

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Cancer Waiting Times (January – March 2020)



READER INFORMATION

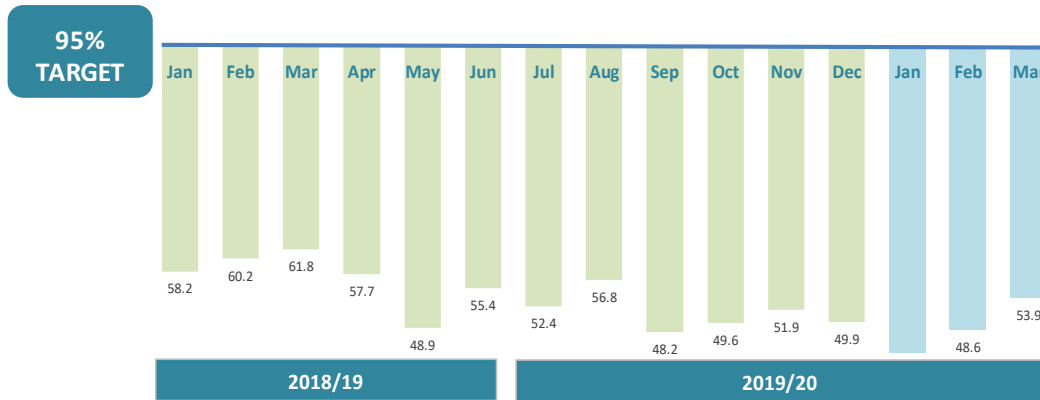
Purpose:	<p>This publication presents information on waiting times for cancer services at hospitals in Northern Ireland during January, February and March (2020) and reports on the performance of Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland, against the draft 2019/20 Ministerial Target for cancer care services, which states that:</p> <p><i>“During 2019/20, all urgent breast cancer referrals should be seen within 14 days; at least 98% of patients diagnosed with cancer should receive their first definitive treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat; and at least 95% of patients urgently referred with a suspected cancer should begin their first definitive treatment within 62 days.”</i></p> <p>All data are presented by Health and Social Care Trust and, where applicable, by tumour site. In order to preserve the privacy of individual patients, we do not report on individual counts below five. This does not affect the statistical inferences that can be drawn from the data.</p>
Statistical Quality	<p>The ‘Cancer Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation’ booklet details the technical guidance, definitions, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from the following link: https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times</p>
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Authors	Jennifer Finlay, Mary Farrelly & Siobhán Morgan
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Contact Information and further copies	statistics@health-ni.gov.uk
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62 Day Ministerial Target

At least 95% of patients should begin their first treatment for cancer within 62 days following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer.

In March 2020, 440 patients commenced their first treatment for cancer following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer, compared with 350 in February, 407 in January and 314 in March 2019 (Table 3).

% of patients commencing treatment for cancer within 62 days



The Ministerial target has not been met in the last 3 years. In March 2020, 53.9% of patients commenced their first treatment for cancer within 62 days of an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer, compared with 48.6% in February, 44.5% in January and 61.8% during March 2019 (Table 3).

Trust Performance

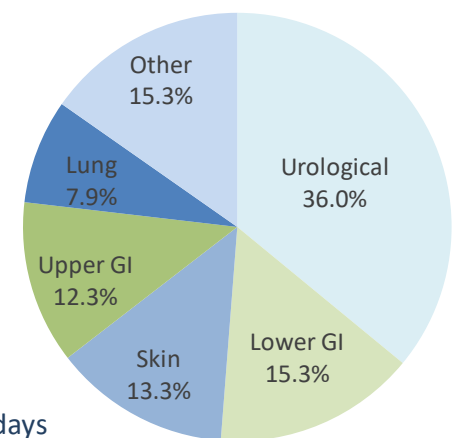
% of patients commencing treatment for cancer within 62 days by HSC Trust



All HSC Trusts failed to meet the 62 day component of the Ministerial target during January, February or March (Table 1).

Waits over 62 Days by Tumour Site

Of the 203 patients waiting longer than 62 days for treatment in March 2020, over a third (59, 36.0%) were diagnosed with urological cancer (Table 2).



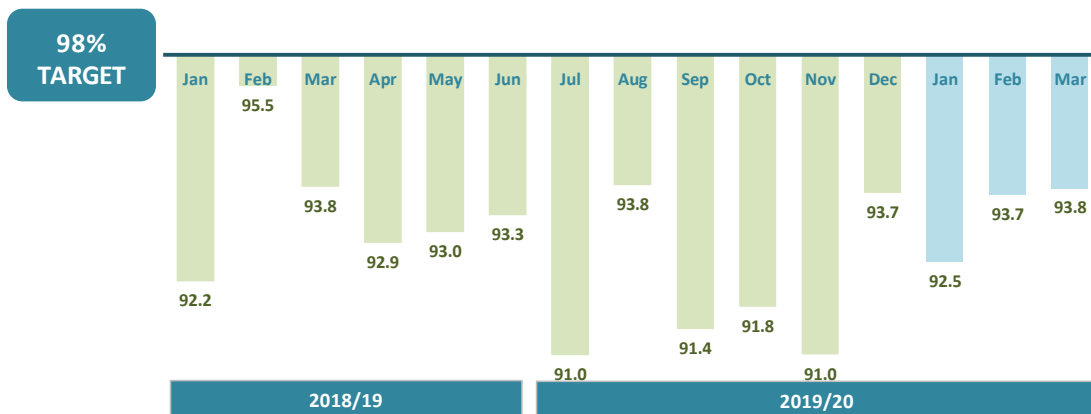
% of patients waiting over 62 days by tumour site

31 Day Ministerial Target

At least 98% of patients diagnosed with cancer should receive their first definitive treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat.

In March 2020, 964 patients commenced their first treatment for cancer following a decision to treat, compared with 806 in February, 938 in January and 791 in March 2019 (Table 6).

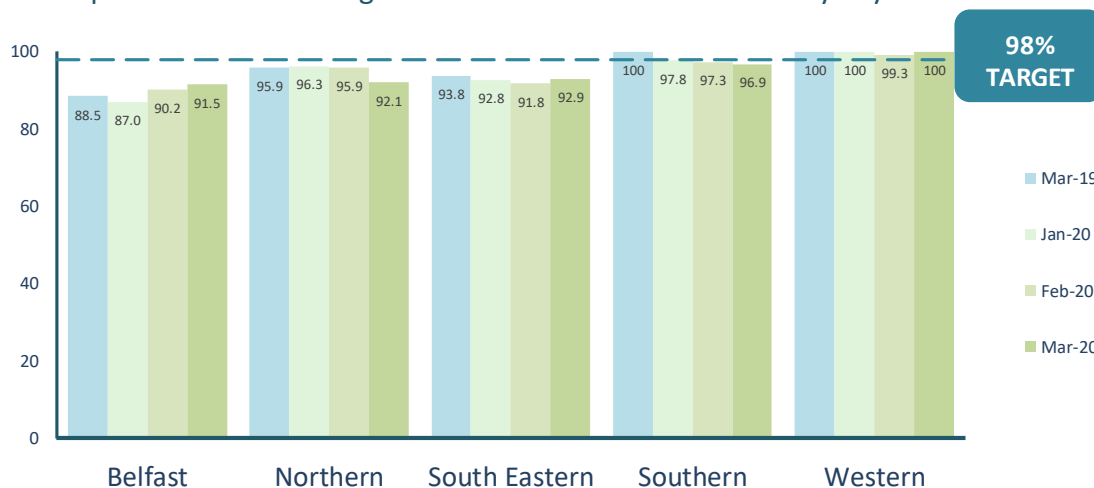
% of patients commencing treatment for cancer within 31 days



The Ministerial target has not been met in the last 3 years. In March 2020, 93.8% of patients were treated within 31 days compared with 93.7% in February, 92.5% in January and 93.8% during March 2019 (Table 6).

Trust Performance

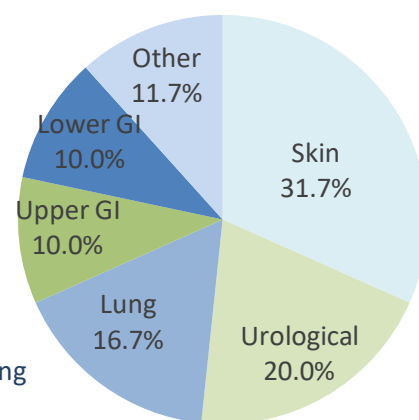
% of patients commencing treatment for cancer within 31 days by HSC Trust



The Western HSC Trust achieved the 98% Ministerial target in January, February and March (Table 4).

Waits over 31 Days by Tumour Site

Of the 60 patients waiting longer than 31 days in March, almost one third (19, 31.7%) were diagnosed with skin cancer (Table 5).

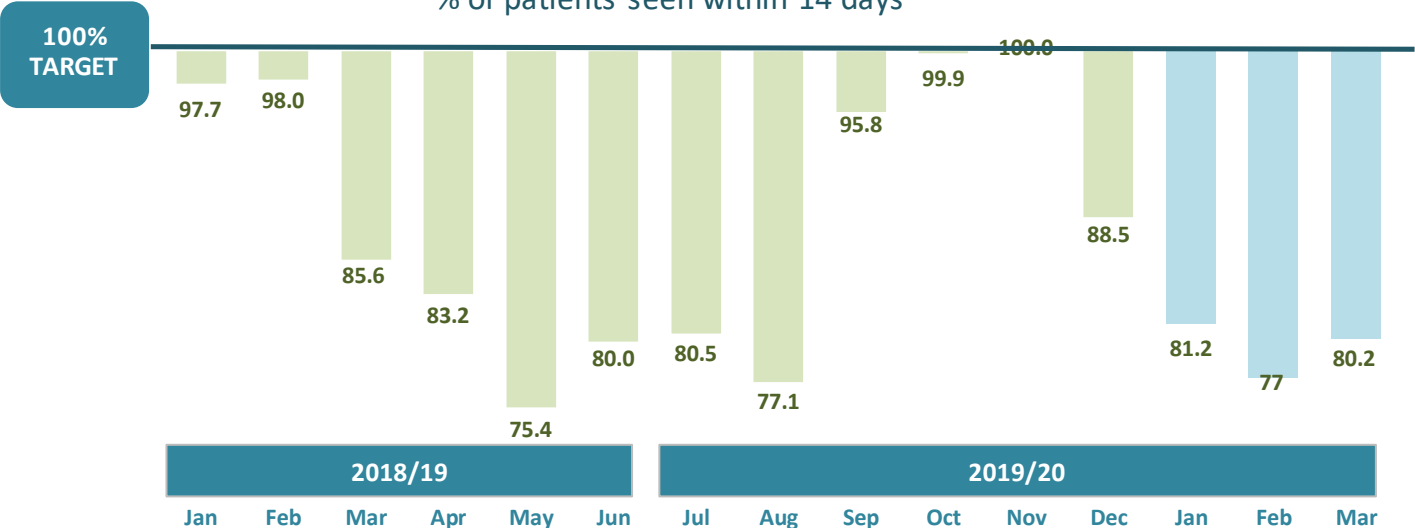


% of patients waiting over 31 days by tumour site

14 Day Ministerial Target

All urgent breast cancer referrals should be seen within 14 days.

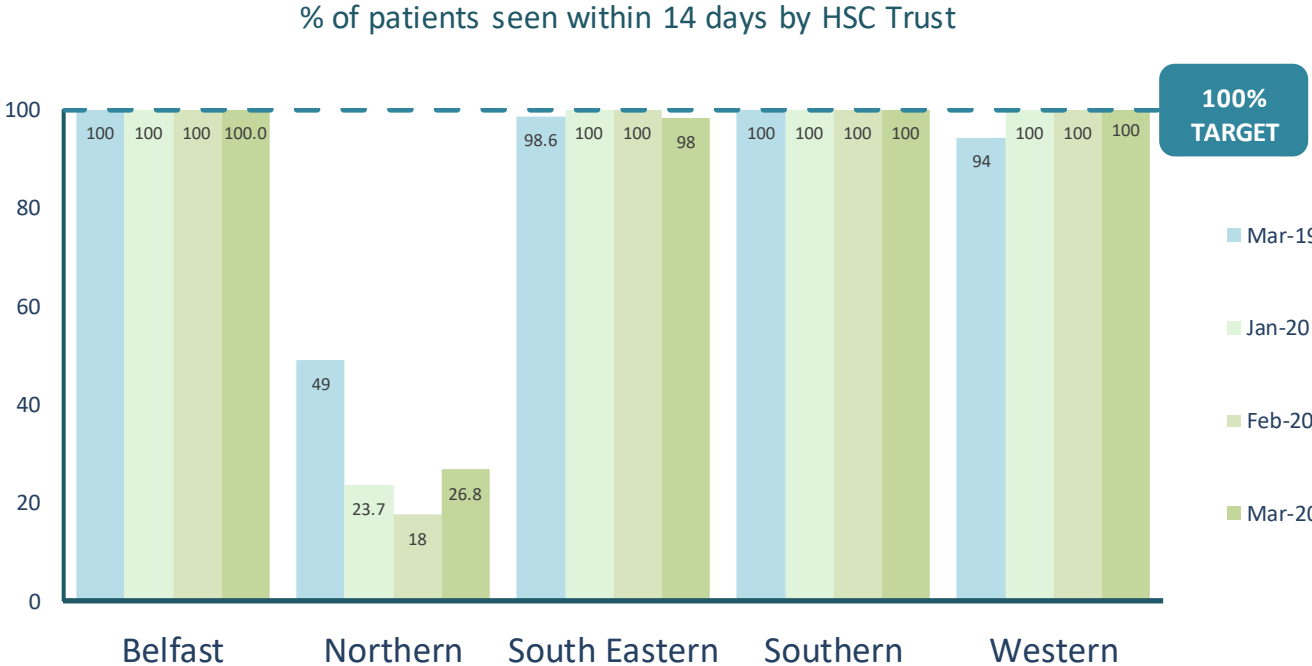
In March 2020, 1,069 patients were first seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer, compared with 1,205 in February, 1,289 in January and 1,387 during March 2019 (Table 8).



In March 2020, 80.2% of patients were first seen within 14 days, compared with 77.4% in February, 81.2% in January and 85.6% during March 2019 (Table 8).

Trust Performance

The Belfast, Southern and Western HSC Trusts achieved the 100% Ministerial target in January, February and March and South Eastern achieved this target in two months of the quarter (Table 7).



Breast cancer referrals

Information in this section relates to the number of referrals received by HSC Trusts for suspect breast cancer. This information is sourced from the Patient Administration System via the HSC Data Warehouse.

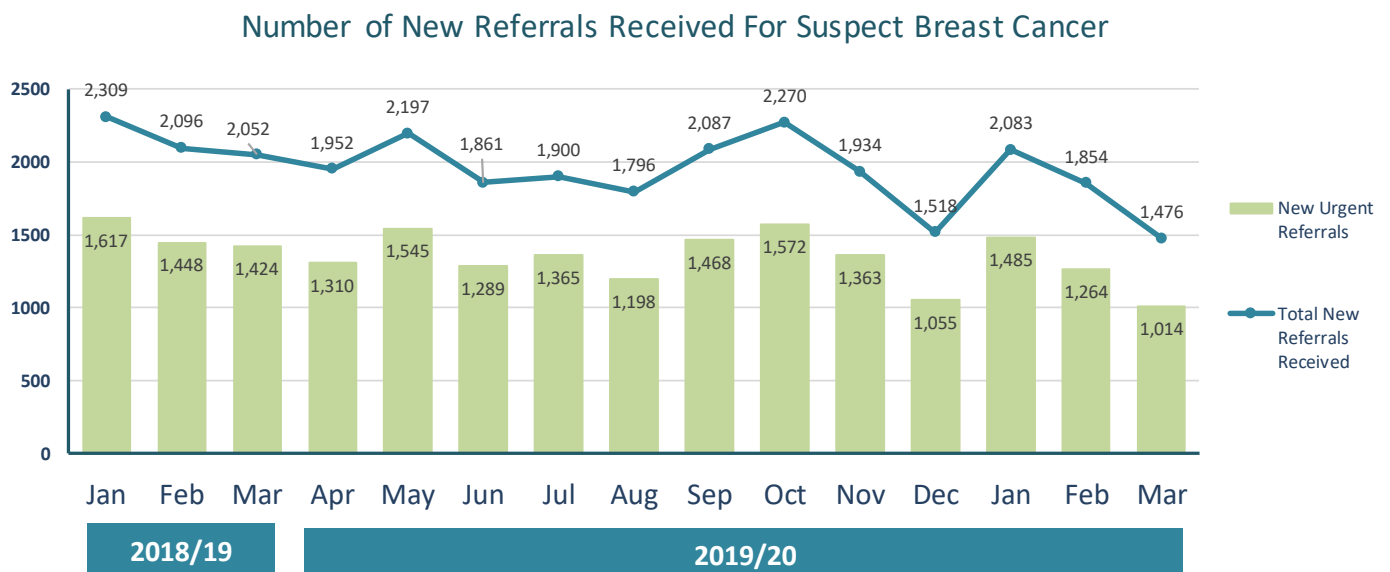
Readers should note that these data are not National Statistics but have been validated and quality assured by HSC Trusts prior to publication. Currently the Department is in the process of refining validation processes for these data, which should therefore be treated with caution. However, they have been published to help provide users with some contextual information in relation to the Ministerial Target relating to breast cancer waiting times.

New Suspect Breast Cancer Referrals

In March 2020, 1,476 new referrals for suspect breast cancer were received; this compares with 1,854 in February, 2,083 in January and 2,052 in March 2019 (Table 9). Referrals for suspect cancer can be for advice, assessment or both.

New Urgent Suspect Breast Cancer Referrals

Of those new referrals for suspect breast cancer in March 2020, 1,014 (68.7%) were classified as urgent.



Additional Tables

Table 1: Percentage of patients who commenced first treatment within 62 days following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer, in Northern Ireland (January - March 2020)¹

HSC Trust	% treated within 62 days		
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
Belfast	32.1%	44.5%	48.3%
Northern	61.1%	44.3%	65.0%
South Eastern	31.0%	30.4%	49.7%
Southern	60.7%	68.7%	58.4%
Western	54.4%	67.3%	56.0%
Northern Ireland	44.5%	48.6%	53.9%

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes – Points 1-5.

Table 2: Percentage of patients who commenced first treatment within 62 days following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer, by tumour site (January - March 2020)²

Cancer Type	% treated within 62 days		
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
Brain/ CNS	100.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Breast	90.8%	86.9%	94.3%
Gynae	9.5%	23.8%	66.7%
Haematological	58.8%	80.0%	77.8%
Head/Neck	21.4%	31.3%	31.3%
Lower GI	24.5%	23.3%	18.4%
Lung	52.2%	52.2%	50.0%
Sarcomas	100.0%	-	-
Skin	59.7%	62.5%	72.7%
Upper GI	36.4%	34.6%	39.0%
Urological	19.6%	24.6%	21.5%
Other	62.5%	71.4%	50.0%
Northern Ireland	44.5%	48.6%	53.9%

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

²Refer to Explanatory Notes – Points 1-6.

Table 3: Number of patients who commenced first treatment following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer, in Northern Ireland (April 2017 – March 2020)³

Month	Total Treated	Treated within 62 days from receipt of referral	% treated within 62 days
Apr-17	327	226	69.1%
May-17	393	266	67.7%
Jun-17	391	270	69.1%
Jul-17	324	208	64.2%
Aug-17	332	212	63.9%
Sep-17	372	232	62.4%
Oct-17	344	233	67.7%
Nov-17	426	281	66.0%
Dec-17	352	235	66.8%
Jan-18	366	245	66.9%
Feb-18	296	200	67.6%
Mar-18	345	260	75.4%
Apr-18	343	234	68.2%
May-18	414	279	67.4%
Jun-18	367	260	70.8%
Jul-18	370	231	62.4%
Aug-18	403	268	66.5%
Sep-18	377	234	62.1%
Oct-18	435	256	58.9%
Nov-18	390	224	57.4%
Dec-18	318	192	60.4%
Jan-19	435	253	58.2%
Feb-19	337	203	60.2%
Mar-19	314	194	61.8%
Apr-19	355	205	57.7%
May-19	360	176	48.9%
Jun-19	325	180	55.4%
Jul-19	391	205	52.4%
Aug-19	345	196	56.8%
Sep-19	390	188	48.2%
Oct-19	423	210	49.6%
Nov-19	395	205	51.9%
Dec-19	351	175	49.9%
Jan-20	407	181	44.5%
Feb-20	350	170	48.6%
Mar-20	440	237	53.9%

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

³Refer to Explanatory Notes – Points 1-5 & 7

Table 4: Percentage of patients who commenced first treatment within 31 days, for all cancers in HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland (January – March 2020)⁴

HSC Trust	% treated within 31 days		
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
Belfast	87.0%	90.2%	91.5%
Northern	96.3%	95.9%	92.1%
South Eastern	92.8%	91.8%	92.9%
Southern	97.8%	97.3%	96.9%
Western	100.0%	99.3%	100.0%
Northern Ireland	92.5%	93.7%	93.8%

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

⁴Refer to Explanatory Notes – Points 1-2 & 8-9.

Table 5: Percentage of patients who commenced first treatment within 31 days, for all cancers, in Northern Ireland by tumour site (January - March 2020)⁵

Cancer Type	% treated within 31 days		
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
Brain/ CNS	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Breast	95.8%	98.3%	98.1%
Gynae	69.2%	90.0%	98.0%
Haematological	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Head/Neck	92.7%	90.3%	97.6%
Lower GI	97.2%	95.7%	93.8%
Lung	83.8%	94.0%	91.6%
Sarcomas	100.0%	100.0%	90.0%
Skin	92.6%	89.3%	87.8%
Upper GI	91.5%	98.5%	92.7%
Urological	93.0%	88.3%	91.8%
Other	100.0%	100.0%	95.8%
Northern Ireland	92.5%	93.7%	93.8%

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

⁵Refer to Explanatory Notes – Points 1-2 & 8-10.

Table 6: Number of patients who commenced first treatment, for all cancers, in Northern Ireland (April 2017 – March 2020)⁴

Month	Total Treated	Treated within 31 days from receipt of referral	% treated within 31 days
Apr-17	716	678	94.7%
May-17	858	796	92.8%
Jun-17	885	837	94.6%
Jul-17	749	714	95.3%
Aug-17	818	767	93.8%
Sep-17	861	790	91.8%
Oct-17	845	802	94.9%
Nov-17	961	893	92.9%
Dec-17	807	744	92.2%
Jan-18	909	838	92.2%
Feb-18	711	662	93.1%
Mar-18	846	818	96.7%
Apr-18	791	751	94.9%
May-18	909	848	93.3%
Jun-18	845	806	95.4%
Jul-18	877	824	94.0%
Aug-18	867	807	93.1%
Sep-18	890	816	91.7%
Oct-18	1040	992	95.4%
Nov-18	914	850	93.0%
Dec-18	772	721	93.4%
Jan-19	977	901	92.2%
Feb-19	820	783	95.5%
Mar-19	791	742	93.8%
Apr-19	840	780	92.9%
May-19	848	789	93.0%
Jun-19	809	755	93.3%
Jul-19	943	858	91.0%
Aug-19	843	791	93.8%
Sep-19	909	831	91.4%
Oct-19	1011	928	91.8%
Nov-19	933	849	91.0%
Dec-19	810	759	93.7%
Jan-20	938	868	92.5%
Feb-20	806	755	93.7%
Mar-20	964	904	93.8%

Source: Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS)

⁴Refer to Explanatory Notes – Points 1-2 & 8-9

Table 7: Percentage of patients seen within 14 days by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect cancer in HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland (January – March 2020)⁶

HSC Trust	% seen within 14 days		
	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
Belfast	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Northern	23.7%	17.6%	26.8%
South Eastern	100.0%	100.0%	98.3%
Southern	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Western	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Northern Ireland	81.2%	77.4%	80.2%

Source: Patient Administration System via HSC Data Warehouse

⁶Refer to Explanatory Notes – points 1-2 & 11-13

Table 8: Number of patients seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect cancer in Northern Ireland (April 2017 – March 2020)⁶

Month	Total seen	Seen within 14 days or less	% seen within 14 days
April 2017	1,169	955	81.7%
May 2017	1,233	1,079	87.5%
June 2017	1,339	1,143	85.4%
July 2017	1,015	899	88.6%
August 2017	1,155	1,014	87.8%
September 2017	1,256	950	75.6%
October 2017	1,334	1,087	81.5%
November 2017	1,370	1,117	81.5%
December 2017	1,265	1,022	80.8%
January 2018	1,293	1,262	97.6%
February 2018	1,235	1,232	99.8%
March 2018	1,276	1,276	100.0%
April 2018	1,251	1,250	99.9%
May 2018	1,448	1,394	96.3%
June 2018	1,307	1,230	94.1%
July 2018	1,199	1,104	92.1%
August 2018	1,352	1,075	79.5%
September 2018	1,100	819	74.5%
October 2018	1,456	1,278	87.8%
November 2018	1,512	1,492	98.7%
December 2018	1,121	1,119	99.8%
January 2019	1,367	1,336	97.7%
February 2019	1,282	1,257	98.0%
March 2019	1,387	1,187	85.6%
April 2019	1,234	1,027	83.2%
May 2019	1,486	1,120	75.4%
June 2019	1,303	1,042	80.0%
July 2019	1,287	1,036	80.5%
August 2019	1,203	928	77.1%
September 2019	1,224	1,173	95.8%
October 2019	1,567	1,565	99.9%
November 2019	1,353	1,353	100.0%
December 2019	1,020	903	88.5%
January 2020	1,289	1,047	81.2%
February 2020	1,205	933	77.4%
March 2020	1,069	857	80.2%

Source: Patient Administration System via HSC Data Warehouse

⁶Refer to Explanatory Notes – points 1-2 & 11-13

Table 9: Number of patients referred for suspect breast cancer in Northern Ireland (April 2017 – March 2020⁷)

Month	Total New Referrals Received	New Urgent Referrals
April 2017	1,705	1,202
May 2017	1,963	1,370
June 2017	1,947	1,359
July 2017	1,614	1,130
August 2017	1,754	1,268
September 2017	1,731	1,266
October 2017	2,032	1,511
November 2017	1,961	1,392
December 2017	1,422	1,010
January 2018	1,908	1,341
February 2018	1,849	1,303
March 2018	1,977	1,403
April 2018	1,987	1,432
May 2018	1,940	1,396
June 2018	1,934	1,404
July 2018	1,743	1,318
August 2018	1,833	1,328
September 2018	1,740	1,226
October 2018	2,321	1,576
November 2018	2,103	1,367
December 2018	1,609	1,098
January 2019	2,309	1,617
February 2019	2,096	1,448
March 2019	2,052	1,424
April 2019	1,952	1,310
May 2019	2,197	1,545
June 2019	1,861	1,289
July 2019	1,900	1,365
August 2019	1,796	1,198
September 2019	2,087	1,468
October 2019	2,270	1,572
November 2019	1,934	1,363
December 2019	1,518	1,055
January 2020	2,083	1,485
February 2020	1,854	1,264
March 2020	1,476	1,014

Source: Patient Administration System via HSC Data Warehouse

⁷Refer to Explanatory Notes – points 1 & 14

Appendix 1: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the Outpatient Universe, Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS) and Patient Administration System (PAS).
2. The draft 2019/20 Ministerial Target for cancer waiting times, as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2019, states that during 2019/20, (i) at least 95% of patients should begin their first treatment for cancer within 62 days following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer; (ii) at least 98% of patients diagnosed with cancer should receive their first definitive treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat; and (iii) all urgent breast cancer referrals should be seen within 14 days.
3. Data contained in Tables 1, 2, and 3 relate to patients who received a first definitive treatment for cancer (having been given an 'International Classification of Diseases 10' (ICD 10) diagnosis) during each of the three months covered in the publication, following an urgent referral for suspect cancer from a General Practitioner or a routine GP referral that has subsequently been reclassified as urgent by a cancer specialist. Data for all cancers are included with the exception of basal cell carcinoma. Figures also include all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients treated in Health and Social Care hospitals in Northern Ireland. Referrals from sources other than a GP, routine referrals and patients who have not been given an ICD 10 diagnosis are excluded.
4. The completed waiting time in Tables 1, 2, and 3 is measured from the date an initial urgent GP referral for suspect cancer is received by the Provider Health and Social Care Trust and ends on the date the patient receives their first definitive treatment for cancer. Adjustments are made to the completed waiting time in the event of a patient cancelling or self-deferring treatment or as a result of suspension for either medical or social reasons.
5. The measurement of a patient's waiting time in Tables 1, 2, and 3 include cases in which a patient was initially referred to a particular Health and Social Trust for consultant assessment but was then subsequently transferred to another Health and Social Care Trust for treatment. In such cases, the responsibility for that patient is shared, with 0.5 allocated to the Trust where the patient was first assessed and 0.5 to the Trust of first treatment. For example, if a patient is initially referred for assessment in the South Eastern HSC Trust and is then transferred to the Belfast HSC Trust where they receive treatment 70 days after their initial GP referral, both the South Eastern and Belfast HSC Trusts will report 0.5 of a patient treated who waited over 62 days.
6. Table 2 reflects the number of patients that were treated in 62 days or less for each tumour site. Tumour sites are an aggregation of applicable ICD 10 codes.
7. Between April 2008 and February 2009, the target relating to waiting time for treatment following an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer required that 'at least 75% of patients urgently referred with a suspect cancer should begin their first definitive treatment within 62 days of urgent GP referral'. From March 2009 onwards this target increased to 95% of patients.
8. Data contained in Tables 4, 5, and 6 relate to all patients who received a first definitive treatment for cancer (having been given an ICD 10 diagnosis) during each of the three months covered in the publication, irrespective of their source or type of referral. Data include treatment for all cancers, with the exception of basal cell carcinoma. Figures also include all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients

treated in Health and Social Care hospitals in Northern Ireland. Patients that have not been given an ICD 10 diagnosis are excluded.

9. The completed waiting time in Tables 4, 5, and 6 is measured from the date a decision is taken to treat a patient for cancer and ends on the date the patient receives their first definitive treatment for cancer. The decision to treat is the date on which the patient and the clinician agree the planned treatment. Adjustments are made to the completed waiting time in the event of a patient cancelling or self-deferring treatment or as a result of suspension for either medical or social reasons.

10. Table 5 reflects the number of patients that were treated in 31 days or less for each tumour site. Tumour sites are an aggregation of applicable ICD 10 codes.

11. Data contained in Tables 7 and 8 relate to all urgent referrals (excluding those that have been reclassified as routine by the breast specialist) for suspect breast cancer, and routine referrals that have subsequently been reclassified as urgent by a breast specialist that were first seen during each of the three months covered in the publication. Figures also include patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients seen in Health and Social Care hospitals in Northern Ireland.

12. The completed waiting time in Tables 7 and 8 is measured from the date an initial breast cancer referral is first received by the Provider HSC Trust, and ends on the date that the patient attends their first outpatient appointment with a breast cancer specialist. Adjustments are made to the completed waiting time in the event of a patient cancelling, self-deferring or failing to attend a first outpatient appointment.

13. Figures provided in Tables 7 and 8 reflect all urgent referrals for breast cancer both from GP's and other practitioners.

14. Figures provided in the Breast Cancer Referrals section reflect all new referrals received for suspect breast cancer irrespective of their source of referral.

15. Information on the grouping of ICD 10 codes by tumour site is available at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

16. HIB surveyed data providers during 2011/12 to ascertain the cost of producing, validating and submitting the information required for this publication. This relates to the time taken to generate, validate and submit data, over and above what is already required by their organisation for internal performance management purposes. The cost to data providers of compliance with HIB's requirements for this publication, based on HSC salary costs, was £2,378.

17. Monthly data relating to cancer waiting times have also been presented in spreadsheet format (Microsoft Excel), split by HSC Trust, and where applicable tumour site, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/cancer-waiting-times>

18. Information on waiting times for the months of April, May and June 2020 will be published on Thursday 24th September 2020.

19. Data contained within this publication are National Statistics except for breast cancer referrals which are currently statistics in development.

Further information on cancer waiting times in Northern Ireland, is available from:

Hospital Information Branch

Information & Analysis Directorate

Department of Health

Stormont Estate

Belfast, BT4 3SQ

✉ Email: statistics@health-ni.gov.uk

This Statistical bulletin and others published by Hospital Information Branch are available to download from the DoH Internet site at:

Internet address: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/doh-statistics-and-research>