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Abstract

This paper uses village level data on individual voters to ask what are the factors which determine the probability of whether an individual votes? Is this probability greater for national compared to local elections? And is there evidence that people are more likely to vote today than they were in the past? Allied to these questions is another set of questions relating to the choice of candidates. What are the factors that make for women's autonomy in voting, meaning that they cast their vote without reference to their spousal instructions? What are the factors which contribute to people voting for candidates who are of their own caste? And, lastly, what are the factors which contribute to people voting for candidates who have a reputation for honesty and fairness?

Needless to say, voting in elections is just one facet of political participation. Another might be attending and participating in political meetings. This is particularly relevant in Indian villages since the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1993. This made it mandatory for all villages to have a village council (hereafter, Gram Sabha) consisting of all registered voters on the electoral roll of a village. The Gram Sabha was to be entrusted with the power of supervising the functioning of the elected village panchayat and to approve the panchayat's development plan for the village and the associated budget. Consequently, in addition to voting, electors in villages had another form of political participation: they could attend Gram Sabha meetings and also participate in its discussions. This paper also analyses the factors which determine attendance and participation in such meetings. A worrisome feature of the results was the high proportion of married women reporting that they cast their vote according to their husbands' instructions and further that, this proportion was impervious to the education level of the women. Women's education would not appear, from these results, to reduce the power of patriarchy. Another source of anxiety was the gender gap in the proportion of men and women who took part in Gram Sabha discussions. This would suggest that the reservation of village panchayat positions (including that of *panchayat pradhan*, or village president) for women was a step in the right direction for the empowerment of women. In contrast, there were no inter-social group differences in participation in Gram Sabha meetings.

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1. Introduction

If countries have a 'unique selling point' then India's must surely be that, with over 700 million voters, it is the world's largest democracy. Allied to this is the enthusiasm with which Indians have embraced the electoral process. The turnout in Indian national elections has been over 62% in 10 of the last 15 national elections with 66% of eligible voters voting the 2014 *Lok Sabha* (Parliamentary) elections; the last time that a US Presidential election came close to matching this was the 60% turnout in the 1968 election between Nixon and Humphrey.

Against this backdrop, this paper uses village level data for India on *individual* voters to ask what are the factors which determine the probability of whether an individual votes? Is this probability greater for national compared to local elections? And is there evidence that people are more likely to vote today than they were in the past? Allied to these questions is another set of questions relating to the choice of candidates. What are the factors that make for women's autonomy in voting, meaning that they voted without reference to their spouses' instructions? What are the factors which contribute to people voting for candidates who are of their own caste that is, 'group identity' voting? And, lastly, what are the factors which contribute to people voting for candidates who have a reputation for honesty and fairness?

These specific questions are, in turn, grounded in a number of general hypotheses about people's motivation to vote. Traditional theories of voting are based on an individualistic model of voting. On this view of voting, it is not clear why a rational individual, on a purely cost-benefit basis, would bother to vote: the chances of an individual vote influencing the electoral outcome are infinitesimally small while the costs of voting – taking time off work, standing in a long queue – are real and not insubstantial (Downs, 1957). However, given the far from negligible turnout witnessed in elections throughout the world, it is clear that people do take the trouble to vote.

One reason why people vote is because of 'group identity' voting. In the Indian context, Srinivas (1955) coined the term 'vote banks' to mean the exchange of benefits and favours to groups of citizens in return for their political support. Vote banks had three essential features: political parties which, at the time Srinivas was writing, was essentially the Congress party; a village 'middle man', usually a high caste landowner who was a party member and who had agency over groups of voters;

and voter groups. There was then a patron-client relationship between party and 'middle man', and the middle man and voters, based on a system of reciprocal favours.

Vote banks go some way towards explaining why people in India turn out to vote in such large numbers. Downs' (1957) argument was based on the belief that the *costs* of voting – gathering information about parties and candidates, registration, time spent to/from/at the polling station – were specific to the voter and were likely to exceed the *benefits* from voting. The latter are in the form of collective goods and their benefit to a specific voter are likely to be zero.[1] However, in the context of 'vote banks', many of the benefits of voting may be private benefits paid to groups of voters for their electoral support and may be quite substantial.

Favours to voters took essentially two forms: the provision of local public goods targeted at particular groups, say a paved road or a school in a locality in which people from a group were concentrated; the provision of private benefits to targeted groups of (usually poor) voters, often in the form of cash payments or gifts in kind like cycles, sewing machines, and illegally supplying below poverty line (BPL) cards to voters who do not qualify for these (Breeding, 2011). This raises the interesting question, addressed by Schedler and Shaffer (2007), of how one should distinguish between favours granted through the public purse ('local' public goods) and payments in cash and in kind. Indeed, even when direct payments are made they should not necessarily to be viewed as purely commercial transactions; instead, they may reflect a socio-cultural relationship between the patron and client, embodying 'obligation and reciprocity' and an egalitarian transfer of resources from rich to poor (Srinivas, 1955).

Inglehart (2000) points out that the transition from group identity to individualistic identity is a part of the process of economic development broadly conceived. On this criterion, the importance of the group as a source of votes is decreasing in the Indian polity. Over half a century after Srinivas (1955) formulated his theory of vote banks, Breeding (2011) observed that "while the structure of vote banks remains largely unaltered the meaning of obligation and reciprocity in modern vote banks has completely altered." Indian politics has changed considerably since the days that the Congress

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[1] Besley *et. al.* (2012) suggest that, in the context of Indian villages, residents in the Chief Councillor's village had greater access to public goods than residents in other villages.

was the dominant party. Firstly, the rise in party competition means that there are now many more parties attempting to attract the vote of the same group of voters. Vote banks have thus become an inefficient form of electoral campaigning: parties feel obliged to supply benefits but inter-party competition means that voters feel under no obligation to reciprocate with their votes.

Secondly, the possibility of free-riding has now become greater, particularly so with a stricter enforcement of the secret ballot. The Electoral Commission of India (ECI) has progressively tightened its views on permissible campaigning practices through its *Model Code of Conduct.* At the start of an election period, this Code sets out an elaborate set of parameters within which elections should be conducted; in particular, under this code, the 'payment for votes' is illegal and there are severe restrictions on the use of public resources, particularly by incumbent governments, to 'seek votes'.

Consequently, the reliance of parties in India on vote banks to deliver electoral approval is based more on hope than on expectation and, as these hopes are more often than not belied, parties will begin to see that the cost of maintaining 'vote banks' outweighs their benefits. Overlaying the fickleness of vote banks is the fact that running such client groups can easily cause parties to fall foul of the ECI's strictures and, thereby, risk severe penalties including disqualification.[2] In India today, as Breeding (2011) observes, "vote banks are social displays of wealth on the part of political parties to attract, primarily low-income citizens; they are gestures, historical remnants of a system in which the rules governing the game have changed" (p.77).

So, in order to explain why the turnout in Indian elections is so high one has to explain why people bother to vote even though their vote may not be decisive. In addition to opportunistic electoral politics, there are several, more general, explanations for this paradox of (not) voting. As Geys (2006) observes, the instrumental theory of voting holds that an action has value only if it affects outcome. Sen (1977) argued that if "outcome" was narrowly defined as serving one's own interest, to the exclusion of any others, then a person acting in such a manner might be 'rational' but he would also be a fool. Indeed, Sen (1977) argued that people act out of a myriad motives many of which are

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[2] As a consequence of employing over 2 million workers during elections, the ECI's observers are ubiquitous and, since they are drawn from the ranks of those in civilian employment, cannot be easily identified. In addition, the Indian media seizes upon any infractions of the Model Code and affords them considerable publicity.

unconnected with self-interest. One of these is 'sympathy', another is 'commitment'. Even if it is argued that 'sympathy' is just an economic externality, Sen (1977) argues that commitment involves a counter-preferential choice, destroying the crucial assumption that the chosen alternative must be better than the others – "it drives a wedge between personal choice and personal welfare" (p. 329). Consequently, the high turnout in elections "may be guided not so much by expected utility maximisation but by something simpler, *viz.* just a desire to record one's true preference" (p.333).

The concept of 'expressive voting' elaborates upon, and extends, the view of people voting to record their preference. In terms of 'expressive voting', people vote not for instrumental reasons – that is to effect change – but rather to express an opinion or a point of view, regardless of whether that turns out to be the winning opinion. This view has been articulated by *inter alia* Brennan and Lomasky (1993) and Hamlin and Jennings (2011).

All this is not to say that expressive voting cannot be self-interested or not result in change. The 2014 Indian election results, which led to a landslide victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Narendra Modi, can be interpreted as an expression of the electorate's distaste for the ineffectual, dynastic government led by the Congress Party. As Banerjee (2014) argues that, "for many Indian voters, voting is not just a means to elect a government…rather the very act of voting is seen by them as meaningful, as an end in itself, that expresses the virtues of citizenship, accountability, and civility that they wish to see in ordinary life, but rarely can. " (p. 3)

For all these reasons this paper analyses the decisions of *individuals*, rather than of groups, on whether to vote and the basis on which to vote. Of course, in making such decisions, individuals are constrained by group identity, whether it is women burdened by the strictures of patriarchy or by persons voting on the grounds of caste loyalty. All these issues – women's autonomy, caste loyalty, and, indeed, the (possibly futile) desire for honest candidates - are central to political participation in rural India. The novelty of this paper is that it addresses them using a unique set of data on individuals living in nearly 250 villages distributed over 18 different Indian states. This enables it to provide *quantitative* answers to questions relating to voting and meetings in contrast to answers based upon *qualitative* responses (for example, Banerjee, 2014). The next section describes the data used and the subsequent sections provide the analysis.

Voting in elections is just one facet of political participation. Another might be attending and participating in 'political meetings'. This is particularly relevant in Indian villages since the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1993. This made it mandatory for all villages to have a village council (hereafter, *Gram Sabha*) consisting of all registered voters on the electoral roll of a village. The *Gram Sabha* was to be entrusted with the power of supervising the functioning of the elected village *panchayat* and to approve the panchayat's development plan for the village and the associated budget. Consequently, in addition to voting, electors in villages had another form of political participation: they could attend *Gram Sabha* meetings and also participate in its discussions. This paper also analyses the factors which determine attendance and participation in such meetings.

2. Data and Preliminary Analysis

The data for this paper is from the Rural Economic and Demographic Survey (REDS) of 2006 covering 18 states in India and encompassing 8,652 households. Members of these households were asked whether they had voted in the *period* covering the (i) current panchayat election (ii) the previous panchayat election, and (iii) the previous to previous panchayat election. They were also asked the election *level* at which they voted: (i) for the *gramt pradhan* (village president); a ward member of the *panchayat*; (iii) a member of the state legislative assembly (MLA); (iv) a member of the national parliament (MP).

In total, there were 272, 532 *responses* to this question, from 25,995 *individuals*. Of the total of responses, 75% (204,984) did, and 25% (66,714) did not, vote. The respondents were also distinguished by religion and caste. So, for example, 78% of Scheduled Caste (*SC*), and 76% of Other Backward Classes (*OBC*), respondents voted compared to 74% of Scheduled Tribe (*ST*), and 74% of Upper Caste (*UC*), respondents. A test on the difference in proportions of those who voted between persons from the SC and the UC showed that these differences were significantly different from zero for all three election periods: current, previous and previous to previous. However, it was only for local elections that the proportion of persons from the *SC* who said they had voted was significantly different from that of *UC* persons; there was no significant difference between the two groups in the proportions of their members who voted in national elections.

It was hypothesised that an individual's decision to participate in the electoral process would *inter alia* depend upon (a) social; (b) economic; and (c) demographic factors. These factors capture the primary socio-economic characteristics driving electoral participation in rural India. Understanding electoral participation through the perspective of these socio-economic determinants will also help us in identifying the "ideal" type of voter in rural India. Thus, an understanding of who typically votes in elections will be gained.

We used the following *conditioning variables* or factors in our analyses:

a) Social factors:

These include the *social group* to which the household belonged: *SC, ST, OBC, and UC*;

b) Economic factors:

These include the primary *occupation* of the person:

   a. Self-employed in agriculture

   b. Self-employed in non-agriculture

   c. Agricultural wage labourer

   d. Non-agricultural wage labourer

   e. Salaried

   f. Family Worker (agriculture and non-agriculture)

   g. Household worker

   h. Retired, dependent, or student;

And the *educational level* of the person:

   a. Illiterate

   b. Educated up to primary level

   c. Educated up to secondary level

   d. Educated up to higher secondary level or uncompleted college

   e. Educated with a degree or higher

c) Demographic factors:

These include the person's gender and age.

The equation to be estimated can be expressed as:

$$P(Y_{iv} = 1) = \alpha + \beta_1 X_{iv} + \beta_2 V_v + \varepsilon_{iv} \qquad (1)$$

Where y_{iv} is the outcome variable of interest (whether individual i residing in village v voted in the election / participated in a Gram Sabha meeting). α represents unobserved individual and village-level characteristics, X_{iv} is a vector of individual-specific characteristics, detailed above, encompassing the social, economic, and demographic factors that could determine electoral participation, V_v are village fixed-effects, and ε_{iv} is the random error term.

The average age of the 25,995 voters, referred to above,[3] was 42 years, 80% were married, and the division by gender was almost equal with 51% male and 49% female voters. It is worth emphasising that the division of the sample is by social group: *SC*, *ST*. *OBC*, and *UC*. Each of these groups can contain persons of different religions. So, for example, the *SC* could comprise Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists while the *OBC* and the *UC* could contain both Hindus (mostly) and Muslims (as a minority). Although this study does not explicitly study the voting behaviour of Muslims in Indian villages it is worth saying something about this Muslims comprise about 15% of India's population, In our own study –which, as stated above, does not explicitly examine the voting behaviour of Muslims – it was found that 31% of Muslim respondents, compared to 24% of Hindu respondents, did not vote and further that this difference between the two groups was statistically significant.[4]

Figures 1-3 shows some of the salient features of the voters in terms of their social group, educational level, and occupation.

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[3] To recapitulate, these were voters who answered whether they had voted in the *period* covering the (i) current panchayat election (ii) the previous panchayat election, and (iii) the previous to previous panchayat election and the level of election at which they had voted.
[4] For academic studies of the political participation of Muslims see Rowley and Smith (2009), Potrafke (2010), and Hanusch (2013).
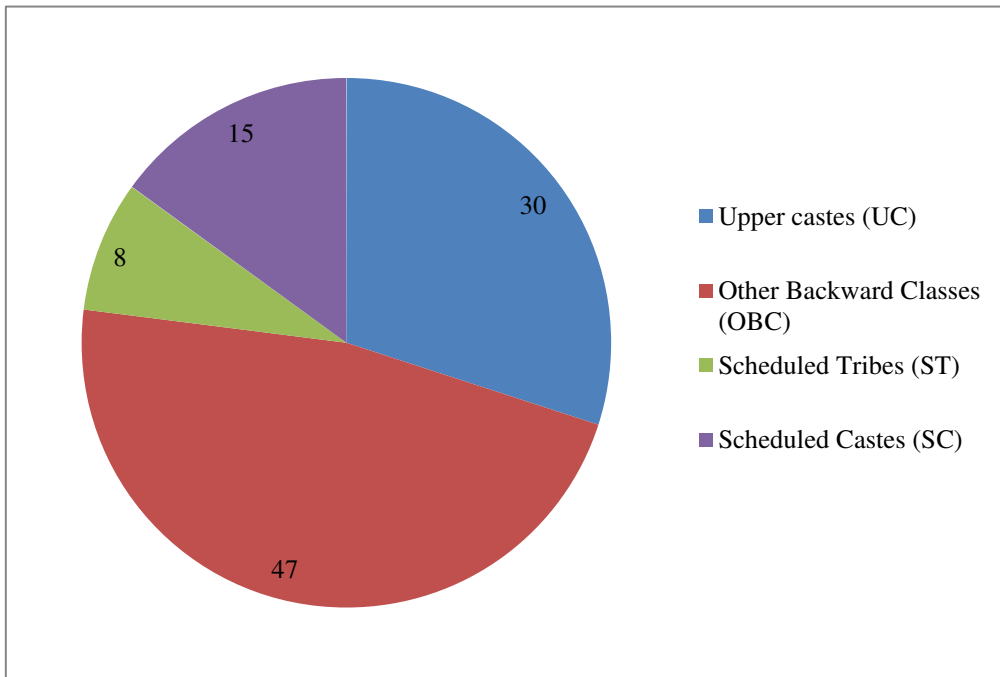
Figure 1: Social Group of the Voters (%)

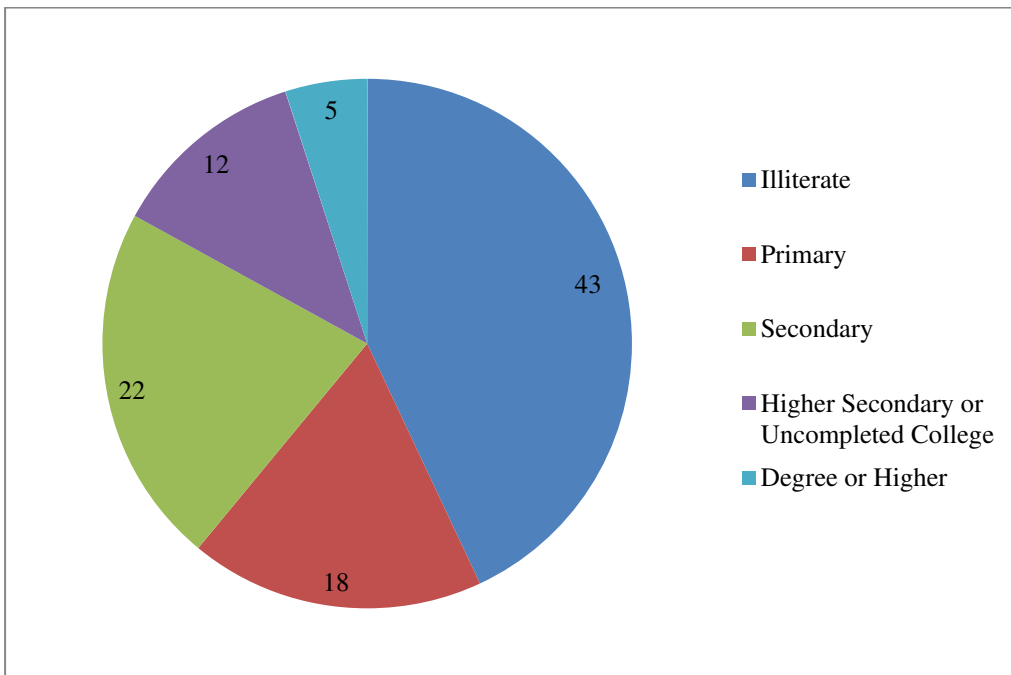**Figure 2: Educational Level of Voters (%)**

Figure 3: Occupations of the Voters (%)
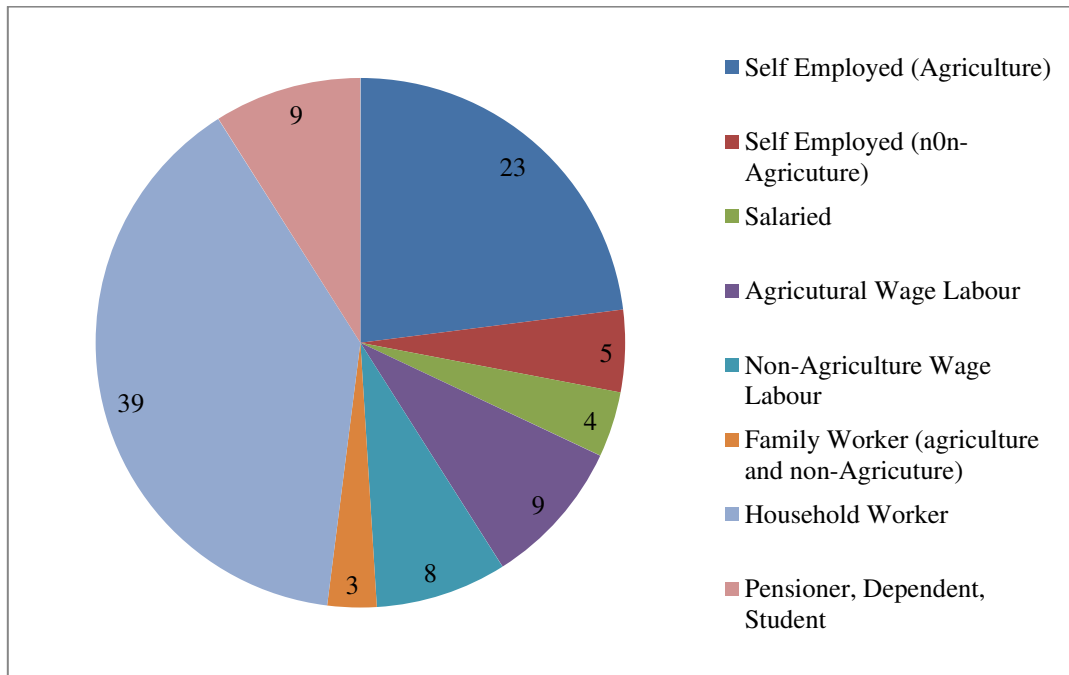
The elections considered in the study could be distinguished by *election level* and by *election period*:

1. The election level referred to the difference between 'national' and 'local' elections. National Elections were defined as elections to the State Assembly or to the National Parliament; and 'Local Elections' were elections at the village panchayat level, either of the *gram pradhan* (village president) or a ward member. The 'national election effect' was captured by a variable *NE* which took the value 1 if the election was for the state Assembly or national Parliament and zero otherwise.

2. The election period referred to when the elections were held. 'Current' Elections are elections that were held during the period of the *current* panchayat. 'Past' elections are elections that were held during the life of the *previous* (or *previous to previous*) panchayat. The 'current election effect' was captured by a variable *CE* which took the value 1 if the decision to vote occurred during the period of the current panchayat and the value zero if it occurred during the previous (or previous to previous) panchayat.

So, in total there were 12 elections in the villages covered by the sample: Parliamentary and Assembly (collectively referred to as 'national') × three election periods (current, previous, and previous to previous *panchayats*). Since the *panchayat* periods are not specifically defined, we assumed that they were of 5-7 years duration so that the earliest *panchayat* election in the sample (the 'previous to the previous' *panchayat*) was held around (approximately) 1994.

A person is eligible to vote in India at the age of 18 years. So, only those persons in the sample who were 18 years old in 1994 – and, therefore at least 30 years of age in the survey of 2006 - would have been eligible to vote in *all* 12 elections. So, from the from 25,995 *individuals* who answered the voting question, we chose the 18,322 persons who, by virtue of being older than 30 years at the time of the survey, *could* have voted in all 12 elections. On average, these persons voted in 9.2 of the 12 elections in which they *could* have voted, yielding an average participation rate of 77%. There were 199,087 *responses* from these 18,322 voters to the "did you vote in election X?" question and, of these 199,087 responses, 85% were positive.

Table 1 shows the results of estimating a logit model, for respondents above 30 years age, in which the dependent variable, y, took the value 1 if the person i, $i=1,...N$, voted $(y_i=1)$ in a particular election and zero if he/she did not $(y_i=0)$.

Interaction effects were used to model whether the effect of one conditioning variable varied according to values of another variable. In the context of this study, a natural question to ask is whether the effects of some of the conditioning variables (social group, age, gender, marital status, education, and occupation) on the decision to vote varied according to whether the election was 'national' or local and also according to whether it was a current or a past election. In order to answer this question we estimated a general model in which the conditioning variables were allowed to interact with the national/local election variable (*NE*) and, also, separately with the current/past election variable (*CE*). By virtue of this characteristic, this model is referred to in the paper as the *general interaction model* (GIM).

3. Model Estimation and Predicted Probabilities

The GIM was estimated on 181,556 responses which was the number of responses which had *non-missing values* associated with *all* the conditioning variables. The coefficient estimates, in terms

of the odds ratios, are shown in an Appendix to this paper; these estimates are employed in the body of the paper to make predictions about the probability of voting under various scenarios relating to the values of the conditioning variables. Following the advice contained in Long and Freese (2014), the method of model interpretation used in this paper is based upon predicted probabilities rather than on the odds-ratios shown in Table A1 of the Appendix.

Overall, the GIM predicted that, $y_i=1$ for 85.4% of the 181,556 responses with a 95% confidence interval of [85.2%, 85.6%].[5] This prediction was based upon using the equation estimates in conjunction with the observed values of the conditioning variables to compute $Pr[y_i=1]$ for each response and, then to average over these 181,556 predicted probabilities to obtain 85.4%. [An alternative method of prediction is to hold the values of the conditioning variables at their mean values and to use the equation to predict the probability of voting. Under this scenario, $Pr[y_i=1]$=91.9% suggesting that there is a difference between the "average probability over all persons" (85.4%) and the "probability of the average person".

The specific results from the estimated GIM are shown in Table 1 in terms of probabilities (column 2) and the marginal probabilities (column 3) of voting. Column 2 shows that the predicted probability of a *SC* response being positive is 85.99%. This probability was obtained by setting *SC=1* for all the 181,556 cases but leaving the values of the other variables for each case unchanged (that is, as observed in the sample). Applying the equation estimates (shown in Table A1 of the Appendix) to these revised values yields a predicted probability of 85.99%. It is important to emphasise that, in computing this probability, all the interaction effects (the interactions of *SC* with *NE* and with *CE*) are taken into account. The predicted probability of voting of the *ST*, *OBC*, and the *UC* are also computed similarly.

The *marginal probability* associated with a variable refers to the *change* in the outcome probability consequent upon a unit change in the value of the variable, *the values of the other variables remaining unchanged.* For discrete variables (as, indeed, are, except for age, all the variables reported above), an unit change in the value of a variable refers to a move *from the reference*

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[5] That is, the probability of a randomly chosen response being positive will, with 95% probability, be between 85.2% and 85.5%.

category to the category in question, the values of the other variables remaining unchanged. So, the *marginal probability* associated with the *SC* is defined as the *difference* between the *SC* and the (group) reference category in their predicted probabilities of voting. Since, in this study, the *UC* are the reference category, the marginal probability associated with the *SC* is 85.99%-84.93%=1.06 *percentage points*. This is shown in column 3 (against the *SC* row) as 0.0106. Dividing this marginal probability (in column 3) by its standard error (column 4) yields the z-value associated with this marginal probability (column 5). For the *SC t*his is 3.75 and, as the *p*-value in column 6 suggests, this marginal probability is significantly different from zero. The marginal probabilities associated with the *ST* and the *OBC* are, however, *not* significantly different from zero.

Similarly, one may predict the probabilities of the responses associated with the different educational responses being positive. Column 2 shows that the predicted probability of responses from persons with primary level of education being positive is 85.82%. This probability was obtained by setting *PRM=1* for all the 181,556 cases but leaving the values of the other variables for each case unchanged (that is, as observed in the sample). Applying the equation estimates (shown in Table A1 of the Appendix) to these revised values yields a predicted probability of 85.82%. [Again it is important to emphasise that, in computing this probability, all the interaction effects (the interactions of *PRM* with *NE* and with *CE*) are taken into account]. The predicted probabilities of voting of the other educational categories (*ILT, SEC, HSEC, GRD*) are also computed similarly. Since *GRD* is the reference category, the marginal probabilities for education are defined as difference between the other educational categories and the *GRD* category in their probabilities of a positive response. The marginal probability for the *PRM* category is 85.22%-84.29=1.53 percentage points; this is reported in column 3 as 0.0153 and the z value in column 5, in conjunction with the *p*-value of column 6, shows that this change is significantly different from zero. The marginal probabilities associated with the other educational categories are, however, *not* significantly different from zero.

Lastly, one can turn to the probabilities associated with national versus local and current versus past elections. Column 2 shows that the predicted probability of voting, when elections were national, was 92.2% compared to 77.86% when they were local. Similarly, the predicted probability of voting, when elections were held in the current panchayat period, was 88.45% compared to 77.86%

when they were in past panchayat periods. These probabilities were obtained by, respectively, setting *NE=1* and *CE=1* for all the 181,556 cases but leaving the values of the other variables for each case unchanged (that is, as observed in the sample). The changes in these probabilities are the marginal probabilities associated with national and current elections: respectively, 14.34 and 6.02 points. As the z-values in column 5 show, these changes were significantly different from zero. Once again, it is important to emphasise that, in computing this probability, all the interaction effects (in this case, the interactions of *NE* and *CE* with all the other conditioning variables) are taken into account.

Table 1 allows one to identify the variables whose associated marginal probabilities were significantly different from zero:

1. Scheduled Castes versus the Upper Castes: the probability change from the reference category (upper castes) is positive and significant

2. Women versus men: the probability change from the reference category (men) is negative and significant

3. Married versus unmarried: the probability change from the reference category (unmarried) is positive and significant

4. Primary education versus Graduates: the probability change from the reference category (graduates) is positive and significant

5. Self-employed in agriculture versus pensioners, dependents, students: the probability change from the reference category (pensioners, dependents, students) is positive and significant

6. Self-employed in non-agriculture versus pensioners, dependents, students: the probability change from the reference category (pensioners, dependents, students) is positive and significant

7. Agricultural wage labourers versus pensioners, dependents, students: the probability change from the reference category (pensioners, dependents, students) is positive and significant

8. Non-Agricultural wage labourers versus pensioners, dependents, students: the probability change from the reference category (pensioners, dependents, students) is positive and significant

9. National versus local elections: the probability change from the reference category (local elections) is positive and significant

10. Current versus past elections: the probability change from the reference category (past elections) is positive and significant

The high probability of voting in elections (92% in national elections and 79% in local elections) flies in the face of the rational choice model of voting which weighs the costs of voting against its expected benefits. However, if one considers group-based based voting (Geys, 2006) then turnout could be stimulated by the enforcement of group-based social norms. According to Grossman and Helpman, (2001), three elements are likely to be particularly important for the existence of, and the ease of enforcing, such norms. First, there is the frequency of interaction between group members. Second, social norms will be more binding the greater the danger of social isolation if these norms are flouted. Third, enforcement is easier if actions are observable. All these conditions are likely to be particularly important in the context of the close proximity in which residents of an Indian village live Indeed, as Akerlof (1976) in his paper on caste has observed, the threat of ostracism plays a big role in enforcing caste norms.

Table 1: Predicted and Marginal Probabilities of Voting

1	2	3	4	5	6
Conditioning Variable	Probability	Marginal Probability	SE	z value	Pr>|z|
Scheduled Caste (SC)	0.8599	0.0106	0.003	3.75	0.00
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	0.8509	0.0016	0.005	0.34	0.74
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	0.8472	-0.0021	0.002	-0.92	0.36
Upper Castes (UC) [Reference]	0.8493				
Females	0.8460	-0.0084	0.003	-2.60	0.01
Males [Reference]	0.8543				
Married	0.8517	0.0137	0.003	4.99	0.00
Unmarried [Reference]	0.8380				
Illiterate (ILT)	0.8488	0.0058	0.004	1.30	0.19
Primary (PRM)	0.8582	0.0153	0.004	3.44	0.00
Secondary (SEC)	0.8479	0.0049	0.004	1.16	0.25
Higher Secondary (HSEC)	0.8490	0.0061	0.005	1.28	0.20
Graduate (GRD) [Reference]	0.8429				
Self-employed Agriculture (SEA)	0.8593	0.0213	0.004	4.85	0.00
Self-employed non-Agriculture (SEnA)	0.8572	0.0192	0.005	3.68	0.00
Salaried (SAL)	0.8292	-0.0089	0.006	-1.53	0.13
Agriculture Wage Labour (AWL)	0.8639	0.0258	0.005	5.21	0.00
Non-Agriculture Wage Labour (NAWL)	0.8552	0.0171	0.005	3.37	0.00
Family Worker (FWK)	0.8271	-0.0110	0.007	-1.49	0.14
Household Worker (HWK)	0.8461	0.0080	0.005	1.73	0.08
Pensioner, Dependent, student [Reference]	0.8381				
National Election	0.9220	0.1434	0.002	89.30	0.00
Local Election	0.7866				
Current Election	.88447	.06024	.0015552	38.74	0.00
Past Election	.82423				
Age at mean	0.8681	0.0028	0.000	33.06	0.00

4. The Basis for Choosing Candidates

Given that a person voted for a candidate/party, a further question is on what basis did he/she chose his/her preferred candidate/party? The REDS survey asked voters this question by offering them a range of possibilities. In the context of India's political economy, three of these questions are of interest.

The first concerns the *autonomy* of the women's vote: do women in rural India vote according to their own preferences or according to their husbands' preferences? In this context, voters were asked if the reason they voted for a candidate/party was because they "were told to do so by their spouse": of the 47,640 *male* responses to this question, only 8% replied in the affirmative; however, of the 49,297 *female* responses to the same question, 69% replied that what had determined their vote was their spouses' instructions.[6]

The second question relates to the *caste basis* for voting: when voting, do voters primarily vote for candidates who are of their caste? In this context, of the 201,999 responses to this question, only 17% admitted to their vote having been determined by the candidates' caste.[7]

The third question relates to *candidate merit*: do voters choose candidates with a reputation for honesty and fairness? Of the 202,946 responses to the 'honesty' question, 60.8% said that they voted on the basis of the candidates' reputation for honesty.[8]

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[6] Autonomy, in general, refers to the control that women have over their lives – the ability of women to obtain information and to use that as the basis for making decisions both about themselves and their intimates (Dyson and Moore, 1983). Jeejeebhoy and Sattar (2001) in their discussion of women's autonomy in India observe that "the cultures of South Asia are gender-stratified characterised by hierarchical relations…in which the patriarch or his relatives have control over family members." In her ethnographic study of Indian elections, Banerjee (2014) notes that it is "mainly men who conduct public discussions of politic because venues where these discussions occur are traditionally masculine places. These discussions then filtered back into people's homes as men brought back news of the day [and] women, who were often missing from public discussion of politics, often asked questions of their men requiring them to clarify points" (p.87-88).

[7] The importance of caste as a determinant of electoral outcomes in India cannot be overemphasised: see Chandra (2004).

[8] Corruption in Indian public life has emerged as a salient feature of the country's political debate. In 2012, India ranked 94th out of 176 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index and, in practical terms, corruption has ramifications for almost every aspect of life in India (Witsoe, 2012; Borooah, 2012). Consequently, it is likely that a reputation for honesty and fairness might be an important consideration in evaluating candidates. Indeed, the desire on the part of Indian voters to address corruption in Indian public life has spawned an entirely new party – the *Aam Aadmi* Party – which briefly came to power in the state of Delhi and which also won a number of seats in the 2014 Indian parliamentary elections.

Women's Autonomy

In order to throw light on the women's autonomy question, we estimated a logit equation in which the dependent variable took the value 1 if the married woman said the reason she voted for a candidate/party was because she "was told to do so by their spouse", and took the value 0 otherwise. (It is important to emphasise that a particular woman did not necessarily *always* vote according to formula – she may well have recorded a value of 1 for some elections and 0 for others). As in the previous section, in order to answer this question we estimated a general model in which the relevant conditioning variables (social group, age, education, and occupation) were allowed to interact with the national/local election variable (*NE*) and, also, separately with the current/past election variable (*CE*).

Estimated over 38,033 responses from married women who were at least 30 years of age at the time of the survey, this model predicted that after all interaction effects had been accounted for, 69.3% of women would have voted according to spousal instructions but, if the women's attributes had been held at the mean values, this would have risen to 78.3%.[9] In other words, *on average* 69% of the votes of married women (who were at least 30 years of age) were awarded according to spousal instructions but there was a 79% chance that the *average woman* would vote as her husband told her.

The specific results from the estimated GIM are shown in Table 2 in terms of probabilities (column 2) and the marginal probabilities (column 3) of voting. Column 2 shows that the predicted probability of a *SC* female response being positive (that is, she voted according to her spouse's instructions) was 67.77% while the equivalent *UC* (the reference category) response was 68.74% yielding a marginal probability of 0.97 percentage points which, as the associated *z* value shows, was not significantly different from zero. Women from the *ST* and the *OBC* were, however, significantly more likely to vote according their husbands' wishes than *UC* (and *ipso facto SC*) women. Their marginal probabilities – that is, the difference between their probabilities (respectively, 72.78% and 70.9%) that of UC women (68.74%) - were significantly different from zero. So, women's autnmy was *highest* among the *SC* and the *UC* and *lowest* among the *ST* and the *OBC*.

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[9] The estimated coefficients from this model are not shown but may be obtained on request.

Interestingly, there did not appear to be any difference between women of different educational levels in their propensity to vote as their husbands asked. To illustrate this point, the likelihood of women graduates and of illiterate women voting according to spousal wishes was, respectively, 68.99% and 70.41% yielding a marginal probability 1.41 percentage points which, as the accompanying *z* value shows, was not significantly different from zero. So, the estimated model does *not* find support for the hypothesis that education liberates women from patriarchal control, at least as far as voting is concerned.

There were strong occupational effects associated with the probability of women's vote being determined by her husband. The probability of women from the reference occupational category (pensioners, dependents, students) voting according to their husbands' instructions was 69.56% and this was *significantly higher* than the corresponding probabilities for women who were self-employed in non-agriculture (60.86%), salaried workers (58.47%), non-agricultural wage labourers (58.5%), and family workers (62.34%). On the other hand, compared to the reference group, the probability of voting according to their husbands' wishes was *not* significantly different for women who were self-employed in agriculture (67.36%), agricultural wage labourers (67.56%), and household workers (70.46%). So, in contrast to education, at least as far as voting was concerned, there was support for the hypothesis that being gainfully employed in non-agricultural activities, to a significant degree, liberated women from patriarchal control.

Lastly, a lack of women's autonomy, as measured by the probability of voting by reference to their husbands' instructions was significantly higher in local elections, than in national, elections (72.75% versus 68.11%) and was significantly higher in 'past', than in current, elections (70.24% versus 69.12%). Compared to national elections, the outcomes of local elections were more closely tied with the welfare of households and hence gave more reason for husbands to control their wives' votes. Once again, it is important to emphasise that, in computing these probabilities, all the interaction effects (in this case, the interactions of *NE* and *CE* with all the other conditioning variables) were taken into account.

Table 2: Predicted, and Marginal. Probabilities of the Probability of Women Voting According to Spouses' Instructions

1	2	3	4	5	6
Conditioning Variable	Probability	Marginal Probability	SE	z value	Pr>|z|
Scheduled Caste (SC)	0.6777	-0.0097	0.007	-1.35	0.18
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	0.7278	0.0404	0.012	3.24	0.00
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	0.7090	0.0216	0.006	3.66	0.00
Upper Castes (UC) [Reference]	0.6874				
Illiterate (ILT)	0.7041	0.0141	0.015	0.96	0.34
Primary (PRM)	0.6978	0.0078	0.015	0.53	0.60
Secondary (SEC)	0.6823	-0.0077	0.015	-0.53	0.60
Higher Secondary (HSEC)	0.6860	-0.0039	0.016	-0.24	0.81
Graduate (GRD) [Reference]	0.6899				
Self-employed Agriculture (SEA)	0.6736	-0.0220	0.018	-1.22	0.22
Self-employed non-Agriculture (SEnA)	0.6086	-0.0870	0.029	-2.95	0.00
Salaried (SAL)	0.5847	-0.1109	0.025	-4.49	0.00
Agriculture Wage Labour (AWL)	0.6756	-0.0200	0.019	-1.07	0.28
Non-Agriculture Wage Labour (NAWL)	0.5850	-0.1106	0.045	-2.44	0.01
Family Worker (FWK)	0.6234	-0.0721	0.035	-2.06	0.04
Household Worker (HWK)	0.7046	0.0091	0.015	0.59	0.55
Pensioner, Dependent, student [Reference]	0.6956				
National Election	0.6811	-0.0465	0.005	-10.29	0.00
Local Election	0.7275				
Current Election	0.6912	-0.0112	0.004	-2.49	0.01
Past Election	0.7024				
Age at Mean	0.6984	0.0001	0.000	0.52	0.60

The Caste Basis of Voting

In order to investigate the importance of caste in voters' candidate selection, we estimated a logit equation in which the dependent variable took the value 1 if the voter's response was that the candidate's caste determined his/her choice, 0 if it did not. (It is important to emphasise that a particular person did not necessarily *always* vote according to caste – he/she may well have recorded a value of 1 for some elections and 0 for others). As in the previous section, in order to answer this question we estimated a general model in which the relevant conditioning variables (social group, age, gender, marital status, education, and occupation) were allowed to interact with the national/local election variable (*NE*) and, also, separately with the current/past election variable (*CE*). By virtue of this characteristic, this model is referred to in the paper as the general interaction model (GIM) *for caste-based voting*. Estimated over 154,191 responses from persons who were at least 30 years of age at the time of the survey, this model predicted that after all interaction effects had been accounted for, 17.2% of the responses would have voted according to caste but that if the respondent's attributes had been held at the mean values this would have fallen to 10.6%.[10] In other words, *on average* 17% of votes by persons (who were at least 30 years of age) were on a caste basis but there was only a 10% chance that the *average person* would vote on the basis of caste.

The specific results from the estimated GIM are shown in Table 3 in terms of probabilities (column 2) and the marginal probabilities (column 3) of voting. The first point to note is that compared to reference group of the *UC* (from which only 15.39% of the responses chose candidates on the basis of caste), the likelihood of responses from the other caste groups, claiming to choose candidates on a caste-basis, was *significantly* higher: 16.16% for the *SC*, 18.02% for the *ST*, and 18.53% for the *OBC*. Indeed, the predicted proportion of *ST* and *OBC* responses claiming caste-based voting (respectively, 18.02% and 18.53%) was significantly higher than that for the *SC* (16.16%).

It is interesting that persons from the OBC had the largest propensity to vote along caste lines. Jaffrelot (2003) points out that India has undergone a "silent revolution" as lower-status groups increasingly captured political office and used political power to alter the balance of power between the upper and the lower castes in the countryside. Foremost among these lower caste groups – who

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[10] The estimated coefficients from this model are not shown but may be obtained on request.

originally were mobilised by the upper caste Congress Party but who now mobilised themselves *against* the Congress – were the *OBC*. These were castes that were not forward – in the sense of belonging to the Brahmin, Kshatriya, or Vaishya *varnas* – but who, unlike the *SC*, were not considered 'untouchable'. In the context of Indian politics, the *OBC* is a useful electoral category encapsulating the lower castes *above the pollution line* who have tried, by voting along caste lines, to carve out a political space for themselves.

Interestingly, education level and the propensity to caste-based voting had a U-shaped distribution. The predicted probability of responses claiming caste-based voting fell from 17.47% for illiterate persons to around 16.3% for persons with primary and secondary educational levels before rising to 18.7% for graduates and higher secondary responses. In consequence, the predicted probability of graduates claiming caste-based voting was *significantly higher* than the corresponding probabilities for responses from illiterate persons or persons educated to primary or secondary levels. In turn, the predicted probability for responses from illiterate persons was *significantly higher* than the corresponding probabilities for responses from persons educated to primary or secondary levels.

In terms of occupations, the propensity for caste based voting was highest for the occupational reference group of pensioners, dependents, students (18.62%) and this was significantly higher than that for the other occupations. The lowest predicted probability of voting along caste lines emanated from those who were non-agricultural wage labourers (15.43%) or self-employed in non-agricultural activities (15.8%). Lastly the predicted likelihood of caste-based voting was significantly lower in national (13.17%) compared to local (21.85%) elections and significantly lower for elections conducted during the current panchayat period (16.31%) compared to elections conducted during the past panchayat periods (17.82%).

Table 3: Predicted and Marginal Probabilities of Caste-Based Voting

1	2	3	4	5	6
Conditioning Variable	Probability	Marginal Probability	SE	z value	Pr>|z|
Scheduled Caste (SC)	0.1616	0.0077	0.003	2.55	0.01
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	0.1802	0.0263	0.006	4.32	0.00
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	0.1853	0.0314	0.003	11.60	0.00
Upper Castes (UC) [Reference]	0.1539				
Females	0.1760	0.0077	0.003	2.34	0.02
Males [Reference]	0.1683				
Married	0.1725	0.0045	0.003	1.54	0.12
Unmarried [Reference]	0.1679				
Illiterate (ILT)	0.1747	-0.0122	0.005	-2.28	0.02
Primary (PRM)	0.1631	-0.0239	0.005	-4.43	0.00
Secondary (SEC)	0.1628	-0.0242	0.005	-4.59	0.00
Higher Secondary (HSEC)	0.1867	-0.0003	0.006	-0.05	0.96
Graduate (GRD) [Reference]	0.1870				
Self-employed Agriculture (SEA)	0.1813	-0.0049	0.005	-0.99	0.32
Self-employed non-Agriculture (SEnA)	0.1580	-0.0282	0.006	-4.63	0.00
Salaried (SAL)	0.1742	-0.0119	0.007	-1.79	0.07
Agriculture Wage Labour (AWL)	0.1637	-0.0224	0.005	-4.08	0.00
Non-Agriculture Wage Labour (NAWL)	0.1543	-0.0319	0.006	-5.40	0.00
Family Worker (FWK)	0.1705	-0.0157	0.008	-1.96	0.05
Household Worker (HWK)	0.1703	-0.0159	0.005	-3.11	0.00
Pensioner, Dependent, student [Reference]	0.1862				
National Election	0.1317	-0.0868	0.002	-45.46	0.00
Local Election	0.2185				
Current Election	0.1631	-0.0152	0.002	-8.04	0.00
Past Election	0.1782				
Age at Mean	0.1735	0.0000	0.000	-0.43	0.67

Candidate Merit

In order to investigate the importance of a candidate's merit as a determinant of voters'

candidate selection, we estimated a logit equation in which the dependent variable took the value 1 if

the voter's response was that the candidate's *reputation for honesty and fairness* determined his/her choice, 0 if it did not. (As before, it is important to emphasise that a particular person did not necessarily *always* vote according to merit – he/she may well have recorded a value of 1 for some elections and 0 for others). As in the previous section, in order to answer this question we estimated a general model in which the relevant conditioning variables (social group, age, gender, marital status, education, and occupation) were allowed to interact with the national/local election variable (*NE*) and, also, separately with the current/past election variable (*CE*). By virtue of this characteristic, this model is referred to in the paper as the general interaction model (GIM) *for merit-based voting*. Estimated over 156,325 responses from persons who were at least 30 years of age at the time of the survey, this model predicted that after all interaction effects had been accounted for, 60.3% of the responses would have voted according to merit (honesty and fairness) but that if the respondent's attributes had been held at the mean values this would have risen to 63.8%.[11] In other words, *on average* 60.3% of votes by persons (who were at least 30 years of age) were on a merit basis but 63.8% of votes from the *average person* were on the basis of merit.

The specific results from the estimated GIM are shown in Table 4 in terms of the probabilities (column 2) and the marginal probabilities (column 3) of voting. The first point to note is that compared to reference group of the *UC* (from which 60.58% of the responses chose candidates on the basis of merit), the likelihood of responses from the other caste groups, claiming to choose candidates on a merit basis, was not *significantly* different: 60.71% for the *SC*, 61.71% for the *ST*, and 59.7% for the *OBC*.

In terms of the educational level of voters, there was a positive relationship between education and the propensity to vote on the basis of candidate merit. The predicted probability of responses being in favour of choosing on the basis of a reputation for honesty and fairness was highest for graduates (63.48%) and lowest for illiterates (59.07%). For all educational levels the difference in the predicted probabilities of merit-based voting between persons at the four lowest educational levels and persons who were graduates (the reference group) was significantly different from zero.

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[11] The estimated coefficients from this model are not shown but may be obtained on request.

In terms of occupations, responses from persons who were self-employed in non-agricultural activities, and from non-agricultural wage labourers, predicted significantly *higher* probabilities (respectively, 63.28% and 62.66%) of merit-based voting - and responses from persons engaged in household work predicted a significantly *lower* probability (59.59%) – compared to responses from the reference category of pensioners, dependents, and students (61.07%). For the other occupations there was no significant difference between their predicted probabilities and that of the reference group.

Lastly, the honesty and fairness issue was less important as a voting issue in national compared to local elections – 56.41% versus 64.45% of positive responses – and less of an issue in elections conducted during the present panchayat period compared to those conducted in past periods.

Combining these results leads to some interesting implications. First, since household welfare is more directly affected by the outcome of local, compared to national, elections, candidates' honesty and fairness mattered more in the former than in the latter. Second, since agriculturists were more likely to dominate the *Gram Sabha* than non-agriculturists, it was more important for the latter that their position should be safeguarded through the election of candidates with a reputation for honesty and fairness. Lastly, it is perhaps a sad comment on the direction of Indian politics that the importance of honesty in candidates has, in the minds of voters, devalued over time.

Table 4: Predicted and Marginal Probabilities of Merit-Based Voting

1	2	3	4	5	6
Conditioning Variable	Probability	Marginal Probability	SE	z value	Pr>|z|
Scheduled Caste (SC)	0.6071	0.0014	0.004	0.34	0.74
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	0.6171	0.0113	0.007	1.62	0.11
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	0.5970	-0.0088	0.006	-1.47	0.01
Upper Castes (UC) [Reference]	0.6058				
Females	0.5693	-0.0664	0.005	-13.94	0.00
Males [Reference]	0.6357				
Married	0.6021	-0.0053	0.004	-1.42	0.16
Unmarried [Reference]	0.6074				
Illiterate (ILT)	0.5907	-0.0441	0.007	-6.73	0.00
Primary (PRM)	0.6107	-0.0242	0.007	-3.64	0.00
Secondary (SEC)	0.6184	-0.0164	0.006	-2.57	0.01
Higher Secondary (HSEC)	0.6092	-0.0256	0.007	-3.63	0.00
Graduate (GRD) [Reference]	0.6348				
Self-employed Agriculture (SEA)	0.6135	0.0028	0.006	0.46	0.65
Self-employed non-Agriculture (SEnA)	0.6328	0.0221	0.007	2.97	0.00
Salaried (SAL)	0.6134	0.0026	0.008	0.33	0.74
Agriculture Wage Labour (AWL)	0.6194	0.0087	0.007	1.21	0.23
Non-Agriculture Wage Labour (NAWL)	0.6266	0.0159	0.007	2.22	0.03
Family Worker (FWK)	0.5959	-0.0148	0.010	-1.54	0.12
Household Worker (HWK)	0.5827	-0.0281	0.006	-4.42	0.00
Pensioner, Dependent, student [Reference]	0.6107				
National Election	0.5641	-0.0804	0.002	-33.65	0.00
Local Election	0.6445				
Current Election	0.5811	-0.0344	0.002	-14.06	0.00
Past Election	0.6155				
Age at Mean	0.6040	0.0006	0.000	5.81	0.00

5. Attendance and Participation at *Gram Sabha* Meetings

Voting is one form of political involvement; *attendance* at, and *participation* in, *Gram Sabha* (GS) meetings is an alternative form of representation in local government. In this section, we consider attendance and participation in *Gram Sabha* meetings and study it in the context of similar factors that were hypothesized to influence electoral involvement. The average number of *Gram Sabha* meetings held across panchayat periods is approximately 7.6, and shows a decreasing trend, with an average of approximately 9 meetings in the previous-to-previous panchayat period to 6 meetings taking place in the current period.

Persons were regarded as having 'participated' in a Gram Sabha meeting which they attended if they answered yes to the question: "when you attend *Gram Sabha* meetings, do you participate actively, presenting issues, raising questions, and voicing your opinion?" They were regarded as not having participated if they answered this question in the negative. In total, there were 72,617 responses to this question from 8,586 respondents. This subsample only contains data on those individuals for whom voting data was also available. The total participation rate in *Gram Sabha* meetings stood at 46.3% across all panchayat periods: 37% of all persons belonging to the *SC* participated in Gram Sabha meetings at least once compared to 32% for members of the *ST*. There were significant differences in participation rates in *Gram Sabha* meetings between Hindus and Muslims (as well as between the *SC* and the *UC*) across all panchayat periods. Members of the *UC* had a significantly higher participation rate relative to members of the *SC*.

If electoral participation and participation in Gram Sabha meetings are to be seen as two complementary dimensions of involvement in the process of local governance, then it is of interest to ask how respondents chose between these two dimensions. Table 5 shows the percentage of individuals who voted vis-à-vis the percentage of individuals who took part in GS meetings.

Table 5: Participation in *Gram Sabha* Meetings and Voting Participation in *Gram Sabha* Meetings

		Yes	No
Voted	**Yes**	45.9	31.5
	No	20.2	13.3

N = 8,586 individuals

It was hypothesised that a person's decision of how many *Gram Sabha* meetings to attend and, then, whether to participate in the meeting would *inter alia* depend upon the same conditioning variables factors employed in the earlier sections on voting along with some additional factors. These were:

a. The notice period available to household members about the *Gram Sabha* meeting

b. The total number of *Gram Sabha* meetings held in that particular period and it's square (since the effect may not be linear)

c. To test the effect of participation in the current panchayat period, we also include a dummy for *Gram Sabha* meetings held in the current period.

In the case of participation in GS meetings, two more variables were hypothesised to have an impact. These were:

i. The average length of meetings

ii. Whether the person knew in advance of the topics to be discussed at the meeting

Attendance at Gram Sabha Meetings

We used an ordinary-least squares (OLS) regression to estimate the impact of various factors on the *number* of *Gram Sabha* meetings attended. For this sample, the number of meetings attended ranged from 0 to 42 for each panchayat period. The average number of meetings attended was 5.08, whereas the median number of meetings attended was 3. The estimates from the model, over 41,453 observations may be obtained on request from the authors; the results presented in Table 6 are in terms of the *predicted number of meetings attended*.

 Table 6 shows that the model predicted that the predicted number of meetings attended at 4.97 was *significantly* lower than the 5.1 meetings attended by men. The difference between women

and men in the average number of meetings attended is, of course the estimated regression coefficient on the *FEM* variable in the OLS regression. Similarly, the predicted average number of meetings attended by married persons (5.08) was significantly higher than the predicted average for unmarried persons (4.99) where, again, the difference between married and unmarried persons in the average number of meetings attended is the estimated regression coefficient on the *MAR* variable in the OLS estimates.

There were no significant differences between the social groups in the average number of meetings attended by their members and, except for the fact that persons with secondary level education attended significantly more meetings (5.23) than persons with other educational levels, variations in the level of education did not significantly effect the number of meetings attended: illiterate persons were predicted to attend as many meetings as graduates (5.05).

There were, however, significant occupational effects. Compared to the number of meetings attended by persons from the reference group of pensioners, dependents, and students (5.21), a significantly smaller number of meetings were attended by those who were: salaried workers (4.82), agricultural labourers (4.79), non-agricultural labourers (4.91), and household workers (5.0). With the category of employment, it was self-employed persons who were more interested in attending than those who were employees.

There was no significant difference in the predicted number of meetings attended during the current panchayat (5.09) and past panchayats (5.07). The predicted number of meetings attended at the mean number of meetings held (8.6 over the three *panchayat* periods) was 4.73 and it was predicted that every additional meeting would increase attendance by 0.45 meetings. Similarly, the predicted number of meetings attended at the mean age of the respondents (48.8 years) was 5.18 and it was predicted that every additional year of age would increase attendance by 0.014 meetings.

Table 6: Predicted and Marginal Number of Gram Sabha Meetings Attended

1	2	3	4	5	6
Conditioning Variable	Number Attended	Marginal Probability	SE	t value	Pr>|t|
Females	4.97	-0.14	0.06	-2.33	0.02
Males [Reference]	5.10				
Married	5.08	0.10	0.05	2.04	0.04
Unmarried [Reference]	4.99				
Scheduled Caste (SC)	5.12	0.07	0.04	1.59	0.11
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	5.12	0.07	0.07	0.92	0.36
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	5.07	0.02	0.04	0.45	0.65
Upper Castes (UC) [Reference]	5.05				
Illiterate (ILT)	5.05	0.00	0.07	-0.01	0.99
Primary (PRM)	5.02	-0.03	0.07	-0.42	0.68
Secondary (SEC)	5.23	0.18	0.07	2.72	0.01
Higher Secondary (HSEC)	5.10	0.05	0.07	0.77	0.44
Graduate (GRD) [Reference]	5.05				
Self-employed Agriculture (SEA)	5.26	0.05	0.07	0.73	0.46
Self-employed non-Agriculture (SEnA)	5.09	-0.12	0.08	-1.52	0.13
Salaried (SAL)	4.82	-0.39	0.09	-4.48	0.00
Agriculture Wage Labour (AWL)	4.79	-0.42	0.07	-5.76	0.00
Non-Agriculture Wage Labour (NAWL)	4.91	-0.30	0.08	-3.82	0.00
Family Worker (FWK)	5.11	-0.10	0.12	-0.83	0.41
Household Worker (HWK)	5.00	-0.21	0.09	-2.41	0.02
Pensioner, Dependent, student [Reference]	5.21				
Current Panchayat	5.09	0.03	0.03	1.08	0.28
Past Panchayat	5.07				
Advance notice >1 week	5.12	0.36	0.05	7.65	0.00
Advance notice <1 week	4.75				
Number of meetings held (at mean=8.6)	4.73	0.45	0.00	139.43	0.00
Age (at mean=48.8)	5.18	0.014	0.00	11.98	0.00
Number of meetings held (at mean=8.6)	4.73	0.4517	0.003	139.47	0.00

Participation in Gram Sabha Meetings

In order to investigate the factors underlying participation in Gram Sabha meetings, we

estimated a logit equation in which the dependent variable was coded 1 if the person answered

affirmatively to the following question: "when you attend *Gram Sabha* meetings, do you participate actively, presenting issues, raising questions, and voicing your opinion?" If the answer to this question was a 'yes', the variable was coded 1, and was coded 0 if the answer was 'no'. (It is important to emphasise that a particular person did not necessarily *always* participate or not participate – he/she may well have recorded a value of 1 for some meetings and 0 for others). The participation equation was estimated over 33,757 responses from persons who were at least 30 years of age at the time of the survey and it predicted that 55.7% of the responses would have said that they had 'participated'. Hereafter, this referred to as the 'participation rate'. If, however, the respondent's attributes had been held at the mean values this participation rate would have been 57.1%. In other words, there was not much difference between the *average* participation rate (55.7%) and the participation rate of the *average person* (57.1%).

The specific results from the estimated equation are shown in Table 7 in terms of the probabilities (column 2) and the marginal probabilities (column 3) of voting. The first point to note is that compared to the male participation rate of 59.61%, the female rate was significantly and considerably lower at 41.45%. This probably the most worrisome feature of the results: even when women attend *Gram Sabha* meetings, their voice was much less likely to be heard than that of men.

The participation rate for married persons (55.59%) was slightly, but significantly, below that of unmarried persons (57.48%). Compared to the 57.05% participation rate of persons from the (reference group of) *UC*, it was only the participation rate of OBC persons (54.63%) that was significantly different; other than that, social group did not affect participation.

The participation rate rose with the educational status of persons. The reference group of graduates had the highest participation rate (63.3%); compared to that, the participation rate of persons with lesser educational qualifications was significantly lower with illiterate persons having the lowest participation rate (52.52%).

In terms of occupation, there was no statistical difference between the participation rates of persons in the reference category (pensioners, dependents, students) and that of salaried workers, and those in agricultural self-employment: respectively, 60.33%, 59.74%, and 59.65%. However, the

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participation rates for the other groups were significantly lower with the participation rate being lowest for household workers (47.71%).

There was a significant difference in the predicted participation rates during the current panchayat (58.71%) and past panchayats (53.72%). Each additional meeting held increased the participation rate by 0.3 points.

Table 7: Predicted and Marginal Probabilities of Participating in Gram Sabha Meetings

1	2	3	4	5	6
Conditioning Variable	Probability	Marginal Probability	SE	t value	Pr>|t|
Females	0.4145	-0.1816	0.011	-15.89	0.00
Males [Reference]	0.5961				
Married	0.5559	-0.0190	0.009	-2.23	0.03
Unmarried [Reference]	0.5748				
Scheduled Caste (SC)	0.5664	-0.0041	0.008	-0.53	0.60
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	0.5519	-0.0186	0.013	-1.46	0.15
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	0.5463	-0.0242	0.007	-3.69	0.00
Upper Castes (UC) [Reference]	0.5705				
Illiterate (ILT)	0.5252	-0.1078	0.012	-8.91	0.00
Primary (PRM)	0.5619	-0.0711	0.012	-6.03	0.00
Secondary (SEC)	0.5891	-0.0440	0.012	-3.74	0.00
Higher Secondary (HSEC)	0.5797	-0.0534	0.012	-4.35	0.00
Graduate (GRD) [Reference]	0.6330				
Self-employed Agriculture (SEA)	0.5965	-0.0069	0.013	-0.54	0.59
Self-employed non-Agriculture (SEnA)	0.5315	-0.0718	0.015	-4.88	0.00
Salaried (SAL)	0.5974	-0.0059	0.016	-0.37	0.71
Agriculture Wage Labour (AWL)	0.5396	-0.0638	0.014	-4.56	0.00
Non-Agriculture Wage Labour (NAWL)	0.5227	-0.0807	0.015	-5.43	0.00
Family Worker (FWK)	0.5603	-0.0431	0.025	-1.75	0.08
Household Worker (HWK)	0.4771	-0.1262	0.017	-7.48	0.00
Pensioner, Dependent, student [Reference]	0.6033				
Current Panchayat	0.5871	0.0499	0.005	10.04	0.00
Past Panchayat	0.5372				
Advance notice >1 week	0.5701	0.1038	0.009	11.73	0.00
Advance notice <1 week	0.4663				
Agenda known in advance	0.6002	0.1212	0.005	22.72	0.00
Agenda not known in advance	0.4790				
Number of meetings held (at mean=8.6)	0.5505	0.0031	0.001	3.92	0.00
Number of meetings attended (at mean=4.66	0.5583	0.0053	0.001	5.52	0.00
Age (at mean=48.8)	0.5574	0.014	0.00	11.98	0.00

6. Ideal Types

The predicted probabilities from Table 1 allowed one to identify "ideal types" where ideal types represent *hypothetical* cases with *specified* characteristics. For example, the voter *most* likely to vote would be an older *SC* married man, educated up to primary level, and working as an agricultural wage labourer (Ideal Type *A*); conversely, the voter who would be *least* likely to vote would be a young, illiterate, unmarried *ST* woman who was a dependent (Ideal Type *B*).

Similarly, from Table 2, we can identify the types of women *most* likely (Type *A*) and *least* likely (Type *B*). A type *A* woman would be an unmarried, dependent, illiterate, ST woman who was 30 years old. A type *B* woman would be a 60 year old, graduate, *SC* woman working in a salaried job. Again, one can compute the probability of voting of each of these types and test whether the difference between the probabilities of Cases A and B is statistically significant.

Table 3 allows one to identify the person type most likely (Type *A*) and least likely (Type *B*) to vote along caste lines. The former was an *OBC*, 60 year old, graduate, married woman who was either a pensioner or a dependent; the latter was a 30 year old, *UC*, unmarried male who was educated to secondary level.

Table 4 tells us that the person *most* likely to vote on the basis of a candidate's reputation for honesty and fairness (Type *A*) would be a 30 year old, unmarried, graduate *ST* man who was self-employed in non-agriculture. Conversely, the person *least* likely to vote on the basis of a candidate's reputation for honesty and fairness would be a 60 year old, married, *OBC* woman who was illiterate and did household work.

According to Table 6, the person *most* likely to attend *Gram Sabha* meetings would be a 60 year old *SC* male, educated to secondary level and self-employed in agriculture (Type *A*); the person least likely to attend these meetings would be an illiterate, 30 year old unmarried, *UC* woman working as an agricultural wage labourer (Type *B*).

Lastly, Table 7 suggests that the person most likely to participate at *Gram Sabha* meetings would be a 60 year old SC married man who was educated up to secondary level and was self-employed in agriculture (Type *A*). Conversely, the person least likely to participate at *Gram Sabha*

meetings would be a 30 year old *UC* unmarried woman who was illiterate and worked as an

agricultural wage labourer (Type *B*).

After identifying the 'ideal types', such that the probability of observing the relevant outcome

was highest for Type *A* and lowest for Type *B*, one can proceed to computing the probability of the

event for each of these types, *A* and *B*, and then to test whether the difference between their

probabilities was statistically significant.

Table 8, which reports the results of this exercise, shows that, for all the probabilistic

outcomes, there was a considerable difference between the probabilities of Type *A* (highest

probability) and Type *B* (lowest probability) and that, in terms of attendance, there was also a marked

difference between the meetings attended by Type *A* and Type *B* persons. Furthermore, as the results

of the statistical tests show, these differences were all significantly different from zero.

Table 8: Outcome Probabilities for 'Ideal Types

	Probabilities (%)		Difference	Test Statistics		
	Type A	Type B	Type A - Type B	SE	Z value	Pr>|z|
Voting	92.6	75.1	17.5	0.01	15.4	0.0
Voting by Spouse's Instructions	73.0	55.4	17.6	0.03	5.6	0.0
Voting by Caste	21.5	12.1	9.4	0.01	9.1	0.0
Voting by Candidate Honesty	70.1	53.6	16.5	0.01	15.3	0.0
Participation in *Gram Sabha* Meetings	69.3	33.8	35.5	0.02	19.1	0.0
	Meetings Attended		Difference	SE	Z	Pr>|z|
Attendance at *Gram Sabha* Meetings	5.7	4.2	1.5	0.1	14.5	0.0

7. Conclusions

The issue of voting on the basis of one's social identity, as opposed to voting as an individual,

has recently attracted attention in the literature. Ben-Bassat and Dahan (2012), using data on Arab

communities, examined the effect of social affiliation on actual voter turnout in local elections in

Israel. They tested whether voters with a particular last name, which serves as a proxy for *hamula* (or

clan) affiliation, were more likely to vote for a candidate with the same last name, as compared to

other candidates, and found strong-evidence for *hamula*-based voting behaviour.[12] They also tested

whether individuals who felt part of a group were more likely to participate in elections and found that

that voter turnout in Arab localities is significantly higher than in Jewish localities – which have

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[12] In the Palestinian territories, clans (locally called hamulas) have become a focus of political activity and major hubs of local power.

social structures more in common with European communities - controlling for the standard list of explanatory variables. This result is in line with the notion that communities with stronger senses of social attachment (Arab localities) are more likely to participate in elections.

These ideas resonate very clearly in the Indian political context. It is a fact of Indian political life that voter turnout among the poor is greater than among the rich. One explanation for this is that the poor are organised into vote banks in terms of their social identity (for example, lower castes, Muslims) and vote because there is material benefit associated with voting for their group. As we argued in the introduction, the evidence is that the importance of vote banks based on the *quid pro quo* of material benefits to groups has declined. Instead, it is more reasonable to view the high voter turnout by the poor as an expression of *identity* and *presence*. This identity may be social, defined either in caste or religious terms, but presence may relate to a general desire to flex one's political muscles by reminding the governing classes of the folly of neglecting a significant portion of the electorate.

In the last 20 years Indian politics has changed in three important ways. Perhaps the most dramatic has been the fragmentation of politics as the lower castes have left the Congress party's upper-caste dominated 'big tent' to set up their own parties in opposition to the Congress. As Jodhka (2012) observes, there is a weakening of traditional caste relations based on status and hierarchy and this has been facilitated by India's lower classes rising to challenge, at the ballot box, the traditional political hegemony of India's upper castes (Jaffrelot, 2003).

The second important change is that, as a consequence of political fragmentation, national governments, following the general elections of 1999, 2004, and 2009, have been formed by alliances comprising a cluster of regional parties led by a national party – the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance of 1999 and the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance of 2004 and 2009. (Ruparelia, 2011). For alliances formed before the election this has meant seat sharing with the result that traditional workers and supporters of Party X have suddenly had to shift their allegiance, not always

successfully or with enthusiasm, to Party X.[13] In addition to the reasons cited in the introduction, this factor too has contributed to the decline of 'vote bank' politics as the presence of alien candidates has strained traditional party loyalties (Banerjee, 2014, p. 78-79).

The third aspect of change has been village level elections under the auspices of the *Panchayati Raj* brought into being by the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act of 1993 with the accompanying provision that one-third of the total number of positions of *gram pradhan* would be held by women with another proportion held by the SC/ST. This has engaged a tranche of persons in political activity that previously had no experience or, indeed, the opportunity, of participating in public life (Krishna, 2010; Corbridge, Harris, and Jeffrey, 2013).

These three aspects justify the emphasis in this paper on political participation in terms of the individual-citizen (rather than by purely group loyalties) albeit constrained by considerations of gender and caste. The unique feature of this study was that it provided a *quantitative* analysis of political participation in rural India with respect to voting and to attendance/participation in *Gram Sabha* meetings. This analysis was conducted in terms of common set of explanatory variables – social group, gender, age, marital status, education, and occupation. A novel twist was provided by allowing each of these variables to interact with whether the election was a 'national' or a 'local' election and with whether the election was conducted during the current or past panchayat periods. The estimated equations permitted predicted probabilities to be computed under a variety of scenarios and, from these scenarios, it was possible to cull 'ideal types' of persons – those with the highest and lowest probabilities of experiencing a particular outcome.

A worrisome feature of the results was the high proportion of married women reporting that they voted according to their husbands' instructions and further that, this proportion was impervious to the education level of the women. Women's education would not appear, from these results, to reduce the power of patriarchy. However, the fact that a secret ballot can drive a wedge between professed and actual actions might serve to ameliorate this.

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[13] For example, the AIDMK-CPM and the DMK-Congress alliances in Tamil Nadu meant that traditional AIDMK supporters had to support CPM candidates and traditional DMK supporters had to support Congress candidates.

Another source of anxiety was the gender gap in the proportion of men and women who took part in *Gram Sabha* discussions. This would suggest that the reservation of village panchayat positions (including that of *panchayat pradhan*, or village president) for women was a step in the right direction for the empowerment of women. In contrast, there were no inter-social group differences in participation in *Gram Sabha* meetings.

The paper suggests several avenues for further research based on the data from REDS. First, there is the question of the consequences of political participation in terms of good village governance and levels of village development. Second, there is the question of differences in political participation between the upper (the 'creamy layer') and lower echelons of the lower castes and it is possible to address this because the REDS data also provides information on household sub-caste. Third, but by no means last, is the question of the level of village level conflict in the wake of the 73rd amendment which, by establishing *Gram Sabhas*, has diluted the oligarchic hegemony of the upper castes in public policy matters pertaining to the village.

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Table A1: Estimation Results from the Logit Voting Model with Interactions on Election Type and Election Period

Y_i=1, if voted	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.	z	P>z
National Election (NE)	0.278	0.060	-5.88	0.00
Social group				
Scheduled Caste (SC)	1.204	0.048	4.62	0.00
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	1.096	0.065	1.55	0.12
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	1.147	0.034	4.58	0.00
Reference Group: Upper Classes				
Interaction of NE and Group				
NE×SC	0.645	0.036	-7.83	0.00
NE×ST	0.853	0.057	-2.37	0.02
NE×OBC	0.625	0.024	-12.12	0.00
Current Election (CE)	30.587	6.664	15.70	0.00
Interaction of CE and Group				
CE×SC	1.151	0.063	2.59	0.01
CE×ST	0.921	0.058	-1.31	0.19
CE×OBC	0.960	0.035	-1.12	0.26
Female	0.874	0.043	-2.75	0.01
Interaction of NE and Female				
NE×Female	0.872	0.058	-2.06	0.04
Interaction of CE and Female				
CE×Female	1.303	0.085	4.06	0.00
Age	1.108	0.007	16.99	0.00
Age^2	0.999	0.000	-14.04	0.00
Interaction of NE and Age				
NE×Age	1.122	0.009	13.92	0.00
Interaction of NE and Age^2				
NE×Age^2	0.999	0.000	-11.88	0.00
Interaction of CE and Age				
CE×Age	0.912	0.008	-11.10	0.00

Interaction of CE and Age^2				
CE×Age^2	1.001	0.000	8.99	0.00
Married	1.148	0.045	3.52	0.00
Interaction of NE and Married				
NE×Married	1.078	0.060	1.35	0.18
Interaction of CE and Married				
CE×Married	0.910	0.049	-1.77	0.08
Occupation				
Self-employed Agriculture (SEA)	1.306	0.082	4.25	0.00
Self-employed non-Agriculture (SEnA)	1.115	0.085	1.43	0.15
Salaried (SAL)	0.933	0.074	-0.87	0.38
Agriculture Wage Labour (AWL)	1.278	0.094	3.34	0.00
Non-Agriculture Wage Labour (NAWL)	1.093	0.080	1.21	0.23
Family Worker (FWK)	0.908	0.090	-0.98	0.33
Household Worker (HWK)	1.087	0.072	1.27	0.21
Reference category: Pensioner, Dependent, Student				
Interaction of NE and Occupation				
NE×SEA	0.922	0.086	-0.87	0.38
NE×SEnA	1.005	0.114	0.05	0.96
NE×SAL	0.830	0.096	-1.61	0.11
NE×AWL	0.840	0.089	-1.65	0.10
NE×NAWL	1.139	0.125	1.19	0.23
NE×FWK	0.841	0.120	-1.22	0.22
NE×HWK	0.932	0.089	-0.74	0.46
Interaction of CE and Occupation				
CE×SEA	0.899	0.076	-1.27	0.21
CE×SEnA	1.220	0.128	1.90	0.06
CE×SAL	1.152	0.126	1.29	0.20
CE×AWL	1.176	0.115	1.65	0.10
CE×NAWL	1.098	0.110	0.93	0.35
CE×FWK	1.166	0.162	1.10	0.27
CE×HWK	1.034	0.092	0.38	0.71
Education				
Illiterate (ILT)	1.324	0.084	4.45	0.00

Primary (PRM)	1.263	0.081	3.62	0.00
Secondary (SEC)	0.996	0.062	-0.06	0.95
Higher Secondary (HSEC)	1.265	0.088	3.39	0.00
Reference Category: Degree or Higher				
Interaction of NE and Education				
NE×ILT	0.851	0.075	-1.83	0.07
NE×PRM	0.973	0.089	-0.30	0.76
NE×SEC	1.095	0.097	1.02	0.31
NE×HSEC	0.749	0.073	-2.97	0.00
Interaction of NE and Education				
CE×ILT	0.613	0.053	-5.61	0.00
CE×PRM	0.800	0.072	-2.48	0.01
CE×SEC	1.071	0.094	0.78	0.44
CE×HSEC	0.783	0.076	-2.51	0.01

Number of observations	181556
LR chi2(284)	29012.19
Prob > chi2	0.00
Pseudo R^2	0.19
Log likelihood	-62191.732