

# International Visitor Leadership Program

Impact Evaluation, 2018–2020

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collaboration with IIE's International Visitor  
Leadership Program Department

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## Introduction

The [International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#) is the U.S. Department of State's (DOS's) premier professional exchange program. Through short-term exchanges with interlocutors in the United States, current and emerging foreign leaders in a variety of fields develop lasting relationships with their American counterparts. Meetings reflect the participants' professional interests and support the foreign policy goals of the United States. Diplomats at U.S. missions abroad nominate and select IVLP participants.

The DOS Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Office of International Visitors administers the IVLP in cooperation with a group of nonprofit organizations along with community-based organizations across the country that are members of the Global Ties U.S. network. The Institute of International Education (IIE) has served as the DOS' implementing partner for many years, providing highly tailored experiential professional programming (including guest speakers, subject matter experts, workshops, site visits, etc.) and logistical support to thousands of participants.

In support of ECA's effort to evaluate the long-term impact of IVLP, IIE proposed developing an impact report based on select projects administered between 2018 and 2020. This impact evaluation explores how the IVLP contributes to U.S. foreign policy and enhances global collaboration between nations by creating a platform and opportunities for international and American leaders to exchange knowledge, strengthen skills, seek solutions for global and local problems, and discuss innovative ideas. This impact evaluation contributes to the successful achievement of IIE's IVLP Cooperative Agreement (Award) for 2018–2020 and to the IVLP's goals.

## Reading This Report

This report begins with the evaluation methodology, analysis, and participant demographics. The report's first section covers the influence of the IVLP program on participants' academic and career outcomes. Next, the report offers insights into the skills and knowledge that participants increased through the IVLP program and the ways in which participants have applied and shared these skills and knowledge within their workplaces and communities. Then, the report exemplifies how participants have expanded their networks and collaborated with professionals worldwide. Lastly, the report offers some reflections and recommendations for the IVLP program to enhance its impact on the lives and communities of global leaders from diverse fields.

Terminology:

- "Alumni" refers to IVLP alumni who completed the survey.
- "Peers" refers to all IVLP participants and alumni, regardless of survey completion.
- "Program" refers to IVLP as an overall program or a professional program developed for every IVLP project, whether a group or individual.
- "Project" refers to an IVLP project for a specific country or region, built around a particular theme (e.g., "Women's Leadership" project for Pakistan).

All the quotes in the report are from IVLP alumni; some quotes have been slightly edited for readability.

## Evaluation Methodology

For the IVLP alumni impact evaluation, IIE's Research, Evaluation and Learning unit (hereinafter "the evaluation team") selected 24 IVLP projects that took place in 2018–2020. The projects were classified into six themes: Democracy (eight projects); Women's Leadership (four projects); and Diversity, Environmental Protection, Journalism, and National Security, with three projects each.

These 24 projects encompassed different topics, objectives, and programmatic activities. The projects varied in duration, number of participants, and number of countries represented. The evaluation team invited 248 participants across these 24 projects to complete the survey and received 88 responses across 21 projects. The overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) participated in a three-week program, four (5%) participated in a two-week program, and two (2%) participated in a one-week program. More than half of the respondents (52%) participated in a multiregional program, 25% participated in a project where all participants came from the same country, and 23% participated in a project with participants from different countries within the same region. Sixty-nine respondents (78%) participated in a program conducted in English. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 11 respondents (13%) completed their project virtually. The response rate by theme and overall totals are below:

Project Theme	Responses	Invited	Response Rate
Women's Leadership	32	60	53%
Democracy	20	65	31%
Environmental Protection	12	26	46%
Journalism	12	40	30%
Diversity	8	28	29%
National Security	4	29	14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>35%</b>

## Analysis and Limitations

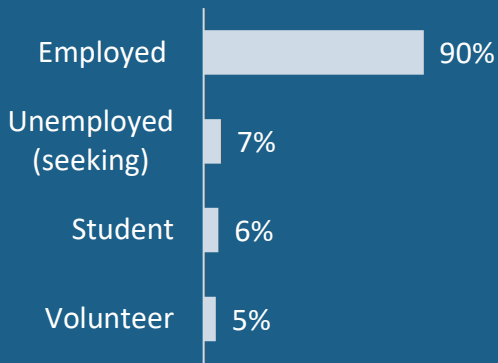
The evaluation team analyzed the quantitative and qualitative data jointly for a holistic understanding of the IVLP's impact. The evaluation team analyzed the survey responses in Stata using descriptive and inferential statistics, and the qualitative data collected through the survey's open-ended responses were analyzed and grouped by themes where relevant. The evaluation team utilized a 1–4 Likert scale to assess the reported increase and application of selected skills and areas of knowledge. Alumni who reported an increase or application of skills or knowledge areas as a "3: to some extent" or "4: to a great extent" are considered to have done so more significantly compared to those who answered "2: not that much" or "1: not at all."

Uneven survey response rates across the six project themes presented a limitation to the comparison of the impact across projects. Furthermore, the National Security project theme sample size is too small (n=4) to support broader claims about the participants' experiences. To mitigate this limitation, the evaluation team considered the project theme response rates when analyzing data by theme and did not include projects under the National Security theme in any analysis focused on variation across themes.

## Respondent Demographics

Survey respondents came from diverse backgrounds and areas of the world, representing 27 countries. Fifty-three percent of respondents identified as female and 47% as male. Thirty-six percent of respondents identified as coming from an economically disadvantaged background, 18% as a racial or ethnic minority, 9% as LGBTQ, and 5% as a person with a disability. The survey sample was deemed representative of the survey population. Where possible, the evaluation team considered variation in data by these background characteristics.

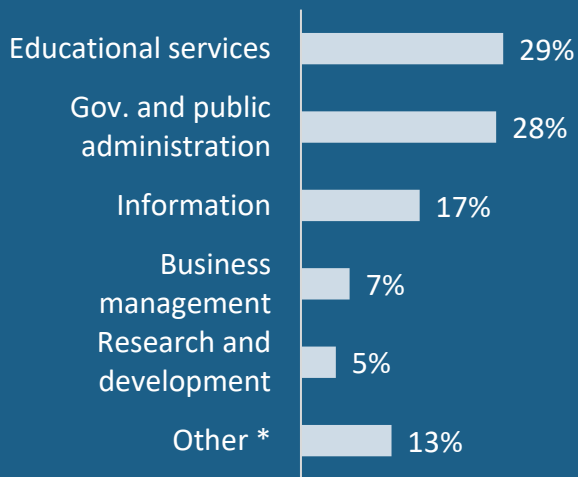
IVLP alumni are engaged in different activities, with the overwhelming majority currently working full-time or part-time.



Respondents could select more than one option

Figure 1. Alumni's current status

Out of those currently working, more than half (57%) were employed in the educational services and government and public administration fields.



\*The Other category includes arts, construction, mining, and legal services.

Figure 2. Alumni's employment fields

Alumni have leveraged their IVLP experience for professional and academic opportunities.

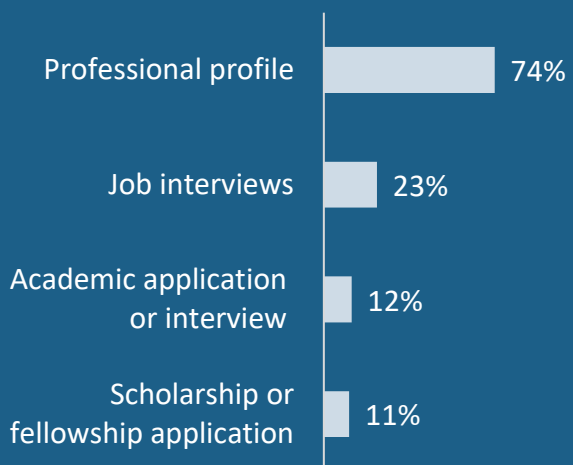


Figure 3. Areas where alumni have mentioned their IVLP experience

## IVLP's Influence on Participants' Careers and Educational Opportunities

After completing their IVLP program, alumni returned to their home countries, where their experience strongly influenced their decisions and actions regarding their professional and academic careers. In the years since program completion, almost three in four (74%) alumni pursued new employment and 78% sought new academic opportunities. Seventy-two percent of those who pursued a new job and 74% of those who enrolled in educational programs believe that their IVLP experience significantly influenced their ability to do so.

Overall, 99% of alumni have leveraged their IVLP experience to become stronger candidates for professional and academic opportunities. Of the alumni currently employed, two-thirds believe their participation in the IVLP contributed to securing their jobs. This sentiment was strongest for alumni who participated in projects focused on Democracy (83%) and Women's Leadership (62%).

*"[The biggest impact of the IVLP experience on my career was giving me] higher acceptance and legitimacy, as I was able to acquire experience and knowledge in the U.S." – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Switzerland*

*"[IVLP] was a great exposure and learning experience for me. The places I visited and the experts I met during my visit were a great help in organizing and exploring my field of expertise." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, India*

The IVLP experience positively impacted the professional lives of 85% of alumni in the following areas:



**81%**

Career advancement



**50%**

Job opportunities



**32%**

Salary or income level

The career impact discussed above was similarly positive across all project themes. There was a non-statistically significant but notable variation concerning salary increases: 22% of women alumni reported having one compared to 43% of men.

## Increasing Knowledge to Tackle National and International Issues

IVLP alumni came to the United States with valuable experience and knowledge from their previous experiences. The program helped them to grow critical knowledge on various topics applicable to diverse contexts (i.e., the United States and their own countries and regions). Alumni have utilized and adapted these learnings in their work after the program.

### *Knowledge focused on the United States*

During their IVLP experience, alumni traveled to different cities across regions in the United States and engaged in diverse professional and cultural contexts through their everyday experiences and programmed activities. As a result of this exchange, alumni learned about U.S. values and culture (100%), daily life in the United States (99%), and the country’s religious and ethnic diversity (93%). Furthermore, learning about the United States helped alumni reflect on diversity in their countries and explore the complexities of addressing problems that affect certain groups more than others.

#### All alumni (100%) significantly increased their knowledge about U.S.-related topics

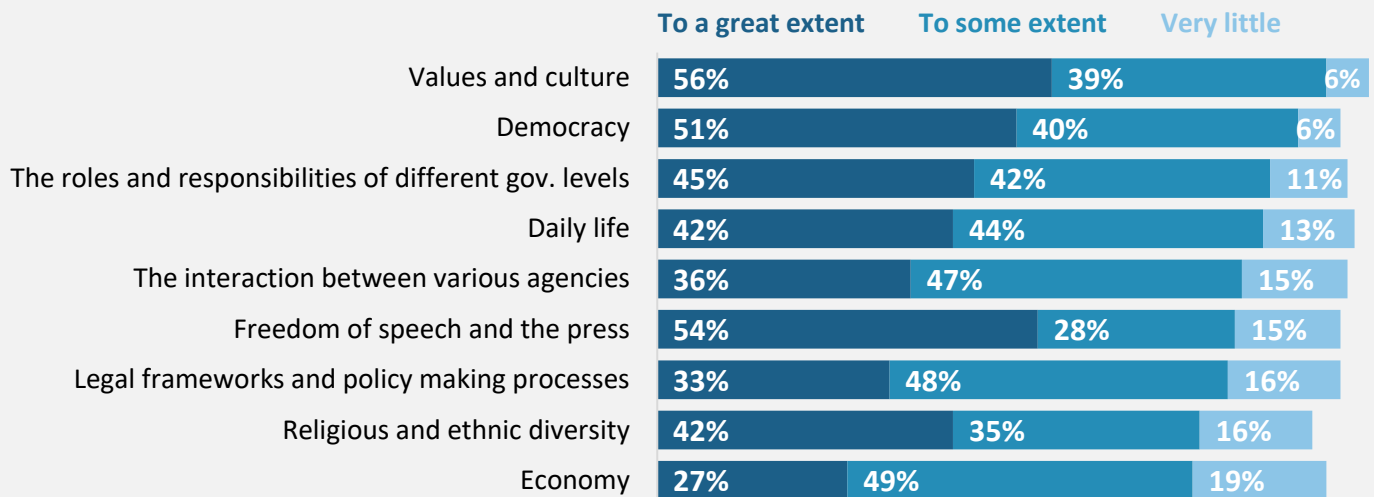


Figure 4. Reported knowledge increase in topics focused on the United States

*“I have learned much more about cultural sensitivity and different culture all around the globe. And I have experienced the current cultural specifics of the different U.S. states, racial and gender diversity reality. I have become more understanding and adaptable to the different challenges that these aspects have.” – Alumna from a Women’s Leadership project, Latvia*

*“The biggest impact of my IVLP experience on me as a person has been the opportunity to learn about and immerse myself in the culture of the United States. Through this program, I had the chance to visit different cities and regions, interact with a diverse group of people, and experience various aspects of American culture. This has given me a greater appreciation and understanding of the country and its people.” – Alumna from an Environmental Protection project, Pakistan*

The evaluation team found that the reported increase in knowledge about U.S. values and culture and religious and ethnic diversity was similar among participants who participated in the program virtually and those who completed the program in person. This finding demonstrates that despite the challenges brought by COVID-19 and the limitations of virtual participation, intentional program activities exposed participants to new knowledge about the United States.

Through the IVLP, alumni met leaders from various backgrounds and fields and different types of organizations, ranging from nongovernmental organizations and businesses to academia and government entities. They gained knowledge about democracy and the responsibility of the government (98%), how different organizations and agencies can work together to advance their objectives (98%), and how people can more actively participate in democratic processes. IVLP alumni also enhanced their understanding of the media’s power to educate citizens and empower them to make informed decisions, which requires promoting a free press and educating the public on how to critically assess their news sources.

*“Being in contact with the media in the U.S. allowed me to discover new tools to avoid falling for false news, which does so much damage to democracy.” – Alumnus from a Journalism project, Paraguay*

*“I am a journalist, and I realized how important freedom of the press is, and that inspired me to never mind the obstacles in my country. It gave me a renewed respect for my profession. It freshened me up for good.” – Alumna from a Journalism project, Greece*

### Knowledge focused on global topics

Through guest speakers and subject matter experts, workshops, site visits, and other programmatic activities, IVLP alumni gained valuable knowledge about different topics and social issues impacting the world at large. Alumni learned about strategic ways to collaborate with stakeholders and leverage diverse areas of expertise to address these issues.

#### 99% of alumni greatly increased their knowledge about topics that are relevant on a global level



Figure 5. Reported knowledge increase in global topics

During and after the program, alumni reflected on the relevance and applicability of the topics they learned about to their local contexts. While every country had unique challenges due to social, economic, environmental, and political factors, alumni adapted and applied their learnings in their work.

*“IVLP changed my vision [and helped] me see how to mobilize different resources to run an impact campaign with the community. America gave me a lesson about developing the country based on the spirit of economic self-reliance. Therefore, at the end of the program, my organization has focused all its resources on supporting ethnic minority women in Vietnam to be self-sufficient and economically equal.” – Alumna from a Women’s Leadership project, Vietnam*

*“[The IVLP program impacted my] understanding of the experience and work in U.S. which can be applied in Ukraine. Also, the fact that there are some differences in governing and human rights work also helps in understanding how it works in other countries.” – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Ukraine*

## Building Crucial Skills to Succeed in Diverse and Dynamic Environments

As part of the IVLP experience, alumni came to the U.S. and interacted with American professionals from different cultural backgrounds and perspectives and with peers from other parts of the world. Most alumni believe that they strengthened their intercultural communication (96%), diversity awareness (92%), and cultural sensitivity (91%) in significant ways. Alumni felt inspired by exchanging ideas and approaches to address social issues and better recognized their ability to contribute their dedication, knowledge, and skills. As a result, they increased their sense of responsibility (92%) and leadership (88%). They also significantly improved their presentation skills (89%), which are crucial in capturing the public's interest in a cause and securing buy-in from stakeholders to implement new projects and ideas. While the seven skills IVLP alumni improved the most (out of 14 measured) were interpersonal and intrapersonal, 82% of alumni also strengthened cognitive skills such as strategic planning, problem-solving, and critical thinking. See Appendix A for the full list of skills that were assessed and Appendix B for the full breakdown of skills increased.

Through their IVLP experience, alumni greatly increased important **interpersonal** and **intrapersonal** skills

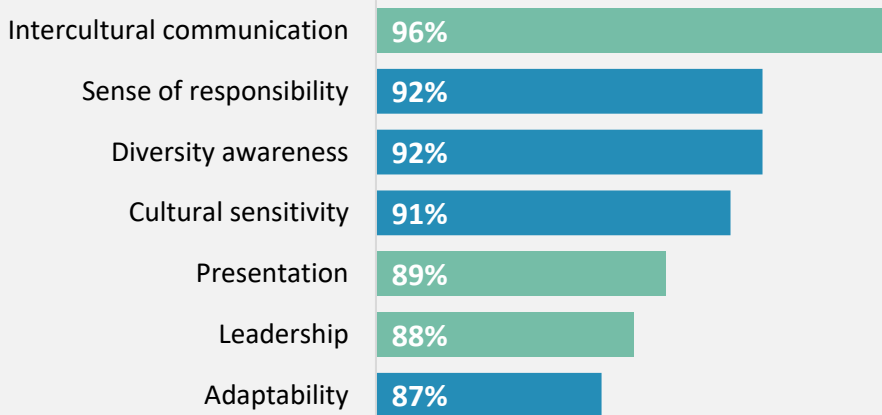


Figure 6. Top skills increased by alumni as a result of the IVLP

The evaluation team found meaningful differences in the reported average skill increase across participants. Alumni who participated in the program in person reported a higher increase in cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal skills than those who participated in the program virtually. While the evaluation team did not ask questions specific to COVID-19, this difference could be attributed to the possibility that virtual environments can limit the natural flow of conversation and exchanges as it often requires someone to facilitate or schedule formal meetings. Women, on average, increased their interpersonal skills more than men.

*“The IVLP allowed me to develop and enhance my interpersonal skills by providing numerous opportunities to meet and engage with people from different backgrounds and cultures. Overall, my IVLP experience has had a lasting and significant impact on my personal growth and development.” – Alumna from an Environmental Protection project, Pakistan*

The evaluation team found a positive relationship between increasing cognitive and interpersonal skills and experiencing a positive impact on career advancement, income level, and job opportunities.

*“The program taught me to come out and not hide talent and skills. This has led me to be more visible and I have been selected in a number of leadership positions including a promotion to be part of the institution’s top management.” – Alumnus from a Journalism project, Estonia*



## Applying Relevant Knowledge and Skills to Create Impact

Alumni understood that sustainable change requires people from different backgrounds and perspectives to come together and exchange their knowledge, skills, and experience. After the IVLP, alumni felt more confident in their ability to apply their increased knowledge and skills meaningfully in their workplaces and volunteering engagements. Alumni led new projects, articulated new ideas, and engaged with multiple groups of stakeholders from different backgrounds and fields. By applying and sharing the knowledge and skills they acquired in the United States, in their professional and personal lives abroad, alumni expanded the impact of the IVLP and reached more communities. *See Appendix C for the full breakdown of the application of knowledge by topic and Appendix D for the full breakdown of the application of skills.*

### Greater increase in knowledge during the IVLP is linked to alumni applying the knowledge to a greater extent

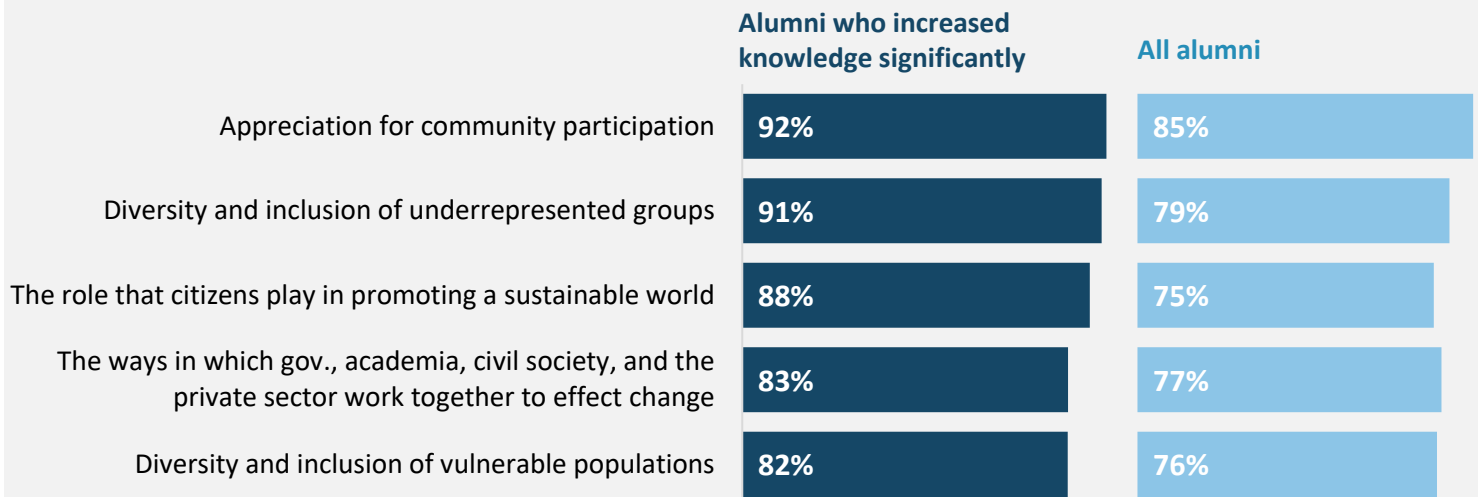


Figure 7. Alumni's application of top knowledge areas

### Similarly, the more alumni increased their skills during the IVLP, the more they applied them after the program

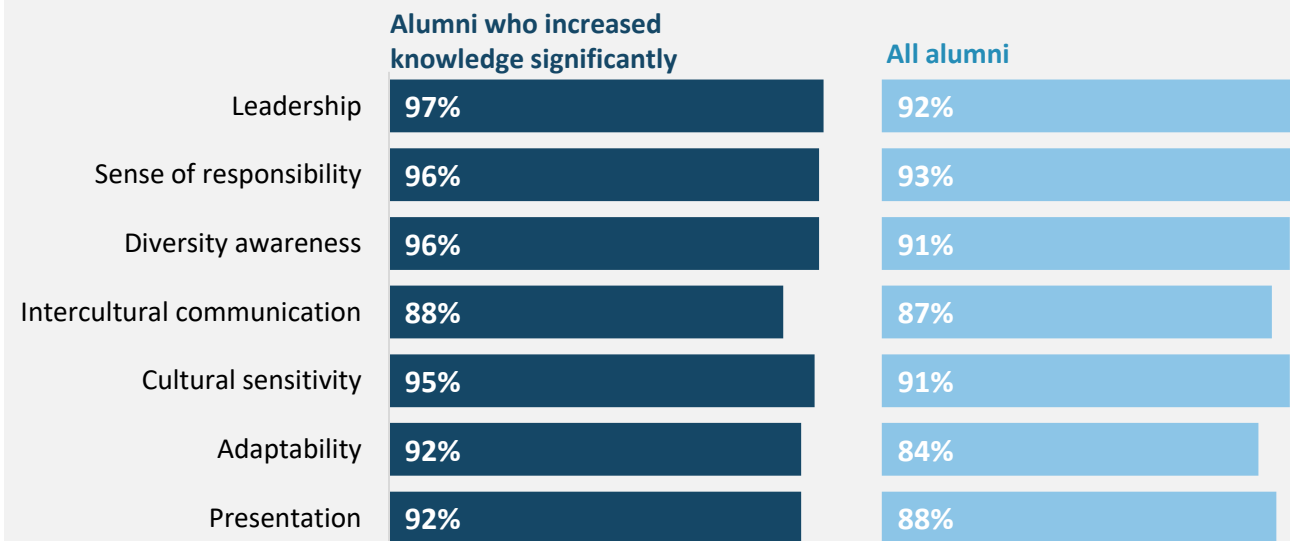


Figure 8. Alumni's application of top skills



Alumni have applied their IVLP experience as employees and volunteers. Through these engagements, alumni are uplifting colleagues, program beneficiaries, and members of their communities, which can help alumni continue to build on their leadership.

**93% of participants applied the knowledge they increased through the IVLP in at least one way**



Figure 9. Ways in which alumni applied their knowledge in their employment and volunteering

Through these actions, alumni changed how organizations operate, influenced improved policies and working conditions, built powerful teams by equipping others with skills and knowledge, and formed allegiances for future collaborations to the ultimate benefit of their communities.

*“After my visit to the U.S., I was able to share techniques and other water conservancy plans with [local] agriculturalists and tried to convince them to use water conservancy methods for their agriculture.” – Alumnus from an Environmental Protection project, Pakistan*

*“I have shared my experiences with my peers at work and during community meetings. I am also advocating for the Government to always set review timelines for its projects as a majority of them become [defunct] after some time, and there are no assessments on their impacts and relevancy. I am also advocating for partnerships between the various stakeholders involved in the fight against corruption.” – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Swaziland*

*“I try to connect the knowledge of getting everyone involved as a team [...] toward what needs to be done in order to accomplish the tasks. During my visit to the States, my first impression was how diversity can be blended all together in every corner of the country.” – Alumnus from a Diversity Project, Thailand*

The evaluation team found some variation across themes in the ways in which alumni applied their increased knowledge. A much higher percentage of alumni from Democracy and Women’s Leadership projects promoted diversity and inclusion and built partnerships when compared to alumni who participated in projects focused on other themes.\* Alumni from Democracy projects were also more likely to introduce new ideas than alumni from projects focused on all other themes, including Women’s Leadership projects.

\*In comparing the application of knowledge areas across themes, a much higher percentage indicates a difference of at least 10 percentage points compared to the average across all themes, excluding National Security due to the small sample size.

## Sharing Interdisciplinary Knowledge and Experience

IVLP alumni continued to share their knowledge and experience on topics related to Democracy, Women's Leadership, Diversity, Environmental Protection, Journalism, and National Security by creating content and products. Through these materials, alumni equipped others with technical knowledge, valuable insights into social issues, and effective ways to address them.

**Almost 3 in 4 (74%) alumni produced at least one type of knowledge product due to their participation in the IVLP**

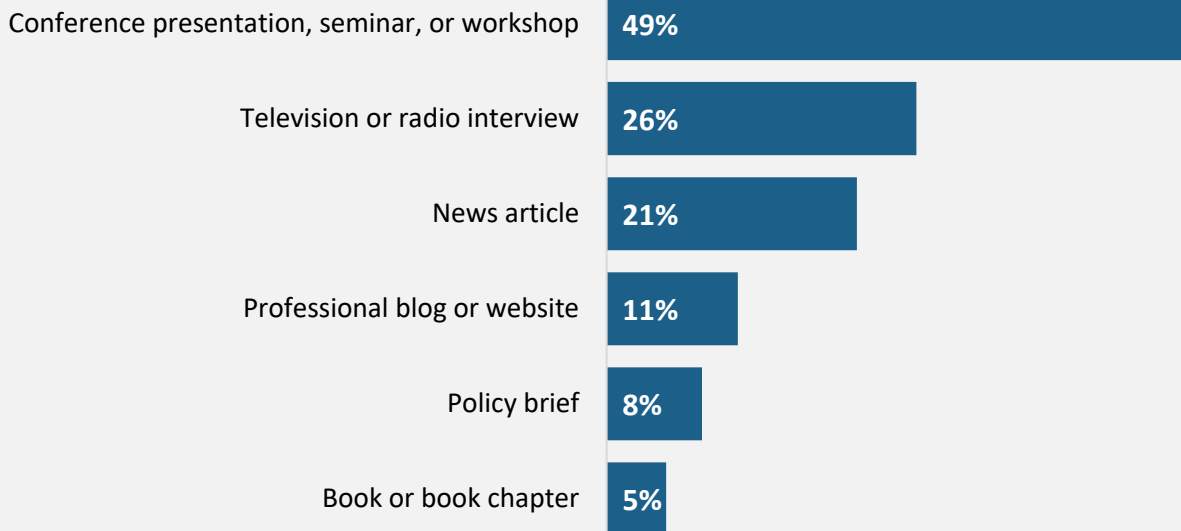


Figure 10. Percentage of alumni who created knowledge products

Overall, alumni produced a total of 217 knowledge products. While each project that IVLP alumni participated in was grouped into a specific project theme, many social issues encompass a combination of areas, requiring an interdisciplinary and systemic approach. As a result, alumni continued to engage in work covering a variety of fields, which has led to important knowledge works that cover more than one project theme. Due to their diverse areas of interest and expertise, many alumni created products on topics beyond their project's theme.

### Number of knowledge works created by theme



Women's Leadership: 54



Journalism: 29



Diversity: 51



Environmental Protection: 26



Democracy: 36



National Security: 17

## Alumni's Involvement in Activism

Alumni are committed to utilizing their skills to improve systems and organizations. They invest their time, share their knowledge, and advocate for inclusion and resource access. Before coming to the United States, IVLP participants were already active leaders in their countries. Nevertheless, this experience helped most alumni gain insights into ways to shape their involvement in their community and which strategies successfully lead to positive outcomes.

*As a result of their IVLP experience...*

With a stronger sense of responsibility and confidence in their ability to lead projects and ideas, IVLP alumni have increased their involvement in activism across different fields and areas of focus.

*"I am a human rights lawyer and have always been working to protect and promote human rights. In this capacity, I have worked with women-headed households (women affected by war). After attending the IVLP my involvement with this community has become more active, and in addition, working more with journalists has also made more impact in my current profession." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, Sri Lanka*

*"I contributed to the establishment of [an association], which contributes to the training of local actors and elected officials, particularly women, for a better appropriation of their functions. The said association has conducted several training sessions for elected officials in the different regions of Mali." – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Mali*

After increasing their knowledge about ways to bring people together and collaborate across fields, alumni explored new areas of impact.

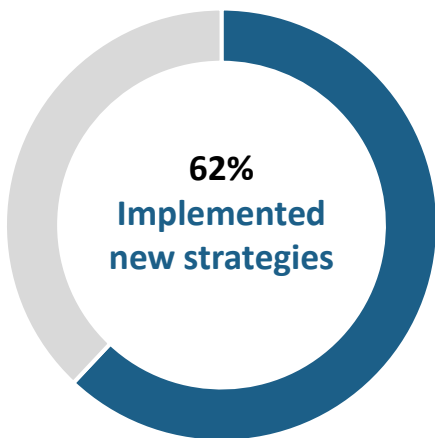
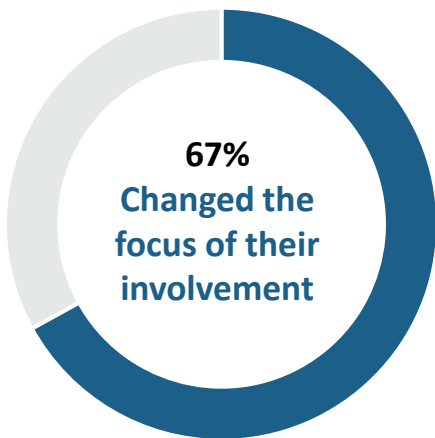
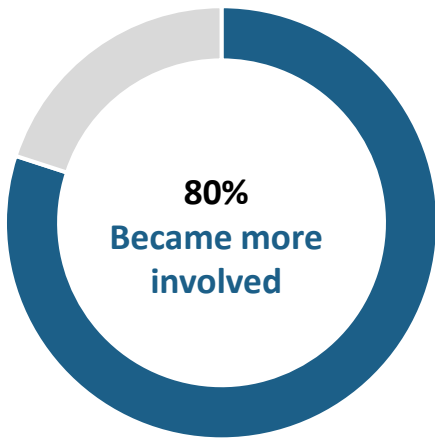
*"I have moved to full time working on the diversity and inclusion education development and promotion of more gender diversity in Tech and STEM. I have shifted focus of the work from just gender diversity to inclusion on a larger scale. I have developed larger projects and international collaborations." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, Latvia*

*"My experience with IVLP impacted the way I view activism in my community especially towards the completion of my master's degree, it has sparked an interest in the policy and strategies that our government bring forth to the people." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, South Africa*

Alumni are strategizing more effective ways to build partnerships and engage communities.

*"[Implementing] new strategies in activism and/or community engagement has allowed me to develop more critical thinking about current leadership, inclusion policies and educational policies." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, Bolivia*

*"I have been leading advocacy on environmental protection by partnering with NGOs to establish clubs in schools." – Alumna from a Diversity project, Nigeria*



## Leading the Way for Social Impact in the For-profit and Nonprofit Sectors

Since their participation in the IVLP, a quarter of alumni (24%) started a business or a nonprofit organization; for at least 44% of them, this was in addition to their other employment. As leaders of their organizations, IVLP alumni can shape their organizations' missions and visions to promote social impact. Some of those who own for-profit businesses have leveraged their entrepreneurial abilities to solve complex issues through social impact initiatives. Alumni's organizations offered diverse services to their communities, mainly managing projects, organizing media and information campaigns, and lecturing and teaching, among other activities.

### Organizations founded by alumni provide communities with a variety of services and products

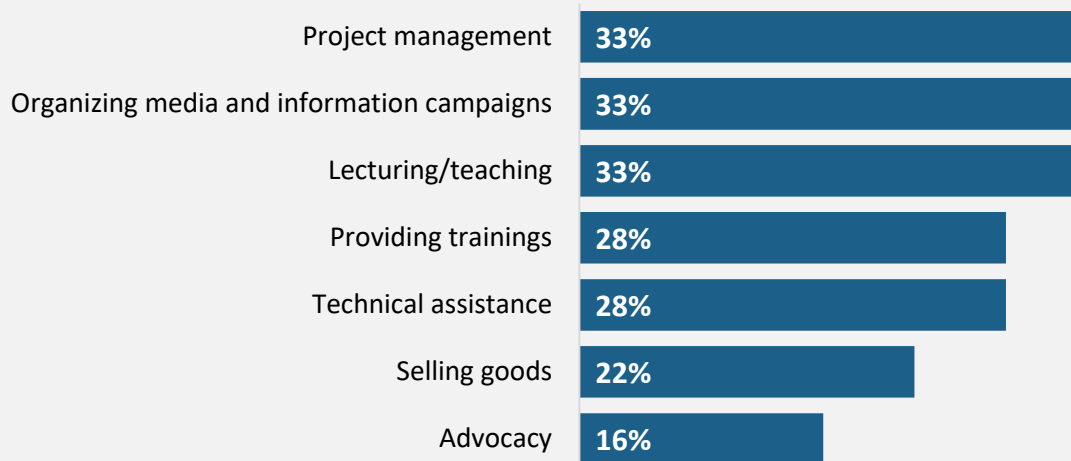


Figure 11. Top activities perform by organizations started by alumni

Alumni addressed various topics through their skills, knowledge, and ability to mobilize resources and connect with communities. They empowered women in technical fields, supported immigrant populations in developing professional skills, educated the public about environmental problems, and sold products for academic institutions and medical facilities, among other activities. Through this work, alumni demonstrated that they have the power to be agents of change by building organizations that focus on using innovative methods to solve problems and educate others.

*"[The organization provides] help and support [to] the life of Ukrainian refugees in Georgia. Almost alone, I provide constant help to around 50 people (including rental of housing, providing medicine, food and goods for babies) and now with my [partners], we start to provide help with drugs for Ukrainian refugees in Tbilisi. My plan is to expand the aid with the help of my IVLP team and even via the whole alumni network (IVLP alumni portal)." – Alumnus from a Journalism project, Russia*

*"This business has started with the goal to employ and empower immigrants in the Netherlands. It's a queer-led company. We plan to make it strong enough to employ the people that we initially help in our nonprofit organization to integrate more with the job market and empower them financially." – Alumnus from a Democracy project, the Netherlands*

*"Andromeda, Astronomy & Experimental Science is a company specialized in providing solutions in the field of Science. The sale of products in these areas aims to equip educational institutions, schools, universities and in the future to create their own equipment. In astronomy we are a national reference. We work hand in hand with educators, supporting teaching, and constant training to teachers. We also carry out scientific dissemination, such as fairs or camps. The company is very new, less than a year old, but in this time, we have already equipped several schools. And trained teachers in urban and rural areas." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, Bolivia*

## An Experience that Leads to Long-lasting Global Connections

Alumni believed that the program was most helpful in connecting them to professionals who work in academia, NGOs and nonprofits, and governments. In addition, they also had the opportunity to connect with people from citizen and student groups, private businesses, and philanthropic organizations. By interacting with their IVLP peers, they also connected with organizations outside the United States.

### The IVLP experience helped alumni grow a strong network of people with whom they can collaborate in the future

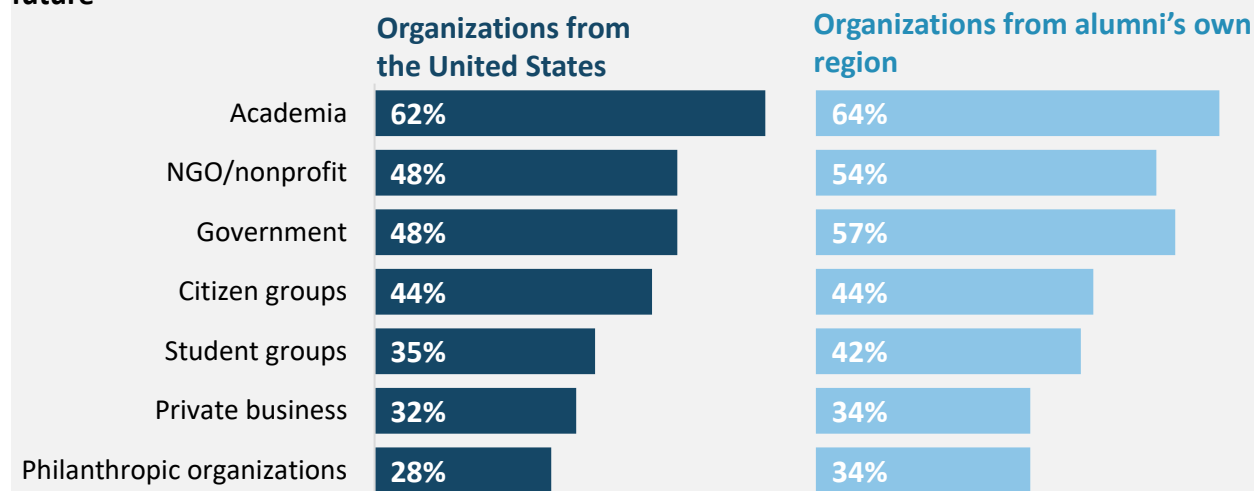


Figure 12. Percentage of alumni who believe that the IVLP experience was helpful in connecting them to people from different types of organizations

After the program, 85% of alumni remained in contact with individuals they met through IVLP, including their peers (79%) and other professionals. Alumni remained in contact the most with IVLP alumni who participated in their projects: 65% with people from other countries and 50% with people from their own country. Participants from regional and multiregional projects were more likely to remain in contact with participants from different IVLP projects (from their own countries and different ones) than those who participated in single-country projects. The evaluation team found that a higher percentage of alumni who completed the program in person (86%) remained in contact with people they met through the IVLP compared to those who participated in the program virtually (73%). Almost all IVLP alumni indicated that they benefited from remaining in contact with IVLP connections.

### 89% of alumni benefited from remaining in contact with their IVLP connections in at least one way



Figure 13. Ways in which alumni have benefited from remaining in contact with other IVLP participants

## International Exchange and Collaboration After the Program

Through the IVLP experience, alumni built strong networks of professionals in the United States and their own countries. After the program, alumni developed new ideas, pursued new projects, and collaborated with people with whom they share interests and areas of expertise. Alumni are working on projects and exchanging ideas through engagements with their peers, other U.S. professionals, and people who work with embassies. These activities have the potential to help alumni continue to expand their networks in their own countries and connect with like-minded individuals interested in the same initiatives. These collaborations are taking place at national and international levels, allowing alumni to create an impact beyond their organizations or communities.

### Alumni networks

After the program, alumni are part of an exchange community facilitated by the ECA's Office of Alumni Affairs, and they also form their own unofficial groups to communicate with other alumni from their country or region. These networks facilitated communication and collaboration with people who want to put their ideas and projects into action. One in three (33%) alumni were involved in these networks, through which they had an opportunity to meet other IVLP alumni beyond the peers with whom they participated in a project. Alumni remained involved in these networks by participating in webinars, meetings, and workshops; exchanging information; and updating each other on their accomplishments and future plans.

*"I am part of a local IVLP alumni group, and we exchange various information ranging from democracy and what other members are currently involved in and what others have achieved." – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Swaziland*

### Collaboration with individuals met through IVLP

One in four (25%) alumni who remained in contact with people they met through the IVLP worked with these contacts on a project or publication. These collaborations covered various topics, including cultural diversity, educational content, and research for news stories, and were happening across countries and regions.

*"I collaborated with a video related to Paraguayan culture to help a participant of my IVLP project with her class on cultural diversity in Thailand." – Alumna from a Diversity project, Paraguay*

*"I wrote an article, and I needed information from another country and a fellow IVLP participant helped me write the story." – Alumnus from a Journalism project, Greece*

### Collaboration with U.S. embassies

Half of alumni engaged with U.S. embassies in their home countries by attending receptions and workshops, receiving training, collaborating on projects, and even leading initiatives financed by the embassies. Through these collaborations, alumni remain connected to U.S. culture and values while building stronger relationships between their home countries and the United States. At the same time, alumni receive the support and resources to put their ideas into action and contribute to the development of their communities.

*"[I] requested and have been provided with training in corruption investigation and collaborated in investigation projects." – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Swaziland*

*"Before the pandemic, we got a small fund from U.S. embassy in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The result was discussed at an international conference and on a published scientific journal." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, Mongolia*

*"I have also been the Coordinator of another scholarship program, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Paraguay as well, for public primary school English teachers to help them improve their English skills and awareness of the U.S. culture and values through cultural presentations and a community service project." – Alumna from a Diversity project, Paraguay*

## Overcoming Obstacles to Continue to Impact Organizations and Communities

Alumni successfully supported and improved their organizations and communities with their skills and knowledge. Nevertheless, 84% of alumni faced various challenges along the way, which they had to overcome to reach their professional and personal goals.

### 84% of alumni faced at least one challenge in applying knowledge and skills



Figure 14. Obstacles faced by alumni in the application of knowledge and skills acquired through IVLP

These challenges pushed alumni to leverage resources and people in their networks. Through their hard work and perseverance, alumni found avenues to recruit more people and resources to implement their ideas and projects.

*“I was faced with financial difficulties in putting up a volunteering group. I venture into recycling business to raise funds to finance some outings.” – Alumna from a Democracy project, Nicaragua*

*“[There is] disinformation in my organization and community. There is a perception that the program is used for training and recruiting spies. I have shared the program materials with these groups, and it has assisted in changing the perceived perception.” – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Swaziland*

Not being able to remain in contact with people they met in their IVLP also limited the alumni’s ability to implement projects and ideas. Those who could not stay in touch (15%) shared that the most prevalent obstacles were not having a project to connect about, not knowing how to join the alumni network, and not having contact information.

Alumni believe they could implement more ideas and reach more communities through greater financial support, resources, and connections. Alumni shared their desire for IVLP to support them in their endeavors by having a more connected alumni network with more frequent events (conferences, workshops, training sessions) that can help the exchange of ideas and funding opportunities and connect alumni with financial support and connections available in the United States and their own countries.



## Conclusion

As demonstrated by the accomplishments of alumni in their journeys after the program, the IVLP significantly impacts the professional and personal lives of program participants. The IVLP equips participants with skills and knowledge and helps them develop the confidence to apply their expertise and passion in different fields to address the needs of their organizations and communities back home. Alumni inspire and push each other to pursue their ideas and put them into action. Alumni remain in contact with individuals they meet in the United States, with whom they connect about their desire to work on meaningful projects that can potentially shape people's lives worldwide. Overall, alumni are grateful to be exposed to diverse ways of thinking, learn about the United States and new approaches to common areas of interest, and share their experiences and traditions.

*"[The biggest impact that the IVLP had on my career was] definitely meeting other women who are also working and fighting from their regions, trying to generate changes in their societies. And on the other hand, to see all that science and technology up close, places that were only [available before] in my books or on the internet. Having the opportunity to see all this up close certainly invites you to keep working and think that, yes, dreams do come true." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, Bolivia*

*"I had the opportunity to meet leaders who reinforced my conviction to serve my country by doing a good job while taking into account my responsibilities and the need to be accountable. I have also acquired a proven experience in exchanges that have allowed me to trust my abilities and skills. Self-confidence is a source of inspiration and motivation to surpass oneself in the search for perfection and the satisfaction of people's needs." – Alumnus from a Democracy project, Mali*

IVLP alumni are committed to using their expertise to improve their professional and personal communities. However, limited access to resources such as funding or the technical knowledge to implement new projects can hinder alumni from bringing their ideas to fruition. Alumni are interested in applying for more funding opportunities and having access to additional training and workshops to enhance their technical knowledge. The IVLP can further support alumni's work by connecting them with opportunities for funding and technical training from U.S. government organizations and working with embassies abroad to inform alumni of these opportunities.

*"I believe one of the ways IVLP can better equip participants is to inform them of the funding opportunities available in their countries, perhaps have a dedicated individual who works hand in hand with the participants once they have completed the IVLP program for a year or two." – Alumna from a Women's Leadership project, South Africa*

IVLP alumni are eager to continue meeting and connecting with others to exchange ideas. However, not having an opportunity to discuss people's interests in specific work areas or having potential collaborators' contact information can prevent alumni from exploring potential projects. The IVLP program should enhance current networking opportunities to allow alumni to remain in contact with other alumni and meet other professionals. The IVLP can support alumni by creating a space where participants can meet (virtually or in person) with alumni and other professionals (such as former guest speakers and representatives from U.S. organizations who were part of IVLP programming) to publicize and discuss opportunities to engage in projects across various fields.

*"Maybe if IVLP will provide the assistance through its former participants in different countries –for example, it would be a great help for me now if I could contact some of Georgian alumni who maybe will provide me with some help in my volunteer activities." – Alumnus from a Journalism project, Russia*

*"IVLP has introduced me to many new opportunities. However, I'd like to suggest to include meetings and plans to connect the participants to influential entities who can support them in the road ahead." – Alumnus from a Democracy project, the Netherlands*

The IVLP significantly impacts many people's lives beyond the program participants and is an avenue for global understanding and collaboration. With the support of an international network of inspiring Americans and leaders from abroad, the IVLP will continue to support the United States' foreign policy and promote global peace and mutual understanding.

# Appendix A. Full List and Grouping of Skills Assessed

## Cognitive Skills

- Critical Thinking
- Entrepreneurship
- Innovation
- Problem Solving
- Strategic Planning
- Technical Skills

## Intrapersonal Skills

- Intercultural Communication
- Leadership
- Presentation Skills
- Teamwork

## Interpersonal Skills

- Adaptability
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Diversity Awareness
- Sense of Responsibility

## Appendix B. Increase of Skills (All)

Percentage of participants who reported increasing different **interpersonal**, **intrapersonal**, and **cognitive** skills to a significant extent (selecting 3 or 4 on a 1–4 Likert scale).

Skill	Skill grouping	1 Not at all	2 Very little	3 To some extent	4 To a great extent
Intercultural Communication	Interpersonal	0%	4%	31%	65%
Sense of Responsibility	Intrapersonal	2%	6%	37%	55%
Diversity Awareness	Intrapersonal	1%	7%	20%	72%
Cultural Sensitivity	Intrapersonal	3%	6%	41%	50%
Presentation Skills	Interpersonal	1%	10%	50%	39%
Leadership	Interpersonal	2%	10%	25%	63%
Adaptability	Intrapersonal	5%	8%	38%	49%
Teamwork	Interpersonal	3%	13%	28%	56%
Critical Thinking	Cognitive	2%	16%	40%	42%
Problem Solving	Cognitive	5%	13%	42%	40%
Strategic Planning	Cognitive	6%	12%	44%	38%
Innovation	Cognitive	7%	12%	40%	41%
Technical Skills	Cognitive	13%	19%	42%	26%
Entrepreneurship	Cognitive	10%	27%	40%	23%

## Appendix C. Knowledge Application (All Global Topics)

Percentage of participants who reported applying global knowledge topics to a significant extent (selecting 3 or 4 on a 1–4 Likert scale).

Topic	1 Not at all	2 Very little	3 To some extent	4 To a great extent
Appreciation for community participation	6%	9%	43%	43%
Diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups	5%	16%	47%	32%
The ways in which government, academia, civil society, and the private sector work together to effect change	3%	20%	51%	26%
The role that citizens play in promoting a sustainable world	7%	18%	37%	38%
Diversity and inclusion of vulnerable populations	7%	17%	41%	34%
Organization policies or improvements	5%	21%	48%	26%
The ways in which citizens can hold government and/or public officials accountable	6%	21%	49%	24%
Strategies to promote public-private partnerships	9%	23%	40%	28%
International cooperation to promote human and civil rights	8%	26%	38%	28%
The role that media plays in protecting democracy	12%	26%	32%	30%

## Appendix D. Application of Skills (All)

Percentage of participants who reported applying the various skills to a significant extent (selecting 3 or 4 on a 1–4 Likert scale).

Skill	Skill Grouping	1 Not at all	2 Very little	3 To some extent	4 To a great extent
Sense of Responsibility	Intrapersonal	3%	3%	36%	57%
Leadership	Interpersonal	3%	5%	26%	66%
Cultural Sensitivity	Intrapersonal	4%	5%	39%	52%
Diversity Awareness	Intrapersonal	1%	8%	36%	55%
Teamwork	Interpersonal	1%	8%	30%	61%
Critical Thinking	Cognitive	2%	8%	40%	50%
Problem Solving	Cognitive	2%	9%	39%	50%
Presentation Skills	Interpersonal	0%	11%	48%	40%
Intercultural Communication	Interpersonal	0%	13%	32%	55%
Adaptability	Intrapersonal	2%	14%	28%	56%
Innovation	Cognitive	8%	10%	37%	45%
Strategic Planning	Cognitive	5%	14%	42%	39%
Technical Skills	Cognitive	9%	19%	33%	39%
Entrepreneurship	Cognitive	14%	22%	34%	30%