



The Network Effect: How Women Beat the Odds to Get to the Top in Tech

Report findings and country data

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DEI
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Summary

Women face significant hurdles getting to the top in tech, and companies have a vested interest in supporting them to accelerate through the ranks. The competition to hire talented candidates for tech positions is intense and increasing as the need for these roles grows. Companies cannot afford to miss out on this valuable source of talent.

BCG and the Women's Forum (Women4STEM Daring Circle) developed a picture of the work environment for women in tech. This report is based on a [survey of more than 1,500 women and men working in tech leadership across France, Germany, Italy and the UK](#) as well as [30 in-depth interviews with tech leaders](#) (tech leaders = leaders in the tech industry or leaders in tech functions in other industries).

We found three [significant similarities](#) between the women and men who make it to the top in tech:

- They are [equally ambitious](#). In fact, women are slightly more likely than men to say they will seek promotions in the next 1-3 years.
- They are [equally comfortable taking risks or willing to take risks](#) (such as applying for a position without meeting all the criteria).
- Importantly, they have a [high level of technical or tech-adjacent expertise](#)—although this does not mean that a STEM degree (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) is necessarily required for a flourishing career in tech.

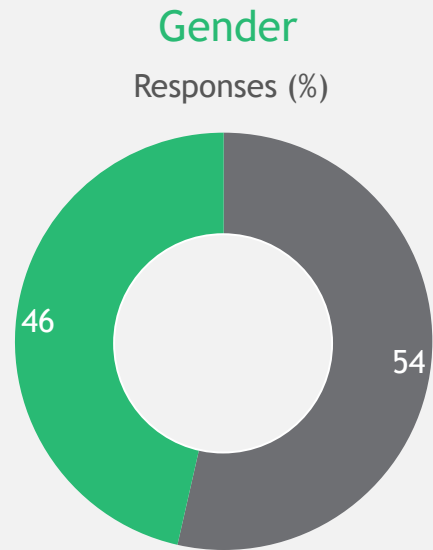
However, on their path to leadership, women surmount [challenges that most men don't face](#):

- Many have [caregiving responsibilities](#) that result in longer leaves of absence.
- There are [too few role models and peers](#) to help support and guide them.
- And, they perceive a [greater pressure to prove their skills than men](#), in particular tech skills; which means women feel they have to work harder for the same recognition.

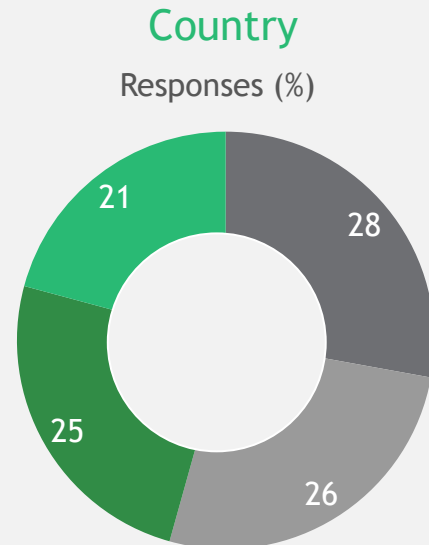
A key finding is that [when making careers decisions, women tend to rely more on strong networks of support](#)—such as recruiting firms, peers, mentors, sponsors, affiliation groups, and household members—[while men are more likely to rely on their self-confidence in addition to their networks](#). Given this, organizations can help women build, nurture, and sustain these networks to support their careers in tech.

The report provides recommendations for senior leaders, line managers, HR and DEI managers as well as for women.

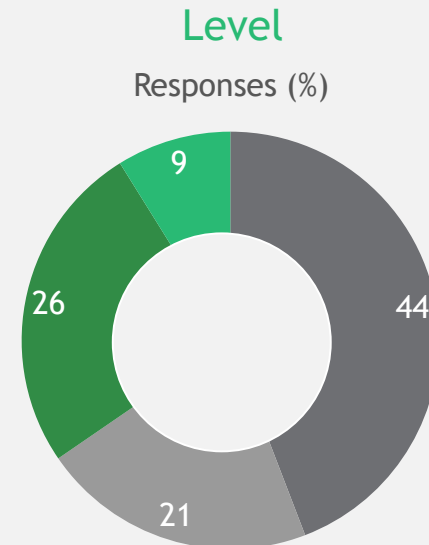
Who we have surveyed (total N=1,533)



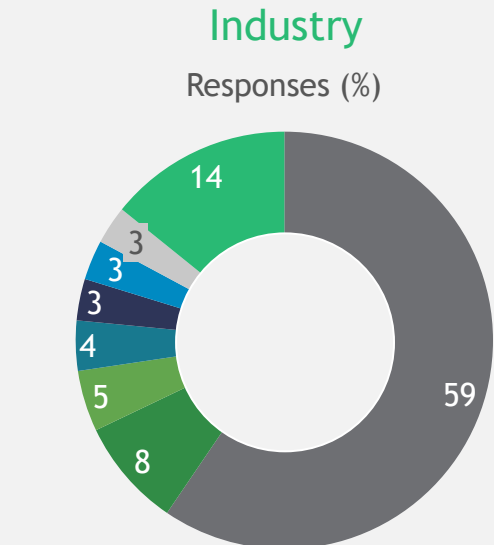
Men
Women



Italy
UK
France
Germany



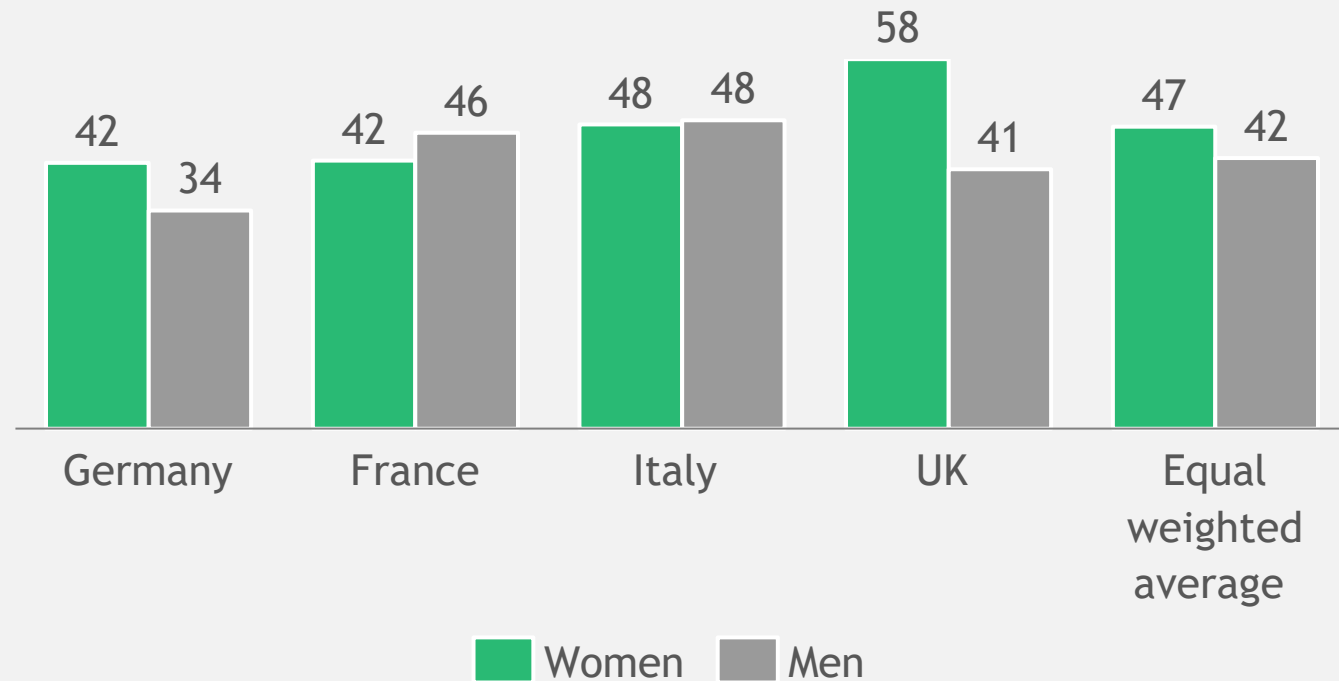
C-Suite
C-1
C-2
C-3



Tech, IT and software engineering
FS and insurance
Industrial goods and manufacturing
Construction
Professional and business services
Retail
Telco, media and publishing
Other

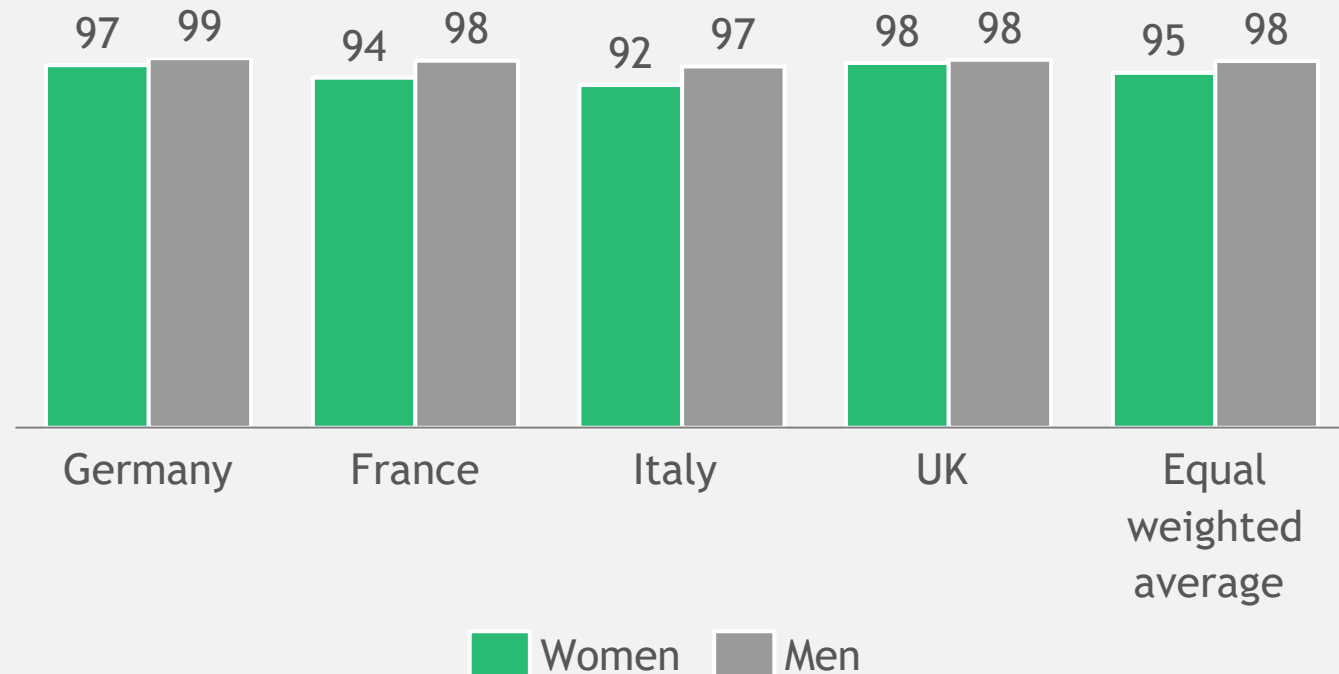
There is no ambition gap:
Overall slightly more women look to get promoted in the next 1-3 years

Share of respondents who look to get promoted to a more senior role in the next 1-3 years (%)



Comfort with risk:
Men and women in
tech leadership
are equally
comfortable taking
risks or willing to
take risks

Share of respondents who feel very or somewhat comfortable to take risks and deal with ambiguity (%)

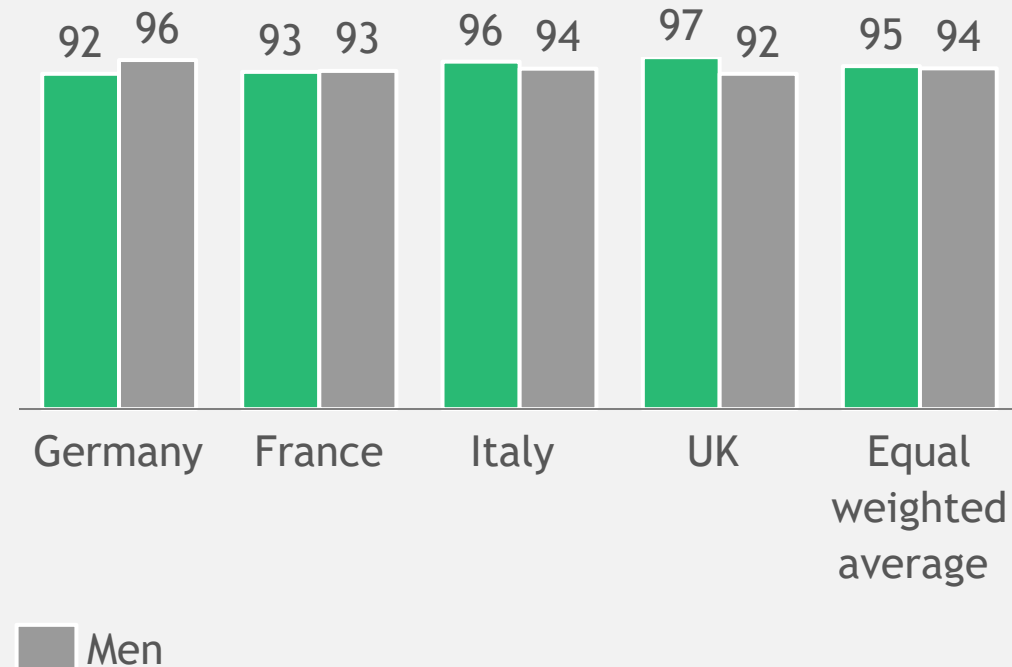
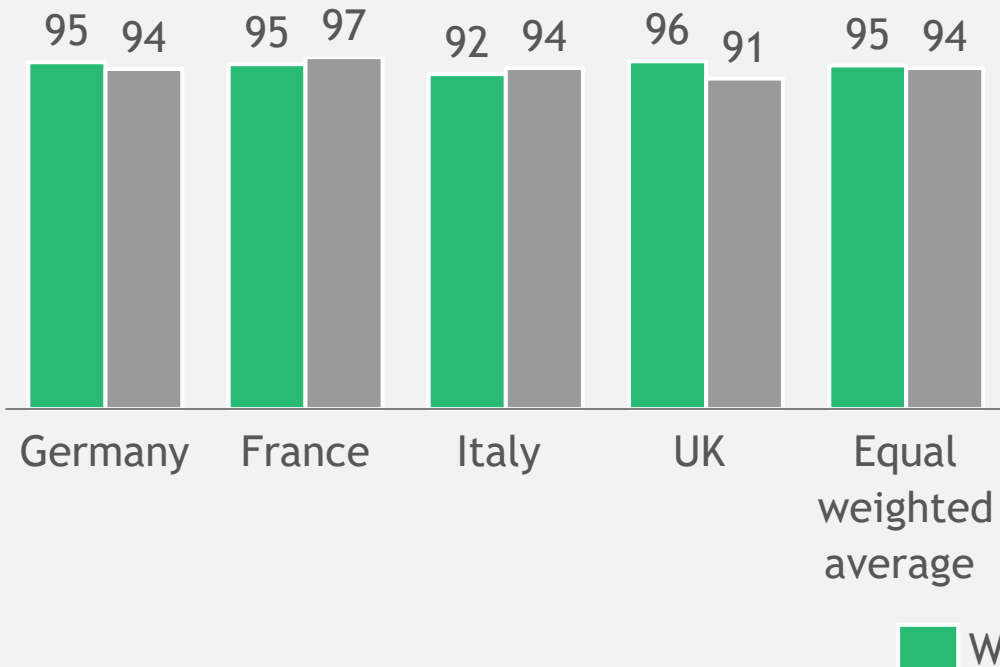


The similarities

Tech skills: For men and women, strong tech and IT skills were important in their early career and to reach their senior level role

Share of respondents who said having strong tech skills was very critical or somewhat important for early career advancement (%)

Share of respondents who said very advanced or somewhat advanced tech skills were required to make the last promotion (%)



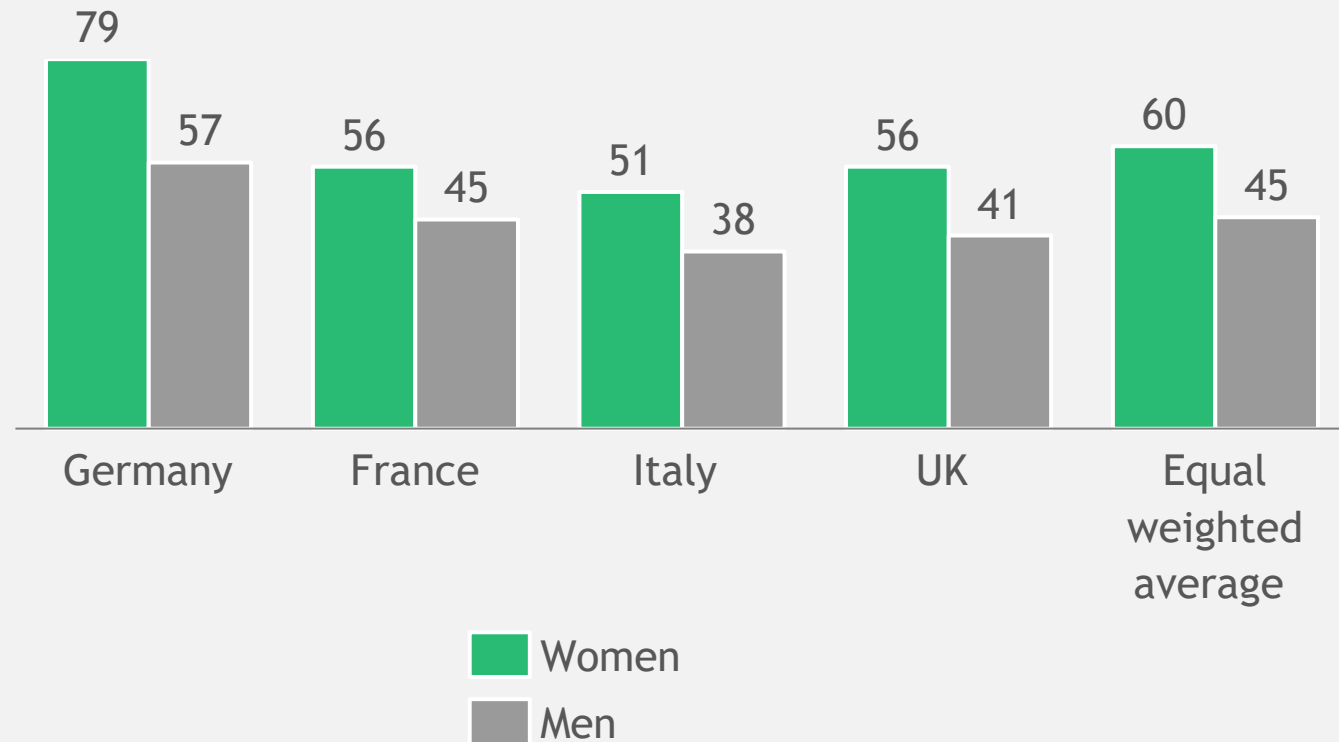
However, a STEM degree is not an absolute prerequisite for all tech careers

“There are plenty of different roles in the IT industry that do not require you to be a computer scientist. If you are open to learn and invest effort and time, you can learn everything you need to. The tech industry is full of opportunity.”

Irene Acedo-Rico, Channel Sales Executive Director EMEA at Lenovo (who studied business administration and law)

Caregiving responsibilities:
More women have declined roles due to caregiver responsibilities they often disproportionately shoulder

Share of respondents who have declined a role due to caregiving responsibilities for children or other family members (%)



Challenges women face

Leave of absence:
Women are much more likely than men to take a longer leave of more than 6M— even though they think it will negatively effect their career



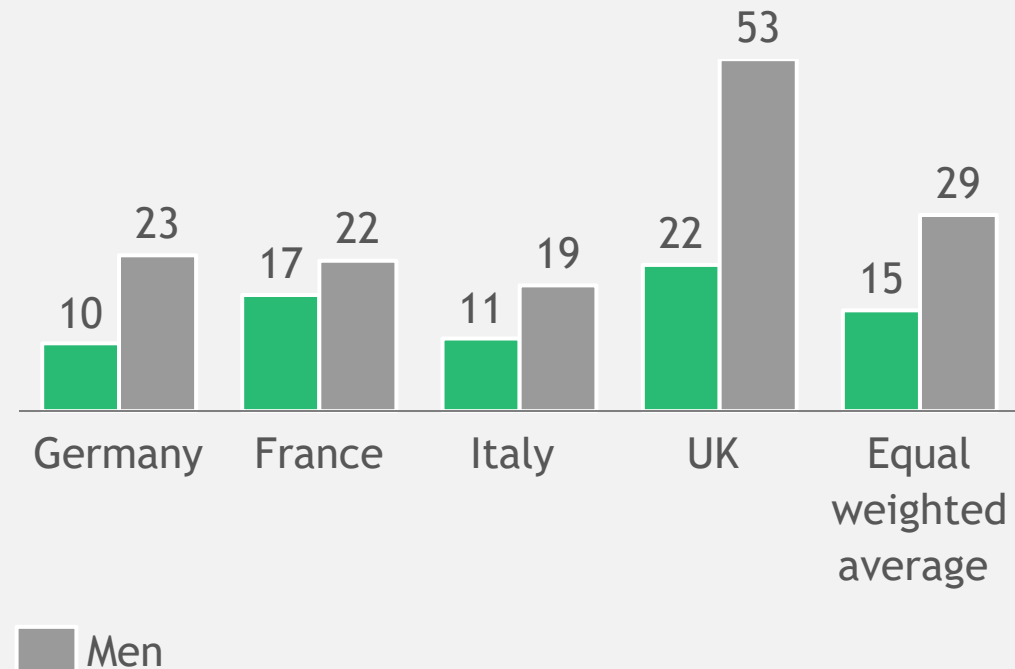
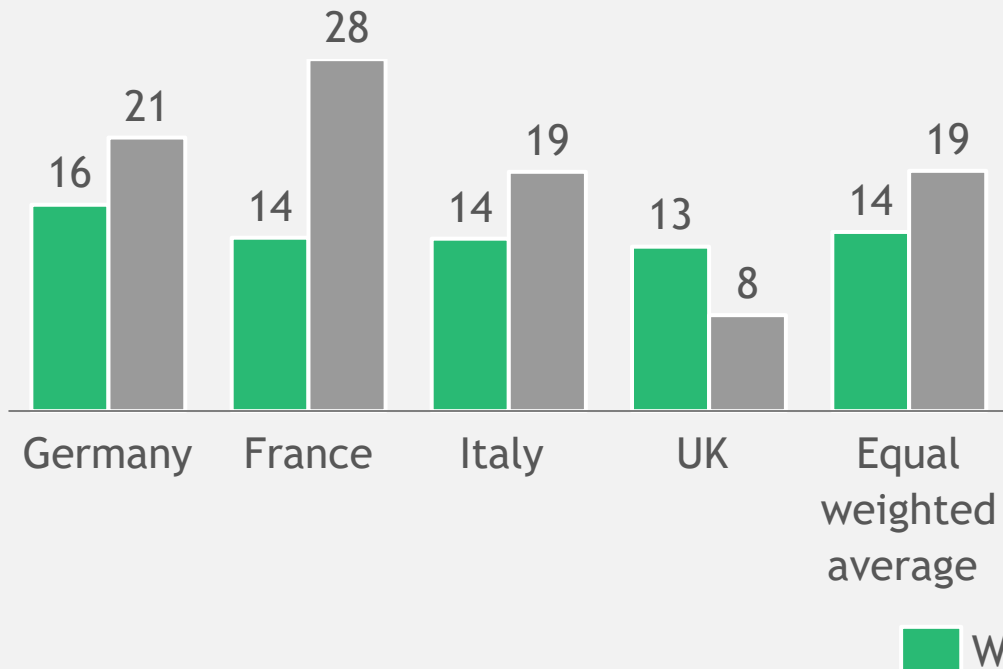
Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

Challenges women face

Impact of leaves: Longer leaves of more than 6 months seem to have a greater impact—both positive and negative—on men’s careers

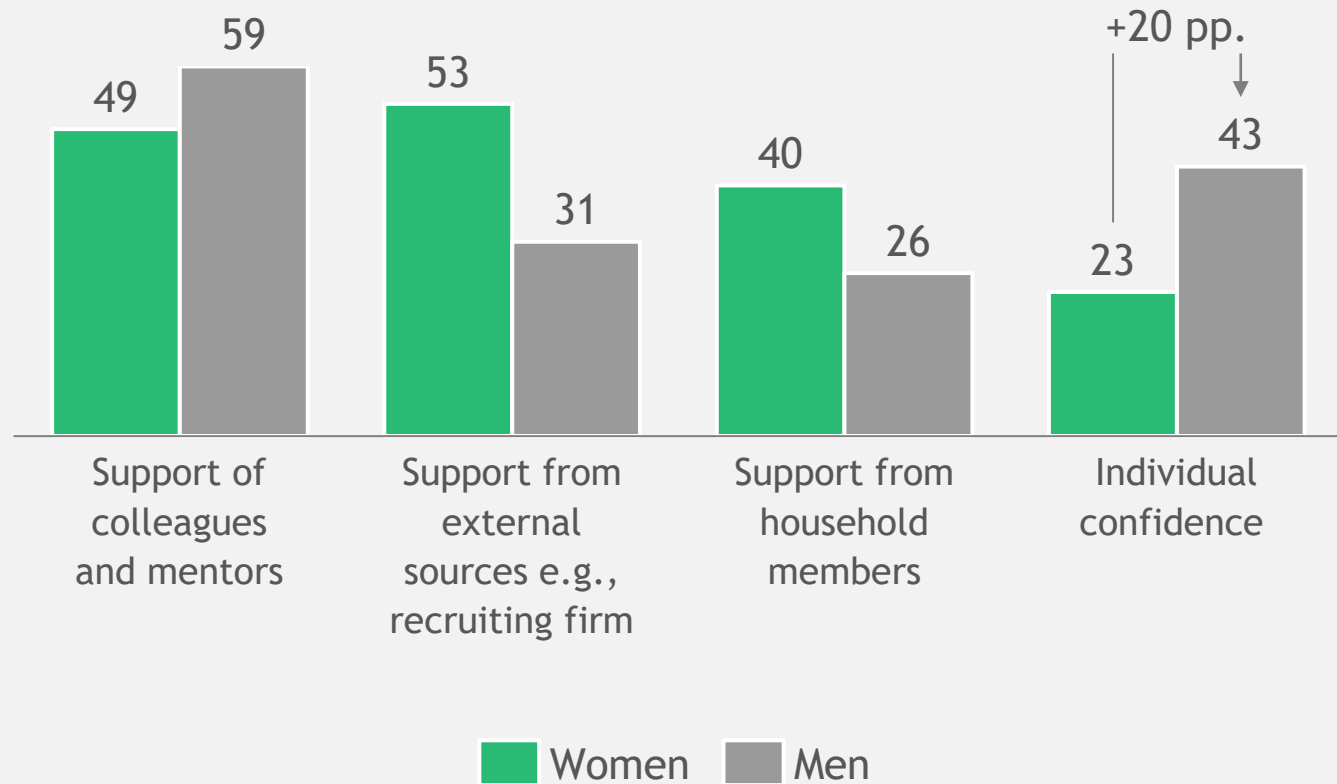
Share of respondents who said they returned to a lower-level position after their leave (%)

Share of respondents who said they returned to a higher-level position/were promoted after their leave (%)



Source of confidence: Senior women in tech seek support and encouragement from others while men rely more on their self confidence

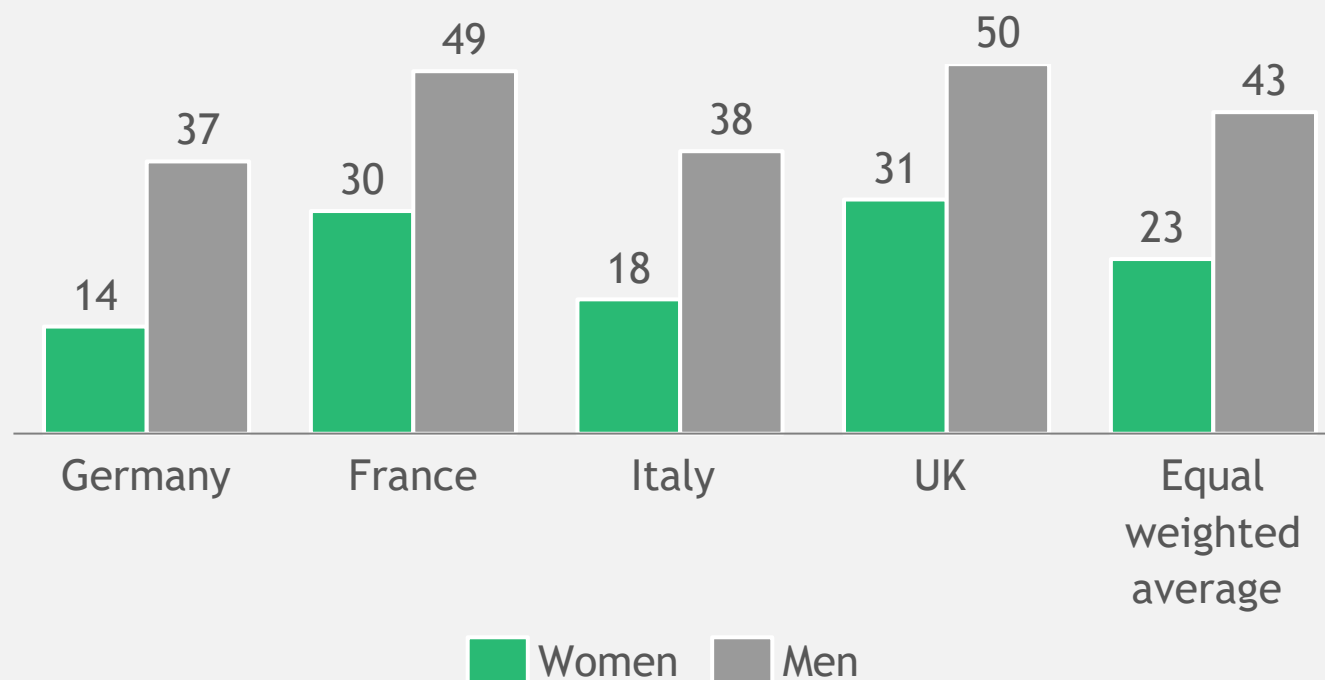
Q: Which factors made you feel comfortable pursuing a promotion without meeting all of the position qualifications? (%)



Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

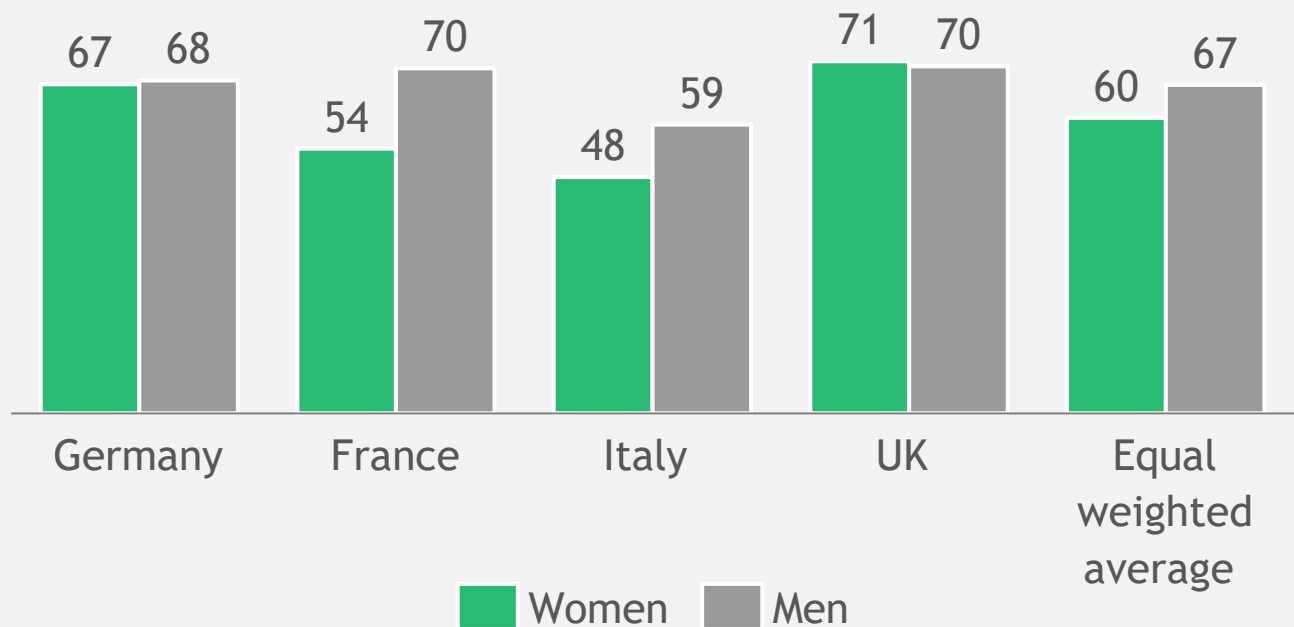
Individual confidence: Across countries, men rely to a far greater extent on their own individual confidence to get ahead than women

Share of respondents who felt comfortable to pursue a promotion without meeting all qualifications due to their individual confidence (%)



Switching employers:
50%-70% of women and men said that to move up, you need to move on

Share of respondents who said changing employers was very critical for career advancement (%)

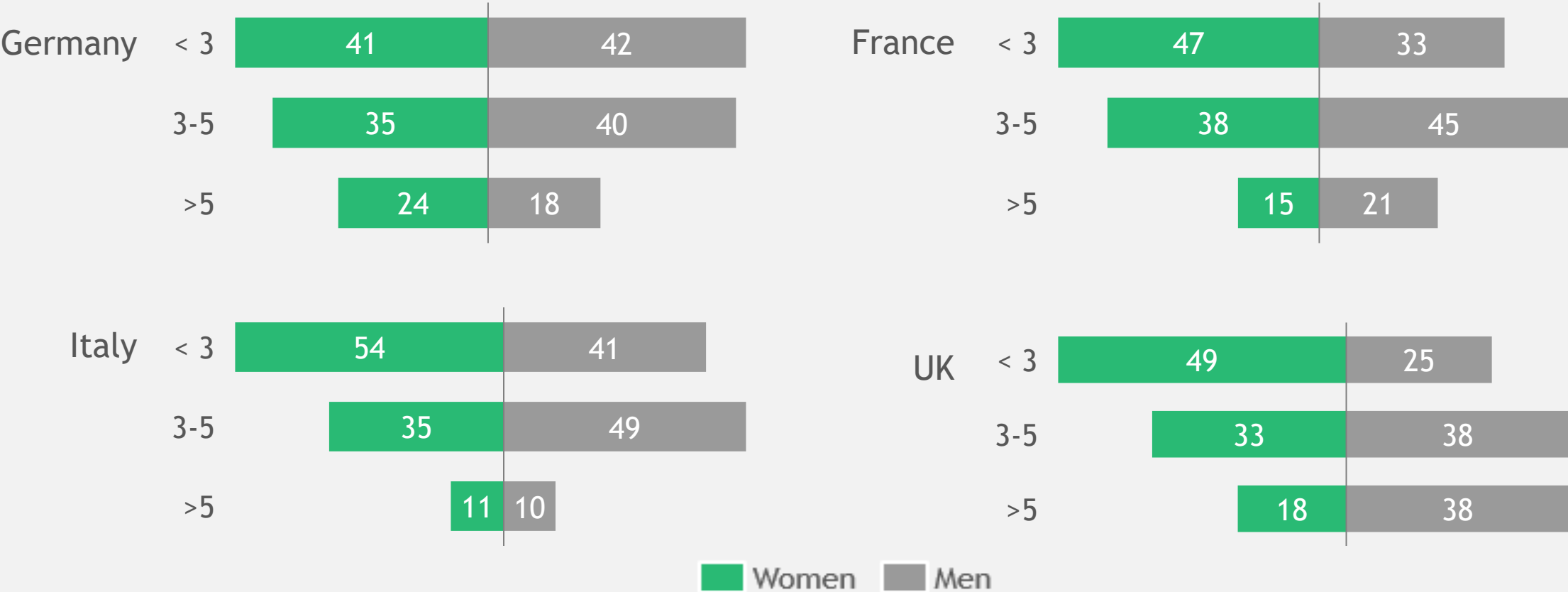


Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

Importance of the network

Switching employers: However, women in France, Italy and especially the UK tend to switch employers less often than men do

Q: How many employers have you had including your current employer? (%)

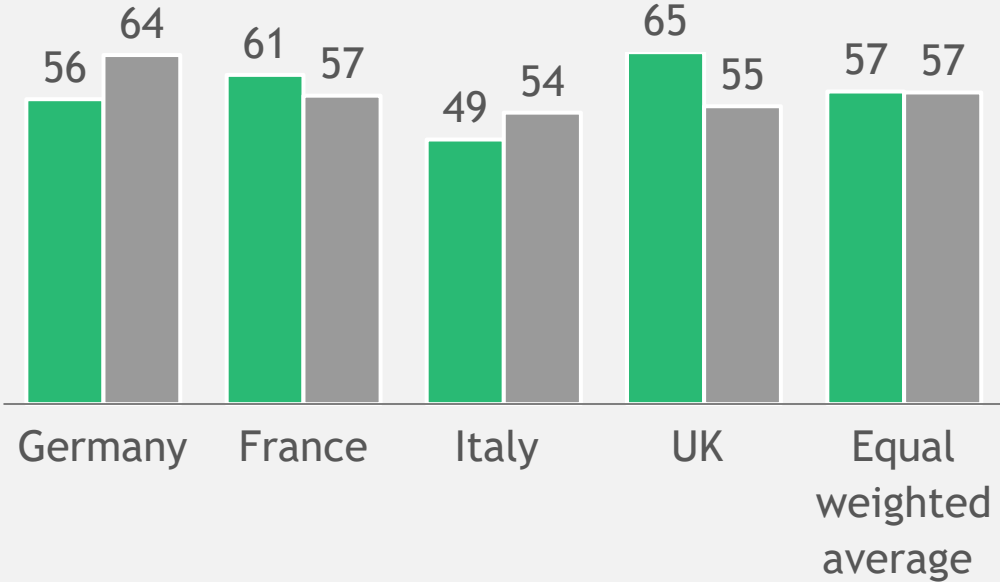


Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

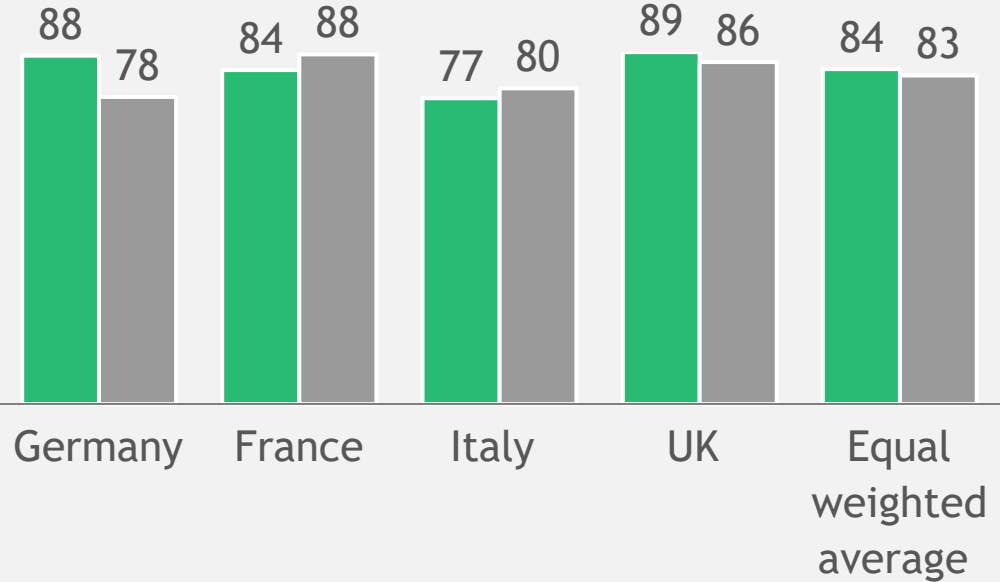
Importance of the network

Mentors: On average, 57% of men and women had a career mentor and more than 80% say this support was essential for advancement

Share of respondents who ever had a career mentor (%)



Share of respondents who agreed with the statement: "I would not be in the same position today without my most influential mentor's help" (%)



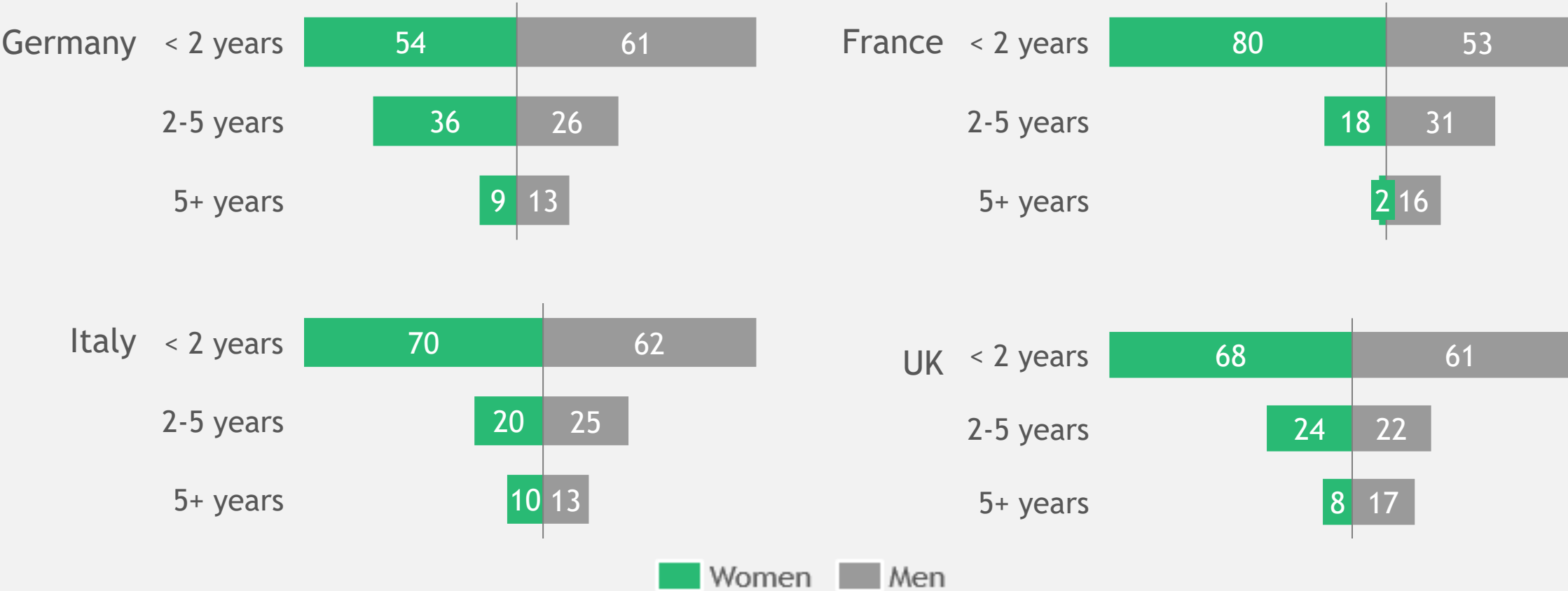
Women Men

Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

Importance of the network

Mentors: Men are more likely to stay connected with mentors longer than women (except for Germany)

Q: How long has your most influential mentor supported you?

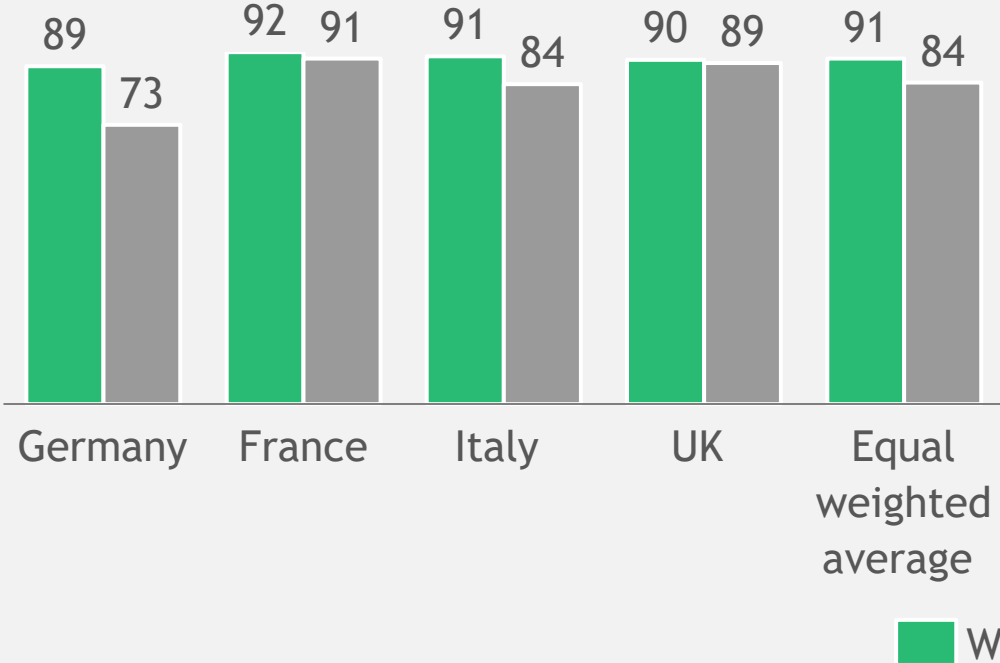


Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

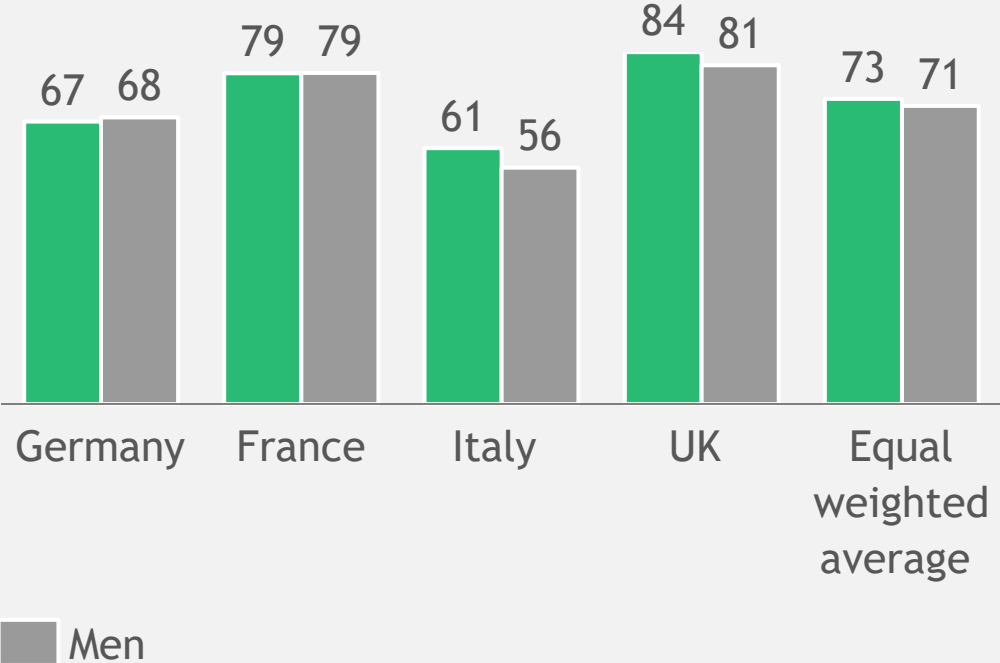
Importance of the network

Role models: Relatable role models are essential for women's career advancement, however on average 30% don't have women role models

Share of respondents who said having women senior level role models is important for women's career advancement (%)



Share of respondents who said their company has women senior level role models (%)

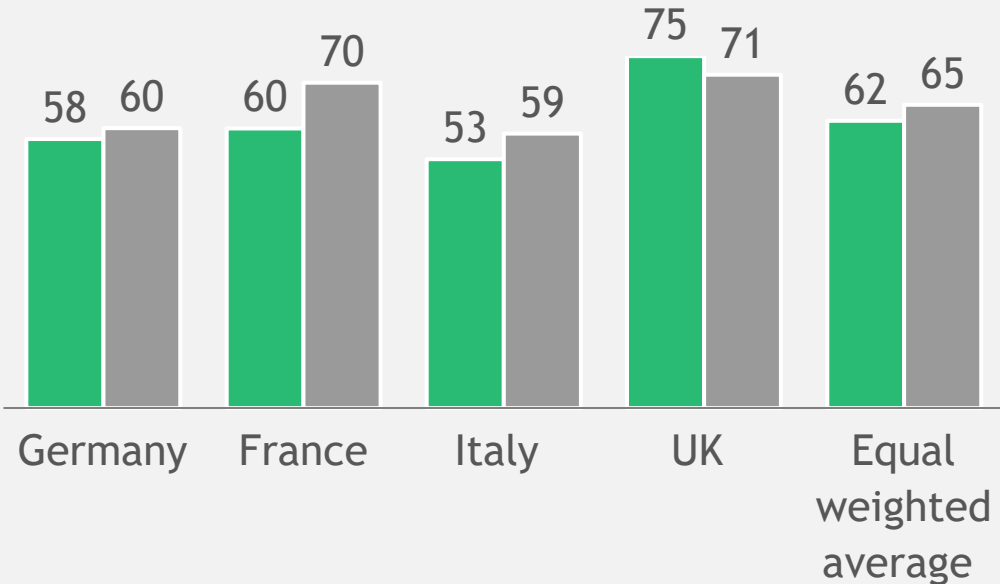


Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

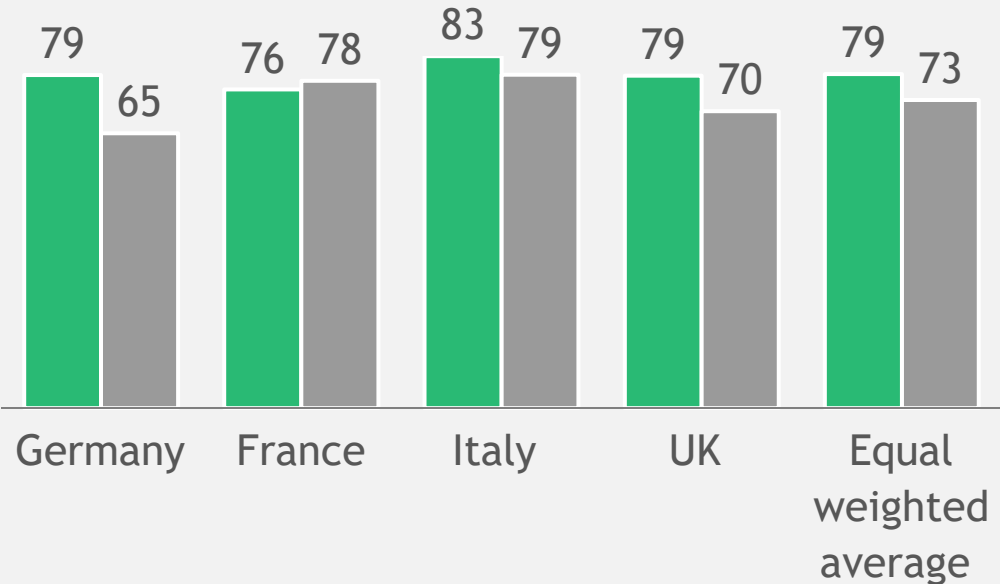
Organizational support

DEI programs: On average, almost 40% said their company does not have a program to increase gender diversity in leadership in place

Share of respondents who said their company has Diversity, Equity & Inclusion initiatives in place to increase gender diversity in leadership (%)



Share of respondents who said the DEI initiatives in place have been effective at increasing gender diversity in leadership (% of those who have initiatives in place)



Women Men

Source: BCG's Senior Tech Leaders In Europe survey, 2022.

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