

Publication Report



Diagnostic Waiting Times

Quarter Ending 31 March 2015

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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 final results are available for reporting. However, in some cases for Endoscopic tests, patients are reported as waiting until the day the test is carried out due to system constraints.

Key points

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.

As at 31 March 2015:

- 60,098 patients in NHS Scotland were waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. This is 10.9% higher than number of patients waiting at 31 March 2014.
- 91.2% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test had been waiting less than six weeks. This compares to 95.4% at 31 March 2014 and 90.3% at 31 December 2014.
- The majority of the 5,314 patients waiting over six weeks in NHS Scotland were waiting to be seen in NHS Grampian (33.3%) and NHS Ayrshire & Arran (21.1%).

Results and Commentary

From 31 March 2009, the Scottish Government set a national waiting time standard that patients should be waiting no more than six weeks for any of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. NHS Boards are currently working to local targets that patients will wait no more than four weeks.

Eight Key Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

Table 1 shows the number of [patients waiting](#) for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. At 31 March 2015, 91.2% had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of six weeks in NHS Scotland. The performance percentage of patients waiting less than six weeks has improved compared to the previous quarter end (31 December 2014) when it was 90.3% but below the previous year end (31 March 2014) of 95.4%.

Of the 5,314 patients waiting over six weeks at 31 March 2015, the majority were waiting to be seen in NHS Grampian (1,767) and NHS Ayrshire & Arran (1,123). Comparable information by NHS Board of Treatment is provided [here](#).

Table 1: Patients waiting for all Key Diagnostic Tests, NHS Scotland

Diagnostic Test & Investigations	Number of Patients Waiting as at 31 Mar 2015:			Waiting within 6 week Standard (%):		
	Total waiting	> 6 Weeks	> 4 Weeks	31 Mar 15 (current)	31 Dec 14	31 Mar 14
8 Key Diagnostic Tests	60 098	5 314	10 862	91.2	90.3	95.4
Upper Endoscopy	7 020	1 555	2 450	77.8	80.7	90.8
Lower Endoscopy	2 717	888	1 260	67.3	71.1	84.9
Colonoscopy	6 937	1 309	2 154	81.1	81.4	89.5
Cystoscopy	2 078	361	615	82.6	71.5	94.5
All Endoscopy	18 752	4 113	6 479	78.1	78.3	90.1
Computer Tomography (CT Scan)	10 017	200	1 150	98.0	97.5	99.7
Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI Scan)	11 622	895	2 048	92.3	93.0	97.1
Barium Studies	245	1	8	99.6	100.0	100.0
Non-Obstetric Ultrasound	19 462	105	1 177	99.5	96.7	96.9
All Radiology	41 346	1 201	4 383	97.1	95.9	97.6

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.

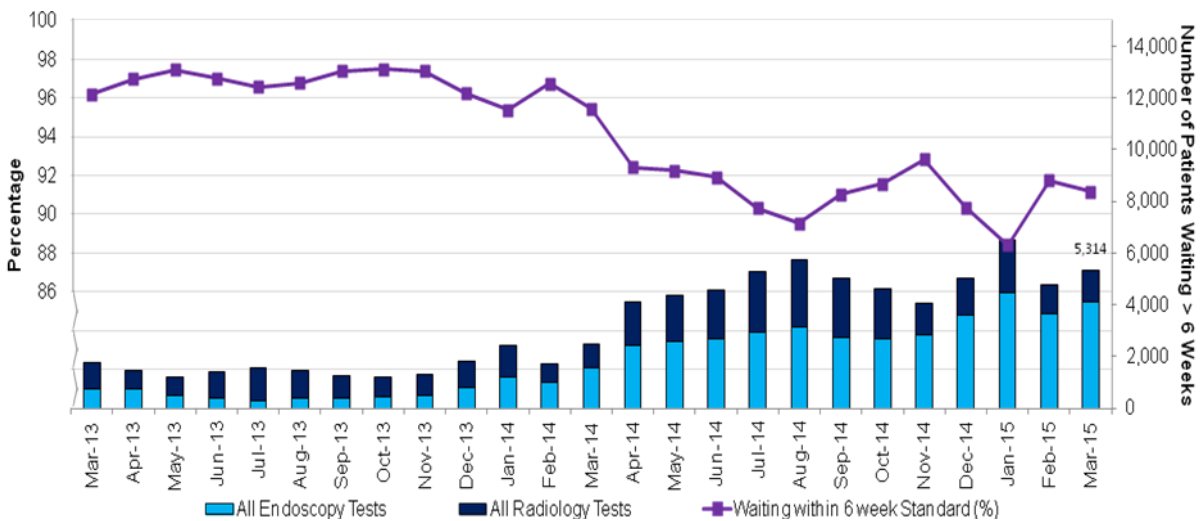
It can be seen from Chart 1 that the percentage of patients waiting within 6 weeks remained stable around 97% for most of 2013. From 28 Feb 2014 patients waiting within 6 weeks dropped and reduced to below 90% at 31 Aug 2014. Following a slight upward trend since August, performance dropped back down to below 90% in January 2015 before returning to the current level of 91.2%.

Despite having much less demand than Radiology, the majority of patients waiting over 6 weeks are waiting for an Endoscopy test.

Considering recent trends, Chart 1 demonstrates an increase in the number of patients waiting greater than 6 weeks from 1,545 at 31 March 2014 to 4,113 at 31 March 2015 for all endoscopy tests. Initially, the increase was primarily due to longer waits at NHS Grampian but at various points in recent months NHS Ayrshire & Arran, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley, NHS Highland, NHS Lothian and NHS Tayside have all reported notable drops in performance specific to endoscopy tests. A combination of staff resource issues, higher demand and the consequent strain on capacity has led to an increase in the average length of wait.

NHS Ayrshire & Arran make up 65.4% or 786 of the 1,201 patients currently waiting greater than 6 weeks for radiology tests. Since the last quarter NHS Ayrshire & Arran has seen a 18.6% increase on waiting list size, which has coincided with increases in patients waiting greater than 6 weeks for radiology tests and a consequent decrease in performance.

Chart 1: Waiting within 6 week Standard (%)



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),
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI),
- 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.

List of Tables

Table No.	Name	Time period	File & size
1	Waiting times for diagnostic tests monthly census dates	31 March 2013 to 31 March 2015	Excel [538KB]

Contact

Brendan de Moor

Information Analyst

brendan.demoor@nhs.net

0131 314 1201

Stuart Kerr

Senior Information Analyst

stuartkerr2@nhs.net

0131 275 6363

General Enquiries

nss.isdwaitingtimes@nhs.net

Further Information

Further information can be found on the [ISD website](#)

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Appendix

A1 – Background Information

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Week Referral To Treatment standard (18 Weeks RTT) with waiting times information on the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations having been collected nationally since 2006.

The Scottish Government introduced a nine week maximum waiting time for these eight key diagnostic tests and investigations from 31 December 2007. This wait was reduced to six weeks from 31 March 2009.

NHS Boards also supply data that allows measurement of the number of patients waiting over four weeks. The number of patients waiting over four weeks is included from 31 March 2010. From January 2010, the Scotland total includes Golden Jubilee National Hospital.

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, 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. This includes all referral routes (i.e. whether the patient was referred by a GP, by a hospital-based clinician or other route) and also all settings (i.e. outpatient clinic, inpatient ward, x-ray department, primary care one-stop centres etc.).

The diagnostics waiting times national delivery team has worked with NHS Boards and ISD over recent years to support the compilation of the diagnostic waiting time data. Common definitions have been established and reporting systems improved so the coverage and quality of these data has improved month-on-month from April 2006.

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 carried out by individual NHS Boards in collaboration with ISD.

A2 – Data Quality

ISD receives aggregate data on Diagnostic Waiting Times 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.

Specific NHS Board Data Quality Issues:

NHS Highland

Normal process for running the data is to run the report in the middle of the following month as at the previous month end. This enables the service to tidy up any outstanding waiting list queries to reflect the most accurate position. Due to the implementation of NHS Highland's new Patient Management System, they are now unable to follow the normal process. This means that the data submitted for Month Ends 31 March 2014 onwards are at the Month end position and no tidying up exercise has been applied to the data.

However NHS Highland are confident that this is an accurate reflection of their data and have signed off accordingly. ISD continue to quality assure the data and query any outliers with NHS Highland.

NHS Grampian

In July 2013, NHS Grampian made improvements to their local reporting processes for Diagnostic Waiting Times. Consequent to this, there has been a rise in the number of patients waiting for a Diagnostic Test and investigation. ISD have received assurance from NHS Grampian that historical data is correct and that there are no data quality issues however caution should be taken when comparing data prior to July 2013 due to the change in their reporting practices.

NHS Tayside

Patients who have been offered a date out with NHS Tayside's local 4 week target but within the 6 week national target and whose appointment is subsequently moved, for example the patient is on holiday, NHS Tayside's PAS system will not allow unavailability to be applied as it works to a 4 week target.

NHS Western Isles

NHS Western Isles are unable to provide true waiting list size, for Radiology diagnostic tests, as direct access to their RIS is not available. As a proxy, NHS Western Isles compile figures for Diagnostics from SCI Store on 15th of the month post census date. This has been the process since October 2011.

A3 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details)

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication title	Diagnostic Waiting Times
Description	Monthly summary of patients waiting times for eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.
Theme	Health and Social Care
Topic	Access and Waiting Times
Format	Excel workbooks
Data source(s)	Aggregate counts accredited and derived from individual NHS Scotland Boards are submitted monthly to ISD using a defined Excel template. Associated with individual NHS Scotland Boards Local Delivery Plans integrated to the 18Weeks RTT national standards.
Date that data are acquired	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.
Release date	The last Tuesday of the month for each publication.
Frequency	Quarterly
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Data from December 2007 to date. There have been no delays in reporting.
Continuity of data	From January 2010 Golden Jubilee National Hospital data is included in the Scotland total.
Revisions statement	Historic data is not normally revised unless revision of data is required due to NHS Board resubmission of revised local data following publication.
Revisions relevant to this publication	NHS Western Isles re-submitted data for quarter ending 30 June 2014. This was due to a handful of repeat endoscopy patients being included in figures.
Concepts and definitions	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 http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/
Relevance and key uses of the statistics	<p>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.</p> <p>Other uses of the data include information requests for a variety of customers, e.g. research charities; public companies; freedom of Information requests; information support to Boards; health intelligence</p>

	work; parliamentary questions and HEAT targets.
Accuracy	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 can not 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.
Completeness	100% of submitted data is used for analysis and publication.
Comparability	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.
Accessibility	It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines .
Coherence and clarity	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.
Value type and unit of measurement	Count of number of patients waiting over four, six and nine weeks for Scotland and NHS Scotland Health Boards
Disclosure	The ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol is followed.
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published 29 th July 2010. http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf
Last published	24 February 2015
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Help email	NSS.isdwaitingtimes@nhs.net
Date form completed	26 May 2015

A4 – Early Access details (including Pre-Release Access)

Pre-Release Access

Under terms of the "Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008", ISD are 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

A5 – 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 (ie assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as complying with the Code of Practice)
- National Statistics (ie legacy, still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- Official Statistics (ie 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](#).

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

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