

# Why Fewer Pharmacy Graduates are Choosing PGY2 Residency Training: Insights from Program Directors



Beth B Phillips, PharmD, BCPS, BCACP, FCCP, FASHP; Russ Palmer, PhD; Devin Lavender, PharmD, BCPS; Sharmon P. Osa, PharmD, BCACP; Rebecca H. Stone, PharmD, BCPS, BCACP, FCCP; Joshua Caballero, Pharm D, BCPP, FCCP; Lauren Baugh, PharmD Candidate 2025; Chelsea A. Keedy, PharmD, BCACP  
University of Georgia College of Pharmacy, Athens, GA

## Introduction

Postgraduate Year Two (PGY2) residency training prepares residents for specialized roles and board certification through advanced patient care or knowledge, leadership, research or process improvement, and scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

PGY2 residents significantly improve patient care in their respective advanced areas, and when compared to PGY1 residents, are more likely to deliver education programs and engage in scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

From 2020 to 2025, the number of PGY2 applicants to the Match has declined by 20.5% from 1,372 to 1,091, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

The **purpose** of this research is to identify and explain residency program director (RPD) observations of factors impacting resident interest in PGY2 training.

## Objective

To report residency program director (RPD) observed factors and common themes related to the decline in PGY2 applicants.

## Methods

This was a cross-sectional study using survey methodology. The University of Georgia's Ambulatory Care Collaborative (AC2) developed the survey with expert review and testing by individuals outside of the research team. In collaboration with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP), total population sampling of PGY1 RPDs was used to disseminate the electronic survey.

Descriptive statistics were used for quantitative data. Qualitative data were coded using a two-cycle inductive process. Thematic content analysis was applied to open-ended survey responses to gain a deeper understanding and interpret survey results. Themes were described, and the prevalence of each theme were also reported.

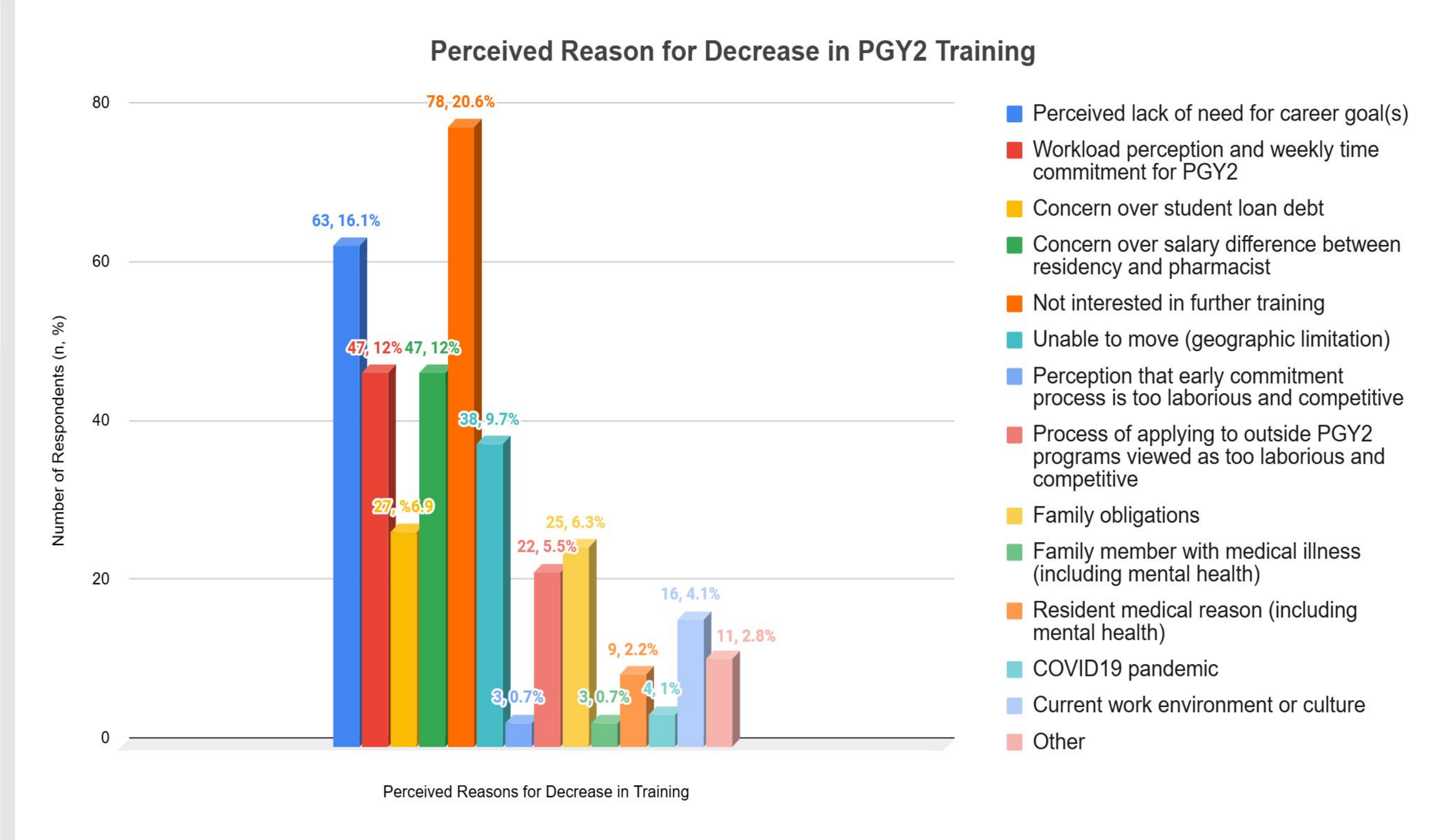
## Results

RPD Demographics	
Survey responses received (n)	428
Survey distribution (n)	1449
Survey response rate	29.5%

Duration in RPD Role	n	%
<1 year	52	12.2%
1 - 5 years	211	49.6%
6 - 10 years	86	20.2%
11 - 15 years	38	9%
More than 15 years	38	9%
Total	425	100%

RPD Practice Setting	n	%
Community Hospital	196	47.2%
Academic Medical Center	120	29%
VA	38	9.2%
Community Pharmacy/Retail	25	6%
Ambulatory Clinic	21	5%
Managed Care	14	3.4%
University/College of Pharmacy	1	0.2%
Other	0	0%
Total	415	100%

Total Residents in Program	n	%	Perception of 5 Year Trend in PGY2 Applicants	n	%
5 or less	292	69.9%	No Change	215	51.2%
6 - 10	62	14.8%	Increase	95	22.6%
11 - 20	41	9.8%	Decrease	110	26.2%
21 or more	23	5.5%	Total	420	100%
Total	418	100%			



## Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Survey Comments

Theme	Definition	Freq	Quotes
<b>Tradeoffs for completing PGY2 training outweigh potential benefits</b>	Extra time, workload, or loss of pay are not worth the type of job obtained after PGY2	47	"PGY1 workload is tough. Past 3 years of residents would prefer to not take another year of a pay cut to have more resident level workload." "Residents are older than they have been in the past and are ready to start paying off loans, save for retirement, etc" "Burnout is consistently a concern expressed by residents. PGY1 is harder than they expected, and they are not enthusiastic about continuing to work that hard in a PGY2."
<b>Lack of need for specialization to enter pharmacy workforce</b>	Resident able to get a pharmacist position within the profession without completion of a PGY2 residency	34	"More job positions open that don't require advanced certification" "General impression of experience on the job is equivalent." "We have had several residents interested in critical care and ID state that they are able to find jobs at smaller institutions without the need for additional training" "Ambulatory care in particular has been a struggle for our system as PGY1 residents interested in that field commonly seek (and secure) jobs in it without PGY2 training"
<b>Geography is a driver of need to pursue PGY2 training</b>	Lack of available jobs or PGY2 residency programs in the desired geographic area	23	"Specialty positions saturated and if wanting to stay in area, that makes it seemingly unnecessary" "seeing many more residents unwilling to move b/c of personal relationships"
<b>Early commit process is a barrier to pursuit of PGY2 training</b>	Opportunities limited due to early commit process	5	"they try hard to do outside programs only to find out they early committed in december, so now scrambling to figure out which programs are left. there is no way to find out unless you specifically ask the program. Too time consuming to do that, some programs don't reply back"
<b>Unclear career goals</b>		2	"Residents lack clear professional goals, making the purpose of a PGY2 unclear, as well as which PGY2 they would even pursue."

## Discussion

Lack of interest, perceived lack of need, salary differences, and workload perception/weekly time commitments were the top observations related to the decline in PGY2 residency applicants.

When RPDs were asked to explain their perceptions, several themes emerged from their comments including too many tradeoffs compared to benefits, perceived lack of need based on available positions, and geographic limitations.

The Early Commit process was identified as a barrier for residents who did not have access to those opportunities.

Study limitations:

- Not all respondents provided open-ended comments for evaluation.
- Survey results represent the observations of RPDs and may not fully represent the rationale behind all individual PGY1 residents.

## Conclusion

A variety of factors were perceived as reasons for the decline in PGY2 applicants. Health systems and Programs should assess PGY2 salary and workload considerations. RPDs and professional organizations should promote the benefits of PGY2 residency training.

## References

1. American Society of Health-System Pharmacists. ASHP Accreditation Standard for Postgraduate Pharmacy Residency Programs. Available from: <https://www.ashp.org/professional-development/residency-information/residency-program-resources>. Accessed 6/2/2025.
2. Langlois H, Proulx LC, Villeneuve E, et al. Impact of postgraduate second-year pharmacy training (PGY2) on clinical financial, and educational outcomes: A scoping review. Am J Pharm Educ 2023;87(8):1000037. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajpe.2022.08.004>
3. National Resident Matching Program. ASHRMP Statistics. National Residency Matching Program. Updated 2025. Available from: <https://natmatch.com/ashprmp/stats.html>. Accessed 6.2.2025.

This research was funded by the ASHP Foundation Daniel M. Ashby Fund.  
**Disclosures: The authors have no significant conflicts of interest related to this research to disclose.**  
CONTACT: [bbp@uga.edu](mailto:bbp@uga.edu)