

Factors That Contribute to FFA Members' High Levels of Involvement in FFA

A member's level of involvement in FFA can vary widely—from not being involved in any activities to competing at the National FFA Convention & Expo. What barriers exist that prevent FFA members from being fully involved in FFA? The National FFA Organization and Purdue University surveyed high-school FFA members from 60 schools to help answer this question.

Survey participants came from 60 FFA chapters—31 classified as being in a rural area and 29 in an urban area.¹ There were 590 usable responses from current FFA members.² Most responses (about 90%) came from members of urban FFA chapters. While this research study³ was not the largest study of FFA members in terms of the number of respondents, it was the most racially and ethnically diverse pool to date.

This report focuses on levels of involvement in FFA across various demographics—including urban or rural classification—and conclusions that can be drawn about more highly involved FFA members. Forthcoming reports will focus on other aspects of this research study.

How is involvement in FFA measured on a survey?

The survey included a previously developed scale that measures FFA involvement⁴ (FFA Involvement Scale) that was modified for the present study to contain more activities an average FFA member might participate in at their high school chapter. Since not every FFA member participates in national, regional or state-wide events, the modified scale was inclusive to all FFA members as a result.

FFA members taking the survey were asked questions about their involvement in:

- their FFA chapter activities.
- leadership positions in FFA held at the chapter, district/region/area, state or national level.
- awards earned at the chapter, district/region/area, state or national level through FFA.
- contests and competitive events competed in at the chapter, district/region/area, state, or national level of FFA.

¹ Chapters were selected based on their urban or rural classification according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. Classifications 11 and 12 were used for the urban chapters while classifications 42 and 43 were used to identify the rural chapters.

² Not all responses were usable if the FFA members' parent did not fill out a consent form.

³ McBride, S. M., & Talbert, B. A. (2021). Barriers to full involvement: A study of rural and urban FFA chapters [Research presentation]. National FFA Organization, Indianapolis, IN.

⁴ Copeland, B. (2019). Exploring the employability skills and academic success of the National FFA membership [Unpublished master's thesis]. Purdue University.

The study found that most FFA members are lightly involved.

According to members' responses, most FFA members are considered lightly involved (see table below).

8.5

mean FFA involvement score

57%

lightly involved

23%

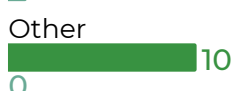
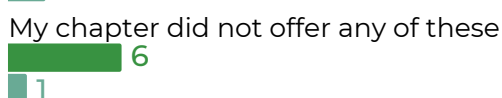
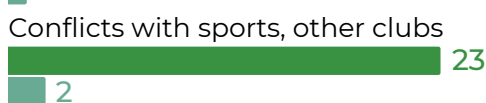
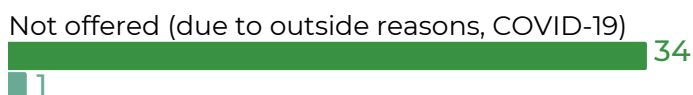
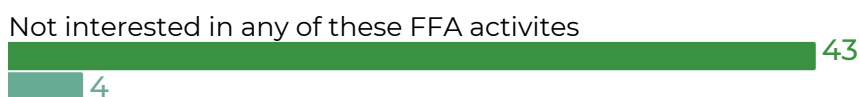
not involved

Level of involvement	Involvement Score	%
Not involved	0	23.1%
Lightly involved	1-14	56.8%
Moderately involved	15-20	9.7%
Actively involved	21-30	6.4%
Highly involved	31-41	3.2%
Substantially involved	42-55	0.8%

Most FFA members who are not involved indicate that this is their first year and they haven't had a chance to participate yet.

Members' Reasons for No Involvement in FFA

It is my first year and I have not had the chance to participate yet



Urban Rural

Why do some members have an involvement score of zero? FFA members who indicated they are not involved in any of the areas (N=136) indicated some reasons why and could indicate multiple.

FFA Involvement Scores

Involvement scores were calculated using the FFA Involvement Scale. Members could score anywhere from 0-55.

Location	Urban	8.2*
	Rural	12.0*
Gender	Female	9.1
	Male	7.7
	Non-binary	8.4
	Non-disclosed	7.2
Race/Ethnicity	White	9.0
	Hispanic, Latino, or Latinx	6.9
	Black or African American	7.9
	Other minority	9.5
Socioeconomic status	Free/reduced lunch	9.0
	No free/reduced lunch	8.1
	Prefer not to answer	6.6
Grade-Point Average	A+ through A-	9.2
	B+ through B-	8.5
	C+ through C-	6.6
Future plans	Military	9.0
	Training/vocational school	7.5
	Two-year college	8.4
	Four-year college	9.6*
	Undecided	6.2*
Future plans involving agriculture	Ag-related job	10.4
	Non ag-related job	6.7
	Pursuing agriculture	12.4*
	Not pursuing agriculture	7.0

*Indicates a statistically significant difference

There was a statistically significant difference between pursuing agriculture and FFA involvement score. This finding suggests that FFA is meeting its mission to promote careers in agriculture, as evidenced by the results that those interested in pursuing agriculture further are more involved in FFA.

The involvement scores above reveal that an involved FFA member is likely a rural, white, female student with an "A average" GPA, who received free or reduced lunch, is planning to attend a four-year university and is planning to pursue agriculture.

Therefore, aside from the barrier of not having had sufficient time to get involved in FFA, potential barriers for involvement could include exclusion based on any number of demographic factors. Barriers could also include a students' perception that their future plans do not align with FFA—such as interest in a non-agricultural career.

FFA members in urban chapters mostly attend social events and FFA-specific events.

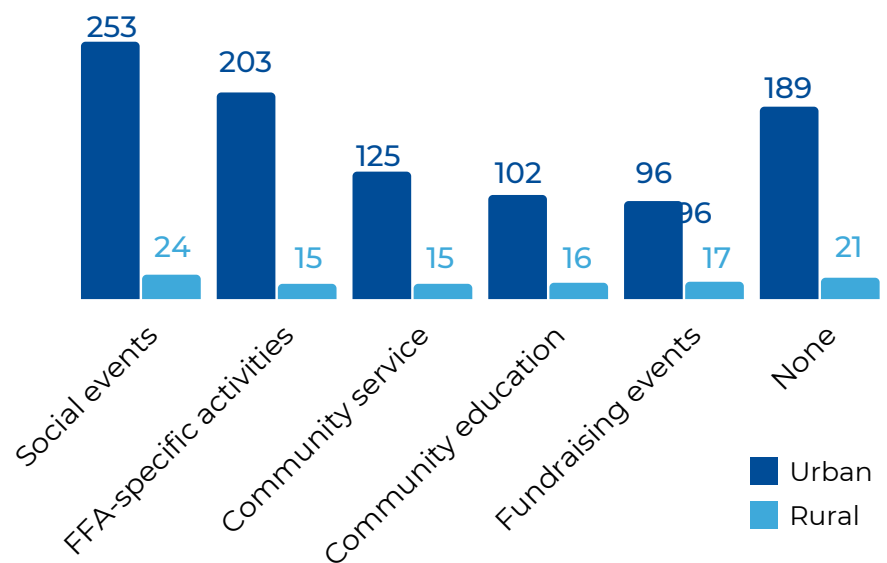
There was also a statistically significant difference between FFA chapter location and FFA involvement score; those in rural areas were significantly more involved in FFA activities than those in urban areas.

This finding suggests a need to get FFA members in urban chapters more involved. One way to start is by looking at the involvement at the chapter level of FFA members in urban settings.

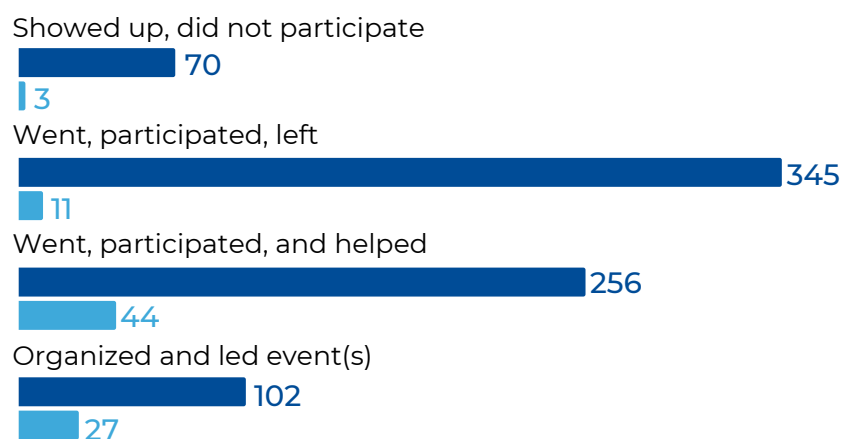
FFA members in urban chapters mostly attend social events and FFA-specific events as opposed to other FFA-affiliated activities. Many show up, participate, and even help at the events, but are not necessarily involved with organizing or leading the events. Since FFA members from urban areas have a lower overall involvement score (8.2) than FFA members from rural areas (12.0), it's possible that the leadership skills that come with organizing and leading events at the chapter level translate to leadership in all aspects of FFA—including regional, state, and national leadership development opportunities, which would yield a higher involvement score.

This research study provides a closer look into FFA involvement for various demographic groups within FFA. For more information, email evaluation@FFA.org.

Type of Members' Involvement in High-School FFA Activities



Extent of Members' Involvement in High-School FFA Activities



There was a much smaller response rate among rural versus urban participants, potentially due to lack of Internet access.