

STATISTICAL PRESS NOTICE
NHS DIAGNOSTICS WAITING TIMES AND ACTIVITY DATA MARCH 2013

Diagnostics waiting times and activity – March 2013

Data are published on waiting times and activity for 15 key diagnostic tests for the month of March 2013. The key points are:

- At the end of March 2013, there were 677,700 patients still waiting for one of 15 key diagnostic tests, and of these 7,400 were waiting 6 weeks or over from referral. The number waiting 6 weeks or longer shows an increase of 1,600 from February 2013 and an increase of 3,100 from March 2012.
- The 7,400 waiting over 6 weeks or longer represents 1.1% of all patients waiting for a test. This compares to 0.9% at the end of February 2013 and 0.7 % at the end of March 2012.
- In total, 1,403,000 of the 15 key diagnostic tests were performed during March 2013, which is a decrease of 11,200 (0.8%) on the same period last year. Year to date figures for 2012/13 show a 6.1% rise on 2011/12. However, When adjusted for the number of working days, due to how Easter has fallen this year, the monthly growth is 6.6% and the annual growth 7.0%
- Tables 1 and 2 show latest figures on waiting times and activity by test. Table 3 and Graph 1 show trends in waiting times for diagnostic tests. These tables and graphs can be found in the full statistical press notice published here:
<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/monthly-diagnostics-data-2012-13/>

Detailed tables by provider and commissioner can be found via the following link:
<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

Annex A – Detailed Tables

Table 1 – Diagnostic waiting times by test – March 2013

Test	Total number waiting at month end	Number waiting six weeks or more at month end	Percentage of patients waiting six weeks or more	Average (median) waiting time (in weeks)
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	131,087	1,845	1.4%	2.1
Computer Tomography	82,873	164	0.2%	1.7
Non-obstetric ultrasound	245,054	934	0.4%	2.0
Barium Enema	1,867	3	0.2%	1.4
DEXA Scan	20,823	22	0.1%	2.0
Audiology	40,674	1,145	2.8%	2.3
Cardiology - echocardiography	44,959	505	1.1%	2.3
Cardiology - electrophysiology	1,727	58	3.4%	1.9
Neurophysiology	13,510	66	0.5%	2.4
Respiratory physiology	5,051	164	3.2%	2.2
Urodynamics - pressures & flows	4,568	200	4.4%	2.5
Colonoscopy	26,904	761	2.8%	2.2
Flexi sigmoidoscopy	14,497	329	2.3%	2.2
Cystoscopy	12,785	499	3.9%	2.6
Gastroscopy	31,366	743	2.4%	2.1
Total for 15 tests	677,745	7,438	1.1%	2.0

Table 2 – Total diagnostic activity by test – March 2013

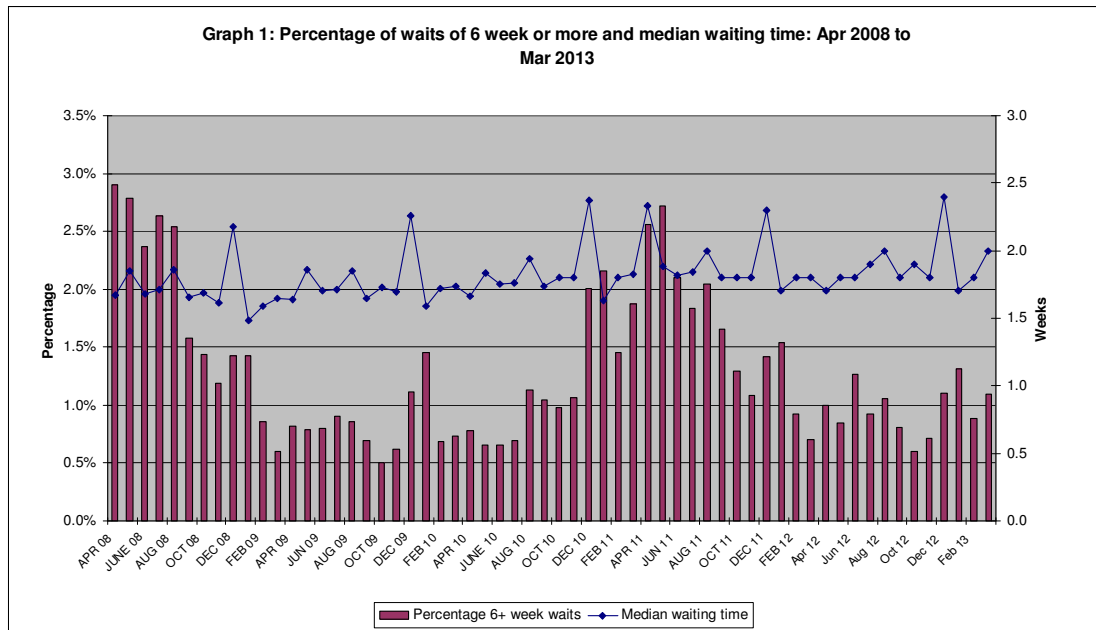
	No of diagnostic tests in March 2013	Total number of tests in 2012/13 to date	Year to date percentage change on previous year
Magnetic Resonance Imaging	208,029	2,406,915	10.1%
Computer Tomography	339,419	3,965,067	9.8%
Non-obstetric ultrasound	489,473	5,915,964	9.7%
Barium Enema	3,553	59,002	5.8%
DEXA Scan	27,243	336,952	-13.9%
Audiology	90,266	1,179,634	5.4%
Cardiology - echocardiography	90,673	1,110,867	-4.1%
Cardiology - electrophysiology	4,068	32,477	5.5%
Neurophysiology	13,754	172,731	32.7%
Respiratory physiology	8,545	96,505	-0.9%
Urodynamics - pressures & flows	6,609	87,837	1.4%
Colonoscopy	32,504	399,637	0.7%
Flexi sigmoidoscopy	18,170	232,673	10.9%
Cystoscopy	24,353	289,796	6.8%
Gastroscopy	46,303	557,890	-7.2%
Total	1,402,962	16,843,947	6.1%

Note: Total activity includes waiting list, planned and unscheduled tests.

Table 3 – Waiting times for 15 key diagnostic tests - March 2006 to March 2013

Test	Number waiting six weeks or more at month end	Percentage of patients waiting six weeks or more at month end	Average (median) waiting time (in weeks)
March 2006	393,123	48.8%	4.9
March 2007	243,191	34.7%	3.9
March 2008	12,904	3.1%	2.1
March 2009	2,870	0.6%	1.7
March 2010	3,824	0.7%	1.7
March 2011	10,795	1.9%	1.8
April 2011	14,247	2.6%	2.3
May 2011	15,919	2.7%	1.9
June 2011	12,516	2.1%	1.8
July 2011	10,734	1.8%	1.8
August 2011	11,443	2.0%	2.0
September 2011	9,589	1.7%	1.8
October 2011	7,629	1.3%	1.8
November 2011	6,498	1.1%	1.8
December 2011	7,981	1.4%	2.3
January 2012	8,973	1.5%	1.7
February 2012	5,562	0.9%	1.8
March 2012	4,323	0.7%	1.8
April 2012	6,240	1.0%	1.7
May 2012	5,535	0.8%	1.8
June 2012	8,301	1.3%	1.8
July 2012	6,115	0.9%	1.9
August 2012	6,542	1.0%	2.0
September 2012	5,089	0.8%	1.8
October 2012	3,905	0.6%	1.9
November 2012	4,653	0.7%	1.8
December 2012	6,827	1.1%	2.4
January 2013	8,308	1.3%	1.7
February 2013	5,817	0.9%	1.8
March 2013	7,438	1.1%	2.0

Graph 1 – Waiting times for 15 key diagnostic tests - April 2008 to March 2013



Statistical Notes

1. Diagnostic waiting times

Diagnostics data is collected from NHS providers (NHS Trusts and other providers) and signed off by commissioners (Primary Care Trusts).

The data measures current waiting times of patient still waiting at the end of the month. This information is split by number of weeks waiting, and by test.

The waiting times reported are for those patients who have been referred for a test, but whose test had not taken place by the end of the reporting period.

Data was first published in May 2006, and is available for each month from January 2006 to date.

The six week diagnostic wait was initially introduced as a 'milestone' from March 2008 towards achieving the standard Referral to Treatment wait of 18 weeks by December 2008.

The NHS Operating Framework 2012/2013 introduced an expectation that less than 1 per cent of patients should wait six weeks or longer for a diagnostic test. This publication also measures progress against the standard.

The NHS Commissioning Board's planning guidance for 2013/14 reflects the consulted position, setting out that assessments of organisational delivery will include a threshold that 99% of patients should have been waiting less than 6 weeks for a diagnostic test. The financial penalty for non-delivery of the standard is set out in the draft NHS Standard Contract 2013/14.

2. Provider and Commissioner based data

England figures quoted are commissioner based. Commissioner based returns reflect data for patients for whom English commissioners are responsible. This is defined as:

- all those patients resident within the PCT boundary; plus
- all patients registered with GPs who are members of the PCT, but are resident in another PCT; minus
- All patients resident in the PCT, but registered with a GP who is a member of another PCT

Provider based returns cover patients treated in organisations in England.

3. Average (median) waiting times

The median is the mid-point of the waiting times distribution (i.e. the 50th percentile) and can be interpreted by saying that 50% of all patients have waited this amount of time.

It should be noted that medians are calculated from aggregate data, rather than patient level data, and therefore are only estimates of the position on average waits.

4. Interpretation of waiting times and activity data

Care should be taken when making month on month comparisons of these figures. Measures of waiting time performance are subject to seasonality. For example, the presence of bank holidays, or the number of weekends, in a calendar month affect the number of working days. Similarly, adverse weather may result in emergency pressure and impacts upon the health service's ability to preserve elective capacity. These factors can affect waiting times and should be considered when making comparisons across time.

5. Feedback welcomed

We welcome feedback on the content and presentation of statistics within this Statistical Press Notice and those published on the DH website. If anyone has any comments on this, or any other issues regarding these statistics, then please email unify2@dh.gsi.gov.uk

Additional Information

Full details of diagnostics data for individual organisations is available at:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/diagnostics-waiting-times-and-activity/>

For press enquiries please e-mail the NHS England media team at nhs.cb.media@nhs.net or call 07768 901293

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) statistician responsible for producing these data is:

Mark Svenson
NHS Operations
NHS England
Room 8E10, Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7UE
Email: unify2@dh.gsi.gov.uk