



# The Girl Scout Alum Difference:

A Lifetime of Courage,  
Confidence, and Character

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2021 Report by the Girl Scout Research Institute

# Introduction



For over 100 years, Girl Scouts has offered girls the best leadership development experience in the world. The [Girl Scout Leadership Experience](#) is a research-based leadership development program that builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

In Girl Scouts, girls develop a strong sense of self, learn positive values, seek out and overcome challenges, develop and maintain healthy relationships, and develop interest in and learn ways to positively impact their community ([The Girl Scout Impact Study](#), 2017).

Past research from the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) on alums shows that the impact of Girl Scouts continues well into adulthood<sup>1</sup>. The current study builds on prior research to assess how participation in Girl Scouts is linked to later life success among adult alums and delves into the additional benefits experienced by women who earned their Girl Scout Gold Award.

1. *Girl Scouting Works: The Alumnae Impact Study (2012)*, *The Power of the Girl Scout Gold Award: Excellence in Leadership and Life (2016)*

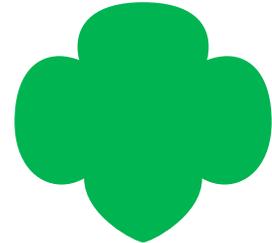
# Research Goals

**This study investigates the following questions:**

## Alum Impact

### **How do Girl Scout alums rate the impact of Girl Scouts in their lives?**

- To what extent do they attribute their current achievements and success to their participation in Girl Scouts?
- How do Girl Scout alums fare when it comes to positive life outcomes—and how do they compare to women who were never Girl Scouts?



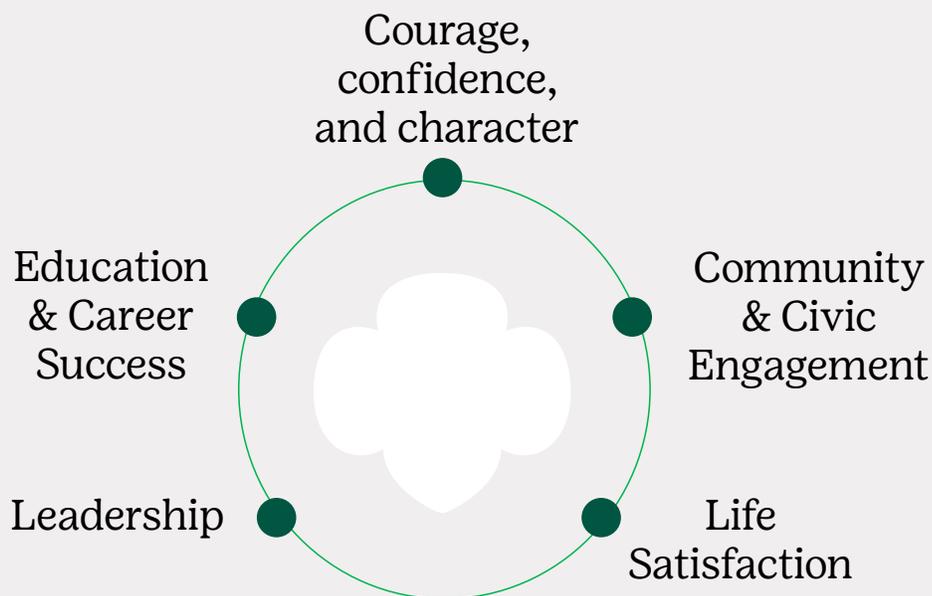
## Gold Award Advantage

### **How do Gold Award Girl Scout alums rate the impact of the Gold Award in their lives?**

- What do they see as the values and benefits of earning the Gold Award?
- How do they leverage the Gold Award in pursuing their education, career, and/or philanthropic goals?



### **Outcomes evaluated in this study**



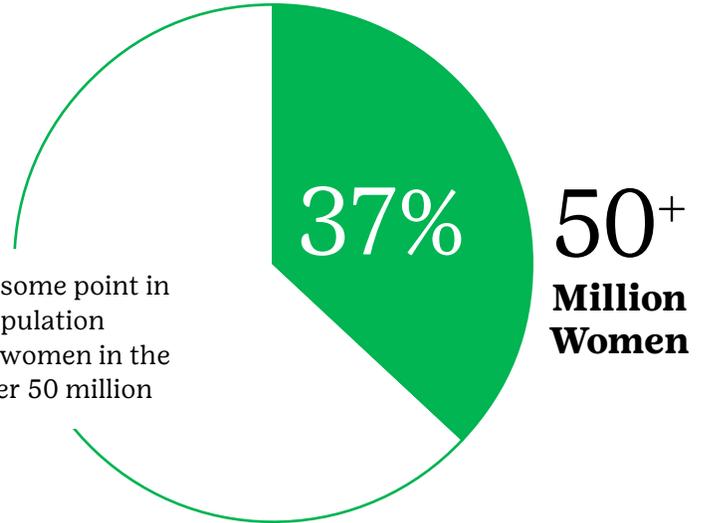
# Girl Scout Alum Facts

## Incidence rate

This study indicates that more than

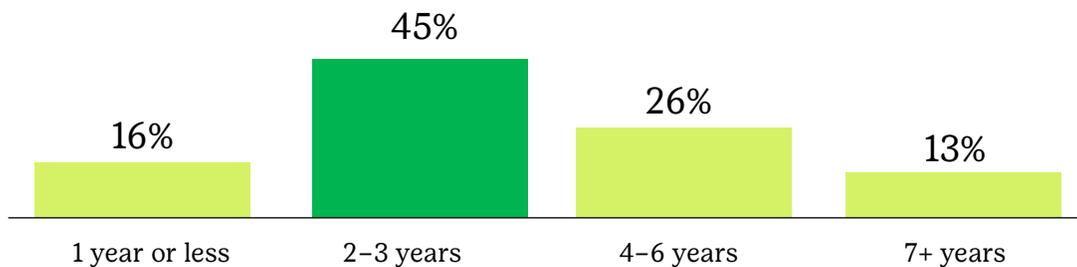
**1 in every 3**

adult women in the United States were Girl Scouts at some point in their lives. Based on current U.S. government population estimates<sup>2</sup>, there are approximately 143 million adult women in the United States. The Girl Scout alum community is over 50 million strong.



The average length of participation in Girl Scouting was three years.

## Program Tenure for Girl Scout Alums



2. <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-03.pdf>

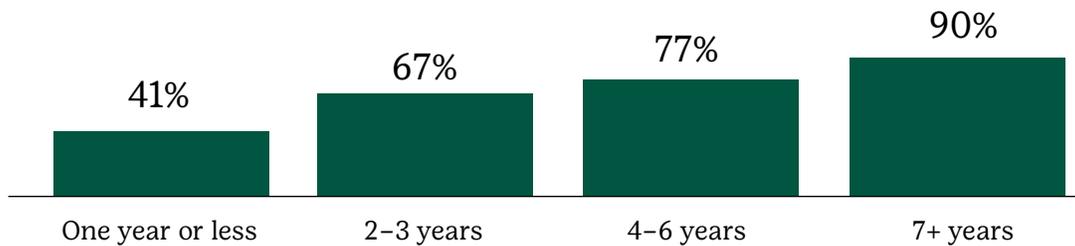
# The Positive Impact of Girl Scouting

**Girl Scout alums attribute positive outcomes to their participation in Girl Scouts. Longer term participation and engagement in highest awards are linked to greater perceptions of impact.**

**7 in 10 (68%)**

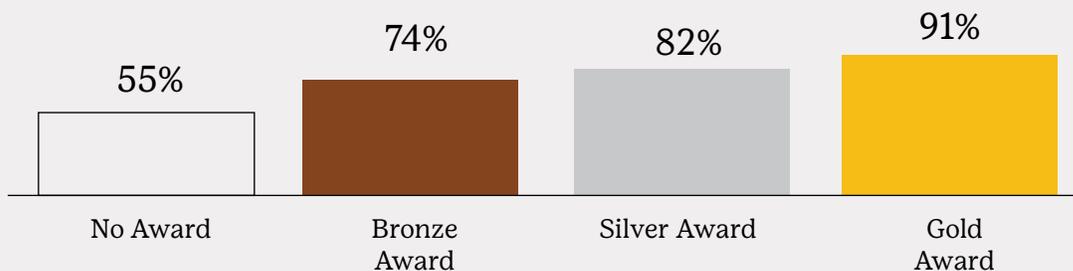
**Girl Scout alums assert that Girl Scouts has had a positive impact on their lives.**

**Percentage of Alums Who Assert Girl Scouts Had a Positive Impact**



Starting in fourth grade, Girl Scouts can begin to take action in their communities through the Girl Scout highest awards<sup>3</sup>. Through these awards, girls learn important leadership skills, discover their passions, and plan and lead projects that create big change in their communities. This study found that the more alums were engaged with highest awards as Girl Scouts, the greater their perception of the impact of Girl Scouts on their life outcomes.

**Percentage of Alums Who Agree Girl Scouts Had a Positive Impact by Highest Award Earned**



3. The Bronze Award can be earned by Girl Scout Juniors (4th and 5th grade girls), the Silver Award can be earned by Girl Scout Cadettes (6th, 7th, and 8th grade girls), and the Gold Award can be earned by Girl Scout Seniors or Ambassadors (9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade girls). More information about the Girl Scout highest awards can be found at <https://www.girlscouts.org/en/our-program/highest-awards.html>.

# Alums say Girl Scouts laid the foundation for their success.

## Girl Scouts helped

### **1. Set them on a path for achievement and success.**

- 64% encouraged to set high goals for their lives
- 54% contributed to their overall success in life
- 48% contributed to their work or career success

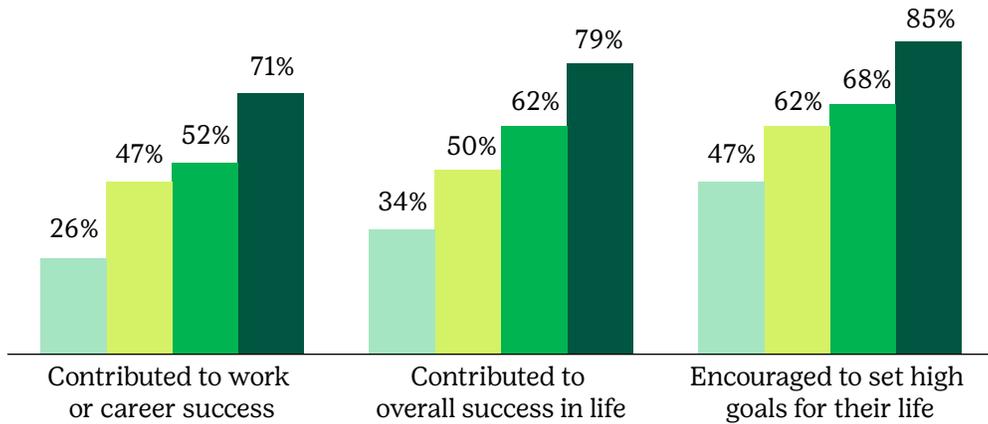
### **2. Connect them to something bigger than themselves—linking them to community and to a network of girls and women around the world.**

- 61% became more responsible members of their communities
- 60% inspired their commitment to community service or volunteering
- 59% felt part of a national or global sisterhood
- 53% equipped to solve problems in their communities

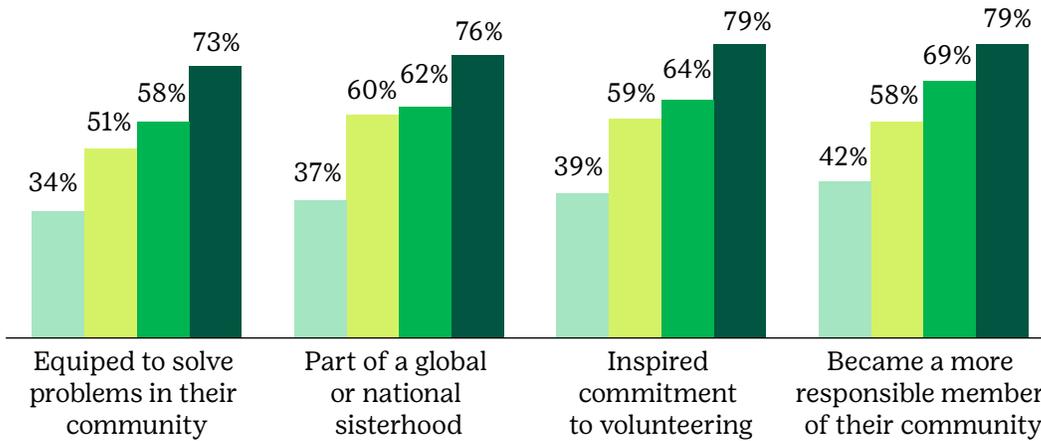
### **3. Develop their passions and interests.**

- 64% developed outdoor skills, including environmental stewardship
- 43% developed their interest in business or entrepreneurship
- 37% developed their interest in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM)

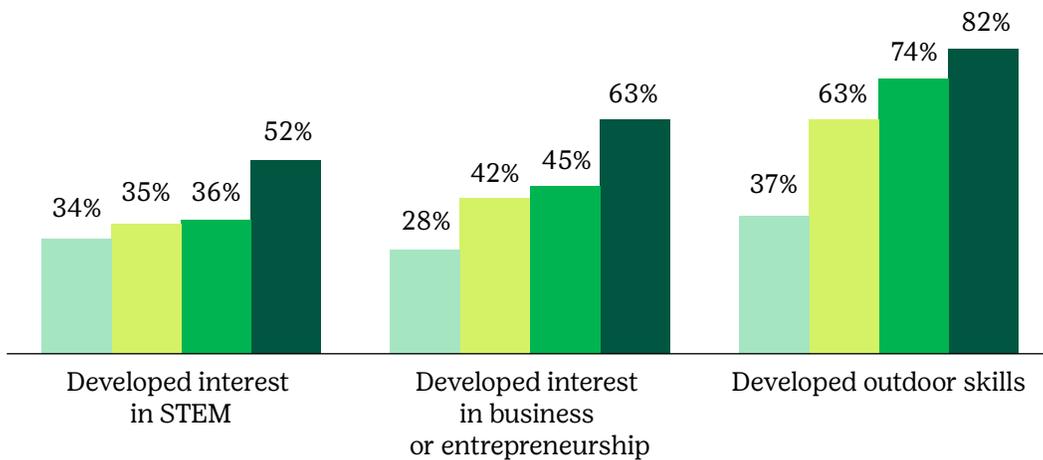
**Percentage of Alums who Say Girl Scouts Helped Set them on a Path for Achievement and Success by Program Tenure**



**Percentage of Alums who Say Girl Scouts Connected Them to Something Bigger than Themselves by Program Tenure**



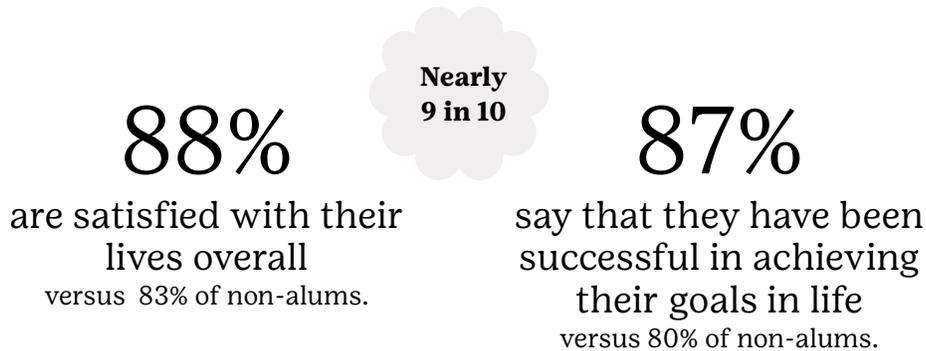
**Percentage of Alums who Say Girl Scouts Helped them Develop their Passions and Interests by Program Tenure**



One year or less    2-3 years    4-6 years    7+ years

# Girl Scout alums are very satisfied with their lives today.

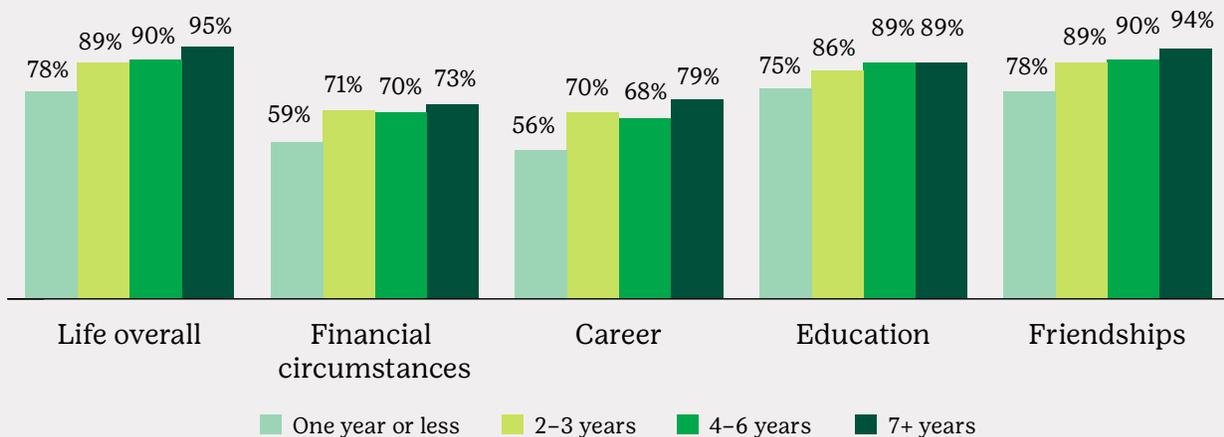
Girl Scout alums are more satisfied with life and with their relationships, education, financial circumstances, and careers than non-alums.



Friendships	Education	Financial circumstances	Career
88% vs. 81%	86% vs. 77%	69% vs. 63%	68% vs. 60%

The longer women were involved in Girl Scouts the more satisfied they are on all satisfaction indicators.

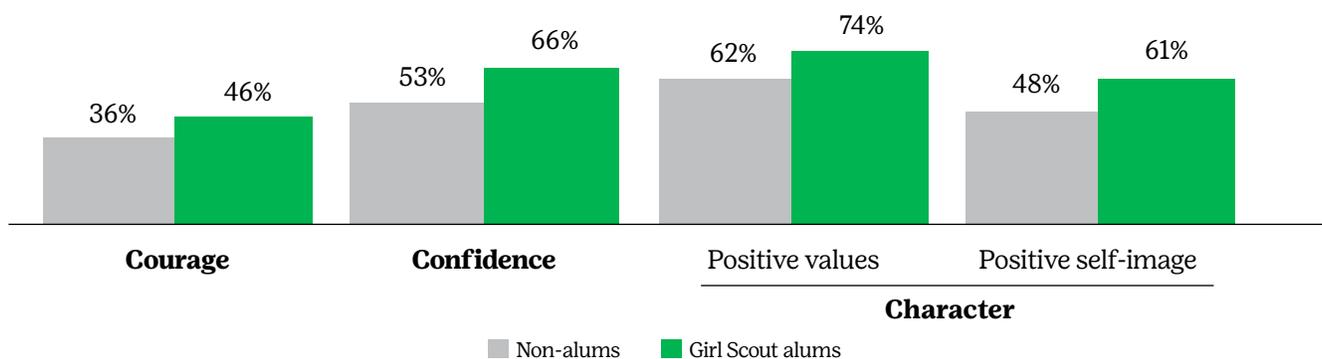
Percentage of Alums Satisfied with Life by Program Tenure



# Girl Scout alums exhibit courage, confidence, and character.

Girl Scout alums are more likely than non-alums to excel across a variety of positive life outcome metrics.

Percentage of Alums Exhibiting Courage, Confidence, and Character



## Courage

Girl Scout alums exhibit courage. They take on challenges, persist when encountering failure, and are determined and motivated to achieve their goals. They are more likely than non-alums to say:

I learn from failures and setbacks.

**75%**  
versus 66%

I take on challenges to improve myself.

**61%**  
versus 50%

I am ambitious.

**58%**  
versus 49%

I am not afraid to take risks.

**48%**  
versus 42%

## Confidence

Girl Scout alums are confident. They are sure of themselves and their ability to set and achieve their goals. They are more likely than non-alums to say:

I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.

**81%**  
versus 67%

I try to be the very best at the things I do.

**80%**  
versus 70%

I generally accomplish what I set out to do.

**74%**  
versus 63%

I am confident in my abilities.

**70%**  
versus 62%

## Character: Positive Self-image

Girl Scout alums possess a positive self-image. They feel a sense of purpose, meaning, and conviction in living their values. They are more likely than non-alums to say:

I am a good person and live a good life.

**82%**  
versus 68%

I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.

**67%**  
versus 54%

I am optimistic about the future.

**65%**  
versus 53%

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## Character: Positive Values

Girl Scout alums possess positive values. They feel a sense of conviction toward honesty, caring for others, and standing up for their beliefs. They are more likely than non-alums to say:

I am honest and trustworthy.

**89%**  
versus 80%

I stand up for my beliefs and values.

**79%**  
versus 69%

I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.

**73%**  
versus 60%

# Girl Scout alums outperform in education and career attainment.

## Girl Scout alums are more satisfied with their education and attain higher levels of education than non-alums.

The length of time in Girl Scouts is positively correlated to attaining higher levels of education. Girl Scout alums who participated for four or more years completed more years of education<sup>4</sup>.

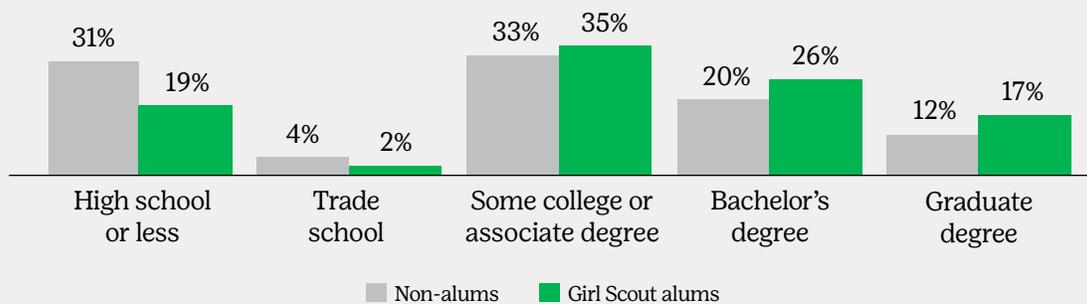
43%

of Girl Scout alums have completed at least a 4-year college degree<sup>5</sup>, compared to 32% of non-alums.

78%

have attended at least some college, compared to 65% of non-alums.

### Educational Attainment



## Girl Scout alums are more likely to be in management positions at work, more satisfied with their careers, and more likely to want to have a positive impact on society through their work.

42%

of Girl Scout alums hold management positions, compared to 37% non-alums.

76%

of Girl Scout alums think it is important to make a positive impact on society through their work, compared to 65% of non-alums.

68%

of Girl Scout alums are satisfied with their careers, compared to 60% of non-alums.

4. This finding remained consistent for alums of all races.

5. In 2019, 36.6% of women in the United States completed four years or more of college. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/184272/educational-attainment-of-college-diploma-or-higher-by-gender/>

# Alums engage in community and take civic action.

**Girl Scout alums are more likely to volunteer and contribute financially to causes they care about than non-alums. Girl Scout alums are invested in supporting their communities by donating their time and money and in making a difference in the world through civic action.**

48%

of Girl Scout alums volunteer, compared to 33% of non-alums.

62%

of Girl Scout alums donate money, compared to 47% of non-alums.

## Top causes alums support through volunteering and donations

Animal welfare

Health

Religion

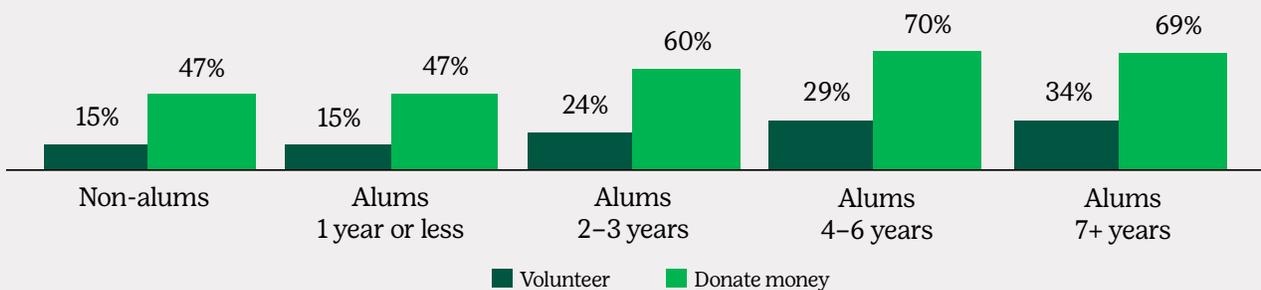
Youth services

Education

Girls' and women's causes

The longer alums were in Girl Scouts, the more likely they are to volunteer regularly and to donate money to causes as adults.

## Percentage of Alums Who Donate Time and Money by Girl Scout Tenure



# Girl Scout alums take civic action.

Girl Scout alums are more likely to be civically engaged and to take civic action than non-alums.

**58%**

**of Girl Scout alums took at least one of the following civic actions in the 12 months prior to this study,**

compared to 43% of non-alums.

**Signed a petition**

**35% vs. 23%**

**Advocated for a cause on social media**

**25% vs. 18%**

**Worked with others to address a community issue**

**22% vs. 14%**

**Wrote to, called, or visited elected official to express views**

**16% vs. 10%**

**Served on a committee or in a leadership position for a local, national, or international organization**

**13% vs. 6%**

**Held or ran for a public office**

**3% vs. 2%**

## Girl Scout alums exercise their right to vote:

**86%**

are registered to vote,  
versus 76% of non-alums.

**73%**

vote always  
or nearly always,  
versus 60% of non-alums.

# Girl Scout alums shine in leadership.

**Girl Scout alums are more likely to exhibit leadership attributes and hold more leadership roles than non-alums. They bring people together, make decisions, and get things done. The longer alums were in Girl Scouts, the more likely they are to exhibit leadership attributes.**

**Girl Scout alums are more likely to report having these attributes than non-alums<sup>6</sup>.**

I possess qualities and skills that make others respect me.

**62%**

compared to 50% of non-alums

I bring people together to get things done.

**53%**

compared to 43% of non-alums

I think of myself as a leader.

**46%**

compared to 36% of non-alums

I have decision-making power at work or in my community.

**42%**

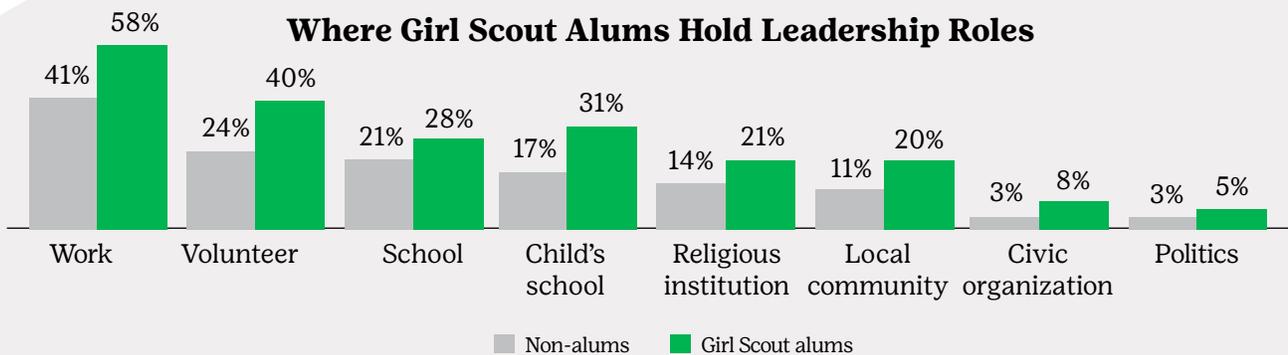
compared to 31% of non-alums

6. Black and Latina alums exhibit even higher leadership traits than White alums; Black and Latina alums are more likely to identify as leaders (63% and 55% versus 44%), bring people together to get things done (75% and 68% versus 50%), and have decision-making power (66% and 59% versus 39%).

**Girl Scout alums not only possess leadership attributes—the majority also engage in leadership roles across different spheres of life.**

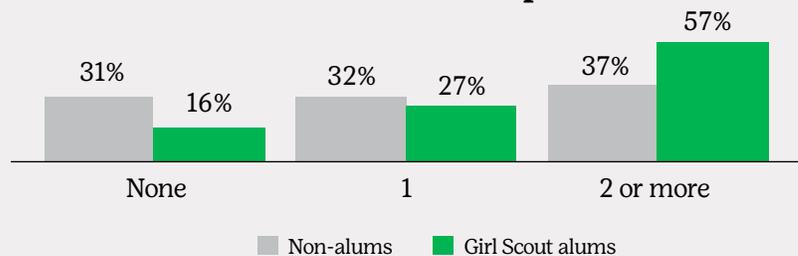
For example, Girl Scout alums are more likely than non-alums to have held leadership roles at work, in their own or their children’s school, or as a volunteer. And when tallied, Girl Scout alums have held more leadership roles overall than non-alums.

**Where Girl Scout Alums Hold Leadership Roles**



**84% of Girl Scout alums currently hold leadership roles.**

**Number of Leadership Roles**



**Girl Scout alums think there should be more women in positions of leadership.**

**70%**  
in their local community

**73%**  
in government

**75%**  
in business



# The Gold Award Impact

The Girl Scout Gold Award is the mark of the truly remarkable. Girl Scouts who earn the Gold Award tackle issues of need and concern in their communities to drive lasting change. This study confirms the results of the [\*2016 The Power of the Girl Scout Gold Award: Excellence in Leadership and Life Report\*](#). It also expands the body of knowledge about the skills Gold Award Girl Scouts develop and examines how these Girl Scouts leverage the Gold Award to achieve their goals and truly change the world. Additionally, this study finds that while being a Girl Scout is good in terms of life outcomes, earning a Girl Scout Gold Award is great.

## Benefits of the Gold Award

**Gold Award Girl Scouts developed key skills in earning the Gold Award that helped them succeed in life.** Gold Award Girl Scouts describe themselves as “go-getters” and feel they acquired essential 21st-century employment skills through the process of earning the Gold Award. These skills gave them a boost in their academic and professional lives.

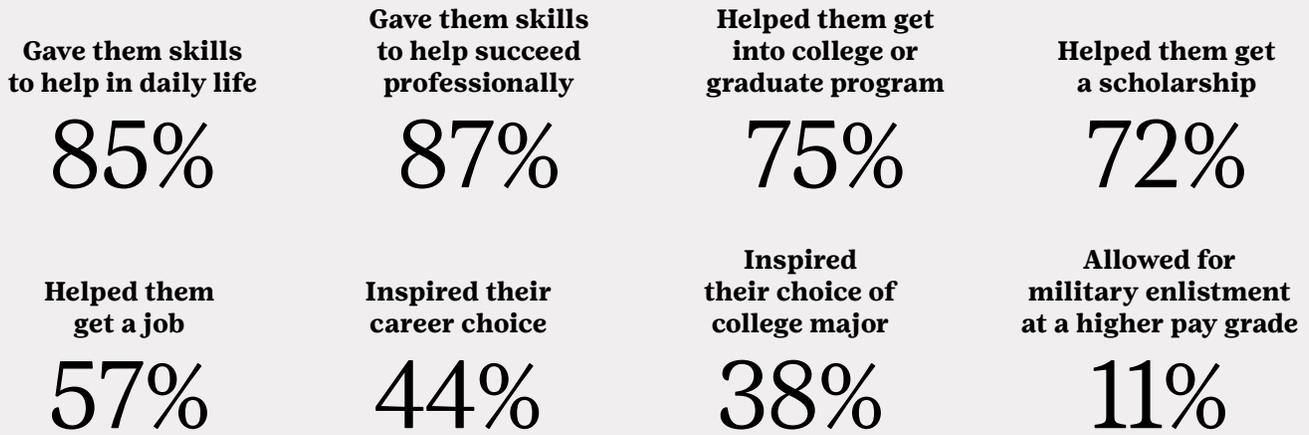
Project management	Problem solving	Leadership	Decision-making
Resourcefulness	Self-confidence	Time management	Community building
Resilience	Teamwork	Research	Public speaking

*“Being able to talk about project management and give an example of something I created was great for my first job interview.”*

Gold Award Girl Scout

# Leveraging the Gold Award

## Gold Award Girl Scouts agree that earning their Gold Award...



*“Now that I am higher up in a leadership position in my career, I’ve noticed that many of the skills I learned and things that came naturally to me because I had this experience have been real big career builders.”*

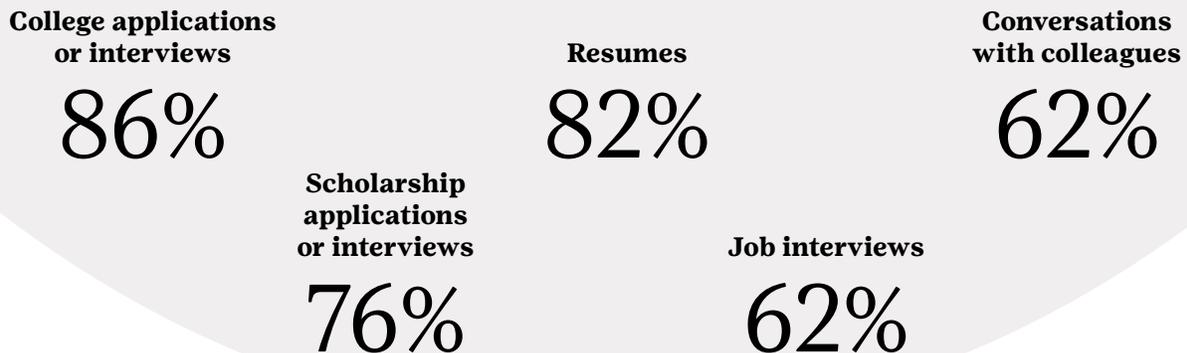
Gold Award Girl Scout

*“I think one of the reasons why I am where I am is because the interviewer knew what the Gold Award was and appreciated the value of it.”*

Gold Award Girl Scout

## Gold Award Girl Scouts leverage the Gold Award to support educational and professional advancements.

Gold Award Girl Scouts use the Gold Award to open doors educationally and professionally in the following ways:



Analysis was restricted to women age 39 and under to include millennial (1981–1995) and Generation Z (1996–2012) generations. We chose this subsample to reflect early- and mid-career women.

# Positive Impact of Girl Scouting

**Over 90% of women who earned the Gold Award are proud to have been a Girl Scout and feel that Girl Scouting had a unique and positive impact in their lives.**

**Gold Award Girl Scouts attribute their commitment to community, development of essential life skills, and success in life to Girl Scouts.**

**98%**

Girl Scouts had a positive impact on my life.

**95%**

I am proud to have been a Girl Scout.

**92%**

I had experiences in Girl Scouts I could not get elsewhere.

## Gold Award Girl Scouts say that Girl Scouts...

**Inspired their commitment to community service or volunteering**

**96%**

**Made them more responsible members of their communities**

**95%**

**Encouraged them to set high goals or aspirations for their lives**

**93%**

**Contributed to their success in life**

**92%**

**Developed their outdoor skills, including environmental stewardship**

**91%**

**Equipped them to solve problems in their communities**

**89%**

**Contributed to their work or career success**

**87%**

**Made them feel like part of a global or national sisterhood**

**83%**

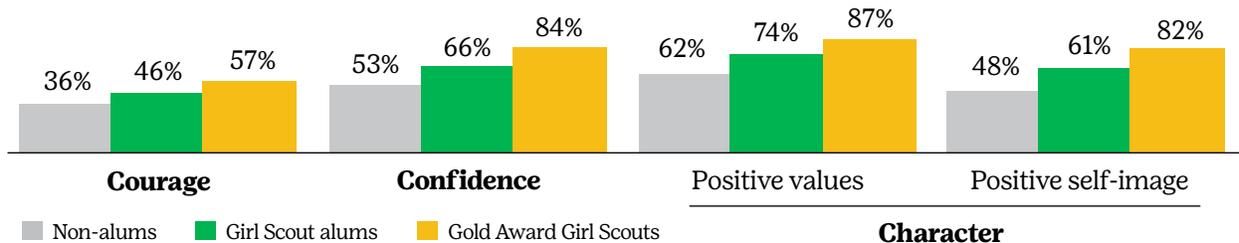
**Developed their business or entrepreneurship skills**

**75%**

# Positive Life Outcomes

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are more likely to exhibit positive life outcomes than non-alums. Gold Award Girl Scouts are more likely to have a positive self-image, hold positive values, and exhibit confidence and courage compared to non-alums.**

**Percentage of Girl Scout Gold Award Alums Who Exhibit Positive Life Outcomes**



**Gold Award Girl Scouts have courage. They take on challenges, persist when encountering failure, and stay determined to achieve their goals.**

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are confident. They are sure of themselves and their ability to set and achieve their goals.**

**Gold Award Girl Scouts have character.**

**They have a positive self-image: They feel a sense of purpose, meaning, and conviction in living their values.**

**They have positive values: They are honest, caring, and stand up for their beliefs.**

## Educational Attainment

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are three times more likely to have earned a graduate degree than non-alums.**

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are more likely to have:**

Obtained a bachelor's or graduate degree

**88%**

versus 32% non-alums

Bachelor's degree

**50%**

versus 20% non-alums

Graduate degree

**38%**

versus 12% non-alums

# Community and Civic Engagement

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are three times more likely to volunteer for and more likely to donate to multiple causes compared to non-alums.**

Gold Award Girl Scouts are much more engaged in their communities through volunteering, donating money, and advocating for others than non-alums. When it comes to the issues they support, Gold Award Girl Scouts are more invested in supporting organizations or causes that focus on youth, girls/women, and education.

## Gold Award Girl Scouts:

volunteer  
**82%**  
versus 33% non-alums

volunteer for  
multiple causes  
**73%**  
versus 20% non-alums

donate money  
to causes  
**76%**  
versus 47% non-alums

Volunteer Causes	Gold Award Girl Scouts	Girl Scout Alums	Non-alums
Youth-serving	49%	16%	8%
Girls' & Women's Causes	41%	16%	6%
Educational	36%	16%	8%

Donation Causes	Gold Award Girl Scouts	Girl Scout Alums	Non-alums
Youth-serving	44%	23%	13%
Girls' & Women's Causes	40%	24%	14%
Educational	36%	21%	13%

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are more civically engaged and more likely to be:**

registered  
to vote  
**96%**  
versus 76% non-alums

voting  
frequently<sup>7</sup>  
**82%**  
versus 60% non-alums

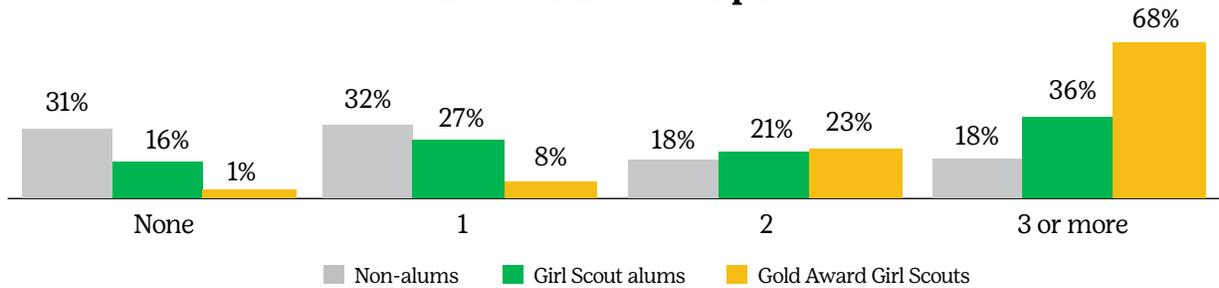
7. Voting refers to women who identified as voting always or nearly always.

# Leadership in Action

**Nearly all Gold Award Girl Scouts take on leadership roles in their everyday lives, far more than non-alums.**

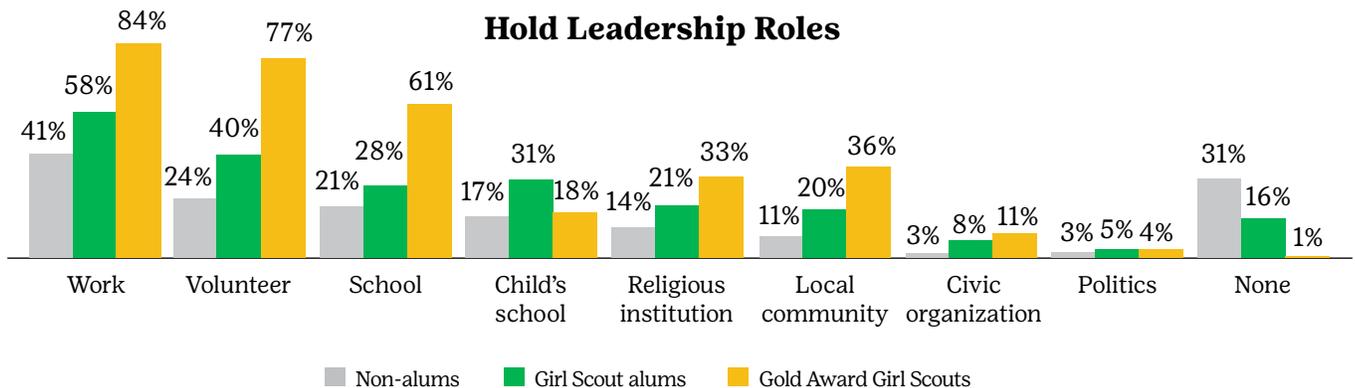
Gold Award Girl Scouts put their beliefs about women in leadership into action. Gold Award Girl Scouts fill leadership roles at work, in schools, and as volunteers in their communities. Additionally, when tallied, Gold Award Girl Scouts hold more leadership roles in their lives than non-alums.

**Number of Leadership Roles**



**99% of Gold Award Girl Scouts take on leadership roles in their everyday lives and seven in ten have taken on three or more.**

**Where Girl Scout Alums Hold Leadership Roles**



# Attitudes Toward Women in Leadership

**Gold Award Girl Scouts hold more inclusive beliefs about gender equality; they are more likely to express the need for women's representation in top leadership positions than non-alums.**

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are more likely than non-alums to want more women in leadership positions in**

their  
local communities

**85%**  
versus 61%

business

**88%**  
versus 65%

government

**88%**  
versus 64%

## Life Satisfaction

**Gold Award Girl Scouts are significantly more satisfied in life—personally, with education, professionally, and financially—than non-alums.**

More than **8 in 10** Gold Award Girl Scouts feel satisfied with their lives and achievements.

**Percentage of Gold Award Girl Scouts who feel satisfied with their...**

Life overall

**97%**

Education

**97%**

Career

**84%**

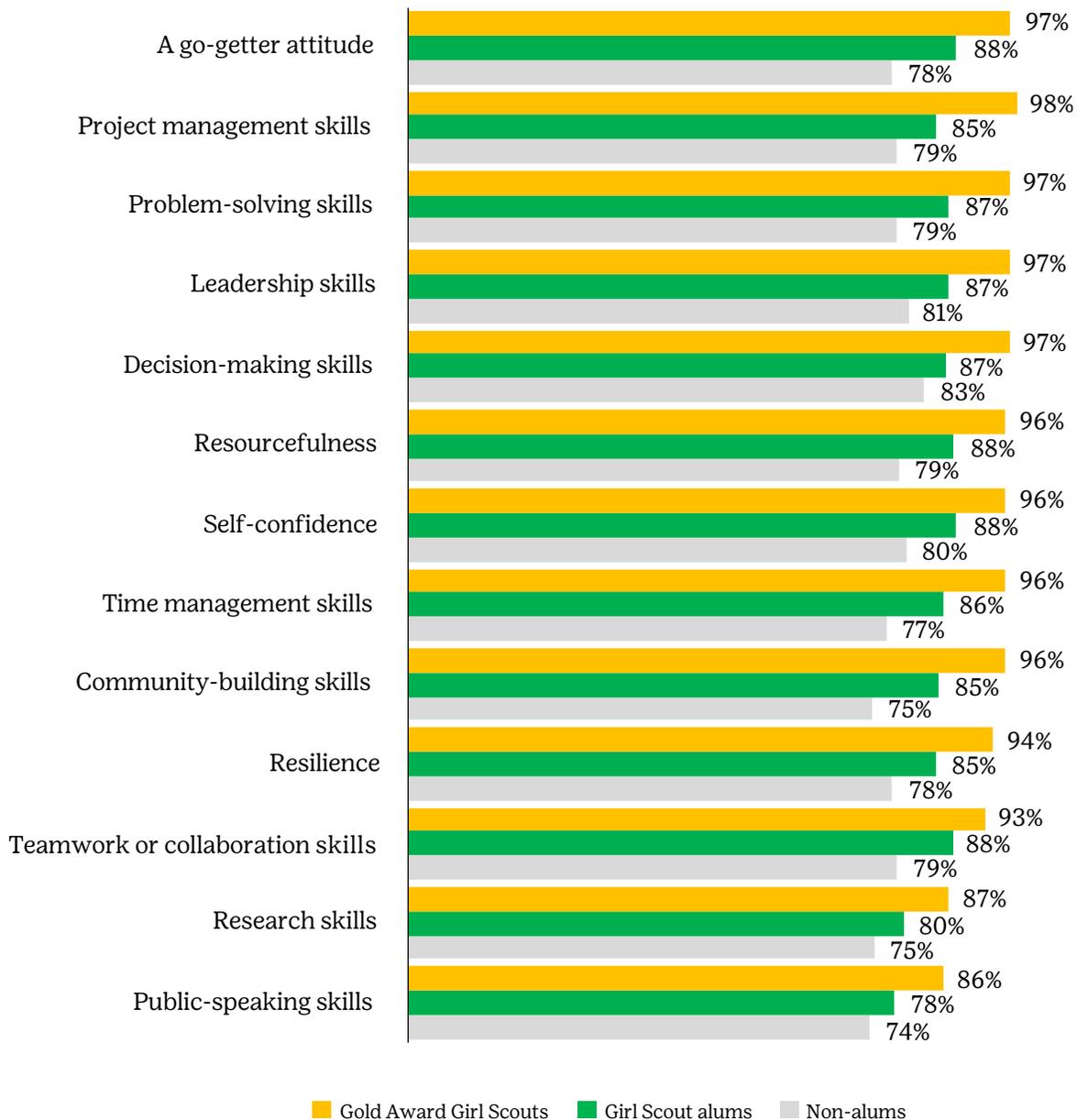
Financial  
circumstances

**82%**

# Perceptions of the Gold Award

**While Gold Award Girl Scouts and alums alike understand the prestige of the Gold Award, our research indicates that non-alums who are aware of the Gold Award also see the Gold Award as important and associate it with a variety of important skills and traits.**

**Percentage Who Associate Each of the Following Attributes with Someone Who Earned a Gold Award**



# Significance and Implications

As with the 2012 [\*Girl Scouting Works: The Girl Scout Alumnae Impact Study\*](#), this study found that Girl Scout alums are more likely than non-alums to exhibit the positive life outcomes promoted in Girl Scouts. These positive life outcomes provide the foundation for women to excel in education and careers, to become leaders at work and in their communities, and to be satisfied in their lives. Evidence suggests that participation in Girl Scouts is a powerful factor in developing these outcomes. The power of this influence is recognized by both Girl Scouts and non-Girl Scouts alike and Girl Scout alums leverage their Girl Scout experience to help reach their desired goals throughout their lives.

## **The findings from this study show that Girl Scout alums excel!**

### **Girl Scout alums are more likely than non-alums to:**

- Exhibit higher levels of courage, confidence, and character
- Attain higher levels of education and management positions at work
- Volunteer and contribute to causes they support
- Be civically involved
- Exhibit leadership attributes and hold more leadership roles
- Be more satisfied with life—personally, professionally, and financially

**Additionally, this research validates findings in the 2016 report, [\*The Power of the Girl Scout Gold Award: Excellence in Leadership and Life\*](#), which highlighted the extraordinary benefits experienced by earning the Girl Scout Gold Award.**

### **Gold Award Girl Scouts, compared to alums and non-alums, are even more likely to:**

- Exhibit courage, confidence, and character
- Attain a college or graduate degree
- Volunteer for or donate to multiple causes
- Hold three or more leadership roles
- Be more satisfied with life—personally, professionally, and financially

Gold Award Girl Scouts report that through earning the Gold Award, they developed essential 21st-century employment skills that give them a boost in their academic and professional lives. They affirm that the Gold Award helped them get into college or graduate programs, earn scholarships, and secure jobs.

**This study confirms what Girl Scouts have known all along. Girl Scouts builds girls and women of courage, confidence, and character who are leaders in their lives, at work, and in their communities.**

# Appendix

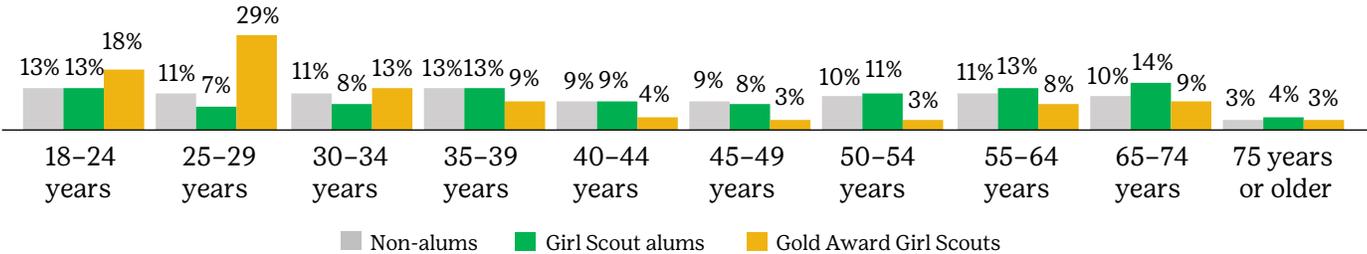
## Methodology

The study design included focus groups and quantitative surveys with women ages 18 to 75 and older from across the United States. The first phase of research involved formative focus groups with women who earned the Girl Scout Gold Award in Texas and in California. The second phase of research consisted of online surveys with a nationally representative sample (matched to census data on race/ethnicity, age, and income) of 800 women who were never Girl Scouts (non-alums), 1,000 Girl Scout alums, and an additional purposeful sample of 992 Gold Award Girl Scout alums.

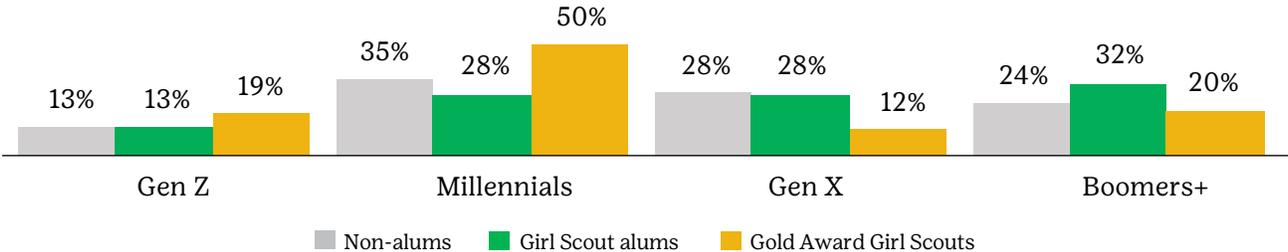
The GSRI worked with Fluent Research to conduct this research; data were collected in January 2020.

## Demographics

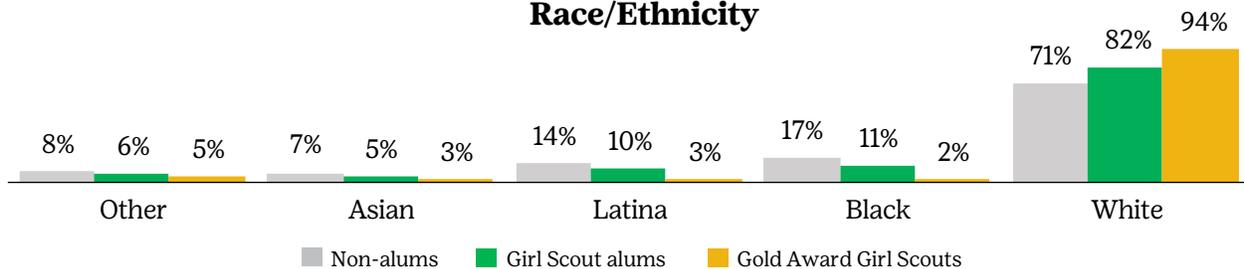
### Age



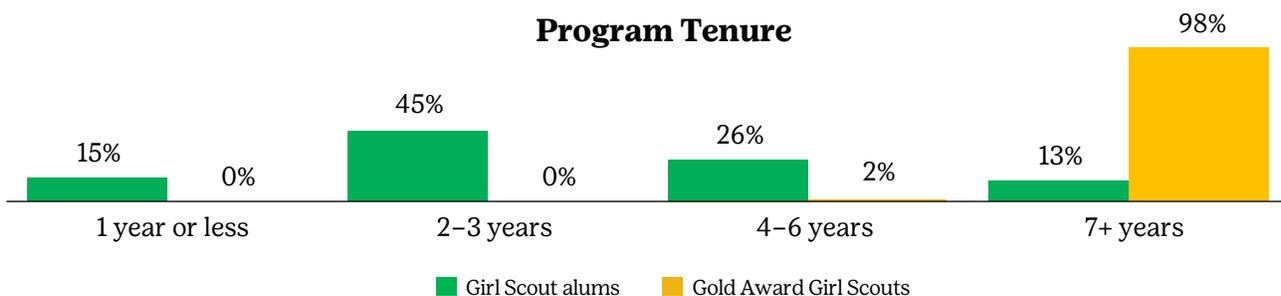
### Generations



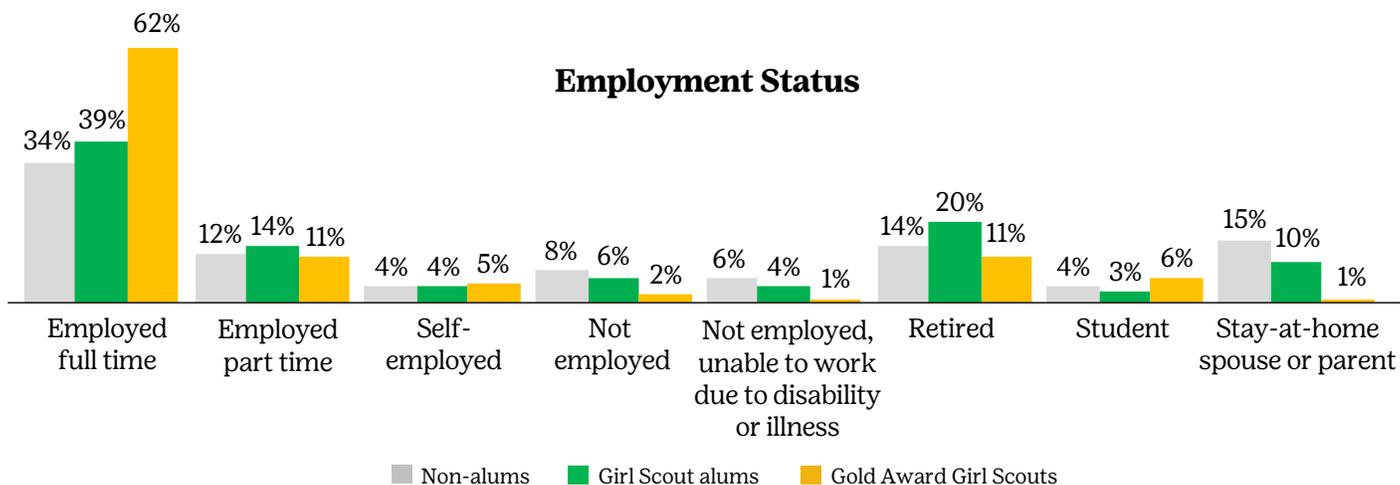
### Race/Ethnicity



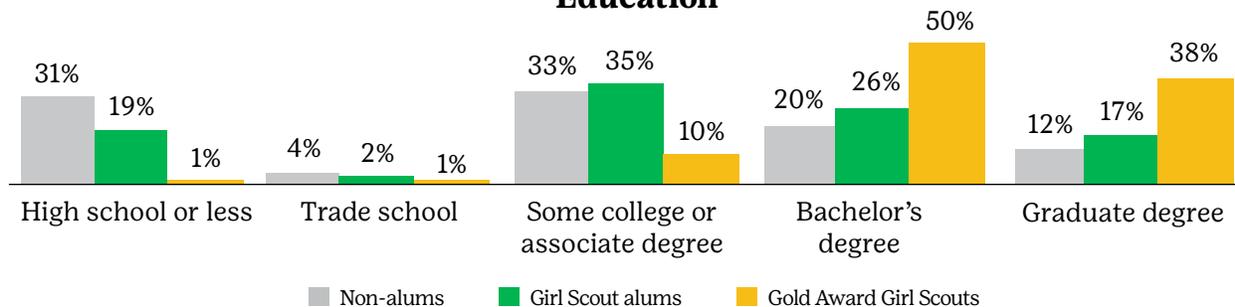
### Program Tenure



### Employment Status



### Education





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## 2021 Report by the Girl Scout Research Institute

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