

Impact of Covid-19 on Hospital Waiting Times

POSITION AT 31ST MAY 2020

Introduction

DoH publish quarterly statistical reports and tables on Hospital Waiting Times. However, data covering the waiting times position as at 31st May is not routinely published. This publication will highlight the Inpatient, Outpatient and Cancer Waiting Times positions for 31st May 2019 and 31st May 2020 to show the early impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on services.

This management information (MI) has been drawn from data extracts from the Patient Administration System (PAS) at a point in time and has not been quality assured or processed to the standards required to be official statistics. In addition, this information is provisional and has not been derived to the same methodology as the National Statistics published quarterly so will not be directly comparable, however similar principles have been applied. The data presented excludes medical specialties which are not captured on PAS.

Outpatients

Total Waiting

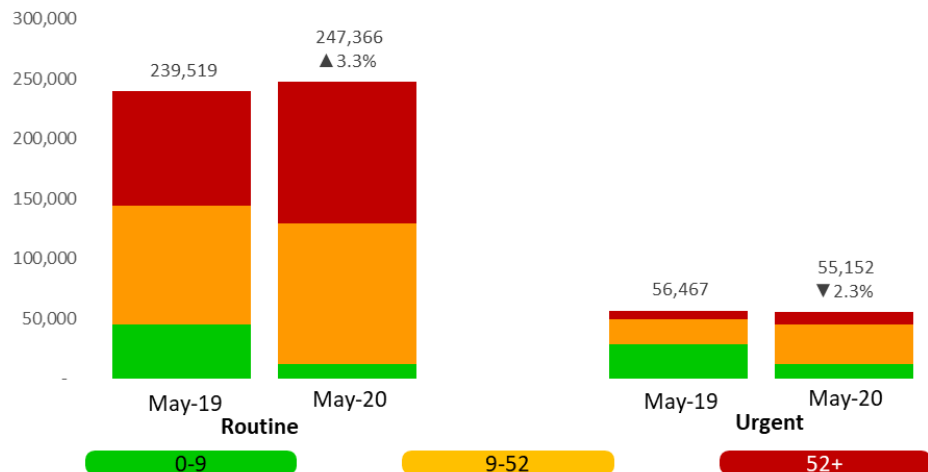
The number of patients waiting for an outpatient appointment at 31st May 2020 (302,518) was 2.2% (6,532) higher than the same point last year (295,986). This was comprised of a decrease of 66.8% (49,029) in the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks, a 25.3% (30,278) increase in the number of patients waiting between 9 and 52 weeks, and a 24.5% (25,283) increase in the number waiting over 52 weeks.

Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 9 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
May 2019	295,986	222,581	103,030
May 2020	302,518	278,142	128,313

By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting routine appointments increased by 3.3% and the number awaiting urgent appointments fell slightly (2.3%) between May 2019 and May 2020.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Outpatient Appointment: May 2019 & 2020 by Urgency

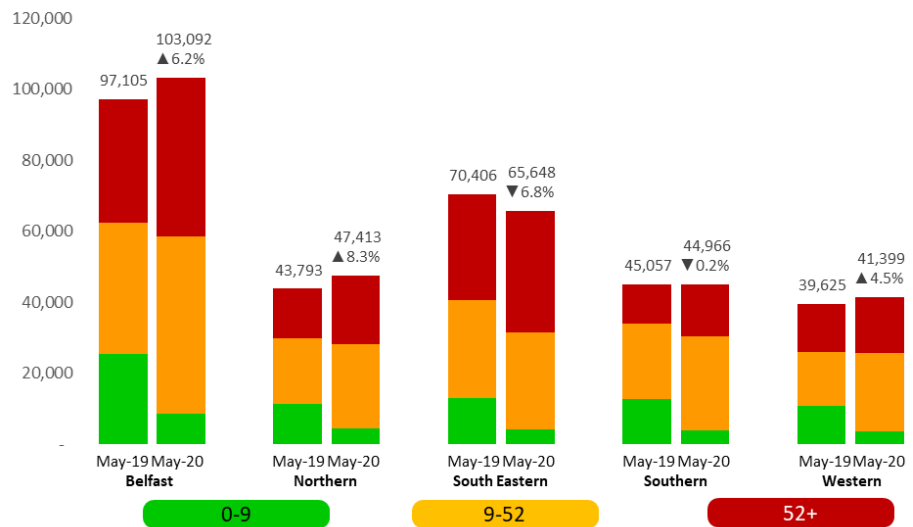


There was a 56% (15,597) increase in the number of patients waiting more than 9 weeks for an urgent appointment. This compares to an increase of 21% (41,388) in the number of patients waiting more than 9 weeks for a routine appointment.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Outpatient Appointment: May 2019 & 2020 by HSC Trust

By Trust

Waiting lists in the Belfast, Northern and Western HSC Trusts increased between May 2019 and May 2020. Across the same period there was a decrease in the number waiting in the Southern and South Eastern HSC Trusts.

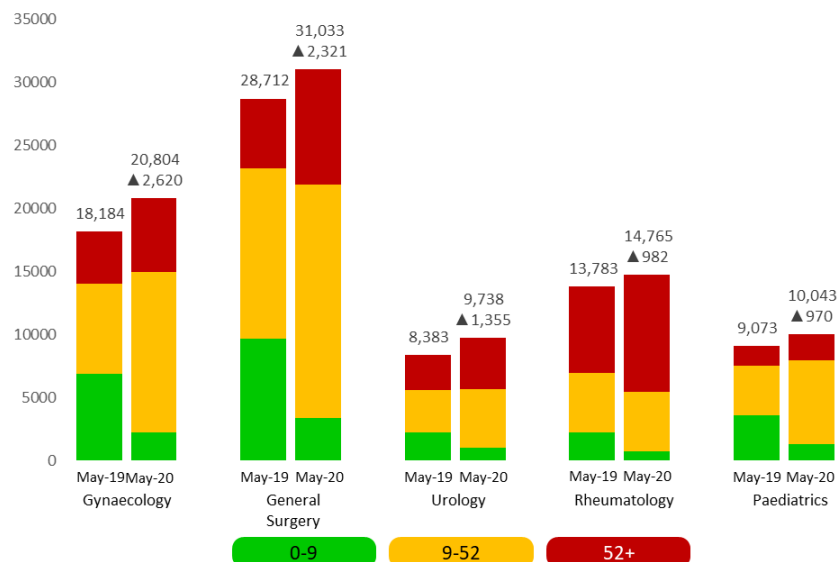


In all HSC Trusts, the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks in May 2020 was less than half that in May 2019. Across the same period, the number waiting more than 9 weeks and the number waiting over 52 weeks increased in all HSC Trusts.

Specialties with Largest Increases in Number of Patients Waiting

There were 20,804 patients waiting for Gynaecology in May 2020, an increase of 2,620 (14.4%) from May 2019 (18,184). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. General Surgery, Urology, Rheumatology and Paediatrics also showed large increases across this period.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Outpatient Appointment: May 2019 & 2020 - Specialties With Largest Increases



Inpatients

Total Waiting

The number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case appointment at 31st May 2020 (100,631) was 13.5% (11,948) higher than the same period last year (88,683).

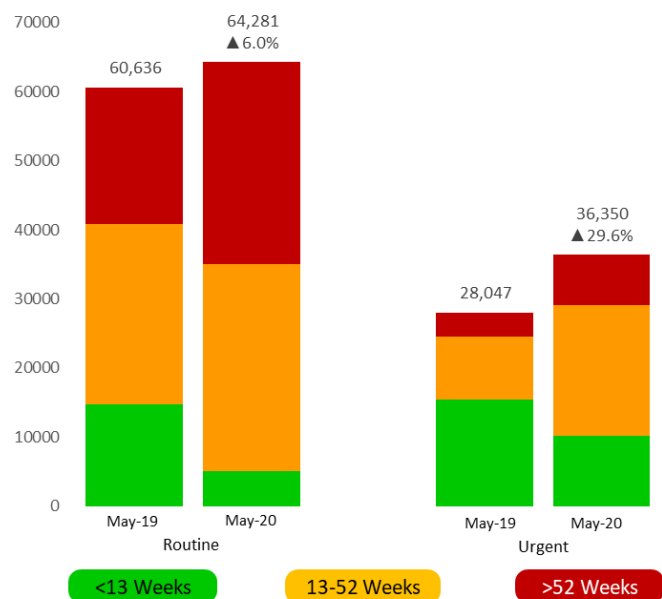
Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 13 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
May 2019	88,683	58,611	23,355
May 2020	100,631	85,324	36,522

By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting urgent appointments increased by 8,303 (29.6%), accounting for 69.5% of the total increase.

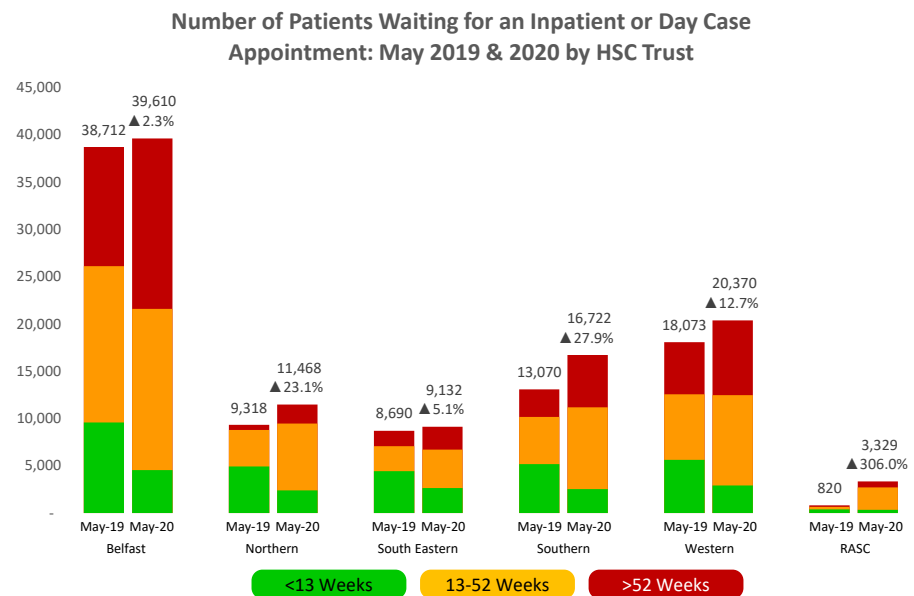
A further increase of 3,645 (6.0%) patients was seen in the waiting list for routine appointments.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: May 2019 & 2020 by Urgency



By Trust

The Southern HSC Trust waiting list increased by 27.9% between May 2019 and May 2020. Across the same period there was an increase of 23.1% in the number waiting in the Northern HSC Trust and 12.7% in the Western HSC Trust, while the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust waiting lists remained similar.



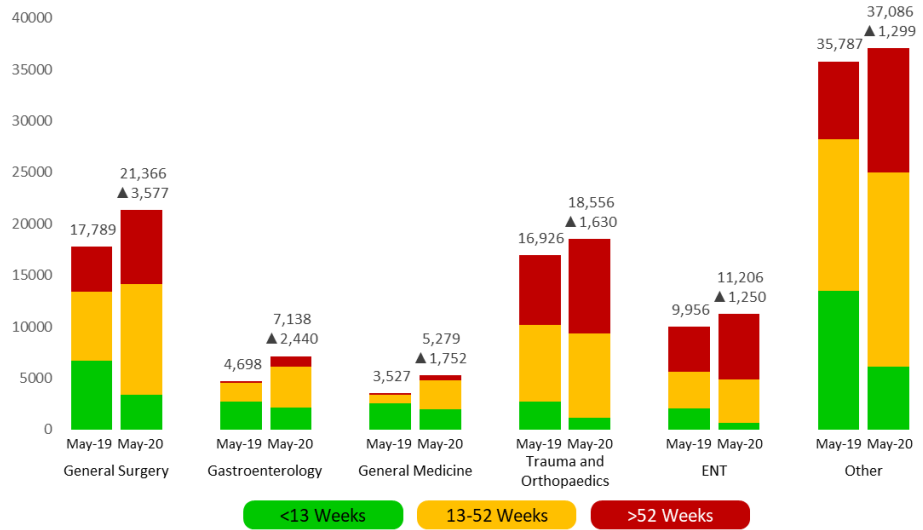
The number of patients waiting more than 13 weeks doubled in the Northern HSC Trust (an increase of 106.9%, 4,695 patients). Comparatively, the number waiting over 13 weeks in the Southern HSC Trust increased by four-fifths (79.5%), the South Eastern HSC Trust increased by half (51.8%), two fifths (40.2%) in the Western HSC Trust and by a fifth (20.4%) in the Belfast HSC Trust.

As Regional Assessment and Surgical Centres (RASCs) were in the process of being established in 2019, waiting lists at RASCs should not be compared with those in 2020.

Specialties with Largest Increases to Waiting Lists

There were 21,366 patients waiting for General Surgery in May 2020, an increase of 3,577 (20.1%) from May 2019 (17,789). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. Gastroenterology, General Medicine, T&O Surgery and ENT also showed large increases across this period.

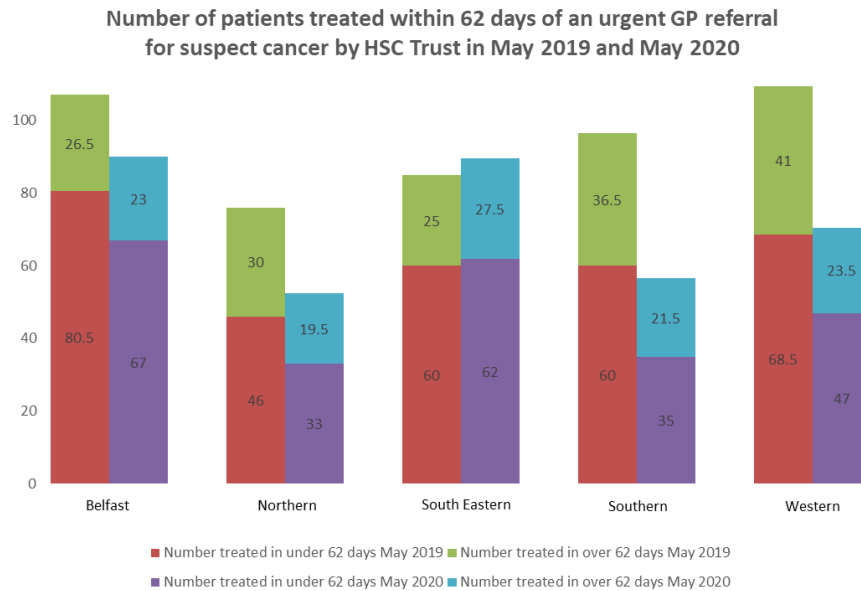
**Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment:
May 2019 & 2020 - Specialties With Largest Increases**



Cancer

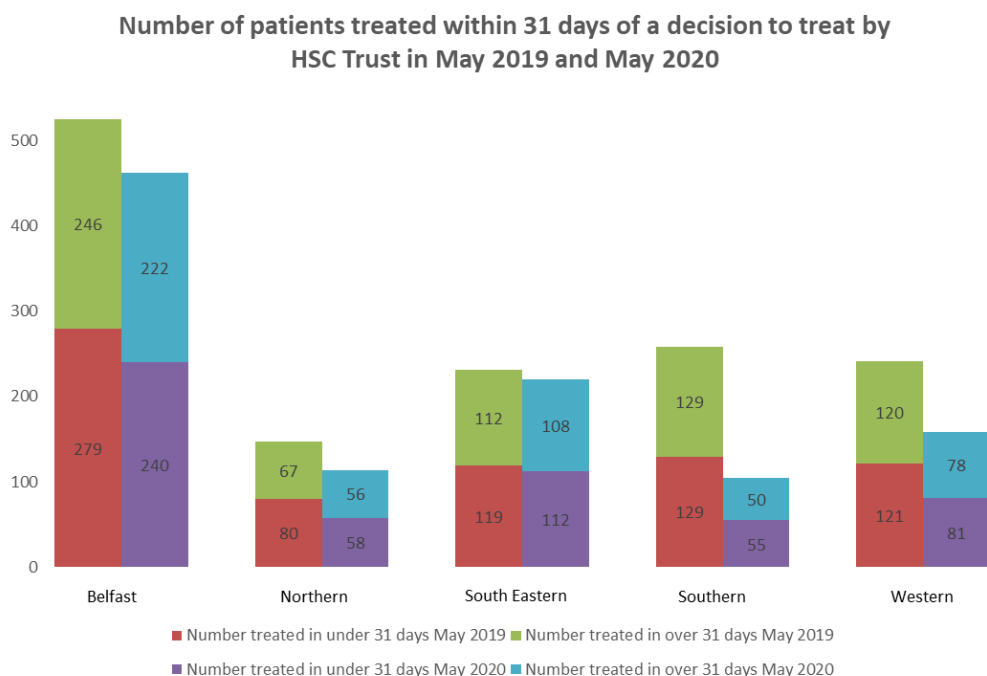
62 day Ministerial Target

There has been a decrease in the number of patients who started treatment following an urgent GP referral in May 2020 (244) when compared with May 2019 (315), with the percentage seen within the target of 62 days dropping from 51% to 47%.



31 day Ministerial Target

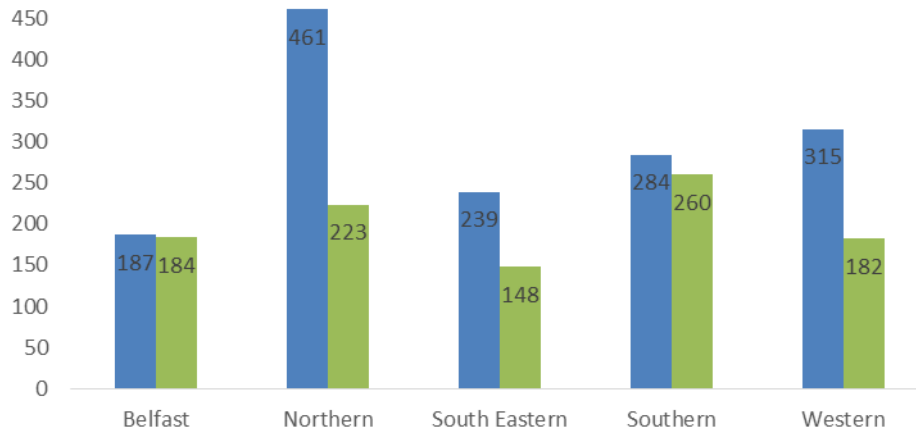
There has been a considerable decrease in the number of patients who started treatment within 31 days following a decision to treat. In May 2020, 514 out of 546 (94%) started treatment within 31 days, compared with 674 out of 728 (93%) in May 2019. The number of patients who began treatment within 31 days decreased between 2019 and 2020 in all HSC Trusts.



14 day Ministerial Target

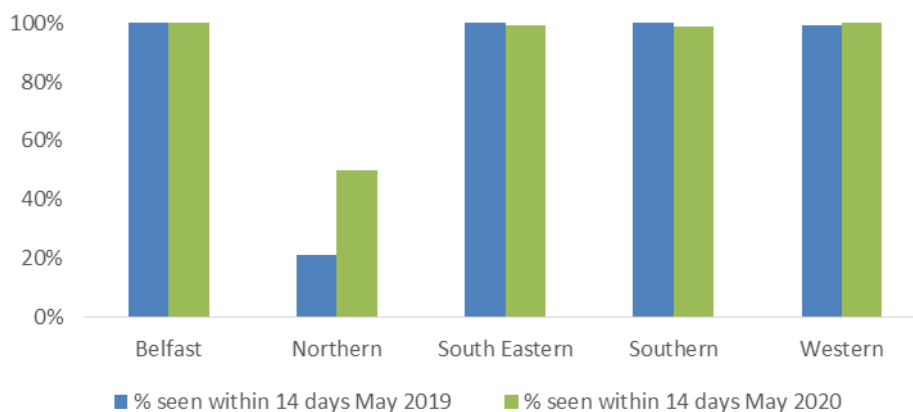
In May 2020, 997 patients were seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer, 33% less than the 1,486 seen in May 2019. A reduction in the numbers of patients seen following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer was reported across all HSC Trusts. This reduction was particularly evident in the Northern, South Eastern and Western HSC Trusts.

Number of patients seen by a breast cancer specialist by HSC Trust in May 2019 and May 2020



The percentage of patients seen within the target of 14 days increased, from 75% to 88%, with this increase mostly attributable to the Northern HSC Trust. However, this should be viewed in the context of the decrease in the number of patients seen.

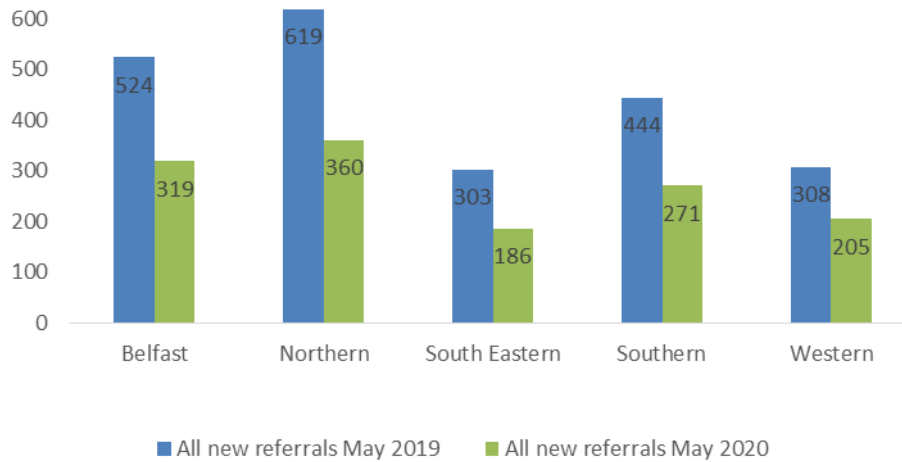
Percentage of patients seen within 14 days of an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in May 2019 and May 2020



Breast Cancer Referrals

New breast cancer referrals in May 2020 (1,341) were 39% less than in May 2019 (2,198). Within this, urgent breast cancer referrals saw a reduction of 27% (From 1,537 to 1,117).

Number of new referrals for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in May 2019 and May 2020



All Trusts reported a large reduction in the number of breast cancer referrals in May 2020 when compared with May 2019 with this decrease most evident in the Northern Trust.

Number of new urgent referrals for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in May 2019 and May 2020

