

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

- Despite American Academy of Ophthalmology recommendations cautioning against this practice, many payers require patients to try off-label bevacizumab before granting access to ranibizumab.¹
- There is concern that step therapy requirements, particularly for off-label therapies, could expose patients to complications.
- This analysis examined changes over time in payer use of step-therapy requirements for ranibizumab products.

METHODS

Data Source

Tufts Medical Center Specialty Drug Evidence and Coverage (SPEC) Database includes specialty drug coverage decisions issued by 18 large US commercial payers. 17 of these payers covered bevacizumab in 2025.

Analysis

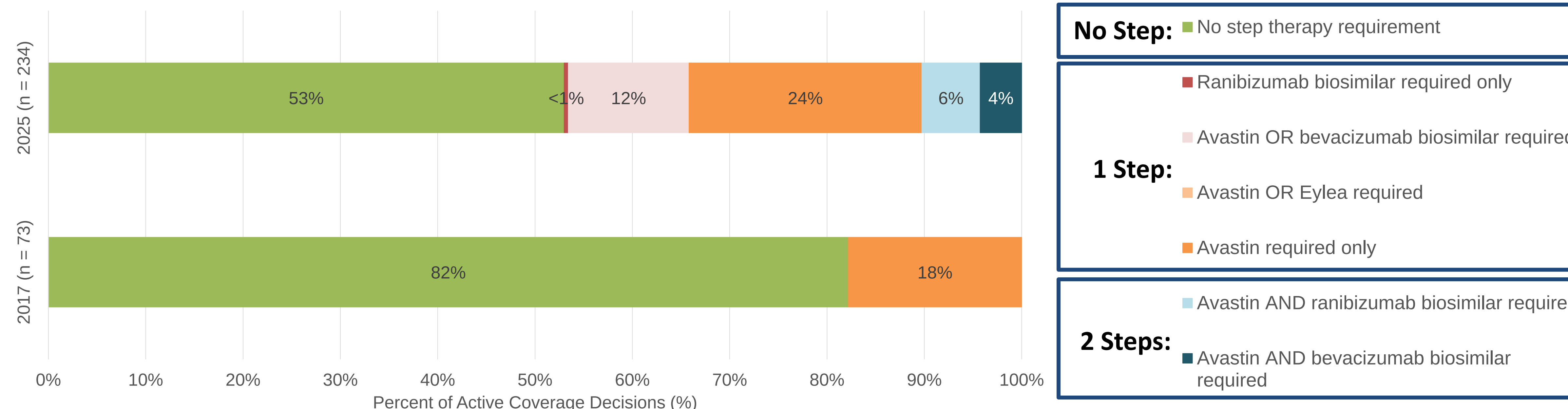
- The objective of this analysis is to examine the frequency with which US commercial health plans include step therapy requirements in their coverage of ranibizumab (Lucentis) and its biosimilars over time.

We analyzed trends in:

- ✓ We categorized policies according to the number of non-requested products patients were required to try before accessing the requested ranibizumab product: no step therapy, 1 step, or 2 steps
- ✓ Longitudinal trends with stratification by brand
- ✓ 2025 step-therapy requirements, by payer

RESULTS

Figure 1. Step Therapy Requirements for Ranibizumab Products, 2017 vs. 2025



Key Points

- Payers are increasingly requiring patients to try lower-cost alternatives, such as bevacizumab products, before accessing ranibizumab products.
- Step-therapy requirements most often favor Avastin, the originator bevacizumab product, although practices vary across payers.
- Step-therapy requirements were similar across retinal indications despite differences in clinical guidance.

CONCLUSION

Figure 3. 2025 Step Therapy Requirements, by Ranibizumab Product

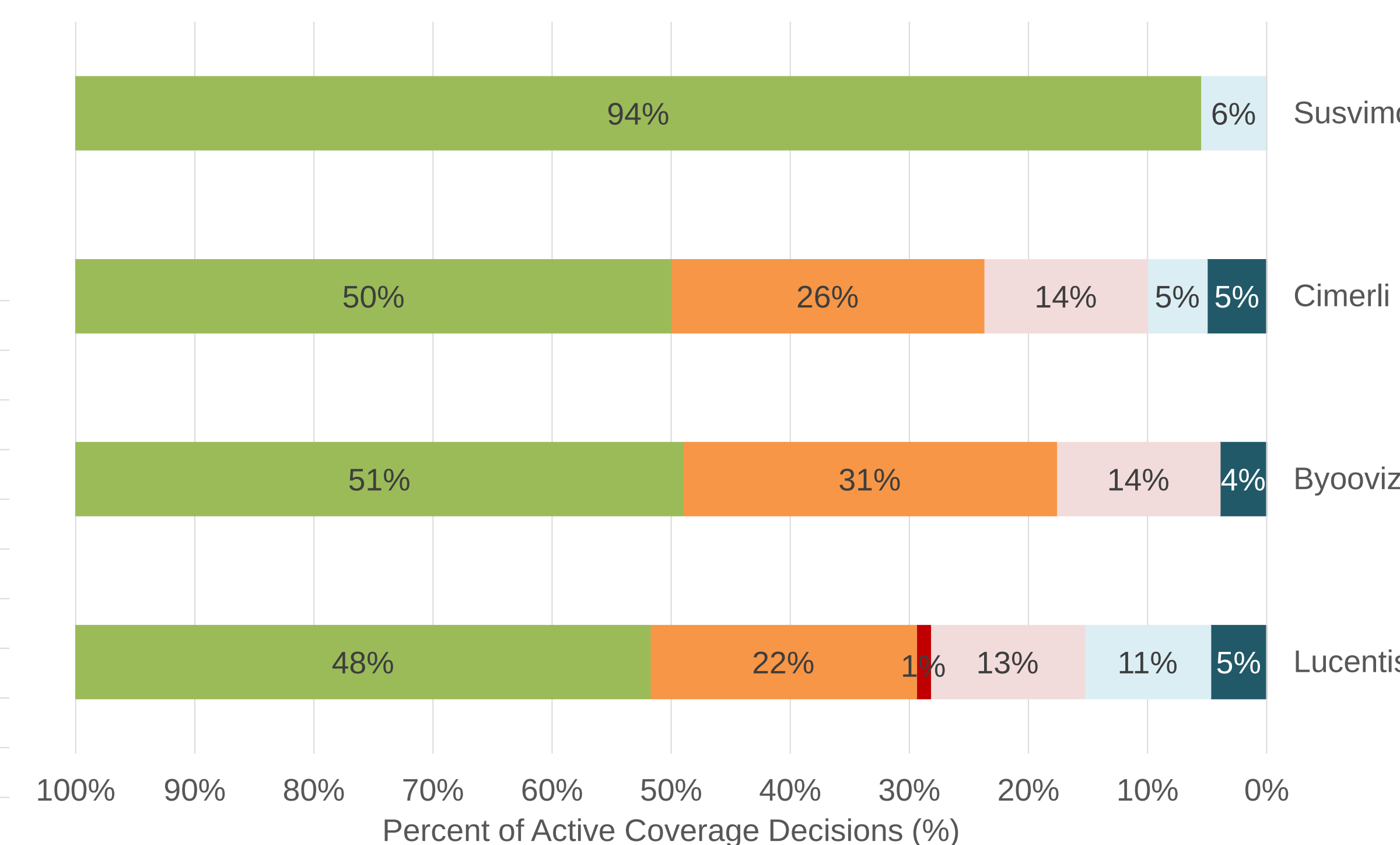
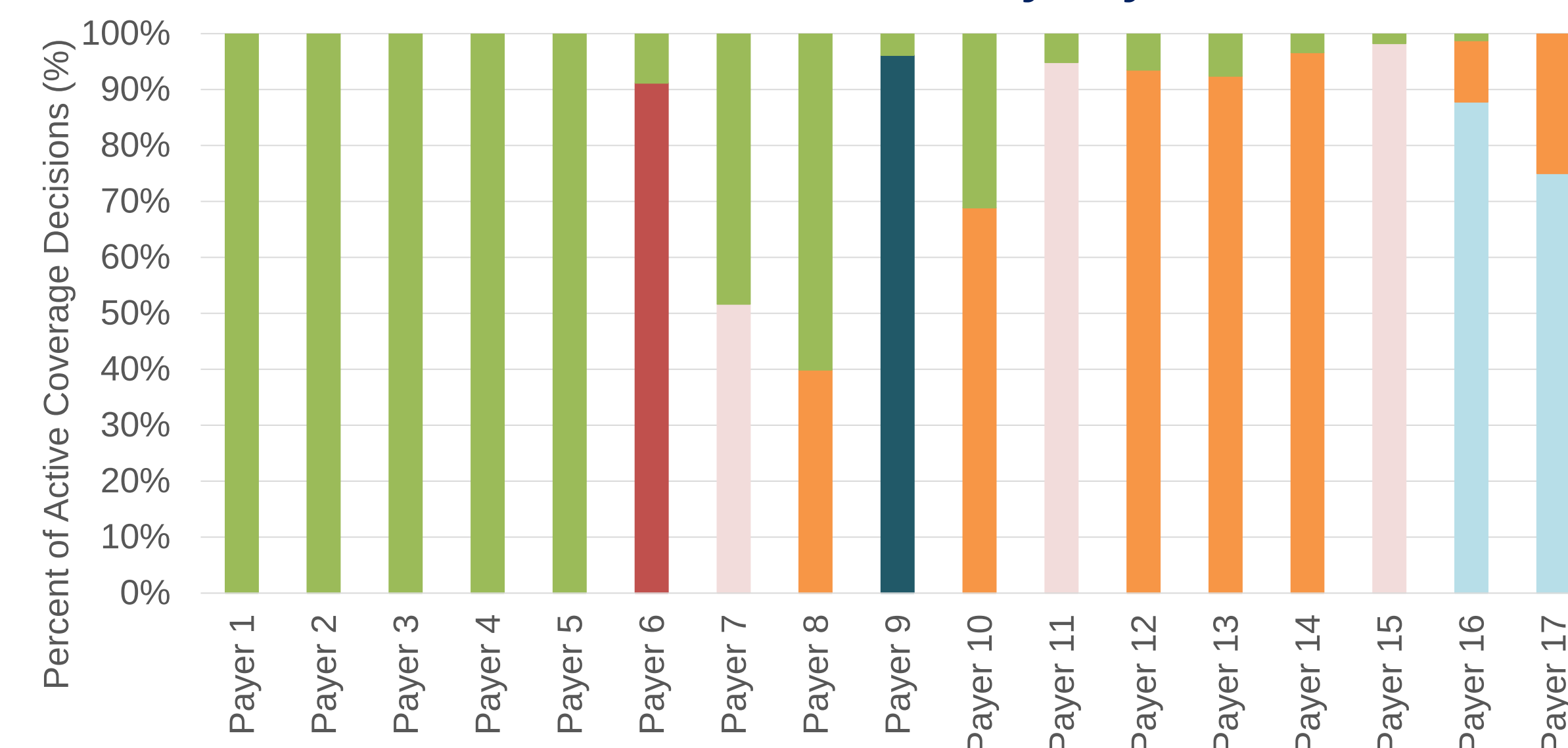


Figure 2. 2025 Step Therapy Requirements for Ranibizumab Products, by Payer



- Over time, payers have increasingly imposed step-therapy requirements for ranibizumab products.
- In 2017, 18% (13/73) of coverage decisions required a step through a non-requested product compared to 47% (110/234) in 2025.
- In 2025, payers varied in their use of step therapy requirements. Notably, five payers did not include any step therapy requirements.
- Only three payers required 2 steps in any of their decisions.

- Nearly all 2025 coverage decisions for Susvimo (17/19; 94%) did not require step therapy.
- Step therapy requirements for Cimerli, Byooviz, and Lucentis were similar, with Byooviz most often requiring 2 steps in its coverage decisions (13/85, 15%).

- Off-label bevacizumab offers substantial cost savings relative to ranibizumab and is increasingly incorporated into payer step-therapy requirements. However, step-therapy practices vary considerably across payers. Avastin remains the predominant bevacizumab product used in these protocols, with relatively few payers requiring bevacizumab biosimilars.

REFERENCES

1. The Use of Biosimilars in Ophthalmic Practice - 2022. American Academy of Ophthalmology January 1, 2022. Accessed October 7, 2026. <https://www.aao.org/education/clinical-statement/use-of-biosimilars-in-ophthalmic-practice>

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