

The Power of Plush

With a mix of old and new, plush maintains its appeal

Topping girls' lists of things they haven't done before, but would like to try, is creating their own stuffed animals at home using a kit; nearly 50 percent of girls "really want to try" this. Creating their own plush accessories at home and decorating their rooms with plush pieces they've designed were also popular, with more than 30 percent of girls surveyed highly interested in

By Nancy Zweirs

Kids may be growing up faster, but when it comes to snuggling up to their favorite plush pals, girls still have a soft spot for stuffed animals.

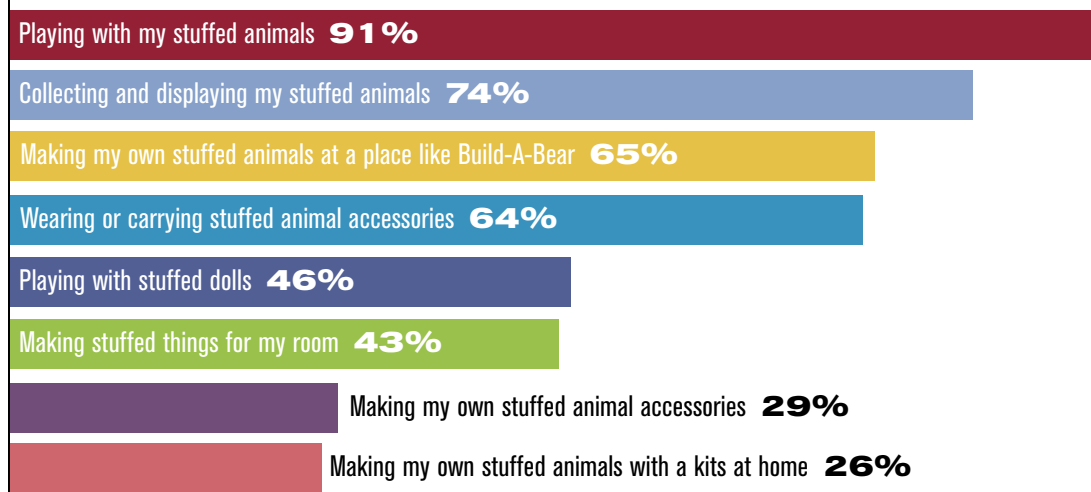
From playing to displaying to building their own, plush holds a great deal of appeal for girls of all ages. In a recent Toy Tracker study conducted by marketing consulting firm Funosophy Inc. and research partner KidEyes, 300 girls ages 6-11 shared their experiences with and interests in a variety of traditional and emerging plush activities.

Alive and well

Playing with stuffed animals is almost a rite of passage for girls, as evidenced by the fact that more than 90 percent of girls surveyed reported having cuddled up to plush in the past. But they're not just playing! Another 74 percent of girls reported having collected and displayed various plush pieces. Perhaps most surprising is the popularity of a relatively new plush subcategory, make-your-own stuffed animals, with two-thirds of girls surveyed reporting having done this at places like shopping mall-based make-your-own plush retailer Build-A-Bear Workshop and its various competitors.

"Here is a list of different kinds of things you might do with stuffed animals and other stuffed toys. For each one, which answer best describes you?"

Girls Ages 6-11



Sewing up sales

With the appeal for traditional plush play patterns so high, the category is ripe for expansion. Combining traditionally popular plush with another hot category like arts & crafts is a winning combination, as evidenced by girls' interest levels in new forms of activity-based plush play.

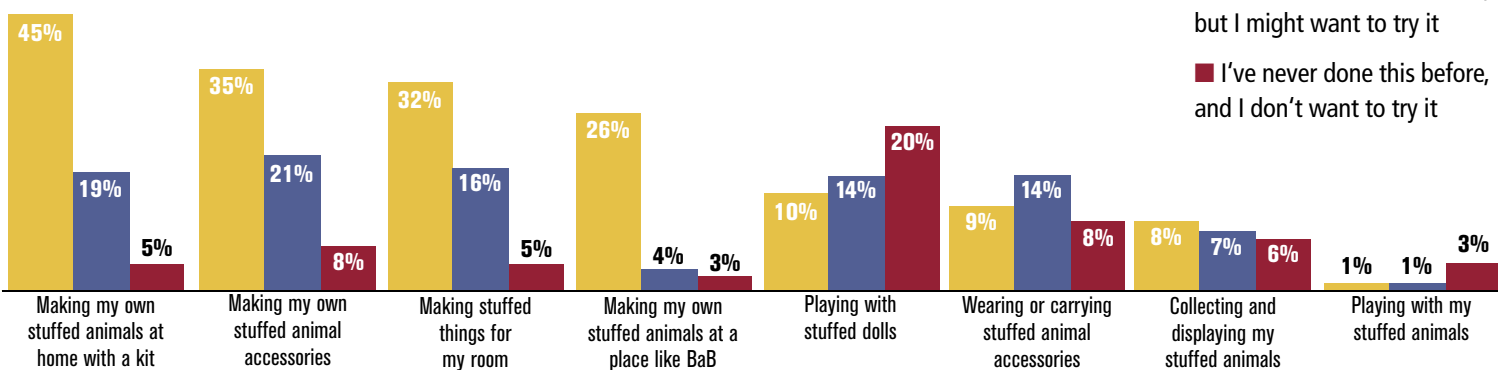
trying both of these activities.

Age differences

Although interest in trying new plush activities was high among both younger and older girls, there were variances between the age groups. Younger girls were slightly more enthusiastic about the majority of plush activities tested.

"Here is a list of different kinds of things you might do with stuffed animals and other stuffed toys. For each one, which answer best describes you?"

Girls ages 6 - 11 • Never done this before...

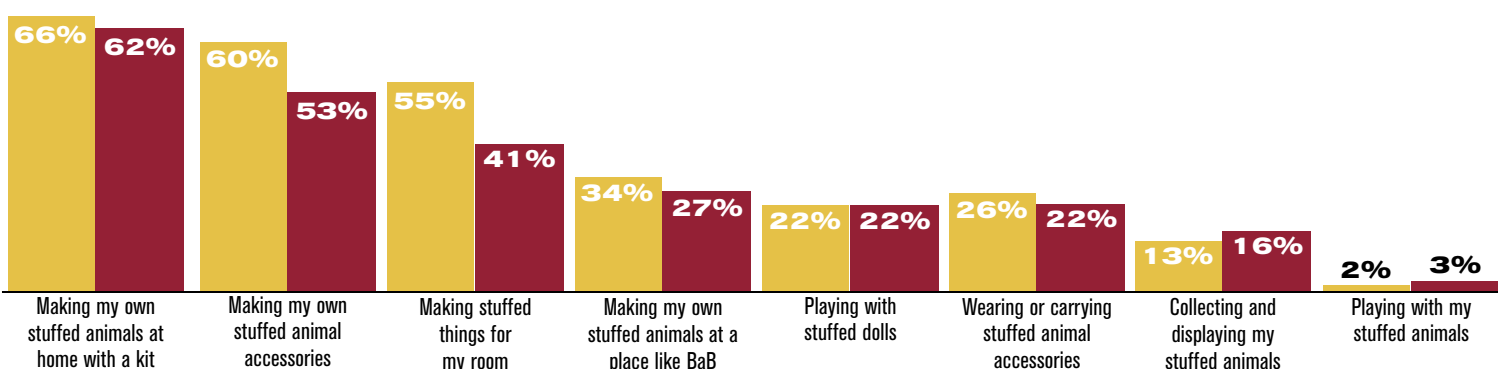


Make a move

Plush is a thriving category that's here to stay. Girls are open to compound play patterns based on traditional plush activities, as seen by the popularity of Build-A-Bear Workshop and Play Along's Doodle Bear. Manufacturers with original, plush-based activity play patterns are sure to find marketplace demand.

"Here is a list of different kinds of things you might do with stuffed animals and other stuffed toys. For each one, which answer best describes you?"

Age Breakout • Future Interest Level • net responses—"really" and "might" want to try this...



About the Author: Nancy Zweirs is CEO of Funosophy Inc., the toy industry focused brand-building consulting and research firm. For additional information about this survey or to conduct your own Toy Tracker survey,