

# THE CONFIDENCE CODE FOR GIRLS

The Confidence Collapse and  
Why It Matters for the Next Gen



In partnership with Claire Shipman & Katty Kay, authors of *The Confidence Code for Girls*, we embarked on a research initiative to investigate what confidence looks like for girls today.

### **We uncovered some dramatic findings:**

Between ages 8 and 14, girls' confidence levels **drop by 30%**.

Between their tween and teen years, girls' confidence **that other people like them** falls from 71% to 38% — a 46% drop.

More than half of teen girls feel **pressure to be perfect**.

3 in 4 teen girls **worry about failing**.

Between ages 12 and 13, the percentage of girls who say **they're not allowed to fail** increases by 150%.

Nearly **8 in 10 girls** want to feel more confident in themselves.

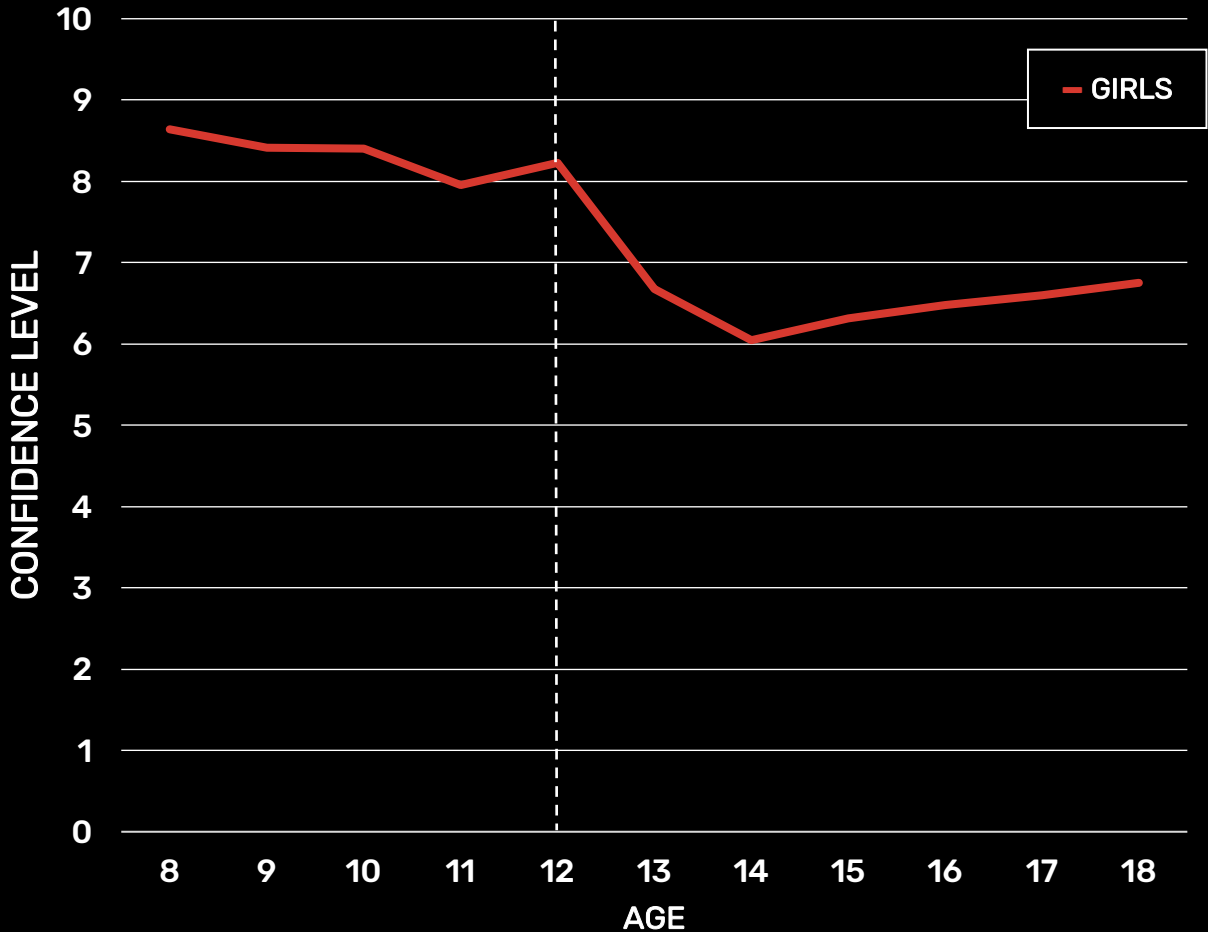
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# CONFIDENCE COLLAPSES

Between ages 8 and 14, girls' confidence levels **drop by 30%.**

## Q. How confident are you?

*On a scale from "0 – Not confident at all" to "10 – Extremely confident"*



Results based on Ypulse survey research conducted Feb 8th – Feb 13th, 2018 among 864 girls aged 8-18.

There is virtually no difference in confidence between boys and girls until they hit age 12. After age 12, a confidence gap opens between boys and girls that doesn't close through adolescence. Boys do experience some turbulence in confidence entering puberty, but boys' confidence at age 14, when we see girls at their lowest point, is 27% higher than girls' confidence.

# THEIR TEENAGE YEARS

Between their tween and teen years, girls' confidence that other people like them falls from 71% to 38% — a 46% drop.

*"I make friends really easily. I can go up to anyone and start a conversation."*

—GIRL, AGE 9



*"I'm not confident in making friends because I am scared of making a mistake."*

—GIRL, AGE 18

*"I love writing poetry and I don't care if anyone else thinks it's good or bad."*

—GIRL, AGE 12



*"I feel like everybody is so smart and pretty and I'm just this ugly girl without friends."*

—GIRL, AGE 14

*"I feel comfortable around my friends because they know the real me."*

—GIRL, AGE 12



*"I feel that if I acted like my true self that no one would like me."*

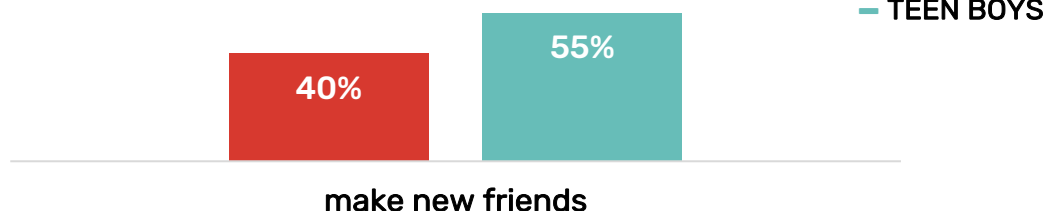
—GIRL, AGE 14

Confidence takes a nosedive as girls enter their teenage years. Teen girls are 27% less likely than teen boys to feel confident that they can make new friends, signaling intense social pressures that arise during puberty.

## AVERAGE CONFIDENCE LEVELS

Tween girl/boy	8.3 / 10
Teen boy	7.8 / 10
Teen girl	6.5 / 10

% who feel very/extremely confident they can...



# DEFINING THEMSELVES

**Girls are 18% less likely than boys to describe themselves as "confident."**

Girls are more likely than boys to describe themselves as stressed, anxious, shy, emotional, worried, depressed and ugly. Boys are more likely than girls to describe themselves as confident, strong, adventurous, and fearless.

**3 IN 4  
TEEN GIRLS  
WORRY ABOUT FAILING**

**MORE THAN HALF  
OF TEEN GIRLS FEEL  
PRESSURE TO BE PERFECT**

*"I don't think I'm that smart. I feel like I make too many mistakes to be smart."*  
—GIRL, AGE 17

*BETWEEN AGES 12 AND 13...*

...the percentage of girls who say **they are not allowed to fail** rises from 18% to 45% — a 150% increase.

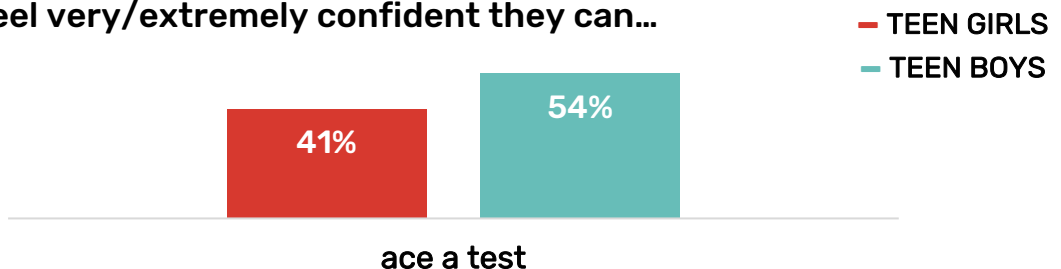
...the percentage of girls who **feel the pressure to be perfect** rises from 35% to 51% — a 46% increase.

## SOCIETY OF STRESS

**Teen girls are 24% less likely than teen boys to say they would ace a test.**

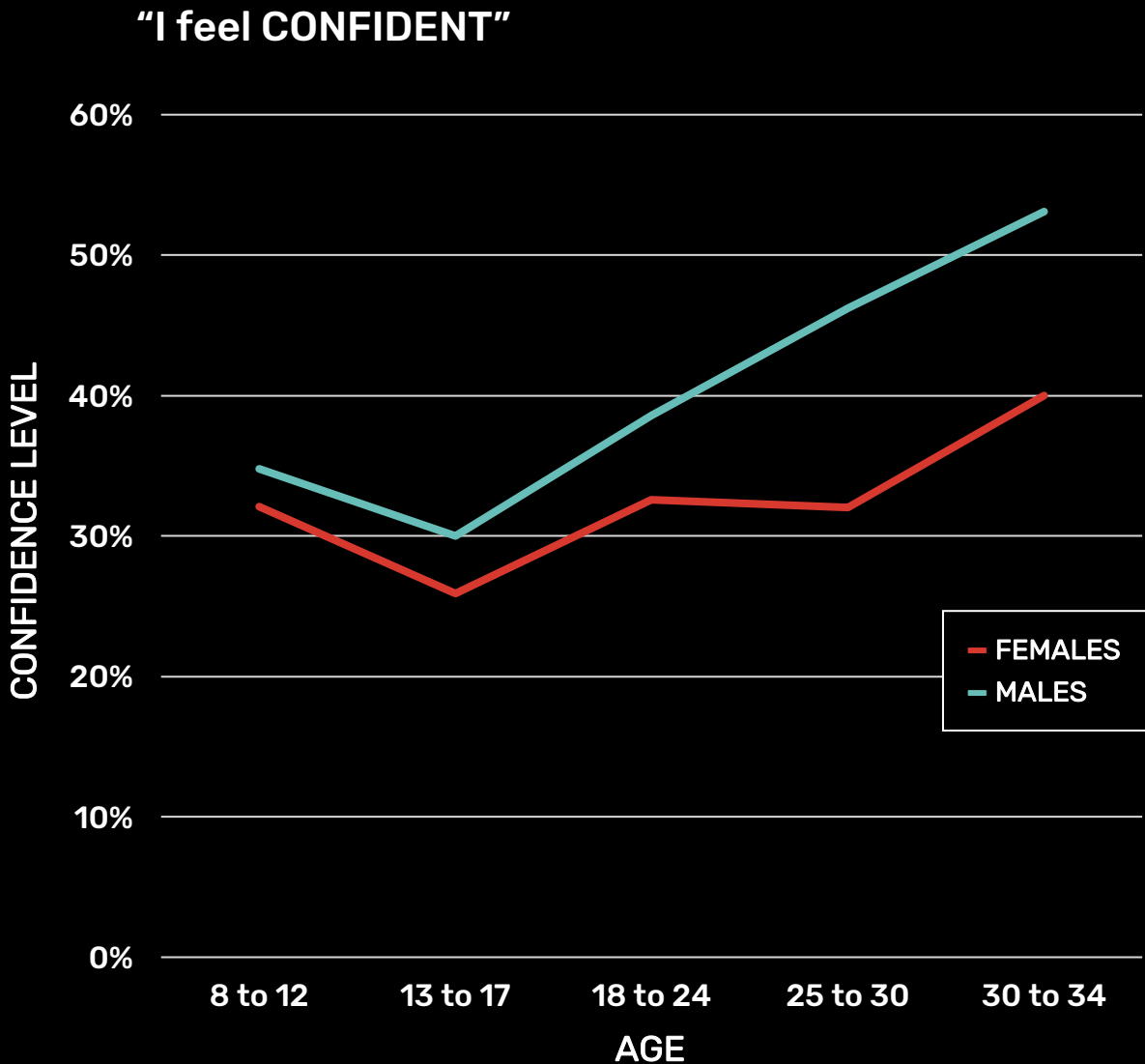
Gen Z has proven to be the most stressed generation to date, and it's easy to see why as they struggle with social and academic stress simultaneously.

% who feel very/extremely confident they can...



# THE NEXT GENERATION

Merging Ypulse syndicated data with *The Confidence Code for Girls*, we can see the trajectory of the confidence gap as girls & boys move through their teen years and into early adulthood. Girls never catch up to their male peers.



Results based on Ypulse survey research conducted Feb 8th – Feb 13th, 2018 among 1394 8-18-year-olds and Ypulse syndicated research conducted May 19th – May 30th, 2017 among 1442 13-34-year-olds.

**NEARLY 8 IN 10 GIRLS WANT TO FEEL  
MORE CONFIDENT IN THEMSELVES**

## OTHER INTERESTING FINDINGS

# THE IMPACT ON STEM

### 1 in 3 boys and girls believe that boys will make more money in life.

Tween and teens girls are more confident compared to boys that they will be successful in a variety of arts and humanities careers. Tween girls and boys are even equally likely to believe they will succeed in STEM. However, as they enter their teen years, boys gain more confidence that they will be successful in STEM, while girls remain at low levels. Despite the focus in recent years on fueling girls' confidence in STEM, we still have a ways to go.

Almost 3x as many high school boys think they would be successful in a **technology or computers career** than high school girls.

More than 3x as many boys than girls ages 8-18 think they would be successful in an **engineering career**.

1 in 4 high school boys think they would have a successful career in **math or economics** compared to just 1 in 7 high school girls.

Even boys in middle school are more confident than girls in high school that they would be successful in a math or economics career.



Engineering is perhaps the field with the largest disparity between girls and boys. Twice as many high school boys, and more than 3x as many tween and teen boys overall, think they would be successful in an engineering career compared to their female peers.

The fields of science, technology & computers, engineering, and math are dominated by men, and data on confidence tells us to expect this trend to continue. Even qualitatively, many girls express that they are least confident in their math skills in school. Concerted efforts to launch and support STEM initiatives for girls will help to establish confidence in adolescence and propel them into successful careers in the years that follow.



## OTHER INTERESTING FINDINGS

# WHAT CONFIDENCE MEANS

For most girls, confidence means “being proud of who you are.” For most boys, it means “believing you can achieve anything.” This subtle difference signals the tendency for girls to focus on self-discovery and self-esteem, while boys develop a more action-oriented mindset from adolescence.

*“Confidence means that you’re not afraid of what the world throws at you and are comfortable in your own skin.”*

—GIRL, AGE 12

**GIRLS: Confidence is being proud of who you are**

**BOYS: Confidence is believing you can achieve anything**

## RAISING CONFIDENT KIDS

Generations are shaped by how they are raised, and the societal climate in which they come of age. We found that parents of teens are less likely than parents of tweens to agree that it’s important for their child to learn they are allowed to fail, and that they should try something new even if they don’t know how to do it.

**Dads are 26% more likely to accurately estimate their child’s confidence than moms are.**

Dads are better at accurately estimating their child’s confidence than moms are, regardless of gender. Dads are also significantly better at evaluating their sons’ confidence than moms are at evaluating their daughters’. The error for moms is even more pronounced when their daughters have low confidence.

The confidence gap leads to women not defining confidence and valuing it well enough for themselves. Biases don’t lessen as they age, leading moms to continue to expect more from their daughters as was expected of them.

**In their latest work, *The Confidence Code for Girls*, Shipman and Kay investigate why confidence drops so dramatically for girls at puberty, why it matters, and what they and their parents can do about it.**



# The Confidence Code for Girls



Ypulse is the leading authority on Millennials and Gen Z: tweens, teens, college students, and young adults. Ypulse provides strategic insight to companies and organizations via subscription-based syndicated research content, along with custom research and consulting services.

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## METHODOLOGY

In partnership with *The Confidence Code for Girls*, Ypulse conducted a nationwide quantitative online survey of 1394 8-18-year-olds and their parents/guardians. Participants were recruited from Ypulse's proprietary SurveyU community. The survey was fielded between 2/8/18 and 2/13/18.