

IIMs Chart a New Course on Gender Diversity

Three of the 6 first-gen B-schools have a record number of women this year in flagship 2-year PGP in management

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Bengaluru | New Delhi: At least three of the six first-generation Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have a record number of women in their flagship two-year post-graduate programme (PGP) in management this year, as the business schools accelerate

efforts to bring in more diversity, mirroring similar endeavours by India Inc to shore up women's representation in its ranks. At IIM-Kozhikode, which has been spearheading the gender-diversity drive among IIMs, 59.1% (290) of the 491 students in the batch of 2024-26 are women, surpassing the previous highest of 53.2% in 2020-22.

At 40%, IIM-Bangalore admitted more women this year than ever in the past. At IIM-Lucknow, where numbers are yet to be finalised, there are already 36.5% female acceptances.

Overall, nearly four out of every 10 students across the PGP batch at the top six IIMs — Bangalore, Ahmed-

abad, Calcutta, Indore, Lucknow and Kozhikode — are women. At IIM-Ahmedabad, the representation of women stands at 24.7%, while at IIM-Indore, it is 27.6%. IIM-Calcutta has 172 women (36%)

in a batch of 477; in 2021-23, the last highest, the batch of 480 had 171 women (35.6%).

The rising share of women in MBA classrooms reflects

Indian business schools' efforts, like their counterparts globally, to improve gender diversity. Some IIMs are giving gender diversity more weight in their admission policies, driven by demand for more and more female managers from recruiting companies, said institute officials as well as industry experts.

"The feedback with regard to diverse students has been excellent and well appreciated by most companies," said Debashis Chatterjee, director at IIM-Kozhikode. "There is definitely a preference and certain organisations are also working

on meeting internal targets for attaining diversity within their organisations."

Narayanan Ramaswamy, national leader (education and skill development) at KPMG India, said there is a big awakening which has happened in corporate India which is increasingly looking at bettering gender ratios. "On the demand side, there is a pull for more women managers. On the supply side, there are more women getting into the higher education ecosystem. All this is reflecting in improved diversity numbers in MBA classrooms,"

said Ramaswamy.

DIVERSITY ACROSS BACKGROUNDS

Gender diversity apart, business schools have also moved to embrace more students across a variety of backgrounds, including arts/humanities, commerce, science and law, instead of being heavily skewed in favour of engineering as in the past.

IIM-Indore director Himanshu Rai said integrating the gender diversity and academic diversity factors into the selection process not only enriches classroom dynam-

ics, but also prepares students to thrive in diverse, global workplaces.

"Diversity is essential because it mirrors the real-world dynamics that students will encounter in their future workplaces," Rai said.

IIM-Ahmedabad said it considers diversity to be an important factor for enhancing the learning experience.

Viswanath Pingali, chairperson (placements) at IIM-Ahmedabad, said companies have been showing a good response to increasing batch diversity.

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GENDER MIX AT TOP IIMs

Institute	Women in 2024-26 batch	Total students in 2024-26 batch
IIM Bangalore	214	535
IIM Lucknow*	187	513
IIM Kozhikode	290	491
IIM Indore	133	482
IIM Calcutta	172	477
IIM Ahmedabad	100	404
Total	1,096	2,902

Diversity across backgrounds also increased: percentage of non-engineering students up at these institutes

Mirrors diversity focus across Corporate India

Note: IIM Lucknow process not complete