

NHS Diagnostic Waiting Times and Activity Data

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April 2025 Monthly Report

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1 Executive summary

This report presents a monthly summary of diagnostic waiting times and activity across the NHS in England. This monthly report is part of a routine series of publications produced by NHS England.

The data presented in this report measures the current waiting times of patients still waiting for any of 15 key diagnostic tests or procedures at the month end. This data 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. Referrals may be from a variety of sources including GPs.

One of the main measurements covered in this report is the number and proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more for a diagnostic test, from time of referral.

This 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, but diagnostic waiting times now form part of the NHS Constitution. This gives patients the legal right to treatment within 18 weeks of referral (18 week RTT) and as part of this, pledges that patients should not be required to wait six weeks or more for a diagnostic test.

The NHS Standard Contract 2022/23 states that there is a standard threshold of 1% for this pledge. NHS England’s planning guidance for 2023/24 requests that progress should be made towards a threshold of at least 5% by April 2025.

The 15 key diagnostic tests included in this report are:

Imaging

- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Computerised Tomography (CT)
- Non-obstetric Ultrasound
- Barium Enema
- Dual-Energy X-Ray Absorptiometry (DEXA) Scan

Physiological Measurements

- Audiology Assessments
- Echocardiography
- Electrophysiology
- Neurophysiology – Peripheral Neurophysiology
- Respiratory Physiology – Sleep Studies
- Urodynamics – Pressures & Flows

Endoscopy

- Gastroscopy
- Colonoscopy
- Flexible Sigmoidoscopy
- Cystoscopy

For detailed descriptions of each diagnostic test please see the [collection guidance documentation](#).

Some of the key terms used throughout this report are outlined below:

- **6+ Week Waits**
A count of the number of patients waiting six weeks or more for a diagnostic test at month end from referral.
- **Activity**
A count of the number of diagnostic tests undertaken during the month.
- **Diagnostic Test**
A test or procedure of which the primary function is to identify a patient's disease or condition to allow a medical diagnosis to be made.
- **Waiting List**
A count of the number of patients that are waiting for a diagnostic test at the end of the month.

A more comprehensive glossary is available in the Annex.

All England figures quoted are commissioner based. Commissioner based returns reflect data for patients for whom English commissioners are responsible.

1.1 Accredited Official Statistics

The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as Accredited Official Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Accredited 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 Accredited Official Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

2 April 2025 Key Findings

- The total number of patients waiting six weeks or more from referral for one of the 15 key diagnostic tests at the end of April 2025 was 360,400. This was 21.2% of the total number of patients waiting at the end of the month.
- Nationally, the operational standard of less than 1% of patients waiting six weeks or more was not met this month.
- Compared with April 2024 the total number of patients waiting six weeks or more decreased by 15,800 while the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more decreased by 1.8 percentage points.
- In the last 12 months, the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more at the end of a month has varied between 17.5% (February 2025) and 23.9% (August 2024).
- At the end of April 2025, the test with the smallest proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was CT with 11.1%. The test with the highest proportion was Urodynamics, with 41.7% of patients waiting six weeks or more.
- An alternative measure of diagnostic waiting times is the average (median) waiting time. The estimated average time that a patient had been waiting for a diagnostic test was 3.0 weeks at the end of April 2025.
- There were 1,696,700 patients waiting for a key diagnostic test at the end of April 2025. This is an increase of 61,400 from April 2024.
- A total of 2,399,600 diagnostic tests were undertaken in April 2025. This is an increase of 70,600 from April 2024.

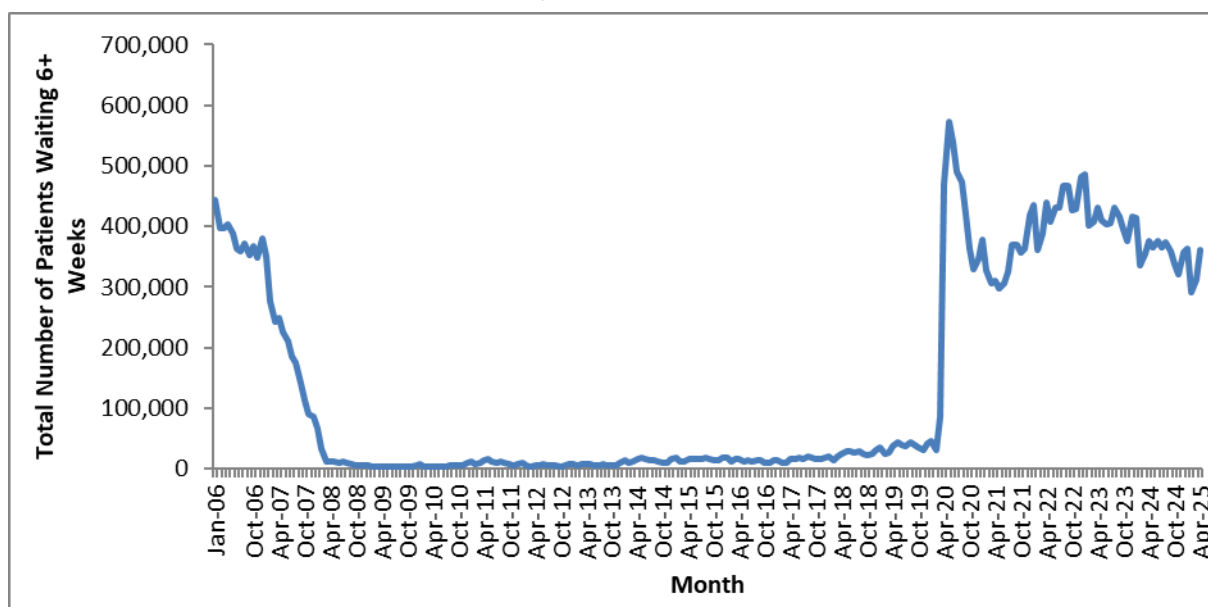
3 National Trends

This section analyses trends in monthly diagnostic waiting times and activity data that has been collected since January 2006.

3.1 6+ Week Waits

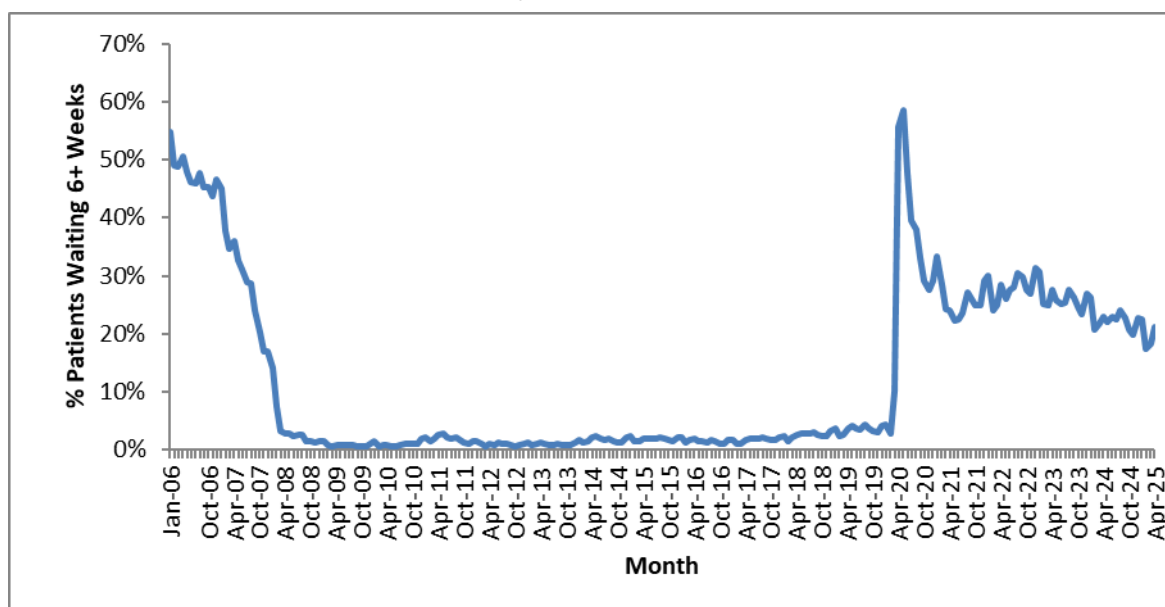
- 3.1.1. The total number of patients waiting six weeks or more dropped sharply between January 2007 and March 2008 (Chart 1), as Trusts worked towards the NHS Improvement Plan (June 2004) milestone that no one should wait six weeks or more for a diagnostic test by March 2008. Since March 2008 there were fluctuations in the total number of patients waiting six weeks or more, with a significant rise between December 2013 and May 2014.
- 3.1.2. The number of patients waiting six weeks or more rose sharply in April 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. In April 2025 there was an increase of 47,600 in the number of patients waiting six weeks or more from the previous month.

**Chart 1: Total number of patients waiting 6+ weeks at month end for all tests
January 2006 to April 2025**



- 3.1.3. The proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more shows a similar pattern (Chart 2). In the last 12 months, the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more at the end of a month has varied between 17.5% (February 2025) and 23.9% (August 2024). The 1% operational standard was last met in November 2013.

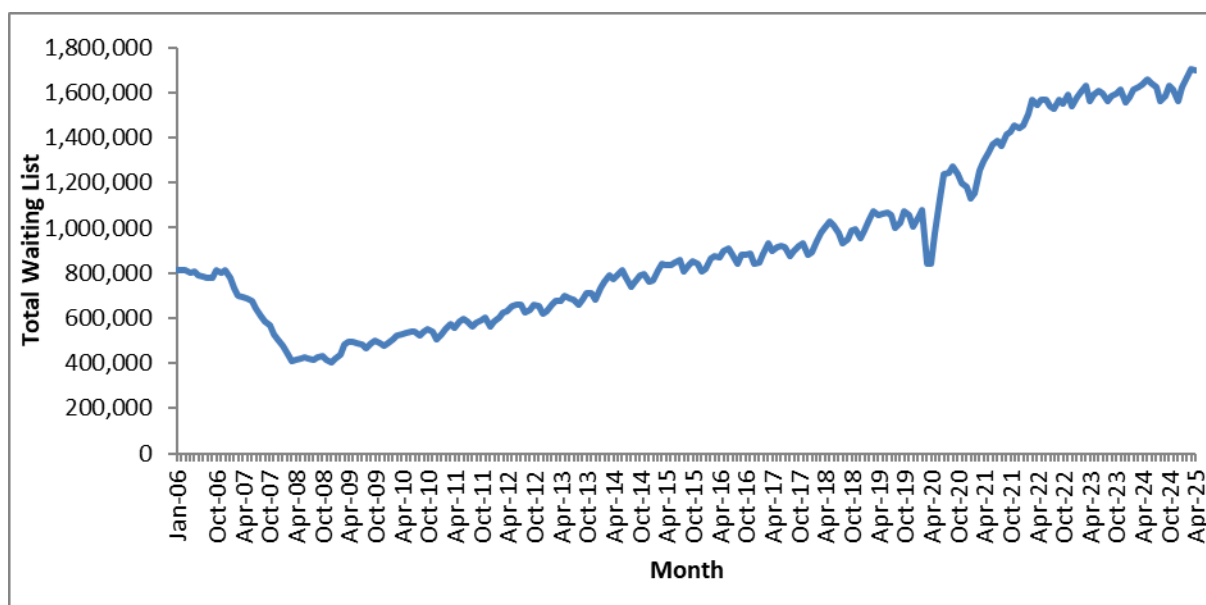
**Chart 2: Percentage of patients waiting 6+ weeks at month end for all tests
January 2006 to April 2025**



3.2 Total Waiting List

- 3.2.1. As with the number and proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more, the total number of patients waiting at the month end fell between January 2007 and the 6-week milestone in March 2008 (Chart 3). Following a period with a stable total waiting list between March 2008 and January 2009, the underlying trend showed a steady increase before dropping sharply in March 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19 and subsequently rising.

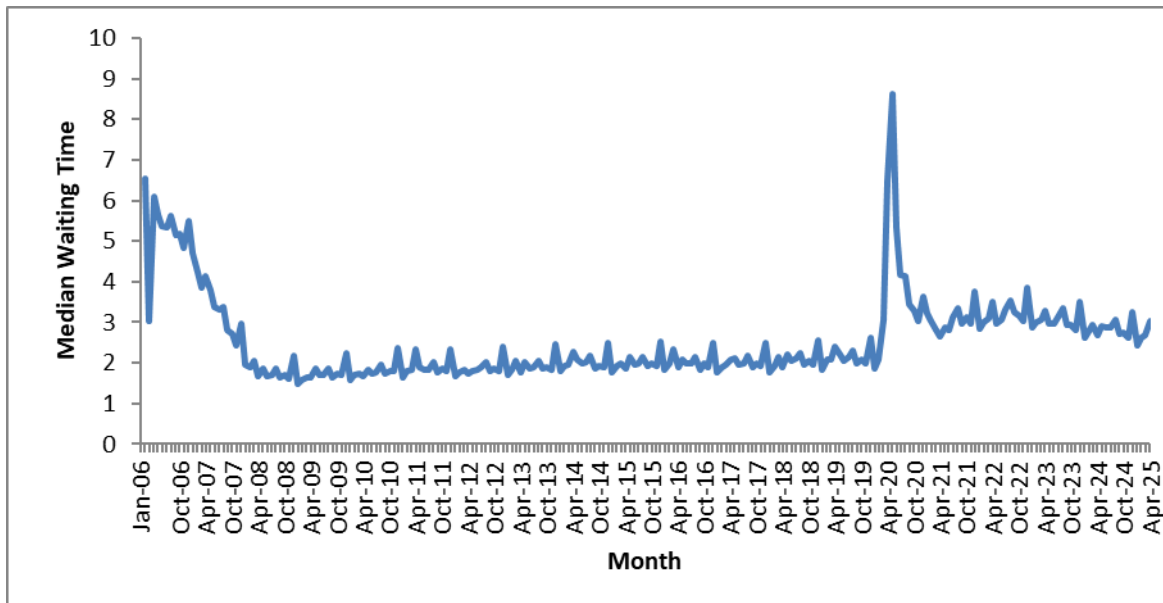
**Chart 3: Total number of patients waiting at month end for all tests
January 2006 to April 2025**



3.3 Median Waiting Time

- 3.3.1. The average (median) waiting time displays a similar trend to the total waiting list and 6 weeks or more waits. After a rapid decrease in the two years leading to the 6-week milestone, the median waiting time remained stable until the COVID-19 period (Chart 4). The data shows significant increases during December every year as a result of the higher number of bank holidays and resulting lower activity. In the last 12 months, the median waiting time had a high of 3.2 weeks (December 2024) and a low of 2.4 weeks (January 2025). The median waiting time in April 2025 was 3.0 weeks.

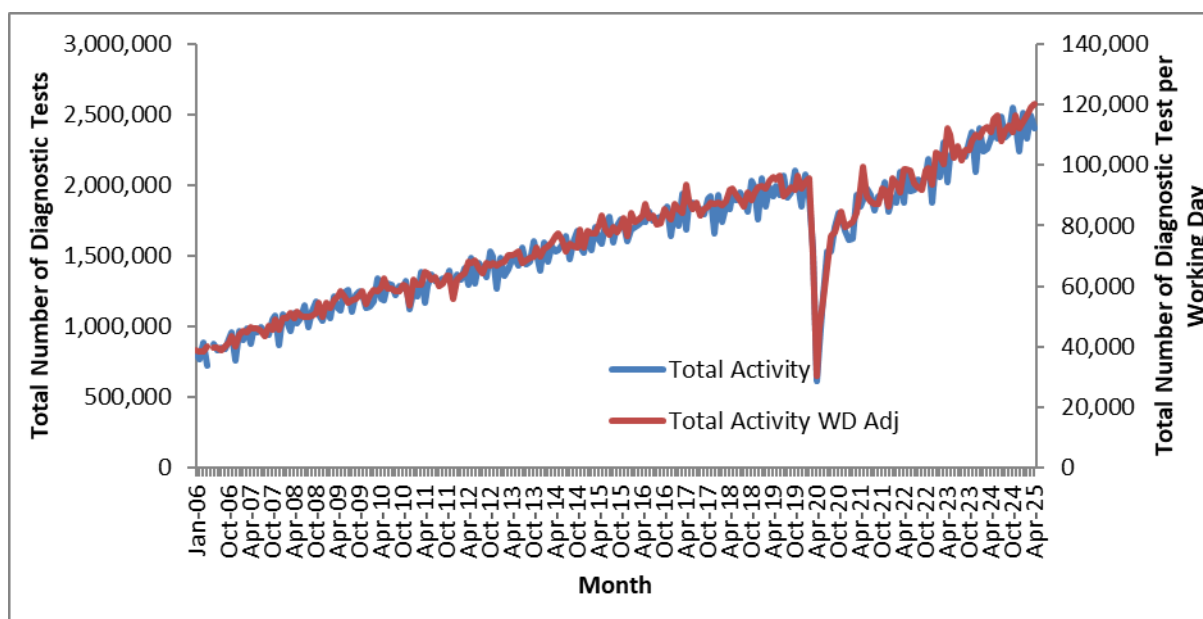
Chart 4: Median waiting time for all tests – January 2006 to April 2025



3.4 Total Activity

- 3.4.1. The monthly activity figure can significantly fluctuate month to month, with particularly notable decreases in December due to the bank holidays. If the data is adjusted to show activity per working day, the monthly variation becomes less pronounced (Chart 5).
- 3.4.2. The underlying trend showed an increase from January 2006 to the COVID-19 period when total activity in April 2020 fell by 68% compared to April 2019. Monthly activity subsequently started to rise again.

**Chart 5: Total activity and working day adjusted activity per month for all tests
January 2006 to April 2025**



Note: Activity data was not collected in May 2006 and all activity time series graphs will show missing values for that month

3.4.3. In the previous 12 months, individual tests have shown differing changes in activity. The tests with the largest proportional increase in activity were MRI and Sleep studies, where April 2025 activity was 0.6% higher per month than April 2024 (Table 1).

Table 1: Total activity, by test – April 2024 and April 2025

	Apr-24	Apr-25	Average monthly growth
MRI	378,292	408,537	0.6%
CT	703,124	746,735	0.5%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	711,919	711,966	0.0%
Barium Enema	3,997	3,963	-0.1%
Dexa Scan	47,790	48,796	0.2%
Audiology Assessments	110,692	113,140	0.2%
Echocardiography	162,253	162,898	0.0%
Electrophysiology	683	310	-6.4%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	21,129	21,130	0.0%
Sleep Studies	18,340	19,816	0.6%
Urodynamics	6,490	6,180	-0.4%
Colonoscopy	53,982	51,511	-0.4%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	16,361	14,543	-1.0%
Cystoscopy	31,164	29,258	-0.5%
Gastroscopy	62,770	60,828	-0.3%
All Tests	2,328,986	2,399,611	0.2%

4 April 2025 Data

This section analyses the April 2025 diagnostic waiting times and activity data and includes comparisons between tests, regions, providers and commissioners.

4.1 6+ Week Waits

- 4.1.1. At the end of April 2025, there were a total of 360,400 patients waiting six weeks or more from referral for one of the 15 key diagnostic tests. This was 21.2% of the total number of patients waiting at the end of the month.
- 4.1.2. Compared with April 2024, the number of patients waiting six weeks or more decreased by 15,800, while the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more decreased by 1.8 percentage points.
- 4.1.3. Compared with April 2024, the test with the largest increase in the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was Barium Enema, which increased by 10.0 percentage points. The test with the largest decrease was Electrophysiology, which decreased by 10.6 percentage points (Table 2). Both of these are low volume tests.

Table 2: Proportion of patients waiting 6+ weeks, by test – April 2024 and April 2025

	Apr-24	Apr-25	Difference (%age points)
MRI	20.5%	15.8%	-4.8
CT	12.3%	11.1%	-1.2
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	18.8%	19.4%	0.6
Barium Enema	7.9%	17.9%	10.0
Dexa Scan	25.3%	15.8%	-9.4
Audiology Assessments	39.3%	41.7%	2.4
Echocardiography	31.6%	27.6%	-4.0
Electrophysiology	38.5%	27.9%	-10.6
Peripheral Neurophysiology	33.6%	36.3%	2.7
Sleep Studies	36.9%	31.6%	-5.3
Urodynamics	42.1%	41.7%	-0.3
Colonoscopy	26.0%	26.3%	0.3
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	33.7%	27.5%	-6.2
Cystoscopy	29.4%	26.9%	-2.5
Gastroscopy	27.0%	23.3%	-3.7
All Tests	23.0%	21.2%	-1.8

Note: Figures may differ due to rounding.

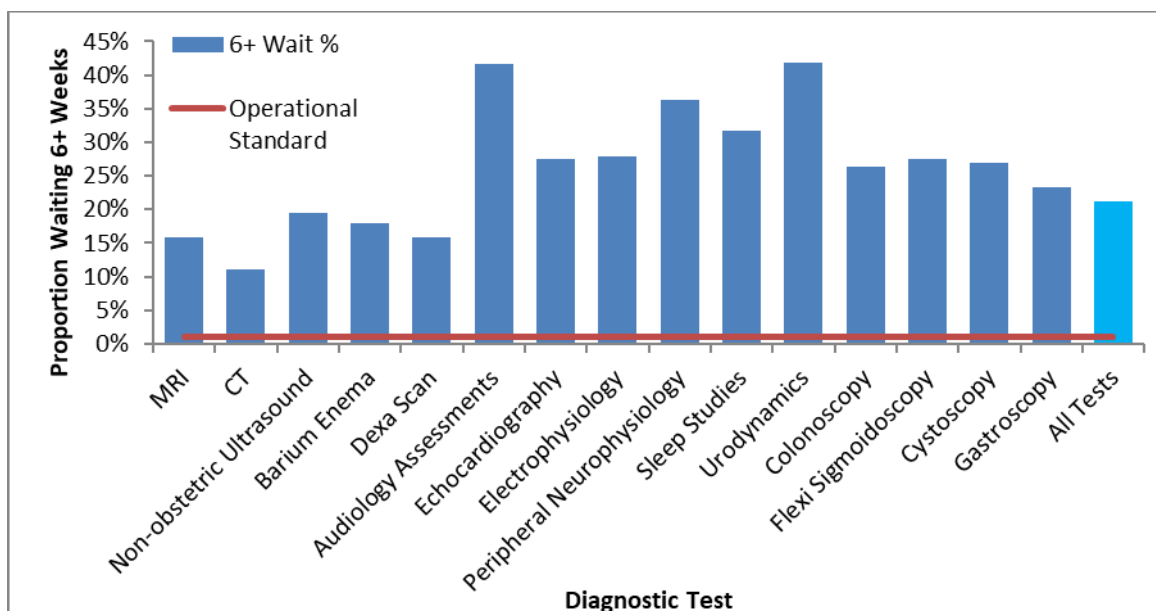
- 4.1.4. Compared with April 2024, the test types with the smallest change in the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was Physiological Measurements with a decrease of 1.2 percentage points. Endoscopy decreased by 2.4 percentage points (Table 3). See section 5.4 for which tests are included under the different test types.

Table 3: Proportion of patients waiting 6+ weeks, by test type – April 2024 and April 2025

	Apr-24	Apr-25	Difference (%age points)
Imaging	18.6%	17.0%	-1.6
Physiological Measurement	35.1%	33.8%	-1.2
Endoscopy	27.8%	25.4%	-2.4
Total	23.0%	21.2%	-1.8

Note: Figures may differ due to rounding.

- 4.1.5. The operational standard that less than 1% of patients should wait six weeks or more from referral for a diagnostic test was met in none of the 15 key tests this month. The test with the lowest proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was CT (11.1%), whilst the test with the highest proportion was Urodynamics (41.7%) (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Percentage of patients waiting 6+ weeks, by test – April 2025

- 4.1.6. 126 of the 133 acute trusts that submitted data for April 2025 failed to meet the 1% operational standard.
- 4.1.7. All 42 Commissioners (ICBs) failed to meet the 1% operational standard.
- 4.1.8. None of the seven NHS England Regions met the 1% operational standard. The proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more for a diagnostic test varied by region between 13.9% (Northwest region) and 28.1% (East of England) (Table 4).
- 4.1.9. Feedback from NHS trusts has indicated that variations can exist between different regions due to a variety of reasons, from machines breaking down to staff shortages in trusts that usually only affect one region.

Table 4: April 2025 Diagnostic Waiting Times and Activity by Regional Team*

Region	Number of patients waiting six weeks or more at month end	Percentage of patients waiting six weeks or more at month end	Total number of patients waiting at month end	Total activity undertaken in month	Median waiting time
London	59,427	19.8%	299,723	393,798	2.9
South West	31,013	20.5%	151,266	226,215	3.0
South East	52,169	21.1%	247,550	366,778	2.9
Midlands	84,014	25.0%	335,391	454,290	3.3
East of England	58,851	28.1%	209,203	270,832	3.5
North West	28,512	13.9%	204,824	320,562	2.7
North East and Yorkshire	45,509	18.6%	244,182	356,432	2.8
England	360,370	21.2%	1,696,688	2,399,611	3.0

*Includes all independent sector providers and excludes centrally commissioned.

4.2 Total Waiting List

- 4.2.1. At the end of April 2025 there were a total of 1,696,700 patients still waiting for a diagnostic test. This is an increase of 61,400 (3.8%) from April 2024.
- 4.2.2. The test with the largest waiting list was Non-obstetric Ultrasound, which accounted for 35.7% of the total waiting list, or 606,400 patients. The test with the smallest waiting list was Electrophysiology, which accounted for 0.01% of the total waiting list, or 200 patients (Table 5).

Table 5: Total number of patients waiting at month end, by test – April 2024 and April 2025

	Apr-24	Apr-25	Growth (%age)
MRI	313,534	324,051	3.4%
CT	178,832	184,389	3.1%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	568,132	606,437	6.7%
Barium Enema	2,697	3,449	27.9%
Dexa Scan	60,583	56,736	-6.3%
Audiology Assessments	112,248	110,876	-1.2%
Echocardiography	158,378	155,346	-1.9%
Electrophysiology	730	201	-72.5%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	33,955	35,396	4.2%
Sleep Studies	29,905	29,610	-1.0%
Urodynamics	8,380	9,306	11.1%
Colonoscopy	60,571	67,021	10.6%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	21,815	22,184	1.7%
Cystoscopy	22,604	24,182	7.0%
Gastroscopy	62,875	67,504	7.4%
All Tests	1,635,239	1,696,688	3.8%

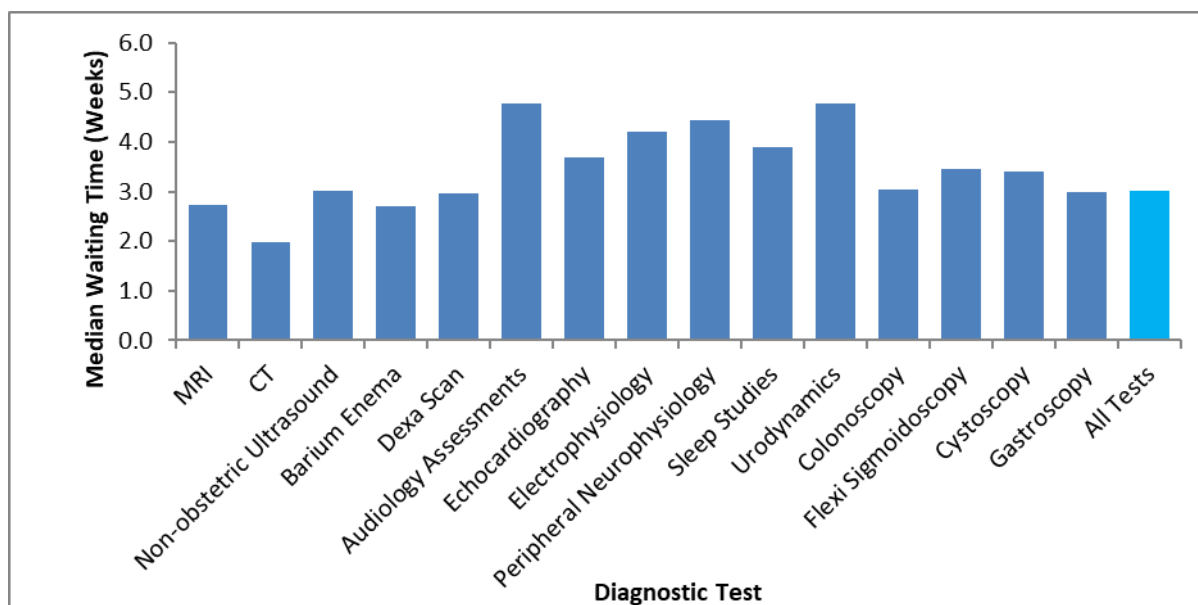
Note: Barium Enema is a test that should be replaced by Colonoscopy or CT Colonography, so the number of tests undertaken should be reducing.

- 4.2.3. The largest proportional increase in the number of patients waiting by test has been for Barium Enema where the reported waiting list grew by 27.9% compared with April 2024.

4.3 Median Waiting Times

- 4.3.1. At the end of April 2025, the estimated median waiting time for all 15 diagnostic tests was 3.0 weeks from the time of referral, up from 2.7 in the previous month. The test with the shortest median waiting time was CT at 2.0 weeks. The test with the longest median waiting time was Urodynamics at 4.8 weeks (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Median waiting time by test – April 2025



4.4 Total Activity

- 4.4.1. In total 2,399,600 of the 15 key diagnostic tests were performed during April 2025. This is an increase of 70,600 (3.0%) from April 2024, which is 8.2% when adjusted for working days (Table 6).
- 4.4.2. The test with the highest activity was CT with 746,700 tests taking place. This accounted for 31.1% of all activity in April 2025. The test with the lowest activity was Electrophysiology with 300 tests taking place. This accounted for 0.01% of all activity this month.
- 4.4.3. The number of tests conducted over the last 12 months has increased by 6.6% from the same period last year, 6.2% when adjusted for working days.

Accredited Official Statistics

Table 6: Total activity and growth, by test – April 2024 and April 2025

Note: Barium Enema is a test that should be replaced by Colonoscopy or CT Colonography, so the number of tests undertaken should be reducing.

	Apr-25	Apr-24	YTD 25/26	YTD 24/25	Growth Apr 25 vs Apr 24	Growth YTD 25/26 vs YTD 24/25	Adjusted Growth Apr 25 vs Apr 24	Adjusted Growth YTD 25/26 vs YTD 24/25
MRI	408,537	378,292	408,537	378,292	8.0%	8.0%	13.4%	13.4%
CT	746,735	703,124	746,735	703,124	6.2%	6.2%	11.5%	11.5%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	711,966	711,919	711,966	711,919	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Barium Enema	3,963	3,997	3,963	3,997	-0.9%	-0.9%	4.1%	4.1%
Dexa Scan	48,796	47,790	48,796	47,790	2.1%	2.1%	7.2%	7.2%
Audiology Assessments	113,140	110,692	113,140	110,692	2.2%	2.2%	7.3%	7.3%
Echocardiography	162,898	162,253	162,898	162,253	0.4%	0.4%	5.4%	5.4%
Electrophysiology	310	683	310	683	-54.6%	-54.6%	-52.3%	-52.3%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	21,130	21,129	21,130	21,129	0.0%	0.0%	5.0%	5.0%
Sleep Studies	19,816	18,340	19,816	18,340	8.0%	8.0%	13.5%	13.5%
Urodynamics	6,180	6,490	6,180	6,490	-4.8%	-4.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Colonoscopy	51,511	53,982	51,511	53,982	-4.6%	-4.6%	0.2%	0.2%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	14,543	16,361	14,543	16,361	-11.1%	-11.1%	-6.7%	-6.7%
Cystoscopy	29,258	31,164	29,258	31,164	-6.1%	-6.1%	-1.4%	-1.4%
Gastroscopy	60,828	62,770	60,828	62,770	-3.1%	-3.1%	1.8%	1.8%
All Tests	2,399,611	2,328,986	2,399,611	2,328,986	3.0%	3.0%	8.2%	8.2%

5 Annex

5.1 Methodology

5.1.1. NHS England compiles diagnostic waiting time and activity data through a central return. Data collected includes:

- The number of patients waiting at the month end, split by test and week.
- Total activity classified as either Waiting List tests (excluding planned), Planned tests, or Unscheduled tests.

5.1.2. Providers submit data to NHS England via SDCS where it is checked and signed off by commissioners. For further details on how the data is collected and the SDCS system, please refer to the [NHSE Collection Guidance](#).

5.2 Data Revisions

5.2.1. Revisions to published figures are released on a six-monthly basis and in accordance with the NHS England's revision policy. For more information on the revision policy please refer to the [SDCS Revisions Policy Document](#). Revisions were last published in April 2024 for the months January 2022 through to April 2023.

5.3 Data Availability

5.3.1. Monthly diagnostic waiting time and activity data is published on a monthly timetable. [A full calendar of all statistical publications can be found here.](#)

5.4 Glossary

Community Diagnostic Centre

Community diagnostic centres (CDCs) provide a broad range of elective diagnostics (including checks, scans and tests) away from acute facilities, so reducing pressure on hospitals, providing quicker access to tests and greater convenience to patients. The earliest CDCs were started in 2021 and the list of sites and their services continues to expand. CDCs are hosted by acute Trusts but may receive patients from other Trusts.

Endoscopy

A categorisation of diagnostic tests that include: Colonoscopy; Flexi Sigmoidoscopy; Cystoscopy and Gastroscopy.

Imaging

A categorisation of diagnostic tests that include: Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI); Computed Tomography (CT); Non-obstetric Ultrasound; Barium Enema and DEXA Scan.

Integrated Care Board (ICB)

Integrated care boards (ICBs) replaced clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in the NHS in England from 1 April 2023. ICBs oversee partnerships of organisations that come together to plan and deliver joined up health and care services.

Median Waiting Time

A measurement of the average time patients have been waiting for a diagnostic test. The median is the middle value when waiting times are put in numerical order. 50% of patients have been waiting less than the median. The median is the preferred measurement of average waiting time as it is less susceptible to extreme values than the mean.

Physiological Measurement

A categorisation of diagnostic tests that include: Audiology Assessments; Echocardiology; Electrophysiology; Peripheral Neurophysiology; Sleep Studies and Urodynamics.

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.

Region

One of seven geographical areas of NHS England responsible for the quality, financial and operational performance of all NHS organisations in their region.

5.5 Feedback Welcomed

We welcome feedback on the content and presentation of statistics within this report and those published on the NHS England website.

If you have any comments on this, or any other issues regarding these statistics, then please email england.diagnosticsdata@nhs.net

5.6 Consultation

Between 8 February 2018 and 5 April 2018, NHS England consulted on the future of the Quarterly Diagnostics Census and Monthly Diagnostics Waiting Times and Activity Returns. The outcome document for the consultation was published 30 March 2020 and confirmed the decision to stop collecting the Quarterly Diagnostics Census on a permanent basis and to continue the monthly diagnostics waiting times and activity return (DM01) in its current form. Find out more at:

<https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/diagnostics-census-waiting-times-activity-return>

5.7 Additional Information

[Full details of diagnostics data for individual organisations are available here.](#)

For press enquiries please contact the NHS England media team on 0113 825 0958 or 0113 825 0959. Email enquiries should be directed to nhsengland.media@nhs.net

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