

Political Science Former Students Survey

Key Findings

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1 Introduction

In 2023, the Texas A&M Department of Political Science conducted its first-ever survey of former students. For this survey, we attempted to contact all students who obtained either a BA or BS degree in Political Science from Texas A&M using a list of email addresses from the Texas A&M Foundation.

The main goals of this survey were as follows:

1. To obtain an overview of what our former students liked and disliked about their experiences.
2. To obtain an overview of how our former students evaluate the skills that they obtained while majoring in Political Science.
3. To obtain measures of what our students have done since they left Texas A&M.
4. To gauge interest among former students in engaging with the Department of Political Science and the Bush School.

A full report with responses to all items and details on the technical aspects of this survey will be made available on the Department's website shortly together with this report. In this document, we show results of our main findings and discuss briefly our plans for moving forward.

2 Main Findings

Our main findings from this survey are the following:

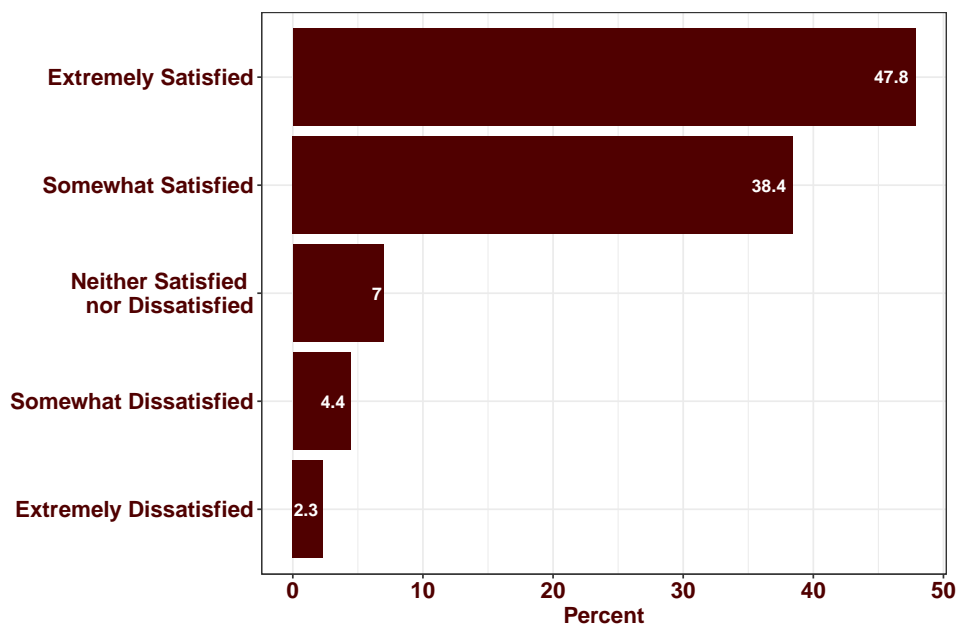
1. Our former students are very happy with their undergraduate education and the skills that they developed in our programs.
2. Our former students are heavily involved in public service.
3. Many of our former students have become leaders.
4. Our former students have had success in a wide range of professions.

5. A majority of our former students went on to earn further degrees and felt that their undergraduate training prepared them well for the next level(s) of their education.
6. Our former students would like to be more engaged with the Department and the Bush School.

In the remainder of this document, we provide some of the relevant results and a brief explanation of our main findings followed by a summary of our plans for how to move forward based on what we have learned from this survey.

2.1 Our former students are very happy with their undergraduate education and the skills that they developed in our programs

Figure 1: Overall, how satisfied are you with your political science undergraduate education at Texas A&M University?

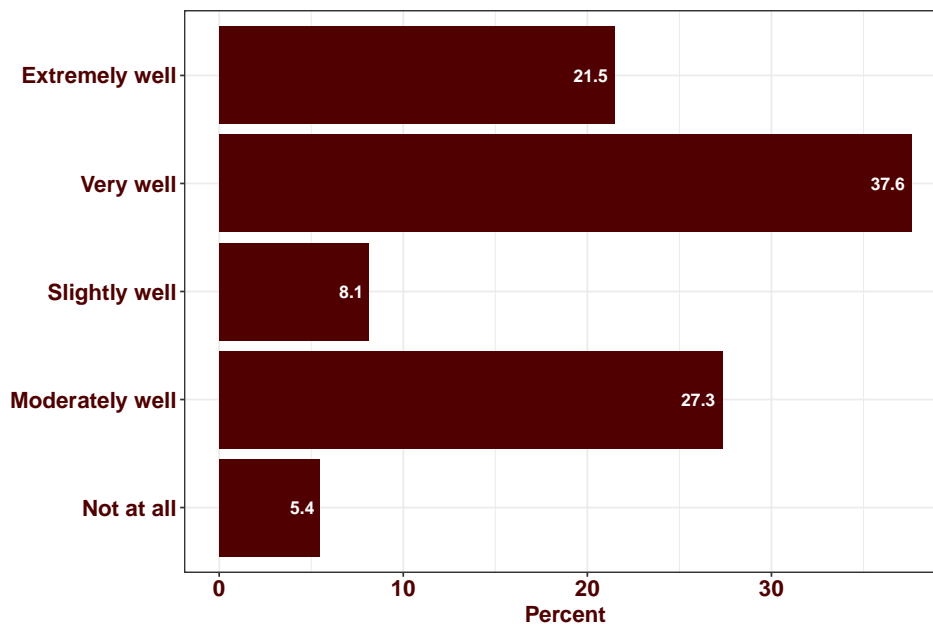


We asked a series of general and specific questions to get a sense of what our students liked and disliked about their experiences as a political science major at Texas A&M. Across the board, the vast majority of the answers provided were positive. In Figure 1 we present the responses from

the most general question that we asked about satisfaction. Almost half (47.8%) of our former students are “extremely satisfied” with their undergraduate education in political science. If we combine these responses with those who are “somewhat satisfied,” the overall rate of satisfaction is 86.2%.

Responses to another fairly general question are displayed in Figure 2. As we can see in this figure, our former students are very positive in their assessments of how well their political science degree prepared them for the workplace with 59.1% saying that their degree prepared them “extremely” or “very” well.

Figure 2: How well did your political science degree prepare you for the workforce in terms of broad skills learned and experiences gained?



In Figure 3 we show the results from a more specific assessment that we asked our former students to make. We asked them to rate how well their undergraduate experience prepared them in 16 skill areas. The dots in Figure 3 show the average response to each item together with a line for the 95% confidence interval around that average (these intervals are so small that they do not stick out beyond the dots for each average). As we can see from this figure, our former students’ average responses were high across all of these different skill areas.

Responses to other questions about particular skill areas and preparations for different aspects

Figure 3: Based on what you know now, how well do you think your undergraduate experience in political science at Texas A&M University prepared you to:



of life after graduation are provided in the full report. The overall picture is one of high levels of satisfaction with their experiences in our department and how it prepared them for life after their undergraduate years.

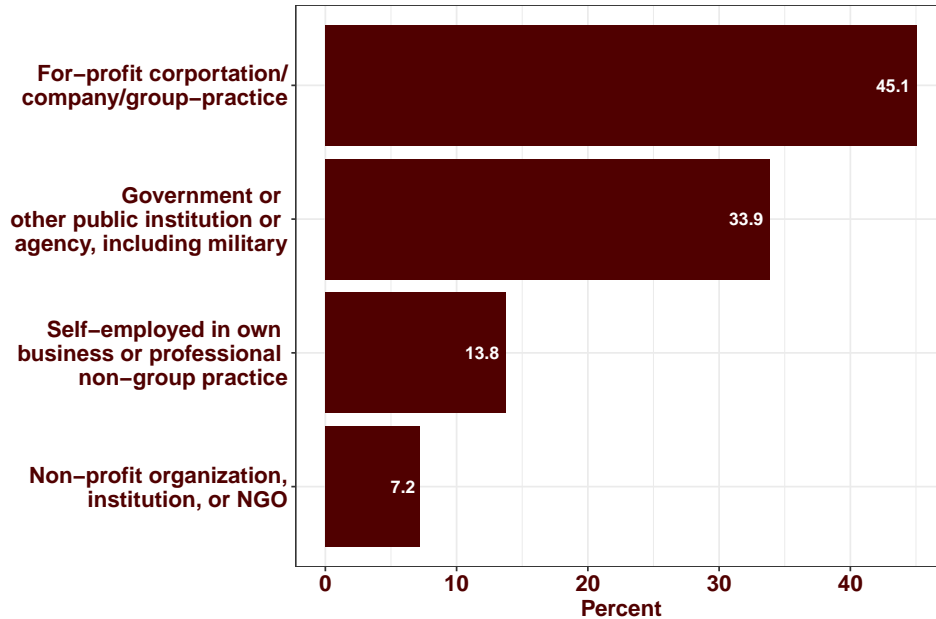
2.2 Our former students are heavily involved in public service

When the Department of Political Science moved to the Bush School in 2022, there were some reasonable questions about how well it fit in with the Bush School's emphasis on public service. There are of course many different ways to perform public service and the Bush School takes a big-tent approach to defining what is public service. It can be your profession, things that you do outside of your professional life, and/or the way you go about your business regardless of the profession in which you work.

The first and second of these broad categories of public service are the easier ones to measure in a survey format. In Figure 4, we show our former students' classification of the sector in which they currently are employed listed from top to bottom by frequency of responses. The second and

fourth most frequent responses are sectors that are unambiguously public service, “Government or other public institution or agency, including military” and “Non-profit organization, institution or NGO (e.g., arts/human services/international organizations).” Together, these two categories make up just over 41% of responses.

Figure 4: In what sector are you employed? Mark the best answer.

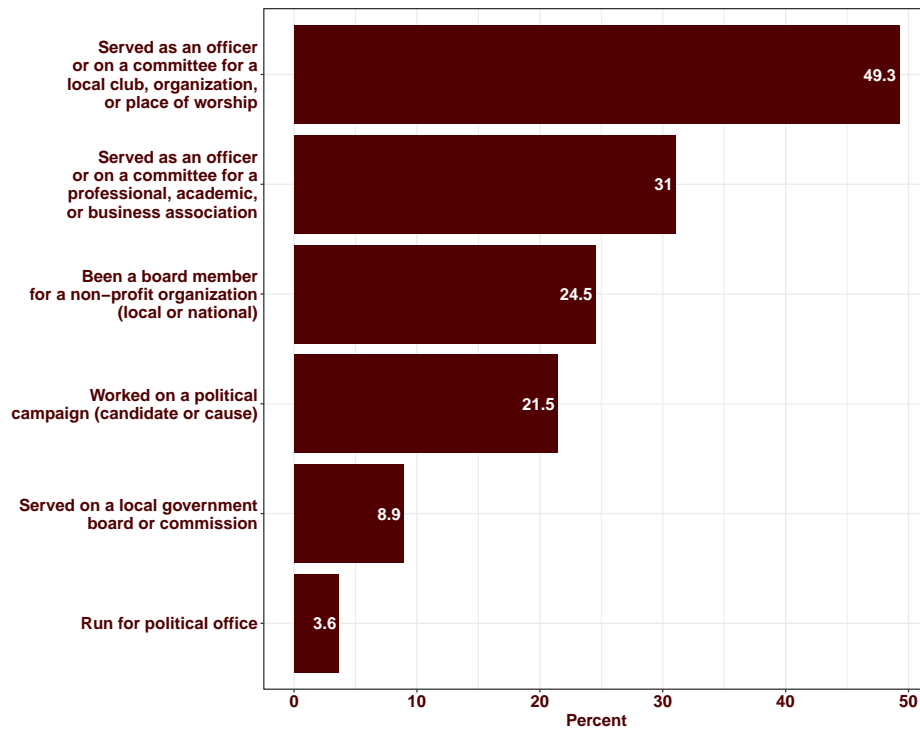


In Figure 5 we show responses to a series of questions about service activities done in the last 10 years. We can see from this figure that our former students have been heavily involved in a wide range of service activities and that they have frequently been in leadership positions in service organizations. Overall, 57.3% of our former students marked at least one of the categories displayed in Figure 5 with 35.6% marking two or more.

2.3 Many of our former students have become leaders

As we saw in the previous section (Section 2.2), our former students have been heavily involved in leadership positions in service organizations. We also found a strong tendency among our former students to be in leadership positions in their professional lives. In Figures 6 and 7, we show

Figure 5: In the last 10 years, have you done any of these activities? Please mark all that apply.



responses to questions measuring the leadership level at which our former students are currently employed and their reports of how much management they are doing in their current positions.

Figure 6: Which of the following best describes your current position?

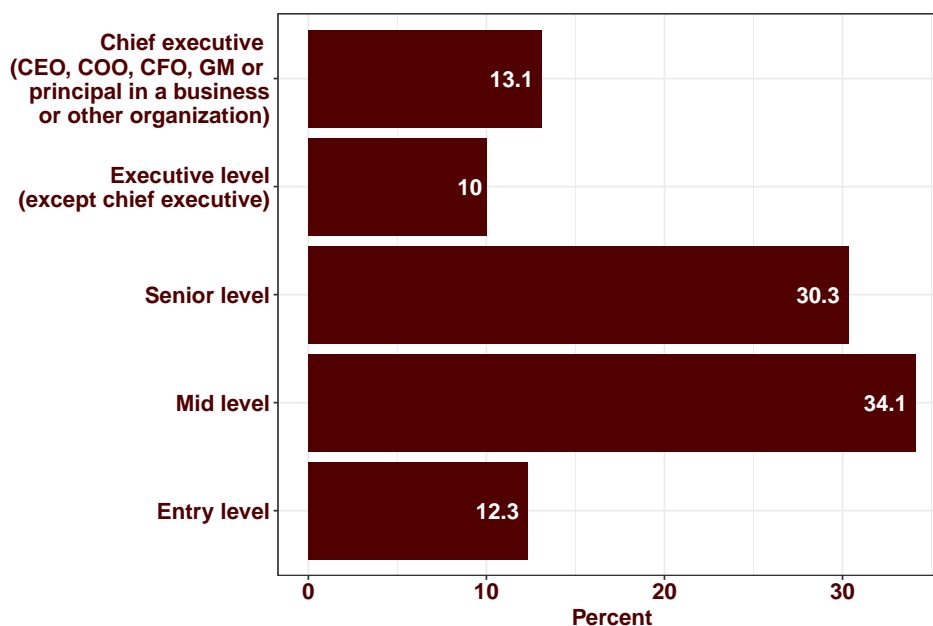
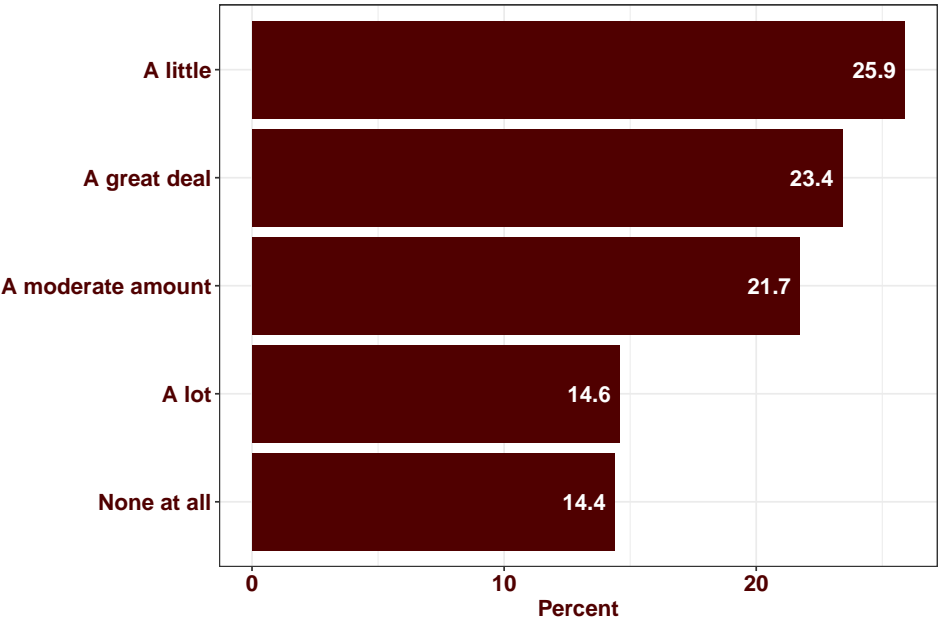


Figure 7: How much does your current job involve supervising or managing the work of others?



To get a better sense of the leadership trajectories of our former students as they progress in their careers, in Figures 8 and 9 we show the percentages of responses to these same questions across cohorts of former students defined by the number of years since they graduated from Texas A&M. Although these data are from a snapshot of survey responses collected in a single time window, they show a clear pattern of our former students climbing the ranks of leadership in their professions as they gain experience in the workforce.

Figure 8: Current position leadership level across years since graduation.

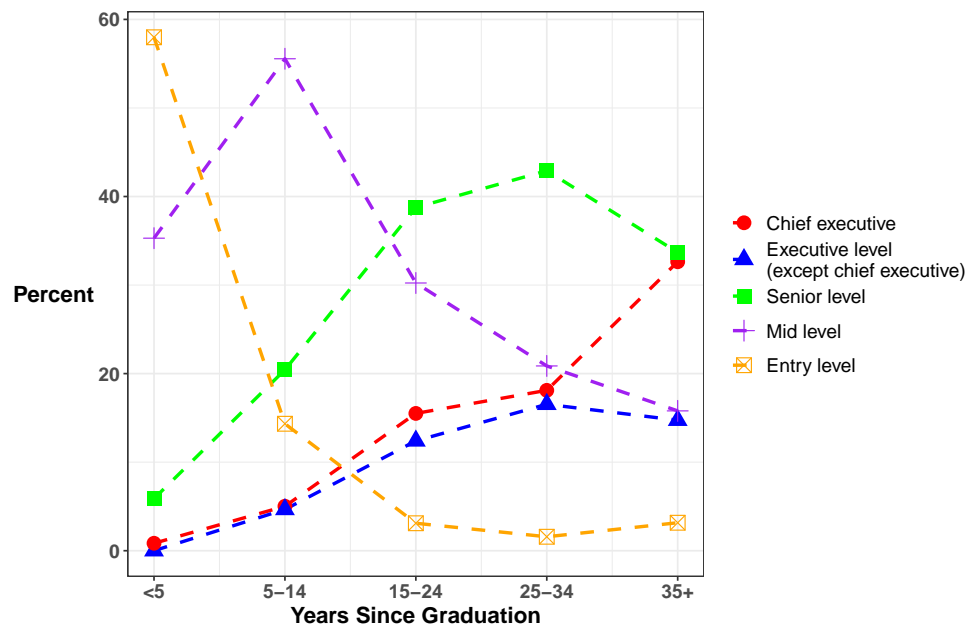
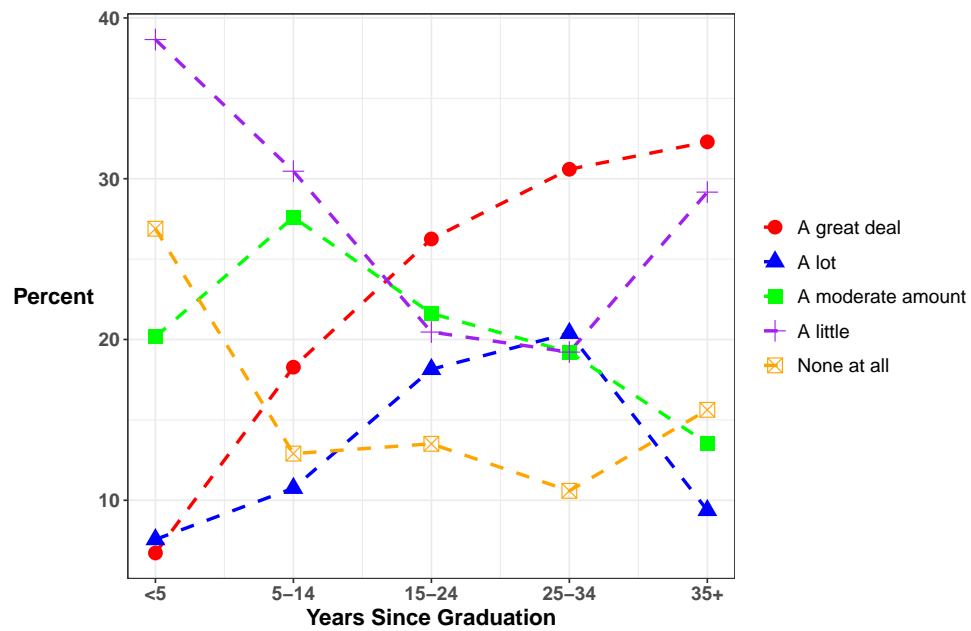


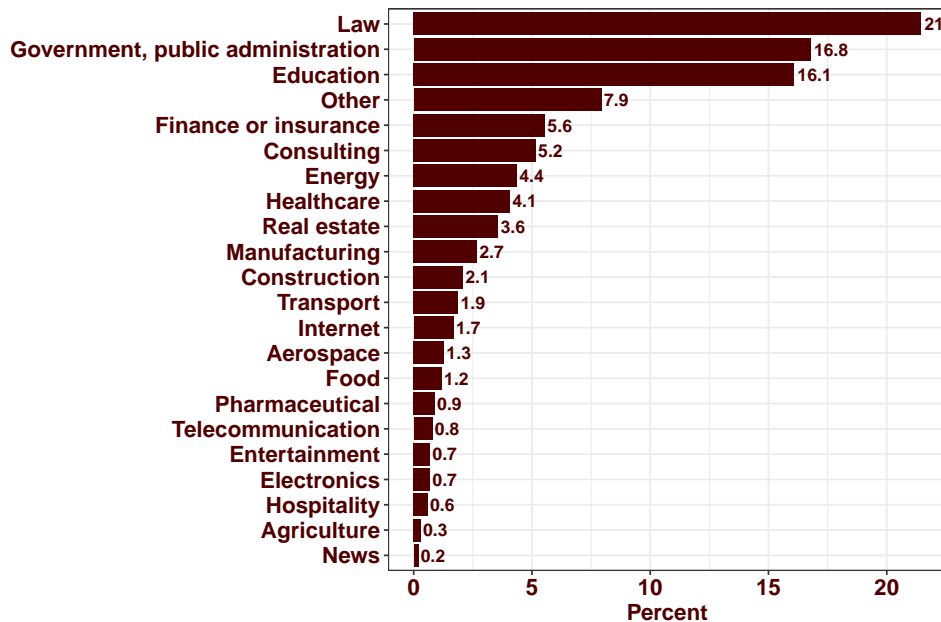
Figure 9: Managing involved in current role across years since graduation.



2.4 Our former students have had success in a wide range of different professions

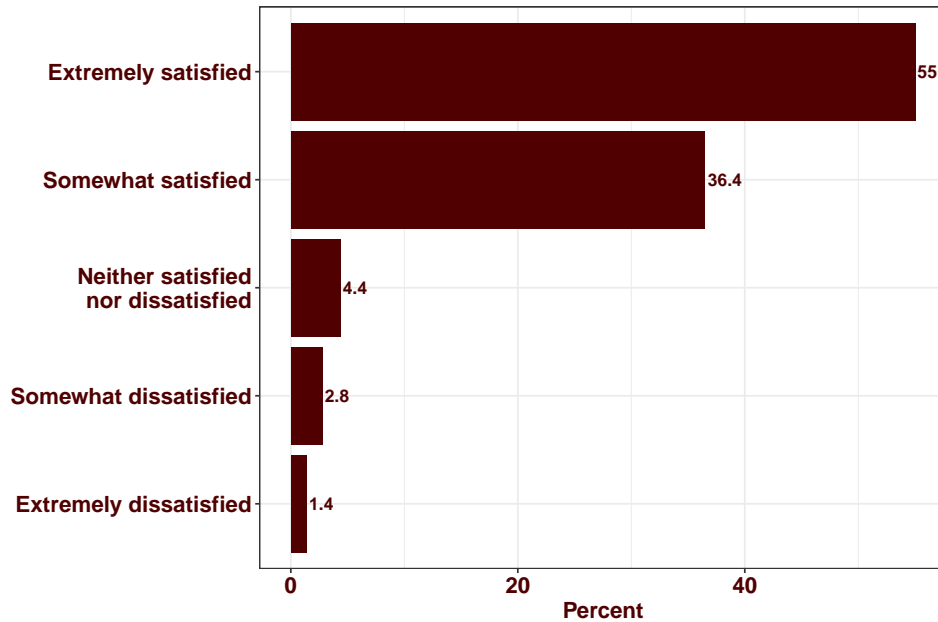
It is a well-known generalization that most political science majors want to become lawyers and/or politicians. It is thus not very surprising that when we look at the responses in Figure 10, we see that the two most frequent industries of employment for our former students are “Law” and “Government, public administration.” It is worth noting, however, that these two categories sum up to only 38.2%, meaning that more than half of our former students are employed in other industries.

Figure 10: Which of the following industries most closely matches the one in which you are employed?



There are, of course, a lot of different ways to measure professional success. In Section 2.3, we saw that our students have done well on one measure of professional success, rising to leadership positions. Another measure of professional success is career satisfaction. In Figure 11, we can see that our former students are overwhelmingly satisfied with their careers thus far. In fact, 55.1% are “extremely satisfied” and 36.4% are “somewhat satisfied” while only 2.8% and 1.4% are “somewhat dissatisfied” or “extremely dissatisfied.”

Figure 11: Overall, how satisfied are you with your career thus far?



Another measure of professional success is income. In Figure 12 we can see the distribution of our former students across income ranges. At the time that our survey data were collected, the national average income was \$61,220.07, which falls into the second category from the bottom in Figure 12 which was the reported range for 27.6% of our former students. If we only count the responses in the categories above this one (with incomes of \$100,000 or more), we can conservatively state that 57.3% of our former students have incomes above the national average.

As we did with leadership measures in Section 2.3, we can get a sense of the over-time trajectory of the incomes of our former students by plotting the percentages of income responses across cohorts of former students defined by the number of years since they graduated from Texas A&M. These data, presented in Figure 13, show that incomes rise steeply as we move from left to right indicating more years since graduation. We see a slight reversal of this trend in the highest income category (those who graduated 35 or more years ago) which is likely due to retirements among that cohort.

Figure 12: Personal income range

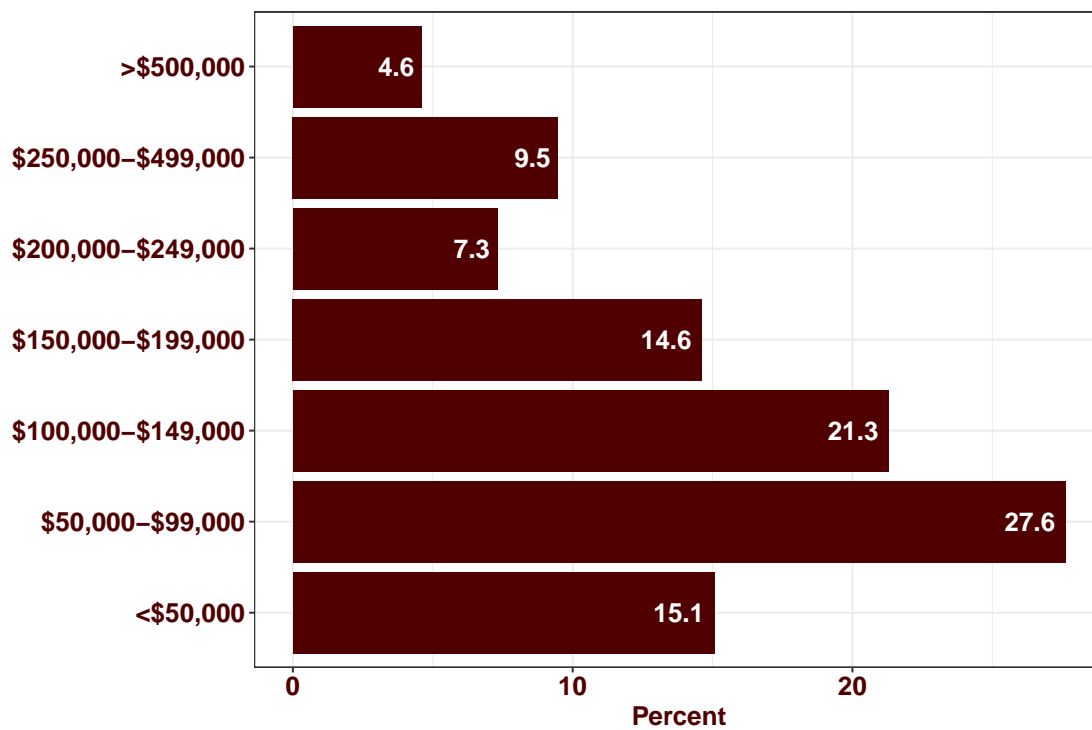
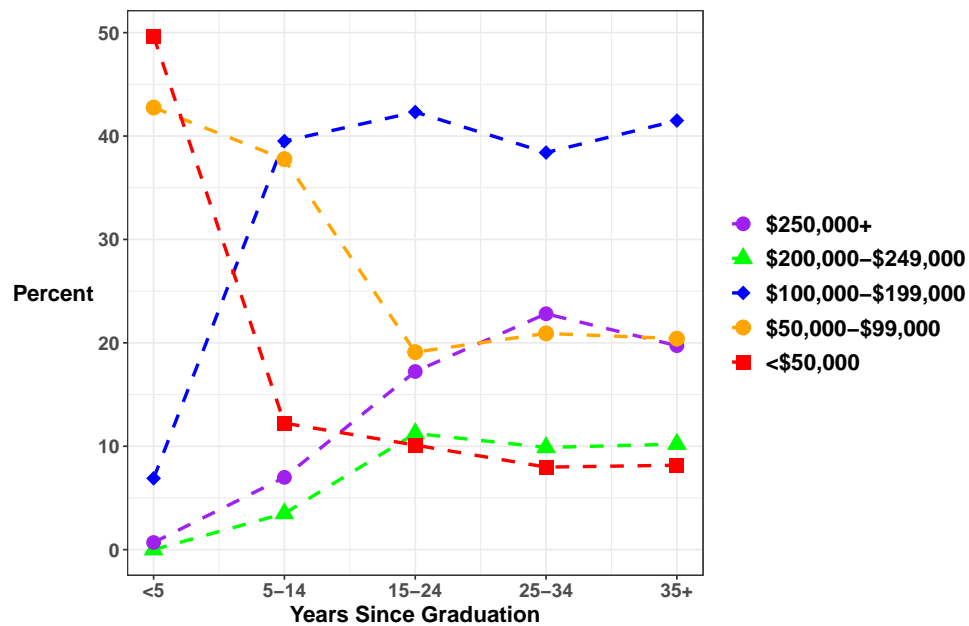


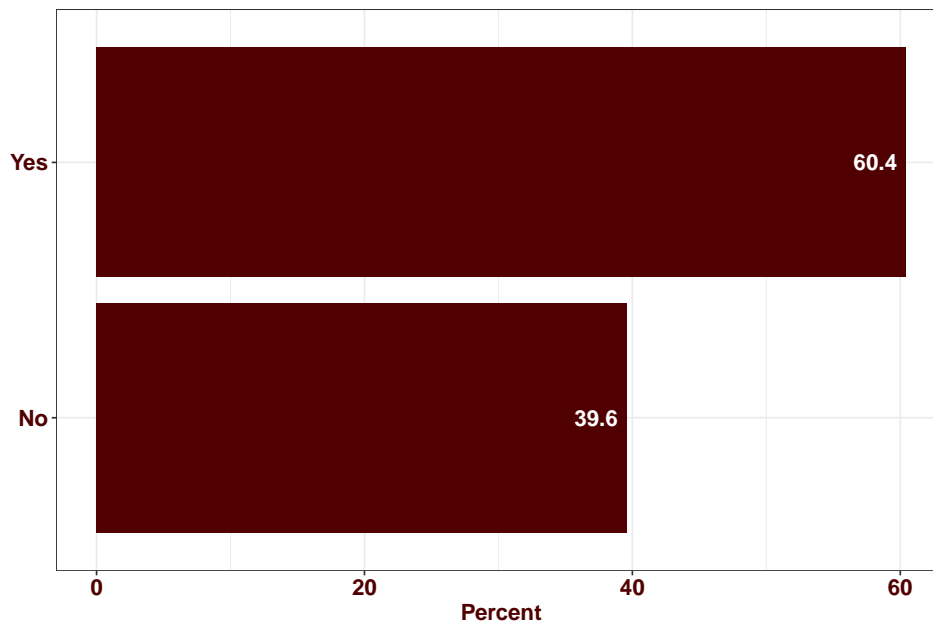
Figure 13: Personal income range across years since graduation.



2.5 A majority of our former students went on to earn further degrees and felt that their undergraduate training prepared them well for the next level(s) of education

The Department of Political Science wholly embraces Texas A&M’s goal of setting its students up for lifelong learning. While we have been aware for some time of many individual former students who have gone on to success in professional schools and other graduate programs, we did not have systematic data on this before now.

Figure 14: Have you enrolled in a graduate or professional degree program since graduating from Texas A&M University?



As we can see in Figure 14 60.4% of our former students have enrolled in a graduate or professional program since graduating. From Figure 15 we can see the wide range of different types of degrees that they have pursued.

In Figure 16, we see that our former students who pursued further degrees felt that their studies in our department prepared them well for these endeavors. 93.8% of our former students felt that they were “adequately,” “more than adequately,” or “very well” prepared for the pursuit of higher degrees with the skills that they developed in political science at Texas A&M.

Figure 15: Please tell us about the graduate and professional degrees you have pursued, including any current enrollments. Mark all that apply.

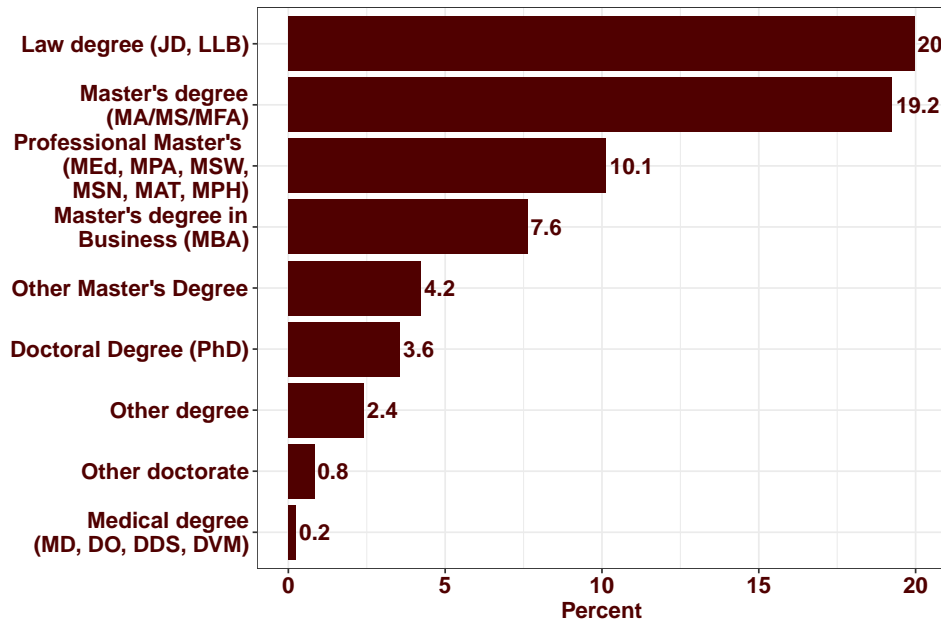
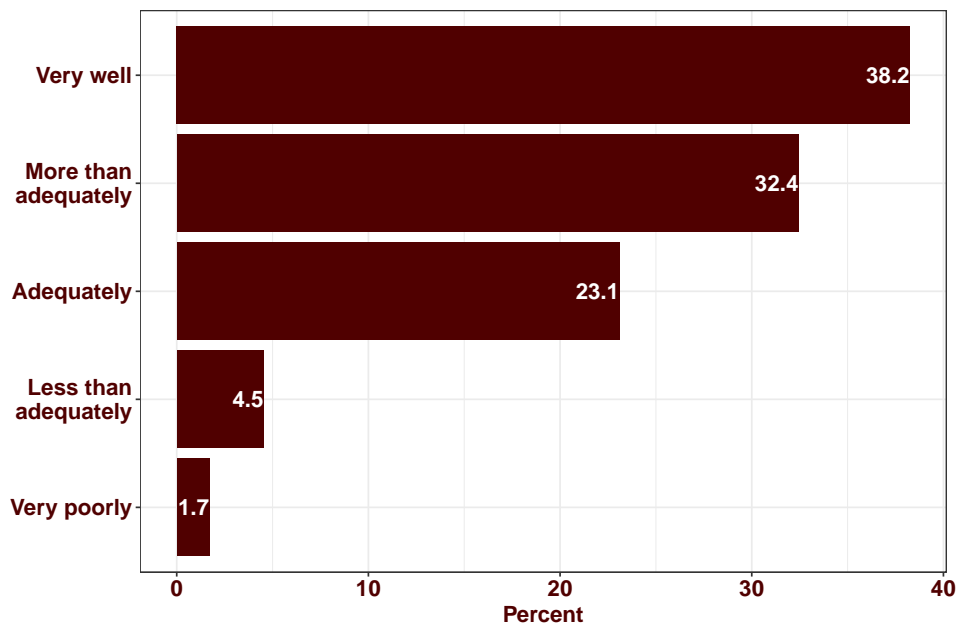


Figure 16: How well did the skills you developed in political science at TAMU prepare you for graduate or professional school?

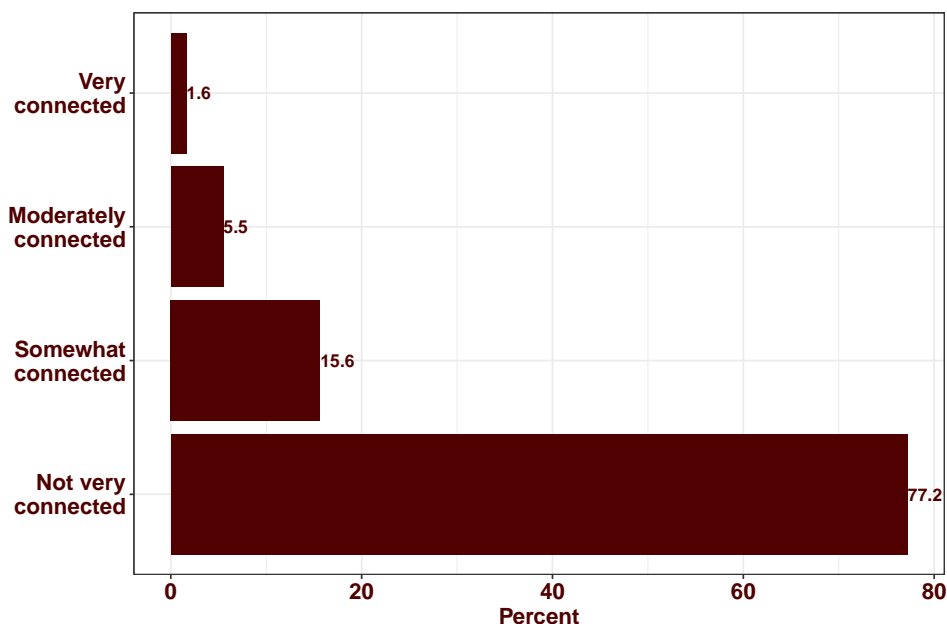


2.6 Our former students would like to be more engaged with the Department and the Bush School

One of the many exciting elements about the move of the Department of Political Science to the Bush School is enhanced opportunities for engagement with our former students. In order to get some ideas about how we should go about this, we asked a series of questions about their current levels of engagement and their interest in future engagement with the Department and the Bush School.

Figures 17 and 18 show that our former students do not currently feel very well connected to the Department of Political Science. Figure 17 shows that the vast majority of our former students, 77.2%, feel that they are “not very connected” with the Department. And Figure 18 shows that a vast majority of them are not in touch with their classmates, the professors, or the staff.

Figure 17: Today, how connected do you feel to the Political Science Department at Texas A&M University?



While the results Figures 17 and 18 clearly make the point that the Department of Political Science has mostly been out of touch with its former students, the results in Figure 19 indicate that a majority of the former students are interested in “receiving updates from the department,”

“visiting College Station to talk with current political science students,” “serve as a mentor to current students or recent graduates,” and/or “serving on an alumni board.”

Figure 18: Are you regularly in touch with people you met through your Political Science classes at TAMU? (Mark all that apply)

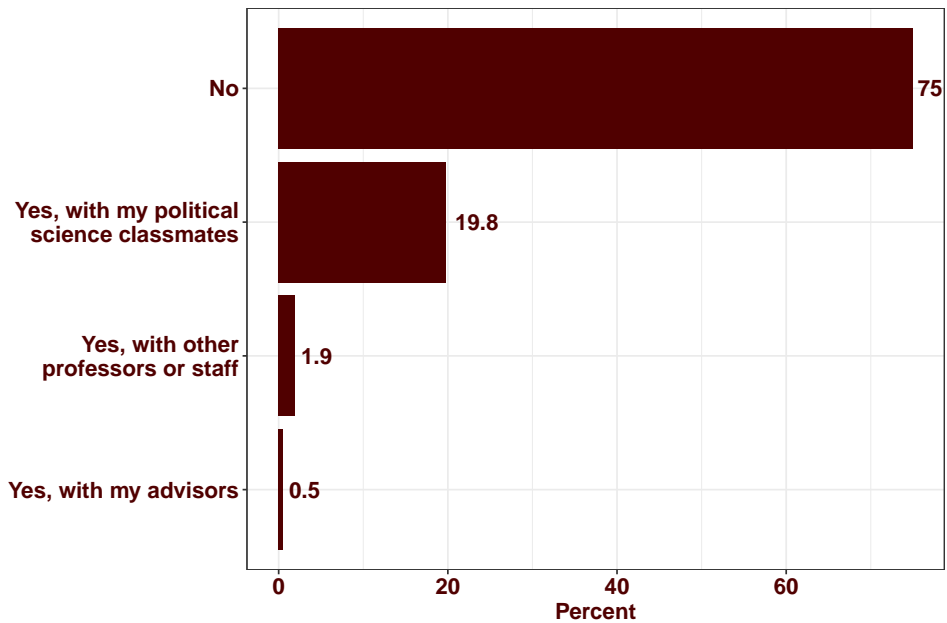
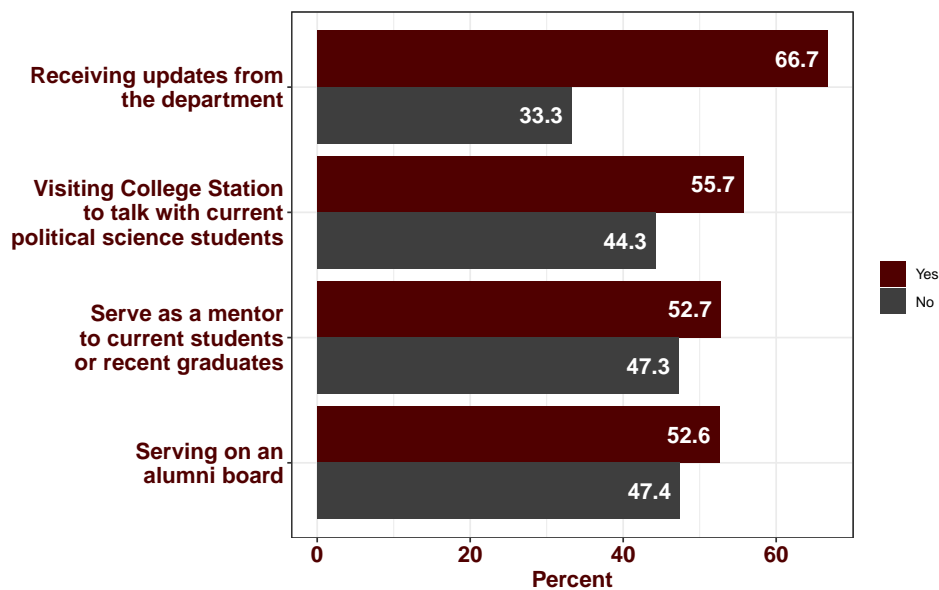


Figure 19: Would you be interested in...



3 Plans for moving forward

Almost everything that we learned about our former students from this survey is very positive. We are proud of the success of our former students and now have plenty of data to share with all stakeholders and with prospective students. Moving forward, we are updating these data with surveys of each graduating class.

One of the most exciting findings from this survey is that our former students want to be more engaged with the Department. Here is a list of what we are doing and planning along these lines:

- **TAMU Political Science newsletter**—Starting in the fall of 2025, we will post on the Department’s website and send out by email a new newsletter updating stakeholders about what is going on in the Department of Political Science. Our plan is to produce this newsletter three times per year, corresponding with the three academic periods that each calendar year is divided into: spring, summer, and fall.
- **“Inside Political Science” pod cast**— Last summer, two of our faculty, Kirby Goidel and Todd Kent, started hosting a pod-cast and television program on KAMU called “Inside Political Science.” On this program, Kirby and Todd discuss critical issues in politics from a Political Science perspective. Guests on this program have and will include TAMU faculty, current students, former students, and researchers from all over the world. This is a great way for former students to stay in touch with the Department and stay current on what Political Science has to say about important issues in the world.
- **Political Science visitation program**—One of the clearest findings of our survey is that our former students want to reconnect with the Department and engage with our current students. We are thus developing a series of ways for these things to happen. These include the following:
 - Class visits
 - Career mentoring opportunities

- Former student panels and workshops

Further information about how to become engaged with this program will be available in the new newsletter.

We are in the early stages of exploring the development of a former students board and some other initiatives that will help us to reconnect and stay in touch with our former students. Details on these and the activities listed above will be made available through the new newsletter.