



**FY 2016 Peace Corps Early Termination Report**  
**GLOBAL**

**February 2017**

## 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 public both during their service and when they return to the United States, further strengthening mutual understanding with other countries and cultures.

Through this unique approach to development, the Peace Corps seeks to build strong relationships between the United States and the people of our partner nations. More than 225,000 Volunteers have served in 141 countries over the agency's 55-year history.

Given the central role of Volunteers in advancing the Peace Corps mission, there can be a significant impact on agency operations when Volunteers leave before completing two years of service.<sup>1</sup> 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 FY 2016, the agency continues to maintain historically low early termination rates similar to the prior three years, though showing slight increases over time. Additionally, the average length of service was 22 months in FY 2016 compared to 21 months in FY 2015, signaling that Volunteers are terminating closer to completion of two years of 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."<sup>2</sup> This manual section also identifies the four types of early termination:

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Peace Corps Manual, Section 284.

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

The source for the early termination data in this report is the agency’s Volunteer database (PCVDBMS). Data on the dates and reasons for early terminations are entered by post staff. These data are downloaded, cleaned, and archived<sup>4</sup> on a quarterly basis by the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning (OSIRP).

This report describes several measures of early terminations. It provides the annual rate of all early terminations for fiscal year (FY) 2016 and compares the FY 2016 results to those of the previous six fiscal years. Several of the charts in this report also disaggregate the annual resignation rate as a specific type of early termination, displayed side-by-side with the overall rate of early termination.

Two additional measures—cohort rate and average length of service—are included to provide further context on the tenure of Volunteers. The report also disaggregates the annual early termination rate for FY 2016 using six demographic characteristics on which the Peace Corps collects data, pursuant to the [Kate Puzey Act of 2011](#): sex, age group, marital status, education level, race, and ethnicity.

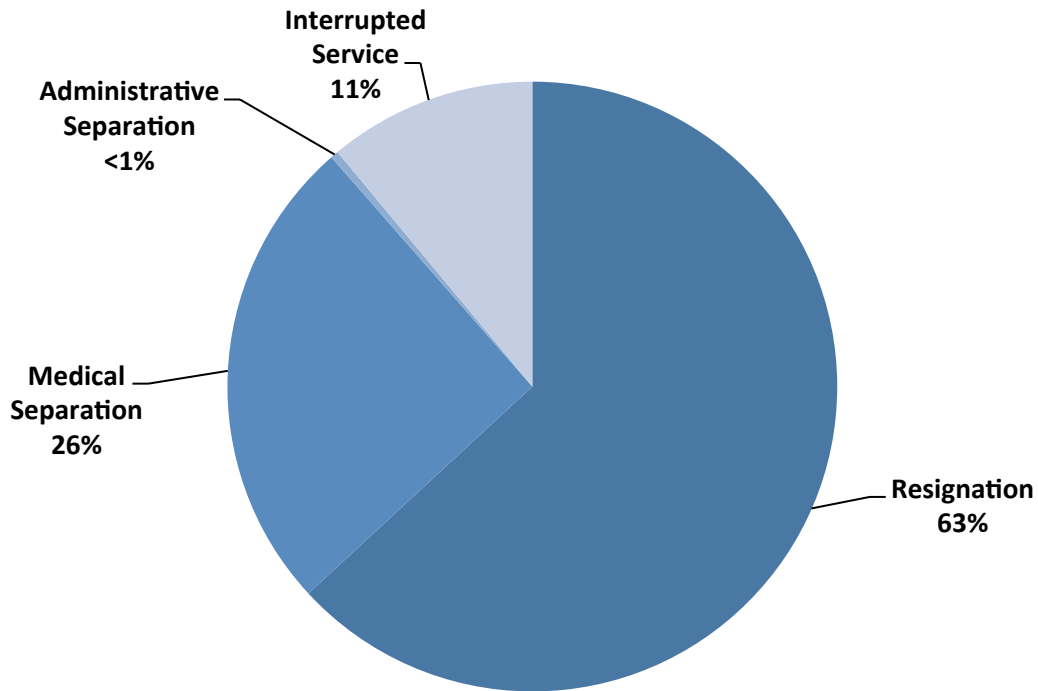
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<sup>3</sup> Volunteers who are informed by their country director that they will be administratively separated from the Peace Corps are given a 24-hour window to voluntarily resign from their service. If they choose this alternative, they are entered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

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

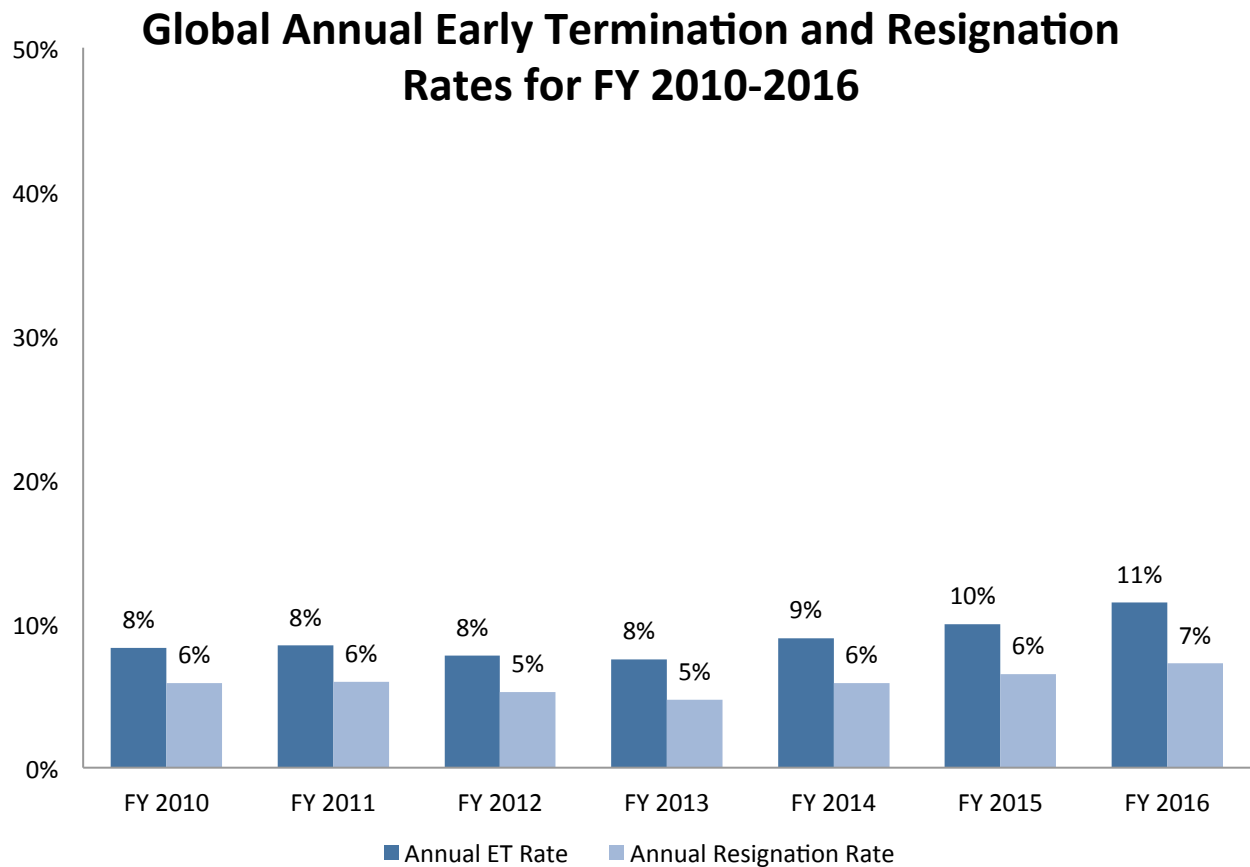
## Early Terminations by Type

### Percentage of Global Early Terminations in FY 2016 by Type



**Summary:** In FY 2016, 1,196 Volunteers did not complete their full service. Of these 1,196 Volunteers, 775 (63% of all ETs) resigned. The second largest number of early terminations came from medical separations (304 Volunteers, or 26% of all ETs). These results are similar to FY 2015.

## Annual Early Termination and Resignation Rates



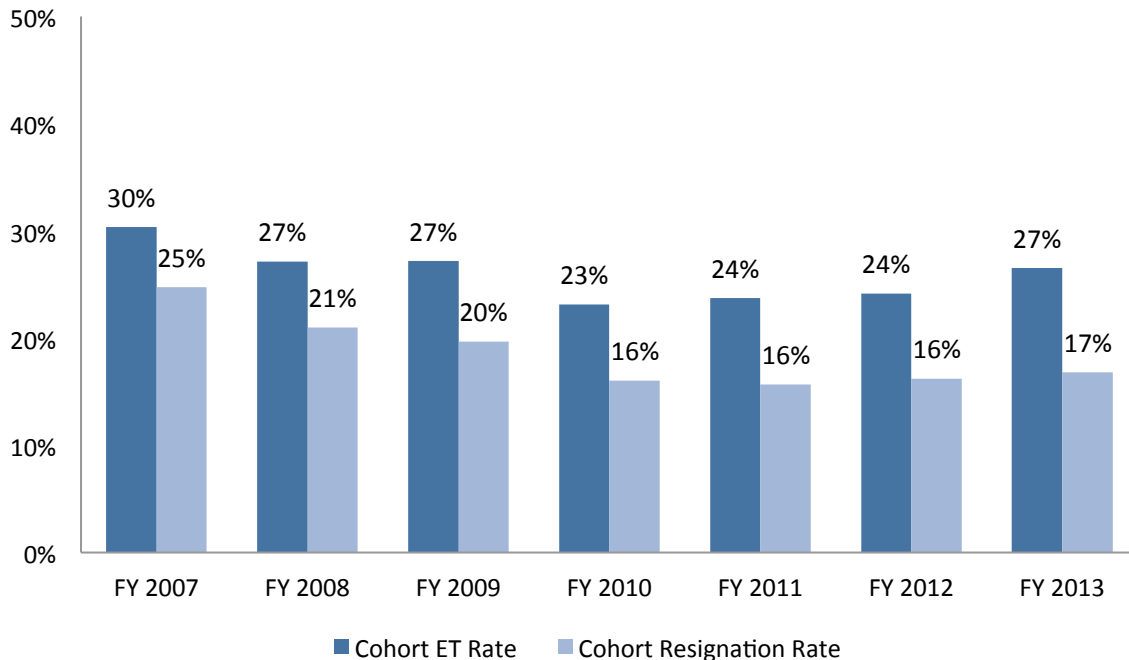
**Summary:** In FY 2016, 1,196 of the 10,440 Volunteers who served (11%) did not complete their full service. Seven percent of the 10,440 Volunteers resigned. This result is similar to FY 2015, though showing slight increases over the past few fiscal years.

**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 2007-2013



**Summary:** 851 of the 3,209 Volunteers who began their Peace Corps service in FY 2013 (27%) terminated early. Resignations accounted for the majority of these early terminations, affecting 17 percent of the Volunteers in the FY 2013 cohort, or 540 people. This result is slightly higher than FY 2012.

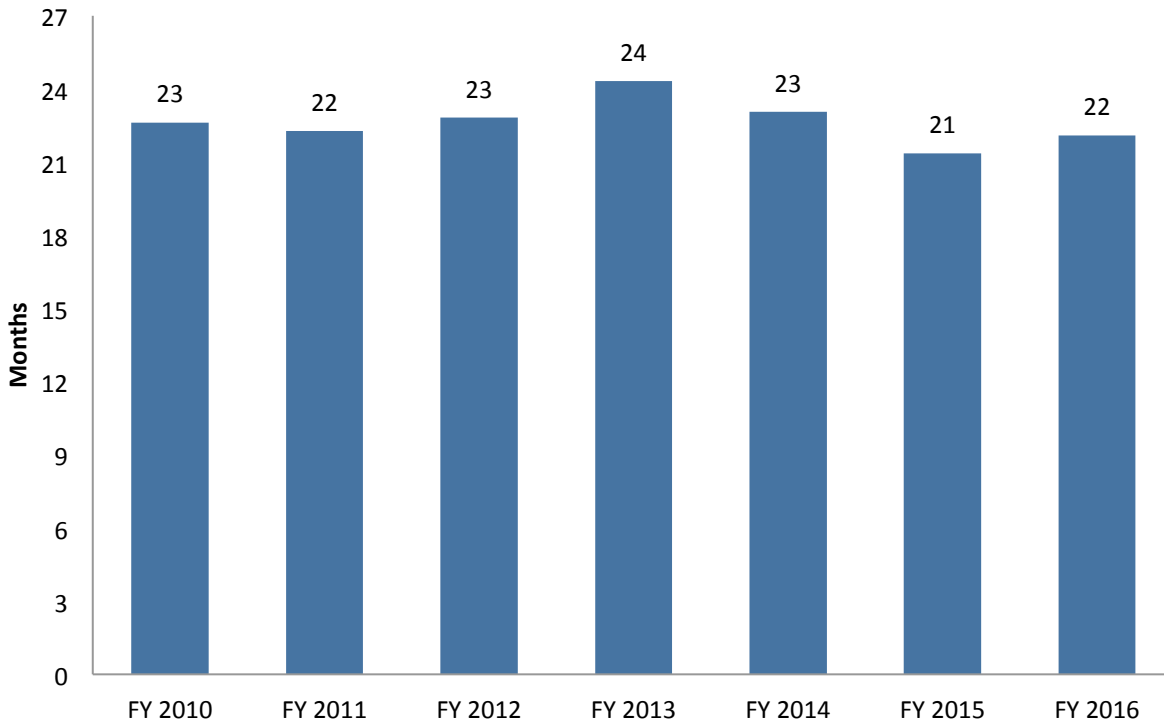
**Calculation:** The cohort early termination rate is based on a dataset that includes every Volunteer whose enter-on-duty date occurred in the fiscal year. The cohort ET rate is calculated as the number of Volunteers in the fiscal year cohort who terminated early (at any point in their service) divided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

Volunteers are typically expected to serve 27 months from staging to close of service. For this reason, the agency calculates the cohort rate after approximately three years to ensure that 95 percent of the cohort has reached the end of their service. As a result, the most recent fiscal year cohort rate that is available for FY 2016 is the cohort that entered on duty in FY 2013.

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

## Average Length of Service

### Global Average Length of Service for FY 2010-2016



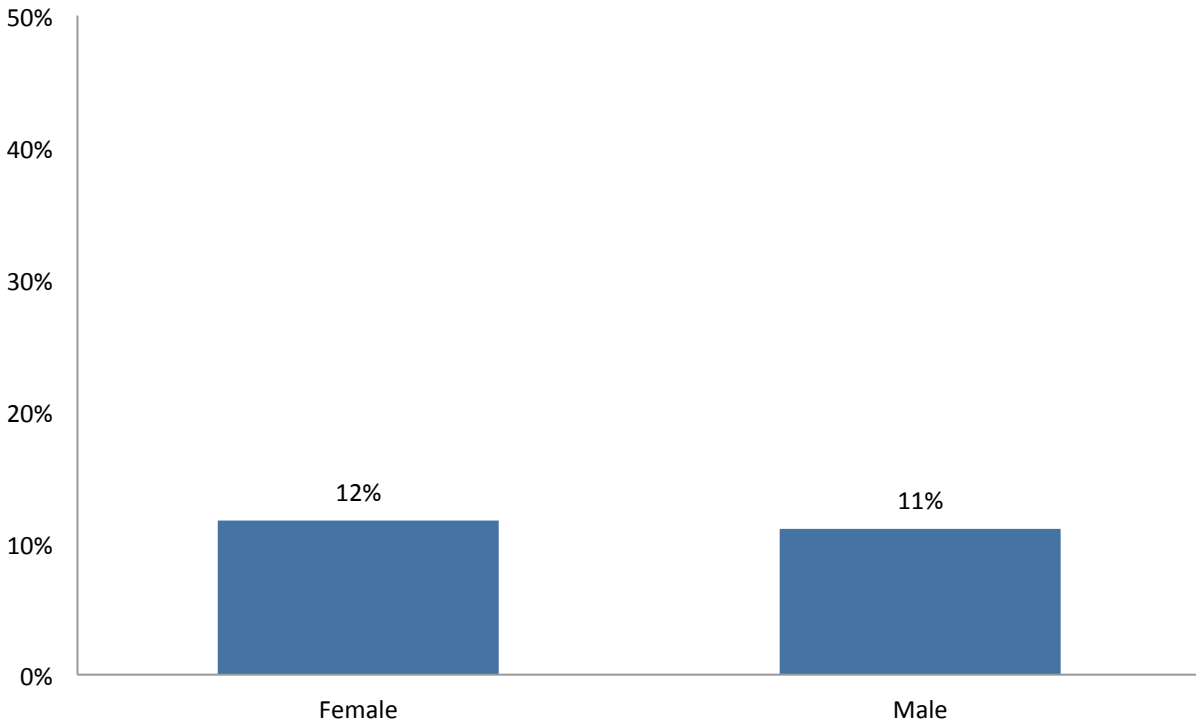
**Summary:** The average length of service of all Volunteers who ended their Peace Corps service in FY 2016 was 22 months compared to 21 months on average in FY 2015 and 23 months in FY 2014.

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

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

## Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Sex

### FY 2016 Early Termination Rate by Sex

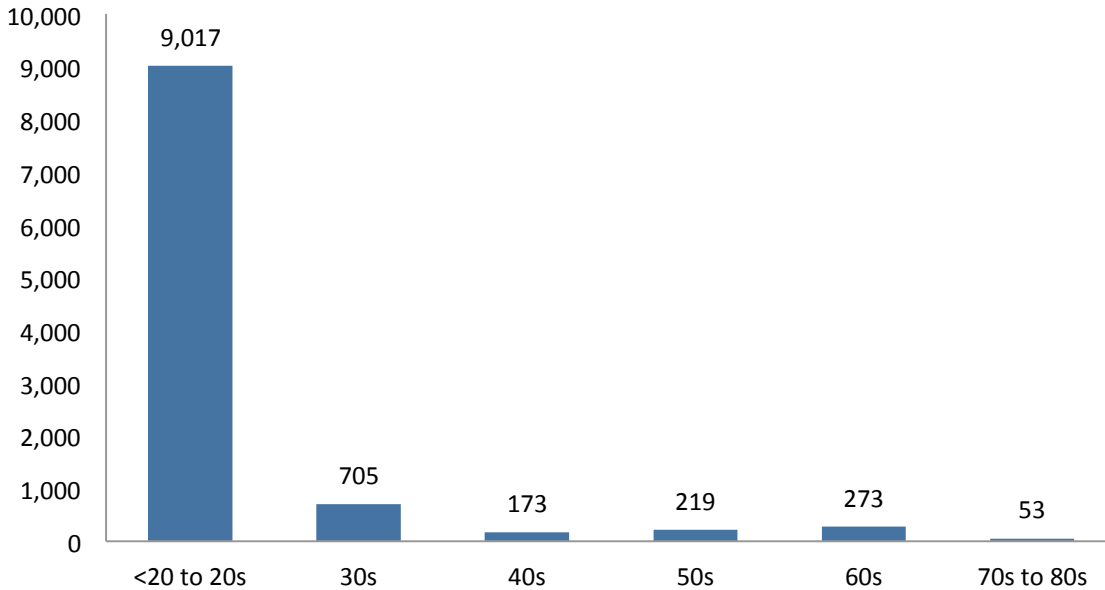


**Summary:** In FY 2016, 766 out of 6,554 female Volunteers (12%) and 430 out of 3,886 male Volunteers (11%) left service early.

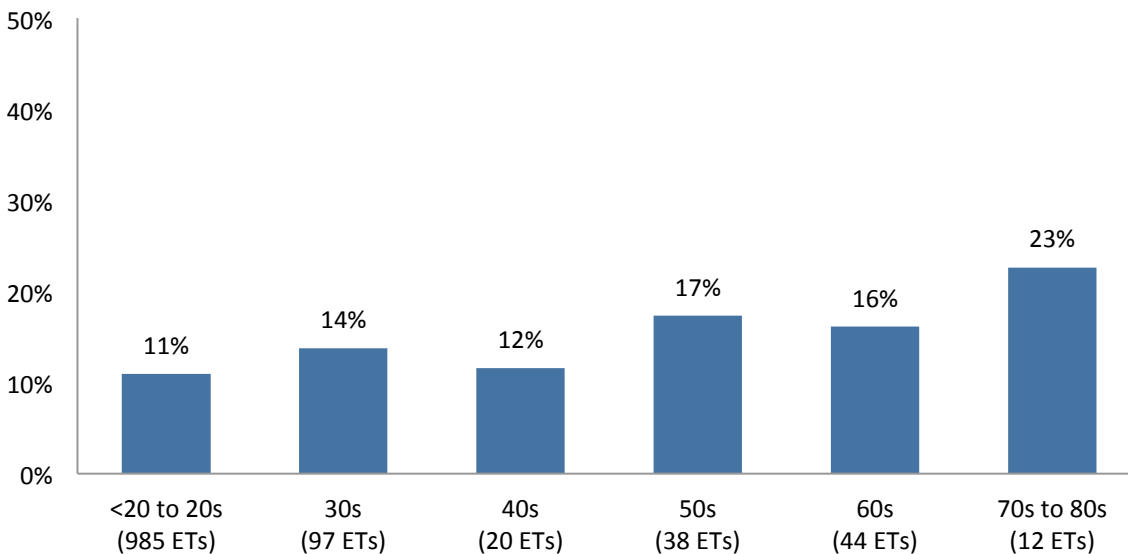


## Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Age Group

### Number of FY 2016 Volunteers by Age Group

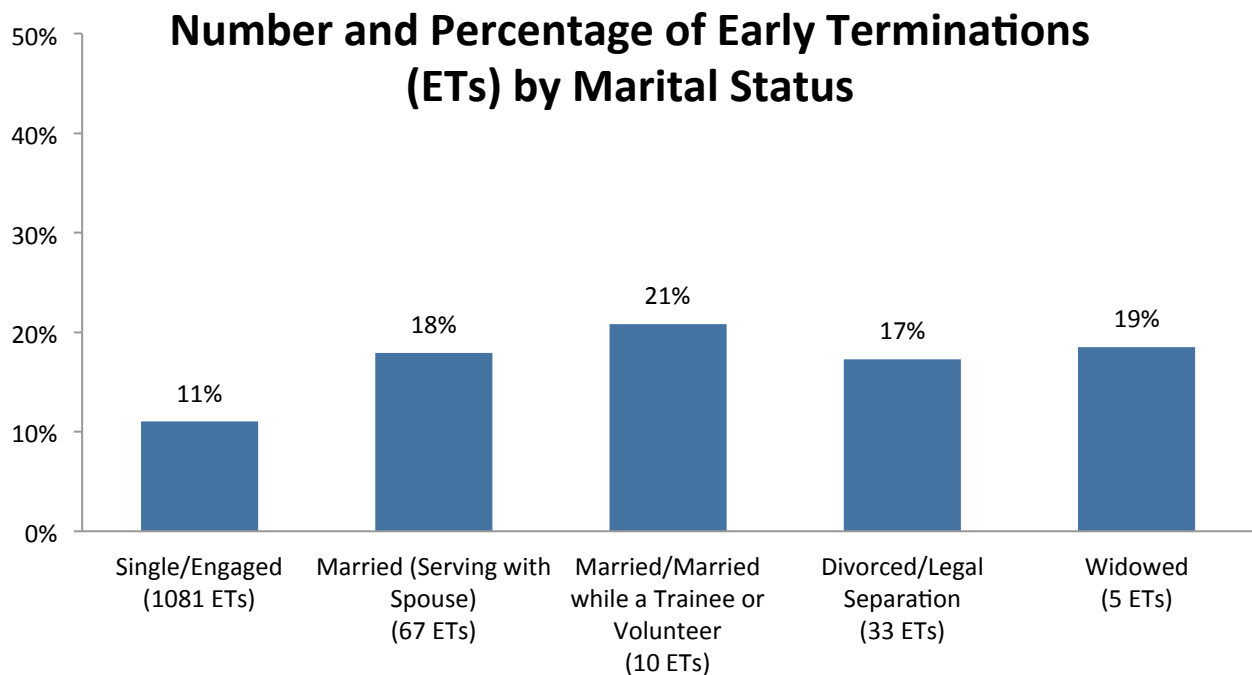
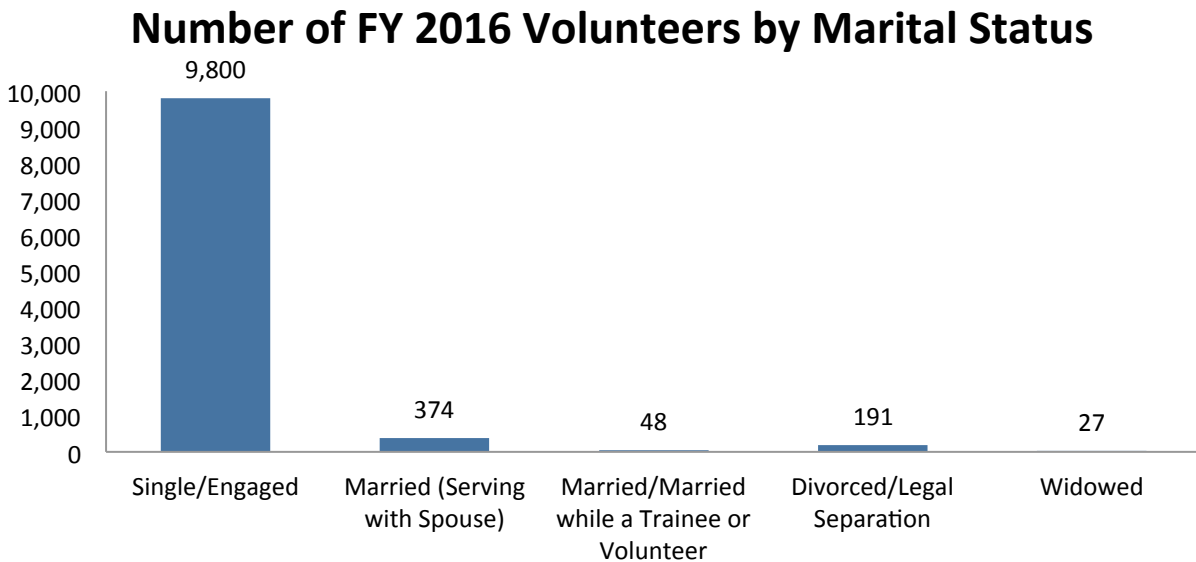


### Number and Percentage of Early Terminations (ETs) by Age Group



**Summary:** The vast majority of Volunteers are in their 20s. This group has the lowest early termination rate of any age group (11%). The highest ET rate of any group in FY 2016 was found among Volunteers in their 70s to 80s (23%).

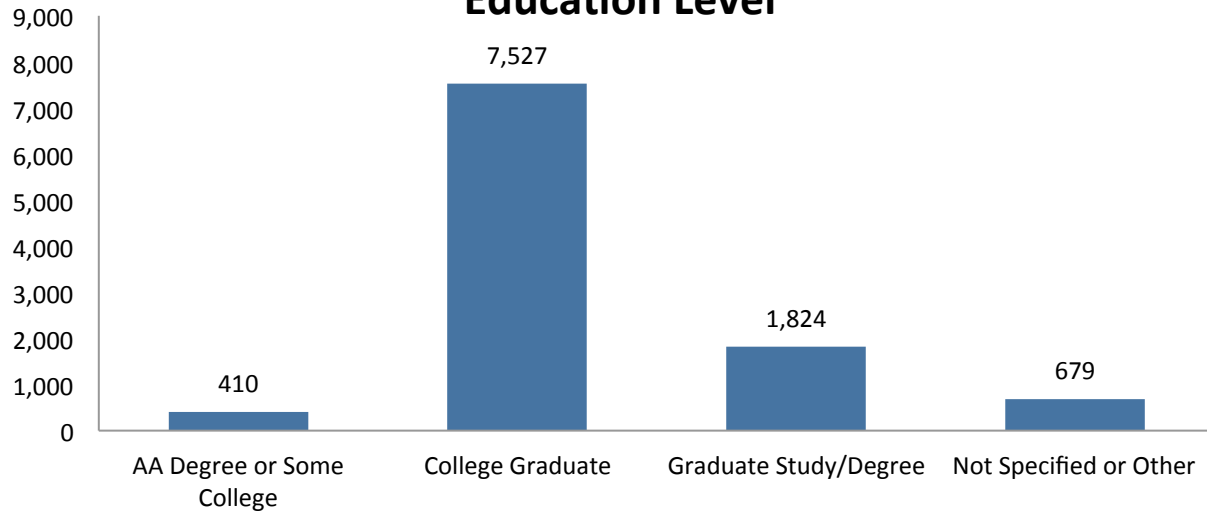
## Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Marital Status



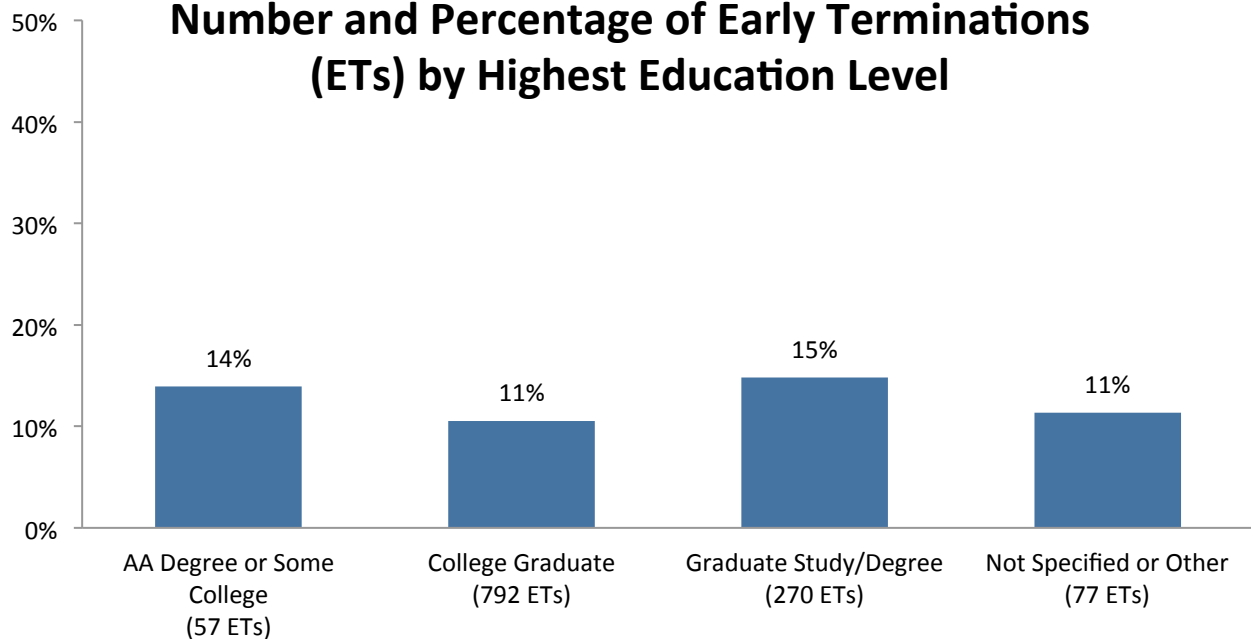
**Summary:** The vast majority of Volunteers are not married. Early termination rates vary modestly across marital status groups from a low of 11 percent among Volunteers who are single/engaged to highs of 18—21 percent for Volunteers who are married (most of whom are serving with their spouse) or who got married as a Trainee or Volunteer.

## Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Education Level

### Number of FY 2016 Volunteers by Highest Education Level



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

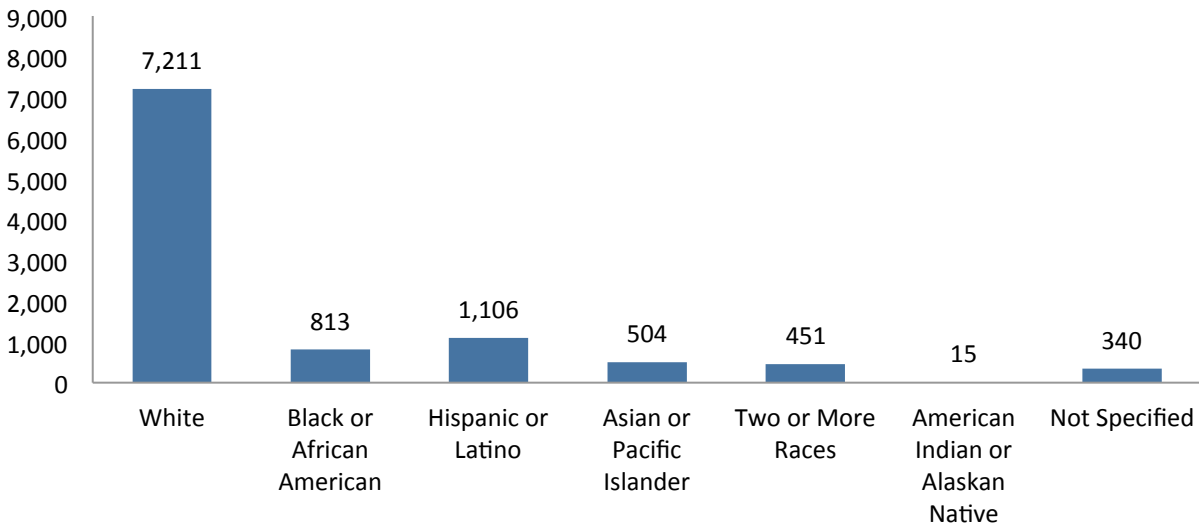


**Summary:** The vast majority of Volunteers have an undergraduate or higher education. Early termination rates vary modestly by educational level from a low of 11 percent among college graduates to a high of 15 percent of Volunteers who have had some graduate study or completed a graduate degree.

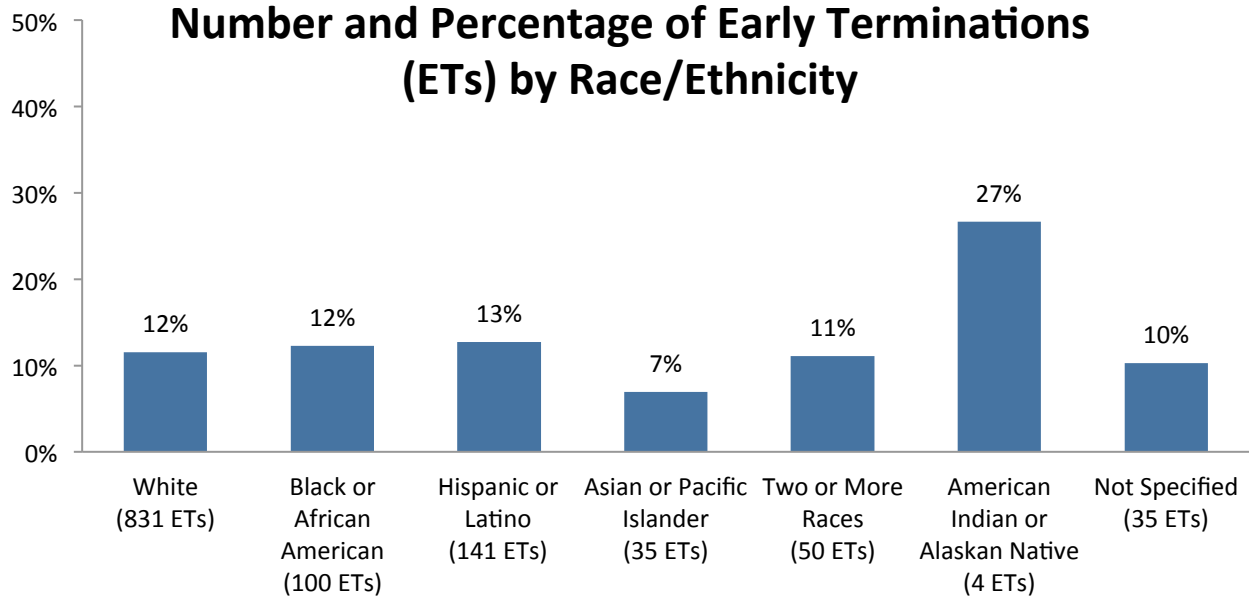
**Calculation Notes:** The group “AA degree or some college” includes the following categories: technical school graduate, A.A. degree or equivalent, one or two years of college completed, and three years of college completed. The group “not specified or other” includes high school graduate, other, and people who did not provide this data.

## Annual Early Termination Demographic Data—Race

### Number of FY 2016 Volunteers by Race/Ethnicity



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



**Summary:** Early termination rates are similar across all racial groups. What appears to be a higher rate among American Indians and Alaskan Natives is simply due to the small size of this population (15 people).

**Calculation Notes:** The current Peace Corps application includes two demographic questions on race and ethnicity. The categories shown in the analysis above include those who self-identify as having Hispanic or Latino ethnicity *regardless of race*, while the rest of the categories include people who self-identified with the corresponding racial group *and* do not identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino.

## 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](mailto:OSIRP@peacecorps.gov).

### Acknowledgements

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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. Since President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961, more than 225,000 Americans of all ages have served in 141 countries worldwide. For more information, visit [peacecorps.gov](http://peacecorps.gov) and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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

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