

2017 Host Country Staff Survey Summary Report

Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning



2017 Host Country Staff Survey Table of Contents

Section #	Section Title	Page #
I.	Introduction	3
II.	Top Line Findings	6
III.	Engaging Employees	8
IV.	Creating a High-Performing Learning Organization	11
V.	Creating a Diverse & Inclusive Organization	14
VI.	Promoting Cross-Cultural Understanding	17
VII.	Promoting a Better Understanding of Americans	19
VIII.	Why Peace Corps?	21
IX.	Appendix A: Survey Approach	23
X.	Appendix B: Respondent Characteristics	30
XI.	Appendix C: Questionnaire & Acknowledgments	37



I. Introduction

Introduction (1 of 2)

Building on the success of three previously administered surveys starting in 2014, the 2017 Host Country Staff Survey (HCSS) continues to tap into the wealth of experience and knowledge found among our host country staff. As a critically important component of the Peace Corps' operations and mission, host country staff offer a unique perspective on the agency's success in building a more inclusive and diverse organization, as well as generating broader insights into training needs, clarifying host country staff motivations for working for the Peace Corps, and providing additional insight on the work of our Volunteers.

The HCSS was piloted in 2014 to support the Peace Corps Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2014-2018 by providing results for two official indicators used by the agency to report its annual performance to Congress, OMB, and the public. The survey solicits feedback from employees whose work is vital to Peace Corps operations but whose viewpoints were previously unavailable to agency management at headquarters. The data received through the HCSS complements the Peace Corps' other performance data sources, including the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) of U.S. direct-hire (USDH) staff, the Annual Volunteer Survey (AVS), and the Global Counterpart Survey (GCS) of Volunteers' primary work partners.

The HCSS is distributed online to a multicultural and/or multilingual community of respondents. All post staff who are hired as foreign service nationals (FSNs) or personal services contractors (PSCs) are eligible to participate in the HCSS, regardless of whether they are nationals of the host country, the United States, or a third country. In an attempt to reach as many staff as possible, the 2017 HCSS was again available in three languages: English, French, and Spanish.¹

The first HCSS, piloted in 2014, included nine core questions drawn from the Office of Personnel Management's FEVS, which is fielded every year to U.S. direct-hire employees throughout the agencies of the federal government. The 2014 survey...[go to next page]

¹ Please refer to Appendix B for a link to the questionnaire as distributed in English, French, and Spanish.

Introduction (2 of 2)

focused on measuring two of the agency's performance goals (PGs)—PG 6.2: Build an Open and Inclusive Organizational Culture, which calls for the agency to increase the percentage of Peace Corps Volunteers, U.S. direct-hire staff, and host country staff who report that the agency has an inclusive culture; and PG 9.1: Improve Staff Training, which calls for the agency to increase the percentage of staff who are satisfied with the training they receive to do their jobs.

In 2015, all core questions were retained, while the scope of the survey expanded slightly to offer broader insight. With the addition of five new questions, the 2015 HCSS was able to gain host country staff perspectives on agency inclusion, job satisfaction, Volunteer development impact and integration, and how their work contributed to the Peace Corps' Strategic Plan.

In 2016, two new questions were added, and one original question was expanded. These changes were made to gain insight into the motivation of host country staff for working for the Peace Corps, and to better understand the extent to which they feel Volunteers deeply integrate into their host country's culture.

Following improvements to the survey instrument implemented in 2016, the 2017 survey retained as much consistency as possible, while adding questions to gain greater insight into staff learning and development preferences and team cohesion.

II. Top-Line Findings

2017 HCSS Top-Line Findings

The 2017 HCSS received responses from over half of its total population, on par with responses from eligible staff in 2016.² However, survey results must be viewed with caution due to the constraints and limitations outlined in Appendix A. In addition, it is important to note that all subsequent references to “staff” in this report refer only to those who participated in the 2017 HCSS and do not reflect the views and opinions of all overseas staff.

Results were highly consistent with those from 2016. The staff who participated in this year’s survey overwhelmingly reported that they were satisfied with their jobs. In addition:

- **The majority of staff felt they did high quality work, and slightly more reported having enough input into work-related decisions than did in 2016.**
- **In 2017, staff were modestly more positive in all areas when comparing Peace Corps to other jobs available.**
- **Staff were 5 percent more likely to *strongly agree* Peace Corps allowed them to improve their jobs skills over 2016.**
- **Oral communication, knowledge of agency procedures, and problem solving top list of staff skills.**
- **Staff were 7% more likely to *strongly agree* managers work well with employees of different backgrounds over 2016.**
- **Just over half of all host country staff saw no gaps in the Peace Corps culture of inclusion.**
- **Staff reported that integration and management of cultural differences remain the areas of greatest opportunity for Volunteers.**
- **More than two in three staff reported a more positive opinion about Americans since becoming an agency employee.**
- **Staff reported the *opportunity to improve the lives of people in my country* as the main reason they work at Peace Corps.**

² 76 percent of staff with a valid email address and 52 percent of the total eligible pool of staff responded in 2017. 78 percent of staff with a valid email address and 55 percent of the total eligible pool of staff responded to the survey in 2016, compared with 52 percent of all eligible staff in 2015, and 37 percent of all eligible staff in 2014.

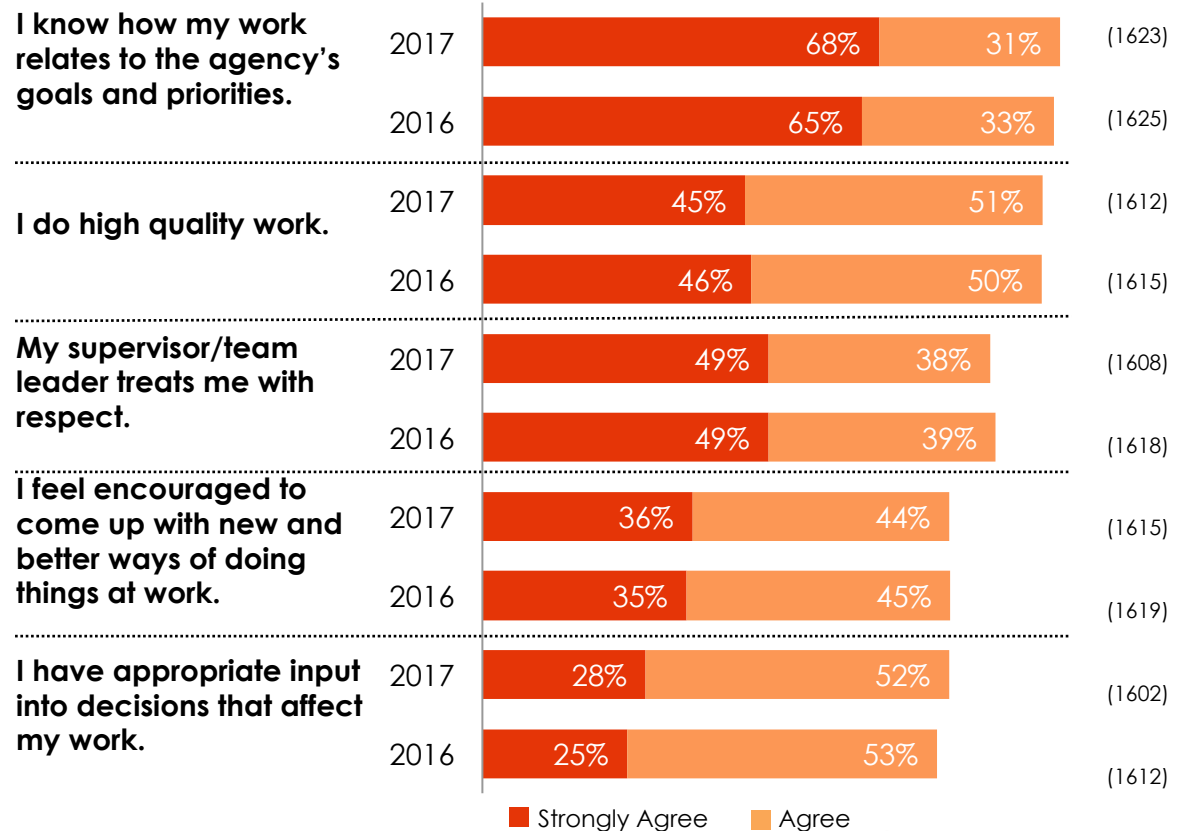
III. Engaging Employees

The majority of staff felt they did high quality work, and slightly more reported having enough input into work-related decisions than did in 2016.

Finding:

Staff reported having a solid understanding of how their work related to the Peace Corps' goals and priorities. In addition, four in ten strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their job. However, just over one in four staff strongly agreed they had appropriate input into decisions that affected their work.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements...

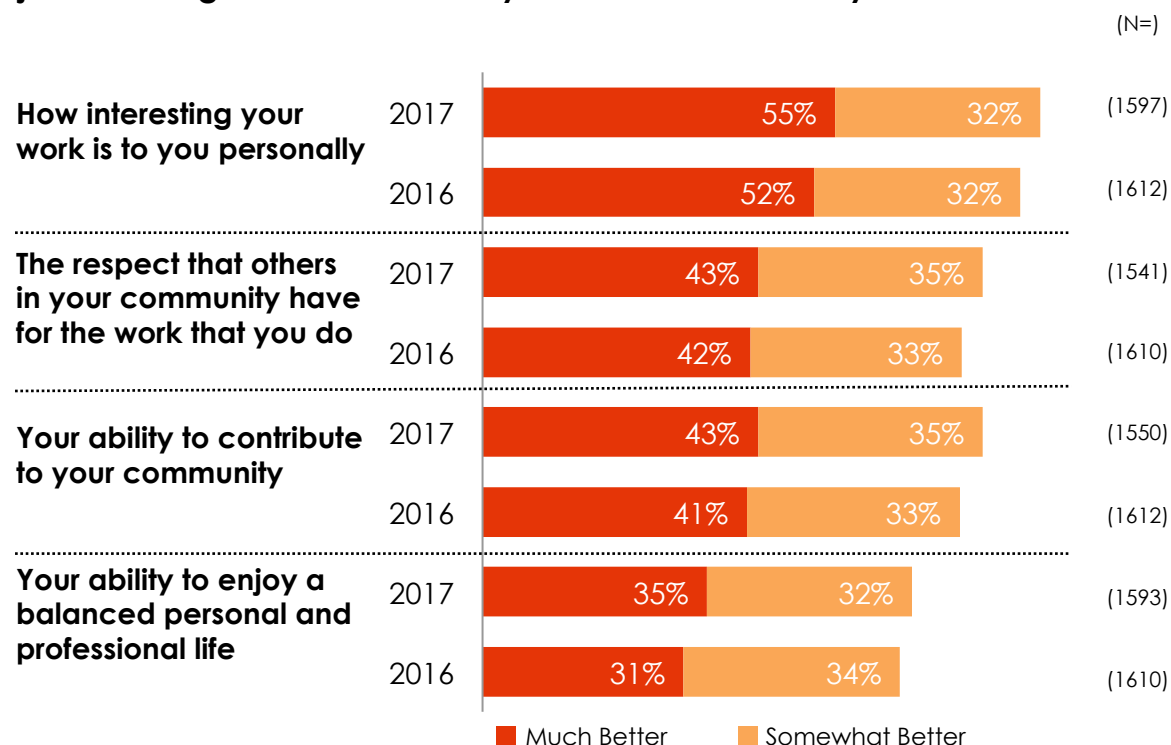


In 2017, staff were modestly more positive in all areas when comparing Peace Corps to other jobs available.

Finding:

Staff rated all aspects of their Peace Corps job higher in comparison to other jobs available over 2016 with *'your ability to contribute to your community'* showing the highest increase. Despite a modest improvement over 2016, staff still felt their ability to enjoy a balanced personal and professional life was the least competitive aspect of their job compared to other jobs available.

How does your job with the Peace Corps compare to other jobs that might be available to you in the area where you live?



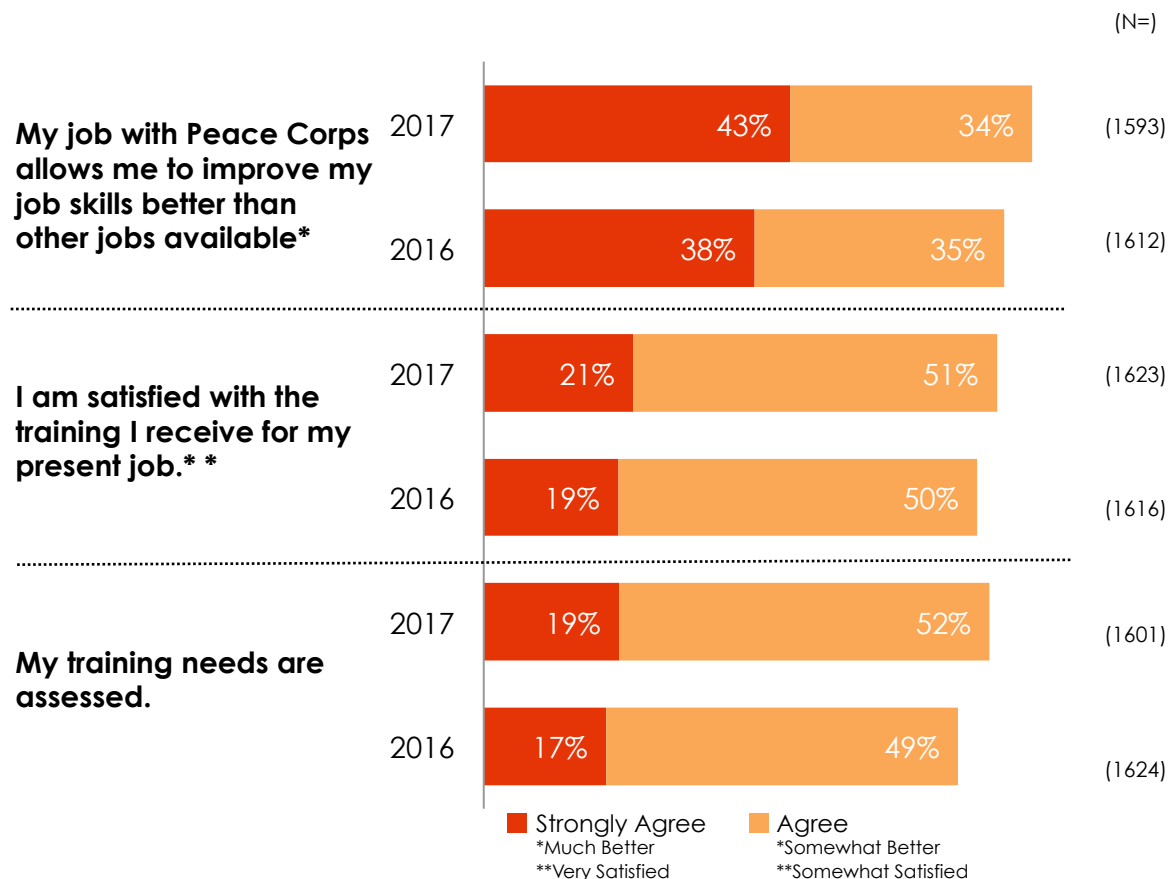
IV. Creating a High-Performing Learning Agency

Staff were 5 percent more likely to *strongly agree* Peace Corps allowed them to improve their jobs skills over 2016.

Finding:

Staff experiences with Peace Corps development and training have been highly consistent over the past two years, but 2017 showed a solid increase in staff reporting their training needs were assessed. Staff were also more likely to report they '*strongly agreed*' their job with Peace Corps allowed them to improve their job skills better than other jobs available.

Thinking about your experiences with Peace Corps Staff Development and Training...



*Reference question: How does your job with Peace Corps compare to other jobs that might be available to you in the area where you live in your ability to improve your job skills?

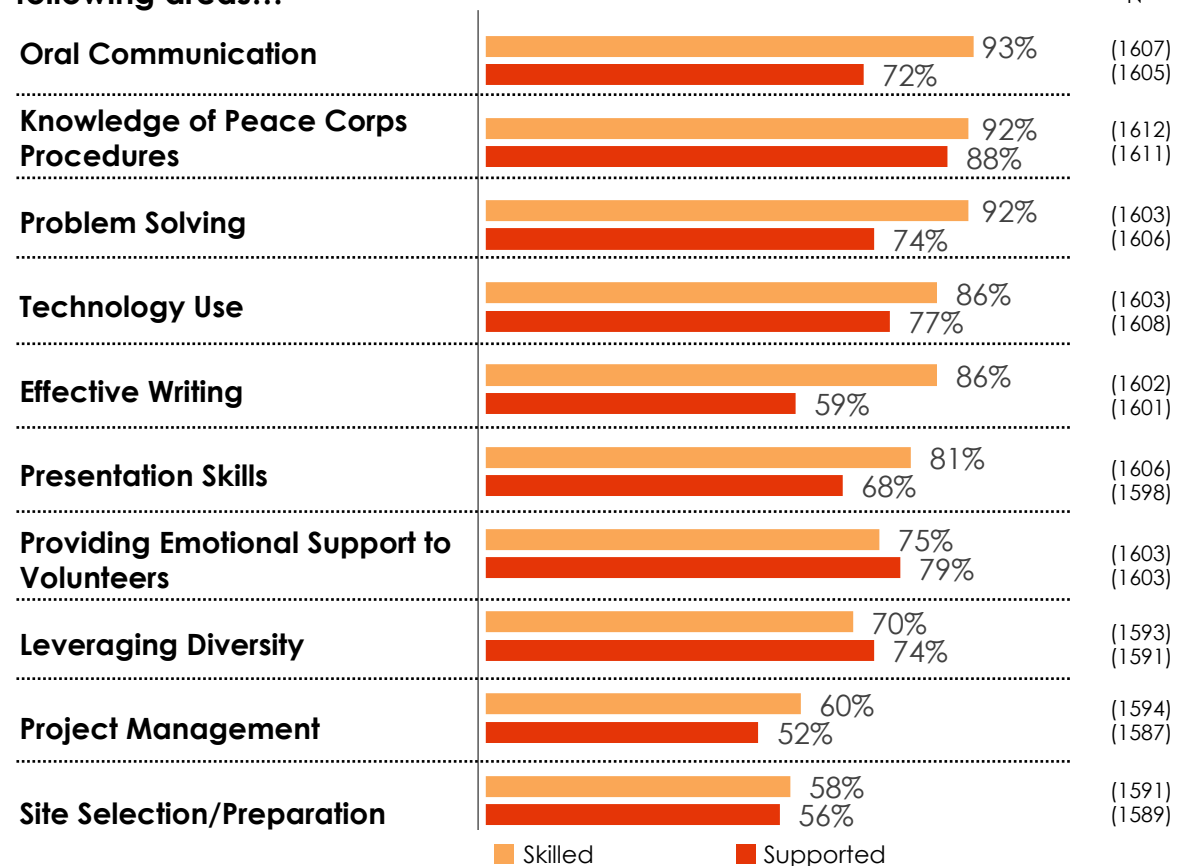
**Reference question: How satisfied are you with the training you receive for your present job?

Oral communication, knowledge of agency procedures, and problem solving top list of staff skills.

Finding:

Staff felt most skilled in their oral communication and knowledge of Peace Corps Procedures abilities, with more than nine in ten reporting feeling highly or somewhat skilled. Project management and site selection/preparation were the biggest areas of opportunity for support and skill building, though not all staff require these skills.

Please indicate if you feel *highly or somewhat highly supported or skilled* in each of the following areas...



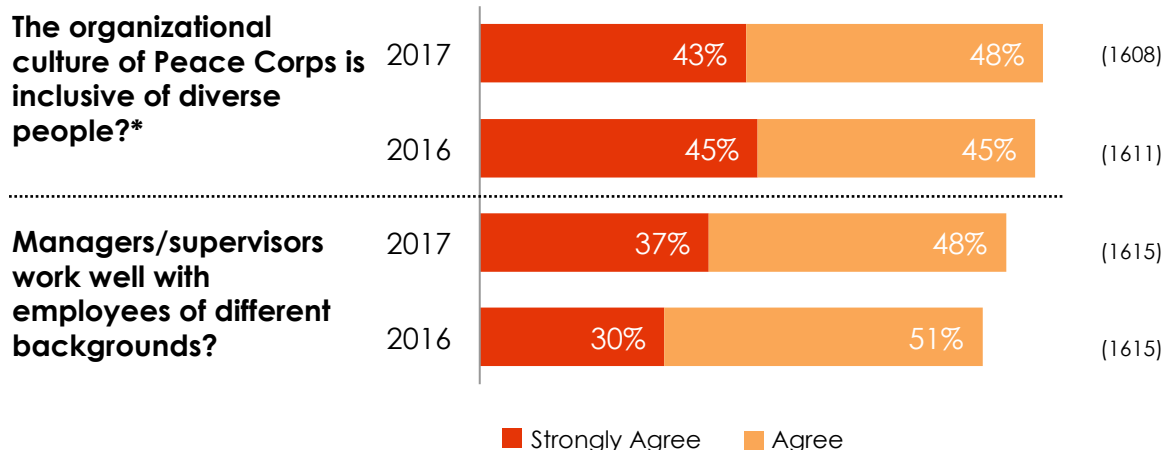
V. Creating a Diverse & Inclusive Agency

Staff were 7% more likely to *strongly agree* managers work well with employees of different backgrounds over 2016.

Finding:

Nine in ten staff (91%) agreed that the culture of the Peace Corps was inclusive, and 85 percent agreed managers worked well with employees of different backgrounds with 37 percent *strongly agreeing*. While the former result was very similar to responses in 2016, staff were seven percent more likely to *strongly agree* that managers/supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds.

To what extent do you agree or disagree...



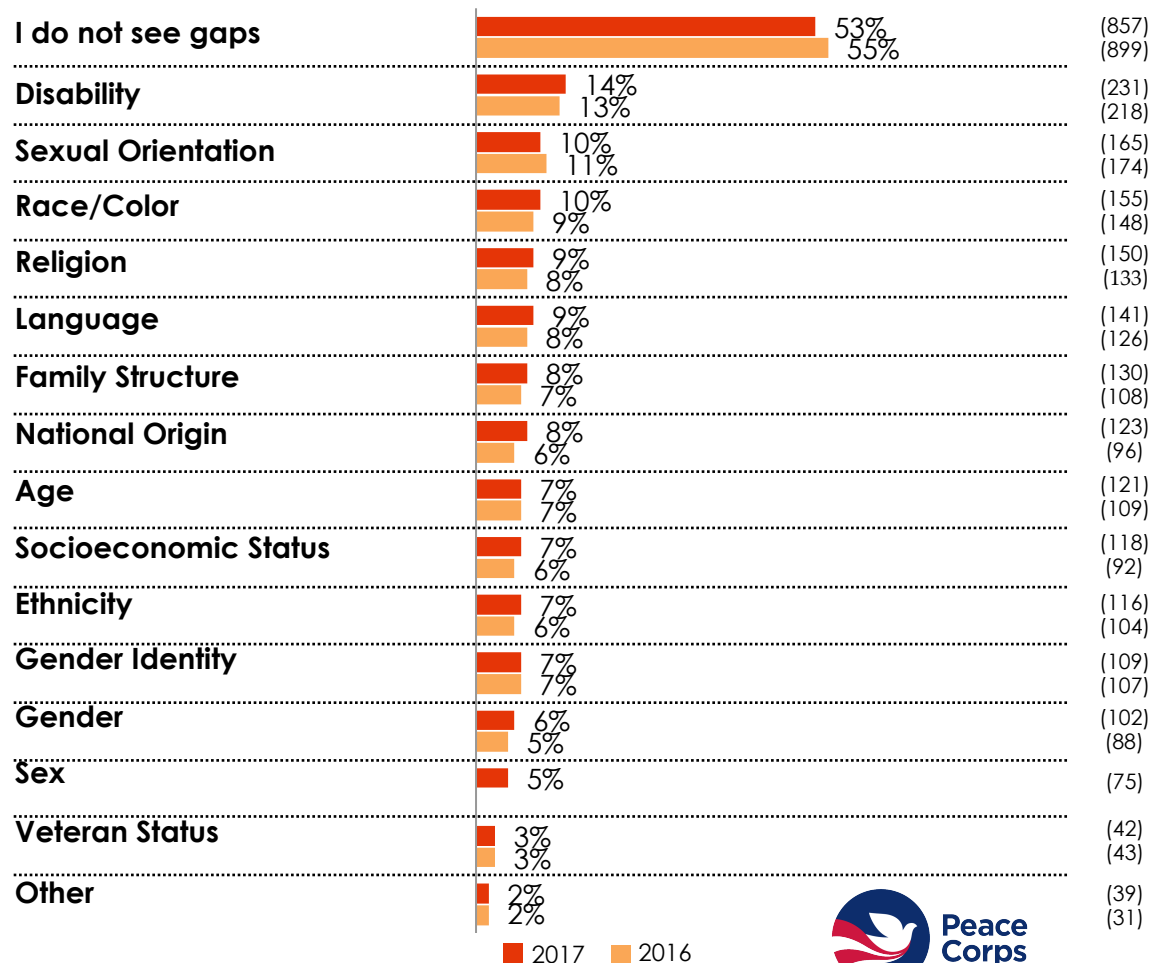
*Diversity is a collection of individual attributes that include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as nationality, language, race, color, ethnicity, disability, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures.

Just over half of all host country staff saw no gaps in the Peace Corps culture of inclusion.

Finding:

In measuring Performance Goal 6.2: Build an Open and Inclusive Organizational Culture, Peace Corps staff have consistently reported that the culture of inclusion at the agency is strong. While the greatest number of staff who reported seeing a gap pointed to disabilities, no single inclusion gap was noted by more than 15 percent of staff.

Where, if anywhere do you see gaps in the culture of inclusion in the Peace Corps...





VI. Promoting Cross-Cultural Understanding

Staff reported that integration and management of cultural differences remain the areas of greatest opportunity for Volunteers.

Finding:

Nearly 100 percent of staff felt that Volunteers made a positive impact on their country, and 85 percent believed Volunteers were helping to create lasting change in their communities. While staff also agreed that Volunteers worked hard to learn the local language, they continue to see opportunity for improvement in Volunteer integration and the management of cultural differences.

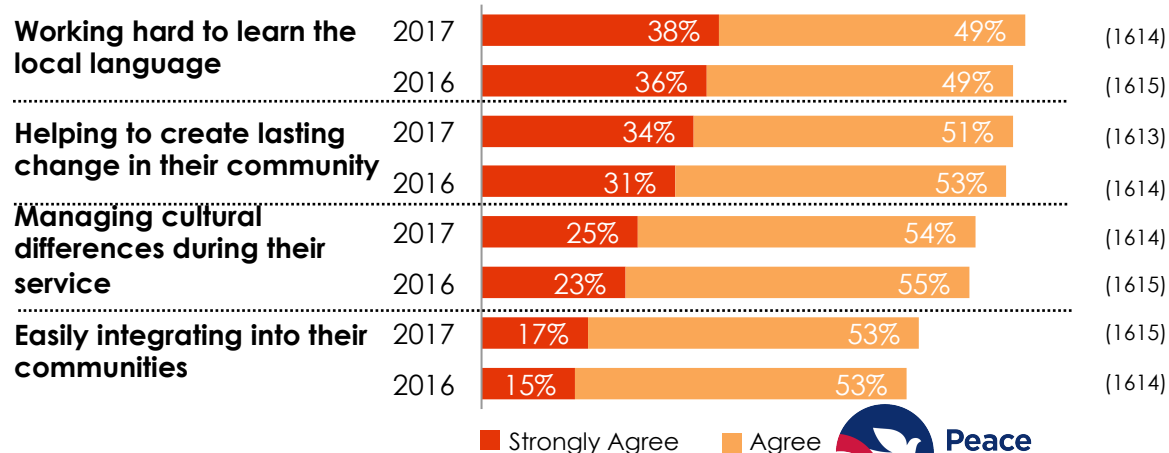
What kind of impact do you think Peace Corps has on people in your country?

2017*



■ Strong Positive (55%) ■ Somewhat Positive (42%)

Peace Corps Volunteers do a good job....





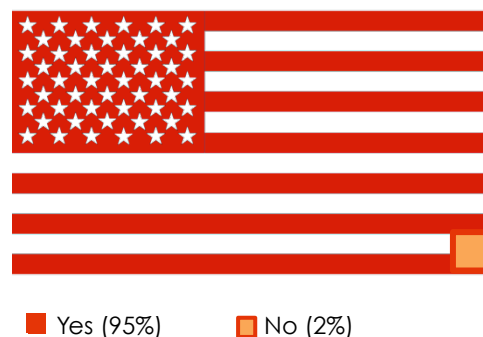
VII. Promoting a Better Understanding of Americans

More than two in three staff reported a more positive opinion about Americans since becoming an agency employee.

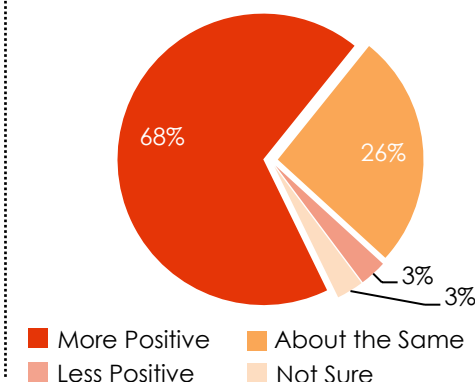
Finding:

In measuring Goal Two: Sharing America with the World, 95 percent of staff reported gaining a new, and largely more positive, understanding of Americans during their employment at the Peace Corps. Staff were most likely to share this new understanding with co-workers and family members.

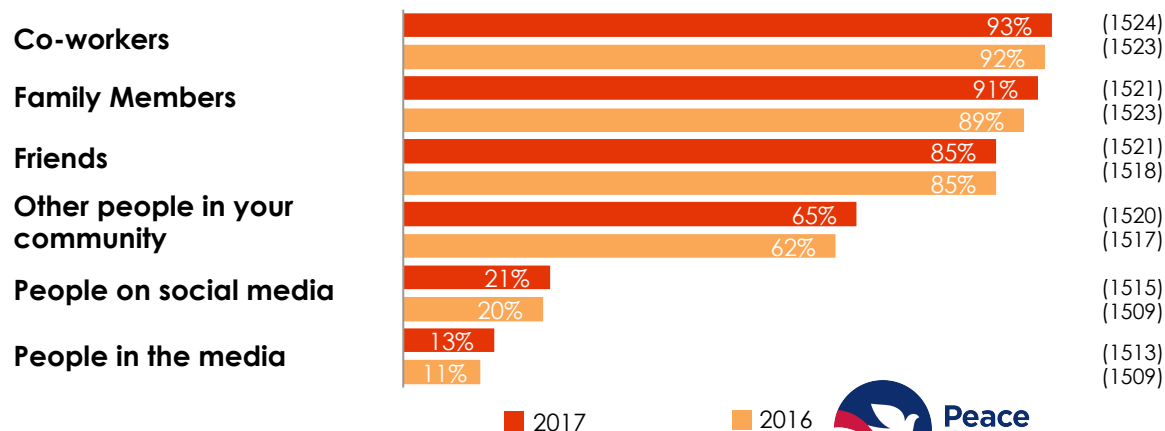
Have you gained a new understanding of Americans during your employment at Peace Corps?*



My overall opinion about Americans since I became a Peace Corps employee is....**



I have shared the new understanding gained during my employment at Peace Corps with....



*Those who responded negatively to gaining a new understanding of Americans decreased 3% over 2016, 3% were unsure (N=16)

**Unchanged over 2016 (N=1609)

VIII. Why Peace Corps?

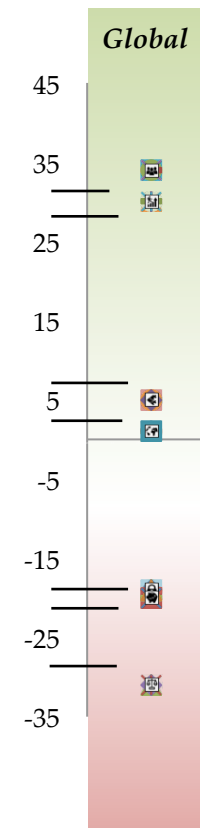
Staff reported the *opportunity to improve the lives of people in my country* as the main reason they work at Peace Corps.

Finding:

Staff continue to report overwhelmingly that the reason they choose to work at the Peace Corps is to improve the lives of people in their country – a clear reflection of Goal One.

Reasons global staff choose to work at Peace Corps (N=1390)*

	Rank	Score
 Opportunity to help improve the lives of people in my country	1	34
 Opportunity for professional growth and development	2	30
 Challenging and dynamic work	3	5
 Opportunity to help improve understanding between my country and the U.S.	4	1
 Stable employment	5	-19
 Pay and benefits	6	-20
 Balance of personal life and professional life	7	-31



* Rankings unchanged over 2016

- None of the items that were presented to respondents are inherently negative, so all can be judged equally by respondents.
- Data analysts also need to remember that no item is negative when interpreting MaxDiff scores. Rather than focusing entirely on each component's absolute score, the relationship between the different ranked items is important, because the results show us, in a nuanced way, the overall motivations of staff in working for the Peace Corps.
- MaxDiff scores run from -100 to 100, where negative scores indicate that the item was selected more often as a "bottom" choice, and positive scores indicate that the item was selected more often as a "top" choice.
- The scores are proportionate, so a score of -50 for Item X can be compared to a score of 50 for item y by saying "Item Y was selected as a bottom choice as often as Item X was selected as a top choice."

IX. Appendix A

Acronym List

The acronyms below are commonly used in the Peace Corps and throughout this report.

AFR	Africa Region
EMA	Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia Region
EVS	Employee Viewpoint Survey
FSN	Foreign service national
HCN	Host country national
HCS	Host country staff
HCSS	Host Country Staff Survey
IAP	Inter-America and the Pacific Region
OSIRP	Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning
PG	Performance goal in the agency's Strategic Plan
PSC	Personal services contractor
USDH	U.S. direct hires

Limitations (1 of 2)

Distribution of the survey tool by email limited participation to staff who had an email address that was both valid at the time of the survey and available to the research team. Email addresses were compiled utilizing a linking process to match staff names provided by an internal data source and email addresses provided by a separate internal data source, thus introducing the possibility of linking error.

Additionally, It is important to note that while staff may be literate in English, French, or Spanish, some of the survey questions were originally designed by the Office of Personnel Management for use in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, which is targeted to an American workforce. Concepts such as “veteran status” may be unfamiliar to post staff who do not speak English as their native language. As a result, there may be barriers to participation embedded in the questions themselves, both in terms of the level of language that is used and in terms of underlying cultural concepts or norms.

Lastly, barriers to participation may be related to the time of year in which the survey is fielded (mid-August to early September). The timing of the survey could potentially limit the participation of staff if it conflicts with planned vacation schedules or periods when short-term contracts are not active.³

³To minimize this limitation, the survey period was established as a full 30 days, and the survey tool itself was limited to a small set of questions that could be answered in an estimated time of 15 minutes or less.

Limitations (2 of 2)

The cumulative effect of these limitations is that the results are based on a non-random sample of respondents who: (1) had an active peacecorps.gov email address that was provided to the researchers; (2) were on duty and able to receive the message during the survey window; (3) were sufficiently literate in computers and English, French, or Spanish to take the survey; and (4) chose to respond.

While 76 percent of the staff with an active peacecorps.gov email address that was provided to the researchers responded to the FY 2017 survey, they constitute just over half (52 percent) of the total eligible pool of staff. Thus, results should be interpreted with caution, as they may not accurately represent the opinions of the global pool of host country staff.

Methodology and Data Interpretation: Why We Focus on Global Findings

This report focuses on global results for two primary reasons. First, global insights provide “the big picture” for how supervisors can enact positive behaviors to support employee satisfaction and performance. While individual circumstances may vary among staff at different posts, the insights that are received from employees around the world are the ones that are most likely to produce positive results once they are acted upon at the local level.

Second, although the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) used all of the tools available to its research team to increase the validity of the HCSS data, some logistical and intercultural limitations persist. Challenges to validity, such as sampling bias, coverage error, and the effects of intercultural interpretation of questions, are magnified at lower levels of reporting,⁴ but global-level results can offer insights where respondents display consensus around results.

⁴ The researchers investigated job title, job hierarchy, and regional breakdowns in assembling this report but did not find a compelling case for including results at those levels of analysis due to the potential for sample bias and coverage error.

Surveying Method: An Attempted Census

The HCSS attempts to reach all eligible staff, which is a non-random sampling methodology also known as a census. Unlike random sampling methodologies, census approaches cannot ensure with a known degree of confidence that those who respond to a survey are similar to those who do not respond. It is therefore important not to extrapolate the HCSS results to the eligible staff who did not participate in the survey, either because they chose not to respond, because they did not have a valid email address, or because they do not speak the survey's supported languages of English, French, and Spanish. French and Spanish accounted for 16 percent of the responses to the 2017 survey. See Appendix B for response rates broken out by language.

In 2017, email addresses for 69 percent of all host country staff were identified by the research team. Of those staff members who received the HCSS, 1,632 overall responses were received, or 76 percent of those surveyed—a two percent decrease over 2016. In total, 52 percent of all host country staff globally responded to the survey.

While we continue to receive a greater number of total responses, when compared to the previous three years⁵—likely due to wider dissemination of survey results and Agency awareness—the response rate is still far less than ideal for a census methodology.

⁵ In 2016, 55 percent of all eligible staff or 78 percent with identified email addresses. In 2015, 52 percent of all eligible staff or 71 percent with identified email addresses responded to the survey. In 2014, 37 percent of all eligible staff or 58 percent of staff with identified email addresses responded to the survey.

The HCSS Questionnaire: Intercultural Surveying

The HCSS Questionnaire was originally designed as an extension of the FEVS and closely retains several questions from that survey. It is notable, however, that those questions were originally designed for a very specific population: English-speaking federal employees who were well-acquainted with American and U.S. government culture. Consequently, the questions on the HCSS might be interpreted differently by—or be more or less sensitive to—host country staff who do not share this same cultural background. This limits the survey's comparability to Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey results and also complicates comparability when looking at data below the global level.

The issue of cross-cultural comparability is also compounded by translating the survey into multiple languages⁸ and by imperfect coverage of the languages spoken at post. As a result, the nature and extent of the effects of intercultural interpretation of the terms used in the survey is unknown.

⁸Translations were completed by the U.S. Department of State's Office of Language Services and checked by internal Peace Corps employees who were familiar with agency operations and also fluent in the languages employed.

X. Appendix B

Global Respondent Rates and Language Type

The research team worked in cooperation with the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and individual posts to assemble a survey distribution list that was as complete as possible. However, the distribution list was limited by the facts that not all host country staff are supplied with email addresses, and there is currently no central list or database of host country staff that includes email addresses. Resulting from the collaboration of all three offices, email addresses for 2,201 of all 3,185 eligible staff (69%) were available for distribution of the survey. The HCSS received responses from 1,668 staff for a response rate of 76 percent of reachable staff and 52 percent of all eligible staff.

	Sample Responses	Sample Members	Sample Response Rate	Population Members	Population Response Rate
GLOBAL	1632	2201	74%	3185	52%
English	1361	83%	16% Non-English	LANGUAGE TYPE	
Spanish	184	11%			
French	87	5%			

Respondent Rates by Region: Africa (1 of 3)

	Sample Responses	Sample Members	Sample Response Rate
AFRICA	740	1013	73%
BENIN	24	32	75%
BOTSWANA	28	35	80%
BURKINA FASO	39	49	80%
CAMEROON	42	48	88%
COMOROS	12	13	92%
ETHIOPIA	38	59	64%
GAMBIA	23	34	68%
GHANA	30	44	68%
GUINEA	21	28	75%
KENYA	19	19	100%
LESOTHO	23	29	79%
LIBERIA	38	41	93%
MADAGASCAR	36	46	78%
MALAWI	28	44	64%
MOZAMBIQUE	40	61	66%
NAMIBIA	25	26	96%
RWANDA	22	36	61%
SENEGAL	43	75	57%
SIERRA LEONE	20	30	67%
SOUTH AFRICA	34	46	74%
SWAZILAND	19	25	76%
TANZANIA	33	48	69%
TOGO	23	31	74%
UGANDA	39	55	71%
ZAMBIA	41	59	69%

Respondent Rates by Region: EMA (2 of 3)

	Sample Responses	Sample Members	Sample Response Rate
EMA	436	600	73%
ALBANIA	25	30	83%
ARMENIA	22	31	71%
MYANMAR	14	19	74%
CAMBODIA	27	29	93%
CHINA	17	17	100%
GEORGIA	26	44	59%
INDONESIA	26	28	93%
KOSOVO	17	28	61%
KYRGYZ REPUBLIC	21	37	57%
MACEDONIA	25	29	86%
MOLDOVA	17	36	47%
MONGOLIA	26	37	70%
MOROCCO	27	37	73%
NEPAL	25	28	89%
PHILIPPINES	52	64	81%
THAILAND	20	33	61%
TIMOR LESTE	17	21	81%
UKRAINE	32	52	62%

Respondent Rates by Region: IAP (3 of 3)

	Sample Responses	Sample Members	Sample Response Rate
IAP	456	588	78%
BELIZE	13	20	65%
COLOMBIA	18	25	72%
COSTA RICA	29	39	74%
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	29	40	73%
EASTERN CARIBBEAN	22	23	96%
ECUADOR	36	43	84%
EL SALVADOR	1	1	100%
FIJI	15	18	83%
GUATEMALA	36	44	82%
GUYANA	20	25	80%
JAMAICA	18	22	82%
MEXICO	15	22	68%
MICRONESIA	16	20	80%
NICARAGUA	33	43	77%
PANAMA	38	50	76%
PARAGUAY	38	53	72%
PERU	37	51	73%
SAMOA	12	13	92%
TONGA	13	16	81%
VANUATU	17	20	85%

XI. Appendix C

The 2017 HCSS Questionnaire in English, French, and Spanish

The 2017 Host Country Staff Survey was designed in English and then translated into French and Spanish by the Department of State's translation services in order to increase the number of staff who could be reached.

Links to the English, French, and Spanish questionnaire can be found here:

[HCSS Questionnaire](#)

About the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning

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.

Acknowledgments

OSIRP developed this survey to systematically tap into the enormous wealth of experience of a critically important segment of the Peace Corps family: our host country staff. The interest and support from the Peace Corps staff in the countries where this survey was conducted were critical to this endeavor. Our sincere appreciation is extended to the Office of Global Operations for reviewing the survey materials and to the country directors at each post for their assistance in promoting participation in this survey. Finally, we would like to extend special thanks to all of the post staff who helped to make the 2017 Host Country Staff Survey a success by participating in the survey.

This report was developed by Jenny Hurst, OSIRP Management Analyst.

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