

# The Visible and Invisible Barriers to Indian Women Working

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# Headline News?

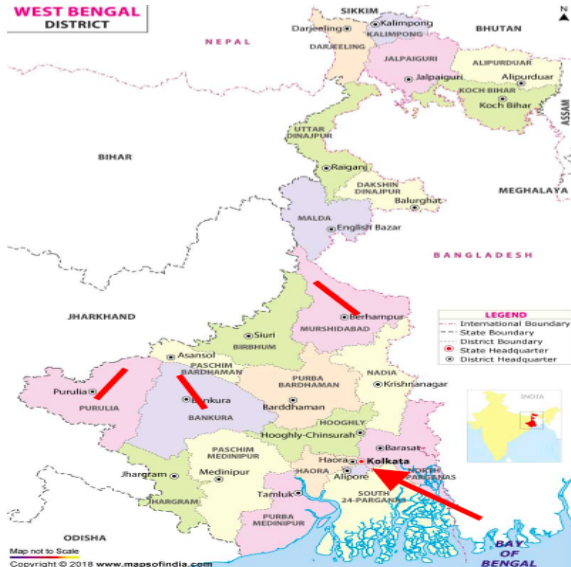
- ▶ Recent international spotlight on low and declining female LFPRs in India: IMF, Economist, NYT



“Patriarchal social mores supersede economic opportunity in a way more associated with Middle Eastern countries ... enduring stigma of women being seen as “having to toil.”

# Paper based on primary survey in West Bengal

Joint with Naila Kabeer.



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- ▶ We classify women as "working" if they answered "yes" to this question.



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- ▶ For each activity, a set of two questions: 1 whether they were involved in that activity; 2 if they did the activity not just for their home use, but for economic help or support in family’s income generating work.

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- ▶ Our extended definition is not based on adding reproductive or care work to economic work, but is derived from including activities that fall within the conventional boundary, but women discount their contribution to these activities as part of routine housework, and are most likely unpaid.

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- ▶ Note that the boundary between “OLF” and “ES” is fuzzy.

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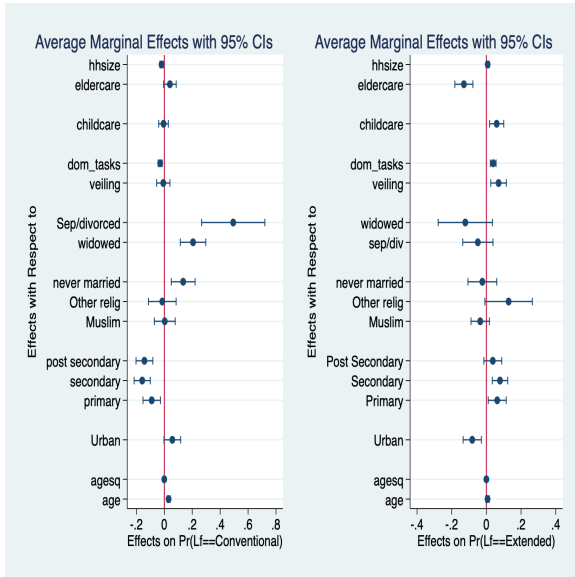
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- ▶ The second includes the effect of cultural norms: “veiling”, = 1 if the woman covers her face sometimes or always. Standard errors are clustered at the village level.

# Predicted Probability: Working



# Domestic Chores Matter More

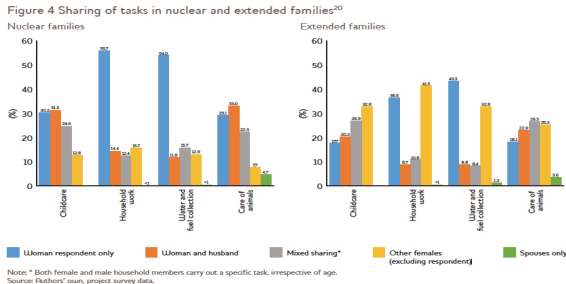
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- ▶ Chopra, D. (2017): India, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania Study



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- ▶ Perceptions about work: formal work is most desired and gives most satisfaction (work in progress)

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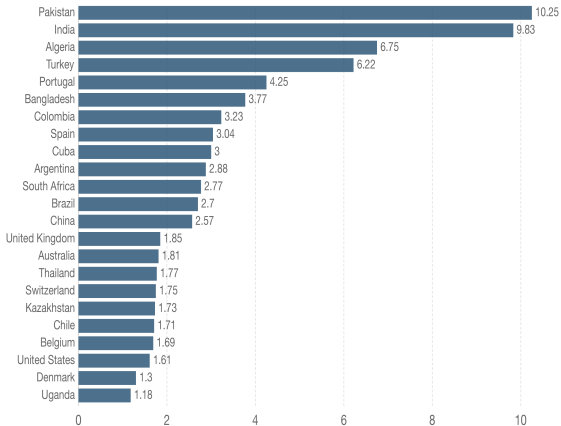
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- ▶ However, even accounting for that, the majority are “not working”, but involved in expenditure saving activities.
- ▶ There is a demand for work, especially if it is compatible with domestic chores.
- ▶ International attention on visible markers (burqa) or religion (Islam). But the real “cultural” norm that needs to change: sharing of domestic chores.

# Do Domestic Chores Explain International Variation in FLFP?

## Female-to-male ratio of time devoted to unpaid care work, 2014

Female to male ratio of time devoted to unpaid care work. Unpaid care work refers to all unpaid services provided within a household for its members, including care of persons, housework and voluntary community work.



Source: OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (2014) [OurWorldInData.org/women-in-the-labor-force-determinants/](http://OurWorldInData.org/women-in-the-labor-force-determinants/) • CC BY





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- ▶ Internal migration: women brave massive odds, take huge risks to migrate for work.

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Expenditure saving work.
- ▶ Unpaid work should not be seen as care work.
- ▶ Def of cultural norms to be re-articulated: unequal sharing of domestic, unpaid care work, from its current focus on religious differences, especially the spotlight on Islam or veiling as a constraint to labour force participation.