



NHS Cancelled Elective Operations

Quarter Ending March 2013



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Commentary

This National Statistic release covers NHS cancelled elective operations in England, during the quarter ending 31st March 2013.

The main points of this release are:

- There were 19,968 elective operations cancelled at the last minute for non-clinical reasons. In the same period in 2011/12, there were 16,719 such cancelled elective operations.
- Of these cancellations, 1,124 (5.6%) of patients were not treated within 28 days of a cancellation. In the same period in 2011/12, 1,048 (6.3%) of patients were not treated within 28 days.
- Cancelled elective operations during the quarter represented 1.1% of all elective activity, compared to 0.9% during the corresponding period in 2011/12.

Table 1: A summary of the above results in comparison with last quarter and the same period in 2011/12.

Quarter ending	March 2012	December 2012	March 2013
Total Elective activity	1,860,415	1,829,133	1,800,760
Breaches	1,048	663	1,124
Cancelled Elective operations	16,719	16,281	19,968
Breaches as % of cancellations	6.3%	4.1%	5.6%
Cancellations as % of total activity.	0.9%	0.9%	1.1%

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust did not submit QMCO data for this quarter.

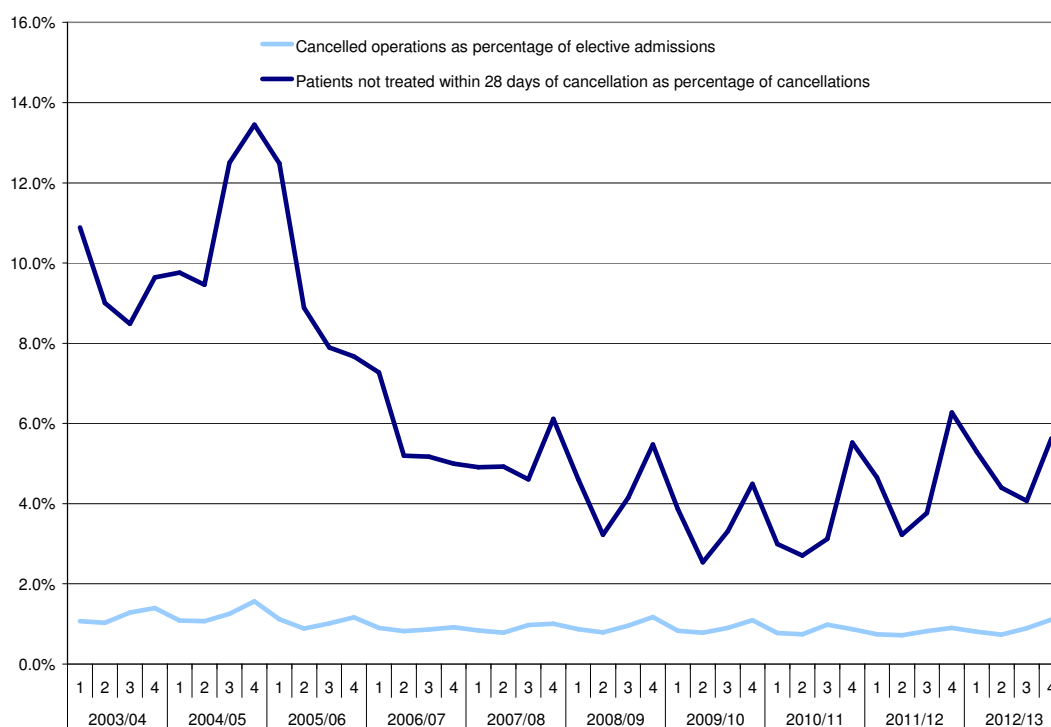
Table 2: Quarterly time series from 2003/04.

Year	Quarter	Number of cancelled elective operations	Patients not treated within 28 days of cancellation.	Elective admissions	Cancelled operations as percentage of elective admissions	Patients not treated within 28 days of cancellation as percentage of cancellations
2003/04	Q1	14,092	1,534	1,323,799	1.1%	10.9%
2003/04	Q2	14,364	1,293	1,397,181	1.0%	9.0%
2003/04	Q3	17,782	1,509	1,384,664	1.3%	8.5%
2003/04	Q4	20,065	1,934	1,444,093	1.4%	9.6%
2004/05	Q1	14,672	1,432	1,359,813	1.1%	9.8%
2004/05	Q2	14,929	1,412	1,396,681	1.1%	9.5%
2004/05	Q3	17,402	2,175	1,394,126	1.2%	12.5%
2004/05	Q4	21,566	2,901	1,381,096	1.6%	13.5%
2005/06	Q1	15,690	1,959	1,411,379	1.1%	12.5%
2005/06	Q2	13,058	1,160	1,479,813	0.9%	8.9%
2005/06	Q3	14,819	1,170	1,462,215	1.0%	7.9%
2005/06	Q4	17,236	1,322	1,474,246	1.2%	7.7%
2006/07	Q1	12,548	912	1,396,060	0.9%	7.3%
2006/07	Q2	12,259	637	1,497,881	0.8%	5.2%
2006/07	Q3	12,600	652	1,474,106	0.9%	5.2%
2006/07	Q4	14,598	729	1,598,966	0.9%	5.0%
2007/08	Q1	12,489	613	1,489,633	0.8%	4.9%
2007/08	Q2	12,482	615	1,603,648	0.8%	4.9%
2007/08	Q3	15,640	720	1,615,630	1.0%	4.6%
2007/08	Q4	16,771	1,025	1,664,482	1.0%	6.1%
2008/09	Q1	14,543	669	1,679,188	0.9%	4.6%
2008/09	Q2	13,144	424	1,671,318	0.8%	3.2%
2008/09	Q3	16,094	668	1,680,016	1.0%	4.2%
2008/09	Q4	19,863	1,088	1,693,637	1.2%	5.5%
2009/10	Q1	13,958	539	1,682,180	0.8%	3.9%
2009/10	Q2	13,547	343	1,725,378	0.8%	2.5%
2009/10	Q3	15,765	521	1,748,999	0.9%	3.3%
2009/10	Q4	19,026	855	1,735,117	1.1%	4.5%
2010/11	Q1	13,233	396	1,708,984	0.8%	3.0%
2010/11	Q2	12,991	351	1,762,988	0.7%	2.7%
2010/11	Q3	16,784	523	1,721,273	1.0%	3.1%
2010/11	Q4	15,287	844	1,760,996	0.9%	5.5%
2011/12	Q1	12,780	594	1,725,958	0.7%	4.6%
2011/12	Q2	12,892	415	1,800,973	0.7%	3.2%
2011/12	Q3	14,696	553	1,786,454	0.8%	3.8%
2011/12	Q4	16,719	1,048	1,860,415	0.9%	6.3%
2012/13	Q1	14,113	746	1,758,961	0.8%	5.3%
2012/13	Q2 ¹	13,155	582	1,796,340	0.7%	4.4%
2012/13	Q3 ¹	16,281	663	1,829,133	0.9%	4.1%
2012/13	Q4	19,968	1,124	1,800,760	1.1%	5.6%

Notes:

¹ Data has been revised, see Table 3 for more details.

Graph 1: Time series of breach and cancellation rates.



Revisions to cancelled elective operations data up to 30th April were also published. Revisions were received from:

Alder Hey Children’s NHS Foundation Trust, James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Eccleshill NHS Treatment Centre.

Table 3: A summary of the effect the revisions had on the previous quarter’s data.

Quarter ending December 2012	Before Revisions	Revised Figures	Difference	Percentage Change
Total Elective activity	1,829,133	1,829,133	0	0.000%
Breaches	651	663	12	1.843%
Cancelled Elective operations	16,211	16,281	70	0.432%
Breaches as % of cancellations	4.016%	4.072%		
Cancellations as % of total activity	0.886%	0.890%		

Quarter ending September 2012	Before Revisions	Revised Figures	Difference	Percentage Change
Total Elective activity	1,796,340	1,796,340	0	0.000%
Breaches	577	582	5	0.867%
Cancelled Elective operations	13,122	13,155	33	0.251%
Breaches as % of cancellations	4.397%	4.424%		
Cancellations as % of total activity.	0.730%	0.732%		

Full tables by Provider and SHA, a national time series are available here:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/cancelled-elective-operations/cancelled-ops-data/>

Statistical Notes

1. National Statistics

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

2. Cancelled Elective Operations (QMCO) Data Collection

Cancelled elective operation data is signed off locally and then supplied to the Department of Health (DH) by NHS providers (NHS Trusts and other providers). This report presents a summary of the number of last minute cancelled operations for non-clinical reasons and, of those, the number subsequently re-admitted within 28 days, during the quarter.

The elective cancelled operations standard is a pledge in the Handbook to the NHS Constitution which states “all patients who have operations cancelled, on or after the day of admission (including the day of surgery), for non-clinical reasons to be offered another binding date within 28 days, or the patient’s treatment to be funded at the time and hospital of the patient’s choice.”

The NHS Constitution contains pledges which the NHS is committed to achieve. Pledges go above and beyond legal rights. This means that they are not legally binding, but represent a commitment by the NHS to provide high-quality services.

Data availability

Data has been published since Q1 2003-04 in the current format as a Provider collection. Prior to this it was collected and published as part of the QMPC return from Q1 1996-97.

The data is published quarterly to a pre-announced timetable. Publication occurs on the second Friday of the month, around 6 weeks after the end of the reference quarter.

Data Collection

The Department of Health (DH) compiles quarterly data from a return (QMCO) collected from all NHS providers of elective operations via Unify2, the DH standard online tool for the collection and sharing of NHS performance data. Validation checks are applied to the data. Queries arising from the validation checks are raised with data providers. Trusts are then able to resubmit data or provide DH with further explanation of the figures.

The information provides a total of the number of last minute elective operations cancelled for non-clinical reason and the number of patients not treated within 28 days of a last minute elective cancellation (breaches). Breaches are counted at the point in which they occur, i.e. if after 28 days of a last minute cancellation the patient has not been treated then the breach should be recorded.

The quarter's figures are presented in Excel, PDF and Comma Separate Values (CSV) file formats.

Data Quality

This collection is a census so we aim to have a complete return, with data from all Providers. Any exceptions to this are noted. To minimise the risk of definitions being interpreted incorrectly during the data gathering process, guidance is issued to help aid providers and commissioners. The QMCO guidance can be found here:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/cancelled-elective-operations/>

Validation checks are applied to the data. Queries arising from the validation checks are raised with data providers. Trusts and are then able to resubmit data or provide DH with further explanation of the figures. We are happy to answer any queries from users in regards to difficulties in interpreting the data.

U.K Data Comparison

Wales

The Welsh office does not routinely publish this data, although some data was published this year in the Programme for Government Annual report:

<http://wales.gov.uk/about/programmeforgov/healthcare/trackingindicators?lang=en>.

Scotland

The Scottish office does not routinely publish this data. They do however publish data for cancellation by service (not necessarily last minute) which can be found here:

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Waiting-Times/Inpatient-Day-Cases-and-Outpatients/>

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety have published this data in the past. However, this has now been discontinued and in the

future only data on cases operated on will be published. The last data published from Northern Ireland on cancelled operations can be found here:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/ni_hospital_statistics_-_inpatient_activity_2011_12.pdf
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3. Data Revision Policy

Revisions to published figures are released on a six-monthly basis and in accordance with the NHS Operations team's revision policy. The revisions policy can be found here:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/@ps/@sta/@perf/documents/digitalasset/dh_133692.pdf

4. Glossary

Elective Operations

Operations that are organised in advance.

Provider

An organisation that provides NHS treatment or care, for example, an NHS Acute Trust, Mental Health Trust, Community Provider, or an Independent Sector Organisation.

Strategic Health Authority (SHA)

The NHS in England is currently split into ten SHAs. SHAs lead planning for improving health services in their local area and ensure that national priorities are integrated into local health service plans.

Last Minute

A cancellation is last minute if it occurs after the patient has arrived in hospital or on the day of the operation or surgery.

Non-Clinical

Some common non-clinical reasons for cancellations by the hospital include:

- ward beds being unavailable;
- surgeon being unavailable;
- emergency cases needing the theatre;
- theatre list over-running;
- equipment failure;
- administrative errors;
- anaesthetists unavailable;
- theatre staff unavailable
- critical care bed not available.

These examples are based on information from the Modernisation Agency's Theatres Project and do not necessarily cover all non-clinical reasons

5. Feedback

We welcome feedback on the content and presentation of these statistics and those published on the NHS England website. If anyone has any comments or feedback, then please email Unify2@dh.gsi.gov.uk

6. Additional Information

A full detail of data for individual organisations is available at:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/cancelled-elective-operations/cancelled-ops-data/>

7. Press enquiries

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

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