

girl scouts
of northeast texas

THE STATE OF THE TEXAS GIRL





Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas was able to complete The State of the Texas Girl report thanks to the generosity of the Texas Women's Foundation, which supports this work in honor of Sharon King.

The Texas Women's Foundation has been a trusted leader in advancing research and insight around the issues impacting women and girls across our state. Its commitment to the cause aligns exactly with what this report is designed to do: bring clarity, urgency, and understanding to the experiences girls are facing in Texas today. We are grateful for its partnership in this endeavor.



Friends, neighbors, and trusted partners,

It is an exhilarating time to live in Northeast Texas — our population and economy are flourishing. Local reports and outlooks are optimistic about the overall impact on our residents and community. But as a girl-centric organization, Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas (GSNETX) is laser-focused on understanding how these seismic changes are affecting our girls.

The last in-depth analysis on girls' well-being was done in 2017 by The Girl Scout Research Institute's "The State of the Girls" report.

Amid this dynamic environment and six years post-pandemic, we felt it was critical to answer a simple question: **How are Texas girls faring today?**

Inspired by our peers in other states and through the generous support of the Texas Women's Foundation, GSNETX has completed an updated analysis on The State of the Texas Girl. This report evaluates and scores our girls' physical, academic, and social/emotional well-being.

As you read on, you will find some of these findings are surprising if not outright alarming. As a mom and engaged citizen, I'm especially struck by what our Texas girls are facing today. As the very proud CEO of GSNETX, I am also eager to share this information with the intention of convening partners and fellow Girl Champions.

I invite you to read this report — but the call to action does not stop there. It is critical that we reflect on these findings and then share this information broadly — with co-workers, peers, parents, neighbors, and schools. My hope is that it will spark important and needed conversations about what our girls are experiencing today.

This is just the beginning. We plan to continue researching and diving deeper into this data, especially as it relates to demographics specific to our Northeast Texas region. We know that the better we understand our girls and these interrelated challenges, the clearer the path forward becomes. And as history has proven, Texans know how to rally together to drive critical change. Let this report serve as our first road map.

Onward,

Jennifer Bartkowski
CEO, Girl Scouts of Northeast Texas

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Girls face pressure to be everything at once and to be perfect while doing it. They are expected to excel academically, be socially aware, look a certain way, succeed in sports or extracurriculars, be kind and emotionally intelligent, and present a curated version of themselves online.

– MELISSA K.
TEXAS GIRL MOM

OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

The State of the Texas Girl report was created to start informed conversations about the challenges and major issues that face the girls of Texas today.

This data was compiled and sourced from a variety of government and public resources, using the most recent available.

Report sources include:

- The 2022-2023 National Survey of Children’s Health
- U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 2024 Mathematics Assessment, 2024 Reading Assessment, and 2015 Science Assessment
- 2022-2023 TEA Texas Reports: Data on School Performance and Accountability Research
- The Brookings Institution High School Graduation Rates
- January 2026 North Texas Parents Poll
- January 2026 interviews with North Texas girls

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EXPLANATION OF WELLNESS INDICATORS



PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Healthy weight metrics
 Reported daily physical activity of 60 minutes per day
 Daily screentime: watch TV or play video games four-plus hours a day (girls ages 6-17)
 Families' economic standing (based on national poverty level)



ACADEMIC WELL-BEING

Girls in fourth through eighth grade at or above grade-level proficiency for reading
 Girls in fourth through eighth grade at or above grade-level proficiency for math
 Girls in fourth through eighth grade at or above grade-level proficiency for science
 High school graduation rates



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Presence of emotional, behavioral, or developmental issues
 Mental health treatment or counseling (girls ages 3-17)
 Student-to-support staff ratio (school counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses)
 Involvement in any community service or volunteer work (girls ages 12-17)
 Participation in any organized activities (girls ages 6-17)

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION:

While we have broken out the data into groupings, we know our overall well-being is derived from a combination of our physical, social, and emotional health.

This report does not have the ability to determine causation or draw explicit conclusions. However, it is important to start to understand the correlation between certain well-being metrics. For example, improving a girl's mental health can help her improve her desire to be social and physically active. Helping girls feel less lonely and isolated can encourage them to seek help and support in academics and other spaces in which they struggle.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We're proud to be Texans, yet we're failing girls in our own backyard. The data shows that despite Texas' prosperity, it's a terribly tough time (and place) to be a girl.



TEXAS RANKS 41ST IN THE NATION FOR GIRLS' OVERALL WELL-BEING.*

When you average Texas girls' well-being metrics across physical, academic, and social/emotional well-being, we land in the bottom fifth of the nation.

**This ranking gives equal weight to the three different well-being categories.*



TEXAS GIRLS ARE CAUGHT IN AN UNHEALTHY PHYSICAL RUT.

We rank 51st in the nation for girls' physical well-being. Girls' lack of physical activity, combined with an excessive daily use of screens and unhealthy weight levels, results in a national last-place ranking.



92% of Texas girls do not get enough physical activity daily



Almost **one-quarter** of Texas girls are on screens for four-plus hours a day



36% of Texas girls are considered overweight or obese



TEXAS GIRLS ARE AVERAGE/JUST-BELOW AVERAGE FOR ACADEMICS.

While Texas girls fare better for academic well-being, their **overall proficiency levels are extremely low** (mirroring low national levels), especially for reading and STEM subjects.



Less than **1 in 3** girls can read proficiently



Eighth grade Texas girls are especially behind in math; only **20%** are at or above proficiency



Fourth grade Texas girls are overall at or slightly above average for math and science proficiency



92% of Texas girls graduated from high school, higher than the national average (88%)



GIRLS, OVERALL, ARE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

Nearly **3 in 5** teen girls feel persistently sad and hopeless, much higher than their male counterparts. Teen girls were also more than twice as likely as boys to report feelings of anxiety and depression.



Texas girls mirror the national average for mental health; about **24%** report having emotional/behavioral issues, but only **13%** of Texas girls are getting treated



Texas girls need more community support and involvement, as their levels lag national numbers for:

- Student-to-support staff ratio at school
- Participation in community service
- Participation in organized activities

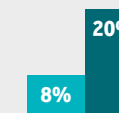
THE WELL-BEING GENDER GAP: TEXAS GIRLS VS. TEXAS BOYS

When compared with Texas boys, Texas girls fall significantly behind their male counterparts in two key metrics:

■ GIRLS
 ■ BOYS

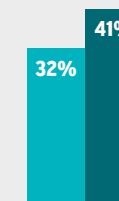
PHYSICAL WELL-BEING:

When it comes to movement, less than **8%** of Texas girls are getting at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily, compared with nearly **20%** of Texas boys.



ACADEMIC WELL-BEING:

Texas girls' science proficiency levels are nearly **10 percentage points lower** compared with eighth grade Texas boys (32% vs. 41%, respectively), indicating a knowledge gap that could continue if not addressed.



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING:

National and qualitative research paint the picture of emotional challenges facing girls — often invisible struggles of low self-esteem, competitive dynamics, and unreasonable expectations set by culture and social media. This also highlights the need for further understanding of not only the causes but also of effective solutions.

What that tells us is that this is not a generational problem or a general "Texas" problem. **Some of these issues are truly a Texas girl problem.**

TEXAS' WELL-BEING SCORECARD

A look at Texas' scorecard shows the spectrum of challenges for girls' well-being.

- Academically, graduation rates for Texas girls are strong, ranking second in the nation.
- Comparatively low levels of community service, organized activities, and student support put Texas girls in the bottom third when it comes to social and emotional well-being.
- Critical skills such as reading proficiency and lack of physical well-being across the board are detrimental to girls' overall ranking and well-being.



ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC	SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC	SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	ACADEMIC	ACADEMIC	SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL	ACADEMIC	PHYSICAL	PHYSICAL	PHYSICAL	PHYSICAL
Graduation Rates	Fourth Grade Math Proficiency	No Emotional, Behavioral, or Developmental Issues	Fourth Grade Science Proficiency	Eighth Grade Science Proficiency	Involved in Community Service or Volunteer Work	Mental Health Treatment or Counseling	Student-to-Support Staff Ratio	Eighth Grade Math Proficiency	Fourth Grade Reading Proficiency	Participate in Any Organized Activities	Eighth Grade Reading Proficiency	Watch TV or Play Video Games 3+ Hours a Day	Family at or Above Poverty Level	Girls at Normal Weight	60 Minutes of Physical Activity per Day
90%	38%	77%	39%	32%	35%	13%	392:1	20%	30%	71%	28%	76%	82%	54%	8%
2 ND	13 TH	14 TH	20 TH	23 RD	34 TH	36 TH	37 TH	39 TH	43 RD	43 RD	43 RD	45 TH	46 TH	48 TH	51 ST

These well-being rankings were determined by rating each Texas data point against the comparable data from the 51 other states (including Washington, D.C.). Rankings are based on raw data value.



WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE A GIRL TODAY

While this report helps quantify Texas girls' well-being metrics, it is effectively impossible to represent girls' complex realities, emotions, and experiences.

At the personal level, each girl has her own outlook, skills, resources, values, and goals that shape how she navigates life. At the macro level, systemic factors — such as policies, laws, societal expectations, culture/society, technology, and social media — present challenges that can shape, if not define, a girl's reality.

This myriad of variables creates endless answers to the question, "What is it like to be a girl today?" In a single word, the answer is that it's "complicated."

But some themes emerge when looking at the big picture that cut across personal and macro factors. So we asked Northeast Texas girls, parents, and educators to tell us about their experiences. Their answers are both heart-wrenching and heartwarming.

I would describe myself as a leader — very confident, funny, and all around a nice, kind person. [The biggest challenge I face as a girl is] **people underestimating how powerful we are.**

— **ABRIEL R.**
GIRL SCOUT

BEING A GIRL TODAY CAN FEEL LIKE...



YOU'RE CONSTANTLY TRYING TO FIT IN AND BELONG

"All we want is to fit in; we want people to like us. I think we all deal with that struggle, whether we're young or adults."

— Brandee S., *Texas girl mom*

"TikTok has decided what is trendy and what's 'out.' It's always been bad, but it's started to get particularly vicious."

— Cosondra C., *Texas girl mom*

IT'S YOU VS. SCHOOL

"School is constantly getting harder, just when you thought it was going to get easier."

— Malia, *Texas girl*

"It seems like we are taught a new lesson and then are quickly tested — without time to really process and learn. Add all our projects, assignments, and reports, and it can get overwhelming quickly."

— Chloe M., *Texas girl*

EXPECTATIONS ARE IMPOSSIBLY HIGH

"There's just a bunch of standards, and obviously not everyone can fit every single standard there is."

— Claire, *Texas girl*

"If you are unpopular and not really noticeable in school, you don't really have anyone to talk to."

— Miranda, *Texas girl*

LIFE IS RULED BY SCREENS & SOCIAL MEDIA

"We don't have a lot of positive things for them to do in the community — to just get outside and get off of the games and phones."

— Chanel, *Texas girl mom*

"Girls do not get five minutes to be themselves; social media dominates their lives so much."

— Victoria R., *Texas girl mom*

BUT WITH THE RIGHT AWARENESS, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT, BEING A GIRL TODAY ALSO MEANS:



MORE OPPORTUNITIES THAN BEFORE

"Having a community like Girl Scouts helps girls navigate challenges. It helps them learn that they're not alone, that they're heard, and that they have people in their corner."

— Jayden S., *Girl Scout dad*

A CONTINUED FOCUS ON HER MENTAL HEALTH

"The more we talk about mental health, the more it normalizes it and makes it easier for girls to reach out when struggling instead of quietly suffering."

— Abby D., *Texas girl mom*

THE RIGHT MENTORS & ENVIRONMENT CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

"For girls to fully thrive, they need space to make mistakes and be given grace afterwards. Many girls feel pressured to make that perfect decision, and then they overthink or second-guess themselves."

— Elizabeth, *Texas girl mom*

"I'm just trying to stay positive for my girls and just show them that they can stand up against the world and the things that don't serve them well. The girl needs to be the trend."

— Nicole F., *Girl Scout troop leader*

TEXAS GIRLS RANK 51ST IN THE NATION – **LAST PLACE** – WHEN IT COMES TO BEING PHYSICALLY HEALTHY.



EXCESSIVE DAILY USE OF SCREENS

GIRLS' LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

UNHEALTHY WEIGHT LEVELS

Regular physical activity has been shown to be a key mechanism for holistic health and well-being. Countless studies prove that being physically fit and active creates strong bodies, can elevate mood and reduce stress, and can fuel a girl's self-confidence.

But what is less documented and known appears to be the current state of Texas girls' health. Despite our poor ranking, a local poll among Northeast Texas parents shows they believe Texas girls are physically healthy.

AMONG NORTHEAST TEXAS PARENTS SURVEYED:

55% RATED TEXAS GIRLS' PHYSICAL WELL-BEING AS "EXCELLENT" OR "GOOD"

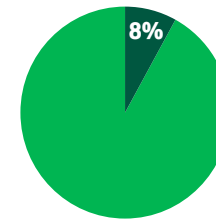
45% RATED TEXAS GIRLS' PHYSICAL WELL-BEING AS "AVERAGE"

I don't think girls are getting enough physical activity. Access and availability to screens have severely **cut into their desire or ability to just go outside and play.**

– **JASON B.**
TEXAS GIRL DAD & YOUTH COACH

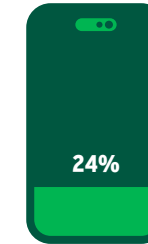


LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



% REPORTED DAILY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (60+ MINUTES/DAY)

Over **90%** of Texas girls do not get enough physical activity daily.



GIRLS' SCREEN TIME (4+ HOURS/DAY)

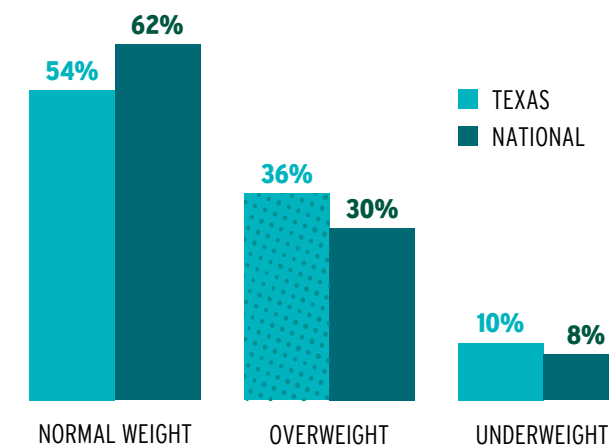
Almost **one-quarter** of Texas girls are spending time on their devices for a large portion of the day.



A 2018 survey reported that American children spend **35% less time** playing outside freely than their parents did.

Source: 2018 Kamik Outside Free Play Survey

UNHEALTHY WEIGHT LEVELS



Over **one-third** of Texas girls are considered overweight or obese.

Texas ranks **48th** in girls having a normal or healthy weight.

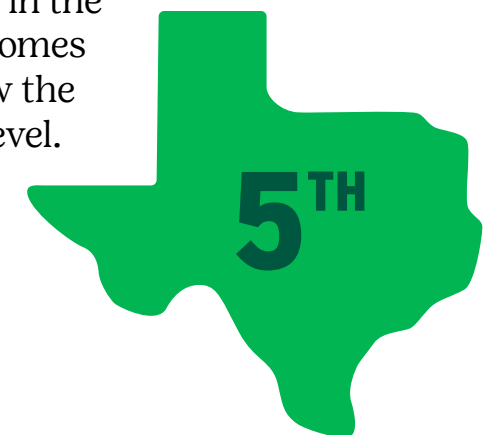
POOR LIVING CONDITIONS



About **1 in 5** Texas girls lives below the national poverty level.

This is higher than the national average of **15%** but an improvement since 2014 when **24%** of Texas girls lived in poverty.

Texas ranks in the **top 5** for homes at or below the poverty level.



TEXAS GIRLS ARE BELOW AVERAGE ACADEMICALLY IN A LANDSCAPE THAT IS ALARMINGLY LOW.



I think pre-COVID girls were a lot stronger emotionally and academically. It's a double-edged sword — they are more tech savvy now, but **not as resilient** as pre-COVID.

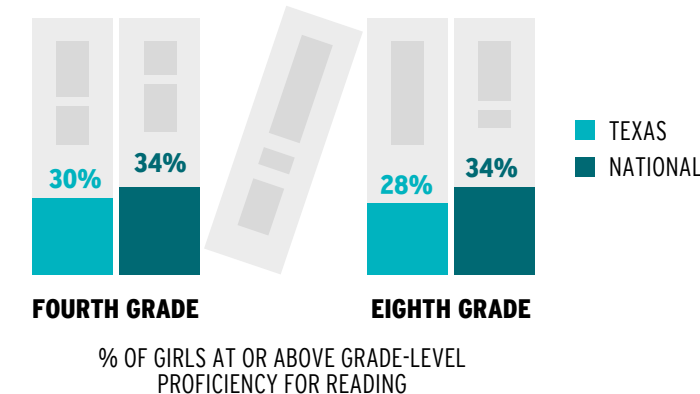
— **NIKITA L.**
TEXAS GIRL MOM

While schools, policymakers, and communities help address academic challenges at school, it will be critical to help support and encourage learning outside the classroom. Enrichment activities and programs that promote a love of learning, reading support, homework help, mentorship, and career readiness can supplement gaps at home and school.

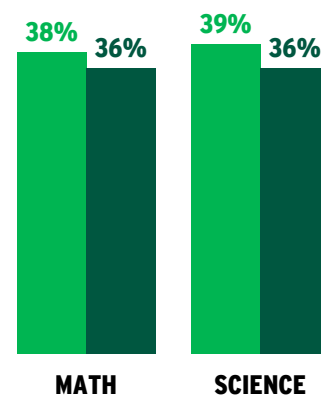
It is also important to recognize the impact the pandemic had on students — eighth grade girls' academic proficiency is far below that of fourth grade girls, indicating this may be a vulnerable age group, disproportionately affected by school closures and social isolation.

A WEAK ACADEMIC FOUNDATION

30% of fourth grade Texas girls are at or above grade-level proficiency for reading.
Only **28%** of eighth grade Texas girls are at or above grade-level proficiency for reading.



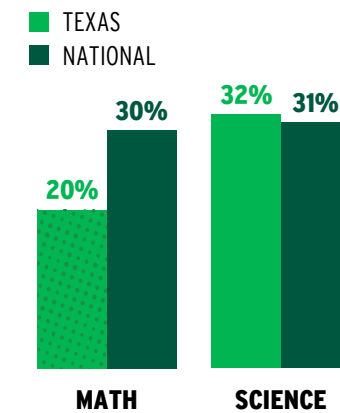
EIGHTH GRADERS STRUGGLE IN STEM



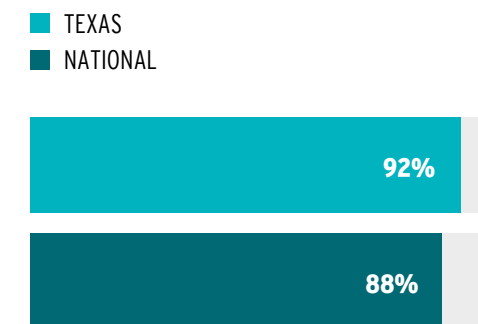
Fourth grade Texas girls fare better in science and math vs. other girls in the U.S.

Eighth grade Texas girls are especially **behind in math** but proficient in science.*

*State data from 2015, the latest data available



STRONG GRADUATION RATES



Past cohorts of Texas girls had **higher-than-average graduation rates** vs. the national average.

TEEN GIRLS ARE EXPERIENCING A **MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS**, WHERE LONELINESS, HOPELESSNESS, AND ANXIETY ABOUND.



“

There are so many instances in a young woman's life that **she may not be prepared for** because of the differences in generational experiences or access. Helping girls learn about understanding and maintaining their mental health and well-being will help them succeed in so many other areas of their lives.

— **CHRISTINA H.**
TEXAS GIRL MOM

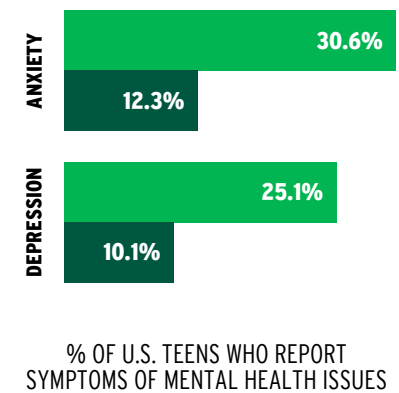
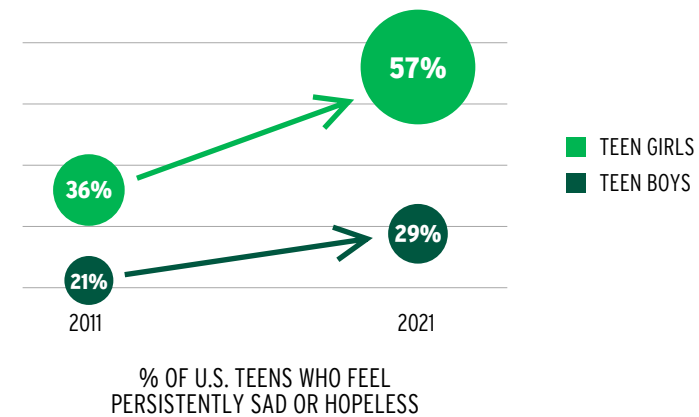
Children's mental health is an important, top-of-mind issue that is garnering a lot of attention. Once taboo or less understood, it is inspiring to see communities and groups come together to discuss its importance. But just as critical will be the research and conversations to understand why girls are so disproportionately affected.

Among North Texas parents, girls' mental health is considered average to poor, indicating some awareness of this challenge:

42% RATED TEXAS GIRLS' MENTAL HEALTH AS "AVERAGE"
33% RATED TEXAS GIRLS' MENTAL HEALTH AS "POOR"
8% RATED TEXAS GIRLS' MENTAL HEALTH AS "DIRE"

A complex and layered topic, the better we understand the main contributors to loneliness, anxiety, and detractors of mental well-being, the more support programs can be created.

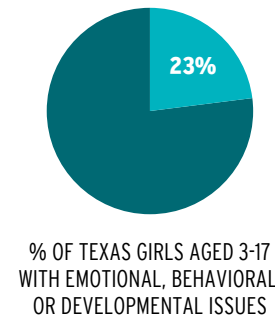
DRAMATIC INCREASE IN SADNESS & ANXIETY



Teen girls were **twice as likely** as boys to report feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anxiety, and depression.

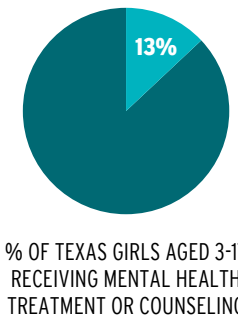
“ Growing up, I connected by walking to my next-door girlfriend's house, playing in the backyard, **being part of community**. Today those things are much more secondary. —Candace W., *Girl Scout advocate* ”

DIAGNOSED BUT UNDERTREATED



Teen girls mirror the national average for emotional and behavioral issues.

However, **only a fraction** of Texas girls are currently receiving treatment.



LIMITED STRUCTURED SUPPORT



In Texas, there is only one adult support person* for every **392 students**.

*Adult support person is defined as one of the following: school counselors, social workers, psychologists, and/or nurses.



% OF GIRLS PARTICIPATING IN COMMUNITY SERVICE



% OF GIRLS PARTICIPATING IN ORGANIZED ACTIVITIES

The **majority of girls** in Texas and nationwide aren't finding opportunities to give back, but they are involved in some sort of organization.



WHAT'S NEXT MORE CONVERSATIONS, MORE INSIGHTS, MORE SUPPORT

Solving problems begins with awareness and clarity. It will be imperative to continue to discuss and share information about The State of the Texas Girl with parents, teachers, community leaders, and policymakers.

And while we now have a solid baseline with The State of the Texas Girl report, GSNETX plans to conduct more interviews, learning sessions, and data analysis to gain additional insight and perspective into the challenges girls face today. Future reports will include diving deeper into the demographics of the Northeast Texas region, along with race and ethnicity.

Lastly, having additional partners — at the corporate, service, policy, and donor levels — convene to prioritize the challenges and potential solutions will be critical if we want to improve our girls' well-being and our state's ranking. Creating systemic change and breakthroughs can only happen when leaders come together to support a common issue, develop connected strategies, and implement sustainable solutions. We owe it to our Texas girls.

When a girl truly believes in her own worth and abilities, she is more likely to try new things, speak up, take healthy risks, and recover from setbacks. Helping her become resilient helps her navigate friendship challenges, academic pressure, social media comparison, and disappointment without internalizing failure or losing her sense of self.

— MELISSA K.
TEXAS GIRL MOM



The biggest challenge I face is speaking up. But **Girl Scouts has taught me to speak up for myself** and how my voice matters. When I face challenges, I turn to my family, my troop leader, my mom, and my friends because I know they'll be there for me and support me.

— ANYA L.
GIRL SCOUT



THE GIRL SCOUT DIFFERENCE

For more than 114 years, Girl Scouts has had one clear mission and vision: **to put the girl first**. And it's incredible to see what happens when girl-centric programs, environments, experiences, and mentors come together.

THE IMPACT OF GIRL SCOUTS IS UNDENIABLE.

Data shows that when you build girls of courage, confidence, and character, they — and the world around them — thrive.

88% of Girl Scouts say they are satisfied with their lives today

87% say that they have successfully met their life goals

76% say that they lead purposeful and meaningful lives, actively contributing to others' well-being (compared to 61% non-Girl Scouts)

70% of girls who participate in the Girl Scout outdoor leadership experience increase their confidence, interest, and environmental stewardship.

46% of Girl Scouts say they show resilience, take on challenges, are ambitious, and aren't afraid to take risks (compared to 36% non-Girl Scouts)

Source: GSNETX 2024 Case for Support

GSNETX continues to believe in the **power of a girl-led future** and is actively investing in ways to serve more girls, in more communities, in more ways.



girl scouts
of northeast texas

gsnetx.org

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FOLLOW OUR **JOURNEY**

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The State of the Texas Girl!