

# Future Proof

The traits and attributes of  
young turnaround professionals

## Message from t-three/Kiddy & Partners

**t-three/Kiddy & Partners** are people consultants and occupational psychologists specialising in organisational and workplace assessment, development and change. Our capabilities range from 1:1 coaching to business-wide behavioural transformation programmes. We are a part of the **Gateley Legal group** and operate across all sectors globally, from employee level to C-Suite.

**Facet5** is a globally acknowledged and recognised personality psychometric based upon the Big Five trait model. We are a licensed distributor, accreditor and specialists in using this approach to help individuals, teams and organisations maximise their strengths and better understand their risks. The questionnaire is available worldwide in 39 languages and can be used at all stages of the employee's journey through an organisation.

We would like to thank **The IFT** for partnering with us on this project and for their insights.





# Message from The Institute for Turnaround

**The IFT** is committed to recognising the importance and skills of the turnaround profession and encouraging its continued development. The recent period has highlighted the value of turnaround in a difficult economic climate, with our latest annual Societal Impact Report highlighting that IFT accredited members saved in excess of 55,000 jobs and £2.6bn in shareholder value in the year 2022-23. When we factor in the work of our partners the number of jobs saved rises to just shy of 150,000.

The work of turnaround professionals looks likely to continue to be even more essential in the coming period, as businesses continue to struggle with a number of ongoing challenges. In the longer term, turnaround will continue to be necessary for safeguarding jobs and businesses, and helping organisations adapt to longer term changes in the economy and their operating environment.

Ensuring that we have a sustainable pipeline of turnaround professionals who are prepared to meet future challenges is crucial. Our IFT Next programme is focussed on supporting professionals who have identified turnaround and business support as their long-term career pathway. This report also starts to build an evidence base of the traits and drivers of younger turnaround professionals and how we can support their future development.

**The IFT** would like to thank **t-three** and **Kiddy & Partners** for their collaboration on this report, as well as all those individuals who took the time to complete the **Facet5** questionnaire.



# Introduction

**The business environment is constantly changing and evolving. There are long term drivers of change - technology, trade, geopolitical contexts - that require an agile transformation mindset, as well as crises and shocks that need immediate responses and acute support.**

Turnaround advisers and practitioners work with businesses at the leading edge of change, either instigating a transformation or working at the stressed end where rapid action is required. They are required to assess, plan and deliver and are given a mandate for change to help businesses transform and grow; to do this they need to observe and interpret the evolving landscape.

Their skill set needs to evolve both to meet day-to-day challenges and prepare for long-term changes that will impact the world of business. This includes the increasing importance of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) factors, developments in technology such as Artificial Intelligence, changes to working practices such as hybrid working and the increasing impacts of climate change. The demand for turnaround skills and turnaround leaders looks likely only to grow in the future.

To this end, this project has investigated the skills and traits the turnaround leaders of tomorrow currently hold, to better understand how they can be supported to deal with changing trends and be prepared for the future.

**The IFT** has previously analysed the competencies, traits and drivers associated with senior turnaround leaders - the Chief Restructuring Officers, Chairs, Chief Executives and Turnaround Directors who lead the recovery of distressed or underperforming businesses. This work identified that

successful turnaround leaders demonstrate characteristics including courage in the face of adversity, that they are energised by achievement and that they are driven by autonomy and challenge.

This project builds on this work to identify the attributes, traits and drivers of a younger population of turnaround professionals, including advisers, bankers, investors and lawyers, predominately working within firms at this stage of their career. **This IFT** Next cohort represent the future turnaround leaders of tomorrow; by 2050 we would expect to see them in senior leadership roles at the forefront of change.

By understanding the key traits and characteristics of this population, we can comprehend the behaviours and skills distinguishing young turnaround professionals and build on this knowledge to make recommendations for future development, to ensure that they are equipped to meet the turnaround challenges of the future.

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**This project has investigated the skills and traits the turnaround leaders of tomorrow currently hold, to better understand on what basis they can be supported to deal with the changing trends and be prepared for the future.**

# Findings

70 early career turnaround professionals from fields such as banking, investment, law and accountancy completed **Facet5**, a globally recognized Five Factor trait personality questionnaire accredited by the British Psychological Society and designed specifically for the workplace.

As one of the most reliable profiling tests on the market, the data produced gives an indication of turnaround professionals' likely behavioural characteristics and preferences in comparison to a sizeable norm group of over 70,000 UK participants covering both private and public sector, local and national government. **Facet5** reflects "how" people may work.

The data was analysed to see which traits (subfactors) were outside of the norm; based on the observation that personality data is normally distributed, this can show which characteristics are seen in these turnaround professionals more so than perhaps in a broader, general population of employees.

Differences between sub-groups of professionals within the turnaround cohort were observed and noted.

## Will

### Determination

The inner drive to commit to own ideas

### Confrontation

A drive to confront issues as they arise

### Independence

A tendency to go your own way

## Energy

### Vitality

Obvious enthusiasm and energy

### Sociability

Interest in being with people

### Adaptability

Involving others in your thinking

## Affection

### Altruism

Putting other people's interests first

### Support

Always trying to be understanding

### Trust

Tendency to take people at face value

## Control

### Discipline

Being personally organised and planned

### Responsibility

Being willing to take personal responsibility

## Emotionality

### Tension

A general sense of tension or stress

### Apprehension

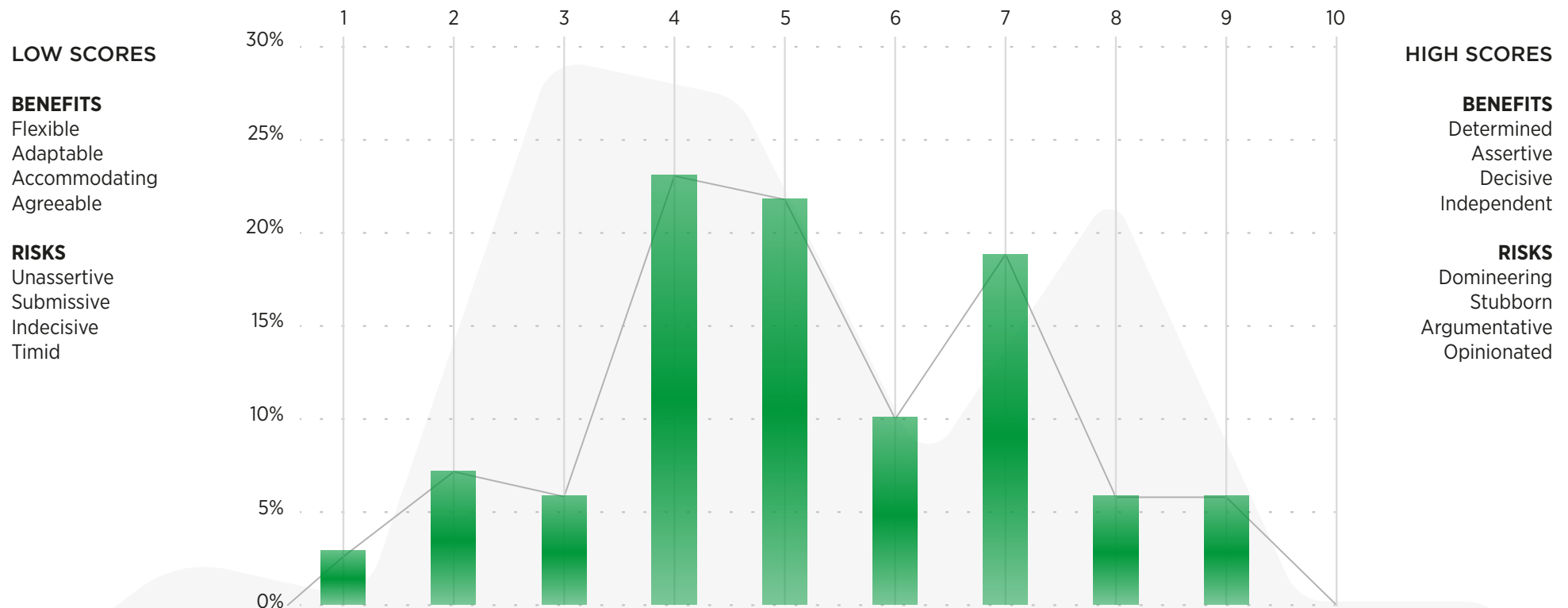
Being cautious and not over-optimistic

# Will

**This covers the promotion and defence of your thoughts, ideas and opinions, with subfactors of Determination, Confrontation and Independence.**

There was some positive and negative skewing across the subfactors for the turnaround group. In particular, Confrontation was significantly positively skewed, meaning that numbers of low scores will be more common in the whole group.

A significant number of the turnaround group may therefore demonstrate tendencies associated with lower Confrontation, which means that they may be more flexible in their views. A willingness to consider all aspects of and views on a problem and to be flexible and nimble in approach can be useful when dealing with complex turnaround scenarios.

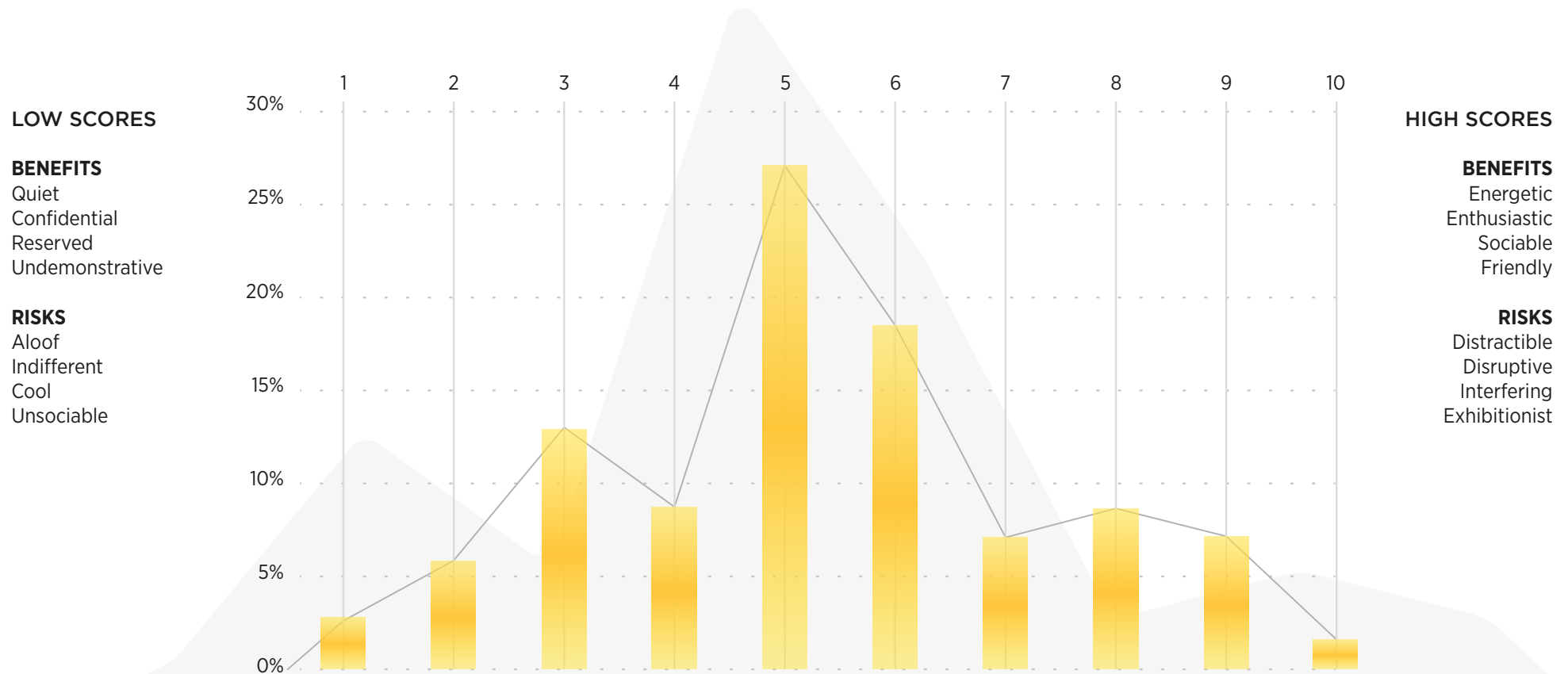


# Energy

**This refers to the extent to which you need to interact with people and includes the subfactors of Vitality, Sociability and Adaptability.**

The scores in relation to Energy demonstrated some moderate skewing, with Adaptability significantly negatively skewed, pointing to a higher proportion of mid to high scores for this subfactor.

This suggests that a significant number of young turnaround professionals may demonstrate tendencies associated with higher Adaptability, valuing consensus building and working with others. Building agreement and support for options is crucial in the often challenged business environments these professionals operate in. This aligns very closely with the CRO skillset as an honest broker finding the best solution amid competing interests.

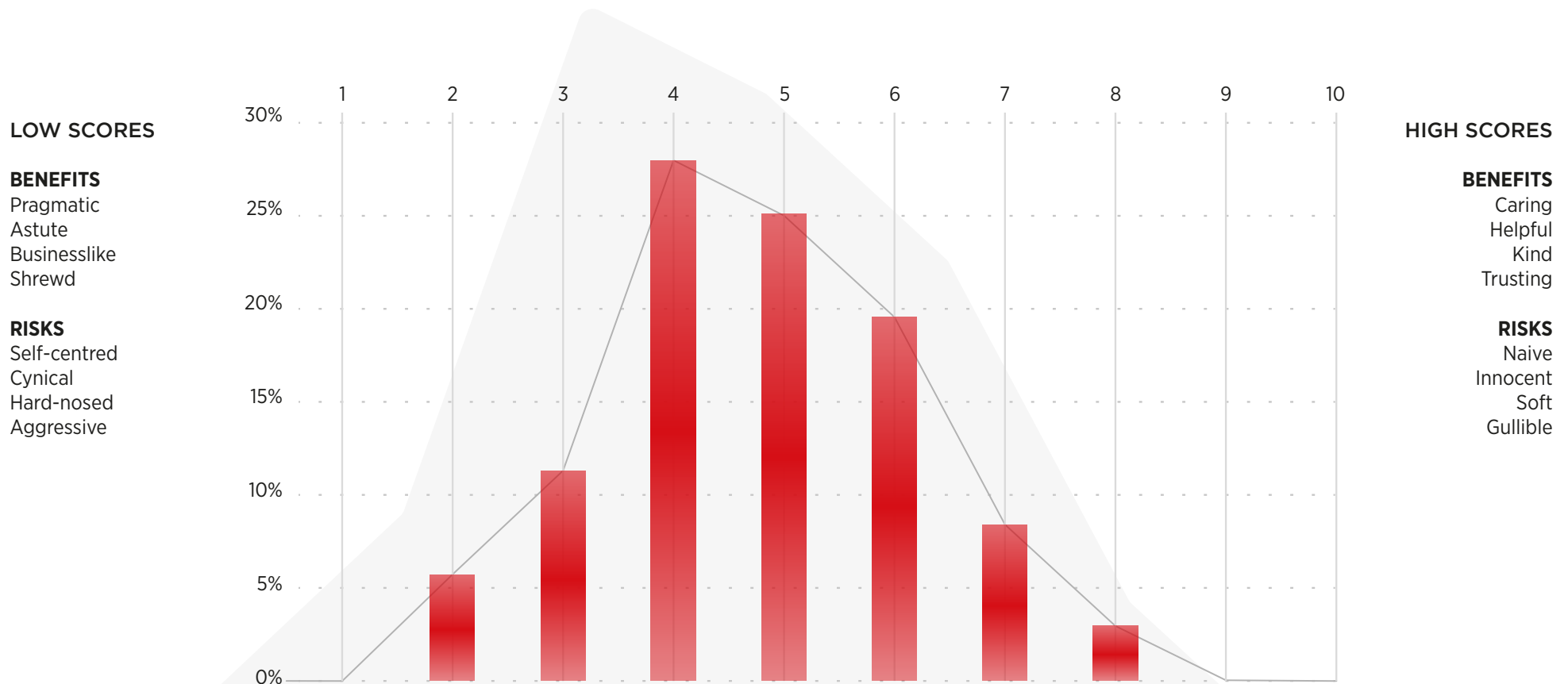


# Affection

In Facet5 this refers to the extent to which you are task or people focused, and includes the subfactors of Altruism, Support and Trust.

There was no significant variance found in participants' responses across either the overall factor score or any of its subfactors, with the scores for Affection normally distributed.

This indicates that young turnaround professionals' traits in this area do not differ substantially from those of the control group representative of wider employees.





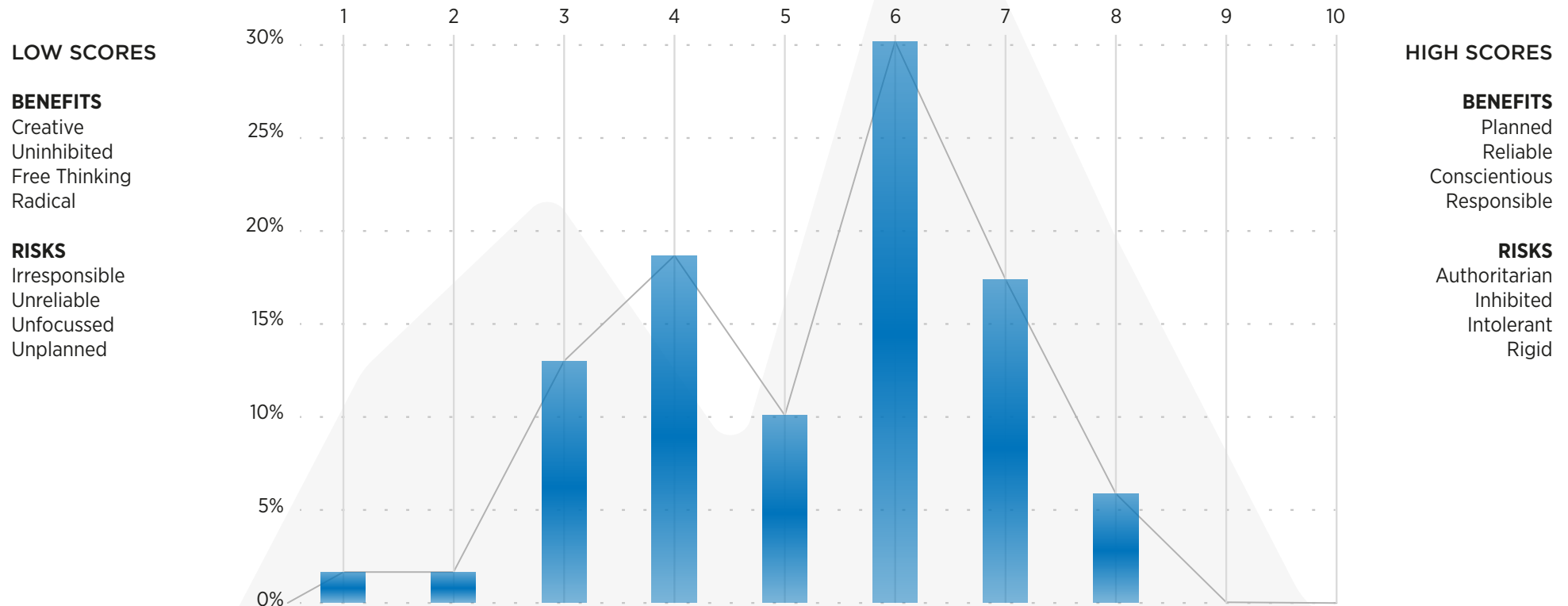
# Control

**This refers to the amount of self-discipline and responsibility an individual has, with the subfactors of Discipline and Responsibility.**

The data shows a significant negative skew for Responsibility amongst participants. This indicates that a higher proportion of young turnaround professionals may demonstrate behaviour associated with higher responsibility, such as possessing high

levels of conscientiousness, a strict personal code of conduct and striving to work to high standards at all times.

A higher proportion of the group may have a slight preference to impose structure and standards. This reflects the exacting nature of turnaround work and the high stakes of getting things wrong, but also the nature of turnaround work as seeking to return stability and sustainable structures to distressed businesses.

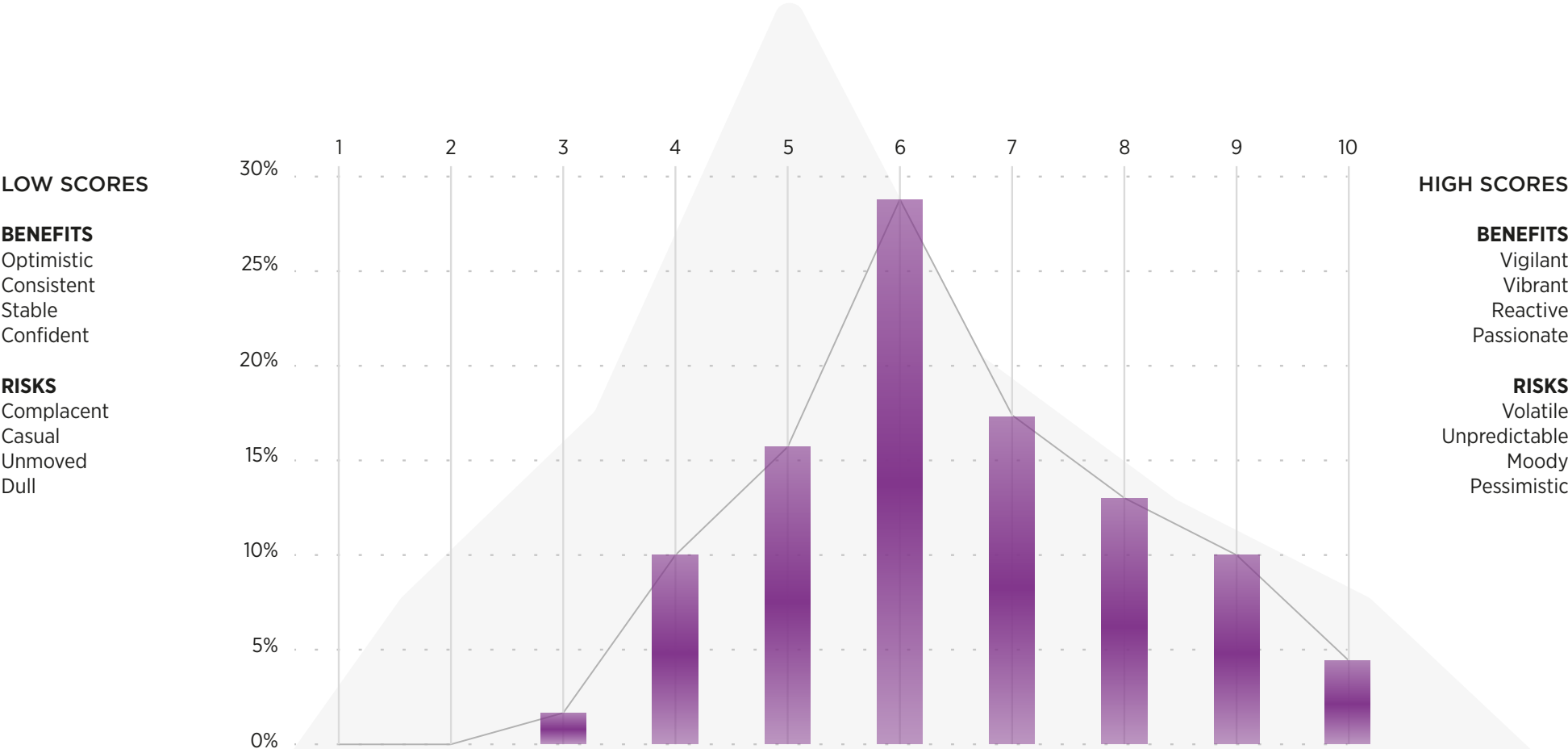


# Emotionality

This refers to the amount of Tension and Apprehension you experience on a day-to-day basis.

The responses showed no significant skewing across Emotionality or any of its subfactors and group scores are normally distributed, again indicating little deviation from the norm group.

In other words, the young turnaround professionals did not differ significantly from the general employee population in this regard.



# Conclusions

The responses from participants indicated three key areas of significant deviation from the norm, that is to say where young turnaround professionals' traits and behaviours can be distinguished from those of general employees:

- 1 Turnaround professionals are more likely to demonstrate behaviour which seeks to resolve differences of view and disagreement in a calm, non-argumentative way to achieve a consensual position.
- 2 They also show a higher tendency to share their processes and approach, favouring working collaboratively towards a successful outcome, taking into account others' input and feedback along the way. Naturally this works well with the behaviour described in (1).
- 3 Finally, those in the participant group show a greater tendency overall towards working to high standards and hence will display a strong sense of duty, responsibility and conscientiousness.

In each case, the data reflected in the sample population (n=70) showed tendencies which are, statistically, significantly outside of the overall norm.

## Exceptions to the rule

There were some minor differences between three sub-groups of turnaround professionals identified in the sample population, Bankers, Lawyers and Advisors.

**The Advisor group**, which included individuals from private equity, scored highest overall on factors related to sociability, excitability and expressive enthusiasm.

**Bankers** scored higher on being consultative, adaptable and accommodating although lower on factors related to generally being outgoing and sociable. They also scored highest on factors related to being open, interested in others and trusting.

**Lawyers** scored highest on being perceptive, vigilant and risk aware. There is also an overall higher level of emotional responsiveness associated with this.

# Implications

In the case of younger turnaround professionals, we can surmise in general that these professionals tend to work collaboratively and seek to build consensus and avoid direct confrontation. This is essential when working in sometimes demanding and contentious turnaround situations. They also display high levels of conscientiousness and work to high standards, again essential when working in the fast-paced and high-stakes environment of turnaround.

The research also indicates some areas where it may be useful to focus professional development so that these young professionals feel equipped to become the turnaround leaders of tomorrow. These include developing both people and stakeholder management skills to supplement technical skills and commercial focus, and the development of strategies for comfortably sharing their views and holding ground in the face of confrontation.

Overall however, the adaptability and drive of young turnaround professionals indicated by this research bodes well for the future of the profession, as there may not be much we can be certain of in terms of future demands, other than the certainty of continually changing environments and demand for the skills of turnaround professionals.

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