

India Inc has hardly made any progress in filling the gender gap. These are the statistics

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A recent survey conducted by ProEves revealed that India Inc has less than 20% participation of women in workforce and this has remained the same for the past three years. This highlighted the fact that even in this age, gender diversity agenda for many multi-national and Indian companies in the country is still not increasing.

Similar studies were conducted by Catalyst in 2015 and Community Business in 2014, and all of them showed similar results. In fact, the percentage has been the same for the past five years. The survey was conducted among 47 leading companies like 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.

At top managerial level the percentage is as low as 12-13%. However, at junior levels, 21% companies have representation of above 35%. This puts some light on the leaking pipeline from the middle to senior positions. Compared to the US, India is at half the women participation across all employee groups.

"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," Saundarya Rajesh, founder-president of AVTAR Career Creators and FLEXI Careers India told ET.

The survey also shows that goals on diversity are stated by about 61% of the companies but only one-third of them have reached their 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.

"Another reason for the gap is that lot of things employees think are important are not what women think, a childcare and parental support organization that works with individuals and companies to provide verified childcare support and drive. ProEves also runs a Facebook community of women called 'Happy Moms raise Happy Kids' which acts as a support group" Ketika Kapoor, coFounder of ProEves told ET.

According to a survey conducted by ProEves, lack of flexibility proved to be the second biggest reason for leaving the cooperate world by moms. "This is really a

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

The percentage of women working in white collar jobs has dropped down from 25.5% in 2002-03 to 22-23% at present. Whereas the gender diversity ratio is around 15% now.

There is definitely a positive intent and genuine recognition of the benefits of genuine diversity. However, there exist larger issues to be looked at like child care support system, commuting, infrastructure that are to be looked into.