

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-301
Cambridge, MA 02139
talesara@mit.edu
<https://economics.mit.edu/people/phd-students/ishaana-talesara>

HOME CONTACT INFORMATION

379 Harvard St. Apt 4
Cambridge, MA 02138
Mobile: 512-983-4749

MIT PLACEMENT OFFICER

Professor David Autor
dautor@mit.edu
617-253-4669

MIT PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATOR

Mrs. Shannon Robinson
shmay@mit.edu
617-324-5857

**DOCTORAL
STUDIES**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
PhD, Economics, Expected completion June 2026
DISSERTATION: Essays in Labor Economics

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE AND REFERENCES

Professor David Autor
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-438
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-4669
dautor@mit.edu

Professor Daron Acemoglu
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-446
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-4669
daron@mit.edu

Professor Simon Jäger
Princeton Department of Economics
and School of Public and
International Affairs
Louis A. Simpson International
Bldg., Room 253A
Princeton, NJ 08544
609-258-6133
simon.jaeger@princeton.edu

**PRIOR
EDUCATION**

The University of Texas at Austin
B.A. Economics, B.S.A Mathematics

2020

CITIZENSHIP

USA

GENDER

Female

LANGUAGES

English (native), Hindi (fluent)

FIELDS

Primary Field: Labor Economics

Secondary Fields: Macroeconomics, Development Economics

MIT Economics

ISHAANA TALESARA

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TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Economics Research and Communication (MIT course 14.33)	2025
	Teaching Assistant to Professor Nina Roussille	
	Why Markets Fail (MIT course 14.35)	2024
	Teaching Assistant to Professor Nathaniel Hendren	
RELEVANT POSITIONS	Research Fellow at Vienna University of Economics and Business	2024-
	INEQ	2021-2022
	Research Assistant to David Autor	
	Research Assistant to Michael Geruso	2018-2020
FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS	Jerry A. Hausman Graduate Dissertation Fellow (MIT)	2023
	MIT Economics Alumni Fellowship	2021
	National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship	2020
	Dean's Distinguished Graduate (UT Austin)	2020
	Daniel Hamermesh Senior Thesis Prize in Economics (UT Austin)	2019
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	Service: MIT Labor Lunch Organizer (2023-2024), MIT Labor Coffee Organizer (2022-2023), MIT Women in Economics Co-President (2022-2023), MIT-Harvard Application Assistance and Mentoring Program Organizer/Mentor (2021-2024)	
PUBLICATIONS	Inversions in US Presidential Elections: 1836–2016 (with Michael Geruso and Dean Spears) <i>American Economic Journal: Applied Economics</i> , (2022) 14(1), 327-357.	
RESEARCH PAPERS	Worker Beliefs about Layoff Risk (Job Market Paper) (with Lukas Lehner and Arthur Wickard)	

Job loss is one of the most costly economic risks workers face, but a firm's layoff risk is difficult to observe. We document substantial, persistent variation in firm layoff rates, creating scope for workers to change their job loss risk through firm choice. We exploit linked survey, experimental, and administrative data from Austria to examine how unemployed workers perceive and respond to information about firm-level layoff risk. Workers believe that past layoffs are predictive of future risk and prefer jobs at firms with lower historical layoff rates, but have significant misperceptions about which firms are safer. Providing workers with information about firm layoff histories causes them to redirect their search toward historically safer employers. Using a search and matching model, we show that imperfect information distorts equilibrium outcomes: it reverses the compensating differential for layoff risk and raises the average layoff rate by allocating more workers to high-risk firms.

Monopsony with Insurance (with Arthur Wickard)

Empirical evidence of monopsony power is often identified using shocks yet interpreted through static models which assume spot wages. But when risk averse workers receive insurance via wage contracts, firms' employment and

wage responses to shocks look like those from labor market power. We develop a general equilibrium dynamic monopsony model where firms contract with risk-averse workers over idiosyncratic shocks. Worker risk aversion can produce a more inelastic shock-identified labor supply elasticity without implying wider wage markdowns. Increasing risk aversion and reducing labor market competition both mute the wage pass-through, but only risk aversion smooths the wage response over time. We estimate the model using U.S. Census employer-employee matched data and show that risk aversion is necessary to match the relatively flat wage response observed following idiosyncratic shocks. We find the average worker's wage is marked down 8.3%—narrower than the typical 15%-50% range—and that workers exhibit considerable risk aversion. Insurance also distorts the job ladder, preventing productivity-improving job transitions from occurring.

Breadwinning Gender Norms: Experimental Evidence from India (with Kailash Rajah)

How important are social norms in shaping women's labor supply relative to neo-classical economic forces? The widely studied "breadwinner norm" holds that it is socially undesirable for married women to earn more than their husbands. We test this prediction using an experiment in India. We randomly vary wage offers for salaried jobs among married women. If the norm binds, labor supply should be discontinuous or flatten when women are offered wages above their husband's income. We find no evidence that women withdraw from the labor force when offered wages that exceed their husbands' incomes and can reject negative discontinuities as small as 1.5 percentage points. Instead, labor supply is highly responsive to wages, consistent with standard economic models. These findings hold even in the most conservative households.

The Tipped Minimum Wage (with Arthur Wickard)

[working paper under IRS review for distribution: expected October 2025]
Labor market policy can regulate total pay (like the minimum wage) or specifically target a form of pay (like the tipped minimum wage). The tipped minimum wage has been the subject of considerable policy debate despite limited evidence on how it will affect workers and firms. In this project, we compare the tipped minimum wage to the minimum wage. Using IRS W-2 and firm tax data, we present new facts about the prevalence of tips in the US. We use state-level temporal variation in the tipped and standard minimum wages to study the effect of the policy on base wages, tips, the composition of earnings, and overall earnings. We also estimate effects on employment and revenue. Our findings contribute directly to the ongoing policy debate surrounding the tipped minimum wage and offer broader insights into the determinants of firms' compensation strategies. We present a monopsony model where firms choose wages and tips to rationalize the results.

**RESEARCH IN
PROGRESS**

The Labor Market Consequences of Moving Home (with Nathan Lazarus
and Arthur Wickard)
Approved US Census RDC Project