

Market overview - India

In India, workforce participation by women is very low, sitting at 24% compared with 73.6% of the male population¹. The section below explores how women in India are experiencing the Second Glass Ceiling, and looks at which factors are more influential.

Workforce participation

With the lowest workforce participation of the seven markets, and ranking 135th in the World Economic Forum for gender parity, India stands out and arguably has not yet conquered the original Glass Ceiling. With only 16.5% women in senior and middle management in 2020, and 14.4% of seats in national parliament in 2021², women are trailing behind. Deep-seated cultural attitudes in some sectors of society may mean addressing more fundamental gender discrimination might be prioritised above lifting the SGC.

Menopause and taboo

The stigma that is attached to menopause in India means that it is so rarely discussed in society, with women not even reporting their symptoms³, and therefore there is minimal understanding of its impact as yet. As a result of this, before any policies can be implemented, there needs to be conversations to overcome the existing taboo⁴.

Interestingly, studies have shown that whilst around the world, menopause occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 years, in India, the mean age at menopause appears to be younger, at 41.9 years to 49.4 years⁵. This again means that until the taboo is addressed, understanding the effect this is having on women, and therefore women within the workplace, is unlikely. However it also highlights the importance of this issue coming to light, since women could be locked out of the workforce in India at an even younger age.

All of this demonstrates that steps are first needed to bridge the gender equality gap and encourage women to enter the workforce, remove taboos surrounding menopause, and then focus on maintaining the opportunity for women in the workplace in later life.



¹ [Gender Statistics](#), The World Bank, accessed June 2023

² [Gender Data Portal / India](#), The World Bank, accessed June 2023

³ [Normality, Freedom, and Distress: Listening to the Menopausal Experiences of Indian Women of Haryana](#), Vanita Singh & M. Sivakami, July 2020

⁴ [Can India have a menopause policy for the workplace?](#), HR Katha, October 2019

⁵ [Natural menopause among women below 50 years in India: A population-based study](#), Saseendran Pallikadavath et al, September 2016