

April 2008 Issue No. 4

## Girls' Views on Politics, Power, and Life

The new year is well underway and girls are taking note of what is playing out in the media and their own lives—from politics on a broader scale to personal resolutions and goals.

To get a sense of what's currently important to girls, we've included results from research we recently conducted in conjunction with Smarty Pants, a youth market research firm, with an online survey panel of 433 girls ages 8 to 17 of diverse backgrounds in February 2008. The survey had a margin of error of  $\pm 5$  percent. We've also included current statistics on youth and young adults ages 18 to 29 from other's research related to findings from our panel.

The findings reveal girls' personal concerns and resolutions about relationships, health, and school as well as their thoughts on gender, race, and equality in this country. Advocacy, politics, and leadership are also areas girls find important.

Stay tuned for our next issue in which we will bring you our newest publications on girls' leadership: *Change It Up! What Girls Say About Redefining Leadership*, *Transforming Leadership: Focusing on Outcomes of the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience*, and *Exploring Girls' Leadership*. These three pieces bring together what girls say about the need to change leadership so that it resonates with them and how Girl Scouting is working with the leadership aspirations of girls today.

Sincerely,  
*Michael Conn, Ph.D.*  
 Vice President, Research  
 Girl Scout Research Institute  
 Girl Scouts of the USA

## POLITICS AND VOTING

### Eight in ten girls ages 8 to 17 are interested in this upcoming presidential election. They are drawn to this election for many reasons, with gender being number one.

[Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008].

Girls are interested because:

- A woman is running (48%).
- Girls want to know all candidates' points of view (30%).
- An African American is running (29%).
- The issues are important (26%).

[Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008]

### Girls' older counterparts are also drawn to this election. With more and more youth and young adults following the presidential campaign, young adult voters ages 18 to 29 will have likely impact, according to a recent [Time Magazine/SRBI poll: Year of the Youth Vote](#) (January 2008).

- Three-quarters of 18 to 29 year old youth are following the election.
- Almost two in three (63%) are following the election campaign by television, 44% by the Internet, and 21% by newspapers.
- Nearly three-quarters (72%) believe the U.S. is on the wrong track.

[Source: [Time Magazine/SRBI poll: Year of the Youth Vote](#), January 2008]

Over the last decade voter trends have risen for youth voter registration and turnout ([Young Voter Registration Turnout and Trends](#), February 2008). To see the sharp rise for this presidential campaign, check out [Young Voter Registration Turnout and Trends](#) (February 2008), a new report from Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and Rock The Vote.

## ADVOCACY AND POWER

### Over eight in ten (86%) girls see themselves as advocates, often speaking up on a variety of issues, such as:

- Peer pressure and acceptance (43%).
- Alcohol and drug abuse (39%).
- Violence and abuse towards children (37%).
- Smoking (32%).

[Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008]

To see how girls in Girl Scouting in the U.S. and across the globe are speaking up for themselves and taking a stand on key issues, check out [Take a Stand](#), developed by girls worldwide with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS).

### Girls believe there is still a need for gender and racial equality in the U.S. Three-fourths feel that it is still necessary for the country to focus on gender equality as well as racial equality. However, approximately 9% feel racial and gender equality have been achieved.

[Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008]

### Girls see varying levels of influence of particular groups in the U.S. When asked which groups have too much influence, the right amount of influence, or too little, girls say the following:

- Too much influence: wealthy business leaders (68%) and men (53%).
- Too little influence: young people (64%), women (54%), and senior citizens (51%) have too little.

[Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008]

## CONCERNS AND RESOLUTIONS

Girls decidedly have resolutions for the new year—particularly academic. When asked about their top three resolutions or goals, nearly two-thirds (64%) chose getting good grades followed by eating healthy (36%) and being a better person (29%). [Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008]

To see how some young people and communities are taking charge of their educational pursuits, check out [The Connection Strategy: Preparing Young People to Succeed in College and Beyond](#), a new report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

### Yet girls have major concerns, too, from academic success to the war in Iraq. Nearly half (47%) were afraid of not earning the grades they want at school [Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008]. Concerns about family, friends, and finances followed:

- Thirty-eight percent worried about someone close getting very sick or dying.
- About thirty-five percent worried about friends not liking them and their family not having enough money.
- Nearly 20% worried about some type of violence—the war in Iraq, crime and violence in the neighborhood, and bullying at school.

[Source: GSRI, Girl Panel Survey, February 2008]

### Young adults ages 18 to 29 also express concerns for the new year, according to a recent [Time Magazine/SRBI poll: Year of the Youth Vote](#) (January 2008).

- Over 60% worry about affordable health care.
- Approximately 60% worry about the war in Iraq and job stability.
- Nearly half worry about the environment. [Source: [Time Magazine/SRBI poll: Year of the Youth Vote](#), January 2008]

To learn more of girls' view on politics, power, and life, visit our website at [www.girlscouts.org/research](http://www.girlscouts.org/research). Also, visit our website for original studies and research reviews of issues relevant to girls today.

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## DID YOU KNOW?

Sixty-eight percent of girls believe that if a woman were to become President of the United States it would bring more equality to women.

Three out of four girls believe it is still necessary for the country to focus on racial and gender equality.

Nearly seven out of ten girls believe that wealthy business leaders have too much influence.

—GSRI, Girl Survey Panel, February 2008

## ABOUT GSRI

The Girl Scout Research Institute, formed in 2000, is a vital extension of Girl Scouts of the USA.

The GSRI conducts original research, evaluation, and outcomes measurement studies, releases critical facts and findings, and provides resources essential for the advancement of the well-being and safety of girls living in today's world.

The GSRI also informs public policy and advocacy for Girl Scouting.

## ABOUT GIRL SCOUTING

### Girl Scouts of the USA Mission Statement

Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character, who make the world a better place.

## GIRL SCOUT CORE BUSINESS STRATEGY

### TRANSFORMING GIRL SCOUTS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Girl Scouts began to develop its [Core Business Strategy](#) in 2004, to ensure that this historic organization continues to be the best leadership experience for girls in kindergarten through high school.

Today, through the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience, girls become leaders by [discovering](#), [connecting](#), and [taking action](#).

[Learn more about the New Girl Scout Leadership Experience for girls!](#)

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## GIRL SCOUT PROGRAM RESOURCES

[Girl Scout Gold, Silver, and Bronze Awards](#)

[Young Women of Distinction](#)

[Challenge and Change](#)

[The White House Project](#)

[uniquely ME! The Girl Scout/Dove Self-Esteem Project](#)

[World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts](#)

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Abt SRBI](#)

[American Association of University Women \(AAUW\)](#)

[Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

[ChildStats](#)

[Child Trends](#)

[Civic Learning and Engagement \(CIRCLE\)](#)

[National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center](#)

[Pew Internet and American Life Project](#)

[Rock The Vote](#)

[UNICEF](#)

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