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INTRODUCTION

This report is designed to review Rotary Youth Exchange activity for the 2014-15 Rotary year. The statistics, trends, issues, and qualitative feedback from program administrators are based on the responses received from the online annual survey, which was sent to district and multidistrict Youth Exchange chairs in September 2015. The information in this report is impacted by the percentage of districts reporting in any given country or geographical area.

Please note that districts must submit inbound student data, usually found on the students’ Guarantee Form, for all types of exchanges (long- and short-term) to RI before or shortly after the exchange commences (RCOP 41.060.6) and as any data changes, including updates in host family information. Responding to the annual survey does not fulfill this data submission requirement.

SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

The Rotary International Youth Exchange team received survey responses from 370 of 468 certified districts. This equates to a **79% response rate**, which is an 11% increase from the 2013-14 program survey. Of these survey responses, 77% (285) were completed by individual districts, and 23% (85) by multidistricts on behalf of their member districts. The geographic areas referred to in this report are listed below along with their survey response rates. Each region’s response rate increased over the previous year. Most significantly, Asia’s response rate increased by 35%; Oceania, Africa, and North America each increased by 12%.

Geographic Area	% certified districts responding to survey
Asia (Zones 1-6, 9, and 10)	70%
Oceania (Zones 7 and 8)	75%
Europe (Zones 11-19 and 20B)	87%
Africa (Zone Section 20A)	83%
North America (Zones 21A – Mexico only, 21B, and 24-34)	79%
South America (Zones 21A – excluding Mexico, 22, and 23)	75%

OVERALL PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Districts reported a combined total of 8,777 Youth Exchange program participants during the 2014-15 Rotary year, which is an increase of 17.6% as compared to the 2013-14 report. The number of reported exchanges increased for both long-term (+948) and short-term (+369) programs.

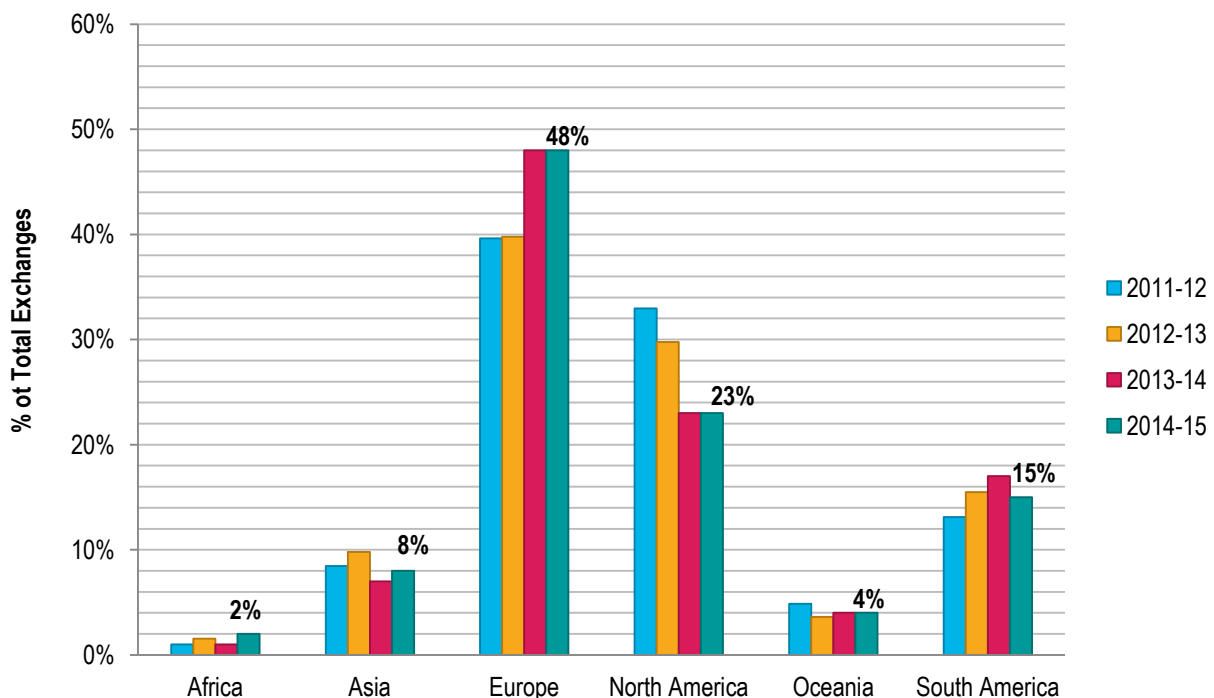
Type of Exchange	Exchanges Reported	% of Total Exchanges
Long-term	6,087	69%
Short-term	2,690	31%
Total	8,777	100%

Exchanges in 2014-15 had a similar geographic distribution to previous years, with Europe having the greatest number of total exchanges, followed by North America and South America.

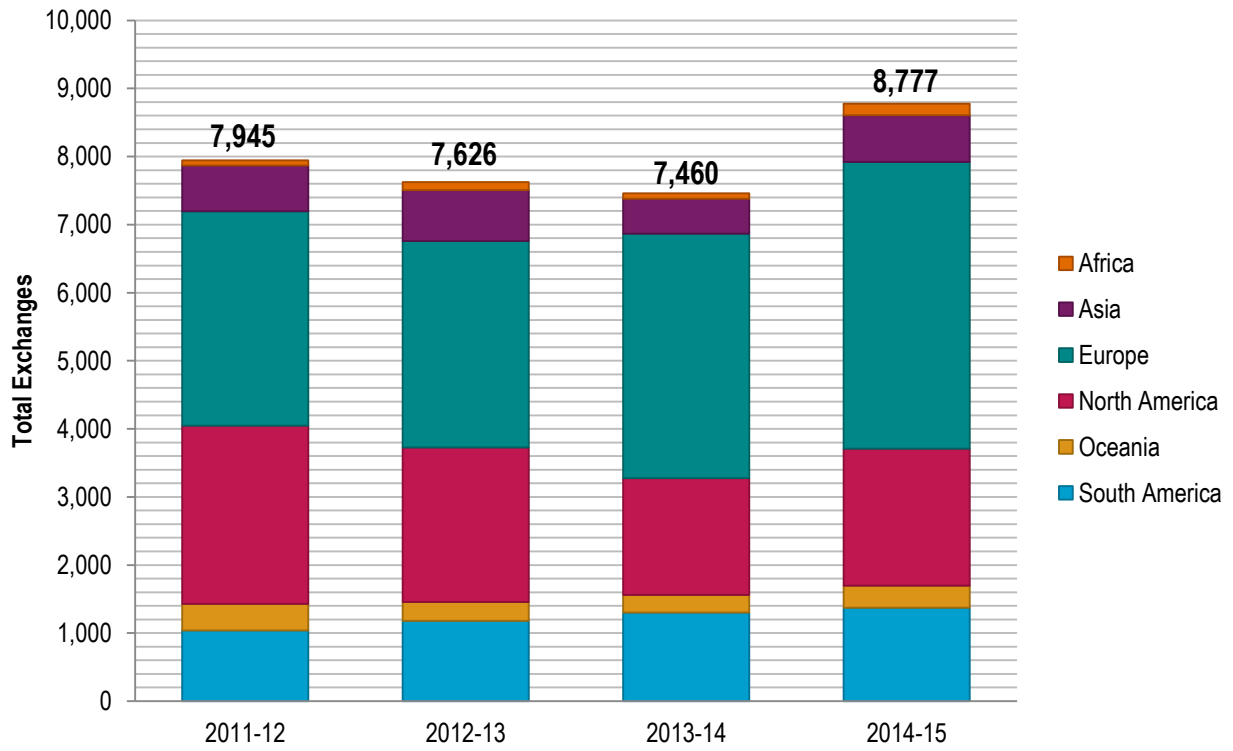
Geographic Area	Total Exchanges Reported	% of Total Exchanges
Africa	168	2%
Asia	688	8%
Europe	4,212	48%
North America	2,012	23%
Oceania	323	4%
South America	1,374	15%
Total	8,777	100%

The following two graphs provide analysis of exchanges reported in the last five years. The distribution of exchanges across regions is consistent with prior years despite more districts reporting exchange activity.

2011-2015 Historical Analysis: Percent of Total Exchanges by Geographic Area



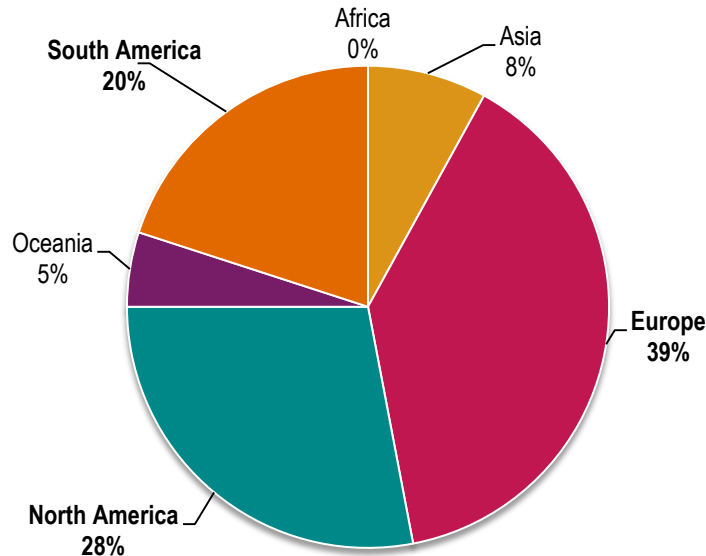
2011-2015 Historical Analysis: Geographic Distribution of Total Exchanges by Year



LONG-TERM EXCHANGES

Long-term exchanges represented 69% of all Youth Exchange activity during the 2014-15 year, which is consistent with prior years. Three-hundred and thirty (330) districts reported a total of 6,087 long-term exchange participants, which is an increase of 948 students as compared to the 2013-14 data.

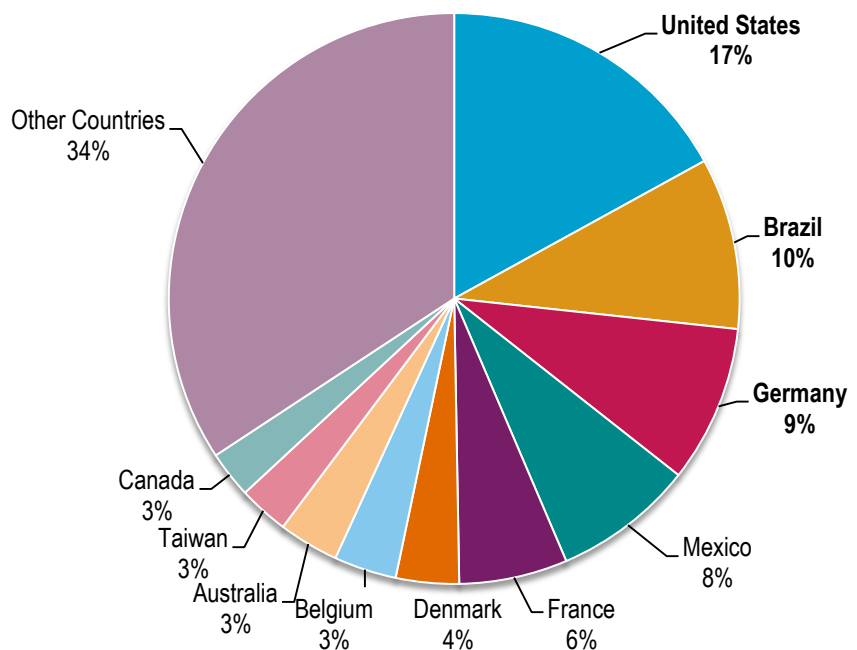
2014-15 Long-term Exchanges Worldwide



Long-term Exchanges by Country

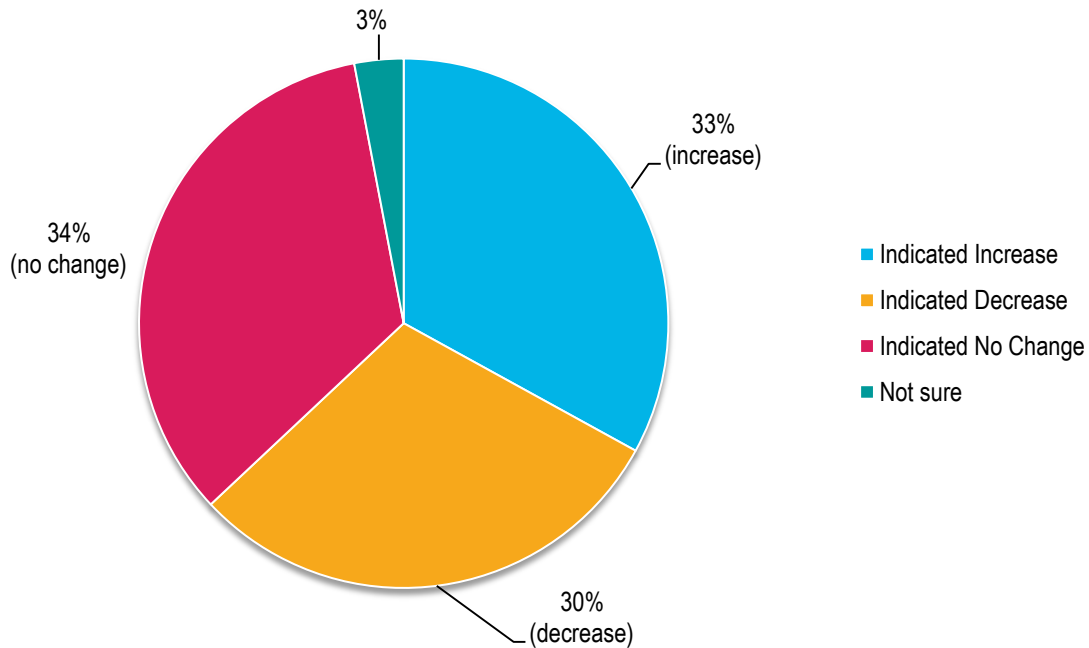
The table and chart below show the ten countries that reported the highest number of inbound long-term exchange participants in 2014-15, representing 66% of the total participation in the long-term exchange program.

Country	Inbound Long-term Exchanges
United States	1027
Brazil	587
Germany	538
Mexico	481
France	371
Denmark	216
Belgium	214
Australia	206
Taiwan	172
Canada	160
Other	2070
Total	6087



Long-term Exchange Trends and Challenges

Survey respondents also provided feedback on emerging trends and challenges in the long-term exchange program in 2014-15. The chart below indicates how many districts reported an increase (33%), decrease (29%) in long-term exchanges, or that the number remained the same (34%).



Overall Trends:

- The percentage of districts reporting an increase, decrease, or no change in their long-term exchange numbers was similar to the numbers reported in 2013-14: 37%, 26%, and 36% respectively.
- Respondents noted increased club participation as the most common reason for a rise in exchange numbers, followed by increased interest from youth, strengthening relationships with partner districts, attending regional/international conferences and networking.
- Strong support from district leadership was cited as contributing to an increase in long-term exchanges, suggesting these individuals have a key role in shaping the success of the program.
- Redistricting (changes in district boundaries and composition) was noted as a cause for both an increase and decrease in numbers for different districts.

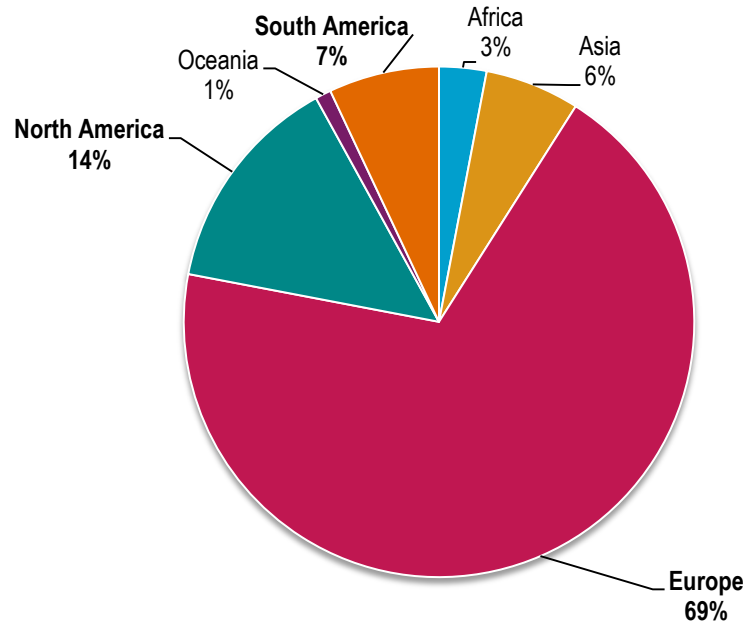
Challenges:

- Similar to the 2013-14 report, the top three reasons districts reported as contributing to a decline in long-term exchanges were a lack of interest from Rotary clubs, youth, and host families. Districts looking to increase numbers, or begin hosting long-term exchange students, may benefit from developing the support and interest of these groups.
- Additional challenges included issues with travel visas, changes in leadership, increased administrative work, and political unrest.

SHORT-TERM EXCHANGES

Two-hundred and thirty-seven (237) districts hosted short-term exchanges during the 2014-15 year, and reported a total of 2,690 participants. This is an increase of 369 reported exchanges from the 2013-14 report, though short-term exchange activity remained at 31% of total exchanges reported.

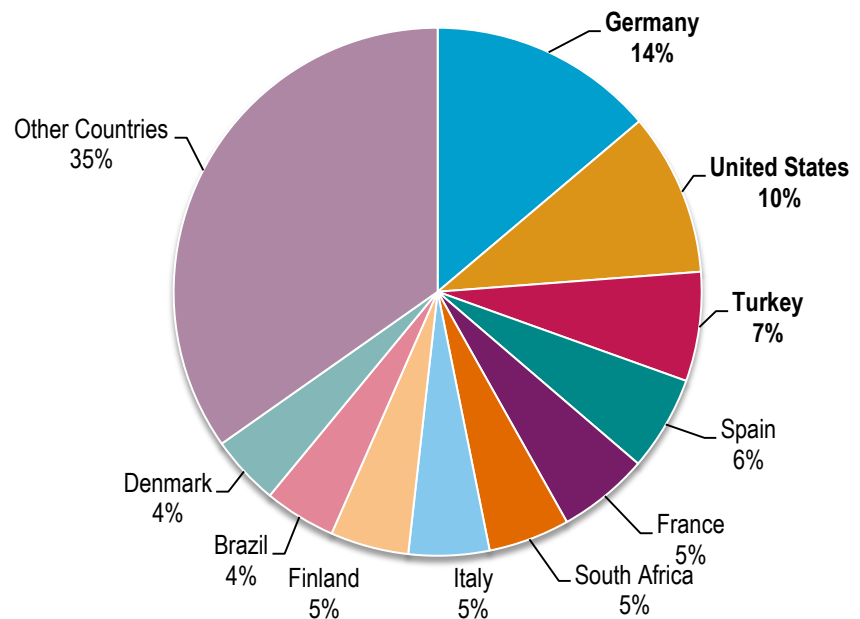
2014-15 Short-term Exchanges Worldwide



Short-term Exchanges by Country

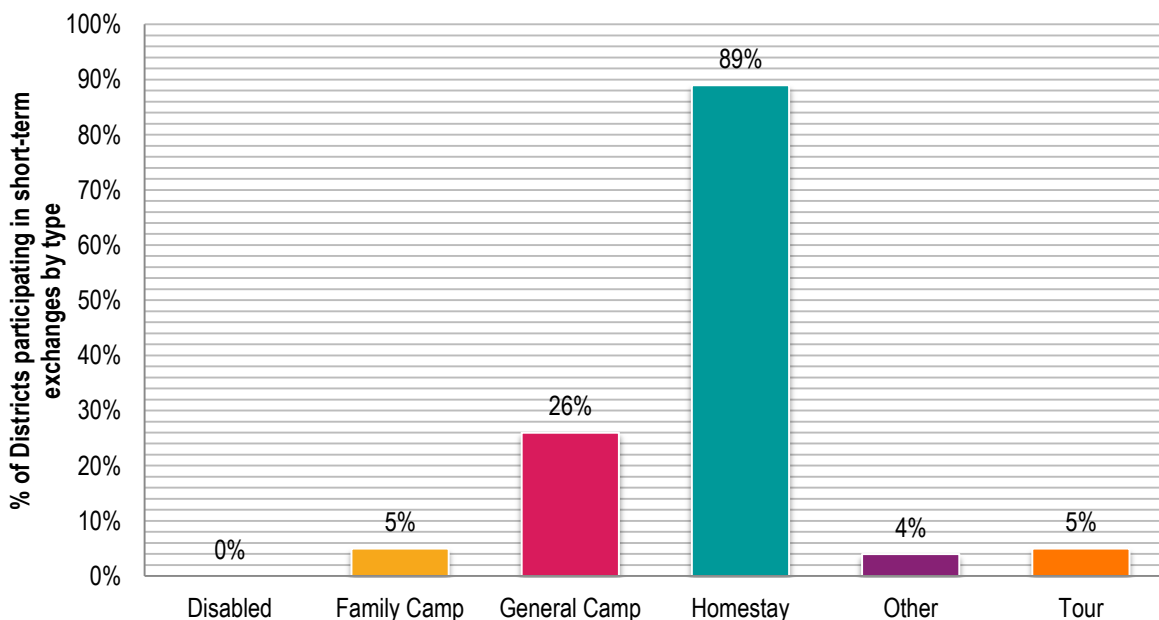
The table and chart below show the ten countries that reported the highest number of inbound short-term exchange participants in 2014-15, representing 65% of the total participation in the short-term exchange program.

Country	Inbound Short-term Exchanges
Germany	372
United States	268
Turkey	180
Spain	156
France	150
South Africa	134
Italy	133
Finland	129
Brazil	118
Denmark	115
Other	935
Total	2,690



District Participation by Type of Short-term Exchange

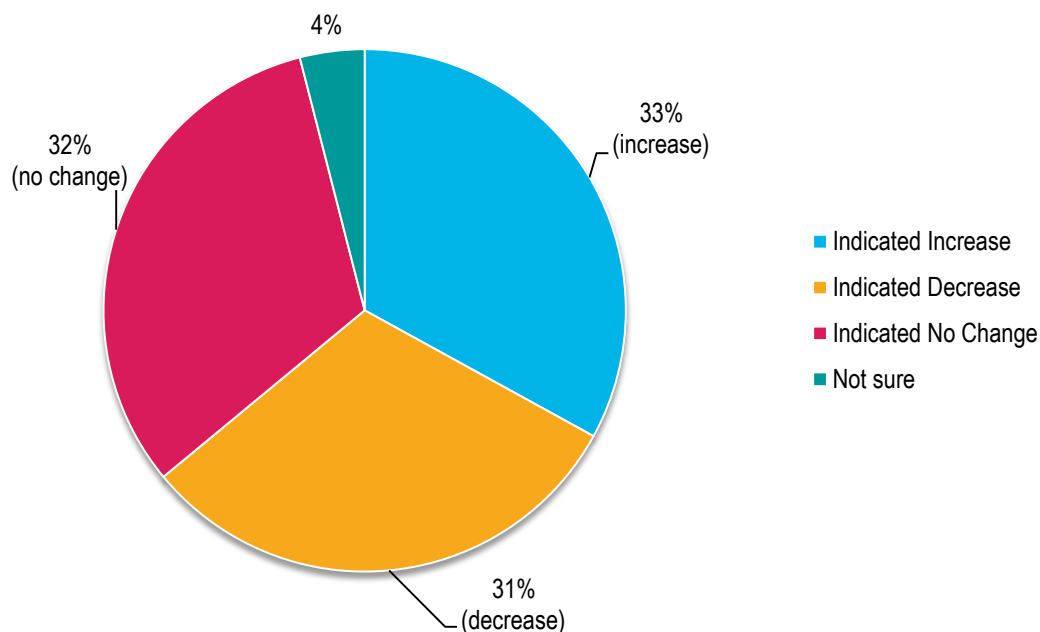
Respondents were asked to indicate the types of short-term exchanges their district hosted, and were able to select any that apply. The following chart details the percentage of districts that hosted each type of short-term exchange: homestay remained the most common (89%), followed by general camps (26%).



It is important to note that the numbers above will not add to 100%, as some districts offer multiple types of short-term exchanges and are calculated in multiple categories.

Short-term Exchange Trends and Challenges

Along with program statistics, the annual survey asked for feedback regarding trends in districts' short-term exchanges. The chart below indicates the percentage of districts that reported an increase (33%), decrease (31%) in short-term exchanges, or that the number remained the same (32%).



Trends:

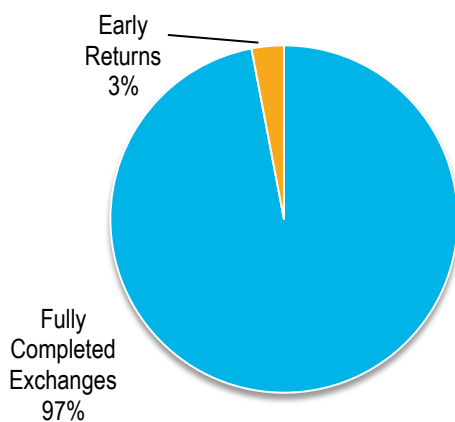
- Similar to long-term exchanges, the percentages reported for an increase, decrease, or no change in short-term exchange activity remained consistent with the 2013-14 year, which was 30%, 32%, and 4% respectively.
- The vast majority of respondents with increased activity noted Rotary club participation and increased interest from youth as their top causes for this change. These districts also noted that an increase in networking and strengthening relationships with partner districts were important factors in the rise of short-term exchanges.
- Some districts noted that there was an increase in students' desire to participate specifically in short-term exchanges, rather than long-term exchanges.

Challenges:

- A lack of interest from youth was by far the most frequently cited cause for a decline in short-term exchange numbers, as over half of the districts reporting a decline selected this as the main cause.
- Additional factors cited for decreasing activity included a lack of interest from Rotary clubs and host families, as well as failed marketing strategies, suggesting that districts should focus on creative strategies to ignite enthusiasm across many groups.
- Some districts also noted that a change in district leadership was a contributing factor in the decline of their short-term exchange program, which could indicate a need for increased communication regarding exchange programs during regular leadership transitions.

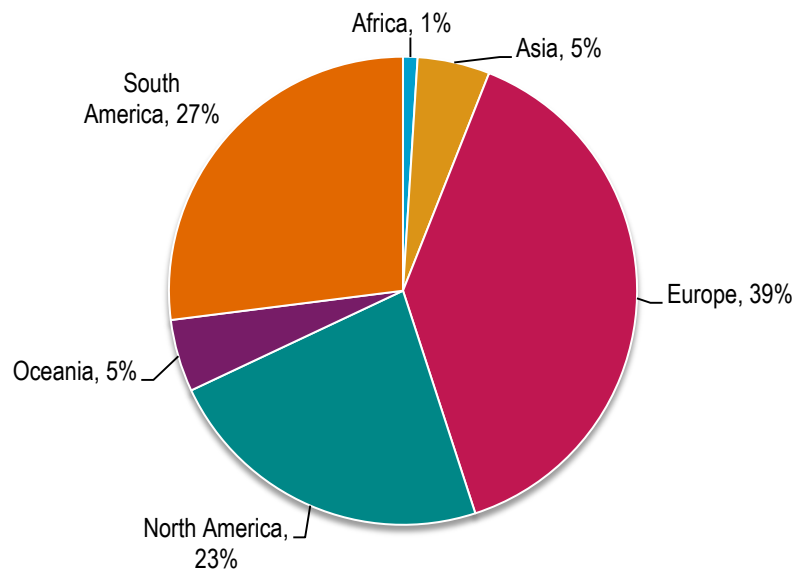
EARLY RETURNS

Districts reported 271 early returns in 2014-15, comprising only 3% of all exchanges, which is a decrease compared to the 2013-14 report. Ninety-nine percent of the early returns occurred within the long-term exchange program, and the remaining one percent occurred within the short-term exchange program.



The geographic distribution of early returns largely mirrors the geographic distribution of total exchange activity. Areas with the highest numbers of total exchanges also had the greatest percentage of early returns: Europe, North America, and South America.

2014-15 Early Returns Worldwide by Region

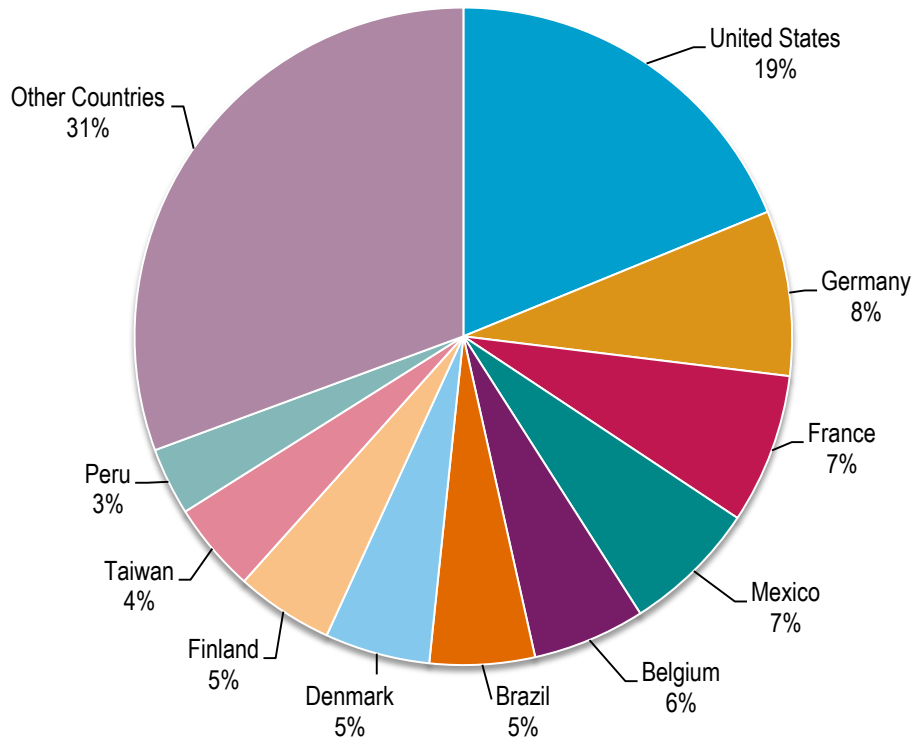


The percentage of early returns within each region is roughly even (between 1% and 3%). These numbers represent a decrease in early returns for each region as compared to the 2013-14 report, and are consistent with the overall early return rate of 3%.

Early Returns by Country

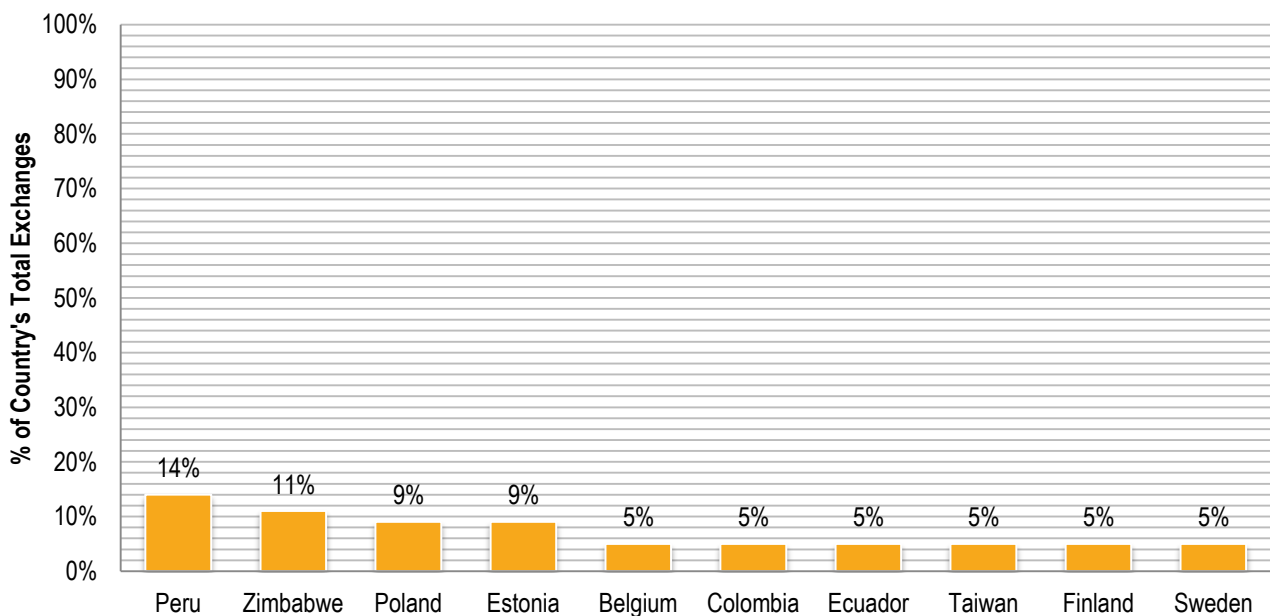
The 10 countries on the list below reported the highest number of early returns in 2014-15, totaling 69% of the returns worldwide. It is largely comprised of the individual countries with the highest amount of total exchanges reported.

Country	Early Returns Reported
United States	51
Germany	22
France	20
Mexico	18
Belgium	15
Brazil	14
Denmark	14
Finland	13
Taiwan	12
Peru	9
Other	83
Total	271



Early Returns as Percent of Country Totals

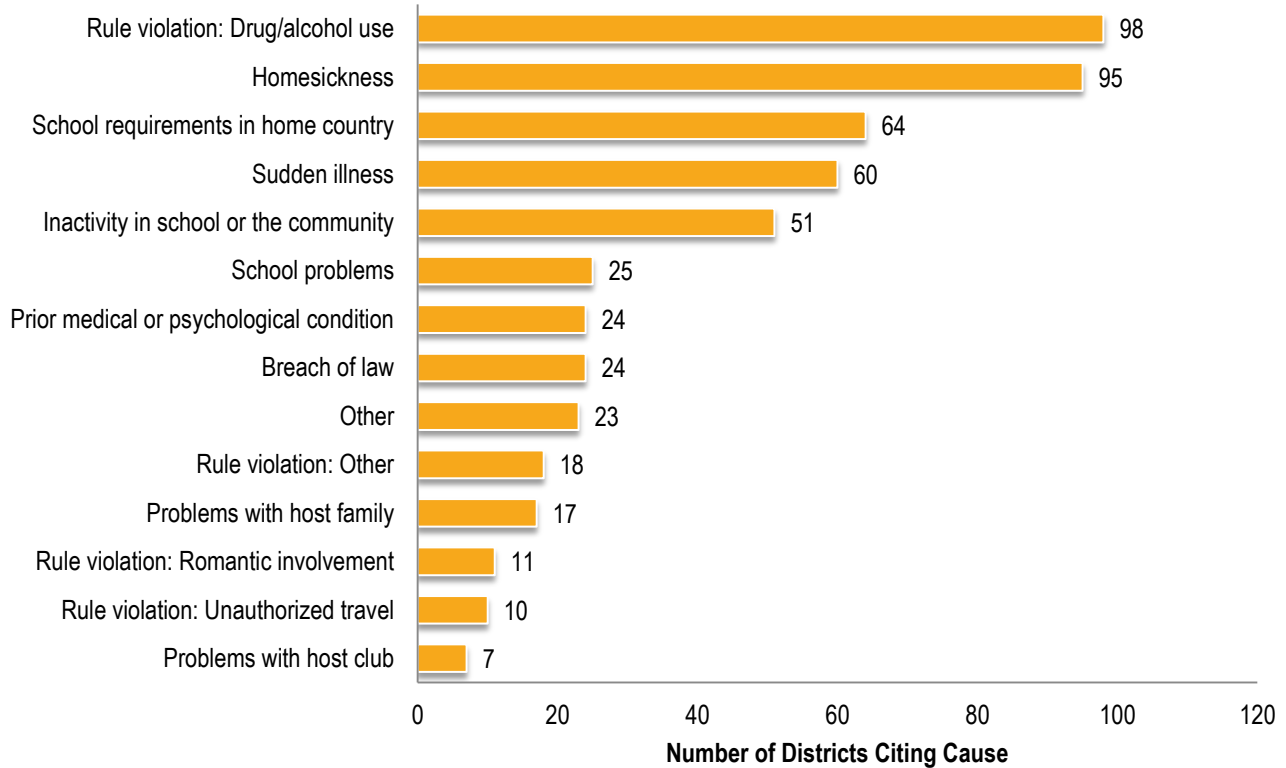
The chart below represents the 10 countries reporting the highest percentage of early returns in comparison to their total number of exchanges hosted in 2014-15. These numbers are relatively balanced, with Peru, Zimbabwe, Poland, and Estonia reporting the highest percentages of early returns.



Causes for Early Returns

Survey respondents were asked two specific questions regarding the causes of early returns: first to select any of the following causes that applied to their early returns, and then to rank the importance of each reason they selected. Each district reported a number of different causes, and the overall trends are very similar to the reports from previous years.

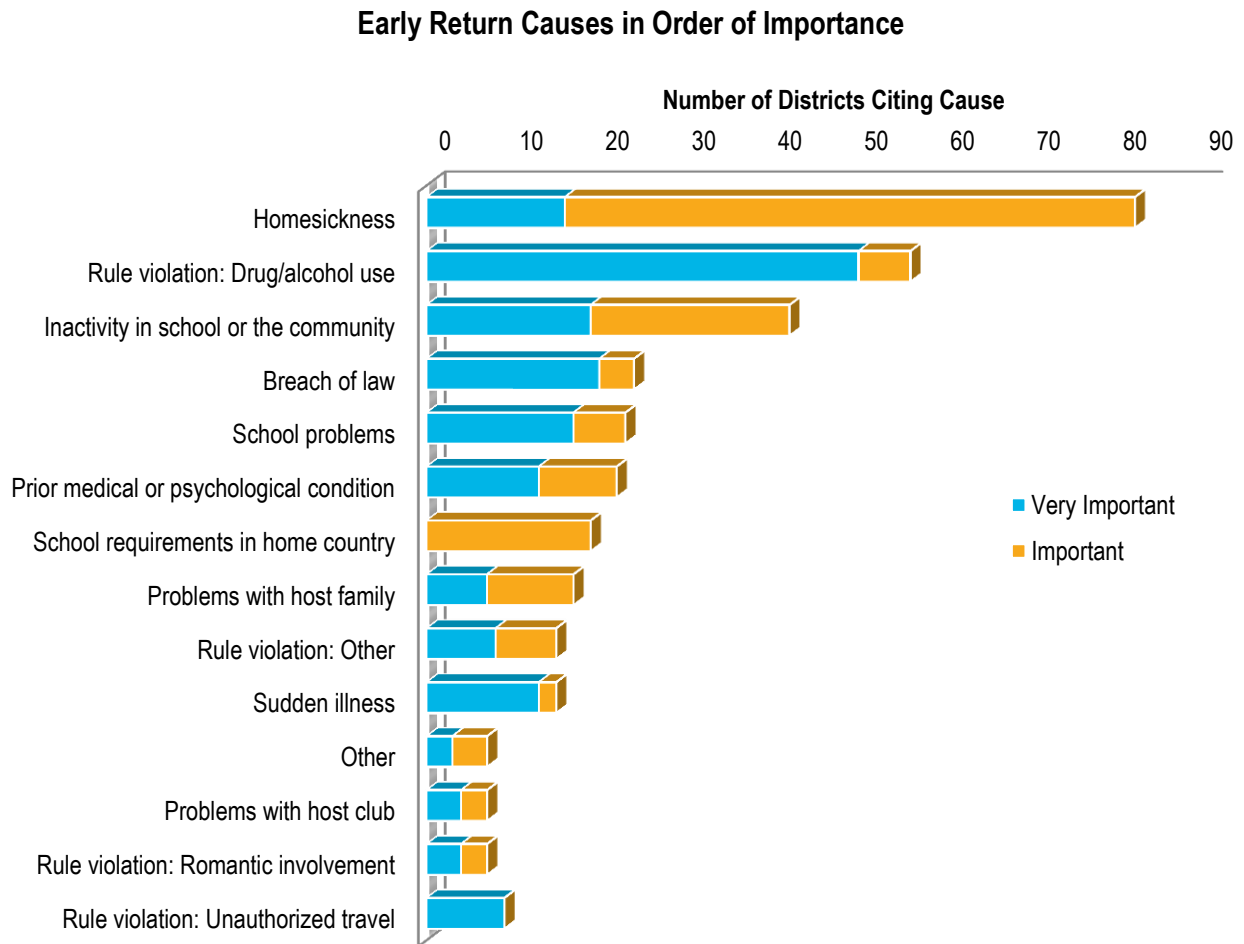
Early Return Causes in Order of Frequency



In order of *frequency*, or how often a particular reason is reported to be involved in determining an early return, drug and alcohol use, homesickness, and school requirements in the home country were cited most often as the causes for early returns in 2014-15.

Drug and alcohol use and homesickness were the top two causes (by frequency) of early returns in the 2013-14 report as well, and inactivity in the school or community remained in the top five. The biggest changes in regards to the frequency of causation were school requirements in the home country and sudden illness (which increased in frequency from the bottom five to the top five). The remaining causes had similar frequencies reported in the previous year's report.

The second graph displays the same causes, ranked in order of importance or significance in determining early returns, as reported by the districts.



Compared to the 2013-14 data, significantly more districts placed importance on homesickness as a factor for early returns. Drug and alcohol use continues to be ranked high in both frequency and importance for early returns, as does inactivity in the host school and community.

Though no districts reported school requirements in the home country as a “very important” reason for early returns, this particular factor saw an increase in both frequency and importance overall. Given this trend, it is reasonable to infer that students are facing increasing demands from schools in their home countries.

Some districts noted that students were not properly prepared for their exchange experience, and that this significantly contributed to their early return. Additionally, districts reported that a lack of willingness to experience and engage in cultural activities and language barriers as important factors, which may be results of poor preparation.

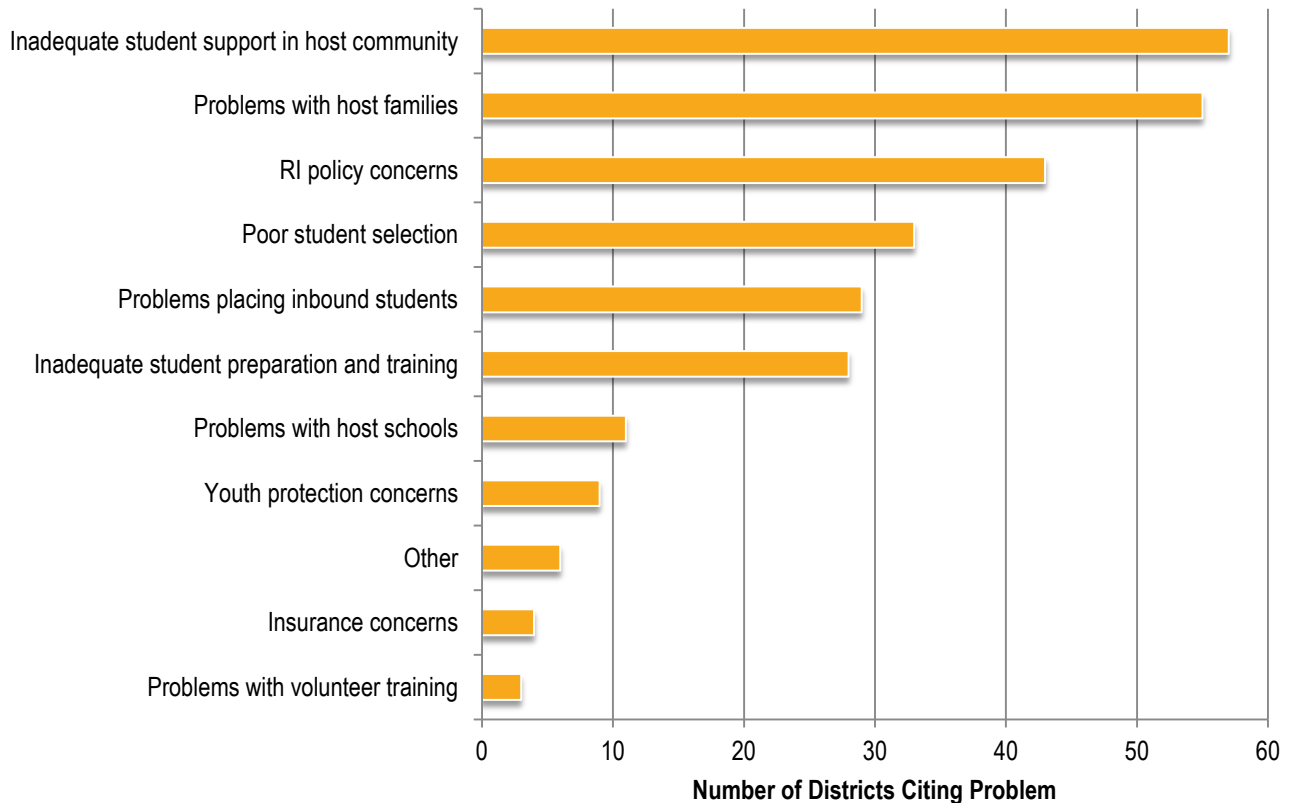
Survey respondents provided the following advice and strategies to address factors related to early returns:

- Implement comprehensive training for students, host families, and counselors. Training for host families and counselors should be ongoing, rather than a one-time experience.
- Place a stronger focus on student selection, specifically language abilities and participation in groups and activities.
- Increase the attention paid to inbound orientation, especially with regard to rules and regulations, and also the importance of staying involved within the community.
- Encourage regular communication with clubs and counselors; it is essential that counselors develop close relationships with their students.
- Form a committee to review current practices and discuss or implement resolutions to related issues.

EXCHANGE PARTNER INTERACTIONS

Survey respondents were asked about challenges they experienced with their exchange partner districts in 2014-15. Of the 370 responding districts, 115 (32%) indicated they had challenges with their partners. While this represents an increase in number of districts (+17) reporting problems, it is a decrease of one percent from the 2013-14 report. The most common problems with partner districts reported in 2014-15 were inadequate student support in the host community, problems with host schools, and RI policy concerns, which are consistent with last year's report.

Common Problems with Exchange Partners



When compared with 2013-14 data, the following trends emerged:

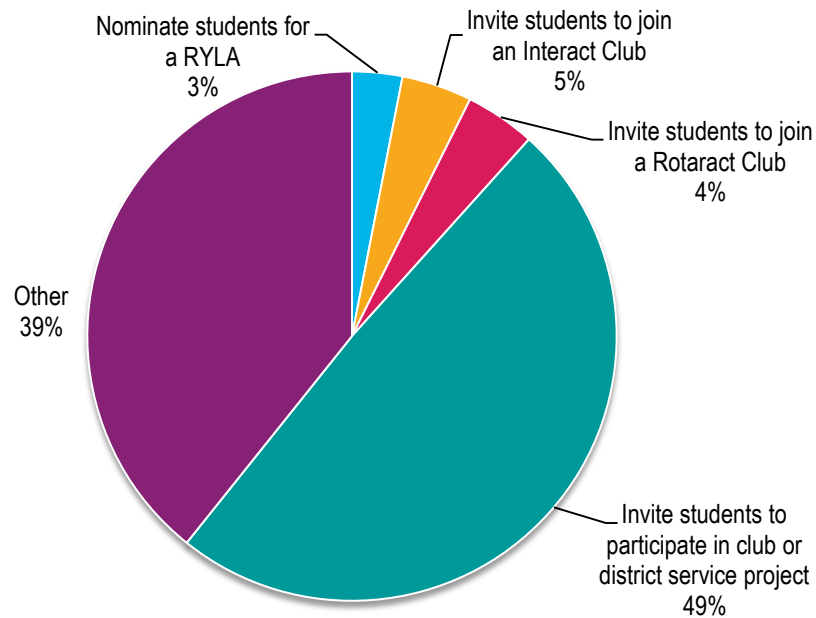
- While most of the trends remained similar, there was a significant increase in the number of reports regarding RI policy concerns and problems with host families. Inadequate student support in the host community also had a fairly large increase in number of reports, though it was also ranked highly in last year's report.
- Districts reported fewer youth protection concerns and problems with host schools overall. Insurance concerns and problems with volunteer training also remained very low.

Any district with concerns about the handling of a specific youth protection incident or potential violation of RI policy should contact the Youth Exchange team directly at youthexchange@rotary.org. It is essential that identifying information be provided so that the concerns can be appropriately addressed.

CROSS-PROMOTION WITH OTHER ROTARY YOUTH PROGRAMS

Survey respondents were asked how their district engaged 2014-15 inbound students with club and district level Rotary activities. Each respondent was only allowed to select one option, and the chart below reflects the number of times an option was selected.

District Methods of Engagement for Rotary Youth Exchange Students



The most common method districts choose to engage their inbound students in Rotary is to invite them to participate in club or district level service projects. Several districts noted (via the “other” category) that they participate in a combination of these methods, most notably in Interact combined with club and district service activities. Some districts also indicated that they invite inbound students to participate in ROTEX, as well as district and region conferences and related activities.

RI encourages all districts to consider ways of keeping former students involved with Rotary after they return from their exchange. Resources with tips and ideas for keeping alumni connected may be found at <https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/alumni>.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the 2014-15 year, Rotary Youth Exchange provided over 8,500 students with the opportunity to travel the world and immerse themselves in new cultures. These experiences, throughout their year as outbound students and after their return from exchange, create life-long memories and give the next generation of leaders a greater sense of international understanding. The program's success is largely due to the strong commitment of Youth Exchange Officers and district leadership, who dedicate tremendous time and energy to ensure program development.

While the percentages of exchanges per geographic area remained the same, responses to the 2014-15 annual survey indicated increases in both long-term (+948) and short-term (+369) exchanges, and a slight decrease (-1%) in early returns. Compared to previous years, approximately the same percentage of districts reported that their long and short-term programs increased, decreased, or stayed the same. Considering that the response rate of the survey increased (+11%), we project that the number of students participating in Rotary Youth Exchange was fairly consistent with previous years.

According to the data received this year, districts looking to increase the number of long-term and/or short-term exchanges should enlist the support of district leadership and work to increase interest in youth, host families, and host clubs. Increased networking and communication between current and new exchange partners, either virtually or in-person, can also lead to the expansion of district programs.

Ninety-seven percent of all exchanges were completed successfully, and early return percentages were equally distributed throughout each of the six geographic regions, which positively correlated to the number of exchanges any given region reported. The top reasons for early returns in terms of frequency and importance were similar to those listed on the 2013-14 report, with two main exceptions: school requirements in the home country was ranked higher in both frequency and importance, and homesickness was deemed significantly more important than in previous years. Districts also noted that a lack of prior preparation and a lack of engagement during the exchange as important factors in early returns, indicating that an increased focus in these areas may yield positive results.

Though two-thirds of responding districts reported no problems with their partner districts, those who did experience problems found inadequate student support and challenges with host families to be the most difficult. This further supports a stronger emphasis on the preparation and orientation not only for students, but also for host families, counselors, and others involved with the program. Additionally, the number of reported problems in regards to RI policy concerns between partner districts increased significantly for the 2014-15 year. As a reminder, any district with concerns about the handling of a potential violation of RI policy should always contact the Youth Exchange team directly at youthexchange@rotary.org