Diagnostic Waiting Times

Waits for Key Diagnostic Tests

A National Statistics release for Scotland
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About this release

This release relates to the number of patients waiting for one of eight key diagnostics tests and investigations and the time they have waited. The eight key tests and investigation are Upper Endoscopy, Lower Endoscopy (excl. Colonoscopy), Colonoscopy, Cystoscopy, CT scan, MRI scan, Barium Studies and Non-obstetric ultrasound. A more detailed report can be accessed via the link below:

Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

Main Points

It should be highlighted that the statistics released for this reporting period are affected in part by the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. In particular, on the 17 March, NHS Scotland was placed under emergency measures and Boards were asked to suspend all non-urgent elective treatment. Later on the 23 March the nation entered a period of ‘lockdown’. These measures affected normal referral and treatment patterns, with less referrals to services as well as less patients seen in the later weeks of March. The main publication report provides more detailed analysis on this.

Diagnostics National Standard – 100% of patients waiting six weeks or less for a key diagnostic test

- During March the number of patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostics tests and investigations reduced from 88,301 at the end of February to 79,402 patients - a 10% decrease.
  - This decrease is largely driven by a decrease in the number of patients waiting for the key radiology tests (from 65,869 to 56,074 patients). This is due to in part to a reduction in referrals in the latter weeks of March as well as some services managing to continue to test some patients in this period.
  - In contrast the number of patients waiting for endoscopy tests increased slightly from 22,432 to 23,328.
- Due to a reduction in referrals and reduced levels of testing in March, by the end of March the distribution of waiting patients, in respect of how long they had been waiting for key tests, had changed significantly. In particular:
  - There were less patients who had been waiting less than 2 weeks - 17,902 patients (22.5%) at the end of March compared to 37,384 (42.3%) at the end of February.
  - 60,179 patients (75.8%) had been waiting no more than six weeks compared to 74,801 (84.7%) at the end of February.
  - 19,223 patients (24.2%) had been waiting over 6 weeks compared to 13,500 (15.3%) at the end of February.
Percentage of Patients still waiting at month end who had been waiting 6 weeks or less

*Please note the vertical scale on the left hand side of the graph does not start at zero.

**Background**

The following document relates to waiting times, including Diagnostics:


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**Further Information**

For more information see the [Waiting Times section of our website](https://www.nhs.scot/). ISD have developed an [animation](https://www.nhs.scot/services/isd/waiting-times), with further explanations of how waiting times are calculated.

The next release of this publication will be in August 2020.

**NHS Performs**

A selection of information from this publication is included in [NHS Performs](https://www.isd.scot). NHS Performs is a website that brings together a range of information on how hospitals and NHS Boards within NHSScotland are performing.

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**PHS and Official Statistics**

Public Health Scotland (PHS) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. PHS 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 Statistics. [Further information about our statistics.](https://www.gov.scot/statistics)