

ABIM Diplomate Report: Hospice and Palliative Medicine 2026





Table of Contents

- Executive Summary 3
- Diplomate Population..... 4
 - How Many Physicians Passed the Initial HPM Certification Exam? 5
 - How Large is the ABIM Diplomate Population? 6
 - How Many ABIM Diplomates Maintain Certification? 7
 - What are Common Dual Subspecialty Certifications and How Many Diplomates Maintain IM Certification? 8
 - How Has the Number of Issued ABIM Certificates Changed Over Time? 9
 - How Has the Diplomate Population Changed Compared to the U.S. Population? 10
 - Which U.S. States Have the Highest Density of ABIM Diplomates? 11
- Diplomate Demographics 12
 - What is the Medical School Composition of the Diplomate Population? 13
 - What is the Sex/Gender Composition of the Diplomate Population? 14
 - What is the Racial/Ethnic Composition of the Diplomate Population? 15
 - How Has the Composition of Newly Certified Diplomate Race/Ethnicity Changed Over Time? 16
 - What is the Age Composition of the Diplomate Population? 17
- Diplomate Assessments..... 18
 - Initial Certification Examinations and Pass Rates Over Time 19
 - Which Maintenance of Certification Assessment Option Did Diplomates Choose? 20
 - What Percentage of Diplomates Met the MOC Assessment Requirement? 21

Executive Summary

The American Board of Internal Medicine's 2026 Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM) 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 HPM 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.

- 56.8% of physicians who passed the HPM exam in 2025 were certified by ABIM.
- The number of physicians in the HPM diplomate population grew in 2026. There were fewer newly certified Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists than in the previous year.
- In the last two decades, we observed an increase in the HPM diplomate population per 100,000 U.S. population. The density of the HPM 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 Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists.
- There has been an increase in the number of HPM certification assessment takers over time. A majority of newly eligible diplomates have chosen the Longitudinal Knowledge Assessment to meet the MOC assessment requirement.

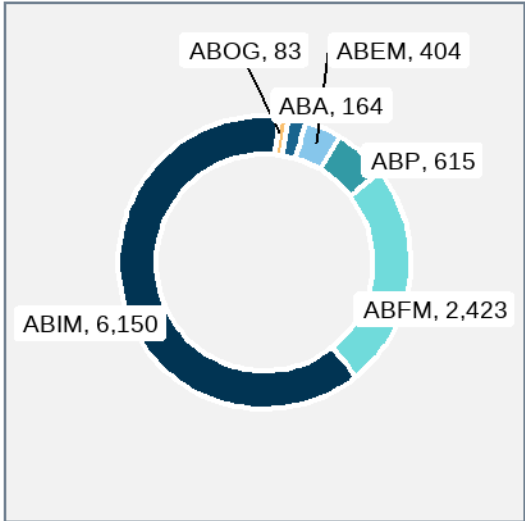
Diplomate Population

The report primarily focuses on ABIM diplomates, as we have limited data on diplomates of other boards; unless otherwise stated, the data being depicted reflects ABIM diplomates only. However, the first section of the report begins with an overview of all physicians who passed the initial Hospice and Palliative Medicine certification exam, including diplomates of ABIM and other member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). The rest of this section highlights the current state of ABIM diplomates who received initial certification in Hospice and Palliative Medicine, with additional analysis on trends over time and a comparison to the U.S. population. The ABIM HPM diplomate population is defined as physicians with an active medical license who received initial certification in HPM, 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.

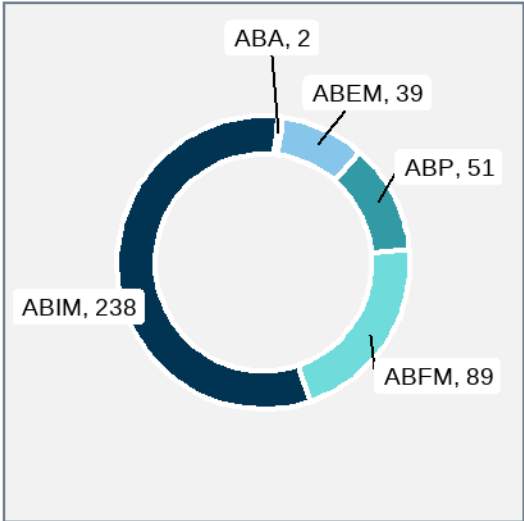
How Many Physicians Passed the Initial HPM Certification Exam?

ABIM co-sponsors the Hospice and Palliative Medicine certification exam with other member boards of the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS). ABIM administers the exam and physicians from other co-sponsoring boards hold a certificate with their respective member board. The plot on the left depicts the breakdown of physicians who ever passed the initial HPM certification exam (i.e., a proxy for ever-certified physicians) by co-sponsoring board (N=9,839): 62.5% from ABIM, 24.6% from the American Board of Family Medicine (ABFM), 6.3% from the American Board of Pediatrics (ABP), 4.1% from the American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM), 1.7% from the American Board of Anesthesiology (ABA), and 0.8% from the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ABOG). The plot on the right displays physicians who passed the certification exam in 2025 (i.e., a proxy for newly certified physicians) by co-sponsoring board (N=419).

Ever Certified in HPM






Newly Certified in HPM



How Large is the ABIM Diplomate Population?

The table to the right highlights the current state of physicians who received initial certification in Hospice and Palliative Medicine. Compared to the previous year, there was an increase in the number of Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists in the diplomate population and a rise in the number of Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists with a valid HPM certificate. Additionally, there was a decrease in the number of newly certified Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists from the previous year, which is due to the fact that the exam used to be offered every other year but became an annual exam in 2025.

ABIM Diplomates

 HPM diplomates	<i>+/- from previous year</i>
6,152	+ 2.3%
 Diplomates with valid HPM certificate	<i>+/- from previous year</i>
4,885	+ 5.4%
 Newly certified in 2025	<i>+/- from previous year</i>
238	-46.0%

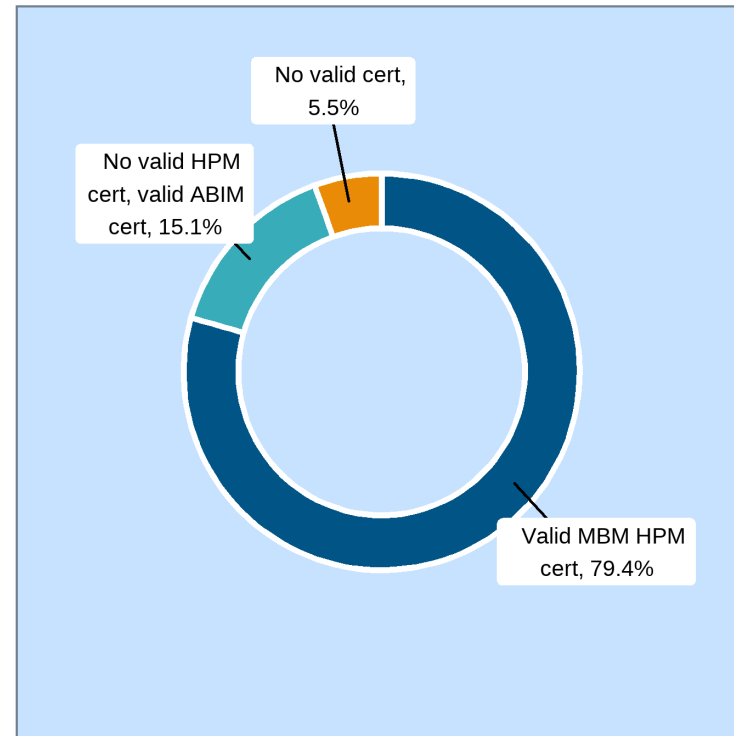
How Many ABIM Diplomates Maintain Certification?

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

In the HPM diplomate population, 79.4% of physicians hold a valid Must-Be-Maintained (MBM) HPM certificate. There was an additional 15.1% who were once certified in HPM but do not currently hold a valid HPM certificate, however they do hold some other kind of valid ABIM certificate. The remaining 5.5% of the HPM diplomate population do not hold any valid ABIM certificate.

Therefore, 20.6% of diplomates certified in HPM no longer hold an HPM certificate; for comparison, across all subspecialty certificates, 15% were no longer valid.

Hospice and Palliative Medicine Certification Status (N=6,152)

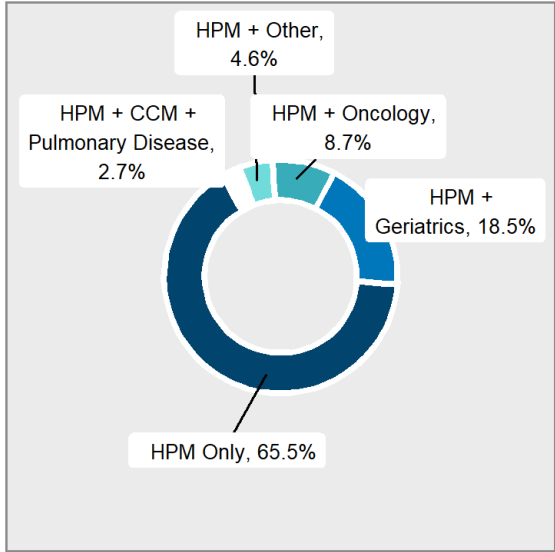


What are Common Dual Subspecialty Certifications and How Many Diplomates Maintain IM Certification?

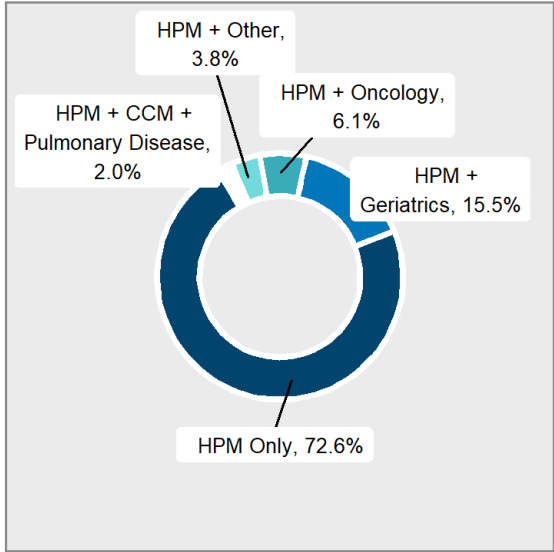
Many Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists pursued initial subspecialty certification in other disciplines and many choose to maintain their underlying Internal Medicine (IM) certification. The graph on the left displays the breakdown of initial subspecialty certificate combinations among individuals who received initial Hospice and Palliative Medicine certification. The graph in the middle shows the population with valid subspecialty certificates. The graph on the right presents diplomates with valid HPM certification who also maintain IM certification (cert). 2,125 physicians with initial HPM certification also received initial certification in another subspecialty. Among physicians with valid HPM certification, 1,338 also have another valid subspecialty certificate, and 3,923 maintain a valid IM certificate.

Hospice and Palliative Medicine Certificate Combinations (Initial Certification, N=6,152; Valid Certificates, N=4,885)

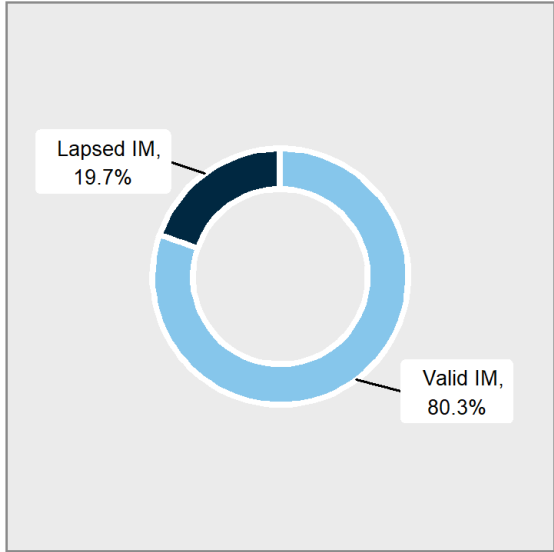
Initial HPM Certification



Valid HPM Certification



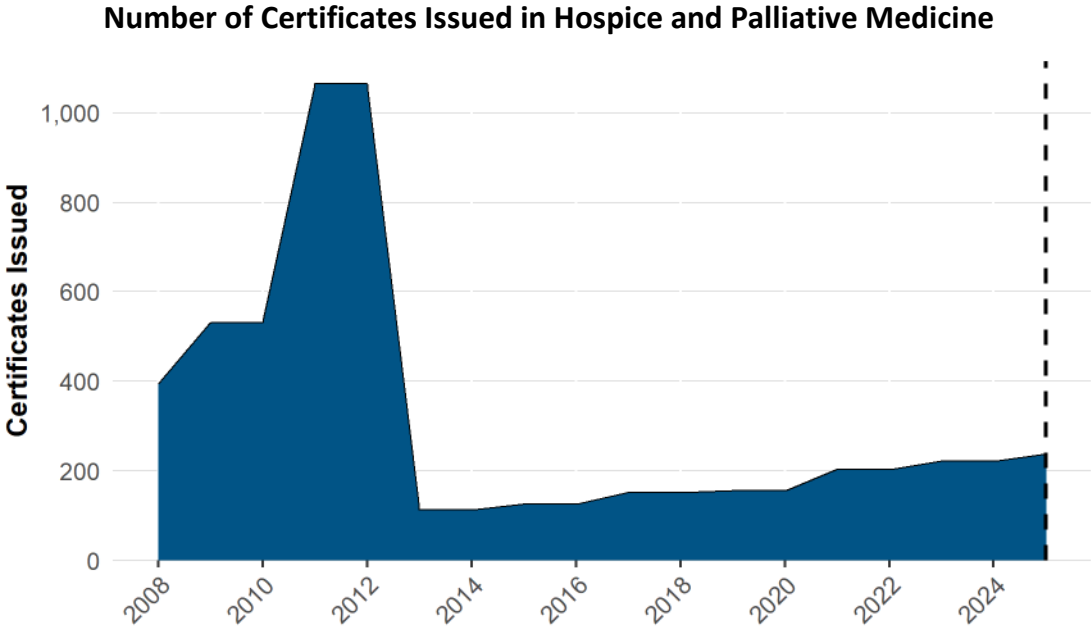
Valid HPM by IM Cert Status



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

Hospice and Palliative Medicine certificates were first issued in 2008, with a certification exam that was initially offered every other year. As of 2025, the exam is offered annually. The plot presents the number of ABIM candidates certified in HPM by year of initial certification since 2008.

A Practice Pathway for admission to the HPM Certification Examination was available in 2008, 2010, and 2012, so we see a higher number of certificates issued in those years.



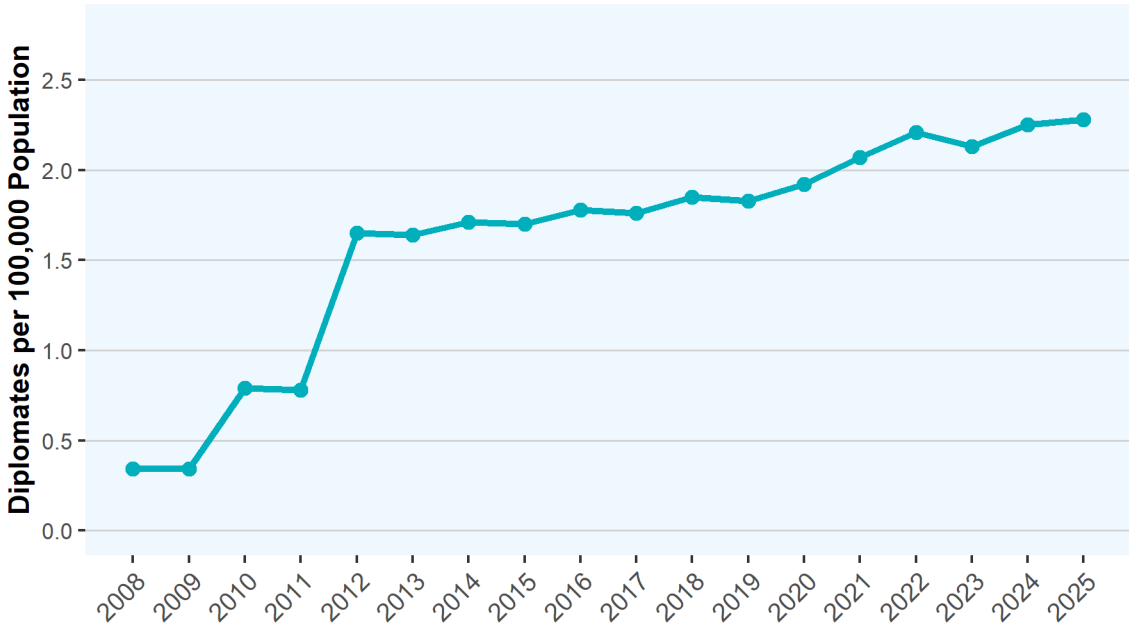
*The dotted vertical line indicates the year the certification exam was first offered annually; prior to this year, the exam was offered every other year. In the figure, the number of certificates issued to the left of the line are calculated as an average over 2 years, allowing for direct comparison 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 Hospice and Palliative Medicine diplomate population per 100,000 U.S. population 18 years or older. In 2008, there were 0.3 diplomates per 100,000 U.S. population 18 years or older. Since then, we have observed a steady increase in the Hospice and Palliative Medicine diplomate population.

Hospice and Palliative Medicine Diplomate Population per 100,000 U.S. Population

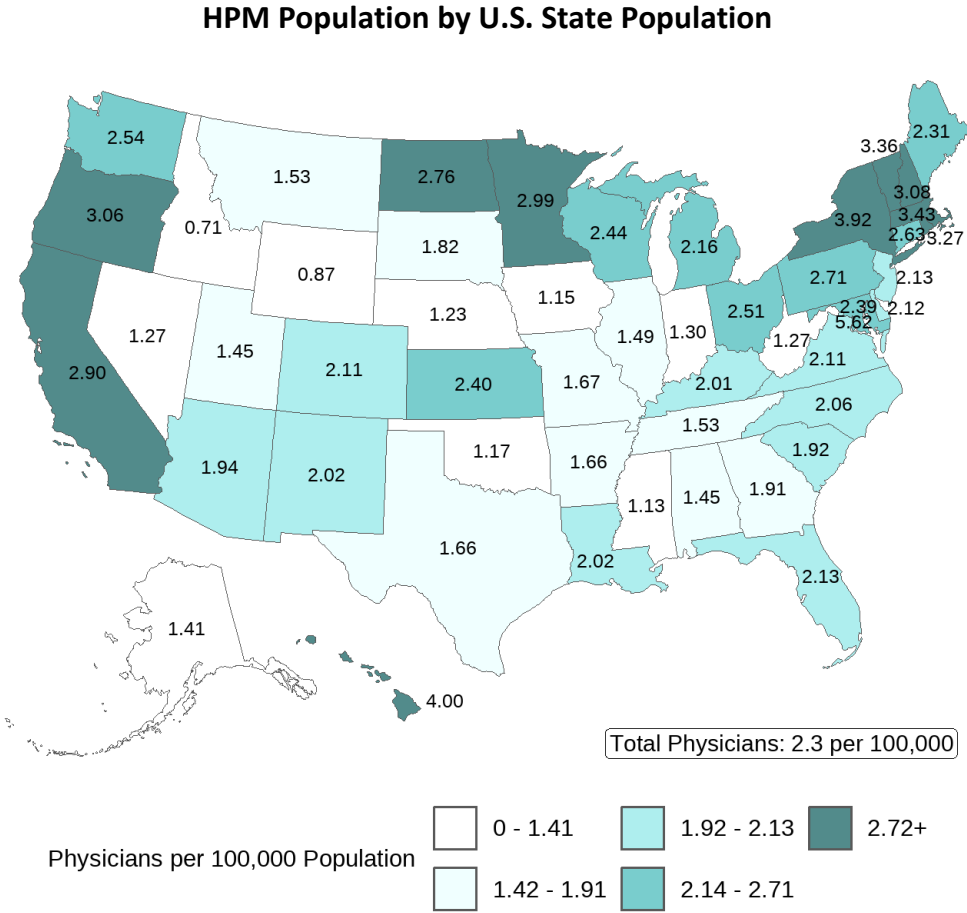


*The Current diplomate calculation used slightly different methods for periods before 2015, 2015-2017, and after 2017. The dip in 2018 is due to the exclusion of physicians who no longer maintained an active medical license.

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

The map depicts the population of Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists 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 Idaho and Wyoming, have the lowest density of physicians per population, while darker states, like Hawaii and New York, have the highest density.



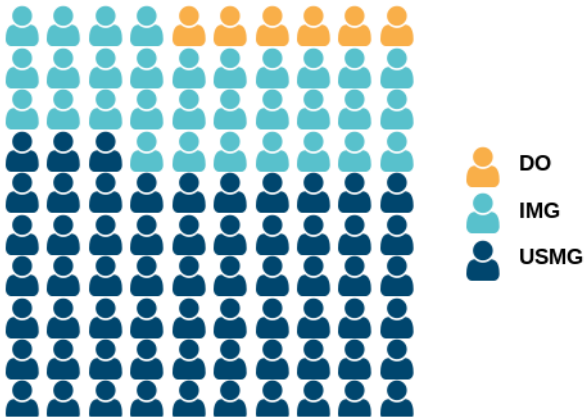
Diplomate Demographics

The infographics and plots in this section of the report display the breakdown of demographic characteristics in the current HPM diplomate population as well as demographic trends over time in physicians who are newly certified in Hospice and Palliative Medicine. 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?

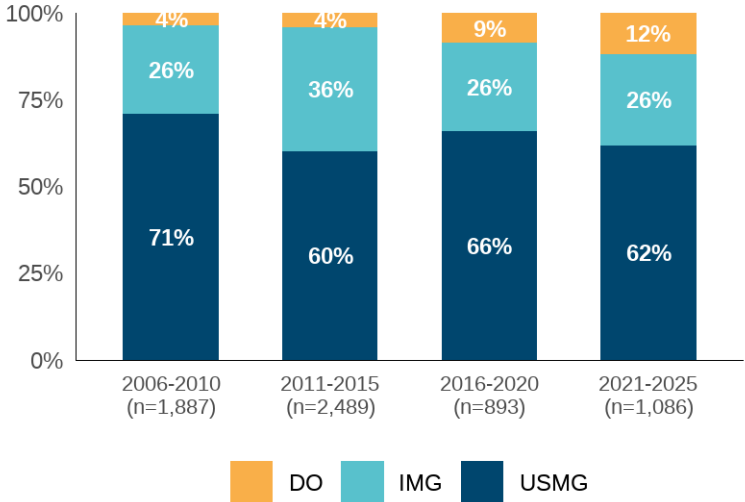
In the HPM diplomate population, 63% of Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists are U.S./Canadian Medical Graduates (USMGs) and 31% are International Medical Graduates (IMGs). In comparison, 56% of the subspecialty diplomate population is a USMG and 37% is an IMG. Among physicians newly certified in HPM, 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 213 physicians with other or unknown medical school type.

Newly Certified Physicians

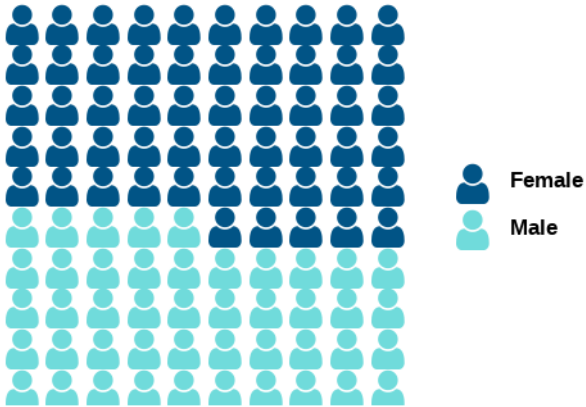


What is the Sex/Gender Composition of the Diplomate Population?

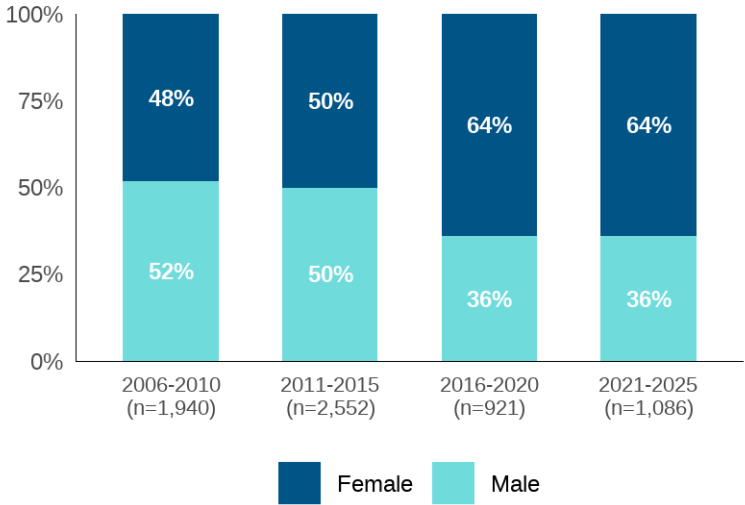
In the HPM diplomate population, 45% of Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists are male. In comparison, 69% of the subspecialty diplomate population is male. Over time, we observed an increase in the proportion of female Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists. For comparison, the proportion 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



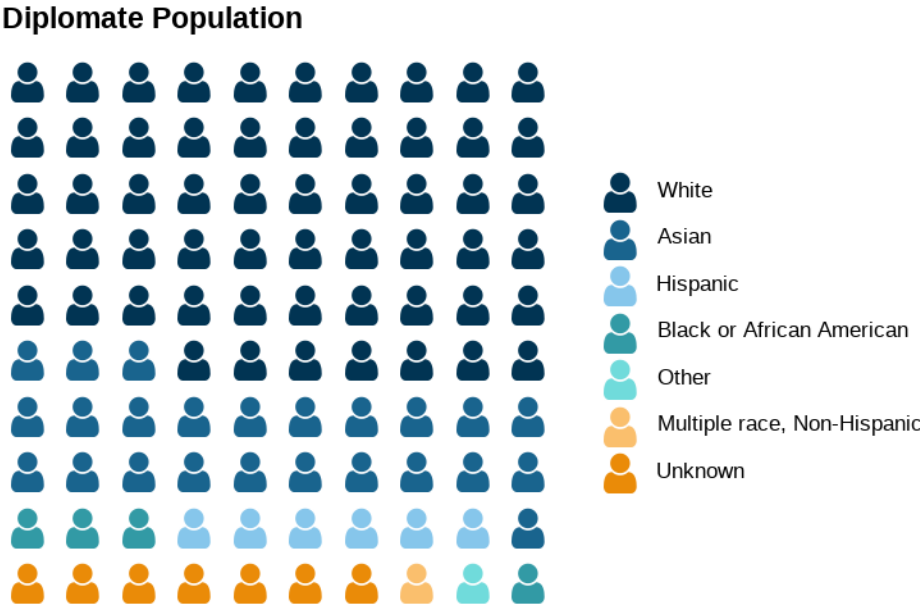
Newly Certified Physicians



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

In an examination of a physician’s race/ethnicity in the HPM diplomate population, 57% of Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists are White, 24% are Asian, 6% are Hispanic (alone or with any race), 4% 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.

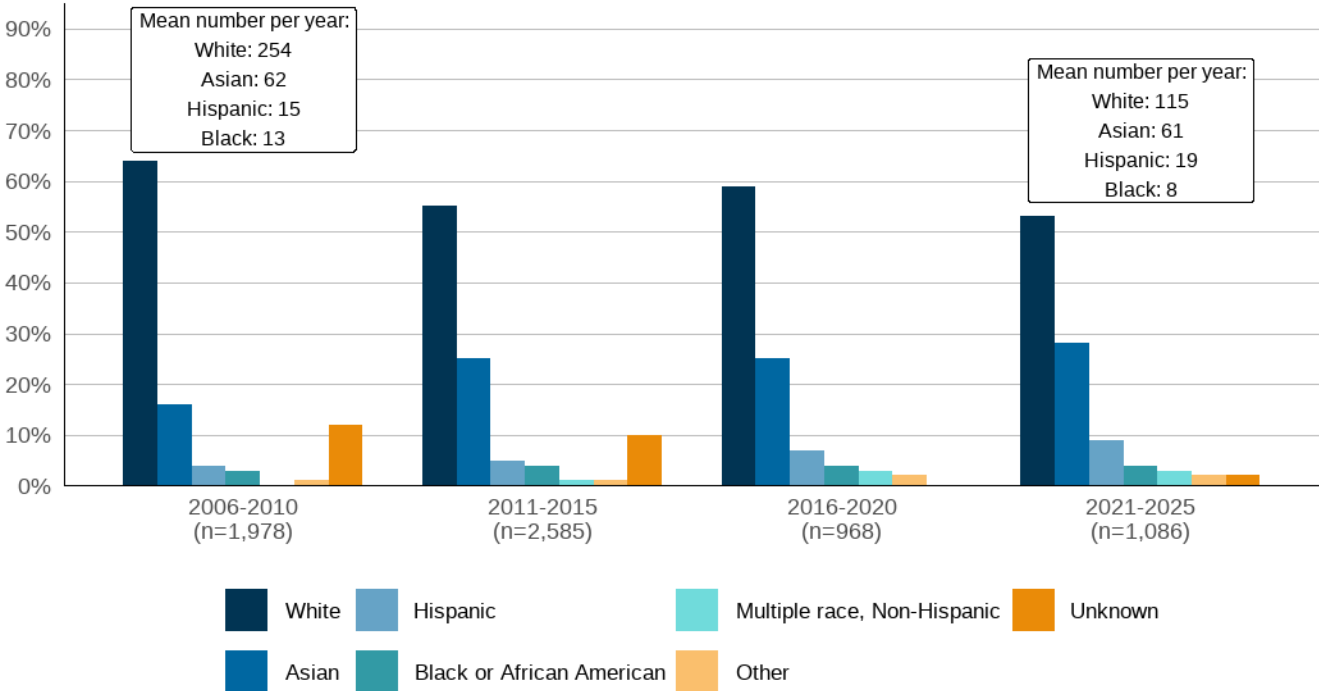
In comparison, 48% of the subspecialty diplomate population is White, 29% is Asian, 6% is Hispanic (alone or with any race), 4% is Black/African American, and the rest are multiple race Non-Hispanic, Other, and Unknown.





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 64%. However, by the end of the period, White physicians make up 53%, while Asian physicians make up 28%. Additionally, we saw an increase in the proportion of Hispanic (alone or with any race) and an uptick in the proportion of Black or African American Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists.



Mean number per year:
 White: 254
 Asian: 62
 Hispanic: 15
 Black: 13

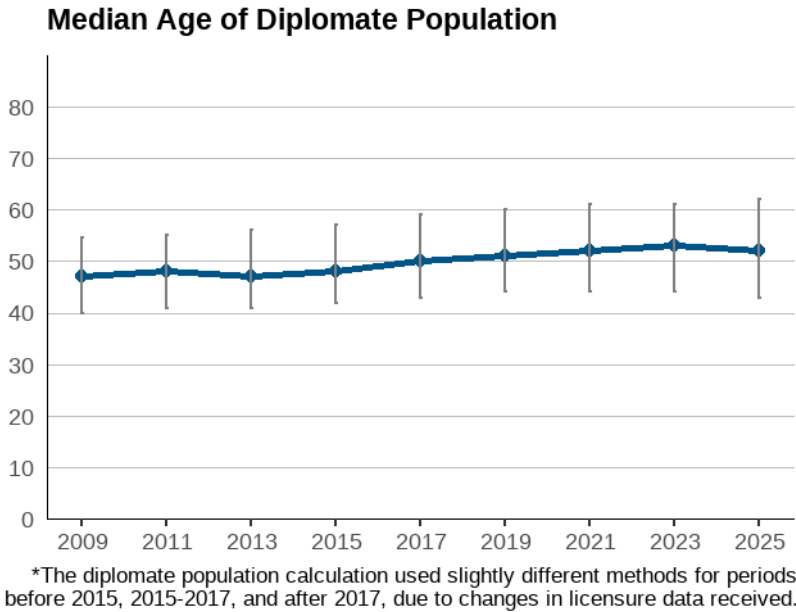
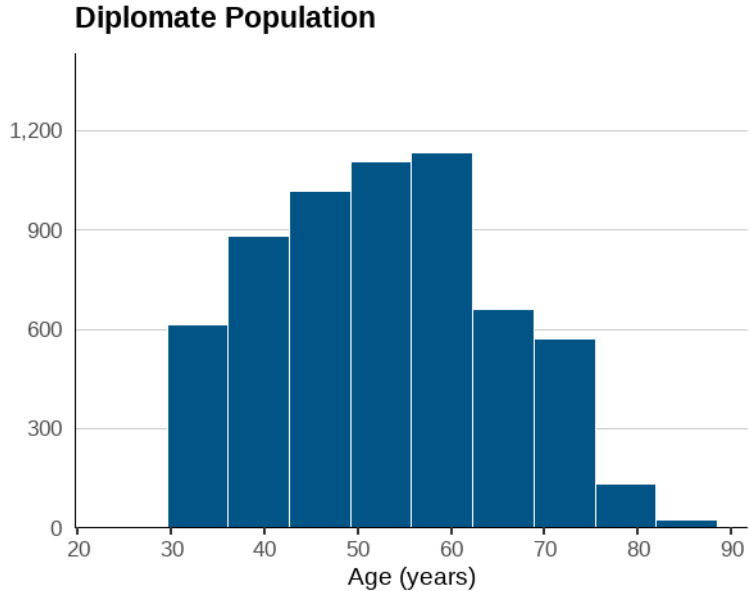
Mean number per year:
 White: 115
 Asian: 61
 Hispanic: 19
 Black: 8

- 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 HPM 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 over time. This increase is due to the aging of practice pathway physicians, who currently account for a large portion of Hospice and Palliative Medicine specialists; the size of newly certified cohorts is not large enough to lower the median age.



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 HPM certification exam was offered every other year, on even years. As of 2025, it is now 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.



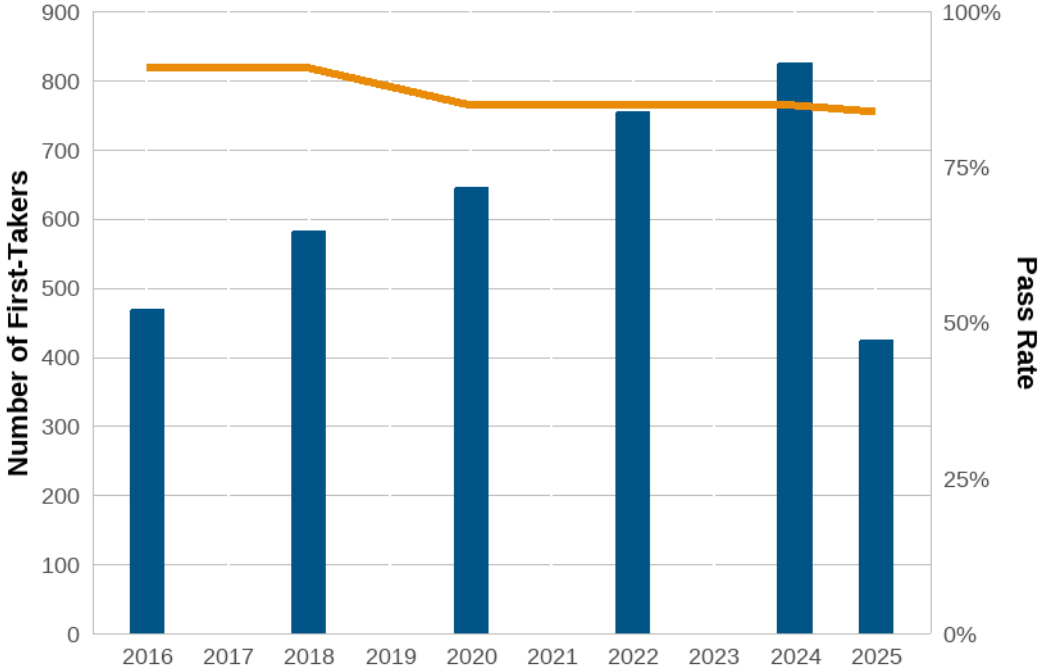
Initial Certification Examinations and Pass Rates Over Time

The plot depicts the annual number of initial HPM 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 HPM Certification Examination takers over time, hitting a high of 823 first-time takers in 2024. First-time taker pass rates decreased throughout the period and have approached the mid-eighties 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 HPM Certification Examination pass rate was 98% 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 Hospice and Palliative Medicine Certification Examination with Pass Rates



*The plot includes ABIM and co-sponsoring board candidates.

Which Maintenance of Certification Assessment Option Did Diplomates Choose?

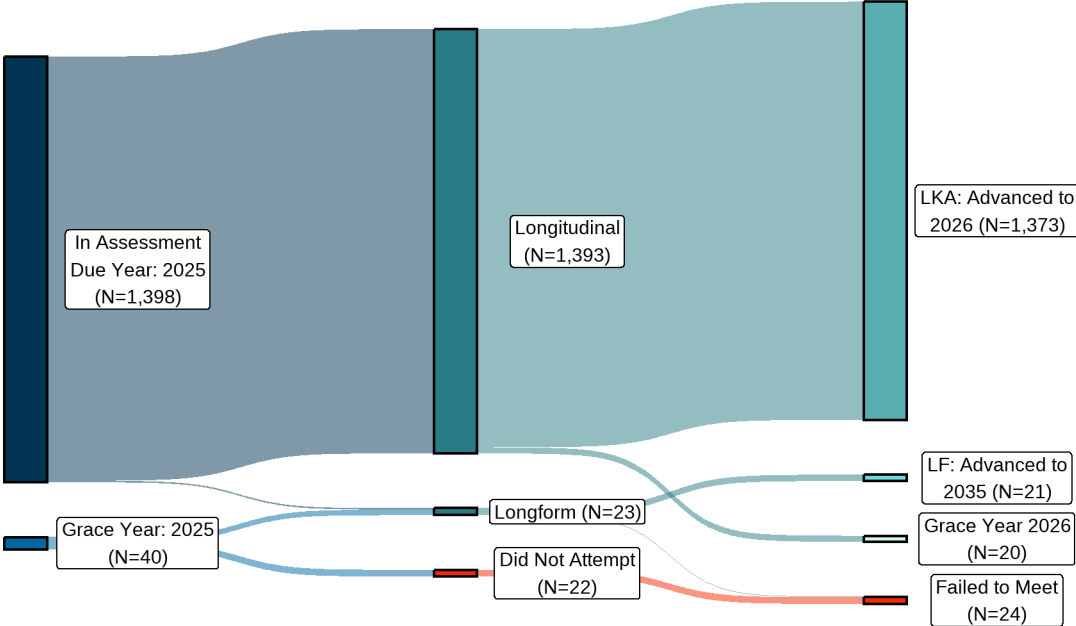
The chart on the right displays the number of physicians by MOC assessment option. It includes physicians with valid certificates as well as individuals who have let their certificates lapse. In 2025, there were 75 takers of the traditional Longform MOC Examination, and 116 newly eligible physicians were enrolled in the 2025 cohort of the LKA.

<i>Maintenance of Certification</i>	
<i>Longform</i> 	<i>LKA</i> 
75 takers	116 enrolled in the 2025 cohort 2,103 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. 98.3% of diplomates with a **valid Hospice and Palliative Medicine certificate** have met the assessment requirement. The remaining 24 (1.7%) diplomates failed to meet the assessment requirement in 2025 and lost their certificate. 1,393 met the assessment requirement through the LKA (longitudinal) pathway, with most successfully advancing their assessment due year to 2026. 23 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 Diplomat 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.

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