

RF-PTCAS

Provided by  **APTA**

RF-PTCAS Fact Sheet

Trends and Analysis From 2015 Through 2025

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
RF-PTCAS Summary	1
Applicant, Application, and Participation Trends.....	1
Applicant Demographics Trends.....	3
Doctor of Physical Therapy Feeder Programs.....	6
Strategic Insights and Takeaways.....	6
Insights	6
Takeaways.....	7
Bottom Line	7
Fellowships	8
Overall Trends.....	8
Subspecialty Breakdown	8
Key Observations	8
Critical Care	9
Higher Education Leadership.....	10
Neonatology.....	10
Neurologic Movement Disorders	11
Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy	11
Performing Arts	12
Spine.....	12
Sports Division 1	13
Upper Extremity Athlete	13
Residency	14
Overall Trends.....	14
Specialty Breakdown	14
Key Observations	14
Acute Care	15
Cardiovascular & Pulmonary	16
Clinical Electrophysiology	16
Faculty	17
Geriatrics.....	17
Neurology.....	18
Oncology	18
Orthopaedics	19
Pediatrics	19
Sports	20

Women’s/Pelvic Health..... 20

Wound Management..... 21

Executive Summary

The Residency and Fellowship Physical Therapy Centralized Application (RF-PTCAS) applicant pool has experienced strong long-term growth, increasing by 64.4% over the last 11 years, despite several periodic cyclical declines. Overall, interest in residency and fellowship education remains strong, with the most significant growth occurring during the pandemic-era 2020-21 cycle, likely fueled by limited job opportunities for recent grads and new professionals, which pushed them toward continuing education opportunities. This was followed by a sharp contraction in the 2021-22 cycle as the pool corrected itself, then a modest growth period through the 2024-25 cycle. Overall, post professional education continues to attract more diverse applicants, while applicant behavior is shifting toward applying to fewer programs on average, as has been the case with Doctor of Physical Therapy program applications.

The most significant strategic story coming out of the last decade of residency and fellowship education is a combination of:

- Growing applicant volume
- Increased racial and ethnic diversity in the applicant pool
- Expanded DPT feeder program representation, though with a greater concentration of applicants from a relatively small group of high-producing DPT programs
- Declining average applications per applicant

RF-PTCAS Summary

Applicant, Application, and Participation Trends

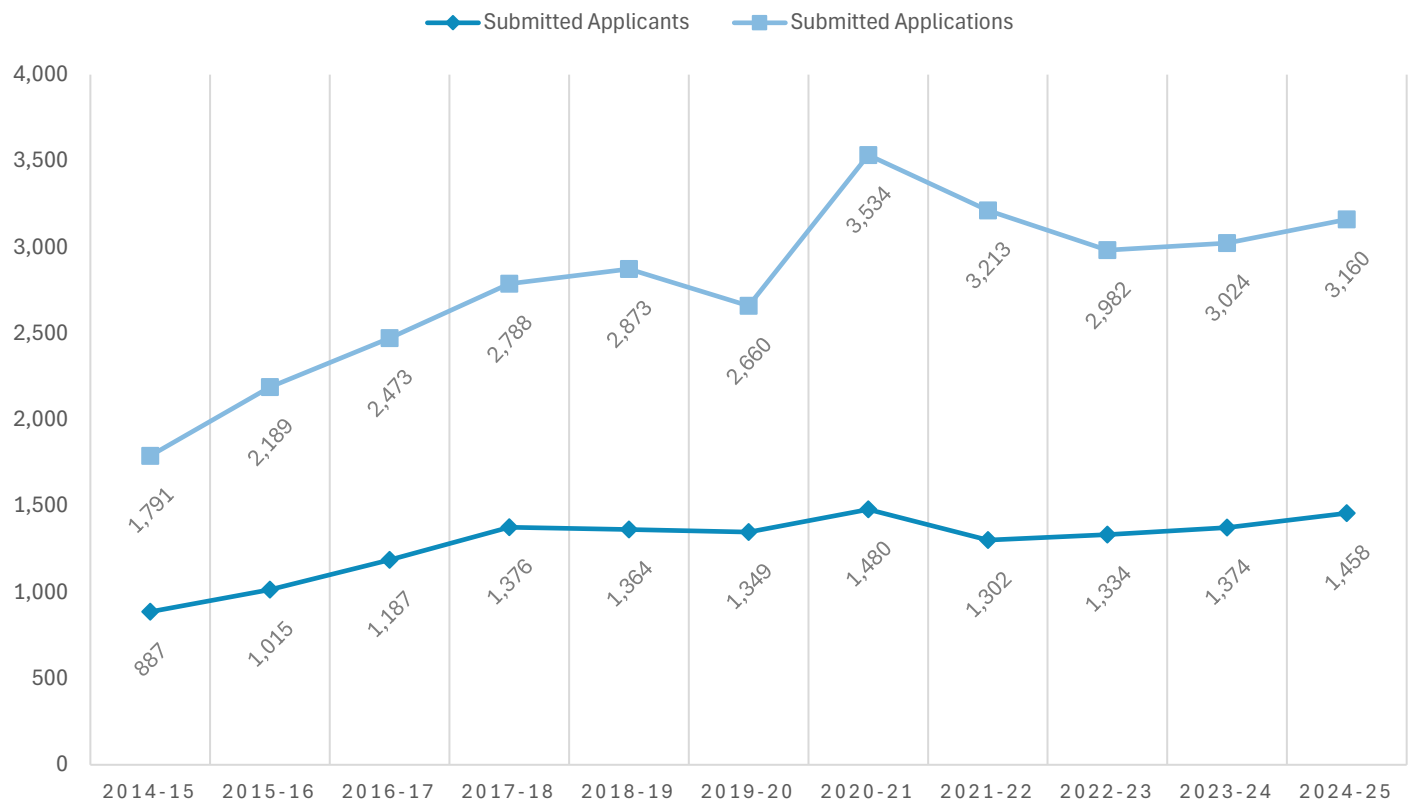
The overall market for residency and fellowship education continues to grow. While continued focus on raising awareness of and interest in residency and fellowship training will be a priority of APTA and the student recruitment team, individual programs should focus on differentiating themselves from competing programs as competition increases.

- Applicants grew 64% over 10 years, from 887 in 2015 to 1,458 in 2025.
 - There was a surge in 2021 (+9.7%) and an overcorrection in 2022 (-12%), rebounding over the following three years.
- Applications also grew 76% over the same period, from 1,791 to 3,160.
 - They peaked at 3,534 in 2021 (+32.86%) before steadily settling over the next three years and seeing an increase in the most recent 2025 cycle.
- The number of programs receiving at least one application grew 113% over the 10-year period, from 180 in 2015 to 383 in 2025.
- Average designations per applicant remained essentially flat at 2.17 in 2025 (2.16 in 2016).
- Residencies continue to dominate among the participating programs and applicants, accounting for 92% of applicants in 2024-25.

Table 1 – RF-PTCAS Cycle Summary

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2014-15	887		1,791		2.02		180
2015-16	1,015	14.43%	2,189	22.22%	2.16	0.14	194
2016-17	1,187	16.95%	2,473	12.97%	2.08	-0.07	227
2017-18	1,376	15.92%	2,788	12.74%	2.03	-0.06	251
2018-19	1,364	-0.87%	2,873	3.05%	2.11	0.08	270
2019-20	1,349	-1.10%	2,660	-7.41%	1.97	-0.13	287
2020-21	1,480	9.71%	3,534	32.86%	2.39	0.42	285
2021-22	1,302	-12.03%	3,213	-9.08%	2.47	0.08	319
2022-23	1,334	2.46%	2,982	-7.19%	2.24	-0.23	350
2023-24	1,374	3.00%	3,024	1.41%	2.20	-0.03	369
2024-25	1,458	6.11%	3,160	4.50%	2.17	-0.03	383

FIGURE 1: RF-PTCAS APPLICANT AND APPLICATION VOLUME



Applicant Demographics Trends

- Female applicants remain the majority at about 55% each year, consistent with DPT trends.
- Racial and ethnic minority representation increased from 18.4% in 2015 to 36% in 2025, closely mirroring the growth seen in the DPT applicant pool, as well.
 - This was driven predominantly by growth in Asian (+153%, +4.4% of pool), Black (+276%, +3.6% of pool), Hispanic (+255%, +6.6% of pool), and multiracial (+320%, +2.6% of pool) applicants.
- Applicants have consistently been in their mid-20s, with an average age hovering at 27.5 and a median age of 26.

Table 2 – RF-PTCAS Applicant Sex

	Male Count	Male Percent	Female Count	Female Percent	Decline to State Count	Decline to State Percentage
2014-15	369	41.60%	515	58.06%	3	0.34%
2015-16	431	42.46%	583	57.44%	1	0.10%
2016-17	517	43.56%	670	56.44%	0	0.00%
2017-18	599	43.53%	775	56.32%	2	0.15%
2018-19	620	45.45%	743	54.47%	1	0.07%
2019-20	591	43.81%	758	56.19%	0	0.00%
2020-21	614	41.49%	864	58.38%	2	0.14%
2021-22	555	42.63%	747	57.37%	0	0.00%
2022-23	631	47.30%	700	52.47%	3	0.22%
2023-24	592	43.09%	781	56.84%	1	0.07%
2024-25	651	44.65%	805	55.21%	2	0.14%

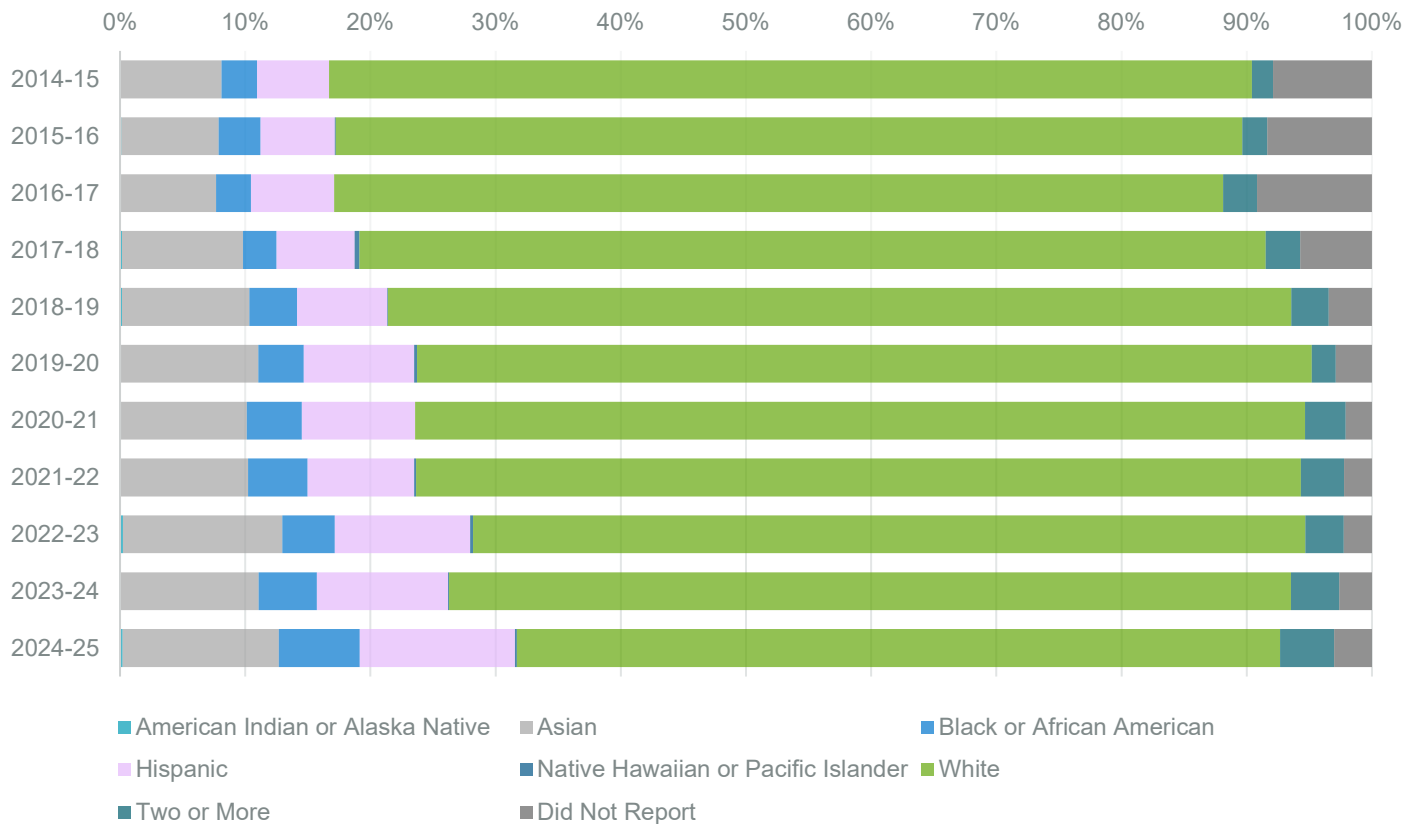
Table 3 – RF-PTCAS Applicant Race and Ethnicity

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
AIAN	0 0.00%	1 0.10%	1 0.08%	2 0.15%	2 0.15%	1 0.07%	1 0.07%	0 0.00%	3 0.22%	0 0.00%	3 0.21%
Asian	72 8.12%	79 7.78%	90 7.58%	133 9.67%	139 10.19%	148 10.97%	149 10.07%	133 10.22%	170 12.74%	152 11.06%	182 12.48%
Black or African American	25 2.82%	34 3.35%	33 2.78%	37 2.69%	52 3.81%	49 3.63%	65 4.39%	62 4.76%	56 4.20%	64 4.66%	94 6.45%
Hisp.	51 5.75%	60 5.91%	79 6.66%	86 6.25%	98 7.18%	119 8.82%	134 9.05%	111 8.53%	144 10.79%	144 10.48%	181 12.41%
NHPI	0 0.00%	1 0.10%	0 0.00%	5 0.36%	1 0.07%	3 0.22%	0 0.00%	2 0.15%	3 0.22%	1 0.07%	2 0.14%
White	654 73.73%	735 72.41%	843 71.02%	996 72.38%	984 72.14%	964 71.46%	1052 71.08%	920 70.66%	887 66.49%	924 67.25%	889 60.97%
2 or more	15 1.69%	20 1.97%	32 2.70%	38 2.76%	41 3.01%	26 1.93%	48 3.24%	45 3.46%	41 3.07%	53 3.86%	63 4.32%

Table 3 (cont.) – RF-PTCAS Applicant Race and Ethnicity

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Not Rep.	70	85	109	79	47	39	31	29	30	36	44
	7.89%	8.37%	9.18%	5.74%	3.45%	2.89%	2.09%	2.23%	2.25%	2.62%	3.02%

Note: AIAN stands for American Indian or Alaska Native; NHPI stands for Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; Not Rep. stands for Did Not Report

FIGURE 2: RF-PTCAS APPLICANT RACE AND ETHNICITY**Table 4 – Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Minority RF-PTCAS Applicants**

	Number	% of Applicant Pool	Change from Previous Cycle
2014-15	163	18.38%	
2015-16	195	19.21%	0.84%
2016-17	235	19.80%	0.59%
2017-18	301	21.88%	2.08%
2018-19	333	24.41%	2.54%
2019-20	320	23.72%	-0.69%
2020-21	397	26.82%	3.10%
2021-22	353	27.11%	0.29%
2022-23	417	31.26%	4.15%
2023-24	414	30.13%	-1.13%
2024-25	525	36.01%	5.88%

FIGURE 3: UNDERREPRESENTED RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITY PERCENTAGE OF RF-PTCAS APPLICANT POOL

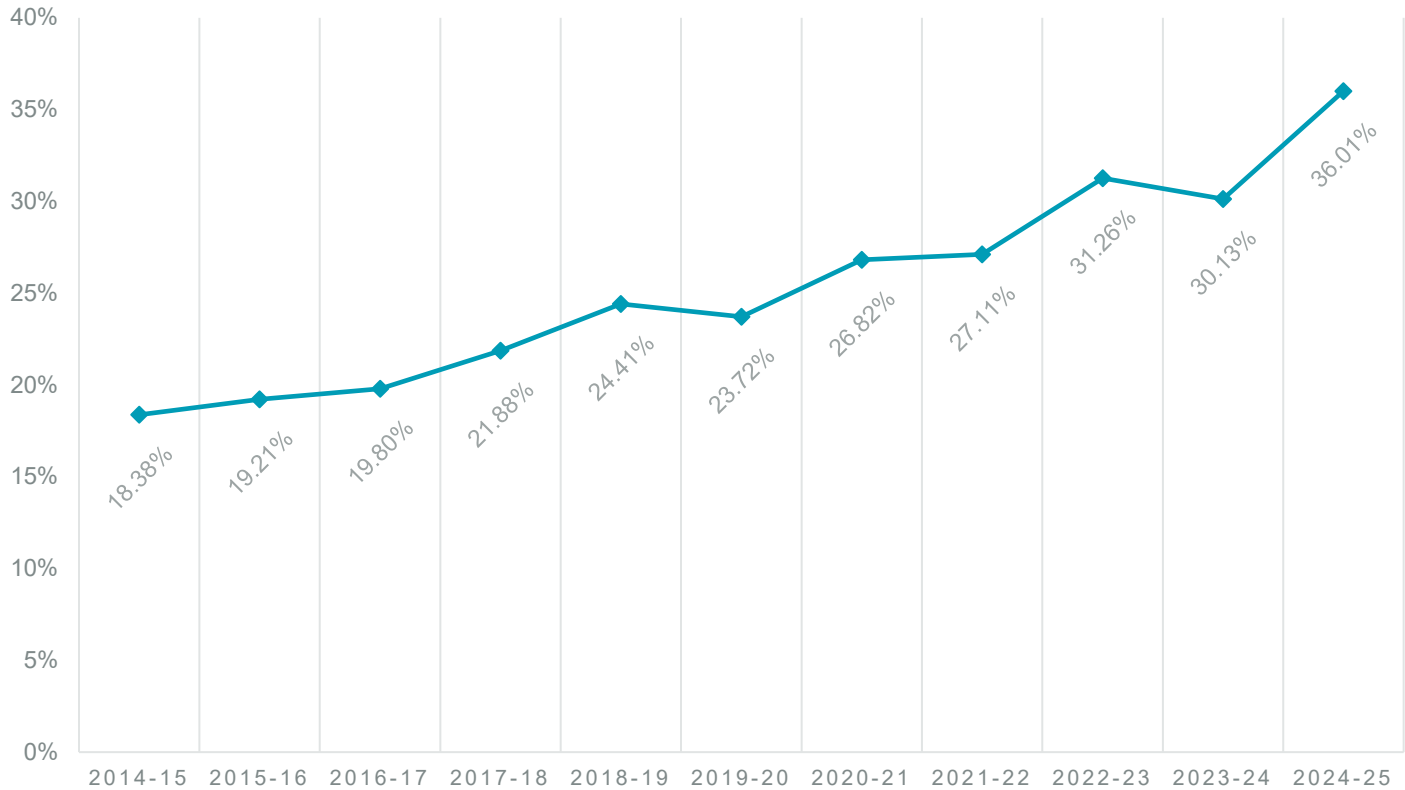


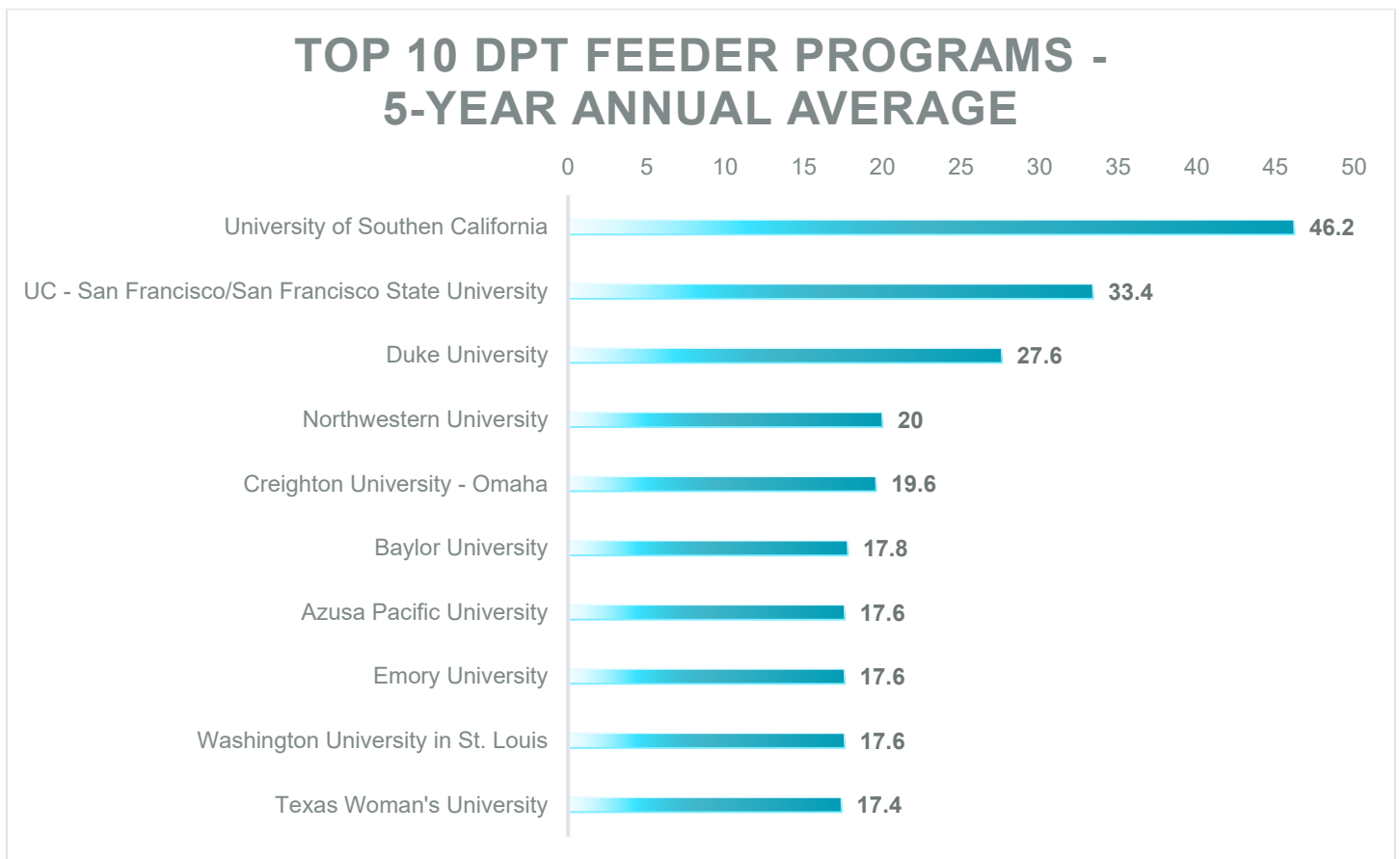
Table 5: RF-PTCAS Applicant Ages

Age Group	2020-21		2021-22		2022-23		2023-24		2024-25	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Age 20-25	615	41.55%	525	40.32%	508	38.08%	571	41.56%	612	41.98%
Age 26-30	631	42.64%	554	42.55%	597	44.75%	592	43.09%	610	41.84%
Age 31-35	142	9.59%	138	10.60%	144	10.79%	126	9.17%	142	9.74%
Age 36-40	51	3.45%	38	2.92%	33	2.47%	48	3.49%	50	3.43%
Age 41-45	21	1.42%	19	1.46%	24	1.80%	16	1.16%	17	1.17%
Age 46+	19	1.28%	25	1.92%	27	2.02%	20	1.46%	24	1.65%
Did Not Report	1	0.07%	3	0.23%	1	0.07%	1	0.07%	3	0.21%
Total	1,480	100%	1,302	100%	1,334	100%	1,374	100%	1,458	100%
Median for All Applicants	26		26		26		26		26	
Range for All Applicants	21-64		22-56		22-57		22-56		22-57	
Average for All Applicants	27.5		27.6		27.8		27.4		27.5	

Doctor of Physical Therapy Feeder Programs

Over the past five years, there were 265 unique Doctor of Physical Therapy education programs that had at least one alum apply for a residency or fellowship program through RF-PTCAS. On average, each of these DPT programs produced 4.9 applicants through RF-PTCAS each year, with a median of three applicants per year from each.

Residency and fellowship programs should cultivate direct relationships not only with the DPT programs in their immediate area, but with the high-yield DPT programs, particularly in the highly concentrated areas of California, Texas, Florida, and the surrounding southeastern region as a whole, as well as with those areas that have major academic medical centers. Programs seeking to increase applicant volume should consider focused outreach efforts in these regions.



Strategic Insights and Takeaways

Insights

- Total residency demand remains robust and continues to grow, with growth increasingly concentrated in sports, orthopaedics, neurology, and acute care.
- Sports residencies, acute care residencies, and sports division 1 fellowships lead as the highest growth areas across all of RF-PTCAS.

- Contraction has been seen in pediatric residencies, orthopaedic manual physical therapy fellowships, neurological movement disorders fellowships, and wound management residencies.
- The applicant pool is becoming substantially more diverse with the increase in underrepresented racial and ethnic minority, or URM, representation being the single most significant demographic shift.
- Program expansion has outpaced applicant growth, reducing average applications per program and potentially easing competition in some specialties as applicant behavior becomes more deliberate.
- Feeder program pathways matter more than ever, with a smaller number of DPT programs producing a disproportionately larger share of RF-PTCAS applicants each year.
- Early-career clinicians remain the primary market, with the average age of applicants remaining at 26 for the last decade.

Takeaways

1. RF-PTCAS is experiencing healthy growth: Record applicants, applications, and participating programs are solid indicators of a strong market.
2. Diversity gains are substantial: Underrepresented minority representation among the applicant pool increased from 18% to 36% over the past 11 cycles, with particularly strong growth among Black and Hispanic applicants.
3. Sports is the biggest growth story: Both residency and fellowship sports pathways show exceptional expansion across applicant volume, applications, and program participation.
4. Orthopaedics remains the market anchor: Despite fluctuations, orthopaedics remains the largest specialty area and primary driver of residency demand.
5. Pediatrics and other smaller specialties warrant monitoring: Recent declines could indicate changing career interests, workforce demand shifts, or limited training capacity.
6. Applicant behavior is becoming more efficient: Applicants are submitting fewer additional applications, also called designations, than during peak pandemic years, suggesting increased knowledge and an eye toward fit, along with an understanding of the changing landscape regarding competitive admissions.

Bottom Line

RF-PTCAS ended the 2024-25 cycle in its strongest position ever, characterized by record applicant volume, expanding program availability, growing diversity, continued concentration of demand in orthopaedics and sports-related specialties and subspecialties, and new feeder institutions emerging alongside traditional high-volume programs. However, applicants are applying more selectively, making program differentiation increasingly important. Programs that build meaningful relationships with high-producing feeder schools, demonstrate strong mentoring and outcomes, and intentionally support diverse applicant populations will be best positioned to capitalize on continued growth in the residency and fellowship education marketplace.

Fellowships

Overall Trends

- Overall, applicant volume to fellowships has fallen 38% from 2017 to 2025, with the sharpest declines in the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021.
- There has been a modest increase over last four years (+15.9%), but applicant and application numbers are not yet back to pre-pandemic levels.
- The number of fellowship programs receiving applications has remained relatively stable.

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	188	-	210	-	1.12	-	30
2017-18	221	17.55%	231	10.00%	1.05	-0.07	32
2018-19	191	-13.57%	109	-52.81%	0.57	-0.47	33
2019-20	149	-21.99%	159	45.87%	1.07	0.50	29
2020-21	102	-31.54%	118	-25.79%	1.16	0.09	22
2021-22	106	3.92%	123	4.24%	1.16	0.00	27
2022-23	127	19.81%	177	43.90%	1.39	0.23	30
2023-24	116	-8.66%	153	-13.56%	1.32	-0.07	28
2024-25	117	0.86%	183	19.61%	1.56	0.25	28

Subspecialty Breakdown

Key Observations

- Fellowship demand has shifted away from the more traditional OMPT programs toward sports-focused fellowships, particularly division I sports and upper extremity athlete programs.
 - OMPT fellowships remain the largest fellowship specialty by number of applicants and programs, but have seen steady declines in both, from a peak of 158 applicants in 2017-18 to 41 in 2024-25, and in programs receiving applicants from 17 in 2016-17 to nine in 2024-25.
 - Sports division 1 has seen the strongest growth in both applicants and programs, from three applicants and one program in 2016-17 to 32 applicants and seven programs in 2024-25.
 - Upper extremity athlete programs remain small, but growing, from two programs in 2016-17 to six in 2024-25, and a peak of 21 applications received in the most recent 2024-25 cycle.
- Higher education leadership remains a consistent, mid-sized subspecialty with a single program typically drawing an average of 25 applicants annually.

- Critical care, neonatology, performing arts, and spine fellowships are niche, and draw consistently small applicant volume to a few programs.
- Neurologic movement disorders fellowships saw a steady decline and are virtually nonexistent now, with no applicants for the last two years.

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Critical Care	2.13%	1.81%	1.05%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.79%	0.00%	0.00%
Higher Education Leadership	12.77%	9.05%	12.04%	11.41%	25.49%	29.25%	20.47%	27.59%	21.37%
Neonatology	0.53%	1.81%	1.57%	1.34%	2.94%	2.83%	2.36%	3.45%	0.85%
Neurologic Movement Disorders	7.45%	8.60%	6.81%	4.03%	4.90%	0.00%	1.57%	0.00%	0.00%
Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy	70.21%	71.49%	69.11%	69.80%	40.20%	45.28%	38.58%	31.90%	35.04%
Performing Arts	1.06%	0.45%	1.05%	0.00%	0.98%	0.00%	2.36%	2.59%	1.71%
Spine	6.38%	7.24%	4.19%	4.70%	3.92%	3.77%	10.24%	8.62%	6.84%
Sports Division 1	1.60%	0.90%	2.09%	6.71%	21.57%	12.26%	18.90%	18.97%	27.35%
Upper Extremity Athlete	4.79%	1.81%	4.19%	5.37%	5.88%	8.49%	11.02%	7.76%	8.55%
TOTAL	106.91%	103.17%	102.09%	103.36%	105.88%	101.89%	106.30%	100.86%	101.71%
Note: Total percentage is greater than 100% because applicants who applied to multiple specialties are included in each area in which they applied.									

Critical Care

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	4	-	4	-	1	-	3
2017-18	4	0.00%	5	25.00%	1.25	0.25	2
2018-19	2	-50.00%	3	-40.00%	1.5	0.25	2
2019-20	0	-100.00%	0	-100.00%	-	-1.50	0
2020-21	0	-	0	-	-	-	0
2021-22	0	-	0	-	-	-	0
2022-23	1	100.00%	1	100.00%	1	1.00	1
2023-24	0	-100.00%	0	-100.00%	-	-1.00	0
2024-25	0	-	0	-	-	-	0

Higher Education Leadership

Table 8 – Higher Education Leadership Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends							
	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	24	-	24	-	1	-	1
2017-18	20	-16.67%	20	-16.67%	1	0.00	1
2018-19	23	15.00%	23	15.00%	1	0.00	1
2019-20	17	-26.09%	17	-26.09%	1	0.00	1
2020-21	26	52.94%	26	52.94%	1	0.00	1
2021-22	31	19.23%	31	19.23%	1	0.00	1
2022-23	26	-16.13%	26	-16.13%	1	0.00	1
2023-24	32	23.08%	32	23.08%	1	0.00	1
2024-25	25	-21.88%	25	-21.88%	1	0.00	1

Neonatology

Table 9 – Neonatology Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends							
	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	1	-	1	-	1.00	-	1
2017-18	4	300.00%	4	300.00%	1.00	0.00	2
2018-19	3	-25.00%	5	25.00%	1.67	0.67	2
2019-20	2	-33.33%	2	-60.00%	1.00	-0.67	2
2020-21	3	50.00%	4	100.00%	1.33	0.33	2
2021-22	3	0.00%	5	25.00%	1.67	0.33	3
2022-23	3	0.00%	3	-40.00%	1.00	-0.67	1
2023-24	4	33.33%	4	33.33%	1.00	0.00	3
2024-25	1	-75.00%	1	-75.00%	1.00	0.00	1

Neurologic Movement Disorders

Table 10 – Neurologic Movement Disorders Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends							
	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	14	-	14	-	1.00		2
2017-18	19	35.71%	19	35.71%	1.00	0.00	2
2018-19	13	-31.58%	13	-31.58%	1.00	0.00	2
2019-20	6	-53.85%	6	-53.85%	1.00	0.00	2
2020-21	5	-16.67%	5	-16.67%	1.00	0.00	2
2021-22	0	-100.00%	0	-100.00%	0.00	-1.00	0
2022-23	2	200.00%	2	200.00%	1.00	1.00	1
2023-24	0	-100.00%	0	-100.00%	0.00	-1.00	0
2024-25	0	-	0	-	0.00	0.00	0

Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy

Table 11 – OMPT Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends							
	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	132	-	136	-	1.03	-	17
2017-18	158	19.70%	158	16.18%	1.00	-0.03	17
2018-19	132	-16.46%	138	-12.66%	1.05	0.05	17
2019-20	104	-21.21%	110	-20.29%	1.06	0.01	18
2020-21	41	-60.58%	43	-60.91%	1.05	-0.01	9
2021-22	48	17.07%	53	23.26%	1.10	0.06	14
2022-23	49	2.08%	50	-5.66%	1.02	-0.08	12
2023-24	37	-24.49%	40	-20.00%	1.08	0.06	11
2024-25	41	10.81%	44	10.00%	1.07	-0.01	9

Performing Arts

Table 12 – Performing Arts Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	2	-	2	-	1.00	-	1
2017-18	1	-50.00%	1	-50.00%	1.00	0.00	1
2018-19	2	100.00%	4	300.00%	2.00	1.00	2
2019-20	0	-100.00%	0	-100.00%	0.00	-2.00	0
2020-21	1	100.00%	1	100.00%	1.00	1.00	1
2021-22	0	-100.00%	0	-100.00%	0.00	-1.00	0
2022-23	3	300.00%	4	400.00%	1.33	1.33	2
2023-24	3	0.00%	5	25.00%	1.67	0.33	2
2024-25	2	-33.33%	2	-60.00%	1.00	-0.67	2

Spine

Table 13 – Spine Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	12	-	12	-	1.00	-	2
2017-18	16	33.33%	16	33.33%	1.00	0.00	3
2018-19	8	-50.00%	8	-50.00%	1.00	0.00	2
2019-20	7	-12.50%	7	-12.50%	1.00	0.00	1
2020-21	4	-42.86%	4	-42.86%	1.00	0.00	1
2021-22	4	0.00%	4	0.00%	1.00	0.00	2
2022-23	13	225.00%	13	225.00%	1.00	0.00	3
2023-24	10	-23.08%	10	-23.08%	1.00	0.00	2
2024-25	8	-20.00%	8	-20.00%	1.00	0.00	4

Sports Division 1

Table 14 – Sports Division 1 Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	3	-	3	-	1.00	-	1
2017-18	2	-33.33%	2	-33.33%	1.00	0.00	1
2018-19	4	100.00%	4	100.00%	1.00	0.00	2
2019-20	10	150.00%	10	150.00%	1.00	0.00	2
2020-21	22	120.00%	27	170.00%	1.23	0.23	3
2021-22	13	-40.91%	17	-37.04%	1.31	0.08	4
2022-23	24	84.62%	60	252.94%	2.50	1.19	6
2023-24	22	-8.33%	53	-11.67%	2.41	-0.09	6
2024-25	32	45.45%	82	54.72%	2.56	0.15	7

Upper Extremity Athlete

Table 15 – Upper Extremity Athlete Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	9	-	14	-	1.56	-	2
2017-18	4	-55.56%	6	-57.14%	1.50	-0.06	3
2018-19	8	100.00%	11	83.33%	1.38	-0.13	3
2019-20	8	0.00%	10	-9.09%	1.25	-0.13	3
2020-21	6	-25.00%	8	-20.00%	1.33	0.08	3
2021-22	9	50.00%	13	62.50%	1.44	0.11	3
2022-23	14	55.56%	18	38.46%	1.29	-0.16	4
2023-24	9	-35.71%	9	-50.00%	1.00	-0.29	4
2024-25	10	11.11%	21	133.33%	2.10	1.10	6

Residency

Overall Trends

- Residencies remain the primary pathway for postprofessional education and account for the overwhelming majority of RF-PTCAS applications.
- Applicant volume increased by 34%, from 999 in 2017 to 1,341 in 2025.
- Applications received increased by 31% over the same period, from 2,263 to 2,977.
- The number of residency programs receiving applications nearly doubled, from 202 in 2017 to 359 in 2025.
- The average number of applications submitted per applicant remains consistent, starting at 2.27 in 2016 and ending at 2.22 in 2025.

Table 16 – Residency Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	999	-	2,263	-	2.27	-	202
2017-18	1,155	15.62%	2,557	12.99%	2.21	-0.05	224
2018-19	1,173	1.56%	2,664	4.18%	2.27	0.06	241
2019-20	1,201	2.39%	2,501	-6.12%	2.08	-0.19	261
2020-21	1,378	14.74%	3,416	36.59%	2.48	0.40	265
2021-22	1,197	-13.13%	3,090	-9.54%	2.58	0.10	297
2022-23	1,207	0.84%	2,805	-9.22%	2.32	-0.26	325
2023-24	1,259	4.31%	2,871	2.35%	2.28	-0.04	347
2024-25	1,341	6.51%	2,977	3.69%	2.22	-0.06	359

Specialty Breakdown

Key Observations

- Orthopaedics remains the dominant residency specialty area, with strong growth until 2019, stability through the pandemic era, a postpandemic dip, and a rebound in the most recent 2024-25 cycle.
- Sports is one of the fastest growing specialty areas, with applicant volume growing by 110% from 2017 to 2025.
- Pediatrics has had the largest decline among the larger specialties, experiencing sustained contraction in applicant volume from a peak in 2021.
- Oncology remains an emerging specialty, growing from three to a peak of 14 applicants in 2021 before settling at nine in 2025.
- Neurology and Women's/Pelvic Health remain healthy and stable in applicant demand, but declining application volume shows a decrease in competition for available slots.

- Acute care remains small but has also experienced one of the largest percentage growths from 2017 to 2025 at 169%.
- Geriatrics, Cardiovascular & Pulmonary, and Faculty remain small but stable specialty areas.
- Wound management remains a small specialty in decline, going from six applicants in 2017 to one in 2025.

Table 17 – Share of Residency Applicants by Specialty

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Acute Care	1.30%	2.08%	1.45%	1.67%	1.89%	1.75%	1.57%	1.99%	2.61%
Cardiovascular & Pulmonary	1.30%	1.04%	1.19%	1.42%	1.02%	1.34%	1.16%	1.11%	0.82%
Clinical Electrophysiology	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.08%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Faculty	0.50%	0.87%	1.02%	1.08%	0.58%	0.67%	0.58%	0.64%	0.37%
Geriatrics	2.90%	3.12%	2.30%	2.25%	2.25%	2.09%	2.07%	1.99%	2.31%
Neurology	19.52%	17.23%	16.79%	17.32%	17.71%	14.87%	15.16%	17.87%	16.63%
Oncology	0.00%	0.26%	0.51%	0.92%	1.02%	0.50%	0.58%	0.87%	0.67%
Orthopaedics	51.05%	51.60%	51.07%	48.96%	42.45%	45.11%	45.98%	42.10%	42.95%
Pediatrics	8.21%	7.71%	7.33%	7.91%	9.58%	8.52%	7.62%	7.39%	5.59%
Sports	18.62%	18.10%	19.86%	17.90%	24.60%	25.06%	25.93%	25.73%	29.08%
Women's Health	1.90%	2.16%	2.90%	4.33%	3.48%	4.09%	3.73%	3.97%	3.43%
Wound Management	0.60%	0.17%	0.09%	0.17%	0.15%	0.25%	0.25%	0.16%	0.07%
TOTAL	105.91%	104.33%	104.52%	103.91%	104.72%	104.34%	104.64%	103.81%	104.55%

Note: Total percentage is greater than 100% because applicants who applied to multiple specialties are included in each area in which they applied.

Acute Care

Table 18 – Acute Care Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	13	-	14	-	1.08	-	3
2017-18	24	84.62%	30	114.29%	1.25	0.17	7
2018-19	17	-29.17%	26	-13.33%	1.53	0.28	7
2019-20	20	17.65%	36	38.46%	1.80	0.27	8
2020-21	26	30.00%	33	-8.33%	1.27	-0.53	9
2021-22	21	-19.23%	24	-27.27%	1.14	-0.13	13
2022-23	19	-9.52%	38	58.33%	2.00	0.86	16
2023-24	25	31.58%	39	2.63%	1.56	-0.44	15
2024-25	35	40.00%	43	10.26%	1.23	-0.33	17

Cardiovascular & Pulmonary

Table 19 – Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	13	-	14	-	1.08	-	5
2017-18	12	-7.69%	19	35.71%	1.58	0.51	7
2018-19	14	16.67%	21	10.53%	1.50	-0.08	8
2019-20	17	21.43%	28	33.33%	1.65	0.15	8
2020-21	14	-17.65%	25	-10.71%	1.79	0.14	7
2021-22	16	14.29%	32	28.00%	2.00	0.21	8
2022-23	14	-12.50%	22	-31.25%	1.57	-0.43	10
2023-24	14	0.00%	22	0.00%	1.57	0.00	11
2024-25	11	-21.43%	23	4.55%	2.09	0.52	10

Clinical Electrophysiology

Table 20 – Clinical Electrophysiology Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
2017-18	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
2018-19	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
2019-20	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
2020-21	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
2021-22	1	100.00%	1	100.00%	1	1.00	1
2022-23	0	-100.00%	0	-100.00%	0	-1.00	0
2023-24	0	-	0	-	0	-	0
2024-25	0	-	0	-	0	-	0

Faculty

Table 21 – Faculty Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	5	-	5	-	1.00	-	1
2017-18	10	100.00%	10	100.00%	1.00	0.00	1
2018-19	12	20.00%	12	20.00%	1.00	0.00	1
2019-20	13	8.33%	13	8.33%	1.00	0.00	2
2020-21	8	-38.46%	9	-30.77%	1.13	0.13	2
2021-22	8	0.00%	9	0.00%	1.13	0.00	3
2022-23	7	-12.50%	7	-22.22%	1.00	-0.13	3
2023-24	8	14.29%	8	14.29%	1.00	0.00	4
2024-25	5	-37.50%	7	-12.50%	1.40	0.40	4

Geriatrics

Table 22 – Geriatrics Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	29	-	47	-	1.62	-	16
2017-18	36	24.14%	53	12.77%	1.47	-0.15	17
2018-19	27	-25.00%	45	-15.09%	1.67	0.19	15
2019-20	27	0.00%	34	-24.44%	1.26	-0.41	13
2020-21	31	14.81%	54	58.82%	1.74	0.48	16
2021-22	25	-19.35%	36	-33.33%	1.44	-0.30	15
2022-23	25	0.00%	32	-11.11%	1.28	-0.16	15
2023-24	25	0.00%	37	15.63%	1.48	0.20	18
2024-25	31	24.00%	40	8.11%	1.29	-0.19	22

Neurology

Table 23 – Neurology Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	195		525		2.69		47
2017-18	199	2.05%	506	-3.62%	2.54	-0.15	49
2018-19	197	-1.01%	436	-13.83%	2.21	-0.33	58
2019-20	208	5.58%	508	16.51%	2.44	0.23	57
2020-21	244	17.31%	640	25.98%	2.62	0.18	53
2021-22	178	-27.05%	556	-13.13%	3.12	0.50	57
2022-23	183	2.81%	424	-23.74%	2.32	-0.81	67
2023-24	225	22.95%	511	20.52%	2.27	-0.05	76
2024-25	223	-0.89%	471	-7.83%	2.11	-0.16	77

Oncology

Table 24 – Oncology Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	0	-	0	-	0.00	-	0
2017-18	3	400.00%	3	400.00%	1.00	1.00	1
2018-19	6	100.00%	6	100.00%	1.00	0.00	2
2019-20	11	83.33%	11	83.33%	1.00	0.00	3
2020-21	14	27.27%	20	81.82%	1.43	0.43	4
2021-22	6	-57.14%	7	-65.00%	1.17	-0.26	5
2022-23	7	16.67%	8	14.29%	1.14	-0.02	5
2023-24	11	57.14%	13	62.50%	1.18	0.04	4
2024-25	9	-18.18%	13	0.00%	1.44	0.26	7

Orthopaedics

Table 25 – Orthopaedics Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	510	-	798	-	1.56	-	83
2017-18	596	16.86%	957	19.92%	1.61	0.04	89
2018-19	599	0.50%	1006	5.12%	1.68	0.07	94
2019-20	588	-1.84%	926	-7.95%	1.57	-0.10	107
2020-21	585	-0.51%	938	1.30%	1.60	0.03	103
2021-22	540	-7.69%	845	-9.91%	1.56	-0.04	116
2022-23	555	2.78%	853	0.95%	1.54	-0.03	124
2023-24	530	-4.50%	752	-11.84%	1.42	-0.12	131
2024-25	576	8.68%	837	11.30%	1.45	0.03	133

Pediatrics

Table 26 – Pediatrics Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	82	-	240	-	2.93	-	20
2017-18	89	8.54%	268	11.67%	3.01	0.08	20
2018-19	86	-3.37%	247	-7.84%	2.87	-0.14	20
2019-20	95	10.47%	245	-0.81%	2.58	-0.29	22
2020-21	132	38.95%	375	53.06%	2.84	0.26	22
2021-22	102	-22.73%	287	-23.47%	2.81	-0.03	26
2022-23	92	-9.80%	282	-1.74%	3.07	0.25	29
2023-24	93	1.09%	255	-9.57%	2.74	-0.32	32
2024-25	75	-19.35%	181	-29.02%	2.41	-0.33	34

Sports

Table 27 – Sports Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	186	-	584	-	3.14	-	36
2017-18	209	12.37%	647	10.79%	3.10	-0.04	39
2018-19	233	11.48%	804	24.27%	3.45	0.35	45
2019-20	215	-7.73%	606	-24.63%	2.82	-0.63	47
2020-21	339	57.67%	1229	102.81%	3.63	0.81	54
2021-22	300	-11.50%	1183	-3.74%	3.94	0.32	60
2022-23	313	4.33%	1056	-10.74%	3.37	-0.57	68
2023-24	324	3.51%	1127	6.72%	3.48	0.10	72
2024-25	390	20.37%	1286	14.11%	3.30	-0.18	82

Women's/Pelvic Health

Table 28 – Women's/Pelvic Health Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	19	-	30	-	1.58	-	8
2017-18	25	31.58%	62	106.67%	2.48	0.90	11
2018-19	34	36.00%	60	-3.23%	1.76	-0.72	11
2019-20	52	52.94%	92	53.33%	1.77	0.00	15
2020-21	48	-7.69%	91	-1.09%	1.90	0.13	14
2021-22	49	2.08%	107	17.58%	2.18	0.29	16
2022-23	45	-8.16%	80	-25.23%	1.78	-0.41	20
2023-24	50	11.11%	105	31.25%	2.10	0.32	21
2024-25	46	-8.00%	75	-28.57%	1.63	-0.47	20

Wound Management

Table 29 – Wound Management Applicant, Applications, and Program Participation Trends

	Submitted Applicants	% Change From Previous Cycle	Submitted Applications	% Change From Previous Cycle	Average Designations per Applicant	Change From Previous Cycle	Programs Receiving Applicants
2016-17	6	-	6	-	1.00	-	1
2017-18	2	-66.67%	2	-66.67%	1.00	0.00	1
2018-19	1	-50.00%	1	-50.00%	1.00	0.00	1
2019-20	2	100.00%	2	100.00%	1.00	0.00	1
2020-21	2	0.00%	2	0.00%	1.00	0.00	1
2021-22	3	50.00%	3	50.00%	1.00	0.00	1
2022-23	3	0.00%	3	0.00%	1.00	0.00	2
2023-24	2	-33.33%	2	-33.33%	1.00	0.00	1
2024-25	1	-50.00%	1	-50.00%	1.00	0.00	1

Last Updated: 10/14/2026

Contact: rfptcas@apta.org