

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



Northern Ireland Waiting Time Statistics: Diagnostic Waiting Times Quarter Ending March 2016



Department of
Health

Reader Information

Purpose	This publication presents information on waiting times for diagnostic services in Northern Ireland at 31 st March 2016 and diagnostic reporting times during the quarter ending 31 st March 2016. 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	DoH, 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 March 2016, there were 93,531 patients waiting for a diagnostic service at HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland, 0.5% (512) less than at 31st December 2015 but 16.0% (12,888) more than at 31st March 2015 (Figure 1 & Table 1a).
- Of the 93,531 patients waiting, almost half (49.2%, 45,971) were waiting for an Imaging Service, 30.1% (28,175) for a Physiological Measurement test and 20.7% (19,385) for a Day Case Endoscopy (Figure 2 & Table 1b).
- Almost one in five (19.6%, 18,314) patients waiting for a diagnostic service were waiting for a Non-obstetric Ultrasound (Figure 3 & Table 3).
- Almost a third (31.1%, 29,088) of those waiting for a diagnostic service at the end of March 2016 were waiting longer than 9 weeks, 13.3% (4,467) less than the number at the end of the previous quarter (33,555), but 26.4% (6,067) more than at the end of the same quarter last year (23,021) (Figure 6 & Tables 2, 3 & 4).
- During the quarter ending March 2016, 143,730 completed diagnostic reports were verified and dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland, 1.0% (1,464) more than the previous quarter (142,266), and 5.0% (6,809) more than the same quarter last year (136,921) (Figure 11 & Table 5).
- In Northern Ireland as a whole, 88.3% of all urgent diagnostic tests were reported on within 2 days in the quarter ending March 2016, compared to 87.9% in the previous quarter and 90.3% for the same quarter last year (Figure 16 & Tables 10 & 11).
- During the quarter ending March 2016, 95.6% of routine diagnostic tests were reported on within 2 weeks and 99.0% were reported on within 4 weeks (Figure 16 & Tables 10 & 11).

Contents

About Hospital Information Branch.....	5
List of Figures.....	6
List of Tables.....	7
Technical Notes.....	8
Introduction.....	10
Waiting Times for Diagnostic Services.....	10
Diagnostic Reporting Times.....	16
Tables.....	21
Appendix 1: Explanatory Notes.....	26

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 DoH, 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.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/dhssps-statistics-and-research>

List of Figures

Figure 1:	Total number of patients waiting: Quarterly trends 31 st March 2014 to 31 st March 2016.....	10
Figure 2:	Total number of patients waiting by category of service: Quarterly trends 31 st March 2015 to 31 st March 2016.....	11
Figure 3:	Total number of patients waiting by diagnostic service at 31 st March 2016.....	12
Figure 4:	Total number of patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31 st March 2016.....	12
Figure 5:	HSC Trust performance against the 2015/16 waiting time target for diagnostic tests.....	13
Figure 6:	Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31 st March 2014 to 31 st March 2016.....	13
Figure 7:	Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by diagnostic service at 31 st March 2016.....	14
Figure 8:	Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by HSC Trust at 31 st March 2016.....	14
Figure 9:	Proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31 st March 2014 to 31 st March 2016.....	15
Figure 10:	Proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks in each HSC Trust at 31 st March 2016.....	15
Figure 11:	Number of completed diagnostic reports by priority: Quarterly trends QE March 2015 – QE March 2016.....	16
Figure 12:	Number of completed diagnostic reports by category and priority during QE March 2016.....	17
Figure 13:	Number of completed diagnostic reports by HSC Trust and priority during QE March 2016.....	17
Figure 14:	HSC Trust performance against the 2015/16 reporting time target.....	18
Figure 15:	Percentage of diagnostic tests reported within 2 days/2 weeks/4weeks: Quarterly trends QE March 2015 - QE March 2016.....	18
Figure 16:	Percentage of diagnostic tests reported within 2 days/2 weeks/4 weeks by HSC Trust during QE March 2016.....	19

List of Tables

Table 1a:	Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service – 31 st March 2016.....	21
Table 1b:	Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by category – 31 st March 2016.....	21
Table 2:	Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service – 31 st March 2016.....	21
Table 3:	Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by type of service and weeks waiting – 31 st March 2016.....	22
Table 4:	Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by HSC Trust - 31 st March 2016.....	22
Table 5:	Number of completed diagnostic reports by priority – QE March 2016.....	23
Table 6:	Number of completed urgent diagnostic reports by category – QE March 2016.....	23
Table 7:	Number of completed routine diagnostic reports by category – QE March 2016.....	23
Table 8:	Number of completed urgent diagnostic reports by HSC Trust and time in days – QE March 2016.....	24
Table 9:	Number of completed routine diagnostic reports by HSC Trust and time in weeks – QE March 2016.....	24
Table 10:	Percentage of completed reports achieved – QE March 2016.....	25
Table 11:	Diagnostic reporting time performance (across all HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland) – QE March 2016.....	25

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.health-ni.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 DoH, 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 DoH Health Committee to assess the performance of the DoH, 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 March 2016 and during the quarter ending (QE) March 2016, respectively.

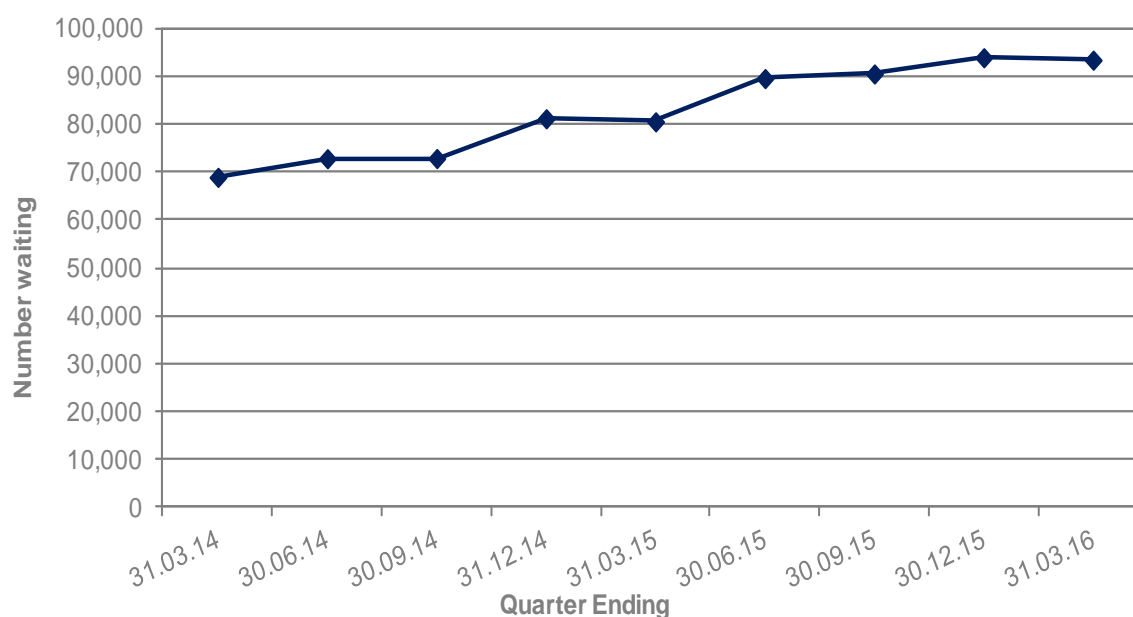
Waiting Times for Diagnostic Services

A diagnostic service refers to 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

At 31st March 2016, there were 93,531 patients waiting for a diagnostic service at hospitals in Northern Ireland, 0.5% (512) less than the number waiting at 31st December 2015 (94,043) but 16.0% (12,888) more than at 31st March 2015 (80,643) (Figure 1 & Table 1a).

Figure 1: Total number of patients waiting: Quarterly trends 31st March 2014 to 31st March 2016

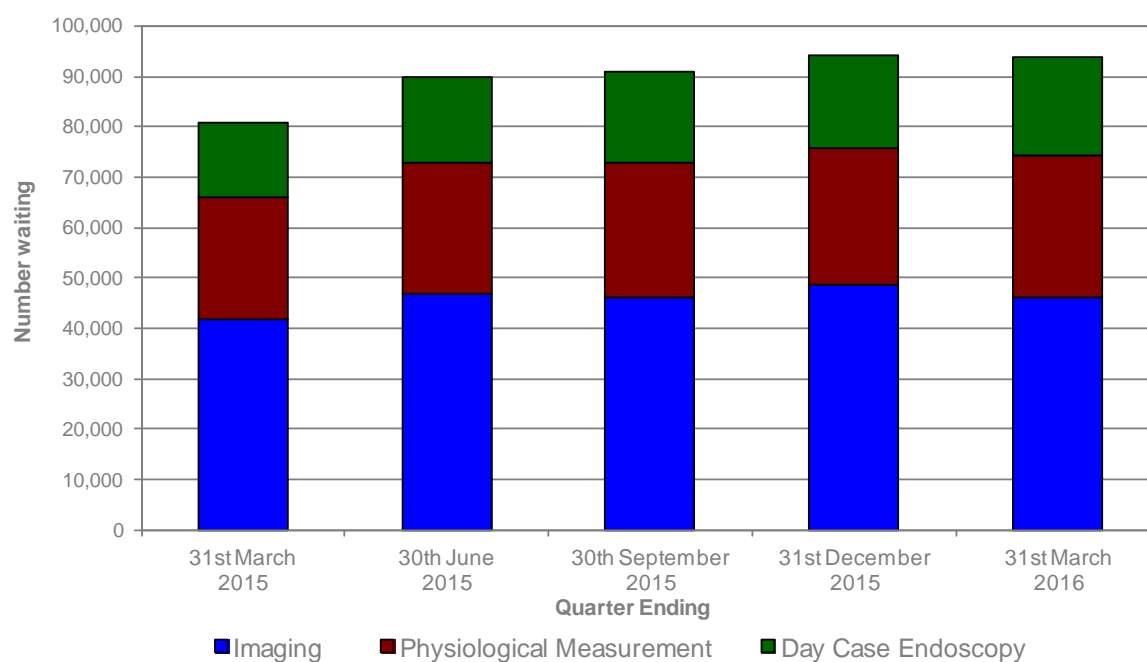


¹ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-10 & 18

Total patients waiting by Diagnostic category¹

Of the 93,531 patients waiting, almost half (49.2%, 45,971) were waiting for an Imaging Service, 30.1% (28,175) for a Physiological Measurement test and 20.7% (19,385) for a Day Case Endoscopy (Figure 2 & Table 1b).

Figure 2: Total number of patients waiting by category of service: Quarterly trends 31st March 2015 to 31st March 2016



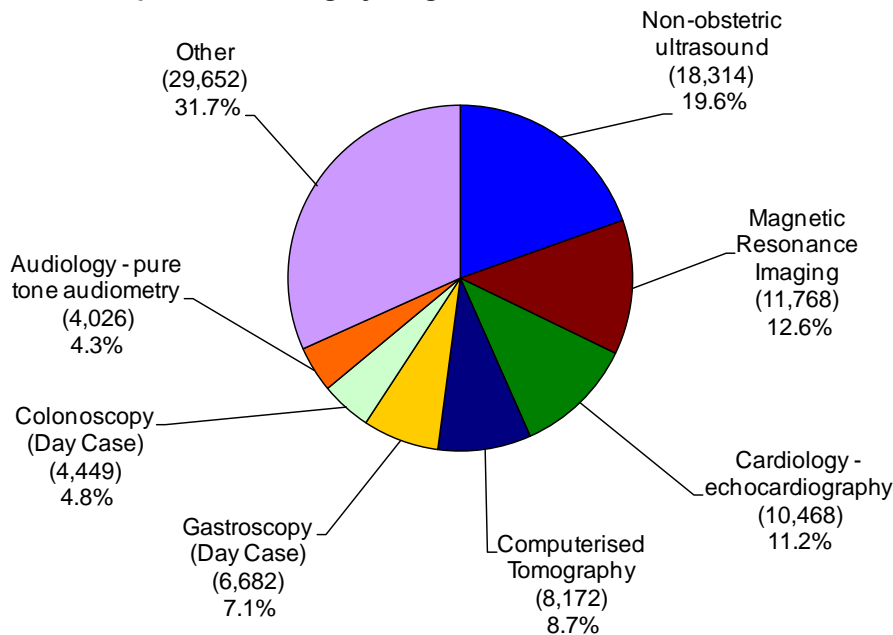
Total patients waiting by Diagnostic service²

Over two thirds (68.3%, 63,879) of those waiting for a diagnostic service at the 31st March 2016 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

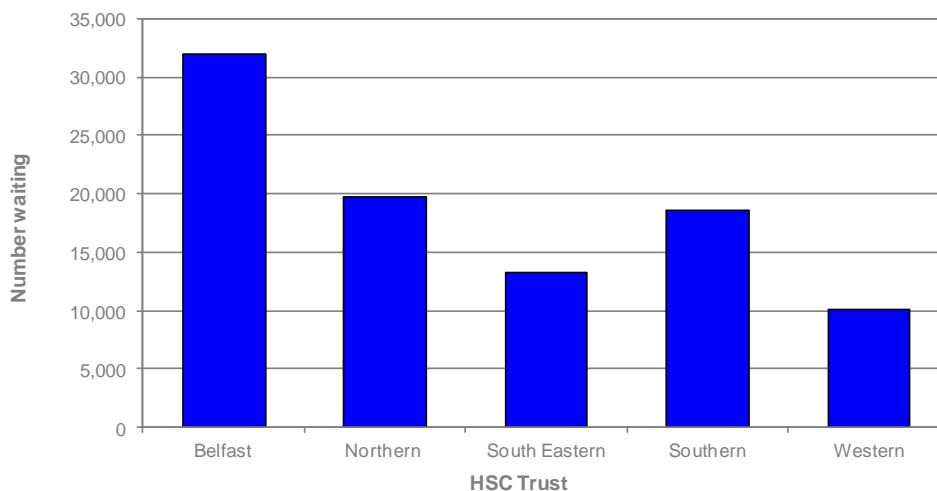
Figure 3: Total number of patients waiting by diagnostic service at 31st March 2016



Total patients waiting by HSC Trust²

Just over a third (34.2%, 31,953) of patients waiting for a diagnostic service were in the Belfast HSC Trust, 21.1% (19,689) in the Northern HSC Trust, 19.8% (18,521) in the Southern HSC Trust, 14.2% (13,237) in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 10.8% (10,131) in the Western HSC Trust (Figure 4 & Table 4).

Figure 4: Total number of patients waiting by HSC Trust at 31st March 2016



Readers should note 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 waiting time target for diagnostic tests

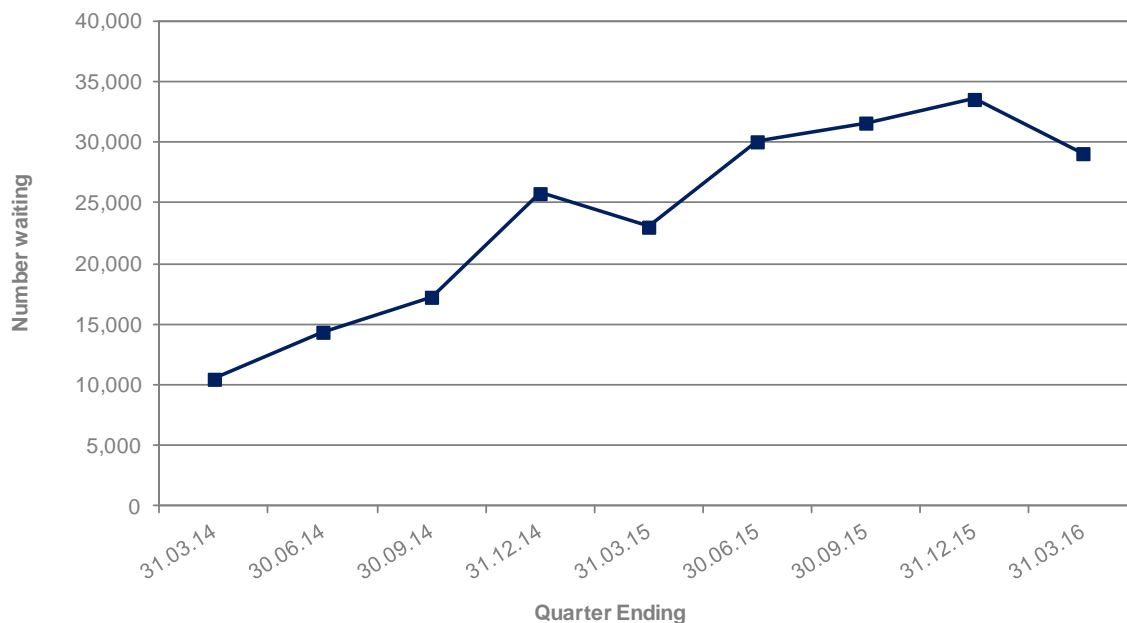
HSC Trust	Target Achieved?
	No patient waiting longer than nine weeks
Belfast	No
Northern	No
South Eastern	No
Southern	No
Western	No
Northern Ireland	No

Number of patients waiting longer than the 9 weeks waiting time target

At the end of March 2016, no HSC Trust met the diagnostic waiting time target (Table 4 & Figure 5).

At 31st March 2016, there were 31.1% (29,088) patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, 13.3% (4,467) less than at 31st December 2015 (33,555), but 26.4% (6,067) more than at 31st March 2015 (23,021) (Figure 6 & Table 2).

Figure 6: Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st March 2014 to 31st March 2016

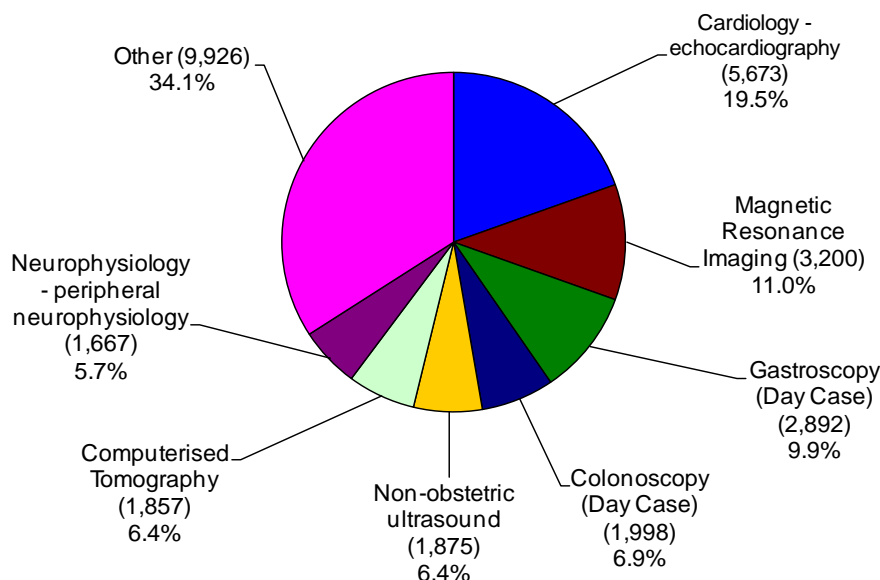


³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

Patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by Diagnostic service³

Over two thirds (69.9%, 23,444) of those waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following seven diagnostic services: Echocardiography; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Gastroscopy (Day Case); Colonoscopy (Day Case); Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Computerised Tomography and Peripheral Neurophysiology (Figure 7 & Table 3).

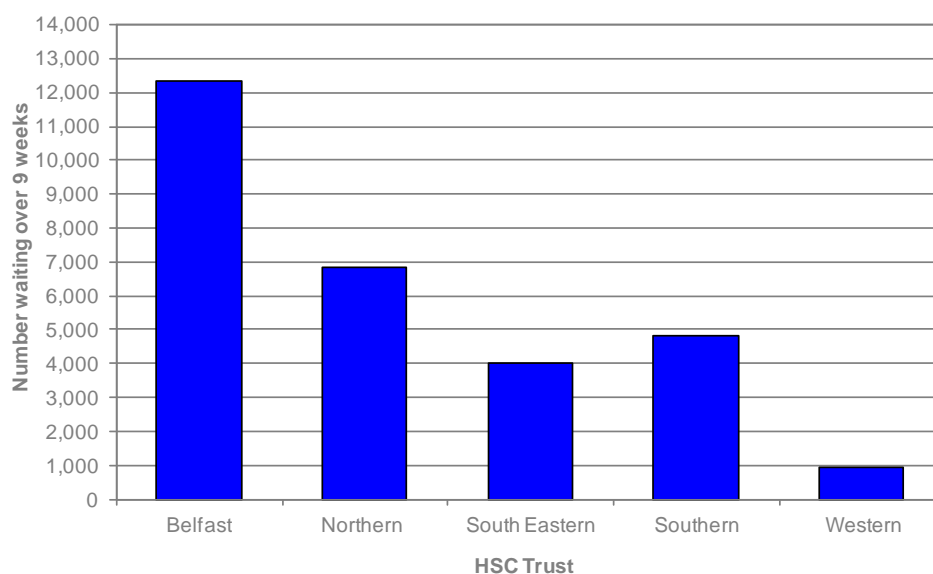
Figure 7: Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by diagnostic service at 31st March 2016



Patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by HSC Trust³

Of the 29,088 patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service, 42.5% (12,371) were waiting in the Belfast HSC Trust, 23.6% (6,868) in the Northern HSC Trust, 16.7% (4,847) in the Southern HSC Trust, 13.9% (4,049) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, and 3.3% (953) in the Western HSC Trust (Figure 8 & Table 4).

Figure 8: Number of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks by HSC Trust at 31st March 2016

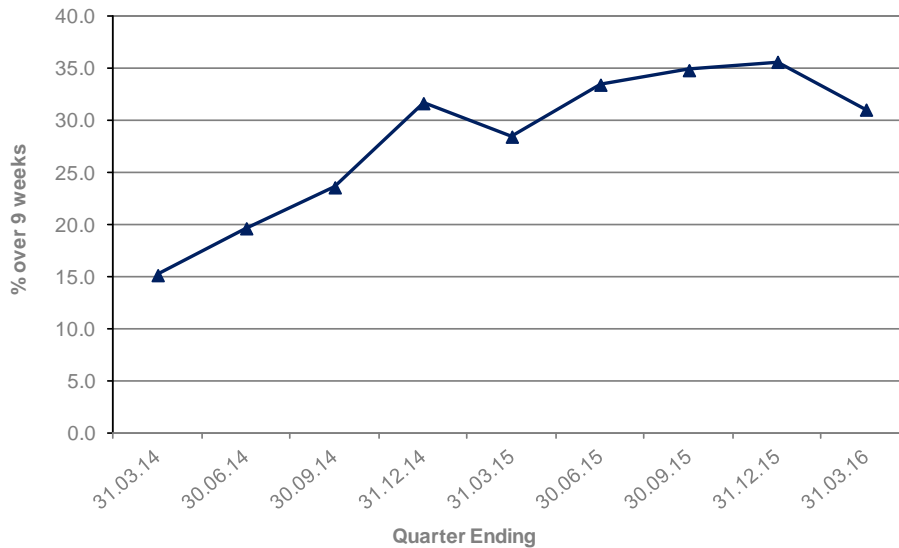


³ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-12, 16 & 18

Proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks³

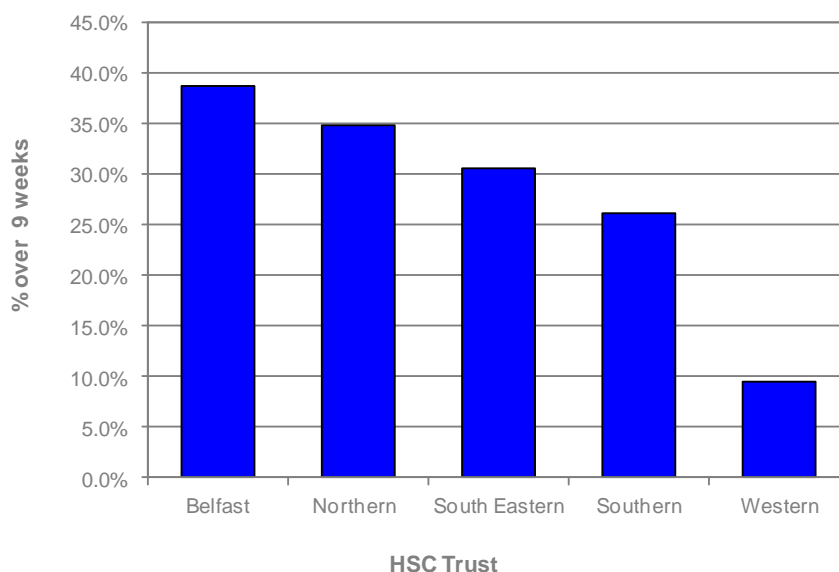
At the end of March 2016, just under a third (31.1%, 29088) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service, compared with 35.7% (33,555) at the end of December 2015 and 28.5% (23,021) at the end of March 2015 (Figure 9 & Tables 1a & 2).

Figure 9: Proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks: Quarterly trends 31st March 2014 to 31st March 2016



At 31st March 2016, 38.7% (12,371 out of 31,953) of patients in the Belfast HSC Trust were waiting longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic service, compared with 34.9% (6,868 out of 19,689) in the Northern HSC Trust, 30.6% (4,049 out of 13,237) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 26.2% (4,847 out of 18,521) in the Southern HSC Trust and 9.4% (953 out of 10,131) 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 March 2016



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

Diagnostic Reporting Times

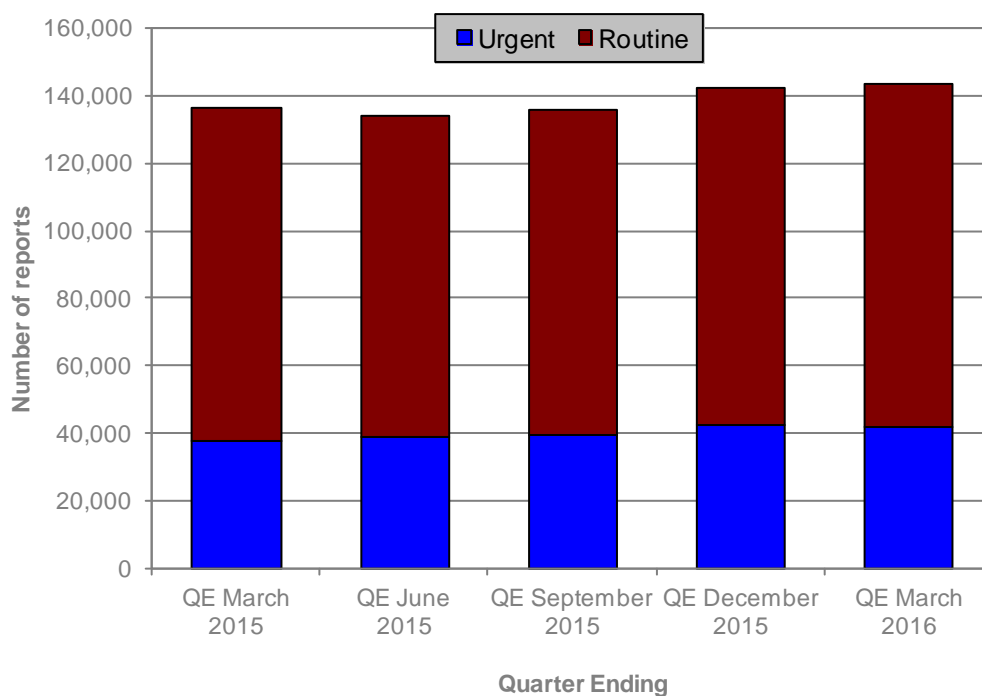
The diagnostic reporting turnaround time is the length of time between the diagnostic test being undertaken and the results being verified and dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland.

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

During the quarter ending March 2016, 143,730 completed diagnostic reports were verified and dispatched to the referring clinician in Northern Ireland, 1.0% (1,464) more than the previous quarter (142,266), and 5.0% (6,809) more than the same quarter last year (136,921) (Figure 11 & Table 5).

Figure 11: Number of completed diagnostic reports by priority: Quarterly trends QE March 2015 – QE March 2016

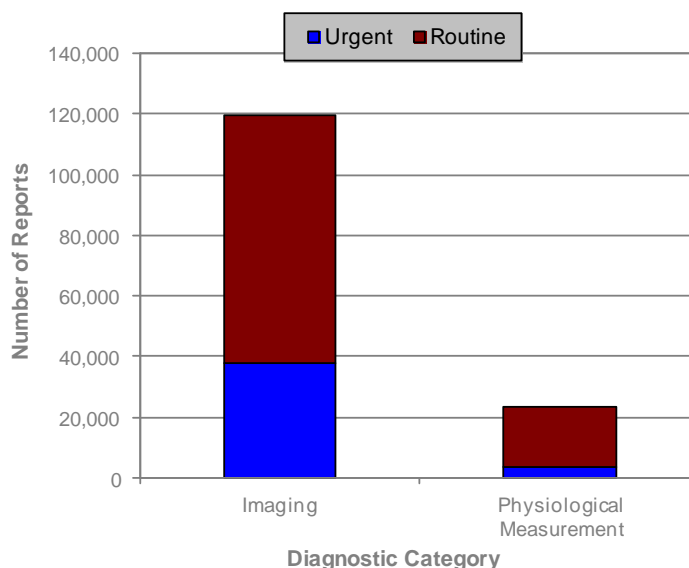


⁴ Refer to Explanatory Notes 1-5, 13-15 & 18-19

Diagnostic reports by diagnostic category⁴

Of the 143,730 completed diagnostic test reports, 83.4% (119,930) were reporting on an Imaging test and 16.6% (23,800) were reporting on a Physiological Measurement test (Figure 12 & Tables 6 & 7).

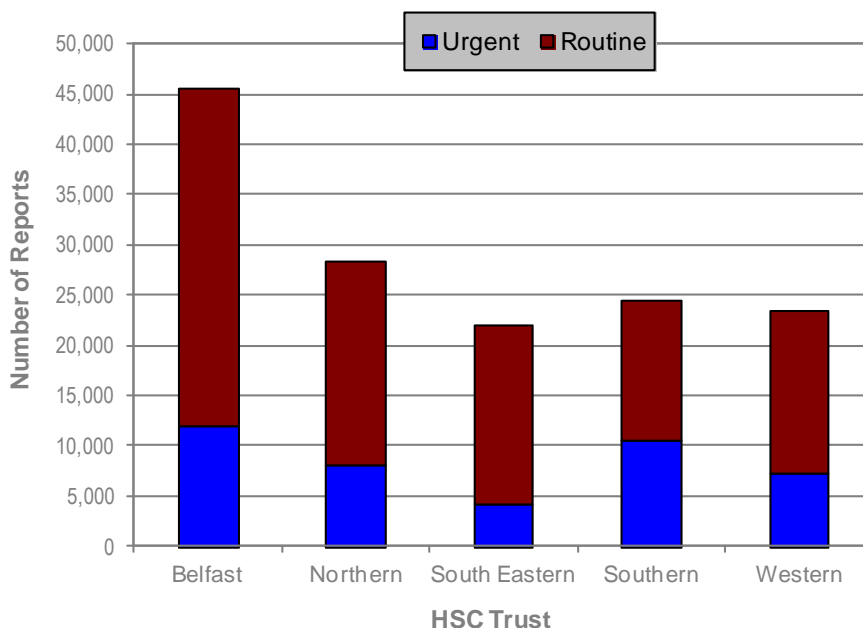
Figure 12: Number of completed diagnostic reports by category and priority during QE March 2016



Diagnostic reports by HSC Trust⁴

Almost a third (31.7%, 45,573) of all diagnostic reports were completed in the Belfast HSC Trust, with 19.7% (28,327) in the Northern HSC Trust, 17.0% (24,386) in the Southern HSC Trust, 16.3% (23,417) in the Western HSC Trust and 15.3% (22,027) 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 March 2016



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

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 Diagnostic Reporting time target

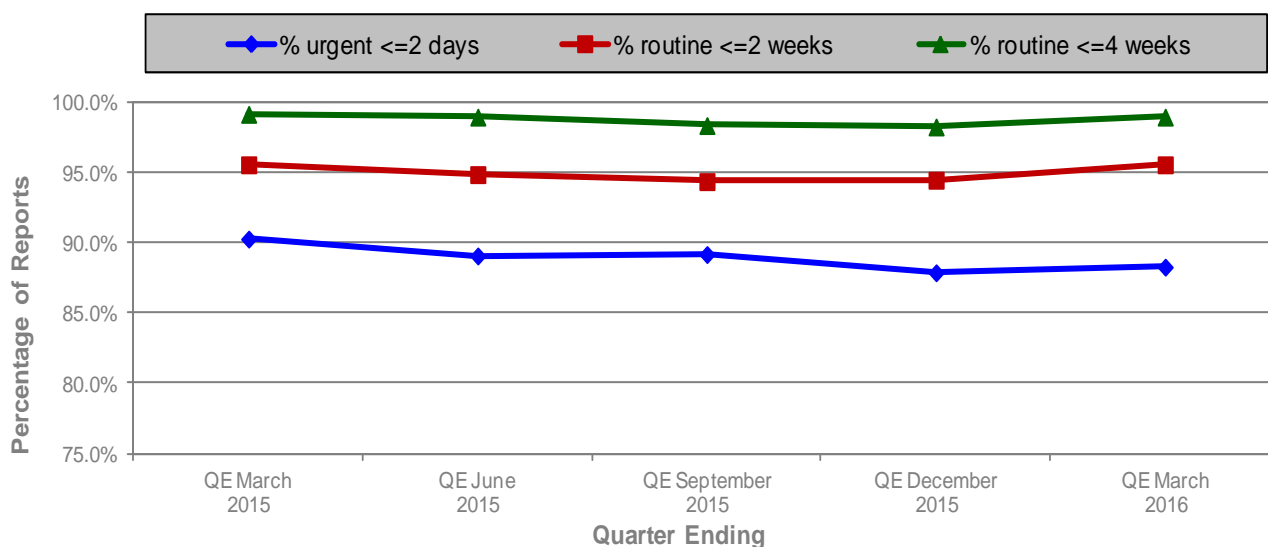
HSC Trust	Target Achieved?
	Ministerial Target: All urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days
Belfast	No
Northern	No
South Eastern	No
Southern	No
Western	No
Northern Ireland	No

During the quarter ending March 2016, no HSC Trust achieved the diagnostic reporting time target (Figure 14).

Of the 42,062 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending March 2016, 88.3% (37,148) were reported on within 2 days. This is an increase of 0.4 percentage points compared with the previous quarter (87.9%) (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 2.0 percentage points (90.3%). (Figure 15 & Table 11).

Figure 15: Percentage of diagnostic tests reported within 2 days/2weeks/4weeks: Quarterly trends QE March 2015 - QE March 2016



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

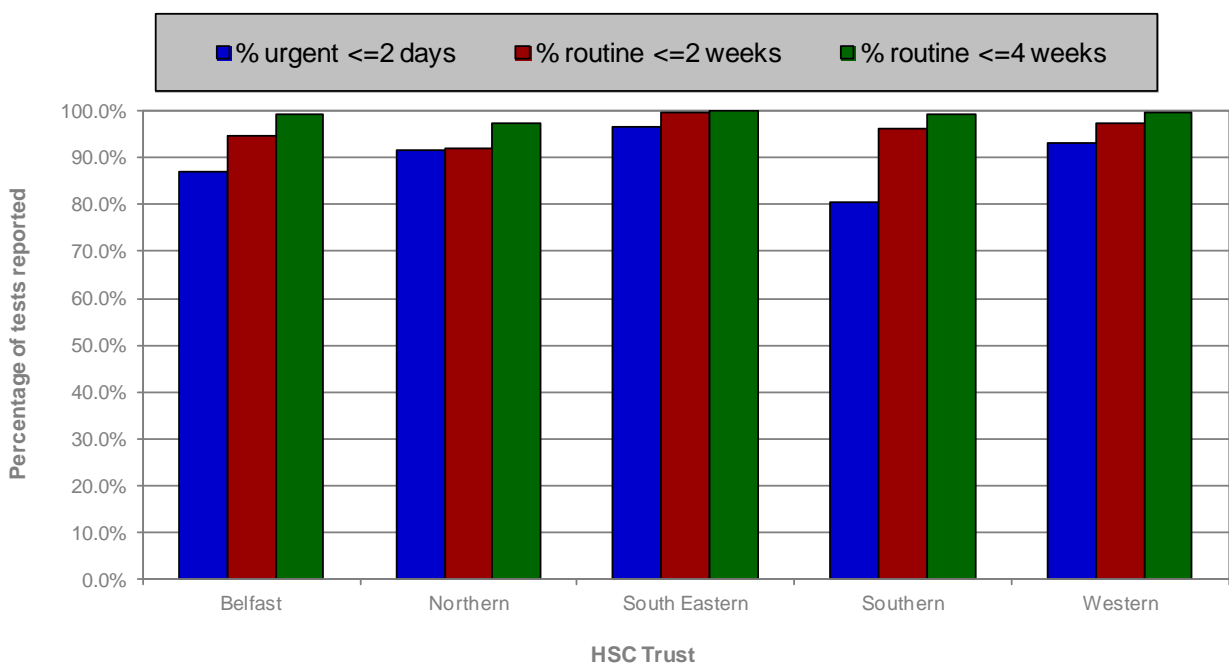
Performance against target by Diagnostic category⁵

Of the 42,062 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending March 2016, 90.5% (38,076) were imaging reports and 9.5% (3,986) were physiological measurement reports. A total of 87.9% of urgent imaging tests were reported on within 2 days, compared to 92.6% of urgent physiological measurement tests (Table 6).

Performance against target across Trusts⁵

Although no HSC Trust managed to report on 100% of urgent diagnostic tests within 2 days, all Trusts did manage to report on at least 80.6%, with the South Eastern HSC Trust reporting on 96.7% within 2 days (Figure 16 & Table 10).

Figure 16: Percentage of diagnostic tests reported within 2 days/2weeks/4weeks by HSC Trust during QE March 2016



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

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 March 2016, a total of 101,668 routine diagnostic tests were completed in Northern Ireland, of which 95.6%, (97,160) were reported on within two weeks, 3.4% (3,498) within two to four weeks and 1.0% (1,010) took more than four weeks (Tables 7 & 9).

The percentage of routine diagnostic tests reported on within two weeks increased by 1.1 percentage points, when compared with the previous quarter and remained similar when compared with the same quarter last year (Figure 15 & Table 11).

Indicators of performance by Diagnostic category⁶

Of the 101,668 routine diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending March 2016, 81,854 were imaging reports, while 19,814 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 95.5% of routine imaging tests were reported on within 2 weeks, compared to 95.9% of routine physiological measurement tests (Table 7).

At 31st March 2016, 99.2% routine imaging tests were reported on within 4 weeks, compared to 98.3% of routine physiological measurement tests (Table 7).

Indicators of performance by Trust⁶

All Trusts managed to report on at least 91.9% of routine diagnostic tests within two weeks, with the South Eastern Trust reporting on 99.5% of routine diagnostic tests within two weeks.

All Trusts managed to report on at least 97.2% 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 March 2016¹

Total Waiting :	Number of patients waiting: 31st March 2016	Change compared with the end of the previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
16 Selected Services*	76,897	-809	+10,106
Other Services	16,634	+297	+2,782
Total	93,531	-512	+12,888

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 March 2016¹

Diagnostic Service Category	Number of patients waiting for one of the 16 selected services - 31st March 2016*	Number of patients waiting for one of the other diagnostic services - 31st March 2016	Total waiting for a diagnostic service - 31st March 2016
Imaging (excluding Interventional Imaging)	41,106	4,865	45,971
Physiological Measurement	19,793	8,382	28,175
Endoscopy (Day Case)	15,998	3,387	19,385
Total waiting for diagnostic tests	76,897	16,634	93,531

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 March 2016³

Waiting more than 9 weeks for:	Number of patients waiting: 31st March 2016	Change compared with the end of the previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
16 Selected Services*	24,490	-4,475	+4,435
Other Services	4,598	+8	+1,632
Total	29,088	-4,467	+6,067

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 March 2016³

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	12,358	4,081	1,351	465	34	25	18,314
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	6,382	2,186	885	1,379	608	328	11,768
Cardiology - echocardiography	3,447	1,348	1,145	2,210	757	1,561	10,468
Computerised Tomography	5,249	1,066	685	817	156	199	8,172
Gastroscopy (Day Case)	2,698	1,092	958	927	252	755	6,682
Colonoscopy (Day Case)	1,817	634	547	537	202	712	4,449
Audiology - pure tone audiometry	1,982	862	503	456	191	32	4,026
Plain Film Xrays	3,476	240	2	0	0	0	3,718
Neurophysiology - peripheral neurophysiology	731	377	394	739	324	210	2,775
Flexi sigmoidoscopy (Day Case)	1,005	367	364	332	110	497	2,675
Ambulatory ECG monitoring (24 hr holter)	1,584	488	227	193	29	35	2,556
DEXA Scan	1,214	362	290	376	45	36	2,323
Cystoscopy (Day Case)	861	219	184	258	109	561	2,192
Arthroscopy	120	122	157	263	130	377	1,169
Spirometry inc.flow volume curves	463	147	138	168	86	50	1,052
Hysteroscopy	359	183	150	142	43	126	1,003
Fluroscopy	657	142	89	57	8	0	953
Cardiology - perfusion studies	313	136	162	99	32	176	918
Transfer Factor	414	119	125	149	75	36	918
Respiratory physiology - sleep studies	531	197	61	57	11	43	900
Other	3,622	792	563	678	297	548	6,500
Total waiting for diagnostic tests	49,283	15,160	8,980	10,302	3,499	6,307	93,531

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 March 2016³

HSC Trust	Patients waiting for a Diagnostic Test by Weeks						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	> 21 - 26	>26	
Belfast	14,526	5,056	3,228	4,645	1,914	2,584	31,953
Northern	10,349	2,472	2,062	2,334	856	1,616	19,689
South Eastern	7,125	2,063	981	1,112	394	1,562	13,237
Southern	9,853	3,821	2,362	1,969	240	276	18,521
Western	7,430	1,748	347	242	95	269	10,131
Total	49,283	15,160	8,980	10,302	3,499	6,307	93,531
Total waiting more than nine weeks:	29,088						

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 March 2016⁴

Priority of Report	QE March 2016	Change compared with previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
Urgent Reports	42,062	-581	+4,389
Routine Reports	101,668	+2,045	+2,420
Total Reports	143,730	+1,464	+6,809

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 March 2016⁵

Category of test	Length of time reporting in days				Total Completed
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Imaging	33,455	4,351	237	33	38,076
Physiological Measurement	3,693	265	13	15	3,986
Total	37,148	4,616	250	48	42,062
0 - 2 days: 37,148 (88.3%) > 2 days: 4,914 (11.7%)					

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 March 2016⁶

Category of test	Length of time reporting in weeks			Total Completed
	0 - 2 weeks	>2 - 4 weeks	>4 weeks	
Imaging	78,158	3,024	672	81,854
Physiological Measurement	19,002	474	338	19,814
Total	97,160	3,498	1,010	101,668
0 - 2 weeks: 97,160 (95.6%) >2 - 4 weeks: 3,498 (3.4%) >4 weeks: 1,010 (1.0%)				

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 March 2016⁵

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in days				Total Completed
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Belfast	10,464	1,430	105	13	12,012
Northern	7,339	655	20	6	8,020
South Eastern	4,049	135	2	0	4,186
Southern	8,491	1,913	109	28	10,541
Western	6,805	483	14	1	7,303
Total	37,148	4,616	250	48	42,062

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 March 2016⁶

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in weeks			Total Completed
	0 - 2 weeks	>2 - 4 weeks	>4 weeks	
Belfast	31,718	1,565	278	33,561
Northern	18,668	1,076	563	20,307
South Eastern	17,757	82	2	17,841
Southern	13,316	406	123	13,845
Western	15,701	369	44	16,114
Total	97,160	3,498	1,010	101,668

Source: Departmental Return DRTT

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

Table 10: Percentage of completed reports achieved – QE March 2016⁷

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	87.1%	94.5%	99.2%
Northern	91.5%	91.9%	97.2%
South Eastern	96.7%	99.5%	100.0%
Southern	80.6%	96.2%	99.1%
Western	93.2%	97.4%	99.7%
Northern Ireland	88.3%	95.6%	99.0%

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 March 2016⁷

Priority	Performance	Change compared with previous quarter	Change compared with the same quarter previous year
Urgent	% within two days: 88.3%	+0.4 percentage points	-2.0 percentage points
Routine	% within two weeks: 95.6%	+1.1 percentage points	+/- 0 percentage points
Routine	% within four weeks: 99.0%	+0.7 percentage points	-0.2 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.health-ni.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 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 30th June 2016 will be released on Thursday 26th August 2016.

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 DoH Internet site at:

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