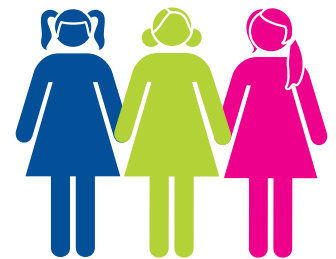


## Background

As the United States continues to grow in the 21st century, we must ensure that our youngest citizens receive opportunities to develop their interests and skills in fields that will move our country forward. Girl Scouts is eager to continue working with the members of the 115th Congress to advance policies that foster girls' leadership development. Together we can address a range of issues that benefit girls all across the nation.

Girl Scouts is the world's preeminent leadership development organization for girls, with 2.6 million members—1.8 million girls and 800,000 adults who believe in the power of every G.I.R.L. (Go-getter, Innovator, Risk-taker, Leader)<sup>TM</sup> to change the world. We know through more than a century of time-tested research that girls thrive in an inclusive, safe space in which they're free to explore their potential and take the lead without the distractions or pressures that can be found in a coed environment. We are proud to offer girls an unparalleled Girl Scout Leadership Experience, which encourages them to develop a strong sense of self, connect with their local and global communities, and unleash their potential to make a difference in the world.

Girl Scouts has  
more than  
**50 Million**  
alums



According to the Girl Scout Research Institute's 2017 *The Girl Scout Impact Study*,\* Girl Scouts are more likely than non-Girl Scouts to develop strong leadership outcomes, have adults in their lives who help them think about their future and pursue goals, and participate in activities that shape their character and open up new worlds. Girl Scouts also earn better grades, have higher academic aspirations, and are more likely to desire and pursue a career in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM); business; or law—industries in which women are vastly underrepresented. *The Girl Scout Impact Study* provides compelling evidence that Girl Scouts has a strong, positive effect on girls, helping them develop into citizens who are responsible, caring, engaged, and prepared for a lifetime of leadership.

“Today, Girl Scouts provides girls and families with a clear roadmap for success that focuses on four pillars: STEM education, the outdoors, life skills, and entrepreneurship.”

More than 50 million women can call themselves Girl Scout alums. In fact, approximately one out of every two women living in the United States today was a

member of Girl Scouts in her youth, and the organization has been instrumental in developing female leaders in government, business, and public service. The majority of female astronauts who have flown in space are Girl Scout alumnae, as well as the majority of female members of Congress and female CEOs. At Girl Scouts, we're constantly thinking about the future and how to help the next generation of female business owners, educators, scientists, and community leaders succeed.

In October 2017, Girl Scouts launched the G.I.R.L. Agenda, a nonpartisan initiative to inspire, prepare, and mobilize girls and those who care about them to lead positive change through civic action. The multiyear effort celebrates the Girl Scout legacy of civic engagement programming, which now includes a new badge for girls as early as kindergarten, and provides girls and adults with tools to

\*For more information on the original research used to support our public policy priorities, visit [www.girlscouts.org/research/](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/).

be catalysts for change who strengthen their communities and the world.

Furthermore, the Girl Scout Gold Award—the highest and most prestigious award in Girl Scouting, comparable to the Boy Scouts of America’s rank of Eagle Scout—acknowledges the power behind each Gold Award Girl Scout’s dedication to not only empowering and bettering herself but also to making the world a better place for others. A young woman who has earned her Gold Award has become a community leader by transforming an idea and vision for change into an actionable plan with measurable, sustainable, and far-reaching results.

Now more than ever, our country needs Girl Scouts. A recent Girl Scout Research Institute report shows that economic conditions affecting girls have not recovered from the Great Recession; more girls live in poverty and low-income households today than ten years ago. Girl Scouts offers these and all girls a solution—the very skills and leadership opportunities they need to empower themselves for a lifetime of success.

Girls need public policies supporting programs and initiatives that allow them to grow up healthy and strong, develop the skills they need to excel in the ever-changing workforce, and make a positive mark in their communities and the world. In partnership with our 112 Girl Scout councils, we work with policymakers at all levels to advance the cause of girls and their limitless potential. Through this alliance, we can lead the way forward and change the world, one girl at a time.

### To build tomorrow’s leaders, Girl Scouts is prioritizing the following public policy goals in 2018:

- **Promote economic opportunities for girls by increasing their involvement in STEM and strengthening their financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.**
- **Encourage girls to embrace a healthy lifestyle by increasing their access to outdoor activities, preventing bullying/relational aggression, and promoting healthy relationships.**
- **Foster global citizenship and a global voice for girls.**
- **Support a strong nonprofit community that encourages the Girl Scout Leadership Experience.**

## Promote Economic Opportunities for Girls

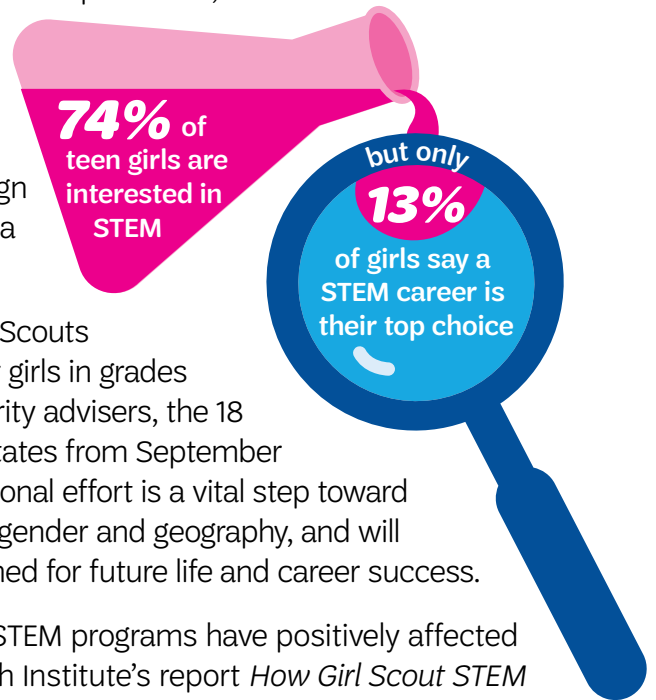
### ***Increase Girls’ Involvement in STEM***

---

Women are currently underrepresented at all levels of the STEM career journey—from developing an initial interest in STEM in school to majoring in a STEM subject in college to securing a career in a STEM field in adulthood. Studies show that girls form their STEM identity as early as second or third grade, often lose interest in math and science during middle school, and have a lower overall interest in STEM compared to boys.

If the United States is to maintain its competitive advantage in the global economy, we need to make sure that our young people—especially girls—can master careers in STEM. That’s why Girl Scouts is committed to ensuring that *every* girl has the chance to explore and build an interest and possible career path in STEM-related fields.

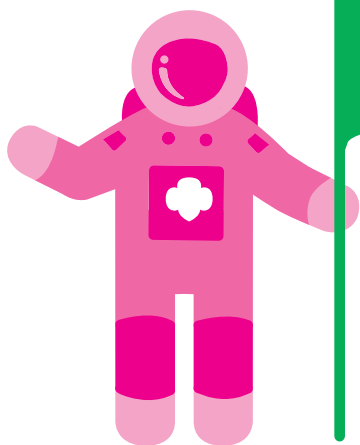
In 2017, Girl Scouts released new STEM programming that gives girls the opportunity to earn awards in engineering, computer science, and outdoor STEM, as well as new badges in robotics and mechanical engineering. Through hands-on, age-appropriate experiences, Girl Scouts is addressing the lack of exposure many girls have to STEM. In fact, Girl Scouts are almost twice as likely as non-Girl Scouts to participate in STEM and outdoor activities. With the introduction of 18 new awards and 15 new badges, Girl Scouts can now create algorithms, design robots, take on engineering design challenges, gather data for citizen science projects, and discover so much more.



Through a partnership with Palo Alto Networks in 2017, Girl Scouts introduced the first-ever national Cybersecurity badges for girls in grades K-12. Created with input from a panel of expert cybersecurity advisers, the 18 Cybersecurity badges will be released across the United States from September 2018 to September 2019 for Girl Scouts ages 5-17. This national effort is a vital step toward eliminating traditional barriers to industry access, such as gender and geography, and will ensure that even the youngest girls have a foundation primed for future life and career success.

Because of the interactive, supportive nature, Girl Scout STEM programs have positively affected girls' self-confidence. According to the Girl Scout Research Institute's report *How Girl Scout STEM Programs Benefit Girls*, girls who participate in these programs say the experience boosted their confidence in their science and math abilities. Not only do girls indicate that these programs have increased their overall self-confidence but girls also say the programs had more of an effect on them than other after-school programs.

For more than 100 years, Girl Scouts has been developing the pipeline of future STEM leaders by providing girls with an opportunity to explore, develop, and sharpen their STEM skills through Girl Scout national proficiency badges. The content has been correlated by grade level to national standards; 21st century skills standards; financial literacy education standards; and various other learning objectives (such as for health and physical education, language arts, math, science, and social studies learning) for all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.



**Former Girl Scouts  
have flown on at least  
40 of the first 114  
Space Shuttle missions**

problem solving. Girl Scouts has the scale, and the capacity, to expand our one-of-a-kind programs and continue to leverage girls' potential in STEM on a national level.

Girl Scouts are equipped to become coders, video game designers, design thinkers, inventors, naturalists, scientists, app developers, cybersecurity experts, and robotics engineers. Girls who participate in Girl Scouts' STEM programming express increased capability in critical thinking and

## Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Invest in STEM education programs through federal partnerships with community organizations and schools.
- Promote proven techniques for engaging girls in STEM, including single-gender learning environments and hands-on, inquiry-based learning.
- Engage girls in engineering and computer science to prepare them for the STEM workforce in the 21st century.
- Introduce girls to diverse role models and mentors.
- Expand out-of-school STEM programming to girls and underrepresented minorities.
- Support initiatives that encourage federal agencies to invest in developing career pipelines for girls and underrepresented minorities in STEM.

## ***Strengthen Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurial Skills***

---

A nationwide survey conducted by the Girl Scout Research Institute reveals that girls are confident and optimistic about their financial futures but feel their current financial knowledge is limited. Overall, girls need stronger financial literacy skills to be successful when making decisions about important life events, such as financing a college education, buying a home, and planning for retirement. Girl Scouts can fill this need by providing a solid understanding of age-appropriate money management and economics. This is especially important because financial literacy is not currently a standard component of the K–12 curriculum in the United States, and thus, the responsibility for teaching these skills has fallen to parents, families, and after-school programs.

Financial literacy has been a cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience for more than a century. We know that when girls develop the skills to be sound stewards of their own and others' money, they grow more assured in handling money and making financial decisions that serve them for the rest of their lives. Whether they choose to become the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or the CFO of their family, girls must develop the tools to make financially responsible decisions. And at Girl Scouts, this process is a vital element in instilling the courage, confidence, and character girls need to be leaders in their own lives and to make our world a better place.

Our widely known Girl Scout Cookie Program is often girls' first introduction to business planning and entrepreneurship. Through the program, girls develop five lifelong financial and entrepreneurial skills: goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics, all crucial for life in the 21st century. The Girl Scout Research Institute studied these benefits for girls and found that 85 percent of girls develop money-management skills through the cookie program.

In 2018, as we embark on a second century of the cookie program, Girl Scouts are embracing technology to innovate the most powerful girl-led business to reflect today's market realities while still maintaining essential offline sales skills.

## Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- Ensure that all girls have financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.
- Bolster the role of youth-serving organizations by providing real-world financial literacy and entrepreneurial experiences in an all-girl environment.
- Increase federal initiatives that invest in financial literacy programs through partnerships with community organizations and schools.
- Leverage educational technology to strengthen financial literacy capabilities for youth.

## Encourage Healthy Living Opportunities for Girls

### Increase Access to Outdoor Activities

U.S. youth do not spend as much time outdoors as they do on indoor activities; 88 percent say they spend time online every day. Additionally, fewer than two in five youths participate in any of the following activities on a weekly basis: visiting a local park, visiting a natural area outdoors, hiking outside, fishing or hunting, or visiting a national or state park outside a city. When young people are given more opportunities to have meaningful experiences outdoors, such as learning to camp or volunteering in a park, they become more likely to value nature, engage with it, and feel empowered to protect it.

In 2017, Girl Scouts released eight new badges related to outdoor skills, outdoor adventure, and environmental skills. The new programming builds on what girls already know and encourages their interest from an early age in areas they may not be as familiar with, such as environmental conservation. This approach boosts their confidence as they participate in an all-girl environment where they feel comfortable trying new things, taking appropriate risks, and learning from failure.



One of the fundamental pillars of Girl Scouts is an appreciation for nature and exposure to the outdoors, which lead girls to become conservation advocates. Outdoor activities teach girls valuable life lessons, such as self-reliance, leadership, and perseverance. Throughout our 105-year history, our Movement has remained committed to ensuring that girls have access to everything our camps and our nation's natural resources have to offer. Girls who attend Girl Scout resident camp more than once develop the ability to meet challenges at a higher rate than other girls. Most importantly, at camp, girls take the lead in an all-girl safe space where they are free to explore, learn, and have fun without the pressure and social anxiety that can result from a coed environment.

The Girl Scout Research Institute report *More Than S'mores* (2014) found that girls with frequent outdoor experiences are more likely than their peers with less outdoor exposure to seek challenges and be better problem solvers—traits imperative for 21st century leadership. Girl Scouts offers girls the opportunity to have outdoor experiences that



Girl Scouts are twice as likely to say they would **TAKE ACTION** to protect the environment



they might not otherwise; girls of lower socioeconomic status benefit greatly from their outdoor Girl Scout experiences. Girl Scouts who have monthly outdoor experiences are more involved nationally in volunteering for conservation as a result of those experiences.

### **Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:**

- **Ensure that all girls get outside regularly and in varied ways, particularly girls in underserved communities who may have limited opportunities to experience nature.**
- **Provide opportunities for girls to explore solutions to conservation issues and develop an increased understanding of natural sciences, natural resource management, and STEM careers.**
- **Engage girls in environmental stewardship and action to conserve natural resources.**

### ***Prevent Bullying/Relational Aggression and Build Healthy Relationships***

---

We know that girls' bullying experiences are different from boys' and often involve teasing, exclusion, and cruel behavior on social media, all of which are difficult for adults to notice. The consequences of bullying, in whichever form it takes, are devastating. Bullied girls have higher rates of absenteeism; have lower grades; and are at increased risk of depression, eating disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide.

To address this problem, Girl Scouts gives girls a blueprint for developing healthy relationships and preventing bullying behavior outright. Our evidence-based BFF (Be a Friend First) bullying-prevention program, designed for middle-school girls, focuses directly on reducing bullying, particularly relational aggression and cyberbullying. From an evaluation of the BFF program conducted in partnership with 24 Girl Scout councils, Latina girls were more likely to see bullying as a “huge” problem, and they reaped the greatest benefits from the program.

### **Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:**

- **Engage local education agencies in providing education and training programs for middle-school (and elementary school-age) youth to reduce relational aggression, bullying, and adolescent violence, as well as in creating safe schools and communities.**
- **Increase federal programs that invest in bullying-prevention programs through partnerships with community organizations and schools.**

## **Foster Global Citizenship and a Global Voice for Girls**

Girl Scouts is dedicated to ensuring that girls develop an increased awareness of the larger world around them and understand their relationship to it—even if they don't travel beyond their own community—so they can grow into responsible global citizens. We strive to promote cross-cultural learning opportunities and to educate girls on relevant global issues that inspire them to take action. In 2017, approximately 42 percent of nominations for the Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest award in Girl Scouting, included girls who took action on issues to improve conditions for girls and women globally in a variety of areas, including human trafficking, sanitation, violence against women and girls, STEM representation, and economic self-sufficiency.

## Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- **Promote education about global issues, particularly those affecting girls and women, and ultimately, promote a sense of global citizenship.**
- **Promote global access to education for girls.**
- **Support awareness of the impact of investing in girls globally.**
- **Provide cross-cultural opportunities for learning and international travel.**
- **Provide opportunities for girls to explore and engage in solutions to global issues.**

## Support a Strong Nonprofit Community That Encourages the Girl Scout Experience

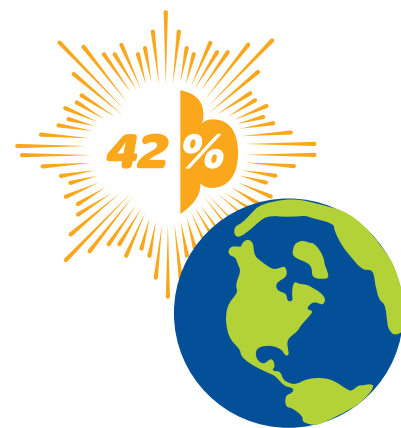
Girl Scouts is proud to partner with influential organizations and coalitions in the nonprofit sector, such as Leadership 18, Independent Sector, the National Council of Nonprofits, the National Human Services Assembly, and the Charitable Giving Coalition. These groups ensure that nonprofits not only survive but also flourish as employers that provide essential services to our country. The 1.4 million U.S. nonprofits employ 11.4 million workers, making the sector the third largest workforce in the nation.

We support policies that help nonprofits screen, recruit, and retain staff and volunteers, as well as incentivize charitable giving. Charitable giving policies fuel the health of our nation and communities around the world.

As the White House and Congress consider new tax policies to stimulate economic growth, there is significant debate about the potential effect of proposed tax changes on charitable giving. Girl Scouts supports changes in tax policy that encourage more people—specifically, those who do not currently have access to the charitable deduction—to give more.

We believe there is opportunity in tax reform to expand access to the charitable deduction to 100 percent of taxpayers. Accordingly, we urge Congress to reject proposals to limit the value of deductions for charitable donations and support policies to encourage all individuals, regardless of income, to give more to charity. Such policies would include people who do not itemize their taxes and take the standard deduction, would allow Girl Scouts to serve more girls in communities across the country, and would help these girls realize their full potential.

Furthermore, in the 115th Congress, Girl Scouts supports Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) premium reduction legislation so Girl Scout councils can serve more girls. Girl Scouts' ability to continue to fund vital programs, offer opportunities to girls in at-risk communities, and



**42% of 2017 nominations for the Gold Award were for globally-focused projects**

retain staff and develop volunteers who make our organization so effective are in serious jeopardy. Every dollar that Girl Scouts spends on PBGC premiums is one dollar less spent on our mission—to provide the best leadership experience for girls in the world.

### Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- **Ensure a healthy, effective, and vibrant nonprofit community that sustains the nation's philanthropic tradition.**
- **Maintain the financial stability of the Girl Scout Movement to ensure that the Girl Scout Leadership Experience can be offered to an increasing number of girls.**
- **Reduce pension premiums, which hinder Girl Scouts' ability to improve girls' lives and develop our nation's future leaders.**
- **Support tax policies that encourage individuals' charitable donations, which serve as the backbone of all nonprofits.**



GSUSA's Public Policy and Advocacy Office, located in Washington, DC, works in partnership with all 112 Girl Scout councils across the country to educate representatives of the Legislative and Executive branches of government and to advocate for public policy issues important to girls and Girl Scouting. For more information, contact us at 202-659-3780 or [advocacy@girlscouts.org](mailto:advocacy@girlscouts.org). To volunteer, reconnect, donate, or join, visit [www.girlscouts.org](http://www.girlscouts.org).