

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Outpatient Waiting Times Quarter Ending June 2021

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 2021/22 Draft Ministerial waiting time target, which states that:

“By March 2022, 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 2021 (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 2021. 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; data related to the Southern HSC Trust for quarter ending December 2020 is provisional and will be amended as necessary in future publications.

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 2022, 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
348,867 patients
waiting for a first outpatient
appointment in Northern
Ireland



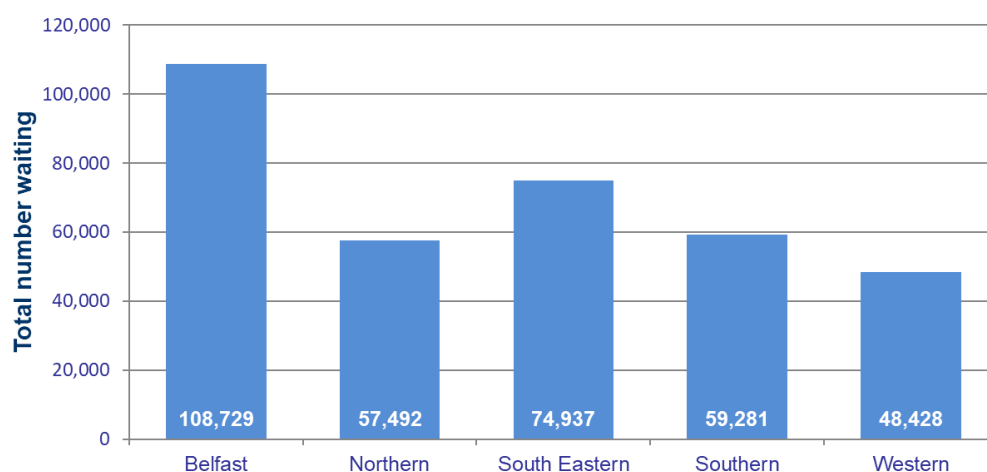
An **increase of 4.1%** on
the previous quarter



An **increase of 12.6%**
on the same quarter last

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

At 30th June 2021, 348,867 patients were waiting for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, 4.1% (13,825) more than at 31st March 2021 (335,042) and 12.6% (38,946) more than at 30th June 2020 (309,921) (Table 1). This does not include patients waiting to be seen at a Day Case Procedure Centre.



Almost a third (31.2%) of those waiting were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 21.5% in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 17.0% in the Southern HSC Trust, 16.5% in the Northern HSC Trust and 13.9% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2a).

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).

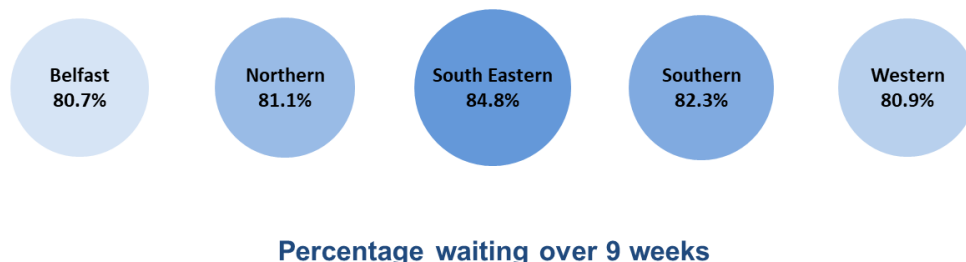
Of the 348,867 patients waiting, 61.4% (214,353) were waiting in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) (44,257); General Surgery (44,021); Dermatology (29,278); Gynaecology (26,719); Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery (26,300); Ophthalmology (22,309) and Neurology (21,469 (Table 3a).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th June 2021

By March 2022, 50% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

This element was **not achieved** by any HSC Trust

82.0%
of patients
were waiting longer
than 9 weeks

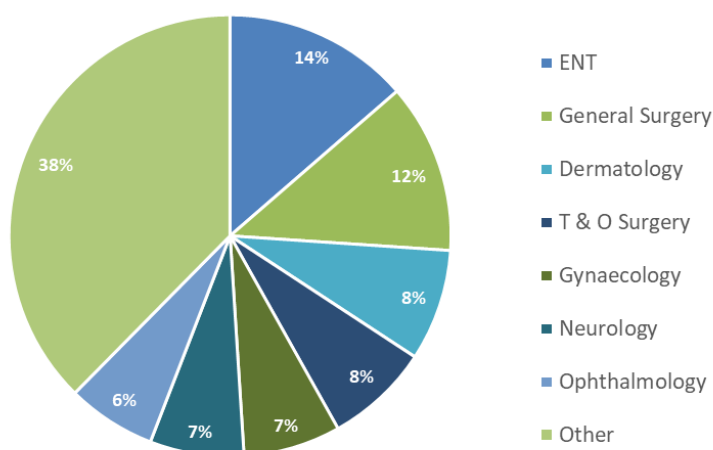


Over four fifths (82.0%, 285,937) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment at 30th June 2021, compared with 83.9% (281,140) at 31st March 2021 and 89.3% (276,753) at 30th June 2020 (Table 1).

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

Over four fifths of patients (84.8%, 63,570) in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 9 weeks; 82.3% (48,791) in the Southern HSC Trust, 81.1% (46,615) in the Northern HSC Trust, 80.9% (39,178) in the Western HSC Trust and 80.7% (87,783) in the Belfast HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks by speciality



More than three-fifths (62.4%, 178,423) of the 285,937 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Dermatology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Gynaecology; Neurology and Ophthalmology (Table 3a).

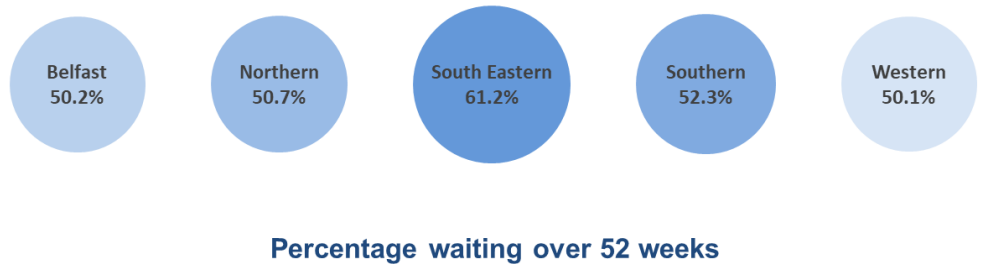
Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks at 30th June 2021

By March 2022, no patient should wait longer than 52 weeks for a first outpatient appointment

This element was **not achieved** by any HSC Trust

184,873
patients
were waiting longer
than 52 weeks

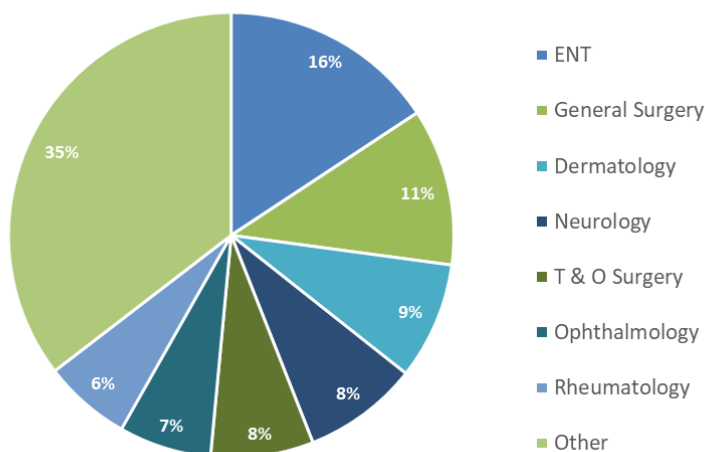


At 30th June 2021, 53.0% (184,873) of patients were waiting more than 52 weeks for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment, compared with 56.6% (189,753) at 31st March 2021, and 44.1% (136,633) at 30th June 2020 (Table 1).

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 three fifths (61.2%, 45,870) of patients in the South Eastern HSC Trust were waiting longer than 52 weeks, 52.3% (31,000) in the Southern HSC Trust, 50.7% (29,166) in the Northern HSC Trust, 50.2% (54,587) in the Belfast HSC Trust and 50.1% (24,250) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2a).

Patients waiting more than 52 weeks by specialty



Almost two thirds (64.6%, 119,386) of the 184,873 patients waiting more than 52 weeks were in one of the following specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Dermatology; Neurology; Trauma and Orthopaedic (T&O) Surgery; Ophthalmology 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 June 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)

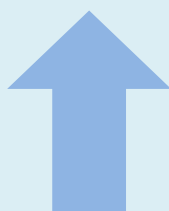
Due to these changes in operational service delivery and concomitant changes in how Outpatient waiting times are recorded, the following data and information about DPC Waiting Lists is provisional and subject to revision.

At 30th June 2021, 13,306 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 2021

There were
82,788
first outpatient
attendances

commissioned by the Health
Service



An **increase** of **15.9%**
on the previous quarter

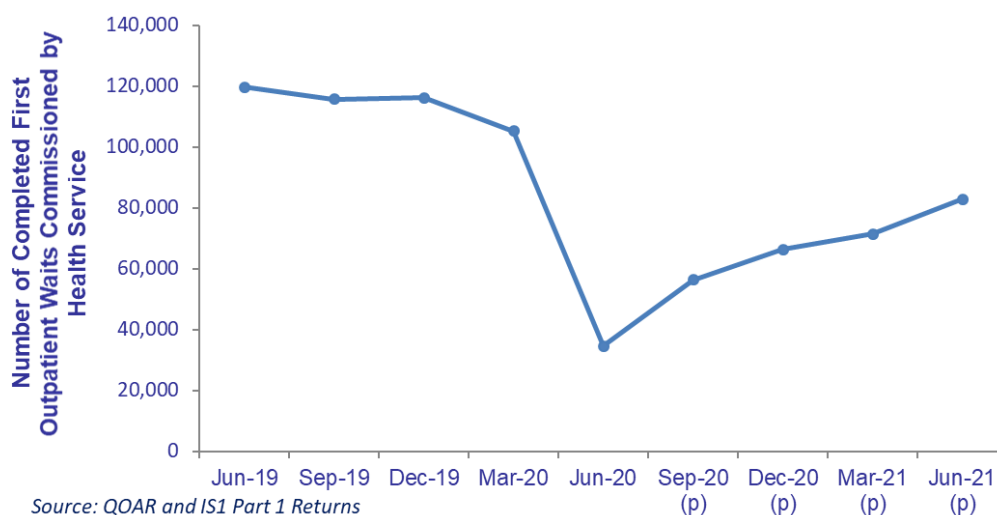


An **increase** of **139.0%**
on the same quarter last
year

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 80,741 attendances for a first consultant-led outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland, 21.1% (14,075) more than the number of attendances during the previous quarter (66,666), and more than double the number of attendances during the quarter ending June 2020 (34,348). During the quarter ending June 2021, 182 patients attended their appointment at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) (Table 4).



Within the Independent Sector, 1,865 Health Service patients attended a first outpatient appointment, 59.3% (2,718) less than during the quarter ending March 2021 (4,583), and more than five times more than in the same quarter last year (297) (Table 4).

When the number of attendances commissioned by the Health Service within the Independent Sector (1,865) is combined with that for outpatients attending a first outpatient appointment in Health Service hospitals (80,741), and those attending a DPC (182), provisional figures indicate that 82,788 outpatients attended a first appointment in Northern Ireland commissioned by the Health Service. This is an increase of 15.9% (11,384) on the number seen during the quarter ending March 2021 (71,404) and 139.0% (48,143) more than during the quarter ending June 2020 (34,645) (Table 4).

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Quarterly outpatient waiting lists – 30th June 2021¹

First Consultant-Led Outpatient Appointment	Current Quarter (30th June 2021)	Previous Quarter (31st March 2021)	Same Quarter Last Year (30th June 2020)
Total Patients Waiting	348,867	335,042	309,921
Number waiting over 9 weeks	285,937	281,140	276,753
<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	82.0%	83.9%	89.3%
Number waiting over 52 weeks	184,873	189,753	136,633

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 2021¹

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	16,329	4,617	3,852	2,791	3,150	23,403	54,587	108,729
Northern	8,262	2,615	2,012	1,344	1,643	12,450	29,166	57,492
South Eastern	8,939	2,428	2,165	1,445	1,615	12,475	45,870	74,937
Southern	7,939	2,551	2,131	1,500	1,666	12,494	31,000	59,281
Western	7,129	2,121	1,818	1,356	1,409	10,345	24,250	48,428
Total	48,598	14,332	11,978	8,436	9,483	71,167	184,873	348,867

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 2021¹

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	15.0%	4.2%	3.5%	2.6%	2.9%	21.5%	50.2%
Northern	14.4%	4.5%	3.5%	2.3%	2.9%	21.7%	50.7%
South Eastern	11.9%	3.2%	2.9%	1.9%	2.2%	16.6%	61.2%
Southern	13.4%	4.3%	3.6%	2.5%	2.8%	21.1%	52.3%
Western	14.7%	4.4%	3.8%	2.8%	2.9%	21.4%	50.1%
Total	13.9%	4.1%	3.4%	2.4%	2.7%	20.4%	53.0%

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 2021¹

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	3,942	1,314	1,174	714	812	7,218	29,083	44,257
General Surgery	6,585	1,915	1,577	1,226	1,359	10,280	21,079	44,021
Dermatology	4,803	1,116	874	575	697	5,477	15,736	29,278
Gynaecology	4,822	1,564	1,416	973	1,140	7,994	8,810	26,719
T & O Surgery	3,624	827	745	539	650	6,100	13,815	26,300
Ophthalmology	2,816	834	787	550	651	4,250	12,421	22,309
Neurology	1,285	483	456	353	374	3,035	15,483	21,469
Rheumatology	1,379	509	497	389	380	2,971	11,769	17,894
Gastroenterology	2,757	860	566	370	405	3,579	7,913	16,450
Paediatrics	3,390	1,162	834	542	553	3,390	5,588	15,459
Oral Surgery	793	246	230	174	190	1,691	8,920	12,244
General Medicine	1,643	499	410	283	330	2,308	6,049	11,522
Thoracic Medicine	1,224	409	375	290	279	2,053	6,186	10,816
Urology	1,569	408	320	271	247	1,783	5,984	10,582
Cardiology	2,317	589	540	406	442	2,809	3,207	10,310
Pain Management	664	249	228	174	228	1,644	5,385	8,572
Plastic Surgery	620	191	138	109	130	929	3,128	5,245
Geriatric Medicine	790	180	143	80	54	344	554	2,145
Endocrinology	589	202	147	100	134	559	218	1,949
Other	2,986	775	521	318	428	2,753	3,545	11,326
All Specialties	48,598	14,332	11,978	8,436	9,483	71,167	184,873	348,867

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 2021¹

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	8.9%	3.0%	2.7%	1.6%	1.8%	16.3%	65.7%
General Surgery	15.0%	4.4%	3.6%	2.8%	3.1%	23.4%	47.9%
Dermatology	16.4%	3.8%	3.0%	2.0%	2.4%	18.7%	53.7%
Gynaecology	18.0%	5.9%	5.3%	3.6%	4.3%	29.9%	33.0%
T & O Surgery	13.8%	3.1%	2.8%	2.0%	2.5%	23.2%	52.5%
Ophthalmology	12.6%	3.7%	3.5%	2.5%	2.9%	19.1%	55.7%
Neurology	6.0%	2.2%	2.1%	1.6%	1.7%	14.1%	72.1%
Rheumatology	7.7%	2.8%	2.8%	2.2%	2.1%	16.6%	65.8%
Gastroenterology	16.8%	5.2%	3.4%	2.2%	2.5%	21.8%	48.1%
Paediatrics	21.9%	7.5%	5.4%	3.5%	3.6%	21.9%	36.1%
Oral Surgery	6.5%	2.0%	1.9%	1.4%	1.6%	13.8%	72.9%
General Medicine	14.3%	4.3%	3.6%	2.5%	2.9%	20.0%	52.5%
Thoracic Medicine	11.3%	3.8%	3.5%	2.7%	2.6%	19.0%	57.2%
Urology	14.8%	3.9%	3.0%	2.6%	2.3%	16.8%	56.5%
Cardiology	22.5%	5.7%	5.2%	3.9%	4.3%	27.2%	31.1%
Pain Management	7.7%	2.9%	2.7%	2.0%	2.7%	19.2%	62.8%
Plastic Surgery	11.8%	3.6%	2.6%	2.1%	2.5%	17.7%	59.6%
Geriatric Medicine	36.8%	8.4%	6.7%	3.7%	2.5%	16.0%	25.8%
Endocrinology	30.2%	10.4%	7.5%	5.1%	6.9%	28.7%	11.2%
Other	26.4%	6.8%	4.6%	2.8%	3.8%	24.3%	31.3%
All Specialties	13.9%	4.1%	3.4%	2.4%	2.7%	20.4%	53.0%

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 2019 - QE June 2021²

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-19	117,985	106	1,579	119,670
Sep-19	114,423	109	1,168	115,700
Dec-19	114,817	155	1,135	116,107
Mar-20	102,572	181	2,515	105,268
Jun-20	34,348	0	297	34,645
Sep-20 (p)	55,646	61	614	56,321
Dec-20 (p)	64,873	161	1,365	66,399
Mar-21 (p)	66,666	155	4,583	71,404
Jun-21 (p)	80,741	182	1,865	82,788

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 weeks waiting, 30th June 2021

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	
Ophthalmology	1,043	547	575	466	408	3,771	6,496	13,306

Source: DoH Outpatient Waiting Times Dataset

* Not National Statistics

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the DoHCH3, 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-2021>.
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.
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 2022, 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 at the time of the survey, was £3,110.

14. Figures relating to outpatient waiting times for the quarter ending 30th September 2021 will be released on Thursday 25th November 2021.

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

[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
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