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## INTRODUCTION

This report is designed to review Rotary Youth Exchange activity for the 2015-16 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 2016. 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 384 of 469 certified districts. This is an **82% response rate**, which is a 3% increase from the 2014-15 program survey. Of these survey responses, 75% (287) were completed by individual districts, and 25% (97) by multidistricts on behalf of their member districts, which is consistent with previous years. The geographic areas referred to in this report are listed below along with their survey response rates. Each region's rate of response remained similar (within 3 percentage points) from the previous year.

Geographic Area	% certified districts responding to survey
Asia (Zones 1-6, 9, and 10)	68%
Oceania (Zones 7 and 8)	75%
Europe (Zones 11-19 and 20B)	85%
Africa (Zone Section 20A)	87%
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 **8,695** Youth Exchange program participants during the 2015-16 Rotary year, which is a decrease of only 1% (-82) as compared to the 2014-15 report. The number of reported exchanges increased (+78) for the long-term program and decreased (-160) for the short-term program.

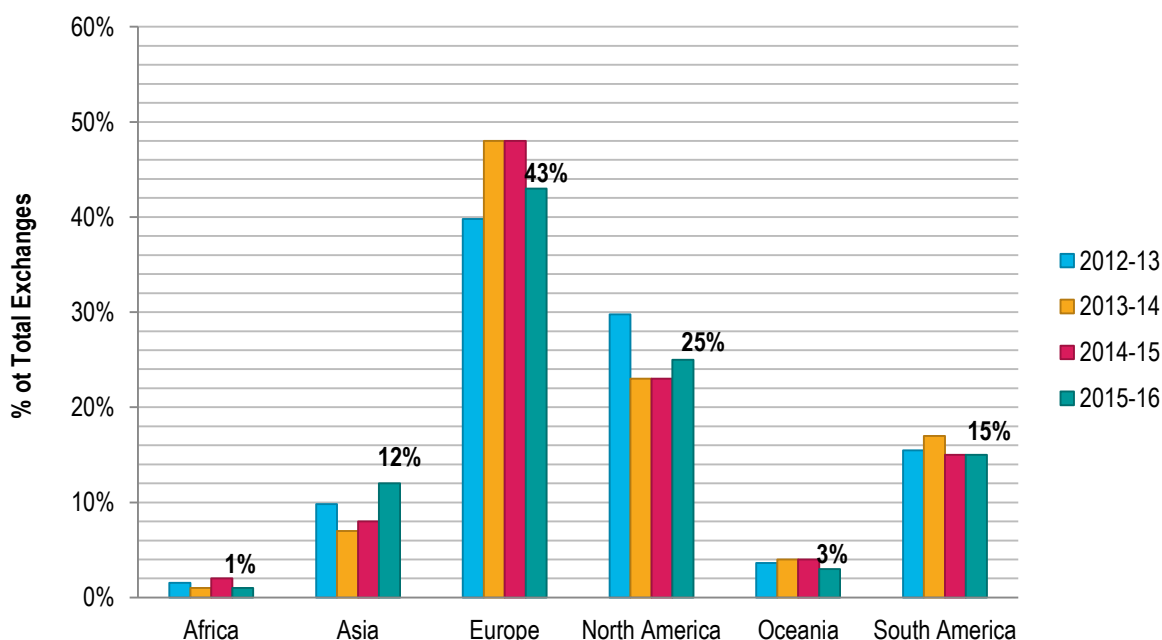
Type of Exchange	Exchanges Reported	% of Total Exchanges
Long-term	6,165	71%
Short-term	2,530	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,695</b>	<b>100%</b>

Exchanges in 2015-16 had a similar geographic distribution to previous years, with Europe having the greatest number of total exchanges, followed by North America and South America. Asia had the greatest growth through the year, increasing by four percent.

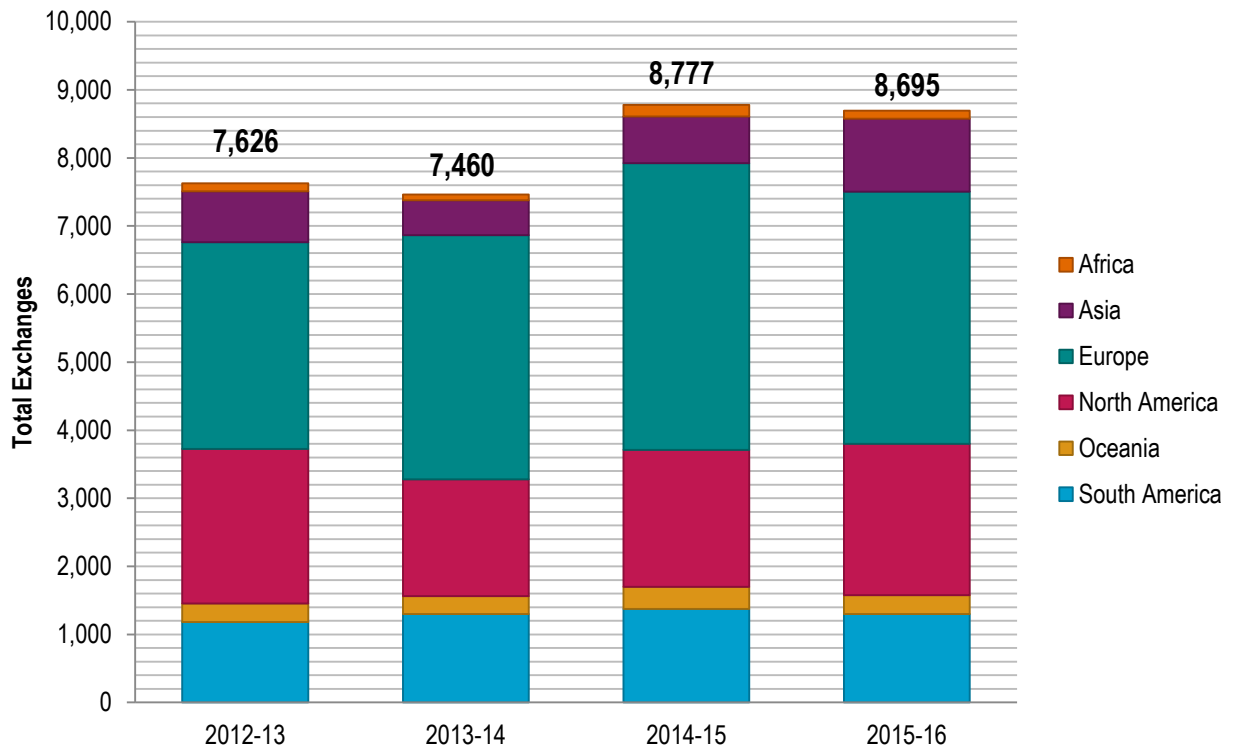
Geographic Area	Total Exchanges Reported	% of Total Exchanges
Africa	117	1%
Asia	1,074	12%
Europe	3,704	43%
North America	2,225	25%
Oceania	276	3%
South America	1,299	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,695</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

### 2012-2016 Historical Analysis: Percent of Total Exchanges by Geographic Area



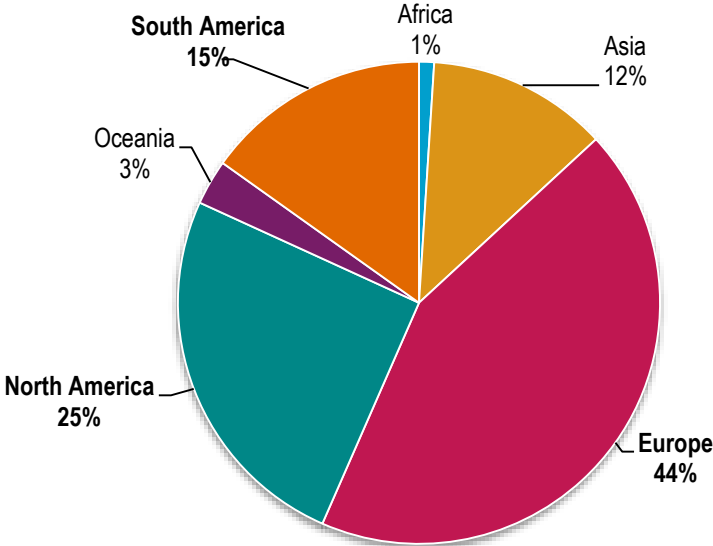
## 2012-2016 Historical Analysis: Geographic Distribution of Total Exchanges by Year



## LONG-TERM EXCHANGES

Long-term exchanges represented 71% of all Youth Exchange activity during the 2015-16 year, which is consistent with prior years. Three-hundred and forty-five (345) districts reported a total of 6,165 long-term exchange participants, which is an increase of 78 students as compared to the 2014-15 data.

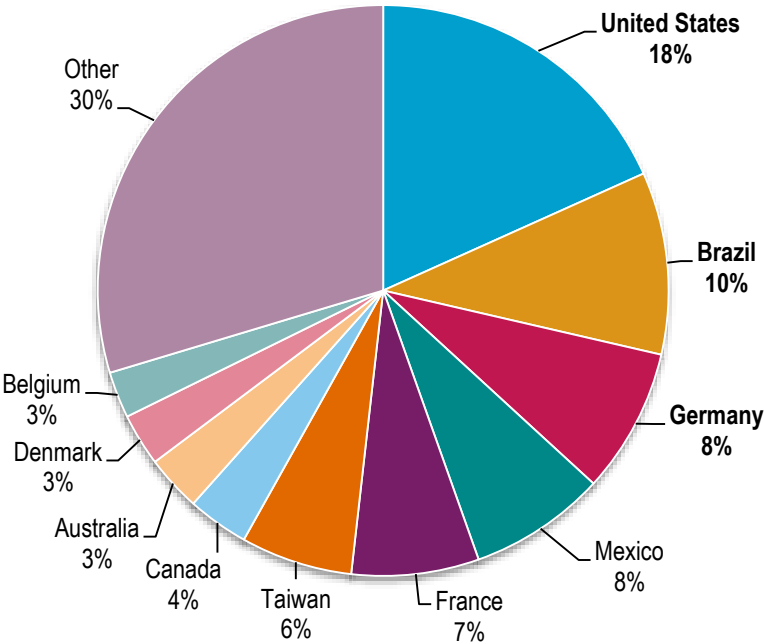
2015-16 Long-term Exchanges Worldwide



### Long-term Exchanges by Country

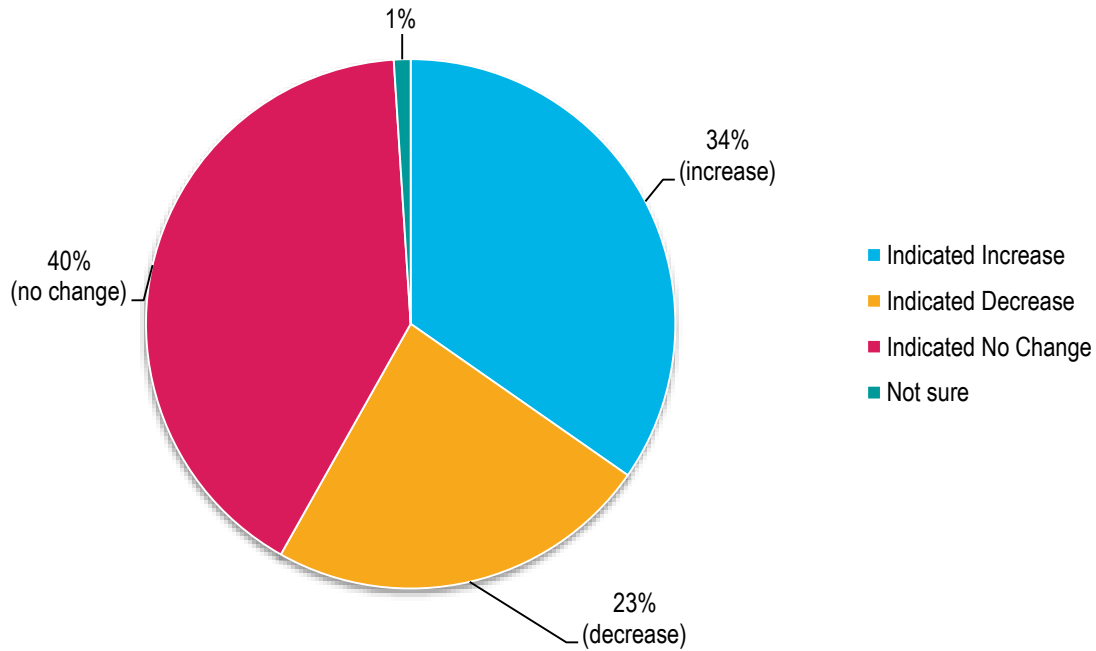
The table and chart below show the ten countries that reported the highest number of inbound long-term exchange participants in 2015-16, representing 70% of the total participation in the long-term exchange program.

Country	Inbound Long-term Exchanges
United States	1,127
Brazil	637
Germany	506
Mexico	478
France	445
Taiwan	390
Canada	214
Australia	195
Denmark	183
Belgium	162
Other	1,828
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,165</b>



### Long-term Exchange Trends and Challenges

Survey respondents also provided feedback on emerging trends and challenges in the long-term exchange program in 2015-16. The chart below indicates how many districts reported an increase (34%), decrease (23%) in long-term exchanges, or that the number remained the same (40%). These numbers are similar to previous years, though more districts indicated there was no change and fewer districts reported a decrease, suggesting that long-term program remains strong across the globe.



### Overall Trends:

- 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, and networking. This matches exactly with the 2014-15 report, suggesting these factors are crucial in creating additional opportunities for long-term exchanges.
- Districts reported that stronger efforts in promotion, as well as active involvement by both rebound and ROTEX students also led to an increase in exchanges.

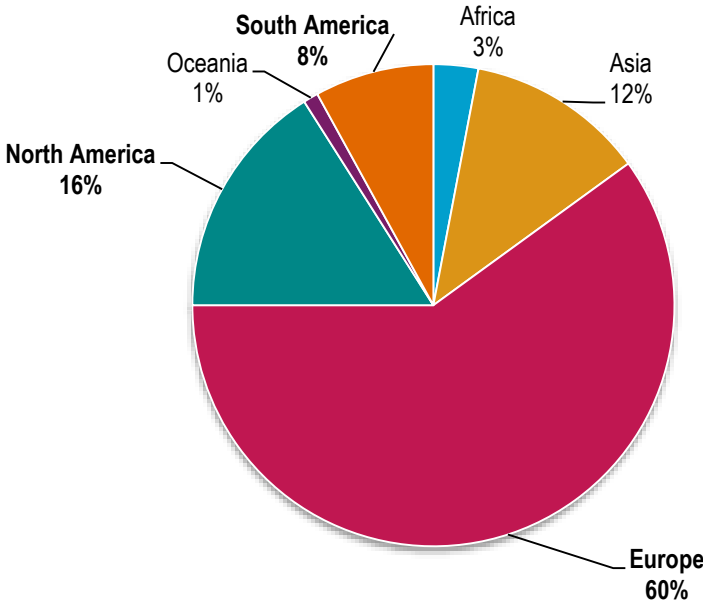
### Challenges:

- Similar to the 2014-15 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 fifty-six (256) districts hosted short-term exchanges during the 2015-16 year, and reported a total of 2,530 participants. While this is a decrease in the number of reported exchanges (-160), the number of districts hosting short term exchanges increased (+19) from the 2014-15 report. The geographical trend remained much the same, with Europe hosting the vast majority of all short-term exchanges, followed by North America. The largest change was in Asia, wherein short-term exchanges increased (+6%) to account for 12% of all short-term exchanges in the 2015-16 year.

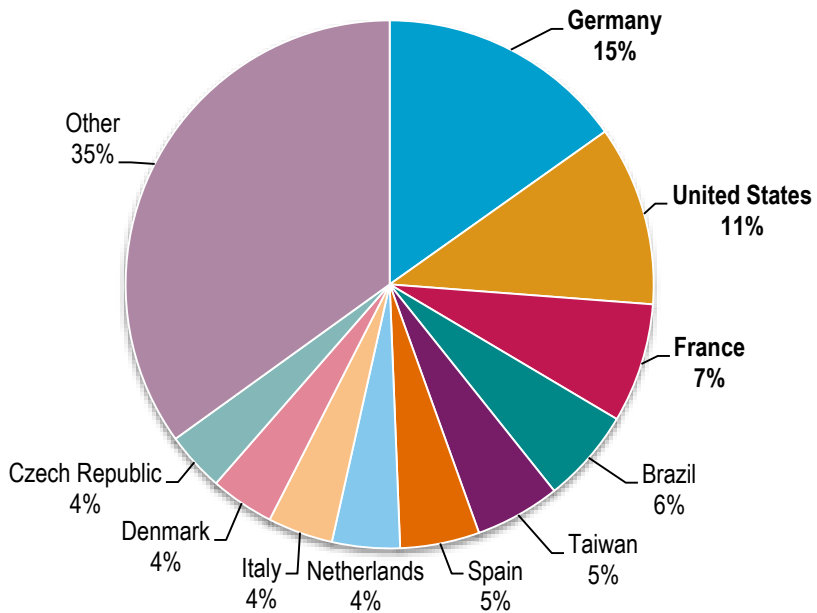
2015-16 Short-term Exchanges Worldwide



### Short-term Exchanges by Country

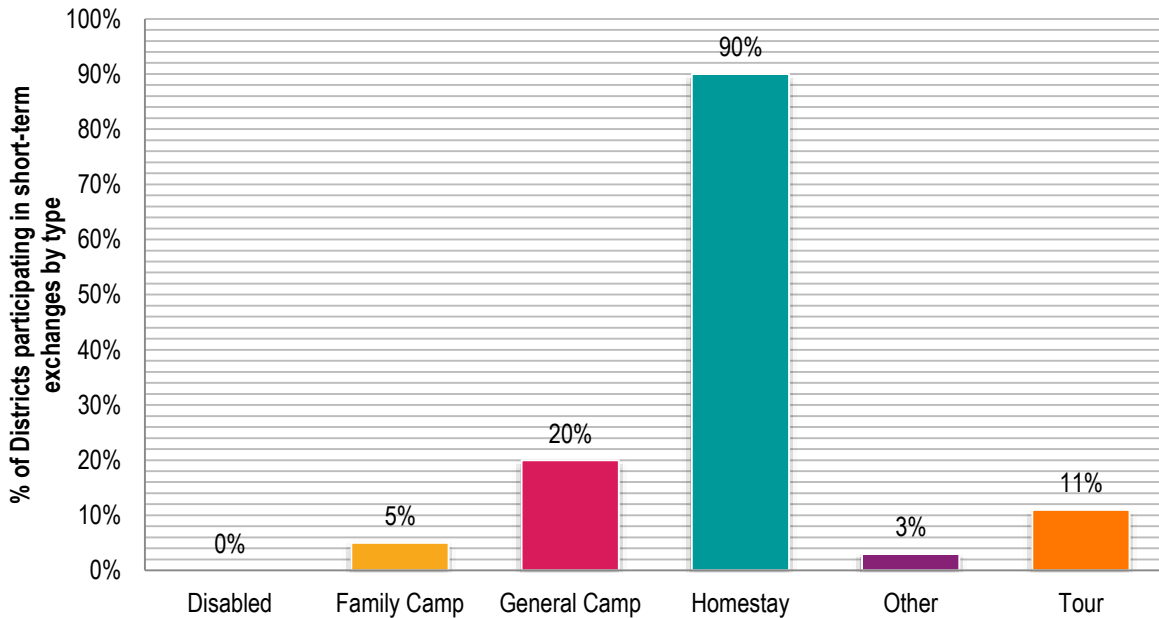
The table and chart below show the ten countries that reported the highest number of inbound short-term exchange participants in 2015-16, representing 65% of the total participation in the short-term exchange program.

Country	Inbound Short-term Exchanges
Germany	384
United States	279
France	185
Brazil	146
Taiwan	132
Spain	123
Netherlands	105
Italy	101
Denmark	99
Czech Republic	92
Other	884
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,530</b>



### District Participation by Type of Short-term Exchange

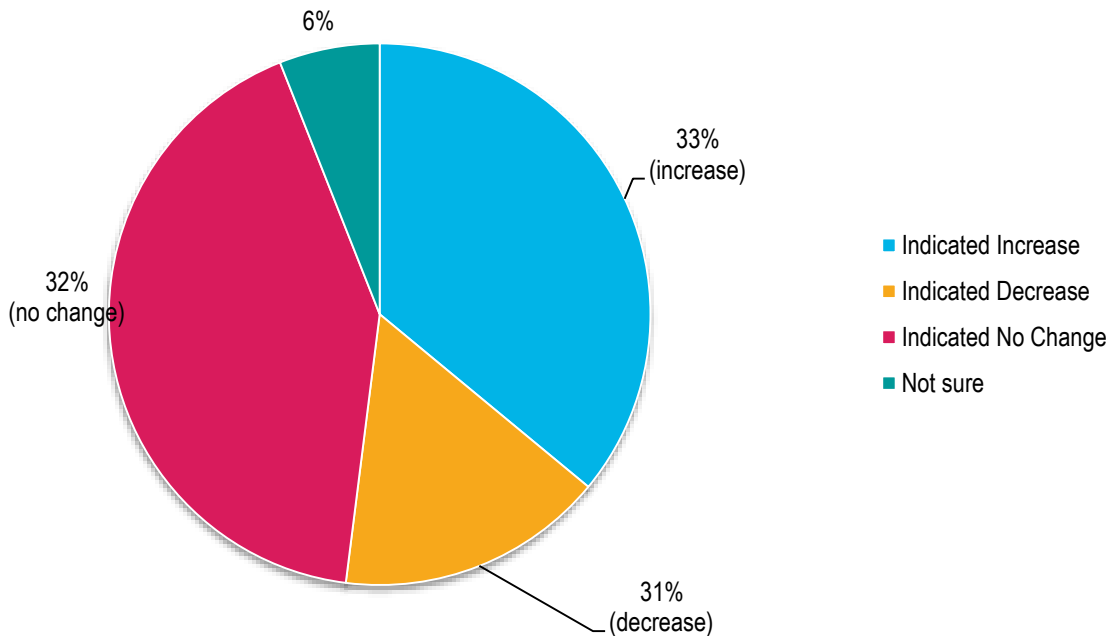
Respondents were asked to indicate the types of short-term exchanges their district hosted, and were able to select any that apply. The following chart details the percentage of districts that hosted each type of short-term exchange: homestay remained the most common (90%), followed by general camps (20%). Short-term exchange tours saw the largest increase, from 6% in 2014-15 to 11% in 2015-16.



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 (36%), decrease (16%) in short-term exchanges, or that the number remained the same (42%).



## Trends:

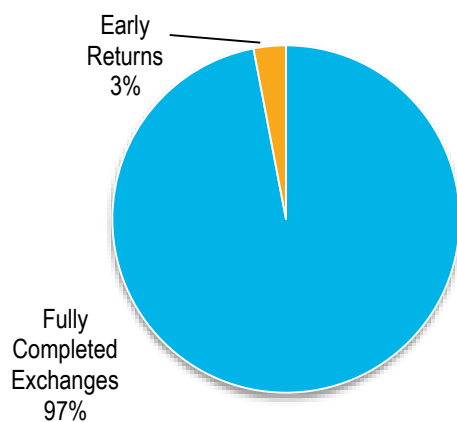
- Similar to long-term exchanges, a larger percentage of districts indicated “no change” (+10%) and a smaller percentage of districts indicated a decrease (-15%).
- The vast majority of respondents with increased activity noted Rotary club participation and increased interest from youth as their top 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.
- Districts also noted that increased promotion, adding more camps, and strengthening partnerships with local schools also led to an increase of short-term exchanges.

## Challenges:

- The main reason reported for either a decrease in exchanges or a decision to not participate in the short-term was a lack of interest from Rotary clubs. Lack of interest from youth was the second highest reported reason in both of these categories as well. Additional factors cited for decreasing activity included a lack of interest from host families, as well as failed marketing strategies.
- 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.
- Districts looking to increase (or begin) the short-term exchanges should consider promoting the benefits of the program for all involved: students, host families, and Rotary clubs.

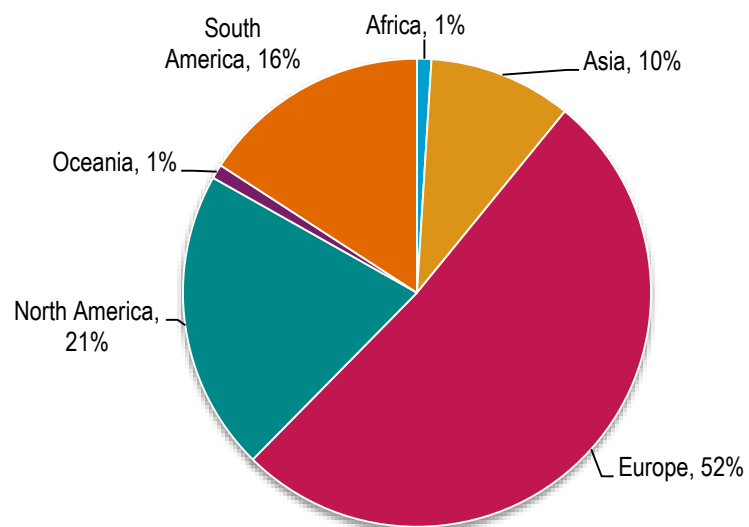
## EARLY RETURNS

Districts reported 268 early returns in 2015-16, comprising 3% of all exchanges, which represents a minimal decrease compared to the 2014-15 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.

### 2015-16 Early Returns Worldwide by Region



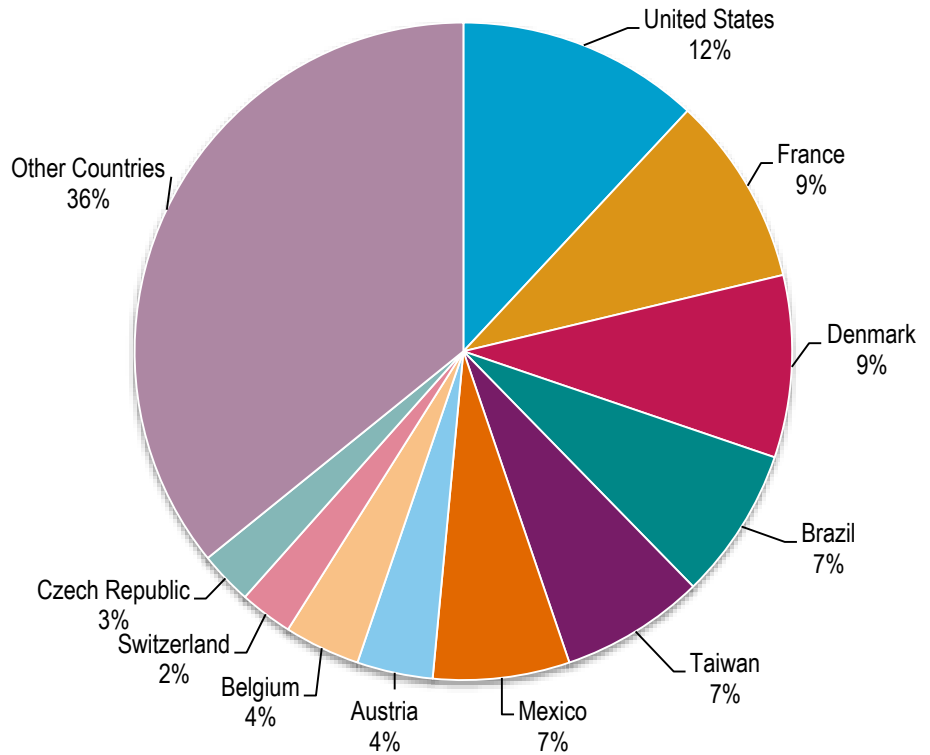
The percentage of early returns within each region is roughly even (between 1% and 4%), and is consistent with the overall early return rate of 3%.



### Early Returns by Country

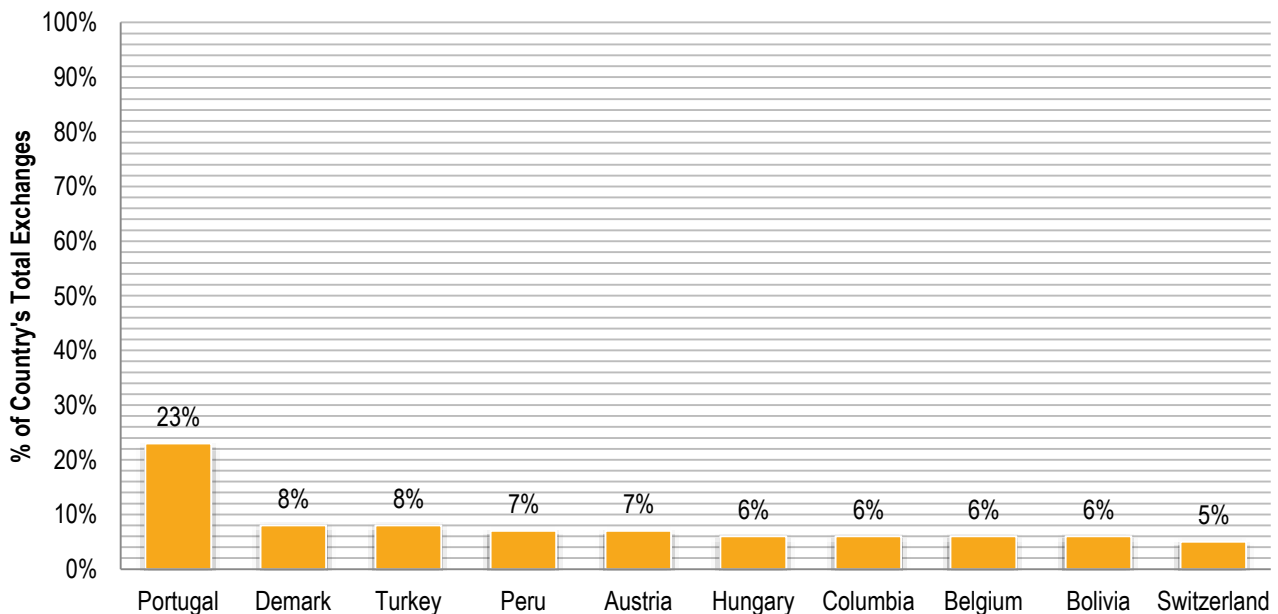
The 10 countries on the list below reported the highest number of early returns in 2015-16, totaling 64% of the returns worldwide. It is largely comprised of the individual countries with the highest amount of total exchanges reported.

Country	Early Returns Reported
United States	32
France	25
Denmark	24
Brazil	20
Taiwan	19
Mexico	18
Austria	10
Belgium	10
Switzerland	7
Czech Republic	7
Other	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>



### Early Returns as Percent of Country Totals

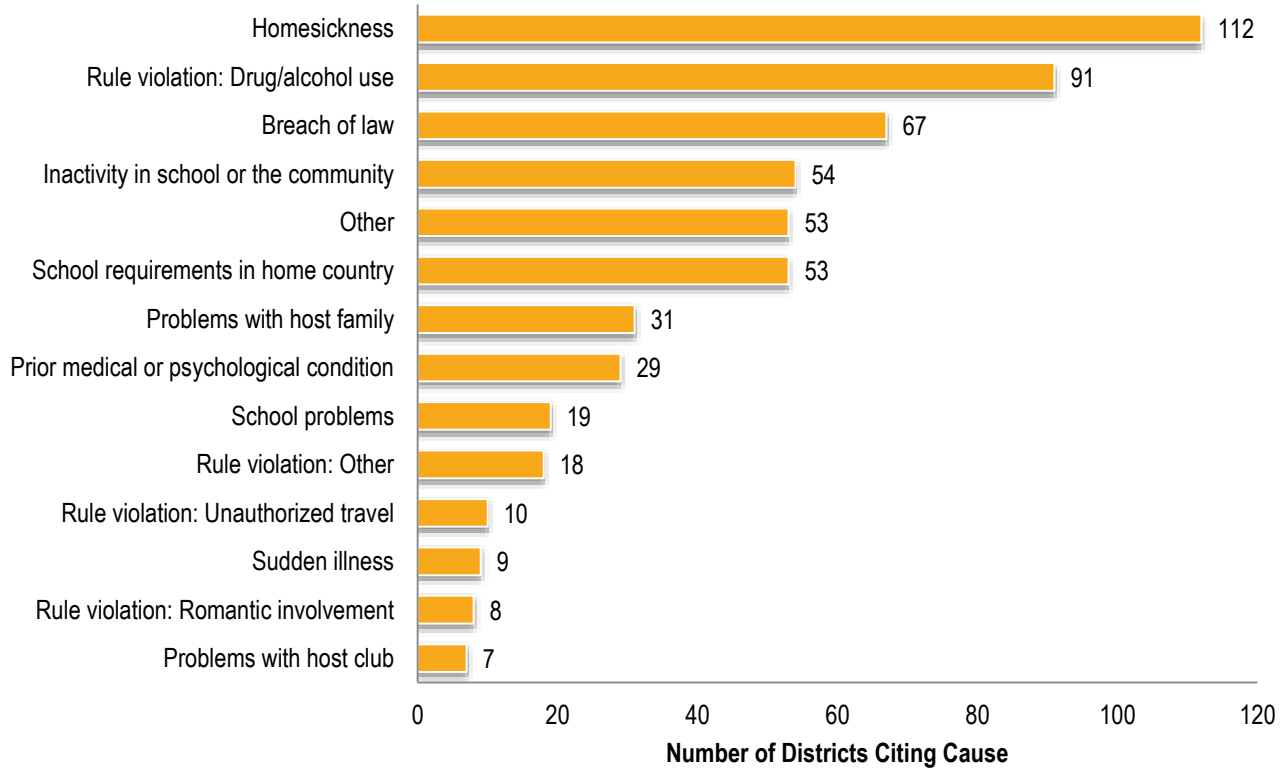
The chart below represents the 10 countries reporting the highest percentage of early returns in comparison to their total number of exchanges hosted in 2015-16. While Portugal's number looks significantly higher than the others, it is mostly due to the fact that the country hosted thirteen students in the 2015-16 year.



## 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.

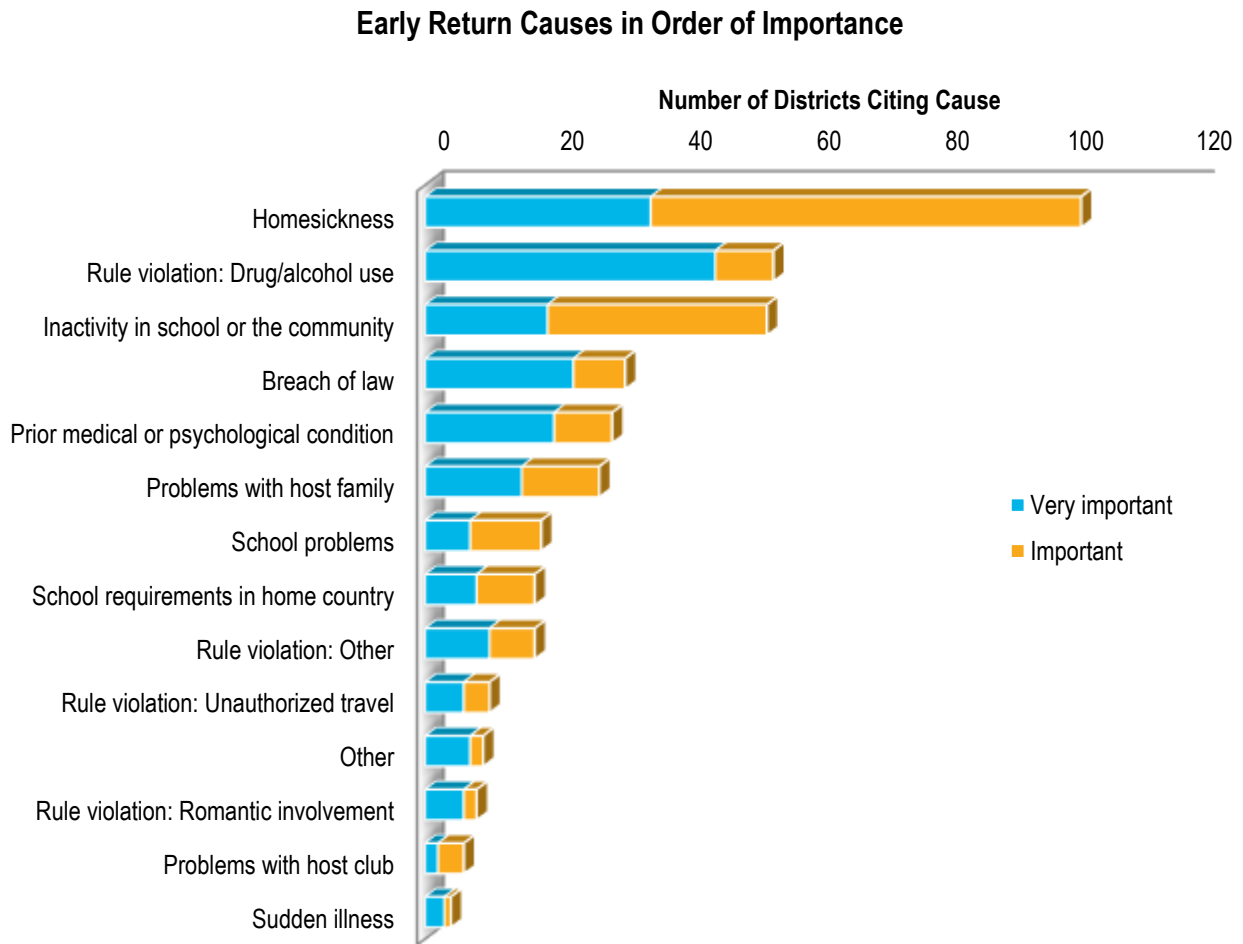
**Early Return Causes in Order of Frequency**



In order of *frequency*, or how often a particular reason is reported to be involved in determining an early return, homesickness, drug and alcohol use, and school requirements in the home country were cited most often as the causes for early returns in 2015-16.

Drug and alcohol use and homesickness were the top two causes (by frequency) of early returns in the 2014-15 report as well, and inactivity in the school or community remained in the top five. The largest change occurred with reports of sudden illness, which decreased dramatically from sixty-four to nine. It is also worth noting that the frequency of problems with the host family *increased* from seventeen reports to twenty-seven. 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 2014-15 data, more districts placed a higher 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. In addition to the reasons listed above, respondents noted that a lack of student preparation for the exchange contributed significantly to early return.

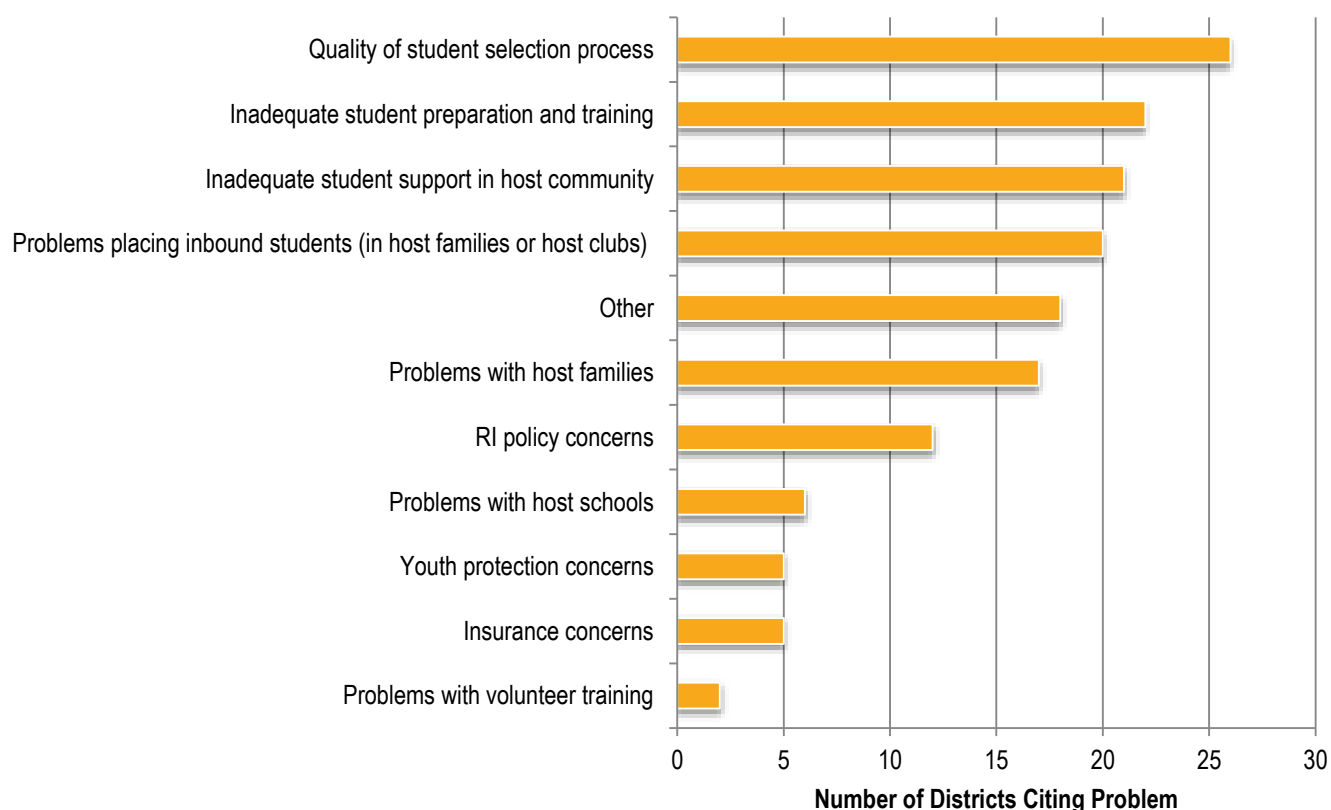
Survey respondents provided the following advice and strategies to address factors related to early returns:

- Place a stronger focus on student selection, specifically language abilities and participation in groups and activities.
- Focus more on holistic coaching at the beginning of the exchange in addition to discussing the rules and regulations for the students.
- Enhance the counselor role and be proactive about early involvement when issues begin to arise.
- Organize more activities for inbound students to keep them busy throughout their exchange, especially in the early stages.
- Implement comprehensive screening and training for students, host families, and counselors. Training for host families and counselors should be ongoing, rather than a one-time experience.
- Include additional training on the signs and symptoms of homesickness, questions to ask students, and red flags to identify. Discuss strategies host families can use to help their students through the tough times.
- Involve rebound and/or ROTEX students throughout the exchange to help inbound students create connections and friendships.

## EXCHANGE PARTNER INTERACTIONS

Survey respondents were asked about challenges they experienced with their exchange partner districts in 2015-16. Of the 384 responding districts, only 49 (13%) indicated they had challenges with their partners. This is a decrease in reports from both the 2014-15 report (-19%) and the 2013-14 report (-20%). The most common problems reported included the quality of the student selection process, inadequate student preparation/training and inadequate student support in the host community.

### Common Problems with Exchange Partners



When compared with 2014-15 data, the following trends emerged:

- While most of the trends remained similar, there were significantly fewer reports made overall.
- There was an increase in concern with student preparation and support throughout the exchange process, which indicates districts may need to focus their efforts in those areas in the coming year.
- Districts reported fewer youth protection and RI policy concerns, and problems with volunteer training remained the lowest reported issue.

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](mailto:youthexchange@rotary.org). It is essential that identifying information be provided so that the concerns can be appropriately addressed.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the 2015-16 year, Rotary Youth Exchange provided over 8,600 students with unique opportunities to explore new cultures and enhance personal and professional development. These experiences create life-long memories and give the next generation of leaders a greater sense of international understanding and service. It is clear that the commitment of Youth Exchange Officers and district leadership remains strong; their dedication of time and energy ensures the program's continued development.

Responses to the 2015-16 survey indicate growth in the long-term exchange program (+78) and decrease in the short-term program (-160), resulting in a decrease overall in total exchanges. Compared to previous years, a larger percentage of districts reported that their long and short term programs either increased in numbers or stayed the same, which is an indication that Rotary Youth Exchange programs remain strong globally.

Statistics from the past few years indicate that club support is vital to success of both long and short-term exchanges. Districts looking to increase the number of exchanges should consider methods to increase both club participation and promotional efforts for youth in their area. Districts may also consider involving rebound students and youth exchange alumni (ROTEX) throughout the exchange processes, as their involvement was noted as a way to both increase exchange numbers and reduce early returns. Moreover, data suggests that clear and effective communication – with students, parents, and district leadership - is paramount for the success of the program.

The strong majority of all exchanges (97%) were fully completed with no need for early return, and early return percentages were equally distributed throughout each of the geographic regions. Homesickness was listed both as the more frequent and most important reason for early returns, indicating that districts should train students, host families, and counselors to identify early warning signs and methods to manage the feelings and actions associated with homesickness. While some early exchanges are unavoidable, increased student training, preparation, and orientation in vulnerable areas may lead to a continued decrease in the overall number of early exchanges.

Over three-quarters of all responding districts reported no challenges with their exchange partners, indicating that these relationships remain strong overall. While most of the trends remained similar from previous years, there was an increase in concern with both student preparation and support throughout the exchange. It will be crucial for districts to review their processes related to these areas in the upcoming year to ensure the continued success of the long-term and short-term exchange programs.

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](mailto:youthexchange@rotary.org)

## STUDENT TRAVEL INSURANCE

The Rotary Code of Policy section 41.060.11 was revised in 2012 to include details on the type of coverage and minimum coverage amounts required for all students participating in Rotary Youth Exchange.

It is the responsibility of the parents or legal guardians of the student to provide insurance that meets these requirements. However, the host district has final authority in accepting the students' travel insurance as they are ultimately responsible for arranging immediate and emergency medical attention when needed.

As part of the 2015-16 annual survey, districts and multidistricts were given the option to answer three questions related to student travel insurance policy requirements for Rotary Youth Exchange programs worldwide. Ten multidistricts responded on behalf of their member districts in addition to 264 individual districts, for a total representation of 344 districts.

Of these 344 districts, **247 (72%)** indicated they require a specific student travel insurance policy, **70 (20%)** indicated they recommend a specific policy, and **26 (8%)** indicated they neither required nor recommended a specific policy.

Districts were also asked whether they believe the required coverage amount is too high, adequate, or too low for each area of the policy. Some districts chose not to respond to every question, thus the percentages may not add to a full 100%.

	Too High	Adequate	Too Low
US\$1,000,000 for expenses related to injury or illness such as hospital, doctors/physicians, dentist, ambulance or other usual and customary medical services.	21%	<b>73%</b>	2%
US\$100,000 for accidental death, dismemberment, or disability	6%	<b>80%</b>	10%
US\$50,000 for necessary emergency transport or evacuation of student in the event of severe illness or bodily injury	9%	<b>85%</b>	2%
US\$50,000 for repatriation of student's remains or cremation expenses in the event of the death of the student.	12%	<b>80%</b>	2%
US\$50,000 for necessary emergency transport or evacuation of student in the event of a non-medical emergency, including due to a political crisis or a natural disaster.	16%	<b>77%</b>	3%
US\$500,000 for personal legal liability for liability arising from the student's actions or omissions that cause bodily injury to a third party or damage to a third party's property.	10%	<b>77%</b>	9%

These numbers suggest that the vast majority of districts believe that the required coverage amounts adequately meet the needs of exchange students.

The survey results will be shared with the Youth Exchange Committee. They will then determine if it is necessary to make recommendations related to the student travel insurance policy to the RI Board of Directors.