THE GIRLS' INDEX ™

NEW INSIGHTS INTO THE COMPLEX WORLD OF TODAY'S GIRLS

A ROX RESEARCH BRIEF

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Ruling Our eXperiences (ROX) is a 501(c)3
non-profit organization committed to equipping
girls with the knowledge and skills they need to
lead healthy, independent, productive and
violence-free lives.
We provide education, programming, resources
and research to help create generations of
confident girls who can control their own
relationships, experiences and decisions.

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INTRODUCTION

LISA HINKELMAN, Ph.D., *Founder and Executive Director*

WE KNOW THAT THE WORLD IS COMPLICATED FOR GIRLS. Fitting in, body image, pressure, academics, friendships and relationships are all challenging to navigate. Add to this, the potential challenges of technology and social media, and it is not surprising that girls are reporting high levels of pressure alongside declining levels of self-confidence.

We also know that the issues that impact girls during their early years can affect subsequent stages of their development, decisions, relationships and aspirations – positively or negatively. Developing insights into what girls need to be successful and what they need to establish a strong identity and sense of self is critical for the adults who work with and care about girls.

At ROX, we are focused on developing a deep understanding of the world of girls and we use this information to develop programming, tools, research and resources that will help positively impact girls' lives. We want girls to have the skills to identify and expand their own skills, develop their individual competencies and enhance their support systems so they can make healthy decisions as they traverse the challenging adolescent years.

The Girls' Index is a first-of-its-kind, large scale, national survey designed to develop a deeper understanding of the thoughts, experiences, perceptions, beliefs, behaviors and attitudes of girls throughout the United States. While a plethora of research exists on the economic status, health trends, safety and crime victimization, drug use and risk behavior of teens, there is little data that delves deeper into the lived experiences of girls that provides the opportunity for them to share their thoughts and opinions related to a variety of relevant issues currently impacting their lives. This national effort sought data from a large, representative sample of girls about their thoughts, experiences and perceptions on key issues, such as: confidence, body image, friendships, pressure, leadership, career aspirations, school, academics, technology and social media.

WE WANTED TO UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT THE CONNECTIONS TO SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES FOR GIRLS AND THE PERCEPTIONS THAT GIRLS HAVE OF THEIR OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEIR FUTURES.

In order to understand what is going well for girls, we asked them about their friendships and relationships, their perceptions of support at school and at home and what they need to be successful. We wanted to learn more about the connections to positive outcomes for girls and the perceptions that girls have of their opportunities for their futures. Which girls report strong relationships with other girls and how many feel confident in their skills and abilities?

In addition to learning what is positive in girls' lives, we also wanted to understand what is challenging for them and how we can more effectively support them. This is why we asked them about their thoughts surrounding school, relationships with other girls and how adept they believe they are at managing stress. We asked questions such as: What do girls think are the biggest issues impacting girls their age? How many do not feel that they are smart enough for their dream career? How many feel they are in competition with other girls? How many days a week, on average, do girls report feeling sad or depressed?

Our goal is to learn more about what we, as adults, need to do to make the world better for girls. What do girls want us to know about what it is like being a girl today and what do they want and need from their parents, teachers and counselors? The Girls' Index survey was designed to answer these – and many more – questions and provide improved insights into the complex world of today's girls. This research brief provides the summary findings of this survey conducted during 2016-17. Over the next year, we will be releasing subsequent Girls' Index Impact Reports that will provide deeper analysis into topics of special interest. You can find additional information on The Girls' Index at www.rulingourexperiences.org.

Lisa Hinkelman, Ph.D.
Founder & Executive Director
Ruling Our eXperiences, Inc. (ROX)

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THE GIRLS' INDEX IS A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND, LARGE-SCALE, NATIONAL SURVEY DESIGNED TO DEVELOP A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE THOUGHTS, EXPERIENCES, PERCEPTIONS, BELIEFS, BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDES OF GIRLS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

1 **GIRLS' CONFIDENCE DECLINES SHARPLY BETWEEN 5TH AND 9TH GRADE.** The Girls' Index surveyed girls from 5th through 12th grade and found that the **percentage of girls who would describe themselves as confident declines more than 25% throughout the middle school years, from 86% to 60%.** By 9th grade, confidence is as its lowest point, and then it levels off for the next three years. Girls reported confidence does not return to pre-middle school levels for the remainder of high school.

Research supports that adolescent girls often develop a lack of confidence in their changing bodies and can become withdrawn and unsure of themselves. Puberty accounts for some of these confidence challenges; however, girls also receive intense messaging from media and society regarding ideal body shape, size and image. These internalized messages can impact the way that a girl feels about herself, which can contribute to a lower level of confidence. The Girls' Index demonstrates a relationship between a girl's confidence and her desire to change her appearance. **As a girl gets older, her confidence declines as drastically as her desire to change her appearance increases.**

Additionally, girls report high levels of pressure throughout their adolescent years that may impact their sense of confidence. The key areas of pressure reported are:
- Need to be perfect at everything
- Appearance (weight, skin, hair, body shape)
- Grades and school
- Pressure from parents
- Peer pressure
- Sports and extra-curricular activities

ACTIONS

- Identify developmentally appropriate programs and activities for elementary, middle and high school girls that focus on maintaining and building confidence.

- Implement activities and strategies that help girls identify and value their internal strengths, characteristics and accomplishments while de-emphasizing the importance of external appearance as a primary source of interpersonal value.

- Help girls develop body positivity, acceptance and pride in their appearance. Emphasize the importance of healthy bodies rather than skinny or sexy bodies as ideal.

- Help girls identify and develop healthy coping skills to help them manage the pressures they experience in and out of school.

2 **GIRLS WHO HAVE STRONG AND TRUSTING FRIENDSHIPS WITH OTHER GIRLS FARE BETTER.** Girls' relationships with one another get more contentious as they go through school; and **by the time girls are in high school, 86% report that most girls are in competition with one another.** When we asked girls the open-ended question, "What are the big things going on for girls your age?" the most frequently occurring theme for girls of all ages was focused on conflict with other girls.

Girls cited these challenges as:

- Drama
- Girls being mean
- Conflict between groups of girls
- Gossip and rumors

While most girls reported that they have friends who they can talk to about serious issues, 41% of girls say that they do not trust other girls. Developing strong, healthy and trusting relationships during adolescence helps girls access support, feel like they fit in and believe they have people in their lives that they can depend on.

There is a relationship between girl's social media use and her assessment of her relationships with other girls. Specifically, **girls who spend the most time on social media were the least likely to say that they trust other girls and that they have supportive friends to talk to about serious issues**.

Additionally, the impact of girls' friendships on reported levels of sadness and depression is critical. One in three high school girls report that they are sad or depressed four or more days per week; however, **girls who report that they get along well with other girls and trust other girls reported the lowest levels of sadness and depression**.

ACTIONS

- Help girls establish strong female friendships and relationships with an emphasis on support, open communication and collaboration rather than competition.

- Encourage in-person social engagement in addition to social media engagement to help girls develop authentic, lasting and multi-dimensional friendships.

- Identify girls who are at risk for, or who are experiencing, frequent sadness or depression and support their meaningful connections to effective peer relationships and adult support systems.

- Recognize "girl drama," "gossip and rumors" and other types of conflict between girls as an emotional expression of anger, frustration and disappointment, not simply "girls being girls." Help girls learn the skills to communicate openly, effectively and assertively.

3 BY HIGH SCHOOL, SEXTING IS COMMON AND PREVALENT. In 6th grade, about 30% of girls report that most teens their age send sexually explicit texts and photos to one another. By 12th grade, this percentage rises to 75% with **two out of every three girls reporting that they have been asked to send a sexually explicit photo to another person.** Girls report pressure to send nudes and say, "if you don't send a picture, they'll just ask the next girl" and "girls want to feel pretty and sexy, so sharing pics is the way that some girls do that."

While reliance exclusively on parental monitoring is unlikely to diminish these statistics and themes, it is important to note that the vast majority of girls state that their parents 'rarely' or 'never' monitor their use of social media.

Girls, parents and school personnel report intense challenges related to technology and social media, yet few report effective approaches or strategies that improve decision-making and/or their ability to manage the pressure that exists around technology. While flirting and sexual exploration are developmentally appropriate for the adolescent years, the implications of sharing sexually explicit photos can have long-standing personal, social and legal implications.

- Educate girls on responsible use of technology during elementary school as they are beginning to utilize various social media platforms. Help them learn when to:
    - Set and enhance their privacy settings
    - Stand up for themselves/set boundaries
    - End a conversation
    - Engage an adult for help

- Recognize the authentic pressure that girls can experience to fit-in and be desired by dating interests as they explore their budding sexuality. Create opportunities for open dialogue and candid conversation to give girls a safe place to explore these challenges.

- Teach girls the skills that they need to manage pressure and coercion that happens via in-person interactions and via technology. Girls need the skills to set boundaries and say "no" in person *and* online.

4 HIGH ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT DOES NOT FEND OFF CONFIDENCE CHALLENGES. Girls with the highest achievement are not immune from the confidence challenges that plague many girls. In fact, **30% of the girls with the highest reported grade point averages (4.0 or above) do not think they are smart enough for their dream careers.** While it may be assumed that with achievement comes confidence, The Girls' Index data suggests that challenges persist for high academic performers. On average, 46% of all girls report that they do not say what they are thinking or disagree with others because they want to be liked; however, this percentage rises to 62% for girls with a

G.P.A. above 4.0, indicating that the highest achievers are most concerned with the outside approval of others.

The data suggests that while girls are clearly academically competent, there are other factors that impact their perceptions of themselves and their abilities.

ACTIONS

- Ensure that high-achieving girls are not overlooked when providing extra-curricular, interpersonal and social support services in schools. Oftentimes, girls who struggle academically or behaviorally are singled out for additional services or programs, with the academically competent girls viewed as less in need of support. Future success is contingent on personal, social *and* academic skills.

- Provide girls with opportunities to develop confidence in their competencies and abilities. Girls often learn how to perform well in school by being compliant and following directions well, but may not learn effective strategies to build their own sense of efficacy and confidence. Girls need to have *both* the skills to complete a particular task or challenge *and* the belief in their ability.

5 TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT GIRLS' RELATIONSHIPS, ACHIEVEMENT, CONFIDENCE, MOOD AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT. With technology and social media becoming an ever-present reality, it is important to understand how technology is related to other aspects of girls' lives. We asked girls about the time that they spent using technology (computers, tablets, phones, video games, etc.) as well as the time they spent engaged specifically with social media.

Girls who spend the most time using technology were also the most likely to:

- Say they are sad/depressed nearly every day
- Want to change their appearance
- Not participate in sports, band, theatre, arts or other extra-curricular or enrichment activities

We also learned that social media use is related to girls' perceptions of their relationships with others. **Specifically, girls who spend the most time on social media were also less likely to**:

- Trust other girls
- Have supportive friends and adults to talk to about serious issues
- Enjoy coming to school

While there is much more to explore about these relationships, it is clear that increased use of technology and social media is related to some personal and relationship challenges for girls. It should be stated that the observed relationships are not causal – rather that there is a connection that warrants deeper understanding.

ACTIONS

- Ensure that girls' use of technology and social media does not replace in-person activities and interactions. Today's girls need the skills to navigate technology effectively while also possessing strong interpersonal and relationship skills. Help girls connect with meaningful people and activities that help expand their social competence and support network.
- Help girls develop a critical lens to help them navigate media and, in particular, social media. Girls often compare themselves to others and judge their bodies, their relationships and their accomplishments more harshly. Assist girls in analyzing the images they view

online to determine which are authentic and which have been photoshopped or edited.

6 MOST GIRLS LIKE TO BE IN CHARGE, BUT SELF-DOUBT CAN IMPACT THEIR PURSUIT OF LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES. We asked girls about their own leadership desires, whether they like to be in charge and their thoughts on several other concepts related to leadership. We learned **that 8% of girls believe that men are better leaders than women, but that 46% of girls think that certain jobs are better for men than women.** When it comes to skills that are required for leadership like sharing an opinion or disagreeing with others, there are continued challenges for some girls, particularly for girls who lack confidence. Less confident girls are nearly twice as likely to report that they withhold their opinions or disagreement compared to girls who describe themselves as confident. Overall, **1 in 3 girls are afraid to be a leader for fear of others thinking she is bossy.**

ACTIONS

- Help girls explore career and leadership opportunities in their community and across the nation. Ask them where they see women represented and where do they find a lack of female involvement? What do they believe make certain jobs/roles specific for men or women? Gather their thoughts regarding the traits and characteristics they traditionally associate with a leader and have them identify the leadership traits that they believe they possess.
- Engage in a discussion with girls about the importance of their own thoughts and opinions. What makes a girl perceive her thoughts and opinions as less important than those of others? Help girls realize their contributions are equal to the insights of others.

WE SOUGHT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GIRLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY by seeking a large and representative sample across racial and ethnic groups, as well as girls from different geographic areas and socioeconomic backgrounds. As girls are all unique – we wanted to understand girls' experiences at a variety of school types across the country – from large cities to rural areas. Through partnerships with schools and districts throughout the United States, The Girls' Index was completed by 10,678 girls in grades 5-12 …

Here is what we learned.

THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 18,789,552 GIRLS BETWEEN THE AGES OF 10-18 IN THE UNITED STATES.

The Girls' Index includes the responses from

10,678

girls age 10-18.

This large number of respondents provides 99% confidence* that our sample represents the responses of girls throughout the United States.

*(+/- 2%)

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

ROX WORKED TO INCLUDE A NATIONALLY representative sample of girls from a wide range of schools and regions throughout the United States. From private, independent all-girls schools to public, inner city schools to schools in remote and rural regions – we wanted to include the voices and experiences of as many girls as we could. The large sample size allows us to segment and disaggregate the data in various ways, but most importantly, it allows the opportunity to speak to the similarities among girls throughout the country. It allows us to begin to understand the opinions, attitudes, behaviors and perceptions of *all* girls.

geographic REGIONS REPRESENTED

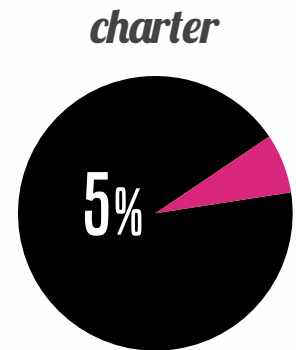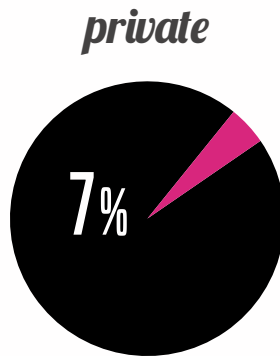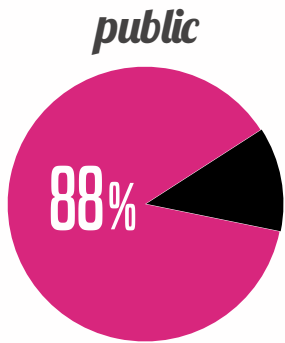**24% RURAL**

58% SUBURBAN

18% URBAN

41%

37%

22%
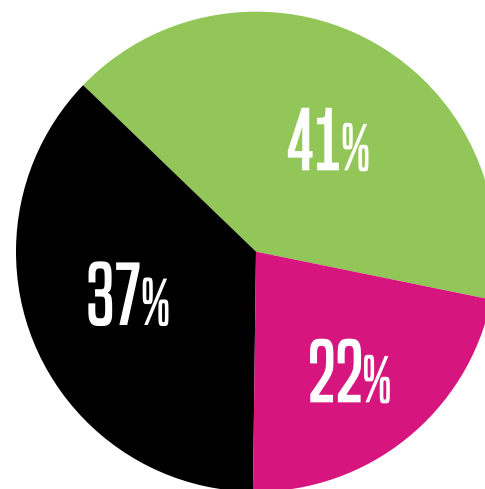
ELEMENTARY
5th-6th grade

MIDDLE
7th-8th grade

HIGH
9th-12th grade

THE MAJORITY OF GIRLS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE GIRLS' INDEX ATTEND PUBLIC SCHOOL.

public

88%

private

7%

charter

5%

THE ETHNICITY OF THE GIRLS' INDEX SAMPLE COMPARED TO THE REPRESENTATION REPORTED ON THE UNITED STATES CENSUS

Ethnicity	Girls' Index	U.S. Census
Asian	3.8%	4.8%
Black or African American	12.1%	12.6%
Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander	1.4%	0.2%
Hispanic/Latina	9.4%	16.3%
Multiracial	4.7%	2.9%
Native American or American Indian	0.9%	0.9%
White	57.5%	72.4%
Other/Did Not Answer	10.2%	N/A

socioeconomic STATUS OF SCHOOLS

29% HIGH POVERTY

27% MEDIUM POVERTY

38% LOW POVERTY

School poverty level based upon the % of students who receive free/reduced lunch.
6% of participating schools did not report.

Just the facts

31%

OF GIRLS HAVE BEEN **BULLIED** OR MADE FUN OF ON SOCIAL MEDIA

61%

OF GIRLS SAY THEIR PARENTS **NEVER** MONITOR THEIR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

85%

OF GIRLS HAVE RECEIVED FRIEND REQUESTS FROM **STRANGERS**

44% OF GIRLS HAVE **ACCEPTED FRIEND REQUESTS FROM STRANGERS**

GIRLS' ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY increases as they get older. By the time girls are in high school, most report spending six or more hours on social media each day, and around 40% check in on their social media accounts 10 or more times each day. For younger girls, musical.ly and Snapchat were top choices for social media engagement. High school girls prefer Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter.

Thirty-one percent of girls report having been bullied or made fun of on social media, and 19% say that they have bullied or made fun of someone else. More than a quarter of girls (26%) report that they have posted something that they later regretted, and 14% admit to posting something to make someone else jealous.

WHEN PEOPLE VIEW MY SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS, THEY WOULD DESCRIBE ME AS ...

Fun, pretty, funny

(MOST FREQUENTLY CITED WORDS BY GIRLS)

THE **PERCENTAGE** OF GIRLS WHO SAY THEY:

ARE **DISTRACTED IN SCHOOL** BECAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	18%
HAVE GOTTEN INTO AN **ARGUMENT AT SCHOOL** BECAUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA	30%
WILL **DELETE POSTS** IF THEY DON'T RECEIVE ENOUGH 'LIKES'	27%

GIRLS WHO SPEND THE MOST TIME USING TECHNOLOGY ARE FIVE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEY ARE SAD OR DEPRESSED NEARLY EVERY DAY ...

COMPARED TO GIRLS WHO SPEND THE LEAST TIME USING TECHNOLOGY. The Girls' Index asked girls questions about the amount of time they spend each day using technology. Girls who reported spending eight or more hours a day using technology were five times more likely to also report that they were sad or depressed six or seven days per week compared to girls who spent more moderate amounts of time engaged with technology (four or fewer hours).

Additionally, the girls who spend the

MOST time engaged with technology were also the

LEAST likely to be involved in activities such as sports, clubs, band, music or theatre.

Just the facts

75%

OF 12TH GRADE GIRLS SAY MOST STUDENTS THEIR AGE **SEND SEXUALLY EXPLICIT PHOTOS** TO ONE ANOTHER

51%

OF 9TH GRADE GIRLS HAVE BEEN **ASKED TO SEND** A SEXUALLY EXPLICIT PHOTO

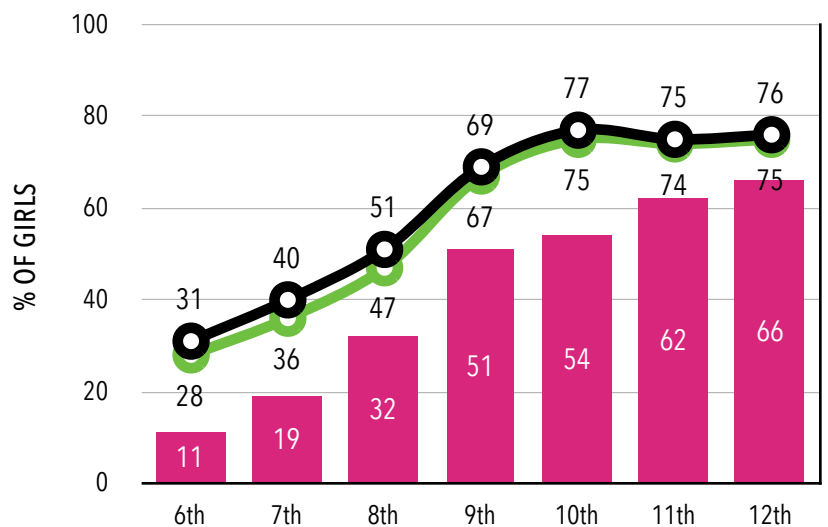GIRLS WHO SPEND THE **MOST TIME USING TECHNOLOGY** ARE

24%

MORE LIKELY TO **WANT TO CHANGE THEIR APPEARANCE**

(MORE THAN 10 HOURS/DAY VS FEWER THAN 4 HOURS /DAY)

THE GIRLS' INDEX SOUGHT TO UNDERSTAND GIRLS' PERCEPTIONS on a variety of issues related to social media and technology and specifically trends around sexting. Thirty percent of 6th graders say, "Most students my age send sexually explicit texts" or "sexually explicit photos to one another." This increases to 75% in 12th grade. While we did not ask girls if they have sent such texts or photos, we did ask if they have been asked to send a photo. Eleven percent of 6th grade girls say they have been asked; compared to 66% of high school seniors.

Legend:
- **I HAVE BEEN ASKED** to send a sexually explicit text/photo (pink)
- **MOST STUDENTS** my age send sexually explicit texts (black)
- **MOST STUDENTS** my age send sexually explicit photos (green)

Chart — % OF GIRLS by grade:

Grade	I have been asked (pink bar)	Most students send texts (black line)	Most students send photos (green line)
6th	11	31	28
7th	19	40	36
8th	32	51	47
9th	51	69	67
10th	54	77	75
11th	62	75	74
12th	66	76	75

GIRLS WHO SPEND THE MOST TIME ON TECHNOLOGY *are the least likely to say they have* SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS TO TALK TO ABOUT SERIOUS ISSUES.

GIRLS & CONFIDENCE

GIRLS' CONFIDENCE DECLINES as they get older, and their sense of themselves as capable, good at lots of things and smart enough to pursue their passions becomes compromised throughout middle school and on to high school.

We wanted to understand more about the developmental trends that impact girls' perceptions of themselves and their abilities and draw connections to the factors that influence the way a girl feels about herself.

While most girls say that they are happy the way they are and good at lots of things, there is a downward trend over time in the number of girls who describe themselves this way. There is a drop of 13% among girls from elementary school to high school who report being happy the way they are (89% - 76%) and a slightly smaller drop in the percentage of girls who believe that they are good at lots of things (85% - 76%).

When girls are in 5th grade, 87% describe themselves as confident, but by the time they are in high school only 60% would say that they are a "confident person". When grouped together there is a precipitous drop from elementary, to middle, to high school (elementary: 79%; middle: 70%; high: 61%).

Throughout these years there is also a change in the way that girls perceive their abilities and their opportunities. Older girls are less likely to believe they are "smart enough for their dream career" and that they are "good at lots of things." Fewer say that they are happy the way they are and many more want to change their appearance.

GIRLS IN HIGH SCHOOL ARE TWICE AS LIKELY THAN GIRLS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO THINK THAT THEY ARE NOT SMART ENOUGH FOR THEIR DREAM CAREER.

"GIRLS DEAL A LOT WITH SELF-CONFIDENCE AND LOVING YOURSELF FOR WHO YOU ARE. GIRLS CONSTANTLY COMPARE THEMSELVES TO OTHERS, FEELING AS THOUGH THEY AREN'T GOOD ENOUGH. WE GET PUT DOWN BY BOYS, AND EVEN OTHER GIRLS."

- 11TH GRADE *GIRLS' INDEX* PARTICIPANT

Just the facts

46%

OF HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS **DO NOT BELIEVE THEY ARE SMART ENOUGH** FOR THEIR DREAM CAREER
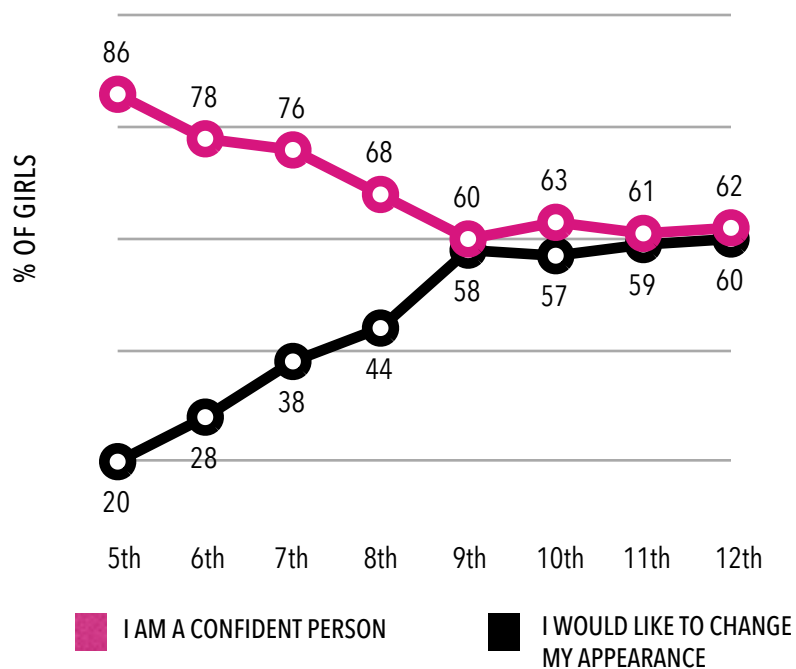
11%

DROP FROM ELEMENTARY TO HIGH SCHOOL ON THE % OF GIRLS WHO BELIEVE THEY ARE **GOOD AT LOTS OF THINGS**

86%

OF FIFTH GRADE GIRLS DESCRIBE THEMSELVES AS **CONFIDENT**

BY NINTH GRADE 60% OF GIRLS **DESCRIBE THEMSELVES AS CONFIDENT**

CONFIDENCE DECLINES AS GIRLS GET OLDER and desire to change appearance increases. The sharpest changes are from 5th grade to 9th grade, then the rates level off during high school.

% OF GIRLS

86, 78, 76, 68, 60, 63, 61, 62

20, 28, 38, 44, 58, 57, 59, 60

5th   6th   7th   8th   9th   10th   11th   12th

■ I AM A CONFIDENT PERSON   ■ I WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE MY APPEARANCE

GIRLS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR INTELLIGENCE also changes as they get older. In 5th grade, 23% of girls do not feel they are smart enough for their dream career, by high school this doubles to 46%.

% OF GIRLS

23%   32%   46%

Elementary   Middle   High

■ % OF GIRLS WHO ARE NOT SURE IF THEY ARE SMART ENOUGH FOR THEIR DREAM CAREER
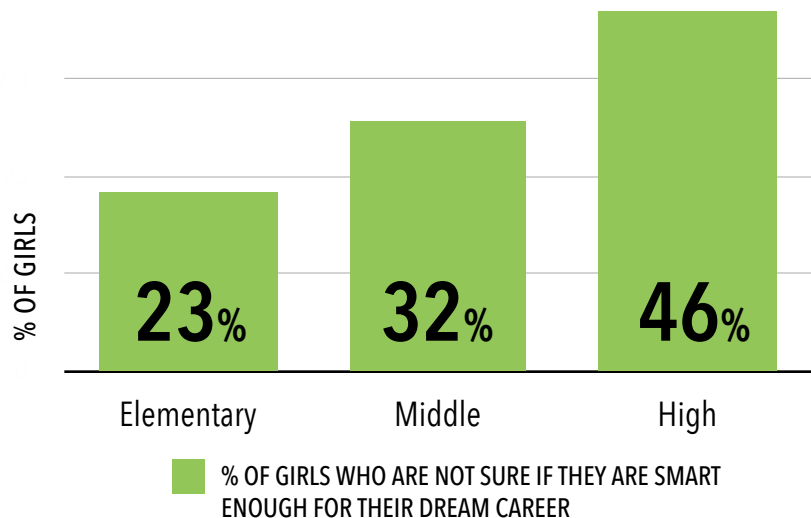
30% OF GIRLS WHO HAVE A GRADE POINT AVERAGE ABOVE 4.0 DO NOT THINK THEY ARE SMART ENOUGH FOR THEIR DREAM CAREER ...

DESPITE THE FACT THAT GIRLS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATE THEIR ACADEMIC CAPABILITIES by achieving a perfect grade point average, nearly one in three continues to lack confidence in her own abilities and the options available to her.

Just the facts

84%

OF GIRLS SAY THEY **HAVE SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS** TO TALK TO ABOUT SERIOUS ISSUES

76%

OF GIRLS SAY THAT MOST GIRLS ARE IN **COMPETITION WITH ONE ANOTHER**

41%

OF GIRLS SAY THEY **DO NOT TRUST OTHER GIRLS**

THE MORE TIME GIRLS SPEND ON SOCIAL MEDIA, THE MORE LIKELY THEY ARE TO **SAY THEY DO NOT TRUST OTHER GIRLS**
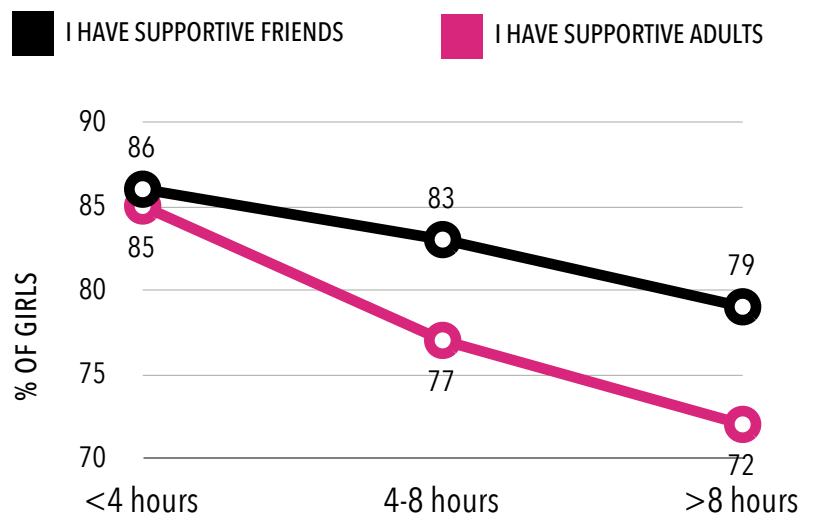
TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA CORRELATES WITH GIRLS' perceptions of their relationships with one another. Girls who spend the most time on social media are also most likely to say that they do not trust other girls.

I DON'T TRUST OTHER GIRLS

% OF GIRLS

<4 hours	4-8 hours	>8 hours
37%	**46%**	**53%**
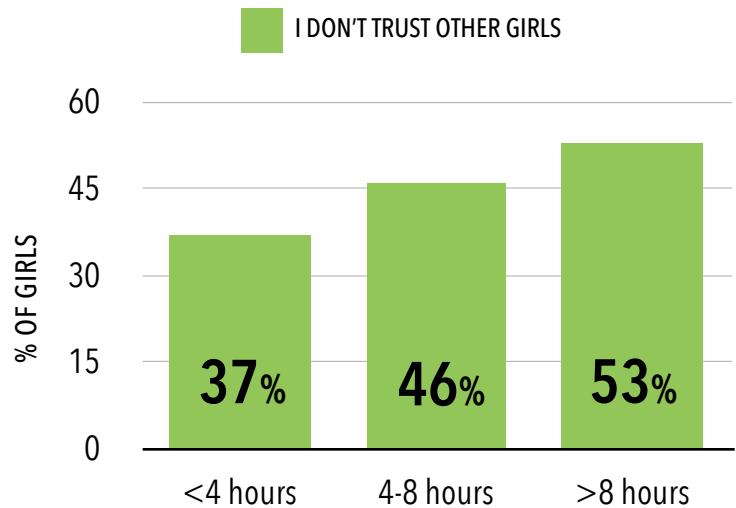
NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

GIRLS WHO SPEND THE MOST TIME USING SOCIAL MEDIA are also the least likely to report that they have supportive friends and adults they can talk to about serious issues.

I HAVE SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS   **I HAVE SUPPORTIVE ADULTS**

% OF GIRLS

I HAVE SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS: 86 (<4 hours), 83 (4-8 hours), 79 (>8 hours)
I HAVE SUPPORTIVE ADULTS: 85 (<4 hours), 77 (4-8 hours), 72 (>8 hours)

NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

GIRLS WHO HAVE SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS, GET ALONG WELL WITH OTHER GIRLS AND TRUST OTHER GIRLS REPORT LOWER LEVELS OF SADNESS AND DEPRESSION.

% OF GIRLS

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I get along well with other girls (black)	95	93	89	84	80	75	73	66
I have supportive friends (green)	93	90	89	82	77	71	68	63
I don't trust other girls (pink bars)	29	34	40	47	50	52	55	57

NUMBER OF DAYS PER WEEK I FEEL SAD OR DEPRESSED

- I DON'T TRUST OTHER GIRLS
- I GET ALONG WELL WITH OTHER GIRLS
- I HAVE SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS I CAN TALK TO ABOUT SERIOUS ISSUES
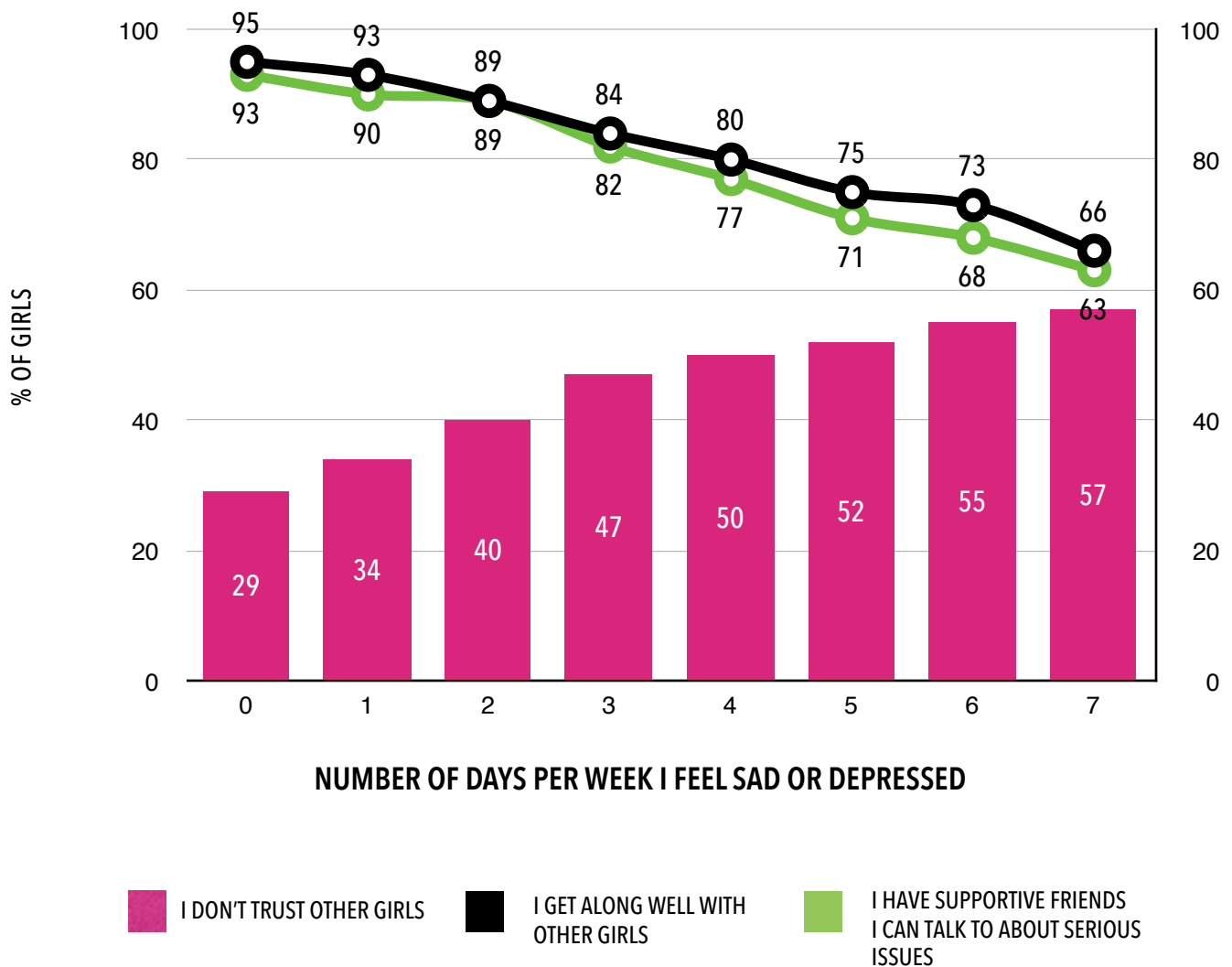
20% OF GIRLS IN HIGH SCHOOL BELIEVE THAT GUYS THEIR AGE ARE RESPECTFUL OF GIRLS ...

WHILE GIRLS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONE ANOTHER CAN BECOME MORE COMPLICATED as they get older, their perceptions around respectful relationships with boys are also impacted with age. Nearly half (48%) of girls in elementary school say that guys their age are respectful of girls. By middle school this drops to 33% and then to 20% by high school.

GIRLS & SCHOOL

THERE ARE MANY FACTORS THAT CAN IMPACT A GIRL'S DESIRE to come to school and her engagement and performance while in school. From managing the social scene, to participating fully in the academic program, to making plans for after graduation, school can be a complex and stressful world for girls to navigate.

We wanted to learn more about girls' perceptions of school and what impacts their desire to come to school. Unsurprisingly, as girls get older, fewer report that they like coming to school. However, girls who believe that their teachers treat them like they are smart and call on boys and girls equally are more likely to enjoy coming to school.

Social media use is also related to girls' thoughts and ideas about school and careers. The more time girls spend on social media, the less likely they are to report that they enjoy school and the more likely they are to believe that they are not smart enough for their dream career. Additionally, while overall 45% of girls report that they are considering a career in math or science, only 31% of the girls who spend the most time on social media (10+ hours/day) report this consideration.

As girls get older, more report that they are considering a career in math and/or science (elementary: 38%; middle: 43%; high: 50%), however fewer report that they are good at math and/or science (elementary: 81%; middle: 77%; high: 67%).

35% OF HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS SAY THAT WHILE AT SCHOOL THEY THINK ABOUT THEIR APPEARANCE AT LEAST 'ONCE A PERIOD' OR 'ALMOST ALL DAY'.

"THE BIGGEST ISSUES FACING GIRLS MY AGE ARE THE CHALLENGES OF BALANCING SCHOOL WITH WORK AND THEIR SOCIAL LIFE, AND DEALING WITH ALL OF THE STRESS FROM THEIR PARENTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT."

– 9TH GRADE *GIRLS' INDEX* PARTICIPANT

Just the facts

49%
OF GIRLS SAY THAT SOMEONE AT THEIR SCHOOL IS **HELPING THEM EXPLORE THEIR PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**

77%
OF GIRLS SAY THAT THEIR **TEACHERS TREAT THEM LIKE THEY ARE SMART**

55%
OF 11TH GRADE GIRLS **LIKE COMING TO SCHOOL**

VS

87%
OF 5TH GRADE GIRLS

THE **PERCENTAGE** OF GIRLS WHO SAY THEY:

ARE GOOD AT **MATH AND/OR SCIENCE** — 75%

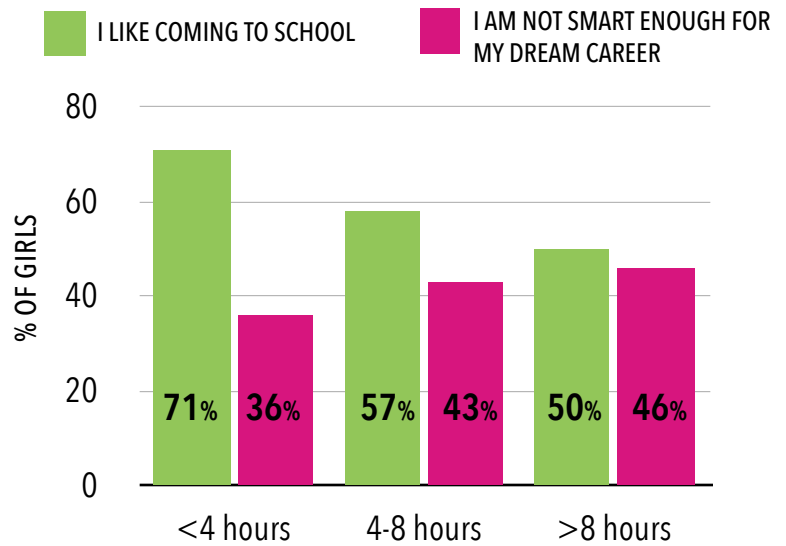ARE CONSIDERING A **CAREER IN MATH AND/OR SCIENCE** — 45%

THINK **BOYS ARE ENCOURAGED MORE** IN MATH & SCIENCE — 29%

THINK MOST GIRLS THEIR AGE ARE **EMBARRASSED TO BE SMART** — 47%

- I LIKE COMING TO SCHOOL
- I AM NOT SMART ENOUGH FOR MY DREAM CAREER

% OF GIRLS

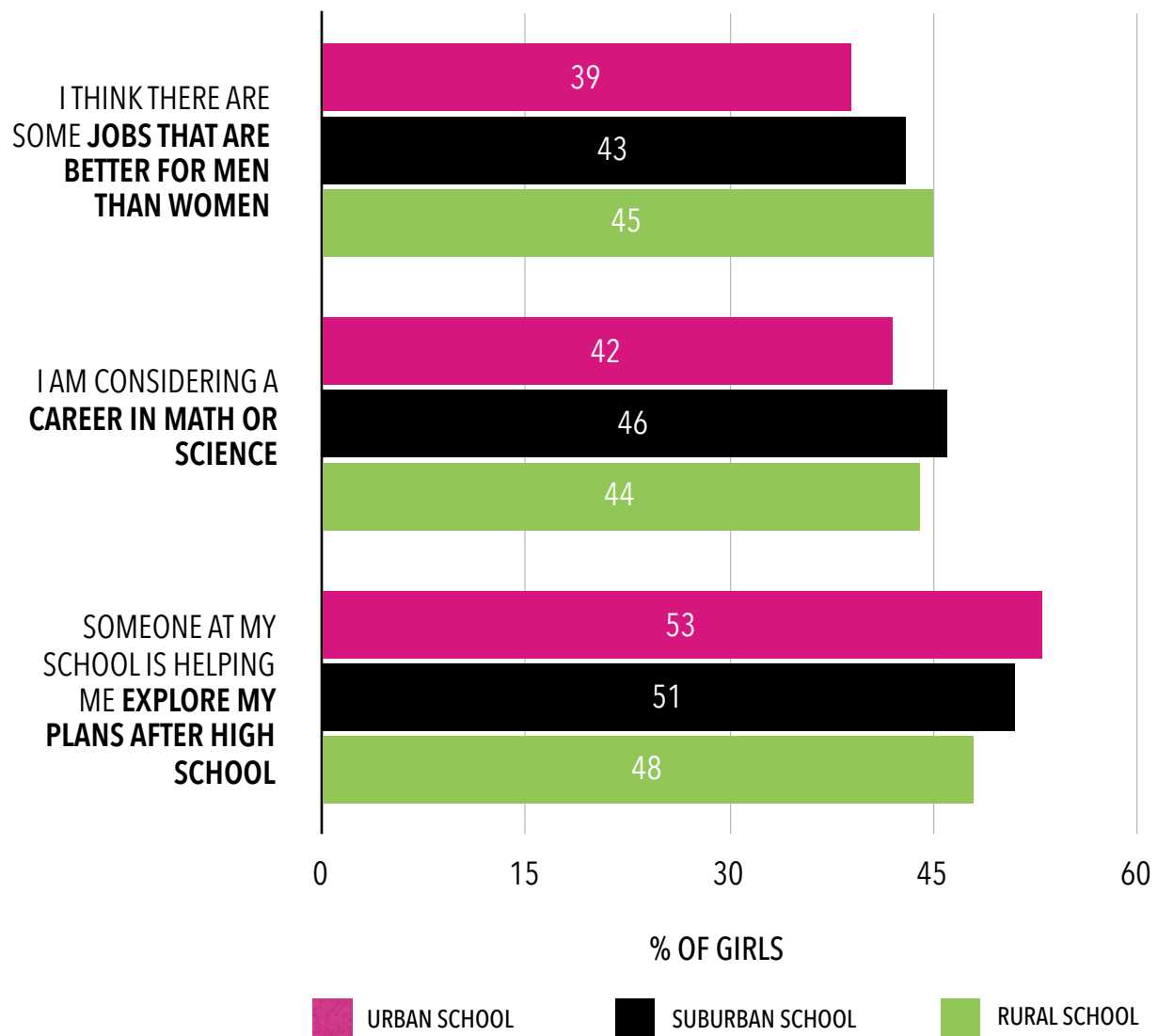| Number of hours per day	I like coming to school	I am not smart enough for my dream career
<4 hours	71%	36%
4-8 hours	57%	43%
>8 hours	50%	46%

NUMBER OF HOURS PER DAY SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 14% OF GIRLS *are often distracted in school because of things happening on social media.* BY HIGH SCHOOL, 22% REPORT BEING DISTRACTED.

GIRLS WHO ATTEND URBAN, SUBURBAN AND RURAL SCHOOLS HAVE SIMILAR VIEWS OF THEIR CAREER AND POST-SECONDARY OPTIONS.

I THINK THERE ARE SOME JOBS THAT ARE BETTER FOR MEN THAN WOMEN
- Urban School: 39
- Suburban School: 43
- Rural School: 45

I AM CONSIDERING A CAREER IN MATH OR SCIENCE
- Urban School: 42
- Suburban School: 46
- Rural School: 44

SOMEONE AT MY SCHOOL IS HELPING ME EXPLORE MY PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL
- Urban School: 53
- Suburban School: 51
- Rural School: 48

% OF GIRLS

URBAN SCHOOL   SUBURBAN SCHOOL   RURAL SCHOOL

GIRLS & LEADERSHIP

UNDERSTANDING THE VARIABLES THAT RELATE TO leadership development in girls continues to be a focus of many girl-serving organizations and schools. While girls have the desire to become leaders and most (64%) report that they like being in charge, nearly half (46%) continue to hold a perception that speaking their mind or disagreeing with others will keep people from liking them.

When it comes to skills that are required for leadership like sharing an opinion, disagreeing with others or being perceived as bossy, there are challenges for some girls, particularly for girls who lack confidence. Less confident girls are nearly twice as likely to report that they withhold their opinions or disagreement compared to girls who describe themselves as confident.

Few girls believe that men are better leaders than women (8%) and of those who do, most hold other traditional beliefs, such as believing that there are certain careers that are better for men than women and that they would rather have a male supervisor over a female supervisor. Overall, 46% of girls think that certain jobs are better for men than women.

The perceptions that girls have about some specific leadership concepts are relatively consistent from elementary to middle to high school, with the exception of the thoughts around leadership and being perceived as bossy. Overall, 1 in 3 girls say they are afraid to be a leader for fear of others thinking she is bossy. Fewer girls in high school have concerns about this compared to elementary school girls.

MOST GIRLS SAY THAT THEY LIKE BEING IN CHARGE, BUT FEWER ASPIRE TO BE LEADERS BECAUSE THEY FEAR THAT THEY WILL BE PERCEIVED AS BOSSY.

"I THINK THAT GIRLS MAKE GREAT LEADERS, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT PEOPLE ALWAYS TAKE GIRLS SERIOUSLY. IT'S LIKE YOU CAN'T BE A GIRL AND BE STRONG AT THE SAME TIME. I THINK PEOPLE UNDERESTIMATE US SOMETIMES."

– 8TH GRADE *GIRLS' INDEX* PARTICIPANT

Just the facts

61%

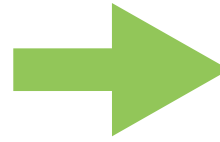OF GIRLS SAY THAT THEY **LIKE TO BE IN CHARGE**

33%

OF GIRLS SAY THAT THEY ARE AFRAID TO BE A LEADER BECAUSE **THEY DON'T WANT OTHERS TO THINK THEY ARE BOSSY**

46%

OF GIRLS SAY THEY **DON'T SAY WHAT THEY ARE THINKING OR DISAGREE WITH OTHERS BECAUSE THEY WANT TO BE LIKED**

CONFIDENT GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO →
- SPEAK THEIR MIND
- BELIEVE THEY ARE SMART
- WANT TO BE A LEADER

THE TRAITS AND CHARACTERISTICS OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH effective leadership like, being in charge, sharing a dissenting opinion or believing in one's capabilities can be challenging for girls. Some appear to be even more challenging for the most academically proficient girls, as 62% of the girls with a grade point average of 4.0 or higher reported that they don't say what they are thinking or disagree with others because they want to be liked.

1 IN **3** GIRLS WITH A GRADE POINT AVERAGE **ABOVE 4.0** DO NOT THINK THEY ARE SMART ENOUGH FOR THEIR DREAM CAREER
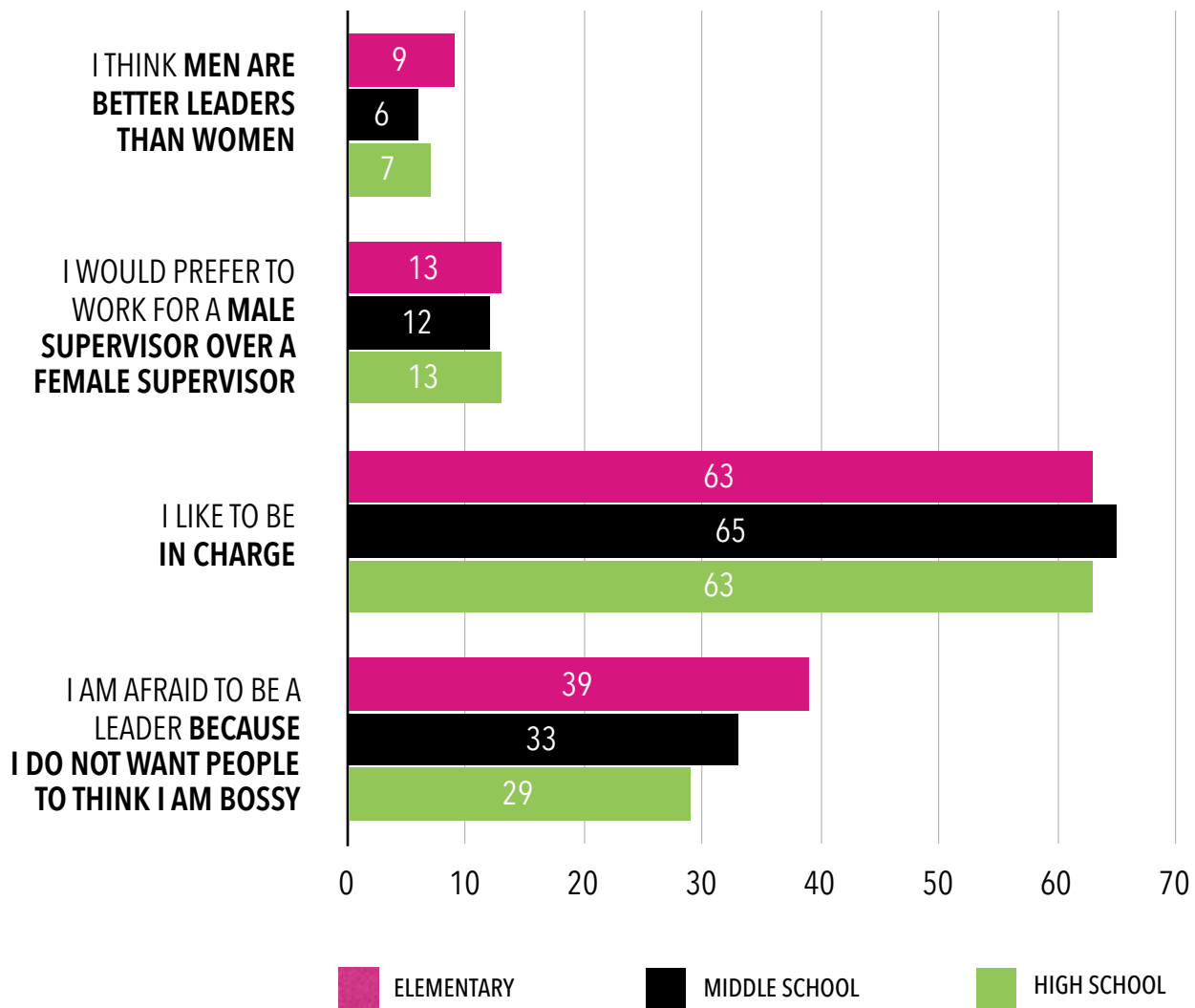
GIRLS WITH THE HIGHEST G.P.A.

% OF GIRLS WHO DON'T DISAGREE WITH OTHERS

75
62
49
36
23
10

48
40
44
44
50
62

<2.0   3.0 - 3.5   >4.0

GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA)
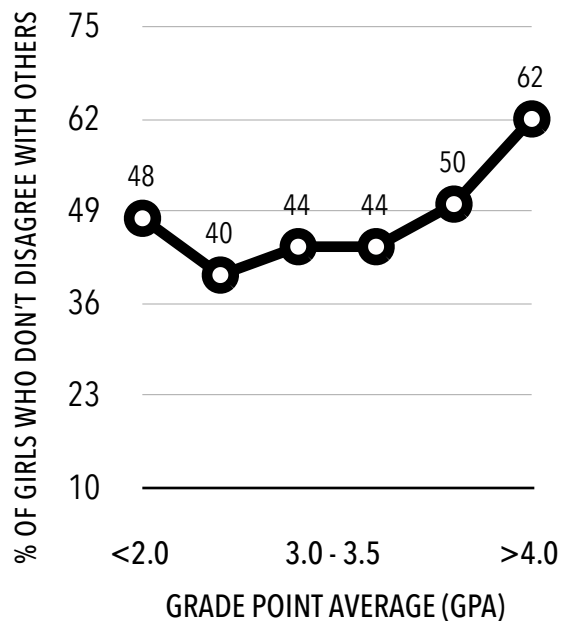
ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO REPORT THAT THEY **DON'T SAY WHAT THEY ARE THINKING** OR DISAGREE WITH OTHERS **BECAUSE THEY WANT TO BE LIKED**

% OF GIRLS IN ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE OR HIGH SCHOOL

I THINK MEN ARE BETTER LEADERS THAN WOMEN
- Elementary: 9
- Middle School: 6
- High School: 7

I WOULD PREFER TO WORK FOR A MALE SUPERVISOR OVER A FEMALE SUPERVISOR
- Elementary: 13
- Middle School: 12
- High School: 13

I LIKE TO BE IN CHARGE
- Elementary: 63
- Middle School: 65
- High School: 63

I AM AFRAID TO BE A LEADER BECAUSE I DO NOT WANT PEOPLE TO THINK I AM BOSSY
- Elementary: 39
- Middle School: 33
- High School: 29

ELEMENTARY · MIDDLE SCHOOL · HIGH SCHOOL

THE MAJORITY OF GIRLS SAY THAT THEY LIKE BEING IN CHARGE AND OLDER GIRLS ARE LESS LIKELY TO CARE IF OTHERS THINK THEY ARE BOSSY.

ADDITIONAL DATA RELEASES

ROX WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE THE LEAD IN disseminating additional findings from The Girls' Index survey. This Girls' Index Research Brief provides the first look into the complex world of girls and helps illuminate many of the strengths and challenges facing girls today. Through this research with a large and representative sample of girls, we have developed high-level insights into girls' lives and have **established strong national statistics surrounding key areas impacting girls.**

Through additional analyses and reporting, we will continue to contribute to the understanding of the world of girls through the **release of additional Girls' Index Impact Reports**. These deep examinations into the complex relationships between and among key variables of girls' lives will focus on speciality topic areas, such as: girls and sport participation; single-gender school vs. co-education outcomes; variances among geographic regions, school type and socio-economic status; and technology/social media. Subject-specific reports will provide deeper knowledge about the issues impacting girls and serve as a catalyst for the needed support, resources, policy changes, motivation and encouragement that girls need to be successful.

CONCLUSION

BEING A TEENAGER TODAY IS CHALLENGING, and the middle school years appear to remain particularly difficult for adolescent girls. As we see from the results of The Girls' Index, there are areas where girls are thriving and others where they could benefit from additional support.

As an organization committed to equipping girls with the knowledge and skills they need to lead healthy, independent, productive and violence-free lives, we believe that it is our responsibility to continue to establish a deep understanding of the complexity of girls' lives through purposeful engagement with girls. By asking girls about themselves and giving them the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions, we allow them to be the experts on their own lives. **The robust data from the nearly 11,000 girls surveyed through The Girls' Index provides the knowledge and insights required to provide effective education, programming and resources to diverse girls across the country.** We look forward to sharing this information with others who share our commitment to create generations of confident girls who can control their own relationships, experiences and decisions.

HOW WE DEVELOPED THE QUESTIONS AND COLLECTED THE DATA

ROX CONVENED AN INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM of counselors, school counselors, principals, parents, teachers, public administration professionals, education policy professionals, social scientists, attorneys, researchers, educators – and of course girls – to review existing instrumentation, technical reports, research and published literature on the status of girls in the United States and to prioritize areas of interest, concern and inquiry.

Taking the general categories identified by the group, the team then convened a series of semi-structured focus groups with girls, parents, counselors and educators to further develop the areas of focus and to craft the specific questions to include in the survey.

After developing this initial series of questions, The Girls' Index was reviewed by scholars and educators for developmental appropriateness and cultural competence and was subsequently piloted with 668 girls. Their feedback and results were utilized to further refine the survey questions, and the final Girls' Index survey consisted of 78 questions. Most questions were scaled from: Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree with several open-ended questions included.

ROX PARTNERED WITH INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS and districts throughout the country to administer this anonymous and voluntary survey to girls in grades 5-12 during 2016 and 2017. Surveys were available for electronic or paper-pencil completion and independent data scientists compiled and normed the data for review and analysis. Each participating school received a confidential summary report on the responses from their female students. Areas of inquiry included:

SELF-ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE
BODY IMAGE
FRIENDSHIPS & RELATIONSHIPS
STRESS & PRESSURE
LEADERSHIP & CAREER ASPIRATIONS
SCHOOL & ACADEMICS
TECHNOLOGY & SOCIAL MEDIA

ABOUT ROX

Ruling Our eXperiences, Inc. (ROX) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. Emerging from a 2006-2011 faculty research study at The Ohio State University, the mission of ROX is to equip girls with the knowledge and skills needed to live healthy, independent, productive and violence-free lives. Our vision is to create generations of confident girls who can control their own relationships, experiences and decisions. We utilize research and evidence-based programming to simultaneously impact girls, educate and support the adult influencers in girls' lives and improve the societal conditions that have the potential to negatively impact girls.

WHAT ROX DOES:

- DELIVER EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMING TO GIRLS
- TRAIN EDUCATORS ON BEST-PRACTICES FOR TEACHING AND SUPPORTING GIRLS
- INFORM PROFESSIONALS, POLICY-MAKERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT ISSUES IMPACTING GIRLS
- PROVIDE PARENTS WITH TOOLS TO UNDERSTAND, SUPPORT AND CONNECT WITH THEIR DAUGHTERS
- CONDUCT NATIONAL RESEARCH ON GIRLS TO HELP INFORM LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PROGRAMS AND POLICIES
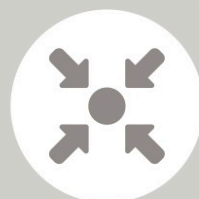
GIVING GIRLS TOOLS TO HELP WITH:

using SOCIAL MEDIA

navigating RELATIONSHIPS

managing PRESSURE

developing SELF-CONCEPT

OUR MISSION

Equip girls with the knowledge and skills necessary to live healthy, independent, productive and violence-free lives.

OUR VISION

Create generations of confident girls who can control their own relationships, experiences and decisions.

OUR COMMITMENT

Provide innovative, relevant and evidence-based programming that contributes to a safer, accessible and equitable world for girls.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Hinkelman, Ph.D. is the founder and executive director of Ruling Our eXperiences, Inc. (ROX). She is a counselor, educator, researcher and author of the award-winning book, 'Girls Without Limits: Helping Girls Achieve Healthy Relationships, Academic Success and Interpersonal Strength' Corwin Press, 2013. Dr. Hinkelman's work for the past decade has focused on the critical issues impacting girls and how schools, parents and educators can effectively support and encourage girls' interpersonal, educational and career growth. Previously, as a Counselor Education faculty member at The Ohio State University, Dr. Hinkelman's teaching and scholarly research focused on social and emotional learning, non-academic barriers that impact learning and girls' self-concept development. She was selected as a Nominated Changemaker for The White House United State of Women and is a Draper, Richards, Kaplan Social Entrepreneur Fellow.

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