

AmeriCorps Alumni Pilot Outcomes Study: Findings on Cultural Competency and Diversity Skills



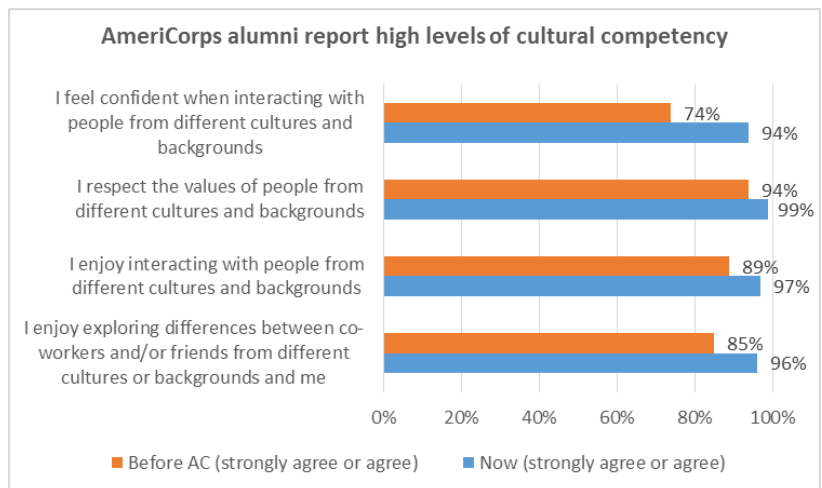
What was the research question?

The purpose of this study was to understand and document long-term outcomes for AmeriCorps alumni in four areas: development of career-oriented soft skills, career pathways, sense of community, and civic engagement. This research brief presents key findings related to alumni's cultural competency, ability to work with diverse others, and perceptions of how the AmeriCorps experience increased their abilities in these areas.

What did the survey find?

AmeriCorps alumni have high levels of cultural competency and are skilled at working with diverse groups of people.

- Nine out of ten alumni agree or strongly agree that they **enjoy exploring differences with others, enjoy interacting with different people, respect others' values, and are confident interacting with diverse people**. Alumni reported **gains in all these areas** compared to before service.
- 97% of alumni rated themselves as excellent or good at **working with people different from themselves**, and 86% of alumni reported that their **AmeriCorps experience helped them increase this skill** either a great deal or somewhat.
- 87% of alumni agree or strongly agree that during AmeriCorps they were **exposed to new ideas and ways of seeing the world**.
- 78% of alumni agree or strongly agree that during AmeriCorps they **learned more about the real world or the rest of the world**.
- 94% of alumni agree or strongly agree that during AmeriCorps they **gained an understanding of the community(s)** where they served.
- 66% of alumni agree or strongly agree that during AmeriCorps they **re-examined their beliefs and attitudes about other people**.



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Research Methodology¹

An online survey was fielded, with follow-up reminders and the option to complete the survey by telephone or mail. The survey instrument was based largely on the Member Exit Survey that CNCS administers to all members at the completion of their service, and was modified and pilot tested prior to widespread administration. The alumni outcomes survey project was a collaboration between the CNCS Office of Research and Evaluation and JBS International. Data collection and reporting occurred in spring/summer 2015. The project was funded by the Office of Research and Evaluation.

Survey At-a-Glance

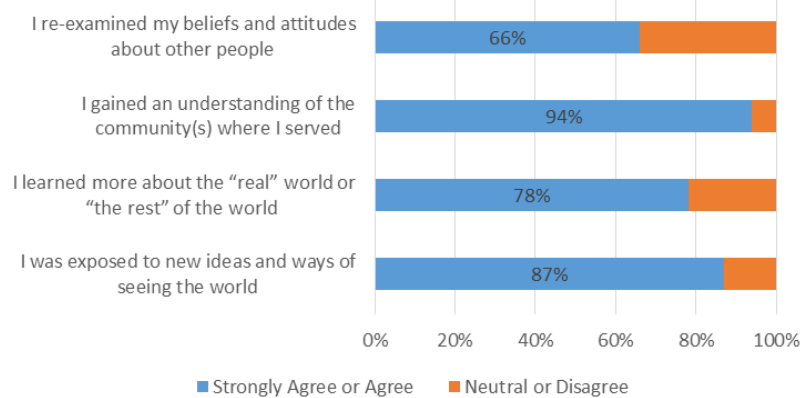
Study Design: Nationally representative survey

Study Population: AmeriCorps State and National, AmeriCorps NCCC, and AmeriCorps VISTA alumni from three cohorts who finished serving in 2004, 2009, and 2012

Research Partner: JBS International

Sample Size: 1468 useable responses

AmeriCorps exposes alumni to new people and new ideas



What do the findings mean?

AmeriCorps alumni have high levels of cultural competency, and they report that during their AmeriCorps experience they were exposed to new ideas, learned more about the rest of the world, and gained an understanding of the community where they served. Almost all alumni report that they are skilled at working with people different than themselves, and they believe that the AmeriCorps experience helped them increase this skill. The findings demonstrate that AmeriCorps service is a valuable mechanism for citizens to engage with different kinds of people and improve their own abilities to thrive in diverse environments. These are incredibly valuable skills in an increasingly diverse country and world.

The content of this brief was drawn from the full research report submitted to CNCS by JBS International. The brief was written by staff in the Office of Research and Evaluation at CNCS. All original content from the report is attributable to its authors.

AmeriCorps engages more than 75,000 Americans in intensive service each year at nonprofits, schools, public agencies, and community and faith-based groups across the country. Since the program's founding in 1994, more than 900,000 AmeriCorps members have contributed more than 1.2 billion hours in service across America while tackling pressing problems and mobilizing millions of volunteers for the organizations they serve.

¹ The survey response rate was 20%. The data were weighted using both sampling weights and nonresponse weights across programs and years so the reported frequencies correspond to a nationally representative sample of alumni across the sampled cohorts and programs.