This is a National Statistics Publication

National Statistics status means that the official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value. They are identified by the quality mark shown above.

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics, it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

The statistics last underwent a full assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR) against the Code of Practice in July 2010. The OSR is the regulatory arm of the UK Statistics Authority.

Find out more about the Code of Practice at: https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/osr/code-of-practice/

Find out more about National Statistics at: https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/national-statistician/types-of-official-statistics/
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Introduction

Waiting times are important to patients and are a measure of how the NHS is responding to demands for services. Measuring and regular reporting of waiting times highlight where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS Scotland’s performance. Information Services Division (ISD) Scotland continues to be committed to improving the information on waiting times along with our key stakeholders, the NHS Boards and Scottish Government.

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Weeks Referral to Treatment standard (a maximum whole journey waiting time of 18 weeks from referral to treatment).

On 31 March 2009, the Scottish Government introduced the waiting time standard that patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations would be waiting no longer than six weeks. This supersedes nine weeks, which was initially introduced on 31 December 2007.

Waiting Times information on the following eight key diagnostic tests and investigations has been collected nationally since 2006:

**Endoscopy**
- Upper Endoscopy
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy)
- Colonoscopy
- Cystoscopy

**Radiology**
- CT Scan
- MRI Scan
- Barium Studies
- Non-obstetric ultrasound

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests and investigations at the end of the month. The standard end point that the wait is measured to, i.e. when the clock stops, is when the verified results are available for reporting. However, due to IT system constraints, in some cases for both Endoscopic and Radiology tests, the clock stops on the day the test is carried out.

Further [background](#) and [data quality](#) information can be found on the ISD website.
Main Points

The Scottish Government waiting time standard states that patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations should be waiting no longer than six weeks.

As at 31 December 2019:

- 87,543 patients in NHSScotland were waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. This is similar to the number of patients waiting at 30 September 2019 but 4.8 percent higher than at 31 December 2018.
  
  o Of these patients:
    - 69,637 (79.5%) had been waiting less than six weeks. This compares to 82.3% at 30 September 2019 and to 78.1% at the same point last year.
    - 17,906 (20.5%) had been waiting six weeks or over. This compares to 17.7% at 30 September 2019 and to 21.9% at 31 December 2018.

- 21,896 patients were waiting for key diagnostic tests that involve endoscopy tests.
  
  o Of these patients:
    - 14,906 (68.1%) had been waiting less than six weeks. This compares to 70.4% at 30 September 2019 and to 57.0% at 31 December 2018.
    - 6,990 (31.9%) had been waiting six weeks or over. This compares to 29.6% at 30 September 2019 and to 43.0% at 31 December 2018.

- 65,647 patients were waiting for key diagnostics that involve radiology tests.
  
  o Of these patients:
    - 54,731 (83.4%) had been waiting less than six weeks. This compares to 85.9% at 30 September 2019 and to 88.1% at 31 December 2018.
    - 10,916 (16.6%) had been waiting six weeks or over. This compares to 14.1% at 30 September 2019 and to 11.9% at 31 December 2018.
Results and Commentary

The Scottish Government national waiting time standard is for patients to be waiting no more than six weeks for any of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.

Latest Position

Table 1 shows the latest number of patients waiting for each of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. At 31 December 2019, 79.5% had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of 6 weeks in NHSScotland. This compares to 82.3% at 30 September 2019 and to 78.1% at 31 December 2018.

Table 1: Patients waiting for all Key Diagnostic Tests, NHSScotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnostic Test &amp; Investigations</th>
<th>Total waiting</th>
<th>6 Weeks or less</th>
<th>Over 6 Weeks</th>
<th>% within 6 Weeks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 Key Diagnostic Tests</td>
<td>87,543</td>
<td>69,637</td>
<td>17,906</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Endoscopy</td>
<td>8,303</td>
<td>5,581</td>
<td>2,722</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Endoscopy</td>
<td>2,235</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonoscopy</td>
<td>8,668</td>
<td>6,033</td>
<td>2,635</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cystoscopy</td>
<td>2,690</td>
<td>1,762</td>
<td>928</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Endoscopy</td>
<td>21,896</td>
<td>14,906</td>
<td>6,990</td>
<td>68.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT Scan</td>
<td>14,138</td>
<td>13,350</td>
<td>788</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI Scan</td>
<td>21,218</td>
<td>15,706</td>
<td>5,512</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barium Studies</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Obstetric Ultrasound</td>
<td>29,987</td>
<td>25,395</td>
<td>4,592</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Radiology</td>
<td>65,647</td>
<td>54,731</td>
<td>10,916</td>
<td>83.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For the latest quarter Figure 3 shows the percentage of patients who had been waiting over six weeks in each Board (Board of treatment) for one of the 8 key diagnostics tests. The highest performing boards were NHS Forth Valley (99.1%), NHS Fife (98.6%), and Golden Jubilee (98.5%) with NHS Highland (70.6%), NHS Tayside (71.3%), and NHS Ayrshire & Arran (71.4%) being the lowest.

A detailed breakdown by for each diagnostic test and for each NHS Board of Treatment is provided in the data tables.

**Figure 1: Percentage of patients who had been waiting six weeks in each NHS Board as at 30 December 2019**
Trends

Figure 2 shows a trend for the number of patients who had been waiting over 6 weeks at the end of each month for either one of the endoscopy tests or one of the radiology tests. The number of patients waiting more than six weeks for an endoscopy test has increased slightly since September 2019, from 6,129 to 6,990 at December 2019. However, the long term trend for patients waiting over six weeks for an endoscopy test has decreased since December 2017.

The number of patients waiting more than six weeks for a radiology test hasn't changed substantially over the past quarter with the numbers remaining consistently higher than those observed before June 2019. This is a continuation of the longer term trend of increasing numbers of patients waiting over six weeks for a radiology test since December 2017.

Figure 2: Trend in the number of patients who had been waiting over six weeks
Figure 3 shows the time trend for performance against the 6-week standard for the 8 key diagnostic tests with groupings for all endoscopy and all radiology tests, over the past 2 years. The chart shows that the overall performance for the eight key diagnostic tests has remained around the 80% mark. This overall performance masks the different performance trends of endoscopy and radiology waits.

Since December 2017, the percentage of radiology patients seen within six weeks has shown a gradual decline from a high of 93% in February 2018 to a low of 83% at the end of December 2019.

From December 2017, the percentage of endoscopy patients being seen within six weeks has steadily increased from 57% to a high of 70% with slight downturn in performance, to 68%, in the most recent quarter.

**Figure 3: Waiting within six-week Standard (%)**

Figure 4 shows a recent trend for the percentage of patients who had been waiting less than 6 weeks at the end of each month for each the key Endoscopy tests. All tests, except lower endoscopy, have shown a slight decrease in performance across the most recent quarter with colonoscopy showing the biggest decrease, from 72.4% at September 2019 to 69.6% at December 2019. While there has been a decrease in performance in the most recent quarter, there has been an increase in performance observed for all tests since December 2017 for all endoscopy tests.
Figure 4: Percentage of patients who had been waiting less than six weeks for each Endoscopy Test

![Figure 4: Percentage of patients who had been waiting less than six weeks for each Endoscopy Test](image)

Figure 5 shows a trend the percentage of patients who had been waiting less than 6 weeks at the end of each month for each radiology test. Over the past two years the performance for each of the four radiology tests has remained fairly static with the exception of a dip in performance for Barium studies at December 2019. The most recent quarter has shown a decrease in performance for all radiology tests except CT, with the biggest decrease being for non-obstetric ultrasound, from 90.1% September 2019 to 84.7% at December 2019. CT was the only radiology test to show an increase this quarter, from 87.7% at September 2019 to 94.4% at December 2019.

Looking at performance for these four tests over a longer period of time it can be observed that there has been a decrease in performance for all radiology tests with the exception of CT. Also, the variance in performance of the four tests has increased since December 2017.
Figure 5: Percentage of patients who had been waiting less than six weeks for each Radiology Test

Note: ISD receives aggregate diagnostics data from each NHS Board and so patient-level information is not systematically validated by ISD; however, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is the responsibility of the Board.
Glossary

Diagnostic test: Test or procedure that is used to identify a person’s condition, disease or injury to enable a medical diagnosis to be made.

Key Diagnostic test: There are eight key diagnostic tests, for which the current National Waiting Times Standard is a maximum wait of six weeks. These eight tests/investigations are:

- Upper Endoscopy,
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy),
- Colonoscopy,
- Cystoscopy,
- Computer Tomography (CT Scan),
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI Scan),
- Barium Studies,
- Non-obstetric Ultrasound.

Patient’s completed wait: The period of time between the date the request for the test or procedure is received within the department and the date when the verified report has been received by or made available to the requester.

Patients waiting: Number of available patients waiting at the census date, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester. The number of patients waiting at the census date in each time band corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the receipt of the referral.
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Further Information
Further information and data for this publication are available from the ISD website.
For more information on Diagnostics see the Diagnostics section of our website. For related topics, please see the Waiting Times pages.
The next release of this publication will be May 2020.

Open data
Data from this publication is available to download from the NHSScotland Open Data platform.

NHS Performs
A selection of information from this publication is included in NHS Performs. NHS Performs is a website that brings together a range of information on how hospitals and NHS Boards within NHSScotland are performing.

Rate this publication
Please provide feedback on this publication to help us improve our services.
### Appendices

#### Appendix 1 – Publication Metadata

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metadata Indicator</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Publication title</td>
<td>Diagnostic Waiting Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Monthly summary of patients waiting times for eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Theme</td>
<td>Health and Social Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Access and Waiting Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Excel workbooks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Data source(s)</td>
<td>Aggregate counts accredited and derived from individual NHSScotland Boards are submitted monthly to ISD using a defined Excel template. Associated with individual NHSScotland Boards Local Delivery Plans integrated to the 18Weeks RTT national standards.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date that data are acquired</td>
<td>Deadline for data submission is the 22nd of each month, though files can be resubmitted up to one week before publication where the quality assurance process identifies differences with local figures.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Release date</td>
<td>The last Tuesday of the month for each publication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timeframe of data and timeliness</td>
<td>Data from December 2007 to date. There have been no delays in reporting.</td>
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<td>Continuity of data</td>
<td>From January 2010 Golden Jubilee National Hospital data is included in the Scotland total.</td>
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<td>Revisions statement</td>
<td>Historic data is not normally revised unless revision of data is required due to NHS Board resubmission of revised local data following publication.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revisions relevant to this publication</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Concepts and definitions</td>
<td>A Data Submission Guidance document is available in printed and electronic form. These have been provided to all NHS Boards' key DMMI contacts. This information is now published and available to view at <a href="http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/">http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/</a></td>
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<td>Relevance and key uses of the statistics</td>
<td>Waiting times are important to patients and are a measure of how the NHS is responding to demands for services. Measuring and regular reporting of waiting times highlights where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS performance throughout the country. The NHS in Scotland has been set a number of targets for maximum waiting times. Other uses of the data include information requests for a variety of customers, e.g. research charities; public companies; freedom of Information requests;</td>
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<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
<td>ISD only receives aggregate data from each NHS Board where the data for the previous quarter is confirmed by the submitting Board. Although aggregated data cannot be systematically validated by ISD, ISD does carry out quality assurance checks on the data submitted. Reported data are compared to previous figures and to expected trends. Derivation of the figures and data accuracy is a matter for individual NHS Boards.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Completeness</strong></td>
<td>100% of submitted data is used for analysis and publication.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Comparability</strong></td>
<td>Comparative waiting times information is not possible at present using these data due to inconsistencies in definitions of waiting times for treatment across the four countries.</td>
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<td><strong>Accessibility</strong></td>
<td>It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines.</td>
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<td><strong>Coherence and clarity</strong></td>
<td>Key statistics for the latest quarter are linked to on the main Waiting Times page of the publication. Statistics are presented within Excel spreadsheets. NHS Board and national figures are presented. Geographical hierarchies and national figures are presented using drop down menus. Further features to aid clarity: 1. Tables use drop down menus to display data by a single Board. 2. Tables are printer friendly.</td>
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<td><strong>Value type and unit of measurement</strong></td>
<td>Count of number of patients waiting over four and six weeks for Scotland and NHSScotland Health Boards.</td>
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<td><strong>Official Statistics designation</strong></td>
<td>National Statistics.</td>
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<td><strong>Last published</strong></td>
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Appendix 2 – Early access details

Pre-Release Access

Under terms of the "Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008", HPS is obliged to publish information on those receiving Pre-Release Access ("Pre-Release Access" refers to statistics in their final form prior to publication). The standard maximum Pre-Release Access is five working days. Shown below are details of those receiving standard Pre-Release Access.

Standard Pre-Release Access:

Scottish Government Health Department

NHS Board Chief Executives

NHS Board Communication leads
Appendix 3 – ISD and Official Statistics

About ISD
Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

Purpose: To deliver effective national and specialist intelligence services to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland.

Mission: Better Information, Better Decisions, Better Health

Vision: To be a valued partner in improving health and wellbeing in Scotland by providing a world class intelligence service.

Official Statistics
Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

ISD’s statistical publications are currently classified as one of the following:

- National Statistics (i.e. assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as complying with the Code of Practice)
- National Statistics (i.e. legacy, still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- Official Statistics (i.e. still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- other (not Official Statistics)

Further information on ISD’s statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the ISD website.