

# Applying to Family Medicine Residencies

**AAFP Webinar**

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# Presenters

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# About This Presentation

- Perspectives and insights from program, medical student advisor, and candidate perspective
- Most frequently asked questions from medical students
- Questions taken in order of relevance to the Match timeline, so you can skip ahead depending on where you are
- Results from AAFP national surveys of medical students and family medicine residency programs on their plans this year

# Two Surveys

**75 residency program directors**  
(12.5% of 600 responded)

## Type

- 79% community-based
- 21% university-based

## Size

- 69% <30 residents
- 31% 31-59 residents

**1,170 medical students**  
(5.9% of almost 20K responded)

## Year

- 64% 4<sup>th</sup> year medical students
- 36% 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> year medical students

## Type

- 79% M.D.
- 21% D.O.

## Location of School

- 78% U.S.
- 21% International

# Attitudes

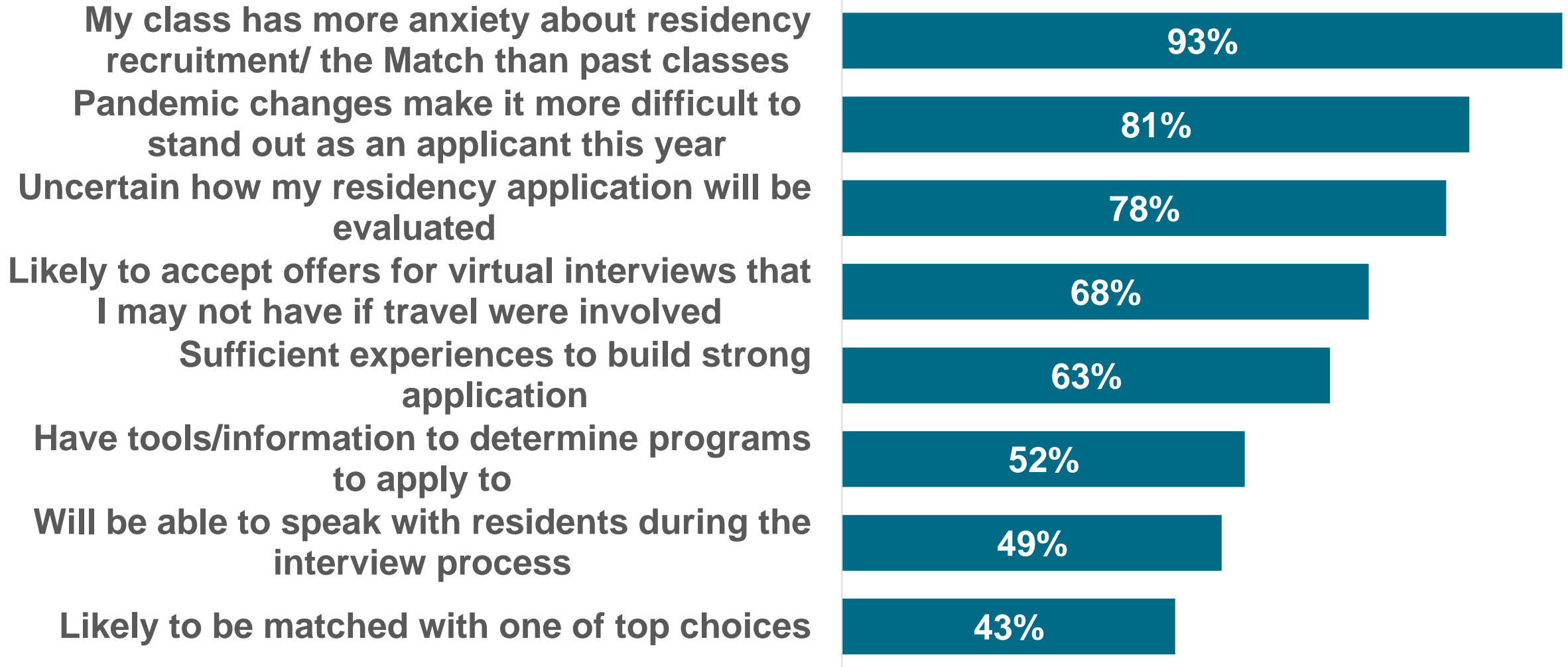
## Program Directors

- Mixed confidence that their ability will be as good as in previous years to determine which applicants to interview and which to rank
- 58% confident in their approach to the Match and in ability to use holistic applicant review process.
- 47% are confident in their approach for interviewing and 42% in their approach for recruitment

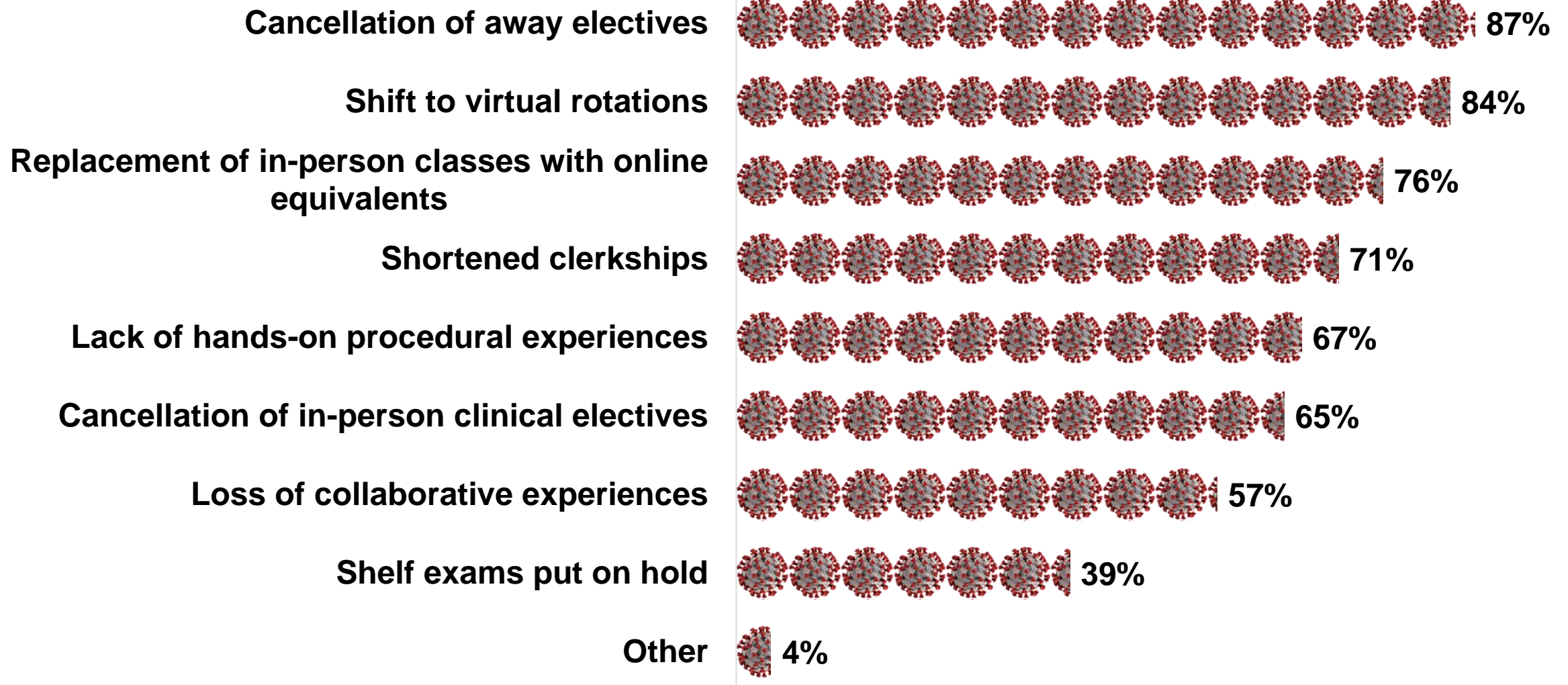
## Medical Students

- Class has more anxiety about residency application than in the past
- Believe it may be more difficult to stand out as an applicant this year
- Uncertain about how their residency application will be evaluated

# 2021 Match: Student Attitudes



# Changes Due to Covid-19: Medical School



**Q: What is the best way to research family medicine residency programs, and how can I differentiate program qualities?**



# Sources of Information About the Match

How much information about the 2021 Match Process do you expect to get from each of the following? *4th year medical students only*

	A lot	Some	Subtotal	Plan FM Res Sub- total	Little/none	N
AAMC	29%	61%	90%	90%	10%	699
Directly from residency programs	33%	54%	87%	87%	13%	698
My classmates	29%	57%	85%	85%	15%	696
Previous graduates	30%	50%	79%	79%	21%	698
Specialty organizations	24%	54%	79%	77%	21%	695
Residents	28%	50%	77%	78%	23%	697
My school's Dean's Office	20%	49%	69%	68%	31%	699
Social media	22%	47%	69%	67%	31%	698
My school's career counselor	22%	39%	61%	60%	39%	700
My school's Family Medicine Department	15%	40%	55%	55%	45%	696

# Social Media Platforms That are Sources of Information About the Match

Please specify which social media platforms *Among those who got a lot or some information about the 2021 Match process from social media*

	Percent
Instagram	53%
Twitter	43%
Facebook	42%
Reddit	11%
Student Doctor Network	2%
Email	2%
LinkedIn	1%
Other	5%
Number of respondents	321

# Advice

- Search program websites and social media, look for virtual open houses and special social media postings and series
- Leverage alumni networks from your school, reach out to graduates who are training at programs of interest
- Evaluate program mission and values, educational focus and curriculum, community and culture
- Use all directories (FREIDA, AAMC Residency Explorer, AAFP Residency Directory, etc.); they all offer something different

**Q: Should I connect with programs before or outside of ERAS? Do programs want to hear from faculty advocating for known applicants from their institutions?**

# Advice

- Yes, but make it meaningful. Have a specific question or desire to express specific interest.
- Be respectful if programs say they're not responding to individual inquiries, and don't be discouraged.
- If you have faculty who can advocate on your behalf, it will help you stand out.
- Programs are always cognizant of Match rules to avoid violations. You may not try to elicit a commitment. Programs may be cautious and neutral in their communication.

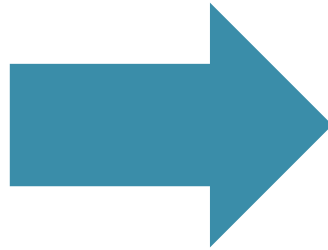
**Q: How many programs should I apply to? And how do I decide whether to accept interview invitations from family medicine residency programs?**

# What program directors told us: how many interview slots do you plan to offer?



48%

A lot more 1% + More 36%



50%

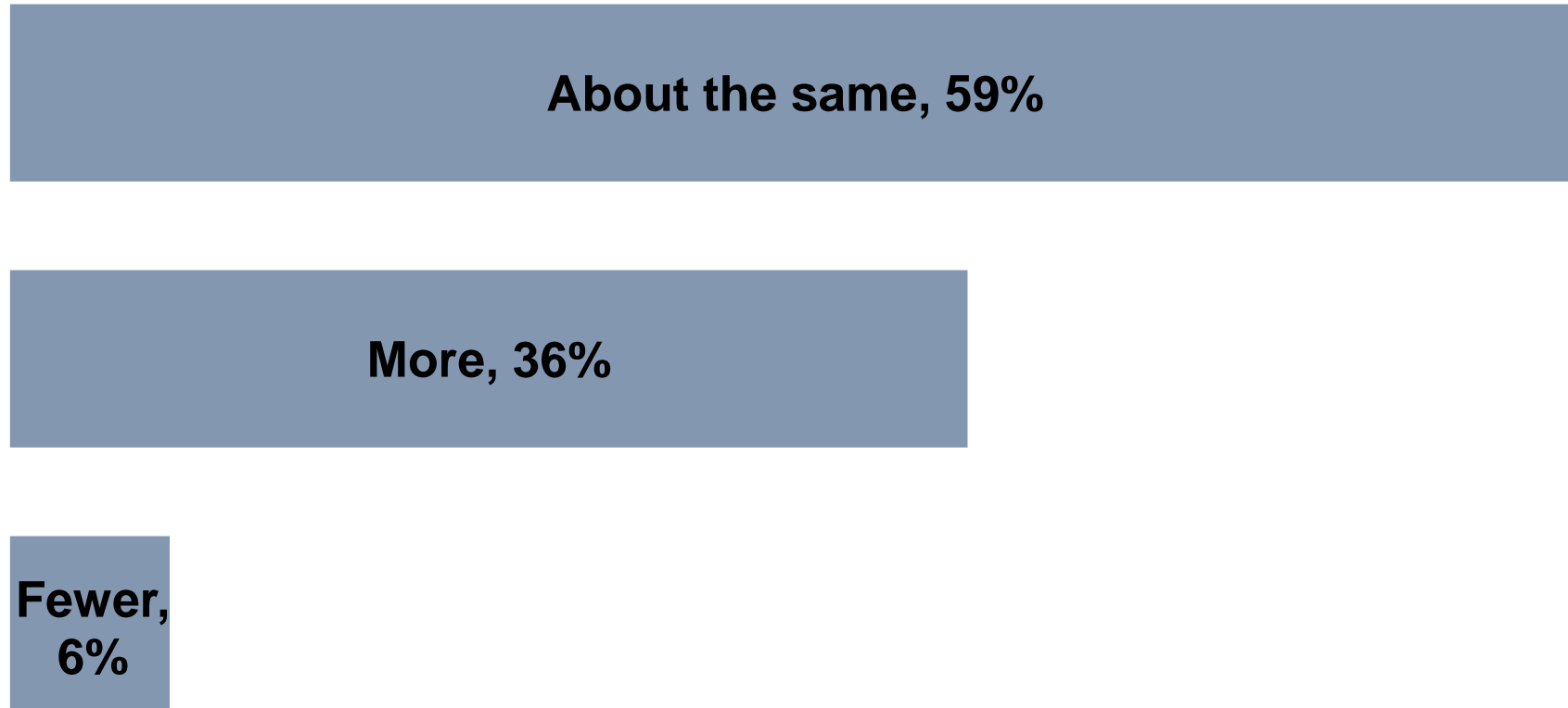
About the same 50%



2%

Fewer 2% + A lot fewer 0%

# What students told the AAFP: How many programs do you plan to apply to?





# What students told the AAFP:

About how many residency programs do you plan to apply to?

	Total	US MD	US DO	IMG
1 - 20	22%	36%	13%	2%
21 - 40	33%	43%	35%	12%
41 - 60	16%	11%	28%	11%
More than 60	29%	10%	24%	75%
N	724	349	153	166

# Advice on applying

- Based on Match performance, there is a diminishing rate of returns after 17 applications to family medicine residencies.
- Try not to participate in the panic this year.
- Make sure you can explain “why our program” to every single one that makes your application or interview list. And make sure it’s authentic.
- Only apply to programs at which you could really see yourself to help filter your list to a reasonable number. Be thoughtful and don’t over-apply. You’ll make it harder on yourself and your peers.
- There are legitimate reasons to apply to more programs, which you should discuss with a family medicine advisor.

# Advice on interview offers

- If you're going to cancel, cancel early. Once interviews start and you've heard from most places you want to, cancel interviews at programs you are less interested in.
- Most family medicine residencies will offer more interview slots this year, giving more opportunities to students.
- If you take an interview slot at a program you're not really interested in ("safety" or "courtesy" interview), you're taking an opportunity away from a student who might really be interested.
- Don't over-apply, but also don't cut a program you're really interested in just because you've hit a certain number.

**Q: How can I ensure I will stand out in my application, the interview, and supporting process? How will I be evaluated? What is holistic admissions?**

# Advice

- Many students feel doubt and lack of confidence, but most are well positioned to Match successfully in family medicine.
- Family medicine residencies are leaders in using holistic processes and evaluation criteria, judging candidates by looking well beyond numerical exam and academic scores.
- Holistic review processes endeavor to provide balanced consideration to all aspects of an application including academic metrics, experience, and attributes, allowing for flexible and individualized assessment.
- Programs will try to leverage these assessments even more this year.

# What you can do

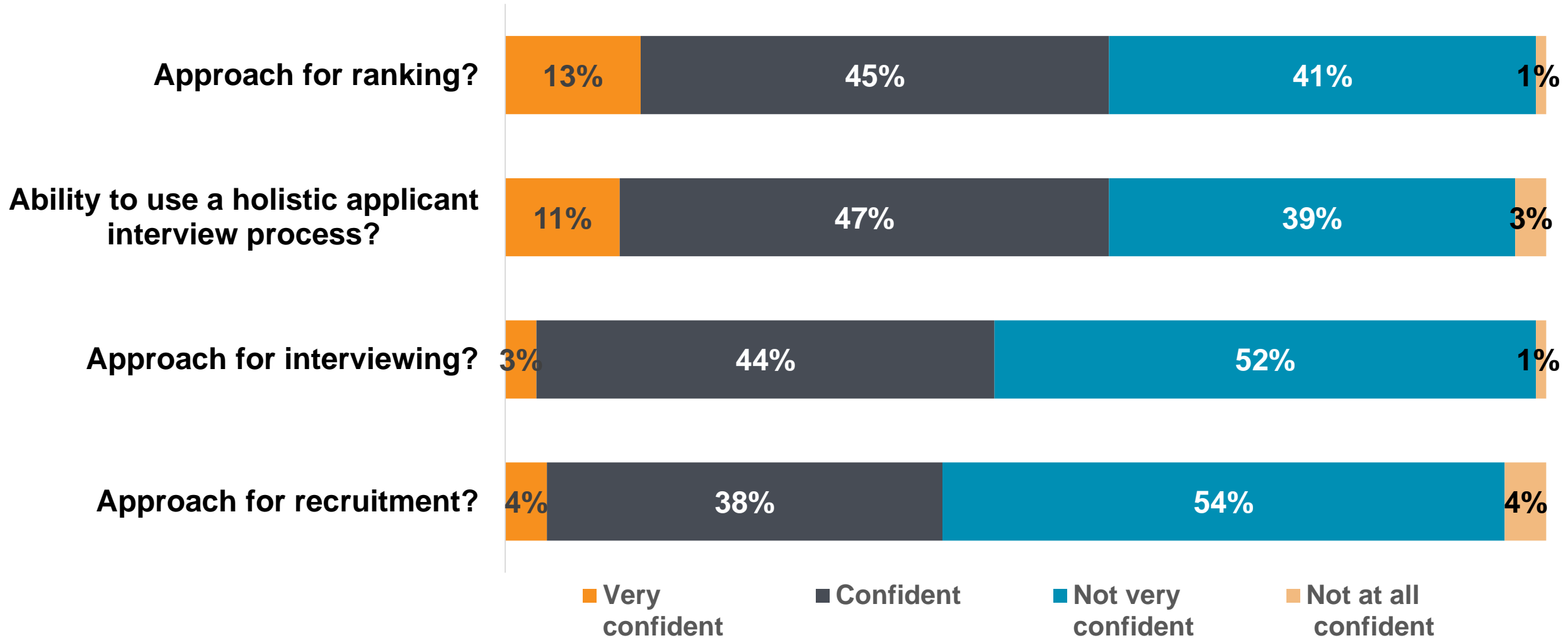
- Attend events, show your face, and become known to programs you're interested in.
- Programs want to know who you are, what drives you, your sense of purpose, how you overcome challenges and use these as opportunities for growth, and how you participate in or build teams and community.
- Be able to articulate your values and be authentic and consistent throughout the process.
- Share experiences and details about what you did, learned, and the impact you had.

**If you don't have sufficient experiences and exposure to put together a strong application, what is lacking? *4th year medical students only***

	Percent
Opportunities for away rotations (Als and Sub Is)	82%
Letters of recommendation	53%
Clinical experiences	45%
Opportunities for family medicine elective rotations	40%
Meaningful faculty evaluations	38%
Completion of Step 2 USMLE or COMLEX-USA Level 2	27%
Leadership opportunities	25%
Other	7%
N	236

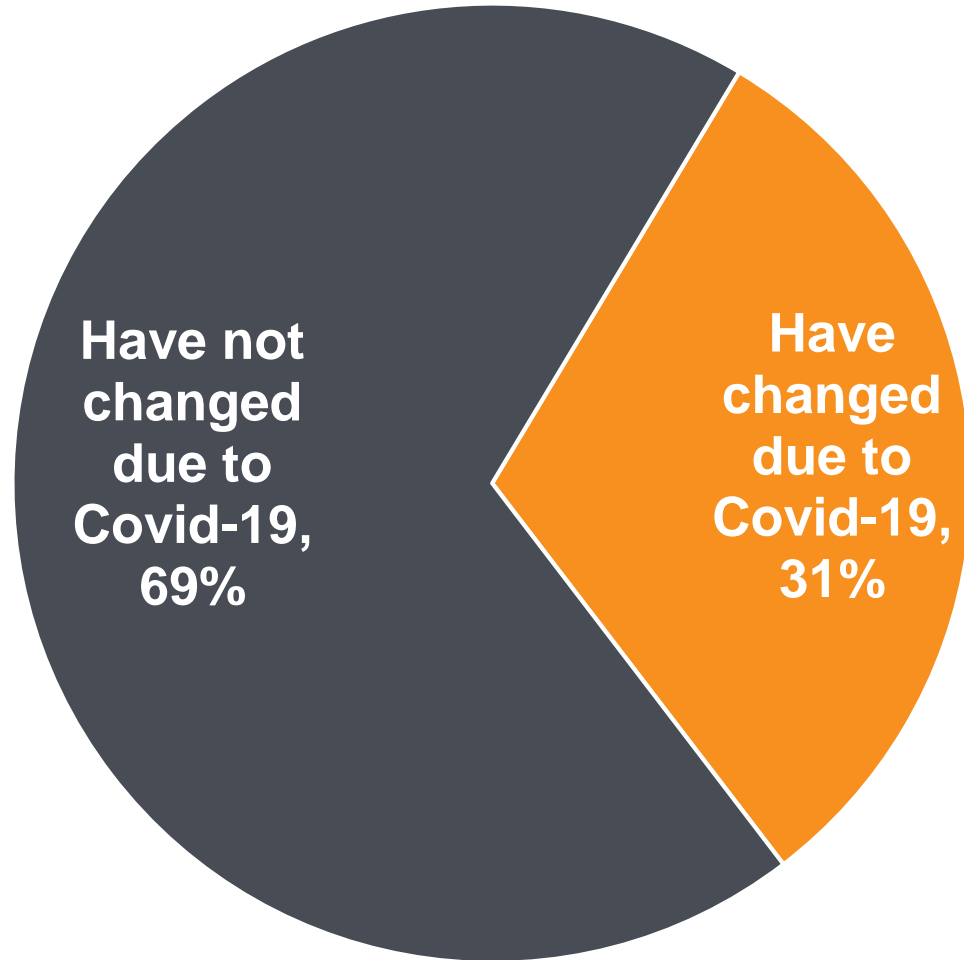
*[Regarding the 2021 Match]*

## How confident are you in your . . .





# Have PDs changed criteria used to evaluate applicants for the 2021 Match?



## Themes of evaluation criteria changes

- Removing or de-emphasizing criteria regarding exam/Board scores
- Greater focus on objective/ submitted materials or criteria due to lack of exam scores and in-person interviews
- Adding depth to virtual interviews

# Program Director Actions to Support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Application Process



**Q: What types of interviews might I expect this year and how should I prepare?**

# Interview Format



92% virtual only



&



8% virtual & in-person



100%

allow substitution of virtual for in-person interview without penalty

# Do Program Directors think their abilities to determine applicants to interview and rank are as good as in previous years?

My ability to determine the applicants to rank should be as good as in previous years

29%

16%

55%

My ability to determine which applicants to interview should be as good as in previous years

46%

13%

41%


■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree

# Advice

- All residency programs have been advised to only offer virtual interviews this year, which is vital to allow for a fair and equitable interview process. Only a small percentage of family medicine residency programs are deterring that advice to offer in-person interviews, and all programs say they will honor virtual interview requests in lieu of in-person.
- This is a new process for programs, and most are still figuring it out!

# Interview Structures

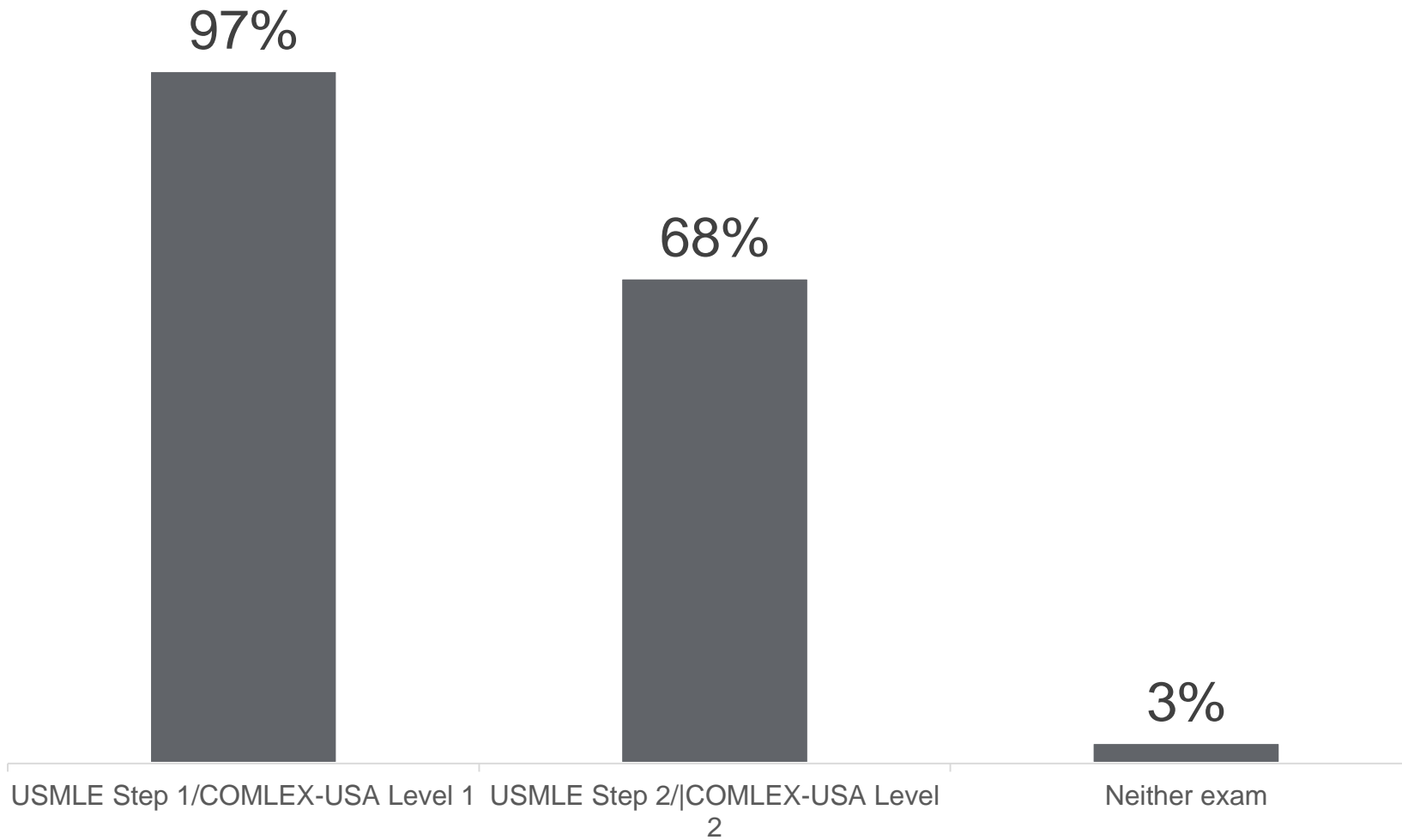
- Secondary applications
- Standardized interview questions
- Asynchronous video interviews
- Virtual interview days
- Interview questions for students in Strolling Through the Match and available from family medicine residents on social media
- Prepare your space, be introspective, listen first, ask questions second



**Q: What is your advice for someone with an academic misstep? How should it be addressed in the application and interview? How do I show my strengths and potential?**



# Exams Taken



<i>Which of the following does your residency program plan to do?</i>	Percent of respondents	N
Offer interviews to students who do not have a USMLE Step 2/COMLEX-USA Level 2 score when they submit their application	94%	61
Offer elective rotations to residency candidates in 2020-2021	59%	38
Rank students who do not have a USMLE Step 2/COMLEX-USA Level 2 score at time of ranking	17%	11
Total respondents	65	

# Actions for Student Success

*What can applicants who don't have a Step2/Level2 exam score do to become more competitive?*

- Include letters of recommendation
  - *“Detailed LORs with specific patient care/clinical skills”*
- Show interest in the program
  - *“Address why they are interested in a specific program in their personal statement”*
- Provide descriptions of relevant experiences
  - *“Meaningful experiences with details in the experiences section”*
- Prepare a detailed personal statement
- Take or schedule the exam
  - *“Get it done so results have returned before the ranking deadline”*

# Advice

- Programs know that exam timelines have been interrupted. Most will interview you without Step/Level 2, but are less likely to rank you without. Schedule and take those exams.
- You should address academic missteps in your personal statement if it's in your Dean's letter (MSPE) or transcript.
  - Explain anything on the MSPE or any breaks in training in your Common Application.
  - Explain exam failures or repeated courses in your personal statement.
  - Bring it up in your interview and focus on what you learned and how you've grown. Take ownership, don't blame all external factors. Show maturity.

**Q: What should I capture, and how, about programs I interview with to advise my rank list?**

# Advice

Maintain a list or spreadsheet with the factors that matter most to you about each program.

- Capture information real-time and reflect immediately after each interview.
- Rank as you go—it gets harder to differentiate at the end.
- Consider reaching out to programs for follow-up calls or more interaction if you weren't able to get a full feeling of the program.
- Assess program qualities on diversity, equity, and inclusion. It allows you to see where their values lie, and lets you express your values and have an impact on the system.

**Q: For those of us who arrived at a family medicine specialty choice late or are applying in more than one specialty, what is your advice?**

# Advice

- More applicants are finding themselves on this “parallel path,” applying in more than one specialty.
- Match performance statistics show candidates ranking more than one specialty Match at a lower rate and lower down their lists.
- Programs are not allowed to ask you where else you’re applying. It can be concerning for a program because they want to know you are committed to completing their residency.
- Seek advice from your school’s family medicine department or Student Affairs or Dean’s office.
- Consider circling back with programs later in the interview season if it becomes clear that family medicine is right for you.



**Q: How can I protect my wellness and manage anxiety and uncertainty during Match season?**

# Advice

- Even without significant travel and less financial expense, interview season can be very taxing.
- Take days off from the process to give yourself a break from thinking about the Match. Consider these vacation days from your “Match job.”
- Talk with peers and friends about programs. Decompress, check in, support each other.
- Follow outgoing AAFP student board member Margaret Miller, MD, MPH, on Twitter (@margjeanmiller) for support.

**Q: How will programs and applicants handle post-interview communications this year?**

# Advice

- Many programs have existing policies and approaches and will share these with you during the interview. You can also ask them about their standard process.
- Communications should never be used to elicit information on how a program is ranking you or vice versa.
- It is appropriate to reach out through contact information and vehicles the program provided. If you send thank you messages, consider capturing specifics of what you appreciated about the program.

# Resources and Support

- AAFP Student Membership – it's FREE!
- AAFP.org/match
  - Recorded workshops and webinars
  - Match FAQs
  - Strolling Through the Match
  - AAFP Family Medicine Residency Directory
- Exclusive online community for AAFP medical student members
- @the\_aafp on IG, @aafp\_fmig on Twitter, FMIG Network on FB
- Your state chapter of the AAFP (aafp.org/chapterdirectory)
- Your school's Family Medicine Department



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