



Human-centered leaders are the future of leadership

BCG study 2021



FEBRUARY, 4TH

A quantitative survey on leadership at work conducted across 4 countries & complemented by insights from leadership experts



Quantitative survey

- 4,000 participants from private & public sector
- 4 countries (1,000 participants from each country, using a representative sample)



France



Spain



UK



Germany

- Survey conducted by BVA on Oct 8-21th 2020



Expert insights

- Insights from leadership experts (professors & researchers) part of the [AGRH network](#)¹
 - Quantitative insights gathered through an [online survey](#) on Oct 19 - Nov 13th 2020
 - Qualitative insights gathered through [interviews](#)

1. AGRH (Association Francophone de Gestion des Ressources Humaines) has a network of >1,300 members, both professors and researchers

Key insights | Being a good leader in today's world (I)

BCG long-term research shows that successful leaders lead with a combination of:

- **Head:** leaders need to envision the future & set aligned priorities
- **Heart:** leaders need to inspire and empower their people
- **Hands:** leaders need to execute a set of actions to deliver results

Companies attending to all three areas are nearly three times more likely to show sustained breakthrough improvement. However, in normal times, companies address the Head (69%), the Hands (44%) but neglect the Heart (25%).

Participants to recent BCG survey believe that good leaders need to strongly display heart qualities: consideration (37%) 2) empathy (33%) 3) listening skills (31%) 4) team development (29%) well before hands and head (below 20%).

There is a **shift towards increasingly valuing human leadership**, that has crystalized with the Covid-19 crisis and for which there is no going back. While Head and Hands need to be mastered by any leader, alone they are simply not enough. A visionary & decisive leader may jeopardize the engagement of his/her teams if he/she lacks human qualities.

Connecting emotionally with people, displaying consideration, being demanding and fostering team development, acknowledging personal realization have become table-stakes in our society of strong individualism.

This is agnostic of gender and age, which confirms even more what our times require: Heart before anything else.

Focus of organizations undergoing transformation:

69%

Head: Envision the future & align on the big rocks

25%

Heart: Inspire and empower your people

44%

Hands: Execute and innovate with agility

Qualities expected from a good leader according to participants:

14%

Head qualities: prioritization & customer focus 14%

20%

Hands qualities: decision-making & experimentation 20%

37%

Heart qualities: consideration 37%, empathy 33%, and listening skills 31%

How leaders act matters more than ever in crisis, leading with Heads, Heart and Hands



HEAD

Envision the future & align on the big rocks

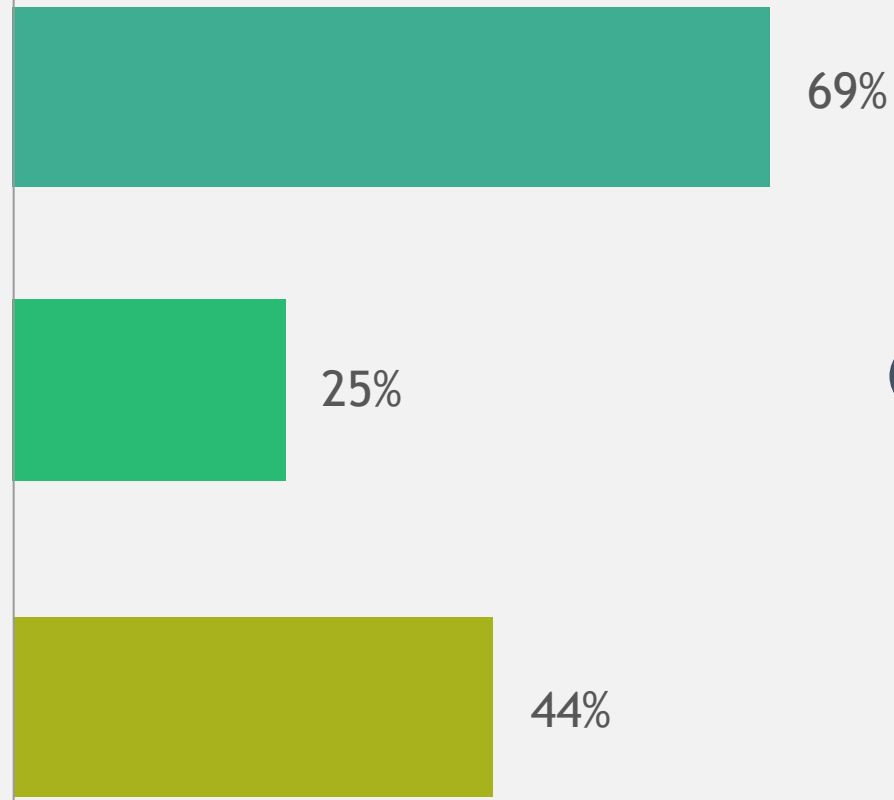
HEART

Inspire and empower your people

HANDS

Execute and innovate with agility

Attention given during transformation



The **HEART** is often neglected in transformations

Yet, we observe a shift towards people centric leadership, embracing the **HEART** values

Especially in times of Covid, this practice is paramount

In 2020, ideal leaders are expected to display 5 main qualities and be above all human-centric

Which of the following qualities characterize a good leader? Up to 5 answers. Base : all

Consideration

Empathy

Listening

Team development

Self-reflection



Show consideration & respect and have a good rapport with the team



Be concerned about the staff wellbeing



Listen to opinions & draw inspiration from what is done in other organizations



Create opportunities to develop the skills of their teams



Possess a good capacity for self-reflection

#1
(37%)

#2
(33%)

#3
(31%)

#4
(29%)

#5
(26%)

Note: only displayed are top 5 answers
Source: BCG x BVA survey, October 2020. 4,000 respondents

“

A good leader has good listening skills, takes advice and is open to suggestions, can communicate well and treats others with respect and empathy

Promotion of professional skills of employees, motivation instead of pressure, recognition of performance

A listener who makes decisions after consulting his team. Who knows how to explain his choices by detailing the objectives and motivations

In 2020, good leaders are expected to be human-centric

Clear communication, honest, good listener, empathy, motivating

A good leader is someone who can be easily trusted, respected and listened to. He/she is also a person who must respect his collaborators and encourage them to develop

Being able to manage a team, unafraid on confrontation. Striving for the best for their team. Being caring but strong minded

In 2020, good leaders are expected to strongly display heart qualities, head & heart is not enough



HEART

Inspire and empower your people



HANDS

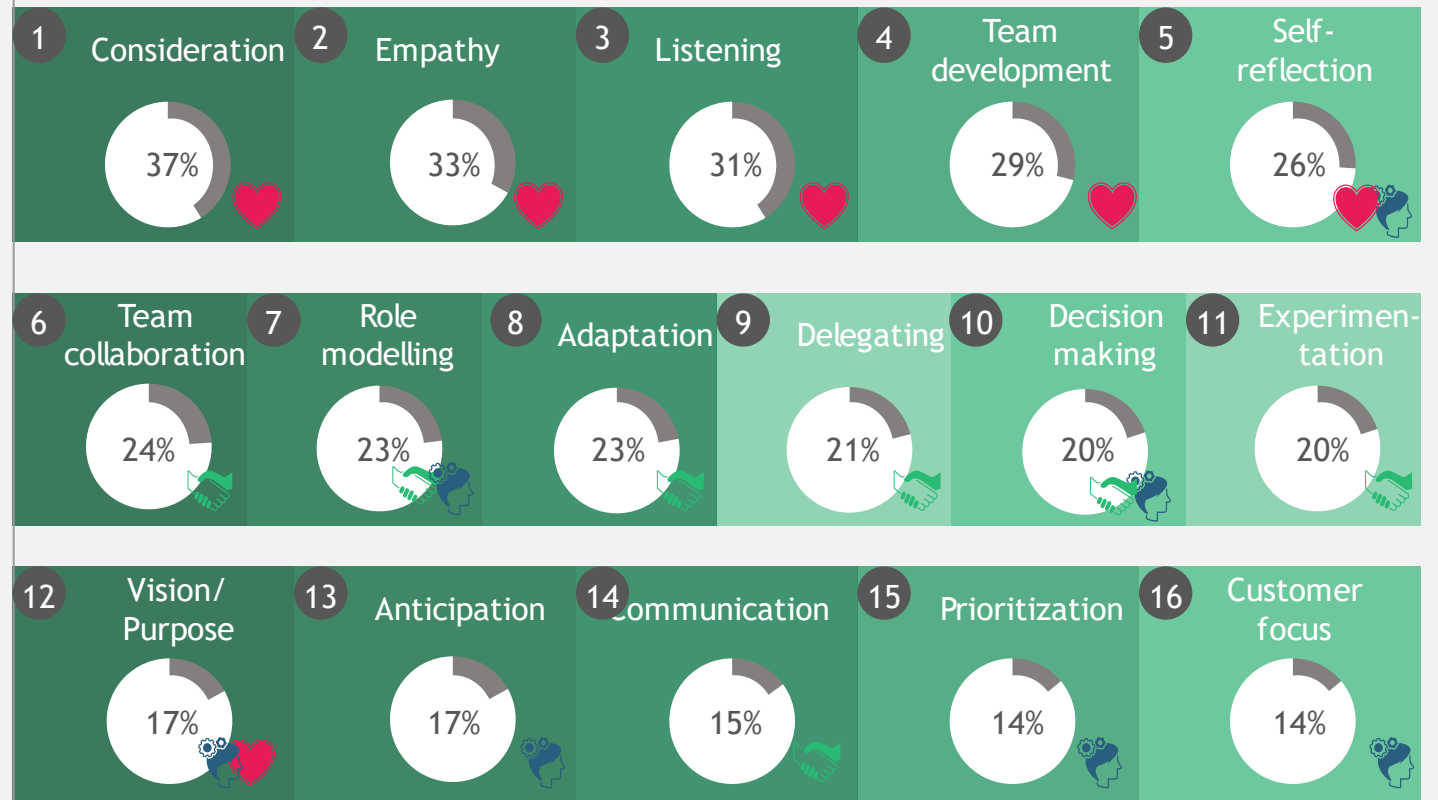
Execute and innovate with agility



HEAD

Envision the future & align on the big rocks

What qualities characterize a good leader?



Key insights | Being a good leader in today's world (II)

A closer analysis shows that some differences are observed in terms of **position of employees** (executives give less importance to consideration).

In addition, there are **cultural differences** in the qualities expected from good leaders:

- France: most important are consideration, empathy & self-reflection
- Germany: most important are consideration, listening skills & collaborating
- Spain: most important are team development, empathy & consideration
- UK: most important are consideration, empathy & listening skills

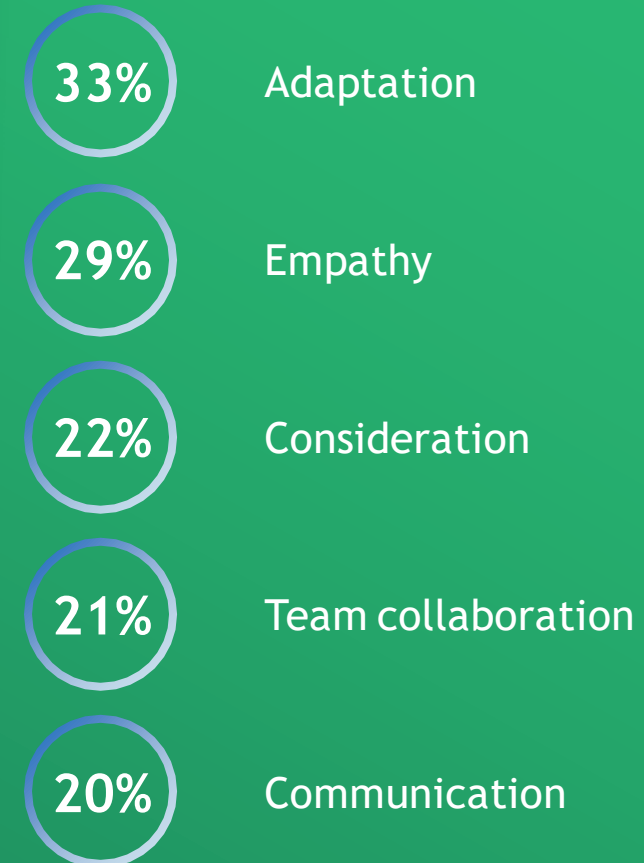
Leadership is also contextual.

In times of crisis, empathy & consideration remain among most important, but some other qualities become more relevant

- Adaptation: most important quality is to adapt to situations & manage uncertainty
- Communication: providing regular updates on company's financial health and decisions taken & encouraging collaboration

Indeed, beyond consideration, in times of crisis employee ask for transparency on information

Top 5 qualities that characterize a good leader in times of crisis:



In times of crisis a good leader is expected to display other qualities: manage uncertainty, encourage collaboration & provide regular updates

In your workplace, what specific qualities have leaders demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis? Up to 5 answers. Base: all



Crisis leaders key characteristics¹

- Crisis will reveal some people as leaders
- They show ability to deal with **uncertainty, adapt**, and are **present** for their team
- They care about **personal life / dimension**, as it has a heightened impact on work

1. Source: Survey & interviews with experts and researchers (AGRH), November 2020. BCG analysis
 Note: only shown in this slide the top 5 qualities
 Source: BCG x BVA survey, October 2020. 4,000 respondents.

Key insights | Becoming a good leader

Only 13% of non-manager want to become a manager, which a % constant over past 5 years

Most participants (64%) believe that **leadership is partly innate and can be developed**

- Leadership being developed mainly through **experience & formal training**
- Employee needing to **drive their own development** instead of depending on their organization's encouragement

Going forward, main challenge for leaders is to **reinforce the collective and boost team morale**, showing that in times of crisis caring about people predominates on longer-term objectives

Other key challenges for tomorrow's leaders will be to facilitate the implementation of **new tools & methods of collaborative working**, **boost employee's engagement**, convey the organization's **purpose** & develop a **long-term strategy** and increase **innovation**

Leaders will be able to address these challenges and meet employee expectations by **combining Head, Heart and Hands** and **increasingly valuing human leadership**

13%

Of non-managers would like to manage a team / manage a larger team or to join the board of directors

64%

believe that leadership is partly innate and can be developed

72%

believe that they should drive their own development

36%

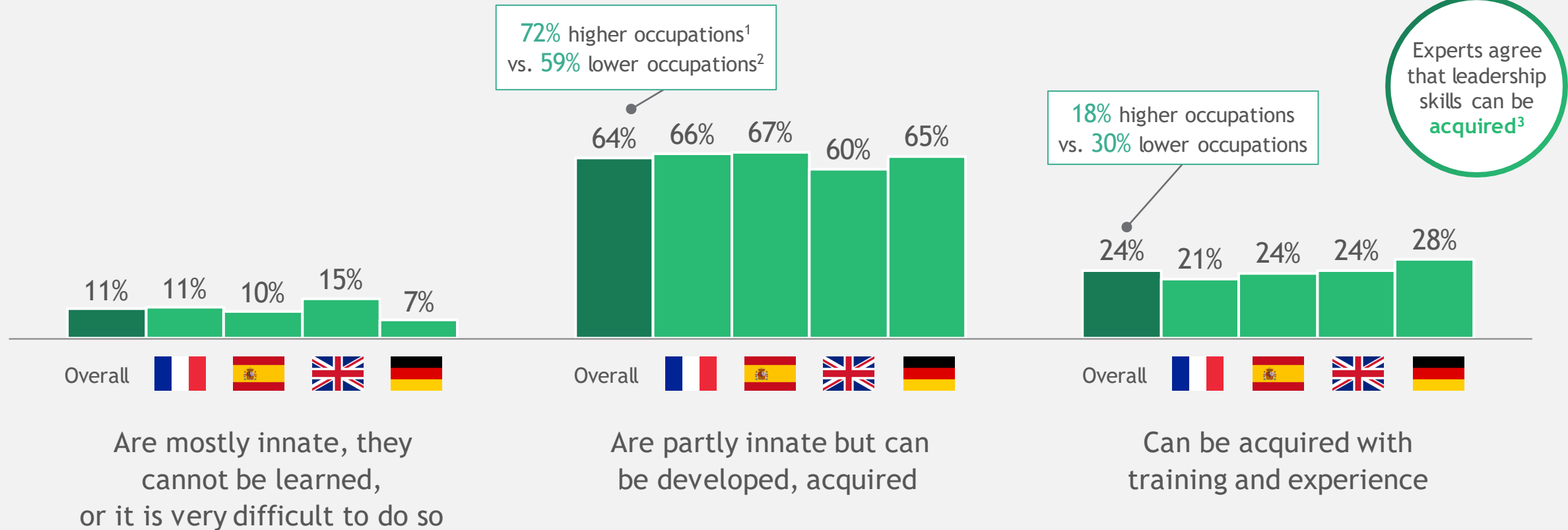
see boosting team morale as the main priority for leaders

64% of participants believe leadership is partly innate but can be developed, with a higher proportion in Germany

In your opinion, the qualities that make a good leader ...

Only 1 possible answer. Base: all

No significant gender difference



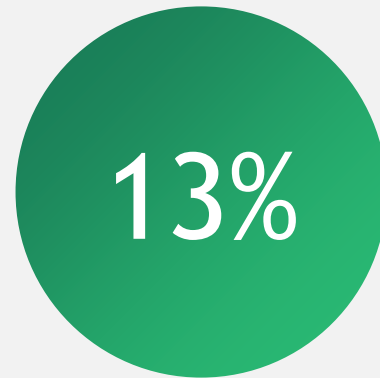
1. Higher occupations correspond to managers, professionals/scientists, technicians / associate professionals and armed forces occupations 2. Lower occupations correspond to clerical support workers, service and sales workers, skilled agricultural/forestry/fishery workers, craft and related trades workers, plant and machine operators/assemblers, elementary occupations.

3. Survey & interviews with experts and researchers (AGRH), November 2020.

Note: excludes 'Don't know' (0.7% of total responses). Source: BCG x BVA survey, October 2020. 4,000 respondents

Being in a leadership position is no longer a main aspiration for participants, especially for non managers

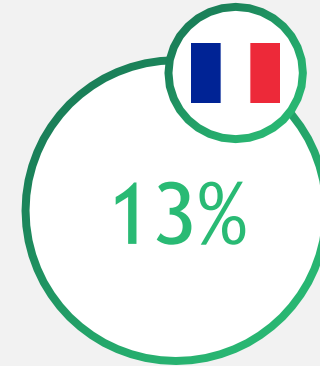
Given the choice, what would you like to be doing in 5 or 10 years' time?
Only 1 possible answer. Base: all



Of non-managers would like to manage a team / manage a larger team or to join the board of directors



Non-managers



What can you do to develop the heart at scale and lead in the New Reality




Demonstrate care for people whose lives have been disrupted



Double down on activating purpose to inspire employees and connect with customers and communities



Create an empowering culture where people can do their best work and embed Heart in the organization



What can you do to develop the heart at scale and lead in the New Reality

Leaders need to demonstrate care for people whose lives have been disrupted

- these could be upskilling support, efforts to bolster employees' mental as well as physical welfare, or flex work options. Leaders need to deliberately focus on connection and relationships to help provide a foundation for well-being and resilience during what promises to be a difficult time.

Leaders need to double down on activating purpose to inspire employees and connect with customers and communities alike

- the disruption created by the crises has led many people to ponder "big" questions and beyond the need to secure a paycheck, people are yearning to find meaning in their work

And lastly leaders need to create an empowering culture where people can do their best work and embed Heart in the organization

- Leaders might reduce or eliminate the number of steering committees so that it's easier to get work done.
- Senior leaders can solicit a dissenting opinion in every discussion and encourage team members to provide their viewpoint and explain how they will test it before leaders offer theirs.
- Senior leaders can also seek face time with one or two up-and-coming leaders every day to show support and see how they are doing.

APPENDIX

Key insights | What leaders inspire employee today?

Most participants are **satisfied with their leaders' performance during COVID-19 across Europe**

However, most participants don't find the **best examples of inspiring leaders in the business world, except in Germany.**

When asked to choose among key XXth and XXIst century leaders, **Nelson Mandela is plebiscited across countries by 28% of employees**, and Bill Gates, first business figure of the ranking, comes in the 5th position with 8%.

More generally, inspiring leaders

- **Stem from the family & friends circle (34%)**
- **Are recognized for their engagement for great causes (31%)**
- **Or are leaders that have made history (31%)**

Business leader come in 4th position with 27%

In this always more bionic world, an inspiring leader is a **human-centric leader**

- **With a strong humanity and With a strong vision for humanity**
- **An ethical leader ?**

65%

satisfied with their leaders' performance during COVID-19

28%

Think Nelson Mandela is the 20th and 21st-century figure that best personify an inspiring leader

27%

find the best examples of inspirational leaders in the business world

Leaders that inspire today's employees mostly originate from non-economical spheres

In your opinion, which of the following 20th and 21st-century figures best personify an inspiring leader?

Only one possible answer. Base: all

Ranking per country

	Overall				
 Nelson Mandela	28% (#1)	31% (#1)	36% (#1)	27% (#2)	16% (#3)
 Dalai Lama	11% (#2)	9% (#3)	12% (#2)	6% (#5)	17% (#2)
 Winston Churchill	10% (#3)	5% (#7)	5% (#6)	27% (#1)	4% (#6)
 Angela Merkel	10% (#4)	5% (#5)	8% (#4)	5% (#7)	22% (#1)
 Bill Gates	8% (#5)	7% (#4)	7% (#5)	9% (#3)	10% (#4)
 Steve Jobs	7% (#6)	5% (#5)	9% (#3)	4% (#8)	9% (#5)
 Charles de Gaulle	6% (#7)	22% (#2)	1.4% (#14)	0.5% (#16)	1.5% (#11)

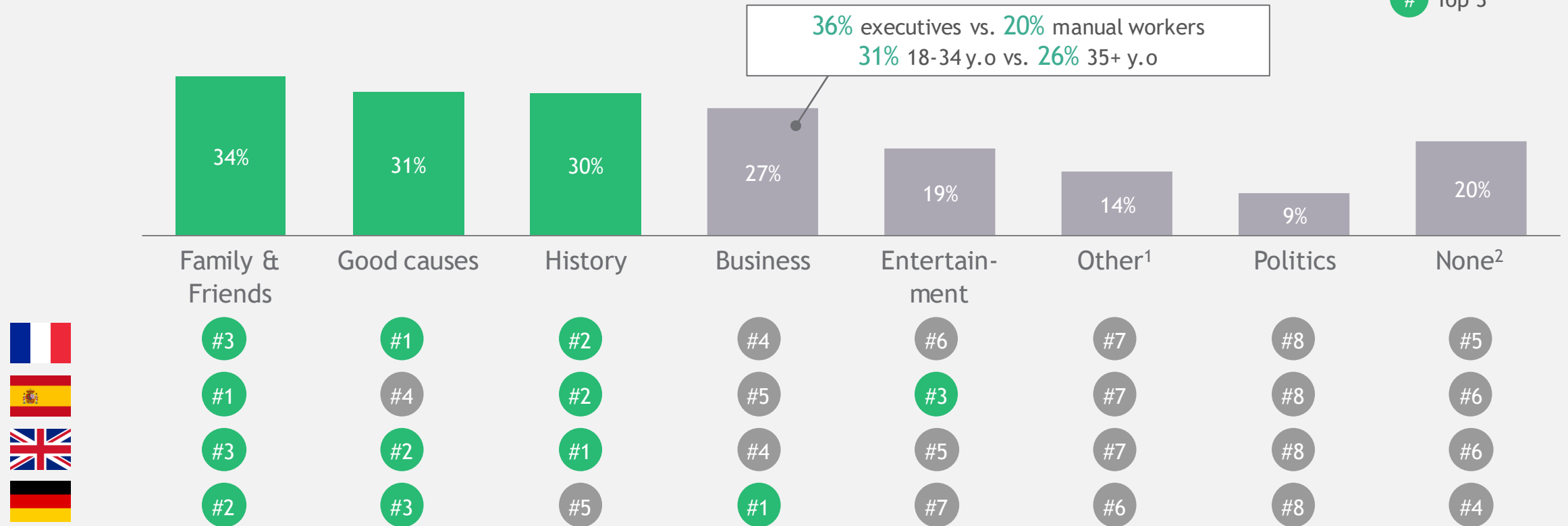
Note: only shown are top 5 personalities overall
Source: BCG x BVA survey, October 2020. 4,000 respondents

There is a lack of inspirational leaders in the economic & business world, especially for non-executive employees

In which of the following areas do you find the best examples of inspirational leaders?

Up to 3 answers. Base: all

Ranking in the country
Top 3



1. Others (The spiritual sphere + Other + Don't know) 2. I do not find any leader particularly inspiring

Source: BCG x BVA survey, October 2020. 4,000 respondents



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