

DEEPAK SARASWAT

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Education

- Ph.D. Economics, University of Connecticut, 2017–2022
- M.Sc. Economics, University of Texas at Austin, 2015–2017
- M.Sc. Economics, University of Essex, UK, 2010–2011
- B.A. (Hons.) Economics, University of Delhi, India, 2006–2009

Employment

- **Amazon**, Economist, Prime Video Personalization & Discovery, *April 2025–present*
- **Meta Platforms, Inc.**, Research Scientist, Demography and Survey Science Team, *Aug 2022–April 2025*
- **University of Connecticut, Dept. of Economics**, Teaching Assistant, Research Assistant, and Instructor of Record, *Aug 2017–May 2022*
- **World Bank**, Short-term Consultant, *July 2019–Aug 2019 & Sept 2020–Dec 2020*
- **Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), South Asia**, Research Manager, *June 2014–July 2015*; Research Associate, *Nov 2011–May 2014*
- **Centre for Microfinance, IFMR Research**, Research Consultant, *Aug 2009–July 2010*

Research Interests

- Labor Economics, Development Economics, Urban Economics, Health Economics, Economics of Education, Behavioral Economics, Program Evaluation

Teaching Interests

Primary

- Urban Economics, Econometrics/Quantitative Methods, Development Economics, Labor Economics

Secondary

- Health Economics, Public Economics, Economics of Education, Macroeconomics

Publications and Accepted Papers

- *Can Destigmatizing Mental Health Increase Willingness to Seek Help? Experimental Evidence from Nepal.. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 2025, Volume 44 (97-124) (with Lindsey Lacey, Nishith Mishra, Priya Mukherjee, Nikhilesh Prakash, Nishith Prakash, Diane Quinn & Shwetlena Sabarwal)

- *All Pain and No Gain: When goal setting leads to more effort but no gains in test scores.* **Economics of Education Review**, 2024, Volume 103, 102594 (with Asad Islam, Sungoh Kwon, Eema Masood, Nishith Prakash & Shwetlena Sabarwal)
- *Gender Composition of Children and Sanitation Behavior in India.* **Journal of Environmental Economics and Management**, 2024, Volume 125, 102962
- *When Criminality Begets Crime: The Role of Elected Politicians in India.* **Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization**, 2024, ewae021 (with Nishith Prakash, Soham Sahoo and Reetika Sindhi)

Working Papers

- *Can Technology Mitigate the Impact of Heat and Humidity on Productivity? Experimental Evidence from India* (R&R at Economics and Human Biology)
- *Labor Market Impacts of Exposure to Affordable Housing Supply: Evidence from the LIHTC Program*
- *Minimum Scholastic Standards and Student Outcomes: Role of Support Services in the U.S.* (with Nishith Prakash and Stephen L. Ross)

Work in Progress

- *Job Loss and Marital Dissolution in the US: The Role of Outside Option and Gender* (with Patralekha Ukil)
- *Impact of Early Childhood Education in Nepal* (with Shwetlena Sabarwal, Lindsey Lacey, Natasha Jha, Nishith Prakash & Rachel Cohen)
- *The Impact of Affordable Housing in the US on Peer Exposure: The Role of Changes in Neighborhoods* (with Patralekha Ukil)

Policy Writing

- *Educator Knowledge of Early Childhood Development: Evidence from Eastern Nepal.* Policy Research Working Paper No. 9381, World Bank (with Lindsey Buck, Nathan Fiala, Nishith Prakash, Shwetlena Sabarwal & Deepika Shrestha)

Teaching Experience

Instructor

- Econometrics-I (University of Connecticut) [Syllabus](#) [Student Evaluation](#) Spring 2021

Teaching Assistant

- Principles of Macroeconomics (University of Connecticut) Fall 2017, Fall 2018, Spring 2019
- Principles of Microeconomics (University of Connecticut) Spring 2018
- Contemporary Problems in Economics (*writing-intensive*) (University of Connecticut) Fall 2021
- Development Economics (University of Texas at Austin) Fall 2015, Fall 2016

Guest Lecturer

- PhD Development Economics (University of Connecticut) Spring 2022

- Sustainable Economic Development (University of Connecticut)
- Statistical Methods for Impact Evaluation (IFMR Research)
- Economic Development (University of Connecticut)

Spring 2021
Fall 2020
Fall 2019

Conferences and Invited Presentations

- **2025:** Sacred Heart University (Department of Economics), SEA 95th Annual Meeting (*scheduled*)
- **2024:** 99th Annual Conference of the Western Economic Association International; Urban Economics Association's 18th North American Meeting; SEA 94th Annual Meeting
- **2023:** University of California–San Diego (invited seminar); SEA 93rd Annual Meeting
- **2022:** U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (invited seminar); Newcastle University, UK; Meta Platforms, Inc.; Analysis Group; Syracuse University; Sarojini Naidu College for Women, Kolkata, India
- **2021:** Asia Impact Evaluation Conference; KDI School–World Bank DIME Conference; Southern Economic Association's 91st Annual Meeting (Session Organizer); Symposium on Economic Experiments in Developing Countries; Economic Development in Africa (CSAE), University of Oxford; University of Connecticut
- **2020:** SEA 90th Annual Meeting; NEUDC, Dartmouth College; University of Connecticut; Advances in Field Experiments, University of Chicago; 17th Midwest International Economic Development Conference, Purdue University; World Bank, Washington DC (invited seminar)
- **2019:** ISI Delhi; Norms and Behavioral Change (NoBeC) Conference, UPenn; NEUDC, Northwestern University; IIM Bangalore; Jindal Global University (invited seminar); University of Connecticut
- **2018:** SEA 88th Annual Meeting; Department of Political Science, University of Connecticut (invited seminar)

Professional Service

- Mentor, *Association for Mentoring and Inclusion in Economics (AMIE)* (2024-25, 2025-26)
- Organizer, PhD Student Seminar Series, Department of Economics, University of Connecticut (2020–21)
- Volunteer Data Analyst for the *Healthy Minds Study*, as part of the Wellness Coalition Academic Affairs Partnership Committee, University of Connecticut (2020-21)
- Member of the Organizing Committee, *New Frontiers in Development Economics Conference*, University of Connecticut (2017-18)

Peer Reviewer for Academic Journals: *Journal of Development Economics* (x2), *Journal of Development Studies* (x2), *Economics of Education Review*, *Empirical Economics*, *Economic Inquiry*, *Economic Modelling*, *Science Advances*, *PLOS ONE* (x2), *Applied Spatial Analysis & Policy*, *One Health*, *Feminist Economics*, *Journal of International Development*, *Economia Politica*, *MARGIN: The Indian Journal of Applied Economics*.

Conference Paper Reviewer: North East Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC), 2024 Conference.

Honors & Awards

- **2020:** Best Third Year Paper Award, Department of Economics, University of Connecticut
- **2019:** Travel Award, Health Economics and Policy Education Lab, University of Connecticut

- **2017–2018:** Teaching Excellence Letters, Office of the Provost, University of Connecticut
- **2010–2011:** Postgraduate Scholarship, University of Essex, UK
- **2010:** Travel Grant for Postgraduate Studies, Sir Ratan Tata Trust

Skills

- **Software:** Stata, R, Python, PySpark, SQL, \LaTeX , ArcGIS
- **Other:** Certified to teach “W” (writing-intensive) courses at the University of Connecticut

Abstracts of Research Papers

Gender Composition of Children and Sanitation Behavior in India (*Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*)

Abstract: Open defecation has been linked to various environmental and public health issues and has gained significant policy attention. Investing in better sanitation has also been advocated to provide women with privacy and protection from harassment. Nonetheless, previous research has shown that because of son-biased preferences, households in India underinvest in outcomes for their female children. Linking the gender composition of children to the sanitation behavior in Indian households, I find that households increase toilet ownership in the presence of female children by 5% in urban and 2.5% in rural areas, respectively. These results are robust to various empirical specifications, falsification tests, and bounding analysis to test for omitted-variable bias. Various heterogeneity analyses suggest that the decline in open defecation in response to having a female child is driven by households living in regions with a higher prevalence gender-based harassment and weaker law and order. These findings provide new evidence that differences in the gender composition of households create differential incentives to adopt toilets, a finding that can be harnessed to reduce open defecation in India.

When Criminality Begets Crime: The Role of Elected Politicians in India (*Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*)

Abstract: This paper examines the effect of electing criminally accused politicians on crime in India, considering the severity of their alleged offenses. Employing an instrumental variable approach that exploits the quasi-random variation in outcomes of close elections between candidates with and without criminal accusations, we find that a standard deviation increase in the share of criminally accused leaders in institutionally weaker states leads to a 0.05 standard deviation rise in yearly reported crimes. Leaders accused of serious crimes have a more pronounced effect on crime outcomes, including crimes against women. Crucially, leaders accused of serious crimes also exert a negative influence on female labor force participation, underlining their detrimental impact on socioeconomic welfare. Our findings highlight the significance of considering the nature and severity of criminal accusations when evaluating the impact of criminally accused politicians on crime and society.

Can Destigmatizing Mental Health Increase Willingness to Seek Help? Experimental Evidence from Nepal (*Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*)

Abstract: We conducted a randomized control trial to study the impact of two information messages aimed at reducing the stigma associated with mental illness on the willingness to seek mental healthcare among adults in Nepal. The first intervention shares information about the prevalence of mental health issues and the efficacy of treatment. The second intervention shares information about the mental health struggles of a Nepali celebrity and how he benefited from treatment. We find three results. First, compared to a no-information control group, both interventions increase participants’ stated willingness to

seek mental health treatment. This effect is driven by participants with high personal and anticipated stigma, less severe symptoms of depression and anxiety, and who hold strong beliefs about conformity to masculinity. Second, the impact on participants' stated willingness to seek mental health treatment mirrors their willingness to pay for counseling. Third, participants are, on average, more likely to report willingness to seek help when the enumerator is female.

All Pain and No Gain: When Goal Setting Leads to More Effort but No Gains in Test Scores (*Economics of Education Review*)

Abstract: We conducted an at-scale randomized control trial among 18,281 secondary students in Tanzania to examine the effects of self-set academic goals on students' efforts and academic outcomes. We also test the impact of combining goal setting with non-financial rewards. We find that goal-setting has a significant positive effect on self-reported student time use, study effort, and self-discipline along with a positive but statistically insignificant impact on the performance on the test. We also find that combining goal setting with recognition awards for achieving the goals does not demonstrate any complementary effects. Heterogeneity analysis suggests that goal-setting has a higher impact on the test performance for the students in the middle of the distribution of baseline learning levels. We also find that the impact of the treatment does not vary significantly across students' gender, socioeconomic background and by the type of chosen goals.

Can Technology Mitigate the Impact of Heat on Labor Productivity? Experimental Evidence from India (*R&R, Economics and Human Biology*)

Abstract: This paper analyses the role of technology in reducing heat-induced labor productivity losses. For this, we use a field experiment in India which randomized the use of productivity-augmenting digital mode versus classic paper-and-pen mode for conducting 2000 household surveys. Combining this experimentally induced variation in survey mode with day-to-day variation in temperature, we estimate the impact of survey mode on surveyor productivity as temperature rises. We find that as temperature rises and working conditions start to deteriorate, using digital-mode results in 5 percent higher surveyor-productivity compared to paper surveys. These relative productivity gains are mainly concentrated in extremely hot days—where the adverse impact of heat is likely at its peak. Further analysis shows that these impacts are not driven by differences in effort of surveyors or differences in the characteristics of respondents, thereby pointing to the role of technology in reducing the adverse effects of heat.

Labor Market Impacts of Exposure to Affordable Housing Supply: Evidence from the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program

Abstract: Affordable housing programs in the United States affect neighborhoods, but little is known about their impact on individuals living in these neighborhoods. This paper examines the effects of affordable housing construction under the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program on individuals' labor market outcomes and welfare dependence. We exploit changes in the LIHTC program that affect spatial housing supply and compare labor market outcomes of individuals exposed to different levels of housing construction. We address the empirical challenges of selective sorting by matching the timing of housing supply changes to individuals' neighborhoods of residence. Our findings indicate an average improvement in labor market outcomes due to increased affordable housing supply in their neighborhood. We also document significant heterogeneities by race and ethnicity, likely explained by program-induced and migration-induced changes in neighborhood quality.

Minimum Scholastic Standards and Student Outcomes: Role of Support Services in the US

Abstract: We employ a regression discontinuity design to assess the effect of mentoring services on the academic performance of undergraduates who fall below the minimum academic standards at a large public university in the US. Our results show that students invited to participate in the mentoring program experience significant GPA improvements in subsequent semesters. The impact is more pronounced in

later years, following enhancements in program resources and services. Additionally, we find that the improvement in academic outcomes translates into labor market outcomes in the form of higher wages.

Breaking the Marital Union: The Role of Job Loss in the US

Abstract: This paper investigates the effects of changes in local economic conditions on the existing marital unions in the US. Using the biennial panel structure of the March Current Population Survey data, we exploit the variation in negative shocks to manufacturing industries in commuting zones to analyze the impact on marital dissolution. Results suggest an increase in marital dissolution on average following higher import penetration in local labor markets, and the effect is stronger in markets with limited options outside of manufacturing jobs.

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