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# B-Schools Score High on Gender Diversity

**BRIDGING THE GAP** Women student intakes at SPJIMR, ISB, IIFT above 35%; IIM Indore has 42% women students



## Gender Sensitive

Better classroom gender diversity in non-IIM B-schools than leading IIMs

**MEASURES THAT HAVE HELPED...**

- 1] Extra marks in the interview round
- 2] Relaxations in the cutoff in pre-interview list
- 3] Some like ISB are offering daycare, family accommodation and crèche facility
- 4] Push from recruiters is also helping

**Prachi Verma Dadhwal & Rica Bhattacharyya**

**New Delhi | Mumbai:** The percentage of women students for the 2021 graduating year hit a record at Indian B-Schools, with intakes at SP Jain (SPJIMR), Indian School of Business (Hyderabad and Mohali) and Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) above the 35% threshold, ahead of the premier Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

The older IIMs of Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Lucknow, Indore and Kozhikode scored an average of 33.5% on gender diversity in their lecture halls, with intake of women students at IIM-A slightly dipping to 24% from 26% a year ago. Individually, IIM Indore has 42% women while it's 37% at IIM Bangalore and Lucknow, IIM Calcutta has 31% women and Kozhikode has enrolled 30% women in their respective new batches.

ISB and SPJIMR intakes touched 40%, while at IIFT (Kolkata and Delhi), women students make up 36% of the 2021 class, compared with 32% for the 2020 graduating year.

"Gender diversity at our campus is one of the most important focus areas. To improve gender diversity, 2% extra weightage is being given to all female candidates during the interview session," said Manoj Pant, director, IIFT. The institute, with campuses in both Delhi and Kolkata, is also providing a 2% grace to female candidates in the cut-offs in standardised tests to ensure greater participation. But SPJIMR managed to raise the intake to 41% from 38% last year without targeted incentives or gender-based quotas.

"Candidates with exceptional CVs and extra-curricular activities are called for an interview in what is called a 'profile-based' selection," said Saivee George, chairperson - PGDM programme, SPJIMR. The regular selection process also gives importance to various aspects of a participant's profile, including academics.

The Indian School of Business (ISB) has 39% female students, compared with 24% last

year, across its two campuses at Hyderabad and Mohali.

"The percentage increase is a result of consistent efforts, over the years, to ensure much-needed gender diversity in the classroom, which in turn will lead to an increase in the representation of women in the board rooms," said an ISB spokesperson.

Unlike other B-schools, the average age of students at ISB is about 25-27 years and the institute has taken several women-friendly initiatives at the campus. These include family-friendly accommodation and facilities such as a crèche and day-care for young mothers. All students, including women, stay on ISB campus with their families.

ISB's scholarship policy is both need-based and merit-based. For instance, ISB alumnus and former vice president of WhatsApp, Neeraj Arora, has instituted a perpetual merit-cum-need based scholarship for a deserving woman student.

There is pressure from recruiters too.

"With a strong business case for inclusion and diversity in business leadership, recruiters are increasingly relying on top B-schools to prepare the next generation of trained female managers," said SPJIMR's George.

EY, a regular talent-shopper at both IIMs and other B-schools, said the trend is encouraging.

"Female student representation in business management courses is increasing and for us it is important to provide them with a level playing field. We have strengthened our efforts in this direction by introducing 'recruitHER' — our 360-degree approach to gender diversity," said Sandeep Kohli, partner and talent leader at EY India.

BigBasket, a regular visitor at Indian campuses, is trying to improve gender diversity at all levels of the hierarchy.

"We have been taking a very thoughtful approach to gender diversity, which is about getting a good balance between the masculine and feminine side of every individual, man or woman... With this thought process, we hire women at all levels including those from campuses," said TN Hari, head HR, BigBasket.

This year, MDI Gurgaon has enrolled a record number of women — 119 out of 419 — compared with 82 women in a total intake of 360 students last year.

"Since inception, this is the highest number of women the institute has admitted in a year," said Rajesh K Singh, chairperson - admissions, at MDI Gurgaon. "Diversity is important for ensuring a mixed batch profile and better placement opportunities."

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