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# **DOMINANT OR BACKWARD? POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE DEMAND FOR QUOTAS BY JATS, PATELS AND MARATHAS**

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# Dominant or Backward? Political Economy of the Demand for Quotas by Jats, Patels and Marathas

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## Abstract

Using data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS), this paper examines the claims of three communities, viz., Jats in Haryana, Patels in Gujarat and Marathas in Maharashtra, to be classified as Other Backward Classes (OBC) in order to gain access to affirmative action. Comparing these three groups to the other major caste groups - Brahmins, Other Forward Castes, existing OBCs and Scheduled Castes and Tribes (SC and STs) in their respective states – on socio-economic indicators such as household consumption expenditure, poverty, access to infrastructure, self-declared practice of untouchability, education and occupational status, we find that that these three communities are closer to the dominant groups - Brahmins and Other Forward Castes - than to the existing disadvantaged groups - OBCs and SC-STs. Thus, their claim to backwardness is not justified by empirical data. We then examine the material basis of their anxieties in the context of structural changes in the Indian economy, particularly agriculture. We also investigate their networks and political connections that explain their success in mobilizing large numbers in support of their demands.

JEL: I24, O15; J45; J78

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Caste, Quotas, Education, India,

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# 1 Introduction

Affirmative action (AA) or preferential policies everywhere, regardless of their form (preferences in the USA, or quotas in India) are highly controversial.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand these policies are under increasing attack (witness the AA rollback in the US and demands for abolition of reservations in India) and widely unpopular, especially among the middle-classes. On the other hand, there is visible and vocal articulation of a perception of marginalization, followed by demands of protection by communities, such as Jats, Patels and Marathas, that may not necessarily be seen as marginalized by those who are at the bottom of socio-economic hierarchy. How does one reconcile the fierce opposition to affirmative action with increasing demands for it, when the same group expresses these? Based on evidence from caste quotas in India, we argue that dominant groups, driven by anxieties about their place in the new economy and by a perception of marginalization and relative deprivation, demand preferences for themselves because preferential policies work, that is, they deliver real benefit to those who use them.<sup>2</sup>

In a first-of-its-kind exercise, this paper provides detailed evidence on various socio-economic status indicators of three particular castes or jatis in India - Patels or Patidars in Gujarat, Jats in Haryana<sup>3</sup> and Marathas in Maharashtra - in relation to other broad caste groups in their respective states, in order to examine the validity of their claim to 'backwardness'. We use data from India Human Development Survey (IHDS), 2011-12 that has information on specific jatis, and find that these three groups are closer to the socioeconomically dominant caste groups - Brahmins and other

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<sup>1</sup>See references in Holzer and Neumark (2000), Weisskopf (2004) and Deshpande (2013); AA is challenged even when these are targeted towards individuals or groups that might be genuinely disadvantaged or stigmatized.

<sup>2</sup>Deshpande and Ramachandran (2016) provide empirical evidence on positive effects of AA in India.

<sup>3</sup>Jats are spread over several north Indian states such as Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh (UP). Jats in UP have also been demanding reservations (Singh, 2011), but we focus on the Haryana Jats because they are considered a dominant caste in that state, thus their agitation has been very prominent recently, as well as because reservation was granted to them by the government to be withdrawn later by the courts.

forward castes - in their respective states on a variety of indicators - such as per capita consumption expenditure, poverty status, educational attainment and occupational status - compared to the existing socioeconomically disadvantaged groups - OBCs and the Dalits and Adivasis (or Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC-STs)).

Next, we empirically examine what factors might underlie their anxieties which led them to articulate a demand for quotas so forcefully. We propose a structural change hypothesis which suggests that the groups might feel disempowered due to the widespread structural changes in the agrarian sector – rise of large corporations, land fragmentation, water shortages – and their presumed inability to take advantage of new opportunities in the non-agricultural sector, hampered by their relative lack of fluency in English, the language of the elite non-agricultural sector. As compared to their relatively dominant position in agriculture, we document that in the non-agricultural sector these groups are predominantly employed in “casual” jobs that do not provide any security and insurance, and are paid by a daily wage or a piece rate. However, it is important to note that though the relative advantage of the Jats, Patels and Marathas in the agricultural sector is greater than in the non-agricultural sector, they still do better in absolute terms than the socially disadvantaged groups in the non-agricultural sector. Comparing changes over time on educational attainment, per capita consumption expenditure and the probability of being classified as poor shows that the three jatis - Jats, Patels and Marathas - have increased their relative advantage over the time period 2004-05 (the first round of IHDS data) to 2011-12 (the second round). Thus, our analysis shows that not only do they possess an advantage over the ‘backward’ groups, but in fact have consolidated their relative position compared to the disadvantaged groups, and that the narrative of “the ground is slipping beneath their feet” is largely based on perceptions and has little empirical support in the data.

This raises the interesting question about factors explaining their success in creating and sustaining powerful movements that have been sufficiently large and disruptive so as to compel governments to take notice of their demands. The support for their demands has come from the highest legislative body in the state – the state governments of Haryana and Maharashtra, as Jats and Marathas were

granted access to reserved positions, a decision that was later withdrawn by the courts. The data shows that the connectedness of the three jatis in their local political networks, both within and outside their communities, might be an important factor underlying this success.

Our paper contributes to the scholarly understanding of a relatively under-studied phenomenon - factors that prompt dominant or powerful groups to view themselves as marginalized or under threat, and ask for remedial measures. There are few international instances where the dominant group becomes the beneficiary of special or remedial treatment - perhaps the most egregious instance being the apartheid system in South Africa. Other examples include Malaysia's New Economic Policy of affirmative action in favor of the politically dominant Malays, or reserving conscription into the Israel army to Jews and a few minorities, but excluding Arab citizens of Israel. Commentaries analyzing recent political events, such as Brexit and Donald Trump's election as the President of the USA, have emphasized anxieties of white men, a group that includes poor and working class white men, but would ordinarily be seen as dominant in comparison to women and racial, ethnic or sexual minorities. Our results suggest that socially powerful groups might be successful in powerfully articulating their demands and being heeded, though objectively other groups in society might be more deserving recipients of government assistance.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 contains a brief review of related literature. Section 3 empirically examines the relative position of the three Jatis, and its changes over time, especially in educational attainment, to examine the validity of their demands. Section 4, in turn, explores the determinants of social mobilization by the three groups, and the factors underlying their success, and Section 5 offers concluding comments.

## **2 Review of related literature**

Literature on these three jatis and their demand for reservations is mostly ethnographic and/or consists of commentaries that trace the history of these specific demands. We provide a brief overview of

studies that help us contextualise these demands for quotas. Chandra (1997) examines how Kanbis of Gujarat, who were predominantly agricultural castes, accumulated wealth as a result of migration to east Africa and returned to India to claim a higher caste status, along with the more gentrified name of "Patidar", signalling their upward mobility. Thus, their demand to be considered "backward" is an about-face. This is very similar to the Jat story. Datta (1999)'s short commentary discusses how the Jat strategy changed from that of demanding Kshatriya status via the Arya Samaj movement, which was denied to them by the upper castes and colonial authorities, to that of demanding OBC status via the Jat Mahasabha, the umbrella organization of Jats across different states in north India. Datta (1999, pp. 3172) argues that their chief concern, not articulated as such, is to "access state resources, homogenise Jat society vis-à-vis the others in the scramble for power and influence, and restore the political and social equilibrium that was partially disturbed by Mandalisation". In a parallel vein, Deore and Munde (2013) suggest that for certain Maratha leaders to argue that they are essentially Kunbis (the same as Kanbis in Gujarat), and therefore deserve reservation is disingenuous, as various state commissions have shown Marathas to be forward castes, rather than backward. These specific demands have garnered a great deal of media commentaries that detail the anxieties and frustration of these groups, which we examine in detail. There are also media commentaries justifying reservation demands, for instance by Marathas<sup>4</sup>, and our analysis directly addresses such opinions by providing an empirically informed perspective in Section 3.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup><http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/case-for-extending-the-quota-jats-patidars-marathas-3729998/>

<sup>5</sup>See, for instance,  
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Rich-Jats-want-reservation-to-bring-parity-in-education-jobs/articleshow/51083193.cms>;  
<http://scroll.in/article/754203/beyond-reservations-haryanas-jats-believe-the-ground-is-slipping-beneath-their-feet>;  
<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/how-not-to-review-reservations/>;  
<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/jats-reservation-stir-obc-quota-rohtak-haryana-protests/>;  
<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/jat-reservation-paidar-patel-the-quota-kapus/>

### **3 When the powerful demand special protection: Demand for quotas by three jatis**

The extension of affirmative action to the OBCs in the early 1990s has been followed by a particularly robust mobilization by castes or communities to be included in the OBC category. The issue has become highly contentious with groups perceived as being socio-economically dominant joining the fray. The demand for inclusion into the OBC category by Marathas, a predominantly landowning caste, a group that is politically and economically dominant in the rich western state of Maharashtra, has been ongoing since the 1990s. Since 2015, another powerful caste group - Patels or Patidars - from the neighbouring state of Gujarat has been on the streets in a prolonged agitation, which has occasionally turned violent with damage to public property, demanding to be classified as OBC. So widespread was the agitation that its 22-year old leader, Hardik Patel, was imprisoned on sedition charges, and put in jail for nine months between October 2015 and July 2016. In the northern Indian state of Haryana, the agitation by Jats, an agrarian middle caste, which has been clamoring for OBC status since the late 1990s, took a particularly fierce and hostile turn, including a blockade of the capital city of Delhi, which is surrounded by Haryana on three sides.<sup>6</sup> While these three are the most prominent examples, there are similar other demands sprouting up, e.g. Kapus in Andhra Pradesh.

What is noteworthy about these demands is that all these communities are perceived to be prosperous and socially dominant (and in these three examples, also belong to richer states of India). The case of the Patels is even more curious as Gujarat was rocked by violent anti-quota agitations in the mid-1980s, and Patels were in the forefront of this agitation demanding a scrapping of quotas for SC-STs, labeling quotas as anti-merit and unfair (Shah, 1987). Thus, their volte-face is especially

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<sup>6</sup>See, for instance, <http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/haryana-on-guard-as-jats-begin-fresh-agitation-for-quota-today-10-facts-1415612>.

intriguing.<sup>7</sup> It is also interesting to note that two of the groups we analyze - the Jats and the Patels - managed to win political support to be classified as beneficiaries of reservation, only to be thwarted by the judiciary. In June 2014, the Maharashtra state assembly granted 16 percent quotas to Marathas and another 5 percent to Muslims, over and above the pre-existing 49 percent quotas.<sup>8</sup> Five months later the High court put a stay on this decision, which has remained in force despite another attempt at passing the 16 percent quota in March 2015. In the case of Jats, a March 2016 Supreme Court verdict overturned the 2014 Central government categorization of Jats as “backward”, and hence made the community ineligible for OBC reservations.

Understandably, these developments have been under media spotlight, and have spawned a number of commentaries on the reasons underlying this massive mobilization, along with a discussion of whether these demands are justified, especially in the context of the judiciary striking down the legislative acceptance of quotas. However, while several observers have argued for an evidence-based discussion, there is virtually no macro-evidence on the socio-economic-political condition of these groups relative to other groups in the state. There has been a great deal of speculation about the political economy underlying the mobilization of these groups, with the suggested reasons being declining importance of agriculture - the primary occupation of these groups; water shortages and increasing corporatization of agriculture; and their political connectedness. However, there is virtually no comprehensive empirical assessment of any of these claims. To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first exercise to empirically explore the socio-economic position of the three most important groups - Jats, Patels/Patidars and Marathas - relative to other groups in their respective states of Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra. We not only provide empirical backdrop to examine the validity of their claim, but our assessment also throws light on the political economy of the demand for quotas.

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<sup>7</sup>The same is largely true for the Marathas, who traditionally have been strongly opposed to reservation (Kumar, 2009).

<sup>8</sup>The 49 percent comprises of 22 and 27 percent of the total seats being reserved for the SC-ST and OBCs, respectively.



### 3.1 Data and methodology

We use the nationally representative data from India Human Development Survey, 2012. This data not only provides us information on broad caste groups but also individual jatis. Thus, it allows us to identify Jats in Haryana, Patels in Gujarat and Marathas in Maharashtra. We compare these to Brahmins, non-Brahmin forward castes<sup>9</sup>, OBCs (these are groups that are currently designated as OBCs) and SC-STs. We compare outcomes on two broad categories - household-level outcomes and individual level-outcomes. Our sample consists of 9,658, 15,984 and 9,364 individuals for Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively, of which 12.97, 25.67 and 5.09 percent are Jats, Marathas and Patels, respectively.

To estimate the socioeconomic differences between the Jats, Marathas, Patels and the other broad caste groups, we estimate the following regression:

$$O_{jk} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 \text{Brahmins}_{jk} + \delta_2 \text{Forward\_Caste}_{jk} + \delta_3 \text{OBCS}_{jk} + \delta_4 \text{SC} - \text{ST}_{jk} \\ + \delta_5 \text{Urban}_{jk} + \delta_6 \text{District}_k + \delta_7 \text{Age\_HHead} + \delta_8 \text{HH\_Size} + \varepsilon_{jk}. \quad (1)$$

The regressions are estimated separately for each state. For household level outcomes, we restrict the sample to household heads, whereas for individual level outcomes Equation 1 is estimated for the entire sample of individuals.  $O_{jk}$  refers to the outcome of interest for household  $j$  in district  $k$  for household level outcomes, and refers to individual  $i$  in district  $k$  for individual level outcomes. The omitted or reference category is the jati of interest - Jats in Haryana, Marathas in Maharashtra and Patels in Gujarat. Examining the sign and significance of  $\delta_1$ ,  $\delta_2$ ,  $\delta_3$ , and  $\delta_4$  allows us to evaluate the position of each of these groups in relation to the jati we are interested in. The specification further controls for whether the household is located in an urban or rural area, the age of the household head, household size and a set of district dummies. A positive or negative  $\delta_j$  for  $j = \{1, 2, 3, 4\}$  tells

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<sup>9</sup>Brahmins are conventionally regarded at the top of the ritual caste hierarchy. Forward or upper castes are also high up in the hierarchy, but Brahmin outcomes are typically superior to other forward castes (Desai and Dubey, 2012).

us whether the jati of interest does better or worse than the comparison social group. Moreover, the 90 percent confidence intervals are also shown for each outcome of interest, and indicates whether the point estimate of  $\delta_j$  is statistically different from zero.

## 3.2 Results - the static picture

### 3.2.1 Household level outcomes

The main household level variables considered are (i) per capita consumption expenditure; (ii) whether the household is classified as poor; (iii) access to electricity; (iv) access to flush toilet; (v) land ownership; and (vi) whether the household practices untouchability. Figure I shows the

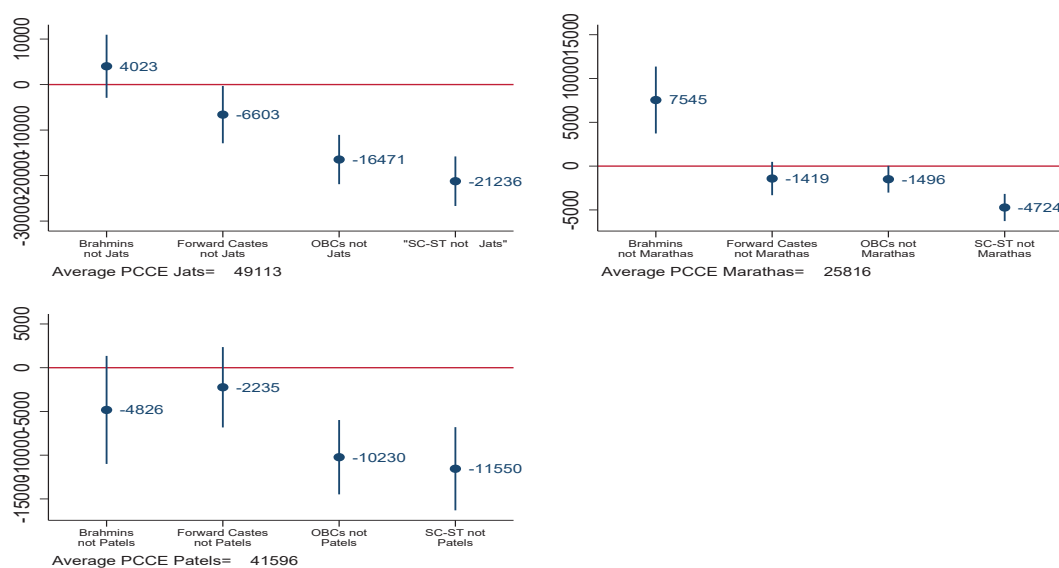


Figure I: Comparing the groups on per capita consumption expenditure

comparison based on per capita consumption expenditure (PCCE). The graphs show the relative position of the other groups with reference to the jati of interest in each of the three states. We see that Jats are at the level of the Haryana Brahmins in terms of PCCE, and have a significantly higher

PCCE than all other groups in the state, including the forward castes. Marathas have a lower PCCE than Maharashtra Brahmins, but are at the same level as other forward castes and OBCs, and significantly higher than SC-STs. The Patels have statistically similar PCCE to Gujarati Brahmins and forward castes, and significantly better-off than OBCs and SC-STs in the state.

Figure II shows the incidence of poverty: we see that Jats have a poverty incidence that is similar to

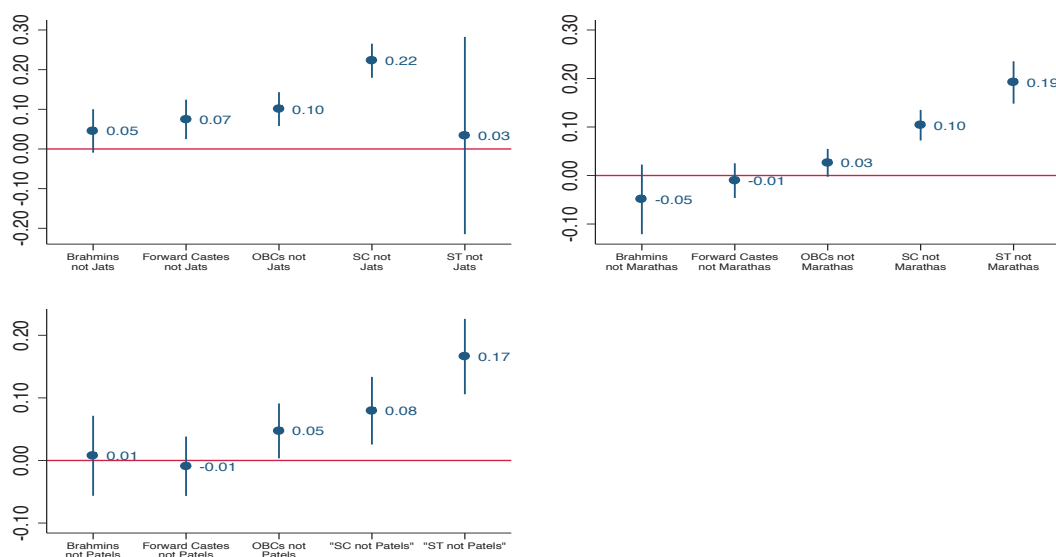


Figure II: Comparing the groups on probability of being classified as poor

Brahmins and significantly lower than other groups. Marathas are similar to Brahmins and other forward castes, and less so to OBCs in terms of poverty incidence, but have significantly lower poverty incidence compared to SC-STs. Patidars are similar to Gujarati Brahmins and other forward castes, but have a lower incidence of poverty compared to OBCs, SC-STs in the state.

The differences in access to electricity and flush toilet is shown in Figure A1 and A2 in the appendix. The differential access to electricity across groups is more muted compared to the first two indicators. This is not surprising as the provision of electricity is a function of administrative, as well as capacity-related factors. Despite greater similarity, we do see some important group differences. Jats have greater access to electricity compared to Haryana OBCs and SC-STs; Marathas

have greater access compared to SC-STs and Patels have greater access compared to OBCs and SCSTs. The implication of access to toilets goes beyond the mere fact of access to sanitation, and is an important indicator of status in itself. Access to toilets suggests lower open defecation, and that has strong positive implications for health, and in particular for stunting among young children (Spears et al., 2013). It is important to note that 63, 44 and 67 percent of Jats, Marathas and Patels respectively, report having access to a flush toilet. In terms of between group comparisons Jats are 11 and 16 percentage points more likely than OBCs and SC-STs, the Marathas are 6 and 14 percentage points more likely than OBCs and SC-STs, and Patels are 18 and 20 percentage points more likely than OBCs and SC-STs, to have access to a flush toilet in Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively.

The next household level outcome we explore is the probability of owing or cultivating land, and

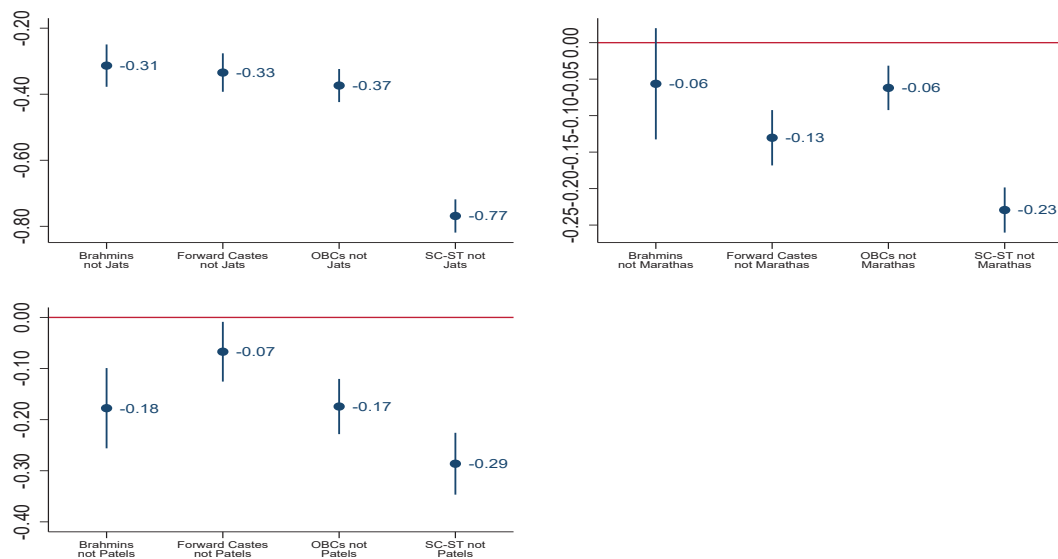


Figure III: Comparing the groups on probability of owing or cultivating land

the results are shown in Figure III. We see that Jats are 30 to 77 percentage points more likely to own or cultivate land than all social groups in Haryana, including Brahmins. Marathas and Patels, similar to Jats, are more likely to own or cultivate land than all social groups in Maharashtra and

Gujarat, respectively. Thus, the popular perception of these groups being predominantly involved in agriculture, and more likely to be working on their own land than being agricultural laborers is indeed borne out by evidence.

The final outcome variable is whether the households report practicing untouchability - an ac-

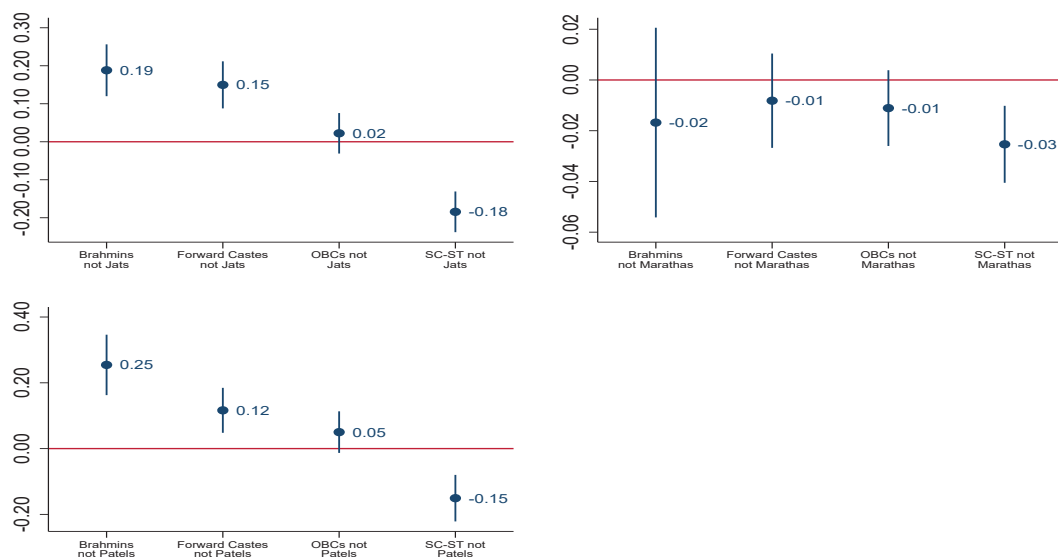


Figure IV: Comparing the groups on probability of reporting that they practice untouchability

tivity deemed punishable by the 17th paragraph of the Indian constitution. Yet, covert and overt instances of untouchability continue, with Brahmins, conventionally seen at the top of the social hierarchy, reporting the highest practice of untouchability towards caste groups that they consider ritually impure (Thorat and Joshi, 2015). Thus the self-confessed practice of untouchability by caste groups is an indicator of where, that is, how high, they see themselves in the caste hierarchy. 24, 3.30 and 31 percent of households in Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively, report engaging in untouchability. In comparison, 23.5 percent of Jats, 5 percent of Marathas and 32 percent of Patels, in Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively, report practicing untouchability. The inter-group differences are shown in Figure IV for each of the three states. We see that for Jats and Patels, their practice of untouchability is similar to OBCs; however it is between 12 and 25 percentage points

lower than Brahmins and other forward castes, and 18 and 15 percentage points higher than SC-ST, in Haryana and Gujarat, respectively. In the case of Maharashtra there are no significant differences by social groups in the practice of untouchability; this is not surprising as less than 4 percent of the households report engaging in untouchability. We should note that these differences are merely suggestive, as these are self-reported figures for a phenomenon that is illegal and punishable by law. The survey question, “in your household, do some members practice untouchability”, which is further followed up by “would there be a problem if someone who is scheduled caste were to enter your kitchen or share utensils”, is intended to capture broad contours of the issue, rather than very detailed admission of the problem. Despite all these caveats, we see that these groups in terms of social hierarchy are intermediate in Haryana and Gujarat and similar to upper castes in Maharashtra.

### **3.2.2 Individual level outcomes**

The main variables explored at the individual level are: (i) years of education; (ii) probability of completing secondary education or more; and the (iii) probability of holding a government job.

Figure V show that the average years of education for Jats (which is 5.90 years) is lower than Brahmins and other forward castes, but higher than OBCs and SCs. Marathas have average years of education equal to 6.58 which is lower than Brahmins by 2.18 years, but is similar to other forward castes and OBCs, and 1.22 years more than the SC-STs. Patels’ average years of education is 7.46, which is very similar to other forward castes in the state, and 0.97 years less than Brahmins; they have a lead of 2.26 and 2.47 years of education over the OBCs and SC-STs, respectively. 16, 19 and 20 percent of Jats, Marathas and Patels have completed 12 years of schooling or more. Figure VI compares the social groups on the indicator of the probability of having completed 12 or more years of schooling; in Haryana, it is 8 and 6 percentage points higher for the Brahmin and other forward castes; the Jats however do 3 and 7 percentage points better than the OBCs and SC-ST, respectively. The Marathas are 13 percentage points less likely to have completed 12 years or more of education as compared to the Brahmins, but are very similar to the forward castes and do 2 and 6 percentage

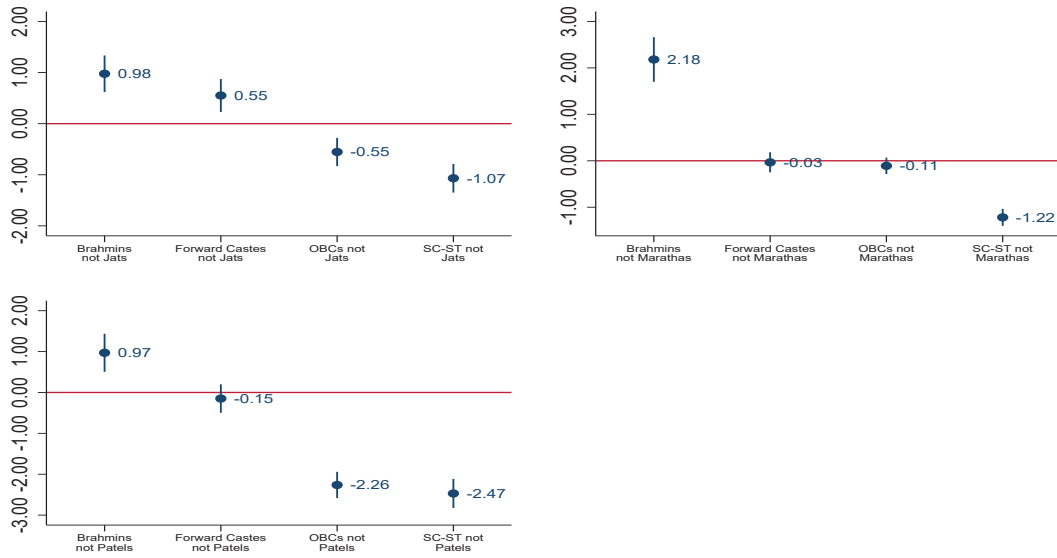


Figure V: Comparing the groups on total years of education

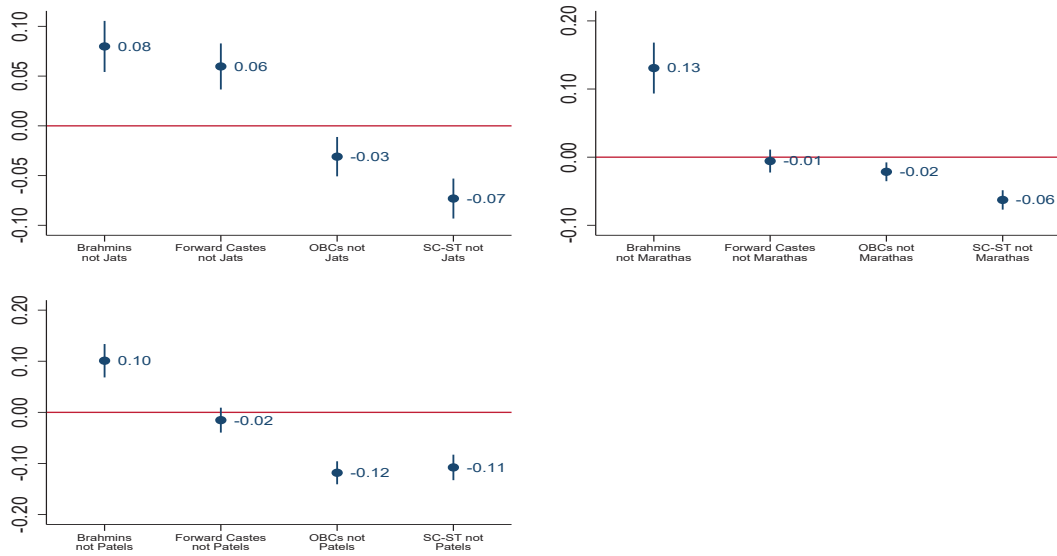


Figure VI: Comparing the groups on proportion with more than and equal to 12 years of schooling

points better than the OBCs and SC-ST, respectively. The picture for Patels is similar to that of Marathas, qualitatively in terms of caste gaps; however their lead over OBCs and SC-ST is much larger and stands at 12 and 11 percentage points, respectively.

The crux of the demand for quotas is the presumed lack of access to government jobs, which

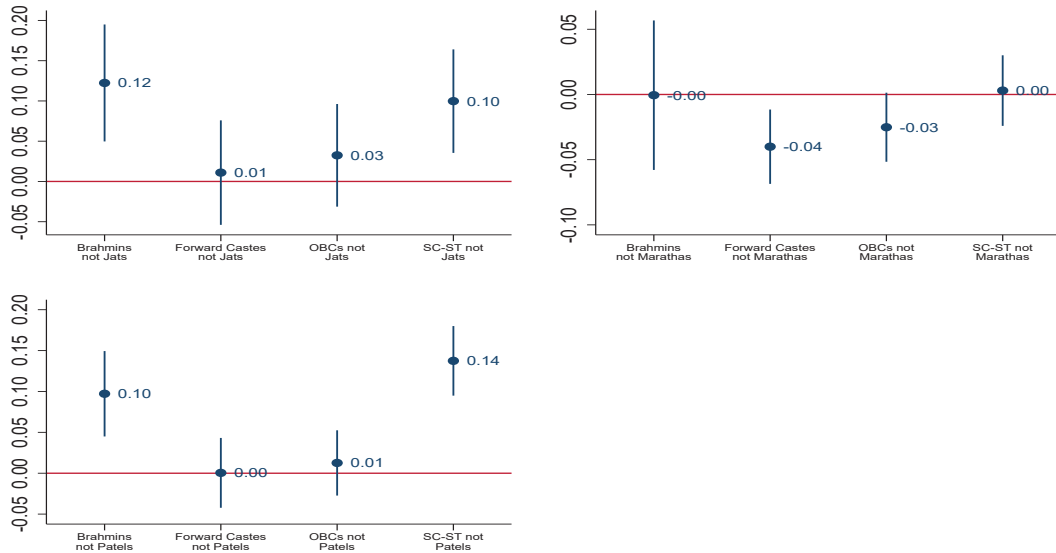


Figure VII: Comparing the groups on probability of holding a government job

according to anecdotal accounts, is lower than that for SC-STs, communities that have historically enjoyed quotas. We see that 2.5 percent of Jats, 2.5 percent of Marathas and 0.008 percent of Patels living in Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively, have a government job. A between-group comparison of these differences is very revealing; we see in Figure VII that in Haryana, Jats' access to government jobs is similar to forward castes and OBCs, despite the fact that historically, Jats have been an agrarian caste and has not turned towards government jobs. Brahmins and SC-STs' probability of government jobs is 12 and 10 percentage points greater than that for Jats. The point to note is that Jats already have access to government jobs that is similar to other OBCs in the state, despite not officially being classified as OBCs. Marathas' access to government jobs is similar to that of Brahmins, and higher than that for other forward castes and OBCs, and not different from that for SC-STs. Patels' access to government jobs is similar to forward castes and OBCs. However, the Brahmins and SC-ST are 10 and 14 percentage points more likely to hold a government job. Therefore, the demand for quotas is government jobs is not justified by an empirical



analysis of any disadvantage vis-à-vis either the other dominant groups or even in relation to Dalits, who have historically had access to quotas. The sharp disparity in access to government jobs in between Brahmins and Jats and Patels in their respective states might be an important factor in their feeling of relative disparity, as their reference point might be the dominant group, and not the socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.

### **3.3 Results - Analyzing evolution of group (dis)advantage over time**

The previous sections provides empirical evidence to show that the three groups demanding OBC status and thereby access to reservations (quotas) are already closer to the upper castes in their respective states than to the more disadvantaged groups. However, the evidence presented compares the groups at one point in time. It could be argued that changes over time, more particular a relative decline in relation to the other social groups might explain the forceful articulation for affirmative action.

#### **3.3.1 Panel analysis of household level indicators**

In order to examine the changes in relative position between the social groups, the first strategy undertaken by us is as follows:<sup>10</sup> the IHDS 2011-12 is the second wave of a longitudinal data set, the first wave of which was in 2004-5. The first wave of data does not have individual Jati-level information. However, the two rounds can be linked in a panel, and through that we identify the same households in the three states in the 2004-5 data. We first examine the changes over time on the three household level variables - PCCE, probability of being poor, and whether they owned or

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<sup>10</sup>In Deshpande and Ramachandran (2016) we examine the changing contours of caste disadvantage over the last four decades, and find that on key material indicators, such as access to white collar jobs, higher educational attainment, average wages etc., caste disparities are rising, rather than falling. However, that analysis is based on the broad administrative categories – SC-ST, OBC and Others – due to the nature of data availability. Given the disaggregated jati-level data in IHDS, we can directly assess change over time for these specific groups, relative to other groups in their respective states.

Table I: Panel analysis: evolution of relative (dis)advantage over time

	(1) PCCE	(2) Dummy for being Poor	(3) Dummy for Own or Cultivate Land
<b>HARYANA</b>			
Jat Dummy* Dummy for Year 2012	11,909*** (4,164) [0.111]	-0.0837** (0.0378) [-0.0710]	-0.0729** (0.0344) [-0.0477]
HH Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,631	2,631	2,631
R-squared	0.871	0.913	0.957
<b>MAHARASHTRA</b>			
Maratha Dummy* Dummy for Year 2012	5,919*** (960.9) [0.131]	-0.0323 (0.0250) [-0.0319]	-0.0294* (0.0167) [-0.0246]
HH Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	5,087	5,087	5,088
R-squared	0.901	0.866	0.957
<b>GUJARAT</b>			
Patel Dummy* Dummy for Year 2012	8,963** (3,952) [0.0676]	0.0244 (0.0545) [0.0140]	-0.0102 (0.0515) [-0.00414]
HH Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,790	2,790	2,791
R-squared	0.897	0.887	0.949

The other controls include a dummy for year 2012, age of the household head, a dummy for being in an urban location and household fixed effects. In column (1), (2) and (3) the dependent variables are per capita consumption expenditure, dummy for being classified as poor based on the 2012 Tendulkar poverty line, and a dummy for whether the household owns or cultivates any land.  $p < .10$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $p < .01$ .

cultivated any land - and estimate the following equation:

$$y_{ijk} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 D_j C_k + \delta_2 D_j + \delta_3 C_k + \delta_4 HH_i + \varepsilon_{ijkn}, \quad (2)$$

where the subscript  $ijk$  indexes individual  $i$ , from group  $j$ , from year  $k$ .  $D_j$  is a dummy variable taking the value 1 if the individual is a Jat in Haryana and zero otherwise, when the equation is estimated for the state of Haryana; it takes the value 1 for Marathas in Maharashtra and zero otherwise, when we consider Maharashtra; and finally for the state of Gujarat  $D_j$  it takes the value 1 for Patels and zero otherwise.  $C_k$  is a dummy variable which takes the value 1 if the data is from the year 2011-12 and zero otherwise, and  $HH_i$  is a household fixed effect. Moreover, all specifications control for the age of the household head, as well as an urban dummy. As we are looking household level variables, we restrict the estimation to household heads that are between 18 and 65 years old. Panel A of Table I shows the results.

We see from Table I that Jats, in fact, increase their PCCE as compared to the other social groups over the two rounds; moreover, they also decrease their probability of being classified as poor based on 2012 Tendulkar poverty line (Planning Commission, Government of India, 2011). However, we see that they reduce their probability of owning or cultivating land in 2011-12 compared to 2004-5, relative to all the other groups in the state. Thus, the narrative of agrarian distress underlying anxieties is borne out by the reduced probability of owning land. In Gujarat, we see that Patels had higher PCCE, the same probability of being poor and of owning or cultivating land in 2011-12 compared to 2004-05, relative to all other groups in the state. Thus, based on the probability of owning or cultivating land, on average there is no sign of increasing agrarian distress among the Patels. In Maharashtra, the change is very similar to that in Gujarat: Marathas had significantly higher PCCE, the same probability of being poor, and a reduced probability of owning or cultivating land in 2011-12 compared to 2004-5, relative to all other groups combined.

Combining this evidence with that in the previous section, the picture that emerges is the follow-

ing. Assessed in 2011-12, the three aggrieved Jatis are closer to upper rather than middle or lower castes on a variety of indicators. Comparing this picture to the relative position of the same households vis-à-vis all other groups in their respective states in 2004-05, we find that in terms of average per capita expenditure, their position has improved over time. In terms of probability of being poor, there is no worsening. In two of the three states, there is evidence of a decline in the probability of owning or cultivating land, which could be the reason for the heightened anxiety. However, on the whole, there is no overwhelming evidence of a relative deterioration in their position.

### 3.3.2 Changes in educational attainment using cohort analysis

The ongoing transformation of the Indian economy to a skill-based one implies that education gains an ever more important role, and the traditionally agrarian social groups might feel ill equipped to seize new knowledge-based or skill-based occupations, despite their dominant position. In order to assess this we now consider how the younger cohorts of these three agrarian jatis compare to the other social groups, relative to the same comparison between the older cohorts from these groups. We define the younger cohort as comprising of individuals aged 18 to 35 in 2012, and the older cohort as individuals who are aged 36-65 in 2012. We compare the three jatis within each state to two broad social groups: (1) the Brahmins and the other Forward Castes; (2) the OBCs and SC-ST. In order to evaluate changes over the two cohorts, we estimate the following regression:

$$y_{ijkn} = \delta_0 + \delta_1 D_j C_k + \delta_2 D_j + \delta_3 C_k + \delta_4 R_n + \varepsilon_{ijkn}, \quad (3)$$

where the subscript  $ijkn$  indexes individual  $i$ , from social group  $j$  and cohort  $k$  and resident in district  $n$ .  $D_j$  is a dummy variable taking the value 1 for Jats in Haryana and zero otherwise, when the equation is estimated for the state of Haryana; it takes the value 1 for Marathas in Maharashtra and zero otherwise, when we consider Maharashtra; and finally for the state of Gujarat  $D_j$  takes the value 1 for Patels and zero otherwise.  $C_k$  is a dummy variable which takes the value 1 if the individual is

aged 18 to 35 in 2012 and zero otherwise. Finally,  $R_n$  is a set of district dummies. Moreover, all specifications control for the age of the individual as well as an urban dummy. Table II shows the results.

The results for the Jats in Haryana show that the younger cohort increases its relative years of schooling by 2.19 and 1.45 years, as compared to Group 1 (the Brahmins and the other Forward Castes) and Group 2 (the OBCs and SC-ST), respectively. As the Jats were trailing Group 1 and ahead of Group 2, this implies they close the gaps with the the other dominant, non-disadvantaged groups and further increase their advantage in relation to the socially backward groups. For the indicator of having completing secondary education or more, we see that there is neither convergence nor divergence when compared to Group 1. However, they increase their completion rate of secondary schooling by a whole 12 percentage points when compared to the socially disadvantaged groups - the OBCs and SC-ST.

The younger Marathas in Maharashtra close the gap with the Brahmins and Forward castes by almost 1 year of schooling, and fall behind Group 2 by 0.44 years, though they still hold an advantage of 1.23 years of schooling as compared to Group 2. For the indicator of having completing secondary education or more, we see that there is neither convergence nor divergence as compared to Group 1 and 2. Finally the younger Patels in Gujarat show no convergence or divergence when compared with the non-backward groups in the state of Gujarat; though it is important to note that they in fact do better in absolute terms when compared to Group 1. Comparing the socially backward groups to the Patels in Gujarat, we see that they ncrease their completion rate of secondary schooling by a whole 14 percentage points, which is over and above the already 12 percentage points gap that existed between them.

One potential channel that might account for such forceful demand for quotas is that the younger cohorts of these three jatis have put in a greater investment in education, in comparison to corresponding cohorts of other groups. Our preliminary investigation in this dimension cannot rule out this hypothesis; yet more work is needed before firmly concluding that greater investment in educa-

Table II: Cohort analysis: evolution of relative (dis)advantage over time on educational indicators

	Comparison with Brahmins and Other Forward Castes		Comparison with OBCs and SC-ST	
	(1) Years of Education	(2) Dummy for Completing Secondary Educ. or More	(3) Years of Education	(4) Dummy for Completing Secondary Educ. Or more
<b>HARYANA</b>				
Younger Cohort Dummy*Haryana Jat Dummy	2.19*** (0.40)	0.018 (0.039)	1.45*** (0.34)	0.12*** (0.029)
Cohort aged 18 to 35 in 2011-12	[1.53 - 2.85]	[-0.046 - 0.082]	[0.90 - 2.01]	[0.076 - 0.17]
Haryana Jat Dummy	-0.15 (0.40)	0.088** (0.039)	1.31*** (0.26)	0.079*** (0.022)
	[-0.80 - 0.51]	[0.024 - 0.15]	[0.88 - 1.73]	[0.044 - 0.12]
	-2.43*** (0.31)	-0.11*** (0.030)	0.50* (0.26)	0.011 (0.022)
	[-2.94 - -1.92]	[-0.16 - -0.065]	[0.081 - 0.92]	[-0.025 - 0.046]
Observations	2,069	2,071	4,387	4,391
R-squared	0.321	0.228	0.313	0.160
<b>MAHARASHTRA</b>				
Younger Cohort Dummy*Maharashtra Maratha Dummy	1.03*** (0.24)	0.0091 (0.027)	-0.44** (0.18)	0.0096 (0.018)
Cohort aged 18 to 35 in 2011-12	[0.63 - 1.42]	[-0.035 - 0.053]	[-0.73 - -0.14]	[-0.020 - 0.039]
Maharashtra Maratha Dummy	-0.90*** (0.27)	-0.028 (0.030)	0.22 (0.17)	-0.016 (0.017)
	[-1.34 - -0.46]	[-0.077 - 0.020]	[-0.054 - 0.50]	[-0.044 - 0.012]
	-0.48** (0.19)	0.015 (0.021)	1.23*** (0.14)	0.066*** (0.014)
	[-0.80 - -0.16]	[-0.020 - 0.049]	[1.00 - 1.46]	[0.043 - 0.089]
Observations	4,349	4,350	8,562	8,568
R-squared	0.298	0.171	0.340	0.189
<b>GUJARAT</b>				
Younger Cohort Dummy*Gujarat Patel Dummy	0.24 (0.48)	0.043 (0.052)	-0.50 (0.47)	0.14*** (0.036)
Cohort aged 18 to 35 in 2011-12	[-0.55 - 1.03]	[-0.043 - 0.13]	[-1.27 - 0.27]	[0.080 - 0.20]
Gujarat Patel Dummy	-0.085 (0.34)	-0.0092 (0.037)	1.26*** (0.25)	0.025 (0.019)
	[-0.64 - 0.47]	[-0.070 - 0.051]	[0.85 - 1.67]	[-0.0062 - 0.057]
	0.55* (0.33)	0.0027 (0.036)	3.70*** (0.31)	0.12*** (0.024)
	[0.0040 - 1.10]	[-0.057 - 0.062]	[3.19 - 4.21]	[0.077 - 0.16]
Observations	1,932	1,934	4,254	4,259
R-squared	0.290	0.190	0.258	0.111

$p < .10$ ;  $p < .05$ ;  $p < .01$ .

tion by younger cohorts is behind this demand for quotas.

## Summary

The overall picture emerging from the socio-economic comparison of Jats, Marathas and the Patels with the other social groups in Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively suggests that extension of reservation based on criteria of backwardness has no empirical validity. The three Jatis are similar to the Brahmins and Other forward castes, and generally much better off compared to the OBCs or the SC-STs in their respective states. This is not true only when we compare them at a point in time, but looking at evolution shows that, if anything, these three Jatis have increased their relative advantage compared to the disadvantaged social groups and closed gaps in relation to the dominant caste groups.

## 4 Anxieties and Mobilization Success

### 4.1 Exploring the basis for anxieties: The structural change hypothesis

The Jats, Marathas and the Patels, are predominantly agricultural communities which benefited from the Green Revolution and the White (milk) Revolution that took place in India starting the early 1960s. The transformation happening in the economy, especially, the declining importance of agriculture, and growth of corporatized agriculture and water shortages affecting productivity, has meant that these groups feel increasingly vulnerable, especially given their former position of strength (see, for instance, the discussion in Singh (2011) about the vulnerabilities of Jats in UP, or Jodhka (2014)).<sup>11</sup> This structural change hypothesis has been highlighted by the popular press, though commentators have not provided empirical evidence to support their assertion.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>The column by Jodhka is available at <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/going-backward/> )

<sup>12</sup>Refer to <http://scroll.in/article/754203/beyond-reservations-haryanas-jats-believe-the-ground-is-slipping-beneath-their-feet>  
<http://scroll.in/article/757889/in-maharashtra-the-maratha-demand-for-reservations-is-losing-steam>  
<http://scroll.in/article/753595/casteism-brides-and-a-failed-gujarat-model-what-the-patel-demand-for-reservations-is-really-about>

Figures VIII and IX show the probability of holding a casual job in the agricultural and non-

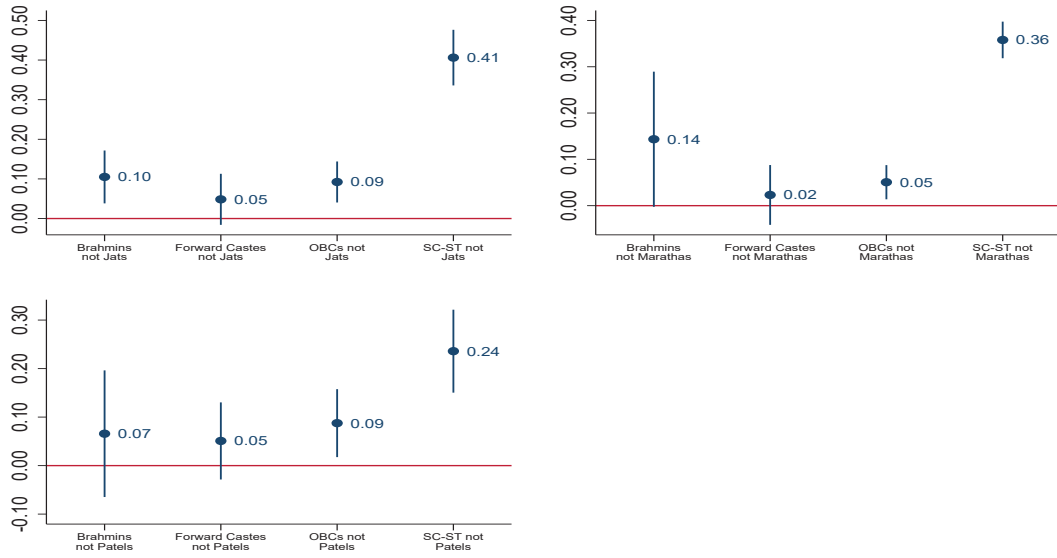


Figure VIII: Comparing the groups on probability of having a casual job in the agricultural sector

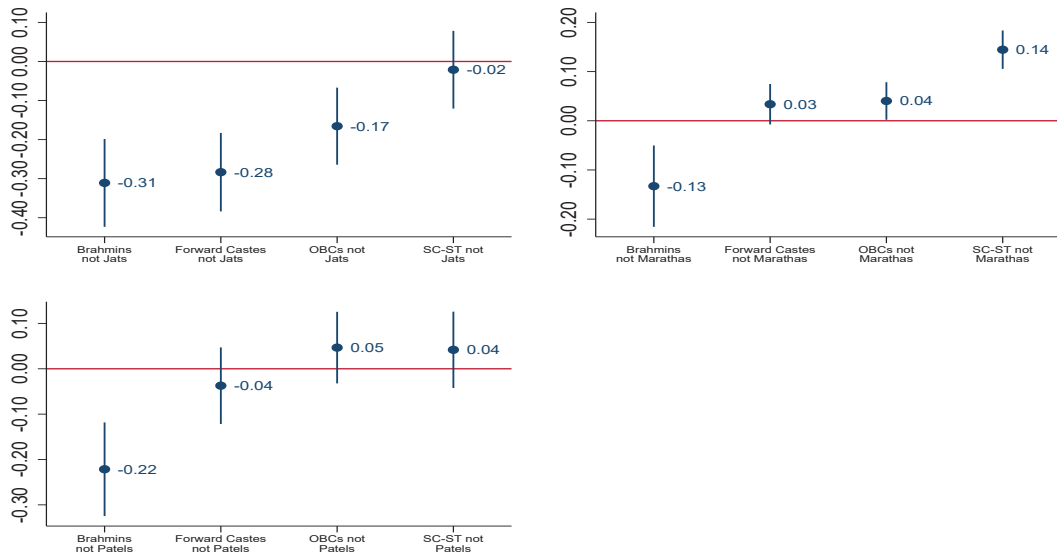


Figure IX: Comparing the groups on probability of having a casual job in the non-agricultural sector

agricultural sector for the Jats, Marathas and the Patels, relative to the other caste groups, in Haryana,



Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively. We note that in the agricultural sector, these three groups are *less* likely than all other caste groups to be involved in casual jobs. On the other hand, when we look at the non-agricultural sector, we see a more nuanced picture. 40 percent of the Jats involved in the non-agricultural sector are likely to be in casual jobs. They have a 32, 29 and 17 percentage point greater likelihood than Brahmins, Forward Castes, and OBCs, respectively, to be involved in casual jobs, and there are no significant differences between the Jats and the SC-STs. On the other hand, 23 percent of the Marathas employed in the non-agricultural sector hold casual jobs; this is 13 percentage points more than the Brahmins. The socially disadvantaged groups - OBCs and SC-STs - are all more likely to be involved in casual jobs even in the non-agricultural sector. Finally, for the Patels, 53 percent of those employed in the non-agricultural sector hold casual jobs. Having noted this, it is important to highlight that in Gujarat, only the Brahmins are 22 percentage points less likely to hold casual jobs compared to Patels. There are no significant differences between Patels and the other social groups in the probability of holding casual jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The above suggests that the declining importance of agriculture, with high levels of employment in casual jobs in the non-agricultural sector could be an important factor driving demands for reservation. However, both Marathas and Patels have lower levels of casualization of the labor force in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors, as compared to the socially disadvantaged groups.

For these three jatis, the dominant livelihood being agriculture has meant that these groups are especially susceptible to the increasing water shortages. The combination of monsoon failures and cropping patterns have led to the overexploitation of groundwater; for instance, according to the World Bank, in Maharashtra “by 2025, an estimated 60 per cent of ground water blocks will be in a critical condition.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the crushing and processing of the dominant cash crop in Maharashtra, sugarcane, is an extremely water intensive process. For instance, in 2013-14, farmers grew sugarcane in two lakh hectares of land, which is around 9.4 percent of the state’s cultivated area, consuming 71.4 percent of its irrigation water. The uncertainty about future agricultural productiv-

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<sup>13</sup><http://www.deccanherald.com/content/56673/indias-groundwater-table-dry.html>

ity is most likely on the rise due to the vagaries of the monsoon and continuously declining water table levels. The increased hardship due to declining water table levels has also been accompanied by increasing competition for water for the farmers from the multi-national corporations (Shiva et al., 2002). For instance, in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan, Coca Cola was forced to shut down plants in the face of protests from farmers over depleted water levels affecting both household consumption and irrigation needs.<sup>14</sup> These changes have meant that traditionally dominant agricultural groups are considering alternative avenues to ensure livelihood security in the future, and one of the avenues has been to be included as beneficiaries of AA which provides access to government jobs with security of tenure, and additional benefits such as access to health care and pensions.

Another important element highlighted in the popular press has been the lack of integration of the Jats, Marathas, and Patels, into the modern economy, where knowledge of English is considered to be a necessity. Figure X shows the differentially probability for being fluent in English among the caste groups relative to the Jats, Marathas, and Patels in Haryana, Maharashtra and Gujarat, respectively. It is interesting to note that only 4.5 percent of the Jats are classified as being fluent. The Brahmins and the other forward castes are 6 and 4 percentage points more likely to be fluent; an increase of more than 100 percent. Moreover there are no significant differences between the Jats and the OBCs and SC-STs. In the case of Marathas, again only 6 percent of the sample is fluent in English; again the Brahmins and the other forward castes are 14 and 3 percentage points more likely than the Marathas to be fluent in English, with no significant differences between the Marathas and the socially disadvantaged groups - the OBCs, and SC-STs. Finally, in Gujarat, again 6 percent of the Patels report being fluent in English. Moreover, there is seen to be no significant differences in English fluency between the Patels and the non-backward groups. On the other hand, they are around

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<sup>14</sup>Refer to Shiva (2006) for further details. Also refer to <http://www.firstpost.com/india/coca-cola-battles-water-crisis-in-three-states-rajasthan-meghalaya-andhra-pradesh-plants-shut-2623590.html> and <https://fsrn.org/2016/03/coca-cola-shuts-down-three-bottling-plants-in-india-amid-severe-water-shortages/>.

6 percentage points more likely to be fluent in English as compared to the socially disadvantaged groups.

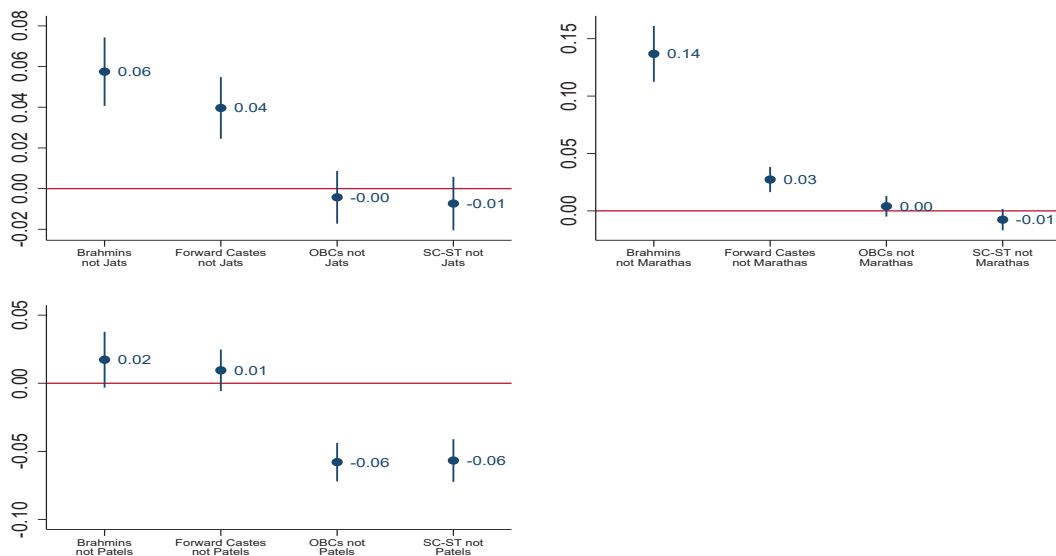


Figure X: Comparing the groups on probability of being fluent in English

## 4.2 Understanding the mobilization success of the three Jatis

The above analysis shows that despite internal differentiation, overall the Jats, Marathas and Patels, cannot be considered to be “backward” relative to the other social groups in their respective states. In that case, what factors might explain the fact that the Jats and Marathas, were able to get legislative support to be classified as beneficiaries of AA, only to be overturned by the courts. Also, what factors underlie the large successful organization of Patels, who seem to be comparable to Brahmins on most socioeconomic indicators considered in Section 3.2

To throw some light on this issue, we explore the importance of political connectedness in explaining their mobilization success. More specifically, we look at the differences in political connectedness of these three Jatis and the other social groups as measured by: (i) probability of knowing party officials from own community; (ii) probability of knowing party officials not from own com-

munity; (iii) probability of knowing elected politician from own community; (iv) probability of knowing elected politician not from own community; (v) probability of having a Panchayat member from their own household (HH) or closely related to their HH.

The results of this analysis are shown in Figures A3, A4, A5, A6, and A7 in the appendix. We see that within group cohesion is very strong among the three Jatis, with the Jats and Patels being 3 to 8 percentage points more likely to know a party official or an elected politician from their own community. On the other indicators, we see no sharp differences across the social groups with political connectedness across community lines being not significantly different, though all the point estimates do suggest better political capital for the three jatis considered.

## 5 Concluding Comments

Jats, Marathas and Patels are among the most powerful communities in their respective regions. Jodhka (2014)<sup>15</sup> argues that Jats are the “most important and powerful community in the rural landscapes of northwest India”. Even compared to Patels and Marathas, the Jats are “superior-most” in their region as Brahmanical dominance is weak. Landownership and cultivation have been their economic backbone. Our findings provide empirical support to Jodhka’s argument that Jats are not lagging behind, not even in government jobs, but are dealing with tectonic shifts caused to their livelihoods due to the crisis of agriculture. Jodhka suggests that it is not the marginalized Jat cultivator, but the upwardly mobile Jat elite who are articulating the demand for quotas, as they do not want to be stuck in agriculture, and feel that they are unable to compete with upper castes in urban areas.

Overall, there is discontent among powerful farming communities due to the perception that real economic power lies in the hands of the big corporations, and the state, overtly or covertly, acts in their interest. These communities feel their power slipping away or eroding, in addition to feeling

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<sup>15</sup><http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/going-backward/>

ill prepared to shift towards urban, formal sector livelihood opportunities. Desai (2016)<sup>16</sup> discusses how a “sense of fairness in economic outcomes is strongly related to perceptions of prosperity”. This would imply that individuals or communities who feel strongly that the odds of economic success are stacked against them are more likely to feel deprived. Desai reports estimates from IHDS panel data that “forward castes were about 30 per cent more likely to feel that they were worse off in 2011-12 than in 2004-05”.<sup>17</sup> Thus, perceptions of being worse-off are real: our analysis suggests that these perceptions are exactly that - feelings - not supported by evidence on the ground. The evidence, which is overwhelming, suggests that these communities are not the most marginalized in their respective states.

Having said this, economic changes that give rise to widespread anxieties, definitely need to be understood and genuine grievances, including those that might come from forward castes dealing with agrarian transformations, need to be addressed. Apropos demands for inclusion into the OBC category, we would like to make the following argument: given increasing privatization, the base, that is, total jobs that are eligible for reservations, is already shrinking. In another paper (Deshpande and Ramachandran, 2016) we demonstrate how existing OBCs and SC-STs are further lagging behind upper castes in a range of material indicators. In this context, extending quotas to relatively richer and powerful groups would amount to diluting the already small and shrinking entitlement for communities that are truly disadvantaged and discriminated against.

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<sup>16</sup><http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-politics-of-perceptions/article9320728.ece>

<sup>17</sup>Note that in the current classification of castes, Jats, Patels and Marathas are classified as forward castes in IHDS

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# Appendix

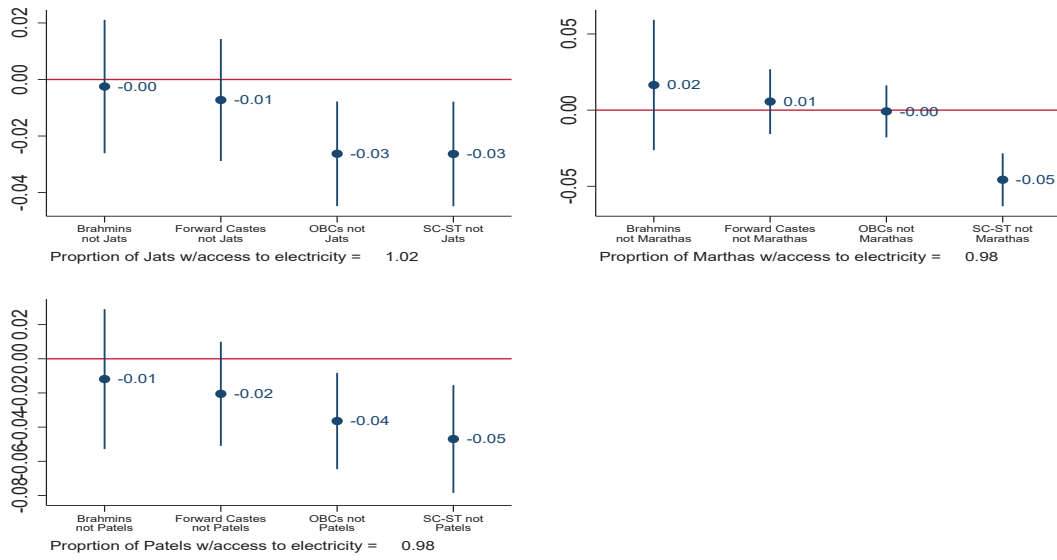


Figure A1: Comparing the groups on access to electricity

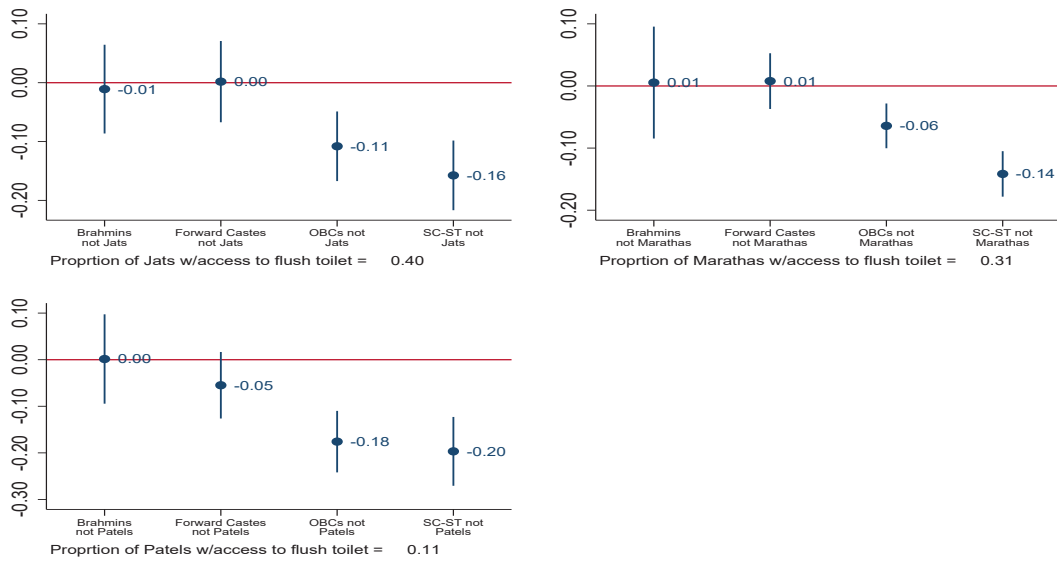


Figure A2: Comparing the groups on access to flush toilets



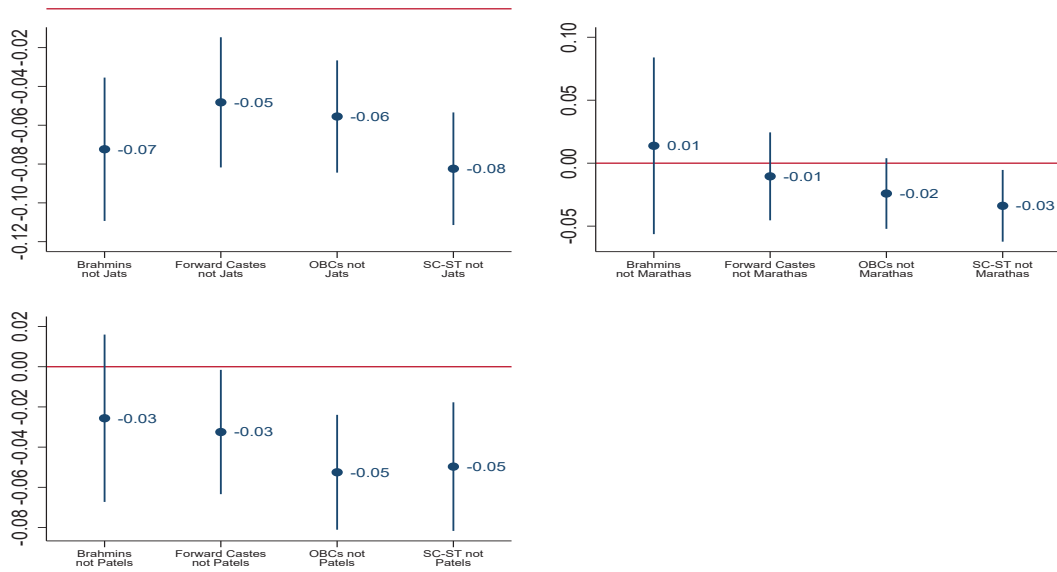


Figure A3: Comparing the groups on probability of knowing party officials from own community

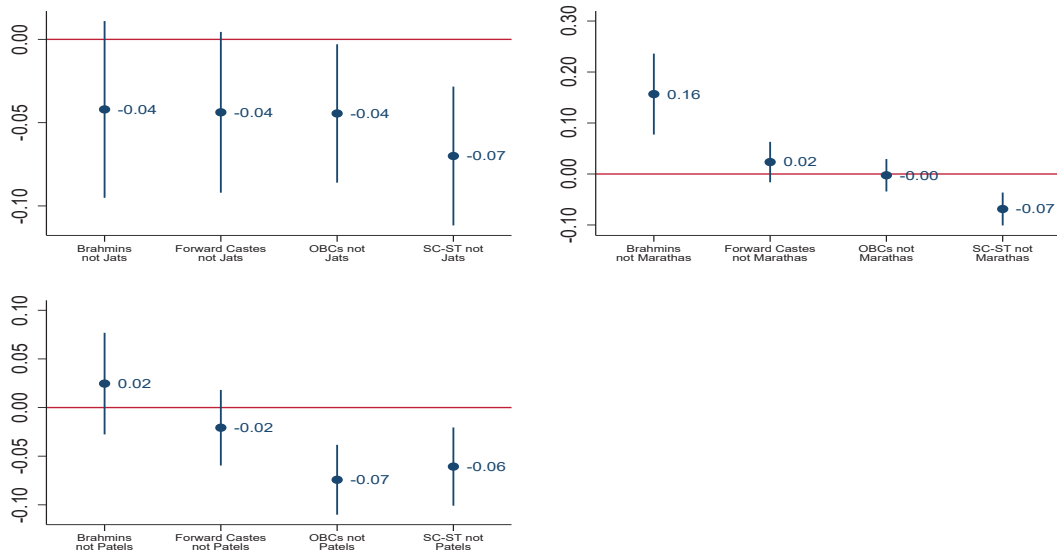


Figure A4: Comparing the groups on probability of knowing party officials not from own community

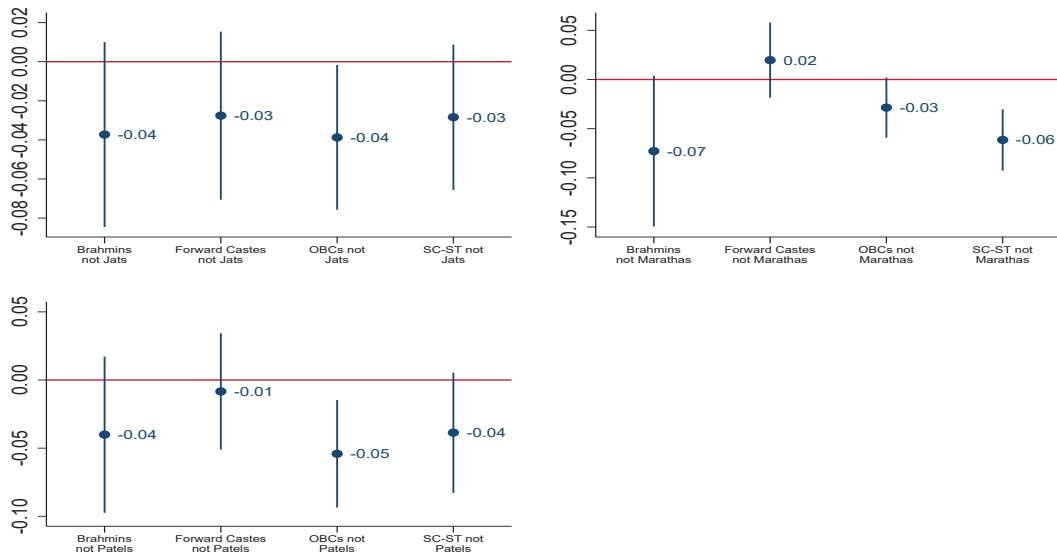


Figure A5: Comparing the groups on probability of knowing elected politician from own community

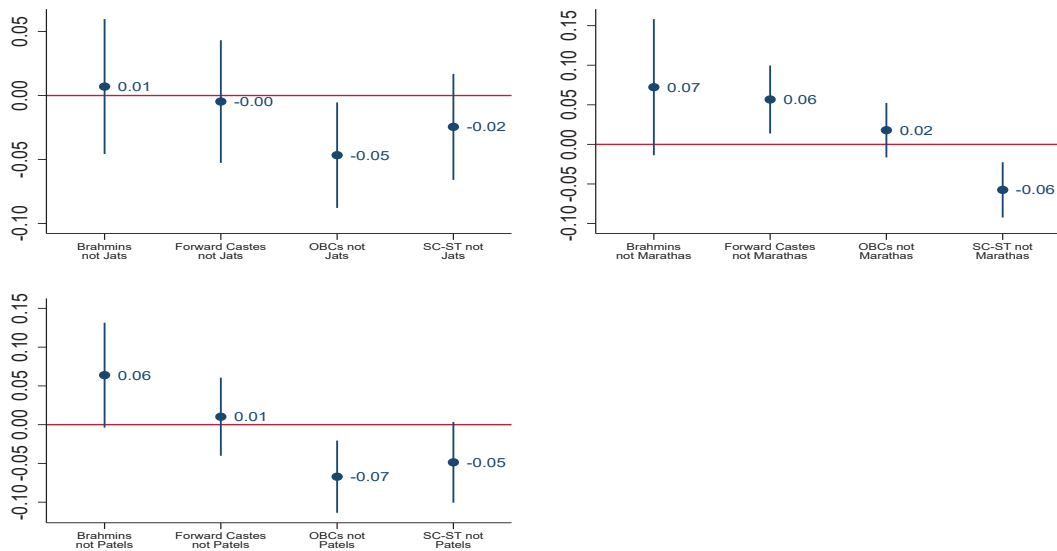


Figure A6: Comparing the groups on probability of knowing elected politician not from own community

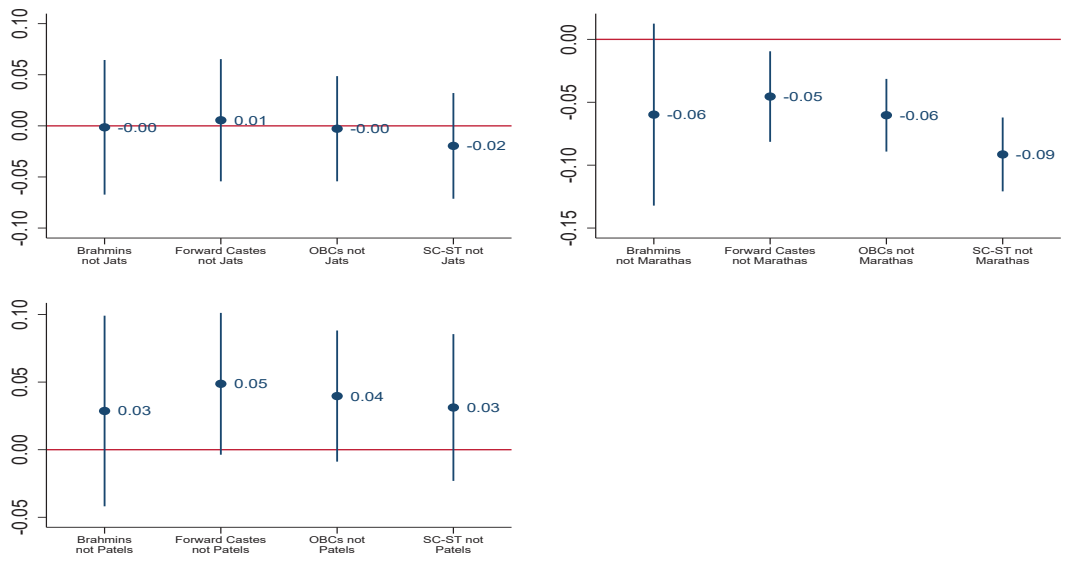


Figure A7: Comparing the groups on probability of a Panchayat member from HH or close to HH