Cancelled Elective Operations

NHS England and NHS Improvement

Cancelled Elective Operations

Version number: 1

First published: 11th August 2022

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Classification: Official

Contents

Commentary

This release covers NHS cancelled elective operations in England, during the quarter ending 30th June 2022 (Q1 2022/23).

The Quarterly Monitoring of Cancelled Operations (QMCO) collection resumed for Q3 2021/22 data following a period of suspension (Q4 2019/20 to Q2 2021/22) due to Covid-19 and the need to release capacity across the NHS.

The main points from the latest release are:

- During Q1 2022/23, 17,579 operations were cancelled at the last minute for non-clinical reasons by NHS providers. In the same period in 2019/20 (pre Covid-19 pandemic), there were 19,969 cancelled operations.

- Cancelled operations during the quarter represented 1.0% of all elective activity, which is equal to the corresponding percentage in the same period in 2019/20 (1.0%).

- Of these cancellations 4,145 (23.6%) of patients were not treated within 28 days of a cancellation. In the same period in 2019/20, 1,730 (8.7%) of patients were not treated within 28 days.

- Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust did not submit data for Q1 2022/23

Table 1: A Summary of the above results compared to previous quarters

Year	Quarter	Elective Spells	Breaches of Standard	Cancelled Operations	Breach Rate (%)	Cancelled Operations (%)
2022/23	Q1	1,809,200	4,145	17,579	23.6	1.0
2021/22	Q4	1,767,671	4,015	17,477	23.0	1.0
2021/22	Q3	1,764,595	4,603	19,338	23.8	1.1
2019/20	Q3	2,054,503	2,138	23,503	9.1	1.1
2019/20	Q2	2,056,552	1,548	20,961	7.4	1.0
2019/20	Q1	1,999,615	1,730	19,969	8.7	1.0
2018/19	Q4	2,009,119	2,157	21,931	9.8	1.1

Figure 1: Cancelled Operations Time Series
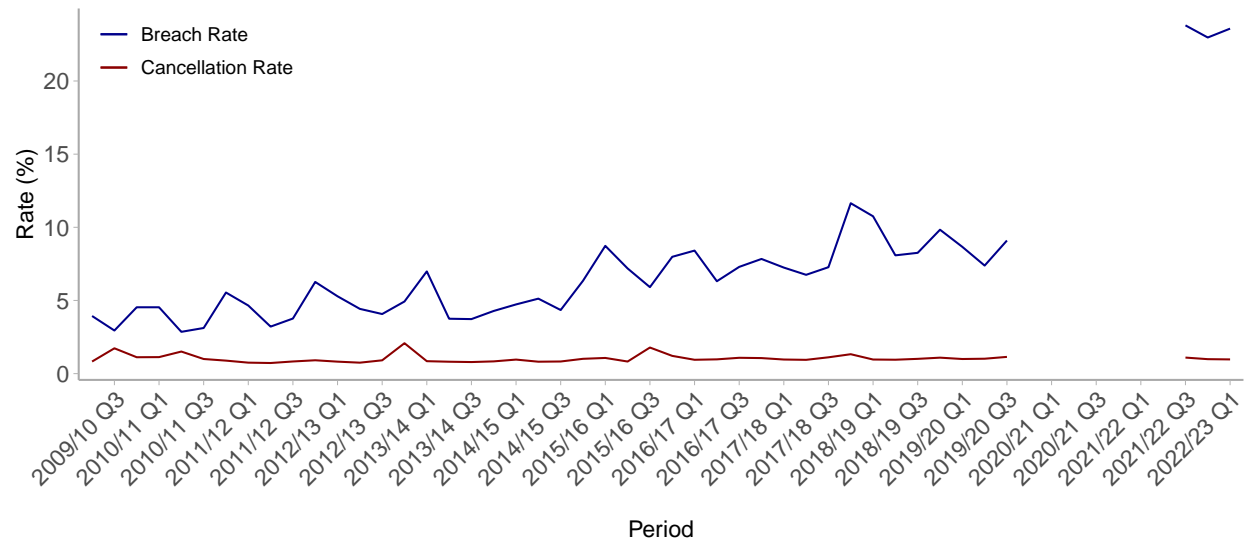
Statistical Notes

1. Cancelled Elective Operations (QMCO) Data Collection

Cancelled elective operation data is signed off locally and then supplied to NHS England and NHS Improvement 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 QMCO collection was suspended between Q4 2019/20 and Q2 2021/22 (inclusive) due to Covid-19 and the need to release capacity across the NHS.

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

Data Collection

NHS England and NHS Improvement compiles quarterly data from a return (QMCO) collected from all NHS providers of elective operations via Strategic Data Collection Service (SDCS), the standard online tool for the collection and sharing of NHS performance data.

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

The 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, guidance is published on the NHS England Statistics website NHS England Statistics website to help aid providers and commissioners.

Data providers are responsible for submitting accurate data in accordance with the national guidelines and data definitions. High level validation checks are applied to the data centrally as an extra precaution. Queries arising from the validation checks are raised with data providers. Trusts are then able to resubmit data or provide NHS England and NHS Improvement with further explanation of the figures. We are happy to answer any queries from users in regards to difficulties in interpreting the data.

UK Data Comparison

Wales

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

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 on the ISD Scotland website.

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 inpatients and day cases operated on will be published. The data can be found on the Health-NI.gov.uk website.

2. Data Revisions Policy

Revisions to published figures are released on a six-monthly basis and in accordance with NHS England's revision policy. The revisions policy can be found on the NHS England Statistics Code of Practice compliance page.

3. 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.

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.

4. 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 england.nhsdata@nhs.net

5. Additional Information

Data for individual organisations is available on the NHS England Statistics website

6. Press enquires

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

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