

Homeward Bound Program

Five Year Retrospective Evaluation

Key Findings and Recommendations

March 8, 2018



Opportunity made here.

Evaluation Conducted with Support
from Constellation Consulting Group



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1.0 Introduction & Background

Homeward Bound is an innovative program designed to support inadequately housed or homeless mother-led families in earning college diplomas, gaining employment, and achieving self-sufficiency. The primary goal of the program is to enable un/underemployed and/or precariously housed single mothers to gain employment with family-sustaining wages so that they and their families can move out of poverty. The program was developed and piloted by WoodGreen Community Services (WoodGreen) in Toronto in 2004 and has since created positive impacts for vulnerable single mothers and their children.

The program consists of four years of wrap-around intensive services that systematically eliminate barriers for single mothers to move out of poverty. In the first year of the program, participants engage in educational upgrading and skills development activities in preparation for the subsequent two years of the program, where participants work towards obtaining a college diploma. In the last year of the program, with a college diploma in hand, participants are supported in developing key employability skills and gaining work experience through internships facilitated by the Homeward Bound Industry Council.¹ By the end of the program, participants have increased their educational attainment, employment experience, and skills that all contribute to obtaining family-sustaining employment, stable housing, and positive futures for themselves and their children.

The program recognizes that, while single mothers have inherent strength and resilience, they often face disproportionate barriers to achieving their education and employment goals. In order to reduce barriers and bolster participant success the program provides housing, case management, on-site child care/after school youth programming, and college tuition. Trauma counselling and emotional support are available, as well as parenting training and financial and computer literacy upgrading.

With support from Ontario's Local Poverty Reduction Fund, in 2016 WoodGreen engaged external evaluation experts at Constellation Consulting Group to objectively assess the impact of the program on individuals who had participated in the last five years (since 2012). The objective of the research has been to better understand the outcomes, successes and challenges of Homeward Bound so that the program can be continuously improved and effectively scaled.

In parallel to the evaluation conducted with Homeward Bound participants, WoodGreen has been supported by Constellation Consulting Group in evolving a Social Return on Investment (SROI) model created by Boston Consulting Group in 2013 to adhere to international standards and more comprehensively assess the value of social outcomes created by the program. The result of an SROI analysis is an SROI ratio that reveals how much social value is created by a

¹ See www.woodgreen.org for more details.

2.0 What is the Context for Homeward Bound?

In Toronto in 2016, approximately 20% of families were headed by a lone parent² with an estimated 83% of lone parent families being female-led.³ The unemployment rate amongst single mothers living in Toronto was 13% compared with 7% amongst all adults living in Toronto,⁴ and the median household income in Toronto was only \$45,440 compared with a median household income of \$86,260 amongst coupled families.⁵ Many single mothers in Toronto who do not have employment income rely on income support through Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).⁶ Across Ontario, it is estimated that up to 18,600 single parents' primary source of income is Ontario Works and/or child support payments.⁷ According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), however, income provided by Ontario Works leaves lone parent families short of an income level that would place them above the poverty line. In a 2016 report on Ontario Works the CCPA estimated the poverty gap for a single parent with one child relying on Ontario Works was 35% and that it would take an additional \$10,386 in support to move these families above the poverty line.⁸

Ongoing increases in cost of living in Toronto and limited resources within female-led lone parent families puts significant pressure on families and creates conditions in which experiences of poverty are common. Even when single mothers are not living in poverty, they often hover precariously above the poverty level because they are usually the sole income earner, and are not earning enough income to build assets; if this sole income earner becomes unemployed or incapacitated, then, poverty instantly results.⁹ In part due to this precarious position, women parenting on their own enter homeless and women's shelters at twice the rate of two-parent families.¹⁰ Domestic violence against women and children is also a contributing factor to homelessness and when women become homeless, they are subsequently at an increased risk of violence, sexual assault and exploitation.¹¹

The experiences of poverty and homelessness impacting single mothers are also impacting their children. According to Statistics Canada, children living in a lone-parent family are three times as likely to live in a low-income household as children in two-parent families.¹² Approximately 22% of children in Toronto live in a lone parent family, with 89% living with a female lone parent.¹³ Research has shown that children living in poverty often have poor academic performance,

² 21.2% of families in Toronto and 17.9% of families in the GTA reported as lone parent census families; City of Toronto (2017).

³ Based on 2011 Census data with 83% in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area, and 84% in the Toronto Census Subdivision; Statistics Canada (2012).

⁴ National Labour Force Survey data, 2016.

⁵ Statistics Canada. (2017).

⁶ Baskin (2008)

⁷ Monsebraaten, L. (2016, February 26).

⁸ Thiessen, K. (2016). Page 13.

⁹ Ambert, A-M. (2006) Page 7.

¹⁰ YWCA Canada (2009).

¹¹ YWCA Canada (2009).

¹² Statistics Canada. (2017).

¹³ City of Toronto (2017)

delayed cognitive development, less participation in extra-curricular activities, lower career aspirations, interrupted school attendance, lower university attendance, an increased risk of illiteracy, and higher drop-out rates.¹⁴ They are also more likely to have Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) that negatively impact mental health and contribute to long-term negative outcomes.¹⁵ Overall, individuals who grow up in poverty are more likely to become lone parents themselves, perpetuating a cycle of intergenerational poverty and barriers to advancement.¹⁶

Despite the inherent resilience of single mothers and their deep commitment to providing for and supporting their children, they often face multiple barriers to exiting poverty, including barriers to furthering their education and gaining employment. In a study conducted with single mothers attending post-secondary education institutions in Ontario, Ajandi highlights the ways in which limited social capital, low child care availability and affordability, social pressures, and social stigma create barriers to single mothers as they seek to advance their education to improve their employability.¹⁷ With fewer assets such as a higher education, work experience, and a good income amongst single mothers, the path out of poverty often becomes difficult.¹⁸

Homeward Bound seeks to change the conditions that lead to intergenerational poverty, conscientiously eliminating barriers and supporting single mothers in building on their own strength and resilience so that they can gain employment with family-sustaining wages and move out of poverty for the long-term. In the last five years, 78 single mothers have graduated Homeward Bound having completed four years of intensive programming, including earning a college degree. In addition, 20 women began the program but withdrew before completing, and 11 women began the program but were discharged before completing, resulting in a program completion rate of 72%.

¹⁴ Canadian Teacher's Federation. (2009). Page 1.

¹⁵ Nurius, P., Logan-Greene, P. & Green, S. (2012).

¹⁶ Ambert (2006) Page.7

¹⁷ Ajandi, J. (2011).

¹⁸ Ambert, A-M. (2006) Page 7.

3.0 How Do We Know Homeward Bound is Working?

3.1 Evaluation Methods

Since its inception Homeward Bound has consistently received positive feedback from graduating participants, and preliminary assessments of the program's impact from 2005 to 2007 suggested that up to 80% of participants gain employment after graduation.¹⁹ In 2013, Boston Consulting Group worked with WoodGreen to analyze the social value created by the program using basic Social Return on Investment (SROI) techniques. The 2013 SROI analysis by Boston Consulting Group suggested that the program is creating at least \$4 for every dollar invested.

With preliminary evidence pointing to the program's success in creating significant social impact, scaling Homeward Bound has begun in communities across Ontario, including a cultural adaptation of Homeward Bound by Indigenous Friendship Centres for the urban Indigenous context. As communities move forward with scaling Homeward Bound the importance of consistent outcomes measurement and deep understanding of program impact has been highlighted.

In the spring of 2016, with support from Ontario's Local Poverty Reduction Fund, WoodGreen began a process of updating Homeward Bound outcomes measurement systems in order to reduce measurement burden on staff, increase the quality and availability of information about program outcomes, and enable outcomes measurement systems to be incorporated into Homeward Bound partner communities. In undertaking this work, WoodGreen has partnered with external evaluation experts at Constellation Consulting Group to ensure the highest quality of objective assessment of program outcomes. Recognizing that the Homeward Bound program has been updated and adjusted over the years, targeted assessment of the impact of new program components, such as the Transitions to Success (TTS) employment readiness component, has been an important aspect of the measurement system update.

As Homeward Bound moves forward with these important updates, in 2017 it was recognized that a retrospective evaluation of participant outcomes from the past five years could garner additional insights into program effectiveness, areas for program improvement, and key questions for evaluation and measurement going forward. In the summer of 2017, the evaluation conducted with individuals who had participated in Homeward Bound in the last five years involved:



A reflective online survey for all participants who had completed Homeward Bound within the last 5 years, as well as participants who began the program but withdrew before completing.

¹⁹ For example, the program was assessed in 2006 by Patel, Leung, Cheng, Sarmiento, & Corter through the Atkinson Centre at the University of Toronto. The program was also assessed from 2005 to 2007 by Ekos Nomos consultants. Both assessments found preliminary evidence of program effectiveness and success in creating positive social outcomes for female-led households.



Phone surveys with participants who were unable to complete the survey online.

The surveys included questions on housing status, employment, and income, which could be compared with information collected by Homeward Bound when participants enter the program. The surveys also provided space to qualitatively describe the impact of Homeward Bound on survey respondents and their children, as well as observed areas for program improvement. See Appendix A for survey questions.

Online survey invitations were sent to the 78 Homeward Bound participants who completed the program in the last five years, and the 20 individuals who withdrew from the program in the last five years. Surveys were not conducted with the 11 individuals who had been discharged from the program in the last five years, as many no longer have valid contact information recorded by Homeward Bound. Valid survey responses were received from **50** participants who had graduated within the last five years, representing a 64% response rate. Of the 50 participants who engaged in the evaluation, 49 completed the survey online and 1 completed the survey via phone interview.



Existing participant intake records were used to compare changes that occurred for survey respondents from when they began the program to when they completed the survey. These program records were also used to analyze differences between survey respondents and non-respondents.

The demographics of those who participated in the evaluation were not, for the most part, significantly different from those who chose not to participate in the evaluation, however graduates who did not complete the survey had, on average, graduated longer ago than those who completed the survey (3 years compared with 2 years). Those who did not complete the survey were also more likely to have lower education upon entry to Homeward Bound (85% of non-respondents had grade 12 education or less compared with 68% of respondents). While respondents and non-respondents had a similar average number of children (1.6 compared with 1.9), non-respondents were more likely to have more than two children (10% of respondents had more than two children, compared with 19% of non-respondents). See Section 3.0 for more details on demographics of those who participated in the evaluation.

Only five withdrawn participants chose to complete a survey, representing a 25% response rate and a non-statistically significant sample. Due to the low response rate amongst withdrawn participants, comparative analysis and conclusions cannot be drawn with confidence at this time.

In parallel to the evaluation conducted with past Homeward Bound participants, WoodGreen has worked with Constellation Consulting Group to evolve the preliminary 2013 SROI assessment conducted by Boston Consulting Group into a robust and comprehensive SROI model that

adheres to the internationally standardized SROI methodology and integrates actual program data gathered through the 2017 evaluation.²⁰

SROI is a methodology for articulating and understanding the financial value of social outcomes created through social investment. The SROI ratio produced through an SROI analysis indicates how much social value is created for every dollar invested in a program, articulating in monetary terms the social value of positive social outcomes. For example, an SROI ratio of 1 : 3 would indicate that for every dollar invested in an initiative, three dollars is created in social value (the value of outcomes achieved). While SROI enables social initiatives to speak about social outcomes in the *language* of financial returns, it is important to note that the social value return calculated through an SROI analysis is not *equivalent* to a financial return that would see the creation of spendable dollars. Rather, it is better understood as an approach to valuing social outcomes through financial measures other than standard economic indicators, such as GDP.²¹

Since new outcome performance metrics are currently being developed and implemented within the Homeward Bound Program, the new SROI analysis was conducted using a combined evaluative and forecast approach, building on key available evaluation information from the Homeward Bound Program (including information from the 2017 evaluation survey) combined with reliable external research to create an estimation of the social value created by the program. Sensitivity tests were conducted to ensure the validity of any assumptions or estimations that were made.²²

3.2 Evaluation Limitations

While attempts were made to engage in evaluation methods that would result in robust results, there are nevertheless limitations to the study and generalizability of findings. First, although a 64% survey response rate amongst graduated participants is substantial, with a small total population size of 78 graduated participants, a sample of 50 respondents only represents a confidence level of 75%. This limits the accuracy of findings as they apply to the whole population of graduated participants. Further, too few withdrawn participants were involved in the survey to enable comparative analysis and, with no discharged participants engaged through the evaluation, some comparative analysis opportunities may have been missed.

The study was also limited by the types of information gathered at Homeward Bound intake in the last five years. No outcome-related information on children was gathered at intake during this period, and intake information from women entering the program was not as detailed as information gathered through the evaluation, somewhat limiting assessment of change over time (e.g. information on whether participants were receiving benefits through employment

²⁰ Internationally standardized through the Social Value Network International and outlined in: Nicholls, J., Lawlow, E., Neitzert, E., & Goodspeed, T. (2012) *A Guide to Social Return on Investment*. London, UK: The SROI Network.

²¹ See for example: Ravi, A., & Reinhardt, C. (2011) and the work of economist Joseph Stiglitz in relation to well-being valuation.

²² Please contact WoodGreen's Strategy and Innovation Team for SROI details.

when they started the program was not collected at intake so no comparison could be made with participants' current situations).

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the current study has not involved a control group, limiting the assumptions that can be made based on findings garnered through the evaluation. Although some comparison can be made with single mothers in Toronto generally, it is recognized that the general population of single mothers in Toronto is not likely to be comparable to Homeward Bound participants since Homeward Bound participants are generally more disadvantaged than the average single mother (e.g. homeless, extremely low-income, etc.). At the same time, Homeward Bound participants are possibly more motivated to change than similarly disadvantaged single mothers who do not engage with the program.

While results from the 2017 evaluation are meaningful and impactful, ongoing evaluation systems upgrading and pursuit of robust evaluation activities is needed to further advance our understanding of the processes of change fostered by the Homeward Bound program.

3.3 SROI Analysis Limitations

Since the SROI analysis of Homeward Bound has used data from the 2017 evaluation to determine the social value of the program, it is subject to the same limitations as the evaluation and has not included analysis of information from withdrawn participants.

Additionally, SROI is an emergent methodology for understanding and articulating social value, and as an emergent methodology it is still evolving to address inherent limitations. In particular, while SROI analysis uses innovative valuation techniques to assess the financial value of social outcomes produced by social initiatives like Homeward Bound, it may never be possible to fully articulate the value of social outcomes in financial terms, meaning the SROI ratio likely understates the actual social value created by the program.

Further, without a control group for comparison, discounts included in the SROI have been based on existing research, which may not consistently align with the lived-experiences of Homeward Bound participants. Future research and ongoing evaluation can help create deeper understanding of the change experienced by participants, and increase the robustness of the SROI analysis model used to assess the social value created by Homeward Bound.

4.0 Who Was Involved in the Evaluation?



In total, **50** unique Homeward Bound graduates engaged in the evaluation.



On average, survey respondents had graduated **2** years ago, with the time since their graduation ranging from less than six months to five years.

Homeward Bound aims to impact the lives of female-led families living in poverty, which may include un/underemployment, low income, and/or precarious housing. Program records revealed that:



46% of survey respondents were living in a women's shelter or homeless shelter when they started Homeward Bound. Others were living in market rental (44%), subsidized rentals (4%) or other housing (4%).²³



68% of survey respondents had only achieved high school education or less when they entered the program. The other 32% of survey respondents had college or university education when they started Homeward Bound, though this education may not have been completed and/or recognized in Canada.²⁴



94% of survey respondents were unemployed when they began Homeward Bound and 6% were employed part-time.²⁵



90% of survey respondents indicated their primary source of income at intake into Homeward Bound was Ontario Works (including PNA). Others primarily received income through employment (4%), child support payments (4%), or ODSP (2%).²⁶



72% of survey respondents were Canadian Citizens when they began Homeward Bound. Others were Landed Immigrants (20%), Sponsored Immigrants (2%), Convention Refugees (4%), or identified having 'Native Status' (2%).²⁷

²³ N=48

²⁴ N=50

²⁵ N=50

²⁶ N=50

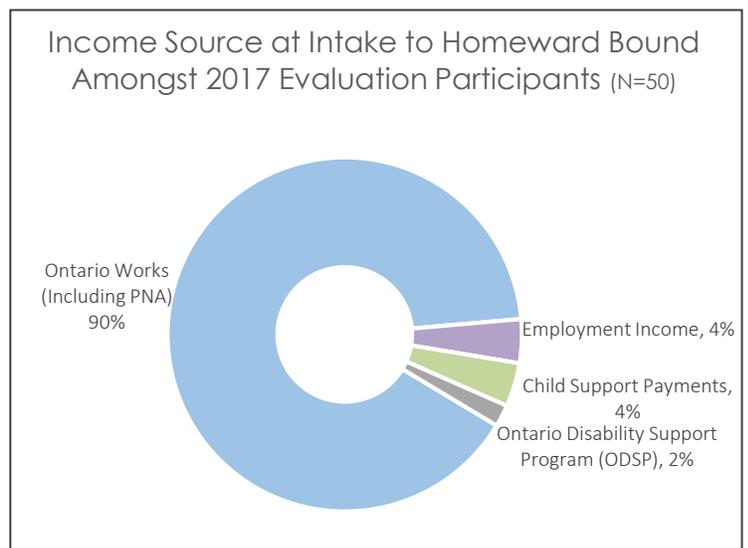
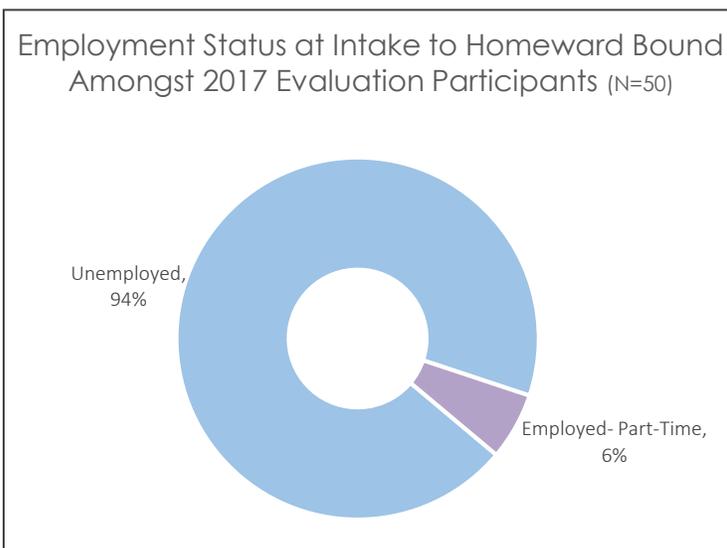
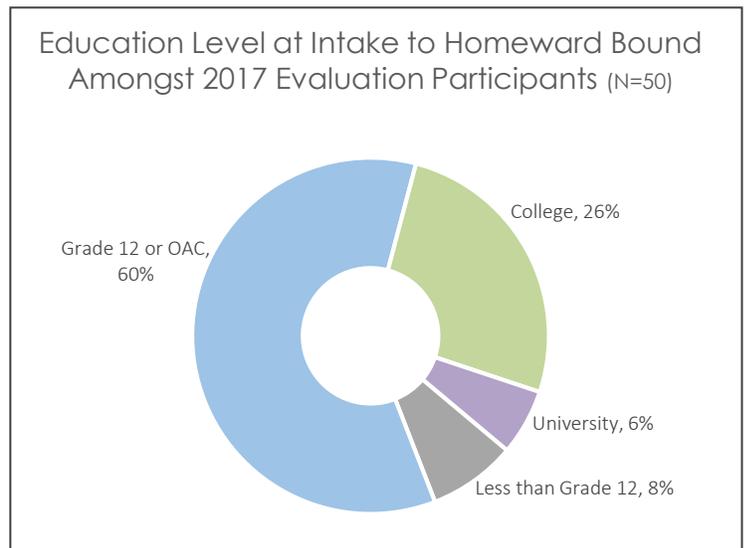
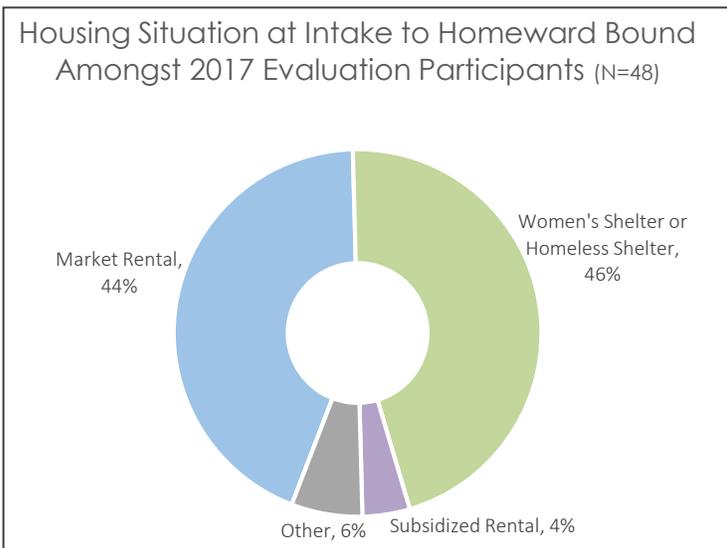
²⁷ N=50



On average, survey respondents had **1.6 children** when they began Homeward Bound. 54% of respondents had one child, 36% had two children, and 10% had more than two children when entering the program.



When starting Homeward Bound, survey respondent ages ranged from 22 to 53, with an average age of **33** years old at intake.



Homeward Bound has a rigorous application process to ensure the program is accessed by single mothers with demonstrated high need as well as demonstrated commitment to change, strength, and resiliency. Based on survey respondent demographics upon entry to the program, it is apparent that Homeward Bound participants are often facing deeper poverty, disadvantage, and barriers than single mothers in Toronto overall. The unemployment rate and the rate of Ontario Works access were much higher for mothers entering Homeward Bound in comparison to single mothers in Toronto generally.²⁸ Similarly, the rate of shelter use amongst Homeward Bound participants was much higher than shelter use by single mothers in Toronto generally.²⁹

Overall, while single mothers entering Homeward Bound are at higher risk of entrenched poverty in the long-term, based on Homeward Bound entrance and application criteria, they are also extremely motivated and committed changing their circumstances for themselves and their families.

²⁸ See for example: Monsebraaten, L. (2016, February 26).; Canadian Labour Force Survey data

²⁹ YWCA Canada (2009).

5.0 What Was Found Through the 2017 Evaluation?

The 2017 evaluation of Homeward Bound revealed important learnings about the impact of the program. Examining changes in housing status, employment and income source, and education from when survey respondents began Homeward Bound to their self-reported status today, up to five years after graduation from Homeward Bound, the outcomes are impressive. Beyond quantitatively measured changes in housing, employment, and education, qualitative comments from participants have highlighted the transformational nature of the program for themselves and their children.

5.1 Factors Contributing to Homeward Bound Completion

For individuals who participated in Homeward Bound in the last five years, the program completion rate was 72%, with 18% of participants withdrawing from the program voluntarily for various reasons (e.g. wanting to live with a partner, finding employment, choosing a different path, etc.) and 10% of participants being discharged from the program for various reason (e.g. non-compliance with program rules).³⁰



Overall, **72%** of those who begin Homeward Bound complete the program.

Those who complete Homeward Bound are generally slightly older, with an average age of 33 at program intake compared to an average age of 27 amongst withdrawn and discharged participants starting the program. Individuals who graduate from Homeward Bound are more likely than those who withdraw or are discharged from the program to have three or more children, although the average number of children amongst all participants is quite similar (graduates having 1.7 children on average compared with withdrawn participants having 1.5 children and discharged participants having 1.4 children).



100% of participants who were immigrants or convention refugees when they entered Homeward Bound completed the program.

Amongst Homeward Bound participants completing or disengaging from the program, withdrawn participants were the most likely to be employed at intake, and discharged participants were the least likely. Mirroring employment status, withdrawn participants were the least likely to be accessing income support, and discharged participants were the most likely.

Considering the demographic profiles of those who are completing and not completing Homeward Bound can, in the future, help inform participant selection to maximize program effectiveness, however the mandate of the program to serve motivated vulnerable single mothers should remain the primary driver of intake criteria.

³⁰ Including 78 graduates; 20 withdrawn participants; and 11 discharged participants.

5.2 Housing Outcomes for Homeward Bound Graduates

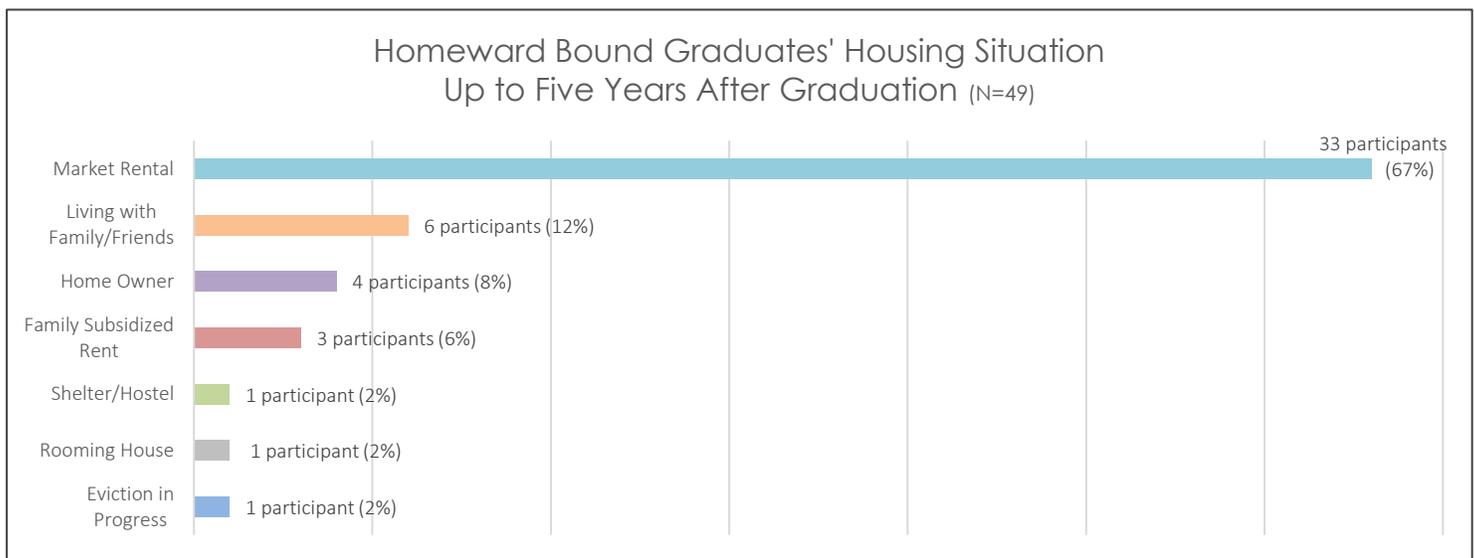
Housing instability often contributes significantly to family stress and poor health for single-parent families and research has shown that poor housing quality and residential instability negatively impact children’s and adolescents’ development and functioning, including worse emotional and behavioural functioning, and lower cognitive skills.³¹ This contributes to poor academic performance as well as social and emotional problems amongst children experiencing housing instability and poor housing conditions.³²

The 2017 evaluation revealed that housing instability has decreased substantially for Homeward Bound participants up to five years after graduation. Upon entry to the program, 46% of survey respondents (22 people) were living in a shelter (homeless shelter or women’s shelter) compared with only 1 survey respondent currently living in a shelter or hostel.³³



Remarkably, **92%** of participants who were living in a shelter when they started Homeward Bound are now living in market rental (77%), subsidized housing (9%), or a home they own (5%).³⁴

Of those entering Homeward Bound from market rental, most returned to market rental (57%) or advanced into home ownership (5%). Others indicated they had moved to subsidized housing (5%), a rooming house (5%), or living with family/friends (24%).³⁵



Overall, **67%** of survey respondents are now living in market rentals and **8%** now own their own home.

³¹ Pomeroy, S. & Marquis-Bissonnette, M. (2016); Coley, R. L., Leventhal, T., Lynch, A. D., & Kull, M. (2013).

³² Leventhal, T., & Newman, S. (2010).

³³ N=48 with pre housing status information; N=47 individuals with matched pre to post housing status responses

³⁴ N=22 individuals who were living in a shelter when they started Homeward Bound and had a matched post

³⁵ N=21 individuals who were living in market rental when they started Homeward Bound and had a matched post.

5.3 Education Outcomes for Homeward Bound Graduates

Poverty is both a barrier to completing post-secondary education and often a consequence of not completing post-secondary education.³⁶ Particularly for single mothers, the financial and social barriers to post-secondary education limit ability to successfully further educational attainment, resulting for many in greater difficulty escaping poverty.³⁷ This in turn decreases their children's likelihood of completing post-secondary education, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.³⁸ When single mothers complete higher education, it advances not only their social capital but also the social capital of their children, increasing the likelihood that their children will complete high school and go on to post-secondary education.³⁹

Upon intake to the program, nearly two thirds of survey respondents had Grade 12 as their highest level of educational achievement (64%).⁴⁰ To graduate Homeward Bound, participants must complete a two-year college program in one of four fields of study identified by the program as employable:

1. Early Childhood Education (ECE)
2. Business/Human Resources (HR)
3. Networking/IT support
4. Legal assistance (law clerk program)

All survey respondents who entered Homeward Bound with a Grade 12 education or less, graduated with a college education in an employable field. The other 32% of survey respondents who had college or university education when they started Homeward Bound, may not have had education in employable fields or may have had post-secondary education that was not recognized because it was completed outside Canada. These participants also graduated Homeward Bound with a college education in an employable field.



100% of survey respondents graduated Homeward Bound having completed a college degree in an employable field.

In total, 65% of survey respondents studied business/HR, 17% studied legal administration (law clerk program), 13% studied Early Childhood Education, and 6% studied networking/IT support.⁴¹

Pursuing and accomplishing additional education can lead to a desire for continued skills development. Since graduating from Homeward Bound, 26% of survey respondents indicated they had pursued more education, including training related to their employment, additional

³⁶ Deming, D., & Dynarski, S. (2009).

³⁷ Ajandi, J. (2011).

³⁸ Ferguson, H., Bovaird, S. & Mueller, M. (2007); Aronson, P. (2008).

³⁹ Gofen, A. (2009)

⁴⁰ N=45

⁴¹ N=48

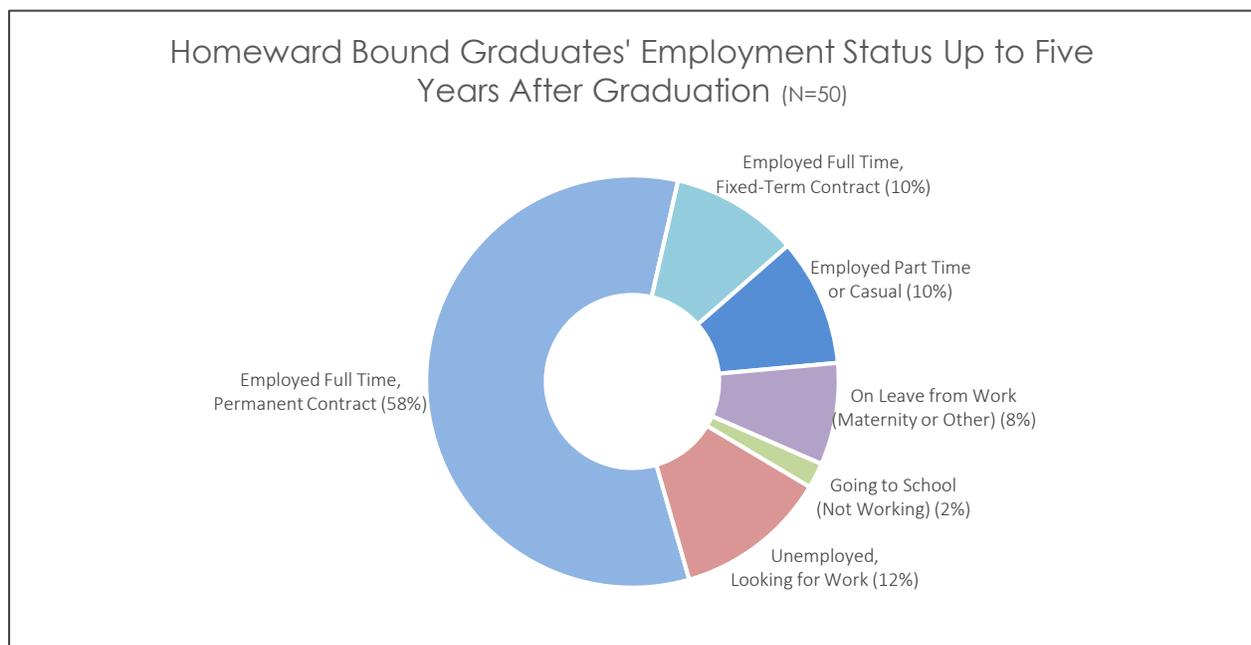
certification, and university.⁴² Several participants also indicated that in the future they plan to pursue further education advancement opportunities.

5.4 Employment & Income Outcomes for Homeward Bound Graduates

Employment is one of the key outcome goals of Homeward Bound because higher incomes obtained through employment are directly linked with single mothers' ability to move out of poverty.⁴³ Upon intake to Homeward Bound, 94% of survey respondents (47 people) were unemployed.⁴⁴ Currently, only 6 survey respondents (12%) are unemployed, and all indicated that they are looking for work. Another 4 respondents (8%) indicated that they are currently on maternity or some other type of leave from work, and 1 respondent indicated that they are not working currently because they are in school.⁴⁵



Overall, **78%** of survey respondents are currently working (full or part time) after graduating from Homeward Bound, representing an employment rate of **87%** amongst graduates.



Overall, the program results in extremely high-risk and vulnerable female-led families moving from an unemployment rate of 94% at intake to the program to an unemployment rate of only 13% up to five years after graduation. The after-graduation unemployment and employment rates are identical to Toronto-based single mothers generally, suggesting that the program

⁴² N=49

⁴³ See for example: Aletha *et al.* (2005); Misra, J. Moller, S., Strader, E., & Wemlinger, E. (2012)

⁴⁴ N=50

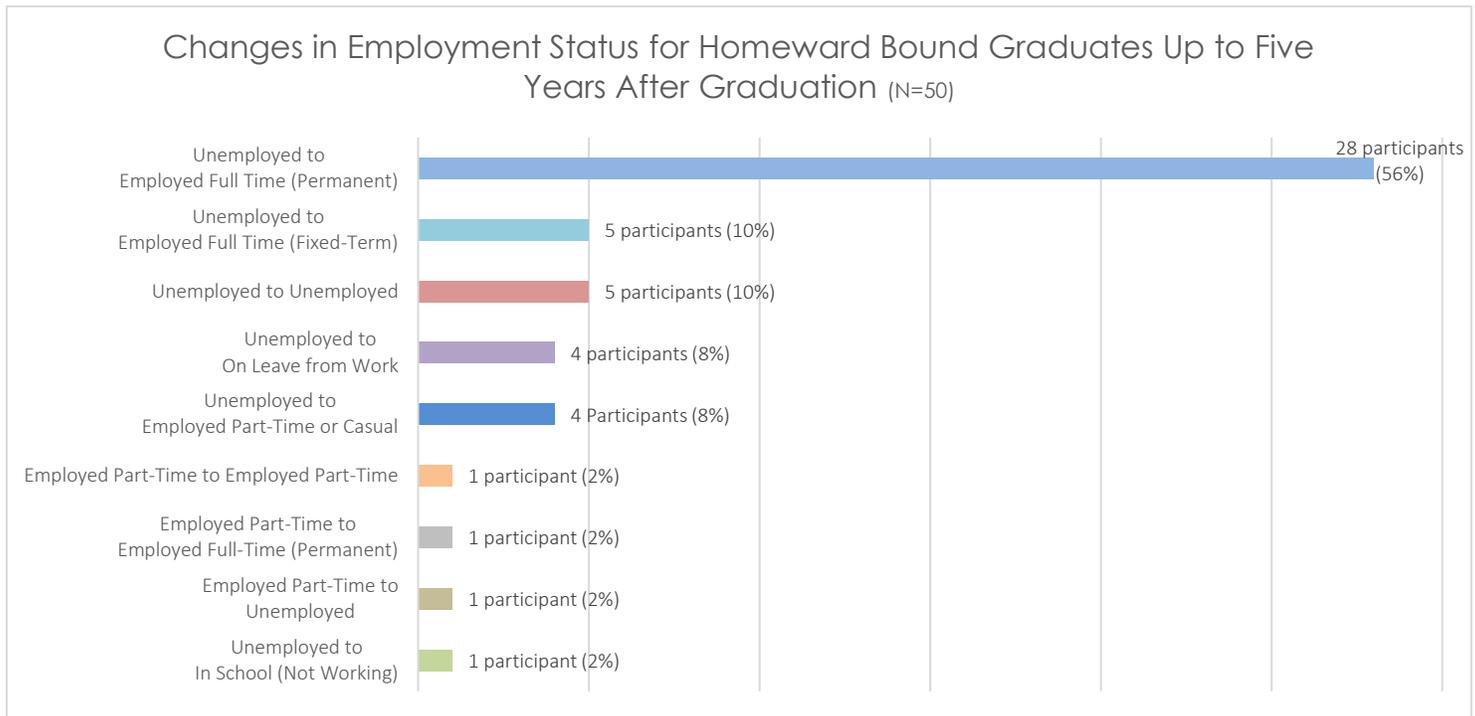
⁴⁵ N=50

moves families from extreme vulnerability to lower-risk situations. The labour market participation rate amongst Homeward Bound graduates, however, is higher than that of single mothers in Toronto generally, sitting at 90% compared with 75%.⁴⁶



Upon entering Homeward Bound, the employment rate amongst participants was **6% compared with 87%** up to five years after graduation.

In total, 79% of survey respondents who were unemployed when they began Homeward Bound are now employed.⁴⁷ Of the three participants who were employed part-time when they started Homeward Bound, one is still employed part-time, one is now employed full-time, and one is currently unemployed but looking for work.



Up to five years after graduating from Homeward Bound, many survey respondents indicated that they are working in the fields in which they studied. For survey respondents who are currently working full or part time, the most common occupations include:⁴⁸

- Early Childhood Education (ECE or RECE) (14%)
- Customer service (including sales and product support) (14%)
- Office administration (including executive assistants and office managers) (11%)
- Law clerk/legal assistant (9%)
- Human resources (9%)

⁴⁶ Canadian Labour Force Survey, 2016, Single Mothers, Toronto.

⁴⁷ N=41

⁴⁸ N=35

Other occupations of Homeward Bound graduates include things like analysts, consultants, physiotherapists, accountants and accounts managers, financial planners, personal trainers, underwriters, and change management specialists.

As part of the supports towards employment provided by Homeward Bound, internships are arranged for participants after they have finished, or while they are finishing, their college program through the Homeward Bound Industry Council. In total, 35% of survey respondents indicated that they are still working with the employer with whom they completed their internship, and 17% indicated that they had worked with their internship employer for a period of time after Homeward Bound before moving on.⁴⁹

Of those who are working full or part time, most have been working with their current employer more than a year (79%), and just over half have been working with their current employer more than two years (55%).⁵⁰ 78% of respondents indicated that they had only had 1-2 jobs since graduating from Homeward Bound.⁵¹ These findings suggest that employment obtained after graduating from Homeward Bound is relatively stable.

For single mothers, employment with benefits can be extremely important as they work to support the health and wellbeing not only of themselves, but of their child(ren).⁵²



88% of survey respondents who reported having full time employment also reported receiving benefits through their employment.⁵³

50% of survey respondents indicating they have part time employment also indicated that they receive benefits⁵⁴ and 75% of those on leave from work (maternity or other leave) indicated that they receive benefits.⁵⁵ This suggests that, not only is employment obtained after Homeward Bound stable, it also provides key supports that enable families to thrive.

The before tax incomes from full time employment now earned by survey respondents range from \$20,800 per year to \$70,000 per year with an average income of \$43,000.



On average, full-time employed survey respondents reported earning approximately **\$43,000 per year.**

⁴⁹ N=48

⁵⁰ N=42

⁵¹ N=47

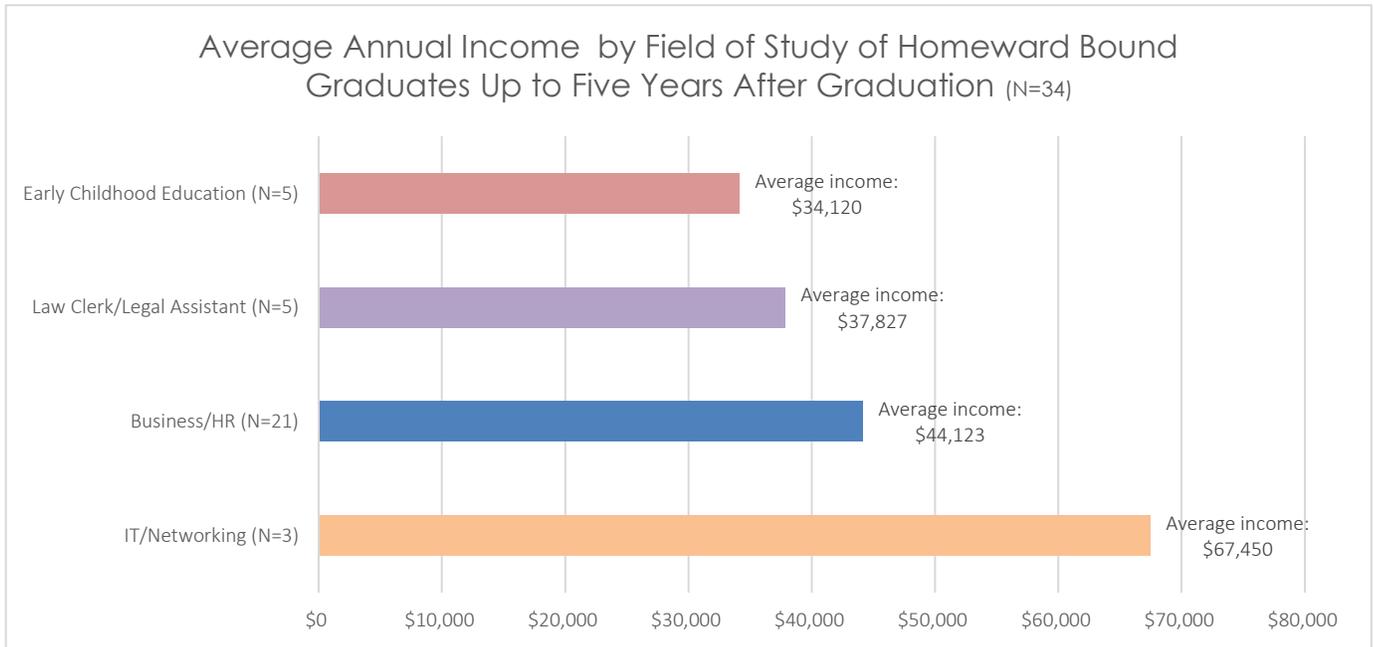
⁵² Kalil, A., & Ryan, R. (2010).

⁵³ N=33

⁵⁴ N=4

⁵⁵ N=4

While the sample size is small, the connection between field of study while at Homeward Bound and income earned through full-time employment after graduation suggest studying IT/Networking and Business/HR may lead to the highest post-graduation incomes.



Homeward Bound aims to support single mothers in obtaining employment with ‘family-sustaining wages’ defined at income equal to or higher than \$35,000 per year.



Overall, **77%** of survey respondents who now have full time employment are making \$35,000 per year or more.⁵⁶

Another 20% of survey respondents with full time employment indicated that they make \$25,000-\$34,999 per year and only 1 respondent indicated they make under \$25,000 per year in full time employment since graduating Homeward Bound.

For those survey respondents working part-time, annual part-time income was reported at an average of approximately \$19,000 per year.⁵⁷

For these individuals, the employment income earned after participating in Homeward Bound represents a significant shift in income source and level. Upon entering Homeward Bound, 90% of participants were accessing income support through Ontario Works (including Personal Needs Allowance (PNA)) as their primary source of income.⁵⁸ This compares with only 15% of

⁵⁶ N=35

⁵⁷ N=35

⁵⁸ N=50

participants accessing income support through Ontario Works up to five years after graduation from Homeward Bound.⁵⁹

The average amount received through Ontario Works for participants entering Homeward Bound was \$11,645, with 31% receiving only \$10,000 or less per year. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the current Ontario Works benefit rates for single parent families annually leave families at least \$10,000 below the poverty line.⁶⁰ The average amount earned by Homeward Bound graduates who are now employed full time is nearly four times the average amount received by participants through Ontario Works.



84% of survey respondents who were accessing income support through Ontario Works at intake now have income from full- or part-time employment.⁶¹

Amongst survey respondents who indicated that they are currently unemployed, the average length of time they have been without work is 11 months and all indicated that they have been looking for work.⁶² No significant correlations were found between demographic profiles of participants and employment or income after graduation.

Qualitative comments from survey respondents reinforce the importance of the positive employment and income outcomes supported by Homeward Bound. In their own words, participants said things like:

It was a wonderful program that has given me skills to always be able to network and stay current within employment.

It was a life changing experience. I could not have a job like I do without Homeward Bound's help.

Being an immigrant and without Canadian education and being a single mother Homeward Bound helped me to open the opportunity to join the work force and provide for my children. I am so grateful.

5.5 Outcomes for Children of Homeward Bound Graduates

When children experience poverty, the instability that often comes along with that poverty can increase the likelihood of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and negative outcomes such as poor academic performance, delayed cognitive development, poor mental health, less

⁵⁹ N=48; NOTE: One participant indicated they were working part time *and* receiving support through Ontario Works.

⁶⁰ Thiessen, K. (2016). Page 13.

⁶¹ N=39

⁶² N=9

participation in extra-curricular activities, lower career aspirations, interrupted school attendance, lower university attendance, an increased risk of illiteracy, and higher drop-out rates.⁶³ Children growing up in poverty are also more likely to become lone parents, perpetuating a cycle of intergenerational poverty and barriers to advancement.⁶⁴

Since Homeward Bound does not currently collect data beyond basic demographic information of children when their mothers begin the program, comparative measurement of outcomes for children from the start of their mothers' involvement in Homeward Bound to up to five years after graduation has not been possible in the current evaluation. The evaluation survey, however, asked graduated Homeward Bound participants whether they felt their children benefited in any ways because of their involvement in Homeward Bound.



92% of survey respondents felt their children had benefited or somewhat benefited from their involvement in Homeward Bound.⁶⁵

Qualitatively, survey respondents described many perceived benefits of Homeward Bound for their children. Many participants talked about their struggles with poverty and providing a stable home environment for their children prior to coming to Homeward Bound.



The most commonly cited benefit of Homeward Bound for children was **increased stability.**

Other benefits for children that graduates articulated included:

- Increased safety
- Improved school performance due to tutoring, mentoring, and reading circles
- Benefits from supportive out of school care and activities for their children
- Increased socialization and positive peer connections
- Increased access to and interaction within a positive, child-friendly, environment

Participants also described the ways in which their own self-development journey through Homeward Bound was inspiring for their children and increased their family's confidence and resilience. Many respondents indicated that, overall, the lives of their children were better because of their experience at Homeward Bound.

⁶³ Canadian Teacher's Federation. (2009). Page 1; Nurius, P., Logan-Greene, P. & Green, S. (2012).

⁶⁴ Ambert (2006) Page.7

⁶⁵ N=48

In their own words, survey respondents said things like:

My child benefited through my opportunities and learning. We both became better advocates for ourselves and each other.

My daughter thrived through this program, was given a great daycare opportunity, met and played with many children, as well as secure housing while I focused on my goals.

My child was able to get involved in activities. My child was also able to watch his mom grow as a person. I became a better mother because of Homeward Bound.

My child benefited in many ways. Especially not having to see the struggle of making ends meet. There was never any worry about meals, a roof over our heads or an unsafe environment. All major hurdles/obstacles were taken care of, leaving me free for self-improvement and spending quality time with my child.

Homeward Bound provided a better life for [my children] by providing direction for me and more stability.

My children are able to live a financially stable lifestyle since I completed the Homeward Bound program. I am able to pay for my son's sports such as soccer and capoeira. I am also able to pay for family vacations that I often take my children on so they have a worldly experience.

My daughter was safe and was able to be a child and live a peaceful early childhood.

5.6 Perspectives on Program Satisfaction and Personal Impact

Homeward Bound graduates participating in the evaluation were asked to qualitatively describe what the ‘top three best things’ about Homeward Bound were for them. The most frequently cited ‘best things’ were:

1. The opportunity to increase education without taking on debt
2. The opportunity to live in safe and stable housing while participating in the program
3. The employment-related supports provided by the program and resulting increased employability

Participants also indicated that child care was an important aspect of the program and that the social connections made through Homeward Bound were (and in many cases still are) positive natural supports. Survey respondents described significant positive changes in their self-esteem, self-awareness, independence, and empowerment due to the program. Reflecting on the impact of the program on their lives, many participants articulated that Homeward Bound had given them greater confidence and had inspired hope for the future. In their own words, participants said thing like:

Homeward Bound completely changed my life and bettered me as an individual and mother. I will forever feel indebted to the program and those who helped me create a life for myself and my child.

The environment this program created gave me immense HOPE and a desire to push and believe for more.

The best part was the amazing opportunity to get my life together as a single mom who wanted to strive to make a better life for her children.

It is a life changing experience for me. I found a new me because of this program.

The best part was the recognition and encouragement for participants to gain their confidence back.

[Homeward Bound] was a very positive experience, certainly got me back on my feet and gave me a feeling of hope and looking forward to the future.

5.7 Areas for Program Improvement

While participants qualitatively described the life changing nature of Homeward Bound and objective measurement has demonstrated remarkable outcomes from the program, there is always room for program improvement. Wanting to capture lived-experience perspectives on areas for improvement, the evaluation asked survey respondents to identify the top three ways in which they felt Homeward Bound could be improved. While several participants indicated that they felt there were no ways in which Homeward Bound could be made better, others articulated key points for improvement.

The most common way in which survey respondents felt the program could be improved was through additional transition/exit planning support and follow-up support after exiting. Participants felt that the program provided significant supports that transformed their lives over the four years they were involved in the program, but many felt the transition out of the program was difficult, with significant uncertainty around employment, housing, and stability. They indicated that a greater focus on exit planning and the possibility of additional support after exit would strengthen the program and generate even greater positive impact.

The second most commonly cited area for improvement was the internship and employment component of the program. While survey respondents indicated they appreciated their internship experiences and many are still working with their internship employer, several participants felt the internship experience could be improved through more internship opportunities, a broader Industry Counsel of employer partners, longer internships, and/or more paid internship opportunities. Participants also suggested that a greater focus on employment readiness, networking, and career counselling could create a smoother transition to long-term employment. Homeward Bound has already recognized this possible area for improvement and in recent years the employment readiness component of the program has been enhanced by the Transitions to Success (TTS) program component. Going forward, it will be interesting to see if suggestions for improvements in this area shift away from the need for more employability support as the TTS component is offered to new participants.

The third most common way in which survey respondents thought Homeward Bound could be improved was through offering more career stream options. Participants felt that having only four college program choices limited their ability to pursue career opportunities in areas of interest, and that a broader array of options would support participants in finding meaningful employment and pursuing their passions.

Other areas for improvement listed by survey respondents included:

- More mental health, counselling, family counselling and/or psychiatric supports
- Stricter implementation of rules, particularly rules for guests in housing component
- More lifeskills workshops/resources (e.g. financial literacy, parenting, etc.)
- Increased security and/or better housing maintenance supports
- Creation of opportunities to give back while in the program and afterwards as alumnae

6.0 How Much Social Value is Generated by Homeward Bound Outcomes?

The outcomes generated by Homeward Bound also create important social value for participants, their children, and government systems. Analyzing the Social Return on Investment (SROI) created by these proven outcomes can reveal learnings about the value of investing in Homeward Bound by demonstrating how much social value is created for every dollar invested.

Using the 2017 Homeward Bound evaluation results to analyze Homeward Bound’s social value and evolving the Boston Consulting Group’s 2013 SROI analysis to adhere to the internationally standardized SROI methodology, it was revealed that:

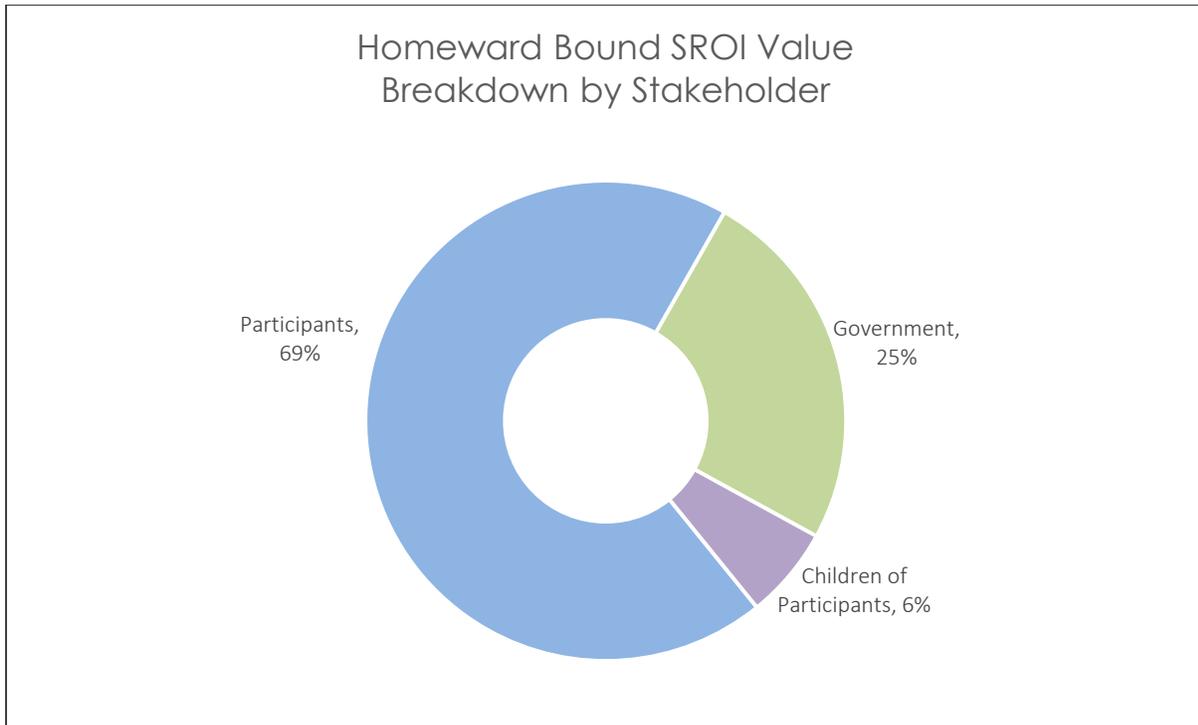
For every dollar invested in Homeward Bound,
approximately **six dollars** in social and economic value is created.



This SROI result suggests that significant social and economic value is created through investment in Homeward Bound’s holistic four-year support for single mothers. It is important to note, however, that the SROI analysis of Homeward Bound represents a conservative estimation of the total value created, since conservative estimations were made throughout the analysis and it may never be possible to fully capture the value of social outcomes in financial terms. Further, the social value created by Homeward Bound is likely much higher, as outcomes included in the analysis were considered to last only during the time a participant was involved with Homeward Bound and directly after their involvement, without consideration of longer term impact on women and their children that is likely generated by the program (e.g. child’s trajectory based on decreased experience of poverty, mother’s ongoing career advancement, etc.).

The social value created by Homeward Bound accrues to participants, the children of participants, and governments at various levels. Most of the value (69%) goes back to participants in benefits they experience due to the program, such as housing stability during their four years in the program, increased education, and better employment opportunities. Approximately 6% of the estimated value goes to the children of participants while they are involved in the program and experiencing the supports provided by the program. The SROI analysis has conservatively estimated the value to participants’ children as estimated future

value for children has not been included, and tangential benefits experienced by children via the positive outcomes experienced by their mothers have not been estimated and valued. Finally, 25% of the social value created by Homeward Bound goes back to various levels of government in cost reallocation due to decreased government service use by Homeward Bound participants.⁶⁶



Overall, the SROI result indicates that the program is a significantly worthwhile investment, creating positive social value for participants, their children, and governments.

⁶⁶ Please contact WoodGreen’s Strategy and Innovation Team for SROI details.

7.0 Where do We Go from Here?

The evaluation of Homeward Bound conducted in 2017 revealed that the program is creating positive social impact and transforming lives. The evaluation results clearly demonstrate that the program is positively altering the trajectories of single mothers in Toronto and their children, supporting the creation of positive long-term outcomes that are breaking the cycle of poverty. The SROI analysis revealed that these life-changing outcomes have significant social value for participants, their children, and our social systems, creating six dollars in social and economic value for every dollar invested. While some areas for improvement were identified, overall the evaluation results suggest that the program is meeting its goal of enabling un/underemployed and/or precariously housed single mothers to gain employment with family-sustaining wages so that they and their families can move out of poverty.

Based on the evaluation and SROI findings, the following four recommendations for future directions are put forward:

1. Continue the program and seek opportunities for expansion or scaling. Based on the evaluation and SROI results, it is clear that Homeward Bound is creating positive social impact and social value. Continuing the program will enable scores more single mothers to move out of poverty and create better lives for themselves and their children. Expanding the program in Toronto or continuing to scale it in other communities can help maximize the social impact and social value created, expanding the program model's transformational effect to even more female-led families.
2. Communicate Homeward Bound's positive social impact by sharing the evaluation and SROI findings. The positive outcomes that Homeward Bound creates in housing, employment, and income are nothing short of remarkable. Sharing the program model created by WoodGreen and seeking opportunities to contribute to the literature on what works can lead to recognition of WoodGreen's program as a best/promising practice and can support other communities in designing effective programming for single mothers. Sharing the demonstrable positive social impact created by Homeward Bound can also help attract supporters and investors.
3. Seek opportunities to enhance transition and follow-up support for participants to further enable positive outcomes. Throughout the four years of Homeward Bound, significant supports are provided to participants to decrease barriers and enable positive outcomes. Barriers, however, are not likely to completely disappear after the program and additional transitional planning for overcoming setbacks and continuing in positive directions may further enhance the outcomes produced by Homeward Bound and decrease the stress of transitioning upon graduation. Further, as new challenges arise, follow-up outreach support may benefit alumnae in sustaining positive outcomes. This could include alumnae engagement activities that create a

structure for maintaining positive social connections and natural supports, giving back to the community, and reaching out when help is needed.

4. Pursue ongoing program evaluation activities and revisit the SROI analysis model regularly. While the current evaluation has effectively engaged Homeward Bound graduates in a retrospective study and has had the opportunity to match some pre to post data, further evolution of evaluation systems to ensure consistent and strategic data collection will further advance knowledge and understanding of what is working and what could be improved about the program model, ultimately enhancing the program over time. Using data collected over time, an increasingly robust SROI model can be built.

Appendix A: Survey Questions

Graduated Participant Survey:

Preamble: Thank you for choosing to participate in the Homeward Bound feedback survey! Constellation Consulting Group has been hired to help Homeward Bound improve their program so that people like you can have the best experience possible. We would like to ask you a few questions about your experience with the program to better understand what is working and what needs to be improved. We would also like to ask you some questions about your employment, income, and housing situation to understand how things have been going for you since you completed the program.

Your information will be kept confidential with us. This means that any information you provide will not be shared with your name attached. Your choice to participate in the survey or not participate in the survey will not impact your relationship with Woodgreen, Homeward Bound, or any staff.

You are free to stop the survey at any point. The survey shouldn't take more than 15 minutes to complete. In appreciation of your time, once you have completed the survey we will electronically send you a \$10 gift card.

If you have any questions or would prefer to chat on the phone rather than completing the online survey, please let Cate White know at cate@constellationconsulting.ca or 403-923-7611. If you would like more information about our consulting group, please visit: www.constellationconsulting.ca.

Homeward Bound Feedback Survey March 2017

1. Your name (for survey tracking purposes only):

2. What is your current housing situation?

- Homeless (street)
- Shelter/Hostel
- Family Subsidized Rent
- Market Rental
- Home Owner
- Living with family and/or friends
- Rooming House
- Other (please specify)

3. What is your current source of income?

- Employment income (working full or part time)
- Employment Insurance (EI)
- Ontario Works (OW)
- Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- Crown Ward
- Child or spousal support payments
- Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB)
- Spousal Income
- CPP/OAS
- Prefer not to say
- Other (please specify)

4. If you are working, please select the description that best describes your current employment situation:

- Working full-time - permanent contract
- Working full-time - fixed-term contract
- Working full-time - seasonal contract
- Working part-time
- Not working right now but looking for work
- On maternity/paternity or other type of leave from work
- Self-employed
- Other (please specify)

5. If you are working, what is your occupation/job title?

6. If you are working, approximately how many hours do you work per week?

7. How much do you usually make before taxes? (Feel free to fill in the estimation that is easiest for you)

- Yearly: _____
- Monthly: _____
- Bi-weekly: _____
- Weekly: _____
- Hourly: _____

8. If you are working, do you receive benefits with your employment (e.g. health, dental, etc.)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to answer

9. If you are working, approximately how long have you been with your current employer?

10. If you are working, are you still working with the employer with whom you completed an internship through Homeward Bound?

- Yes
- No, and I did not work with that employer at all after Homeward Bound
- No, but I worked with that employer for a period after Homeward Bound
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

11. If you're not employed right now, how long have you been out of work?

12. How many jobs would you estimate you've had since finishing Homeward Bound?

Thank you for helping us understand your current housing and employment situation! We appreciate your willingness to share these things with us. Now, we would like to ask you a bit about your experience with Homeward Bound. Please remember, your responses will be kept confidential.

13. What were the top three best things for you about Homeward Bound?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

14. What were the top three things you feel could be improved about Homeward Bound?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

15. Do you feel your child(ren) benefited at all because of your involvement in Homeward Bound?

- Yes
- Somewhat
- No
- Don't know

16. In what ways do you feel your child(ren) benefited or did not benefit from Homeward Bound?

17. Have you pursued more education since completing Homeward Bound?

- Yes
- No

Please explain _____

18. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience in Homeward Bound?

19. Thank you for sharing your information and perspectives with us today! In appreciation of your time we would like to send you a \$10 electronic gift card. What would be the best email address to send this to?

We appreciate your time and participation in this survey. If you have any questions or would like to share anything else, please let Cate White at cate@constellationconsulting.ca or 403-923-7611.

Withdrawn Participant Survey:

Preamble: Thank you for choosing to participate in the Homeward Bound feedback survey! Constellation Consulting Group has been hired to help Homeward Bound improve their program so that people like you can have the best experience possible. We would like to ask you a few questions about your experience with the program to better understand what is working and what needs to be improved. We would also like to ask you some questions about your employment, income, and housing situation to understand how things have been going for you since you completed the program.

Your information will be kept confidential with us. This means that any information you provide will not be shared with your name attached. Your choice to participate in the survey or not participate in the survey will not impact your relationship with Woodgreen, Homeward Bound, or any staff.

You are free to stop the survey at any point. The survey shouldn't take more than **15 minutes** to complete. In appreciation of your time, once you have completed the survey we will electronically send you a \$10 gift card.

If you have any questions or would prefer to chat on the phone rather than completing the online survey, please let Cate White know at cate@constellationconsulting.ca or 403-923-7611. If you would like more information about our consulting group, please visit www.constellationconsulting.ca.

1. Your name (for survey tracking purposes only):
2. At what point did you withdraw from the Homeward Bound program?
 - Boundless possibilities for Women

- College
 - Internship
 - Other, please specify?
3. What were the issue(s) and/or reason(s) for withdrawing from the program?
4. What were the top three best things for you about Homeward Bound?
- 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
5. What were the top three things you feel could be improved about Homeward Bound?
- 1. _____
 - 2. _____
 - 3. _____
6. Have you pursued more education since leaving Homeward Bound?
- Yes
 - No
- Please explain* _____
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your experience in Homeward Bound?

Thank you for providing some feedback on your experience with Homeward Bound! We are also hoping to understand how much Homeward Bound impacts things like housing and employment by comparing information from people who withdrew from Homeward Bound with information from people who completed Homeward Bound.

We would like to ask you a bit about your current housing and employment situation. We appreciate that this information is personal and anything you share with us will be kept confidential. In appreciation of your time and willingness to share these things with us, we can send you a \$10 electronic gift card for completing these questions.

8. What is your current housing situation?
- Homeless (street)
 - Shelter/Hostel
 - Family Subsidized Rent
 - Market Rental
 - Home Owner
 - Living with family and/or friends
 - Rooming House
 - Other (please specify)
9. What is your current source of income?
- Employment income (working full or part time)
 - Employment Insurance (EI)
 - Ontario Works (OW)
 - Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
 - Crown Ward
 - Child or spousal support payments
 - Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB)
 - Spousal Income
 - CPP/OAS
 - Prefer not to say

- Other (please specify)
10. If you are working, please select the description that best describes your current employment situation:
- Working full-time - permanent contract
 - Working full-time - fixed-term contract
 - Working full-time - seasonal contract
 - Working part-time
 - Not working right now but looking for work
 - On maternity/paternity or other type of leave from work
 - Self-employed
 - Other (please specify)
11. If you are working, what is your occupation/job title?
12. How much do you usually make before taxes?
(Feel free to fill in the estimation that is easiest for you)
- Yearly:
 - Monthly:
 - Bi-weekly:
 - Weekly:
 - Hourly:
13. If you are working, do you receive benefits with your employment (e.g. health, dental, etc.)?
- Yes
 - No
 - Don't know
 - Prefer not to answer
14. If you are working, approximately how long have you been with your current employer?
15. If you're not employed right now, how long have you been out of work?
16. How many jobs would you estimate you've had since leaving Homeward Bound?
17. Thank you for sharing your information and perspectives with us today! In appreciation of your time we would like to send you a \$10 electronic gift card. What would be the best email address to send this to?

We appreciate your time and participation in this survey. If you have any questions or would like to share anything else, please let Cate White at cate@constellationconsulting.ca or 403-923-7611.

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