



FY 2020 Peace Corps Early Termination Report
GLOBAL

February 2021

Overview

Since its establishment in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, 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. Peace Corps Volunteers serve around the world and advance this mission by living and working in local communities, learning their languages, and tackling their most pressing challenges in coordination with local leaders. Volunteers typically serve in the host country for two years after three months of training.¹ Under certain circumstances, Volunteers may end their service early, prior to what is called their “Completion of Service” (“COS”). These earlier-than-expected departures are called “early terminations” (ETs).

Given the central role of Volunteers in advancing the Peace Corps mission, ETs 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 can affect the Peace Corps’ relationship with the host country and/or host communities. The Peace Corps makes significant efforts to minimize ETs throughout Volunteer recruitment, staging,² training, and service.

The Peace Corps Manual outlines the policies and procedures governing the circumstances under which a Volunteer’s service may end early. It stipulates that an ET should occur when a Volunteer “cannot or should not remain in service until his or her projected COS date.”³ The manual identifies four types of ET:

- **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 Peace Corps Office of Health Services in consultation with the Peace Corps medical officer at the post⁴ and, as needed, appropriate medical consultants.
- **Administrative Separation:** Pursuant to the Peace Corps Act, 22 U.S.C. 2504(j) and Peace Corps policy, Volunteer service 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 Peace Corps policy, including certain policies designed to ensure health and safety.
- **Resignation:** Volunteers who no longer wish to continue their Peace Corps service may resign. With certain exceptions,⁵ Volunteers who are informed by their country director that they will be administratively separated from the Peace Corps can be given a 24-hour window to voluntarily resign from service. If they

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 A pre-departure orientation on health, safety, etc. to prepare Volunteers for their life and service abroad.

³ Peace Corps Manual, Section 284.

⁴ “Posts” are the principal offices responsible for managing day-to-day operations within host countries. In some cases, multiple countries may be administered from a single post to economize on overhead costs.

⁵ When the Volunteer or Trainee admits to or is found to have engaged in the use, possession, or distribution of drugs. Peace Corps Manual, Section 284.

choose this alternative, their ET 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 Volunteer’s control 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 ET 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.

In March and April 2020, the Peace Corps evacuated all the Volunteers around the world in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. With a small number of exceptions, the evacuated Volunteers were considered to have completed their service regardless of the stage of their service.⁶ Consequently, some of the ET rates were lower than prior years.

This report describes several ET measures. It provides the annual rate of all ETs for Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 and compares these 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 ET, displayed along with the overall ET rate.

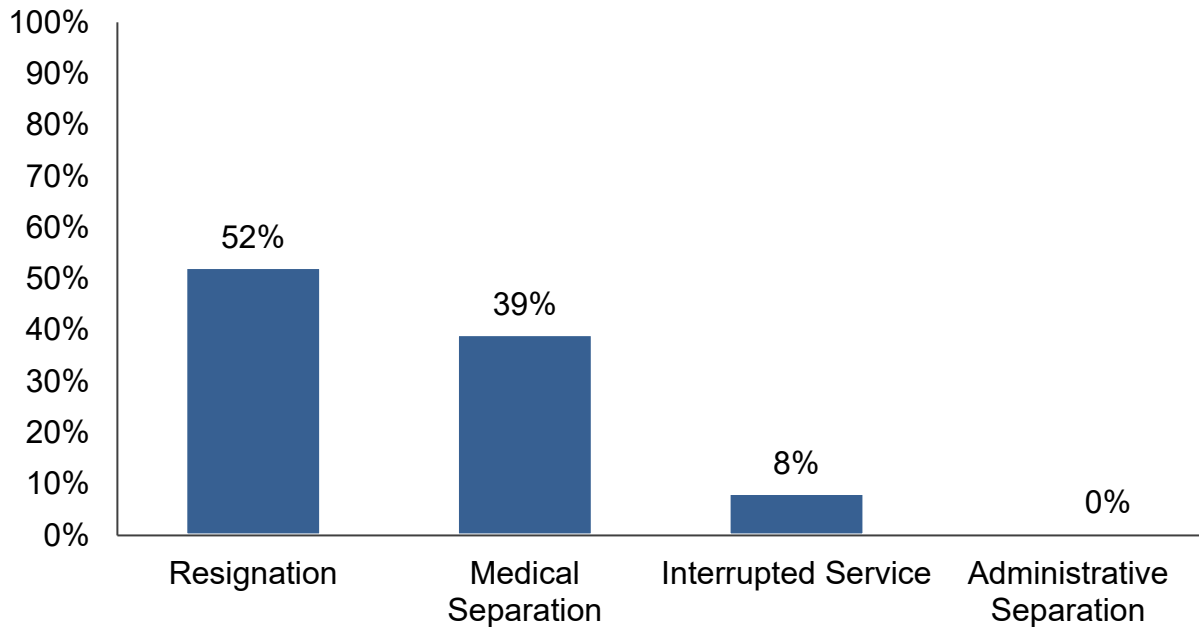
Two additional measures—cohort rate and average length of service—are included to provide further context on Volunteer tenure. Pursuant to the [Kate Puzey Peace Corps Volunteer Protection Act of 2011](#), the report also disaggregates the annual ET rate using demographic characteristics. Specifically, the Peace Corps collects data on six demographic characteristics: sex, age, marital status, education level, race, and ethnic group.

The source for the ET data in this report is the Peace Corps’ Volunteer database (PCVDBMS). Data on the dates and reasons for ETs are reported by post staff.

⁶ Exceptions are predominantly medical separations with a very small number of interrupted services.

Early Terminations by Type

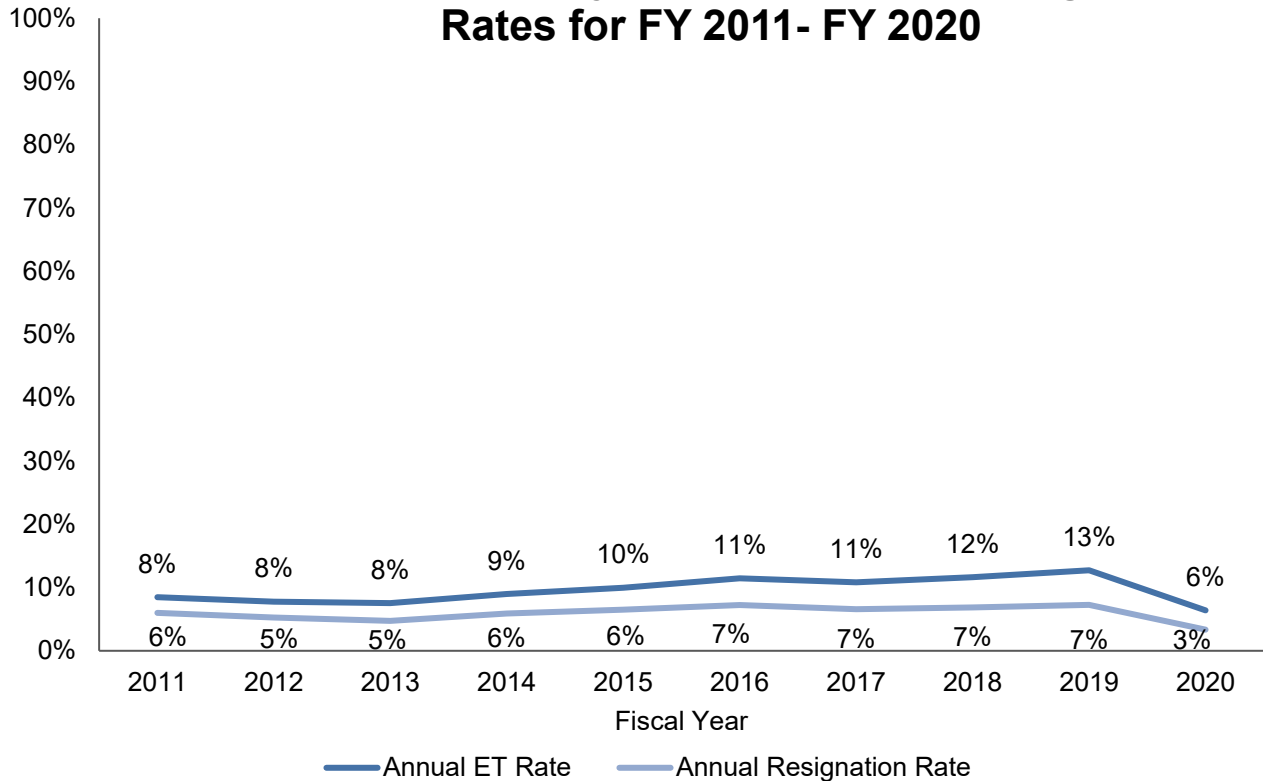
Percentage of Global Early Terminations in FY 2020 by Type



Summary: In FY 2020, the Peace Corps evacuated all Volunteers worldwide due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The vast majority of evacuated Volunteers received a completion of service (COS) status and were not classified as ETs. In FY 2020, 520 Volunteers who served during the fiscal year and prior to the global evacuation of Volunteers did not complete their full service. Of these 520 Volunteers, 272 (52 percent of all ETs) resigned. Thirty of the 272 people who resigned in FY 2020 (11 percent of resignations) chose to do so in lieu of an administrative separation. The second largest number of FY 2020 ETs came from medical separations (204 Volunteers, or 39 percent of all ETs).

Annual Early Termination and Resignation Rates

Global Annual Early Termination and Resignation Rates for FY 2011- FY 2020



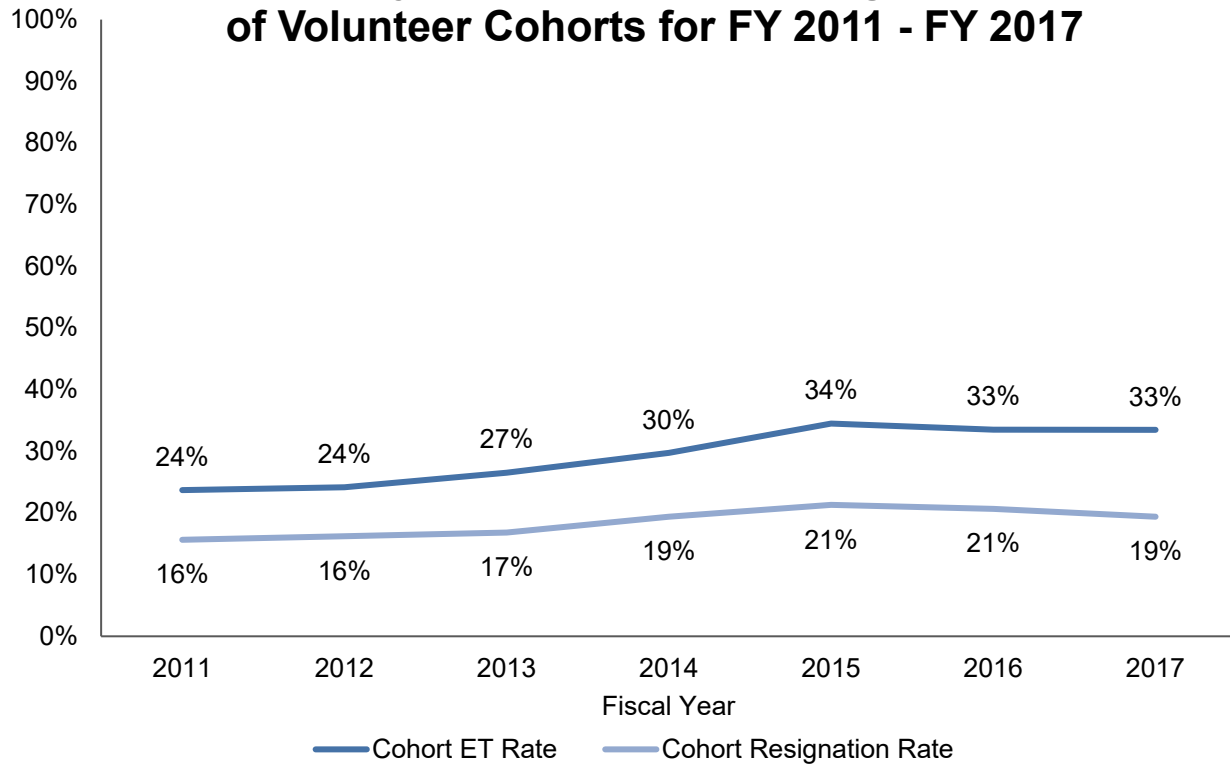
Summary: In FY 2020, 520 of the 8,136 Volunteers (6 percent) who served during the fiscal year and prior to the global evacuation of Volunteers did not complete their full service. Of these 8,136 Volunteers, 3 percent resigned. These results are lower than any fiscal year in the past decade likely due to the global evacuation.

Calculation: The Annual Early Termination 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. Resignations consistently account for the largest proportion of ETs.

$$\text{Annual Early Termination Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Volunteers Early Terminating in a Fiscal Year}}{\text{Total Number of Volunteers Serving Anytime in a Fiscal Year}}$$

Cohort Early Termination and Resignation Rates

Global Early Termination and Resignation Rates of Volunteer Cohorts for FY 2011 - FY 2017



Summary: Of the 3,761 Volunteers who began their Peace Corps service in FY 2017, 1,259 (33%) terminated early. Resignations accounted for the majority of these ETs, affecting 19 percent of the Volunteers in the FY 2017 cohort, or 729 people.

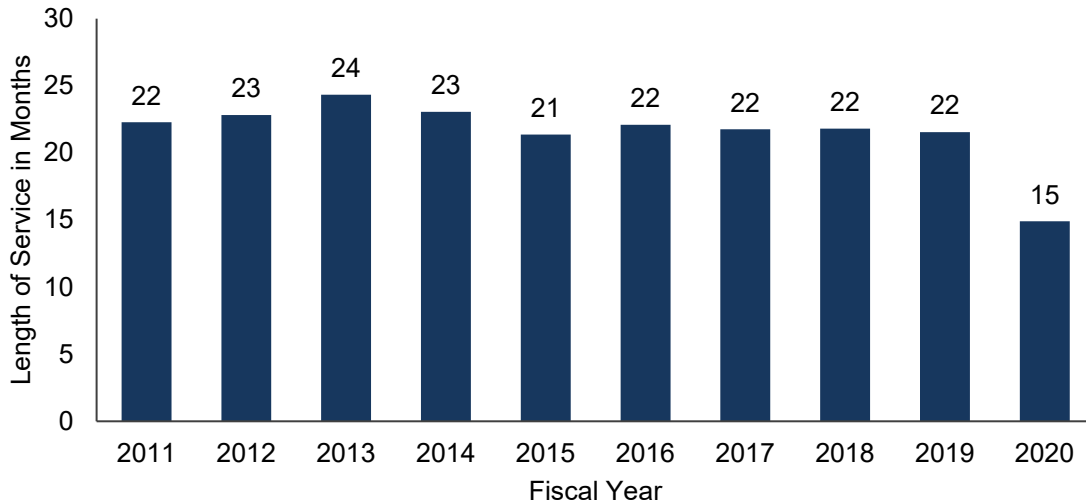
Calculation: The Cohort ET Rate is based on a dataset that includes every Volunteer who entered-on-duty in the fiscal year. The cohort ET rate is calculated as the number of Volunteers in the fiscal year cohort who terminated early (at any point in their service) divided by the total number of Volunteers 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, the cohort ET rate 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 COS. For this reason, the agency calculates the cohort rate after three years to allow a cohort to reach the end of its service. As a result, the most recent fiscal year cohort rate that is available for FY 2020 is the cohort that entered-on-duty in FY 2017.

$$\text{Cohort Early Termination Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Volunteers in a Cohort Terminating Early}}{\text{Total Number of Volunteers in the Cohort}}$$

Average Length of Service

Global Average Length of Service for FY 2011- FY 2020

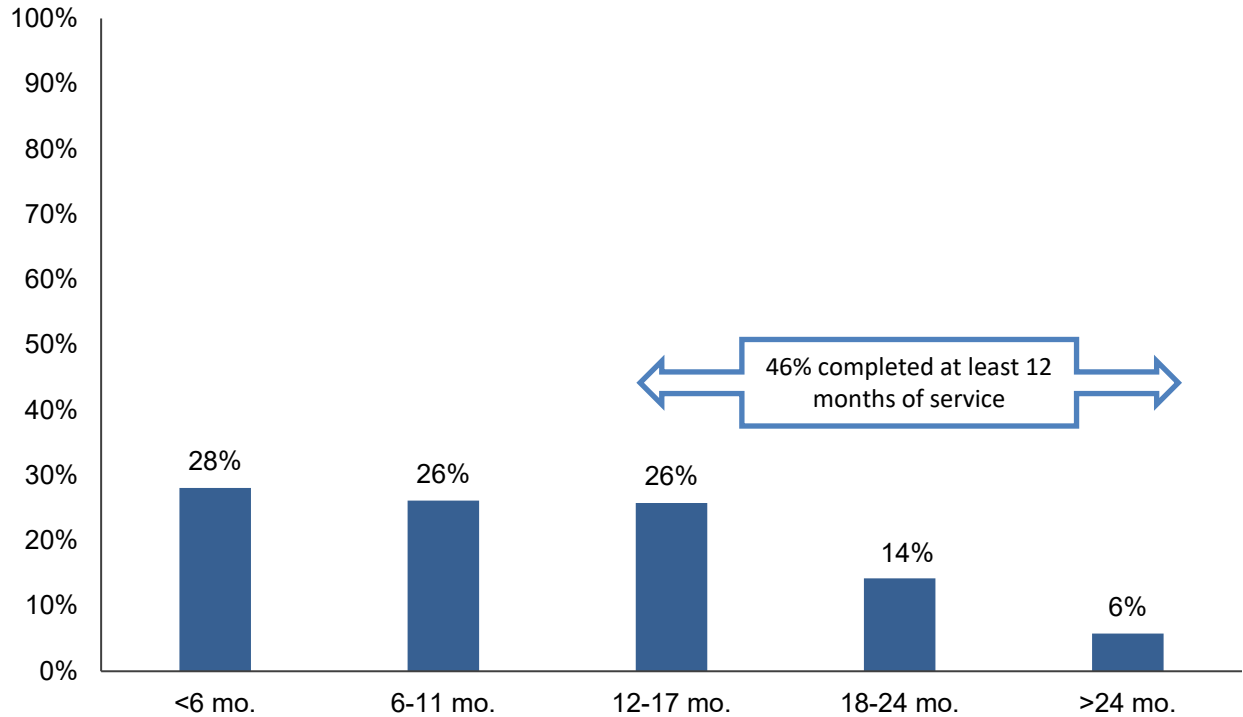


Summary: Because of the global evacuation of Volunteers in FY 2020, the number of Volunteers who ended their service in FY 2020 is much larger than in other years, and their length of service was cut short. As a result, the average length of service of the 8,136 Volunteers who ended their Peace Corps service in FY 2020 was only 15 months, compared with more than 20 months in previous years.

Calculation: The Average Length of Service is calculated by measuring the number of months each Volunteer who has ended his or her service in a fiscal year has served. The length of service period begins with the Volunteer's enter-on-duty date and ends with either the COS or ET date. The average length of service is calculated by dividing the total number of months all Volunteers who ended their service in the fiscal year served by the total number of Volunteers who ended their service in that fiscal year.

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

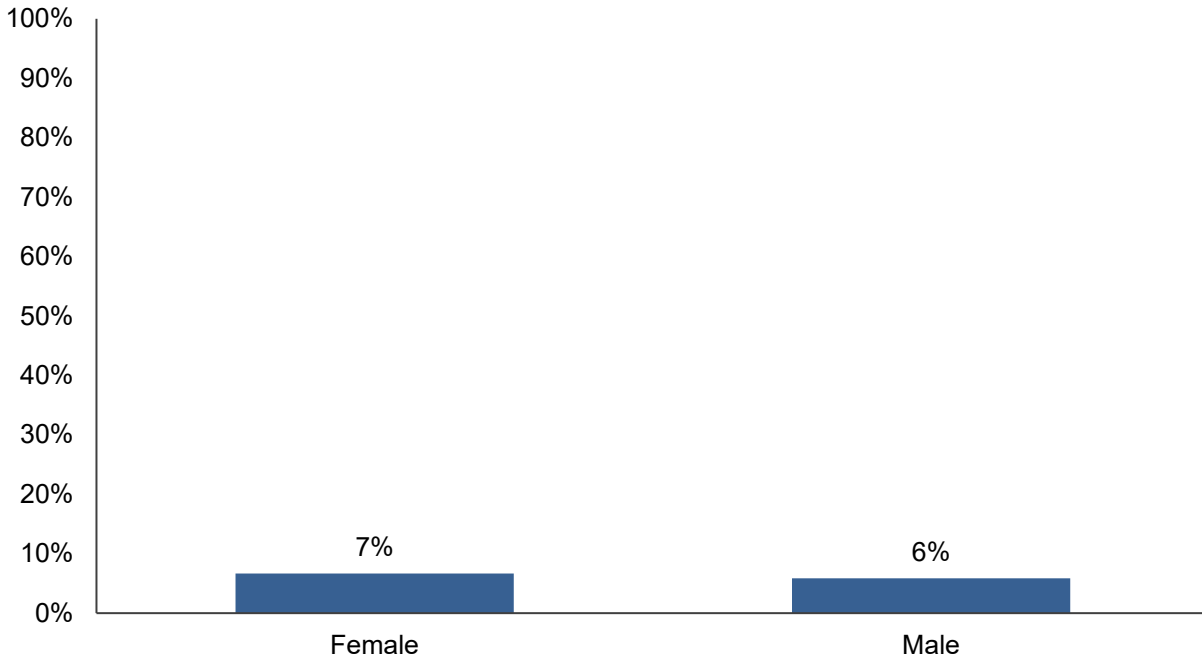
Months of Service Completed Among Volunteers Who Early Terminated in FY 2020



Summary: In FY 2020, among the 520 Volunteers who ended their Peace Corps service early, 46 percent completed at least 12 full months of service: 26 percent served 12 to 17 months, 14 percent served 18 to 24 months, and 6 percent served more than 24 months.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Sex

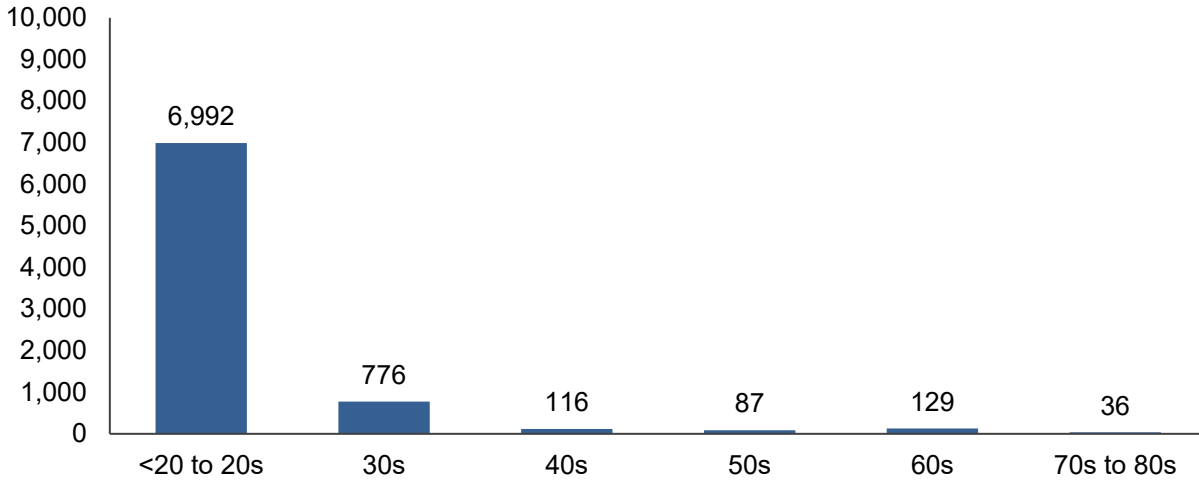
FY 2020 Early Termination Rate by Sex



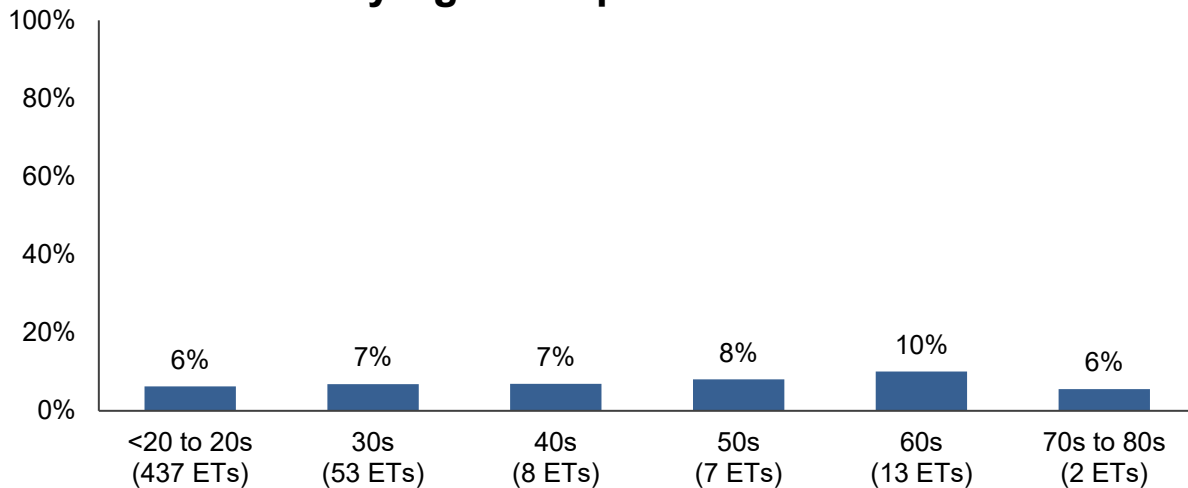
Summary: In FY 2020, 351 out of 5,255 female Volunteers (7 percent) and 169 out of 2,881 male Volunteers (6 percent) left service early.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Age Group

Number of FY 2020 Volunteers by Age Group



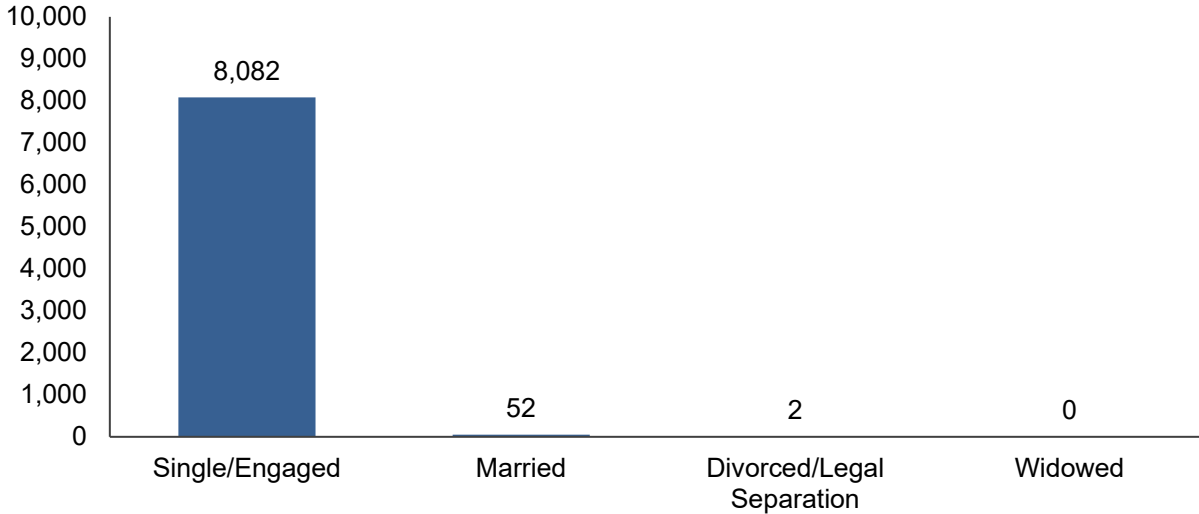
Number and Percentage of Early Terminations by Age Group in FY 2020



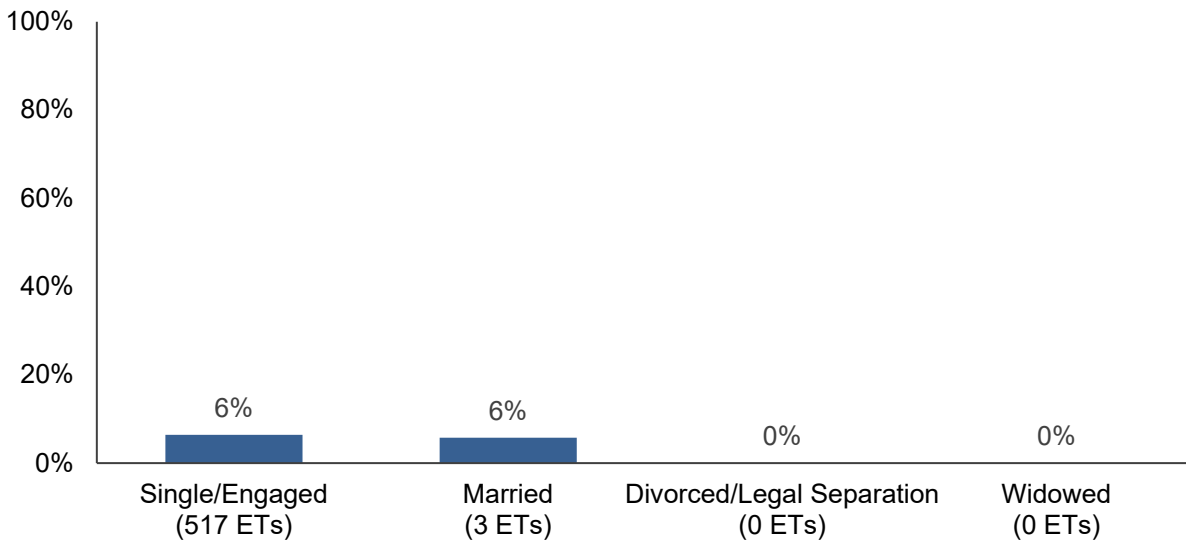
Summary: In this report, the Volunteer age is calculated as the age at the end of the fiscal year (September 30), regardless of when they ended their service. Although no Volunteer was in service at the end of FY 2020, the age calculation remained the same and results were comparable to prior years. The vast majority, 6,992 of 8,136 Volunteers in FY 2020, were in their 20s. Only 437 of 6,992 Volunteers in their 20s ended their service early, resulting in a low ET rate for this age group (6 percent). The highest ET rate in FY 2020 was found among Volunteers in their 60s (10 percent).

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Marital Status

Number of FY 2020 Volunteers by Marital Status



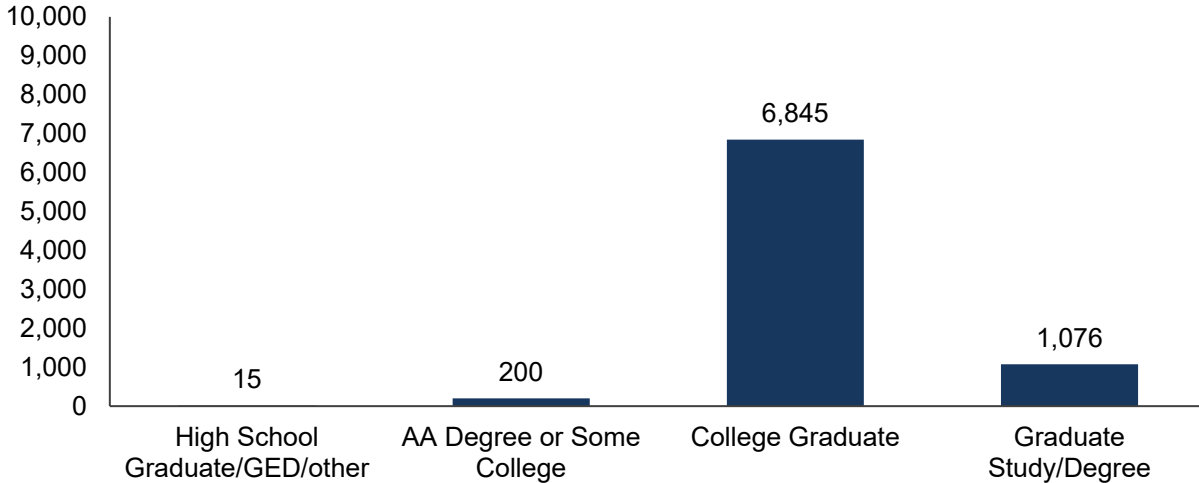
Number and Percentage of Early Terminations by Marital Status in FY 2020



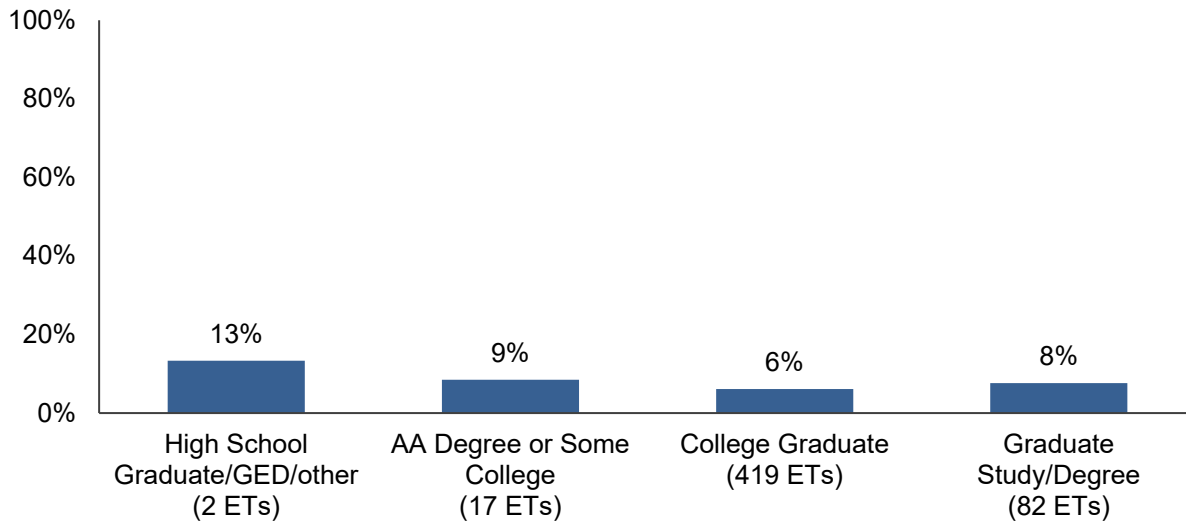
Summary: Data in this section are drawn from the Volunteers' applications for Peace Corps service. As these data show, the vast majority of Volunteers are not married at the time of their Peace Corps application. The ET rate was 6 percent among single/engaged Volunteers and 6 percent among married Volunteers in FY 2020. Very few Volunteers were divorced, legally separated, or widowed and none of them ended their service early.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Education Level

Number of FY 2020 Volunteers by Highest Education Level



Number and Percentage of Early Terminations by Highest Education Level in FY 2020

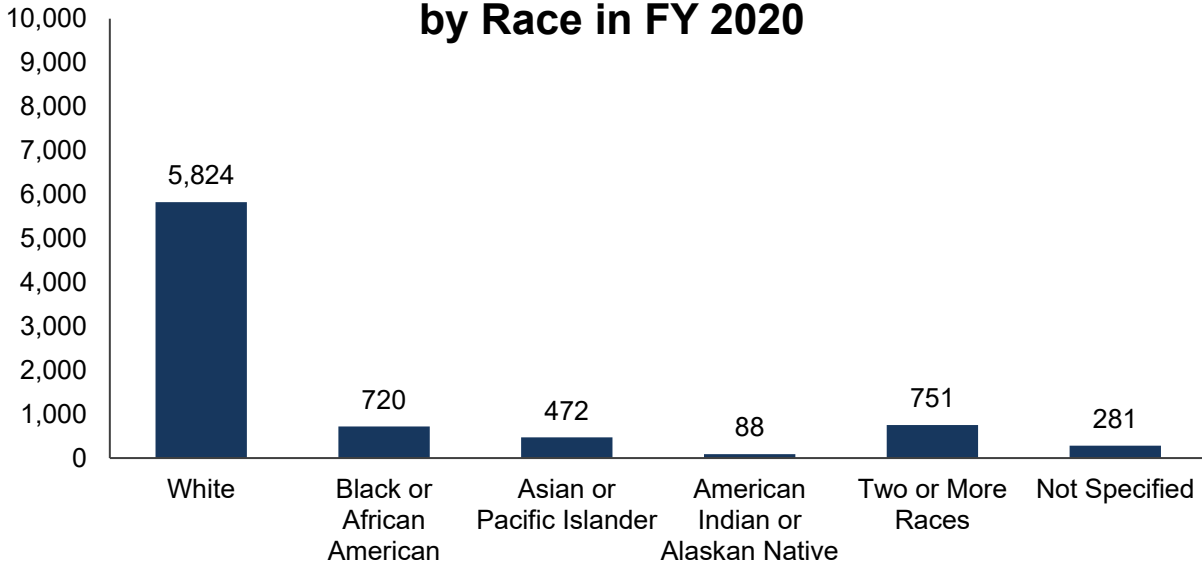


Summary: The vast majority of Volunteers have an undergraduate or graduate degree. The ET rate in FY 2020 was the lowest for Volunteers with an undergraduate degree: Only 419 of the 6,845 Volunteers ended their service early (6 percent). The number of Volunteers with only a high school education, GED, or other is the lowest (15 Volunteers), but the ET rate is also the highest (13 percent) in FY 2020.

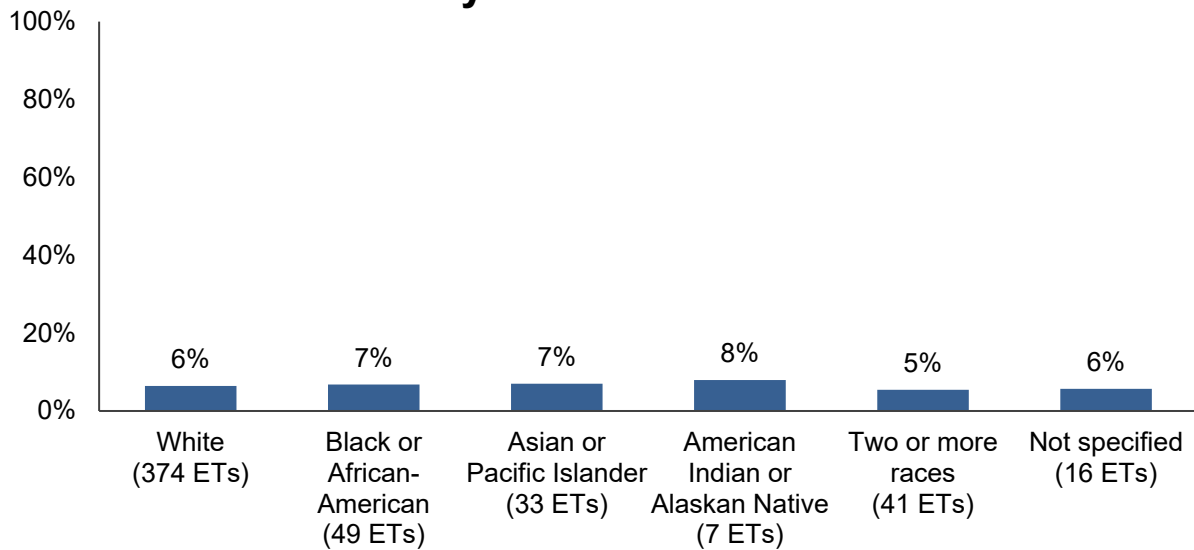
Calculation Notes: The group “AA degree or some college” includes technical school graduate, A.A. degree or equivalent, and one to three completed years of college.

Annual Early Termination Demographic Data: Race and Ethnicity

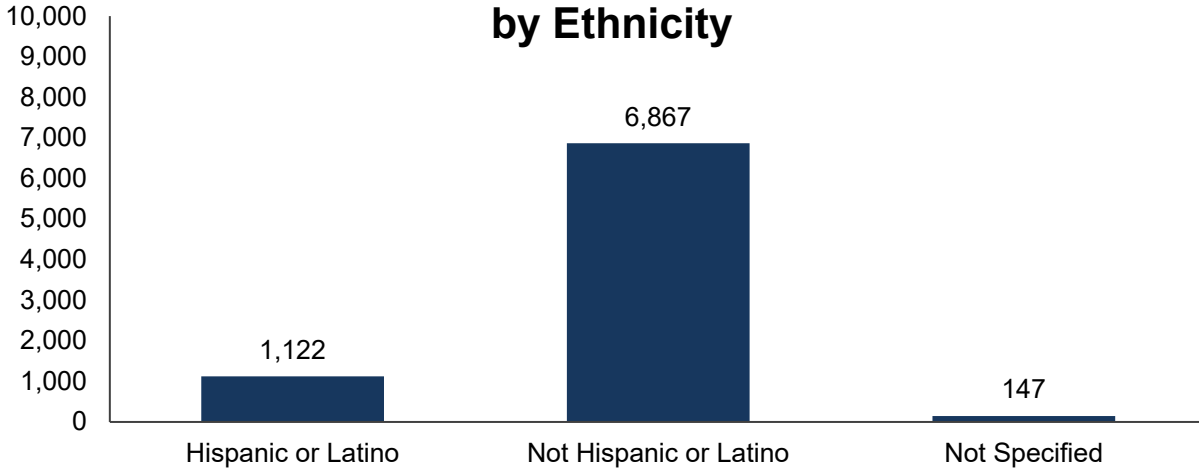
Number of Volunteers by Race in FY 2020



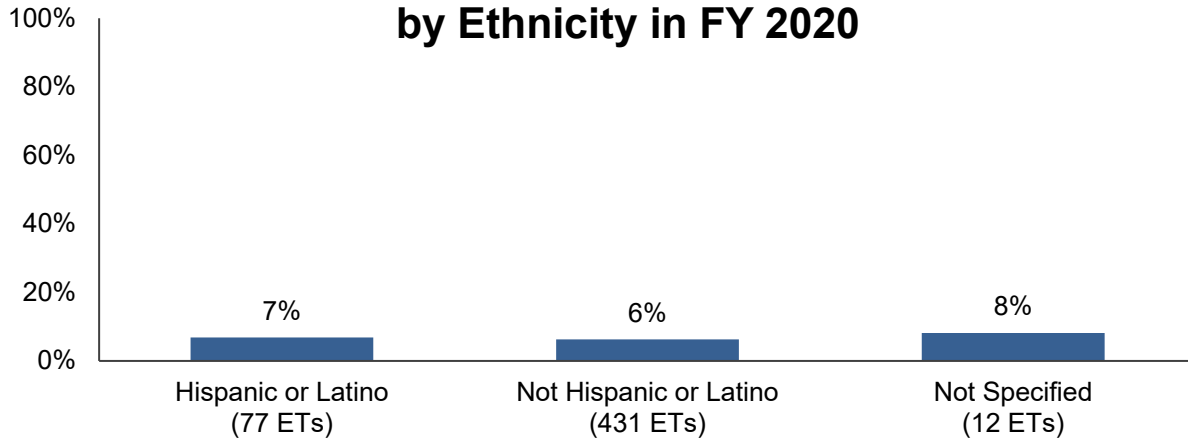
Number and Percentage of Early Terminations by Race in FY 2020



Number of FY 2020 Volunteers by Ethnicity



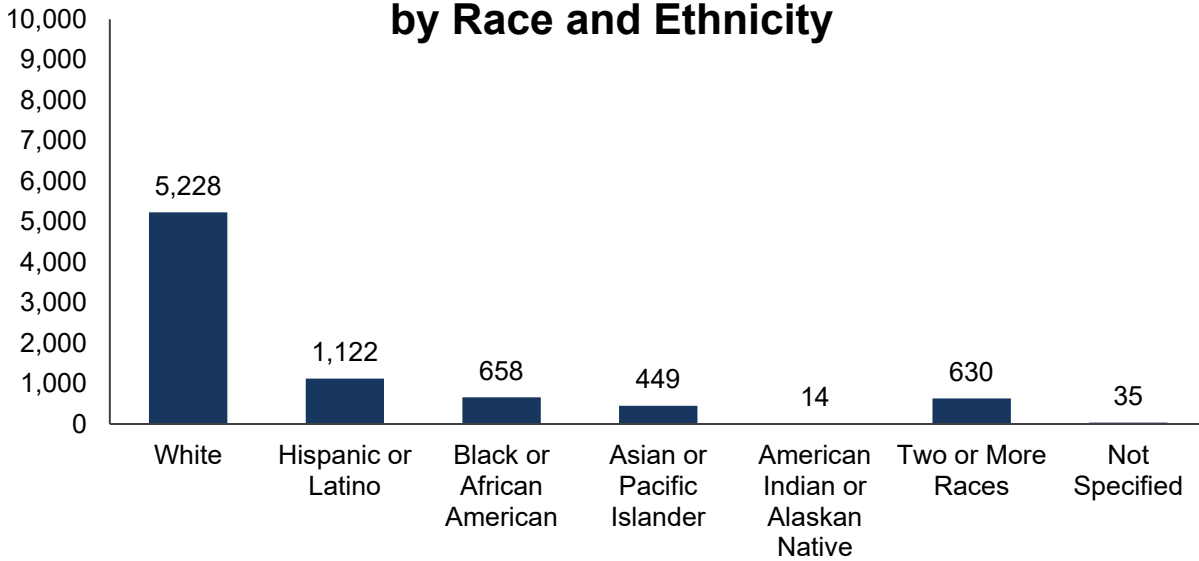
Number and Percentage of Early Terminations by Ethnicity in FY 2020



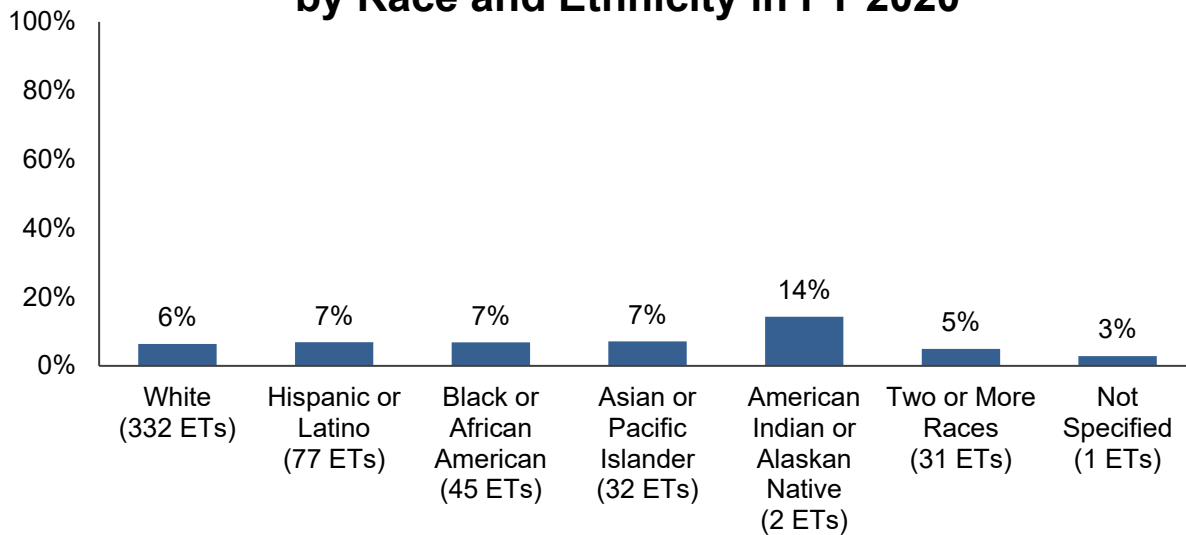
Summary: FY 2020 ET rates are similar across ethnic groups and vary modestly across racial groups.

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.”

Number of FY 2020 Volunteers by Race and Ethnicity



Number and Percentage of Early Terminations by Race and Ethnicity in FY 2020



Calculation Notes: The combined analysis of race and ethnicity is presented to facilitate comparisons to prior years. This analysis categorizes as “Hispanic or Latino” 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.

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.

About the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning

The Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP) strengthens agency performance, advances evidence-based management, data governance, and accountability through strategic, analytical, and operational support to the Director, senior leadership, and partner offices.

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](#).