

Strengths of IHDS

India Human Development Surveys Wave 1 (2004-5), Wave 2 (2011-12) and Wave 3 (2022-24) are part of a collaborative research program between researchers from the National Council of Applied Economic Research and University of Maryland. The IHDS is a multi-topic survey designed to examine changes in livelihoods and life-styles of Indian households in an era of rapid social transformation. The IHDS research program is governed under guidance from an advisory panel headed by Dr. Pronab Sen, former Chairman, National Statistical Commission and consists of representatives from several ministries as well as researchers from universities and civil society institutions.

IHDS data for Waves 1 and 2 are available in public domain for cost-free download. They have been downloaded by over 11,000 users worldwide and have resulted in over 1200 papers and dissertations.

Strengths of IHDS include: (1) A multi-purpose multi-topic design including questions on income, consumption, health, education, employment, social networks, gender relations etc. (2) Many innovative features including administration of short reading, writing, and arithmetic tests to children aged 8-11, questions about symbolic aspects of gender (e.g. purdah, men and women eating together in the household), information on social networks; and, (3) Information on village infrastructure and facility survey for two schools/medical facilities in each sampling unit.

The IHDS has a unique niche, even as a cross-sectional survey. However, its longitudinal dimension makes it especially important for studying a society undergoing a rapid transition. With surveys of the same households in 2004-5, 2011-12, and 2022-24, IHDS is the first panel study of urban and rural households in India that covers all age ranges. Substantial field efforts were made in IHDS-I to secure contact information (telephones, neighbours' names, family contacts) so that the IHDS-I households could be easily relocated, even in the event of a move. While many international surveys today are part of panel designs, in India the most widely used surveys, the NSS and the NFHS, remain repeated cross-sections. There is, therefore, an important role to be played by the IHDS in providing panel data for one of the world's most

important regions. Panel designs are favoured for good reasons, despite their added cost and the difficulties of re-contacting a shifting and often busy population.

Advantages of panel data include:

- Estimates of entry, exit and duration in such vital phenomena as poverty, education and migration.
- Research on path-dependent changes such as the impact of childhood health on adult outcomes, the interaction between population growth and environment or household response to rising incomes in switching from biofuels to clean fuels.
- Application of better statistical models for controlling unobserved heterogeneity enhanced the possibility of computing fixed-effects models that account for unmeasured, time-invariant characteristics of the household or individual (e.g. overtime growth in academic skills when comparing public and private schools).
- Better analysis of the role of exogenous shocks between fielding various rounds of the survey.