



# Au Pair Program 2020 Executive Summary Report

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### Executive Summary of Findings

The Au Pair Program, a category within the U.S. Department of State's Exchange Visitor Program (EVP), has been promoting daily cultural exchange in American homes for more than 30 years. Through the Au Pair program, participants and host families take part in a mutually rewarding, intercultural opportunity. Participants can continue their education at U.S. universities and colleges while experiencing everyday life with an American family. Hosts receive reliable and responsible childcare support from individuals who become part of the family. Each year, au pairs care for over 50,000 children across 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The Alliance for International Exchange commissioned EurekaFacts, an independent firm, to conduct a thorough evaluation of the Au Pair Exchange Visitor Program. EurekaFacts surveyed 10,881 au pair participant alumni and 6,452 host families to determine the impact of the program.

The findings presented in this summary are based on:

- A document review and environmental scan of the U.S. State Department's Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) J-1 Visa Au Pair Program to conduct a multi-method study of au pair alumni and host family participants, addressing themes identified under direction of the Alliance for International Exchange.
- Analysis of surveys, in-depth interviews, and expenditure data on program impact, characteristics of international cultural exchange, relationship building, personal and career development, impact on children or family life, and economic growth.
- Web-based surveys of responses from 10,881 au pair alumni and 6,452 host family representatives conducted simultaneously, April 15, 2020 – May 15, 2020. The surveys include host families living in the United States and au pair alumni recruited worldwide who participated in the J-1 Visa Au Pair Program within the last five years, representing a broad demographic cross-section of the host and au pair populations.

The full report on the Au Pair program will be released in August 2020.

The Alliance for International Exchange fact sheet can be found here: [https://www.alliance-exchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EF\\_AuPairReport\\_FactSheet\\_2020-1.pdf](https://www.alliance-exchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/EF_AuPairReport_FactSheet_2020-1.pdf)

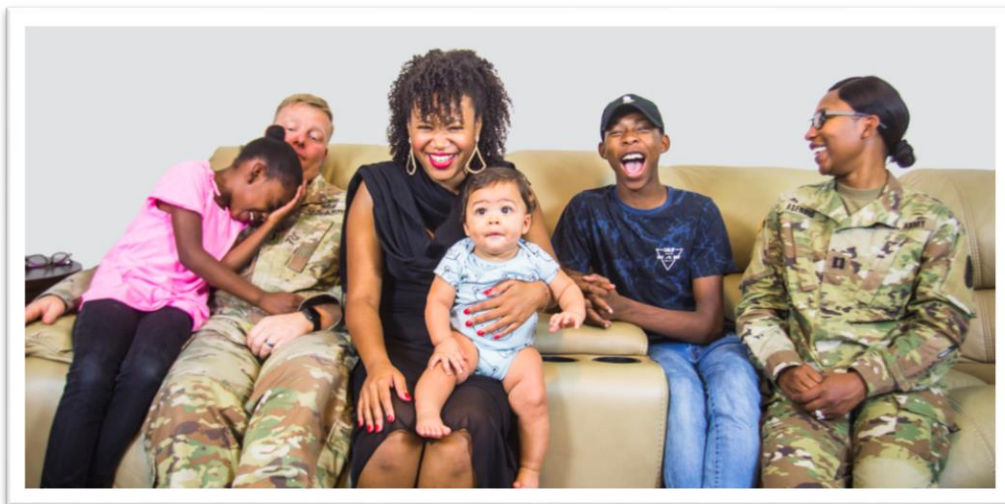
### ***Au Pair Alumni Experience, Motivations, and Benefits***

**The vast majority of au pair alumni express satisfaction with their overall experience in the au pair program and would recommend the program to their friends and other potential participants.**

- More than eight-in-ten (84%) au pairs say they are satisfied with their overall experience in the program, including 48% who are “extremely satisfied”. Likewise, overwhelming majorities of au pairs say that specific aspects of the program are “good” or “very good”, including; the applications process (95%), program orientation and training (84%), and the ability to build close personal connections to their host families (83%).
- Nine-in-ten au pairs rate their overall experience in the U.S. as “excellent” (60%) or “good” (30%).
- The majority of au pair alumni report positive social experiences with their host families (83%), sponsor organizations (70%), and local program coordinators (68%).
- 87% of au pairs say that they would recommend the program to a friend, including 60% who are “very likely” to endorse the program to others.

**Most au pairs have a positive experience in the host family home.**

- The majority of au pairs characterize the home setting as “welcoming” (63%), and “comfortable” (55%) and half (51%) say that they are made to feel like one of the family.
- Speaking to the strengths of the au pair recruitment process, and the orientation and training they receive, just one-in-four au pairs (23%) say that they need an “adjustment period” living with a host family.



**Au pairs are highly motivated to participate in the J-1 visa program, recognizing “very important” opportunities for cultural exchange, and personal and professional growth.**

- Two-thirds or more of au pairs see the program as “very important” opportunities for them to “gain new or improved personal skills” (77%), to experience daily life in a different culture” (73%), to improve their English skills (69%), or to learn and interact with people from a different culture than their own (63%). Majorities see it as “very important” to gain new or improve professional skills (58%) and to learn about American values (52%).

**Au pairs make great strides in acquiring English language skills while participating in the program.**

- Overall, eight-in-ten (79%) of au pairs say that their understanding of the English language and speaking ability (80%) in the English language improved “a lot” from before entering the program.
- Au pairs at all language skills levels say improved “a lot”, and especially among those arriving with basic skills level: 87% improved a lot in understanding, 80% in speaking, 60% in reading, and 48% in writing.

**The overwhelming majority of au pairs gain experiences in the program to support their personal career and educational goals. Moreover, nearly all are able to put those skills to work in one or more professional sectors.**

- More than eight-in-ten (84%) au pairs say that the program supports their career and educational goals and growth. Similarly, 80% say that the program provided practical work experience, including 38% who benefited a “great deal”.
- Almost all (96%) au pairs say that they are applying the skills and experience they acquired through the program to their chosen professions: 68% to the education sector, 50% to childcare, 42% to business, and another 20% to careers in cultural exchange.

**The au pair program imparts a wide spectrum of life skills and opportunities for personal development to participants.**

- Topping the list of skills, about eight-in-ten au pairs say that they developed greater confidence in communicating with others (83%) and learned to multi-task (79%). About half say that they learned to prioritize objectives or manage their finances (53% each) and half (50%) acquired leadership skills.

### **Au pairs view the US and Americans very favorably. These affinities grow during their time in the program.**

- When entering the program au pairs have widely favorable views of the US (88%) and of Americans (83%). Those views change for the positive when it comes to the American people (66% “more” or “much more” positive), American culture (65%), and the US in general (63%).
- In contrast, a sizeable minority say that their view of the American political system grew more negative (42%) compared with their initial impression.

### **The majority of au pairs build lasting relationships with host families, fellow au pairs, and American friends**

- Au pairs build and maintain connections to a wide variety of people during their program. Most build relationships and maintain them with fellow au pairs (89% establish the relationship and 98% keep them), with host families (85% and 86%), and with American friends (67% and 93%).
- Nearly all au pairs (94%) say that they are likely to return to the US, including 79% who say they are “very likely” to do so.

### **Au pairs are introduced to a spectrum of American cultural activities and share many cultural activities from their native country with their host family and friends.**

- Most au pairs (54%) participate in seven or more cultural activities while participating in the program, including American holidays (91%) and outdoor recreational activities (85%).
- Au pairs see great novelty in the activities shared with them. Many activities are different from their native country, including community celebrations (82%), holidays (72%), travel destinations (71%), and volunteer activities (58%).
- The cultural exchange between au pair and host family is reciprocal. Most Au pairs share food (89%), stories (80%) and cultural gifts (74%) with their host families and their friends.

### ***Host Family Program Experience, Motivations, and Benefits***

**The vast majority of host families express great satisfaction with their experience hosting in the au pair program.**

- More than eight-in-ten (85%) host families say that they are satisfied with their overall experience with the au pair program, including a majority (57%) who are “extremely satisfied”.
- Likewise, 86% of host families say that they are very or somewhat likely to recommend the program to friends or family, including 65% who are “very likely” to do so.
- Specifically, host families are highly satisfied with the au pairs themselves. Nine-in-ten host families report a “good” or “very good” experience establishing personal connections with their au pair and a “good” or “very good” experience with the childcare that their au pair provides (91% each).
- Overwhelmingly, the experience of integrating au pairs into the family setting (85%), communicating with au pairs (84%) and changes to their finances for operating the household (68%) are excellent or good according to host families.

**Host family participation in the au pair program is most motivated by the opportunity for live-in childcare, the ability to develop a deeper level of trust with their childcare provider and for their family to engage in cultural exchange.**

- Two-thirds of host families see the program as a “very important” opportunity for them to have live-in childcare (68%) and to build deeper trust with a childcare provider (67%). Most (78%) say the program is an important opportunity for their family to engage in cultural exchange, including 42% who say this is “very important”.

**The vast majority of host families see great benefits of the additional help with childcare as part of the program, while also highly valuing the au pair – family relationship, fostering a life-time friendship and mentoring their au pairs**

- Nine-in-ten (90%) of host families feel that they benefit from the additional help in caring for their children.
- Three-quarters or more see benefit in establishing a relationship with the au pair (82%) and in building a life-long relationship with the au pair.

### **The cultural exchange of the au pair program is seen as highly beneficial among host families**

- Two-thirds recognize the benefit of interacting with individuals from other countries (67%), promoting inter-cultural engagement for their children (65%), developing an appreciation for other cultures (62%) and providing experiences for young people to carry home to their native country (71%).
- About nine-in-ten host families now say that they are able to interact with people from other countries (92%) and about as many say they have developed a better understanding of their au pair's culture (88%).

### **The au pair program is seen as critical to host families and very difficult to go without.**

- If the program were not available, seven-in-ten host families (71%) say that they would be adversely affected, including 55% who say “a great deal”.
- Most say it would be difficult to replace the flexibility the program grants their family (77%), the trust and bond build with the au pair as caretaker in their home (66%), and access to cultural exposure and other customs (52%).

### **Most host families say they would pay more for childcare and would have difficulty locating suitable childcare for their kids without the au pair program.**

- Two-thirds say that they would likely not be able to find suitable care for the children (67%) and most would miss out on intercultural relationships (57%).
- 84% of host families say that without the au pair program they would likely spend more money for childcare, including 66% who say this is “extremely likely”.

### **If the au pair program were not available, many host families would face challenges for their career and quality time with family.**

- A sizeable minority (38%) of host families say that they may need to change or stop their careers if the au pair program were not available to them.
- Most (71%) would not be able to spend quality time alone with their spouse if the au pair program were not an option for them.



### *Economic Impact*

**During their time in the United States, au pairs spend approximately \$257 million per year on items such as food, entertainment and travel.**

- Individual participants spend approximately \$5,336 per year in their local communities.
- Financially, there is a net positive effect for host families, au pairs and overall impact for local economies. The expenditures from families provide for the day-to-day needs and beyond for au pairs. In turn, au pairs receive resources that allow them to experience US culture in their community, travel and purchase US goods that contribute towards local economic growth.

**Earning money is the least important motivator when deciding to participate in the program in comparison to other motivating factors indicated.**

- Gaining new or improved personal skills and experiencing daily life in a different culture are top drivers for participation among au pairs.
- 73% of au pairs say that experiencing daily life in a different culture was very important to them in their initial decision to participate in the au pair program.