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The politics of demography: a study of inter-community fertility differences in India

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine differences in fertility between Hindu and Muslim women in India with a view to shedding light on an issue that both polarises and inflames academic and political opinion in India: how much of the higher fertility rate of Muslim women is due to differences between the communities in their *responses* towards fertility-influencing factors and how much is due to differences between them in their *endowments* of such factors? The answer to this question is based on an econometric analysis of data for over 28,000 currently married women, drawn from rural households across India. The sample of women was divided into three mutually exclusive groups: Hindus, Muslims and scheduled castes/tribes (Dalits). An econometric equation, with the number of live births to each woman as the dependent variable, was estimated, and the size of the coefficient, on each of the determining variables, was allowed to vary according to the community of the woman. After comparing the high-fertility central,

and the low-fertility southern, regions of India, the results suggest that slightly over a half of the observed births surplus of Muslims over Hindus was due to differences between Muslims and Hindus in their responses toward fertility-influencing factors.



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Keywords

Fertility; India; Hindu; Muslim; Logit

JEL classification

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The politics of demography: a study of inter-community fertility

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