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

Note that the statistics presented for this period are affected by the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak. On the 17 March, NHSScotland 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. In particular, there is likely to have been less referrals to services as well as less patients seen from the latter weeks of March onwards. From 29 June, boards started to gradually resume some screening services including endoscopies and other diagnostic tests. Where possible we have highlighted where these factors may be influencing the statistics shown.

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

At 30 June 2020:

- There were 98,332 patients waiting for the eight key diagnostic tests. This is 11.4% higher (10,031 patients) than 29 February 2020 when NHSScotland was placed under emergency measures and non-urgent treatment was paused.

  - There were 29,925 patients waiting for an endoscopy test, an increase of 7,493 (33.4%) from 29 February 2020.

  - There were 68,407 patients waiting for a radiology test, an increase of 2,538 (3.9%) from 29 February 2020.

- Due to a reduction in referrals and reduced levels of testing from March onwards, the distribution in the length of time patients had been waiting had changed significantly:

  - Only 35.4% of patients had been waiting six weeks or less compared to 84.7% at the end of February. This percentage was greater for those waiting for the Radiology tests (40.9%) but less for those waiting for the endoscopy tests (22.8%).

  - Half of patients had been waiting over 13 weeks (50.5%), compared to just 5.1% at 29 February. More specifically, 44.7% (30,551) of those waiting for a radiology test and 63.9% (19,127) of those endoscopy test had been waiting over 13 weeks.
Trend in the percentage of patients waiting 6 weeks or less at the end of each month; split by test type

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. ISD have developed an animation, with further explanations of how waiting times are calculated.

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

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.

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.