



An Investment in America

How Department of State BridgeUSA Exchange Programs Advance U.S. Interests at Home and Abroad

AN IMPACT REPORT

FEBRUARY 2025





ABOUT THE ALLIANCE FOR INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

The Alliance for International Exchange is an association that represents American organizations and companies comprising the international educational and cultural exchange community in the United States and serves as its only collective public policy voice. The mission of the Alliance is to promote the growth and impact of exchange programs and the effectiveness of its members. The Alliance engages in advocacy, provides member development opportunities, and builds public awareness of the power of exchange.



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FOREWORD

In today's interconnected world, building connections between people and nations and fostering mutual understanding across cultures is a necessity.

U.S. Department of State **BridgeUSA international exchange programs provide opportunities** for approximately 300,000 international students and young professionals to come to the United States each year for temporary exchange experiences. They support and enhance American families, communities, and businesses at virtually no cost to the U.S. taxpayer because they are all privately funded.

The Alliance for International Exchange is pleased to release this important impact report, which highlights the **transformative power of BridgeUSA programs and the impact they have** on exchange participants and their American hosts. The report looks specifically at five BridgeUSA programs—the **Au Pair, Camp Counselor, Intern, Summer WorkTravel, and Trainee programs.**

The data clearly show that **BridgeUSA exchange programs are an investment in America:** they drive local economies, advance U.S. interests, create future leaders, and help tell America's story. Program participants return home to their countries as current and future leaders; U.S. communities strongly benefit from the international visitors' economic and cultural contributions; and countries in all corners of the globe become more connected through mutual respect and collaboration.

Department of State BridgeUSA programs undoubtedly are an investment in the United States and a testament to the enduring power of people-to-people diplomacy. **They contribute to a more peaceful world** and by doing so **make America a safer and more prosperous nation.**

Mark Overmann
Executive Director
Alliance for International Exchange

February 11, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



U.S. Department of State BridgeUSA exchange programs are a vital tool for advancing U.S. diplomacy, fostering global partnerships, and enriching the lives of international participants and U.S. host communities. By promoting cross-cultural exchange and professional development, these temporary people-to-people exchanges strengthen international ties while also benefiting the U.S. economy. Exchange participants apply for a non-immigrant J-1 Exchange Visitor visa from abroad with the intention of visiting the U.S. for educational and professional purposes for a limited time before returning to their home countries.

Commissioned by the Alliance for International Exchange and based on an impact study of program alumni and U.S.-based hosts (families, businesses, and organizations), this report focuses on five key BridgeUSA programs: the **Au Pair Program**, the **Camp Counselor Program**, the **Intern and Trainee Programs**, and the **Summer Work Travel Program (SWT)**. The report reflects survey data gathered from 9,049 international alumni who participated in the five programs between 2019-2023, and a total of 4,335 host families/organizations that participated in these programs during the same time period. The estimated economic impact of these programs was calculated based on survey data as well as national-level program participant numbers obtained from the U.S. Department of State.

The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact these programs have on American hosts and international program participants across three

key areas: the **U.S. economy and workforce**; **long-term diplomatic ties** between the U.S. and other countries; and **mutual and cultural understanding** between Americans and the international visitors. The findings point to the collective and program-level economic, public diplomacy, and cultural impacts of the five programs surveyed, and underscore how these programs help foster international cooperation, support American businesses, and strengthen global competencies of participants and their American hosts and communities alike. Importantly, they do so at virtually no cost to the U.S. taxpayer—all BridgeUSA programs are privately funded and receive no government funding. While the five surveyed programs vary in their specific purposes, goals, and stakeholders involved, the following key themes emerge across all five.

Bridge USA Programs:

- 1) Have a profound economic impact on host organizations, families, and communities in the U.S.
- 2) Forge long-term ties between the U.S. and other countries.
- 3) Benefit international participants without taking away employment opportunities from Americans.
- 4) Have a multiplier effect on American communities.
- 5) Are meaningful cultural exchange and a unique workforce opportunity.

KEY FINDINGS

BridgeUSA Programs

Have a Profound Economic Impact on Host Organizations and Host Families, and by Extension Host Communities Across the U.S.

BridgeUSA program participants have a significant impact on the U.S. economy through their spending on living and other expenses during their time in the U.S.



\$811.2 MILLION

The amount BridgeUSA participants across the five programs surveyed contributed to the U.S. economy in 2023.

In addition, participants enable local businesses to fill seasonal labor shortages. Whether it is through the actual dollars that program participants contribute to the U.S. economy, or the important role they play in enabling local businesses to meet demand during their busiest seasons, or providing quality and affordable child care, it is evident that BridgeUSA programs enable the U.S. workforce to flourish. Additionally, the absence or shrinking of such programs would negatively impact the U.S. economy. Were it not for the support of BridgeUSA participants, many American businesses would

be unable to operate as intended and/or at full capacity.

- **68% of Intern and Trainee host employers would see their work and business negatively impacted** by not being able to develop international business connections through the program.
- **86% of SWT host employers rely on the program** to fill local staffing shortages. If employers were unable to host SWT participants, 82.3% would see their overall business negatively impacted, and 76.2% would see a decline in their level of service to their customers.
- If host camps could not host international camp counselors, **96% would see their operations negatively impacted** either through a reduction of services or activities and/or a decrease in the number of enrolled American campers.
- If families could not host au pairs, **87% would be negatively impacted** due to their inability to find suitable childcare for their family.

BridgeUSA Programs

Forge Long-Term Ties Between the U.S. and Other Countries

The mutual and cultural ties forged through BridgeUSA programs extend well beyond the duration of the program or a participant's sojourn in the U.S. Host employers and families continue to participate in the programs year after year, encourage others in the U.S. to participate as program hosts, and maintain contact with program alumni. Alumni, for their part, spread the word about the programs and their time in the U.S.—effectively serving as “unofficial ambassadors”—while also seeking future opportunities to continue to engage with the U.S.

- **80% to 96% of alumni of all five programs recommend the programs** to their family and friends upon returning home; 87% to 98% of them spread the word about the programs and their experience in the U.S. through their networks.
- **90% of alumni continue their engagement** with the U.S. by either planning to return or already having returned to the U.S. for personal travel, further education, or by participating in another exchange program.

- 93% and 97% of Intern and Trainee and SWT hosts, respectively, believe that the **programs enable overseas participants to develop a deeper, long-term understanding of the U.S.** 77% and 73% of Intern and Trainee and SWT hosts also feel that the programs help the U.S. build long-term strategic alliances with other countries.
- 80% of host camps believe that the Camp Counselor Program **enables international counselors to develop a better understanding of the U.S.**
- **96% of Au Pair host families believe that the program fosters lifelong friendships** between families and their au pairs and also provides a transformational experience for the au pairs to take back to their home countries (71%).
- **80% of Au Pair alumni stay in touch with their host family**, while 88.8% of host families stay in touch with their previous au pairs a few times a year or more.

BridgeUSA Programs

Benefit International Participants Without Taking Away Employment Opportunities From Americans

BridgeUSA programs offer a mutually beneficial, “win-win” opportunity for the U.S. and for individuals from other countries. Across the four programs where international visitors engage in their program’s work component alongside Americans—the Camp Counselor, Intern and Trainee, and SWT programs—host employers and organizations ensure parity across both groups when it comes to recruitment, hiring, and compensation practices. This demonstrates that **hosting individuals from other countries through BridgeUSA programs does not take away opportunities from equally qualified Americans.**

- 98% of host camps **offer equivalent camp counselor jobs**, opportunities, training, and professional development for both international and American camp counselors.
- 84.4% of Intern and Trainee hosts report **offering opportunities equally to Americans and international exchange participants**; 74.6% train both groups side-by-side; and among those that offer compensation, 89.1% offer a similar level of compensation to U.S. and international interns and trainees.

BridgeUSA Programs

Have a Multiplier Effect on American Communities

Going beyond program hosts and participants, BridgeUSA programs play a key role in enhancing the cultural knowledge and understanding of American communities such as customers, clients, and campers who are able to interact with participants from around the world.

and customers. Thus, hosting international interns/trainees and SWT participants enables businesses and organizations to introduce a global element to their interactions with those they serve.

- 98% and 99% of Intern and Trainee and SWT hosts, respectively, **report positive interactions** between international program participants and their clients
- 98% of host camps report that hosting international counselors has a positive impact on campers, **enabling them to develop a better understanding of other countries and cultures.**

BridgeUSA Programs Are

Meaningful Cultural Exchange and a Unique Workforce Opportunity

American hosts and program participants derive significant cultural benefits from participating in BridgeUSA programs, which offer the opportunity for both groups to learn about different cultures and perspectives through their daily interactions. From the perspective of BridgeUSA host employers and families, the opportunity for cultural exchange is a prized attribute of the programs that goes beyond the practical value of filling seasonal vacancies or enabling host parents to work. On the part of program alumni, the vast majority view the program(s) they participated in as a cultural exchange opportunity.

- Over 97% of alumni across all five programs participated in a wide range of cultural activities with their hosts that **enabled them to develop a broader understanding of American culture and society**. American host employers and host families also report offering these types of opportunities for BridgeUSA program participants (ranging from 78.2% to 99.6% across the five programs).
- Over 70% of both SWT and Intern and Trainee alumni **developed more positive views of the U.S.** in general, as well as of American culture, people, companies and organizations, and the American way of doing business.
- 88.2% of Au Pair host families report that the **opportunity for cultural exchange** is the primary motivator for participating in the program.
- 74.4% of Intern and Trainee hosts cite **cultural enhancement of the workplace as the top benefit** of participating in the programs, reporting that the programs benefit their staff by broadening their perspectives through greater cultural exposure (73%) and by enhancing their intercultural communications skills (78%).
- SWT program hosts report that the three top benefits of participating in the program are that it **supports overall business staffing** (85.5%), **helps fill local labor shortages** (82%), and **contributes to a positive culture** in the workplace (79%).





Introduction

A cornerstone of U.S. diplomacy and foreign policy, U.S. Department of State BridgeUSA exchange programs are designed to promote cultural exchange between the United States and other nations. Since their establishment as part of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (The Fulbright-Hays Act), BridgeUSA programs have for the past six decades fostered mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries and cultures, which in turn has enhanced international cooperation and national security.

Encompassing 16 different exchange programs, the BridgeUSA program at large attracts approximately 300,000 individuals from 200 countries each year to participate in American society, the workplace, and education at the secondary and post-secondary level for a limited amount of time. Through these experiences, participants gain valuable professional skills and strengthen their English language, communication, and intercultural skills. Participants apply for a non-immigrant J-1 Exchange Visitor visa from abroad with the expressed intention of visiting the U.S. temporarily for educational and professional purposes before returning to their home countries.

A key feature of BridgeUSA programs is their reciprocity and mutually beneficial nature: while visiting

individuals from other countries acquire critical skills and experience, American families, organizations, schools, and businesses benefit from exposure to other cultures. These benefits include the following:

- The **financial and economic contributions** that BridgeUSA participants bring to American communities;
- The **additional and seasonal support** international visitors provide in workplaces and homes;
- The **wider opportunities for cultural exchange** that arise from daily interactions that occur between Americans and international visitors all across the U.S.;
- International visitors return to their home countries with **a much better understanding of the U.S.**, its people and its values, and actively contribute to further mutual understanding and goodwill between countries.

Based on an impact study of program alumni, host families and host organizations in the U.S., this report focuses on five key BridgeUSA programs: the ***Au Pair Program***, the ***Camp Counselor Program***, the ***Intern and Trainee Programs***, and the ***Summer Work Travel Program (SWT)***. According to the U.S. Department of State, a total of 183,510 individuals from around the world participated in these five programs in 2023.



Goals and Approach

Commissioned by the Alliance for International Exchange, an association that serves as the collective voice of the international educational and cultural exchange community in the United States, and conducted by Rajika Bhandari Advisors, the impact study and report of the five BridgeUSA programs provide a comprehensive, evidence-based analysis of the impact these programs have on American hosts and program participants across three key areas: the **U.S. economy and workforce; long-term diplomatic**

ties between the U.S. and other countries; and **mutual and cultural understanding** between Americans and the international visitors.

The findings of the study shed light on the multi-faceted outcomes and impact of these critical, temporary exchange programs, while also underscoring their valuable role in enabling the U.S. government and American society to continue to engage with the rest of the world, both in the short- and the long-term.

Methodology

We surveyed those who participated in the program over a five-year period (2019 to 2023). While this timeframe captures significantly lower participation across all exchange programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it also includes the post-pandemic phase when program participation resumed across all exchange programs. A total of eight alumni and host/employer online surveys were administered from April through July, 2024.¹ Both alumni and host/employer surveys focused on the following key themes:

- Motivations and reasons for participating in the program
- Perceived benefits of the program
- Experiences during the program and satisfaction with the program
- Earnings and expenditures during the program, and
- Activities and impact post-participation.

The surveys were distributed by Alliance member organizations to their roster of over 52,900 host families/employers and over 252,200 program alumni who had participated in the five programs from 2019-2023. The analysis and findings in the report are based on the following responses:

PROGRAM(S)	ALUMNI	HOST FAMILIES & ORGANIZATIONS
Au Pair	1,693	2,835
Camp Counselor	1,377	288
Intern and Trainee	590	599
SWT	5,389	613



¹The surveys for the Intern and Trainee Programs were combined into a single survey due to the overlapping nature of these two programs.



While these were the total number of responses to each survey, the response rate varied for individual survey items and this is noted where appropriate. In addition, select analyses in the report are based on a combination of survey data and national-level data available for each program from the U.S. Department of State. The estimated national-level economic impact of each of the five programs was derived by using two data sources: (1) the alumni spending data obtained from the surveys above, and (2) 2023 data on the total number of individuals who participated in each of the programs at the national level, obtained from the U.S. Department of State.

More details about the survey methodology and analysis are available in the appendix.

Overview of the Report

The report is organized into two main sections. The first section focuses on the collective impact of BridgeUSA programs in three key areas: economic impact, foreign policy and national security, and cultural exchange and mutual understanding. The second section focuses on program-specific findings for each of the five programs, covering aspects such as host/employer and participant demographics, program experiences, recruitment and hiring practices, and more.

The Collective Impact of BridgeUSA Programs

Underlying all five of the BridgeUSA programs featured in this report are the shared goals of economic benefits for the U.S. economy, enhancing American interests and national security, and people-to-people exchange and mutual understanding.

BridgeUSA Programs Drive the U.S. Economy and Support American Businesses

BridgeUSA program participants have a significant impact on the U.S. economy in a number of ways, including through their contributions to local economies through their spending on living and other expenses during their time in the U.S.



**\$811.2
MILLION**

The amount BridgeUSA participants across the five programs surveyed contributed to the U.S. economy in 2023.²

PROGRAM	ECONOMIC IMPACT 2023*
Au Pair	\$143.8M
Camp Counselor	\$ 50.1M
Intern and Trainee	\$ 264.2M
SWT	\$ 353M
TOTAL	\$811.2M

*The total varies slightly from the sub-totals due to rounding.

² Estimates are based on spending data from the alumni surveys, in combination with national-level program participation data from the U.S. Department of State.

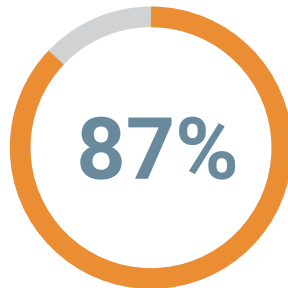
In addition to the economic contribution through their spending, participants also impact the U.S. economy by enabling local businesses to fill seasonal labor shortages.

Were it not for the support of BridgeUSA participants, many American businesses would be unable to operate as intended and/or at full capacity:



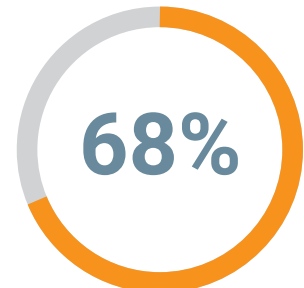
If host camps could not host international camp counselors...

An overwhelming 96% would see their operations negatively impacted either through a reduction of services or activities and/or a decrease in the number of enrolled American campers.



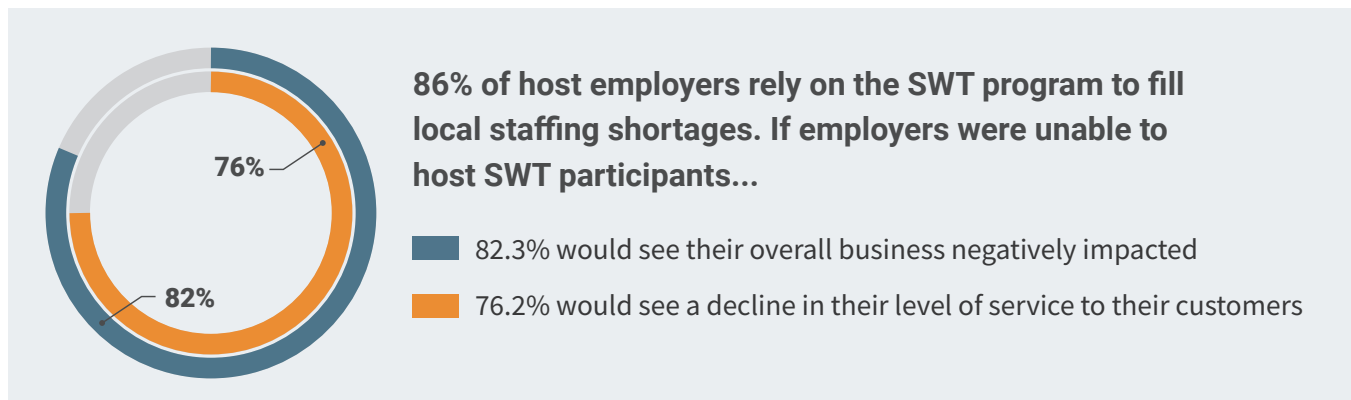
If families could not host au pairs...

87% would be negatively impacted due to their inability to find suitable childcare for their family.



If employers could not develop international business connections through the Intern and Trainee Programs...

68% report that they would see their work and business negatively impacted.

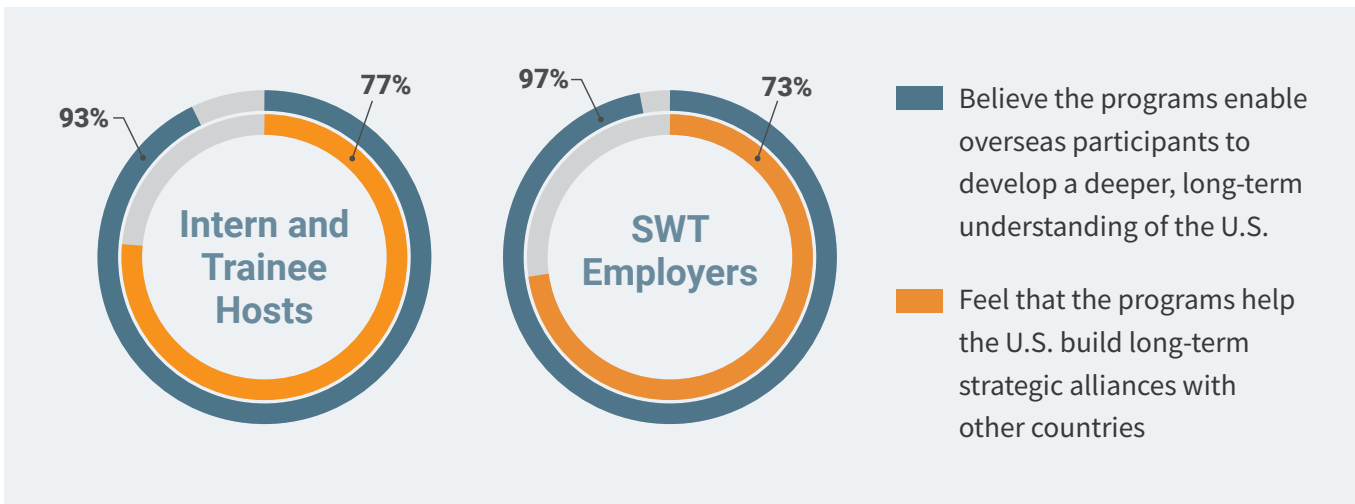
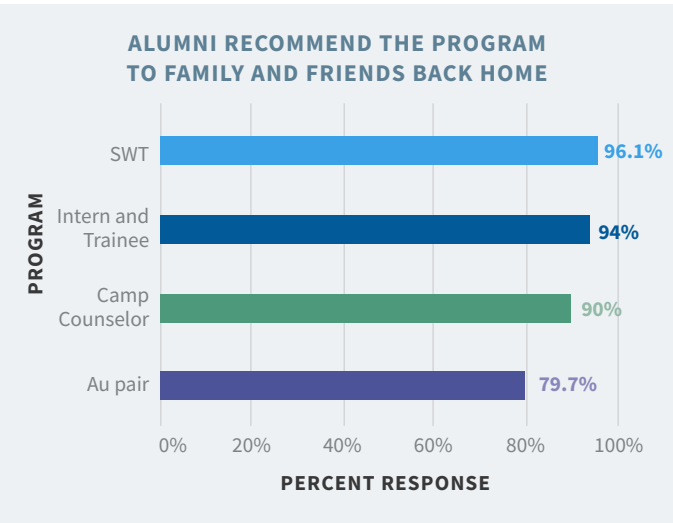


BridgeUSA Programs Advance Long-term American Interests

Host organizations and families were asked about their views on the role BridgeUSA programs play in advancing long-term diplomacy and U.S. interests overseas. Program alumni were asked about the sorts of activities they engage in upon returning home that point to their ongoing engagement with the U.S., as well as their specific plans for returning to the U.S.

- Across all five surveyed programs, an overwhelming majority of alumni recommend the programs to their family and friends upon returning to their home countries (80% to 96%). Alumni spread the word about the specific program they participated in and their experience in the U.S. with their networks via conversations, presentations, and social media (ranging from 87% to 98% of alumni).

- Nine out of ten alumni continue their engagement with the U.S. by either planning to return or already having returned to the U.S. for personal travel, further education, or by participating in another exchange program (more than 90%).
- 80% of host camps believe that the Camp Counselor program enables international counselors to develop a better understanding of the U.S.
- Many host employers and families see the programs as a way of building long-term ties for the U.S.



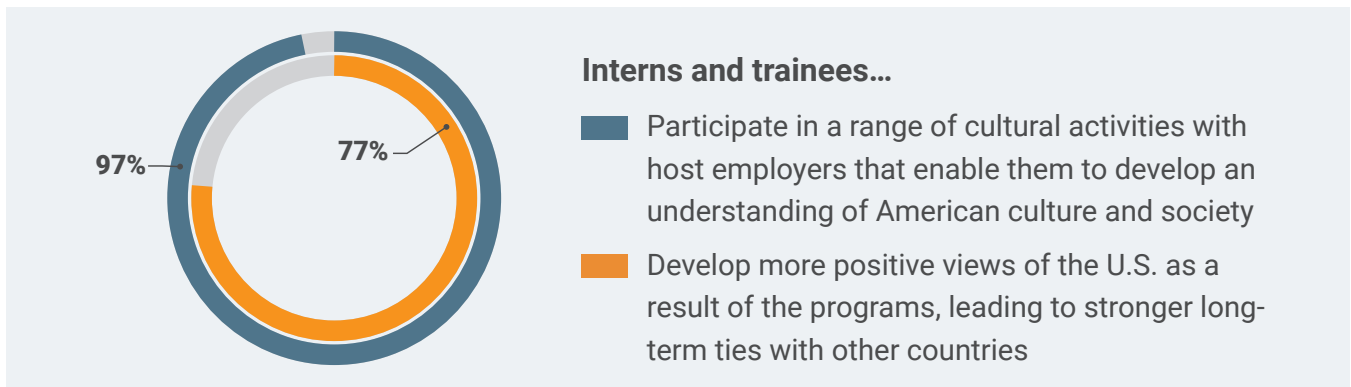
- After leaving the U.S., eight out of ten au pairs stay in touch with their host family, while 88.8% of host families report staying in touch with their previous au pairs a few times a year or more.



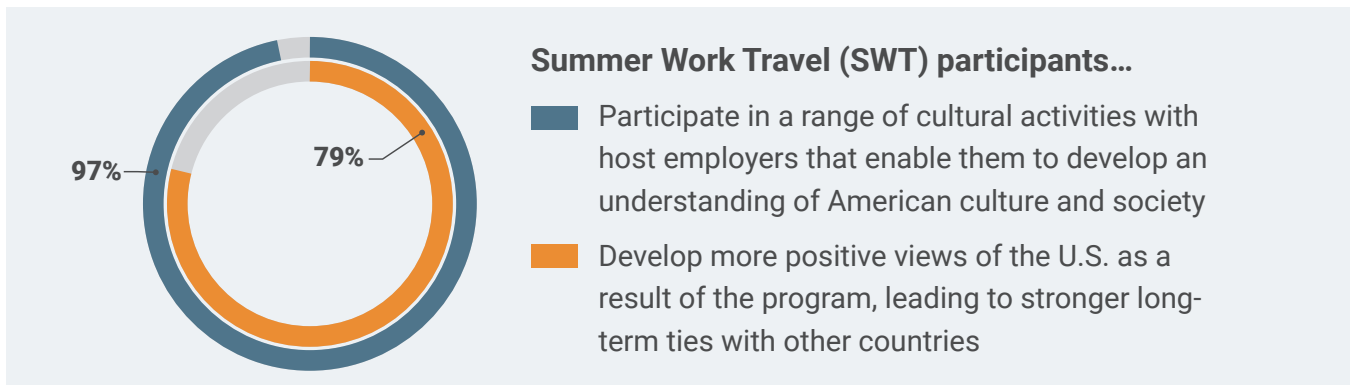
BridgeUSA Programs Increase Mutual Understanding

American hosts and program participants derive significant cultural benefits from participating in BridgeUSA programs, which offer the opportunity for both groups to learn about different cultures and perspectives through their daily interactions. Moreover, the programs have a multiplier effect, enabling other groups—beyond participating host employers and families—to benefit from this type of cultural exchange. This includes, for example, the local communities in which host organizations and host families are based, as well as American campers who attend camps where they are exposed to camp counselors from around the world.

- BridgeUSA programs offer international visitors the ability to temporarily immerse themselves in American culture. Almost all program alumni surveyed report participating in a wide range of cultural activities with their hosts that enable them to develop a broader understanding of American culture and society (more than 97% across all five programs). These activities can range from celebrating American holidays and traditions such as Thanksgiving or Fourth of July celebrations, to attending American sports and cultural events. On their part, American host employers and host families also report offering these types of opportunities for BridgeUSA program participants (ranging from 78.2% to 99.6% across the five programs).



- Participating in BridgeUSA programs enables international visitors to learn firsthand about the U.S. and change their pre-existing notions and perceptions of the U.S. on several fronts. Over 70% of both SWT and Intern and Trainee Program alumni developed more positive views of the U.S. in general, as well as of American culture, people, companies and organizations, and the American way of doing business.



The cultural exchange aspect of BridgeUSA programs clearly demonstrates the cultural benefits of these programs for American hosts. Perhaps most compelling is the value that host employers and families place on the cultural exchange component of each program.

88.2%

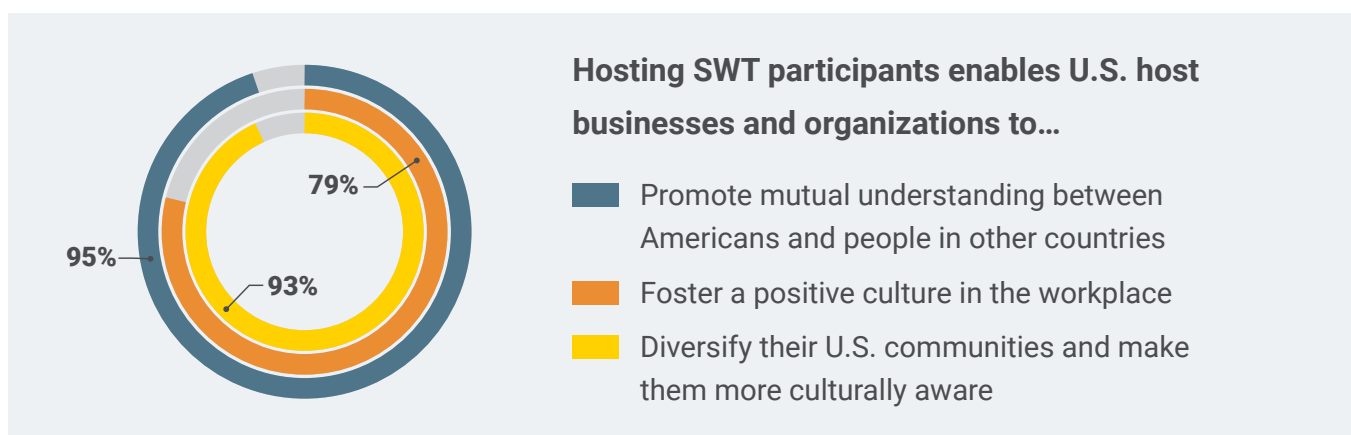
When asked about a range of reasons for participating in the Au Pair Program, 88.2% of host families report that the **opportunity for cultural exchange** was a key reason.



- Intern and trainee hosts cite cultural enhancement of the workplace as the top benefit of participating in the programs (74.4%), reporting that the programs benefit their staff by broadening their perspectives through greater cultural exposure (73%) and by enhancing their intercultural communications skills (78%). Similarly, over 60% of SWT program hosts report that the program increases the cultural and global awareness of their American staff.



When looking at the impact on the broader community and key stakeholders, an overwhelming majority of intern and trainee hosts (98%) and SWT hosts (99%) report positive interactions between program participants and their clients and customers. Thus, hosting international interns/trainees and SWT participants enables businesses and organizations to introduce a global element to their interactions with those they serve.



Impact of Individual BridgeUSA Programs

The Au Pair Program

Cultural Exposure and Support for American Families

The U.S. Department of State BridgeUSA Au Pair Program enables international participants to stay with American host families for up to two years while offering childcare support and participating in cultural exchange. Au pairs care for their host children, help with schoolwork, participate in family activities and immerse themselves in the local community. In return, they receive a stipend, room and board, and attend required educational courses through which they enhance their academic training and improve their English language proficiency. American families benefit from the program by exposing their children to other cultures and languages, while also receiving help with daily childcare tasks.

Profile of Host Families and Alumni

During their most recent participation in the Au Pair Program, families hosted au pairs for an average of 13.3 months. Just over a tenth (11.8%) of surveyed host families are affiliated with the military, including those on active duty, in the National Guard, or as veterans. About half of au pair host families surveyed have two children (49.3%), while one third have three or more children (33.3%). The Au Pair Program also plays a critical role in supporting families with unique circumstances or whose children have special needs: 28.1% of families report having children with special or health-related needs or having multiples (for example, twins or triplets).

Most au pairs (48.6%) spend 19-24 months in the U.S. as part of the Au Pair Program and the majority of au pairs surveyed participated in the program just once (96.5%)³. Most au pairs are women (97.8%). Age-wise, au pairs are almost evenly distributed, with about one third being between 18 and 20 years old, one third being between 21 and 23 years old, and 36.5% being between the ages of 24 and 26 at the time of first participation in the program.



21,419

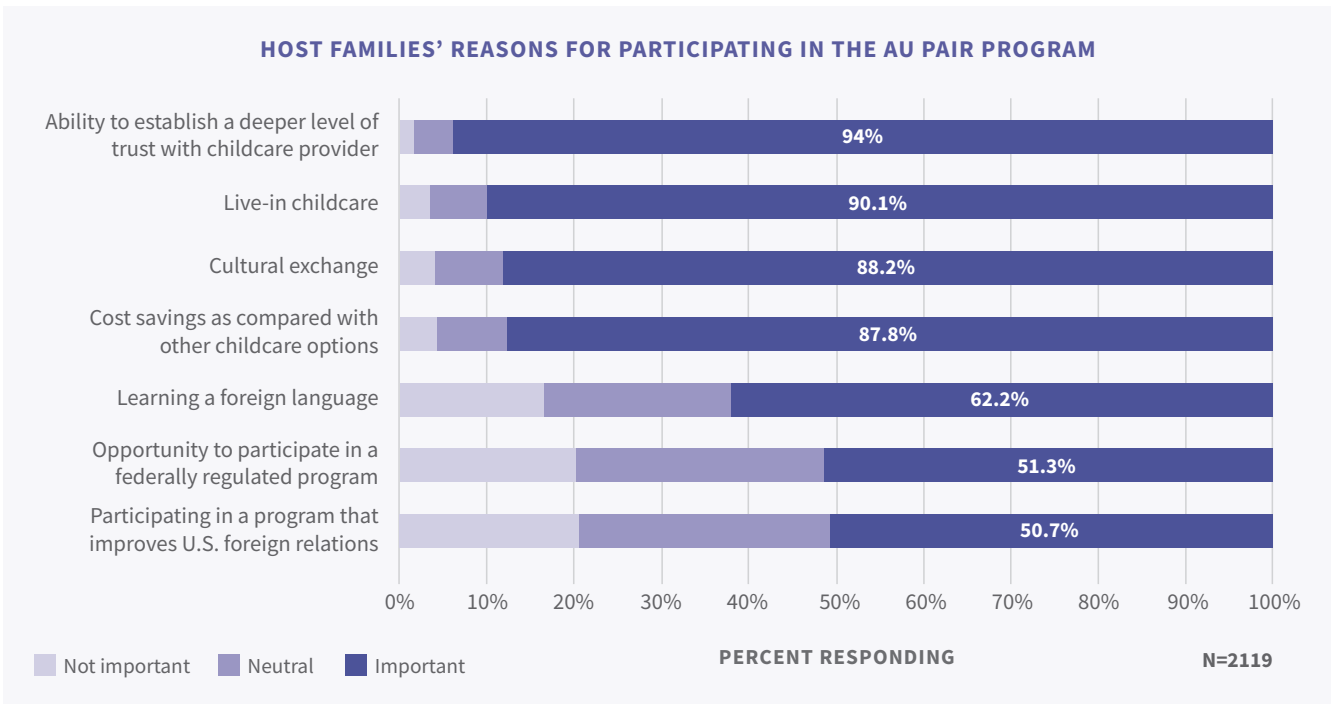
Participants in 2023

According to U.S. Department of State national-level data, 21,419 au pairs participated in the program in 2023, with Brazil, Colombia, Germany, South Africa, and Mexico being the top five places of origin, respectively. The top five host states for au pairs were California, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington.

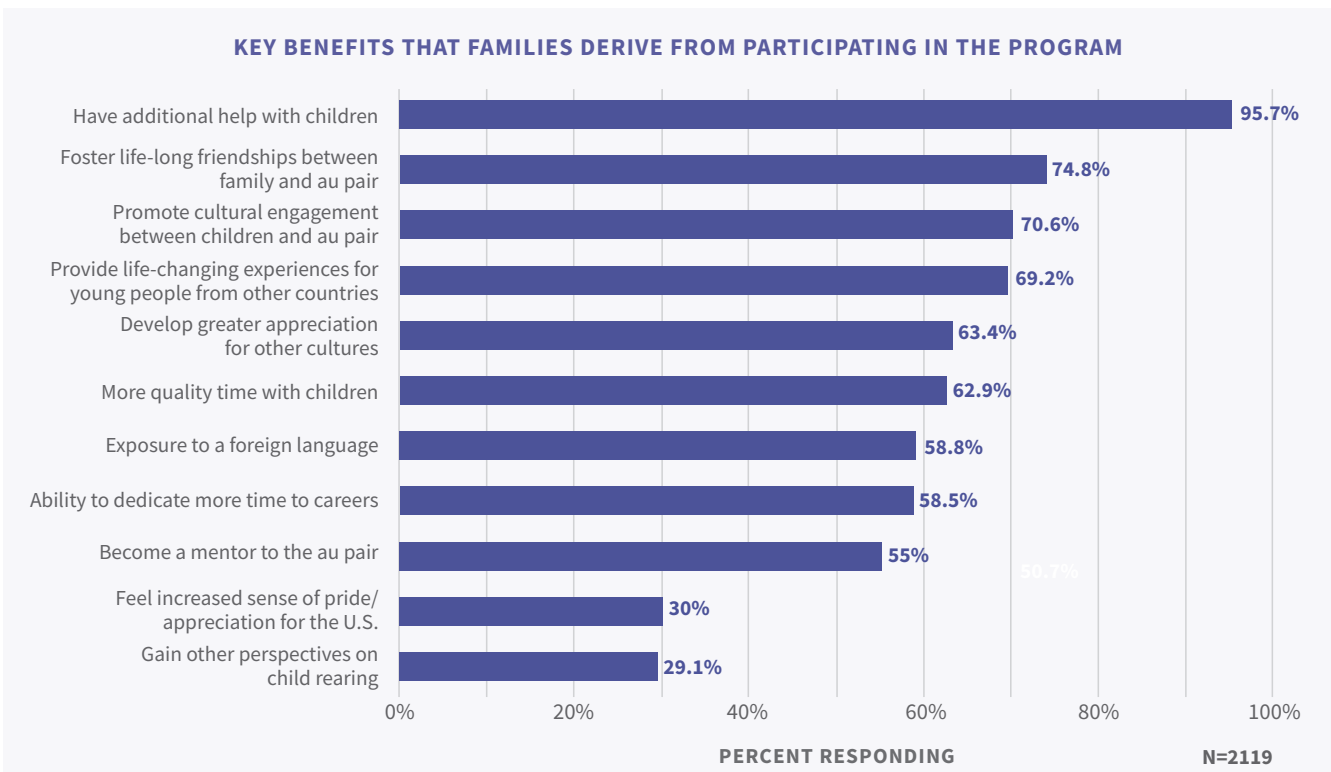
³Au pairs initially commit to a one-year stay but have the opportunity to extend their time in the U.S. for 6, 9 or 12 months.

Benefits of Participation

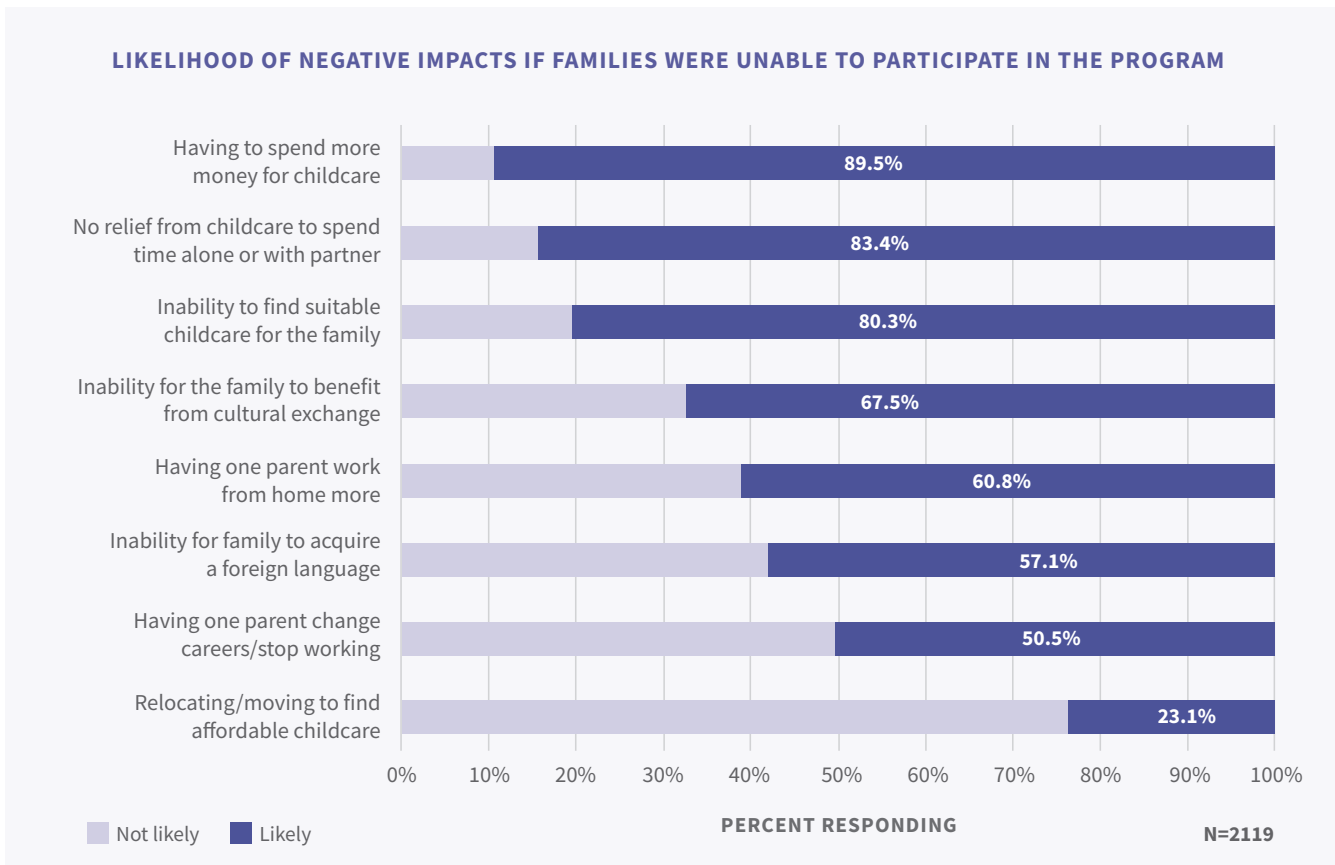
Host families choose to participate in the Au Pair Program for a variety of reasons, with the top three being: the ability to establish a deeper level of trust with a childcare provider (94%), having live-in childcare (90.1%), and providing a cultural exchange experience for their family and children (88.2%).



When asked about the key benefits they derived from participating in the program, families report similar themes: the benefit of having additional help with childcare (95.7%), the ability to foster life-long friendships between the family and the au pair (74.8%), and promoting cultural engagement between the family and the au pair (70.6%).

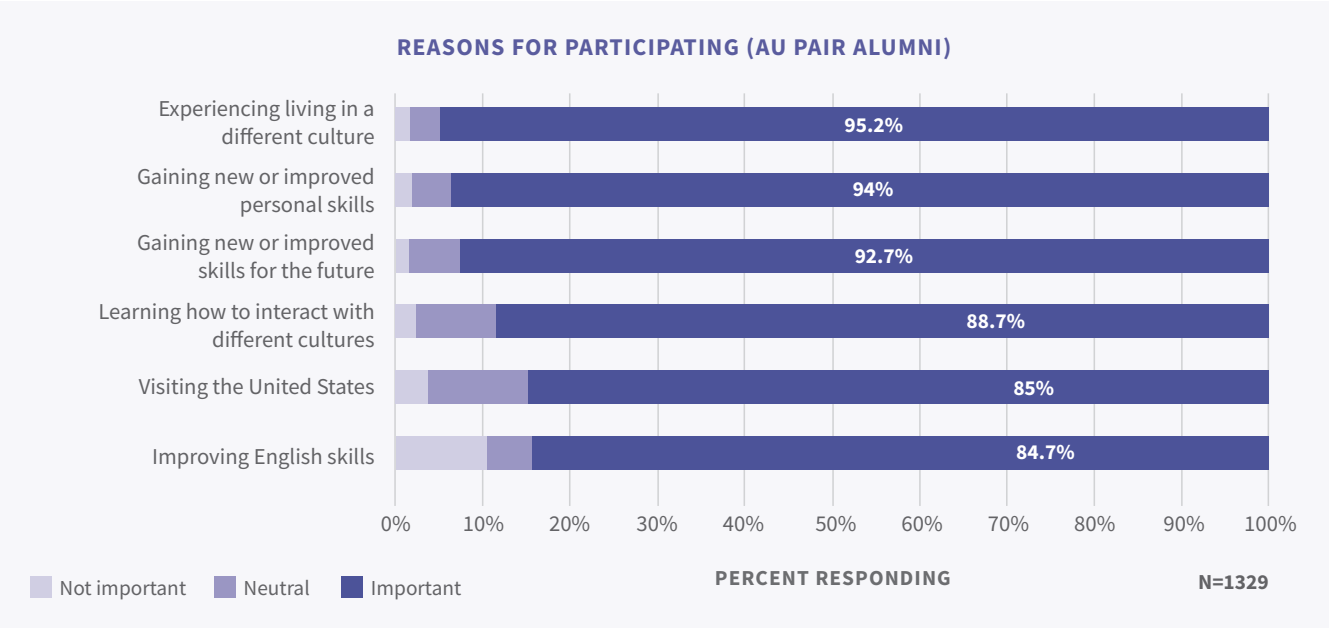


A majority (86.7%) of families report that they would be significantly negatively impacted if they were unable to host an au pair. For example, families would have to spend more money on childcare (89.6%) and many noted they would be unable to find suitable childcare (80.3%). Additionally, not being able to host an au pair would limit the family’s ability to develop intercultural relationships, communications, and global perspectives (67.5%). Further, about half of the respondents indicate that at least one parent would have to either change careers or stop working altogether (50.5%).

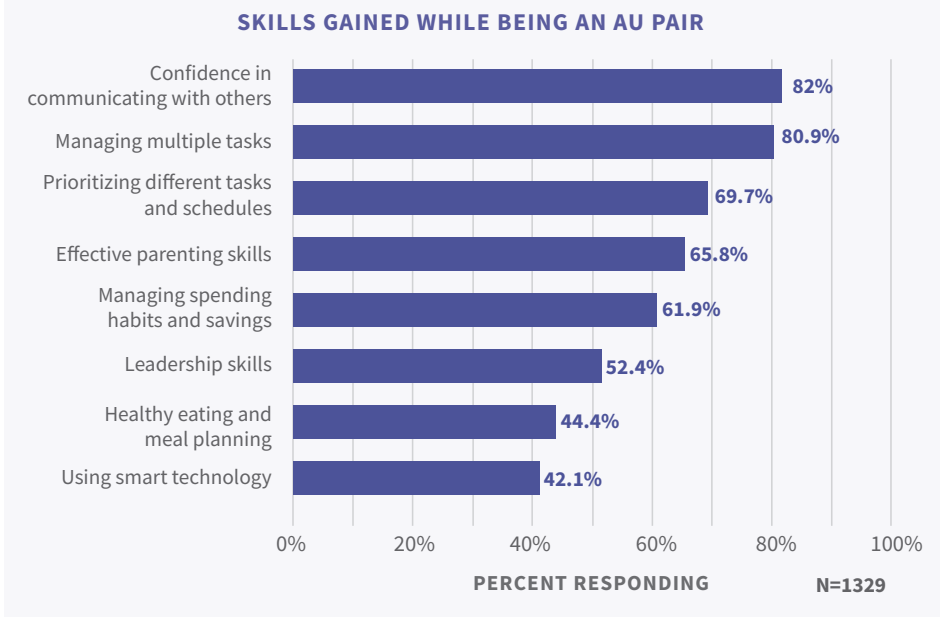


Estimates based on the au pair alumni survey and the national-level participation data from the U.S. Department of State show that the Au Pair Program has significant benefits for the U.S. economy, with **au pairs contributing a total of \$143.8 million on the national level in 2023**. This contribution comes from their spending on items not covered by their host family, including expenses for entertainment, local transportation, leisure travel, and personal items.

Au pairs participate in the program for a range of reasons, with the key motivators being **the desire to engage in cultural exchange** and **the potential for learning new skills**. An overwhelming majority of alumni report that they were drawn to the program because of the opportunity to live and interact with people in a different culture (95.2% and 88.7%, respectively). Most au pairs also participate in the program because of the opportunity to improve their English language skills (84.7%).



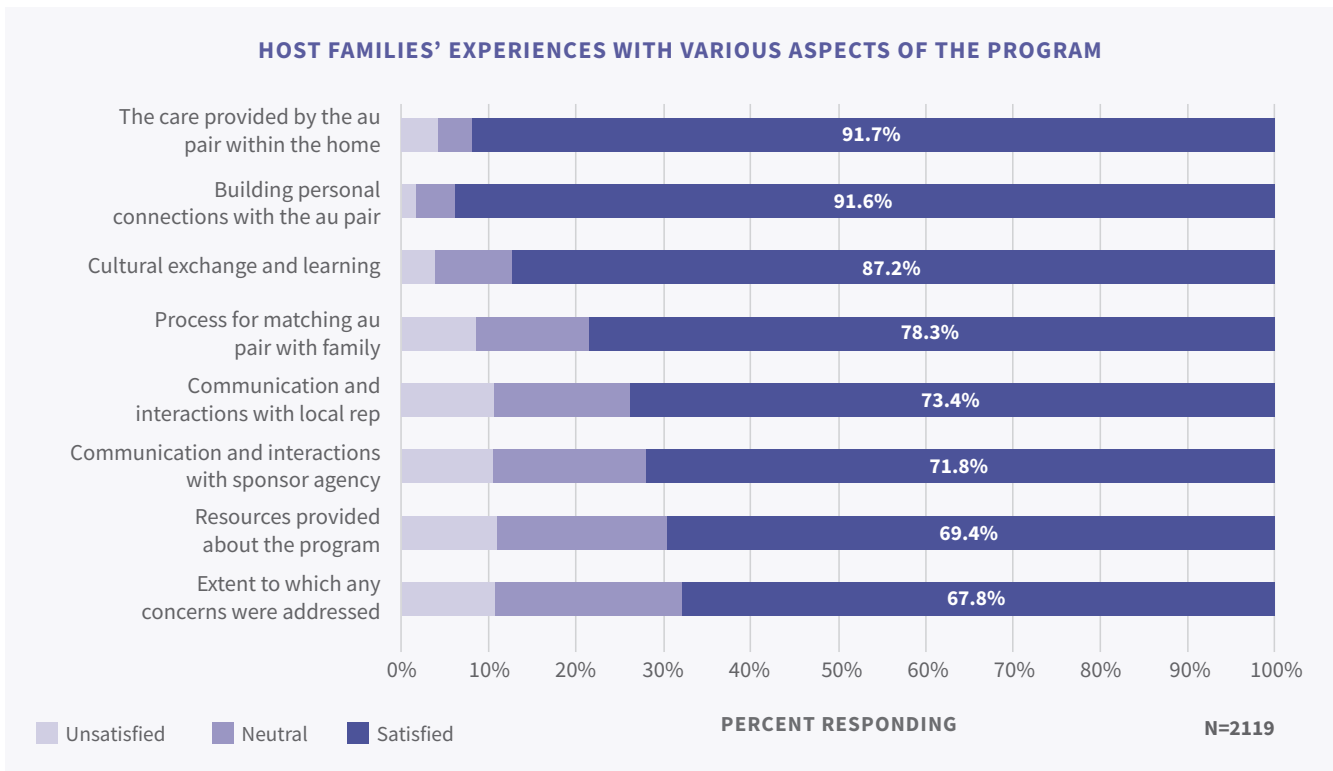
Au pairs have the opportunity to develop or improve a range of specific skills by observing their host families' day-to-day activities, as well as through hands-on practice. According to responding alumni, the top three skills are: developing confidence in communicating with others (82%); managing multiple tasks (80.9%); and learning how to prioritize different tasks and schedules (69.7%).



Developing or furthering English language skills is a key motivation for au pair participants, with just over half (53.9%) having a basic or conversational level of English prior to beginning their program. Among this group, 96.7% report a moderate to significant improvement in their English language skills following participation in the Au Pair Program.

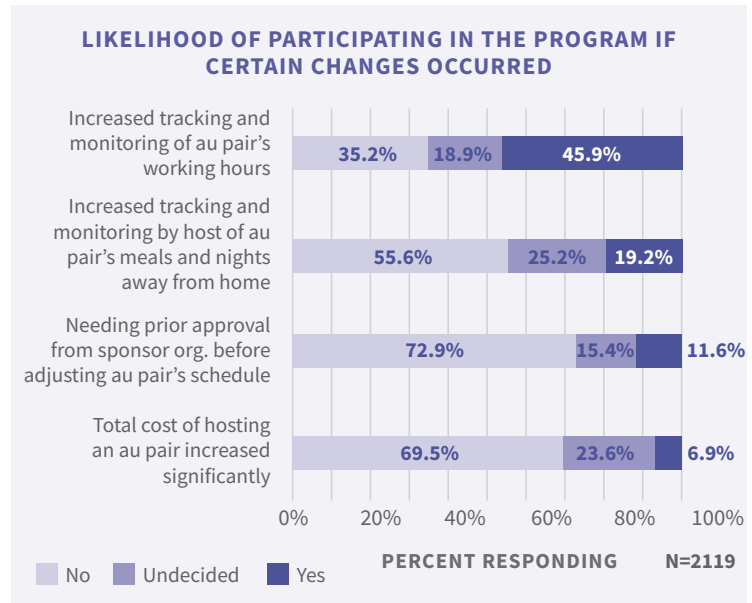
Overall Program Experience

Au pair host families report overall satisfaction with their participation in the program, with nine out of ten indicating that they were either satisfied or very satisfied, and 78% indicating that they would continue to participate in the program if they were eligible to. Eight out of ten survey respondents would recommend becoming a host family to friends or family.



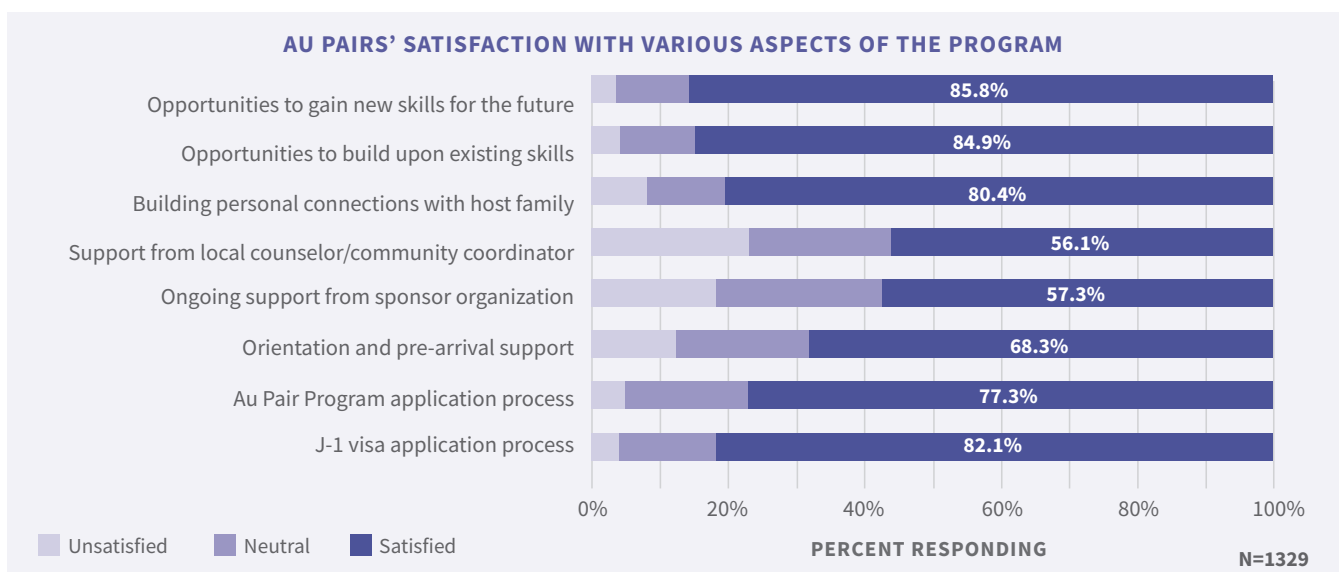
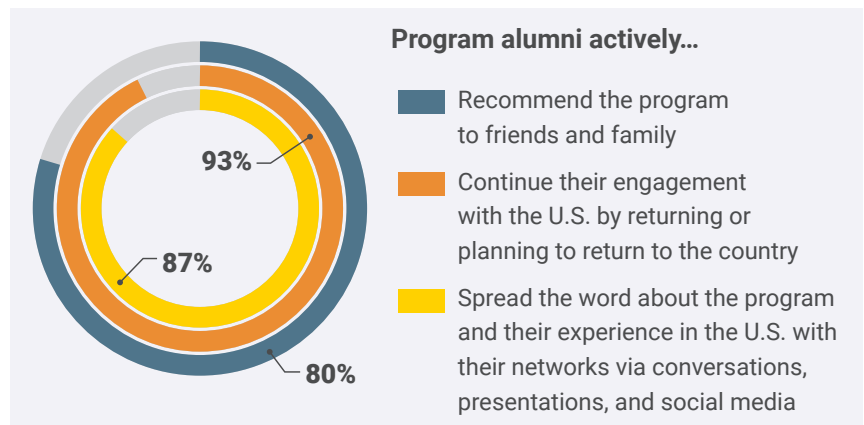
When asked about their experiences with specific aspects of the program, hosts were most likely to be satisfied with the care they received from the au pair (91.7%), the ability to build personal connections with the au pair (91.6%), and the overall opportunity for cultural exchange and learning (87.2%). On the program administration front, almost 70% were satisfied with the resources provided to them (for example, regulatory guidelines, interview tips, local program support, etc.), and 73.4% were satisfied with their communications and interactions with their local program coordinator or contact. A large proportion of host families (78.3%) were also satisfied with the process of matching with their au pair. Finally, over 90% of families report a positive experience with cross-cultural communications between the au pair and members of the household.

Families were also asked about how potential changes in the fundamental structure and rules and regulations of the Au Pair Program might affect their inclination to participate in the program. Almost 70% indicate that they would not participate in the program if the total cost of the program increased significantly; 72.9% say they would not participate if they needed prior approval from the sponsor organization⁴ before being able to adjust their au pair's schedule; and just over half (55.6%) report that they would not participate if they were required to increase their tracking and monitoring of their au pair's meals and nights away from home.



Au pairs report an overall high level of satisfaction with their experience in the program and with their time in the U.S. (83% and 93%, respectively), and 89.1% indicate that they felt comfortable adjusting to American culture because of participating in the program. Most au pairs would also recommend the program to friends and family and to future participants (79.7%).

A large majority of au pairs were satisfied with the opportunity to gain new skills that would help them with their future pursuits, and with the opportunity to build upon their existing skills (85.8% and 84.9%, respectively). Eight out of ten also report satisfaction with the personal connections they built with their host family.



⁴Sponsor organizations are designated by the U.S. Department of State and are authorized to issue a Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange J-1 Visitor Status (DS-2019 Form). Sponsor organizations are responsible for the screening, orientation and monitoring of exchange participants as well as providing 24/7 emergency support and ensuring participants' health, safety, and welfare.



The Camp Counselor Program Exposing Campers to Global Perspectives

The U.S. Department of State BridgeUSA Camp Counselor Program allows international participants—including university students, youth workers, teachers, and individuals with specialized skills—to work as counselors in American summer camps for up to four months, gaining hands-on experience while immersing

themselves in American culture. As camp counselors, participants lead activities and ensure a safe and enjoyable environment for campers. U.S. camps benefit from being able to expose their campers and staff to other cultures, while also receiving critical staffing support during the peak summer season.

According to U.S. Department of State national-level data, 28,622 international camp counselors participated in the program in 2023. The top five sending countries (in order) are the United Kingdom, Mexico, Israel, Ireland, and Colombia, with New York, Pennsylvania, Maine, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire being the top five host states.

Profile of Host Camps and Alumni

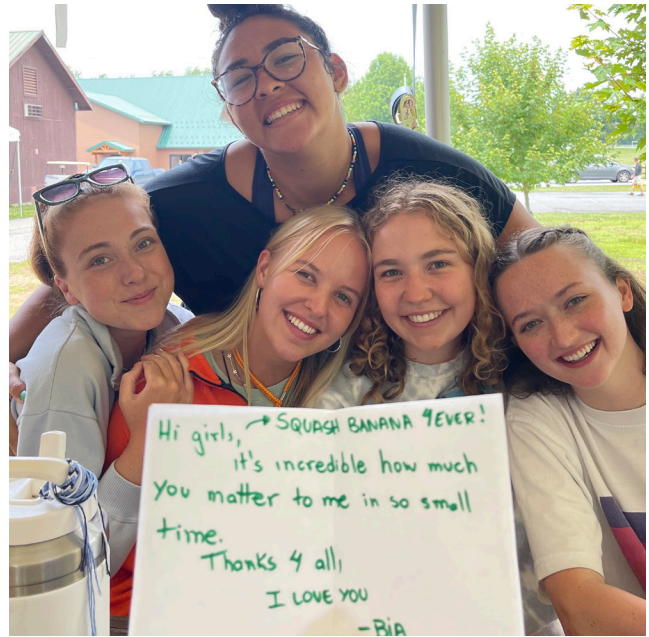
A range of American camps participate in the Camp Counselor Program, of which a majority of respondents are overnight camps (91%). Responding camps had been in operation for an average of 71 years and had participated in BridgeUSA programs for an average of 18 years. Surveyed camps report hosting a total of 6,619 international camp counselors and 10,459 U.S. camp counselors during the 2023 peak season, with international camp counselors thus constituting 38.8% of all counselors.

Camps were also asked to provide insights into their recruitment and hiring practices. Almost all camps report parity in their recruiting and hiring practices,

where equivalent camp counselor jobs, opportunities, training, and professional development are offered for both international and American camp counselors (98%). International camp counselors play a critical role in filling seasonal roles, with 82.4% of camps reporting that they face difficulties in filling seasonal positions.

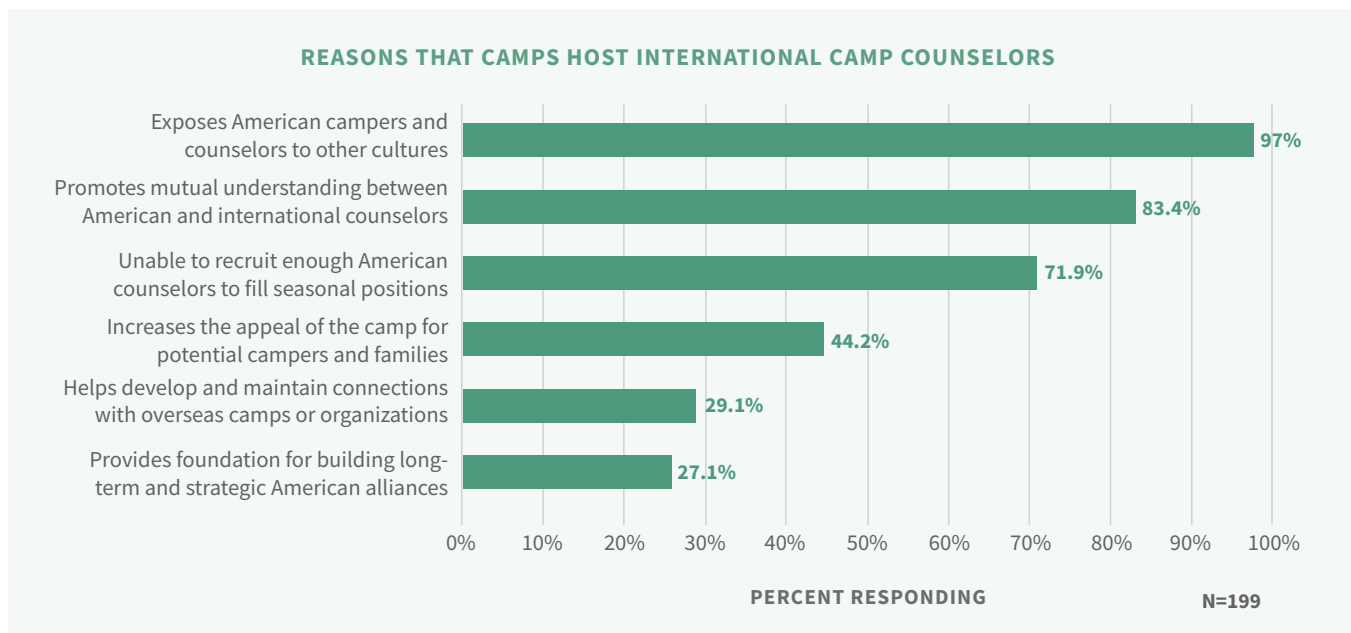
Most responding international camp counselors participate in overnight camps (59%). While they perform a range of duties at camp, international camp counselors' report that their main duties are to supervise campers (83.5%), keep campers safe (81.3%), and lead campers in specific activities (75.1%).

When asked about their status or occupation while participating in the program, a large proportion report that they were post-secondary students (47.4%); just over a third were teachers, youth workers, or were pursuing other occupations; and 20.2% were not employed but were participating because of their interest in cultural exchange and/or teaching a skill. As with other BridgeUSA programs, most international camp counselors (69.4%) are women. Many camp counselors (44.2%) are between the ages of 18 and 20 when they begin the BridgeUSA Camp Counselor Program.



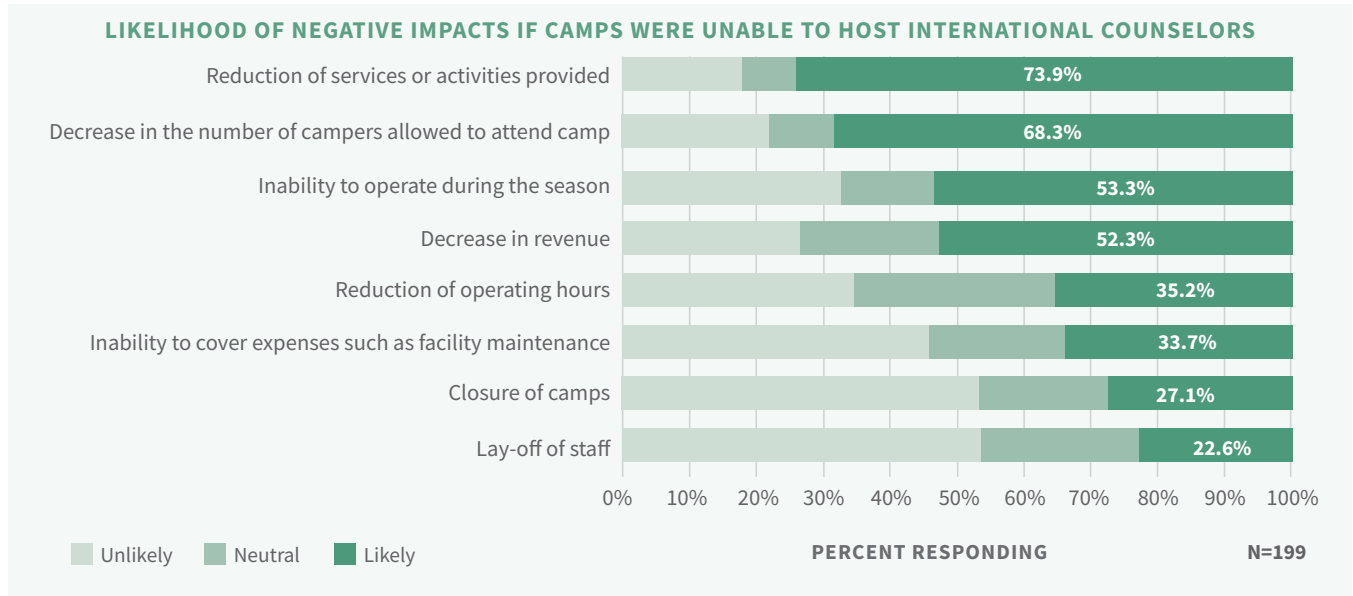
Benefits of Participation

Host camps choose to participate in the BridgeUSA Camp Counselor Program for a variety of reasons. The top three include: providing American campers and counselors with exposure to international cultures and new perspectives brought by international counselors (97%), fostering mutual understanding and lifelong friendships between American and international counselors (83.4%), and filling vacancies because there aren't enough American counselors to fill seasonal positions (71.9%).



Eight out of ten host camps report that participating in the Camp Counselor Program is very important for their camp. Further, 96.5% report that not being able to host international counselors would have a negative impact on the camp. The top three forms of

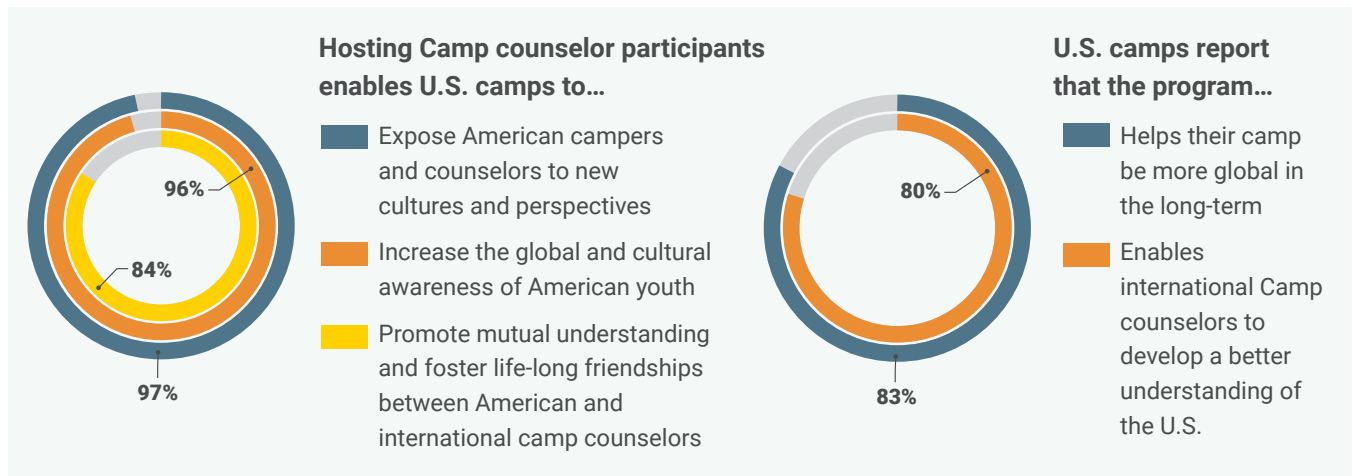
negative impact would be: a reduction of services or activities provided by the camp (73.9%); a decrease in the number of campers allowed to attend (68.3%); and the inability to operate during peak season (53.3%).



These potential negative consequences point to the value that international counselors bring to U.S. camps, enabling both American and international students and young professionals to partake in the camp experience.

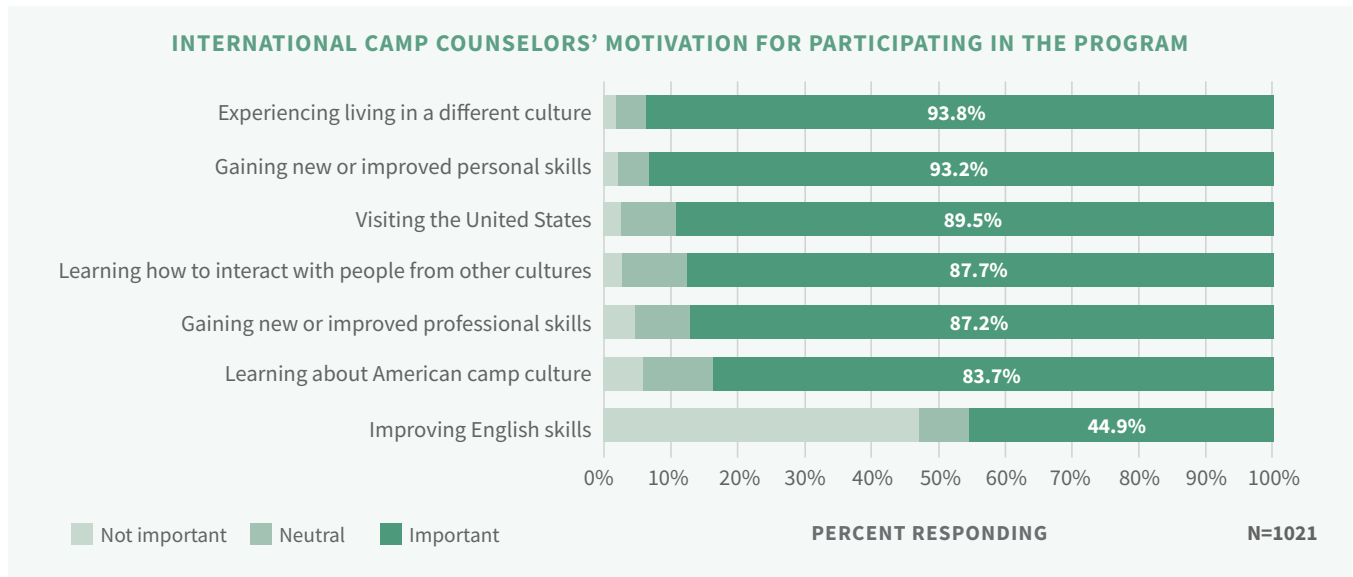
Camps further value the fact that BridgeUSA counselors benefit the local economy (82.4%). International camp counselors bring significant economic benefits to participating camps and local communities. **In 2023, international camp counselors contributed \$50.1 million to the U.S. economy.**

For U.S. camps, participating in the Camp Counselor Program also has a valuable multiplier effect. 95% of camps surveyed believe that the program enables both international and American counselors to gain a better understanding of the U.S. and other countries. Hosting international counselors also has an impact on campers, with 96% of host camps reporting that it enables campers to develop a better understanding of other countries and cultures. Finally, 81.4% of camp staff report that their camp's participation in the BridgeUSA program has enabled them to develop more favorable views of other cultures.



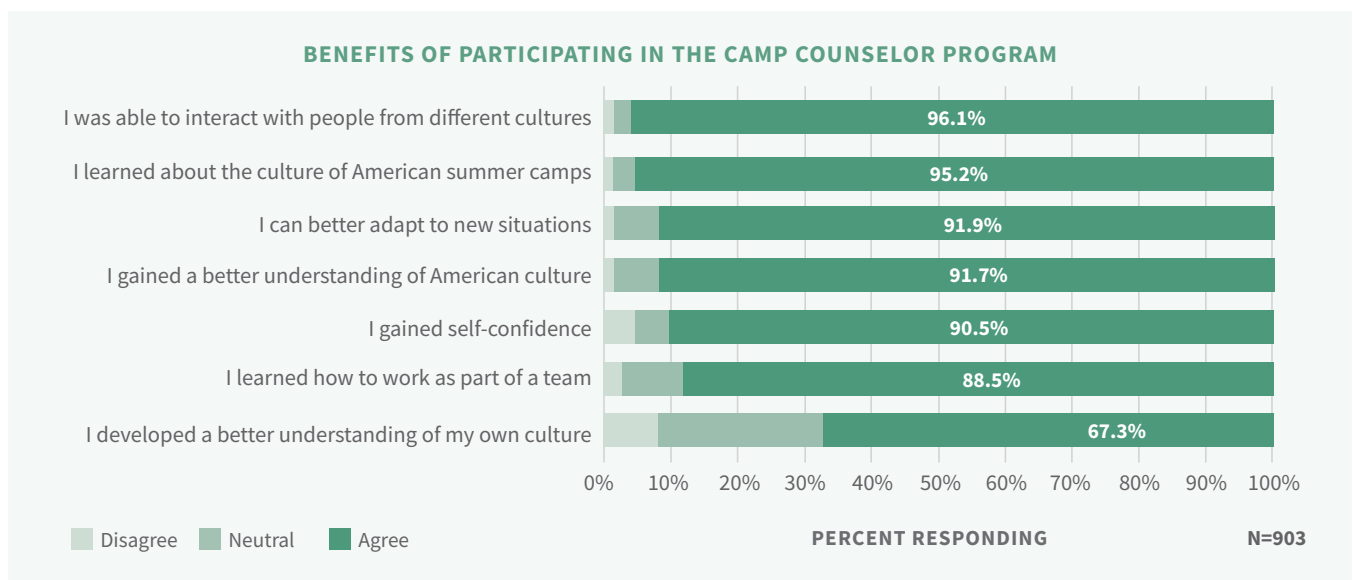
International camp counselors participate in the program for various reasons, with the primary motivator being the opportunity to live in a different culture (93.8%). Additional motivating factors include gaining new and improved personal skills (93.2%) and visiting the United States (89.5%). Improving English

language skills was the least important reason for participating in the program (44.9%), likely because almost 80% of the counselors were either native English speakers or were already proficient in the language.



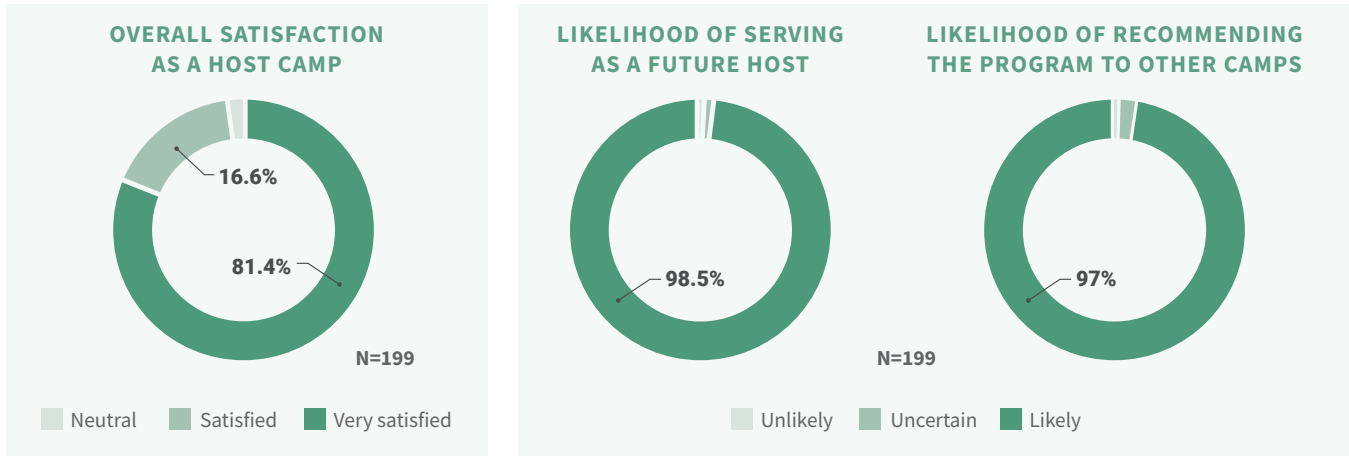
When reflecting upon their time in the Camp Counselor Program and what they gained from the experience, alumni report benefiting the most from being able to interact with people from different

cultures (96.1%), being able to learn about the culture of American summer camps (95.2%), and developing the skills to adapt to new situations (91.9%).



Overall Program Experience

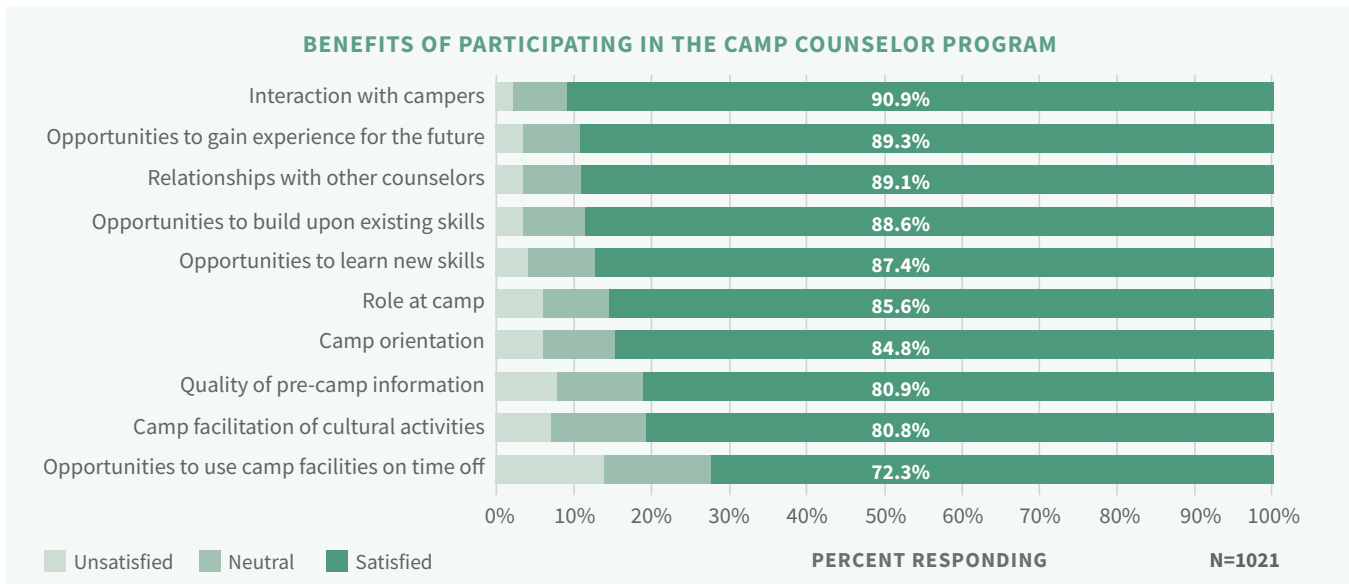
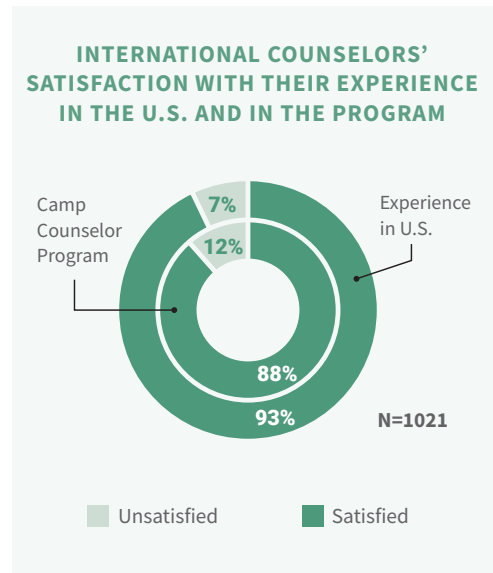
Most camps report being satisfied with their experience as a host camp in the BridgeUSA Camp Counselor Program (81.4%). Further, 98.5% indicate that they would be likely to serve as a host again, and 97% would recommend the program to other camps for future participation. Camp administrators also report that participating in the program meets the goals and needs of their camp (94.5%).



A large majority of international camp counselors (88.2%) express overall satisfaction with their experience in the program. 93.1% are satisfied with the time they spent in the U.S.; and 90% would recommend the program to their friends, family, and future participants.

International camp counselors also report high levels of satisfaction with specific aspects of their experience, especially when it comes to interacting with campers (90.9%), the opportunity to gain experiences that are helpful for their future (89.3%), and forging relationships with other counselors (89.1%). The vast majority of counselors (90.6%) report being comfortable adjusting to American culture.

A majority (76.9%) of counselors feel that the camp staff showed interest in their growth during the program.





The Intern and Trainee Programs Gaining Skills While Supporting American Businesses

The U.S. Department of State BridgeUSA Intern and Trainee programs provide international visitors the opportunity to temporarily reside in the U.S. while engaging in professional training with American host organizations. Intern programs allow international college and university students or recent graduates to gain exposure to U.S. culture and gain hands-on experience in U.S. business practices. Trainee

programs are designed to allow professionals with at least five years of experience to gain exposure to U.S. culture and receive training in U.S. business practices in their chosen field. International participants develop their professional skills and engage in cultural exchange that fosters understanding and collaboration between cultures, while also enabling U.S. hosts and their staff to benefit from the global exposure.

19,039

Interns in 2023

10,645

Trainees in 2023

According to U.S. Department of State national-level data, a total of 19,039 interns and 10,645 trainees participated in the programs across the U.S. in 2023. The top sending countries for interns were (in order) South Korea, Canada, France, India and the Philippines, with the top U.S. host states being California, New York, Florida, Texas, and Massachusetts. The top sending countries for trainees were (in order) India, France, Japan, the Philippines, and Germany, while the top receiving states were New York, California, Florida, Texas, and Colorado.

Profile of Intern and Trainee Program Host Employers and Alumni

U.S. businesses and organizations that participate in the Intern and Trainee programs span a number of different sectors and industries, with the hospitality and tourism industry being the most predominant (23.3% of all hosts). Most host employers (58.9%) are U.S. domestic businesses or organizations that operate solely in the U.S., while the remaining hosts are evenly split between being multinational

organizations headquartered in the U.S. and those headquartered in foreign countries. Most host employers of interns and trainees are mid- to large-sized organizations that employ more than 250 staff (37.6%). Those that employ 50-249 staff, or between 10-49 staff, each make up about 26% of those that participate in the Intern and Trainee Programs.

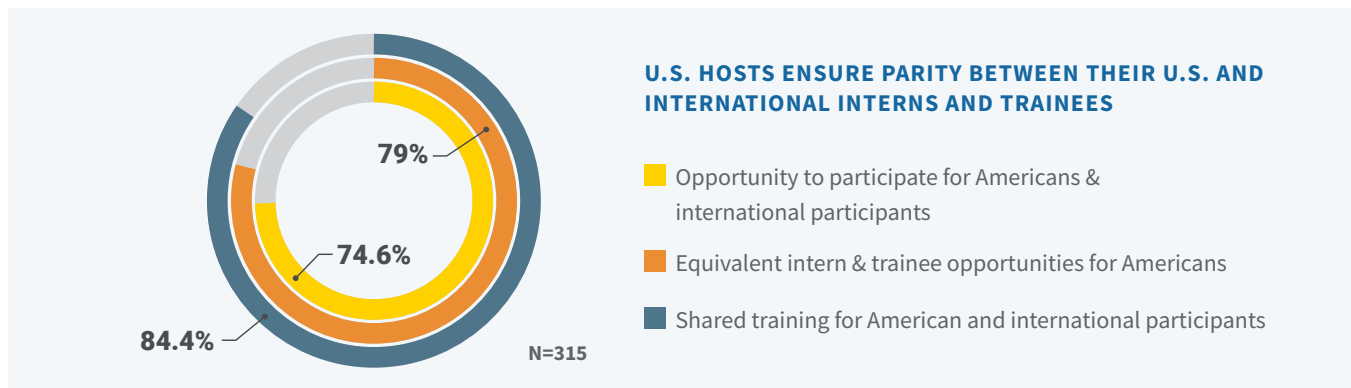
Responding host organizations had participated in just one of the programs or in both: about half had participated only in the Intern Program; 17% had participated only in the Trainee Program; and about a third had participated in both programs. Responding host employers and organizations report hosting a total of 1,736 interns and 884 trainees in 2023.

When it comes to recruiting both international and U.S. interns and trainees, program hosts rely on online job sites (41.6%) and on word of mouth (39.6%); over half (56.8%) also rely on exchange programs to recruit international participants. About 7% indicate that they do not actively recruit interns and trainees.

Survey findings indicate that Intern and Trainee Program hosts ensure parity between their U.S.

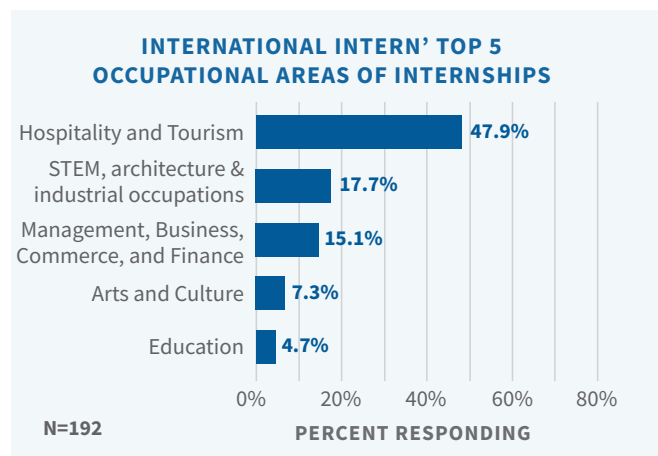
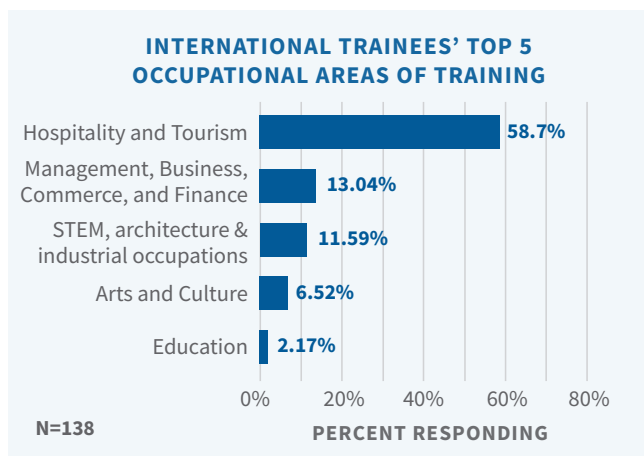
and international interns and trainees, with 84.4% reporting that they offer opportunities equally to Americans and international exchange participants. Further, a majority of hosts train both groups side-by-side (74.6%), and among those employers that offer compensation, 89.1% report offering a similar level of compensation to U.S. and international interns and trainees.

Over half of surveyed participants (59.3%) were interns and the remaining were trainees. On average, internships and traineeships lasted approximately 10 months. Most Intern and Trainee program participants (52.1%) were between the ages of 25 and 34 at the time of participating in the program, while 41.7% were between the ages of 18 and 24. Most identified as female (59.7%).



At the time of survey completion, 66.2% of Intern and Trainee Program alumni were employed either full- or part-time and 14.9% were enrolled either full- or part-time in either an undergraduate or advanced degree program. Trainees report returning home to work in a range of industries and sectors, with tourism and hospitality being the most predominant (30.4%),

followed by accommodation and food services (15.9%). This also aligns with the fact that over half of all trainees train in the hospitality and tourism sector during their time in the U.S. Similarly, the U.S. tourism and hospitality sector is the most prominent sector for international interns (47.9%), followed by STEM, architecture, and industrial occupations.



U.S. EMPLOYERS' TOP REASONS FOR HOSTING INTERNATIONAL INTERNS AND TRAINEES

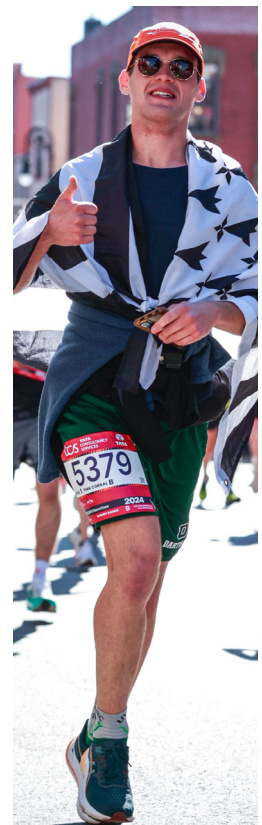
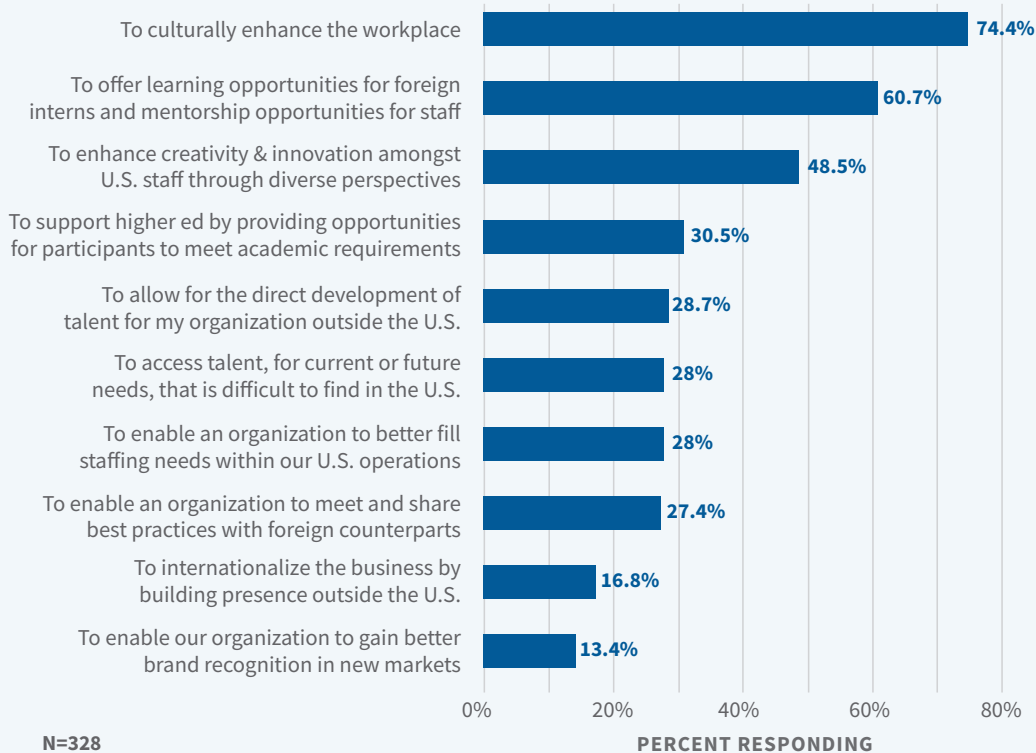


Benefits of Participation

Overall, eight out of ten **host organizations** report that the Intern and Trainee Programs are critical to their businesses (84.2%). Host employers and organizations list a number of different reasons for participating in the Intern and Trainee Programs, chief among them being that international interns and trainees bring an important cultural dimension to the workplace (64.3% of responding hosts), as well as a unique work ethic that contributes positively to

the workplace (63.7%). Furthermore, a majority of surveyed hosts report that the main benefit of the program is the cultural enrichment it brings to their workplace (74.4%). Intern and Trainee Program host employers also derive significant economic benefits from their participation in the program. At the national level, **Intern and Trainee Program participants contributed \$264.2 million to the U.S. economy in 2023.**

KEY BENEFITS OF HOSTING INTERNATIONAL INTERNS AND TRAINEES



The majority of host employers (67.8%) report that their companies and organizations would face a significant negative impact without the Intern and Trainee Programs, further illustrating these programs' impact. The most significant potential negative impact is that the employers' U.S. staff would lose the opportunity to develop intercultural relationships, intercultural communications skills, and global perspectives (61.9%).



International Interns and trainees participate in BridgeUSA programs for a range of reasons, the top five being: the opportunity to gain professional or job-related experience abroad (96.8% of respondents); learning specific work skills (93.4%); learning how to

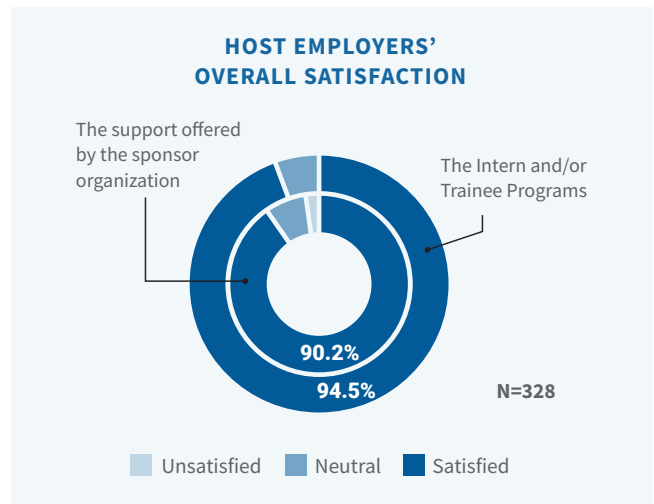
interact with people from different cultures (90.4%); establishing networks with American colleagues (90.2%); and learning about the American way of doing business (87.3%).



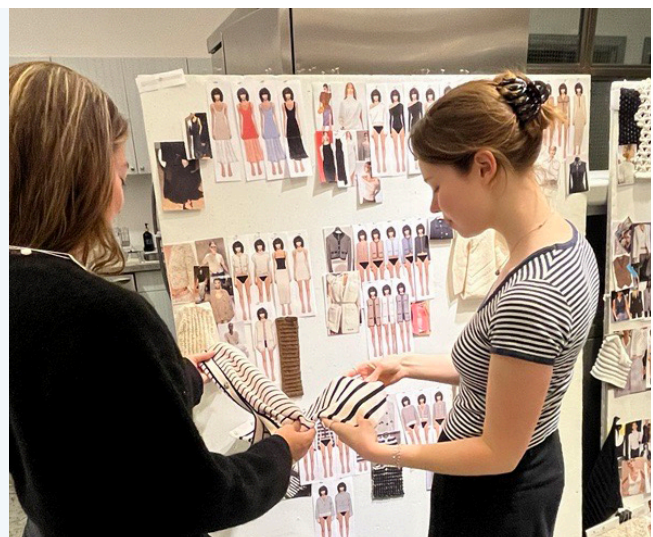
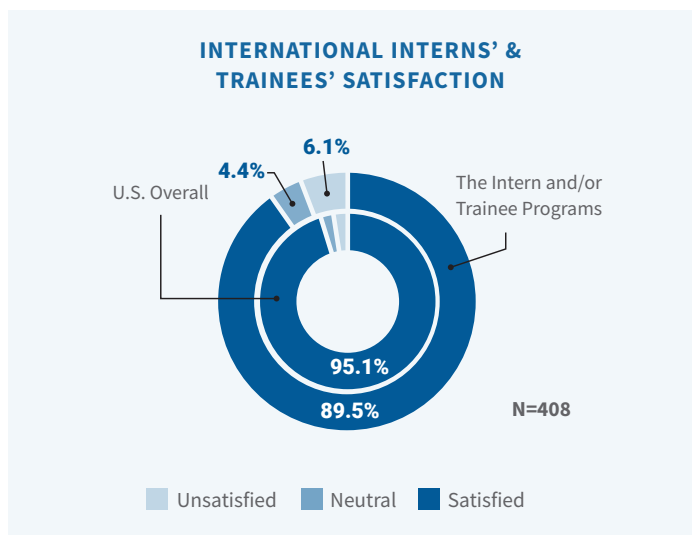
Overall Program Experience

An overwhelming majority of **host organizations** report satisfaction with their participation in the Intern and Trainee Programs (94.5%). In addition, 92.7% were either very likely or likely to recommend the program to other businesses or organizations. The vast majority of host employers (98.4%) also report a high level of positive interactions between their customers/clients and their international trainees and interns.

Overall, **Intern and Trainee Program alumni** report high levels of satisfaction with their experience in the U.S. (95.1%) and with the programs themselves (89.5%). The vast majority of program alumni (94%) were likely to recommend the programs to their family and friends. Participants also report that they were able to develop connections within their workplace with their co-workers (92.4%) as well as with other Americans outside the workplace (78.2%). A large



majority (81.3%) further report that their experience aligned with the goals and outcomes outlined in their Training/Internship Placement Plan (T/IPP).





The Summer Work Travel Program

Cultural Exposure and Support for American Seasonal Businesses

The largest of the U.S. Department of State's BridgeUSA suite of international exchange programs, the Summer Work Travel (SWT) Program enables university students from around the world to come to the U.S. for a short period of time to learn about American culture through temporary work and travel opportunities. U.S. businesses

hosting these exchange visitors in turn benefit from global exposure for their staff and clients, and from filling critical vacancies during peak periods. SWT participants live, work, and travel in the U.S. (often in high tourist areas) for a maximum of four months during their home universities' summer breaks.

103,785
Participants in 2023

National-level data from the U.S. Department of State data indicates that 103,785 individuals from a range of countries participated in the SWT program in 2023. The top five sending countries (in order) were Peru, Thailand, Jamaica, Turkey, and Mexico, while the top five host states were Florida, New York, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Wisconsin.

Profile of SWT Host Employers and Alumni

Employers in the hospitality industry (such as hotels and resorts), and those in the food service industry (e.g. restaurants) make up the majority of responding SWT hosts (63.5%). Amusement parks and summer camps each account for approximately 10% of responding hosts' businesses.

SWT employers who responded to the survey report employing a total of 58,412 seasonal staff in 2023, of whom approximately 16,708 (28.6%) were SWT participants. An overwhelming majority of surveyed employers (95%) report facing a seasonal shortage of staff, which suggests that SWT participants play an important role in filling this gap.

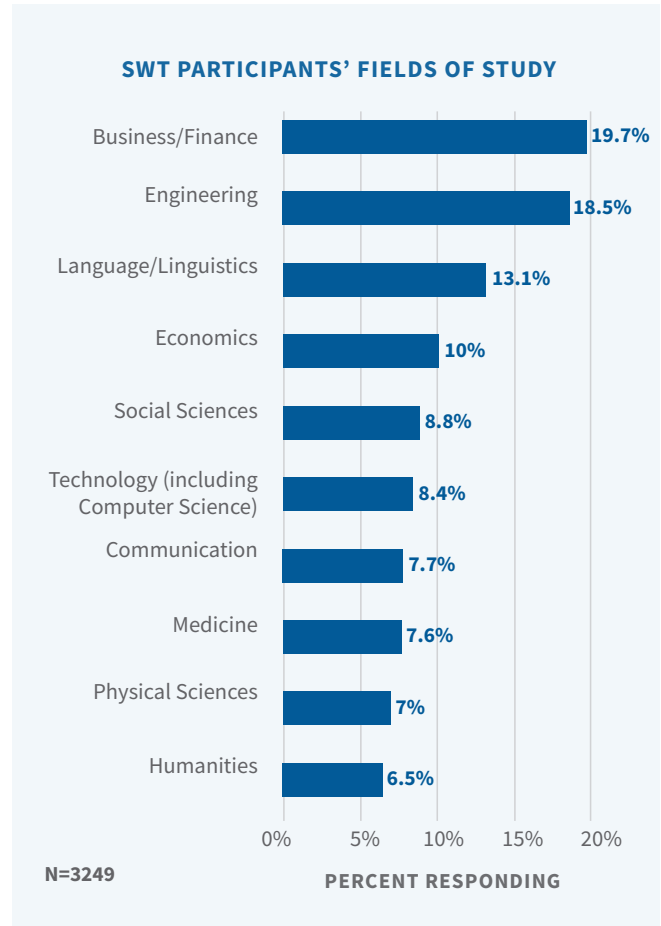


The majority of SWT program participants surveyed (82.9%) were between the ages of 18 and 24 at the time of participating in the program, and most identified as female (59.7%). The top three fields of study of participants were business and finance (19.7%), engineering (18.5%), and language/linguistics (13.1%).

At the time of survey completion, 44.4% of SWT alumni were employed either full- or part-time and 43.5%



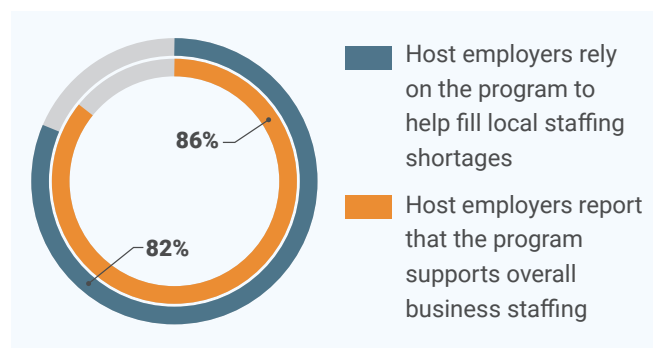
were enrolled either full- or part-time in either an undergraduate or advanced degree program. Among those who were employed, 71.4% felt that their SWT experience played a helpful role in obtaining their current job.



Benefits of Participation

Overall, 87% of surveyed **host employers** report that the SWT program is very important to their organization and its operations. As described above, the SWT program plays an important role in filling seasonal staffing shortages in various industries across the U.S., while also providing opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange. A large proportion of host employers (82%) report that filling local labor shortages was their main reason for participating in the program, while the opportunity for cultural exchange also played a key role (64%). Relatedly, employers indicate that the three top benefits of

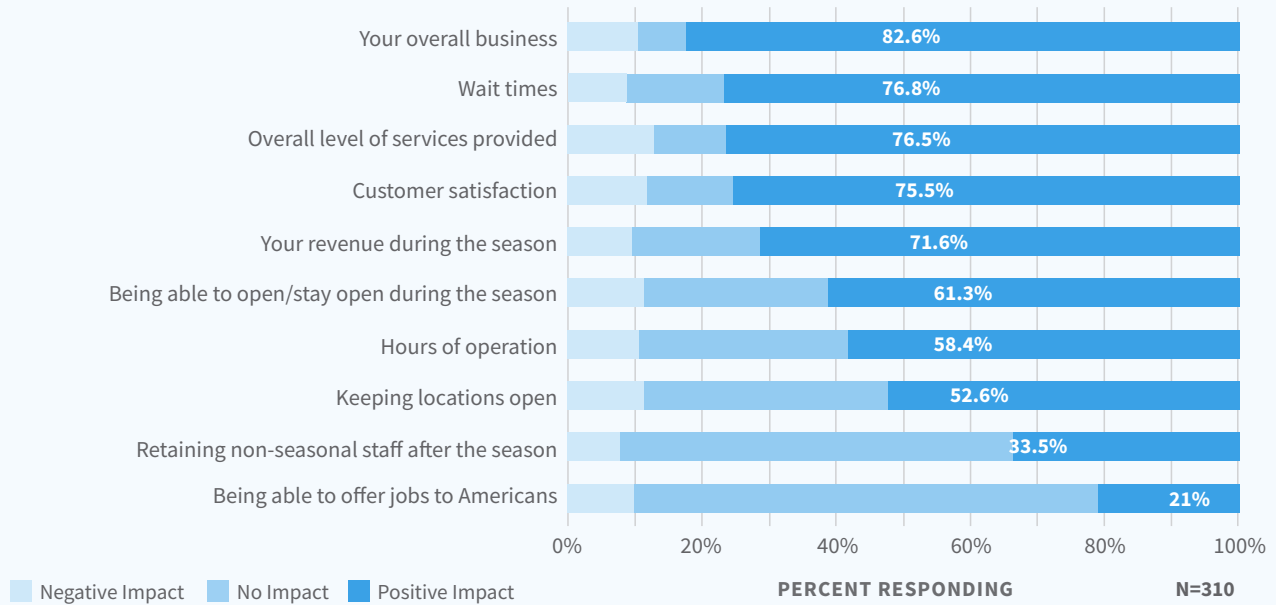
participating in the program are that it supports overall business staffing (85.5%), helps fill local labor shortages (82%), and contributes to a positive culture in the workplace (79%).



SWT host employers derive significant economic benefits from participating in the program. At the national level, SWT participants **contributed \$353 million to the U.S. economy in 2023**. The economic impact of the program is also evident from host employers' reports of how the inability to host international participants might impact their

businesses. The potential consequences would include: an overall negative impact on business and work (82.6% of responding hosts); an increase in wait times for customers (76.8%); a decline in the overall level of service (76.5%); a drop in customer satisfaction (75.5%); and a drop of revenue during the peak season (71.6%).

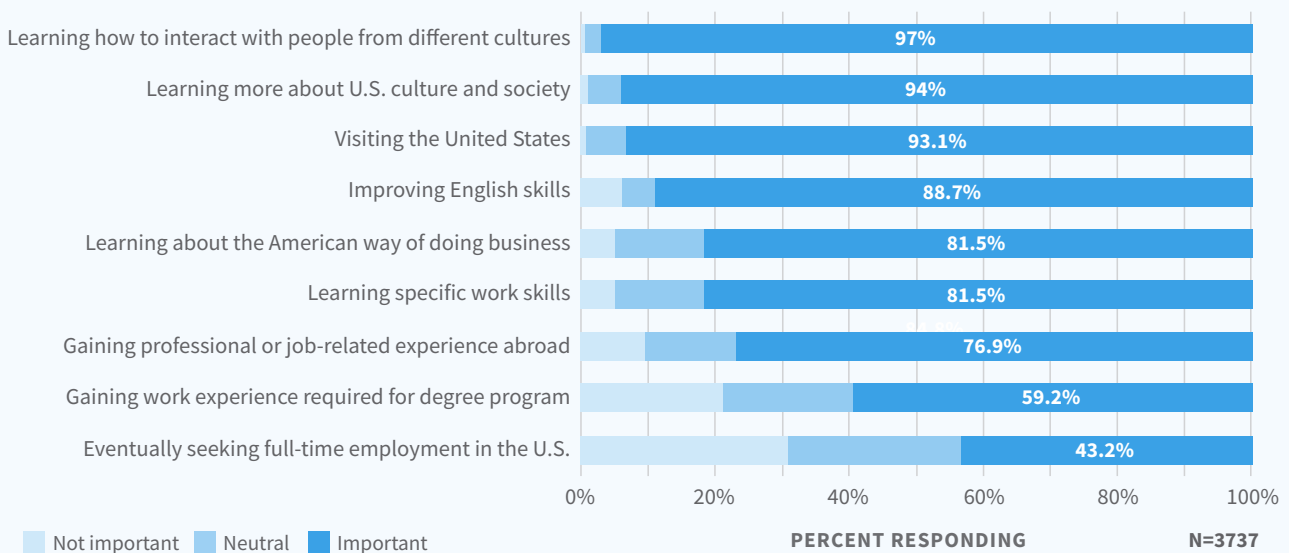
POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF NOT BEING ABLE TO HOST SWT PARTICIPANTS



Individuals from around the world participate in the SWT program for a range of reasons, the top three being the opportunity to learn how to interact with

people from different cultures (97%), to learn more about U.S. culture and society (94%), and the ability to visit the U.S. (93.1%).

SWT PARTICIPANTS' MAIN REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM



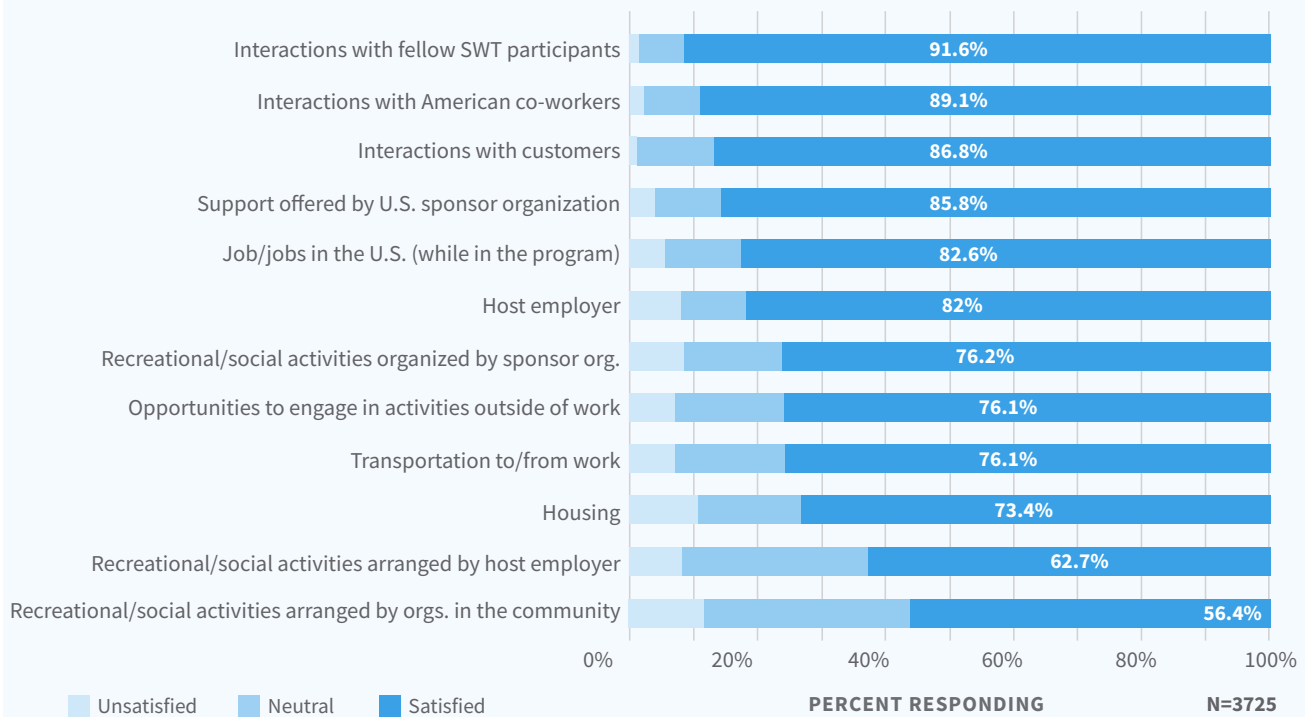
Overall Program Experience

The vast majority of **SWT host employers** report being satisfied with their participation in the program, with 93.9% indicating that they were either very satisfied or satisfied. In addition, 95.2% of surveyed hosts were either very likely or likely to recommend the program to other businesses or organizations in areas with high seasonal staffing needs.

Overall, **SWT program alumni** report being satisfied with their time in the U.S. (95.7%) and with the program itself (93.1%). Alumni also report strong

satisfaction with specific aspects of their experience in the U.S., including their interactions with other SWT participants (91.6%), with American co-workers (89.1%), and with customers served (86.8%). A large majority (85.8%) report being satisfied with the support they received from their U.S. sponsor organization, and with their host employers (82%). Participants were also able to develop connections within their workplace (92.8%), and with other Americans outside the workplace (70.1%).

SWT PARTICIPANTS' SATISFACTION WITH VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM



Conclusion

This report provides comprehensive and evidence-based insights into the collective and program-level impact of BridgeUSA programs, including the Au Pair Program, the Camp Counselor Program, the Intern and Trainee Programs, and the Summer Work Travel Program. The findings clearly show the strong economic, public diplomacy, and cultural impact of

the programs surveyed, and underscore how these programs help foster international cooperation, support American businesses, and strengthen global competencies of participants and their American hosts and communities. Importantly, they are very cost effective as they do so at virtually no cost to the U.S. taxpayer.

APPENDIX: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

The 2024 impact study of five BridgeUSA programs was based on a total of eight surveys administered to U.S. program hosts (organizations, businesses, and families), and to alumni who participated in the program between 2019-2023. The surveys were adapted in partnership with the Alliance and its member organizations, based on a previous impact study commissioned by the Alliance and conducted by EurekaFacts from 2017-2020. For the current study, survey questions were shortened and streamlined to identify common themes across the five programs while also identifying questions unique to each exchange program. Prior to dissemination, the surveys were pilot tested with a small group of program hosts and participants to ensure their relevance.

Using the online survey platform Alchemer, the surveys were administered between April 2024 and July 2024 through the Alliance's member organizations' network of more than 52,900 hosts/employers and 252,200 alumni. The following responses were obtained after several rounds of follow-up and reminders to potential respondents:

- **Au Pair Program:** A total of 1,693 alumni responded to the survey, with 1,329 providing complete data. A total of 2,835 host families responded to the survey, with 2,119 providing complete data.
- **Camp Counselor Program:** A total of 1,377 alumni responded to the survey, with 1,021 providing complete data. A total of 228 host organizations responded to the survey, with 199 providing complete data.
- **Intern and Trainee Programs:** A total of 590 alumni responded to the survey, with 408 providing complete data. A total of 599 host organizations responded to the survey, with 328 providing complete data.
- **Summer Work Travel Program:** A total of 5,389 alumni responded to the survey, with 3,737 providing complete data. A total of 613 host organizations responded to the survey, with 310 providing complete data.

Survey data was cleaned, validated, and analyzed following standard protocols and best practices. Outliers were adjusted using an imputation approach.

Calculations of the economic impact of each of the five programs are based on both the survey data described above, and also through national-level program participation data obtained from the U.S. Department of State. The estimated economic impact totals are therefore based on: (1) the per alumni spending data obtained from the surveys, and (2) data on the total number of individuals who participated in each of the programs in 2023.