Diagnostic Waiting Times
Quarter Ending
31 December 2017

Publication date
27 February 2018
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.

They comply with the Code of Practice for statistics and are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority’s regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

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, in some cases for both Endoscopic and Radiology tests, patients are reported as waiting until the day the test is carried out due to system constraints.

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 2017:

- 77,256 patients in NHSScotland were waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. This is a decrease of 0.7% compared with the number of patients waiting at 30 September 2017 and an increase of 19.0% since 31 December 2016.
- Table 1 shows that 79.3% of patients waiting for a key diagnostic test had been waiting less than six weeks. This compares to 81.6% at 30 September 2017 and 86.1% at 31 December 2016.

Table 1: Waiting within 6 weeks Standard as at 31 December 2017 by NHS Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NHS Board</th>
<th>Waiting within 6 week Standard (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NHS Ayrshire &amp; Arran</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Borders</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Dumfries &amp; Galloway</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Fife</td>
<td>77.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Forth Valley</td>
<td>99.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Golden Jubilee National Hospital</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Grampian</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Greater Glasgow &amp; Clyde</td>
<td>79.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Highland</td>
<td>80.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Lanarkshire</td>
<td>97.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Lothian</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Orkney</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Shetland</td>
<td>99.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Tayside</td>
<td>78.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Western Isles</td>
<td>88.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NHS Scotland</strong></td>
<td><strong>79.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.

Eight Key Diagnostic Tests and Investigations

- Table 2 shows the number of patients waiting for one of the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations. At 31 December 2017, 79.3% had been waiting less than the waiting time standard of 6 weeks in NHSScotland. This compares to 81.6% at 30 September 2017 and 86.1% at 31 December 2016. A detailed breakdown of diagnostic tests by NHS Board of Treatment is provided here.
- 56.9% of patients waiting for endoscopy tests had waits of less than six weeks.
- 90.6% of patients waiting for radiology tests had waits of less than six weeks.

Table 2: Patients waiting for all Key Diagnostic Tests, NHSScotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagnostic Test &amp; Investigations</th>
<th>Number of Patients Waiting as at 31 December 17:</th>
<th>Waiting within 6 week Standard (%):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total waiting</td>
<td>&gt; 6 Weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Key Diagnostic Tests</td>
<td>77 256</td>
<td>15 956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Endoscopy</td>
<td>9 539</td>
<td>3 949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Endoscopy</td>
<td>2 584</td>
<td>1 129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonoscopy</td>
<td>9 675</td>
<td>4 002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cystoscopy</td>
<td>3 960</td>
<td>2 025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Endoscopy</td>
<td>25 758</td>
<td>11 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CT Scan</td>
<td>13 267</td>
<td>1 483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRI Scan</td>
<td>15 128</td>
<td>1 912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barium Studies</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Obstetric Ultrasound</td>
<td>22 890</td>
<td>1 448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Radiology</td>
<td>51 498</td>
<td>4 851</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 1 shows an increasing trend in the number of patients waiting longer than six weeks over the past two years. Performance has gone from a high of 94.7% of patients waiting within the six weeks standard at month ending 29 February 2016, to a low of 79.3% at month ending 31 December 2017.

The number of patients waiting over six weeks for all endoscopy tests has increased substantially over the last 18 months, from 2,563 in June 2016 to a high of 11,105 at 31 December 2017. Month ending 30 November 2017 saw the only respite during a ten month increasing trend of patients waiting over 6 weeks for all endoscopy tests. Each key endoscopy test exhibits a similar trend, with Cystoscopy being the only test to show continuous increase this quarter.

The number of patients waiting over six weeks for all Radiology tests had shown an increasing trend until 30 April 2017, where it hit a high of 5,543 patients waiting. There has since been a slight decrease to 4,851 at 31 December 2017. This recent improvement in performance has been largely due to a reduction in the number of patients waiting more than six weeks for a Non-Obstetric Ultrasound, hitting a twenty month low at 30 November 2017, when 711 patients were waiting longer than the national standard.

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 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.
## List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File name</th>
<th>File and size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waiting times for diagnostic tests monthly census dates</td>
<td>Excel 548 Kb</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Contact

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Further Information
Further Information can be found on the ISD website.
The next release of this publication will be 29 May 2018.

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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publication title</td>
<td>Diagnostic Waiting Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Monthly summary of patients waiting times for eight key diagnostic tests and investigations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Health and Social Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Access and Waiting Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Excel workbooks</td>
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</table>

**Data source(s)**

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.

**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 Border resubmitted MRI data for September 2017 after performing validation checks.

**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/](http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Diagnostics/)

**Relevance and key uses of the statistics**

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; information support to Boards; health intelligence 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 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.

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accessibility</th>
<th>It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coherence and clarity</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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value type and unit of measurement</td>
<td>Count of number of patients waiting over four, six and nine weeks for Scotland and NHSScotland Health Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclosure</td>
<td>The ISD protocol on Statistical Disclosure Protocol is followed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last published</td>
<td>28 November 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next published</td>
<td>29 May 2018</td>
</tr>
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<td>Date of first publication</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
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<td>Help email</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date form completed</td>
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</table>
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 (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.