



Peace  
Corps

**2016**  
**End of Service**  
**Crime Survey Report**

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# Contents

OVERVIEW.....	1
Types and Level of Crime Volunteers Experienced.....	1
Economic Crimes.....	1
Gender Differences.....	2
Changes in Sexual Assault Reporting.....	2
Using Crime Survey Data to Reduce Crime.....	2
Highlights.....	4
BACKGROUND.....	5
Survey Administration.....	5
Security Incident Questionnaire Structure and Content.....	5
Time Frame.....	6
Table 1. Time periods reflected in responses from Volunteers that ended service in 2014 through 2016.....	6
Representativeness of Data.....	7
Table 2. Characteristics of Volunteers that completed the Security Incident Questionnaire compared to characteristics of all Volunteers.....	7
Crime Classification and Definitions.....	8
Table 3. Crime definitions and classification hierarchy.....	8
Crime Prevalence and Levels of Victimization.....	9
Crime Prevalence Rates.....	9
Figure 1. Average uneven economic development index score.....	9
Figure 2. Crime prevalence rates (n = 3,024) (% of respondents that ended service in 2016).....	10
Figure 3. Crime prevalence rates, by gender (% of respondents that ended service in 2016).....	10
Gender Differences in Crime Prevalence Rates.....	11
Level of Victimization Rates.....	11
Figure 4. Level of victimization (n = 3,024) (% of respondents that ended service in 2016).....	12
Gender Differences in Level of Victimization Rates.....	12
Figure 5. Level of victimization, by gender (% of respondents that ended service in 2016).....	12

Changes in Crime Prevalence and Levels of Victimization, 2014 — 2016.....	13
Change in the Types of Crimes Volunteers Experienced .....	13
Change in the Overall Proportion of Volunteers that Experienced Crime.....	13
Change in the Amount of Crime Volunteers Experienced .....	13
Figure 6. Crime experienced by female Volunteers 2014—2016 (% of exit cohort).....	14
Figure 7. Crime experienced by male Volunteers 2014—2016 (% of exit cohort).....	15
CHANGES IN SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTING.....	16
Table 4. Comparison of reporting and population prevalence rates for sexual assaults, females .....	17
Using Crime Survey Data to Improve Volunteer Safety.....	17

# OVERVIEW

The *End of Service Crime Survey Report, 2016* contains information on three topics. First, it provides descriptive statistics on the types and level of crime experienced by Peace Corps Volunteers<sup>1</sup> that ended their service in calendar years 2014 through 2016. Second, it describes recent changes in the proportions of sexual assault victims that reported incidents to Peace Corps staff. Third, it describes a new process the Peace Corps has implemented to put crime survey data to use to reduce future crimes against Volunteers.

The crime metrics in this report are based on data from the Security Incident Questionnaire, an online survey form the agency asks Volunteers to fill out when they leave the Peace Corps. Data from the Security Incident Questionnaire are used to generate two crime metrics. The first, *crime prevalence rates*, describes the proportions of Volunteers that experienced each of 11 different types of crime. The second, *level of victimization rates*, is a summary measure of the overall proportion of Volunteers that were crime victims and the amount of crime individual victims experienced. Both metrics reflect crimes that happened to Volunteers throughout their entire Peace Corps service (a period averaging approximately two years), and both also encompass the combination of crime incidents Volunteers reported to Peace Corps staff as well as those they did not.<sup>2</sup>

## Types and Level of Crime Volunteers Experienced

### Economic Crimes

Peace Corps Volunteers often live in conditions of hardship, working directly with local people and organizations in communities throughout the world to build sustainable solutions to persistent challenges. Many communities where Volunteers live and work are in countries that experience some of the highest levels of relative poverty in the world, a factor associated with higher rates of economic crimes. Since Volunteers began filling out the Security Incident Questionnaire in March 2014, three of the most common crimes have consistently been economic crimes — theft, robbery, and burglary.

During their time in the Peace Corps, approximately 1 in 3 Volunteers that ended service in 2016 had money or property stolen under non-confrontational circumstances (i.e., theft) and about 1 in 10 had someone take or attempt to take property from them by force or threat of force (i.e., robbery). Also, approximately 1 in 6 Volunteers had someone enter their residence or hotel/hostel room without

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<sup>1</sup> The term Volunteer is used throughout to refer to the combination of Volunteers, Response Volunteers, and trainees.

<sup>2</sup> The agency documents information about the subset of crimes Volunteers report to Peace Corps staff in its Consolidated Incident Reporting System. Data pertaining exclusively to reported crime incidents is published annually in the series, *Statistical Report of Crimes against Volunteers*. [www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports/)

permission, many times for the purpose of stealing items (i.e. burglary). Typical items taken from Volunteers include cell phones and other small electronics, wallets, purses, small sums of cash, and (in the case of burglaries) food items, clothing, and toiletries.

### Gender Differences

Female Volunteers experience relatively more crime throughout their time in the Peace Corps than do male Volunteers. Among Volunteers that ended service in 2014 through 2016, approximately two-thirds of female Volunteers experienced crime compared to about one-half of male Volunteers. Two factors help explain this difference. First, female Volunteers experienced theft and burglary, two of the most common crimes, at higher rates than male Volunteers. Second, female Volunteers are significantly more likely than male Volunteers to experience sexual assaults.

The Peace Corps collects information on three types of sexual assaults: non-aggravated sexual assault (i.e., unwanted sexual contact without force), aggravated sexual assault (i.e., unwanted sexual contact by force, threat of force, or when the victim is incapable of consenting), and rape (i.e., penetration without consent or when the victim is incapable of consenting). After theft, non-aggravated sexual assault is the second most common crime female Volunteers experience. Of the Volunteers that left the Peace Corps in 2016, about 1 in 4 female Volunteers had someone kiss her on the mouth or touch her bottom, crotch, or breasts without her consent, or attempt to do these things. Aggravated sexual assault and rape are far less common (respectively, 7 percent and 5 percent of females that ended Peace Corps service in 2016 experienced these crimes), but are also experienced at higher rates by female than male Volunteers.

### Changes in Sexual Assault Reporting

The Peace Corps instituted numerous changes in policies, programming, and training following passage of the *Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011* that were intended, among other things, to increase Volunteers' reporting of rapes, aggravated sexual assaults, and non-aggravated sexual assaults. Comparing female Volunteers that left the Peace Corps in 2015 and 2016, the proportion of female rape victims and non-aggravated sexual assault victims that reported incidents to Peace Corps staff increased by approximately 5 percent. However, the proportion of female aggravated sexual assault victims that reported incidents decreased by approximately 7 percent.

### Using Crime Survey Data to Reduce Crime

In late 2015, the Peace Corps began disseminating information from the Security Incident Questionnaire to staff in Peace Corps' host countries. Because the Security Incident Questionnaire captures information about crimes that Volunteers never reported to staff in addition to the subset staff were made aware of,

data from the Security Incident Questionnaire provides a more robust appraisal of crime than was previously available.

Throughout 2016, Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers from the Office of Safety and Security guided staff in each Peace Corps host country in appraising information about crimes that had happened to Volunteers that served in their respective countries. Staff used this newly available information to determine ways they could revise or supplement their existing safety and security programs to address identified problems. At the end of 2016, the vast majority of Peace Corps countries had completed this assessment and planning process (the exceptions were primarily a few recently opened/reopened posts). Staff have submitted plans that include improvements in the crime avoidance training Volunteers receive at the onset of and throughout the course of their service, strategies to limit Volunteer exposure to transportation routes where crimes occur, and changes in the selection of the communities in which Volunteers live and work.

## Highlights

- Three of the most common crimes Volunteers experience throughout their Peace Corps service are economic crimes. Among Volunteers that ended Peace Corps service in 2016:
  - 30 percent experienced theft (i.e., property taken under non-confrontational circumstance),
  - 10 percent experienced robbery (i.e., property taken by force or threat of force), and
  - 14 percent experienced burglary (i.e., unauthorized entry into Volunteers' occupied or unoccupied residence or hotel/hostel room, often involving theft).
- Female Volunteers experience more crime than male Volunteers. Among Volunteers that ended service in 2016:
  - 64 percent of female Volunteers experienced crime compared to 52 percent of male Volunteers; and
  - 45 percent of female Volunteers experienced multiple different types of crimes compared to 30 percent of male Volunteers.
- Overall, prevalence rates for individual types of crime were relatively stable across the cohorts of Volunteers that ended service between 2014 and 2016; however, there were minor changes in:
  - the prevalence of theft, which decreased by 4 percent among male Volunteers and 3 percent among females; and
  - the prevalence of non-aggravated sexual assault, which increased 4 percent among female Volunteers.
- Changes in the reporting of sexual assaults to Peace Corps staff varied. Comparing female Volunteers that left the Peace Corps in 2015 and 2016:
  - the proportion of victims of rape that reported incidents increased by 4.8 percent (from 50 percent to 54.8 percent);
  - the proportion of victims of aggravated sexual assault that reported incidents decreased by 6.7 percent (from 23.4 percent to 16.7 percent); and
  - the proportion of victims of non-aggravated sexual assault that reported incidents increased (from 20 percent to 26 percent).
- Staff at Peace Corps posts around the globe have reviewed information from the Security Incident Questionnaire, using it to devise ways to revise or supplement existing safety and security programs to reduce future crimes against Volunteers.



## BACKGROUND

Each year, about 3,500 Volunteers leave the Peace Corps after living and working in local communities around the world. In March 2014, the Peace Corps began asking departing Volunteers to fill out the Security Incident Questionnaire<sup>3</sup>, a confidential online survey form. The Security Incident Questionnaire collects information about crimes Volunteers may have experienced at any point in their service, a period averaging approximately two years. It also captures information on the combination of crimes Volunteers reported to Peace Corps staff (which are documented in the agency's administrative database, the Consolidated Incident Reporting System) as well as crimes that were not reported to staff.

Two crime metrics are calculated using data from the Security Incident Questionnaire: *crime prevalence rates* and *level of victimization rates*. Crime prevalence rates describe the proportions of Volunteers that experienced each of 11 individual types of crimes during their service (see definitions on page 8). These rates are useful for understanding the likelihood of specific types of crimes occurring. Some Volunteers, however, experience the same type of crime on several occasions (i.e., repeat victimization) and some experience a variety of different types of crimes (i.e., multiple victimization). This is where the second crime metric — level of victimization rate — comes in. This second rate conveys information about the overall proportion of Volunteers that experienced any crime at all and the level of crime individual victims experienced.

### Survey Administration

Volunteers are asked to fill out the Security Incident Questionnaire at the end of service, whether they complete their service as initially planned or end service early. Volunteers are required to log on to the Security Incident Questionnaire and read the purpose of the survey, but may then decline to fill it out. At multiple points in the questionnaire, Volunteers are reminded that they have the option to skip questions or discontinue completing the survey if they find questions upsetting. Information is also provided about how to contact trained professionals should Volunteers wish to speak with someone. Less than 0.02 percent of respondents that agree to complete the questionnaire exit without completing it.

### Security Incident Questionnaire Structure and Content

The Security Incident Questionnaire begins with a brief set of general questions to promote recall of events (e.g., "Since arriving in your current host country, was anything stolen from you including, but not

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of the Security Incident Questionnaire can be obtained by emailing SIQHelp@peacecorps.gov

limited to...” followed by a list of different types of items). Research shows that the time people spend thinking about these questions enhances their recall of events.<sup>4</sup>

Following memory prompt questions, Volunteers answer sets of behaviorally oriented questions to determine if they were victims of any of the 11 different types of crimes defined at the end of this section. Questions related to rape and aggravated and non-aggravated sexual assault were modeled after the Sexual Experiences Survey, which is considered a gold standard for measuring these phenomena.<sup>5</sup>

When Volunteers’ responses to questions indicate they experienced a crime, they are asked to briefly describe a single incident of their choosing. This process is repeated for each of the 11 crime categories, which are presented to respondents in hierarchical order (see below). Once a Volunteer records experiences in one crime category, the Volunteer is instructed not to include that experience when answering subsequent questions to preclude counting the same incident in multiple categories.

## Time Frame

Data collected via the Security Incident Questionnaire reflects crimes Volunteers may have experienced at any point while in the Peace Corps (inclusive of training). As shown in table 1, two-thirds of Security Incident Questionnaire respondents that ended Peace Corps service in 2016 entered the Peace Corps in 2013. Accordingly, data relating to the 2016 exit cohort (Volunteers that left Peace Corps in 2016) reflect events that occurred primarily between 2014 and 2016. Similarly, data on Volunteers that ended service in 2015 largely reflect events that took place between 2013 and 2014 and, for the 2014 exit cohort, during the period 2012 through 2014.

**Table 1. Time periods reflected in responses from Volunteers that ended service in 2014 through 2016**

		End of Service Year		
		2014* (n = 2,644)	2015 (n = 2,737)	2016 (n = 3,024)
Entry Year	2016			9%
	2015		9%	16%
	2014	6%	16%	66%
	2013	13%	64%	9% 2013 or before
	2012	71%	11% 2012 or before	
	2011	9% 2011 or before		

Columns add to 100%

\*Includes only Volunteers that ended service between March and December

<sup>4</sup> Peytchev, A., Caspar, R., Neely, B. & Moore, A. (2012). *NCVS Screening Questions Evaluation: Final Report*. NC: RTI International.

<sup>5</sup> Koss, M.P., Abbey, A., Campbell, R., Cook, S., Norris, J., Testa, M., Ullman, S., West, C., & White, J. (2007). Revising the SES: A collaborative process to improve assessment of sexual aggression and victimization. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31: 357-370.

## Representativeness of Data

The Security Incident Questionnaire was launched in March 2014. In its inaugural year, 73 percent of all departing Volunteers completed the questionnaire. The completion rate was just over 80 percent in the following two years (table 2).

The gender composition of Volunteers that completed the Security Incident Questionnaire has consistently been comparable to that of the overall population of departing Volunteers (i.e., approximately two-thirds female). However, on average, Volunteers that completed the Security Incident Questionnaire served in the Peace Corps approximately two months longer than departing Volunteers in general (table 2).

Analyses were conducted to assess whether crime statistics (i.e., prevalence rates) based on Volunteers that completed the Security Incident Questionnaire were biased due to the fact that not all Volunteers had filled out the survey, and because those that did had served for a somewhat longer period of time. The results of these analyses (which are described in detail in a prior report<sup>6</sup>) suggest that crime prevalence rates based on only Volunteers that completed the Security Incident Questionnaire are, on average, within  $\pm 0.05$  percent of what the rates would likely have been had all Volunteers filled out the questionnaire. In other words, crime rates based on data from the Security Incident Questionnaire are representative of crime rates for the overall population of Volunteers that ended service.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Volunteers that completed the Security Incident Questionnaire compared to characteristics of all Volunteers**

Characteristic	Exit Cohort					
	2014*		2015		2016	
	Respondents	All departing Volunteers	Respondents	All departing Volunteers	Respondents	All departing Volunteers
Number of Volunteers	2,644	3,603	2,737	3,384	3,024	3,692
Completion rate	73%		81%		82%	
% female	63%	63%	64%	64%	65%	64%
Months in the Peace Corps (avg)	24	22	23	21	23	21

\*March thru December only

<sup>6</sup> The Peace Corps (2016), *End of Service Crime Survey Report, 2015*. Washington, DC: The Peace Corps, Office of Safety and Security.

## Crime Classification and Definitions

The Peace Corps classifies crime incidents using a hierarchy-based system similar to that used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (table 3). If elements of a particular incident overlap two or more crime categories, the incident is assigned to only one — the higher category. For example, if someone breaks into a house (burglary) damaging a door in the process (vandalism), the incident is classified as burglary.

Table 3. Crime definitions and classification hierarchy

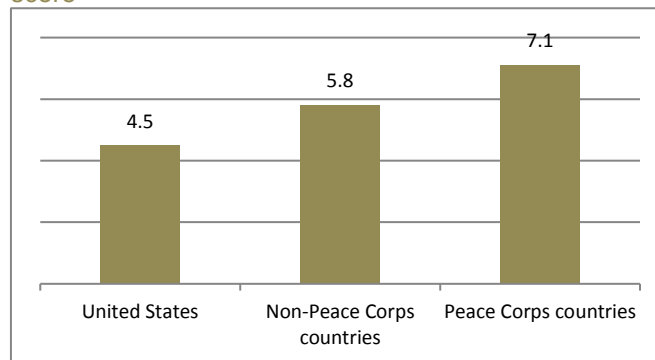
	Crime	Definition
Highest Category	Kidnapping	Unlawful seizure and/or detention of a Volunteer against his/her will for more than a short period of time.
	Rape	Penetration, no matter how slight, of a person's vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by another person's sex organ, without the consent of the person, including when the person is incapacitated or otherwise incapable of consenting.
	Aggravated sexual assault	Intentional contact with a person's genitalia, anus, groin, breasts, inner thigh, or buttocks, or kissing or disrobing a person or forcing a person to contact someone's genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks or the attempt to carry out any of these acts and there is use or threatened use of a weapon, or use or threatened use of force or other intimidating action, or the victim is incapacitated or otherwise incapable of consenting.
	Robbery	Taking or attempting to take anything of value from the care, custody, or control of a person under confrontational circumstances including the threat of force, violence, or putting the person in fear of immediate harm.
	Aggravated physical assault	Attack or threat of attack with a weapon in a manner capable of causing death or severe bodily injury or the attack without a weapon when severe injury occurs.
	Non-aggravated sexual assault	Contact with a person's genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or buttocks or kissing on the mouth without the consent of the person or attempts to carry out these acts.
	Non-aggravated physical assault	Aggressive contact that does not require the Volunteer to use substantial force to disengage and results in no injury or minor injury.
	Burglary	Unlawful or forcible entry of a person's residence (including hostel and hotel rooms). The crime usually, but not always, involves theft.
	Threat	The use of threatening words or other conduct that places a person in reasonable fear of bodily harm.
	Theft	Taking or attempting to take away someone's property or cash without the use of force, illegal entry, or direct contact with the victim.
Lowest Category	Vandalism	Mischievous or malicious defacement, destruction, or damage of property.

# Crime Prevalence and Levels of Victimization

## Crime Prevalence Rates

Peace Corps Volunteers live and work in communities in countries that experience some of the highest levels of relative poverty in the world. Figure 1, for example, shows the difference in Fragile States Index scores for uneven economic development (a proxy for relative poverty) in countries where Volunteers serve compared to other countries.

Figure 1. Average uneven economic development index score



Source: Fragile States Index. Uneven Economic Development index comprised of GINI coefficient, income share of highest 10%, income share of lowest 10%, urban-rural service distribution, access to improved services, slum population.

High relative poverty is a condition widely associated with elevated rates of economic crime.<sup>7,8</sup> Consistent with this, three economic crimes — theft, robbery, and burglary — are among the crimes Volunteers most commonly experience (figure 2).

Overall, theft is the most common crime that happens to Volunteers. A theft occurs when someone takes a Volunteer's money or property under non-confrontational circumstances such as when a Volunteer is pickpocketed. About 30 percent of Volunteers leaving the Peace Corps in 2016 experienced theft at least once.

Robbery, by comparison, involves someone demanding that a Volunteer hand over money or property or taking these things from a Volunteer by force or threat of force. An incident is a robbery, for example, if someone attempts to snatch a Volunteer's cellphone or purse and a struggle ensues. About 10 percent of the 2016 Volunteer exit cohort experienced robbery.

If a person enters a Volunteer's home or hotel/hostel room without permission, that act is considered a burglary. It is included as an economic crime because the goal of unauthorized entry is often theft. About 16 percent of Volunteers (1 in 6) experienced burglary (e.g., someone breaking into a Volunteer's home while the Volunteer is away to steal the Volunteer's belongings).

<sup>7</sup> Wilkinson, R.G. & Pickett, K.E. (2007). The problems of relative deprivation: Why some societies do better than others. *Social Science & Medicine*: 67(9), 1965-1978.

<sup>8</sup> Bouruignon, F., The World Bank, & École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (2001). Crime as a social cost of poverty and inequality: A review focusing on developing countries. In Yusuf, S., Evenett, S. & Wu, W. (Eds), World Bank Discussion Paper No. 415. *Facet of Globalization: International and Local Dimensions of Development* (pp. 171-190).

Figure 2. Crime prevalence rates (n = 3,024) (% of respondents that ended service in 2016)

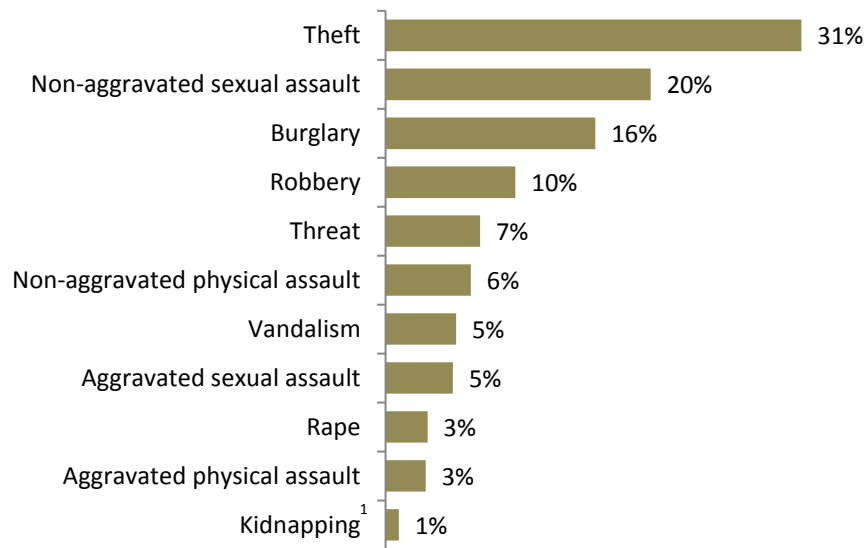
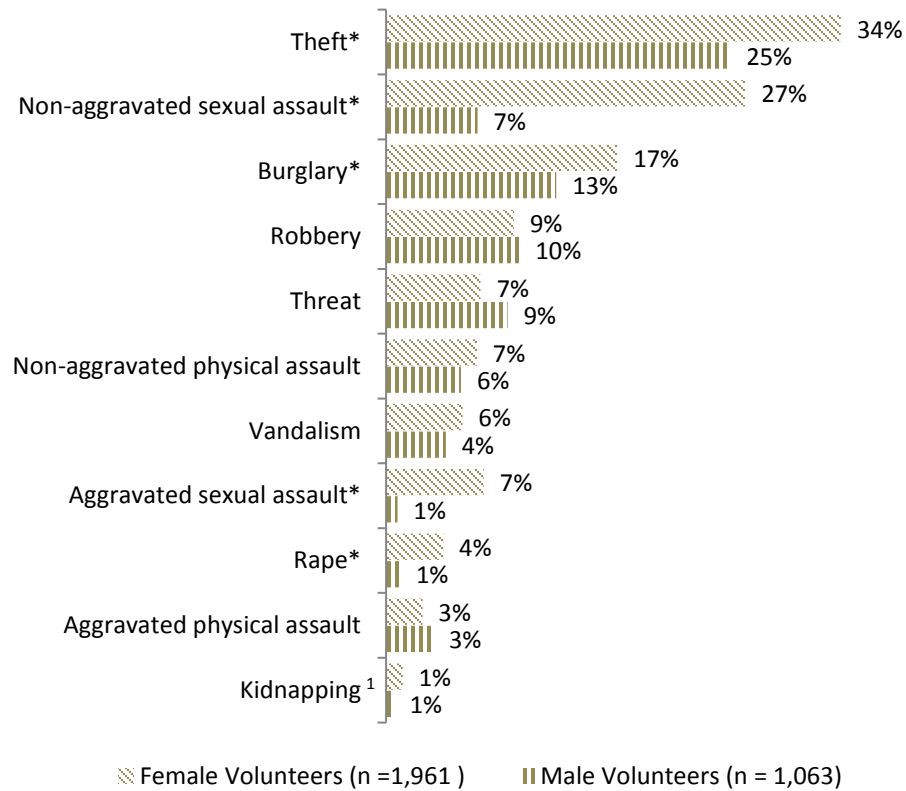


Figure 3. Crime prevalence rates, by gender (% of respondents that ended service in 2016)



\*Difference is statistically significant ( $\chi^2, df = 1, p < .05$ )

<sup>1</sup>Kidnapping is the detention of a Volunteer against his or her will for an extended period, which often involves taxi drivers refusing to take Volunteers directly to their requested destination.

Prevalence rates sum to more than 100 percent across crimes because some Volunteers are counted in multiple categories. See crime definitions on page 8.

## Gender Differences in Crime Prevalence Rates

Female Volunteers experience several types of crimes at significantly higher rates than male Volunteers, including the two most common economic crimes — theft and burglary (figure 3, previous page).

However, the most pronounced differences are in the levels of sexual assaults that female and male Volunteers experience.

Following theft (i.e., taking property under non-confrontational circumstance), non-aggravated sexual assault (i.e., being kissed or being touched on the bottom, breast, or crotch without consent) is the second most common crime that happens to female Volunteers. Female Volunteers experience non-aggravated sexual assault at 4 times the rate of male Volunteers (27 percent versus 7 percent among Volunteers ending service in 2016). Aggravated sexual assault (i.e., being kissed, disrobed, or touched on the bottom, breast, or crotch by force or when incapacitated or otherwise unable to consent) and rape (i.e., penetration without consent or when unable to consent) are far less common than non-aggravated sexual assault. Nonetheless, female Volunteers also experience these crimes at higher rates than male Volunteers.

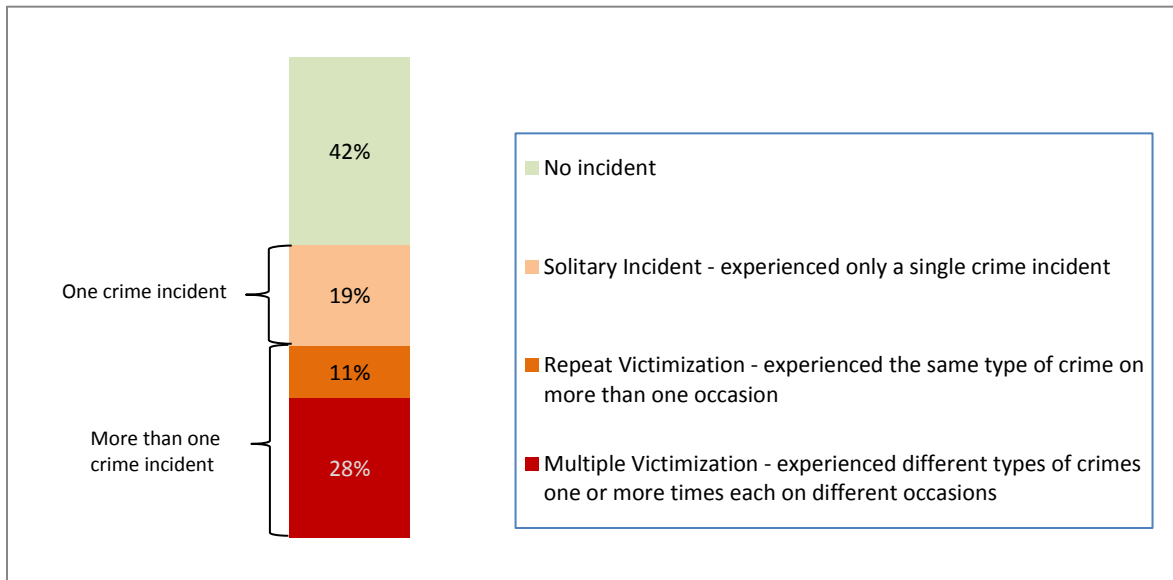
## Level of Victimization Rates

Crime prevalence rates provide valuable information about specific types of crimes that happen to Volunteers. They fall short, however, in conveying information about the overall level of crime individual Volunteers experience during the course of their service. Level of victimization rates, in comparison, convey information about the overall proportion of Volunteers affected by crime and the extent to which individuals experienced crime.

As shown in figure 4, 58 percent of Volunteers that left the Peace Corps in 2016 experienced crime. This group is made up of 19 percent of departing Volunteers that had a solitary crime incident happen to them during their entire time in the Peace Corps and 39 percent that experienced more than one incident.

The 39 percent of Volunteers that experienced more than one crime incident include a subgroup of 11 percent of all departing Volunteers that were repeat victims of only one type of crime (i.e., repeat victimization). An example would be a Volunteer that was pickpocketed on several different trips to a densely crowded market (i.e., theft). A larger subgroup of these Volunteers (28 percent) experienced a variety of types of crimes on one or more occasions (i.e., multiple victimization). This latter category would include, for example, a Volunteer that was pickpocketed on several different trips to a market (i.e., theft), and groped by someone on a bus (i.e., non-aggravated sexual assault), and had their house broken into while away (i.e., burglary).

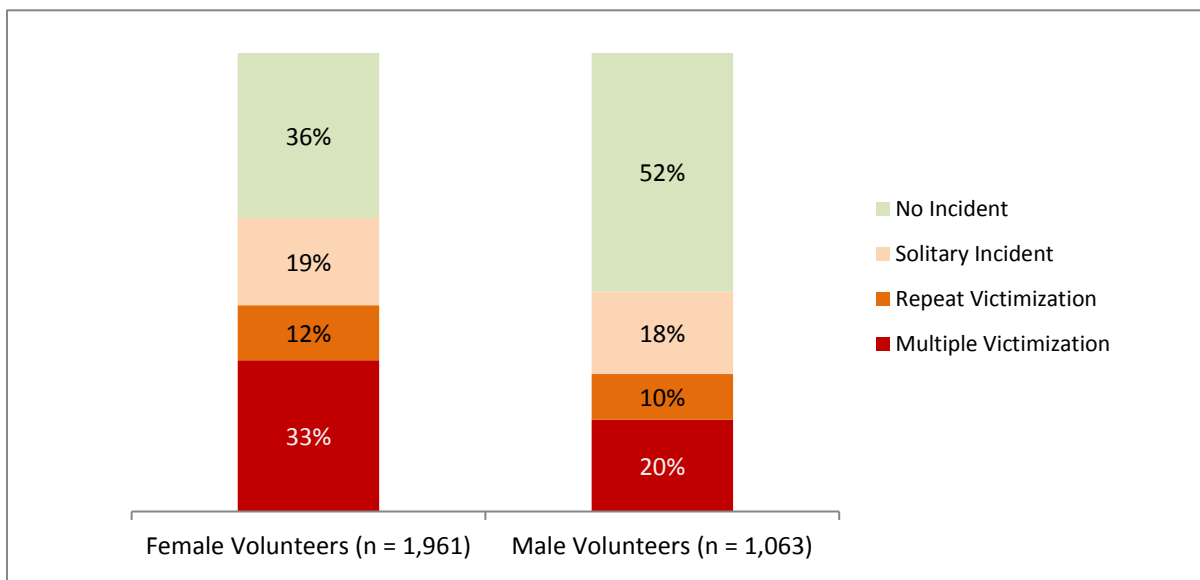
Figure 4. Level of victimization (n = 3,024) (% of respondents that ended service in 2016)



#### Gender Differences in Level of Victimization Rates

Female Volunteers experience crime at an overall higher rate than male Volunteers (figure 5). About two-thirds of female Volunteers (64 percent) in the 2016 exit cohort, compared to one-half of male Volunteers (48 percent), experienced crime during their Peace Corps service. Not only are female Volunteers proportionately more likely to experience crime, but they are also more likely to experience multiple different types of crimes, most typically involving a combination of theft and non-aggravated sexual assault.

Figure 5. Level of victimization, by gender (% of respondents that ended service in 2016)





## Changes in Crime Prevalence and Levels of Victimization, 2014 — 2016

### Change in the Types of Crimes Volunteers Experienced

In general, crime prevalence rates for Volunteers ending service in 2016 differed little from the crime prevalence rates for Volunteers that ended service in 2014. There was a 3 percent decrease in the prevalence of theft among female Volunteers (figure 6) and a 4 percent decrease among male Volunteers (figure 7). Despite these declines, one-third (34 percent) of female and one-fourth (25 percent) of male Volunteers that left the Peace Corps in 2016 experienced at least one theft.

The largest growth in crime prevalence rates was a 3 percent increase in non-aggravated sexual assault among female Volunteers. Among females that left the Peace Corps in 2014, 24 percent experienced non-aggravated sexual assault compared to 27 percent of Volunteers that ended service in 2016.

### Change in the Overall Proportion of Volunteers that Experienced Crime

Were Volunteers that ended service in 2016 any less likely overall to experience crime compared to Volunteers that ended service in previous years?

The answer to this question differs by gender. Across years, the overall proportion of female Volunteers that experienced crime during service fluctuated only within a range averaging  $\pm 1$  percent per year (figure 6). The proportion of male Volunteers that experienced crime declined from 53 percent among those ending service in 2014 to 48 percent among those that left the Peace Corps in 2015 and 2016, a 5 percent overall decrease (figure 7).

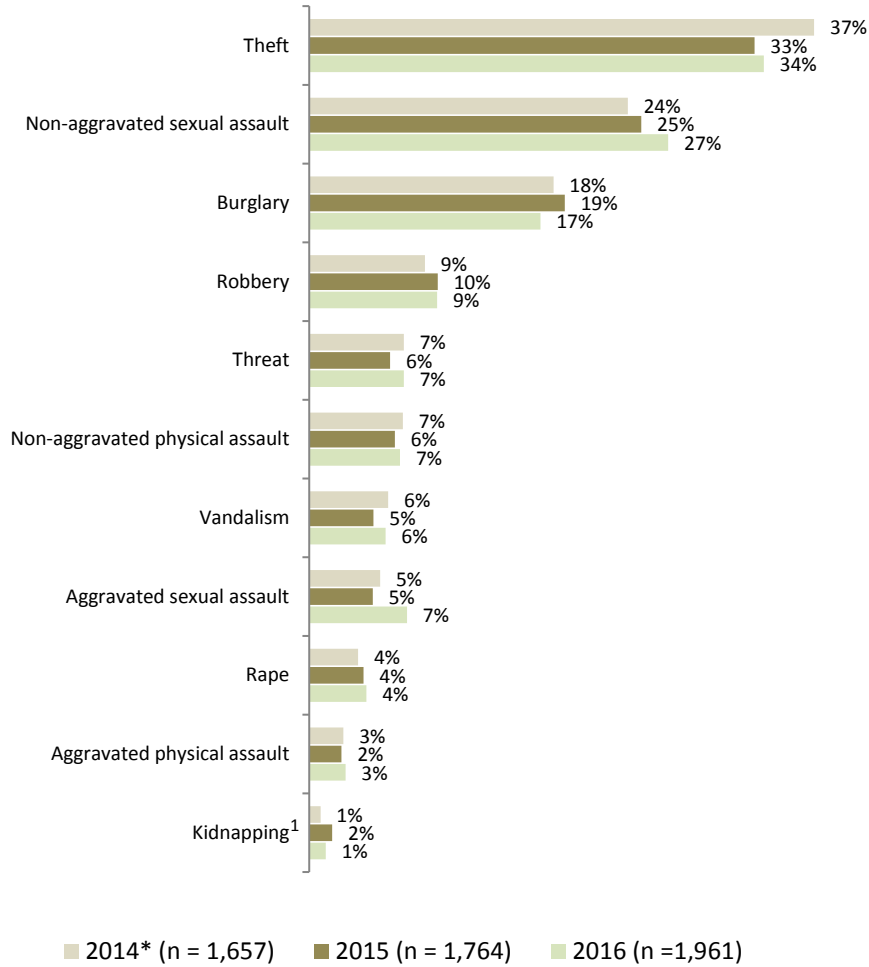
### Change in the Amount of Crime Volunteers Experienced

In parallel with the overall 5 percent decrease in male Volunteers that experienced crime, there was a 3 percent decrease in the proportion of male Volunteers (from 23 percent to 20 percent) that experienced multiple different types of crimes. Thus, there were not only proportionately fewer males that experienced crime in the group of Volunteers that ended service in 2016, but those that did experience crime also experienced slightly lower levels of victimization.

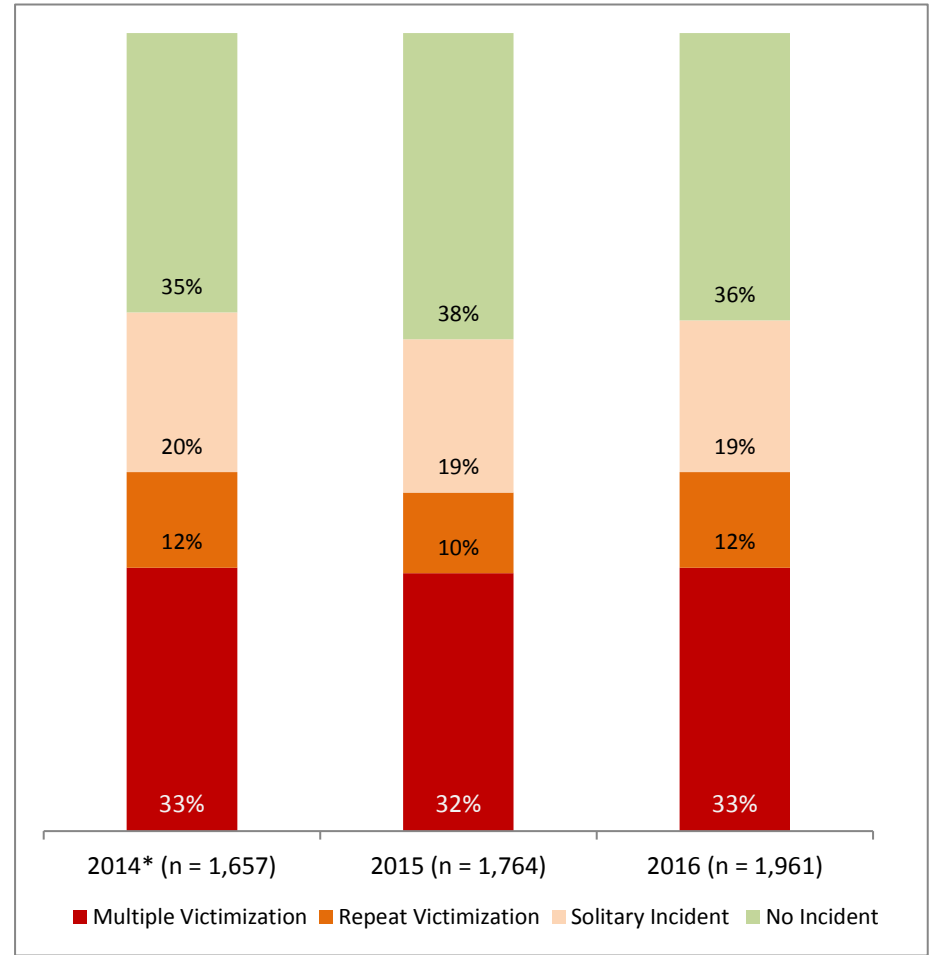
This was not the case for female Volunteers. Both the overall proportion of female Volunteers that experienced crime, and the proportion that experienced multiple types of crimes has remained relatively stable.

Figure 6. Crime experienced by female Volunteers 2014—2016 (% of exit cohort)

Crime prevalence rates (female Volunteers)



Level of victimization rate (female Volunteers)



\*March thru December only

<sup>1</sup>Kidnapping is the detention of a Volunteer against his or her will for an extended period, which often involves taxi drivers refusing to take Volunteers directly to their requested destination.

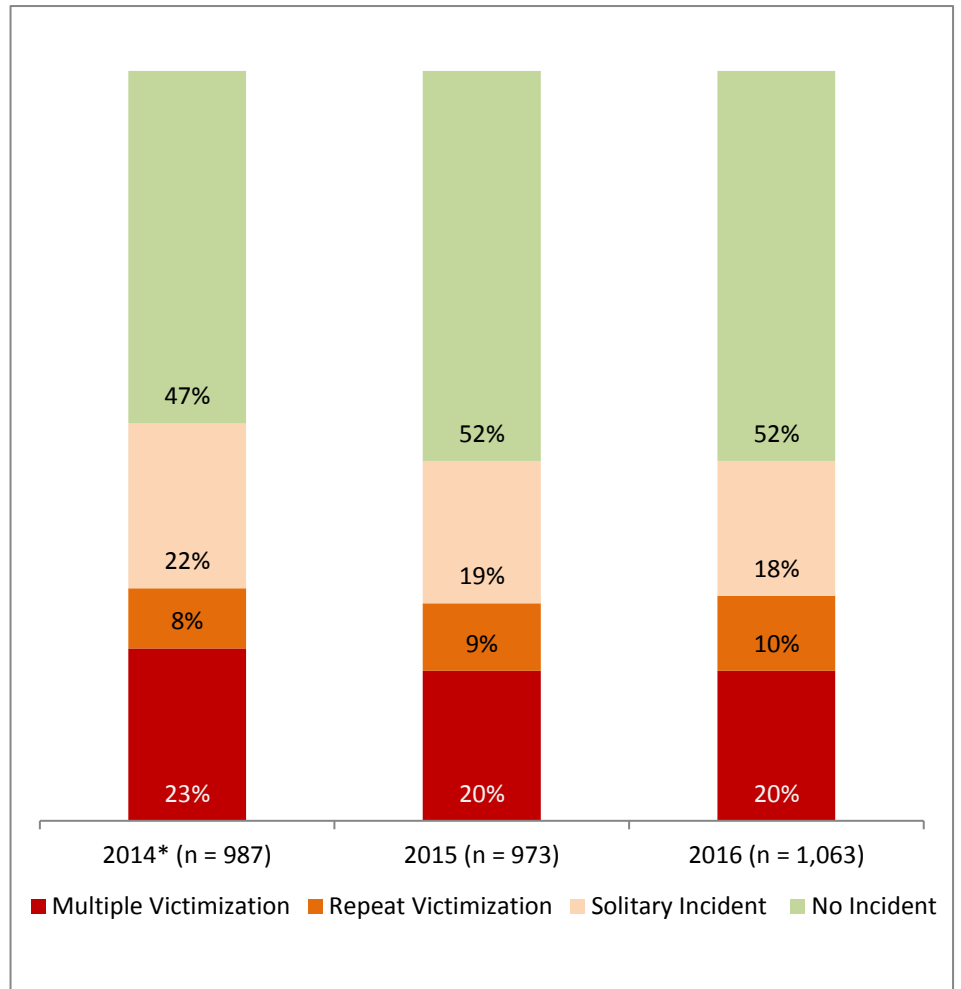
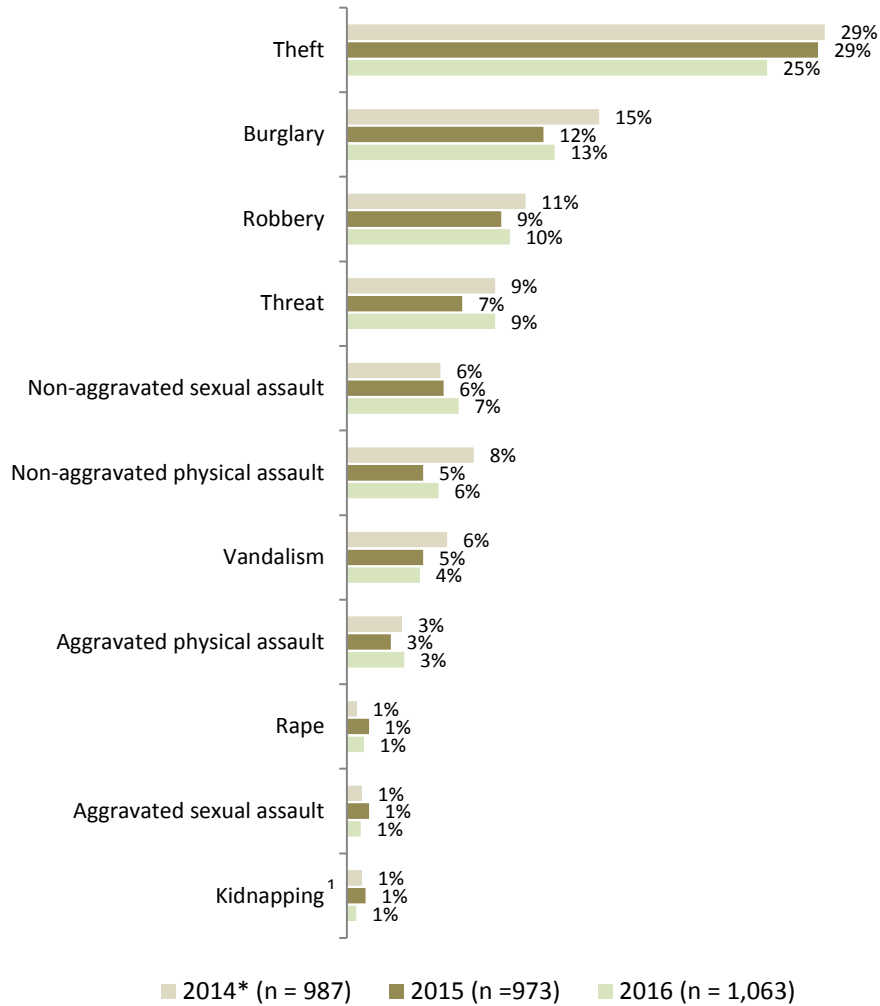
Prevalence rates sum to more than 100 percent across crimes because some Volunteers are counted in multiple categories.

Crime definitions are found on page 8.

Figure 7. Crime experienced by male Volunteers 2014—2016 (% of exit cohort)

Crime prevalence rates (male Volunteers)

Level of victimization rate (male Volunteers)



\*March thru December only

<sup>1</sup>Kidnapping is the detention of a Volunteer against his or her will for an extended period, which many times involves taxi drivers refusing to take Volunteers directly to their requested destination.

Prevalence rates sum to more than 100 percent across crimes because some Volunteers are counted in multiple categories.

Crime definitions are found on page 8.

## CHANGES IN SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTING

Following passage of the *Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011*, the Peace Corps instituted numerous changes, some of which were intended to remove barriers to Volunteers reporting rapes, aggravated sexual assaults, and non-aggravated sexual assaults (e.g., victim blaming, concerns about confidentiality). During the early implementation of reforms, the only source of information the agency had on Volunteers' reporting of sexual assaults was the Consolidated Incident Reporting System, which is an administrative database the agency uses to document information on the subset of crimes Volunteers report to Peace Corps staff. Prior analyses of data from the Consolidated Incident Reporting system showed annual increases in the incidence rate of reported rape, aggravated sexual assault, and non-aggravated sexual assaults<sup>9</sup>. However, changes in documented reports of sexual assault alone do not necessarily mean that victims of these crimes were any more or less inclined to report incidents. Increases or decreases in reports of crime may, more simply, reflect changes in the overall level of Volunteers that experienced these crimes.

Beginning with Volunteers that left the Peace Corps in 2015<sup>10</sup>, the agency is now able to compare changes in reported incidents of sexual assault (i.e., data from the Consolidated Incident Reporting System) to changes in the overall proportion of Volunteers that experienced crimes (i.e., data from the Security Incident Questionnaire). Table 4 provides these comparative data for female Volunteers that ended Peace Corps service in 2015 and 2016.

The data in table 4 show that, taking into account changes in the overall prevalence of rape, 5 percent more victims of rape reported an incident to staff in 2016 compared to 2015 and about 6 percent more victims of non-aggravated sexual assault reported an incident. The proportion of victims of aggravated sexual assaults that reported incidents, however, declined by approximately 7 percent (from 23.4 percent to 16.7 percent).

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<sup>9</sup> The Peace Corps (2016). *Statistical Report of Crimes against Volunteers, 2015*. Washington, DC: The Peace Corps, Office of Safety and Security. [www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports/](http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/open-government/reports/)

<sup>10</sup> Historically, information on reported crimes documented in the Consolidated Incident Reporting System has been used to calculate one-year incidence rates (e.g., average number of crime victimizations per Volunteer) based on the overall population of Volunteers that served in the Peace Corps each year. Beginning in 2013, changes were made in the Consolidated Incident Reporting System that now make it possible to also calculate prevalence rates based on reported crimes that correspond with the population (i.e., departing Volunteers) and time frame (i.e., entire time in service) reflected in population prevalence rates generated from Security Incident Questionnaire data.

Table 4. Comparison of reporting and population prevalence rates for sexual assaults, females

	Type of Sexual Assault		
	Rape	Aggravated sexual assault	Non-aggravated sexual assault
2015 exit cohort (n=2,284 departing female Volunteers)			
a. % Volunteers that reported incidents <sup>1</sup>	2.0%	1.1%	5.3%
b. % Volunteers that experienced incidents	4.0%	4.7%	24.6%
c. % of <i>victims</i> that reported incident (= a ÷ b)	50.0%	23.4%	21.5%
2016 exit cohort (n=2,388 departing female Volunteers)			
a. % Volunteers that reported incidents	2.3%	1.1%	7.2%
b. % Volunteers that experienced incidents	4.2%	7.2%	26.6%
c. % of <i>victims</i> that reported incident (= a ÷ b)	54.8%	16.7%	27.1%
Change in % of <i>victims</i> that reported incidents	4.8%	-6.7%	5.5%

Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Consolidated Incident Reporting System

<sup>2</sup> Security Incident Questionnaire prevalence rates extrapolated to each year's overall group of departing Volunteers

## Using Crime Survey Data to Improve Volunteer Safety

Staff at Peace Corps posts regularly review data on reported crimes, which are routinely available to them both in “real time” and retrospectively, to identify and address emerging crime problems. Because information from the Security Incident Questionnaire includes crimes that Volunteers never reported to Peace Corps staff, it provides a more thorough picture of the crimes Volunteers experience than data on reported crimes alone.

In late 2015, Peace Corps Safety and Security Officers from the Office of Safety and Security began disseminating post-specific information from the Security Incident Questionnaire to staff in Peace Corps countries around the globe. Throughout 2016, staff in each country used this information to identify crime problems experienced by Volunteers in their respective countries and formulated plans for how to supplement existing safety and security programs to address those problems.

Staff in many countries recognized ways to improve the training they provide Volunteers when Volunteers begin their service. This included using examples of specific types of crimes that are most likely to happen to Volunteers in a particular country, incorporating tips from veteran Volunteers on how to avoid common crimes, and providing Volunteers with periodic crime prevention tips.

In a few instances, posts revisited the methods they use for selecting communities and housing for Volunteers. For example, one post decided that Volunteers would be less vulnerable to theft and assault

in crowded markets and transportation hubs if they began placing Volunteers in more rural settings. Another changed the housing allowance that Volunteers in certain locations received so Volunteers could live closer to the organizations where they worked and avoid traveling on bus routes where they were at risk of having belongings stolen or being groped.

The Office of Safety and Security, in conjunction with Headquarters-based Regional Security Advisors, will be monitoring the implementation of the plans that staff in Peace Corps countries devised for reducing crime. One of the challenges the Peace Corps faces in assessing whether these plans lead to a reduction in crime is that the plans are not being implemented in isolation from other efforts to reduce Volunteer victimization.

Staff at Peace Corps Headquarters and abroad are committed to minimizing the risk of Volunteers being victimized. That means that there are ongoing changes, for example, in training, site selection, and other programs and procedures to reduce the risk of crimes against Volunteers. Post staff are also dedicated to maintaining reforms to reduce sexual assaults that were implemented in response to the *Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011*.

The Office of Safety and Security is working on revisions to the facilitated process post staff use to identify crime problems and ways to prevent crimes. Among other things, revisions will include adapting and promulgating analytical models used in problem-oriented policing. These models provide a framework for posts to use in appraising crime problems and systematically considering multiple ways to prevent those problems.



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