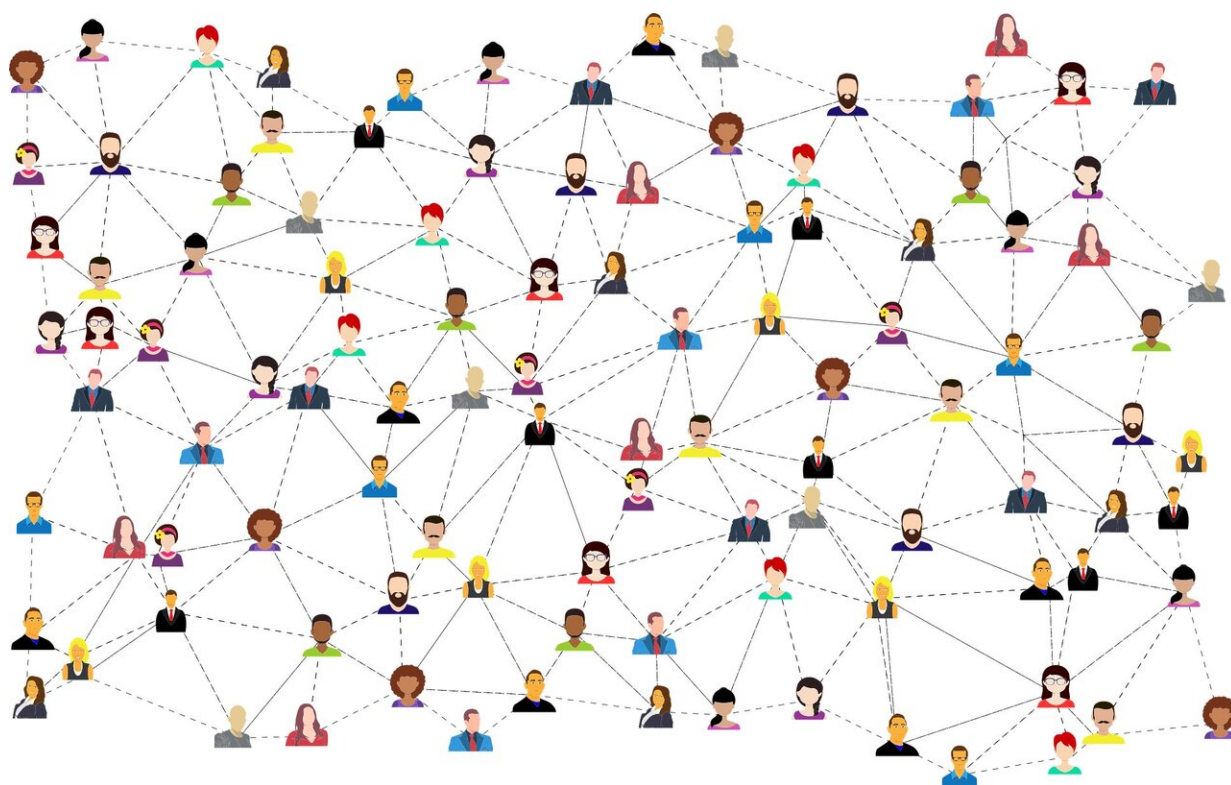


# Only 1 in 5 editors-in-chief of leading medical journals are women, study finds

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Women remain underrepresented at the most senior position of international medical journals, finds a new study investigating the gender distribution of editors-in-chief across 41 journal specialities.



The results, published today in *JAMA Open Network*, found that women represented just 21 percent of editor-in-chief positions, varying widely across specialties (with none at journals specializing in psychiatry and anaesthesiology, to 82 percent in genetics and heredity). Even in women's health journals, the top editorial position was predominantly held by men rather than women.

Dr. Ana-Catarina Pinho-Gomes of The George Institute for Global Health, UK, in collaboration with Imperial College London, who led the research, said it showed much more needed to be done to achieve gender parity.

"Despite the gradual increase in women as clinicians in many medical specialties over the past 50 years, our findings highlight a disappointing lack of progress in their representation in the most senior editorial positions of high-impact medical journals. This adds to compelling evidence on the longstanding gender bias, which has been consistently reported across all medical specialties and at all stages of the academic and clinical career ladder."

Researchers suggest multiple reasons for the disparity, including [traditional gender roles](#) with women shouldering greater responsibility for housework and childcare as well as needing to take career breaks for maternity leave. But they also argued that unconscious gender bias could lead to women's academic achievements being undervalued and a perception that they are not suitable for senior leadership roles.

A total of 410 journals and 444 editors-in-chief were included in the analysis, conducted in April 2021. All journals, regardless of their size and remit, have at least one editor-in-chief who oversees the production of content for publications. The findings that women are significantly underrepresented in this position tracks with previous studies, indicating that progress has been inadequate.



Study co-author Dr. Amy Vassallo, Research Fellow at The George Institute Australia, said while the long term goal was to change biased systems, some things could be done more quickly.

"Policies and initiatives need to be immediately implemented, and evaluated, to address diversity and inclusion in medical research leadership, including senior leadership roles in medical journals."

The authors suggest providing training on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as on unconscious gender bias, to key stakeholders, as well as having robust policies that establish [gender](#) quotas in editorial boards and remove tangible and intangible barriers to [women's](#) career progression.

"It is important for journals and [academic institutions](#) to work together to drive this change because medicine, and science in general, have much to gain from [gender balance](#) and fairness," Dr. Vassallo added.

**More information:** Ana-Catarina Pinho-Gomes et al, Representation of Women Among Editors in Chief of Leading Medical Journals, *JAMA Network Open* (2021). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.23026](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2021.23026)

Provided by George Institute for Global Health

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