

# Explicit Prejudice

## Evidence from a New Survey

DIANE COFFEY, PAYAL HATHI, NIDHI KHURANA, AMIT THORAT

A representative phone survey to study explicit prejudice against women and Dalits in Delhi, Mumbai, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan reveals widespread prejudice in several domains and discusses the consequences for women and Dalits, and society as a whole. The results suggest the need for a more robust public discourse and active approach to measuring and challenging prejudice and discrimination.

Seventy years ago, independent India adopted a Constitution after nearly two centuries of colonial exploitation. At that time, poverty and destitution were widespread, mortality rates were high, and few people knew how to read and write. Much has changed since then: India is now a rapidly growing economy and a world leader in many sectors. Human development has improved as well: while in 1960, 17% of infants died in their first year of life, by 2015 that statistic has come down to 4%. Only about a quarter of Indians were literate in 1960 whereas about three quarters were literate in 2015 (World Bank 2017). These advances in economic well-being and human development should be celebrated, even if, by some important measures, improvements are not proceeding as quickly as they should.

In this paper, we investigate another important indicator of human well-being: explicit prejudice. We quantify and analyse explicit prejudice against women and Dalits, two of India's largest oppressed groups. By explicit prejudice, we mean beliefs and behaviours to which people openly and readily admit that reinforce the lower social status of people in oppressed groups. Studying prejudice and discrimination makes an important contribution to understanding well-being because, in addition to being distressing for those who experience them, they negatively impact education, occupation, economic, and health outcomes (Thorat 2010; Baru et al 2010; Thorat and Desai 2012). Further, there is mounting evidence that prejudice and discrimination have negative consequences not only for oppressed groups, but for everyone—men and higher caste people included (Ramalingaswami et al 1996; Coffey and Spears 2017).<sup>1</sup>

This paper draws on data from the Social Attitudes Research, India (SARI), a new survey which interviewed representative samples of adults in Delhi, Mumbai, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. This data set is unique: to our knowledge, data on explicit prejudice have been collected only a handful of times in India, and never before as the focus of a representative survey.<sup>2</sup> We, therefore, see our contributions to the study of prejudice as both substantive and methodological. As we discuss at the end of this paper, our research demonstrates that it is feasible to scientifically document explicit prejudice and discrimination using low-cost phone survey methods.

Section 1 of the paper introduces our phone survey methods; Sections 2, 3 and 4 present results. Section 2 deals with discrimination against women: we find that about half of the people in the places we study disapprove of women working

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outside the home if their husbands earn enough to support the family. Section 2 also presents evidence of two discriminatory behaviours that threaten women's autonomy and health. First, we document that the vast majority of women in the areas we study practice *ghunghat* (veiling), which is important because, on average, women who practise *ghunghat* have less say in decisions about their own lives than the women who do not. Second, we find that in some places, more than half of the women report that they eat after men do. This practice matters because women who eat after men often eat less and lower quality food.

Section 3 presents results on discrimination against Dalits. We find that more than half of non-Dalit Hindu adults in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh live in households where someone practises untouchability. In Delhi and Mumbai, reported prevalence of practising untouchability is lower, but still very high. This is surprising considering that untouchability has been criminalised in India for decades. We also find that between 40% and 60% of non-Dalit adults in the places we study support a legal prohibition against marriage between lower and higher castes. We interpret this finding in the context of Ambedkar's observation that the social ban on inter-marriage is "the most fundamental idea on which the whole fabric of caste is built up" (Ambedkar and Moon 1979). Clearly, there is wide popular support for enforcing caste boundaries, even at the expense of individual freedom.

Section 4 presents respondents' opinions about reservations, the government's primary response to discrimination. We evidence that, despite these high levels of explicit sex and caste-based prejudice, there is nevertheless relatively high support for reservation policies. We note however, that many people in our representative samples are not familiar enough with reservation to give clearly stated reasons for supporting or opposing these policies.

Section 5 discusses our results. Our results show that it is feasible to collect data on explicit prejudice using a low-cost phone survey. Measuring social attitudes, explicit prejudice, and discriminatory behaviours add to a much-needed conversation about the extent to which India is achieving the justice, liberty, equality and fraternity envisaged by the Constitution. This conversation is all the more urgent in light of mounting evidence that faster improvements in India's human development depend on social progress.

## 1 The SARI Survey

SARI is a phone survey that builds representative samples of adults aged 18 to 65 by using probability weighted random digit dialing and within-household respondent selection. We adjust our estimates based on statistical weights constructed using the 2011 Census data. Although phone surveys have been used in developed countries for several decades, they are relatively new in India because mobile coverage has only recently become high enough to collect high-quality samples. Further information about survey design and data collection, as well as the strategies we use to reduce non-sampling error, can be found in Coffey (2017) and in the online survey documentation (SARI 2016).

## 1.1 Sampling Strategies

Random digit dialing is a common method for recruiting representative samples of survey respondents. SARI uses a form of random digit dialing designed around India's mobile network. In India, the department of telecommunications assigns companies five-digit "series" that they are allowed to use at the beginning of the 10-digit mobile phone numbers they sell in a particular mobile circle. The SARI team generates a sampling frame of potentially active numbers in each mobile circle by first creating a list in which series appear in equal proportion to the number of subscribers a company reports, divided by the number of series it has. We then add a randomly generated five-digit number to each series to form a 10-digit mobile number. SARI surveyors call these numbers in a random order.

In order to ensure that adults who do not have their own mobile phones are included in our sample, we use within-household respondent selection. The person who answers the phone is asked to list the eligible respondents—adults 18 to 65 who are the same sex as the interviewer—living in his/her household. Qualtrics survey software, which surveyors use for recording responses, randomly selects a respondent from that list.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Sample Sizes and Response Rates

Table 1 provides response rates and sample sizes for the four cities and states where SARI data was collected. We compute response rates as the number surveys in which a respondent answered at least a third of the questions divided by the number of mobile numbers that were valid (as opposed to non-existent, switched off, or not available) when they were first called.

SARI's sample sizes are consistent with other representative samples used to analyse social attitudes. SARI's response rates will appear low to people who are accustomed to working with field survey data collected in face-to-face interviews. However,

**Table 1: Response Rates and Sample Sizes**

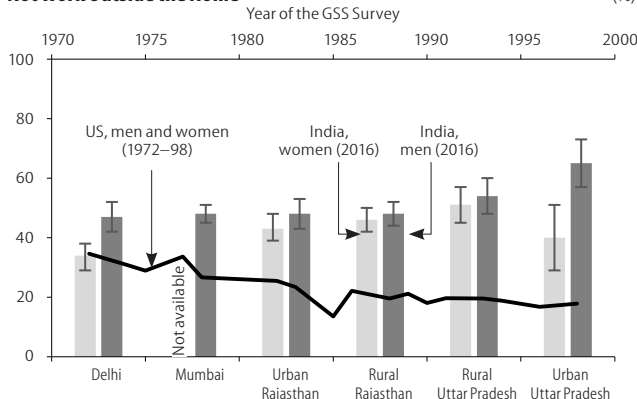
Place	Response Rate (%)	Sample Sizes		
		Men	Women	Total
Delhi	18	753	658	1,411
Uttar Pradesh	29	791	808	1,599
Mumbai	16	1,695	NA	1,695
Rajasthan	25	1,611	1,749	3,360

Source: SARI (2016).

these response rates are high compared with phone surveys done in other countries; a Pew Research Center study from the United States (US) found an average response rate of 9% in its 2012 surveys (Kohut et al 2012). Kohut et al (2012) concluded that despite relatively low response rates, phone surveys that are weighted to match the demographic composition of the population provide accurate estimates of public opinion.

## 1.3 Statistical Weights Using 2011 Census

Like other surveys, we use statistical weights to adjust for the fact that people from some demographic groups are more likely to respond to the survey than others. We use data from the 2011 Census to construct weights that account for the intersection of (i) two sex categories: male and female; (ii) two place of residence categories: urban and rural; (iii) five education level categories: no schooling, primary and below, middle and below, secondary and below, and above secondary; (iv) 10 age group categories: 18–19, and nine 5-year age bands from 20–65.

**Figure 1: Percentage of Adults Who Say That Women Should Not Work Outside the Home**

Source: SARI (2016) and GSS 1972-98.

Thus, respondents are assigned to one of 200 possible bins in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, and 100 possible bins in Delhi and Mumbai (which have no rural respondents). A respondent's statistical weight is the ratio of the number of people in the 2011 Census in that bin to the number of people in the SARI sample who are in that bin.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Prejudice against Women

We report on three indicators of prejudice against women. The first is an attitude that is important to debates about gender and development: whether respondents think women should not work outside the home. The next two indicators are behaviours that are widely recognised as having social and health implications: whether women practise ghunghat and whether men eat meals first. For all three measures, we find high levels of prejudice and discrimination against women.

### 2.1 Work Outside the Home

Several recent studies have documented India's low and declining female labour force participation (Chatterjee et al 2015; Afridi et al 2016). At 27%, India's female labour force participation is lower than that in 170 out of 188 countries<sup>5</sup> for which the International Labour Organization published data in 2016. This has negative consequences for India's development: women's work contributes to economic growth (Elborgh-Woytek et al 2013). Further, considering India's demographic transition from a society in which families have many children to one in which they have fewer children, the costs of women working are going down.

Although there are perhaps many reasons why women in India (who are more educated and having fewer children than in prior decades) are joining the labour force in small and declining numbers, we share Stephan Klasen's (2017) view that the social stigma attached to working outside the home, especially for women who could afford not to work, is an important explanatory factor. It is against this backdrop that we asked SARI respondents the following question: "In your opinion, should a married woman, whose husband earns a good living, work outside the home or not?"

Figure 1 shows the percentage of men and women in each of the five places—Delhi, Mumbai, urban Rajasthan, rural Rajasthan,

urban Uttar Pradesh, and rural Uttar Pradesh—who say that married women whose husbands earn a good living should not work outside the home. There are no data for women in Mumbai because SARI interviewed only men in Mumbai. There is relatively little variation across regions in disapproval for women's work outside the home: in most places we studied, about half of adults disapproved. In most regions, there are no statistically significant differences in the percentage of men and women who say that women should not work outside the home, but differences between men's disapproval and women's disapproval are somewhat more pronounced in urban areas than in rural areas.

For comparison, we plot, as a time-series, the proportion of adults (men and women, 18+) in the US who said that they "disapprove" when the General Social Survey (GSS) asked them the following question: "Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if her husband is able to support her?" We note that SARI's question was intentionally worded for comparison with this question, which was asked of GSS respondents between 1972 and 1998. With the exception of female respondents living in Delhi, SARI respondents' disapproval for women's work in each region of India is higher than what it was in the US 45 years ago.

Although the GSS stopped collecting data on this question in 1998, a CNN-OCR International poll updated the figure for the US in 2012. At that time, only 2% of adults said that they disapproved of women working outside the home (CNN 2012). It is noteworthy that in both the US and in India, stated approval for work outside the home is higher than the actual labour force participation rate.<sup>6</sup>

### 2.2 Practising Ghunghat

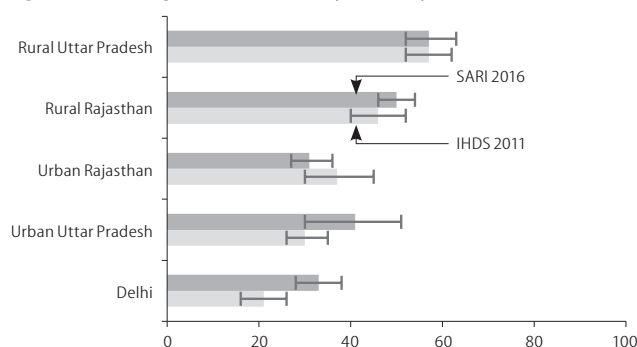
Social scientists recognise ghunghat, the practice of women veiling their heads or faces with the end of a sari or a dupatta, as reinforcing women's unequal position in families and in society (Chowdhry 1993). Our own analysis of the nationally representative 2011 India Human Development Survey (IHDS) data supports these observations: Hindu women who do not practise ghunghat report having a say in more decisions related to their own lives than Hindu women who do. In fact, women who do not practise ghunghat are 12 percentage points more likely to report having at least some say in all six of the decisions for which the IHDS collects data.<sup>7</sup>

Table 2 shows the percentage of Hindu women in different age groups who report these practices and compares the SARI 2016 results to those from the IHDS 2011 (Desai and Vanneman 2015).<sup>8</sup> We analyse the data from Hindu respondents only

**Table 2: Percentage of Hindu Women Who Say They Practise Ghunghat**

Age Range	SARI (2016)			IHDS (2011)		
	18-25	26-40	41-60	18-25	26-40	41-60
Rural Rajasthan	98	99	98	99	99	99
Urban Rajasthan	90	89	84	96	86	87
Rural Uttar Pradesh	91	94	93	94	93	80
Urban Uttar Pradesh	90	63	39	90	74	65
Delhi	75	63	44	81	79	66

Source: SARI (2016) and IHDS (2011).

**Figure 2: Percentage of Women Who Say That They Eat after Men**

Source: SARI (2016) and IHDS (2011).

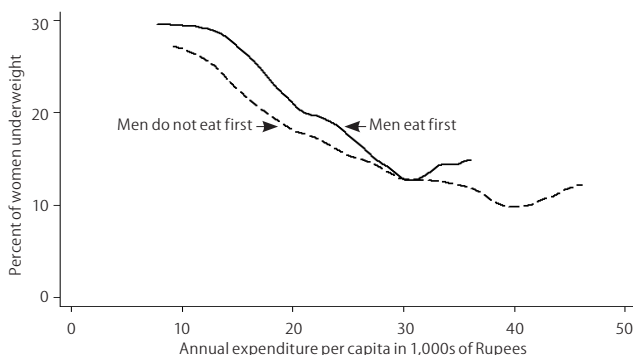
because the social scientific literature on women's status finds that ghunghat has a different social meaning than purdah, the practice of women's seclusion common in Muslim households (Desai and Tamsah 2014). The reason that we break up the results by age group is that research suggests that some indicators of women's status improve as women age (Das Gupta 1995).

Table 2 shows that the practice of ghunghat is very high in each of the places we study. Although urban areas show some age gradient in the practice, rural areas show little, and overall the age gradient is less steep than what we expected. This may be because ghunghat can be practised more or less intensely. For instance, a younger woman might practise ghunghat by covering her whole face, while an older woman covers only her hair. Our data does not capture these differences. There is also less of a difference in the percentage of women who practise ghunghat between rural and urban areas than we expected, though again, we have not measured the intensity of the practice.

We note that the SARI results are very similar to the IHDS results, which we think helps verify SARI's data quality. The fact that the SARI figures are slightly lower could reflect a number of possible causes, such as social progress on this indicator in the five years between 2011, when the IHDS was collected, and 2016, when SARI was collected; the fact that IHDS interviews were face to face (so interviewers might have observed women's behaviour, leading to less social desirability bias in the answer); or that SARI may have interviewed less conservative women, on average, than the IHDS.

### 2.3 Men Eat First

Qualitative research has documented that in some families, women eat their meals after men (Palriwala 1993; Jeffery et al 1989). This is an important discriminatory behaviour both because it emphasises women's unequal social position and because of its health consequences. In 2011, the IHDS first quantified this behaviour by asking women: "When your family eats lunch or dinner, do the women usually eat with the men? Or do the women usually eat first? Or do the men usually eat first?" SARI asked respondents the same question in 2016. Figure 2 shows the percentage of women in each survey who report that the men in their households eat first.<sup>9</sup> The results range from almost 60% of women in rural Uttar Pradesh to about a third of women in Delhi.

**Figure 3: Women in Households Where Men Eat First Are More Likely to be Underweight**

Data: IHDS (2011).

There was no discernible improvement in the prevalence of this practice between the two surveys, done five years apart. In fact, in Delhi, SARI found a higher percentage of women reporting eating last than was found in the IHDS in 2011. We do not think that the percentage of women in Delhi experiencing this discriminatory practice has actually gone up; rather we suspect that respondents may have been more comfortable admitting to this practice on the phone rather than in person. This is, however, just a hypothesis; it would be useful for future research to explore differences in reporting prejudice and discrimination across survey modes.<sup>10</sup>

We do not include Mumbai in Figure 2 because in Mumbai, only men were surveyed. Yet, it is interesting to note that compared to the other places that SARI surveyed, men in Mumbai were less likely than either men or women in other places to say that women in their households eat last. Twenty-eight percent of men in Mumbai said that women in their households eat last (95% CI: 26%–31%).

It is important to document the extent of this practise because it is probably implicated in India's high rates of undernutrition among women, which are higher than rates of undernutrition among men (Coffey and Hathi 2016). The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015–16 finds that 23% of women in India are underweight, meaning that they have body mass index scores of less than 18.5 kg/sq m.<sup>11</sup> Underweight people have less energy and are more likely to be sick than people who are not. If a woman is underweight before pregnancy, her child is more likely to be born small and to die in the first month of life.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 3 uses IHDS 2011 national data to show that, even holding constant annual household expenditure per capita, women who live in households where men eat first are more likely to be underweight than women who live in households where men do not.

### 3 Prejudice against Dalits

We document two forms of explicit prejudice against Dalits. First, we document that a very high percentage of non-Dalit Hindus say that they or someone in their household practises untouchability. Second, we find that many non-Dalits believe that there should be laws against intermarriage between lower and higher caste people. These findings are surprising and

sobering for several reasons, not the least of which are that, on paper, the Indian government promotes inter-caste marriage and criminalises the practice of untouchability.

### 3.1 Practising Untouchability

The Indian law prohibits untouchability, a diverse set of discriminatory practices which reinforce the low social and economic status of Dalits. Despite legal prohibitions, however, untouchability is still practised in both urban and rural India (Shah 2000; Jodhka 2002; Shah et al 2006; Singh 2014). Studying untouchability is important both for documenting how discriminatory practices change over time and for correcting the misconception that exists in some circles that untouchability is no longer a problem in modern India. Further, untouchability is linked to rural India's high rates of open defecation, one of the most important threats to children's health and human capital (Thorat and Spears forthcoming; Coffey and Spears 2017).

To complement prior social scientific efforts to study untouchability with population-level quantitative data, SARI asked non-Dalit Hindu respondents whether any of their family members practise untouchability, and if so, whether they themselves do so. SARI's questions are similar to those asked by the IHDS 2011, described by Thorat and Joshi (2015).

Table 3 presents results for several ways of measuring the prevalence of untouchability.<sup>13</sup> The note below the table provides the survey questions that correspond to each column of estimates. The light grey section of Table 3 details which survey, respondent sex, and reference group, the estimates use. We highlight columns (1) and (4) in dark grey because, although not directly comparable, these are the estimates that are most closely matched across surveys.

The results in Table 3 are unsettling. The 2011 IHDS results in column (4) show that in Rajasthan and in rural Uttar Pradesh—together home to over 200 million people—more than half the non-Dalit Hindu households had members who practised untouchability. Reported untouchability was lower, but still high, for metros like Delhi and Mumbai. Roughly comparable SARI

**Table 3: Percent of Non-Dalit Hindus Who Say They Practise Untouchability**

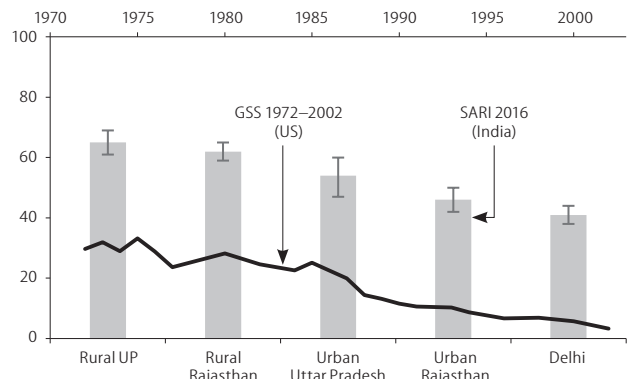
Data Source	SARI	SARI	IHDS	IHDS	SARI	SARI
Respondent's Sex	Female	Male	Predominately Female	Predominately Female*	Female	Male
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Untouchability Practised by	Family or Self	Family or Self	Family or Self	Family or Self	Self	Self
Rural Rajasthan	66	50	50	68	54	34
Rural Uttar Pradesh	64	43	46	56	48	28
Urban Rajasthan	50	33	44	47	31	15
Urban Uttar Pradesh	48	42	40	51	35	18
Delhi	39	27	12	20	21	12
Mumbai	NA	21	5	5	NA	10

The estimates in columns (1–3) use the question: "In your household, do some members practise untouchability?" In column (4), a household is counted as practising untouchability if the respondent answers "yes" to that question or to the question: "Would there be a problem if someone who is from a Scheduled Caste entered your kitchen or used your utensils?" In columns (1–2), if a respondent did not understand the question, the surveyor explained: "There are many meanings of 'untouchability,' one meaning is that some people think that it is not good to sit down and eat with Dalit/Harijan people." SARI respondents who answered, "yes" to the question of whether some members of their household practice untouchability were additionally asked: "Do you yourself practise untouchability?" Columns (5) and (6) record answers to that question.

\* Almost 90% of the primary respondents to the IHDS household questionnaire, where answers to untouchability questions were recorded, were adult women.

Sources: SARI (2016) and IHDS (2011).

**Figure 4: Percentage of Non-Dalit/White Adults Who Support a Legal Ban on Inter-group Marriage**



Source: SARI (2016) and GSS 1972–2002.

data in column (1) suggest this fraction has not improved in five years. Results across the surveys are similar for all of the places we study except Delhi, where reporting of untouchability among SARI respondents is roughly double of what it was in the IHDS.

Comparing the individual-level SARI data in columns (5) and (6), and the household-level data in (1) and (2), we find that women are more likely to report practising untouchability than men. We hope that future research will explore the extent to which this reflects real differences in behaviour and the extent to which it reflects differences in awareness about the socially desirable response.

Although there is still much to learn about measuring untouchability with survey questions, and although the results in all columns likely underestimate untouchability because of social desirability bias, these results nevertheless suggest that untouchability is widely practised and that mindsets of power, purity, and pollution persist. This problem is sorely in need of greater recognition and public response.

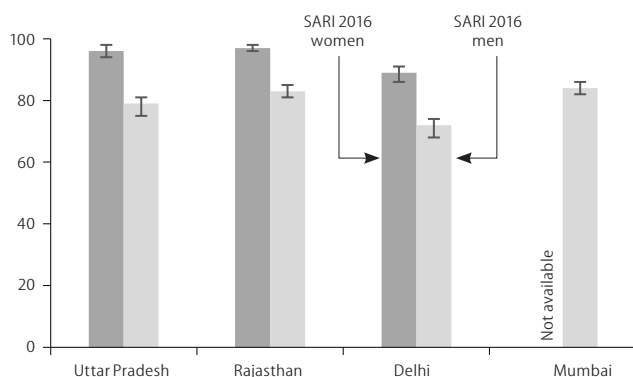
### 3.2 Support for Laws against Inter-marriage

Many researchers have remarked that prejudice against Dalits has been changing in recent decades and that some forms of discrimination are improving, albeit slowly and unevenly (Shah et al 2006; Kumar 2017). One domain in which higher castes have consistently and unapologetically discriminated against Dalits is in arranging marriages for their children. Data shows that rates of inter-caste marriage are very low (Ray et al 2017), despite the fact that the central and many state governments have schemes to promote inter-caste marriages.

Because within-caste marriage is so important for preserving caste distinctions, and because inter-group marriage is seen as threatening to dominant groups in many societies worldwide, SARI asked non-Dalits the question: "In your opinion, should there be a law preventing high caste and low caste people from marrying each other?"

Figure 4 shows that the proportion of non-Dalit adults who support such a law ranges from 60% in rural Rajasthan to about 40% in Delhi. This range is small considering that the average Delhi respondent had five more years of education than the average respondent in rural Rajasthan, and that education is typically considered a liberalising force. Data for Mumbai



**Figure 5: Percentage of Respondents Who Support Reservations for Women**

Source: SARI (2016).

is not shown in Figure 4 because estimates in Figure 4 pool men and women and only men were interviewed in Mumbai. We found that 27% of men in Mumbai support laws against intermarriage (95% CI: 25%–30%). This is statistically significantly lower than the estimate for men in Delhi, which was 35% (95% CI: 52%–63%).

In addition to showing the level of support for laws against intermarriage in the places that SARI studied, Figure 4 also shows responses to a similar question asked of White adults in the US between 1972 and 2002: “Do you think there should be laws against marriages between Blacks and Whites?” The comparison is striking. In each place in India, support for laws against intermarriage is higher than it was in the US 45 years ago. However, support for laws against intermarriage in the US was nevertheless quite high until recently: only 30 years ago did support for laws banning interracial marriage fall to less than one-fifth of the White population.

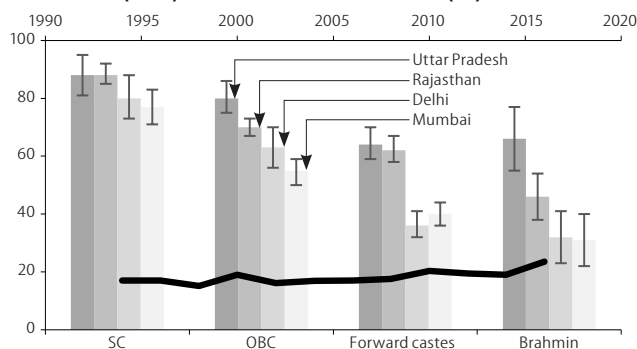
Considering that, in principle, India is a liberal democracy, the level of support that SARI documents for a legal ban on inter-caste marriage is sobering. These data shed light on why rates of inter-caste marriage are so low and on why khap panchayats and others who violently enforce social norms against intermarriage often go uncontested (Kumar 2012). It is interesting to note, however, that inter-caste marriage was explicitly legalised soon after India’s independence by the Special Marriage Act of 1954. In the US, in contrast, laws prohibiting marriage between Blacks and Whites remained in effect in many southern states until 1967, when the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional.

#### 4 Reservation Policies

The results in Sections 2 and 3 reveal high levels of prejudice and discrimination against women and Dalits. In the next section of the paper, we examine public opinion on reservations, perhaps the most debated of the government’s tools for addressing these problems.

Reservations for women are quite limited. Since the early 1990s, one-third of seats in panchayati raj institutions have been reserved for women, but there are no reservations for women in jobs, in universities, or in Parliament.

For Dalits and Adivasis, reservations in government jobs and university enrolments have been in place since independence.

**Figure 6: Percentage of Respondents Who Support Caste-based Reservations (India) or Affirmative Action for Blacks (US)**

The GSS data are restricted to White respondents.

Source: SARI (2016) and GSS 1994–2016

Introduction of reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in 1998 opened up a debate over the need and duration of implementation of reservations. Recently, new groups, such as Patidars in Gujarat, Marathas in Maharashtra and Jats in Haryana have also made demands for reservation, which have been turned down by the Supreme Court. The Court ruled that these groups are neither economically disadvantaged nor have they faced social discrimination.

SARI asked respondents: “Do you support or oppose reservations for women?” It also asked: “Do you support or oppose caste-based reservations?” Figures 5, 6 show support for women’s and for caste-based reservations respectively. There is clearly higher support for women’s reservations than there is for caste-based reservations.

Figure 5 shows that nearly all female respondents in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan support women’s reservations and that nearly 90% of women in Delhi do as well.<sup>14</sup> Male respondents also largely support women’s reservation. The fact that women’s reservations are limited to panchayati raj institutions may be one reason for high levels of support. It is also possible that, unlike for caste reservations, higher caste men can benefit from women’s reservations through the female members of their household.

Figure 6 shows very high support for reservations among Dalits and OBCs. We do not show results for Adivasis because there were very few Adivasis in our samples. Among forward castes and Brahmins, support for reservations is lower, although still relatively high. Support is lowest among forward castes and Brahmins in the two major cities of Delhi and Mumbai. We hypothesise that this may be because people from non-reserved castes in the cities are more likely to pursue government jobs and university enrolments than people from non-reserved castes in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, and therefore to see themselves as competing with people in reserved categories for these positions. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the most educated among the forward castes and Brahmins are most likely to oppose reservations in our data.

Figure 6 also plots White respondents’ answers to the GSS question in the US: “Some people say that because of past discrimination, Blacks should be given preference in hiring and

promotion. Others say that such preference in hiring and promotion of Blacks is wrong because it discriminates against Whites. What about your opinion—are you for or against preferential hiring and promotion of Blacks?” This question was asked between 1994 and 2016.

Although responses to this question are not directly comparable to responses to SARI’s question about support for caste-based reservations, which encompasses political and educational reservations as well as reservations in jobs, the comparison is nevertheless interesting. We find that between 1994 and 2016, support for preferential hiring and promotion of Blacks among white Americans was low, and relatively unchanging: despite the legacy of slavery and clearly documented labour market discrimination against Blacks (Pager 2008), only about one in five White Americans supports preferential hiring of Blacks.

Why do some people support caste-based reservations while others oppose them? Our experiences while collecting the SARI data taught us that, often, people are not well-informed enough about reservation policies to articulate why they support or oppose them. Indeed, after asking a respondent whether he/she supports or opposes reservation, we then ask whether he/she had heard of it before it was mentioned in the interview. The fraction of respondents, who said that they had heard of reservations before, ranged from about half in Delhi and urban Rajasthan to about a quarter in rural Uttar Pradesh. About half of men in Mumbai had heard of reservations. Analysing the Delhi, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh data, we found that women are about 23% less likely to say that they have heard of reservations than men.

We note that this finding may depend on the wording of our survey question. In the phone survey, we asked people if they had heard of “*arakshan* or reservations.” When we did face-to-face surveys with a small, non-random set of respondents to better understand our results, we found that some people

who said they had not heard of “*arakshan* or reservations” were actually familiar with some form of reservation, but not with all of the details of reservation policies. They had answered “no” because they were not familiar with the terms we used.

Among those phone survey respondents who had heard of reservations before the interview, we asked their reasons for supporting or opposing caste-based reservations. Interviewers listened to the responses and coded them into one of the reasons listed in Table 4.

The reasons for supporting caste-based reservations relate to the policies’ potential to correct past injustices suffered by people from oppressed groups. Groups that have reservations today have historically been denied access to education, land, assets, and business ownership, among other things. They have also experienced exclusion and discrimination in the economic and social spheres, as well as caste-based humiliation, ostracism and violence. As a result, these groups have been educationally, economically, and socially deprived. A recent study based on IHDS data shows that while overall poverty rates have fallen over time, 20% of Dalits fell into poverty between 2005 and 2011 (Thorat et al 2017). Yet, reservation helps those who avail it to rise economically and socially (Borooah et al 2007) and the effect is intergenerational.

Among the main reasons for opposing reservations are that seats should be assigned based on merit; that reservations should be given to everyone; and that reservations should be given based on income, rather than caste. These reasons paint reservation as a form of unjustified redistribution, as opposed to a policy mechanism for ensuring representation of people from the lower castes in government and state services.<sup>15</sup> As long as prejudice and discrimination continue to block people from the lower castes from entering government service and higher education, enforcing reservation will continue to be the primary way that the government can safeguard their representation.

**Table 4: Percentage of Respondents Giving Listed Reason for Supporting or Opposing Caste-based Reservations**

	Uttar Pradesh	Rajasthan	Delhi	Mumbai
Reasons for supporting caste-based reservations				
For the development of those castes	32	43	40	37
To help the poor	27	39	39	41
To reduce discrimination	17	21	24	24
To open opportunities in jobs/studies	10	30	22	13
Other reasons	5	5	2	11
Did not give any reason	31	24	16	22
Reasons for opposing caste-based reservations				
Seats should be based on merit	59	47	43	50
Reservations should be given to everyone	40	47	42	40
People should have to work for what they get	27	23	32	12
Reservations should be based on income	22	24	36	20
Other reasons	8	10	11	4
Only wealthy SCs/OBCs benefit from reservations	6	10	4	13
Reservations are no longer needed	5	11	8	15
Reservations cause conflict	3	13	5	11
Did not give any reason	3	11	5	9

The percentages do not add to 100% because respondents were able to give more than one answer.

Source: SARI (2016).

## 5 Discussion

There are many ways to study discrimination and prejudice. Researchers and writers have documented and described discrimination and its effects using statistical analysis of observational data (Deshpande 2017; Desai and Kulkarni 2008), audit studies and experiments (Hanna and Linden 2012; Thorat and Attewell 2007), and personal accounts (Valmiki 2003; Faustina 2014). Our results measure discrimination in a new way: we ask people to report explicit prejudice against women and Dalits using a low-cost phone survey.

We hope that by showing that it is possible to achieve representative samples using phone survey methods that were previously used only in developed countries, and by showing that many people are willing to admit to prejudiced attitudes and behaviours, other researchers will be encouraged to adopt these techniques. It would allow further, urgently-needed documentation about the nature of prejudices against women, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims, sexual minorities, the handicapped, and the poor that exist in India. We expect that such a research

agenda could improve on the methods and results of our initial investigation.

In presenting our results on social attitudes in India, we have included comparisons to the General Social Survey from the US. This long-running survey provides time-series data that are useful for understanding social change. Declining levels of explicit prejudice against women and Blacks over the last 45 years capture a form of a social progress, even if current events in the US suggest that social progress is not always linear or uniform. We hope that time-series data on social attitudes in India will be collected in the coming years.

Of course, the decline of explicit prejudice, as reported in surveys, does not mean that discrimination is a solved problem in the US, nor that discrimination will be a solved problem in India when people no longer openly admit to prejudiced attitudes. Indeed, even people who do not express explicit prejudice nevertheless often behave in ways that reveal their implicit biases, which have important consequences for oppressed groups (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Dovidio and Gaertner 2004). It will be useful, therefore, to track both social attitudes and to develop ways of measuring implicit bias in the Indian context.

Developing the body of scientific evidence on prejudice and discrimination in India is important for many reasons. Prejudice and discrimination importantly diminish the well-being and life chances of the people who experience them. Throughout the presentation of our results, we have also discussed the ways in which prejudice and discrimination hurt everyone. Social disapproval for women's work means a slower-growing economy for everyone; when pregnant women eat last, the next generation of Indians grows up shorter and with fewer cognitive resources; where people practise untouchability, they are less likely to adopt latrines that keep everyone's children safe from disease. There are certainly many more such examples.

Yet, despite the many costs of prejudice and discrimination, there is often little recognition of these problems in public discourse. We are not the first to notice that discussions of discrimination are all but absent in polite society. Even those who recognise the damage done by prejudice and discrimination are often too optimistic about the promise of economic progress for speeding social progress. Our research suggests that a far more searching and active approach is necessary.

## NOTES

- Research suggests that discrimination also leads to economic inefficiencies (Akerlof 1976).
- In the 1970s, Santok Singh Anant (1975, 1978) studied "intercaste attitudes" in Uttar Pradesh. More recently, the Mind of the Youth Survey (Lokniti 2017) and the India Human Development Survey (Desai and Vanneman 2015) asked questions about caste and gender attitudes. The National Family Health Survey investigates the social acceptability of violence against women (Kishor and Gupta 2009).
- If the person owns a mobile phone, we randomise among him/her and any adult household members of the same sex who do not own a mobile phone. If the person does not own a mobile phone, we randomise among him/her and other eligible household members.
- Abstracting away from possible biases due to non-sampling error (such as social desirability bias), the estimates we produce will be biased only if, conditional on the intersection of education, age, sex, and place of residence, people in households in which someone owns a mobile phone would give different answers to our questions than people in households in which no one owns a mobile phone.
- These data include countries and other large economies for which the International Labour Organization assembles data.
- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the female labour force participation rate in the US in 1972 was about 60%. That fraction has remained relatively stable in the past several decades while disapproval for women working has declined considerably.
- These decisions are: what to cook on a daily basis, whether to buy an expensive household item, how many children to have, what to do if the woman falls sick, whether to buy land or property, and how much money to spend on social functions.
- The IHDS asked all women the following question, "Do you practice ghunghat/burkha/pardah/pallu (all synonyms for veil)?" SARI asked Hindu women, "Do you practice ghunghat or pallu?" and asked Muslim women, "Do you practice

pardah or burkha?" SARI also asked men whether their wives practised ghunghat/pardah (depending on if they were Hindu or Muslim). The fraction of men in each age group who said their wives practised was very similar to the fraction of married women who reported practising it.

- The IHDS asked this question only of women; SARI asked both women and men. In four out of five regions (Delhi, urban UP, rural Rajasthan, urban Rajasthan), men's responses were not statistically significantly different than women's. However, in rural Uttar Pradesh, men were significantly more likely to report that men eat first: 69% (95% CI: 64%–75%) v 57% (95% CI: 52%–63%).
- Holbrook et al (2003) find that people exhibit more social desirability bias in phone interviews than in face-to-face interviews. However, many other studies find that providing the respondent anonymity reduces social desirability bias.
- For example, a woman who is 5'3" tall would be considered underweight if she weighed 47 kg or less.
- Coffey (2015) analysed NFHS 2005 data and found that 41% of women were underweight at the beginning of their pregnancy. Coffey et al (2017) find that the low status of women has consequences for their nutrition during pregnancy, and therefore for the survival and physical growth of their children.
- This choice is not meant to imply that Muslims, Scheduled Castes (SCs), and Scheduled Tribes (STs) do not practice untouchability; many do. However, SARI focuses on discrimination against these groups, so people from these groups were instead asked questions about their experiences of discrimination.
- We do not make any comparison to the US data here because there is no similar programme in the US to reserve elected offices for women.
- In domains of public life where there is no SC/ST reservation, there is often little representation of people from these groups. Aggarwal et al (2015) investigate the representation of lower castes among policymakers and prominent

people in Allahabad. They found that the Press Club, the Bar Association, trade unions, non-governmental organisations, and media houses were all dominated by a small group of higher castes—Brahmins and Kayasthas in particular.

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