

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending June 2020



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Northern Ireland
Statistics and Research Agency
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um Staitisticí agus Taighde

Reader Information

Purpose: This statistical release presents information on waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Northern Ireland and reports on the performance of the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts against the 2020/21 Draft Ministerial waiting time target, which states that:

“By March 2021, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment; with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.”

This statistical release details information on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting, for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in HSC Trusts at 30th June 2020 (including patients waiting to be seen at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC)). It also includes activity for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during the quarter ending June 2020. Data are presented by HSC Trust, specialty and time band. Information on Integrated Clinical Assessment and Treatment Services (ICATS) waiting times are available in the accompanying CSV file.

Statistical Quality: The ‘*Outpatient Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*’ booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/outpatient-waiting-times-supporting-documentation>.

Due to the redeployment of resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, the data contained within this publication has not been subject to the usual level of quality assurance.

Internet: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times>

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Target audience: Department of Health (DoH), Chief Executives of the HSC Board and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, Health & Social Care stakeholders, academics, the media and the general public.

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By March 2021, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment, and no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks.

There were
309,921 patients
waiting for a first outpatient
appointment in Northern
Ireland



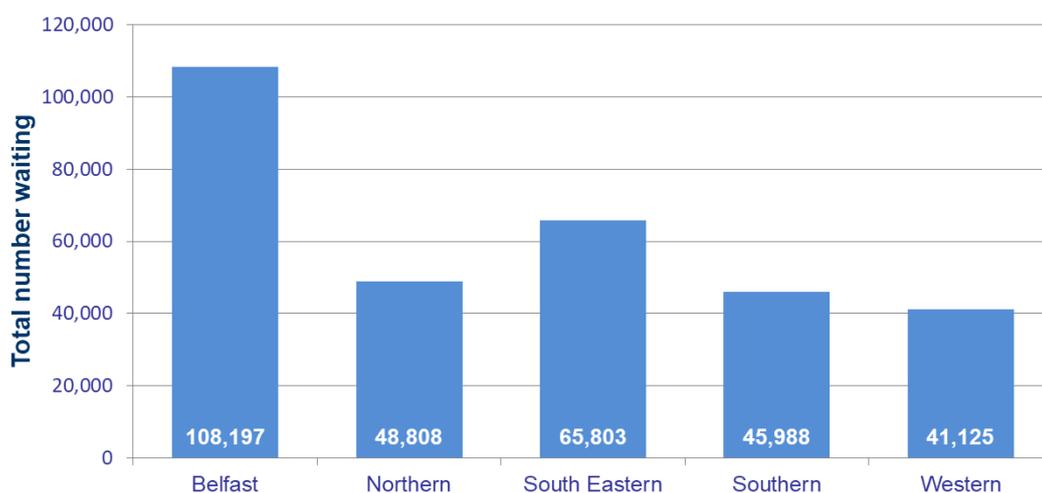
An **increase of 0.9%** on
the previous quarter



An **increase of 3.5%** on
the same quarter last year

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

At 30th June 2020, 309,921 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 0.9% (2,855) more than at 31st March 2020 (307,066) and 3.5% (10,485) more than at 30th June 2019 (299,436) (Table 1). This does not include patients waiting to be seen at a Day Case Procedure Centre.



More than one third (34.9%) of those waiting were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 21.2% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 15.7% in the Northern HSC Trust, 14.8% in the Southern HSC Trust and 13.3% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2b).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust, and instead are provided as centralised services for Northern Ireland. As patients are reported against the HSC Trust responsible for the service to which they have been referred, users should be cautious in how they use these data (see explanatory note 9).

Of the 309,921 patients waiting, 61.1% (189,498) were waiting in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (39,251); General Surgery (32,281); Ophthalmology (28,620); Dermatology (24,347); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery (23,703); Gynaecology (21,449) and Neurology (19,847) (Table 3b).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th June 2020

By March 2021, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

This element was **not achieved** by Northern Ireland as a whole

89.3%
of patients
were waiting longer
than 9 weeks



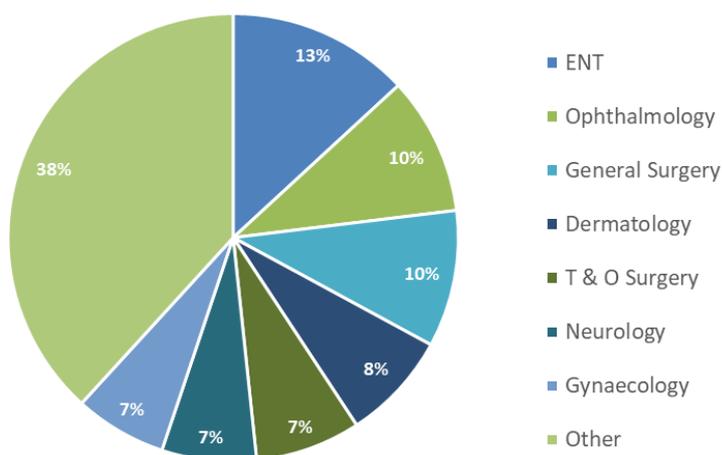
Percentage waiting over 9 weeks

Almost nine out of ten (89.3%, 276,753) patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30th June 2020, compared with 79.1% (242,864) at 31st March 2020 and 74.9% (224,130) at 30th June 2019 (Table 1).

The 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2a). Data users should be aware that not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Over nine out of ten (91.4%, 60,170) patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 9 weeks; 89.9% (97,301) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 87.9% (40,403) in the Southern HSC Trust, 87.9% (36,148) in the Western HSC Trust and 87.5% (42,731) in the Northern HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks by specialty



More than three-fifths (61.8%, 170,919) of the 276,753 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Ophthalmology; General Surgery; Dermatology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Neurology and Gynaecology (Table 3a).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks at 30th June 2020

By March 2021, no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

This element was **not achieved** by Northern Ireland as a whole

136,633
patients
were waiting longer
than 52 weeks



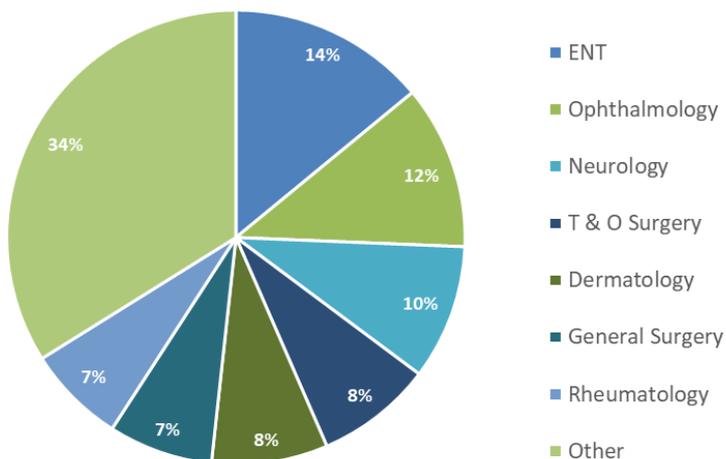
Percentage waiting over 52 weeks

At 30th June 2020, 44.1% (136,633) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 38.1% (117,066) at 31st March 2020, and 35.2% (105,450) at 30th June 2019 (Table 1).

The 52 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2a). Data users should be aware that not all outpatient services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 9).

Over half (54.0%, 35,525) of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks, 44.3% (47,978) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 41.9% (20,430) in the Northern HSC Trust, 41.1% (16,904) in the Western HSC Trust and 34.3% (15,796) in the Southern HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks by specialty



Two thirds (66.1%, 90,275) of the 136,633 patients waiting more than 52 weeks were in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Ophthalmology; Neurology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Dermatology; General Surgery and Rheumatology (Table 3a).

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre

In October 2016 the then Health Minister launched 'Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together,' a strategy which underpins the Northern Ireland Executive's draft Programme for Government ambition to support people to lead long, healthy and active lives.

As part of this strategy, the Elective Care Plan was published in February 2017 which stated that 'Regional Elective Care Assessment and Treatment Centres will be established to deliver large volumes of assessments and non-complex routine surgery across a broad range of specialties.' In December 2018, prototype 'Day Case Procedure Centres' (DPCs) became operational for the surgical treatment of Cataracts and Varicose Veins for outpatients and day cases. Patients waiting for either of these procedures can now be referred to a DPC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.

DPCs have been set up in the following locations:

DPC	Location(s) of Centre
Cataracts	Mid Ulster Hospital (Northern HSC Trust) Downe Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust) South Tyrone Hospital (Southern HSC Trust)
Varicose Veins	Lagan Valley Hospital (South Eastern HSC Trust) Omagh Hospital and Primary Care Complex (Western HSC Trust)

Due to these changes in operational service delivery and concomitant changes in how Outpatient waiting times are recorded, the following data and information about DPC Waiting Lists is provisional and subject to revision.

At 30th June 2020, 1,538 patients were waiting to be seen for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts DPC (Table 5a). There were no outpatients waiting for varicose veins treatment at a DPC.

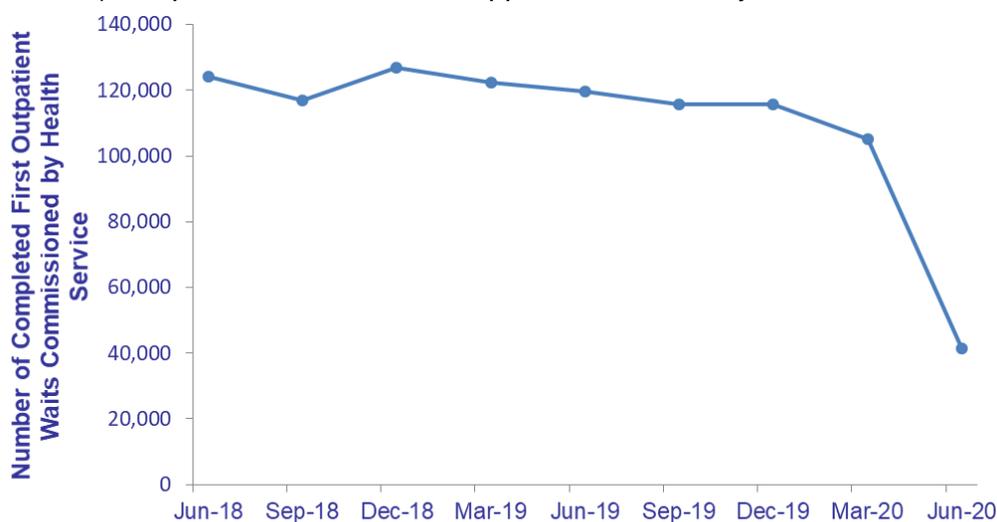
Completed waits for a first outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service during quarter ending June 2020



Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

Users should be aware that the COVID-19 Pandemic drastically altered the functions of hospitals during the current reporting period and should exercise caution when using these provisional data given that hospital records may not be fully updated at this time.

There were 41,203 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland, less than half the number of attendances during the previous quarter (102,596), and just over a third of the number of attendances during the quarter ending June 2019 (117,976). No patients attended their appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) (Table 4).



Within the Independent Sector, 297 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, 88.2% (2,281) less than during the quarter ending March 2020 (2,515), and 81.2% (1,282) less than in the same quarter last year (1,579) (Table 4).

Source: QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns
 Note: Data for the latest 4 quarters are provisional

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service within the Independent Sector (297) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals (41,203), provisional figures indicate that 41,500 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by the Health Service. This is a decrease of 60.6% (63,792) on the number seen during the quarter ending March 2020 (105,292), and 65.3% (78,161) less than during the quarter ending June 2019 (119,661) (Table 4).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 30th June 2020¹

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (30 th Jun 2020)	Previous Quarter (31 st Mar 2020)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 th Jun 2019)
Total Patients Waiting	309,921	307,066	299,436
Number waiting over 9 weeks	276,753	242,864	224,130
<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	89.3%	79.1%	74.9%
Number waiting over 52 weeks	136,633	117,066	105,450

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 2a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 30th June 2020¹

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Belfast	8,634	2,262	1,884	2,810	6,834	37,795	47,978	108,197
Northern	4,920	1,157	822	1,132	3,008	17,339	20,430	48,808
South Eastern	4,582	1,051	715	1,130	2,975	19,825	35,525	65,803
Southern	4,506	1,079	683	935	3,284	19,705	15,796	45,988
Western	4,117	860	554	818	2,706	15,166	16,904	41,125
Total	26,759	6,409	4,658	6,825	18,807	109,830	136,633	309,921

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 2b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by HSC Trust and weeks waiting – 30th June 2020¹

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting						
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52
Belfast	8.0%	2.1%	1.7%	2.6%	6.3%	34.9%	44.3%
Northern	10.1%	2.4%	1.7%	2.3%	6.2%	35.5%	41.9%
South Eastern	7.0%	1.6%	1.1%	1.7%	4.5%	30.1%	54.0%
Southern	9.8%	2.3%	1.5%	2.0%	7.1%	42.8%	34.3%
Western	10.0%	2.1%	1.3%	2.0%	6.6%	36.9%	41.1%
Total	8.6%	2.1%	1.5%	2.2%	6.1%	35.4%	44.1%

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 3a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 30th June 2020¹

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
ENT	2,349	616	392	575	2,312	13,897	19,110	39,251
General Surgery	4,088	849	515	723	2,398	13,626	10,082	32,281
Ophthalmology	913	193	184	442	1,297	9,654	15,937	28,620
Dermatology	2,243	430	216	321	1,206	8,710	11,221	24,347
T & O Surgery	2,313	452	465	585	1,188	7,431	11,269	23,703
Gynaecology	2,526	575	390	594	1,956	8,981	6,427	21,449
Neurology	779	253	231	269	641	4,553	13,121	19,847
Paediatrics	1,771	628	420	588	1,322	6,735	3,987	15,451
Rheumatology	808	217	140	213	641	3,415	9,535	14,969
Oral Surgery	269	69	54	198	493	3,293	7,652	12,028
Gastroenterology	1,521	279	190	280	504	3,540	5,706	12,020
General Medicine	995	230	146	201	559	3,120	5,695	10,946
Cardiology	1,361	389	284	437	958	4,962	1,655	10,046
Urology	1,070	277	206	259	521	3,417	4,258	10,008
Thoracic Medicine	614	211	151	257	615	3,865	3,911	9,624
Pain Management	360	134	125	113	327	2,906	3,766	7,731
Plastic Surgery	334	74	96	129	262	1,234	1,867	3,996
Geriatric Medicine	352	78	50	76	273	842	310	1,981
Haematology (Clinical)	271	45	27	60	101	565	310	1,379
Other	1,822	410	376	505	1,233	5,084	814	10,244
All Specialties	26,759	6,409	4,658	6,825	18,807	109,830	136,633	309,921

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 3b: Percentage of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment by weeks waiting and specialty – 30th June 2020¹

Specialty	Patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, by weeks waiting						
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52
ENT	6.0%	1.6%	1.0%	1.5%	5.9%	35.4%	48.7%
General Surgery	12.7%	2.6%	1.6%	2.2%	7.4%	42.2%	31.2%
Ophthalmology	3.2%	0.7%	0.6%	1.5%	4.5%	33.7%	55.7%
Dermatology	9.2%	1.8%	0.9%	1.3%	5.0%	35.8%	46.1%
T & O Surgery	9.8%	1.9%	2.0%	2.5%	5.0%	31.4%	47.5%
Gynaecology	11.8%	2.7%	1.8%	2.8%	9.1%	41.9%	30.0%
Neurology	3.9%	1.3%	1.2%	1.4%	3.2%	22.9%	66.1%
Paediatrics	11.5%	4.1%	2.7%	3.8%	8.6%	43.6%	25.8%
Rheumatology	5.4%	1.4%	0.9%	1.4%	4.3%	22.8%	63.7%
Oral Surgery	2.2%	0.6%	0.4%	1.6%	4.1%	27.4%	63.6%
Gastroenterology	12.7%	2.3%	1.6%	2.3%	4.2%	29.5%	47.5%
General Medicine	9.1%	2.1%	1.3%	1.8%	5.1%	28.5%	52.0%
Cardiology	13.5%	3.9%	2.8%	4.3%	9.5%	49.4%	16.5%
Urology	10.7%	2.8%	2.1%	2.6%	5.2%	34.1%	42.5%
Thoracic Medicine	6.4%	2.2%	1.6%	2.7%	6.4%	40.2%	40.6%
Pain Management	4.7%	1.7%	1.6%	1.5%	4.2%	37.6%	48.7%
Plastic Surgery	8.4%	1.9%	2.4%	3.2%	6.6%	30.9%	46.7%
Geriatric Medicine	17.8%	3.9%	2.5%	3.8%	13.8%	42.5%	15.6%
Haematology (Clinical)	19.7%	3.3%	2.0%	4.4%	7.3%	41.0%	22.5%
Other	17.8%	4.0%	3.7%	4.9%	12.0%	49.6%	7.9%
All Specialties	8.6%	2.1%	1.5%	2.2%	6.1%	35.4%	44.1%

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–10 & 13-14

Table 4: Number of completed waits for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment commissioned by the Health Service: QE June 2018 - QE June 2020²

Quarter Ending	Number of Completed First Outpatient Waits			
	Within Health Service Hospitals	Within Day Case Procedure Centres*	Independent Sector*	Total Commissioned by Health Service
Jun-18	123,397	0	820	124,217
Sep-18	114,855	0	1,945	116,800
Dec-18	124,530	0	2,442	126,972
Mar-19	119,502	45	2,766	122,313
Jun-19	117,976	106	1,579	119,661
Sep-19	114,416	109	1,168	115,693
Dec-19	114,573	155	1,135	115,863
Mar-20	102,596	181	2,515	105,292
Jun-20 (p)	41,203	0	297	41,500

Source: QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns

(p) Data are currently provisional

* Not National Statistics

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-2, 4 & 11-14

Table 5a: Number of patients waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at a Cataracts Day Case Procedure Centre, by HSC Trust and weeks waiting, 30th June 2020

Trust	Weeks Waiting							Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 12	>12 - 15	>15 - 18	>18 - 52	>52	
Belfast	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Eastern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Southern	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western	40	9	3	27	139	1,307	13	1,538
Total	40	9	3	27	139	1,307	13	1,538

Source: CH3-R Return

* Not National Statistics

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the DoH CH3, CH3-R, QOAR, R-QOAR and IS1 Part 1 Returns and the DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset. These returns collect information from Health and Social Care Trusts on a quarterly basis.
2. The '*Outpatient Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*' booklet details the technical guidance and definitions used, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/outpatient-waiting-times>.
3. All of the data contained in the tables are available on a quarterly basis and can be supplied by individual specialty or Provider HSC Trust if this level of detail is required. In addition, quarterly data relating to waiting times for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment have been published in spreadsheet format (CSV), split by HSC Trust, Specialty and Programme of Care, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-june-2020>.
4. Information includes patients living outside Northern Ireland and privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
5. Outpatient waiters are defined as patients still waiting for their first outpatient appointment at the end of the quarter, including those who have cancelled or missed a previous appointment. An outpatient appointment is to enable a patient to see a consultant, a member of their team or locum for such a member, in respect of one referral. Waiting time for a first outpatient appointment begins on the date the HSC Trust receives a referral for a first outpatient appointment and ends on the date a patient attends a first outpatient appointment. Patients who cannot attend (CNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date they informed the HSC Trust they could not attend, while patients who do not attend (DNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date of their DNA.
6. From 1st April 2014, Oral Surgery services undertaken by consultants contracted to the South Eastern HSC Trust were centralised, meaning that records for patients waiting for this service in both the Northern and Southern HSC Trusts are now held and managed in the South Eastern HSC Trust. A breakdown of the waiting times for these patients broken down by HSC Trust has been provided in the spreadsheet located at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-outpatient-waiting-times-june-2020>.

7. Each outpatient waiting time band relates to the number of completed weeks a patient has been waiting for outpatient assessment. For example, a patient waiting exactly 6 weeks would be included in the 0-6 week time band and a patient waiting 6 weeks and 1 day would be included in the >6-9 (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) time band. The Ministerial target, for outpatient waiting times, as set out in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction states that by March 2021, 50% of patients should wait no longer than nine weeks for a first outpatient appointment, with no patient waiting longer than 52 weeks.
8. Some people will be waiting on more than one waiting list or be on the waiting list for more than one outpatient appointment/admission/diagnostic test at the same time due to having more than one condition.
9. A number of outpatient services may not be provided at a patient's local HSC Trust or at each of the five HSC Trusts, and instead are provided as centralised services for Northern Ireland. In such circumstances, patients from one HSC Trust area will be waiting to be seen at a service provided at another HSC Trust. In some cases a consultant from one HSC Trust may provide a 'visiting' service at another HSC Trust, and so the patient may not be reported at the HSC Trust at which they attend. Users should therefore be cautious in how they use these data. For example, they should not be used to calculate the total number of patients waiting per head of the population residing within each Trust area, as HSC Trusts that provide services for the whole of Northern Ireland will have a higher number of patients waiting per head of the population than those that provide more localised services. Neither should the actual number of patients waiting longer than the recommended waiting time be used as indicator of poor performance within an individual HSC Trust. Users who require an indication of the latter are advised to refer to the commentary section of the publication which provides an indication of the percentage of total waiters that have been waiting over the maximum recommended waiting times, within each HSC Trust
10. In February 2019, prototype 'Day Case Procedure Centres' (DPCs) became operational for the surgical outpatient treatment of Cataracts. Patients waiting for this procedure can now be referred to a DPC for treatment rather than attend the hospital site they may have been referred to previously.
11. The total number of completed outpatient waits each quarter, within HSC hospitals, is derived as the total number of attendances at a first outpatient appointment from the Departmental Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (QOAR) and the Regional Quarterly Outpatient Activity Return (R-QOAR).

12. The number of patients who received an outpatient assessment, commissioned by the Health Service, in the Independent Sector is collected on the IS1 Part 1 Return. These figures are provided by the HSC Board. They are published for each transferring Health and Social Care Trust (Trust responsible for the patient's waiting time). They are not National Statistics and they have not been validated by the Department; however, they have been included to provide users with a comprehensive view of completed outpatient waits during each quarter.

13. 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 within HIB's requirements for this publication, based on HSC salary costs, was £3,110.

14. Figures relating to outpatient waiting times for the quarter ending 30th September 2020 will be released on Thursday 26th November 2020.

Appendix 3: National Statistics

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The statistics last underwent a full assessment against the Code of Practice in 2011:

https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-assessmentreport153statisticsonhospitalwaitingtimesinnorthernirelan_tcm97-41176.pdf.

Designation was awarded in March 2013: [https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-letterofconfirmationasnationalstatisticsassessmentreport15_tcm97-42663.pdf)

[content/uploads/2015/12/images-letterofconfirmationasnationalstatisticsassessmentreport15_tcm97-42663.pdf](https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/images-letterofconfirmationasnationalstatisticsassessmentreport15_tcm97-42663.pdf).

Since the assessment by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics.

Further information on Outpatient 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:

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