

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Diagnostic Waiting Times Quarter Ending June 2019

Revised 13th November 2019



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustle

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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 2019/20 Ministerial waiting time target and the draft 2019/20 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target:
- “By March 2020, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks”.*
- “By March 2020, 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 2019. 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-2019>
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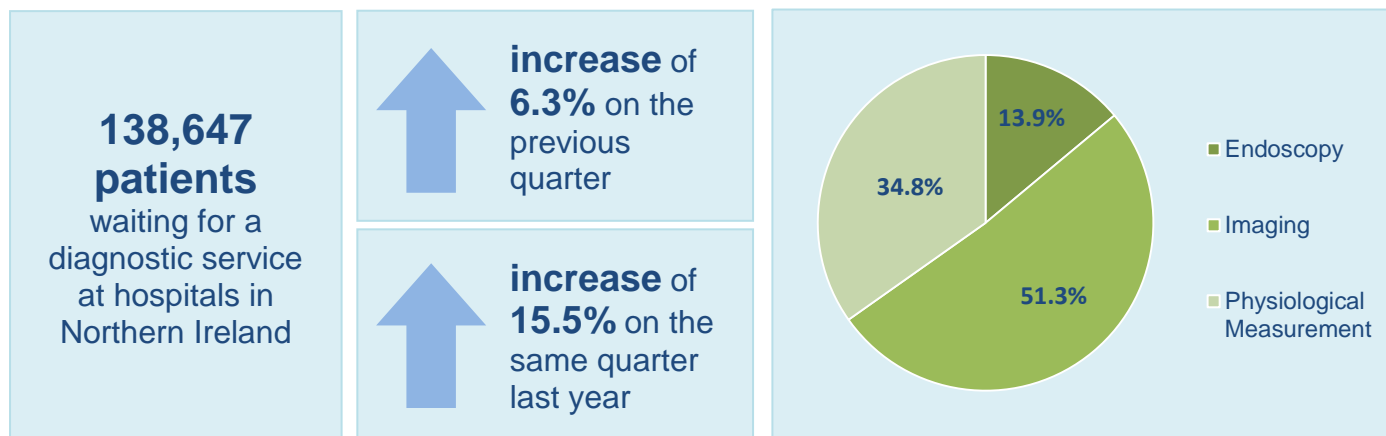
¹ This publication and relevant Excel spreadsheet were republished due to errors in the Diagnostic Reporting Turnaround Times section of the report and corresponding tables.

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By March 2020, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

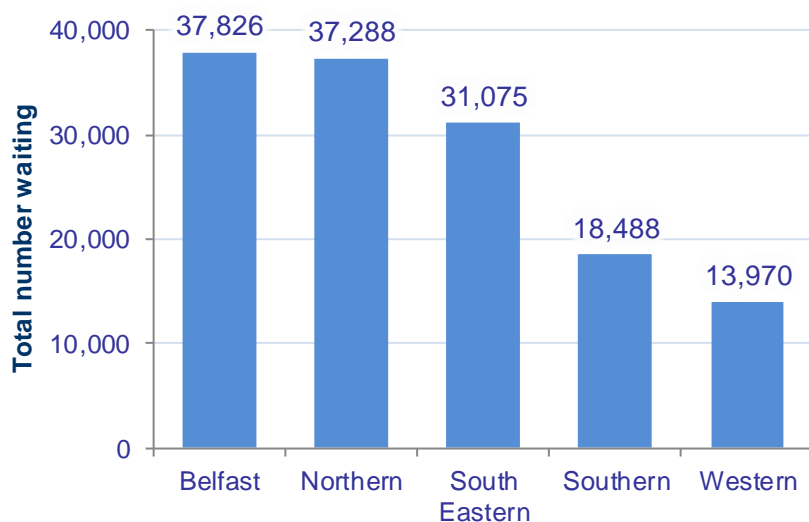
Total number of patients waiting at 30th June 2019



Source: SDR1

At 30th June 2019, a total of 138,647 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test, 6.3% (8,244) more than at 31st March 2019 (130,403), and 15.5% (18,603) more than at 30th June 2018 (120,044) (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 therefore be cautious in how they use these data (see explanatory note 10).



Source: SDR1

More than a quarter (27.3%) were waiting for diagnostic tests in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 26.9% in the Northern HSC Trust, 22.4% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 13.3% in the Southern HSC Trust and 10.1% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

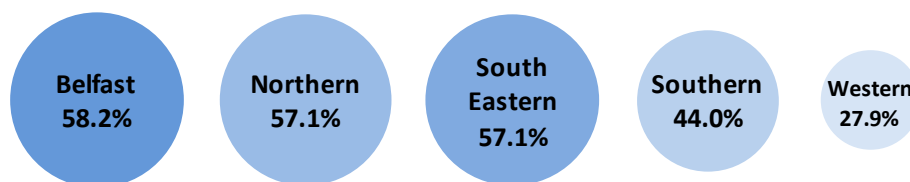
More than two thirds (70.8%, 98,112) of the 138,647 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test within one of the following seven diagnostic services: Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Echocardiography; Computerised Tomography; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Pure Tone Audiometry and Gastroscopy. (Table 3).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th June 2019

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

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

52.7%
of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks



Percentage waiting over 9 weeks

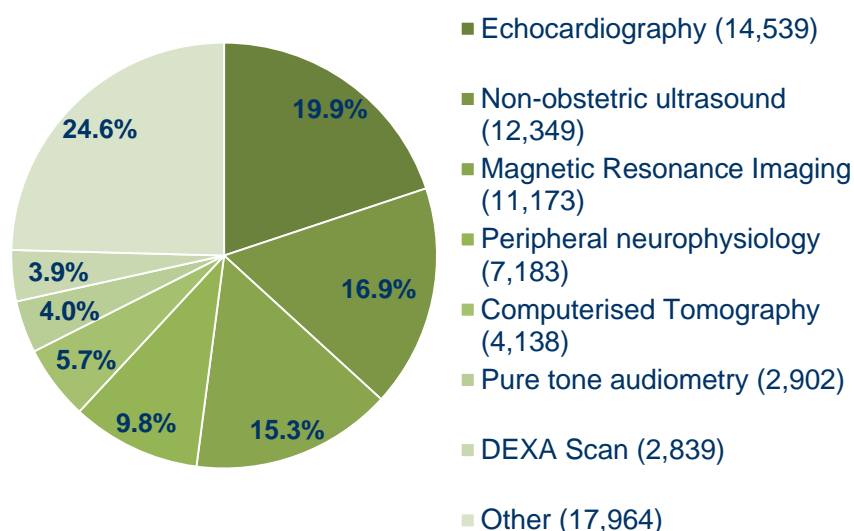
Source: SRD1

At 30th June 2019, 52.7% (73,087) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, compared with 49.4% (64,387) at 31st March 2019 and 45.4% (54,464) at 30th June 2018 (Table 1).

The 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole, or by any individual HSC Trust. Data users should be aware that not all diagnostic services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 10).

Almost three fifths (58.2%, 22,023) of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks in Belfast HSC Trust, 57.1% in both the Northern (21,290) and South Eastern (17,744) HSC Trusts, 44.0% (8,138) in the Southern HSC Trust and 27.9% (3,892) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

Patients waiting over 9 weeks by diagnostic service



Of the 73,087 patients waiting more than 9 weeks, three quarters (75.4%, 55,123) were waiting for one of the following diagnostic tests: Echocardiography; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Computerised Tomography; Pure Tone Audiometry and DEXA Scan. (Table 3).

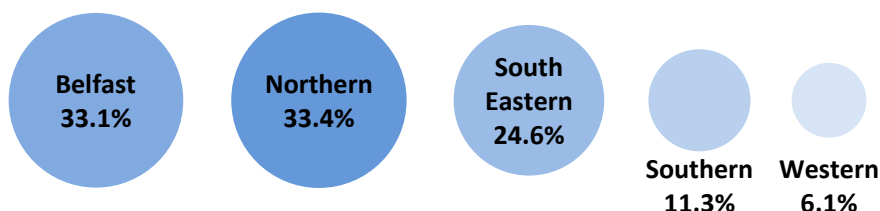
Source: SDR1

Patients waiting more than 26 weeks at 30th June 2019

Achievement of the 26 week target requires that no patients should be waiting over 26 weeks for a diagnostic test.

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

25.6% of patients were waiting longer than 26 weeks



Percentage waiting over 26 weeks

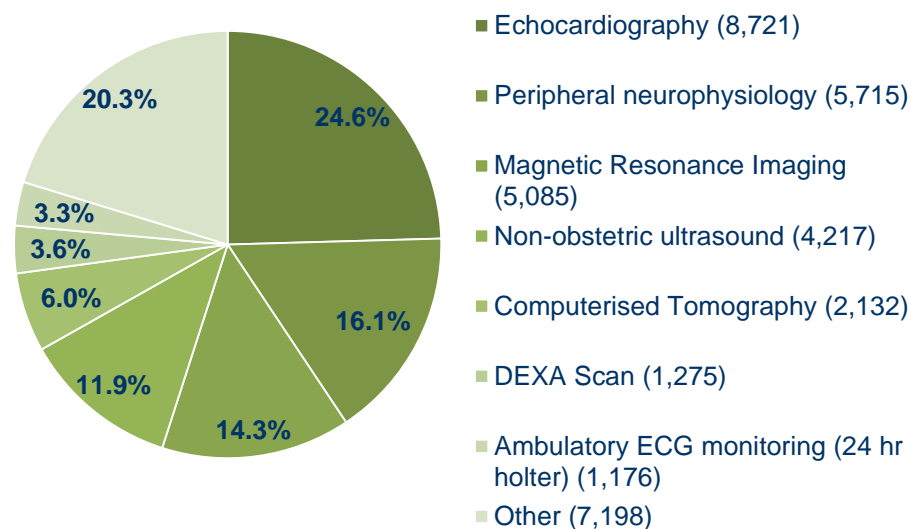
Source: SDR1

At 30th June 2019, 25.6% (35,519) of patients were waiting more than 26 weeks for a diagnostic test compared with 21.7% (28,321) at 31st March 2019 and 17.1% (20,537) at 30th June 2018 (Table 1).

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).

Around a third of patients in the Northern (33.4%, 12,436) and Belfast (33.1%, 12,504) HSC Trusts were waiting longer than 26 weeks, around a quarter (24.6%, 7,644) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 11.3% (2,088) in the Southern HSC Trust and 6.1% (847) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

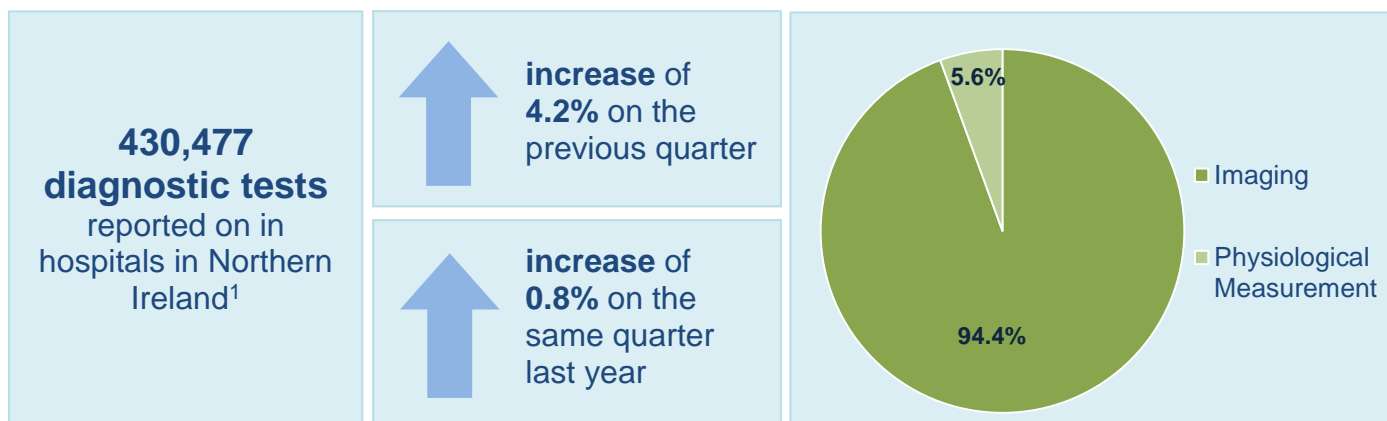
Patients waiting over 26 weeks by diagnostic service



Source: SDR1

More than three quarters (79.7%, 28,321) of the 35,519 patients waiting more than 26 weeks were waiting for one of the following diagnostic tests: Echocardiography; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Computerised Tomography; DEXA Scan and Ambulatory ECG Monitoring (24 Hr Holter). (Table 3).

Total number of diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2019¹

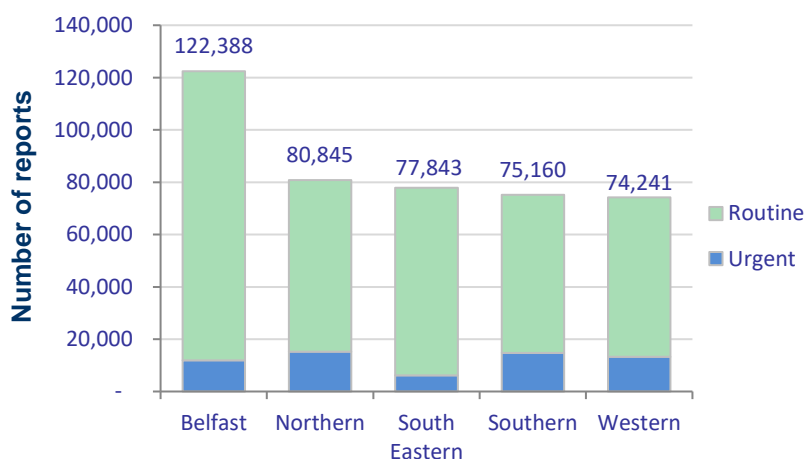


Source: DRTT Return

A total of 430,477 diagnostic tests were reported on and dispatched to the referring clinician at hospitals in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending June 2019, 4.2% (17,257) more than the quarter ending March 2019 (413,220), and 0.8% (3,485) more than the quarter ending June 2018 (426,992) (Table 4).

Of the 430,477 reported diagnostic tests, 94.4% (406,529) were reporting on an Imaging test and 5.6% (23,948) were reporting on a Physiological Measurement test¹ (Table 4).

Approximately one in seven (14.2%, 61,293) of the diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2019 were urgent diagnostic tests, with the remaining 85.8% (369,184) being routine diagnostic tests² (Table 4).



Almost three-tenths (28.4%) of diagnostic tests were reported and dispatched in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 18.8% in the Northern HSC Trust, 18.1% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 17.5% in the Southern HSC Trust and 17.2% in the Western HSC Trust.³

Source: DRTT Return

¹ This publication and relevant Excel spreadsheet were republished due to errors in the Diagnostic Reporting Turnaround Times section of the report and corresponding tables.

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

³ 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.

Urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days during quarter ending June 2019

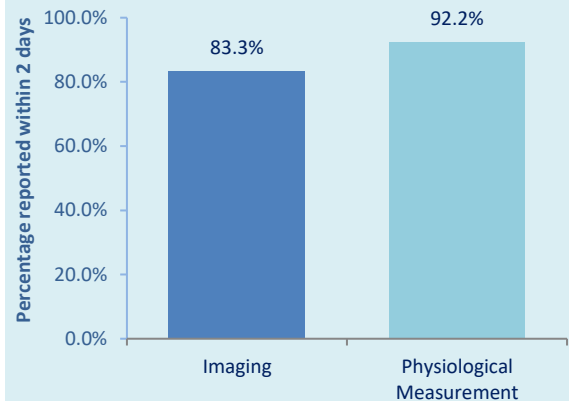
By March 2020, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within 2 days of the test being undertaken.

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

↓ decrease of **2.1 percentage points** on the previous quarter

84.0% of urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days

↓ decrease of **1.0 percentage points** on the same quarter last year

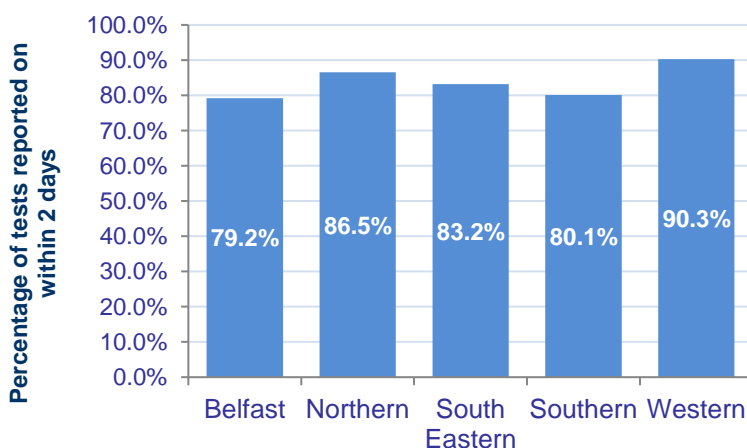


Source: DRTT Return

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

Of the 61,293 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2019, 84.0% (51,511) were reported on within 2 days, compared with 86.1% (50,784) during the quarter ending March 2019 and 85.0% (46,613) during the quarter ending June 2018 (Table 5).

Of the 61,293 urgent diagnostic tests, 56,073 were imaging reports and 5,220 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 83.3% of urgent imaging tests were reported on within 2 days compared with 92.2% of urgent physiological measurement tests (Table 6).



During quarter ending June 2019, the 2 day target was not achieved by any HSC Trust, although the Western Trust reported on 90.3% of urgent diagnostic tests within two days (Table 7).

Source: DRTT Return

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by diagnostic category – 30th June 2019¹

Diagnostic Category		Current Quarter (June 2019)	Previous Quarter (March 2019)	Same Quarter Last Year (June 2018)
Imaging	Total Patients Waiting	71,083	66,146	57,815
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	31,088	25,364	18,468
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	43.7%	38.3%	31.9%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	12,803	8,608	3,080
Physiological Measurement	Total Patients Waiting	48,236	45,433	42,989
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	31,296	28,864	25,622
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	64.9%	63.5%	59.6%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	17,657	15,063	13,086
Endoscopy	Total Patients Waiting	19,328	18,824	19,240
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	10,703	10,159	10,374
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	55.4%	54.0%	53.9%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	5,059	4,650	4,371
Total	Total Patients Waiting	138,647	130,403	120,044
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	73,087	64,387	54,464
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	52.7%	49.4%	45.4%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	35,519	28,321	20,537

Source: SDR1

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–15 & 22-25

Table 2: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by HSC Trust – 30th June 2019¹

HSC Trust	Patients Waiting for Diagnostic Service by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21-26	>26	
Belfast	12,583	3,220	2,979	4,438	2,102	12,504	37,826
Northern	13,074	2,924	2,404	4,091	2,359	12,436	37,288
South Eastern	10,349	2,982	2,934	4,996	2,170	7,644	31,075
Southern	8,140	2,210	2,070	3,009	971	2,088	18,488
Western	8,330	1,748	1,124	1,417	504	847	13,970
Total	52,476	13,084	11,511	17,951	8,106	35,519	138,647

Source: SDR1

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–15 & 22-25

Table 3: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by type of service and weeks waiting – 30th June 2019¹

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	13,088	3,120	2,345	4,135	1,652	4,217	28,557
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	6,859	2,271	2,263	2,768	1,057	5,085	20,303
Echocardiography	3,484	1,340	1,523	2,698	1,597	8,721	19,363
Computerised Tomography	5,351	764	547	960	499	2,132	10,253
Peripheral neurophysiology	517	261	374	720	374	5,715	7,961
Pure tone audiometry	2,157	874	837	1,221	392	452	5,933
Gastroscopy	2,408	557	503	806	380	1,088	5,742
DEXA Scan	1,892	634	426	777	361	1,275	5,365
Colonoscopy	2,129	460	420	715	381	928	5,033
Ambulatory ECG monitoring (24 hr holter)	1,580	459	355	538	278	1,176	4,386
Plain Film Xrays	4,114	69	11	7	1	4	4,206
Flexi sigmoidoscopy	774	278	306	525	208	656	2,747
Cystoscopy	772	179	196	203	83	485	1,918
Arthroscopy	81	55	76	166	96	1,006	1,480
Sleep studies	771	312	143	79	44	110	1,459
Barium Studies/Fluoroscopy	661	167	122	195	51	65	1,261
Patient Activated Ambulatory Function	360	97	113	99	71	457	1,197
EEG	259	108	94	176	85	371	1,093
Ambulatory BP	554	90	106	163	71	56	1,040
Other	4,665	989	751	1,000	425	1,520	9,350
All diagnostic tests	52,476	13,084	11,511	17,951	8,106	35,519	138,647

Source: SDR1

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–15 & 22-25

Table 4: Number of diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by priority of report – QE June 2019^{2R}

Priority of Report	Diagnostic Category	Current Quarter (June 2019)	Previous Quarter (March 2019)	Same Quarter Last Year
Urgent	Imaging	56,073	54,111	50,048
	Physiological Measurement	5,220	4,869	4,793
Routine	Imaging	350,456	333,776	354,553
	Physiological Measurement	18,728	20,464	17,598
Total	Imaging	406,529	387,887	404,601
	Physiological Measurement	23,948	25,333	22,391

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

^R Figures have been revised for June 2019

Table 5: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched – QE June 2019^{2R}

Urgent Diagnostic Tests	Current Quarter (June 2019)	Previous Quarter (March 2019)	Same Quarter Last Year
Total reported	61,293	58,980	54,841
Number reported within 2 days	51,511	50,784	46,613
<i>% reported on within 2 days</i>	<i>84.0%</i>	<i>86.1%</i>	<i>85.0%</i>

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

^R Figures have been revised for June 2019

Table 6: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by diagnostic category and time in days– QE June 2019^{2R}

Diagnostic Category	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Imaging	46,696	7,995	1,155	227	56,073
Physiological Measurement	4,815	371	31	3	5,220
Total	51,511	8,366	1,186	230	61,293

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

Table 7: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by HSC Trust and time in days – QE June 2019^{2R}

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Belfast	9,409	1,946	377	145	11,877
Northern	13,131	2,018	18	5	15,172
South Eastern	5,105	972	46	15	6,138
Southern	11,844	2,207	681	59	14,791
Western	12,022	1,223	64	6	13,315
Total	51,511	8,366	1,186	230	61,293

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the quarterly Departmental Returns SDR1 and the DRTT Return. Note that, prior to September 2018, diagnostic waiting time data was provided separately for 16 selected diagnostic services in the SDR1 Part 1, with all other diagnostic services 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/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>.
3. 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/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-june-2019>
4. From September 2018, the CSV file has a number of changes. Barium Studies and Fluoroscopy diagnostic waits have been combined together and Computerised Tomography has been split into General, Colonoscopy and Cardiac waits. In addition, all patients waiting >26 weeks have now been split into the following timebands >26-36, >36-52, >52-65, >65-78 and >78.
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, particularly endoscopies, 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. 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.
13. The draft 2019/20 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target, states that, By March 2020, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

14. 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.
15. Patients waiting 'longer than 9 weeks' for a diagnostic service includes all patients in the >9 - 13, >13 - 21, >21-26, >26-36, >36-52, >52-65, >65-78 and >78 week time bands. All patients waiting 'over 26 weeks' includes everyone in the >26-36, >36-52, >52-65, >65-78 and >78 week time bands.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. 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.
19. The draft 2018/19 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target, states that, by March 2020, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within two days of the test being undertaken.
20. Further information on routine diagnostic reporting times are available in the accompanying CSV file at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-june-2019>
21. 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.

22. Resubmissions for Quarter Ending June 18 were received from Belfast and Northern HSC Trusts for the SDR1 return and from Northern HSC Trust for the DRTT return. These amendments have been reflected in this publication.
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 2019 will be released on Thursday 28th November 2019.

Further information on Diagnostic 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

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/publications/type/statisticalreports>