# Novelty Assessment Report

**Paper**: Differentially Private Equilibrium Finding in Polymatrix Games

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## Abstract

We study equilibrium finding in polymatrix games under differential privacy constraints. Prior work in this area fails to achieve both high-accuracy equilibria and a low privacy budget. To better understand the fundamental limitations of differential privacy in games, we show hardness results establishing that no algorithm can simultaneously obtain high accuracy and a vanishing privacy budget as the number of players tends to infinity. This impossibility holds in two regimes: (i) We seek to establish equilibrium approximation guarantees in terms of Euclidean \emph{distance} to the equilibrium set, and (ii) The adversary has access to all communication channels. We then consider the more realistic setting in which the adversary can access only a bounded number of channels and propose a new distributed algorithm that: recovers strategies with simultaneously vanishing \emph{Nash gap} (in expected utility, also referred to as \emph{exploitability}) and \emph{privacy budget} as the number of players increases. Our approach leverages structural properties of polymatrix games. To our knowledge, this is the first paper that can achieve this in equilibrium computation. Finally, we also provide numerical results to justify our algorithm.



## Core Task Landscape

This paper addresses: **Differentially Private Equilibrium Computation in Polymatrix Games**

A total of **2 papers** were analyzed and organized into a taxonomy with **3 categories**.

### Taxonomy Overview

The research landscape has been organized into the following main categories:

- **Theoretical Foundations and Hardness Results**
- **Distributed Algorithm Design**
- **Application-Driven Approaches**

### Complete Taxonomy Tree

- Differentially Private Equilibrium Computation in Polymatrix Games Survey Taxonomy
- Theoretical Foundations and Hardness Results
  - Differential Privacy Hardness in Game-Theoretic Equilibria ★ (1 papers)
  - [0] Differentially Private Equilibrium Finding in Polymatrix Games (Anon et al., 2026) View paper
- Distributed Algorithm Design
  - Privacy-Preserving Adversarial Learning Frameworks (1 papers)
  - [2] Game theoretical adversarial deep learning (Aneesh Sreevallabh Chivukula, 2022) View paper
- Application-Driven Approaches
  - Maritime Traffic Management Systems (1 papers)
  - [1] Centralised Decision Support in Maritime Vessel Traffic Services: A Polymatrix Game Solution (L GrgiÄeviÄ, 2025) View paper

### Narrative

Core task: differentially private equilibrium computation in polymatrix games. The field addresses how to compute game-theoretic equilibria while preserving player privacy through differential privacy guarantees. The taxonomy reveals three main branches. Theoretical Foundations and Hardness Results investigates fundamental limits, complexity barriers, and impossibility results when privacy constraints interact with equilibrium computation. Distributed Algorithm Design focuses on developing practical protocols that enable multiple agents to collaboratively find equilibria without revealing sensitive payoff information. Application-Driven Approaches tailors these techniques to real-world domains such as maritime security or adversarial machine learning, where privacy and strategic interaction naturally coexist. Together, these branches span the spectrum from impossibility proofs to deployable systems, reflecting both the mathematical depth and practical urgency of privacy-preserving game solving.

A central tension emerges between what is theoretically achievable under differential privacy and what distributed or application-specific methods can deliver in practice. Private Polymatrix Games[0] sits squarely within the hardness-focused branch, establishing lower bounds and characterizing when privacy fundamentally conflicts with accurate equilibrium computation. This contrasts with application-driven work like Maritime Polymatrix Game[1], which prioritizes domain-specific modeling and may accept relaxed privacy or equilibrium guarantees to achieve operational feasibility. Meanwhile, studies such as Adversarial Deep Learning[2] explore privacy in adjacent strategic settings, highlighting how game-theoretic reasoning under privacy appears across diverse contexts. The original paper thus anchors the theoretical side of the landscape, providing foundational insights that inform both the design of distributed algorithms and the realistic expectations for privacy-preserving equilibria in applied scenarios.

## Related Works in Same Category

No sibling papers and no sibling subtopics were found under the same parent taxonomy node; the paper appears structurally isolated in the taxonomy.

## Contributions Analysis

**Overall novelty summary.** The paper establishes hardness results for differentially private equilibrium computation in polymatrix games and proposes a distributed algorithm achieving vanishing Nash gap and privacy budget under bounded adversarial access. Within the taxonomy, it resides in the 'Differential Privacy Hardness in Game-Theoretic Equilibria' leaf under 'Theoretical Foundations and Hardness Results'. This leaf contains only the original paper itself, indicating a sparse research direction. The broader 'Theoretical Foundations' branch has just one leaf, while the entire taxonomy comprises only three papers across three leaves, suggesting the field of differentially private polymatrix equilibrium computation is nascent and relatively unexplored.

The taxonomy reveals two neighboring branches: 'Distributed Algorithm Design' and 'Application-Driven Approaches'. The former includes work on privacy-preserving adversarial learning frameworks that integrate differential privacy with multi-party computation, though in deep learning contexts rather than polymatrix games. The latter focuses on maritime traffic management using polymatrix equilibria with privacy-preserving broadcast mechanisms. These adjacent directions address privacy in strategic settings but differ in scope: one targets adversarial machine learning equilibria, the other applies game-theoretic coordination to vessel traffic. The original paper's theoretical focus on hardness and fundamental limits distinguishes it from these more constructive or domain-specific efforts.

Among ten candidates examined, the hardness contribution encountered one potentially refutable candidate from seven examined, while the distributed algorithm contribution found no refutations among one candidate, and the structural exploitation contribution found none among two candidates. The limited search scope—ten total candidates from semantic search—means these statistics reflect a narrow sample rather than comprehensive coverage. The hardness results appear to have more substantial prior work overlap, whereas the distributed algorithm achieving simultaneous vanishing Nash gap and privacy budget under bounded adversarial access shows less overlap within the examined set. This suggests the algorithmic contribution may be more novel relative to the accessible literature.

Based on the top-ten semantic matches examined, the work appears to occupy a relatively sparse theoretical niche, with the hardness contribution having modest prior overlap and the algorithmic contributions showing less. The taxonomy structure confirms limited prior work in this exact intersection of differential privacy, polymatrix games, and equilibrium computation. However, the small search scope and single-paper leaf status mean a broader literature review could reveal additional related efforts not captured here.

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This paper presents **3 main contributions**, each analyzed against relevant prior work:

### Contribution 1: Hardness results for differentially private equilibrium computation

**Description**: The authors prove impossibility results showing that distributed equilibrium computation cannot achieve both high accuracy and vanishing privacy budget under two conditions: when measuring accuracy via Euclidean distance to equilibrium, or when the adversary accesses all communication channels. These results establish fundamental limitations for differential privacy in polymatrix games.

This contribution was assessed against **7 related papers** from the literature. Papers with potential prior art are analyzed in detail with textual evidence; others receive brief assessments.

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#### 1. Differentially private distributed convex optimization via functional perturbation

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Private Convex Optimization[5] focuses on distributed convex optimization problems with functional perturbation methods, not on equilibrium computation in polymatrix games or the specific impossibility results regarding accuracy metrics and adversary access to communication channels.

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#### 2. Private equilibrium release, large games, and no-regret learning

**URL**: View paper

**Prior Art Analysis**

Private Equilibrium Release[10] demonstrates prior work establishing fundamental impossibility results for differentially private equilibrium computation. The candidate paper proves that no algorithm can simultaneously achieve high accuracy and vanishing privacy budget in certain regimes, specifically showing a lower bound of ω(1/√n log n) for computing approximate equilibria. This directly refutes the novelty claim that the original authors were the first to establish such impossibility results, as the candidate paper published these hardness results earlier.

**Evidence**

Evidence 1 - **Rationale**: Both papers establish impossibility results showing that no algorithm can achieve both high accuracy and vanishing privacy budget. The candidate paper proves a specific lower bound of ω(1/√n log n), demonstrating that such hardness results existed prior to the original paper's submission. - **Original**: we show hardness results establishing that no algorithm can simultaneously obtain high accuracy and a vanishing privacy budget as the number of players tends to infinity. this impossibility holds in two regimes: (i) we seek to establish equilibrium approximation guarantees in terms of euclidean dist... - **Candidate**: any (ε = o(1),δ = o(1))-differentially private mechanism mthat computes an α-approximate coarse correlated equilibria inn-player 2-action games with o(1/n)-sensitive utility functions must satisfy α= ω( 1√nlog n).

Evidence 2 - **Rationale**: Both papers address the same fundamental problem of computing equilibria while preserving privacy of utility functions. The candidate paper establishes the framework and impossibility results for this problem domain. - **Original**: in several settings, such as security games (de nittis et al., 2018) and financial markets (evangelista et al., 2022; donmez et al., 2024), the players' utility functions may be sensitive and need to be kept private by the players as they update their behavior toward equilibrium. - **Candidate**: we consider a setting in which a centralized planner simultaneously receives type reports from each agent and proposes an action to each. we study the design of mechanisms that: 1. propose an approximate equilibrium of the full information game given the reports. our solution concept here is ϵ-corre...

Evidence 3 - **Rationale**: The candidate paper proves impossibility results showing fundamental limitations on accuracy when computing equilibria with differential privacy, establishing that such hardness results were known before the original paper's claimed contribution. - **Original**: we show that if the adversary can access an arbitrary number of communication channels, or the target accuracy metric of interest is the euclidean distance from the equilibrium set, then distributed computation of high-quality equilibria while providing vanishing privacy guarantees is impossible. - **Candidate**: we show that there is no algorithm that privately computes an α-approximate equilibrium of an arbitrary n-player 2-action game, for α ≪1/√nlog n. in other words, there cannot exist an algorithm that privately computes a 'signficantly' more exact equilibrium.

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#### 3. Differentially Private Distributed Nash Equilibrium Seeking for Aggregative Games With Linear Convergence

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Private Nash Equilibrium[4] focuses on aggregative games with unknown nonlinear players and achieves finite cumulative privacy budget through momentum-based methods, rather than establishing fundamental impossibility results for polymatrix games under different accuracy metrics or adversary access conditions.

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### 4. The privacy-fairness-accuracy frontier: A computational law & economics toolkit for making algorithmic tradeoffs

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Privacy Fairness Accuracy[6] focuses on tradeoffs between privacy, fairness, and accuracy in consumer lending contexts, not on impossibility results for differentially private equilibrium computation in polymatrix games.

### 5. Differentially private algorithms for the stochastic saddle point problem with optimal rates for the strong gap

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Private Saddle Point[8] focuses on stochastic saddle point problems (minimax optimization) with differential privacy, not on equilibrium computation in polymatrix games. The technical settings and problem formulations are fundamentally different.

### 6. The value of privacy: Strategic data subjects, incentive mechanisms and fundamental limits

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Value of Privacy[9] studies privacy-payment tradeoffs in data trading mechanisms, not impossibility results for distributed equilibrium computation in polymatrix games. The technical settings are fundamentally different.

### 7. The possibilities and limitations of private prediction markets

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Private Prediction Markets[7] focuses on prediction market mechanisms and wagering systems, not on equilibrium computation in polymatrix games. The impossibility results concern privacy-loss trade-offs in market maker mechanisms rather than distributed equilibrium finding algorithms.

## Contribution 2: Distributed algorithm with vanishing Nash gap and privacy budget

**Description**: The authors introduce a novel distributed algorithm for computing coarse correlated equilibria in polymatrix games. The algorithm uses adaptive regularization inversely proportional to player degree and achieves both low exploitability and low differential privacy budget, with guarantees that improve as the number of players grows.

This contribution was assessed against **1 related papers** from the literature. Papers with potential prior art are analyzed in detail with textual evidence; others receive brief assessments.

### 1. Statistical privacy-preserving online distributed Nash equilibrium tracking in aggregative games

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Private Nash Tracking[11] focuses on online aggregative games with time-varying Nash equilibrium tracking, not polymatrix games with coarse correlated equilibria. The technical settings and game structures differ fundamentally.

## Contribution 3: Structural exploitation of polymatrix games for privacy-accuracy tradeoffs

**Description**: The authors exploit the localized interaction structure of polymatrix games to achieve their privacy-accuracy guarantees. They leverage sparsity or density properties of the game graph and the aggregative nature of utility functions to stabilize updates and mitigate the impact of utility matrix changes across adjacent games.

This contribution was assessed against **2 related papers** from the literature. Papers with potential prior art are analyzed in detail with textual evidence; others receive brief assessments.

### 1. Adversarial Defense Mechanisms for Supervised Learning

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Adversarial Defense Mechanisms[3] focuses on supervised learning defense mechanisms rather than equilibrium computation in polymatrix games. The candidate's minimal mention of polymatrix games does not demonstrate prior work on exploiting game structure for privacy-accuracy tradeoffs in equilibrium finding.

### 2. Game theoretical adversarial deep learning

**URL**: View paper

**Brief Assessment**

Adversarial Deep Learning[2] focuses on game-theoretic adversarial deep learning frameworks, not on exploiting polymatrix game structure for differential privacy guarantees in equilibrium computation.

# Appendix: Text Similarity Detection

No high-similarity text segments were detected across any compared papers.

# References


- [0] Differentially Private Equilibrium Finding in Polymatrix Games View paper
- [1] Centralised Decision Support in Maritime Vessel Traffic Services: A Polymatrix Game Solution View paper
- [2] Game theoretical adversarial deep learning View paper
- [3] Adversarial Defense Mechanisms for Supervised Learning View paper
- [4] Differentially Private Distributed Nash Equilibrium Seeking for Aggregative Games With Linear Convergence View paper
- [5] Differentially private distributed convex optimization via functional perturbation View paper
- [6] The privacy-fairness-accuracy frontier: A computational law & economics toolkit for making algorithmic tradeoffs View paper
- [7] The possibilities and limitations of private prediction markets View paper
- [8] Differentially private algorithms for the stochastic saddle point problem with optimal rates for the strong gap View paper
- [9] The value of privacy: Strategic data subjects, incentive mechanisms and fundamental limits View paper
- [10] Private equilibrium release, large games, and no-regret learning View paper

- [11] Statistical privacy-preserving online distributed Nash equilibrium tracking in aggregative games View paper