



## DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT

### India Human Development Survey Forum | March 2024

A monthly update of socio-economic developments in India by the IHDS research community.

#### Happy International Women's Day and Month

We bring you a special edition of the IHDS newsletter to celebrate Women's History Month by highlighting some of the papers that have examined the gendered dimensions of Indian society. These papers have been featured in the past editions of this newsletter but we hope that this compilation will help provide a holistic picture of Indian women's lives.

#### The gender gap in enrolment rates is narrowing



Over the last few decades, there has been significant progress towards achieving gender equality, especially in education. Afridi and Barooah (2016) found that among 5-21-year-olds, the gender gap in ever attending school declined from 7 to 2 percentage points.

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## However, the gender based segregation in education persists

While the gender gap in enrolment rates at the lower levels has closed substantially, there persists a disparity in stream choice at higher levels of education. Sahoo and Klasen (2019), explored the complex factors that influence the choices made by male and female students in India at the higher secondary level, with a focus on gender-based segregation. They found that girls were mainly concentrated in arts and humanities and were about 20 percentage points less likely than boys to study in science (STEM) and commerce streams.



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## Rising education does not always translate into higher Female Labour Force Participation Rates (FLFPR)



IHDS data was uniquely useful in examining the link between education and employment while controlling for the education and income of husbands and other family members. Chatterjee, Desai and Vanneman (2018) found that after controlling for other factors, the relationship between education and employment is U shaped with the most and the least educated women more likely to be employed than women in the middle of the educational spectrum, possibly because few jobs are available to them.

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## When women earn, they tend to invest in labour-saving devices

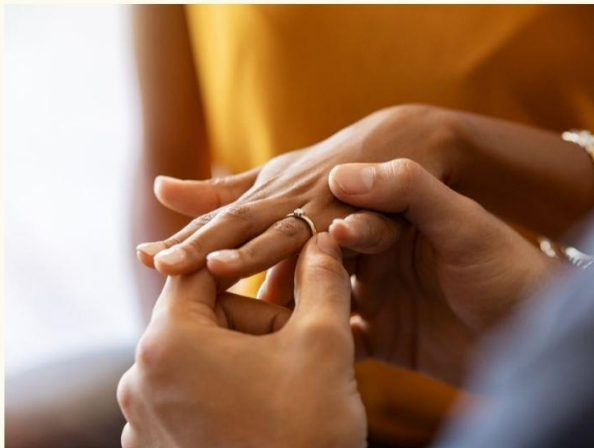
Choudhuri and Desai (2020) found that households where women have more empowerment to make decisions regarding expenses and participate in the market are more likely to invest in clean cooking fuels. When women are engaged in stable and independent work, such as salaried jobs or running their businesses, households are more inclined to invest in clean fuels, possibly because it frees up their time from collecting fuelwood or other biofuels to devote to income-earning activities. Additionally, the



study suggests that women may value clean fuels more highly than other household goods, increasing household investments in clean fuels in households where women may have higher bargaining power.

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## While arranged marriage remains prevalent, urban and educated women have a greater say in selecting their partners.



Allendorf and Pandian (2016) explored the evolving pattern of marriage in India, particularly focusing on arranged marriages. They found that the practice of arranged marriage is shifting, rather than declining. Women have greater autonomy and choice in marriage decisions, particularly in younger generations, and are increasingly exerting more agency in choosing their life partners. Despite the trend towards greater autonomy, family and social factors still play a significant role in marriage.

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## Control over agricultural land improves the bargaining power of elderly women

Landownership is an important source of old-age security in India. Yan, Desai and Barik (2024) examined the relationship between landownership among older individuals and decision-making power at home in rural India. They found that while family ownership of land is sufficient to enhance men's well-being, women need to own and control land in their own rights to derive the same benefits in terms of household bargaining power and investments in their health.



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## Enhancements in infrastructure investment correlate with increased female participation in non-agricultural work



Sometimes gender-neutral development brings gendered benefits. Lei, Desai and Vanneman (2019) explored the impact of transportation infrastructure on women's engagement in non-agricultural employment in Indian villages. Their paper reveals a significant positive impact of the improved transportation infrastructure, such as roads and public transportation systems, on women's participation in non-agricultural jobs. Villages with better transportation were more accessible to urban centres and markets, thereby providing women with

increased opportunities for employment outside of traditional agricultural roles. This suggests that investments in transportation infrastructure could be crucial in empowering women economically and encouraging gender equality in rural India.

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## Publications List

### Recent Publications using IHDS Data:

Agarwal, M., & Alam, M. M. U. (2023). *Female Inheritance Rights and Household Sanitation*. [Link](#)

Bharti, I. K., & Kumar, M. (2024). *Development of social capital formation in context of left behind member of migrant at origin*. *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, 1-22. [Link](#)

Mishra, N., & Mukhopadhyay, J. P. (2024, 20/02/2024). *Can safe drinking water improve children's educational outcomes?* *Ideas for India*. [Link](#)

Nongbri, R. W., & Mandal, S. K. (2024). *An assessment of multidimensional water poverty in India: an application of Alkire–Foster dual cut-off approach*. *Indian Economic Review*, 1-24. [Link](#)

Srikanth, C. (2023). *Degrees of disadvantage*. WIDER Working Paper. [Link](#)

Srikanth, C., & Dey, S. (2023). *Identity and multigenerational persistence*. WIDER Working Paper. [Link](#)

Srikanth, C., & Dey, S. (2023). *Conspicuous consumption for social parity*. WIDER Working Paper. [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 neighborhoods across India. The first round of interviews were completed in 2004-05; Data is publicly available through ICPSR. A second round of re-interviewed most of these households in 2011-12 (N=42,152) and data for the same can be found via ICPSR. IHDS 3 is currently in progress with field work and data compilation.

IHDS 3 has been jointly organised by researchers from the University of Maryland, the National Council of Applied Economic Research, Indiana University and University of Michigan. Funding for the second round of 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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