From 9 lakh in 2013, over 20L women in IT now

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BENGALURU: The Indian tech sector has added over 10 lakh women in direct employment in the last decade, underscoring the concerted efforts from the industry, academia and government in fostering and supporting inclusive actions. Indian IT employed 9 lakh women, or 30% of the total 30 lakh directly employed in the India IT sector in the year 2012-13. Today, that number has doubled to over 20 lakh, or 36% of the total workforce of 50.3 lakh in the industry.

A confluence of factors has accelerated women's representation, including companies developing progressive policies to induct more women into the workforce, increased number of colleges offering computer science courses and more women opting for it, visible examples of women in leadership roles, and several state governments enacting policy frameworks to enable women to work in night shifts.

% OF WOMEN IN THE INDIAN TECH INDUSTRY

Year	Total employee base (in lakh)	Women employees (in lakh)	% of women
FY2013	30.4	9.1	30
FY2014	32.6	11.0	34
FY2015	34.8	11.8	34
FY2016	36.9	12.5	34
FY2017	38.6	13.1	34
FY2018	39.6	13.4	34
FY2019	42.2	14.7	35
FY2020	44.6	15.6	35
FY2021	46.5	16.2	35
FY2022	51.0	18.3	36
FY2023	53.9	19.4	36

Debjani Ghosh, president of the IT industry's apex body Nasscom, said it is encouraging to see organisations formalising DE&I (diversity, equity & inclusion) strategies, budgeting for it and embedding it as a critical component to organisational culture and values.
"We are seeing outstanding efforts from leaders in re-imagining benchmarks and accountability," she said.

Ramkumar Ramamoorthy, partner at Catalincs and former CMD of Cognizant India, said the number of seats in computer science engineering and related disciplines has expanded rapidly across India, and in states like Tamil

Nadu, it has more than doubled.

"Given the nature of work, many female students opt for this discipline. Secondly, the pandemic has enabled work to move to where great talent resides, including tier-2 and tier-3 locations, thereby enabling greater women participation. In some progressive companies, women as a proportion of workforce in tier-2 and tier-3 locations is well over 50%," he said.

To raise the number of women employees, companies have introduced special skilling and upskilling programmes, identified women leaders and have offered programmes to help those who took breaks to reintegrate into the workforce.

TCS has 2.2 lakh women employees, constituting 36% of its total workforce of 6.1 lakh employees. In its 2022-23 annual report, the company said it had seen a 60% increase in senior women executives over the last five years. Infosys has 1.3 lakh women employees, comprising 39.4% of its overall workforce.

Nasscom's Ghosh said their research shows that women representation is 40% higher in organisations where the senior leadership or the CEO is driving the DE&I agenda.

"This corroborates the significance of leadership buy-in for successful DE&I outcomes. What is needed now is to dive deep in translating intent into actionable impact," she said.
Namratha Dharshan, chief business leader for India research in technology research and advisory firm ISG, said enterprises are also keen to partner with IT services companies that help address their diversity and inclusion strategy.

"This is gradually becoming one of the critical criteria for outsourcing. Hybrid working and flexible working conditions have opened opportunities for women to consider employment, especially for those returning from

maternity breaks; flexible working options have helped them reconsider full-time employment. Besides, newer safety measures have pushed the companies to take appropriate measures to ensure women's safety while deploying them on night shifts."

Ramamoorthy pointed out how many women have become CEOs, especially in GCCs of large multinationals, which is an inspiration for female students.

"Uma Ratnam (Optum and Barclays), Gangapriya Chakraverti (Ford), Daisy Chittilapilly (Cisco), Prativa Mohapatra (Adobe), Sirisha Voruganti (Lloyds Bank) are great examples of low-profile but highly accomplished women leaders," he said.

"Finally, policy changes by several key state governments, enabling women to work in multiple shifts, has also led to greater women participation in this industry," Ramamurthy added.

In the last 16 months, seven states including Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Odisha have issued notifications, making it possible for commercial establishments to deploy women on the night shift.

Karnataka was an early mover in this direction, coming up with an amendment to the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961, that allows companies to employ women workers on night shifts with certain safeguards ensured by the employers.

Vikram Shroff, head of HR law at Nishith Desai Associates, said there continues to be a healthy competition among several progressive Indian states to attract and encourage women at work. Some of the reforms are

primarily aimed at removing the night shift work restrictions applicable to IT/BPM companies. "These measures tie in well with the overall objectives of companies to promote diversity, equality and inclusion, while supporting case laws on equal opportunities at the workplace," Shroff said.