

Women CFO Count Better but Still Miles to Go...

Nos have improved in 2024 so far, but data from 2,257 NSE cos show only 45 women in director-finance roles

**Rica Bhattacharyya
& Kala Vijayraghavan**

Mumbai: Hiring of women to lead the finance function at companies in India picked up in the past year amid a growing emphasis on improving gender diversity at the top deck, but their number still remains abysmally small.

Latest data from 2,257 companies

listed on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), collated by Primeinfobase, show that just 45 of them have a woman in the chief financial officer or director-finance role. That number was 24 in March 2019 and 31 at the end of March last year.

Board members, executive search companies and legal experts said there is a lot of room for improvement.

MNCs in India as well as large

domestic firms and conglomerates are taking steps to enhance gender diversity in their top management, but they often find a shortage of talent to head the finance function, they said.

“On one in every three CFO search mandates, there is an explicit ask for a woman professional. However, it is essential to recognise that the talent pipeline varies across industries,” said

Rahul Kakkar, partner and India head, CFO Practice, at the leadership advisory and senior executive search firm Korn Ferry.

For companies in the core industrial and manufacturing sectors, the talent pipeline is more limited compared with the services sector, where there has been greater success in cultivating and retaining high-potential, senior female professionals within the finance function. “However, where pipeline is an issue, we are seeing an openness to hiring talent from other sectors, prioritising potential over immediate readiness,” Kakkar added.

MK Sharma, chairman and independent director at spirits maker Diageo, said there is a visible change in the addition of female leaders on corporate boards.

Falling Short

Experts said a push is coming from boards to improve gender diversity at top deck

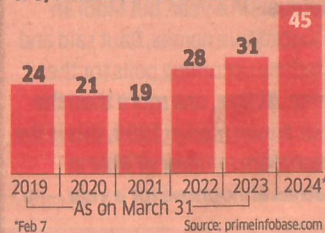
MNCs in India say they often see talent crunch to head finance function

Women CFO talent pool is more limited in core industrial and mfg sectors compared with services sector

NOS ARE ALSO LOW AS WOMEN IN FINANCE SHIFT TOWARD CONSULTING COS OR M&A SPACE



NO OF NSE COS HAVING WOMEN IN CFO/DIRECTOR-FINANCE ROLES



Changing Trend

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“With active corporate legislation for hiring women leaders, there is a growing pool of women talent in CFO and legal roles. Possibly, they have not been as visible as they are today,” he said. Experts said a push is coming from board members to improve gender diversity (which is a key element in the ESG scores of companies) at the top deck. Investors too are looking to allocate funds to companies that are invested in social good. A female CFO

at a top company said women have been breaking the men's club at several companies owing to regulations. So, there is a change in the male mindset of managements which is that women make good leaders too. “Several progressive corporates are now willing to make that bet and are actively seeking women leaders. And women are proving they can not only do as well as men, they are even better than them many times,” she said, seeking anonymity.

rica.bhattacharyya
@timesgroup.com