

Background

- The pan-Canadian benchmark for cataract surgery wait times is 16 weeks, with an aim for 90% of patients to meet this timeframe^{1,2}
- The objective of this study was to collate and report published evidence documenting recent trends of Canada's cataract surgery wait times, including the impact of COVID-19

Methods

Search Strategy

- A targeted literature review was conducted using PubMed® database to identify studies published between January 1, 2017 and December 10, 2021
- This was supplemented by a grey literature search to identify white papers and government-reported data
- Search terms included cataract surgery, wait times, epidemiology, Canada, and COVID-19

Eligibility Criteria

- Intervention: Any Canada national or provincial (Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta) data for cataract surgery wait times
- Outcomes for cataract procedures:
 - % of patients treated within 16-weeks (pan-Canadian benchmark)
 - 90th percentile wait times (10% of patients waited more than this many weeks)
 - 50th percentile/median wait times (50% of patients waited more than this many weeks)
- Articles were restricted to English-language publications and Canada specific data, but were not restricted by type of study or report

Results – Overview

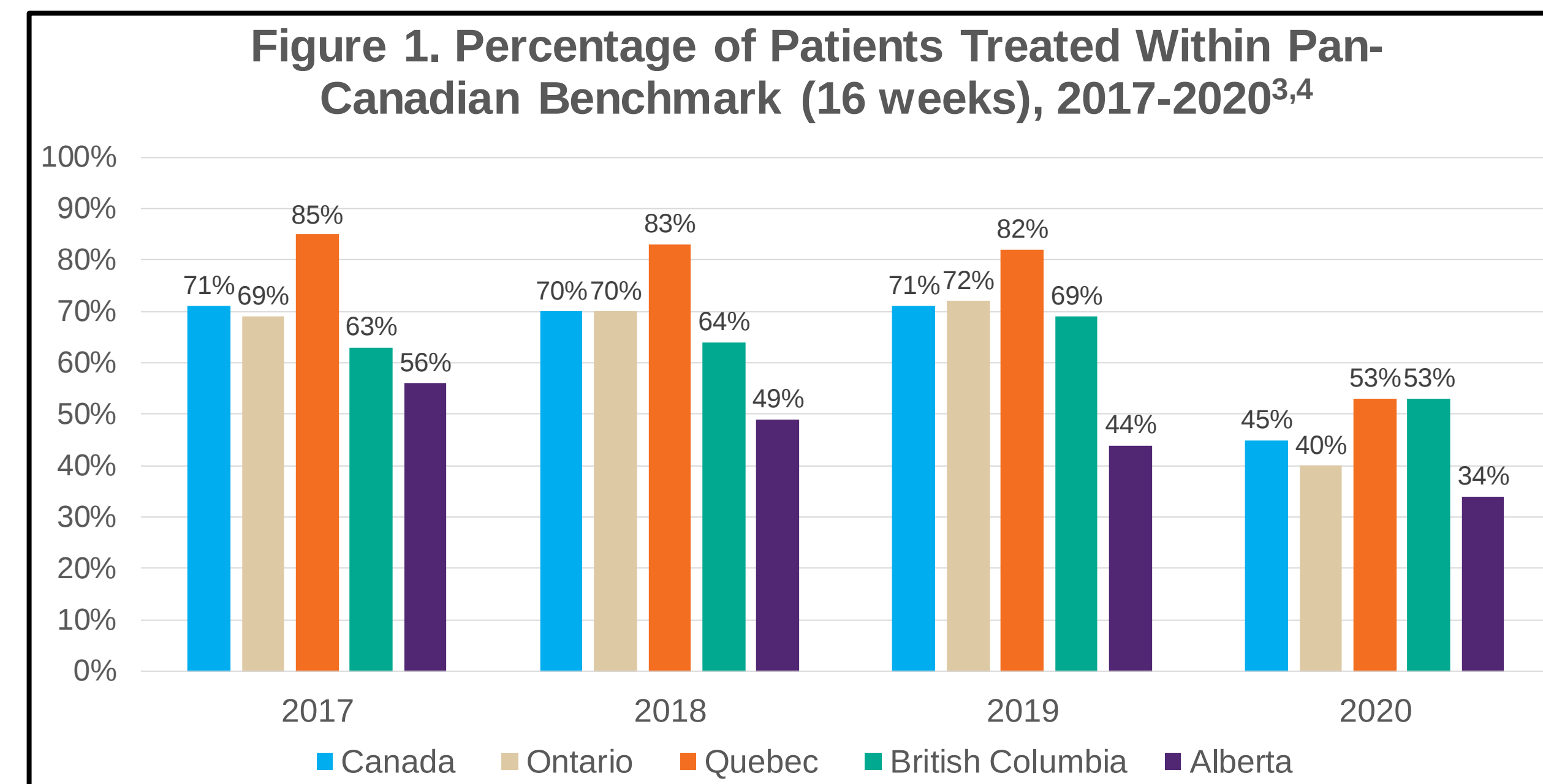
- 6 unique sources reported cataract surgery wait times in Canada
 - Includes 2 white papers and 4 government reported data
 - No recent PubMed® data was identified (evidence gap recognized)

References and Disclosures

1. Leung et al. Can J Ophthalmol. 2013;48:240-245. 2. CIHI. Wait time information in priority areas: definitions. Ottawa, ON: CIHI; Jun 2021. 3. CIHI. Wait times for priority procedures in Canada, 2021. Jun 2021. 4. [Explore wait times for priority procedures across Canada | CIHI](#) 5. [Alberta Health Services. Quarterly monitoring measures, 2018-2019 FQ4](#) 6. [Government of Alberta. Alberta wait times reporting](#) 7. [OECD. Health care utilisation: waiting times](#) 8. Barua B et al. Waiting your turn: wait times for health care in Canada, 2020 Report. Fraser Institute. Dec 2020.

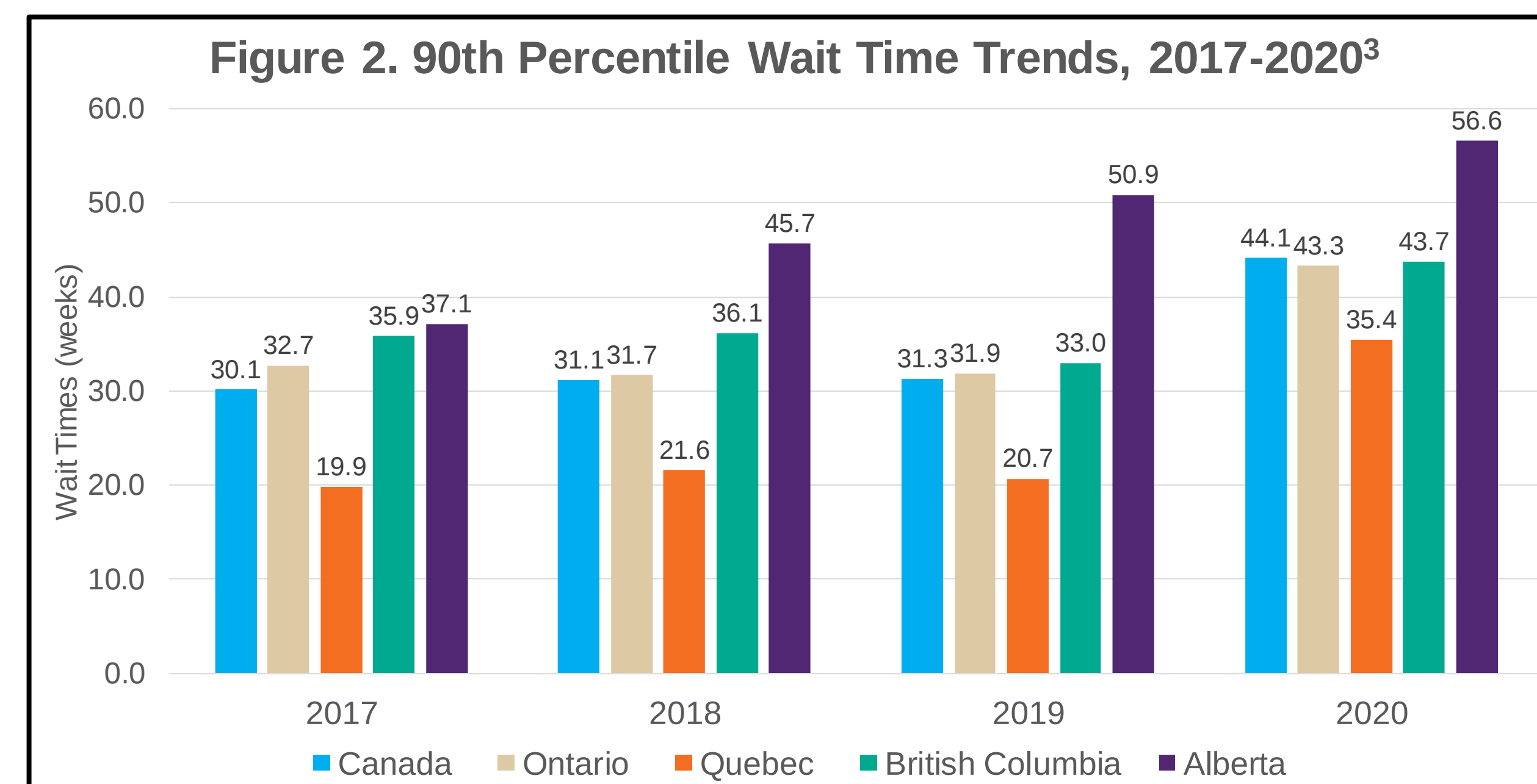
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Results – Patients Treated within the 16 Week Benchmark



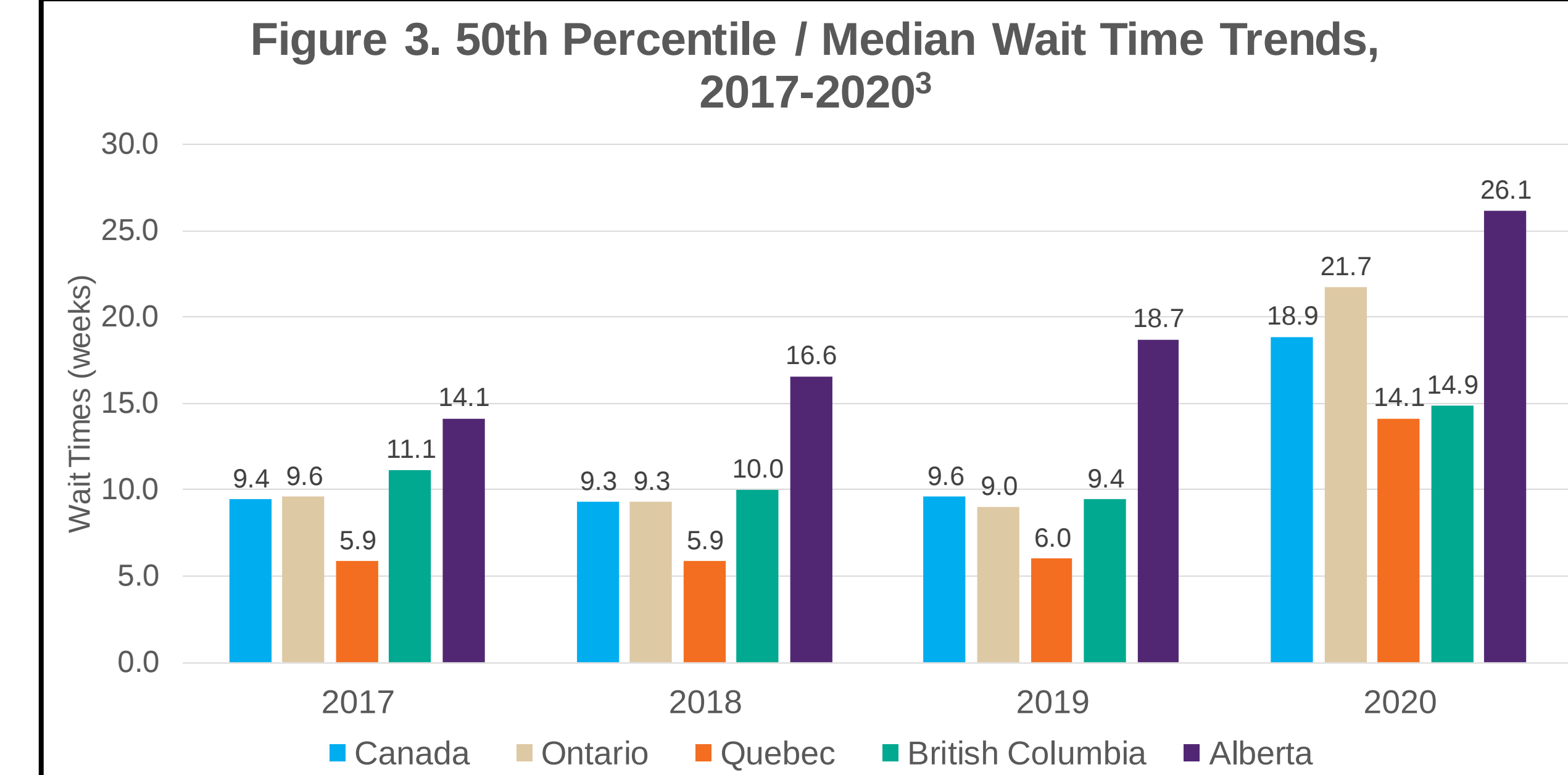
- **(Figure 1)** Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI) reported ~30% of Canadian patients did not receive cataract surgery within recommended wait times from 2017-2019, growing to 55% in 2020 amidst COVID-19^{3,4}

Results – 90th Percentile Wait Times



- **(Figure 2)** From 2017-2019, 10% of Canadian patients waited more than 30 weeks for cataract surgery, while growing to more than 44 weeks in 2020³
- Alberta data reported 10% waited more than 34 weeks in 2017, 38.6 weeks in 2018, and 63 weeks in 2020^{5,6}

Results – 50th Percentile/Median Wait Times



- **(Figure 3)** Half of Canadian patients waited more than 9 weeks for cataract surgery from 2017-2019, growing to 19 weeks in 2020 amidst COVID-19^{3,7}
- Fraser Institute reported slightly different results for 2020 among Canada (20.6 weeks) and the provinces (Ontario=17.0, Quebec=12.0, British Columbia=28.0, Alberta=24.0)⁸
- Alberta Health Services also reported median wait times of 13.9 and 14.9 weeks for 2017 and 2018, respectively⁵

Discussion and Conclusions

- Cancelled and delayed procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic led to longer wait times for cataract surgeries, with more than half of Canadian patients waiting longer than 16 weeks in 2020, compared to one-third from 2017 to 2019
- Even prior to the pandemic (2017-2019), the target of 90% of patients receiving cataract surgery within 16 weeks was not met in Canada (nationally & provincially)
- One report also reveals that wait times in Canada are longer than what physicians consider to be clinically reasonable⁸
- Study limitation: wait times may have been measured differently among sources (e.g. point in year data was captured, bilateral vs unilateral implantation data, wait times definitions used, i.e. time since initial clinical visit vs specialist visit)
 - Thus, there is a need to develop benchmarks for cataract surgery wait times that are consistent throughout Canada, and should include time since initial clinical visit with optometrist⁸
- To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and bring wait times to the recommended threshold, collaboration among provincial health authorities and clinicians may be necessary with prioritization of stable funding and reimbursement for cataract surgery