



# A Seat at the Table:

## How Cosmetic Surgery Fits Within the Landscape of Postgraduate Surgical Training

### Background

Cosmetic Surgery is an independent surgical subspecialty that is gaining increased visibility within the modern landscape of postgraduate surgical training, yet its relative competitiveness within surgical education remains underexamined. For most general surgery trainees, fellowship occurs through ACGME- or NRMP-based matches. However, these structures do not encompass all disciplines, and historically independent tracks such as Cosmetic Surgery have had limited visibility in traditional match and training analyses.

### Disclosures

I have no disclosures.

### Purpose

This study provides a snapshot of cosmetic surgery fellowship demand based on applicant volume, match rates, and relative competitiveness in comparison to other major surgical fellowships. The objective is to clarify where cosmetic surgery training exists within the broader landscape of postgraduate surgical education.

### Methods

A retrospective comparative analysis of publicly available fellowship match data was conducted using information from the NRMP, Fellowship Council, and specialty-specific sources including the AACS, American Society of Transplant Surgeons (ASTS), American Association of Endocrine Surgeons (AAES), and the Society of Surgical Oncology (SSO) in collaboration with National Matching Services (NMS). Applicant volume, match rates, and number of applicants per position were evaluated across multiple surgical fellowships. Cosmetic Surgery data was further examined across its two certified training tracks, facial and general (body), and discussed in aggregate, following precedent set by other multi-track fellowships.

### Figures and Results

Table 1. Match Data for non-ACGME Surgical Fellowships, by Appointment Year

Fellowship Specialty	Appointment Year	Programs	Positions	Applicants	Match Rate	Applicants per Position
Facial Cosmetic Surgery <sup>1</sup>	2024	6	6	11	54.5%	1.83
General Cosmetic Surgery <sup>1</sup>	2024	24	27	26	69.2%	0.96
Endocrine Surgery <sup>2,3</sup>	2021	25	27	37	73%	1.37
Abdominal Transplant Surgery <sup>4</sup>	2025	64	91	101	81.2%	1.11
MIS & GI Surgery <sup>5</sup>	2024	154	200	322	61.5%	1.61
Breast Surgical Oncology <sup>6</sup>	2025	64	89	113	78.8%	1.27

For endocrine surgery, applicant volume was drawn from a peer-reviewed study of the 2020 match cycle, while certified programs and match outcomes were verified using the AAES-published match list for that same year <sup>3</sup>.

Cosmetic Surgery fellowships offered 33 positions across 30 programs. Within its individual tracks, Facial Cosmetic Surgery and General Cosmetic Surgery had match rates of **54.5%** and **69%** respectively. Across all surgical fellowships analyzed, applicant-to-position ratios ranged from 0.87 to 1.83, with facial cosmetic surgery representing the most applicant-dense track. Match rates across specialties ranged from 54.5% to nearly 100%. Overall, cosmetic surgery fellowships had **1.12 applicants per position** and a weighted aggregate match rate of **65.3%**.

Figure 1. Match Rate by Surgical Fellowship

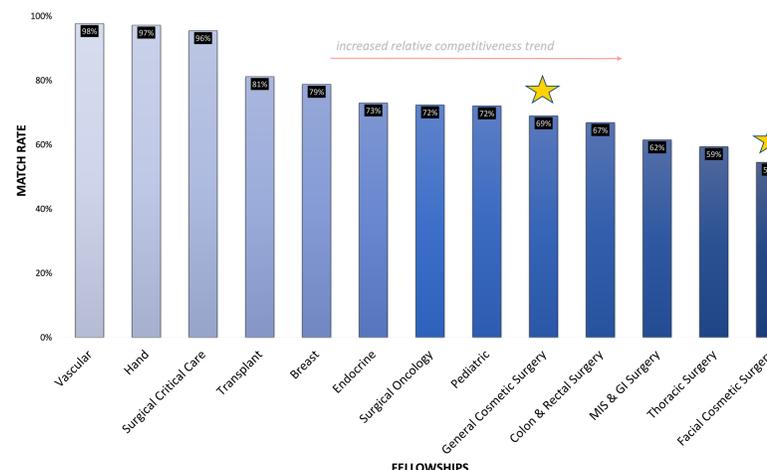


Figure 1. Match rate by surgical fellowship specialty based on the most recent, publicly available data from certifying boards, match programs (e.g., NRMP, SF Match), and specialty-specific societies. Only specialties meeting inclusion criteria for data completeness and verification were included and all match rates were rounded to the nearest whole number for clarity and consistency.

### Conclusion

Applicant demand and match outcomes for cosmetic surgery fall within the competitive range across observed surgical fellowships. By centralizing data fragmented across a myriad of general surgical fellowships, this study underscores cosmetic surgery's relevance and offers a clear framework for its recognition within the modern surgical landscape.

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