

BridgeUSA Program Survey

Absence of Crucial International Exchange Visitors Devastates Seasonal Businesses Across the United States

From September 13 to October 15, 2021, the Alliance for International Exchange surveyed 665 seasonal businesses and summer camps nationwide, of which 72% are small businesses. Below are responses from these businesses, 38 in Maine.

SUMMER WORK TRAVEL PARTICIPANTS*

	2019	2020	2021	Decrease from 2019
United States	108,303	4,952	39,647	63% ↓
Maine	3,297	123	1,364	59% ↓

*Data source the U.S. Department of State, J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program.

- ECONOMIC IMPACT -

60%

Of Businesses
Lost Revenue

20%

Of Seasonal
Positions Unfilled

3 in 5

Shortened their
season/hours or closed
business locations



Did not meet peak
staffing needs without J-1
Visa Exchange Visitors



Reported staff burnout



Reported lower quality of
customer service or longer
customer wait times

In Maine, 26 businesses reported a total loss of \$5,901,000, averaging

\$226,962

per business

- PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IMPACT -

Lack of J-1 Visa Exchange Visitors hampers U.S. public diplomacy goals by taking away a key positive U.S. experience from tomorrow's international leaders, and preventing them from engaging with their American host communities.

Host employers across America agree or strongly agree that Summer Work Travel and Camp Counselor participants:



Enable U.S. based staff to gain a better understanding of other cultures



Contribute to a positive culture in the workplace



Make the community more sensitive to other cultures

“We were closed 1 day per week which resulted in over \$11k per week in lost revenue. We may need to work with reduced hours in the winter resulting in less staff/layoffs which will mean a need to hire even more staff in spring.”

- Restaurant in Ogunquit, ME

“The Summer Work Travel program brings diversity to our team and our small town. These students add a cultural impact that we wouldn't have otherwise.”

- Hotel in York Beach, ME

“The town is suffering right now without enough exchange participants. Half the restaurants are already closed in September. The impact is that tourists are complaining - and many will not return here in future years believing that our town does not have the labor capacity to deliver on our tourism promises. Help us!!!”

- Ice Cream Shop in Boothbay Harbor, ME

“BridgeUSA participants rave about their experiences working at summer camps and in turn our campers and U.S. based staff learn about other cultures, languages, customs and countries. Exchange participants explore the local area and sites in their time off which adds to our local economy and tourism attractions.”

- Summer Camp in Denmark, ME

“Staffing shortages caused me to open later, close earlier and be closed one to two days per week, which caused me to hire fewer Americans for front end work and overall have less revenue.”

- Restaurant in Scarborough, ME

“We have had to turn away so much business at our restaurant and inn. We just don't have the staff to clean the rooms or greet the guests. Normally our BridgeUSA students help with these tasks. They were sorely missed and we took a financial hit because of it.”

- Hotel in Spruce Head, ME