

girl scouts
1912-2012



GIRL SCOUTING WORKS:

The Alumnae Impact Study

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.¹ Since its inception in 1912, women have explored new fields of knowledge, learned valuable skills, and developed strong core values through Girl Scouting. The Girl Scout organization has shaped the lives of the majority of female senior executives and business owners, two-thirds of women in Congress, and virtually every female astronaut. The Girl Scout Cookie Program is the world's largest business and financial literacy program for girls, generating revenues of \$760 million last year.

Girl Scouts has built its success on a deep commitment to timeless values and building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place. Girl Scouts' core principle of diversity is inspired by Juliette Gordon Low's commitment to welcoming girls from across all races and classes. Women who have been involved in Girl Scouting routinely point to the immediate benefits as well as the lasting effects of the experience. In Girl Scouts, girls learn practical skills, gain self-knowledge and self-confidence, make friends, and

gain experience working as part of a team and, often, as leaders. Girls are exposed to a diversity of people, ideas, and environments. All of this is true across generations of women, as it is for girls today.

In 2005, GSUSA renewed its commitment to girls' leadership development as a core focus of our mission to build girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place, through the development of an enhanced Girl Scout Leadership Experience tied to national outcomes for girls. Girls can discover their talents while taking on challenging goals; connect with others in a team environment, acquiring conflict-resolution and relationship-building skills; and take action to make the world a better place.

Further, Girl Scouts of the USA is using the occasion of its 100th anniversary to declare 2012 the Year of the Girl and launch ToGetHerThere: the largest, boldest advocacy and fundraising cause campaign dedicated to girls' leadership issues in the nation's history. This multi-year effort will help break down societal barriers that hinder girls from leading and

¹In this study, "Girl Scout alumnae" refers to women who participated in Girl Scouting as girls.

achieving success in everything from technology and science to business and industry. Our long-term goal is ambitious and urgent: to create balanced leadership in one generation.

To do that, we must ask all adult members of society—mothers, fathers, corporations, governments, and non-profits—to help girls reach their leadership potential and place this urgent issue front and center on the national agenda. We all have a role to play in helping girls achieve their full leadership potential, because when girls succeed, so does society. For more information on Year of the Girl and ToGetHerThere, including how you can join the cause, check out www.girlscouts.org/yearofthegirl.

TWO THOUSAND TWELVE IS THE YEAR OF THE GIRL

YEAR OF THE GIRL



Girl Scouts of the USA is declaring 2012 the Year of the Girl.


On the heels of 100 years of developing girls of courage, confidence, and character, the Year of the Girl is our move to rally the nation around the cause of girls' leadership.

We are working to break down societal barriers that hinder girls from leading in their own lives and from achieving success in business, technology, science, and virtually every other walk of life.

Together, we can get her there. To learn more, visit girlscouts.org/yearofthegirl.

2

YEAR OF THE GIRL



BE THERE SO SHE CAN BE HERE

YEAR OF THE GIRL

TOGETHERTHERE.ORG

Research Goals



Girl Scouts of the USA celebrates its centennial in 2012. As the organization looks ahead to the next 100 years, it is the ideal time for an in-depth exploration of the effects of Girl Scouting on alumnae of multiple generations. This study was designed to explore questions such as:

- Does Girl Scout participation result in positive life outcomes?
- What are the benefits of the Girl Scout experience?
- Does Girl Scout participation benefit certain demographic groups more than others? How lasting is the impact of Girl Scouting?
- How do Girl Scout alumnae compare to non-Girl Scout alumnae with respect to several key indicators of success, including sense of self, achievement, leadership, community involvement, commitment to social causes/philanthropy, and civic engagement, among others?
- To what experiences from childhood and adolescence do Girl Scout alumnae and non-alumnae attribute their success?

- What are the perceptions of Girl Scout alumnae of the impact and benefits of their Girl Scout experience?

To examine these questions, the study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, including focus groups, in-depth individual interviews, an online community, online chats, a national random-digit dial (RDD) telephone survey, a mobile phone survey, and an online survey. In total, more than 3,750 women participated in this study, of whom roughly 2,000 were Girl Scout alumnae. This document presents an integrated report of findings from the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study. For more details on the methodology and data analysis, please refer to the Appendix on page 39.

Key Findings

Girl Scout Alumnae

One in every two adult women has at some point been a member of Girl Scouts, and the average length of time spent in Girl Scouts is four years. There are currently 59 million Girl Scout alumnae.

The Girl Scout Research Institute conducted a large-scale mixed-methods research study in conjunction with an independent research firm and reached the following conclusion:

Girl Scouting works.

Girl Scouting and Positive Life Outcomes

Girl Scout alumnae display positive life outcomes to a greater degree than non-alumnae on several indicators of success, including:

- Sense of self
- Volunteerism and community work
- Civic engagement
- Education
- Income/socioeconomic status

These differences are pronounced for women who were in Girl Scouts for more

years. Alumnae with more than three years' experience in Girl Scouts fare better than shorter-term alumnae with regard to:

- Sense of self
- Civic engagement
- Education
- Income/socioeconomic status
- Satisfaction with life
- Success
- Leadership
- Relationship satisfaction

All alumnae, even those with two years' experience or less, are more active in community service and volunteer work than non-alumnae.

Girl Scouting: A Rewarding Experience

In addition, Girl Scout alumnae rate their experiences highly. Alumnae consider Girl Scouting to have been positive and rewarding. Women who have been a Girl Scout:

- Rate their Girl Scout experiences very highly. The average rating score from 1 to 10 across all alumnae is 8.04.
- Fondly remember positive aspects

of and experiences in Girl Scouts. Fun, friendships, and crafts are the most frequently cited positive aspects of Girl Scouting.

- Say they have received concrete benefits from Girl Scouting, such as being exposed to nature and having a safe place to try new things.
- Actively recognize the impact that Girl Scouting has had on their lives. Three-quarters of alumnae report that the Girl Scout experience had a positive impact on their lives in general.

The positive effects of Girl Scouting seem to be particularly pronounced for those women who stayed Girl Scouts longer, as well as for African American and Hispanic women.

Reconnecting with Girl Scouts

Lastly, regarding Girl Scout involvement later in life, nearly one in five alumnae (19%) has already reconnected with Girl Scouts as a volunteer or troop leader, and 21 percent express strong interest in reconnecting with Girl Scouts in the future.

Alumnae Facts



Incidence Rate

This study indicates that nearly one in two adult women in the U.S. has at some point been a member of Girl Scouts. The incidence of Girl Scout alumnae in the general population of women ages 18 and older is 49 percent. According to the most recent (2010) U.S. government estimates, the total population of females ages 18 and older in the U.S. is approximately 120 million.² Thus, the community of Girl Scout alumnae numbers roughly 59 million.

The incidence of Girl Scout alumnae is highest among 55- to 64-year-olds (57%) and lowest among 18- to 24-year-olds

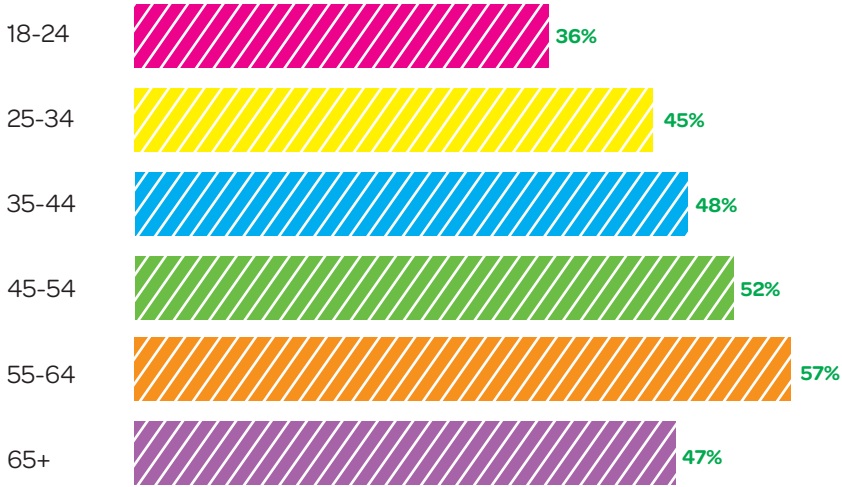
(36%). In fact, from its high among 55- to 64-year-olds, the proportion of Girl Scout alumnae steadily decreases with each age cohort. In terms of race, incidence is highest among Caucasians (56%) and considerably lower among African Americans (38%), Hispanics (33%), and Asians (27%). Girl Scouts currently has several initiatives underway to ensure that all girls have access to and can benefit from the organization's program.

Length of Membership

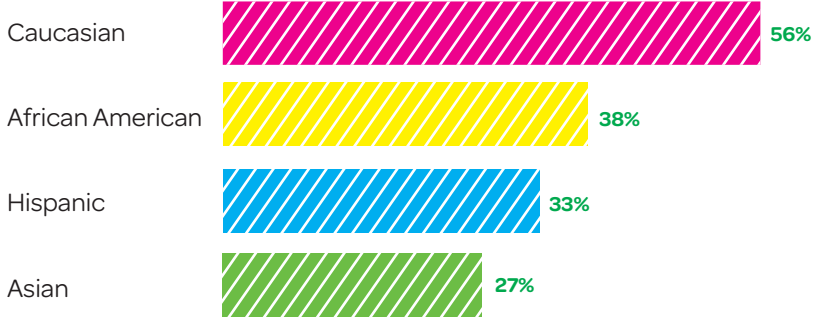
Alumnae's average length of Girl Scout participation has remained steady across generations and races/ethnicities—about four years.

² 2010 Census Data. U.S. Census Bureau. www.census.gov

Incidence of Girl Scout alumnae in the general population of women, by age



Incidence of Girl Scout alumnae in the general population of women, by race





Jurgen Reisch of Jurgen Reisch Photography

Impact of Girl Scouting: Comparison of Alumnae to Non-Alumnae

The key objective of this research was to assess the impact of Girl Scout participation on the lives of American women. The study examined the impact of Girl Scouting on the following life outcomes and compared them with non-alumnae from the general population:

- Sense of self
- Satisfaction with life
- Success in meeting life goals
- Leadership
- Volunteerism and community work
- Civic engagement
- Education
- Income/financial situation
- Relationship satisfaction

This study confirms that Girl Scouting works. Most alumnae take pride in having been part of Girl Scouts and credit Girl Scouts with providing key building blocks for success later in life. **The benefits of Girl Scout participation are not exclusive to any particular group or cohort: across ages/generations, former Girl Scouts have had an equal likelihood of benefiting from their experiences, regardless of social class,**

race, or engagement in other extracurricular activities.

Girl Scout alumnae display positive life outcomes to a significantly³ greater degree than non-alumnae on several indicators of success measured in this research, including:

- Sense of self
- Volunteerism and community work
- Civic engagement
- Education
- Income/socioeconomic status

Significantly, no outcome resulted in higher scores for non-alumnae than for alumnae.

Longer-Term Girl Scout Alumnae Derive Greater Benefits

The extent of this perceived impact increases dramatically with the length of Girl Scout experience. Alumnae with three-plus years' experience in Girl Scouts fare significantly better than shorter-term alumnae and non-alumnae with regard to:

- Sense of self
- Civic engagement
- Education and income
- Satisfaction with life
- Success
- Leadership
- Relationship satisfaction

The only outcome that did not result in significant gains for long-term alumnae as compared to short-term alumnae is community service and volunteerism—**all alumnae, even those with two years' experience or less, are more active in community service and volunteer work than non-alumnae.** Additionally, the difference in income/socioeconomic status between non-alumnae and alumnae with three or more years' experience was especially strong among Hispanics. For other outcomes, there were no other significant interactions between Girl Scout history and race/ethnicity—Girl Scout participation was beneficial regardless of race/ethnicity.

³Statistical significance at 95 percent confidence.

“Girl Scouts taught me confidence, that you can do anything you set your mind to. Also, they recognized my personal talents and helped to exploit them in a highly positive way. They nurtured a love to try new things in life without feeling defeat.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 40

Impact of Girl Scouting by Life Outcomes

1. Girl Scout alumnae display a more positive sense of self.

Girl Scout alumnae across generations name confidence building among the top benefits of their Girl Scout experiences. Alumnae, for instance, are more likely to strongly agree with statements describing themselves as:

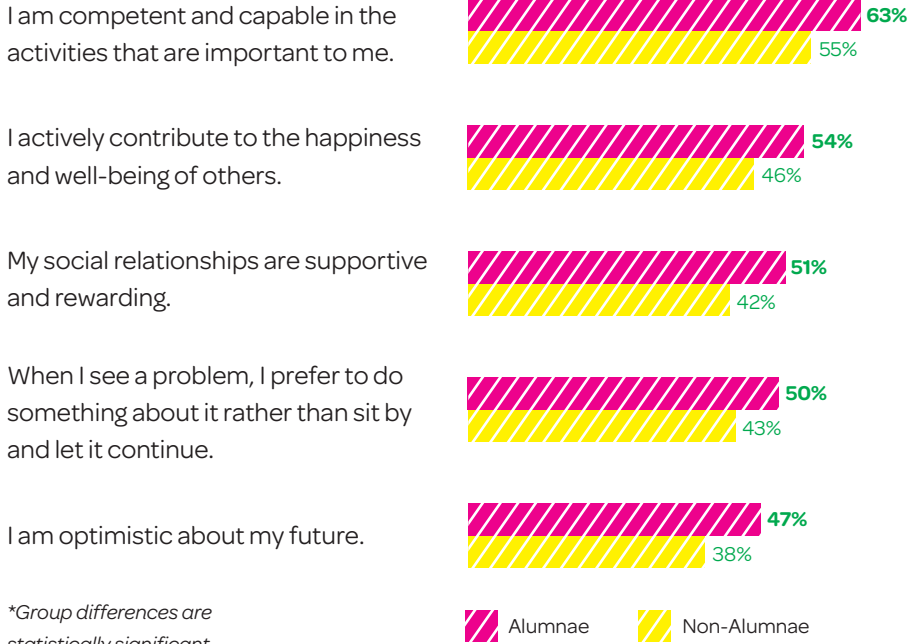
- Competent and capable (63% vs. 55%)
- Having can-do attitudes (50% vs. 43%)
- Actively contributing to the well-being of others (54% vs. 46%)
- Having supportive relationships (51% vs. 42%)
- Being more optimistic about their future (47% vs. 38%)

More time spent in Girl Scouts is correlated with a positive sense of self. The positive impact of Girl Scouting on sense of self is particularly strong among alumnae with at least three years of Girl Scout experience as compared to non-alumnae and alumnae who spent two years or less in Girl Scouts.

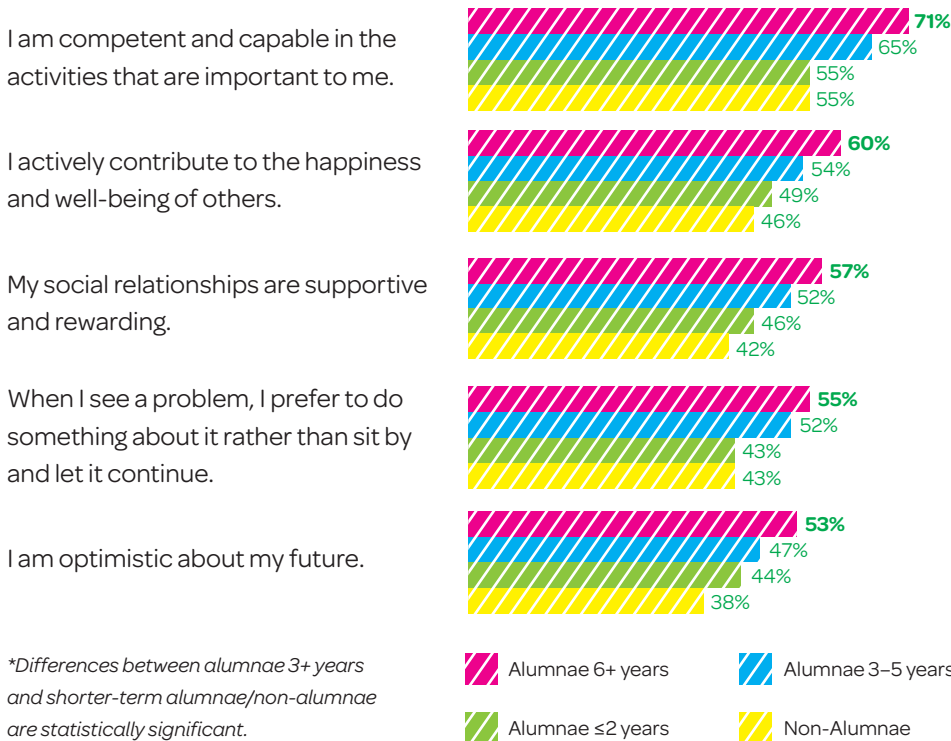
In qualitative interviews, many alumnae reflected on the significance of gaining confidence and self-esteem in Girl Scouts, which they perceived as instrumental to their successes and achievements in later years.



How much do you agree with the following statements? (% strongly agree)



How much do you agree with the following statements? (% strongly agree)



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“If I can still remember the looks on the patients’ faces the day they took us to the nursing home and hospital, it must have made an impact. I do volunteer work with a local animal shelter now, and if Girl Scouts hadn’t taken us out into the community to show us people that needed help or were less fortunate, maybe I wouldn’t have done the volunteer work I do as an adult now.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 35
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2. Girl Scout alumnae are more engaged in volunteerism and community service.

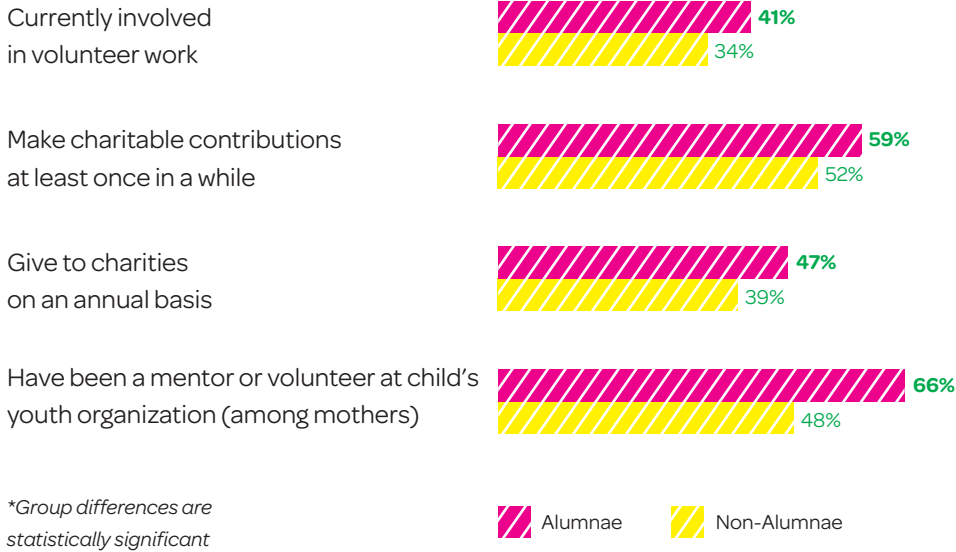
Girl Scout alumnae are more likely than non-alumnae:

- To have volunteered or to be currently involved in volunteer work (41% vs. 34%)
- To have donated money (86% vs. 78%), goods, or services
- To contribute to charities on a regular basis (47% vs. 39%)
- (Among mothers) to have volunteered at their child’s youth organization (66% vs. 48%)

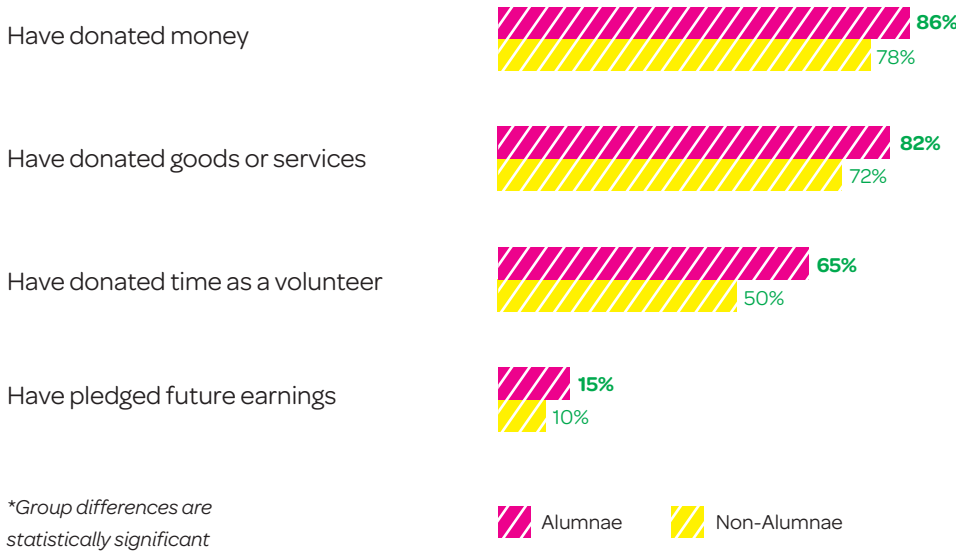
Community service is the only outcome that does not vary significantly by length of time in Girl Scouts: all Girl Scout alumnae, even those with less than three years of experience, seem to have internalized this value and display a greater degree of engagement in volunteer work and community service than do women who were never Girl Scouts.

In qualitative interviews, many alumnae observed that it was in Girl Scouts that they first were introduced to the world outside of their immediate environment and exposed to those in need.

Volunteer work and charitable giving



Volunteer work and charitable giving



“We worked for weeks making teddy bears. As soon as we arrived [at St. Agnes Children’s Hospital], a little girl ran up to me and grabbed me. At first I was scared, and I could see she was different. I handed her a stuffed animal; she hugged it and smiled. Later on I realized the girl had Down syndrome. I was sad to see children in wheelchairs but felt good when they smiled at being given stuffed animals. This one outing left such an impact on my life—I eventually became a special education teacher working with the same type of children I was lucky enough to meet that day.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 50

“I learned many things from Girl Scouting, such as leadership, teamwork. I learned about camping, nature, and the environment; cooking, sewing, selling cookies, government . . . I probably got my interest in the outdoors from Girl Scouting, and it has never left me. I probably got my patriotism from Girl Scouting, and it too has never left me.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 50

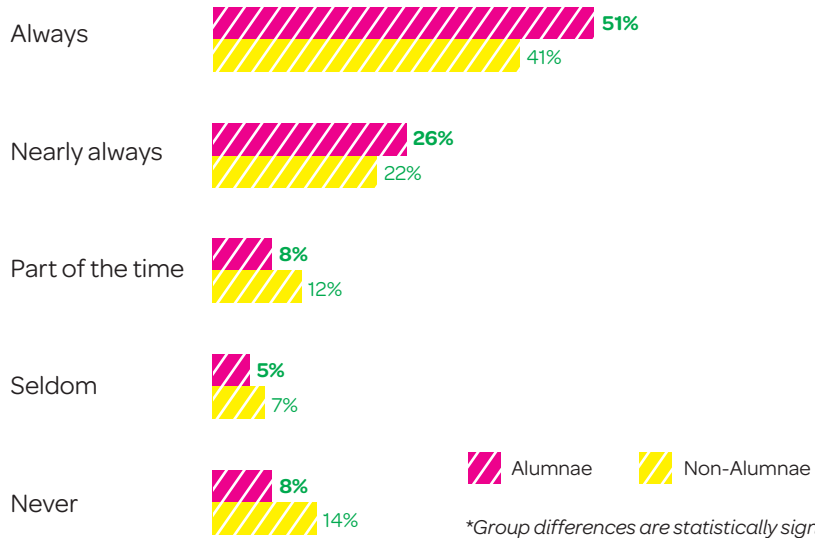
3. Girl Scout alumnae are more civically engaged.

Alumnae are more likely to vote than non-alumnae: 51% of alumnae versus 41% of non-alumnae report that they always vote. Voting behavior is also correlated positively with length of

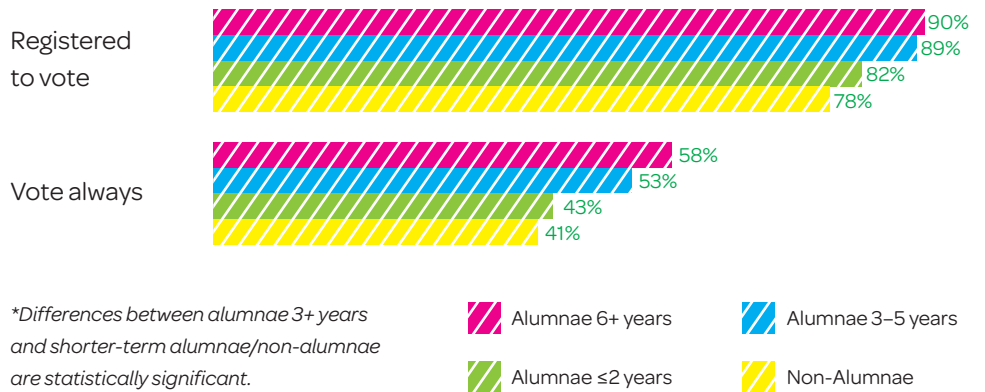
time in Girl Scouts, with longer-term alumnae (three or more years) voting more frequently than non-alumnae or shorter-term alumnae (two years or less).

It is notable that Girl Scout alumnae do not differ from non-alumnae in their party affiliation or political leanings.

How often would you say you vote?



Registered to vote and frequency of voting



4. Girl Scout alumnae have attained higher levels of education.

Girl Scout alumnae (38%) have attained more advanced degrees (undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree) than non-alumnae (28%).

Length of time in Girl Scouts is positively correlated with higher levels of education: alumnae with at least three years of Girl Scout experience have completed more years of schooling than non-alumnae

and alumnae with less than three years in Girl Scouts. In qualitative interviews, alumnae expounded on this idea by describing ways in which Girl Scouting has contributed to their focus on education or choice of career paths by giving them confidence in setting goals and reaching them, exploring unfamiliar subjects that exposed them to new interests and possible careers, and gaining organizational skills to tackle personal goals in education and elsewhere.

“Girl Scouting probably contributed to me going to nursing school and definitely helped me learn how to get along with others—something I didn’t get at home. I never would have had confidence in myself to undertake the training had it not been for the self-confidence I gained each time I earned a badge.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 55

Last grade or class completed in school



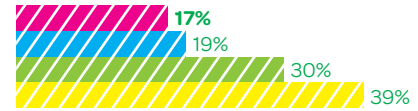
*Group differences are statistically significant

Alumnae Non-Alumnae



Last grade or class completed in school

Less than college



Some college or associate degree



Undergraduate and/or postgraduate degree



*Differences between alumnae 3+ years and shorter-term alumnae/non-alumnae are statistically significant.

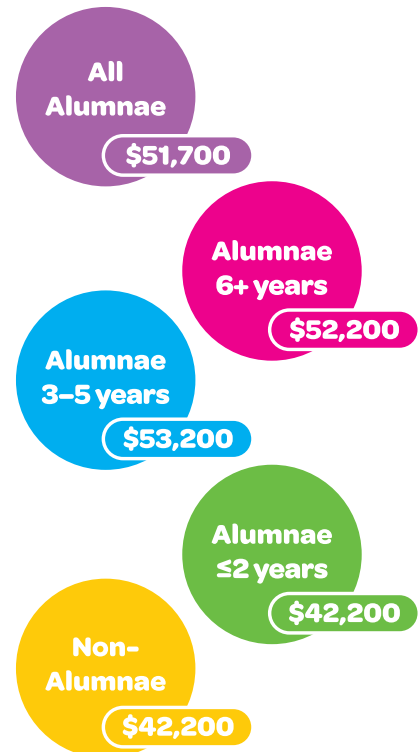


5. Girl Scout alumnae outperform non-alumnae on key economic indicators.

Girl Scout alumnae report a higher household income for 2010 (before taxes) at \$51,700 compared to non-alumnae at \$42,200, and higher socioeconomic status.

Length of time in Girl Scouts is associated with higher income and socioeconomic status. Alumnae with at least three years of experience in Girl Scouts report higher income than non-alumnae and alumnae with less than three years in Girl Scouts. (The most recent—June 2011—estimate of the median annual household income in the U.S. is \$49,909.⁴)

Median household income in 2010, before taxes



⁴Sentier Research (2011). *Household Income Rates During Recession and Economic Recovery*. Annapolis, Maryland.

6. Longer-term Girl Scout alumnae have more success in achieving life goals.

Success or achievement was measured based on respondents' assessments of their success in life in general, as well as in meeting their goals in specific spheres of life such as career, finances, education, and leadership. Longer-term alumnae report higher levels of success in meeting their life goals than non-alumnae. Notably, alumnae (61%) were significantly more likely than non-alumnae (36%) to attribute their success in life to childhood membership in youth

organizations such as Girl Scouts, 4-H, Junior Achievement.

In the words of one alumna, "The experiences I had in Girl Scouts are a basis of who I am today."

Alumnae credit Girl Scouting with preparing them to face life's challenges and opportunities with resourcefulness, ingenuity, and discipline. Many alumnae named teamwork among the most valuable skills gained in Girl Scouts, as well as having the opportunity to try new things and make mistakes in a supportive environment.

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"[Earning badges] probably helped prepare me for life by having discrete goals and rewards that were readily attainable, some alone and others with the assistance of friends, family, or troop leaders. Earning merit badges may have contributed to my goal-oriented mentality."
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—Girl Scout alumna, age 43



“Being a Girl Scout was the first time in my life that I was able to try out something new. I think it gave me confidence to try things outside of my comfort zone—such as crossing a river with snakes in it! Girl Scouts was part of the building block that developed confidence. I’m not afraid to speak out when I’m with a group of people, especially in a meeting. I’m not afraid to give my opinion and make suggestions.”

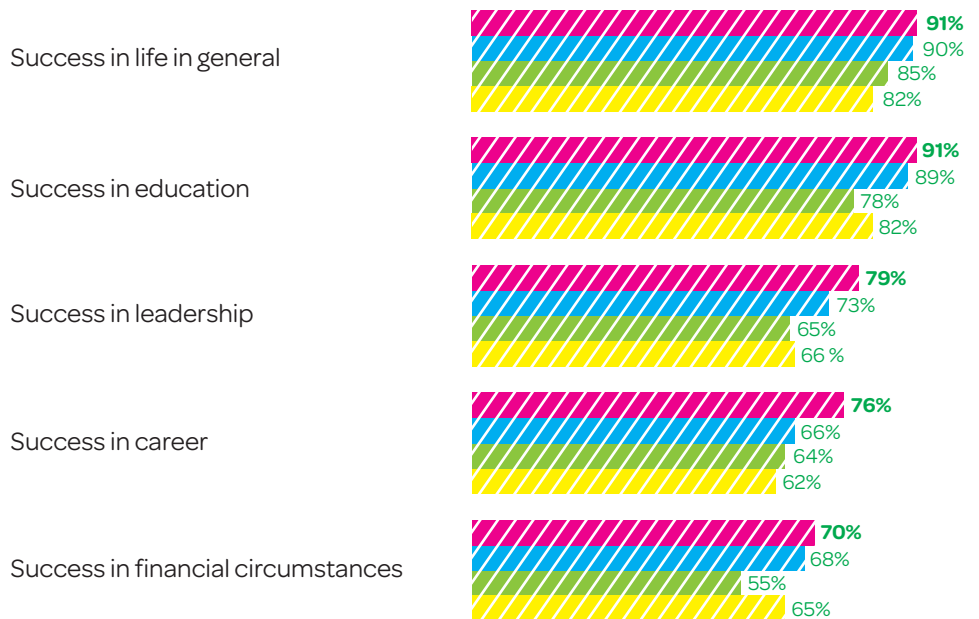
—Girl Scout alumna, age 33

7. Longer-term Girl Scout alumnae are more satisfied with their lives today.

Alumnae and non-alumnae alike paint upward trajectories of their perceived stations in life in the past, present, and future. While the alumnae trajectory is slightly higher than that of non-alumnae, the difference is not statistically significant.

However, long-term Girl Scout experience is positively associated with satisfaction with life. Alumnae who spent at least three years in Girl Scouts exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with life than alumnae with two years or less in Girl Scouts as well as non-alumnae.

Perceived success (“somewhat successful” and “very successful” ratings combined)



*Differences between alumnae 3+ years and shorter-term alumnae/non-alumnae are statistically significant.

■ Alumnae 6+ years ■ Alumnae 3-5 years
■ Alumnae ≤2 years ■ Non-Alumnae

8. Longer-term Girl Scout alumnae are more likely to be leaders.

Alumnae (57%) are more likely than non-alumnae (49%) to consider themselves leaders. However, factors other than participation in Girl Scouts could account for these differences. Much of the difference between the leadership outcomes of alumnae and non-alumnae is driven by participation in extracurricular activities in general—including but not exclusively Girl Scouting. Alumnae and non-alumnae alike are likely to exhibit the qualities and self-identities of a leader if they were involved in extracurricular activities in their youth. Longer-term alumnae self-identify as leaders in greater numbers than do non-alumnae or alumnae with less Girl Scout experience. Among those who regard themselves as leaders, alumnae are more likely than non-alumnae to have had opportunities to be leaders

in various spheres of life, such as:

- Social circles (73% vs. 61%)
- Education (52% vs. 38%)
- Volunteer experiences (51% vs. 37%)
- Clubs (44% vs. 26%)
- Community settings (36% vs. 27%)

African Americans are more likely to think of themselves as leaders (67%). Additionally, when it comes to seeing themselves as such, differences between alumnae and non-alumnae are most pronounced among non-Caucasian respondents. For example, 72 percent of African American alumnae versus 62 percent of African American non-alumnae, 61 percent of Hispanic alumnae versus 47 percent of Hispanic non-alumnae, and 56 percent of Asian alumnae versus 44 percent of Asian non-alumnae see themselves as leaders. By comparison, 55 percent of Caucasian alumnae see themselves as leaders, versus 49 percent of Caucasian non-alumnae.

“Being a leader means setting an example for our youth today, so I do that by volunteering and by trying to do the right thing every day. Girl Scouts taught me those things by exposing me to helping others and avoiding drugs and alcohol and [by providing] a role model who set an example. The experiences I had in Girl Scouts are a basis of who I am today.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 44

“I think of myself as a leader”



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“Girl Scouts is the first step I took in learning how to get along with different individuals. It helped me in the process of becoming a young adult by teaching me how to formulate goals and the necessary steps needed to be taken by everyone as a team to achieve those goals. I will never forget those lessons.”
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—Girl Scout alumna, age 50

9. Longer-term Girl Scout alumnae have higher rates of relationship satisfaction.

Many alumnae report that their Girl Scout experience has had at least some positive effect on later friendships and family life (58% and 52%, respectively). However, there is no evidence of a correlation between participation in Girl Scouts and satisfaction with relationships as a life outcome. While Girl Scouting likely has contributed to alumnae’s perceived success in their relationships (including family, marriage/partnership, parenting, and friendship spheres), other factors must have played a role as well.

However, among alumnae, longer-term Girl Scout experience is associated with higher rates of satisfaction with relationships. Girl Scout alumnae with at least three years in Girl Scouts appear to fare better in relationships than alumnae with less than two years of experience.

Comparison of Alumnae Executives with Non-Alumnae Executives

A separate survey was conducted online among female executives in public, private, and nonprofit sectors, including Girl Scout alumnae and non-alumnae, to provide insight into the role of Girl Scouting in the lives of women who have achieved positions of leadership in the workplace.

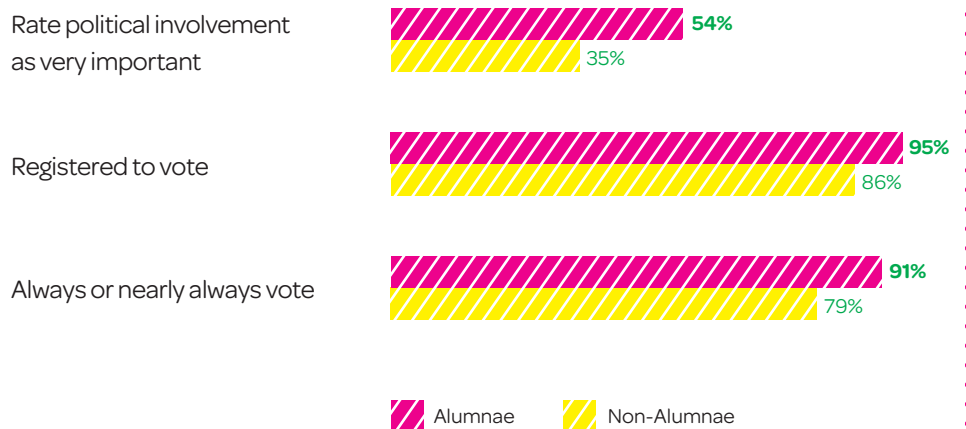
The most notable differences between alumnae executives and non-alumnae executives lie in the areas of community service and volunteer work, charitable giving, and civic engagement. The former group is significantly more likely to report current engagement in charitable activities, to say that charitable giving is a priority, and to say that they make charitable contributions than is the latter group.

Alumnae executives also place much more importance on political involvement and, in addition, are more likely to act on this belief. They are significantly more likely to be registered voters and to make the effort to cast their votes.

Community service and charitable giving



Civic engagement





Alumnae Evaluation of The Girl Scout Experience

The majority of Girl Scout alumnae view their Girl Scout experiences as positive and rewarding. In particular, women who have been a Girl Scout (as a girl):

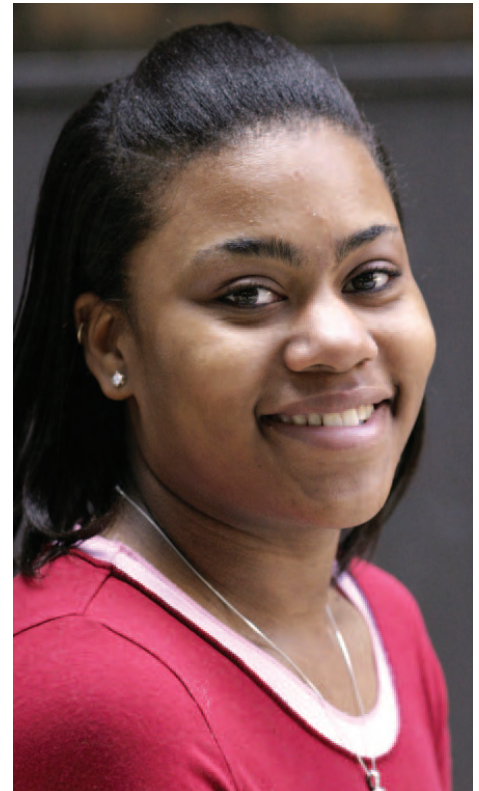
- Rate their Girl Scout experiences very highly
- Fondly remember positive aspects of and experiences in Girl Scouts
- Say they have received concrete benefits from Girl Scouting
- Actively recognize the impact Girl Scouting has had on their lives

In many cases, the positive effects of Girl Scouting seem to be particularly pronounced for those women who stayed in Girl Scouts longer, as well as for African American and Hispanic women.

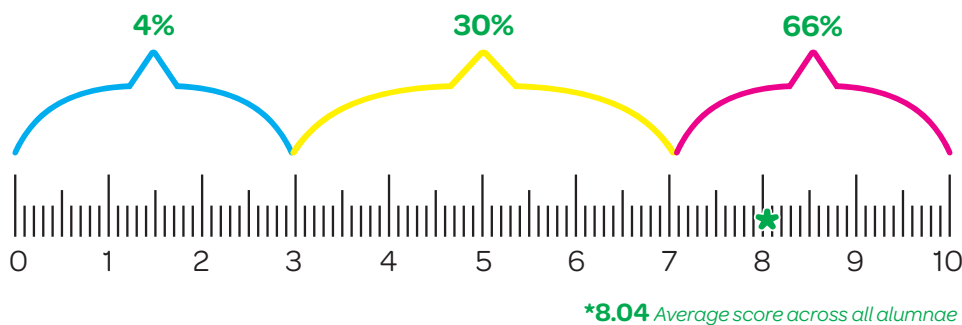
Ratings of Girl Scout Experience

When asked how they would rate their experiences on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest), the majority (66%) rate it an 8, 9, or 10. The average score across all alumnae is 8.04, and only 4% give their experience a 3 or lower (see graphic below).

While most alumnae rate their Girl Scout experience positively, the highest ratings came from women who spent more years in Girl Scouts, are African American or Hispanic, and/or who participated in Girl Scouts in rural areas. Conversely, alumnae ages 18 to 29 are less likely to rate their Girl Scout experiences very highly.



Alumnae Rating of Their Girl Scout Experiences



“Many activities for kids are very focused—sports, music, dance, etc. Girl Scouting allows you to be exposed to lots of different activities, including some you are good at and some you may never have experienced before. Sporty kids could cook; bookish kids could camp. The experiences were varied.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 44

Percent who rate experience in Girl Scouts very highly,* by length of time in Girl Scouting



Percent who rate experience in Girl Scouts very highly,* by race/ethnicity



Percent who rate Girl Scouts very highly,* by age



*Connotes a rating of 8, 9, or 10

Positive Aspects of and Experiences in Girl Scouts

When asked to reflect on what they consider the most positive aspects of Girl Scouting, fun, friendships, and crafts (making things) are the most frequently

cited, followed by camping trips, learning new skills, and earning badges. In addition, more than half of respondents say they had no negative experiences, and 17% say the only negative aspect they had was being unable to stay in Girl Scouts longer.

What were the positive aspects of your Girl Scout experience? (open-end)

Fun	59%
Friendships with Girl Scouts	58%
Crafting, making things	56%
Camping trips	49%
Learning new skill	48%
Earning badges	48%
Cookie sales	45%
Values	42%
Trying new things	39%
All-girl environment	33%
Community work	32%
Gaining confidence	31%
Working on a team to accomplish goals	31%
Trips	30%
Wearing the uniform	27%
Diversity	22%
Troop leader	22%

What are the negative aspects of your Girl Scout experience? (open-end)

I didn't stay long enough	17%
Wasn't consistent/disbanded	9%
Troop leader	8%
Didn't get along with other girls	7%
Didn't like activities	5%
All-girl environment	4%
Wasn't cool	4%
Other	6%
None	52%

“Girl Scouts was unique in that we all participated in the same activities at the same time. It didn’t matter what our ethnicity or socioeconomic background was; we were all the same once we put on that uniform. Girl Scouts made me feel safe that I would not be teased for my ‘less than’ clothes or for being fat. We were just a bunch of girls who wanted to have fun.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 49

“There is no other group for girls that teaches them values and helps them develop self-confidence through activities like camping and community service. There’s just no organization quite like Girl Scouts.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 32

Focus groups with alumnae support these findings. When asked to share their most treasured memories of Girl Scouting, alumnae responses can be grouped into six broad categories:

fun, learning, field trips, sisterhood, badges, and cookie sales. They also spoke broadly about the types of skills and activities conferred through each category.

Memorable Girl Scout Experiences



Perceived Benefits of Girl Scouting

The majority of alumnae can identify specific, salient benefits of Girl Scouting. In general, benefits fall into the following three major categories:

- New opportunities and experiences—especially with regard to nature
- A safe space to call their own, where they could explore, express themselves, and try new things
- Introduction to new perspectives and behaviors

Perceived benefits of Girl Scouting

Back when you belonged, to what extent did belonging to Girl Scouts . . .	Somewhat + a lot	A lot
Expose you to nature	77%	43%
Provide you with a safe place to try new things	77%	39%
Make you a more responsible member of your community	67%	30%
Provide you with an adult role model or mentor	66%	33%
Encourage you to set high goals or aspirations for your life	66%	32%
Provide structure in your life	66%	27%
Provide a place where you could express yourself and your opinions	65%	29%
Provide you with decision-making opportunities	63%	26%
Expose you to the world outside your community	63%	27%
Provide a place “just for you”	59%	25%
Open your eyes to possibilities for your future	58%	23%
Make you feel empowered	57%	24%
Provide you with leadership opportunities that you didn’t get elsewhere	54%	24%
Expose you to racial, cultural, or socioeconomic diversity	48%	21%



“[Girl Scouts] helped me develop skills for working with others. Sharing, teamwork, caring about others and their strengths and weaknesses, looking at the big picture, caring about feelings: these have made me a good employee, a good boss, and, most importantly, a good parent.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 50

Overall Impact of Girl Scouting

In addition to rating Girl Scouting highly and being able to name specific aspects and benefits, three-quarters of alumnae report that the Girl Scout experience had a positive impact on their lives in general. This is particularly true of women who were in Girl Scouts for six or more years and of African American, Hispanic, and alumnae who identify as “other” race.

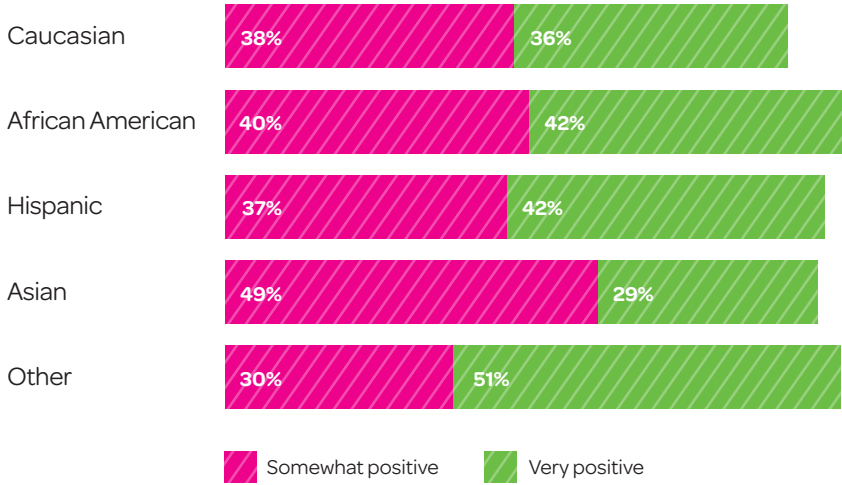
Similarly, the perception that Girl Scouting contributed to success later in life is shared by almost 60% of alumnae in this study, and felt more strongly by those women in Girl Scouts for six years or more and by those who identify as Hispanic or “other” race.

When alumnae were asked to name the most important ways in which belonging to Girl Scouts affected their lives, the two most commonly cited were “good values” (36%) and “teamwork/team spirit” (31%).

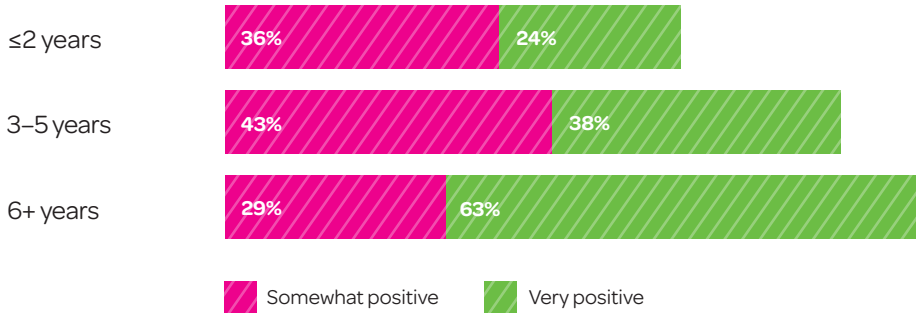
Overall, how would you rate the impact that belonging to Girl Scouts has had on your life?



The impact of Girl Scouting on life, by race

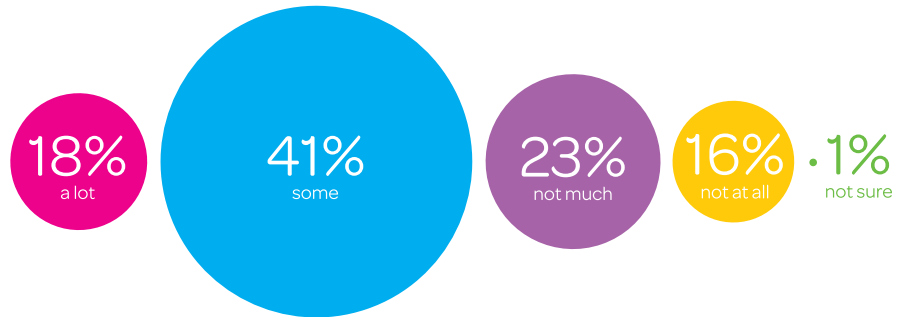


The impact of Girl Scouting on life, by length of time in Girl Scouts

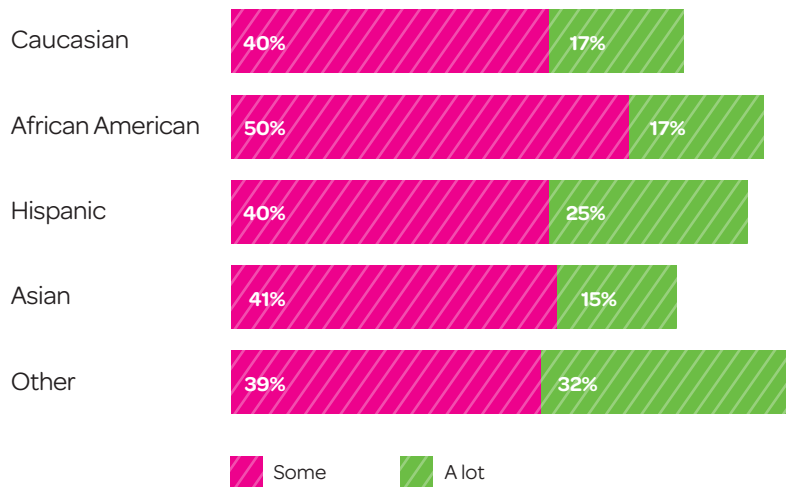




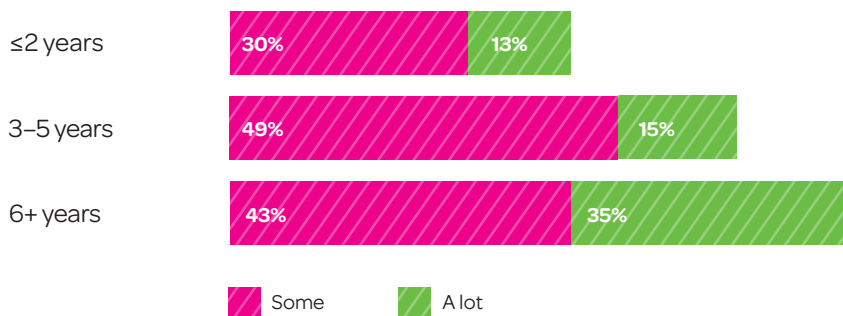
All in all, to what extent did your Girl Scout experience contribute to your success in life?



Girl Scout experience contributed to success in life, by race



Girl Scout experience contributed to success in life, by length of time in Girl Scouting



Girl Scout Gold Award Recipients

Five percent of Girl Scout alumnae in this study report being Girl Scout Gold Award recipients. Those alumnae ages 18 to 29 who identify as Asian or Hispanic are more likely to have received this award.

In general, Gold Award recipients tend to express more positive attitudes toward self and their experiences in Girl Scouts, and they tend to evaluate their success in life higher than do other alumnae and non-alumnae. They are more likely to:

- Perceive they have derived short- and long-term benefits from Girl Scouting
- Rate higher the impact of Girl Scouting on their lives and their success in life
- Agree with most statements about the positive role of Girl Scouting in their lives

Also, Gold Award recipients appear more ambitious than do other alumnae (and non-alumnae) and place significantly higher importance on having a successful career and financial security, and on being a leader. They are more likely to believe that they are achieving their ambitions in life. They rate their general success in life significantly higher and report higher success in reaching their goals within many diverse domains (education, career, leadership, friendships, volunteer work, financial circumstance, and political involvement).

They are also significantly more likely to express interest in reconnecting with Girl Scouts.

The Girl Scout Gold Award represents the highest achievement in Girl Scouting. It symbolizes outstanding accomplishments in the areas of leadership, community service, career planning, and personal development. Today's Girl Scout Seniors and Ambassadors working toward their Gold Awards use their vision for change to complete a project that is measurable and sustainable and that will make lasting differences in their communities, regions, or beyond. Versions of this prestigious award have been around since 1916. We believe that more than 5 percent of Girl Scout alumnae nationwide have earned the honor.

“I was very proud to win the Gold Award, and when I applied for college I was so happy to be able to include it on my application.”

—Girl Scout alumna, age 32



What would you say is the most important way in which belonging to the Girl Scouts has affected your life? (open-end)

Good values	36%
Teamwork/team spirit	31%
Camaraderie/friendships	26%
Confidence/self-esteem	25%
Interpersonal/socialization skills	24%
Practical skills	21%
Leadership development	14%
Decision-making/organizational skills	13%
Other	7%
Not sure	18%

Interest in Engagement with Girl Scouts

When thinking about reconnecting with Girl Scouts, one in five alumnae (21%) expresses strong interest in doing so, which amounts to over 10 million women. Interest is considerably stronger among certain subsets of alumnae: younger alumnae (ages 18–29); alumnae of African American, Hispanic, or “other” race; and alumnae with the most experience in Girl Scouts (six years or more).

When presented with various specific ideas for potentially reengaging with Girl Scouts, options elicit 10 to 12 percent of *definite* interest. Overall, more than one in four alumnae (27%) has definite interest in engaging in at least one of the proposed ways.

This suggests that although alumnae express an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of their Girl Scout experiences, there seems to exist a lack of clarity as to how the organization would be relevant or meaningful to alumnae in their adult lives and what present-day participation might entail. Donating money and mentoring current Girl Scouts are the two forms of potential engagement most likely to prompt the broadest reception from alumnae.

Interest in engagement with Girl Scouts

How interested would you be in each of the following?	Definitely interested	Maybe interested	Not interested
Taking part in Girl Scouts' 100th anniversary celebrations in 2012	13%	26%	59%
Teaching a class or workshop for a local troop/group or appearing as a guest speaker	12%	24%	62%
Donating money to support Girl Scouts	12%	32%	53%
Taking part in a national Girl Scout project around the environment	12%	27%	60%
Mentoring current Girl Scouts	12%	31%	55%
Getting or sharing career advice or opportunities from/with alumnae	11%	23%	63%
Helping with fundraising for your local council	11%	24%	63%
Volunteering your time as a troop/group leader	11%	23%	64%
Connecting with sister Girl Scouts on Facebook or other online networking sites	10%	19%	69%
Participating in alumnae networking events in your community	10%	22%	66%
Joining the national online community of alumnae	10%	22%	66%





Significance and Implications of this Study

While it is beyond the scope of this study to establish causation (because factors other than those measured in this study could influence results), evidence points to participation in Girl Scouts as a powerful factor in improving life outcomes, particularly for those who remain in the program for more than two years.

The most salient findings from this data include:

- Alumnae positively evaluate their Girl Scout experience and its immediate and long-term impact on their lives.
- Alumnae experience positive life outcomes to a greater degree than non-alumnae.
- Length of time in Girl Scouts is associated with significantly more positive long-term outcomes.
- The Girl Scout experience is universally beneficial, regardless of one's generation, childhood socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, or exposure in youth to extracurricular activities.
- Outcomes of Girl Scout experience correspond with organizational goals and priorities, presenting a powerful picture of the contribution Girl Scouts has made to the lives of American women.

It is worth noting that such a robust set of mutually reinforcing correlations and indicators of possible impact is both unusual and significant. Very rarely does a study of this nature—one seeking evidence of the impact of specific stimuli on matters as complex as human behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions—yield such strong and unequivocally positive results.

Alumnae Outcomes Match Girl Scouts' Priorities

The Girl Scout experience is positively associated with life outcomes historically cultivated by Girl Scouts, including confidence in one's abilities, self-esteem, commitment to community service and volunteerism, civic engagement, and focus on achievement in education, in the workplace, and in other spheres of life. This research validates Girl Scouts' efforts by demonstrating the relationship between participation in Girl Scouts and those life outcomes.

While longer-term alumnae score significantly higher on measures of leadership than do alumnae with less Girl Scout experience, this study suggests that overall leadership as an outcome is largely driven by participation in extracurricular

activities in general—including but not exclusive to Girl Scouting. In other words, alumnae and non-alumnae alike have a greater chance of exhibiting leadership in adulthood if they participated in extracurricular activities in youth.

However, on virtually every other outcome tested in this research, Girl Scout alumnae—particularly those with at least three years' experience—score higher than non-alumnae, with the largest differences registered in sense of self, and degree of community service and civic engagement, areas traditionally of particular importance to Girl Scouts.

In fact, not a single key indicator of success demonstrated better outcomes for non-alumnae than alumnae.

Reengaging Alumnae

Given the vast number of alumnae, a starting base of even 20 percent with high receptivity is noteworthy and could translate into a potential pool of roughly 10 million volunteers, supporters, and donors. Other alumnae could also be potentially receptive to the idea but likely need to know more about what this would entail and why it would be meaningful in their current stage of life.



The findings of this study might provide an ideal opening to pique the interest of alumnae, to trigger nostalgia, and to enable further communication. Thus primed, alumnae might not only see the value of perpetuating this good work with younger generations, but be open to participating on some level. The research also suggests two points that might provide optimum connection with alumnae: the sense of pride they still take in their Girl Scout experience, and the sense of gratitude for the lasting impact of those experiences.

Looking Ahead to the Next 100 Years

Girl Scouts has produced pioneers who blazed trails. Today's Girl Scouts take part in many activities that others enjoyed 25, 50, or 75 years ago, as well as new activities never before imagined. These activities and experiences not only enriched and brought joy to multiple generations of women, they have impacted their lives in profound, enduring, and meaningful ways. This research provides compelling evidence of the real and lasting impact of Girl Scouts' efforts. The values and lessons learned through Girl Scouting resonate through alumnae's lives and inform their attitudes and actions for a lifetime. As one alumna put it, "Once a Girl Scout, always a Girl Scout."

Indeed, with Girl Scouts' 100th birthday this year, there's no better—or more exciting—time to get back on board with the world's premier leadership organization for girls. Girl Scouts is using the occasion of its centennial to declare 2012 the Year of the Girl and to launch ToGetHerThere, the largest, boldest advocacy and fundraising cause campaign dedicated to girls' leadership issues in the nation's history. This multi-year effort will help break down societal barriers that hinder girls from leading and achieving success in everything from technology and science to business and industry. The long-term goal is ambitious and urgent: to create balanced leadership in one generation. For more information on Year of the Girl and ToGetHerThere, including how you can join the cause, check out www.girlscouts.org/yearofthegirl. In addition, register with the Girl Scouts Alumnae Association (www.alumnae.girlscouts.org) and learn about the many ways you can reconnect with Girl Scouts. Together, we'll continue building girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.



Appendix

METHODOLOGY

The multi-phased study combined qualitative and quantitative research methodologies* consisting of:

- Focus groups with Girl Scout alumnae
- An online community of Girl Scout alumnae
- A combined telephone and online survey with a nationally representative sample of women, including an oversample of Girl Scout alumnae
- A mobile phone survey with the general population of women, including Girl Scout alumnae.
- An online survey with a sample of senior professionals, including Girl Scout alumnae
- Hybrid online chats with a subsample of senior professional Girl Scout alumnae
- Video oral histories with Girl Scout alumnae

Qualitative Components

Data from the qualitative components of the study was used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how Girl Scouting impacted alumnae. Focus groups were conducted in October 2010, with the online community completed in March 2011. The video oral histories took place August through September of 2011. When appropriate, findings from focus groups, interviews, the online community, and the video oral histories were used to underscore data from the national online

survey; these appear as quotes and background information throughout the report.

Focus Groups

Ten focus groups with alumnae were conducted in four markets:

- **Cincinnati, Ohio:** One group each with Generation X (29–44) and the Silent Generation (65+)
- **Los Angeles, California:** One group each with Generation Y (18–28) and baby boomers (45–64), and one mixed-age group with Latina alumnae
- **Dallas, Texas:** One group each with Generation X (29–44) and baby boomers (45–64)
- **Westchester, New York:** One group each with Generation X (29–44) and baby boomers (45–64), and one mixed-age group with African American alumnae

The groups were segregated by alumnae age or generation. Respondents were selected to represent alumnae with diverse professional and personal backgrounds (e.g., community leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs, volunteers). Other recruitment criteria included entry age and length of exposure to Girl Scouting as well as a good mix of income, education, marital status, and race/ethnicity. Prior to the focus groups, respondents completed a home assignment in the form of a “memory book” about their Girl Scout experience.

Online Community

The online community was conducted with 30 to 50 alumnae over the course of one month. This methodology allowed us to recruit participants from across the country who represented diverse generational, cultural, ethnic, socioeconomic, and professional backgrounds. Over the course of a month, participants were engaged in an ongoing “conversation” with the researcher and other community members about their experiences in Girl Scouts.

Hybrid Interviews

Hybrid interviews consisted of online live chats with 20 alumnae who were selected from the online survey with senior executives. The online survey included a programming logic that allowed us to identify respondents who met our predetermined criteria for a follow-up interview. After completing the survey, these respondents participated in a live online chat with a professional researcher. They were able to elaborate on their responses to the survey and share their memories and impressions of their Girl Scout experience.

* A more detailed description of the methodology is available from the Girl Scout Research Institute upon request (gsresearch@girlscouts.org).

Video Oral Histories

The video oral histories were conducted with a total of 12 Girl Scout alumnae in four markets: Chicago, Illinois; San Antonio, Texas; San Francisco, California; and Washington, DC. Respondents for this phase of research were carefully selected to represent different generations, ethnic/cultural backgrounds, occupations, and types of experiences and memories they had to share. Each respondent was interviewed one-on-one by a professional researcher, and the interview was videotaped by the production team and then edited into a five-minute video presentation.

QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The quantitative phase of research consisted of a combined telephone and online survey, with roughly 60 percent of the sample surveyed by telephone and 40 percent online. The survey was conducted with a statistically robust sample of 3,550 women ages 18 and older and fielded from February 3, 2011 to March 16, 2011. The sample comprised roughly 1,775 women from the general population and 1,775 Girl Scout alumnae. The sample is representative of the national population with regard to key demographic variables, including race/ethnicity, household income, education, marital status, type of residence, etc. The sample size is statistically rigorous and provides sufficient analytical power to examine differences in attitudes, opinions, and perceptions among relevant subgroups of the population.

- **RDD telephone survey:** a random digit dial, nationally representative sample of 1,800 women ages 18 and older, including 900 Girl Scout alumnae and 900 women who were never Girl Scouts

- **Mobile phone survey:** a random national mobile phone survey with 250 women from the general population, including 125 Girl Scout alumnae.
- **Online survey:** an online survey with a total sample of 1,200, including 600 Girl Scout alumnae and 600 women from the general population, which allowed us to boost statistical power for analyzing differences among subgroups of the population
- **Executive survey:** an online survey with a sample of 300 female senior professionals, equally split between the general population of professional women and Girl Scout alumnae among them

DATA REPORTING

The findings presented in this report are based on analyses of the following data sets:

- **Multivariate analyses**, which measured the impact of Girl Scouting on life outcomes, were based on the combined RDD and mobile phone sample.
- **Descriptive statistics** comparing Girl Scout alumnae and non-alumnae are based on the analysis of the combined RDD and mobile phone sample in order to allow us to generalize findings to the entire population of women. The combined landline and cell phone sample are weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region, and population density to parameters from the March 2008 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. The sample is also weighted to match current patterns of telephone status and relative usage of landline and cell phones (for those

with both), based on extrapolations from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. The margin of sampling error is estimated to not exceed +/-2.2 percentage points for the total sample. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to multiple sources of error, including but not limited to sampling error, coverage error, and measurement error.

- **Descriptive statistics** examining differences in attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of segments within the Girl Scout alumnae population are based on the analysis of the combined RDD, mobile phone, and online surveys. Combining the telephone and online samples allowed us to boost statistical power for analyzing differences among subgroups of the alumnae population. The sample was weighted utilizing the same iterative technique described above.
- **Descriptive statistics** comparing Girl Scout alumnae and non-alumnae within the scope of senior professionals are based on the online survey with the panel of female executives. The sample was not weighted.
- All findings presented in this research are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

Resources

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**TWO
THOUSAND
TWELVE
IS THE
YEAR
OF THE
GIRL**



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