brandrounds
HEALTHCARE MARKETING

State of the

Healthcare Marketing and Communications Executive

An analysis of 205 marketing and communications leaders at U.S. health systems

2026 Report

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Section 01

Executive summary

The role reaches beyond traditional responsibilities

43% lead marketing and communications together, and 28% carry duties beyond both, most often consumer and patient experience, strategy and external affairs.

Turnover is high

Four in ten leaders in role started in 2024 or later, and the median leader has been in the job three years. 2026 is on pace to match 2025's high for leadership changes.

Systems split on promoting from within

47% of leaders were promoted internally. When systems hire from outside, they usually recruit from another healthcare organization: 62% of external hires did.

Women are more likely to hold these executive roles

Women hold 60% of seats, a trend that holds from VP to EVP. Women and men reach the Chief role with similar experience, about 25 years.

Outside experience is now the norm

82% have worked outside healthcare, most often in advertising, media or consulting. The typical leader spent about 10 years outside healthcare and 25 years building a career before earning the Chief title.

An MBA is now preferred

60% hold a graduate degree and 33% hold an MBA. 46% studied communications, journalism, marketing or advertising, and just 1.5% hold the FACHE designation.

Section 02

Portrait of a Healthcare CMCO

Illustrative image of a composite leader, not a real person.

Woman, about 50

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer

She learned the craft at a marketing and communications agency, then spent most of her career inside health systems, moving up through marketing and communications roles. She was hired from another health system about three years ago, after 25 years of experience.

Education

MBA

Bachelor's in Communications

Career path

How she reflects today's leaders

60%	are women
52%	were hired externally
62%	of external hires came from another healthcare organization
60%	hold a master's degree or higher
33%	hold an MBA
20%	majored in communications, the most common major

Section 03

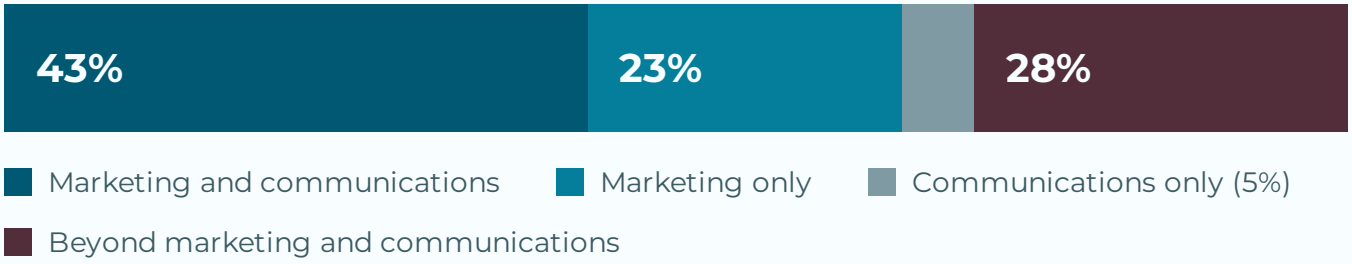
Scope of responsibility

28%

carry duties beyond marketing and communications

Most top marketing leaders own marketing and communications together. Fewer than one in three run marketing or communications alone, and more than a quarter have taken on work beyond both.

What the role covers



Most common titles

25%

Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, or a close variant

15%

Chief Marketing Officer

5%

Chief Communications Officer

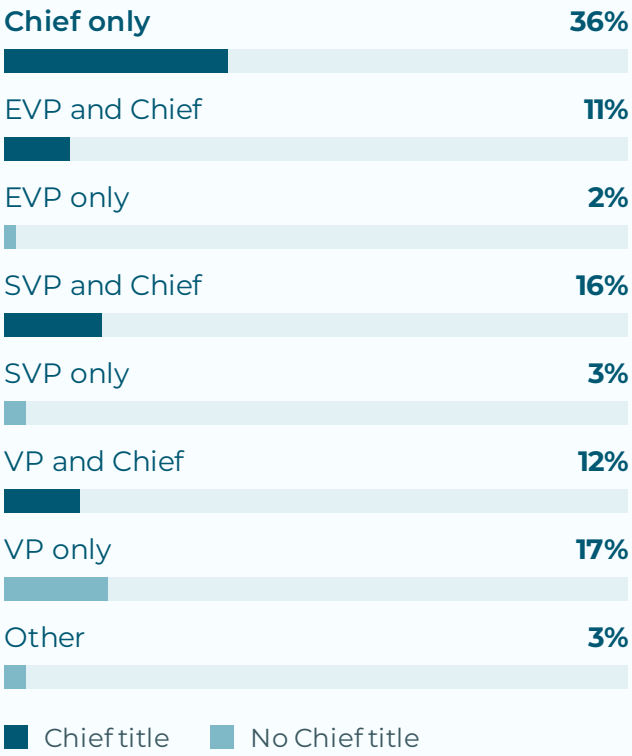
Scope of responsibility

Beyond marketing and communications

When the executive's responsibilities go beyond traditional marketing and communications, they most often take on patient and consumer experience, strategy, or external affairs.

Most common added duties

Seniority and titles



75%

hold a Chief title, but title and level don’t always line up

Some vice presidents carry a Chief title, while some senior and executive vice presidents don’t. Titles alone aren’t a reliable guide to seniority across systems.

Section 04

Movement and turnover

Health system marketing and communications leadership is turning over quickly. Four in ten leaders in role today started in 2024 or later, and with only three quarters down, 2026 is on pace to match 2025's high.

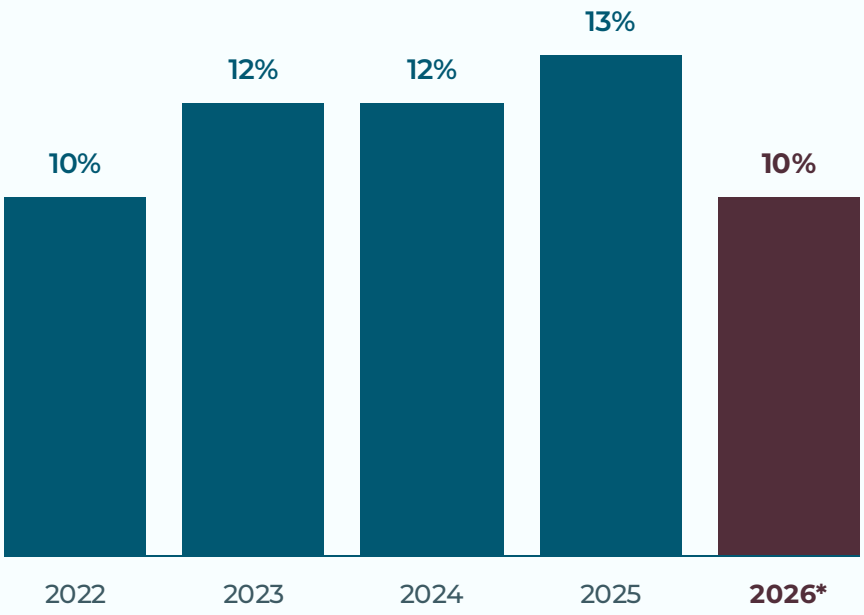
3 yrs

median time in role for current leaders

40%

of current leaders started in 2024 or later

Systems with executive changes, by year

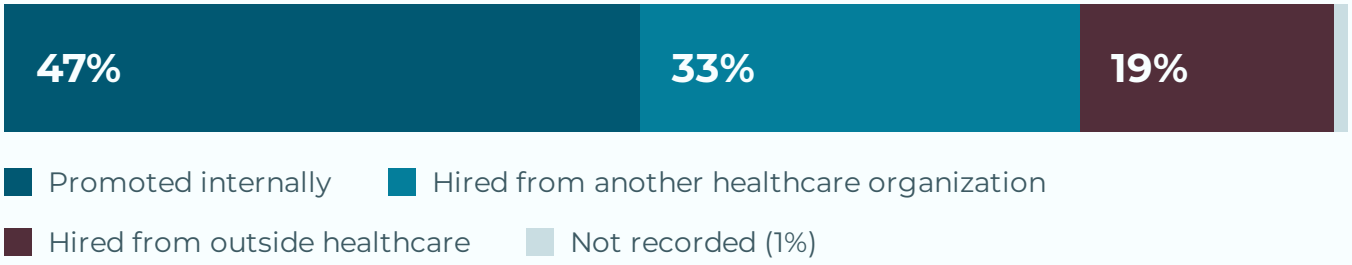


*2026 counts January through September only.

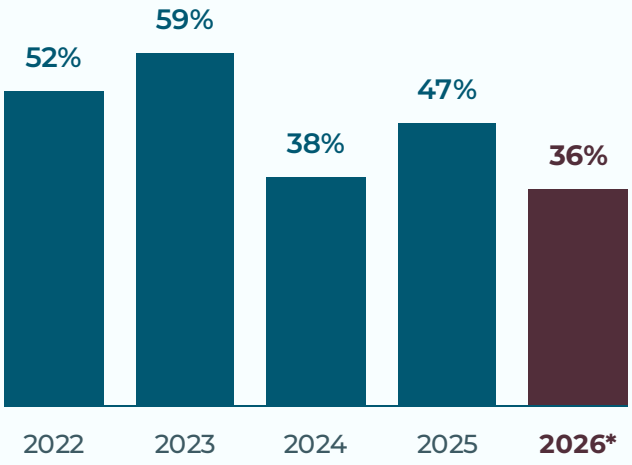
Promotions vs. external hires

Systems split almost evenly between promoting from within and hiring from outside. When they do look outside, they usually recruit from another health system.

Path into the current role

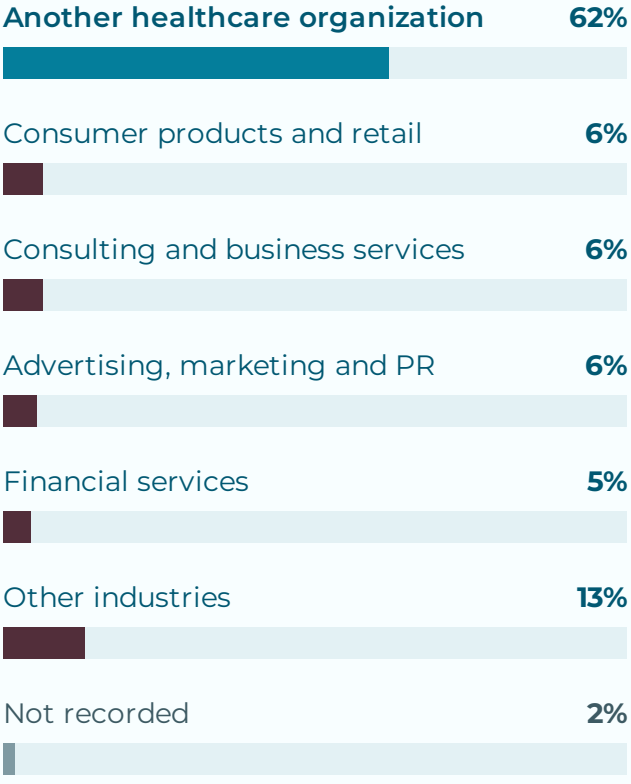


Share of new leaders promoted internally, by year



*2026 data is only through September 2026.

Where external hires came from



Section 05

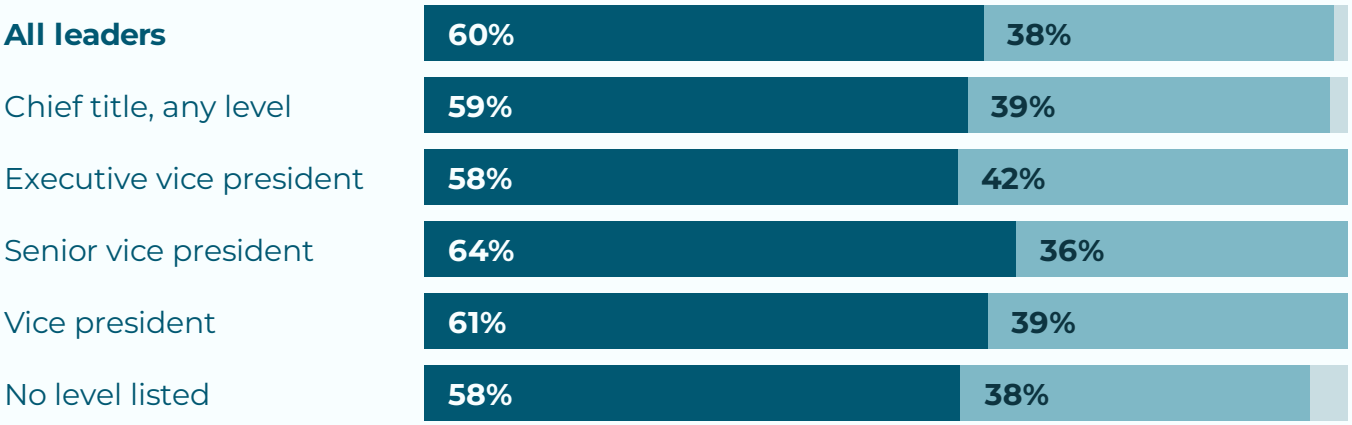
Gender

60%

of leaders in role are women, and 38% are men

Women hold 60% of top marketing and communications seats and men hold 38%, a split that is similar at every level. Women and men reach the Chief role with similar experience: a median of 25 years for women and 26 for men.

Seniority and title and gender



Path into role and gender

Section 06

Experience and background

82%

have worked outside healthcare

Today's leaders are seasoned and widely traveled. The typical leader has nearly three decades of experience, about a third of it outside healthcare.

29 yrs

median career length

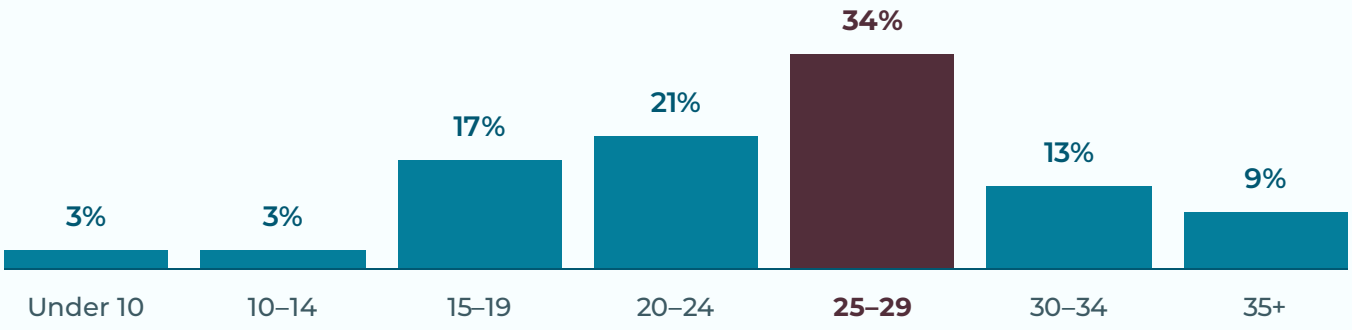
25 yrs

median career before earning the Chief title

10 yrs

median time spent outside healthcare

Years of career before earning the Chief title

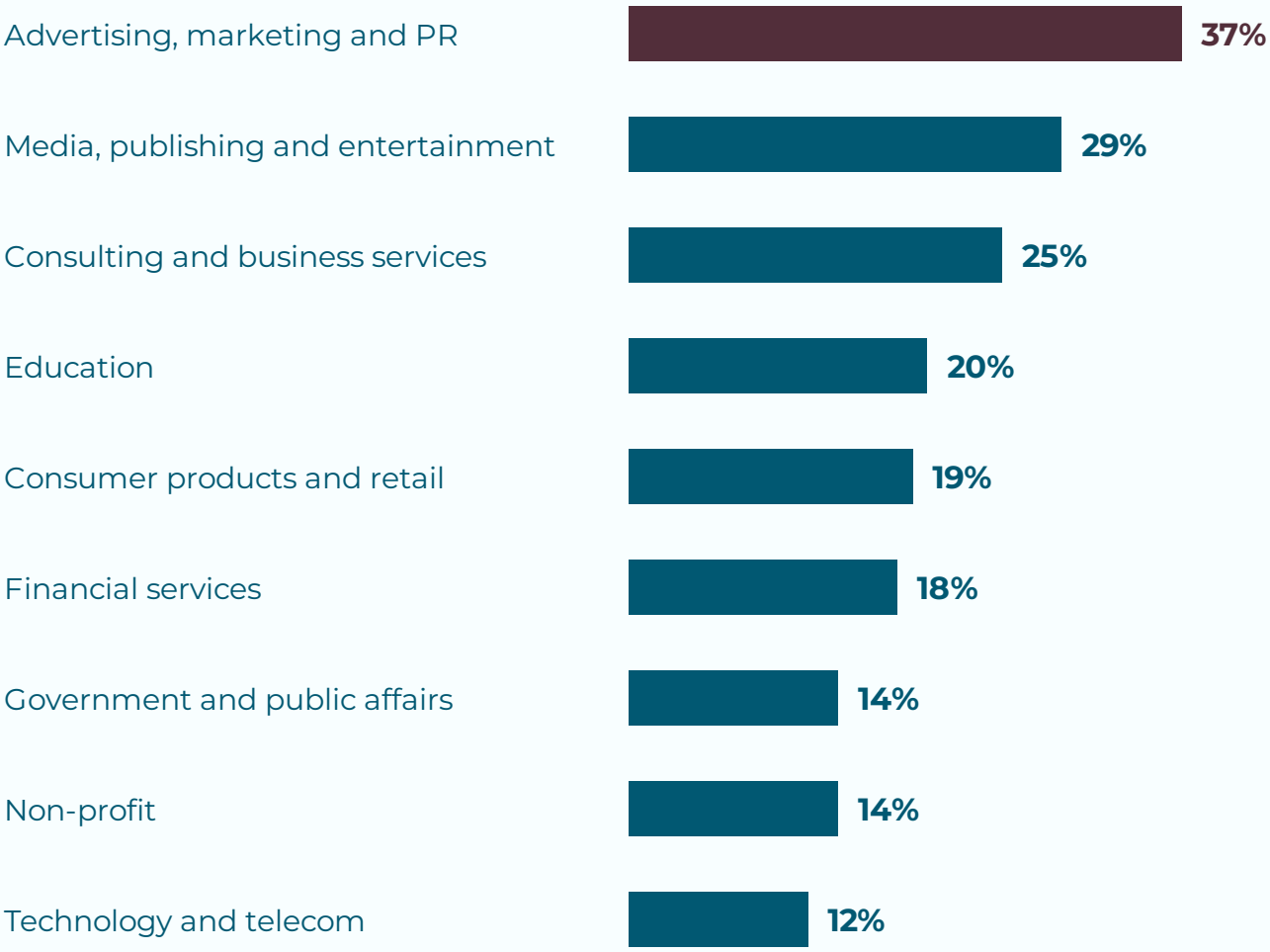


Experience and background

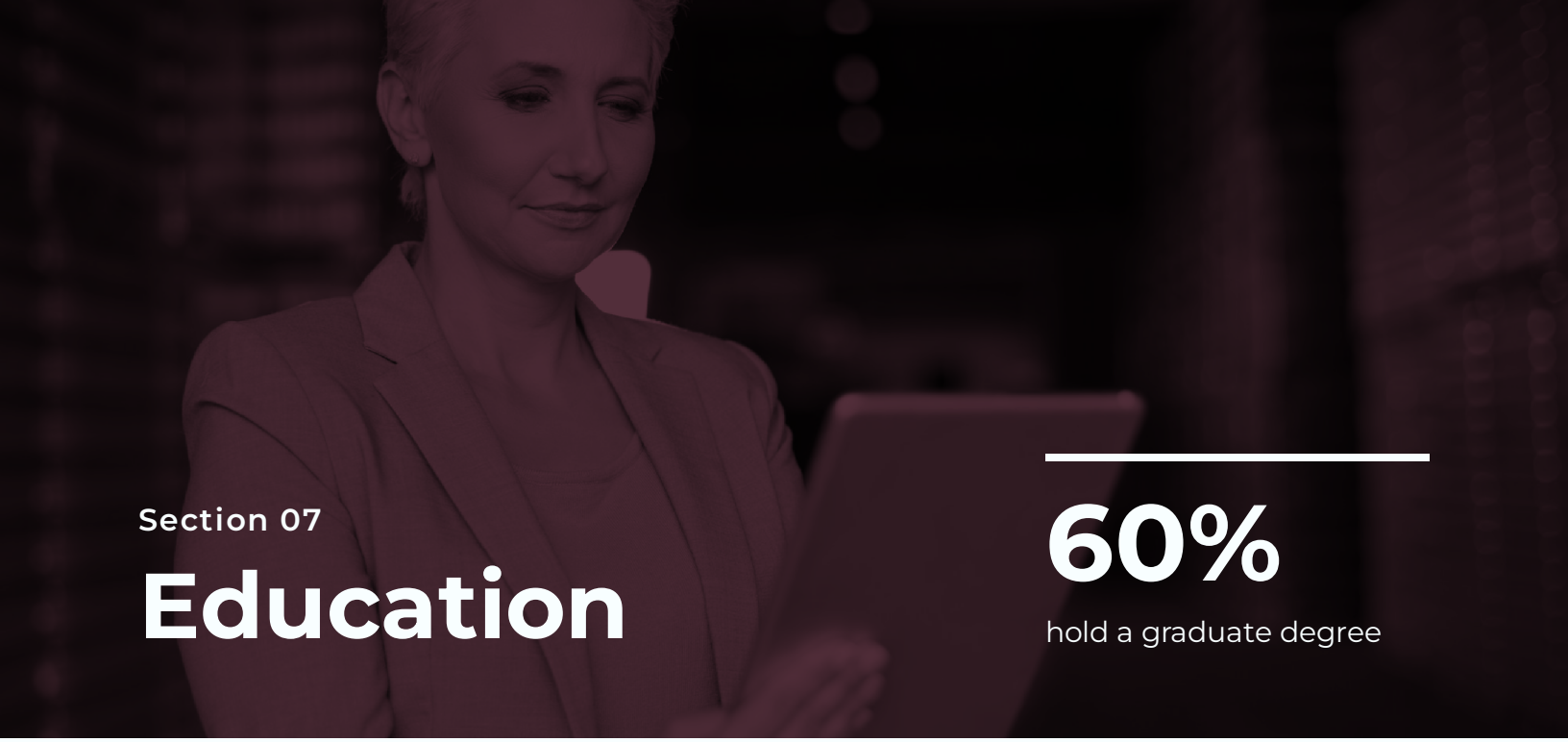
Where leaders worked before healthcare

Most leaders built their skills outside healthcare first, most often at agencies, in media or in consulting. Many worked in more than one industry along the way.

Previous industries, among leaders with experience outside healthcare



Many leaders have worked in more than one industry, so shares add up to more than 100%.



Section 07

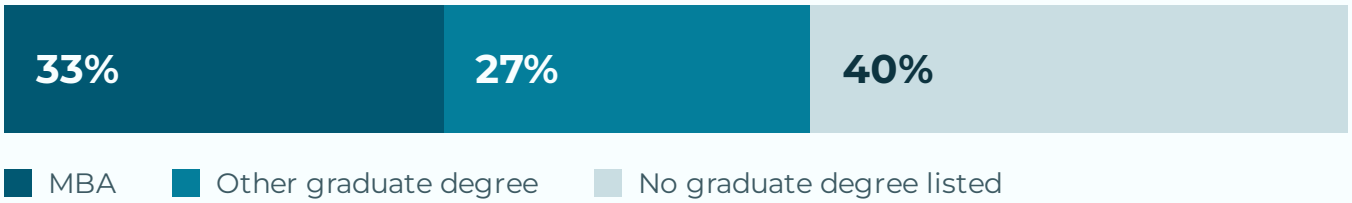
Education

60%

hold a graduate degree

Three in five leaders hold a graduate degree, and the MBA is by far the most common. Healthcare's own executive credential is rare.

Highest degree



54%

of graduate-degree holders have an MBA

1.5%

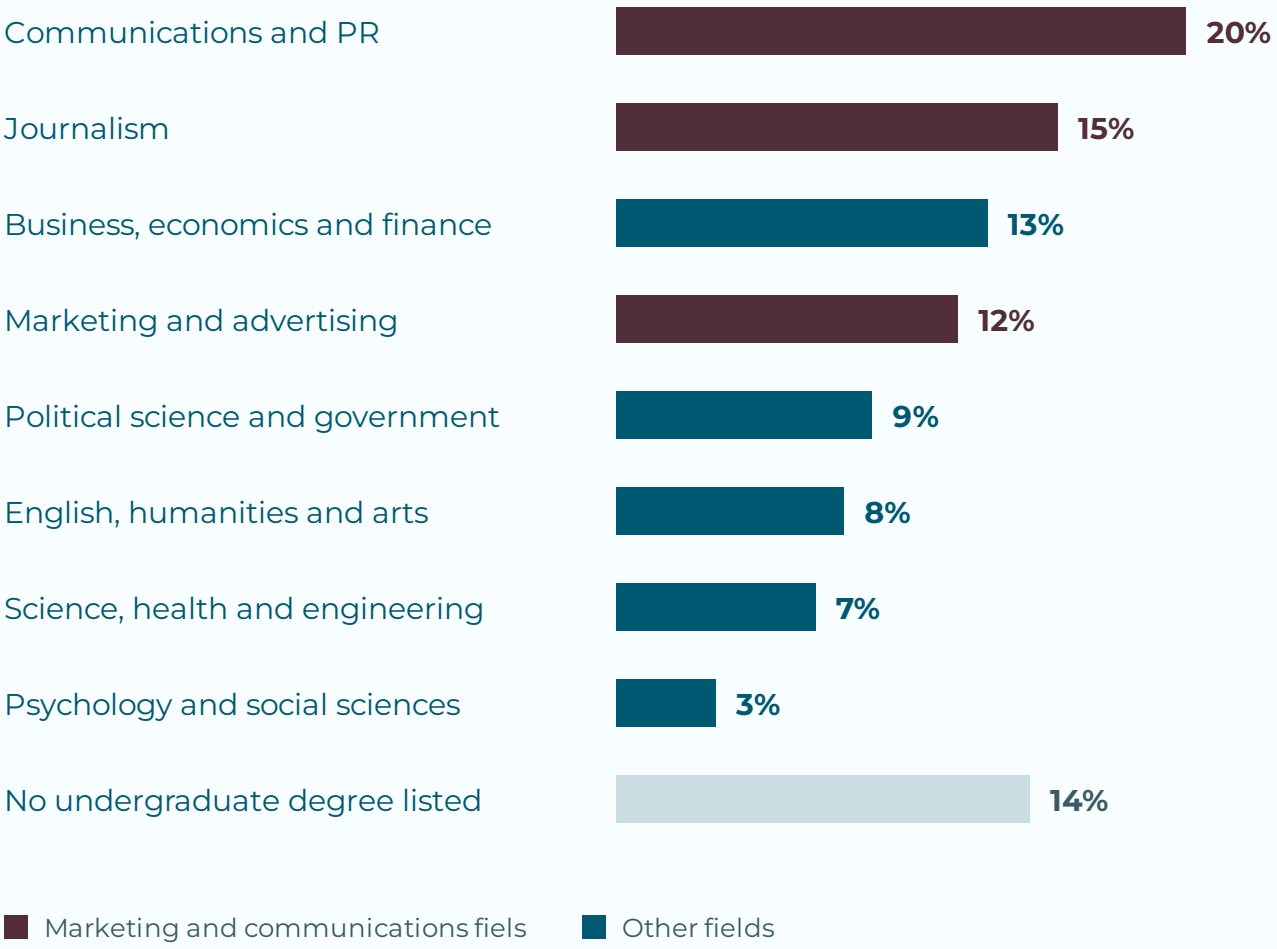
hold the FACHE designation from the American College of Healthcare Executives

Education

Undergraduate studies

Most leaders trained in marketing or communications programs before they trained in business. Communications and journalism are the two most common undergraduate majors.

Undergraduate major



46% majored in communications, journalism, marketing or advertising

Section 08

About the data

Source

A Brand Rounds dataset of the top marketing and communications leaders at 241 U.S. hospitals and health systems, compiled from publicly available professional profiles, chiefly LinkedIn, through September 2026.

Who's included

The dataset holds 280 records of past and present healthcare executives. Most figures describe the 205 leaders presently in their role. Five profiles with too little public information to verify were excluded.

Limitations

Public profiles are self-reported and vary in detail. Departures are incompletely recorded, so movement is measured by arrivals, and earlier years are undercounted. Gender is as recorded in the dataset, not self-identified. Race, ethnicity and age are not captured, and inferring them from photos or names would be unreliable, so this report doesn't attempt it. In future years, we aim to expand our data sources to report on race, ethnicity and age, and to track movement more completely.

Rounding

Percentages are rounded to whole numbers, so some totals may not add to exactly 100%.

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