



**2021 HEALTH  
EQUITY SPOTLIGHT:  
ACADEMIC  
MEDICAL CENTERS**

An academic medical center (AMC) is more than just a healthcare provider, it's one of the greatest learning resources available for medical students. As AMCs train the next generation of clinicians, they must ask: Are clinicians being trained in the right areas to promote health equity?

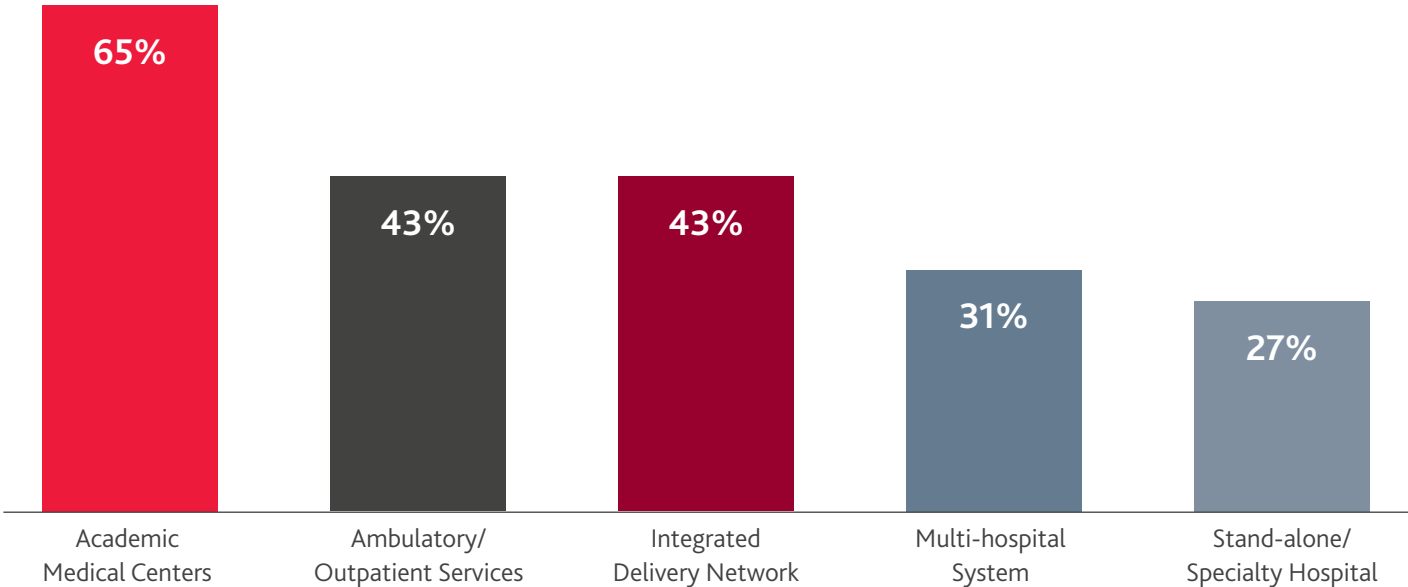
In June and July 2021, BDO and HIMSS surveyed 153 executive and senior leaders within a hospital or health system to gauge the state of health equity in the U.S. Of those respondents, 20 were AMCs. The resulting data showed that AMCs are well-positioned to make great strides in health equity — provided they make the right moves today.



# AMCs are ahead of the curve, but there's more work to be done.

Out of all our survey respondents, AMCs were the most likely to have a health equity strategy already in place.

## ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE ALREADY DEPLOYED A HEALTH EQUITY STRATEGY



However, challenges remain. When asked about the difficulties they face in addressing health equity, the three top-cited answers were:



Tracking economic health



Tracking provider performance



Tracking patient outcomes



Among all respondents, AMCs showed the highest proficiency in tracking economic health and providing training and education.

When it comes to training employees on health equity, the top four objectives cited by AMCs were:

**60%**

Discuss health disparities related to diverse populations.

**50%**

Outline how unconscious bias can influence attitudes, behaviors and expectations related to health, medications, treatment regimens, healthcare, and healthcare providers.

**45%**

Coach communication skills such as teach-back, plain language, verbal and written instruction methods, interviewing, non-verbal communication, and knowledge confirmation.

**45%**

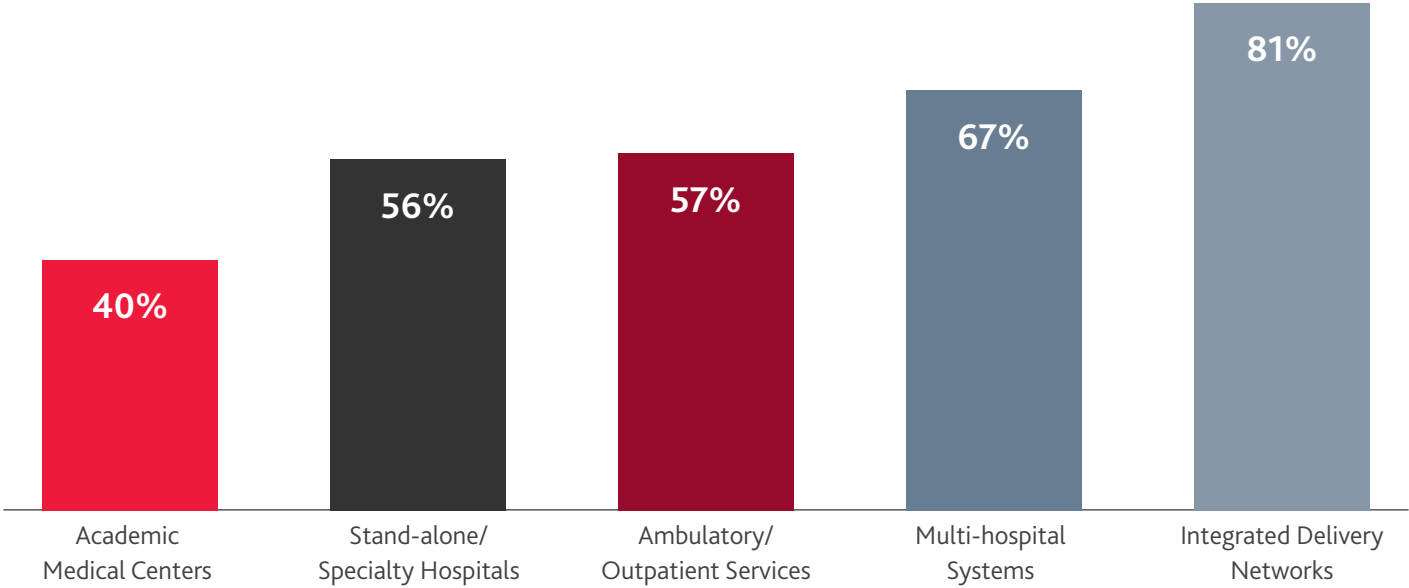
Confirm how to meet diverse needs of patients with disabilities and/or cognitive or mental health impairments.

While the top-cited answer was discussing healthcare disparities related to diverse populations, only one in four AMCs prioritize training on the demographics of their organization's specific patient populations, which creates a crucial gap between training and applied knowledge.

# AMCs measure health equity differently than other organizations.

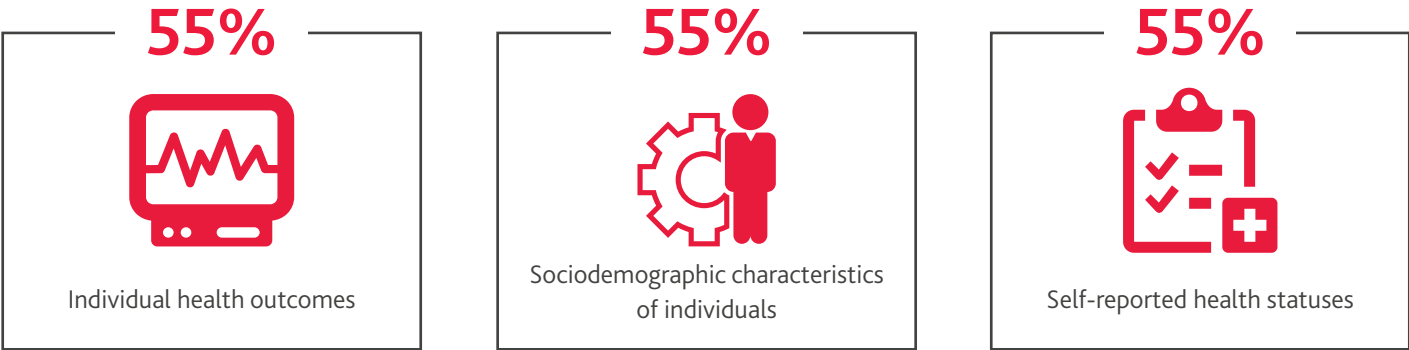
When looking at all survey respondents, the top-cited KPI for measuring health equity was Quality of Care (QOC) measures. However, AMCs rely on these measures the least of all organizations.

## ORGANIZATIONS THAT USE QOC MEASURES TO TRACK HEALTH EQUITY



In contrast, 25% of AMCs said they relied on data collection, the most of any organization type, which could suggest that AMCs have stronger data analytics capabilities.

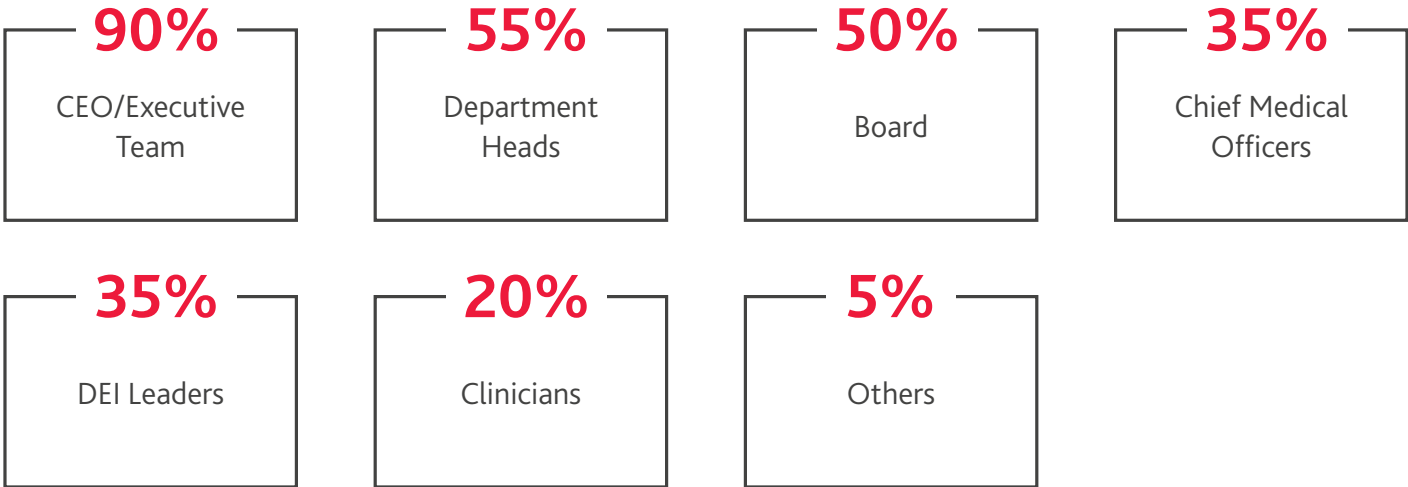
When it comes to measuring health equity improvement, AMCs were ahead of other organizations when it comes to tracking three key metrics:



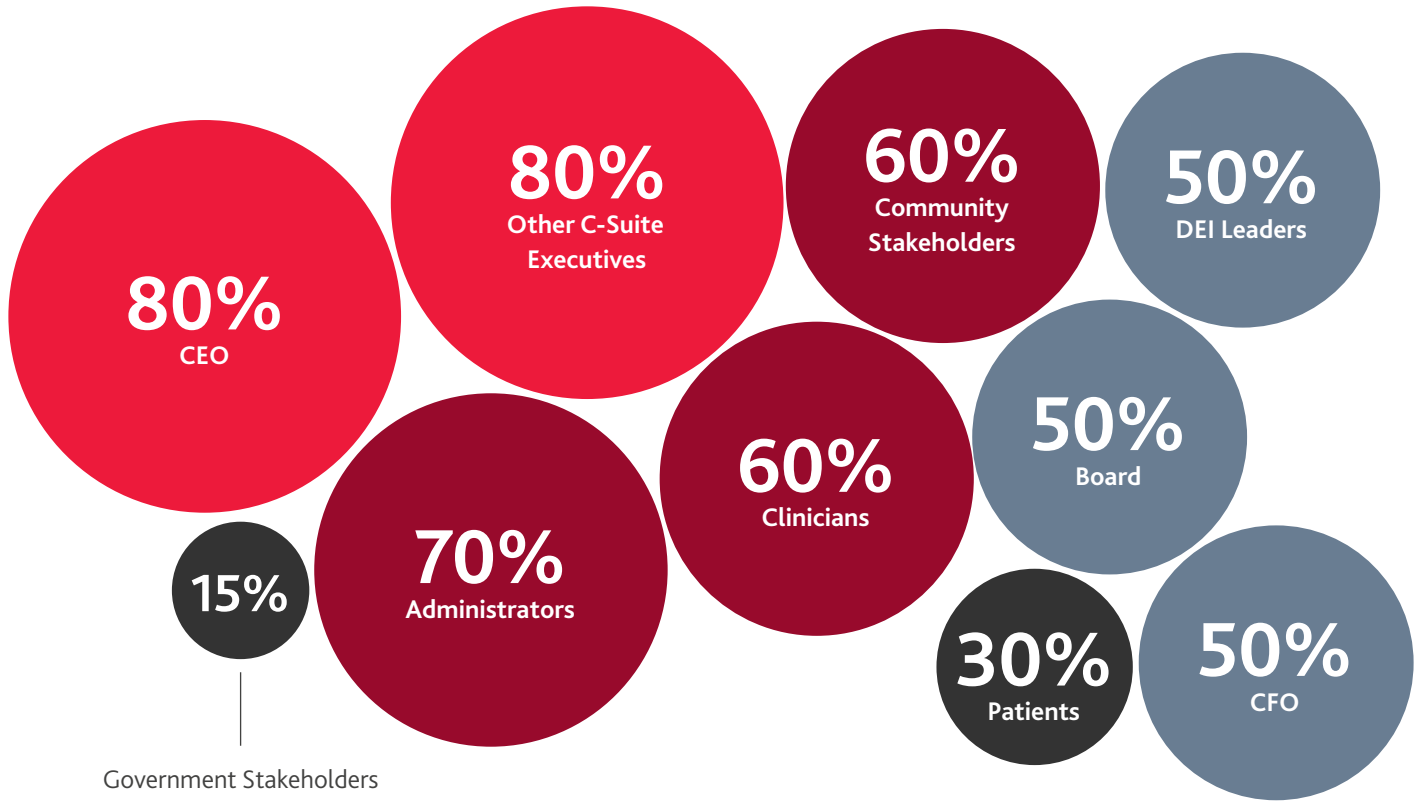
This data suggests that AMCs have an advantage when it comes to measuring health equity on the individual level. By contrast, 45% of AMCs reported measuring community health outcomes to gauge health equity improvement.

# For AMCs, accountability for health equity is top heavy.

When asked who is accountable for health equity within the organization, AMCs cited:



When looking at who is involved with the organization's task force, however, we see a different story:

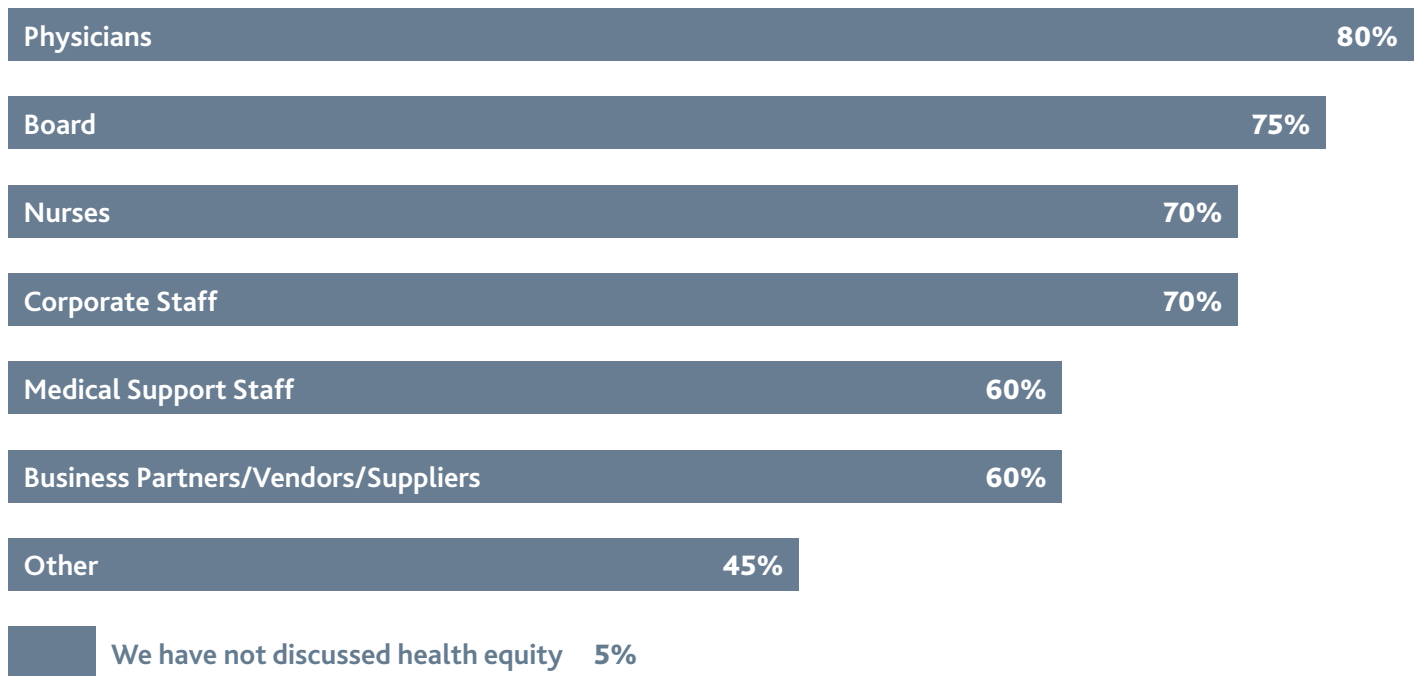




While only 20% of AMCs stated that clinicians were accountable for health equity in their organization, 60% reported that clinicians were involved on their health equity task force. Additionally, 50% of AMCs stated that DEI leaders were included on the task force, but only 35% cited DEI leaders as accountable for health equity. As a result, we can see there is some disconnect in who participates in the task force and who is actually held accountable.

That disconnect grows when we look at who is involved in health equity discussions in AMCs.

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN HEALTH EQUITY CONVERSATIONS IN AMCS



80% of AMCs reported that physicians are involved in health equity discussions, which outpaces how many AMCs said they have physicians on their health equity task forces and hold providers accountable. Additionally, 70% of AMCs stated that corporate staff are involved in these conversations, which is slightly less than we would expect given their high levels of accountability and involvement in health equity task forces.

Interestingly, AMCs were by far the most likely of all the organizations to include their business partners, vendors and suppliers in health equity conversations.



# Tying it all together.

While in many ways health equity initiatives at AMCs are further advanced than at other organizations, there are still gaps that AMCs need to address to promote greater health equity in their communities:



## ► Tailor their training.

Currently, AMCs are focused on understanding health disparities in diverse communities, but they aren't prioritizing understanding their specific patient populations. To best serve their communities and offer customized care, they need to spend more time focusing on the demographics of their patients and proactively create solutions to address the challenges they face.

## ► Measure beyond the individual.

AMCs are focusing on individual health metrics to measure health equity improvement. They are less confident when it comes to measuring communities and groups of people. Since a higher percentage of AMCs collect and analyze data than other organizations, they should invest in collecting data from their patient population to incorporate community measurements into their health equity metrics.

## ► Foster organization-wide accountability.

AMCs must focus on aligning their health equity discussions and task forces to their accountability expectations. Clinicians, for example, should have greater representation on health equity task forces, and C-suite executives need more involvement in health equity discussions. Keeping health equity involvement consistent across the organization will lead to stronger health equity improvement.



Looking for help advancing health equity at your organization?  
BDO can help you take the right steps to make a difference in your community.

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