



The gold standard

Surveying recipients of the highest honors achievable in the National FFA Organization.

The American FFA Degree

The American FFA Degree is the highest degree achievable in the National FFA Organization. It shows an FFA member's dedication to their chapter and state FFA association. It demonstrates the effort FFA members apply toward their supervised agricultural experiences (SAEs) and the outstanding leadership abilities and community involvement they exhibited through their FFA careers.¹ Community service, leadership abilities and outstanding scholastic achievement are among the essential requirements to earn the American FFA Degree. Members must also have been active members of FFA for the past three years, completed many hours of agricultural education classwork and be currently operating an SAE.

The American Star Award

From among those members receiving the American FFA Degree each year, National FFA annually recognizes FFA members who rise to the top with the American Star Awards. These members have gone above and beyond in their attitude, involvement, community service and SAEs. Finalists for these awards have mastered skills in production, finance, management and/or research.²

The Research

The purpose of the research, which began in the fall of 2022, was to collect information from those who recently received the American FFA Degree and American Star Awards about their career paths following their active involvement in FFA. We surveyed recipients of these awards from the years 2016-21 and received 786 responses. This document shares high-level findings from the survey, which shed light on the power of leadership within agriculture, as well as profiles of respondents sorted by SAE area where students in agricultural education can find themselves in FFA.

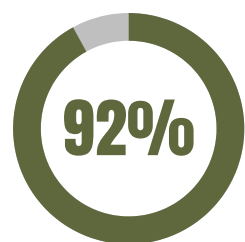
¹ National FFA Organization (2023).

² National FFA Organization (2023).

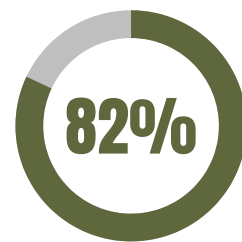


**2022 National FFA
Convention & Expo**

Earners of the highest achievements possible in FFA feel that their FFA membership contributed to their overall career success.



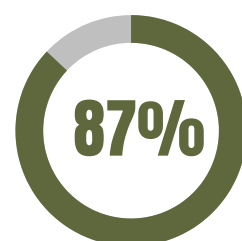
of respondents feel FFA contributed to their overall career success.



of respondents feel that their FFA involvement impacted their career choices.



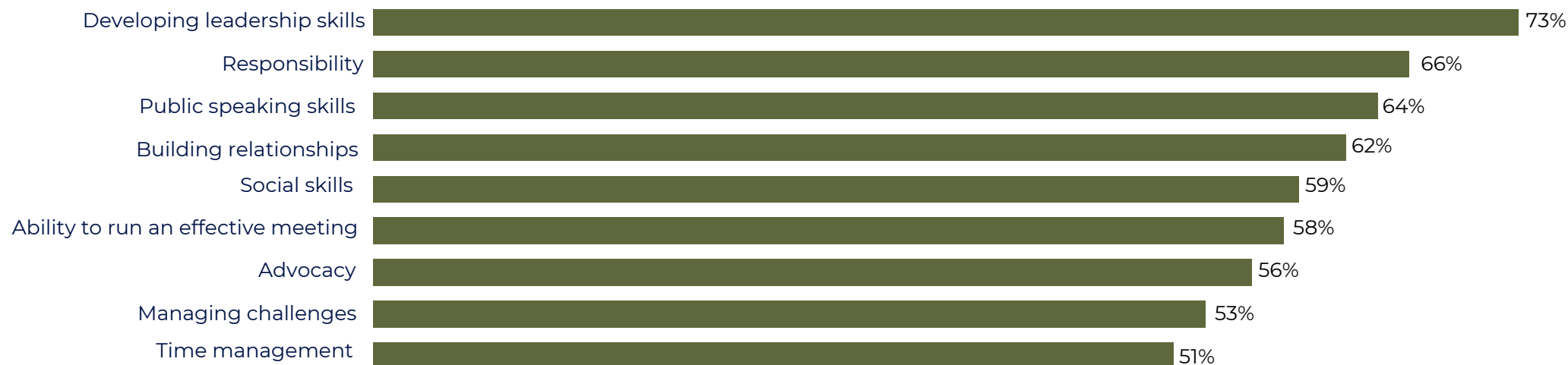
of respondents list their involvement in FFA on their resumes.



of respondents list their American FFA Degree or American Star Award achievements on their resumes.

When asked how influential their FFA experience was on their life in different areas, recipients of the highest achievement possible in FFA deemed FFA extremely influential in **developing leadership skills, responsibility, and public speaking skills**, amongst other areas. See Figure 2.

Figure 2. FFA was extremely influential on my life in the following areas:



Most recipients told us they are currently working in agriculture.

We asked the recent award recipients if they are currently working in agriculture or have ever worked in agriculture. Almost 70% said that they are currently in the industry, while 85% said that they have worked in the industry.



Most respondents told us they live within 100 miles of their former FFA chapter.

We asked the recent award recipients whether they currently reside in the community of their former FFA chapter (within 100 miles), and 72% indicated that they do.



The heat map above represents where in the country the survey respondents live, which they provided as a ZIP code. Those areas in yellow or red are more concentrated with survey respondents.

Of those currently working in agriculture, 41% have a bachelor's degree.

Of those currently working in agriculture...³

- 41% have a bachelor's degree
- 21% have an associate degree
- 17% have some college credit (no degree)
- 10% are a high school graduate or have a GED
- 5% have trade/technical/vocational training
- 5% have a master's degree
- 1% have a doctorate



Some FFA members go into a career field related to their SAEs, while others apply their skills to a different career.

Just under half of the respondents (49%) told us they are currently working in a field related to their SAEs. Based on survey responses, these fields include production, agribusiness, food, government, non-related government organizations/nonprofits, agricultural education, trades, veterinary, and natural resources management.



³ Highest level of education obtained by American FFA Degree recipients from 2016-21.

Find Yourself in FFA: Profile of the Average Top Award Recipient

Based on the results of our survey, the average respondent identifies as female. She is not currently working in a field related to her SAE but works in agriculture. She resides within 100 miles of her former FFA chapter and supports her former FFA chapter mainly by volunteering (up to 50 hours annually). She had family members who were themselves involved in FFA, and her family most influenced her choice to join FFA. She credits FFA as being extremely influential in developing leadership skills, responsibility, public speaking skills and building relationships. She lists her involvement with FFA and her American FFA Degree/Star Award on her resume. She thinks her FFA involvement had an impact on her career choice and contributed to her overall career success.



Of those respondents with an **animal systems SAE** who currently work in agriculture, 63% are female, and 35% are male. Almost half (48%) have obtained a bachelor's degree, while 15% have obtained an associate degree. Nearly three in four respondents (72%) are employed for wages, while another 12.5% are self-employed.



Of those respondents with an **agribusiness systems SAE** who currently work in agriculture, 65% are male, and 35% are female. Over 40% have obtained a bachelor's degree, while nearly 20% are high school graduates/obtained a GED (42%; 19%). Over half (56%) are employed for wages, while just over a third (34%) are self-employed.



Of those respondents with a **plant systems SAE** who currently work in agriculture, 61% are male, and 29% are female. Exactly half (50%) have obtained a bachelor's degree, while 28% have obtained an associate degree. Over half (56%) are employed for wages, while another 19% are self-employed.



Of those respondents with an **agricultural education SAE** who currently work in agriculture, 60% are female, and 40% are male. Over half (60%) have obtained a bachelor's degree, while 20% have obtained an associate degree and 20% have some college credit (no degree). Almost all (90%) are employed for wages, while 10% are self-employed.



Of those respondents with a **power, structural and technical SAE** who currently work in agriculture, 56% are male, and 44% are female. One-third (33%) have obtained an associate degree, while 22% have obtained trade/technical/vocational training. The majority (80%) are employed for wages, while another 10% are self-employed.

*The SAE profiles above were formed from survey respondents who are currently working in agriculture. The pathways represented are those which had at least nine survey respondents who currently work in agriculture. Some survey respondents may still be attending college, which may skew the results of the highest education obtained.

Recipient Spotlights

SAE Area: Animal Systems

"FFA gave me the confidence to explore working with animals as a career choice. I learned behavior, body language and husbandry with FFA. I eventually became a dog trainer and own/run a state-licensed boarding and training facility."

SAE Area: Plant Systems

"I did not expect to want a career in the specialty crop production industry until I had my own produce business as my SAE in FFA. Now I am working for Frey Farms, which is the largest ornamental pumpkin producer in the U.S."