



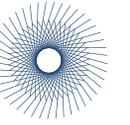
SOUTH  
ASIA  
ECONOMIC  
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SPRING 2022

EXPERT PANEL

# Reshaping Social Norms about Gender: A New Way Forward

S Anukriti, Maurizio Bussolo, Ana Maria Munoz Boudet,  
with Jessy Amarachi Ezebuihe, Tasmia Rahman, Nele Warrinnier, Anaise Williams,  
Veronica M. Gutierrez, Andreas Eberhard, Stavros Poupakis



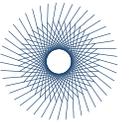


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# Gender inequalities in South Asia are stubbornly persistent

Our chapter' starting point is a review of the large literature and data on gender disparities in South Asia.

We highlight two points:

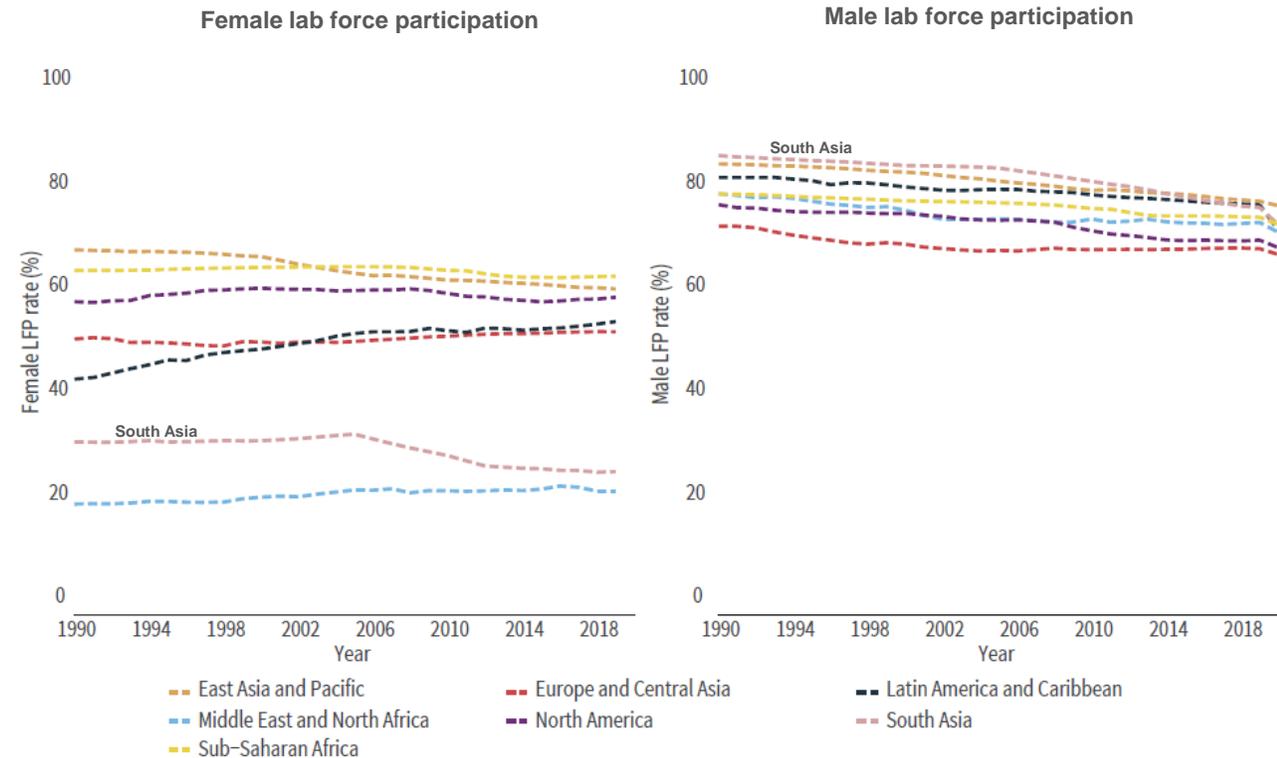


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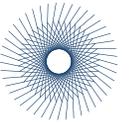
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Firstly, economic drivers, such as economic growth, rising education, and declining fertility, cannot adequately explain the levels and (stagnant to worsening) trends of female labor force participation (FLFP) in South Asia.



Source: South Asia Economic Focus, 2022 using world development indicators



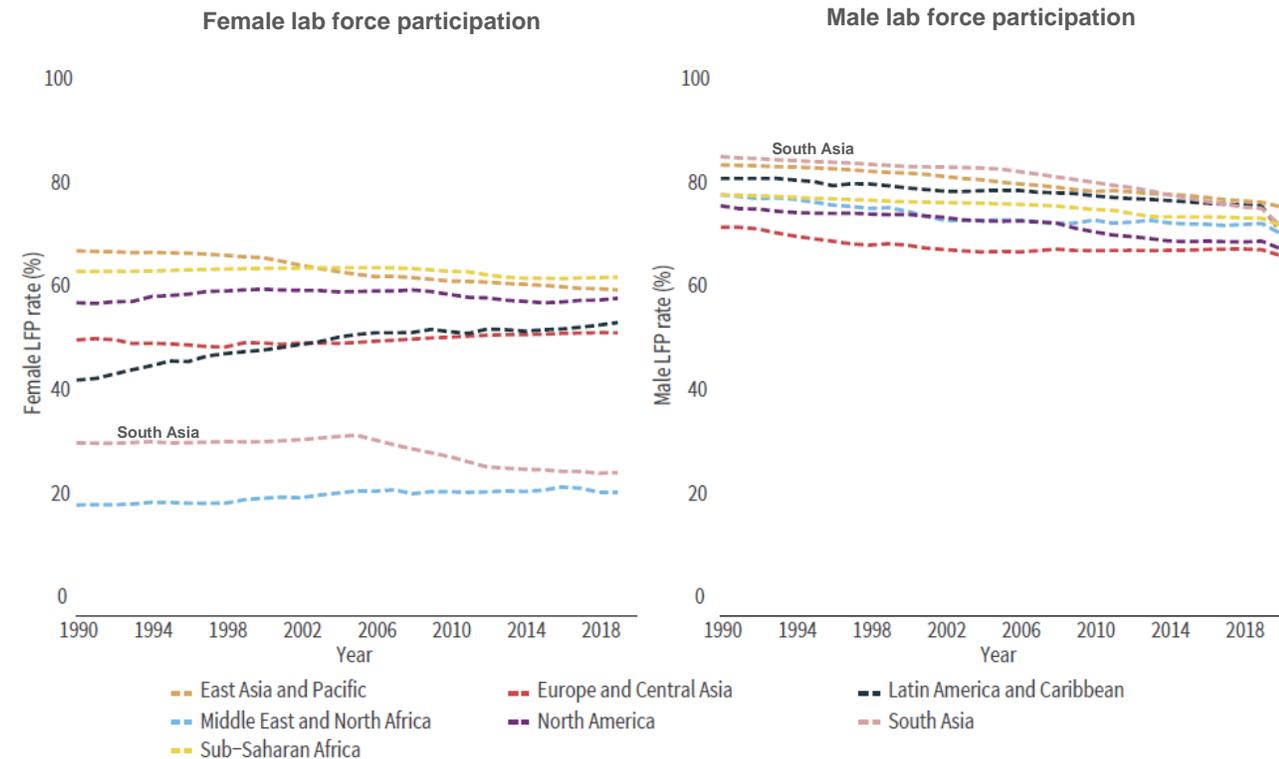
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Secondly, a host of other forms of gender gaps related to economic participation—early marriages, freedom of movement, social interactions, asset ownership, and parents' offspring preference—also show stagnant trends in South Asia.

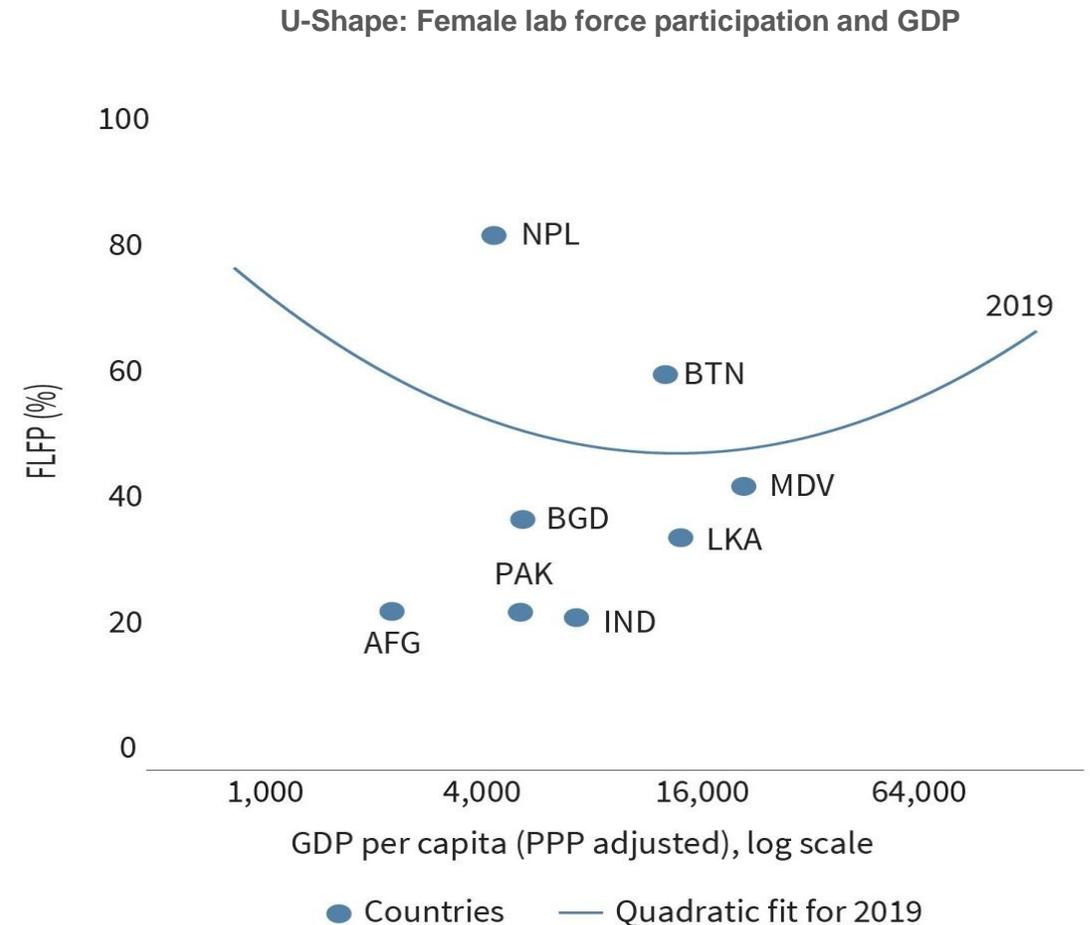


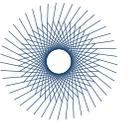
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# Deeply rooted social norms about gender can account for a large proportion of gender disparities

A clear example of how economic determinants are not sufficient to fully explain women's engagement in the labor market is illustrated by the fact that FLFP in most South Asian countries is below what economic development would predict.



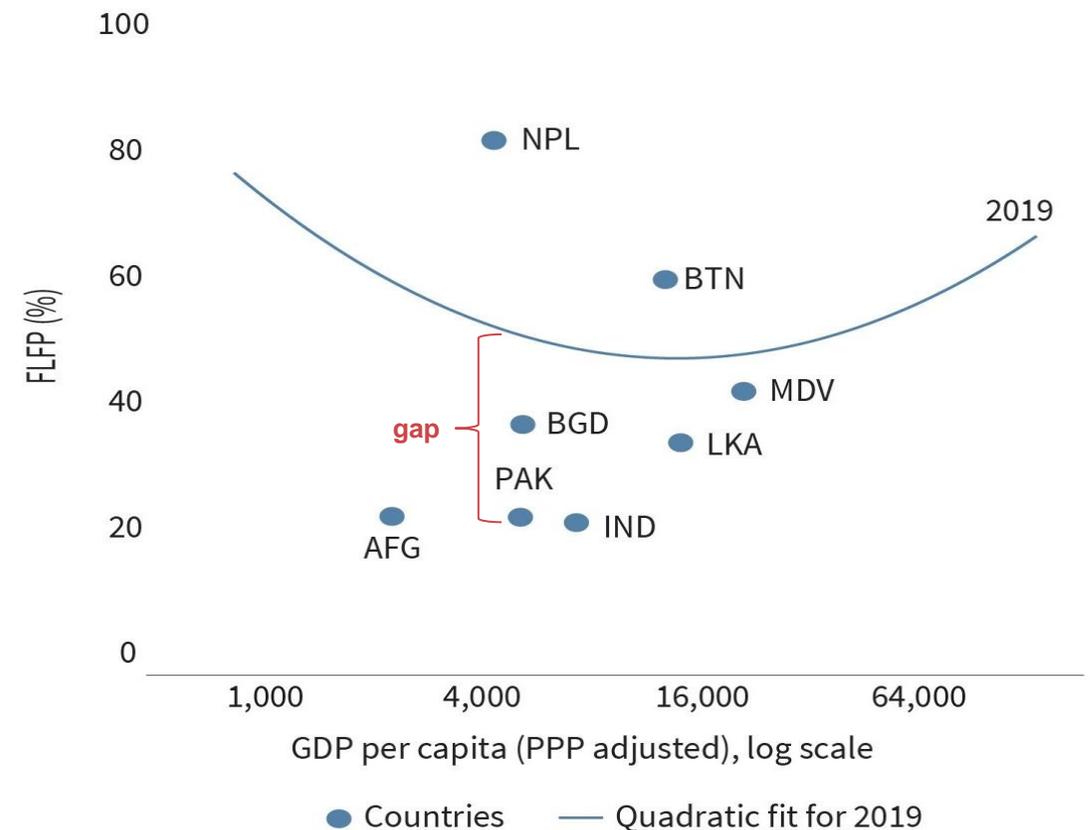


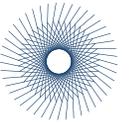
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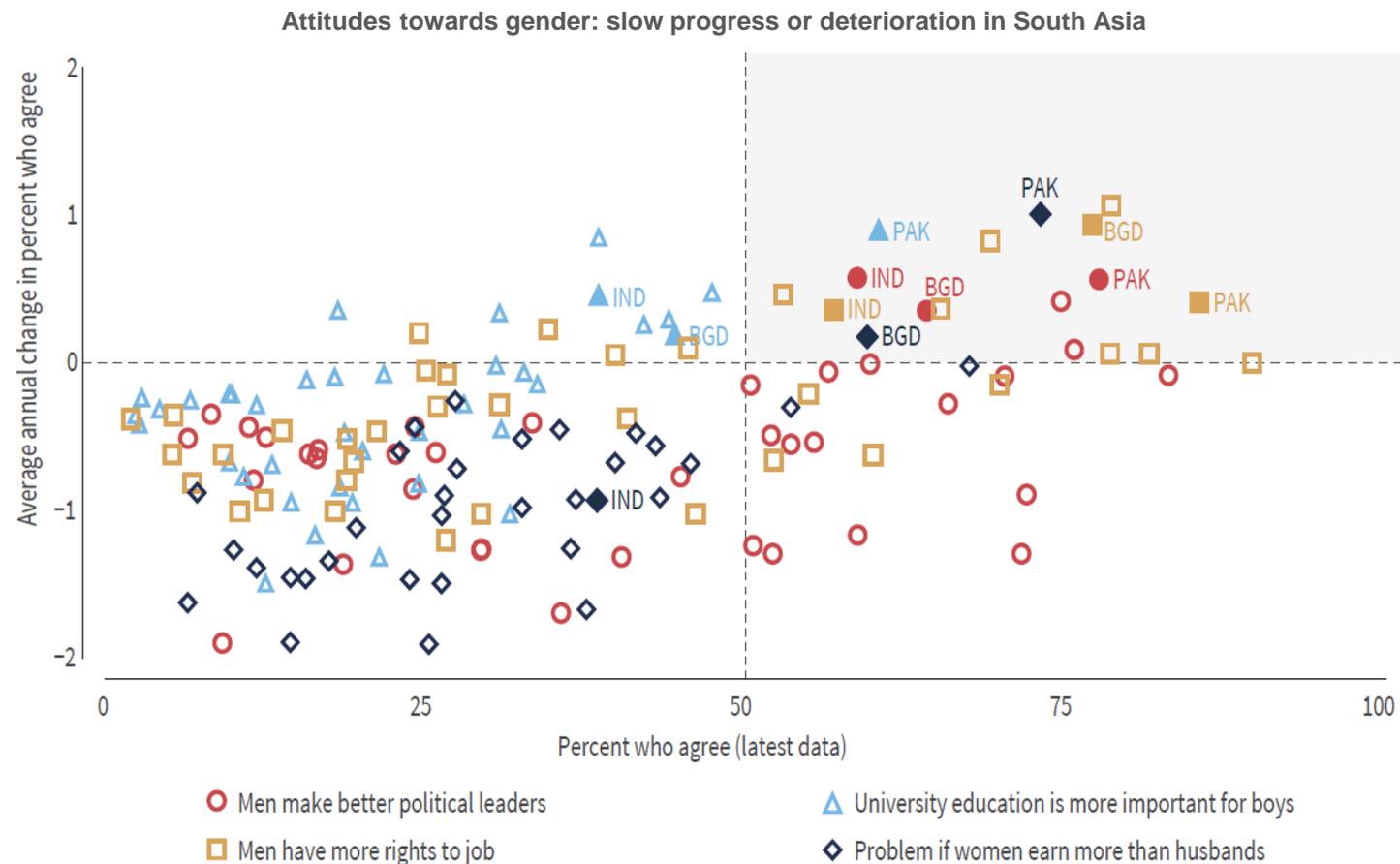
New research in our chapter suggests that deeply rooted social norms, especially those about household division of labor, account for a large share of these **gaps** in women's economic engagement.

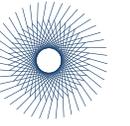
U-Shape: Female lab force participation and GDP





# Attitudes towards gender in South Asia tend to be more conservative than in other regions and have become more conservative over time

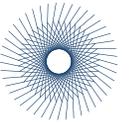




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# Accurate definition and measurement of social norms is crucial

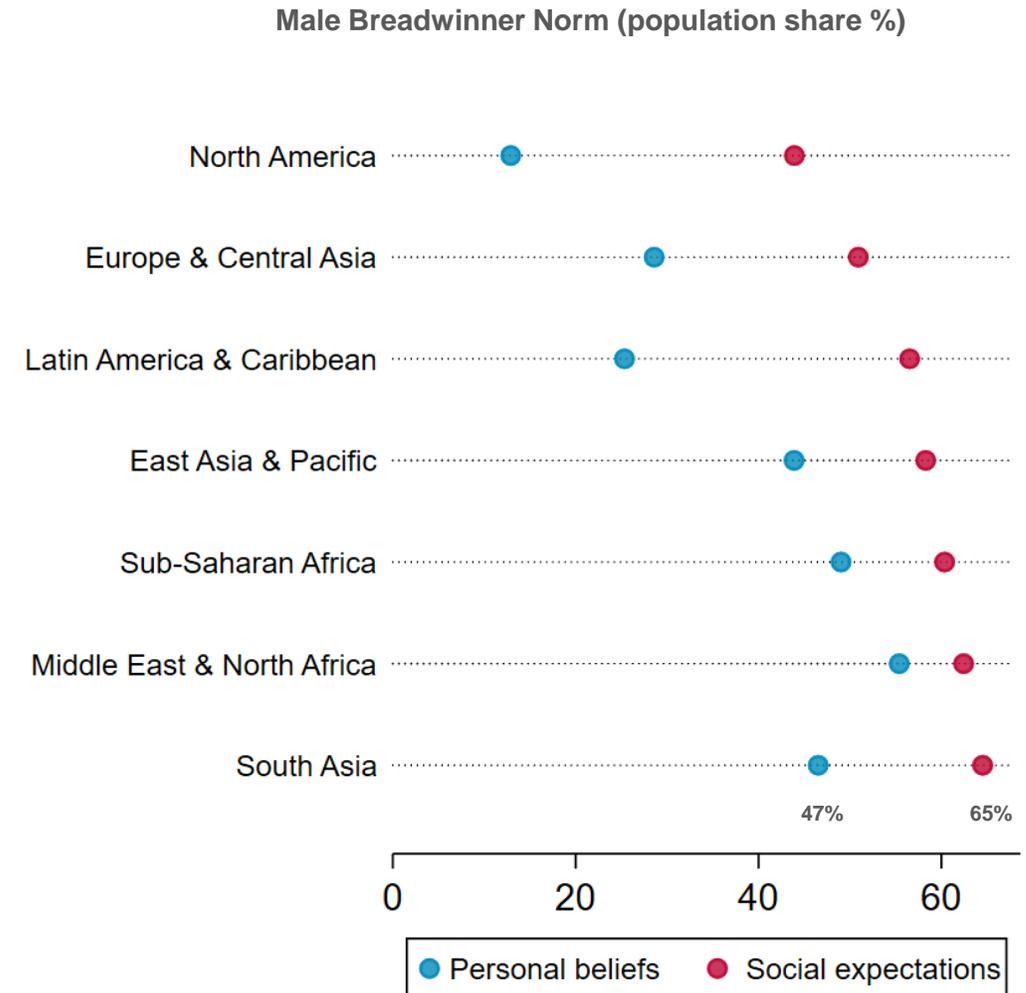
Social norms comprise two distinct elements: *social* expectations and *personal* beliefs (or attitudes).

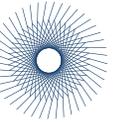


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And in most regions, people personal beliefs tend to be more liberal than what they think are the predominant social views.

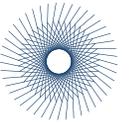




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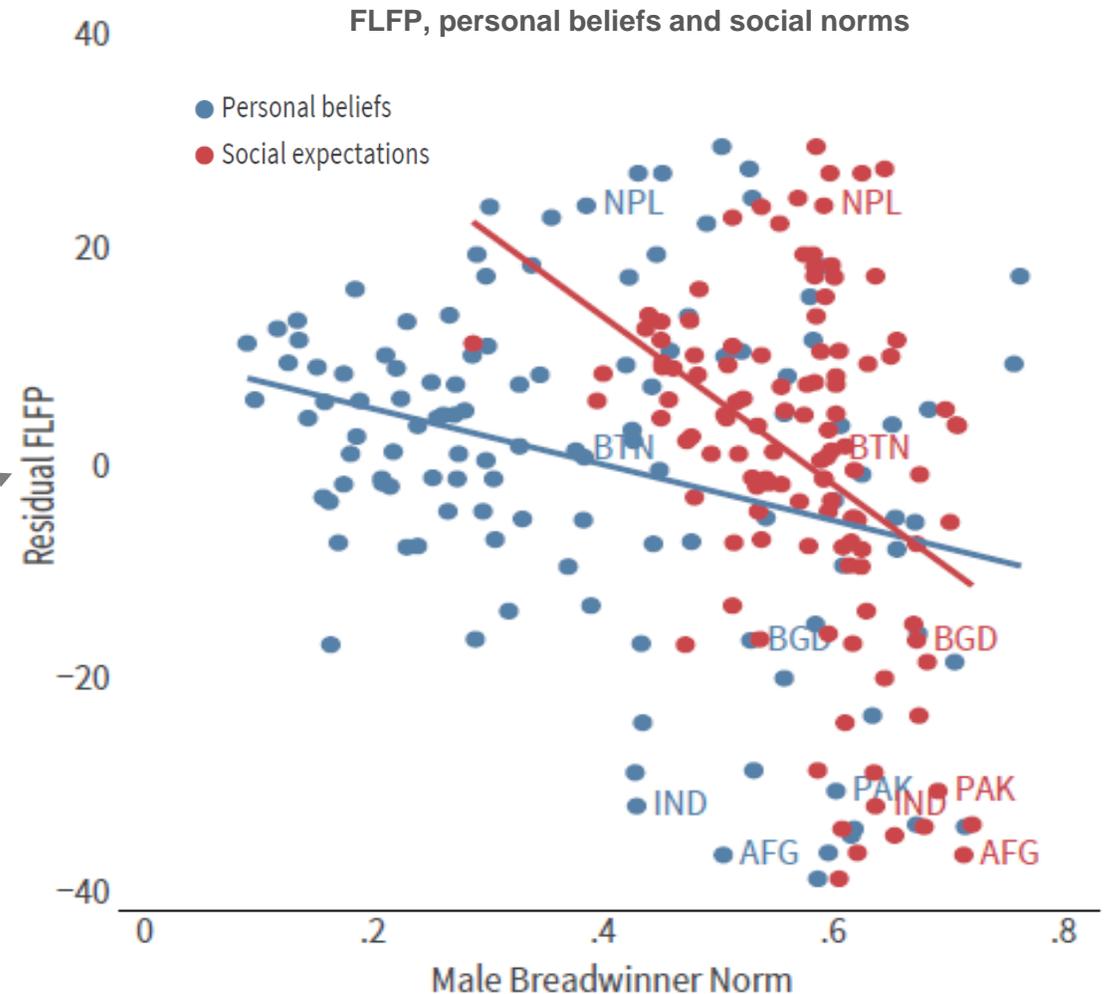
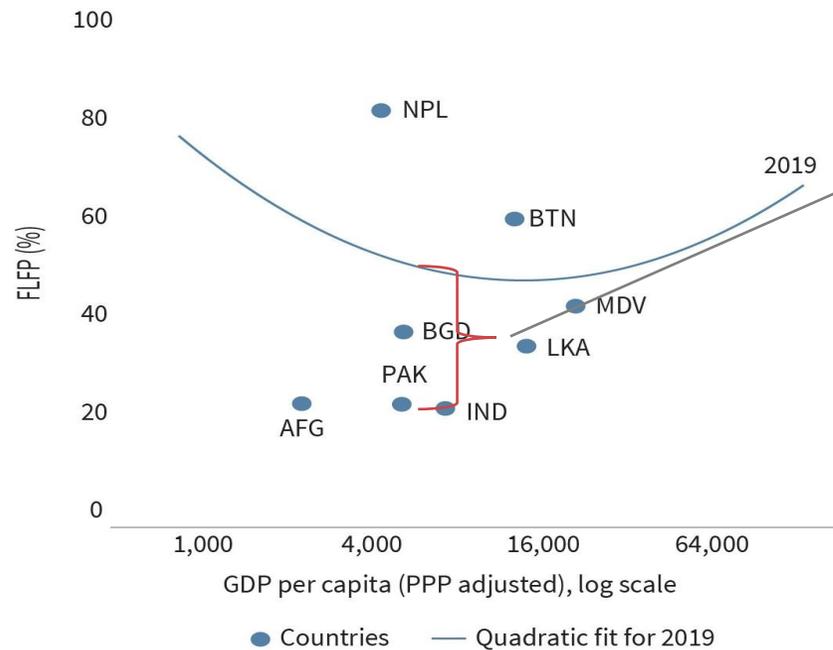
# Social expectations appear to matter even more than personal beliefs in accounting of gender gaps in FLFP

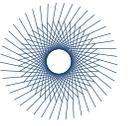
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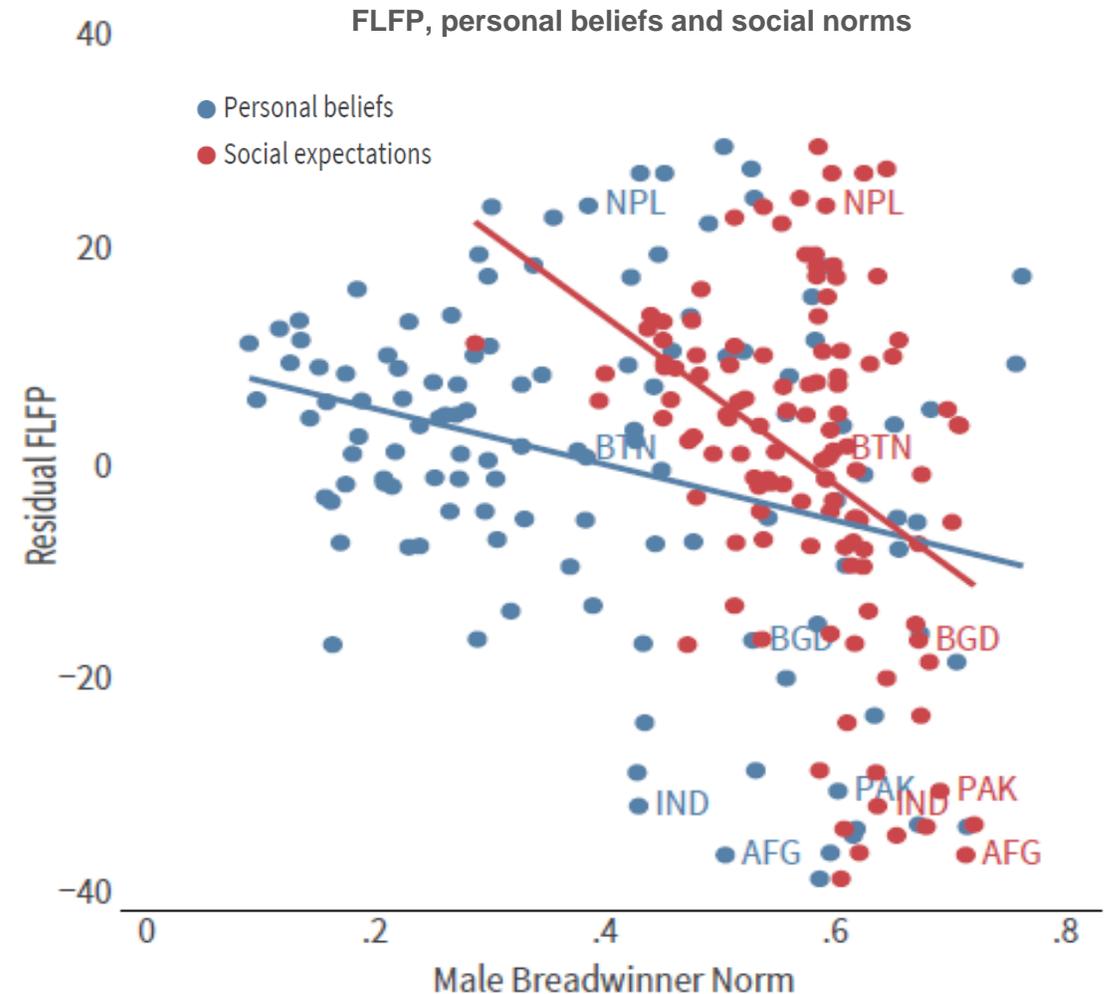


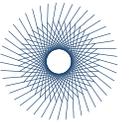


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The residuals of FLFP (the **gaps** after controlling for economic dev.) are correlated with personal beliefs and social norms. In particular:

- The more conservative the beliefs and/or the social expectation, the larger the negative gap

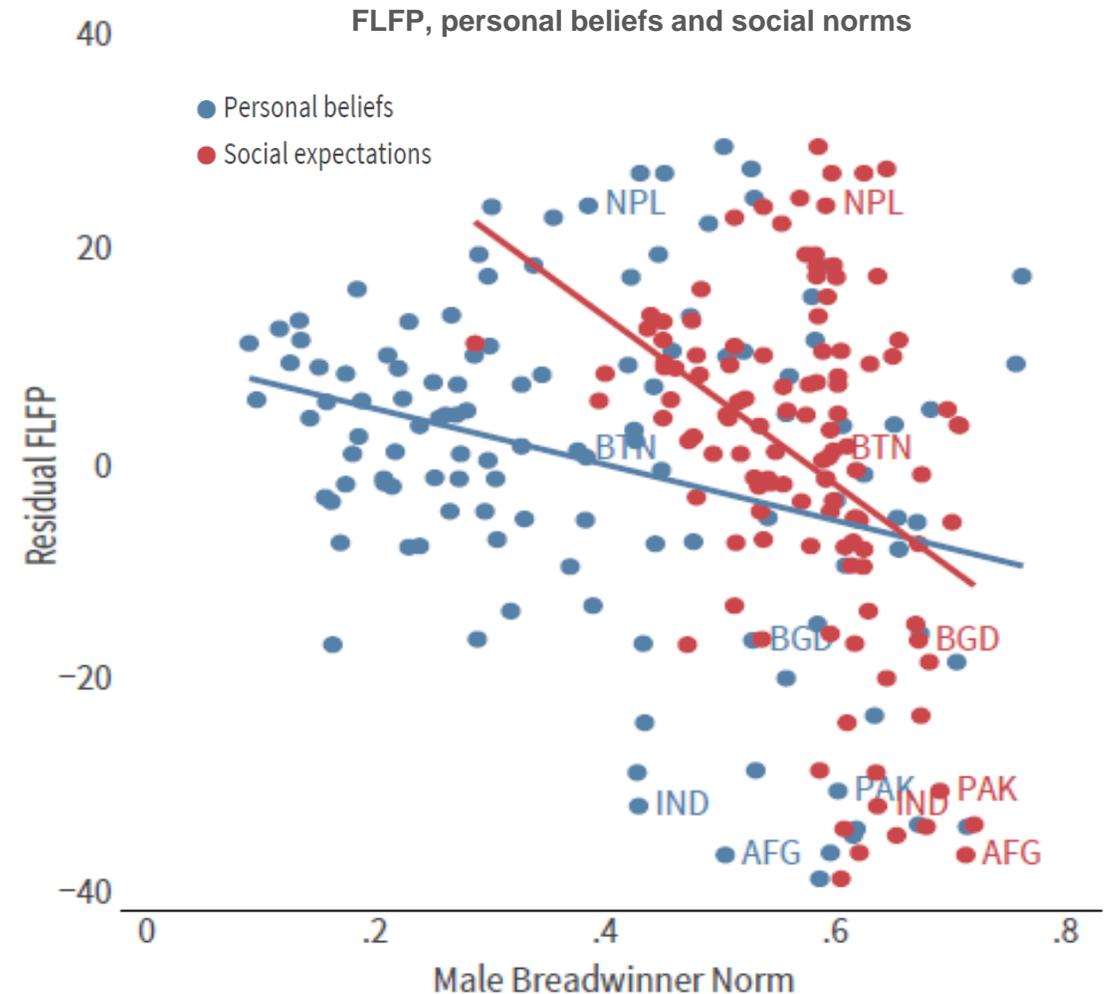


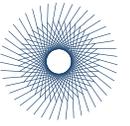


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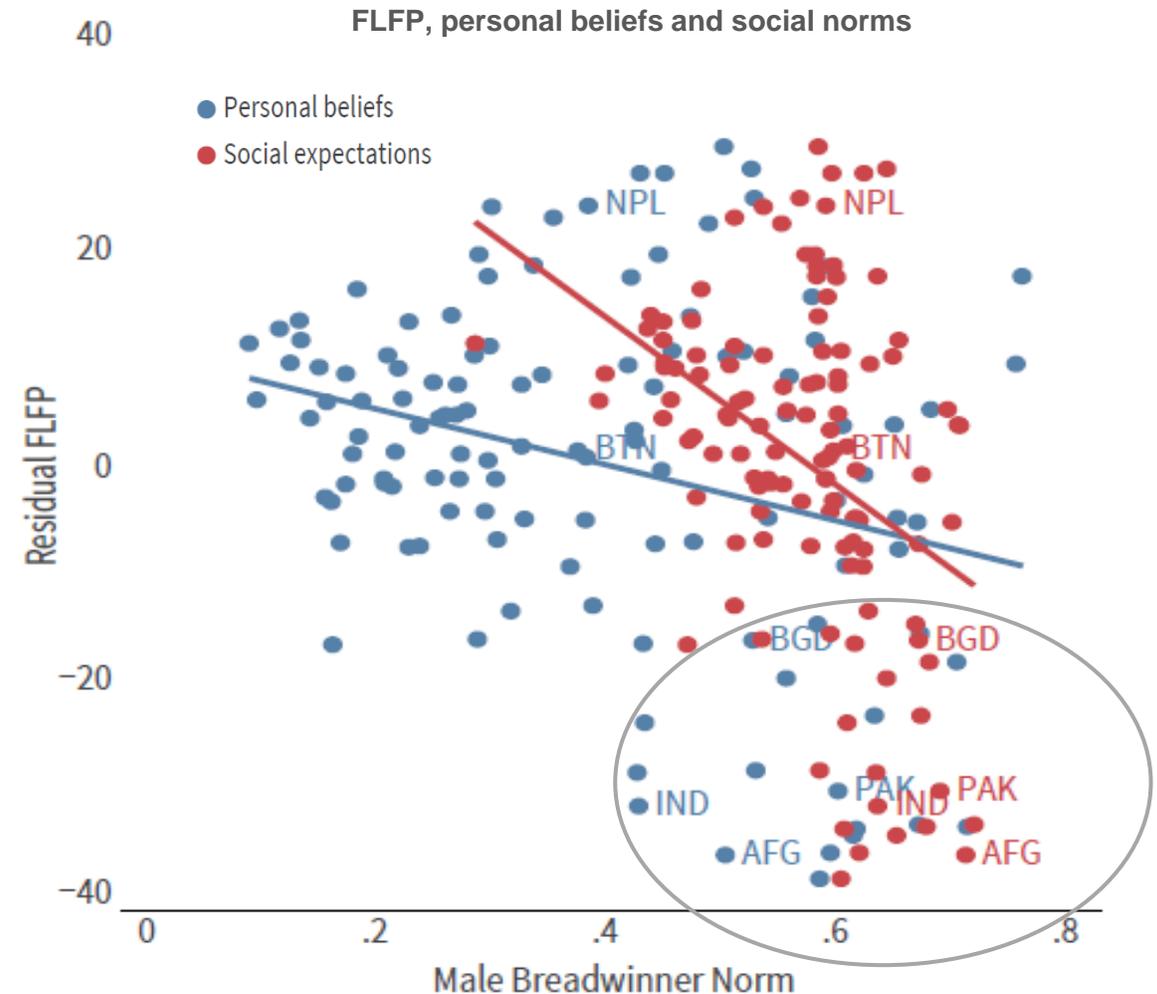


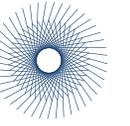


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The residuals of FLFP (the **gaps** after controlling for economic dev.) are correlated with personal beliefs and social norms. In particular:

- The more conservative the beliefs and/or the social expectation, the larger the negative gap
- Social expectations explain a larger share of the residual gaps than personal beliefs
- South Asia countries agglomerate at the bottom right corner (most conservative norms and largest FLFP gaps)

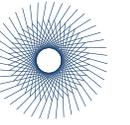




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# Achieving gender equality requires a change in gender norms

**Social norms tend to persist, despite their negative impact on women's opportunities, the welfare of children, and overall economic growth. But social norms are not immutable.**



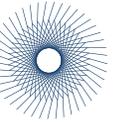
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Policies can improve women's economic opportunities in the face of norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Policies can:

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- Address norms directly: Education policies where students are made aware of biases against women have shifted gender attitudes.
- Correct misperceptions of norms persistence: Information campaigns about the conservative views of society has led to improvement in female labor force participation and other gender outcomes.



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Thank you!

