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The C-Suite Churn Report 2026/27

Contents

3	Executive summary	
4	Introduction	
6	FTSE 100 leadership today	
7	What's changed since 2025	
	8	C-Suite exits by gender & role
9	Snapshot of C-Suite tenure in 2026	
	9	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
	10	Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
	10	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
	10	Chief People Officer (CPO)
	11	Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)
12	FTSE 100 C-Suite trends	
	12	External hire rates
	13	CEO churn vs confidence
	14	Female CEOs in FTSE 100
	16	C-Suite still mostly male
	17	Average tenure by gender
	18	Gender parity
19	Paths to FTSE 100 leadership	
	20	Most common names
	21	Most common universities
22	Equity for C-Suite stability	
	22	Types of equity compensation
	23	Equity inclusion
25	Summary	
26	Methodology	
27	Vestd	

Short on time?

Here's a quick summary.

We tracked six C-Suite roles across every FTSE 100 company to see how long leaders stay in post and how they got there. This is the second edition of the report, so it's also the first time we can compare year on year.

Key findings:

- One in five executives have moved on. Of the 413 leaders in our May 2025 dataset, 87 (21%) are no longer in their roles.
- Tenure is creeping up overall. The average time in a C-Suite role rose by three months, to 4 years and 8 months. Chief People Officers saw the biggest jump, from 46 to 56 months.
- Marketing is the exception. 27% of CMOs have left since May 2025, and they now have the shortest tenure of any role, at 3 years and 3.9 months.
- CEOs are staying put, but approval has slipped. CEO turnover was the lowest in the C-Suite at 14%. Employee approval of CEOs fell from 77% to 73%.
- Women hold 36% of C-Suite roles but just 9% of CEO posts, down from 10% last year. Female CEOs still score an 82% approval rating, against 72% for men. Finance is the bright spot: the share of CFOs who are women rose from 25% to 35%.
- Parity isn't on the horizon. Women have won 41% of C-Suite appointments over the past five years. At that rate the C-Suite never reaches gender parity, and even at 60% it would take around 12 years.
- Almost half (48%) of executives were hired externally, rising to 68% for CPOs.

Read on for the full breakdown by role and gender, and a look at how equity incentives can support senior retention.

Introduction

Leadership at the top of Britain's biggest companies is changing, even if the job titles haven't. CEOs and CFOs still anchor the C-Suite. What's shifting is who fills those seats and how long they stay.

Having worked with founders, boards and leadership teams for years, I know how much pressure today's executives are under. They're expected to cut costs, rework how the business runs and get to grips with AI, all while keeping shareholders happy.

Only 30% of CEOs now feel confident about near-term revenue growth, and geopolitical uncertainty is making many think twice about big investments.

AI is reshaping the top table too. 76% of organisations now have a Chief AI Officer, up from 26% last year. CEOs expect AI to make 48% of operational decisions without human input by 2030.

Other progress is far slower. Women remain underrepresented in senior roles, and the Global Gender Gap Report puts UK gender parity around 40 years away.

When leaders leave early and progress stalls, it tells me we aren't giving people enough reason to stay. At Vestd, we believe ownership is part of the answer.

Growth shares and unapproved share options give leaders a real stake in the business they're building and help link their reward to its long-term success.

I hope this report gives you some useful data, and a few fresh ideas about how your own organisation attracts and keeps its leaders.



Ifty Nasir
Founder & CEO of Vestd

The C-Suite Churn Report 2026

To understand dynamics in executive leadership, our team collected and analysed employment trends across six C-Suite roles in the UK's FTSE100 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange.

We explored key factors such as average tenure, roles, gender, educational backgrounds and first names across the following roles:

01. Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

02. Chief Financial Officer (CFO)

03. Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

04. Chief People Officer (CPO)

05. Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)

06. Chief Operating Officer (COO)

We then analysed Glassdoor employee sentiment data to assess CEO approval ratings, as well as average scores for compensation and benefits across sectors.

Together, these insights provided a comprehensive insight into the patterns shaping leadership in the UK's FTSE100 companies.

The State of C-Suite Leadership in FTSE100 Companies

The 2026 edition of our ‘C-Suite Churn Report’ confirms a significant variation in tenure, turnover, and gender representation in leadership across FTSE100 companies.

While some roles enjoy more relative stability, others have seen a rapid turnover in the last 12 months, which could signal shifts in organisational priorities and long-term strategies.

How trends have changed since 2025

Since the May 2025 edition of this report, one in five FTSE100 C-Suite executives have moved on. Of the 413 executives in our 2025 dataset, 87 (21%) are no longer in their roles.

Key changes:

- CMOs and CTOs were the only C-Suite roles to see tenure decline since 2025.
- Average tenure across the C-Suite has risen by three months, averaging 4 years, 8 months in 2026.
- The CPO role saw the biggest increase in tenure, from 46 to 56 months.
- More than a quarter of CMOs are no longer in the role 18 months on.

Role	Average tenure in months (2025)	Average tenure in months (2026)	Change	% left since May 2025
C-Suite Overall	53	56	+3	21%
Chief People Officer	46	56	+10	20%
Chief Executive Officer	74	79	+5	14%
Chief Financial Officer	46	47	+1	23%
Chief Technology Officer	54	53	-1	23%
Chief Marketing Officer	42	40	-2	27%

Marketing chiefs saw the most movement. 15 of 56 CMOs (27%) left, against 14% of CEOs.

The CMO role is also the only role where both time in role and time at the company fell, by two months and eight months, respectively. Of those who departed, the average tenure in the role was five years, almost two years longer than the CMOs now in post.

This comes at a time when expectations placed on marketing leaders are changing rapidly. The growing adoption of AI is also impacting everything from customer engagement to data analysis and personalisation.

As a result, CMOs are increasingly expected to balance traditional brand and growth responsibilities with technological adoption, digital transformation and demonstrating measurable commercial returns.

By contrast, CEO tenure continues to increase, with average time in the role rising by five months. The average FTSE 100 CEO has now been with their company for almost 14 years, up from 13 years and 2 months.

C-Suite departures by gender and role, since May 2025

Role	Female departures	Male departures
C-Suite Overall	37	50
Chief People Officer	3	11
Chief Executive Officer	2	21
Chief Financial Officer	5	12
Chief Technology Officer	12	5
Chief Marketing Officer	14	1
Chief Operating Officer*	1	0

*Note: COO departures are included in the 2026 movement data but excluded from the year-on-year gender representation comparison, as the role was not tracked in 2025.

Snapshot of C-Suite tenure in 2026

From CEOs averaging more than six and a half years in post to CMOs at just over three, here's how long each C-Suite role is lasting in 2026.

Average tenure in C-Suite roles and company overall, 2026

Role	Average tenure in C-Suite role	Average tenure at the company overall	Average number of roles held in the company
C-Suite Overall	4 years, 8 months	10 years, 1.4 months	2.7
Chief Executive Officer	6 years, 7 months	13 years, 11 months	3.0
Chief People Officer	4 years, 8.4 months	8 years, 3.6 months	2.1
Chief Technology Officer	4 years, 5 months	9 years, 3 months	2.8
Chief Financial Officer	3 years, 11 months	9 years, 2 months	2.6
Chief Operating Officer	3 years, 10.1 months	11 years, 5.3 months	3.3
Chief Marketing Officer	3 years, 3.9 months	7 years, 1.8 months	2.4

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)

CEOs continue to serve the longest tenure of any C-Suite position analysed, spending an average of 6 years and 7 months in the role.

They also have the longest overall company tenure, at almost 14 years, suggesting that many have built up considerable organisational experience before reaching the top position.

On average, CEOs have held three different roles within their current organisations, further indicating the importance of internal experience and progression in reaching the most senior leadership position.

Chief Financial Officers (CFOs)

CFOs hold an average tenure of 3 years and 11 months in their current position, with overall tenure averaging 9 years and 2 months.

Having held an average of 2.6 positions within their companies, CFOs typically bring several years of internal experience to their leadership positions.

Chief Operating Officers (COOs)

New to this year, we also tracked the Chief Operating Officer role. COOs have the most varied career paths of the C-Suite, having held an average of 3.3 roles within their organisations.

They also had the second-longest overall company tenure, at 11 years, 5.3 months, suggesting that the role is often filled by individuals who have built up extensive internal experience.

Wider findings suggest this isn't an uncommon route into the position, with seven in 10 COOs growing into the role, often by taking responsibilities that needed a home.

Chief People Officers (CPOs)

The average tenure of CPOs stands at 4 years and 8.4 months, making them the second-longest-serving executives, marginally ahead of Chief Technology Officers.

This represents a notable increase since 2025, when average tenure stood at 46 months (3 years and 10 months), marking the largest increase in average tenure across all roles.

Their average time at the company overall, however, is considerably shorter than that of other senior leaders, at 8 years and 3.6 months.

CPOs also have held the fewest positions within their organisations, at just 2.1 on average, suggesting a different route into senior leadership compared with roles such as CEO and COO.

This comes as the role's strategic importance looks set to grow, with 59% of CEOs expecting the CHRO's influence to increase over the next few years.

Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs)

CMOs have the shortest average tenure across the C-Suite, spending just 3 years and 3.9 months in their current roles. They also have the shortest overall company tenure, at 7 years and 1.8 months.

With an average of 2.4 positions held within their organisations, marketing leaders have comparatively less internal experience than the other roles within the C-Suite, second only to the CPO.

Trends in the FTSE100 C-Suite 2026

This year's data shows where FTSE 100 boards are finding their leaders, how CEOs are faring with their teams, and why women still struggle to reach the top.

External hire rates

Almost half (48%) of FTSE100 C-Suite positions appear to be held by executives appointed from outside their current organisations.

More than two-thirds (68%) of CPOs were external appointments, the highest proportion across the roles analysed. This was followed by CMOs, where half (50%) had joined from outside the organisation, and CFOs (48%).

At the other end of the scale, Chief Operating Officers were the least likely to be external hires, with just 35% appointed from outside their organisation. CEOs also showed a relatively strong tendency towards internal progression, with 39% of appointments made externally.

These findings suggest that businesses take different approaches to succession across the C-Suite roles. While people leadership roles are more likely to bring in external experience, operational and executive leadership positions appear more likely to draw on existing talent and internal knowledge.

External appointment rate across C-Suite roles, 2026

Role	External appointments (only 1 role recorded)	% external
Total C-Suite	209	48%
Chief People Officer	57	68%
Chief Marketing Officer	24	50%
Chief Financial Officer	46	48%
Chief Technology Officer	30	43%
Chief Executive Officer	37	39%
Chief Operating Officer	15	35%

CEO turnover has stabilised, but employee confidence has dipped

After two consecutive years of record CEO departures, the latest figures suggest the market is beginning to settle.

Globally, research shows CEO departures have fallen, with a total of 141 CEOs having left their positions so far this year, down from 174 over the same period in 2025 and below the nine-year average of 151.

The UK picture was more measured. Across the FTSE100, 14 CEOs (one in seven) had departed their positions since May 2025, representing 14% of roles tracked.

Outgoing CEOs held an average tenure of 6.4 years, broadly in line with the global historical norm. This was also the lowest turnover rate of any C-Suite role analysed in the report.

However, while CEO turnover appears to be easing, employee approval of business leaders has slipped. The average CEO approval rating across all sectors stood at 73%, down from 77% in 2025, suggesting a modest decline in employee confidence.

There are some more positive signs in how employees view their wider working experience. Average ratings for workplace benefits increased from 3.7 out of 5 in 2025 to 4.0 in 2026.

This sits alongside wider workplace value findings, which found that 63% of UK workers are satisfied with their employee benefits package, while nearly two-thirds believe having a stake in company ownership would increase their motivation.

Explore which employee share scheme could work for your business using our Equity Scheme Modeller.

Female CEOs in FTSE100

Female CEOs make up just 9% of FTSE100 CEOs, down from 10% in 2025, despite far outperforming their male counterparts in employee approval. On average, women CEOs earned an 82% approval rating, compared to 72% for men.

They also scored marginally higher than average on employee reviews for benefits and compensation offered (4.1 out of 5 vs 4 out of 5), highlighting the positive impact of diverse leadership.

Despite this, female CEOs typically face heightened scrutiny and bias over performance and leadership.

A media analysis found that female CEOs were both 2.1x more likely than males to be described as “too ambitious” and 2.1x more likely to be described as “lacking ambition” than male CEOs.

Gendered language also remains a persistent issue according to the same analysis, with female CEOs 27% more likely to be described using people-oriented language, while male CEOs are 34% more likely to be described for their task-oriented skills.

Men are also twice as likely to be labelled as “innovators”, while females are 72% more likely to be described as “inspirational”.

Women remain underrepresented across most C-Suite roles

While female CEOs outperform in approval ratings, women remain significantly underrepresented across nearly every C-Suite role, and that has only worsened year-on-year.

Even when they do reach leadership, female executives serve much shorter tenures of just 3 years and 1.7 months on average, compared to 4 years and 10 months for men. This represents a difference of almost 20 months.

Chief People Officers are the most female-dominated position, with women accounting for 83% of those in post. Despite this, female CPOs have shorter average tenures than their male counterparts, spending 4 years and 6.3 months in the role compared with 5 years and 6.8 months for men, a difference of around 13 months.

By contrast, women make up half of all CMOs and are the only group to have longer average tenures than their male counterparts, spending 3 years and 9.4 months in the role compared with 2 years and 10.4 months for men.

The gender disparity is most acute in CEO, CTO, and COO positions. Women account for just 9% of CEOs, 17% of CTOs, and 23% of COOs.

Female CTOs have the shortest tenure of any female C-Suite group, at just 2 years and 0.4 months. This is closely followed by female CFOs, who spend an average of 2 years and 6.4 months in the role - around 2 years and 1 month less than male CFOs, whose average tenure is 4 years and 7.1 months.

Despite this, there has been some progress in financial leadership, with female representation among CFOs rising from 25% in 2025 to 35% in 2026. This is an increase of 10 percentage points, following 10 new female appointments.

On average, female leaders also spend less time at their organisations than men, with an average company tenure of 8 years, 4.3 months compared with 10 years, 9 months.

The gap is widest among CTOs, where female executives have spent almost five years less at their organisations than their male counterparts.

This reflects wider systemic barriers to women's career progression, from gender bias and the motherhood penalty to a lack of role models, disproportionate caring responsibilities at home and lower investment in female-led businesses.

A recent study found that female employees were almost twice as likely as men to say they felt undervalued in their current roles, while 24% cited a lack of career progression as a reason for wanting to leave their jobs, versus 18% of men.

Average tenure for C-Suite executive roles, by gender

Role	% count in role		Average tenure in C-Suiite role		Average number of roles held in the company		Average tenure at company overall	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
C-Suite Overall	63.8	36.2	4 years, 10 months	3 years, 1.7 months	2.8	2.5	10 years, 9 months	8 years, 4.3 months
Chief Executive Officer	91	9	6 years, 10.8 months	3 years, 5.2 months	2.9	2.6	14 years, 3.1 months	10 years, 9.1 months
Chief Financial Officer	65	35	4 years, 7,1 months	2 years, 6.4 months	2.8	2.2	10 years, 7.7 months	6 years, 3.8 months
Chief Technology Officer	83	17	4 years, 10 months	2 years, 0.4 months	3.0	1.8	10 years, 1 month	5 years, 1.1 months
Chief People Officer	17	83	5 years, 6.8 months	4 years, 6.3 months	2.4	2.1	10 years, 10.7 months	7 years, 9.3 months
Chief Marketing Officer	50	50	2 years, 10.4 months	3 years, 9.4 months	2.7	2.2	7 years, 10.7 months	6 years, 4.9 months
Chief Operating Officer	77	23	4 years, 2.8 months	2 years, 6.7 months	2.9	4.3	10 years, 8.7 months	13 years, 9.8 months

Slow progress on gender parity

While women are making up a growing proportion of some C-Suite positions, the most senior decision-making roles remain heavily male-dominated. Men account for 90.6% of CEOs, 82.9% of CTOs and 65.3% of CFOs across the FTSE100.

Although female appointments have recovered slightly from their low in 2023, when women secured just 35.1% of appointments, they still represented only 40% of new appointments in 2025.

Looking at appointments over the past five years (2021–2025):

- Women secured 107 of the 262 C-Suite appointments analysed, representing an appointment rate of 41%.
- Men accounted for the remaining 59%, with 155 appointments in total.
- There was an average appointment rate of 52.4.

At this rate, women are not on course to ever achieve equal representation in the C-Suite.

Based on the average of 52.4 appointments per year between 2021 and 2025, women would need to secure more than half of all future appointments just to reach parity in senior leadership positions.

How long until gender parity?*

Female share of appointments	Years to parity	Estimated women appointed per year
41%	Never	21
50%	Never	26
55%	23	29
60%	12	31
65%	8	34
70%	6	37

*Based on 52 C-Suite appointments a year (2021 to 2025 average) and assumes nobody leaves the C-Suite. Figures are estimates, not forecasts.

Paths to leadership: What does it take?

What does it take to be a FTSE100 leader? Our analysis reveals a clear pattern in the backgrounds of today's C-Suite, as well as a growing trend towards more diverse and non-linear paths to leadership.

Across the C-Suite overall, Mark is the most common first name, accounting for 2.2% of all senior leaders. The name also ranks in the top ten male names across the broader UK workforce, according to the 'First Names Report', representing 4.8% of employees overall.

Simon and David ranked as the most common for the CEO position, while Alison came joint top for Chief People Officer.

Academically, Economics and Computer Science dominate as go-to degrees for strategic and technical leadership roles - most notably CEOs and CTOs.

In contrast, people- and brand-focused positions like CPO and CMO showed a far wider academic variety, led by Psychology, Marketing, History, and Law degrees.

Most common first name and degree, by role

Role	Most common first name	Most common uni course	% studied	Top courses
Chief Executive Officer	Simon/David	Economics	9%	Economics, Mathematics, Business Administration, Law
Chief Technology Officer	Mark	Computer Science	13%	Computer Science, Aeronautical Engineering, Engineering
Chief Financial Officer	David/Paul	Economics	9%	Economics, Accounting, Finance
Chief People Officer	Alison	Psychology	9%	Psychology, Law, Business Administration
Chief Marketing Officer	Richard/ Nicola	Marketing History Law	7%	Marketing, History, Law, Communications
Chief Operating Officer	Craig/Mike/ Richard	Engineering	7%	Engineering, Chemical Engineering

While many leaders followed traditional academic routes into their roles, there was a surprising mix of unconventional degrees which underlines the growing recognition of transferable skills and non-linear career paths.

Where most CTOs leaned predictably on more technical degrees, some had more niche degrees like Genetics, Digital Arts, Journalism, and German Language and Literature.

Equally, economics remained the most prevalent degree for CEOs, yet Veterinary Medicine, Geology, and French with Latin degrees also cropped up.

This suggests that as leadership teams evolve, companies are more open to talent from broader backgrounds, particularly in roles focused on people, culture, and brand.

Where did today's FTSE100 go to university?

The University of Oxford was the most commonly attended university across the C-Suite, with 12 senior leaders having studied there. This was particularly evident among CFOs, with six executives having attended.

However, the picture varies considerably by role. Marketing leaders showed the widest spread, with Reading, Cambridge and Nottingham all appearing equally as often, while the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa was the most frequently attended institution among Chief People Officers.

Most common first name and degree, by role

Role	Most common university	Count
Total C-Suite	**University of Oxford**	**12**
Chief Executive Officer	Massachusetts Institute of Technology University of Cambridge University of Oxford University of Witwatersrand University of York	3 (joint)
Chief Technology Officer	University of Middlesex University of Warwick	3 (joint)
Chief Financial Officer	University of Oxford	6
Chief People Officer	University of Witwatersrand	3
Chief Marketing Officer	University of Reading University of Cambridge University of Nottingham	2 (joint)
Chief Operating Officer	University of Oxford University of Newcastle	2 (joint)

How equity builds C-Suite stability

The revolving door at the top of businesses is not just a leadership issue, but a strategic vulnerability.

While there has been a positive trend in average tenure for most C-Suite positions this year, there is still a fair amount of instability among pivotal roles like CMO, CPO and CTO - positions which are now central to critical future-facing decisions around brand, innovation, and digital transformation.

This is where equity-based incentives can help tie leadership performance to long-term company success. Transparent and performance-linked equity schemes also provide a powerful counterbalance to short-term pressures and bonuses.

Types of equity compensation

Some of the most common types include:

- Restricted Stock Units (RSUs): A promise to give someone shares in the future, usually after they've stayed at the company for a certain period.
- Stock options: The opportunity to purchase company shares at a predetermined price, often used by early-stage businesses.
- Unapproved share options: Flexible share options that sit outside HMRC-approved schemes, allowing businesses to tailor incentives for senior hires.
- Phantom shares: Cash-based incentives that mirror the value of company shares without granting actual ownership.
- Growth shares: Shares that give recipients a financial interest in future increases in the company's value.

The right approach will depend on the company's circumstances, including its structure, growth ambitions and the type of talent it wants to attract and retain.

Unapproved share options

While HMRC-approved schemes offer tax advantages, unapproved share options provide greater flexibility that businesses need to attract and retain talent.

Unlike approved schemes, they offer broader scope to tailor eligibility, award values and vesting arrangements. This flexibility allows companies to:

- Offer attractive incentives where standard compensation may not be able to keep up with market expectations.
- Quickly adapt packages for international or external hiring situations.

Growth Shares

Growth shares give recipients a share in the future capital growth of the business. They allow businesses to:

- Reward leadership performance through a financial interest in future business growth
- Set customised triggering conditions, tied to specific revenue milestones, value milestones, or tenure requirements.
- Create a direct link between a leader's strategic decisions and their personal rewards to help build long-term value and growth.

Maximise opportunities for employees

By embedding equity from the very top, companies can encourage greater investment in the long-term success of the business and support executive retention.

However, equity schemes shouldn't stop at the boardroom door. Extending ownership opportunities to wider teams through Enterprise Management Incentives (EMIs) creates a culture of shared accountability.

Ownership also needs to feel tangible. Employees in private companies can have limited opportunities to realise the value of their shares before a sale or public listing.

For privately held companies, PISCES offers a new option: regulated, intermittent trading windows where shareholders can sell to a restricted group of investors, while the company stays private.

This could give employees an opportunity to realise some of the value they've helped create, without the business needing to pursue an immediate exit.

Explore how equity can support your business as it scales in our Enterprise Hub.

Summary

FTSE 100 leadership looks steadier than it did a year ago. Most C-Suite roles now have longer average tenures, and CEO departures have eased in the UK and globally. The stability is uneven, though. Marketing chiefs are leaving faster than anyone else, CTO tenure has dipped slightly and employees are a little less sure of the people running their companies.

On gender, it's hard to call this year progress. Women now hold more than a third of C-Suite roles and made real gains in finance. But they hold fewer CEO seats than last year, and on average they stay in post around 20 months less than men. Unless women win well over half of future appointments, parity stays out of reach.

For boards, the lesson is that keeping good leaders needs as much thought as hiring them. Equity can play a part. Growth shares and unapproved share options give executives a stake in the value they help build, and extending ownership through schemes like EMI helps the wider team share in that growth too.

The right mix depends on each company's structure and goals, and Vestd makes it easier to compare your options and to set up and manage the scheme that fits.

Methodology

Vestd analysed C-Suite data from FTSE100 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange as of October 2026.

Executive profiles were sourced from public company websites and LinkedIn to find the average tenure in current C-Suite roles, the number of internal roles held overall at the company, and the average overall tenure at the company.

Data collected also included first names, university degrees and university names (where findable), gender, and the year of C-Suite appointment.

To calculate years to gender parity, Vestd used the average number of appointments by gender over the last five full years (2021-2025) and compared it with the current gender split of the C-Suite (156 women out of 434 roles, 36%).

Holding total appointments at the five-year average of 52.4 a year, and assuming no one leaves the C-Suite, Vestd calculated how many years it would take women to reach a 50% share at different proportions of new appointments.

Finally, Vestd analysed the Glassdoor profiles of each company to calculate the average approval rating for CEOs and employee review ratings for ‘compensation and benefits’.

All data is correct as of October 2026.

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