

## *The State of Girls: Unfinished Business* **What Girl Scouting Does to Address The State of Girls**

The State of Girls: Unfinished Business is a groundbreaking report from the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) that stakes out key issues and major trends affecting girls' healthy development in the United States today.

### **Promising News for Girls—But Struggles Persist**

Our report indicates promising news 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: they 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.

Additionally, in the workforce women are underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), and our research shows that this trend starts in girlhood. Plus, and not surprisingly in the face of struggles to gain a foothold in these key areas, many girls see barriers to their wider leadership potential.

Of further significance is that not all girls are faring the same. In particular, black/African American and Hispanic/Latina girls face considerable challenges in making successful transitions to adulthood. Poverty and a lack of resources limit many Hispanic/Latina and black/African American girls from having access to good healthcare and nutritional and general wellness, opportunities to prioritize education, and the chance to explore constructive extracurricular activities. As a result, their overall quality of life may be compromised.

### **Data Is Not Destiny! Where Girl Scouting Makes a Difference**

However, we know that “data is not destiny,” and as the premier leadership development organization for girls, Girl Scouts is committed to ensuring that all girls develop to their full potential. This fact sheet highlights key areas of challenge and opportunity for girls in the U.S., as well as solutions for better supporting girls based on contributions of the Girl Scout Movement.

### **OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME**

**State of Girls finding: Extracurricular activities help young people develop positive life skills like leadership and teamwork, but not all girls have access to and opportunities for enrichment activities outside of school.**

#### **What Girl Scouting does:**

Girl Scouting serves 3.2 million girl and adult members worldwide, with a 100-year history of empowering girls to make a difference in the world. A study by GSRI in 2012 reached the following conclusion: [Girl Scouting works](#). Women who were Girl Scouts as girls display positive life outcomes to a greater degree than women who were not Girl Scouts. These outcomes pertain to sense of self, community service, civic engagement, education, and income. And this is the case for all Girl Scout alumnae, across age/generation, social class, race, and engagement in other extracurricular activities.

## LEADERSHIP

**State of Girls finding: Many girls don't see themselves as leaders, and they see many barriers to achieving leadership roles.**

### **What Girl Scouting does:**

Girl Scouts of the USA is the preeminent leadership development organization for girls, with 3.2 million girl and adult members worldwide. Girl Scouts is the leading authority on girls' healthy development, and builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. The Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE) sets forth a bold and aspirational model of leadership that encourages girls to discover their values, interests, and skills; connect with others locally and globally; and take action to create sustainable solutions to issues of concern to them. The GSLE, as delivered to girls through National Leadership Journeys, specifies 15 benefits to girls—the behaviors, attitudes, skills, and values of courageous and confident girl and women leaders. Recent GSRI studies show that Girl Scout participation has a positive impact on girls' development of these leadership attributes.

## EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

**State of Girls finding: Many girls are graduating from high school and going to college, but Hispanic/Latina girls are at particular risk for dropping out of school.**

### **What Girl Scouting does:**

The GSRI study [Linking Leadership to Academic Success](#) finds that Girl Scouting helps all girls flourish academically by providing them a supportive, encouraging environment that allows them to take age-appropriate risks. The study found that the leadership skills girls develop through Girl Scouting, such as problem solving and a willingness to seek and take on challenges, contribute to their academic engagement and achievement. It also found that Girl Scouting influences academic success as much as, and sometimes more than, positive relationships with teachers and weekly participation in out-of-school-time activities—factors known to boost success in school.

Importantly, the content of all Girl Scout National Leadership Journeys and national proficiency badge activities have been correlated by grade level to national Common Core State Standards; 21st Century Skills standards; financial literacy education standards; and health and physical education, language arts, math, science, and social studies learning objectives for all 50 states and the District of Columbia. See more [here](#).

## SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATH (STEM)

**State of Girls finding: Women and girls have generally been underrepresented in the fields of STEM. Girls have high interest in STEM but low exposure to STEM fields.**

### **What Girl Scouting does:**

Girl Scouts introduces girls of every age to STEM experiences relevant to everyday life. Girl Scouting encourages girls of all ages by offering “fun with purpose” through its K–12 national program. The Girl Scout program includes two curriculum resources: [National Leadership Journeys](#) such as It's Your Planet: Love It! and [national proficiency badges](#) that include the Naturalist, Digital Art, Science and Technology, Innovation, and Financial Literacy badges.

Additionally, a new national activity series called [Imagine Your STEM Future](#) is designed to engage high school girls in and inspire them toward careers in STEM. When asked, girls say that the program increased their interest in STEM, led them to become more informed about STEM careers, helped them realize how important it is to take math and science in school, strengthened their critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities, and increased their confidence in their STEM-related skills.

## **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

**State of Girls finding:** *Spending time outdoors can have a variety of potential benefits, but some girls do not spend time outdoors because they don't have access to safe areas in which to do so.*

### **What Girl Scouting does:**

In Girl Scouting, outdoor activities such as camping are a great way for girls to explore leadership, build skills, and develop a deep appreciation for nature. Whether girls go for a day, a week, or longer, Girl Scout camp gives them opportunities to grow, explore, and have fun under the guidance of caring, trained adults. In fact, according to an upcoming GSRI report on outdoor experiences in Girl Scouting (forthcoming in 2014), one-third of girls say they wouldn't have had the chance to do outdoor activities were it not for Girl Scouting! In addition, the study found that girls who participate in outdoor activities through Girl Scouting on a consistent (at least monthly) basis are better challenge seekers and problem solvers than girls who participate less frequently.

## **EMOTIONAL HEALTH**

**State of Girls finding:** *Girls are experiencing threats to their emotional health such as depression and bullying.*

### **What Girl Scouting does:**

Girl Scouting is committed to supporting girls' emotional health and well-being through the National Leadership Journeys. Activities that help girls develop self-confidence, healthy-living practices, and relationship skills are woven through all Leadership Journey experiences. Further, Girl Scouts recently launched a bullying prevention program called [BFF](#) (Be a Friend First), giving middle school girls valuable skills to develop healthy relationships, prevent bullying behavior, and become peacemakers in their schools and communities, all of which help girls develop confidence and friendships in the process.

## **FINANCIAL LITERACY**

**State of Girls finding:** *Girls have lower financial literacy than boys, and this persists into adulthood.*

### **What Girl Scouting does:**

Girl Scouting offers all girls—from kindergartners to high school seniors—the opportunity to build their business savvy and hone their financial literacy skills. They can do this through our financial empowerment curriculum, online learning, and the Girl Scout Cookie Program, the largest girl-led business in the world. Through their cookie program experiences, girls gain five essential skills to last a lifetime: goal setting, money management, people skills, decision making, and business ethics.

The GSRI studied these [benefits to girls](#) and found that 85 percent of girls developed money management skills through the cookie program. In addition, GSRI's [Having It All: Girls and Financial Literacy](#) found that girls envision a future where they are financially independent and empowered. (Eight in ten girls would rather make their own money than marry someone who supports them financially.)

## **PHYSICAL HEALTH**

**State of Girls finding:** *Girls are experiencing health problems like obesity at a high rate, and their physical activity levels are low.*

### **What Girl Scouting does:**

Health and fitness have been part of Girl Scouting for more than 100 years. Healthy-living activities including physical exercise, healthy eating habits, and sports are woven through the Girl Scout Leadership Journeys in varied ways to provide girls with choice and flexibility. Additionally, girls are offered a wide range of options to improve their physical health and expose them to new interest areas through Athlete, Healthy Living, and other national badge activities.

In partnership with the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation, Girl Scouts has also developed three *Healthy Habits* booklets for volunteers to use with Girl Scout Daisies, Brownies, and Juniors in their Leadership Journeys. The booklets are designed to guide girls in leading active, healthy lifestyles.