

# Akanksha Vardani

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
Columbia University  
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<https://akankshavardani.github.io>

## PLACEMENT CHAIRS

Sandra Black  
sblack@columbia.edu

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mark.dean@columbia.edu

## PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATORS

Amy Devine  
aed2152@columbia.edu

Rosie Lourentzatos  
rcl2109@columbia.edu

## EDUCATION

### Columbia University, New York

Ph.D in Economics

*2019-2025 (Expected)*

M.Phil in Economics

*2022*

M.A. in Economics

*2021*

### Delhi School of Economics (DSE), New Delhi

Master of Arts in Economics

*2018*

### Indraprastha College for Women(IPCW), University of Delhi

Bachelor of Arts (Honors) in Economics

*2016*

### Springdales School, Pusa Road, New Delhi

Senior Secondary

*2013*

## RESEARCH FIELDS

Development Economics, Family Economics, Public Economics

## WORK IN PROGRESS

### A House for Two : Empowering Women with Property Rights (JMP)

Abstract: Despite global efforts to advance gender parity in property ownership, evidence on the impact of these initiatives remains mixed. One potential reason is the failure to differentiate between documented ownership and effective ownership, which encompasses documented rights and social recognition of the rights. This study examines the gap between documented and effective property rights by randomizing a household-level awareness campaign in a setting where, despite women holding documented ownership, their effective rights remain weak, and beliefs about these rights varies within couples, with husbands and wives holding different initial beliefs. The intervention involves providing both spouses in the treatment group with information about women's property rights alongside a physical copy of the ownership document. I assess how strengthening women's effective rights influences their empowerment by analyzing its impact on gendered resource allocation within households and domestic violence. The findings show that the campaign significantly improved perceptions of women's ownership, leading to increased expenditure on women-specific goods, such as clothing, and reduced men's alcohol consumption. However, there is no overall effect on domestic violence. To explore how pre-existing differences in spousal beliefs mediate the intervention's effects, I develop and test an intra-household bargaining model, finding that the strongest impacts on consumption occur in households with the lowest initial beliefs about women's ownership, while domestic violence improves in households where the husband's initial beliefs are lower than the wife's.

### How do political connections affect property tax compliance?

with Aneesha Parvathaneni

Abstract: How does being connected to a local elected leader affect property tax compliance? Using a close election difference-in-discontinuities design, we quantify the effect of being connected to a local elected leader on tax liability and compliance. We use novel administrative data on property taxation from an Indian district and find that citizens connected to local elected leaders are 45 percentage points more likely to remit taxes and remit 351% more in taxes. We also find that these results are partially driven by enforcement as those who are connected are 30.8 percentage points more likely to face fines and face 247% more in fines. Among those who are connected to the local elected leader, we find that these results are driven by poorer property owners.

### Signaling in Female Education

with Tushar Kundu

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND INTERNSHIPS	<b>Research Assistant</b>	<i>2020-2021</i>
	<i>Supervisors: Michael Best and Evan Sadler</i>	
	<b>Department of Economics, Columbia University, New York</b>	
	<b>Research Assistant</b>	<i>2017-2019</i>
	<i>Supervisor: Rohini Somanathan</i>	
	<b>Department of Economics, Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi</b>	
	<b>Research Analyst Intern</b>	<i>2015</i>
	<b>India Institute, New Delhi</b>	
	<b>Research Intern</b>	<i>2014-2015</i>
	<b>Consumers India, New Delhi</b>	
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	<b>Teaching Fellow, Columbia University</b>	
	Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	<i>Fall 2022</i>
	Microeconomics (MA)	<i>Spring 2022</i>
	Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	<i>Fall 2021</i>
	Math Camp (PhD)	<i>Summer 2021</i>
AWARDS AND HONORS	SurveyCTO Primary Data Collection Research Grant (Honorable Mention)	<i>2024</i>
	Wueller Pre-Dissertation Award for Best 4th-year Proposal, Columbia University	<i>2023</i>
	Reubens Travel and Research Award, Columbia University	<i>2023</i>
	Wueller Award for Best TA for MA Program, Columbia University	<i>2022</i>
	Wueller Award for Best TA (Runners up) for Undergraduate Courses, Columbia University	<i>2022</i>
	Exim Bank Scholarship, DSE	<i>2016-2018</i>
	National (CAS) Scholarship Internal, DSE	<i>2016-2018</i>
	Rai Bahadur Raghunath Sahai Memorial Prize, IPCW	<i>2016</i>
	Rewa Dhawan Memorial Scholarship, IPCW	<i>2013-2016</i>
	Nagendra Nath Majumdar Memorial Prize, IPCW	<i>2016</i>
	Principal's Honour Roll, IPCW	<i>2015</i>
FELLOWSHIPS	<b>NBER Gender in the Economy Fellowship</b>	<i>2023-2024</i>
RESEARCH GRANTS	<b>Weiss Fund</b> (with Aneesha Parvathaneni)	<i>2024</i>
	<b>CDEP Student Research Grant</b> , Columbia University	<i>2023</i>
	<b>PER Experiment Grant</b> , Columbia University	<i>2023</i>
	<b>CDEP Student Research Grant</b> , Columbia University	<i>2022</i>
	<b>PER Experiment Grant</b> , Columbia University	<i>2022</i>
	<b>PER Research Fellow Summer Grant</b> , Columbia University	<i>2020</i>
FIELDWORK EXPERIENCE	Running a randomised control trial (RCT) in India to study the impact of land ownership on women's empowerment.	<i>May 2023-present</i>
	Conducted a household-level survey on women's bargaining power across 30 villages, covering 150 households in Pune, India.	<i>October 2022</i>
	Surveyed the workers of the informal wire stripping industry in Seelampur, Delhi.	<i>March 2015</i>
	Surveyed the workers of the informal garment sector in Kapashera, Delhi.	<i>December 2013</i>

ACADEMIC  
PRESENTATIONS

European Association of Young Economists Annual Meeting	2024
Imperial College PhD Conference	2024
NBER Summer Institute	2023
14th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development	2018
4th Annual Center for research on the Economics of Climate, Food, Energy and Environment (CECFEE) Research and Policy Workshop	2018
12th South Asian Economics Students' Meet	2016

TECHNICAL SKILLS    STATA, R, Python, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X

LANGUAGE SKILLS    **English** (Fluent), **Hindi** (Native Speaker), **French** (Intermediate) and **German** (Beginner)

REFERENCES

**Cristian Pop-Eleches**  
Professor  
School of International and Public Affairs  
Columbia University  
cp2124@columbia.edu

**Michael Best**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Economics  
Columbia University  
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**Pierre-André Chiappori**  
E. Rowan and Barbara Steinschneider  
Professor of Economics  
Department of Economics  
Columbia University  
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**Bernard Salanié**  
Sami Mnaymneh Professor of Economics,  
Director of the Master's Program  
Department of Economics  
Columbia University  
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**Jack Willis**  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Economics  
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