

The Rise of the Chief of Staff

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KEY FINDINGS

- Chief of Staff roles are expanding rapidly, up 60% in the US since 2019, nearly triple the growth of comparable roles (+21%), and global Chief of Staff roles up 91% vs. +31% for similar positions. Growth has averaged 10% annually in the US over the past decade, though it slowed after 2023.
- The role is spreading across the private sector: each US industry now has over 50% more Chief of Staff roles than five years ago, led by Technology (+102%), Consumer Services (+78%), Accommodation & Food Services (+76%), and Healthcare (+76%), while public-sector growth remains slower (Government Administration +21%).
- The Chief of Staff role is a launchpad for leadership roles, with the 10 most common career transitions being into positions like 'Chief Operating Officer', 'Founder', and 'Chief Executive Officer'.
- Women are driving this expansion. In the US, women hold 59% of such roles, far above their representation in director positions (47%) – and growing by 74% from five years ago. Globally, women's share rose from 39% to 49%.
- The growing number and representation of women in Chief of Staff roles, combined with the role's high rates of transition into executive leadership positions, may signal progress in advancing women's representation in senior leadership.

CONTINUOUS GROWTH IN CHIEF OF STAFF POSITIONS IN THE US

From 2015 to 2025, the number of members holding a Chief of Staff title in the US increased by 150%, considering data until end of November 2025. To understand the magnitude of that change, consider a comparison group composed of roles of similar seniority, skillset, and scope, such as Head of Operations, Director of Strategy and more¹. In the same time period, the number of members in comparable roles increased by 50%, a third of the growth for the Chief of Staff title.

Globally, we see a similar trend, with an average 237% increase in Chief of Staff titles, compared to an average 80% increase in similar positions.

The number of Chief of Staff positions has been growing every year. In the US, the Chief of Staff ranks have been increasing by 10% every year on average since 2016. The consistent growth slowed down starting from 2022, reaching a 5.5% growth year over year in 2024. The growth of similar positions, instead, has been around half that rate: around 5% year on year. In 2023 and 2024, the growth in members employed in positions similar to Chief of Staff was also significantly lower than the previous years, with only a 1-2% increase compared to the previous year.

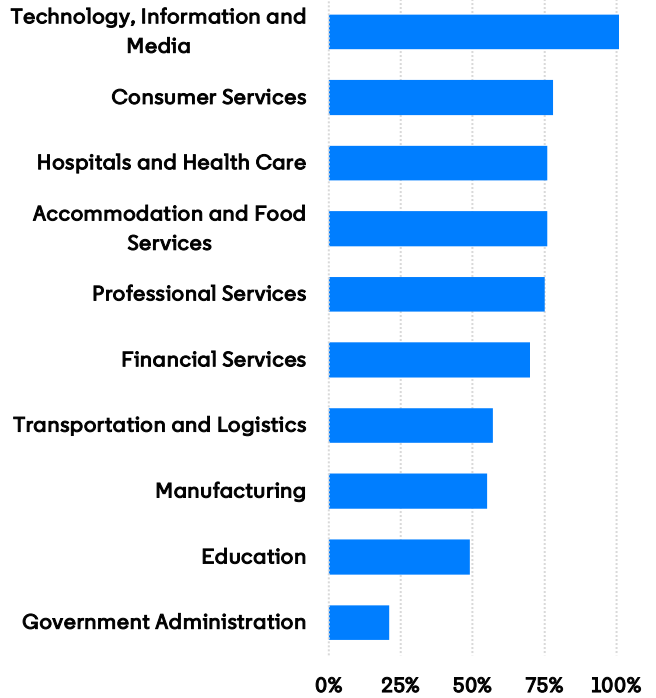
¹ For more details on the methodology, see the Appendix.

CHIEF OF STAFF ROLES ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY POPULAR OUTSIDE THE PUBLIC SECTOR

More industries are adopting Chief of Staff roles, which was historically mainly associated with the public sector. In the US, each of the private sector industries have seen more than 50% growth in Chief of Staffs roles compared to five years ago. Leading the expansion are the Technology, Information and Media industry with a 102% increase in the last five years, followed by Consumer Services at 78%, and Accommodation and Food Services and the Hospitals and Health Care sectors, both at 76%. In other countries, the expansion is also driven by Transportation, Logistics, Supply Chain and Storage and the Financial Services industries, both with an average 81% growth rate over the last 5 years.

Meanwhile, the industries with the slowest growth were some of the biggest employers of Chiefs of Staff in the country. Specifically, the Government Administration industry, lead employer for this role, saw a 21% increase in the number of such roles from 2019 to 2024. Globally, we see a similar picture: the average number of Chief of Staff in the public sector grew by 28% across the countries considered in this study, the smallest growth out of all industries.

Growth in Chief of Staff Roles by Industry

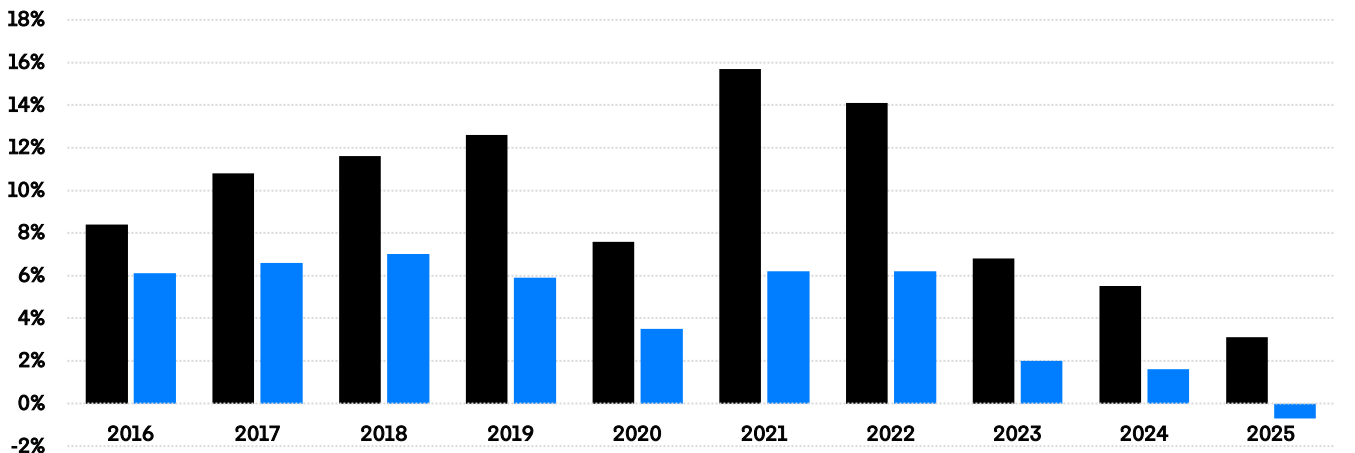


Note: The chart above compares 2019 to 2024.



Year over year growth of Chief of Staff Positions

United States



Note: 2025 includes data only up to the end of November. Comparison group refers to a set of occupations similar to Chief of Staff in skill set, seniority, and scope. Refer to the Methodology section for more details.

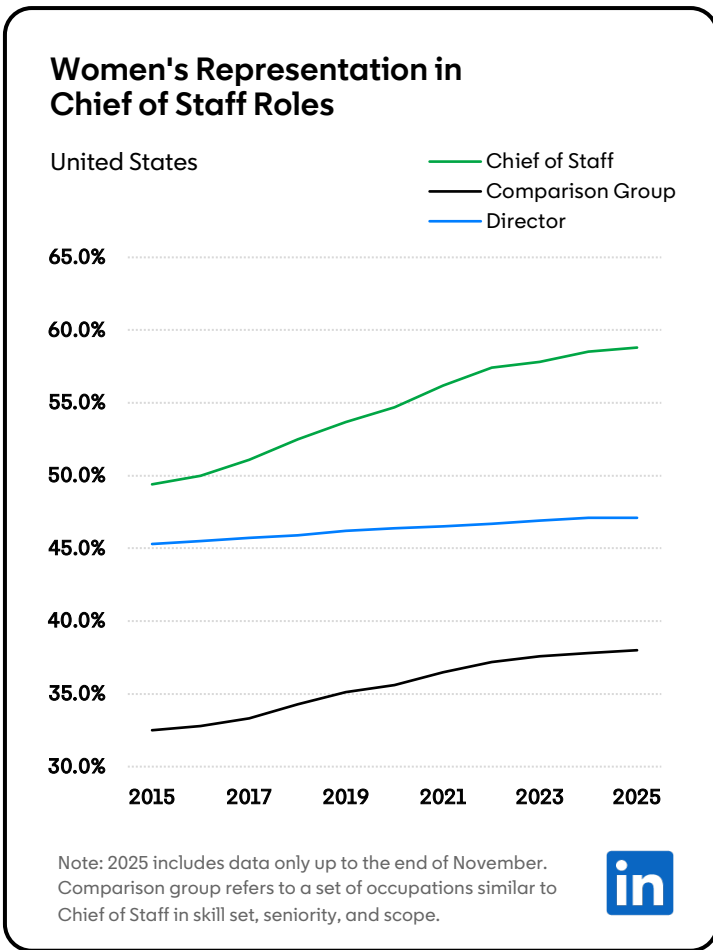


MORE AND MORE CHIEFS OF STAFF ARE WOMEN

The growth in Chief of Staff numbers has been mainly driven by women. In the US, the number of women holding Chief of Staff positions increased by 74% in the last five years.

At the end of 2025, women held 59% of Chief of Staff positions, up from 49% in 2015. The Chief of Staff role is generally a Director-level position, offering a useful seniority-based benchmark. Such high representation is uncommon at this seniority level; women usually hold around only 45% of Director-level positions², and 38% of positions in roles with similar scope to the Chief of Staff role.

Globally, the trend shows a similar increase: women held 39% of Chief of Staff positions in 2015, and now they hold 49% of such positions. By contrast, they hold only



31% of positions in the comparable occupations group, up from 25% in 2015.

ACROSS INDUSTRIES, WOMEN ARE BETTER REPRESENTED IN CHIEF OF STAFF ROLES THAN IN SIMILAR ROLES

When breaking this down by industry, we observe a similar pattern but with some variations. In every industry, the share of women holding Chief of Staff roles is higher (and sometimes double) than the share of women holding similar positions. When compared to the share of women holding Director positions in each industry, the Chief of Staff role has better representation in all industries but Healthcare and Government.

The industries where women hold the greatest share of Chief of Staff roles are the Accommodation and Food Services industry (69%), the Financial Services industry (65%), and the Professional Services industry (64%). The industries where women make up a smaller share of the Chief of Staff positions are the Government Administration industry (47%), the Hospitals and Health Care industry (55%), and the Manufacturing industry (55%).

When considering a global picture, the share of women in this role reflects more closely the overall representation of women in each industry, with Healthcare, Accommodation and Food Services and Education showing the highest share of women employed in Chief of Staff roles.

TOP SKILLS FOR CHIEF OF STAFFS IN THE US

As the Chief of Staff role has expanded across industries and countries, a clear set of skills has emerged. These skills reflect the role's position at the intersection of executive support, strategy, and execution, requiring both operational capabilities and cross-organizational influence.

The following are the most commonly associated skills with Chief of Staff roles in the US.

1. C-level support
2. Program Management
3. Strategic Partnerships

² Lara, S., & Baird, M. (2025). *The State of Women in Leadership*. Economic Graph Research Institute.

4. Administration
5. Strategic Planning
6. Strategic Communications
7. Cross-functional Team Leadership
8. Government
9. Public Policy
10. Operations Management

WHO CAN BECOME A CHIEF OF STAFF?

There are many roles that build on the skills needed to become Chief of Staff. In the US, the most common roles held by soon-to-be Chief of Staff professionals include 'Executive Assistant', 'Director of Operations', 'Program Manager', and 'Project Manager'. (See Appendix for more details)

Interestingly, the occupation most likely to transition into a Chief of Staff role is not the Chief of Staff occupation itself. Instead, 23.8% Legislative Directors transition into Chiefs of Staff, followed by 11.3% of Assistant to the Chief of Staff. This compares to only 9.5% of Chiefs of Staff staying in the occupation at their next career transition.

CAREER PROSPECTS FOR CHIEFS OF STAFF

The Chief of Staff role opens the door to several occupations which also require similar skills, including in the C-Suite. While the greatest share of Chief of Staff professionals in the US remain in the same occupation when they change jobs (9.4%), the second most common occupation they transition to is 'Chief Operating Officer' – 2.9% of all Chief of Staff changing roles transition into a COO position. Entrepreneurship is a common next step for Chiefs of Staff, with a total of 3.7% of Chief of Staff professionals transitioning into a Founder or Co-Founder role. Similarly, Chief Executive Officer is also among the 10 most common next roles for Chief of Staff professionals, with CEO contributing to 1% of the transitions out of the Chief of Staff role. These stats are particularly promising for women, as the increasing female representation in Chief of Staff positions could lead to more women leading businesses. Other top choices for Chief of Staff professionals changing jobs include 'Director of Operations' (2%), 'Executive Assistant' (1.8%), and 'Program Manager' (1.7%).

Appendix

What roles do Chiefs of Staff transition to?

In the United States

Number	Occupation	Percentage of transitions into this occupation from Chief of Staff	Percentage of transitions out of Chief of Staff into this occupation
1	Chief of Staff	7.21%	9.45%
2	Chief Operating Officer	1.13%	2.93%
3	Director of Operations	0.40%	2.06%
4	Executive Assistant	0.40%	1.81%
5	Program Manager	0.21%	1.73%
6	Founder	0.26%	1.66%
7	Vice President Operations	0.56%	1.17%
8	Project Manager	0.06%	1.16%
9	Co-Founder	0.31%	1.07%
10	Chief Executive Officer	0.23%	1.04%

What roles transition into Chiefs of Staff?

In the United States

Number	Occupation	Percentage of transition into Chief of Staff from this occupation	Percentage of transitions out of this occupation into Chief of Staff
1	Chief of Staff	7.21%	9.45%
2	Executive Assistant	3.31%	1.04%
3	Director of Operations	2.42%	0.71%
4	Program Manager	2.31%	0.43%
5	Project Manager	1.96%	0.14%
6	Operations Manager	1.36%	0.19%
7	Director of Communications	1.21%	1.49%
8	Legislative Director	1.08%	23.80%
9	Chief Operating Officer	0.96%	0.64%
10	Executive Assistant to CEO	0.95%	2.95%

Methodology

LINKEDIN DATA

This body of work represents the world seen through LinkedIn data, drawn from the anonymized and aggregated profile information of LinkedIn's 1 billion+ members around the world. As such, it is influenced by how members choose to use the platform, which can vary based on professional, social, and regional culture, as well as overall site availability and accessibility.

In publishing these insights from LinkedIn's Economic Graph, we want to provide accurate statistics while ensuring our members' privacy. As a result, all data show aggregated information for the corresponding period following strict data quality thresholds that prevent disclosing any information about specific individuals.

The data in this paper refers to the period from January 2015 to November 2025.

GENDER CLASSIFICATION

If not explicitly self-identified, we have inferred the gender of members included in this analysis either by the pronouns used on their LinkedIn profiles or inferred on the basis of first name. Members whose gender could not be inferred as either man or woman were excluded from this analysis.

OCCUPATION TAXONOMY

The Chief of Staff title is a standardized title in our taxonomy. We only consider members who hold the Chief of Staff title in their main position, and exclude positions held during education.

The comparison group of similar occupations is defined by the set of the following occupations: 'Head of Operations', 'Director of Operations', 'Strategy Director', 'Head of Strategy', 'Director Corporate Strategy', 'Director of Business Development', 'Head of Business Development', 'Director Strategy Operations'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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