

# Akanksha Vardani

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## CONTACT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS  
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## PLACEMENT CHAIRS

Sandra Black  
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## PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATORS

Amy Devine  
aed2152@columbia.edu

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## 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*

## RESEARCH FIELDS

**Development Economics, Family Economics, Public Economics**

## JOB MARKET PAPER

### **A House for Two : Empowering Women with Property Rights**

Abstract: Formal property ownership may not empower women unless those that they interact with also recognize it. I study the effect of improving awareness about property rights on women's empowerment through a field experiment in rural Maharashtra. I work in a setting where following a recent policy change married women are documented owners but only 26% recognize it. I randomize an awareness campaign across 1,783 households that informs both spouses that women co-own their property and delivers a physical copy of their ownership document. The campaign improves knowledge that women hold property rights, increases expenditure on women-specific goods by 40%, and reduces men's alcohol consumption by 33%, though it has no overall effect on domestic violence. I develop and test an intrahousehold bargaining model, which highlights that the effect of the campaign may differ depending on who already knows. Consistent with the model's predictions, the strongest consumption effects are observed in households with the lowest initial knowledge about women's ownership, while reductions in domestic violence occur in households where the husband did not know but the wife did. This study highlights how shifting beliefs about women's rights is essential to realizing the full impact of large-scale government programs.

## WORKING PAPER

### **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.

WORK IN PROGRESS	<b>Unpacking Willingness to Pay as a Measure of Women's Empowerment</b> with Aletheia Donald, William Hickman and Berber Kramer	
	<b>From Skills to Jobs: How Community and Household Networks Impact Women's Workforce Entry</b> with Tushar Kundu	
	<b>Signaling in Female Education</b> with Tushar Kundu	
RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND INTERNSHIPS	<b>Research Assistant</b> <i>Supervisors: Michael Best and Evan Sadler</i> Department of Economics, Columbia University, New York	<b>2020-2021</b>
	<b>Research Assistant</b> <i>Supervisor: Rohini Somanathan</i> Department of Economics, Delhi School of Economics, New Delhi	<b>2017-2019</b>
	<b>Research Analyst Intern</b> India Institute, New Delhi	<b>2015</b>
	<b>Research Intern</b> Consumers India, New Delhi	<b>2014-2015</b>
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	<b>Teaching Fellow, Columbia University</b> Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	<b>Fall 2022</b>
	Microeconomics (MA)	<b>Spring 2022</b>
	Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)	<b>Fall 2021</b>
	Math Camp (PhD)	<b>Summer 2021</b>
AWARDS AND HONORS	SurveyCTO Primary Data Collection Research Grant (Honorable Mention)	<b>2024</b>
	Wueller Pre-Dissertation Award for Best 4th-year Proposal, Columbia University	<b>2023</b>
	Reubens Travel and Research Award, Columbia University	<b>2023</b>
	Wueller Award for Best TA for MA Program, Columbia University	<b>2022</b>
	Wueller Award for Best TA (Runners up) for Undergraduate Courses, Columbia University	<b>2022</b>
	Exim Bank Scholarship, DSE	<b>2016-2018</b>
	National (CAS) Scholarship Internal, DSE	<b>2016-2018</b>
	Rai Bahadur Raghunath Sahai Memorial Prize, IPCW	<b>2016</b>
	Rewa Dhawan Memorial Scholarship, IPCW	<b>2013-2016</b>
	Nagendra Nath Majumdar Memorial Prize, IPCW	<b>2016</b>
	Principal's Honour Roll, IPCW	<b>2015</b>
FELLOWSHIPS	<b>NBER Gender in the Economy Fellowship</b>	<b>2023-2024</b>
RESEARCH GRANTS	<b>Weiss Fund</b> (with Aneesha Parvathaneni)	<b>2024</b>
	<b>CDEP Student Research Grant</b> , Columbia University	<b>2023</b>
	<b>PER Experiment Grant</b> , Columbia University	<b>2023</b>
	<b>CDEP Student Research Grant</b> , Columbia University	<b>2022</b>
	<b>PER Experiment Grant</b> , Columbia University	<b>2022</b>
	<b>PER Research Fellow Summer Grant</b> , Columbia University	<b>2020</b>

FIELDWORK  
EXPERIENCE

Running a randomised control trial (RCT) in India to study the impact of land ownership on women's empowerment. *May 2023-present*

Conducted a household-level survey on women's bargaining power across 30 villages, covering 150 households in Pune, India. *October 2022*

Surveyed the workers of the informal wire stripping industry in Seelampur, Delhi. *March 2015*

Surveyed the workers of the informal garment sector in Kapashera, Delhi. *December 2013*

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  
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**Pierre-André Chiappori**  
E. Rowan and Barbara Steinschneider  
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**Bernard Salanié**  
Sami Mnaymneh Professor of Economics,  
Director of the Master's Program  
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