

METHODS NOTE · Peer-reviewed · Published · Dashboard and data figures

CT.gov Completion Cohort Debt

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Abstract

It is not clear whether ClinicalTrials.gov data become more complete when studies are given two years to report. Using 249,507 older, already-closed eligible studies from a March 29, 2026 snapshot, we analysed and grouped them by primary completion year and completion era. Using data on ghost protocols and two-year no-results rates, we carried out the analysis.

The 2008 to 2012 era showed a 64.4 percent no-results rate and a 38.8 percent ghost-protocol rate. However, from 2021 to 2024 this worsened to 77.0 percent and 46.7 percent respectively, with only a 10.8 percent fully visible share. This has been consistent year on year, which shows that eligibility does not reduce registry silence.

These cohort comparisons are descriptive and uneven, reflecting changing trial mix and reporting behaviour.

References

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Live dashboard figure

The figure below is rendered directly from this paper's interactive analysis dashboard, where the full analysis can be reproduced first-hand. **Interactive dashboard:** <https://mahmood726-cyber.github.io/ctgov-completion-cohort-debt/>

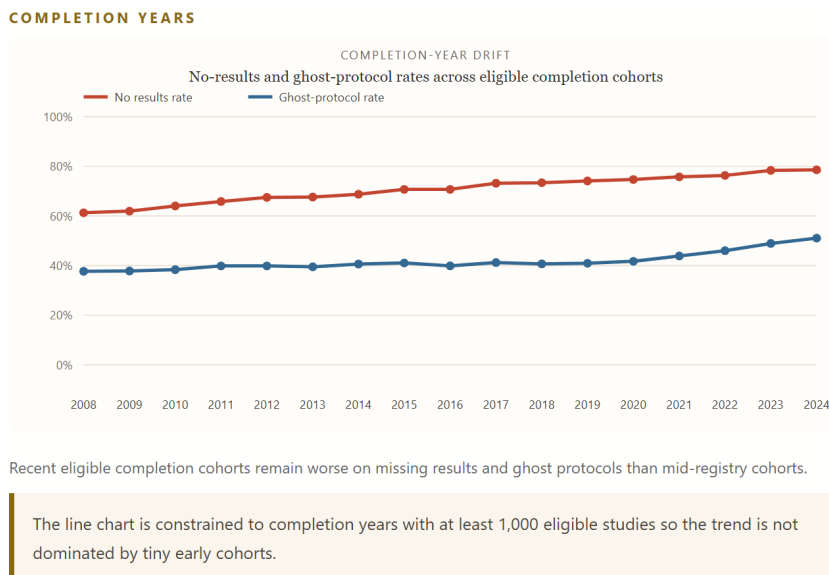


Figure 1. COMPLETION-YEAR DRIFT — No-results and ghost-protocol rates across eligible completion cohorts Rendered directly from the article's live interactive dashboard.

Registry-data figures

This registry-audit paper reports full-registry summary statistics rather than a per-study dataset. The figures below are rendered directly from the statistics reported in the article.

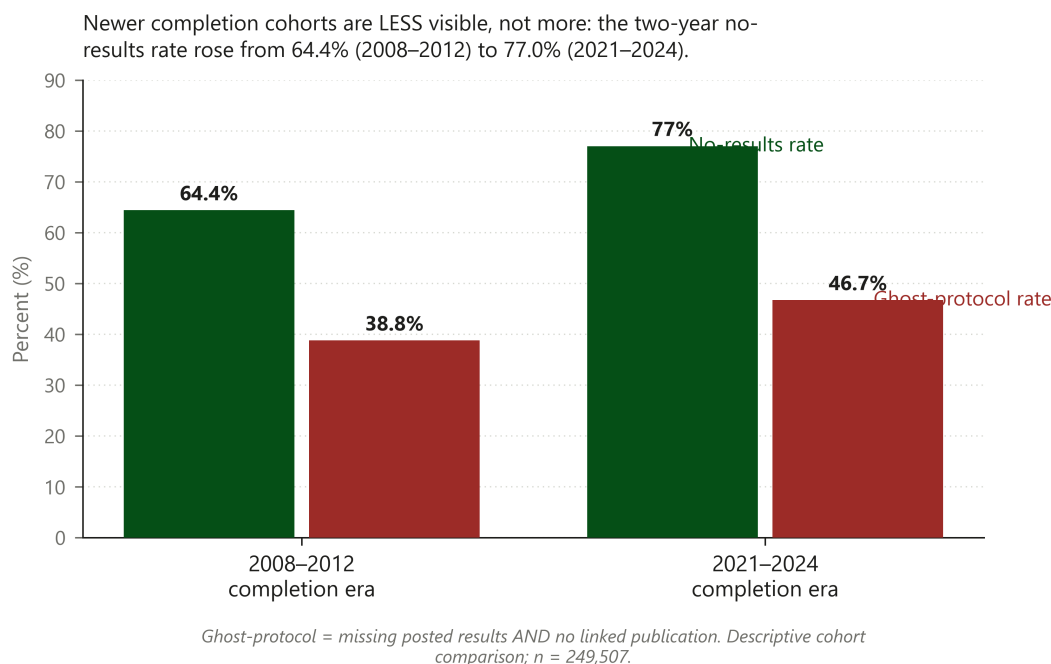


Figure 2. Registry visibility by primary-completion era. Rendered directly from the statistics reported in the article. Two-year no-results and ghost-protocol rates for the 2008–2012 versus 2021–2024 completion eras, among 249,507 eligible older closed interventional studies in the March 29, 2026 ClinicalTrials.gov snapshot. Values are reproduced verbatim from the article's reported statistics; bars are not model estimates.

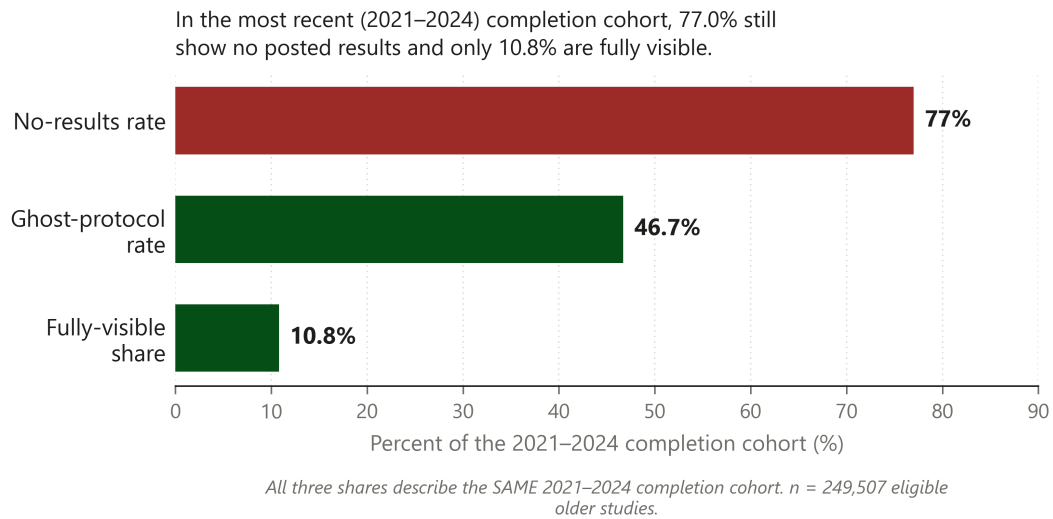


Figure 3. Most-recent completion cohort (2021–2024) visibility. Rendered directly from the statistics reported in the article. For studies whose primary completion fell in 2021–2024, the two-year no-results rate, the ghost-protocol rate and the fully-visible share, reproduced verbatim from the article.

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Reproducibility & data provenance. The live-dashboard figures are rendered directly from <https://mahmood726-cyber.github.io/ctgov-completion-cohort-debt/>, where the analysis can be explored and reproduced interactively; the registry-data figures are rendered directly from the statistics reported in this article. Each figure traces transparently to its source. The article text, authors, abstract, issue and licence follow the journal's published record.

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