

THE SUPPLY OF PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS IN ALBERTA 2018-2022: THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND COMPANYY?

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BACKGROUND

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic re-emphasized the ongoing concern of Alberta's (AB) primary care physician (PCP) supply.

Some PCPs are leaving the province to practice elsewhere, retire, or limit their practice.

Over the years, patient complexity has increased, and today, community PCPs face the added challenge of providing care in a political environment that has made many consider practice options elsewhere.

GP + FP = PCP
(General Practitioner) (Family Physician) (Primary Care Physician)

This study aimed to numerically and demographically describe trends in the supply of AB PCPs from 2018-2022.

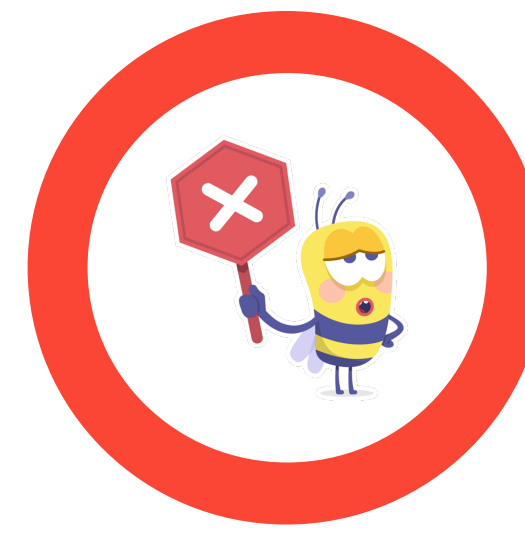
METHODS

The descriptive analysis included demographic information from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of AB for PCPs from 2018, 2020, and 2022.

PCPs were characterized by:

- Year (2018, 2020, 2022).
- Number of years since medical school graduation.
- FP or GP designation.
- Sex.
- Country of medical school graduation.

RESULTS



Pay attention to me, the bee! I will highlight some interesting findings for you.



From 2018 to 2022 the number of PCPs increased from 4949 to 5540. The number of PCPs 31+ years since medical school graduation increased from 1340 to 1446, representing 1/4 of the workforce supply.



The number of PCPs 0 to 5 years since medical school graduation declined from 592 to 476.

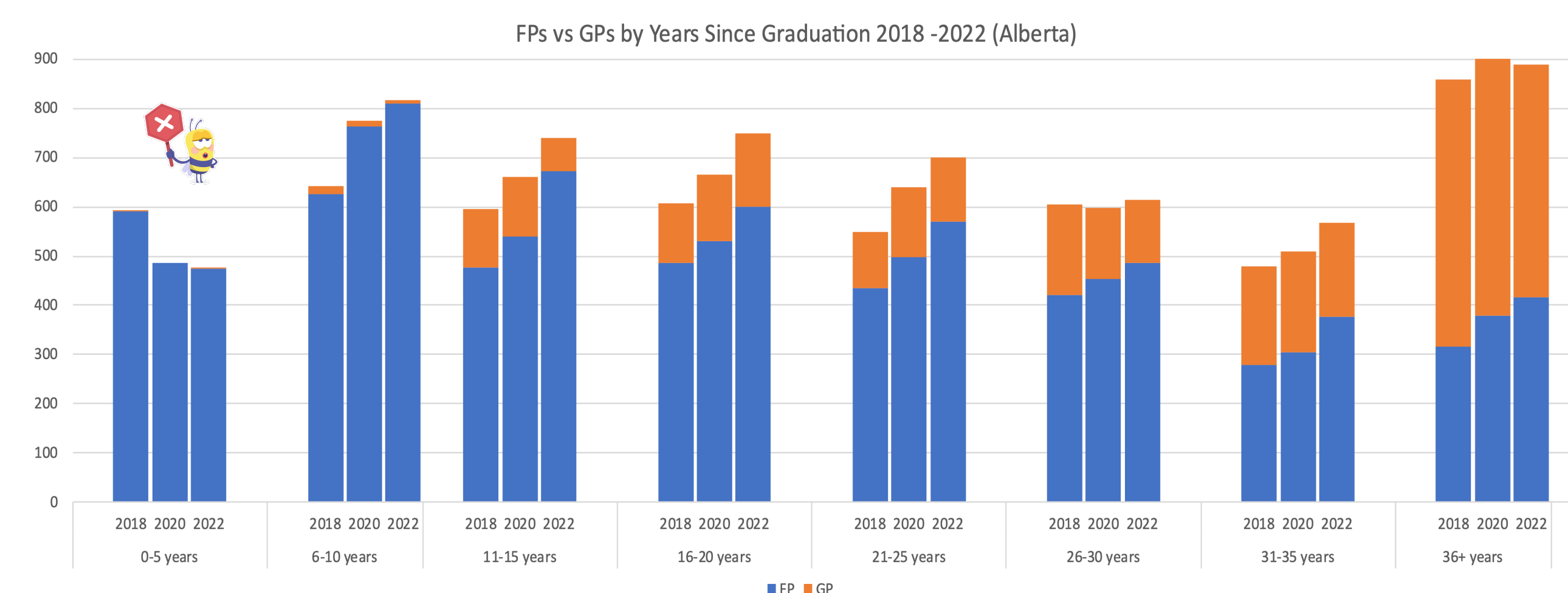


FIGURE 3

The GP cohort was older than the FP cohort, with an average number of years since graduation of 33 to 34 years, as compared to 18 to 22 years in the FP cohort, and 68% to 71% were over 26 years in practice compared to 23% to 29% of the FP group.

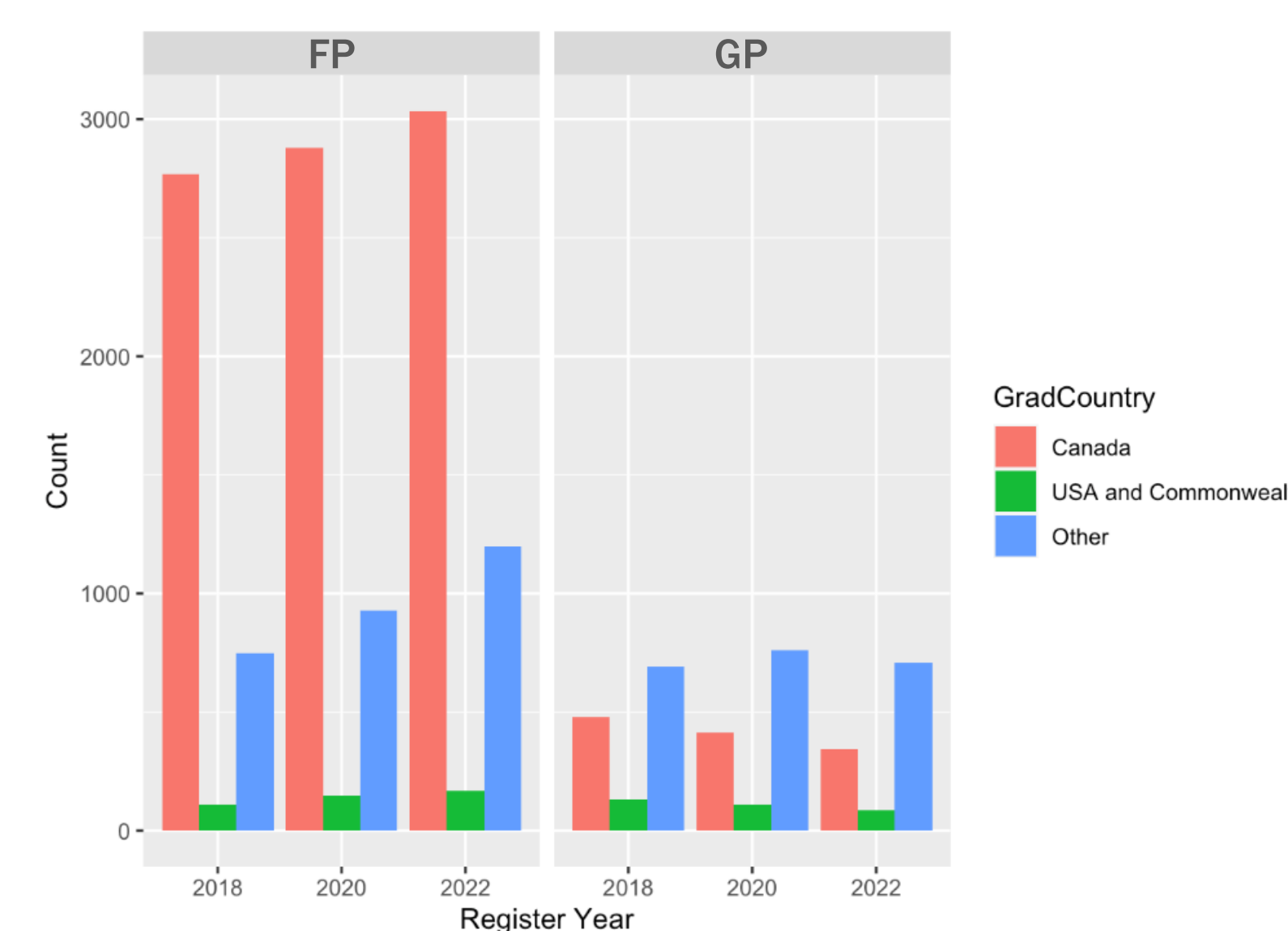


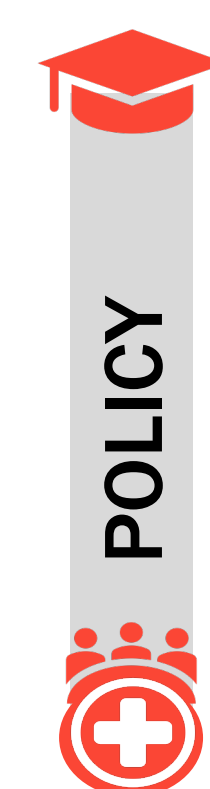
FIGURE 4

DISCUSSION

>25% of AB's PCP workforce is nearing retirement age. The number of younger cohorts was stable, but the decline in new entrants indicates an impending deficit in primary care availability.



We have likely not yet seen the full impact of COVID-19 on PCP recruitment and retention; future research should continue to monitor PCP supply.



Strategies to entice medical students to practice Family Medicine and increase IMGs.

Better utilize the supply of PCPs by shifting toward team-based primary care models.

AB has made some strides to fund a more integrated primary care system:

- Primary Care Networks (PCNs).
- Modernizing AB's Primary Health Care System (MAPS).

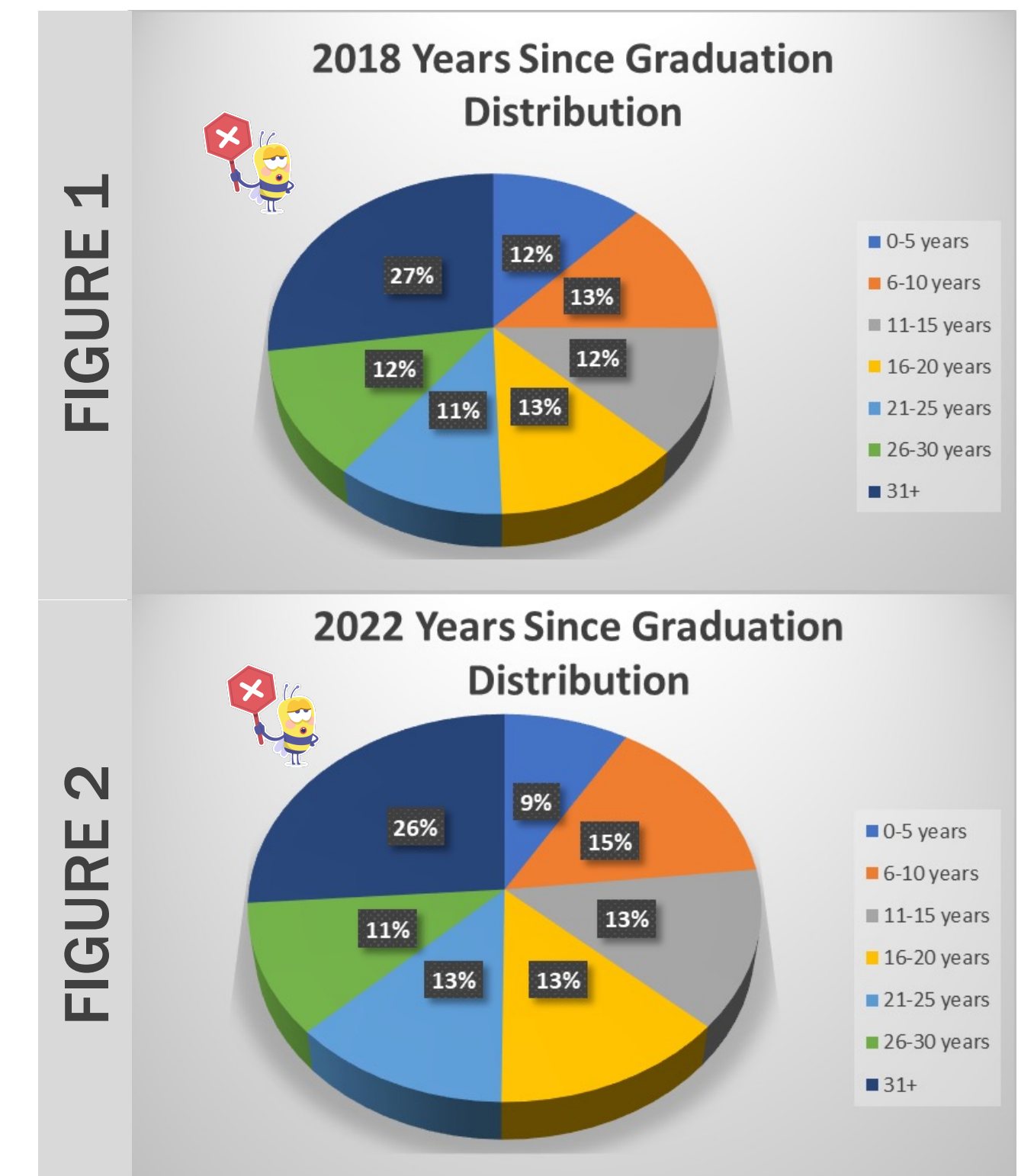


FIGURE 1

FIGURE 2

Over half of all PCPs were male:

- 2018: n=2756 (55.9%).
- 2020: n=2885 (55.1%).
- 2022: n=3010 (54.3%)

