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Market Watch

Newer IIMs score on gender diversity front

BY SREERADHA DASGUPTA BASU & PRACHI VERMA, ET BUREAU | JUL 30, 2019,
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Kolkata | New Delhi: The newer Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) are giving their older and more famous counterparts a run for their money on the gender diversity front.

In a year when the intake of women at the six top IIMs averaged 33.5%, at least two of the newer institutes have women outnumbering men in the classrooms. IIM Sambalpur has 50 women in the 98-strong batch of 2019-21. IIM Rohtak inducted 246 students in the batch, of whom 124 are female. It's been a huge leap for IIM Rohtak, where 6% of the batch were women in 2016.

"Diversity is important for creating an environment that instills creativity, confidence and candour in future business leaders. Increased diversity in the class adds to diversity in perspectives, opinions and ideas, which in turn results in increased sharpness of solutions offered to various business problems," said Dheeraj Sharma, director of IIM Rohtak.

The strong showing on gender diversity goes hand-in-hand with a jump in the number of women appearing for the [Common Admission Test \(CAT\)](#) for entry into the IIMs. CAT 2018 had 84,350 women registered, a 50% increase from 56,409 women in 2013.

NEW RECORDS

Most of the newer IIMs have improved their record in terms of percentage of women students.

[IIM Kashipur](#) admitted 29 female candidates this year, compared with six last year. It's the same at IIM Udaipur, with 88 women compared with last year's 66. IIM Nagpur has 25 women students compared with 20 last year and two the year before. At IIM Tiruchirappalli, where the percentage of women fell to 40% this year from 51%, in terms of absolute numbers, there's been a rise to 93 from last year's 92.

WHY THE JUMP

Institutes say they have been actively pushing for greater enrolment of women despite hurdles such as smaller batch sizes and perceived locational disadvantage.

IIM Sambalpur, which struggled to get women students last year, decided to lower the cut-off for women to 90% compared with 95% for men. IIM Kashipur implemented a supernumerary quota for female candidates -limited to 15 - and gave 5 points under the head of gender diversity in its admission policy, said administrative officer Vinay Kumar Sharma.

IIM Udaipur also awarded additional diversity points to female applicants at the time of admission. Besides outreach activities in metros cities, IIM Rohtak reimbursed AC 3-tier fares to female students invited to visit the campus before taking a decision on joining.

While some experts are of the view that such initiatives to boost gender diversity may be going too far, Rediff. com founder Ajit Balakrishnan disagrees. Balakrishnan, who was chairman of IIM Calcutta's board of governors for a decade, said it is a way to counter the fact that the entrance process has traditionally been quant-oriented, resulting in as much as 90% of the accepted students being from engineering backgrounds, where again, there are fewer women.



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Diversity for Creativity

“It’s a societal problem. IIMs are trying to compensate for that because women managers come with extraordinary skills like empathy and insights that are badly needed in industrial setups,” said Balakrishnan.

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