

ISSUES GIRLS FACE

1 in 4 girls will not finish high school.

- 30% of teen girls who drop out do so due to pregnancy / parenthood leading cause of dropout among girls.¹
 - Rates are higher for Latinas: 36% and African Americans: 38%.¹
- Girls are often “pulled out” of school due to caregiving and other family responsibilities.
 - Latinas and other immigrant populations may have added challenges due to gender and ethnic stereotypes.²
- Declined academic performance resulting from feeling unsafe in school can also lead to dropping out.³
 - 68% of girls vs. 28% of boys report being impacted by sexual harassment.³

78% of girls are unhappy with their bodies by age 17.

- Body image disproportionately affects girls and women, dissatisfaction with one’s body often starts before teen years and increases in adolescence.⁴
 - 60% of girls grades 9-12 are trying to lose weight.⁵
- Girls receive mixed messages from family, peers, and media causing them to feel pressure to conform to an “ideal” body.
- Poor body image can lead girls to miss out on positive life experiences and engage in risky behaviors.
 - 6 in 10 girls abstain from participating in something they love because of anxiety about looks.⁶

3 in 10 girls will become pregnant before the age of 20.

- Despite recent progress, the U.S. still has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates among developed nations.⁷
- Teen birth rates vary based on race/ethnicity and geographic areas.
 - Latina, Black, and Native American young women experience higher birth rates than Whites and Asian Americans.⁸
 - Teens living in the South experience higher birth rates than those living in other U.S. areas.⁸

1 in 5 girls will be a victim of childhood sexual abuse.

- Childhood sexual abuse, “exposing a child to sexual acts or behavior,” disproportionately affects girls.^{9,10}
 - 82 percent of reports of childhood sexual abuse were girls.¹¹
- Less than a third of childhood sexual abuse cases are reported.
 - As many as 45% of children who were sexually abused do not tell for at least 5 years.¹²
- Child sexual abuse is found in all racial and ethnic communities in the U.S., at all income levels. However, African American girls face higher risk of sexual abuse than Whites. Hispanics have a slightly greater risk than non-Hispanic Whites.^{13,14}



Why it is important for Girls Inc. to address these issues:

High School Graduation	Body Image	Teen Pregnancy	Childhood Sexual Abuse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A girl's potential to be healthy and economically independent is at risk. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Female dropouts are substantially less likely to be employed; those who work are plagued by low earnings.¹⁵ Societal impact is great. High school dropout threatens our ability to compete globally and secure a domestic talent pipeline. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children of high school dropouts are less likely to graduate.¹⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls may engage in risky behaviors due to poor body image, including substance use, diets, using food substitutes or diet pills, and/or vomiting.¹⁶ Many girls equate being healthy with losing weight. They also experience unrealistic definitions of beauty that vary by culture and race. Girls require support to build positive body image, take healthy risks, avoid unhealthy relationships and behaviors, and combat stereotypes and limiting expectations around physical appearance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many girls do not understand they have the capability, right, and responsibility to be in charge of their sexual health.¹⁷ Early childbearing has educational and financial consequences. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young mothers may have difficulty completing high school, obtaining a college degree, and earning a living wage.¹⁸ Children born to teen mothers also face challenges such as higher risk of dropping out of high school and also becoming teen parents.^{18,19} 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood sexual abuse survivors often suffer from long term problems²⁰: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of trust/feelings of betrayal Eating disorders Sleep disorders Revictimization Participation in risky sexual activity, substance abuse, and other health risks Problems in school, increased risk of dropping out Effects can last into adulthood. Sexually abused girls are more likely to experience violence as adults.^{21,22} Sexually abused girls experience feelings of guilt, which can be intensified when adults do not believe or provide adequate support, contributing to shame, stigma, and secrecy.^{23,24,25,26}

Girls Inc. empowers girls to succeed and overcome challenges.

The Girls Inc. Experience consists of people, an environment, and programming that, together, empower girls to succeed.

- The *people* are trained staff and volunteers who build lasting, mentoring relationships, and peers who share their drive and aspirations.
- The *environment* is girls-only, physically and emotionally safe; there is a sisterhood of support, high expectations, and respect.
- The research-based *programming* is hands-on, minds-on, and meets the needs of today's girls to provide the age-appropriate information and knowledge so girls make decisions leading to healthy lives; succeed academically; and develop life skills to prepare for adulthood.

Our aspirations for girls:

We equip girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow up healthy, educated, and independent. Girls build confidence and embrace positive decision-making to take charge of their health and wellbeing, and achieve academic, personal, and career goals.