

Impact of Covid-19 on Hospital Waiting Times

POSITION AT 31st August 2020

Introduction

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

This management information (MI) has been drawn from data extracts from the Patient Administration System (PAS) and CaPPs system 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

It should be noted that Outpatient figures are provisional and exclude a small number of patients not recorded on the Patient Administration System.

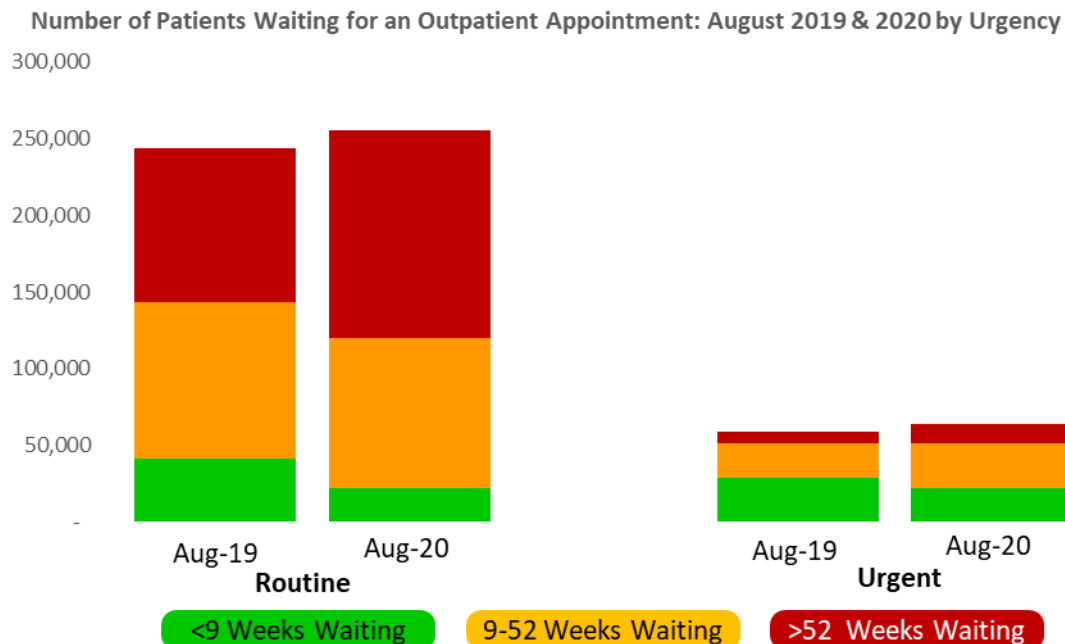
Total Waiting

The number of patients waiting for an outpatient appointment at 31st August 2020 (319,599) was 5.5% (16,674) higher than the same point last year (302,999). This was comprised of a decrease of 35.2% (24,592) in the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks, a 1.4% (1,736) increase in the number of patients waiting between 9 and 52 weeks, and a 36.6% (39,530) increase in the number waiting over 52 weeks.

Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 9 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
August 2019	302,925	233,070	108,147
August 2020	319,599	274,336	147,677

By Urgency

At 31st August 2020 63,899 (20%) patients were waiting for an urgent appointment, with the remaining 255,700 waiting for a routine appointment. This is compared with 59,068 patients waiting for an urgent appointment and 243,857 waiting for a routine appointment in August 2019.



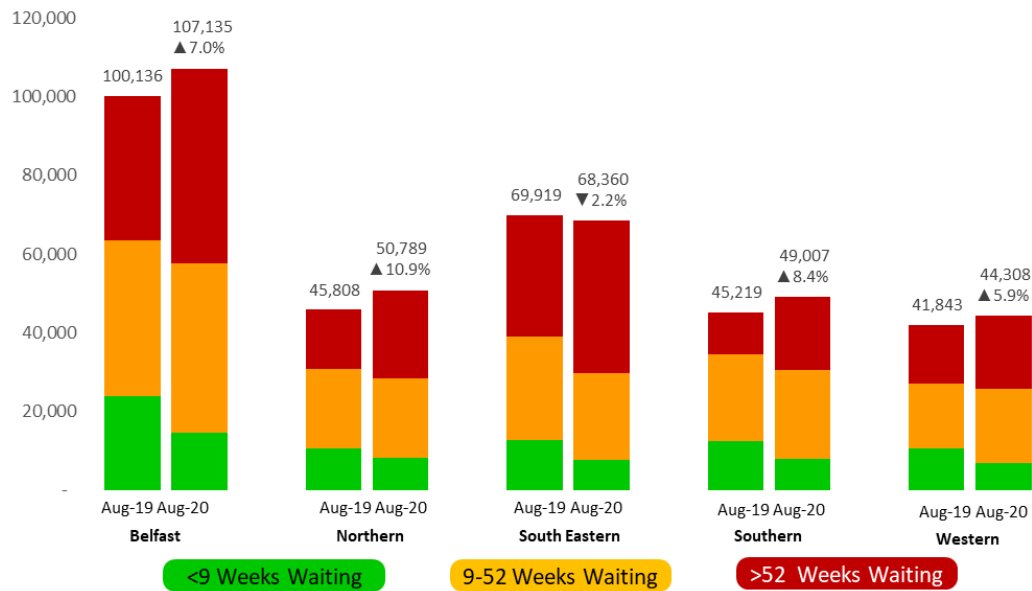
The number of patients waiting more than 9 weeks for a routine appointment increased by 14.7% (29,728), compared to an increase of 37.9% (11,538) among patients waiting over 9 weeks for an urgent appointment.

There were a third (34.8%, 34,935) more patients waiting more than 52 weeks for a routine appointment, and an increase of three-fifths (60.0%, 4,595) waiting more than 52 weeks for an urgent appointment.

By Trust

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

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

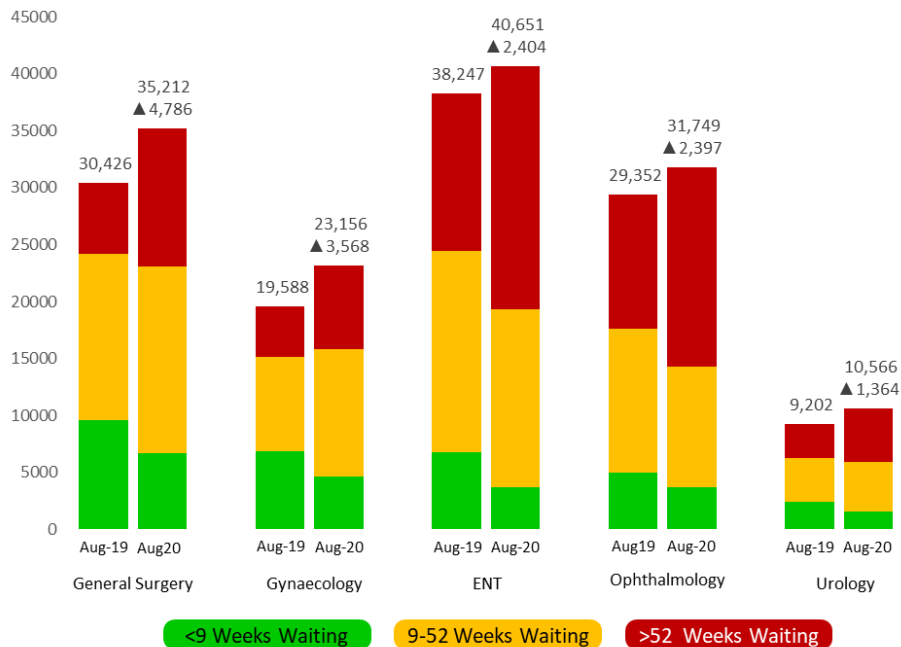


Across all HSC Trusts, the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks in August 2020 decreased considerably from August 2019, whilst across the same period, the number waiting over 52 weeks increased in all HSC Trusts except South Eastern.

Specialties with Largest Increases in Number of Patients Waiting

There were 35,212 patients waiting for General Surgery in August 2020, an increase of 4,786 (15.7%) from August 2019 (30,426). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. Gynaecology, ENT, Ophthalmology, and Urology also showed large increases across this period.

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



Inpatients

Total Waiting

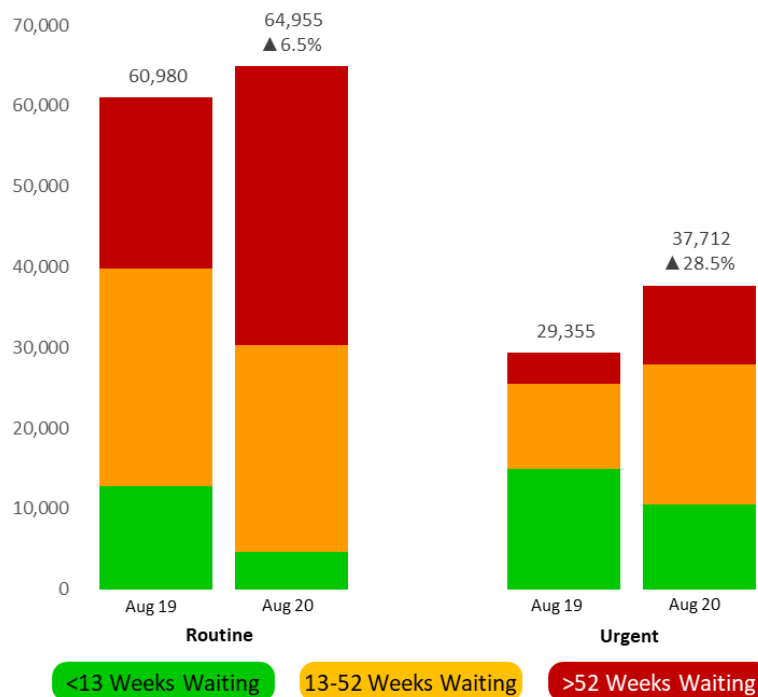
The number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case appointment at the end of August 2020 (102,667) was 13.7% (12,332) higher than the same period last year (90,335).

Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 13 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
August 19	90,335	62,642	25,034
August 20	102,667	87,570	44,401
Difference	▲ 12,332 (13.7%)	▲ 24,928 (39.8%)	▲ 19,367 (77.4%)

By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting urgent appointments increased by 8,357 (28.5%), accounting for 67.8% of the total increase. A further increase of 3,975 (6.5%) patients was seen in the waiting list for routine appointments.

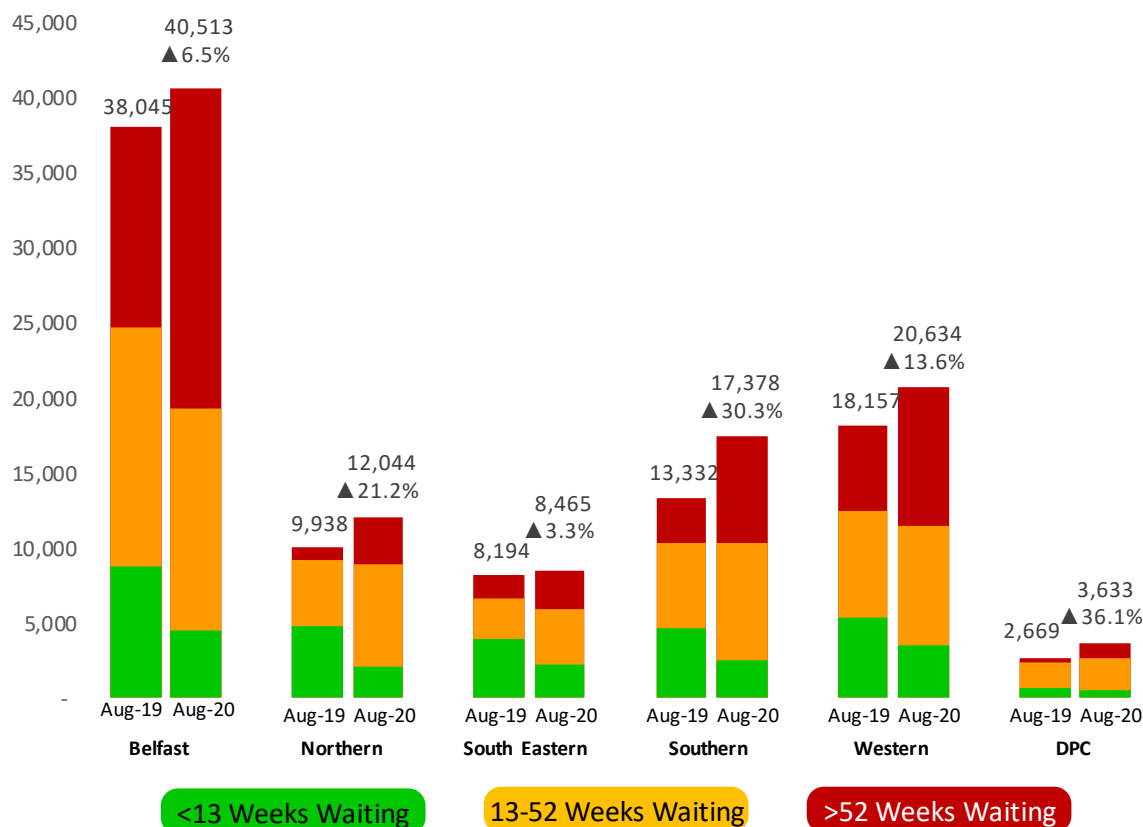
Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: August 2019 & 2020 by Urgency



By Trust

Between August 2019 and August 2020, the Southern HSC Trust waiting list increased by 30.3% (4,046). Across the same period there was an increase of 21.2% (2,106) in the number waiting in the Northern HSC Trust and 13.6% (2,477) in the Western HSC Trust, while the Belfast and South Eastern HSC Trust waiting lists increased by smaller proportions.

Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: August 2019 & 2020 by HSC Trust



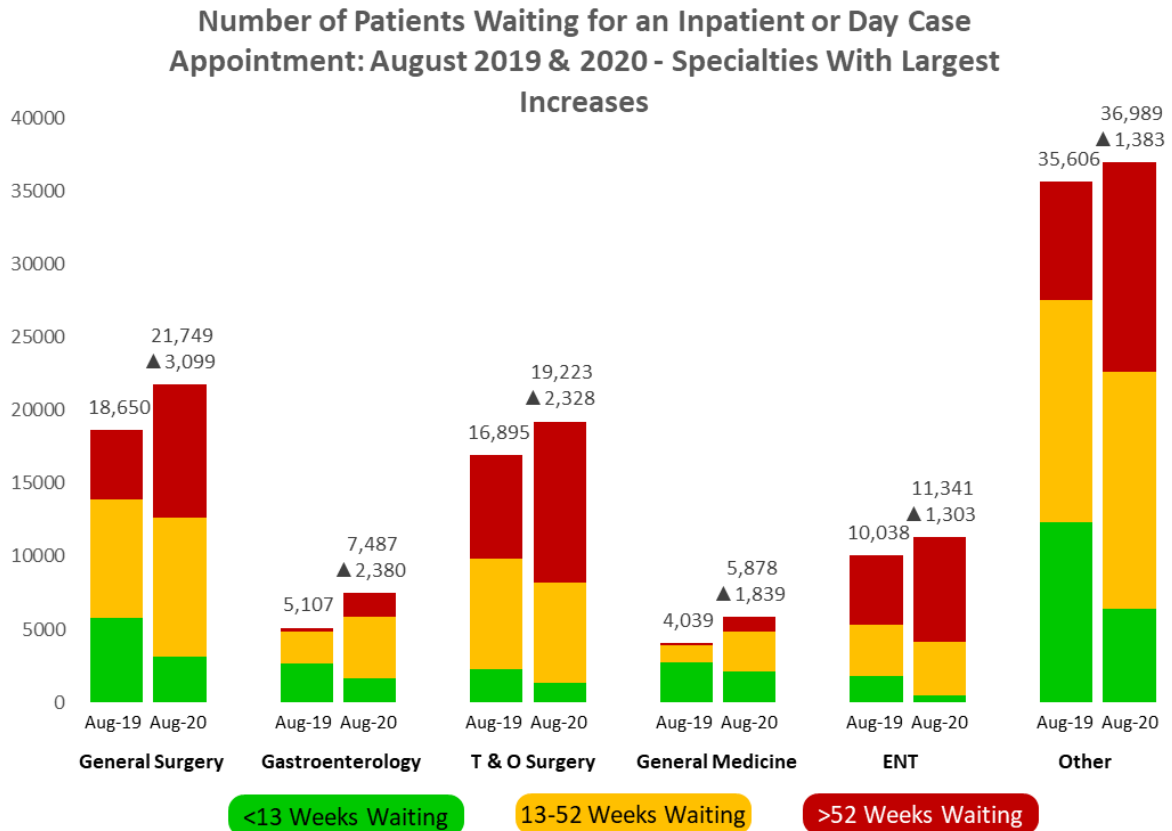
The number of patients waiting more than 13 weeks almost doubled in the Northern HSC Trust (an increase of 90.2%, 4,724 patients). The number waiting over 13 weeks in the Southern HSC Trust increased by almost three quarters (71.8%, 6,249), the South Eastern HSC Trust increased by two-fifths (43.5%, 1,901), the Western HSC Trust by a third (33.9%, 4,362) and the Belfast HSC Trust by a fifth (22.6%, 6,623).

As Day Procedure Centres (DPCs) were in the process of being established in 2019, waiting lists at DPCs should not be compared with those in 2020.

Specialties with Largest Increases to Waiting Lists

There were 21,749 patients waiting for General Surgery in August 2020, an increase of 3,099 (14.2%) from August 2019 (18,650). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty.

Gastroenterology, T&O Surgery, General Medicine and ENT also showed large increases across this period.

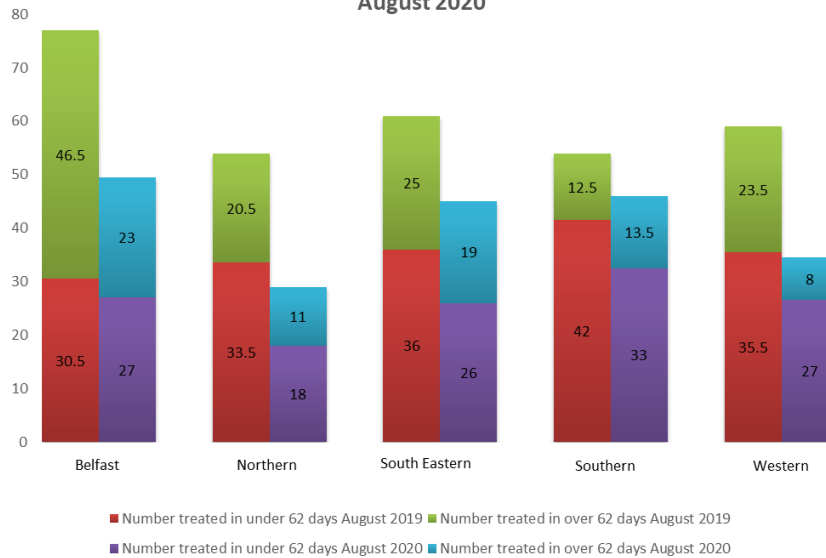


Cancer

62 day Ministerial Target

There was a decrease of 33% in the number of patients who started treatment following an urgent GP referral in August 2020 (204) compared with August 2019 (305), with the percentage seen within the target of 62 days increasing from 58.0% to 63.7% during the same period. However, this should be viewed in the context of the decrease in the number of patients who began treatment.

Number of patients treated within 62 days of an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer by HSC Trust in August 2019 and August 2020



31 day Ministerial Target

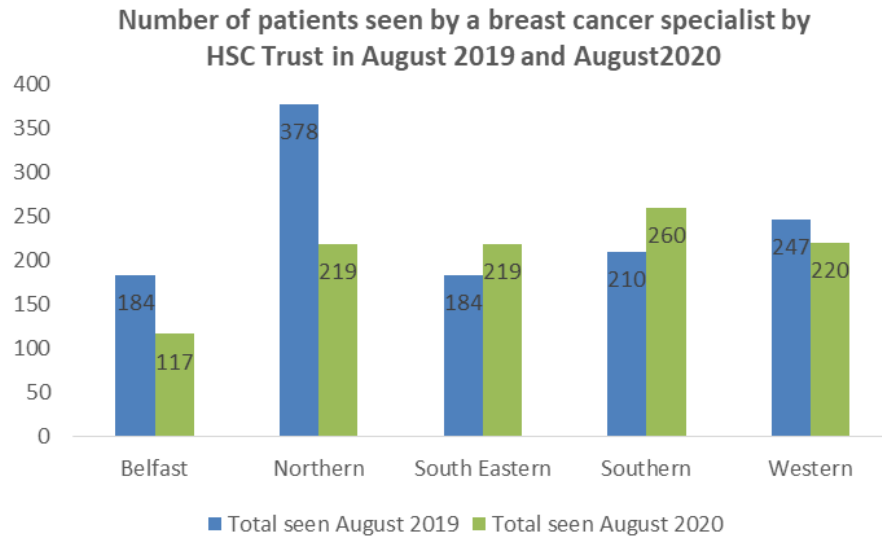
There has been a decrease in the number of patients who started treatment within 31 days following a decision to treat. In August 2020, 363 out of 384 (94.5%) started treatment within 31 days, compared with 675 out of 724 (93.2%) in August 2019. The number of patients who began treatment within 31 days decreased between 2019 and 2020 in all HSC Trusts.

Number of patients treated within 31 days of a decision to treat by HSC Trust in August 2019 and August 2020

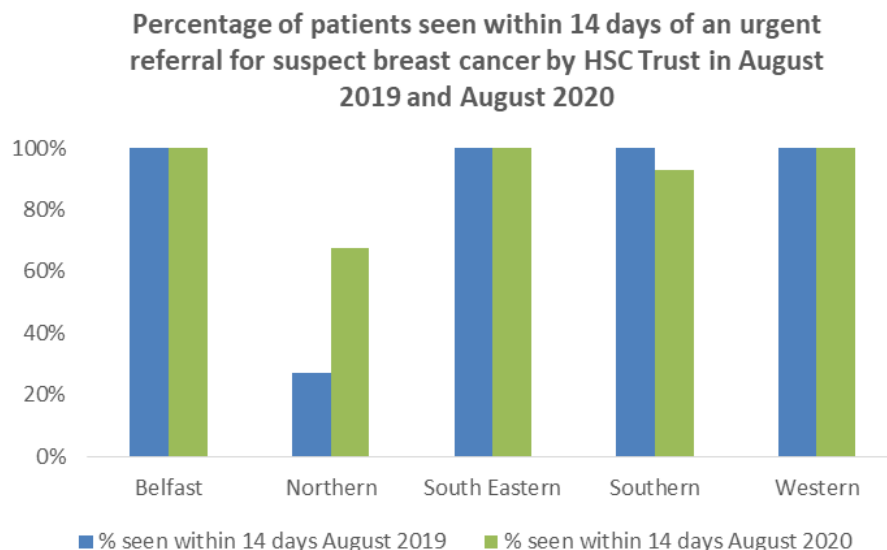


14 day Ministerial Target

In August 2020, 1,035 patients were seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer, a decrease of 14% on the 1,203 seen in August 2019. South Eastern and Southern HSC Trusts saw an increase in the numbers of patients seen following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer with a reduction reported in the Belfast, Northern and Western HSC Trusts.



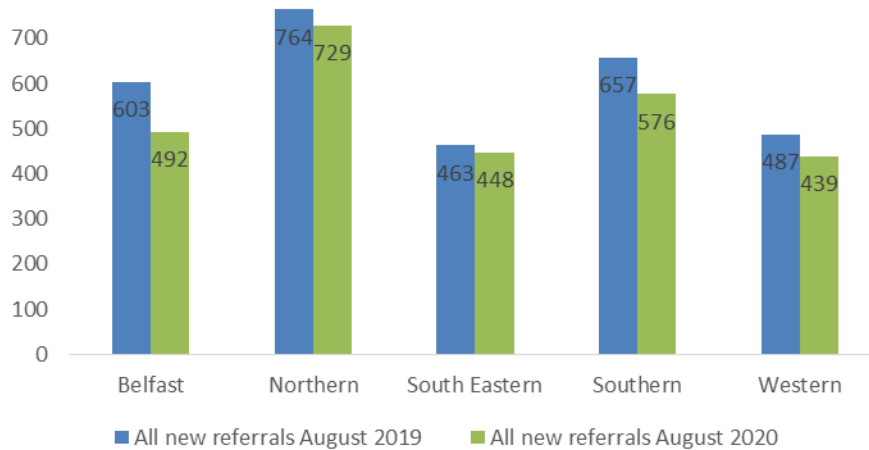
The percentage of patients seen within the target of 14 days increased, from 77% to 91%, with this increase attributable to the Northern HSC Trust.



Breast Cancer Referrals

There were 10% fewer new breast cancer referrals in August 2020 (2,684) than in August 2019 (2,974). Within this, urgent breast cancer referrals saw a decrease from 1,183 in August 2019 to 1,143 in August 2020.

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



Northern and Southern HSC Trusts reported an increase in the number of urgent breast cancer referrals in August 2020 when compared with August 2019, while Belfast, South Eastern and Western HSC Trusts reported a reduction in the same period.

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

