

Recruitment to Rural Residency Programs: Match Rates and Best Practices

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Background

- Many rural residency programs, defined as programs in which residents spend >50% of their time training in a rural location, including integrated rural training tracks (IRTTs) and other rurally located programs, struggle to recruit residents.
- Publicly available match rates in the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) may be seen as a marker of program desirability and program outcomes by accrediting agencies and by prospective students and their faculty advisors.
- No comprehensive studies of NRMP match rates and their correlation with program outcomes have been conducted in the past two decades.

Study goals

Document patterns in NRMP match rates for rural residency programs from 1996 to 2020.

Compare rural residency match rates with program outcomes for a 3-year period (2013-2015).

Explore successful recruitment strategies among rural residency programs.

Initial Results

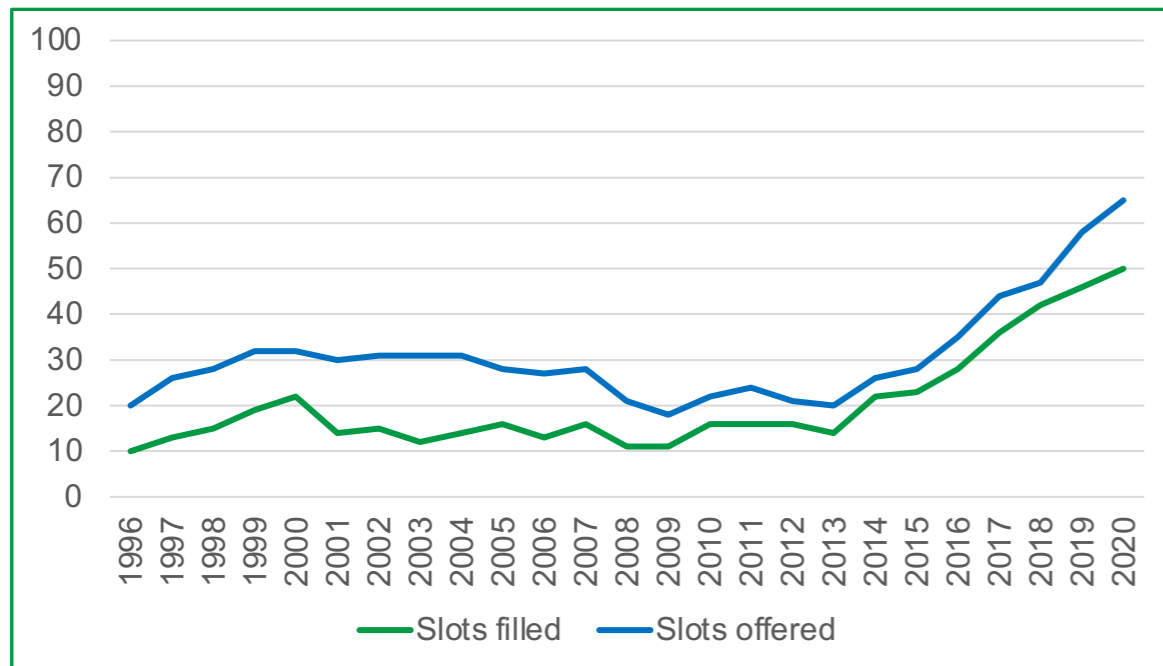
- The number of rural residency programs has increased over the 25-year period:
 - 1996:** 13 IRTTs, 14 rurally located programs, and 454 urban (481 total)
 - 2020:** 32 IRTTs, 65 rurally located programs, and 616 urban (713 total)
- So have the number of positions offered in the main match:
 - 1996:** 20 positions in IRTTs, 84 rurally located, 3053 urban (3157 total)
 - 2020:** 65 positions in IRTTs, 345 rurally located, 4252 urban (4662 total)

Initial Results

- This growth has been most impacted in the last 5 years by the transition to a single accreditation system (and the influx of both AOA programs and student applicants).
- Rural programs offered an average of 3.4 positions in the match (vs. 5.6 in urban programs).
- The fill rate for rural programs (both IRTTs and rurally located programs) has generally improved relative to urban over 25 years.

Total positions offered and filled in Main Match, 1996-2020

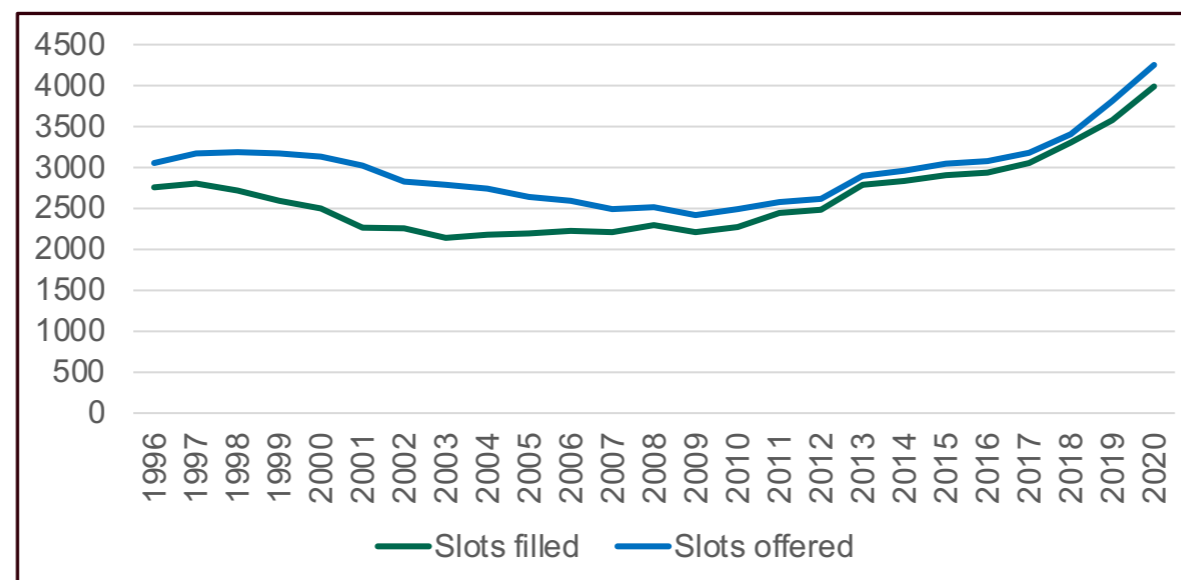
IRTTs



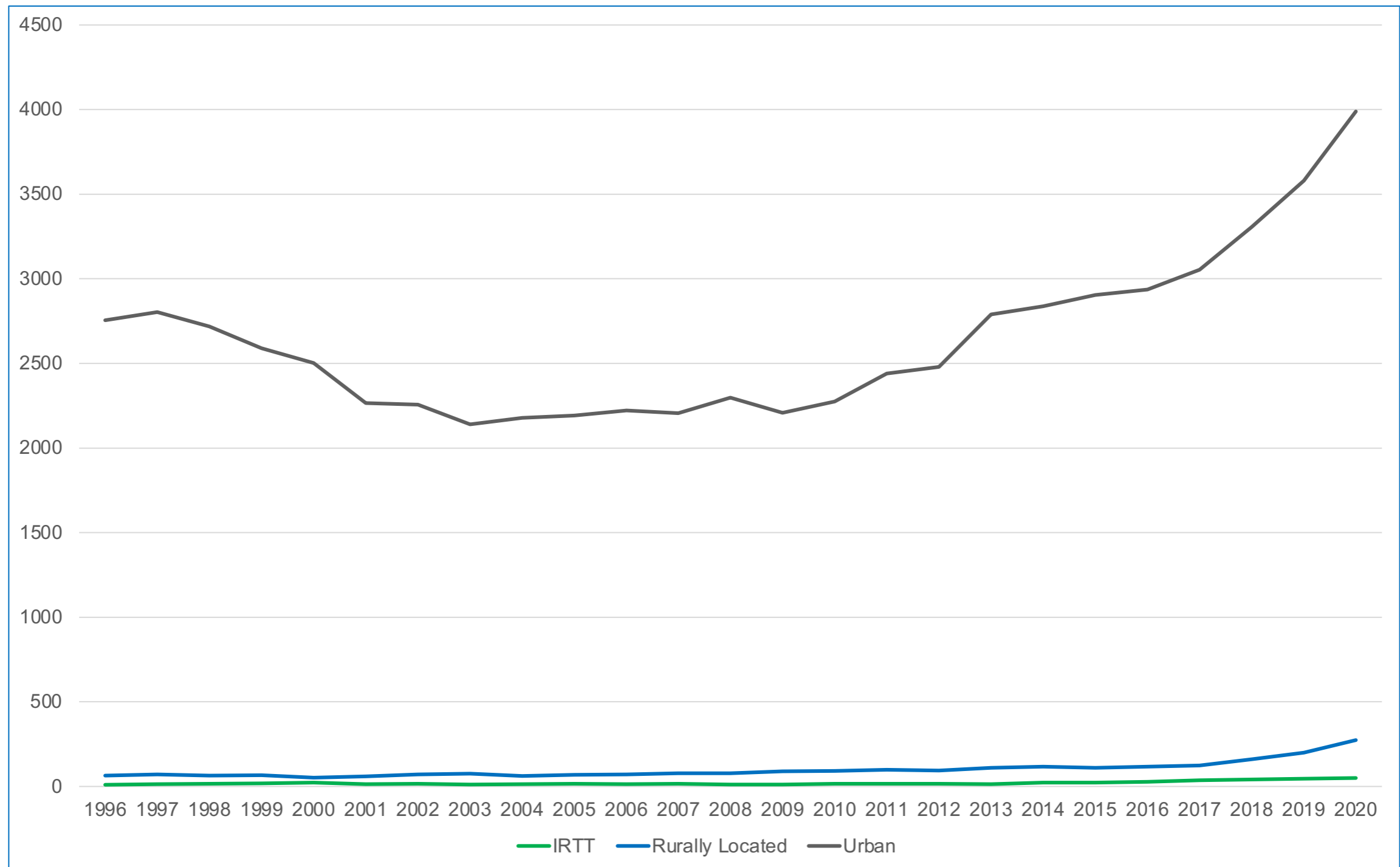
Rurally located



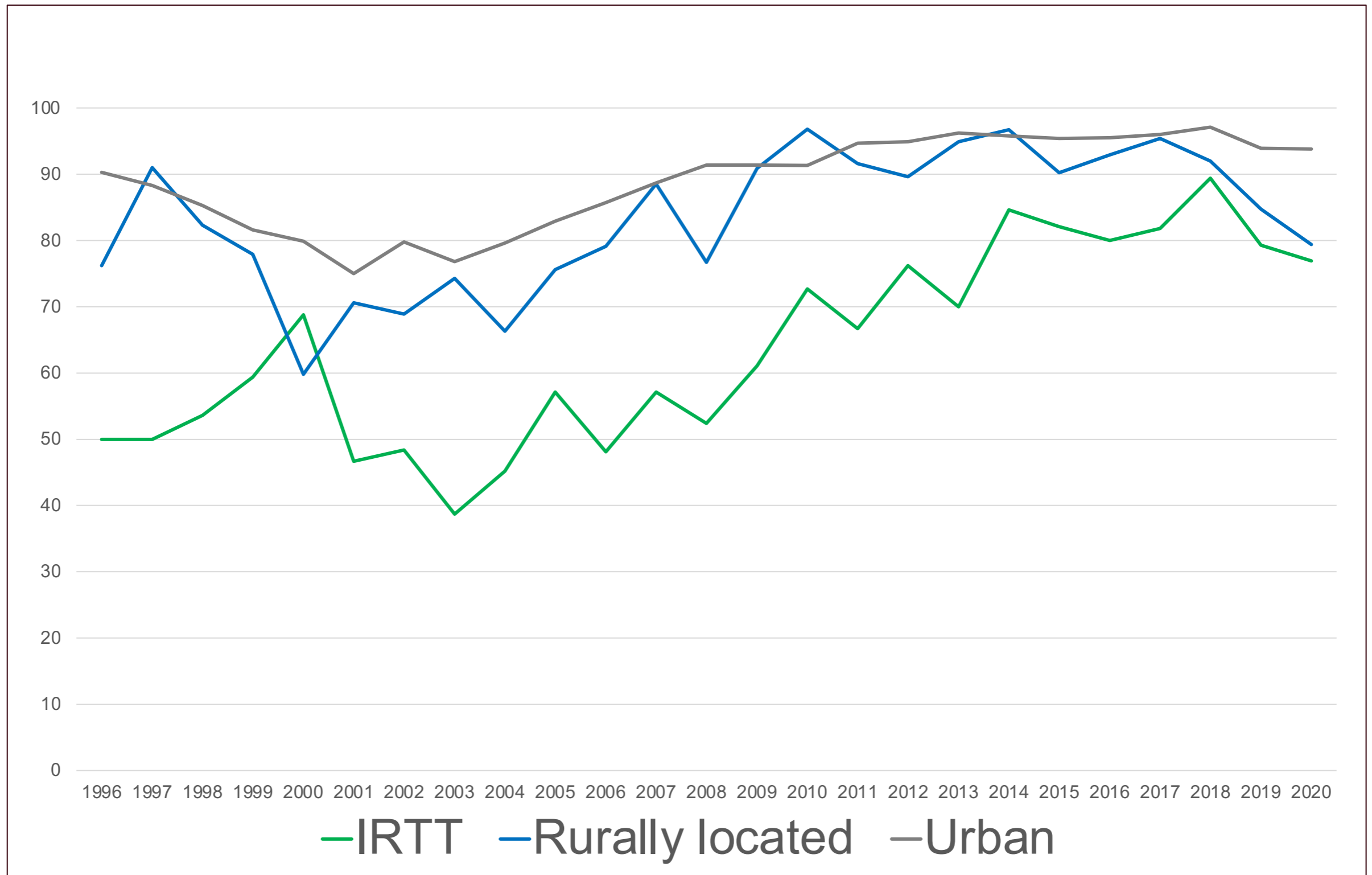
Urban



Total positions filled in Main Match, 1996-2020



Rural v. urban residency slots filled in Main Match, 1996-2020 (%)



Interviews with residency coordinators

Program characteristics: Between 2018-2020, most interviewed programs...

- Received 500-1000 applications
- Invited 50-100 applicants for an interview
- Interviewed 25-75 applicants
- Put 25-50 applicants on their rank order list

Successful strategies to recruit residents to rural programs



- Highlight small-town connections that characterize rural life, practice, and training (the ‘personal touch’)
- Collaborate with community members outside health care to introduce rural applicants to the community (Capturing/demonstrating small town hospitality in the way they recruit)
- Use unique community and program assets to create a recruiting niche (e.g., osteopathic recognition)
- Teach medical students – for rotations, for longitudinal integrated clerkships, or (for larger rural programs) as a regional campus
- Emphasize scope of training tailored to the individual

Next steps

- Outcomes analysis (i.e., evaluate if match rates are associated with programs outcomes such as scope of practice, In-Training Exam (ITE) scores, etc.).
- Analyze the relative contributions of Supplemental Offer and Acceptance Program (SOAP) and post-SOAP to an eventual fill rate of ~100%.
- Explore osteopathic residency match rates between 2009-2019 (recognizing the major differences in match process and that these data are not directly comparable to NRMP data).

Questions

- What's missing that you would like to know?
- To whom should we disseminate this information, and in what way?

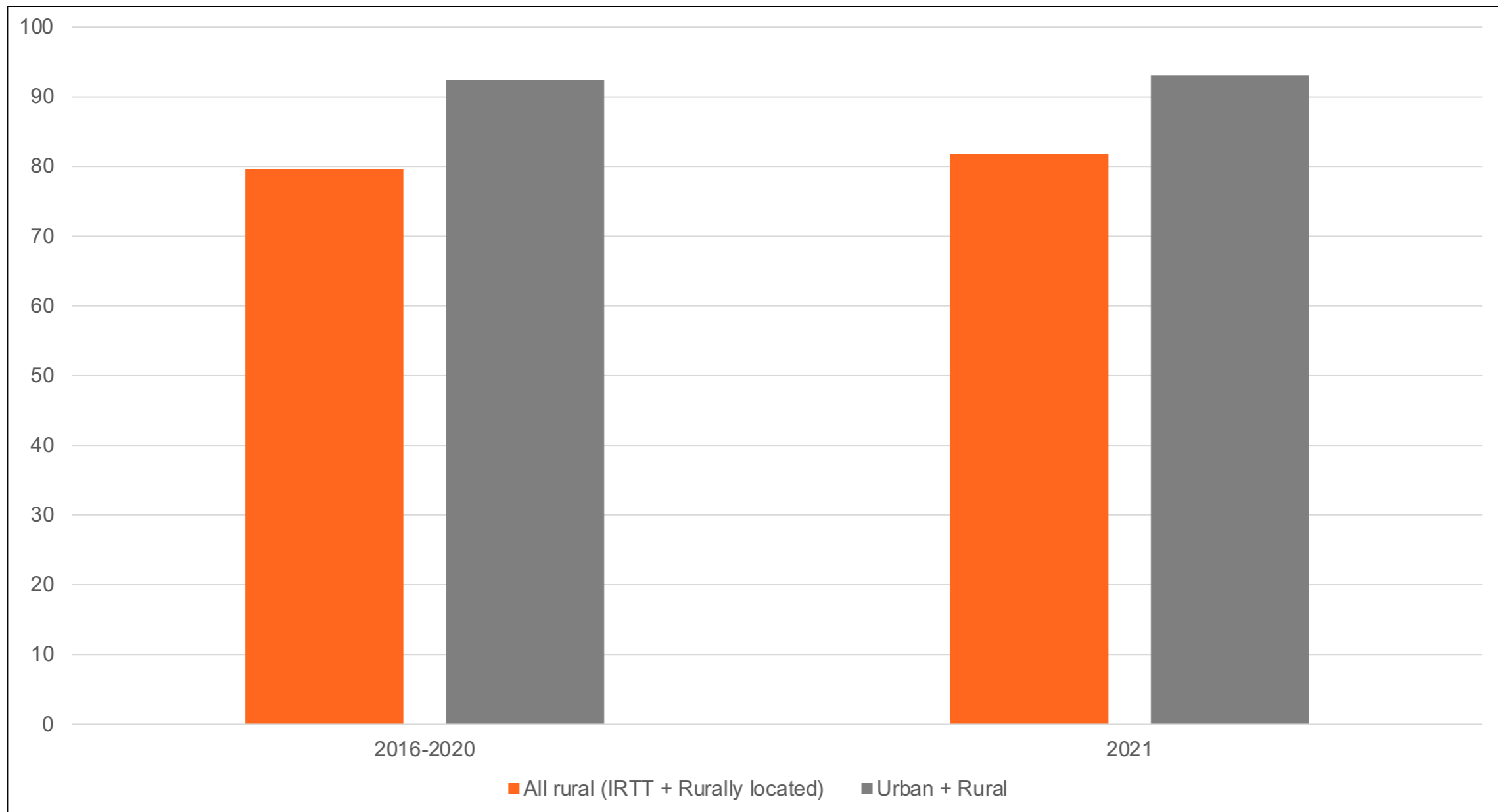
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Mean percentage of slots filled in 2021 vs. previous 5 years^a



a. Mean percentage of positions filled per program during Main Match

Methods

Document patterns in NRMP match rates for rural residency programs between 1996-2020.



Analyze NRMP data to find:

- Number of rural programs over 25-years
- Mean and total number residency slots filled and offered annually
- Percent of slots filled
- Mean percent filled per program

Compare rural residency match rates with program outcomes for a 3-year period (2013-2015).



Evaluate if match rates and community livability indices are associated with programs outcomes, e.g.

- Scope of practice scores
- Preparedness score
- In-Training Exam (ITE)
- Board exam scores

Explore successful recruitment strategies among rural residency programs.



Conduct semi-structured interviews with 20 rural residency coordinators to deepen our understanding of successful recruitment strategies.