

Considering fellowship? Check in on the latest applicant trends

MAY 4, 2021

Brendan Murphy

News Writer

With more than 10,000 applicants landing positions, the 2021 appointment year fellowship Match was the largest in record. Figures released by the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) detail data behind matches—conducted in 2020 and early 2021—for 68 subspecialties that will start this summer.

In total, 5,110 programs that submitted certified rank-order lists offered 11,767 fellowship positions, of which 10,433 (88.7%) were filled, and 82% of programs in the varying matches filled all positions. On the applicant side, 12,925 active applicants who participated in at least one fellowship Match, of which 10,433 (80.7%) obtained positions.

Learn the top factors fellowship program directors look for in applicants.

Applicant type

Roughly one-fifth of programs filled 100% of positions within their matches. Certain subspecialties were more prone to certain types of applicants, according to the NRMP. Gynecologic oncology, for instance, had the highest percentage of positions filled by U.S. MD graduates (93%).

A few other key trends relating to applicant type:

- The four other specialties with the highest percentages of positions filled by U.S. MD graduates are pediatric surgery (89.4%), hand surgery (86.3%), reproductive endocrinology (85%), and female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery (82.3%).
- The five specialties with the highest percentages of positions filled by U.S. DO graduates are sports medicine (37.6%), medical toxicology (23.5%), rheumatology (20.0%), pain medicine (19.6%) and pediatric pulmonology (17.3%).
- The five specialties with the highest percentages of positions filled by U.S. citizen graduates

of international medical schools are developmental and behavioral pediatrics (34.4%), adolescent medicine (26.1%), interventional pulmonology (25%), nephrology (21.2%) and sleep medicine (20.6%).

The five specialties with the highest percentages of positions filled by non-U.S. citizen graduates of international medical schools are endocrinology, diabetes and metabolism (46%), nephrology (40.3%), vascular neurology (37.5%), hematology and oncology (28.1%), and pediatric endocrinology (27.4%).

Find out the four ways the pandemic is changing the fellowship Match process.

Not matching

Roughly 20% of applicants in the fellowship didn't find a match. That setback may be a disappointment, but it's important to keep the matter in perspective, said John Andrews, MD. He is the AMA's vice president for graduate medical education innovations.

"By definition, people who are applying for fellowship are knowledgeable physicians," he said. "They will have many opportunities to practice medicine in a variety of settings. To not match to a specific subspecialty training program may lead them to try to match again in a different year or find a different way to apply their skills. Not matching may limit your options to work in a highly specialized area, but you still have those skills as a physician to use in so many ways."

For those looking to apply for fellowship beginning in the 2022 appointment year, make use of FREIDA™—a comprehensive AMA tool that captures data on more than 12,000 residency and fellowship programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education.