Welcome to the India Human Development Survey Forum
A monthly update of socio-economic developments in India by the IHDS research community.

February 2022

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Featuring the recently published book,
Whole Numbers and Half Truths: What Data Can and Cannot Tell Us about Modern India

(Westland, 2021)

by eminent data journalist, Rukmini S.

In this book, the author draws on her vast reporting experience to wade through a mountain of data on India that is difficult to both access and analyse, and yet she efficiently manages to document the changes occurring in Indian society over the last few years, using this very data. This is a very
interesting book, and the insights provided in it highlight the importance of not only using accurate data but also interpreting it correctly for policy-making, governance, and research.

One of the most engaging qualities of the book is the manner in which it weaves stories around the data by actually highlighting the lived experiences of people and then integrating them with actual numbers to spin the narrative.

Since the book cites IHDS data extensively in the context of various socio-demographic parameters, including marriage, employment, health, education, and consumption trends, this month’s IHDS Forum showcases the book and its author, and how the usage and citation of IHDS data helped her in unpacking her key findings and conclusions.

About the Author

Rukmini S. is an independent data journalist based in Chennai. In 2004, she began covering Mumbai city for the *Times of India*. Since 2010, she has specialised in data journalism. She was the first Data Editor of an Indian newsroom, initially at *The Hindu* and then at *Huffpost India*. She now writes for a range of publications, including *Mint*, *IndiaSpend*, and *The Guardian*. Her pandemic podcast, *The Moving Curve*, won an Emergent Ventures India COVID-19 Prize in 2020. She was awarded the Chameli Devi Jain Award for Outstanding Mediaperson in 2020 and the Likho Awards for Excellence in Media in 2019.
She has a post-graduate Diploma in Social Communications Media and an MSc in Development Studies.

Following are some graphs and charts from the book.
Figure 10.2: Who falls sick and who gets care is determined by how rich you are

The poor report worse health...

Morbidity per 1,000 from cough/ fever/ diarrhoea

Days incapacitated in last month (if sick)

Days lost to sickness per year for whole population

Source: National Council for Applied Economic Research and University of Maryland, India Human Development Survey Rounds 1, 2005-06; 2, 2011-12
Rukmini S. Speaks to IHDS

Following is a reproduction of an interview that IHDS had with the author, in which she shares her experiences on writing the book and working with data, in general, and IHDS data, in particular. She talks about the accessibility and user-friendliness of various datasets she used while writing her book and the challenges of data collection in India. She also discusses the comparability and intersectionality of different datasets, and the fundamentals of a robust and credible data ecosystem.

Full Interview Here

IHDS DATA IN THE NEWS

OP-ED FROM RITU SHARMA: “Females Have Lower Assessment Levels than Males in Basic Maths: Study”, The Indian Express, January 25, 2022. [Link](#).

OP-ED FROM SONALDE DESAI: “Education Should be Priority, Not Banning of Hijab”, The Indian Express, February 26, 2022. [Link](#).
Recent publications from IHDS users:

Das, Upasak and Karan Singhal. 2022. “Gender Difference in Mathematics Learning in Rural India”, Ideas For India, January 24. [Link](#).


Please visit our updated IHDS website for all your IHDS related questions: ihds.umd.edu
ABOUT IHDS

The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) is a nationally representative, multi-topic survey of 41,554 households in 1503 villages and 971 urban neighbourhoods across India. The first round of interviews was completed in 2004-05; data are publicly available through ICPSR. A second round of IHDS re-interviewed most of these households in 2011-12 (N=42,152) and data for the same can be found here. IHDS 3 is in development and expected to be in the field in 2021.

IHDS 3 has been jointly organised by researchers from the University of Maryland, the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), Indiana University and the University of Michigan. Funding for the second round of this survey is provided by the National Institutes of Health, grants R01HD041455 and R01HD061048. Additional funding is provided by The Ford Foundation, IDRC and DFID.

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