



OUTWARD BOUND®
INTERNATIONAL

FLOURISHING FUTURES

GLOBAL IMPACT

AT SCALE

Outward Bound International
Global Impact Report 2026



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Outward Bound International creates transformational growth at scale. Drawing on one of the largest global datasets in experiential education—47,312 participant surveys collected across 27 Outward Bound Schools, 23 countries, and six continents—this report demonstrates clear, measurable, and consistent impact across diverse cultures and contexts. Participants across the global network report meaningful growth in self confidence, resilience, compassion, social competence, and environmental responsibility, pointing to the consistent positive impact of the Outward Bound model.

These findings tell a larger story about human flourishing. In a world facing increasing social, environmental, and well-being challenges, young people need more than knowledge alone; they need the confidence to act, the resilience to navigate uncertainty, the ability to connect with others, and a commitment to care for the world around them. Across countries and communities worldwide, Outward Bound is helping cultivate these qualities at scale, creating flourishing futures through transformative experiences that shape lives, strengthen communities, and inspire responsibility for our shared future.



A photograph of two people in yellow kayaks on a river. The person in the foreground is wearing a red helmet and a red life vest, and is smiling and waving. The person in the background is also wearing a red helmet and a red life vest, and is holding a red paddle. The river is dark and rocky.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are pleased to share Flourishing Futures: Global Impact at Scale, a report that captures both the breadth and depth of Outward Bound's impact around the world. In a period marked by increasing uncertainty and social challenges for young people, this report demonstrates meaningful and measurable impact. Across six continents and diverse cultural contexts, we see young people discovering confidence, building resilience, strengthening relationships, and developing a deeper connection to the natural world.

What makes these findings especially meaningful is not only the scale of the data, but the consistency of the story it tells. Drawing on more than 47,000 participant surveys from across our global network, the results demonstrate that impact is not limited to one place, one culture, or one type of program. Outward Bound's educational approach continues to create meaningful and measurable change across contexts, helping young people develop the capabilities they need not only to navigate the world as it is, but to shape the world as it could be.

This report also reflects the power of our global community. The work of Outward Bound has always depended on the dedication of educators, instructors, researchers, staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters who believe in the potential of young people. We are deeply grateful to every Outward Bound School and to all those who make this work possible.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to expanding access, strengthening our global network, and continuing to learn how Outward Bound experiences create lasting impact. Our goal is to support growth that benefits individuals, communities, and the natural world around us.

Thank you for being part of this journey.
With gratitude,

Nick Cotton
Executive Director, Outward Bound International

Colin Maund
Chair, Outward Bound International

ABOUT OUTWARD BOUND INTERNATIONAL

Outward Bound International (OBI) serves as the coordinating body for the global network of Outward Bound Schools operating across six continents. Established to uphold the integrity and quality of Outward Bound programs worldwide, OBI provides leadership, support, and guidance to ensure Schools deliver high-quality outdoor learning experiences grounded in a shared educational approach.

Since 1941, Outward Bound has believed in the power of learning through outdoor adventure learning. At its core is a simple idea: people grow through challenge. Through adventure, teamwork, service, and meaningful experiences in nature, participants discover strengths they did not know they possessed and develop skills and qualities that extend beyond the course itself.

Outward Bound's educational approach is grounded in the belief that challenge, experienced within a supportive environment, can be a powerful catalyst for growth.

Across cultures and contexts, our programs combine meaningful challenges with opportunities for reflection, personal and social responsibility, and connection with nature. Set in inspiring outdoor environments, these experiences foster learning that is both deeply personal and enduring.

Beyond supporting quality across the network, OBI fosters collaboration among Schools, strengthens partnerships, and advances research and initiatives related to positive youth development and environmental responsibility. Through this work, OBI helps strengthen learning, practice, and impact across the global network.

This report tells the story of that impact: how challenge, connection, and discovery create measurable change in the lives of young people and contribute to flourishing futures across the globe.

For more information: www.outwardbound.net

OUR BELIEF

“

We are all better than we know. If only we can be brought to realise this, we may never again be prepared to settle for anything else.

”

Kurt Hahn, Co-founder of Outward Bound

OUR VALUES



Adventurous Learning

A belief in the power and intensity of learning through adventure in the outdoors - as a means of bringing out the best in people.



Transformational Change

A deep appreciation of the balance between risk, reward, and responsibility. We facilitate authentic learning through purposeful and intense experiences with real consequences and powerful, positive, and memorable outcomes.



Respect and Compassion

Our Schools aim to stretch people both physically and mentally. In doing so they act with care, concern and generosity towards people and the natural environment.

OUTWARD BOUND AROUND THE GLOBE

36 
SCHOOLS



34 
COUNTRIES



SIX 
CONTINENTS

1,500,000+ 
PARTICIPANTS SERVED



85 YEARS 
OF OUTWARD BOUND



DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF OUTWARD BOUND

An Outward Bound program is all about learning and the impact this has on the individual. This is achieved through skillful people working in an inspiring and challenging environment and applying an effective process.



OUR PEOPLE

- Qualified and competent outdoor instructors
- Experienced educators who facilitate learning
- Educators who inspire and support participants to achieve their potential



OUR PROCESS

- Experiential learning and development using authentic adventure in the outdoors
- Practical application of educational models with continuous reviewing and reflection
- Instillation of new behaviours and skills that transfer to the participant's home, school and work environments



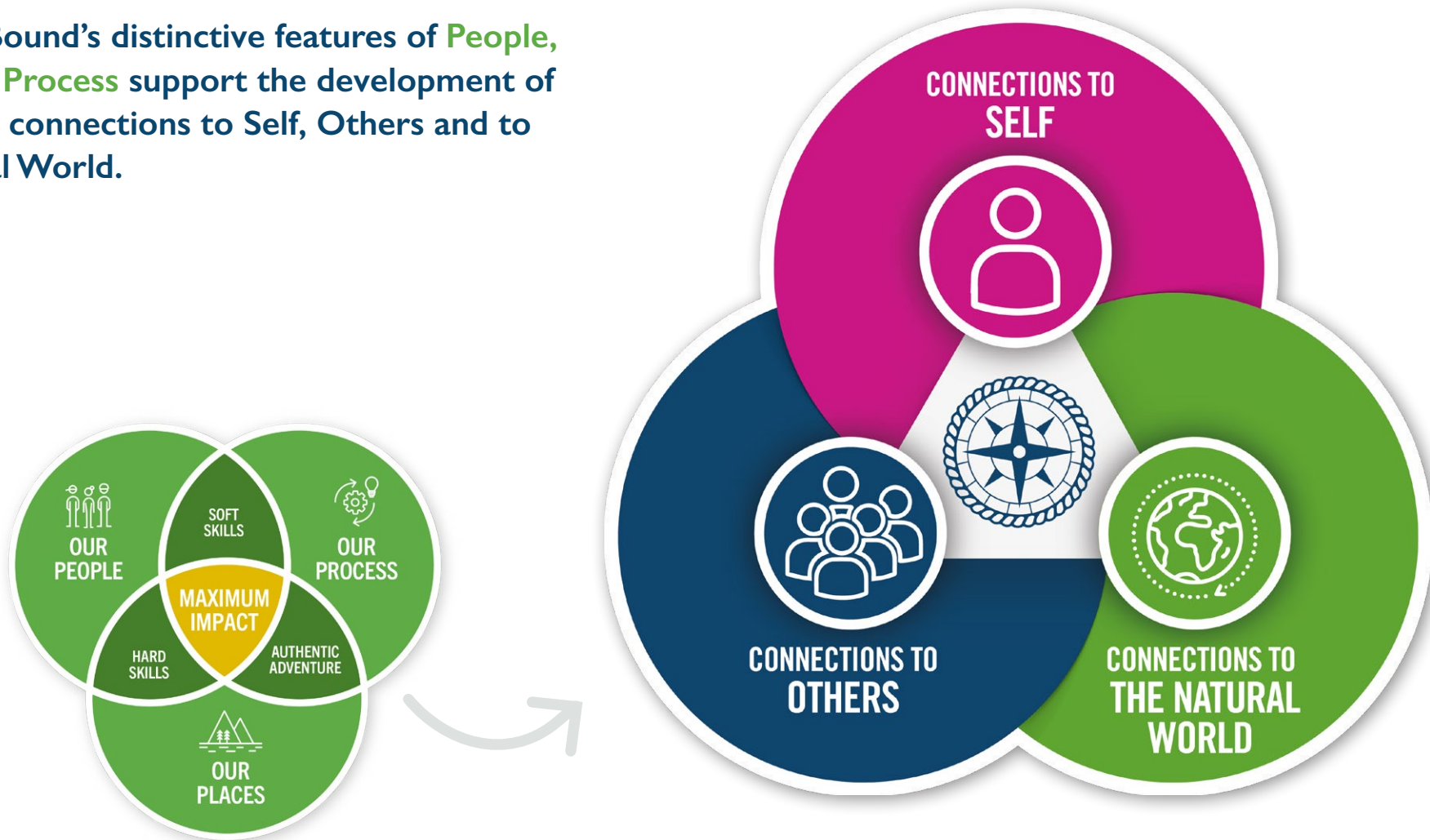
OUR PLACES

- Real adventures in the natural environment
- Inspiring locations that provide limitless opportunities
- Scale of experience and journeys is unique and challenging

DEVELOPING CONNECTIONS

TO SELF > *TO OTHERS* > *TO THE NATURAL WORLD*

Outward Bound's distinctive features of **People**, **Places** and **Process** support the development of meaningful connections to Self, Others and to the Natural World.



OUTWARD BOUND GLOBAL OUTCOMES MODEL

Outward Bound programs develop Connections to Self, Others and the Natural World resulting in the following core outcomes: Resilience, Self-Confidence, Social Competence, Compassion and Environmental Responsibility.

RESILIENCE

Ability to “bounce back” from and adjust to adversity and challenges

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Belief in one’s ability to be successful

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Awareness of connection to nature and demonstrating a sense of consciousness and stewardship for the natural world

COMPASSION

Ability to sense the emotions and needs of others and the motivation and initiative to act

SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Social, emotional, and cognitive skills and behaviors needed to succeed as a member of society



A CLEAR RESULT

Each year, tens of thousands of young people take part in Outward Bound programs around the world. They arrive with different experiences, confidence levels, and challenges, but they leave changed.

Our latest global data, drawn from more than 45,000 participant surveys* collected over the last 5 years, shows a powerful and consistent result: Outward Bound delivers measurable, life-changing growth at scale.

Across each outcome we measure, participants report significant improvement from before to after their experience.

Outward Bound's educational approach is grounded in the belief that: *Challenge, experienced within a supportive environment, can be a powerful catalyst for growth.*

PARTICIPANTS SHOW CLEAR AND CONSISTENT GROWTH ACROSS ALL FIVE CORE OUTCOMES:

1. SELF-CONFIDENCE
2. RESILIENCE
3. COMPASSION,
4. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY
5. SOCIAL COMPETENCE

*The Outward Bound Outcomes Survey (OBOS) is a statistically validated and reliable measurement tool developed with assistance from the OBI Research Advisory Committee. Confirmatory Factor Analysis has been conducted by external researchers.



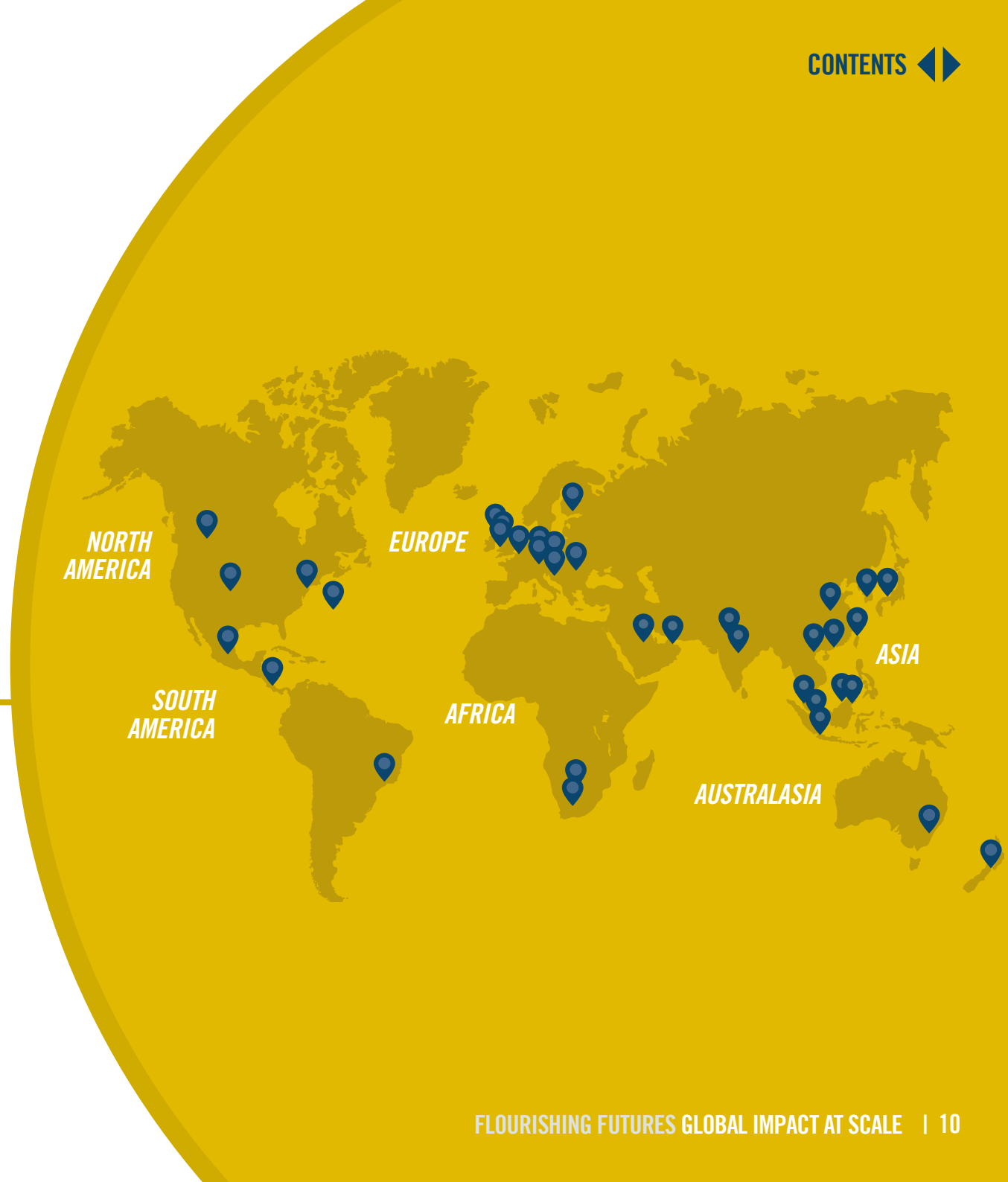
OB Hong Kong 

A PROGRAM DELIVERED ACROSS *SIX CONTINENTS*

From Hong Kong to Germany, Singapore to Australia, Outward Bound operates at scale while remaining deeply local.

47,312 SURVEYS
were collected across
27 SCHOOLS
representing one of the
LARGEST
GLOBAL DATASETS
in outdoor experiential
education

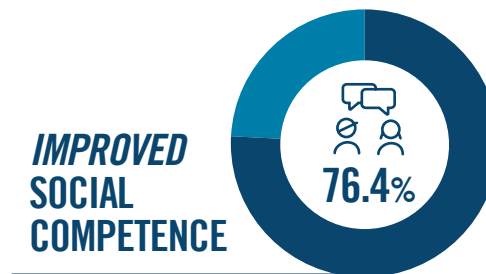
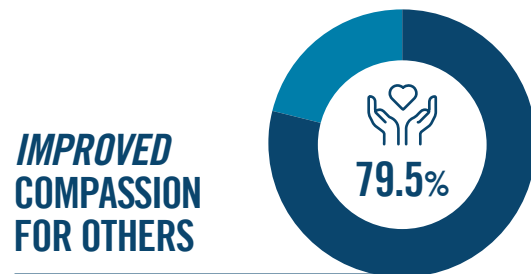
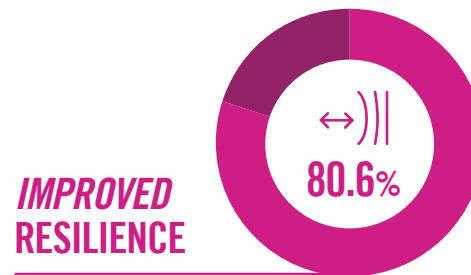
Despite diverse countries, cultures, and environments, the pattern of impact is consistent, demonstrating a model that is reliable across contexts and effective for a wide range of young people.



IMPACT YOU CAN SEE AND MEASURE

WIDESPREAD GROWTH ACROSS PARTICIPANTS

The most compelling story in the data is how broadly the impact is experienced:



THIS TELLS US THAT THE OUTWARD BOUND EXPERIENCE WORKS FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF PARTICIPANTS, NOT JUST A SELECT FEW.



DEPTH OF CHANGE

Participants also show strong gains in average scores across all outcomes:

THESE ARE MEANINGFUL SHIFTS IN THE SKILLS AND MINDSETS THAT SHAPE LONG-TERM SUCCESS.



+21.9%

IMPROVED
SELF-CONFIDENCE



+19%

IMPROVED
RESILIENCE



+14.9%

IMPROVED
COMPASSION
FOR OTHERS



+19.9%

IMPROVED
SOCIAL
COMPETENCE



+21.4%

IMPROVED
ENVIRONMENTAL
RESPONSIBILITY



STRONG AND RELIABLE IMPACT

All five outcomes exceed the 0.50 benchmark for significant impact:

THIS CONFIRMS THAT THE CHANGES OBSERVED ARE NOT ONLY WIDESPREAD BUT SUBSTANTIAL.



IMPACT AT SCALE AND IMPACT YOU CAN TRUST

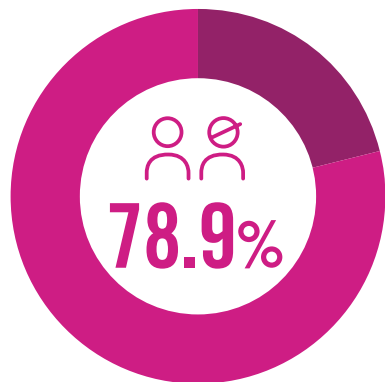
Outward Bound delivers consistent, meaningful growth in the skills and mindsets that matter most. Participants leave more confident, more resilient, more connected to others, and more committed to the world around them. This most recent analysis gives us one of the most reliable pictures available of what Outward Bound programs actually do to the young people who experience them.

HOW PARTICIPANTS GROW: THE FIVE CORE OUTCOMES

A closer look at what changes and how much across each of the five constructs Outward Bound measures globally.

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Outward Bound helps young people discover what they are truly capable of. Through challenge and achievement, participants build stronger self-belief and confidence in their ability to take on new challenges and embrace new situations.



THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AREAS OF IMPACT

78.9% of participants report increased confidence.

AVERAGE SCORES RISING BY 21.5%

The strong effect size of 0.68 is particularly significant given the growing recognition of self-efficacy (self-belief of one's abilities) as a critical skill for the future.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) research shows that young people who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to embrace challenges, persist through difficulties, and achieve positive outcomes. (OECD).

“

My experience with Outward Bound was amazing. It gave me new insights into myself, the outdoors, and, most importantly, life. I learned exactly what I am capable of. I AM a leader. I AM strong. I CAN carry on. Outward Bound is the main reason I'm here today, succeeding in college. If I had not stepped outside my comfort zone, had I not taken the leap and pushed through the pain, who knows where I would be?

”

Outward Bound USA participant



RESILIENCE

Outward Bound participants learn to navigate uncertainty, overcome setbacks, and persevere through difficulties, building resilience that extends well beyond the course. Resilience also has the lowest baseline among the five core outcomes, reflecting how strongly young people feel this gap.



Globally, 80.6% of participants report increased resilience.

**AVERAGE INCREASE
SCORE OF 19%**

An effect size of 0.54 demonstrates meaningful development in participants' ability to respond to the challenges encountered on their Outward Bound program.

The OECD's Learning Compass 2030 identifies resilience and adaptability as essential competencies for thriving in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. By providing structured opportunities to face and overcome challenges, Outward Bound helps participants build the resilience needed to navigate future uncertainty with confidence.

“

It was physically demanding and mentally tough, but every stroke and step pushed me to grow. I discovered a deeper sense of resilience, patience, and strength within myself while building strong friendships with peers who shared in both the struggle and the joy.

”

Outward Bound Canada participant

“

I discovered both my abilities and my fears, and I learned what empowerment truly means.

”

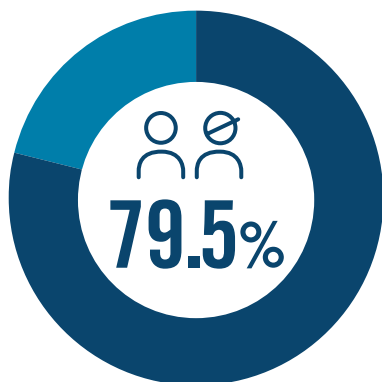
Outward Bound Croatia participant





COMPASSION FOR OTHERS

Living and working closely with others develops empathy, understanding, and an awareness of different perspectives. Participants learn to support one another and value the strengths of the group as differences dissolve and interdependence takes hold.



This is reflected in **79.5%** of participants reporting increased compassion.

**AVERAGE INCREASE
SCORE OF 14.9%**

An effect size of 0.52 indicates a real, significant change in interpersonal awareness.

In a world where individual achievement is often celebrated, developing the capacity to care for others is more important than ever. Research shows that social connection, empathy, and prosocial behavior contribute to stronger communities, greater trust, improved well-being, and increased resilience in the face of social and environmental challenges. Experiences that help people understand, support, and care for one another therefore have value not only for individuals, but for society as a whole (**World Health Organization**).

“

I get it now that being a good teammate is way more about compassion than just doing my own thing. I used to just think about myself, but now I realise how important it is to actually understand how everyone else is feeling. I'm gonna try way harder to be kinder and more understanding, like, actually care about how my team's doing.

”

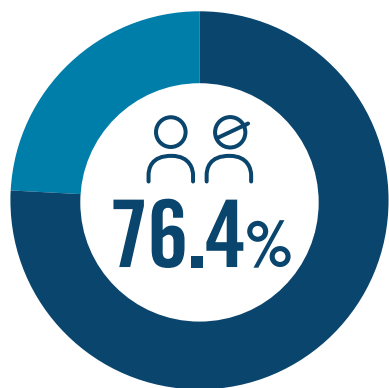
Outward Bound Vietnam participant





SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Outward Bound programs are built around teamwork. Participants develop communication skills, learn to collaborate effectively, and build trust within a group through the kind of friction and connection that ordinary life rarely provides.



As a result, 76.4% of participants report improved social competence.

**AVERAGE INCREASE
SCORE OF 19.9%** ↗

The outcome shows a strong effect size of 0.61, reflecting meaningful gains in how participants relate to and work with others.

In an increasingly fragmented world, the ability to connect across differences is a critical skill for the future. Through shared challenges and collaborative experiences, Outward Bound helps young people develop the social competence needed to build relationships, work in diverse teams, and contribute positively to their communities, workplaces, and society.

“

Outward Bound taught me that one day, when I'm older, I'm going to have to pull away from my family and start my own life and journey. I loved the teamwork we had here at Outward Bound. It made me and all my teammates learn to trust one another.

”

Outward Bound South Africa participant

“

The thing I learned at Outward Bound and will take with me is the confidence to be around others and work with them.

”

Outward Bound New Zealand participant

ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Time spent immersed in nature fosters a lasting connection to the natural world and a stronger sense of responsibility for protecting it. Across OBI's global data, this is the most widely reported impact.

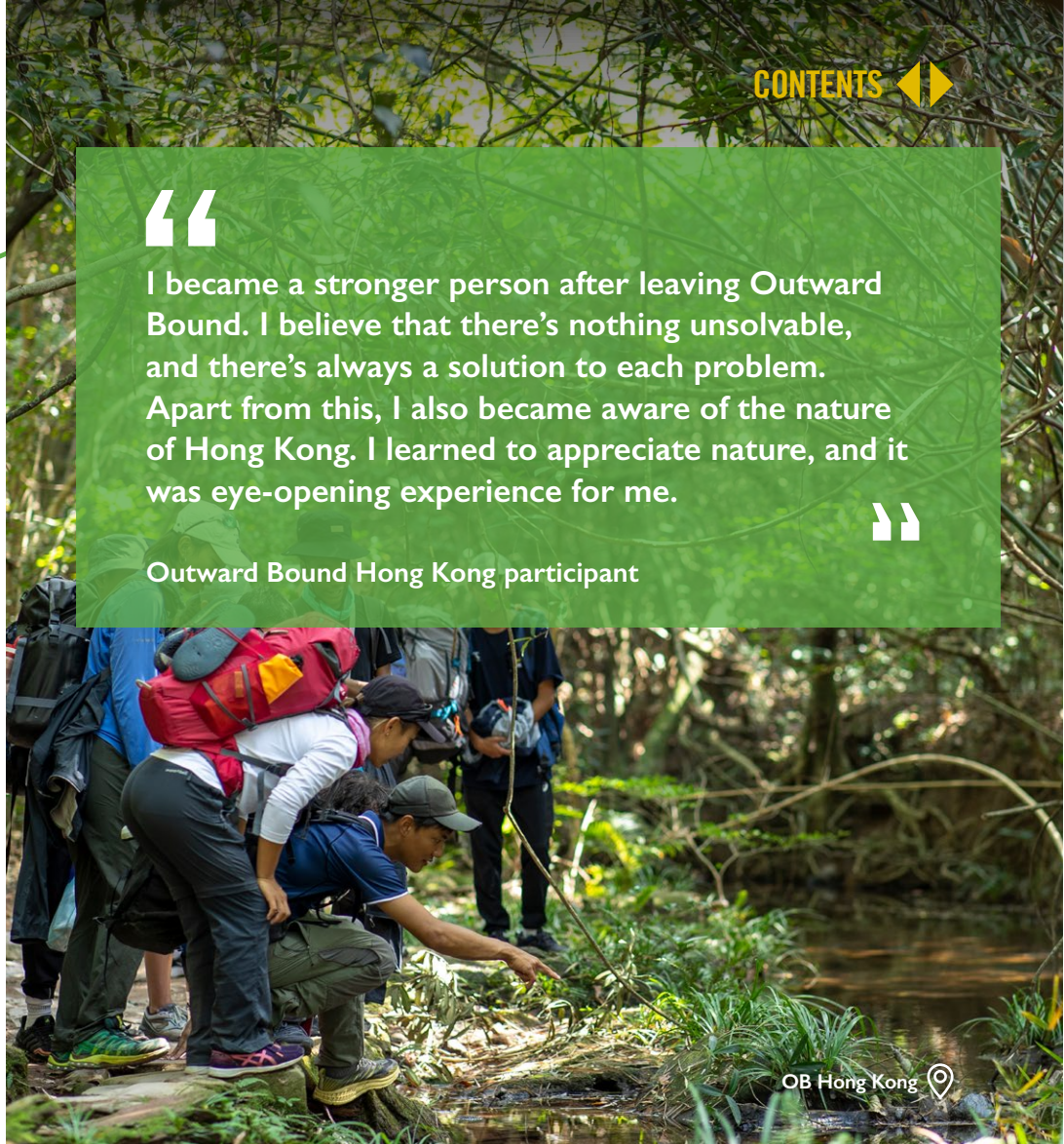


More than 83.6% of participants report increased environmental responsibility

AVERAGE INCREASE SCORE OF 21.4%

THE HIGHEST OF ANY OF THE CORE OUTCOMES

These findings are supported by a growing body of research demonstrating that connection to nature is a powerful driver of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. A meta-analysis of 92 studies involving more than 27,000 participants found compelling evidence that people who feel more connected to nature are more likely to engage in behaviours that protect the environment. A second meta-analysis of 37 studies involving over 13,000 participants reached a similar conclusion, finding a consistent positive relationship between nature connectedness and pro-environmental behaviour across countries, age groups, and measurement approaches (**Children & Nature Network**).



CONTENTS

“

I became a stronger person after leaving Outward Bound. I believe that there's nothing unsolvable, and there's always a solution to each problem. Apart from this, I also became aware of the nature of Hong Kong. I learned to appreciate nature, and it was eye-opening experience for me.

”

Outward Bound Hong Kong participant

The strong effect size of 0.61 points to a meaningful increase in participants' sense of responsibility for the future. As environmental challenges grow, experiences that foster a connection to nature can help cultivate behaviours and attitudes needed to support a more sustainable future.

WHY THESE RESULTS MATTER

Across the world, educators, employers, researchers, and policymakers are asking the same question:

What skills and qualities do young people need to thrive in an increasingly complex and uncertain world?



The outcomes highlighted in this global impact report align closely with these global priorities. Increased self-confidence, resilience, social competence, compassion for others, and environmental responsibility are not only valuable in their own right; they are the foundations of human flourishing and positive contribution.

For more than 80 years, Outward Bound has helped people discover what they are capable of through challenge, adventure, service, and connection with nature. The evidence presented here confirms that this approach continues to develop the qualities that individuals, communities, and societies need to thrive today and into the future.

Recent reports from leading global institutions point to a growing consensus. The OECD's *Future of Education and Skills 2030* framework calls for education that fosters agency, well-being, and the capacity to shape a better future. Its 2025 work on Human Flourishing highlights the importance of purpose, adaptability, relationships, and personal well-being. Similarly, UNESCO's 2024 report, *Shaping Education for Flourishing*, argues that education must support not only academic achievement but also the social, emotional, and ethical capacities that enable people to lead meaningful lives. Meanwhile, the World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2025* identifies resilience, flexibility, leadership, curiosity, and lifelong learning as among the most needed skills in a rapidly changing world.



A MODEL THAT WORKS - GLOBALLY

These results come from programs delivered across diverse countries, cultures, and environments. Despite this diversity, the pattern of impact is remarkably consistent.

This demonstrates that the Outward Bound model is:

- **Reliable across contexts**
- **Scalable globally**
- **Effective for a wide range of young people**

IN SUMMARY

Outward Bound delivers consistent, meaningful growth in the skills and mindsets that matter most.

Participants leave more confident, more resilient, more connected to others, and more committed to the world around them.

THIS IS IMPACT AT SCALE AND IMPACT YOU CAN TRUST.

Across the global network, Outward Bound experiences are helping young people grow in confidence, resilience, compassion, connection, and responsibility. This report demonstrates how those individual experiences, repeated across contexts and communities worldwide, contribute to flourishing futures at scale.

OB Canada 

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

2024 - 2026

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT PROJECT - INVESTING IN ONE CREATES VALUE FOR MANY MORE

In 2024, Outward Bound International partnered with Accenture Development Partnerships to conduct a Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis to estimate the impact of Outward Bound's global programming against the cost to deliver.

The SROI quantifies the global economic, social, and environmental value that Outward Bound generates for every dollar spent, revealing the transformative & rippling impact of Outward Bound.

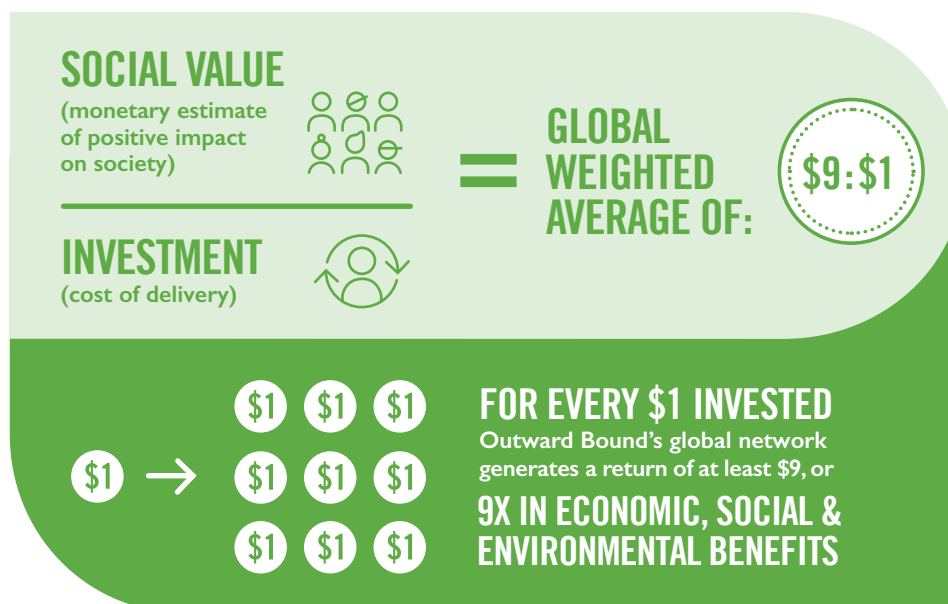
The analysis found that Outward Bound creates approximately \$9 of social value for every \$1 invested, demonstrating the wider social impact of Outward Bound programs. Through these experiences, participants develop skills, attitudes, and behaviours that support positive long-term outcomes for themselves and their communities.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The challenges facing today's world require people who are confident, resilient, connected, and committed to positive action.

The SROI analysis suggests that investments in Outward Bound are not simply investments in outdoor programs; they are investments in human flourishing. By helping participants develop the skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed to thrive and contribute, Outward Bound creates lasting value that ripples through families, communities, workplaces, and society.

[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE >](#)



In 2026, Outward Bound International (OBI), in partnership with Penn State University, the University of Utah, Clemson University, and supported by the John Templeton Foundation, completed a landmark global study examining how outdoor experiential learning influences character development. Conducted across 11 Outward Bound Schools worldwide, the research identified a shared framework for character development while recognizing the importance of local cultural contexts.

Importantly, the study moved beyond identifying outcomes to understanding how they are developed. Researchers found that five key program elements consistently strengthen character development across cultures: a clear educational philosophy, authentic adventure, meaningful service, intentional educational models, and skilled instructor behaviours. Together, these elements provide a practical framework that Schools can adapt to their unique contexts while maintaining the integrity of the Outward Bound experience.

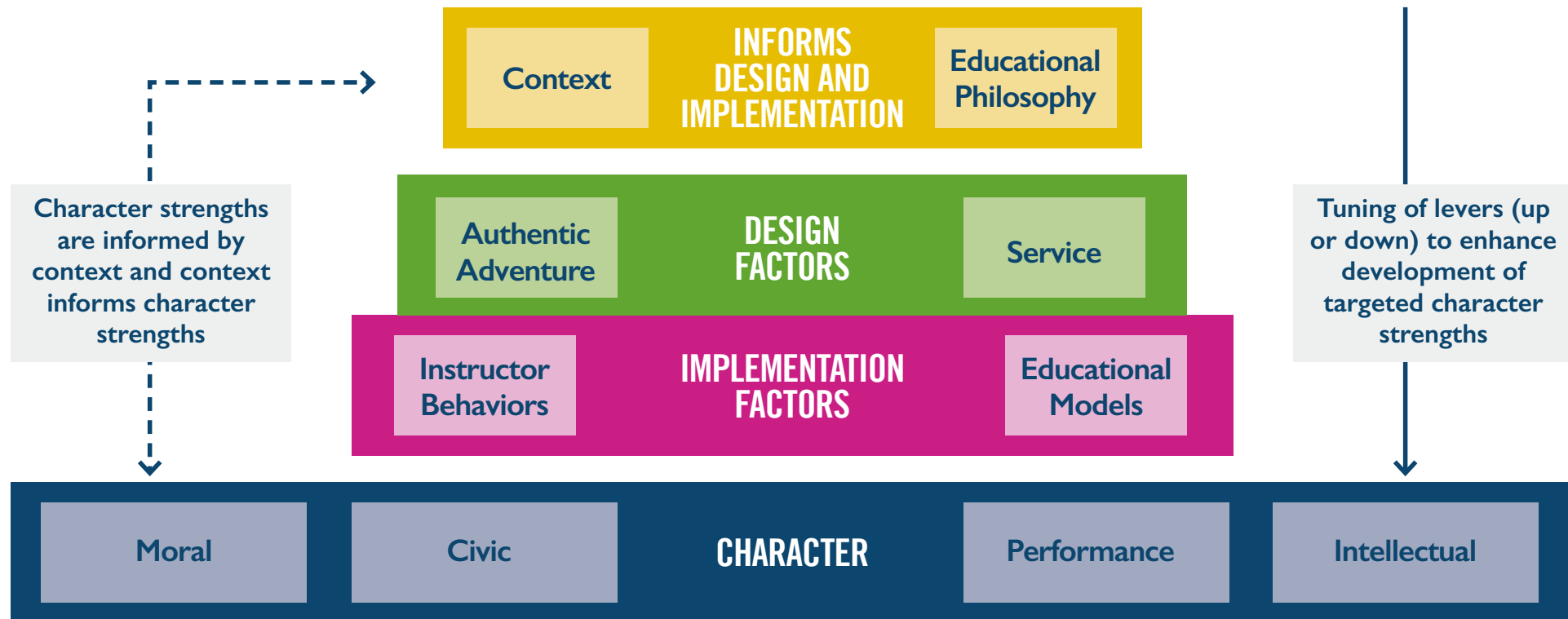
In an increasingly complex world, the research affirms Outward Bound's unique role in helping young people develop the character, relationships, and sense of purpose needed to flourish.

[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE >](#)

TEMPLETON-FUNDED GLOBAL CHARACTER PROJECT

6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study produced a dynamic framework linking context, course design, and instructional practice to the four key character domains, and positioning educational philosophy and School context as the foundation for “tuning” other program levers.





MECHANISMS OF CHANGE STUDY

This global study commissioned by OBI and conducted by researchers from the University of Utah, brings together the voices of 1,260 students across 14 Outward Bound Schools worldwide to better understand what young people gain from their Outward Bound experience and what drives that learning.

Using two open-ended questions from the Outward Bound Outcomes Survey (OBOS), researchers analyzed students' own descriptions of:

1. Their most important learning, and
2. What part of the course they believe created that learning

The findings are clear and consistent across cultures and contexts. Students most commonly describe growth in three areas:



**STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS
AND SOCIAL SKILLS**

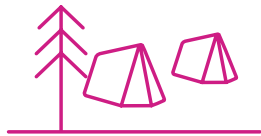


**INCREASED RESILIENCE AND
CONFIDENCE**

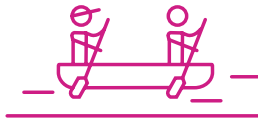


**THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICAL
OUTDOOR SKILLS**

Three core elements of the Outward Bound experience were identified as the strongest drivers of this growth:



Immersive
expedition-based
course design



Meaningful
challenge



Supportive,
inclusive group
culture

This study affirms that Outward Bound’s educational model, rooted in challenge, community, and connection to nature, continues to support young people worldwide to build resilience, confidence, social competence, compassion, and environmental responsibility.

It also provides one of the most globally representative perspectives to date on what truly matters to students, and why Outward Bound experiences create meaningful impact across cultures and contexts.

[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE >](#)

INTEGRATED GLOBAL SUMMARY

Across all Schools, students consistently highlighted three core areas of growth as the most meaningful outcomes of their Outward Bound experience:

43% Strengthening relationships and social skills

31% Building inner resilience and confidence

13% Developing practical outdoor and expedition skills

Together, these mechanisms illustrate how Outward Bound programs combine authentic adventure, intentional design, and powerful social environments to shape meaningful growth.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

OUR RESEARCHERS

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) Committee has played a central role in helping Outward Bound International develop and validate its global outcomes measurement tool, strengthen data analysis and interpretation, and identify meaningful opportunities for research and learning. This committee comprises researchers from across the globe who are experts in outdoor adventure and experiential education. All members of the committee are affiliated with at least one Outward Bound School and, by volunteering their time and expertise, demonstrate their passion for and commitment to Outward Bound's work.

[READ ABOUT THE RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE >](#)

OUR SUPPORTERS — GLOBAL AMBASSADORS

Outward Bound Global Ambassadors are a distinguished and dedicated group of Outward Bound champions who have been involved in a significant way with Outward Bound either regionally or globally, and continue to support and inspire the global Outward Bound movement. The support of the OB Global Ambassadors means a sustainable future for not only Outward Bound International but also the growing global network of member Schools.

[READ ABOUT OUR GLOBAL AMBASSADORS >](#)



RELEVANT THEN,
EVEN MORE RELEVANT NOW...

“

Outward Bound transcends individual differences and kindles within each of us a sense of community. The wilderness environment allows one's veneers to slip away, and each person can grow through daring to risk, to care, and to share with others. As an educational forum, Outward Bound offers true learning, involving heart, mind and body, in a way that will last a lifetime.

”

Kurt Hahn, Co-founder of Outward Bound



OUTWARD BOUND®
INTERNATIONAL

OB Taiwan 