



FY 2015 Peace Corps Early Termination Report
GLOBAL

February 2016

Overview

Since its establishment in 1961, the Peace Corps has been guided by a mission of world peace and friendship, which it promotes through cross-cultural understanding and community-based development. Volunteers serve around the world and advance this mission by living and working side by side with local partners in one of six programmatic sectors: Agriculture, Community Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, and Youth in Development. Volunteers are trained to speak the local language, and their day-to-day interactions provide a unique perspective about how to best partner with local communities to address development challenges. Volunteers also share their experiences with family, friends, and the American public both during their service and when they return to the United States, further strengthening mutual understanding with other countries and cultures.

Through this unique approach to development, the Peace Corps seeks to build strong relationships between the United States and the people of our partner nations. More than 220,000 Volunteers have served in 141 countries over the agency's 55-year history.

Given the central role of Volunteers in advancing the Peace Corps mission, there can be a significant impact on agency operations when Volunteers leave before completing two years of service.¹ These earlier-than-expected departures are collectively referred to as "early terminations" (ETs). When Volunteers end their service early, their departures reduce the agency's ability to contribute to the project goals and objectives that have been jointly established by the Peace Corps and the host country. This, in turn, can affect the Peace Corps' relationship with the host country and/or host communities.

The Peace Corps makes significant efforts throughout the recruitment, staging, training, and support of Volunteers to minimize early terminations. While the agency continues to target potential causes of early terminations, trends are positive: The three most recent cohorts of Volunteers for which there is complete data (i.e., Volunteers who began their service in fiscal years 2010, 2011, and 2012) illustrate a decreasing trend in both the overall ET rates and the rate of resignations.

The agency outlines comprehensive policies and procedures governing the circumstances under which a Peace Corps Volunteer's service may end early. Specifically, the Peace Corps Manual stipulates that an early termination should occur when a Volunteer "cannot or should not remain in service until his or her projected completion of service (COS) date."² This manual section also identifies the four types of early termination:

- **Resignation:** A resignation is a decision made by a Volunteer who no longer wishes to continue his or her Peace Corps service.
- **Medical Separation:** If a Volunteer has or develops a medical condition that the Peace Corps cannot medically accommodate or resolve within 45 days, the Volunteer will be medically

¹ For the purposes of this report, the term "Volunteer" includes both trainees and Volunteers in the two-year Peace Corps Volunteer program. This definition does not include Volunteers who serve in the short-term Peace Corps Response program.

² Peace Corps Manual, Section 284.

separated. This decision is made by the Office of Health Services in consultation with the Peace Corps medical officer at the post and, as needed, appropriate medical consultants.

- **Administrative Separation:** Pursuant to the Peace Corps Act, 22 U.S.C. 2504(i), the service of a Volunteer may be terminated at the discretion of the Peace Corps staff.³ This option is invoked when a Volunteer commits a major violation of a Peace Corps policy, including policies designed to ensure their health and safety.
- **Interrupted Service:** A Volunteer may be separated with “interrupted service” status if the country director determines that circumstances beyond the control of the Volunteer make it necessary for the Volunteer to leave his or her present assignment. Because the nature of circumstances is beyond the Volunteer’s control, interrupted service is not used in lieu of administrative separation. Examples of cases in which this type of early termination is used include civil unrest, conflict, and outbreaks of major diseases in the country of service that put the Volunteers’ health or safety at risk.

The source for the early termination data in this report is the agency’s Volunteer database (PCVDBMS). Data on the dates and reasons for early terminations are entered by post staff. These data are downloaded, cleaned, and archived⁴ on a quarterly basis by the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP).

This report describes several measures of early terminations. It provides the annual rate of all early terminations for fiscal year 2015 and compares the FY 2015 results to those of the previous six fiscal years. Several of the charts in this report also disaggregate the annual resignation rate as a specific type of early termination, displayed side by side with the overall rate of early termination.

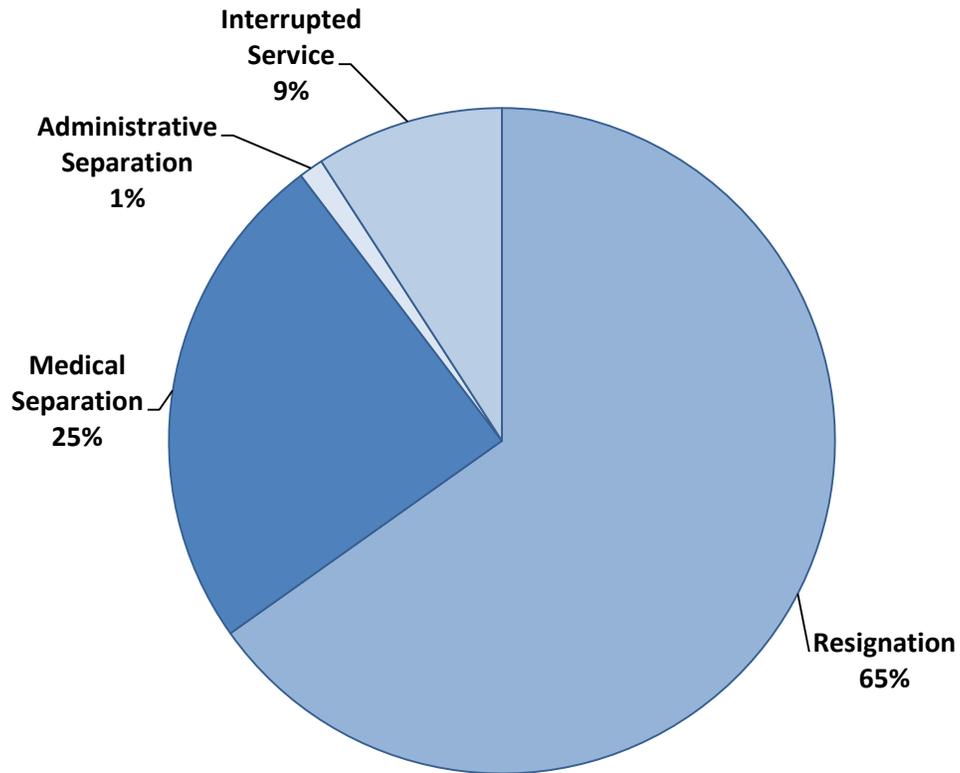
Two additional measures—cohort rate and average length of service—are included to provide further context on the tenure of Volunteers. The report also disaggregates the annual early termination rate for FY 2015 using six demographic characteristics on which the Peace Corps collects data, pursuant to the [Kate Puzey Act of 2011](#): sex, age group, marital status, education level, race, and ethnicity.

³ Volunteers who are informed by their country director that they will be administratively separated from the Peace Corps are given a 24-hour window to voluntarily resign from their service. If they choose this alternative, they are entered into the database as a resignation.

⁴ Data sets are archived to maintain consistency and to minimize the potential for fluctuations in annual counts due to corrections or updates to individual Volunteer records over time.

Early Terminations by Type

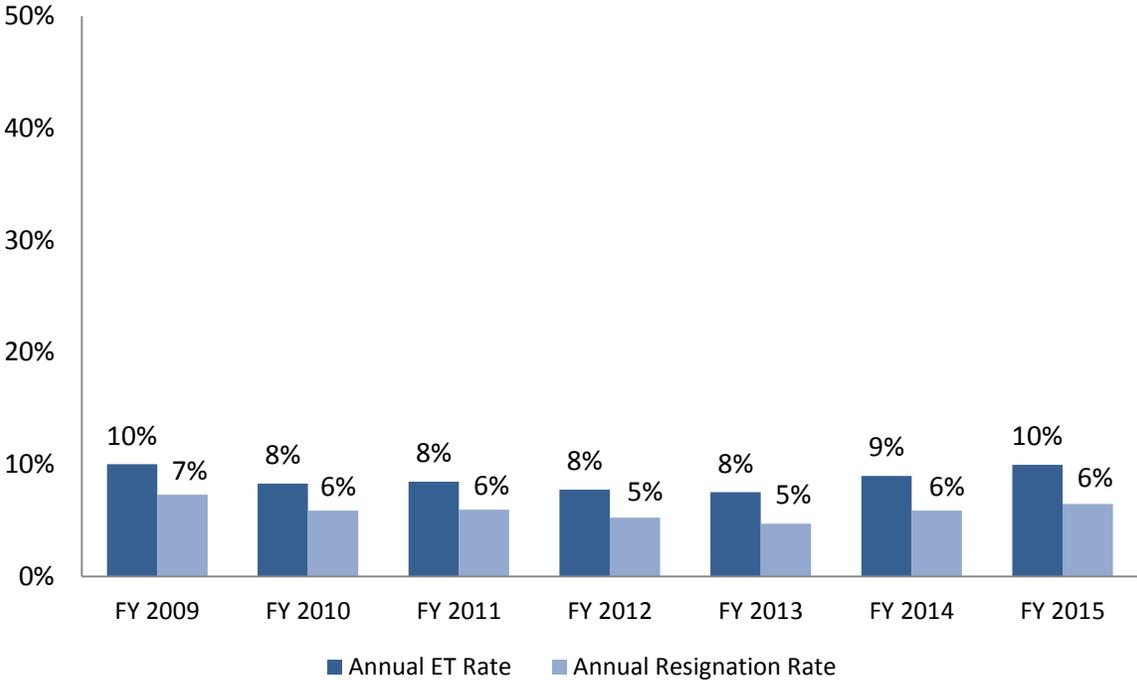
Percentage of Global Early Terminations in FY 2015
by Type



Summary: In FY 2015, 1,008 Volunteers did not complete their full service. Of these 1,008 Volunteers, 657 (65% of all ETs) resigned. The second largest number of early terminations came from medical separations (247 Volunteers, or 25% of all ETs). These results are similar to FY 2014.

Annual Early Termination and Resignation Rates

Global Annual Early Termination and Resignation Rates for FY 2009-2015



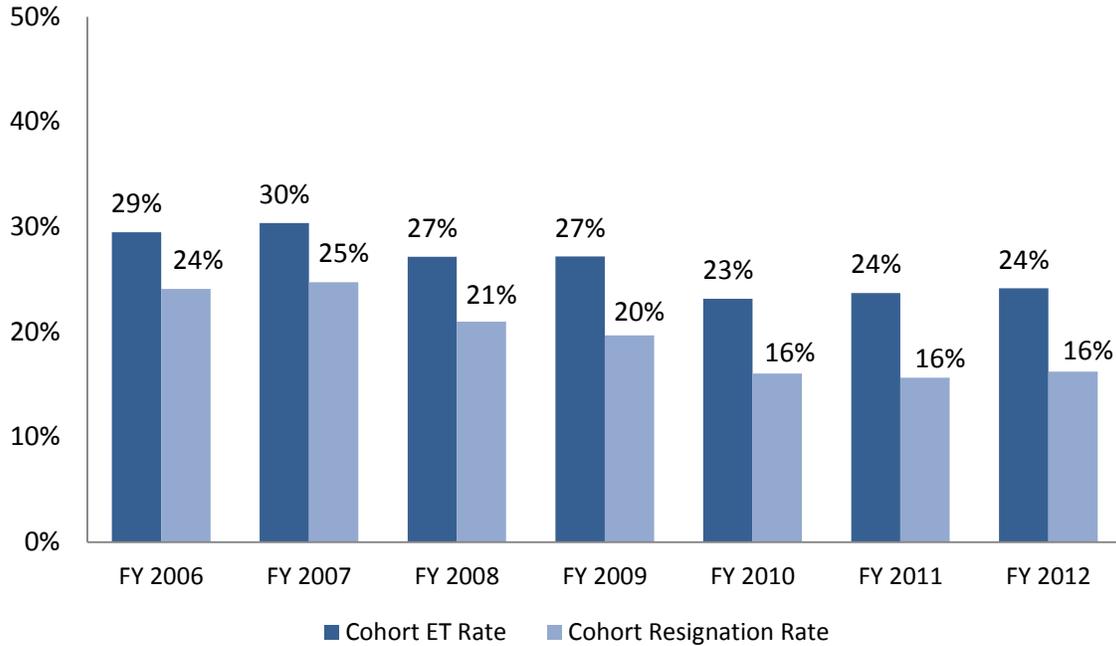
Summary: In FY 2015, 1,008 of the 10,120 Volunteers who served (10%) did not complete their full service. Six percent of the 10,120 Volunteers resigned. This result is similar to FY 2014.

Calculation: The annual ET rate is calculated for each fiscal year as the number of Volunteers who left Peace Corps service early divided by the total number of Volunteers who served at any time during the fiscal year. This calculation is based on the enter-on-duty (EOD) date—when an individual arrives at the Peace Corps’ pre-departure orientation prior to traveling to the country of service for training. Resignations consistently account for the largest number of early terminations.

$$\text{Annual Early Termination Rate} = \left(\frac{\text{Number of Volunteers Early Terminating in a Fiscal Year}}{\text{Total Number of Volunteers Serving in a Fiscal Year}} \right) \times 100$$

Cohort Early Termination and Resignation Rates

Global Early Termination and Resignation Rates of Volunteer Cohorts for FY 2006-2012



Summary: In FY 2012, 840 of the 3,477 Volunteers who began their Peace Corps service in FY 2012 (24%) left early. Resignations accounted for the majority of these early terminations, affecting 16 percent of the Volunteers in the FY 2012 cohort, or 564 people. This result is similar to FY 2014.

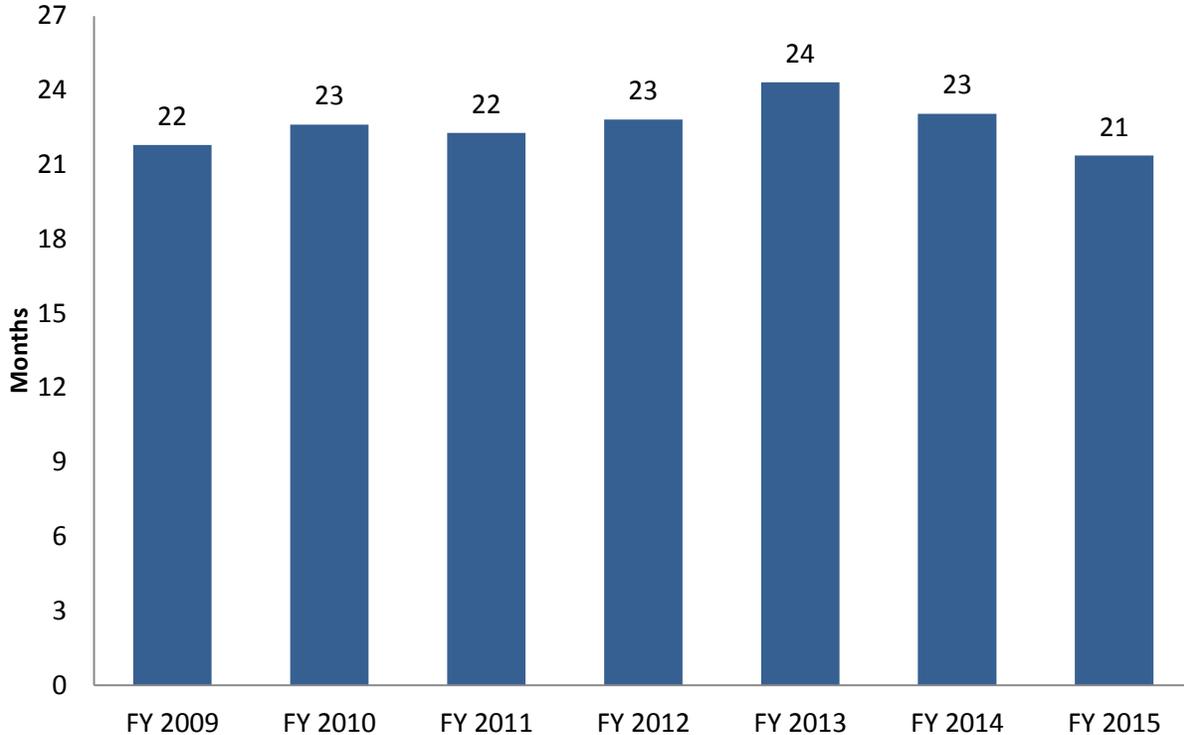
Calculation: The cohort early termination rate is based on a dataset that includes every Volunteer whose enter-on-duty date occurred in the fiscal year. The cohort ET rate is calculated as the number of Volunteers in the fiscal year cohort who terminated early (at any point in their service) divided by the total number of Volunteers in that fiscal year cohort. The cohort rates are not calculated until at least 95 percent of all Volunteers in the cohort have ended their service. While the annual ET rate is akin to asking what percentage of all university students dropped out in a given year, this measure is akin to asking what percentage of a specific freshman class dropped out before graduating.

Volunteers are typically expected to serve 27 months from staging to close of service. For this reason, the agency calculates the cohort rate after approximately three years to ensure that 95 percent of the cohort has reached the end of their service. As a result, the most recent fiscal year cohort rate that is available for FY 2015 is the cohort from FY 2012.

$$\text{Cohort Early Termination Rate} = \left(\frac{\text{Number of Cohort Volunteers Terminating Early}}{\text{Total Number of Volunteers in the Cohort}} \right) \times 100$$

Average Length of Service

Global Average Length of Service for FY 2009-2015



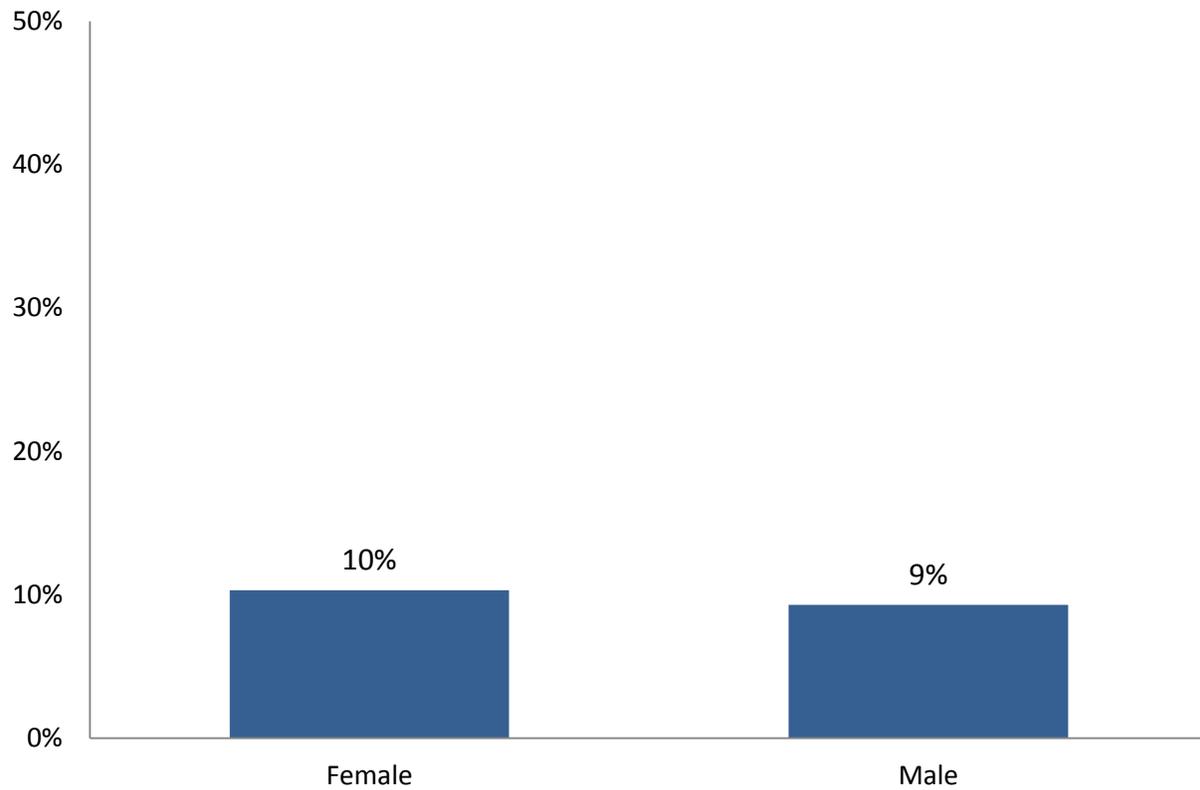
Summary: The average length of service of all Volunteers who ended their Peace Corps service in FY 2015 was 21 months compared to 23 months on average in FY 2014 and 24 months in FY 2013.

Calculation: The average length of service is calculated by measuring the number of months served by each Volunteer who has ended his or her service in a fiscal year. The length of service period begins with the Volunteer’s enter-on-duty (EOD) date and ends with the date of either the close of service (COS) or early termination (ET). The average length of service is calculated by dividing the total number of months served by all Volunteers who left service in the fiscal year by the total number of Volunteers who ended their service in the same fiscal year.

$$\text{Average Length of Service} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Months Served by Volunteers Completing or Ending Service in the Fiscal Year}}{\text{Number of Volunteers Completing or Ending Service in the Fiscal Year}}$$

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Sex

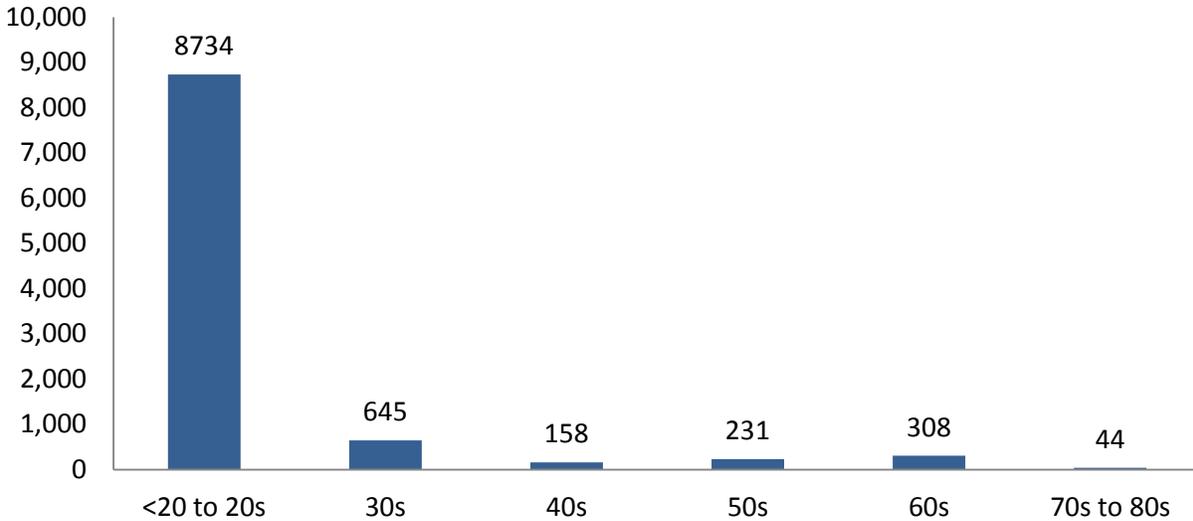
FY 2015 Early Termination Rate by Sex



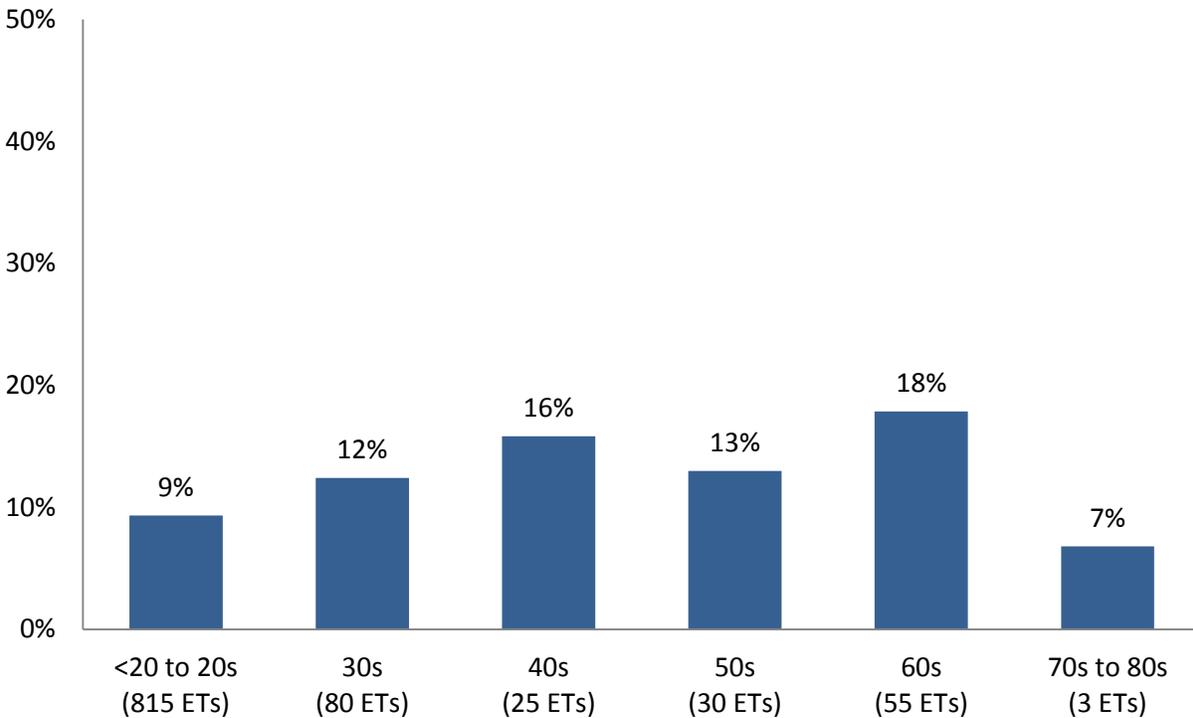
Summary: In FY 2015, 657 out of 6,363 female Volunteers (10%) and 349 out of 3,751 male Volunteers (9%) left service early. No data on sex is available for the remaining six Volunteers who served in FY 2015.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Age Group

Number of FY 2015 Volunteers by Age Group



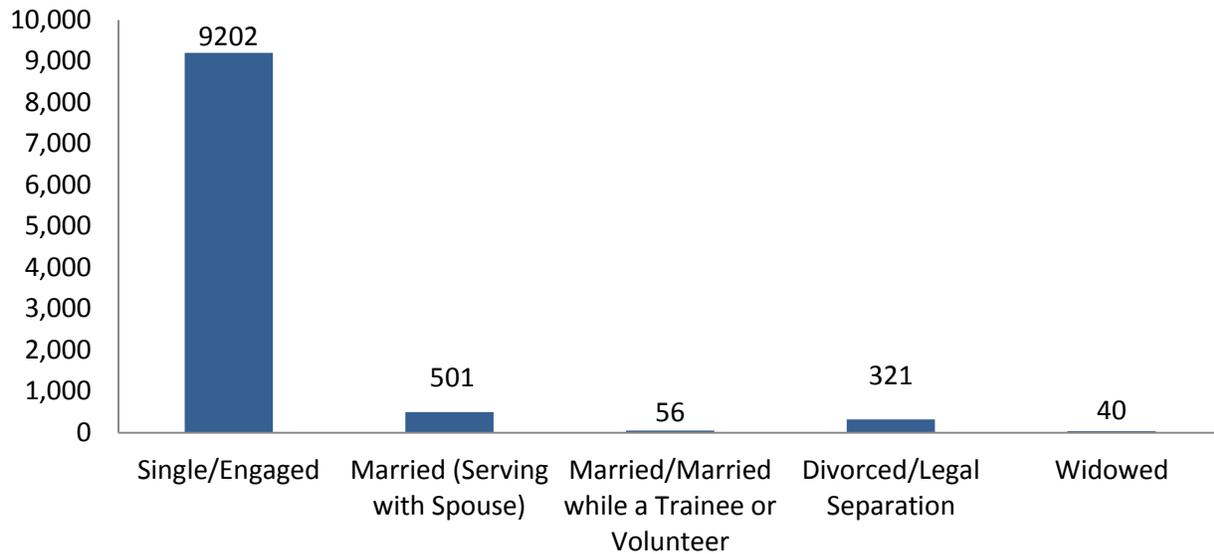
Number and Percentage of ETs by Age Group



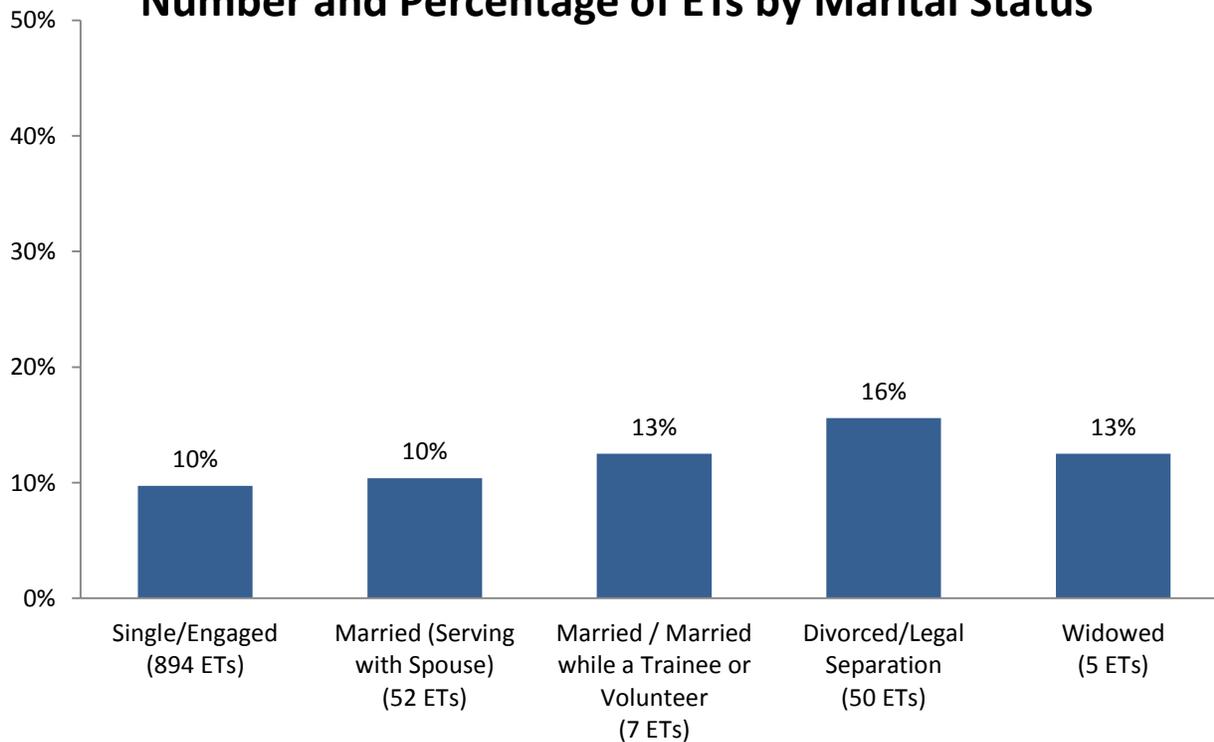
Summary: The vast majority of Volunteers are in their 20s. This group has the second lowest early termination rate of any age group (9%). The highest ET rate of any group in FY 2015 was found among Volunteers in their 60s (18%).

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Marital Status

Number of FY 2015 Volunteers by Marital Status



Number and Percentage of ETs by Marital Status

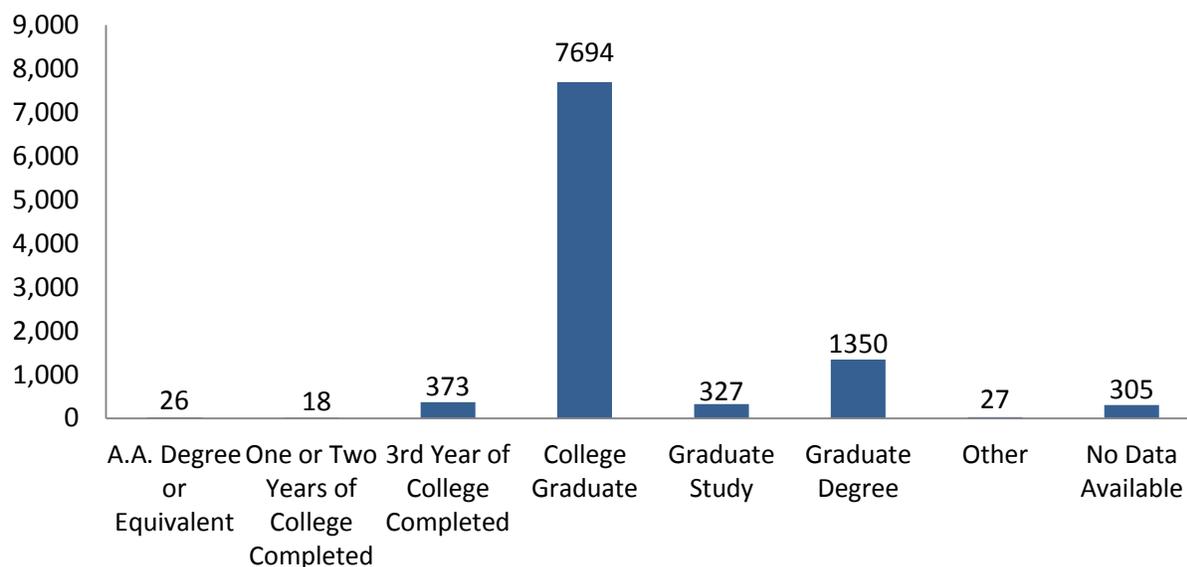


Summary: The vast majority of Volunteers are single. Early termination rates vary modestly across marital status groups from a low of 10 percent among single Volunteers and those who are married and serving with their spouses to a high of 16 percent for Volunteers who are divorced or legally separated.

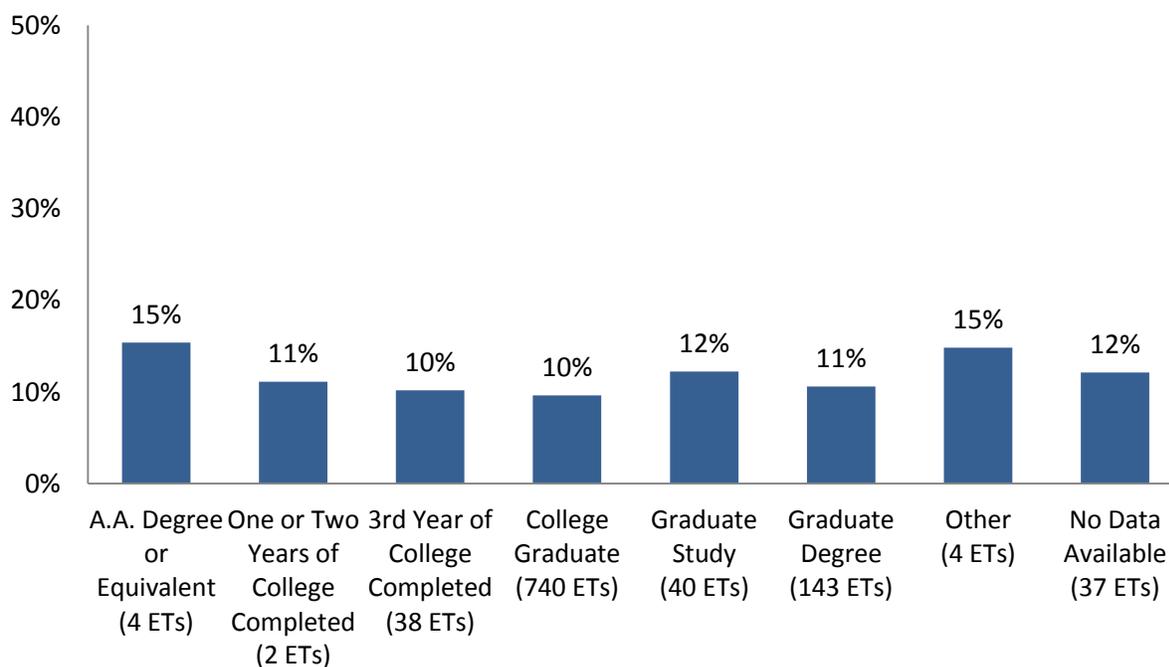
Calculation Notes: The group of “single” Volunteers includes nine Volunteers who were reported as engaged but not yet married, one of whom left service early. The “married” group includes 13 Volunteers who were coded as “married while they were in training or during their service,” two of whom terminated their service early.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Education Level

Number of FY 2015 Volunteers by Highest Educational Level



FY 2015 Early Termination Rate by Highest Education Level

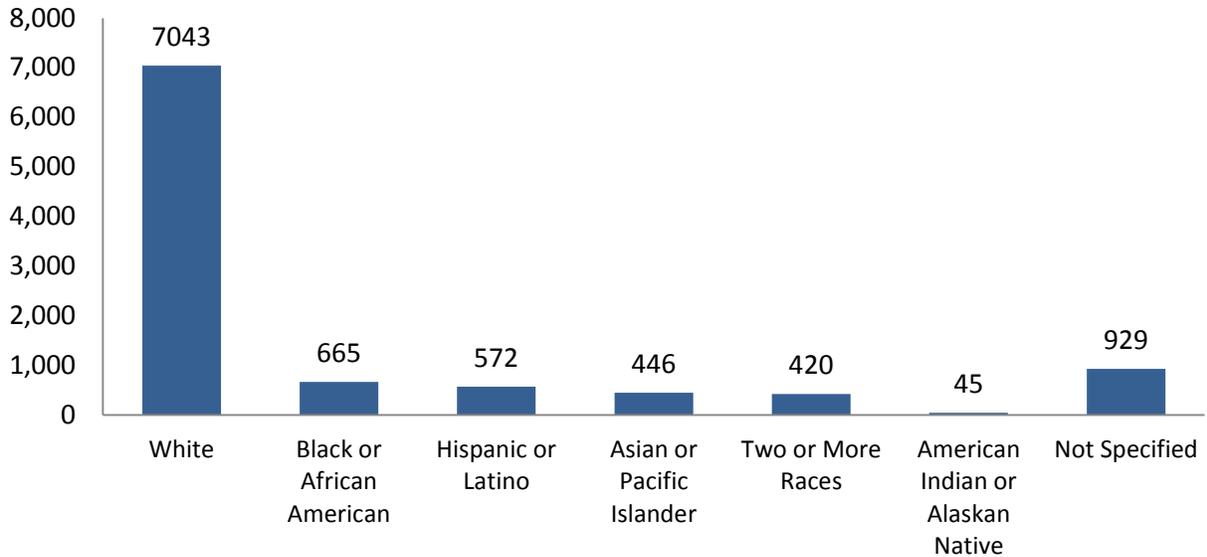


Summary: The vast majority of Volunteers have an undergraduate or graduate degree. Early termination rates vary modestly by educational level from a low of 10 percent among Volunteers with at least three years of completed college studies or an undergraduate degree to a high of 15 percent of Volunteers who have an associate's degree.

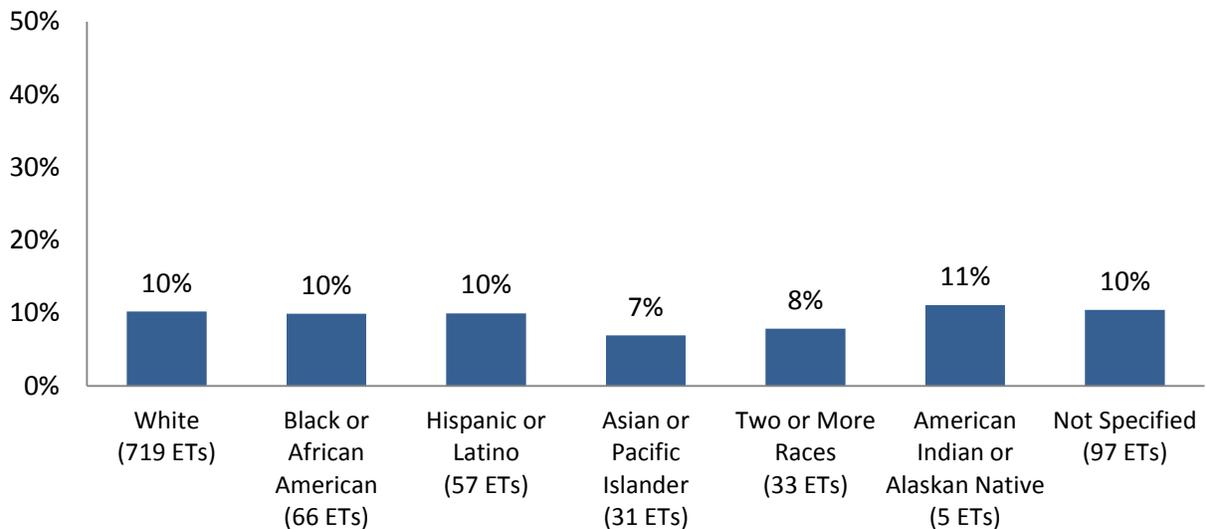
Calculation Notes: The group of "other" education levels includes small groups of Volunteers who did not graduate high school (1 Volunteer), high school graduates with no further education (13 Volunteers), technical school graduates (6 Volunteers), and people who were coded as "other" in the source data without any further information (7 Volunteers). No educational data were available for 305 people.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Race

FY 2015 Volunteers by Race



FY 2015 Early Termination Rate by Race

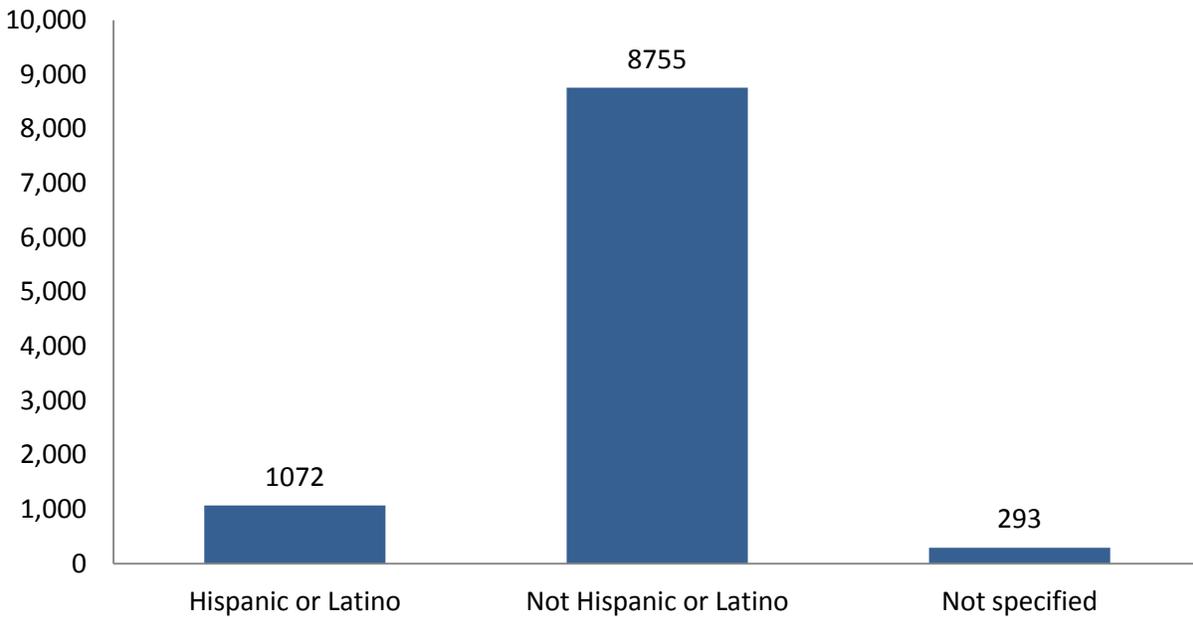


Summary: Early termination rates are very similar across all racial groups.

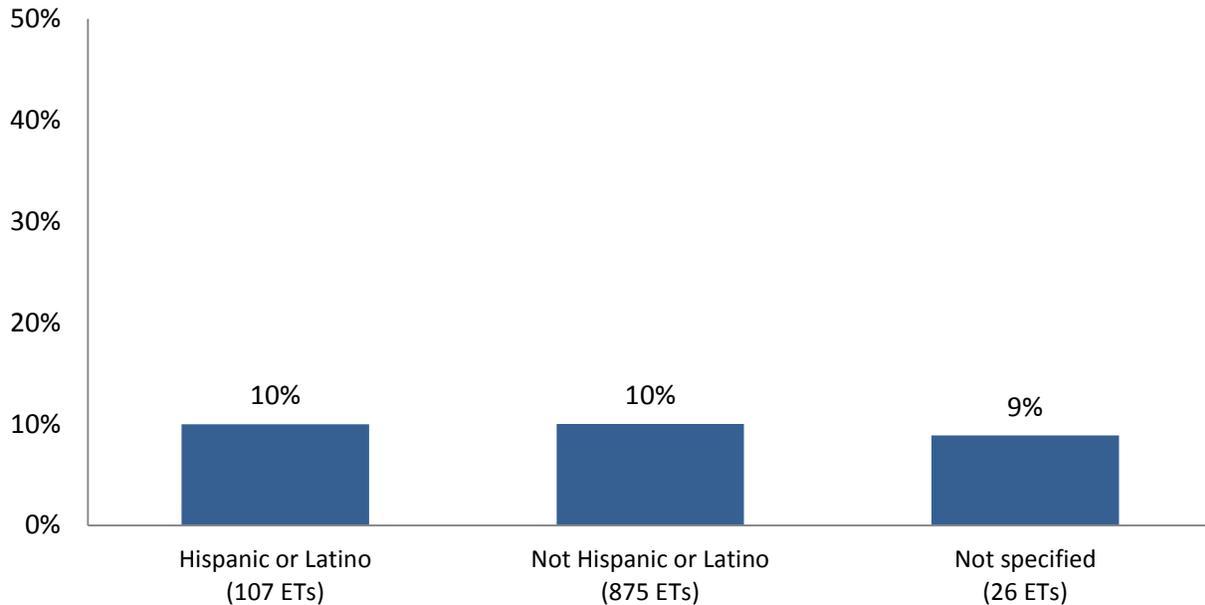
Calculation Notes: The Peace Corps application includes two demographic questions on race and ethnicity. The results for "Volunteers by race" on this page show the number of Volunteers who self-reported "Hispanic or Latino" as their *racial identity* in their application (572 individuals). The charts on the following page include Volunteers who reported "Hispanic or Latino" *ethnicity* (1,072 individuals), some of whom reported a different racial identity.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Ethnicity

FY 2015 Volunteers by Ethnicity



FY 2015 Early Termination Rate by Ethnicity



Summary: Early termination rates are the same for Hispanic and non-Hispanic Volunteers.

Concluding Notes

Contact Information

For questions or comments regarding the methodology or data in this report, please contact the Peace Corps' Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) at OSIRP@peacecorps.gov.

Acknowledgements

Christopher Praley, Management Analyst, OSIRP: data analysis and document author; Karen Van Roekel, Chief of Strategic Planning and Data Management, OSIRP: final analysis in collaboration with author and document review; Jeff Kwiecinski, Deputy Director, OSIRP: document review; Samuel Ludwig, Writer/Editor, OSIRP: document review; Jeremy Haldeman, Director, Office of Congressional Relations: document review.

About the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps traces its roots and mission to 1960, when then-Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew an agency of the federal government devoted to world peace and friendship.

About the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP)

OSIRP advances evidence-based management at the Peace Corps by guiding agency strategic planning; monitoring and evaluating agency-level performance and programs; conducting research to generate new insights in the fields of international development, cultural exchange, and Volunteer service; enhancing the stewardship and governance of agency data; and, helping to shape agency engagement on high-level, governmentwide initiatives.