

Job Gains

India registered significant improvements in employment parameters for women last year, according to official data. However, getting to the top remained an uphill task. **Ishaan Gera** takes a look:

JOB CONDITIONS IMPROVE FOR WOMEN

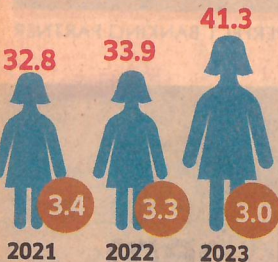
Unemployment rate declines to its lowest level of **3%**



Labour force participation crosses **40%** for first time

WOMEN AGED 15 YEARS AND ABOVE (%)

Labour force participation rate
Unemployment rate



MORE FIND JOBS IN PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL WORK

Proportion rises to near **50%** in professional and technical jobs

More women with advanced degrees find employment

RATIO OF FEMALE WORKERS TO MALE WORKERS (%)



* % of females employed with advanced degrees among the total employed

BUT FEWER WOMEN IN SENIOR ROLES

Proportion of women in senior positions lowest in 3 yrs

Decline higher in urban areas than rural

PROPORTION OF WOMEN LEGISLATORS, SENIOR OFFICIALS AND MANAGERS (%)



Source: MoSPI

BEYOND TOKENISM

India Inc, Here's a Case for Making Room for Women

It's time to move to some form of proportional representation

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ET Intelligence Group: Thanks to the requirement to have one woman director, 98% of companies listed on the NSE have a female board member compared with 35% in FY14, before the mandate came into effect in 2015. The number of women directors in NSE-listed companies has also increased to 3,611 from 638 at the end of FY14, according to data from Prime Database.

However, over the years, the minimum of 'one woman independent director' has mostly been construed as the maximum need for women on the board, irrespective of size. This is seen on boards of leading companies such as L&T (21 directors), Jagran Prakashan (18), Coal India, LIC and Muthoot Finance (15 each) or Havells India and Page Industries (14 each).

A study published in Harvard Business Review in 2006 had recommended three or more women directors to drive change. According to researchers Alison M Konrad and Vicki W Kramer, solo women on boards feel isolated and marginalised. Adding a second helps reduce isolation but the two may be perceived as a separate group and could find they have to be careful not to appear to be conspiring. A clear shift occurs when boards

12%

OF LISTED COS HAVE 3 OR MORE WOMEN DIRECTORS

have three or more women. At that critical mass, women tend to be regarded by other members not as 'female directors' but simply as fellow directors.

In India, 267 companies or 12% of those listed have three or more women directors on their boards. Companies such as Godrej Consumer Products, Apollo Hospitals, Colgate Palmolive, Asian Paints and Piramal Enterprises are some of the leading ones having more than four women on their boards.

Globally, the mandate is not number based but proportion based. For instance, countries such as Norway, France, Iceland and Spain have a mandate of having women occupy at least 40% of board seats in public companies. In the UK, it is now mandatory that women should make up at least 40% of the board.

As India Inc's one woman director mandate completes a decade, it's probably time to shift to some form of proportional representation in line with the global trend.

