



## OneStream Global Study Finds Women Take Longer to Reach CFO Seat; But, Once There, Deliver Performance Returns, Lead in Digital Adoption

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*Study finds women CFOs delivered 4.5% annualized shareholder return; 83% of women finance leaders see automation enabling different expertise to enter the role, but lag in AI advancement and trust*

- Women take ~3+ years longer to reach CFO seat, and over a third follow a non-linear path to the role
- Companies led by women CFOs delivered ~4.5% annualized shareholder return during their tenure
- Underperforming firms have seen a 10% performance uplift after appointing a woman CFO
- 83% of women CFOs say automation, particularly AI, is enabling new expertise and pathways into finance leadership
- 75% of women finance leaders identify digital literacy and strategic leadership as important skills for the future CFO role; yet only 24% rely significantly on AI tools today.

BIRMINGHAM, Mich., Aug. 27, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- Leading enterprise finance management platform, OneStream, today released the findings from a global study of 1,146 finance leaders, professionals, and business executives. The research explores the measurable business value of diversity in finance leadership, the routes to achieving the CFO role, barriers women face on the path to CFO, and the accelerators that help them advance.

The report – entitled *"The Glass Chair"* -- shows that women CFOs are not only driving strong business results but are also helping shape the skills and capabilities required for the future of finance leadership. Companies led by women CFOs deliver an average 4.5% annualized shareholder return, outperforming industry benchmarks by approximately 0.2% per year across Europe, the UK, and the US.

Notably, these findings are consistent with earlier independent research from [S&P Global Market Intelligence study](#) which found that companies appointing women CFOs generated 6% higher profitability and 8% higher stock returns in the first 24 months post-appointment.

Part of the ongoing [Finance 2035 Initiative](#), the study found that women are prioritizing the capabilities most critical for tomorrow's CFO role. Eighty-three percent of women CFOs say automation – especially AI -- is enabling different types of expertise to enter the role, and three-quarters identify digital literacy and strategic leadership as essential skills for the future.

"The data is clear: advancing women into CFO roles enhances innovation, competitiveness and modernizes a critical business function," said Pam McIntyre, Senior Vice President, Corporate Controller, OneStream. "At a time where CFOs are being asked to do more and navigate increasing complexity, women leaders are accelerating digital transformation, outperforming benchmarks and bringing strategic and leadership skillsets businesses need to thrive in an uncertain future."

### Broader Experience, Deeper Impact

The research reveals that women take longer and less linear routes to the CFO seat — averaging 18 years at Global Fortune 500 and 20 years in the FTSE 100. Along the way, they change roles and companies more frequently, and according to the LinkedIn analysis in the study, 35% of women CFOs in the sample group have backgrounds that reflect a non-linear career trajectory, including operating or cross-functional roles outside of core finance.

As a result, women often have a broader enterprise-wide perspective, deeper operational acumen, and stronger leadership experience for the CFO role. This positions them to balance financial strategy with people development, risk management, and cross-business collaboration — all qualities critical to the modern CFO.

### Skills that Define the Future CFO

The research shows that women CFOs are more likely to align with leadership personas that emphasize financial governance, strategic planning, and team development, defined as:

- The Strategic Architect – balancing long-term finance planning with executive team development
- The Financial Guardian – emphasizing transparency, governance, and risk management

These qualities align directly with the skills most needed for today's CFOs, as today's finance leaders embrace AI and automation to free up capacity for strategic guidance and decision-making.

Women are also helping lead in digital adoption. Most cite (83%) that automation is enabling different expertise to enter the role, and three-quarters identify digital literacy and strategic leadership as the top skills for the future. Nearly 70% report that technology has already helped equalize opportunities, while many also point to data analytics and cybersecurity as essential capabilities for

tomorrow's CFO.

The study highlights powerful opportunity: While 73% of women are eager to build AI skills, only 24% expect to rely significantly on AI tools today, according to our recent pulse survey on Finance Talent. Women finance leaders' focus on transparency, governance, and risk management offers one reason why they've been slower to adopt more generic AI toolsets, which lack the context, accuracy, and transparency required for effective financial decisions and performance. Closing this gap in AI transparency and accuracy is one of the fastest ways for women to build confidence and competence in AI adoption across finance — and an accelerant to empowering women leaders who already demonstrate competencies in other areas critical to the future CFO role.

### **The Rising Value of Women in Finance Leadership**

While women CFOs bring the diverse skillsets, resilience, and enterprise-wide perspective that the modern CFO role demands, many cited several structural barriers that slowed their progression, despite them being capable for the CFO role. These include economic downturns disrupting organizational structures, complex workplace politics, limited access to mentorship, challenges balancing work and personal life, and skills gaps within finance teams.

These barriers delay advancement and in doing so, postpone the value businesses could be capturing sooner. Companies that prioritize breaking down these obstacles will unlock leaders who not only deliver higher returns, but also bring broader skillsets needed to steer finance into the future

To access the full findings of the research and download a complimentary copy of *The Glass Chair* report, please visit [www.onestream.com/women-in-finance](http://www.onestream.com/women-in-finance).

### **About the Study**

*The Glass Chair* study is the latest installment in OneStream's research exploring the future of finance leadership. Following the global *Finance 2035* study – conducted with 1,500 business leaders and 500 investors across six countries – *The Glass Chair* builds on those insights with a focused examination of women in senior finance roles. Conducted between February and July 2025 in partnership with Man Bites Dog, the study combines economic analysis of more than 100 publicly traded companies, opinion research among 700 senior finance professionals across the US, UK, France, Germany, and Australia, and LinkedIn career data from 346 CFOs worldwide from the Fortune Global 500 and FTSE 100.

To enrich these findings, OneStream convened an advisory board of senior women in finance to provide context and perspectives to contribute a qualitative dimension to the research. Together, these findings offer a comprehensive view of the progress of women CFOs, the pathways to leadership and the business value of diversity in finance leadership.


To access more detailed findings of the research and download a complimentary copy of the report, please visit [www.onestream.com/women-in-finance](http://www.onestream.com/women-in-finance).

### **About OneStream**

OneStream is how today's Finance teams can go beyond just reporting on the past and Take Finance Further™ by steering the business to the future. It's the leading enterprise Finance platform that unifies financial and operational data, embeds AI for better decisions and productivity, and empowers the CFO to become a critical driver of business strategy and execution.

We deliver a comprehensive cloud-based platform to modernize the Office of the CFO. Our Digital Finance Cloud unifies core financial and broader operational data and processes and embeds AI for better planning and forecasting, with an extensible architecture, so customers can adopt and develop new solutions, achieving greater value as their business needs evolve.

With over 1,600 customers, including 17% of the Fortune 500, more than 300 go-to-market, implementation, and development partners and over 1,500 employees, our vision is to be the operating system for modern Finance. To learn more, visit [onestream.com](http://onestream.com).

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