

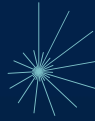
# Character in UK Finance

The Oxford Character Project

October 2023



The Oxford  
Character  
Project



JOHN  
TEMPLETON  
FOUNDATION

*Inspiring Awe & Wonder*





# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	5
<b>Executive summary</b>	6
<b>Introduction</b>	8
<u>Character, culture, and leadership</u>	10
<u>The social licence for financial markets</u>	12
<b>Our research</b>	14
<b>UK finance values survey</b>	16
<u>Why do values matter?</u>	18
<u>Values listed by UK financial services firms</u>	19
<u>Undervalued values</u>	22
<u>How do firms embed their values?</u>	26
<b>Good leadership in UK finance</b>	29
<u>Three dimensions of good leadership: Professional competence, interpersonal skills, and character</u>	32
<u>Character and leadership</u>	34
<b>Character and the future of finance</b>	40
<b>What does it mean to lead with character?</b>	42
<b>Technical methodology</b>	44
<b>Endnotes</b>	48
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	50





## Foreword

The Forward Institute and Oxford Character Project are passionate about the role of good leaders in making the world better. We believe that leaders profoundly shape the nature of organisations – how they operate, the decisions they make and the principles underpinning them.

The finance sector plays a vital role in the UK and beyond. It contributes over 12% of the country's economic output, employs 1 in 13 people, is the largest taxpayer and is the biggest exporting industry. Since the 2008 financial crisis, it has also increasingly been challenged to articulate its role in non-financial terms and to ensure that it plays an unambiguously positive role in people's lives across the country. For with great power comes responsibility.

In this context, and especially given the disruption facing society in the coming years, the imperative for better leadership in financial services is clear.

Yet what do we really mean by 'better'? What is commonly meant by 'good leadership'? Does this understanding differ in financial services compared to other sectors? And what might it mean to lead with character? These questions formed the backdrop for this research.

**Adam Grodecki**  
**Founder & Chief Executive**  
**Forward Institute**

The report shows convincingly that for most employees in financial services the character of their leaders really matters. Over 50% of the top 20 features of good leaders identified relate not to competence or interpersonal skill, but rather to character. Character, along with competence, is fundamental to any understanding of high performance leadership.

This reinforces what most of us intuitively know. But despite this, and significant work done on culture and conduct, in financial services most attempts to foster 'good leadership' still focus almost exclusively on a set of behaviours or technical competences that individuals or organisations wish to develop.

So I hope that you enjoy this report, that it stimulates your thinking, but above all that it makes a contribution to the financial services sector becoming more thoughtful about how it can help foster the leadership our world needs and that will allow the sector to flourish through the disruption of the coming decades.

# Executive summary

The purpose of the financial services industry, the culture and leadership of firms, and the role of the financial sector in wider society have all been the subject of ongoing debate since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2008. London's position as a global financial hub and the significance of financial services in the UK economy give discussion of UK finance a particular importance.

Regulatory reform following the GFC has been accompanied by attention to conduct, culture, and leadership within firms and across the sector. This report proposes an additional focus on character. The importance of good character in finance is sometimes referenced as a professional expectation but the deeper personal and developmental perspective that the idea of character brings into view has more value to add. The character of professionals, and particularly of leaders, can deliver a performance advantage to individuals and organisations.

What does character mean in an era of computer trading, challenger banks, and bitcoin? If character is important when it comes to maintaining regulatory standards, what role might it play when it comes to optimising human and organisational performance? How can character not simply be judged but also developed in business environments?

This report presents research by the Oxford Character Project into character, culture, and leadership in UK finance. Our research included content analysis of organisational values, a prototype analysis survey exploring how good leadership is understood in UK finance, and semi-structured interviews with participants across leadership levels within six firms. Findings were discussed with research partners and industry bodies including at a symposium and conference held at the University of Oxford.

**The importance of good character in finance is sometimes referenced as a professional expectation but the deeper personal and developmental perspective that the idea of character brings into view has more value to add. The character of professionals, and particularly of leaders, can deliver a performance advantage to individuals and organisations.**

## Key findings

- Character, culture, and leadership are all essential for the future of finance but their importance depends on the narrative that frames the meaning and purpose of the sector itself.
- Culture and character are interdependent: culture shapes character and character, especially of leaders, can shape culture.
- The top five stated values of UK finance firms are integrity, collaboration, customer service, excellence, and passion.
- Virtues (excellences) of character enable values to move from principles to practice.
- Some organisational values, such as integrity, courage, and responsibility, are qualities of character. Other values require virtues of character in order to be consistently enacted.
- UK firms consider their values important for culture and conduct but also as a driver of commercial success.
- Participants identified 141 features of good leadership in finance, reflecting three dimensions: Character, professional competence, and interpersonal skills.
- Interpersonal skills and character are central to good leadership in finance: 44% of features identified by participants relate to interpersonal skills, 43% to character, 13% to professional competence.
- Character is essential for leaders to navigate present 'tides of disruption' identified by the Financial Services Skills Commission, particularly in the areas of digital technology, hybrid working patterns, sustainability, and diversity.
- Leading with character involves building on values, acting as a positive role model, and learning the art of narrative communication.



# Introduction

The purpose and values of the financial services industry, the culture and leadership of firms, and the role of the financial sector in wider society have been the subject of ongoing debate since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. London's position as a major financial hub and the significance of the sector in the UK economy give discussion of financial services in the UK a particular importance.

“UK financial services employ over 1.1 million people and contribute about £75 billion in tax per year... If UK markets work well, competitively and fairly they benefit customers, staff and shareholders, and maintain confidence in the UK as a major global financial hub.”

– *Financial Conduct Authority*<sup>1</sup>

The interlocking themes of character, culture, and leadership have all been highlighted in relation to challenges in the industry and are central in efforts to renew the public standing of the financial sector.

**If finance is to fulfil its potential as a force for good – with strong firms contributing to a thriving and prosperous society – character, culture, and leadership are central themes.**





# Character, culture, and leadership

The idea of character has a historical importance in professional practice and has recently come to the fore in what has been described as a new era of personal accountability in business and finance.<sup>2</sup> As the UK Financial Conduct Authority put it in a 2020 press release: “The FCA expects high standards of character... from those who operate in the financial services industry and will take action to ensure these standards are maintained.” But what does character mean in an era of computer trading, challenger banks, and bitcoin? If character is important when it comes to maintaining regulatory standards, what role might it play when it comes to optimising human and organisational performance? How can character not simply be judged but also developed in business environments?

A key focus of our research has been the relationship between character, culture, and leadership, which are inextricably linked.

**“The cultures we spend time in shape our characters and our characters may in turn shape the culture, in particular if we sit at the top of the hierarchy.”<sup>3</sup>**

– Alison Cottrell, Former CEO of the Financial Services Culture Board (FSCB)

The importance of culture to uphold conduct, limit risk, and maintain public trust has been emphasised alongside regulation over the last decade. Commonly understood as “a combination of shared or... dominant beliefs, values, conventions and habitual behaviours within a group”,<sup>4</sup> calls to invest in culture have led to firm and industry-wide initiatives such as the Federal Reserve Bank of New York’s Governance and Culture Reform Initiative and the FSCB in the UK. The disbandment of the FSCB in 2023 places the onus on UK firms to maintain their focus on the long-term investment of energy and resources needed to develop and renew culture continually.

The symbiotic relationship between culture and character that Cottrell points out needs more sustained attention. The impact of culture is mediated through the decisions of individuals who are not simply apples in barrels but moral agents with self-conceptions rooted in their personal stories, aspirations, values, and habits of character that shape the way they think, feel, and act. In order for culture initiatives to be successful, supplementing the focus on culture in finance with a focus on character is an important next step.

An important place where character and culture come together is in leadership, both at the top of firms and more widely at the middle-management and team level across organisations. As our research into good leadership in finance highlights, leaders need character and interpersonal skills as well as professional competence. All three of these areas are important for leaders to build

trust, develop a positive culture, and drive performance over the long term. As authority figures and decision makers, leaders have a huge influence on the way organisations operate and the lives of those who work within them. They can drive positive culture as role models, and they can undermine it by the blinkered pursuit of financial success or by failing to act in line with values they profess.<sup>5</sup>



Alison Cottrell  
Oxford Character Project Finance Symposium  
University of Oxford, October 2022

# The social licence for financial markets

Character, culture, and leadership are all essential for the future of finance but none of these themes can be understood in isolation. Their importance depends on the story we tell of the sector itself.

A prevalent narrative is that of the Wolf of Wall Street: finance begins and ends with the money. The aim is accumulation—and the best companies, teams, and traders make the most. Bankers are characterised by hubris, greed, and personal ambition, and the climax of the story is boom or bust depending on whether individuals and organisations get lucky or get caught. The story is inadequate, even in its more sophisticated forms. The pursuit of profit is only one part of a bigger, societal picture of financial services, yet the notion of its pre-eminence continues to play a controlling role in the popular imagination. The same view underlies approaches to compliance that focus almost entirely on rules to restrict malpractice or assume the ultimacy of financial incentives when it comes to the motivation of professionals.

A better, that is to say, fuller story of finance has its origin and end in the values of the society out of which the industry was born and as part of which it operates. Nowhere is this point made more clearly than in the work of Blueprint for Better Business, which has pioneered work on the role of business in society since 2011.

At the centre of Blueprint’s framework, and the heart of good business is a commitment to human dignity and the common good (understood in terms of the long-term benefits to business and society).<sup>6</sup> In this story of finance the pursuit of profit is important but it is not the ultimate goal. Financial markets operate on the basis of social trust which is granted in view of the return they generate—not simply to those within the industry but to society as a whole. Finance is supported by the public not because it provides the opportunity for a small number of people to make a large amount of money but because the industry overcomes challenges faced by society and contributes to its goals economic, social, and environmental—the three can be distinguished but not so easily divorced from each other. As the FCA puts it “when markets work well, it benefits firms, individuals and society as a whole.”<sup>7</sup>

This reciprocal relationship between finance and society is described by David Rouch, Partner at Freshfields Bruckhaus Derringer, in his important 2020 book, *The Social Licence for Financial Markets*.<sup>8</sup> We do not have to ignore the presence and power of financial self-interest, Rouch argues, to recognise that it is not the final word in human motivation. Human beings are driven to pursue intrinsic as well as instrumental goods, social values as well as financial value.

Even in finance, “powerful non-financial and other-regarding aspirations are also at work.”<sup>9</sup> At a time when trust in financial institutions needs to be renewed in order for organisations to perform well and for people and the planet to flourish, the value of money needs to be reconnected to deeper human values and aspirations.

**“Addressing current challenges and realising opportunities is not simply about making more legal and regulatory rules. It is about re-writing the script, or, more correctly, recognising that there is a more accurate narrative about financial markets, which now needs to be told.”**

— David Rouch, *The Social Licence for Financial Markets*<sup>10</sup>



David Rouch  
Oxford Character Project Finance Symposium  
University of Oxford, October 2022

# Our research

Over the last three years the Oxford Character Project has conducted a major research project on character, culture, and leadership in UK business, with the financial services sector a key area of focus. Our research partners have included high street and commercial banks, as well as building societies and investment firms. We focused on four areas:

## 1. UK finance values survey

What are the most common values of UK firms? What values are important but unstated? How are companies seeking to move values from aspiration to action? How do values relate to virtues? As part of our UK Business Values Survey we analysed the stated values of 47 leading financial services firms. Our research team conducted a content analysis of the annual reports and websites, identifying espoused values along with their definitions, the way firms are seeking to embed values in practice, and the benefits they report.

## 2. Good leadership in UK finance

What is the prototype of good leadership in finance? What aspects of character and competence are considered most important by those working within the sector? We surveyed 651 UK-based professionals across levels within five financial services firms to investigate perceptions of good leadership and the features that are considered most central.

## 3. Practitioner interviews and discussions

What does an emphasis on character contribute to existing work on culture and conduct? What kind of leaders do people look up to? What does character mean in practice? We conducted 33 semi-structured interviews with financial services professionals from six firms, including board members, executives, HR leaders, middle managers, and junior employees. We discussed results with groups from five of these organisations and hosted a roundtable discussion and conference involving representatives from firms, regulators, and other industry bodies.

## 4. Character and leadership development programmes

How can character be developed in professional education and industry contexts? How can we assess character in order to track progress and focus our efforts? We have developed and delivered long and short-form character and leadership development programmes for emerging and experienced leaders, including MBA students, managers, and senior executives.



*Varun Shankar  
Oxford Character Project Conference  
University of Oxford, June 2023*



# UK Finance Values Survey

## “Value is built on values”

—Mark Carney,  
former Governor of the Bank of England.<sup>11</sup>

Prioritisation of financial value and utilitarian reasoning enabled significant societal advances through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but it is clear that continued progress on the same path is not sustainable in the medium and long term. As Mark Carney puts it, “We have moved from a market economy to a market society, and this is now undermining our basic social contract of relative equality of outcomes, equality of opportunity and fairness across generations.”<sup>12</sup>

If our society is to thrive in times of uncertainty and engage the economic, social, and environmental challenges that confront us, we need to reconnect with values more fundamental than efficiency and profit and reorder our individual and collective endeavours in line with what is most important. Such re-rooting of business and financial markets in deeper soil than personal acquisition can allow the economy to come into its own in positive relation to the society and environment upon which it relies.

## What values underpin successful firms in the financial sector?

An important step is to gain some clarity when it comes to the organisation’s understanding of success, nowadays expressed in the language of purpose: What does success look like for the firm? How would you know if you were

achieving it? The language of profit comes easily but it needs to be supported by a renewed moral articulacy in order for attention to be directed to the full range of a firm’s commitments. One role of leadership is to open space for this discussion, which can be deep without being academic. We can imagine how it might go: “Success for our bank is about making wise investments that secure long term growth and give customers confidence that their money is in good hands; success is about treating all of our clients with equal respect regardless of their background or the amount of money they have; success is finding a way to be present around the country so ordinary people can access the financial services they need; success is having a good reputation as honest and reliable; success is about the people who work within the firm being valued for their contribution and looked after when they hit difficult times.”

Discussion of purpose brings values to the fore as the commitments upon which success is built. There are likely quite a number. Wisdom, equality, service, fairness, growth, sustainability, respect, creativity, honesty, reliability, and compassion underlie the example above. Context is important to discern where to focus: What principles or commitments are most important to keep in mind at this point in the life of the company?

It is perfectly possible for a company to articulate its values, upload them on the website, and miss the point entirely. Some companies do this and it is why there is often such cynicism attached to discussion

of corporate values.<sup>13</sup> What is the point of listing values if most people don’t know them, don’t discuss them, and don’t really need them to succeed in their job? Surely we all know integrity is important already? Perhaps, but the relevant kind of knowledge when it comes to values is not simply theoretical but practical. That is to say, knowledge that is reliably action-guiding. If our firm’s values really are what is most important to our collective effort and pursuit of success why wouldn’t we want to keep them in view?

## The identification of organisational values is part of the ongoing process necessary to keep core commitments in view.

In order to be meaningful, values need to be embedded and manifest in actions across the firm. This process involves intention and effort, and in larger companies it is hard to always keep everyone on board. That is where character and leadership are important. Virtues (excellences) of character are akin to muscles which enable values to be brought to life, they are values that have been enacted in behaviours and practised for so long that they have become habitual ways of being. Leaders ensure that the values process is conducted thoughtfully, with meaning more than marketing in view; they direct collective attention to the things that matter most, articulating what is being done and why; and they model the character that aligns with the values of the firm.

## Our research

As part of a wider investigation of UK business values, we conducted a content analysis of websites and annual reports of the top 47 financial services organisations listed in the FTSE 350. Researchers investigated the stated values of these firms, how they are defined, how companies describe their approach to embedding them, and the benefits associated with them. Further details of the methodology can be found below. Our research identified 34 distinct values in finance firms and that 89% of companies in our survey (42 out of 47) list their values publicly.



Katie Whyte  
Oxford Character Project Finance Symposium  
University of Oxford, October 2022

# Why do values matter?

In 2022 the Financial Services Culture Board surveyed over 41,000 employees in 23 firms in the UK financial sector. 82% agreed that their organisation's purpose and values were meaningful to them and only 5% disagreed.<sup>14</sup> In our research, we analysed the

organisational benefits cited by 47 financial services firms in relation to their values. We identified nine key themes, relating to a wide range of business issues. Percentages below reflect the proportion of companies that link their values with each benefit.



**74%**  
Supporting organisational culture



**66%**  
Advancing commercial success



**49%**  
Focusing on quality customer service



**37%**  
Mitigating risk



**34%**  
Underpinning mission and/or strategy



**31%**  
Driving societal impact



**29%**  
Enhancing reputation

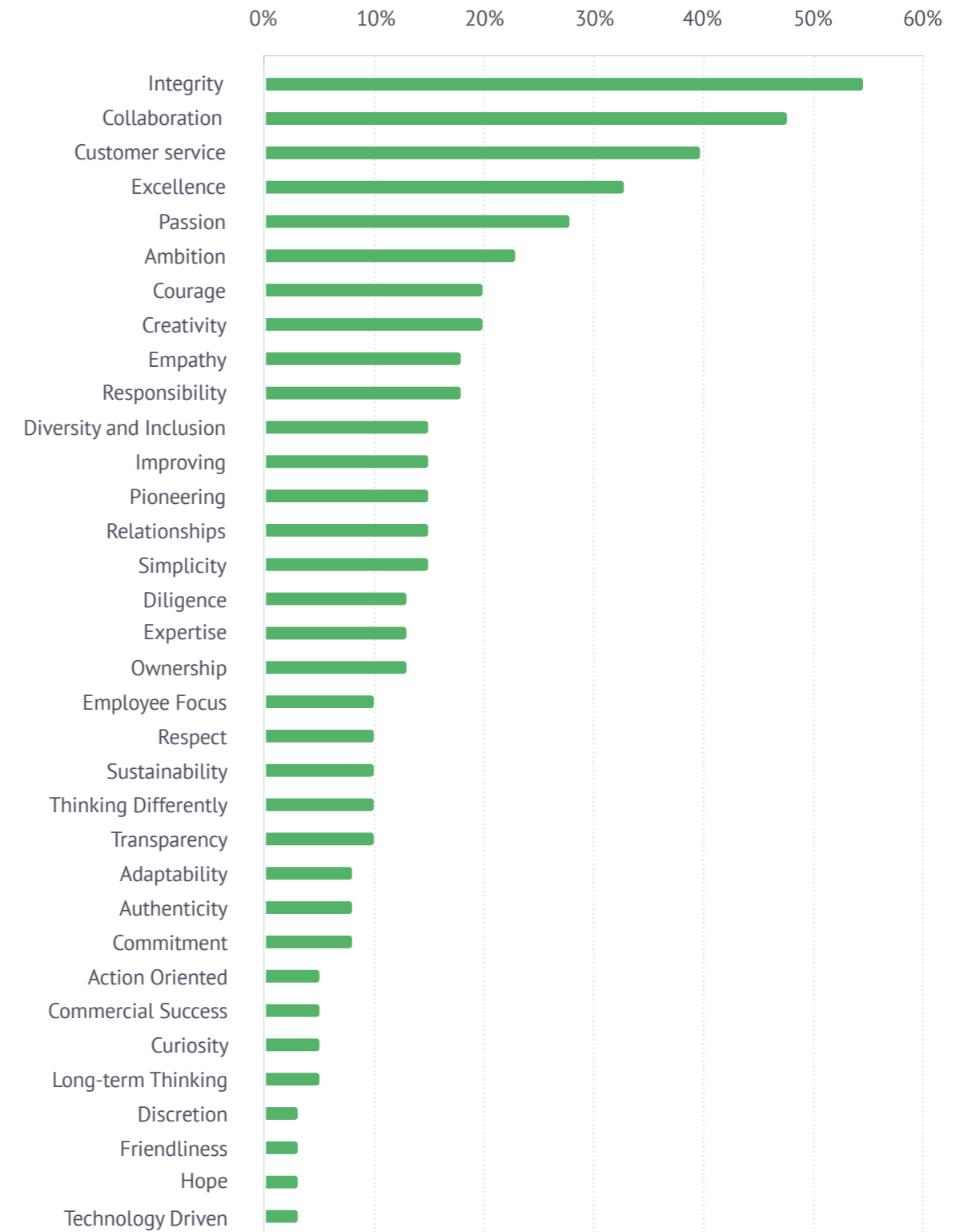


**26%**  
Guiding individual behaviours and conduct



**14%**  
Building customer trust

# Values listed by UK financial services firms





# The Top 5

## #1 Integrity

Integrity is central if financial services firms are to regain public confidence following challenges faced by the sector in recent years. Indeed, one of the main aims of the FCA is “to protect and enhance the integrity of the UK financial system”.<sup>15</sup> When firms describe what they mean by integrity they emphasise honesty, openness, fairness, and trust. Other emphases include customer service, long-term thinking, sustainability, simplicity, and good judgement. The breadth of meaning in the use of integrity by firms highlights the importance of definitional clarity.

## #2 Collaboration

When firms talk about collaboration they most often emphasise cooperation and success. The two go together, both in the teamwork needed within organisations and in relationships with industry bodies, other firms and wider society that are essential to do business in a digitally-connected world. Internally, effective team performance depends on psychological safety whereby people feel able to take risks associated with contributing their ideas and talent. This is reflected in the way companies describe collaboration in terms of openness, respect, support, diversity and inclusion, trust, and care.



*Trisha Prabhu and Kim Polman  
The Future of Leadership Roundtable Discussion, co-sponsored by the  
Oxford Character Project and the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship,  
Saïd Business School, February 2023*

## #3 Customer service

The way companies describe customer service highlights its essential role in organisational performance. It is often linked to excellence as well as being described in relational terms with emphases such as care, kindness, and authenticity. A number of firms talk about customers as partners, emphasising collaboration and cooperation in connection with customer service.



## #4 Excellence

The value of excellence is often described by firms in relation to the creativity needed to drive innovation and the long-term thinking needed to sustain performance over time. It is also related to virtues of character which can be understood as “excellences in being for the good”,<sup>16</sup> including moral virtues such as diligence and commitment; intellectual virtues such as curiosity and accuracy; and interpersonal virtues such as care. The connection of organisational excellence to virtue is an important one since it foregrounds the pursuit of excellence as a path of personal development, which requires each person in an organisation to contribute their best.

## #5 Passion

Passion is a new emphasis in corporate values in the financial sector, as it is in UK business more widely.<sup>17</sup> Its inclusion, along with empathy and courage—which are also new emphases since 2015—suggests increased emotional engagement in the way companies are presenting themselves. In finance, passion is mostly discussed in terms of ambition and fun, but also in relation to thinking long-term, which is not common as a top-level value but is frequently drawn on to define and describe the meaning of other values.



# Undervalued values

There are a number of reasons why values may be at the bottom of the list or absent from it entirely. Perhaps “technology-driven”, for example, needs less emphasis at a time when tech is so prevalent in finance and the human dimension has a particular importance in order to rebuild the public’s confidence and trust in the sector. Other values may be missing since they are not usually spoken of in the corporate world. Kindness was once in that category but is increasingly coming to the fore through the *Kindness and Leadership: 50 Leading Lights* campaign, annual lecture (Charlie Nunn, CEO of Lloyds Banking Group spoke in 2022), and listing in the Financial Times.<sup>18</sup> Values that speak to the need to remain well-grounded and to work towards time horizons beyond the demands of the next deal seem particularly important at a time when there is much instability and uncertainty.

## Humility (0%)

Humility is one important value that is close to the bottom of the list when it comes to UK business as a whole and not on the list at all when it comes to finance. Noted for its absence from the banking culture identified by Antony Salz in his 2015 review following the Libor scandal, humility is one of the values Mark Carney refers to as essential for a successful economy.<sup>19</sup> Understood in terms of an appropriate (neither under-nor over-sensitive) awareness, assessment, and ownership of one’s weaknesses, humility refers to a well-judged sense of self that opens a person to others in order to work together, and to new learning in order to grow.<sup>20</sup>

It has been singled out as a cornerstone of high performance leadership and arguably deserves more formal attention by organisations as a driver of success.

**“Humility admits the limits of our knowledge, that there are unknown unknowns which make resilience and adaptability imperative.... If we are humble we can recognise that answers can be found through... debate, considering different perspectives and forging consensus.”**

–Mark Carney,  
former Governor of the Bank of England.<sup>21</sup>

## Hope (3%) and long-term thinking (5%)

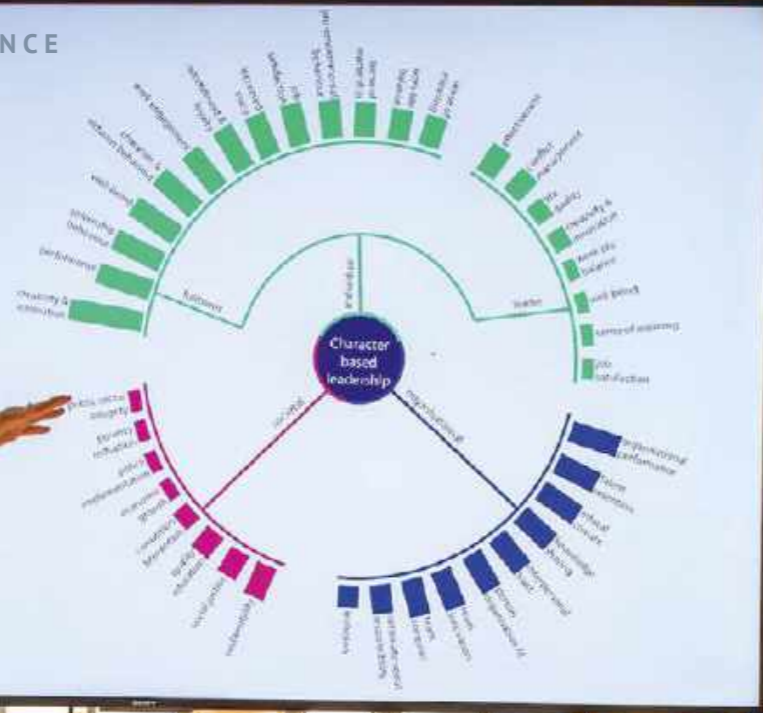
Hope and long-term thinking are close to the bottom of the list but both are essential and they belong together. If financial services firms are to deliver on the commitments attached to their social licence, they must adopt long-term thinking by adjusting their time-horizons beyond the next reporting deadline or bonus round. Hope—understood as a habit of attention that sustains focus on the attainment of future goods even in the face of difficulty—is the virtue that relates to the mental discipline of thinking long-term and is at the root of the courage needed to pursue challenging goals.



Charlie Nunn  
Leading with Kindness Lecture, hosted by  
Women of the Future and Oxford Character Project  
London, November 2022



5. Most papers report a positive and multilayer effect, including positive outcomes for individuals, organisations and society.



# Change from 2015

Prior to our survey, the most recent research of the stated values of UK financial services companies was by Maitland in 2015.<sup>22</sup> The table below compares the top-listed values

according to each survey. Passion, courage, empathy, and responsibility are all more prominent today than in 2015.

Top listed values of UK financial services companies

Rank	OCP (2022)	Maitland (2015)
1	Integrity	Integrity
2	Collaboration*	Teamwork
3	Customer service	Respect
		Service†
		Collaboration†
		Openness†
		Ambition†
4	Excellence	
5	Passion	
6	Ambition	
7	Courage	
	Creativity*†	
8		Innovation
		Can do attitude†
		Fun†
		Striving†
		Accountability†
9	Empathy	
	Responsibility†	

\*Semantic overlap in the description of values meant that the OCP study combined teamwork and collaboration (listed as collaboration) and creativity and innovation (listed as creativity).

† reflects that the values were ranked by an equal number of companies as the value above



# How do firms embed their values?

Percentages reflect the proportion of companies' websites and annual reports that mention each approach.

**Policy alignment** (89%) – e.g. policies and practices set out in the code of conduct align with and support stated values and behaviours

**Responsible leadership** (68%) – e.g. board oversight, leadership setting the tone, embedding values in leadership development

**Financial incentives** (66%) – e.g. remuneration linked to values

**Measurement** (62%) – e.g. conducting surveys, monitoring data, comparing with other organisations

**Employee engagement** (55%) – e.g. embedding values in recruitment and retention strategies, staff training, coaching.



89%

Policy alignment



68%

Responsible leadership



66%

Financial incentives



62%

Measurement



55%

Employee engagement



Hilary Viney  
Oxford Character Project Finance Symposium  
University of Oxford, October 2022





Rebecca Park  
Oxford Character Project Conference  
Rhodes House, June 2023

## Good Leadership in UK Finance

The impact of leaders on the direction, culture, and performance of organisations underlines the importance of good leadership across sectors. The economic and societal influence of the UK financial services industry combined with high levels of reimbursement, a questionable leadership record, and ongoing concerns around conduct and culture have kept leaders and leadership in the spotlight.

While the media focus is drawn most strongly to perceived failures of leadership, there are many examples of good leadership in the sector and there are initiatives across firms that support existing leaders and enable leadership development. The work of the Oxford Character Project seeks to contribute to this developmental agenda in two ways:

1. Our research seeks to bring clarity to the idea of good leadership and the central importance of character.
2. Our educational programmes apply research-based approaches to help present and future leaders develop character qualities they need to lead well in their context.

### **What leadership is needed for firms to perform well financially and deliver on their ambition to make a positive contribution to society?**

Our research focused on this aspirational question, surveying current professionals in the sector in order to understand the features of good leadership as it is perceived on the ground. There are many leadership theories and styles, but the identification of the idea or 'prototype' of good leadership is important, since it drives expectations and practice.

# Good leadership prototype analysis

We surveyed 651 people from across leadership levels in five UK financial services firms, using a method known as prototype analysis. This allowed us to identify the central features of good leadership in the

finance sector, as understood by professionals. The method encompasses three studies, conducted with three different groups of participants, each building on the preceding study.



## Study 1

**Free generation:** Participants in group A were asked to freely generate features of good leadership in the financial sector.



## Study 2

**Centrality assessment:** Participants in group B were asked to rate the features identified by group A, assessing them according to their centrality for good leadership in the financial sector on a scale between 1 (almost never true) and 7 (almost always true).



## Study 3

**Testing for a prototype using cognitive tasks:** Participants in group C underwent a series of cognitive processing tests to establish differences in memory recall and speed of awareness between central and peripheral features as rated by group B. This enabled us to establish the presence of a stable prototype of good leadership in finance.



*Pegr Harrison  
Oxford Character Project Conference  
Rhodes House, June 2023*

Participants identified 141 separate features of good leadership in study 1, which were ranked according to their centrality between 1 (almost never true) and 7 (almost always true) in Study 2. In Study 3, central features were more quickly identified and more easily recalled than peripheral features, indicating the presence of a stable prototype (idea) of good leadership in finance.

Features are presented in the table below in order of centrality along with the mean centrality assessment and standard deviation for each feature. Further detail of the method can be found in the technical methodology section, below. The full results and discussion are available in a peer-reviewed journal article based on this research.<sup>23</sup> The comparison between good leadership in finance and good leadership in the technology and legal sectors can be found in the Oxford Character Project's *Good leadership in UK business* report.<sup>24</sup>



# Three dimensions of good leadership: Competence, character, and interpersonal skills

The features of good leadership identified by practitioners relate to three essential dimensions: competence, character, and interpersonal skills.

All three of these aspects are important and each requires focused attention when it comes to leadership development in organisations and business schools.\*

- **Professional competence** refers to the professional knowledge, cognitive abilities, and skills that enable individuals to perform leadership tasks to a high standard.
- **Interpersonal skills** refer to the interpersonal understanding and skills necessary to perform leadership tasks to a high standard given the essentially relational nature of good leadership.
- **Character** refers to habits or dispositions of thought, emotion, and action that in their developed state are stable over time and consistent across contexts.

*\*Categorisation according to professional competence, character, and interpersonal skills was conducted by two researchers who analysed the data independently before resolving discrepancies in conversation. There is significant overlap between character qualities and interpersonal skills since character has an important interpersonal dimension. However, some strengths of character may be stable traits that are only evidenced in interpersonal contexts. Where an interpersonal context is necessary for a feature to be exhibited (e.g. collaboration) we classed the feature as an interpersonal skill.*



Jackie Scully  
Leading with Kindness Lecture, hosted by  
Women of the Future and Oxford Character Project  
London, November 2022

# Character and leadership

**Character is a constellation of habits or dispositions that shape how a person thinks, feels, and acts. Character is stable across contexts and over time but it is not static. Character can be developed by habitual practice and is shaped by the stories we tell, the people around us, and the cultures of the organisations we inhabit.**

Virtues are excellences of character that accord with good performance in a specific domain or in life as a whole. Character can be broken down into moral virtues (such as honesty and fairness), intellectual virtues (such as open-mindedness and judgement), civic virtues (such as friendliness and helpfulness), and performance virtues (such as resilience and commitment).<sup>25</sup>

**Character takes us beneath specific actions and accomplishments to the foundational level of who a leader is. It is particularly as a function of their character that leaders serve as role models who set the tone for organisational culture through their words and actions.**

- Character drives moral leadership through qualities such as integrity, responsibility, and honesty.
- Character drives thought leadership through qualities such as open-mindedness and curiosity.
- Character drives high-performance leadership through the combination of moral and intellectual virtues with performance virtues such as drive, resilience, and calm.<sup>26</sup>

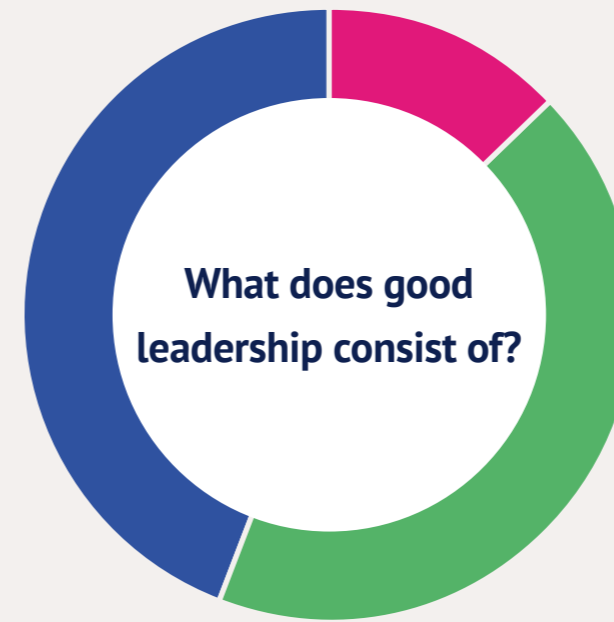


Figure 1: Proportion of features in each category

● Interpersonal skills	44%
● Character	43%
● Professional competence	13%



Figure 2: Proportion of the top 20 most central features in each category

● Character	55%
● Professional competence	25%
● Interpersonal skills	20%



## Features of good leadership in UK finance

	Feature of good leadership	Centrality (scale 1-7)	Standard deviation
●	1. Risk aware	6.29	1.02
●	2. Communication skills	6.24	1.08
●	3. Integrity	6.24	1.09
●	4. Credible	6.18	1.05
●	5. Resilient	6.18	0.93
●	6. Confident	6.17	0.85
●	7. Committed	6.15	0.98
●	8. Competent	6.15	1.08
●	9. Responsible	6.15	1.04
●	10. Professional	6.14	1.06
●	11. Trustworthy	6.12	1.17
●	12. Good judgement	6.11	1.05
●	13. Hardworking	6.11	1.03
●	14. Honesty	6.11	1.17
●	15. Takes action	6.11	1.05
●	16. Accountable	6.09	1.16
●	17. Customer focused	6.08	1.06
●	18. Focused	6.07	0.95
●	19. Provides direction	6.07	1.10
●	20. Reliable	6.07	1.10
●	21. Ethical	6.06	1.12
●	22. Respected	6.05	1.05
●	23. Builds trust	6.03	1.13
●	24. Connected	6.03	1.10
●	25. Driven	6.03	1.03
●	26. Knowledgable	6.02	1.05
●	27. Respectful	6.02	1.10
●	28. Decisive	6.01	1.08
●	29. Big picture perspective	6.00	1.11
●	30. Listens	5.99	1.20
●	31. Gives recognition*	5.99	1.20
●	32. Delegates	5.97	1.03
●	33. Influential	5.97	1.11
●	34. Purpose driven	5.97	1.06

\* Features are listed in the form provided by participants in Study 1 with the exception of "gives recognition" which has been shortened from "recognises others' contributions".

● Character ● Interpersonal skills ● Professional competence

	Feature of good leadership	Centrality (scale 1-7)	Standard deviation
●	35. Values others	5.97	1.20
●	36. Inclusive	5.96	1.23
●	37. Encouraging	5.95	1.18
●	38. Long-term view	5.95	1.18
●	39. Encourages diversity	5.94	1.23
●	40. Forward thinking	5.94	1.12
●	41. Strength of character	5.94	1.13
●	42. Expertise	5.93	1.12
●	43. Shares knowledge	5.93	1.17
●	44. Strategic	5.93	1.16
●	45. Approachable	5.92	1.25
●	46. Provides guidance	5.92	1.17
●	47. Team builder	5.92	1.11
●	48. Collaborative	5.91	1.18
●	49. Empowering	5.91	1.24
●	50. Growth mindset	5.91	1.22
●	51. Supportive	5.91	1.20
●	52. Positive	5.90	1.08
●	53. Role model	5.90	1.24
●	54. Engaging	5.89	1.15
●	55. Fair	5.88	1.19
●	56. Motivator	5.88	1.22
●	57. Clear	5.87	1.18
●	58. Experienced	5.87	1.14
●	59. Commercial acumen	5.86	1.20
●	60. Rational	5.86	1.07
●	61. Authentic	5.85	1.28
●	62. Champions others	5.85	1.26
●	63. Results oriented	5.85	1.15
●	64. Gives feedback	5.84	1.21
●	65. Consistent	5.83	1.18
●	66. Solves problems	5.83	1.04
●	67. Challenger	5.82	1.02
●	68. Human	5.82	1.22
●	69. Open minded	5.82	1.19

	Feature of good leadership	Centrality (scale 1-7)	Standard deviation
●	70. Emotionally intelligent	5.80	1.33
●	71. Open to change	5.80	1.27
●	72. Responsive	5.80	1.16
●	73. Team player	5.80	1.27
●	74. Values led	5.80	1.24
●	75. Adaptable	5.79	1.17
●	76. Develops others	5.79	1.38
●	77. Intelligent	5.78	1.15
●	78. Willing to learn	5.78	1.30
●	79. Balanced	5.77	1.16
●	80. Understanding	5.77	1.20
●	81. Enthusiastic	5.76	1.11
●	82. Assertive	5.75	1.09
●	83. Conflict management	5.75	1.26
●	84. Inspiring	5.75	1.26
●	85. Organised	5.74	1.18
●	86. Self-aware	5.74	1.27
●	87. Visible	5.74	1.23
●	88. Efficient	5.73	1.16
●	89. Has your back	5.73	1.33
●	90. Trusts others	5.73	1.28
●	91. Calm	5.72	1.14
●	92. Helpful	5.70	1.21
●	93. Passionate	5.70	1.17
●	94. Ambitious	5.69	1.14
●	95. People-centred	5.69	1.30
●	96. Coaches others	5.68	1.34
●	97. Curious	5.68	1.19
●	98. Optimistic	5.68	1.11
●	99. Accepts feedback	5.66	1.39
●	100. Personable	5.66	1.27
●	101. Removes obstacles	5.66	1.21
●	102. Thoughtful	5.66	1.16
●	103. Gives autonomy	5.65	1.27
●	104. Flexible	5.64	1.26
●	105. Does not blame	5.63	1.43

	Feature of good leadership	Centrality (scale 1-7)	Standard deviation
●	106. Straightforward	5.63	1.20
●	107. Empathetic	5.62	1.34
●	108. Open	5.61	1.31
●	109. Compassionate	5.60	1.28
●	110. Attentive	5.57	1.21
●	111. Considerate	5.57	1.33
●	112. Mentors others	5.56	1.35
●	113. Transparent	5.55	1.38
●	114. Direct	5.54	1.13
●	115. Consultative	5.53	1.26
●	116. Analytical	5.51	1.21
●	117. Available	5.46	1.21
●	118. Energetic	5.46	1.22
●	119. Courageous	5.45	1.28
●	120. Non-judgemental	5.44	1.37
●	121. Friendly	5.43	1.21
●	122. Caring	5.42	1.34
●	123. Visionary	5.42	1.34
●	124. Nurturing	5.36	1.40
●	125. Down-to-earth	5.34	1.34
●	126. Patient	5.34	1.34
●	127. Innovative	5.31	1.30
●	128. Kind	5.31	1.31
●	129. Loyal	5.30	1.44
●	130. Politically savvy	5.25	1.46
●	131. Charismatic	5.22	1.26
●	132. Technically competent	5.20	1.41
●	133. Admits mistakes	5.09	1.65
●	134. Non-hierarchical	4.97	1.68
●	135. Story-teller	4.95	1.51
●	136. Creative	4.91	1.36
●	137. Humble	4.87	1.49
●	138. Selfless	4.85	1.48
●	139. Fun	4.80	1.42
●	140. Humorous	4.79	1.30
●	141. Vulnerable	3.94	1.55

Table showing features of good leadership in finance according to current UK professionals



# Character and the future of finance

In 2021 the Financial Services Skills Commission identified several “tides of disruption” that are sweeping through the sector and that leaders need to navigate.<sup>27</sup> Technical and interpersonal skills are both important, but in each case there is an essential character dimension.

## Digital

Digitisation has brought new technologies and a wave of innovation across the sector. All aspects of business are impacted, including strategy, systems, products, customer relations, and employee skills. New companies are often more agile in their ability to capitalise on innovation, evidenced in the rise of fintech firms and challenger banks. Established companies need to evaluate their offerings, realise their strengths, and develop new digital abilities at speed. The new digital landscape is full of adaptive challenges that require leaders to be flexible, creative, and open-minded, balancing the allocation of attention and resources between implementation and innovation.

**It is the character of leaders that provides motivation and direction as well as the judgement needed to avoid hazards and keep moving forward.**

## Hybrid

Flexible hours and working-from-home patterns made possible by new digital technologies and established during the COVID-19 pandemic remain attractive to many employees. The technical dimensions of hybrid working are largely in place, but the longer-term impact on workplace culture and business performance is unclear. Hybrid work makes new demands on leaders when it comes to communication, interpersonal skills, and character. Leading hybrid teams requires qualities including trust, flexibility, creativity, fairness, and judgement.

## Sustainability

The role of the financial system in relation to climate change has brought environmental considerations to the fore. Sustainability reporting has taken on a new importance, along with wider considerations of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards. The authenticity of leaders is in the spotlight as many (especially younger) colleagues and consumers look to firms to take a more proactive stance, but the issues are divisive and decisions are quickly politicised.

## Diversity

Diversity should follow with: Diversity has come to the fore in finance for reasons of equity and on account of the business benefits that accrue from having people with a range of backgrounds and perspectives working together on adaptive challenges. However, meaningful diversity is not simply a numbers game but the result of active effort to welcome and attend to the contributions and concerns of others who have different experiences, perspectives and approaches. Character qualities like empathy and hospitality are vital alongside interpersonal skills such as active listening.

## Summary

**Leaders need diligence to engage with evidence, integrity to hold to their convictions, courage to take bold steps where those are needed, and good judgement to navigate a complex cultural and political landscape.**

These tides of disruption are not isolated challenges but reflective of a greater sea-change. The leaders who will be most successful are the ones whose approach, or range of approaches, enables them not only to engage present trends and challenges but respond positively to those that are soon to emerge. As our leadership survey shows, the prototype of good leadership in finance includes many important aspects of professional competence and interpersonal skills. These and further such abilities and skills will continue to be vital, but it is character that provides such underlying and enduring qualities as integrity, resilience, growth mindset, confidence, and judgement.

# What does it mean to lead with character?



Kim McMurdo  
Oxford Character Project Finance Symposium  
University of Oxford,  
October 2022

## 1. Double down on deeper values

To focus on character is to recognise the central importance of values that are deeper than financial value. Character drives success in business but it also re-defines success beyond the scope of the market. To lead with character requires commitment to purpose beyond profit and a willingness to invest in ongoing personal growth. Character can be developed over time through habituation, reflection, and friendship. It is not easy but it is worth the effort. Research by the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University suggests that character, meaning, and purpose are at the heart of a flourishing life.<sup>28</sup>

**A recent review by the Oxford Character Project of research on character-based leadership around the world indicates that leading with character produces multiple positive effects for leaders and followers, organisations, and society more widely.<sup>29</sup>**

## 2. Lead with narrative and by example

To lead with character means to appeal to hearts as well as minds. Narratives and personal example are key in this regard. As David Rouch puts it,

“Narratives *focus* attention on some desires that people bring to finance over others (some purposes over others)... they *frame* the decisions people take in pursuing those desires... Finally, over time, the repetition of these behaviours in the context of the narrative *form* the character of those involved and the culture of their institutions, creating individual and institutional pre-dispositions to behave one way rather than another. That is why people often say that culture change in finance firms could take decades; a process of formation –or re-formation– is involved.”<sup>30</sup>

If the stories leaders tell and the examples they highlight are powerful, the example they set has the power to strengthen or undermine their message. To lead with character does not mean leaders are models of perfection but rather that they model progress in character over time and a commitment to the practice that enables it.

## 3. Build culture and character together

Character is not static but dynamic, shaped over time by habitual practice and by the patterns of life that are coded into organisational cultures. Character is not binary; everyone is on a spectrum between virtue and vice, and not fully formed in either. Indeed, the benefit of character as a concept is this developmental dimension that supplements the focus of ethical compliance on whether the rules are being followed or not.

Culture exercises a powerful influence when it comes to shaping character for good or ill, and the more the culture in financial organisations is dominated by personal financial incentives and associated rivalries, the more it risks leaning towards the latter. Leaders have the opportunity to alter the dynamic by investing in character and culture together in order to help people and organisations to flourish into the future.



# Technical methodology

This section provides further detail of the research method for the surveys to analyse organisational values and understandings of good leadership in finance. Further detail can be found in peer-reviewed articles based on this work that are forthcoming.

## Finance values survey

### Sample

This report is based on a sample of 47 financial services organisations listed in the FTSE 350 index. We selected the top 47 firms with a substantial UK presence as part of a wider sample of 221 companies that were analysed in our 2022 UK Business Values Survey.

### Documents for Analysis

We analysed public-facing documents and web pages between December 2020 and May 2021. We retrieved values statements from company websites, supplementing the data with annual reports and additional company documents detailing corporate culture.

### Coding Technique

A team of five coders employed NVivo12 software to undertake a content analysis to partially quantify the data. A set of pre-defined categories was established in line with our research questions, and coders created sub-codes under these as led by the data. Website pages and short company documents were read in their entirety to ensure all

relevant extracts were captured. Annual reports were coded by applying a text search query using the word “value” and including all stems. This provided the opportunity not only for value statements to be coded, but also references to embedding tactics, connections between values and purpose, outcomes of values, the impact of COVID-19 etc. Coders were careful to ensure the correct inference of any values-related language was captured. Codes were attached to text extracts using NVivo12. Any instances where coders were unsure of a particular extract were discussed within the coding team.

### Analytical Method

Once all companies were coded, two lead researchers examined each code, determined each extract’s final inclusion in the dataset, and discussed any changes to the structure of the codebook. These researchers then independently coded 10% of the total sample from beginning to end, resulting in a reliability score of  $K=0.68$ . Considering the significant amount of text included for each sample and the large number of codes in the codebook ( $N=445$ ), we are satisfied with this result. To analyse the data, cross-tab queries were run in NVivo, comparing the number of companies coded in each code across all sectors and between sectors. These queries were run separately in line with each of our research questions, resulting in percentages of companies coded in each code overall and within each sector.



Christen Brandt and Susanna Kistenko  
The Future of Leadership Roundtable Discussion, co-sponsored by the  
Oxford Character Project and the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship,  
Saïd Business School, February 2023

## Good leadership survey

### Method

To explore understandings of “good leadership” in UK finance, we utilised a method known as prototype analysis. This method is based on prototype theory which defines concepts in terms of common features held by most examples of the concept.<sup>31</sup>

Prototype analysis involves three steps that examine if a shared prototype of a given concept exists among a specific group of participants: i) features of the concept are identified; ii) central and peripheral (and in some cases marginal and remote) features are distinguished; iii) the reliability of the distinction between central and peripheral features is tested using one or more measures of information processing (central features will be remembered more quickly, and more accurately than peripheral features). Following this methodology, our research took the form of three experiments:

Study 1: Participants were invited to list features of “good leadership” in finance. Features listed by participants were grouped independently by two researchers. Features were grouped linguistically (e.g. empathetic and empathy were grouped together) and semantically (e.g. genuine and authentic were grouped together). Discrepancies were adjudicated by a third researcher to establish an agreed list of features.

Study 2: Features derived from Study 1 were presented to a new group of participants who rated their centrality on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = almost never true, 7 = almost always true), enabling us to produce averaged centrality scores for each feature.

Study 3: A third group of participants completed a series of memory and reaction time tasks to corroborate the presence of a valid prototype (the hypothesis here is that participants recall and recognise central features more accurately and quickly than peripheral features). These tests were conducted in four phases: i) an acquisition stage in which participants were shown a series of both central and peripheral features for three seconds each; ii) an interruption task which distracted participants from rehearsing the features by asking them to list, in alphabetical order, as many UK cities and towns as they could think of; iii) a recall task in which participants had to report features listed in the first phase; iv) a recognition task in which participants had to quickly indicate whether or not they had seen the feature shown in phase one. In Study 3, central features were more quickly identified and more easily recalled than peripheral features, indicating the presence of a stable prototype (idea) of good leadership in finance.

Participants who took part in the Good leadership survey

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
<b>Number of participants</b>	204 participants from 5 firms	358 participants from 4 firms	89 participants from 2 firms
<b>Age</b>	25–62 years (M = 43.76, SD = 8.42)	22–65 years (M = 43.95, SD = 8.84)	24–64 years (M = 44.85, SD = 9.26)
<b>Gender</b>	68.1% female, 30.4% male, 1.5% not disclosed	65.6% female, 31.8% male, 0.3% non-binary, 2.2% not disclosed	73.5% female, 23.5% male
<b>Leadership level</b>	18.6% managers of managers, 19.6% managers, 61.3% no direct reports	16.8% managers of managers, 33% managers, 50.3% no direct reports	4.5% managers of managers, 25.8% managers, 69.7% no direct reports
<b>Managed by</b>	52% managed by a female, 46.6% managed by a male	46.4% managed by a female, 52% managed by a male	55.1% managed by a female, 42.7% managed by a male
<b>Ethnicity</b>	74% white, 10.8% Black, 3.9% Asian, 3.9% mixed, 2.5% other	80.4% white, 9.5% Asian, 2.5% Black, 2.5% mixed, 0.3% other	92.1% white, 3.3% Asian, 1.1% mixed
<b>Business functions</b>	94.1% finance focused, 2.5% tech focused, 2.5% business focused, 0.5% law focused	94.4% finance-focused, 3.9% tech-focused, 1.1% business focused, 0.6% law focused	93.3% finance-focused, 5.6% tech-focused
<b>Average tenure in the sector</b>	18.77 years (SD = 10.53)	19.01 years (SD = 10.36)	20.74 years (SD = 11.55)
<b>Education level (highest achieved)</b>	10.3% GCSEs or equivalent, 21.6% A-levels or equivalent, 33.3% undergraduate degree, 32.8% postgraduate degree, 1% doctoral degree	10.6% GCSEs or equivalent, 24% A-levels or equivalent, 39.4% undergraduate degree, 24.9% postgraduate degree, 1.1% doctoral degree	11.2% GCSEs or equivalent, 38.2% A-levels or equivalent, 31.5% undergraduate degree, 16.9% postgraduate degree, 1.1% doctoral degree

### Research ethics

This research was conducted under the ethical oversight and prior approval of the Central University Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford. All participants gave their informed consent to participate in this research.



# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Financial Conduct Authority (2023). *About the FCA*. Online: [www.fca.org.uk/about/what-we-do/the-fca](http://www.fca.org.uk/about/what-we-do/the-fca)

<sup>2</sup> Starling Insights (2023). *Deeper dive: The era of accountability*. January 2023. Online: [insights.starlingtrust.com/content/thoughts/deeper-dive-the-era-of-accountability](https://insights.starlingtrust.com/content/thoughts/deeper-dive-the-era-of-accountability)

<sup>3</sup> Cottrell, A. (2023). *Character, leadership and culture in UK business; some thoughts*. Speech given at the University of Oxford on June 22, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Andrews, P. (2016). *Culture in UK banking. Insight: Opinion and analysis hosted by the FCA*. 18 October 2016. Online: [www.fca.org.uk/insight/culture-uk-banking](http://www.fca.org.uk/insight/culture-uk-banking)

<sup>5</sup> Research by the FSCB investigated what differentiates the business areas of firms when it comes to perceptions of conflict between organisational values and the way business is done. Employees in business areas who identified low levels of conflict “more frequently mentioned that leaders or managers genuinely believed in the firm’s values, discussed them without cynicism and demonstrated them in their daily actions.” Viney, H., Park, R., Brooks, E. (2023). *Values in finance*. Financial Services Culture Board, 9 February 2023. Online: [financialservicescultureboard.org.uk/values-in-finance](https://financialservicescultureboard.org.uk/values-in-finance)

<sup>6</sup> Blueprint for Better Business (2020). *A framework to guide decision making*. Online: [www.blueprintforbusiness.org/the-framework](http://www.blueprintforbusiness.org/the-framework)

<sup>7</sup> Financial Conduct Authority (2023). *Enhancing market integrity*. Online: [www.fca.org.uk/about/what-we-do/enhancing-market-integrity](http://www.fca.org.uk/about/what-we-do/enhancing-market-integrity)

<sup>8</sup> Rouch, D. (2020). *The social licence for financial markets: Reaching for the end and why it counts*. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>9</sup> Rouch, D. (2020). *The social licence*, p.23.

<sup>10</sup> Rouch, D. (2020). *The social licence*, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Carney, M. (2021). *Value(s): Building a better world for all*. William Collins, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Carney, M. (2021), *Value(s)*, p. 5

<sup>13</sup> Kellaway, L. (2015). Hands up if you can say what your company’s values are. *Financial Times*, October 4 2015. Online: [www.ft.com/content/d508d08e-682d-11e5-a57f-21b88f7d973f](http://www.ft.com/content/d508d08e-682d-11e5-a57f-21b88f7d973f)

<sup>14</sup> Viney et al. (2023). *Values*. Financial Services Culture Board, 2 September 2023. Online: [financialservicescultureboard.org.uk/values-in-finance](https://financialservicescultureboard.org.uk/values-in-finance)

<sup>15</sup> Financial Services Authority (2023). *Enhancing market integrity*. Online: [www.fca.org.uk/about/what-we-do/enhancing-market-integrity](http://www.fca.org.uk/about/what-we-do/enhancing-market-integrity)

<sup>16</sup> Adams, R. M. (2006). *A theory of virtue: Excellence in being for the good*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Brooks, E., Park, R., & Revell, R. (2022). *UK business values survey*. Oxford Character Project, University of Oxford, pp. 18-19.

<sup>18</sup> Kindness & Leadership 50 Leading Lights (2023). *Kindness & Leadership*. [www.kindnessrules.co.uk](http://www.kindnessrules.co.uk).

<sup>19</sup> Salz, A. (2015). *Salz review: An independent review of Barclays’ business practices*; Carney, M. (2021). *Value(s)*. Online: <https://www.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/SalzReview04032013.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> See King, N. L. (2021). *The excellent mind: Intellectual virtues for everyday life*. Oxford University Press.

<sup>21</sup> Carney, M. (2021). *Value(s)*, p. 516.

<sup>22</sup> Maitland (2015). *The values most valued by UK plc*.

<sup>23</sup> Park, R., Brooks, E., & Gulliford, L. (Under review, 2023). *Good leadership in finance: A prototype analysis*.

<sup>24</sup> Brooks, E., Elsner, L., Gulliford, L., Park, R. (2023). *Good leadership in UK business*. Oxford Character Project, University of Oxford.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur, J., Kristjánsson, K., Thompson, A., & Fazel, A. (2023). *The Jubilee Centre framework for virtue-based professional ethics*. Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham. Online: [www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Framework\\_Virtue\\_Based\\_Prof\\_Ethics.pdf](http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/Framework_Virtue_Based_Prof_Ethics.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Text previously published in the *Oxford Character Project’s Good Leadership in UK Business 2023* report.

<sup>27</sup> Financial Services Skills Commission (2021). *Staying ahead in a changing world: the skills leaders in financial services need*. Online: [wp.financialserviceskills.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/OB\\_FSSC\\_Staying\\_ahead\\_in\\_a\\_changing\\_world.pdf](https://wp.financialserviceskills.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/OB_FSSC_Staying_ahead_in_a_changing_world.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Chen, Y., Weziak-Bialowolska, D., Lee, M.T., Bialowski, P., McNeely, E., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2022). *Longitudinal associations between domains of flourishing*. *Scientific Reports* 12, 2740.

<sup>29</sup> Wang, W. & Brooks, E. (2023). *Character and global leadership*. Oxford Character Project, University of Oxford. Online: [oxfordcharacter.org/research/character-global-leadership-report-2023](https://oxfordcharacter.org/research/character-global-leadership-report-2023)

<sup>30</sup> Rouch, D. (2022). *The social licence for financial markets*. Talk given at the University of Oxford, 28 October 2022.

<sup>31</sup> Rosch, E. H. (1973). *Natural categories*. *Cognitive Psychology*, 4(3), 328-350.

# Acknowledgements

Between 2020 and 2023 the Oxford Character Project worked together with firms and industry bodies to explore character, culture, and leadership in UK finance. We are grateful to Agathos, Legal and General, Legatum, Lloyds Banking Group, Nationwide, NatWest, and Standard Chartered for their collaboration. We are also grateful for input from the Financial Conduct Authority, Financial Markets Standards Board, and Financial Services Culture Board. Particular thanks are due to Chris Bleakley, Hannah Burke, Nick Ceasar, Alison Cottrell, Simon Danielli, Edward David, William de Laszlo, Sarah Gillard, Sharon Hutchinson, Rachel Johnson, Vicky Maberley, Ted MacDonald, Colin Mayer, Kim McMurdo, Marta Rocchi, Jack Roper, David Rouch, Robert Thoyts, Karen Tracey, Emmajane Varley, Hilary Viney, Katie Whyte, Charles Wookey, and all who contributed to discussions on the themes of this report at our Oxford finance symposium and conference.

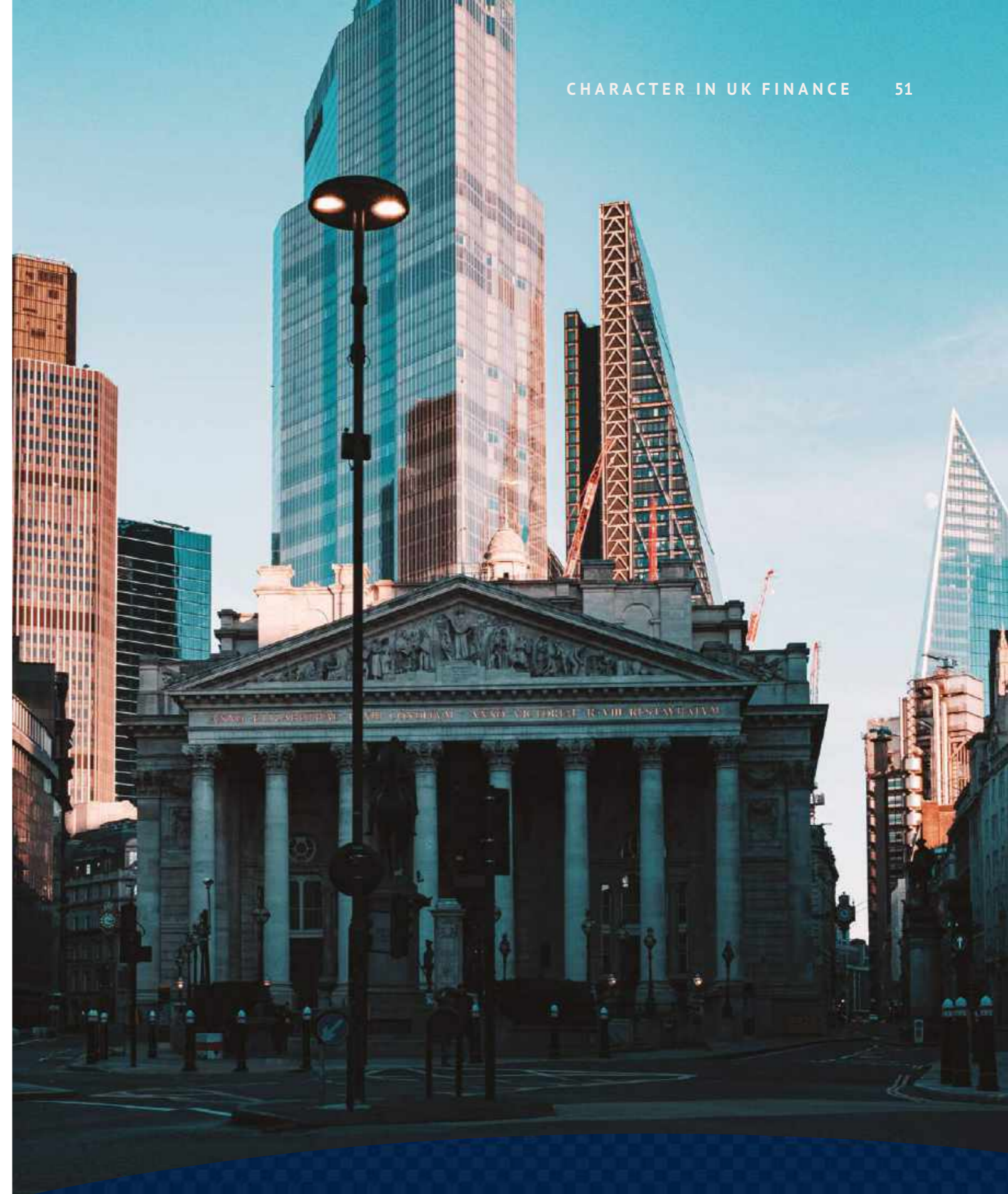
**Edward Brooks**  
**Lily Elsner**  
**Liz Gulliford**  
**Rebecca Park**

**Oxford Character Project**  
**University of Oxford**  
**October 2023**

Thanks are due to all members of the Oxford Character Project team who contributed to this work, particularly to Jocelyn Krauss for her editorial work on this report, and to our industry advisory group: James Arroyo, Robin Budenberg, Eshe Barzey, Alison Cottrell, Adam Grodecki, Shelley Hartland, Mary Johnstone-Louis, Pinky Lilani, Alan McCormick, Kalm Paul-Christian, Kim Polman, David Rouch, Emmajane Varley, and Charles Wookey.

The Forward Institute, which exists to advance responsible leadership across public, private, and charitable sectors in the UK, partnered with us in this research. Particular thanks are due to Jo Grant, Adam Grodecki and Alex Jolly for valuable support, connections, and advice.

The Character in UK Finance report was made possible by the generosity of the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.







The Oxford  
Character  
Project



JOHN  
TEMPLETON  
FOUNDATION  
*Inspiring Awe & Wonder*

