March 4, 2025

2025 Ohio: State of the Girl Report
Frequently Asked Questions

What is the *2025 Ohio: State of the Girl* report?

The **2025 Ohio: State of the Girl Report** is a comprehensive, first-of-its-kind study commissioned by Ohio's four Girl Scout councils—Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland, Girl Scouts of Black Diamond, Girl Scouts of North East Ohio, and Girl Scouts of Western Ohio. The report highlights key challenges facing Ohio girls, such as mental health struggles, the impact of cyberbullying, and underrepresentation in STEM careers, and offers actionable recommendations to improve their wellbeing.

Why was this report commissioned?

The report was commissioned to gather credible, state-specific data to better understand the needs of Ohio's girls and to serve as a resource for caregivers, youth program providers, educators, and policymakers. The findings are intended to drive meaningful actions, investments, and community programs that address the pressing challenges girls face today.

Who conducted the research for the report?

The University of Cincinnati Evaluation Services Center contributed secondary data and research, while The Center for Community Solutions helped design the report. Nancy Dawes, President of BEWEL (Buckeye Engineering Women in Executive Leadership) and longtime Girl Scout volunteer, was the Co-Chair of the Ohio: State of the Girl Report. The findings reflect a combination of state-specific data and broader research on the experiences of girls.

What are the key challenges highlighted in the report?

Key findings from the report reveal:

- **A growing prevalence of mental health struggles:** More than half of high school girls (56%) grades 9-12 reported feeling sad or hopeless in 2021, and 15% reported attempting suicide—nearly four times the rate of boys. In 2022, 31% of Ohio girls experienced difficulty accessing mental health treatment or counseling and 8% reported being unable to obtain care.

- **The impact of cyberbullying and extended social media use:** Ohio girls experienced bullying and cyberbullying at significantly higher rates than boys. In 2021, 51% of Ohio middle school girls and 28% of high school girls reported being bullied online. Older teens are particularly affected given their frequent use of social media.

- **Challenges to their physical wellbeing.** In 2021, 18% of high school girls (grades 9-12) reported experiencing sexual dating violence, an alarming 64% increase since 2019.

- **Academic barriers to success:** Chronic absenteeism affected more than a quarter (27%) of K-12 students during the 2022-2023 school year, with poor attendance linked to lower academic achievement, increased health risks, and reduced long-term success.

- **Opportunities to reignite interest in STEM and leadership programs:** STEM careers continue to grow in Ohio, but women remain underrepresented in these fields. The report highlights the need for early and consistent exposure to STEM programs, as girls' interest in science often declines starting at age 11.

How does the report suggest addressing these challenges?

The report details actionable recommendations for caregivers, youth program providers, schools and state policy makers including:

- Increasing girls' access to positive, challenging activities and supportive adults, to build girls' self-confidence and resilience at every stage of development. This includes efforts to increase girls' interest in STEM careers by providing early and consistent encouragement and education.
- Addressing interpersonal aggression, including cyberbullying and dating violence, through prevention and support, to reduce its occurrence and the long-term impact on girls' mental health.
- Providing access to mental health resources, including through programs, interventions, and licensed mental health services.

How can Girl Scouts help address these issues?

The report underscores the importance of **organized activities, such as Girl Scouts,** in helping girls develop **confidence, resilience and leadership skills**. In addition to the health and developmental benefits of social engagement, research shows that participation in structured, supportive programs can positively influence girls' moral, civic and developmental growth.

In addition, the report reinforces the impact of Girl Scout STEM programs.

- 75% of Girl Scouts in middle and high school participated in multiple STEM activities were interested in taking STEM classes in college, compared to only 50% among those who did not do STEM activities.
- 63% of Girl Scouts in middle and high school, who participated in multiple STEM activities aspire to a career in STEM, compared to only 43% among those who did not do STEM activities.

What role do community members, caregivers, policymakers and schools play in addressing these challenges?

Caregivers:

- Foster supportive relationships by engaging in open and honest communication with girls about mental health, body image, and online safety.
- Encourage participation in positive extracurricular activities, such as sports, clubs, or organizations like Girl Scouts, that build confidence and leadership skills.
- Collaborate with schools and mental health providers to ensure girls can access the resources they need for their emotional and academic development.

Policymakers:

- Increase funding for mental health services in schools and communities, with a focus on trauma-informed care and prevention programs.
- Develop policies to address cyberbullying and online harassment, with clear guidelines and support systems for victims.
- Support initiatives that promote gender equity in STEM by funding early exposure programs and scholarships for girls interested in science-related fields.

Youth Program Providers:

- Create safe, inclusive environments where girls can engage in structured, positive activities that foster confidence and resilience.
- Design programs that address interpersonal aggression, including cyberbullying and dating violence, through prevention, intervention, and support services.
- Partner with schools and community leaders to deliver mentoring programs, extracurricular activities, and leadership development opportunities tailored to girls' needs.

Schools:

- Implement trauma-informed teaching practices and mental health support programs to address the needs of students facing adverse experiences.
- Provide comprehensive digital literacy and online safety education to help girls identify and handle negative body image messaging and cyberbullying.
- Collaborate with community organizations to offer after-school programs that engage girls in STEM, leadership, and social-emotional learning activities.

How will this report be used moving forward?
The report will serve as a valuable resource for Girl Scout councils, community organizations, and policymakers to guide future program development, funding decisions, and advocacy efforts. It aims to inspire new efforts and investments to improve the well-being of girls across Ohio.

Where can I access the full report?
To **access the full report** and learn more, visit https://ohiogirlreport.org/

How can I support this initiative or get involved with Girl Scouts of Ohio's Heartland?
You can support the efforts outlined in the report by volunteering, donating or joining Girl Scouts. Visit **gsoh.org** to learn more about how you can get involved.