

# Girls go to engg colleges closer home, so cos are heading there

With diversity hiring a priority, local institutions are the hunting grounds

Swell Rafter & Arpita Misra | THE

In one of the Inspiration columns on these pages, Lavanya Jaganath, a data scientist with Shell India, said her parents allowed her to choose from just four engineering colleges close to her home. Because anything beyond would have meant leaving home. "I lost out on many good colleges," she said.

It's the story of countless girls in India. Girls invariably outdo boys in school board exams. Yet, girls used to form just 10-14% of students in the IITs and NITs till six years ago, and are now only a little better, at 18-20%, after the government introduced supernumerary seats in those institutions (reserved seats for women over and above the existing ones).

The numbers are low because parents want their girls to be with them in their college years, or are reluctant to send them to places like Kota that are often necessary to crack the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE).

However, with the big momentum in engineering hiring, and especially diversity hiring - among MNC tech companies, and increasingly among Indian ones too - this disadvantage that women face is wearing off. Companies have significantly expanded their reach into local engineering insti-

## GIRLS IN TIER-2 COLLEGES ARE HARDWORKING, EAGER TO LEARN



"The IT industry hires girls from tier-2 institutions as they exhibit a greater thirst for knowledge, and they have a distinct urge to upgrade themselves. They also have a passion for technology, they are hardworking and loyal."

**Shrikant Sinha** | CEO, TELANGANA ACADEMY FOR SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE



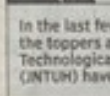
While women may be pursuing engineering in a college closer home, they look to do internships and projects at IITs and IISc to expand their knowledge base and to add value to their CVs.

**K N Subramanya** | PRINCIPAL & PROFESSOR, RV COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING, BENGALURU



There's no difference in the top 15% of any college. Whether it's college A, B or C, the students are all very sharp. There is an increasing trend in recent years of hiring women from local colleges.

**Pradip K Dutta** | FORMER GROUP VP & MD, SYNOPSIS SOUTH ASIA



In the last few years, 70% of the toppers at Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad (JNTUH) have been girls. When it



comes to overall placements, 60% of the offers are bagged by them.

**Jayesh Ranjan** | FORMER VICE-CHANCELLOR, JNTUH

Girls' general behaviour patterns like attention to detail, striving for perfection, dedication and determination, struggle against odds, multitasking can help them thrive in tech careers.

**Neha Bagaria** | FOUNDER & CEO, JOBSPHERE



Girls are process driven and their conformance levels are better. They understand that a process is there for a certain reason. That's why they also tend to be successful.

**Ajoy Kumar** | PROFESSOR & COO, PES INSTITUTIONS

Tier-1 engineering colleges may require women to relocate, and women in India often face social challenges in doing so. The majority of our intake is from local institutions.

**Mahesh Medhekar** | HEAD, HR, MERCEDES-BENZ RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT INDIA



that in the past couple of years, access to knowledge has improved significantly due to digitisation, providing good opportunities to all students irrespective of their location. And, in this same period, he says, MNCs as well as top Indian IT companies have been ramping up hiring from tier 2 & 3 engineering colleges.

**Shrikant Sinha**, CEO of Telangana Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK), says the organisation had held a job mela in Karimnagar and Khammam to fill the requirements of the companies that were setting up offices there. "Over 5,000 students at-

tended at each of the locations. We were happy to see that more than 60% were girl students, and more than 250 girl students were given offer letters for various technical positions," he says.

**Mahesh Medhekar**, VP and head of human resources at Mercedes-Benz Research & Development India (MBRDI), says the majority of their intake is from local institutions. Since the percentage of women is the weakest in mechanical engineering, and MBRDI needs mechanical engineers, the organisation launched the Mercedes-in-Mech Initiative in 2017 to offer scholarships to women in that discipline, across universities in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Hassan, Coimbatore, Pune and Belagavi.

**Pradip K Dutta**, former group VP & MD for South Asia at semiconductor tools company Synopsys, says there is an increasing trend in recent years of hiring women from local colleges. And he sees no difference in the quality of the top 15% in any college, be it tier 1, 2, or 3.

While companies are going to where the bulk of the girls are, another positive change for girls is that the social restrictions that held them at home are beginning to loosen. **Subramanya** of RV College says while parents prioritise factors such as proximity to home, and safety while choosing institutions for undergraduate programmes, they are often okay with their daughters going abroad to pursue post-graduation, and even to do internships and projects at IITs and IISc to add value to their CVs.

The problem of having to stay at home, he says, is most acute in the case of a first-gen engineer in the family. Once a family sees a daughter emerge as an engineer, attitudes change dramatically.