

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2536
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04th August, 2023

WOMEN IN DEFENCE FORCES

2536. SHRI TAPIR GAO:
SHRI JANARDAN SINGH SIGRIWAL:
SHRI P.C. MOHAN:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of women working in various Defence forces across the country at present, service/wing-wise;
- (b) whether the Government has made any assessment regarding working conditions of women in Defence postings, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has formulated any rules to deploy them as per their convenience, if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the other steps being taken by the Government for betterment of women soldiers and to accommodate more women cadets in the forces?

A N S W E R

MINISTER OF STATE
IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

(SHRI AJAY BHATT)

(a): The number of women working in various Defence Forces are as follows:

Indian Army:

Sl. No.	Category	Held Strength of Women (as on 1 st January, 2023)
(a)	Women Officers (Excluding Army Medical Corps (AMC)/ Army Dental Corps (ADC))	1,733
(b)	Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs)	00
(c)	Other Ranks (ORs)	100

Indian Air Force:

Sl. No.	Category	Held Strength of Women (as on 1 st July, 2023)
(a)	Women Officers (Excluding Medical & Dental branches)	1654
(b)	Airmen (Agniveervayu)	155

Indian Navy:

Sl. No.	Category	Held Strength of Women (as on 26 th July, 2023)
(a)	Women Officers (Excluding Medical & Dental officers)	580
(b)	Sailors (Agniveer)	726

Medical and Dental Branches: Total number of women (cadre-wise & service-wise) in Armed Forces Medical Services (AFMS) are as under (as on 1st July, 2023): -

Service	Army	Navy	Air Force
Corps			
Army Medical Corps (AMC)	1212	151	274
Army Dental Corps (ADC)	168	10	05
Military Nursing Service (MNS)	3841	380	425

(b) & (c): In Indian Armed Forces, there is no distinction in the deployment and working conditions of male and female officers in the Arms and Services in which they serve. The postings are as per organizational requirements. Training, postings, promotions, terms of engagement etc are common for both women and men. The rules regarding employability in Indian Armed Forces are gender neutral and provide equal opportunities to men and women.

(d): Indian Army:

Indian Army is encouraging women officers to join the force by adopting enabling policies for their inclusion. Recent major initiatives are as under: -

(i) Permanent Commission (PC) is being granted to Women Officers (WOs) in 12 Arms & Services (in addition to Army Medical Corps, Army Dental Corps and Military Nursing Service) where they are commissioned. Indian Army has ensured parity amongst WOs and their male counterparts with a complete gender neutral environment existing in the 12 Arms/ Services they are presently serving in. A special board to screen all affected WOs has been held and the results have been declassified. In regular boards also, WOs are being considered for grant of PC alongwith their male counterparts.

(ii) Armed Forces have opened entry for women candidates in National Defence Academy (NDA) with 19 cadets including 10 for Indian Army joining the academy every six months. First, Second and Third batch of women cadets started training in NDA with effect from July 2022, January 2023 and July 2023 respectively. The organisation is ensuring inclusive measures to carry out all necessary administrative, training and policy changes to enable the same.

(iii) Indian Army has also opened avenues for WOs to serve as pilots in the Corps of Army Aviation.

(iv) WOs are also being considered for Colonel (Select Grade) ranks and are being given command appointments. Certain waivers have also been given to WOs to rule out any impediment in career progression of those who could not undergo mandatory career courses during the transition period.

Provision for enrolment of women as Other Ranks (ORs) in Corps of Military Police in the Indian Army has been introduced in 2019. Under the scheme, 1700 women are targeted to be inducted in Indian Army in a phased manner (approximately 100 per year).

Indian Navy:

In Indian Navy, women are given opportunities for spouse co-location, resettlement posting and compassionate grounds posting in a gender neutral manner. Other provisions of maternity leave with provisions to conjoin other types of leave (viz. annual, furlough, Child Care Leave) is also being granted. Further, the following steps are being taken to recruit more women soldiers in Indian Navy: -

(i) Women in all Branches/ Cadre/ Specialisations: Entry of women in all branches/ Cadres/ Specialisations (except Submarine specialisation) has commenced w.e.f. June, 2023.

(ii) On board Ships: Women officers are also being appointed on board warships in afloat billets and also as Specialist Naval Air Operations (NAO) officers to ship borne helicopters.

(iii) RPA Stream: Women officers can now join the Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) stream and first women officer joined RPA Squadron in March, 2021.

(iv) Overseas Assignments: Women officers have also been deputed on Diplomatic assignments and other Foreign Cooperation engagements.

(v) National Defence Academy (NDA): Entry of women cadets in NDA has been permitted from 2022 wherein women officers are being inducted as PC officers. Three vacancies per batch were initially allocated at NDA for women candidates of Navy and the first batch has joined in June, 2022. The number of vacancies for women cadets at NDA have been further increased from 03 to 12 for subsequent batches w.e.f. January, 2024.

(vi) Indian Naval Academy (INA): At INA, women cadets are now eligible to join through '10+2 B.Tech' entry scheme w.e.f. January, 2024.

(vii) Women Agniveers: As a part of the Agnipath Scheme, women have been enrolled as Agniveers commencing from the first batch itself. They are subjected to the same training curriculum, professional courses and retention criteria as compared to their male counterparts.

Indian Air Force:

In Indian Air Force (IAF), the facilities in terms of infrastructure necessitated at work place for women personnel are assessed and provided as authorized by Scales of Accommodation, 2022 and relevant Government orders on the subject.

Recruitment of officer in the IAF is gender neutral. Women officers are inducted in all the branches and streams of IAF.

(i) Opportunities for a career in IAF are widely publicized through print/electronic media and special publicity drives. An opening has also been provided through NCC Special Entry for flying SSC (Women) from July, 2017 onwards.

(ii) The experimental scheme to induct women officers in all combat roles, initiated by the IAF in 2015 was regularized in the year 2022 into a permanent Scheme. Such gender neutral approach is facilitating the employment of women officers of IAF in all combat roles without any restrictions.

(iii) IAF started inducting women through NDA from the course commenced in June, 2022 (Tech and Non-tech) as PC officers. The intake of women cadets in NDA is fixed at six vacancies (for Air Force) per course for the next five years.

(iv) 'DISHA' cell at Air HQ conducts various Induction Publicity programmes across the country related to induction/ career of officer cadre in IAF. Women candidates are encouraged during such publicity drives to join IAF as a preferred career option.

(v) Conduct of motivational talks by women officers gives opportunity to female students to interact with them and clear their apprehensions. The scope of choosing IAF as a career is covered in terms of prospects, facilities, work profile, benefits etc, during these sessions.

IAF is continuously upgrading its environment and infrastructure for its personnel. Induction of women (other than officers i.e. Airmen) is being executed in a gradual manner to ensure that necessary facilities are available for women. The plan is to increase number of women with every intake.
