

# Women underrepresented in U.S. health system leadership

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(HealthDay)—Women are underrepresented in senior leadership

throughout the U.S. health system, according to a research letter published online Nov. 29 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Bismarck C. Odei, M.D., from Ohio State University in Columbus, and colleagues evaluated the representation of [women](#) among the highest-ranking executives in the U.S. health care system. The analysis included 161 health systems with a minimum of five affiliated hospitals (2,608 [senior executives](#)), 108 health insurance groups with at least 0.09 percent of the U.S. health insurance market share (1,303 senior executives), and 31 leadership positions in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The researchers found that the proportion of board of director chairpersons who were women was 17.5 percent in health systems and 21.3 percent in health insurance groups. For [chief executive officer](#) (CEO) roles, women made up 15.3 percent of positions in health systems and 15.8 percent of the positions in health insurance groups. For combined board of director positions and senior executive teams in both [health systems](#) and [health insurance](#) groups, 20 to 50 percent of leadership positions were filled by women. Having a woman as CEO was associated with a higher proportion of women either on the board of directors (odds ratio, 1.09) or in senior executive positions (odds ratio, 1.06) in health care systems. Eighteen of 31 leadership positions within HHS were held by women.

"The findings support the increased prioritization of gender diversity at all hierarchical areas in the U.S. health care system," the authors write.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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