

ABIM Diplomate Report: Rheumatology 2026





Table of Contents

- Executive Summary 3
- Diplomate Population..... 4
 - How Large is the ABIM Diplomate Population? 5
 - How Many ABIM Diplomates Maintain Certification? 6
 - What are Common Dual Subspecialty Certifications and How Many Diplomates Maintain IM Certification? 7
 - How Has the Number of Issued ABIM Certificates Changed Over Time? 8
 - How Has the Diplomate Population Changed Compared to the U.S. Population? 9
 - Which U.S. States Have the Highest Density of ABIM Diplomates? 10
- Diplomate Demographics 11
 - What is the Medical School Composition of the Diplomate Population? 12
 - What is the Sex/Gender Composition of the Diplomate Population? 13
 - What is the Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Diplomate Population? 14
 - How Has the Composition of Newly Certified Diplomate Race/Ethnicity Changed Over Time? 15
 - What is the Age Composition of the Diplomate Population? 16
- Diplomate Assessments..... 17
 - Initial Certification Examinations and Pass Rates Over Time 18
 - Which Maintenance of Certification Assessment Option Did Diplomates Choose? 19
 - What Percentage of Diplomates Met the MOC Assessment Requirement? 20

Executive Summary

The American Board of Internal Medicine's 2026 Rheumatology Diplomate Report presents data collected as part of ABIM's certification and maintenance of certification (MOC) programs. The report focuses on the current state of the Rheumatology discipline, while using historic trends to provide appropriate context. The report highlights the current status of the diplomate population, growth in the diplomate population over time, participation in certification and maintenance of certification, demographic characteristics of the diplomates, and examination statistics.

- The number of physicians in the Rheumatology diplomate population grew in 2026. There were fewer newly certified Rheumatologists than in the previous year.
- In the last two decades, we observed an increase in the Rheumatology diplomate population per 100,000 U.S. population. The density of the Rheumatology diplomate population per U.S. population varies greatly across states.
- In the last two decades, there has been an increase in the proportion of physicians trained in osteopathic medicine and a decrease in the proportion of White physicians, among newly certified Rheumatologists.
- There has been an increase in the number of Rheumatology certification assessment takers over time. A majority of newly eligible diplomates have chosen the Longitudinal Knowledge Assessment to meet the MOC assessment requirement.

A decorative graphic consisting of a horizontal bar with a gradient from orange to blue. The year '2026' is written in white text in the center of the bar.

2026




Diplomate Population

This section of the report highlights the current state of ABIM diplomates who received initial certification in Rheumatology, with additional analysis on trends over time and a comparison to the U.S. population. The ABIM Rheumatology diplomate population is defined as physicians with an active medical license who received initial certification in Rheumatology, excluding physicians who have reported themselves as retired, who are suspended from the MOC program, or who have deactivated all certificates as of March, 2026.

How Large is the ABIM Diplomate Population?

The table to the right highlights the current state of physicians who received initial certification in Rheumatology. Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in the number of Rheumatologists in the diplomate population and a rise in the number of Rheumatologists with a valid Rheumatology certificate. Additionally, there was a decrease in the number of newly certified Rheumatologists from the previous year.

ABIM Diplomates

 <i>Rheumatology diplomates</i>	<i>+/- from previous year</i>
7,672	+ 0.7%
 <i>Diplomates with valid Rheumatology certificate</i>	<i>+/- from previous year</i>
6,918	+ 2.0%
 <i>Newly certified in 2025</i>	<i>+/- from previous year</i>
286	-6.8%

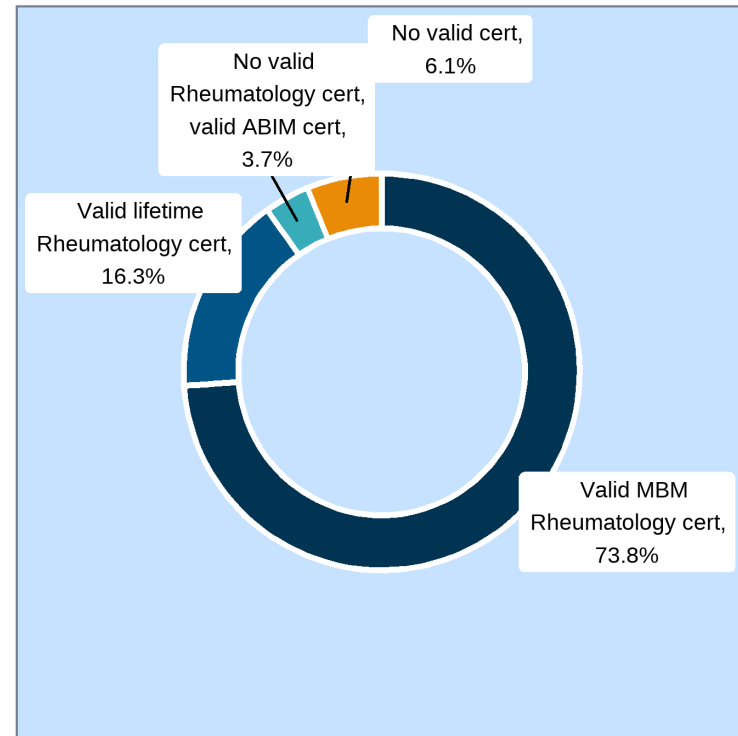
How Many ABIM Diplomates Maintain Certification?

The graph depicts the certification status of the Rheumatology diplomate population. For non-lifetime certification, to maintain a valid Rheumatology certificate, diplomates must meet MOC requirements including earning 100 points every five years and passing a MOC assessment by the due date.

In the Rheumatology diplomate population, 73.8% of physicians hold a valid Must-Be-Maintained (MBM) Rheumatology certificate and 16.3% of physicians hold a valid lifetime Rheumatology certificate. There was an additional 3.7% who were once certified in Rheumatology but do not currently hold a valid Rheumatology certificate, however they do hold some other kind of valid ABIM certificate. The remaining 6.1% of the Rheumatology diplomate population do not hold any valid ABIM certificate.

Therefore, 9.8% of diplomates certified in Rheumatology no longer hold a Rheumatology certificate; for comparison, across all subspecialty certificates, 15% were no longer valid.

Rheumatology Certification Status (N=7,672)

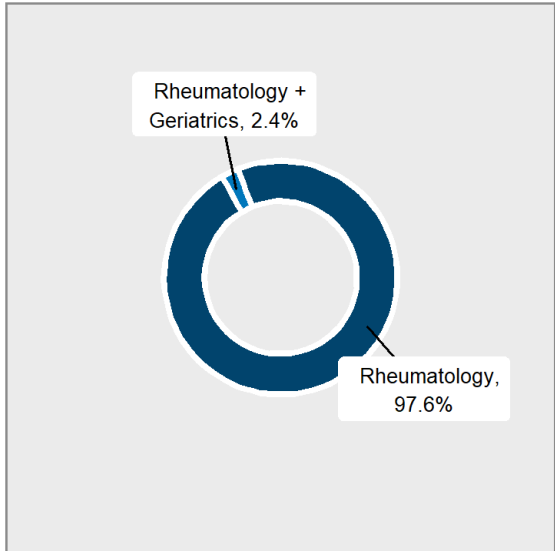


What are Common Dual Subspecialty Certifications and How Many Diplomates Maintain IM Certification?

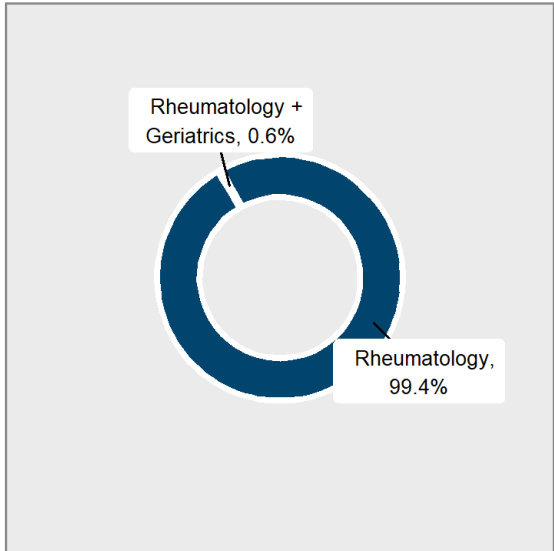
Very few Rheumatologists pursued initial subspecialty certification in other disciplines and many choose to maintain their underlying Internal Medicine (IM) certification. The graph on the left displays the breakdown of initial subspecialty certificate combinations among individuals who received initial Rheumatology certification. The graph in the middle shows the population with valid subspecialty certificates. The graph on the right presents diplomates with valid Rheumatology certification who also maintain IM certification (cert). 185 physicians with initial Rheumatology certification also received initial certification in another subspecialty. Among physicians with valid Rheumatology certification, 40 also have another valid subspecialty certificate, and 4,816 maintain a valid IM certificate.

Rheumatology Certificate Combinations (Initial Certification, N=7,672; Valid Certificates, N=6,918)

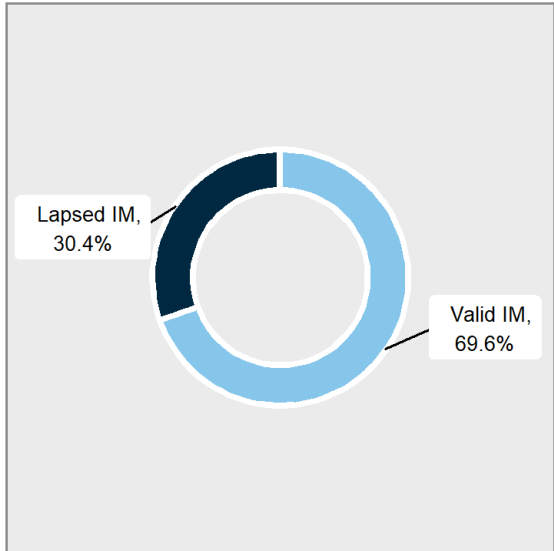
Initial Rheumatology Certification



Valid Rheumatology Certification



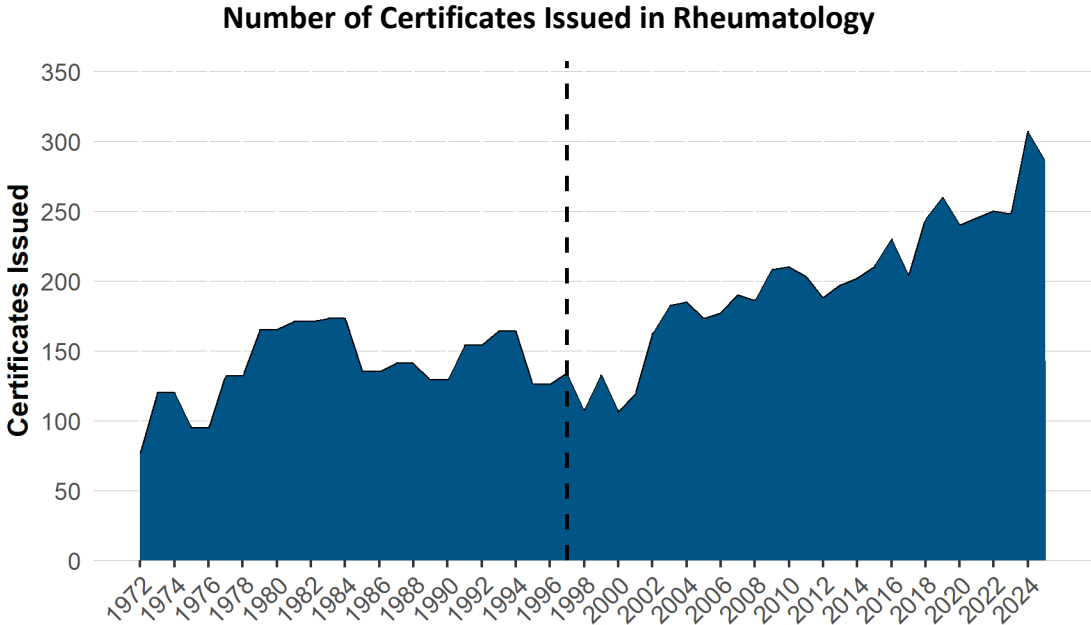
Valid Rheumatology by IM Cert Status



How Has the Number of Issued ABIM Certificates Changed Over Time?

Rheumatology certificates were first issued in 1972, with a certification exam that was initially offered every other year. As of 1997, the exam is offered annually. The plot presents the number of ABIM candidates certified in Rheumatology by year of initial certification since 1972.

There has been growth over time in the number of Rheumatology certificates issued. 2024 saw the highest annual number of new Rheumatology certificates ever at 307.

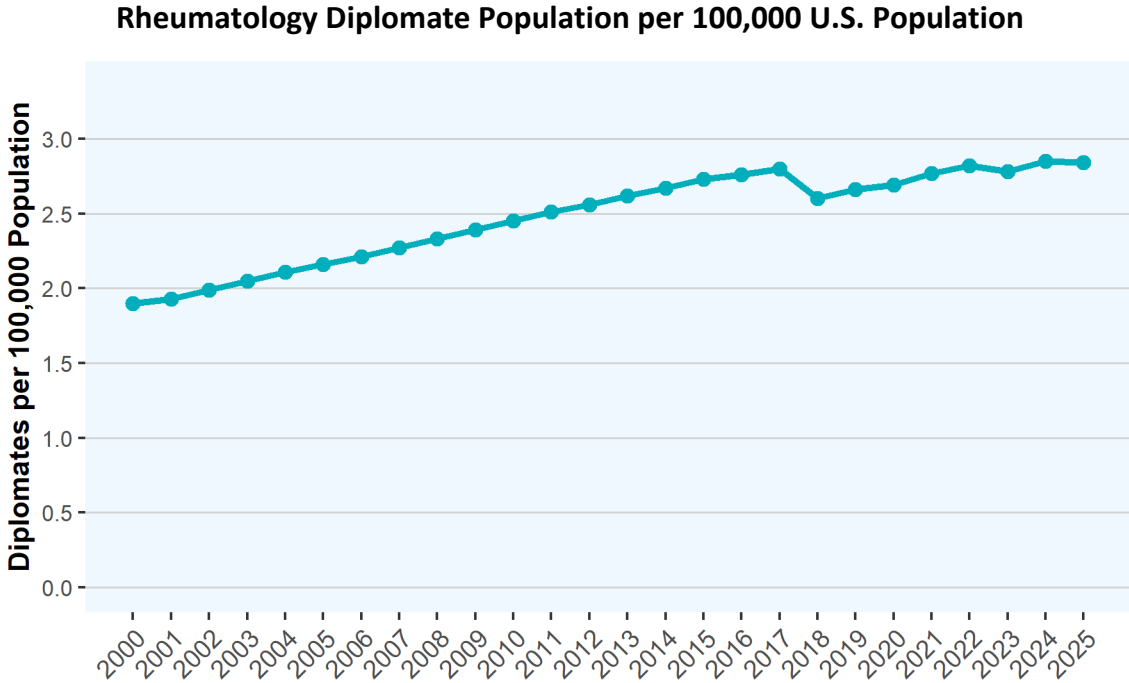


*The dotted vertical line indicates the year the certification exam was first offered annually; prior to this year, the exam was offered every other year. In the figure, the number of certificates issued to the left of the line are calculated as an average over 2 years, allowing for direct comparison with the annual values to the right of the line. For the certification launching year, only half of the certificates are displayed.



How Has the Diplomate Population Changed Compared to the U.S. Population?

The graph depicts the annual Rheumatology diplomate population per 100,000 U.S. population 18 years or older. In 2000, there were 1.9 diplomates per 100,000 U.S. population 18 years or older. Since then, we have observed a steady increase in the Rheumatology diplomate population.

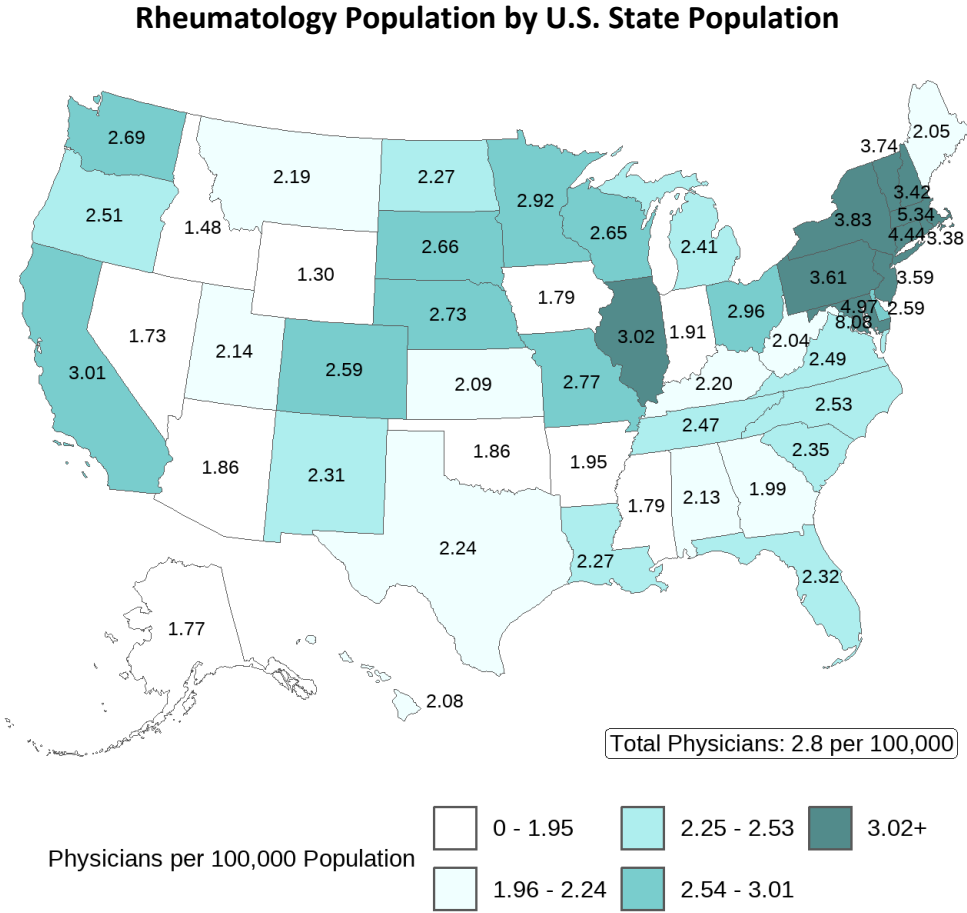


*The Current diplomate calculation used slightly different methods for periods before 2015, 2015-2017, and after 2017. The dip in 2018 is due to the exclusion of physicians who no longer maintained an active medical license.

Which U.S. States Have the Highest Density of ABIM Diplomates?

The map depicts the population of Rheumatologists in 2026. Values reflect the number of physicians per 100,000 U.S. population over the age of 18 years, by state. Estimates of the total U.S. population over 18 years are from the U.S. Census Bureau website and reflect values through July 1, 2025.

States depicted by lighter colors on the map, such as Wyoming and Idaho, have the lowest density of physicians per population, while darker states, like Massachusetts and Maryland, have the highest density.



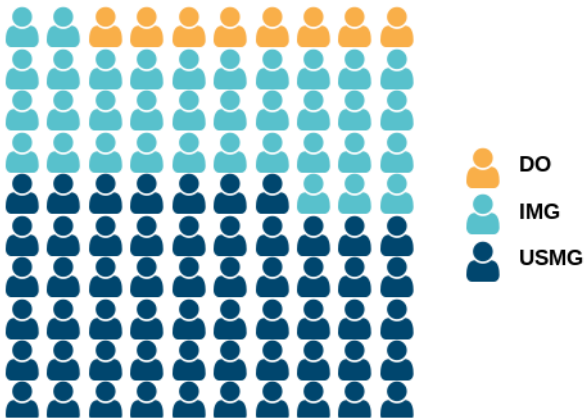
Diplomate Demographics

The infographics and plots in this section of the report display the breakdown of demographic characteristics in the current Rheumatology diplomate population as well as demographic trends over time in physicians who are newly certified in Rheumatology. We focused on the following demographic characteristics: country of medical school, sex of the physician, physician race/ethnicity, and physician age.

What is the Medical School Composition of the Diplomate Population?

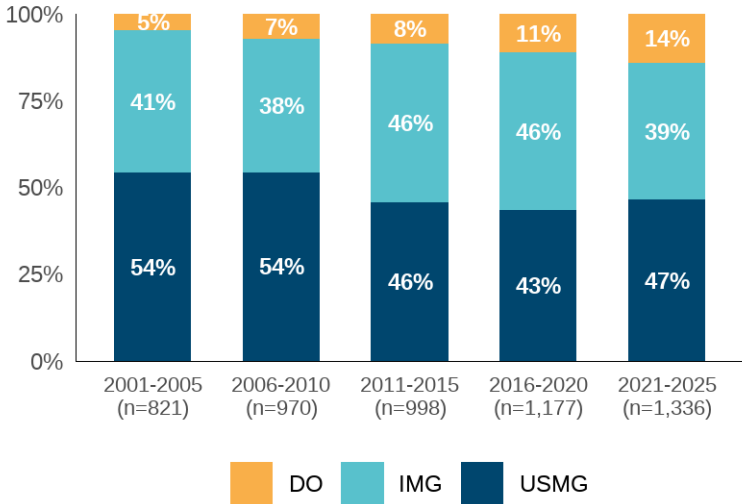
In the Rheumatology diplomate population, 57% of Rheumatologists are U.S./Canadian Medical Graduates (USMGs) and 35% are International Medical Graduates (IMGs). In comparison, 56% of the subspecialty diplomate population is a USMG and 37% is an IMG. Among physicians newly certified in Rheumatology, we observe some fluctuation over time, with an overall trend of a decrease in USMGs from the start to the end of the last two decades. Additionally, there is an increase in U.S. osteopathic doctors (DOs) in this period. As a comparison, in 2025, ABIM subspecialists overall had the following breakdown: roughly 47% USMGs, 41% IMGs, and 12% DOs.

Diplomate Population



*There are 193 physicians with other or unknown medical school type.

Newly Certified Physicians

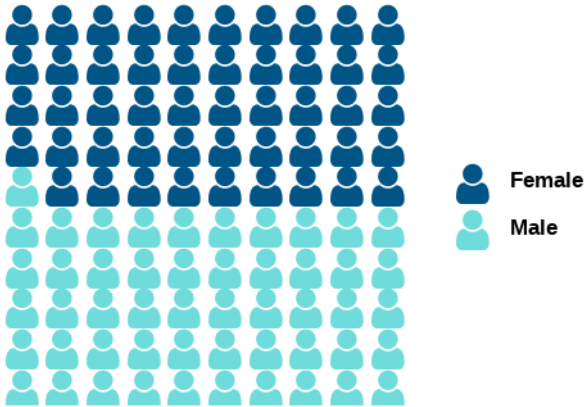


What is the Sex/Gender Composition of the Diplomate Population?

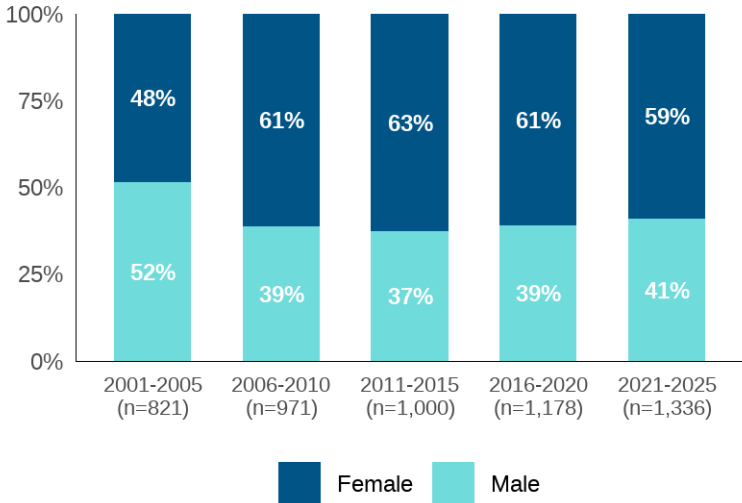
In the Rheumatology diplomate population, 51% of Rheumatologists are male. In comparison, 69% of the subspecialty diplomate population is male. Over time, we observed an increase in the proportion of female Rheumatologists, although there is some fluctuation. For comparison, the proportion of all female ABIM subspecialists in 2025 was 40%.

Beginning in 2023, ABIM has expanded our gender data collection and will begin reporting more comprehensive data in the future.

Diplomate Population



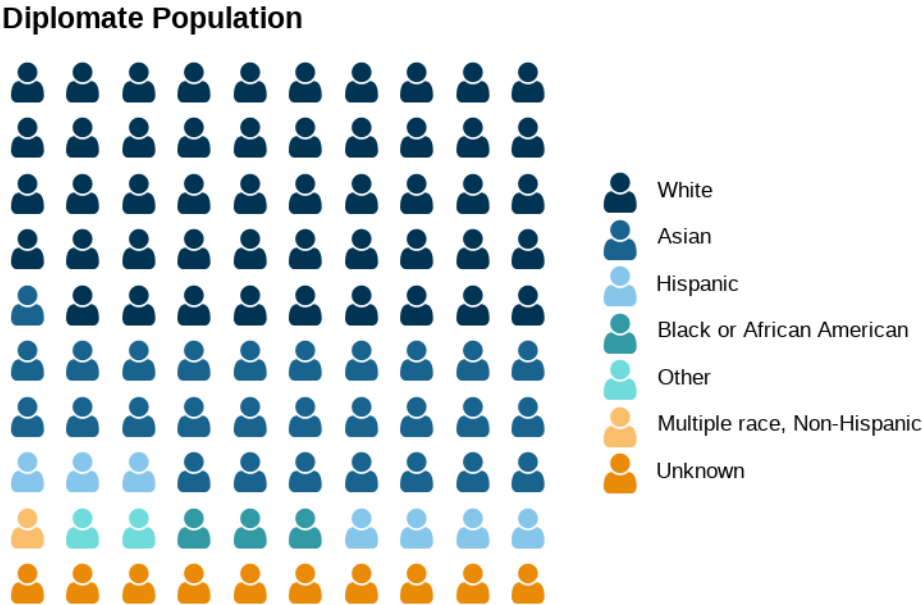
Newly Certified Physicians



What is the Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Diplomate Population?

In an examination of a physician’s race/ethnicity in the Rheumatology diplomate population, 49% of Rheumatologists are White, 28% are Asian, 7% are Hispanic (alone or with any race), 3% are Black/African American, and the remaining are multiple race Non-Hispanic, Other, and Unknown. The “Other” category includes American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Other. A designation of “unknown” signifies we are missing race/ethnicity data for that individual. We have expanded our data collection to include physician heritage and will report this in the future.

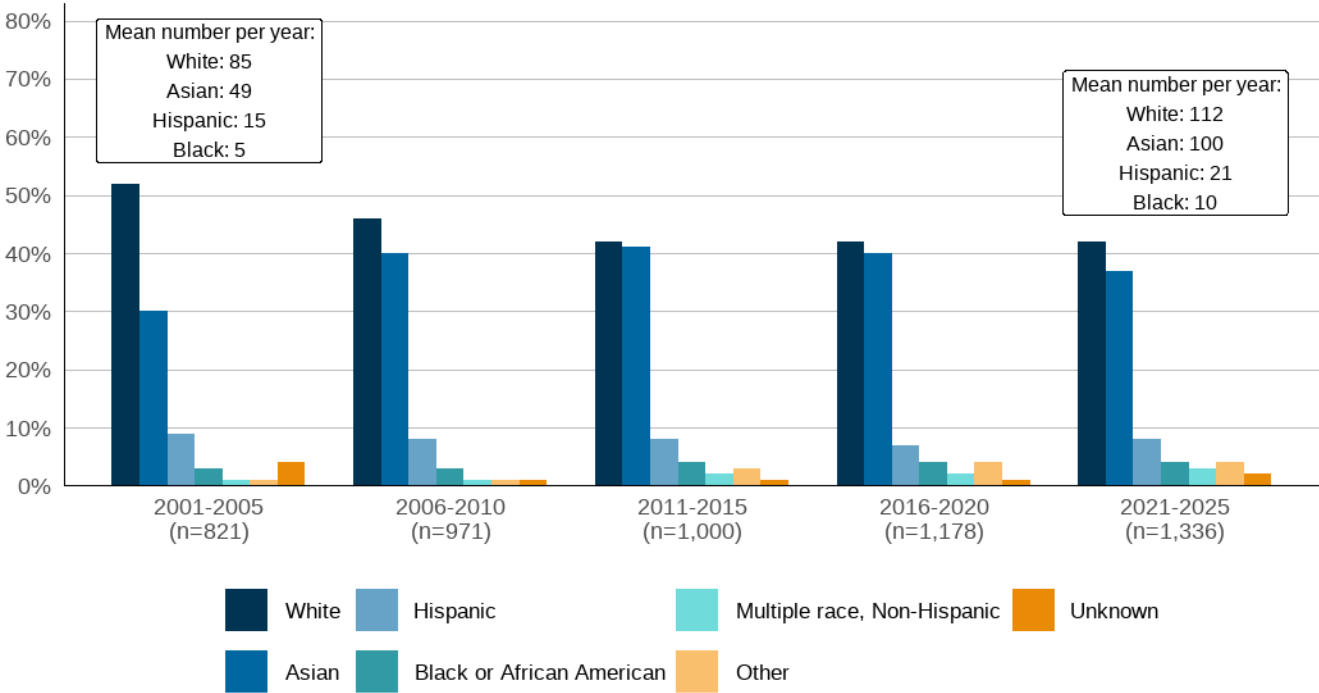
In comparison, 48% of the subspecialty diplomate population is White, 29% is Asian, 6% is Hispanic (alone or with any race), 4% is Black/African American, and the rest are multiple race Non-Hispanic, Other, and Unknown.





How Has the Composition of Newly Certified Diplomate Race/Ethnicity Changed Over Time?

At the beginning of the past two decades, among newly certified physicians, White diplomates were the largest group at 52%. However, by the end of the period, White physicians make up 42%, while Asian physicians make up 37%. Additionally, we saw a slight decrease in the proportion of Hispanic (alone or with any race) and a small uptick in the proportion of Black or African American Rheumatologists.



Mean number per year:
 White: 85
 Asian: 49
 Hispanic: 15
 Black: 5

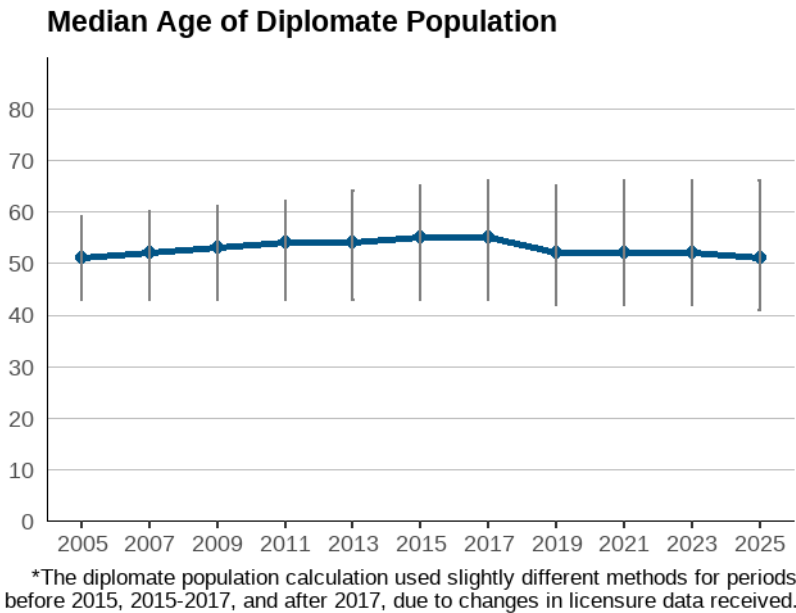
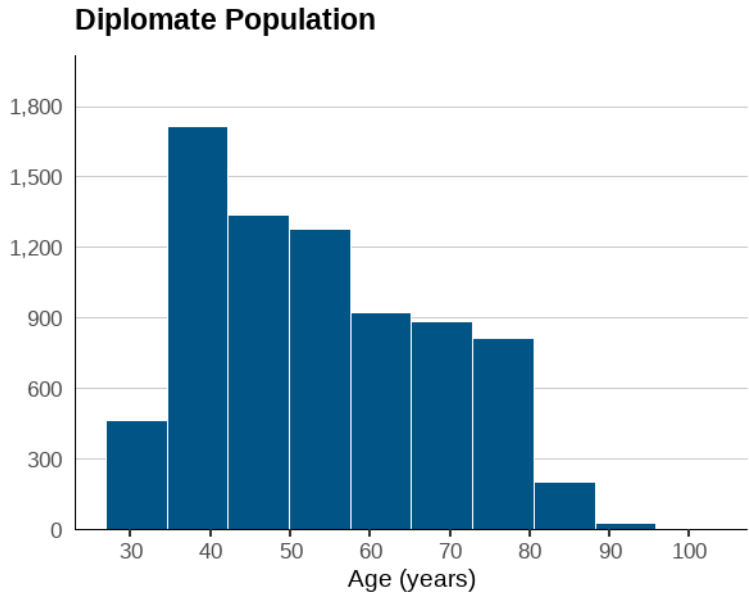
Mean number per year:
 White: 112
 Asian: 100
 Hispanic: 21
 Black: 10

- White
- Hispanic
- Multiple race, Non-Hispanic
- Unknown
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Other

* "Other" = American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Other.

What is the Age Composition of the Diplomate Population?

The graph on the left displays the age breakdown of the current Rheumatology diplomate population, while the plot on the right depicts the median age of the diplomate population over time, with interquartile ranges. The median age increased slightly in the 2000s but has remained stable over the last decade.



Diplomate Assessments

This section of the report highlights initial certification exam taker and pass rate trends over time, assessment options for MOC, and a breakdown of how diplomates met the assessment requirement in 2025. The purpose of initial certification is to demonstrate a physician is ready for independent practice in the discipline. The initial Rheumatology certification exam is offered annually.

The purpose of Maintenance of Certification is to demonstrate a physician is staying current in knowledge and practice. Physicians have two options to meet their MOC assessment requirement: the traditional Longform exam or the Longitudinal Knowledge Assessment (LKA). If physicians take or enroll in one of these assessment options in their certificate's assessment due year and are successful, the due year is advanced. If they are not successful, **they do not lose their certification based on a single unsuccessful attempt**. Instead, they enter a "**grace year**", the year after their assessment was due—provided they meet the MOC points requirement. During this grace year, **they have until the end of the calendar year to pass a Longform assessment to maintain their certification**.

The traditional Longform Exam is administered in person and must be passed every 10 years. Diplomates can choose to take the Longform exam before the assessment is due. First introduced in 2022, the LKA is a continuous assessment with 30 new questions per quarter and a passing decision at the end of a 5-year cycle. Diplomates are eligible for the LKA at the assessment due year or may use the LKA as a reentry pathway to regain a lapsed certificate.

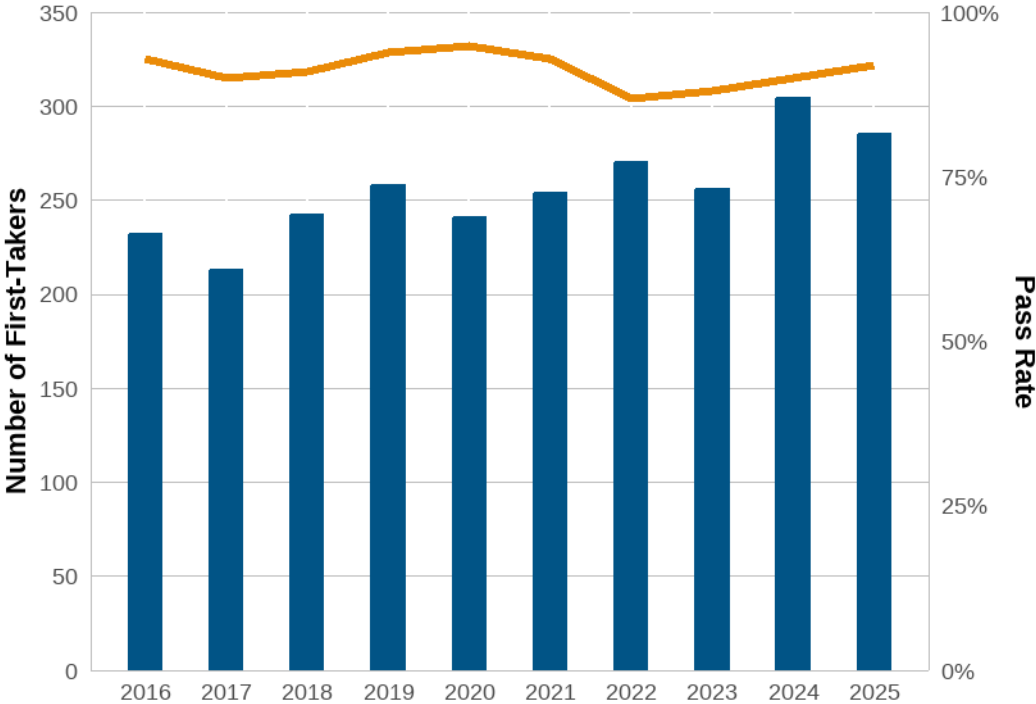
Initial Certification Examinations and Pass Rates Over Time

The plot depicts the annual number of initial Rheumatology Certification Examination first-time takers as vertical bars and the annual first-time pass rate over time as a line graph.

There has been an increase in the number of Rheumatology Certification Examination takers over time, hitting a high of 304 first-time takers in 2024. First-time taker pass rates fluctuated throughout the period and have approached the low-nineties in recent years.



After the completion of fellowship training, physicians are considered 'board eligible' for the following 7 years, meaning that they have 7 years to pass the initial certification examination. Most physicians retake the exam if they failed the first attempt. The ultimate Rheumatology Certification Examination pass rate was 100% for the cohort of physicians whose board eligibility to sit for the exam expired in 2025.

Annual Number of First-Time Takers of the ABIM Rheumatology Certification Examination with Pass Rates



Which Maintenance of Certification Assessment Option Did Diplomates Choose?

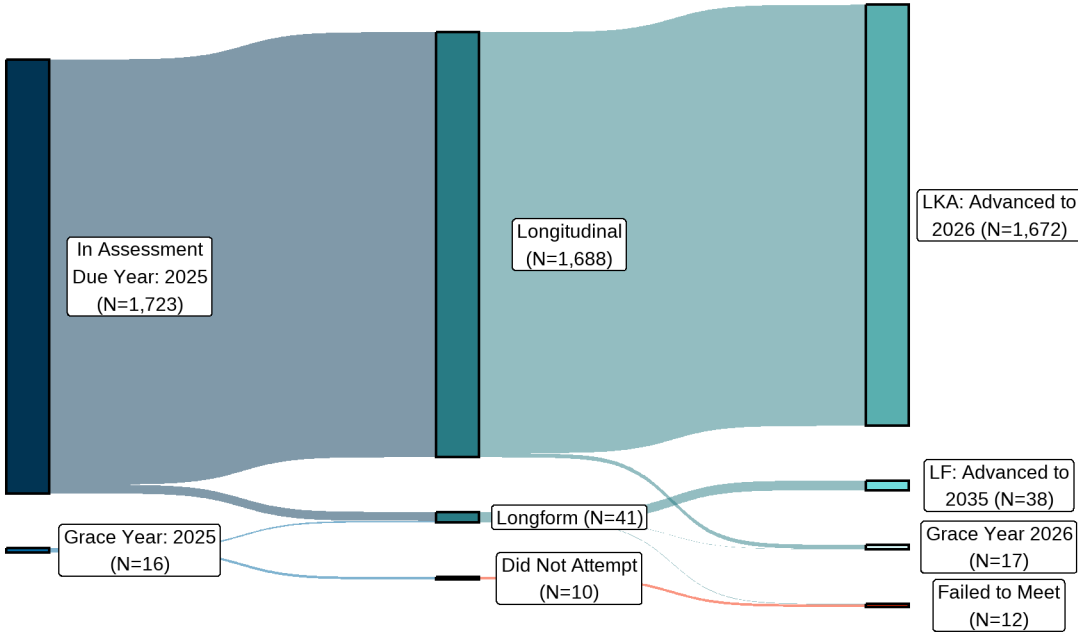
The chart on the right displays the number of physicians by MOC assessment option. It includes physicians with valid certificates as well as individuals who have let their certificates lapse. In 2025, there were 71 takers of the traditional Longform MOC Examination, and 421 newly eligible physicians were enrolled in the 2025 cohort of the LKA.

<i>Maintenance of Certification</i>	
<i>Longform</i> 	<i>LKA</i> 
71 takers	421 enrolled in the 2025 cohort 1,322 previously enrolled

What Percentage of Diplomates Met the MOC Assessment Requirement?

Diplomates had to meet an assessment requirement in 2025 if they either had an assessment due this year or they were in a grace year in 2025, due to a previous unsuccessful attempt. 99.3% of diplomates with a **valid Rheumatology certificate** have met the assessment requirement. The remaining 12 (0.7%) diplomates failed to meet the assessment requirement in 2025 and lost their certificate. 1,688 met the assessment requirement through the LKA (longitudinal) pathway, with most successfully advancing their assessment due year to 2026. 41 met the assessment requirement through the Longform exam, with most successfully advancing their assessment due year to 2035. A small percentage entered into a grace year in 2026.

Meeting Assessment Requirements: Assessment Due Year or Grace Year in 2025



Notes About Data Usage and Interpretation

- The ABIM diplomate population is defined as physicians with an active medical license excluding those who have reported themselves as retired, who are suspended from the MOC program, or who have deactivated all certificates. As a result, there could be a small number of individuals included in the diplomate population who are no longer practicing medicine.
- Our data reflects every physician who was board certified by ABIM in Internal Medicine or a subspecialty of Internal Medicine but does not include individuals in the workforce who were not board certified by ABIM.
- The data in our report may not exactly match reports by ABMS or other similar types of reports because they may have been pulled at different points in time.
- Lifetime certifications were issued prior to 1990, however there has been a requirement to maintain certification for every subsequent cohort. As a result, lifetime certification will be gradually phased out over time.
- When a new board certification is established, the initial years typically offer two pathways for admission: a practice pathway or a training (traditional) pathway. Physicians in the practice pathway must meet independent practice thresholds in lieu of a traditional training program. After the practice pathway closes, all potential applicants must meet the requirements of the training pathway.
- The U.S. map depicting physician density by state is based on the address provided to ABIM by the physician. This could represent either their home or work address.
- Race/ethnicity categories used in this report are based on the classification used by AAMC. The categories may continue to evolve over time.
- Changes in certification exam pass rates should be interpreted with caution; pass rates are subject to change over time due to adjustments in performance standards, updates to the examination blueprints, and advances in medical knowledge and practice.

The ABIM Diplomate Report was developed using data from the ABIM administrative database, which is maintained to support essential operations and deliver services to physicians pursuing ABIM certification. ABIM acknowledges the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) for providing and approving the use of race and ethnicity data on ABIM diplomates. This report has been reviewed and deemed exempt by the Advarra Institutional Review Board.

No part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without ABIM's prior written approval.

To provide feedback on the diplomate report, please go to: <http://s.alchemer.com/s3/ABIM-Diplomate-Report-Feedback>.

