

A LEGACY OF ADVENTURE LEARNING

Reflections across
generations of
Outward Bound
Alumni



THE
OUTWARD
BOUND TRUST



THE LASTING IMPACT OF OUTWARD BOUND

Since 1941 and guided by Kurt Hahn's belief in "education for life," Outward Bound has been delivering learning through adventure and helping generations of young people discover their potential — a mission that continues to shape lives today.

Outward Bound alumni across different generations consistently describe their courses as life-changing, with lasting benefits that shaped their personal growth and values.

THIS RESEARCH

In summer 2025, we invited alumni to complete an online survey exploring how Outward Bound courses have shaped skills, attitudes, and behaviours. 68 alumni aged 23–85 responded, sharing how Outward Bound impacted their sense of self, approach to challenge and relationships with others, with key outcomes including:

- Building confidence and compassion for others
- Developing skills that support positive pathways in life, such as resilience and emotional control
- Shaping personal values and supporting wellbeing



Feedback from alumni across all generations:



GENERATIONAL INSIGHTS

Key themes emerged for Outward Bound alumni from different generations which are presented in this report. The different generational insights are grouped and colour coded throughout the report as follows:

Recent Alumni

Career Alumni

Legacy Alumni



RECENT ALUMNI INSIGHTS

BUILDING CONFIDENCE

For alumni who attended Outward Bound 5-10 years ago, their course experience was essential in building self-confidence and helping them to find their voice, enabling bold steps into adulthood. Though the covid-19 pandemic disrupted milestones and isolated them from friends and family, they emerged with a heightened sense of resilience and self-belief as a result of their experiences at Outward Bound. These lessons from their course have carried into everyday life, helping them embrace opportunities such as solo travel and pursue studies and careers with an openness to challenge and feeling motivated to succeed.

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My growth mindset has [developed] a lot, and my own self belief. At school I believed my abilities were limited, and if I didn't understand something, I stopped trying. But after Outward Bound, I feel I approach struggles differently, and with an open mind to not always getting it right first time. Having these processes explained to you at age 16-17 is a crucial time, before heading to [university] and further education, as it means you are more likely to succeed.

Eilidh, age 24, 2017 course at Loch Eil

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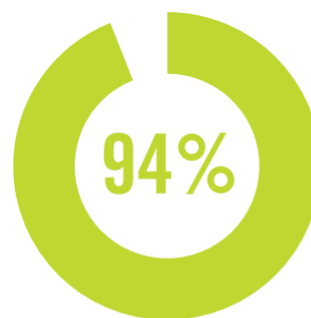
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Before the course I was an incredibly shy girl who wouldn't speak to anyone... since attending [Outward Bound], my confidence sky-rocketed and now I'm a journalist [and] spend my days talking to people and I went solo backpacking around Europe for two months. When my Grandad and Dad picked me up after that first course, they met a completely new girl who was ready to take on the world.

Mia, age 23, 2017 course at Ullswater

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Alumni who attended Outward Bound 5-10 years ago:



Agreed that they have seen positive results from applying what they learnt during their Outward Bound programme



Agreed that their ability to overcome stress and anxiety has been positively influenced by their Outward Bound experience

(N= 15)

DEVELOPING COMPASSION

Outward Bound experiences not only develop a strong sense of self, but also compassion for others and a sense of belonging. Surrounded and guided by positive role models, social barriers are broken down, and individuals are free to be their authentic, often vulnerable selves. This environment nurtures a young person's compassion, understanding and awareness of themselves and those around them; connecting young people from diverse backgrounds and building lasting friendships.

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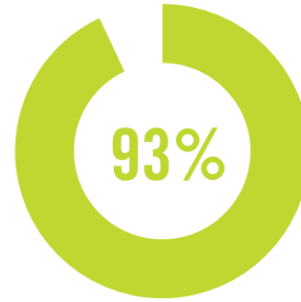
Outward Bound connected me with people my age who I would never have met otherwise. People from all different parts of the country and from all over the world; there are people who if I happened to be in their area, I would ask if they wanted to meet and catch up. Becoming that close and comfortable with a group of peers also gave me a feeling of confidence that I hadn't felt in a long time. It was very significant for me to feel part of a group and like I belonged.

I often think about my group from Outward Bound and how my friendships with them gave me confidence when meeting new people since then.

Katy, age 24, 2017 course at Ullswater

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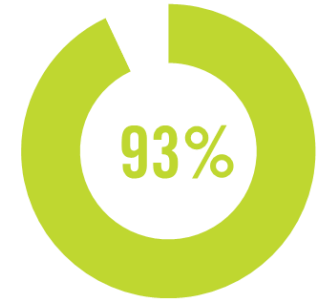
Alumni who attended Outward Bound 5-10 years ago:



Agreed that their Outward Bound experience helped them to better understand others' perspectives



Agreed that Outward Bound helped them to better appreciate and respect people's differences



Agreed that they are more empathetic in their relationships today because of their Outward Bound experience

(N= 15)



CAREER ALUMNI INSIGHTS

THE FOUNDATION FOR POSITIVE PATHWAYS

The lessons learned at Outward Bound build a powerful foundation for life by instilling resilience, teamwork, and confidence that carry into careers and personal growth. Alumni describe how the skills they developed — such as communication, problem solving, and perseverance — help them thrive under pressure, embrace challenges, and support others. For some, it even sparked new passions and career pathways, such as supporting frontline roles in high pressure environments and leading outdoor education, showing how these experiences can shape lasting, positive directions in life.



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In my current role as a paramedic, I believe I use values such as communication, problem solving and perseverance in my day to day work, which were all aspects challenged during my Outward Bound course.

Stuart, age 49, 1992 course at Loch Eil

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“

[Outward Bound] opened my eyes to the possibility that I could combine my passion for working with young people and my love of the outdoors ... gradually I ticked off my Rock Climbing Instructor and my Mountain Leader (ML) qualifications, trained as a teacher and now run an outdoor learning department in a school.

At the end of our course in 2011, we [wrote] a letter to ourselves in the future. My younger self had written that she wanted to be a Winter ML. This year I watched a group write their letters after their week in the Highlands. It meant so much to watch them. A week later, I passed my Winter ML, and it felt like everything had come full circle. After all this time, I will be bringing my own students to Scotland this coming winter.

Jen, 2011 course at Loch Eil

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SKILLS FOR LIFE

Feedback from alumni who came to Outward Bound 11-35 years ago shows that their experience has given them the tools to be confident, resilient, and to stay calm under pressure; helping individuals perform effectively and adapt to challenges in new and demanding situations.

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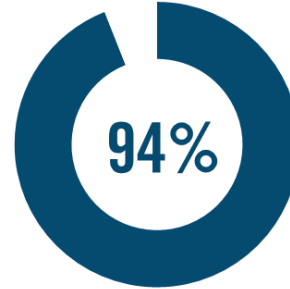
It gave me confidence I never knew I had. Adversity doesn't phase me much as a result and I have the confidence that my skills and determination won't fail me. It's made me a better human being.

Thomas, age 41, 2004 course at Ullswater

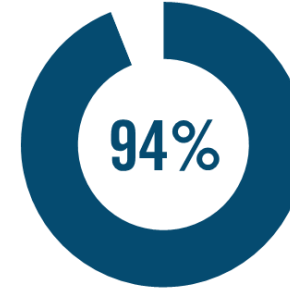
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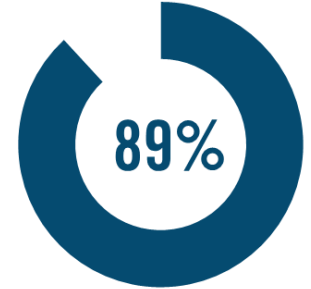
Alumni who attended Outward Bound 11-35 years ago:



Agreed that they developed coping strategies during Outward Bound that they still use today (N= 17)



Agreed that their ability to bounce back from setbacks has been positively influenced by Outward Bound (N= 17)



Agreed that they feel more sure of themselves and who they are because of their Outward Bound experience (N= 16)

“

Since doing the course, I've noticed that a lot of what I learned has stuck with me in my work life. Outward Bound really helped me build resilience and stay calm when things get intense. I also find myself being more mindful of how I work in a team: knowing when to speak up, when to step back, and how to support others without being asked. It gave me a mindset where I see challenges less as problems and more as chances to figure things out and grow.

Clémence, 2014 course at Ullswater

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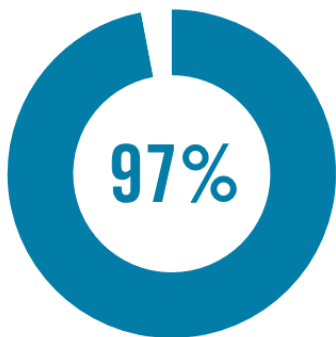
LEGACY ALUMNI INSIGHTS

SHAPING PERSONAL VALUES AND SUPPORTING WELLBEING

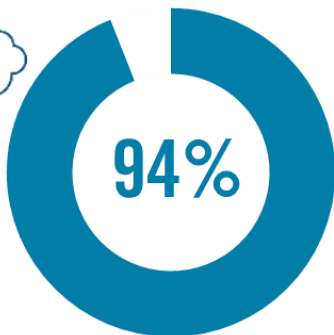
Feedback shows that Outward Bound has a profound impact on shaping personal values and wellbeing, helping young people discover passions, resilience, and a sense of belonging.

Alumni who came to Outward Bound 36+ years ago described how it inspired lifelong connections to nature in addition to building confidence to embrace challenge. Their time during their courses fostered values like teamwork, perseverance, and openness to new experiences. These lessons ripple outward — supporting careers, traditions, and community leadership — while nurturing wellbeing through a deep and lasting love of the outdoors.

Alumni who attended Outward Bound 36+ years ago:



Agreed that the lessons they learned during their Outward Bound course remain relevant to their life today (N=31)



Have drawn on lessons from Outward Bound when facing challenges (N=30)

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I came from a pretty poor background in the East End of London. I had not experienced anything like this before ... it totally opened my eyes to what was possible.

When I qualified as a youth worker, the outdoors always featured as a tool that I used. I have been a youth worker for the last 43 years and [Mountain Leader] and have overseen the management of 5 outdoor centres as a result of my Outward Bound experiences.

Martin, age 65, 1976 course at Aberdovey

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SHARING THE ADVENTURE

Alumni described how Outward Bound sparked a personal connection with nature by revealing new skills, hobbies, and sources of joy. This passion naturally extended to others, inspiring families and communities to embrace the outdoors and creating a legacy of connection to nature and adventure. Alumni shared examples of family traditions and influences that stemmed from their time at Outward Bound.



91%
of alumni who
attended Outward
Bound 36+ years
ago have shared
learning from their
experience with
others (N= 29)

“

Before I went [to Outward Bound] none of my family spent much time outside ... I was a quiet, reserved teenager who didn't think I was any good at anything, but through Outward Bound I found something that I enjoyed and surprisingly, could do well.

Outward Bound introduced me to pastimes and hobbies I would never have dreamed about. I took my own children and nieces/nephews camping and started their love of being outdoors ... my daughter is now at university and is a Mountain Leader [and] secretary of the university walking society ... Outward Bound has continued to have a hugely positive knock-on effect for so many other lives as well as mine.

Jane, age 56, 1983 course at Rhownair

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A LASTING CONNECTION

For our alumni who experienced Outward Bound 36+ years ago, they reflected and shared the deep and enduring connection with nature that came from their course, creating lifelong passions and meaningful places that shape identity and inspire reflection. Personal values were shaped through encouraging perseverance, teamwork, and a willingness to embrace challenge, and the lessons learned still remain relevant to their lives today.



91%
of alumni who
attended Outward
Bound 36+ years ago
agreed that their
course helped them
to understand their
personal values (N= 29)



“

I take every opportunity presented to me, even if I'm not great, I will give it a go, and I don't give up. I have a strong sense of team and the importance of individuals in a team. My love of the mountains, sea and walking all come from my time at Outward Bound.

Debbie, age 62, 1980 course at Rhownair

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Apart from the physical and mental aspects of the course, my first views of the fells above Ullswater began my love affair with the [Lake District] and the mountains that continues to this day. For a 14-year-old boy from a council estate in Leicester it was truly awe inspiring. I have never forgotten it. I visit every year and one day I hope my ashes will be scattered in that special place.

Tom, age 73, 1967 course at Ullswater

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Outward Bound would like to thank all the alumni who participated in this research

GET IN TOUCH

The Outward Bound Trust's Social Impact Report 2024: www.outwardbound.org.uk/our-impact/social-impact-report

Latest Annual Report and Accounts: www.outwardbound.org.uk/trusts-and-foundations

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST

HEAD OFFICE

Hackthorpe Hall, Hackthorpe, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2HX
T: 01931 740000 | E: enquiries@outwardbound.org.uk

LONDON OFFICE

4th Floor, 207 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8XD
T: 0203 301 6481 | E: fundraising@outwardbound.org.uk

GLASGOW OFFICE

Robertson House, 152 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4TB
T: 0141 413 0244 | E: enquiriesscotland@outwardbound.org.uk

CENTRES

Aberdovey, Snowdonia, Wales
Ogwen Cottage, Snowdonia, Wales
Eskdale, The Lake District, England
Howtown, The Lake District, England
Ullswater, The Lake District, England
Loch Eil, The Highlands, Scotland

