

INFORMATION  
ANALYSIS  
DIRECTORATE



# Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending September 2021



Department of  
**Health**  
An Roinn Sláinte  
Máinnystrie O Poustie  
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**NISRA**  
Northern Ireland  
Statistics and Research Agency  
Gníomhaireacht Thuaisceart Éireann  
um Staitisticí agus Taighde

# Reader Information

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**Purpose:** This statistical release presents information on waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland and reports on the performance of the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts against the 2021/22 Draft Ministerial waiting time target, which states that:

*“By March 2022, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment; with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.”*

This statistical release details information on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting, for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in HSC Trusts at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (including patients waiting to be seen at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC)). It also includes activity for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during the quarter ending September 2021. Data are presented by HSC Trust, specialty and time band. Information on Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS) waiting times are available in the accompanying CSV file.

**Statistical Quality:** The ‘*Outpatient Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*’ booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/outpatient-waiting-times-supporting-documentation>.

Due to the redeployment of resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, the data contained within this publication has not been subject to the usual level of quality assurance; data related to the Southern HSC Trust for quarter ending December 2020 is provisional and will be amended as necessary in future publications.

**Internet:** <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times>

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**Target audience:** Department of Health (DoH), Chief Executives of the HSC Board and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, Health & Social Care stakeholders, academics, the media and the general public.

**Price:** Free

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**By March 2022, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks.**

There were  
**358,346 patients**  
waiting for a first outpatient  
appointment in Northern  
Ireland



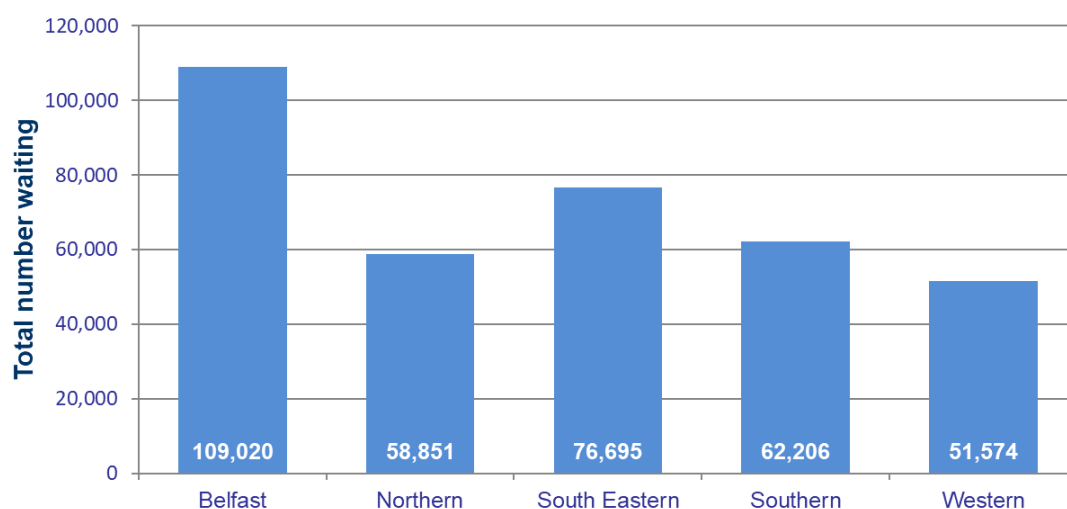
An **increase of 2.7%** on  
the previous quarter



An **increase of 9.5%** on  
the same quarter last year

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

At 30th September 2021, 358,346 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 2.7% (9,479) more than at 30th June 2021 (348,867) and 9.5% (31,157) more than at 30th September 2020 (327,189) (Table 1). This does not include patients waiting to be seen at a Day Case Procedure Centre.



Almost a third (30.4%) of those waiting were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 21.4% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 17.4% in the Southern HSC Trust, 16.4% in the Northern HSC Trust and 14.4% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust, and instead are provided as centralised services for Northern Ireland. As patients are reported against the HSC Trust responsible for the service to which they have been referred, users should be cautious in how they use these data (see explanatory note 9).

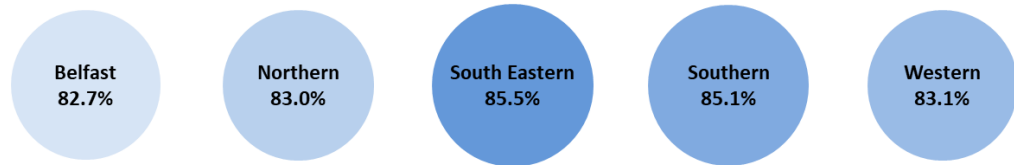
Of the 358,346 patients waiting, 61.7% (221,262) were waiting in one of the following specialties: General Surgery (46,616); Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (43,471); Dermatology (31,309); Gynaecology (28,511); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery (26,738); Ophthalmology (22,387) and Neurology (22,230) (Table 3a).

## Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th September 2021

By March 2022, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

This element was **not achieved** by any HSC Trust

**83.8%**  
of patients  
were waiting longer  
than 9 weeks



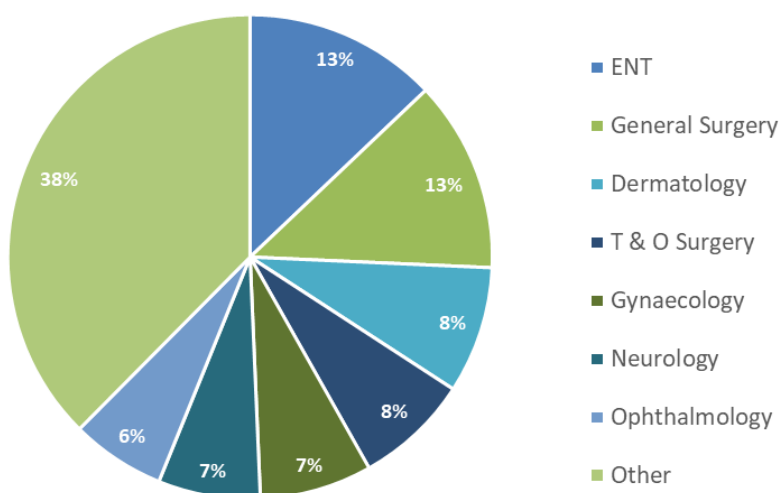
Percentage waiting over 9 weeks

Over four fifths (83.8%, 300,451) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30th September 2021, compared with 82.0% (285,937) at 30th June 2021 and 84.9% (277,776) at 30th September 2020 (Table 1).

The 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2b). Data users should be aware that not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Over four fifths of patients in each HSC Trust were waiting longer than 9 weeks; (85.5%, 65,595) in the South Eastern HSC Trust; 85.1% (52,933) in the Southern HSC Trust, 83.1% (42,843) in the Western HSC Trust, 83.0% (48,874) in the Northern HSC Trust, and 82.7% (90,206) in the Belfast HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks by specialty



More than three-fifths (62.4%, 187,608) of the 300,451 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Dermatology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Gynaecology; Neurology and Ophthalmology (Table 3a).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

## Patients waiting more than 52 weeks at 30th September 2021

By March 2022, no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

This element was **not achieved** by any HSC Trust

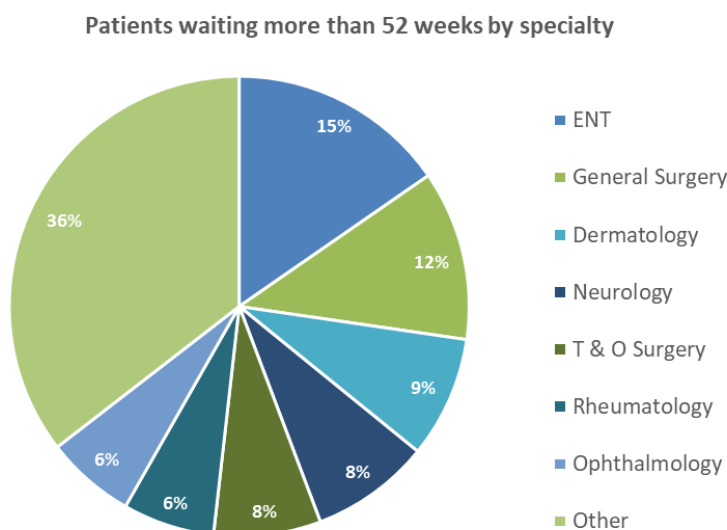
**188,060**  
patients  
were waiting longer  
than 52 weeks



At 30th September 2021, 52.5% (188,060) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 53.0% (184,873) at 30th June 2021, and 47.5% (155,497) at 30th September 2020 (Table 1).

The 52 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2a). Data users should be aware that not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Over three fifths (60.2%, 46,169) of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks, 53.0% (32,943) in the Southern HSC Trust, 50.7% (26,141) in the Western HSC Trust, 50.3% (29,617) in the Northern HSC Trust and 48.8% (53,190) in the Belfast HSC Trust (Table 2a).



Almost two thirds (64.5%, 121,366) of the 188,060 patients waiting more than 52 weeks were in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Dermatology; Neurology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Rheumatology and Ophthalmology (Table 3a).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

## Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre

In October 2016 the then Health Minister launched 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together,' a strategy which underpins the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Programme for Government ambition to support people to lead long, healthy and active lives.

As part of this strategy, the Elective Care Plan was published in February 2017 which stated that 'Regional Elective Care Assessment and Treatment Centres will be established to deliver large volumes of assessments and non-complex routine surgery across a broad range of specialties.' In June 2018, prototype 'Day Case Procedure Centres' (DPCs) became operational for the surgical treatment of Cataracts and Varicose Veins for outpatients and day cases. Patients waiting for either of these procedures can now be referred to a DPC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.

DPCs have been set up in the following locations:

DPC	Location(s) of Centre
Cataracts	Mid Ulster Hospital (Northern HSC Trust) Downe Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust) South Tyrone Hospital (Southern HSC Trust)
Varicose Veins	Lagan Valley Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust) Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex (Western HSC Trust)

Due to these changes in operational service delivery and concomitant changes in how Outpatient waiting times are recorded, the following data and information about DPC Waiting Lists is provisional and subject to revision.

At 30th September 2021, 13,978 patients were waiting to be seen for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts DPC with 2 patients waiting for varicose veins treatment at a DPC (Table 5).

Note that DPC data have not been assessed as National Statistics, but have been quality assured with HSC Trusts.

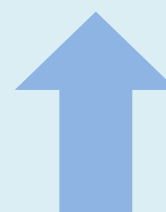


## Completed waits for a first outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during quarter ending September 2021

There were  
**81,016**  
**first outpatient attendances**  
commissioned by the Health Service



A **decrease** of **2.5%** on the previous quarter

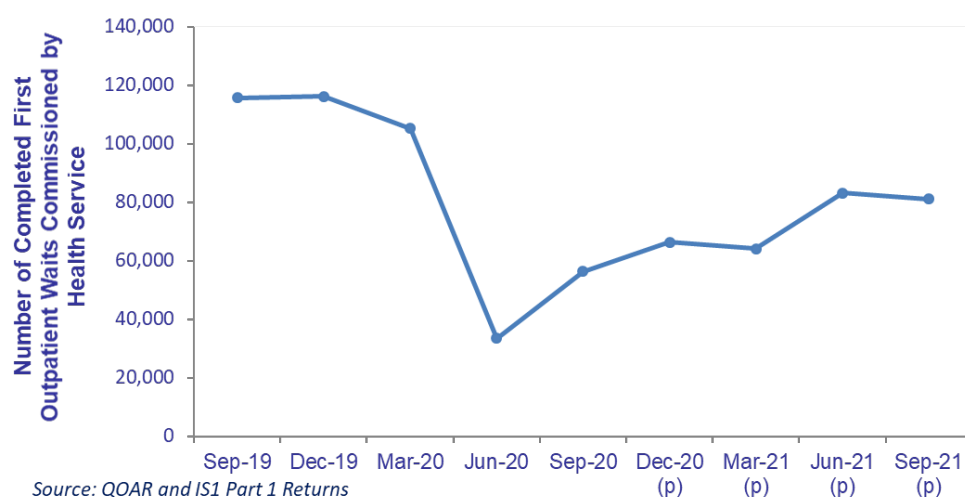


An **increase** of **43.8%** on the same quarter last year

Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

Users should be aware that the COVID-19 Pandemic drastically altered the functions of hospitals during the current reporting period and should exercise caution when using these provisional data given that hospital records may not be fully updated at this time.

There were 77,261 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland, 4.7% (3,796) less than the number of attendances during the previous quarter (81,057), and 38.8% (21,615) more than the number of attendances during the quarter ending September 2020 (55,646). During the quarter ending September 2021, 176 patients attended their appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) (Table 4).



Within the Independent Sector, 3,579 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, 91.9% (1,714) more than during the quarter ending June 2021 (1,865), and almost six times as many as in the same quarter last year (614) (Table 4).

Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns  
Note: Data for the latest 4 quarters are provisional

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service within the Independent Sector (3,579) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals (77,261), and those attending a DPC (176), provisional figures indicate that 81,016 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by the Health Service. This is a decrease

of 2.5% (2,088) on the number seen during the quarter ending June 2021 (83,104) and 43.8% (24,695) more than during the quarter ending September 2020 (56,321) (Table 4)).

Outpatient and DPC attendance data are fully validated once per year and, as such, provisional figures presented in this section do not hold National Statistics status. Independent Sector data are provided by the Health and Social Care Board and are also not National Statistics.

## Appendix 1: Tables

**Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 30th September 2021<sup>1</sup>**

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (30th Sept 2021)	Previous Quarter (30th June 2021)	Same Quarter Last Year (30th Sept 2020)
Total Patients Waiting	358,346	348,867	327,189
Number waiting over 9 weeks	300,451	285,937	277,776
<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	<i>83.8%</i>	<i>82.0%</i>	<i>84.9%</i>
Number waiting over 52 weeks	188,060	184,873	155,497

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

<sup>1</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13

**Table 2a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 30th September 2021<sup>1</sup>**

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Belfast	14,203	4,611	3,713	4,018	3,829	25,456	53,190	109,020
Northern	7,350	2,627	2,194	2,305	1,847	12,911	29,617	58,851
South Eastern	8,471	2,629	1,998	2,069	1,732	13,627	46,169	76,695
Southern	7,092	2,181	1,865	2,190	1,819	14,116	32,943	62,206
Western	6,787	1,944	1,719	1,791	1,581	11,611	26,141	51,574
<b>Total</b>	<b>43,903</b>	<b>13,992</b>	<b>11,489</b>	<b>12,373</b>	<b>10,808</b>	<b>77,721</b>	<b>188,060</b>	<b>358,346</b>

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

<sup>1</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13

**Table 2b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 30th September 2021<sup>1</sup>**

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Belfast	13.0%	4.2%	3.4%	3.7%	3.5%	23.3%	48.8%	
Northern	12.5%	4.5%	3.7%	3.9%	3.1%	21.9%	50.3%	
South Eastern	11.0%	3.4%	2.6%	2.7%	2.3%	17.8%	60.2%	
Southern	11.4%	3.5%	3.0%	3.5%	2.9%	22.7%	53.0%	
Western	13.2%	3.8%	3.3%	3.5%	3.1%	22.5%	50.7%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>52.5%</b>	

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

<sup>1</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13

**Table 3a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 30th September 2021<sup>1</sup>**

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
General Surgery	6,482	1,691	1,416	1,606	1,443	11,538	22,440	<b>46,616</b>
ENT	3,572	1,103	839	963	903	7,181	28,910	<b>43,471</b>
Dermatology	4,308	1,552	1,325	1,105	964	5,998	16,057	<b>31,309</b>
Gynaecology	4,472	1,524	1,322	1,422	1,224	8,510	10,037	<b>28,511</b>
T & O Surgery	3,031	730	730	811	696	6,567	14,173	<b>26,738</b>
Ophthalmology	2,539	927	787	788	798	4,716	11,832	<b>22,387</b>
Neurology	1,207	516	476	490	460	3,259	15,822	<b>22,230</b>
Rheumatology	1,114	424	399	441	397	3,530	12,132	<b>18,437</b>
Gastroenterology	2,053	826	635	729	546	3,770	8,644	<b>17,203</b>
Paediatrics	2,882	977	829	988	723	3,979	5,466	<b>15,844</b>
Oral Surgery	707	216	213	234	208	1,677	8,734	<b>11,989</b>
General Medicine	1,567	459	315	354	365	2,594	6,156	<b>11,810</b>
Thoracic Medicine	1,173	399	321	351	301	2,382	6,196	<b>11,123</b>
Urology	1,566	477	234	284	262	2,048	5,917	<b>10,788</b>
Cardiology	2,045	620	503	533	448	3,038	3,414	<b>10,601</b>
Pain Management	576	220	192	230	198	1,809	5,004	<b>8,229</b>
Plastic Surgery	673	187	168	193	153	1,072	3,424	<b>5,870</b>
Geriatric Medicine	650	213	147	143	89	359	452	<b>2,053</b>
Endocrinology	425	175	100	137	128	663	310	<b>1,938</b>
Other*	2,861	756	538	571	502	3,031	2,940	<b>11,199</b>
<b>All Specialties</b>	<b>43,903</b>	<b>13,992</b>	<b>11,489</b>	<b>12,373</b>	<b>10,808</b>	<b>77,721</b>	<b>188,060</b>	<b>358,346</b>

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

<sup>1</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13

\*The 'Other' category includes the following specialties: Haematology (Clinical), Old Age Psychiatry, Restorative Dentistry, Paediatric Surgery, Orthodontics, Neurosurgery, Dental Medicine Specialties, Nephrology, Clinical Oncology, Paediatric Dentistry, Clinical Genetics, Chemical Pathology, Paediatric Neurology, Infectious Diseases, Cardiac Surgery, Rehabilitation, Learning Disability, Thoracic Surgery, Medical Oncology, Radiology, Palliative Medicine, Genito-Urinary Medicine, Joint Consultant Clinics

**Table 3b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and speciality – 30th September 2021<sup>1</sup>**

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting						
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52
General Surgery	13.9%	3.6%	3.0%	3.4%	3.1%	24.8%	48.1%
ENT	8.2%	2.5%	1.9%	2.2%	2.1%	16.5%	66.5%
Dermatology	13.8%	5.0%	4.2%	3.5%	3.1%	19.2%	51.3%
Gynaecology	15.7%	5.3%	4.6%	5.0%	4.3%	29.8%	35.2%
T & O Surgery	11.3%	2.7%	2.7%	3.0%	2.6%	24.6%	53.0%
Ophthalmology	11.3%	4.1%	3.5%	3.5%	3.6%	21.1%	52.9%
Neurology	5.4%	2.3%	2.1%	2.2%	2.1%	14.7%	71.2%
Rheumatology	6.0%	2.3%	2.2%	2.4%	2.2%	19.1%	65.8%
Gastroenterology	11.9%	4.8%	3.7%	4.2%	3.2%	21.9%	50.2%
Paediatrics	18.2%	6.2%	5.2%	6.2%	4.6%	25.1%	34.5%
Oral Surgery	5.9%	1.8%	1.8%	2.0%	1.7%	14.0%	72.9%
General Medicine	13.3%	3.9%	2.7%	3.0%	3.1%	22.0%	52.1%
Thoracic Medicine	10.5%	3.6%	2.9%	3.2%	2.7%	21.4%	55.7%
Urology	14.5%	4.4%	2.2%	2.6%	2.4%	19.0%	54.8%
Cardiology	19.3%	5.8%	4.7%	5.0%	4.2%	28.7%	32.2%
Pain Management	7.0%	2.7%	2.3%	2.8%	2.4%	22.0%	60.8%
Plastic Surgery	11.5%	3.2%	2.9%	3.3%	2.6%	18.3%	58.3%
Geriatric Medicine	31.7%	10.4%	7.2%	7.0%	4.3%	17.5%	22.0%
Endocrinology	21.9%	9.0%	5.2%	7.1%	6.6%	34.2%	16.0%
Other*	25.5%	6.8%	4.8%	5.1%	4.5%	27.1%	26.3%
<b>All Specialties</b>	<b>12.3%</b>	<b>3.9%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>21.7%</b>	<b>52.5%</b>

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

<sup>1</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13

\*The 'Other' category includes the following specialties: Haematology (Clinical), Old Age Psychiatry, Restorative Dentistry, Paediatric Surgery, Orthodontics, Neurosurgery, Dental Medicine Specialties, Nephrology, Clinical Oncology, Paediatric Dentistry, Clinical Genetics, Chemical Pathology, Paediatric Neurology, Infectious Diseases, Cardiac Surgery, Rehabilitation, Learning Disability, Thoracic Surgery, Medical Oncology, Radiology, Palliative Medicine, Genito-Urinary Medicine, Joint Consultant Clinics

**Table 4: Number of completed waits for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service: QE September 2019 - QE September 2021<sup>2</sup>**

Quarter Ending	Number of Completed First Outpatient Waits			
	Within Health Service Hospitals	Within Day Case Procedure Centres	Independent Sector	Total Commissioned by Health Service
Sep-19	114,423	109	1,168	115,700
Dec-19	114,817	155	1,135	116,107
Mar-20	102,572	181	2,515	105,268
Jun-20	33,256	0	297	33,553
Sep-20	55,646	61	614	56,321
Dec-20 (p)	64,873	161	1,365	66,399
Mar-21 (p)	59,448	155	4,583	64,186
Jun-21 (p)	81,057	182	1,865	83,104
Sep-21 (p)	77,261	176	3,579	81,016

Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

(p) Data are currently provisional

\* Not National Statistics

<sup>2</sup>Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4 & 11-13

**Table 5: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts or Varicose Veins Day Case Procedure Centre, by weeks waiting, 30th September 2021**

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Ophthalmology	1,016	462	397	471	395	3,926	7,311	13,978
General Surgery	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Total	1,016	464	397	471	395	3,926	7,311	13,980

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

\* Not National Statistics

## Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the DoH CH3, QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns and the DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset. These returns collect information from Health and Social Care Trusts on a quarterly basis.
2. The '*Outpatient Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*' booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times>.
3. All of the data contained in the tables are available on a quarterly basis and can be supplied by individual specialty or Provider HSC Trust if this level of detail is required. In addition, quarterly data relating to waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment have been published in spreadsheet format (CSV), split by HSC Trust, Specialty and Programme of Care, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-September-2021>.
4. Information includes patients living outside Northern Ireland and privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
5. Outpatient waiters are defined as patients still waiting for their first outpatient appointment at the end of the quarter, including those who have cancelled or missed a previous appointment. An outpatient appointment is to enable a patient to see a consultant, a member of their team or locum for such a member, in respect of one referral. Waiting time for a first outpatient appointment begins on the date the HSC Trust receives a referral for a first outpatient appointment and ends on the date a patient attends a first outpatient appointment. Patients who cannot attend (CNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date they informed the HSC Trust they could not attend, while patients who do not attend (DNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date of their DNA.
6. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014, Oral Surgery services undertaken by consultants contracted to the South Eastern HSC Trust were centralised, meaning that records for patients waiting for this service in both the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts are now held and managed in the South Eastern HSC Trust.
7. Each outpatient waiting time band relates to the number of completed weeks a patient has been waiting for outpatient assessment. For example, a patient waiting exactly 6 weeks would be

included in the 0-6 week time band and a patient waiting 6 weeks and 1 day would be included in the >6-9 (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) time band. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as set out in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction states that by March 2022, 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.

8. Some people will be waiting on more than one waiting list or be on the waiting list for more than one outpatient appointment/admission/diagnostic test at the same time due to having more than one condition.
9. A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust or at each of the five HSC Trusts, and instead are provided as centralised services for Northern Ireland. In such circumstances, patients from one HSC Trust area will be waiting to be seen at a service provided at another HSC Trust. In some cases a consultant from one HSC Trust may provide a 'visiting' service at another HSC Trust, and so the patient may not be reported at the HSC Trust at which they attend. Users should therefore be cautious in how they use these data. For example, they should not be used to calculate the total number of patients waiting per head of the population residing within each Trust area, as HSC Trusts that provide services for the whole of Northern Ireland will have a higher number of patients waiting per head of the population than those that provide more localised services. Neither should the actual number of patients waiting longer than the recommended waiting time be used as indicator of poor performance within an individual HSC Trust. Users who require an indication of the latter are advised to refer to the commentary section of the publication which provides an indication of the percentage of total waiters that have been waiting over the maximum recommended waiting times, within each HSC Trust
10. In February 2019, prototype 'Day Case Procedure Centres' (DPCs) became operational for the surgical outpatient treatment of Cataracts. Patients waiting for this procedure can now be referred to a DPC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.
11. The total number of completed outpatient waits each quarter, within HSC hospitals, is derived as the total number of attendances at a first outpatient appointment from the Departmental Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR) and the Regional Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (R-QOAR).
12. The number of patients who received an outpatient assessment, commissioned by the Health Service, in the Independent Sector is collected on the IS1 Part 1 Return. These figures are provided by the HSC Board. They are published for each transferring Health and Social Care



Trust (Trust responsible for the patient's waiting time). They are not National Statistics and they have not been validated by the Department; however, they have been included to provide users with a comprehensive view of completed outpatient waits during each quarter.

13. HIB surveyed data providers during 2011/12 to ascertain the cost of producing, validating and submitting the information required for this publication. This relates to the time taken to generate, validate and submit data, over and above what is already required by their organisation for internal performance management purposes. The cost to data providers of compliance within HIB's requirements for this publication, based on HSC salary costs at the time of the survey, was £3,110.
14. Due to the redeployment of resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, data related to the Southern HSC Trust for quarter ending December 2020 did not undergo the usual levels of quality assurance. The impact of this has been assessed as negligible, however the data remain provisional and will be amended as necessary in future publications.
15. Figures relating to outpatient waiting times for the quarter ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021 will be released on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2022. It is planned that this publication will be issued in a new and interactive html format.

## Appendix 3: National Statistics

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The statistics last underwent a full assessment against the Code of Practice in 2011 and designation was awarded in December 2013.

Since the assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

In November 2021, the Office for Statistics Regulation conducted a compliance check on these statistics and confirmed that they should continue to be designated as National Statistics. Further details can be found [here](#).

**Further information on Outpatient Waiting Times in Northern Ireland is available from:**

Hospital Information Branch  
Information & Analysis Directorate  
Department of Health  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

✉ Email: [statistics@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:statistics@health-ni.gov.uk)

**This Statistical bulletin and others published by Hospital Information Branch are available to download from the DoH Internet site at:**

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research>