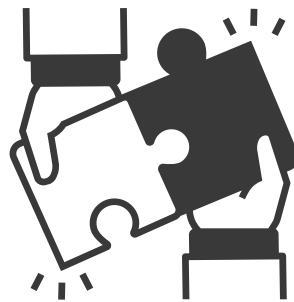


# **WOMEN IN THE AVIATION SECTOR**

## About the Udaiti Foundation

The Udaiti Foundation is committed to drive India's vision of a Viksit Bharat and a \$30 trillion economy, through two key objectives of increasing India's Female Labour Force Participation Rate to 50% and doubling the number of women owned enterprises in the country. As a force multiplier in the Women's Economic Empowerment ecosystem, we actively provide data-backed evidence to the private sector organizations, state governments and the start-up ecosystem and collaborate with them to drive change on the ground.



## About Ladies Who Lead

Ladies Who Lead is a dynamic leadership and learning platform for professional women. We at LWL are dedicated to empowering individuals on their leadership journeys and helping them reach new heights in their careers through knowledge-sharing and mentorship. Our holistic ecosystem allows us to co-create the future with our like-minded partners, driving continuous innovation and progress. We facilitate breakthrough conversations and provide exclusive access to global leaders, fostering an environment of growth and collaboration.



## THE CLOSE THE GENDER GAP (CGG) 30X30 INITIATIVE

The private sector holds significant potential to enhance women's participation in the workforce. To this end, the Close the Gender Gap (CGG) 30 x 30 initiative aims to increase women's representation in the private sector from 18% to 30% by 2030.



### WHY IT MATTERS?



Empowering women in the workforce isn't just a social responsibility—it drives innovation, productivity, and long-term business success. By leveraging the resources, innovation, and reach of private enterprises, we aim to break down barriers to economic opportunities and support women.

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## DATA BACKED EVIDENCE BUILDING AND SOLUTION TESTING

The CGG Data Platform is designed to drive data disclosure, action, and accountability to advance gender parity. It is a data to solutions platform, generating data, insights and tools for companies to set actionable goals and track progress, fostering transparency and accountability. Additionally, we partner with organizations through pilot programs, working with committed organizations to improve hiring strategies and retention of women. We are partners in their journey to become a gender-transformative organization.

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## SECTOR OVERVIEW

India is currently the third-largest aviation market globally, following the United States and China, with a market size of USD 13.89 billion. Driven by the growth of global tourism and business, both domestic and international air traffic have experienced significant surge. This trend is expected to continue, with an expected Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 11% by 2030.

Government initiatives like UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik), has improved regional connectivity by connecting small towns with cities, making air travel accessible and more affordable, thereby boosting tourism and economic growth.

The Indian aviation sector is supported by drivers like increasing number of low-cost carriers, modern airports, 100% FDI in airlines, advanced technology, and a focus on regional connectivity enabled by UDAN scheme. The sector, with its rapid growth and expansion, possesses the potential to absorb a large workforce, and women can be a key component in driving the aviation revolution.

## WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN THE INDIAN AVIATION SECTOR

According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), women make up 39% of the workforce in the Indian aviation sector, predominantly in roles such as cabin crew and pilots. Women represent 14% of pilots, and they make up the majority of cabin crew, comprising 86% of the workforce<sup>1</sup>.

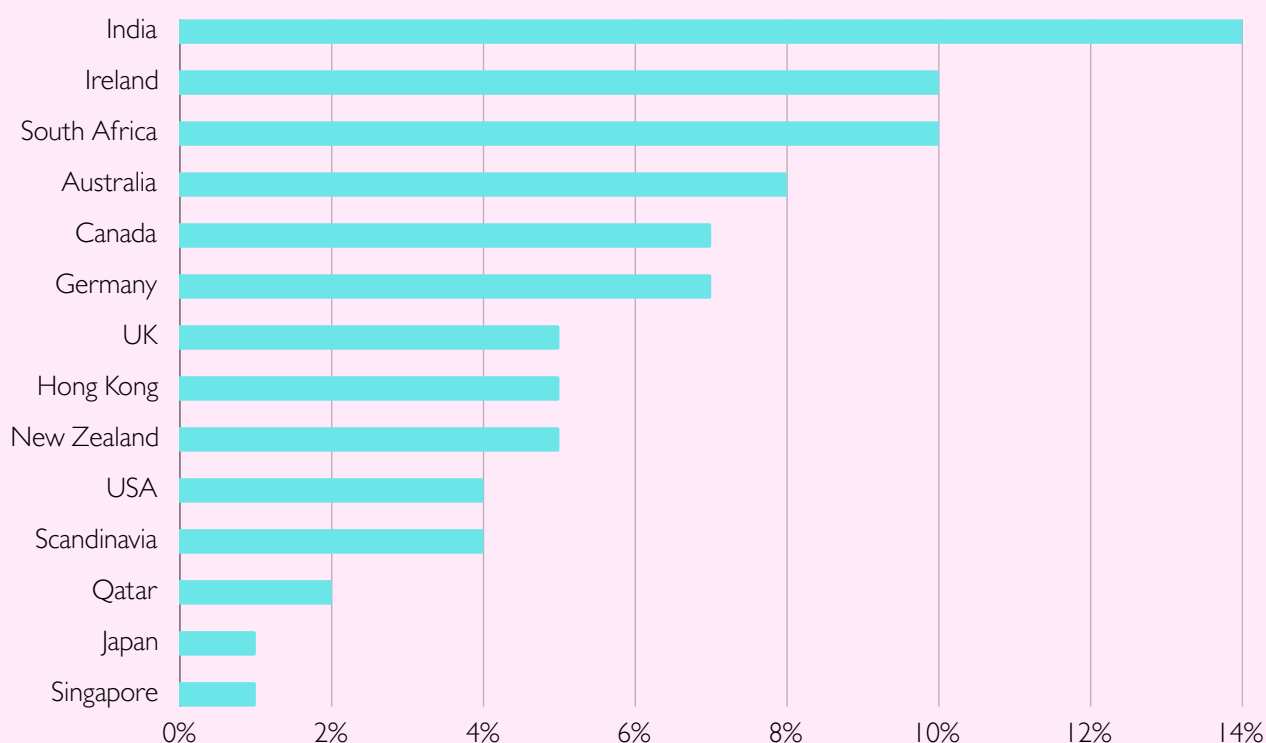


### INDIA IS A LEADER IN FEMALE PILOT REPRESENTATION

With 14% of pilot roles held by women, the Indian aviation sector leads in women's representation. Globally, the representation of women pilots is a meagre 6%.<sup>2</sup> Aviation sector presents a promising career path for Indian women, with a significant increase in enrollment of female pilots each year. In the year 2023, 294 commercial pilot licenses (CPLs) were issued for women, compared to 240 in 2022, marking a 22% increase. A total of 1622 CPLs were issued in 2023, out of which 18% were issued to women<sup>3</sup>.

A closer look at the sector reveals that across airlines, Air India has the highest percentage of female pilots globally standing at 15%, followed by Indigo and SpiceJet with 14% female pilots.<sup>4</sup>

**Fig 1: Female pilot representation across countries**



Source: International Society of Women Airline Pilot Data, DGCA Handbook 2023-24, IATA25by2025 Survey data

A plethora of factors has driven the current representation of women pilots, making India an exemplar in the fabric of gender inclusivity within the aviation sector



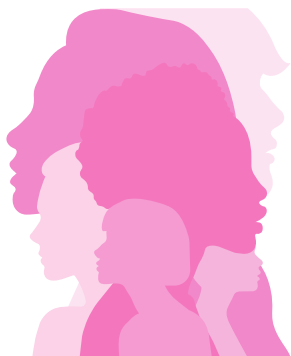
**Pilot training schools:** India has 35 commercial pilot training schools, and has consistently taken steps to boost the number of flying schools and train greater number of pilots. Consequently, this has promoted the accessibility for female pilots. Initiatives include liberalised Flying Training Organisation policies (FTO), abolishing airport royalty payments and land rents, online on-demand examinations where candidates can choose flexible date and other such policies



**Targeted hiring of women by airlines:** Indian airline companies have targeted hiring policies for women pilots, along with special policies to ease work for new mothers and women returning to work



**DGCAs push to increase women representation:** The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has released a circular in 2024 strongly urging companies to promote women across roles, including in leadership. It has recommended a range of initiatives that companies can practice in order to enhance the number of women. Additionally, it has advised companies to aim for at least 25% women representation across each role in the aviation sector



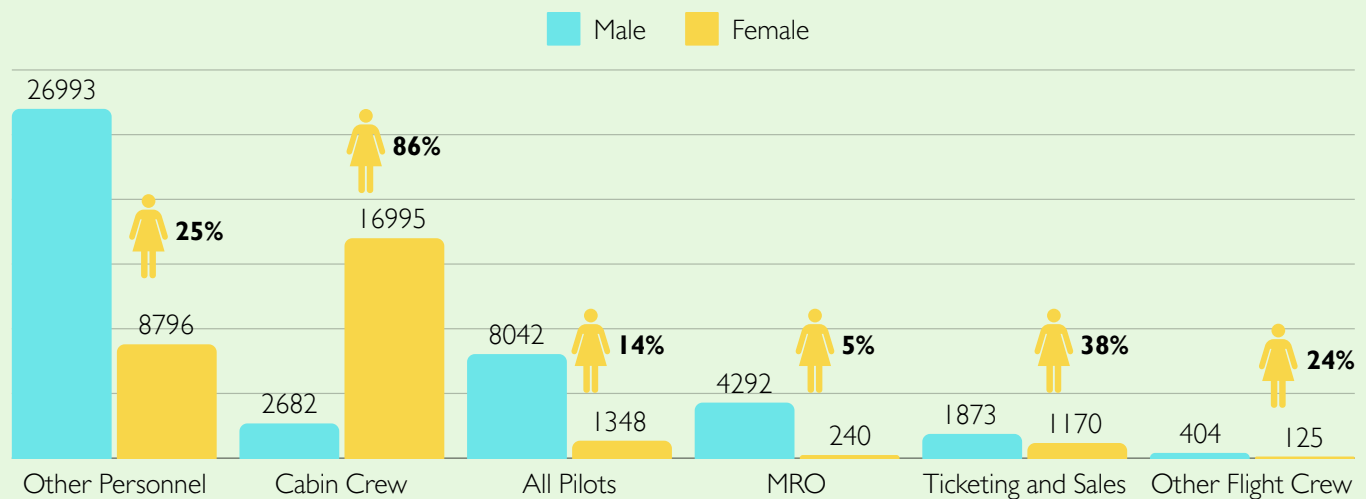
## FOCUS ON WOMEN IN OPERATIONAL ROLES

Despite India making positive strides in enhancing women representation in the aviation sector, there is scope to improve women representation in operational roles, such as Maintenance and Overhaul (MRO), and Flight dispatchers.

Ground staff positions constitute the largest segment in the aviation sector. However, critical roles like MRO constitute only 5% women, indicating the lack of training and access for women in these male-dominated roles. Moreover, most of the initiatives are focused towards increasing the number of pilots in the sector. Targeted and more holistic gender diversity initiatives to actively hire more women in these areas could significantly enhance their representation in the sector as a whole.



**Fig 2: Gender-wise personnel numbers in 2022-23**



Source: DGCA Handbook 2023-24

## ENHANCING GENDER DATA TRANSPARENCY: A KEY TO INCLUSIVE PROGRESS

Gender data disclosure in the Aviation sector remains limited, with only listed companies like Indigo and SpiceJet reporting gender disaggregated data according to the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Framework (BRSR). Compared to other sectors, aviation falls behind in comprehensive gender data reporting. Only four companies disclosed figures on women pilots and 6 on overall representation. None provided data on women in ground staff roles.

Companies should track and report not just representation data but also initiatives and best practices to boost women's participation. Through its Data Hub, Udaiti is engaging with companies to enhance gender data reporting and drive meaningful action.

### Representation and Hiring

- Women representation across roles, age, seniority, department/function, and geography.
- Gender-disaggregated hiring data.
- Ratio of lateral vs. vertical hiring (promotions) for men and women.

### Retention and Benefits

- Retention rates for women, including access to benefits such as maternity, paternity, and daycare.
- Year-on-year turnover rates.
- Return-to-work and retention rates post-parental leave.

**Fig 3: Key indicators for comprehensive gender data reporting**



### Advancement and Pay

- Gender-disaggregated pay data across seniority levels.
- Promotion data by gender across different functions or departments.

### Workplace Safety and Grievances

- POSH (Prevention of Sexual Harassment) data, including the total complaints recorded and resolved annually

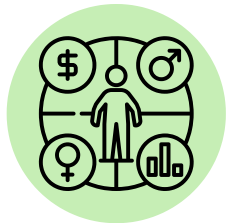
# BEST PRACTICES IN THE INDIAN AVIATION SECTOR

The Indian aviation sector provides a range of measures focusing on aspects catering to work life balance, support during and post maternity period, and on promoting awareness among women regarding aviation careers.

## INITIATIVES BY INDIAN AIRLINE COMPANIES



**Flexibility at work:** SpiceJet offers home base as choice to all women pilots including new joinees to enable a balance between home and work, fixed monthly flying patterns for women to ensure they get back home at the end of the day and convenient flight schedules



**Setting gender targets:** Indigo aims for 25% female leadership and 50% women in the organisation, while at Akasa Air over 35% of the workforce is female, and it has the goal of achieving gender parity across all verticals



**Maternity Support:** Akasa Air, Air India and Indigo offer daycare facility, quicker turnaround flights till child turns one, special hiring drives for women returning from breaks and flexible work for new mothers. At SpiceJet, women pilots can opt for ground jobs to balance post delivery off-time

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## INITIATIVES BY THE GOVERNMENT AND NODAL AGENCIES



**Push from Nodal Government Bodies:** On September 6 2024, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued a circular urging stakeholders to increase women's representation in various aviation verticals to at least 25%, prescribing best practices companies can adopt to achieve this goal



**Raising Awareness:** The Women in Aviation International India Chapter, in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and industry leaders, conducts awareness programs highlighting opportunities in aviation, with a special focus on schoolgirls from low-income families



**Promoting Women in Non-Traditional Roles:** Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Boeing Sukanya Programme on January 2024, at Boeing's new manufacturing facility in Bengaluru, India. The initiative offers STEM training, scholarships for women pilots, and 150 STEM labs for young girls to boost women's participation in aviation

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## CALL TO ACTION

The Indian aviation sector has emerged as a global leader in women's representation, with 14% of pilots being women, more than double the global average of 6%. Airline companies are setting benchmarks in gender diversity, and the steady rise in female pilot enrollments highlights the sector's growing inclusivity. However, to sustain this leadership, there is a need to expand efforts beyond roles like pilots and cabin crew.

Operational roles such as Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO), flight dispatch, and ground staff remain heavily male-dominated. Targeted initiatives, skill development programs, and active recruitment strategies must be implemented to fill the gender gap in these roles.

Additionally, gender data transparency in the sector remains limited, with only a few companies reporting disaggregated workforce data. Comprehensive and consistent gender reporting is essential to track progress, identify gaps, and drive meaningful change. The sector must commit to structured data disclosure, not just on representation but also on initiatives that support women's career growth.

India's aviation industry has a unique opportunity to lead by example, setting new standards for gender diversity across all roles. By setting ambitious targets for women representation, actively hiring women in underrepresented positions and committing to transparent gender data reporting, India can continue to be a global pioneer for gender inclusivity in the aviation sector.

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