



DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT



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**December 2021**

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IHDS DATA COMMUNITY RESULTS

# ***Women's Low Employment Rates in India: Cultural and Structural Explanations***

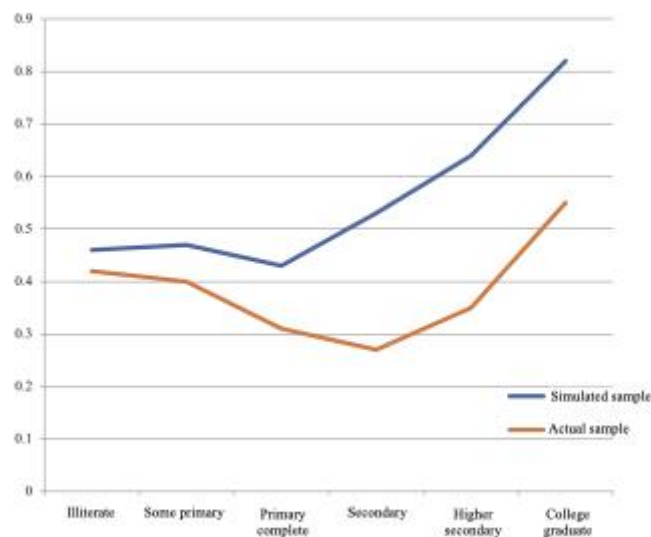
*By Esha Chatterjee and Reeve Vanneman*



It has long been known that Indian women's labour force participation rates have a U-shaped relationship with their education, rather than a more conventional positive linear relationship. The low rates of employment for moderately educated women are usually explained either as a result of the cultural stigma of women's employment in a patriarchal society or because of the lack of demand from white-collar and light manufacturing jobs for women with middle levels of education. Using especially well-suited data from two waves of the India Human Development Survey, the authors test these explanations by examining the education–employment relationship in districts with low cultural stigma (low observance of *purdah*) and high proportions of (salaried) employment considered “suitable” for women. The paper finds little support for either the cultural or structural explanations: the education–employment relationship remains U-shaped in districts with low stigma or with more “suitable” salaried employment. Instead, the authors suggest that a better explanation lies in the high levels of gender segregation where most white-collar jobs are reserved for men. They simulate what the education–employment relationship would look like if these white-collar

occupations were female dominated as they are in most places in the world and find a more conventional linear relationship.

**Predicted probability of employment among Indian women (with all controls) by education level, for the actual and simulated sample**



Source: Calculations from the India Human Development Survey I and II.

[Full Article Here](#)

**Esha Chatterjee** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur. She received her PhD in Sociology from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 2020. Her primary research interests are in the fields of demography and gender, work and family. Her past and ongoing projects examine the relationship between women's employment and education; fertility intentions, behaviour and maternal health, the unmet need for contraception, and internal migration in the Indian context. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *Population Studies*, *PLOS ONE* and *Demographic Research*. Her paper, "Indian paradox: Rising education, declining women's employment" has been awarded the

Editor's choice award by *Demographic Research*, and has been featured in several prominent publications in India like *The Hindu*, *ThePrint*, and *Livemint*.

**Reeve Vanneman** is a sociologist at the University of Maryland whose research focuses on changing gender inequalities in the United States and India. With Sonal Desai and colleagues in Delhi at the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), he has helped field two waves of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS). With Dave Cotter and Joan Hermsen, he has investigated why the US gender revolution of the 1970s and 1980s stalled in the 1990s. His recent work with Joanna Motro has investigated whether changing cultural themes about working mothers may have contributed to this stalled gender revolution.

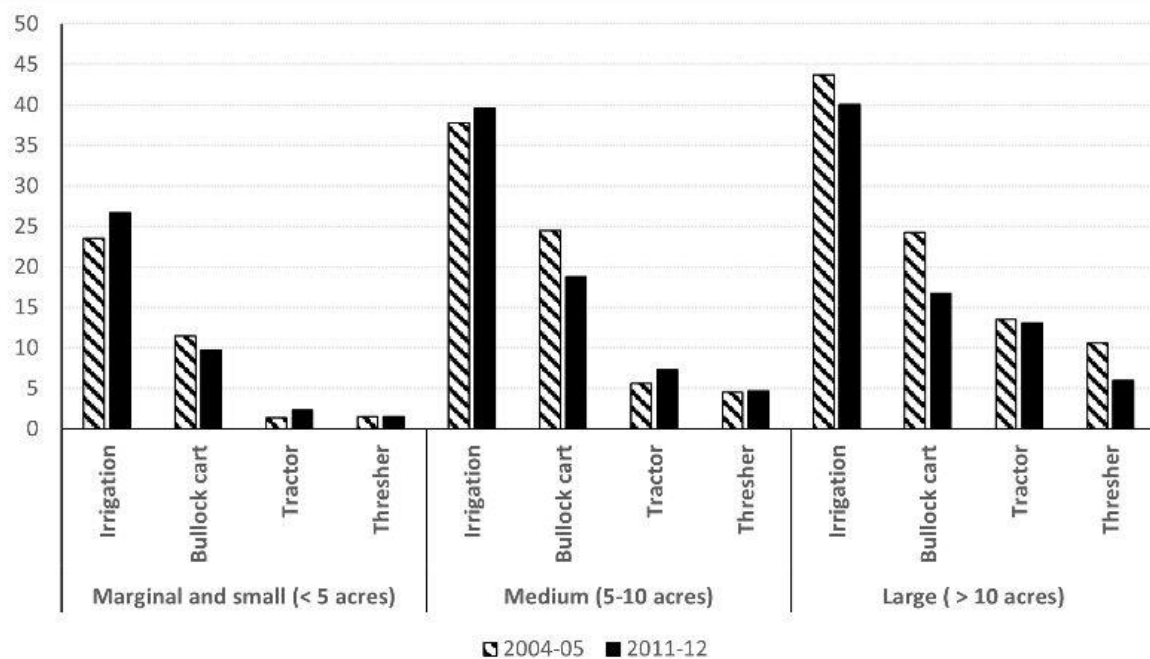
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## ***Revisiting the relationship between farm mechanization and labour requirement in India***



*By Pallavi Rajkhowa and Zaneta Kubik*

In many developing and emerging economies, better employment opportunities in the non-farm sector have increased rural wages due to labour shortages during the peak agricultural season. Increasing wages often cause a substitution of labour for mechanical power, but extensive use of labour-saving technologies may cause labour displacement and have serious equity concerns. Using the nationally representative India Human Development Survey (IHDS), this paper analyses the relationship between different types of farm machines and labour requirements in India. The results suggest that a unit increase in the level of farm mechanization increases the demand for hired labour by 12 per cent. Moreover, the authors find that the level of farm mechanization has a positive effect on women's participation in farm work, while it decreases the probability of children participating in agriculture-related work. Disaggregated analysis based on types of farm machinery suggests that water-lifting equipment, draft power, and tractors increase the probability of male household members working on their farms, while all types of farm machines, except tractors, have a positive effect on female farm labour participation. The authors also find that the effect of farm mechanization on the demand for hired labour decreases as the size of the farm increases.



[Full Article Here](#)

**Pallavi Rajkhowa** is pursuing her PhD in Agriculture Economics from Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany. Prior to joining ZEF, Pallavi has worked at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), and Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on various agriculture and food policy-related issues, as well as macro-economic analysis. Her current work seeks to understand the impact of digital technologies on development outcomes in India, particularly in the areas of agriculture, agricultural markets, and the rural non-farm sector.

**Zaneta Kubik** is a senior researcher at the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, Germany. She is a development economist with a background in economics and political science. She holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne in France. In her research, she focuses on labour markets, migration, and poverty analysis, in particular in the context of Sub-Saharan

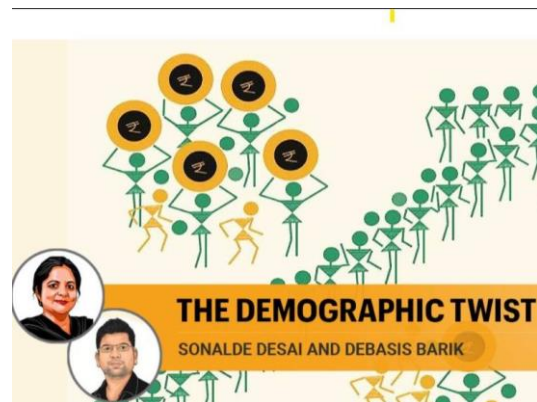
Africa and South Asia. She is also a lecturer in the Economics Department at the University of Bonn where she teaches development economics.

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## IHDS DATA IN THE NEWS



**OP-ED FROM RUKMINI S.:** "Preserve the integrity of India's data ecosystem", *The Hindustan Times*, November 30, 2021. [Link.](#)



**OP-ED FROM SONALDE DESAI AND DEBASIS BARIK:** "With India's demographic transition, come challenges", *The Indian Express*, December 2, 2021. [Link.](#)



OP-ED FROM ANDRES PARRADO AND DOUG JOHNSON: "How reliable is India's Learning Outcome Data?", *idronline*, November 17, 2021. [Link.](#)



OP-ED FROM BINA AGARWAL, PERVESH ANTHWAL AND MALVIKA MAHESH: "Inter-gender and intra-gender gaps in land ownership in India", *Ideas for India*, November 24, 2021. [Link.](#)

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#### Recent publications from IHDS users:

Heyes, A. and S. Saberian. 2021. "Hot Days, the ability to Work and climate resilience: Evidence from a representative sample of 42,152 Indian households", *Journal of Development Economics*. [Link.](#)

Lodh, T., P. Roy, and M. Roy. 2021. "Intergenerational occupational mobility in India across social groups", *Indian Economic Review*. [Link.](#)



Shrikant, C. and S. Dey. 2021. "Conspicuous Consumption for Social Parity", *Working Paper No. IIMK/WPS/482/ECO/2021/13*. Indian Institute of management Kozhikode.

[Link](#).

Mehta, A. 2021. "Analyzing the Debt Behavior of Farm Households in the Maharashtra State of India", *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 56(2): 107-117. [Link](#).

Uddin, A. 2021. "Gender Gap in Intergenerational Educational Mobility: Evidence from India", *Working Paper*, [Link](#).

Sarma, N. Forthcoming in January 2022. "Domestic violence and workfare: An evaluation of India's MGNREGS", *World Development*, Vol. 149. [Link](#).

Patidar, H. and S. Chothodi. 2021. "Livelihood Diversification in Rural India", *Space and Culture, India*, 9(3), 32-44. [Link](#).

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## 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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