

INFORMATION
ANALYSIS
DIRECTORATE



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



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 2016/17 Ministerial waiting time target and the 2016/17 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target:

“By March 2017, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks”.

“From April 2016, 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 June 2016. Data are presented by HSC Trust, diagnostic category, diagnostic test, and time band. Further information on routine diagnostic reporting times are available in the accompanying CSV file.

Statistical Quality: The ‘*Diagnostic Waiting Times Publication – Supporting Documentation*’ booklet details the technical guidance, definitions, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from the following link:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-june-2016>

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

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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

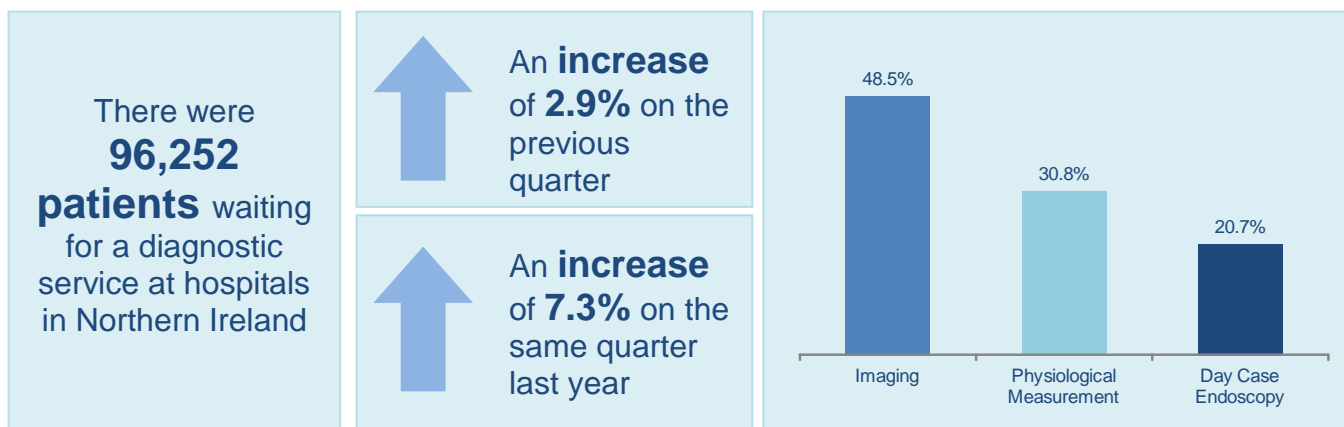
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Contents

Total number of patients waiting for Diagnostic Service	4
Patients waiting longer than 9 weeks for Diagnostic Service.....	5
Patients waiting longer than 26 weeks for Diagnostic Service.....	6
Total diagnostic tests reported and dispatched	7
Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched within 2 days	8
Appendix 1: Tables.....	9
Appendix 2: Explanatory Notes.....	13

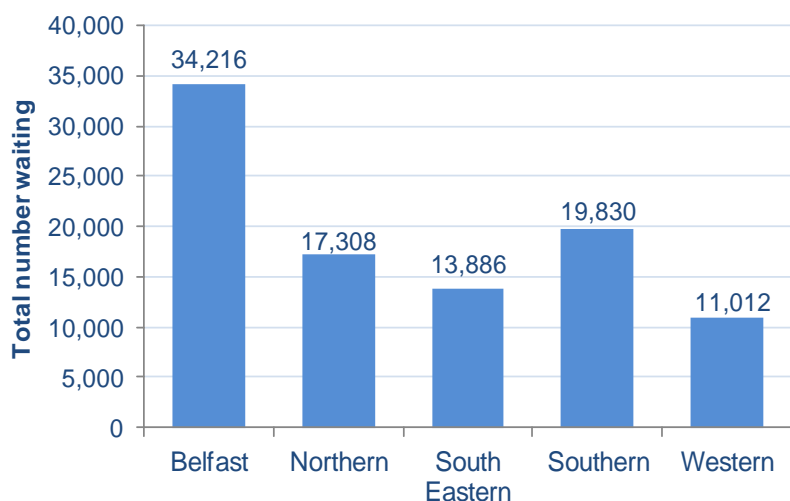
The Ministerial target for diagnostic waiting times states that, by March 2017, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.

Total number of patients waiting at 30th June 2016



Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

At 30th June 2016, a total of 96,252 people were waiting for a diagnostic service at hospitals in Northern Ireland, 2.9% (2,721) more than at 31st March 2016 (93,531), and 7.3% (6,566) more than at 30th June 2015 (89,686) (Table 1).



Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

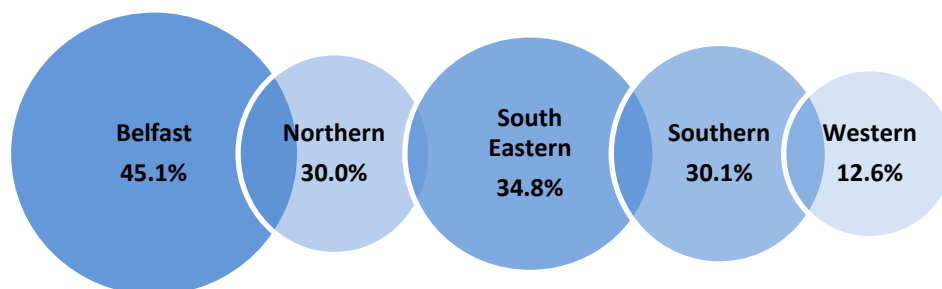
Just over a third (35.5%) of those waiting for diagnostic tests were in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 20.6% in the Southern HSC Trust, 18.0% waiting in the Northern HSC Trust, 14.4% in the South Eastern HSC Trust and 11.4% in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

Over two-thirds (67.2%, 64,642) of the 96,252 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; Colonoscopy and Pure Tone Audiometry (Table 3).

Patients waiting more than 9 weeks at 30th June 2015

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

34.1%
of patients
were waiting longer
than 9 weeks



Patients waiting over 9 weeks

Source: SRD1 Part 1&2

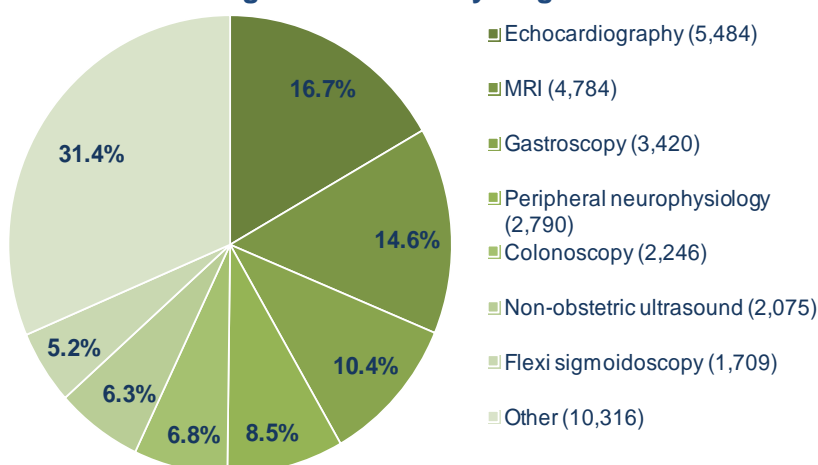
Achievement of the 9 week target requires that less than 25% of patients should be waiting over 9 weeks for a diagnostic test.

At the end of June 2016, 34.1% (32,824) of patients were waiting more than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, compared with 31.1% (29,088) at the end of March 2016 and 33.5% (30,061) at the end of June 2015 (Table 1).

At 30th June 2016, the 9 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole but was achieved by the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 9 weeks at 30th June 2016 was 45.1% (15,430) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 34.8% (4,837) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 30.1% (5,975) in the Southern HSC Trust, 30.0% (5,197) in the Northern HSC Trust and 12.6% (1,385) in the Western HSC Trust (Table 2).

Patients waiting over 9 weeks by diagnostic service



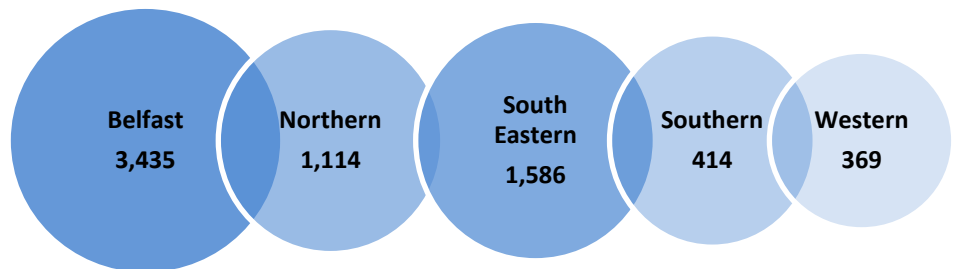
Source: SDR1 Part1&2

Over two-thirds (68.6%, 22,508) of the 32,824 patients waiting more than 9 weeks were waiting for one of the following seven diagnostic services: Echocardiography; Magnetic Resonance Imaging; Gastroscopy; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Colonoscopy; Non-Obstetric Ultrasound and Flexi Sigmoidoscopy (Table 3).

Patients waiting more than 26 weeks at 30th June 2016

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

6,918
patients
were waiting longer
than 26 weeks



Number waiting over 26 weeks

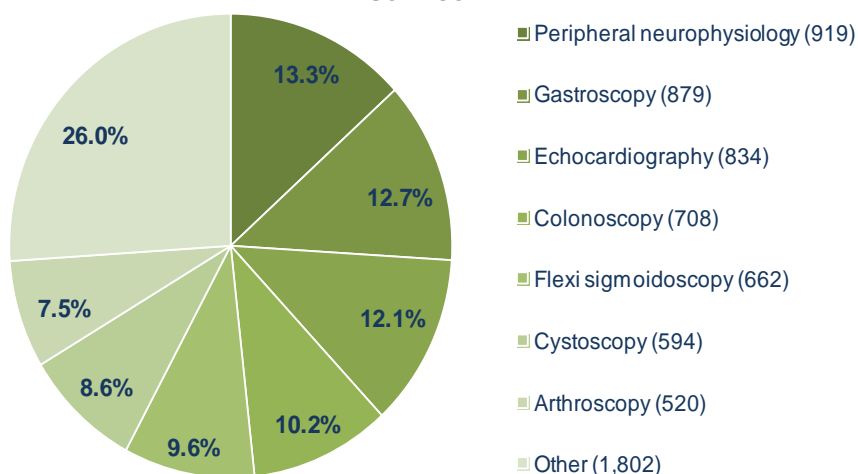
Source: SDR1 Part1&2

At the end of June 2016, 6,918 (7.2%) of patients were waiting more than 26 weeks for a diagnostic test. This is an increase of 9.7% (611) compared with the end of March 2016 (6,307), and an increase of 6.7% (434) compared with the number waiting at the end of June 2015 (6,484) (Table 1).

At 30th June 2016, the 26 week element of the target was not achieved by Northern Ireland as a whole or by any individual HSC Trust (Table 2).

The proportion of patients waiting longer than 26 weeks at 30th June 2016 was 11.4% (1,586) in the South Eastern HSC Trust, 10.0% (3,435) in the Belfast HSC Trust, 6.4% (1,114) in the Northern HSC Trust, 3.4% (369) in the Western HSC Trust and 2.1% (414) in the Southern HSC Trust (Table 2).

Patients waiting over 26 weeks by diagnostic service



A total of 74.0% (5,116) of the 6,918 patients waiting more than 26 weeks were within the following seven diagnostic services: Peripheral Neurophysiology; Gastroscopy; Echocardiography; Colonoscopy; Flexi sigmoidoscopy; Cystoscopy; Arthroscopy (Table 3).

Source: SDR1 Part1&2

Total number of diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2016



Source: DRTT Return

A total of 420,361 diagnostic tests were reported on and dispatched to the referring clinician at hospitals in Northern Ireland during quarter ending June 2016¹. An increase of 12.9% (47,959) compared to quarter ending March 2016 (372,402), and 13.2% (48,971) more than quarter ending June 2015 (371,390) (Table 4).

Of the 420,361 reported diagnostic tests, 94.4% (396,825) were reporting on an Imaging test and 5.6% (23,536) were reporting on a Physiological Measurement test² (Table 4).

Just over one tenth (11.7%, 49,322) of the diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2016 were for urgent diagnostic tests, with the remaining 88.3% (371,039) being routine diagnostic tests³ (Table 4).



Just under a third (30.0%) of diagnostic tests were reported and dispatched in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a further 18.8% in the Northern HSC Trust, 17.7% in the Southern HSC Trust, 16.9% in the Western HSC Trust and 16.7% in the South Eastern HSC Trust.

Source: DRTT Return

¹ Belfast HSC Trust figures are unvalidated as a response was not provided to validation queries prior to release. Comparing trend data over the last year it is highly likely that the Belfast HSCT figures for quarter ending June 2016 are overestimated. As such figures will be revised in the next publication release.

² 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 not included.

³ Reporting times of routine diagnostic tests are available in the accompanying CSV file.

The Ministerial target for diagnostic reporting turnaround times states that, from April 2016, 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 June 2016

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

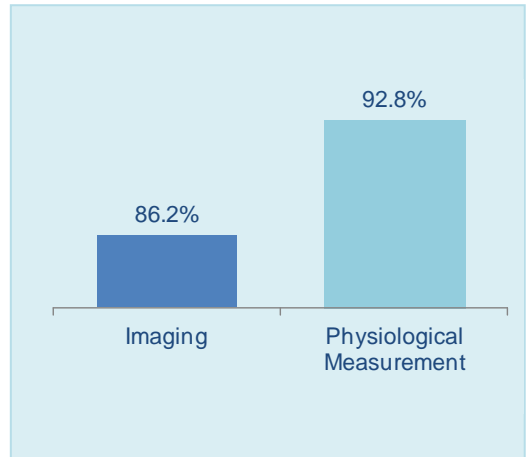


A decrease of **1.1 percentage point** on the previous quarter



A decrease of **2.3 percentage points** on the same quarter last year

86.8% of urgent diagnostic tests reported on within 2 days

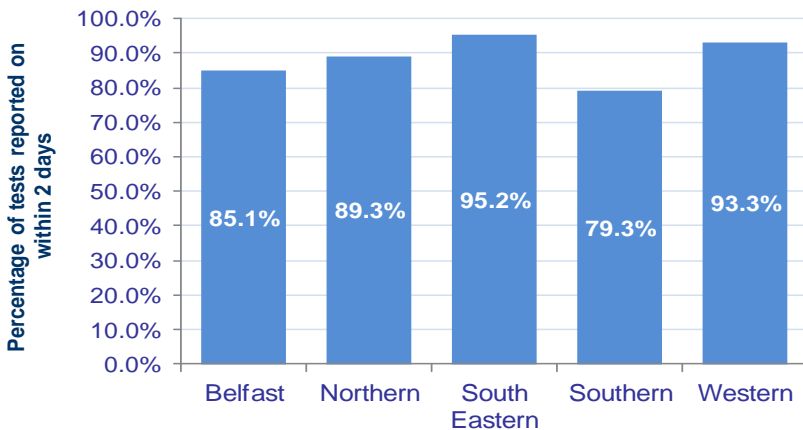


Source: DRTT Return

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

Of the 49,322 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during quarter ending June 2016, 86.8% (42,802) were reported on within 2 days. This is compared with 87.9% (40,435) during the quarter ending March 2016 and 89.1% (37,952) during the quarter ending June 2015 (Table 5).

Of the 49,322 urgent diagnostic tests reported on during the quarter ending June 2016, 44,912 were imaging reports and 4,410 were physiological measurement reports. A total of 86.2% of urgent imaging tests were reported on within 2 days, compared to 92.8% of urgent physiological measurement tests (Table 6).



During quarter ending June 2016, the 2 day target was not achieved by any HSC Trust, although the South Eastern and Western Trusts did manage to report on 95.2% and 93.3% of urgent diagnostic tests respectively (Table 7).

Source: DRTT Return

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by diagnostic category – 30th June 2016¹

Diagnostic Category		Current Quarter (30 th June 2016)	Previous Quarter (31 st March 2016)	Same Quarter Last Year (30 th June 2015)
Imaging	Total Patients Waiting	46,722	45,971	46,663
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	16,146	15,991	17,963
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	34.6%	34.8%	38.5%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	602	588	595
Physiological Measurement	Total Patients Waiting	29,611	28,175	26,163
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	17,155	16,050	14,559
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	57.9%	57.0%	55.6%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	2,439	2,372	3,683
Endoscopy	Total Patients Waiting	19,919	19,385	16,860
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	12,960	12,207	10,151
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	65.1%	63.0%	60.2%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	3,877	3,347	2,206
Total	Total Patients Waiting	96,252	93,531	89,686
	Number waiting over 9 weeks	46,261	44,248	42,673
	<i>Percentage waiting over 9 weeks</i>	48.1%	47.3%	47.6%
	Number waiting over 26 weeks	6,918	6,307	6,484

Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

¹Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–12 & 21-24

Table 2: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service, by HSC Trust – 30th June 2016²

HSC Trust	Patients Waiting for Diagnostic Service by Weeks Waiting						Total Waiting
	0 - 6	>6 - 9	>9 - 13	>13 - 21	>21-26	>26	
Belfast	14,267	4,519	3,895	5,936	2,164	3,435	34,216
Northern	9,914	2,197	1,677	1,766	640	1,114	17,308
South Eastern	7,300	1,749	1,498	1,276	477	1,586	13,886
Southern	10,581	3,274	2,761	2,397	403	414	19,830
Western	7,929	1,698	689	256	71	369	11,012
Total	49,991	13,437	10,520	11,631	3,755	6,918	96,252

Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–14 & 21-24

Table 3: Number of patients waiting for a diagnostic service by type of service and weeks waiting – 30th June 2016²

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	12,580	3,158	1,560	504	9	2	17,813
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	6,977	2,532	1,880	1,891	524	489	14,293
Echocardiography	3,369	1,513	1,774	2,159	717	834	10,366
Computerised Tomography	5,171	772	491	450	92	70	7,046
Gastroscopy	2,445	789	859	1,333	349	879	6,654
Colonoscopy	1,794	477	517	806	215	708	4,517
Pure tone audiometry	1,724	659	493	693	341	43	3,953
Peripheral neurophysiology	669	322	496	803	572	919	3,781
Plain Film Xrays	3,231	168	24	0	0	0	3,423
Ambulatory ECG monitoring (24 hr holter)	1,898	475	304	279	3	76	3,035
Flexi sigmoidoscopy	850	278	287	572	188	662	2,837
DEXA Scan	1,125	261	298	581	57	41	2,363
Cystoscopy	959	200	257	180	93	594	2,283
Sleep studies	847	194	78	113	16	58	1,306
Arthroscopy	103	122	156	255	148	520	1,304
Cardiology - perfusion studies	344	176	190	153	75	162	1,100
Hysteroscopy	444	118	104	190	60	141	1,057
Fluroscopy	625	72	59	48	2	0	806
Patient Activated Ambulatory Function	350	113	109	145	44	44	805
Other	4,486	1,038	584	476	250	676	7,510
All diagnostic tests	49,991	13,437	10,520	11,631	3,755	6,918	96,252

Source: SDR1 Part 1&2

²Refer to Explanatory Notes 1–14 & 21-24

Table 4: Number of diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by priority of report – QE June 2016³

Priority of Report	Diagnostic Category	QE June 2016	QE March 2016	QE June 2015
Urgent	Imaging	44,912	42,040	38,930
	Physiological Measurement	4,410	3,986	3,671
Routine	Imaging	351,913	306,562	311,186
	Physiological Measurement	19,126	19,814	17,603
Total	Imaging	396,825	348,602	350,116
	Physiological Measurement	23,536	23,800	21,274

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

Table 5: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched – QE June 2016³

Urgent Diagnostic Tests	QE June 2016	QE March 2016	QE June 2015
Total reported	49,322	46,026	42,601
Number reported within 2 days	42,802	40,435	37,952
<i>% reported on within 2 days</i>	<i>86.8%</i>	<i>87.9%</i>	<i>89.1%</i>

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

Table 6: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by diagnostic category and time in days– QE June 2016³

Diagnostic Category	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Imaging	38,708	5,704	404	96	44,912
Physiological Measurement	4,094	293	21	2	4,410
Total	42,802	5,997	425	98	49,322

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

Table 7: Number of urgent diagnostic tests reported and dispatched by HSC Trust and time in days – QE June 2016³

HSC Trust	Length of time reporting in days				Total Reported
	0 - 2 days	>2 - 14 days	>14 - 28 days	>28 days	
Belfast	11,107	1,766	142	40	13,055
Northern	10,194	1,202	20	5	11,421
South Eastern	4,115	200	7	0	4,322
Southern	9,979	2,320	232	52	12,583
Western	7,407	509	24	1	7,941
Total	42,802	5,997	425	98	49,322

Source: DRTT Return

³Refer to Explanatory Notes 15–24

Appendix 2: 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 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 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, definitions, as well as notes on how to use the data contained within this statistical release. This booklet is available to view or download from the following link: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-waiting-time-statistics-diagnostic-waiting-times-june-2016>
3. 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.
4. 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/articles/diagnostic-waiting-times>
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 have 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 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 the diagnostic services reported on the SDR 1 (Part 1&2) return 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.
11. Waiting time statistics for day case endoscopies also include patients waiting for these services that are managed as inpatient admissions.
12. The 2016/17 Ministerial diagnostic waiting time target, as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2016, states that, by March 2017, 75% of patients should wait no longer than 9 weeks for a diagnostic test, with no patient waiting longer than 26 weeks.
13. 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 (greater than 6 weeks but waiting no longer than 9 weeks) week time band.
14. Patients waiting 'longer than 9 weeks' for a diagnostic service includes all patients in the >9 - 13, >13 - 21, >21 - 26 and >26 week time bands. All patients waiting 'over 26 weeks' included everyone in the >26 week time band.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.
18. Belfast HSC Trust figures are unvalidated as a response was not provided to validation queries prior to release. Comparing trend data over the last year it is highly likely that the Belfast HSCT figures for quarter ending June 2016 are overestimated. As such figures will be revised in the next publication release.
19. The 2016/17 Ministerial diagnostic reporting turnaround target, as detailed in the Health and Social Care (Commissioning Plan) Direction (Northern Ireland) 2016, states that, from April 2016, 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. 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.

23. The information contained within this publication is not National Statistics.

24. Figures relating to diagnostic waiting times and diagnostic reporting turnaround times for the quarter ending 30th September 2016 will be released on Thursday 24th November 2016.

Further information on Diagnostic Waiting Times in Northern Ireland is available from:

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