



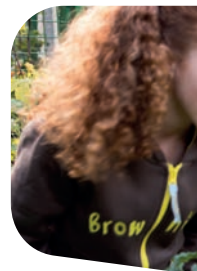
Exploring the impact of Girlguiding among alumnae



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Registered charity number 306016.



We give girls their own space



We change as the lives of girls change



We give girls a voice






'The best part about being in Guides is you get so many opportunities that you wouldn't have normally - going to Guiding centres in Switzerland, Mexico and India; helping out in the community; doing challenges like the high-ropes course; going on camps. You make so many new friends too. In fact, Guides is the most adventurous thing I've ever been a part of!' Current member of the Guide section



We are for all girls





‘When I tell people what Girlguiding does they’re amazed. People tend to have historical views so it’s fantastic to educate them about what Girlguiding is about now and all the amazing things it does for girls.’

Girlguiding North West England Region Manager

Introduction

Every day, girls tell us about the life-changing experiences they have had through Girlguiding - flying down a zip wire for the first time, finding the courage to stand up and speak out on an issue they care about, going on their very first camp away from home... Through fun, friendship, challenge and adventure, and within a safe girl-only space, we see that young Girlguiding members discover their full potential, changing their own lives and the world around them for the better.

But we also wanted to understand more about **how** we are changing lives, what we are doing well and what we can do better, through robust research.

At the heart of ‘Being our best’, Girlguiding’s Strategic Plan for 2015-2020, is a commitment to get better and better at what we do for girls. And fundamental to this is that we **listen**, we **learn** and we **change** as the lives of girls change. So this research will help us to:

- fine tune and improve our programmes for the future
- ensure that we bring the best of guiding to the maximum number of girls and young women.

How did we do the research?

With funding from Pears Foundation, we commissioned BMG Research to evaluate the impact that being a member of Girlguiding has had on adult women, and to benchmark our offer against that of other youth organisations.

To do this BMG conducted:

- eight qualitative focus groups with Girlguiding alumnae
- a nationally representative quantitative telephone survey of 1,500 women
- a quantitative telephone survey of 200 senior professionals, including 100 Girlguiding alumnae
- 15 in-depth case studies with video.

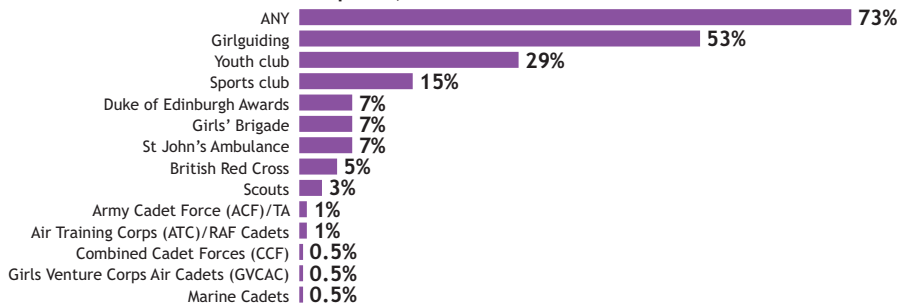
And through this we discovered what we did well - and what we need to focus on in the future.

‘I like the idea that I’m a role model - I like the idea that I’m inspiring young people’.

Current member of The Senior Section

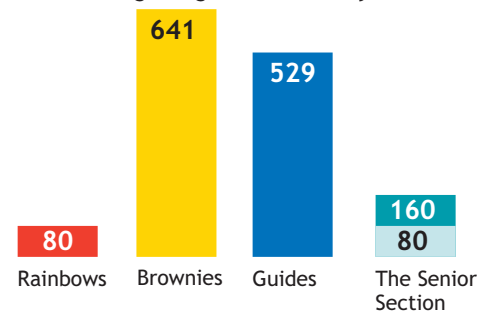
Membership of youth organisations

Sample: 1,545 women



Membership by section

Total Girlguiding alumnae surveyed: 802



Who did we talk to?

The research focused on **women aged 18 and over**, so the majority of the results reflect Girlguiding as it was in the past, rather than as it is now. And the results also show that, as women's lives have changed, Girlguiding has adapted and changed alongside them. For example, women who first experienced guiding 50 years ago might talk about the practical skills they gained on camp (cutting-edge at the time), whereas women who joined guiding ten years ago might talk about empowerment and leadership skills.

So what proportion of women have been members of Girlguiding? An incredible **53 per cent** of those surveyed had been a member at some time in their lives.

But to avoid any possibility of overestimation, BMG defined Girlguiding alumnae as those who had been members for at least one year and adjusted the results to take into account the fact that women who had never been members might have been reluctant to take part in the survey. So BMG has made a 'best estimate' that at least one in four women across

the UK can be regarded as **Girlguiding alumnae**.

Geography, though, had an impact, with Girlguiding membership lower among women who grew up in:

- Northern Ireland
- London
- rural areas.

Of the Girlguiding alumnae surveyed:

- 80% had been Brownies
- 66% had been Guides
- 10% had been Rainbows
- 10% had been members of The Senior Section (● though for senior professionals this rose to almost 20%).





The findings

Having been a member of Girlguiding had a positive correlation with life chances, with Girlguiding alumnae more likely to:

- have higher qualifications
- be involved in volunteering
- have a higher income
- own their own home.



So how much impact did Girlguiding have on the former members surveyed?

As many as **70 per cent** of all women involved in Girlguiding believe their involvement had a positive impact on their life and 20 per cent believe it contributed 'a lot'. Not surprisingly, the longer their membership, the more it shaped their lives. Other important influences were family, character/outlook on life, experience at work, friends, and partner/spouse.

Girlguiding alumnae who were also members of another organisation are more likely than those who were not, or those who were members of other organisations, to identify being given a sense of adventure, becoming a more responsible member of society and developing new life skills as benefits of membership.

The opportunities guiding provides

The research told us that women associated certain opportunities with guiding. They mentioned:

guiding. They mentioned:

SAFE PLACE
TRY NEW THINGS
EXPOSURE
NATURE
FRIENDS
OPPORTUNITIES
LIFE SKILLS
PROVIDED WITH ROLE MODELS
DECISION-MAKING
COMMUNITY
MEMBER OF
RESPONSIBLE
ADVENTURE
SENSE OF
MORE LEADERSHIP

‘Guiding is special because it helps you in the world - to get jobs and earn money in the future - and it gives you a sense of freedom. It’s just for girls but it doesn’t do the stereotype of girls knitting and stuff!’

Current member of the Guide section



Women in the 18-29 age group also stressed the following benefits, demonstrating how our programmes have evolved:

ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS
TEAMWORK
SKILLS COMMUNICATION
INDEPENDENT
ENGAGEMENT
WITH COMMUNITY
LEADERSHIP
PRACTICAL SKILLS
PUBLIC SPEAKING
DEVELOPMENT
CONFIDENCE



‘It made me want to become a nurse - from Brownies, I remember, and I followed it through and I did become a nurse, even though I was told at school I wasn’t clever enough.’

Girlguiding alumna, aged 45-49

Three quarters of former Brownies stayed on until age ten.



Only a third of Guides stayed on until age 14.



‘Brownies helps people learn and helps people have fun - and we go on lots of trips!’

Current Brownie from BME background

The longer you stay...

It was clear from the findings that the longer girls stayed in guiding, the greater were the benefits. Those who had been members for three years or more stressed the huge range of opportunities they had had in the organisation, from camping and adventurous activities to developing life skills. And later in life, these longer-term alumnae were more likely to be involved in volunteering and more likely to use their right to vote, as well as scoring more highly for such qualities as:

- confidence
- independence
- having good values
- team work
- leadership.

But not everyone stayed on in guiding, and we wanted to know why. The reasons

varied but members of Girlguiding mentioned these issues more than members of other organisations:

- issues with their group’s Leader
- the uniform
- feeling that guiding wasn’t ‘cool’.

And what did the research suggest would help retention in the future?

- Ensuring programmes are relevant to the ages of girls in each section.
- Ensuring that activities go far beyond traditionally ‘feminine’ skills.
- Providing activities that improve understanding of other cultures.
- Improving awareness of what Girlguiding offers through marketing and in-school promotion.

Reaching out: younger women

Our research found that those in the 18-29 age group were:

- less aware of Girlguiding
- less likely to have been members (especially of the Guide section)
- likely to have remained Brownies or Guides for a shorter time.

So it’s important for us to focus on keeping girls interested right through their guiding journey - especially at that crucial time when they are making the transition from Brownies to Guides (at the age of ten).



‘My Division did a special “I am Guide...Get me out of here!” event so we Brownies could find out about Guides. It was even better than I imagined. There were so many brilliant things to do! I can’t choose my favourite. I start Guides next Monday and can’t wait.’

Current Brownie moving on to Guides

‘I just thought, “I’m too cool for this now.”’

Girlguiding alumna, aged 18-29



'I was a Brownie from the age of seven and then went on to Guides and now I'm a Leader. As a disabled person, I've had so many opportunities and now I want to make sure that every young member has the same.'

Girlguiding alumna and current Brownie Leader

Reaching out: diversity

Another key finding of the research was that women from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities had a much lower engagement with out-of-school informal learning activities, including guiding. Those who **were** engaged with guiding, though, were more likely to say it made a big difference to them in some key areas:

- exposing them to people from a wide range of backgrounds
- developing their leadership skills
- raising their aspirations
- providing a place to express themselves and their opinions
- providing a safe place to try new things
- making them a more responsible member of the community
- making them feel empowered
- improving their confidence.

This shows that if Girlguiding continues to widen access and reach out to girls and young women from diverse backgrounds, we have the potential to change many more lives for the better.





Being our best

Girlguiding's plan for 2020

What we need to do

The findings of this research have fed into our new Strategic Plan, 'Being our best'.



EXCELLENCE



ACCESS



VOICE



CAPACITY

It is essential that Girlguiding:

- makes our **offer** stand out from the crowd and improves awareness of all the benefits we bring so that we can inspire more girls and young women to join us, change more lives, recruit more volunteers and encourage more people to support us as a charity
- widens our **reach** to groups not currently benefitting from guiding so that every single girl will feel welcome, included and inspired to stay involved
- ensures that our **programmes** are age-appropriate for girls in each section so that we deliver the opportunities that girls themselves both want and need
- offers skills and experiences **relevant** to the young people of today - from encouraging entrepreneurship to building resilience, from developing leadership, public speaking and communication skills to enabling girls and young women to engage in social action and adventure - so that girls can fulfil their potential in the modern world
- improves **retention**, especially when girls move from Brownies to Guides so that girls and young women reap the increased benefits that long-term membership brings, now and for the rest of their lives
- works cooperatively with **other youth organisations** to offer young people the best possible outcomes.

'Girlguiding helps girls learn about themselves and discover their talents in different things. It improves their confidence and prepares them for the world.'

Current Young Leader



The future

More than 100 years ago, a small group of young women raised their voices to demand ‘something for the girls’. Girlguiding was born then, and has flourished to become one of the UK’s leading charities for young people, with a membership of over half a million. To make sure Girlguiding continues to transform the lives of even more girls and young women, we have put in place ‘Being our best’, our Strategic Plan that will help us realise our vision of an equal world where all girls can make a positive difference, be happy, safe and fulfil their potential.

So we are excited at the challenge to make what we do even better, and are planning to continue focused research with girls, volunteers, parents and others to address several key areas identified in the work with BMG.

Geography	Culture	Programme	Impact
Improving the availability of guiding to those in rural areas and exploring and counteracting the issues that mean a lower uptake in London and Northern Ireland.	Identifying groups missing out on guiding - for example those from BME communities and those from a wider range of social backgrounds.	Exploring the best way to differentiate what Girlguiding offers from what other organisations do, and being clear about the impacts and outcomes of our programme for our members so we attract and retain new members.	Exploring the value employers place on Girlguiding experience when recruiting, and continuing to evaluate the long-term impact of guiding on women’s lives.

This ongoing research will improve the benefits we bring to a wider cross section of girls and young women, and help us make a difference to their lives both now and in the future.

To find out more about our Strategic Plan, visit www.girlguiding.org.uk/beingourbest.

About Girlguiding

Girlguiding is the leading charity for girls and young women in the UK. Thanks to the dedication and support of 100,000 amazing volunteers, we are active in every part of the UK, giving girls and young women a space where they can be themselves, have fun, build brilliant friendships, gain valuable life skills and make a positive difference to their lives and their communities. We build girls' confidence and raise their aspirations. We give them the chance to discover their full potential and encourage them to be a powerful force for good.

Registered charity number 306016.



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

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We are for all girls

We are for all girls and young women, whatever their background and circumstances. We offer them fun, exciting activities and the chance to make lifelong friends. You'll find us in every community, helping to give girls a head start in life and encouraging them to be happy, self-confident and curious about the world they live in and the difference they can make.

We change as the lives of girls change

We are relevant to today's girls because we listen to them and constantly evolve and adapt what we offer them without losing what makes us uniquely us. We provide support, comfort and friendship in what can often seem a complex world for girls as they grow up.

We give girls a voice

We give girls the confidence, skills and information to make informed decisions. We offer a supportive, inclusive and exciting environment where they can reach their own conclusions about the world. We show them how they can speak out and take positive action to improve their lives and the lives of others. We passionately believe that girls and young women can be a powerful force for good.

We give girls their own space

We give girls a place where they can really be themselves with other girls and share the experience of growing up as a girl in today's world. We provide a safe, non-judgemental environment where girls can explore the issues they care about while having lots of fun, enjoying new experiences and learning vital skills.

@girlguiding
www.girlguiding.org.uk

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