

# What's Driving the Surge in Female Enrollment in Indian Universities?

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In recent years, India has witnessed a remarkable surge in female enrollment in universities. This positive trend is a testament to the country's ongoing efforts to promote gender equality and empower women through education. But what exactly is driving this surge? Let's explore the key factors behind this encouraging development.

## 1. Government Initiatives

The Indian government has implemented numerous schemes and policies aimed at encouraging female education. For instance, the **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao** (Save the Daughter, Educate the Daughter) campaign has been instrumental in raising awareness and providing financial support to families for their daughters' education. Additionally, scholarships specifically for girls, free or subsidized education, and the establishment of girls' hostels have significantly contributed to this surge. According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), female enrollment in higher education increased from **1.57 crore in 2014-15 to 2.07 crore in 2021-22**.

## 2. Increased Awareness

There is a growing recognition of the importance of educating women, not just for their personal development but also for the broader socio-economic progress of the country. Campaigns and initiatives promoting gender equality have significantly contributed to changing mindsets. Families are increasingly viewing education as a valuable investment for their daughters' futures. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in higher education has improved, indicating that female enrollment rates are catching up with, and in some cases surpassing, male enrollment rates.

### **3. Improved Access**

Enhanced infrastructure, including better transportation and safety measures, has made it easier for women to attend educational institutions. The construction of more schools and colleges in rural and semi-urban areas has also improved access to higher education for women who previously faced geographical barriers. For example, the number of universities in India increased from **799 in 2014-15 to 1,043 in 2020-21**, providing more opportunities for women to pursue higher education.

### **4. Societal Changes**

Societal attitudes towards women's education and career aspirations are evolving. More families are now supporting higher education for their daughters, recognizing the long-term benefits. This shift is partly due to the success of female role models in various fields, which has inspired young women to pursue higher education and professional careers. According to AISHE, women now make up **48% of the total enrollment in higher education**, a significant increase from previous years.

### **5. Flexible Learning Options**

The advent of online courses and flexible learning schedules has made it more convenient for women to continue their education while managing other responsibilities. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for women who may have family or work commitments that previously hindered their ability to pursue higher education. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online education, further facilitating access for women.

### **6. Role Models**

The success stories of women in various professional fields serve as powerful motivators for young women. Seeing women excel in traditionally male-dominated fields like science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) encourages more girls to aspire to similar achievements. For instance, women now account for **52.1% of students in the science stream** at various levels of study.

### **Conclusion**

The surge in female enrollment in Indian universities is a multifaceted phenomenon driven by government initiatives, increased awareness, improved access, societal changes, flexible learning options, and the influence of role models. This trend is a positive step towards achieving gender parity in education and empowering women to contribute meaningfully to the nation's development. As India continues to invest in and prioritize female education, the future looks promising for the next generation of women leaders.

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