

Gender diversity in India stuck at 20pc since 3 years

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Though the government of India is launching many schemes and initiatives to promote employment and entrepreneurship among women, the companies are still finding it difficult to fill the gender gap. Compared to the US, India only has half the women participation across all employee groups.

A recent study conducted by ProEves, a gender diversity consulting firm, reveals that overall woman participation in India Inc is stuck at less than 20 percent for the past three-five years. The survey results show that the gender diversity agenda of some of the top multinational and Indian companies in the country is not reflected in the year-on-year progression of these numbers.

According to the survey, though 61 percent of the companies have a stated goal of diversity but only a third have a number target and have no target association on inclusion for leaders, a reflection that many companies have the intent but are shying away from real numbers.

At junior levels, 21 percent companies have the representation of above 35 percent, but drops sharply to 12-13 percent at the senior to top management level, highlighting a "leaking pipeline" from the middle to senior management levels.

"There is a big discrepancy in policies and implementation. Companies could really do a lot more in softer aspects of inclusion and that can happen when leaders begin walking the talk," said Saundarya Rajesh, founder-president of AVTAR Career Creators and FLEXI Careers India.

ProEves also conducted a poll in their Facebook community of 3,000 women called "Happy Moms raise Happy Kids" to understand the reasons for women leaving a corporate career. And not so surprisingly, childcare and lack of flexibility emerged as the main reasons. However, contrary to the poll findings, companies cite better career prospects, relocation, and childcare as the top three reasons for the exit of women.

"This is really a paradox and companies have to concentrate on their culture to achieve real flexibility," said Rajesh.

White-collar women workforce participation in India has dipped in the past decade from 25.5 percent in 2002-03 to 22-23 percent at present.

Whereas the gender diversity ratio – or the number of men and women for every 100 people in the workforce – is around 15 percent now.

The survey findings are based on inputs from 47 leading companies across sectors, including Reckitt Benckiser, Dr Reddy's Laboratories, Nestle India, Colgate-Palmolive (India), Sanofi, Britannia Industries, Whirlpool, Flipkart, Convergys, InMobi, Novartis, Mars International, Honeywell India, Mondelez India Foods, Marico, Castrol India, among others.