

# NHS Diagnostic Waiting Times and Activity Data

# **NHS Diagnostic Waiting Times and Activity Data**

## **October 2025 Monthly Report**

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Prepared by: Data and Analytics: Operational Insights - Diagnostics  
NHS England

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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.

There is a standard threshold of 1% for this pledge. The NHS Standard Contract 2025/26 seeks progress towards an interim threshold of at most 5%.

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 Science

- 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 October 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 October 2025 was 380,600. This was 21.3% 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 October 2024 the total number of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 43,200 while the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 0.6%.
- 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 24.0% (August 2025).
- At the end of October 2025, the test with the smallest proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was CT with 9.5%. The test with the highest proportion was Electrophysiology, with 55.7% 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 2.8 weeks at the end of October 2025.
- There were 1,786,700 patients waiting for a key diagnostic test at the end of October 2025. This is an increase of 155,700 from October 2024.
- A total of 2,617,900 diagnostic tests were undertaken in October 2025. This is an increase of 61,700 from October 2024.

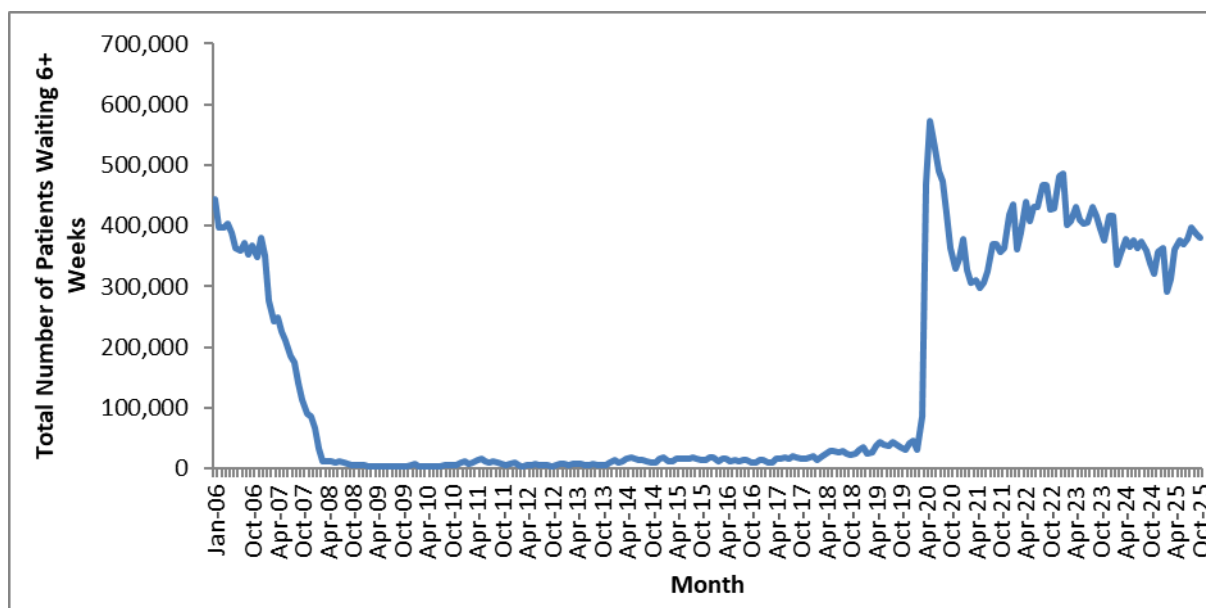
### 3 National Trends

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

#### 3.1 6+ Week Waits

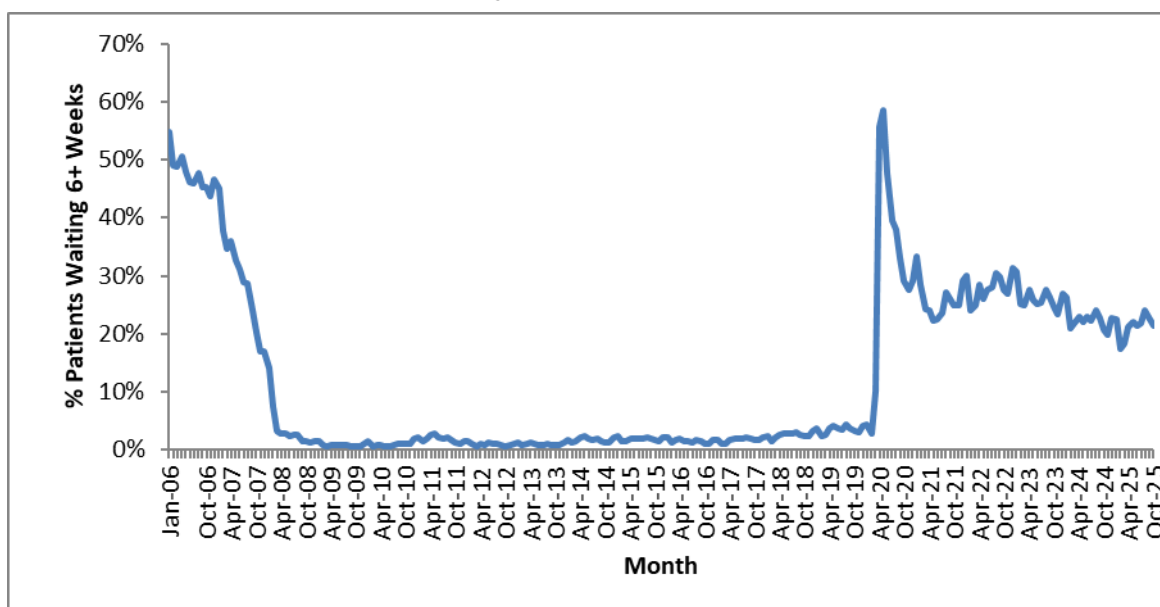
- 3.1.1. The total number of patients waiting six weeks or more dropped sharply between January 2007 and March 2008 (Chart 1), as Trusts worked towards the NHS Improvement Plan (June 2004) milestone that no one should wait six weeks or more for a diagnostic test by March 2008. Subsequent fluctuations in the total number of patients waiting six weeks or more led to a gradual increase until it rose sharply in April 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19.
- 3.1.2. In October 2025 there was a decrease of 6,200 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 October 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 24.0% (August 2025). The 1% operational standard was last met in November 2013.

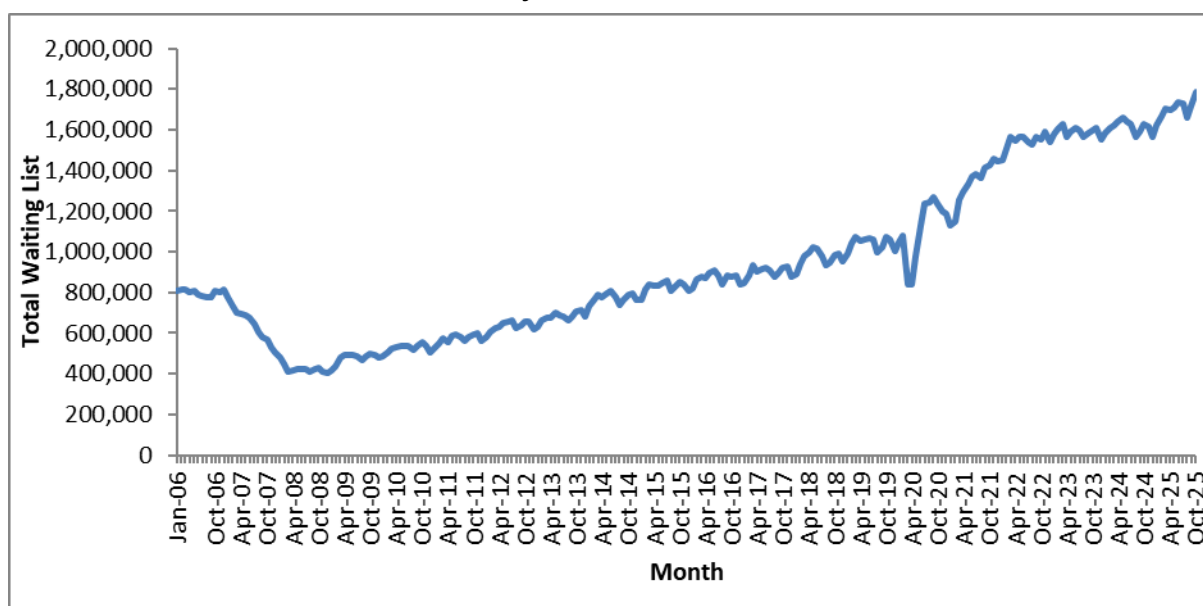
**Chart 2: Percentage of patients waiting 6+ weeks at month end for all tests  
January 2006 to October 2025**



## 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), remaining static for some months. The underlying trend then showed a steady increase before dropping sharply in March 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19 and subsequently rising again.

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

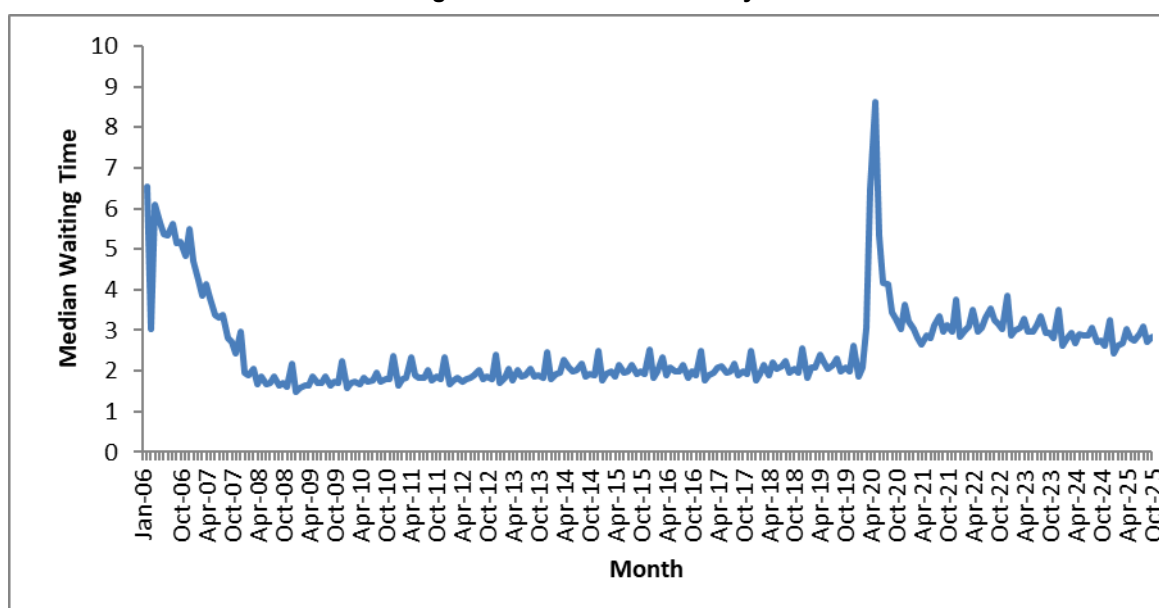




### 3.3 Median Waiting Time

- 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 rose minimally 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 October 2025 was 2.8 weeks.

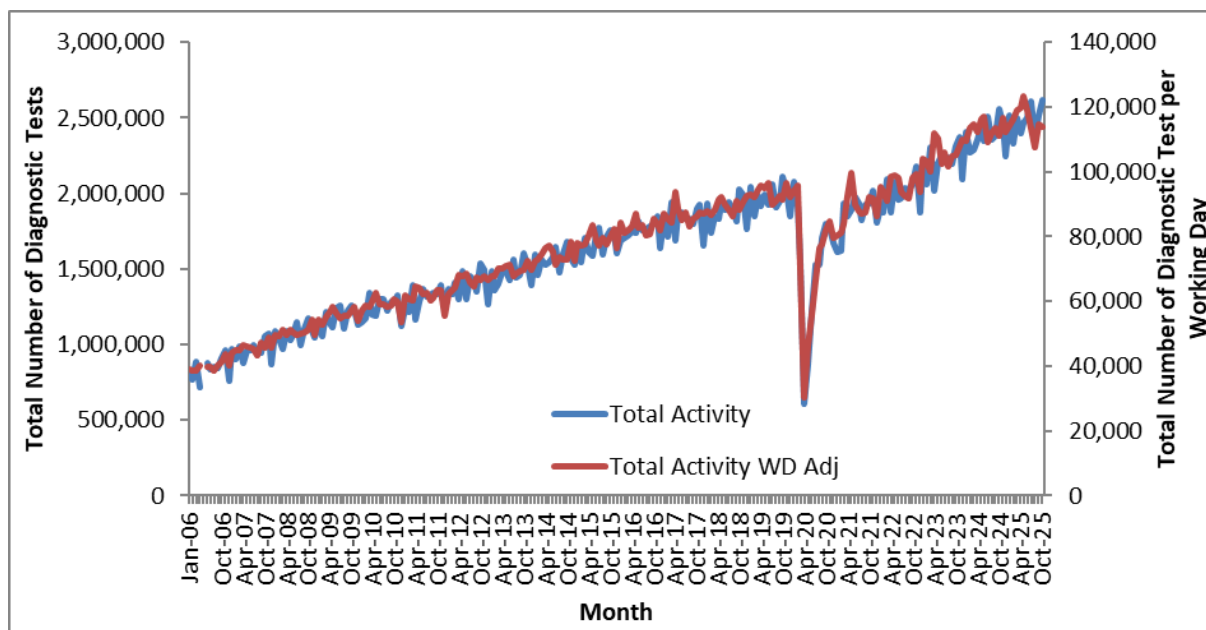
Chart 4: Median waiting time for all tests – January 2006 to October 2025



### 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 October 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 test with the largest proportional increase in activity was Audiology Assessments, where October 2025 activity was 0.9% higher per month than October 2024 (Table 1).

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

	Oct-24	Oct-25	Average monthly growth
MRI	414,022	425,676	0.2%
CT	765,597	796,235	0.3%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	784,630	791,425	0.1%
Barium Enema	4,573	4,891	0.6%
Dexa Scan	52,224	52,064	0.0%
Audiology Assessments	122,506	136,711	0.9%
Echocardiography	177,861	181,112	0.2%
Electrophysiology	1,017	130	-15.8%
Peripheral Neuropsychology	22,524	21,881	-0.2%
Sleep Studies	21,530	22,406	0.3%
Urodynamics	6,784	7,057	0.3%
Colonoscopy	61,643	59,679	-0.3%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	17,575	16,368	-0.6%
Cystoscopy	33,501	35,017	0.4%
Gastroscopy	70,160	67,239	-0.4%
<b>All Tests</b>	<b>2,556,147</b>	<b>2,617,891</b>	<b>0.2%</b>

## 4 October 2025 Data

This section analyses the October 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 October 2025, there were a total of 380,600 patients waiting six weeks or more from referral for one of the 15 key diagnostic tests. This was 21.3% of the total number of patients waiting at the end of the month.
- 4.1.2. Compared with October 2024, the number of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 43,200, while the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 0.6%.
- 4.1.3. Compared with October 2024, the test with the largest increase in the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was Electrophysiology, which increased by 32.7 percentage points. The test with the largest decrease was Sleep Studies, which decreased by 9.4 percentage points (Table 2).

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

	Oct-24	Oct-25	Difference (%age points)
MRI	16.3%	17.4%	1.1
CT	7.9%	9.5%	1.5
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	17.0%	18.5%	1.5
Barium Enema	9.1%	19.2%	10.1
Dexa Scan	17.3%	13.2%	-4.1
Audiology Assessments	41.7%	42.4%	0.7
Echocardiography	31.3%	30.0%	-1.3
Electrophysiology	23.0%	55.7%	32.7
Peripheral Neuropsychology	31.1%	39.5%	8.4
Sleep Studies	35.5%	26.1%	-9.4
Urodynamics	40.8%	39.1%	-1.7
Colonoscopy	26.7%	26.9%	0.2
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	26.9%	27.6%	0.7
Cystoscopy	25.8%	25.4%	-0.4
Gastroscopy	22.6%	25.8%	3.2
<b>All Tests</b>	<b>20.7%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>0.6</b>

Note: Figures may differ due to rounding.

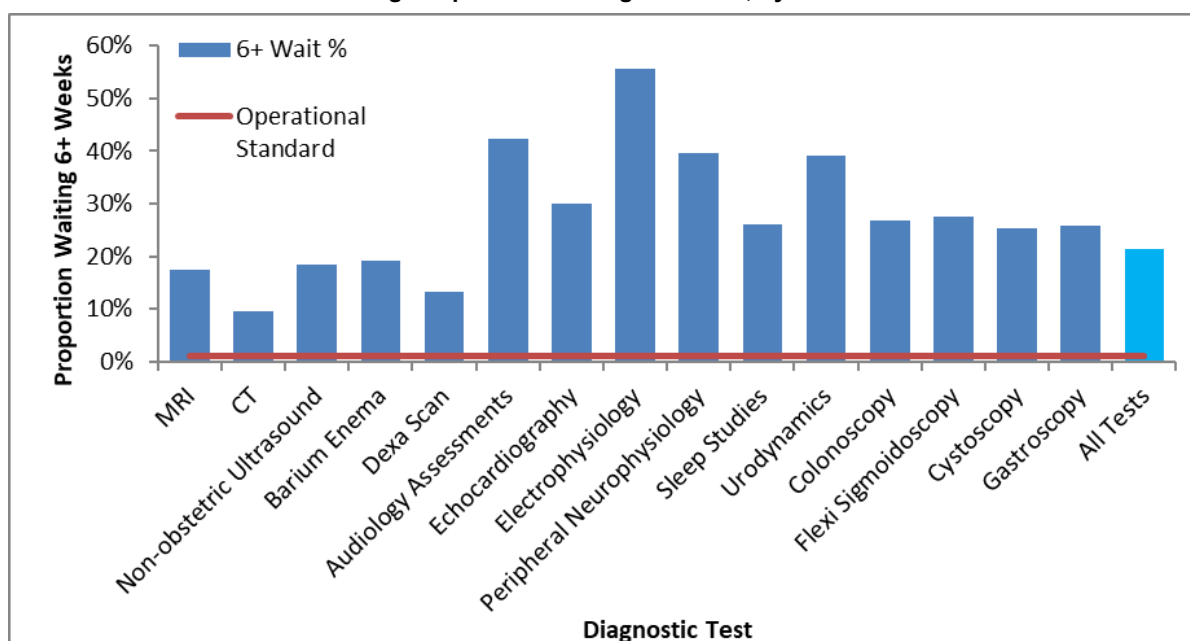
- 4.1.4. Compared with October 2024, the test type with the smallest change in the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was Physiological Science with a decrease of 0.1 percentage points. Imaging and Endoscopy both increased by 1.2 percentage points (Table 3). See section 5.4 for which tests are included under the different test types.

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

	Oct-24	Oct-25	Difference (%age points)
Imaging	15.5%	16.7%	1.2
Physiological Science	35.4%	35.3%	-0.1
Endoscopy	25.1%	26.3%	1.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>20.7%</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>0.6</b>

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 (9.5%), whilst the test with the highest proportion was Electrophysiology (55.7%) (Chart 6).

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

- 4.1.6. 123 of the 133 acute trusts that submitted data for October 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 14.0% (Northwest region) and 30.1% (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: October 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	70,104	21.6%	324,090	425,312	2.8
South West	29,857	19.2%	155,172	258,791	2.7
South East	46,543	18.5%	252,223	402,330	2.6
Midlands	85,288	24.2%	352,435	492,228	3.1
East of England	71,125	30.1%	235,952	283,782	3.5
North West	29,358	14.0%	209,311	357,417	2.5
North East and Yorkshire	47,340	18.7%	252,968	388,680	2.7
<b>England</b>	<b>379,615</b>	<b>21.3%</b>	<b>1,782,151</b>	<b>2,608,540</b>	<b>2.8</b>

\*Includes all independent sector providers and excludes centrally commissioned.

## 4.2 Total Waiting List

4.2.1. At the end of October 2025 there were a total of 1,786,700 patients still waiting for a diagnostic test. This is an increase of 155,700 (9.5%) from October 2024.

4.2.2. The test with the largest waiting list was Non-obstetric Ultrasound, which accounted for 36.3% of the total waiting list, or 648,500 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 – October 2024 and October 2025**

	Oct-24	Oct-25	Growth (%age)
MRI	311,430	360,322	15.7%
CT	169,029	180,953	7.1%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	574,285	648,531	12.9%
Barium Enema	2,993	3,969	32.6%
Dexa Scan	56,882	56,912	0.1%
Audiology Assessments	114,772	119,939	4.5%
Echocardiography	153,772	146,366	-4.8%
Electrophysiology	335	158	-52.8%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	35,395	39,609	11.9%
Sleep Studies	31,451	29,829	-5.2%
Urodynamics	9,310	9,975	7.1%
Colonoscopy	64,447	71,605	11.1%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	21,244	22,976	8.2%
Cystoscopy	22,962	25,886	12.7%
Gastroscopy	62,674	69,696	11.2%
<b>All Tests</b>	<b>1,630,981</b>	<b>1,786,726</b>	<b>9.5%</b>

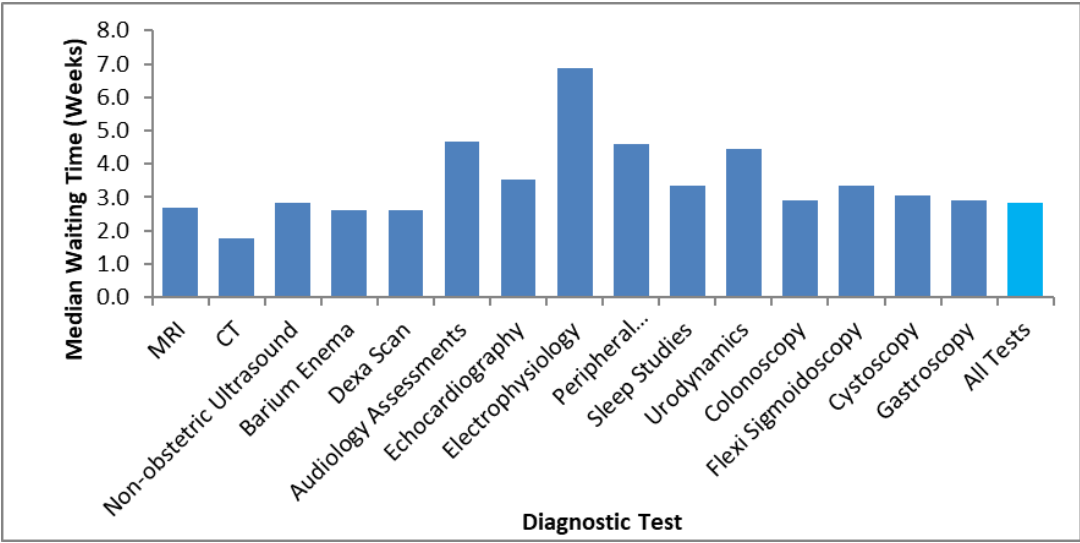
Note: Barium Enema is a test that should be replaced by Colonoscopy or CT Colonography, so the number of tests undertaken should be reducing.

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 32.6% compared with October 2024.

4.3 Median Waiting Times

4.3.1. At the end of October 2025, the estimated median waiting time for all 15 diagnostic tests was 2.8 weeks from the time of referral, up 0.1 from 2.7 in the previous month. The test with the shortest median waiting time was CT at 1.8 weeks. The test with the longest median waiting time was Electrophysiology at 6.9 weeks (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Median waiting time by test – October 2025



4.4 Total Activity

4.4.1. In total 2,617,900 of the 15 key diagnostic tests were performed during October 2025. This is an increase of 61,700 (2.4%) from October 2024, which remains at 2.4% when adjusted for working days (Table 6).

4.4.2. The test with the highest activity was CT with 796,200 tests taking place. This accounted for 30.4% of all activity in October 2025. The test with the lowest activity was Electrophysiology with 100 tests taking place. This accounted for 0.0% of all activity this month.

4.4.3. The number of tests conducted over the last 12 months has increased by 4.0% from the same period last year, which becomes 3.2% when adjusted for working days.

## Accredited Official Statistics

**Table 6: Total activity and growth, by test – October 2024 and October 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.

	Oct-25	Oct-24	YTD 25/26	YTD 24/25	Growth Oct 25 vs Oct 24	Growth YTD 25/26 vs YTD 24/25	Adjusted Growth Oct 25 vs Oct 24	Adjusted Growth YTD 25/26 vs YTD 24/25
MRI	425,676	414,022	2,923,609	2,776,898	2.8%	5.3%	2.8%	4.6%
CT	796,235	765,597	5,379,994	5,136,414	4.0%	4.7%	4.0%	4.0%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	791,425	784,630	5,240,009	5,150,604	0.9%	1.7%	0.9%	1.1%
Barium Enema	4,891	4,573	30,758	28,594	7.0%	7.6%	7.0%	6.9%
Dexa Scan	52,064	52,224	350,459	346,050	-0.3%	1.3%	-0.3%	0.6%
Audiology Assessments	136,711	122,506	870,231	790,134	11.6%	10.1%	11.6%	9.4%
Echocardiography	181,112	177,861	1,194,052	1,162,777	1.8%	2.7%	1.8%	2.0%
Electrophysiology	130	1,017	1,239	5,270	-87.2%	-76.5%	-87.2%	-76.6%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	21,881	22,524	148,708	149,324	-2.9%	-0.4%	-2.9%	-1.1%
Sleep Studies	22,406	21,530	149,553	134,197	4.1%	11.4%	4.1%	10.7%
Urodynamics	7,057	6,784	43,501	44,999	4.0%	-3.3%	4.0%	-4.0%
Colonoscopy	59,679	61,643	381,327	407,866	-3.2%	-6.5%	-3.2%	-7.1%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	16,368	17,575	106,173	119,651	-6.9%	-11.3%	-6.9%	-11.9%
Cystoscopy	35,017	33,501	219,795	222,096	4.5%	-1.0%	4.5%	-1.7%
Gastroscopy	67,239	70,160	440,904	470,648	-4.2%	-6.3%	-4.2%	-6.9%
<b>All Tests</b>	<b>2,617,891</b>	<b>2,556,147</b>	<b>17,480,312</b>	<b>16,945,522</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>

## 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 currently released on an annual 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 October 2025 for the months January 2024 through to January 2025.

### 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. CDC activity is no longer collected separately in DM01, since the programme's management information is now published instead, but waits and activity for their patients is included in DM01 returns for the responsible or host Trust.

#### **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 Science**

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 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](mailto: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](mailto:nhsengland.media@nhs.net)

The NHS England analyst responsible for producing these data is:

Sheila Dixon  
Diagnostics, Operational Insights, NHS England  
Email: [england.diagnosticsdata@nhs.net](mailto:england.diagnosticsdata@nhs.net)