

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
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Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Diagnostic Waiting Times Quarter Ending September 2016



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

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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 2016/17 Ministerial waiting time target and the 2016/17 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target:

“By March 2017, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks”.

“From April 2016, 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 September 2016. Data are presented by HSC Trust, diagnostic category, diagnostic test, and time band. Further information on routine diagnostic reporting times are available in the accompanying CSV file.

Statistical Quality: The ‘*Diagnostic Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*’ booklet details the technical guidance, definitions, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-september-2016>

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

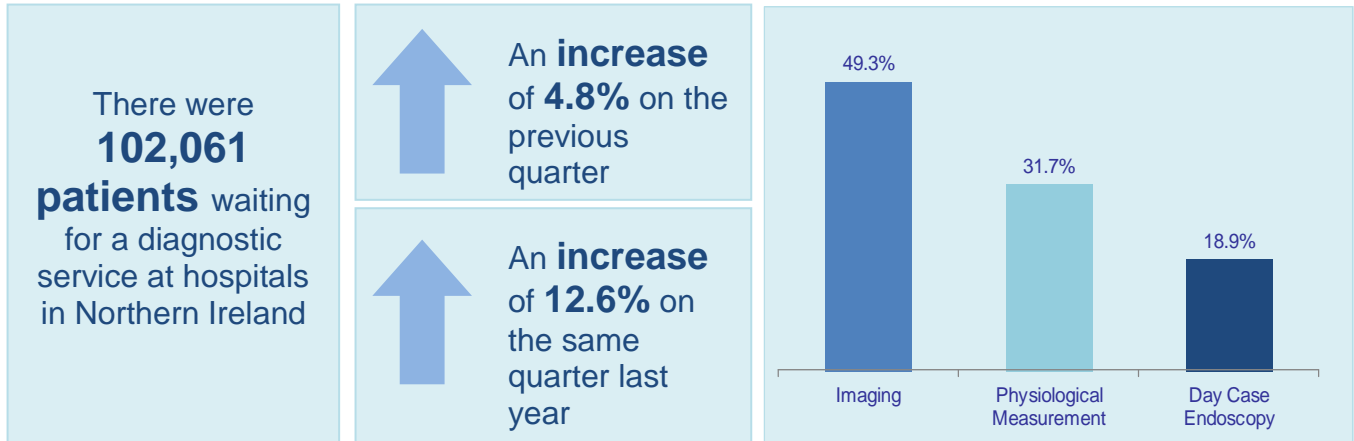
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Contents

Total number of patients waiting for Diagnostic Service	4
Patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for Diagnostic Service.....	5
Patients waiting longer than 26 weeks for Diagnostic Service.....	6
Total diagnostic tests reported and dispatched	7
Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched within 2 days	8
Appendix 1: Tables.....	9
Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes.....	13

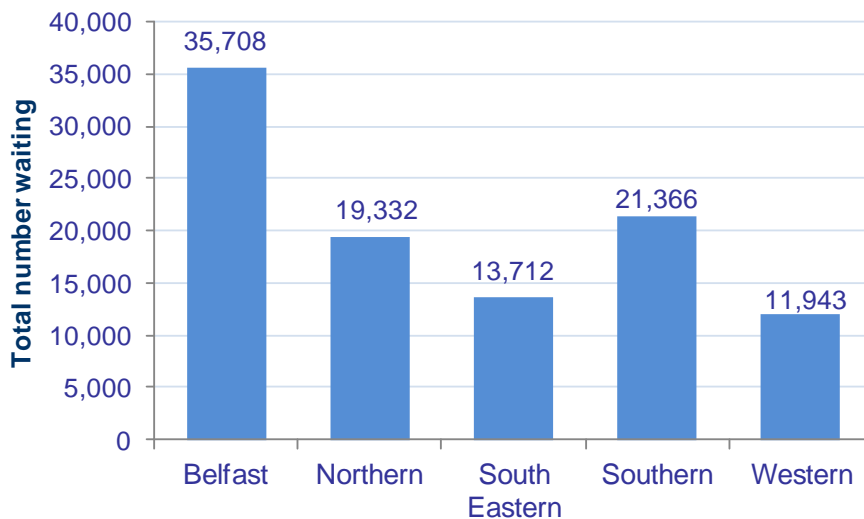
By March 2017, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

Total number of patients waiting at 30th September 2016



Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

At 30th September 2016, a total of 102,061 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test, 4.8% (4,655) more than at 30th June 2016 (97,406), and 12.6% (11,418) more than at 30th September 2015 (90,643) (Table 1).



Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

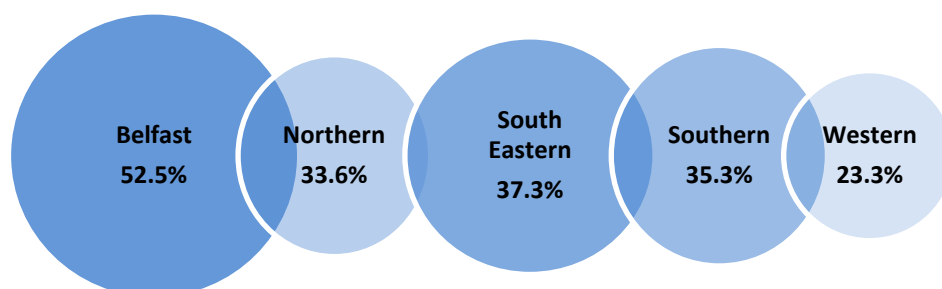
Just over a third (35.0%) were waiting for diagnostic tests in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 20.9% in the Southern HSC Trust, 18.9% in the Northern HSC Trust, 13.4% in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 11.7% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

Over two-thirds (67.1%, 68,506) of the 102,061 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test within one of the following seven diagnostic services: Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Echocardiography; Computerised Tomography; Gastroscopy; Pure Tone Audiometry and Peripheral Neurophysiology (Table 3).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th September 2016

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

39.9%
of patients
were waiting longer
than 9 weeks



Patients waiting over 9 weeks

Source: SRD1 Part 1&2

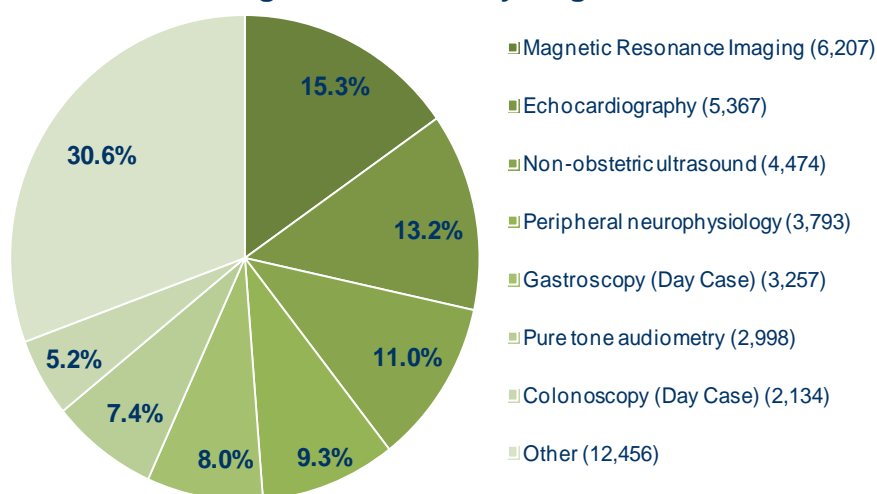
Achievement of the 9 week target requires that less than 25% of patients should be waiting over 9 weeks for a diagnostic test.

At 30th September 2016, 39.9% (40,686) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, compared with 34.5% (33,586) at 30th June 2016 and 34.9% (31,607) at 30th September 2015 (Table 1).

At 30th September 2016, the 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole but was achieved by the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

Over half (52.5%, 18,741) of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks in Belfast HSC Trust at 30th September 2016, 37.3% (5,111) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 35.3% (7,549) in the Southern HSC Trust, 33.6% (6,503) in the Northern HSC Trust and 23.3% (2,782) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 3).

Patients waiting over 9 weeks by diagnostic service



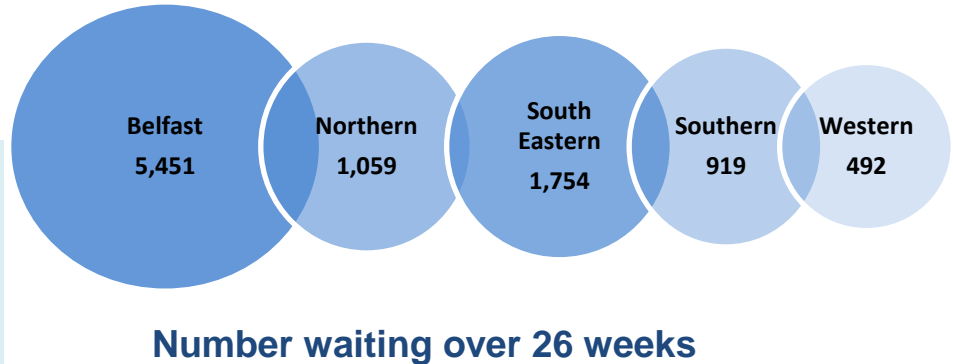
Over two-thirds (69.4%, 28,230) of the 40,686 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following diagnostic tests: Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Echocardiography; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Gastroscopy; Pure Tone Audiometry and Colonoscopy (Table 3).

Source: SDR1 Part1&2

Patients waiting more than 26 weeks at 30th September 2016

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

9,675
patients
were waiting longer
than 26 weeks



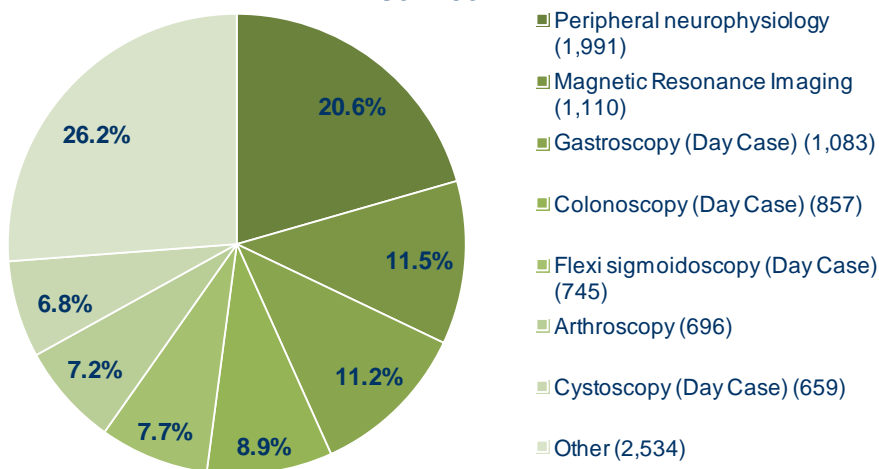
Source: SDR1 Part1&2

At 30th September 2016, 9.5% (9,675) of patients were waiting more than 26 weeks for a diagnostic test compared with 7.1% (6,930) at 30th June 2016 and 8.4% (7,631) at 30th September 2015 (Table 1).

At 30th September 2016, the 26 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2).

Just over one in seven (15.3%, 5,451) of patients in the Belfast HSC Trust were waiting longer than 26 weeks at 30th September 2016, 12.8% (1,754) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 5.5% (1,059) in the Northern HSC Trust, 4.3% (919) in the Southern HSC Trust and 4.1% (492) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

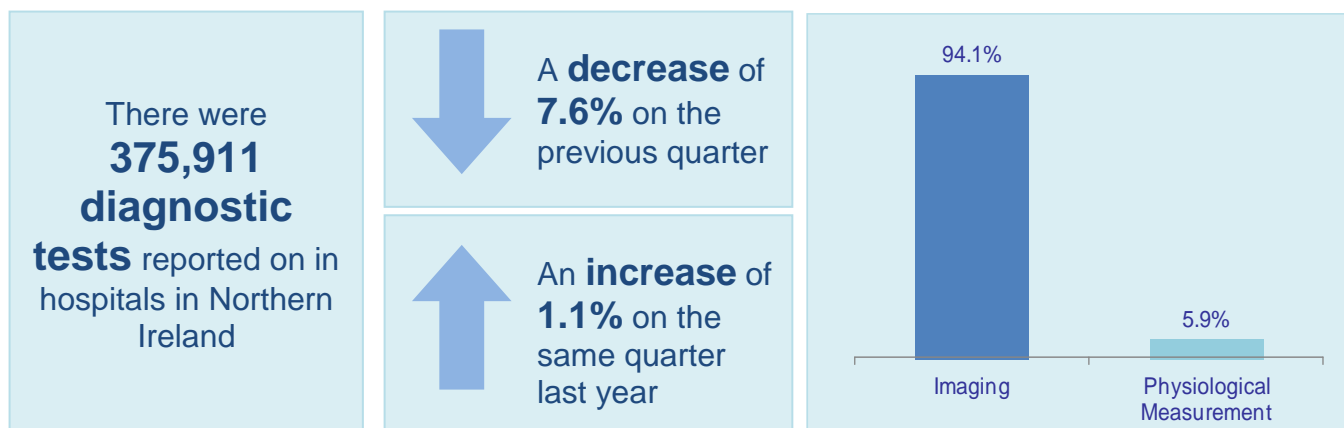
Patients waiting over 26 weeks by diagnostic service



Source: SDR1 Part1&2

Almost three quarters (73.8%, 7,141) of the 9,675 patients waiting more than 26 weeks were waiting for one the following diagnostic tests: Peripheral Neurophysiology; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Gastroscopy; Colonoscopy; Flexi sigmoidoscopy; Arthroscopy and Cytoscopy (Table 3).

Total number of diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending September 2016

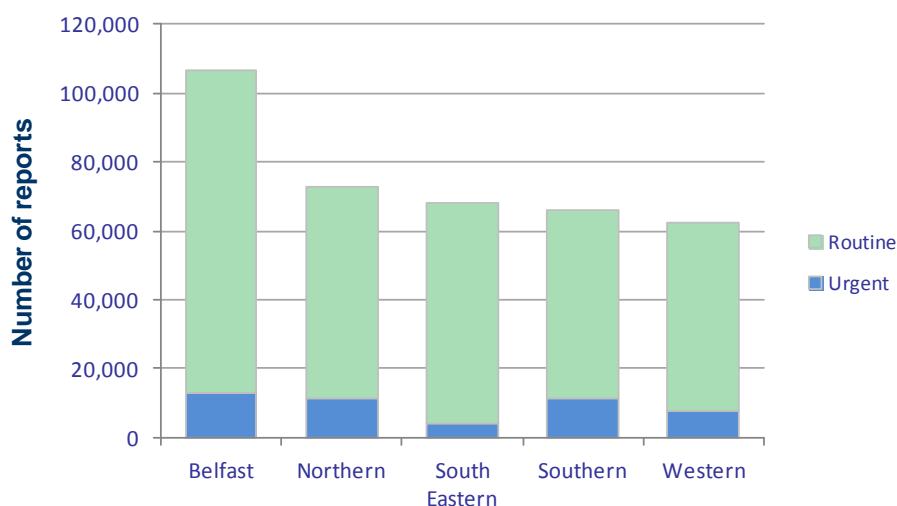


Source: DRTT Return

A total of 375,911 diagnostic tests were reported on and dispatched to the referring clinician at hospitals in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending September 2016, 7.6% (31,115) less than the quarter ending June 2016 (407,026)¹, but 1.1% (3,984) more than the quarter ending September 2015 (371,927) (Table 4).

Of the 375,911 reported diagnostic tests, 94.1% (353,647) were reporting on an Imaging test and 5.9% (22,264) were reporting on a Physiological Measurement test² (Table 4).

Just over one tenth (12.6%, 47,446) of the diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending September 2016 were for urgent diagnostic tests, with the remaining 87.4% (328,465) being routine diagnostic tests³ (Table 4).



Over one quarter (28.4%) of diagnostic tests were reported and dispatched in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 19.4% in the Northern HSC Trust, 18.1% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 17.6% in the Southern HSC Trust and 16.6% in the Western HSC Trust.

Source: DRTT Return

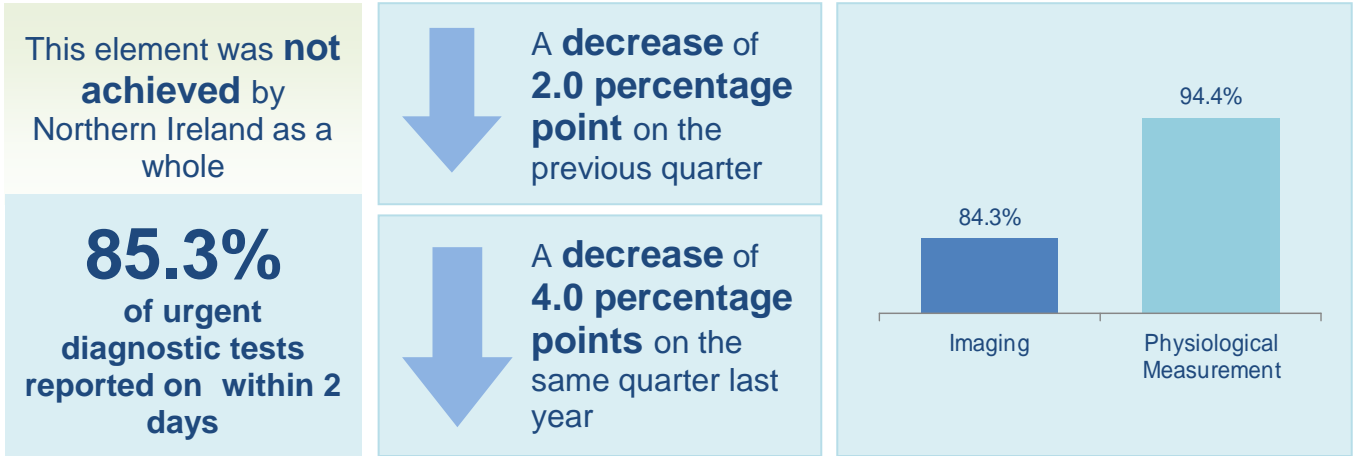
¹ Belfast HSC Trust figures for quarter ending June 2016 have been revised in this publication release.

² 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.

³ Reporting times of routine diagnostic tests are available in the accompanying CSV file.

From April 2016, 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 September 2016

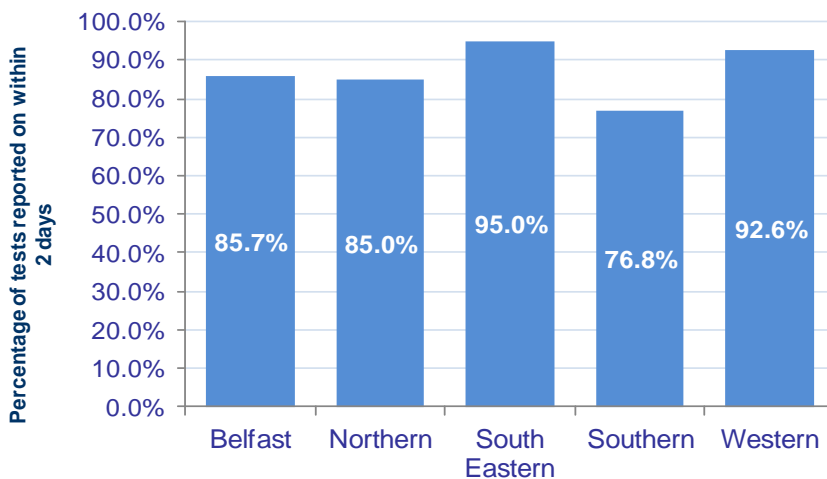


Source: DRTT Return

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

Of the 47,446 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending September 2016, 85.3% (40,464) were reported on within 2 days, compared with 87.3% (42,673) during the quarter ending June 2016 and 89.3% (38,291) during the quarter ending September 2015 (Table 5).

Of the 47,446 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending September 2016, 42,890 were imaging reports and 4,556 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 84.3% of urgent imaging tests were reported on within 2 days, compared to 94.4% of urgent physiological measurement tests (Table 6).



Source: DRTT Return

During quarter ending September 2016, the 2 day target was not achieved by any HSC Trust, although the South Eastern Trust did manage to report on 95.0% of urgent diagnostic tests (Table 7).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by diagnostic category – 30th September 2016¹

Diagnostic Category		Current Quarter (30 th September 2016)	Previous Quarter (30 th June 2016)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 th September 2015)
Imaging	Total Patients Waiting	50,363	46,893	46,135
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	13,618	9,103	10,999
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	27.0%	19.4%	23.8%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	1,495	602	748
Physiological Measurement	Total Patients Waiting	32,384	30,594	26,532
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	16,433	13,627	11,770
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	50.7%	44.5%	44.4%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	3,526	2,451	3,520
Endoscopy	Total Patients Waiting	19,314	19,919	17,976
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	10,635	10,856	8,838
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	55.1%	54.5%	49.2%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	4,654	3,877	3,363
Total	Total Patients Waiting	102,061	97,406	90,643
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	40,686	33,586	31,607
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	39.9%	34.5%	34.9%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	9,675	6,930	7,631

Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–12, 18 & 21-24

Table 2: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by HSC Trust – 30th September 2016²

HSC Trust	Patients Waiting for Diagnostic Service by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21-26	>26	
Belfast	12,771	4,196	4,001	6,321	2,968	5,451	35,708
Northern	10,886	1,943	1,707	2,338	1,399	1,059	19,332
South Eastern	7,079	1,522	1,339	1,576	442	1,754	13,712
Southern	10,172	3,645	2,491	3,272	867	919	21,366
Western	7,473	1,688	1,080	997	213	492	11,943
Total	48,381	12,994	10,618	14,504	5,889	9,675	102,061

Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–14, 18 & 21-24

Table 3: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by type of service and weeks waiting – 30th September 2016²

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	12,183	3,271	2,340	2,084	48	2	19,928
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	6,821	2,167	1,780	2,301	1,016	1,110	15,195
Cardiology - echocardiography	3,112	1,219	1,317	2,511	999	540	9,698
Computerised Tomography	4,901	760	442	550	257	286	7,196
Gastroscopy (Day Case)	2,331	746	725	986	463	1,083	6,334
Audiology - pure tone audiometry	1,714	767	633	1,131	901	333	5,479
Neurophysiology - peripheral neurophysiol	647	236	413	826	563	1,991	4,676
Colonoscopy (Day Case)	1,693	476	398	556	323	857	4,303
Ambulatory ECG monitoring (24 hr holter)	1,832	692	513	660	216	37	3,950
Plain Film Xrays	3,044	117	45	2	0	0	3,208
DEXA Scan	1,353	412	324	540	172	59	2,860
Flexi sigmoidoscopy (Day Case)	758	246	232	356	154	745	2,491
Cystoscopy (Day Case)	964	263	200	294	86	659	2,466
Respiratory physiology - sleep studies	763	280	186	249	65	153	1,696
Arthroscopy	87	91	97	275	152	696	1,398
Cardiology - perfusion studies	387	179	145	243	147	213	1,314
Hysteroscopy	419	102	91	156	59	190	1,017
Fluroscopy	731	105	66	46	0	0	948
Patient Activated Ambulatory Function	288	90	109	215	55	56	813
Other	4,353	775	562	523	213	665	7,091
All diagnostic tests	48,381	12,994	10,618	14,504	5,889	9,675	102,061

Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–14, 18 & 21-24

Table 4: Number of diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by priority of report – QE September 2016³

Priority of Report	Diagnostic Category	QE September 2016	QE June 2016	QE September 2015
Urgent	Imaging	42,890	44,448	39,301
	Physiological Measurement	4,556	4,410	3,576
Routine	Imaging	310,757	339,042	311,340
	Physiological Measurement	17,708	19,126	17,710
Total	Imaging	353,647	383,490	350,641
	Physiological Measurement	22,264	23,536	21,286

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

Table 5: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched – QE September 2016³

Urgent Diagnostic Tests	QE September 2016	QE June 2016	QE September 2015
Total reported	47,446	48,858	42,877
Number reported within 2 days	40,464	42,673	38,291
<i>% reported on within 2 days</i>	<i>85.3%</i>	<i>87.3%</i>	<i>89.3%</i>

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

Table 6: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by diagnostic category and time in days– QE September 2016³

Diagnostic Category	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Imaging	36,163	5,957	610	160	42,890
Physiological Measurement	4,301	215	34	6	4,556
Total	40,464	6,172	644	166	47,446

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

Table 7: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by HSC Trust and time in days – QE September 2016³

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Belfast	11,205	1,753	97	20	13,075
Northern	9,490	1,648	26	2	11,166
South Eastern	4,006	209	2	0	4,217
Southern	8,823	2,032	499	138	11,492
Western	6,940	530	20	6	7,496
Total	40,464	6,172	644	166	47,446

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

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, definitions, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-september-2016>
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 have 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 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 the diagnostic services reported on the SDR 1 (Part 1&2) return 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.
11. Waiting time statistics for day case endoscopies also include patients waiting for these services that are managed as inpatient admissions.
12. The 2016/17 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target, as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2016, states that, by March 2017, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.
13. 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 (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) week time band.

14. 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' included everyone in the >26 week time band.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. Belfast HSC Trust DRTT figures for the quarter ending June 2016 have been revised in this publication release. Figures for diagnostic waiting times for quarter ending June 2016 have also been revised.
19. The 2016/17 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target, as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2016, states that, from April 2016, 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/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>
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. 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.

23. The information contained within this publication is not National Statistics.

24. Figures relating to diagnostic waiting times and diagnostic reporting turnaround times for the quarter ending 31st December 2016 will be released on Thursday 23rd February 2017.

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

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