

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Diagnostic Waiting Times Quarter Ending December 2015



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

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Reader Information

Purpose	This publication presents information on waiting times for diagnostic services in Northern Ireland at 31 st December 2015 and diagnostic reporting times during the quarter ending 31 st December 2015. It details information on the number of patients waiting, and length of time waiting, for diagnostic services, as well as diagnostic reporting times at Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts in Northern Ireland. This information reports on performance against the 2015/16 Ministerial diagnostic target which states that, from April 2015, no patient should wait longer than nine weeks for a diagnostic test and all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within 2 days of the test being undertaken. Data is presented by HSC Trust, diagnostic service and time band.
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Target audience	DHSSPS, Chief Executives of the HSC Board and Trusts in Northern Ireland, health care professionals, academics, Health & Social Care stakeholders, the media and general public.
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Key Points

- At 31st December 2015, there were 94,043 patients waiting for a diagnostic service at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. This represents an increase of 3.8% (3,400) compared with the end of September 2015 and an increase of 15.7% (12,725) compared to the end of December 2014 (Figure 1 & Table 1a).
- Of the 94,043 patients waiting, 51.6% (48,482) were waiting for an Imaging Service, 29.0% (27,287) were waiting for a Physiological Measurement test and 19.4% (18,274) were waiting for a Day Case Endoscopy (Figure 2 & Table 1b).
- Of the 94,043 patients waiting for a diagnostic service, approximately 1 in 5 were waiting for a Non-obstetric Ultrasound (18,471, 19.6%) (Figure 3 & Table 3).
- There were 33,555 (35.7%) patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service at the end of December 2015, an increase of 1,948 (6.2%) on the corresponding number at the end of the previous quarter (31,607), and 7,768 (30.1%) more than on 31st December 2014 (25,787) (Figure 6 & Tables 2, 3 & 4).
- There were 142,266 completed diagnostic reports verified and dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending December 2015, an increase of 4.6% (6,305) on the 135,961 reported in the previous quarter, and an increase of 6.4% (8,524) on the same quarter last year (133,742) (Figure 11 & Table 5).
- In Northern Ireland as a whole, 87.9% of all urgent diagnostic tests were reported on within 2 days in the quarter ending December 2015, compared to 89.2% in the previous quarter and 91.6% for the same quarter last year (Figure 16 & Tables 10 & 11).
- During the quarter ending December 2015, 94.5% of routine diagnostic tests were reported on within 2 weeks and 98.3% were reported on within 4 weeks (Figure 16 & Tables 10 & 11).

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Hospital Information Branch (HIB)

Hospital Information Branch is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the Health & Social Care (HSC) Trusts and the HSC Board. Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic patient level administrative systems and pre-defined EXCEL survey return templates.

The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the HSC Committee, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within the DHSSPS, other Health organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations as well as the general public. The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the HSC system, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, development of service frameworks as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a significantly high volume of Parliamentary/Assembly questions and ad-hoc queries each year.

Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications, including: Inpatient Activity, Outpatient Activity, Emergency Care, Mental Health & Learning Disability and Waiting Time Statistics (Inpatient, Outpatient, Diagnostics and Cancer). A detailed list of these publications is available from:

Website: <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/topics/dhssps-statistics-and-research>

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Technical Notes

This statistics release is part of a quarterly data series presenting information on waiting times and reporting times for diagnostic services at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland.

Data Collection

The information presented in this bulletin derives from a series of statistical returns (listed below) provided by HSC Trusts and the HSC Board.

Statutory Data Return 1 (SDR1), Parts 1 and 2, and Diagnostic Reporting Turnaround Time Return (DRTT)

Data providers are supplied with technical guidance documents outlining the methodologies that should be used in the collection, reporting and validation of each of these data returns. These documents can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>

Rounding

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place and, as a consequence, some percentages may not sum to 100.

On occasion, the percentage of patients waiting within overall totals or percentage changes between quarters, are presented. In some instances, these percentages are less than 0.1% or more than 99.9%. Users should be aware that in such cases, the percentage is rounded to zero or 100%.

Data Quality

Information provided by HSC Trusts on the SDR1 Part 1 return has been validated and quality assured by HSC Trusts prior to publication. HSC Trusts are given a set period of time to submit the information to HIB. Following submission, HIB perform a series of checks to verify that information is consistent both within and across returns. Trend analyses are used to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Queries arising from validation checks are presented to HSC Trusts for clarification and if required, returns may be amended and/or re-submitted.

The information contained within this publication is currently under review. The Department is looking at how information on diagnostic waiting and reporting times is sourced and the validation procedures that are carried out. All quality issues identified as part of this review are being addressed on an ongoing basis.

The information contained within this publication are not currently National Statistics.

Main Uses of Data

Data contained in this release are published primarily to provide an indication of HSC performance. They allow the general public and the DHSSPS Health Committee to assess the performance of the DHSSPS, the HSC Board and HSC Trusts in providing timely access to hospital services in Northern Ireland. These data also provide policy makers with the necessary information to formulate and evaluate health services and are helpful in assessing the effectiveness of resource allocation in providing services that are fully responsive to patient needs. Additionally, hospital waiting time information is used to inform the media, special interest groups and academics, and by the DHSSPS to respond to parliamentary/assembly questions and ad hoc queries from the public.

An additional aim of this publication is to make waiting times information publicly available to those people using health services in Northern Ireland.

Waiting Time Information Elsewhere in the United Kingdom

While it is our intention to direct users to waiting time information elsewhere in the UK, users should be aware that hospital waiting times in other administrations are not always measured in a comparable manner to those in Northern Ireland. Details of the hospital waiting times published elsewhere in the UK can be found as detailed below.

England

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

Scotland

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Publications/>

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/nhs-diagnostic-therapy-service-waiting-times/?lang=en>

Contact Information

As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to:

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Introduction

The information detailed in this release is published primarily to provide an indication of HSC Trust performance. It allows the general public and the DHSSPS Health Committee to assess the performance of the DHSSPS, the HSC Board and HSC Trusts in providing timely access to hospital services in Northern Ireland.

Data contained in this publication relates to waiting times for diagnostic services and the diagnostic reporting turnaround times at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland at 31st December 2015 and during the quarter ending (QE) December 2015, respectively.

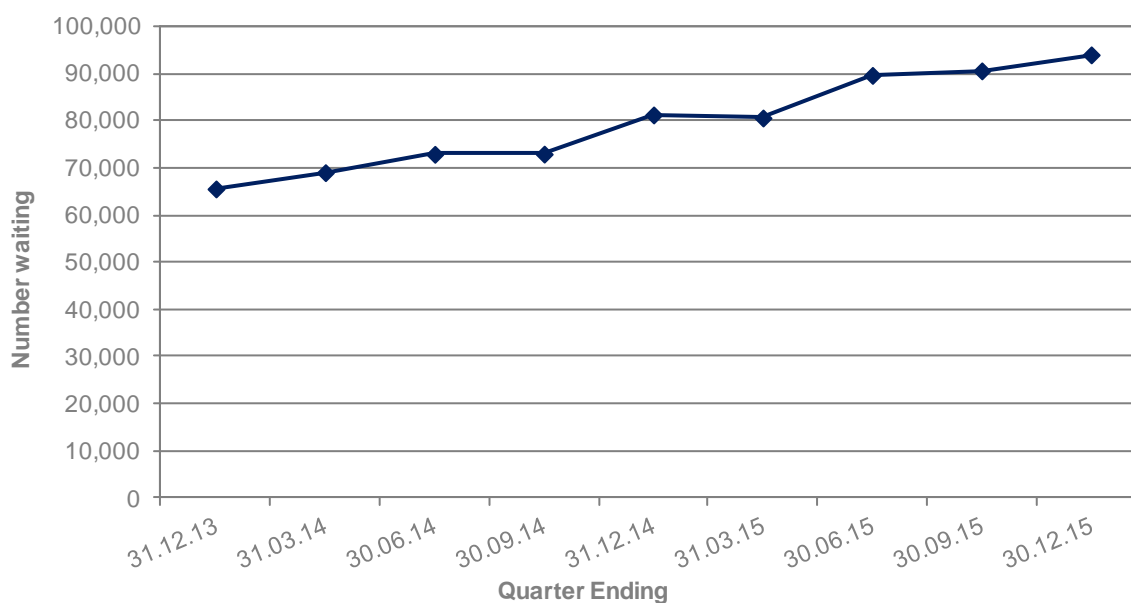
Waiting Times for Diagnostic Services

A diagnostic service provides an examination, test or procedure used to identify a person's disease or condition and which allows a medical diagnosis to be made.

Total patients waiting¹

The number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service at hospitals in Northern Ireland at 31st December 2015 was 94,043. This represents an increase of 3,400 (3.8%) on the number waiting at 30th September 2015 (90,643) and 12,755 (15.7%) more than at 31st December 2014 (81,288) (Figure 1 & Table 1a).

Figure 1: Total number of patients waiting: Quarterly trends 31st December 2013 to 31st December 2015

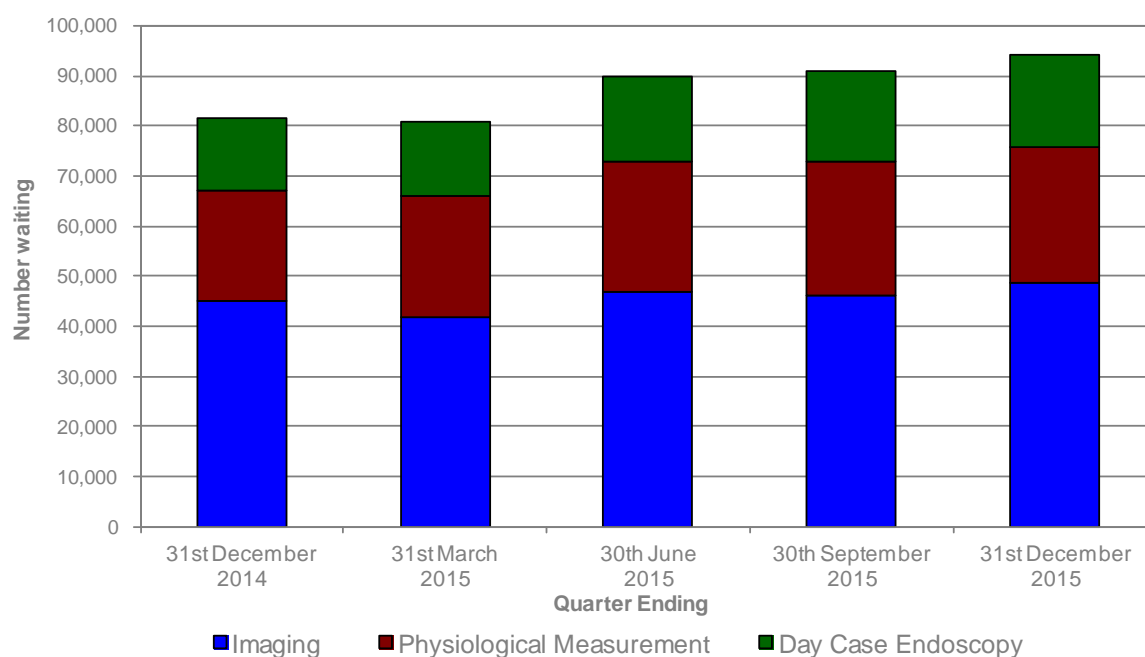


¹ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-10 & 18

Total patients waiting by Diagnostic category¹

Of the 94,043 patients waiting, 51.6% (48,482) were waiting for an Imaging Service, 29.0% (27,287) were waiting for a Physiological Measurement test and 19.4% (18,274) were waiting for a Day Case Endoscopy (Figure 2 & Table 1b).

Figure 2: Total number of patients waiting by category of service: Quarterly trends 31st December 2014 to 31st December 2015



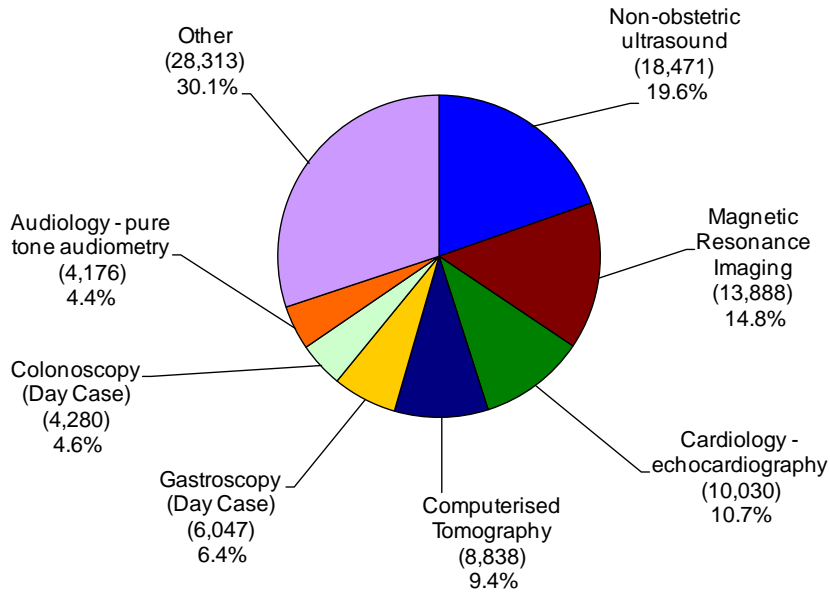
Total patients waiting by Diagnostic service²

A total of 69.9% (65,730) of the 94,043 patients waiting for a diagnostic service were within one of the following seven diagnostic services: Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Echocardiography; Computerised Tomography; Gastroscopy (Day Case); Colonoscopy (Day Case) and Pure Tone Audiometry (Figure 3 & Table 3).

¹ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-10 & 18

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-11 & 18

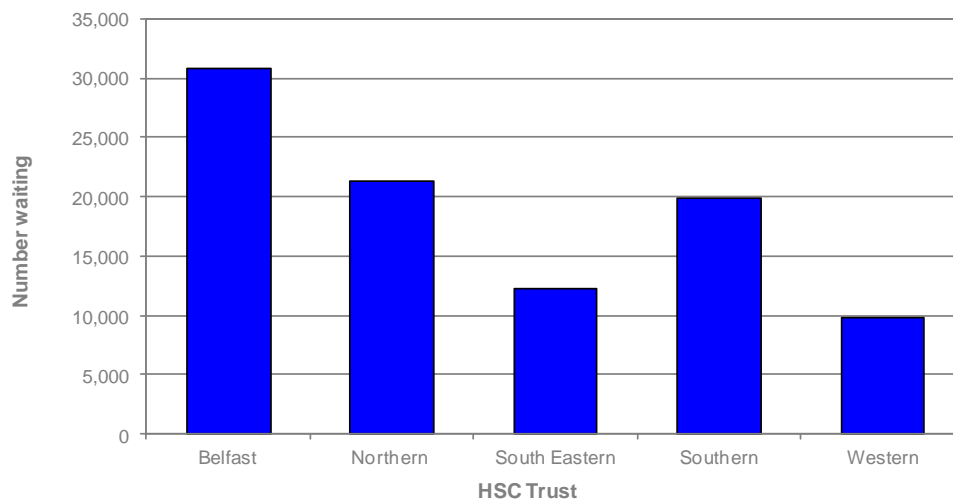
Figure 3: Total number of patients waiting by diagnostic service at 31st December 2015



Total patients waiting by HSC Trust²

Just under a third (32.7%, 30,759) of patients waiting for a diagnostic service were waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust. A further 22.7% (21,303) were waiting in the Northern HSC Trust, 13.0% (12,219) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 21.2% (19,914) in the Southern HSC Trust and 10.5% (9,848) in the Western HSC Trust (Figure 4 & Table 4).

Figure 4: Total number of patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31st December 2015



Data users should be aware that many diagnostic services are not provided at each of the five HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. In this situation, patients from one HSC Trust area will be waiting to be seen at a service provided at another HSC Trust. It is therefore not possible to accurately calculate the number of patients waiting per head of the population in any specific HSC 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.

² Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-11 & 18

Performance against the 2015/16 maximum waiting time target³

The 2015/16 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target states that, from April 2015, no patient should wait longer than nine weeks for a diagnostic test.

Figure 5: HSC Trust performance against the 2015/16 waiting time target for diagnostic tests

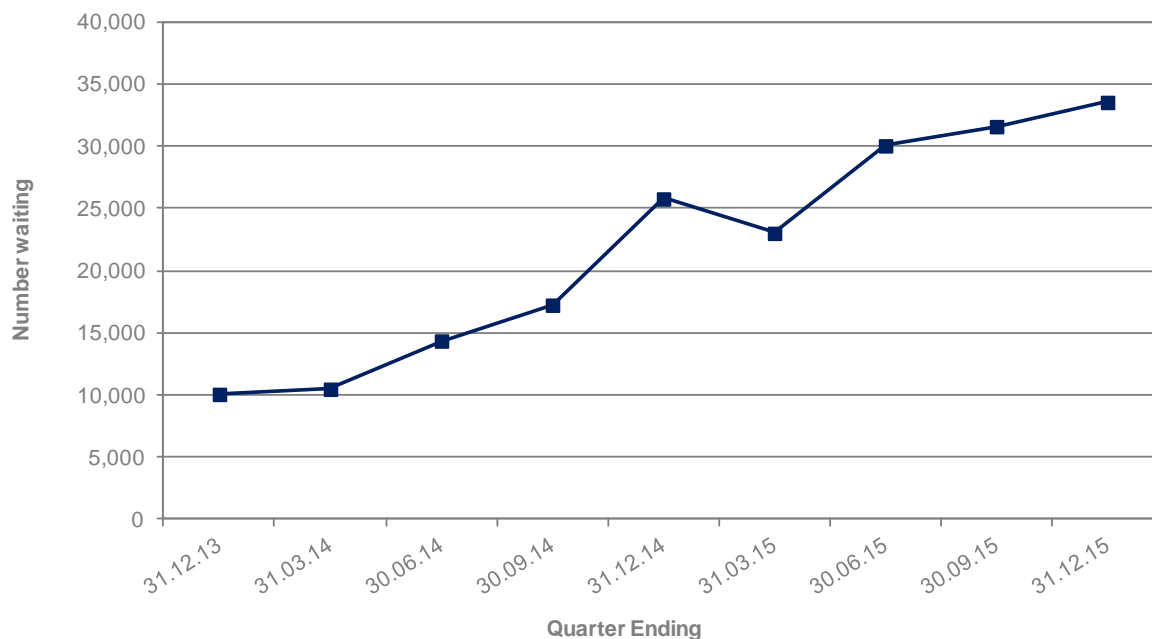
HSC Trust	Target Achieved?
	No patient waiting longer than nine weeks
Belfast	No
Northern	No
South Eastern	No
Southern	No
Western	No
Northern Ireland	No

Number of patients waiting longer than the 2015/16 maximum waiting time target

At the end of December 2015, no individual Trust met this target, nor did Northern Ireland as a whole (Table 4 & Figure 5).

At 31st December 2015, there were 33,555 (35.7%) patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test. This represents an increase of 1,948 (6.2%) on 30th September 2015 (31,607), and 7,768 (30.1%) more than the number waiting at 31st December 2014 (25,787) (Figure 6 & Table 2).

Figure 6: Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st December 2013 to 31st December 2015

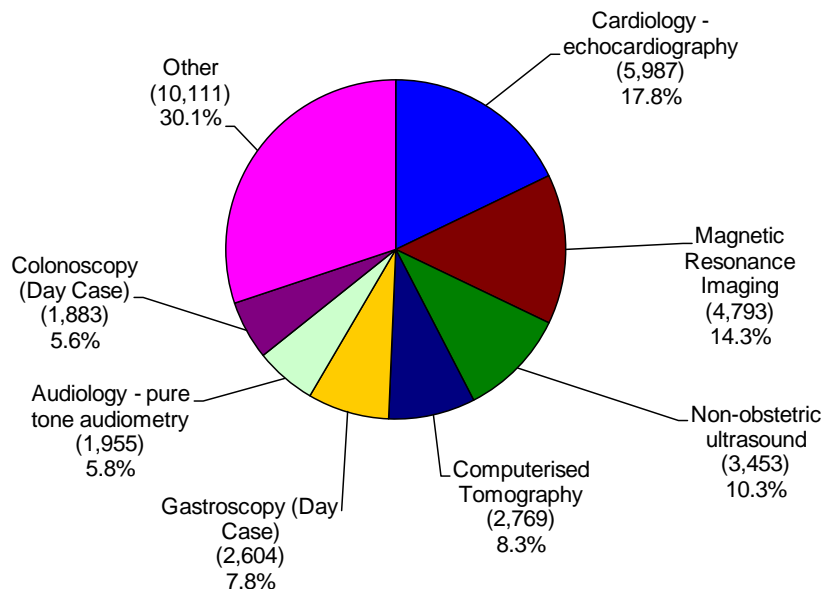


³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

Patients waiting longer than the 2015/16 maximum waiting time target by Diagnostic service³

A total of 69.9%, (23,444) of the 33,555 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following seven diagnostic services: Echocardiography; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Computerised Tomography; Gastroscopy (Day Case); Pure Tone Audiometry; and Colonoscopy (Day Case) (Figure 7 & Table 3).

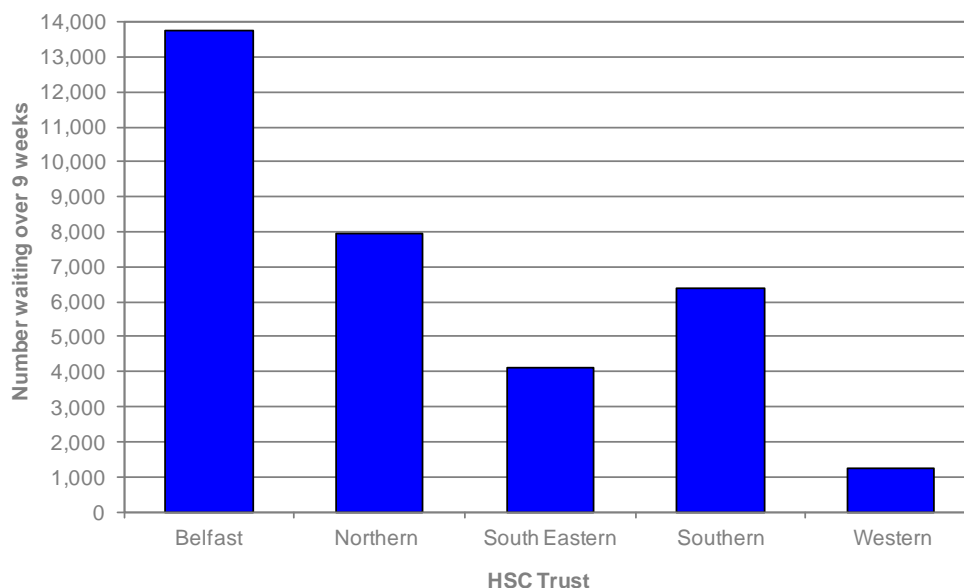
Figure 7: Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by diagnostic service at 31st December 2015



Patients waiting longer than the 2015/16 maximum waiting time target by HSC Trust³

Of the 33,555 patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service, 41.1% (13,785) were waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust, 23.8% (7,985) in the Northern HSC Trust, 19.1% (6,400) in the Southern HSC Trust, 12.3% (4,136) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, and 3.7% (1,249) in the Western HSC Trust (Figure 8 & Table 4).

Figure 8: Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st December 2015

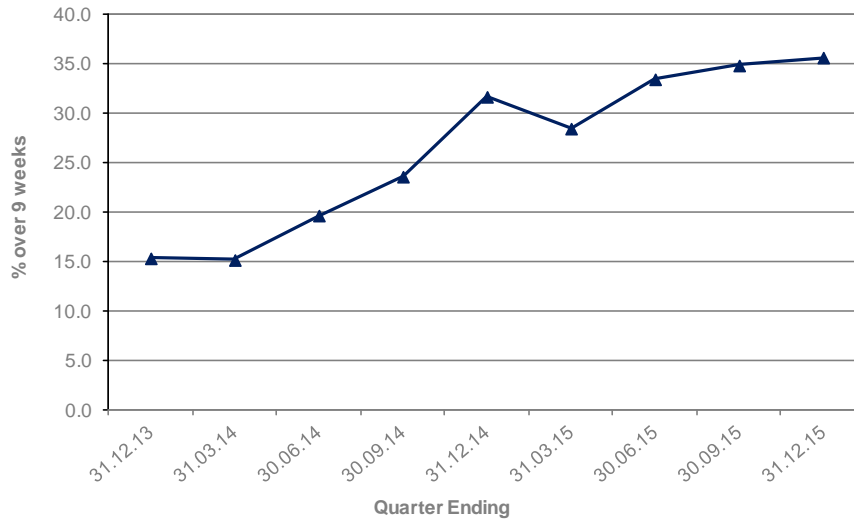


³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

Proportion of patients waiting longer than the 2015/16 maximum waiting time target³

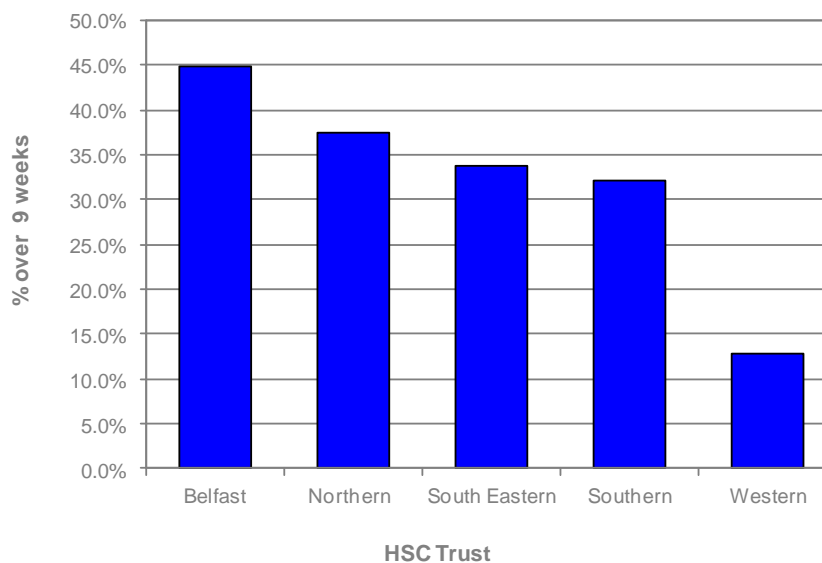
At the end of December 2015, 35.7% (33,555) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service, compared with 34.9% (31,607) at the end of September 2015 and 31.7% (25,787) at the end of December 2014 (Figure 9 & Tables 1a & 2).

Figure 9: Proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st December 2013 to 31st December 2015



At 31st December 2015, 44.8% (13,785 out of 30,759) of patients in the Belfast HSC Trust were waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service. The comparable proportion in the Northern HSC Trust was 37.5% (7,985 out of 21,303), with 32.1% (6,400 out of 19,914) in the Southern HSC Trust, 33.8% (4,136 out of 12,219) in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 12.7% (1,249 out of 9,818) in the Western HSC Trust (Figure 10 & Table 4).

Figure 10: Proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks in each HSC Trust at 31st December 2015



³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

Diagnostic Reporting Times

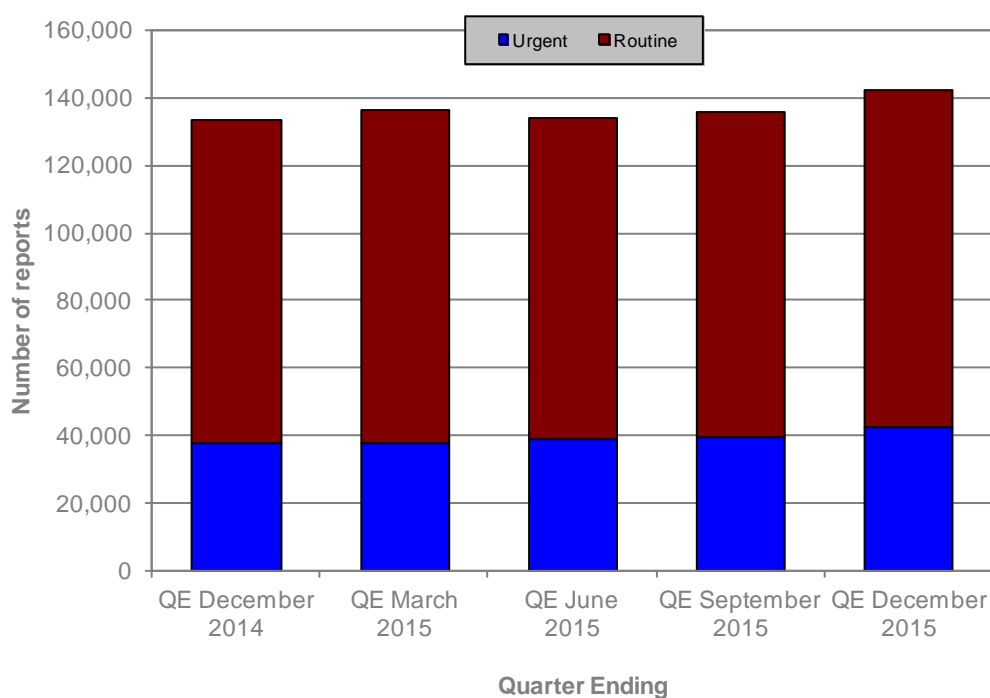
The diagnostic reporting turnaround time is the length of time between the diagnostic test being undertaken and the results being verified and dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland.

Diagnostic reporting turnaround times relate only to a selected subset of Imaging and Physiological Measurement tests (See explanatory note 14). Day case endoscopies are reported on the day of the test and as such are not included.

Total completed diagnostic reports⁴

A total of 142,266 diagnostic reports were verified and dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending December 2015. This represents an increase of 6,305 (4.6%) on the number of completed reports during the quarter ending September 2015 (135,961), and an increase of 8,524 (6.4%) on the number completed during the quarter ending December 2014 (133,742) (Figure 11 & Table 5).

Figure 11: Number of completed diagnostic reports by priority: Quarterly trends QE December 2014 – QE December 2015

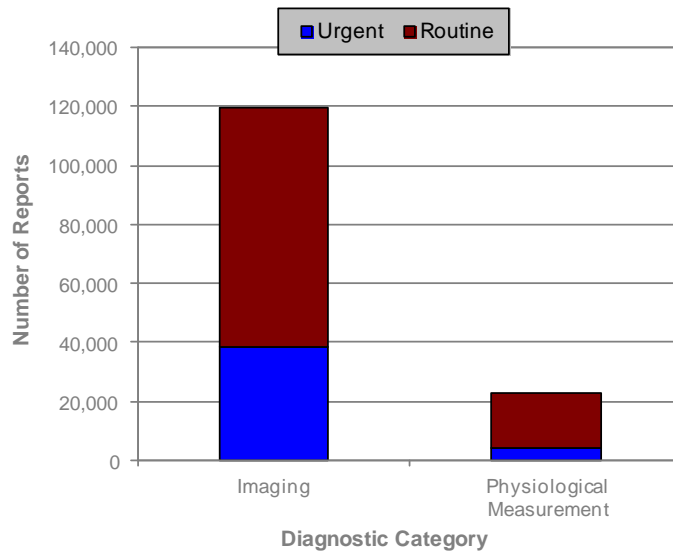


⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-15 & 18-19

Diagnostic reports by diagnostic category⁴

Of the 142,266 completed diagnostic test reports, 119,573 (84.0%) were reporting on an Imaging test and 22,693 (16.0%) were reporting on a Physiological Measurement test (Figure 12 & Tables 6 & 7).

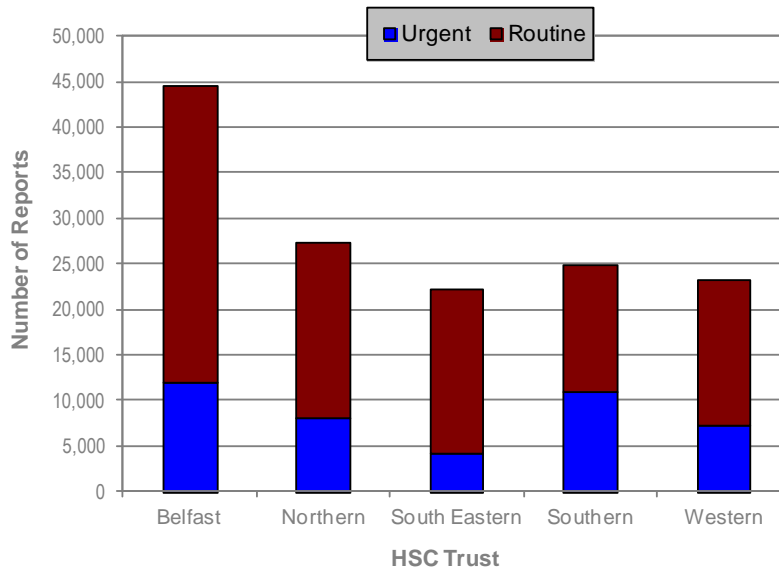
Figure 12: Number of completed diagnostic reports by category and priority during QE December 2015



Diagnostic reports by HSC Trust⁴

A total of 31.3% (44,589) diagnostic reports were completed in the Belfast HSC Trust, with 19.2% (27,313) completed in the Northern HSC Trust, 17.5% (24,956) in the Southern HSC Trust, 16.3% (23,231) in the Western HSC Trust and 15.6% (22,177) in the South Eastern HSC Trust (Figure 13 & Tables 8 & 9).

Figure 13: Number of completed diagnostic reports by HSC Trust and priority during QE December 2015



⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-15 & 18-19

2015/16 Diagnostic reporting time target⁵

The Ministerial target for diagnostic reporting times states that, from April 2015, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within two days of the test being undertaken. This means that 100% of urgent diagnostic tests subject to the target should be reported on within two days.

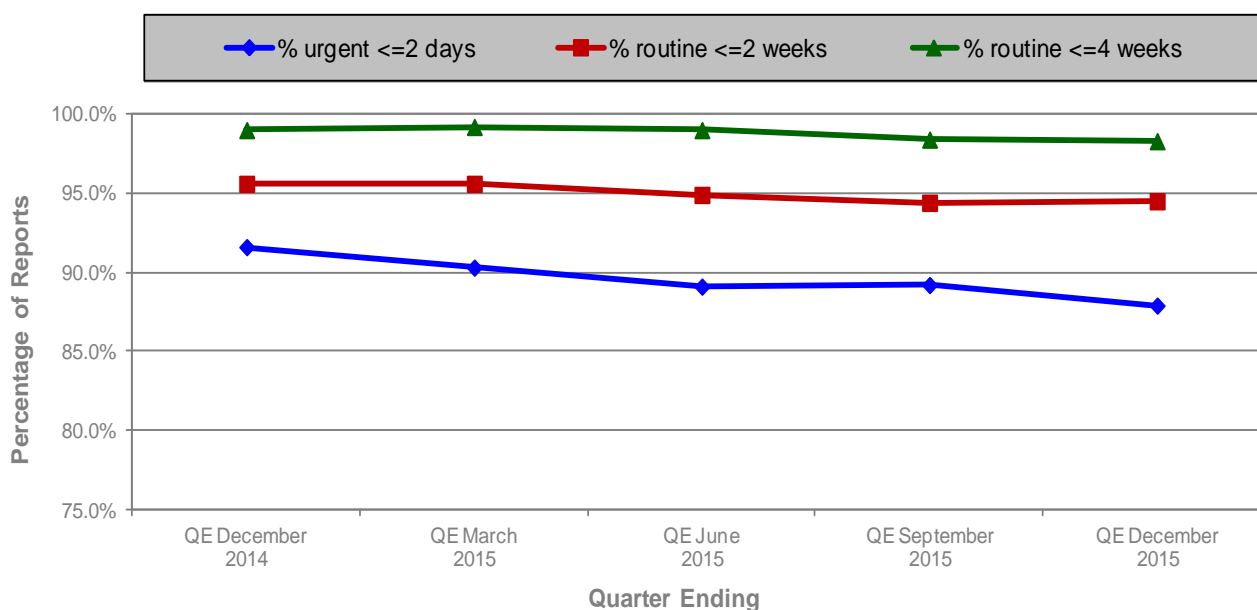
Figure 14: HSC Trust performance against the 2015/16 reporting time target

HSC Trust	Target Achieved?
	Ministerial Target: All urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days
Belfast	No
Northern	No
South Eastern	No
Southern	No
Western	No
Northern Ireland	No

During the quarter ending December 2015, no individual Trust met this target, nor did Northern Ireland as a whole (Figure 14).

Of the 42,643 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending December 2015, 87.9% (37,479) were reported on within 2 days. This is a decrease of 1.3 percentage points compared with the previous quarter (89.2%) (Figure 15 & Table 11). Compared with the same quarter in the previous year, the percentage of urgent diagnostic tests reported on within two days has decreased by 3.7 percentage points (91.6%). (Figure 15 & Table 11).

Figure 15: Percentage of diagnostic tests reported within 2 days/2weeks/4weeks: Quarterly trends QE December 2014 - QE December 2015



⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-16 & 18-19

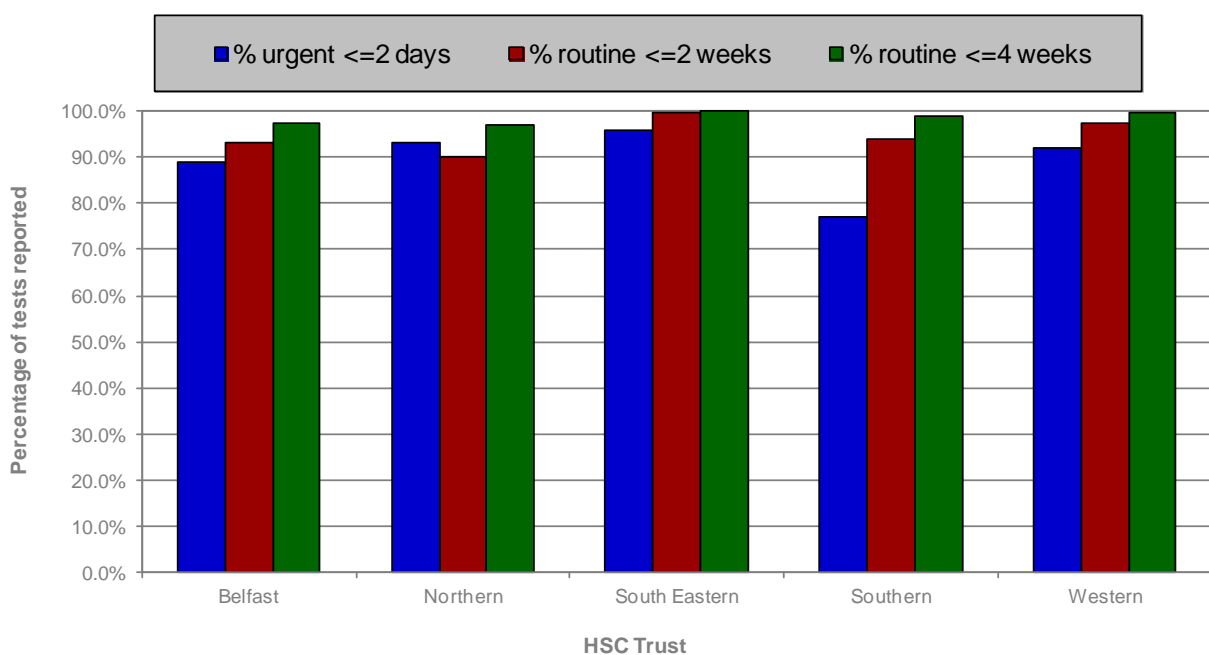
Performance against target by Diagnostic category⁵

Of the 42,643 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending December 2015, 38,453 were imaging reports and 4,190 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 87.3% of urgent imaging tests were reported on within 2 days, compared to 93.3% of urgent physiological measurement tests (Table 6).

Performance against target across Trusts⁵

Although no Trust managed to report on 100% of urgent diagnostic tests within 2 days, all Trusts did manage to report on at least 76.9%, with the South Eastern HSC Trust reporting on 96.0% within 2 days (Figure 16 & Table 10).

Figure 16: Percentage of diagnostic tests reported within 2 days/2weeks/4weeks by HSC Trust during QE December 2015



⁵ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-16 & 18-19

2015/16 Diagnostic reporting time indicators of performance⁶

The 2015/16 Ministerial indicators of performance for diagnostic reporting times refer to (i) the percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within 2 weeks of the test being undertaken, and (ii) the percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within 4 weeks of the test being undertaken.

During the quarter ending December 2015, there were a total of 99,632 completed routine diagnostic tests, of which 94,167 (94.5%) were reported on within two weeks (Table 7).

A further 3,777 (3.8%) routine tests were reported on within two to four weeks, giving a total of 97,944 (98.3%) reported on within four weeks. It took more than four weeks to report on 1,679 (1.7%) of these routine diagnostic tests (Tables 7 & 9).

Compared with the previous quarter, the percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within two weeks increased by 0.1 percentage points.

Compared with the same quarter in the previous year, the percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within two weeks decreased by 1.1 percentage points (Figure 15 & Table 11).

The percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within four weeks decreased by 0.1 percentage points when compared with the previous quarter, and 0.7 percentage points when compared to the same quarter in the previous year (Figure 15 & Table 11).

Indicators of performance by Diagnostic category⁶

Of the 99,623 routine diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending December 2015, 81,120 were imaging reports, while 18,503 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 94.7% of routine imaging tests were reported on within 2 weeks, compared to 93.9% of routine physiological measurement tests (Table 7).

A total of 98.2% of routine imaging tests were reported on within 4 weeks, compared to 98.7% of routine physiological measurement tests (Table 7).

Indicators of performance by Trust⁶

All Trusts managed to report on at least 90.1% of routine diagnostic tests within two weeks, with the South Eastern Trust reporting on 99.7% of routine diagnostic tests within two weeks. All Trusts managed to report on at least 97.0% of routine diagnostic tests within four weeks, with the South Eastern Trust reporting on 100% of routine diagnostic tests within four weeks (Figure 16 & Table 10).

⁶ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-15 & 17-19

Waiting times for Diagnostic Tests

Table 1a: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service – 31st December 2015¹

Total Waiting :	Number of patients waiting: 31st December 2015	Change compared with the end of the previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
16 Selected Services*	77,706	+2,231	+8,809
Other Services	16,337	+1,169	+3,847
Total	94,043	+3,400	+12,755

Source: Departmental Return SDR 1 (Parts 1 & 2)

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-10 & 18

* Refer specifically to Explanatory Note 2

Table 1b: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by category – 31st December 2015¹

Diagnostic Service Category	Number of patients waiting for one of the 16 selected services - 31st December 2015*	Number of patients waiting for one of the other diagnostic services - 31st December 2015	Total waiting for a diagnostic service - 31st December 2015
Imaging (excluding Interventional Imaging)	43,853	4,629	48,482
Physiological Measurement	19,063	8,224	27,287
Endoscopy (Day Case)	14,790	3,484	18,274
Total waiting for diagnostic tests	77,706	16,337	94,043

Source: Departmental Return SDR 1 (Parts 1 & 2)

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-11 & 18

* Refer specifically to Explanatory Note 2

Table 2: Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service – 31st December 2015³

Waiting more than 9 weeks for:	Number of patients waiting: 31st December 2015	Change compared with the end of the previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
16 Selected Services*	28,965	+864	+6,026
Other Services	4,590	+1,084	+1,742
Total	33,555	+1,948	+7,768

Source: Departmental Return SDR 1 (Parts 1 & 2)

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

* Refer specifically to Explanatory Note 2

Table 3: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by type of service and weeks waiting – 31st December 2015³

Diagnostic Test	Patients Waiting for a Diagnostic Test by Weeks						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21 - 26	>26	
Non-obstetric ultrasound	11,256	3,123	2,634	1,601	50	57	18,721
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	6,692	2,045	1,699	1,352	102	355	12,245
Cardiology - echocardiography	3,017	1,354	1,194	1,974	910	1,506	9,955
Computerised Tomography	4,945	939	683	974	300	334	8,175
Gastroscopy (Day Case)	2,497	784	705	938	327	688	5,939
Audiology - pure tone audiometry	1,535	533	517	763	520	1,337	5,205
Colonoscopy (Day Case)	1,992	510	431	556	183	696	4,368
Plain Film Xrays	3,329	93	11	1	1	1	3,436
Ambulatory ECG monitoring (24 hr holter)	1,679	388	234	109	5	5	2,420
Cystoscopy (Day Case)	859	153	127	240	135	720	2,234
Flexi sigmoidoscopy (Day Case)	856	275	219	342	122	353	2,167
DEXA Scan	1,017	237	269	352	44	0	1,919
Neurophysiology - peripheral neurophysiology	671	228	290	518	39	20	1,766
Arthroscopy	90	97	125	258	124	588	1,282
Fluroscopy	709	121	89	73	0	0	992
Cardiology - perfusion studies	313	127	111	120	37	282	990
Hysteroscopy	495	105	91	155	38	74	958
Spirometry inc.flow volume curves	633	115	61	9	0	0	818
Transfer Factor	524	99	60	9	0	0	692
Urodynamics - pressures and flows	267	93	91	109	40	86	686
Other	3,661	580	331	431	143	529	5,675
Total waiting for diagnostic tests	47,037	11,999	9,972	10,884	3,120	7,631	90,643

Source: Departmental Return SDR 1 (Parts 1 & 2)

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

Table 4: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by HSC Trust – 31st December 2015³

HSC Trust	All patients waiting for a diagnostic service by HSC Trust and weeks waiting: 31st December 2015						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	> 21 - 26	>26	
Belfast	12,099	4,875	4,460	5,192	1,748	2,385	30,759
Northern	10,398	2,920	1,970	2,827	1,175	2,013	21,303
South Eastern	9,437	4,077	3,400	2,459	187	354	19,914
Southern	6,480	1,603	905	988	410	1,833	12,219
Western	6,919	1,680	412	226	85	526	9,848
Total	45,333	15,155	11,147	11,692	3,605	7,111	94,043
Total waiting more than nine weeks:		33,555					

Source: Departmental Return SDR 1 (Parts 1 & 2)

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

Diagnostic Reporting Times

Table 5: Number of completed diagnostic reports by priority – QE December 2015⁴

Priority of Report	QE December 2015	Change compared with previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
Urgent Reports	42,643	+3,032	+4,878
Routine Reports	99,623	+3,273	+3,646
Total Reports	142,266	+6,305	+8,524

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

⁴Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-15 & 18-19

Table 6: Number of completed urgent diagnostic reports by category – QE December 2015⁵

Category of test	Length of time reporting in days				Total Completed
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Imaging	33,571	4,571	287	24	38,453
Physiological Measurement	3,908	268	9	5	4,190
Total	37,479	4,839	296	29	42,643
0 - 2 days:	37,479 (87.9%)				
> 2 days:	5,164 (12.1%)				

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

⁵Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-16 & 18-19

Table 7: Number of completed routine diagnostic reports by category – QE December 2015⁶

Category of test	Length of time reporting in weeks			Total Completed
	0 - 2 weeks	>2 - 4 weeks	>4 weeks	
Imaging	76,795	2,881	1,444	81,120
Physiological Measurement	17,372	896	235	18,503
Total	94,167	3,777	1,679	99,623
0 - 2 weeks: 94,167 (94.5%) >2 - 4 weeks: 3,777 (3.8%) >4 weeks: 1,679 (1.7%)				

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

⁶Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-15 & 17-19

Table 8: Number of completed urgent diagnostic reports by HSC Trust and time in days – QE December 2015⁵

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in days				Total Completed
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Belfast	10,682	1,227	83	8	12,000
Northern	7,508	542	5	2	8,057
South Eastern	4,067	168	3	0	4,238
Southern	8,470	2,327	195	16	11,008
Western	6,752	575	10	3	7,340
Total	37,479	4,839	296	29	42,643

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

⁵Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-16 & 18-19

Table 9: Number of completed routine diagnostic reports by HSC Trust and time in weeks – QE December 2015⁶

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in weeks			Total Completed
	0 - 2 weeks	>2 - 4 weeks	>4 weeks	
Belfast	30,350	1,374	865	32,589
Northern	17,347	1,326	583	19,256
South Eastern	17,877	57	5	17,939
Southern	13,108	671	169	13,948
Western	15,485	349	57	15,891
Total	94,167	3,777	1,679	99,623

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

⁶ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-15 & 17-19

Table 10: Percentage of completed reports achieved – QE December 2015⁷

HSC Trust	Percentage achieved		
	Percentage of urgent diagnostic tests reported on within two days	Percentage of routine tests reported on within two weeks	Percentage of routine tests reported on within four weeks
Belfast	89.0%	93.1%	97.3%
Northern	93.2%	90.1%	97.0%
South Eastern	96.0%	99.7%	100.0%
Southern	76.9%	94.0%	98.8%
Western	92.0%	97.4%	99.6%
Northern Ireland	87.9%	94.5%	98.3%

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

⁷Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5 & 13-19

Table 11: Diagnostic reporting time performance (across all HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland) – QE December 2015⁷

Priority	Performance	Change compared with previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
Urgent	% within two days: 87.9%	-1.3 percentage points	- 3.7 percentage points
Routine	% within two weeks: 94.5%	+0.1 percentage points	-1.1 percentage points
Routine	% within four weeks: 98.3%	-0.1 percentage points	-0.7 percentage points

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

⁷Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5 & 13-19

Appendix 1: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the quarterly Departmental Returns SDR1 (Parts 1 & 2) and the DRTT Return. The source for the diagnostic waiting time data for the 16 selected diagnostic services is the Departmental Return SDR1 Part 1 (See explanatory note 2). The waiting time information for all other diagnostic services is provided by the HSC Board on the SDR1 Part 2 return. The diagnostic reporting turnaround time information is provided by the HSC Board on the DRTT return.
2. The 16 selected diagnostic services are: Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Computerised Tomography; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Barium Studies; DEXA Scan; Radio-Nuclide Imaging; Pure Tone Audiometry; Echocardiography; Perfusion Studies; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Sleep Studies; Urodynamics Pressures and Flows; Colonoscopy; Flexi Sigmoidoscopy; Cystoscopy and Gastroscopy.
3. All of the data contained in the tables can be supplied by individual diagnostic service or HSC Trust if this level of detail is required. In addition, quarterly data relating to diagnostic waiting times has also been published in spreadsheet format (Microsoft Excel), split by HSC Trust and diagnostic service, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at <https://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>
4. The diagnostic waiting and reporting turnaround times returns (SDR1 Parts 1 and 2, DRTT) include patients living outside Northern Ireland and privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
5. HSC Trusts use the Northern Ireland Picture Archive and Communications System (NIPACS) as the mechanism for managing imaging services. The HSC Board has carried out a validation exercise with Trusts to address any data quality issues. The quality of imaging waiting times and reporting times have improved in recent years.
6. A **diagnostic service** provides an examination, test or procedure used to identify a person's disease or condition and which allows a medical diagnosis to be made. There are three categories of diagnostic test: Imaging Service; Physiological Measurement test; and Day Case Endoscopy.
7. The **diagnostic waiting time** relates to all tests with a diagnostic element. Included are tests that are part diagnostic and subsequently part therapeutic. A therapeutic procedure is defined as a procedure which involves actual treatment of a person's disease, condition or injury. Purely therapeutic procedures are excluded from the diagnostic waiting times target. Patients currently admitted to a hospital bed and waiting for an emergency procedure, patients waiting for a planned procedure and patients waiting for procedures as part of screening programmes are also excluded from the waiting times target.
8. The waiting time for a diagnostic service commences on the date on which the referral for the service is received by the Health Care provider and stops on the date on which the test is performed. 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 the DNA.
9. A number of the diagnostic services reported on the SDR 1 return are managed as an inpatient admission: either an ordinary admission or a day case. As such, they will be included in both the inpatient and diagnostic services waiting time figures. Due to the risk of multiple counting, these two sets of data should not be combined to give an estimate of the total number of patients waiting for either inpatient admission or a diagnostic service.
10. Waiting time statistics for day case endoscopies also include patients waiting for these services that are managed as ordinary admissions.

11. For Tables 2, 3 and 4 and Figures 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, each diagnostic waiting timeband relates to the number of completed weeks a patient has been waiting for a diagnostic service. 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) week time band.
12. Patients waiting 'longer than nine weeks' for a diagnostic service includes all patients in the >9 - 13, >13 - 21, >21 - 26 and > 26 week time bands.
13. The **diagnostic reporting turnaround time** is the time interval between the completion of the diagnostic test and the results of that test being verified or dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland, whichever is applicable.
14. Diagnostic reporting times apply to a selected subset of diagnostic services. These services are: Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Computerised Tomography; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Barium Studies; DEXA Scan; Radio-Nuclide Imaging; Pure Tone Audiometry; Echocardiography; Perfusion Studies; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Sleep Studies; and Urodynamics Pressures and Flows.
15. Information on Plain Film Xray reporting times has been collected from April 2015 however as it is not included as part of the 2015/16 Ministerial Target, the commentary and figures within this publication do not include them. Information on Plain Film Xray reporting times however have been provided within the accompanying excel document.
16. The 2015/16 Ministerial diagnostic target, as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2015, states that, from April 2015, no patient should wait longer than nine weeks for a diagnostic test, and all urgent diagnostic tests are reported on within two days of being undertaken.
17. The 2015/16 Ministerial indicators of performance, as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Indicators of Performance) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2015, measure (i) percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within 2 weeks of the test being undertaken and (ii) percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within four weeks of the test being undertaken.
18. The information on diagnostic and reporting times contained within this publication is currently under review. The Department is looking at how this information is sourced and the validation procedures that are carried out with a view to improving the quality. All quality issues identified as part of this review are being addressed on an ongoing basis.
19. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety policy is to publish revised figures with subsequent statistical releases unless it is decided that the magnitude of the change merits earlier notification.
20. The information contained within this publication is not National Statistics.
21. Figures relating to the quarter ending 31st March 2016 will be released on Thursday 26th May 2016.

Additional Information

Further information on Waiting Times for Diagnostic Services at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland is available from:

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

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