

What We Think **vs** What We Are:

10 Years of Homeward Bound and The Life Styles Inventory™

Changing the World - One Organisation at a Time.®



Homeward Bound

900+ women. 10 years of data.

They thought they had to hold back.
Others saw leaders ready to rise.

Every cohort told the same story, “*play small*” – even as their raters saw brilliance, confidence, and capability.

But behind that story? Lower satisfaction, higher stress, and untapped potential.

The data is clear: *change your thinking, change your impact!*

Executive Summary

The Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI) has played a pivotal role in Homeward Bound's mission to develop female leaders in STEMM since the program's inception in 2016. Since then, more than 900 women with STEMM backgrounds (these include Homeward Bound participants, staff and coaches, some whom have since transitioned into broader leadership roles) have completed the LSI diagnostic, receiving structured feedback on their thinking and behavioural styles..

This report presents an analysis of that dataset and underscores the critical importance of Homeward Bound's work in equipping these leaders to realise their full potential and contribute to a more sustainable future for the planet.

Key insights include:

- A significant gap exists between how participants perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. While self-descriptions often emphasised the need to hold back or defer to others, feedback from raters consistently portrayed participants as highly capable, confident, and effective.
- This pattern has persisted across every Homeward Bound cohort to date, indicating that these internalised beliefs are both widespread and enduring within the broader population of women in STEMM.
- Compared to the general population, HB participants reported lower levels of satisfaction with both their professional and personal lives - particularly in relation to their ability to manage stress.
- The value of constructive thinking and behavioural styles is clear: participants demonstrating the most constructive profiles were consistently described as more effective, more resilient, and more satisfied in both personal and professional contexts.



NB: While Homeward Bound LSI participants in this report come from STEMM backgrounds, some may no longer work in traditional STEMM roles.

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Introduction

Since its inception in 2016, the Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI) has been an integral part of the Homeward Bound leadership initiative. The LSI provides participants with evidence-based feedback on their thinking (LSI1) and behavioural (LSI2) styles, and is embedded within a broader leadership development framework that includes coaching, reflection, and strategic goal-setting.

As part of the Homeward Bound programme, all participants complete the LSI diagnostic early in their journey. This process enables individuals to better understand their current patterns of thinking and behaviour, assess their impact, and identify areas for development. The insights gained are used to inform one-on-one coaching sessions and peer discussions, helping participants to build greater self-awareness and shift towards more constructive leadership practices.

The LSI measures styles that are not innate but learned - shaped by life experiences, personal history, and environmental factors. These thinking and behavioural styles influence how individuals approach challenges, interact with others, and lead within complex systems.

This report presents an analysis of LSI data from 905 Homeward Bound participants over a ten-year period. It examines how their profiles compare with those of the broader population and explores trends in satisfaction and perceived effectiveness. By analysing this dataset, we aim to highlight the strengths and challenges experienced by women in STEMM leadership, and to provide evidence of the impact of constructive thinking and behavioural development.



The Circumplex - *A lens for measuring thinking and behaviour.*

The Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI) is a tool that helps individuals understand how they think (LSI1) and behave (LSI2) based on feedback from themselves and others. It uses a visual model called the Human Synergistics Circumplex, which maps out 12 thinking and behavioural styles.

These styles are grouped into three colour-coded clusters:

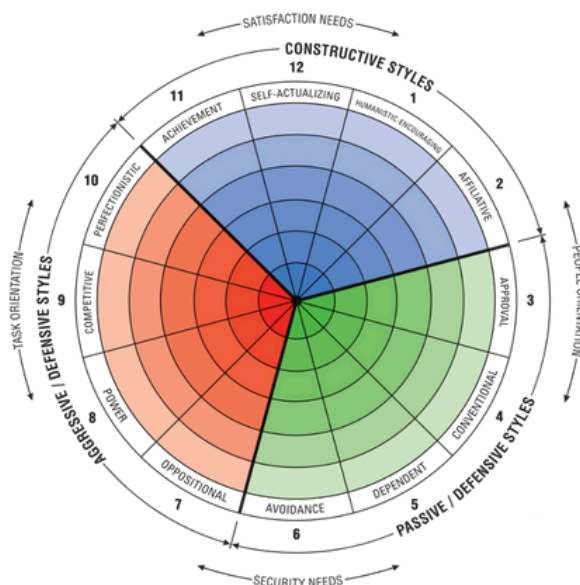
- **Constructive styles (Blue)**: Associated with positive behaviours like setting high standards, working well with others, being supportive, and adapting to challenges. People with more of these styles tend to be more effective and satisfied in their work and life.
- **Aggressive/Defensive styles (Red)**: Linked to more controlling or competitive behaviour, often putting individual needs ahead of the group. These styles can lead to stress and inconsistent performance.
- **Passive/Defensive styles (Green)**: Reflect tendencies like avoiding conflict, seeking approval, or holding back ideas. While these behaviours might feel safe, they can limit creativity and growth.

The model also shows how these styles meet different needs:

- The top half relates to satisfaction > things like connection, learning, and achievement.
- The bottom half focuses on security > feeling safe, accepted, or in control.
- The left side leans more towards task-focused behaviour, while the right side is more about people and relationships.

Each person's results are shown in colour on the Circumplex diagram (like a visual radar), with deeper colour indicating stronger patterns. The rings in the diagram show how someone's styles compare to a large reference group - ranging from the 10th to the 99th percentile.

This framework provides a simple but powerful way to understand how people operate and how their thinking and behaviour influence their effectiveness as leaders and team members.



Self-Actualising

Members are expected to gain enjoyment from their work and produce high quality services/products.

Approval

Members are expected to agree with, gain the approval of, and be liked by others.

Oppositional

Members are expected to gain status and influence by being critical and constantly challenging one another.

Humanistic-Encouraging

Members are expected to be supportive, constructive and open to influence in dealing with others.

Conventional

Members are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression.

Power

Members are expected to take charge, 'control' others, and make decisions autocratically.

Affiliative

Members are expected to be friendly, open and sensitive to the satisfaction of the workgroup.

Dependent

Members are expected to do what they are told and clear all decisions with supervisors.

Competitive

Members are expected to operate in a "win-lose" framework and work against their peers to be noticed.

Achievement

Members are expected to set challenging but realistic goals and solve problems effectively.

Avoidance

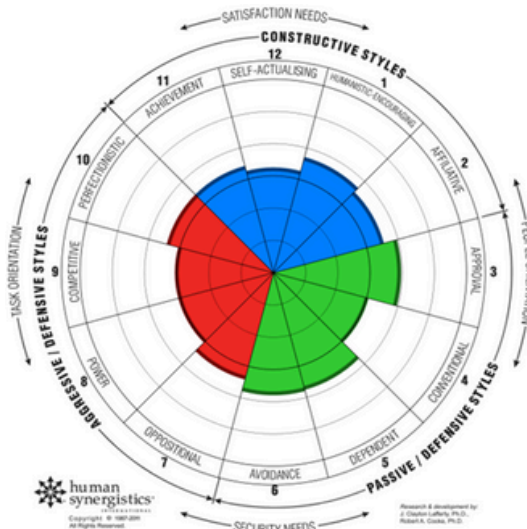
Members are expected to shift responsibilities to others and avoid being blamed for mistakes.

Perfectionistic

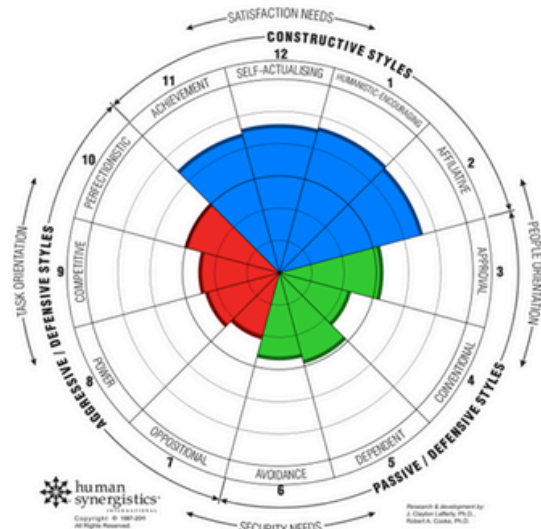
Members are expected to avoid making mistakes, work long hours, and keep 'on top' of everything.

What We Tell Ourselves vs What Others See!

Self Description vs Description by Others



Self (LSI 1)

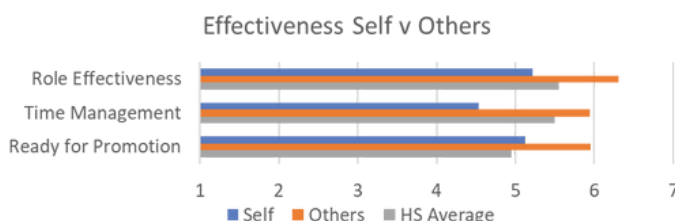


Others (LSI 2)

One of the most striking patterns in the Homeward Bound data is the consistent difference between how participants describe their own thinking styles and how others experience them in practice. Time and again, we see participants telling themselves they need to play small - hold back, wait, be agreeable, and defer to others. These are learnt thinking patterns, often shaped by earlier experiences.

Science is about being evidence-based. So when we look at these LSI1 self-descriptions, it's worth asking: what's the evidence? The evidence in the LSI2 - how others perceive them - tells a very different story. Raters consistently describe participants as highly Constructive: people with high standards, who pursue excellence, adapt well, offer support, and build strong interpersonal relationships.

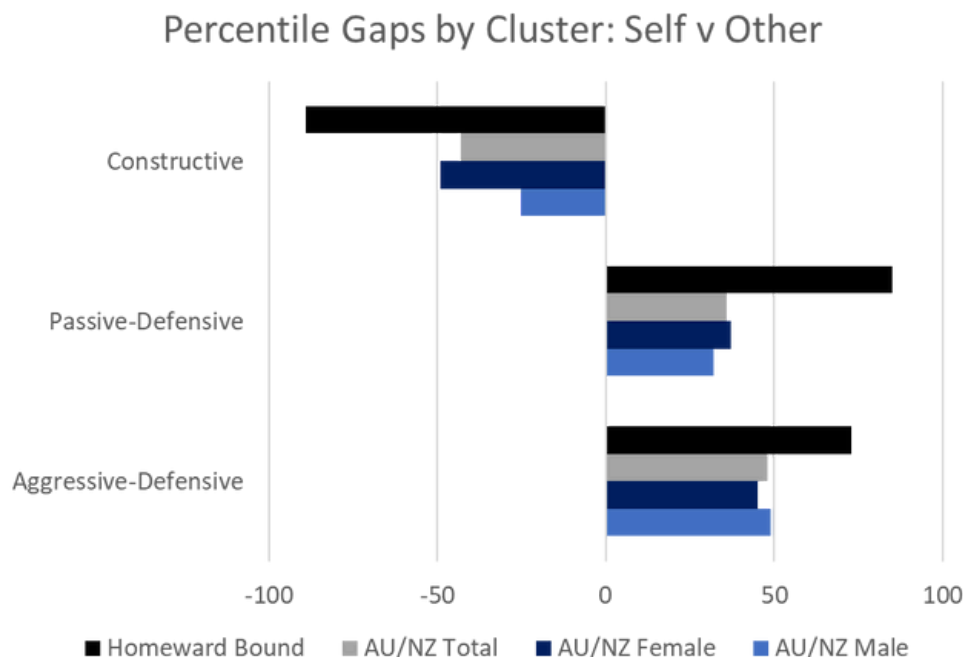
This contrast invites reflection. Perhaps it's time to hold those old internal stories up to the light, examine the evidence, weigh the trade-offs, and consider re-authoring a new story - one of confidence, stepping forward, leading, and owning expertise.



This same trend shows up in the effectiveness data. Participants rate themselves as less effective in their roles, less capable at managing time, and less ready for promotion than others believe them to be. Many are so wary of being seen as 'cocky' or 'arrogant' that they shy away from confidence altogether. But real confidence isn't flashy or loud, it's quiet and assured.

On the other hand, humility is rightly valued; it allows us to learn, to take on feedback, and to grow. But humility is not the same as self-doubt, self-diminishment, or playing small. Recognising that difference is essential in helping these women step fully into their leadership.

Is this specific to women in STEMM?



A natural question is whether this pattern ie, participants judging themselves more harshly than others do - is specific to Homeward Bound, or more broadly reflective of women in STEMM. To explore this, we compared the HB data with a broader dataset of 50,875 individuals from Australia and New Zealand (the regions from which most HB participants originate), all of whom completed both the LSI1 and LSI2 diagnostics.

This comparative dataset includes 22,314 women, 27,489 men and 1,072 individuals who identify as non-binary or preferred not to disclose their gender. Across the board, there is a general trend: people tend to rate themselves as less constructive and more defensive than they are perceived by others. This may reflect the influence of cultural factors such as the 'tall poppy syndrome', which discourages individuals from standing out or appearing overly confident.

While this trend is evident in the broader population, and more pronounced in women than men - it is not nearly as stark as the contrast seen in the HB cohort. **This suggests that the tendency to 'play small' and undervalue oneself is felt more acutely by Homeward Bound participants than by women in general, indicating a deeper or more systemic internalisation of these beliefs within this specific group.**

The trend is slightly more pronounced among female participants than male.

Compared to the overall AU/NZ data, HB participants show significantly wider perception gaps:

- **107% larger in the Constructive style,**
- **136% larger in Passive-Aggressive,**
- **52% larger in Aggressive-Defensive.**

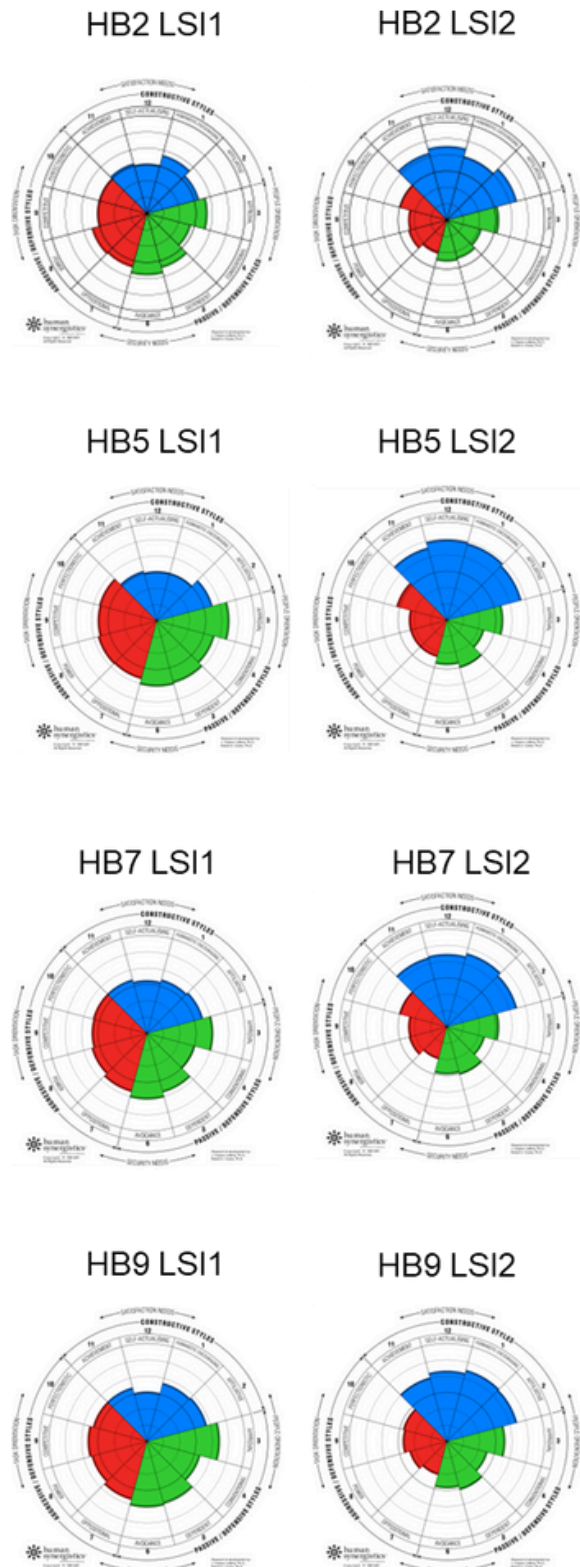
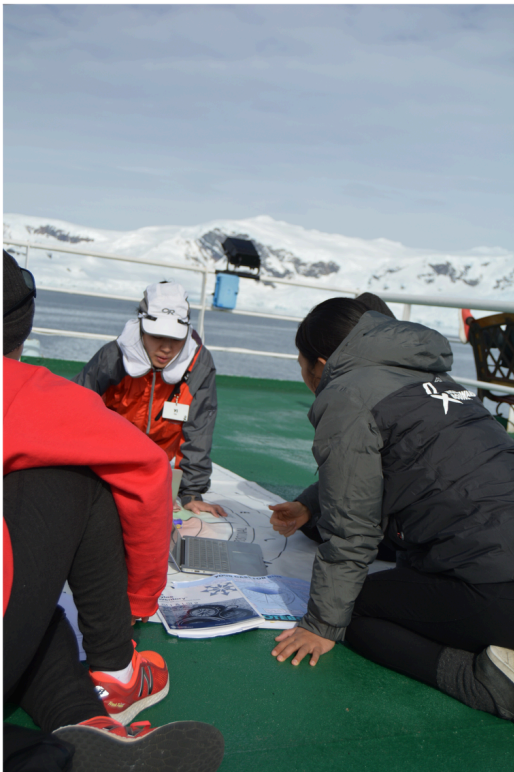


Is it changing over time?

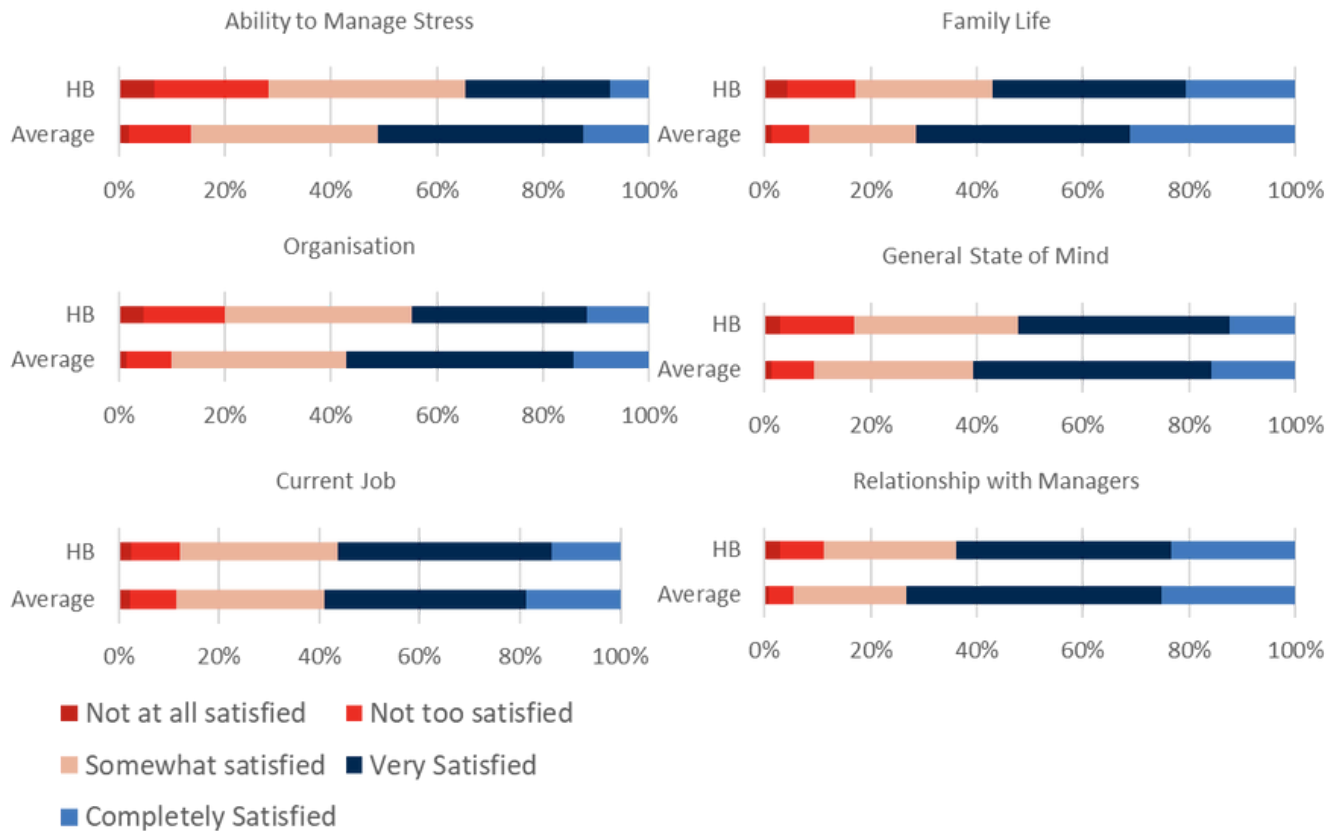
HB# Cohort - Self vs Others

At the time of writing, eight cohorts of Homeward Bound, (HB2 through to HB9), have completed both the LSI1 and LSI2 diagnostics, with the inaugural cohort (HB1) completing LSI1 only. While there are some year-to-year variations in the data, the overarching trend has remained consistent: participants are rated significantly more constructively by others than they perceive themselves to be.

This enduring pattern suggests that, over the past decade, there has been little meaningful shift in the internal narratives women in STEMM tell themselves. The story of needing to hold back, downplay strengths, or defer to others continues to persist—despite evidence from external feedback that strongly contradicts it.



How are women in STEMM feeling?



The LSI1 also includes a set of questions that assess individual satisfaction - both at work and more broadly. By comparing responses from Homeward Bound participants to those from the wider population, we gain insight into how this group is feeling collectively.

Overall, HB participants reported lower satisfaction across most areas, with the exception of personal growth and development. In this domain, 59.89% of HB participants indicated they were 'very' or 'completely' satisfied, compared to 55.23% of the general population - a difference that may be attributed to their engagement in the Homeward Bound programme itself.

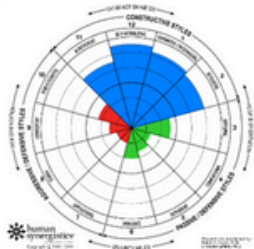
However, several key gaps emerged:

- **Ability to manage stress:** Only 34.59% of HB participants were satisfied, compared to 51.23% of the broader population.
- **Satisfaction with family life:** 56.91% of HB participants expressed satisfaction, compared to 71.5% of others.
- **Organisational dissatisfaction:** 20% of HB participants reported dissatisfaction with their organisation - double the rate of the general population (10.04%).
- **General state of mind:** 16.91% of HB participants reported dissatisfaction, compared to 9.26%.
- **Relationship with managers:** 11.27% of HB participants were dissatisfied, versus 5.54% of others.

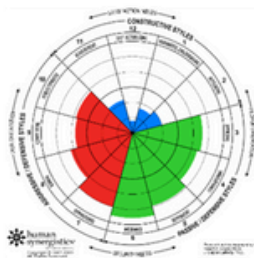
Taken together, these findings suggest that HB participants may be experiencing significant work-related pressure. This appears to be contributing to lower levels of satisfaction with their organisations and leaders, with ripple effects extending into their mental health and family lives.

Why does Thinking matter?

LSI1 Most Constructive Individuals



LSI1 Least Constructive Individuals



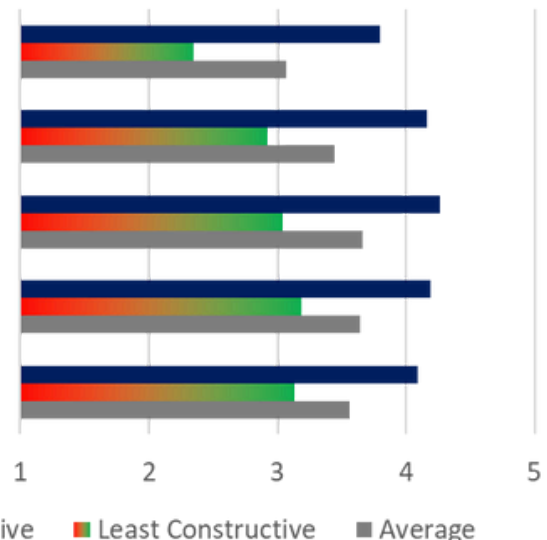
Ability to Manage Stress

General State of Mind

Personal Development

Work Accomplishments

Career Prospects



■ Most Constructive ■ Least Constructive ■ Average

One important question remains: why is the LSI included in the Homeward Bound programme in the first place? What is the value in critically examining the stories we tell ourselves, and how those stories influence the way we think and behave?

To highlight the impact of thinking styles, we compared the 10% most constructive individuals in the dataset with the 10% least constructive, examining how these differences relate to key outcomes. The results clearly illustrate the benefits of constructive thinking, particularly in the very areas where HB participants reported the lowest levels of satisfaction.

Compared to their less constructive counterparts, the most constructive individuals were:

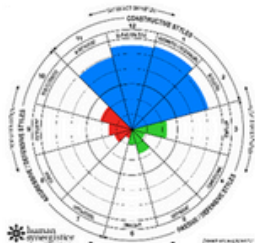
- **62% more satisfied with their ability to manage stress**
- **46% more satisfied with their general state of mind**
- **40% more satisfied with their personal growth and development**
- **31% more satisfied with their work accomplishments**
- **31% more satisfied with their career prospects**

These findings reinforce the importance of mindset and self-perception. Developing more constructive thinking patterns is not just beneficial - it is transformational, influencing everything from resilience and wellbeing to professional growth and career fulfilment.

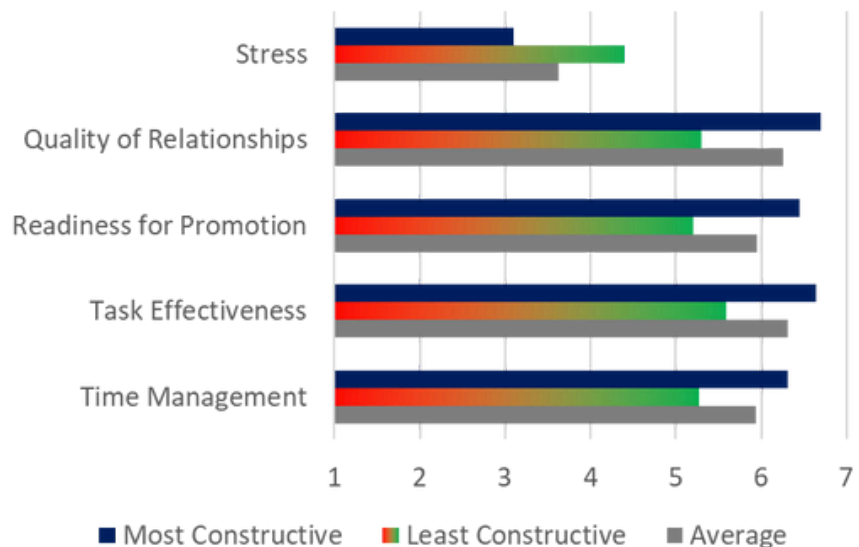
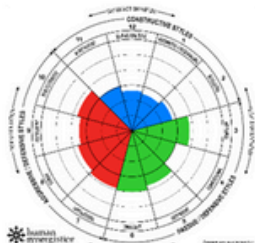


Why does Behaviour matter?

LSI2 Most Constructive Individuals



LSI1 Least Constructive Individuals



Equally important is how our internal stories are expressed outwardly - how they shape our behaviour and, in turn, influence how others perceive our effectiveness. The LSI2 captures this external view, providing insight into the impact of behavioural styles.

When we compare the 10% most and least constructive individuals on LSI2, the benefits of constructive behaviour become clear. Those with the most constructive profiles were rated as:

- **30% less stressed**
- **26% better in the quality of their relationships with others**
- **24% more likely to be ready for promotion**
- **19% more effective in their current role**
- **20% more effective at managing their time**

These outcomes highlight the tangible value of constructive behaviour - not only in how individuals function day-to-day, but also in how they are viewed as leaders, colleagues, and contributors. Behaviour, shaped by thinking, becomes the bridge between self-perception and external impact.

Where to next?



The data explored in this report underscores the vital role Homeward Bound plays in developing female leaders in STEMM background, not only through the practical skills delivered in the broader programme, but also through the deeper self-reflection prompted by the LSI diagnostics. Revisiting the internal stories participants tell themselves, about who they are and what they are capable of, is a powerful part of this journey.

The encouraging message in the LSI data, and in our thinking and behaviour more broadly, is that **none of it is fixed**. With awareness, reflection, and effort, it is entirely possible to shift how we think, and, as a result, how we behave. However, this often begins with questioning long-held beliefs and examining whether those internal narratives still serve us.

So consider your own story: **does it align with the evidence of how others experience you?**
Has it helped you in the past - but is it still serving your future? Or is it time to write a new one?

Follow the evidence. Re-author the story. Make an impact.

Time to Re-test? See Yourself Clearly, Lead Yourself Better!

The Transformative Power of the **LSI**

The Life Styles Inventory® (LSI) is more than just a tool – it's a mirror for personal growth. Grounded in decades of research, it helps you uncover how your current thinking and behaviour shape your effectiveness, relationships, and outcomes. With deeper self-awareness, you can break free from unhelpful patterns, build more constructive habits, and take control of your own transformation. **Interested to see how the LSI can help you? Contact Us / Find out more -->>>>**



The Personal Impact of the LSI



"What I've found most profound is how the LSI encourages deeper reflection on the figures who have shaped me as a person. Coming from a unique family dynamic with four older siblings... my mom, dad, and my nanny, who was like a second mother to me, I grew up surrounded by several role models, who influenced my perspective and interactions."

Paola Jenn, HB9

"As an Occupational Therapist, I have always been interested in human behaviour and aware of how our thoughts can impact us. However, it wasn't until I was provided the opportunity to complete the LSI through Homeward Bound, that I was finally empowered with an incredible framework. The LSI gave me the language to be able to label other people's "difficult" behaviour for what it was (a coping mechanism). Being able to label other people's behaviour has provided me with the necessary space to recognise the response this creates in me, regulate my emotions and then actively work towards using "blue" behaviour to support constructive conversations. Now, thanks to the increased self-awareness that the LSI has supported me to develop, I get to choose each day how I show up for the people around me. I hope to one day become a certified trainer and share this gift with others."

Brigid Hartnett, HB8



"I have supported the development of leaders in many different environments using the LSI for many years. The feature that stands out for me about the LSI – and this is especially true for the women of Homeward Bound because they have a STEMM background – is the fact that there is quality data to help people understand and take action on the thinking that may be holding them back. I have seen many HB participants make significant changes as a result of undertaking the LSI and coaching. At a personal level, I have also used feedback from the LSI to develop a more constructive mindset and to be more effective as a leader."

Simon Osborne, Accredited Practitioner

"One of the things that I am taking away from the Homeward Bound program is understanding my values and how I want to grow as a leader. The LSI tool has taught me where I am at, and also that forward-looking aspect of where I want to be heading, and developing both at work, but also in my own life."

Ruby Kan, HB8



"It really helped me to think carefully about my leadership characteristics, attributes, and particularly how to build collaborative leadership. I think this is central in the STEMM fields, but is often not given enough support."

Gina Ziervogel, HB6

