

## Plastic Surgery Match Trends in 2022

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The plastic surgery match in 2021 demonstrated increased matching at home programs, a trend that was reflected in other competitive subspecialties, including otolaryngology and dermatology.<sup>1-3</sup> In 2021, there was an 8% increase in home matches. This was thought to be largely due to restrictions in the 2021 cycle; specifically, applicants were not able to do away rotations, and all interviews were performed virtually. Programs and applicants likely favored the known (including trainees who performed research with the program), rather than risking getting an unknown applicant or going to an unfamiliar program.<sup>4</sup> Previous studies consistently demonstrate that geographic biases were prevalent in the plastic surgery match before the pandemic, with geography playing an even stronger role in 2021.<sup>5</sup>

Also of note, this was the first cycle where more women than men matched into plastic surgery.<sup>1</sup> In light of the efforts to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion, seeing more women match into plastic surgery in 2021 was a positive result; so we aimed to re-evaluate the trends we saw in 2021. Evaluating previous cycles and identifying biases is essential for programs and applicants when navigating future matches, allowing us all to be more intentional in our efforts to rank potential trainees.

For 2022, we identified successfully matched applicants (191 positions from 86 integrated plastic surgery programs), documented their home medical school, the residency program they matched in, the regions and states of their school and residency, and gender of the applicant. This was compared with data previously collected for match cycles from 2016 to 2021. We found 29 (15%) matched at their home program, which is an 11% drop from 2021; however, this is closer to previous years (average of 17% from 2016 to 2020). We also

found that home region dropped by 9% to 49% in 2022 when compared with 2021, which approached previous rates (42% from 2016 to 2020). Interestingly, fewer students with associated independent plastic surgery programs successfully matched into integrated plastic surgery (6% in 2022 from a mean of 24% from 2016 to 2021). Finally, this is the second year in a row that that more women matched than men, 52% in 2022 from 56% in 2021.

The 2022 match was different than 2021 in that a single away rotation was allowed. Additionally, the virtual clerkships and virtual interviews continued. Despite applicants and programs staying closer to home in 2021, the 2022 match cycle returned to pre-COVID trends, with applicants matching at home and in their home region at similar rates from 2016 to 2020. The most important trend identified was that more women matched into plastic surgery for the second year in a row. As we look forward, the shifting demographic toward diversity in plastic surgery suggests that recruitment efforts have been successful, and hopefully longer-term retention of women in plastic surgery will continue. Making intentional changes in recruitment to promote diversity and inclusion has started to show real results. Given these trends, plastic surgery certainly has a bright future.

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### DISCLOSURE

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