

Early Termination
in the
Peace Corps

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Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION.....	3
Early Termination.....	3
Determining ET rates.....	3
Comparison between methods.....	4
An Analogy.....	4
II. HISTORICAL ET RATES.....	6
Historical Reporting of ETs.....	6
Summary of Past Reports to Study Volunteer and Trainee Attrition.....	8
Current ET rates.....	15
III. COMPARISON TO OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.....	20
Attrition Information from Other Volunteer-sending Organizations.....	20
VSO Attrition Data.....	21
IV. BREAKDOWN OF ET RATES.....	24
By Type.....	22
Resignation rates through time.....	26
By Reason.....	27
V. CONCLUSION.....	30
VI. APPENDICES.....	32
Appendix A: Verification of 35% estimate of ET rate.....	32
Appendix B: Computer Simulation.....	33
Appendix C: Early Termination Data – Volunteer Demographics.....	35

All documents used throughout this report are in public domain, obtained either on the Peace Corps' main website or acquired through the Freedom of Information Act.

Links have been provided, both within this report and listed below, so the individual reports referenced can be downloaded for further comparison and study.

U.S. Peace Corps

“The following documents are presented in our Electronic Reading Room to comply with FOIA regulations and to offer a central point for finding Peace Corps reports.”

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/index.cfm?shell=pchq.policies.docs>

Peace Corps Wiki: Early Termination

(PeaceCorpsWiki.org is not affiliated with the United States Peace Corps. It is a collaborative project whose goal is to create a free, interactive, and up-to-date source of information about serving as a volunteer with the U.S. Peace Corps.)

http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/Early_Termination

I. INTRODUCTION

Early Termination

Peace Corps Manual Section 284 establishes the policies and procedures governing the circumstances under which a Peace Corps Volunteer's service may end prior to the completion of service date. An Early Termination (ET) occurs when a Volunteer "cannot or should not remain in service until his or her Completion of Service (COS) date."

There are four types of early termination:

- **Resignation:** A resignation is a decision made by a Volunteer that he/she no longer wishes to continue in Peace Corps service.
- **Medical Separation:** If a Volunteer has or develops a medical condition that Peace Corps cannot medically accommodate or resolve within forty-five (45) days, the Volunteer will be medically separated. This decision is made by the Office of Medical Services (OMS) in consultation with the Peace Corps Medical Officer and, if needed, appropriate medical consultants.
- **Administrative Separation:** Pursuant to the Peace Corps Act, 22 USC 2504(i), the service of a Volunteer may be terminated at any time at the pleasure of the President of the United States. The authority of the President to terminate service has been delegated to the Director of the Peace Corps. Accordingly, the Director, or anyone to whom the Director delegates such authority, may separate a Volunteer at any time purely at the discretion of the deciding official and as otherwise expressly provided herein.
- **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.

Determining ET rates

Before 1981, Peace Corps used the **V Year method**, standing for 'Volunteer-Year'. It is the number of ET's by an average volunteer during one year of service. Since most volunteers successfully complete their service, which is longer than one year, this number would be a "fraction of an ET". If the V-Year ET rate was 0.20 (per year) we would expect about 2 volunteers out of 10 to ET per year, or about 1 volunteer out of 10 in a six-month period.

In 1981, at the request of the General Accounting Office, the agency's Office of Special Service began to report Volunteer attrition, using the **Cohort Method**. This method addresses the question: 'If X number of people enter Peace Corps service during a given time period, how many actually complete their service?'

A cohort is defined as all trainees who enter on duty during a Fiscal Year (i.e. the Class of FY90), and the cohort attrition rate as the percent of Volunteers and Trainees within a cohort who do not complete service (e.g. 29% of the Class of FY90 did not complete service). Cohort attrition is also referred to as 'class of' attrition rate (where 'class of' refers to all trainees entering on duty during a Fiscal Year).

Cohort ET rates tend to be at least double the ET reported by posts using the V Year chart method. While these latter rates (V-Year) are essential for budget calculations purposes, they provide an incomplete picture of overall attrition. Unlike the V Year chart method used by posts to calculate T and V ET rates, the cohort method provides a complete picture of attrition because it follows people over their full tour (meaning, for most Volunteers, a 24 to 27 month period).

In the early 2000's, Peace Corps switched formulas to an **Annual Method** in reported ET data. The 'ET rate' using the annual method is the number of PCVs/Ts who separated from the Peace Corps during the fiscal year divided by the total number of trainees and volunteers who served at any time during the fiscal year. Thus, a volunteer who served for *one day* and another volunteer who served for the *full fiscal year* are *counted equally* for the denominator of the fraction. This method addresses the question: 'Of the X total number of volunteers who served at any time during a given time 12-month period, how many early terminate in that same time span?'

Because the different methods in reporting ET data use different data and calculations, care must be taken so as not to inappropriately compare the two. As the Cohort Method spans over a twenty-seven month period (or more) while the Annual method is strictly a twelve-month period, the results do not lend to comparability.

Comparison between methods

V Year	Cohort Method	Annual Method
before 1981	1981 - early 2000s	used currently
roughly half of Cohort value	"complete picture of attrition"	roughly half to a third of Cohort Value
n/a	FY 1990: 29% ET rate	FY 1990: 13% ET rate
n/a	Meaning: 29% of all volunteers who entered service in FY 1990 ET'ed sometime before their COS date	Meaning: 13% of all volunteers who served <i>any portion</i> of the fiscal year of 1990 ET'ed <i>within that year</i>

An Analogy:

A marathon is a little over 26 miles, comparable to the 27-month service of Peace Corps volunteers, where each completed mile represents a month of completed service. The Chicago Marathon that took place on October 7, 2007 was cancelled due to record-setting temperatures. "Of the 24,931 that participated, 4,000 finished before it was shut down at 11:30 am, 3.5 hours after it started."^[1] The cancelation of the event could be considered, in Peace Corps terms, an Interrupted Service – a type of Early Termination. In this case, of the 25,000 participants only 4,000 finished the race before being "ETed", and the ET

rate, in terms of the **Cohort Method**, would be 84%. (21,000 out of the 25,000 participants did not finish the marathon before it was cancelled).

The **Annual Method** is different as it only considers a *specific* 12-month time-span; comparable to seeing which runners drop-out in a specific 12-mile section of the entire race. For instance, if we assume that in the first 12-miles of the Marathon not a single runner dropped out of the race then the ET rate, in terms of the *Annual Method*, would be 0% - despite the fact the vast majority were forced to stop later on.

If the 12-mile section happened to be in the middle of the race and a runner dropped out just a few blocks before that section began they would *not* be counted in the analysis as we did not “see them” in the 12-mile section we were considering. It would be as if they never existed - in terms of our analysis. That being said, they *would* be counted in the *previous* 12-mile section as, in fact, they did in fact ‘exist’ during those 12-miles.

In this sense, the “Annual Method” of determining an ET rate for the Chicago Marathon can produce a wide range of values – depending on which 12-mile section you are considering – even though 84% of the participants eventually did not finish.

The same reasoning would hold true for Peace Corps Volunteer service. Even with standardizing the 12-month period, keeping it consistently a Calendar Year or Fiscal Year, any value of an ‘ET rate’ computed using an *Annual Method* will, in general, be *lower* than an ‘ET rate’ computed using the Cohort Method - as you are not following the volunteers for the whole duration of their service. The consequences of such were illustrated above in the case of the Chicago Marathon.

The ET rates given by Peace Corps are *even lower* than the simple example stated above - as new trainees are being added within the same 12-month period that Peace Corps is analyzing. While the *number* of volunteers/trainees who ET may increase slightly, due to some newly added trainees ETing, the total number of people you are watching during that time span *increases significantly* – thus lowering the ‘rate’.

This would be similar to having *another* Marathon being started at the half-way point of the *original* Chicago Marathon. With this additional group of runners it only adds to the confusion of which runner is running which marathon. However, for the next 12-miles they are grouped into one category for analysis. Your ‘Annual ET rate’ for that 12-mile section has just now been significantly lowered as there could be double the number of runners from just a mile ago. One person dropping out of a group of 200 seems better than the same person dropping out of the original group of 100 a mile back.

In this sense, the **Cohort Method** provides a *complete picture of attrition* because it follows people over their full tour (meaning, for most Volunteers, a 24 to 27 month period). All ET numbers in this report will be in terms of the Cohort Method, unless specifically mentioned otherwise.

[1] Source: "Chicago Marathon Cancelled After 1 Dies And 302 Go To The Hospital"
<http://www.shortnews.com/start.cfm?id=65484>

II. HISTORICAL EARLY TERMINATION RATES

The vast majority of information concerning historical ET rates comes from the report “Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997”. Since the report is quite comprehensive, including ‘Initial Recommendations’ and ‘Future Plan of Action’, only the sections dealing with historical ET rates are copied below in full. A link has been provided to the full report for reference and further comparison and study.

Historical Reporting of ETs

Source: *Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997 (pages 2-4)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETProgressMar1997.PDF>

III. Historical Reporting of ETs

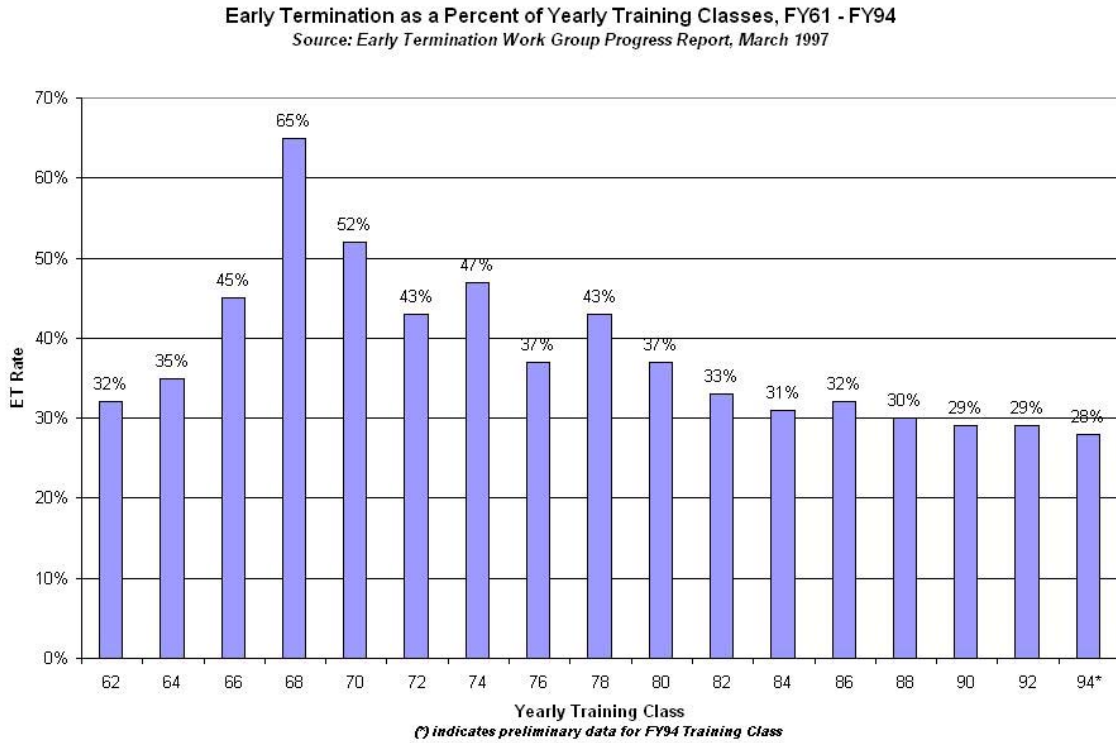
As one of its goals, the ET Work Group located historical studies of Volunteer attrition, dating back as far as 1969 (there may be earlier reports, but we were unable to locate them).

Historical documents show that attrition has remained a concern throughout Peace Corps history, with major efforts to address the issue surfacing every several years. An example of one of the more comprehensive efforts was a management exercise called for by Director Ruppe in 1983. Although the recommendations put forth in the exercise are comprehensive and useful, there is little information to tell us how the recommendations were implemented and what the impact of the strategies were on overall attrition rates. Unfortunately, this is the case with most available historical information.

What we can discern from the historical reports is that, contrary to popular belief, the overall ET rate has fluctuated quite significantly over the years (although it has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years). Although the ET rate was relatively low in the first several years of Peace Corps history (’61-’63), the rate rose significantly in the second half of the 1960s, ranging from 45%-65% for Volunteers and Trainees. This extremely high overall rate may be due to high Trainee attrition during this period, when much of pre-service training was conducted state-side and actual “de-selection” of trainees was common; unfortunately, it is difficult to isolate the Volunteer attrition rate to compare with more recent Volunteer data.

The overall attrition rate remained high throughout the 1970s (between about 40% - 50%), but began to decrease beginning the early 1980s. During the 1980s, the rate fluctuated between 30-35%, and has hovered around 30% during the 1990s. Although attrition has leveled off for the last five yearly training classes, the fact that rates have declined with each decade may indicate that past efforts to reduce attrition have been somewhat successful (or, at least, that improvement of certain Agency systems has had an effect on attrition).

The chart below provides a general picture of the historical trends in ET rates, FY 61 – FY 94, in two-year intervals.



PLEASE NOTE: this data should be used for internal discussions purposes only, since 1) the information is based on estimates from various historical reports (including reports listed in Appendix A and a 1989 GAO Reported entitled “Peace Corps: Statistical Profile” and 2) it is difficult to confirm from the estimates whether consistent methods for measuring attrition have been employed over time.

For more detailed information on historical ET studies, please see the summary included in Appendix A of this report.

Source: *Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997 (pages 2-4)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETProgressMar1997.PDF>

Summary of Past Reports to Study Volunteer and Trainee Attrition

The original appendix to the report listed above (“Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997”) showed not only the summaries of previous reports written through years in regards to measuring ET rates, but also results and recommendations. For brevity only the name of the study and summary of findings are included here. A link has been provided to the full report for reference and further comparison and study.

Source: *Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997 (Appendix A)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETProgressMar1997.PDF>

Appendix A: Summary of Past Reports to Study Volunteer and Trainee Attrition

INTRODUCTION

The Early termination of Volunteers and Trainees has been a concern for Peace Corps since it sent its first Volunteers overseas in 1961. Over the decades Peace Corps has used a variety of methods to study, measure, predict, and combat Volunteer and Trainee attrition. This report is a summary and outline of trends in the early termination rate over the past decades and of measures taken by the Agency to lower that rate

THE EARLY 60's

Based on current available records, precise Early Termination (ET) rates are difficult to determine for the first several years of the Peace Corps. The few records located suggest that the ET rate fluctuated between 30% and 35% of all Volunteers and Trainees. ET rates were not broken down by region or demographic group.

THE LATE 60's

The ET rate of the late 1960's rose to all time agency highs, ranging between 45% in 1966 to 65% in 1968. It is uncertain why such high rates existed; however, some have suggested that these high rates may have been caused by: 1) the sharp, rapid increase in Volunteers sent overseas (and the corresponding lack of adequate programming) and 2) high Trainee attrition, when the practice of “de-select” was common. External forces, such as U.S. military intervention overseas, may have also contributed to high attrition. Peace Corps took significant steps to study and measure the rising ET rate, as evidenced by the study below:

STUDY: Memorandum, October 8, 1969, Subject: Design to Study Early Termination. Sent to Bill Inglis, Dick Wilson, Bill Hintz, Curt Bristol, Joe Kelly, and John Salamack. Sent from Wayne Mock, Director, Division of Research

Summary: This memorandum introduced a study designed to identify the causes for Volunteer early termination. The study focused on “(1) Why is the worldwide attrition rate so high?” and “(2) Why is the worldwide attrition rate rising?” There was a common fear that the rates were rising due to the feeling that “the Peace Corps had lost some of its mystique”. The agency decided that it could best lower attrition by increasing Volunteer satisfaction and by improving recruitment and selection.

THE EARLY 70’s

Very little analytic data exists for the ET rates of the early 1970’s. The only statistical data available shows that the overall ET rate was approximately 50% in 1970, fell to roughly 43% in 1972, then rose again to nearly 50% in 1974, and finally decreased to about 37% by 1976. There is no evidence to suggest whether the ‘Design of Study’ discussed in 1969 was implemented.

THE LATE 70’s

Overall, ET rates of the late 1970’s declined from the previous high attrition of the late ‘60s and early 70s. Although the rate rose to nearly 45% in 1978, it fell back to under 40% by 1980 and continued to decrease from that point onward. This is the first time that statistical breakdowns are available by region, job assignment, and detailed ET reasons. The late 70’s also reflected an interest in examining ET rates between men and women Volunteers, as evidenced by the following study:

STUDY: Storti, Craig and Frank West. “Women as Volunteers; Volunteers as Women, IV: Patterns of Volunteer Attrition.” Action. Peace Corps: Program and Training Journal. Vol. IV. No. 6, pg 53-56, 1977.

Summary: This report compared the ET rate of Men and Women Volunteers who entered on duty between 1975 and 1976, and provided country by country rates. The report appears to be intended more for hands-on, in-country use rather than for initiating policy changes. The authors state, “We hope that you will analyze the data and discover the implications in it for your country and your programming.”

THE EARLY 80's

Since the beginning of the 1980's information and statistical reports about Peace Corps ET rates have been well documented, with updates generally provided annually. Overall ET rates continued to hover at, or slightly above, the 30% mark.

STUDY: Special Research Paper: The Utility of Peace Corps Applications in Predicting Early Termination. 1981/2

Summary: The purpose of this report was to re-examine data collected in 1967 which suggested that Peace Corps could use reference letters to predict those who would ET. The 1967 research was flawed, because the staffers who conducted the survey personally knew the Volunteers whom they studied and thus were considered biased. Those experiments suggested that PC could predict with 79% accuracy potential PCVs who would ET. In order to test the true validity of the 1967 experiments, PC conducted the same researching involving all the ETs of 1979.

STUDY: untitled (possibly excerpt from missing document), 1982

Summary: This brief analysis provided evidence indicating that testing by the Center for Assessment and Training (CAST), initiated in FY79 as a pre-invitational selection method for choosing PCVs, could possibly decrease the attrition rate. At the time of this report, CAST had been operational 2.5 years and more than 2,200 PC applicants had attended CAST. For FY80 and FY81, the ET rate for CASTed Trainees was 4% lower than for non-CASTed. The CAST ET rate for Volunteers was 12% lower in FY 80 than for non-CASTed Volunteers. No specific recommendations were made in this report.

STUDY: Memorandum from Loret Ruppe to Country Directors.
Subject: ET Management Exercise. December 22, 1983.

Summary: This memo from the Director outlined the creation of an agency Attrition Task Force whose purpose it would be to "identify areas of manageable attrition and take action to improve COS chances for PCVs." The memo was attached to a management exercise, which was suppose to be completed by all in country staff and Volunteers. All management staff and a sample of 10 Volunteers at each post were asked to complete the survey. The exercise was designed for "quick response" and was to be anonymous.

Note: This exercise addressed ET reason for Volunteers only, not trainees. A copy of the exercise was not attached to this memo.

STUDY: Causes of Early Termination: Attrition Task Force Report.
July 31, 1984.

Summary: This report outlined conclusions of the exercise sponsored by the Attrition Task Force. Only 9 posts returned complete exercises, and no statistical data was provided. Although the data was incomplete, the exercise showed that programming and Volunteer support were cited as the major factors of ET. Other factors, such as sites, training, PCV characteristics, were not cited. The exercise also showed that strategies to manage ETs were fairly uniform from country to country. The basic plan consisted of improving ministry contacts and communication, clarifying job descriptions, increasing site visitation, providing PCV counseling, and restructuring staff responsibilities. It also showed that there were regional factors for ETing among PCVs, and plans to manage ETs did, in turn, vary from region to region.

THE LATE 80's

During the late 1980's the Peace Corps continued to monitor the ET rate closely. Attrition remained at, or slightly above, 30%. The Agency began analyze the ET rate based on various demographics in an effort to pinpoint the causes for ET among different groups.

STUDY: Minority Volunteer and Trainee Attrition Rates (COS Dates FY 85-87). July 7, 88.

<u>Ethnic Group</u>	<u>% Terminated</u>	<u>Number</u>
Black Americans	30	220
Hispanic Americans	31	214
American Indian / Alaskan Ind.	38	24
Asian / Pacific Islander	27	107
White	31	6,959
Preferred not to Respond	30	627

STUDY: The Director's Task Force on Volunteer Retention: Findings and Recommendations. August 1988

Summary: A general consensus had been reached by the Task Force that a variety of isolated disappointments and frustrating experiences conspired to result in Volunteer attrition. The Task Force also cited problems related to Peace Corps operations, which contributed to Volunteer's decisions to shorten their service. "Often, attrition is the result of unmet expectations set by administrative and programmatic activities for Which Peace Corps is responsible and over which Peace Corps management and staff can exert control." The report also addressed the high attrition rate of Senior Volunteers, stating that "the high rate for this group is disturbing," and made a series of recommendation aimed at reducing this particular rate.

The Task Force cited three main factors concerning Volunteer attrition which had not been "adequately considered" in previous studies:

1. Attrition must be viewed as being the collective result of actions taken by Volunteers and the Agency. Peace Corps has the responsibility to support and train Volunteers adequately, just as "applicants have a responsibility to be free of stateside obligations and relationships and must carefully consider the depth of their commitment before taking the Peace Corps oath."
2. There are numerous places throughout the Peace Corps system which together can cause attrition. "At any stage of the Volunteer's service, an old disappointment, such as errors in processing or a negative encounter with a staff member can have a residual effect."
3. Strategies to reduce and end attrition need to be institutionalized into one policy or effort, in contrast to the various uncoordinated efforts which have taken place in the past.

STUDY: Management's Response to the Retention Task Force Recommendations. Memorandum to Margaret H. Thome, Associate Director for Management, Through Robert Werge, Director M/PPA, from Alana Landel, M/PPA. Subject:. Dated September 22, 1988.

Summary: The memo was attached to a point by point response from Management to the suggestions and recommendations raised in the retention Task Force's report (see previous report)

STUDY: Summary Report on Senior Early Termination Data. Submitted by M/PPA, January 1988

Summary: This report did not offer much new information from what had been previously documented. The reported stated that over the past few years the ET rate had remained fairly constant at about 30%. It reiterated that high ET rates were very common for older PCVs, and that 'older' signified Volunteers over the age of 30 and not just 50 year old and above. The highest ET rates were among those in the 30+ yrs age group, a

group which represented 20% of all PCVs. The majority of older Volunteers are placed within the Inter-America Region (42%), with the remaining split fairly evenly between the Africa Region (30%) and NANEAP (28%). The report stresses that something clearly should be done about the high rate among older Volunteers, since a greater percentage of Volunteers will fall into this 'older' category in the years ahead. It was also noted that some countries exhibit a higher ET rate than others. An examination of those countries and those with a consistently low rate should take place.

THE EARLY 90's

During the 1990's the Agency developed more sophisticated methods for monitoring and tracking ET rates. The overall ET rate remained at about 30% during this time, but the debate about how to reduce ET rates continued. The possibility of developing a database to monitor rates was at the forefront of the discussion, as was reducing Senior and minority attrition. Studies through this time still called for the creation of one central committee or office to monitor attrition issues.

STUDY: Subject: Attrition Task Force Meeting (5/31/90) Summary.
Memorandum to Ed Slevin, VRS, Beth Ford, VRS, Dick Haag, VRS, and Eric Tannenblatt, CR; Through Earl McClure, IA; From Charles Hendrix, IA. Dated June 1, 1990.

Summary: The Task Force responded to a request from Director Coverdall to study and submit a report on attrition by June, 1990. The memo stated that VRS was in the process of developing an ET database for use within the Agency. The memo reiterated much of the same information as other reports: 1) Expensive staging models of the past, CAST and PRIST, proved to be ineffective at predicting an applicant's length of service, 2) "Not having real jobs" has been the most common reason for ETs in all studies thus far, 3) Seniors and Volunteers over the age of 35 tended to ET at a higher rate than other Volunteers, and have a difficult time mastering foreign languages. The question was raised whether Peace Corps should shift emphasis from Senior PCVs and focus more on retention of minorities. It was also recommended that IST stress management sessions should be schedule in-country at peak time for ET.

STUDY: Peace Corps Office of Inspector General, Office of Audit:
Peace Corps' Management of Early Termination. Draft Report. Report No. IGA-93-001. October 1992.

Summary: The Peace Corps has failed to institute an authoritative body which has the purpose of monitoring and addressing ETs. Currently, about 30% of Volunteers and trainees collectively ET each year. The agency spends approximately \$6,230 per Volunteer for Medical services, training, and other costs. When 30% of each class ETs each year, the agency loses approximately \$5.8 million dollars of its initial investment.

There is the possibility that 30% is a “natural” rate of attrition among Volunteers, but since there has been no standard scale by which ET rates over the years can be compared, it is difficult to determine whether or not the ET rate is natural or correctable. Regional offices have requested data and information on ET, and presently have no internal operating procedures for handling ET.

STUDY: Memorandum to Michael Hill, IG, From Barabara Zartman, Acting Peace Corps Director, in response to Draft Report IG-93-001 Management of Early Termination. Dated December 3, 1992.

Summary: This report was written in response to the previous report published by the IG’s Office of Audit. Director Zartman agreed that a single “agency component” should be created to address the problem of Volunteer attrition. She stated that Trainee and Volunteer attrition should be looked at separately due to their different dynamics. “not all attrition is bad, and Peace Corps often encourages trainee termination if the trainee feels that they’ve made a bad chance during initial training.” Director Zartman stressed that although no ET is really considered to be positive, trainee ET could be classified as “good”. Peace Corps should also remember that a portion of ET is the result of bad conduct and unacceptable behavior on the part of the Volunteer or trainees. It was also noted that Peace Corps was undertaking a study of ETs in conjunction with the Center for Disease Control.

THE MID – 90’s

The effort to obtain data about Volunteer attrition and the reasons why Volunteers ET became a critical piece in the efforts to reduce attrition during the mid 1990’s. New procedures and data collecting tools were developed to more effectively gather ET information, in the hopes of affecting the number of Volunteers who choose to terminate their service.

STUDY: Memorandum to Country Directors, from Mark Gearan, Director. Subject: Revised early Termination Reason Codes and Procedures. Dated October 19, 1995.

Summary: In this memo Director Gearan introduced a new form to be completed by Volunteers / Trainees and Staff once a PCV has chosen to ET. The questionnaire followed the favorable results of a 1994 pilot study, in which reasons for ET were obtained from 62% of those who terminated – up from 47% the previous year.

The study also showed that ETs were the result of several factors, including “family-related”, according to 41% of Vs/Ts and 43% of overseas staff. Other reasons were “qualifications” (12% Vs/Ts, 22% staff), “job-related dissatisfaction” (18% Vs/Ts, 10%

staff) and “health-related problems” (10% Vs/Ts, 7% staff). The use of general categories proved to be more useful than requesting more detailed information. When Volunteers and trainees who ETed were asked to cite the reason for their exit, over 95 different reasons were cited, none frequently enough to be considered common. It was at that point that six broad categories (job-related, etc.) were developed. The ET packet included a letter from the Director asking each resigning Volunteer to complete a form indicating the category best describing their reason for resignation. In addition, in-country staff were asked to provide their view of the reason for each Volunteer’s departure, to supplement the data received from Volunteers. The memo also stated that PPA would assume responsibility for collecting ET data from OSS from that point onward.

CONCLUSION

Peace Corps’ policy on Early Termination and strategies to reduce overall attrition has taken a varying path over the decades. In the early years of the Agency, attrition was seen as a result of ‘bad’ applicants, who hopefully could be weeded out before they swore-in as Volunteers. As time passed, the Agency’s focus shifted towards correcting and modifying its approach to early terminations. In the 80’s and 90’s attrition has been seen as both a problem resulting from uncontrollable factors, as well as from Volunteer and Agency inadequacies. The new data being collected today, and the adoption of more precise and regular ET monitoring and analysis by PPA offers some hope of ET reduction for the future. Peace Corps needs to continue to identify appropriate policies and practices which improve overall Agency systems if it hopes to convert Volunteer Early Termination into improved Volunteer retention.

Source: *Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997 (Appendix A)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETProgressMar1997.PDF>

Current ET rates

As mentioned in the *Introduction* to this report, Peace Corps is currently using the **Annual Method** in determining ET rates. Even for the same year the ET rate for the two methods could be quite different, as they are measuring the rate under two different interpretations. Below is a portion of a table (full table in *Introduction*, above) explaining the interpretation of the two methods for the same year:

Cohort Method	Annual Method
FY 1990: 29% ET rate	FY 1990: 13% ET rate
Meaning: 29% of all volunteers who entered service in FY 1990 ET'ed sometime before their COS date	Meaning: 13% of all volunteers who served <i>any portion</i> of the fiscal year of 1990 ET'ed <i>within that year</i>

Because the two methods in reporting ET rates use different data sets and calculations, care must be taken so as not to inappropriately compare the two. There is no direct formula to “convert” an ET rate given in the Annual Method to a Cohort Method, or vice versa. Only with raw data can such a conversion be made.

As seen on from the comparison table listed above, ET rates measured with the Annual Method can be significantly lower than Cohort Methods. (In fact, this is true in general) All of the reports referenced in section of “*Historical Early Termination Rates*” were all done with the **Cohort Method**, and state roughly a 30% ET rate across the years. We shall now compare how the ET rate is computed and described for more current years, keeping in mind that historical rates have been around 30%.

Peace Corps is currently using the **Annual Method** in computing ET rates, and the most recent “Annual Report (Performance and Accountability Report)” (FY 2007) mentions that Peace Corps has maintained their goal of having the resignation rate at about 10% or less – *measured using the Annual Method*.

[Note: In the report cited directly above, Peace Corps is measuring the *resignation rate*, which is one of four ways to Early Terminate. However, resignations make up about 80% of all ETs (see ‘*Resignation rates through Time*’ below); and so a reasonable comparison can be made keeping the 80% in mind]

Performance Goal 4.2.1 Maintain the overall 12-month Volunteer’s resignation rate at 10 percent or less in FY 2007.	FY 2007 Goal <10%		FY 2007 Actual 8.8%	
	Results			
	FY 2003 9.0%	FY 2004 8.0%	FY 2005 9.0%	FY 2006 8.9%

Results and Analysis:

Retaining Volunteers is an area the Peace Corps has carefully examined, and its target to keep resignations for FY 2007 below 10 percent was achieved. Offices throughout the agency benefited from a more thorough analysis of early terminations in general, with a focus on resignations (officially defined as a decision made by a Volunteer/trainee that he/she no longer wishes to continue in Peace Corps service). The agency continues to monitor early terminations and to use both quantitative and qualitative data to improve recruiting, training, programming, and all other aspects of the Volunteer experience.

Source: *Annual Report (Performance and Accountability Report) FY 2007* (pg 36)
<http://www.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/policies/annrept2007.pdf>

If we assume that 80% of all Early Terminations in a year are because the volunteer chose to resign (see ‘Resignation rates through Time’ below), then the 8% resignation rate mentioned above in the table for FY2004 would imply the total ET rate for that year was about 10%.

Contrast this to the report *“Early Termination Report (January - December 2004)”* which stated that the 2002 Cohort, which were completing their service in 2004, had an ET rate of 31.8%.

**Early Termination Rate
By 2002 Cohort, N=4158**

Region	Fall ET %	Winter ET %	Spring ET %	Summer ET %	TOTAL ET %
Africa	31.9%	22.9%	34.7%	39.9%	33.4%
EMA	26.7%	32.0%	28.1%	34.1%	30.8%
IAP	28.1%	32.4%	33.0%	29.9%	31.0%
Worldwide ET	30.1%	29.5%	31.9%	34.6%	31.8%

Source: *Early Termination Report (January - December 2004)* pg (P339)
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/CY2004ETReport.PDF>

The 10% ET rate (Annual Method) given for FY2004 has the interpretation “10% of all volunteers who served *any portion* of the fiscal year of 2004 ET'ed *within that year*” while the 31.8% ET rate (Cohort Method) given for the 2002 Cohort (finishing service in 2004) has the more intuitive interpretation of “31.8% of all volunteers who entered service in FY2002 ET'ed sometime before their COS date”

This further illustrates that the ET rates given by the Annual Method can be misleading, as it does not answer the intuitive meaning of ‘ET rate’ given by the question: “If X number of people enter Peace Corps service during a given time period, how many actually complete their service?”

The *“Early Termination Report (January - December 2004)”* report was the last one written which used the Cohort Method in determining ET rates. The beginning part of the report was done with the newly issued Annual method while the last few pages had Cohort Data for cross-comparison between the change-over year.

However, there is an “Important Note” mentioned in the beginning section of the report, using the Annual Method, which can be used to confirm the 31.8% Cohort ET rate:

“The Average length of a Volunteer’s service is 20.4 months. Peace Corps Volunteers who COS served an average of 25.9 months. Those who Early Terminated served an average of 10.2 months.”

Source: *Early Termination Report (January - December 2004) pg (P278)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/CY2004ETRReport.PDF>

The method of weighted-averages can be used to compute an estimate of the worldwide Cohort ET rate using the numbers quoted above. *Appendix A* shows the steps to confirm the answer that the ET rate for that year was about 35%. This is in close agreement to the value of 31.8% given later in the report using the Cohort Method.

For the past six years Peace Corps has maintained that the annual ET rate of its volunteers has been in the 10%-12% range, as the table below illustrates.

	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006
Africa	12.6%	11.4%	10.6%	11.7%	10.6%	10.9%
EMA	13.2%	12.2%	10.8%	11.4%	14.3%	12.2%
IAP	11.2%	11.5%	10.1%	10.8%	10.5%	10.5%
Global	12.3%	11.7%	10.5%	11.3%	11.7%	11.2%

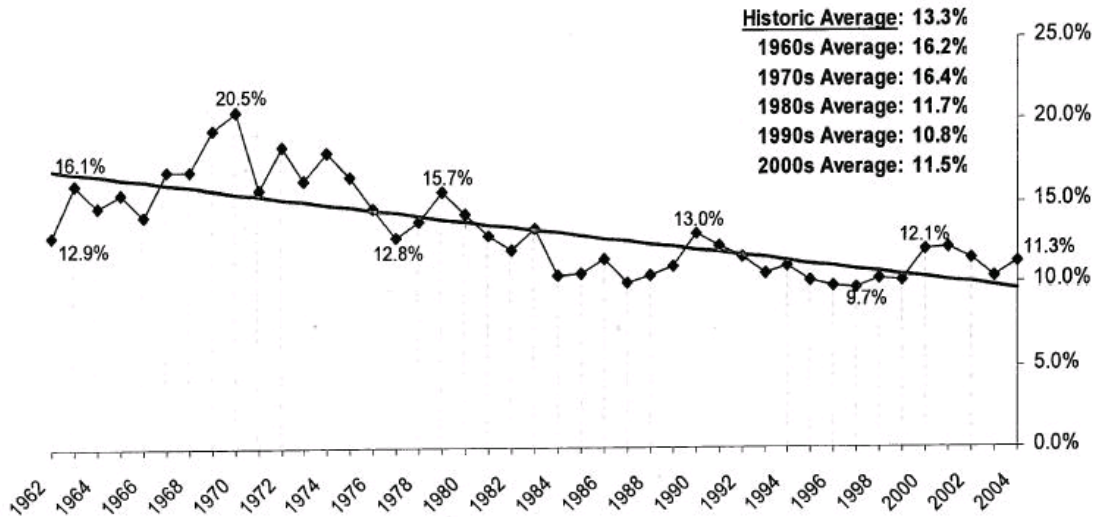
Sources: *FY 2006 Quantitative Early Termination Report (pg 4 of 25)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/FY2006ETRReport.pdf>
FY 2005 Quantitative Early Termination Report (pg 4)
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/FY2005ETRReport.PDF>

However, this does not help answer the most intuitive meaning of ‘ET rate’ given by the question “If X number of people enter Peace Corps service during a given time period, how many actually complete their service?” as even the bottom-line number for FY2005 of 11.7% has the obscure meaning of “11.7% of all volunteers who served *any portion* of the fiscal year of 2005 ET'ed *within that year*”. Even more convoluted is the regional ET rates; the 10.6% quoted ET rate listed for the same year but for Africa has the meaning: “10.6% of all volunteers who served *any portion* of the fiscal year of 2005 *in Africa* ET'ed *within that year*”

Even historical ET rates have been changed to accommodate the new interpretation of ‘ET rate’. Since Peace Corps has switched to the Annual Method in calculating ET rates, recent published Historical ET rates have been presented to correspond to the current method as well:



Historic Worldwide ET Rate October 1961 – December 2004



- * There is a statistically significant difference in ET rate between years.
- * We have less statistical confidence in data collected in the early years.

Source: *Early Termination Report (January - December 2004)* pg (P287)
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/CY2004ETReport.PDF>

Compare these numbers to the dozen reports mentioned in the section “*Summary of Past Reports to Study Volunteer and Trainee Attrition*” where they state almost year after year: “[...] about 30% of Volunteers and trainees collectively ET each year” and were even wondering if “30% is a ‘natural’ rate of attrition among Volunteers”.

While ET rates using the Annual Method are essential for budget calculations purposes, they provide an incomplete - thus, distorted - picture of overall attrition; both historically and presently.

III. COMPARISON OF PEACE CORPS TO OTHER INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER-SENDING ORGANIZATIONS

The only public document known that compares the ET rates of Peace Corps to equivalent rates in other service organization was the “*Early Termination Work Group – Progress Report – March 1997*”

(Note: Peace Corps was using the Cohort Method in computing ET rates at the time)

Source: *Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997 (Appendix B)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETProgressMar1997.PDF>

Attrition Information from Other Volunteer-sending Organizations

The ET Group gathered information from other international volunteer-sending agencies about their management of attrition issues. We hoped this exchange of information could help each organization re-examine their current management practices and identify possible strategies for improvement. In conducting this research, several questions arose about how other agencies calculate their ET rate: 1) should we exclude Trainee ETs from our calculations (as many other organizations do), and 2) is there a natural level of attrition in sending volunteers overseas that would help us identify an acceptable ET rate for Peace Corps?

In order to answer these questions, inquiries were sent to various organizations that had attended the International Conference on Volunteerism sponsored by Peace Corps in May 1996. While none of the organizations support the large number of Volunteers that Peace Corps does, it was felt there was sufficient comparability in agency purpose and operations to provide some helpful insights. The following chart provides a brief overview of the responses:

Organization	ET Rate	What's Counted	# of Vs	Comments
VSO	15-20%: 80s 29%: 89-90 20%: projected '94-95	Those who complete less than 75% of their 2 year service	872 new Vs per year	Intervention done for steep rise in '89 was deemed effective (pre-departure training, counterpart/Vol conferences, info booklet). Divided analysis into controllable reasons (64%) and uncontrollable reasons (33%) for ET (3% unknown reasons). Now addressing strategies for rectifying controllables.
VSA New Zealand	20% in '79 11.58% '96	Didn't mention Ts		Identified broad categories: selection errors; personal/relationship; health; terms and conditions; poor assignment selection. Early returns are decreasing.
Jesuit Volunteers	3 cases in 5 years	No Ts have left	70 Vs	Believe faith & justice themes influence staying power
APSO (Irish Vols)	10 of 286 '93=3.5% 11 of 449 '94 = 2.4% 26 of 470 '95=5.5%	Those who arrive in country after pre-departure training for 2 year assignments	286 449 470	Feel early returns are low but looking at selection and recruitment procedures and info sharing to ensure project is not the cause of early return.
DED (Germany)	6.2% '93 (of 1209) 7% in '94 (of 1014)		1209	Doctors, ag engineers & carpenters have highest ET rates; 37-45% ET due to project circumstances (security problems, redefined jobs)
SNV (Netherlands)	20 out of 550 Average 3.6%			Individuals interviewed for specific job and given job-related assessment tests; they believe all early departures are for job related reasons, not personal.
OSB (Australia)	11.8% in '92 9.1% in '94-'95	24 mos assignment / 21-27 mos = completed	711	Reasons: 1. Job issues, 2 cultural difficulties, 3. personal/family
UNV	No response			

In reviewing their responses several key factors emerged:

1. All respondents seem to measure ETs less comprehensively than Peace Corps does. No other agency seems to calculate Trainee ETs as part of attrition data.
2. Most organizations that have enacted interventions to improve ET rates have targeted three areas: (1) the selection process, (2) information given to Volunteers and (3) ensuring viable project circumstances.
3. The British Volunteer Organization (VSO) provided the most comprehensive feedback in response to our questions. Attached is a summary of their response.

VSO Attrition Data

Major Findings

- ETs calculated by cohort method, but VSO only counts those who serve less than 75% of expected service (less than 18 mo.) and does not include ETs during training.
- If we were to compare like with like, our overall ET rate for those who complete $\frac{3}{4}$ of service would be 24-25% (including trainee ETs), or about 18% excluding trainee ETs. In comparison, VSO's rate is about 20% (excluding trainees), with a goal of reducing the rate to 15% over 5 years.
- Over the past 10 years, there has been more fluctuation in VSO's ET rate than ours, ranging from 15-20% in the early-mid 80s, to 29% in late 80s back to 20-22% in the 90s.
- Part of the greater fluctuation is probably due to the fact that VSO's Trainee Input is considerably lower than ours: 872 for the 95/96 program year, compared to

3,500-3,900 for PC's recent yearly TI. Thus, a small number of ETs can have a greater impact on the attrition rate than ours.

- VSO rate of extension is considerably higher than PC's: 32%-35% compared to 10-14%. However, VSO calculates the extension rate based on the percentage of volunteers who have been overseas at least a year (thus, the actual pool of those who are eligible to extend rather than out of the total TI. VSO also counts those who extend for at least a year, whereas we include everyone who extends, whether it's 1 month or 20 months.
- Like Peace Corps, VSO volunteers in technical / business sectors are more likely to ET than those in agriculture/environment and education. VSO's Health volunteers appear to ET at a relatively lower rate than our PCVs.
- Like Peace Corps, the most common reason cited for ET was personal and professional. 10% of their ETs were dismissed due to unacceptable behavior, which is considerably higher than our rate of Administrative Separation. Their rate of Medical Separation (10% of all ETs) is slightly lower than ours (between 15%-18%).
- VSO's strategy for reducing their ET rate is to focus on "more controllable" reasons, which they roughly define as: "poor job assessment, volunteer selection, or the matching of the two." For the 95/96 ETs, 64% of all ETs returned for "controllable" reasons and "33%" returned for "less controllable" reasons.

Initiatives to minimize ETs (where reason is "more within VSOs control"):

- Recruitment:
 - "Consistent message" program, to establish more control over volunteer expectations.
- Overseas
 - Strengthening employer-volunteer relations
 - Promote 'volunteer lifestyle' concept to more clearly state policies and expectations
 - Integrate and streamlined system of monitoring and evaluating of volunteer placements
- Returned Volunteer Services:
 - Hold 3 ET "Case conferences" per year to provide cross-divisional forum (with volunteers and staff) to examine in detail factors of ET.
 - Focus of 3 themes such as:
 - Professional frustration caused by under or over-utilization of skills
 - Partnership issues undisclosed at or developing since selection
 - Volunteer expectations – during repeat term of service
- Analysis of "instant ETs" (0-3 months):
 - Reasons for "instant return" are more likely to be 'within VSO's control' since they have returned shortly after key decisions have been made. They make up about 11% of all ETs, compared to 13% for PC.

- 69% of instant returns left due to personal factors, including many who “lacked necessary personal qualities and/or had unrealistic expectations”
- Case conference outcomes: (focus on partnership issues)
 - Set up panel of counselors, consisting of suitable RPCVs, to provide confidential listening service for departing trainees with concerns about partnership issues (and possibly others)
 - Clarify stance on partnership. Literature needs to present consistent message. Clearer guidance to volunteers on what they should do if developments occur in a relationship before and during service, and on implications of being separated from a partner.

Major differences between VSO and Peace Corps which limit certain comparisons:

- VSO has much smaller TI and can focus more easily on specific high risk groups
- Fewer country programs allow them to intervene more closely
- England is geographically smaller which allows them to convene ETs more conveniently after they return home to gather feedback.
- Nature of programming and site selection may be different (more urban?)
- The demographic make-up of VSO Volunteers may be different (fewer older PCVs?)

Source: *Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997 (Appendix B)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETProgressMar1997.PDF>

IV. BREAKDOWN OF ET RATES

Unlike comparing ET rates between years that may have used different methods in calculating a “rate” of ET, comparing *attributes* of volunteers who have already ETed you *are able* to cross-compare them between years. The statistics *about* 100 volunteers who ETed are just as valid if they were from a total of 500 volunteers, or if they were 100 out of 100,000. Comparing the 100 to the rest of the volunteers, in defining “a rate” of ETing, was dealt with in previous section. Once a volunteer ET’s we can group them into a new category and treat them as a new population. In other words, if the statistic is *about* the volunteer who ETed and not ‘a rate’ in relation to current volunteers still serving, then cross-comparison between reports is valid.

By Type

The following is a break-down of type of ET given in different reports. This table helps answer the question: “What fraction of all the volunteers who ETed resigned, or were medically separated?”

	FY 2006	FY 2005	CY 2004	FY1996 Cohort	(1996 Report)
Resignation	79%	73%	79%	80%	80%
Medical Separation	17%	16%	17%	17%	18%
Administrative Separation	1%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Interrupted Service	3%	10%	3%		

FY1992 had a break-down of:

- 69% Resignation*
- 14% Medical Separation*
- 12% Evacuation*
- 4% Health Concerns*
- 1% Administrative Separation*

Notes:

1. “An unusually high number of interrupted service ETs, accounting for 10%, occurred during FY 2005, mostly due to the events in Uzbekistan.”
2. “1996 Cohort was 93% complete when data was analyzed on February 10, 1999”
3. (1996 report) gave no indication of what the population Peace Corps was measuring, only stating “Reasons for Early Termination: Based on 509 Total ETs since November 1, 1995”

Sources:

- FY 2006: *FY 2006 Quantitative Early Termination Report (page 3 of 25)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/FY2006ETReport.pdf>
- FY 2005: *FY 2005 Quantitative Early Termination Report (page 3)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/FY2005ETReport.PDF>
- CY 2004: *Early Termination Report (January - December 2004) pg (P280)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/CY2004ETReport.PDF>
- FY 1996 Cohort: *Report on Early Terminations May 1999 (pg 24, P130)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETSummaryMay1999.PDF>
- (1996 Report): *Peace Corps Report on Early Termination FY90-FY96 (pg P180)*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETSummaryReportFY9096.PDF>
- FY 1992: *FY1992 Report of Early Termination Statistics*
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/FY1992ETReport.PDF>

As can be seen on the chart, about 80% of all ETs are because the volunteer resigned from their service, another 17% for Medical Separation, and the rest by either Interrupted Service or Administrative Separation.

Since the Cohort Method answers the question “If X number of people enter Peace Corps service during a given time period, how many actually complete their service?” it also has the interpretation of being a “chance” of ETing, and can help in computing an estimate of other “chances” of events happening to the volunteer in regards to ETs. For example, if the cohort ET rate is 30% then, on average, a volunteer chosen at random has a 70% chance of completing service. Since ETs have further been subdivided into types we can also subdivide the ‘chances’ of ETing by Medical Separation, for an example, for a random volunteer.

	Out of 100 Volunteers	Out of 100 Volunteers <i>who ETed</i>
Complete Service	70%	
Early Terminate	30%	
- <i>Resignation</i>	(24%)	80%
- <i>Medical Separation</i>	(5%)	17%
- <i>Administrative Separation / Interrupted Service</i>	(1%)	3%
TOTAL	100%	100%

Assumptions made:

- 30% Cohort ET rate - valid assumption based on previous historical data*
- 80% of ETs are resignations – valid, see table above*
- 17% of ETs are Medical Separation – valid, see table above.*

This means that about 1 volunteer in 20 (5%) will not complete their service due to being medically separated.

Resignation rates through time

Although current reports list ET rates as an Annual basis, it is still possible to get an accurate estimate of the percent of ETs that are from resignations (RS).

As stated in the “FY 2006 Quantitative Early Termination Report”, FY 2006 had an ET rate of 10.9% and RS rate of 8.7% (pg 4 of 25, link provided below). Since both ET and RS rates were measured on the same group of people, using the same method, during the same time period - the ratio of the two would give an estimate of the percent of volunteers who ETed who resigned.

Below is a table detailing those estimates for the most current years available:

% of ETs that are resignations, by fiscal year					
2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
80%	77%	76%	80%	74%	79%

The original tables that give both the ET and RS rates, as well as subdividing them into regions of Africa, EMA and IPA are provided in the following references:

Source:

For FY 2002 – FY 2006 data:

FY 2006 Quantitative Early Termination Report (pg 4 of 25)

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/FY2006ETReport.pdf>

FY 2001 data:

FY 2005 Quantitative Early Termination Report (pg 4)

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/FY2005ETReport.PDF>

As most reports only list overall ET rates with concentration on Resignation rates; no significant inferences of Medical Separations through time could be made - other than the ‘reverse’ of the graph above, example being *at most* 20% of ETs in 2004 were by medical separations. The phrase ‘at most’ must be used as the remaining 20% of ETs unaccounted for by just resignations alone in 2004 could be by either Medical Separation, Interrupted Service or Administrative Separation. Among those three specific types, though, Medical Separation would make up the vast majority of the “missing” 20%.

By Reason

There as been two recent reports written exclusively on the reasons volunteers give on resigning their Peace Corps service. Both are available to download and read in full. This report only gives a summary of the latest findings, and their conclusions.

2005

Resignation Reason Report (January 2005 - December 2005)

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ReasonsCY2005.PDF>

1995

Reasons for Early Termination of Peace Corps Service; A Pilot Study to Improve Data Collection (Dec 1995)

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/Reasons1995PilotStudy.PDF>

Summary of the 2005 Report:

2005 Resignation Reason Provided by Volunteers - Global

Rank	Resignation Reason	Number	Percent
1	Other personal / family related	101	14.0%
2	Friend(s) or other family responsibility	77	10.7%
3	Other career opportunity	53	7.4%
4	Romantic interest	47	6.5%
5	Physical health	39	5.4%
6	Further education	38	5.3%
7	Amount of work	38	5.3%
8	Resignation in lieu of administrative separation	35	4.9%
9	Emotional / mental health	33	4.6%
10	Matching skills to work assignment	32	4.5%
	<i>others – <see report></i>	226	31.4%
	TOTAL	719	100.0%

Source: *Resignation Reason Report (January 2005 - December 2005)* (pg 30, P394)

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ReasonsCY2005.PDF>

The above table was shortened to just the top 10 reasons as a previous section of the same report specifically dealt with those issues, which is copied in full below:

Source: *Resignation Reason Report (January 2005 - December 2005)* (pg 25, P389)
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ReasonsCY2005.PDF>

Looking at the top ten reasons (Volunteer, global) the Peace Corps has no control over five, three they have limit control over (they may be able to control a portion but others are beyond their control) and two they have significant control over.

Table 18: Resignation Reasons – No Peace Corps Control

Vol Rank	Reason Code	Resignation Description	Number of Volunteers	Peace Corps Control
1	116	Other Personal / family related	101	None
2	115	Friend(s) or other family responsibility	77	None
3	112	Other career opportunity	53	None
4	110	Romantic interest	47	None
6	111	Further education	38	None
Number of Volunteers			215	

Table 19: Resignation Reasons – With Peace Corps Control

Vol Rank	Reason Code	Resignation Description	Number of Volunteers	Peace Corps Control
5	310	Physical Health	39	Limited
7	214	Amount of work	38	Significant
8	710	Resignation in lieu of Administrative separation	35	Limited
9	311	Emotional / mental health	33	Limited
10	213	Matching skills with work assignment	32	Significant
Number of Volunteers			177	

Conclusion:

Approximately half of the resignation reasons are items that Peace Corps has little control over and therefore will not be able to reduce the number of resignations. To reduce the number of resignations Peace Corps needs to concentrate on the reasons that are under the Volunteers or Peace Corps' control.

Table 20 shows resignation reason rankings for all categories. This table can be used to pinpoint areas where the reason is under Peace Corps or the Volunteers control plus has a high ranking and concentrate efforts on those reasons. Peace Corps should use the resignation data and specifically the comments to identify problems. Once problems are identified solutions can be proposed that would reduce the number of resignations. Table 21 uses the resignation reasons in table 19 (resignation reasons – with Peace Corps Control) to provide an idea of how comments can be used to propose solutions.

PPA recommends that a task team be formed that reviews the resignation data and comments from the resignation form and the COS and PCV surveys to identify problems and brainstorm solutions. PPA further recommends that RPCVs should be included on this team.

Source: *Resignation Reason Report (January 2005 - December 2005)* (pg 25, P389)
<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ReasonsCY2005.PDF>

The phrase “Approximately half of the resignation reasons are items that Peace Corps has little control” has the equivalent reverse statement of “approximately half of the resignation reasons are items that Peace Corps **does** have control over”.

In the section above detailing the type of ETs we concluded that about one in four volunteers resign from their service (24%, *see table on pg 25*); and with “approximately half” of the reasons for resigning being in Peace Corps control, we can conclude that about one volunteer in eight resigns from their service due to reasons that Peace Corps has control over.

V. CONCLUSION

Every year Peace Corps produces a Performance and Accountability Report, which “provides an account of the Peace Corps’ financial and performance results, enabling the President, Congress, and the American people to assess the agency’s operations during the past year.”^[1]

Despite claiming in these reports:

- **FY2005**: “The current ET rate of 11.7 percent is still well below the last high (20.5 percent in 1970) as well as the historical average ET rate of 13.3 percent.”^[2]
- **FY2007**: “Retaining Volunteers is an area the Peace Corps has carefully examined, and its target to keep resignations for FY 2007 below 10 percent was achieved.”^[3]

We have shown that, under the **Cohort Method**, which provides *a complete picture of attrition*, that:

- The ET rate is currently around 30%, with the FY2002 Cohort having a 31.8% ET rate^[4]
- The highest ET rate was 65% in 1968. (“The ET rate of the late 1960’s rose to all time agency highs, ranging between 45% in 1966 to 65% in 1968”^[5])

And that, *currently*, **out of 100 Volunteers**, approximately

- **1 in 3** will **not** complete their service
- **1 in 4** will choose to **resign** from their service
 - Half of those resignation will be a reason within Peace Corps’ control, meaning:
 - **1 in 8** will **resign** due to a reason **within Peace Corps’ control**
- **1 in 20** will be **Medically Separated**.

[1] “The Peace Corps Performance and Accountability Report Fiscal Year 2007”

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/policies/annrept2007.pdf>

[2] “The Peace Corps Performance and Accountability Report Fiscal Year 2005”

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/policies/annrept2005.pdf>

[3] Ref. [1], pg 36

[4] *Early Termination Report (January - December 2004) pg (P339)*

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/CY2004ETReport.PDF>

[5] *Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997 (Appendix A)*

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/ETProgressMar1997.PDF>

Appendix A:

Verification of 35% estimate of ET rate

“The Average length of a Volunteer’s service is 20.4 months. Peace Corps Volunteers who COS served an average of 25.9 months. Those who Early Terminated served an average of 10.2 months.”

Source: *Early Termination Report (January - December 2004) pg (P278)*

<http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/FOIAdocs/CY2004ETReport.PDF>

Assume 100 Volunteers, of which 35 have ETed. Those 100 Volunteers may be broken down as

35 volunteers who ET’ed with an “average of 10.2 months” of service

65 volunteers who COSed and “served an average of 25.9 months”

The total number of months served for all 100 volunteers is 10.2 months for *each* of 35 volunteers who ET’ed *plus* 25.9 months for *each* of 65 volunteers who COSed.

35 * 10.2 = 357.0 total months served for the volunteers who ETed

65 * 25.9 = 1683.5 total months served for the volunteers who COSed

TOTAL = 2040.5 total months served for ALL 100 volunteers

The average length of service for this group of 100 volunteers would be 2040.5 divided by 100, or 20.4 months. This is in agreement with the average listed in Peace Corps’ own report, verifying that the ET rate was about 35%.

Appendix B: Computer Simulation

The objective of the simulation was not to try and model past historical data, but to show how even a constant Cohort Early Termination rate can yield unpredictable ET rates when calculated with the Annual Method.

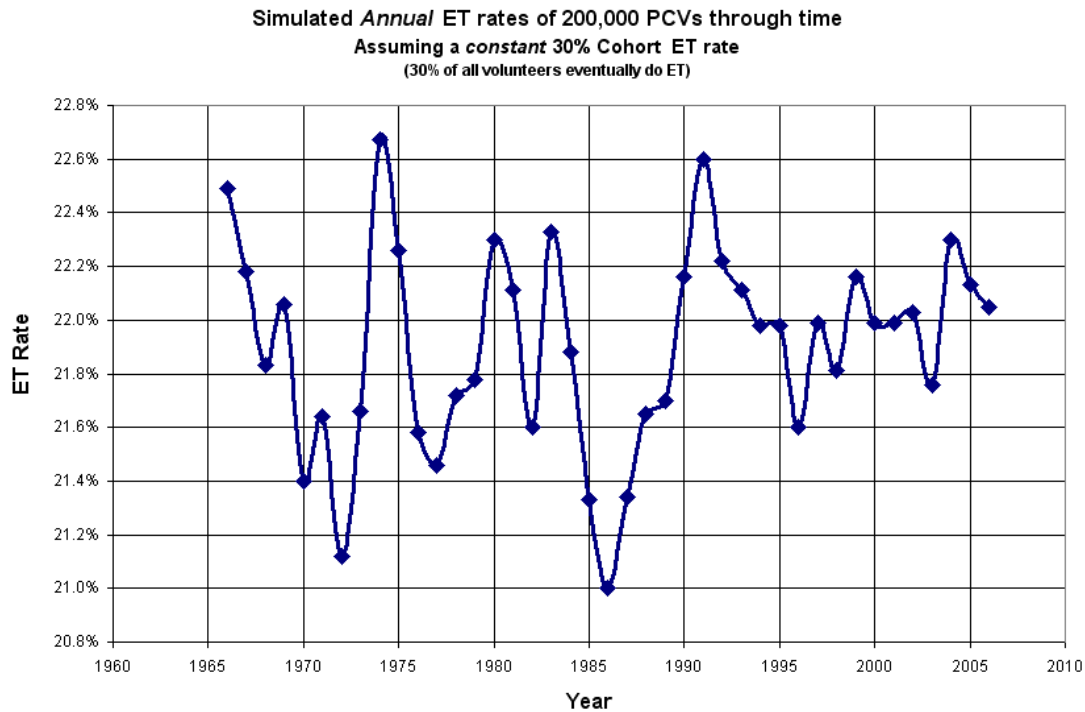
The main reason for the unpredictability of the Annual Method is that it is a ratio of two random variables:

- 1) The number of PCVs/Ts who separated from the Peace Corps during the fiscal year, divided by
- 2) The *total number* of trainees and volunteers who served *at any time* during the same fiscal year

As new trainees come into country and PCVs/Ts leave both numbers change randomly - even in a scale as small as a month. This causes their ratio to fluctuate with no discernable pattern or meaningful statistical interpretation. Caution should be used in not only the number itself, but comparing the number to previous years in year-to-year comparison of potential progress.

This computer simulation modeled the length of service of 200,000 PCVs throughout 50 years. The program was designed such that exactly 30% of them would not complete their service, with a time-scale of their service varying from just one day to ETing just before their anticipated COS date. The other 70% volunteers were given a full 27-month of service in this model.

An Early Termination rate, *using the Annual Method*, was computed for the simulated years of 1966 – 2006, with the results shown below:



Other than one or two years, it looked like the “rate” was declining for the first ten years, and then increased significantly in the next year or so. These apparent effects are not caused by anything inherent that the volunteers have accomplished differently (be it more finish service, or less), but are statistical artifacts of the Annual Method formula itself. The Cohort ET Rate, for the entire 50 years, was a constant 30% - meaning exactly 30% of the 200,000 volunteers did not finish their service at some point.

In this sense, the **Cohort Method** provides a *complete picture of attrition* because it follows people over their full tour.

Results gathered from using the Annual Method, and apparent progress shown in comparing year-to-year numbers, have minimal statistical validity at best.

Appendix C: Early Termination Data – Volunteer Demographics

The following tables are a compilation of data presented in multiple reports of Early Termination that Peace Corps has written throughout the past 17 years, with data going back 20 years.

The ET rate of the same demographic is reported across the years and also between the **Cohort** and **Annual Method** used to produce the rate for the year currently being studied.

Below each table are examples on how to read the numbers presented, and the correct interpretation of what the number represents.

Links has been provided to the full reports for reference and further comparison and study.

Peace Corps Wiki: Early Termination

(PeaceCorpsWiki.org is not affiliated with the United States Peace Corps. It is a collaborative project whose goal is to create a free, interactive, and up-to-date source of information about serving as a volunteer with the U.S. Peace Corps.)

http://www.peacecorpswiki.org/Early_Termination

Reports using the **Annual Method**

- **2006:** [FY 2006 Quantitative Early Termination Report](#)
- **2005:** [FY 2005 Quantitative Early Termination Report](#)
- **2005:** [Resignation Reason Report \(January 2005 - December 2005\)](#)

Reports using both the **Annual Method** and **Cohort Method**

- **2004:** [Early Termination Report \(January - December 2004\)](#)

Reports using the **Cohort Method**

- **1999:** [Report on Early Terminations May 1999](#)
- **1997:** [Early Termination Work Group Progress Report, March 1997](#)
- **1996:** [Peace Corps Report on Early Termination FY90-FY96](#)
- **1995:** [Reasons for Early Termination of Peace Corps Service; A Pilot Study to Improve Data Collection \(Dec 1995\)](#)
- **1992:** [FY1992 Report of Early Termination Statistics](#)

REGION	COHORT METHOD											ANNUAL METHOD						
	FY88	FY89	FY90	FY91	FY92	FY93	FY94	(FY90-FY94)	FY95	FY96	CY02	FY01	FY02	FY03	CY04	FY04	FY05	FY06
Worldwide	31%	30%	29%	29%	29%	30%	28%	29%	29%	28%	32%	12%	12%	11%	12%	11%	12%	11%
Africa	30%	26%	31%	28%	30%	31%	26%	29%	27%	28%	33%	13%	11%	11%	13%	12%	11%	11%
EMA	30%	28%	23%	25%	24%	30%	27%		27%	26%	31%	13%	12%	11%	11%	11%	14%	12%
IAP	33%	36%	31%	29%	32%	30%	30%		32%	30%	31%	11%	12%	10%	12%	11%	11%	11%
Asia-Pacific			23%	29%	26%	25%		26%										
ECAM			20%	26%	24%	32%		27%										
Inter-America			32%	29%	34%	31%		30%										
GENDER																		
Male	30%	28%	30%	29%	32%	32%	31%	28%	32%	29%		11%	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%	12%
Female	32%	33%	28%	28%	27%	29%	28%	31%	27%	28%		13%	12%	11%	12%	12%	12%	11%
RACE																		
Caucasian	32%	31%	29%				30%	29%	31%	29%		12%	11%	11%	12%	11%	12%	11%
Asian American	13%	28%	15%				21%	23%	20%	19%		12%	9%	10%	12%	12%	12%	11%
Mixed Ethnicity							20%	26%	33%	28%		15%	13%	10%	14%	14%	11%	13%
Hispanic	33%	32%	25%				31%	28%	35%	29%		15%	11%	12%	15%	15%	13%	10%
African American	24%	30%	23%				26%	29%	26%	27%		11%	11%	9%	11%	10%	12%	12%
Native American							30%	42%	27%	60%		8%	13%	19%	10%	13%	14%	15%
Not Specified							34%	27%	28%	29%		12%	15%	10%	24%	10%	12%	12%
All Minorities			25%	22%	31%	33%	25%	27%	28%	25%		13%	11%	10%	14%	13%	12%	12%

Example:

Cohort: 29% of all **male** volunteers who entered service in the fiscal year of **1996** ET'ed sometime before their COS date

Annual: 12% of all **male** volunteers who served *any portion* of the fiscal year of **2006** ET'ed *within that year*

	COHORT METHOD											ANNUAL METHOD						
	FY88	FY89	FY90	FY91	FY92	FY93	FY94	(FY90-FY94)	FY95	FY96	CY02	FY01	FY02	FY03	CY04	FY04	FY05	FY06
AGE																		
20s			16%				24%	25%	26%	25%		12%	11%	10%	11%	10%	11%	10%
30s			11%				47%	32%	40%	42%		13%	17%	12%	13%	15%	12%	14%
40s			24%				41%	38%	43%	30%		14%	17%	13%	13%	14%	18%	20%
50s			19%				48%	40%	47%	43%		14%	15%	15%	16%	16%	20%	17%
60s			30%				54%	48%	59%	54%		20%	22%	16%	21%	19%	21%	20%
70s/80s			26%				45%	57%	71%	60%		35%	18%	20%	29%	27%	35%	31%
EDUCATION LEVEL																		
No Response / Other															13%		25%	8%
No High School							44%					20%	33%	0%	0%	0%	0%	60%
HS Diploma							56%					25%	23%	14%	18%	24%	29%	14%
1-2 Yrs. College							47%					16%	20%	16%	16%	14%	26%	22%
AA Degree							44%					16%	16%	16%	19%	28%	14%	17%
Tech School Grad.							61%					15%	21%	25%	23%	17%	6%	17%
3 Years College							32%					21%	15%	13%	15%	15%	11%	13%
Bachelor's Degree							26%					12%	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Grad. Study							32%					9%	6%	11%	13%	11%	10%	17%
Grad. Degree							32%					14%	14%	12%	14%	14%	15%	14%
<i>College Degree</i>							29%		29%	28%								
<i>Less than College Degree</i>							42%		53%	48%								

Example:

Cohort: 42% of all volunteers in their 30s who entered service in the fiscal year of 1996 ET'ed sometime before their COS date

Annual: 14% of all volunteers in their 30s who served *any portion* of the fiscal year of 2006 ET'ed *within that year*

MARITAL STATUS	COHORT METHOD											ANNUAL METHOD						
	FY88	FY89	FY90	FY91	FY92	FY93	FY94	(FY90-FY94)	FY95	FY96	CY02	FY01	FY02	FY03	CY04	FY04	FY05	FY06
Single	26%	26%	25%				26%	26%	27%	25%		12%	11%	10%	11%	11%	11%	10%
Engaged												11%	20%	57%	0%	0%	3%	15%
Married (serving w / Spouse)	45%	43%	36%				37%	35%	36%	37%		15%	15%	11%	15%	15%	15%	16%
Married (serving alone)							42%	38%	40%	48%		19%	17%	20%	21%	17%	25%	20%
Widowed							60%	48%	53%	53%		16%	11%	17%	30%	27%	31%	23%
Divorced							46%	44%	53%	45%		17%	20%	16%	16%	17%	20%	20%
Married (while serving)												0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	7%	22%
SECTOR																		
Environment							28%	26%	25%	25%		12%	11%	10%	11%	10%	10%	10%
Agriculture							34%	31%	32%	29%		15%	11%	11%	11%	12%	10%	11%
Business and IT							34%	32%	31%	34%		12%	12%	10%	11%	11%	12%	12%
Health & HIV/AIDS							30%	30%	34%	30%		13%	10%	11%	13%	13%	12%	11%
Education							26%	26%	28%	25%					11%			11%
Education, Youth, and Community Development												12%	13%	11%		11%	12%	
Urban, Youth Development, Individual Project							30%	31%	40%	36%							12%	
Youth Development															16%			12%
Urban Planning															10%			
UNV Projects															5%			
Other / Not Known												2%	9%	16%	19%	4%	5%	10%

Example:

Cohort: 29% of all male volunteers who entered service in the fiscal year of 1996 ET'ed sometime before their COS date

Annual: 12% of all male volunteers who served any portion of the fiscal year of 2006 ET'ed within that year

Note: For sectors Peace Corps grouped 1) Education, 2) Youth Development, 3) Community Development, and 4) Urban Planning together in different arrangements throughout the years.

