

Background

As the United States continues to grow in the twenty-first century, it is essential to ensure our youth receive opportunities to develop their skills and identify interests in fields that will move our country forward. Girl Scouts is eager to work with members of the 115th Congress to advance policies that foster girls' leadership development. Together, we can work to address a range of issues for the benefit of girls all across America.



“*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.*”

Girl Scouts is the world's preeminent organization for girls, with nearly 3 million members in the United States and its territories and more than 90 countries around the globe. Our mission is to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. 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.

There are 59 million Girl Scout alumnae living all across our country. In fact, approximately one out of every two women living in the United States today was a member of Girl Scouts in her youth. Girl Scout alumnae have gone on to achieve amazing things. Girl Scouts has been instrumental in working to develop female leaders in government, business, and public service. Virtually every female astronaut who has flown in space is a Girl Scout alumna as well as a majority of female members of Congress and female CEOs. Although Girl Scouting has evolved over the years, the fundamental experience of being part of the Girl Scout organization connects generations of women.

At Girl Scouts, we are constantly thinking about the future and how to help the next generation of female business owners, teachers, scientists, and community leaders succeed. Public policies are needed to support programs and initiatives that allow girls to grow up healthy and strong, develop the skills they need to excel in the ever-changing workforce, and make a positive impact in their communities and on their world. In partnership with our 112 local councils, Girl Scouts works with policymakers at all levels to advance the cause of girls and their limitless potential.

In our effort to build tomorrow's leaders, Girl Scouts is prioritizing the following public policy goals in 2017:

- ***Promote economic opportunities for girls by increasing girls' involvement in STEM and strengthening girls' financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.***
- ***Encourage healthy living opportunities for girls by increasing 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 experience.***

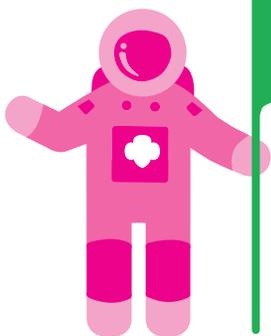
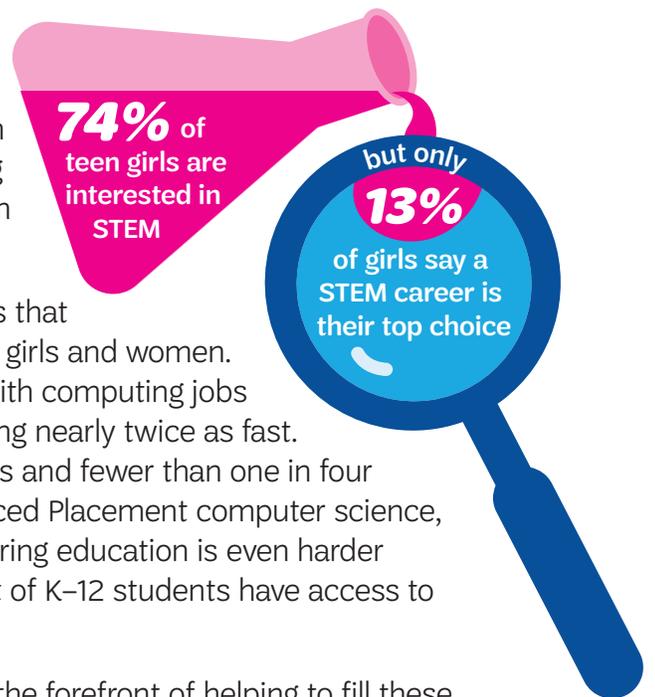
Promote Economic Opportunities for Girls

Increase girls' involvement in STEM

Women are currently underrepresented at all levels of the STEM career journey—especially in computer science and engineering—starting from their level of interest at school and their choice of major in college to their securing of a career in a STEM field in adulthood. Studies show that girls lose interest in math and science during middle school and STEM interest for girls is low 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 reach for careers in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). That is why Girl Scouts is committed to ensuring that every girl has the opportunity to explore and build an interest and possible career path in STEM-related fields.

As the economy shifts rapidly, STEM fields shine as areas that offer tremendous opportunity for growth, particularly for girls and women. Computer science is a gateway to a prosperous future with computing jobs paying almost twice as much as all other jobs and growing nearly twice as fast. Unfortunately, most high schools don't even offer courses and fewer than one in four high school students attends a school that offers Advanced Placement computer science, the gold standard for computer science classes. Engineering education is even harder to find in schools than computing. Only about 10 percent of K-12 students have access to engineering-related curriculum.



Nearly all of the 40 women
to have flown in space are
Girl Scout alumnae

Girl Scouts is at the forefront of helping to fill these gaps by offering effective STEM programming in a supportive, all-girl environment that gives girls the skills and confidence to pursue a field in STEM. Girl Scouts has been instrumental in building the pipeline to STEM careers for generations of girls and women by immersing girls in STEM activities that emphasize learning by doing and a by providing a cooperative learning environment. Particularly with STEM, we have learned that youth benefit most when they are engaged in hands-on and active ways. Additionally, the cooperative learning process gives girls the opportunity to develop leadership and STEM skills in a way that feels comfortable and natural to them.

Since 1913, Girl Scouts has been developing that pipeline by providing girls with an opportunity to explore, develop, and sharpen their STEM skills through national proficiency badges. The content of all Girl Scout national proficiency badges and Journeys has been correlated by grade level to national standards, 21st Century Skills standards, financial literacy education standards, and curriculum learning objectives for all 50 states and the District of Columbia in areas such as health and physical education, language arts, math, science, and social studies. In recent years, Girl Scouts has provided girls with nearly two million separate STEM activities, with each activity

giving individual girls a unique and genuine STEM experience that piques their interest and encourages them to pursue STEM careers.

Girl Scouts can become coders, video-game designers, design thinkers, inventors, naturalists, scientists, app developers, and robotics engineers. Girls who participate in Girl Scouts' STEM programming express increased confidence in their skills and increased capability in critical thinking and problem solving. With over a century of helping girls discover their STEM potential in every zip code in America, Girl Scouts has the scale, and the capacity, to expand our one-of-a-kind programs and continue to leverage the potential of girls in STEM on a national level.

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- *Encourage federal programs that invest in STEM education programs through 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.*
- *Support opportunities to engage girls in engineering and computer science that will prepare them for the STEM workforce in the twenty-first century.*
- *Expose girls to diverse role models and mentors.*
- *Expand out-of-school STEM programming to girls and underrepresented minorities.*
- *Support federal initiatives that encourage federal agencies to invest in developing career pipelines for girls and underrepresented minorities in STEM.*

Strengthen financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills

According to the Girl Scout Research Institute, the dearth of financial literacy programming among the nation's youth is a growing concern given the ever-evolving state of the U.S. economy. The recent recession led to high unemployment, foreclosures, personal and national debt, inflation, and financial uncertainty. In order to properly grasp these concepts and prepare themselves for their financial future, today's youth need a solid understanding of age-appropriate money management and economics. This is especially important given the fact that financial literacy is not currently a standard component of the K-12 education curriculum in the United States, and thus the responsibility for teaching these skills has fallen to parents, families, and out-of-school-time programs.

Financial literacy has been a cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience for over a century. We know when girls develop the skills to be sound stewards of their own and other people's money, it fosters a sense of confidence in handling money and making financial decisions that serves 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. Ensuring girls have the tools they need to make financially responsible decisions 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.

The century-old Girl Scout Cookie Program is often girls' first introduction to business planning and entrepreneurship. Through the cookie program, girls develop five lifelong financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills: goal setting, decision making, money management, people skills, and business ethics—key twenty-first century business and finance skills. The Girl Scout Research Institute studied these benefits to girls and found 85 percent of girls develop money management skills through the cookie program.

In 2017, as we celebrate 100 years of Girl Scouts selling cookies, Girl Scouts are embracing technology to innovate the most powerful girl-led business to reflect today's business realities without losing essential offline skills. The national Digital Cookie™ sales platform includes goal setting and the development of decision-making skills as well as direct customer engagement and marketing.

A nationwide survey conducted by the Girl Scout Research Institute reveals girls are confident and optimistic about their financial futures, but their current knowledge is limited. Overall, girls need greater financial literacy skills to succeed in life when making decisions about actions such as financing a college education, becoming first-time homebuyers, and planning for retirement. Girl Scouts can help fill this need.



ONLY 12%
of girls today feel very confident making financial decisions

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- *Ensure that all girls have financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.*
- *Bolster the role of youth-serving organizations in providing real-world financial literacy and entrepreneurial experiences in an all-girl environment that develops girls' confidence in managing financial decisions.*
- *Encourage federal programs 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

American youth are not spending as much time in nature as they spend on indoor activities, with 88 percent of American youth saying they spend time online every day. Additionally, fewer than two in five American youth participate in any of the following activities on even a weekly basis: hiking outside, fishing or hunting, visiting



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

a local park, visiting a national or state park outside a city, or visiting a natural area outdoors. If American youth are given more opportunities to have a meaningful experience outdoors, they will be more likely to value nature, engage with it, and feel empowered to do something about it.

One of the fundamental pillars of Girl Scouts is an appreciation for nature and exposure to the great outdoors. Activities like hiking, camping, and orienteering build important skills that teach valuable life lessons, such as self-reliance, leadership, and perseverance. That is why for over a century, outdoor experiences have been a cornerstone of the Girl Scout experience, and our Movement remains committed to ensuring that girls have the opportunity to take part in everything our camps and our nation's natural resources have to offer.

The Girl Scout Research Institute's *More Than S'mores* (2013) report found that girls with more frequent and longer-in-duration outdoor experiences are more likely than their peers with less outdoor exposure to seek challenges, and are better problem solvers—both of which are traits needed for twenty-first century leadership.

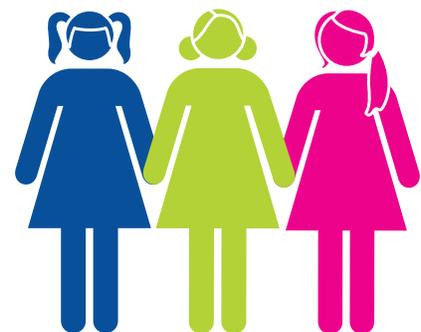
Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

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

Prevent bullying/relational aggression and build healthy relationships

According to the Girl Scout Research Institute, about 30 percent of girls have experienced some form of bullying or relational aggression from their peers. We know that girls' bullying looks different from boys'; it often involves teasing, exclusion, and cruel behavior in social media forums, all of which are difficult for adults to notice. The consequences of bullying, whichever form it manifests, are devastating. Girls who are targeted have higher rates of depression, eating disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, and suicide.

To address this issue, Girl Scouts gives girls the skills to develop healthy relationships and prevent bullying behavior outright. Our evidence-based BFF (Be a Friend



**About 30% of girls have
experienced some form of
bullying or relational aggression
from their peers**

First) bullying prevention program, designed for middle-school girls, focuses directly on reducing bullying, including cyberbullying and relational aggression. 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 greater benefits from the BFF program.

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- ***Engage local education agencies in providing education and training programs for middle-school (and younger) youth to reduce relational aggression, bullying, and adolescent violence, and creating safe schools and communities.***
- ***Encourage 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 have opportunities to develop increased awareness of the larger world and to understand their relationship to it—even if they don’t travel beyond their own community—so they can develop into responsible global citizens. Girl Scouts strives to promote cross-cultural learning opportunities and educate girls on relevant global issues that inspire them to take action. In 2016 more than 40 percent of nominations for our organization’s highest recognition, the Girl Scout Gold Award, 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, and economic self-sufficiency.



40 percent of 2016 nominations for the Gold Award were for globally-focused projects

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 in investing in girls globally.***
- ***Provide cross-cultural opportunities for international travel.***
- ***Provide opportunities for girls to explore solutions to global issues.***

Support a Strong Nonprofit Community That Encourages The Girl Scout Experience

Girl Scouts is proud to partner with organizations and coalitions in the nonprofit sector such as Leadership 18, Independent Sector, National Council of Nonprofits, National Human Services Assembly, and the Charitable Giving Coalition. The goal of these groups is to ensure that nonprofits not only survive but flourish as employers who provide essential services. America's 1.4 million 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. Total charitable giving in the United States was \$358.38 billion in 2014, \$258.51 billion of which came from individuals. Charitable giving policies help fuel the health of our nation and communities around the world.

Girl Scouts is committed to supporting policies that help us deliver on our mission and increase our capacity to serve girls. To that end, we educate policymakers on the value of having a strong nonprofit sector.

Girl Scouts supports policy efforts to:

- ***Ensure a healthy, effective, and vibrant nonprofit community that helps sustain 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.***
- ***Support tax policies that encourage individuals' charitable donations, which serve as the backbone of all nonprofits.***

For more information on the original research conducted by the Girl Scout Research Institute used to support our public policy priorities, go to www.girlscouts.org/research/.

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 advocate for public policy issues important to girls and Girl Scouting.

For more information, contact us at 202-659-3780 or advocacy@girlscouts.org.

To volunteer, reconnect, donate, or join, visit www.girlscouts.org.