

# National Research Confirms Lasting Benefits of Girls on the Run Program

*Landmark, third-party research strengthens evidence of long-term impact beyond a single Girls on the Run season.*

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, March 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Girls on the Run International today released findings from its first-ever national [Alums Study](#), a landmark, third-party research effort that examines whether girls remember and use skills and strategies learned at Girls on the Run as they navigate middle school. The study marks a significant milestone for the organization, providing evidence of long-term impact following program participation.

[Lasting Impact: The Girls on the Run Alums Study](#) explores how participation in Girls on the Run influences girls over time, focusing on outcomes related to confidence, connection, life skills, physical activity, and overall well-being. This research examines whether girls remember and use the skills and strategies they learned as they navigate early adolescence.

The 2024 sample consisted of eighth graders who participated in Girls on the Run in 2019 as fourth graders. The first phase of the study included 807 survey participants, of whom 52 sat for in-depth interviews, combining quantitative and qualitative insights to understand what life skills and strategies girls retain and how they apply them during adolescence.

"This study confirms what we've heard from girls for 30 years — Girls on the Run has a lasting effect on how they see themselves and their place in the world," said Elizabeth Kunz, chief executive officer of Girls on the Run International. "This rigorous research is providing powerful evidence that the confidence and life skills girls build in our program continue to shape their lives during adolescence."

Overall, 97% of alums said Girls on the Run had a positive impact on their lives, and 97% said they enjoyed their experience in the program.

Key findings from the study reveal that Girls on the Run has a lasting and meaningful impact:

- 90% of alums interviewed said Girls on the Run positively influenced how they see themselves.
- 90% of alums interviewed described positive changes in how they approach friendships and interact with peers because of Girls on the Run.

- 91% of alums said Girls on the Run helped them resolve conflicts with peers, and 81% of alums credited Girls on the Run with their ability to manage emotions.
- 95% of alums reported that Girls on the Run influenced their ability to appreciate diversity, including learning from people who are different, showing respect, and getting along with others who are not like them.
- Findings reinforce that Girls on the Run helped girls understand that physical activity is important for their mental and physical well-being.
- When comparing Girls on the Run to other sports or physical activities, girls often described it as more fun, more encouraging, and more focused on belonging, life skills, and teamwork.
- Coaches emerged as among the most memorable and influential parts of the Girls on the Run experience.

“We designed the Alums Study to assess the lasting impact of Girls on the Run during critical developmental periods of girls’ lives. At a time when many social, emotional, and physical changes occur, it is important to determine whether life skills intentionally taught by trained coaches during the elementary years can reduce potential declines in academic confidence, self-esteem, peer relationships, and other health risks during adolescence,” said Dr. Maureen Weiss, professor emerita at the University of Minnesota who leads the research. “Initial findings show middle school alums not only recall skills and strategies they learned in Girls on the Run, but are applying them in real-life challenges at school, at home, and in extracurricular activities.”

These findings arrive at a critical moment. Girls today face increasing pressure related to self-confidence, mental health, and social connection, with national data showing rising levels of anxiety and isolation among adolescents. The Alums Study underscores the importance of early, evidence-based programs that support whole-girl development and long-term well-being.

One alum shared, “Girls on the Run affected my life greatly. It taught me self-confidence, accepting others who are different from me, helped me make new friends, and inspired me to chase my dreams!”

Girls on the Run will follow up with the same girls in ninth grade, twelfth grade, and one year after high school to better understand the enduring effects of Girls on the Run. This next round will deepen understanding of how program lessons show up during critical developmental transitions.

To learn more about the Alums Study and explore the full findings, visit:

[www.girlsontherun.org/alums-study/](http://www.girlsontherun.org/alums-study/)

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About Girls on the Run International

Founded in 1996, Girls on the Run International is a nonprofit organization that offers empowering after-school programs for girls in grades 3 to 8. Through fun activities, engaging

lessons, and meaningful conversations, participants build confidence, increase physical activity, and develop essential life skills, including managing emotions, resolving conflicts, and forming friendships. With the support of trained coaches, girls activate their limitless potential through a research-based curriculum for girls ages 8 to 13. Now celebrating 30 years, Girls on the Run has served more than 2.7 million girls across all 50 states and Canada. Learn more at [www.girlsontherun.org](http://www.girlsontherun.org).

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