



# REPORT

Former Exchangee Survey  
2021

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## SUMMARY:

In this report you will find a summary of the results of the "Former Exchangee Survey" developed by the ICYE International Office.

This report is about the responses former exchange students gave us regarding their experiences of a stay abroad with ICYE - either as an exchange student or as a volunteer.

The survey was published from 1<sup>st</sup> of March to 31<sup>st</sup> of May.

209 alumni took part in the survey.

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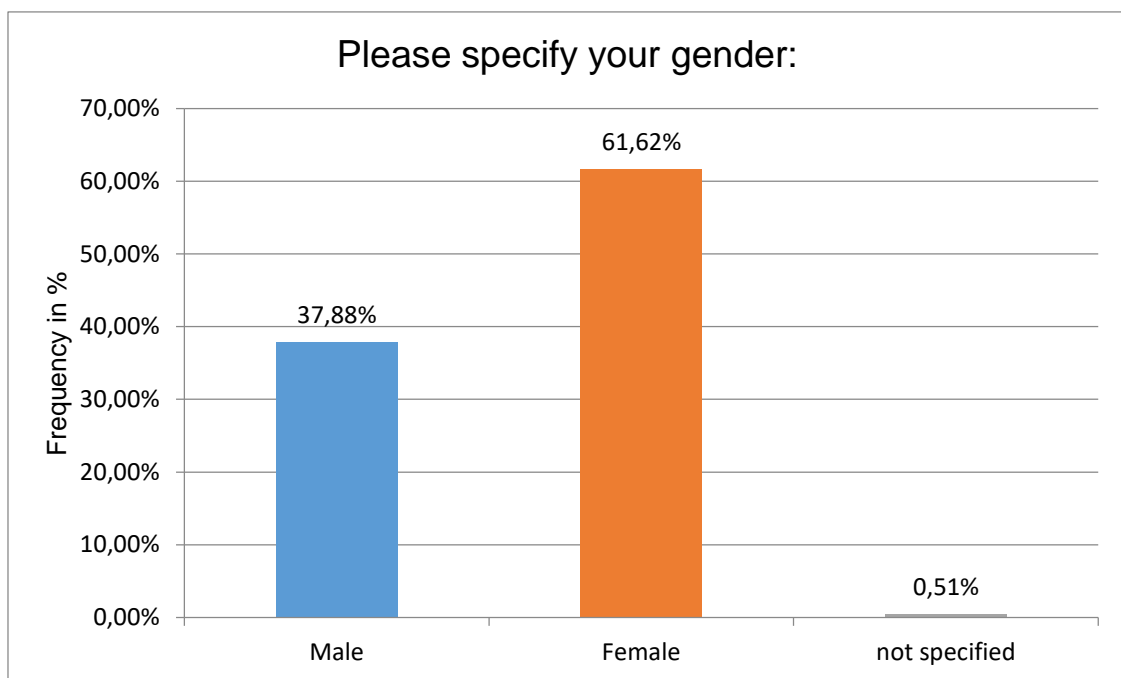
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## 1.0 Survey overview and summary

*"I realized the power of "getting away" and was able to encourage others to take the leap and "get away" and change their lives."*

To capture the experiences and voices of former exchangees who travelled with ICYE, the International Office (IO) decided to create a survey with six questions around their motivation, their experiences and the impact the time abroad had. From March 1<sup>st</sup> to May 31<sup>st</sup> 209 alumni from 25 countries took part in the survey.



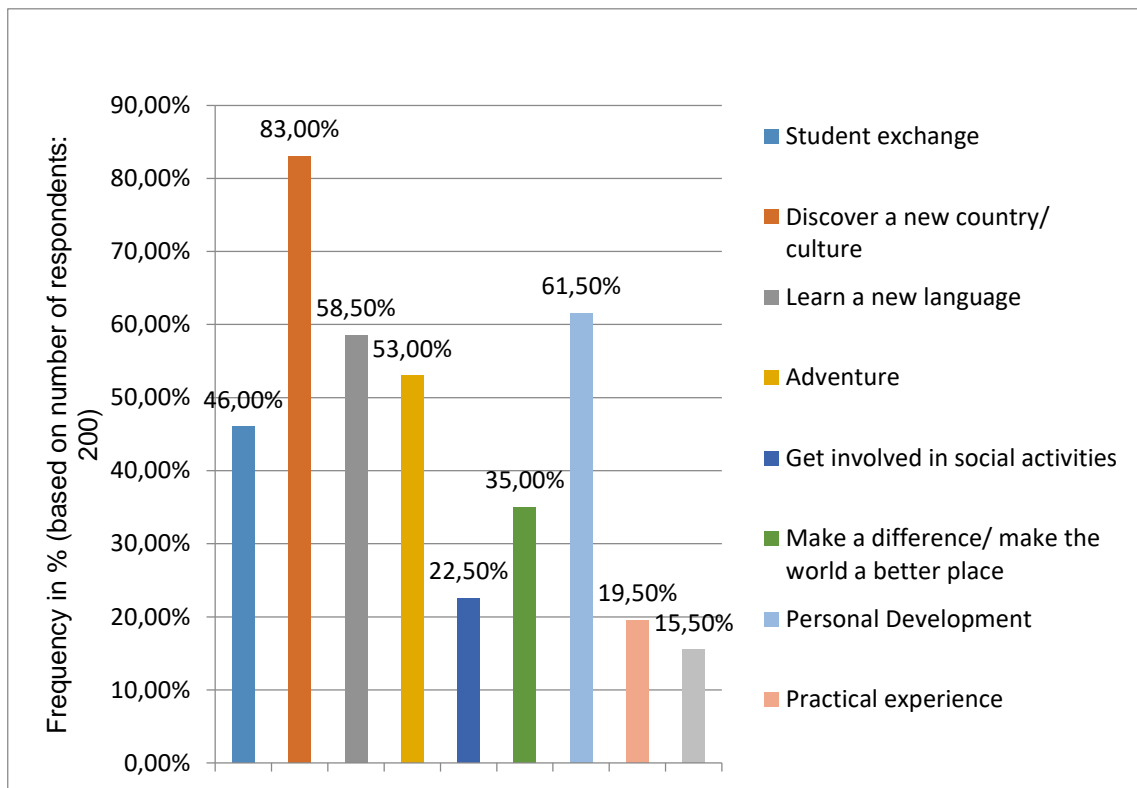
The survey also revealed that the earliest participant travelled abroad in 1958, while the most recent one in 2019. Most participants said they had been abroad for about a year.

The survey reveals that most respondents wanted to discover a new country and did it for their personal development. All highlighted the immense impact the time abroad had on them. Most participants are still in touch with some of the people they met during their time in another country.

In addition, almost 90% say that their ICYE experience has influenced others and that they would do their stay abroad again.

## 2.0 Questions

### 2.1 Why did you decide to travel with ICYE? Please tick as appropriate.



The motivation for most of the exchangeees was very personal – wanting to discover a new culture, learn another language, have an adventure. As many of the respondents were exchange students, the aspect of contributing to social change was not rated as high.

Here were some of the “other reasons” respondents shared:

*“Fulfill a dream.”*

*“Wanted to do something different than go to college immediately after HS.”*

*“Open a new world to me.”*

*“My grandparents hosted many exchange students with ICYE and I was inspired by meeting them.”*

*“Always interested in other cultures, languages, countries.”*

## *2.2 Please describe in a few words what was your best memory of your time abroad?*

Many of the respondents find it difficult to choose just one best memory. Living with the host family was very special to many of them. The fact that you now have friends all over the world and have learned a new culture/language is also highlighted.

Here are some of the answers:

*“There is not just ONE best memory: I loved my host family, I loved learning about my host country, and I loved becoming 'me' during the exchange year.”*

*“A 'best memory' is impossible to pick out. That year gave me a perspective on the world and myself that has shaped my life ever since. I also gained a whole new family that remains a vibrant part of my life to this day.”*

*“Walking on cooling lava from an erupting volcano and melting soles of tennis shoes.”*

*“Can’t be described in a few words. It was the absolute best year of my life, and there are so many best memories that still keep me going.”*

*“Becoming part of a network of social justice advocates.”*

*“Being immersed in a different culture and being challenged to step out of my comfort zone.”*

*“I remember going skiing with my Swiss brother, staying in a chalet with his friends, celebrating New Year's together in the Alpine village of Adelboden.”*

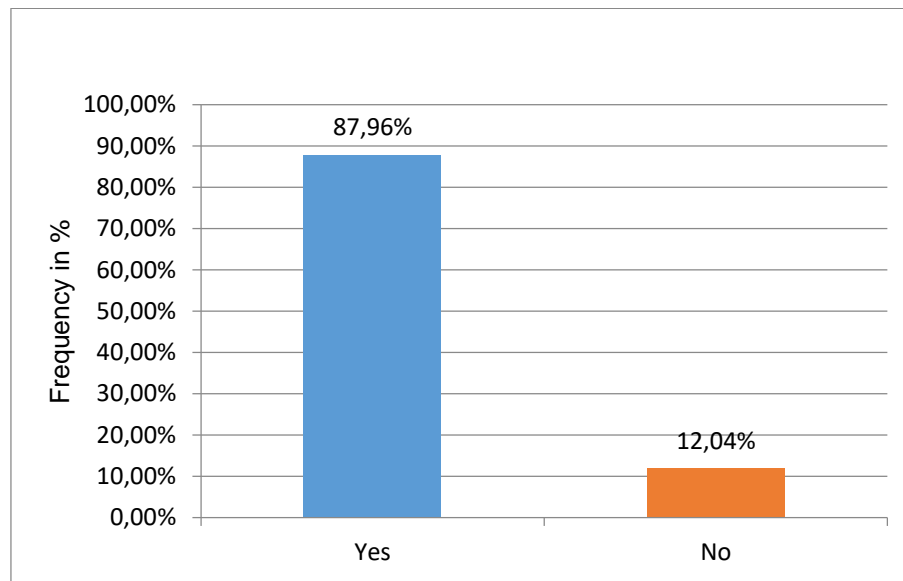
*“Learning a new language, engaging with a new culture. Learning about, tasting and learning to cook different foods. Meeting new friends that have remained so for 50 years.”*

*“To always feel very welcome everywhere!”*

*“Being part of a community, find out what I want to do in life.”*

*“For the first time I really got involved in social and political issues, and the whole year abroad on my own was a vital step in my personal development.”*

## 2.2 Are you still in contact with some of the people you met during your year abroad?



The vast majority of nearly 90% of the respondents are still in contact with people they met during their year abroad. When asked who they are still in contact with, most indicated other exchange students, staff, co-volunteers, host families, local friends, partners:

*“Friends, host family’ office staff. I am a ICYE UK trustee so also lots of contact with many aspects of ICYE in general.”*

*“Host family, in person visits.”*

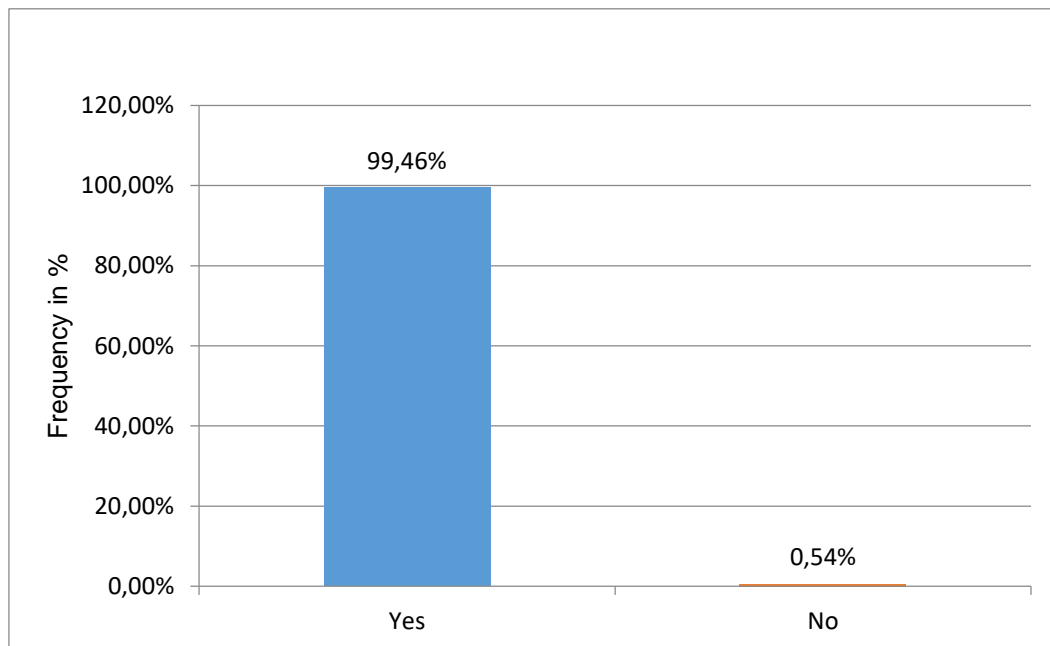
When asked how they keep in touch, most responded with social media, e.g. via Facebook/ WhatsApp, E-mail or video calls:

*“Host mother by e-mail. Host father and host brother on Facebook. Other ICYE exchangees on Facebook and LinkedIn. (Some other exchangees are in the U.S.).”*

*“Host family and other exchangers. Facebook, WhatsApp and zoom.”*

*“I have kept in touch by phone and now Facebook. Occassionally do a video call with other exchangees and my host family.”*

### 2.3 Can you say today that your exchange/ volunteer year with ICYE has influenced your life?



Nearly all the respondents say that their exchange/volunteer year with ICYE has influenced their lives. In what way, that varies - e.g. some say, they have become a global citizen, others mention that their values have changed, they indicate they have become a better, interculturally more sensitive person with a broader view of the world, respecting other people's beliefs and ways of life. The aspect of independence and self-confidence is mentioned over and over and how the time abroad influenced career paths.

Here are some of the answers:

*"I became a better person, I learned to value people and my surroundings more. My exchange year was the best year of my life."*

*"A life-long commitment to progressive politics and social justice issues. It impacts how I teach psychology from a humanities and critical theory perspective."*

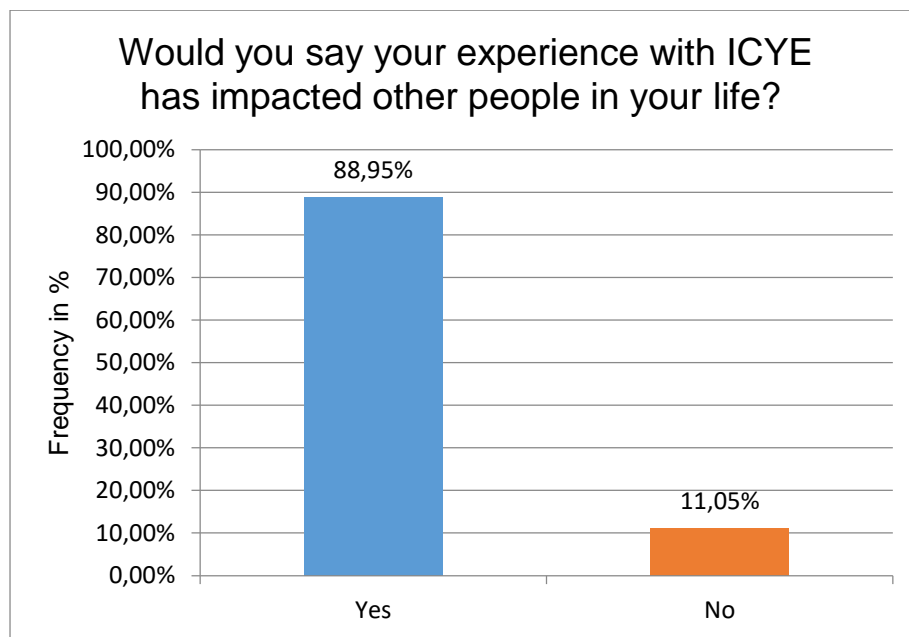
*"Basically everything, gained a lot of independence, confidence and a knowledge of being capable to overcome even what at the time seems like an impossible hurdle."*

*"My exchange year instilled in me the confidence that I could do anything."*

*“Had I not had that experience, I would have had the same limited world view I had living in my home town. By that I mean the view of my world before ICYE was marry the high school sweetheart, have a nice house, get a nice job, have nice children and be concerned with all things involving myself. ICYE changed that.”*

*“It changed my whole life! I became much more excited and interested and curious about in life in general.”*

#### 2.4 Would you say your experience with ICYE has impacted other people in your life?



This statistic shows that about 90% agree that their experience with ICYE has influenced other people in their lives:

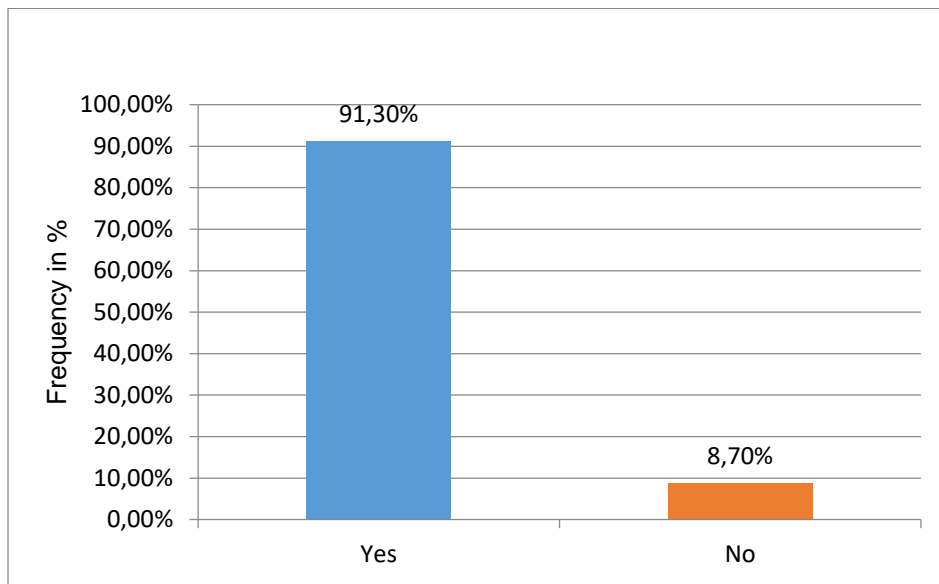
*“A lot friends from Austria and my family already visited me in Mozambique and got to know the country because of me.”*

*“Encouraged others to take opportunities for new life experiences, and growth for oneself that cannot occur otherwise. Also sharing the confidence in oneself that is a result of taking the challenge to step into unknown territory.”*

*“Friends and family want to travel and discover new cultures, visit new places, meet different people.”*



### 2.5 Would you do it again?



From all the feedback on what the exchange or volunteer time meant to respondents, it is clear why over 90% would do it again.

*We would like to thank all the respondents for sharing their insights and experiences.*

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