

girl scouts



The State of Girls: Unfinished Business

A Report from the Girl Scout Research Institute



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Introduction and Background

Girl Scouts is the world's most successful organization dedicated to creating girl leaders, with 3.2 million active members and more than 59 million alumnae. Since its inception in 1912, Girl Scouting has enabled women to explore new fields of knowledge, learn valuable skills, and develop strong core values. The Girl Scout organization has shaped the lives of the majority of the nation's female executives, and six in ten women in Congress. The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the world's largest business and financial literacy program for girls, generating revenues of \$790 million last year.

The Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI), formed in 2000, is a center for research and public policy information on the healthy development of girls. Its main goal is to elevate the voices of girls and understand the key issues that affect their lives. In order to do this, we need accurate information on how girls are faring so that we can identify the aspects of girls' lives that need resources. *The State of Girls: Unfinished Business*, a groundbreaking report from GSRI (conducted in conjunction with the Population Reference Bureau), provides just such information. It makes the case by measuring girls' well-being across a number of indicators showing that many girls do not get a fair start to their futures—especially due to disparities across different racial/ethnic and income groups. The background and research goals for the report are detailed below.

Research Goals

The State of Girls report stakes out key issues and major trends affecting girls' healthy development in the United States today. A report of this magnitude and breadth has never been conducted, making it a much-needed resource in the field. As the "voice for and of girls," Girl Scouts believes it is critical for those who support girls to have up-to-date, accurate data about the state of girls' physical, social, and psychological well-being.

The report contains current statistical indicators and projections about the future that are focused on key issues such as the health, safety, and educational achievement of girls, as well as demographic trends. These data are grouped in a way that will be useful to a broad public audience that includes Girl Scout councils, educators, policy makers, nonprofit leaders, parents of girls, concerned community leaders, media, and girls themselves. The report also includes a first-of-its-kind State of Girls Snapshot that measures the differences in how girls are faring nationally across races/ethnicities.

The report was designed to:

- utilize existing statistical data on issues such as girls' health, safety, and education, as well as demographic trends, to provide a snapshot of how girls are faring today (rather than focusing on trends over time). Before publication of *The State of Girls*, a great deal of this information was dispersed among large national data sets and was not synthesized in ways that could be leveraged by those working to advocate for girls;
- provide a fuller picture of girls' experiences by exploring several interrelated domains—physical and emotional health, safety, media exposure and use, education, employment, out-of-school time, community service, etc.;
- point out differences among populations of girls and include statistical breakdowns according to race/ethnicity, as well as identify points of parity and discrepancy with issues that boys face, where salient; and
- serve as a "call to action" to support girls as a cause and identify key areas that warrant attention by providing conclusions ("implications") about ways we can address the issues.

Report Highlights

The United States is undergoing significant social, economic, and demographic changes. As a nation, we are becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Baby boomers are reaching retirement age, causing a sharp increase in the older population. Family dynamics are becoming more complex, and more children are growing up in single-parent families. Gender roles are shifting as more women enter college and the workforce. And millions of families with children are still feeling the effects of the 2008–09 recession and its aftermath. These trends are important not only because they may affect how girls are faring today, but also because in a generation, these girls will enter the workforce and start families of their own.

There have been promising developments for girls regarding their educational attainment; extracurricular, volunteer, and pro-social activities; reduction of risk behaviors; and connection to the digital world. However, the report also demonstrates that many girls are being left behind and as a result may face significant challenges in making successful transitions to adulthood. Girls struggle in their everyday lives—at school, at home, and in other social environments—with issues such as relational aggression, bullying, depression, and even suicidal ideation.

As well, not all girls are faring the same. In terms of overall well-being, white girls fare much better than black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls across various indicators. Poverty and a lack of resources limit many Hispanic/Latina and black/African American girls from having access to good healthcare, nutrition, and general wellness; the opportunity to prioritize education; and the chance to explore constructive extracurricular activities. As a result, their overall quality of life is compromised.

The following are highlights of the findings across the five domains captured in the State of Girls Snapshot that detail comparisons across race/ethnicity among girls. Full results from the State of Girls Snapshot are presented in Chapter Nine and in Table 9-1.

- **Across the five different domains of well-being, the measurement of economic security stands out because of the large gaps between different racial/ethnic groups.** Poverty rates among Hispanic/Latina, black/African American, and American Indian girls are more than twice the poverty rates of white and Asian American girls. Higher poverty rates are closely linked to high proportions of girls living in single-parent families—this is especially true among black/African American girls. In the case of Hispanic/Latina girls, economic security is also compromised by the high proportion of girls living without health insurance. American Indian girls fare the worst because of the high proportion of girls in that group who are disconnected from work and school.
- **White girls have fewer physical health risks compared to black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls,** who are more likely to be overweight or become pregnant. Indeed, for black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls, the teen birth rate is more than twice the national average.
- **Hispanic/Latina girls fare better than both black/African American and white girls in terms of emotional health,** and are less likely to be bullied. Black/African American girls are the most likely to report being hit by a boyfriend.
- **Asian American girls have better outcomes on education measures,** followed by white girls, multiracial girls, black/African American girls, and Hispanic/Latina girls. The dropout rate for Asian American girls is less than half the national average. Dropout rates among American Indian and Hispanic/Latina girls are especially high, reducing their employment prospects and earnings potential compared with other groups.

- **In terms of participation in extracurricular activities, white girls are slightly more engaged than black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls.** Black/African American girls are compromised by the longer periods of time they spend watching television. Asian American girls are more likely than girls from other racial/ethnic groups to use computers for three or more hours a day (for an activity other than homework).

Unfinished Business

The motivation for this report is to ensure that every girl has the opportunity to become a healthy and productive woman who can be a leader in her own life and in the world at large. While there has been progress for many girls, a story emerges that shows there is still “unfinished business” to attend to—especially for girls from low-income and black/African American and Hispanic/Latino backgrounds—regarding gaps in education, physical and mental health, and economic well-being.

Our hope is that these data will drive conversations about the consequences for girls, families, and communities. How can these data be used to drive policy and program decisions? How can nonprofit organizations, government, and industry connect what we know about how girls are doing to the resources that support them and their families?

Each chapter in the report covers a different dimension of girls’ lives, summarizing key findings and implications for girls. Some of the key points from each chapter are presented below.

The Changing Face of Girls

- **The number of girls in the U.S. population continues to increase, but their numbers are shrinking relative to those in older age groups.** In 2010, there were 26 million girls in the United States. However, over time, longer life expectancies and lower fertility rates have reduced the share of females ages 5 to 17 from 27 percent in 1910 to only 18 percent in 2010. The relative size of the child population is important because it could have implications for public policy priorities and the resources available to girls.
- **The racial/ethnic composition of girls is changing rapidly, and there is a growing number of girls living in immigrant families.** Since 2000, the share of girls who are non-Hispanic white dropped from 62 percent to 54 percent, and by 2020, nearly half of all girls ages 5 to 17 will be racial/ethnic minorities. About 95 percent of girls were born in the United States, but nearly one-fourth live in immigrant families in which one or both parents were born outside of the United States. Hispanic/Latina girls currently make up more than one in five girls ages 5 to 17, and by 2020, they are projected to make up 27 percent of girls in that age group.
- **Black/African American girls are more likely to live in single-parent families compared with girls in other racial/ethnic groups.** In 2010, 27 percent of girls nationwide lived in single-parent families, but the share was much higher among black/African American girls (57 percent). The high proportion of black/African American girls living in single-parent families is one of the key factors linked to their high child poverty rates compared with other racial/ethnic groups.

Economic Well-Being and Employment Status

- **Poverty rates for girls have increased in recent years, and having a working parent does not guarantee economic security.** Between 2005 and 2010, the poverty rate for girls increased from 16.7 percent to 20.5 percent. About 42 percent of girls lived in low-income families (income below 200 percent of the official poverty threshold) in 2010. The majority of low-income families include at least one full-time worker, so having a job does not always provide enough money to make ends meet.
- **Today, a growing number of girls are delaying marriage and childbearing, going to college, and entering the workforce.** However, there is still a gender gap in adult labor force participation rates. In 2010, about 72 percent of working-age women (18 to 64) were in the labor force, compared with 81 percent of working-age men.
- **Even though a growing number of young women are attending college and entering the workforce, women still earn less than their male counterparts.** Women outnumber men in college and make up a growing share of the labor force, but women still earn less money than their male counterparts. Women's earnings are strongly determined by the types of jobs in which they work, and women are underrepresented in higher-paying positions, especially in science and engineering and top managerial jobs.

Physical Health and Safety

- **Most girls have access to health insurance through their parents' employer or through public insurance programs, but Hispanic/Latina girls are significantly less likely to be covered.** In 2010, 90 percent of girls ages 5 to 17 had access to health insurance, but the coverage rate was substantially lower among Hispanics/Latinas (83 percent). Hispanic/Latina girls were also less likely to have care through their parents' employment compared with girls in other racial/ethnic groups.
- **Childhood obesity rates have risen sharply in recent years, putting more girls at risk of Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, hypertension, and other health issues.** In 2010, 32 percent of girls ages 5 to 17 were overweight or obese. Black/African American girls were the most likely to be overweight or obese in 2010 (44 percent), compared with 41 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls and 26 percent of white girls.
- **Girls' participation in sports and physical education classes decline as girls grow older.** While 48 percent of ninth-grade girls had physical education classes five days a week, this number dropped to 20 percent among senior girls. Participation in sports also declines as girls grow older; for instance, about 57 percent of ninth-grade girls participated in school sports in 2009, compared with 44 percent of twelfth-grade girls.
- **Many girls have tried cigarettes or alcohol, but use of illicit drugs is relatively rare.** In 2009, about 46 percent of high school girls had ever tried cigarettes, 74 percent had tried alcohol, and 34 percent had tried marijuana. Relatively few girls in high school have used illicit drugs other than marijuana, such as cocaine, speed, or ecstasy. However, 13 percent of high school girls reported that they have used inhalants.
- **The majority of sexually active high school girls use contraception (86 percent), and few report that they have ever been diagnosed with a sexually transmitted disease.** Condoms were the primary method of birth control among girls who used contraception, followed by the pill. The majority of teenage girls ages 15 to 17 (98 percent) report that they have never been diagnosed with an STD.

- **The teen birth rate has declined in recent years and has reached its lowest recorded levels.** Nationwide, there were 20 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 17 in 2009. A higher share of black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls become teen mothers, compared with white girls. In 2009, there were about 41 births per 1,000 Hispanic/Latina girls ages 15 to 17, compared with 32 births per 1,000 black/African American girls and 11 births per 1,000 white girls in that age group.
- **Compared with boys, girls are less likely to be perpetrators of crime but more likely to be victims of certain crimes.** In 2009, there were 1.9 million juveniles under age 18 arrested by law enforcement, including 578,500 females (30 percent of juvenile arrests). The most common crime is larceny/theft, most of which is shoplifting. Most arrests of girls and boys under age 18 are referred to juvenile court.

Emotional Health and Safety

- **Girls' self-reported rates of depression are higher than rates reported by girls' parents.** Overall, 13 percent of girls ages 5 to 17 were unhappy or depressed during a six-month period in 2010, according to parental reports. However, 34 percent of high school girls had self-reported symptoms of depression during the past year.
- **Suicide among girls is relatively rare, but a relatively high proportion of high school girls consider committing suicide.** Among girls ages 11 to 17, there were 285 deaths due to suicide in 2009. But about 18 percent of all high school girls report that they have seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year.
- **Although many girls report that they have friends and adults that they can trust and turn to at school, about 30 percent of girls reported some sort of bullying or aggression from their peers.** Physical bullying is more common among boys, while relational aggression is more common among girls. These behaviors can have lasting effects on a girl's standing within her peer group and can be damaging to her self-esteem.

Education

- **Girls are more likely than boys to graduate from high school.** In 2009, 7 percent of girls ages 16 to 24 were high school dropouts, meaning they had not completed high school and were not currently enrolled in school, compared with 9 percent of boys in that age group.
- **Girls who stay in school and get good grades are much more likely to make a successful transition to college and the workforce.** Given the growing demand for college-educated workers, school achievement is increasingly linked to earnings later in life. In 2011, eighth-grade girls had better reading scores, on average, compared with boys, but eighth-grade boys were slightly more likely to be proficient in math compared with their female counterparts.
- **Teenage girls in the United States perform worse on international math tests compared with their counterparts in many other countries.** U.S. girls also lagged behind girls in many other countries in science, but scored relatively well on reading tests.
- **Women now outnumber men in college.** In 2010, there were 130 women enrolled in college for every 100 men.
- **There are gender differences in the fields of study of young college graduates.** In 2010, women were nearly three times as likely to have degrees in education, and twice as likely to have degrees in fields such as nursing, health services, and math and science teacher education. Men were more likely than women to major in business, and twice as likely to major in science and engineering fields.

Extracurricular and Out-of-School Activities

- **Girls in the United States have more free time compared with their peers in Europe and East Asia, yet they spend less time doing homework.** Teens who are bored or unengaged are more likely to use drugs, commit crimes, and drop out of school.
- **Lower-income girls have fewer opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities compared with girls growing up in more affluent families.** Participation in extracurricular activities is also higher among girls with plans to attend college, compared with those who don't have college plans.
- **Girls are more likely to participate in school sports than other extracurricular activities.** In 2009, about 35 percent of twelfth-grade girls were involved in school sports. About 27 percent were involved in the performing arts, 18 percent participated in academic clubs, 12 percent were in student government, and 11 percent were involved with the school newspaper or yearbook.
- **Girls and boys spend less time outdoors than they did 20 years ago when computers were not widely available.** Some children do not spend time outdoors because they prefer indoor activities, while others don't have access to safe areas to play outside.
- **Most girls report that religion is important to them.** However, religious service attendance declines with age. About 42 percent of eighth-grade girls attend religious services once a week, compared with 36 percent of tenth-graders and 31 percent of twelfth-graders.

Girls' Leadership

- **Leadership is not a top goal for girls, as only a third (39 percent) say they want to be a leader.** Girls value a social and collaborative approach to leadership, as opposed to the traditional top-down, command-and-control style.
- **Girls cite social barriers to leadership aspirations,** such as not wanting to be laughed at, fear of speaking in front of others, and shyness. Girls are also well aware of gender barriers and stereotypes in the workplace.
- **However, black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls are more likely to have leadership aspirations than white girls.** Fifty-three percent of black/African American girls and 50 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls want to be leaders, compared to 39 percent of all girls. Compared to white girls, black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls rate themselves more highly on leadership skills and dimensions.
- **Girls' leadership experiences are limited to responsibilities and opportunities that exist in their families and social circles, such as babysitting, taking care of a pet, or helping a friend.** Girls have fewer experiences with leadership in volunteerism, community service, school sports, clubs, student government, and neighborhood, social, and political activism.

Technology and Media Use

- **The majority of teenage girls have access to many types of electronic technology.** More than three-fourths of girls ages 12 to 17 have a computer in their home, have a cell phone, and play video games. However, only two-thirds of black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls have cell phones compared with 84 percent of non-Hispanic white girls. Among girls with cell phones, only 27 percent have a smartphone.
- **Girls use the Internet frequently to participate in a wide range of activities.** Nearly half of girls ages 12 to 17 use the Internet several times a day, and only 27 percent use it 3 to 5 days a week or less. More than 80 percent use social networking, 42 percent use video chat, 26 percent record and upload videos, and 22 percent use Twitter.
- **Girls use many modes of communication to maintain close connections with their friends.** Exchanging messages through social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace is a popular mode of communication among girls, with 44 percent using it every day. One-fourth of all girls ages 12 to 17 exchange instant messages with their friends every day, and an additional 28 percent do it at least once a week. But text messaging is the dominant way girls communicate, with one-fifth sending and receiving more than 200 messages on an average day. These different modes of communication are not mutually exclusive, and girls are quite likely to communicate with their friends simultaneously through Facebook, instant messaging, and text messaging.
- **Despite the increased use of electronic media, girls still value spending time with their friends in person.** Nearly 80 percent of all girls spend time participating in social activities in person with their friends once a week or more, and 92 percent would rather spend an hour socializing with their friends in person than spend an hour socializing with their friends via their favorite social networking site.

Highlights and Implications

Changing Face of Girls

Hispanics/Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States, and their numbers are expected to increase rapidly relative to whites and blacks/African Americans during the coming decades. As of 2011, there were 6 million Hispanic/Latina girls ages 5 to 17 living in the United States, compared with 3.7 million black/African American girls, 14.2 million white girls, 1.2 million Asian American and Pacific Islander girls, and just over 200,000 American Indian girls. In order to more effectively engage Hispanic/Latina girls and families, organizations that serve them need to understand their needs more fully and adapt programming to be culturally relevant and appropriate.

Economic Well-Being

Poverty is a critical issue for girls in this country, as one in five girls in the United States lives below the poverty line, and 42 percent of girls live in low-income families. Girls growing up in poor families face a number of significant physical, emotional, and behavioral risks compared to girls living in more affluent families. Policies need to be in place to minimize poverty and afford girls opportunities that optimize their healthy development. Educators and organizations that work with girls should know that some girls have limited means and need some extra help in school and after school.

Physical Health and Safety

Physical health and wellness is critical to girls' development, academic achievement, psychosocial adjustment, happiness, and overall well-being. While girls report a fairly healthy diet and reasonable levels of physical activity, many girls in this country are overweight and some don't have access to health insurance. Obesity rates are highest for black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls, and Hispanic/Latina girls are less likely to have health insurance compared to peers from other ethnic groups. All girls need access to health care, better access to healthy food, and opportunities for exercise and physical activity.

Emotional Health and Safety

Adolescent girls are more than twice as likely to have major depressive episodes as boys, but often their symptoms go unrecognized. Adults need to be aware of the discrepancy between parents' reports of their daughters' depression and girls' reports of their own depression, which suggests that girls are not always honest with their parents or other adults in their life about being sad or unhappy. Because research has shown that mental health issues in childhood and adolescence persist into adulthood, it is important to promote self-confidence and mental health at young ages and be able to recognize signs of depression or other mental health issues.

Education

Education is important for putting girls on a path toward reaching their full potential. An emphasis on girls' education, from enrollment in high-quality early childhood education programs to completion of high school and college, is key to their financial success and economic security in adulthood. Hispanic/Latina girls are at risk for dropping out of school early, as the high-school dropout rates for both Hispanic/Latina girls and Hispanic adults are high. This has important implications for those working with Hispanic/Latina girls, as they may need more educational support and more resources for pursuing higher education.

Extracurricular and Out-of-School Activities

Participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and other structured activities has a positive influence on girls' development and leadership skills. These activities should be readily available in all communities to lessen the burden of child care after school. Many girls are engaged in sports and extracurricular activities, and the majority of girls volunteer. However, white girls are slightly more engaged in these activities than black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls.

Girls' Leadership

Opportunities for leadership are scarce. Youth development organizations such as Girl Scouts need to help young people build skills that will enable them to effect change—in themselves, the community, and the world at large—which is what girls are passionate about. As well, girls need to see a broader range of women stepping up to leadership positions in the culture. If girls can't see it, they can't be it. Girls express interest in having women leaders reach out to them so that they can learn from the real successes and failures of these women, as well as the pathways they have taken to achieve their personal and professional goals.

Technology

Social media has been shown to enhance communication and learning opportunities, as well as feelings of connection among youth. However, it can also put girls at risk for cyberbullying and privacy violation. Adults who work with girls should have very specific conversations about online safety issues and should familiarize themselves with the different channels of social media and the potential risks associated with their use.

What We Need to Know

In order to more fully understand how girls are faring in the future, we also need more and better data where gaps exist, focused on the following issues:

- **Bullying:** There are limited data available on girls who are bullied at school, but we are lacking information on girls who themselves have bullied others.
- **Criminal Behavior:** Data on girls in the criminal justice system are limited. In this report, we present data on girls in juvenile residential facilities, but those counts only represent girls who were charged with offenses and detained as a result of those offenses. Many more girls enter the court system but may not be charged or detained. Some girls are also detained in adult prison facilities.
- **Disabilities:** Data on girls with disabilities are available from a variety of sources, including the Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but there is little agreement on the "best" measures of well-being or how to categorize disabilities for girls in different age groups.
- **Exposure to Violence:** Data on girls who have been exposed to violence are limited, but this is an important indicator of girls' emotional health.
- **Homelessness:** National estimates of girls who are homeless are not available. However, we present an estimate of the total number of children thought to be homeless at the start of the school year, and girls under age 18 who are staying in shelters.
- **Volunteering:** Better data are needed on girls who volunteer, as a measure of girls' civic participation and contributions to society.



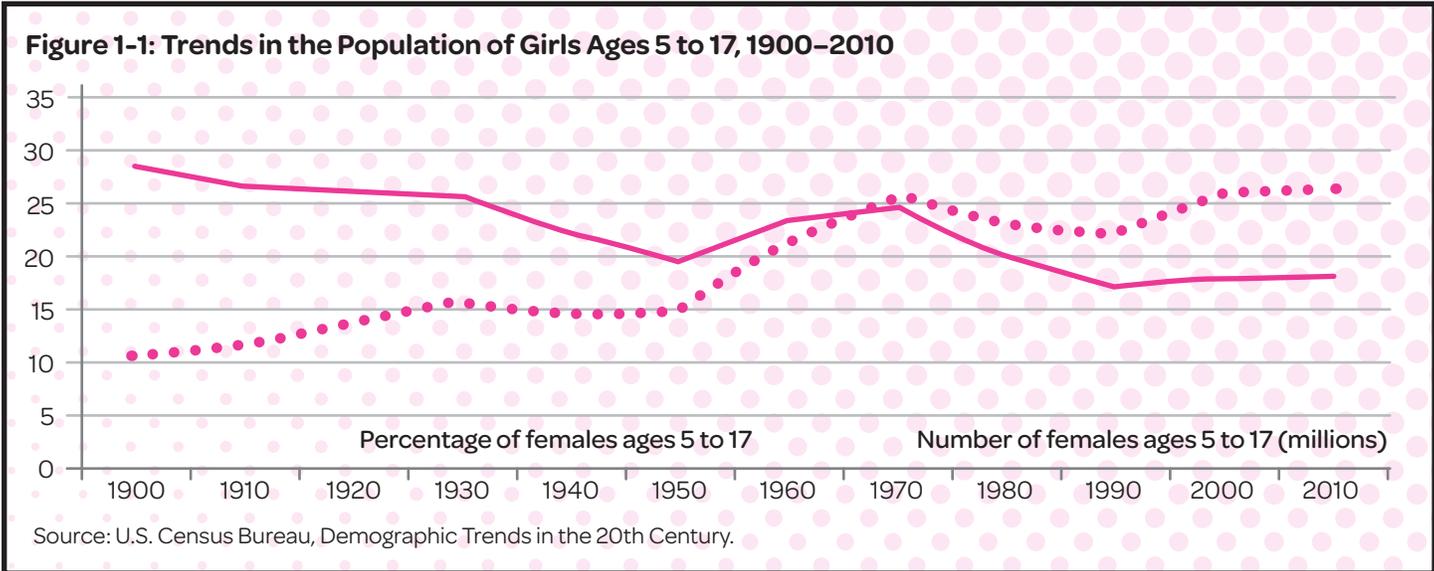
*The Changing
Face of Girls*



The United States is undergoing significant demographic changes.

The population is aging as baby boomers start to reach retirement age. The racial/ethnic composition is shifting rapidly in response to recent trends in immigration. And family dynamics are becoming more complex as the proportion of married-couple families declines—replaced by single parents, cohabiting couples, and other household types. These trends are important not only because they may affect how girls are doing today, but also because in a generation, these girls will enter the workforce and start families of their own.

During the past century, the number of girls ages 5 to 17 in the United States more than doubled, from 12 million in 1910 to more than 26 million in 2010 (see Figure 1-1). In 1910 the country had a relatively youthful population, and girls ages 5 to 17 made up 27 percent of the total female population. However, longer life expectancies and lower fertility rates have reduced the share of children in the population over time. By 2010, girls ages 5 to 17 made up only 18 percent of all females.



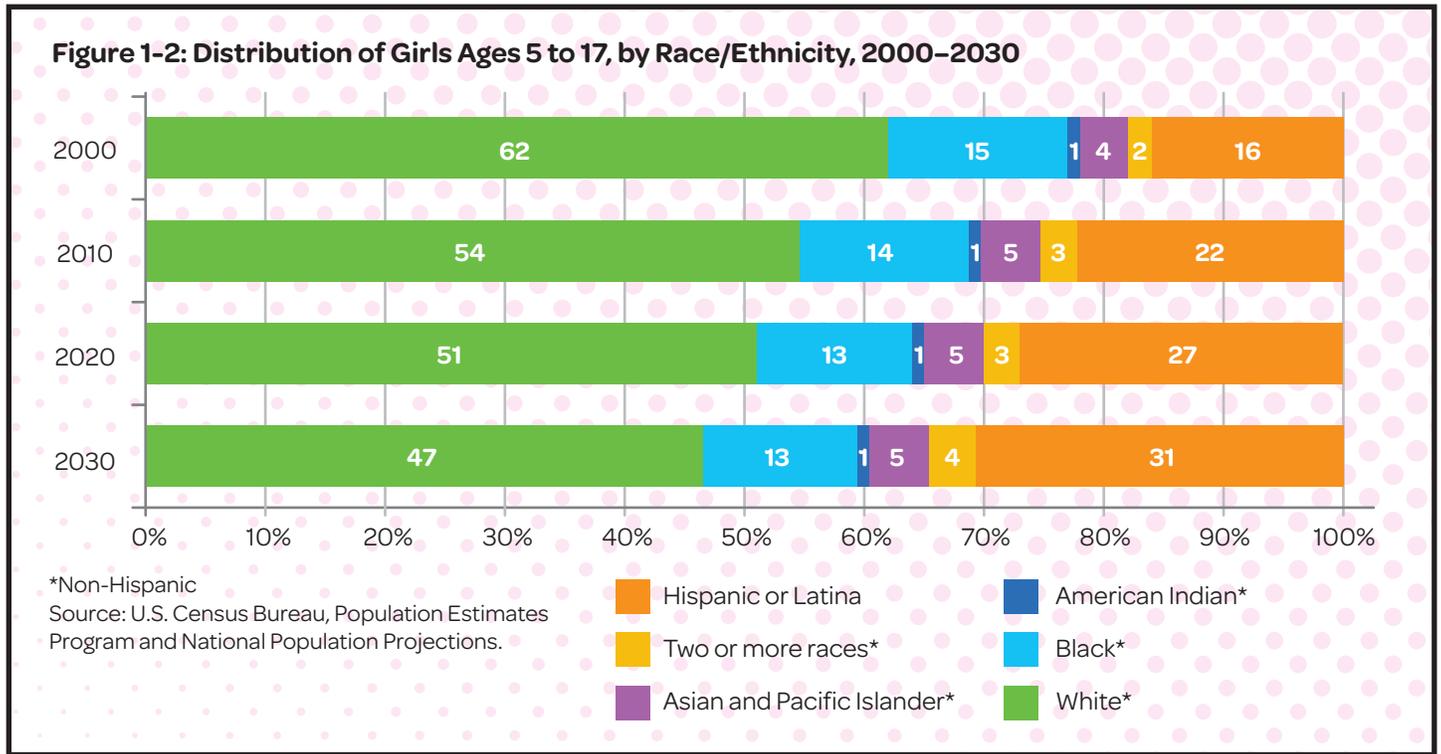
Since 1910, the population of girls has fluctuated in response to broad national demographic changes. After fairly steady growth early in the twentieth century, the number of girls leveled off during the 1930s and 1940s as immigration levels and fertility rates fell. The baby boom, which took place from 1946 to 1964, fueled a sharp increase in girls during the 1950s and 1960s. Fertility rates fell sharply in the 1970s and leveled off in the 1980s, leading to a decline in the total number of girls during those decades. Since 1990, the number of girls has increased somewhat, fueled by recent trends in immigration and relatively high U.S. fertility rates. By 2010, the number of girls reached a historic high of 26.4 million. That number dropped slightly in 2011, to 26.3 million, but it's not clear if this decline will be a short-term or long-term trend. The number of girls depends on future trends in immigration and fertility, both of which have declined since the onset of the 2008–09 recession.¹

The relative size of the child population is important because it could have implications for public policy priorities and the resources available to girls. Since the onset of the recession, federal funding for children's programs (such as tax benefits and nutrition benefits) has increased to support the growing needs of low-income families. However, the majority of public funds for girls do not come from the federal government but rather from state and local governments—mostly to support public schools.² Faced with growing deficits, many state and local governments have cut back on key programs serving children and families. And there are concerns that the growing cost of Social Security and Medicare will reduce federal funds available for children in the future.³

Notes: Percentages and racial/ethnic categories in the charts and graphs are reported in the same manner as they are in the sources. Percentages in the charts and graphs do not always total 100% due to rounding. In the narrative of the report the following categories are used: Asian American, American Indian, Black/African American, White, and Hispanic/Latina.

Growing Racial/Ethnic Diversity

The racial/ethnic composition of the U.S. population is shifting, and children are at the forefront of these changes. A growing number of girls in the United States identify with racial/ethnic minorities. Since 2000, the share of girls who are non-Hispanic white has dropped from 62 percent to 54 percent (see Figure 1-2). By 2020, nearly half of all girls ages 5 to 17 will be racial/ethnic minorities. Hispanic youth currently make up more than one in five girls ages 5 to 17, but by 2030, they are projected to make up nearly a third (31 percent) of girls in that age group.



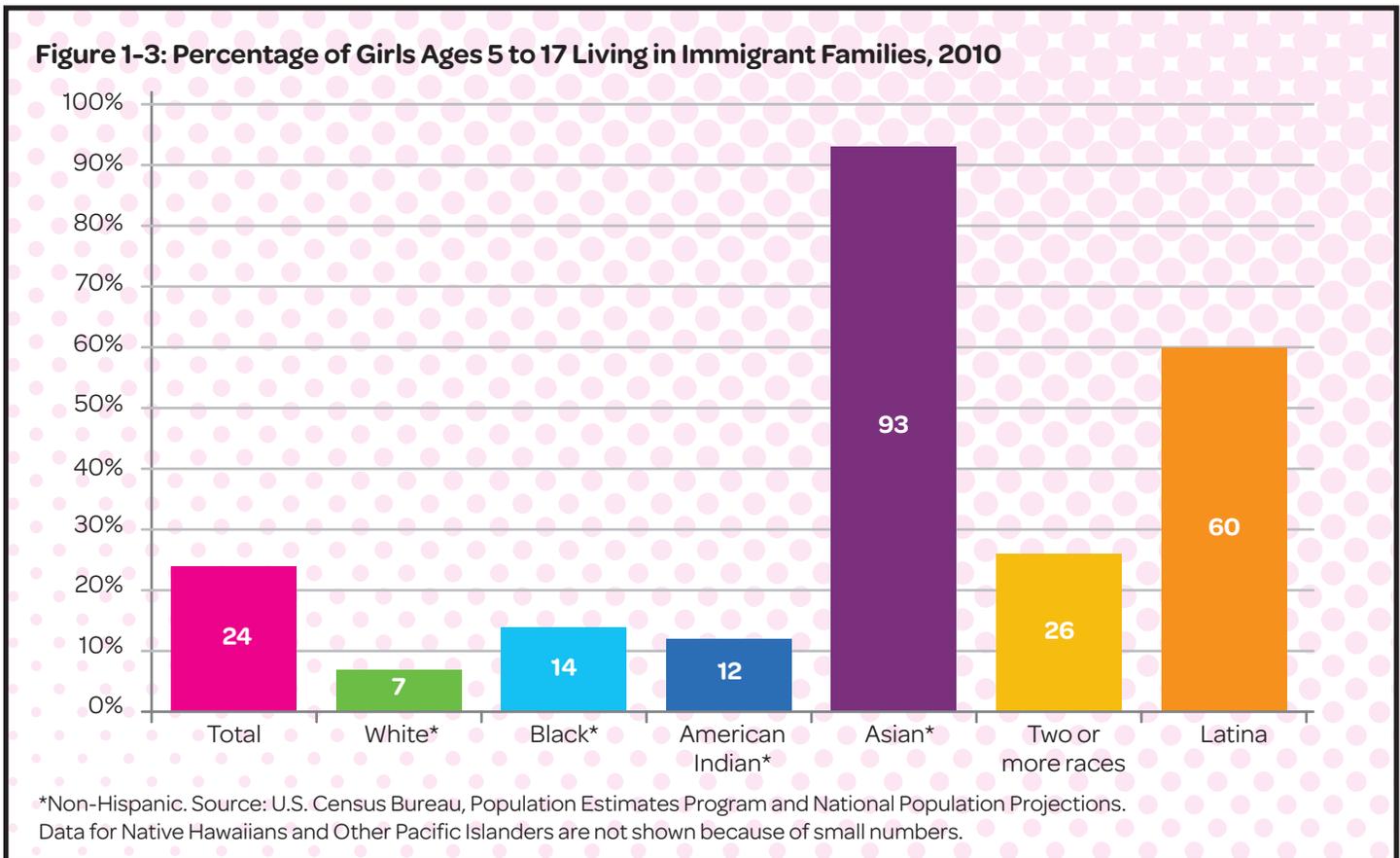
As of 2011, there were 6 million Hispanic/Latina girls ages 5 to 17 living in the United States, compared with 3.7 million black/African American girls, 14.2 million white girls, 1.2 million Asian American and Pacific Islander girls, and just over 200,000 American Indian girls. Hispanics/Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States, and their numbers are expected to increase rapidly relative to whites and blacks/African Americans during the coming decades. The rapid growth of the Hispanic population reflects historically high levels of immigration to the United States from Mexico and other Latin American countries, as well as relatively high fertility rates among Hispanic women.

However, future trends in Hispanic population growth are uncertain. The latest population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau show that Hispanic population growth has dropped below the peaks reported in 2008 and 2009, which could slow U.S. racial and ethnic change in the coming years.⁴ Fertility rates among Hispanic women are also falling, which could reduce the future size of the Hispanic population and workforce.

In 2011, there were also about 900,000 girls who identified with more than one race (about 3 percent). This proportion is expected to increase over time with the rise in interracial couples. Between 2008 and 2010, one in every seven new marriages included spouses of different racial or ethnic backgrounds.⁵ The children of these interracial unions are forming a new generation that is much more likely to identify with multiple racial/ethnic groups.

Immigration and Language

Growing racial/ethnic diversity among children is closely linked to recent trends in immigration. The large majority of girls—95 percent—were born in the United States, but nearly one-fourth live in immigrant families in which one or both parents were born outside of the United States (see Figure 1-3). Asian American girls are the most likely to live in immigrant families (93 percent), followed by Hispanics/Latinas (60 percent), those identifying with multiple races (26 percent), blacks/African Americans (14 percent), American Indians (12 percent), and whites (7 percent). Among girls in immigrant families, 98 percent live with at least one parent who has resided in the United States for more than five years.



The relatively high proportion of girls living with foreign-born parents is important because these families have fewer economic resources, on average, than U.S.-born families. In 2010, about 54 percent of children in immigrant families were low-income, compared with 41 percent of children in U.S.-born families.⁶ Language barriers in immigrant families can also affect children’s school achievement and access to public benefits, including critical health services.⁷

The majority of girls ages 5 to 17 grow up speaking only English at home (see Table 1-1). But a growing number of girls speak Spanish or Asian languages. In 2010, about 78 percent of girls only spoke English at home, while 16 percent spoke Spanish. However, among Hispanic/Latina girls, two-thirds spoke Spanish at home, and among Asian girls, three-fifths spoke a language other than English at home. Languages other than English and Spanish—including Chinese, Vietnamese, and French—were much less common.

Table 1-1: Girls Ages 5 to 17, by Language Spoken at Home, 2010

Language	Number	Percentage	Language	Number	Percentage
All languages	26,344,357	100.00	Russian	61,866	0.2
English only	20,497,322	77.8	Portuguese	46,781	0.2
Spanish	4,196,692	15.9	Urdu	38,334	0.1
Chinese	124,278	0.5	Hindi	35,137	0.1
Vietnamese	116,010	0.4	Japanese	34,484	0.1
French	94,334	0.4	Polish	32,966	0.1
Arabic	86,121	0.3	Hmong	32,756	0.1
German	77,623	0.3	Mandarin	31,261	0.1
Korean	76,847	0.3	Gujarati	30,170	0.1
French Creole	76,557	0.3	Italian	28,036	0.1
Tagalog	65,043	0.2	Other languages	561,729	2.1

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample.

The majority of girls in the United States will grow up speaking only English. However, some girls in immigrant families face challenges because either they don't speak English very well or they are in "linguistically isolated" households in which no one 14 years of age and older speaks English very well. Nationwide, about 5 percent of girls ages 5 to 17 speak a language other than English at home and have difficulty speaking English. But for Asian American girls, this figure rises to 14 percent, and for Hispanic/Latina girls, it increases to 15 percent. Overall, about 6 percent of girls are linguistically isolated, but the proportions are much higher among Hispanic (19 percent) and Asian American girls (17 percent) compared with other groups.

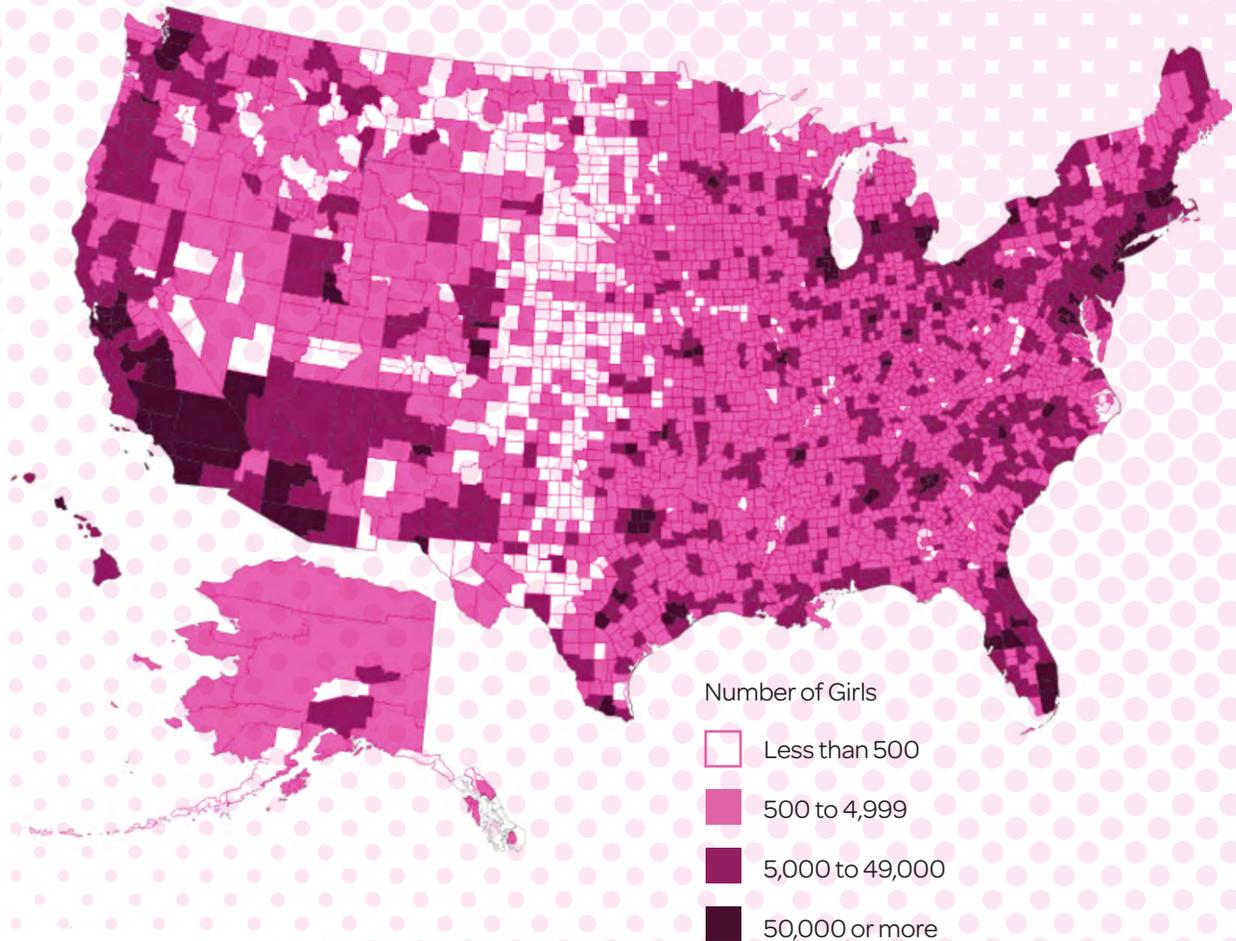
Children whose parents do not speak English do worse in school compared with those in families who speak English at home. The ability to speak English can also limit parents' job opportunities, income, access to health services, and ability to help their children with homework.⁸

Regional Distribution

Two major trends have shaped the geographic distribution of the U.S. population in recent decades. First, the population has shifted away from the Northeast and Midwest to states in the South and West. The South and West both grew 14 percent during the first decade of the 2000s, faster than the national average and more than three times the growth rate of the Northeast and Midwest. Between 2000 and 2010, Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, Texas, and Utah were the fastest-growing states, each with 20 percent or greater increases in population. Michigan was the only state that declined in population during the past decade.

In 2011, three in five girls ages 5 to 17 lived in states in the South and West. More than one-fifth of girls (21 percent) lived in just two states: California and Texas. California had 3.3 million girls ages 5 to 17 in 2011, more than any other state, while Wyoming had the fewest girls (46,000). Girls are most concentrated in densely populated metropolitan areas—especially those located on the coasts (see Figure 1-4). States with the lowest concentrations of girls are mostly located in the Midwest, including the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas.

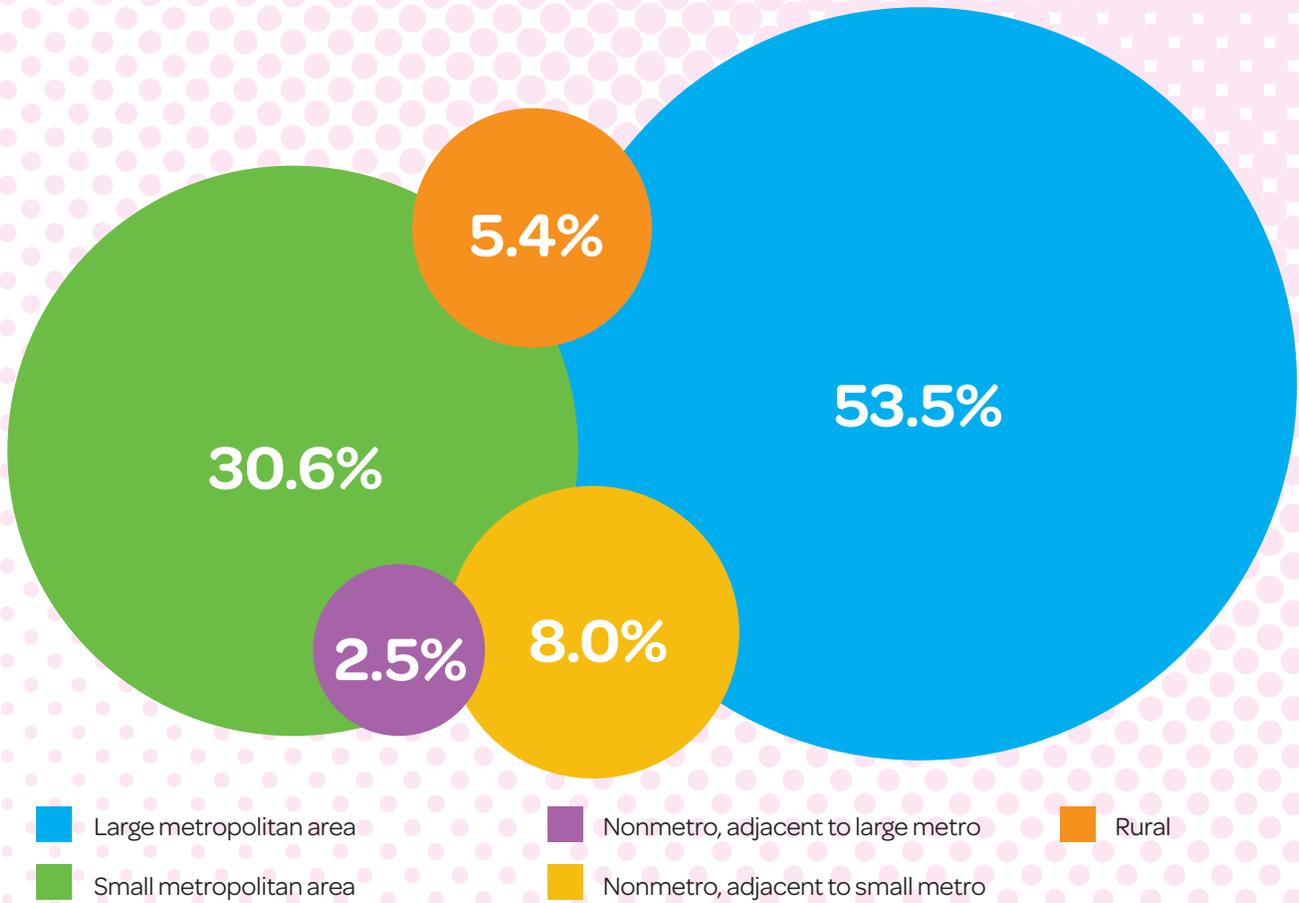
Figure 1-4: Number of Girls Ages 5 to 17, by County, 2011



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 Population Estimates.

The second major trend has been the growing concentration of the U.S. population in the suburbs of large and mid-sized metropolitan areas. Today, 54 percent of girls ages 5 to 19 live in large metropolitan areas with populations of 1 million or more (see Figure 1-5). Another 31 percent live in small metro areas with populations of less than 1 million. The remaining 16 percent live outside of metropolitan areas, with only 5 percent residing in the most rural areas. These current patterns reflect long-term declines in rural residence across the United States. Over time, people have moved to cities and their suburbs for jobs as well as access to good schools, health services, and other amenities. Parts of the Great Plains have been experiencing steady population losses since the 1930s, while the populations of metropolitan areas have continued to increase.⁹

Figure 1-5: Number of Girls Ages 5 to 17, by County, 2011

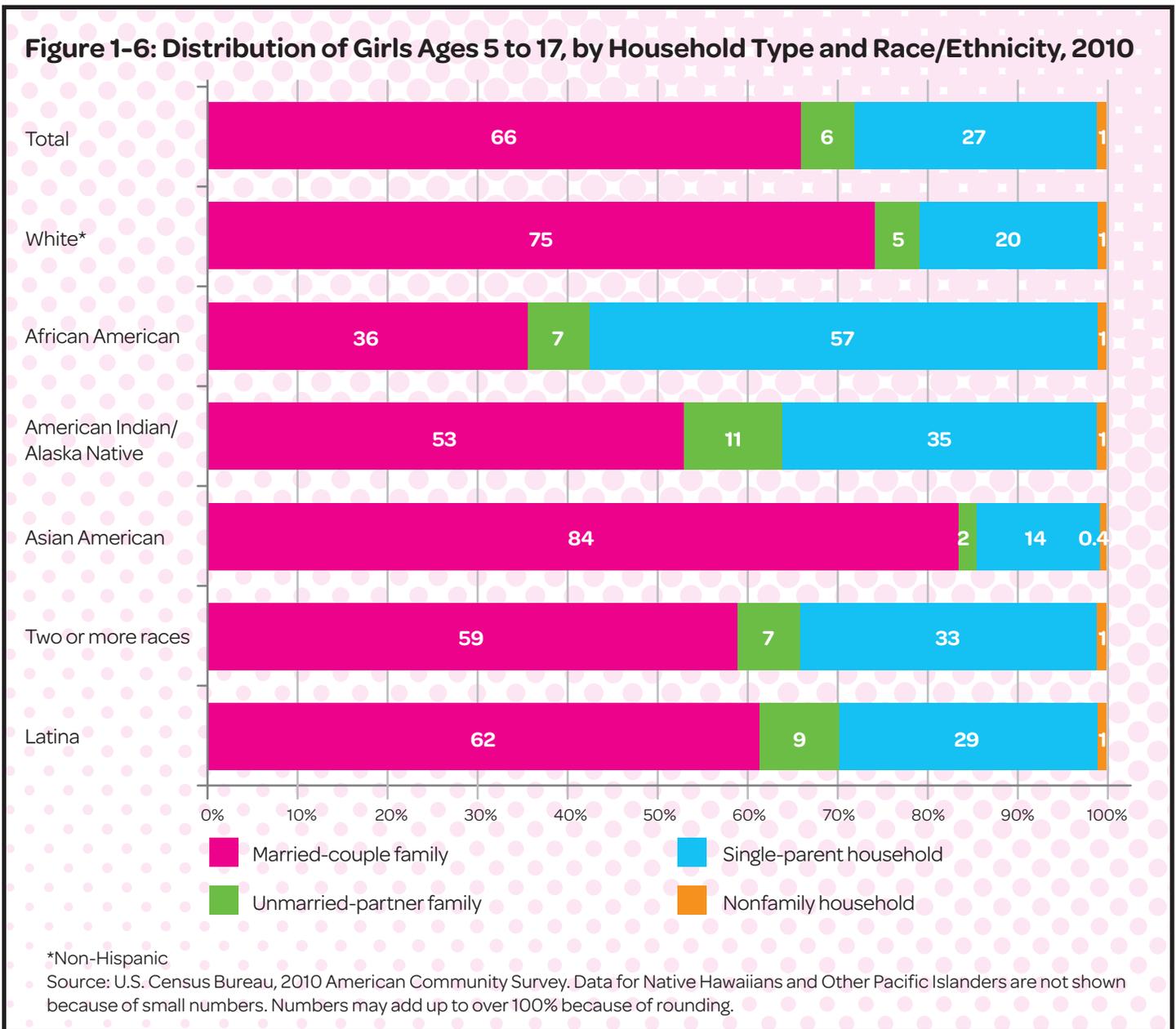


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.

Family Structure and Homelessness

Family structure plays an important role in shaping girls' social and physical development and providing girls with the resources they need to succeed later in life. During the past several decades, there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of births to unmarried parents. These births outside of marriage, combined with relatively high divorce rates, have increased the likelihood of children living in single-parent families.¹⁰ Girls growing up with single parents do not have access to the same social and economic resources as girls in married-couple families, and they are more likely to be poor.¹¹ And as teenagers, girls in single-parent homes are more likely to drop out of high school and become teen parents themselves.¹²

In 2010, 27 percent of girls nationwide lived in single-parent families. About 66 percent of girls ages 5 to 17 lived in married-couple families, and 6 percent lived in unmarried-partner households. Only about 1 percent of girls lived with nonrelatives (see Figure 1-6).



Family structure varies widely across different racial/ethnic groups.

In 2010, about 20 percent of non-Hispanic white girls lived in single-parent families, compared with 57 percent of black/African American girls, 35 percent of American Indian girls, 14 percent of Asian American girls, and 29 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls. The high proportion of black/African American girls living in single-parent families is one of the key factors linked to their high child poverty rates compared with other racial/ethnic groups.

In recent years, there has been an increase in cohabitation as a precursor or alternative to marriage, resulting in a growing share of girls living in unmarried-couple households. In 2010, about 6 percent of girls lived in households headed by unmarried partners. Among different racial/ethnic groups, American Indians had the highest proportion of girls in unmarried-partner households (11 percent), and Asian Americans had the lowest proportion (2 percent).

Some girls classified as living with nonrelatives are in foster care. Girls typically enter foster care because they experienced abuse or neglect in their birth families. In 2010, about 81,000, or 0.3 percent, of girls ages 5 to 17 were identified as foster children in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey. However, the Census Bureau underestimates children in foster care who are living with relatives, so the actual number of girls in foster care could be much higher.¹³ The U.S. government's Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) identified about 194,000 girls under age 20 (less than 1 percent overall) in foster care as of September 2010.¹⁴

For some girls, problems at home related to domestic violence, poverty, or lack of affordable housing can lead to homelessness. Data on children who are homeless are limited, but based upon a broad definition of homelessness that includes youth staying in shelters or hotels/motels; doubled-up with friends or relatives; or living outside in cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers, abandoned buildings, or substandard housing, there were about 1.1 million students (boys and girls combined) who

were homeless at the beginning of the 2010–2011 school year.¹⁵ Most of these children were doubled-up with other families or individuals. A smaller number of children are estimated to be living outside or in shelters. The Census Bureau estimates that in 2010, there were about 21,000 girls under age 18 staying in emergency and transitional shelters.¹⁶

The rapid increase in racial/ethnic minorities in the United States is changing the composition of families and could affect future trends in girls' living arrangements. Currently, about 41 percent of all births in the United States are to unmarried mothers. However, the percentage of non-marital births is significantly higher among Hispanics/Latinos (53 percent) and blacks/African Americans (73 percent) compared with non-Hispanic whites (29 percent).¹⁷ Therefore, as the share of racial/ethnic minorities in the U.S. population increases, we could see a growing share of girls living in single-parent and unmarried-partner families, as well as more complex living arrangements.

Summary and Implications

The relative size of the child population is important because it could have implications for public policy priorities and the resources available to girls.

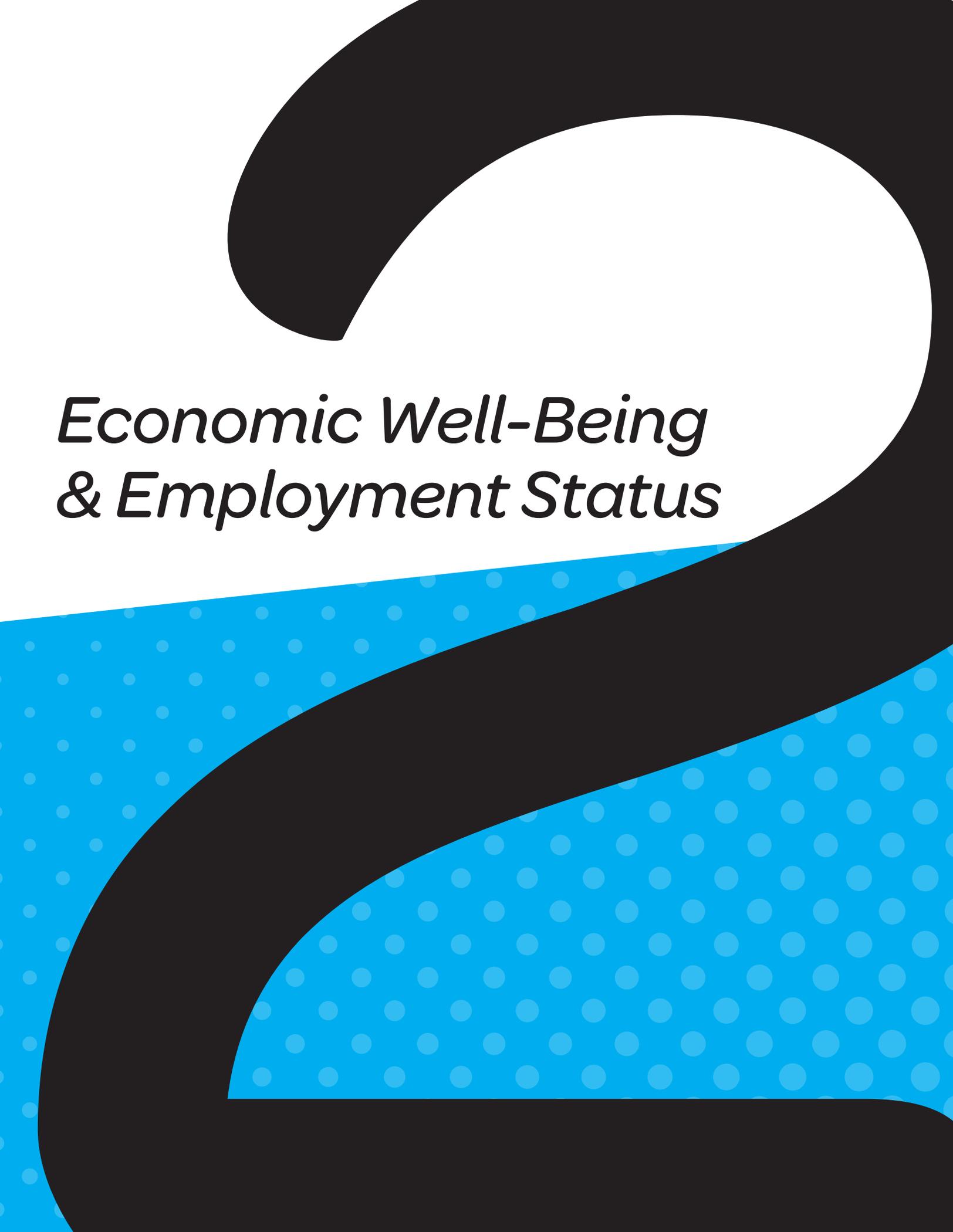
Since the onset of the 2008–09 recession, federal funding for children’s programs (such as tax benefits and nutrition benefits) has increased to support the growing needs of low-income families. However, resources for children may compete with funding for the aging population owing to the rising costs of Medicare and Social Security. Advocates for youth need to be able to present a clear, data-driven case for why continued support for girls is essential for ensuring that girls succeed in school and, later, in the workforce.

- Hispanics/Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States, and their numbers are expected to increase rapidly relative to whites and blacks/African Americans during the coming decades. As of 2011, there were 6 million Hispanic/Latina girls ages 5 to 17 living in the United States, compared with 3.7 million black/African American girls, 14.2 million white girls, 1.2 million Asian American and Pacific Islander girls, and just over 200,000 American Indian girls. In order to more effectively engage Hispanic/Latina girls and families, organizations that serve them need to understand their needs more fully and adapt programming to be culturally relevant and appropriate.
- Changing family structure has implications for many girls’ economic and educational experiences. Girls growing up with single parents do not have access to the same social and economic resources as girls in married-couple families, and they are more likely to be poor. The high proportion of black/African American girls living in single-parent families is one of the key factors linked to their high child poverty rates compared with other racial/ethnic groups. And as teenagers, girls in single-parent homes are more likely to drop out of high school and become teen parents themselves.
- Some girls in immigrant families face challenges because either they don’t speak English very well or they are in “linguistically isolated” households in which no one age 14 or older speaks English very well. Children whose parents do not speak English do worse in school compared with those in families who speak English at home. The inability to speak English can also limit parents’ job opportunities, income, access to health services, and ability to help their children with homework.

“The demographic analysis in The State of Girls emphasizes how important it is to have policies that effectively address the specific challenges that girls from racial/ethnic minority groups experience in education, health, and family economic well-being. The report helps outline an agenda for ensuring that every girl has the opportunity to become a healthy, productive, and empowered woman.”

—Valerie Rawlston Wilson, PhD, Vice President of Research, Economist, National Urban League Policy Institute





*Economic Well-Being
& Employment Status*



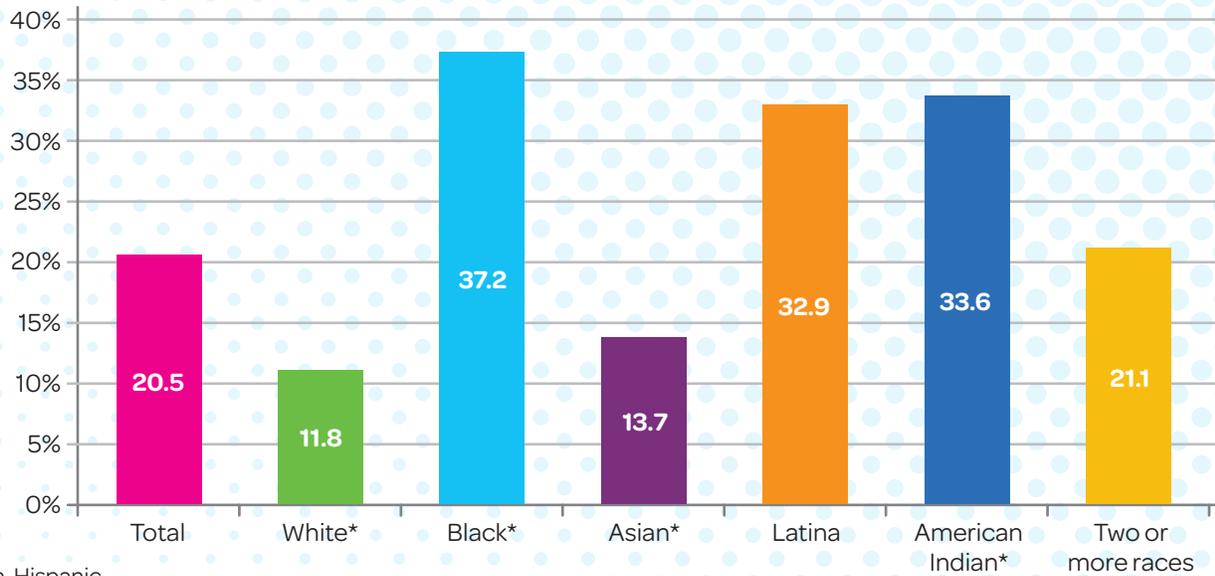
Poverty and Income

Compared with girls growing up in more affluent families, girls growing up in poor families are more likely to have physical, emotional, and behavioral problems; do worse in school; experience parental divorce; live in single-parent families; and experience violent crime.¹⁸ Poverty often persists into adolescence and adulthood, and is linked to a greater risk of girls dropping out of school, becoming pregnant, and earning less money.¹⁹

The official poverty rate, reported each year based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, is used to allocate funds for federal, state, and local programs that benefit girls, including Head Start, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program, and several food and nutrition assistance programs. Girls are classified as poor if they live in families with income below the official poverty threshold. In 2010, the poverty threshold for a family of four, including two children, was \$22,113. However, many public benefits are available to near-poor families with incomes above the official poverty level.

During the 2008–09 recession, millions of girls dropped below the poverty line because their parents lost their jobs or received pay cuts. Between 2005 and 2010, the poverty rate for girls rose from 16.7 percent to 20.5 percent—an increase of nearly 4 percentage points.²⁰ Parental job loss can affect girls not only through reduced household income but also through a loss of benefits, including private health insurance.²¹ In 2010, poverty rates ranged from 12 percent among non-Hispanic white girls to 37 percent among black/African American girls (see Figure 2-1). About a third of Hispanic/Latina girls ages 5 to 17 were poor.

Figure 2-1: Percentage of Girls Ages 5 to 17 Living in Poverty, by Race and Ethnicity, 2010



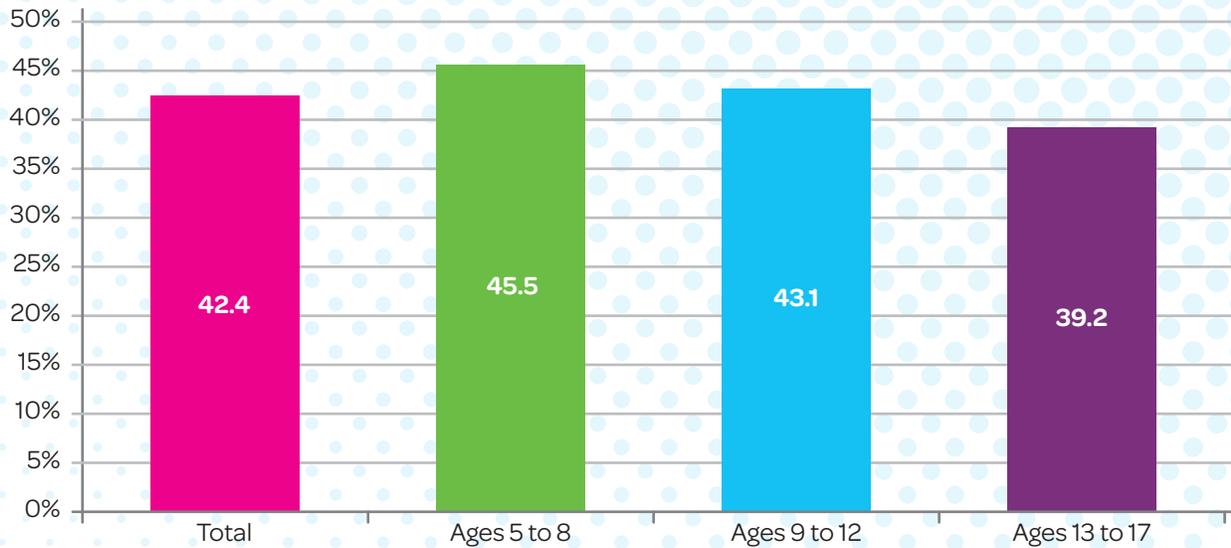
*Non-Hispanic

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 Current Population Survey.

Although parental employment is important for girls' economic security, it does not always provide enough money to make ends meet. In fact, the majority of low-income families—those with incomes below 200 percent of the official poverty threshold, or about \$45,000 for a family of four—include at least one full-time worker.²² Low-income working families face significant challenges in balancing work and family, given the high costs of child care, transportation, and other work-related expenses.²³ Many low-income workers are employed in low-skill jobs with few benefits or opportunities for advancement.²⁴ In 2010, about 42 percent of girls nationwide lived in low-income families (see Figure 2-2). Younger girls ages 5 to 8 were more likely to be low-income (46 percent) compared with girls ages 9 to 12 (43 percent) or 13 to 17 (39 percent).



Figure 2-2: Percentage of Girls Ages 5 to 17 in Low-Income Families, by Age Group, 2010

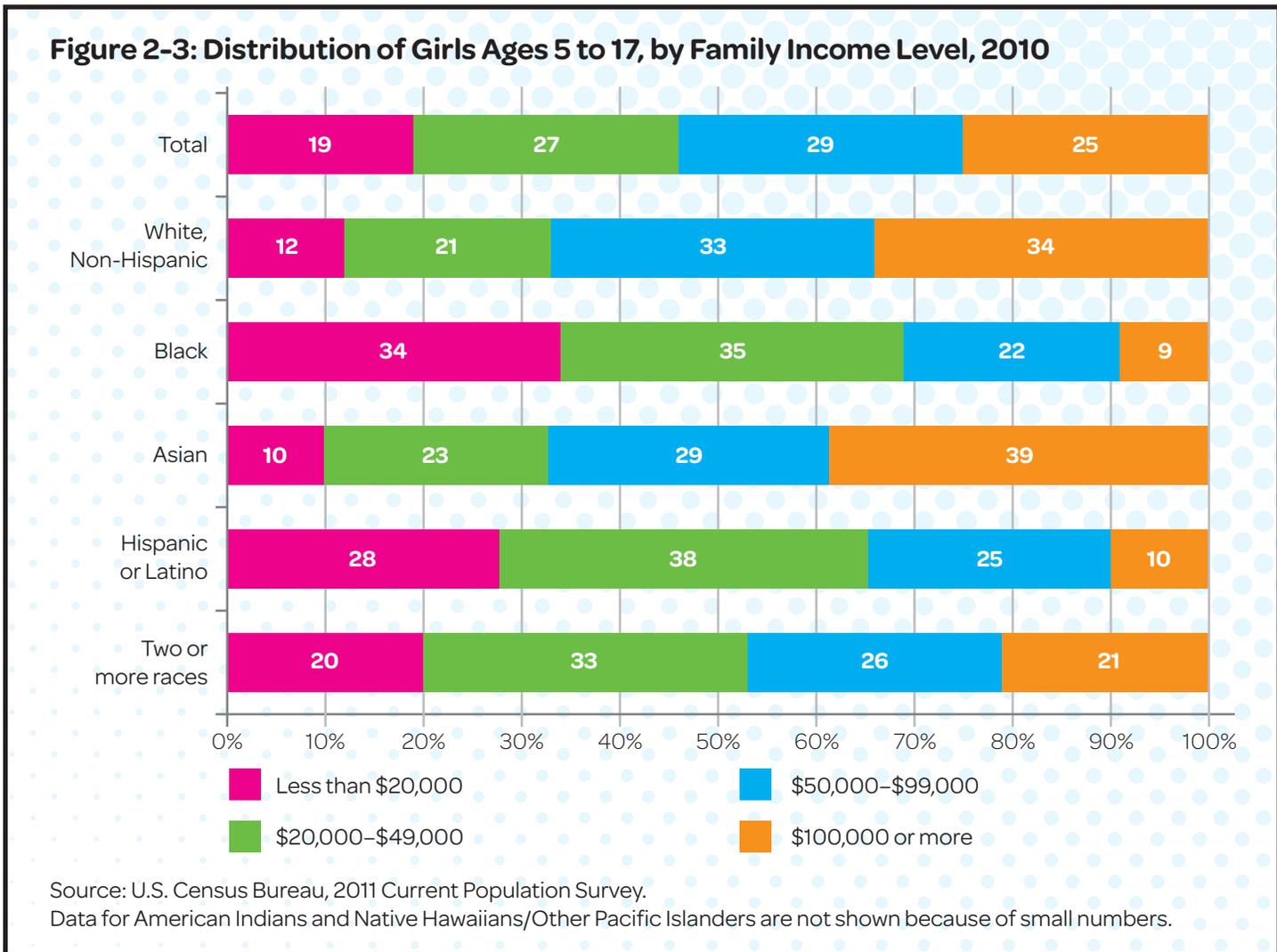


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 Current Population Survey.

The effects of poverty may be multiplied for girls who experience extreme poverty (living below 50 percent of the poverty threshold) or long-term, persistent poverty.²⁵ In 2010, about 9 percent of girls lived in extreme poverty. At the upper end of the income scale, about 19 percent of girls lived in families with incomes at least five times the official poverty threshold (about \$111,000 for a family of four).



Figure 2-3 shows the distribution of girls in different racial/ethnic groups by family income level. In 2010, about 19 percent of girls nationwide lived in families making less than \$20,000. At the upper end of the distribution, 25 percent lived in families with incomes of \$100,000 or more. Among major racial/ethnic groups, Asian American girls were the most affluent, with only 10 percent in the lowest income group and 39 percent in the highest income category. Black/African American girls were the most likely to live in families making less than \$20,000 (34 percent) and the least likely to live in high-income families (9 percent). White girls ages 5 to 17 were the most likely to live in “middle-income” families making less than \$100,000 but more than \$50,000 (33 percent).

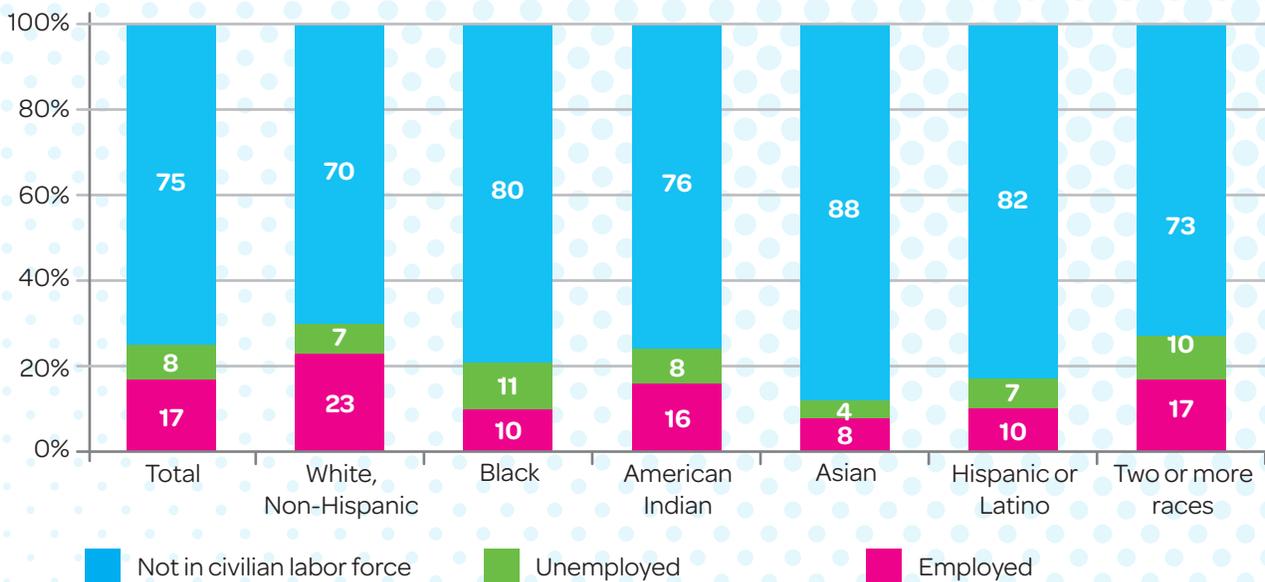


Employment

The recession has also affected employment opportunities for teens in the United States. Between 2005 and 2010, the percent of girls who were unemployed actually dropped slightly, from 8.3 percent to 7.7 percent.²⁶ However, the share of girls not in the labor force (not employed and not looking for work) increased sharply during this period, from 65 percent to 75 percent.²⁷ Part of this increase may be due to the recession; however, the participation rate in the teen labor force was declining even before the market downturn, in part because more teens are attending school during the summer months.²⁸

Labor force participation rates varied widely for girls in different racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 2-4). In 2010, about 30 percent of white teenage girls were in the labor force (either employed or unemployed), compared with 20 percent of black/African American girls, 18 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls, and only 12 percent of Asian American girls. The percentage of girls who were unemployed also varied across different groups. Asian American girls were the least likely to be unemployed (4 percent), while black/African American girls were the most likely to be unemployed (11 percent).

Figure 2-4: Labor Force Status of Girls Ages 16 to 17, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.
Data for American Indians and Native Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders are not shown because of small numbers.

Figure 2-5: Labor Force Status of Women and Men Ages 18 to 64, 2010



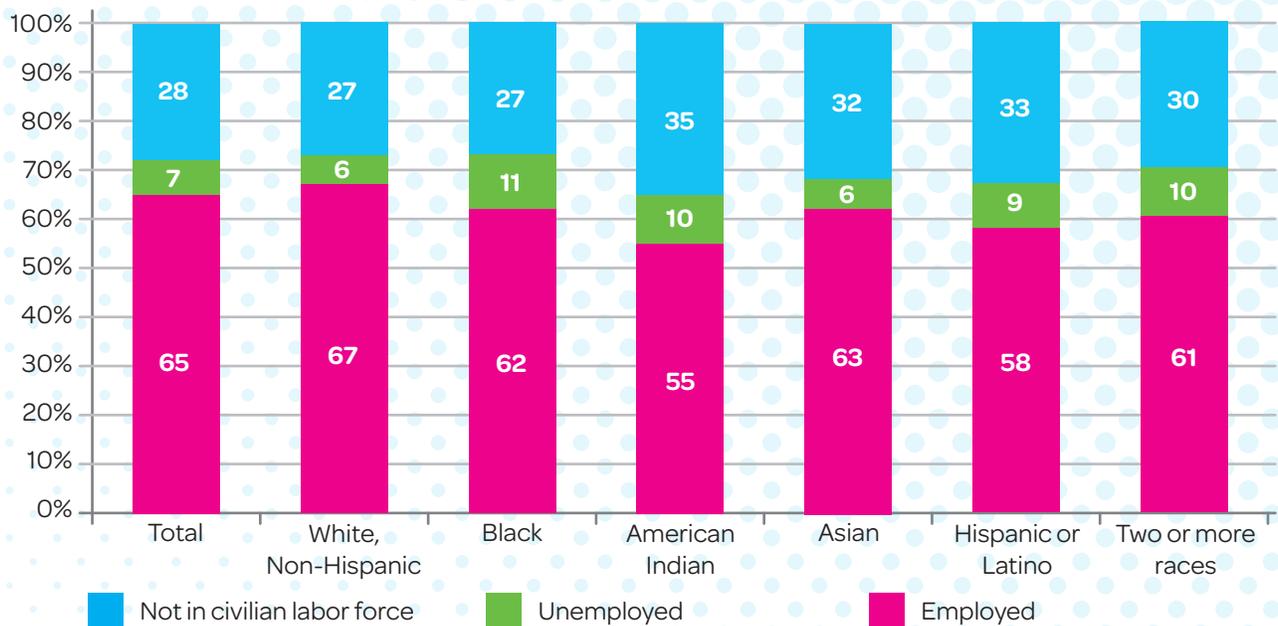
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 Current Population Survey.

Today, a growing number of girls are delaying marriage and childbearing, going to college, and entering the workforce. However, there is still a gender gap in adult labor force participation rates. In 2010, about 72 percent of working-age women (18 to 64) were in the labor force, compared with 81 percent of working-age men (see Figure 2-5).

This gender gap has declined during the last several decades, as the proportion of women in the labor force has increased, while the share of men in the labor force has declined. The growing proportion of women in the paid workforce is transforming gender relations, changing patterns of marriage and childbearing, and moving the United States toward greater gender equality in the labor force.²⁹ In fact, a recent survey showed that young women ages 18 to 34 place more value on working in a high-paying profession (66 percent) compared with men in that age group (59 percent).³⁰

Although women make up a greater share of workers than they did in the past, their participation rates vary across different racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 2-6). Black/African American and white women had the highest labor force participation rates, at 73 percent each, while American Indian women had the lowest participation rate (65 percent). Although white and black/African American women had similar participation rates, black/African American women were much more likely to be unemployed (11 percent) compared with white women (6 percent).

Figure 2-6: Labor Force Status of Women Ages 18 to 64, by Race/Ethnicity, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.
Data for American Indians and Native Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders are not shown because of small numbers.

Occupation and Earnings

The increase in the labor force participation rate for women has been a key step toward gender equality

at home and in the workplace, but closing the labor force gap is only part of the story. Women’s earnings are strongly determined by the type of work they are doing, and women are still underrepresented in higher-paying positions, especially in science and engineering and top managerial jobs. In 2010, women made up 44 percent of all full-time, year-round workers, but they accounted for less than one-fourth of those in computer, engineering, and science occupations (see Table 2-1). Women were also underrepresented in leadership positions, making up only 38 percent of managers. Among Fortune 500 companies, only 3.6 percent had female CEOs in 2012.³¹

Table 2-1: Percentage of Full-Time, Year-Round Workers Ages 18 to 64 Who Are Female, by Occupational Group, 2010

Occupational Group	Percent Female	Occupational Group	Percent Female
Total	44	Service	50
Healthcare practitioners & technicians	72	Arts, design, entertainment, sports, media	43
Education, training, and library	72	Management	38
Community and social service	61	Computer, engineering, and science	24
Sales and office	60	Production, transportation, material moving	21
Business and finance	54	Natural resources, construction, maintenance	4
Legal	50		

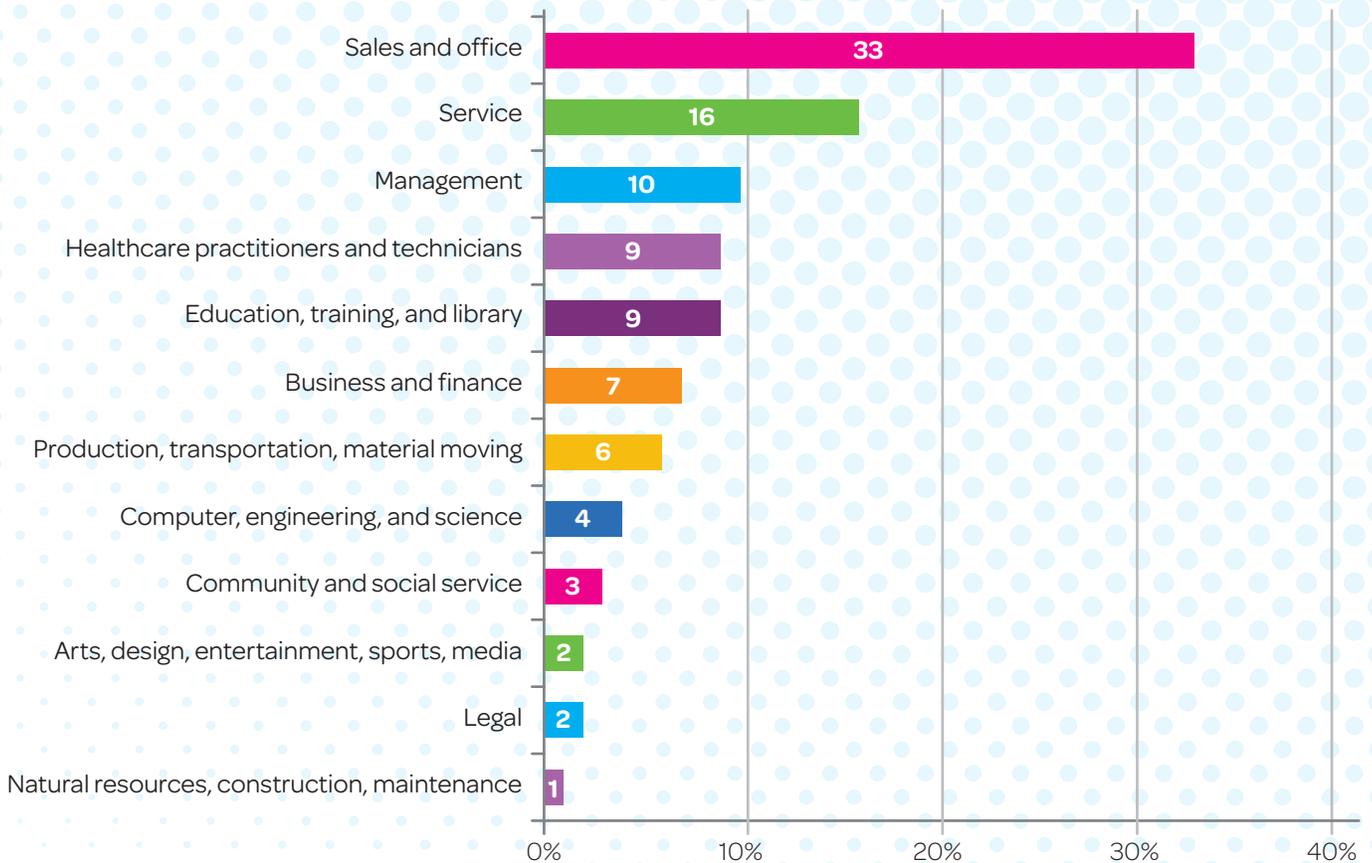
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.

There were also several occupational groups in which women outnumbered men.

For example, women made up about 72 percent of all educators and health-care workers, 61 percent of those in community and social services, 60 percent of workers in sales and office jobs, and 54 percent of business and finance employees. The most common female-dominated occupations included child-care workers and administrative assistants. Women outnumbered men by at least a 20:1 ratio in each of those jobs. Common male-dominated occupations included auto mechanics, carpenters, and electricians, each of which had 40:1 or higher ratios of male workers to female workers.

The high concentration of women in jobs with lower average pay—such as early child care—is one reason why women earn less money than men. In 2010, one-third of all women working full-time, year round were employed in retail sales or office jobs (see Figure 2-7). About 16 percent were working in service jobs (e.g., health care support, food preparation), 10 percent had jobs in management, 9 percent worked in health care, 9 percent were educators, and 7 percent were in business and finance. The remaining 16 percent of women worked in mostly male-dominated occupations, including manufacturing, science, and engineering positions.

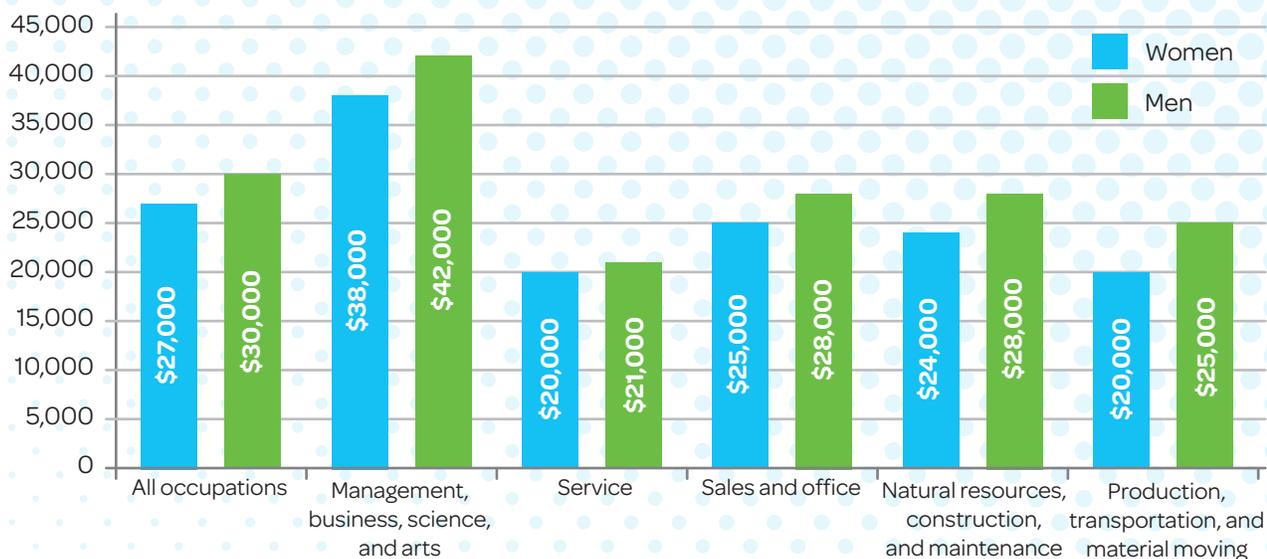
Figure 2-7: Distribution of Women Working Full Time, Year-Round, by Occupational Group, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.

However, even among full-time workers in the same occupations, women earn less money than their male counterparts (see Figure 2-8). Nationwide, the gap in median earnings was about \$3,000 in 2010, but in manufacturing and transportation occupations, men earned approximately \$5,000 more than women.

Figure 2-8: Median Annual Earnings of Women and Men Ages 18 to 29 in Full-Time, Year-Round Jobs, by Occupation, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey.

Among young women ages 18 to 29, whites had higher median earnings (\$30,000) compared with black/African American women (\$25,000) and Hispanic/Latina women (\$23,000). However, the gender gap in earnings was smaller within racial/ethnic minorities. Median earnings among men and women were roughly the same among blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinos, while white men earned about \$2,000 more than their female counterparts.

During the past few decades, the gender gap in earnings has declined somewhat as more women have attended college and gained labor market experience.³² A college degree is increasingly important for young adults to have in order to succeed in the U.S. workforce. In fact, annual earnings for part-time workers who dropped out of high school were only \$11,000 between 2006 and 2008, compared with \$100,000 for professional, full-time workers.³³

“Seemingly, the number of women has increased in the workforce, yet the types of jobs they obtain have left them still underpaid and underrepresented in scientific and technical fields. As a nation we need to close the gender gap so that we have a more diverse and skilled workforce to elevate our nation to even greater heights in innovation and productivity.”

—Rebecca Spyke Keiser, NASA Associate Deputy Administrator for Strategy and Policy

For girls at every level of education, there are certain basic skills that employers have identified as important for success in the workforce, especially English language

ability, reading comprehension, writing, and mathematics (see Table 2-2). Employers identified math skills as being important for students at all levels of education, but especially among those with college degrees. Knowledge of and skills in the humanities and the arts were identified as less important compared with other areas.

Table 2-2: Skills That Employers Believe Are Necessary for the Workforce

Basic Knowledge or Skill	Percent Who Rated Skill as “Very Important”		
	For High School Graduates	For Two-Year College Graduates	For Four-Year College Graduates
Writing in English	49	65	90
English Language	62	71	88
Reading Comprehension	63	72	87
Mathematics	30	44	64
Science	9	21	33
Foreign Languages	11	14	21
Government/Economics	4	7	20
History/Geography	2	4	14
Humanities/Arts	2	4	13

Note: Data are ranked by the percentage of employers who rated the skill necessary for four-year college graduates.
 Source: Corporate Voices for Working Families, “Are They Really Ready To Work? Employers’ Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce” (2006): p. 18, Table 1. Accessed online at www.p21.org/storage/documents/FINAL_REPORT_PDF09-29-06.pdf (Mar. 5, 2012).

Policymakers agree that it’s important to improve students’ reading and math scores and made this the centerpiece of the federal No Child Left Behind Act—to “develop and adopt standards in English language arts and mathematics that build toward college- and career-readiness by the time students graduate from high school.”³⁴

Summary and Implications

- Poverty is a critical issue for girls in the United States, as one in five girls in this country live below the poverty line, and 42 percent live in low-income families. Girls growing up in poor families, in addition to facing more unstable family dynamics, face a number of significant physical, emotional, and behavioral risks compared to girls living in more affluent families. Policies need to be in place to minimize poverty and afford girls opportunities that optimize their healthy development. Educators and organizations that work with girls should know that some girls have limited means and need some extra help in school and after school.
- A college degree is increasingly important for young adults to have in order to succeed in the U.S. workforce. Employers rate facility in math, reading, and writing as essential job skills. Recent education policies have addressed the need for top-notch math and verbal skills for U.S. students.
- Today, more women are entering college, delaying marriage, and entering the workforce. Women make up nearly half of the full-time labor force in health care, education, community and social services, sales, and office work. Women are underrepresented in computer, engineering, and science occupations, as well as in managerial positions and manufacturing. There is also a persistent gender gap in earnings, with women earning less than men, although this gap has narrowed during the last few decades.



*Physical Health
& Safety*



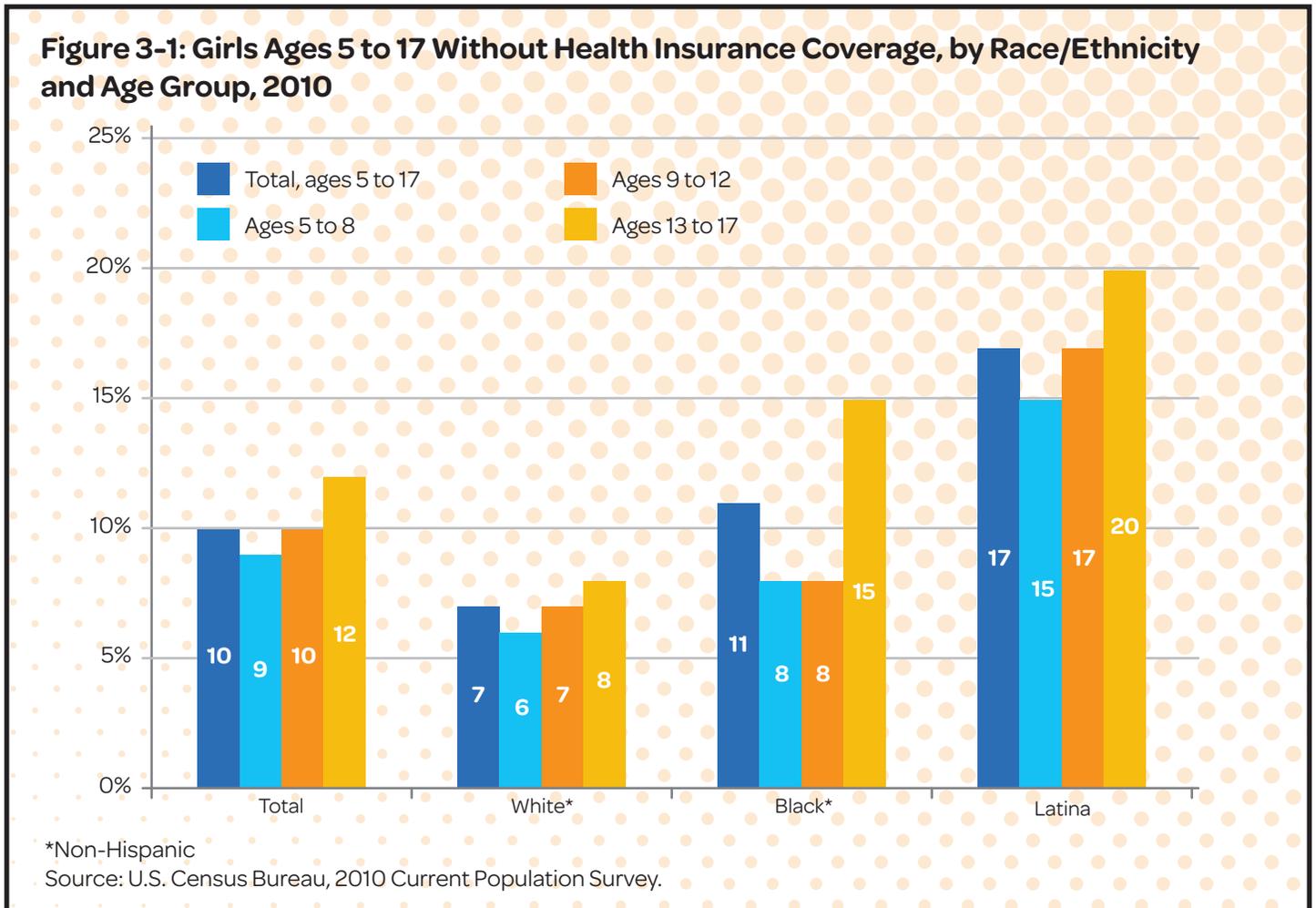
Physical health is integral to girls' well-being and development. Before we can expect a girl to be emotionally healthy, it is important for her to be physically healthy and feel safe in her environment. Emotional health, in turn, affects girls' physical well-being through their attitudes toward diet, exercise, and other healthy behaviors. Most older girls consider emotional health—addressed in Chapter 4—to be closely linked to their physical health and overall well-being.³⁵

At younger ages, girls' physical health is largely determined by biological factors, their physical environment, and their access to services. Among adolescents, the social environment plays a more important role in girls' health and development. There are many pressures that girls encounter in their lives at school and after school that might make them more likely to engage in risky behaviors. These risky behaviors can potentially endanger girls' physical health and keep them from reaching their full potential.

Health Insurance Coverage

Children without health insurance are less likely to have a regular physician

and receive care for medical and dental problems, compared with children who are insured.³⁶ Most girls have access to health insurance through their parents' employment or through public insurance programs such as the Children's Health Insurance Program. In 2010, 90 percent of girls ages 5 to 17 had access to health insurance (see Figure 3-1). Health insurance coverage rates ranged from 91 percent among 5-to-8-year-olds to 88 percent among 13-to-17 year-olds.

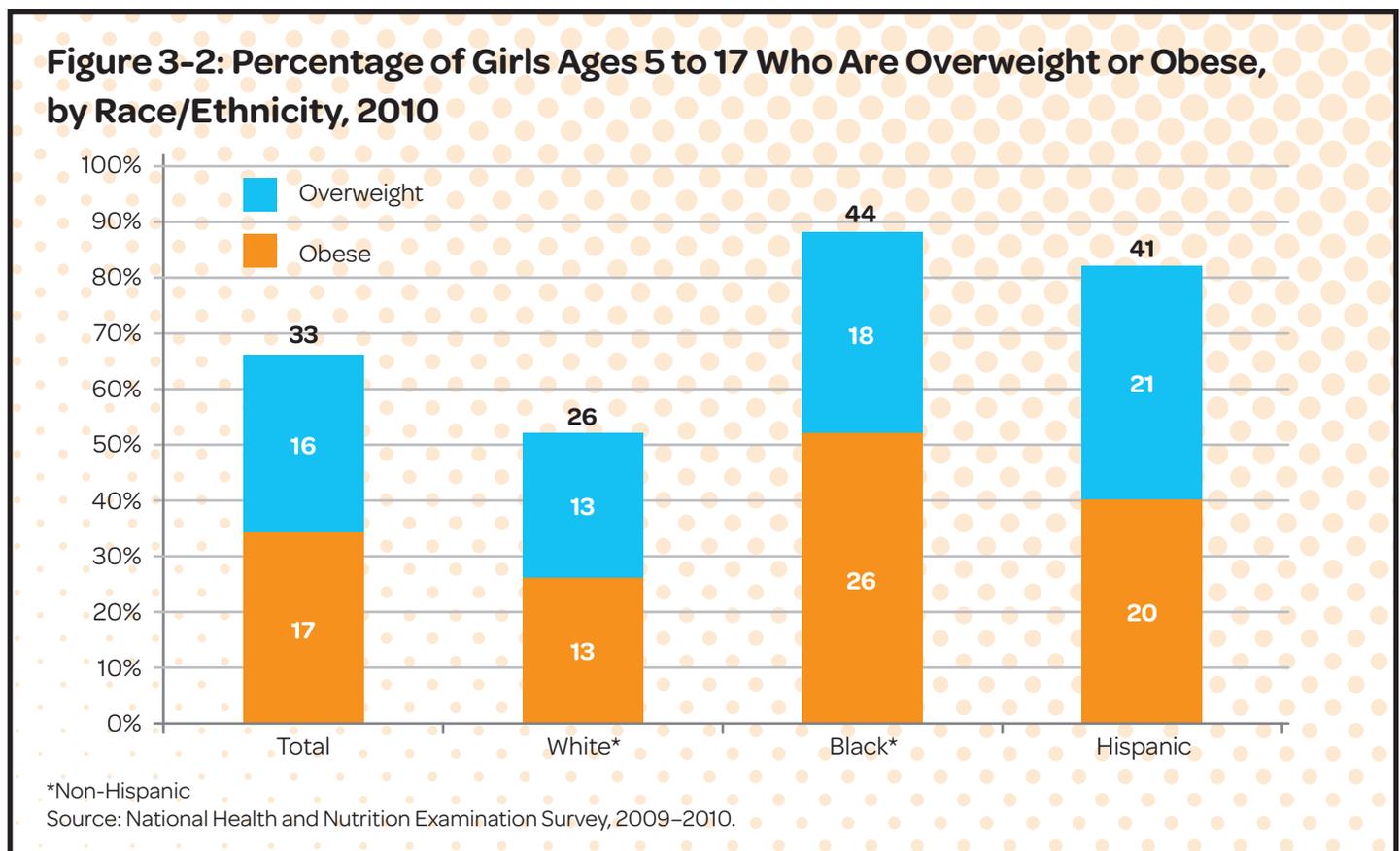


However, there are differences in girls' health insurance coverage rates by race/ethnicity. In 2010, 7 percent of white girls ages 5 to 17 were without health insurance coverage, compared with 11 percent of black/African American girls and 17 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls. Hispanic/Latina girls are less likely to have care through their parents' employment, compared with girls in other racial/ethnic groups.³⁷ Although most Hispanic children's parents are working, their parents are more likely to be working in jobs with lower wages and no benefits.³⁸ Among Hispanic teens ages 13 to 17, one in five lacked health insurance coverage in 2010.

Obesity and Overweight Conditions

Studies show that children who are obese are more likely to be obese as adults, and the consequences of obesity on health are well documented. Childhood obesity rates have risen sharply in recent years, putting more girls at risk of Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, hypertension, and other health issues.³⁹ Obesity is typically measured by calculating body mass index (BMI), based on a person’s weight and height. A healthy BMI for a child is measured on a different scale than that used for a healthy BMI for an adult, taking into account the child’s age and gender. Girls are considered obese if their BMI is at or above the 95th percentile and considered overweight if their BMI is at or above the 85th percentile.⁴⁰

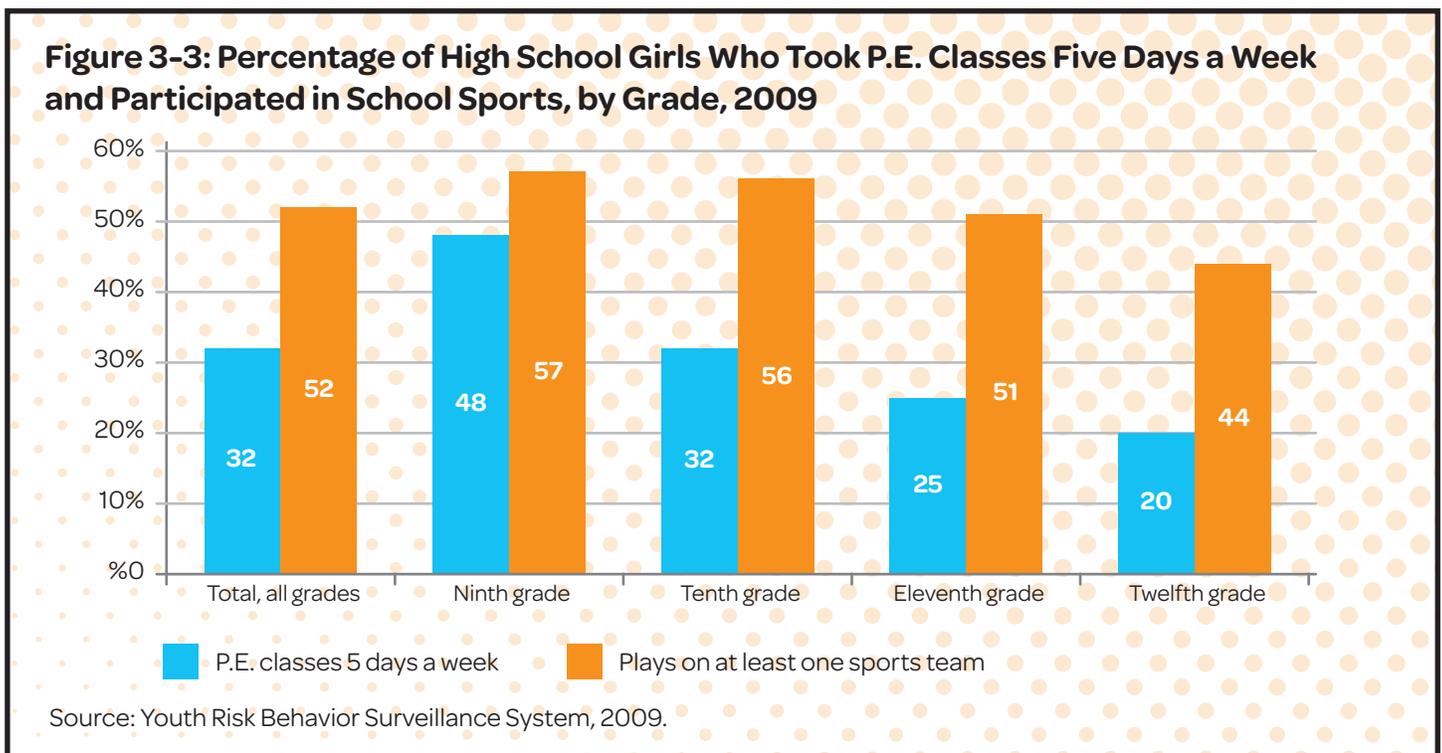
In 2010, 32 percent of girls ages 5 to 17 were overweight or obese (see Figure 3-2). Black/African American girls were the most likely to be overweight or obese in 2010 (44 percent) compared with 41 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls and 26 percent of white girls. About one in six girls (17 percent) were obese in 2010, but obesity rates were higher among black/African American girls (26 percent) compared with Hispanic/Latina girls (20 percent) and white girls (13 percent).



Diet, Nutrition, and Physical Activity

The American Academy of Pediatrics makes several recommendations for the prevention of childhood obesity.⁴¹ These include limiting total calorie, fat, and sugar intake, and increasing the intake of calcium, fruits, vegetables, and 100-percent-juice drinks. Children should not skip breakfast and should avoid snacking, limit fast food, and be aware of appropriate portion size. Eating meals together as a family is positively linked to dietary quality. Also, children should increase physical activity and limit the time they spend in front of computer and television screens.

According to the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, the majority of girls eat vegetables and fruits at least a few times a week, but they also report drinking sodas at least a few times a week. Involvement in school sports and physical education can also help girls maintain a healthy weight. In 2009, 52 percent of high school girls played on at least one sports team and 32 percent had physical education classes five days a week (see Figure 3-3).



Participation rates in sports and physical education classes decline as girls grow older. By twelfth grade, only 20 percent of girls had physical education classes five days a week, compared with 48 percent of ninth-grade girls. Participation in sports also drops off as girls grow older. About 57 percent of ninth-grade girls participated in school sports in 2009, compared with 44 percent of twelfth-grade girls.

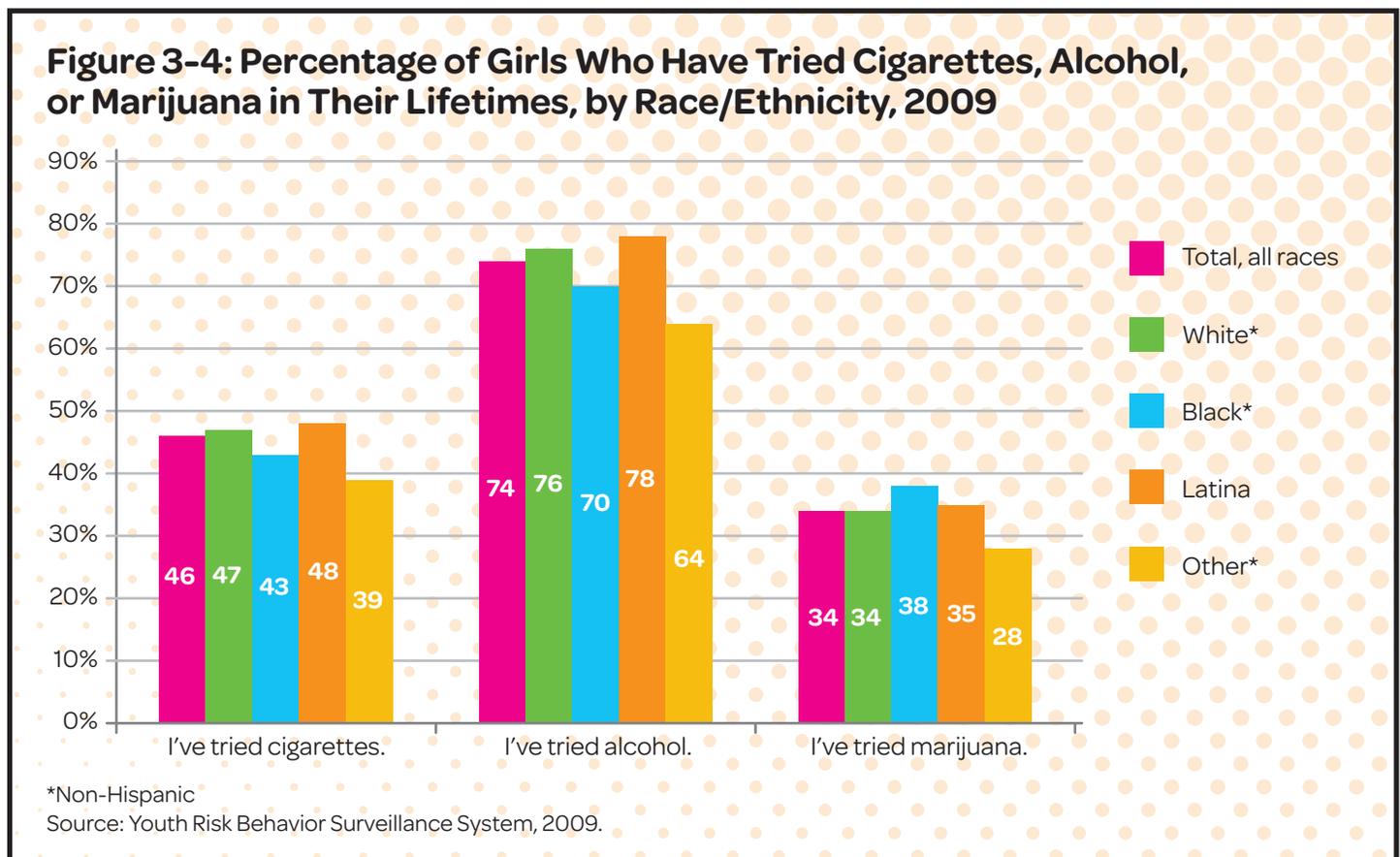
White girls were slightly less likely to participate in physical education classes five days a week compared with black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls, but they were more likely to participate on sports teams. Overall, lower-income minority youth get less exercise than their white peers, in part because of lower participation rates in school sports and physical education activities.⁴²

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Use

Besides eating right and exercising, it's important for girls to avoid risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and using illicit drugs.

Although there are many interrelated factors associated with risky behavior, research is clear that engaging in one risky behavior at a young age is associated with engaging in other risky behaviors as a teen.⁴³ About 90 percent of smokers start smoking before the age of 18, so reducing tobacco use among youth has become a national health priority.⁴⁴ Alcohol abuse among youth can lead to risky sexual behavior, problems in school, and higher risk of drug use.⁴⁵

In 2009, about 46 percent of high school girls had ever tried cigarettes, 74 percent had tried alcohol, and 34 percent had tried marijuana (see Figure 3-4). Patterns of substance use were similar across different racial/ethnic groups, but black/African American girls were slightly less likely than other groups to report that they had ever tried alcohol or cigarettes and more likely to report marijuana use. A higher percentage of older girls (grades eleven and twelve) had used alcohol or drugs compared to freshman girls.



Relatively few girls have used illicit drugs other than marijuana, such as cocaine, speed, or ecstasy (see Table 3-1). However, 13 percent of high school girls reported that they had ever used inhalants.

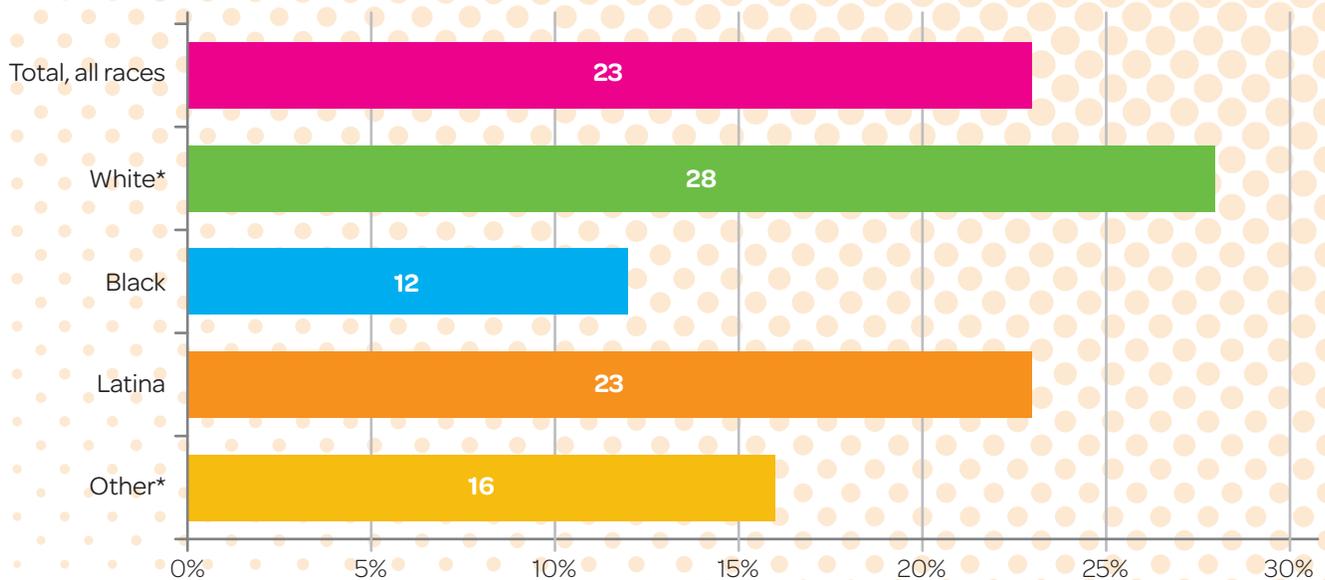
Table 3-1: “Have You Ever Used...In Your Lifetime?” Percentage of High School Girls, by Grade, 2009

Grade	Cocaine	Inhalants	Speed	Ecstasy
Total, all grades	5	13	3	6
Ninth grade	5	17	3	5
Tenth grade	5	13	3	5
Eleventh grade	6	11	4	7
Twelfth grade	6	9	3	6

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2009.

Drinking alcohol is more common among girls than other types of drug use—more common than either marijuana use or smoking. Binge drinking—having five or more drinks in a row in a short period of time—is especially dangerous because it can cause alcohol poisoning and it greatly increases the risk of both unintentional and intentional injuries, as well as sexually transmitted diseases and unintended pregnancies.⁴⁶ Among girls in high school, 23 percent reported that they had been binge drinking during the past 30 days (see Figure 3-5). Binge drinking was most common among white girls (28 percent) and least common among black/African American girls (12 percent).

Figure 3-5: Binge Drinking Among High School Girls During the Last 30 Days, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009



*Non-Hispanic. Note: Binge drinking is defined as having five or more drinks of alcohol in a row within a couple of hours.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2009.

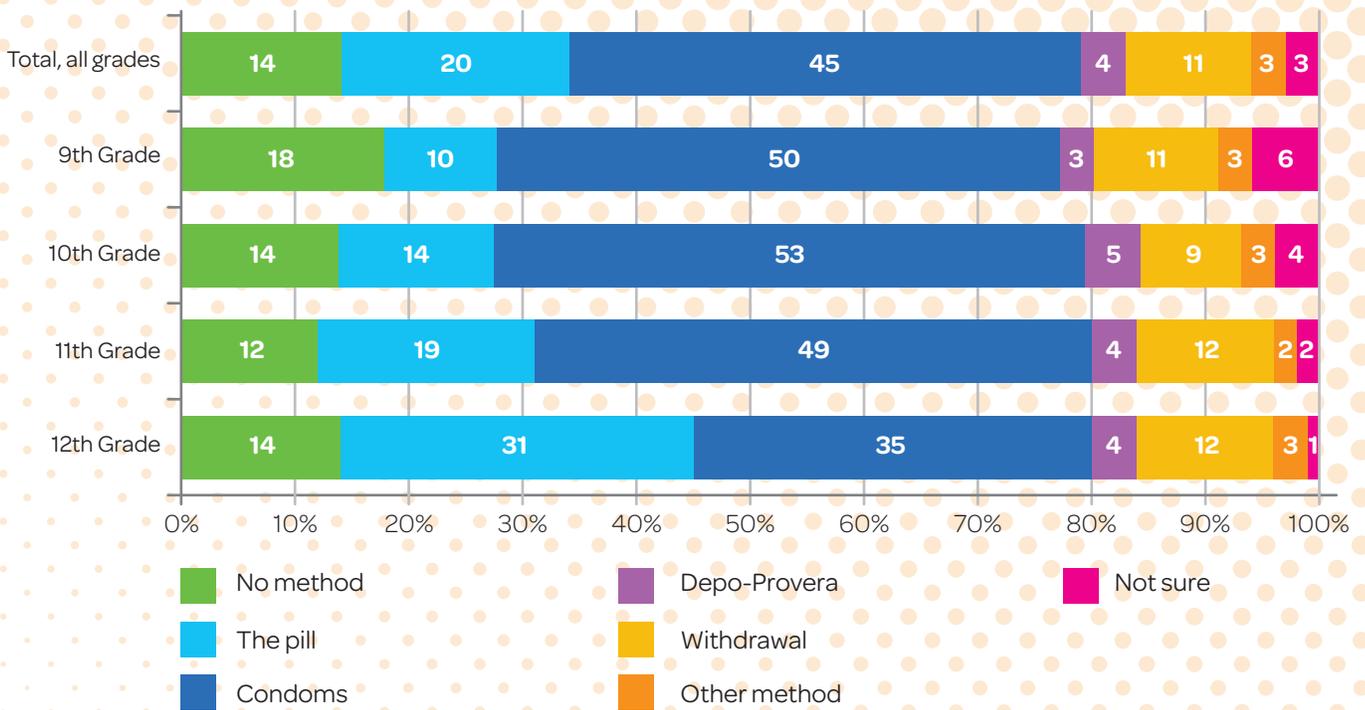
Teen Reproductive Health and Births

Teen sexual activity increases as girls grow older, putting girls at risk of sexually transmitted infections and becoming pregnant. In 2009, about 30 percent of freshman girls reported that they have ever had sex, but by senior year, that figure more than doubled, to 65 percent.

Among high school girls, about 18 percent have had one sexual partner, 16 percent have had two or three partners, and 11 percent have had four or more partners. The number of sexual partners increases with age, so that ninth-grade girls are the least likely to have multiple sexual partners. Black/African American girls are more likely to have had at least one sexual partner (58 percent) compared with white and Hispanic/Latina girls (45 percent each). Black/African American girls were also more likely to report multiple sexual partners compared with girls in other racial/ethnic groups.

Among girls who are sexually active, risk is increased if contraceptives are not used to prevent unwanted pregnancy and the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases. The majority of high school girls—86 percent—used some kind of contraception the last time they had intercourse (see Figure 3-6). Contraception use increases slightly with age, with a higher share of twelfth-grade girls using contraception (86 percent) compared with ninth-grade girls (82 percent). Condoms were the primary method of birth control among girls who used contraception, followed by the pill and the withdrawal method. The use of birth control pills as the primary method of contraception increases with age; only 10 percent of ninth-grade girls reported using the pill compared with 31 percent of twelfth-grade girls.

Figure 3-6: Primary Method of Birth Control Used at Last Intercourse Among High School Girls, by Grade Level, 2009



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2009.

The majority of teenage girls ages 15 to 17 (98 percent) have never been diagnosed with an STD, but black/African American girls report a higher prevalence of STDs (5 percent) compared with white and Hispanic/Latina girls (2 percent each). However, actual prevalence of STDs among teenage girls may be higher because some STDs may not be reported or diagnosed.

By high school, nearly 90 percent of girls have received some kind of education in HIV/AIDS in their school curriculum. Adolescent sexual activity puts teens at risk of sexually transmitted infections and can also lead to teen pregnancy and births, which can have negative consequences for young mothers and their children. Teen pregnancies are associated with higher poverty and unemployment rates and lower levels of educational attainment compared with the pregnancies of women who have their first child at later ages.⁴⁷ Infants of young mothers also face a higher risk of being underweight at birth and of dying during their first year of life.⁴⁸

Ninety-five percent of girls ages 15 to 17 have never been pregnant, 4 percent have been pregnant once, and less than 1 percent have been pregnant more than once. About 9 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls have been pregnant one or more times in their lifetime (up to age 17), compared with 2 percent of white girls and 7 percent of black/African American girls. According to the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), there were about 123,000 births to mothers ages 15 to 17 and about 5,000 births to mothers under age 15 in the United States in 2009 (see Table 3-2).

Table 3-2: Number of Births and Birth Rates by Age of Mother, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009

	10 to 14 years		15 to 17 years	
	Number	Births per 1,000 Girls	Number	Births per 1,000 Girls
Total, all races	4,980	0.5	123,367	20
Total, Non-Hispanic	2,907	0.4	75,349	15
Non-Hispanic White	1,053	0.2	39,975	11
Non-Hispanic Black	1,705	1.2	31,560	32
Latino	2,073	1.0	48,018	41

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2009.

Nationwide, there were 20 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 17 in 2009. A higher share of black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls became teen mothers, compared with white girls. In 2009, there were about 41 births per 1,000 Hispanic/Latina girls ages 15 to 17, compared with 32 births per 1,000 black/African American girls and 11 births per 1,000 white girls in that age group.

The teen birth rate has declined in recent years and has reached its lowest recorded levels.⁴⁹ According to tabulations from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), about 21 percent of girls between the ages of 15 and 17 who are not sexually active maintain their virginity because they do not want to get pregnant. Another 38 percent who have abstained from sex report that premarital sex is “against their beliefs or morals.” The NSFG also asked girls ages 15 to 17 how they would feel if they became pregnant. The overwhelming majority of girls, about 91 percent, would either be “upset” or “very upset.”

Physical Violence and Safety

Compared with boys, girls are less likely to be perpetrators of crime, but they are more likely than boys to be the victims of certain crimes. Girls who experience physical violence are at a higher risk of serious mental and physical health problems, including depression and suicide.⁵⁰ Girls who become victims of violence are often victimized multiple times, with lifelong consequences.⁵¹

Table 3-3 shows the rate of victimization for girls and boys between the ages of 12 and 17 by type of crime. The most common victimization for both boys and girls ages 12 to 17 is simple assault, with rates of 192 per 10,000 boys and 124 per 10,000 girls. Simple assaults are not aggravated in nature and do not result in serious injury to the victim; this includes crimes such as stalking, intimidation, coercion, and hazing.⁵² Girls are much more likely to be victims of rape and sexual assault (35 per 10,000 girls ages 12 to 17) compared with boys (7 per 10,000 boys ages 12 to 17). Boys were more likely than girls to be victims of aggravated and simple assault and personal theft. Overall, there were 264 victimizations per 10,000 girls ages 12 to 17 compared to 291 for boys in that age group. Among girls, rates of sexual assault and simple assault declined with age, but rates of robbery and aggravated assault increased, with higher victimization rates among those ages 15 to 17 compared with those ages 12 to 14.

Table 3-3: Rate of Victimizations per 10,000 Population, by Gender, Type of Crime, and Age, 2010

Crime Type	Total, 12 to 17 years		12 to 14 years		15 to 17 years	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
Total, all crimes	291	264	295	247	287	279
Rape/sexual assault	7	35	7	47	7	25
Robbery	21	43	10	3	31	81
Aggravated assault	61	58	75	38	48	77
Simple assault	192	124	197	159	188	90
Personal theft/larceny	9	3	6	—	12	6

“—” denotes a cell size too small to report
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010.

In 2009, 1.9 million juveniles under age 18 were arrested, including 578,500 females (30 percent of all juvenile arrests).⁵³ Table 3-4 shows the 10 most common crimes for which girls and boys are arrested. The most common crime is larceny/theft, which is dominated by shoplifting. In 2009, there were 134 arrests for theft per 10,000 girls ages 13 to 17, compared with 151 arrests per 10,000 boys in that age group. For most crimes, boys had higher arrest rates than girls, but girls were more likely to be arrested as runaways. There were 49 runaway arrests per 10,000 girls ages 13 to 17, compared with 37 arrests per 10,000 boys.

Table 3-4: Arrest Rates for the Top 10 Most Common Crimes That Girls Are Arrested For, by Age and Gender, 2010 (rate per 10,000)

	Females			Males		
	All ages	Under 13	13 to 17	All Ages	Under 13	13 to 17
Total, all arrests	214	16	726	473	40	1589
Larceny/theft	40	3	134	45	4	151
Other assaults	21	2	68	38	6	120
Disorderly conduct	16	2	51	30	4	97
Runaways	14	0.9	49	11	1	37
Liquor law violations	12	0.2	41	18	0.2	63
Curfew and loitering law violations	9	0.5	33	20	1	70
Drug abuse violations, total	7	0.2	26	38	1	132
Possession, subtotal	6	0.2	23	32	0.8	112
Aggravated assault	3	0.3	11	10	1	32
Vandalism	3	0.5	11	20	3	65
All other offenses (except traffic)	23	1	80	63	4	214

Note: **Total, all arrests** includes all arrests in 2010, not just those shown in the table. The category "Under 13" includes reported arrests of all children under age 13. Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010.

Most juveniles who are arrested are referred to juvenile court.⁵⁴ Males are referred to juvenile court at a higher rate than females (see Table 3-5). The court data are organized by the general type of crime that is listed as the referral crime. The referral crime is the most serious offense for which the juvenile was referred to court.⁵⁵

Table 3-5: Rate of Juvenile Court Referrals by Primary Referral Crime, by Age and Gender, 2010 (Rate per 10,000 population)

	Total, all crime referrals	Public order crime referrals	Property crime referrals	Person crime referrals	Drug crime referrals
Total, both sexes	294	77	112	72	33
Under 13	20	5	8	7	1
13 to 17	651	173	246	155	76
Total, females	167	44	67	44	12
Under 13	11	3	4	4	0
13 to 17	182	48	73	47	13
Total, males	414	109	154	99	52
Under 13	30	6	12	10	1
13 to 17	915	244	338	210	123

Note: The category "under 13" includes reported court referrals for all children under age 13. Source: National Center for Juvenile Justice, 2010.

In 2010, there were 167 court referrals per 10,000 girls under age 17, compared with 414 referrals for boys in that age group. Drug crimes have the lowest rates of referral for girls (12 per 10,000 population). Girls are more likely to be referred to court for property and person crimes, but those rates are still lower than they are for boys. Property crimes include theft, burglary, vandalism, arson, motor vehicle theft, and other crimes against property. Person crimes include homicide, rape, robbery, and assault.

Finally, Table 3-6 shows the number of juveniles in residential placement. Being incarcerated as a teenager can have long-term negative consequences, affecting potential earnings, physical health, and the likelihood of being imprisoned as an adult.⁵⁶ Residential placement includes juveniles who are placed in a facility as part of a court order. These juveniles may have been adjudicated and disposed in juvenile court, or they may have been convicted and sentenced in juvenile court.⁵⁷

Table 3-6: Juveniles in Residential Placement, by Age, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity, 2010

Crime Type	All races		White		Black		Latino		Other	
	Under 13	13 to 17	Under 13	13 to 17	Under 13	13 to 17	Under 13	13 to 17	Under 13	13 to 17
Total	693	60,168	277	19,461	276	24,550	103	13,332	37	2,825
Male	559	51,619	225	16,132	218	21,437	83	11,829	33	2,221
Female	134	8,549	52	3,329	58	3,113	20	1,503	4	604

Source: Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement, 2010.

There are large differences in the number of boys and girls in residential placement facilities. In 2010, there were 51,619 males ages 13 to 17 in residential placement facilities, compared with 8,549 girls in that age group. The number of girls under age 13 in residential placement facilities is relatively small, compared with girls in older age groups. Similar to the referral data, the gender differences in residential placement reflect the fact that boys are more likely to be punished and convicted for crimes than girls, in part because of the types of crime that girls commit, which tend to warrant lesser punishments than the crimes that boys commit at the same ages.

Girls’ physical health is multifaceted, and the factors affecting girls’ health change as girls grow older. Although the outlook for girls is positive for many key indicators—low involvement in crime, positive attitudes toward avoiding pregnancy, relatively high use of birth control, low drug use, and high involvement in school athletics—there are still many areas that need improvement in order for girls to thrive. Specifically, interventions should concentrate on the high proportion of girls who are overweight or obese and the relatively common use of alcohol and cigarettes, especially among black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls. Policy-makers should invest in programs to help steer girls away from risky behaviors that can have lifelong consequences for their health and well-being.

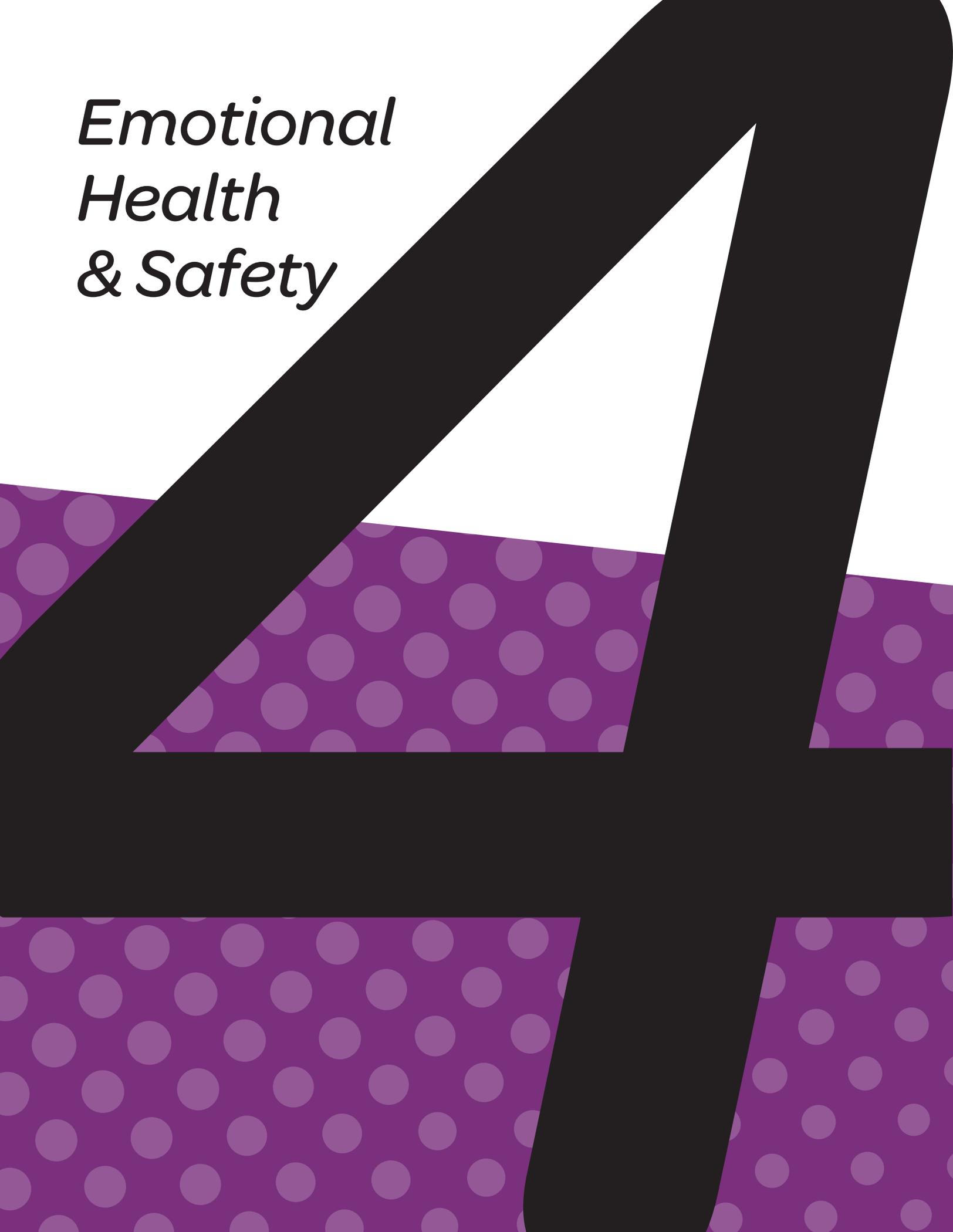
Summary and Implications

- Physical health and wellness is critical to girls' development, academic achievement, psychosocial adjustment, happiness, and overall well-being. While girls report a fairly good diet and reasonable levels of physical activity, many girls in this country are overweight and some don't have access to health insurance. Obesity rates are highest for black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls, and Hispanic/Latina girls are less likely to have health insurance compared to peers from other ethnic groups. All girls need access to health care, better access to healthy food, and opportunities for exercise and physical activity.
- It is important for girls to avoid risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and using illicit drugs. Three-quarters of teen girls have tried alcohol, nearly half have smoked cigarettes, and a third have tried marijuana. Adults should limit and carefully monitor opportunities for teen girls to engage in risky behaviors. Alcohol abuse among youth can lead to risky sexual behavior, problems in school, and a higher risk of drug use.
- Adolescent sexual activity increases as girls grow older, putting girls at risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections and becoming teen mothers. Two-thirds of high school teens are sexually active, and a high number use contraception. Hispanic/Latina girls have the highest pregnancy and birth rates compared to peers from other ethnic groups; however, the teen birth rate has declined in recent years and has reached its lowest recorded levels. Teen pregnancies are associated with higher poverty and unemployment rates and lower levels of educational attainment compared with the pregnancies of women who have their first child at later ages.
- Girls who experience physical violence are at a higher risk of serious mental and physical health problems, including depression and suicide. Girls are less likely to be perpetrators but more likely to be victims of certain crimes, compared to boys. Among the different categories of crime, girls are most likely to be victims of simple assaults, which do not result in serious injury to the victim. Girls are more likely than boys to be victims of rape and sexual assault. Efforts should be made at all levels to minimize youth crime.

“Health and wellness of girls is paramount. The obesity epidemic and a lack of physical activity among girls continue to be major obstacles preventing them from enjoying optimal health. But it is also important to consider how social, economic, and cultural considerations affect the health needs of girls as they grow and age. Programming and education decisions should be centered on physical activity; avoidance of drug, tobacco, and alcohol use; reproductive health; and a development of self-esteem and confidence, to name a few. The focal point for any and all programs and education designed for girls should be the impact they will have on girls' health and wellness.” —Dr. Donna Duffy, Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology, and Program Director for the Program for the Advancement of Girls and Women in Sport and Physical Activity at UNC-Greensboro.



*Emotional
Health
& Safety*





Emotional health is a complicated but important component of girls' well-being. While physical health can be measured in lab results, body mass index, and amount of regular physical activity, measuring emotional health is more difficult. Generally, emotional well-being is conceptualized in terms of the presence of positive emotions, satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning, as well as the absence of negative emotions.⁵⁸ Fostering these positive factors begins in childhood and continues through adulthood. Childhood is an important time in a girl's life, when positive parental, adult, and peer interactions can have lasting effects on a girl's ability to cope with stress, interact with others, and develop healthy self-esteem.⁵⁹

Research shows that girls cope with the stresses of everyday life differently than boys. While boys are more likely to have "fight or flight" reactions to stress, girls are more likely to discuss problems with friends.⁶⁰ Girls are also more likely than boys to worry about "social approval, abandonment, and the status of their relationships" and to use these relationships as outlets to express their emotions and deal with stress in a healthy way. Being able to deal with stress can help reduce the risk of unhealthy or risky behaviors such as eating disorders, cutting or self-mutilation, bullying, and, in the most extreme cases, suicide.

Self-Esteem

It is important to promote self-confidence in girls, because low self-esteem can have lasting negative effects that persist into adulthood. The 2008 report *Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem* finds that 7 out of 10 girls ages 8 to 17 have negative opinions about themselves in some capacity—regarding their looks, school performance, or relationships with peers or family.⁶¹ The majority of girls ages 8 to 17 report that they feel insecure or unsure of themselves, and girls who are insecure are more likely to be unhappy with their appearance than girls who do not feel insecure.

Sixty-one percent of girls with low self-esteem report that they talk badly about themselves, compared to only 15 percent of girls who have high self-esteem. Talking badly about one’s self can amplify emerging feelings of low self-esteem. It is important to break the cycle of low confidence and negative thoughts by encouraging girls to take pride in themselves and their abilities.

Low self-esteem can also lead to risky behaviors. Seventy-five percent of girls with low self-esteem report that they engage in disordered eating, cutting themselves, bullying others, or smoking or drinking, compared with 25 percent of girls with high self-esteem.⁶² It is important that parents and adults teach girls to cope with stressors in positive ways so that they do not turn to these negative behaviors.

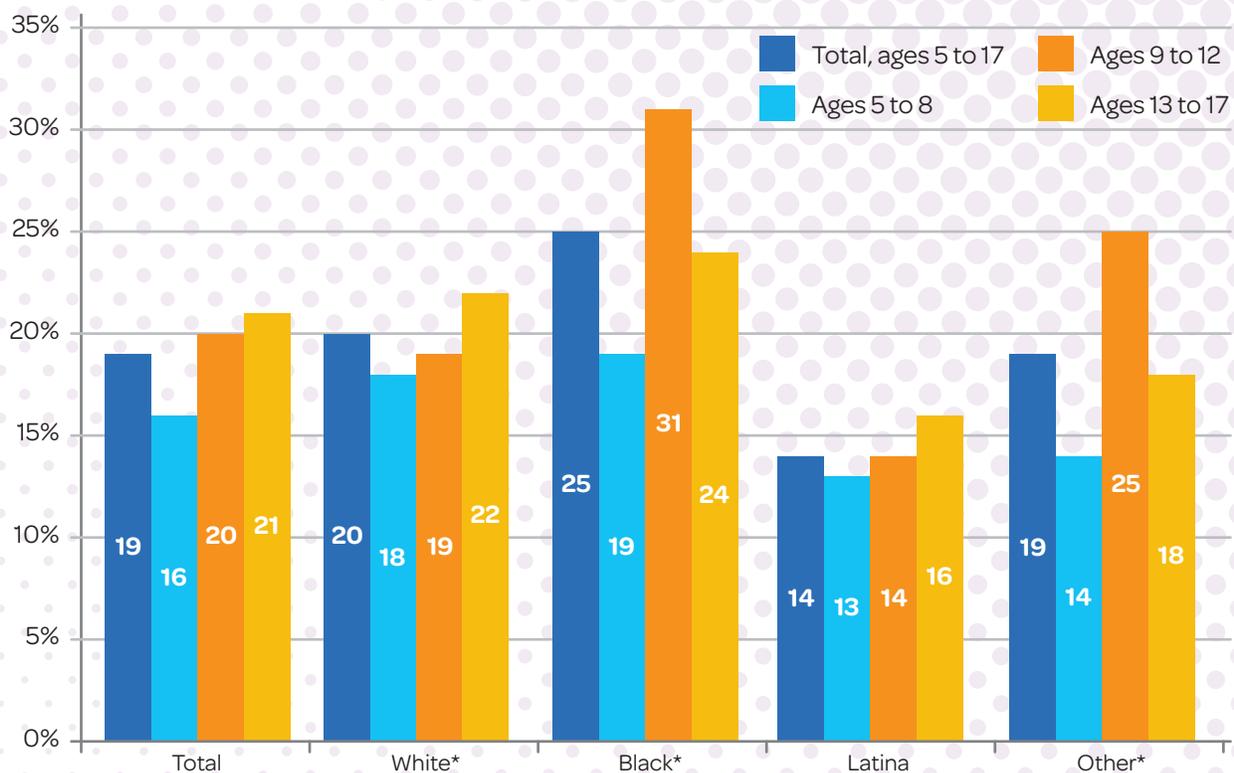


Mental Health and Depression

The public health community views overall health as a multidimensional construct that includes physical, mental, and social elements.⁶³ By concentrating on a girl's physical and mental health, the aim is not only to potentially prolong life, but also to improve the quality of life. Recent studies have shown that mental health issues in childhood or adolescence tend to persist throughout a person's life, so ignoring girls' mental health could have long-term consequences.⁶⁴ Boys are more likely than girls to have emotional or behavioral difficulties, according to parental reports. But adolescent girls are more than twice as likely as boys to have major depressive episodes, and the risk of depression increases as girls reach their older teen years.⁶⁵

Figure 4-1 shows results from the National Health Interview Survey, which asks parents if their daughter "has difficulties with emotions, concentration, behavior, or getting along." Hispanic/Latina girls ages 5 to 17 have the lowest prevalence of any difficulties (14 percent), compared with 20 percent of white girls and 25 percent of black/African American girls. In general, girls ages 5 to 8 are less likely to have emotional difficulties than girls in older age groups. Among white and Hispanic/Latina girls, emotional problems peak in the teenage years. However, black/African American girls are most likely to have emotional difficulties during their preteen years (ages 9 to 12).

Figure 4-1: Girls Ages 5 to 17 Who Have Difficulties with Emotions, Concentration, Behavior, or Getting Along, by Age and Race/Ethnicity, 2010



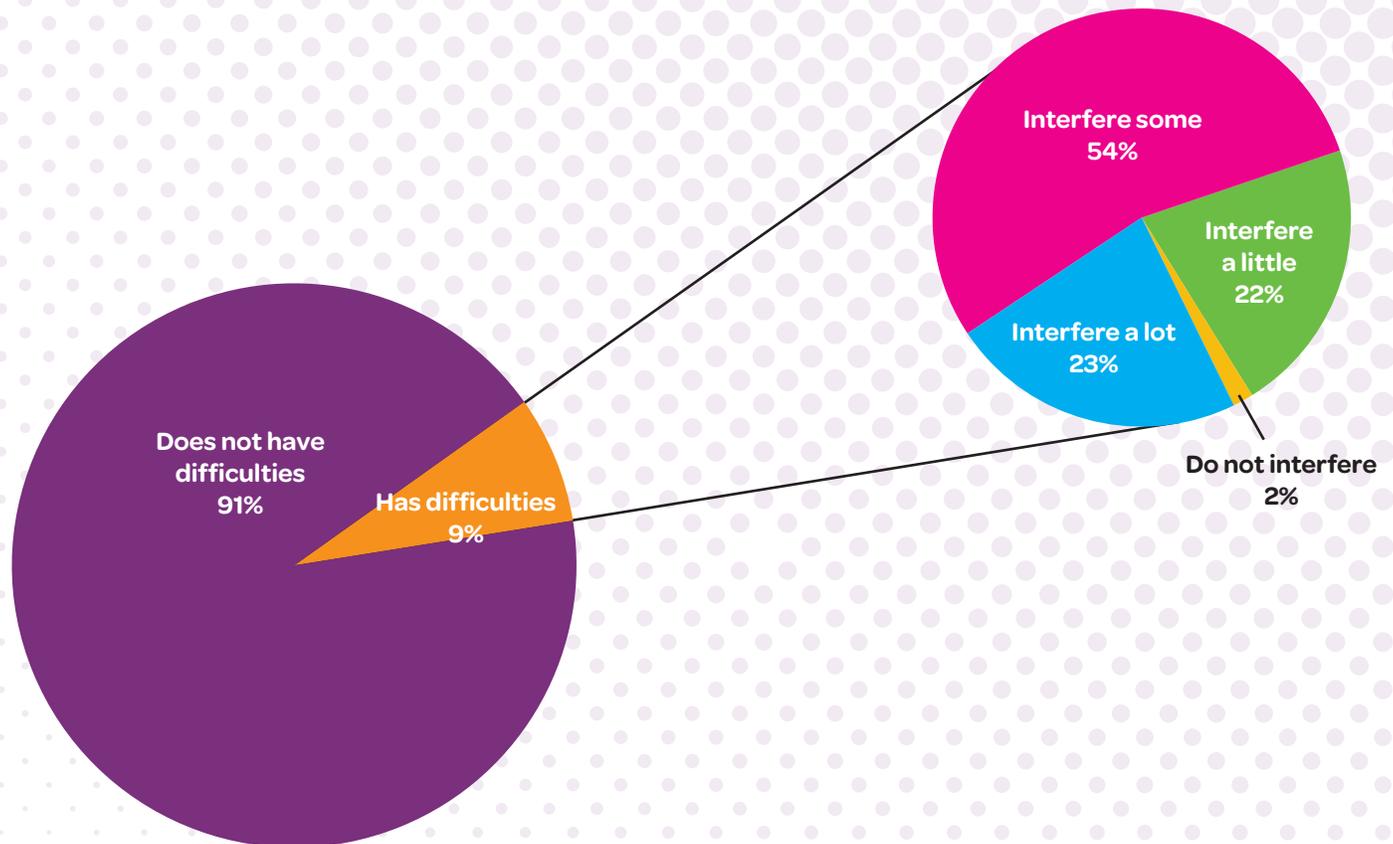
*Non-Hispanic

Note: "Other, Non-Hispanic" includes those identifying with multiple races, and races other than black and white.

Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2010.

If their daughter has had difficulties, parents are also asked: “Do those difficulties interfere with her daily activities?” Figure 4-2 shows that the majority of parents say that their daughters do not have difficulties (91 percent), but of the 9 percent who do, more than three-fourths (77 percent) of parents said that their daughters’ difficulties interfered with family, school, or daily activities “some” or “a lot.” Only 2 percent reported that the difficulties do not interfere at all with their daughters’ daily activities.

Figure 4-2: “Does Your Daughter Have Difficulties That Interfere with Her Family, School, or Daily Activities?” Ages 5 to 17, 2010

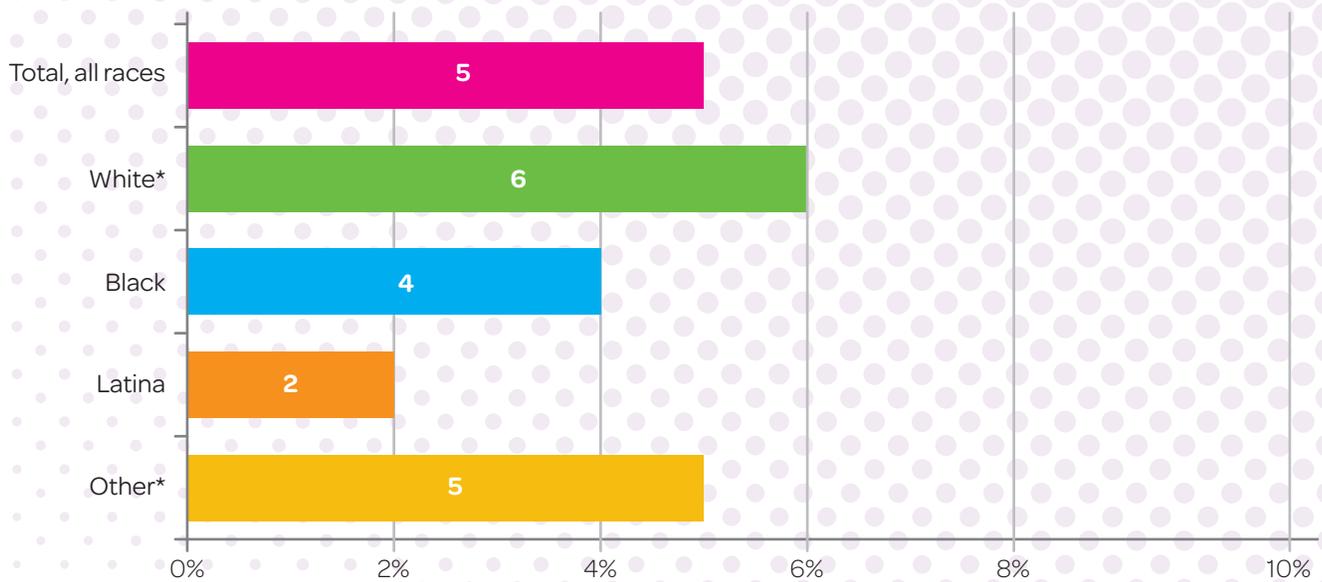


Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2010.

Many mental illnesses can be treated with prescription medications, psychotherapy, or a combination of the two. Conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and other disruptive disorders are more likely to receive medical attention than depressive disorders.⁶⁶ While boys are prescribed medication for ADHD more often than girls, girls are prescribed antidepressants more often than boys.⁶⁷ In adulthood, women report use of both antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication more than men in every age group.⁶⁸

Figure 4-3 shows the percentage of girls who were prescribed medication for emotional or behavioral difficulties in the past six months. About 5 percent of all girls were prescribed medication for their difficulties. About 6 percent of white girls and 5 percent of black/African American girls were prescribed medications, compared with only 2 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls. Lower rates of prescription drug use among Hispanic/Latina girls could be due to several factors, including better emotional and behavioral health among Hispanic/Latino youth, Hispanic/Latino parents' difficulties in accessing needed health care, language barriers, cultural stigmas related to mental illness, and differences in how parents perceive mental illness and the benefits of medication. Research has shown that Hispanic/Latino parents may view prescription drugs more negatively compared with parents in other racial/ethnic groups.⁶⁹

Figure 4-3: Girls Ages 5 to 17 Who Were Prescribed Medication for Difficulties with Emotions, Concentration, Behavior, or Getting Along with Others in the Past Six Months, by Race/Ethnicity, 2010



*Non-Hispanic

Note: "Other, Non-Hispanic" includes those identifying with multiple races, and races other than black and white.

Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2010.

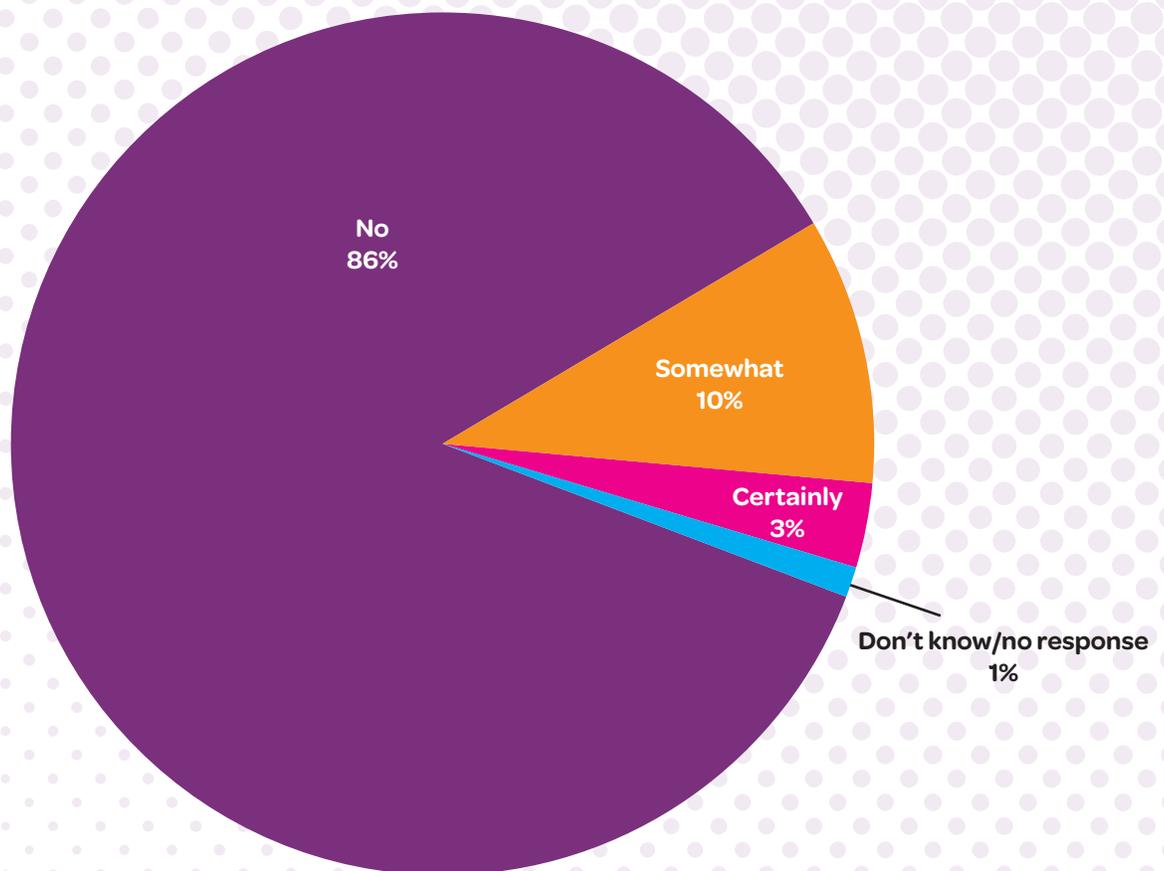
Older girls are more likely to be prescribed medications for emotional or behavioral problems. About 7 percent of girls ages 13 to 17 were prescribed medication in the past six months, compared with 3 percent of girls ages 5 to 8 and 4 percent of girls ages 9 to 12. Overall, about 1.2 million girls received prescription medication for difficulties in the past six months.

Depression

Measuring depression is difficult because it can be both a cause and a consequence of many other dimensions of girls' well-being. Girls who are depressed have more trouble focusing on tasks and controlling their behavior. Depression is linked to worse health outcomes, including childhood obesity.⁷⁰ Girls who are depressed are more likely to use alcohol and drugs, perform worse in school, become teen parents, or commit suicide by the time they reach early adulthood.⁷¹

Figure 4-4 shows the share of girls whose parents report that they were depressed in the past six months. Overall, 13 percent of girls were depressed at any level of severity. Only 3 percent of parents report that their daughters were “certainly” depressed in the past six months, and 10 percent of parents report that their daughters were “somewhat” depressed. Parents of girls ages 13 to 17 were more likely to report signs of depression (20 percent), compared with parents of girls ages 9 to 12 (11 percent) or 5 to 8 (8 percent). The share of girls who were said to be depressed was similar across different racial/ethnic groups.

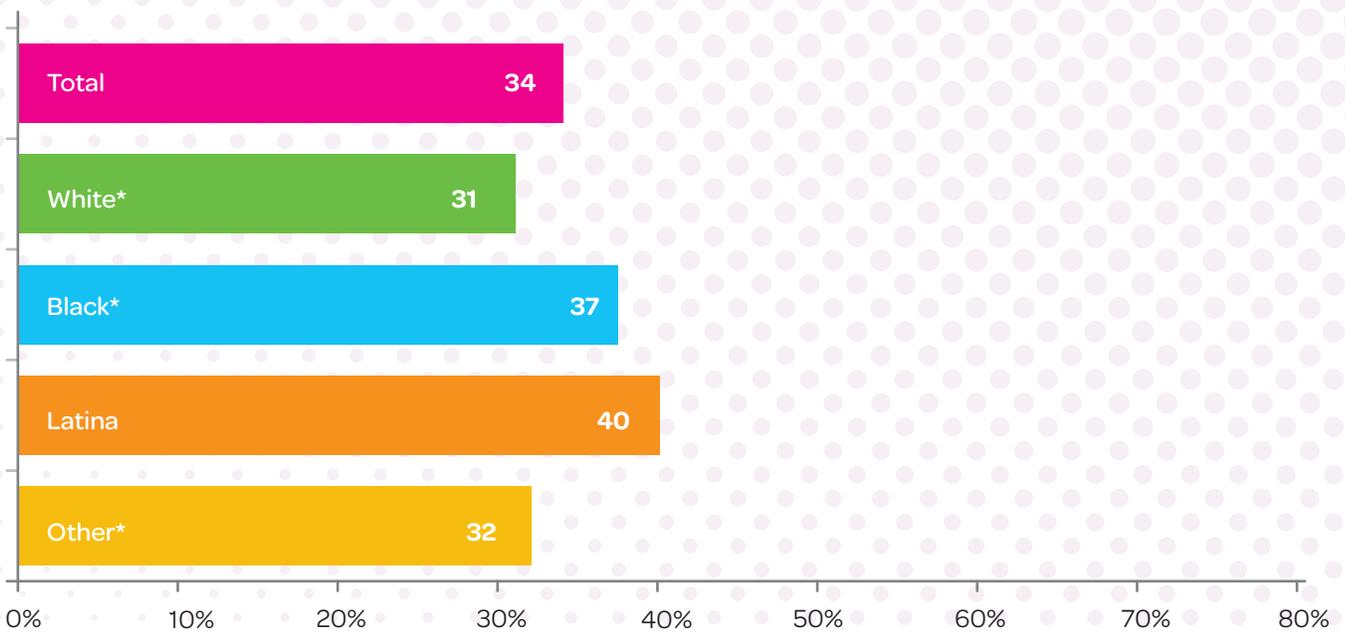
Figure 4-4: “Has Your Daughter Been Unhappy, Depressed, or Tearful in the Past Six Months?” Girls Ages 5 to 17, 2010



Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2010.

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) offers a different perspective on childhood depression, based on girls’ own responses (as opposed to parents’ observations). Among girls in grades nine through twelve, 34 percent reported that they had symptoms of depression—feeling sad or hopeless every day for two or more weeks—during the past year (see Figure 4-5); compare this to the approximately 20 percent of girls ages 13 to 17 whose parents reported that their daughters have been depressed in the last six months. This discrepancy suggests that some girls may not be telling their parents when they have symptoms of depression. Hispanic/Latina girls were the most likely to report that they felt sad or hopeless in the past year (40 percent), while non-Hispanic white girls were the least likely to report those feelings (31 percent). Parental reports also showed a higher rate of depression among Hispanic/Latina girls compared with other racial/ethnic groups, but again, at a lower level than Hispanic/Latina girls’ self-reported rate.

Figure 4-5: Percentage of Girls in Grades Nine Through Twelve Who Felt Sad or Hopeless for Two or More Weeks in a Row in the Past 12 Months, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009



*Non-Hispanic
 Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2009.

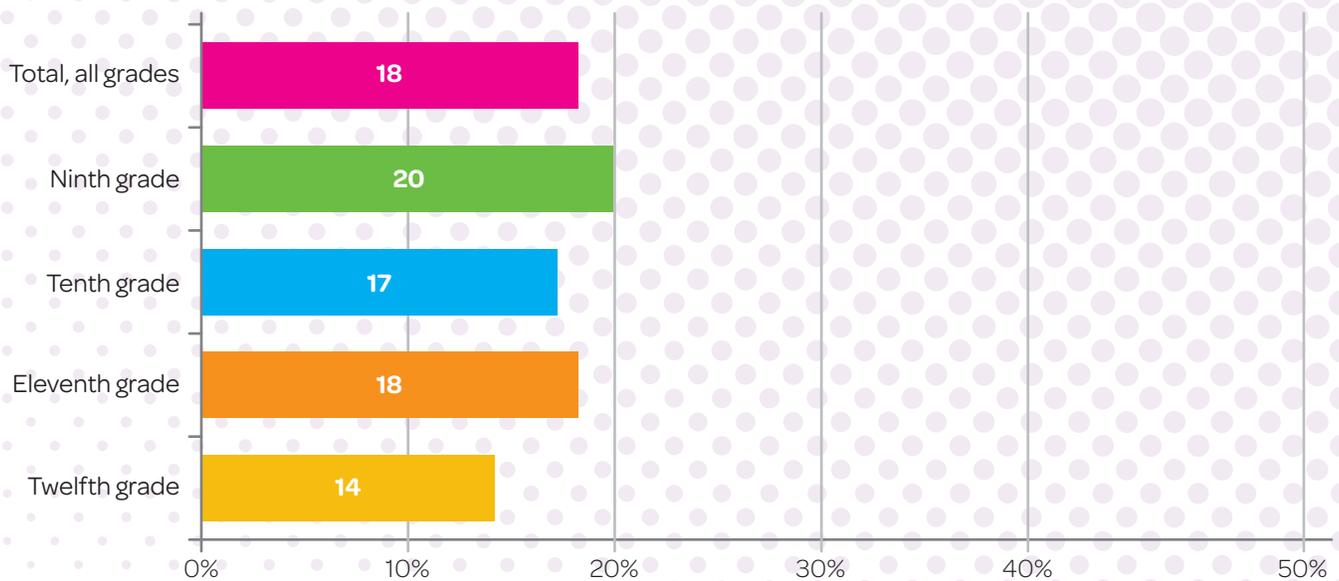
Suicide

Suicide is a serious public health issue and is the second-leading cause of death (behind accidents) among females ages 15 to 24.⁷² Among the subset of girls ages 11 to 17,

there were 285 deaths due to suicide in 2009. Many more girls attempt suicide and survive with self-inflicted injuries.⁷³

Figure 4-6 shows the share of high school girls who report that they had “ever seriously considered suicide in the past 12 months” by grade level. About 18 percent of all high school girls report that they have seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. These percentages do not differ greatly by age group; however, a slightly smaller percentage (14 percent) of senior girls report that they have seriously considered attempting suicide.

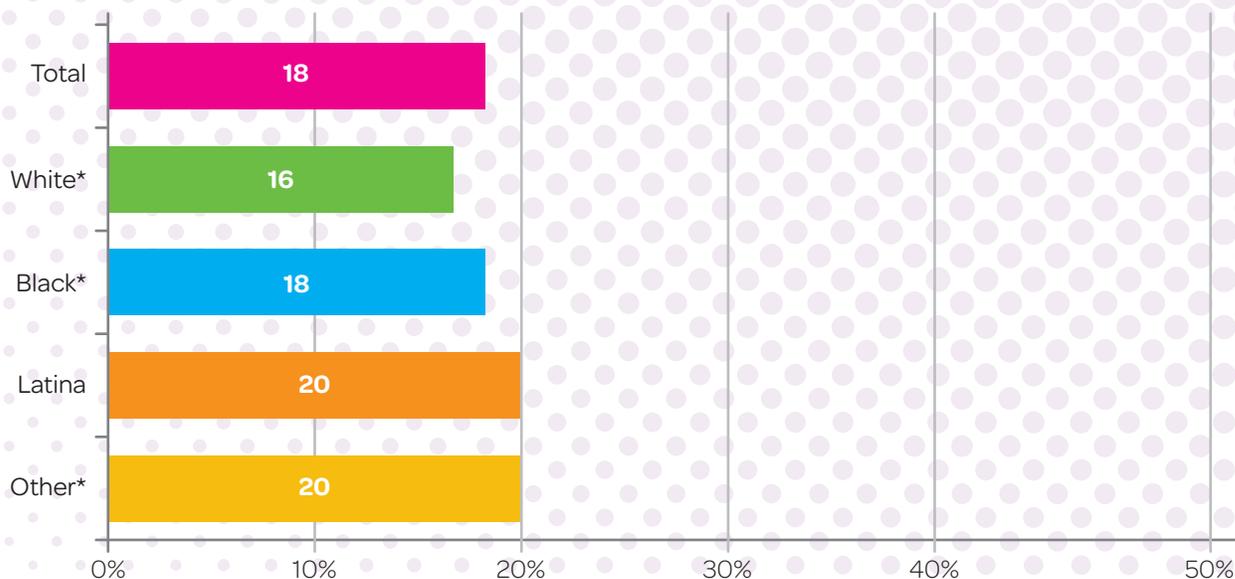
Figure 4-6: Percentage of Ninth-Through-Twelfth-Grade Girls Who Report That They Have Seriously Considered Suicide in the Past 12 Months, by Grade Level, 2009



Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 2009.

About 16 percent of non-Hispanic white girls report that they had seriously considered committing suicide in the past year, compared with 18 percent of black/African American girls and 20 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls (see Figure 4-7).

Figure 4-7: Percentage of Girls Who Report That They Have Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide in the Past 12 Months, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009



*Non-Hispanic

Note: "Other, Non-Hispanic" includes those identifying with multiple races, and races other than black and white.

Source: National Health Interview Survey, 2010.

Although a relatively high proportion of girls report considering suicide, the actual rate of death due to suicide is much lower (see Table 4-1).

Among girls ages 11 to 17, suicide accounted for 285 deaths in 2009, or 2 deaths per 100,000 girls in that age group. The suicide rate increases slightly among girls ages 15 to 17, to 3 deaths per 100,000 girls. In the United States, suicide rates are higher among boys than they are among girls, but girls are more likely than boys to report that they attempted suicide. Many parents and youth do not feel comfortable talking about suicide, which reduces the amount of information available to people working to prevent youth suicide.

Table 4-1: Number and Rate of Deaths by Suicide, Girls Ages 11 to 17, 2009

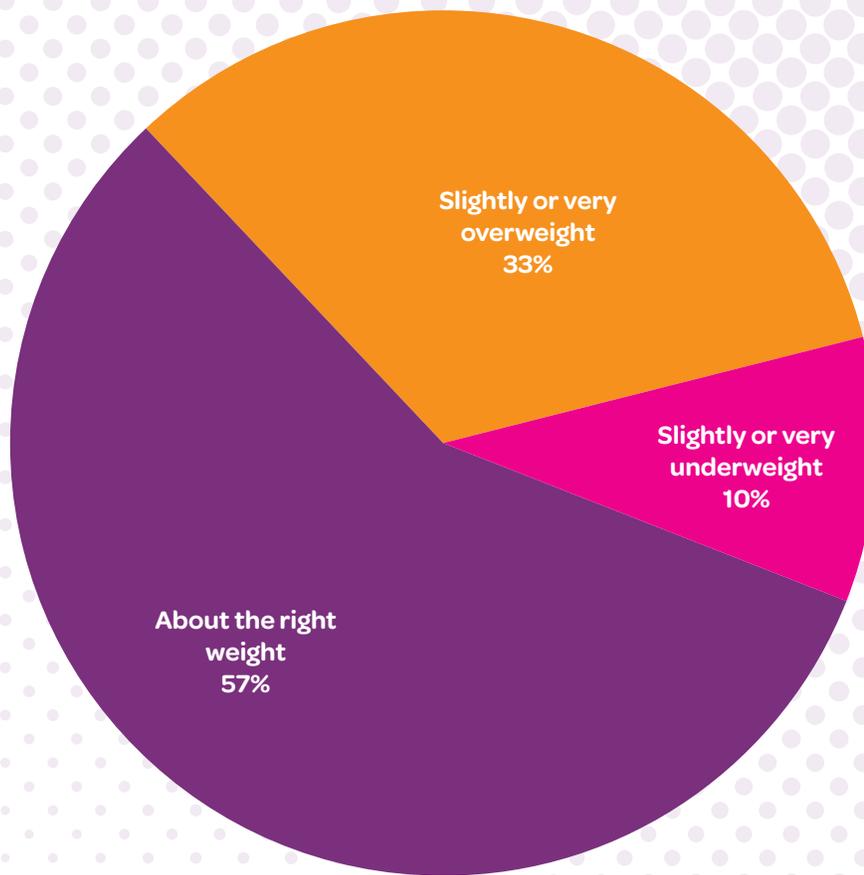
Age	Deaths by suicide	Rate per 100,000 population
11	4	0.2
12	18	0.9
13	31	2
14	33	2
15	59	3
16	69	3
17	71	3
Total, 11 to 17	285	2

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, 2010.

Body Image and Eating Disorders

According to a report issued in 2008 by the Dove Self-Esteem Fund, a girl's self-esteem is "more strongly related to how she views her own body shape and body weight, than how much she actually weighs."⁷⁴ Figure 4-8 shows the distribution of how girls self-describe their weight. More than half (57 percent) of all girls report that they are "about the right weight," while 33 percent report that they are either very overweight or slightly overweight. The percentage of girls who report that they are overweight is relatively similar to the share of girls who are actually overweight based on body mass index (see Chapter 3). Hispanic/Latina girls are the most likely to report that they are overweight (38 percent), compared with white girls (32 percent) and black/African American girls (29 percent).

Figure 4-8: Girls' Self-Description of Their Weight, Grades Nine Through Twelve, 2009



Source: Youth Behavior Surveillance Survey, 2009.

Relationships

Research shows that strong relationships can help combat the temptation for youth to engage in risky behaviors. Girls who value their parents' opinions and feel that they can talk to their parents engage in fewer risky behaviors (such as unhealthy weight control, suicide attempts, and substance abuse) than their peers who did not report high parental involvement and caring.⁷⁵ Girls who felt that their parents didn't care about them were more likely to report that they were dissatisfied with their bodies, had low self-esteem, and were depressed. Among boys with the same feelings of low parental caring, only depression and low self-esteem were associated, meaning that only in girls were perceptions of low parental caring associated with body dissatisfaction.⁷⁶

Even though parental relationships undoubtedly have a critical influence on girls' mental well-being, girls consider peer relationships to be the most important. As girls approach their teen years, they focus less on their relationships with their parents and more on the relationships they have with their friends. Sixty-seven percent of girls ages 13 to 17 turn to their mothers as a resource when they feel bad about themselves, compared with 91 percent of girls ages 8 to 12.⁷⁷ The proportion of girls looking to their fathers for support drops even further during their teenage years (27 percent).

Girls also begin to navigate romantic relationships in their teen years and some teen girls report violence in these relationships. Black/African American girls ages 14 to 17 have the highest risk of partner violence, with 15 percent reporting being hit by a boyfriend. Rates are lower for white and Hispanic/Latina girls at 7 percent and 11 percent, respectively. As mentioned, girls who experience physical violence are at a higher risk of serious mental and physical health problems, including depression and suicide.

The majority of all girls ages 12 to 17, regardless of their race and ethnicity, report that they have a friend at school that they can talk to and who cares about them and their feelings. However, black/African American girls are slightly less likely to report having a friend they can talk to (94 percent), compared with white girls and Hispanic/Latina girls (98 percent each).

A similarly high percentage of girls report that they have an adult at school they can talk to and who cares about them and their feelings. About 95 percent of all girls "strongly agree" or "agree" that there is an adult at school they can talk to.

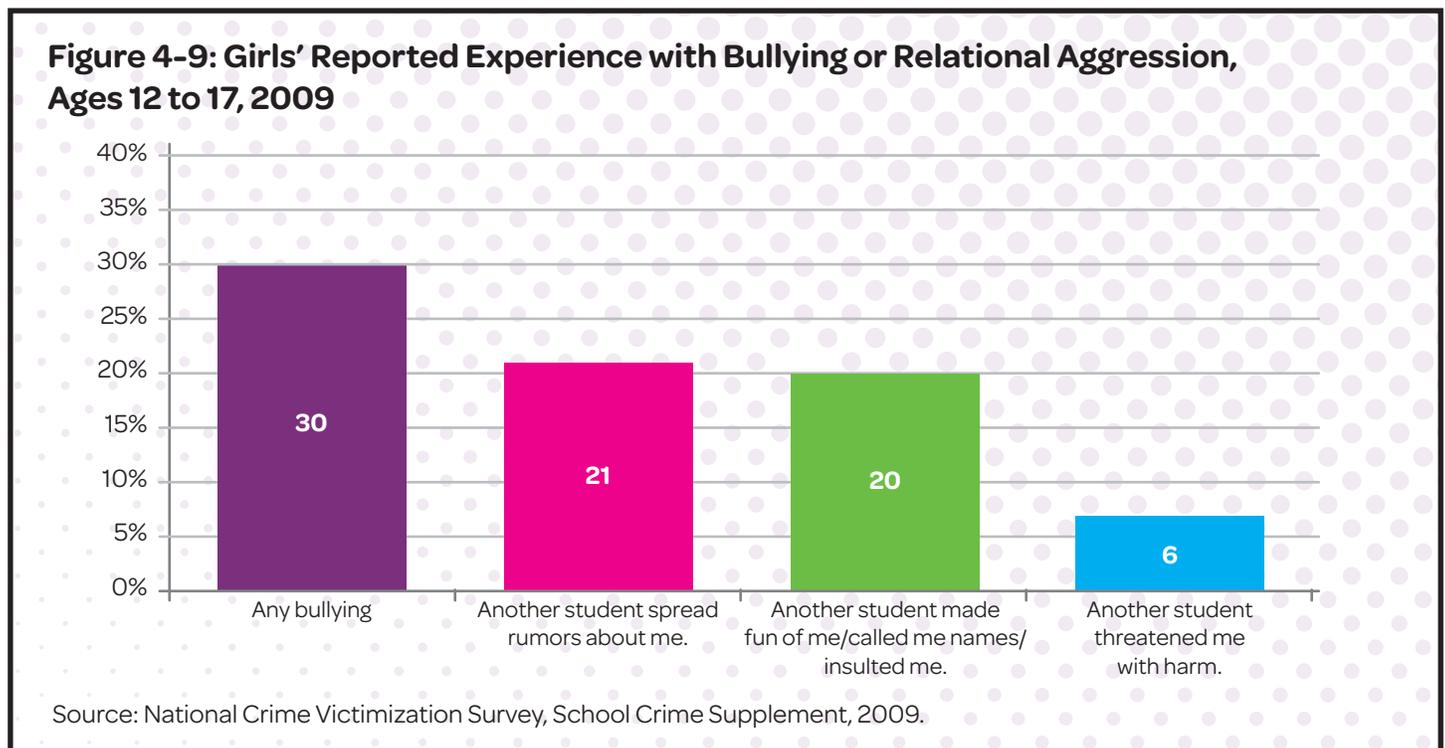
"Making sure that girls feel they have someone to talk to and that they are understood is the first and perhaps best way to ensure that girls feel secure and valued. The path toward emotional, physical, and mental well-being begins with parents, peers, and other adults in a girl's life. By fostering good relationships, we can help ensure that girls avoid risky behaviors, and are able to fulfill their potential."

—Emme, supermodel, founder of EmmeNation, and body image and self-esteem reformer

Bullying and Relational Aggression

Unfortunately, not all interactions that girls have in school and outside of school are positive. Although many girls report that they have friends and adults that they can trust and turn to at school, about 30 percent of girls have experienced some sort of bullying or aggression from their peers. Relational aggression “includes behaviors that inflict harm on others by manipulating their peer relationships (e.g., giving them the silent treatment or maliciously spreading lies or rumors about a peer to damage the peer’s group status).”⁷⁸ Physical bullying is less likely to involve girls, while relational aggression is more common among girls than boys. These behaviors can have lasting effects on a girl’s standing within her peer group and can be damaging to her self-esteem. Research has shown that victims of relational aggression have higher levels of depression, loneliness, and anxiety than their peers who are not the victims of relational aggression.⁷⁹

About 21 percent of girls ages 12 to 17 report that another student in school has spread rumors about them and about 20 percent report that another student has made fun of them, called them names, or insulted them personally (see Figure 4-9). Only 6 percent of girls report that they have been threatened with harm, indicating that this type of bullying is much less common than relationally aggressive behaviors.



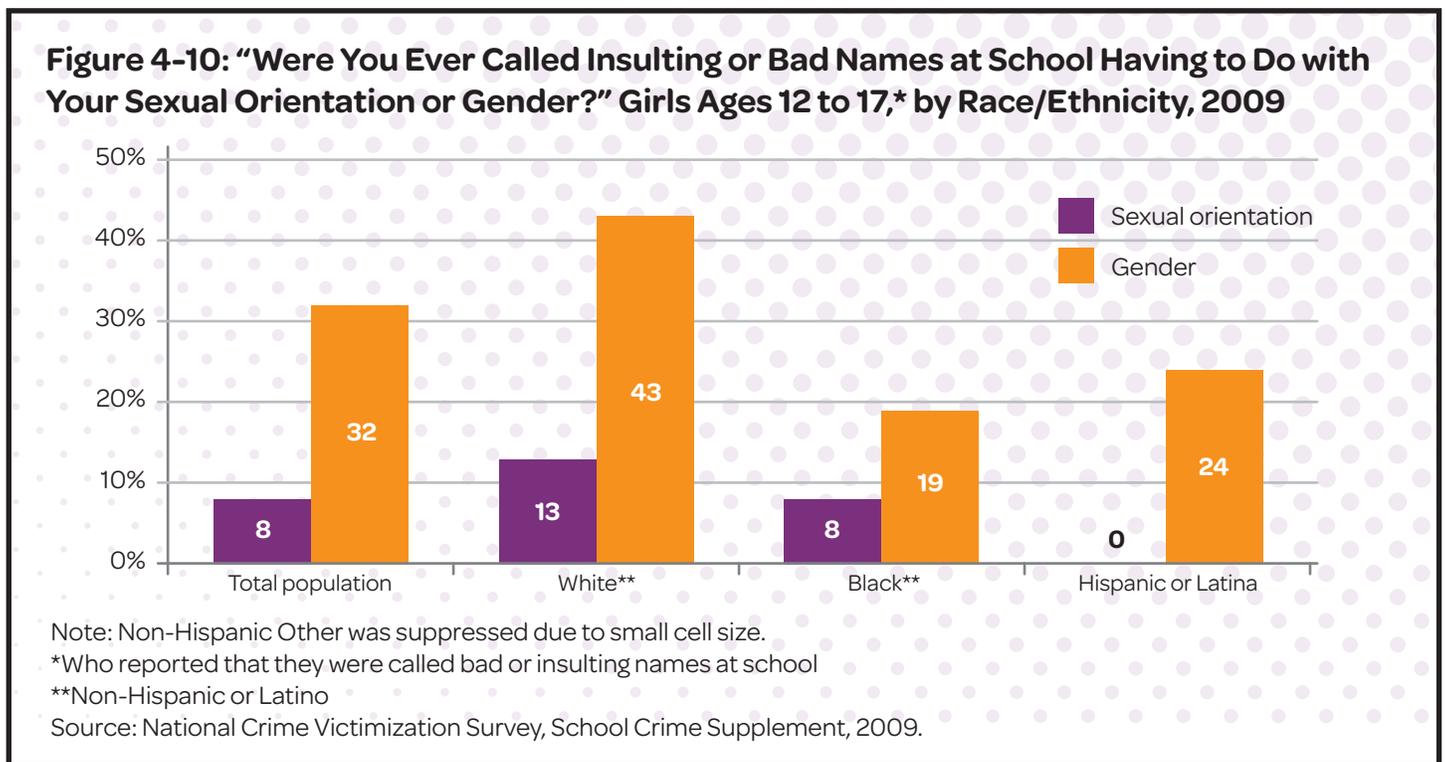
About 9 percent of black/African American girls report that they have been threatened with harm, compared with 6 percent of white girls and 6 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls.

With the growing use of social media, there has also been an increase in cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a type of relational aggression that takes place exclusively via electronic technology.⁸⁰ This means that the aggressive behavior takes place on the Internet (social media sites, instant messaging programs, email, or other websites) or via cell phones (mainly text messaging). Cyberbullying can have serious consequences for the children involved, and because the bullying takes place online, it can be hard to track and can reach a larger audience than regular bullying. It is also difficult, if not impossible, to completely erase messages or pictures that are posted online.

Girls who are the victims of cyberbullying may skip school to avoid their aggressors, they may become depressed or anxious, and their lives inside and outside of school can suffer as a consequence.⁸¹ About 3 percent of girls report that someone had posted something negative about them online, or that they had been threatened by email or by instant message. Four percent of girls report that they have been threatened via text message.

About 5 percent of white girls report that they have been bullied over text messages, compared with 2 percent of both black/African American girls and Hispanic/Latina girls.

Another dimension of bullying is sexual harassment. Harassing behavior can be the same as bullying behavior, but the motivation for that behavior is more specific: it is centered on an individual’s sex or sexual orientation. Among girls who report that they have been called bad or insulting names at school, 8 percent report that they have been called insulting or bad names that have to do with their sexual orientation (see Figure 4-10). However, a much larger percentage of girls, 32 percent, have been called insulting or bad names that have to do with their gender. White girls were more likely to report having been insulted than girls in other racial/ethnic groups.



Girls face many obstacles and pressures in their lives that can make it hard to resist unhealthy behaviors. As girls grow older they start to look more toward their friends for approval than to their parents. And although girls might value peer relationships more than parental and adult relationships, having strong relationships and open communication with parents can have the strongest positive effects on their self-esteem and well-being. Girls may refrain from talking to their parents about personal issues because they fear that their parents might think badly of them.⁸² However, it is important to encourage girls to feel comfortable going to their parents to talk about their feelings and problems. Ninety-three percent of girls with low self-esteem say that they want their parents to change their behavior toward them in some way, either by listening to them more and understanding them better or by simply spending more time with them.



Summary and Implications

- Girls need positive influences and relationships in their lives so that they can manage stress, as well as the peer and societal pressure they face to act and look a certain way. These influences decrease the risk of unhealthy behaviors such as eating disorders, cutting, or self-mutilation.
- Adolescent girls are more than twice as likely to have major depressive episodes as boys but often their symptoms go unrecognized. Adults need to be aware of the discrepancy between parents' reports of their daughters' depression and actual girls' reports of their own depression, which suggests that girls are not always honest with their parents or other adults in their lives about being sad or unhappy. Because research has shown that mental health issues in childhood and adolescence persist into adulthood, it is important to promote self-confidence and mental health at young ages and be able to recognize signs of depression or other mental health issues.
- Behavior that some adults might consider "normal," such as teasing or bullying, can have serious and long-term consequences. Adults should take bullying very seriously, be on the lookout for more subtle forms of bullying, and model healthy relationship behavior themselves.

"Kudos to the Girl Scout Research Institute for placing the topic of girls' relationships and bullying within the context of their emotional well-being. Girls define their self-worth by the quality of their relationships. When girls are confronted daily with a culture that normalizes relationally aggressive or "mean-girl" behavior, their self-esteem and sense of safety drops; their interests and ability to learn, grow, and succeed as adults suffer. This type of bullying has flown under the radar too long because it's harder for adults to recognize and deal with. With girls' well-being and futures at stake, no longer can relational aggression be seen as a harmless rite of passage or 'the way girls are.' Parents, teachers, and youth professionals alike must put programs and policies in place that support girls' social and leadership skills so that they can develop healthy, meaningful relationships and prevent bullying in their own lives and communities. Girls who learn to respect one another and become skilled at honest communication are more likely to become happy, well-adjusted adults."

—Dr. Andrea Bastiani Archibald, Developmental Psychologist, Girl Scouts of the USA

A large, stylized letter 'S' is the central focus. The top portion of the 'S' is solid black, while the bottom portion is filled with a blue background featuring a pattern of white polka dots. The word 'Education' is written in a white, italicized serif font across the middle of the blue section.

Education

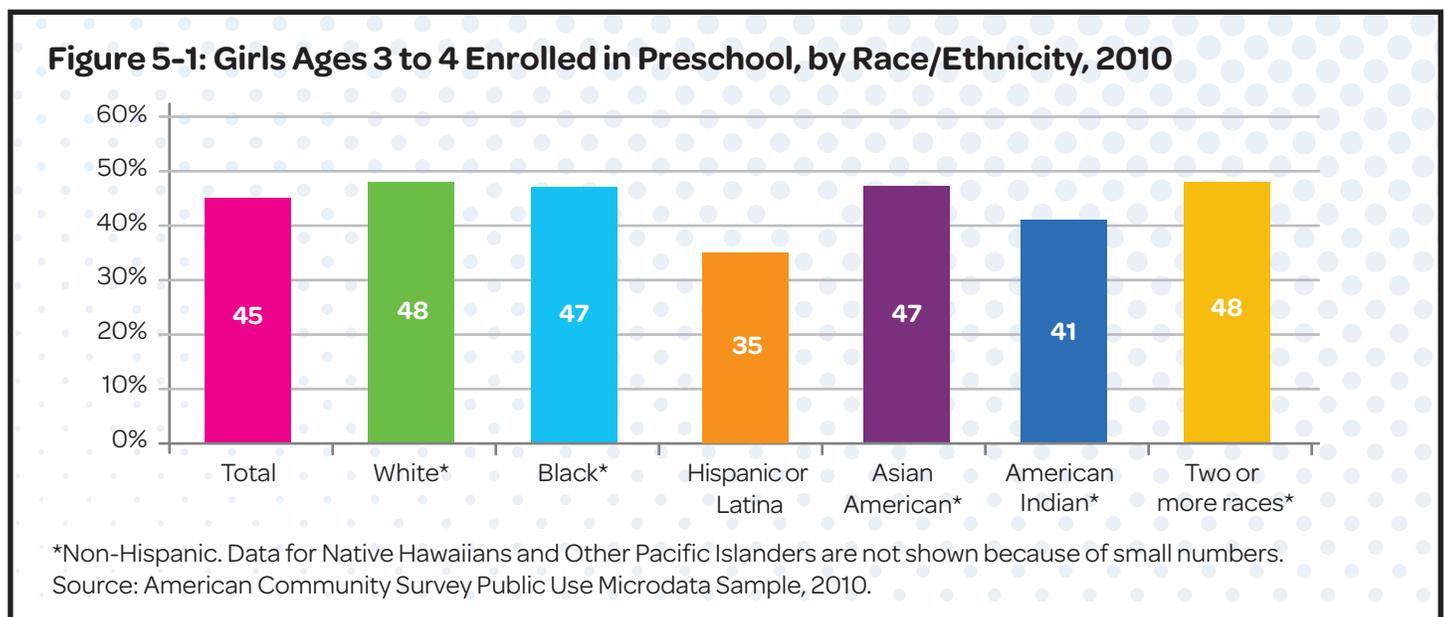


Education is important for putting girls on a path to realizing their full potential. In our increasingly knowledge-based economy, finishing high school and going to college are key to girls' financial success and economic security in adulthood. This chapter covers girls' school enrollment and educational attainment, from preschool through college. It also addresses girls' preparation for employment in terms of their financial literacy and fields of college study. While young women now outnumber young men on college campuses, adult women are still underrepresented in higher-paying jobs, including those in science and engineering fields.

Preschool Enrollment

Early childhood education is an important investment in girls, with multiple long-term benefits, including higher levels of school achievement, reduced risk of being incarcerated, and a lower likelihood of teen pregnancy.⁸³ Particularly for at-risk children, a high-quality preschool education also helps narrow the achievement gap, reduces grade repetition, increases high school graduation rates, and lowers crime rates.⁸⁴ Analyses of the costs and benefits of early care and education have found impressive returns on investment to the public, ranging from \$2.69 to \$7.16 per every dollar invested.⁸⁵ Preschool and other forms of reliable child care also benefit the economy in the short run by enabling parents to participate in the paid labor force and by reducing absenteeism and turnover at work.⁸⁶

In 2010, about 45 percent of all girls ages 3 to 4 were enrolled in preschool. Most racial/ethnic groups had similar preschool enrollment rates, with the exception of Hispanic/Latina girls. Only 35 percent of 3- to-4-year-old Hispanic/Latina girls were enrolled in preschool in 2010 (see Figure 5-1). The lower share of Hispanic/Latina girls attending preschool puts them at a potential disadvantage in terms of school readiness, literacy, and cognitive development compared with other racial/ethnic groups.⁸⁷



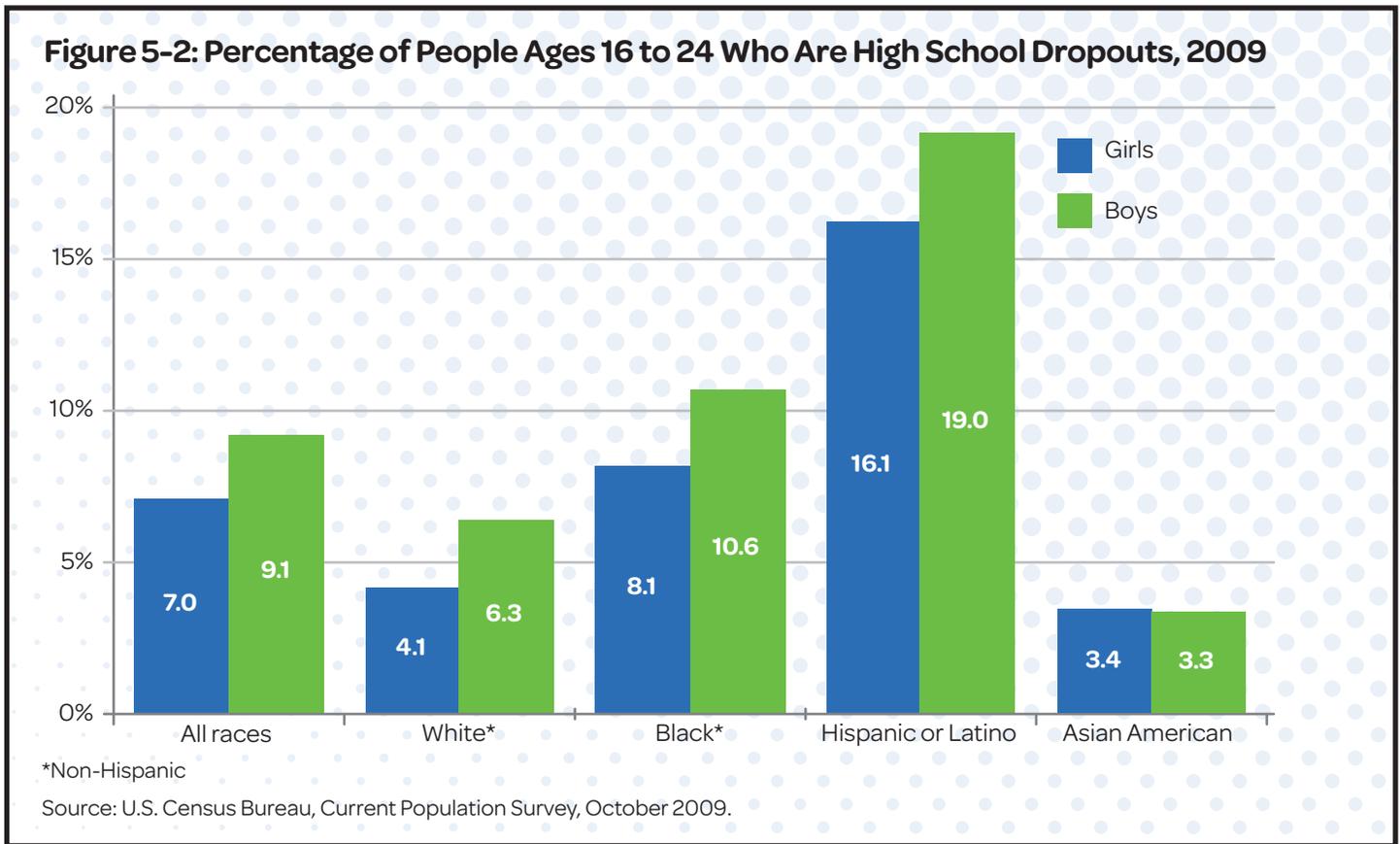
Characteristics of preschools vary widely in terms of teachers' credentials, home-based versus center-based settings, presence of bilingual staff, and quality of instruction to prepare children for school. Access to reliable and high-quality early-childhood education is limited compared to the growing demand. In California, for example, there were only about 500,000 preschool "slots" available in licensed preschool centers in 2010; however, there were over a million children ages 3 and 4 in the state.⁸⁸ The demand for early childhood education and care is growing much faster than the supply. Nationwide, 67 percent of mothers with children under age 6 were in the paid labor force in 2010, an increase from 63 percent in 2005.⁸⁹

The high cost of center-based child care is also a major barrier, especially for low-income families. Parents who don't have access to reliable child care often rely on ad hoc arrangements, usually with extended family members, friends, and neighbors. Informal child care arrangements are often preferable for families not only because they are more affordable, but also because the provider usually shares the same culture or language with the parents, and the provider's relationship with the child generally lasts longer than in a typical preschool setting.⁹⁰

Educational Attainment

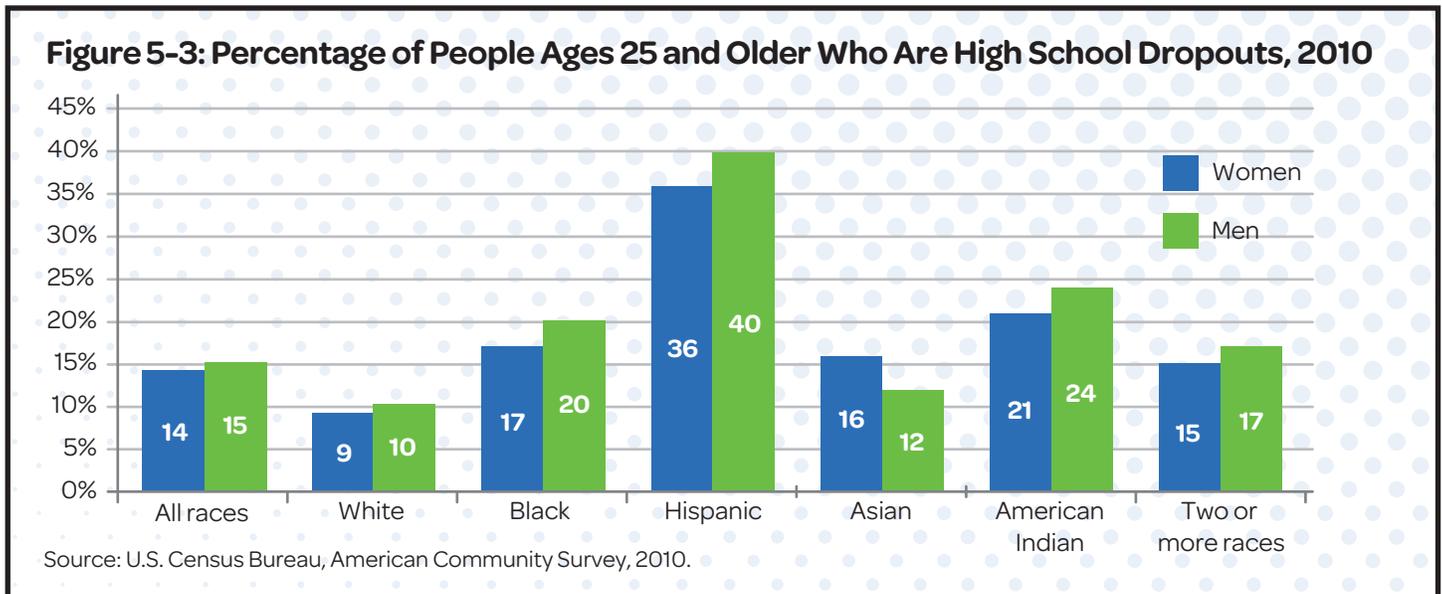
Completing high school is essential for girls' success later in life, as adults with high school degrees have better outcomes compared to those without high school degrees. Having a high school degree not only yields better job opportunities, higher earnings, and increased access to health insurance, but also results in higher life expectancies, stronger social support networks, and better overall well-being.⁹¹ Women without a high school degree are more likely to smoke, have poor nutrition,⁹² and have children outside of marriage.⁹³

In 2009, 7 percent of girls ages 16 to 24 were high school dropouts, meaning they had not completed high school and were not currently enrolled in school. This rate was lower for girls than for boys (9.1 percent). Boys had higher dropout rates across all racial and ethnic groups; however, dropout levels varied by race and ethnicity (see Figure 5-2). While the national rate for girls was 7 percent, it was only 4 percent for white girls, compared with 8 percent for black/African American girls, and 16 percent for Hispanic/Latina girls.

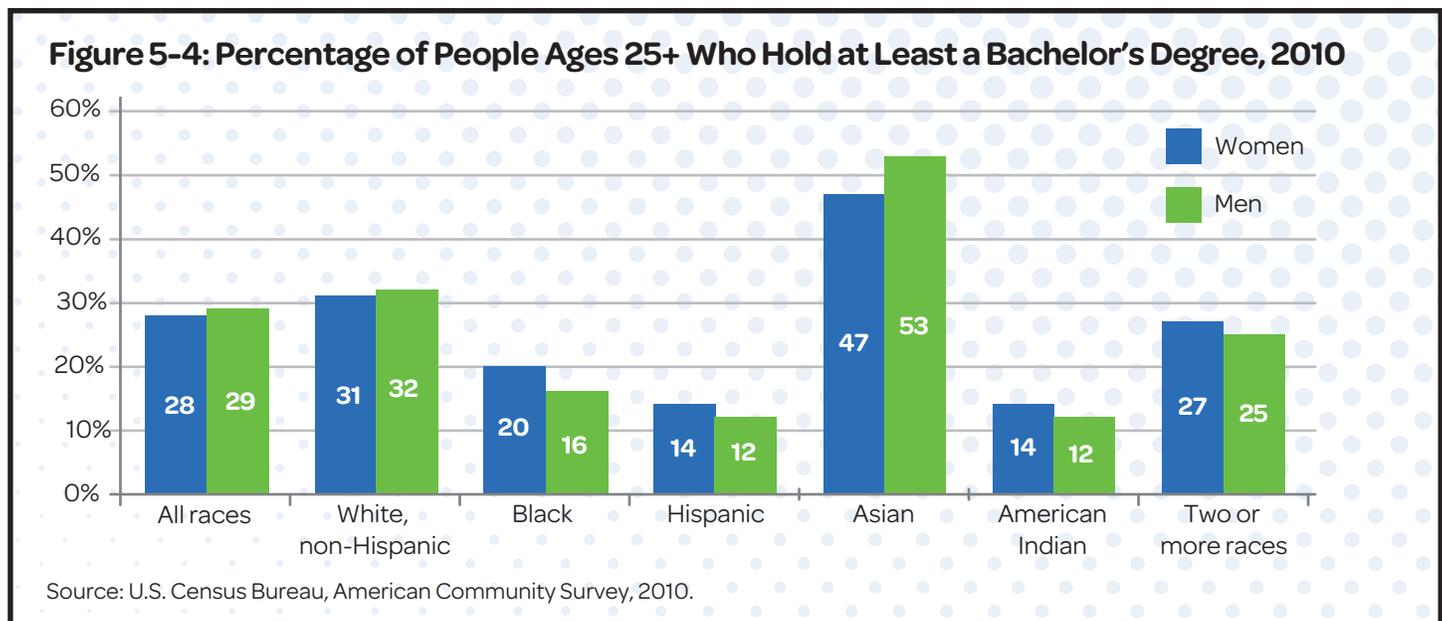


Just as high school dropout rates were lower for girls than for boys, so too were the rates of disconnected youth—16- to-17-year-olds not in school and not working. In 2010, 3 percent of girls ages 16 to 17 were disconnected from work and school, compared to 3.7 percent of boys in the same age group.

These gender differences in education carry over into adulthood. Among those ages 25 and older, men had a slightly higher dropout rate (15 percent) compared with women (14 percent) in 2010. However, there were significant racial/ethnic differences (see Figure 5-3). Latinos had the highest high school dropout rate of any racial/ethnic group: 40 percent for men and 36 percent for women. In 2010, Asian Americans were the only major racial/ethnic group with a higher percentage of women than men who had not completed high school.



The share of adult men and women with at least a bachelor’s degree is roughly equal (see Figure 5-4), but the gender gap varies across different racial/ethnic groups. The percentage of college graduates was higher among white and Asian men compared with women in those groups, but for all other racial/ethnic groups, women were more likely than men to hold bachelor’s degrees. Among women, educational attainment was highest among Asian Americans and non-Hispanic whites, while American Indian women and Hispanic women had the lowest shares of women with bachelor’s degrees.



Educational Achievement

Girls who stay in school and get good grades are much more likely to make a successful transition to college and the workforce. Given the growing demand for college-educated workers, school achievement is increasingly linked to earnings later in life.⁹⁴ In 2011, girls had better reading scores, on average, compared with boys. About 37 percent of fourth-grade girls scored “proficient” or better on standardized reading tests, compared with 31 percent of boys (see Table 5-1). Among girls, Asian Americans were the most likely to be proficient in reading (52 percent), while black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls had the lowest proficiency rates (20 percent each).

Table 5-1: Percentage of Girls Proficient in Fourth Grade Reading and Eighth Grade Math, 2011

	Fourth Grade Reading		Eighth Grade Math	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total	31	37	36	34
White	40	47	46	43
Black	13	20	13	14
Hispanic	17	20	21	19
Asian/Pacific Islander	46	52	53	57
American Indian/Alaska Native	15	21	18	17
Two or more races	34	44	39	39

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Math scores present a different picture. Eighth-grade boys were slightly more likely to be proficient in math (36 percent) compared with their female counterparts (34 percent). However, gender differences in math achievement varied across different racial/ethnic groups. Among blacks/African Americans and Asian Americans, girls scored slightly higher than boys on standardized math tests, while the reverse was true for whites and Hispanics/Latinos.

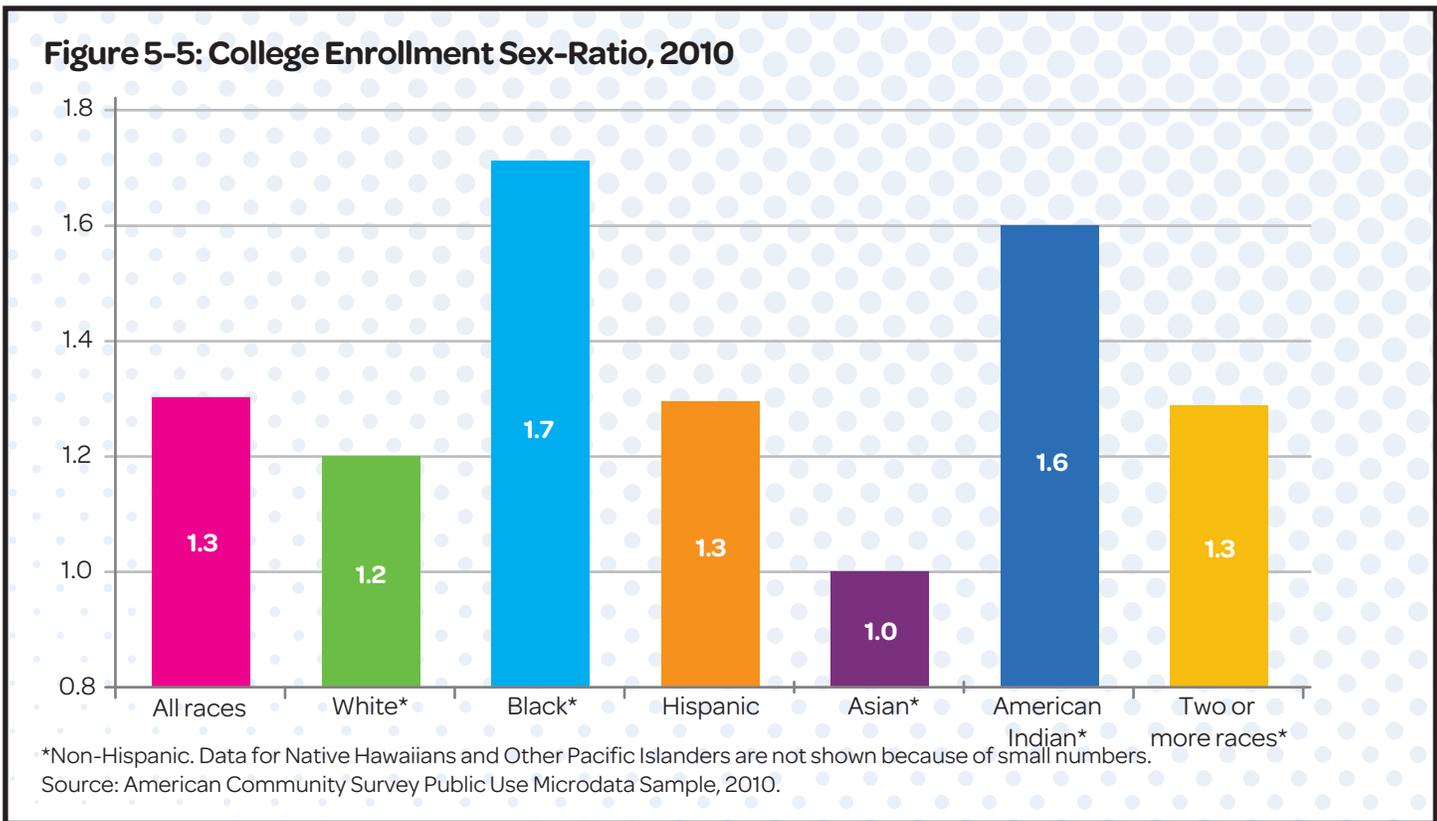
College Enrollment

During the past several decades, the number of women enrolling in college has increased faster than men’s rate of college enrollment. As a result, women now outnumber men in colleges and universities. One reason for this gender difference is that there are more opportunities for men without a college degree. Men are overrepresented in the military, agriculture and mining, and vocational and certificate programs for fields such as auto repair, construction, and heating and air conditioning. Many of these positions offer benefits, and the jobs are often union-protected. The typical opportunities for women without college degrees include waitressing, child care, retail, and housekeeping. These are typically low-wage, hourly jobs with very few benefits or opportunities for advancement. Thus, women’s expected return on investment in a college education (earnings, job security, benefits, and other broader measures of material well-being) has risen faster than it has for men.⁹⁵

Another reason offered for this gender difference is the rising median age at marriage and the changing cultural norms regarding women’s work—especially among women with young children.⁹⁶ Today, fewer women rely on their husbands’ paychecks for economic security. However, it’s hard to determine cause and effect because the increasing share of women with college degrees could be contributing to the rising median age at marriage, while later age at marriage also creates new opportunities for women to attend college.⁹⁷

The overall college enrollment sex-ratio was 1.3 in 2010, meaning that there were 130 females enrolled in college for every 100 males (see Figure 5-5). The college enrollment sex-ratio was highest for blacks/African Americans at 1.7 and lowest for Asians at 1.0.

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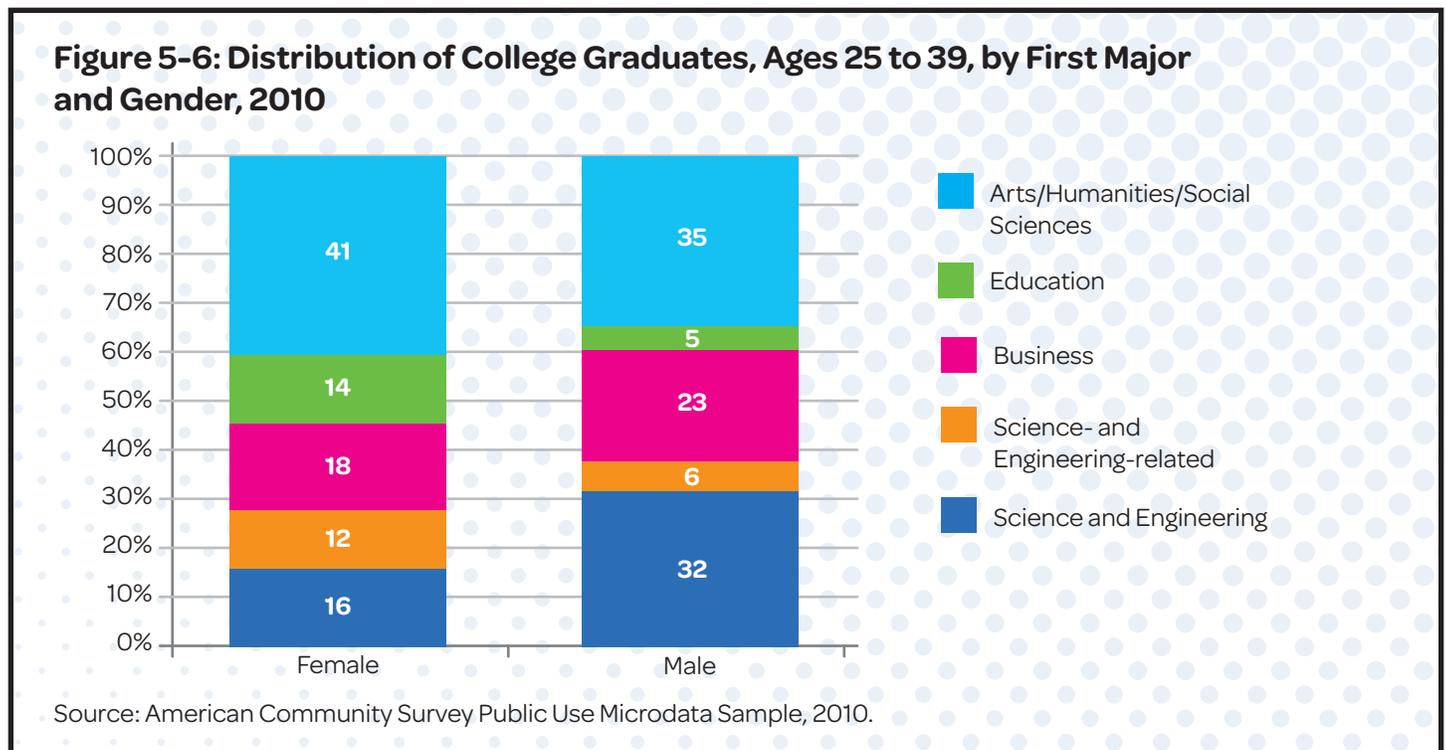


Women’s college enrollment rates vary across different racial/ethnic groups.

In 2010, about 67 percent of Asian women ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in college or graduate school, compared with 36 percent of Hispanic women and 33 percent of American Indian women. (These figures do not distinguish between four-year universities and community colleges.) Since the 2008–09 recession, there has been a rise in community college enrollment among young adults due to the high unemployment rates among people in this age group.⁹⁸

Fields of Study

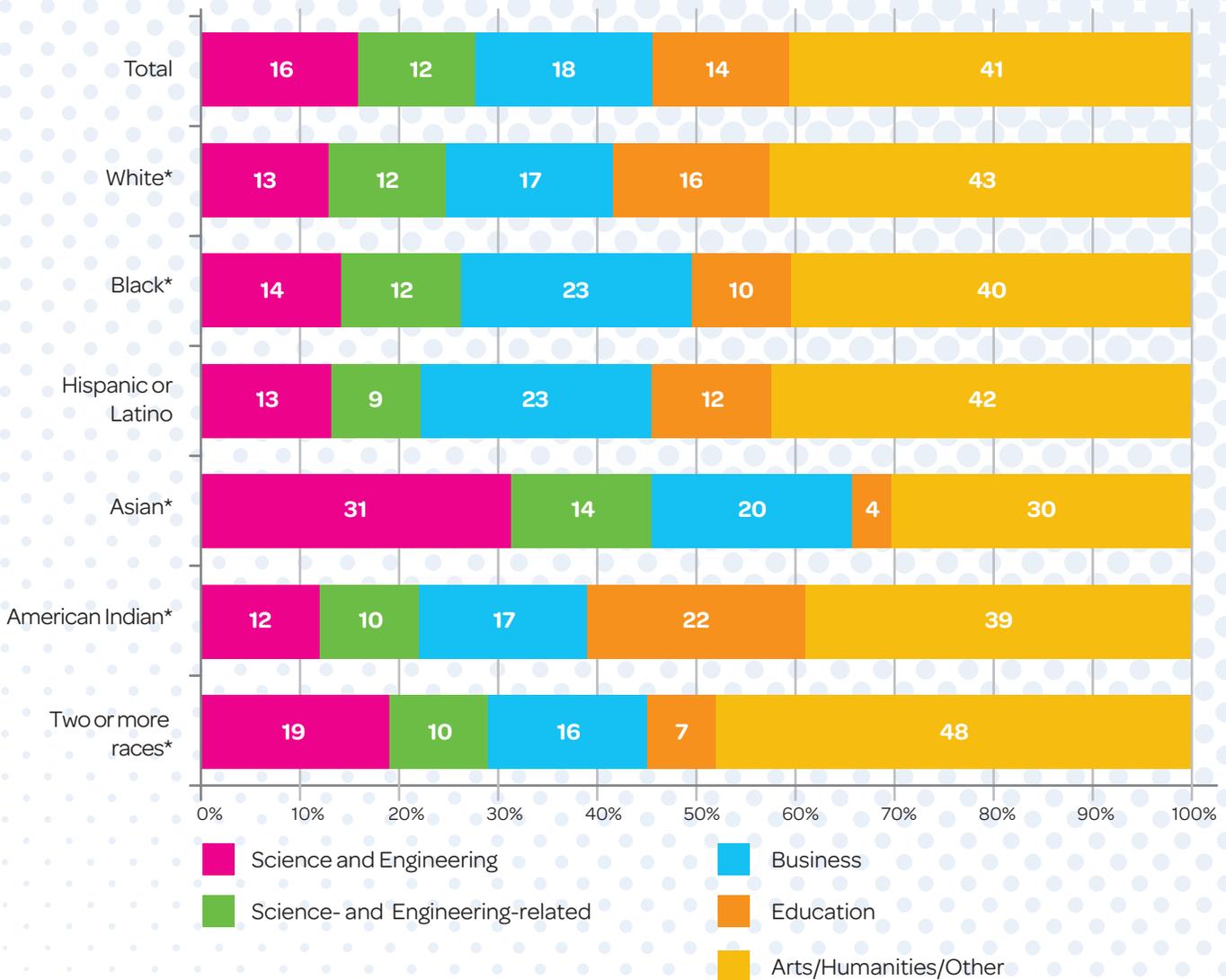
There are also gender differences in the fields of study of young college graduates (see Figure 5-6). In 2010, women were nearly three times as likely to have degrees in education, and twice as likely to have degrees in “science- and engineering-related” fields such as nursing, health services, and math and science teacher education. Men were more likely than women to major in business, and twice as likely to major in science and engineering fields.⁹⁹



There are also racial/ethnic differences in the fields that young women pursue in college.

In 2010, young Asian women who were college graduates were much more likely to have degrees in science and engineering or science- and engineering-related subjects, and less likely to have degrees in education. For example, nursing is a very popular major among Filipinas. While less than 5 percent of all young adult women with college degrees in 2010 had majored in nursing, over 26 percent of Filipina graduates had.¹⁰⁰ American Indian women with college degrees were highly concentrated in education fields and less concentrated in science and engineering careers compared with other racial and ethnic groups (see Figure 5-7).

Figure 5-7: Female College Graduates, Ages 25 to 39, by First Major and Race/Ethnicity, 2010



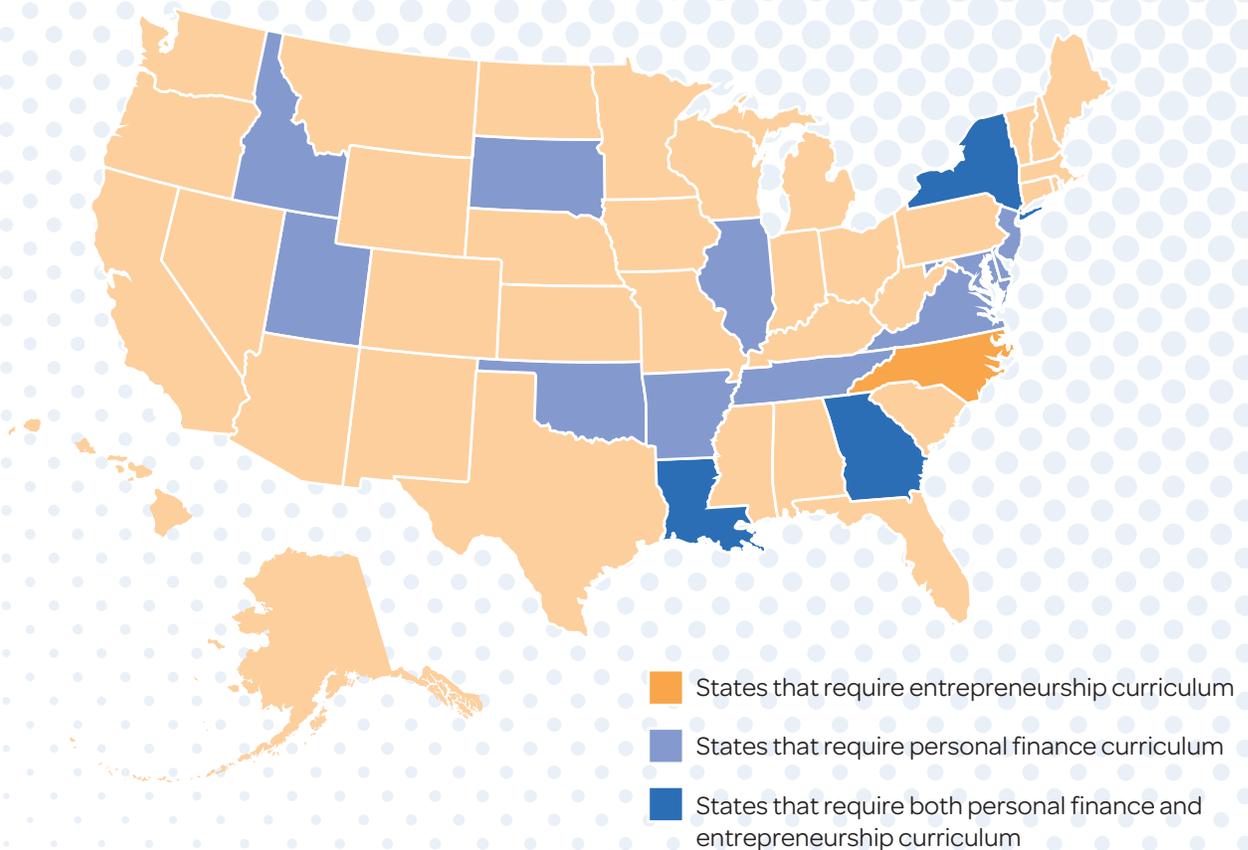
*Non-Hispanic. Data for Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders are not shown because of small numbers.
Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2010.

Financial Literacy

Girls' financial literacy is important because learning how to handle money can help put girls on a path to economic success. People with greater financial literacy generally are more likely to save and have more economic security and are less likely to max out their credit cards.¹⁰¹ However, among teens, girls still lag behind boys in their levels of financial literacy. In 2011, only 26 percent of girls ages 16 to 18 answered "yes" when asked if they knew how credit card interest and fees worked, compared with 37 percent of boys in that age group.¹⁰² Also, only 13 percent of teen girls answered "yes" when asked if they knew what a 401K is, compared to 21 percent of teen boys.¹⁰³

A majority of teens, 52 percent, had a savings account, and 42 percent had an ATM card in 2011. Approximately one in three teens had a checking account.¹⁰⁴ In recent years, some states have started to include personal finance curricula as a high school requirement for graduation. In 2009, 13 states had such a requirement. Fewer states required some form of entrepreneurship curriculum for graduation, usually taught as part of an economics course. Only three states required both (see Figure 5-8). By 2011, Missouri, North Carolina, and West Virginia had added a personal finance course requirement for graduation; however Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Maryland no longer had such a requirement, so the total number of states remained unchanged.¹⁰⁵ States face challenges in adopting personal finance curricula because fewer than 20 percent of teachers feel "very competent" teaching personal finance.¹⁰⁶

Figure 5-8: State High School Finance Requirements, 2009

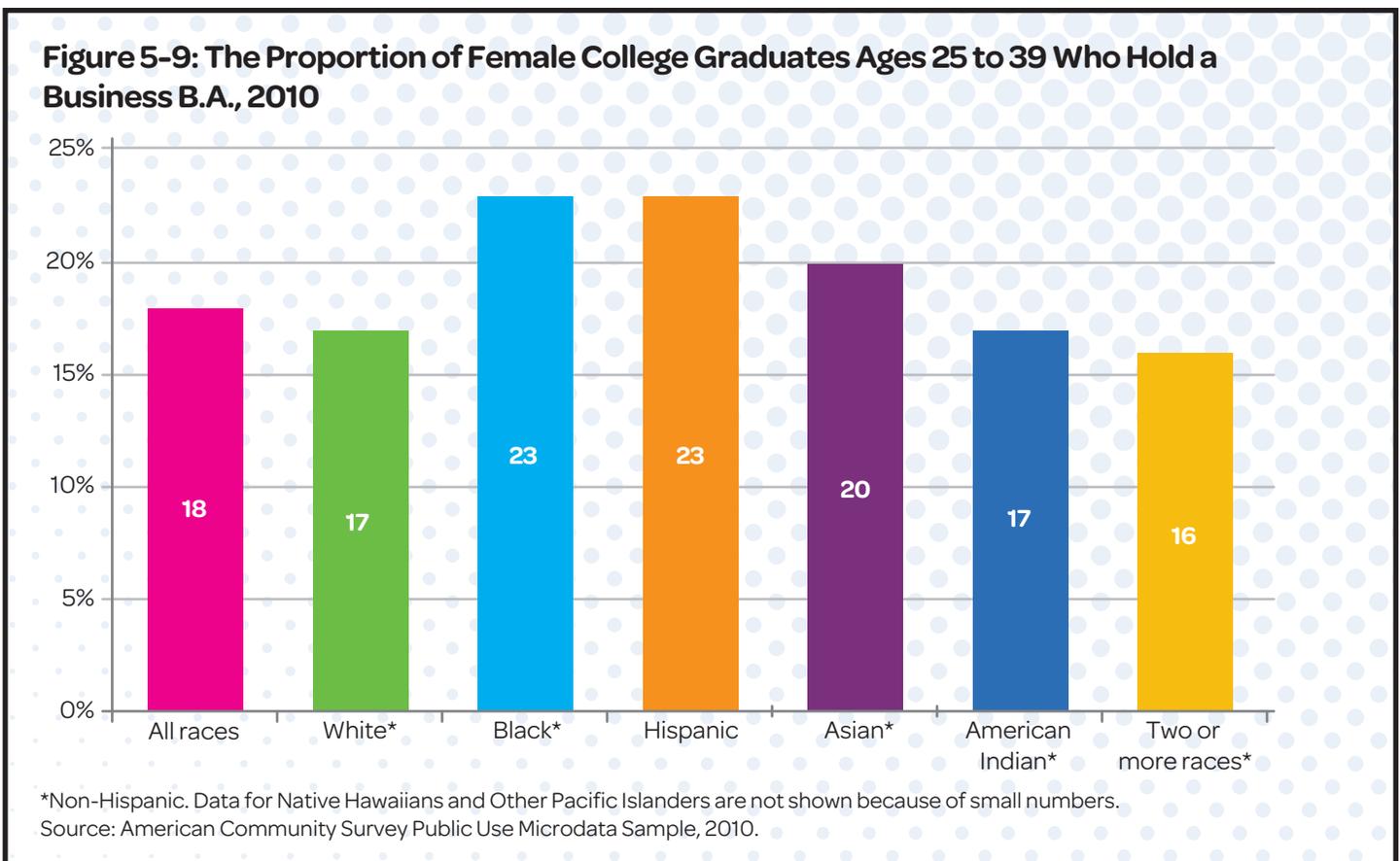


Source: Council for Economic Education's "Survey of the States," 2009.

The gender gap in financial literacy persists into adulthood. In 2008, working-age women (18–64) had fewer entrepreneurial skills and exposure than working-age men. While 65 percent of men agreed that they had the knowledge, skill, and experience to start a new business, only about 47 percent of women felt the same about themselves.¹⁰⁷ Also, men reported more exposure to entrepreneurial activities than women did. About 41 percent of men said they knew someone personally who had started a business in the last two years, compared with 34 percent of women.¹⁰⁸ Women have slightly greater “fear of failure” than men: 30 percent of women said that fear of failure would keep them from starting a business, compared to 27 percent of men.¹⁰⁹

Even among entrepreneurs, there are some salient gender differences. Women business owners are much more likely to have a business-to-consumer company—as opposed to a business-to-business company—compared with men. Women entrepreneurs also have smaller networks for advice and guidance.¹¹⁰ Slightly more men than women reported that they became entrepreneurs out of necessity rather than opportunity in 2008, a pattern that is consistent with other highly developed countries.¹¹¹

Among young adults ages 25 to 39 who held a B.A. in business in 2010, 50 percent were female. About 18 percent of young female college graduates had business degrees, but there were some significant racial and ethnic differences. Business degrees are most prevalent among black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women, and less common among white, American Indian, and multiracial women (see Figure 5-9). Business degrees include fields such as accounting, marketing, finance, management, and business economics.



Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math)

Women and girls have generally been underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math, or “STEM.” Beginning in the middle school years, girls tend to underperform compared with boys in math proficiency.

In 2008, less than 27 percent of 13-year-old girls were performing at or above national proficiency levels in “moderately complex procedures and reasoning,” compared with more than 33 percent of 13-year-old boys.¹¹² This pattern continues throughout high school. The gender gap in scores narrows in more advanced math classes such as precalculus and calculus, but it still does not close.¹¹³ This phenomenon is even seen among college-bound high school students in their college entrance exam scores (see Table 5-2).

Table 5-2: High School Test Scores in STEM by Sex, 2009–2010 School Year

	ACT Math	ACT Science Reasoning	SAT Math
Perfect score	36.0	36.0	800
Mean male score	21.6	21.4	534
Mean female score	20.5	20.5	500

Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

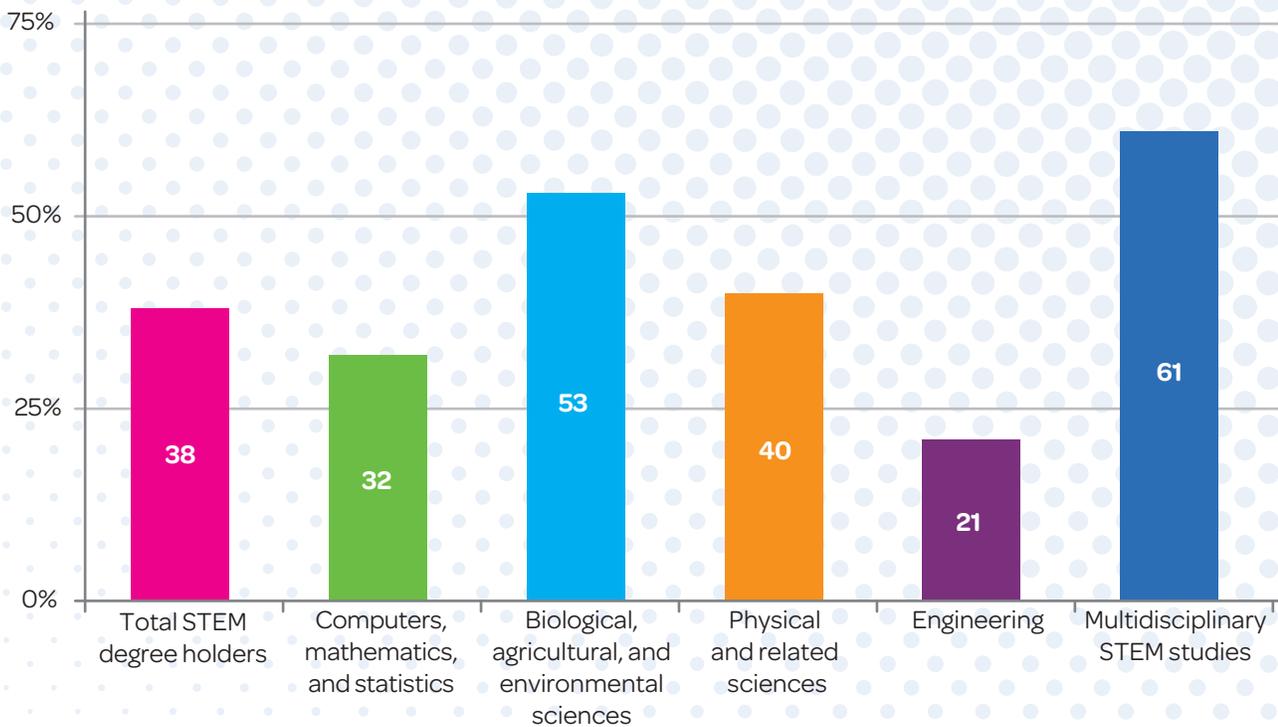
About 74 percent of high school girls are at least somewhat interested in STEM,

and compared to girls who aren’t interested in STEM fields, girls interested in STEM fields are higher achievers and better students.¹¹⁴ Although interest in STEM subjects is high among girls, few consider it their number one career choice, so interest in STEM fields does not necessarily translate into a career in science or engineering.¹¹⁵ In college, girls are less likely to major in STEM subjects. Furthermore, girls are more likely to switch majors from a STEM field to a non-STEM field during their college years.¹¹⁶ The typical STEM majors, such as engineering and physical sciences, are the most male-dominated of the STEM majors, but there are some scientific fields in which females are overrepresented, such as the biological and life sciences. In 2010, women made up only 21 percent of recent college graduates with engineering degrees, but females accounted for 53 percent of those with degrees in biological, agricultural, and environmental sciences (see Figure 5-10). Overall, women made up about 38 percent of recent college graduates with STEM degrees.

“It was particularly useful to see that girls of many different backgrounds are still interested in STEM in high school, though this doesn’t convert to majoring in STEM or pursuing careers in the field. This supports our goals at Google of helping middle and high school girls understand what computer science is and what a career in it could look like, and we think the next step is providing experiences or messages that help girls see that they could use computer science in their future careers. The data tells us not to give up on girls even when they’re in high school, and instead to find ways that schools and extracurricular programs can nurture girls’ intrinsic interest in building and understanding the world around them.”

–Iveta Brigis, K–12 Education Outreach Manager, Google

Figure 5-10: Percentage of STEM B.A. Degree Holders Ages 25–39 Who Are Female, by Field, 2010



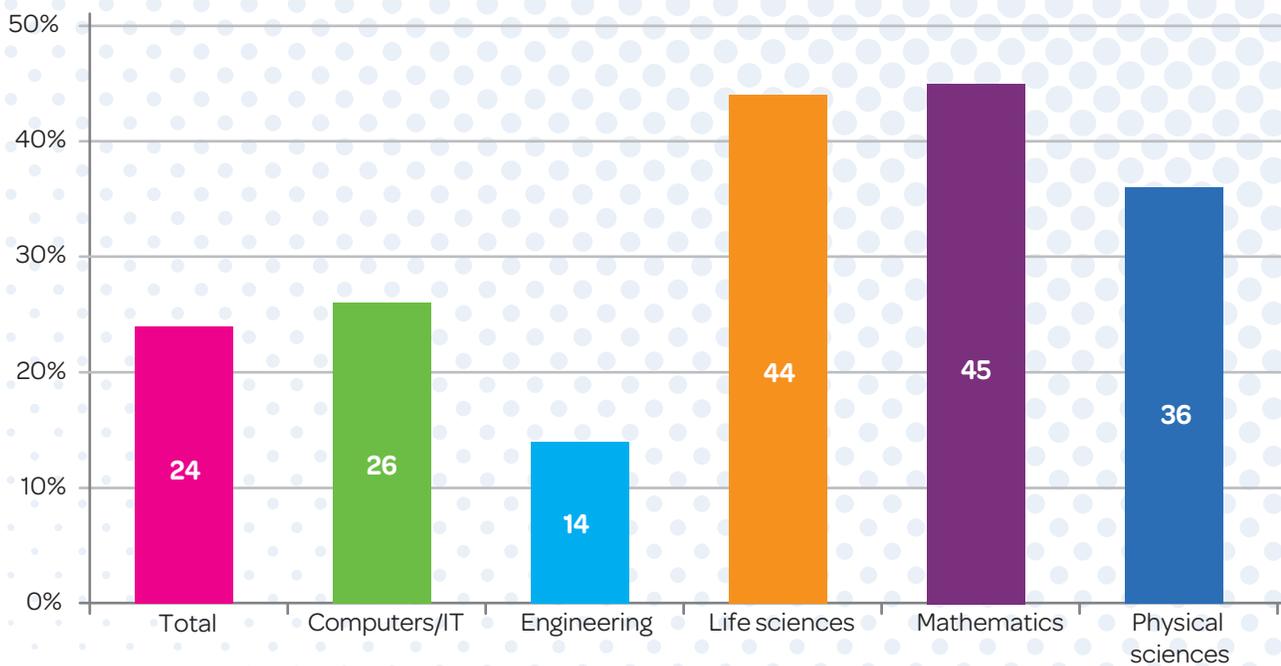
Note: STEM includes degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
Source: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2010.

White and Asian women make up a disproportionate share of young women with STEM degrees. Among female STEM degree holders in 2010, 58 percent were white, 23 percent were Asian, 8 percent were black/African American, 7 percent were Hispanic/Latina, and 3 percent identified with other racial groups.

Many graduates with STEM degrees work in non-STEM occupations after they finish college, including jobs in health care, education, management, and business and finance. In 2009, only 26 percent of women ages 25 and older with STEM bachelor's degrees were employed in STEM occupations, compared with 40 percent of men with STEM degrees.¹¹⁷

There is a significant gender gap in employment in the STEM labor force. In 2010, women made up nearly half of the total labor force but only about one-fourth of those were in STEM occupations.¹¹⁸ Still, there are some STEM fields in which women have achieved near parity with men, such as life science and mathematics occupations (see Figure 5-11). Women remain severely underrepresented in engineering jobs, where they make up only 14 percent of the labor force.

Figure 5-11: Percentage of STEM Labor Force Ages 16 and Older Who Are Female, by Field, 2010



Note: STEM includes fields in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
Source: American Community Survey Internal Microdata Sample, 2010.

The gender gap in earnings in STEM fields is smaller than it is in non-STEM fields, but women still earn substantially less than men in STEM occupations.

The median salary for women in STEM occupations in 2010 was \$54,790, compared to \$69,265 for men.¹¹⁹ Part of this disparity can be explained by the differences in fields: men are more likely to work in information technology and engineering fields with higher average salaries compared with the life sciences. But even within the same occupations, women earn less than men.

This gender gap in salaries and the large male share of the STEM labor force are two of the many perceived barriers to women and girls entering the STEM labor force. About 57 percent of all girls surveyed by GSRI in a study on girls and STEM agreed that “if they went into a STEM career, they’d have to work harder than a man just to be taken seriously.”¹²⁰

Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls had greater awareness of gender barriers in STEM professions than white girls did, and they also had less exposure to adults in STEM careers. In spite of this, black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls expressed more interest than white girls in how things work, in building and putting things back together, and in creating an iPhone app or designing a video game.¹²¹ Priming this interest with support from parents and teachers, and with exposure to women in STEM careers, can help turn this interest into a desire to make a STEM field their choice of major and career.¹²²

While the United States compares favorably to most developing countries in terms of educational outcomes, there are concerns that American youth are falling behind their peers in developed countries. In the United States, there is a strong focus on math achievement as a pathway to better job opportunities and higher earnings. But teenage girls in the United States perform worse on international math tests compared with their counterparts in many other countries. In 2009, about 29 percent of girls in countries representing the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) scored at or above “level-4” proficiency in mathematics, but only 22 percent of girls in the United States were performing at that level.¹²³ Girls in Shanghai, China, were the most likely to be proficient in mathematics (72 percent), while girls in Colombia, Kyrgyzstan, and Tunisia were the least likely to score at or above level-4 proficiency. American girls also lagged behind girls in many other countries in science and reading achievement, although their reading proficiency (34 percent) approached the OECD average for girls (35 percent).

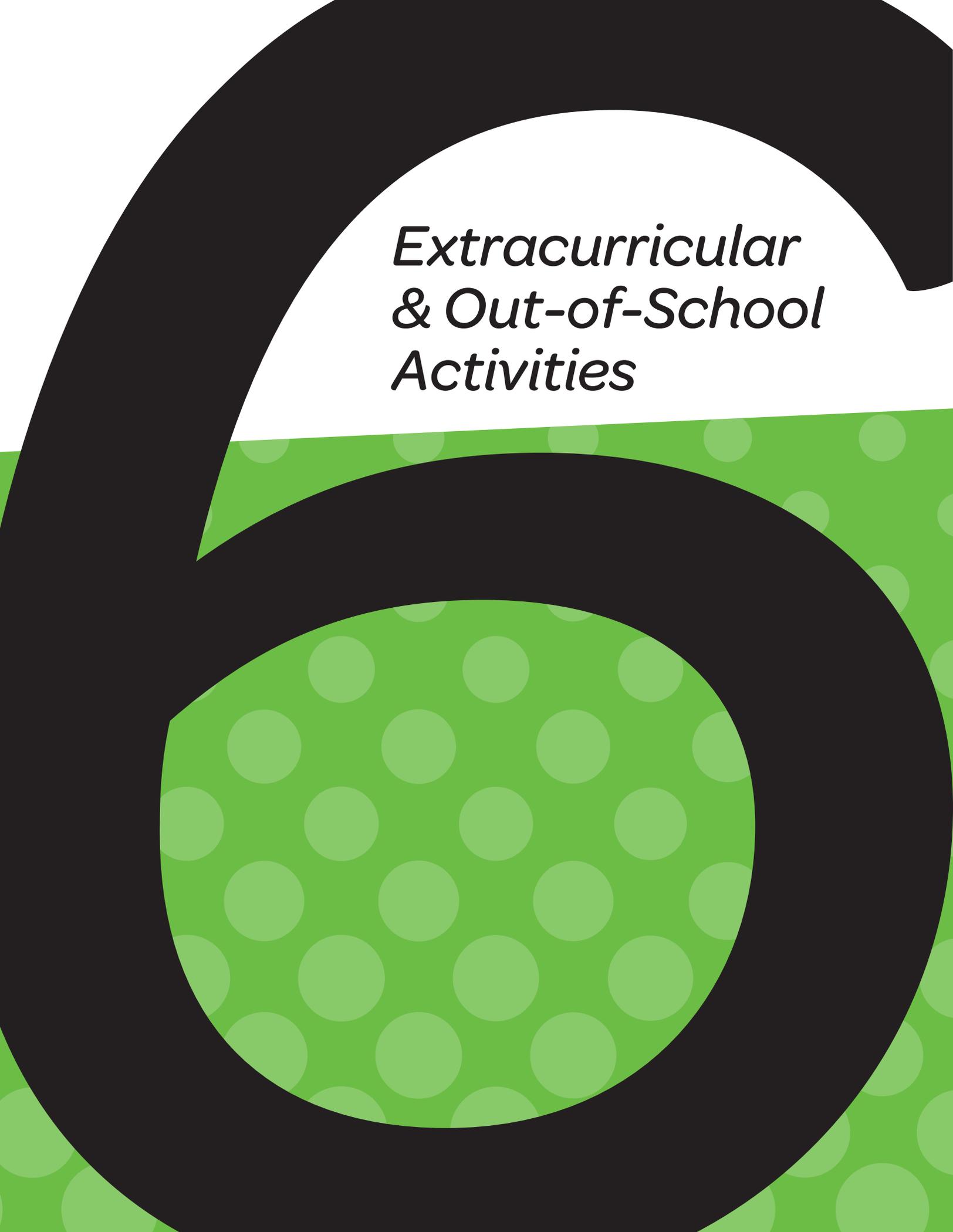
Girls in developed countries generally outperform boys on reading tests, but boys tend to do better in math. The gender gap in math is generally modest, and may reflect girls’ lack of confidence in their math abilities, as opposed to underlying cognitive differences between girls and boys. Girls report much less interest in math and experience more stress in math classes compared with their male counterparts.¹²⁴ However, the United States had one of the largest gender gaps in math achievement among all OECD countries, with boys performing 9 percentage points higher than girls. Only Liechtenstein and the United Kingdom had larger gender gaps in math achievement (10 percentage points each).

Summary and Implications

- Education is important for putting girls on a path to realizing their full potential. An emphasis on girls' education, from enrollment in high-quality early-childhood education programs to completion of high school and college, is key to their financial success and economic security in adulthood. Hispanic/Latina girls are at greater risk of dropping out of school early, as the high school dropout rates for both Hispanic/Latina girls and adults are higher than those of other racial/ethnic groups. This has important implications for those working with Hispanic/Latina girls, as they may need more educational support and more resources for pursuing higher education.
- Girls perform better in reading than boys, while boys perform better in math. White and Asian girls perform better in both reading and math than black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls. Stronger efforts should be made by schools and education departments to close this achievement gap among racial/ethnic groups and between boys and girls.
- Women now outnumber men in college, but they pursue different fields of study. Women are more likely to pursue degrees in education, nursing, health services, and math and science teacher education, and are less likely to major in business and science and engineering fields. Very few black/African American and Hispanic/Latina students major in STEM fields. Studies show that high school girls are interested in STEM fields, but don't consider a career in one of them as their top career choice. Encouraging girls and young women to pursue STEM fields is important to their future success in the workforce, as STEM fields are tied to higher earnings, greater job security, and more opportunities for advancement.

"In all the discussion about girls' and women's progress, the particular experiences of some groups of girls are sometimes overlooked. This report provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the positive news about girls, but it also holds us accountable to do more to improve the educational performance and attainment of Hispanic, African American, and Native American girls where they lag behind their peers and to better support their aspirations in business and STEM."

—Andresse St. Rose, Ed.D, Senior Researcher, American Association of University Women

A large, stylized number '6' is the central graphic. The top curve of the '6' is white, and the rest is black. The background is green with a pattern of lighter green circles. The text is centered within the white curve of the '6'.

*Extracurricular
& Out-of-School
Activities*



Younger girls spend most of their time in school, in child care, or in the care of family or relatives. But as girls grow older, they spend less time under their parents' supervision and more time on their own or with peers. When they are not in school, girls participate in a wide range of leisure activities.¹²⁵ In fact, teenage girls have much more free time today than they did in the 1970s, when a higher proportion of adolescents were in the paid workforce.¹²⁶

Concerns about teens' time use generally fall into two categories. On the one hand, many adults worry that teens spend too much time out of school in nonproductive activities, such as watching TV, surfing the Internet, or playing video games. Girls in the United States have more free time—often unsupervised—compared with their peers in Europe and East Asia, yet they spend less time doing homework.¹²⁷ Teens who are bored or unengaged are also more likely to use drugs, commit crimes, and drop out of school.¹²⁸ These issues are magnified for girls growing up in lower-income families who have fewer opportunities to participate in productive out-of-school activities.¹²⁹

On the other hand, some girls may be “overscheduled” as they juggle extracurricular activities, homework, and part-time jobs.¹³⁰ Being involved in too many out-of-school activities may lead to anxiety.¹³¹ Although some teens may be overextended, most researchers agree that participation in sports, clubs, and other structured activities has a positive influence on girls' development and leadership skills.¹³² Physical activity in adolescence also reduces the risk of obesity and can establish the patterns and habits of behavior that will ensure a healthy lifestyle in adulthood.¹³³

Adults often disagree about how teens should be spending their time, and teenagers may have their own ideas about “good behavior” that differ from their parents' perspectives.¹³⁴ But understanding how girls spend their time is an important first step in finding the right balance between “productive” activities and leisure activities.

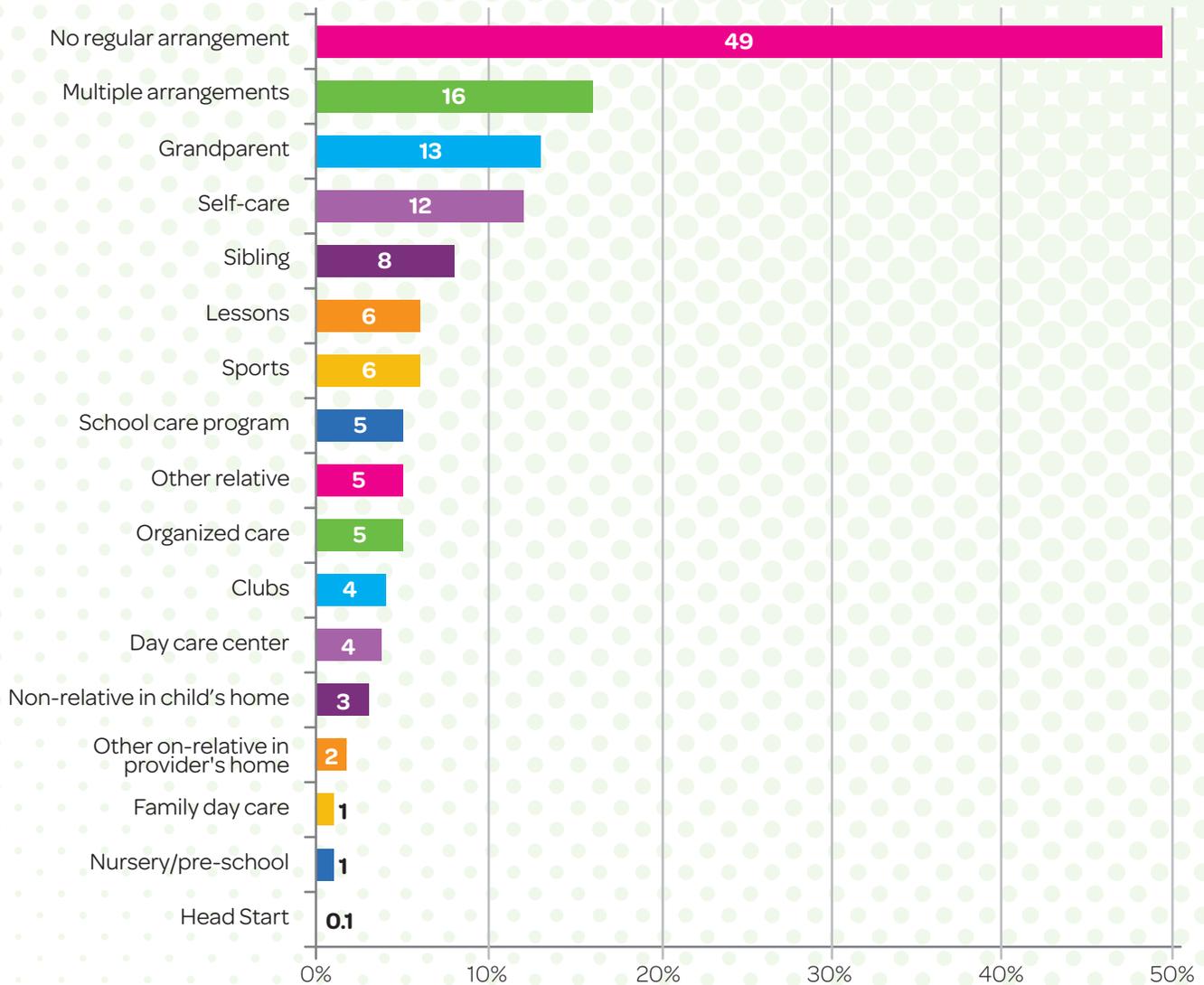


Child-Care Arrangements and Self Care

While older girls can typically take care of themselves, younger girls are more likely to be in structured or unstructured child-care arrangements (see Figure 6-1).

The type of care that children receive is important because caregivers play a central role in children’s emotional and cognitive development. In 2008, many girls received care from their relatives, including grandparents (13 percent) and siblings (8 percent). Other girls received child care through participation in lessons (6 percent), sports (6 percent), or clubs (4 percent). About 12 percent of girls took care of themselves and 16 percent had multiple child-care arrangements.

Figure 6-1: Out-of-School, Nonparental Child-Care Arrangements of Girls Ages 5 to 14, 2008



Note: Numbers sum to more than 100 percent because many children may have multiple child-care arrangements. Data are shown for girls whose mothers are present in the household. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Program Participation.

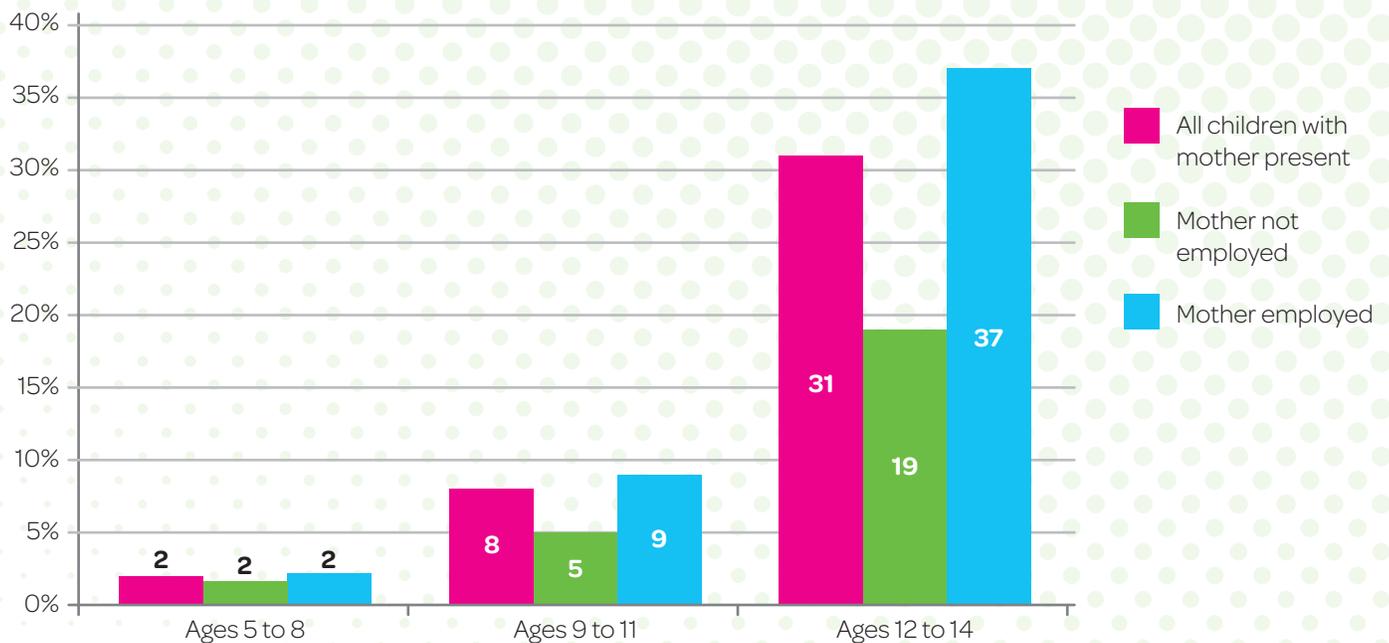
Nearly half of girls ages 5 to 14 (49 percent) had no regular child-care arrangements.

Girls with working mothers were more likely to be in child care, but many girls with stay-at-home moms also receive care at school or at home with grandparents, siblings, or other relatives.¹³⁵ Many lower-income families cannot afford formal child care because of high costs, lack of access, or nonstandard work hours that make it difficult to take advantage of the care that is available.¹³⁶

As girls grow older, they are more likely to take care of themselves. Self-care can be a positive step for girls, providing them with a sense of independence and responsibility. However, if initiated too soon, or in an unsafe environment, self-care can lead to emotional or even physical harm, putting children at a higher risk of problems in school, crime, and substance abuse.¹³⁷

In 2010, about 31 percent of girls ages 12 to 14 took care of themselves, compared with 8 percent of girls ages 9 to 11 and only 2 percent of girls ages 5 to 8 (see Figure 6-2). However, girls with working mothers were nearly twice as likely to take care of themselves compared with girls living with stay-at-home moms.

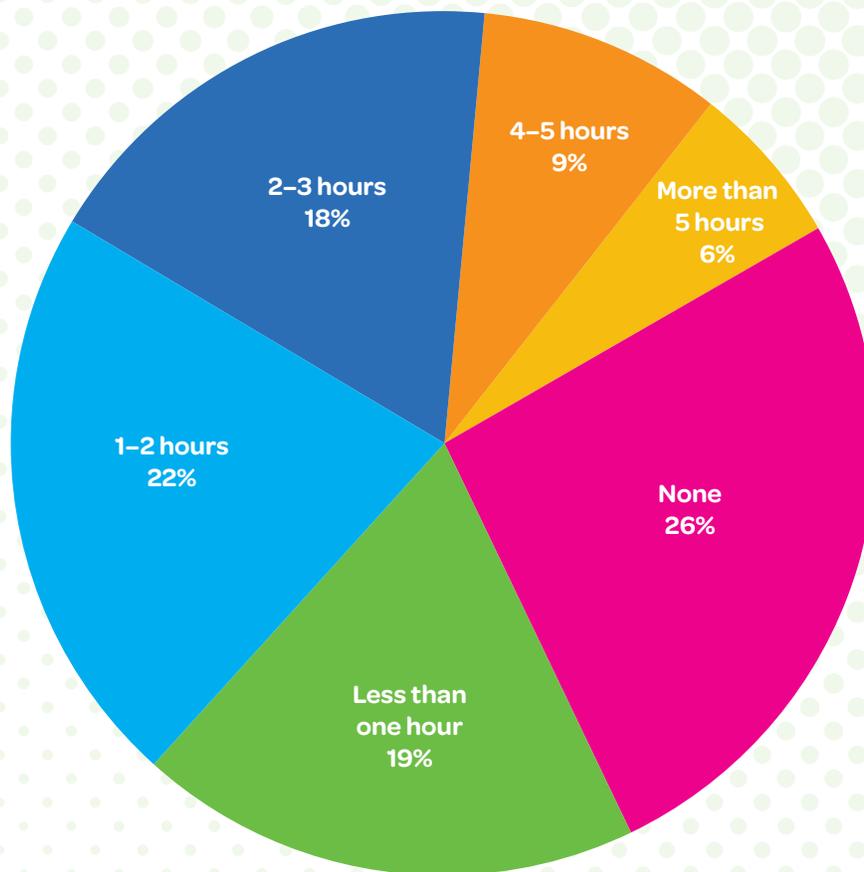
Figure 6-2: Percentage of Girls Ages 5 to 14 in Self-Care, by Age of Child and Employment Status of Mother, 2010



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Program Participation.

Among tenth-grade girls, over one-third were home alone for at least two hours after school in 2009, and 16 percent were home alone for at least four hours (see Figure 6-3). There were racial/ethnic differences in the number of hours spent alone after school. White girls were less likely to be home alone for four or more hours (13 percent), compared with Hispanic/Latina girls (16 percent) and black/African American girls (25 percent). Many black/African American girls live in low-income working families, often headed by single mothers, which may contribute to time spent alone at home.¹³⁸ Low-income families are less likely to be able to afford the out-of-school activities that are available.¹³⁹

Figure 6-3: Hours Alone After School with No Adult Present, Tenth-Grade Girls, 2009

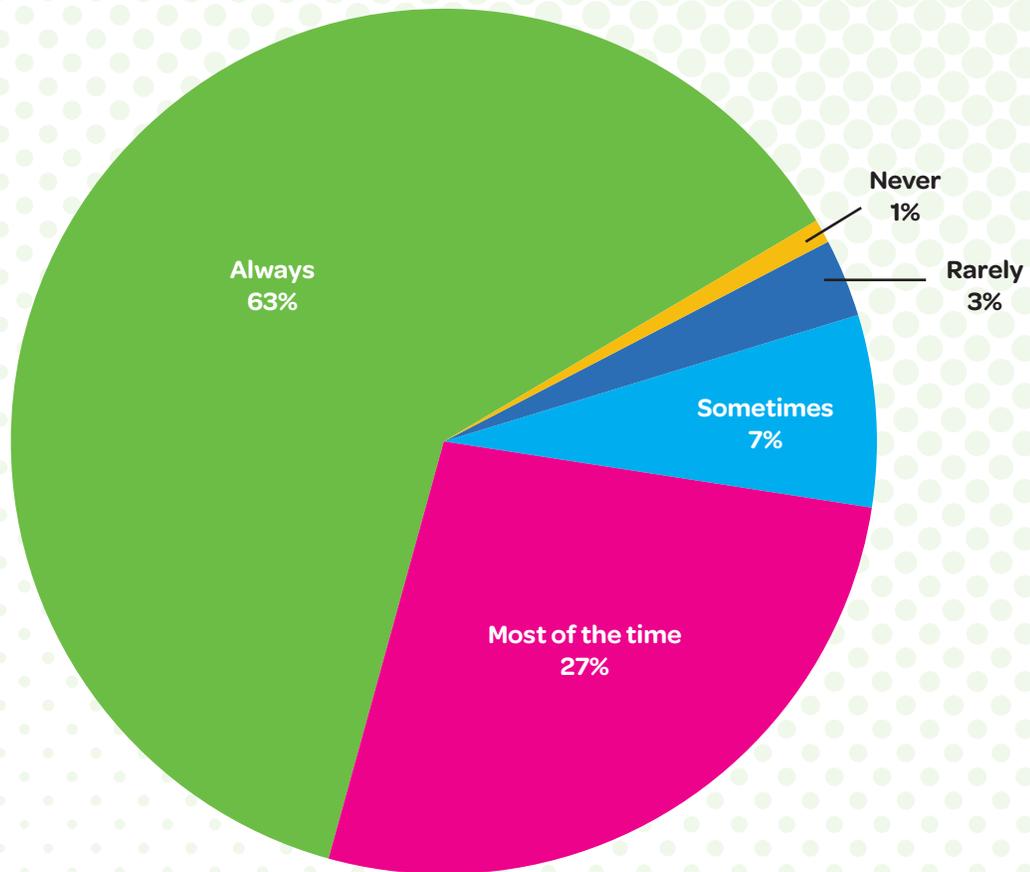


Source: *Monitoring the Future*, 2009.

Although many tenth-grade girls spent several hours home alone, about 45 percent were home alone for less than one hour or not at all. Among different racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic tenth-graders were the most likely to be home alone for less than an hour or not at all (52 percent).

It's also important for parents to know where their children are after school, and who they are with. Parents who keep track of their children's whereabouts are more likely to have children with high self-esteem, better grades, and fewer emotional and behavioral problems.¹⁴⁰ In 2009, about 63 percent of tenth-grade girls reported that their parents always know where they are, and 27 percent said their parents know where they are most of the time (see Figure 6-4). Only 11 percent of girls reported that their parents sometimes, rarely, or never know where they are after school. However, this figure rises to 17 percent among black/African American girls, who are more likely to spend several hours alone after school. White girls are the most likely to report that parents know where they are "always" or "most of the time."

Figure 6-4: "Parents Know Where I Am After School," Tenth-Grade Girls, 2009



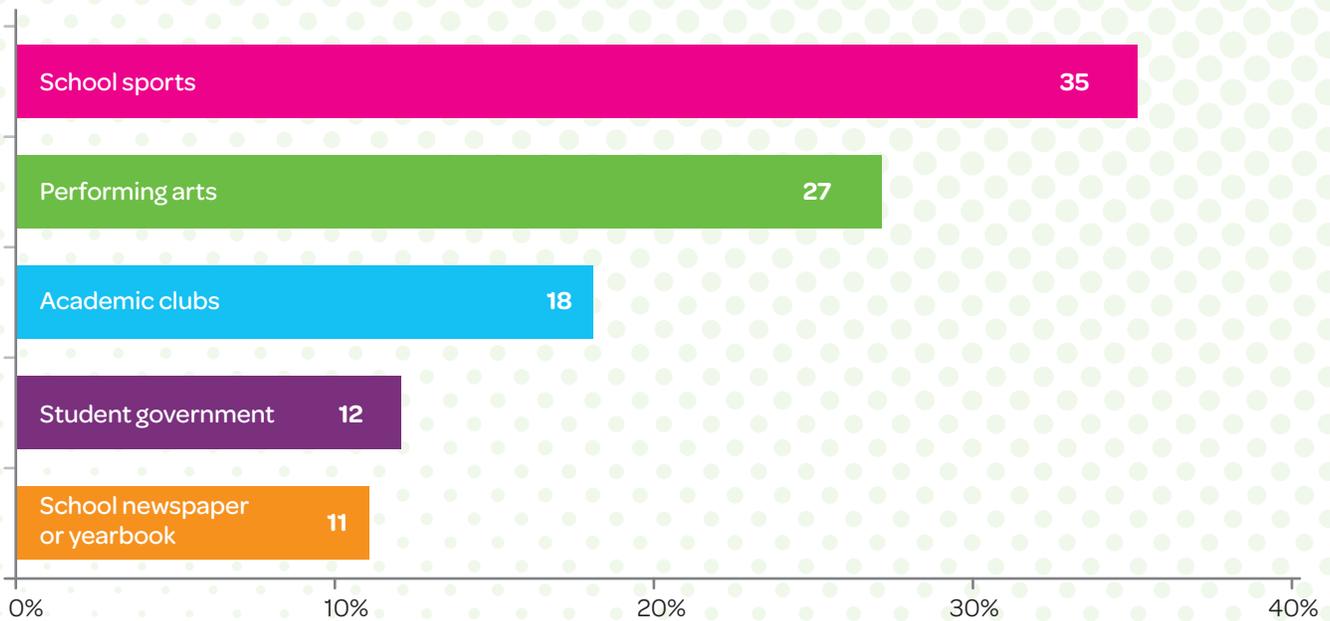
Source: *Monitoring the Future*, 2009.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities can provide multiple educational, physical, and psychological benefits for children.¹⁴¹ Organizations such as Girl Scouts of the USA, the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, school sports teams, church groups, and other youth organizations can provide a safe, inclusive environment that empowers youth to make a difference in their communities. This is especially true when children’s participation in these groups is long-lasting and occurs on a regular basis.¹⁴²

In 2009, about 35 percent of twelfth-grade girls were involved in school sports to a “considerable” or “great extent,” making sports the most common out-of-school activity among senior girls (see Figure 6-5). The five most popular sports among high school girls are outdoor track and field, basketball, volleyball, softball, and soccer. About 27 percent of senior girls were involved in the performing arts, 18 percent participated in academic clubs, 12 percent were in student government, and 11 percent were involved with the school newspaper or yearbook. Participation in extracurricular activities is higher among girls with plans to attend college compared with those who don’t have college plans.¹⁴³ There is also a growing class gap in students’ participation in extracurricular activities, which are increasingly reserved for children of middle and upper class parents, who have more financial resources to invest in their children.¹⁴⁴

Figure 6-5: Percentage of Twelfth-Grade Girls Participating in Extracurricular Activities, 2009*

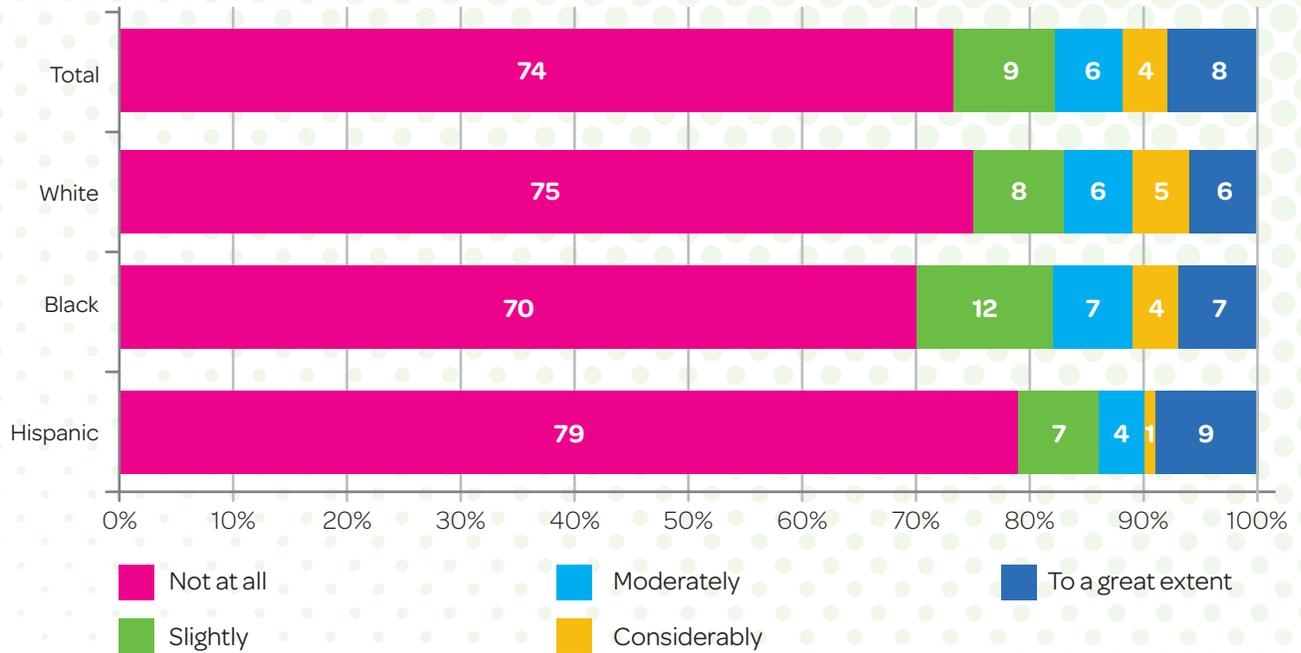


*Includes those participating to a great or considerable extent.
Source: *Monitoring the Future, 2009.*

Student Government

One of the potential benefits of girls' involvement in extracurricular activities is the opportunity it affords them to develop leadership and teamwork skills. Some girls first learn these skills by participating in student council or government. In 2009, about 26 percent of twelfth-grade girls participated in student government, with 12 percent participating to a considerable or great extent (see Figure 6-6). Black/African American girls were the most likely to report any participation in student government.

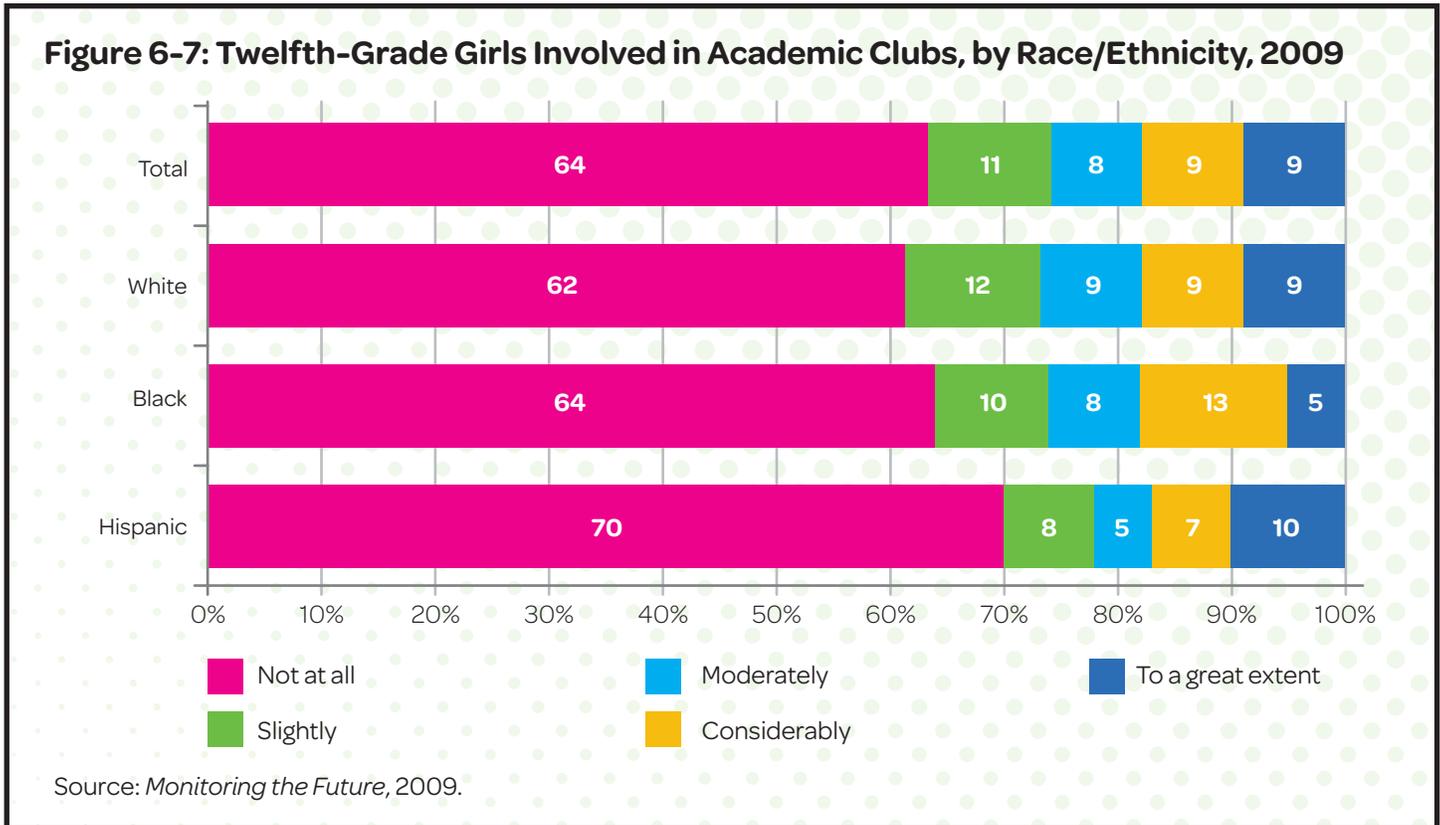
Figure 6-6: Twelfth-Grade Girls Participating in Student Council or Government, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009



Source: *Monitoring the Future*, 2009.

Academic Clubs

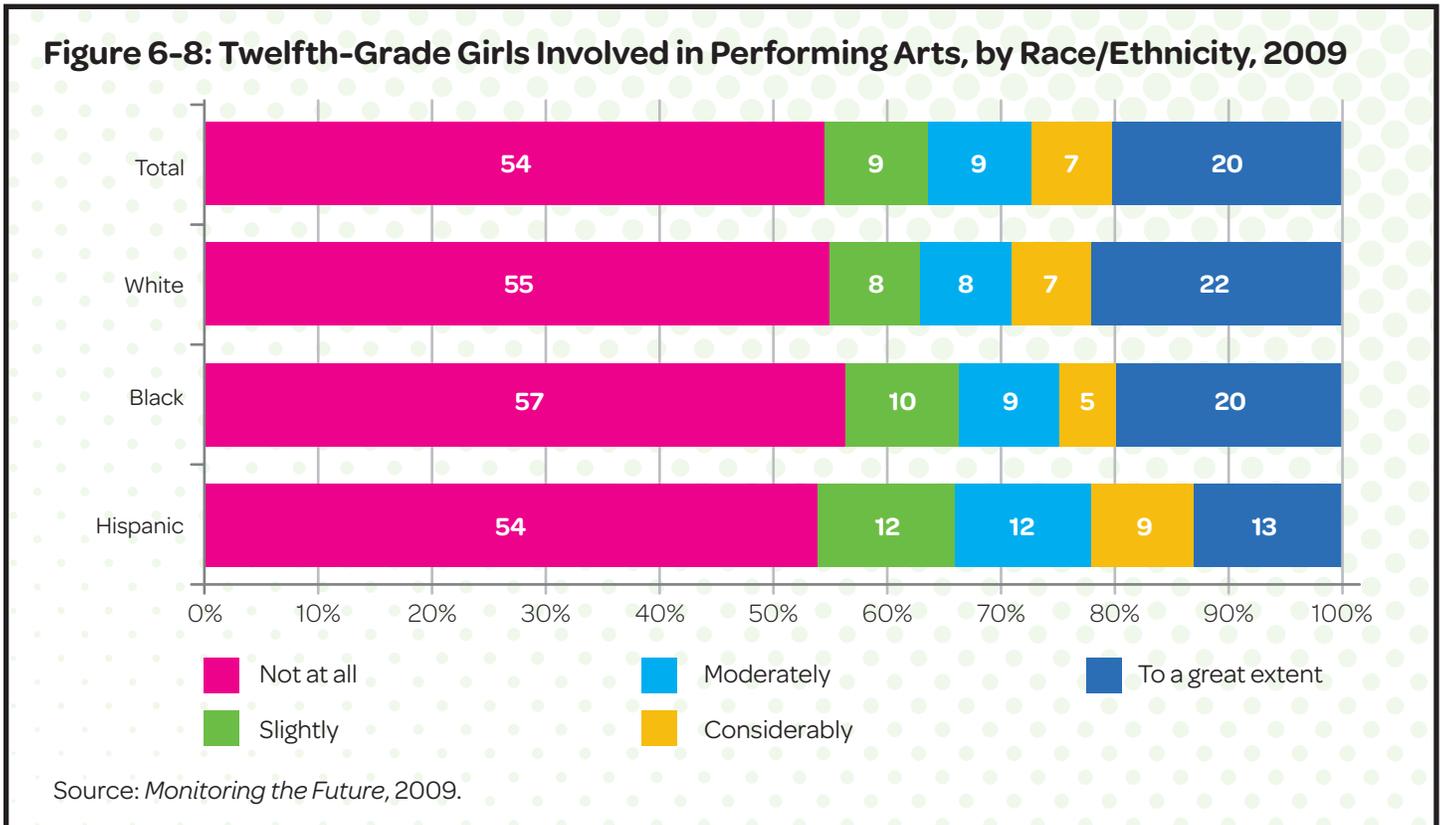
Academic clubs provide another opportunity for girls to socialize and learn outside of the classroom. Among twelfth-grade girls, whites and blacks/African Americans were more likely to participate in academic clubs compared with Hispanics/Latinas. About 70 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls did not participate in academic clubs at all, compared with 64 percent of black/African American girls and 62 percent of white girls (see Figure 6-7). Nationwide, about 36 percent of twelfth-grade girls participated in academic clubs, and 18 percent participated “considerably” or “to a great extent.”



Performing Arts

Participation in the performing arts, such as band or chorus, can help girls become team players, can foster creativity, and may improve academic achievement.¹⁴⁵

In 2009, about 46 percent of twelfth-grade girls participated in the performing arts, and 27 percent said they participated “considerably” or “to a great extent” (see Figure 6-8). White girls were the most likely to report extensive participation in the performing arts (29 percent) compared with black/African American girls (25 percent) and Hispanic/Latina girls (22 percent).

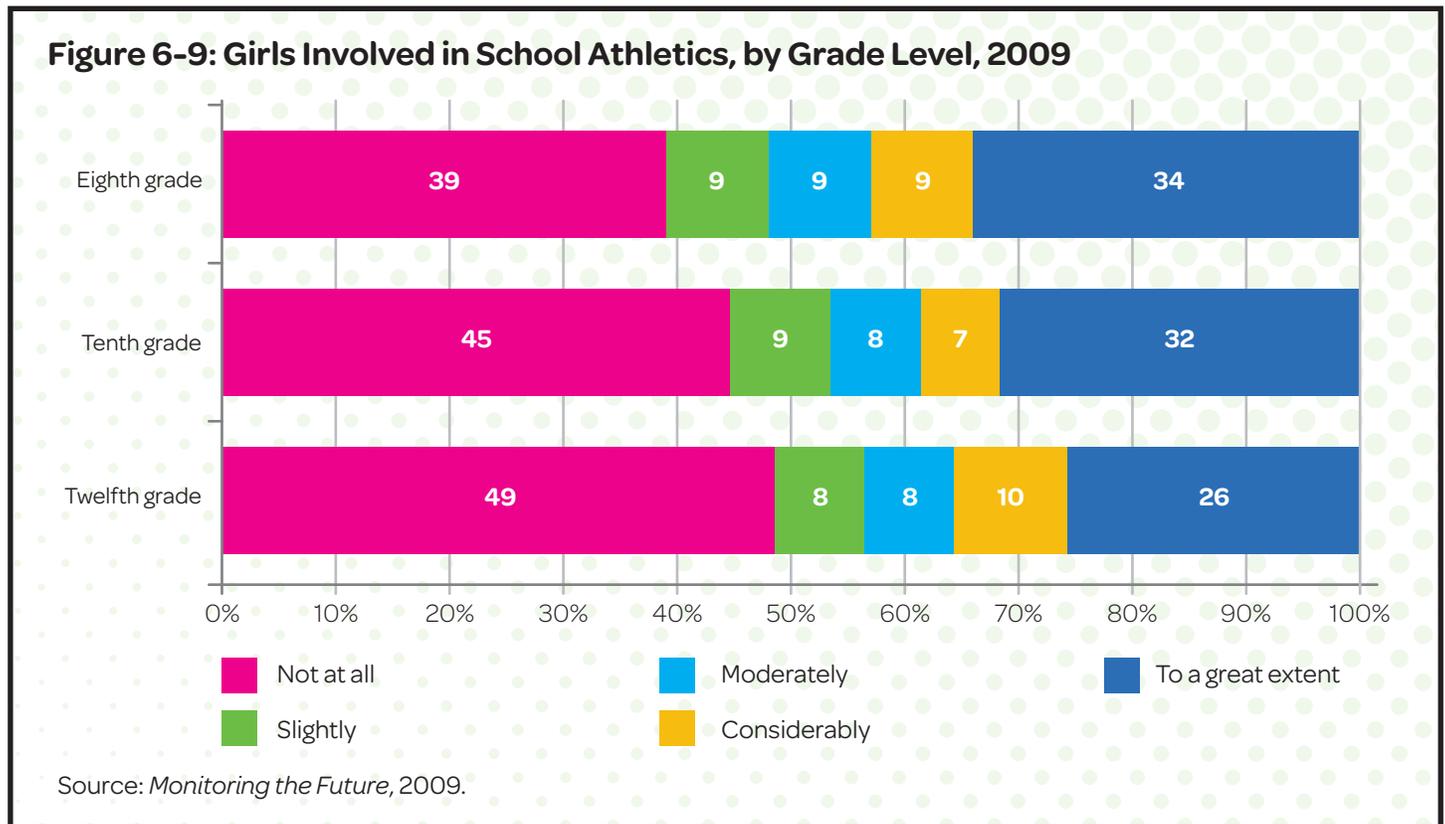


Physical Activity

Physical activity improves children’s strength and endurance, reduces the risk of obesity, contributes to mental health and self-esteem, and may reduce blood pressure and cholesterol levels.¹⁴⁶ The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends 60 minutes of physical activity per day for youth ages 6 to 17.¹⁴⁷ However, the majority of youth do not meet this standard, and among girls, levels of physical activity decline as they grow older.¹⁴⁸ Despite the well-known benefits of physical activity, there is also a potential downside for teens: Those involved in sports are more likely to exhibit certain risky behaviors—especially excessive alcohol use.¹⁴⁹

In 2009, a majority of girls in eighth, tenth, and twelfth grades participated in school athletics. However, participation rates decline as girls grow older. About 61 percent of eighth-grade girls were involved in school athletics in 2009, compared with 55 percent of tenth-graders, and 51 percent of twelfth-graders (see Figure 6-9). The share of girls involved in school athletics “considerably” or “to a great extent” is also highest among eighth-graders (43 percent), compared with tenth-graders (39 percent) and twelfth-graders (35 percent). Among tenth-grade girls, participation in any school athletics is highest among whites (59 percent), followed by blacks/African Americans (52 percent) and Hispanics/Latinas (48 percent).

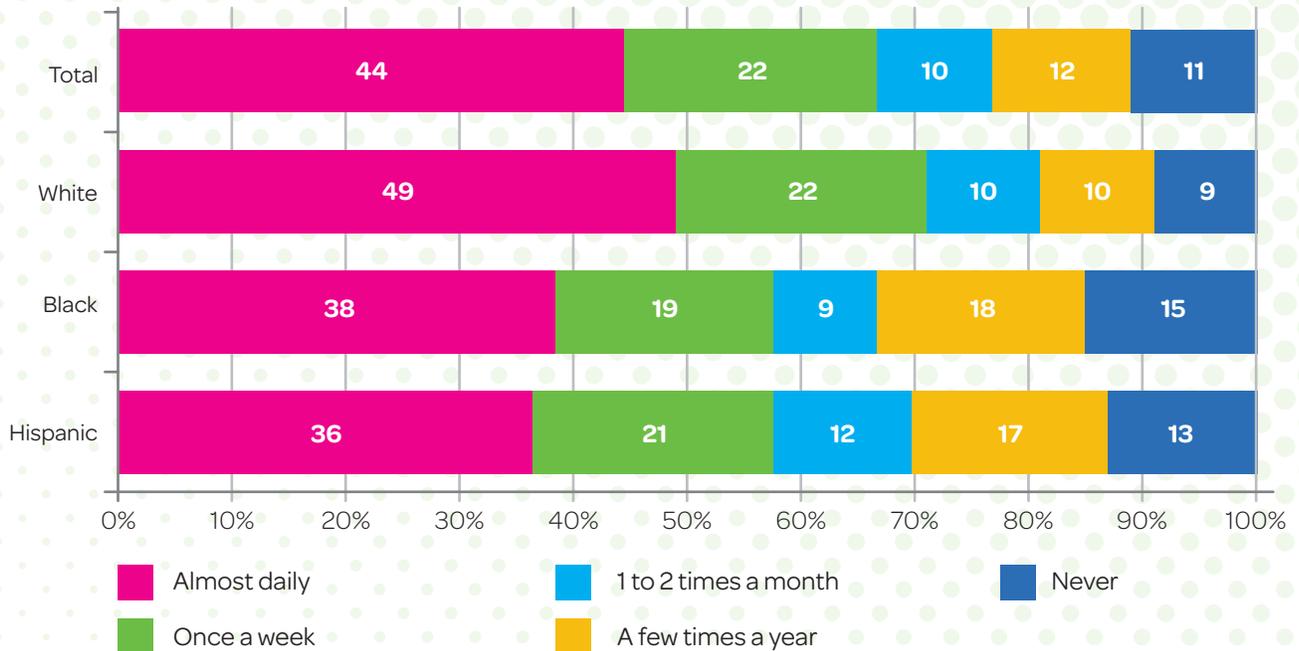
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Not all girls are involved in athletics at school, but most participate in some kind of physical activity, whether it is sports, athletics, or exercising.

In 2009, 89 percent of tenth-grade girls were involved in some kind of physical activity, and 44 percent reported engaging in physical activity “almost daily” (see Figure 6-10). White girls were the most likely to be involved in sports, athletics, or exercising (91 percent), followed by Hispanics/Latinas (87 percent) and blacks/African Americans (85 percent). Nearly half of tenth-grade white girls were physically active “almost daily,” while the proportions of black/African American girls and Hispanic/Latina girls getting exercise on a daily basis were much lower (38 percent and 36 percent respectively).

Figure 6-10: Tenth-Grade Girls Involved in Sports, Athletics, or Exercising, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009



Source: *Monitoring the Future*, 2009.

Outdoor Activity

Girls and boys spend less time outdoors than they did 20 years ago, when computers were not widely available in the home.¹⁵⁰

Although outdoor activity can be associated with certain risks (such as sunburn and mosquito bites), spending time outdoors can have a variety of potential benefits, including improving physical and mental health, social relationships, attitudes toward the environment, and academic achievement.¹⁵¹ However, some children do not spend time outdoors because they prefer passive indoor activities (such as watching television) or don't have access to safe areas to play outside. Children in inner cities do not spend as much time outdoors as children in suburban areas, in part because of parents' concerns about neighborhood safety in densely populated areas.¹⁵²

In 2009, most girls ages 6 to 19 spent some time outdoors on weekends (see Table 6-1). The number of girls spending four or more hours outdoors ranged from 25 percent among 16-to-19-year-olds to 51 percent among girls ages 10 to 12. In general, older girls were more likely to report spending any time outdoors, but younger girls were more likely to be outdoors for extended periods of time. Although these results are encouraging, time spent outdoors should not be equated with rigorous physical activity. In fact, the most common outdoor activity reported by youth was "just playing or hanging out." Many others used portable electronic devices to watch television or listen to music while spending time outside.¹⁵³

Table 6-1: Percentage of Time Girls Spend Outdoors on Weekend Days, by Age Group, 2009

	Ages 6 to 9	Ages 10 to 12	Ages 13 to 15	Ages 16 to 19
None	5	4	4	7
Less than 1/2 hour a day	9	3	2	16
About 1/2 hour a day	2	3	4	7
About 1 hour	16	14	21	16
2 to 3 hours	25	26	36	30
4 or more hours	43	51	34	25

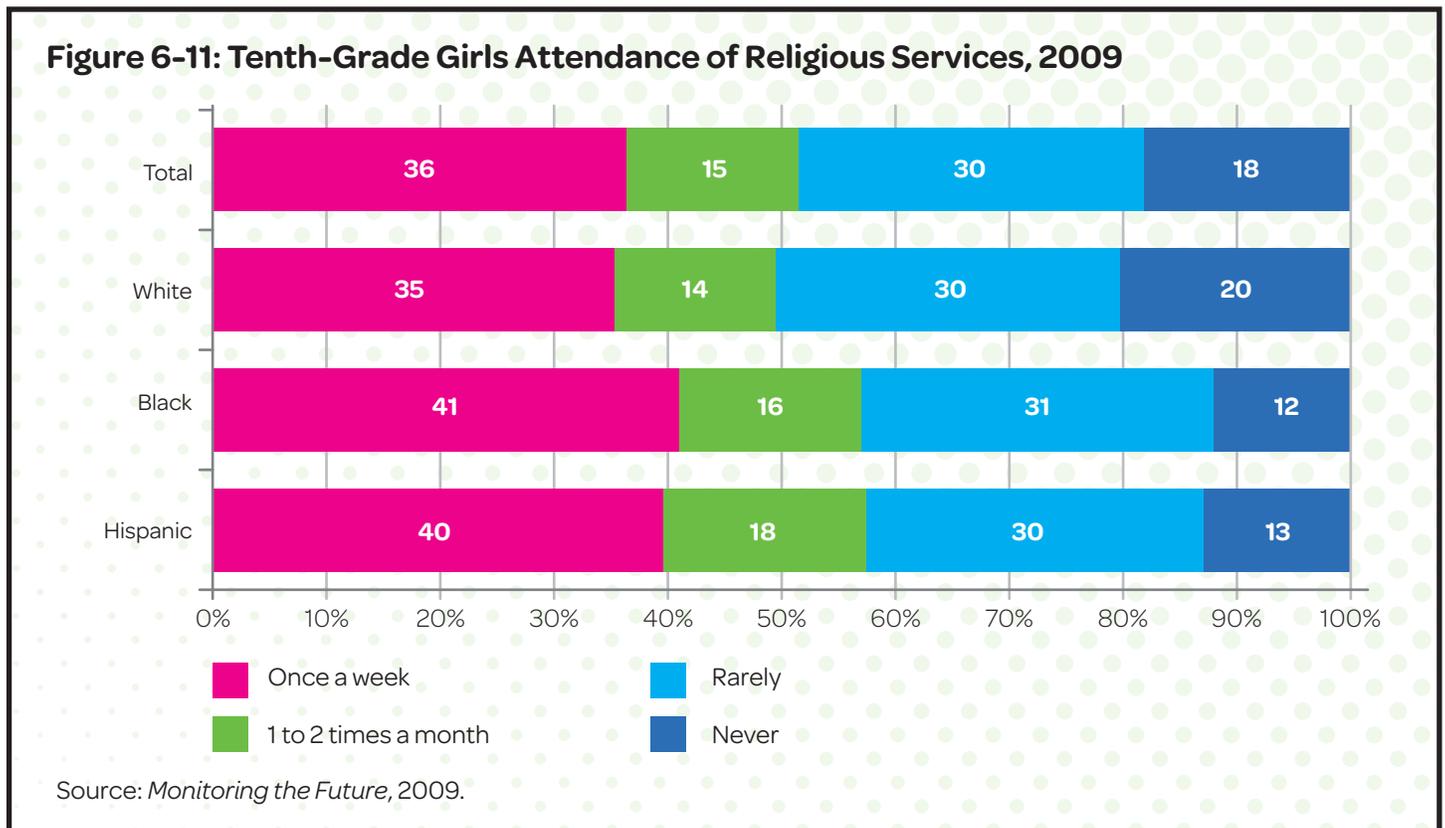
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Kids Survey, 2009.

Religiosity

Religiosity has been linked to multiple positive behaviors and outcomes for teens, including altruistic behavior, reduced use of drugs and alcohol, and later onset of sexual activity.¹⁵⁴ Among different measures of religiosity, attending worship services has been found to have the most positive influence on youth behavior. However, civic participation in secular organizations can have similar positive effects for teens.¹⁵⁵

The majority of girls in eighth, tenth, and twelfth grade report that religion is important to them. However, the share that reports religion is “not important” increases slightly as girls grow older. About 14 percent of eighth-grade girls report that religion is not important to them, compared with 17 percent of twelfth-grade girls.

Religious service attendance also declines with age. About 42 percent of eighth-grade girls attend religious services once a week, compared with 36 percent of tenth-graders and 31 percent of twelfth-graders. Among tenth-graders, black/African American girls were the most likely to attend religious services once a week (41 percent), but Hispanic/Latina girls were not far behind (40 percent) (see Figure 6-11). About 35 percent of white girls attended religious services once a week. White girls were also the most likely to report never attending religious services (20 percent).

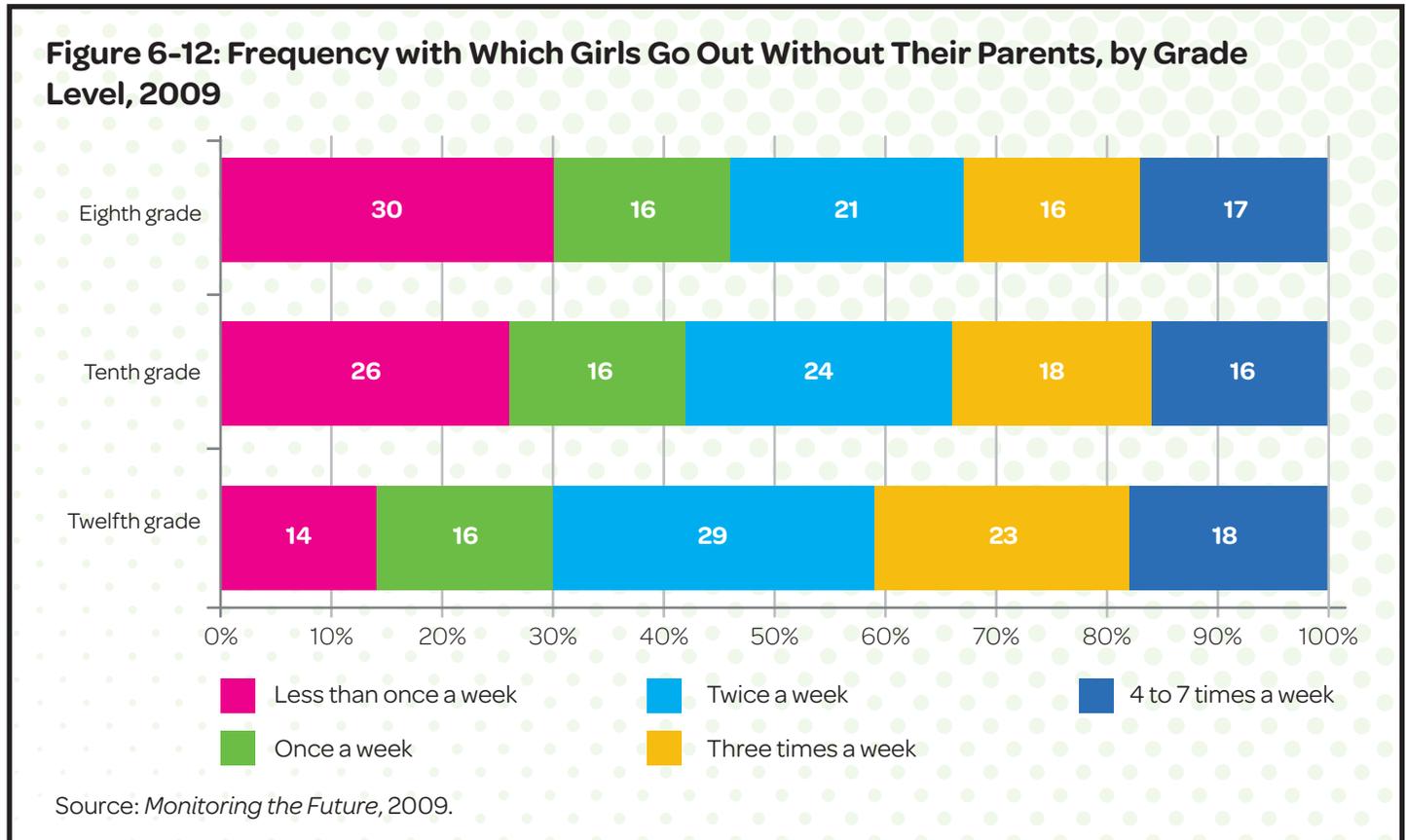


Going Out at Night

Most teens also have a great deal of unstructured time for leisure activities.

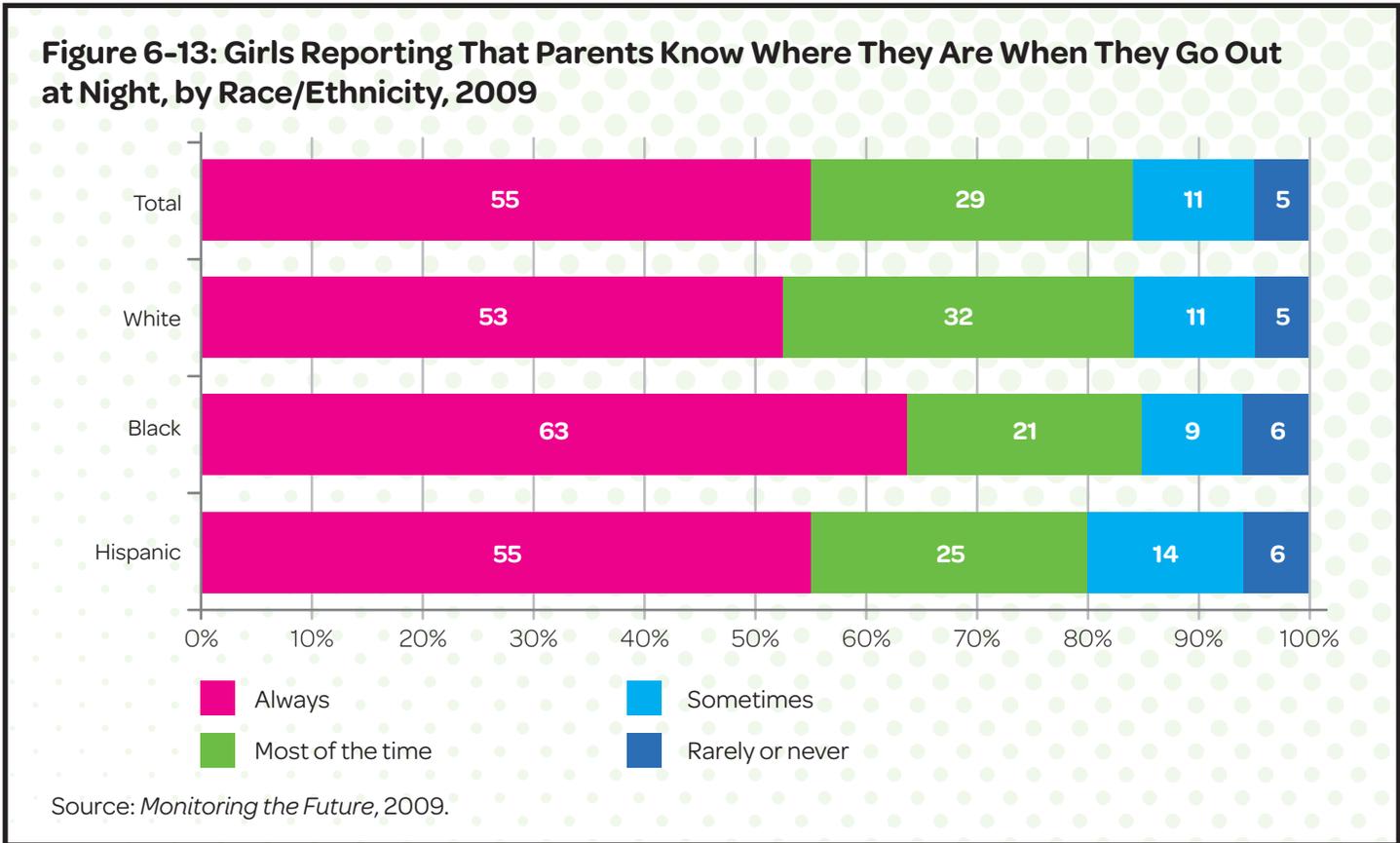
In fact, about 40 percent of adolescents' time is estimated to be discretionary.¹⁵⁶ The effects of these leisure activities are not entirely clear, but in general, researchers view structured, productive activities more favorably than activities that are unstructured and passive.¹⁵⁷

By eighth grade, a majority of girls (70 percent) go out at least one night a week without their parents, and 17 percent go out 4 to 7 times per week (see Figure 6-12). By twelfth grade, 86 percent of girls go out at least once a week, and 18 percent go out at least four times a week.

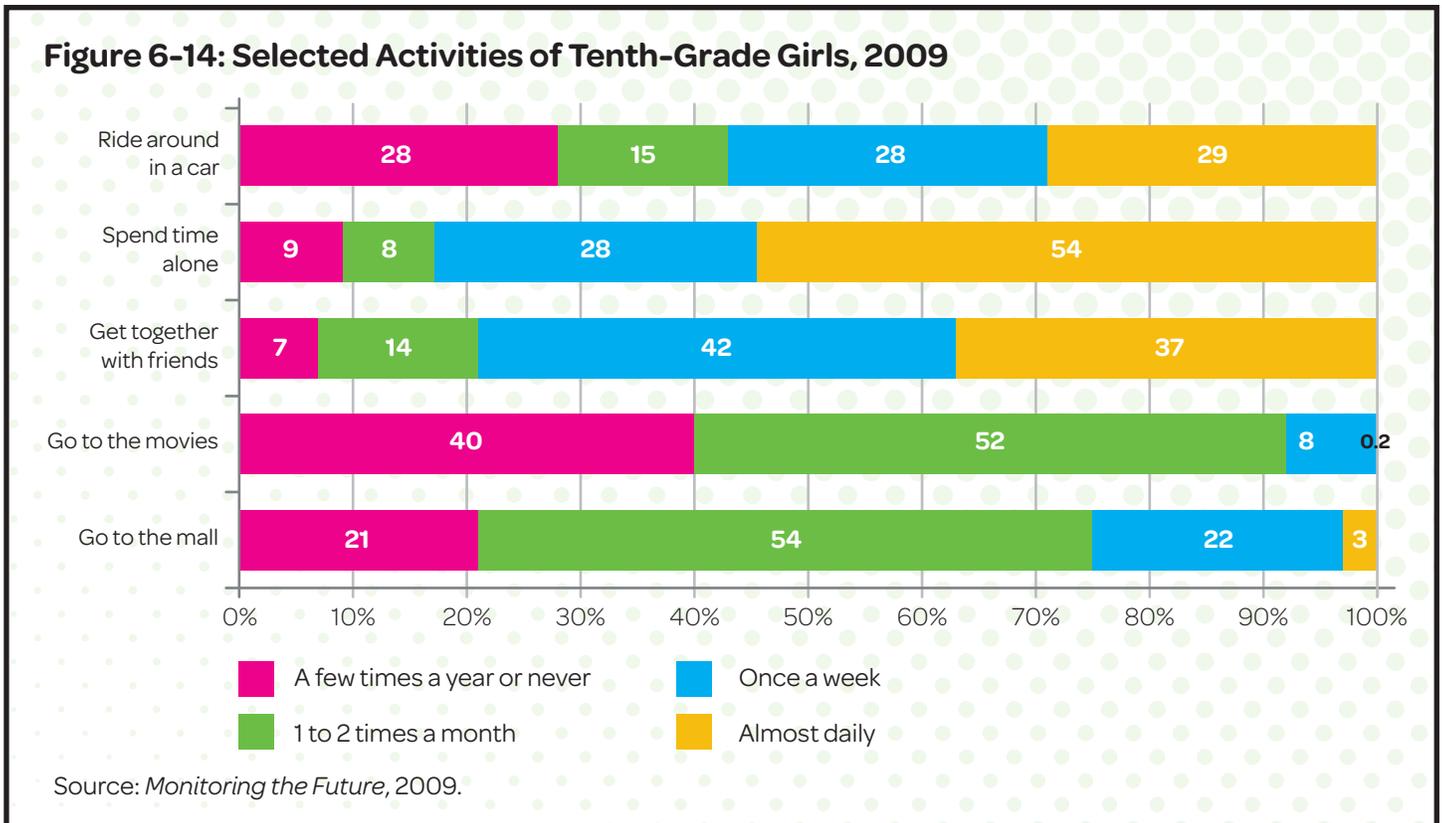


In most cases, parents know where their daughters are when they go out at night.

In 2009, about 84 percent of tenth-grade girls reported that their parents know where they are “most of the time” or “always” (see Figure 6-13). Black/African American girls were more likely to report that their parents always know where they are (63 percent), compared with whites (53 percent) or Hispanics/Latinas (55 percent).



When they go out, girls are involved in many different types of activities (see Figure 6-14). In 2009, 37 percent of tenth-grade girls said they get together with friends almost daily, and 29 percent said they ride around in a car with friends on a daily basis. A higher proportion (54 percent) said they spend time alone on a daily basis. It's often assumed that teens also spend a lot of time hanging out at the mall, but the data show that only one-fourth of girls go to the mall "once a week" or "almost daily." Only about 8 percent of tenth-grade girls said they go to the movies once a week or more.



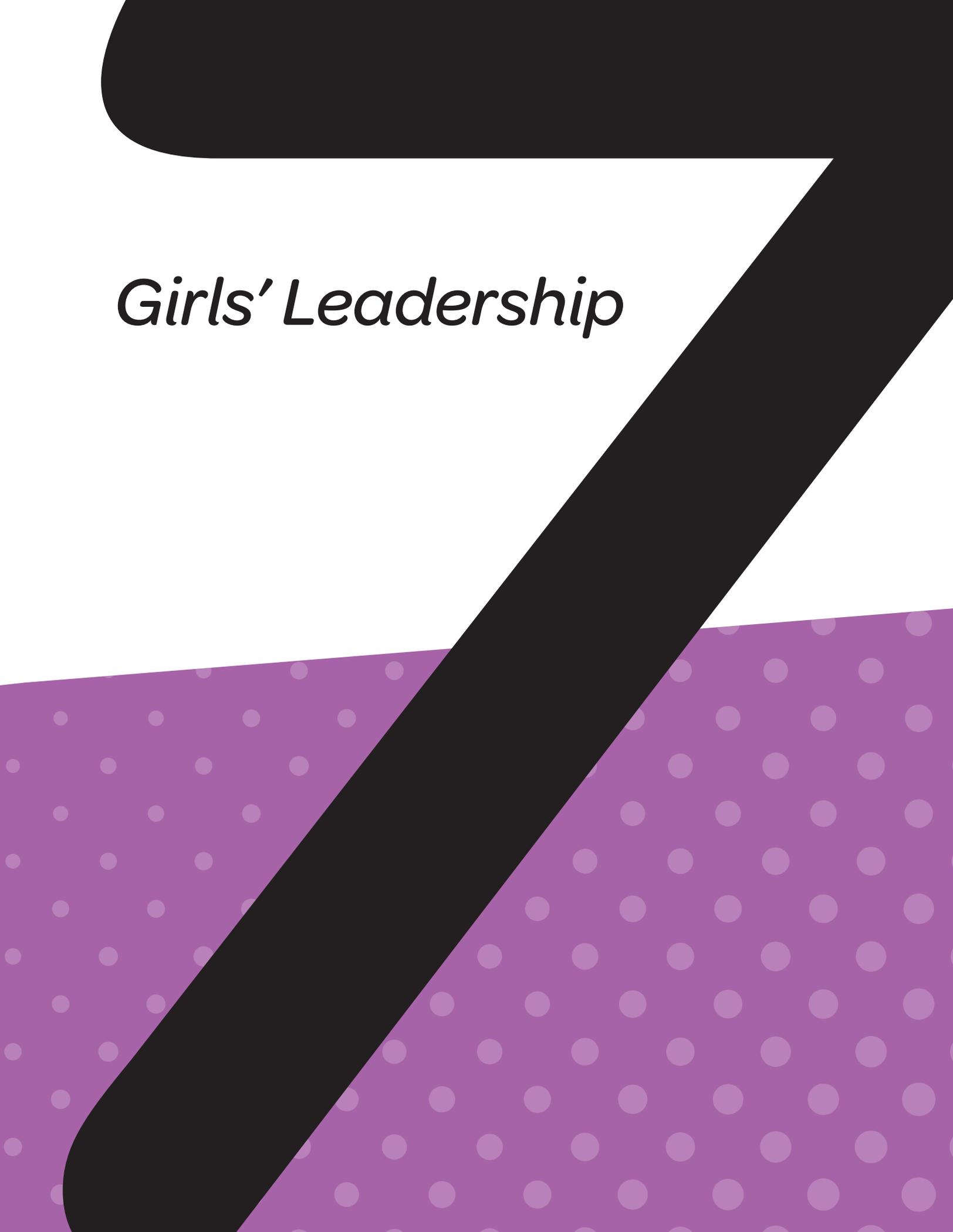
Although researchers sometimes disagree about how teens should spend their time, most agree that they spend too much time on passive activities—especially surfing the web. Increasingly, girls spend their leisure time online, interacting with friends through social media. Girls' access to and use of technology, and its potential effects on their development, is discussed in Chapter 8.

Summary and Implications

- During out-of-school hours, many girls take care of themselves, spend numerous hours of the day unsupervised at home, and have inconsistent child-care arrangements. Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls are more likely to be home alone for several hours each day. Many lower-income families cannot afford formal child care because of high costs, lack of access, or nonstandard work hours that make it difficult to take advantage of the care that is available. Proper supervision and care is needed for all girls in this country.
- Understanding how girls spend their time outside of school is important because participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, and other structured activities has a positive influence on girls' development and leadership skills. Sports are the most common school activity among high school girls, followed by the performing arts, academic clubs, student government, and school newspaper/yearbook. Black/African American girls are most likely to participate in student government and white girls are most likely to participate in the performing arts and sports. Hispanic/Latina girls have lower participation rates in school activities, especially academic clubs and sports. Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls are most likely to attend religious services regularly.
- Teens who are bored or unengaged are more likely to use drugs, commit crimes, and drop out of school. These issues are magnified for girls growing up in lower-income families who have fewer opportunities to participate in productive out-of-school activities. Organizations reaching out to girls from lower-income families need to develop participation structures that meet their needs, since many girls do not have activities to attend after school, which puts them at risk for engaging in unproductive and unhealthy behaviors.

“The new report from the Girl Scout Research Institute demonstrates the compelling need to improve the status, well-being, and prospects of the nation’s girls. In many ways, girls are our future, and the new report shines a spotlight on unequal opportunities for this population. When they are not in school, some girls (and especially those from more affluent families) may be over-scheduled, but many others are unsupervised and at risk for the kind of trouble that can derail their futures, such as substance abuse, sexual activity, and squandered opportunities to learn. After-school or extracurricular activities are especially important for these girls, homework help and opportunities for hands-on learning in science and math, and robotics and computer sciences, as well as mentoring, job exploration, and much more. This report does the country a valuable service by starting a conversation we need to have about how best to ensure that every girl has the best possible chance to succeed in school and in life.” –Jodi Grant, Executive Director, Afterschool Alliance





Girls' Leadership



The role of women has changed dramatically over the past several decades. Women now represent half of the workforce in this country,¹⁵⁸ and more than half of college students and graduates are women.¹⁵⁹ The potential for women to hold leadership positions in business, entertainment, academia, and politics, therefore, is high, but while progress has been made, there is still a shortage of women in leadership roles in the United States. As of 2012, women made up 17 percent of the U.S. Congress and 24 percent of statewide elective executive offices.¹⁶⁰ Three percent of Fortune 500 CEOs are women, and women make up only 16 percent of corporate boards.¹⁶¹

Over the years, researchers have begun to examine leadership styles and definitions, as well as attitudes about leadership held by girls, in order to better understand why leadership roles are scarce for women and to develop a definition of leadership that girls may better identify with. The field has moved from a one-dimensional view of a command-and-control style of leadership to a more holistic framework emphasizing connectivity, collaboration, teamwork, community involvement, civic engagement, and social change.¹⁶² Youth-serving organizations are finding better ways to develop leadership skills in their young members by seeking and using their input. This perspective encourages adults to empower youth to take on greater responsibility. While the topic of girls and women in leadership has been popular in media and among experts in gender studies, sociology, and psychology, there is less national data on the topic.

How Girls Define Leadership

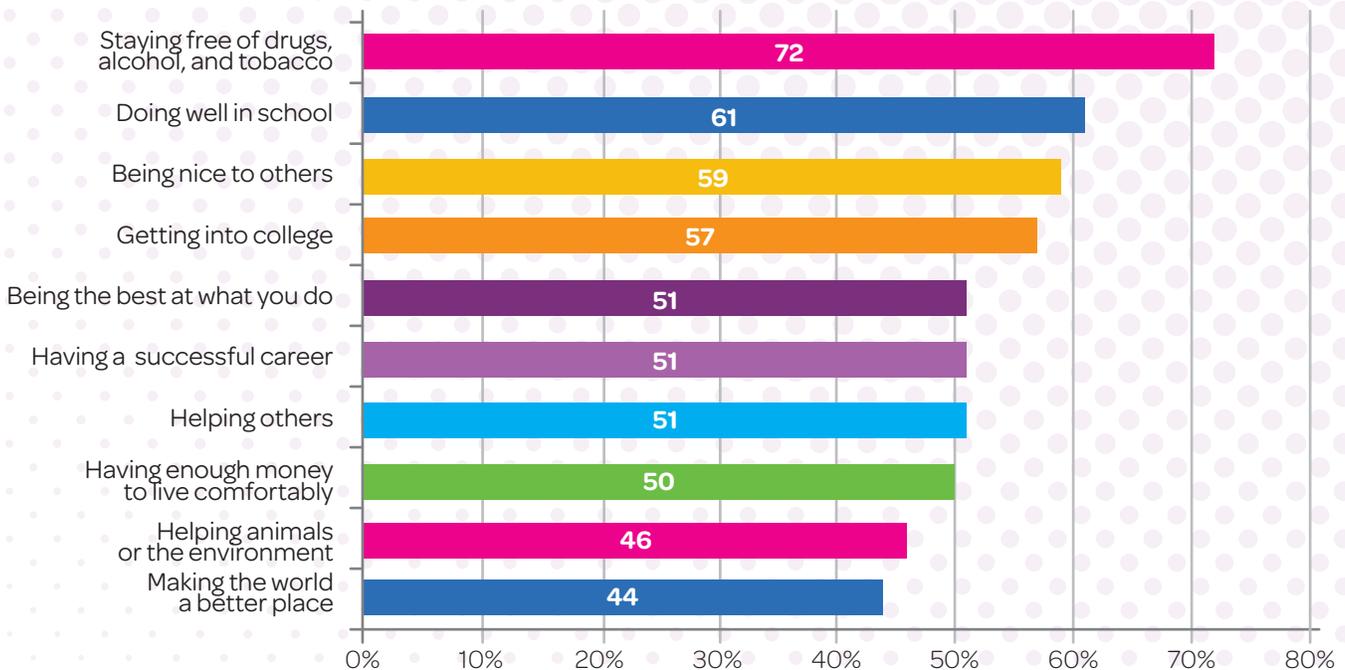
Girls are well aware of the gender gap in leadership in this country. Almost nine in ten teen girls (89 percent) say men outnumber women in leadership positions today, whether in government institutions, such as Congress, or in the private sector as heads of major corporations.¹⁶³

National research¹⁶⁴ shows that girls associate leadership with the traditional top-down, command-and-control style, but they reject this definition and prefer a conception of leadership built upon deeply held convictions, ethical behavior, and a dedication to affecting social change. Girls tend to value a social and collaborative approach, as 72 percent of girls ages 6 to 18 say a leader is someone who “brings people together to get things done,” and 65 percent say a leader is someone who “stands up for his or her beliefs and values.”

Girls' Leadership Aspirations

Leadership is not a top goal for girls, ranking 15th out of 19 options. Twenty-two percent of girls say that being a leader is a top goal in their life, while 23 percent of boys say that being a leader is a top goal in their life. Girls' top goals include staying free of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco (72 percent); doing well in school (61 percent); getting into college (57 percent); and being nice to others (59 percent; see Figure 7-1). Compared to boys, girls are more interested in helping others, helping animals or the environment, being nice to others, and making the world a better place. This gender difference grows as girls enter into their preteen and teen years.

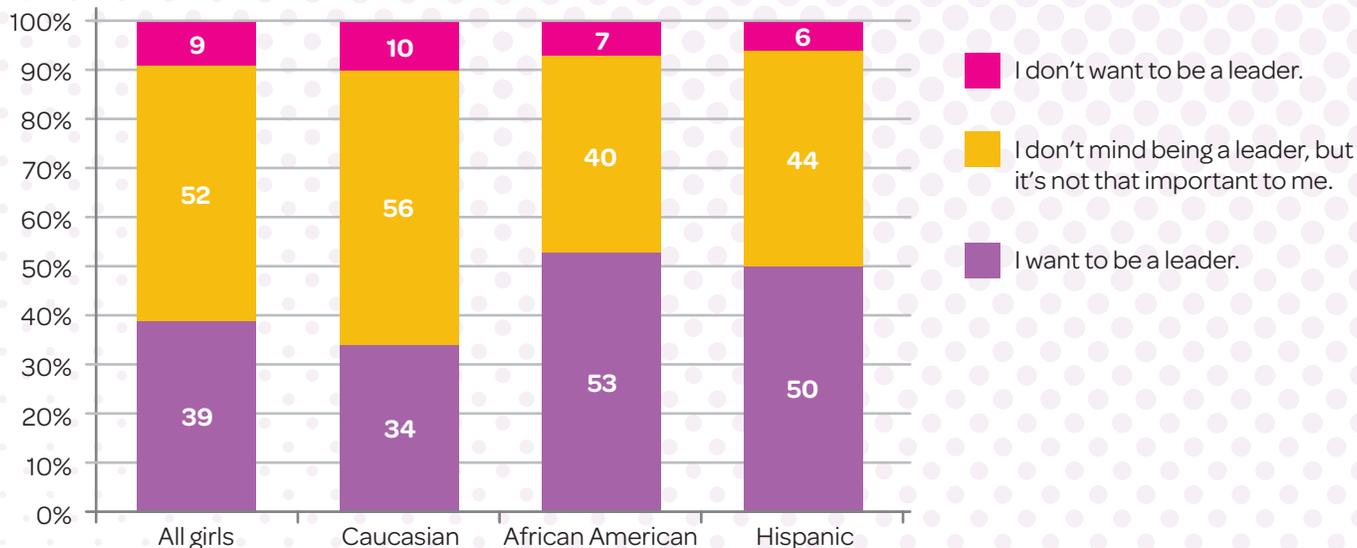
Figure 7-1: Top Goals for Girls Ages 8 to 18, 2009—Percentage Responding “Very Important”



Source: *Change It Up!*, Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008.

More than a third (39 percent) of girls say they want to be leaders, while half (52 percent) say they wouldn't mind being leaders, but it's not particularly important to them. One in ten girls (9 percent) do not want to be leaders. Racial and ethnic differences exist; black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls have a greater desire to be leaders than white girls (see Figure 7-2). About half of both black/African American girls (53 percent) and Hispanic/Latina girls (50 percent) express a desire to be leaders, compared with a third (34 percent) of white girls. Additionally, girls from households with higher incomes are more likely to have leadership aspirations. Among girls who want to be leaders (39 percent), more than two-thirds (67 percent) want to be leaders so they can help other people, while 53 percent say being a leader will allow them to share their knowledge and skills with others.

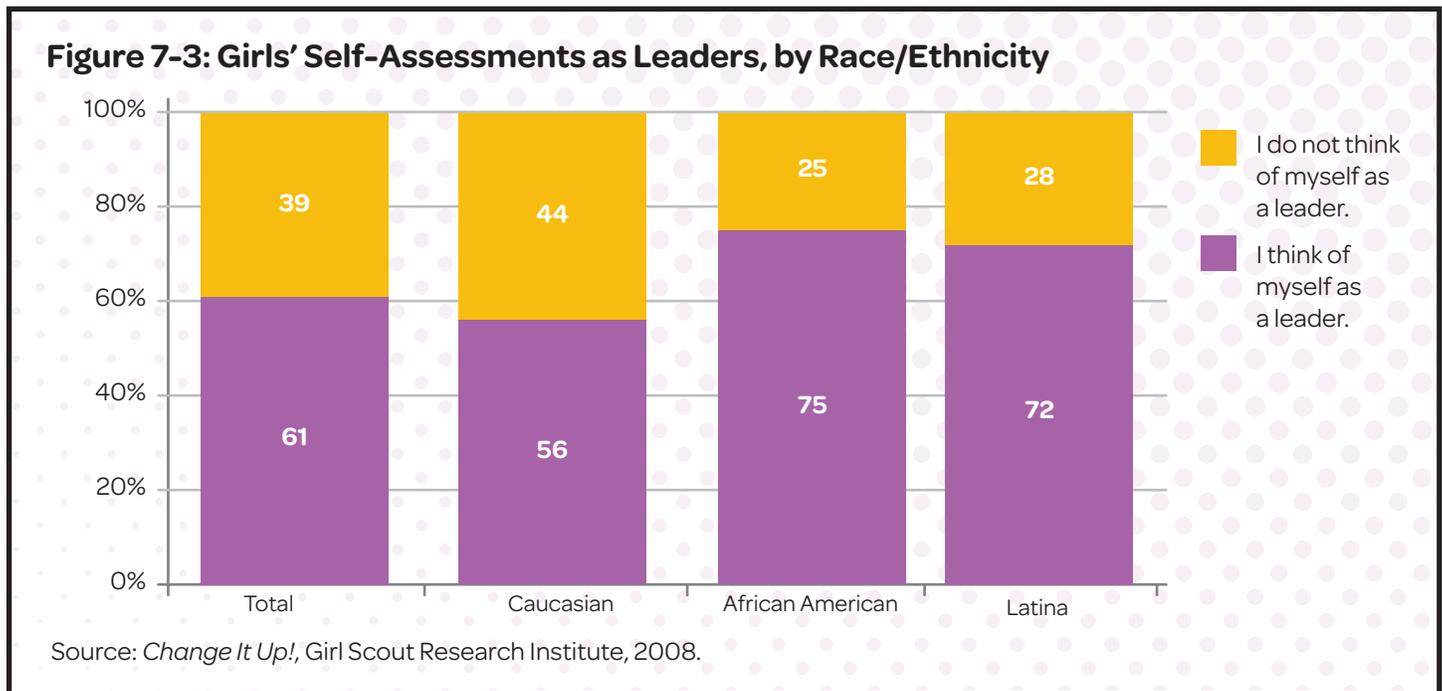
Figure 7-2: Girls' Desire to Be Leaders, by Race/Ethnicity



Source: *Change It Up!*, Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008.



Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls are also more likely to think of themselves as leaders. About three-quarters of both black/African American girls (75 percent) and Hispanic/Latina girls (72 percent) consider themselves leaders, compared to 56 percent of white girls (see Figure 3).



Barriers to Girls' Leadership Aspirations

Among girls who do not want to be leaders (9 percent), the top reasons for rejecting leadership are fear of speaking in front of others (45 percent), shyness (43 percent), non-interest (32 percent), fear of failure (32 percent), and fear of being laughed at (32 percent; see Table 7-1).

Table 7-1: Barriers to Girls' Leadership Aspirations

I do not want to speak in front of others.	45%	People might not like me.	27%
I am too shy.	43%	Other people are better qualified than me.	25%
I am simply not interested.	32%	I don't have experience to be a good leader.	23%
I am afraid I would fail.	32%	I do not have the skills.	21%
I do not want to be laughed at.	32%	Too much stress in my life already.	21%
I do not want people to get mad at me.	30%	Leading doesn't matter, as long as I do what I enjoy.	18%
I do not want the responsibility.	29%	Leading isn't a priority.	16%
I do not want to seem bossy.	29%	I want to be a team player.	14%
I do not want to tell others what to do.	28%		

Source: *Change It Up!*, Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008.

External societal barriers still exist for girls and young women pursuing leadership roles. While a majority of both girls and boys (82 percent) believe that girls and boys have similar leadership skills, more than half (56 percent) of youth believe that “in our society it is more difficult for a woman to become a leader than for a man,” and 52 percent of youth believe that “girls have to work harder than boys in order to gain positions of leadership.” In addition, women are judged by both girls and boys to be better at “taking care of others,” “forming and maintaining relationships,” “running a household,” and “listening to others.” Boys are more likely than girls to feel that the jobs of “running a state or country” and “running a business” are best fulfilled by males.

Girls’ Leadership Experiences

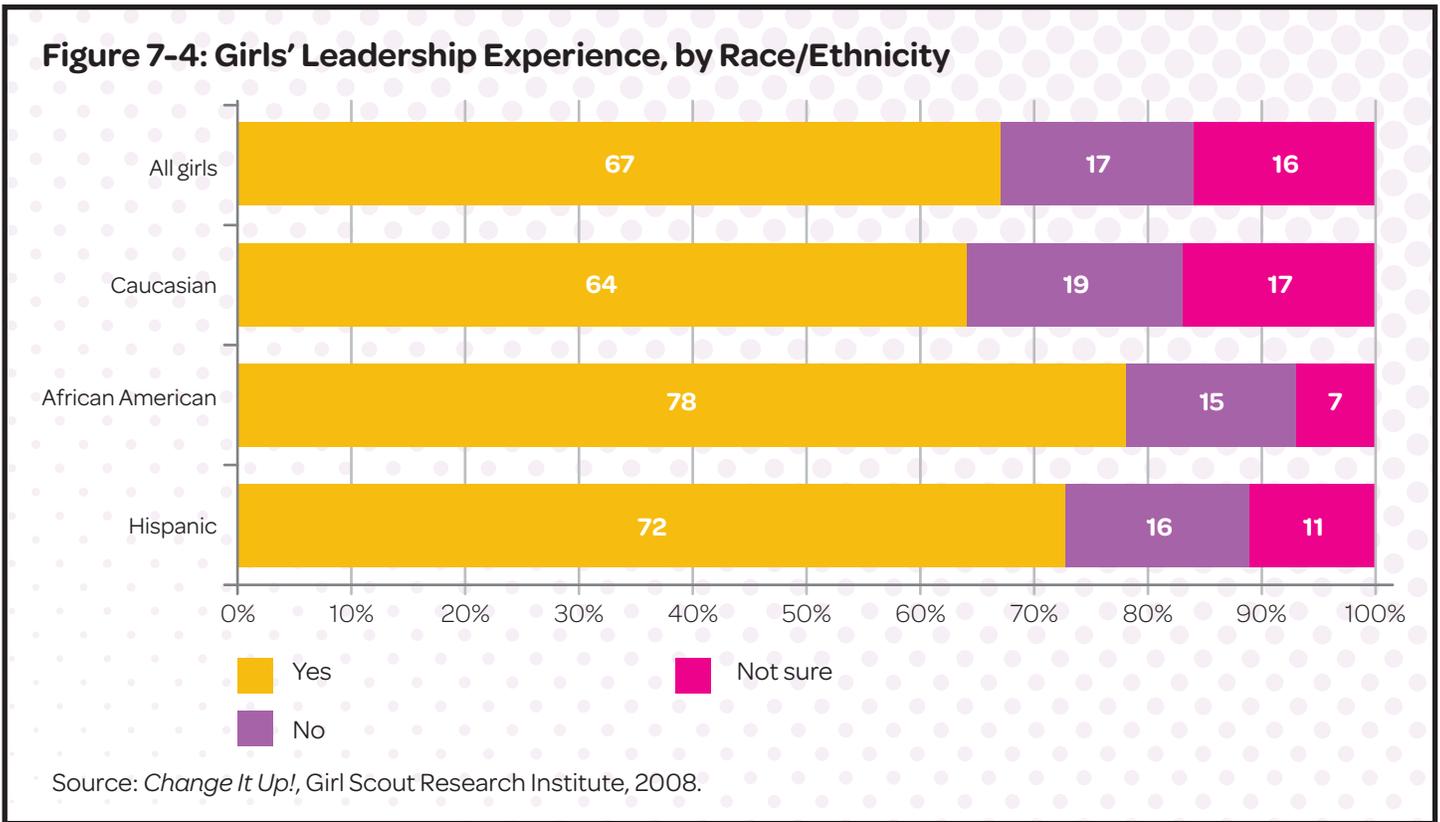
Girls most commonly experience leadership opportunities through formal and informal activities such as taking care of a pet (80 percent), helping to take care of someone (55 percent), trying to stop friends from doing something unsafe (58 percent), helping to raise money for a cause (51 percent), and babysitting (55 percent; see Table 7-2). Girls have less experience with opportunities that involve neighborhood or social change, political activism, and more traditional forms of leadership.

Table 7-2: Girls’ Experience with Formal and Informal Leadership Activities

Took care of a pet	80%
Tried to stop friends from doing something wrong or unsafe	58%
Helped to take care of someone	55%
Helped to raise money for a cause	51%
Babysat for someone	55%
Have been responsible for a younger brother or sister	45%
Have been leader of a team for a school project	31%
Volunteered to do community service	29%
Tried to get friends or family involved in some community service or events	23%
Organized a game in your neighborhood	15%
Have been a captain or co-captain of a sports team	14%
Have been a mentor to someone else	15%
Run for a class or school office	13%
Started a club	11%
Started an online group, blog, or chatline	11%
Have been an officer in a club	11%
Tried to change something you didn’t like about your neighborhood or community	9%
Started a petition or sent a letter to a politician or newspaper editor	5%
Organized a protest	3%

Source: *Change It Up!*, Girl Scout Research Institute, 2008.

Black/African American (78 percent) and Hispanic/Latina (72 percent) girls are more likely to have leadership experience compared with white girls (64 percent; see Figure 7-4). They are also more likely to have enjoyed their leadership experience.



Factors That Influence Girls' Leadership Aspirations and Experiences

Girls say that they are most inspired to be a leader by their mothers (81 percent), teachers (65 percent), fathers (62 percent), and friends (55 percent). While peers can have a positive impact on girls' leadership experiences, they also can have a negative one. More than a third (39 percent) of all girls report having been discouraged or put down, usually by peers and classmates, when they were trying to lead.

The majority of girls (82 percent) say that both boys and girls are equally good at being leaders. However, more than half (57 percent) agree that "girls have to work harder than boys in order to gain positions of leadership."

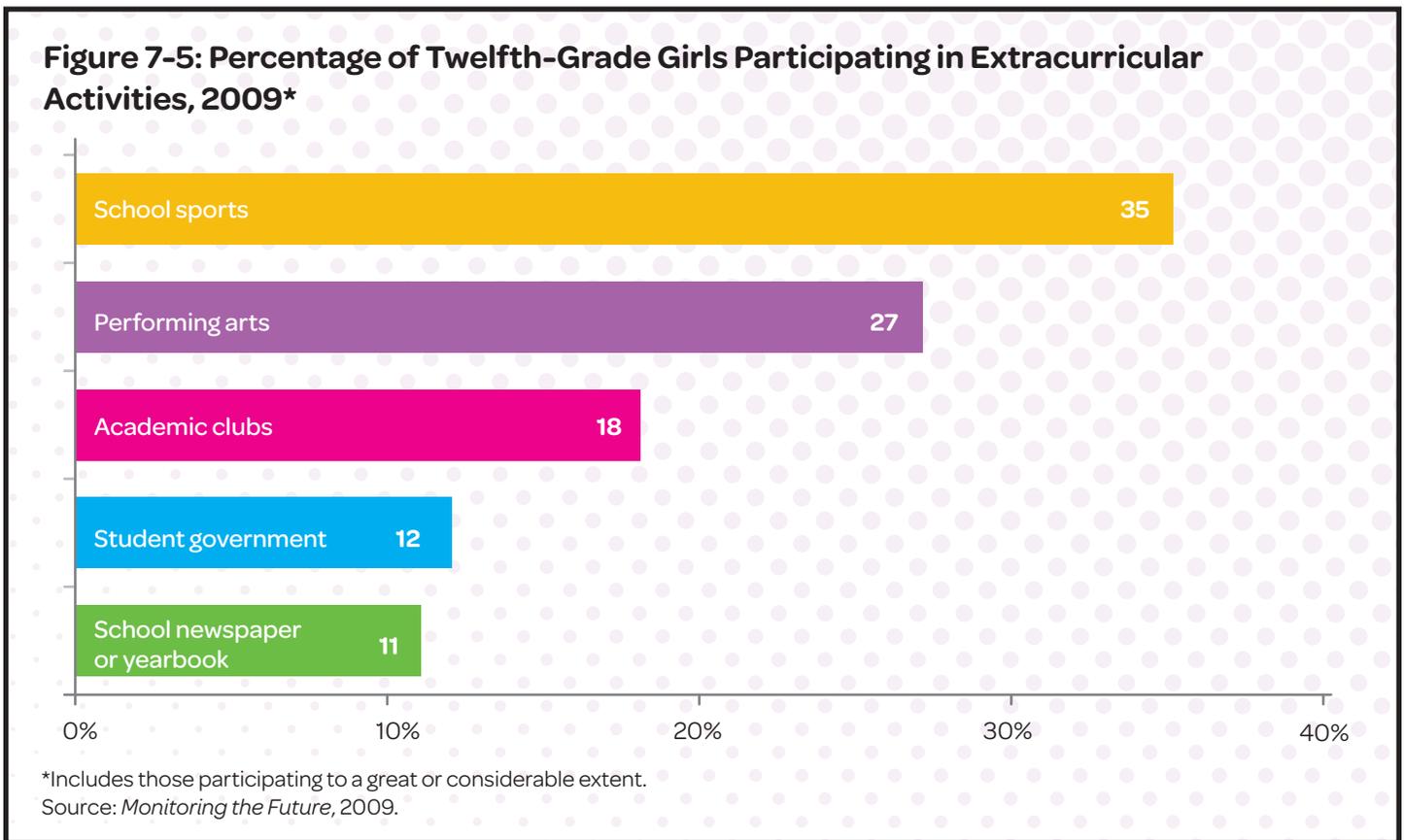
Leadership Skills

Experts on youth leadership identify certain skills as important to becoming leaders. These skills are varied but typically include a combination of organizational skills, problem solving, decision making, ability to engage and motivate others, assertiveness, and creativity.¹⁶⁵¹⁶⁶ These skills can be best developed through participation in diverse extracurricular activities, social networks for girls, and voluntary civic action.¹⁶⁷

Girls rate leadership skills very highly, but feel that they fall short of the leadership threshold. Ninety-two percent of girls believe anyone can acquire the skills of leadership, but only 21 percent believe they currently have most of these key qualities.¹⁶⁸ Self-confidence is the factor that most strongly influences girls' desire to actively pursue leadership roles. Compared to white girls, black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls rate themselves more highly on leadership skills and dimensions such as extraversion, organizational skills, creativity, caring, dominance, and positive problem-solving.

Factors Associated with Youth Leadership: Extracurricular Activities

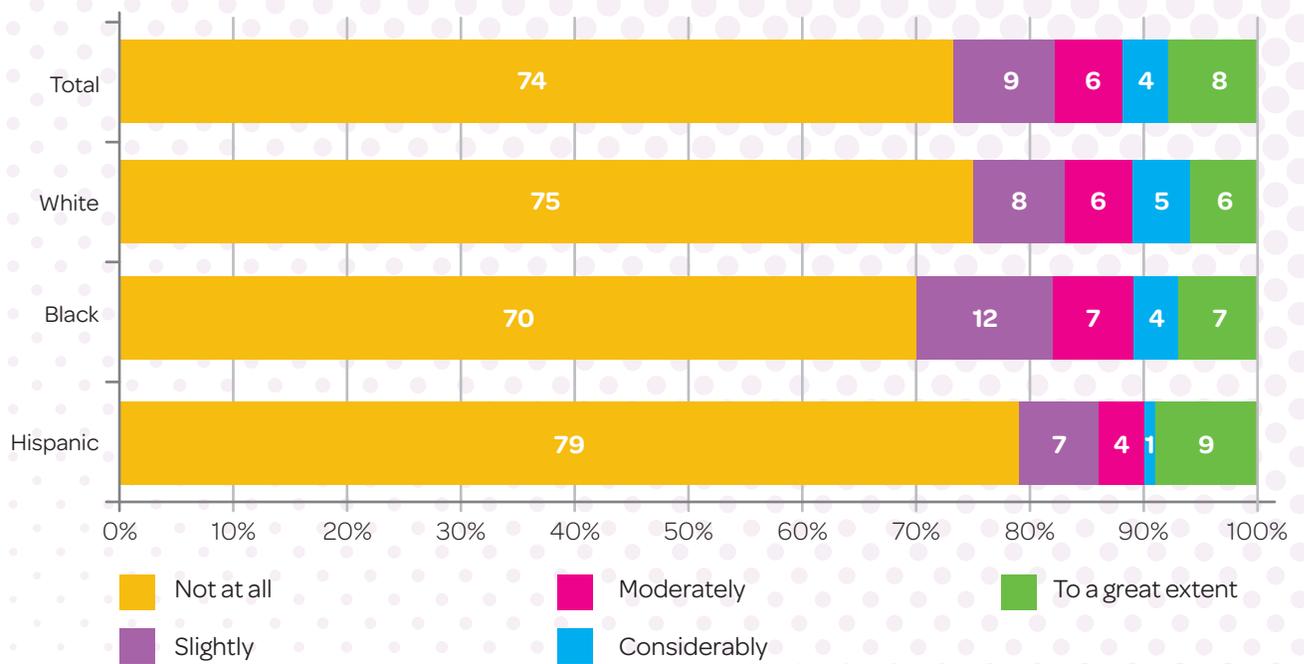
As mentioned in Chapter 6, participation in extracurricular activities helps young people to build leadership and teamwork skills. More than a third (35 percent) of twelfth-grade girls participated in school sports in 2009, making it the most popular extracurricular activity for girls (see Figure 7-5).



“The research is a treasure trove of information about the people and causes that inspire girls to lead. The findings that African American and Hispanic girls are more comfortable leading is an unprecedented insight with enormous programming potential. Yet with only one in five girls believing they have the skills they need to become leaders, the data suggest there is much work we have yet to do.” —Rachel Simmons, Girls Leadership Institute

About 26 percent of twelfth-grade girls participated in student government, with 12 percent participating to a considerable or great extent (see Figure 7-6). Black/African American girls are the most likely to report any participation in student government.

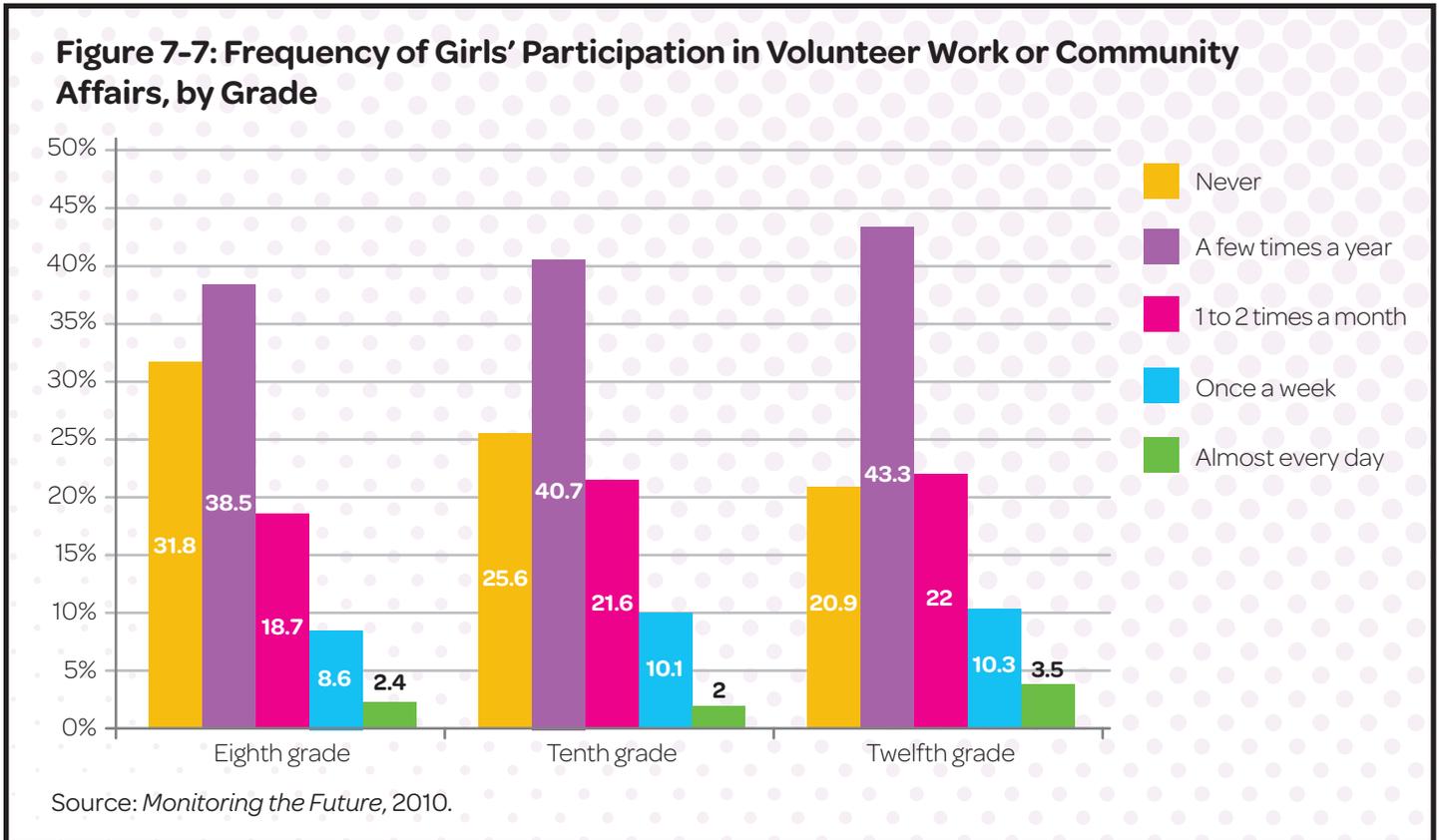
Figure 7-6: Twelfth-Grade Girls Participating in Student Council or Government, by Race/Ethnicity, 2009



Source: *Monitoring the Future*, 2009.

Volunteerism

About three-quarters of teen girls between eighth grade and twelfth grade engage in volunteer activities at least once a year, and about one-third of girls volunteer at least once per month (see Figure 7-7). Older girls volunteer more than younger girls. Seventy-nine percent of twelfth-grade girls volunteer at least once a year, compared to 75 percent of tenth-grade girls and 68 percent of eighth-grade girls. Thirty-six percent of twelfth-grade girls volunteer at least once per month, compared to 34 percent of tenth-grade girls, and 30 percent of eighth-grade girls.



White girls volunteer more frequently than black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls. Among twelfth-grade girls, 39 percent of white girls volunteer at least once a month, compared to 33 percent of black/African American girls, and 28 percent of Hispanic/Latina girls (see Figure 7-8).

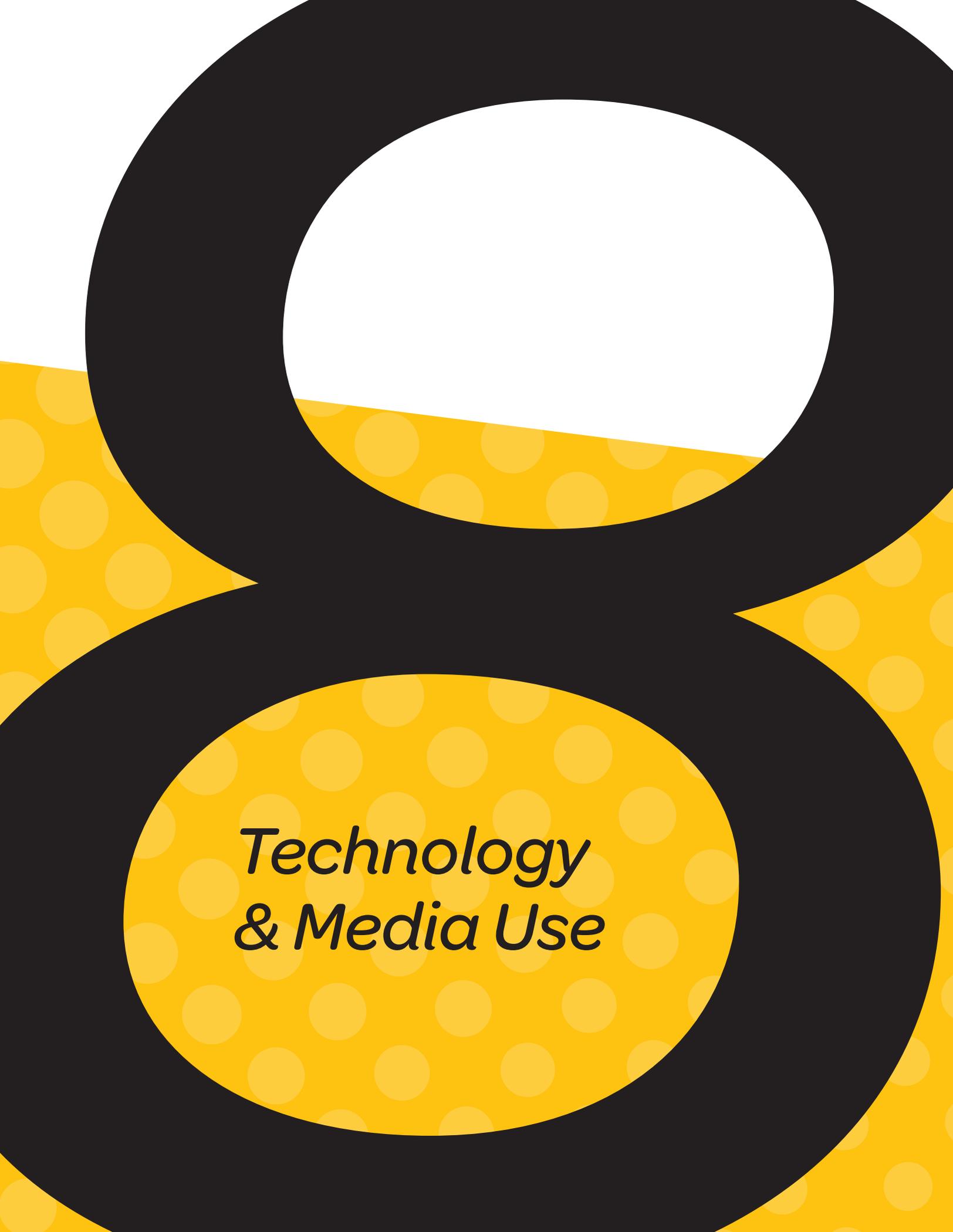


“The State of Girls report echoes many of Search Institute’s studies that focus on the developmental assets that young people need in order to succeed in their families, schools, and communities. It calls all parents, educators, youth workers, and leaders to invest in and support young women as leaders, workers, and citizens of our nation and our world.”

—Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Vice President of Research and Development, Search Institute, Minneapolis

Summary and Implications

- Opportunities for leadership are scarce. Girls are passionate about making a difference. Youth development organizations such as Girl Scouts need to work with young people to help them build skills around effecting change in themselves, the community, and the world at large.
- Girls' leadership aspirations are related to the notions of leadership they see being circulated in the culture. Girls relate to leadership when it is defined as collaborative, inclusive, and concerned with making a difference in the world. Adults who work with girls need to help incorporate and model this broader view of leadership into girls' purview.
- Girls need to see a broader range of women stepping up to leadership positions in the culture. If girls can't see it, they can't be it. Girls express interest in having women leaders reach out to them so that they can learn from the real successes and failures of these women, as well as the pathways they have taken to achieve their career goals.
- Girls who shy away from leadership often do so due to relational issues, such as fear of not being liked, fear of being seen as bossy by others, and fear of making a decision that might cost them a friendship. Adults who work with girls need to help them develop the skills to cope with these issues—skills such as conflict resolution, healthy communication, and problem solving—so that these barriers no longer prevent girls from stepping into more public leadership roles.



*Technology
& Media Use*



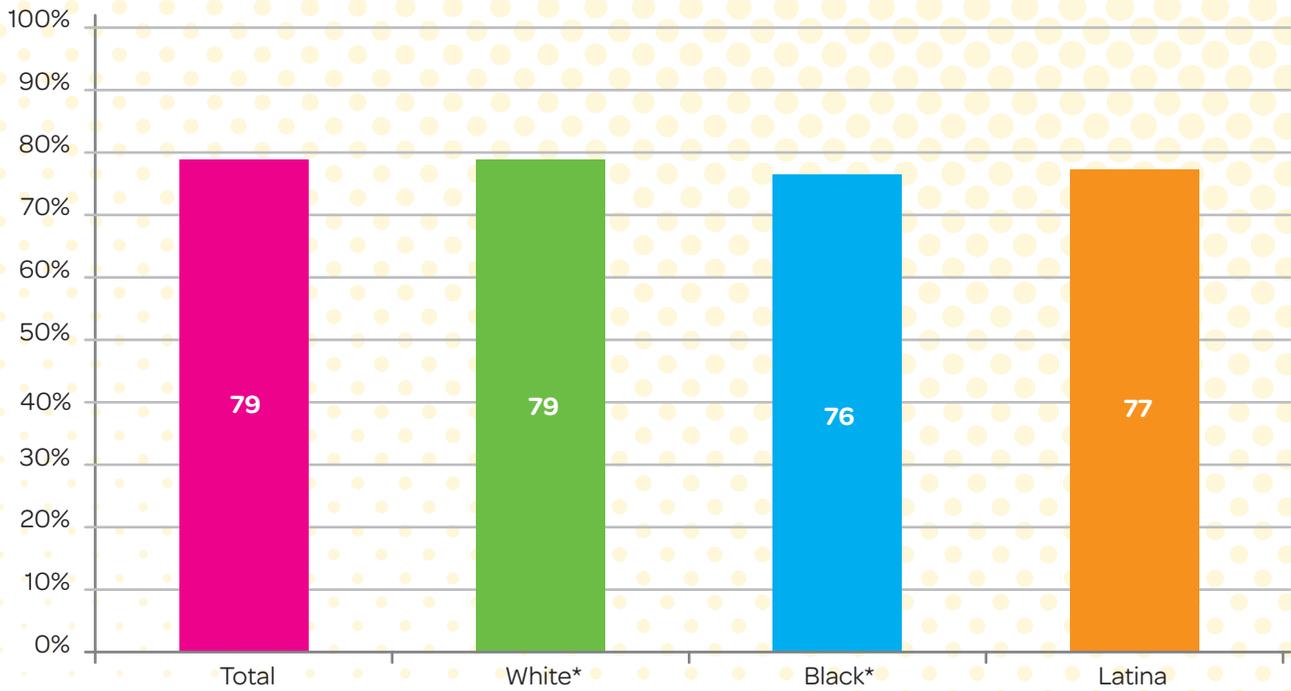
Today's teenagers are often called "the digital generation." In a social environment transformed by rapidly changing technology, teenagers are connected to each other and to their world in more complex ways than any generation before them.¹⁶⁹ Product diversification and lower prices have put new technology such as desktop and laptop computers, cell phones, smartphones, tablets, and high-speed Internet service within reach of a much larger share of American households and teenagers. Other than sleeping, adolescents today spend more time using media than they do in any other single activity.¹⁷⁰

The vast majority (83 percent) of teenage girls who use the Internet have an account on a social networking site such as Facebook or MySpace. While use of such social media has been shown to benefit adolescents by increasing their social connections, enhancing their communication and learning opportunities, and even increasing their technical skills, it has also exposed them to cyberbullying and privacy risks resulting from the posting of inappropriate messages, pictures, and videos.¹⁷¹ It is important for parents and other concerned adults to be knowledgeable about the extensive and varied uses of new technology and social media by teenage girls.

Access to Technology: Computers

More than three-fourths of girls ages 12 to 17 have their own desktop or laptop computer, and this share is about the same for white, black/African American, and Hispanic/Latina girls (see Figure 8-1). However, even among girls who do not have their own computer, about two-thirds do have access to a computer in their home.

Figure 8-1: Percentage of Girls Ages 12 to 17 Who Have Their Own Computers at Home, 2011



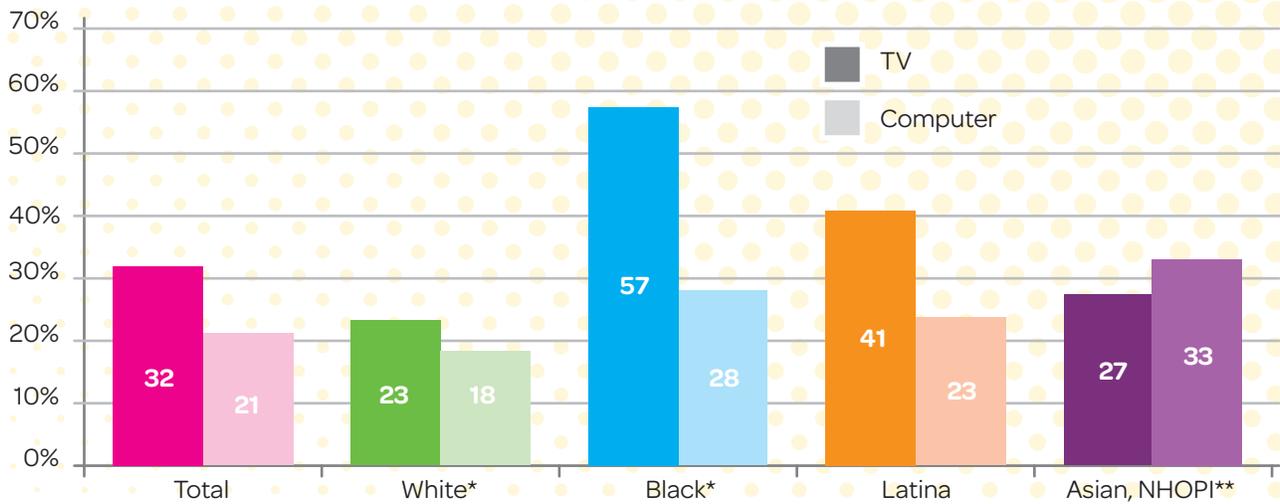
*Non-Hispanic

Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Although teenage girls frequently use computers and new electronic media such as social networking, they have not stopped watching television.

In fact, a recent study suggests TV viewing by teens increased between 2005 and 2009.¹⁷² Overall, about one-third of high school girls reported watching three or more hours of television on the average school day (see Figure 8-2), but this proportion was much higher among blacks/African Americans (57 percent) and Hispanics/Latinas (41 percent). Much smaller shares of blacks/African Americans and Hispanics/Latinas, and a slightly smaller share of white girls, reported using a computer—other than for homework—for three or more hours on the average school day than reported watching television for three or more hours per day. Among Asian American girls, this pattern was reversed: a higher share reported using a computer for three or more hours a day than reported watching television for three or more hours a day (see Figure 8-2). One reason television viewing has remained high despite increases in teens’ use of other electronic media is the growth among teenagers of multitasking—the act of using multiple media at the same time, such as surfing the Internet on their computer and text messaging with friends while they are watching television.¹⁷³

Figure 8-2: Percentage of High School Girls Who Watch TV or Use a Computer (Not for Homework) Three or More Hours Per Day, 2009



*Non-Hispanic **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic
Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

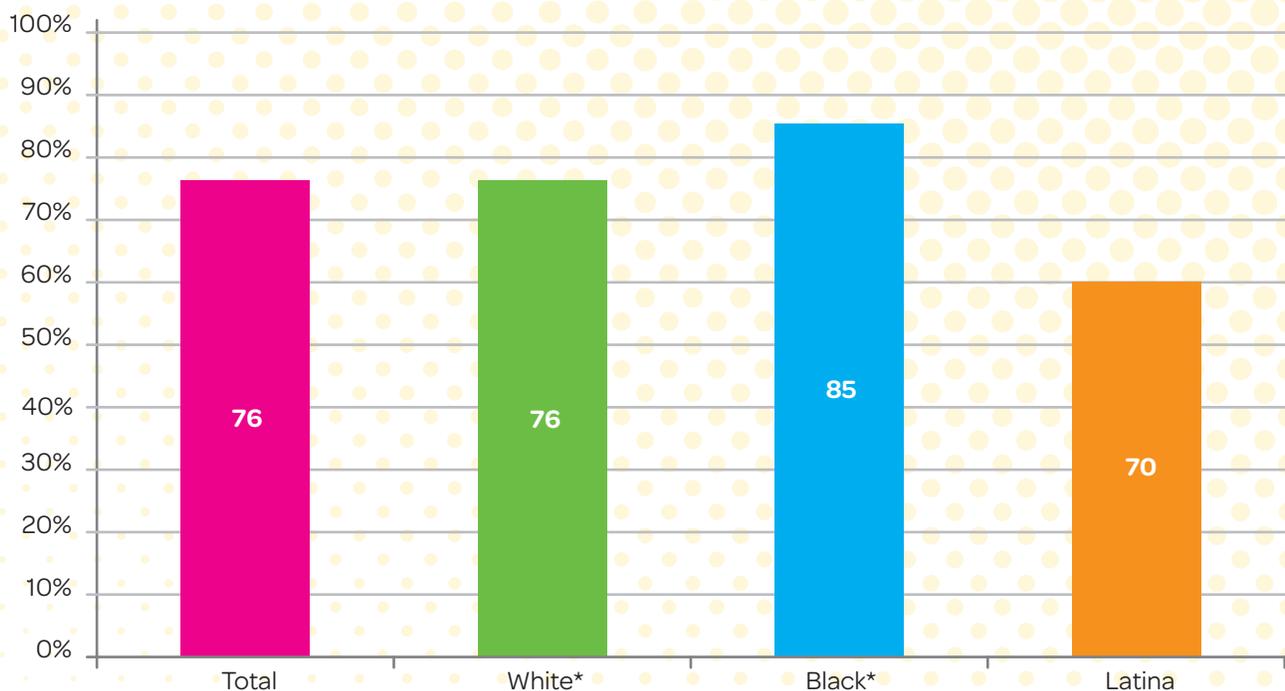
Watching television and/or using a computer for at least three hours on an average school day leaves less time for homework and extracurricular activities. However, research shows that time spent on electronic media does not appear to reduce the amount of time that American youth spend doing homework or reading—primarily because they spend very little time involved in either of these activities.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, most studies find that the total amount of time spent watching television has only a small negative effect on school achievement.¹⁷⁵ Watching television also does not significantly reduce the amount of time that adolescents spend in school-related activities.

“This report reminds us that, despite the ubiquity of media today, young people’s experiences with technology are by no means monolithic. As we begin to explore the positive and negative impact of media and technology on girls’ well-being, we must also consider social and cultural variables. Also, from this vantage point, adult mentors can have more meaningful and culturally appropriate conversations with girls about using technology in enriching, safe, responsible, and respectful ways.”

–Kelly Schryver, Education Content Associate, Common Sense Media

Playing video games on computers, game consoles, or cell phones is another popular leisure activity for adolescent girls. Although video gaming by boys has received more attention, 76 percent of girls ages 12 to 17 also play video games (see Figure 8-3). Black/African American girls are more likely to play video games than white or Hispanic/Latina girls. While studies show that video games can enhance visual-spatial skills and improve problem-solving skills, they also find that playing violent video games increases aggressive behavior among both girls and boys.¹⁷⁶

Figure 8-3: Percentage of Girls Ages 12 to 17 Who Play Video Games, 2011



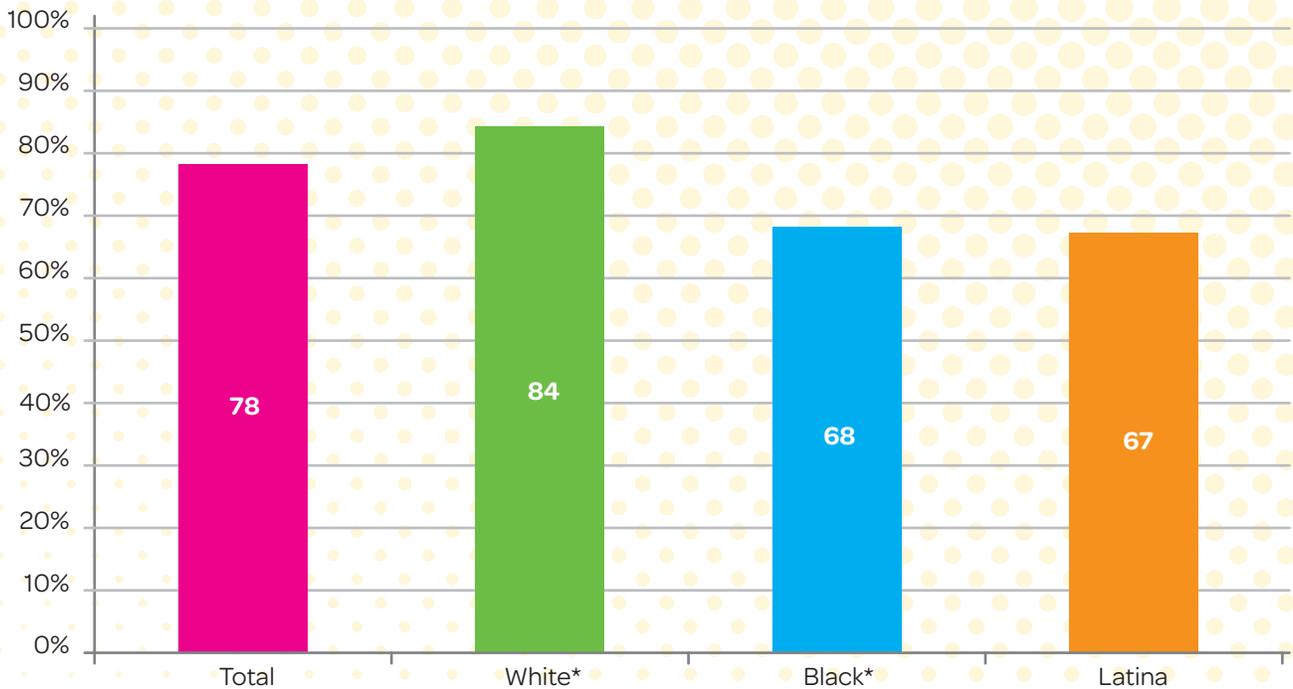
*Non-Hispanic

Source: The Pew Research Center’s Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Cell Phones

More than three-fourths of all 12-to-17 year-old girls have a cell phone, but the share is lower among black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls (see Figure 8-4). Among those with cell phones, only about one-fourth of all girls (27 percent) have a smartphone, and this share is slightly higher among non-Hispanic white girls than among girls in other racial/ethnic groups. Of course, the distinction between smartphones and feature phones has become increasingly blurred in recent years, as both have similar functionality such as built-in cameras, MP3 players, and text messaging. The primary difference is that smartphones provide Internet and email access and the ability to download and use third party software applications. Smartphone owners also usually pay additional monthly fees for a data plan to cover the cost of web browsing and content downloading. However, these distinctions are not necessarily clear to all teenagers, as evidenced by the fact that 16 percent of girls reported that they did not know or were not sure if their cell phone was a smartphone.¹⁷⁷

Figure 8-4: Percentage of Girls Ages 12 to 17 Who Own a Cell Phone, 2011



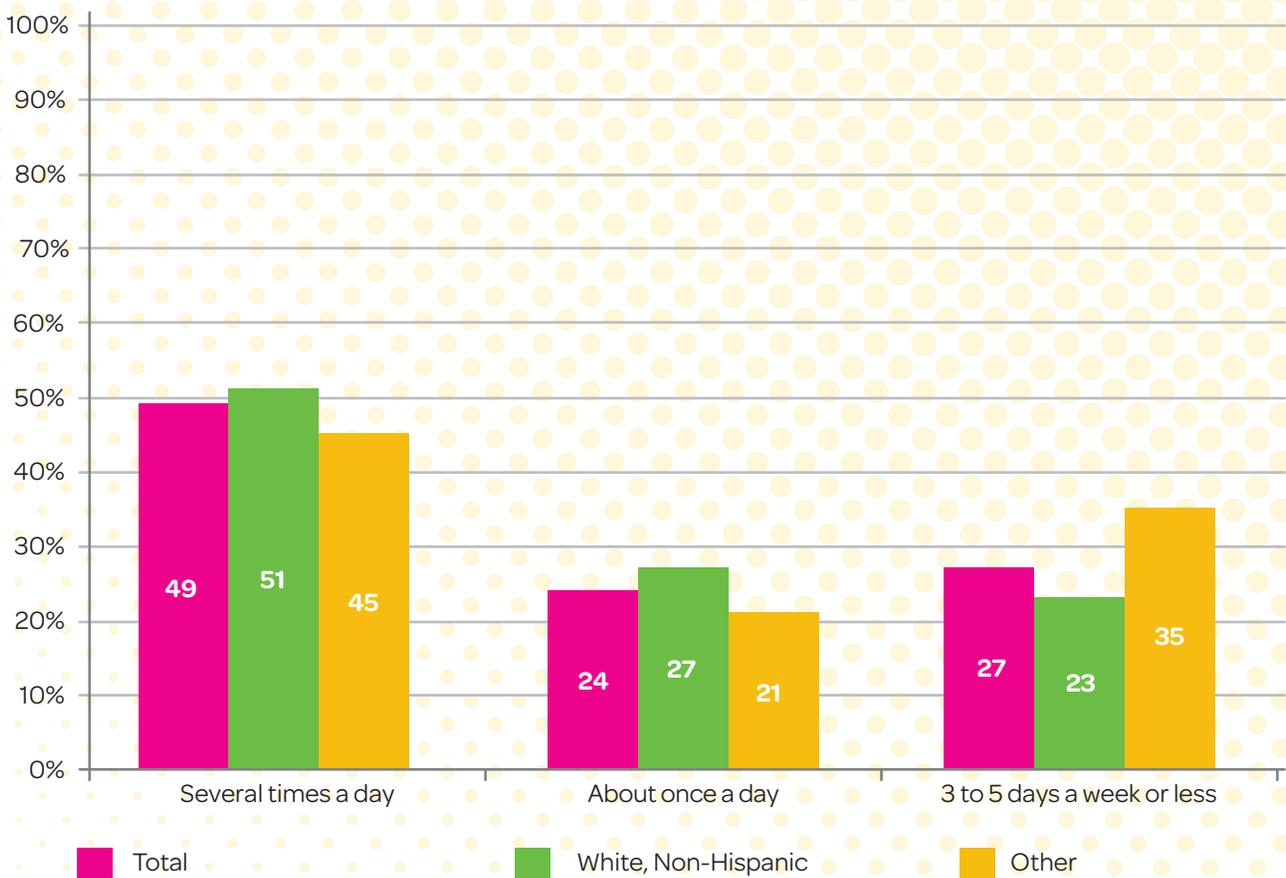
*Non-Hispanic

Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Internet Use

In 2011, a Pew Research Center survey found that 82 percent of teens' homes access the Internet using some type of high-speed connection, while only 3 percent use a dial-up service. These proportions are very similar to those reported by all U.S. households in the 2010 Current Population Survey.¹⁷⁸ Among girls ages 12 to 17, about half use the Internet several times a day, although this share is slightly higher among non-Hispanic white girls than girls in other racial/ethnic groups (see Figure 8-5). About one-fourth of all girls use the Internet only once a day and one-fourth use it only three to five days a week or less, but these shares are higher among minority girls than white girls.

Figure 8-5: Frequency of Internet Use Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011

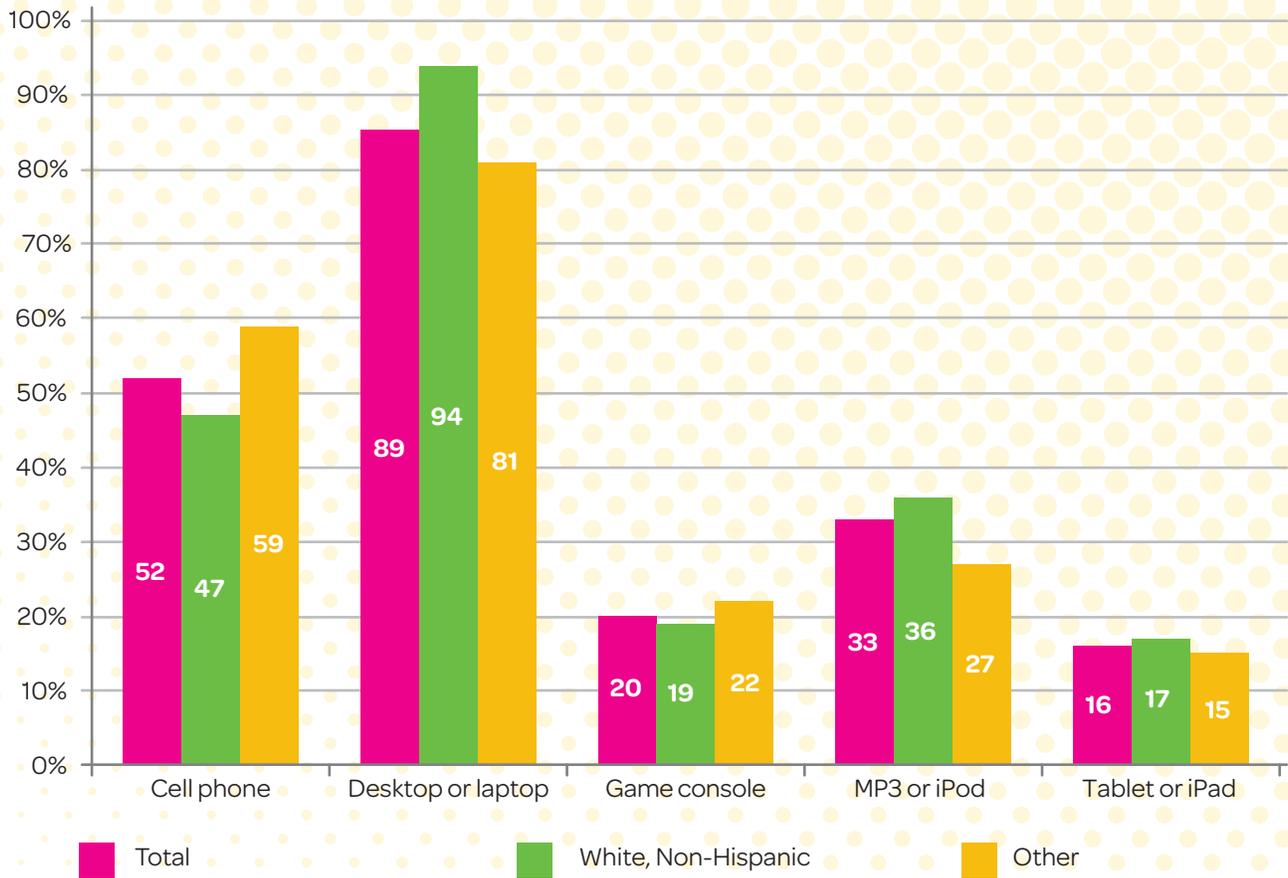


*Other includes all races other than Non-Hispanic White.

Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Girls are using the Internet on a variety of devices, including cell phones, computers, game consoles, iPods, and tablets (see Figure 8-6). Computers are still the predominant way that girls access the Internet, but use of the Internet via cell phones is also quite high, especially among minority girls. Non-Hispanic white girls are slightly less likely to use the Internet on a game console and more likely to use it on an MP3/iPod than girls in other racial/ethnic groups.

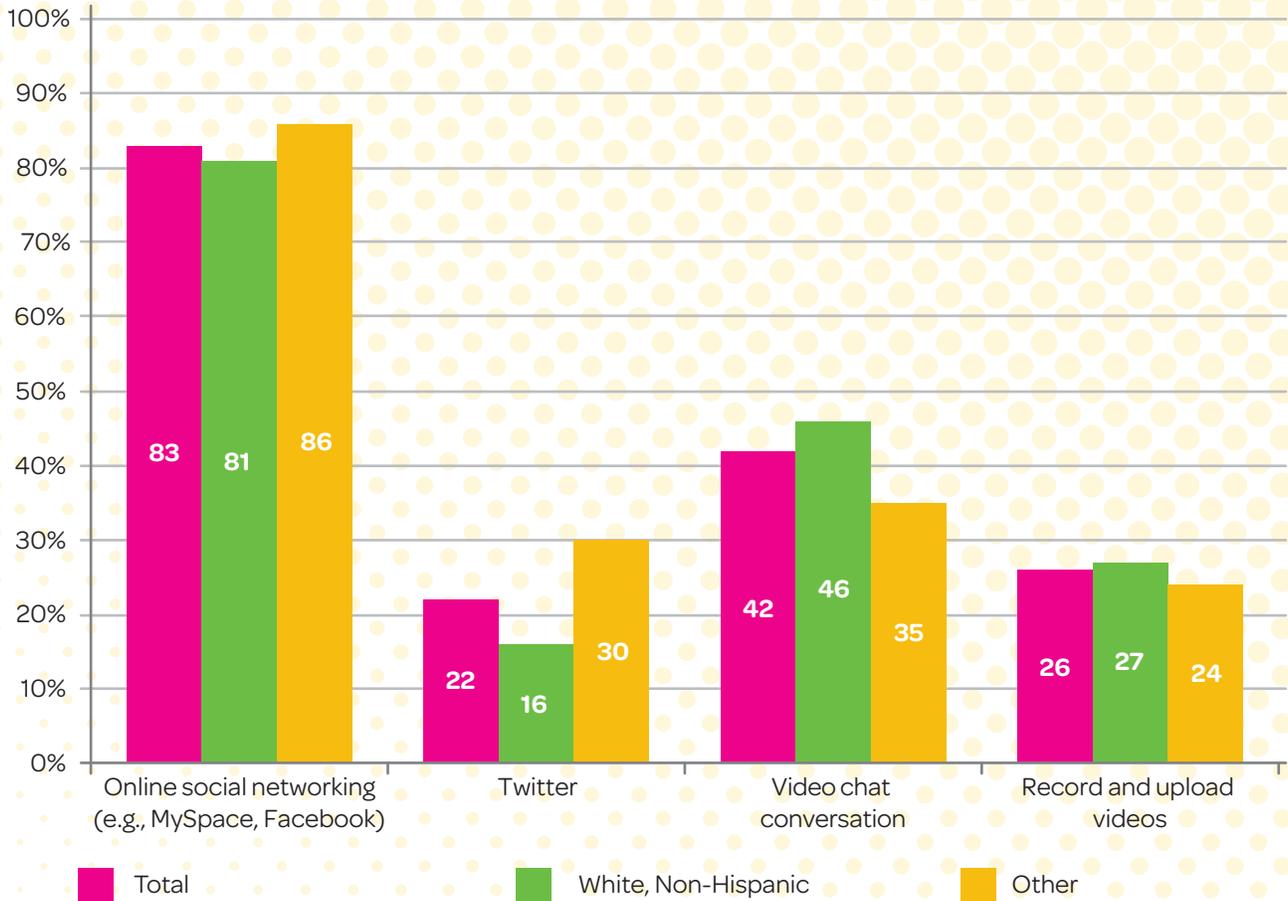
Figure 8-6: Devices Used to Access Internet in the Past 30 Days Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011



*Other includes all races other than Non-Hispanic White.
 Note: Girls may report using more than one device.
 Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Adolescent girls participate in a wide range of activities on the Internet. More than 80 percent of them use social networking, 42 percent use video chat, 26 percent record and upload videos, and 22 percent use Twitter (see Figure 8-7). Non-Hispanic white girls are less likely to use social networking and Twitter than girls in other racial/ethnic groups but are more likely to have video-chat conversations.

Figure 8-7: Internet Activities Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011



*Other includes all races other than Non-Hispanic White.

Note: Girls may report using more than one device.

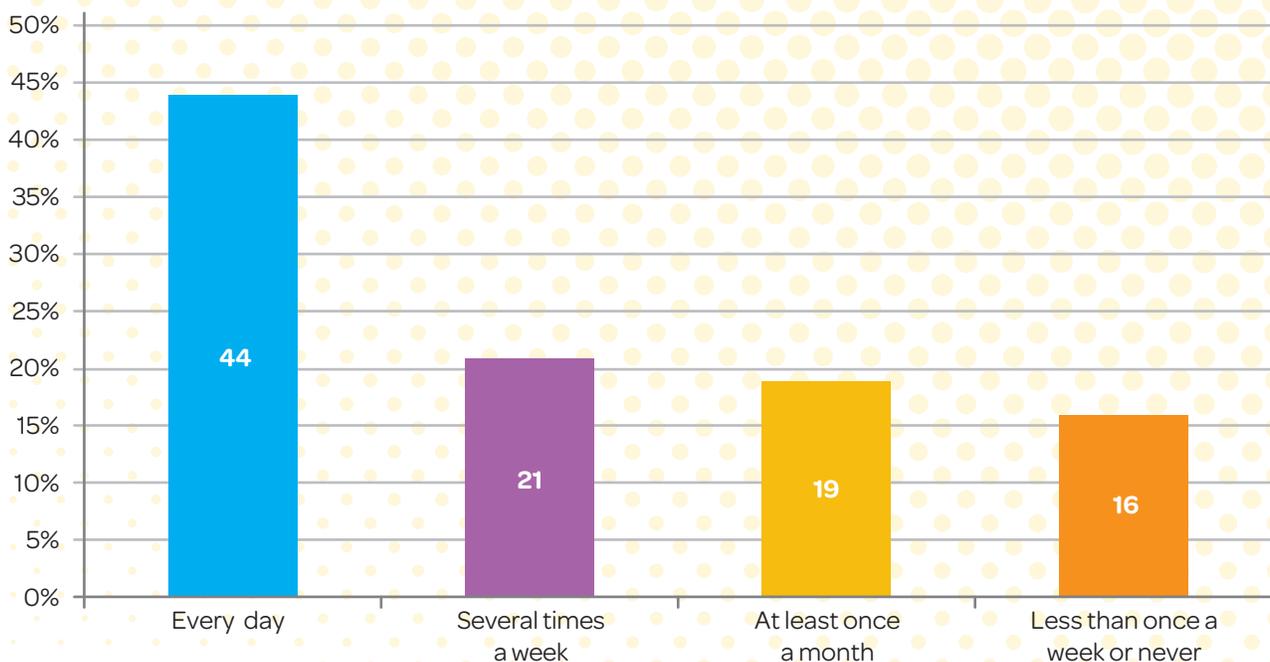
Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Communicating Through Electronic Media

Maintaining close connections with their friends and having the latest news about their activities and plans are very important to teenage girls. This is reflected in the rapid increase in girls' use of social networking sites between 2006 and 2011. While just over half (55 percent) of online teens used social networking sites in 2006,¹⁷⁹ this share rose to 83 percent among teenage girls by 2011. Among girls using social networking sites, 92 percent have an account with Facebook, 22 percent have MySpace pages, and only 16 percent have Twitter accounts.

Exchanging messages through social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace is a popular way girls communicate, with 44 percent using it every day (see Figure 8-8). About one-fifth of girls use social networking several times a week or at least once a week, and only 16 percent of all teenage girls say they use social networking to exchange messages less than once a week or never. About 47 percent of non-Hispanic white girls use social networking every day compared with 40 percent of girls in other racial/ethnic groups.

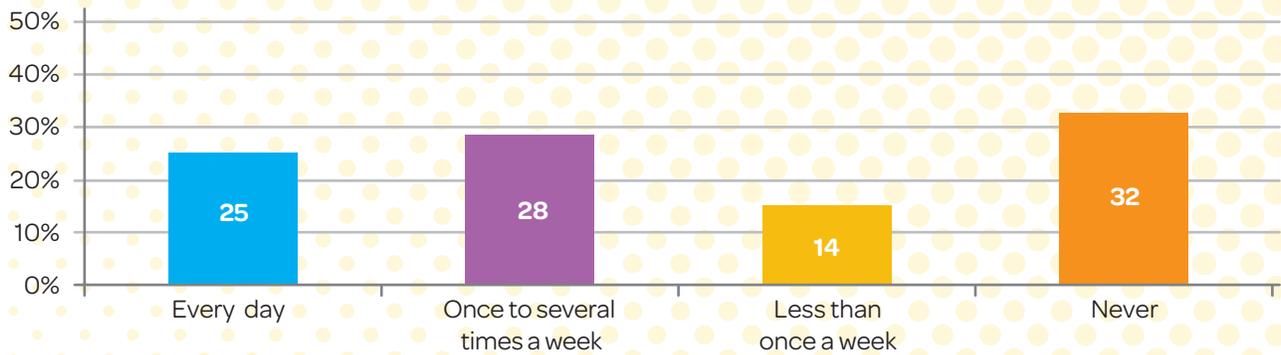
Figure 8-8: Frequency of Exchanging Messages Through Social Networking Sites Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011



Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Even with the growth in popularity of communicating through social networking sites, instant messaging is still in use among adolescent girls (see Figure 8-9). One-fourth of all girls ages 12 to 17 exchange instant messages with their friends every day, and an additional 28 percent do it at least once a week. Only 14 percent of adolescent girls use instant messaging less than once a week, but almost one-third never use it at all to communicate with their friends.

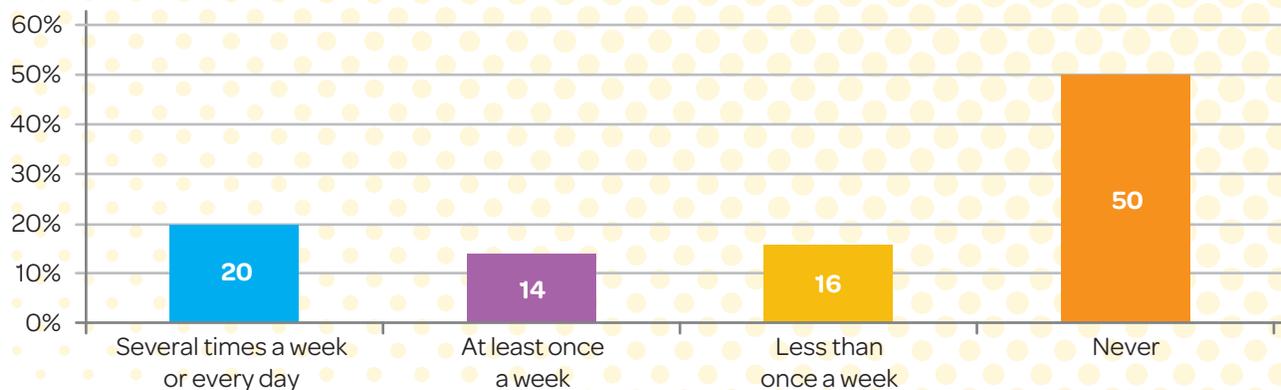
Figure 8-8: Frequency of Exchanging Instant Messages with Friends Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011



Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

As teen girls have switched to social networking, instant messaging, and texting to communicate with their friends, their use of email has declined. Half of all girls ages 12 to 17 never exchange email with their friends, while only one-fifth do it every day or several times a week (see Figure 8-10). About one-sixth of adolescent girls exchange email with their friends less than once a week.

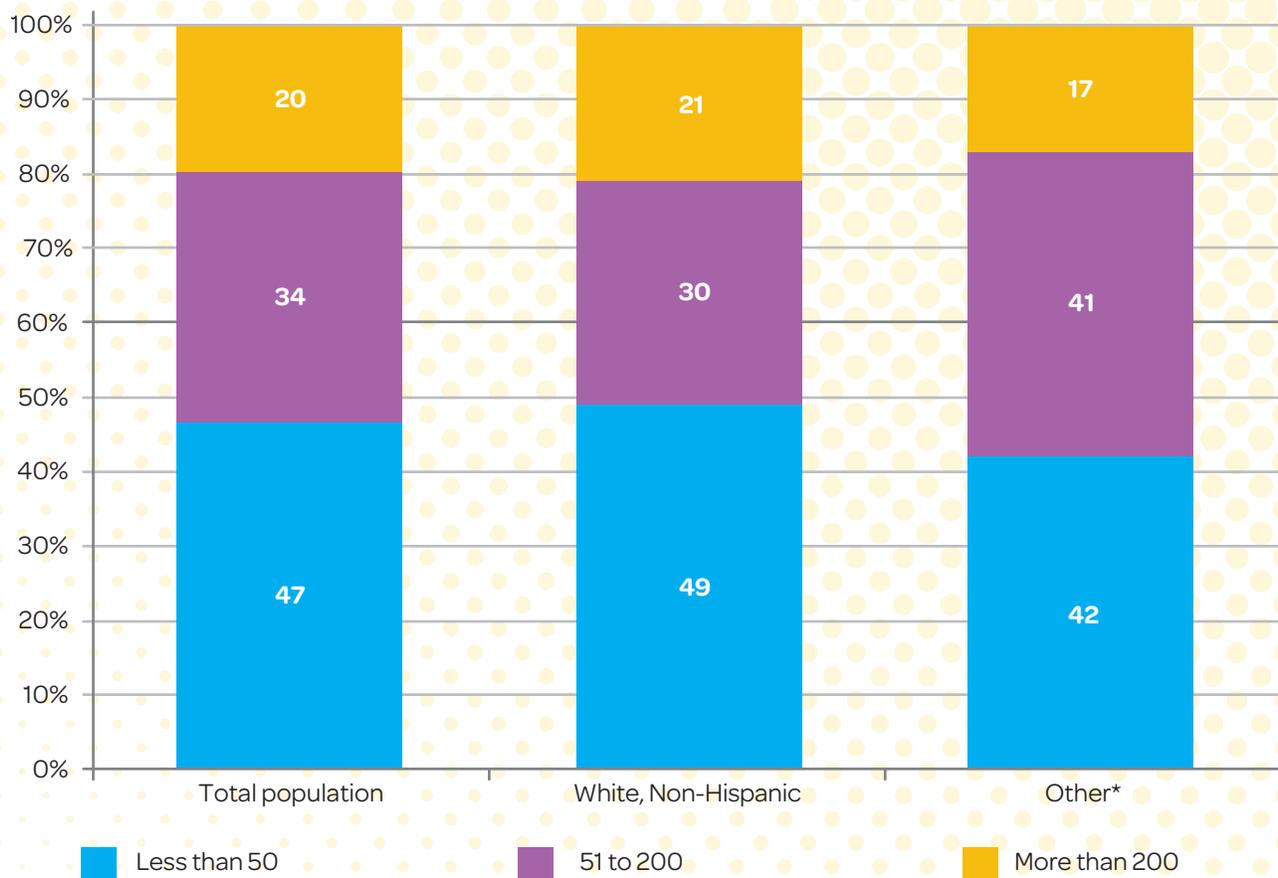
Figure 8-10: Frequency of Exchanging Email with Friends Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011



Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

With the vast majority (78 percent) of teenage girls having cell phones, text messaging is the dominant way girls communicate with their friends.¹⁸⁰ Among all 12- to 17-year-old girls, one-fifth send and receive more than 200 messages on an average day, one-third exchange between 51 and 200 messages, and nearly half (47 percent) send and receive 50 messages or fewer (see Figure 8-11). There are some differences between girls in different racial and ethnic groups in the frequency of text messaging. Non-Hispanic white girls are slightly more likely than girls in other racial/ethnic groups to exchange either more than 200 messages per day or 50 or fewer messages per day.

Figure 8-11: Frequency of Text Messaging on a Cell Phone on an Average Day Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011



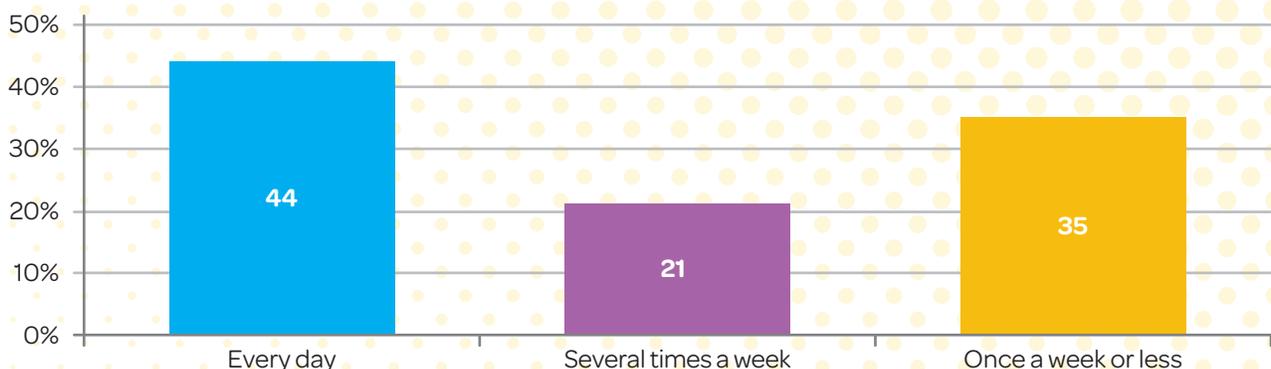
*Other includes all races other than Non-Hispanic White.

Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

It is important to note that these different modes of communication are not mutually exclusive. In fact, teenage girls are quite likely to communicate with their friends simultaneously through Facebook, instant messaging, and text messaging. While it is convenient for girls to be able to communicate information to their friends quickly and easily, these capabilities can also be very distracting when teens need to concentrate to complete homework or study for tests. In addition, some girls may not get enough sleep because it is easy for them to stay up late texting without their parents' knowledge.

Despite their extensive use of social networking, instant messaging, and text messaging, girls still talk to their friends on their cell phones and on their home phones. About 44 percent of girls ages 12 to 17 talk with their friends on their cell phones every day, while only 35 percent of girls say they never talk with their friends on their cell phones (see Figure 8-12).

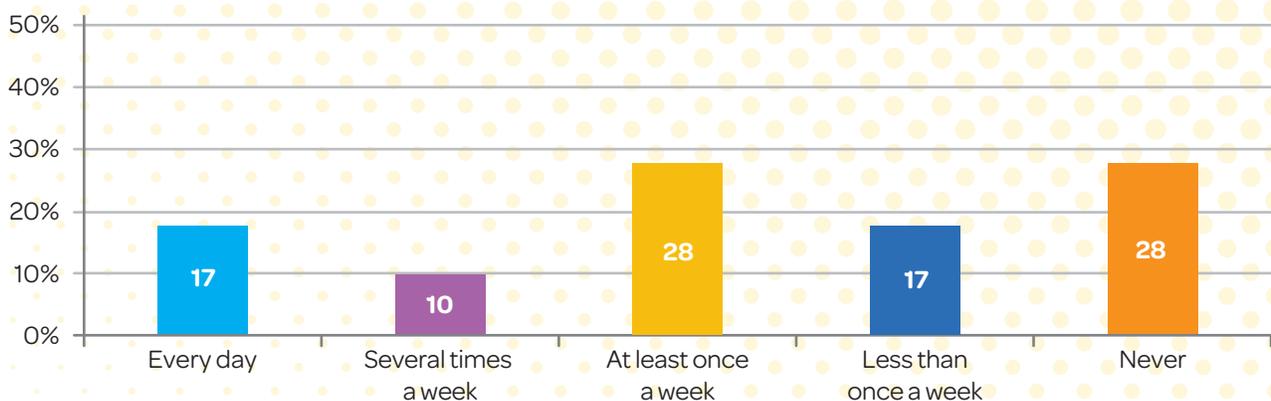
Figure 8-12: Frequency of Talking with Friends on a Cell Phone Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011



Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Teenage girls are much less likely to talk with friends on their home telephones than on their cell phones (see Figure 8-13). Less than one-fifth talk on their home phones every day and more than one-fourth (28 percent) say they never talk with their friends on their home phones. However, 28 percent of adolescent girls do report talking with friends on their home phones at least once a week.

Figure 8-13: Frequency of Talking with Friends on a Home Telephone Among Girls Ages 12 to 17, 2011

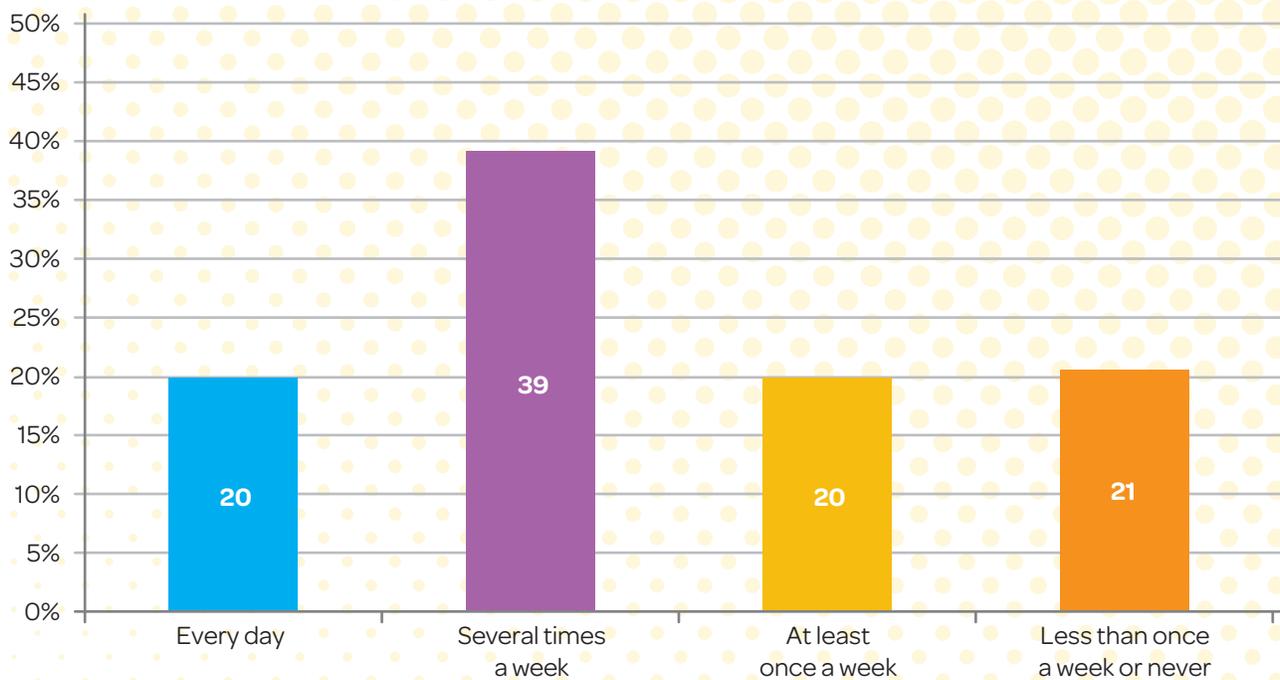


Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

One concern about teenage girls' increasing use of electronic media is that they will become socially withdrawn and less likely to spend time with their friends in person outside of school.

However, this does not seem to be the case. Nearly 80 percent of all girls participate in social activities in person with their friends at least once a week or more (see Figure 8-14). Only one-fifth of adolescent girls report spending time with their friends outside of school less than once a week or never. Importantly, girls express an interest in face-to-face time over screen time. Ninety-two percent would rather spend an hour socializing with their friends in person than spend an hour socializing with their friends via their social networking site, and the same percentage would choose to give up all their social network friends to keep their best friend.¹⁸¹

Figure 8-14: Frequency of Girls Ages 12 to 17 Spending Time with Friends in Person, Doing Social Activities Outside of School, 2011



Source: The Pew Research Center's Teens & Digital Citizenship Survey 2011.

Impact of Media Use on Health and Well-Being

The growing use of electronic media by children and adolescents has raised a number of concerns about the potential impact on their health and well-being. There is some evidence that media

use is contributing to the problem of obesity, as several studies have found a relationship between excessive television viewing and obesity among adolescent girls. However, it is not clear whether this is due to increased junk food and fast food marketing and consumption or due to reduced physical activity.¹⁸²

Although some teens do use electronic communication such as chat rooms, bulletin boards, or multiplayer gaming to connect with strangers, most are using social media tools to reinforce their offline relationships.¹⁸³

More than half (56 percent) of girls ages 14 to 17 say that social networks help them feel closer and more connected to their friends, and 52 percent have gotten involved in causes they care about through a social network.¹⁸⁴

However, 68 percent also report having a negative experience, such as being bullied, on a social networking site. Girls also admit that their social networking image doesn't match their offline image. In particular, online they downplay their positive characteristics such as intelligence, kindness, and aspiration to be a good influence.

Although 85 percent of girls have talked with their parents about safe social networking behavior, 50 percent acknowledge that they are not always as careful as they should be.¹⁸⁵ About 40 percent of girls are also concerned that their social networking content may get them in trouble with parents or teachers, cause family

or friends to lose respect for them, or prevent them from getting a job or being accepted to their preferred college. Other recent studies also find that more teens are deciding not to post content online that might damage their reputations or reflect badly on them in the future.¹⁸⁶

Whether girls' increasing use of electronic media has a positive or negative overall impact on their health and emotional well-being depends largely on whether they have parents and other adults giving them informed guidance that encourages them to choose reliable online sources and appropriate content, avoid privacy risks, and deal wisely with negative online experiences.

Summary and Implications

- Social media has been shown to enhance communication and learning opportunities as well as feelings of connection among youth. However, it can also put girls at risk for cyberbullying and privacy invasion. Adults who work with girls should have very specific conversations about online safety issues and familiarize themselves with the different channels of social media and the potential risks associated with their use.
- Despite the prevalence of social media and technology, use and access varies significantly among girls. For instance, owning a cell phone is less common for black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls. Differences such as this should be taken into account when working with and reaching out to girls, since it cannot be assumed that technology is universally available.
- Even though use of technology and social media among girls is high, girls still prefer face-to-face communication. Adults should encourage in-person communication and create safe spaces and opportunities where this can happen.





Chapter 9: What We've Learned

State of Girls Snapshot

The State of Girls Snapshot summarizes the well-being of girls across several different dimensions.

- 1) Physical Health and Safety
- 2) Economic Well-Being
- 3) Education
- 4) Emotional Health and Safety
- 5) Extracurricular and Out-of-School Activities

The data in the snapshot, which come from different sources, reflect outcomes for girls during the 2009–2011 period. Topics and indicators for the snapshot were selected by staff at the Girl Scout Research Institute and the Population Reference Bureau. Data are presented for six racial/ethnic groups, but because of small sample sizes, data are incomplete for Asian American, American Indian, and multiracial girls.

The snapshot provides a concise comparison of how girls in different racial/ethnic groups are faring across various aspects of well-being. We hope this table provides a useful starting point for developing new and better methods for comparing and tracking the well-being of girls in the United States.

Snapshot Results

Table 9-1 presents the results from the State of Girls Snapshot. In terms of overall well-being, white girls fare much better than black/African American girls and Hispanic/Latina girls. However, results vary across different aspects of well-being:

- **Physical Health and Safety:** White girls have fewer physical health risks compared with black/African American girls and Hispanic/Latina girls across several key measures, including the teen birth rate and the proportion of girls who are overweight. However, white girls are more likely than girls in other racial/ethnic groups—with the exception of American Indians—to have smoked in the past 30 days. White girls are also more likely than black/African American girls and Hispanic/Latina girls to have used alcohol.
- **Economic Well-Being:** Across the five aspects of well-being, economic security stands out because of the large racial/ethnic gap in girls' scores. In fact, poverty rates for white and Asian American girls are more than double those for Hispanic/Latina, black/African American, and American Indian girls. Higher poverty rates are closely linked to high proportions of girls living in single-parent families—especially among blacks/African Americans. In the case of Hispanic/Latina girls, economic security is also compromised by the high proportion of girls without health insurance. American Indian girls are most at risk among all racial/ethnic groups for living in poverty, in part because of the high proportion of girls in that group who are disconnected from work and school.
- **Education:** Asian American girls fare the best on education measures, followed by white girls, multiracial girls, black/African American girls, and Hispanic/Latina girls. Dropout rates among American Indian girls and Hispanic/Latina girls are especially high, reducing their potential employment and earnings compared with other groups. The dropout rate for Asian American girls is less than half the national average.

- **Emotional Health and Safety:** Hispanic/Latina girls fare better than both black/African American and white girls in terms of emotional health. Hispanic/Latina girls not only report fewer emotional and behavioral difficulties compared with other groups, but are also less likely to be bullied. Black/African American girls are the most likely to report being hit by a boyfriend.
- **Extracurricular and Out-of-School Activities:** White girls are slightly more likely than black/African American girls and Hispanic/Latina girls to participate in extracurricular activities. Black/African American girls are disadvantaged by the longer periods of time they spend watching television. Asian American girls are more likely than girls in other racial/ethnic groups to use computers for at least three hours per day (for activities other than homework).

Final Indicators for State of Girls Snapshot											
	Year(s)	Source	Total	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Hispanic, any race	Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander	Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native	Non-Hispanic, two or more races	Non-Hispanic, some other race	Non-Hispanic, multi-race or other
Physical Health											
Percentage of girls ages 5 to 17 who are overweight or obese	2009-2010	NHANES	32.4	26.0	44.4	41.2	--	--	--	--	31.6
Teen birth rate (births per 1,000 females 15-17)	2009	NCHS	15.2	11.0	32.1	41.0	7.1	30.6	--	--	--
Percentage of high school girls who smoked in the past 30 days	2009	YRBSS	19.0	22.8	8.4	16.7	9.0	38.3	22.5	--	--
Percentage of high school girls who drank alcohol in the past 30 days	2009	YRBSS	42.9	45.9	35.7	43.5	19.1	42.0	47.3	--	--
Percentage of high school girls who attend P.E. class at least once a week	2009	YRBSS	54.9	56.8	49.9	58.0	43.3	43.9	46.3	--	--
Percentage of tenth-grade girls involved in school athletics to a considerable or great extent	2009	MTF	38.8	42.8	38.2	28.9	--	--	--	--	--
Economic Well-Being											
Percentage of girls in poverty	2010	CPS	20.5	11.8	37.2	32.9	14.6	33.6	19.9	--	--
Percentage of girls ages 5 to 17 in single-parent families	2010	ACS	27.4	19.7	56.5	29.1	14.2	35.0	32.5*	--	--
Percentage of girls ages 5 to 17 without health insurance	2010	CPS	10.1	7.1	10.7	17.2	10.1	15.4	7.4	--	--
Percentage of girls ages 16 to 17 who are disconnected from work and school	2010	ACS	3.0	2.5	3.7	4.0	1.7	7.3	2.3	--	--
Education											
Percentage of girls ages 3 to 4 enrolled in preschool	2010	ACS	44.6	48.0	46.8	35.4	46.7	40.9	48.5	52.8	--

	Year(s)	Source	Total	Non-Hispanic White	Non-Hispanic Black	Hispanic, any race	Non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander	Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native	Non-Hispanic, two or more races	Non-Hispanic, some other race	Non-Hispanic, multi-race or other
Percentage of girls ages 16 to 24 who are high school dropouts	2009	CPS	7.0	4.1	8.1	16.1	3.4	14.1	7.5	--	--
Percentage of fourth-grade girls below proficient in reading	2011	NAEP	63.4	53.1	80.2	79.9	48.1	78.9	56.2	--	--
Percentage of eighth-grade girls below proficient in math	2011	NAEP	66.3	57.2	86.1	80.7	42.8	83.5	61.1	--	--
Percentage of 15-year-old girls scoring below "level 4" on science literacy scale	2009	PISA	74.1	64.7	90.2	88.7	59.7	--	79.5	--	--
Percentage of women ages 18 to 24 not enrolled in college or graduate school	2010	ACS	52.5	49.0	57.3	63.7	33.3	67.1	50.7	--	--
Emotional Health and Safety											
Percentage of girls ages 5 to 17 with emotional/behavioral difficulties	2010	NHIS	19.1	19.6	24.8	14.3	--	--	--	--	19.3
Percentage of high school girls who have seriously considered suicide	2009	YRBSS	17.7	16.1	18.2	20.2	18.1	21.4	21.3	--	--
Percentage of girls ages 12 to 17 who have been bullied at school	2009	NCVS	30.1	31.1	33.8	27.3	--	--	--	--	19.9
Percentage of girls ages 12 to 17 who have experienced cyberbullying	2009	NCVS	7.2	9.0	5.8	4.1	--	--	--	--	2.3
Percentage of high school girls who have been hit by a boyfriend	2009	YRBSS	9.3	7.1	14.7	11.4	6.4	--	11.2	--	--
Extracurricular and Out-of-School Activities											
Percentage of eighth-grade girls who attend weekly religious services	2009	MTF	42.0	42.7	50.6	35.9	--	--	--	--	--
Percentage of tenth-grade girls who are involved in non-academic clubs "considerably" or "to a great extent"	2009	MTF	35.0	35.3	38.3	27.4	--	--	--	--	--
Percentage of twelfth-grade girls who are involved in academic clubs "considerably" or "to a great extent"	2009	MTF	17.7	17.3	18.0	17.6	--	--	--	--	--
Percentage of twelfth-grade girls involved in student government "considerably" or "to a great extent"	2009	MTF	12.1	11.5	11.7	10.2	--	--	--	--	--
Percentage of tenth-grade girls who volunteer at least 1-2 times per month	2009	MTF	33.7	36.0	28.8	27.5	--	--	--	--	--
Percentage of high school girls who watch television three or more hours per day	2009	YRBSS	32.1	22.7	57.3	41.5	26.8	24.5	35.3	--	--
Percentage of high school girls who use a computer three or more hours per day	2009	YRBSS	21.3	17.8	27.7	23.1	33.5	22.9	25.9	--	--

Data Limitations and Gaps

Most of the estimates presented in this report are based on sample data, and are therefore subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. Estimates for smaller population subgroups, especially American Indian, Asian American, and multiracial girls, are more likely to have large margins of error. Small numerical differences between those groups are therefore not likely to be statistically significant.

In some cases, data for detailed racial/ethnic groups are not available because of small sample sizes. For example, data from the *Monitoring the Future* (MTF) survey, which include measures of girls' extracurricular activities, are only available for white girls, black/African American girls, and Hispanic/Latina girls. Because of these limitations, data for the State of Girls Snapshot are incomplete for American Indian, Asian American, and multiracial girls.

There are other limitations associated with specific data sources. For example, estimates from the Youth Risk Behavior and Surveillance System (YRBSS) are self-reported, and may underestimate or overestimate certain youth risk factors. It's likely that obesity rates are underestimated in the YRBSS¹⁸⁷, so we substitute obesity data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, which are based on height and weight measurements, rather than girls' self-reported height and weight.

Some of the data sources included in this report, including the YRBSS and MTF, are representative of students enrolled in public and private schools and exclude high school dropouts, who tend to have worse social, emotional, and economic outcomes. Data on bullying and victimization from the national Crime Victimization Survey are also derived from a survey of students enrolled in public and private schools.

Data Gaps

There are also several gaps in the data, where important information about how girls are doing is either missing or not reliable. Some of the key gaps in data availability, many of which are documented in the national *America's Children* report¹⁸⁸, are highlighted below:

- **Bullying:** There are some limited data available on girls who are bullied at school, but we are lacking information on girls who themselves have bullied others.
- **Criminal Behavior:** Data on girls in the criminal justice system are limited. In this report, we present data on girls in juvenile residential facilities, but those counts only represent girls who were charged with an offense and detained as a result of that offense. Many more girls enter the court system but may not be charged or detained. Some girls are also detained in adult prison facilities.
- **Disabilities:** Data on girls with disabilities are available from a variety of sources, including the Census Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, but there is little agreement on the "best" measures for categorizing disabilities for girls in different age groups.
- **Environmental Health:** Better data are needed on girls who are exposed to indoor and outdoor environmental contaminants that may affect their long-term health.

- **Exposure to Violence:** Data on girls who have been exposed to violence are limited, but this is an important indicator of girls' emotional health.
- **Homelessness:** National estimates of girls who are homeless are not available. However, we present an estimate of total children who are estimated to be homeless at the start of the school year, and girls under age 18 who are staying in shelters.
- **Volunteering:** Better data are needed on girls who volunteer, as a measure of girls' civic participation and contributions to society.

Accessing State-Level Data

State and local estimates are available for many of the indicators included in this report. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey provides reliable state-level estimates for many indicators shown in the chapters on girls' economic security and education. Other sources, such as the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, can be used to get state-level health data, but estimates may not be reliable for smaller states or small population groups. Sub-national data on girls' extracurricular activities and technology use are generally not available, although data may be available from state-specific sources. Appendix Table 9-1 provides a list of online resources where data users can find state-level estimates of girls' well-being.

Appendices

Chapters One to Eight

Appendix Table 9-1: State-Level Sources of Data for Chapter Topics

Data are available for girls ages 5 to 17 unless otherwise specified.

Topic	State-Level Data Source	URL	Note
Chapter 1: The Changing Face of Girls			
<i>Growing Racial/Ethnic Diversity</i> Girls by Race and Ethnicity	Intercensal Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin for States: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2010	http://www.census.gov/popest/data/intercensal/state/ST-EST00INT-03.html	
<i>Immigration and Language</i> Girls by Nativity Status Languages Spoken at Home	American FactFinder ACS Table #C05003 American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample	http://factfinder2.census.gov http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/public_use_microdata_sample/	Data for girls ages 0–17. Need statistical software to access files.
<i>Regional Distribution</i> Population by Country Population by Urban/Rural Typology	Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for Counties: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2011 County Intercensal Estimates (2000–2010)	http://www.census.gov/popest/data/counties/asrh/2011/CC-EST2011-agesex.html http://www.census.gov/popest/data/intercensal/county/county2010.html	 County-level data are used as basis for urban/rural classification.
<i>Family Structure and Homelessness</i> Household Type Homelessness	American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program: Data Collection Summary	http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/public_use_microdata_sample/ http://center-serve.org/niche/downloads/data_comp_0909-1011.pdf	Need statistical software to access files. Data are not available by gender.

Topic	State-Level Data Source	URL	Note
Chapter 2: Economic Well-Being & Employment Status			
Poverty	American FactFinder ACS Table #B17001	http://factfinder2.census.gov	
Income	American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample	http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/public_use_microdata_sample/	Need statistical software to access files.
Employment	American FactFinder ACS Table #B14005	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for girls ages 16–19.
Occupation	American FactFinder ACS Table #B24020	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for women ages 16 and older.
Earnings	American FactFinder ACS Tables #S2002 and S2402	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for women ages 16 and older.
Chapter 3: Physical Health and Safety			
Health Insurance Coverage	American FactFinder ACS Table #B27001	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for girls ages 6–17.
Obesity and Overweight	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Diet, Nutrition, and Physical Activity	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Dietary Behaviors	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Physical Education Classes	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Alcohol, Cigarettes, and Drug Use	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Teen Reproductive Health and Births			
Birth Control Method	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Number of Births & Birth Rate	CDC: National Center for Health Statistics	http://wonder.cdc.gov/	Data for girls ages 15–19.
Physical Violence & Safety			
Victimizations	—	—	State data not available.
Arrests	—	—	Check individual state Departments of Justice for data

Topic	State-Level Data Source	URL	Note
<i>Physical Violence & Safety Continued</i>			
Juvenile Court Referrals	National Center for Juvenile Justice: Juvenile Court Referral Data	http://www.ojdp.gov/ostatbb/ezajcs/	
Juveniles in Residential Placement	Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement	http://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatb-b/ezacjrp/asp/State_Comparison.asp?topic=&year=2010	Limited crosstabs available.
Chapter 4: Emotional Health and Safety			
<i>Self-Esteem</i>	—	—	State data not available.
<i>Depression</i>	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
<i>Suicide</i>			
Suicidal Ideation	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Number of Deaths by Suicide	National Vital Statistics System: Fatal Injury Data	http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/fatal.html	
<i>Weight-Loss Behavior</i>	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	High schoolers only.
<i>Self-Described Weight</i>	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	High schoolers only.
<i>Relationships</i>	—	—	State data are not available.
<i>Bullying</i>			
Bullying and Relational Aggression	—	—	State data are not available.
Bullied Online	—	—	State data are not available.
Bullied on School Property	—	—	State data are not available.
Chapter 5: Education			
<i>Preschool Enrollment</i>	American FactFinder ACS Table #B17001	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for girls 3 and older in preschool.
<i>High School Dropouts</i>	American FactFinder ACS Table #B14005	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for girls ages 16–19.
<i>Educational Attainment</i>	American FactFinder ACS Table #B15001	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for women ages 18–24.
<i>Reading, Math, and Science Proficiency</i>	National Assessment of Educational Progress	http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/statecomparisons/	Data for girls in grades 4, 8, and 12; limited crosstabs available.

Topic	State-Level Data Source	URL	Note
<i>College Enrollment</i>	American FactFinder ACS Table #B14002	http://factfinder2.census.gov	
<i>Fields of Study</i>	American FactFinder ACS Table #B15011	http://factfinder2.census.gov	Data for women 25 and older.
<i>Financial Literacy</i>	Survey of the States, 2011: The State of Economic and Personal Finances Education in Our Nation's Schools	http://www.councilforeconed.org/news-information/survey-of-the-states/	Data are not available by gender.
<i>Women in STEM</i>	American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample	http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/public_use_microdata_sample/	
<i>SAT Scores</i>	The SAT® Report on College & Career Readiness: 2012	http://research.collegeboard.org/programs/sat/data/cb-seniors-2012	
Chapter 6: Extracurricular and Out-of-School Activities			
<i>Childcare Arrangements and Self-Care</i>	—	—	State data not available.
<i>Extracurricular Activities</i>	—	—	State data not available.
Chapter 7: Girls' Leadership			
Chapter 8: Technology and Media Use			
<i>Access to Technology</i>			State data not available except for computer and TV usage (see below).
Computer and Television Use	—	—	
Internet Use	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System	http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/youthonline/App/Default.aspx	Data for high school girls; not available for all states.
Communicating Through Electronic Media	—	—	State data not available.
	—	—	State data not available.

Chapter One: The Changing Face of Girls

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Chapter Two: Economic Well-Being and Employment Status

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