



Junior  
Achievement  
A Member of JA Worldwide **USA**<sup>®</sup>

## JA ALUMNI REPORT



2016-17

## OVERVIEW

In the spring of 2016, Junior Achievement USA (JA) conducted a survey of a scientifically valid sample of more than 700 JA Alumni. The intent of this research was to better understand the impact JA has had on the lives of the more than 100 million people who have gone through Junior Achievement programs since the organization's founding in 1919. The JA Alumni were asked about a variety of topics, including educational attainment, career satisfaction, financial capability, income levels, and business ownership. These results were then compared to general population data from a variety of sources, including the U.S. Census, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. This report summarizes those findings.

### JA Alum Insight

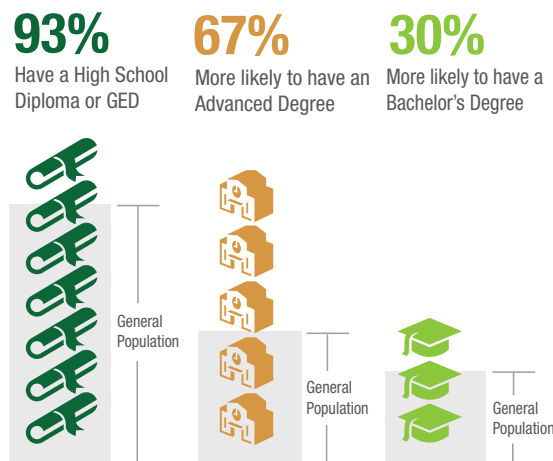
*“The interaction with the volunteers. They were professionals — lawyers and accountants. Individuals we didn’t get exposed to. It was a sea change for me. We were seeing a different world, a different life. That’s what was important to me. I said, ‘I can do it.’ It was eye-opening for me and my character.”*

— Yesenia Cárdenas-Colenso, Attorney, Bowman and Brooke, LLP

## EDUCATION

Related to educational attainment, 93 percent of JA Alumni graduated high school or have a GED. This is compared to a high school/GED rate of 88 percent of the general U.S. population, using 2015 U.S. Census data. When it comes to higher education, 42 percent of JA Alumni have a four-year degree, compared to 32 percent of the general U.S. population. This means JA Alumni are nearly 30 percent more likely to have a four-year degree. At the same time, 20 percent of JA Alumni have an advanced degree, compared to 12 percent of the U.S. population, meaning JA Alumni are 67 percent more likely to have an advanced degree.<sup>1</sup>

### JA Alumni Educational Attainment



### JA Alum Insight

As a 10th grader, Evan was able to make a connection through JA that would significantly affect the direction of his life. *“A JA connection turned into a HS internship, connections, scholarship, four-year degree and my first job out of college.”*

— Evan Frazier, Senior Vice President of Community Affairs for Highmark Health

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2016/demo/p20-578.pdf>

## CAREER

On the career front, 62 percent of JA Alumni are currently working in positions that are “manager status or above.” According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 58.7 percent of Americans are paid hourly wages<sup>2</sup>, compared to 38 percent of JA Alumni. In terms of career aspiration, 30 percent of JA Alumni, or nearly 1 in 3, credit JA with influencing their career choice, while 20 percent of JA Alumni, or 1 in 5, say they work in the same career field as the JA volunteer who taught them as a student. Additionally, 88 percent of JA Alumni report that they are satisfied with their careers, compared to 48.7 percent of the general public, according to the Conference Board.<sup>3</sup>

## JA Alumni Career Aspirations



**1 in 3**

Credit JA for influencing career decision



**1 in 5**

Work in same field as their JA volunteer



## JA Alum Insight

Jennifer credits her success to JA as it “started [her] momentum toward ‘I can do this.’ I know what’s needed to lead, sell a product and be successful. It starts at a young age. You get the right impression at the right time.” It even “open[s] doors by the very nature of reaching out and connecting with people outside of their little bubble.”

— Jennifer Picard, VP of Global Fund Management & Strategy at Prologis

## FINANCES

When asked what impact JA has had on their lives, 30 percent of JA Alumni say it helped them learn to better manage their money. In fact, 90 percent of JA Alumni are confident in their ability to manage money. An example of this may be demonstrated in how JA Alumni approach paying for college.

According to the Institute for College Access & Success, 69 percent of graduating college seniors have student loans<sup>4</sup>. Comparatively, 55 percent of JA Alumni who went to college took out student loans. U.S. News reports that it takes an average of 21 years for college graduates with four-year degrees to pay off their student loans<sup>5</sup>. Nearly half of JA Alumni, or 47 percent, paid off their student loans within 10 years, with most of those occurring by the five year mark.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/minimum-wage/archive/characteristics-of-minimum-wage-workers-2014.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.conference-board.org/press/pressdetail.cfm?pressid=5545>

<sup>4</sup> <http://ticas.org/posd/map-state-data-2015>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/data-mine/2014/10/07/student-loan-expectations-myth-vs-reality>

## JA Alum Insight

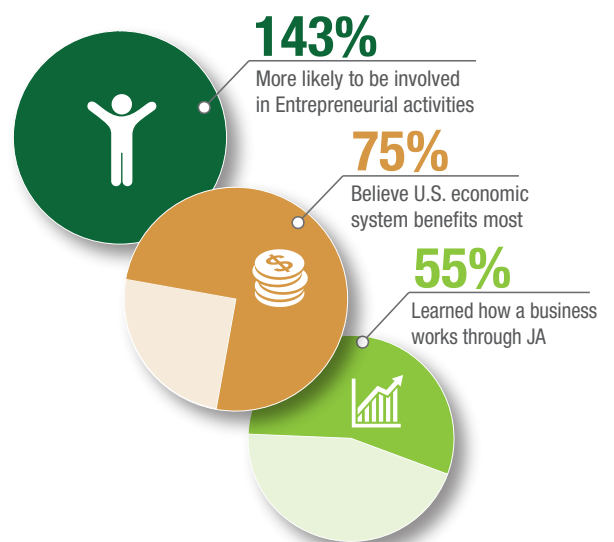
Scott states that “one of the best things JA does and can do is help students understand how to live in a balanced budget. Understand the lifestyle you can have on an income. Understand what matters most in life and how to fund it.”

— Scott Prochazka, President and CEO of CenterPoint

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In terms of perceptions of the U.S. economic system, 75 percent of JA Alumni have a favorable view, compared to only 30 percent of the general population, according to the Pew Research Center<sup>6</sup>. When it comes to business ownership, 55 percent of JA Alumni say that the greatest impact Junior Achievement had on their lives was helping them understand how business works. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) reports that 14 percent of Americans are involved in business ownership<sup>7</sup>, compared to 34 percent of JA Alumni, meaning JA Alumni are 2 ½ times, or 143 percent, more likely to be involved in starting a business.

## JA Alumni Business Ownership



## JA Alum Insight

“I had business know-how. Without Junior Achievement, it might have been a mystery. I used my Junior Achievement experience and my can-do attitude to put together a business plan on how to get to the break-even point...today the company exceeds \$150 million in revenue. I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for Junior Achievement.”

— Bob Coughlin, Founder and CEO, Paycor

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.people-press.org/2016/03/31/3-views-on-economy-government-services-trade/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.gemconsortium.org/country-profile/122>

## INCOME

In terms of perceptions of the U.S. economic system, 75 percent of the US population have a median household income of \$51,939, according to the Federal Reserve<sup>8</sup>. In comparison, median household income for JA Alumni is \$62,500, meaning JA Alumni make nearly 20 percent more than the general

population. In terms of social mobility, 38 percent of JA Alumni describe their standard of living growing up as “Lower Income” (low to low-middle income) while 23 percent describe it as “Upper Income” (upper to upper-middle income). In comparison, 28 percent of these alumni describe their standard of living today as “Lower Income” – a 10-point drop – and 31 percent describe it as “Upper Income” – an 8-point increase.

When asked how JA impacted their lives, 36 percent of JA Alumni said JA “Increased My Self-Confidence/Belief in Myself.” It was the second highest choice behind “Gave Me an Idea of How Business Works” at 55 percent. In terms of standard of living, when it comes to JA Alumni who said JA increased their sense of self-belief, the comparison of “Lower Income” between growing up and today drops from 36 percent to 22 percent – a 14-point decline – and “Upper Income” rises from 27 percent growing up to 39 percent today – a 12-point increase.

## JA Alumni Household Income



## CONCLUSION

The results of this research indicate JA Alumni, when compared to the general public, have higher levels of educational attainment, career satisfaction, financial capability, entrepreneurial activity, and household income. At the same time, a considerable portion of JA Alumni credit Junior Achievement for promoting their understanding of business, influencing their career goals, fostering a sense of self-belief, and enhancing their understanding of how money works. Given the overall gains demonstrated by JA Alumni when compared to the general public, plus the benefits that many JA Alumni themselves attribute to their Junior Achievement experience, it is reasonable to conclude that participation in JA programs contributes to positive knowledge, attitude, and behavioral outcomes for a significant portion of JA students.

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Household\\_income\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Household_income_in_the_United_States)

## METHODOLOGY

The JA Alumni research was conducted using the SurveyMonkey general population Audience Data set of 45 million prospective respondents. Out of a representational sample of 5,000 Americans, 717 identified as JA Alumni. These data were analyzed using the IBM SPSS Statistics V24 analytics platform. A second survey was then conducted with a separate sample of 704 for validation purposes. Results were compared to third party data (U.S. Census, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, and U.S. Department of Education). The margin of error for the findings is +/- 4% with a confidence of 95%.