

# CHANGE IT UP!

What  
Girls Say  
About  
Redefining  
Leadership



Executive Summary







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What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership



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Inquiries related to *Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership* should be directed to the Girl Scout Research Institute, Girl Scouts of the USA, 420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798.

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## INTRODUCTION

While the topic of gender and leadership has been widely explored by social scientists and management practitioners, little or no specific in-depth research has been done on how girls and youth view leadership itself. Girls explore leadership opportunities in school and college, on the sports field, in after-school programs, and in other social institutions and organizations, but little is known about how they understand their leadership experiences, their motivations for pursuing these opportunities, or the implications of their current behaviors and attitudes on their future lives. Will the leadership experiences of this generation of girls translate into their obtaining greater leadership roles as adults? What kind of leadership does this generation of girls aspire to and connect with? What do we need to know in order to support the next generation of girl and women leaders?

*Change It Up!* presents findings from a national study of girls and boys on a broad spectrum of issues related to leadership: how they define it; their experiences, failures, and successes with leadership experimentation; their aspirations, hopes, and fears; the effect of gender biases and stereotypes; and predictors of leadership aspiration. From the evidence of this report, girls are clearly saying that we need to “change it up” in how we define and think about leadership.

## BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH GOALS

The development of girl leadership has been at the heart of Girl Scouts since its founding in 1912. As the Girl Scout Movement approaches its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is renewing its commitment to leadership development, and has launched a body of work to identify what girls need to be successful as leaders today. This work will inform a transformation process that was launched in 2004 and designed to ensure the role of Girl Scouting as the premier leadership experience for girls in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Since its formation in 2000, the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) has emerged as a significant national resource on girls’ issues, both for Girl Scouts of the USA and for educators, policymakers, and others committed to the healthy development of girls throughout our society. Confronted by a national lack of data on girls and leadership, the GSRI published a research review in 2007, *Exploring Girls’ Leadership*. This report analyzed the literature from the youth development and youth leadership fields, contrasted continued misperceptions with youths’ realities, and examined community approaches to leadership in the field. *Exploring Girls’ Leadership* discussed the contribution of single-sex environments to girls’ leadership, and included findings from a small online pilot survey and a series of focus groups of girls around the country.

Though *Exploring Girls’ Leadership* identified a wealth of information on youth leadership programs, it found relatively little national gender-specific data within the youth development

literature on how girls experience leadership. The GSRI, in response to this lack and in keeping with the core mission of the Girl Scouts, took on the task of identifying what girls need to develop their full leadership potential.

Specifically, the GSRI recognized the need to conduct primary research in a number of important areas, including:

- girls' definitions of leadership;
- girls' experiences of leadership;
- girls' aspirations for and barriers to leadership;
- the qualities and skills girls associate with leadership;
- predictors of leadership;
- issues related to gender bias and leadership; and
- leadership education and support systems.

Girl Scouts of the USA, in collaboration with Fluent, a New York-based research firm, commissioned this first-of-its-kind research study of thousands of girls, boys, and mothers to address these and other dimensions of girls' attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and experiences toward leadership. (Boys were included in the sample to provide data for gender comparisons, and mothers were included to see if there was a connection between their leadership aspirations and those of their daughters.) A distinguished group of advisors in the youth development and leadership fields also assisted in guiding the direction of this work, as well as a Girl Scout council advisory body.

## A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The first phase of research was qualitative and exploratory in nature and employed a combination of traditional focus groups and ethnographies, engaging 165 girls, boys, and mothers. Research was conducted in January 2007 in four geographically and culturally diverse locations: Hackensack, New Jersey; Cincinnati, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; and San Diego, California. Upon completion of the qualitative research, a nationwide online survey was administered to a national stratified sample of 2,475 girls and 1,514 boys between the ages of 8 and 17 years. The online survey was fielded from June 22, 2007, to June 29, 2007. The margin of error did not exceed 1.5%. The sample was weighted to reflect the U.S. Census representation of racial/ethnic groups among the target-age population. This report is based on an integrated analysis of both qualitative and quantitative research. (See Appendix for a fuller discussion of the research methodology underlying *Change It Up!*)

## WHAT GIRLS SAY: OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The research reveals several key insights into girls and their views and attitudes about leadership that the GSRI hopes will provide a significant contribution to the national dialogue on leadership development among girls and young women:

- Girls, even at a very young age, have definite ideas about what it means and takes to be a leader.
- Promoting leadership in girls is primarily a matter of fostering their self-confidence and providing supportive environments in which to acquire leadership experience.
- To be relevant to and successful with girls, a leadership program must address their aspirational or preferred definition of leadership, their need for emotional safety, and their desire for social and personal development.
- Girls have a range of “leadership identities,” from strong aspiration to outright rejection of the leadership role.

The last point above notwithstanding, girls are signaling that leadership needs to change in order to fully engage them. As will be seen in the findings, the conventional command-and-control model of leadership so prevalent in the culture does not resonate with their desire to make a difference in the world around them.

Furthermore, while the majority of girls see themselves as leaders, many are ambivalent about leadership itself. The greatest single barrier to leadership reported by girls is self-perception—a lack of self-confidence in their own skills and competencies. Research reveals other reported barriers girls face such as stress, fear of talking in front of others, seeming bossy, and peer pressure. While boys and girls are, by and large, free of prejudice in regard to gender and competencies in leadership roles, girls are more aware of expressions of gender bias toward women than are boys. At the same time, leadership is highly idealized for girls, who set the bar very high for what it takes to be a leader today.

Race and income are also strongly correlated with leadership aspiration; however, their impact is indirect—they come into play through self-perception and attitude. Other factors influencing girls’ leadership aspirations include family, particularly mothers, and also peers—who can play both a negative and a positive role. Participation in organized and informal activities and exposure to leadership opportunities are also strongly correlated with leadership aspirations.

Girls relate that environments in which they can develop leadership skills are scarce. Notably, youth do not feel they have much power to change things or teach/help others in many environments. This presents a great opportunity to the youth development and leadership fields to develop leadership programs that resonate with girls and give them safe spaces in which to experiment with a range of leadership roles.

Finally, many of the findings in this study reveal that additional research is needed to explore more deeply the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, and leadership. The conclusion of the report presents important potential areas for further exploration.

# INSIGHT # 1

## GIRLS REDEFINE LEADERSHIP IN MEANINGFUL TERMS

Even at a young age, girls have well-formed ideas about what it means to be a leader. In focus groups around the country, the top-of-mind definition of leadership was in terms of authority exercised through command and control. However, both girls and boys find this definition of leadership the least appealing or aspirational. **Their preferred definitions of leadership imply personal principles, ethical behavior, and the ability to effect social change.** Many girls emphasize what leadership should be used *for*, rather than focusing on specific roles or positions. For example, 72% of girls say a leader is someone who “brings people together to get things done,” and 65% say a leader is someone who “stands up for his or her beliefs and values.”

When asked what kind of leader they would want to be, both girls and boys express the aspiration to be someone who stands up for his or her beliefs, brings people together to get things done, and tries to change the world for the better, although girls feel these sentiments more strongly than do boys.

The disconnect between the aspirational types of leadership and the conventional command-and-control model may help explain girls’ ambivalence about leadership as a goal.



### Definitions of Leaders

	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
One who brings people together to get things done	69%	64%	72%
One who stands up for his or her beliefs and values	62%	57%	65%
One who tries to change the world for the better	51%	46%	54%
One who is in charge of other people and makes decisions that affect them	49%	50%	49%
One who has skills that make others respect them	46%	46%	46%
One who tries to be the very best at something	36%	38%	36%

### Types of Leaders Youth Want to Be

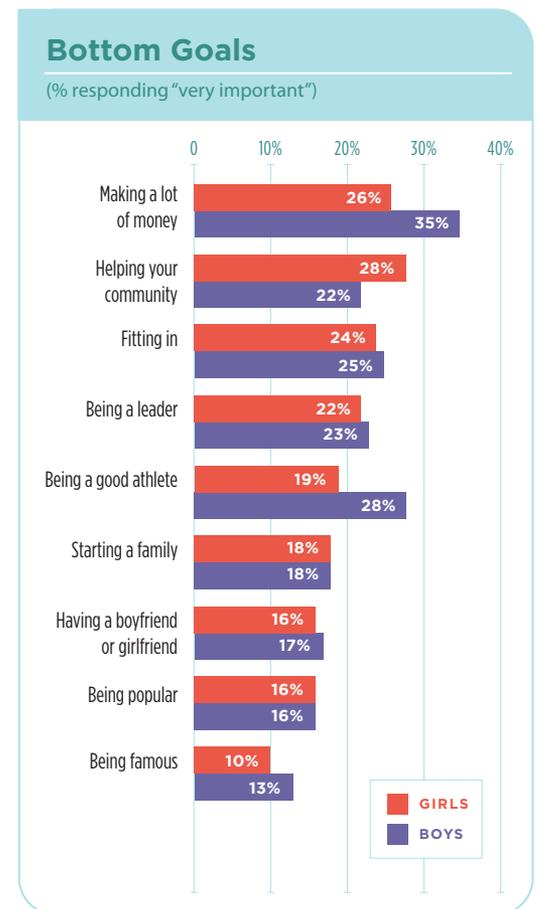
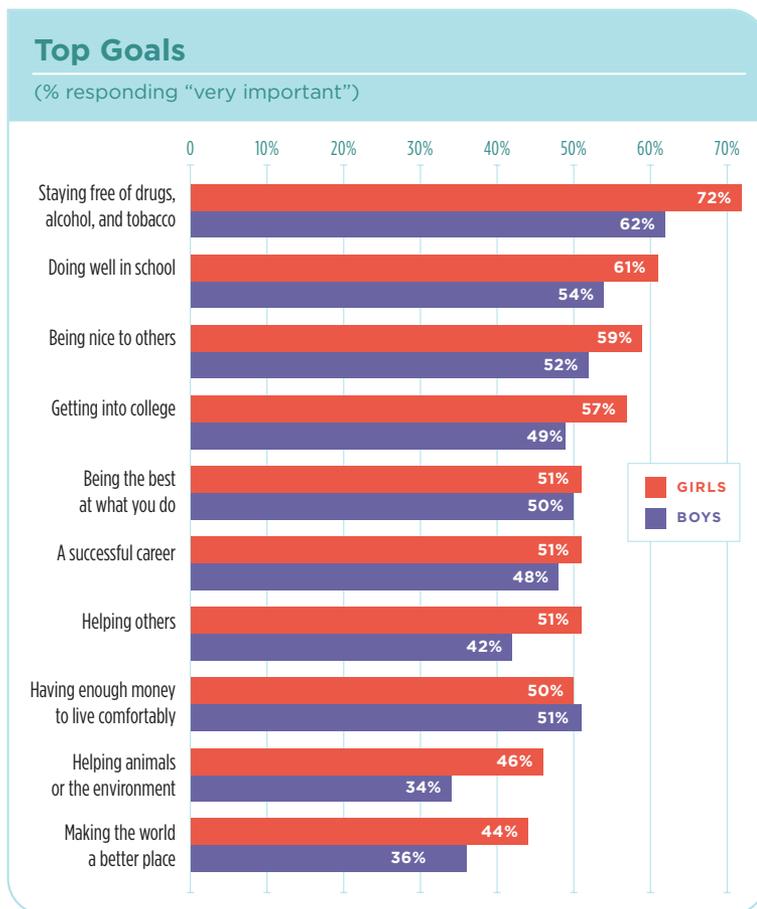
(% responding they want to be like “a lot”)

	TOTAL	BOYS	GIRLS
One who stands up for their beliefs and values	65%	59%	68%
One who brings people together to get things done	55%	52%	58%
One who tries to change the world for the better	55%	49%	59%
One who has skills that make others respect them	50%	49%	50%
One who tries to be the very best at something	49%	50%	49%
One who is in charge of other people and makes decisions that affect them	33%	34%	33%

*Highlighted findings indicate a statistically significant difference between girls and boys.*

## LEADERSHIP AS A GOAL

When asked about their top goals in general, being a leader does not figure prominently for youth, ranking number 15 out of 19 options. About one-fifth (22% of girls and 23% of boys) say that it is very important. The number-one goal for all youth is staying free of alcohol and tobacco, followed by doing well in school, being nice to others, and getting into college. This is consistent with the qualitative research, which revealed that the majority of girls and boys do not consider leadership as a goal in and of itself. While this does not mean that youth are uninterested in leadership per se, it does point to the fact that they have many competing priorities.

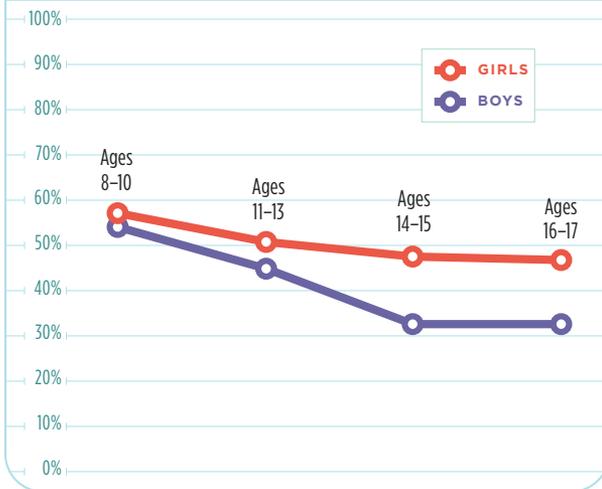


Differences between boys and girls are pronounced in relation to social or altruistic goals, such as helping others, helping animals and the environment, making the world a better place, and being nice to others. As the charts on the next page demonstrate, while girls and boys at the youngest ages rank these goals similarly, their importance for boys drops off dramatically as they get older.

**"A leader is any person of great spirit and heart."**  
*—girl, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, San Diego*

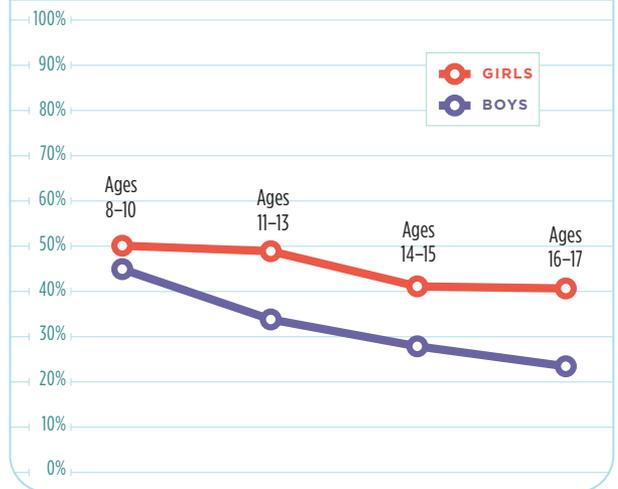
### Importance of Helping Others

(% responding "very important")



### Importance of Helping Animals or the Environment

(% responding "very important")



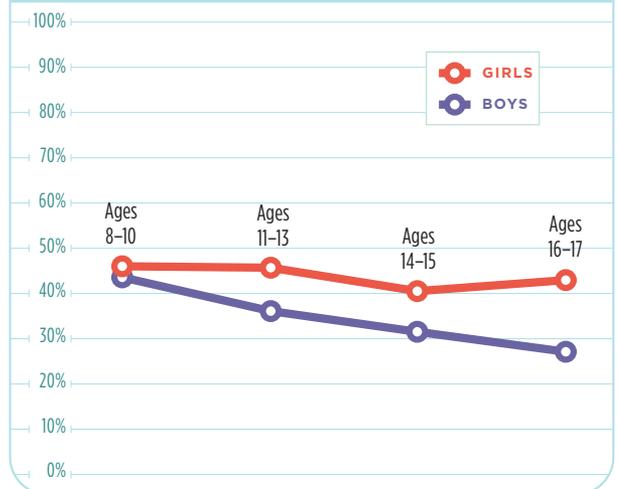
### Importance of Being Nice to Others

(% responding "very important")



### Importance of Making the World a Better Place

(% responding "very important")



## DESIRE TO BE A LEADER

“You don’t have to be a leader of a group. You don’t have to be a leader of an organization. You don’t have to be a leader of a class. It’s just personally within yourself, like knowing that you’re independent, knowing that you can make the right decision. You can be a leader for yourself.”  
 —girl, 11<sup>th</sup> grade, San Diego

“Of course I want to be a leader; no one would ever want to be a follower.”  
 —boy, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Hackensack

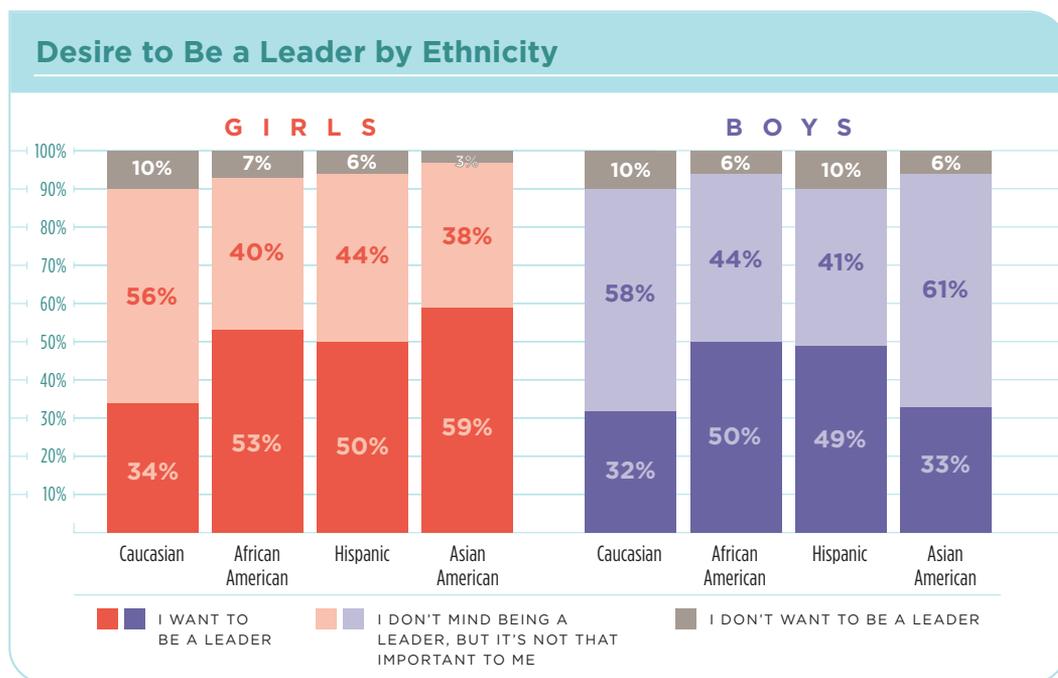
Research reveals that the relationship of girls and boys to leadership is ambivalent. On the one hand, many girls and boys are reluctant to think of themselves as non-leaders or followers. Forty percent of girls and 39% of boys report they would rather be leaders than followers. On the other hand, a significant number of girls and boys lack an active desire to be a leader:

- When asked if they want to be leaders, 39% of girls say yes.
- 52% say they would not mind being a leader, but that it’s not particularly important to them.
- 9% say they do not want to be leaders.

These proportions are mirrored among boys.

The desire to be a leader changes with age. For girls, it peaks at 44% among 8- to 10-year-olds, then drops to 36% for 11- to 13-year-olds, rises to 40% for 14- to 15-year-olds, and drops back to 36% for 16- to 17-year-olds. Interestingly, trends for the *importance* of being a leader go in the opposite direction. Twenty-one percent of girls ages 8-10 say it is very important to be a leader, compared with 26% of girls ages 16-17. In other words, leadership rises in importance for girls as their desire to be a leader diminishes or fluctuates.

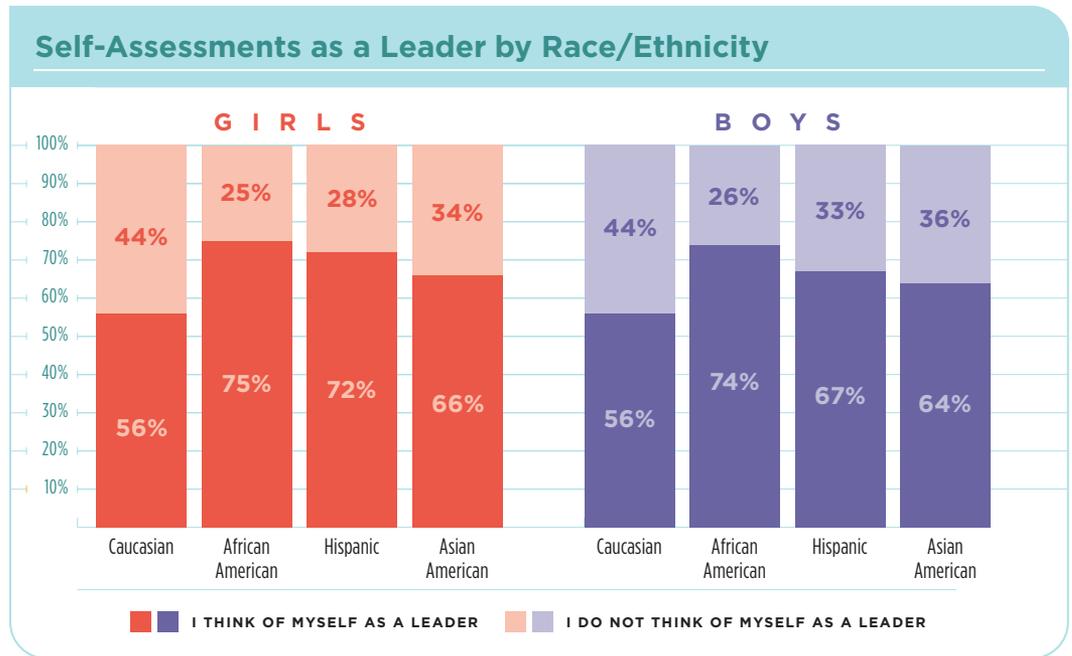
As the graph below illustrates, the desire to be a leader is highest among Asian American, African American, and Hispanic girls, as well as African American and Hispanic boys. Caucasian girls and boys and Asian American boys feel more ambivalent about leadership.



## SELF-ASSESSMENTS AS A LEADER

We also asked if youth see themselves as leaders. Overall, 61% of all respondents currently see themselves as leaders. African Americans (75%) and Hispanics (70%) are more likely than Asian Americans (65%) and Caucasians (56%) to do so. Caucasians are most likely not to think of themselves as leaders when compared with all other racial/ethnic groups combined (44% vs. 39%). The proportion of youth who think of themselves as leaders is highest among African American girls (75%), African American boys (74%), and Hispanic girls (72%).

“The good thing about being a leader is to help others and make them happy.”  
—girl, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, San Diego



## MOTIVATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP

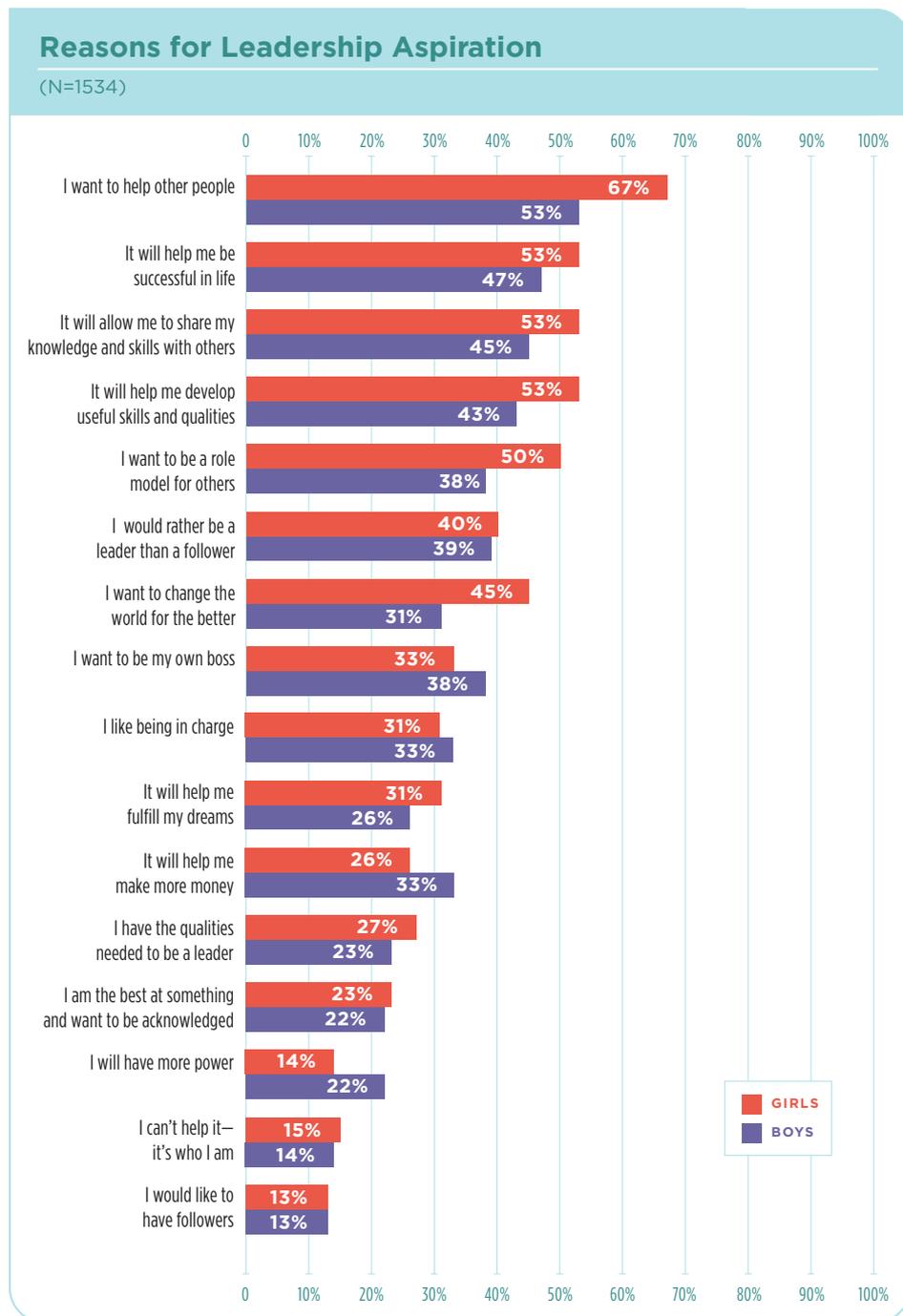
Youth who want to be leaders are driven by a variety of motivations, with the desire to help others topping the list. Overall, both **girls and boys share personal and altruistic motivations for wanting to be leaders**. Girls and boys rank similar reasons for leadership aspiration highly: to help other people, to help themselves be successful in life, to develop useful skills and qualities, and to share their knowledge and skills with others. This is further evidenced in girls’ and boys’ choices of role models. No matter who the role models are—be it a family member, a historic figure, or a celebrity—what youth admire and want to emulate is their commitment to fighting against injustices in society, their focus on helping others, and their determination in overcoming adversity and standing up for their beliefs.

“I would like to be a leader some day so that I can change different aspects of the world, such as homelessness, poverty, and unjust happenings.”  
—boy, 8<sup>th</sup> grade, Atlanta

However, there are significant differences in the relative importance of leadership motivations for girls and boys. **Girls are more likely than boys to want to be leaders because they want to help other people (67% vs. 53%), share their knowledge and skills with others (53% vs. 45%), and change the world for the better (45% vs. 31%). Boys are more likely than girls to be motivated by the desire to be their own bosses, (38% vs. 33%), make more money (33% vs. 26%), and have more power (22% vs. 14%).**

“I want to be a leader for girls everywhere because lately I haven’t seen a single girl role model out in the world that I could look up to, because every time you look to somebody, they go out and do something stupid.”  
—girl, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Atlanta

“Yes, I do want people to look up to me and say, ‘I want to be just like her.’”  
—girl, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Cincinnati

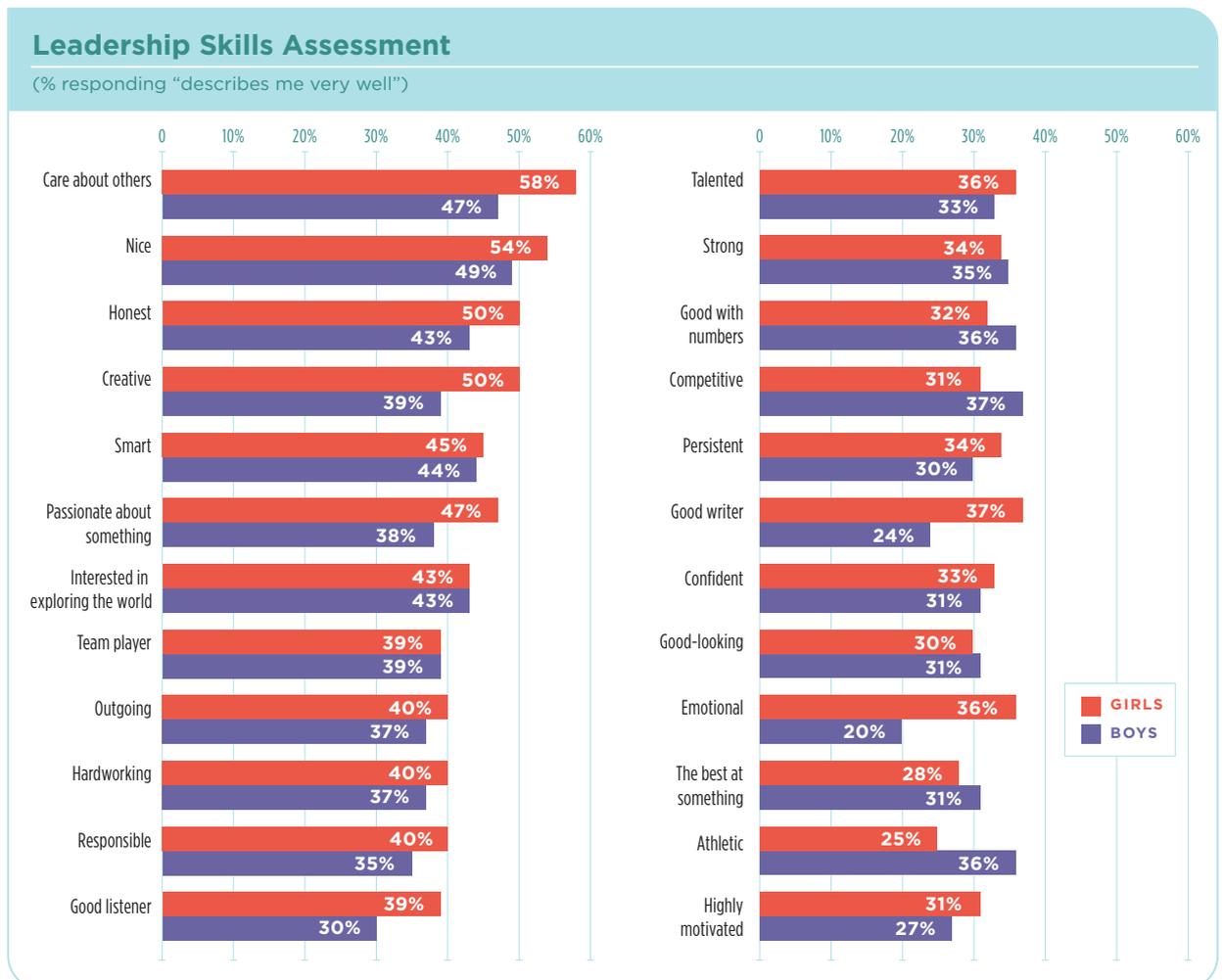


## INGREDIENTS OF LEADERSHIP: SETTING THE BAR HIGH

Girls and boys set the benchmark for leadership skills very high. Leadership is highly idealized and perceived to require a wide range of skills and qualities. Leaders are expected not only to be confident, assertive, and persuasive, but are also expected to be honest, caring, nice, and creative. This does not seem attainable to all girls, and may prevent some from even trying to acquire these skills.

Girls and boys in the study expect a leader to have at her or his disposal a wide array of qualities and skills that can be strategically employed depending on a specific situation. In focus groups and interviews, girls and boys frequently talked about situational leadership – a need to be able to adapt to a particular situation. While some situations might call for a collaborative, team-oriented approach, others demand an executive style of decision-making.

When asked to assess themselves on the same list of skills and qualities they deem important to leadership, girls and boys consistently gave themselves relatively modest ratings. **While 92% of girls believe anyone can acquire the skills of leadership, only 21% believe they**



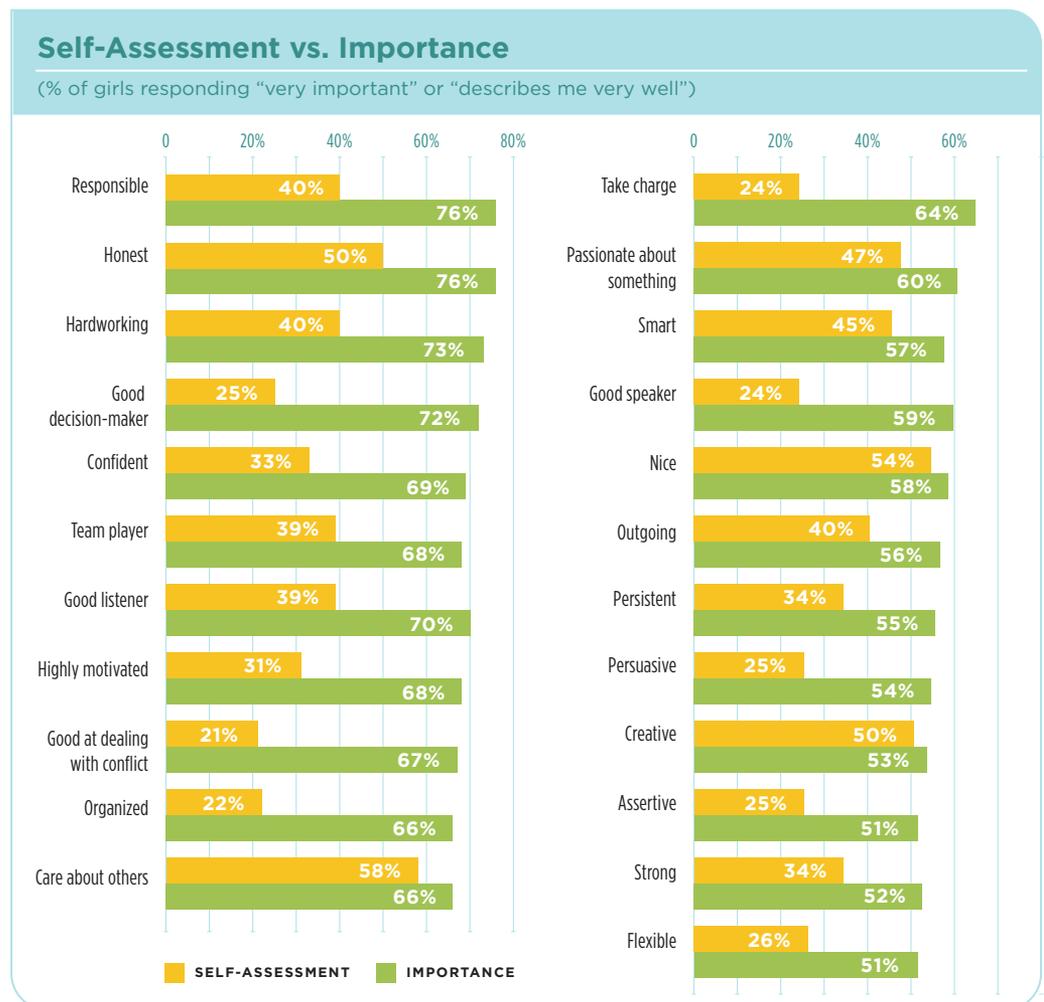
**currently have most of the key qualities required to be a good leader.** This discrepancy is potentially a real barrier. If youth do not feel they possess the skills and competencies necessary for leadership, they may be discouraged altogether from aspiring toward this goal.

Girls and boys rate themselves the highest on qualities such as being caring, honest, and nice.

Overall, girls appear to be more positive in their self-assessment than boys, and give themselves higher ratings on qualities or skills like caring, nice, honest, creative, passionate, good listener, good writer, and highly motivated. They are also more likely to describe themselves as emotional. Boys are more likely than girls to think of themselves as athletic, competitive, and good with numbers.

**However, an important disconnect occurs as girls rate themselves on skills they consider paramount for leadership, including being organized, good at dealing with conflict, taking charge, decision-making, and motivation.** A comparison of importance and self-assessment ratings indicates that girls are not yet confident about having the essential skills and competencies they think of as most important for a leader.

“The type of leadership depends on the situation—for example, in a fire, you must tell people what to do and cannot afford to be nice about it.”  
—girl, 4<sup>th</sup> grade, Atlanta



## IMPLICATIONS

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The disconnect between the command-and-control definition of leadership and the more aspirational types of leadership points to potential pitfalls in communicating with girls about the benefits of leadership development programs. The way girls interpret the intended definition of leadership may determine whether they will find a leadership program appealing. It may also color their expectations for the program, which if not met could result in disappointment. It is important that messages about leadership programs state clearly what definition of leadership is intended.

Leadership is also highly idealized and perceived to require a wide range of skills and qualities. It does not seem attainable to all girls. At the same time, the desire of girls for leadership differs by race and ethnicity, making it important to understand girls' individual experiences rather than communicate to girls universally as one group.

More specifically, communications with girls about a leadership program must:

- Frame communications in language that makes the program relevant and appealing.
- Help girls understand, identify, and verbalize different forms of leadership.
- Make clear which aspects of leadership are at the core of the program.
- Set expectations and leadership skill development goals at a reasonable and attainable level.

# INSIGHT #2:

## SELF-CONFIDENCE + SKILLS = NEW GIRL LEADERS

### PREDICTORS OF LEADERSHIP

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One goal of this research was to uncover the demographic and identity factors, if any, that predict a youth's desire to be a leader. As mentioned previously, the study asked girls and boys to rate themselves on a list of leadership qualities and skills. For analytic purposes, skills and qualities were grouped thematically into four categories:

- *Extraversion* (outgoing, confident, assertive, charismatic, etc.)
- *Organizational Skills* (organized, good decision-maker, etc.)
- *Caring* (nice, honest, cares about others, etc.)
- *Creativity* (creative, talented, good writer, etc.)

In addition, youth were asked to rate themselves on a range of attitudinal variables (e.g., "I prefer when I have a lot of control over what I do and when I do it," "I would rather someone else took over the leadership role when I am involved in a group project," and "When I see a problem, I prefer to do something about it rather than sit by and let it continue.") These responses were grouped into the following psychographic factors:

- *Dominance* (preference for control, giving orders, winning, doing better than others)
- *Decision Avoidance* (pushing decisions off to someone else, preference for someone else to take on leadership roles, reliance on others to make decisions and solve problems)
- *Positive Problem-Solving* (taking initiative to solve problems, optimism, consensus building, making decisions)



### FACTORS WITH A STRONG INFLUENCE ON GIRLS' DESIRE TO PURSUE LEADERSHIP

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The factor that most strongly influences girls' desire to actively pursue leadership is **confidence in their skills and competencies**. Interestingly, it is not only what skills youth rate themselves highly on that impact their leadership aspirations, but how much confidence they have in general. The greatest single barrier to leadership seems to be low self-regard about skills and qualities. Or, to put it another way, youth who report high self-regard on a number of leadership skills and qualities are more likely to aspire to leadership.

Specific factors that influence a girl's desire for leadership are:

- Organizational skills
- Extraversion
- "Dominant" profile/identity
- Involvement in organized and informal group activities
- Experience with leadership roles

Of all factors, organizational skills and extraversion are the strongest predictors of girls' and boys' attitudes toward leadership. Dominance is also positively related to leadership, although the effect is small. Decision avoidance is negatively related, which means that those youth identifying in this category are not likely to pursue leadership.

Leadership aspirations and self-assessments are also strongly correlated with participation in extracurricular activities, and with experience with leadership roles or positions of responsibility for others.

## FACTORS THAT HAVE LITTLE EFFECT

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Age and gender play a very limited role in predicting leadership aspirations. Girls and boys have an equal likelihood of aspiring to and thinking of themselves as leaders.

The age effect is significant, but small. Self-perception as a leader is highest at the younger ages (grades 2-4); drops in grades 7-10; and rises again slightly in grades 11-12. As noted previously, desire to be a leader fluctuates slightly as well, peaking at the younger ages and dropping off at the oldest for both boys and girls.

## FACTORS THAT HAVE AN INDIRECT EFFECT

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Two additional variables—race/ethnicity and household income—have an indirect predictive impact on leadership. As noted earlier, African American, Hispanic, and, to a lesser extent, Asian American girls and boys indicate a stronger desire to be leaders and are more likely to think of themselves as leaders than Caucasians. Youth from households with higher income are also more likely to have leadership aspirations.

However, what actually appears to be at play here is not race/ethnicity and household income alone, but the fact that youth from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and higher-income families rate themselves more highly on leadership skills and dimensions than do others. **For example, African American and Hispanic youth rate themselves higher than do Caucasian youth on extraversion, organizational skills, creativity, caring, dominance, and positive problem-solving. They are also more likely to report having leadership experiences. In other words, it is attitudes, self-perceptions, and experiences that drive leadership aspirations in youth, not their race/ethnicity or income.**

## BARRIERS TO LEADERSHIP

For those youth who are not interested in leadership, the following pose significant barriers:

- Lack of confidence in skills and competence
- Stress
- Fear of talking in front of others
- Fear of embarrassment
- Fear of seeming bossy
- Negative peer pressure

## PROMINENT BARRIERS FOR GIRLS

It is important to note that barriers to leadership are consistent among boys and girls, but that girls experience fears and inhibitions about social acceptance more acutely. **Fully one-third of girls who do not want to be leaders attribute their lack of motivation to fear of being laughed at, making people mad at them, coming across as bossy, or not being liked by people.** These barriers make clear that some girls still struggle with the unwritten rules of what it means to be “feminine” and exhibiting stereotypically “female” behaviors like being nice, quiet, polite, agreeable, and liked by all. **As well, Caucasian youth in general are more likely than youth from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds to not want to be leaders due to their fear of speaking in public, fear of being laughed at, and the perception that others are more qualified than they are.** Unfortunately, as will be discussed in the section on leadership experiences (p. 26), a fear of being ridiculed by peers is not entirely unfounded.

“I do not want to be a leader because people will think I am bossy if I am a leader.”

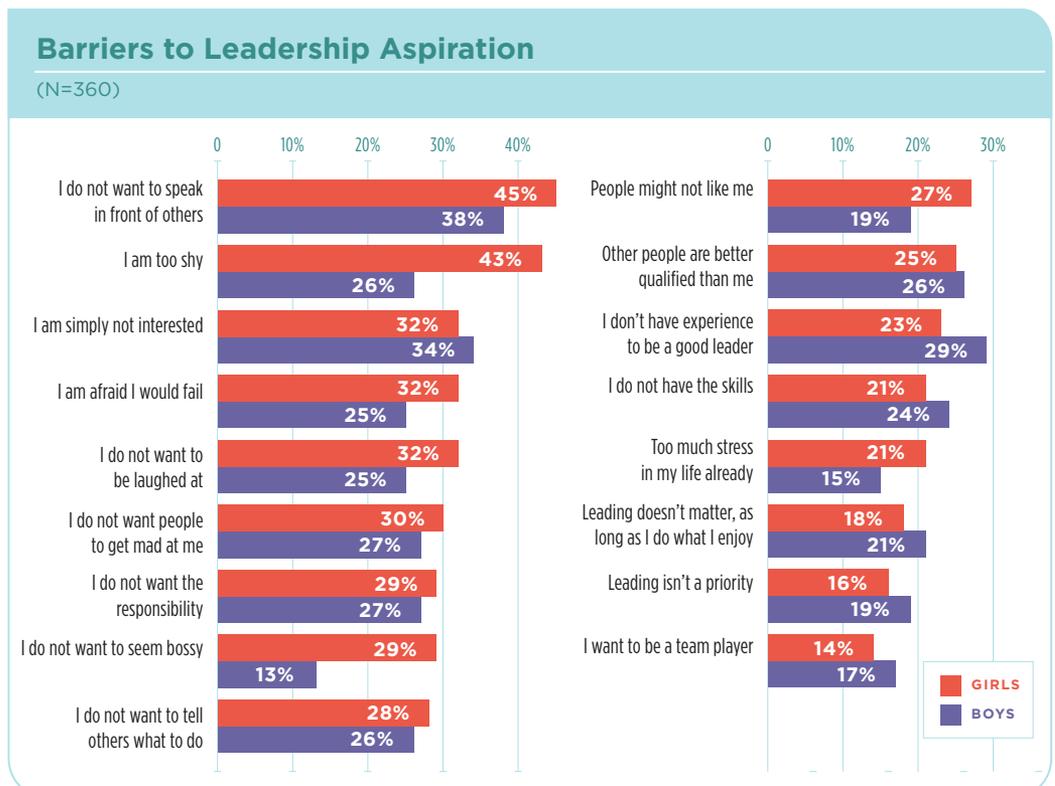
—girl, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, San Diego

“I don’t think I can handle the stress as well as others.”

—boy, 9<sup>th</sup> grade, Cincinnati

“I wouldn’t like getting in front of people.”

—girl, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Atlanta



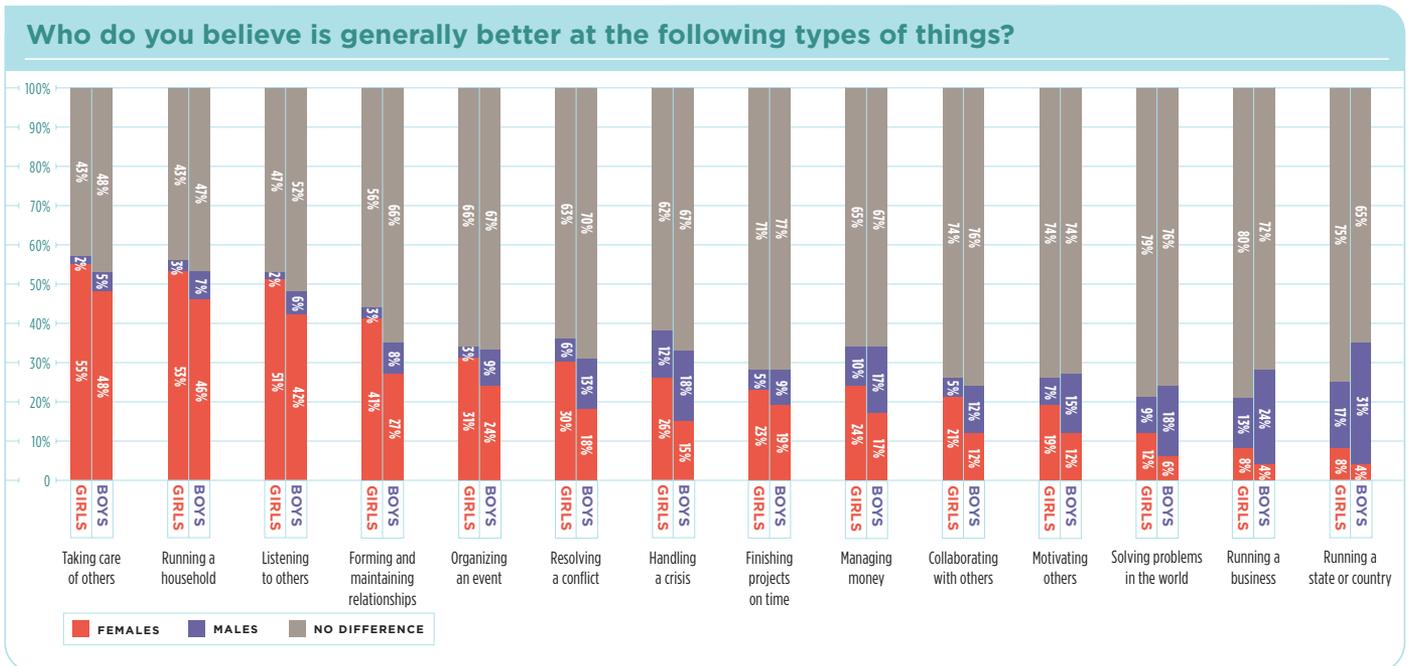
These questions were only asked of those youth not interested in leadership.

## GENDER STEREOTYPES AND BIASES

The research also looked at whether gender stereotypes and biases about roles for women and men exist among youth today. When asked directly, a strong majority (82%) of youth agree that girls and boys are equally good at being leaders. However, 56% of respondents also agree that “in our society, it is more difficult for a woman to become a leader than for a man.” More than half (52%) agree that “girls have to work harder than boys in order to gain positions of leadership,” although this perception is more widely held by girls (57%) than boys (44%). These findings speak to the fact that external barriers in the general environment still exist for girls and young women pursuing leadership roles.

When confronted with statements about women’s or men’s roles or qualities, both boys and girls find no difference in their inherent abilities. However, women are judged by all respondents to be better at fulfilling roles traditionally associated with females, such as “taking care of others,” “forming and maintaining relationships,” “running a household,” and “listening to others.”

As discussed previously, these types of stereotypes can inhibit leadership aspirations because straying from “accepted” female qualities or roles can be seen as inappropriate for a girl. Furthermore, there are expectations that “running a state or country” and “running a business” are best fulfilled by males. Boys are more likely than girls to feel this way.



## IMPLICATIONS

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These findings provide a clear roadmap for leadership development programs. If the goal of a program is to promote girls' interest in leadership, it has to boost girls' self-confidence as well as provide opportunities to develop leadership skills and safely experiment with leadership roles in supportive environments. It should also offer girls high-status, challenging, fun, and exciting projects that can provide a meaningful framework for leadership training. Again, this research reveals that promoting leadership is above all about fostering self-confidence and providing positive, supportive environments in which to acquire experience. More specifically, a leadership development program for girls should:

- Create a supportive environment for girls to express themselves freely and experiment with their leadership identities.
- Involve supportive, inspiring, and influential mentors and role models.
- Provide teamwork, collaborative experiences, and networking opportunities with peers.
- Provide girls with opportunities to support or take responsibility for others.
- Practice and develop specific skills, such as speaking in front of others and giving and receiving critical feedback.
- Debrief girls by reviewing what they learned and how they learned it.
- Be mindful of existing social and gender stereotypes about girls and leadership.

# INSIGHT #3

## OPPORTUNITIES + EXPERIENCES + SUPPORT = NEW GIRL LEADERS

### EXPERIENCE OF LEADERSHIP

Girls and boys experience a wide range of activities involving some form of leadership or responsibility for others. These activities, whether informal or formal, run the gamut from taking care of people or pets, raising money for a cause, or being captain of a sports team to trying to change something about their neighborhood, starting a petition, or even organizing a protest. Girls prefer a social change-oriented definition of leadership and are relatively active in charitable and social service activities; however, they are much less experienced with leadership roles aimed at social change or political activism, compared with more informal leadership activities. They are also less experienced with traditional leadership activities.



Participation in these types of leadership activities differs across age. For example, as girls get older they are more likely to try to stop their

### Experience with Formal and Informal Leadership Activities

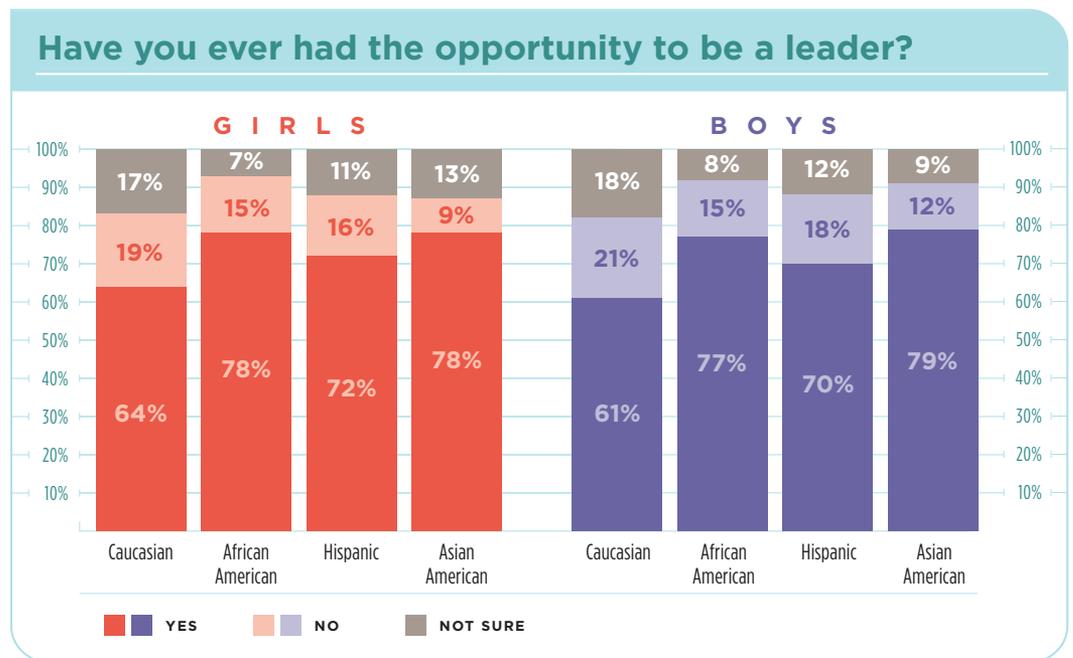
	GIRLS	BOYS
Took care of a pet	80%	74%
Tried to stop friends from something wrong or unsafe	58%	50%
Helped to take care of someone	55%	47%
Helped to raise money for a cause	51%	41%
Babysat for someone	55%	33%
Been responsible for a younger brother or sister	45%	38%
Been leader of a team for a school project	31%	26%
Volunteered to do community service	29%	22%
Tried to get friends or family involved in some community service or events	23%	19%
Organized a game in your neighborhood	15%	25%
Been a captain or co-captain of a sports team	14%	18%
Been a mentor to someone else	15%	12%
Run for a class or school office	13%	10%
Started a club	11%	9%
Started an online group, blog, or chatline	11%	9%
Been an officer in a club	11%	6%
Tried to change something about your neighborhood or community you didn't like	9%	8%
Started a petition or sent a letter to a politician or newspaper editor	5%	4%
Organized a protest	3%	3%

*Highlighted findings indicate a statistically significant difference between girls and boys.*

friends from doing something that is wrong or unsafe (54% of 8- to 10-year-olds vs. 68% of 16- to 17-year-olds). Older girls are also more likely to be leaders of teams for school projects (24% of 8- to 10-year-olds vs. 37% of 16- to 17-year-olds). This progression in age and leadership responsibility is not as evident in girls being captains/co-captains of a sports team, organizing a game in the neighborhood, starting a club or petition, or trying to change something in the neighborhood that they did not like.

Differences in leadership activities across race and ethnicity are also evident among girls. Caucasian girls are more likely than African American, Hispanic, and Asian American girls to help raise money for a cause. Asian American girls are more likely to start a club, be leader of a team for a school project, or run for a class or school office. Asian American and Hispanic girls are more likely than Caucasian and African American girls to start an online group, blog, or chat room.

Overall, four in six girls (67%) believe they have had some opportunity to be a leader. One in six girls, however, is unsure whether she has or not. Across race and ethnicity, Caucasian girls are more likely to be unsure about their experiences than girls of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, especially African American girls. This uncertainty may speak to their inability to recognize leadership experiences as such.

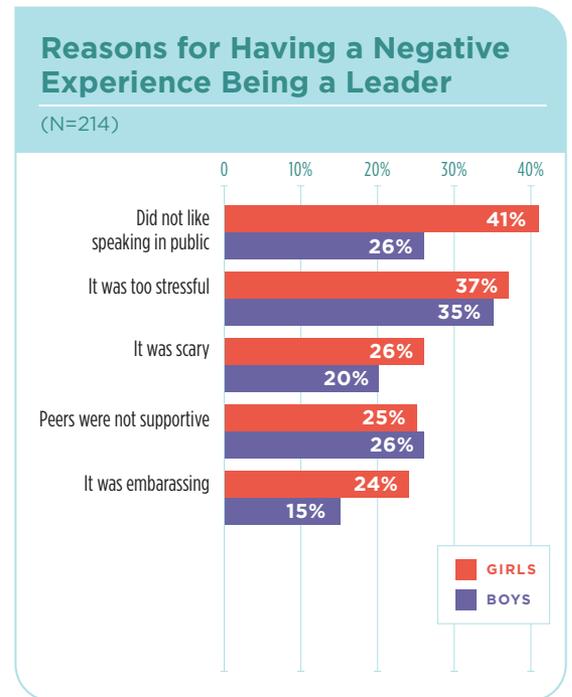


## ENJOYMENT OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Across race and ethnicity, girls experience being a leader differently. The large majority (86%) say their most recent leadership experiences were positive (i.e., they rated the experiences as good or great). African American (89%) and Hispanic (92%) girls are more likely than Caucasian (85%) girls to report enjoying their leadership experiences. **These findings suggest not only that girls of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds are more likely than Caucasian girls to aspire to leadership and seek out leadership experiences, but that they are also more likely to have a better time being leaders.**



*This question was asked only of youth who reported a positive experience being a leader.*



*This question was asked only of youth who reported a negative experience as a leader.*

Further, income has a direct positive correlation with leadership experience. The higher the household income of youth, the more likely they are to have had a leadership experience.

**Girls derive greater satisfaction from learning (31% vs. 22%) in leadership experiences; boys derive greater satisfaction from being in charge (26% vs. 16%). Girls and boys equally cite “being able to effect change” as a reason for their positive experience.**

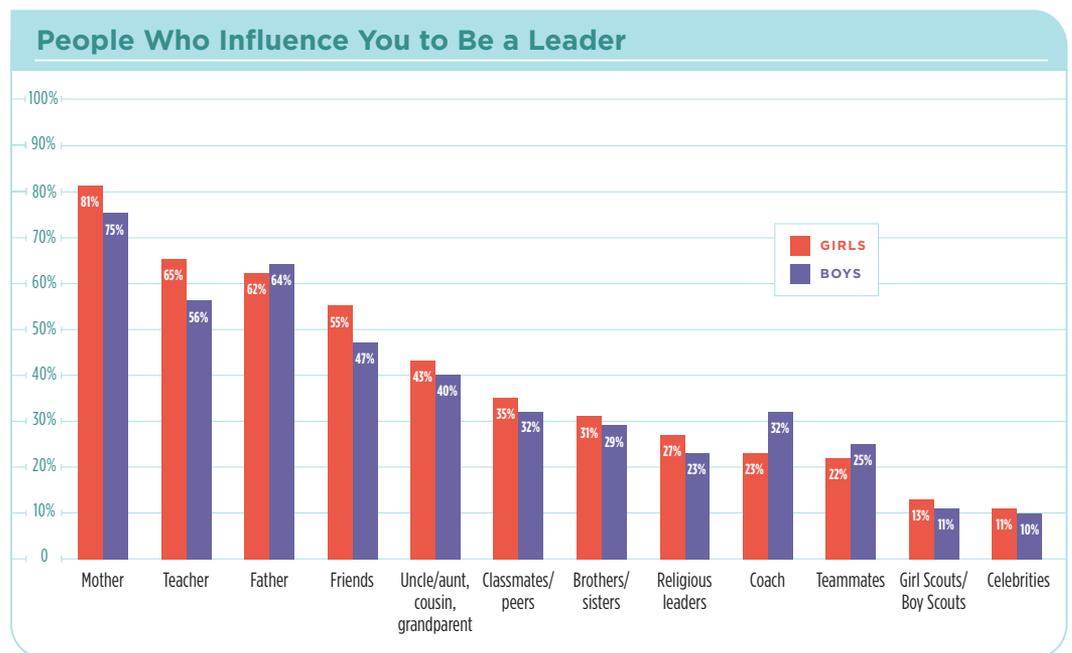
For the 5% of youth who find their most recent experience of leadership to be negative, the top reasons for their dissatisfaction are fear of speaking in public, stress, and lack of support from peers. While girls more significantly than boys (41% vs. 26%) fear speaking in public, both equally cite stress and lack of peer support as factors.

## SUPPORT SYSTEM

Given the potential association of fear or dissatisfaction with leadership, the influence of family, particularly mothers, on girls' and boys' leadership goals and aspirations cannot be overstated. Consistently, across all age groups and regions, girls and boys identify their immediate family members and relatives (mothers, fathers, older siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins) as their role models and the people they most admire.

## MOTHERS' INFLUENCE

Within this study, qualitative research with mothers of girls indicates a close correlation between mothers' own ambitions and outlook on life and leadership with their daughters' aspirations for leadership. Such research also indicates that mothers are remarkably well informed about and attuned to their daughters' dreams and aspirations. Although many mothers do not necessarily want their daughters to hold traditional positions of leadership, they do want them to develop and use leadership skills and qualities for their self-empowerment and for the sake of the greater good. Mothers want their daughters to have a positive impact on their spheres of influence. They share instructive stories about their lives with their daughters, and contend that girls can draw constructive lessons and inspiration to succeed even from examples of their parents' failures and disappointments.



## OTHER ADULTS

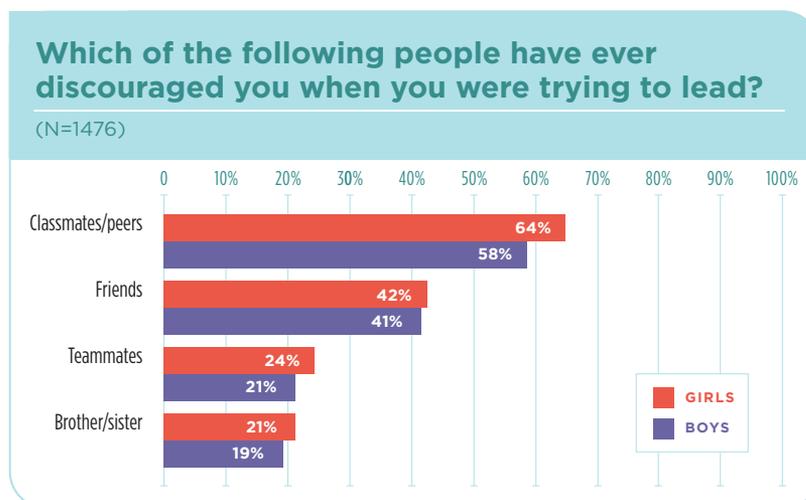
Other influential actors in girls' and boys' lives are teachers, coaches, religious leaders, Girl Scout and Boy Scout troop leaders, and representatives of other youth-serving clubs and organizations. Girls are more likely than boys to look up to their teachers (65% vs. 56%), while boys are more likely than girls to look up to their coaches (32% vs. 23%). Younger girls and boys are more likely than older youth to be influenced by Girl Scout or Boy Scout leaders.

Interestingly, girls and boys do not rate celebrities highly as positive influences on their leadership aspirations. Only a few media personalities, such as Oprah Winfrey, are mentioned by girls and boys in qualitative research as role models for leadership. Girls express disappointment and weariness with celebrity scandals and personal crises that so often play out in public.

## PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Peer relationships play an important role for all youth, but particularly for adolescent girls. Qualitative research within this study finds that some girls cite friends or classmates as role models for setting higher academic and personal goals. At the same time, friends and classmates also serve as negative role models in girls' lives in terms of their leadership aspirations and efforts. **More than one-third of all girls (39%) report having been discouraged or put down, usually by peers and classmates, when they were trying to lead.**

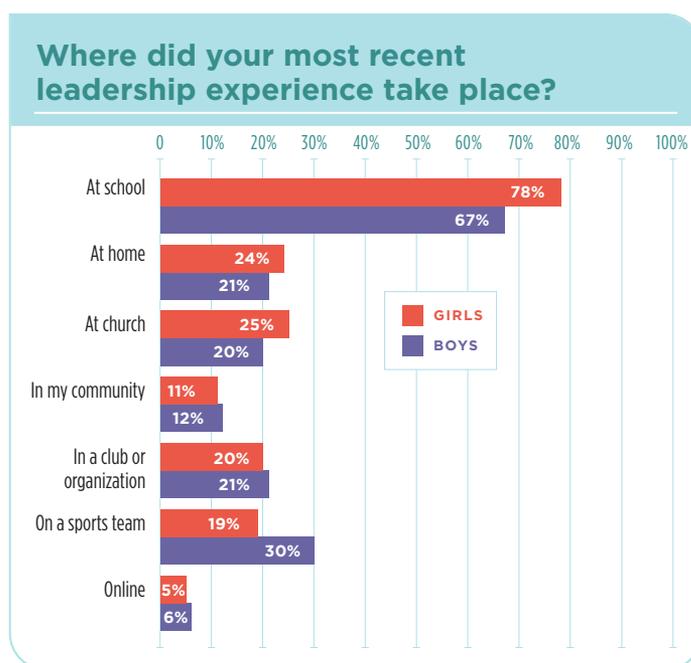
Although this may be seen as normal behavior during youth, the impact should not be underestimated. In qualitative research, girls complain about the emotional toll of "high school drama." This toll dampens girls' enthusiasm for achievement and distinction in their academic or personal goals.



*This question was asked only of youth who reported being discouraged when they were trying to lead.*

## ENVIRONMENTS

Although youth experience leadership in different environments, the majority experience it more at school (75%) than home (24%) or church (22%). Boys see more opportunity to practice leadership on a sports team than do girls, and boys of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds seem to rely on sports teams even more than Caucasian boys (45% each of African American and Hispanic boys, and 48% of Asian American boys vs. 37% of Caucasian boys). Girls, on the other hand, expect to have leadership experience in clubs and at church to a greater extent than boys. Notably, African American girls see more opportunity to practice leadership in a church environment than do girls of other ethnicities (36% vs. 26% of total girl sample).



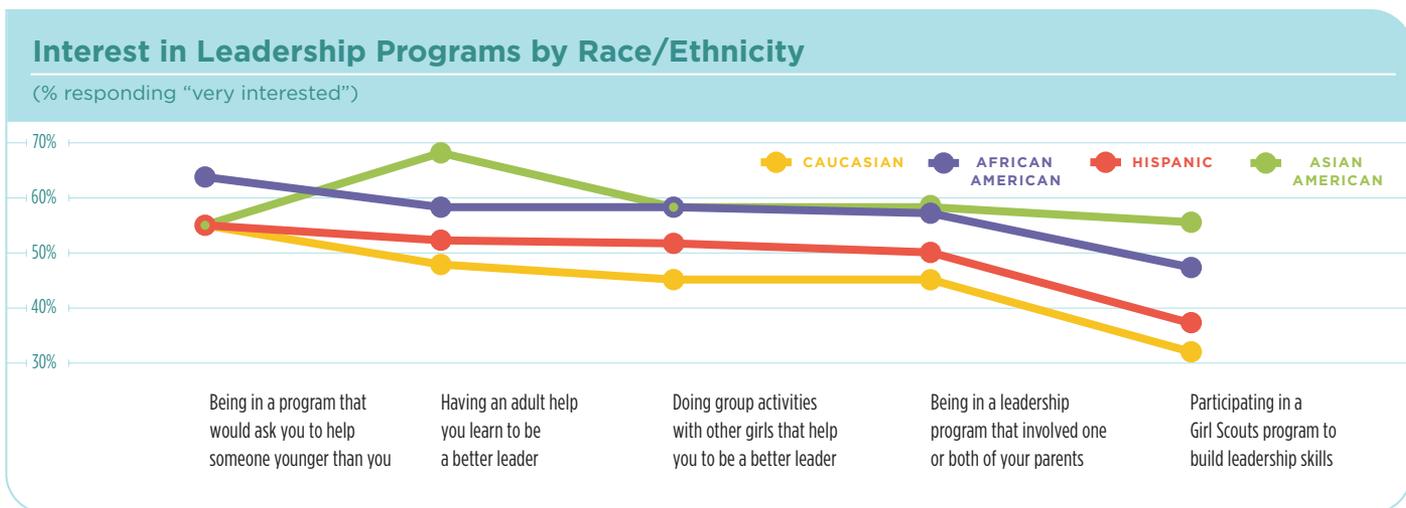
In addition to the best role models, home provides the most influential environment for girls and boys to express themselves freely. However, the school environment is perceived as more conducive to learning new skills, meeting new people, being in charge, making decisions, and having choices. Religious institutions also play a big role in young people’s lives, with girls drawing more support from religious leaders than boys.

**Importantly, youth do not feel they have much power to change things or teach/help others in any environment, even though their preferred idea of leadership is focused on social change.** When asked to rate environments in which they felt they could effect change, they rate “school” highest—at 23%—but give “none” the same rating. After-school environments are rated significantly lower at 7%.

## LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

Participation in organized and informal activities and exposure to leadership opportunities are strongly correlated with leadership aspirations. **However, environments in which girls can develop leadership skills and safely experiment with leadership roles are scarce. It is therefore not surprising that the majority of girls express high levels of interest in leadership training opportunities.**

In the quantitative research, girls were asked about their interest in a range of leadership training programs and activities. In addition to welcoming peer-to-peer partnerships, girls welcome peer-to-adult partnerships and parent participation in leadership programs.



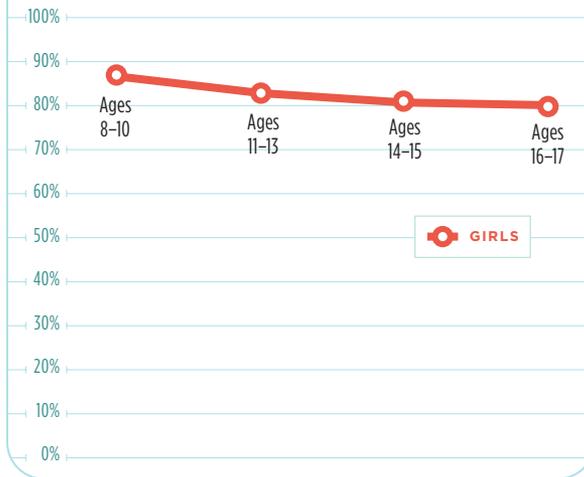
Asian American and African American girls exhibit higher interest than Caucasian or Hispanic girls in almost every program. African American girls are most interested in helping younger youth, and Asian American girls are most attracted to a program in which adults help them to become better leaders. Caucasian girls express less interest than do girls of other ethnicities in every program.

Not surprisingly, current Girl Scouts are significantly more interested in all proposed programs than past or nonmembers, and most of all in a Girl Scout leadership program. Although girls' interest in a Girl Scout leadership program is correlated with age and membership, a majority of all teenage girls (80%) still believe that Girl Scouts can promote leadership among them.

Since girls' leadership participation and opportunities strongly correlate with their leadership aspirations, providing a strong and positive support system for these opportunities serves as a foundation for developing girl leaders. Parents and daughters alike need to be educated about expanded definitions of leadership and the value of leadership skills development.

## Do you think the Girl Scouts can promote leadership among girls like you?

(% responding "yes")



## IMPLICATIONS

To be relevant and successful to girls, a leadership program must address girls' aspirational or preferred definition of leadership, need for emotional safety, and their desire for social and personal development. Such programs should:

- Expand girls' social circles.
- Create supportive relationships (peer-to-adult and peer-to-peer).
- Provide safe and supportive environments for free expression.
- Create opportunities for girls to experience a range of leadership activities, from social change and political activism to more traditional positions of leadership.

# INSIGHT # 4

## GIRLS HAVE A RANGE OF “LEADERSHIP IDENTITIES”

As we have seen, girls vary widely in terms of their leadership aspirations and self-perception. To help clarify these variances and their significance, we have sorted respondents into five categories, based on their desire to be leaders and their self-assessment as leaders. The categories range from girls (and boys—both sexes fall into exactly the same categories in exactly the same proportions) who think of themselves as leaders and actually want to be leaders to those who do not think of themselves as leaders and do not want to be leaders. A comparison of these groups reveals substantial differences not only among their respective orientations to leadership, but also in relation to their general attitudes, goals, aspirations, and behaviors.

What is encouraging is that more than 9 out of 10 girls either want to be or would not mind being leaders. **This means that fewer than 1 out of 10 girls flatly reject leadership as an aspiration and self-perception for themselves.**

### LEADERSHIP VANGUARD

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Vanguard is the largest leadership identity category, and includes 36% of girls and boys. Youth in this group already think of themselves as leaders and actively desire to be leaders. They have the highest self-confidence, a higher focus on academic, personal, and career success, and high social change values.



## **“LEADERSHIP VANGUARD” 36%**

**OVERVIEW:** The largest leadership segment. Youth in this group have the highest self-confidence, already think of themselves as leaders, and actively desire to be leaders.

### **Demographics**

- Equal gender split
- Younger than other groups; a higher proportion of 8- to 10-year-olds
- Higher proportion of African American and Hispanic youth
- Higher household income
- Higher parental religious involvement

### **Key Attributes**

- Higher focus on academics, getting into college, having a successful career, and being a good athlete
- High social change values; making the world a better place, helping others, and helping community
- Extremely high levels of self-confidence; rate themselves higher on all leadership skills and exhibit dominance and positive problem-solving traits
- Feelings of being empowered to change the world
- No gender bias
- Higher proportion of students with high grades
- High representation of Girl Scouts

### **Leadership Behaviors**

- More likely to have had a leadership experience and rated it as great
- More likely than others to have had experience in organized group activities, such as on sports teams, in school clubs, and faith-based clubs
- Highly enthusiastic about leadership opportunities and leadership development

## AMBIVALENT LEADERS

Ambivalent leaders represent 25% of the overall youth population. Youth in this segment think of themselves as leaders and would not mind being leaders, although leadership is not expressly a goal for them. They share most of the attributes and behaviors of Vanguard leaders to a lesser degree.

### “AMBIVALENT LEADERS” 25%

**OVERVIEW:** Youth in this segment think of themselves as leaders and would not mind being leaders, although leadership is not expressly a goal for them. They share most of the attributes and behaviors of Vanguard leaders to a lesser degree.

#### Demographics

- Equal gender split
- Higher proportion of 11- to 17-year-olds

#### Key Attributes

- Share most of the goals with the leadership Vanguard except to a slightly lesser degree
- High levels of self-confidence: rate themselves higher on all leadership skills than other groups, except those in the leadership Vanguard
- Feelings of being less empowered to change the world
- Higher proportion of students with high grades than any other group, except those in the leadership Vanguard

#### Leadership Behaviors

- Like the leadership Vanguard, more likely to have had a leadership experience
- More likely than all others, except those in the leadership Vanguard, to have had experience on sports teams and faith-based clubs
- Enthusiastic about leadership opportunities
- Relatively high interest in leadership development programs

## HOPEFULS

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Hopeful leaders make up only 4% of the overall youth population. The smallest segment of the leadership index, these girls and boys want to be leaders even though they do not think of themselves as leaders. They are not as confident as the Vanguard leaders, or even the Ambivalent leaders.

### “HOPEFULS” 4%

**OVERVIEW:** Youth in this group lack confidence in their current leadership skills but have the desire to be a leader.

#### Demographics

- Equal gender split
- Like those in the leadership Vanguard, tend to be younger; a higher proportion of 8- to 10-year-olds
- Low household income

#### Key Attributes

- Self-confidence is comparable to that of Ambivalent leaders; they are relatively confident in their own skills and character traits but not as confident as those in the leadership Vanguard

#### Leadership Behaviors

- Fairly enthusiastic about leadership opportunities
- Some interest in leadership development programs

## UNMOTIVATED

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Girls and boys who are unmotivated in leadership aspirations represent 26% of the leadership identities. Although they would not mind being leaders, they do not think of themselves as leaders. They have relatively low self-confidence and are unmotivated in pursuing leadership opportunities.

### “UNMOTIVATED” 26%

**OVERVIEW:** Unmotivated represents the second-largest leadership segment. Youth in this group have lower self-confidence, do not think of themselves as leaders, and are ambivalent about being a leader.

#### Demographics

- Equal gender split
- Higher proportion of 11- to 17- year olds
- Higher proportion of Caucasian youth
- Lower parental religious involvement

#### Key Attributes

- Less focus on academics
- Less focus on having a successful career
- Lower social change values
- Relatively low levels of self-confidence
- Feelings of being less empowered to change the world

#### Leadership Behaviors

- Less experience in organized group activities
- Less likely to have had a leadership experience
- More likely to report that leadership experience was OK or not so good
- Low interest in leadership opportunities
- Low interest in leadership development programs

## REJECTERS

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Fewer than 1 in 10 girls and boys reject leadership as a goal. These youth do not want to be leaders and do not think of themselves as leaders. A small segment of the population, this group of girls and boys has the lowest self-confidence, feels powerless to change the world, and is more likely to believe that leadership cannot be learned.

### “REJECTERS” 8%

**OVERVIEW:** Rejecters represent a relatively small segment of the population. Youth in this group have the lowest self-confidence, do not think of themselves as leaders, and have no desire to be leaders.

#### Demographics

- Equal gender split
- Higher proportion of 11- to 17-year-olds
- Higher proportion of Caucasian youth
- Lower household income
- Lowest parental religious involvement

#### Key Attributes

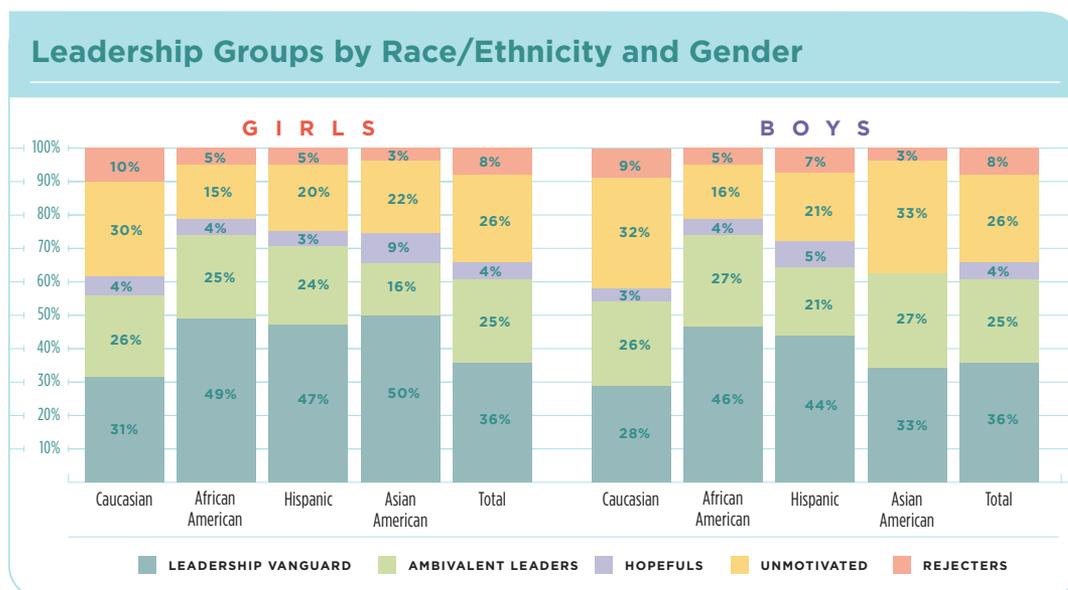
- Low academic ambition
- Lack of focus on social change values
- Extremely low levels of self-confidence; rate themselves lower on every leadership skill
- Have decision-avoidance traits
- Feelings of lack of power to change the world
- More likely to express gender stereotypes
- More likely to believe that leadership cannot be learned
- Highest proportion of students with low grades

#### Leadership Behaviors

- More likely to have never had a leadership experience
- More likely to have had a bad experience being a leader
- Least experience in organized sports or school clubs
- Lack of interest in leadership opportunities
- Lack of interest in leadership development programs

## IDENTITY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS

Although there are no gender differences within each of the five segments, substantial differences exist between racial/ethnic groups. As the chart below illustrates, the proportion of youth with high leadership motivations and self-perceptions is greater among African American and Hispanic girls and boys, and Asian American girls. (The subsample of Asian American girls is too small to make the results conclusive.) Notably, Caucasian girls are twice as likely as African American or Hispanic girls to be in the “Rejecters” category—that is, among those who have absolutely no interest in leadership.



It is also interesting that leadership profiles of Caucasian, African American, and Hispanic youth are very similar for both genders, whereas there are notable differences between Asian American girls and boys—with Asian American girls having leadership dispositions similar to these of African American and Hispanic girls, and Asian American boys being more closely aligned to the leadership profiles of Caucasian boys.

## IMPLICATIONS

Those desiring to create effective leadership development programs should:

- Recognize the leadership identities and needs that youth demonstrate.
- Identify and create opportunities to engender positive leadership aspirations, behaviors, goals, and self-perceptions across settings and environments (e.g., school, home, church or house of worship, peer groups, community organizations, online).
- Diversify youth program to meet their various leadership identities, skills, and needs.
- Understand how factors such as race, ethnicity, household income, religious involvement, age, and culture may impact the development of programs and how youth respond to these programs.

# CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The goal of this study was to explore girls' aspirations, perceptions, and experiences of leadership on a national scale. We found that girls aspire to leadership not in the form in which it most commonly appears in the culture—command and control—but to a model of leadership that is purpose-driven and oriented toward social change. We also found that youths' leadership aspirations and experience are greatly dependent on their perceptions of their own abilities and the opportunities and experiences they have had to exercise leadership.

In addition, the results show that opportunities to develop leadership skills are scarce, and that youth-developing organizations such as the Girl Scouts need to give young people the opportunity to effect change, which is what they are passionate about. The impact of positive adult role models, especially mothers, cannot be underestimated. Finally, the data show a seriousness of purpose and degree of aspiration toward leadership in young people that deserve to be taken seriously and further explored.

Based on the findings of this study, there is clearly a need for additional research on the factors that contribute to girls' developing leadership skills today and in the future. Potential areas for further exploration and research include:

## LEADERSHIP ENVIRONMENTS

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This research suggests that the more experience youth have with leadership roles and extra-curricular activities, the more likely they are to aspire to leadership. However, environments in which girls can develop and safely practice leadership skills are scarce, which signals an urgent need for organizations such as the Girl Scouts to fill the gap. In the quantitative research, girls were asked about their interest in a range of leadership training programs and activities. In addition to welcoming peer-to-peer partnerships, girls welcome peer-to-adult partnerships and parent participation in leadership programs. Girls of all ages find the idea of girl-adult partnerships very attractive and seem open to their parents' participation in leadership programs. Future research is needed to determine what environments are most conducive to girls' gaining leadership skills and how adults can fully support girls in leadership opportunities that resonate with them.

## RACE/ETHNICITY, CULTURE, AND LEADERSHIP

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In this study, African American and Hispanic girls aspired to leadership more than Caucasian girls and also had greater and more positive leadership experiences. Future research is needed to understand more fully what leadership experiences girls of different cultures are having and how that impacts their conceptions of leadership. African American and Hispanic youth rated themselves higher than Caucasian youth on qualities such as creativity, caring, and problem-solving, which are key predictors of their aspirations for leadership. Future research needs to focus on what factors impact the self-confidence of girls from diverse cultures and how this in turn impacts their experiences with leadership.

## EXPLORING DIVERSE DEFINITIONS OF LEADERSHIP WITH GIRLS AND ADULTS

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While many girls do not relate to the conventional command-and-control model of leadership, they are interested in how leadership could be used for social change and for motivating others to make a difference in the world. Leadership programs need to be clear about what definition(s) of leadership they are promoting among girls. They also need to invest in their adult advisors. Girls prefer a social change-oriented definition of leadership and are relatively active in charitable and social service activities; however, they are much less experienced with leadership roles aimed at social change or political activism than with more informal leadership activities. They are also less experienced with traditional leadership activities. Further research is needed to determine what conditions could promote a social change-oriented leadership framework for girls and what it would take to make their aspirations toward this end a reality. At the same time, leadership skills cannot be imparted to girls without the proper training and support from adults. Future research is needed to explore how adult advisors to youth think about leadership and how their conceptions impact the skill sets they deliver to girls.

## GIRLS' FRIENDSHIPS AND LEADERSHIP

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Many of the major barriers to leadership are consistent among boys and girls; however, girls experience fears and inhibitions around social acceptance more acutely. Fully one-third of girls who do not want to be leaders attribute their lack of motivation to fear of being laughed at, making people mad at them, coming across as bossy, and not being liked by people. These barriers make clear that girls still struggle with conventional notions of what it means to be feminine—being nice, quiet, polite, agreeable, and liked. Future research is needed to explore what girls think would help to mitigate these fears, what adults can do, and what environments are conducive to creating a safe space in which girls can take risks that allow them to challenge stereotypical “female” behaviors that limit their aspirations.

# APPENDIX

## METHODOLOGY

The study utilized both qualitative and quantitative research. This report is based on an integrated analysis of both types of findings. Data presented on charts and tables came from an online and mall-intercept survey to which 3,989 girls and boys responded.

## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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The first phase of research was qualitative and exploratory in nature and employed a combination of traditional focus groups and ethnographies. The ethnographies provided the opportunity to interview and observe respondents in their natural environments, such as at home, in school, or in an after-school program. They were designed to include a range of modes, configurations and interviewing techniques, such as friendship dyad, mother/daughter dyad, town hall meeting, small group discussion, observation, and Q&A sessions. This provided the opportunity to observe girls and boys demonstrating their leadership skills and aspirations in action.

The research was conducted in January 2007 in four geographically and culturally diverse locations: Hackensack, New Jersey; Cincinnati, Ohio; Atlanta, Georgia; and San Diego, California. A total of 13 focus groups and six ethnographies were conducted.

**San Diego:** Three focus groups and two ethnographic interviews: one with a parent/girl dyad (2nd–3rd grade) and one with a best friend boy dyad (4th–5th grade).

**Atlanta:** Three focus groups and one ethnography with a Girl Scout troop (4th–5th grade).

**Cincinnati:** Three focus groups and one ethnography with a group of 22 high school students (girls and boys). The protocol included a town hall meeting, small group discussions, leadership role simulation tasks, group presentations, Q&A sessions, and an “exit poll.”

**New Jersey:** Four focus groups and two ethnographic interviews: one with a best friends dyad (middle school girls), and one with a mother/daughter dyad. One of the focus groups in this market combined two separate modes: two simultaneous but separate groups with 6th - 8th-grade girls and their mothers, and then a joined mother/daughter focus group.

All respondents completed a home assignment on their perception of leadership and leadership aspirations prior to participating in the ethnographies or focus groups.

## QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

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Upon completion of the qualitative research, a nationwide online survey was administered to a national stratified sample of 2,475 girls and 1,514 boys between the ages of 8 and 17 years. The online survey was fielded from June 22, 2007, to June 29, 2007. The margin of error did not exceed 1.5%. The sample was weighted to reflect the U.S. Census representation of racial/ethnic groups among the target-age population.

Due to the under-representation of African American and Hispanic households with lower income in online panels, mall-intercept interviews were conducted as part of this sample. A total of 649 African American and Hispanic preteen and teen girls and boys were interviewed at 15 locations across the country in urban, suburban, and rural localities. The data from this sample were used to provide additional insight into correlations between race and various aspects of attitudes toward leadership and leadership aspirations. To ensure uniformity of interviewing techniques, respondents at mall intercept facilities completed the survey online. This portion of the survey was fielded from June 26, 2007 to July 16, 2007. The quantitative findings are based on the combined online and mall intercept portions of the survey.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the quantitative phase of the study was based on a robust sample size of 3,989 respondents. Data were analyzed utilizing several statistical methods and procedures, including cross-tabulations, correlations, factor analysis, univariate analysis of variance, multiple regression analysis, and logistic regression. In order to determine factors that drive leadership aspiration and to identify leadership segments, we took the following steps.

### CREATION OF COMPOSITE VARIABLES

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First, we combined two items to create a “dependent variable.” We had two questions that addressed leadership aspiration and self-assessment: (1) whether a youth thinks of herself or himself as a leader, and (2) whether a youth wants to be a leader. We determined that the two variables correlate strongly with each other (.51), and both correlated similarly with the leadership factor scores detailed below. We therefore combined the two questions into a single leadership index, ranging from 0 to 4.

- 4 = “think of self as a leader” and “want to be a leader”
- 3 = “think of self as a leader” and “don’t mind being a leader”
- 2 = “not think of self as a leader” but “want to be a leader”
- 1 = “not think of self as a leader” and “don’t mind being leader”
- 0 = “not think of self as a leader” and “don’t want to be leader”

In the report, we have used this index in two ways. For multivariate analyses, we have used this index as a continuous scale. For descriptive analyses, we have used it as a categorical variable, and we

dubbed these segments, in the descending order: "Leadership Vanguard" (4), "Ambivalent Leaders" (3), "Hopefuls" (2), "Unmotivated" (1), and "Rejecters" (0). The sub-segment "see self as a leader and don't want to be a leader" was too small to be analyzed (~1%) and was therefore dropped from the analysis. The distribution of these segments is noted in the body of the report.

Our second step in the analysis was to use factor analysis to group the long list of skills and qualities that respondents used to describe themselves into smaller categories. We discovered that these skills and qualities (with the exception of "emotional" which appeared to be unrelated to other skills) could be grouped into four factors that explained 51% of the item variance (see Table A1):

- Extraversion (outgoing and competitive)
- Caring
- Organizational skills (organized, motivated, good at handling conflict, etc.)
- Creative

TABLE A1: FACTOR ANALYSIS OF SELF-DESCRIPTIVE SKILLS AND QUALITIES

		EXTRAVERTED	CARING	ORGANIZED	CREATIVE
D1	GOOD-LOOKING	0.58	0.17	0.02	0.25
D2	STRONG	0.63	0.31	0.20	0.12
D3	ASSERTIVE	0.66	0.11	0.25	0.18
D4	CREATIVE	0.29	0.33	0.06	0.62
D5	HONEST	0.15	0.72	0.20	0.14
D6	RELIGIOUS	0.22	0.36	0.14	-0.02
D7	RESPONSIBLE	0.23	0.56	0.46	0.11
D8	PASSIONATE ABOUT SOMETHING	0.40	0.46	0.06	0.35
D9	COMPETITIVE	0.70	0.02	0.22	0.00
D10	PERSISTENT	0.57	0.20	0.14	0.23
D11	CHARISMATIC	0.59	0.27	0.10	0.24
D12	OUTGOING	0.67	0.24	0.07	0.18
D13	NICE	0.22	0.75	-0.01	0.21
D14	THE BEST AT SOMETHING	0.55	0.19	0.16	0.31
D15	HUMBLE	0.15	0.57	0.23	0.09
D16	TEAM PLAYER	0.40	0.59	0.18	-0.01
D17	CONFIDENT	0.61	0.30	0.29	0.17
D20	ATHLETIC	0.56	0.10	0.34	-0.18
D21	TAKE CHARGE	0.52	0.04	0.53	0.25
D22	FLEXIBLE	0.20	0.41	0.44	0.18
D23	GOOD WRITER	0.05	0.14	0.33	0.67
D24	ORGANIZED	0.12	0.24	0.73	0.07
D25	GOOD DECISION MAKER	0.29	0.36	0.60	0.21
D26	GOOD AT DEALING WITH CONFLICT	0.30	0.29	0.59	0.18
D27	SMART	0.23	0.26	0.32	0.55
D28	GOOD LISTENER	0.07	0.58	0.42	0.20
D29	GOOD SPEAKER	0.35	0.03	0.52	0.42
D30	GOOD WITH NUMBERS	0.14	0.12	0.51	0.26
D31	PERSUASIVE	0.46	0.09	0.34	0.37
D32	SELFLESS	0.05	0.44	0.31	0.18
D33	HARDWORKING	0.23	0.49	0.51	0.14
D34	HIGHLY MOTIVATED	0.38	0.30	0.58	0.20
D35	CARE ABOUT OTHERS	0.09	0.70	0.09	0.32
D36	INTERESTED IN EXPLORING THE WORLD	0.25	0.28	0.19	0.37
D38	TALENTED	0.40	0.16	0.24	0.56

We then tested the internal consistency of four scales comprised of the highest-loading items on each factor (bolded items in Table A1). We obtained Cronbach's alpha's of .77 to .91, meaning that the items "hang together" well when organized this way.

We used this same factor structure when organizing responses to another series of questions about the *importance* of these same skills and qualities in an ideal leader.

Our third step was to conduct factor analysis (using oblique rotation) of a battery of psychographic self-statements about leadership. This analysis yielded three factors that explain 51% of the item variance (see Table A2). We named them:

- Dominance
- Avoiding decisions
- Positive problem solving

**TABLE A2: FACTOR ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOGRAPHIC SELF-STATEMENTS**

	DOMINANCE	AVOIDING DECISIONS	POSITIVE PROBLEM SOLVING
I prefer when I have a lot of control over what I do and when I do it.	<b>0.61</b>	-0.15	0.20
I would prefer to be a leader rather than a follower.	<b>0.50</b>	-0.30	0.39
Others usually know what is best for me.	0.06	<b>0.66</b>	0.12
I enjoy making my own decisions.	0.34	-0.25	<b>0.50</b>
When faced with an opportunity, I usually focus on the risks involved.	-0.07	0.44	<b>0.55</b>
I would rather someone else took over the leadership role when I am involved in a group project.	-0.12	<b>0.76</b>	0.09
I consider myself to be generally more capable of handling situations than others are.	<b>0.43</b>	-0.11	<b>0.44</b>
When I see a problem I prefer to do something about it rather than sit by and let it continue.	0.05	-0.11	<b>0.71</b>
When it comes to orders, I would rather give them than receive them.	<b>0.73</b>	-0.07	-0.07
I wish I could push many daily decisions off on someone else.	0.30	<b>0.65</b>	-0.13
I like to wait and see if someone else is going to solve a problem so that I don't have to be bothered by it.	0.27	<b>0.64</b>	-0.19
It is important that I do better than others.	<b>0.66</b>	0.09	0.05
People who take risks have more interesting lives.	<b>0.52</b>	0.09	0.12
It annoys me when other people perform better than I do.	<b>0.65</b>	0.27	-0.22
I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways.	0.17	-0.08	<b>0.57</b>
Winning is the most important thing.	<b>0.63</b>	0.27	-0.11
I always look on the bright side of things.	-0.11	0.07	<b>0.76</b>
When working on a team, it is important that everybody comes to an agreement.	-0.04	0.09	<b>0.70</b>

One's self-rating on **Positive Problem Solving** is correlated .29 with the leadership index, and is highly correlated (.43 to .55) with self-ratings on all four leadership dimensions (extraverted, caring, organized, creative). **Avoidance** of decisions is negatively correlated ( $r = -.29$ ) with the leadership index and modestly negative correlated ( $r = -.14$  to  $-.17$ ) with all four self-rated leadership factors. In contrast, one's self rating on the **Dominance** psychographic factor also correlates with the leadership index ( $r = .25$ ), but is most strongly correlated with extraversion ( $r = .35$ ), more modestly correlated (.19 to .20) with organization and creativity, and entirely unrelated ( $r = .00$ ) to caring.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES ON LEADERSHIP MEASURES

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After we developed the leadership index and organized the self-descriptive qualities/skills and psychographic self-statements into factors, we used bivariate analyses to examine whether there were any differences by gender (without controlling for age or any other variable). This initial gender difference analysis revealed:

**A. No gender difference on:**

- Overall leadership index (self-rating as a "leader")
- Self-perception as extraverted
- Self-perception of having organizational skills
- Perceived importance of a leader being extraverted

**B. Boys rate themselves higher than do girls on:**

- Valuing dominance (psychographic), yet also...
- Valuing avoiding decisions (psychographic)

**C. Girls rate themselves higher than do boys on:**

- Valuing positive problem solving
- Self-perception as caring
- Self-perception as creative

**D. Girls believe to a greater degree than do boys that a leader needs to be:**

- Caring
- Organizationally skilled
- Creative (near-significant trend for a gender difference)

## MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

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Our next step was to determine factors that predict leadership utilizing multivariate analysis, which allows us to control for the influence of other factors. The hierarchical regression analysis<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Because the survey instrument for 8- to 10-year-olds didn't include the psychographic battery of questions, the results of the regression analysis reported here are based on the sample of 11- to 17-year-olds.

using the leadership index as the dependent variable, was performed by entering sets of predictors in steps. The effects of variables in each subsequent step were already statistically controlled for the effects of variables in prior steps. These steps were as follows:

- We first entered demographic predictors: grade level, gender, race, and income.
- Next, we added self-ratings on leadership skill factors.
- Next, we added psychographics factors.
- Finally, we added participation in the extracurricular activities and past experience with leadership roles.

We conducted three analyses: one for the combined sample of boys and girls, one for girls only, and another for boys. As described in the body of the report, we found the following:

**Demographic variables have a modest impact, together explaining about 4% of the variance:**

- **Age and gender do not matter much.**
  - There is no difference in self-perceived leadership by gender.
  - Age effect is significant but very small (explains 0.4% of variance).
    - Self-perception as a leader drops in grades 7/8 and 9/10, rises again slightly in grades 11/12.
  - Prior analysis showed no significant age x gender interaction – pattern by age is generally similar for both genders.
- **Effect of race/ethnicity is significant but modest.**
  - African American as compared to White (beta weight = .057,  $p < .0001$ )
  - Hispanic as compared to White (beta weight = .079,  $p < .0001$ )
- **Self-ratings on leadership dimensions are the big drivers, together explaining 30% of the variance.**
  - Organizational skills (beta weight = .360,  $p < .0001$ )
  - Extraverted (beta weight = .264,  $p < .0001$ )
  - Caring (negatively related, beta weight = - .163,  $p < .0001$ )
  - Creative is unrelated (beta weight = -.023, ns)
- **Psychographic factors add as well (explain additional 4% of the variance).**
  - Avoiding decisions is negatively related (beta = -.185,  $p < .0001$ ).
  - Dominance is positively related, but not too strong (beta = .143,  $p < .0001$ ).
- **Finally, past experience with leadership roles explains additional 1% of the variance (beta weight = .122,  $p < .0001$ ).**

Regression predictors of leadership index are very similar for both genders. Small age effect for girls becomes non-significant after adding self-rating factors.

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