

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland

Waiting Time Statistics:

Diagnostic Waiting Times

Quarter Ending June 2018



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

www.health-ni.gov.uk

Reader Information

Purpose: This statistical release presents information on waiting times and reporting times for diagnostic services in Northern Ireland and reports on the performance of the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts against the draft 2018/19 Ministerial waiting time target and the draft 2018/19 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target:

“By March 2019, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks”.

“By March 2019, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within two days of the test being undertaken”.

This statistical release details information on waiting times and reporting times for diagnostic services in HSC Trusts at 30th June 2018. Data are presented by HSC Trust, diagnostic category, diagnostic test, and time band. Further information on routine diagnostic reporting times is available in the accompanying CSV file.

Statistical Quality: The ‘*Diagnostic 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/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-june-2018>

Internet: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/diagnostic-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, academics, and Health & Social Care stakeholders, the media and general public.

Price: Free

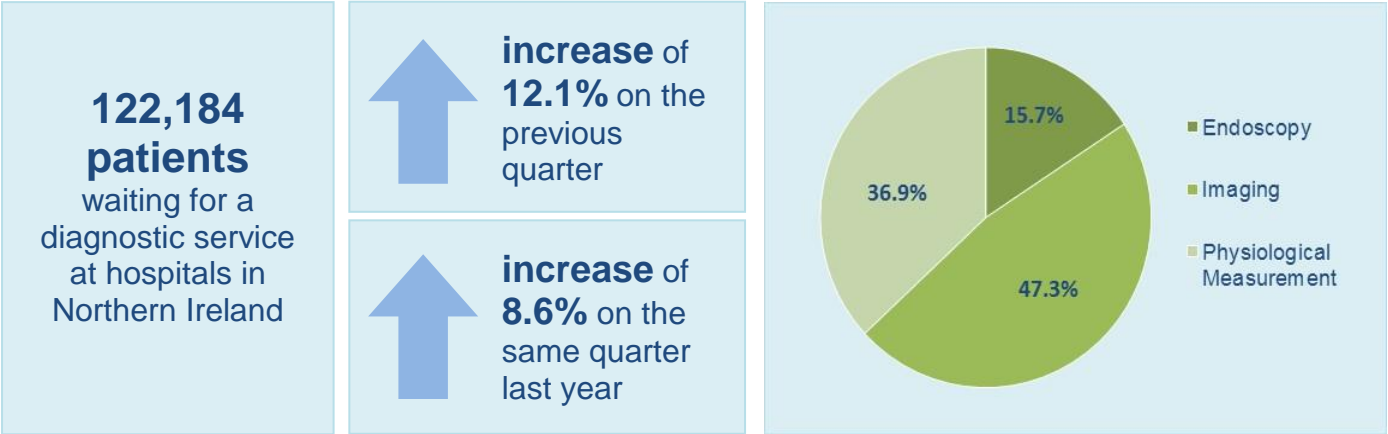
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By March 2019, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

Total number of patients waiting at 30th June 2018



Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

At 30th June 2018, a total of 122,184 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test, 12.1% (13,168) more than at 31st March 2018 (109,016), and 8.6% (9,704) more than at 30th June 2017 (112,521) (Table 1).

A number of diagnostic services may not be provided at all of the five HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. In this situation, patients from one HSC Trust area will be waiting to be seen at a service provided at another HSC Trust. Data users should be cautious in how they use these data (see explanatory note 10).

Almost a third (32.6%) were waiting for diagnostic tests in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 20.9% in the Southern HSC Trust, 20.0% in the Northern HSC Trust, 16.7% in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 9.8% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).



Two thirds (66.3%, 80,991) of the 122,184 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test within one of the following seven diagnostic services: Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Echocardiography; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Computerised Tomography; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Gastroscopy; and DEXA scans (Table 3).

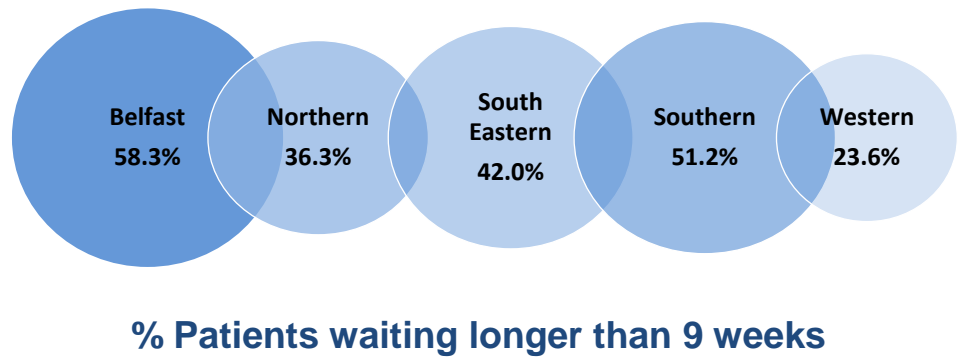
Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th June 2018

This element was **not achieved** by Northern Ireland as a whole

46.3%
of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks

Source: SRD1 Part 1&2



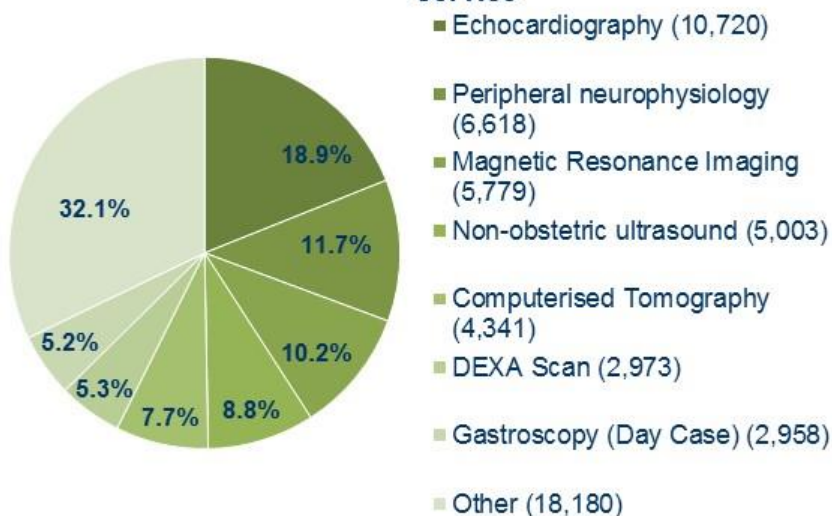
Achievement of the 9 week target requires that less than 25% of patients should be waiting over 9 weeks for a diagnostic test.

At 30th June 2018, 46.3% (56,572) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, compared with 42.1% (45,852) at 31st March 2018 and 44.1% (49,602) at 30th June 2017 (Table 1).

At 30th June 2018, the 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole; however it was achieved by Western HSC Trust (Table 2). Data users should be aware that many diagnostic services are not provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 10).

Over half (58.3%, 23,222) of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks in Belfast HSC Trust at 30th June 2018, 51.2% (13,090) in the Southern HSC Trust, 42.0% (8,549) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 36.3% (8,879) in the Northern HSC Trust and 23.6% (2,832) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

Patients waiting over 9 weeks by diagnostic service



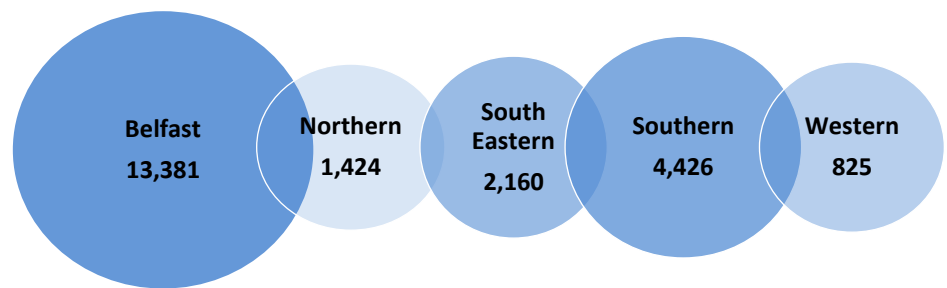
Over two thirds (67.9%, 38,392) of the 56,572 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following diagnostic tests: Echocardiography; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Computerised Tomography; DEXA Scan and Gastroscopy (Table 3).

Source: SDR1 Part1&2

Patients waiting more than 26 weeks at 30th June 2018

This element was **not achieved** by Northern Ireland as a whole

22,216 patients were waiting longer than 26 weeks



No. of patients waiting longer than 26 weeks

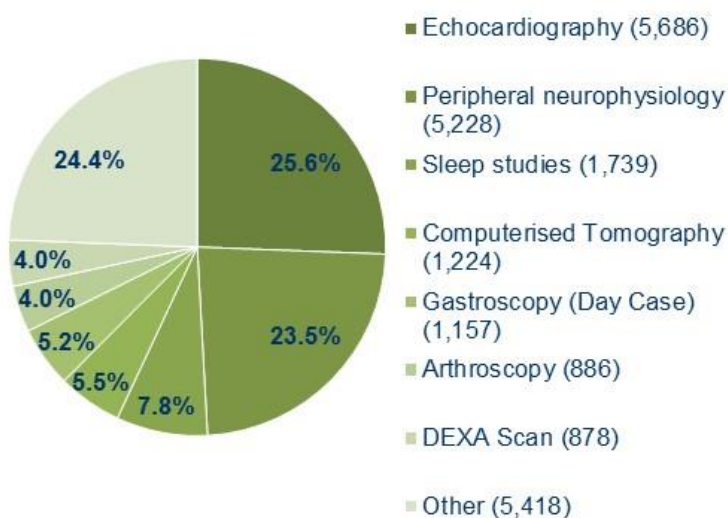
Source: SDR1 Part1&2

At 30th June 2018, 18.2% (22,216) of patients were waiting more than 26 weeks for a diagnostic test compared with 17.1% (18,598) at 31st March 2018 and 12.1% (13,593) at 30th June 2017 (Table 1).

At 30th June 2018, the 26 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2). Data users should be aware that not all diagnostic services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 10).

One third (33.6%, 13,381) of patients in the Belfast HSC Trust were waiting longer than 26 weeks at 30th June 2018, 17.3% (4,426) in the Southern HSC Trust, 10.6% (2,160) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 6.9% (825) in the Western HSC Trust and 5.8% (1,424) in the Northern HSC Trust (Table 2).

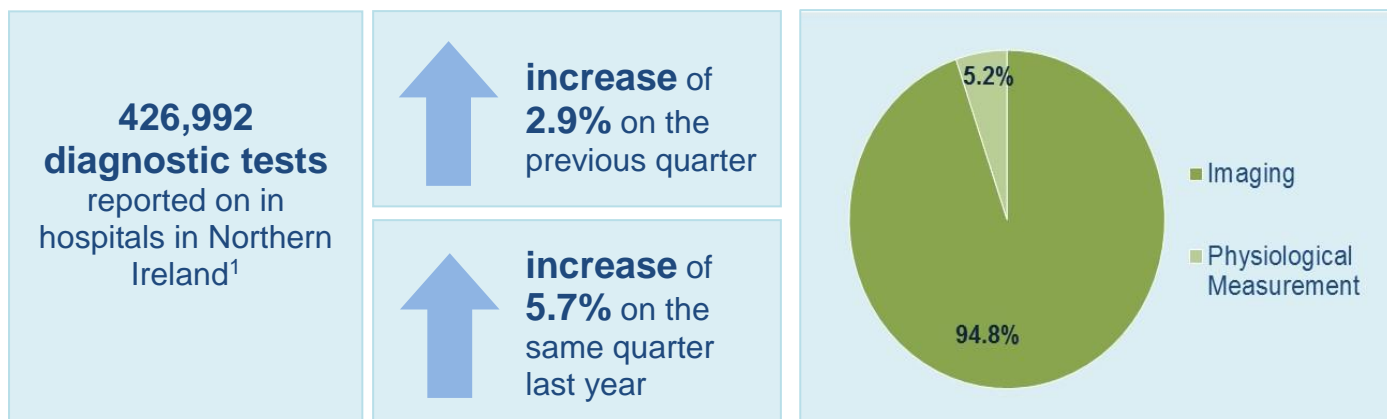
Patients waiting over 26 weeks by diagnostic service



Three quarters (75.6%, 16,798) of the 22,216 patients waiting more than 26 weeks were waiting for one of the following diagnostic tests: Echo-cardiology; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Respiratory physiology sleep studies; Computerised Tomography; Gastroscopy; Arthroscopy and DEXA Scan (Table 3).

Source: SDR1 Part1&2

Total number of diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2018



Source: DRTT Return

A total of 426,992 diagnostic tests were reported on and dispatched to the referring clinician at hospitals in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending June 2018, 2.9% (12,001) more than the quarter ending March 2018 (414,991), and 5.7% (23,171) more than the quarter ending June 2017 (403,821) (Table 4).

Of the 426,992 reported diagnostic tests, 94.8% (404,601) were reporting on an Imaging test and 5.2% (22,391) were reporting on a Physiological Measurement test¹ (Table 4).

Approximately one out of eight (12.9%, 54,869) of the diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2018 were urgent diagnostic tests, with the remaining 87.1% (372,123) being routine diagnostic tests² (Table 4).



Source: DRTT Return

Over one quarter (28.1%) of diagnostic tests were reported and dispatched in the Belfast HSC Trust¹, with a further 19.3% in the Northern HSC Trust, 18.1% in the Southern HSC Trust, 17.5% in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 17.0% in the Western HSC Trust.

¹ Diagnostic reporting turnaround times relate only to a selected subset of Imaging and Physiological Measurement tests. Day case endoscopies are reported on the day of the test and as such are not included.

² Reporting times of routine diagnostic tests are available in the accompanying CSV file.

By March 2019, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within 2 days of the test being undertaken.

Urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days during quarter ending June 2018

This element was **not achieved** by Northern Ireland as a whole

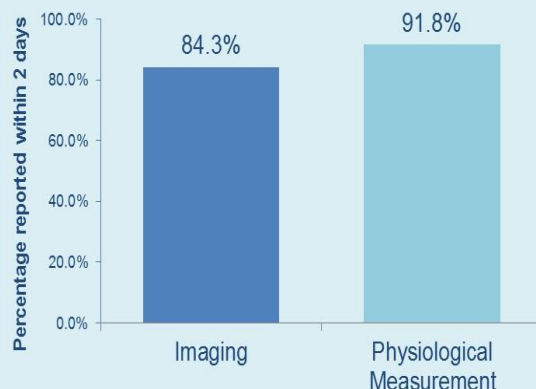


decrease of 0.8 percentage points on the previous quarter

85.0% of urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days



decrease of 2.7 percentage points on the same quarter last year



Source: DRTT Return

Achievement of the diagnostic reporting turnaround time target requires that all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported and dispatched within 2 days.

Of the 54,869 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2018, 85.0% (46,621) were reported on within 2 days, compared with 85.8% (44,607) during the quarter ending March 2018 and 87.7% (44,321) during the quarter ending June 2017 (Table 5).

Of the 54,869 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending June 2018, 50,048 were imaging reports and 4,821 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 84.3% of urgent imaging tests were reported on within 2 days compared with 91.8% of urgent physiological measurement tests (Table 6).



During quarter ending June 2018, the 2 day target was not achieved by any HSC Trust, although the South Eastern Trust reported on 92.0% of urgent diagnostic tests (Table 7).

Source: DRTT Return

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by diagnostic category – 30th June 2018¹

Diagnostic Category		Current Quarter (30 th June 2018)	Previous Quarter (31 st Mar 2018)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 th June 2017)
Imaging	Total Patients Waiting	57,815	50,613	59,967
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	18,468	13,052	21,062
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	31.9%	25.8%	35.1%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	3,080	3,259	3,133
Physiological Measurement	Total Patients Waiting	45,129	40,435	36,162
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	27,730	23,371	20,424
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	61.4%	57.8%	56.5%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	14,765	11,598	7,436
Endoscopy	Total Patients Waiting	19,240	17,968	16,351
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	10,374	9,429	8,116
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	53.9%	52.5%	49.6%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	4,371	3,741	3,024
Total	Total Patients Waiting	122,184	109,016	112,480
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	56,572	45,852	49,602
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	46.3%	42.1%	44.1%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	22,216	18,598	13,593

Source: SDR1 Part 1 & 2 Returns

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–16 & 22-25

Table 2: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by HSC Trust – 30th June 2018¹

HSC Trust	Patients Waiting for Diagnostic Service by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21-26	>26	
Belfast	13,336	3,246	2,795	4,542	2,504	13,381	39,804
Northern	12,560	3,001	2,920	3,788	747	1,424	24,440
South Eastern	9,222	2,597	2,403	2,954	1,032	2,160	20,368
Southern	9,375	3,108	2,936	4,085	1,643	4,426	25,573
Western	7,767	1,400	727	914	366	825	11,999
Total	52,260	13,352	11,781	16,283	6,292	22,216	122,184

Source: SDR1 Part 1 & 2 Returns

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–16 & 22-25

Table 3: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by type of service and weeks waiting – 30th June 2018¹

Diagnostic Test	Patients Waiting for Diagnostic Service by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21-26	>26	
Non-obstetric ultrasound	12,663	2,762	2,126	2,249	258	370	20,428
Cardiology - echocardiography	3,728	1,481	1,447	2,265	1,322	5,686	15,929
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	6,824	2,196	1,971	2,565	686	557	14,799
Computerised Tomography	5,377	1,052	1,028	1,478	611	1,224	10,770
Neurophysiology - peripheral neurophysiology	622	262	304	660	426	5,228	7,502
Gastroscopy (Day Case)	2,326	661	593	855	353	1,157	5,945
DEXA Scan	2,013	632	612	1,061	422	878	5,618
Audiology - pure tone audiometry	1,975	707	658	1,001	416	417	5,174
Colonoscopy (Day Case)	2,117	536	518	638	312	688	4,809
Respiratory physiology - sleep studies	1,139	313	244	410	215	1,739	4,060
Plain Film Xrays	3,744	218	29	3	0	1	3,995
Ambulatory ECG monitoring (24 hr holter)	1,747	404	395	619	234	416	3,815
Flexi sigmoidoscopy (Day Case)	839	276	289	480	220	487	2,591
Cystoscopy (Day Case)	810	243	252	439	89	389	2,222
Arthroscopy	110	97	111	164	113	886	1,481
Patient Activated Ambulatory Function	321	75	110	178	103	325	1,112
Cardiology - perfusion studies	259	110	108	133	174	313	1,097
Ambulatory BP	476	163	110	167	51	11	978
Fluroscopy	644	127	115	82	2	7	977
Other	4,526	1,037	761	836	285	1,437	8,882
All diagnostic tests	52,260	13,352	11,781	16,283	6,292	22,216	122,184

Source: SDR1 Part 1 & 2 Returns

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–16 & 22-25

Table 4: Number of diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by priority of report – QE June 2018²

Priority of Report	Diagnostic Category	QE June 2018	QE Mar 2018	QE June 2017
Urgent	Imaging	50,048	47,146	45,271
	Physiological Measurement	4,821	4,862	5,276
Routine	Imaging	354,553	342,040	334,390
	Physiological Measurement	17,570	20,943	18,884
Total	Imaging	404,601	389,186	379,661
	Physiological Measurement	22,391	25,805	24,160

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4-5 & 17–25

^R Figures have been revised

Table 5: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched – QE June 2018²

Urgent Diagnostic Tests	QE June 2018	QE Mar 2018	QE June 2017
Total reported	54,869	52,008	48,858
Number reported within 2 days	46,621	44,607	42,673
% reported on within 2 days	85.0%	85.8%	87.3%

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4-5 & 17-25

^R Figures have been revised

Table 6: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by diagnostic category and time in days– QE June 2018²

Diagnostic Category	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Imaging	42,197	7,203	519	129	50,048
Physiological Measurement	4,424	363	28	6	4,821
Total	46,621	7,566	547	135	54,869

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4-5 & 17-25

Table 7: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by HSC Trust and time in days – QE June 2018²

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Belfast	10,440	2,215	281	74	13,010
Northern	12,229	1,853	58	11	14,151
South Eastern	4,441	338	32	15	4,826
Southern	11,552	2,311	131	31	14,025
Western	7,959	849	45	4	8,857
Total	46,621	7,566	547	135	54,869

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4-5 & 17-25

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the quarterly Departmental Returns SDR1 (Parts 1 & 2) and the DRTT Return. The source for the diagnostic waiting time data for 16 selected diagnostic services is the Departmental Return SDR1 Part 1 (See explanatory note 2). The waiting time information for all other diagnostic services is provided by the HSCB on the SDR1 Part 2 return. The diagnostic reporting turnaround time information is provided by the HSCB on the DRTT return.
2. The '*Diagnostic 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/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-june-2018>
3. The 16 selected diagnostic services are: Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Computerised Tomography; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Barium Studies; DEXA Scan; Radio-Nuclide Imaging; Pure Tone Audiometry; Echocardiography; Perfusion Studies; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Sleep Studies; Urodynamics Pressures and Flows; Colonoscopy; Flexi Sigmoidoscopy; Cystoscopy and Gastroscopy.
4. All of the data contained in the tables can be supplied by individual diagnostic service or HSC Trust if this level of detail is required. In addition, quarterly data relating to diagnostic waiting times and diagnostic reporting turnaround times has also been published in spreadsheet format (CSV), split by HSC Trust and diagnostic service, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>
5. The diagnostic waiting times and diagnostic reporting turnaround times returns (SDR1 Parts 1 and 2, DRTT) include patients living outside Northern Ireland and privately funded patients waiting for diagnostic services in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
6. HSC Trusts use the Northern Ireland Picture Archive and Communications System (NIPACS) as the mechanism for managing imaging services. The HSC Board has carried out a validation exercise with Trusts to address any data quality issues. The quality of imaging waiting times and reporting times has improved in recent years.

7. A **diagnostic service** provides an examination, test, or procedure used to identify a person's disease or condition and which allows a medical diagnosis to be made. There are three categories of diagnostic test: Imaging test; Physiological Measurement test; and Day Case Endoscopy.
8. The **diagnostic waiting time** relates to all tests with a diagnostic element. Included are tests that are part diagnostic and subsequently part therapeutic. A therapeutic procedure is defined as a procedure which involves actual treatment of a person's disease, condition or injury. Purely therapeutic procedures are excluded from the diagnostic waiting times target. Patients currently admitted to a hospital bed and waiting for an emergency procedure, patients waiting for a planned procedure and patients waiting for procedures as part of screening programmes are also excluded from the waiting times target.
9. The waiting time for a diagnostic service commences on the date on which the referral for the service is received by the Health Care provider and stops on the date on which the test is performed. Patients who cannot attend (CNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date they informed the HSC Trust that they could not attend, while patients who do not attend (DNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date of the DNA.
10. A number of diagnostic services may not be provided at all of the five HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. In this situation, patients from one HSC Trust area will be waiting to be seen at a service provided at another HSC Trust. 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 HSC Trust area. 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.
11. A number of the diagnostic services reported on the SDR 1 (Part 1 & 2) returns are managed as an admission: either an inpatient admission or a day case. As such, they will be included in both the inpatient and day case waiting time and diagnostic waiting time figures. Due to the risk of multiple counting, these two sets of data should not be combined to give an estimate of the total number of patients waiting for admission or a diagnostic service.

12. Waiting time statistics for day case endoscopies also include patients waiting for these services that are managed as inpatient admissions. As patients waiting for day case endoscopies are included within both inpatient and diagnostic waiting times figures should not be added together.
13. Some people will be waiting on more than one waiting list or be on the same waiting list for more than one outpatient appointment/admission/diagnostic test at the same time due to having more than one condition.
14. The draft 2018/19 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target, states that, by March 2019, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.
15. For Tables 2 and 3, each diagnostic waiting time band relates to the number of completed weeks a patient has been waiting for a diagnostic service. 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 week (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) time band.
16. Patients waiting 'longer than 9 weeks' for a diagnostic service includes all patients in the >9 - 13, >13 - 21, >21 - 26 and >26 week time bands. All patients waiting 'over 26 weeks' includes everyone in the >26 week time band.
17. The diagnostic reporting turnaround time is the time interval between the completion of the diagnostic test and the results of that test being verified or dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland, whichever is applicable.
18. Diagnostic reporting times apply to a selected subset of imaging and physiological measurement diagnostic services. These services are: Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Computerised Tomography; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Barium Studies; DEXA Scan; Radio-Nuclide Imaging; Pure Tone Audiometry; Echocardiography; Perfusion Studies; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Sleep Studies; and Urodynamics Pressures and Flows and Plain Film X-rays.
19. Data for Plain Film X-rays is only available from April 2015 onwards, as such DRTT figures should not be compared prior to this date.
20. The draft 2018/19 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target, states that, by March 2019, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within two days of the test being undertaken.

21. Further information on routine diagnostic reporting times are available in the accompanying CSV file at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>
22. The information on diagnostic and reporting times contained within this publication is currently under review. The Department is looking at how this information is sourced and the validation procedures that are carried out with a view to improving the quality. All quality issues identified as part of this review are being addressed on an ongoing basis.
23. The Department of Health's policy is to publish revised figures with subsequent statistical releases unless it is decided that the magnitude of the change merits earlier notification.
24. The information contained within this publication is not National Statistics.
25. Figures relating to diagnostic waiting times and diagnostic reporting turnaround times for the quarter ending 30th September 2018 will be released on Thursday 29th November 2018.

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

Hospital Information Branch
Information & Analysis Directorate
Department of Health
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✉ Email: statistics@health-ni.gov.uk

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