2023-2024 ERAS® Application Cycle: Results of the Applicant Reaction Survey

Overview

On Nov. 6, 2023, 39,399 applicants who had submitted their MyERAS® application as of Sept. 27, 2023, were invited to take an online survey about their experience preparing for the 2023-2024 application cycle and completing their application. The survey took about 15 minutes to complete and consisted of questions mostly related to the Electronic Residency Application Service® (ERAS®) application.

Sample

The survey closed on Dec. 4, 2023, and 4,288 applicants responded (10.8% response rate).

Table 1. Medical School Background of the Survey Sample and Applicant Population

Background	Percentage (Number) of Applicants	
	Survey Sample[1]	Applicant Population
MD	44.8% (1,923)	43.9% (22,529)
DO	12.6% (539)	18.0% (9,246)
International medical graduate	42.6% (1,826)	38.1% (19,565)
Total	100% (4,288)	100% (51,340)

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Findings

The key findings from the survey are displayed in Tables 2-15. Numbers of respondents of <428 represent less than 10% of the total number, and the findings should be interpreted with caution.

The Most Important Factors Affecting Where Respondents Applied

- Applicants were asked to select the five most important factors affecting where they applied. As shown in Table 2, the five factors that most affected the respondents' decision on where they applied were the geographic location of the program, the program's close proximity to family/friends, the alignment of program strengths with career interests, a perceived good fit, and a perceived chance of interview offer. Below are the factors, ordered by reported importance (respondents could choose up to five).

    1. Geographic location of program
    2. Close to family/friends
    3. Alignment of program strengths with career interests
    4. Perceived good fit
    5. Perceived chance of interview offer
    6. Strength of program's clinical training
    7. Program culture/resident camaraderie
    8. Future fellowship training opportunities
    9. Advice from faculty or resident mentors
    10. Diversity of patient population
    11. Diversity of faculty and/or residents
    12. Program reputation/prestige
    13. Cost of living in program location
    14. Having previous ties to program
    15. Future opportunities to practice in the area
    16. Strength of program's research training
    17. Sociopolitical factors related to access to care and/or training
    18. Length of training
    19. Length of time program has been in existence
    20. Other
    21. Having no previous ties to program

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Table 2. Five Most Important Factors Affecting Where Respondents Applied, Overall and by Specialty

Specialty	Total Number of Respondents	Percentage (Number) of Respondents Indicating the Following Factor Was the Most Important:				
		Geographic Location of Program	Close to Family/ Friends	Alignment of Program Strengths With Career Interests	Perceived Good Fit	Perceived Chance of Interview Offer
Adult Neurology	212	52% (110)	51% (108)	50% (107)	39% (83)	35% (75)
Anesthesiology	239	70% (168)	64% (152)	37% (88)	48% (102)	46% (109)
Child Neurology and Neurodevelop-mental Disabilities	40	65% (26)	45% (18)	65% (26)	48% (19)	23% (9)
Dermatology	58	74% (43)	57% (33)	52% (30)	52% (30)	40% (23)
Diagnostic Radiology and Interventional Radiology	164	72% (118)	69% (113)	48% (79)	37% (61)	45% (73)
Emergency Medicine	286	65% (186)	60% (173)	44% (126)	42% (121)	29% (84)
Family Medicine	709	64% (454)	56% (400)	56% (394)	47% (331)	34% (241)
General Surgery	314	55% (173)	51% (160)	55% (173)	44% (137)	38% (120)
Internal Medicine	2,210	56% (1,245)	56% (1,238)	52% (1,141)	38% (845)	39% (853)
Internal Medicine/ Psychiatry	20	70% (14)	40% (8)	45% (9)	55% (11)	30% (6)
Neurological Surgery	31	32% (10)	26% (8)	35% (20)	45% (14)	35% (11)
Obstetrics and Gynecology	212	68% (145)	56% (118)	50% (107)	45% (96)	38% (81)
Orthopedic Surgery	81	75% (61)	62% (50)	37% (30)	51% (41)	43% (35)
Otolaryngology	48	67% (32)	58% (28)	42% (20)	38% (18)	42% (20)
Pathology	148	61% (91)	52% (77)	50% (74)	30% (45)	32% (47)

(continued)

Table 2. Five Most Important Factors Affecting Where Respondents Applied, Overall and by Specialty *(continued)*

Specialty	Total Number of Respondents	Percentage (Number) of Respondents Indicating the Following Factor Was the Most Important:				
		Geographic Location of Program	Close to Family/ Friends	Alignment of Program Strengths With Career Interests	Perceived Good Fit	Perceived Chance of Interview Offer
Pediatrics	511	62% (315)	62% (319)	57% (293)	39% (201)	30% (151)
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	60	73% (44)	57% (34)	42% (25)	53% (32)	35% (21)
Psychiatry	286	66% (189)	57% (163)	47% (133)	45% (129)	40% (115)
Total[1]	4,222	61% (2,592)	57% (2,388)	53% (2,219)	42% (1,770)	35% (1,460)

1. The results are for the 4,222 respondents who completed this question on the ERAS Applicant Survey. The data for specialties with fewer than 20 respondents were excluded from analysis.

Sociopolitical Factors Affecting Where Respondents Applied

- When asked to indicate the most important factors affecting where they applied, 4% of all respondents selected sociopolitical factors related to access to care and/or training. When analyzed by specialty, 16% of respondents who applied to Obstetrics and Gynecology programs considered sociopolitical factors to be the most important factors affecting where they applied.
- When asked what sociopolitical factors affected their decision, 97% of respondents who applied to Obstetrics and Gynecology programs selected access to abortion care and/or training. Results for all respondents and by specialty when the number of respondents was sufficient are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Sociopolitical Factors Affecting Where Respondents Applied, Overall and by Specialty

Specialty[1]	Total Number of Respondents	Percentage (Number) of Respondents[2]		
		Access to Abortion Care and/or Training	Access to LGBTQ Care and/or Training	Other Sociopolitical Factors
Emergency Medicine	13	85% (11)	85% (11)	38% (5)
Internal Medicine	42	57% (24)	60% (25)	24% (10)
Obstetrics and Gynecology	34	97% (33)	65% (22)	--[2]
Pediatrics	18	78% (14)	67% (12)	33% (6)
Psychiatry	18	50% (9)	72% (13)	39% (7)
Total	191	83% (158)	71% (136)	23% (43)

1.The results were analyzed by specialty if there were sufficient numbers of respondents.

2. Dashes indicate cells with fewer than five observations.

Program Signals

- As shown in Table 4, nearly 85% of respondents who submitted program signals responded that their signals reflected their true preferences at the time of their application.
- As shown in Table 5, 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that program signals may help them be noticed by programs in which they have the most interest.

Table 4. My program signals reflected my true preferences at the time of application.

	Percentage (Number) of Respondents Who:					
Total	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Neither Agreed nor Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Agreed or Strongly Agreed
3,772	2% (82)	5% (184)	11% (306)	40% (1,560)	41% (1,640)	81% (3,200)

Table 5. My program signals reflected my true preferences at the time of application.

	Percentage (Number) of Respondents Who:					
Total	Strongly Disagreed	Disagreed	Neither Agreed nor Disagreed	Agreed	Strongly Agreed	Agreed or Strongly Agreed
3,772	7% (273)	10% (367)	16% (603)	37% (1,382)	30% (1,147)	67% (2,529)

Factors Affecting Where Respondents Signaled

- Applicants were also asked to select the five most important factors affecting where they signaled. The five most important factors affecting where respondents signaled (Table 6) were consistent with the five most important factors affecting where they applied (Table 2). Respondents signaled interest in programs that were at their ideal geographic location, that were in close proximity to family/friends, that were aligned with their career interests, that were a perceived good fit, and that gave them a chance to receive interview offer.
- Below is the list of factors ordered by importance.

1. Geographic location of program
2. Close to family/friends
3. Alignment of program strengths with career interests
4. Perceived good fit
5. Perceived chance of interview offer
6. Strength of program's clinical training
7. Program reputation/prestige
8. Advice from faculty or resident mentors
9. Future fellowship training opportunities
10. Program culture/resident camaraderie
11. Diversity of patient population
12. Diversity of faculty and/or residents
13. Having previous ties to program
14. Future opportunities to practice in the area
15. Cost of living in program location
16. Strength of program's research training
17. Having no previous ties to program
18. Sociopolitical factors related to access to care and/or training
19. Length of time program has been in existence
20. Length of training
21. Other

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Table 6. The Five Most Important Factors Affecting Where Respondents Signaled, Overall and by Specialty

Specialty	Total Number of Responses	Percentage (Number) of Respondents Indicating the Following Factor Was One of the Five Most Important:[1]				
		Geographic Location of Program	Close to Family/ Friends	Perceived Good Fit	Alignment of Program Strengths With Career Interests	Perceived Chance of Interview Offer
Adult Neurology	184	51% (93)	48% (88)	49% (91)	54% (100)	35% (65)
Anesthesiology	219	73% (159)	59% (129)	45% (98)	43% (94)	52% (113)
Child Neurology and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities	39	54% (21)	36% (14)	49% (19)	62% (24)	33% (13)
Dermatology	56	57% (32)	48% (27)	61% (34)	50% (28)	50% (28)
Diagnostic Radiology and Interventional Radiology	144	73% (105)	65% (93)	53% (77)	52% (75)	56% (80)
Emergency Medicine	260	65% (168)	49% (127)	48% (124)	46% (119)	36% (94)
Family Medicine	615	61% (376)	57% (348)	51% (314)	60% (370)	38% (234)
General Surgery	261	55% (143)	43% (112)	45% (117)	56% (146)	46% (119)
Internal Medicine	1,874	57% (1,059)	55% (1,024)	44% (816)	50% (939)	44% (831)
Neurological Surgery	26	23% (6)	38% (10)	54% (14)	69% (18)	42% (11)
Obstetrics and Gynecology	195	59% (115)	50% (98)	56% (110)	46% (89)	53% (103)
Orthopedic Surgery	77	69% (53)	64% (49)	52% (40)	38% (29)	52% (40)
Otolaryngology	45	62% (28)	56% (25)	64% (29)	47% (21)	49% (22)
Pathology	131	56% (74)	52% (68)	36% (47)	52% (68)	31% (41)
Pediatrics	449	62% (277)	60% (269)	47% (213)	55% (247)	41% (185)
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	51	59% (30)	55% (28)	55% (28)	55% (28)	33% (17)
Psychiatry	257	62% (160)	54% (139)	49% (127)	48% (124)	48% (124)
Public Health and General Preventive Medicine	27	26% (7)	22% (6)	56% (15)	56% (15)	33% (9)
Total	4,910	59% (2,913)	54% (2,658)	47% (2,311)	52% (2,540)	43% (2,131)

1. Respondents were asked this question for each specialty that they signaled. Responses include respondents who signaled in more than one specialty, and the total responses exceeds the number of respondents due to applicants responding to this question in more than one specialty. Specialties with less than 20 responses were excluded from analysis.

Strategies for Signaling

- Respondents were asked whether the number of specialty program signals provided was sufficient. As shown in Table 7, respondents who applied to more competitive specialties and who were allotted fewer signals were more likely to answer that the number of signals was insufficient.
- When asked what strategies applicants used to select which programs to signal, more than 64% of respondents signaled a mix of less competitive and more competitive programs. Results by the total number of respondents and by specialty are displayed in Table 8.

Table 7. The number of signals I was provided was …

Specialty (Number of Signals)	Percentage (Number) Responding:				
	Total	Too Few	About Right	Too Many	Not Sure
Adult Neurology (3)	100% (176)	77% (135)	15% (27)	--[1]	7% (13)
Anesthesiology (5 Gold, 10 Silver)	100% (215)	45% (97)	40% (85)	7% (16)	8% (17)
Dermatology (3 Gold, 25 Silver)	100% (56)	29% (16)	38% (21)	9% (5)	25% (14)
Diagnostic Radiology and Interventional Radiology (6 Gold, 6 Silver)	100% (148)	46% (68)	41% (61)	4% (6)	9% (13)
Emergency Medicine (7)	100% (255)	24% (60)	63% (160)	3% (8)	11% (27)
Family Medicine (5)	100% (616)	39% (241)	46% (284)	1% (9)	13% (82)
General Surgery (5)	100% (273)	61% (167)	26% (70)	--	13% (35)
Internal Medicine (7)	100% (1,904)	45% (851)	39% (750)	3% (48)	13% (255)
Neurological Surgery (25)	100% (26)	--	62% (16)	--	--
Obstetrics and Gynecology (3 gold, 15 silver)	100% (192)	26% (50)	58% (111)	8% (16)	8% (15)
Orthopedic Surgery (30)	100% (76)	9% (7)	61% (46)	17% (13)	13% (10)
Otolaryngology (25)	100% (440)	16% (7)	57% (25)	--	18% (8)
Pediatrics (5)	100% (437)	40% (174)	50% (218)	--	10% (42)
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (4)	100% (54)	52% (28)	41% (22)	--	--
Psychiatry (5)	100% (263)	59% (154)	28% (73)	--	13% (33)

1. Dashes indicate cells with fewer than five observations. Specialties with less than 20 responses were excluded from analysis.

Table 8. What strategies did you use when selecting programs to signal?

Specialty	Percentage (Number) of Respondents With the Following Response:[1]			
	Total	Signal programs you felt you would have less difficulty getting into	Signal a mix of less and more competitive programs	Signal programs you felt you would have more difficulty getting into
Adult Neurology	100% (182)	23% (41)	53% (96)	25% (45)
Anesthesiology	100% (212)	14% (30)	79% (167)	7% (15)
Child Neurology and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities	100% (37)	16% (60	46% (17)	38% (14)
Dermatology	100% (55)	18% (10)	71% (39)	11% (6)
Diagnostic Radiology and Interventional Radiology	100% (147)	14% (21)	76% (112)	10% (14)
Emergency Medicine	100% (251)	15% (37)	66% (165)	20% (49)
Family Medicine	100% (623)	25% (155)	62% (384)	13% (84)
General Surgery	100% (272)	18% (48)	64% (173)	19% (51)
Internal Medicine	100% (1,889)	24% (453)	63% (1,192)	13% (244)
Neurological Surgery	100% (25)	--[2]	76% (19)	--
Obstetrics and Gynecology	100% (191)	15% (29)	79% (150)	6% (12)
Orthopedic Surgery	100% (77)	8% (6)	87% (67)	--
Otolaryngology	100% (45)	--	93% (42)	--
Pathology	100% (129)	22% (29)	60% (78)	17% (22)

(continued)

Table 9. What strategies did you use when selecting programs to signal? *(continued)*

Specialty	Percentage (Number) of Respondents With the Following Response:[1]			
	Total	Signal programs you felt you would have less difficulty getting into	Signal a mix of less and more competitive programs	Signal programs you felt you would have more difficulty getting into
Pediatrics	100% (445)	16% (73)	65% (291)	18% (81)
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation	100% (53)	13% (7)	60% (32)	26% (14)
Psychiatry	100% (258)	17% (43)	67% (172)	17% (43)
Thoracic Surgery	100% (11)	--	54% (6)	45% (5)
Total	100% (6,141)	20% (1,221)	64% (3,930)	16% (990)

1. Respondents were asked this question for each specialty that they signaled. Responses include respondents who signaled in more than one specialty, and the total responses exceeds the number of respondents due to applicants responding to this question in more than one specialty. Specialties with less than 20 responses were excluded from analysis.

2. Dashes indicate cells with fewer than five observations.

Table 10. Responses to the Past Experiences Questions

Statement	Total Number of Respondents	Percentage (Number) of Respondents With the Following Response:					
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree and Strongly Agree
The “experience types” allowed me to showcase activities that are important to me.	4,217	3% (115)	6% (249)	12% (496)	49% (2,083)	30% (1,274)	80% (3,357)
The “focus areas” allowed me to showcase what’s important to me.	4,216	4% (174)	11% (463)	22% (974)	42% (1,786)	21% (874)	63% (2,660)
The “key characteristics” allowed me to showcase my strengths.	4, 208	6% (232)	13% (549)	23% (974)	39% (1,653)	19% (800)	58% (2,453)
The “other impactful experience” essay allowed me to provide important context to my application.	4,189	6% (242)	9% (366)	31% (1,282)	31% (1,301)	24% (998)	55% (2,299)

Geographic Preferences

- As shown in Table 11, nearly 85% of respondents indicated that their response to the Geographic Preferences section reflected their true preference at the time of their application.
- For respondents who selected a division preference, the top factors that they considered when making their selections were close proximity to family/friends, location of desired programs, lifestyle factors (e.g., urban/rural setting, availability of public transportation, access to outdoor activities), and number of programs in the area (Table 13).
- For respondents who considered sociopolitical factors when selecting geographic preferences, 71% considered access to LGBTQ care and/or training and 74% considered access to abortion care and/or training (Table 14).

Table 11. My response(s) to the Geographic Preferences section reflected my true preferences at the time of application.

	Percentage (Number) of Respondents Who:					
Total	**Strongly Disagreed**	**Disagreed**	**Neither Agreed nor Disagreed**	**Agreed**	**Strongly Agreed**	**Agreed or Strongly Agreed**
3,750	4% (137)	4% (163)	7% (272)	32% (1,207)	53% (1,971)	85% (3,178)

Table 12. If you selected "I do not have a division preference," what factors did you consider when making that selection? (Select all that apply.)

Factor	Percentage (Number) of Respondents
Concern that programs would overlook my application if I did not select their division	55% (337)
Geography is not important to me	53% (320)
Advice from a medical school advisor or other mentor(s)	22% (136)
I was uncertain about my geographic preferences	17% (101)
Other (please specify)	12% (71)
Total	100% (608)

Table 13. If you selected a geographic preference(s), what factors did you consider when making your selection(s)? (Select all that apply)

Factor	Percentage (Number) of Respondents[1]
Close to family/friends	88% (2,739)
Future opportunities to practice in the area	75% (2,357)
Location of desired program(s)	56% (1,758)
Lifestyle factors (e.g., urban/rural setting, availability of public transportation, access to outdoor activities)	53% (1,664)
Number of programs in the area	39% (1,227)
Having previous ties to region	36% (1,131)
No previous ties to region	31% (965)
Sociopolitical factors related to access to care and/or training	10% (309)
Whether I also sent a signal to preferred programs in the area	5% (161)
Other (please specify)	2% (53)
Total	100% (3,129)

1. Of the 2,912 respondents who selected at least one factor on this question. A total of 149 respondents selected “Not Applicable” and were excluded from this analysis.

Table 14. Which of the following sociopolitical factors affected your decision? (select all that apply)

Factor	Percentage (Number) of Respondents[1]
Access to abortion care and/or training	74% (216)
Access to LGBTQ care and/or training	71% (207)
Other sociopolitical factors (please specify)	27% (75)

1. Of the 293 respondents who selected at least one factor on this question.

Preparation

Table 15. Approximately how much time did you spend discussing your ERAS application with your advisor, program director, or other mentor(s)?

Amount of Time	Percentage (Number) of Respondents
Did not discuss with my advisor, program director, or other mentor(s)	12% (448)
Less than 1 hour	10% (398)
1-2 hours	25% (958)
3-4 hours	23% (882)
5 hours or more	30% (1,139)
Total	100% (3,866)