



FY 2019 Peace Corps Early Termination Report
GLOBAL

February 2020

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 with local partners, focusing their efforts 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 people 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 240,000 Volunteers have served in 142 countries since the agency was founded by President John F. Kennedy in 1961.

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. In fiscal year (FY) 2019, the global early termination rate (13 percent of Volunteers) was similar to the FY 2018 result (12 percent). Additionally, the average length of service across all Volunteers and trainees was 22 months during FY 2019, which is the same as the result found in 2018. Half of the Volunteers who left early completed at least one full year in service.

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 The manual identifies the four types of early termination:

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.

- **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 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(j) and Peace Corps policy, the service of a Volunteer may be terminated at the discretion of designated Peace Corps staff. This option may be invoked on several grounds - for example, when a Volunteer commits a major violation of a Peace Corps policy, including certain policies designed to ensure their health and safety.
- **Resignation:** Volunteers who no longer wish to continue their Peace Corps service may resign. In addition, 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 service. If they choose this alternative, their early termination is categorized as a resignation in lieu of administrative separation.
- **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 reported by post staff. These data are downloaded, cleaned, and archived³ by the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP).

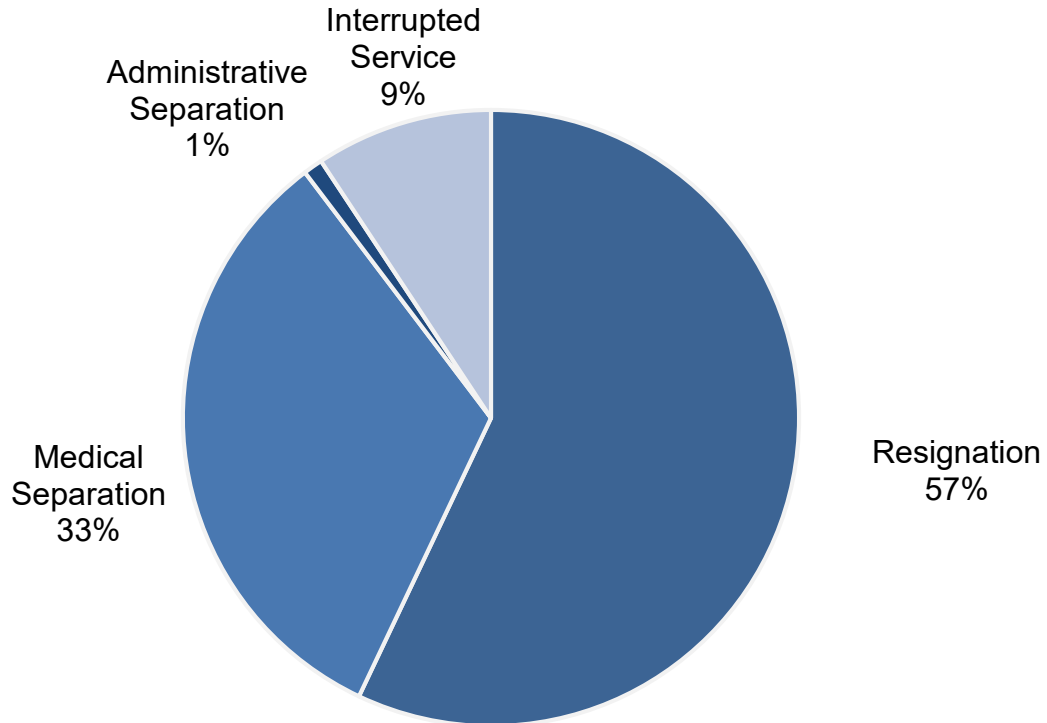
This report describes several measures of early terminations. It provides the annual rate of all early terminations for FY 2019 and compares the FY 2019 results to those of the previous nine fiscal years. Several of the charts in this report also disaggregate the annual resignation rate as a specific 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. Pursuant to the [Kate Puzey Act of 2011](#), the report also disaggregates the annual early termination rate for FY 2019 using demographic characteristics. Specifically, the six demographic characteristics on which the Peace Corps collects data are: sex, age group, marital status, education level, race, and ethnic group.

³ 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 in PCVDBMS.

Early Terminations by Type

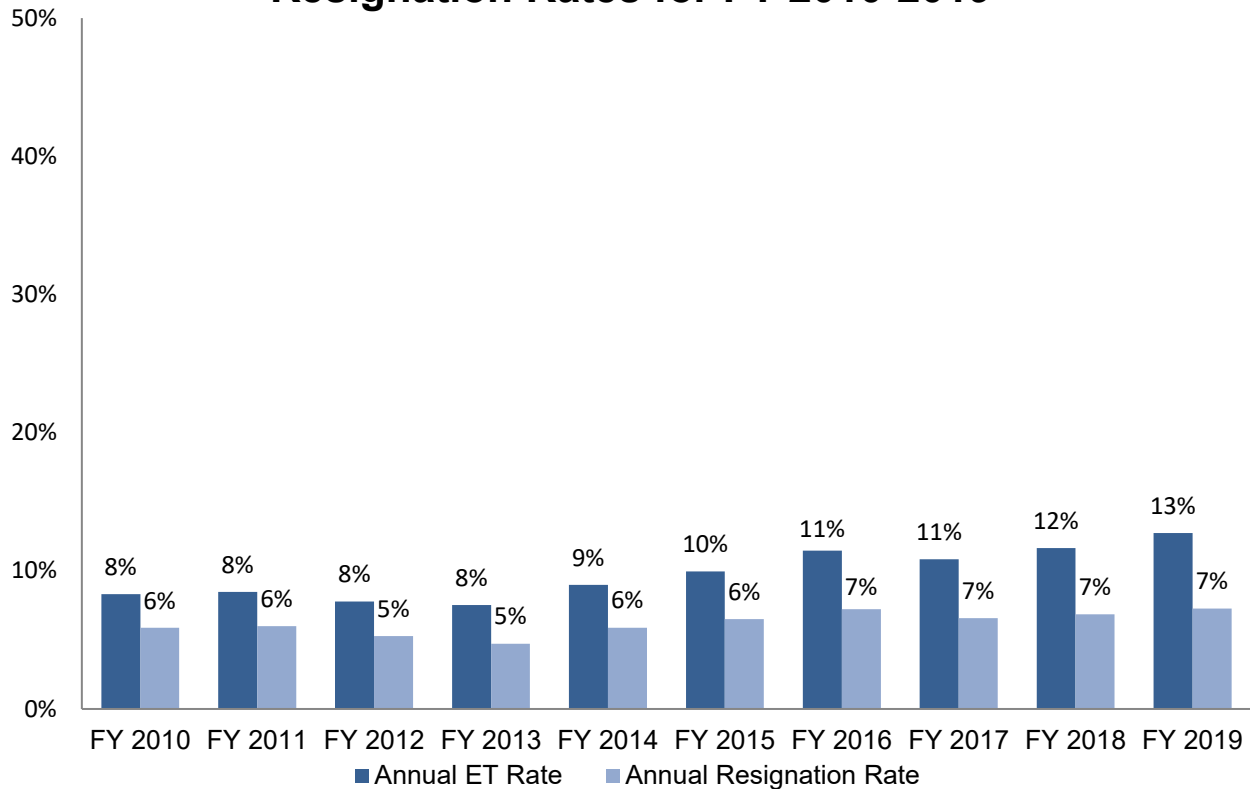
Percentage of Global Early Terminations in FY 2019 by Type



Summary: In FY 2019, 1,376 Volunteers did not complete their full service compared to 1,260 in 2018. Of these 1,376 Volunteers, 785 (57 percent of all ETs) resigned, which is similar to the result for 2018 (59 percent of all ETs resigned). 78 of the 785 people who resigned (10%) chose to do so in lieu of an administrative separation. The second largest number of early terminations came from medical separations (449 Volunteers, or 33 percent of all ETs).

Annual Early Termination and Resignation Rates

Global Annual Early Termination and Resignation Rates for FY 2010-2019



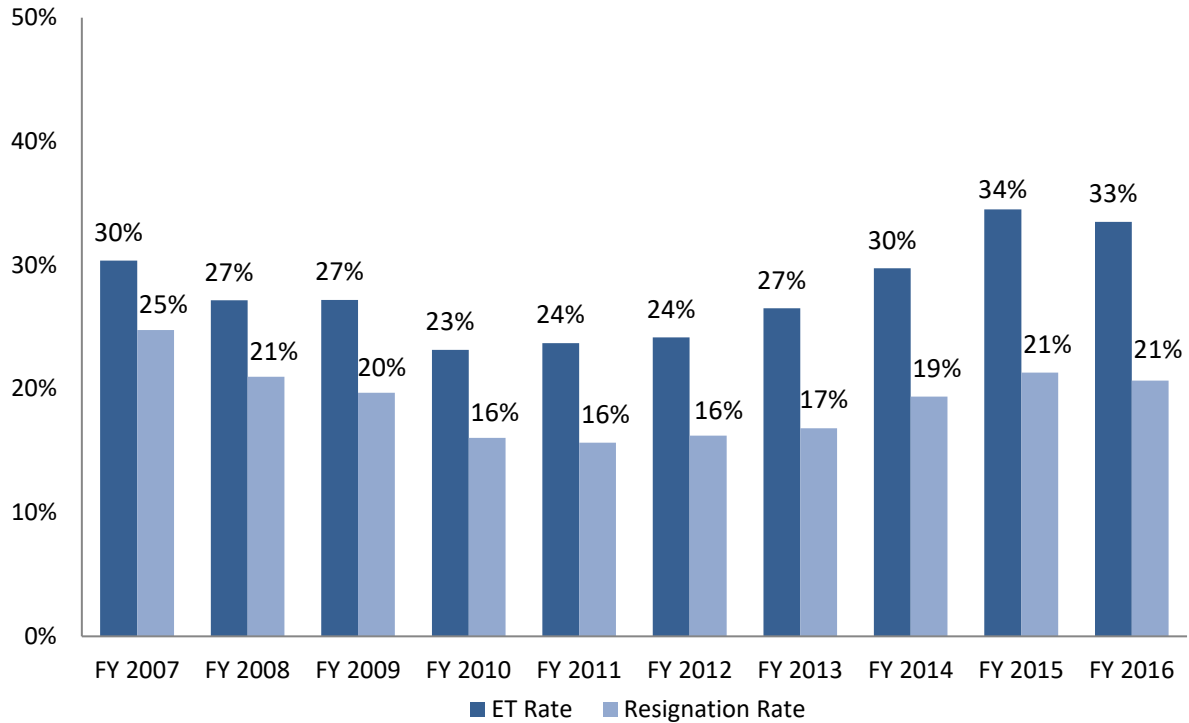
Summary: In FY 2019, 1,376 of the 10,811 Volunteers who served during the year (12.7 percent) did not complete their full service. Of these 10,811 Volunteers, 7.3 percent resigned. This result is similar to the result in FY 2018 (6.9 percent).

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 2007-2016



Summary: 1,277 of the 3,812 Volunteers who began their Peace Corps service in FY 2016 (33 percent) terminated early. Resignations accounted for the majority of these early terminations, affecting 21 percent of the Volunteers in the FY 2016 cohort, or 788 people. This result trended upwards between 2012 and 2015 but appears to have stabilized in 2016.

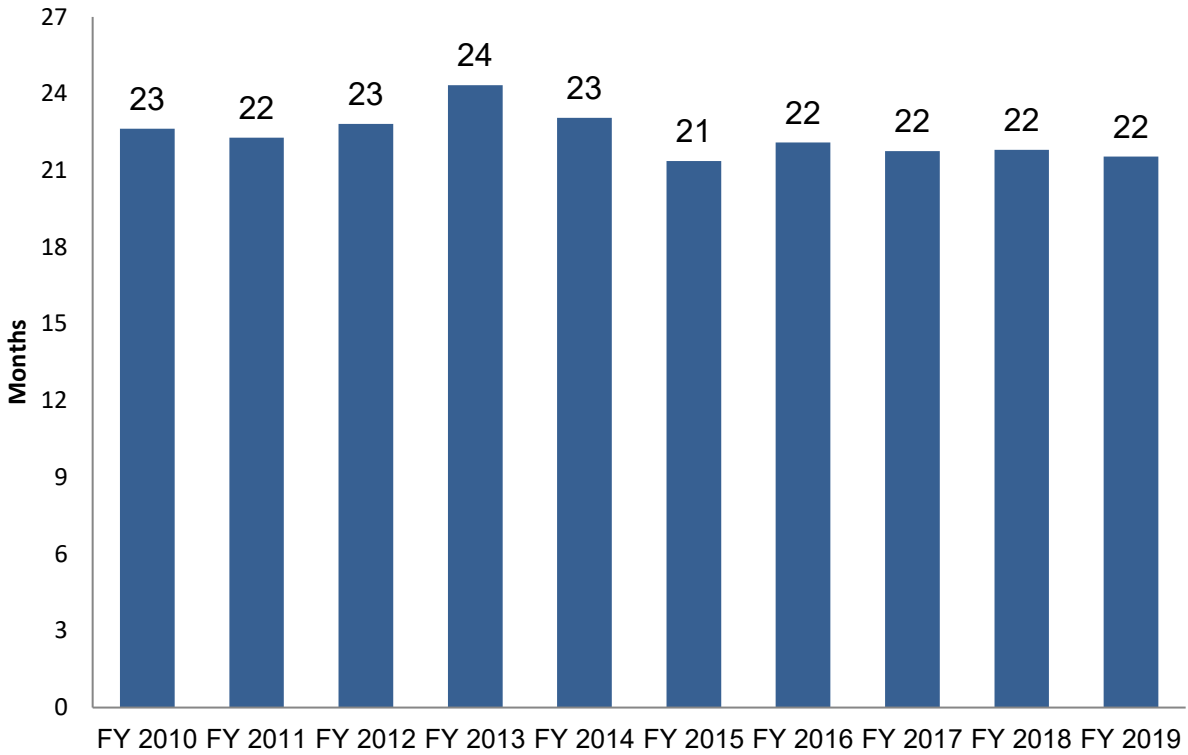
Calculation: The cohort early termination rate is based on a dataset that includes every Volunteer whose enter-on-duty date occurred in the fiscal year. The cohort ET rate is calculated as the number of Volunteers in the fiscal year cohort who terminated early (at any point in their service) divided by the total number of Volunteers in that fiscal year cohort. 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 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 2019 is the cohort that entered on duty in FY 2016.

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

Average Length of Service

Global Average Length of Service for FY 2010-2019

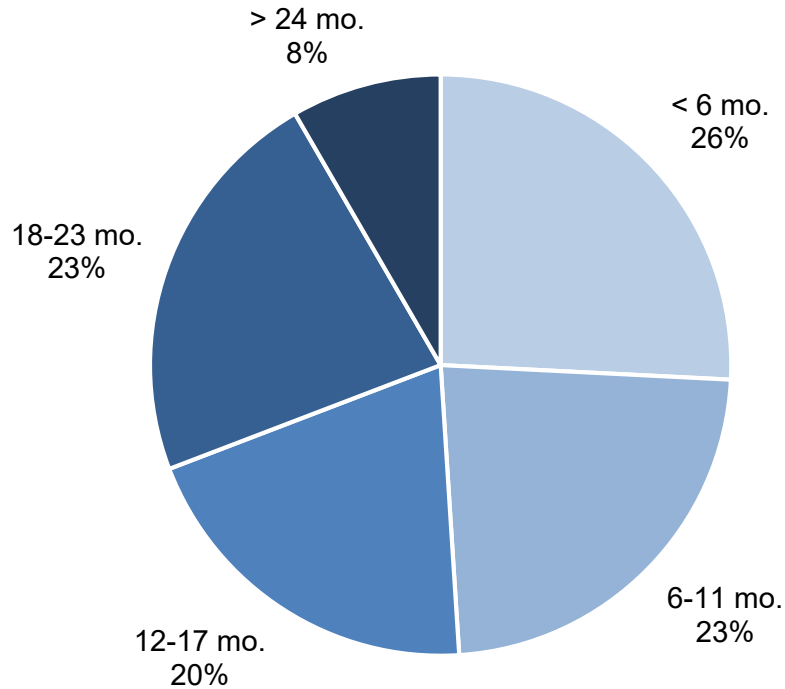


Summary: The average length of service of the 3,659 Volunteers who ended their Peace Corps service in FY 2019 was 21.5 months. This result was similar to FY 2018 and FY 2017 (21.8 months).

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 that fiscal year.

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

Months of Service Completed Among Volunteers Who Terminated Early



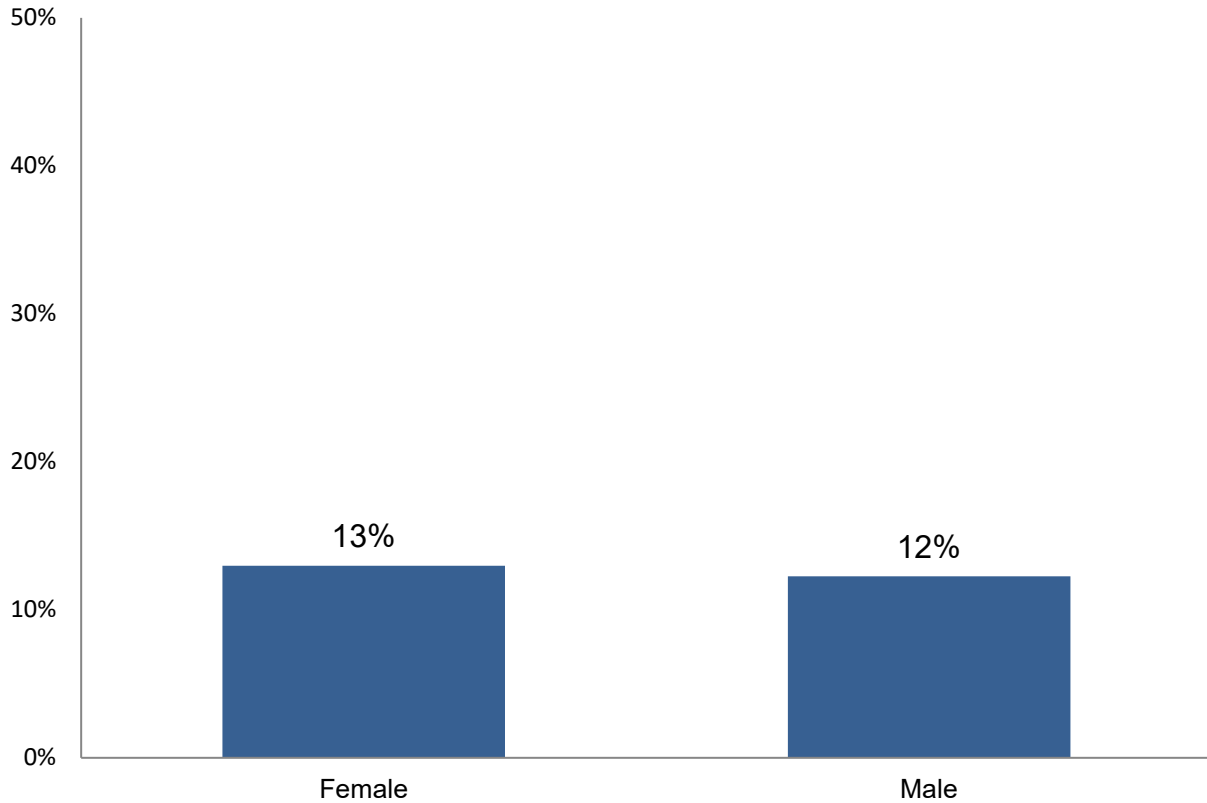
Summary: Among the 1,376 Volunteers who ended their Peace Corps service in FY 2019 ahead of schedule, 51 percent completed at least 12 full months of service. Among the 785 people who resigned, 45 percent completed at least 12 full months. Among the 449 who ended their service early for medical reasons, 57 percent completed at least 12 months of service.

Calculation: The length of service is calculated by measuring the number of complete months served by each Volunteer who terminated his or her service in FY 2019. The length of service period begins with the Volunteer's enter-on-duty (EOD) date and ends with the date of the early termination (ET).

$$\text{Length of Service} = \frac{\text{Total Number of Months of Completed Service in FY 2019}}{\text{Number of Volunteers Who Terminated Service Early in FY 2019}}$$

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Sex

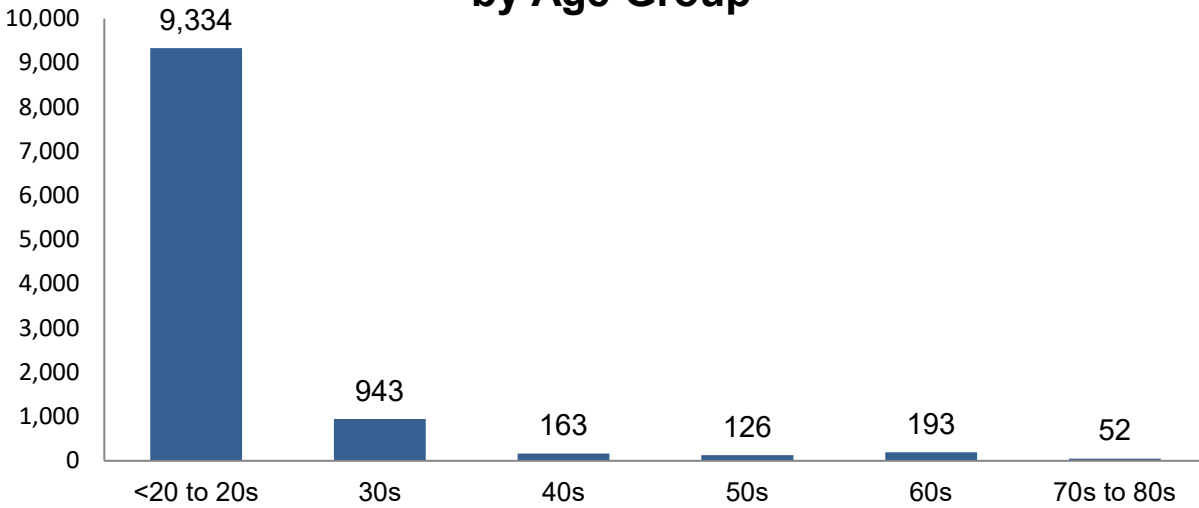
FY 2019 Early Termination Rate, by Sex



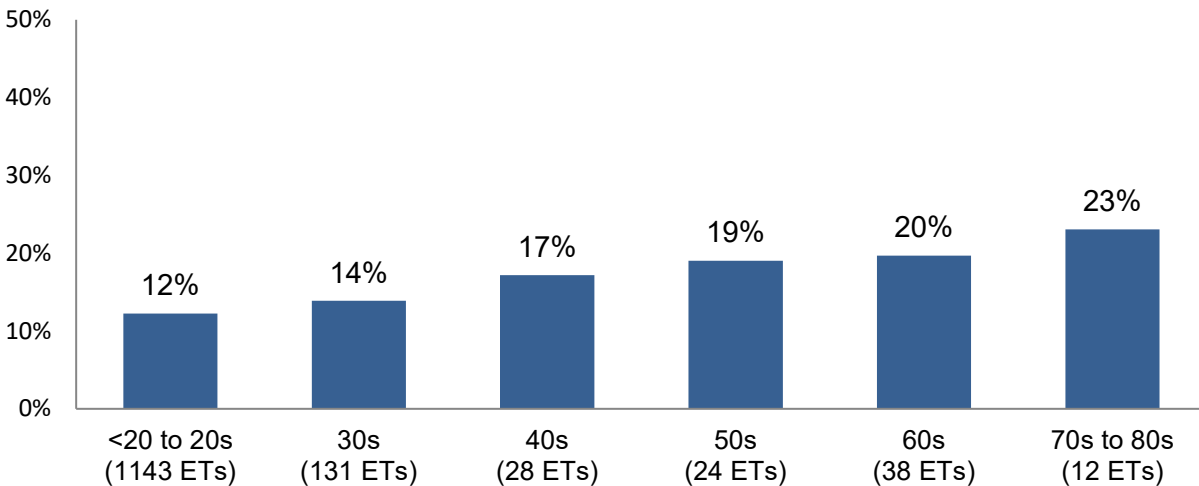
Summary: In FY 2019, 908 out of 6,996 female Volunteers (13 percent) and 468 out of 3,815 male Volunteers (12 percent) left service early.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Age Group

Number of FY 2019 Volunteers by Age Group



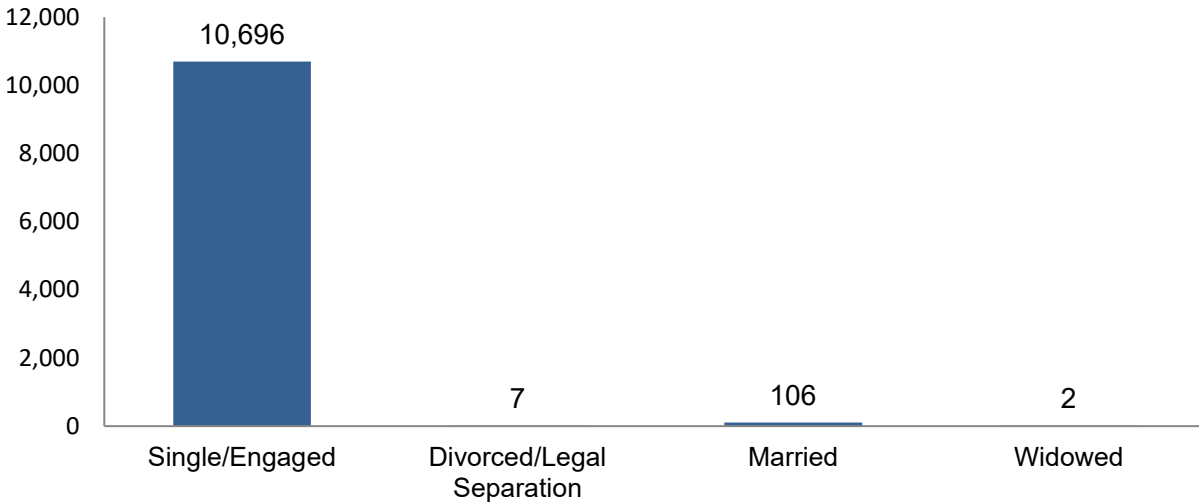
Number and Percentage of Early Terminations (ETs) by Age Group



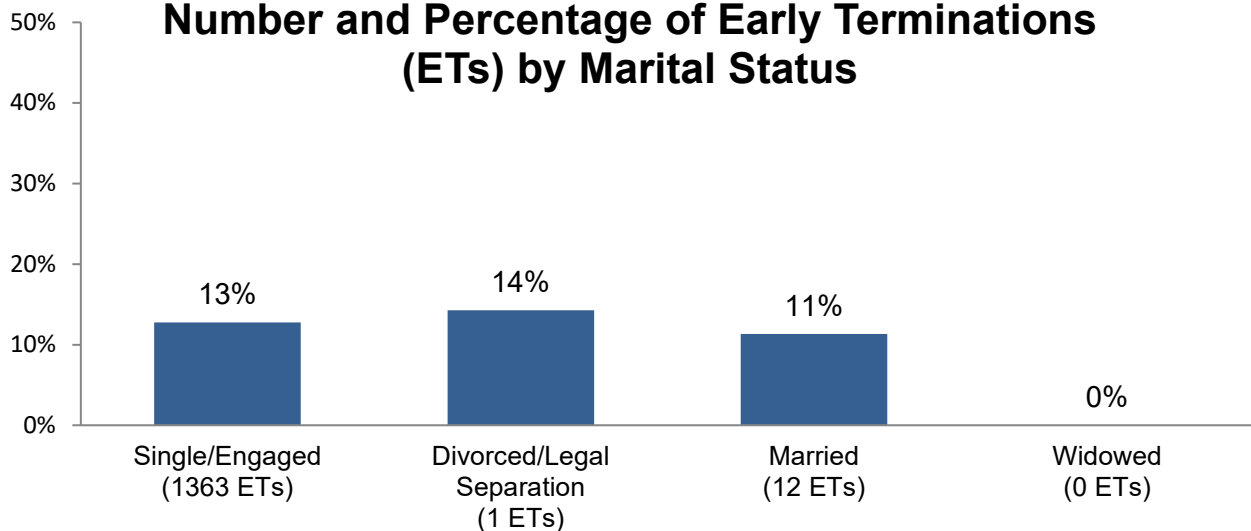
Summary: The vast majority of Volunteers are in their 20s. This group has the lowest early termination rate of any age group (12 percent). The highest ET rate of any group in FY 2019 was found among Volunteers in their 70s to 80s (23 percent).

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Marital Status

Number of FY 2019 Volunteers by Marital Status



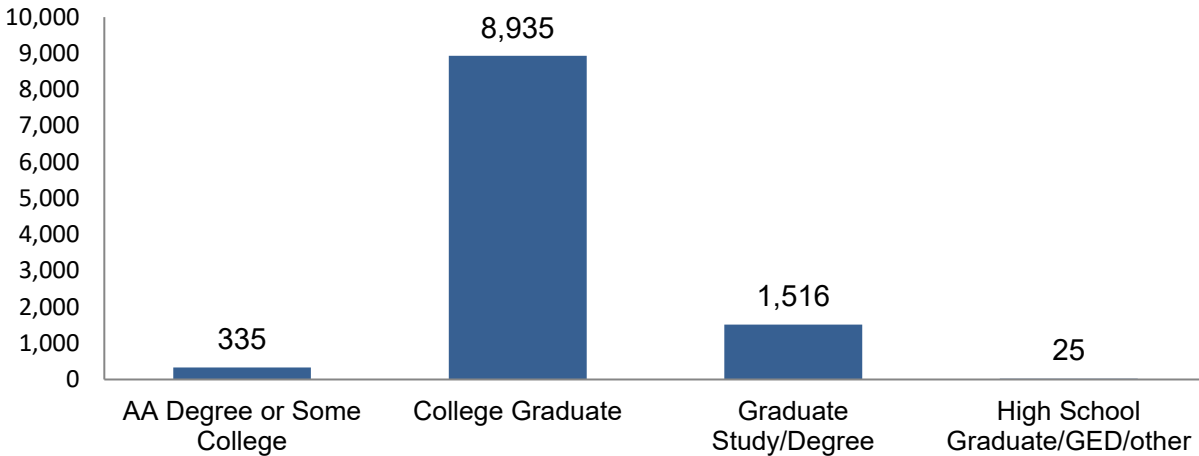
Number and Percentage of Early Terminations (ETs) by Marital Status



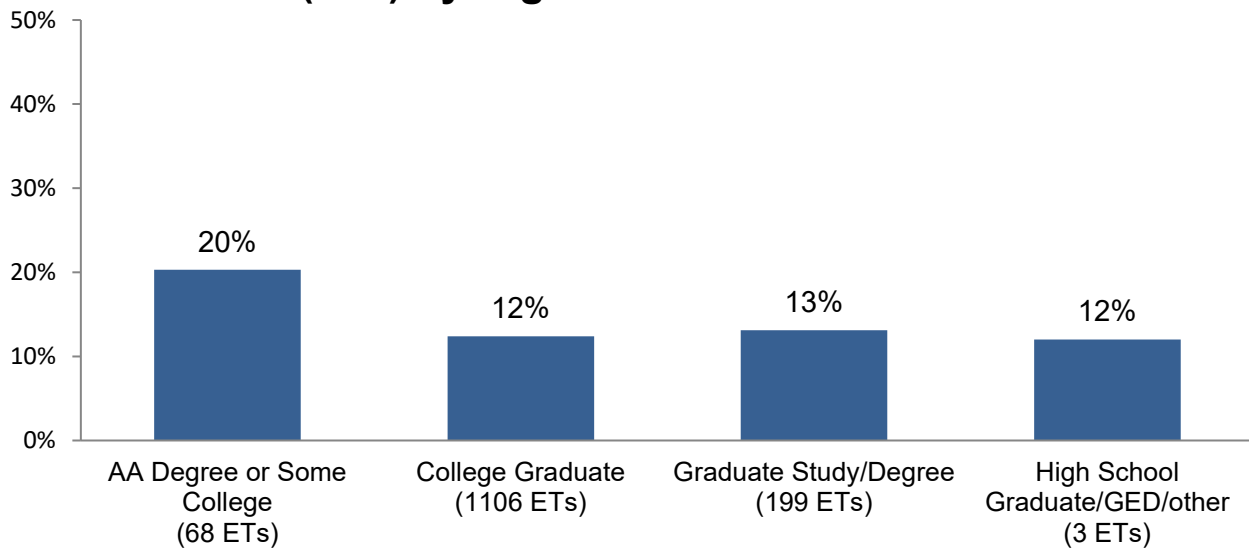
Summary: Data in this section are drawn from the Volunteers' applications for Peace Corps service. As these data show, the vast majority of Volunteers are not married. Early termination rates vary modestly across marital status groups from a low of 11 percent among Volunteers who are married to 13 percent of those who were single. One divorced Volunteer terminated service early.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Education Level

Number of FY 2019 Volunteers by Highest Education Level



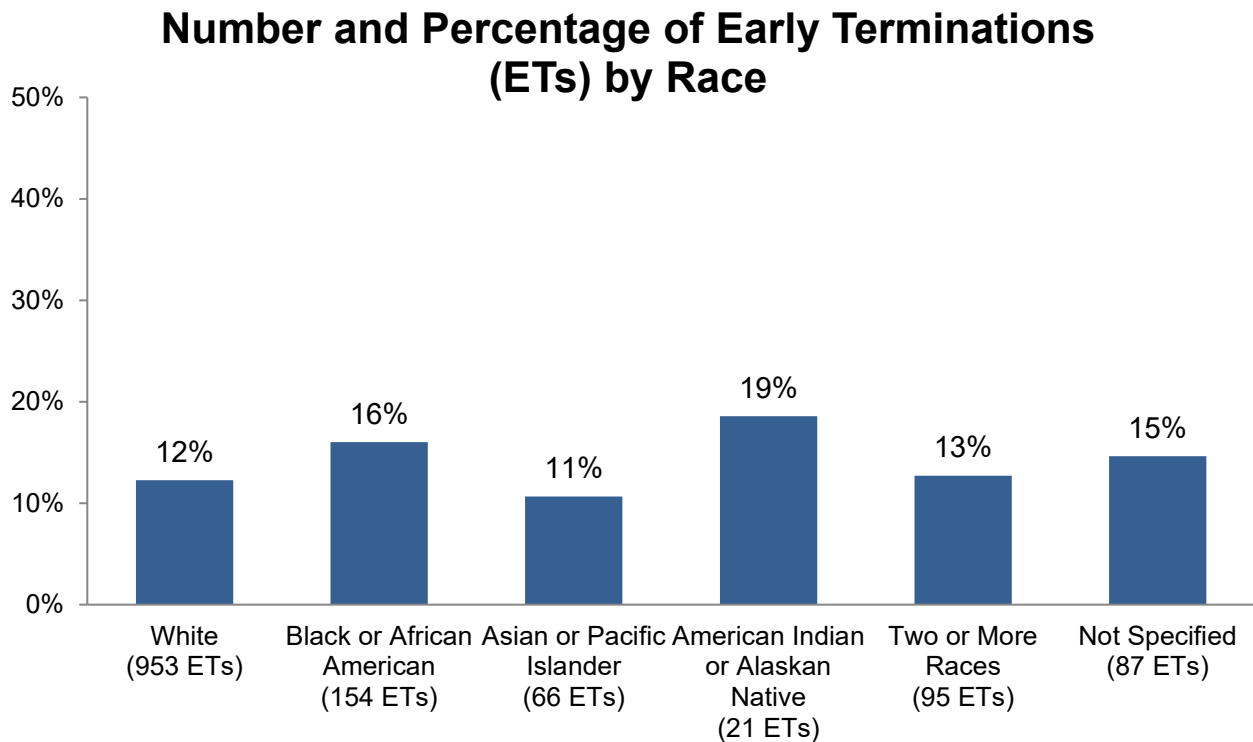
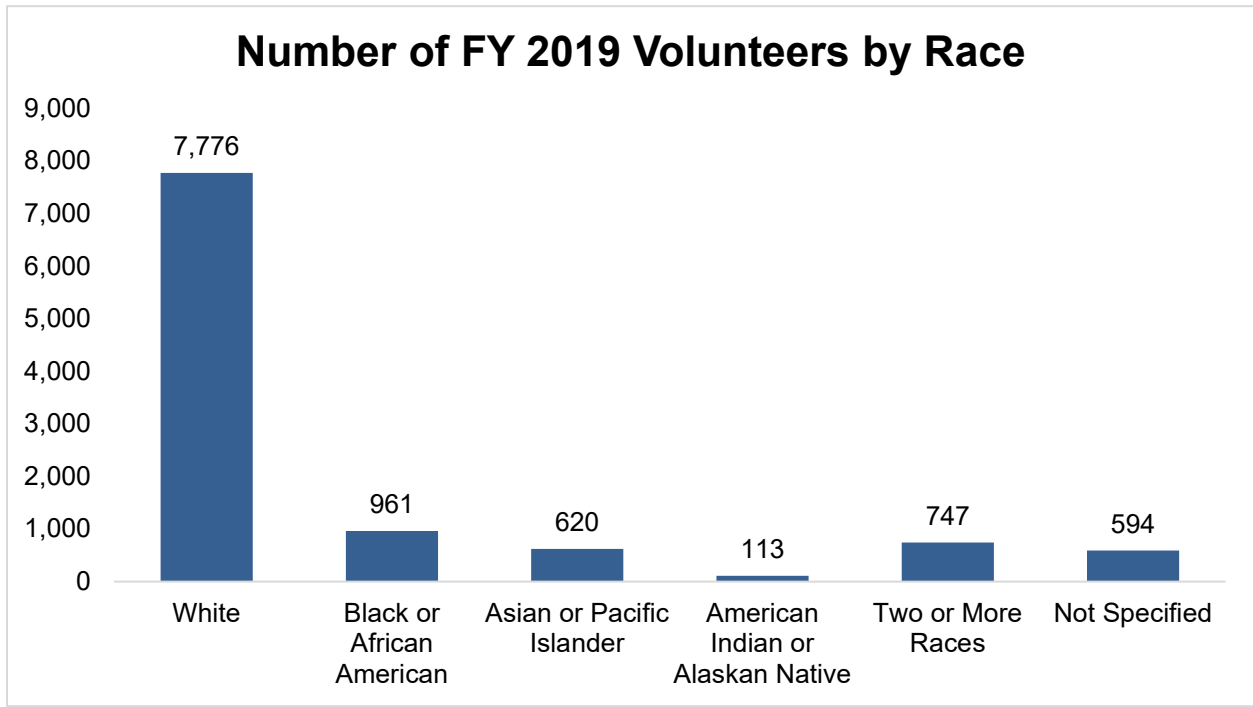
Number and Percentage of Early Terminations (ETs) by Highest Education Level



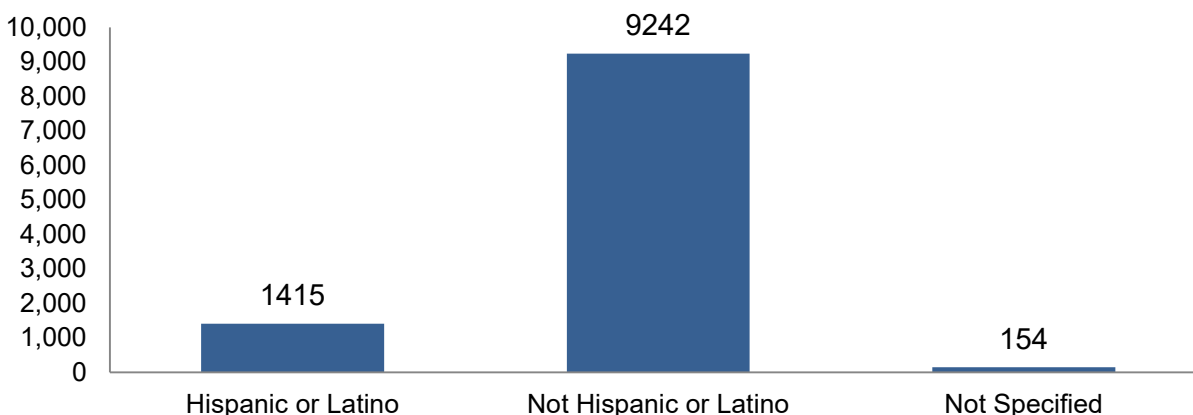
Summary: The vast majority of Volunteers have an undergraduate or graduate degree. Early termination rates are consistent across most educational levels at 12-13 percent. The one group that was found to differ in 2019 was the group with an AA degree or some college classes. Twenty percent of these Volunteers left service early.

Calculation Notes: The group “AA degree or some college” includes technical school graduate, A.A. degree or equivalent, and one to three completed years of college.

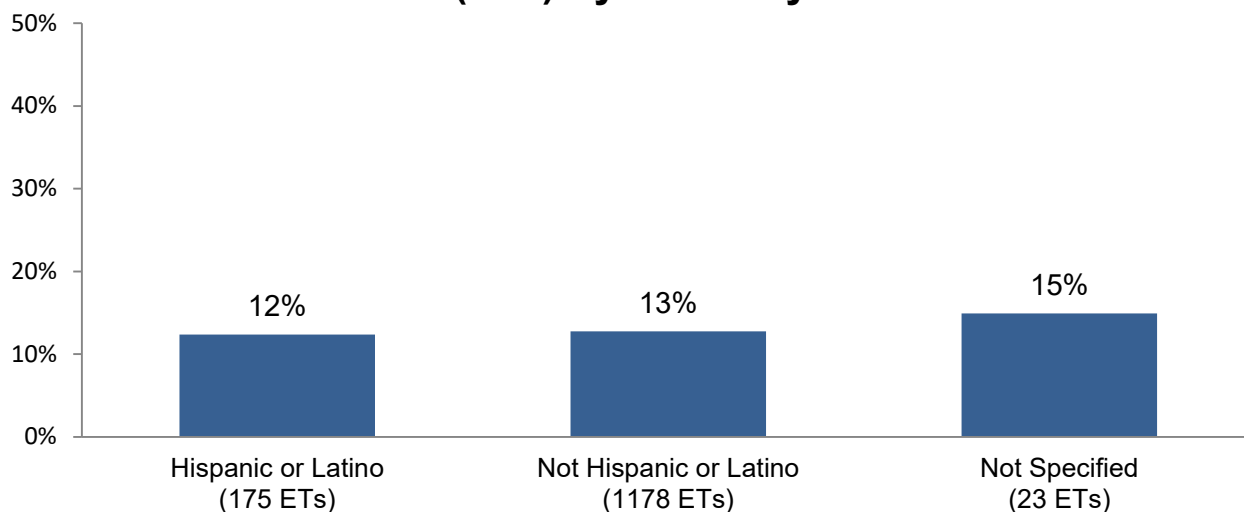
Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Race and Ethnicity



Number of FY 2019 Volunteers by Ethnicity



Number and Percentage of Early Terminations (ETs) by Ethnicity

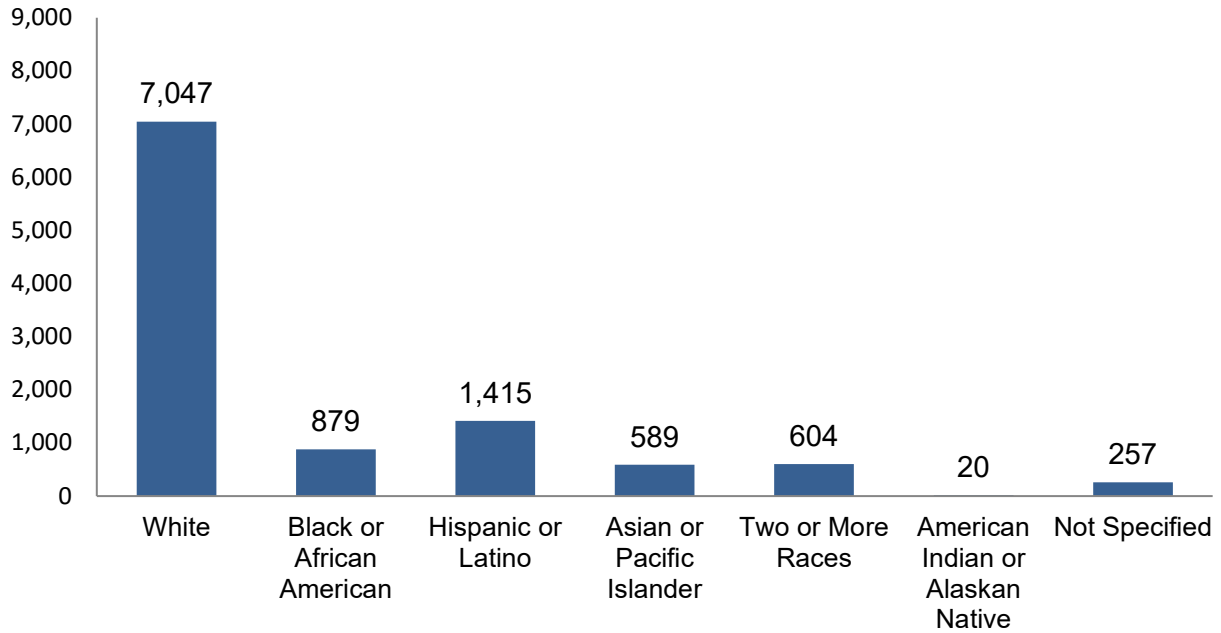


Summary: Early termination rates are similar across ethnic groups and vary modestly across racial groups.

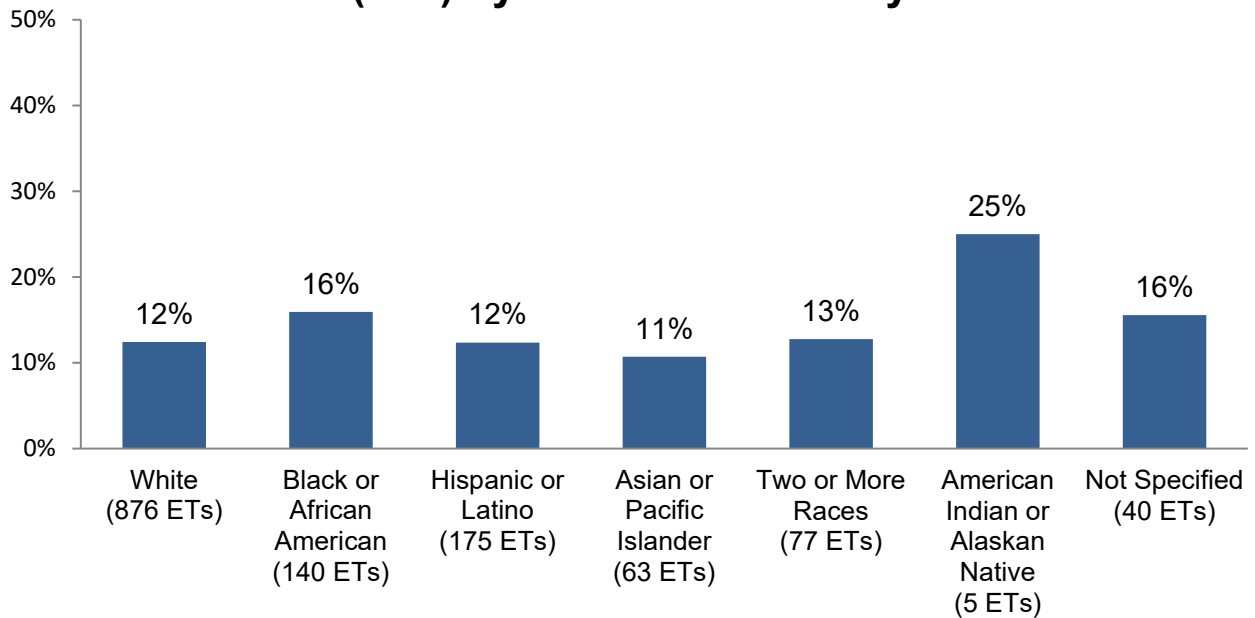
Calculation Notes: The Peace Corps application includes two demographic questions on race and ethnicity. The categories shown in the analysis above are based on results from those individual questions. People who chose not to self-report race or ethnicity are shown above as “not specified.”

The combined analysis of race and ethnicity below is presented to facilitate comparisons to prior years. This analysis categorizes as “Hispanic” all people who self-identify as having Hispanic or Latino ethnicity *regardless of race*. The rest of the categories include people who self-identified with a racial group and do *not* identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino. The category of “not specified” includes non-Hispanic people who chose not to report race, and those who reported neither race nor ethnicity.

Number of FY 2019 Volunteers by Race and Ethnicity



Number and Percentage of Early Terminations (ETs) by Race and Ethnicity



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.

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About the Peace Corps

The Peace Corps sends Americans with a passion for service abroad on behalf of the United States to work with communities and create lasting change. Volunteers develop sustainable solutions to address challenges in education, health, economic development, agriculture, environment and youth development. Through their Peace Corps experience, Volunteers gain a unique cultural understanding and a life-long commitment to service that positions them to succeed in today's global economy. For more information, visit peacecorps.gov and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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