

Sangita Vyas

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sangitavyas.com

Education

PhD student in Economics, trainee in Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.

NSF Graduate Research Fellowship.

NICHD Pre-doctoral Fellow in Population Studies.

Dissertation: Interrelationships among health, the environment, and social inequality in India.

M.S. in Economics, University of Texas at Austin, 2019.

M.P.A. in Economics and Public Policy, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, 2013.

High distinction on final qualifying exam for Economics and Public Policy.

Woodrow Wilson School Dean's Fellow 2011-2012.

B.S. in Economics: Finance, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 2007.

Summa Cum Laude.

Interests

demographic methods; population projections; applied microeconomics; econometrics; public, development, and health economics

Awards & fellowships

2021. Dorothy S. Thomas Award, awarded by the Population Association of America for the best graduate student paper on the interrelationships among social, economic, and demographic variables.

2021-2024. Provost's Graduate Excellence Fellowship, awarded by UT Austin's Graduate School.

2020-2021. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Pre-doctoral Fellowship in Population Studies.

2019 Parker Frisbie Publication Award, awarded by UT's Population Research Center for the best graduate student paper addressing pressing issues in demographic research and population science.

2019 Population Association of America Best Poster Award.

2017-2020. Dean's Prestigious Fellowship Supplement, awarded by UT Austin's Graduate School.

2017-2020. National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship.

Working papers & requests for revision

★ indicates lead author, † indicates all student co-authors

★ † [Social disadvantage, economic inequality, and life expectancy in nine Indian states](#). R&R at *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. with Payal Hathi and Aashish Gupta.

Recognition: Winner of PAA's 2021 Dorothy S. Thomas Award.

[Child health impacts of coal: Evidence from India's coal expansion](#). Under review.

Recognition: Winner of UT PRC's 2019 Parker Frisbie Publication Award and PAA's 2019 Best Poster Award.

★ † [Gender and LPG use after government intervention in rural north India](#). R&R at *World Development*. with Aashish Gupta and Nazar Khalid.

Publications

★ indicates lead author, † indicates all student co-authors

[Persistence of solid fuel use in rural north India](#). *Economic & Political Weekly*. 2020. with Aashish Gupta, Nazar Khalid, Payal Hathi, Nikhil Srivastav, Dean Spears, and Diane Coffey.

Media: *Times of India*, *The Hindu*, *LiveMint*, *IndiaSpend*, *Counterview*, and others.

[Revisiting open defecation: Evidence from a panel survey in rural north India, 2014–18](#). *Economic & Political Weekly*. 2020. with Aashish Gupta, Nazar Khalid, Devashish Deshpande, Payal Hathi, Avani Kapur, Nikhil Srivastav, Dean Spears, and Diane Coffey.

Media: *Hindustan Times*, *The Hindu*, *The Business Standard*, *LiveMint*, *IndiaSpend*, *Scroll.in*, *The Wire*, *First Post*, *Swaraj Magazine*, *Counterview*.

★ [Measuring open defecation in India using survey questions: evidence from a randomised survey experiment](#). *BMJ Open*. 2019. with Nikhil Srivastav, Divya Mary, Neeta Goel, Sujatha Srinivasan, Ajaykumar Tannirkulam, Radu Ban, Dean Spears, and Diane Coffey.

[The association of early-life exposure to ambient PM2.5 and later-childhood height-for-age in India: An observational study](#). *Environmental Health*. 2019. with Dean Spears, Sagnik Dey, Sourangsu Chowdhury, Noah Scovronick, and Joshua Apte.

★ [Sanitation and religion in South Asia: What accounts for differences across countries?](#) *Journal of Development Studies*. 2018. with Dean Spears.

[Switching to sanitation: Understanding latrine adoption in a representative panel of rural Indian households](#). *Social Science & Medicine*. 2017. with Diane Coffey and Dean Spears.

[Understanding open defecation in rural India: Pollution, latrine pits, and untouchability](#). *Economic & Political Weekly (special article section)*. 2017. with Diane Coffey, Aashish Gupta, Payal Hathi, Dean Spears, and Nikhil Srivastav.

Media: *The Economist*, major English-language Indian newspapers.

★ [Disease externalities and net nutrition: Evidence from changes in sanitation and child height in Cambodia, 2005-2010](#). *Economics and Human Biology*. 2016. with Phyrum Kov, Susanna Smets, and Dean Spears.

★ [An experiment with air purifiers in Delhi during winter 2015-2016](#). *PLOS ONE*. 2016. with Dean Spears and Nikhil Srivastav.

[Revealed preference for open defecation: Evidence from a new survey in rural north India](#). *Economic & Political Weekly (special article section)*. 2014. with Diane Coffey, Aashish Gupta, Payal Hathi, Nidhi Khurana, Dean Spears, and Nikhil Srivastav. Reprinted in *Social Policy*, ed. Jean Drèze. 2016.

Media: *New York Times*, *National Public Radio*, *Voice of America*, major English-language Indian newspapers.

Professional Activities

Conference organization

Open defecation in rural north India, conference hosted at India Habitat Centre by r.i.c.e. and Accountability Initiative. January 2019. co-organized with Aashish Gupta.

Purity, Untouchability, and Open Defecation: Starting a Conversation for a Swachh Bharat, conference hosted at Jawaharlal Nehru University by r.i.c.e. and the Indian Institute for Dalit Studies. September 2015. co-organized with Diane Coffey and Dean Spears.

Invited seminars & conference presentations

2021: UT PRC Joint Education & Health Disparities Group and Healing Group Meeting, Population Association of America (chair of Health Deficits and Disparities in a Global Perspective flash session, 2 poster presentations)

2020: Population Association of America (1 verbal presentation, 2 poster presentations, discussant), Council on Foreign Relations, Annual meeting of the American Sociological Association (round-table session)

2019: Indian Statistical Institute Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development (New Delhi), UT Applied Micro Lunch Seminar, North East Universities Development Consortium Conference, Sustainability and Development Conference, Council on Foreign Relations, Population Association of America, Indian Institute for Population Sciences (Mumbai)

2018: Southern Economics Association Annual Conference

prior: UNC Water and Health Conference, Jawaharlal Nehru University (Delhi), Gates Foundation, IFPRI (Delhi), Delhi School of Economics

Journal refereeing

BMJ Open, Demography, Economics and Human Biology, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Development Studies, Nature Sustainability, Population Research and Policy Review, World Development.

Professional Experience

2013 - present: research fellow; r.i.c.e., a research institute for compassionate economics, India.

design and implement field research studies, analyze existing and self-collected datasets, and write academic and policy articles based on results.

2015 - 2016: co-PI with Diane Coffey, Dean Spears, and Sandip Sukhtankar; experimental partnership between J-PAL and the Government of Tamil Nadu.

experiment with strategies for promoting rural sanitation behavior change, budget of \$70,000 (INR 45 lakh).

2013: consultant; World Bank Water and Sanitation Program, India.

analyzed data and produced sanitation knowledge products such as working papers and research and policy briefs.

2009 - 2011: research associate for PI Shawn Cole; Centre for Microfinance, India.

coordinated an academic team researching the effectiveness of rainfall insurance through a randomized evaluation, and oversaw data collection and intervention implementation.

2007 - 2009: associate analyst; NERA Economic Consulting, New York.

calculated financial damages for litigation purposes in securities class action law suits.

Field Research

Study of LPG Use in Rural North India. 2020.

A qualitative study of cooking patterns and fuel use decisions among 45 households in rural Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Survey of Rural Sanitation and Solid Fuel Use. 2018.

The second wave of a panel survey that interviewed 1,550 households in rural Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh to estimate changes in open defecation and solid fuel use since 2014. Qualitative interviews conducted with over 150 government officials to understand implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission, a sanitation program implemented by India's government. Data and documentation are free to download [here](#).

SQUAT: Sanitation Quality, Use, Access, and Trends. 2013-2014.

The first wave of a panel survey that visited over 3,500 households in rural Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, focusing on sanitation beliefs and behaviors. Data and documentation are free to download [here](#).

Switching to sanitation. 2013-2014.

A qualitative study of latrine adoption and non-adoption among 100 households in rural Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Nepal. Documentation and questionnaires are free to download [here](#).

Policy writing & media

TEDx, India. [The surprising truth of open defecation in India](#). Over 2.5 million views.

"Let's talk about toilets." interviewed on *Why it Matters* podcast by Council on Foreign Relations. November 2020.

"The child health impacts of coal: Evidence from India's coal expansion." *Ideas for India*. February 2020.

"Cooking with gas not wood." *with* Aashish Gupta. *The Hindu*. August 2019. Also appeared in policy brief "Ujjwala 2.0: From access to sustained usage," by Collaborative Clean Air Policy Centre.

"Coercion, construction, and 'ODF paper pe': Swachh Bharat according to local officials." *with* Aashish Gupta, Nazar Khalid, Payal Hathi, Nikhil Srivastav, and Diane Coffey. *India Forum*. April 2019.

"Swachh Bharat Mission gains have come at a cost." *Hindustan Times*. January 2019.

"Seeing through Smoke." *The Caravan*. May 2017.

"A pit stop to change attitudes." *The Hindu*. February 2017.

"Bad air quality is a public problem, yet election campaigns in five states were silent on it." *Scroll*. February 2017.

"Not so clean." *Indian Express*. October 2016.

"Two years on, there has been little movement on a key goal of Swachh Bharat - ending open defecation." *Scroll*. October 2016.

"Why just focus on Delhi? It's high time that the government took air pollution in the rest of India seriously." *with* Diane Coffey. *Scroll*. March 2016.

"Swachh Bharat Mission must address untouchability." *Mint*. October 2015.

"Swachh Bharat Mission a misguided approach to ending open defecation." *Mint*. October 2015.

"How India's refusal to shed caste prejudices is undermining Swachh Bharat." *Scroll*. October 2015.

"How serious is the government about Swachh Bharat Mission?" *Ideas for India*. March 2015.

"Five more years of open defecation: Modi has just washed his hands of Swachh Bharat Mission in the budget." *Scroll*. March 2015.

"Not a clean sweep." *Indian Express*. January 2015.

"Swachh Bharat Mission: It's not just about building toilets." *Business Standard*. September 2014.

"Most rural Indians can afford a toilet but don't want one." *Business Standard*. June 2014.

"Toilets are urgently needed in rural India, but don't imagine they will reduce rape." *with* Diane Coffey, Aashish Gupta, Payal Hathi, and Dean Spears. *Scroll*. June 2014.

"How Bangladesh brought about a dramatic toilet revolution." *with* Aashish Gupta. *Business Standard*. March 2014.

"Why are children in India so short?" *Ideas for India*. August 2013.

"Building consensus on building latrines." *Mint*. August 2013.

TV appearances: Global Health Frontiers (January 2016), CNN-IBN (October 2014), NDTV (October 2014)

Language skills

English: native; Hindi: proficient; Gujarati: proficient

Computer skills

Stata; \LaTeX

July 1, 2021