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As we celebrate 30 years of Au Pair in America, a division of the American Institute For Foreign Study (AIFS), we reached out to alumni of the program and asked them to reflect on their experience as an au pair and its impact on their lives.

Offered through the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the au pair program is one opportunity for international visitors looking to travel and gain experience in the United States. Au Pair in America is a designated sponsor of the au pair program. This report is the second edition – the first having been issued in 2012. It describes outcomes of a survey we recently conducted of our alumni who participated in the program between 1987 and 2016. We wanted to gain a fuller picture of the long-term impact of their experience—on both a personal and professional level—living with American families, sharing their culture, experiencing America, caring for their host’s children, and taking classes in communities throughout the nation.

Since its inception in 1986 as the first au pair program in the United States, Au Pair in America has set a high standard for management of the program and our active engagement with both U.S. families and international au pairs. Au Pair in America has brought in over 100,000 young people, from more than 60 countries in Europe, Africa, the Americas, New Zealand, the Middle East and Asia, into communities in 40 states and the District of Columbia. The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs reports that over 17,000 young people, predominantly women, enter the U.S. each year to participate in the au pair program for up to two years.

AIFS has had an exceptional record of leadership and innovation in the international education community for more than fifty years and has actively supported the participation of women in all its programs. Over 300,000 women from more than 120 nations have experienced life in the United States through a variety of our sponsored programs, including Au Pair in America and, in addition, as high school exchange students, camp counselors and participants in various other summer programs.

Empire

The report explores the impacts of Au Pair in America and assesses its success in several areas: personal development, understanding of U.S. culture and society, career direction and employability, and global outlook. These four areas address the intent of the au pair program to provide individuals an opportunity to immerse themselves in daily life with an American family and engage with other Americans in the community, while at the same time gaining critical skills and competencies that measurably contribute to their personal and professional development.

A survey questionnaire was sent to over 30,000 individuals who participated in and completed the Au Pair in America program. We received a response from nearly 10,000 program alumni.

This report is the second one released by Au Pair in America. Our initial survey was conducted with Au Pair in America alumni who participated in the program between 1987 and 2012, with the second survey extending the range of surveyed participants into 2016. Many of the results of the second survey echoed those of the first, reinforcing the benefits of the program for its au pair participants.

Our findings demonstrate that participation in Au Pair in America has had a measurable and sustained impact in the key areas of personal development, understanding of U.S. culture and society, career direction and employability, and global outlook and local involvement (i.e., civic engagement).



A key objective of cultural exchange programs is to provide the opportunity for international visitors to learn about U.S. culture and society. In accordance with the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, the au pair exchange program indeed builds mutual understanding and helps to create a foundation of trust between Americans and the rest of the world. Au pairs are able to gain insight on a more intimate level by living with an American family and engaging in daily activities in the home and community; by taking classes at a local college or university; through their travels to other cities; and, for some, to engage with the community by taking part in some form of volunteer work.

Of the survey respondents:

- 78% of alumni reported that since being an au pair, their attitude toward the United States and its people is more positive.
- 70% reported that living with an American family contributed to their general understanding of American culture.
- 70% of respondents stated they have maintained contact with their host family(ies) and consider them to be family.
- The opportunity afforded by the program to enroll and take classes at a college or university was reported by 86% of respondents to have helped them learn more about U.S. culture.
- 26% of respondents took part in some form of volunteer work or community service while they were in the U.S. Interestingly, anecdotal comments suggest many more engaged in community service after returning to their home country.

"I just wanted to say thank you to Au Pair in America for our participation in Chicago in the years 1989 to 1993. My husband and I just returned from a trip to Germany where we visited with our two fabulous au pairs from those years, Ulrike Pauls and Sabine Braudel. We stayed in touch over the years and finally visited them and their young children. The association has enriched our family life so much over the years. Thanks again!"

There has been a lot of recent research that confirms the importance employers place on the soft intercultural skills that Au Pair in America provides participants. This is likely why we see the importance of the personal and professional skill sets stressed in our survey outcomes. For example, bilingualism research explains how speaking more than one language offers a broad array of benefits and advantages, according to Italian professor Antonella Sorace from the University of Edinburgh. According to a report in *The Financial Times*, her bilingualism research explains that, in addition to communication benefits, multilingualism often provides cognitive benefits, such as improved skills of intercultural sensitivity, cooperation, negotiation, and compromise. Sorace even claims that multilinguals can think more efficiently. These cognitive benefits, her research explains, come from a multilingual person's deeper understanding, from an early age, that someone from another culture might have a different perspective.

Global Outlook

Because Au Pair in America offers such a lengthy and in-depth cross-cultural experience in the United States, we would expect alumni to report outcomes indicating their program experience had influenced their outlook on both the U.S. and its role in the world community. Our findings did bear out the strong impact of the program on the global outlook of alumni in the following ways:

Development of friendships with people from other nations	93%
Ability to communicate in my home country about U.S. citizens and culture in a more informed and positive manner	86%
Developed my awareness of political, economic and social events around the world	67%
More tolerant attitude toward the U.S. and its involvement in world affairs	62%
Involvement and interest in a global issue	65%

“In my case, it was the best decision I could ever have made. It changed my life completely. I made so many friends, from all over the world. The experience, and self-confidence I gained after this, made my life so much easier. After that year in the U.S., I decided to come back to my country and started University. After 10 years, I became a geologist. I have a great job and travel around the world...But I will never forget the experience that changed me completely. Deep inside, I will always be an au pair.”

—Cecilia Garcia, Argentina

“It is a wonderful opportunity to grow emotionally and psychologically. It teaches a person to take responsibility and to be accepting of people different than yourself.”

—Naylene Enslin, South Africa

“Honestly, Au Pair in America changed my life completely. Coming to a different country and living with a host family is the best way to learn about the culture and the language. It made me stronger, independent, and more tolerant.”

—Aroa Lopez Olmeda, Spain



72%



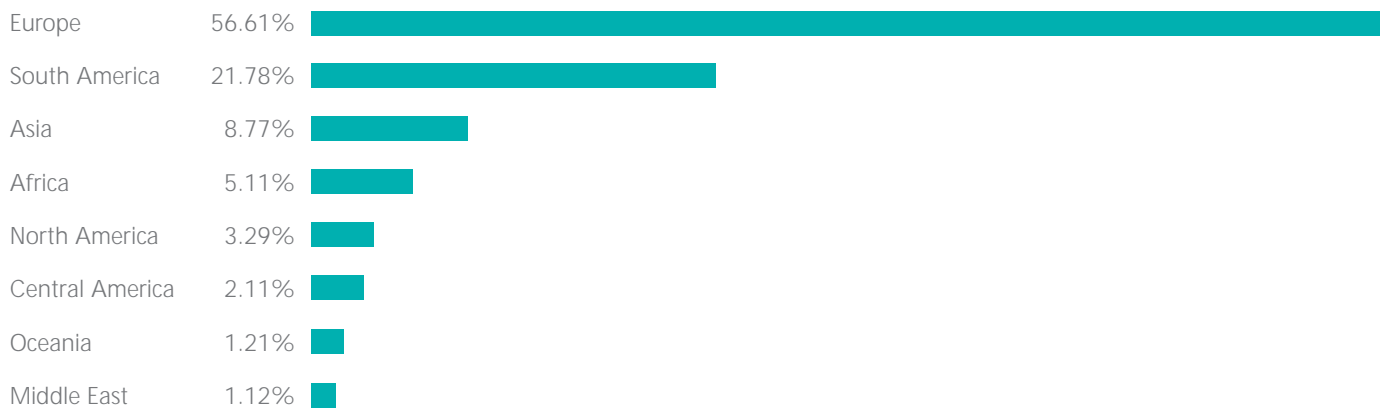
Christina acknowledges that she joined a family that was in mourning and dealing with a lot of grief, but counters, “ I know Terri says such nice things about me, but you have to know that the children are great and open, and Terri is the best host mom. She is accommodating, flexible and fair and supports my discipline with the kids. We are a good match.”

Without a doubt, Terri's thoughtfulness, kindness, and strength are impressive. Through tears, she talks about experiences that might have crippled many in her situation, yet she carries on with spirit and gratitude. “ Don't sugar coat it, my husband was murdered at work... It has been really hard and overwhelming, but we will always be so





Respondents by Country



Africa

Namibia
South Africa
Zimbabwe

Asia

China
India
Japan
Malaysia
Singapore
South Korea
Thailand

Central America

Costa Rica
Guatemala
Panama

Europe

Austria
Belgium
Bosnia
Bulgaria
Croatia
Czech Republic
Denmark

Estonia

Finland
France
Germany
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Netherlands

Norway

Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Middle East

Georgia
Israel
Macedonia
Turkey

North America

Canada
Mexico

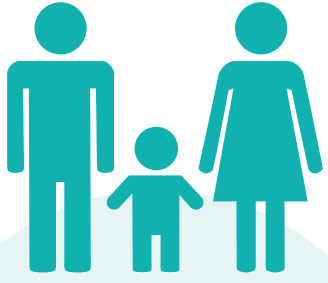
Oceania

Australia
New Zealand

South America

Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Ecuador
Peru
Venezuela

A better understanding of myself and my values



76%

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91%

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...
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95%

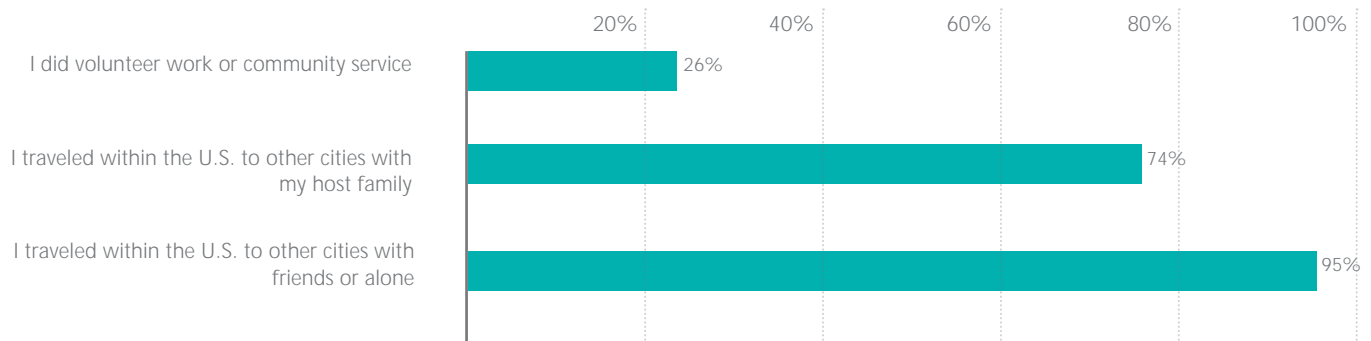




Community Service

The history of volunteerism in America goes back to the founding of the United States. We have long been a nation focused on helping and improving the lives of others. Twenty-six percent of respondents took part in some form of volunteer or community service. We know that for many, the volunteer or community service activity they engaged in while an au pair was their first, but not their last. Hundreds of respondents referenced volunteer activities they have been doing since completing their au pair experience.

Volunteer / Travel – While I was an au pair in the U.S.:

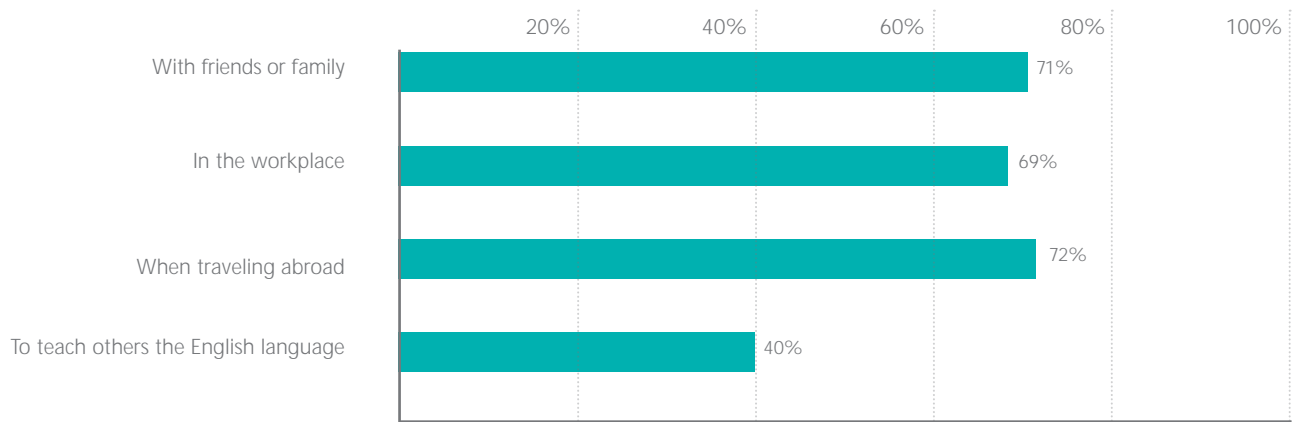


Findings (% reflect strongly agree & agree)



Career Development & Education

Since being an au pair, I have used my English skills:




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The outcomes of our alumni survey, spanning over 30 years, point to the sustaining impact and influence of Au Pair in America on the personal life and professional development of program alumni throughout their adult lives.

On each of the three levels in which Au Pair in America is expected to achieve results— as an exchange program, as a work abroad program focusing upon child care in the American host's home, and as an opportunity to introduce international young adults to U.S. culture and community life—the program has succeeded.

In accordance with the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, the intent of the au pair program is to build mutual understanding and help create a foundation of trust between Americans and the rest of the world.



British Council. *Culture at Work: A Toolkit for Schools and Workplaces*. Booz, Allen, Hamilton, McLean, VA, 2013. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/documents/culture-at-work-research.pdf>

Jone, Meghann. *Partnerships in the Workplace*. News, Public Affairs, Research, Mar 11, 2013.

Norris, E.M., Gillespie, J. *Higher Education in a Global Context: A Framework for Understanding*. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, vol. 13, September 2009.

Nolting, William, Debbie Donohue, Cheryl Matherly and Martin Tillman. *Internationalization: A Practical Guide for Higher Education*. NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Washington, D.C., 2013.

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“ Now I am working in a bilingual school for kids and my priority is education and always will be. My desire is to teach kids that don’t have the same opportunity as I had to learn English. I want to help children around the world volunteering as a teacher. I know it is a little thing but I truly believe they can move forward to a better world and have a better quality of life.”

—Lillian Sanches, Brazil

“ From meeting other au pairs from all over the world, I was inspired to travel more and participate with other organizations. I traveled around Africa and worked with various charities in South Africa, Mozambique, Malawi and Swaziland.”

—Rose-Marie Butt, United Kingdom



Martin Tillman, President, Global Career Compass, for contributions to Au Pair in America Program Outcomes: A View from our Alumni 1987–2012.

Au Pairs from around the world who participated in our program, gathered the skills and experience they gained from living in the United States, and embarked on new adventures.

Host Families from across America who embraced au pairs as a member of their family, entrusted them with their children, shared their culture, and took an interest in learning about their au pair’s culture. And finally, the children in the families who loved their au pair(s).

American AIFS Exchange (AIFS)

AIFS has been a leader in study abroad programs for American students for more than 50 years. Since its founding in 1964, more than 1.5 million people have participated in AIFS programs. AIFS is headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut with offices in the United Kingdom, Poland, Germany and Australia.

Au Pair in America

Since 1986, Au Pair in America has placed more than 100,000 au pairs in 43 states. Au Pair in America maintains offices in five countries with a network of more than 600 employees worldwide dedicated to providing you with a reliable source of child care and a once-in-a-lifetime cultural exchange experience for your family.

Our headquarters provides comprehensive support to all program participants. An experienced and dedicated placement team facilitates the selection and distribution of au pair applications for host family review and regional managers assist the activities of our community counselors throughout the country. We also handle the logistics like visas, flights and offer the definitive au pair orientation program in the industry.

To learn more about Au Pair in America, contact us today.

800.928.7247 | www.aupairinamerica.com

