

# Women at the helm

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On 1 August, Priya Nair will take over as the first woman chief executive officer and managing director of Hindustan Unilever Ltd. Women are gradually advancing into executive roles in Indian companies, but their overall presence remains limited. Globally, there's a noticeable pattern of women excelling in senior HR, marketing, and finance roles, but progress into ultimate leadership positions such as CEO, MD, and chairperson remains painstakingly slow, revealing deeply entrenched barriers at the highest corporate levels worldwide.

**Top names: Select women executive directors in listed companies**

**mint**



**Priya Nair**  
MD & CEO  
Hindustan  
Unilever



**Vibha Padalkar**  
MD & CEO  
HDFC Life  
Insurance Co.



**Preetha Reddy**  
Executive vice  
chairperson  
Apollo Hospitals  
Enterprise



**Vishakha Mulye**  
MD & CEO  
(designate)  
Aditya Birla  
Capital

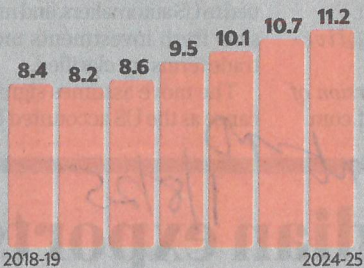


**Falguni Nayar**  
Executive  
chairperson,  
MD & CEO  
FSN E-Commerce  
Ventures



**Prabha  
Narasimhan**  
MD & CEO  
Colgate-Palmolive  
India

**The slow rise: Women's share (in %) among executive directors in NSE-listed companies**



Data as of the last date of each fiscal year.

**The glass ceiling: Share of women leaders (in %) in major economies, by position**



Based on a quarterly research survey of senior executives at around 14,000 "mid-market" businesses across 31 economies, including major global markets, including China, US, UK, India and Brazil. The latest data was collected during Jul-Sep 2024.

Source: primeinfobase.com; Women in Business 2025 report by Grant Thornton

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