Tracking trends
AAP resident survey marks 20th anniversary

from the AAP Department of Research

The Academy is committed to understanding the training experiences and career interests of young pediatricians. Since 1997, the AAP Annual Survey of Graduating Residents has been sent to a nationally representative sample of residents graduating from U.S. pediatric programs.

In 2016, the 20th survey will be sent to gather key data on demographics, residency training, career choice and job search experiences.

The Academy uses survey results for program development and strategic planning. In addition, results have been disseminated widely (e.g., published on 20 occasions in peer-reviewed journals and presented at more than 40 conferences).

The following key trends on graduating pediatric residents have emerged across the last two decades:

- More graduates today are female: 61% in 1997 and 72% in 2015.
- Many are married/partnered: 71% in 1997 and 69% in 2015. One-third of these residents’ spouses/partners also are physicians (34% in 1997 and 35% in 2015).
- Fewer say their career goal is primary care practice (66% in 1997 decreasing to 40% in 2015).
- Nearly all have a job or position when surveyed (94% in 1997 and 98% in 2015).
- Most are satisfied with pediatrics: 94% in 2003 and 93% in 2015 would repeat a pediatric residency if given the choice.

Since 1997, one of the most striking trends is the increased educational debt that young pediatricians face. Among residents who reported having any educational debt, the average debt increased from $122,000 in 1997 to $242,500 in 2015, after adjusting for inflation (see figure). In contrast, the starting salary of residents entering general pediatric practice increased only slightly from $136,000 in 1997 to $145,000 in 2015, after adjusting for inflation.

“Academy leadership values the information we are gaining from graduating residents and is grateful to those who respond to the resident survey,” said Elizabeth Meade, M.D., FAAP, chair of the AAP Section on Early Career Physicians Executive Committee. “The information that we are learning from graduates—including their increasing interest in subspecialty training and that many of them leave residency with six-figure debt loads—is shaping our future programs and services for members. It is encouraging to see that most residents are satisfied with their decisions to become pediatricians and that they are graduating with jobs.”

The Annual Survey of Graduating Residents is conducted each year from May to August. Surveys are mailed and emailed to a random sample of 1,000 graduating pediatric residents. Response rates have ranged from 78% in 1997 to 55% in 2015.

RESOURCES

- For more information on the Annual Survey of Graduating Residents, visit http://www2.aap.org/research/graduatingresidents.htm or contact Mary Pat Frintner, in the AAP Division of Health Services Research, at 800-433-9016, ext. 7664, or mfrintner@aap.org.