Main Residency Match Placement Rates Since the Introduction of SOAP, 2012-2025

RESEARCH BRIEF
July 2025

In the white paper "Applicant Placement Rate in the Main Residency Match® and Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program®" published in October 2023, the NRMP® introduced two new metrics to expand the evaluation of residency attainment in the Main Residency Match® (MRM): *placement rate – all applicants* and *placement rate – active applicants*.[1] While match rate reflects results of the matching algorithm, the placement rate metrics reflect Match and Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program® (SOAP) results combined.

This research brief builds on that white paper by examining annual placement rates since the introduction of SOAP in 2012 through 2025. We focus on **placement rate – all applicants**, hereafter referred to simply as "placement rate", given it provides the most comprehensive profile of applicant experience in the MRM (i.e., what percentage of applicants who participate in Match Week secure a post-graduate year one (PGY-1) position).

Background
NRMP's MRM uses a mathematical algorithm to match applicants (i.e., medical students and graduates) into residency training positions in U.S. graduate medical education programs. The culmination of the Match is "Match Week", held annually in March, when applicants (over 47,000 in 2025) and programs receive Match results.[2] At the conclusion of the Match, NRMP releases the applicant match rate, a measure of the percentage of applicants who certified a rank order list ("ROL"; i.e., "active" applicants) and matched to PGY-1 residency positions when the matching algorithm was processed.[2] Although match rate is a valuable measure of residency attainment in the U.S., match rate has not historically included applicants who participated and accepted a position in SOAP.[1]

Introduced in 2012, SOAP provides a structured process through which residency positions remaining unfilled after processing the matching algorithm are offered to eligible applicants during Match Week. Prior to SOAP, unmatched and partially matched applicants attempted to secure positions at unfilled programs through an unstructured, "open market" period known as the "Scramble". Introduction of SOAP created a standardized, more equitable process for unmatched and partially matched active applicants, as well as applicants who did not certify a ROL (i.e., non-active applicants), to secure remaining unfilled positions. After active applicants find out *if* they matched but before applicants find out *where* they matched (known as Match Day), SOAP-eligible applicants review the list of unfilled programs and apply, those

programs can elect to interview applicants, and then programs can submit preference lists of applicants to the NRMP, which administers position offers to applicants through a series of "offer rounds."

Since match rate includes only positions obtained by way of the matching algorithm, creation of a metric that reflects positions attained both through the matching algorithm and SOAP could provide a broader perspective on the scope of applicants transitioning into residency. Creation of a placement rate metric could provide unique insight into the experiences of different applicant types as all applicant types are not equally represented among those who participate in SOAP. The term "placement rate" has been introduced in a few existing studies[6,7] but without a standardized definition or calculation method, consistent implementation, or reliance on NRMP data.

In this research brief, we examine, in aggregate and by applicant type, annual match rate and the new placement rate metric from 2012 to 2025. To contextualize our findings, which may be impacted by fluctuations in the number of applicants and residency positions from year to year, we also report annual active applicant and position growth rates.

Outcome Metrics
We report on the following two MRM outcome metrics, which measure applicant acquisition of PGY-1 positions through the matching algorithm and/or SOAP:

1. <u>Match rate</u>: percentage of active applicants who matched to PGY-1 positions when the matching algorithm was processed.

   *(PGY-1 Matched Applicants / Active Applicants) * 100*

2. <u>Placement rate</u>: percentage of unique applicants who certified a ROL and/or were SOAP-eligible who successfully placed into a PGY-1 position through ***either*** the matching algorithm ***or*** SOAP. For this measure, the denominator includes active applicants ***and*** applicants who were eligible to participate in SOAP (i.e., SOAP-eligible applicants) because they 1) registered for the Match but did not certify a ROL, or 2) certified a ROL but did not match to a PGY-1 position when the matching algorithm was processed. Applicants who both certified a ROL and were SOAP-eligible are counted only once to identify ***unique*** applicants.

   *((PGY-1 Matched Applicants + PGY-1 SOAP-Accepted Applicants) / Unique Applicants who certified a ROL and/or were SOAP-eligible) * 100*

We retrospectively assessed each metric by Match Year overall and by applicant type. Applicant types included U.S. MD Seniors, U.S. DO Seniors, U.S. MD Graduates, U.S. DO Graduates, U.S. citizen students/graduates of international medical schools (U.S. IMGs), and non-U.S. citizen students/graduates of international medical schools (non-U.S. IMGs). U.S.

IMGs include U.S. citizens who attended medical school outside of the U.S. and Canada, while non-U.S. IMGs include non-U.S. citizens who attended medical school outside of the U.S. and Canada.

We also report position and active applicant growth rate over time to contextualize our match and placement rate findings.

## Results
Overall Match and Placement Rates
When looking at overall match and placement rates over time (**Table 1**, **Figure 1**), match rate is consistently higher than placement rate. However, by 2025 the difference between match rate (79.8%) and placement rate (79.3%) was only 0.5 percentage points.

Table 1: PGY-1 Main Residency Match and Placement Rates, 2012-2025

Match Year	Number of Active Applicants	Number of Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	Match Rate n (%)	Placement Rate n (%)
2012	31,355	35,164	22,924 (73.1)	23,853 (67.8)
2013	34,355	37,854	25,264 (73.5)	26,049 (68.8)
2014	34,270	37,774	25,687 (75.0)	26,569 (70.3)
2015	34,905	38,675	26,252 (75.2)	27,192 (70.3)
2016	35,476	39,562	26,836 (75.6)	27,758 (70.2)
2017	35,969	40,267	27,688 (77.0)	28,702 (71.3)
2018	37,103	41,013	29,040 (78.3)	30,064 (73.3)
2019	38,376	42,056	30,550 (79.6)	31,797 (75.6)
2020	40,084	43,177	32,399 (80.8)	34,011 (78.8)
2021	42,508	46,453	33,353 (78.5)	35,083 (75.5)
2022	42,549	45,765	34,075 (80.1)	36,152 (79.0)
2023	42,952	46,050	34,822 (81.1)	37,212 (80.8)
2024	44,853	48,127	35,984 (80.2)	38,360 (79.7)
2025	47,208	50,318	37,667 (79.8)	39,924 (79.3)

As shown in **Figure 1**, notably, with a few exceptions, both outcomes have generally trended upward, declining by less than 0.5 percentage points from 2024 to 2025.

Figure 1: PGY-1 Main Residency Match and Placement Rates by Year, 2012-2025
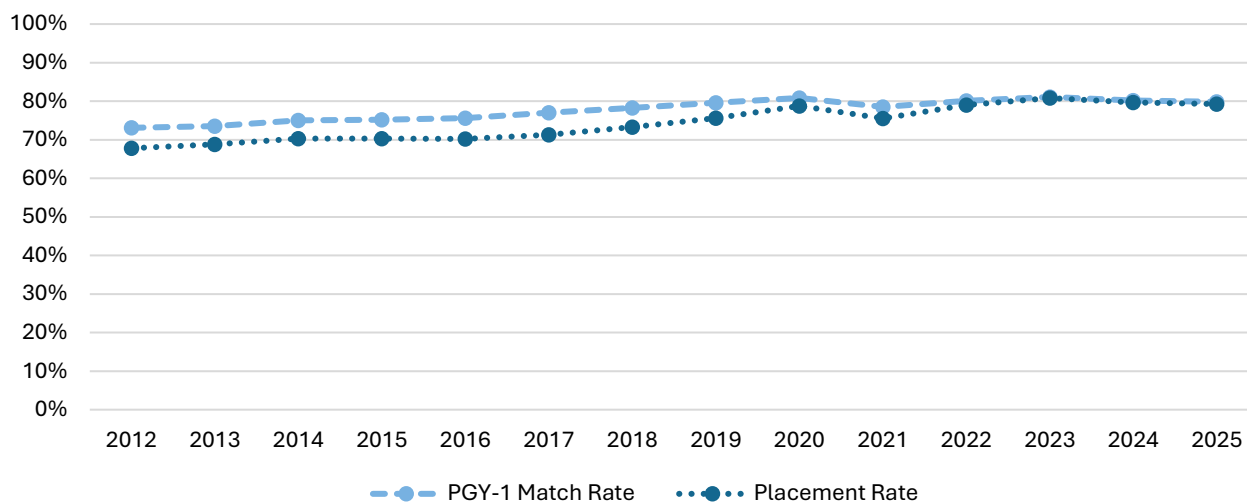
Position and Applicant Growth Rates

The number of PGY-1 positions offered during the Match and the number of applicants who registered to participate in the Match increased every year between 2013 and 2025 with one exception: there was a slight decrease in the number of registered applicants in 2014 (**Figure 2**, **Supplemental Table 1**). While the position growth rate typically outpaces the applicant growth rate, in 2021 the applicant growth rate far exceeded the position growth rate (6.0% vs. 3.0%), and in 2024 and 2025 the applicant growth rate moderately exceeded the position growth rate (4.4% vs. 2.9% in 2024; 5.3% vs. 4.0% in 2025). These trends largely align with trends observed in placement rates, with placement rate experiencing a drop in 2021 and less noticeable drops in 2024 and 2025.

Figure 2: Trends in Position and Applicant Growth Rates with Placement Rate, 2013-2025
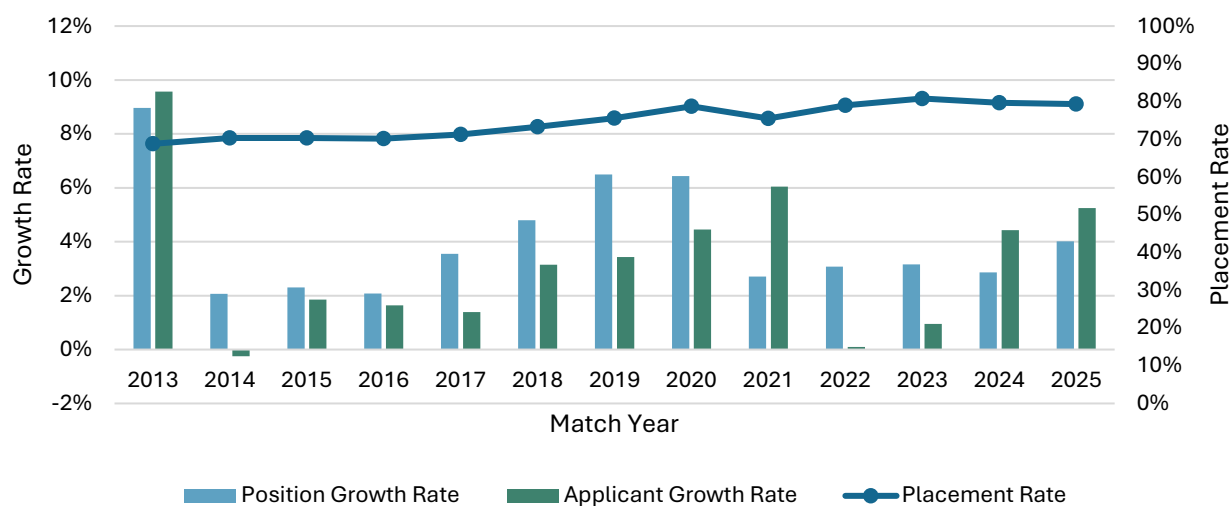
Table 2: PGY-1 Main Residency Match and Placement Rates by Applicant Type*, 2012-2025

Match Year	Outcome	U.S. MD Seniors n (%)	U.S. DO Seniors n (%)	U.S. MD Graduates n (%)	U.S. DO Graduates n (%)	U.S. IMGs n (%)	Non-U.S. IMGs n (%)
2012	Match Rate	15,712 (95.1)	1,673 (78.8)	557 (42.3)	91 (38.4)	2,100 (49.1)	2,770 (40.6)
2012	Placement Rate	16,252 (97.8)	1,768 (77.2)	636 (39.9)	106 (32.2)	2,223 (40.1)	2,847 (32.7)
2013	Match Rate	16,390 (93.7)	1,903 (78.5)	607 (40.8)	99 (39.3)	2,691 (52.8)	3,556 (47.0)
2013	Placement Rate	16,947 (96.4)	1,977 (76.9)	653 (37.8)	103 (30.6)	2,753 (43.8)	3,598 (38.7)
2014	Match Rate	16,399 (94.4)	2,037 (82.1)	798 (48.0)	90 (35.0)	2,722 (53.0)	3,633 (49.5)
2014	Placement Rate	16,947 (96.9)	2,128 (82.2)	873 (46.3)	101 (31.8)	2,805 (44.2)	3,707 (40.7)
2015	Match Rate	16,932 (93.9)	2,244 (82.7)	662 (43.6)	95 (40.6)	2,660 (53.1)	3,641 (49.4)
2015	Placement Rate	17,490 (96.5)	2,374 (83.4)	722 (40.7)	104 (33.4)	2,765 (43.9)	3,717 (40.1)
2016	Match Rate	17,057 (93.8)	2,316 (83.8)	732 (48.7)	80 (36.5)	2,869 (53.9)	3,769 (50.5)
2016	Placement Rate	17,666 (96.4)	2,428 (83.6)	766 (43.1)	91 (28.4)	2,954 (43.6)	3,839 (40.7)
2017	Match Rate	17,480 (94.3)	2,835 (85.0)	677 (46.0)	98 (38.4)	2,777 (54.8)	3,814 (52.4)
2017	Placement Rate	18,058 (96.8)	2,985 (85.3)	720 (41.1)	109 (33.0)	2,902 (44.0)	3,921 (41.7)
2018	Match Rate	17,740 (94.3)	3,630 (84.9)	662 (43.8)	141 (41.2)	2,900 (57.1)	3,962 (56.1)
2018	Placement Rate	18,311 (96.7)	3,827 (85.8)	699 (40.9)	152 (35.1)	3,014 (46.7)	4,055 (45.1)
2019	Match Rate	17,763 (93.9)	4,825 (88.1)	674 (45.4)	251 (48.0)	2,997 (59.0)	4,028 (58.6)
2019	Placement Rate	18,393 (96.6)	5,154 (92.1)	717 (42.3)	281 (45.1)	3,104 (48.0)	4,136 (47.9)
2020	Match Rate	18,108 (93.7)	5,968 (90.7)	693 (45.6)	247 (43.1)	3,154 (61.0)	4,222 (61.1)
2020	Placement Rate	18,871 (97.1)	6,376 (96.1)	770 (44.9)	287 (42.5)	3,343 (52.5)	4,357 (52.3)
2021	Match Rate	18,435 (92.8)	6,327 (89.1)	806 (48.2)	270 (44.3)	3,152 (59.5)	4,356 (54.8)
2021	Placement Rate	19,263 (96.5)	6,808 (95.2)	884 (47.3)	305 (42.1)	3,322 (49.4)	4,494 (44.9)
2022	Match Rate	18,486 (92.9)	6,666 (91.3)	859 (50.5)	383 (53.6)	3,099 (61.4)	4,571 (58.1)
2022	Placement Rate	19,379 (96.5)	7,176 (97.3)	975 (51.7)	474 (60.2)	3,400 (55.9)	4,737 (49.7)
2023	Match Rate	18,498 (93.7)	6,812 (91.6)	790 (48.0)	320 (47.9)	3,356 (67.6)	5,032 (59.4)
2023	Placement Rate	19,414 (97.7)	7,353 (98.1)	948 (52.1)	418 (56.2)	3,731 (62.6)	5,334 (52.5)
2024	Match Rate	18,465 (93.5)	7,412 (92.3)	760 (45.7)	293 (47.6)	3,181 (67.0)	5,864 (58.5)
2024	Placement Rate	19,367 (97.4)	7,934 (97.7)	907 (49.1)	374 (52.9)	3,562 (62.5)	6,207 (52.4)
2025	Match Rate	19,044 (93.5)	7,773 (92.6)	803 (45.9)	276 (43.8)	3,108 (67.8)	6,653 (58.0)
2025	Placement Rate	19,951 (97.3)	8,282 (97.4)	947 (48.4)	353 (49.4)	3,429 (64.3)	6,951 (52.3)

* Canadian and Fifth Pathway applicants were excluded from analyses by applicant type due to small subgroup sizes.

### *Match and Placement Rates by Applicant Type*

<u>U.S. MD and DO Seniors (Seniors).</u> Outcome rates among Senior applicant types were higher than other applicant types (**Table 2**). Specifically, as displayed in **Figure 3**, among U.S. MD Seniors, minimal change in both metrics was observed, with match rates consistently at 93-95% and placement rates consistently at 96-98%. While match rate is consistently the lower of the two metrics among U.S. MD Seniors, among U.S. DO Seniors match rate was not consistently lower than placement rate until 2017. Notably, in 2012, U.S. DO Seniors experienced outcome rates 15-20 percentage points lower than those of U.S. MD Seniors. Although a small gap in match rate between the two groups still exists, increasing match and placement rates over time for U.S. DO Seniors led the group to completely close the placement rate gap compared to U.S. MD Seniors, with placement rates among U.S. DO Seniors slightly exceeding those of U.S. MD Seniors from 2022 to 2025.

Figure 3: PGY-1 Main Residency Match and Placement Rates of U.S. Seniors, 2012-2025


U.S. MD Seniors
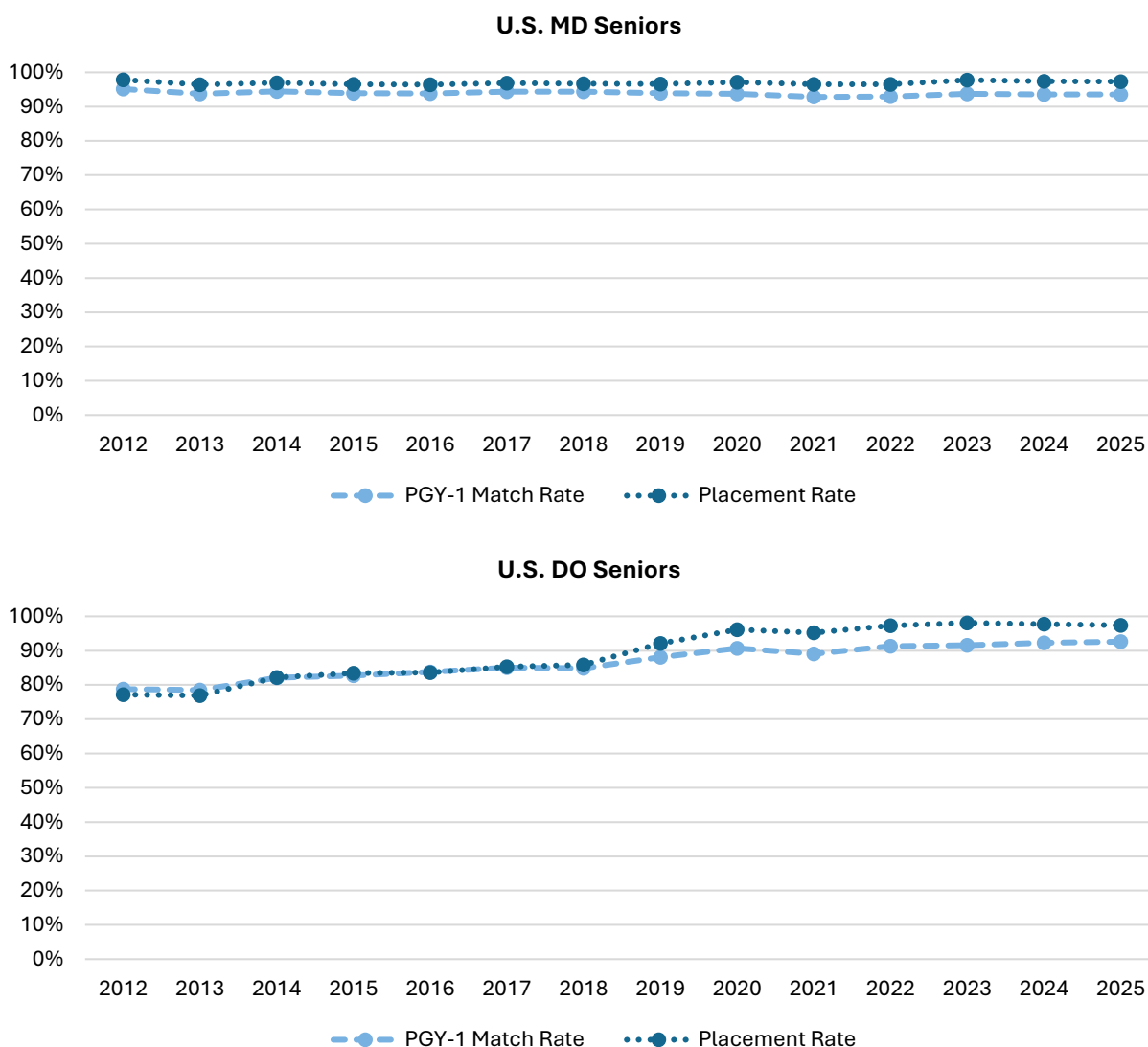
U.S. DO Seniors

U.S. MD and DO Graduates (Graduates). Compared to Seniors, rates among Graduates were lower and less stable, particularly among U.S. DO Graduates (**Table 2**, **Figure 4**). Placement rate was the lower metric among both U.S. MD and DO Graduates until 2022 when it overtook match rate. Among both groups, the greatest increase in placement rates occurred between 2018 and 2022, when placement rates among U.S. MD Graduates consistently trended upward. Although U.S. DO Graduate rate trends were rather unstable, between 2012 and 2025 U.S. DO Graduates experienced larger overall percentage point changes than U.S. MD Graduates. This meant that although placement rate among U.S. DO Graduates was lower than among U.S. MD Graduates in 2012, by 2022 placement rate among U.S. DO Graduates (60.2%) surpassed that of U.S. MD Graduates (51.7%), a trend that has persisted through 2025.

Figure 4: PGY-1 Main Residency Match and Placement Rates of U.S. Graduates, 2012-2025

U.S. MD Graduates

U.S. DO Graduates
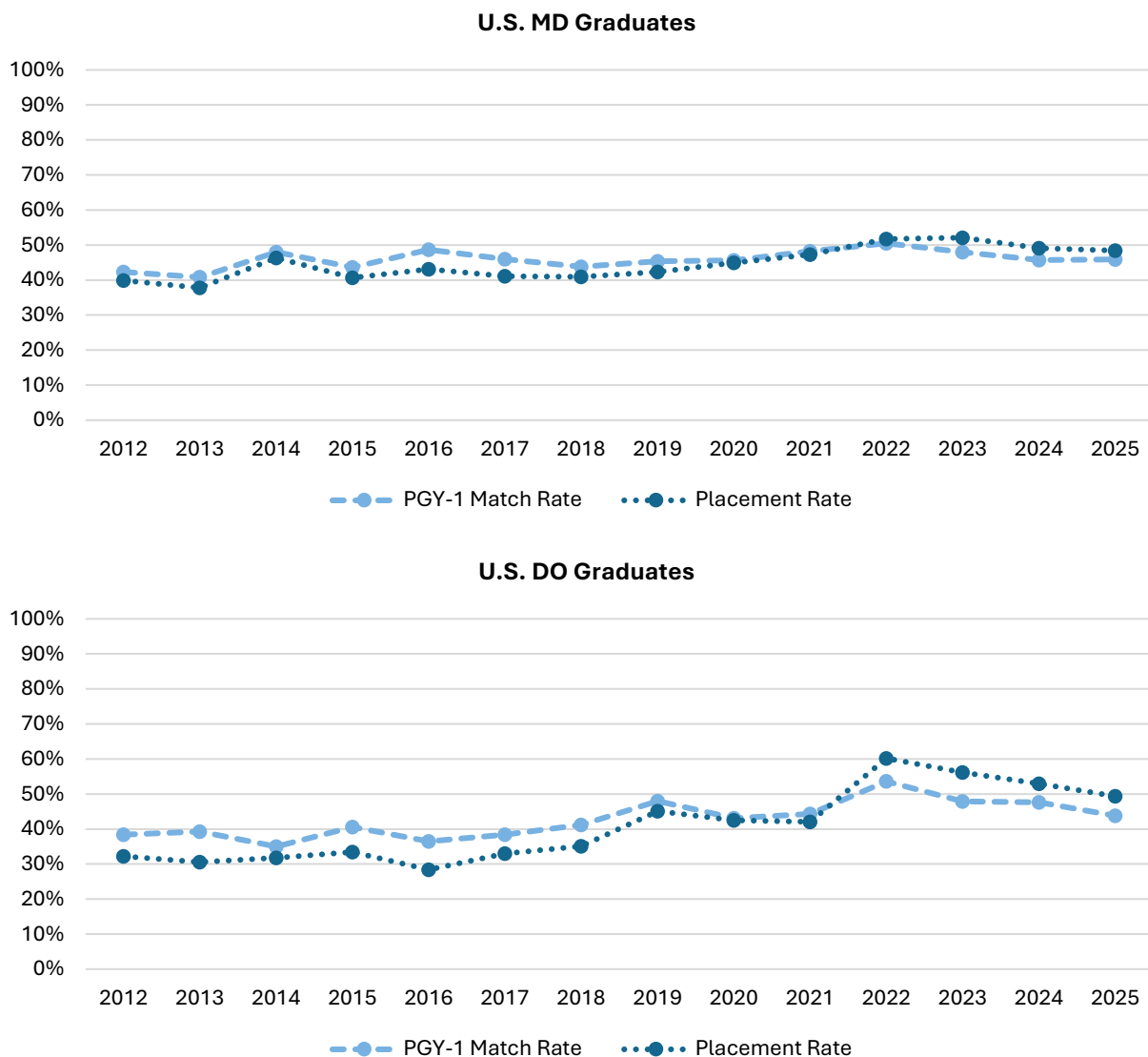
<u>U.S. and Non-U.S. IMGs (IMGs).</u> Among IMGs, there was a noticeable gap between placement rate and match rate, as placement rate was the lower of the two metrics among both U.S. and non-U.S. IMGs (**Table 2**, **Figure 5**). U.S. IMGs generally experienced a plateau in both metrics from 2013-2017, a decrease in 2021, and a smaller decrease in 2024 but otherwise experienced increasing match and placement rates, with the greatest growth between 2021 and 2023. With the exception of an additional plateau in 2025, rates among non-U.S. IMGs trended similarly and experienced comparable percentage point growth but were typically lower than those among U.S. IMGs.

Figure 5: PGY-1 Main Residency Match and Placement Rates of International Medical Graduates (IMGs), 2012-2025

U.S. IMGs

Non-U.S. IMGs
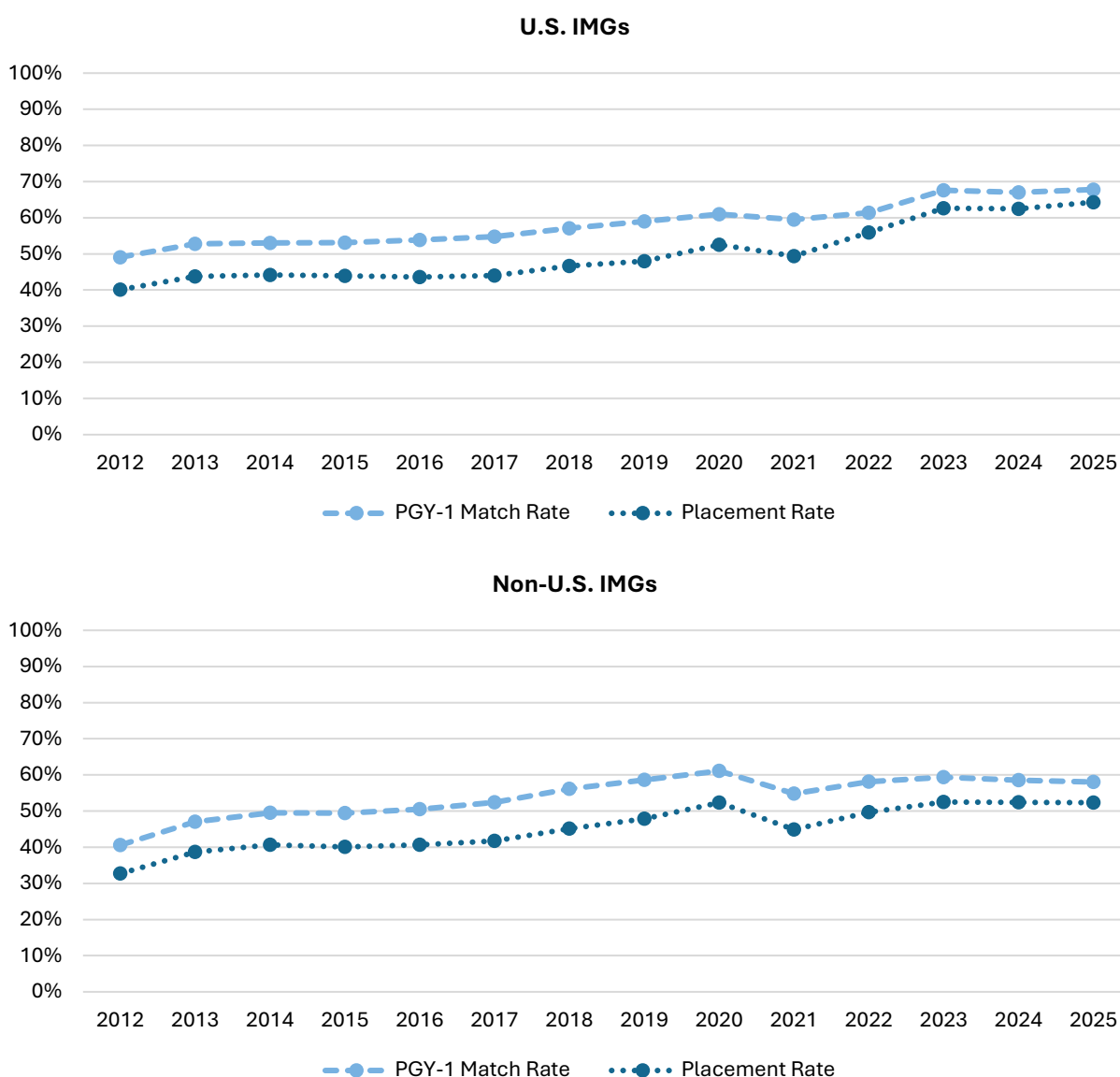
Summary

Between 2012 and 2025, NRMP placed 442,726 applicants into PGY-1 positions through the matching algorithm and SOAP. Match rate and placement rate have experienced predominantly stable growth from 2012 to 2025, with placement rate reflecting that a greater number of applicants secure PGY-1 residency positions than is reflected by match rate alone. Similar to match rate, U.S. MD and DO Seniors have the highest placement rates. Additionally, among U.S. MD and DO Seniors and Graduates, a higher percentage of applicants secure PGY-1 positions via the matching algorithm or SOAP than is reflected by match rate. Notably, while differences in match rate between U.S. MD and DO Seniors have been narrowing, placement rate differences have all but been eliminated in recent years. These changes over time may have, in part, been facilitated by the transition to a single graduate medical education accreditation system rather than separate MD and DO systems (including a separate DO match). While this transition began in 2015, it was not until 2020, when the first "single Match"[8] took place, that we observed U.S. DO Seniors come close to closing the placement rate gap compared to U.S. MD Seniors, which the group officially did in 2022.

It is important to interpret observed rates considering trends in position and applicant growth rates presented in **Figure 2**. High position growth in 2013 due primarily to the NRMP's implementation of the All In Policy for positions, coupled with negative applicant growth in 2014 (i.e., position growth rate outpaced applicant growth rate) likely contributed to observed increasing overall match and placement rates from 2013-2014. As growth rates continued to increase from 2016 to 2020, with position growth rate higher than applicant growth rate, we again observed considerable growth in match and placement rates.

A notable decrease in both rates was observed in 2021 following the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 which profoundly impacted the residency application process: medical licensure exams were unavailable to applicants early in the pandemic, prospective applicants lost the ability to engage in offsite clinical and "visiting" rotations, and less in-person interaction with programs limited applicants' ability to obtain letters of recommendation.[9,10] These realities, coupled with the extreme demands on programs to provide patient care and sustain existing resident training, likely led some programs to limit the growth of available training slots for 2021. As a result, applicant growth rate was higher than position growth rate in 2021 (**Figure 2**), contributing to declines in match and placement rates. IMGs, especially non-U.S. IMGs, were likely disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 due to additional factors such as international travel restrictions and the suspension of many visiting clinical rotations programs which are especially important for these applicants (see below). These factors, coupled with high growth in the number of non-U.S. IMG applicants in 2021, likely led to this group experiencing the largest declines in match and placement rates from 2020-2021 of all applicant types (**Table 2**). Meanwhile, all applicant types experienced continued growth in the number of applicants.

Several other factors unique to IMGs may also impact their match and placement rates. Importantly, having U.S. medical experience reportedly enhances the perceived qualifications of IMG applicants[11,12] but requires that applicants have the means to gain this experience,

which was especially challenging during the early period of COVID-19. Factors such as financial and social capital, which U.S. IMGs may be more likely to have than non-U.S. IMGs, and, relatedly, medical school attended are likely key in determining who obtains U.S. clinical experience[12] and therefore is perceived to be a more competitive applicant.

Likewise, a variety of factors are important to consider when interpreting rates observed among Graduates. U.S. MD and DO Graduates are quite heterogenous groups. For example, in contrast to their Senior counterparts, Graduates have a variety of graduation years, and some have previously gone through the Match. This, compounded by their small numbers relative to other applicant type groups, helps contextualize the unstable rate trends observed among U.S. MD and DO Graduates.

Limitations
NRMP is unable to account for placements outside of the Match when calculating placement rates. While most U.S.-based residency positions are secured via the MRM, there are other mechanisms for obtaining residency positions in the U.S. including other matching services (e.g., Military Match, Urology Residency Match, SF Match for Ophthalmology) or applying directly to programs that either do not participate in the Match or have unfilled positions at the conclusion of SOAP. Notably, prior to the completion of the transition to a Single Accreditation System, our data only captures positions obtained by U.S. DO Seniors and Graduates through the MRM.

Next Steps
Differences between observed match and placement rates will largely vary by specialty and, in cases of very competitive specialties, match and placement rates may be identical. It is important that future work investigate differences between match and placement rates by specialty, including both matched/placed specialty (i.e., the specialty an applicant matched or placed to) as well as preferred specialty (i.e., the specialty of the program ranked first on an applicant's ROL), and applicant type. Examining the intersection of specialty and applicant type is particularly important in light of applicant type differences across specialties.[14–16] Furthermore, investigation into whether there are differences in match and placement rates based on other applicant characteristics could help illuminate biases in the undergraduate to graduate medical education transition. Additionally, existing research efforts, such as those aimed at understanding the impact of changes including preference signaling and the transition of Step and Level 1 to pass/fail, can leverage the placement rate measures to investigate whether the impact of these changes on match and placement rates are the same.

Conclusion
Placement rate, which NRMP began reporting in its annual *Results and Data* report overall and by applicant type in 2024,[13] provides applicants, advisors, and program directors with a comprehensive sense of the percentage of applicants who receive a PGY-1 position by the end of Match Week. By introducing the proposed "placement rate" vernacular and calculations, our hope is that as a supporter of the undergraduate to graduate medical education transition,

we improve the accuracy and transparency in information about residency position attainment and begin to dispel the stigma of SOAP.

For questions, please contact the NRMP at research@nrmp.org.

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Supplemental Table 1: Number of Active Applicants and Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants[a] by Applicant Type and Match Year, 2012-2025

Match Year	Applicant Group	U.S. MD Seniors	U.S. DO Seniors	U.S. MD Graduates	U.S. DO Graduates	U.S. IMGs	Non-U.S. IMGs	Other[b]	TOTAL
2012	Active Applicants	16,527	2,123	1,317	237	4,279	6,828	44	31,355
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	16,624	2,290	1,595	329	5,538	8,719	69	35,164
2013	Active Applicants	17,487	2,425	1,487	252	5,095	7,568	41	34,355
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	17,577	2,570	1,728	337	6,292	9,293	57	37,854
2014	Active Applicants	17,374	2,481	1,662	257	5,133	7,334	29	34,270
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	17,487	2,590	1,887	318	6,342	9,105	45	37,774
2015	Active Applicants	18,025	2,715	1,520	234	5,014	7,366	31	34,905
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	18,131	2,848	1,772	311	6,292	9,273	48	38,675
2016	Active Applicants	18,187	2,763	1,502	219	5,323	7,460	22	35,476
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	18,318	2,904	1,776	320	6,771	9,442	31	39,562
2017	Active Applicants	18,539	3,335	1,472	255	5,069	7,284	15	35,969
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	18,654	3,498	1,752	330	6,602	9,408	23	40,267
2018	Active Applicants	18,818	4,275	1,511	342	5,075	7,067	15	37,103
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	18,945	4,459	1,711	433	6,453	8,988	24	41,013
2019	Active Applicants	18,925	5,478	1,485	523	5,080	6,869	16	38,376
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	19,032	5,595	1,697	623	6,460	8,627	22	42,056
2020	Active Applicants	19,326	6,581	1,519	573	5,167	6,907	11	40,084
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	19,434	6,634	1,716	675	6,370	8,332	16	43,177
2021	Active Applicants	19,866	7,101	1,672	609	5,295	7,943	22	42,508

Year	Applicant Type								
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	19,954	7,154	1,869	724	6,720	10,003	29	46,453
2022	Active Applicants	19,902	7,303	1,700	714	5,048	7,864	18	42,549
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	20,084	7,377	1,885	787	6,080	9,527	25	45,765
2023	Active Applicants	19,748	7,436	1,647	668	4,963	8,469	21	42,952
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	19,862	7,493	1,819	744	5,956	10,153	23	46,050
2024	Active Applicants	19,755	8,033	1,662	616	4,751	10,021	15	44,853
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	19,876	8,119	1,849	707	5,698	11,856	22	48,127
2025	Active Applicants	20,368	8,392	1,751	630	4,587	11,465	15	47,208
	Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants	20,500	8,502	1,957	714	5,336	13,288	21	50,318

[a] Certified or SOAP-Eligible Unique Applicants includes applicants who certified a rank order list (ROL) and applicants who were eligible to participate in SOAP because they 1) did not certify a rank order list or 2) certified a rank order list and did not match to a postgraduate year one position when the matching algorithm was processed. Applicants who both certified a ROL and were SOAP-eligible are counted only once to identify unique applicants.

[b] Other includes Canadian and Fifth Pathway applicants.