




# Office of Inspector General

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**To:** Jody Olsen, Director  
Patrick Young, Associate Director, Office of Global Operations  
Anne Hughes, Chief Compliance Officer

**From:** Kathy A. Buller, Inspector General 

**Date:** July 29, 2019

**Subject:** Final Report: Homestay Impact Evaluation (IG-19-05-E)

Transmitted for your information is our final Homestay Impact Evaluation report.

Management concurred with three recommendations and partially concurred with one recommendation. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations. OIG will review and consider closing recommendation 4 when the documentation reflected in the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 1-3, additional documentation is required. These recommendations remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in our comments is received. Our comments, which are in the report as Appendix G, address these matters.

We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

You may address questions regarding follow-up or documentation to Assistant Inspector General for Evaluation Jeremy Black at 202.692.2912.

Please accept our thanks for your cooperation and assistance in our review.

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PEACE CORPS  
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GENERAL**



*Volunteers with their host families*

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**Final Report**  
Homestay Impact Evaluation  
IG-19-05-E  
July 2019

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### *BACKGROUND*

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This evaluation had two objectives: (1) to describe the range of homestay models that Peace Corps posts were implementing and better understand their advantages and challenges; and (2) to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety, language acquisition, integration, and health. The Peace Corps Office of Global Operations asked the Office of Inspector General to evaluate host family requirements, because it was not clear that these policies led to better outcomes.

### *HOST FAMILY MODELS, ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES*

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We found that the majority (63 percent) of Peace Corps posts implemented homestay requirements during service, though the number of months required varied. If given a choice, most Volunteers said they would choose independent housing over living with a host family. The percentage of Volunteers who would choose independent living was higher among those Volunteers who had less privacy in their homestay.

The lack of privacy was frequently cited by staff and Volunteers as one of the main challenges of homestays. We found that staff from many countries reported that privacy was a foreign concept in the local culture and described how they oriented host families to this cultural difference. Few post staff described friendship as an advantage of homestays, though many Volunteers cited friendship and support as the main advantage of living with a host family. When orienting host families, post staff should carefully nuance their messaging about privacy to also emphasize friendship and support. In doing this, Peace Corps can better achieve its mission of promoting world peace and friendship.

Post staff described various challenges in implementing homestay requirements, including finding host families, meeting housing criteria, managing workload and travel, resolving conflicts, and addressing problematic Volunteer behavior.

### *POLICY IMPACT*

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We assessed the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety, language, integration, and health. Five countries met the inclusion criteria. Findings were inconsistent across countries. Improved language acquisition was the most likely impact of homestay requirements (observed in two of four countries). The second most likely outcome of required homestay was decreased rates of serious crime (observed in two of five countries). In one of four countries, we found evidence that homestay requirements had a positive impact on integration. We found no evidence that host family requirements had an impact on the health outcome we assessed (i.e. total rate of

GI infections). Likewise, we found no evidence that homestay requirements had an impact on any of the outcomes in two countries we assessed.

Staff widely assumed that homestay requirements made Volunteers safer, better integrated into the community, and more proficient in the local language. Evidence from this analysis does not support the assumption that better outcomes will be achieved in all contexts. Given the costs of administering and potential risk associated with homestay programs, posts that transition to or increase homestay requirements should rigorously monitor safety and language outcomes. Interrupted time series analysis like this one can provide a robust approach to assessing the impact of policy changes. Furthermore, this approach can be applied to understand the impact in each country.

### ***RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF***

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This report includes four findings and recommendations, which, if implemented, will address some of the challenges described in this report. The Office of Global Operations should use the evidence generated in this report to provide guidance to post leadership on weighing the advantages and disadvantages when making decisions about homestay requirements and mitigating the challenges associated with homestay requirements.

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## BACKGROUND

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To accomplish its mission of promoting world peace and friendship, the Peace Corps sends Volunteers to live and work in more than 60 countries. “In most countries, Volunteers are required to live with a host family for pre-service training, and, in certain countries, Volunteers live with host families for the duration of their service.” As one post described, “Living with a host family will help Volunteers learn the customs and cultures of the host country nationals, making it easier for Volunteers to integrate into the community, as well as stay healthy and safe.”

Staff across the agency widely assumed that homestay requirements improved Volunteer health, safety, and integration. In recent years, numerous posts began requiring Volunteers to live with host families during service. However, it was not clear that requiring Volunteers to live with host families was an effective policy that leads to better outcomes. In fact, requiring Volunteers to live with host families could potentially have unintended consequences, such as increasing Volunteers’ vulnerability to sexual assault. According to one report, 10 percent of reports of sexual assault of a Peace Corps Volunteer identified a member of the Volunteer’s host family as the perpetrator. To address concerns about Volunteer health and safety, Congress passed the Sam Farr and Nick Castle Peace Corps Reform Act of 2018 (Farr Castle Act). The Farr Castle Act requires the Peace Corps to orient host families to prevent sexual assaults and harassment. Identifying, screening, and training prospective host families involves a significant amount of staff time and resources. Given the investment required to implement homestay programs, the recent scale-up of homestay requirements across posts, and the concern about possible unintended consequences, Peace Corps management required more robust evidence about the advantages, challenges, and impacts of homestays to guide its decision making.

In 2017, the Peace Corps Office of Global Operations asked the Office of Inspector General to evaluate host family policies and practices. The Peace Corps Office of Inspector General provides independent oversight of agency operations and promotes efficiency, effectiveness, and economy through evaluating Peace Corps programs and operations.

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## OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

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### *OBJECTIVES*

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The Homestay Program Evaluation had two objectives:

- Objective 1: To describe the range of host family models that Peace Corps posts were implementing and better understand their advantages and challenges.
- Objective 2: To assess the impact of host family requirements on Volunteer safety, language, integration, and health.

### *SCOPE*

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To answer objective one about the advantages and challenges of implementing homestay, we included all posts that implemented homestay during service. Nearly all Peace Corps posts implemented homestays during pre-service training. Consequently, management decisions pertained primarily to homestays during service. The scope of the evaluation excluded homestays during pre-service training, accordingly.

Due to limitations of the methodology we only assessed the impact of homestay policies for five countries that met the inclusion criteria (see also Appendix C). To be included in the impact analysis, we first identified staff at post who recalled the details of the policy change, for example, increasing the number of months of homestay from 3 to 6. Second, the policy change had to be clearly rolled out at one point in time, for example, to all Volunteers as opposed to certain sectors. Finally, we required a minimum of 3 years of outcome data before and after the policy change.

### *METHODOLOGY*

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This evaluation utilized a mixed methods approach that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative data. The evaluation included in-depth interviews with post staff, a Volunteer survey, and a statistical analysis of the agency's administrative data. Further information on the methodology is provided below and in Appendix C.

This evaluation was conducted in accordance with Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) standards for inspections and evaluations. The draft report was reviewed by an external subject matter expert with experience conducting interrupted time series analyses. Feedback from the external peer review was incorporated into the final version of this report.

### Staff interviews

We contacted country directors and country desk officers for all Peace Corps posts to identify which posts were implementing homestays during service. Country directors and country desk officers identified staff at their posts that were familiar with the homestay program advantages, challenges, and history. We conducted 72 in-depth phone interviews with staff from all posts that implemented homestays during service.

### Volunteer Survey

We distributed a survey to all Volunteers who had an estimated service completion date within the next year in every country that implemented homestays during service. This primarily included second-year Volunteers, though we did not exclude Peace Corps Response Volunteers as they were not uniformly identified in the Volunteer database. The purpose of surveying Volunteers was to understand their perspectives on the advantages and challenges associated with homestays. We sampled second-year Volunteers to gain the perspective of those individuals who had more experience in-country and a longer-term perspective on the advantages and challenges of homestays. In total, we distributed the survey to 1,549 Volunteers and 1,052 responded. The response rate was 68 percent, indicating that the survey adequately represented the broad range of Volunteer perspectives and that non-response bias was limited.

### Interrupted Time Series Analysis

The objective of this evaluation was to determine if host family requirements led to changes in Volunteer language, safety, health, and integration. We conducted a statistical analysis of administrative data to determine if homestay requirements contributed to a change in the outcomes of interest. Five countries met the inclusion criteria.

The most robust approach to determine if a policy contributes to a change in outcomes is through random assignment to an intervention and control group, such as randomly assigning some Volunteers to live in host families and some Volunteers to live in independent housing and comparing outcomes. In this context however, randomization, was not feasible. Interrupted Time Series Analysis is a quasi-experimental evaluation design that has been described as “the next best approach when randomization is not possible.”<sup>1</sup> It uses repeated measures over time to control for external factors that may have influenced the outcomes of interest. By looking at outcome measurements before and after the policy change, it is possible to estimate what would have happened in the absence of the intervention and project the impact of the policy change.

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<sup>1</sup> [Kontopantelis Evangelos, Doran Tim, Springate David A, Buchan Iain, Reeves David. Regression based quasi-experimental approach when randomisation is not an option: interrupted time series analysis BMJ 2015; 350:h2750](#)

Interrupted time series analysis is preferable to a simple before-after comparison because it accounts for underlying trends in the wider environment.

Statistical power is derived from a variety of factors, including the number of time points before and after the intervention, the distribution of data points or variability within the data, the strength of the effect, and the presence of confounding effects. In instances where a change was observed initially, but not sustained over time, we concluded that it was likely due to other factors that occurred at the same time, rather than attributable to the homestay requirement alone. See Appendix C for more information on how we applied interrupted time series analysis.

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## HOMESTAY MODELS, ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES

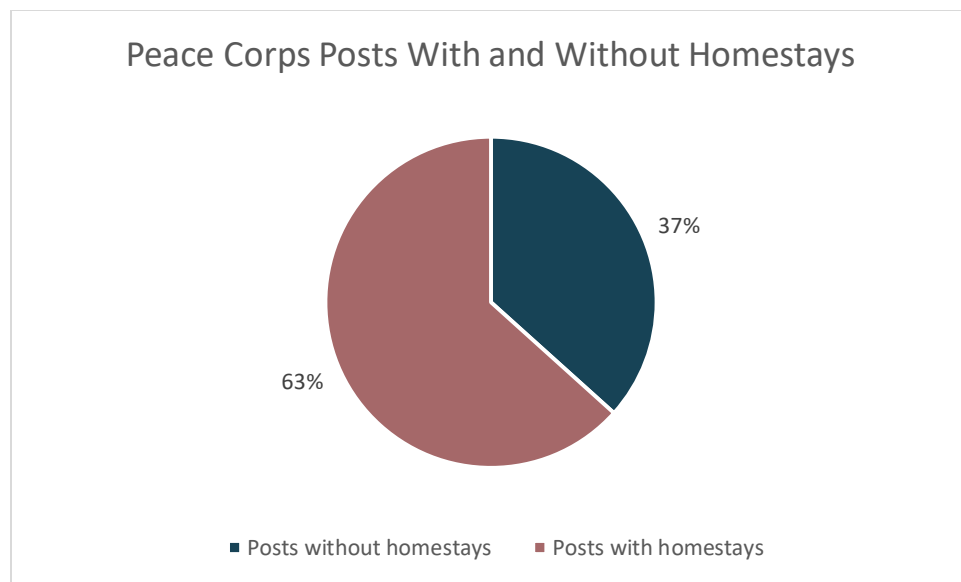
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The first objective of this evaluation was twofold: to describe the range of homestay models that Peace Corps posts were implementing and better understand their advantages and challenges.

### *HOST FAMILY MODELS*

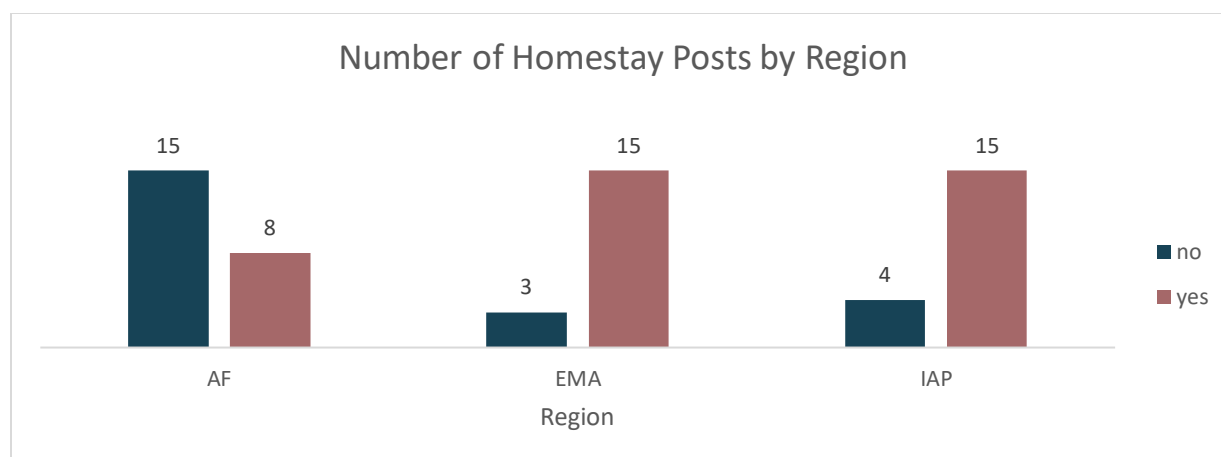
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We found that most Peace Corps posts (63 percent) were implementing homestay requirements during service. (See Figure 1.) For a full list of posts with and without homestay requirements, see Appendix A.



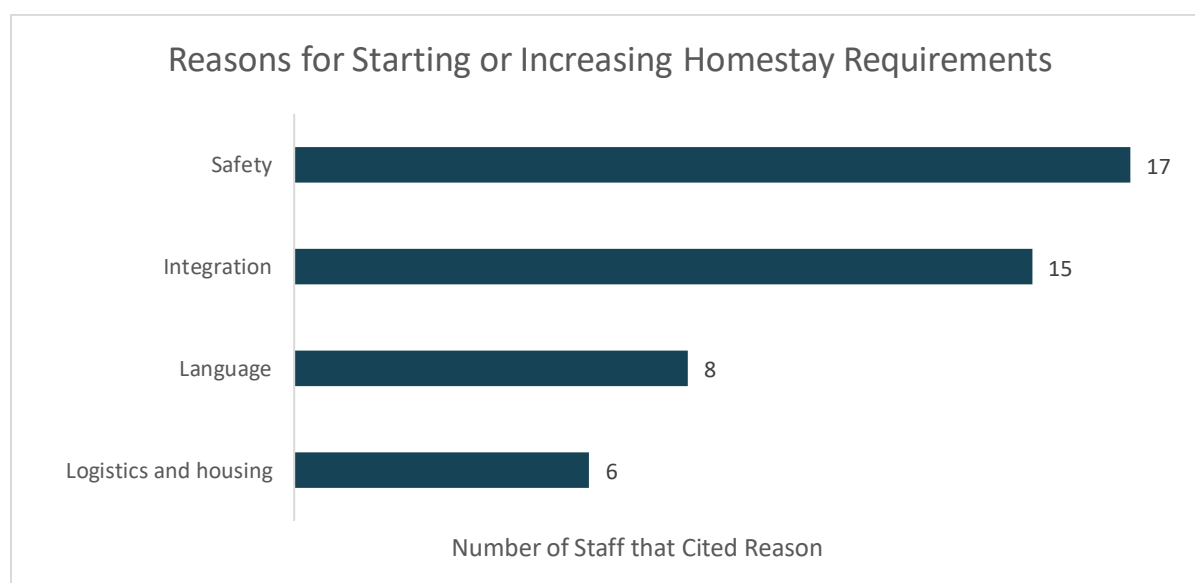
**Figure 1.** Peace Corps Posts With and Without Homestays

The Peace Corps is operationally organized into three Regions: (1) Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA); (2) Inter-America and the Pacific (IAP); and (3) Africa (AF). We found that homestay requirements differed by Region. Whereas most posts in EMA and IAP implemented homestay requirements during service, most posts in Africa did not. (See Figure 2.)



**Figure 2.** Number of Homestay Posts by Region

For posts that had started or expanded homestay requirements, we asked staff about the rationale for doing so. The most frequently cited reason was safety, followed by integration. Language ranked third as a reason for requiring homestays during service. Fewer staff cited logistics and housing, for example, moving to more rural sites with few other housing alternatives, as a reason for implementing homestay requirements. (See Figure 3.) Some posts in the IAP region cited the Volunteer Support Initiative<sup>2</sup> as the main reason for implementing or increasing homestay requirements.



**Figure 3.** Reasons for Starting or Increasing Homestay Requirements

Out of the 38 posts that required Volunteers to live with host families during service, more than three-quarters (76 percent) required homestays for all Volunteers. An additional four posts (11 percent) implemented homestay for most Volunteers but acknowledged some exceptions. For

<sup>2</sup> A centrally initiated effort in 2011 to decrease the rate of violent crime against Volunteers in the IAP region.

some posts, the requirement depended on the site, project sector, or sex of the Volunteer. Only 5 out of 38 posts partially implemented homestays, for example, as an option for Volunteers who chose it or only in certain sites where other housing options were limited.

We found a wide range in the number of months that posts required Volunteers to live with host families. Nearly half (16 out of 38) of the posts that required homestay during service did so for the full 2 years of service. Conversely, some posts required only a few weeks or months of homestay. Nine posts required 6 months of homestay and seven posts required 3 months of homestay. (See Figure 4.)

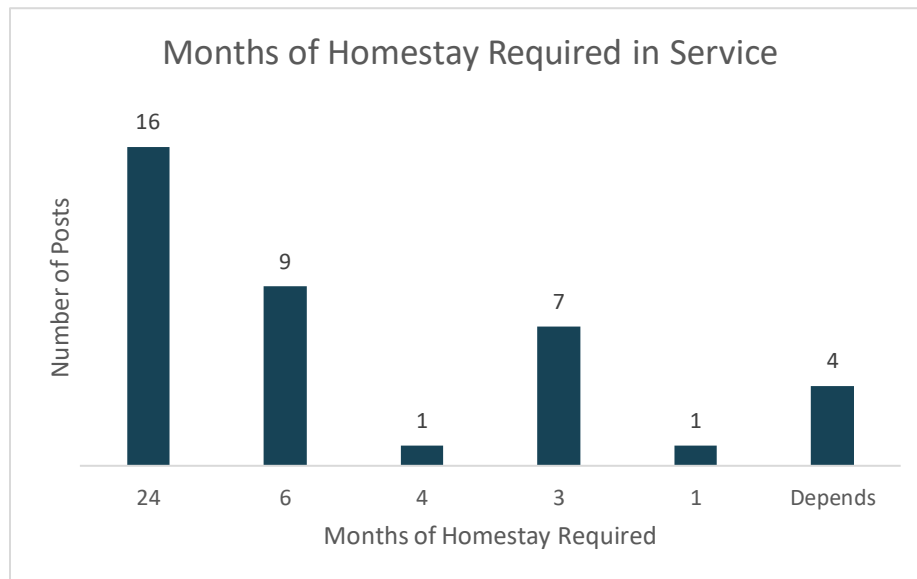
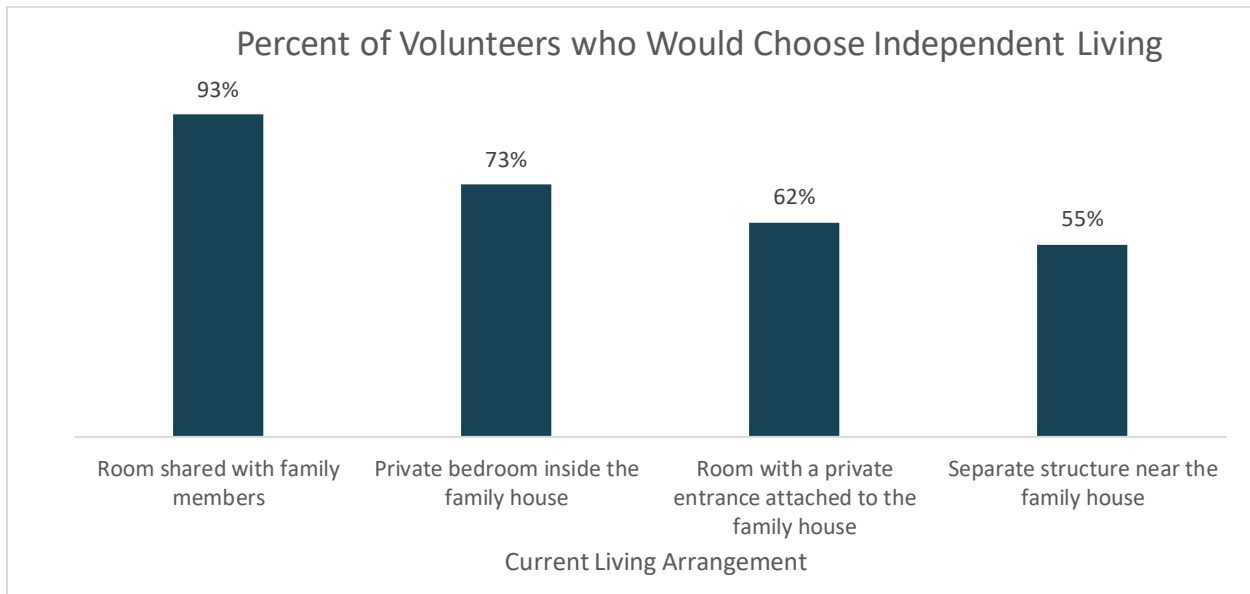


Figure 4. Months of Homestay Required in Service

Among the Volunteers we surveyed, the majority (72 percent) lived in a private bedroom inside the family house. We found differences between Regions with respect to homestay living arrangements. Most Volunteers in IAP and EMA reported living in a private bedroom inside the family home, but the majority in Africa reported living in a separate structure near the family house.

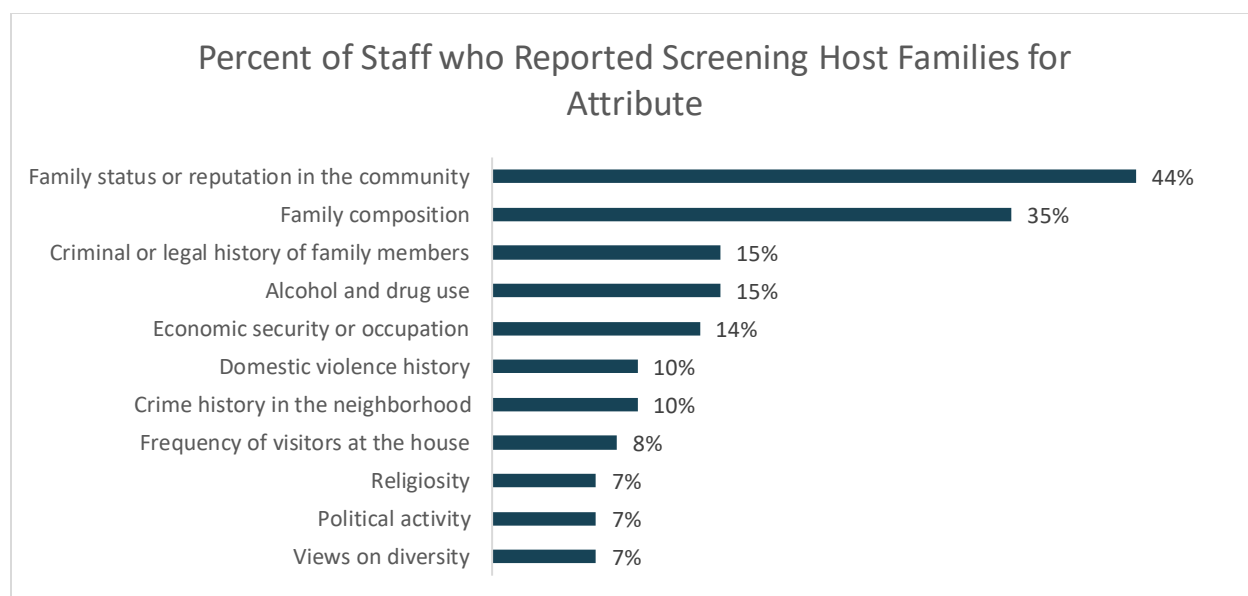
Most of the Volunteers we surveyed (69 percent) said they would prefer independent housing if given a choice. We found some differences across Regions, with a greater proportion of Volunteers in IAP (73 percent) and a smaller proportion in Africa (56 percent) indicating a preference for independent housing. Volunteers who had more private living arrangements, such as a room with a private entrance or a separate structure near the family house were less likely to say they would choose independent housing over homestay. (See Figure 5.)

**69%** of Volunteers would prefer to live *independently*



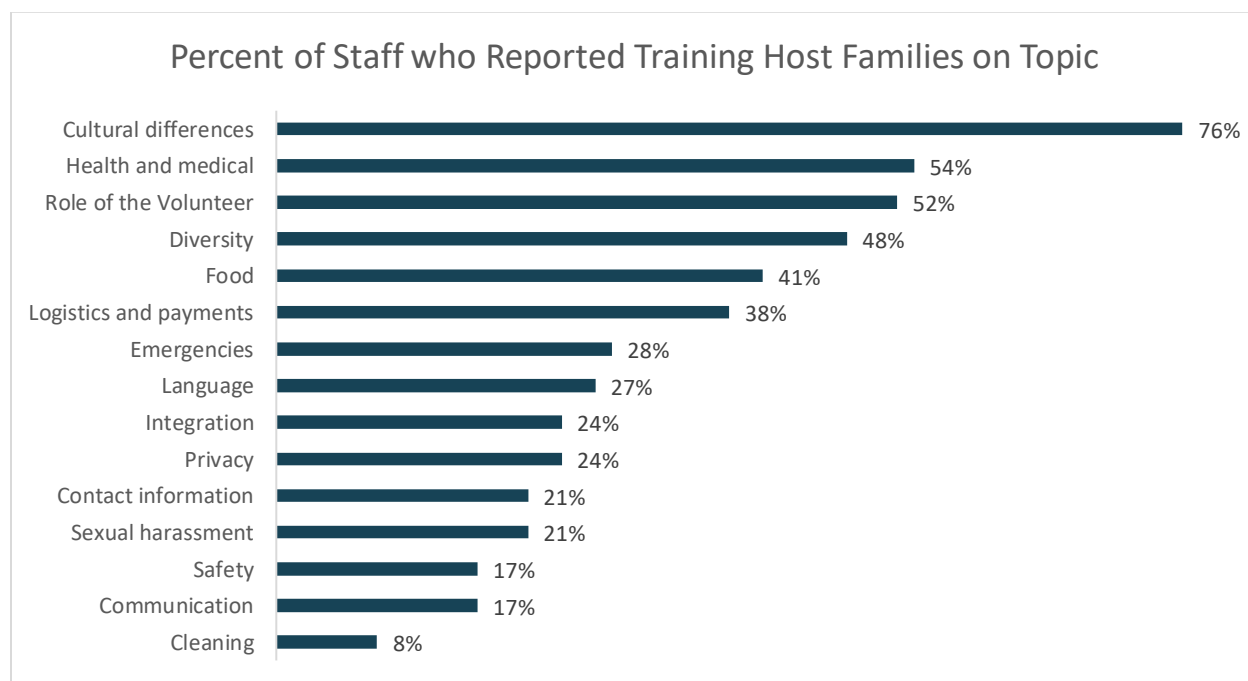
**Figure 5.** Percent of Volunteers who Would Choose Independent Living by Current Living Arrangement

We found differences across posts in terms of how staff administered the homestay programs. Post staff we interviewed reported a variety of attributes they used to screen prospective host families. Nearly half of post staff (44 percent) said they considered the status of the prospective host family, or their reputation in the community, when screening them. Staff reported they spoke with community leaders and counterparts from the host organization to assess the reputation of the potential host family to make sure they were well-respected members of the community. Approximately one-third of staff we interviewed (35 percent) said they looked at the composition of the prospective family (i.e. number of people in the home, their age, and sex) when screening them to host a Volunteer. Smaller percentages of staff said they looked at other safety aspects, such as criminal or legal history of family members (15 percent), alcohol or drug use (15 percent) or history of domestic violence (10 percent). (See Figure 6.)



**Figure 6.** Percent of Staff who Reported Screening Host Families for Attribute<sup>3</sup>

Post staff reported training host families on a variety of topics, including cultural differences, Volunteer health, and the role of the Volunteer in the community. At the time of our data collection, approximately one-fifth (21 percent) of staff at posts that required homestays during service reported training prospective host families about sexual assault and harassment, which subsequently became a requirement of the Farr Castle Act. (See Figure 7.)



**Figure 7.** Percent of Staff who Reported Training Host Families on Topic<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Post staff reported screening host families in multiple areas.

<sup>4</sup> Post staff reported training host families on multiple topics.

Staff considered different criteria in each country when matching Volunteers with host families. The most commonly considered criteria was the Volunteer's sex (55 percent), followed by the type of work assignment (34 percent). One third of post staff we interviewed (32 percent) said they matched Volunteers with host families based on the Volunteers' desire to live with children.

We compared the type of living arrangement to Volunteers' ratings of their host family's supportiveness. Living arrangements were defined as: (1) a room shared with family members, (2) a private bedroom inside the family house, (3) a room with a private entrance attached to the family house, or (4) a separate structure near the family house (see also Figure 5). Host family supportiveness was defined as the degree of supportiveness in meeting people in the community, learning customs, staying safe, learning the language, maintaining health, and maintaining social-emotional wellbeing. We found the type of living arrangement made little to no difference with how supportive Volunteers said their host families were in the areas of interest, with one exception: Volunteers who shared a room with family members were less likely to report their host family was supportive in multiple areas. Agency policy requires that Volunteers placed in homestays during service have a private room with a locking door.

We also compared the number of months spent in homestays to Volunteers' ratings of their host families' supportiveness in terms of meeting people in the community, learning customs, staying safe, learning the language, maintaining health, and maintaining social-emotional wellbeing. We found no difference between longer and shorter homestays with respect to how supportive Volunteers said their host families were.

*"I love everything about living with my host family. They're wonderful people and incredibly supportive. I can't imagine my service without my host family, it wouldn't feel right."*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Belize*

*"My host family has been a highlight of my service - they have become my family. I have liked getting to know them and appreciated their willingness to accept me as a daughter, sister, auntie, over the course of these two years."*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Cambodia*

*"I feel as if I've gained a second family. I've grown really close with my host family over the past year and I wouldn't trade that connection for anything."*

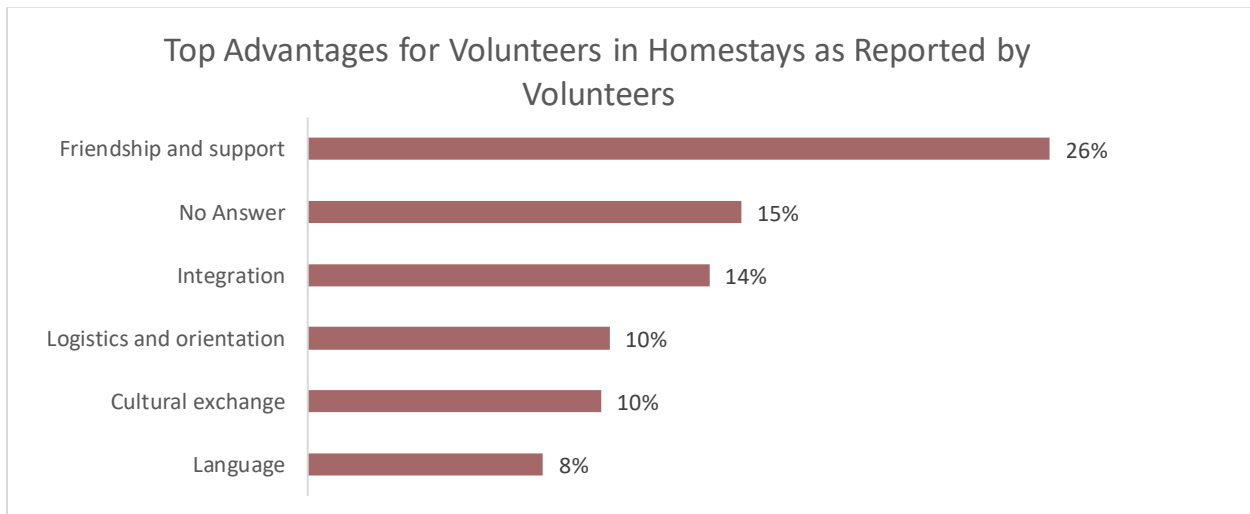
*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Colombia*

We also looked at how many hours per day Volunteers spent with their host families compared to Volunteers' ratings on how supportive their host families were of their meeting people, learning customs, staying safe, maintaining health, and maintaining social-emotional wellbeing. Volunteers who spent less than 1 hour per day with their host families were less likely to report their host families were supportive in any of the areas of interest. This indicates that Volunteers who spend less than 1 hour per day with their host families may not be benefitting from the homestay arrangement.

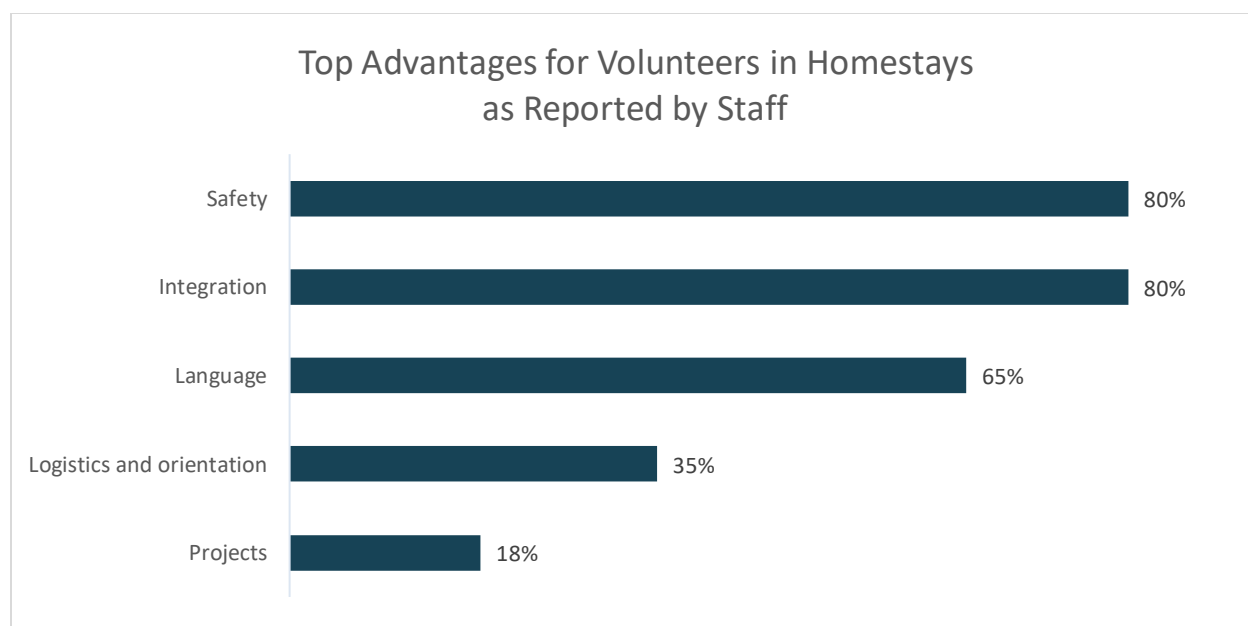
### ***HOMESTAY ADVANTAGES***

We found differences between Volunteers and staff in their views about the advantages of living with a host family. Staff were more likely than Volunteers to cite safety, integration, and language as the main advantages of homestays. The majority of staff we interviewed described safety and integration as advantages of homestays.

Volunteers cited friendship and support most frequently as the main advantage of homestays. One quarter of Volunteers we surveyed described the relationships they developed as the best part of living with a host family.



**Figure 8.** Top Advantages for Volunteers in Homestays as Reported by Volunteers



**Figure 9.** Top Advantages for Volunteers in Homestays as Reported by Staff

*“They respect my privacy but allow opportunities to engage in family activities and outings.”*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Colombia*

*“I like the fact that they are respectful of my space but also enjoy spending time with me.”*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Ecuador*

*“They were always very supportive to me, but they also treated me as an adult and understood when I needed my own space.”*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Micronesia*

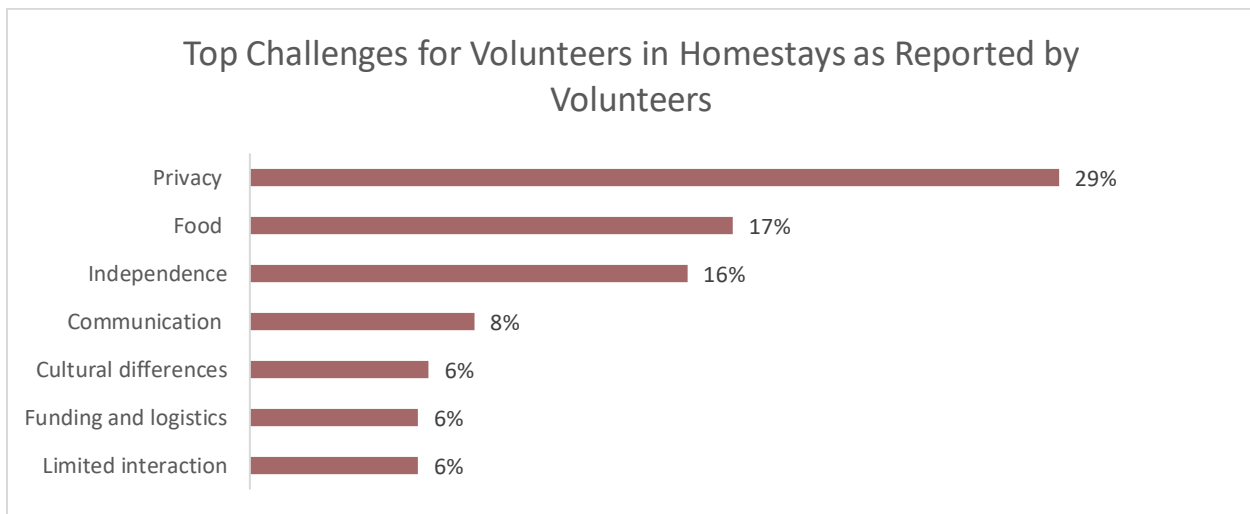
The majority (77 percent) of Volunteers we surveyed reported their host families were somewhat or very supportive of their privacy. This potentially reflected the emphasis staff placed on privacy when training homestay families. Several Volunteers described how they appreciated their host families’ respect for their privacy, alongside engagement and support, and highlighted how privacy and support are not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, a third of Volunteers still described a lack of privacy as the top challenge in homestay and privacy was the most frequently cited challenge among Volunteers. Overall, Volunteers reported far fewer advantages of homestay than staff.

***HOMESTAY CHALLENGES***

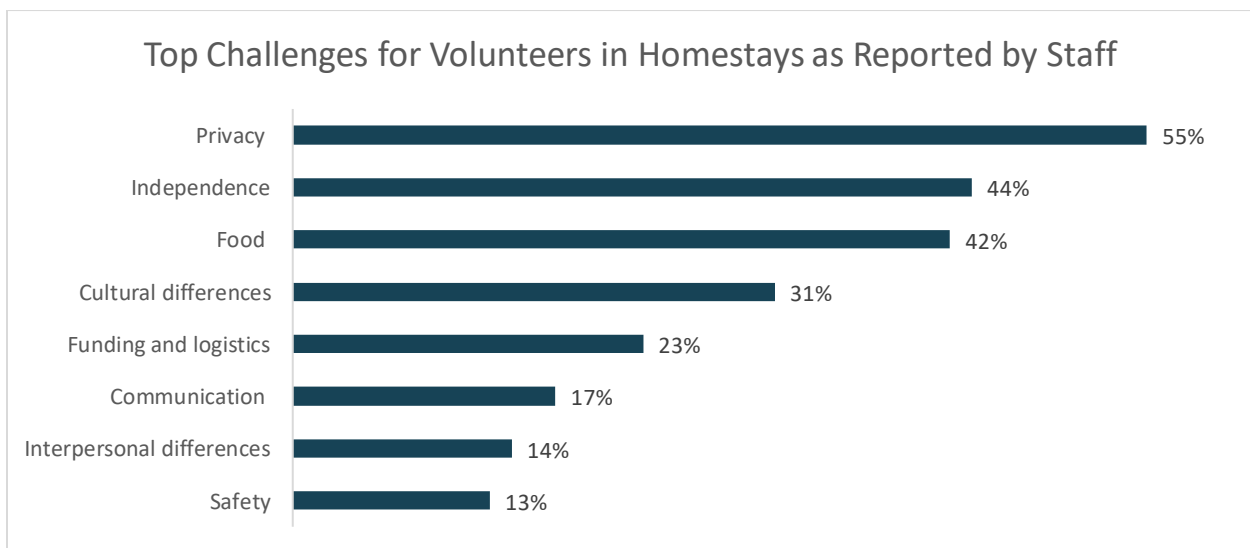
Both staff and Volunteers described privacy as one of the main challenges of homestays. Staff from many countries described cultural differences in conceptions of privacy.

*For Volunteers, giving up the privacy is a big challenge. They are living in the same house. It is difficult for them. If they are in the room the host mom gets worried. That privacy concept is normal in the US but not here.*

*~ Staff member  
IAP Region*



**Figure 10.** Top Challenges for Volunteers in Homestays as Reported by Volunteers



**Figure 11.** Top Challenges for Volunteers in Homestays as Reported by Staff

While staff were aware of most challenges that Volunteers reported, few staff members reported limited host family interaction as a challenge. In some cases, Volunteers articulated how their host families overemphasized privacy, making it difficult to interact with them.

Homestay requirements also posed substantial challenges for staff. Finding families willing and able to host a Volunteer, meeting housing criteria, traveling to prospective Volunteer sites, resolving conflicts between Volunteers and host families, and addressing inappropriate Volunteer behavior were among the main challenges for staff.

*“I am not included in chores and family events such as funerals, so I feel left out.”*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Micronesia*

*“They were always afraid to infringe on my privacy, so they left me alone and did not involve me in a lot of activities.”*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Nicaragua*

*“My host parents' schedules and insistence on my ‘privacy’ is often very alienating and difficult to live with.”*

*~ Volunteer  
Peace Corps/Samoa*

**Table 1: Challenges for Staff**

Challenges for Staff	
<b>Finding families</b>	“Finding families is the hardest thing in site development. We may have a good site but can’t find a host family. It’s hard.”
<b>Housing criteria</b>	“From staff perspective, unrealistic expectations from DC that come down about how a house should meet safety and security standards. We have standards that a house in a rural community would not need bars if others in the community did not have bars. Now all houses need to have bars. That is a challenge.”
<b>Workload</b>	“From the staff perspective. Traveling to every site is a challenge. Sometimes its 10 hours by car. They are trying to find the houses. Then, you come back and get a call that the family is not interested.”
<b>Volunteer behavior</b>	“When staff identify families and Volunteers don’t behave well or meet expectations that is hard for us as staff and as community members we put our reputation out on the line. When the Volunteer doesn’t live up to that it’s disappointing and embarrassing on our part. Some families have had their reputation ruined because the Volunteer does not [measure] up.”
<b>Problem solving</b>	“We end up spending a lot of time resolving issues. Volunteers call and tell us what the family did. Continuously you have one Volunteer issue after another, going around and around solving Volunteer issues with family.”

Staff at approximately one-quarter of posts (9 out of 38) that required homestays during service described the time they spent solving problems between host families and Volunteers as challenging. In some instances, these were legitimate problems that staff had to address, for example safety issues in the home. In other instances, however, staff said they spent time solving interpersonal conflicts between families and Volunteers. Staff attributed these problems to miscommunication between the Volunteers and host family members, especially during the initial period when Volunteers were learning the language and culture.

In 4 out of the 38 countries, staff described problematic Volunteer behavior as a challenging aspect of homestay requirements. In a few instances, staff described how Volunteer behavior could have serious implications, such as jeopardizing the reputation of the program. While few staff described this circumstance, the potential implications were serious.

At the end of this report, we present recommendations to address these management challenges.

*Especially in the first 3 months when Volunteers are adapting, it's time consuming. We are doing a lot of coaching and emotional support strategies.*

*~ Staff member  
IAP Region*

*For staff is dealing with endlessness of discontent. People who complain about it, act out about it, in some extreme cases trying to report events to get out of it. In communities where you are trying to develop relationships, Volunteers damage relationships. It leaves people feeling damaged or abused. Then it's hard to repair. [It's] burning bridges.*

*~ Staff member  
IAP Region*

*Some Volunteers have bad behavior. That leads to stereotyping. Some sites remember and say they do want a good Volunteer not one who drinks and does not behave very well. We try to convince them.*

*~ Staff member  
EMA Region*

## IMPACT OF HOST FAMILY REQUIREMENTS





















The second objective of this evaluation was to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety, language, integration, and health. Countries were included in the impact analysis if they met the inclusion criteria, as described in Appendix C.




**Table 2: Summary of Countries Included in the Homestay Impact Assessment**

Country	Region	Initial Requirement	Year of Change	New Requirement	Type of Change	Amount of Change	Reasons for Change
Georgia	EMA	6 months	2010	3 months	Decrease	- 3	Volunteer preference
Belize	IAP	3 months	2012	24 months	Increase	+ 21	Safety
Ecuador	IAP	3 months	2012	6 months	Increase	+ 3	Safety
Guatemala	IAP	3 months	2011	24 months	Increase	+ 21	Safety
Kyrgyz Republic	EMA	3 months	2014	6 months	Increase	+ 3	Integration, Language

Table 3 summarizes the evidence of the impact that homestay requirements had on the four outcome areas we assessed in the five countries that were included in the analysis. In two of the five countries, we found evidence that homestay requirements had a positive impact on serious crime. In two of four countries, we found evidence that homestay requirements had a positive impact on language. In one of four countries, we found evidence that homestay requirements had a positive impact on integration. We found no evidence that homestay requirements had an impact on any of the outcomes assessed in Belize or Guatemala. Likewise, we found no evidence that host family requirements had an impact on the health outcome we assessed (i.e. total rate of GI infections). Improved language acquisition was the most likely impact of homestay requirements (observed in two of four countries), followed by a positive impact on the rate of serious crime (observed in two of five countries).

**Table 3: Summary of Findings on the Impact of Homestay Requirements**

	<b>Kyrgyz Republic</b>	<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Ecuador</b>	<b>Belize</b>	<b>Guatemala</b>
<b>Serious Crime</b>					
<b>Language</b>					
<b>Integration</b>					
<b>Health</b>					

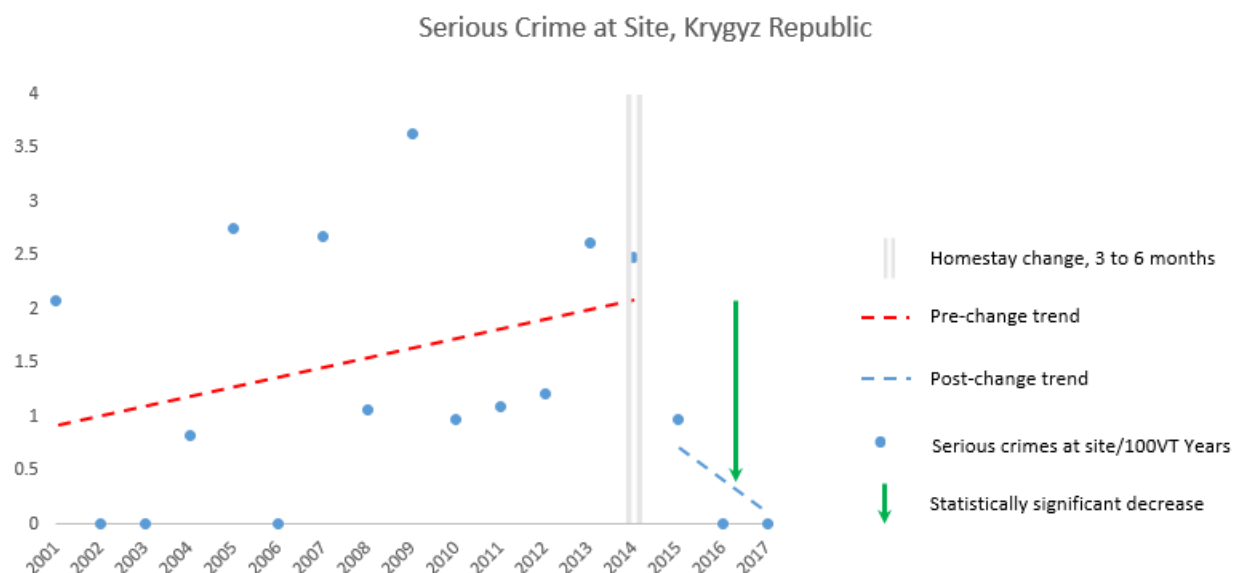
-  Evidence demonstrated a positive impact
-  Evidence did not demonstrate an impact
-  Data were insufficient to assess impact

## ***SAFETY***

We assessed the impact of homestay requirements on serious crime and serious crime at site for five posts that met the inclusion criteria: Ecuador, Kyrgyz Republic, Georgia, Guatemala and Belize. The Peace Corps defined serious crime as homicide, kidnapping, rape, aggravated sexual assault, robbery and aggravated physical assault. The impact of homestay requirements on serious crime and serious crime at site was inconsistent across countries.

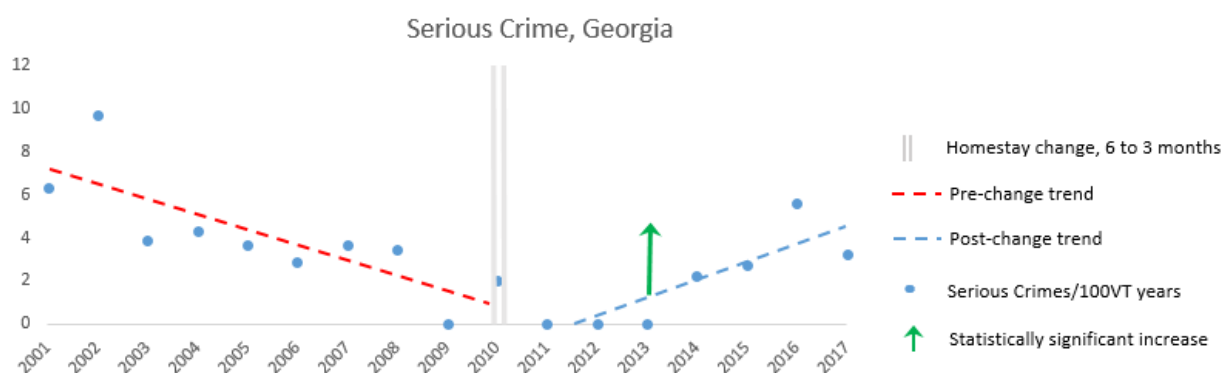
We found no significant impact on serious crime or serious crime at site in Ecuador and Guatemala after increasing homestay requirements (see Appendix B). Both posts reported that improving Volunteer safety was the main reason for changing their policy. Peace Corps/Guatemala changed its homestay policy in response to the Volunteer Support Initiative, as described above.

In 2014, Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic increased its homestay requirement during service from 3 months to 6 months. After the policy change, we found the rate of serious crimes at site significantly decreased in 2016 and 2017, but the effect was delayed (i.e. not significant until 2 years after the policy change). Given the recency of the policy change, we were unable to determine if the change was sustained.



**Figure 12.** Serious Crime at Site, Kyrgyz Republic

In 2010, Peace Corps/Georgia decreased its homestay requirement from 6 months to 3 months. Georgia was the only post we assessed that decreased its homestay requirement. The post decreased its homestay requirement primarily to respond to Volunteer preferences. After the policy change, we found a significant increase in serious crime from 2013 to 2016. The effect was delayed and not significant until 2013 (see Appendix B).



**Figure 13.** Serious Crime, Georgia

In 2012, Peace Corps/Belize increased its homestay requirement during service from 3 months to 24 months. After the post increased its homestay requirement to 24 months, we found a significant decrease in serious crimes in the years from 2013 to 2016. However, this impact was not sustained by 2017 (see also Appendix B). In this context, increased homestay requirements during service did not appear to have a lasting effect on reducing serious crimes. Therefore, the observed decrease in serious crimes was likely due to other factors, as opposed to the homestay requirement alone.

Numerous Peace Corps staff said they thought living with a host family was safer for Volunteers. Post staff provided several explanations of how homestay requirements might prevent crime against volunteers. First, post staff commonly reported that host families protected Volunteers like members of their own family. Second, host families provided insider information about locations and people in the community that were unsafe. Third, Volunteers living with host families inherited a positive reputation in the community and gained acceptance which was thought to deter crime. “The biggest advantage is safety. When a Volunteer is taken in by the family, they become their responsibility. With that comes acceptance from the community. The community looks out for the [Volunteer].”

In conclusion, the impact of host family policies on Volunteer safety appears to be inconsistent across countries. In three countries (Ecuador, Guatemala, and Belize) homestay requirements did not appear to reduce serious crimes against Volunteers. In two countries (Kyrgyz Republic and Georgia), we found evidence that homestay requirements improved safety outcomes for Volunteers.

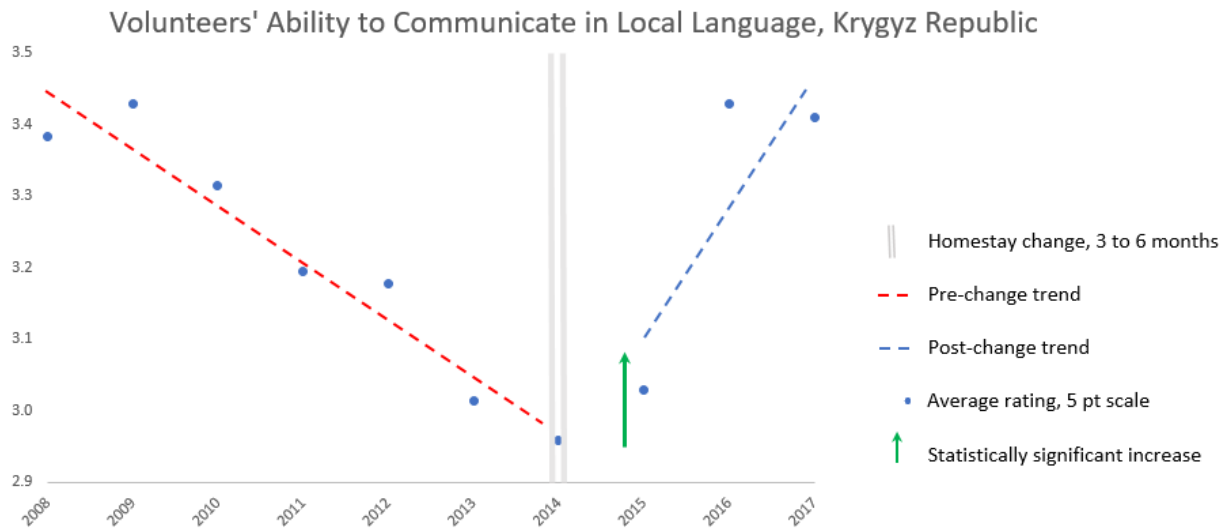
## *LANGUAGE*

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We assessed the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer’s self-assessed ability to speak the local language. Four countries met the inclusion criteria for the impact assessment, Kyrgyz Republic, Ecuador, Belize, and Guatemala. The findings across countries were inconsistent. In Belize and Guatemala, we found no significant change in Volunteers’ ability to communicate in the local language after the posts increased their homestay requirements. Both posts increased their homestay requirements substantially, by 21 months. In Kyrgyz Republic and Ecuador, we found evidence that homestay requirements contributed to improved language outcomes, though in Ecuador, we could not determine if the change was sustained.

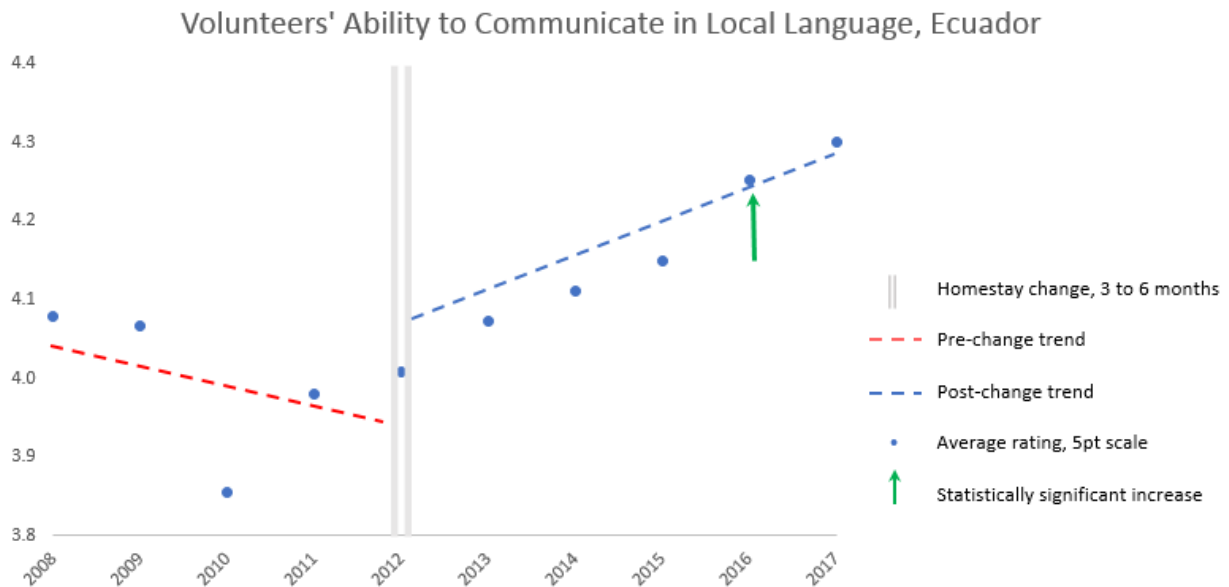
In the annual Volunteer survey, the Peace Corps asked Volunteers to rate how well they could communicate in the language used by most people in the community on a five-point scale. This indicator was limited in that it represented self-perceptions of language proficiency as opposed to an objective test of their language proficiency. At the time this evaluation was conducted, the Peace Corps had begun collecting objective measures of language proficiency by administering the LPI to Volunteers at their close of service. Because the agency had only initiated this practice in recent years, we did not have enough consecutive measurements to assess impact. However, the annual Volunteer survey did provide sufficient years of consecutive and consistent measurements. Recent response rates for the annual Volunteer survey were approximately 90 percent of all Volunteers globally.

In 2014, Peace Corps/Kyrgyz Republic increased its homestay requirement during service from 3 months to 6 months. We found a significant increase in Volunteers’ average ratings of local language proficiency in the 3 years after the post increased its homestay requirements (see Appendix B).



**Figure 14.** Volunteers' Ability to Communicate in Local Language, Kyrgyz Republic

In 2012, Peace Corps/Ecuador increased its homestay requirement during service from 3 months to 6 months. After the post increased its homestay requirement, we found a significant increase in Volunteers' self-reported ability to communicate in the local language. However, this impact was delayed and not significant until 2016 and 2017 (see Appendix B). Moreover, we could not determine if the impact was sustained.



**Figure 15.** Volunteers' Ability to Communicate in Local Language, Ecuador

Post staff widely reported that living with a host family would facilitate Volunteer's ability to learn the local language. As one staff member explained, "Another important aspect is language

because they are forced to interact. The small space [of their room] they cannot stay inside. They have to interact. That is positive.”

In conclusion, we found the impact of host family requirements on Volunteers ability to communicate in the local language was inconsistent across countries, though it was a more likely outcome than improved safety. In two countries, Ecuador and Kyrgyz Republic, we found a positive impact on local language proficiency. However, in Belize and Guatemala we found no evidence of an impact on language.

## INTEGRATION

We assessed the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer integration into their communities. The Peace Corps collected consistent, consecutive measurements of Volunteer integration in its annual Volunteer survey. The agency asked Volunteers to rate how integrated into the community they feel on a five-point scale. This indicator was limited in that it represented Volunteer’s self-perceptions of integration as opposed to objective measures. As noted above, the response rates for the surveys were high. Four countries, Belize, Ecuador, Kyrgyz Republic, and Guatemala met the inclusion criteria for the impact analysis. In Belize, Guatemala, and Kyrgyz Republic, we found no significant increase in Volunteers’ mean ratings of integration following increased homestay requirements.

In 2012, Peace Corps/Ecuador increased its homestay requirement from 3 months to 6 months. After the policy change, we found a significant increase in Volunteers’ mean ratings of their integration. The observed effect was immediate and sustained for years following the policy change.

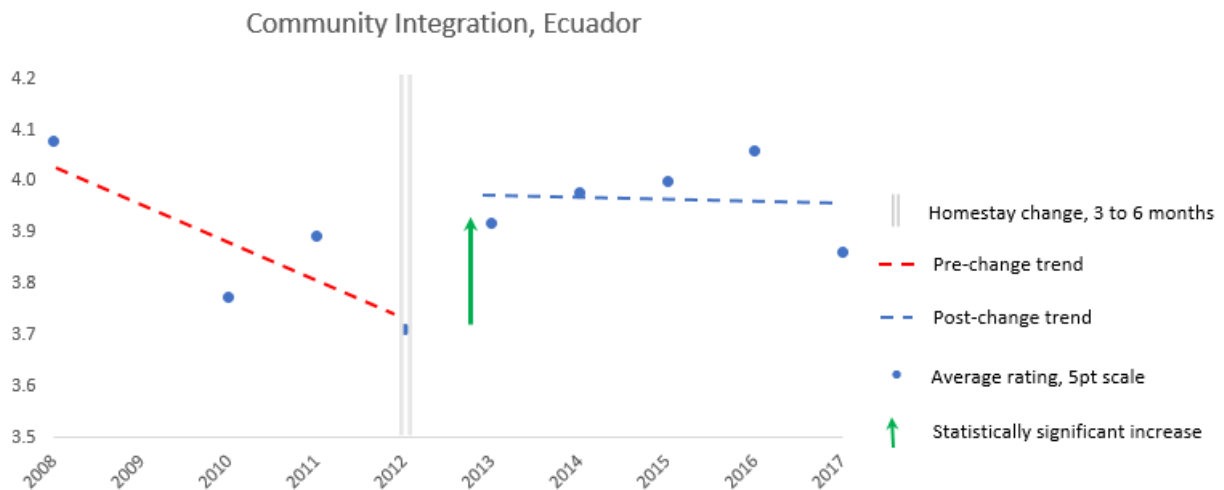


Figure 16. Community Integration, Ecuador

Staff we interviewed widely reported they thought homestays helped Volunteers integrate. As staff explained, host families helped Volunteers meet people in the community, invited

Volunteers to cultural events, helped explain local customs, and provided guidance on how to behave appropriately. Additionally, numerous staff explained that it was culturally inappropriate to live independently.

## ***HEALTH***

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We assessed the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer health. We looked specifically at the rates of GI conditions. Numerous Volunteers cited foodborne illness as a major challenge with homestays. The agency's categorization of GI conditions was inconsistent over time. We used the broadest definition for the total rate of GI conditions to obtain consistent measures over time. The limitation was that total GI conditions included conditions, such as viral infections, that may have been unrelated to food and water safety during homestays. However, viral GI conditions comprised a relatively small proportion of the total rate of GI conditions. Four countries (Belize, Georgia, Ecuador, and Guatemala) met the inclusion criteria for the analysis of homestay impact on health. We found no statistically significant differences in the rates of GI conditions in any country we assessed.

Staff we interviewed described other ways in which living with a host family could impact Volunteer health. For example, staff described how host families could be helpful during medical emergencies, accompanying Volunteers to get medical care and communicating with the Peace Corps medical officer. So, the rate of GI conditions may not serve as the best measure of homestay policies' impact on Volunteer health.

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## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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***Staff widely assumed that host family requirements improved Volunteer safety, though evidence of an impact on safety was inconsistent across countries.***

Volunteer safety is a priority of the agency and Congress. At the time this evaluation was initiated, some stakeholders expressed concern about the potential for unintended adverse consequences of homestay requirements, but robust evidence on the efficacy of homestay policies was not available.

We found that safety was the most frequently cited reason staff gave for increasing homestay requirements, and staff widely assumed that improved safety was the main advantage of homestays. Peace Corps staff should not assume that homestay requirements improve Volunteer safety, as results were inconsistent across countries, and in some countries, we found no impact. Implementing homestay requirements is costly and time consuming for staff. If homestay requirements do not achieve the intended outcomes, resources could be put to better use. Crime rates should be rigorously monitored at all posts that decide to transition to, increase, or decrease homestay requirements and management decisions should be made accordingly. Interrupted time

series analysis can provide a robust approach<sup>5</sup> to assessing the impact of policy changes. Because interrupted time series produces an effect size,<sup>6</sup> it can also be combined with cost data to facilitate cost-benefit analysis. Evidence-based policymaking is a priority of the administration<sup>7</sup> and an explicit standard for Federal operations.<sup>8</sup> In 2017, the bipartisan Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking recommended strengthening Federal evidence-building capacity, including that resources be made available to support evidence-building activities.<sup>9</sup> The Peace Corps' Strategic Plan for 2018-2022<sup>10</sup> includes an objective to "identify and proactively address risks and opportunities through systematic, evidence-based decision making," as part of its organizational risk management approach. As such, agency leadership should plan to analyze the impact of homestay requirements and make evidence-based decisions accordingly.

**We recommend:**

- 1. That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning collaborate with the Office of Safety and Security to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety using Interrupted Time Series analysis or a similarly robust approach.**

*Staff infrequently cited improving language as the primary reason to increase homestay requirements, though evidence suggested this was a more likely outcome.*

The Peace Corps Act requires Volunteers to have reasonable proficiency in the language of the country or area where assigned. We assessed the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteers' ability to speak the local language in four countries. In two countries, Belize and Guatemala, we found no evidence of an impact. In the Kyrgyz Republic and Ecuador, we found significant increases in Volunteers' ability to communicate in the language after the posts increased their homestay requirements, however, we could not determine if the impact was sustained in Ecuador.

Improved language was a more likely outcome than improvements in serious crime. We observed significant improvements in language in two of the four countries we assessed, as opposed to significant improvements in serious crime in two of the five countries we assessed. However, staff less frequently cited improving language as the main reason for starting or increasing homestay requirements. Many staff recognized it was an advantage, though.

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<sup>5</sup> Changes in outcomes can be causally attributed to the effects of the policy.

<sup>6</sup> A quantitative measure of the size of the policy impact.

<sup>7</sup> [Delivering Government Solutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations \(2017\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government \(Green book\)](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Report of the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Peace Corps Strategic Plan 2018-2022](#)

This analysis was limited in that it was based on Volunteers' self-reported ability to communicate in the local language as opposed to an objective measure such as the LPI at COS. This analysis should be repeated when additional years of LPI measurements at COS become available. Additional analysis using objective measures of language proficiency can provide robust evidence that homestay requirements contribute to improved language outcomes. This evidence can be used by agency leadership to make decisions about implementing homestay requirements at posts. As noted above, agency leadership should incorporate homestay impact analysis into their plan for evidence-based policy decisions.

**We recommend:**

- 2. That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning collaborate with the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer language proficiency using Interrupted Time Series analysis or a similarly robust approach.**

***Many Volunteers appreciated their privacy during homestay and thought friendship and support were the main advantages of living with a host family.***

Post staff widely recognized the challenges of privacy for Volunteers in homestays. Most Volunteers we surveyed described their host families as being somewhat or very supportive of their privacy, possibly reflecting the emphasis staff placed on privacy when training host families. Post staff should be careful to nuance their messaging about privacy, particularly because many staff described privacy as a foreign concept in many cultures. While Volunteers appreciated host families' respect for their privacy, it should be clear that privacy is not the same thing as ignoring or excluding. Many Volunteers reported wanting and valuing friendship and support from their host families and described this as the main advantage of homestays, however, few post staff cited this advantage of homestays. According to MS 270, subsection 6.5, post staff are required to orient host families to promote a more supportive environment. When preparing families to host a Volunteer, post staff should distinguish privacy from limited engagement and exclusion to better promote friendship and support. Emphasizing friendship and support when training host families will help to maximize the advantages of homestay requirements for Volunteers and help the Peace Corps better achieve its mission of promoting world peace and friendship.

**We recommend:**

- 3. That the associate director of the Office of Global Operations issue guidance to posts that describes how and why to emphasize both privacy and support when training host families.**

*Homestay requirements during service involved significant challenges for Volunteers and staff that leadership should consider and address.*

This evaluation highlighted the numerous challenges for Volunteers and staff associated with homestay requirements. We found that most Volunteers worldwide would live independently if given a choice. We also found significant challenges for staff in implementing homestay requirements, including increased workload and travel, difficulty meeting housing criteria, and difficulty finding families. Staff from several countries reported spending time resolving conflicts between Volunteers and host families. Though some issues, like safety issues, clearly required staff intervention, when presented with interpersonal communication issues between Volunteers and host families, post leadership should encourage staff to coach and empower Volunteers to resolve their own problems and minimize staff time spent addressing these types of issues. Staff also reported problematic Volunteer behavior that could potentially jeopardize the program's reputation. These challenges should be weighed against the potential benefits described in this evaluation, such as improved language, friendship, and support, when deciding to start or increase homestay requirements.

The mission of the Peace Corps Office of Global Operations is to oversee and coordinate strategic support for overseas posts including promoting efficiency, streamlining operations and disseminating best practices among the regions (MS125, subsection 4.1). Before this evaluation was conducted, information on the advantages, challenges, and impacts of homestay requirements was not available. The Office of Global Operations should use the information provided in this evaluation to guide post leadership in their decision-making concerning homestay requirements to promote efficiency and best practices, according to their mission.

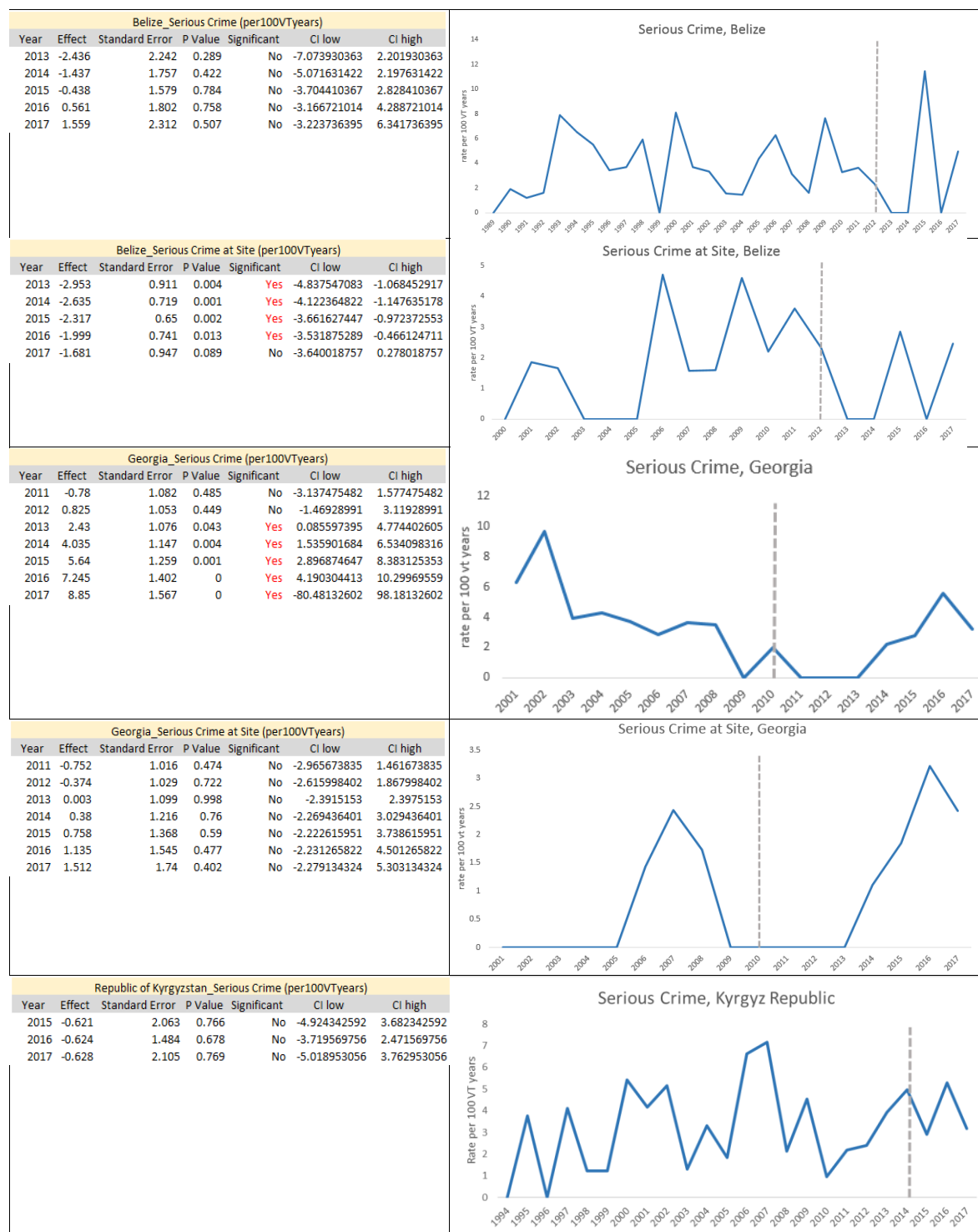
**We recommend:**

- 4. That the associate director of the Office of Global Operations provides guidance to posts about initiating, increasing, and implementing homestay requirements in order to mitigate the challenges associated with these policies.**

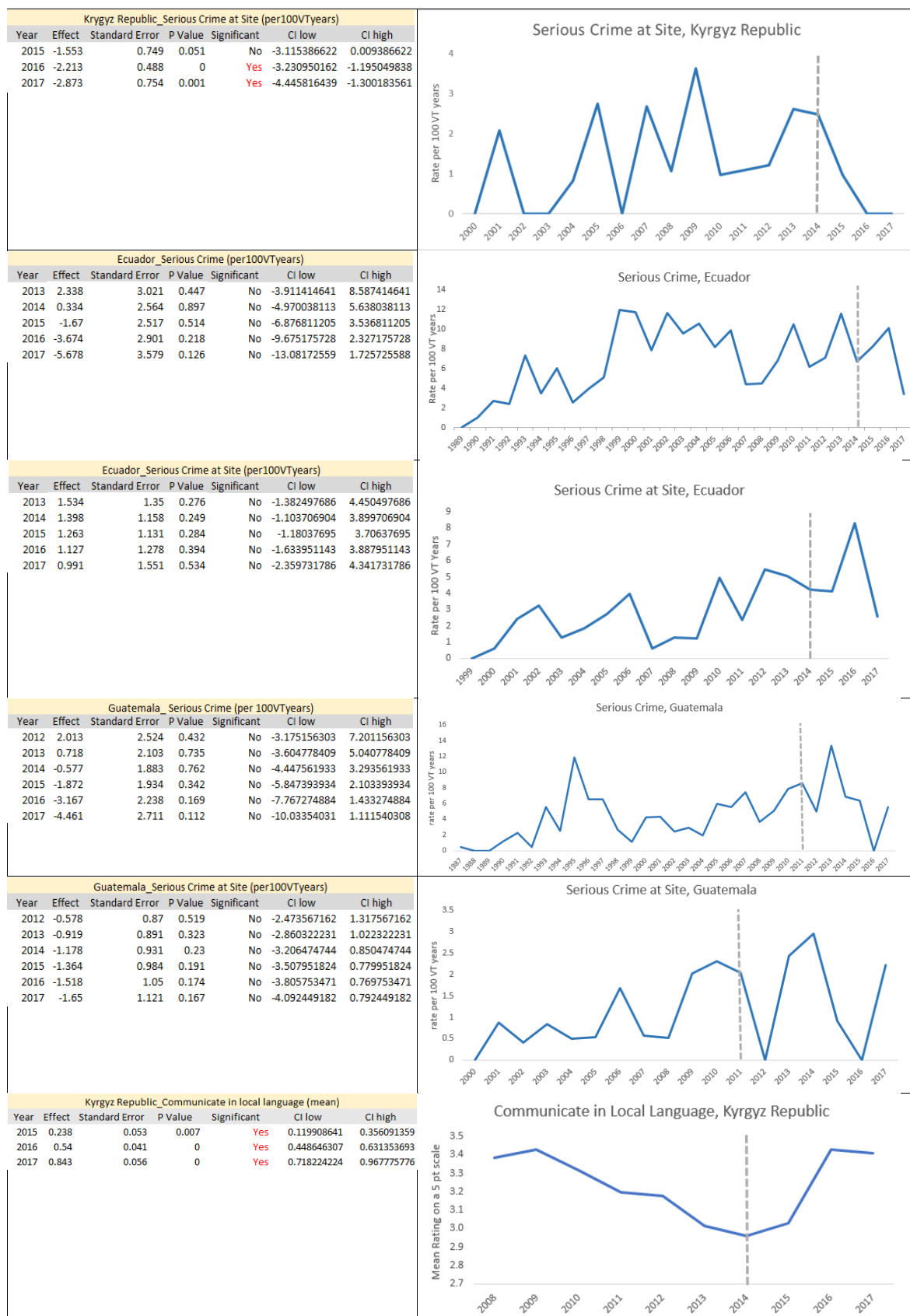
## APPENDIX A: POST HOMESTAY REQUIREMENTS

Posts with homestay during service	Posts without homestay during service
Albania	Benin
Armenia	Botswana
Belize	Cameroon
Cambodia	China
Colombia	Eastern Caribbean
Comoros	Fiji
Costa Rica	Ghana
Dominican Republic	Guinea
Ecuador	Lesotho
Ethiopia	Liberia
FSM	Madagascar
Georgia	Malawi
Guatemala	Mongolia
Guyana	Mozambique
Indonesia	Myanmar
Jamaica	Rwanda
Kosovo	Sierra Leone
Kyrgyz Republic	Tanzania
Macedonia	Togo
Mexico	Tonga
Moldova	Vanuatu
Morocco	Zambia
Namibia	
Nepal	
Nicaragua	
Panama	
Paraguay	
Peru	
Philippines	
Samoa	
Senegal	
South Africa	
Swaziland	
Thailand	
The Gambia	
Timor-Leste	
Uganda	
Ukraine	
38	22

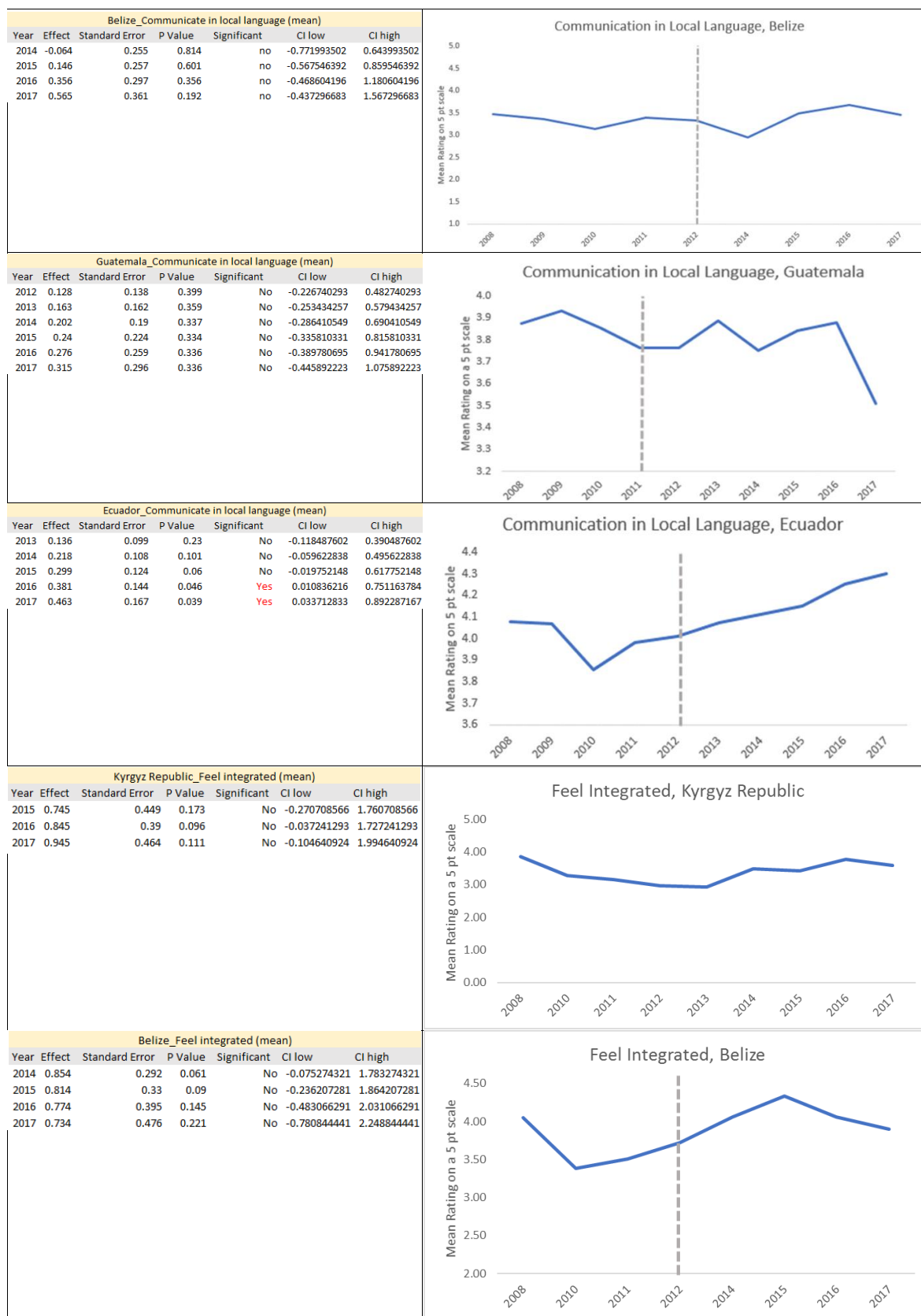
## APPENDIX B: RESULT TABLES



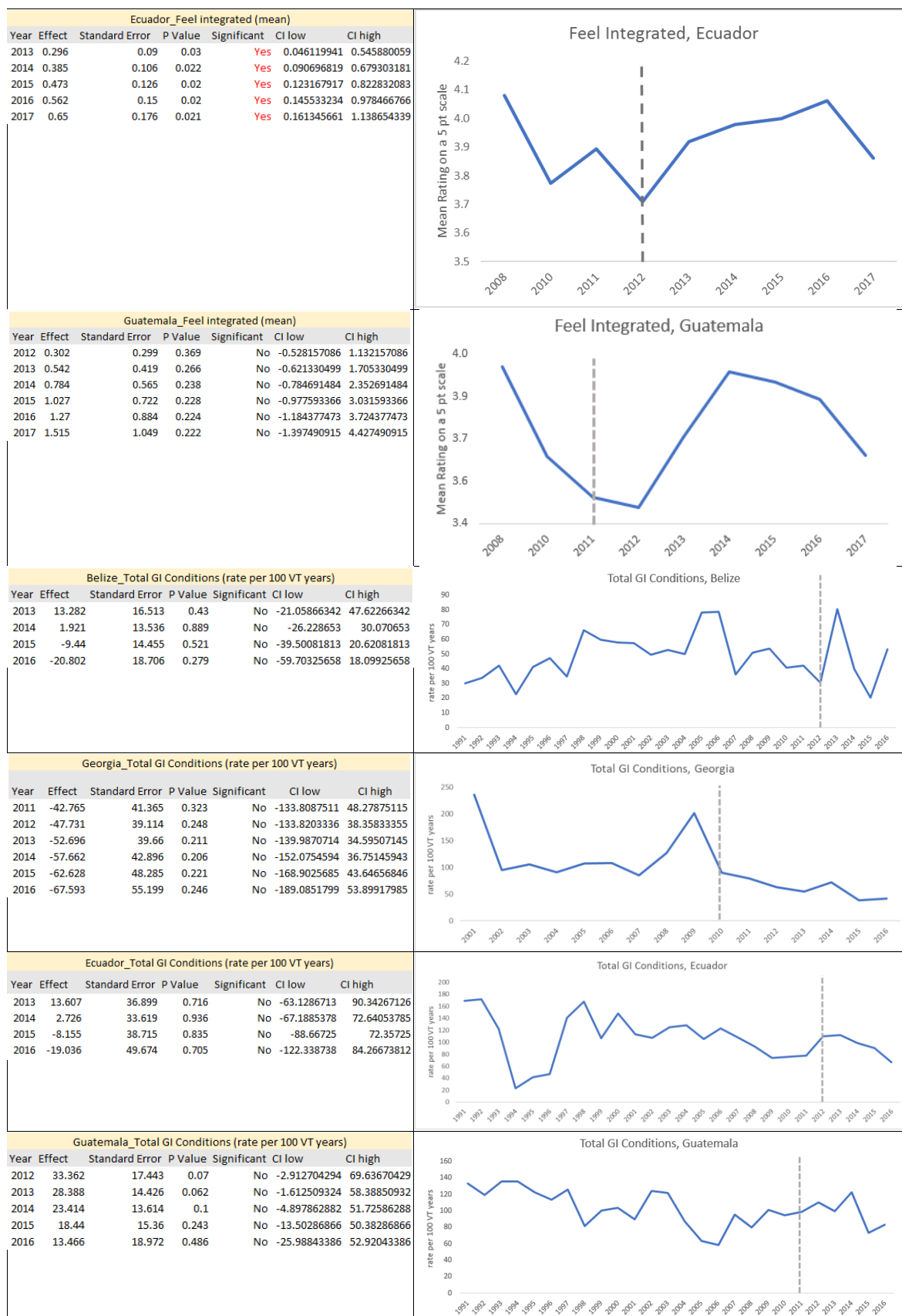
# PEACE CORPS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL



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## APPENDIX C: INTERRUPTED TIME SERIES ANALYSIS

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### Approach

To implement this method, we first identified post staff who were present when the homestay requirement was changed. We conducted in-depth phone interviews to understand the context in which the change was implemented, the year of the policy change, and if there was a clear point of implementation. We asked if the policy change was applied to all Volunteers at the same time or phased in to a smaller population such as a certain region or technical area.

### Inclusion Criteria

Posts were excluded if:

- They did not have a clear point of implementation. For example, the requirement was applied to one group of Volunteers, but not another. Or, it was phased in over time.
- There were fewer than 3 years of data before or after the policy change.
- The policy change was unclear. For example, we could not obtain the number of months of homestay that were required before the policy change was implemented.

### Limitations

A limitation of ITS is that other events may have happened at the same time as the policy change that could also have influenced the outcomes of interest. To mitigate this limitation, we asked post staff to recall any other events that happened at the same time as the homestay policy change that could have influenced the outcomes of interest.

We looked at demographic trends over time (sex, age, and race) to see if any changes occurred that could have impacted the outcomes of interest. In all countries the ratio of male to female Volunteers remained stable over time. Georgia was the only country with unusual demographic trends for age and race. In all countries except Georgia, we observed a steady decrease in the average age of Volunteers. Likewise, in Georgia, we observed an increase in the rate of non-white Volunteers in 2014. Whereas in other countries, Volunteer diversity remained largely unchanged. It is unlikely that these demographic changes could explain the changes in the outcomes we observed.

Another limitation of this approach was that post staff may not have recalled accurately the year and context of the policy change. Also, most staff were not able to identify the month of the policy change. We included the year of the policy change as part of the pre-intervention trend

because it was unlikely that an effect would have been observed in the same year the policy started. However, the outcome measurement in the year the policy was changed could have represented post-intervention period if the policy change was implemented early in the year.

This analysis relied on the Peace Corps' administratively collected data, and therefore was limited by the quality and accuracy of those datasets.

In planning for this evaluation, stakeholders expressed concerns that homestay requirements could potentially place Volunteers at additional risk, especially to crimes such as sexual assault and theft. We were unable to assess the impact of homestay policies on specific types of crime because there was too much variability in the data to detect clear trends before and after the policy change. Moreover, ITS requires that outcomes are measured consistently over time. The Peace Corps changed the way that it collected information on sexual assaults after the Kate Puzey Volunteer Protection Act of 2011.

### Analysis

We followed the Cochrane Guide for Interrupted Time Series Analysis.<sup>11</sup> We used ARIMA (Autoregressive Integrated Moving Averages) to account for variability in the outcome measurements over time. We used a segmented approach to look at significance for each year after the intervention. Confidence intervals were set at 95 percent.

A change was deemed 'delayed' if the difference was not significant in the year immediately following the policy change. The effect was considered 'not sustained' if the results were not significant for all years after the policy change or for at least 3 years. Three factors were considered as evidence that the policy change caused the observed difference in outcomes: (1) a change in level between the pre- and post-intervention measurements, (2) a change in slope between the pre- and post-intervention measurements, and (3) a sustained, significant difference for all years after the intervention.

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<sup>11</sup> Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC). *Interrupted time series (ITS) analyses*. EPOC Resources for review authors, 2017. Available at: <http://epoc.cochrane.org/epoc-specific-resources-review-authors>

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## APPENDIX D: ACRONYMS

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OIG	Office of Inspector General
IAP	Inter-America and the Pacific
EMA	Europe, Mediterranean and Asia
LPI	Language Proficiency Index
AVS	Annual Volunteer Survey
GI	Gastrointestinal
ARIMA	Autoregressive Integrated Moving Averages
ITS	Interrupted Time Series Analysis
CIGIE	Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency
COS	Close of Service

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## APPENDIX E: LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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We recommend:

1. That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning collaborate with the Office of Safety and Security to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety using Interrupted Time Series analysis or a similarly robust approach.
2. That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information, Research, and Planning collaborate with the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer language proficiency using Interrupted Time Series analysis or a similarly robust approach.
3. That the associate director of the Office of Global Operations issue guidance to posts that describes how and why to emphasize both privacy and support when training host families.
4. That the associate director of the Office of Global Operations provides guidance to posts about initiating, increasing, and implementing homestay requirements in order to mitigate the challenges associated with these policies.

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## APPENDIX F: AGENCY RESPONSE TO THE PRELIMINARY REPORT


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**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kathy Buller, Inspector General

**Through:** Anne Hughes, Chief Compliance Officer 

**From:** Michelle K. Brooks, Chief of Staff  
Patrick Young, Associate Director, Office of Global Operations 

**Date:** July 24, 2019

**CC:** Jody K. Olsen, Director  
Matt McKinney, Deputy Chief of Staff/White House Liaison  
Robert Shanks, Associate General Counsel  
Joaquin Ferrao, Deputy Inspector General  
Jeremy Black, AIG/Evaluations  
Shawn Bardwell, Associate Director for Safety and Security  
Karen Becker, Associate Director, Office of Health Services  
Jeffrey Kwiecinski, Deputy Director, Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning

**Subject:** Agency Response to the Report: Homestay Impact Evaluation (Project No. 18-EVAL-08)

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Enclosed please find the agency's response to the recommendations made by the Inspector General for the Homestay Impact Evaluation as outlined in the Preliminary Report on Homestay Impact Evaluation (Project No. 18-EVAL-08) given to the agency on June 7, 2019.

The agency concurred with three recommendations and partially concurred with one recommendation provided by the OIG in its Homestay Impact Evaluation, and will work to address all of the recommendations by the set target dates.

**Recommendation 1**

That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information and Planning collaborate with the Office of Safety and Security to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety using Interrupted Time Series analysis or similarly robust approach.

**Concur**

**Response:** The Office of Strategic Information and Planning (OSIRP) will collaborate with the Office of Safety and Security to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety.

**Documents to be Submitted:**

- Plan for Assessing the Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Safety
- Results for Assessing the Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Safety

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** December 2019

**Recommendation 2**

That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information and Planning collaborate with the Office of Programming and Training support to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer language proficiency using Interrupted Time Series analysis or similarly robust approach.

**Concur**

**Response:** OSIRP will collaborate with the Office of Programming and Training to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer language proficiency.

**Documents Submitted:**

- Plan for Assessing Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Language Proficiency
- Results for Assessing the Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Language Proficiency

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** December 2019

### **Recommendation 3**

That the associate director of the Office of Global Operations provides guidance to posts about initiating, increasing, and implementing homestay requirements in order to mitigate the challenges associated with these policies.

#### **Partially Concur**

**Response:** The agency agrees it is important to make evidence-based policy decisions and issue guidance in line with these decisions. The agency has partially concurred with this recommendation, because it does not have conclusive evidence that could inform global guidance about the initiating, increasing, and implementing of homestay requirements in order to mitigate the challenges associated with these policies. While this report provides an overview of some of the challenges associated with homestay policies, the agency has not received a copy of the survey used to gather the underlying qualitative responses or access to the actual responses given by staff or Volunteers. Therefore, if the agency does acquire this data or data from other sources that could inform guidance as it relates to this recommendation, the agency will then issue guidance to posts accordingly.

#### **Documents Submitted:**

- Guidance to posts (if developed and issued)

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** February 2020

### **Recommendation 4**

That the associate director of the Office of Global Operations issue guidance to posts that describes how and why to emphasize both privacy and support when training host families.

#### **Concur**

**Response:** The Office of Global Operations will issue guidance to posts that describes how and why to emphasize both privacy and support when training host families.

#### **Documents to be Submitted:**

- Guidance on Privacy and Support for Posts/Host Families

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** February 2020

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## APPENDIX G: OIG COMMENTS

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Management concurred with three of the four recommendations and partially concurred with one recommendation. All four recommendations remain open. The agency partially concurred with recommendation 3, pending the receipt of the data and data collection tools, which OIG will provide. In its response, management described actions it is taking or intends to take to address the issues that prompted each of our recommendations.

OIG will review and consider closing recommendation 4 when the documentation reflected in the agency's response to the preliminary report is received. For recommendations 1-3 additional documentation is required. These recommendations remain open pending confirmation from the chief compliance officer that the documentation reflected in our analysis below is received.

We wish to note that in closing recommendations, we are not certifying that the agency has taken these actions or that we have reviewed their effect. Certifying compliance and verifying effectiveness are management's responsibilities. However, when we feel it is warranted, we may conduct a follow-up review to confirm that action has been taken and to evaluate the impact.

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information and Planning collaborate with the Office of Safety and Security to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety using Interrupted Time Series analysis or similarly robust approach.**

### **Concur:**

**Response:** The Office of Strategic Information and Planning (OSIRP) will collaborate with the Office of Safety and Security to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety.

### **Documents to be Submitted:**

- Plan for Assessing the Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Safety
- Results for Assessing the Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Safety

### **Status and Timeline for Completion:** December 2019

**OIG Analysis:** While it may be reasonable to develop a plan for assessing impact by December 2019, OIG believes that it is unlikely that the agency will be able to obtain robust data on the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer safety within that timeframe. The intent of this recommendation was to encourage the agency to make a long-term plan to evaluate homestay impacts on Volunteer safety over time as sufficient longitudinal data is available to assess impacts at particular posts. To close this recommendation, the Peace Corps should submit an

evaluation plan that identifies when it expects to be able to assess the effect on Volunteer safety of homestay policies at particular posts.

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the deputy director of the Office of Strategic Information and Planning collaborate with the Office of Programming and Training support to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer language proficiency using Interrupted Time Series analysis or similarly robust approach.**

#### **Concur**

Response: OSIRP will collaborate with the Office of Programming and Training to develop a plan to assess the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer language proficiency.

#### **Documents Submitted:**

- Plan for Assessing Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Language Proficiency
- Results for Assessing the Impact of Homestay Requirements on Volunteer Language Proficiency

#### **Status and Timeline for Completion:** December 2019

**OIG Analysis:** While it may be reasonable to develop a plan for assessing impact by December 2019, OIG believes that it is unlikely that the agency will be able to obtain robust data on the impact of homestay requirements on Volunteer language within that timeframe. The intent of this recommendation was to encourage the agency to make a long-term plan to evaluate homestay impacts on Volunteer language proficiency over time as sufficient longitudinal data is available to assess impacts at particular posts. To close this recommendation, the Peace Corps should submit an evaluation plan that identifies when it expects to be able to assess the effect on Volunteer language proficiency of homestay policies at particular posts.

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the associate director of the Office of Global Operations provides guidance to posts about initiating, increasing, and implementing homestay requirements in order to mitigate the challenges associated with these policies.**

#### **Partially Concur**

Response: The agency agrees it is important to make evidence-based policy decisions and issue guidance in line with these decisions. The agency has partially concurred with this recommendation, because it does not have conclusive evidence that could inform global

guidance about the initiating, increasing, and implementing of homestay requirements in order to mitigate the challenges associated with these policies. While this report provides an overview of some of the challenges associated with homestay policies, the agency has not received a copy of the survey used to gather the underlying qualitative responses or access to the actual responses given by staff or Volunteers. Therefore, if the agency does acquire this data or data from other sources that could inform guidance as it relates to this recommendation, the agency will then issue guidance to posts accordingly.

**Documents Submitted:**

- Guidance to posts (if developed and issued)

**Status and Timeline for Completion:** February 2020

**OIG Analysis:** OIG would like to clarify the difference between the impact portion of the evaluation (pp. 16-22) and the challenges portion (pp.13-15). While the report concluded that impacts across countries were inconsistent, the challenges associated with homestay were consistent. During the evaluation, we observed several instances of posts that repeatedly changed their homestay policies, presumably with leadership changes at posts. This is one of the reasons why previous agency leadership asked us to evaluate this topic. Our analysis is impartial and provides sufficient evidence to sustain the recommendation that the agency develop and issue guidance to help overseas staff mitigate the challenges described in the report. However, to facilitate the agency's development of such guidance, we will provide the agency with more information about our methods as well as the responses from staff and Volunteers (redacted to protect individual privacy) to our questions about the challenges with homestay. To close the recommendation, please address these commonly recurring challenges in the guidance to posts.

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## APPENDIX H: PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION AND OIG CONTACT

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### PROGRAM EVALUATION COMPLETION

This program evaluation was conducted in accordance with CIGIE bluebook standards, under the direction of Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jeremy Black, by Senior Evaluator Erin Balch. Additional contributions were made by Senior Economist at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Rui Li PhD, Program Analyst A'Daris McNeese, Evaluations Intern Lily Baron and Senior Evaluator Kaitlyn Large.



### OIG CONTACT

Following issuance of the final report, a stakeholder satisfaction survey will be distributed to agency stakeholders. If you wish to comment on the quality or usefulness of this report to help us improve our products, please contact Assistant Inspector General for Evaluations Jeremy Black and at [jblack@peacecorpsoig.gov](mailto:jblack@peacecorpsoig.gov) or 202.692.2912.

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Anyone knowing of wasteful practices, abuse, mismanagement, fraud, or unlawful activity involving Peace Corps programs or personnel should contact the Office of Inspector General. Reports or complaints can also be made anonymously.

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