



## CHAPTER III

# Reshaping Social Norms about Gender: A New Way Forward

## Introduction

**Despite decades of rapid economic growth, rising education, and declining fertility, women in South Asia continue to face greater disadvantages in accessing economic opportunities than in most of the developing world.** Some progress has been made but improvements are slow and increasing income levels do not seem sufficient to reduce stubbornly high gender gaps across multiple dimensions in the region. Social norms about gender can be a key obstacle towards gender equality and these norms are particularly biased against women in South Asia. Many jobs and occupations are considered “men’s jobs,” and few women cross over (World Bank 2022). This concentration of employment in a few (mainly service) sectors exposes women to large employment losses when a crisis hits these sectors. Mobility restrictions further limit women’s ability to work outside the home. Social norms hinder women’s access to land, financial capital, and other assets. They also limit households’ investment in women’s human capital, reducing access to higher education, and constrain women’s influence over decision making, inside and outside the home.

**The COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated existing gender disparities.** Available data indicate that men have suffered from higher COVID-19 mortality rates, but women are more heavily affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic. Women’s employment was disproportionately reduced because the service sector where many women work was most affected by the lockdowns and voluntary restrictions during the pandemic (ILO 2021). Closures of female-run businesses during COVID have been more frequent than those of male-run businesses. Women’s lesser access to credit also makes it harder for them to bounce back and rebuild their small businesses. Social norms result in women undertaking about three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men (OECD 2019). Thus, women had to adjust to and accommodate the closure of daycare facilities and schools during the pandemic. Often women found themselves stretched between increased unpaid care work and reduced income. Moreover, mobility restrictions during the pandemic, coupled with high levels of acceptance of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the region, resulted in increased violence against women.

**The pandemic has thus increased the importance of understanding the role of social norms in limiting women’s access to opportunities in South Asia.** Addressing the core obstacles to achieving gender equality and effectively protecting women in difficult times are critical to preventing setbacks from settling in, to support the economic recovery, but also, in the long term, to boost inclusive growth. Better allocation of talent has a very large growth benefit. Hsieh et al. (2019) estimate that the reduced sectoral segregation against women and African Americans’ employment during the last 50 years explains between 20 to 40 percent of economic growth in the US during the same period. For South Asia, Cuberes and Teignier (2016) estimated an income loss due to gender gaps of 25 percent, with almost 40 percent of it being due to occupational gaps between men and women.

**A key objective of this chapter is to focus the attention of research and policymaking on social norms, not to claim that social norms are the only, or the most important factor hindering the path towards gender equality in South Asia.** More work is needed, especially on better measurement of the complex construct of social norms. This chapter, by adopting a clear definition of social norms and by providing some initial empirical quantification of their links with gender outcomes, is a first step. The next section, Section 3.1, sets the stage and compares female labor force participation rates and related forms of gender inequality in South Asia with trends in other developing regions. Section 3.2 describes in detail what social norms are, distinguishing them from personal beliefs or attitudes. It presents new evidence on the link between social norms and gender outcomes: countries with more restrictive gender norms tend to have worse gender outcomes, such as lower female labor force participation. Section 3.3 examines the potential for changing norms, and the implications for the design of policies to support women.

### 3.1 Female labor force participation and gender inequalities in South Asia

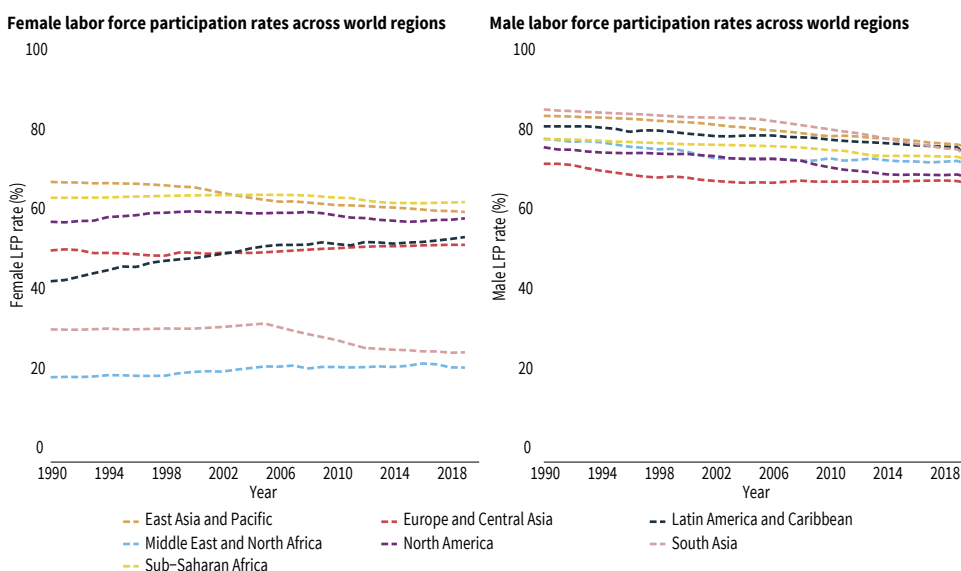
**Female labor force participation (FLFP) rates in South Asia are well below the levels in all other world regions, apart from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)** (Figure 3.1, left panel).<sup>1</sup> In 2019, only 23.6 percent of women in South Asia were in the labor force, compared with around 50-60 percent in other regions (excluding MENA). Gender gaps in labor force participation are also greater in South Asia, given that the labor force participation of men in South Asia is not so different from the rates in other world regions (Figure 3.1, right panel).

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1 This comprises women who are either currently employed or are currently unemployed but actively seeking employment. Note that the labor force participation estimates presented in this chapter are modeled ILO estimates. The ILO modelled estimates series provides a complete set of internationally comparable labor statistics, including both nationally reported observations and imputed data for countries with missing data. The employment definition following 19th ICLS is not yet implemented in the ILO modelled estimates for countries in which it would generate a methodological break, as there are not enough data points based on the new standard to produce reliable global and regional estimates.

**The gender gap in engagement with the labor market is both a driver and a consequence of multiple disparities that affect women in South Asia.** Parental discrimination against girls in human capital investments and women marrying at young ages reduce women’s labor market engagement, while the ability to work can generate multiple benefits. Working women, when compared with women who do not work, report higher levels of agency, which, together with more resources, is associated with improvements in nutrition, health care utilization, productivity, and overall well-being for both women and their children (Donald et al. 2020; Chang et al. 2020; Bussolo et al. 2021). In addition to being a pathway to achieve gender equality in other domains (Jayachandran 2021), enabling women to pursue their comparative advantages by participating in the labor market can improve aggregate economic performance (Hsieh et al. 2019).

**Figure 3.1. South Asia lags behind other world regions, apart from the Middle East and North Africa, in female labor force participation**



**Source:** World Bank calculations based on World Development Indicators (WDI) (modeled ILO estimate for female LFP rate).

**Note:** The vertical axes measure the female and male labor force participation (LFP) rate, and the horizontal axes show the year of the data. LFP rate is the proportion of the population age 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labor (including unemployed and looking for work) for the production of goods and services during a specified period. Female(male) LFP is calculated as the percentage of females(males) ages 15+ actively in the labor market out of the total female(male) population ages 15+.

This section highlights two points. Firstly, economic drivers, such as economic growth, rising education, and declining fertility, cannot adequately explain the levels and trends of FLFP in the region. Secondly, a host of other forms of gender gaps related to economic participation—freedom of movement, social interactions, asset ownership, and parents’ offspring preference—also show stagnant trends in South Asia. Thus, the large literature on the economic

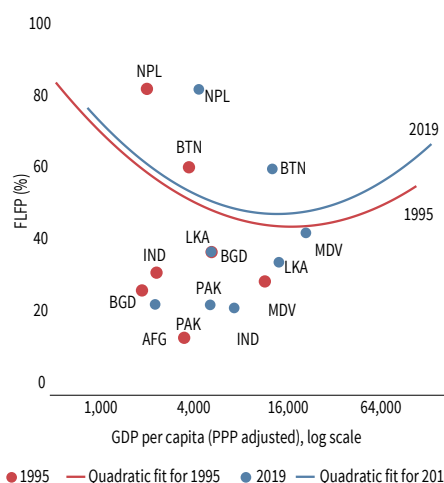
determinants of FLFP in developing countries<sup>2</sup> needs to be complemented by a better understanding of other barriers to women’s engagement and success in labor markets.

### 3.1.1 Economic growth, rising female education, and declining fertility do not adequately explain female labor force participation trends in South Asia

A well-known view of the evolution of FLFP maintains that it follows a U-shaped path over the course of economic development (Boserup 1970; Durand 1975; Goldin 1995). At low levels of economic development, women participate extensively in the labor force, performing work on family farms and in family businesses. As incomes grow and countries industrialize, women’s participation is reduced as the returns to income from a second earner in the family go down, demand for women’s labor in agriculture declines, and women may be barred from manufacturing jobs due to social customs. Yet, as incomes continue to grow and the tertiary sector expands along with a rise in female education and a decline in fertility levels, women move back into the labor force performing service sector jobs where they may have a comparative advantage and face fewer restrictions.

**The relatively low levels of FLFP in South Asia, however, are not due to South Asian countries being at a different point on the U-shaped curve relative to more developed countries.** Global data indeed show that a U-shaped (quadratic) curve is the best fit for the cross-country relationship between GDP per capita and the FLFP rate in both 1995

**Figure 3.2. There is a U-shaped relationship between female labor force participation and development**



Source: World Development Indicators (modeled ILO estimate for FLFP rate).

Note: The vertical axis measures the FLFP rate, and the horizontal axis measures the logarithm of GDP per capita. The graph plots the quadratic fit of FLFP rate and GDP per capita for 210 countries (1995) and 221 countries (2019). The graph compares a) FLFP rate for 1995 on the vertical axis and GDP per capita for 1995 on the horizontal axis and, b) FLFP rate for 2019 on the vertical axis and GDP per capita for 2019 on the horizontal axis. GDP per capita is PPP adjusted at constant 2017 international USD. Labor force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people (including the unemployed looking for work) who supply labor for the production of goods and services during a specified period. FLFP is measured as the percentage of females in the labor market out of all females aged 15+. GDP per capita 1995 data are not available for Afghanistan.

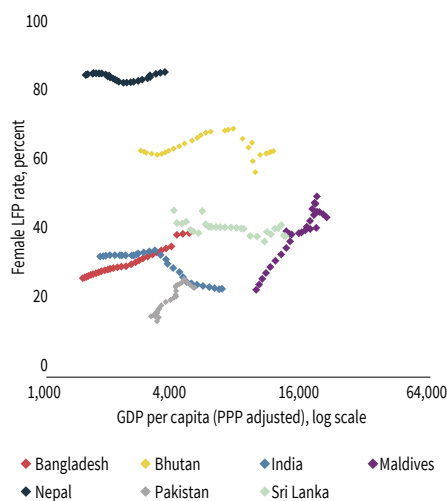
2 For reviews on this literature see Elson (1999); Heath and Jayachandran (2018); Klasen (2019).

and 2019 (Figure 3.2).<sup>3</sup> However, in 1995, South Asian countries other than Nepal and Bhutan displayed much lower FLFP rates for their level of development. Over time, the U-shaped curve for all countries has moved up, reflecting an increase in FLFP for the same level of development. In South Asia, however, while per capita GDP increased in all countries, FLFP barely changed in Nepal; increased in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Maldives; and declined a lot in India.

**The relationship between economic development and FLFP over 1991-2019 differed across South Asian countries, and for some, differed across time** (Figure 3.3. shows the correlation of FLFP rate with per capita GDP for South Asian countries). FLFP in Nepal and Sri Lanka has barely changed despite economic development, whereas it has significantly increased in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Pakistan, and Maldives (although the relationship recently turned negative for Pakistan and Maldives). India saw a weak but positive relationship between FLFP and GDP per capita growth at levels of development roughly below US\$3,500 per capita and declines beyond this point.

**Education, another key determinant of FLFP, also does not explain changes in FLFP in South Asia.** In almost all developing countries, a positive correlation is observed between female education and FLFP (Psacharopoulos and Tzannatos 1989); research suggests that this relationship is also causal (see examples of experimental evidence cited in Heath and Jayachandran 2016). In South Asia, however, primary and secondary school enrollment rates (Figure 3.4) have improved dramatically over time and have either converged or gotten very close to the levels in more developed regions, without commensurate improvements in FLFP.

**Figure 3.3. The correlation between female labor force participation and per capita GDP varies across countries in South Asia**

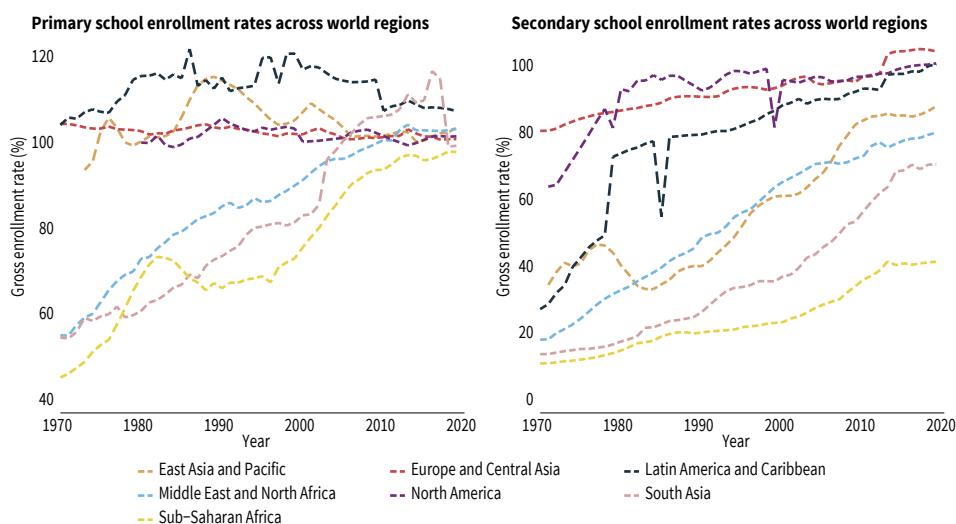


Source: World Bank calculations based on World Development Indicators and Penn World Tables Version 10.0

Note: The vertical axis measures the FLFP rate, and the horizontal axis measures the logarithm of GDP per capita. GDP per capita is PPP adjusted at constant 2017 international USD. FLFP is measured as the percentage of females in the labor market out of all females aged 15+.

<sup>3</sup> The empirical literature is divided as some studies (Goldin 1995) find that cross-country data support the U-shape hypothesis while others (Klasen 2019) cast doubts on its validity.

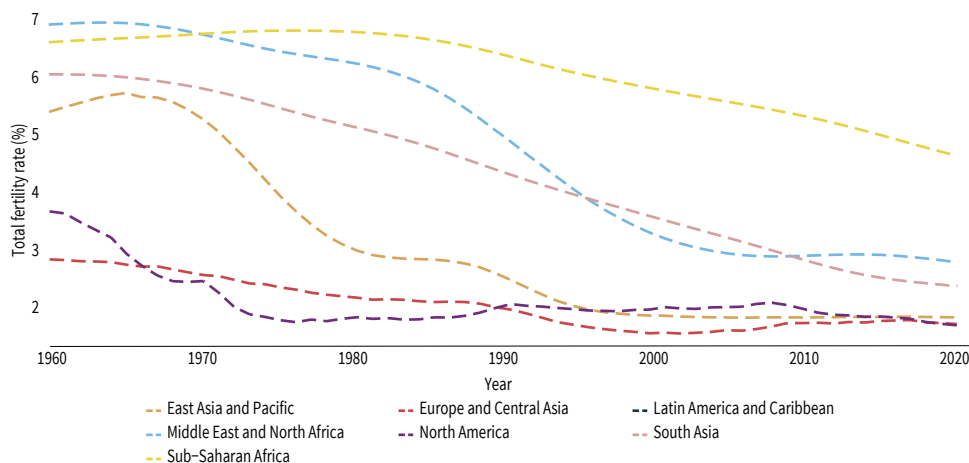
**Figure 3.4. Female enrollment rates in South Asia have dramatically improved over time**



Source: World Development Indicators (retrieved from UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

Note: The vertical axes measure the gross enrollment rate for primary and secondary school and the horizontal axes show the year of the data. Gross enrollment ratio is the ratio of total enrollment, regardless of age, to the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education shown.

**Figure 3.5. Fertility rates have declined globally, including in South Asia**

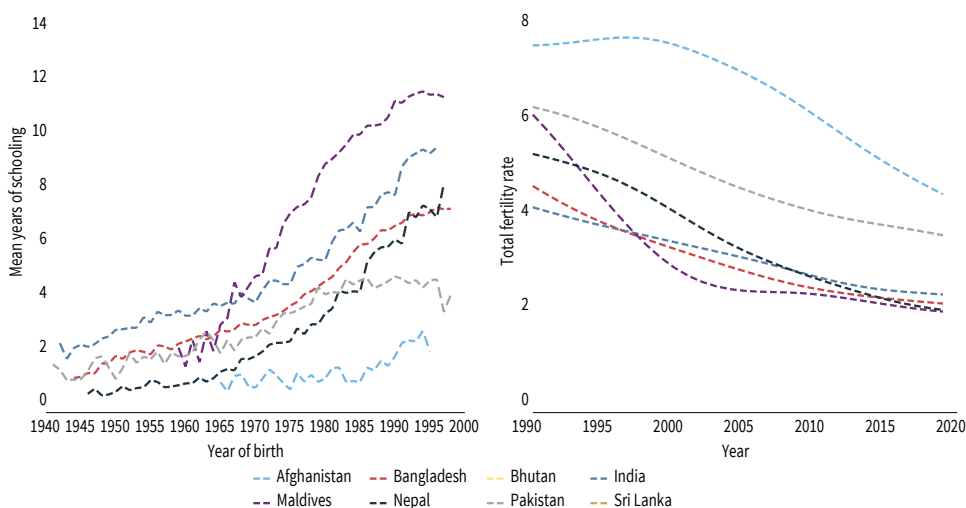


Source: World Development Indicators gathered from (1) United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision, (2) Census reports and other statistical publications from national statistical offices, (3) Eurostat: Demographic Statistics, (4) United Nations Statistical Division, Population and Vital Statistics Report (various years), (5) U.S. Census Bureau: International Database, and (6) Secretariat of the Pacific Community: Statistics and Demography Programme).

Note: The vertical axis measures the total fertility rates and the horizontal axis plots years. Total fertility rate represents the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children in accordance with age-specific fertility rates of the specified year.

A similar picture emerges if we examine the long-term evolution of the gap in completed years of schooling (rather than just enrollment) of adult men and women for generations born since the 1940s in South Asia. Women are catching up with men in the number of years they spend in school, except in Afghanistan. The decline in education inequality in the region has been most remarkable for Bangladesh, followed by India and Nepal. The closing of the gender gap in educational attainment is driven by significant increases in female education (Figure 3.6, left panel). Women born before 1965 achieved fewer than 4 years of schooling, on average, in all countries. After 1965, however, educational attainment rose due to greater access and investment in education in the region (and across the world, see Barro and Lee 2013). Women born after 1990 achieved more than twice the years of education that women born before 1965 in all countries. The highest gains in access to education in the region are found in Maldives, India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, where women born after 1990 attain around four additional years of education compared to those born in 1965. In Afghanistan, gains have been lower as women born after 1990 attain fewer than two additional years of education compared to the cohorts born before 1965. Although an upward trend is evident in all countries, the average years of education of women born after the 1980s has stagnated in Pakistan.

**Figure 3.6. Women's years of schooling have increased and total fertility rates have declined in most South Asian countries**



**Source:** The figure in left panel is based on data from repeated cross-sections from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) that have been combined to create pseudo panels, where individuals from specific birth cohorts are followed as they age. The figure in the right panel is based on data from the World Bank World Development Indicators.

**Note:** The vertical axes measure the mean years of schooling and total fertility rate for the left and right graphs. The horizontal axes plot the year of birth and the year of data for the left and right graphs. Total fertility rate represents the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children in accordance with age-specific fertility rates of the specified year.



**Box 3.1. Female labor force participation rates may be affected by a country's economic structure and by the prevalence of norms over women's employment in specific sectors<sup>1</sup>**

Employment by sector differs for men and women. And some sectoral composition of employment demand is associated with a higher probability of women's overall employment than others. This can be related to the emergence or expansion of sectors that substitute home production, some of which may also create jobs for women (Dinkelman and Ngai 2022), as well as non-neutral technical change that favors female labor (Autor et al. 2003; Bhalotra and Fernández 2021).

Cross-country differences in female labor participation rates may be related to, or perhaps even driven by, differences in the sectoral shares of employment. To analyze this, we first create four groups of developing countries according to their level of GDP per capita, then divide each group into countries where the FLFP rate is higher than the median rate and those where it is lower than the median, and finally calculate the sectoral shares of total (male and female) employment (Figure 3.7). For each of the four development level categories, the sectoral composition of employment identified for the group of countries with high FLFP rates provides a benchmark against which we can compare South Asian countries. For these countries, the share of female employment is lower than that found in the corresponding sectors of the benchmarks (Figure 3.8).

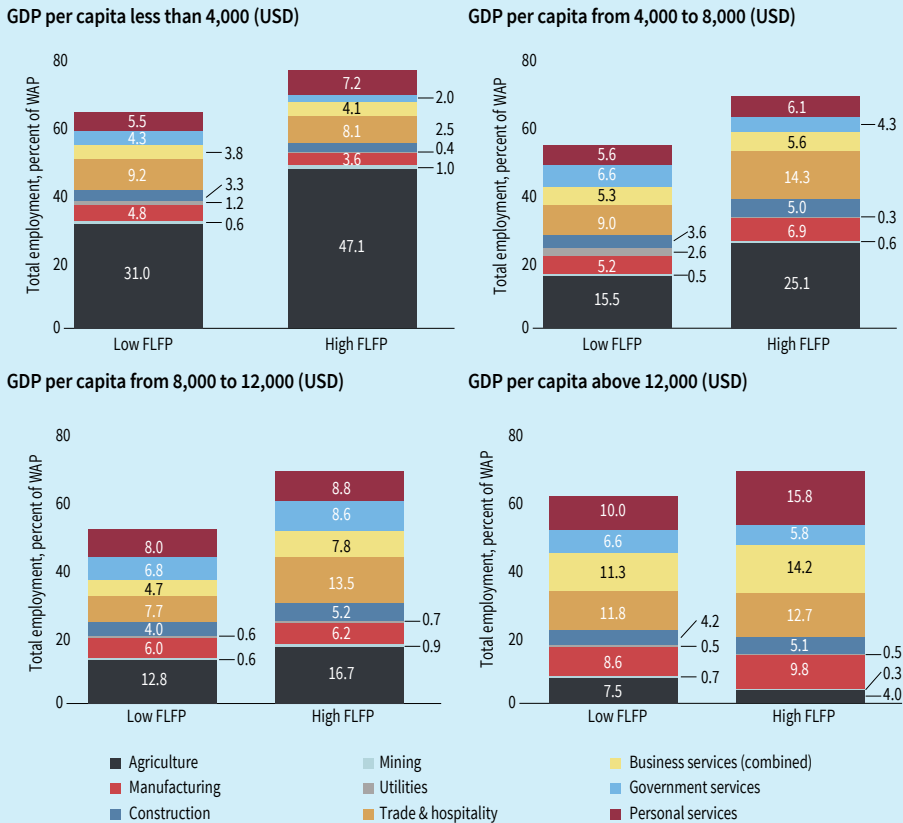
Among countries with per capita GDP between 4,000 and 8,000 US dollars<sup>4</sup>, higher FLFP is associated with more female employment in trade and hospitality services. By contrast, the shares of working women in these sectors in the South Asian countries at this level of income (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Pakistan) are relatively low.

Among countries with per capita GDP between 8,000 and 12,000 US dollars, higher FLFP also is associated with more female employment in trade and hospitality services. In Bhutan, female employment in trade and hospitality services is quite low.<sup>5</sup>

4 All per capita GDP measures are expressed in 2017 international US dollars.

5 In Bhutan's Labor Force Survey raw dataset, a very small number of respondents (across women and men) reported to work in personal services or in government services; this is surprising and might suggest data quality issues.

**Figure 3.7. Female employment varies with countries' economic structure both between and within levels of economic development**



Source: World Bank Jobs Indicator Database (JOIN).

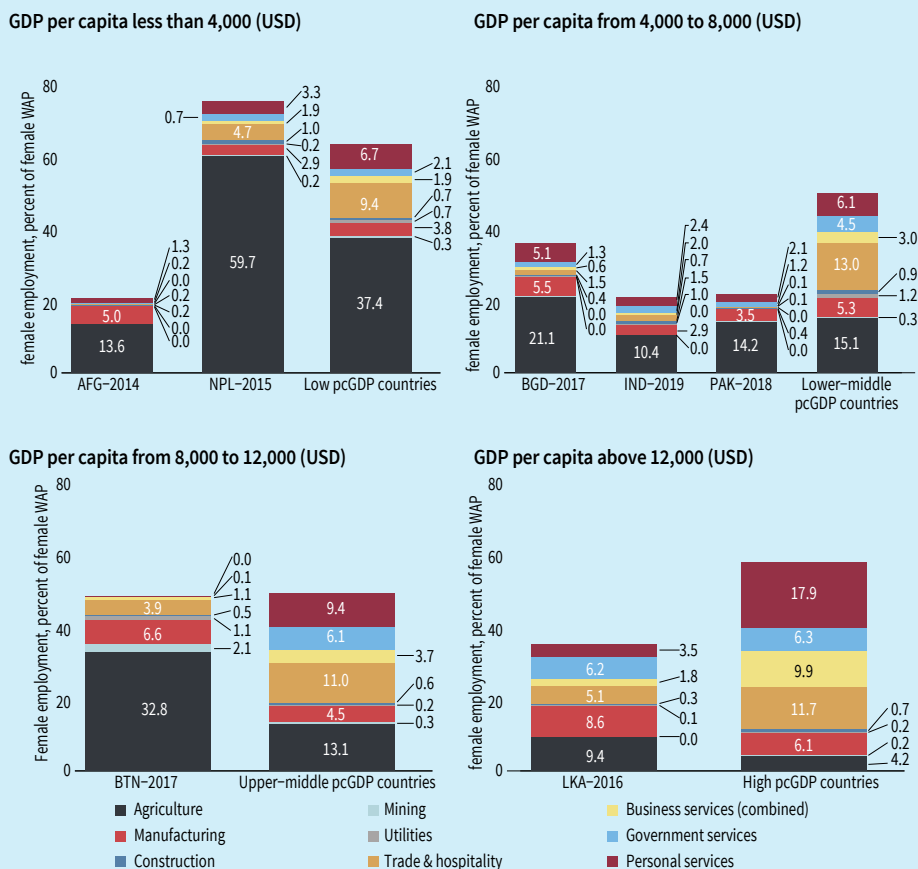
Among countries with per capita GDP above 12,000 US dollars, higher FLFP is associated with more female employment in personal services and business services, while in Sri Lanka, the share of female employment in personal services is low (one in ten in Sri Lanka compared to one in five in developing countries at this income level).

South Asian countries with GDP per capita below 4,000 US dollars (Afghanistan and Nepal) are an exception, as the share of females working in agriculture are high, while the higher than median FLFP countries at this income level also have high shares of employment in agriculture.

These results indicate that gender-specific barriers interact with a country's availability of jobs for women in certain sectors. Low female labor force participation is not

only the result of supply-side factors, such as social norms that encourage marrying at a young age and having children early, but also the result of below average expansion of sectors that create jobs that absorb women. Moreover, in some countries, barriers to female labor force participation are sector-specific because social norms operate from the demand side. Firms prefer to employ men and segregate women out of certain occupations/sectors.

**Figure 3.8. Compared to countries at similar level of income, South Asian countries display lower female employment in sectors that are associated with higher FLFP**



**Source:** Country statistics based on respective national Labor Force Surveys. Survey years differ by country: Afghanistan 2013-14, Bangladesh 2016-17, Bhutan 2017, India 2018-19, Sri Lanka 2016, Maldives 2016, Nepal 2014-15, Pakistan 2017-18. Cross-country aggregates based on data from World Bank Jobs Indicator Database (JOIN).

**Note:** Maldives is not included because its Labor Force Survey does not include a standard industry classification. All GDP values are calculated in 2017 US international dollars.

<sup>1</sup> Veronica Michel-Gutierrez and Andreas Eberhard-Ruiz from the Jobs Group contributed to this box.

**The evolution of fertility rates, a third important determinant of FLFP, also cannot explain FLFP trends in South Asia.** In general, a decline in fertility tends to raise FLFP, as the opportunity cost of women's time falls. However, most countries in South Asia have experienced a significant reduction in the number of children that an average woman has in her lifetime, with fertility rates now around the replacement level (Figure 3.5 and right panel in Figure 3.6). The exceptions are Afghanistan and Pakistan, where fertility rates are still above replacement level, though also declining rapidly (from, respectively, 7 and 5 children born per women in 2000 to around 4 in 2018). These declines in fertility rates are in turn driven by improvements in female education, increases in age at marriage, and declines in child mortality rates that have occurred in all countries.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these supply-side drivers, demand may matter as well for FLFP as discussed in the Box 3.1. below.

### 3.1.2 Other (norms-sensitive) gender inequalities also show stagnant progress in South Asia

**South Asia exhibits gender gaps in several other dimensions that are also closely related to women's labor market participation.** Like FLFP, these other forms of gender gaps also show stagnant trends and remain unaffected by decades of sustained economic growth, improvements in female education, and fertility decline.

**A particularly worrying aspect of gender inequality in South Asia is the selective abortion of girls.** Improvements in medical technology during the last few decades have made it possible for parents to find out if they are pregnant with a boy or a girl through cheap and reliable ultrasound scans, and then have low-cost and low-risk sex-selective abortions. This has led to a substantial gender imbalance in the newborn population in India, Pakistan, Nepal, Maldives, and Afghanistan, where many more boys than girls are born each year, over and above what would be expected naturally (Figure 3.9). In the absence of any interference by parents, typically 105 boys are born per 100 girls. However, in 2019, the male to female ratio at birth was as high as 110 boys per 100 girls in India and 109 boys per 100 girls in Pakistan. Bhalotra and Cochrane (2010) estimate that 480,000 girls were aborted per year in India alone from 1995–2005.

**Like the trends in FLFP, disparities in the sex ratio at birth have worsened despite economic development, rising female education, and declining fertility.** There is a weak relationship between the level of economic development and sex ratio imbalances (Figure 3.10), but in comparison to other countries with the same level of per capita GDP, countries like

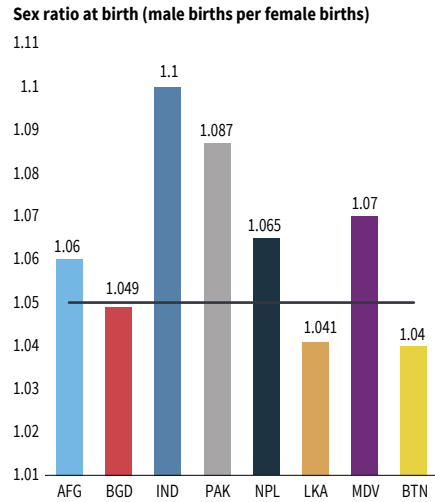
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<sup>6</sup> Lower fertility has also contributed to higher life expectancy for women in South Asia, which has increased by an average of six years over the last 20 years. This is partly driven by improvements in reproductive health of women across all countries in the region as women in recent cohorts are less likely to die during childbirth due to lower fertility, improvements in health infrastructure, and higher rates of institutional delivery.

India and Pakistan have a higher imbalance in male to female births. In fact, the use of prenatal sex-selection has rapidly increased with the persistent decline in fertility that has taken place almost universally (see Figure 3.11 for India).

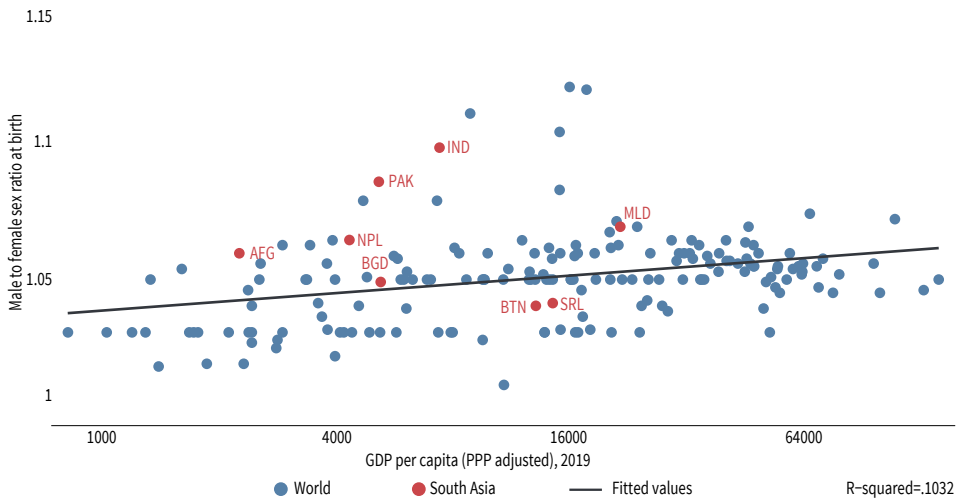
These demographic trends are closely linked with FLFP and the economic value of women relative to men in society. For instance, sex-selective abortions could be driven by parents valuing sons more than daughters due to their dependence on sons for old-age support in patrilocal societies where daughters move away from their natal families upon marriage. Improvements in women’s earning potential and bargaining power relative to men have been shown to decrease sex-selective abortions of female fetuses and neglect and infanticide of girls (Brule et al. 2020; Qian 2008).

**Figure 3.9. Several countries in South Asia have male-biased sex ratios at birth**



Source: 2019 World Development Indicators, based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision.  
 Note: Interpolated using data for 2017 and 2022. Sex ratio at birth refers to male births per female births. The red line denotes the normal sex ratio at birth. The blue bars are based on five-year averages.

**Figure 3.10. The relationship between sex ratios at birth and economic development is weak.**

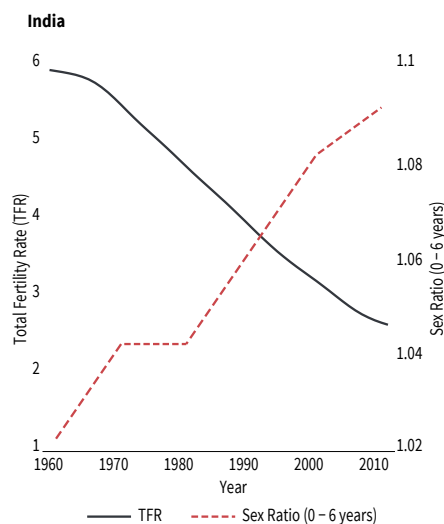


Source: World Development Indicators gathered from United Nations Population Division, World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision.  
 Note: The vertical axis measures sex ratio at birth and the horizontal axis measures the logarithm of GDP per capita for 2019. The sex ratio at birth refers to male births per female births and is measured as a five-year average. GDP per capita is PPP adjusted at constant 2017 international USD.

**Women in South Asia continue to face significant constraints as they enter the marriage and childbearing stages of their lives.**

Despite increases in the minimum age at marriage, early marriage remains more common in South Asia relative to rest of the world. Similarly, age at first birth remains low, as women often face pressure to give birth soon after marriage to prove their “value” (Scott et al. 2021). Early marriage and childbearing in turn prevent effective human capital accumulation (Field and Ambrus 2008; Scott et al. 2021) as well as labor market attachment for young married women. The negative influence of childbearing on labor market outcomes is compounded by the unavailability of paid maternity leave of at least 14 weeks for mothers in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives and the prevalence of informal employment. This creates a conflict between LFP and childbearing for women. In fact, the dismissal of workers because they are pregnant in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan is not even prohibited by law (World Bank 2020).

**Figure 3.11. There is a strong inverse relationship between male-biased sex ratios at birth and fertility in India**



Source: The annual TFR data is from the World Bank’s World Development Indicators database for 1960-2012. The child sex ratio data are from the decennial Census of India (1961-2011). Note: The left vertical axis measures the total fertility rate, and the right vertical axis measures the sex ratio (0-6 years). The horizontal axis shows the year of the data.

**Married women also face significant levels of IPV in all countries.** The trend in IPV prevalence has remained stagnant in South Asia (Figure 3.12), despite legal provisions in all countries, except Afghanistan, that address domestic violence. Women’s economic empowerment can result in IPV against them by their husbands, as violence is often used as an instrument of financial and psychological control by male partners to extract their wives’ income (Vyas and Watts 2009). The social and legal environment often makes it difficult for victims of IPV to leave their abusive partners. For example, women do not have the same rights to divorce and remarry as men in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Maldives.

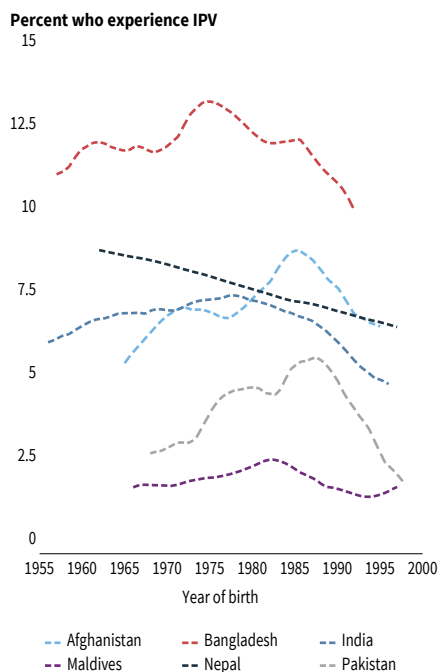
**Women in South Asia, unlike men, also face significant mobility constraints** and are not permitted to access places outside the home alone due to concerns about safety and the “purity” of women. A significant fraction of South Asian women practice *purdah* or *ghunghat* (wearing a head or face covering), and their social interactions are often controlled by family members, such as husbands and mothers-in-law. These restrictions lower women’s ability to work outside the home and prevent them from forming social connections with

non-relatives, especially men, restricting their lives to the domestic sphere (Cheema et al. 2019). Recent literature from India (see, for example, Andrew et al. 2020; Anukriti et al. 2020; Anukriti et al. 2022; Kandpal and Baylis 2019) shows that rural married women interact with few individuals other than their household members on a regular basis, limiting access to the numerous benefits social networks provide to their members, including information about jobs (Beaman and Magruder 2012), support for entrepreneurship (Field et al. 2016), and migration opportunities (Munshi 2020). This relegation of women to the domestic sphere goes hand-in-hand with the gendered division of household labor and implies that women's contributions to the household and their provision of unpaid care work are economically undervalued. In none of the South Asian countries does the law provide for the valuation of non-monetary contributions made by a spouse in case of marital dissolution, which primarily undervalues the unpaid household care work performed by women.

### The gender gap in asset ownership also

**constrains women's economic participation, which, in turn, drives gender gaps in entrepreneurship and business ownership.** In many developing country contexts, including in South Asia, asset ownership, especially land ownership, is primarily determined by inheritance. Although inheritance rights over parental and spousal property have been equalized between men and women in Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, unequal inheritance rights are still prevalent in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Pakistan.<sup>7</sup> Even in countries that have equalized inheritance rights, the implementation of these laws in practice is far from equal (see, for example, Deininger et al. 2013 for the case of India). Gaddis et al. (2021) shows that the gender gaps in property ownership in South Asia are quite large by global standards.

**Figure 3.12. The trend in IPV prevalence has remained stagnant in South Asia**



Source: Based on data from repeated cross-sections from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

Note: The vertical axis measures the share of women by birth year who experience intimate partner violence (IPV). The IPV included are physical and sexual violence. The horizontal axis shows the year of births. The graph plots a local polynomial smooth of the IPV variable on year of birth

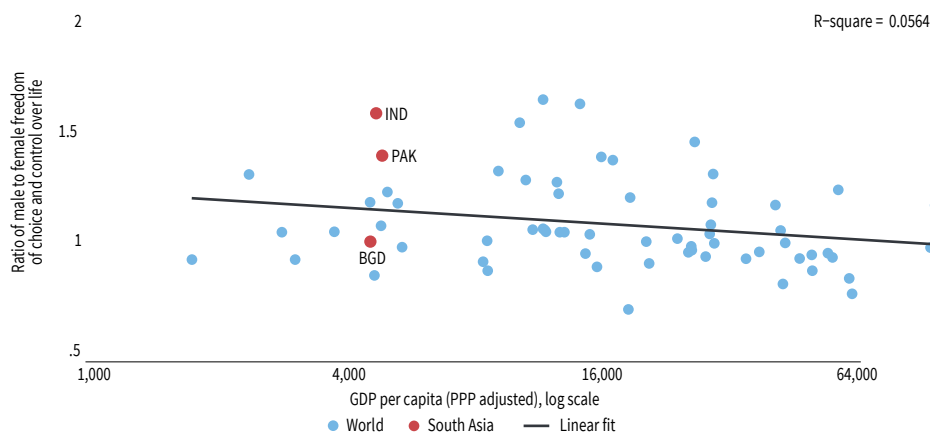
<sup>7</sup> The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law Data (<https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl-data>) indicates that Sri Lanka has had equal rights since 1971, while the India Hindu Succession Act was adopted in 1996, and Nepal only implemented legal changes in 2019.

Apart from financial assets, the proportion of women aged 15-49 who do not own any property (land or house), either alone or jointly, remains extremely high (WB Gender Statistics and Global Findex Database<sup>8</sup>).

**Even when women do participate in the labor market, they face significant barriers.** Apart from Bhutan and Nepal, no country in the region has a law that mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value. Legal barriers to female employment remain commonplace in much of the region through restrictions on the timing of working hours or the type of industry that women can work in (Najeeb et al. 2020).

**It is therefore not surprising that women in some South Asian countries report a lack of freedom of choice and control over their lives relative to men in these countries.** Figure 3.13 shows that in India and Pakistan men have more freedom of choice and control over their lives than women. Moreover, the gender gaps in India and Pakistan are greater than in countries with similar levels of per capita GDP.

**Figure 3.13. In India and Pakistan, men have more freedom of choice and control over their lives than women**



**Source:** World Value Survey (WVS), 2010-2014, 2017-2020 for freedom of choice and control over one’s life and World Development Indicators, 2010-2014, 2017-2020, for GDP per capita.

**Note:** The vertical axis measures the outcome—ratio of male to female ratio in the share of respondents who answered 9 or 10 on a scale of 1–10, where a higher number indicates more freedom. Includes 66 countries. Waves 6 and 7 of the WVS are used, however, only the latest data is used for each country, that is, even if data for a country is available in waves 6 and 7, only data from wave 7 is included. Data for wave 6 was collected from 2010 to 2014 and data for wave 7 was collected from 2017 to 2020. The horizontal axis measures the logarithm of GDP per capita. The GDP per capita is PPP adjusted at constant 2017 international USD. The GDP per capita years corresponds to the individual years of each country’s WVS survey.

8 See Demircuc-Kunt et al. (2020)



The analysis presented in this section implies that to fully understand the reasons behind low FLFP in South Asia, one needs to look beyond just the standard economic determinants of women’s labor market engagement. The next section delves deeper into this argument, starting with a description of social norms; how they are measured; whether social norms in South Asia, especially those pertaining to FLFP, differ from those prevalent elsewhere, both in terms of their current levels and evolution over time with economic development; and how they influence gender outcomes.

## 3.2 Social Norms

**Social norms biased against women have a strong correlation with gender inequality.** This section starts with a discussion of what a social norm is. It highlights the important distinction between personal beliefs, or attitudes, which may have (some) influence on behavior, versus social expectations that exert (stronger) pressure through the social context in which individuals live, work, and socialize. The next subsection describes the standing of South Asian countries in the global context in terms of gender attitudes. The following subsection discusses in more detail the evolution of some of these attitudes and their correlation with gender outcomes for specific countries in the South Asia region. The last subsections show that normative social expectations, more strongly than personal beliefs, exert an influence on gender inequality. That influence is comparable to the level of development (proxied by GDP per capita) and provides strong descriptive evidence that regressive social norms in South Asia are holding back gender equality well beyond what would be expected, given the region’s level of development.

### 3.2.1 Definition of social norms

**Social norms are informal rules of behavior that dictate what is acceptable or appropriate to do in a given situation within a given social context (Cislaghi and Heise 2019; Bicchieri 2006).** They influence behavior through unwritten rules of social conduct. Individuals tend to conform to a norm—that is, act a certain way—if they believe that most individuals within the group they consider their reference network, both conform to the norm and believe that everyone should conform to the norm (Bicchieri 2017).

**Social norms are different than personal attitudes.** Social norms rely on individual perceptions of others. In this way, they are distinct from personal attitudes, morals, and beliefs if these are unrelated to perceptions of others (Cislaghi and Heise 2018; Mackie et al. 2015). The motivating factor with attitudes and beliefs is *internal*, compared with the *external* influence of others with social norms. Unlike attitudes, social norms comprise two primary components—perceptions about how frequent or typical a behavior is within a particular reference

group (i.e., a “descriptive norm” or “social empirical expectation”), and perceptions about how a member of the group ought to behave (i.e., an “injunctive norm” or “social normative expectation”) (Bicchieri 2006, 2012; Cialdini et al. 1991). Table 3.1. provides a useful example of how a social norm about early marriage can be identified. An early marriage social norm will exist in a specific society, or group within that society, if a large percentage of people share the same social belief about (a) what others do, and (b) what others think one should do. Unfortunately, most of the empirical work relies on elements of the first column of Table 3.1. namely, on non-social beliefs. The assessment of how important the role of social norms is in explaining gender inequality is thus still quite imprecise (with few exceptions such as Gauri et al. 2019).

**Table 3.1. Normative and social components of beliefs**

	Non-social beliefs	Social beliefs/expectations
<b>Non-normative beliefs</b>	Factual beliefs	Empirical expectations
<i>Definition</i>	<i>Beliefs about reality (excluding beliefs about people’s behavior and thought)</i>	<i>Beliefs about what people (in a reference group) do</i>
<i>Example</i>	An older girl will not find a good husband.	All my neighbors marry off their daughters as soon as they reach puberty
<b>Normative beliefs</b>	Personal normative beliefs	Normative expectations
<i>Definition</i>	<i>Beliefs about what one should do</i>	<i>Beliefs about what other people (in a reference group) think one should do</i>
<i>Example</i>	I should marry off my daughter as soon as she reaches puberty.	My neighbors think that one should marry off one’s daughter as soon as she reaches puberty.

Source: Bicchieri (2012). “Social Norms, Social Change.” Lecture at the University of Pennsylvania-UNICEF Summer Program on Advances in Social Norms and Social Change. July. <https://agora.unicef.org/course/info.php?id=2351>

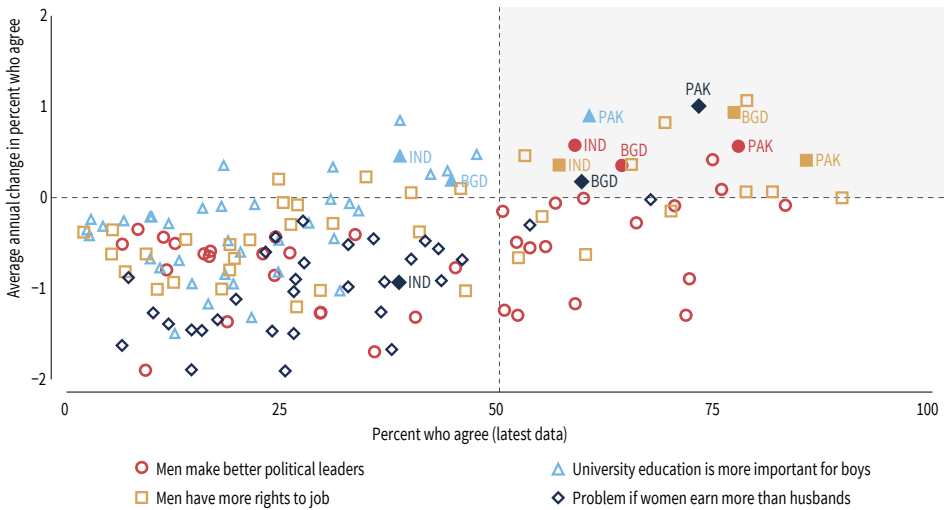
### 3.2.2 Attitudes toward gender

**South Asian attitudes toward gender tend to be more conservative than in other regions and have become more conservative over time.** We constructed an (almost) balanced panel of 39 countries for four key questions on gender attitudes from successive waves of the World Values Survey (WVS, see Annex): (a) men make better political leaders, (b) university education is more important for boys than for girls, (c) when jobs are scarce men have more right to a job than women, and (d) it is a problem if women have more income than their husbands.<sup>9</sup> Figure 3.14 plots the annual change of the share of people with conservative views toward gender against the same share observed in the most recent wave. For most observations,

<sup>9</sup> The qualifier “almost” for the balanced panel is added because, unfortunately, the same questions are not repeated for all waves of the WVS. In particular, the question “if a woman earns more money than her husband, it’s almost certain to cause problems” was not included in wave 4 for the Middle East and North African countries.

the share of people with conservative views is less than 50 percent in the most recent year and has declined over the past couple of decades (bottom left quadrant). By contrast, for the three countries of South Asia surveyed in the WVS (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan), almost without exception the majority of individuals hold conservative views and these majorities have increased over time (top right quadrant). For example, 57 percent of respondents in India, 77 percent in Bangladesh, and 85 percent in Pakistan favor preferential access to jobs for men, which is linked to low female labor force participation (Kenny and Patel 2017; Fortin 2005; Seguino 2007; Giavazzi et al. 2013; Alesina and Giuliano 2014; and see Section 3.2.3), and these percentages have increased.<sup>10</sup> Similar levels and worsening trends are shown for the other three attitudes, with the exception of India for the view of women earning more than their husbands, which is in the bottom left quadrant.

**Figure 3.14. Attitudes toward gender, low progress, or deterioration for South Asian countries**



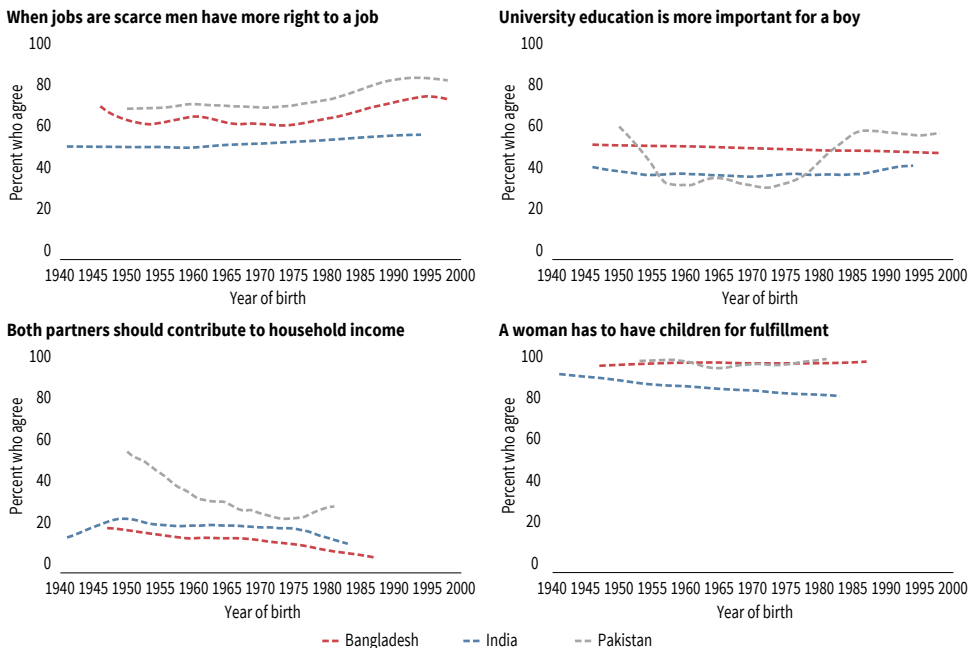
**Source:** World Value Survey (Waves 3, 4, 6 and 7)

**Note:** The vertical axis measures the annual change, in percentage points, of the share of respondents who agree that men make better political leaders, university education is more important for boys than for girls, men have more right to a job than women when jobs are scarce, or whether it is a problem if women have more income than their husbands. This annual change is calculated by subtracting the share for each variable in waves 3 or 4 from the share in waves 6 or 7 and dividing by the difference between the survey years for each country. The horizontal axis measures the most recent share of respondents who agree to the attitudes (wave 6 or 7). Wave 3 was collected from 1995-1998, wave 4 from 1999-2004, wave 6 from 2010-2014, and wave 7 from 2017-2020. Includes 39 countries: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia, Germany, India, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Puerto Rico, Romania, Russia, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

<sup>10</sup> In the cases of Pakistan and India, the increase has been about 0.4 percentage points per year, calculated, for India, as  $(57-51)/17$  [(wave 3 share-wave 6 share)/number years between the two waves], and  $(85-77)/21$  for Pakistan. Bangladesh had an increase of 0.9 percentage points, calculated as  $(77-56)/22$ .

**Conservative attitudes toward gender also appear to be stable, if not increasing, across generations.** Bussolo et al. (2022) use repeated cross sections of the WVS to construct a pseudo panel and assess the attitudes of different cohorts, starting from those born in 1940s. In Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, the shares of people agreeing with conservative attitudes have remained remarkably high across cohorts or even increased in younger cohorts; people born in 1940 had similar attitudes to those born 60 years later (Figure 3.15). Attitudes toward the sharing of household financial responsibility between spouses seem to have become even more conservative across generations. The most progressive position is that toward education, where the population is divided about 50-50 between agreeing and disagreeing that university education is more important for boys than girls. These stagnant, or somewhat deteriorating, trends in gender attitudes closely resemble the trends observed for gender outcomes discussed in section 3.1 (see figures 3.2 and 3.3, for example), suggesting a link between attitudes and gender outcomes. This point is discussed in more detail below in subsection 3.2.3.

**Figure 3.15. Even in the long run, attitudes toward gender in South Asia are remarkably stable**

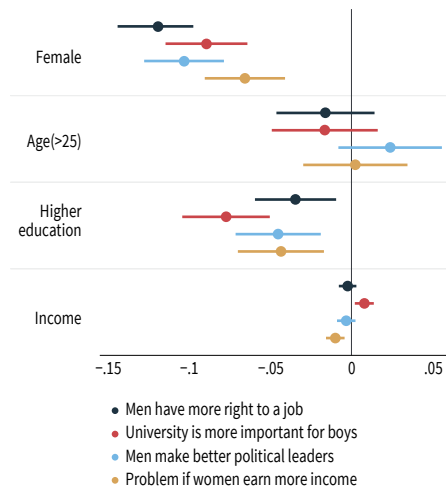


Source: Based on repeated cross section of the World Value Survey.

Note: The vertical axes show the share of women who agree with the four attitude statements. The response options for the first three statements were “agree strongly,” “agree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree,” and include “neither agree nor disagree.” For the last statement, the possible responses were simply “necessary” or “not necessary.” The share of agreeing women is thus calculated by summing all those who either “agree” or “strongly agree,” or say “necessary,” and dividing these sums for the sum of all possible responses. The horizontal axes show the year of birth. The graphs plot a local polynomial smooth of the attitude variable on year of birth.

Despite large and growing majorities holding conservative attitudes toward gender, and little difference in attitudes across age cohorts, there are some significant differences in attitudes between men and women and by education and income.<sup>11</sup> Women are 12 percentage points less likely than men to believe that men have more right to a job when jobs are scarce—and more educated women are 3 percentage points less likely than those with less education to hold that belief (Figure 3.16). Similarly, women are 9 percentage points less likely than men, and the more educated are 8 percentage points less likely, to believe that university education is more important for boys than girls; women are 10 percentage points less likely than men and the more educated are 5 percentage points less likely to believe that men make better political leaders than women; and women are 10 percentage points less likely than men and the more educated are 4 percentage points less likely to believe that it is a problem when women earn more than husbands. The results are less uniform for self-reported household income scale. The beliefs that men have more right to a job and men make better political leaders are not significantly different across income groups. However, respondents who reported higher incomes are 1 percentage point more likely to believe that university education is more important for boys, but they are 1 percentage point less likely to believe it’s a problem if women earn more than husbands.

**Figure 3.16. Higher educated people and women tend to have less restrictive attitudes toward gender**



Source: Authors’ calculations using data from the World Value Survey (wave 6 and 7)

**Note:** This figure shows the coefficients from the regression of the attitude variables on gender, age, education, and income. Age is a dummy variable indicating that the respondent is older than 25 years. Higher education is a dummy variable indicating that the respondent attained higher secondary education or tertiary education. The income variable is a self-reported scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 indicates the lowest income group and 10 is the highest group in one’s country. Countries included are Bangladesh (2018), India (2012), and Pakistan (2018). The regression includes country fixed effects.

### 3.2.3 Attitudes and gender outcomes

The attitudes toward gender discussed above are strongly connected to women’s participation in economic activities. A bidirectional influence is likely, whereby gender outcomes are supported by more progressive gender views, and these views are becoming more open as gender gaps are closing. Fortin (2005) uses data from three rounds of the

<sup>11</sup> Notice that the regressions include country fixed effects, which implies that we estimate within-country differences.

World Values Survey (1990, 1995, and 1999) across 25 OECD countries and finds that anti-egalitarian views have a strong negative association with FLFP rates and are associated with higher gender pay gaps. Similarly, perceptions around women’s roles as homemakers also showed a negative relationship with FLFP, suggesting that traditional gender roles within the household also play a role (Giavazzi et al. 2013; Alesina and Giuliano 2014). This relationship also appears to hold across South Asian countries. Bussolo et al. (2022)'s analysis of WVS data from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan across multiple time periods and cohorts indicates a clear negative association between women’s employment rate and the gender attitude about men having a greater right to jobs when they are scarce (Figure 3.17).

**Figure 3.17. Attitudes biased against women’s right to jobs are negatively correlated with female employment**

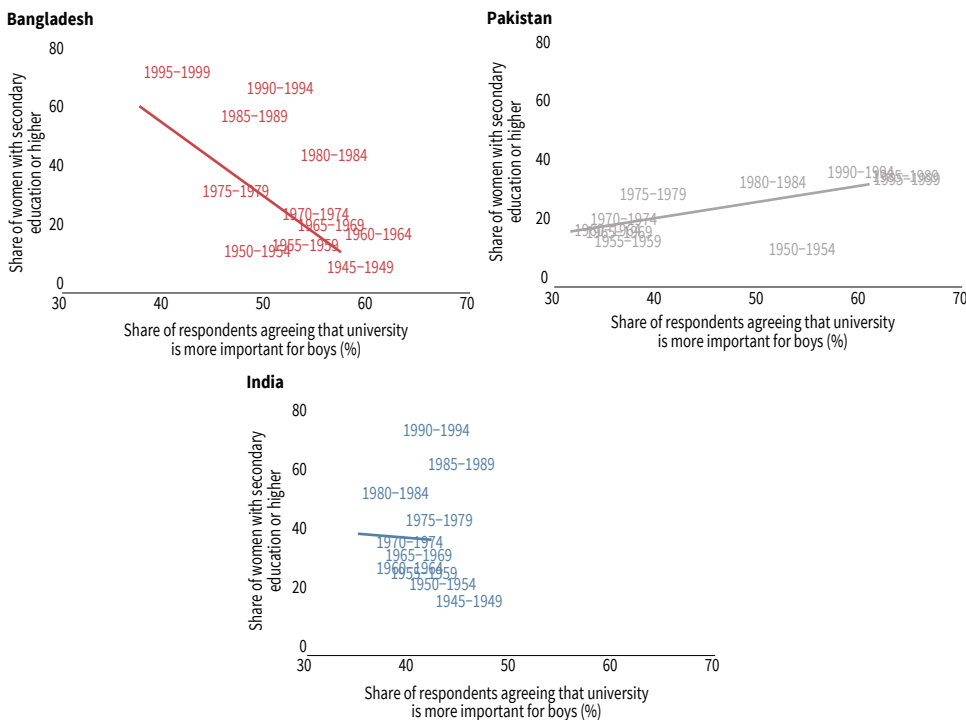


Source: World Value Survey and Demographic and Health Survey.

Note: The correlation coefficient (with observations grouped in five birth years) of being employed and agreeing that when jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women is -0.36 for Bangladesh, with a 95 percent confidence of -0.787 to 0.311; -0.57 for India with a 95 percent confidence interval of -0.872 to 0.045; -0.76 for Pakistan with a 95 percent confidence interval -0.941 to -0.255.

**Other attitudes related to women’s employment are also observed as conservatives.** As discussed above, data from the last available wave of the World Values Survey in South Asia show that there is still strong agreement with views such as “Men make better executives than women do” (over 70 percent of agreement across Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India). With regard to whether working women can build relationships with their children as good as those of stay-at-home mothers, less than 23 percent of women and 13 percent of men in Pakistan in 2001 agreed, while agreement reached 50 percent in Bangladesh and India. Overall, there seems to be a link between these prevalent conservative views around women’s role in the labor force and the low economic participation of women in the region.

**Figure 3.18. Correlations between female participation in higher education and attitudes toward women’s education vary across countries**



Source: World Value Survey and Demographic and Health Surveys.

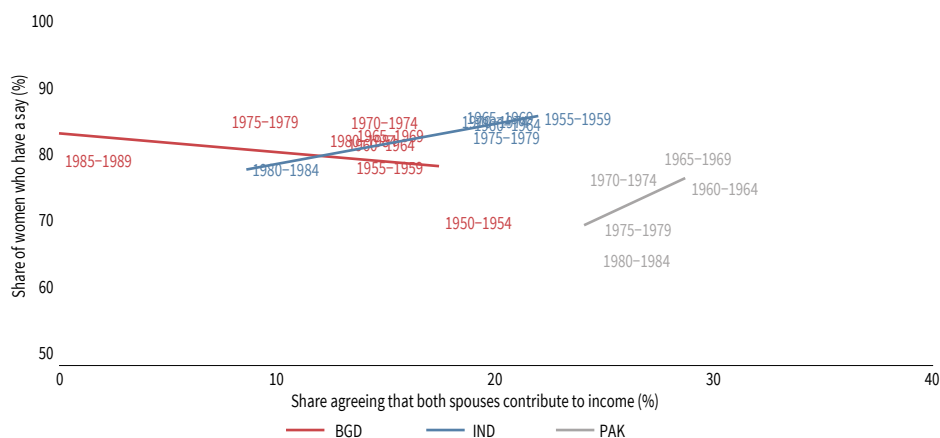
Note: The vertical axes measure the share of women with secondary education and higher. The horizontal axes measure the share of respondents agreeing that education is more important for boys than girls. The correlation coefficient (with observations grouped in five years birth cohorts) of the level of education and agreement that university education is more important for boys is -0.63 for Bangladesh, with a 95 percent confidence interval of -0.892 to -0.044; -0.03 for India with a 95 percent confidence interval of -0.650 to 0.608; and 0.67 for Pakistan with a 95 percent confidence interval of 0.066 to 0.913

**Studies of the relationship between attitudes toward gender and outcomes in terms of education and agency, which are also linked to labor force participation (see Section 3.1), show mixed results** (Kenny and Patel 2017). The relationship between attitudes and educational attainment, areas in which South Asia has made significant strides, is not straightforward. A cohort analysis across multiple time periods shows a strong negative association between the share of women with a secondary or higher education and the share of respondents who agree that “*University is more important for boys than girls,*” but only in the case of Bangladesh (Figure 3.18). In this country, more recent cohorts appear to hold more progressive views and higher levels of education. The correlation, however, is not present or is in the opposite direction for India and Pakistan. In India, recent cohorts have higher levels of education, despite attitudes staying mostly unchanged. And in Pakistan, even when attitudes become less progressive, the share of women receiving higher education increases. The persistence of regressive gender attitudes has, seemingly, not been a binding constraint for women’s educational

outcomes. This may be due to the role of extensive policy action, such as the Punjab Education Sector Reform Program in Pakistan. The program, which included a cash transfer for girls that was conditional on attending a government girl's school and on maintaining a minimum attendance level of 80 percent, had a significant impact on the number of years of education for girls who received transfers (Chaudhury and Parajuli 2006; Bussolo et al. 2022).

**The relationship between attitudes and outcomes around women's agency and motherhood is similarly less predictable across countries.** In theory, financial empowerment can increase the agency of women in the household, so that women who contribute financially to household income are more likely to participate in household decision making. The share of respondents who agree that both spouses should contribute to household income is generally low in all three countries—less than 40 percent—with the share decreasing with younger cohorts. The correlation between the attitude toward shared economic responsibilities and agency is positive in the cases of India and Pakistan, while no significant association is found for Bangladesh (see Figure 3.19).

**Figure 3.19. Women agency and spousal co-responsibility in income generation**



Source: World Value Survey and Demographic and Health Surveys.

Note: The vertical axes measure the share of women who have a say in at least one of three household decision. The horizontal axes measure the share of respondents agreeing that both spouses should contribute to household income. The correlation coefficient (with observations grouped in five years birth cohorts) of having a say in at least one household decision and agreeing that both spouses should contribute to household income is -0.3 for Bangladesh with a 95 percent confidence interval of -0.830 to 0.511; 0.92 for India with 95 percent confidence interval of 0.429 to 0.991; and 0.50 for Pakistan with 95 percent confidence interval of -0.681 to 0.960.

**Similarly, the relationship between attitudes toward the importance of motherhood and the average age when women first have a child differs across countries.** The onset of motherhood has been strongly linked to the withdrawal of women from the labor force and their selection into casual work or more flexible jobs that allow time for childcare. Deep-seated beliefs about women as mothers are evident in Figure 3.15, where, across countries and cohorts and over time, more than 80 percent of respondents agree that women need to have



children to be fulfilled. Correspondingly, the average age of women at their first birth has remained mostly stable at around 17 to 18 years old in Bangladesh and above 20 years of age in Pakistan. In India, the slight increase in age at first birth is mirrored by a corresponding decline in the share of respondents who agree that women need to have children to be fulfilled; India is thus the only country with a statistically significant negative correlation between age at first birth and the attitude toward motherhood.

### 3.2.4 From Attitudes to Social Norms

**A recent survey with data on social norms provides further insight into the relationship between norms and gender outcomes.** The empirical analysis so far has focused on personal beliefs, or attitudes, one of the pieces that make a social norm, largely because these attitudes are what has been collected to date in existing surveys. While personal attitudes can be useful proxies for social norms, the social elements of norms (what I think others believe in, and what I see others do, see table 3.1) have been less explored. A recent global survey,<sup>12</sup> which measures both *personal* beliefs, or attitudes, and the *social* expectations toward gender equality, provides some information on the relationship between the two. The distinction between personal attitudes and social expectations is important because assuming that the former is a close substitute for the latter may potentially lead to an underestimation of the strength of social norms and their link with gender inequality.<sup>13</sup>

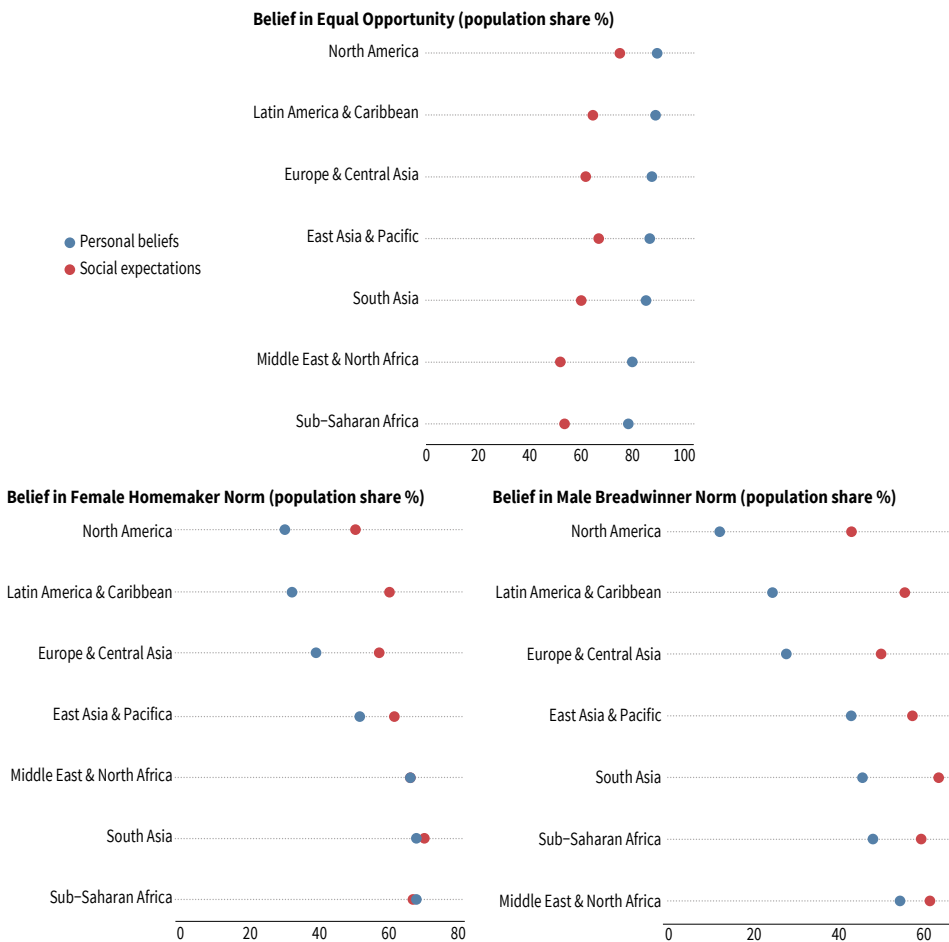
**The survey shows that social expectations of gender roles tend to be more conservative than individuals' personal beliefs.** Respondents were asked about their own agreement with various statements concerning the role of women in the household (personal beliefs) and how many, out of 10 neighbors (taken as a reference group), would agree with the same statements (social normative expectations). Specifically, respondents were asked to report how strongly they agree or disagree with the following statements (a) Equal Opportunity: “Men and women should have equal opportunities (e.g. in education, jobs, household decision-making),” (b) Female Homemaker norm: “Woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and children,” and (c) Male Breadwinner norm: “Household expenses are the responsibility of the man, even if his wife can help him.” Social expectations of the reference group are more conservative across all three statements compared to people’s own personal

12 The Facebook (2020) Survey on Gender Equality at Home, is conducted in partnership with, CARE, Ladysmith, the World Bank, and UNICEF. See appendix for further details.

13 The gap between personal belief and social expectations is commonly referred to as *pluralistic ignorance*. Individuals privately hold an opinion but incorrectly believe that most other people do not share that opinion and, almost universally, believe that beliefs held in their social surroundings are more conservative than they are themselves. In societies that experience pluralistic ignorance, there is a problem of coordination, and people often end up acting against their own beliefs in order to conform to misperceived social norms (Katz et al. 1931; Bicchieri 2012, 2016; Bursztyn et al. 2020; Duque 2022).

beliefs (Figure 3.20). As discussed in Section 3.2.1, if the “external” pressure from the reference group matters for individuals’ behavior, then gender outcomes may be more strongly correlated with social expectations of the reference group than with people’s own personal beliefs. This gap between social expectations and personal beliefs is not only true for South Asia but also across all other regions in the world. Note also that, for one statement, “A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and children,” there is a convergence for South Asia about what people believe and what they assume others’ beliefs are, at least when regional aggregates are considered, as in Figure 3.20.

**Figure 3.20. The gap between (more liberal) personal beliefs and (more restrictive) social expectations varies across world**



Source: Survey on Gender Equality at Home.

Note: Share of population who hold personal beliefs about the above normative statements are calculated as the regional averages that “agree” or “strongly agree” with the respective statements. Social expectations are calculated as the share of the reference group believed to agree with the above normative statements on average for each region.

**Compared to other regions, South Asian countries also appear to have the most conservative normative expectations around women’s and men’s roles within the household** (as indicated by expected agreement with the statements “*A woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and children,*” and “*Household expenses are the responsibility of the man, even if his wife can help him.*”) These overwhelmingly conservative expectations about what other people in one’s immediate social network consider to be appropriate roles for men and women—for a woman to focus on her family and for a man to be the provider—can exert pressure on both men and women, but especially women, to not deviate from the norm. In Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, personal beliefs are even more conservative than social expectations when it comes to the role of women as mothers and homemakers. This suggests that a woman’s decision to stay home instead of going to work may not only respond to what she (and her family) think is the correct behavior, but also what they think society expects it to be a correct behavior, and in the behavior of other women around them; and understood as a social and individual internalized preference.

**As in the case of the personal attitudes from the WVS, there is heterogeneity across socioeconomic groups within South Asian countries concerning social expectations of appropriate gender roles.** Identifying which groups have more conservative views and which have less can be important when designing policies. The first clear, and most remarkable, difference is between men and women. As shown in appendix Table 3.2., men are less likely to support equal opportunity and more likely to believe in the traditional gender roles. Men in South Asia are 10 percentage points more likely to believe that women’s place is in the household and 20 percentage points more likely to believe that men should financially provide for the household. Women have more progressive beliefs overall but expect their neighbors to be considerably more conservative (compared to men’s social expectations) when it comes to equal opportunity and the role of women as mothers and homemakers.

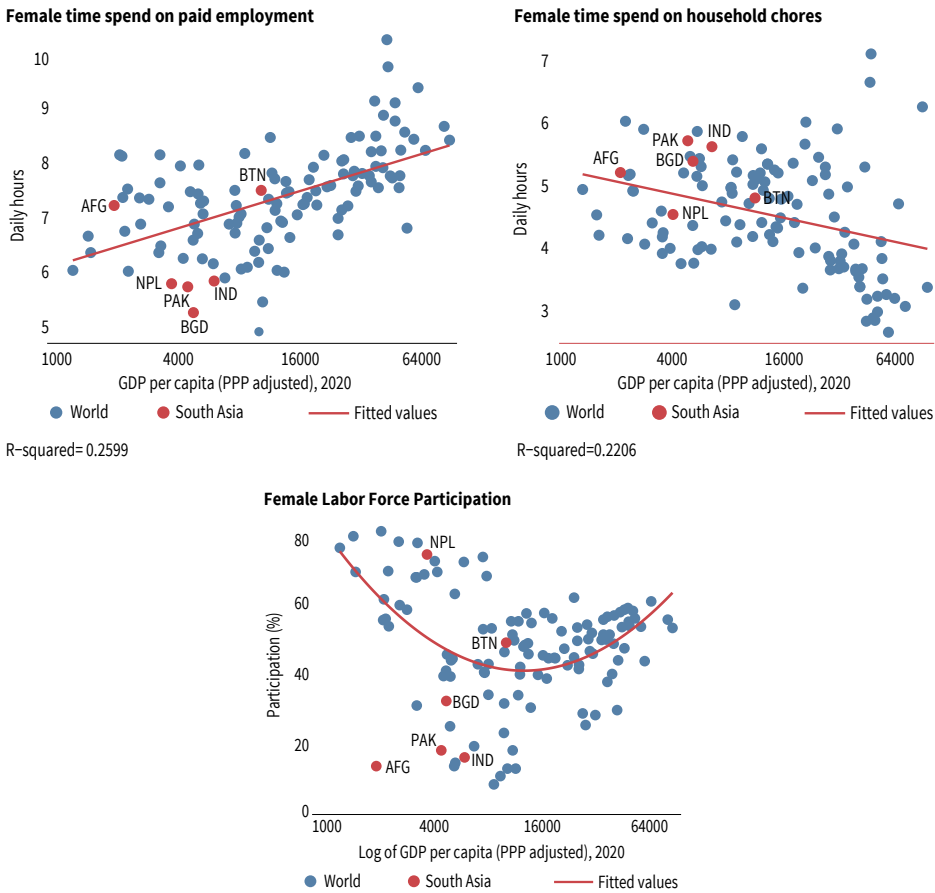
### 3.2.5 Social Norms and Gender Outcomes

This section uses regression analysis to explore the relationship between gender outcomes, economic development, and normative beliefs about the gender division of labor in the household.<sup>14</sup> The analysis proceeds in stages. We first show that gender outcomes are positively related to economic development. We then show that normative beliefs about household labor division between men and women explain cross-country deviations from this average relationship and that this residual heterogeneity is explained more by the normative beliefs others are assumed to hold than people’s own personal beliefs.

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<sup>14</sup> This section is based on the background paper Bussolo and Warrinnier (2022).

**Figure 3.21. The level of development influences women’s time use for household chores, paid employment, and labor force participation**



**Source:** Measures of self-reported time use are calculated from the Survey on Gender Equality at Home. Data on FLFP are retrieved from World Development Indicators.  
**Note:** The horizontal axes measures hours that women spend on household chores (left), paid employment (middle), and labor force participation (right). The horizontal axis measures the logarithm of GDP per capita, 2020. The GDP per capita is PPP adjusted at constant 2017 international USD

**Economic development is positively related to gender outcomes.** For the first task, we estimate the relationship between per capita GDP and subjective<sup>15</sup> measures of the time women spend on household chores and paid employment<sup>16</sup> (Figure 3.21). At higher levels

15 Subjective perceptions of time use are not the best practice for collecting this variable, and mismeasurements likely affect these data.

16 In the Gender Equality at Home Survey women are asked how many hours per day they spend on household chores and working for pay on a typical day. In the question it is clarified that work for pay can be any kind of business, farming, or other activity to generate income.

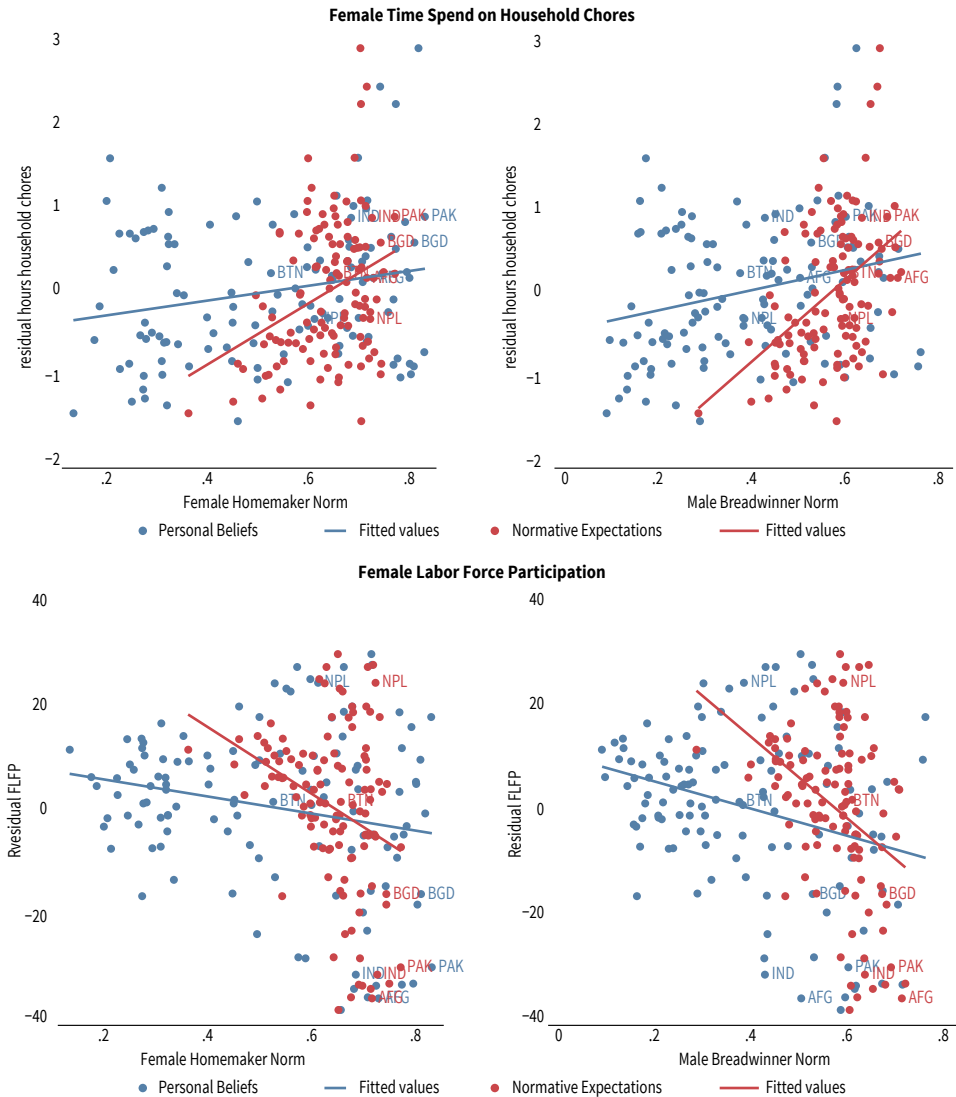
of development, women tend to spend less time doing household chores and more time in paid employment. We also estimate the relationship between GDP per capita and female labor force participation and find the same U-curve discussed in Section 3.1. for the sample of countries in the ‘gender equality at home’ survey. But a lot of variation around these regression lines remains unexplained, and, specifically, most South Asian countries deviate from these lines.

**Normative beliefs about the gender division of labor in the household are significantly related to gender outcomes, after controlling for the level of development.** In the next step, a series of country-level regressions are run where women’s time use on either household chores or paid employment and female labor force participation are the dependent variables, and the level of development (log of GDP per capita) and beliefs about household labor division are used as controls. Countries with more conservative views tend to have worse gender outcomes conditional on their level of development. In countries where a large share of the population believes that a woman’s place is in the household, women are significantly more likely to spend time on household chores and less likely to join the labor force. Similarly, countries where a large share of the population believes that men should be the family breadwinner have significantly lower female labor force participation. Across countries, a 10 percentage point lower share of conservative social expectations about gender labor divisions in the household is associated with seven percent point higher female labor force participation.

**To graphically summarize these regression results we plot residual gender outcomes against population shares of beliefs about the gender division of labor in the household.** We calculate the residual gender outcomes by first regressing the gender outcomes on per capita GDP and saving the residuals. These residuals represent how much more or less time women spend on household chores or in the labor market compared to women in countries with the same level of development. In South Asia the female labor force participation is 15 percent lower compared to equally developed countries, and women in India and Pakistan spend around an hour more per day on household chores than countries with comparable per capita GDP. The results from this procedure are shown in the scatter plots and regression lines in Figure 3.22.

**These scatter plots emphasize three important points.** First, normative beliefs about the gender division of labor in the household can explain some important part of the gender gaps in participation in economic activity conditional on the level of development. For example, in the top left panel, positive residuals for hours spent on household chores (after we have accounted for the level of development) are found for countries with the most conservative normative beliefs (the regression line has a positive slope). Similarly, lower FLFP rates are found in this same group of countries. Second, social normative expectations display a

**Figure 3.22. Social norms account for the gap in women’s engagement in the economy and women’s time use conditional on level of development**



**Source:** Data on personal beliefs, social expectations, and self-reported time use come from the Survey on Gender Equality at Home. Data on FLFP is retrieved from World Development Indicators.

**Note:** Personal beliefs are calculated as the share of the population that “agrees strongly” or “agrees” with the normative statement on gender labor division in the household for women as mothers and homemakers (Female Homemaker Norm) and men as financial providers (Male Breadwinner Norm). Social expectations are calculated as the share of the reference group believed to agree with the respective normative statements. Residual hours household chores are the residuals saved after regressing the number of hours women report to contribute to household chores on per capita GDP (log). Residual FLFP are the residuals saved after regressing the female labor force participation rate on per capita GDP (log) and its square.

stronger link with gender outcomes than do personal beliefs, as the regression lines have a significantly steeper slope. This is also reflected by the larger share of variance explained by regressions when the social expectations are used as controls vis-à-vis those with personal beliefs.<sup>17</sup>

The third point is about South Asia. With few exceptions, conservative beliefs about household labor division in South Asian countries account for their deviations from the expected gender gaps given their level of development. Assuming perceptions in South Asian countries about men's role as breadwinner were at levels similar to those of countries at the same income level (i.e. simulating that South Asian countries share would move from 65 percent to 60 percent) this would be associated with an increase of five percentage points in the share of women joining the labor market and a reduction of about 30 minutes in the time women spend on household chores. Closing the gap between the social expectations of men as breadwinners (65 percent) and the actual personal beliefs (47 percent) in South Asia would be associated with an increase of 14 percentage points in female labor force participation and a reduction of about an hour of female labor spend on household chores. No such gains are associated with closing the gap between social expectations and personal beliefs with respect to women as mothers and homemakers, given that these converge closely for South Asia.

These results have important implications for the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at inducing change in social norms, as discussed in more detail in the next section.

### 3.3 Taking gender norms into account when designing policies

**Policy changes can impact norms and propel improvements in gender outcomes.** Observed differences in women's economic participation, changes in beliefs and values, and legal adjustments around the world and in South Asia indicate that norms do shift, even if their actual change is difficult to measure given that time series data on norms do not yet exist. However, the paucity of changes in observed outcomes in South Asia signals the need for policy action. These policies can accelerate change and promote new behaviors and attitudes that are more supportive of women's economic participation and of gender equality. This section discusses how social norms change and persist, with the aim of identifying channels for policy action and intervention. Then it highlights a few selected interventions (whether large-scale policies or specific programs) whose effectiveness in promoting gender equality has varied depending on their level of attention to gender norms.

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17 R-squares for different specifications with personal beliefs range from 0.05–0.09, while R-squares for specifications with social expectations range between 0.10–0.21.

### 3.3.1 Persistence and change of social norms

**Regressive gender norms may persist for several reasons.** Gender norms may become embedded in institutions such as legal frameworks. For example, marital property laws that give husbands the control over common assets. More broadly, such norms may be maintained due to conformity traps.<sup>18</sup> Moving from a bad societal and economic equilibrium to an improved one, where investment in and returns to human capital are accessible to women and men equally, often means changing institutions as well as societal and power dynamics, as gender social norms are rooted, or embedded, to different degrees within social contexts (Cislaghi 2020). This challenge is particularly difficult in South Asian countries, due to the strength of the norms they upheld and their low tolerance for deviant behavior.<sup>19</sup> Difficulties in changing regressive gender norms may partly be due to the important role family and communities play in societies that are mostly rural, combined with patrilocality (women moving to live with her spouse's family) and patrilineality (strong value favoring sons for inheritance)<sup>20</sup> The persistence and limited change of practices such as early marriage, preference for sons, and dowry payments are reflections of these norms.

**Some regressive gender norms are rooted in historical practices that are no longer relevant.** Some norms originally may have had a rationale in protecting women from hardships or risks or may reflect old economic relationships. Observed gender differences in labor force participation can be traced back to traditional agricultural practices (Alesina et al. 2013; Giuliano 2020). Women's traditional specialization in home production might stem from a comparative male advantage in performing more physically demanding tasks. Dowry payment might have its roots in agricultural societies where women played a more limited productive role compared to men (Giuliano 2020). But this cannot explain its persistence today, when production has shifted from agriculture, agriculture has increased in mechanization, and education levels of women have increased, thus reducing the cost of "taking a woman" in marriage. Dowry persistence shows how a norm has shifted from an original differential in returns to reflect societies' valuing of sons more than daughters, and, more generally, women less than men.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Andreoni et al. (2017) define conformity traps as those that keep groups and individuals in a bad equilibrium despite knowledge of inefficiency and preferences for a different status quo. The trap is due to the pressure to conform to the behavior of the majority and the resistance to be the first deviant from the established norm. Hence a norm will persist because of the strength of the social payoff to comply.

19 An insightful way of assessing the "strength" of the norms is provided by Gelfand et al. (2011) who measured differences between tight and loose cultures in a study of 33 countries which includes some from South Asia.

20 For more details see Khalil and Mookerjee (2019).

21 For a more detail account see Jayachandran (2015) and Bloch and Rao (2002).



**Gender norms that directly reflect the power of one group and control over another group are the most resistant to change.** Imbalances in power and privileges, including over control over assets and resources, and decision-making, stand in the way of changes in norms. Gender norms are also associated with differences in bargaining power between men and women (Agarwal 1997), and support the persistence of those power differences. Resistance to the redistribution of assets (inheritance or land) among spouses is an example of the persistence of backlash and norm avoidance, even in the face of legal changes that aim to introduce a new norm. In many cases a specific outcome is a combination of both proximal norms (that is, those that act directly or close to directly on a behavior or outcome) and meta norms (or second order norms) that influence multiple behaviors and the enforcement of a norm (Axelrod 1986; Heise and Manji 2016). In the case of gender norms, meta norms around authority, control and violence, and gender ideology have all been found extremely influential across multiple areas (The Social Norm Learning Collaborative 2021). Masculinity norms like the honor system are one example. If a daughter or wife transgresses expected behaviors (for example, leaves the house without permission, does not observe purdah, is seen in the company of men, etc.), the impact of her break from the social norm impacts not just the woman but the honor of the father/spouse and the family as a whole. The sanction or price to restore the male and family honor can take many forms, including “honor “killings (Solotaroff and Pande 2014). In these cases, the norm preserves male authority vis-à-vis other men in the community, not just within the household.

**A persistent channel of norm transmission is identity.** Social norms that support gender inequalities, like those related to gender roles, can be internalized and seen as part of the identity of an individual or a society. This is because several behaviors associated with these norms are widely held and practiced daily (West and Zimmerman 1987; Cislighi 2020), to the point of being perceived as part of one gender’s nature. If women specialize in home production, the time persistence of the behavior, intergenerational transmission, and the societal expectation and institutions around it reinforce this role as part of what is natural for women to do and can even curtail women’s abilities and aspirations.<sup>22</sup>

**On the other hand, norms are likely to experience inter-generational shifts and change as social and economic conditions do.** Norms are passed on from one society and one generation to another, both as “the right way to do things” as well as modeled in behaviors (Fernandez 2007). Women from a culture where labor force participation of women is limited, when immersed in a different culture with higher levels of participation, will reproduce the patterns of their culture of origin (as has been shown for immigrants in the United States

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<sup>22</sup> Bertrand et al. (2015), for example, show how married women will drop out of the labor market or curtail their career chances to earn more than their spouses to preserve gender differences inside the household.

by Fernandez 2007, 2011).<sup>23</sup> But also, intergenerational transmission can support a change in norms. Fernandez, Fogli and Olivetti (2004) find that sons of working mothers are more likely to have a positive view of working women, and less of a preference for their spouse not to work. By observing previous generations and learning of the costs to specific behaviors and observing their change, women might, for example, join the labor force as they learn by looking at the cost-benefit of women who opted to work (Fernandez 2013). In a similar vein, younger generations behaviors can change normative views among older generations, who observe and adopt the change, normally when it happens at scale, as it was the case of young women joining the ready-made garment sector in Bangladesh (Lopez-Acevedo and Robertson 2016; Hosain 2012) Across generations, some norms might thus become obsolete or lose their grip on people's behaviors, and even become extinct as subsequent generations are not exposed to the norm (Inglehart 2018).

**Crises can act as a catalyst to change norms or exacerbate existing norms.** While some crises in the past have changed norms (either as a catalyst or watershed), others have exacerbated regressive norms. The surge in female employment, necessitated by a shortage of male labor during World Wars I and II, is a typical example of progress in norm-related behavior both in the short and long runs. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has encouraged flexible work arrangements to accommodate the childcare needs of mothers (Alon et al. 2020), and also triggered increased fathers' involvement in childcare responsibilities (Hupkau and Petrongolo 2020). At the same time, it has reinforced for many women the norm that their role as childcare providers takes precedence over paid employment. While female labor force participation tends to increase<sup>24</sup> during economic crises and might stay up, these crises also mean more female school dropouts and early marriages, increases in the son preference, and other gender-unequal behaviors (Stavropoulou and Jones 2013; World Bank 2020; Brainerd 2013; DasGupta 2015; Nedoluzhko and Agadjanian 2015).

### 3.3.2 Norms and policy and program interventions

**Policies in South Asia have, for the most part, ignored the role of social norms in keeping women out of the labor market.** Not paying attention to the role of norms and how they interact with policy elements can lead to a “norms-blind” intervention. While some such policies have led to increases in FLFP by relaxing constraints and changing structures of opportunities, there is evidence to suggest that they are generally not, by themselves, sufficient. Awareness creation, unbiased design and implementation, effective enforcement, and continuous monitoring together with change in attitudes, norms, and beliefs are necessary

<sup>23</sup> This approach—epidemiological approach—is further detailed in Fernandez 2011

<sup>24</sup> Following the added-worker effect (Lundberg 1985).

to create equitable labor markets (Solotaroff and Pande 2014; Strachan, Adikaram, and Kailasapathy 2015; World Bank 2021).

**Infrastructure changes can generate direct benefits for women.** Improvements in electrification and transportation infrastructure have the potential to improve women's outcomes (Albanesi and Olivetti 2016; Dhak, Saggurti, and Ram 2019; Kondylis et al. 2020; Seki and Yamanda 2020). For example, the ability to move from one place to another safely remains a challenge for women in many South Asian countries. Fear of sexual harassment while commuting to work discourages women's employment and lowers their human capital investment due to safety concerns as well as entrenched norms about the importance of women's purity and its connection with family honor (Borker 2021; Chaudhari and Verick 2014; Chakraborty et al. 2018; Siddique 2018). In urban locations, the expansion of safe means of transport can increase female employment.<sup>25</sup> In rural areas, reducing travel distances impacts human capital investment and labor.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, reliable electrification access increases female labor force participation among rural households because it changes women's time allocation, something that, in turn, can shift their engagement in economic activities, shifting views about women's roles.<sup>27</sup>

**An example of norms-blind policies are those that focus solely on equipping women (with skills, assets, education) as a way to address labor force supply.** The blindness of these policies lies in the fact that they place the burden of change on women. In an environment of deeply entrenched gender norms, such changes can result in backlash, such as increased domestic violence as a way for men to assert their dominance (Eswaran et al. 2013; Amaral et al. 2015; Paul 2016). Similarly, lack of alternatives to support women's roles in the household can reduce program effectiveness. Findings from a systematic review of programs aimed at upskilling women in South Asia (Zahra et al. 2021) found that the programs had some positive effects, at least in the short-term. But in terms of economic participation, programs that did not address social and logistical constraints, such as household work, family obligations, and childcare, were less impactful than those that did. The review showed similar findings when it came to assets transfer programs. Education expansion has been instrumental in terms of gender equality in the South Asia region, however textbooks in many countries reproduce traditional gender norms (Islam and Asadullah 2018)

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25 See, for example, Seki and Yamanda (2020) assessment of the expansion of the Delhi metro and the impact of living near a station on the female labor supply. New research from Pakistan demonstrated that women-only transport led to increased job search activity, highlighting the role of mobility norms and safety.

26 See, for example, Cheema et al. (2018) discussion of Skills for Market (SFM) skills training program in Pakistan, where vocational training delivery was adapted to take place in locations inside treatment villages, increasing both economic activity and monthly income among participants.

27 In India and Bangladesh, electrification increased women's hours of work, economic participation, and girls' hours of education (Samad and Zhang 2016, 2017).

**Norm-sensitive policies consider norm conformity traps such as the structural and environmental factors that reinforce regressive gender norms and make deviation from them difficult.** Without having to directly challenge the beliefs and expectations that allow norms to perpetuate, norm-sensitive policies address some of the barriers norms are rooted in. They also work by reducing sanctions or the perception of them, thereby enabling and encouraging positive deviance and fostering an environment where new norms can appear.

**Shifting incentives is a first strategy to change norm conforming behavior.** The use of economic incentives, in the form of transfers, subsidies, and access to finance instruments can make a difference when it comes to norms. Economic hardship can drive people to adhere to a norm. Parents who marry out their daughters early in their teenage years do so for various reasons, most of them non-financial.<sup>28</sup> Economic incentives have, for example, been successful in delaying marriage of young girls and keeping them in education for longer (as documented for Bangladesh by Buchmann et al. 2021, and worldwide in the review by Malhotra and Elnakib 2021). Large scale interventions like Pakistan’s Punjab Female Secondary School Stipend (FSSS), a conditional cash transfer program for adolescent girls to stay in school, has resulted in education gains and also a later age of marriage (Chaudhury and Parajuli 2006).

**A shift in incentives can also be achieved by introducing new sanctions and shifting the need to abide by the socially prescribed behavior.** Amendments to the Hindu Succession Act, which granted daughters equal rights as sons to ancestral property inheritance, is one of these examples. The legal change was aimed at tackling an existing norm by creating a new one challenged the existing patrilineal default. The reform led to an increase in the share of daughters who inherited land from their dead fathers, from 8 percent before the reform to 16 percent after (Deininger et al. 2013) and was successful in terms of other outcomes besides land access. Women’s labor supply increased (Heath and Tan 2020), as did daughters’ educational attainment and entrepreneurial ventures (Deininger et al. 2019; Naaraayanan 2020) and women’s autonomy within their marital families (Roy 2008). However, Anderson and Genicot (2014) report a rise in suicides, which they speculate is a result of a backlash because of the increase in female bargaining power, resulting in greater marital conflict.

**A second strategy relates to information gaps and “gate opening,”** While providing information to close knowledge gaps (i.e. telling women and their families about job opportunities) does not seem to be very effective in shifting gender outcomes, information interventions

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<sup>28</sup> These reasons include poverty, high dowry, safety, and chastity (Jain and Kurz 2007; Loaiza and Wong 2012; Verma et al. 2013; Bicchieri, Lindemans and Jiang 2014)

combined with information that corrects misperceptions (pluralistic ignorance<sup>29</sup>) of what others do or think about a norm can be effective. Bursztyn et al. (2020) find strong evidence of norm-conforming attitudes and behaviors among Saudi Arabian men in terms of their willingness to help their wives search for jobs. Providing the husbands with information about the beliefs of other men increased their wives' job search activities and the husbands' support for those searches. In the same country, information about college women's work aspirations increased their peers' intention to work (Aloud et al. 2020). In the region, Jensen (2012) found that job recruiters increased young rural women's employment after sessions where information on work opportunities and how to apply for jobs was provided, combined with support to job applications. McKelway (2020) reaches similar conclusions when promoting concrete work opportunities for women through videos viewed by women as well as their in-laws and spouses.

**Role model and other positive deviants can shift aspirations and show that norm deviation is possible.** The visibility of women that have deviated from the main norm (and faced lower than expected or no sanctions) can influence women's aspiration as well as the views of their reference groups. Having women in leadership positions (for example, in India for women took political roles in the local Panchayats, or assemblies), increases not only aspirations among girls but also labor force participation (Beaman et al. 2012; Priyanka 2020). Women-centered self-help groups (SHGs) have been widely implemented in South Asia as a strategy to ensure positive deviation and deliver programs to women by creating a "critical mass" of women engaging in a new activity. Several SHG interventions have successfully improved FLFP and access to income and savings. For example, JEEVIKA in Bihar, India, a government-led women's SHG initiative successfully increased participants' LFP (Hoffman et al. 2021), and similar findings have been observed in West Bengal, Andra Pradesh, and other locations in India (Dutta et al. 2017; Prennushi and Gupta 2014; Jejeebhoy 2018).

**Norms-aware policies cannot solely tackle one conformity trap, but need to be comprehensive and address all barriers, normative and others, to succeed.** While it is possible to positively impact gender outcomes even if the underlying hindering gender norms are not directly targeted, this is not always the case. Take, for example, the need for affordable day-care, one of the core barriers to women's participation in the workforce. A program in rural India showed that the mere provision of care had no impact on women's workforce participation, as it didn't significantly change women's time allocation to other household or unpaid duties and had no impact on women's agency and decision-making abilities (Richardson et al. 2018). Similarly, wide-ranging programs that offer women a wide package of interventions

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29 Pluralistic ignorance is the (inaccurate) belief that one's personal attitudes are different from the majorities' attitudes, and thus one goes along with what the majority attitude (Miller and McFarland 1991).

and appear to be transformative and sustain change over time for many beneficiaries who do not return to their original low-productivity activities (Misha et al. 2019). As an example, BRAC's Ultra Poor<sup>30</sup> provides women with a wide package of interventions, including the transfer of an income generating asset, training on income generating activities, subsistence allowances, health support, and awareness raising trainings, with positive impacts on women's employment and participation in economic activity in the medium term (Balboni et al. 2021).

**Similarly, norms-changing interventions are less likely to succeed if not accompanied by incentives or other interventions to remove barriers.** Information interventions on norms and gender attitudes have often not worked to address deep-seated gender attitudes, especially among adults (Dean and Jayachandran 2019). Though earlier and sustained interventions to shift attitudes show promise (Dhar et al. 2022), there is limited evidence of whether the effects are permanent, and whether behavior changes in turn also shift attitudes. In Nepal, the Sammanit Jeevan, “Living with Dignity” family-focused intervention had success. The program consisted of a workshop series targeting married women, their in-law, and their husbands. By ensuring that young married women led income generating activities with assistance from at least one family member, it increased income generating activities as well as modified the family's views about women's abilities to contribute financially to the household (Shai et al. 2020).

**Changing systematic structures that prevent women from accessing the labor force, such as a lack of job opportunities or safe transport, may be necessary to ensure the success of norms interventions.** Interventions that target social norms without a wider framing on the institutional, social, and political factors that perpetrate a harmful practice may have little positive impact (Cislaghi and Heise 2019). In developing policy to address harmful gender norms that prevent FLFP, some important questions to ask policymakers are: how will gender norms messaging be perceived by communities? How can we make it safe for women to change behaviors, keeping in mind backlash such as the risk of gender-based violence? What kind of popular programming exists—such as media outlets and soap operas—that we can partner with to facilitate gender norms messaging? (Paluck et al. 2010). It is critical that stakeholders think holistically about potential impacts of norms-aware policies, beyond simply the target norm of interest, given that social norms shape how policies play out in markets, institutions, and social networks. This practice will support accurate theories that link norms change with improved FLFP.

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30 The Ultra Poor program is a multi-faceted poverty reduction program that includes four main elements (a) support to meet basic needs, such as a cash transfer or basic food supplies (b) income generation activities, (c) financial support and savings, and (d) social empowerment.

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World Values Survey. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>



# Appendixes

## Appendix A.3.1. The Demographic and Health Survey

Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are nationally-representative household surveys that provide data for a wide range of indicators traditionally used to measure outcomes of women. The DHS covers seven out of the eight countries in the region, but we focus on six countries, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Pakistan. The DHS data have been collected in several waves roughly over a period of 20 years, from 1990 to 2018. The coverage however, varies by country. For instance, the DHS data is available for Afghanistan in one wave, Bangladesh in eight waves, India in four waves, Maldives in two waves, Nepal in five waves, and Pakistan in four waves. The DHS collects data from women aged 15-49 years and we trace these women born over half a century, 1940-2000. The length and breadth of coverage of the DHS data across countries in South Asia allows us to examine changes in key gender-related outcomes. Below are the outcome variables used for the analysis of this chapter:

- i) Years of education
- ii) Female employment
- iii) Intimate partner violence experience (ever experienced physical and sexual violence)
- iv) Participate in household decision making (large household purchases, women's health care, and visit to relatives and friends)

## Appendix A.3.2. The World Values Survey

The World Values Survey (WVS) is a frequently used source of data on cultural attitudes. Started in the 1980s, there have been seven waves of this survey covering an increasing range of topics and countries. In terms of attitudes toward gender, several questions are included in the most recent wave (wave 7, whose data were collected between 2017 and 2020) and in some of the earlier waves. These questions cover economic, political, and educational dimensions of attitudes toward gender disparities as well as, more generally, toward women's role in the family, and their agency and empowerment. Below are the survey questions used for the analysis are listed:

i) Political dimension:

- “On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.”
- “Women have the same rights as men.”

ii) Educational:

- “A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”

iii) Economic:

- “When jobs are scarce, men should have more of a right to a job than women.”
- “On the whole, men make better business executives than women do.”
- “Husband and wife should both contribute to income.”

iv) Gender roles – agency – empowerment:

- “Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person.”
- “If a woman earns more money than her husband, it’s almost certain to cause problems.”
- “When a mother works for pay, the children suffer.”
- “Do you think that a woman has to have children in order to be fulfilled or is this not necessary?”

Surveyed individuals can agree, disagree, or be neutral in their responses. There are some variations in the possible answers, as some include strong agreement or strong disagreement options or, for example, an even finer scale going from a 1 to 10 in agreement-disagreement level is available for the question, “women have the same rights as men.”

### Appendix A.3.3. Survey on Gender Equality at Home

The Facebook (2020) Survey on Gender Equality at Home is conducted in partnership by Facebook, CARE, Ladysmith, the World Bank, and UNICEF (for more details see here: <https://dataforgood.fb.com/tools/gendersurvey/>). This survey was rolled out in 2020 and 2021 through Facebook’s online platform in which Facebook users across 208 countries, islands, and territories were invited to participate. Results of this large-scale survey were weighted to represent the online population in each country or region (not only the Facebook user population). One advantage of this survey method is the large reach of coverage and the possibility to collect valuable information in regions where organizing household surveys is often

difficult due to conflict or logistical barriers. For the analysis of this chapter, we used the 2020 survey round, which received over 461,000 complete responses from 126 geographies around the world. The survey questions used for the analysis are listed below:

i) Equal Opportunity:

- How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *“Men and women should have equal opportunities (e.g. in education, jobs, household decision-making).”*
- Out of 10 of your neighbors, how many do you think believe that men and women should have equal opportunities (e.g. in education, jobs, household decision-making)?

ii) Female Homemaker:

- How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *“Woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and children.”*
- Out of 10 of your neighbors, how many do you think believe that a woman’s most important role is to take care of her home and children?

iii) Male Breadwinner:

- How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? *“Household expenses are the responsibility of the man, even if his wife can help him.”*
- Out of 10 of your neighbors, how many do you think believe that household expenses are the responsibility of the man, even if his wife can help him?

iv) Time Use:

- On a typical day, how many hours per day do you spend working for pay? (Work for pay can be any kind of business, farming, or other activity to generate income).
- On a typical day, how many hours per day do you spend on household chores?

For the analysis in this chapter, we calculate national and regional averages of the personal beliefs and social expectations of the above normative statements and the self-reported time use. Surveyed individuals can answer the questions about their personal beliefs on a fivepoint Likert scale, including following categories: agree strongly, agree, neutral, disagree, disagree strongly. The share of respondents who agree or strongly agree with the three normative statements measures the percentage of the population that believes in the social norm. Social expectations are calculated as the share of neighbors out of 10 that respondents believe agree with the normative statements.

## Appendix A.3.4. Regression tables

**Table 3.2. Results from regressions showing differences in attitudes toward gender across groups**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Men have more right to a job	University for boys	Men make better political leaders	Problem if women earn more
female	-0.121*** (0.01)	-0.089*** (0.01)	-0.103*** (0.01)	-0.066*** (0.01)
age (> 25)	-0.016 (0.02)	-0.016 (0.02)	0.024 (0.02)	0.002 (0.02)
educated (secondary+)	-0.034*** (0.01)	-0.077*** (0.01)	-0.045*** (0.01)	-0.043*** (0.01)
HH income scale	-0.002 (0.00)	0.008*** (0.00)	-0.003 (0.00)	-0.010*** (0.00)
Country FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	5990	5947	5808	5849
Adjusted $R^2$	0.086	0.041	0.047	0.105

**Source:** Authors' calculations using data from the World Value Survey.

**Note:** Age is a dummy variable indicating the respondent is older than 25 years. Educated is a dummy variable indicating the respondent attained higher secondary education or more. The HH income scale is a self-reported scale ranging from 1 to 10, where 1 indicates the lowest income group and 10 the highest group in one's country. Countries included are Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

**Table 3.3. Results from regressions showing differences in personal beliefs and social expectations toward gender across groups**

	Equal Opportunity		Female Homemaker		Male Breadwinner	
	(1) Personal Belief	(2) Normative Expectation	(3) Personal Belief	(4) Normative Expectation	(5) Personal Belief	(6) Normative Expectation
female	0.078*** (0.009)	-0.380*** (0.105)	-0.106*** (0.016)	0.329** (0.109)	-0.203*** (0.018)	-0.380** (0.120)
age (> 25)	-0.022* (0.009)	-0.118 (0.109)	0.058*** (0.017)	-0.153 (0.112)	0.029 (0.018)	0.120 (0.122)
urban	0.012 (0.009)	0.228* (0.107)	-0.051** (0.017)	-0.025 (0.110)	-0.029 (0.018)	-0.054 (0.122)
educated (secondary+)	0.016 (0.010)	-0.107 (0.125)	-0.047* (0.019)	0.182 (0.127)	-0.016 (0.020)	0.386** (0.139)
HH asset index	0.011 (0.006)	-0.198** (0.073)	-0.025* (0.012)	0.233** (0.077)	-0.051*** (0.013)	0.091 (0.086)
Country FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Observations	6369	3462	3241	2754	3263	2657
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.030	0.074	0.067	0.015	0.072	0.024

**Source:** Authors' calculations using data from the Survey of Gender Equality at Home.

**Note:** Sample includes observations six South Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan. Age is a dummy variable indicating the respondent is above 25 years old. Educated is a dummy variable indicating the respondent attained secondary education or more. The HH asset index is the first factor of following household assets owned by respondent: house, land, computer, phone, and motorized vehicle. Standard errors in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

