

# Challenger, Gray & Christmas

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

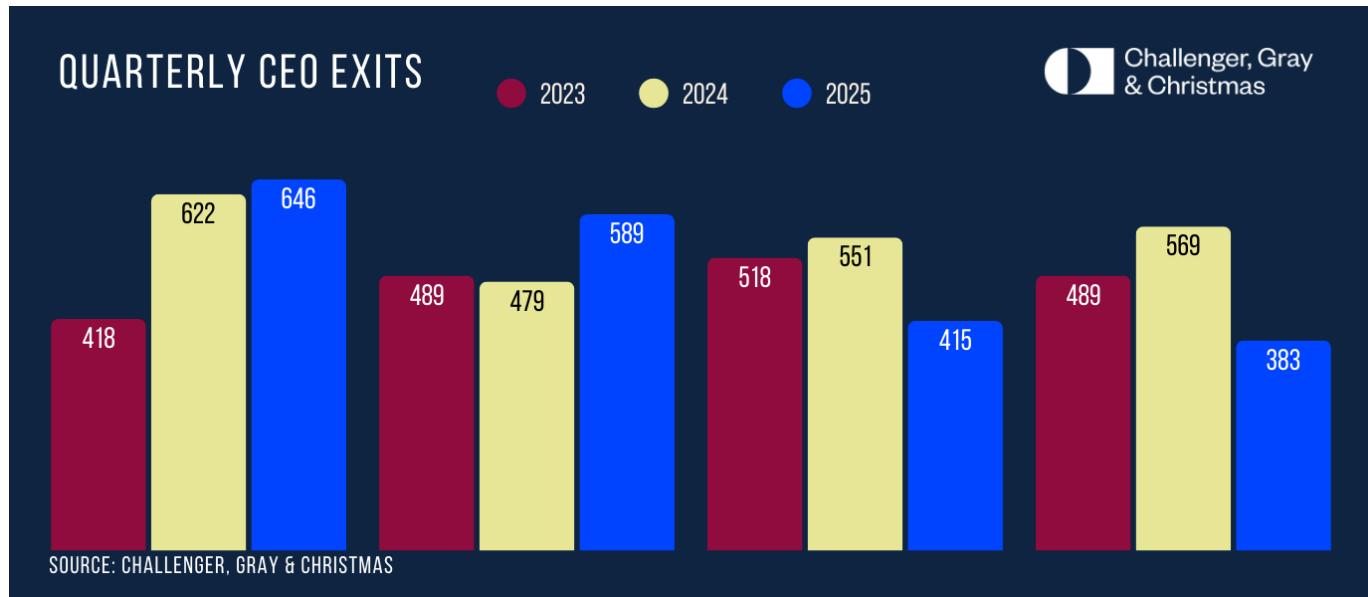
### CEO TURNOVER TICKS UP TO END THE YEAR; 2025 CEO EXITS FALL BELOW 2024 LEVELS

#### Public CEO Exits Break Record

**CHICAGO, February 4, 2026** – The number of CEO changes at U.S. companies rose 22% to 149 in December from 123 in November. This is down 35% from the 230 CEO exits that occurred in the same month one year prior, according to a report released Wednesday by global outplacement and executive coaching firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

December marks the seventh consecutive month CEO exits were lower than the corresponding month one year earlier.

In 2025, 2,032 CEOs left their posts, down 9% from 2,221 CEO exits in 2024. The fourth quarter saw 383 exits, the lowest quarterly total since Q4 2022, when 266 CEO exits were recorded. It is down 7% from the 415 CEO exits recorded in the third quarter, and down 33% from the 569 CEO exits recorded in the same quarter one year earlier.



After seeing the highest quarter total of CEO exits on record in the first quarter of 2025, exits slowed in each of the subsequent quarters.

"The election seemed to set off a wave of leadership exits at the end of 2024 and into the start of last year. But after months of rapid-fire change in the face of geopolitical unrest, policy shifts, economic uncertainty, and evolving technology, companies are signaling some stability," said Andy Challenger, labor and workplace expert and chief revenue officer for Challenger, Gray & Christmas.

While CEO exits have dropped over the course of the year, CEOs from publicly traded companies saw their most active year on record. Challenger tracked 446 CEO exits at publicly traded companies in 2025, the highest annual total on record and up from 373 in 2024.

Meanwhile, December recorded the youngest average age of departing CEOs of any month since Challenger began tracking CEO exits in 2002. The average age for departing CEOs was 51.5 in December. The previous low was just over 52.

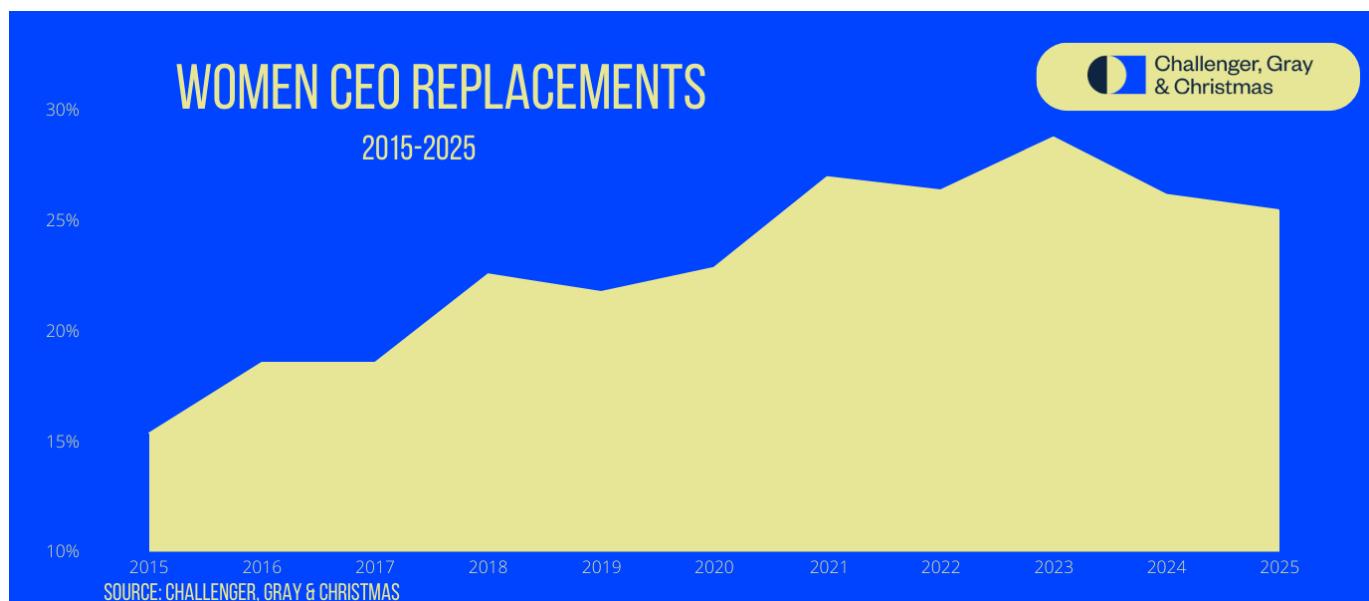
"Modern boards are no longer allowing CEOs to stay in their highly-paid positions if they're not seeing results, and often CEOs have one or two quarters to prove effectiveness.

"CEOs may be exiting younger because they are expected to prove themselves quickly and fall short. On the other hand, CEOs' skills are in high demand, and experienced leaders have agency to take new opportunities when they arise, even if their experience doesn't translate into a long tenure," said Challenger.

## WOMEN CEOs

The rate of new CEOs who are women fell 0.2 percentage points in December for a year-to-date rate of 25.4%. This is compared to 26.1% of new women CEOs appointed in 2024. It is 3.3 percentage points below the peak of 28.7% of new CEOs who are women in all of 2023. It is the lowest rate for women rising to the CEO role since 2020, when 23% of new CEOs were women.

Meanwhile, the rate of outgoing women CEOs is 23% in 2025, compared to 22% in 2024. This suggests a slightly higher rate of women are leaving the CEO role than one year prior.



## WHAT INDUSTRIES SAW EXITS IN 2025?

Government/Non-Profit led all industries with 427 CEO exits through December 2025, including 33 in December, all of which occurred in Non-Profits. This is down from 493 CEO exits recorded in 2024, a decline of 13% year over year.

Technology followed with 208 CEO exits year-to-date, 9 of which occurred in December. While below earlier peaks, the sector remains one of the highest for turnover in 2025 and is down from the 226 CEO exits recorded in 2024, a decrease of 8%.

Health Care/Products companies announced 207 CEO exits in 2025, including 14 in December. This represents a sharp decline from the 277 CEO exits recorded in 2024, down 25% year over year.

Hospitals reported 111 CEO exits year-to-date, with 4 in December. This is up 7% from the 104 hospital CEO exits recorded in 2024.

Financial firms announced 11 CEO exits in December, bringing the year-to-date total to 127, a 13% increase from the 112 CEO exits recorded in 2024.

Entertainment/Leisure companies reported 151 CEO exits in 2025, including 7 in December. This is down 3% from the 155 CEO exits recorded in 2024.

Retail companies reported 51 CEO exits year-to-date, including 3 in December. This represents a 28% increase from the 40 CEO exits recorded in 2024.

Consumer Products firms have announced 76 CEO exits in 2025, including 12 in December. This is down 5% from the 80 CEO exits recorded in 2024.

## WHERE DID CEO EXITS OCCUR IN 2025?

The West continues to lead all regions with 651 CEO exits in 2025, though this represents a 13% decrease from the 749 recorded in 2024. California still accounts for the largest share with 238 CEO departures, down from 259 last year, while Texas follows with 158, up from 153 one year earlier. Both states saw notable activity in December, with 18 exits in California and 13 in Texas. Washington continues to trend downward, reporting 57 exits compared to 75 last year.

The South reported 496 CEO exits in 2025, flat with 2024's total of 496. Florida leads the region with 119 CEO changes, down from 132 last year. Georgia rose sharply to 74 from 54, and North Carolina increased to 69 from 58. Tennessee also edged higher to 65 from 63, reflecting continued leadership movement across much of the region.

The East logged 461 CEO exits in 2025, a 14% decline from the 535 recorded in 2024. New York leads with 134 CEO changes, down from 157 last year. Massachusetts also declined, reporting 74 exits compared to 103 in 2024. Pennsylvania, however, increased to 95 from 91, while New Jersey edged lower at 36 compared to 40 one year earlier.

The Midwest reported 424 CEO exits in 2025, down about 4% from the 441 recorded in 2024. Illinois leads the region with 83 CEO departures, up from 71 last year. Indiana rose to 42 from

29, and Iowa increased to 27 from 18. Ohio declined to 85 from 94, while Michigan fell to 33 from 52.

## **WHY DID CEOs LEAVE IN 2025?**

The most common reason cited for CEO departures in December was leaders stepping down, with 34 exits last month and 678 in 2025. This category often signals planned successions, strategic transitions, or moves into advisory or board roles, and it remains the top driver of CEO turnover this year.

No reason given was the second-most common explanation in December, with 42 exits and a year-to-date total of 456. This remains one of the largest categories overall, suggesting many organizations continue to prefer discretion when announcing leadership changes.

Retirements remain another major contributor, with 31 CEOs retiring in December and 443 in 2025. These figures continue to reflect an ongoing generational transition across corporate leadership, even as retirement totals remain below stepped-down departures.

Some CEOs left for new opportunities, with 9 such exits in December and 175 this year. Meanwhile, 10 CEOs resigned in December, bringing the 2025 resignation total to 115. Another 8 CEOs completed interim appointments last month, pushing the Interim Period Over category to 78 year-to-date.

Other reasons for CEO departures reported in 2025 include:

- Acquisition/Merger: 4 in December; 35 YTD
- Terminated: 2 in December; 13 YTD
- Death: 1 in December; 10 YTD
- Personal Reasons: 2 in December; 10 YTD
- Differences with Board: 3 in December; 7 YTD
- Allegations of Professional Misconduct: 2 in December; 5 YTD

# # #

**CHALLENGER CEO REPORT**  
**CEO DEPARTURES**  
**By Month**

Month	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
January	222	194	112	125	89	219	157	132
February	247	248	167	151	106	128	124	113
March	177	180	139	119	112	94	135	96
April	214	126	147	123	133	48	97	109
May	168	119	224	150	99	83	114	91
June	207	234	118	106	104	91	99	90
July	123	149	197	58	127	125	124	94
August	146	200	157	63	118	109	159	154
September	146	202	164	74	103	119	151	148
October	110	172	105	71	142	92	172	149
November	123	167	180	95	98	110	148	147
December	149	230	204	100	106	96	160	129
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,032</b>	<b>2,221</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>1,235</b>	<b>1,337</b>	<b>1,314</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>1,452</b>

**Annual CEO Turnover by Company Type**

Type	December 2025	2025
Private/Government/Non-Profit	122	1,586
Public	27	446

Year	Public CEO Exits
2010	280
2011	296
2012	265
2013	248
2014	278
2015	255
2016	229
2017	230
2018	260
2019	312
2020	227
2021	197
2022	199
2023	301
2024	373

## ANNUAL CEO TURNOVER

### By Industry

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Aerospace/Defense	17	20	15	10	12	13	11	12	8
Apparel	14	19	17	5	5	12	14	4	0
Automotive	31	26	17	8	24	15	12	24	5
Cannabis	5	13	13	8	13	12	11	N/A	N/A
Chemical	12	19	9	6	10	5	4	8	5
Commodities	5	12	1	0	1	0	6	5	12
Construction	41	39	25	16	18	14	17	19	7
Consumer Products	76	80	56	43	38	33	30	39	30
Electronics	18	9	8	5	6	9	4	25	14
Energy	40	49	38	29	24	34	59	30	35
Entertainment/Leisure	151	155	96	73	80	78	75	55	60
Financial	127	112	116	88	82	80	129	154	119
FinTech	25	35	33	25	12	16	11	N/A	N/A
Food	67	61	59	38	38	37	70	40	31
Government/Non-Profit	427	493	486	271	309	237	339	276	191
Health Care/Products	207	277	189	111	124	130	107	131	105
Hospitals	111	104	146	103	112	101	121	139	107
Industrial Goods	33	44	25	16	20	30	57	42	34
Insurance	31	26	20	20	23	27	20	16	26
Legal	8	11	2	4	8	7	5	3	2
Media	19	25	39	22	21	30	28	25	17
Pharmaceutical	33	60	52	34	24	21	61	48	47
Real Estate	39	53	25	22	21	26	31	27	14
Retail	51	40	52	21	23	28	63	35	41
Services	138	116	121	87	70	106	84	85	110
Technology	208	226	173	137	171	143	216	152	97
Telecommunications	22	19	15	3	5	16	7	10	12
Transportation	46	47	34	16	24	35	31	27	25
Utility	30	31	32	14	19	19	17	21	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,032</b>	<b>2,221</b>	<b>1,914</b>	<b>1,235</b>	<b>1,337</b>	<b>1,314</b>	<b>1,640</b>	<b>1,452</b>	<b>1,160</b>

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas ©

**CHALLENGER CEO REPORT**  
By Industry

	24-Dec	25-Nov	25-Dec	YTD 2024	YTD 2025
Aerospace/Defense	2	2	1	20	17
Apparel	2		1	19	14
Automotive	2	1	3	26	31
Cannabis	1			13	5
Chemical				19	12
Commodities	1			12	5
Construction	7	1	6	39	41
Consumer Products	9	8	12	80	76
Electronics	1	1		9	18
Energy	6		2	49	40
Entertainment/Leisure	16	7	7	155	151
Financial	8	11	11	112	127
FinTech	4		3	35	25
Food	5	6	10	61	67
Government/Non-Profit	55	29	33	493	427
Health Care/Products	47	19	14	277	207
Hospitals	3	3	4	104	111
Industrial Goods	3	1		44	33
Insurance		1	2	26	31
Legal				11	8
Media	3			25	19
Pharmaceutical	6	3	6	60	33
Real Estate	6	6	2	53	39
Retail	3	5	3	40	51
Services	14	5	12	116	138
Technology	18	13	9	226	208
Telecommunications	1		1	19	22
Transportation	4		6	47	46
Utility	3	1	1	31	30
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>2,221</b>	<b>2,032</b>

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas

## CHALLENGER CEO REPORT

### By State

EAST	Dec-25	YTD 2025	YTD 2024	WEST	Dec-25	YTD 2025	YTD 2024
Connecticut		19	23	Alaska	1	6	5
Delaware		5	7	Arizona	3	30	47
Dist. of Columbia	1	35	51	California	18	238	259
Maine	1	7	5	Colorado	7	48	60
Maryland	3	25	37	Hawaii	1	9	9
Massachusetts	7	74	103	Idaho	1	7	16
New Hampshire	2	11	8	Montana		5	5
New Jersey	3	36	40	Nevada	2	9	15
New York	9	134	157	New Mexico		15	12
Pennsylvania	10	95	91	North Dakota		3	0
Rhode Island	1	10	6	Oklahoma		12	17
Vermont	1	10	7	Oregon	3	28	25
	38	461	535	South Dakota	1	9	21
<b>MIDWEST</b>	<b>Dec-25</b>	<b>YTD 2025</b>	<b>YTD 2024</b>	<b>Texas</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>153</b>
Illinois	2	83	71	Utah	1	14	26
Indiana	1	42	29	Washington	2	57	75
Iowa		27	18	Wyoming		3	4
Kansas		13	20	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>749</b>
Michigan	3	33	52	<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>Dec-25</b>	<b>YTD 2025</b>	<b>YTD 2024</b>
Minnesota	2	43	50	Alabama		25	26
Missouri	6	45	54	Arkansas	1	10	14
Nebraska		15	18	Florida	7	119	132
Ohio	9	85	94	Georgia	9	74	54
Wisconsin	1	38	35	Kentucky	1	35	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>441</b>	Louisiana	1	15	21
				Mississippi		6	2
				N. Carolina	4	69	58
				S. Carolina		23	28
				Tennessee	4	65	63
				Virginia	7	54	67
				West Virginia		1	2
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>496</b>

**CHALLENGER CEO REPORT**  
**By Reason**

Reason	December	2025
Stepped Down	34	678
No Reason Given	42	456
Retired	31	443
New Opportunity	9	175
Resigned	10	115
Interim Period Over	8	78
Acquisition/Merger	4	35
Terminated	2	13
Death	1	10
Personal Reasons	2	10
Differences With Board	3	7
Allegations of Professional Misconduct	2	5
Restructuring		2
New Position Within Company	1	2
Loss of Contract		1
Relocation		1
Bankruptcy		1

**Average Age, Tenure**

	Age		Tenure		2024
	2025	2024	2025	2024	
January	59.3	55.6	12.9		9.6
February	66.0	56.4	12.6		9.5
March	67.2	53.7	11.1		9.0
April	63.0	55.9	11.2		9.6
May	71.4	56.1	8.1		9.4
June	64.3	60.0	10.6		10.5
July	70.3	56.2	11.0		13.3
August	60.7	61.3	10.9		11.2
September	52.5	58.9	9.9		9.3
October	59.5	64.0	10.6		12.2
November	59.0	57.2	9.5		6.5
December	51.5	65.0	9.1		11.1

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas

**CHALLENGER CEO REPORT**  
**CEO Replacements**

Replacement Type	YTD 2025	YTD 2024
External Replacement	960	1,081
Internal Replacement	881	948

**ANNUAL CEO TURNOVER: INTERNAL V. EXTERNAL REPLACEMENTS**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
External	469	469	431	513	524	478	493	462	564	784	636	666	589	830
Internal	458	479	529	480	539	560	557	515	630	620	528	552	570	727

**Incoming CEOs by Gender**

Incoming	CEOs (% Interim) YTD 2025	CEOs (% Interim) YTD 2024
Women Replacing Women	172 (17%)	195 (13%)
Men Replacing Women	237 (19%)	235 (17%)
Women Replacing Men	296 (13%)	332 (17%)
Men Replacing Men	1,137 (10%)	1,099 (12%)
Total	1,842 (12%)	2,016 (13%)
Percentage of New CEOs Who are Women	25.4%	26.1%

Annual	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Women Replacing Women	50	64	69	89	119	79	110	107	201
Men Replacing Women	91	99	88	120	131	105	130	113	199
Women Replacing Men	109	130	119	182	189	193	222	197	296
Men Replacing Men	788	757	741	814	983	817	774	738	1,035
Non-Binary Replacing Men								1	
AI Replacing Men								0	1
Grand Total	1,038	1,050	1,017	1,205	1,422	1,194	1,236	1,156	1,732
Percentage of Women Replacement CEOs	15.30%	18.50%	18.50%	22.50%	21.70%	22.78%	26.86%	26.30%	28.70%

Source: Challenger, Gray & Christmas ©