Decoding the **Digital Girl**

Defining and Supporting Girls' **Digital Leadership**

The Girl Scout Research Institute recently conducted national research with nearly 2,900 girls and boys ages 5–17 and their parents to better understand the digital experiences of girls and their use of technology to lead in their own lives and beyond. What we learned shows that many girls exhibit leadership in the digital space—an impressive number of them to a degree that, by the high standards of Girl Scouts of the USA, qualifies them as digital leaders.[1] Girls are out there navigating, learning, and creating online with enthusiasm and a love of technology, and they're using tech to teach others and improve their communities and the world. And this is crucial, because in a few years the current generation of girls will enter a workforce that's in great need of tech talent, as well as the confidence and innovator skills that Girl Scout programming helps girls develop.

Girl Scouts were among those studied for *Decoding the Digital Girl*, and the research shows that **Girl Scouts stand out from their non–Girl Scout peers.** They're more likely than non–Girl Scout girls to be digital leaders; they're also more likely to be interested in STEM (and tech specifically) now and as a future career. Girl Scouts are using technology to discover new talents and skills, building their confidence over time; to connect to social issues/causes and empower others to do the same; to help others become experts in technology; and to take action as they create and innovate.

1 Defined as girls ages 11–17 who responded affirmatively to eight of the ten digital leadership survey items used in the research.

Key Findings

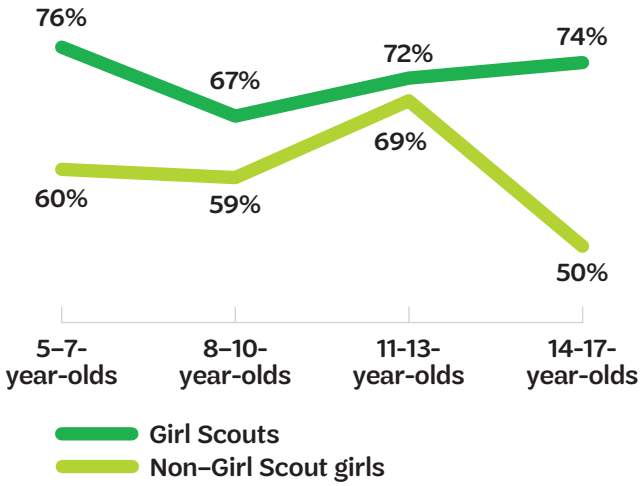
- **Girl Scouts excel at digital leadership.** They're more likely to be digital leaders than boys and non-Girl Scout girls—64 percent of Girl Scouts are digital leaders, compared to 50 percent of boys and 43 percent of non–Girl Scout girls. Girl Scouts particularly stand out as digital leaders with respect to:
  - Discovering new talents or interests through technology (76% vs. 62% of non–GS girls and 59% of boys)
  - Connecting to social issues and causes digitally (72% vs. 51% of non–GS girls and 51% of boys)
  - Connecting friends or family to social issues or causes (63% vs. 37% of non–GS girls and 44% of boys)
  - Taking action by using technology to create (55% vs. 41% of non–GS girls and 38% of boys)
  - Helping other people use their phone or computer (82% vs. 71% of non–GS girls)
  - Confidence in tech skills (82% vs. 70% of non–GS girls)
  - Ability to problem solve online (80% vs. 69% of non–GS girls)
  - Ability to find reliable information online (59% vs. 40% of non–GS girls)

- **Girl Scouts are seeing themselves in STEM fields and tech careers.** Girl Scouts are more likely than non–Girl Scout girls to be interested in STEM fields and tech careers and to maintain this interest through adolescence, while other girls show a drop in interest during adolescence.
  - Seventy-two percent of Girl Scouts are interested in STEM fields (vs. 60% of non–GS girls), and 57 percent are interested in tech careers (vs. 41% of non–GS girls).
  - Whereas non–Girl Scout girls' interest in STEM fields drops from middle school through high school, from 69 percent interested to 50 percent interested, Girl Scouts' interest in these fields actually increases from age eight, when 67 percent are interested, through high school, when 74 percent are interested.
  - Similarly, in terms of tech career interest, Girl Scouts show far less of a drop in interest between middle school and high school—3 percent, versus a 21 percent drop for non–Girl Scout girls.

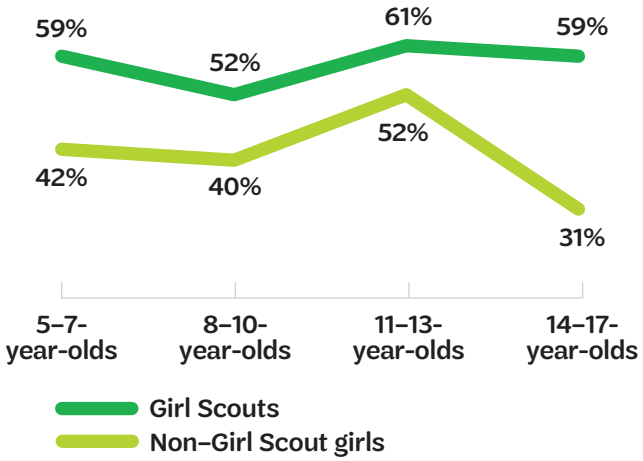
- **Girl Scouts want to learn tech skills.** Girl Scouts are also more likely than non–Girl Scout girls to be interested in specific tech skills, including:
  - App development (60% vs. 46%)
  - Web design (53% vs. 34%)
  - Robotics (52% vs. 39%)
  - Programming (47% vs. 31%)
  - Coding (45% vs. 31%)
  - Cybersecurity (40% vs. 20%)
  - Engineering (37% vs. 23%)

Collectively these findings show that Girl Scouts are poised for digital leadership today and a STEM future tomorrow, complementing previous GSRI research that shows Girl Scouts are more likely than their non–Girl Scout peers to exhibit a strong sense of self, have positive values, seek challenges and learn from setbacks, develop and maintain healthy relationships, and exhibit community problem-solving skills. Indeed, Girl Scouts offers girls a unique support system that promotes a powerful combination of skills, confidence, and connection that propels girls to lead and innovate now and in the future.

STEM Interest



Tech Career Interest



Study Methodology

The GSRI partnered with FROM and Touchstone Research to conduct qualitative and quantitative research with 2,894 participants across the U.S., including 944 girls and 503 boys ages 5–17, and 1,447 of their parents. These national samples aligned with U.S. Census data for youth ages 5–17 with respect to race/ethnicity, urbanicity, geographical region, and household income. Current Girl Scouts (35% of the girl sample, n=323) and non–Girl Scout girls were matched demographically, holding certain factors constant (household income, race/ethnicity, and age) to make equal comparisons between these groups of girls.