

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland

Waiting Time Statistics:

Diagnostic Waiting Times

Quarter Ending September 2018



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Máinnystrie O Poustie

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Reader Information

Purpose: This statistical release presents information on waiting times and reporting times for diagnostic services in Northern Ireland and reports on the performance of the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts against the draft 2018/19 Ministerial waiting time target and the draft 2018/19 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target:

“By March 2019, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks”.

“By March 2019, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within two days of the test being undertaken”.

This statistical release details information on waiting times and reporting times for diagnostic services in HSC Trusts at 30th September 2018. Data are presented by HSC Trust, diagnostic category, diagnostic test, and time band. Further information on routine diagnostic reporting times is available in the accompanying CSV file.

Statistical Quality: The ‘*Diagnostic 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/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-september-2018>

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

Authors: Adam Robinson, Jennifer McCrea, Siobhán Morgan

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Information & Analysis Directorate
Department of Health
Stormont Estate, Belfast, BT4 3SQ

Contact Information and further copies: statistics@health-ni.gov.uk

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

Price: Free

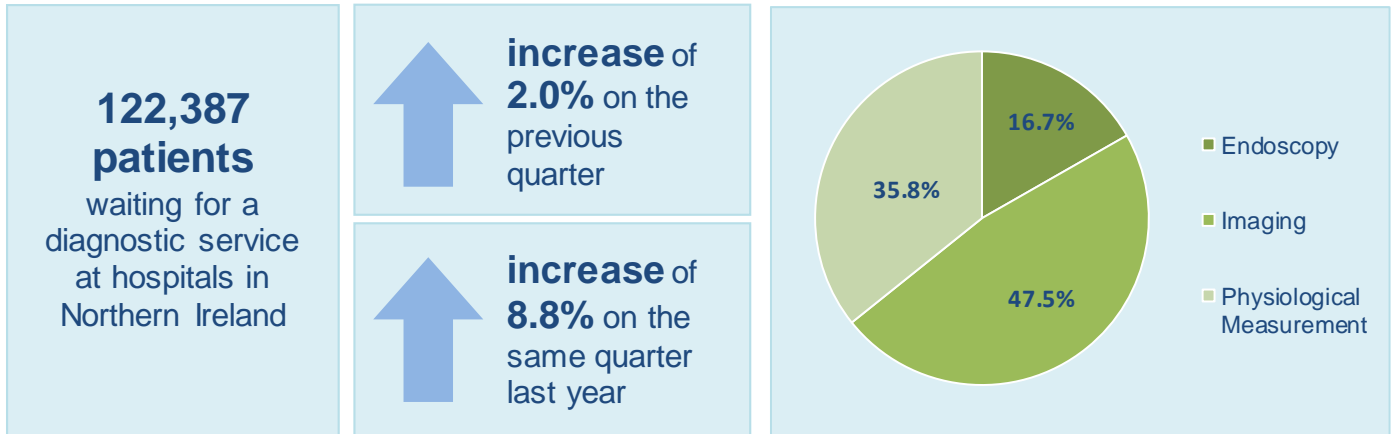
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By March 2019, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

Total number of patients waiting at 30th September 2018

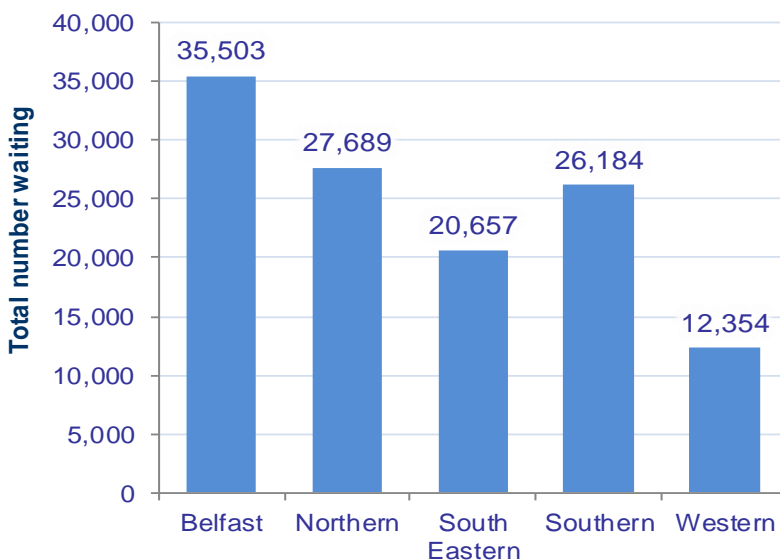


Source: SDR1

At 30th September 2018, a total of 122,387 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test, 2.0% (2,343) more than at 30th June 2018 (120,044), and 8.8% (9,866) more than at 30th September 2017 (112,521) (Table 1).

A number of diagnostic services may not be provided at all 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. Data users should be cautious in how they use these data (see explanatory note 10).

Almost a third (29.0%) were waiting for diagnostic tests in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 22.6% in the Northern HSC Trust, 21.4% in the Southern HSC Trust, 16.9% in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 10.1% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).



More than two thirds (68.7%, 84,098) of the 122,387 patients were waiting for a diagnostic test within one of the following seven diagnostic services: Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Echocardiography; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Computerised Tomography; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Gastroscopy; and Pure Tone Audiometry (Table 3).

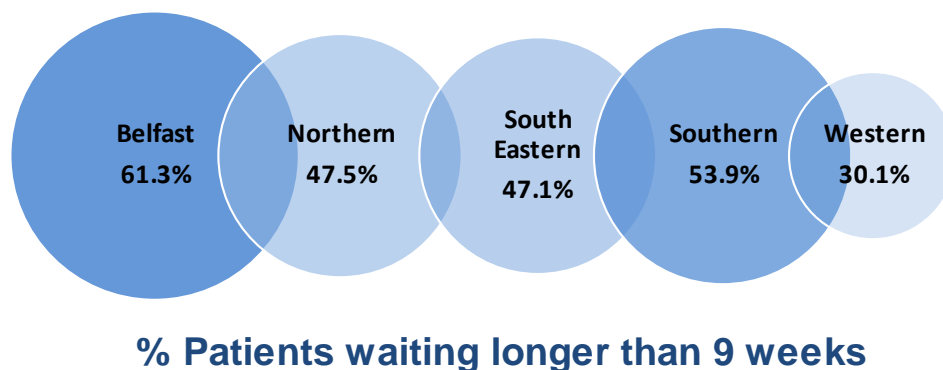
Source: SDR1

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th September 2018

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

51.1%
of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks

Source: SRD1 Part 1&2



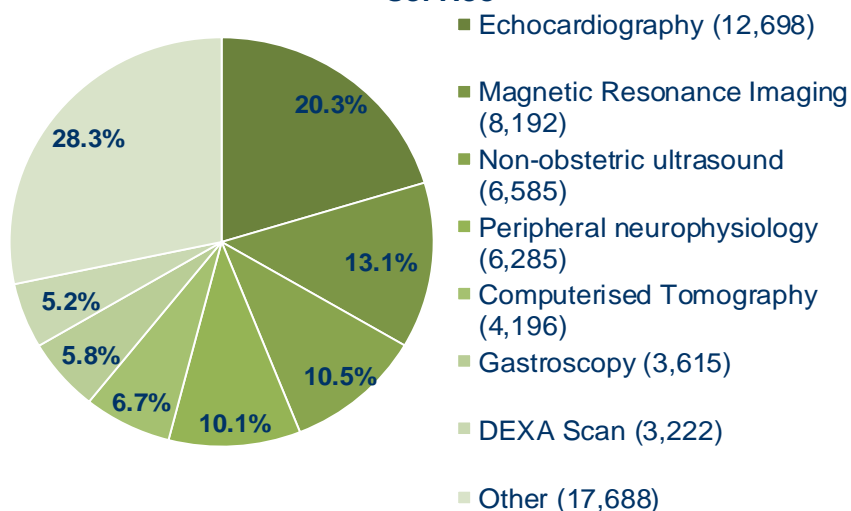
Achievement of the 9 week target requires that less than 25% of patients should be waiting over 9 weeks for a diagnostic test.

At 30th September 2018, 51.1% (62,481) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, compared with 45.4% (54,464) at 30th June 2018 and 49.2% (55,340) at 30th September 2017 (Table 1).

At 30th September 2018, the 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole, or by any individual HSC Trust. Data users should be aware that not all diagnostic services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 10).

Almost two thirds (61.3%, 21,762) of patients were waiting longer than 9 weeks in Belfast HSC Trust at 30th September 2018, 53.9% (14,117) in the Southern HSC Trust, 47.5% (13,152) in the Northern HSC Trust, 47.1% (9,733) in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 30.1% (3,717) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

Patients waiting over 9 weeks by diagnostic service



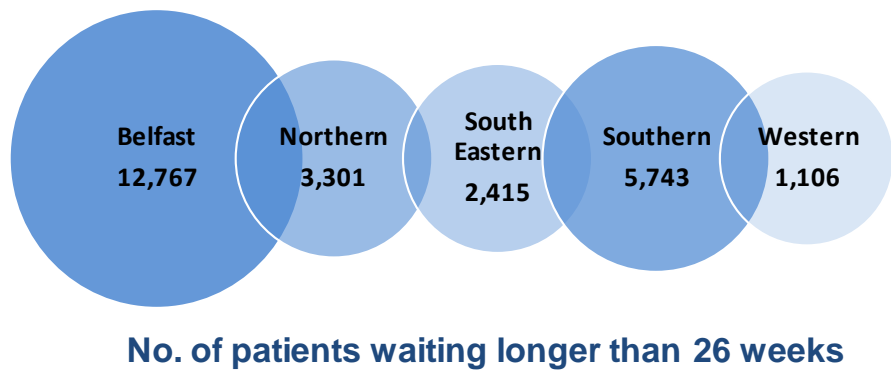
Over two thirds (71.7%, 44,793) of the 62,481 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following diagnostic tests: Echo-cardiography; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound; Peripheral Neuro-physiology; Computerised Tomography; Gastroscopy and DEXA Scan (Table 3).

Source: SDR1

Patients waiting more than 26 weeks at 30th September 2018

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

25,332 patients were waiting longer than 26 weeks



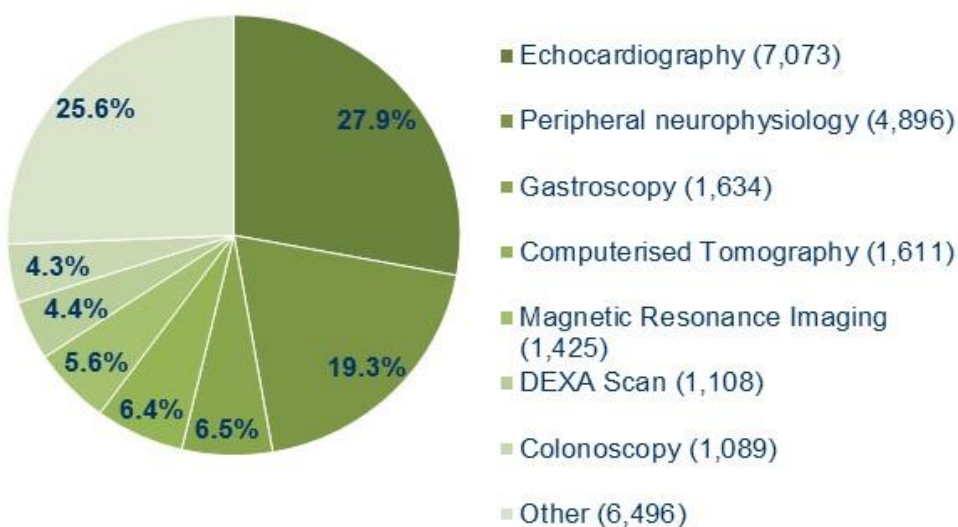
Source: SDR1

At 30th September 2018, 20.7% (25,332) of patients were waiting more than 26 weeks for a diagnostic test compared with 17.1% (20,537) at 30th June 2018 and 16.6% (18,697) at 30th September 2017 (Table 1).

At 30th September 2018, the 26 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2). Data users should be aware that not all diagnostic services are provided at every HSC Trust (see explanatory note 10).

Over a third (36.0%, 12,767) of patients in the Belfast HSC Trust were waiting longer than 26 weeks at 30th September 2018, 21.9% (5,743) in the Southern HSC Trust, 11.9% (3,301) in the Northern HSC Trust, 11.7% (2,415) in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 9.0% (1,106) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

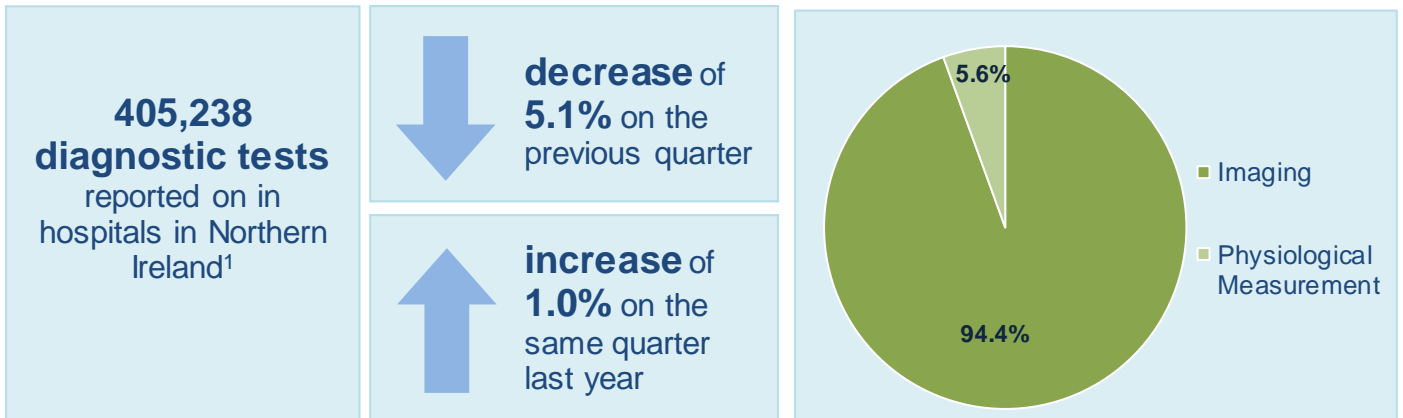
Patients waiting over 26 weeks by diagnostic service



Source: SDR1

Three quarters (74.4%, 18,836) of the 25,332 patients waiting more than 26 weeks were waiting for one of the following diagnostic tests: Echocardiography; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Gastroscopy; Computerised Tomography; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; DEXA Scan and Colonoscopy (Table 3).

Total number of diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending September 2018

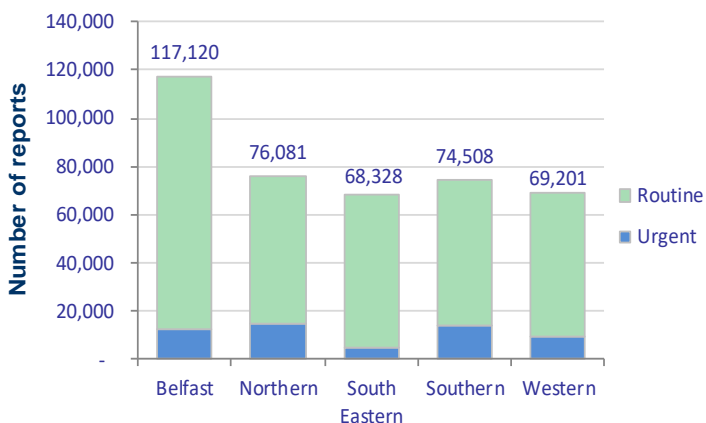


Source: DRTT Return

A total of 405,238 diagnostic tests were reported on and dispatched to the referring clinician at hospitals in Northern Ireland during the quarter ending September 2018, 5.1% (21,754) fewer than the quarter ending June 2018 (426,992), and 1.0% (4,013) more than the quarter ending September 2017 (401,225) (Table 4).

Of the 405,238 reported diagnostic tests, 94.4% (382,737) were reporting on an Imaging test and 5.6% (22,501) were reporting on a Physiological Measurement test¹ (Table 4).

Approximately one in eight (13.6%, 55,196) of the diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending September 2018 were urgent diagnostic tests, with the remaining 86.4% (350,042) being routine diagnostic tests² (Table 4).



Over one quarter (28.9%) of diagnostic tests were reported and dispatched in the Belfast HSC Trust¹, with a further 18.8% in the Northern HSC Trust, 18.4% in the Southern HSC Trust, 17.1% in the Western HSC Trust and 16.9% in the South Eastern HSC Trust.

Source: DRTT Return

¹ Diagnostic reporting turnaround times relate only to a selected subset of Imaging and Physiological Measurement tests. Day case endoscopies are reported on the day of the test and as such are not included.

² Reporting times of routine diagnostic tests are available in the accompanying CSV file.

By March 2019, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within 2 days of the test being undertaken.

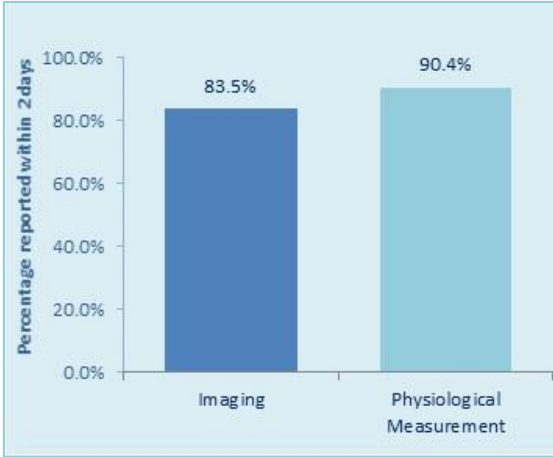
Urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days during quarter ending September 2018

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

↓ **decrease of 0.9 percentage points** on the previous quarter

84.1% of urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days

↓ **decrease of 2.2 percentage points** on the same quarter last year

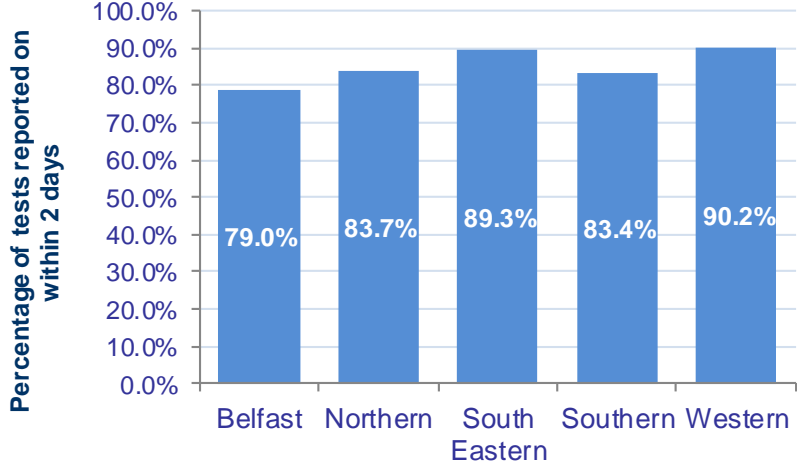


Source: DRTT Return

Achievement of the diagnostic reporting turnaround time target requires that all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported and dispatched within 2 days.

Of the 55,196 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending September 2018, 84.1% (46,438) were reported on within 2 days, compared with 85.0% (46,613) during the quarter ending June 2018 and 86.3% (42,974) during the quarter ending September 2017 (Table 5).

Of the 55,196 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending September 2018, 50,379 were imaging reports and 4,817 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 83.5% of urgent imaging tests were reported on within 2 days compared with 90.4% of urgent physiological measurement tests (Table 6).



During quarter ending September 2018, the 2 day target was not achieved by any HSC Trust, although the Western Trust reported on 90.2% of urgent diagnostic tests (Table 7).

Source: DRTT Return

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by diagnostic category – 30th September 2018¹

Diagnostic Category		Current Quarter (30 th Sep 2018)	Previous Quarter (30 st Jun 2018)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 th Sept 2017)
Imaging	Total Patients Waiting	58,140	57,815	59,503
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	22,550	18,468	24,833
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	38.8%	31.9%	41.7%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	5,043	3,080	5,793
Physiological Measurement	Total Patients Waiting	43,757	42,989	35,444
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	27,786	25,622	20,945
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	63.5%	59.6%	59.1%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	14,538	13,086	9,024
Endoscopy	Total Patients Waiting	20,490	19,240	17,574
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	12,145	10,374	9,562
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	59.3%	53.9%	54.4%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	5,751	4,371	3,880
Total	Total Patients Waiting	122,387	120,044	112,521
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	62,481	54,464	55,340
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	51.1%	45.4%	49.2%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	25,332	20,537	18,697

Source: SDR1

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–15 & 22-25

Table 2: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by HSC Trust – 30th September 2018¹

HSC Trust	Patients Waiting for Diagnostic Service by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21-26	>26	
Belfast	10,843	2,898	2,553	4,283	2,159	12,767	35,503
Northern	11,741	2,796	2,391	5,104	2,356	3,301	27,689
South Eastern	8,673	2,251	2,490	3,931	897	2,415	20,657
Southern	9,401	2,666	2,401	4,148	1,825	5,743	26,184
Western	7,370	1,267	997	1,180	434	1,106	12,354
Total	48,028	11,878	10,832	18,646	7,671	25,332	122,387

Source: SDR1

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–15 & 22-25

Table 3: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by type of service and weeks waiting – 30th September 2018¹

Diagnostic Test	Patients Waiting for Diagnostic Service by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21-26	>26	
Non-obstetric ultrasound	11,938	2,354	1,757	3,180	790	858	20,877
Echocardiography	3,195	1,238	1,541	2,823	1,261	7,073	17,131
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	6,410	2,009	1,756	3,342	1,669	1,425	16,611
Computerised Tomography	4,955	970	693	1,311	581	1,611	10,121
Peripheral neurophysiology	553	302	318	680	391	4,896	7,140
Gastroscopy	2,259	587	660	898	423	1,634	6,461
Pure tone audiometry	2,140	736	730	1,191	345	615	5,757
DEXA Scan	1,658	556	577	1,170	367	1,108	5,436
Colonoscopy	1,906	445	568	758	376	1,089	5,142
Ambulatory ECG monitoring (24 hr holter)	1,683	420	385	507	286	690	3,971
Plain Film Xrays	3,038	59	3	1	0	0	3,101
Flexi sigmoidoscopy	810	250	286	481	254	831	2,912
Cystoscopy	880	149	145	360	207	422	2,163
Arthroscopy	84	69	78	245	112	951	1,539
Sleep studies	737	234	146	205	55	42	1,419
Perfusion studies	195	134	132	228	92	208	989
Patient Activated Ambulatory Function	302	73	76	99	87	333	970
EEG	305	128	120	172	52	144	921
Barium Studies/Fluoroscopy	599	97	117	71	3	7	894
Other	4,381	1,068	744	924	320	1,395	8,832
All diagnostic tests	48,028	11,878	10,832	18,646	7,671	25,332	122,387

Source: SDR1

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–15 & 22-25

Table 4: Number of diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by priority of report – QE September 2018²

Priority of Report	Diagnostic Category	QE September 2018	QE June 2018 ^R	QE September 2017
Urgent	Imaging	50,379	50,048	44,842
	Physiological Measurement	4,817	4,793	4,938
Routine	Imaging	332,358	354,553	333,193
	Physiological Measurement	17,684	17,598	18,252
Total	Imaging	382,737	404,601	378,035
	Physiological Measurement	22,501	22,391	23,190

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

^R Figures have been revised

Table 5: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched – QE September 2018²

Urgent Diagnostic Tests	QE September 2018	QE June 2018 ^R	QE September 2017
Total reported	55,196	54,841	49,780
Number reported within 2 days	46,438	46,613	42,974
<i>% reported on within 2 days</i>	<i>84.1%</i>	<i>85.0%</i>	<i>86.3%</i>

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

^R Figures have been revised

Table 6: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by diagnostic category and time in days– QE September 2018²

Diagnostic Category	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Imaging	42,082	7,492	436	369	50,379
Physiological Measurement	4,356	428	26	7	4,817
Total	46,438	7,920	462	376	55,196

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

Table 7: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by HSC Trust and time in days – QE September 2018²

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Belfast	10,031	2,104	215	341	12,691
Northern	12,292	2,365	26	5	14,688
South Eastern	4,200	467	28	6	4,701
Southern	11,547	2,119	158	18	13,842
Western	8,368	865	35	6	9,274
Total	46,438	7,920	462	376	55,196

Source: DRTT Return

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-3, 5 & 16–25

Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes

1. The sources for the data contained in this release are the quarterly Departmental Returns SDR1 and the DRTT Return. Note that, prior to September 2018, diagnostic waiting time data was provided separately for 16 selected diagnostic services in the SDR1 Part 1, with all other diagnostic services provided by the HSCB on the SDR1 Part 2 return. The diagnostic reporting turnaround time information is provided by the HSCB on the DRTT return.
2. The '*Diagnostic 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/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-september-2018>
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 and diagnostic reporting turnaround times has also been published in spreadsheet format (CSV), split by HSC Trust and diagnostic service, in order to aid secondary analysis. These data are available at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-september-2018>
4. From September 2018, the CSV file has a number of changes. Barium Studies and Fluoroscopy diagnostic waits have been combined together and Computerised Tomography has been split into General, Colonoscopy and Cardiac waits. In addition, all patients waiting >26 weeks have now been split into the following timebands >26-36, >36-52, >52-65, >65-78 and >78.
5. The diagnostic waiting times and diagnostic reporting turnaround times returns (SDR1 Parts 1 and 2, DRTT) include patients living outside Northern Ireland and privately funded patients waiting for diagnostic services in Health Service hospitals in Northern Ireland.
6. 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 has improved in recent years.
7. 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 test; Physiological Measurement test; and Day Case Endoscopy.

8. 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.
9. 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 that they could not attend, while patients who do not attend (DNA) have their waiting time adjusted to commence on the date of the DNA.
10. A number of diagnostic services may not be provided at all 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. 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 HSC Trust area. 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.
11. A number of the diagnostic services, particularly endoscopies, reported on the SDR 1 (Part 1 & 2) returns are managed as an admission: either an inpatient admission or a day case. As such, they will be included in both the inpatient and day case waiting time and diagnostic 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 admission or a diagnostic service.
12. Some people will be waiting on more than one waiting list or be on the same waiting list for more than one outpatient appointment/admission/diagnostic test at the same time due to having more than one condition.
13. The draft 2018/19 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target, states that, by March 2019, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

14. For Tables 2 and 3, each diagnostic waiting time band 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 week (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) time band.
15. Patients waiting 'longer than 9 weeks' for a diagnostic service includes all patients in the >9 - 13, >13 - 21, >21-26, >26-36, >36-52, >52-65, >65-78 and >78 week time bands. All patients waiting 'over 26 weeks' includes everyone in the >26-36, >36-52, >52-65, >65-78 and >78 week time bands.
16. 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.
17. Diagnostic reporting times apply to a selected subset of imaging and physiological measurement 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 and Plain Film X-rays.
18. Data for Plain Film X-rays is only available from April 2015 onwards, as such DRTT figures should not be compared prior to this date.
19. The draft 2018/19 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target, states that, by March 2019, all urgent diagnostic tests should be reported on within two days of the test being undertaken.
20. Further information on routine diagnostic reporting times are available in the accompanying CSV file at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>
21. 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.
22. Resubmissions for Quarter Ending June 18 were received from Belfast and Northern HSC Trusts for the SDR1 return and from Northern HSC Trust for the DRTT return. These amendments have been reflected in this publication.

23. The Department of Health's policy is to publish revised figures with subsequent statistical releases unless it is decided that the magnitude of the change merits earlier notification.
24. The information contained within this publication is not National Statistics.
25. Figures relating to diagnostic waiting times and diagnostic reporting turnaround times for the quarter ending 31st December 2018 will be released on Thursday 28th February 2019.

Further information on Diagnostic 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

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<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/type/statisticalreports>