

Introduction

- The number of appraisals published annually by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has increased by 25% between 2017/18 and 2022/23.¹
- To ensure timely access to cost-effective treatments, NICE introduced the fast-track appraisal (FTA) process in April 2017,² and limited this route to only cost-comparison analyses (CCAs) in February 2022.³
- Interventions with clinical benefits similar to treatments already recommended by NICE can be evaluated with a CCA. Unlike cost-effectiveness analyses, CCAs only compare the costs and resources used while health outcomes are only captured in the assessment of the clinical effectiveness (NICE Addendum, 2022).³

Objectives: To review technology appraisals including a CCA and the evidence submitted to demonstrate that the intervention provides a similar or greater health benefit at a similar or lower cost in order to understand the circumstances leading to a positive recommendation.

Methods

- 426 technology appraisals (TAs) were published by NICE between the opening of the FTA route (April 2017) and May 2023.
- Evidence from TAs taking a cost comparison (CC) route was reviewed from the NICE website.⁴
- For each TA, one reviewer extracted data on the scope considered, the evidence submitted, and the recommendations achieved.

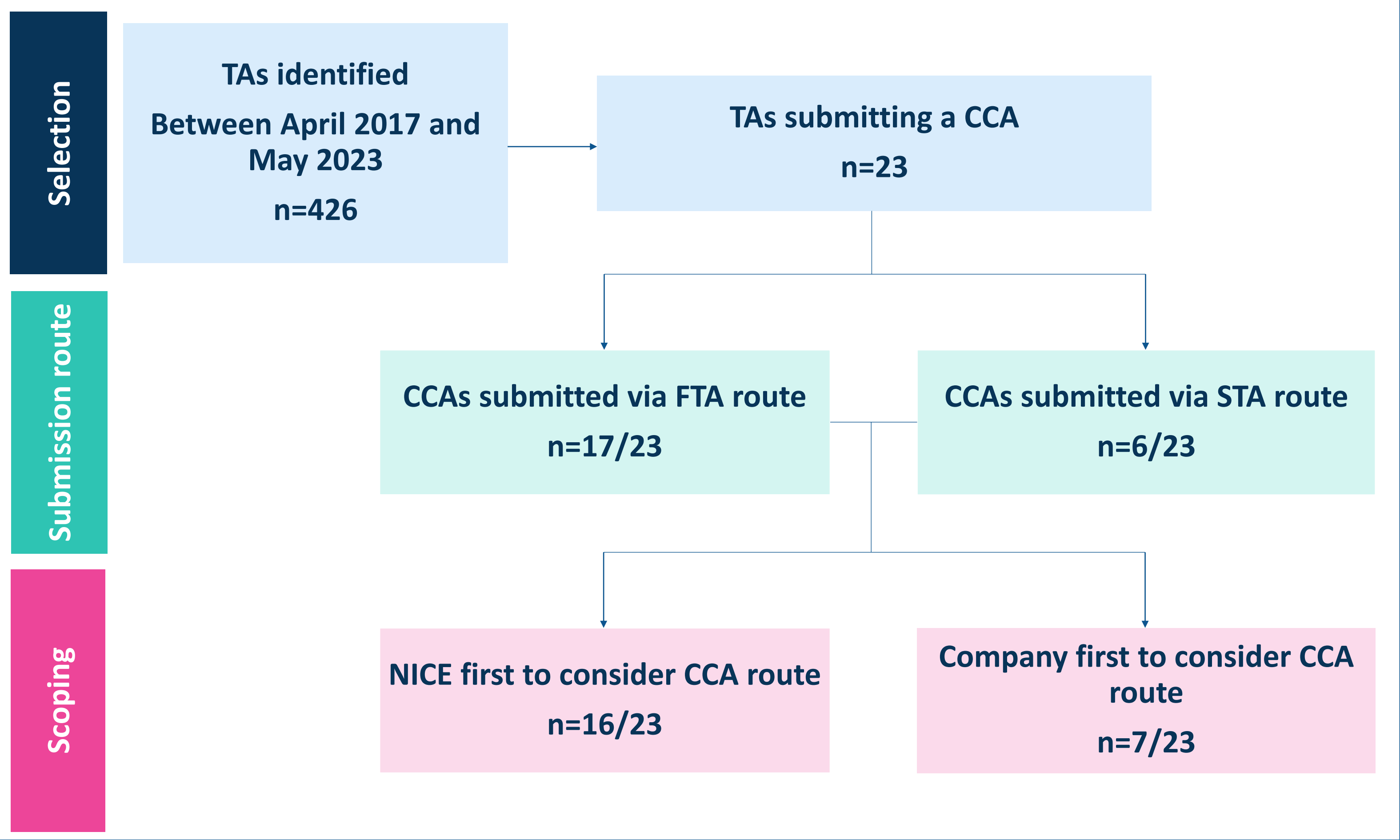
Figure 1: Key steps towards a NICE recommendation



Abbreviations: CC, cost comparison; FTA, fast-track appraisal; NICE, National Institute of Health and Care Excellence; STA, single technology appraisal.

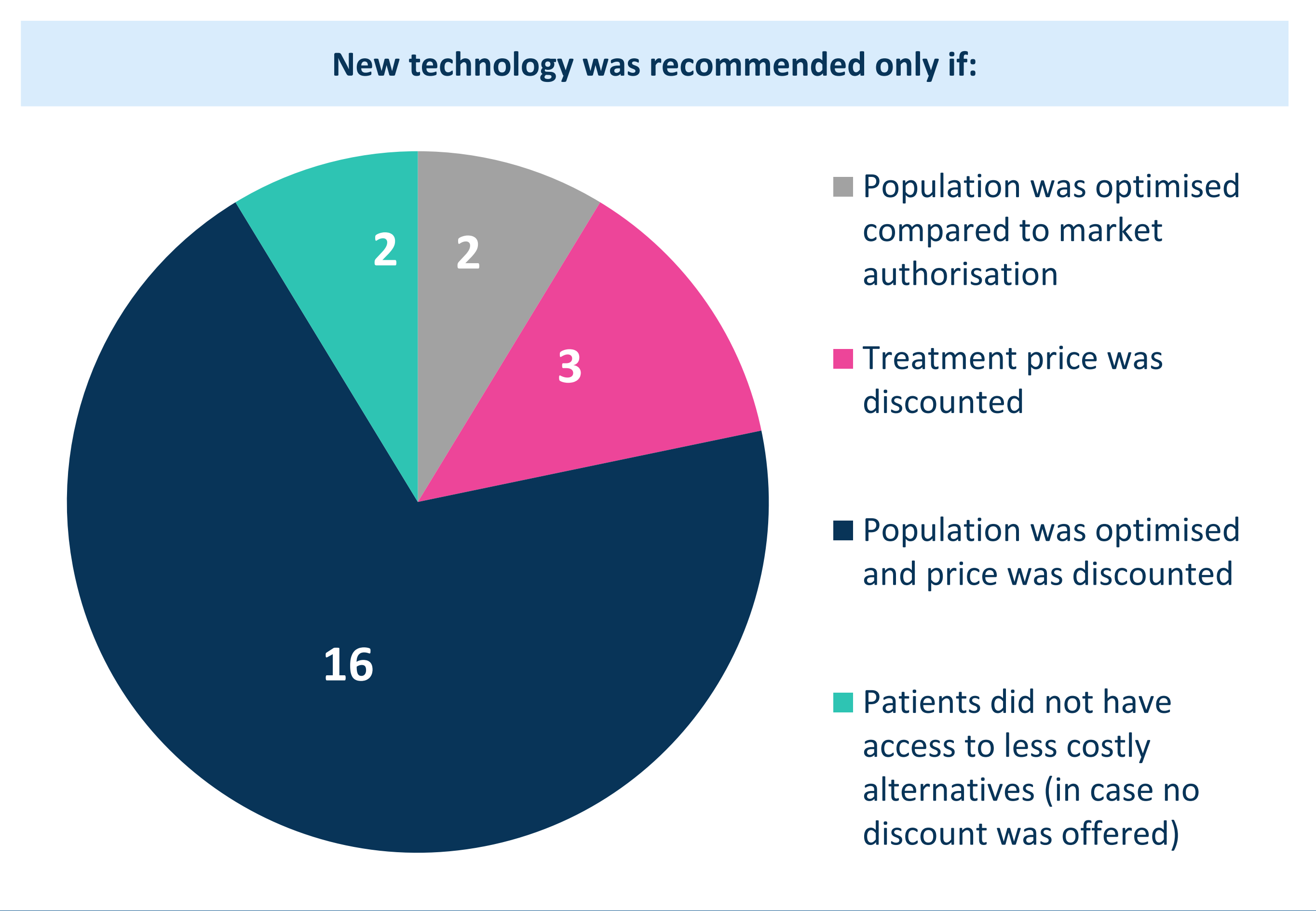
Results

Figure 2: Sample selection and characteristics



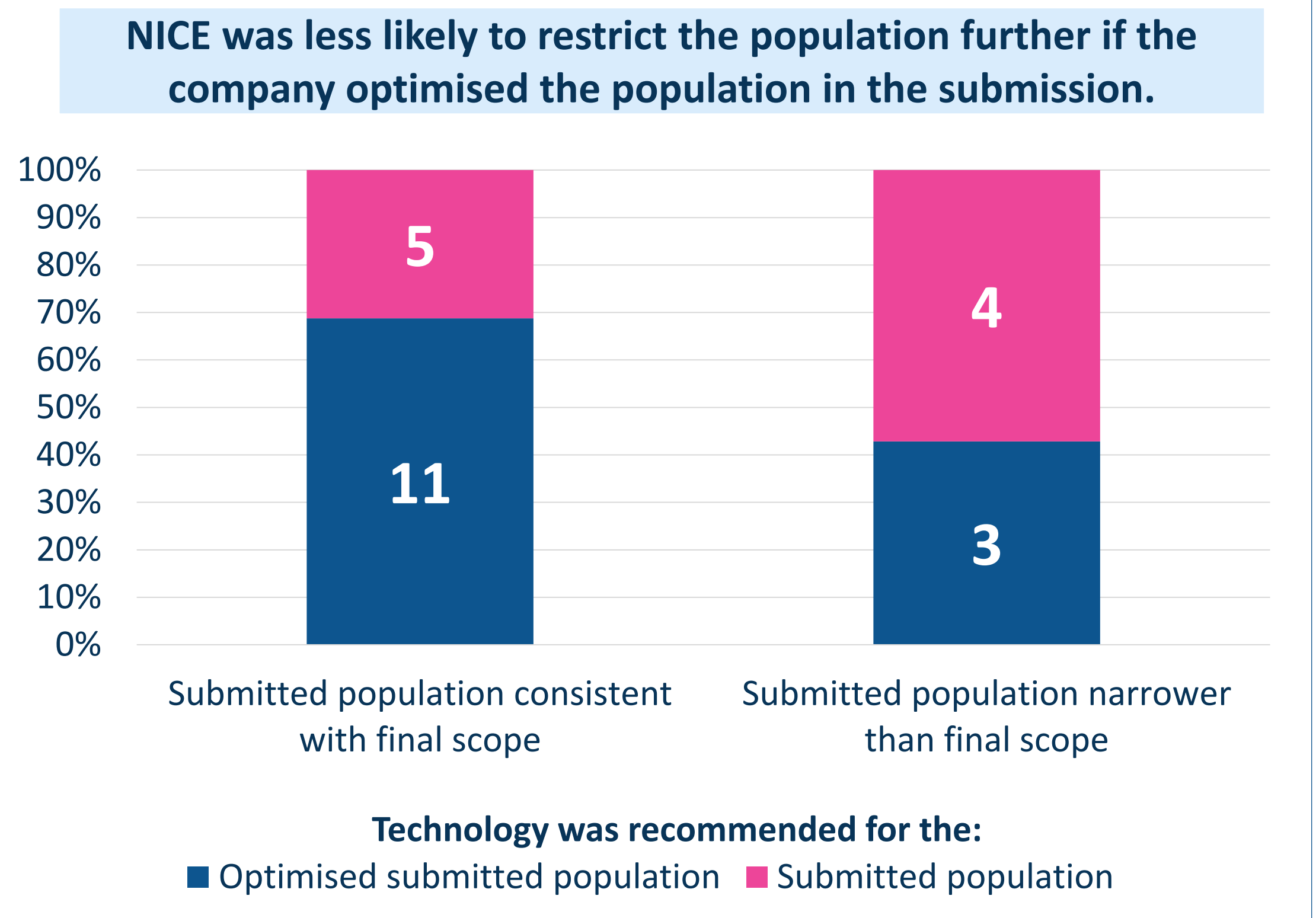
Abbreviations: CCA, cost-comparison analysis; FTA, fast-track appraisal; STA, single technology appraisal; TAs, technology appraisals.

Figure 3: Clinical and economic conditions for NICE recommendations



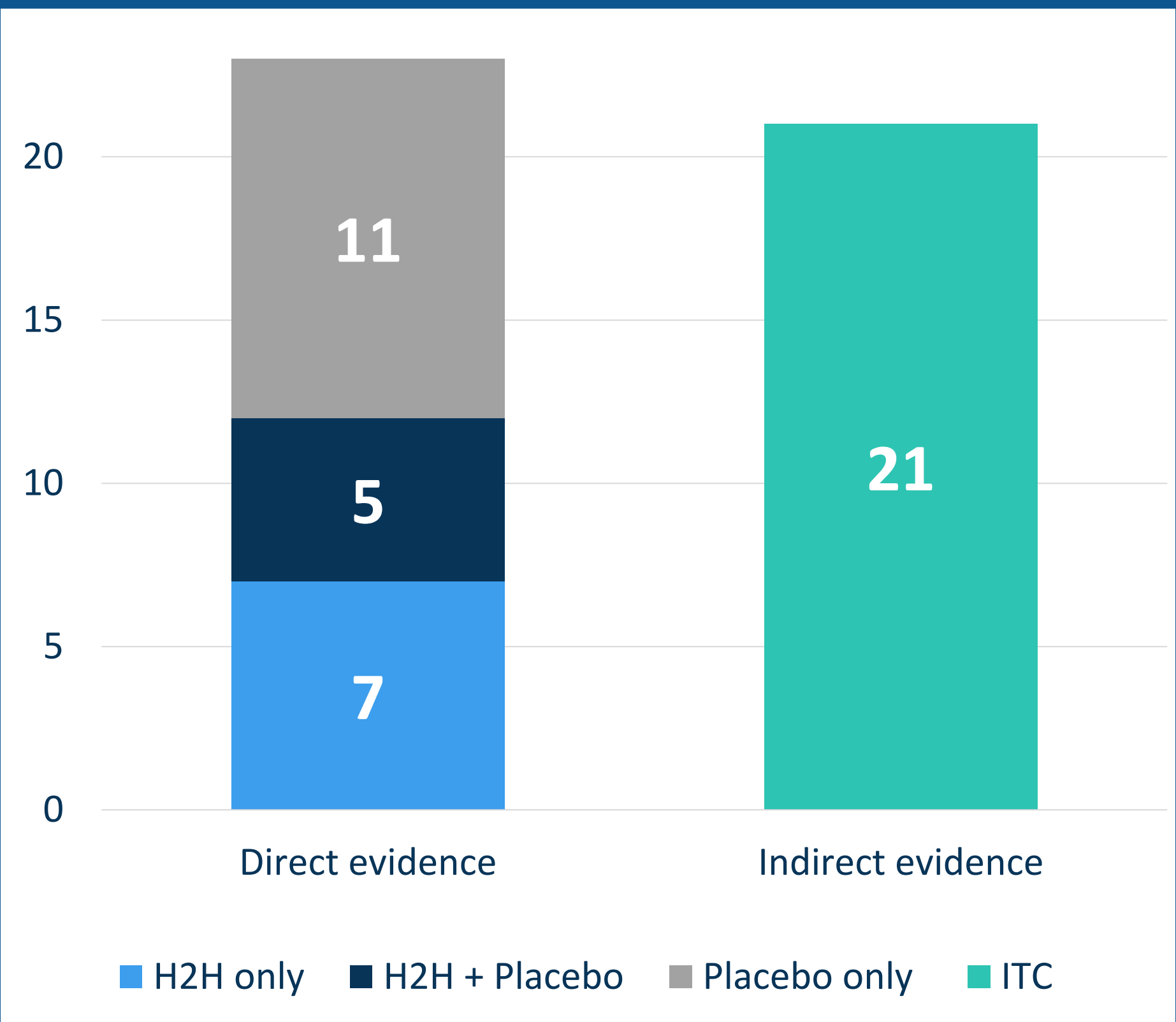
Abbreviations: NICE, National Institute of Health and Care Excellence.

Figure 4: Health technology appraisal strategy for evidence submission



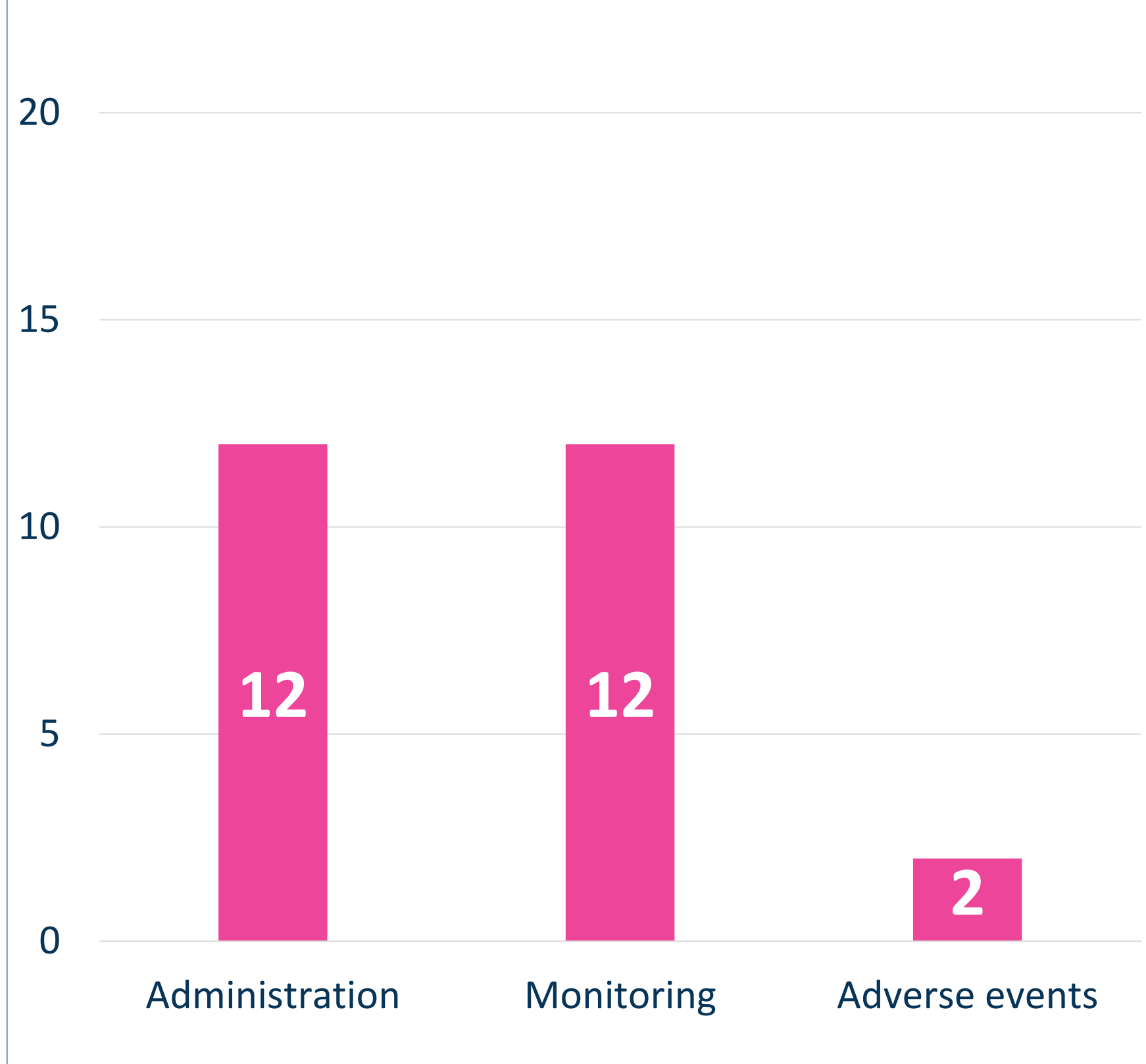
Abbreviations: NICE, National Institute of Health and Care Excellence.

Figure 5: Clinical evidence submitted



Abbreviations: H2H, Head-to-head; ITC, indirect treatment comparison.

Figure 6: Additional costs reported beyond treatment



Additional results

- A confidential discount was applied to most technologies under review (19/23).
- Submissions that optimised the population typically submitted evidence for fewer comparators than outlined in the final scope.
- Most TAs included an indirect treatment comparison (ITC) as part of their strategy to substantiate claims of clinical equivalence.
- Direct evidence alone was used to justify a cost-comparison approach in only two TAs.

Discussion

- Only 5.4% TAs were submitted to NICE via the CC route.
- Almost half of the TAs used head-to-head evidence to support clinical equivalence of the intervention versus relevant comparator(s) and the other half relied solely on ITCs.
- Most companies had to offer a treatment discount and most excluded adverse events costs from their CCA.
- Throughout the process, companies refined their value story by optimising the eligible population.
- Companies that expected to achieve recommendations for a restricted population could streamline the process by reducing the population in the submission.
- Limitations:** Our research is limited to the information publicly available and does not assess the decisions made internally by the company nor reflect unpublished communications with NICE.
- Further research:** Future work could focus on STAs to compare the evidence submitted, critique from external assessment groups and the recommendations achieved and to provide further insights on successful appraisal strategies.

Key message: Few TAs take the CC route and companies can expect to achieve conditional recommendations. Companies can take advantage of early discussions with NICE in the scoping phase to ease their submission process.

References: (1) NICE: Technology appraisal data: Appraisal recommendations. 2023. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/about/what-we-do/our-programmes/nice-guidance/nice-technology-appraisal-guidance/data/appraisal-recommendations> (2) NICE: Guide to processes of technology appraisal. 2018. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/Media/Default/About/what-we-do/NICE-guidance/NICE-technology-appraisals/technology-appraisal-processes-guide-apr-2018.pdf> (3) NICE: Cost comparison, Addendum to the Guide to the methods of technology appraisal. 2022. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/Media/Default/About/what-we-do/NICE-guidance/NICE-technology-appraisals/methods-guide-addendum-cost-comparison.pdf> (4) NICE: Published Guidance, NICE advice and quality standards - Technology appraisal guidance. Available at: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/published?ngt=Technology%20appraisal%20guidance&ndt=Guidance> (5) Chen, G., Dakin, H. L., & Griffiths, E. 2020. PMS152 NICE's fast track appraisal process: Faster but underutilised? Value in Health, 23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jval.2020.08.1596>