

# CLINICAL TRIALS IN CANADA: INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

RESEARCH NOTE  
JUNE 2025



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Innovative Medicines Canada (IMC) is the national association representing Canada's innovative pharmaceutical industry. The industry contributed more than \$18.4 billion to the economy, proudly supported more than 110,000 high-value jobs, and invested close to \$3.2 billion in research and development in 2022.<sup>1</sup>

Nearly 700 clinical trials were initiated in Canada in 2024, and the innovative pharmaceutical industry sponsored two-thirds of them. The industry also showed strong support towards cancer and rare diseases treatments, sponsoring three-quarters of trials for oncology and drugs for rare diseases. Oncology clinical trials accounted for 28% of all trials initiated in 2024, while trials for drugs for rare diseases accounted for 30%.

There were more than 3,100 ongoing clinical trials in Canada in 2025, comprising 5.2% of global trials. Nine of the top 10 sponsors were IMC members. Across the provinces, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia are the main hubs of clinical trial activities. Within these provinces, approximately 40-46% of ongoing trials were for oncology products, and 38-42% were for drugs for rare diseases.

Innovative pharmaceuticals are part of a global ecosystem, with most clinical trials being multinational (ie. conducted across multiple countries). Nearly all these multinational trials are industry-sponsored. Canada ranked comparatively to G7 peer countries (except US) in terms of industry-sponsored clinical trial activity and led the way in ongoing clinical trials per capita. Despite this, post-pandemic performance has faltered, and greater attention to the commercial environment for the life sciences sector is required.



**There were more than 3,100 ongoing clinical trials in Canada in January 2025, taking place at approximately 1,000 sites** (see Chart 6).

**The innovative pharmaceutical industry remained a leader in clinical trial research in Canada, especially for oncology products and drugs for rare diseases. Nine of the top 10 sponsors for ongoing clinical trials in Canada were IMC members.**

**Canada had the highest number of clinical trials per capita among G7 countries** (see Chart 12).

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada (May 2025). *The Canadian Research and Development Pharmaceutical Sector, 2022*.

## KEY FINDINGS

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**The innovative pharmaceutical industry remained a leader in clinical trial research in Canada, especially for oncology products and drugs for rare diseases.**

- Nearly 700 clinical trials were initiated in Canada in 2024, an 11% decrease from the 773 trials initiated in 2023. The innovative pharmaceutical industry sponsored 66% of those trials (see Chart 1 and Chart 3).
- Post-pandemic performance faltered across all G7 countries, with Canada seeing a 21% decline in industry-sponsored trials initiated in 2024 (see Chart 11).
- There were 463 clinical trials completed in 2024, 25% fewer than in 2023. Eighty-three percent of those trials were industry-sponsored (see Chart 2).
- Industry sponsored 74% of oncology trials initiated in 2024, consistent with previous years. Oncology trials represented 28% of all trial activity in Canada in 2024 (see Chart 4).
- Trials for drugs for rare diseases accounted for 30% of trials initiated in 2024 and 41% (1,307 of 3,154) of ongoing trials. Over three-quarters were industry-sponsored (see Chart 5).
- Although the number of new oncology and rare disease trials declined year-over-year since 2021, their proportional share of total trials has remained steady (see Chart 4 and Chart 5).

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**There were more than 3,100 ongoing clinical trials in Canada in January 2025, taking place at approximately 1,000 sites** (see Chart 6).

- 5.2% of interventional clinical trials ongoing worldwide had sites in Canada.<sup>2</sup>
- Sixty-four percent of ongoing clinical trials in Canada involved an American-headquartered company as either a main sponsor or CRO; and 84% of industry-sponsored trials involved at least one American company.
- Ontario led trial activity in 2024, with two-thirds of ongoing trials having at least one site in the province. Significant activity also occurred in Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia.
- Nine of the top 10 sponsors for ongoing clinical trials in Canada were IMC members.

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**Oncology remained the top therapeutic area (26% of ongoing trials), followed by central nervous system (11%), metabolic disorders (7%), and cardiovascular (7%)** (see Chart 7).

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**Approximately two-thirds of clinical trials initiated in Canada were multinational, with about 90% of those being industry-sponsored. In contrast, trials conducted exclusively in Canada were primarily government- or institution-sponsored** (see Chart 8).

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**Clinical trial activity surged in 2021 across North America and Europe, but returned to pre-pandemic levels in 2023 and 2024** (see Chart 9).

- In 2016, 30% of clinical trials initiated worldwide had sites in North America, and 25% had sites in Europe. In 2024, those numbers dropped to 19% and 17%, respectively.
- The Asia-Pacific region experienced strong growth, with the number of trials initiated annually doubling between 2016 and 2024. Fifty-nine percent of trials initiated worldwide had sites in Asia-Pacific in 2024, compared to 41% in 2016.

<sup>2</sup> GlobalData (January 2025). Clinical Trials Database.

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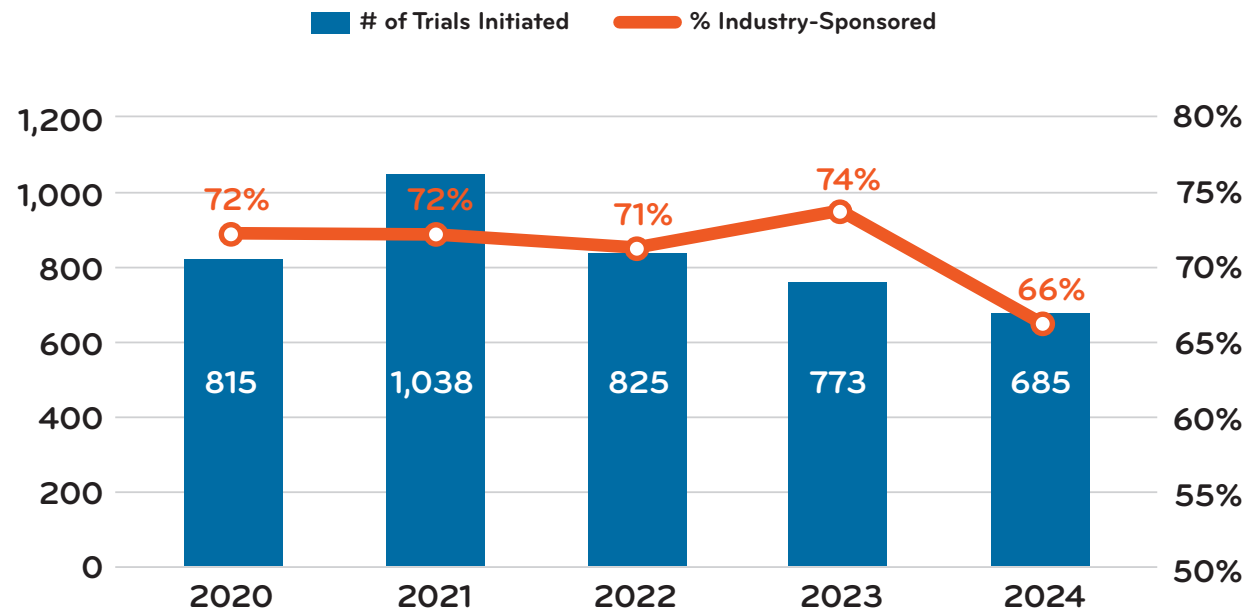
**Canada was comparable to G7 peer countries (except the US) in terms of industry-sponsored clinical trial activity** (see Chart 10 and Chart 11).

- Canada ranked similarly to G7 peer countries (excluding US) in the number of trials initiated and ongoing in 2024. Japan had 30% more trials initiated, but the same number of ongoing trials (see Chart 10).
- All G7 countries experienced a surge in industry-sponsored trials initiated in 2021, followed by a consistent decline. Canada had the largest drop in 2024 (-21%) but the smallest in 2023 (-4%) (see Chart 11).
- On a per capita basis, Canada had the highest number of ongoing trials among G7 countries (see Chart 12).

**By improving access to innovative medicines, Canada can continue to be a global leader in clinical trial activity.**

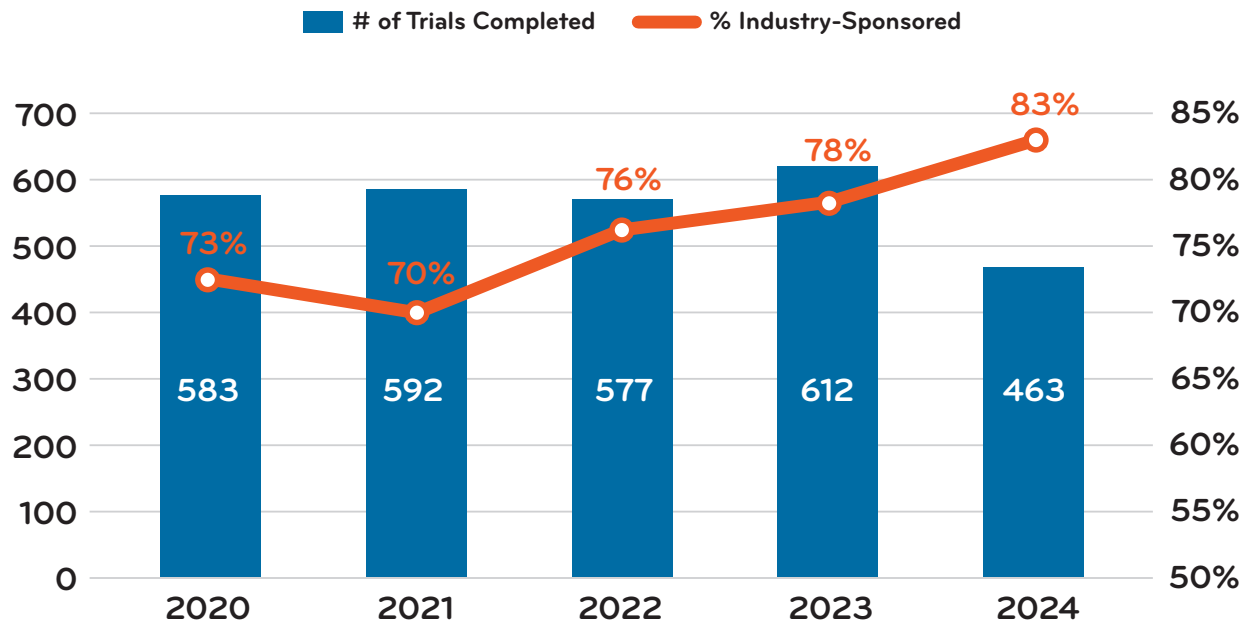
DATA CHARTS

Chart 1: Clinical Trials Initiated in Canada, 2020-2024



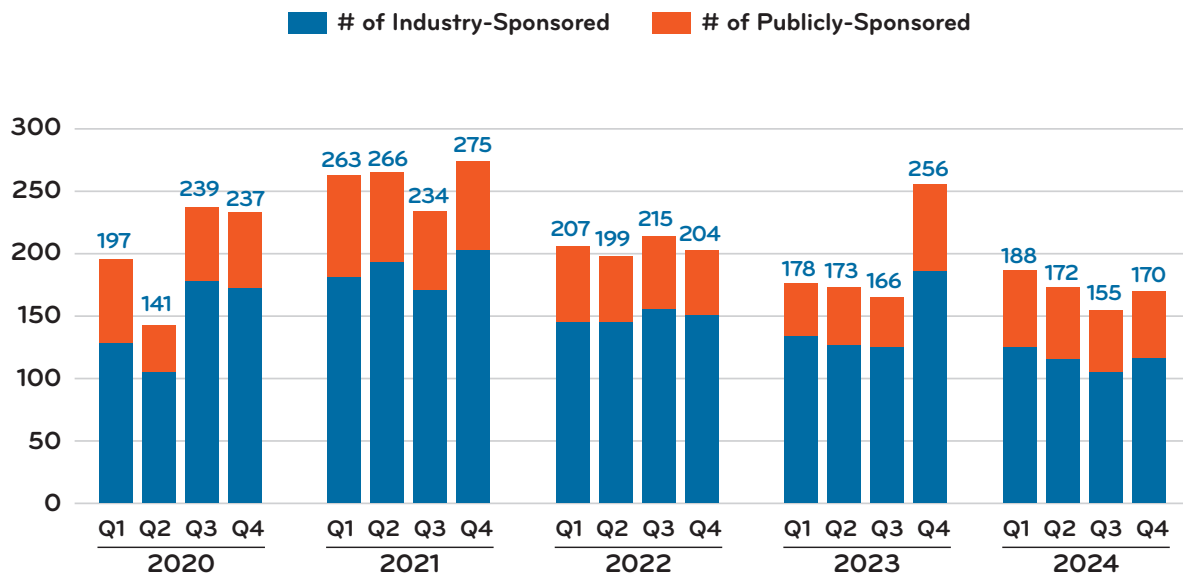
Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

Chart 2: Clinical Trials Completed in Canada, 2020-2024



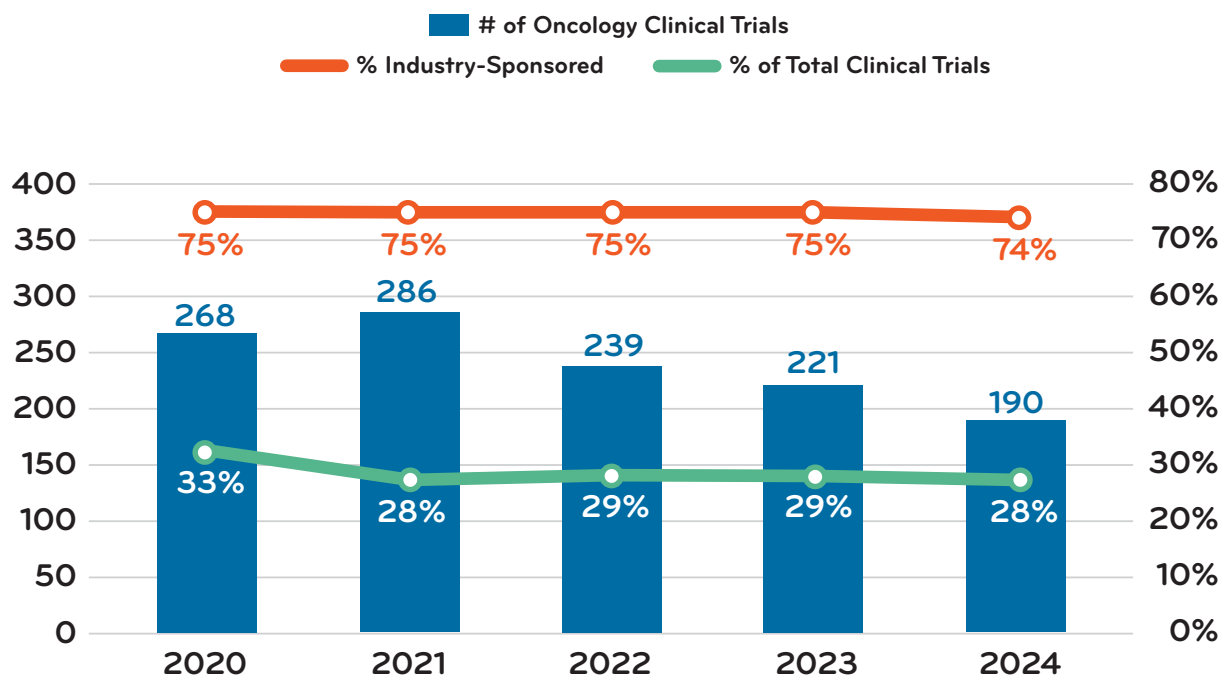
Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

Chart 3: Clinical Trials Initiated in Canada, 2020-2024



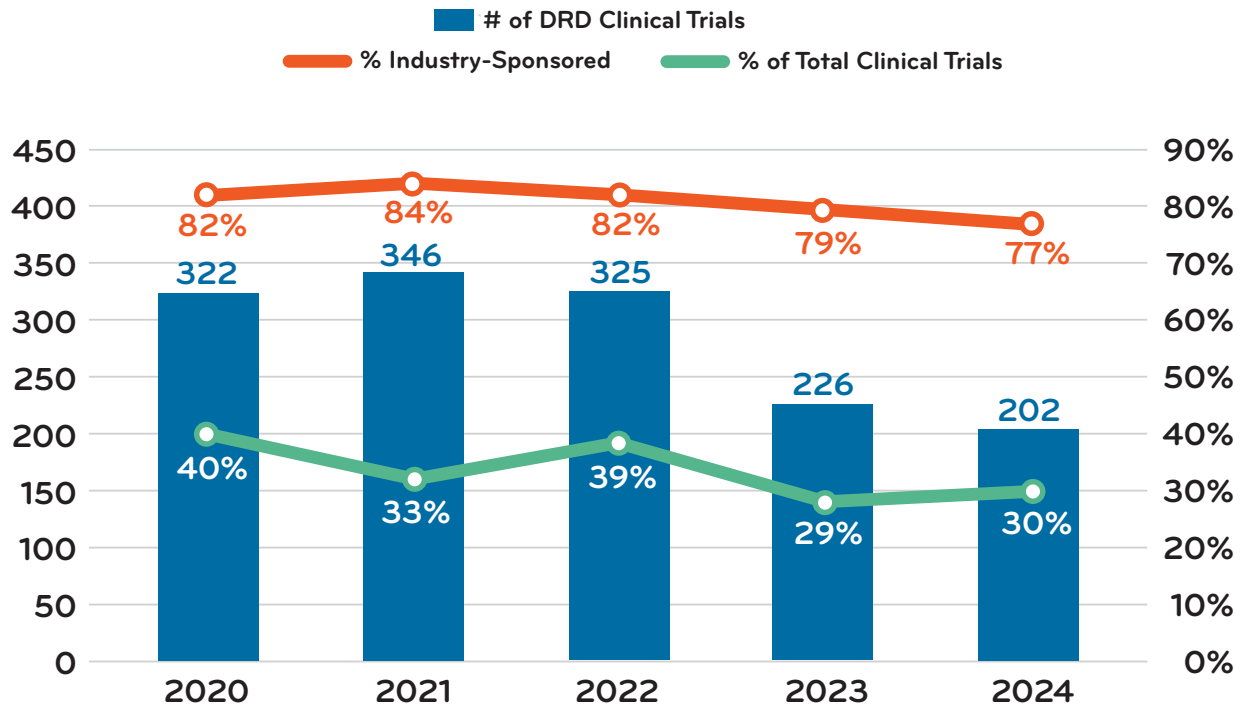
Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

Chart 4: Oncology Clinical Trials Initiated in Canada



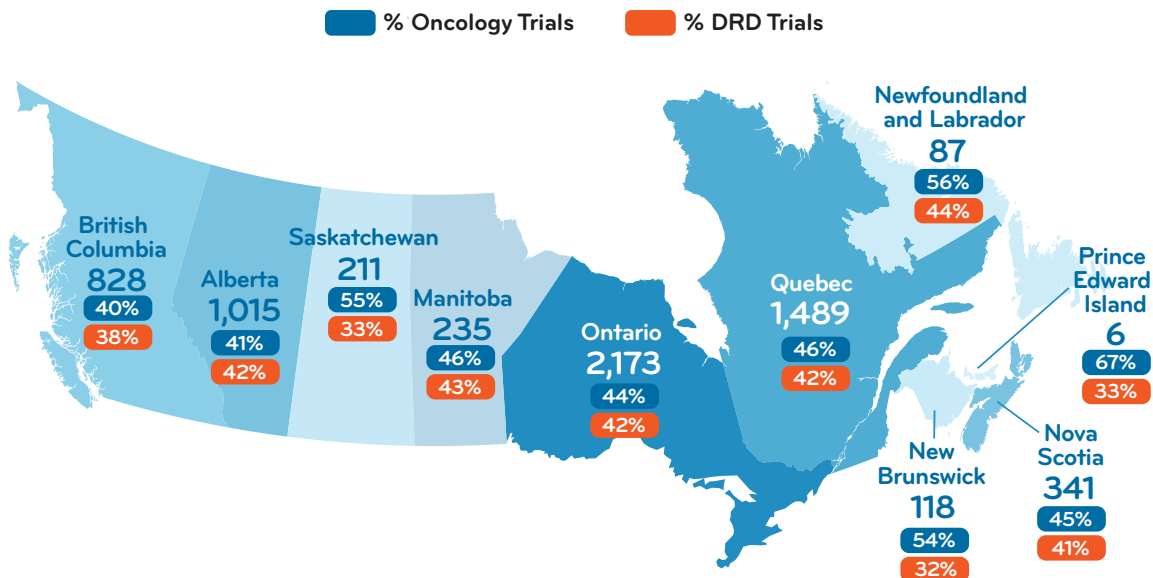
Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

Chart 5: DRD Clinical Trials Initiated in Canada



Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

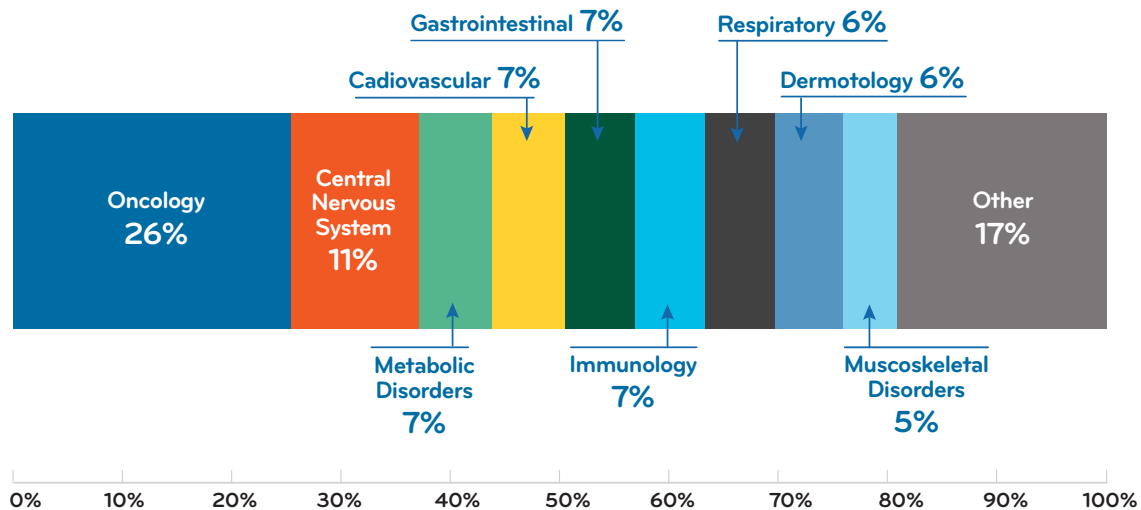
Chart 6: Ongoing Clinical Trials, by Province, January 2025



Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies. Provincial totals add up to more than the Canadian total due to trials having multiple sites in multiple provinces (997 active clinical trial sites).

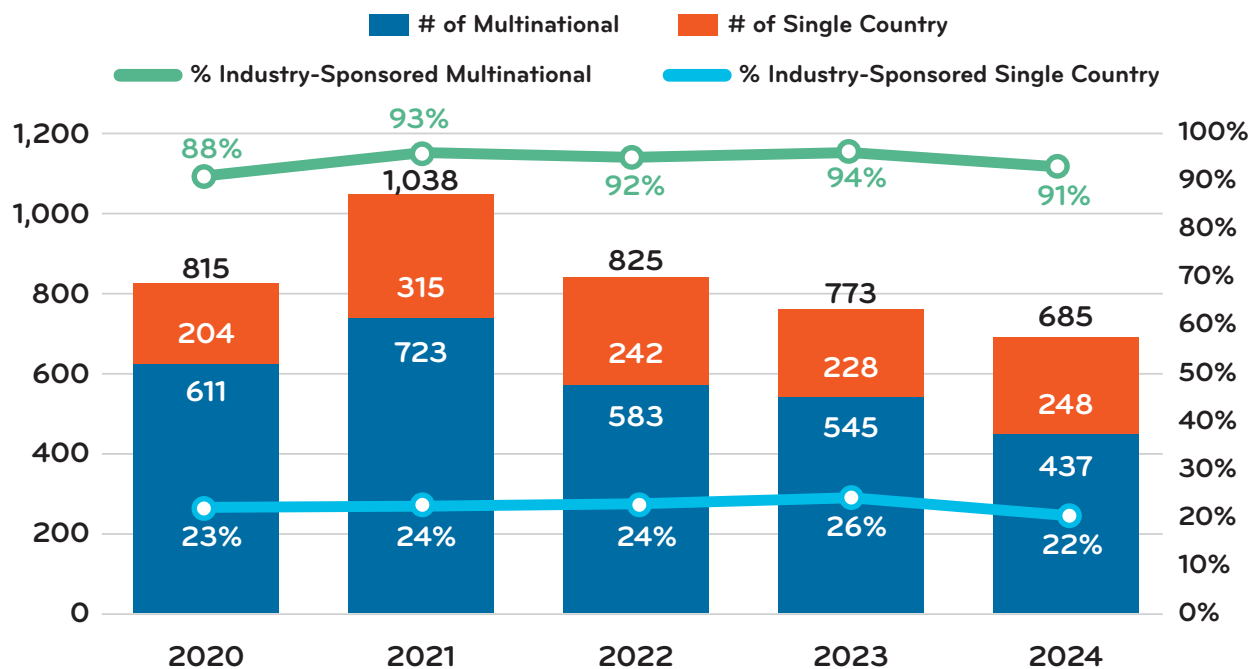


Chart 7: Ongoing Clinical Trials, by Therapeutic Area



Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

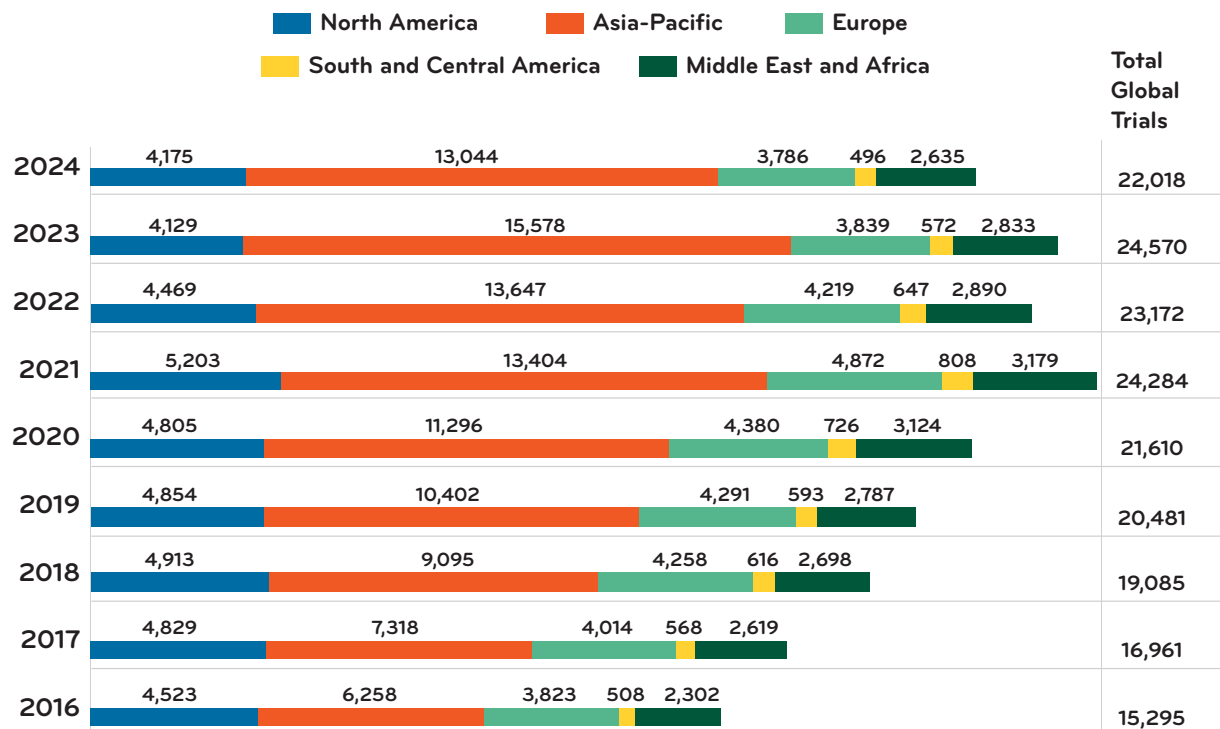
Chart 8: Multinational &amp; Single Country Clinical Trials Initiated in Canada, 2020-2024



Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

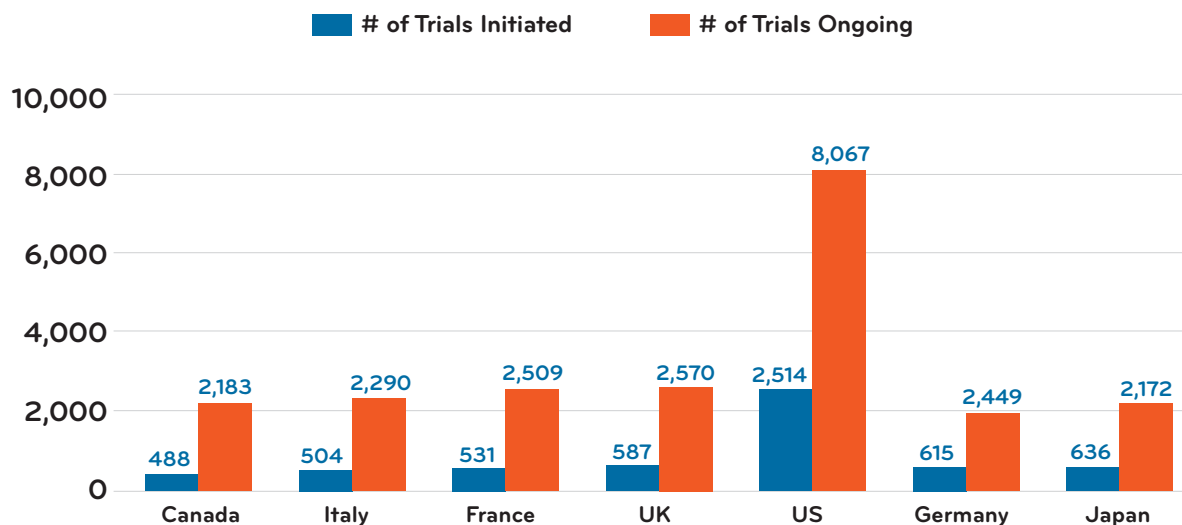


Chart 9: Clinical Trials Initiated, by Region



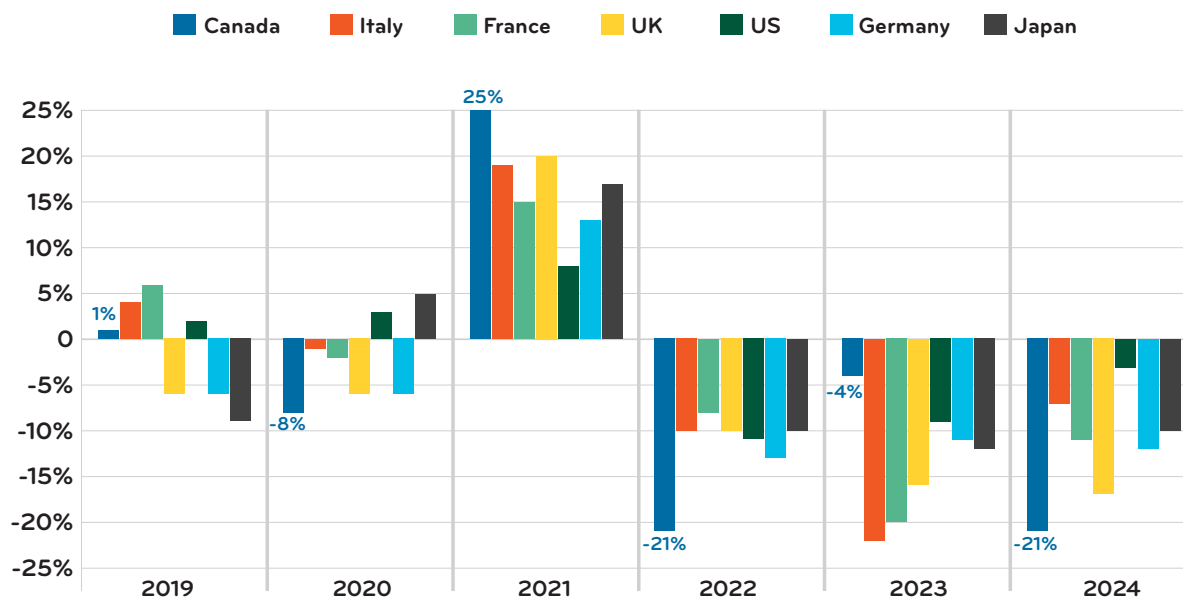
Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies. Regional totals add up to more than the worldwide total due to trials having multiple sites in multiple regions.

Chart 10: Industry-Sponsored Clinical Trials in G7 Countries, 2024



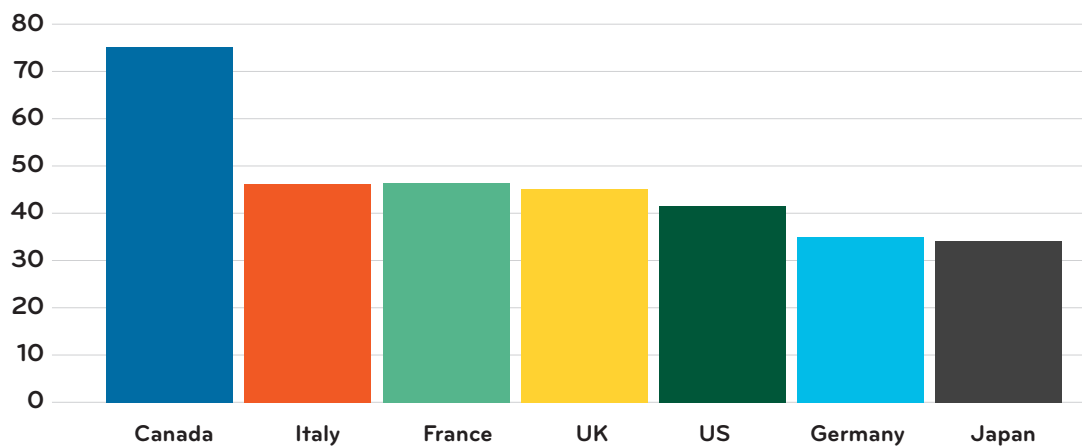
Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

Chart 11: YoY % Change in Industry-Sponsored Trials, G7 Countries



Source: GlobalData, January 2025. Clinical Trials Database. Includes interventional clinical trials, excludes observational and behavioural studies.

Chart 12: Ongoing Clinical Trials per Million Population, G7 Countries, 2025



Source: GlobalData, 2025. Includes interventional trials with ongoing status May 2025. Excludes observational and behavioral studies. World Bank Databank, 2025. Population estimates 2025. Retrieved May 2025. Calculations by IMC.



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