

# **Gender Differences in Mathematics Performance: Evidence from Rural India**

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## **Abstract**

There is limited evidence on gender differences in mathematics scores, especially in the Indian context. Performance in mathematics at school and early ages is positively associated with higher earnings for an individual. This paper attempts to examine gender disparity in mathematics scores among rural children at an all-India level. Our findings from rural India show significant gender gap in mathematics. The same gap is not observable for reading skills and observable only to a smaller extent with respect to writing skills. The results remain robust under various specifications- within social groups, type of school attendance, expenditure quantiles, and birth orders. Further, our inferences also hold for girls and boys belonging to the same household. We explore many mechanisms and find indicative evidence of gender role stereotyping in the society, lower nutrition levels for girls in childhood and possibly higher participation of male children in petty works outside home and in sports. The findings indicate the need for affirmative action policies to both test and monitor these differences and design interventions such as changes in delivery or pedagogy of the subject to understand this gap better. These results assume even greater significance in the current contestations around the New Education Policy in India.