

NHS Diagnostic Waiting Times and Activity Data

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July 2026 Monthly Report

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Contents

Contents	3
1 Executive summary	4
1.1 Accredited Official Statistics	5
2 July 2026 Key Findings	6
3 National Trends	7
3.1 6+ Week Waits	7
3.2 Total Waiting List.....	8
3.3 Median Waiting Time.....	9
3.4 Total Activity	9
4 July 2026 Data	11
4.1 6+ Week Waits	11
4.2 Total Waiting List.....	13
4.3 Median Waiting Times.....	14
4.4 Total Activity	14
5 Annex	16
5.1 Methodology.....	16
5.2 Data Revisions	16
5.3 Data Availability.....	16
5.4 Glossary	16
5.5 Feedback Welcomed.....	17
5.6 Consultation	17
5.7 Additional Information.....	17

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 July 2026 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 July 2026 was 443,200. This was 23.1% 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 July 2025 the total number of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 61,100 while the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 1.3%.
- In the last 12 months, the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more at the end of a month has varied between 20.3% (February 2026) and 24.9% (April 2026).
- At the end of July 2026, the test with the smallest proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was CT with 9.9%. The test with the highest proportion was Peripheral Neurophysiology, with 43.8% 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 July 2026.
- There were 1,915,300 patients waiting for a key diagnostic test at the end of July 2026. This is an increase of 167,800 from July 2025.
- A total of 2,719,900 diagnostic tests were undertaken in July 2026. This is an increase of 70,900 from July 2025.

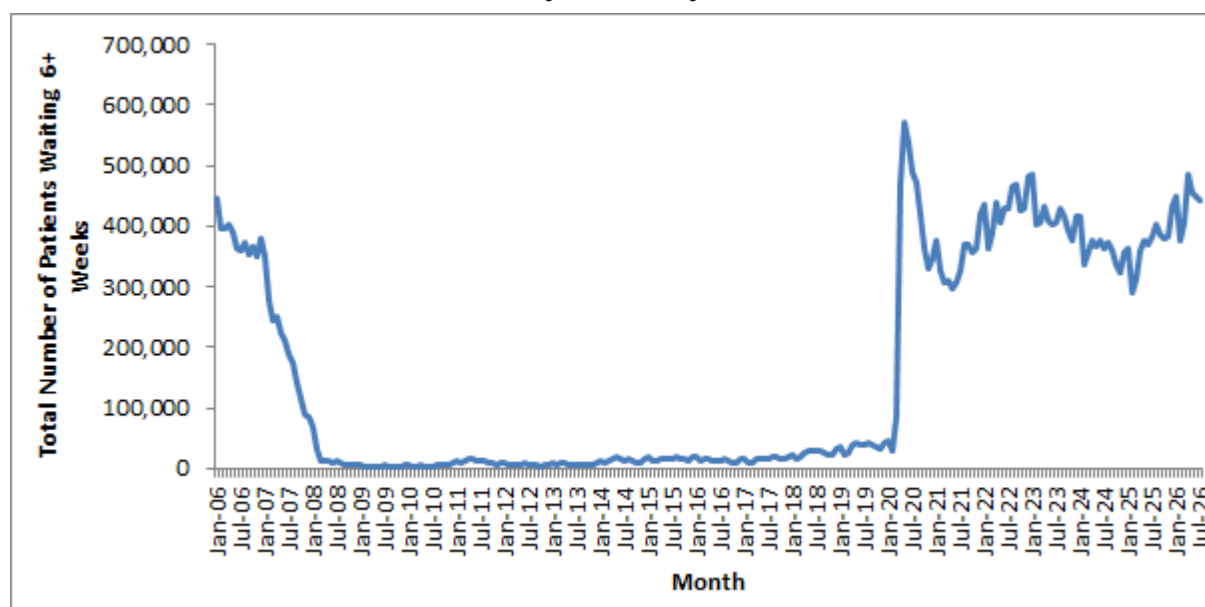
3 National Trends

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

3.1 6+ Week Waits

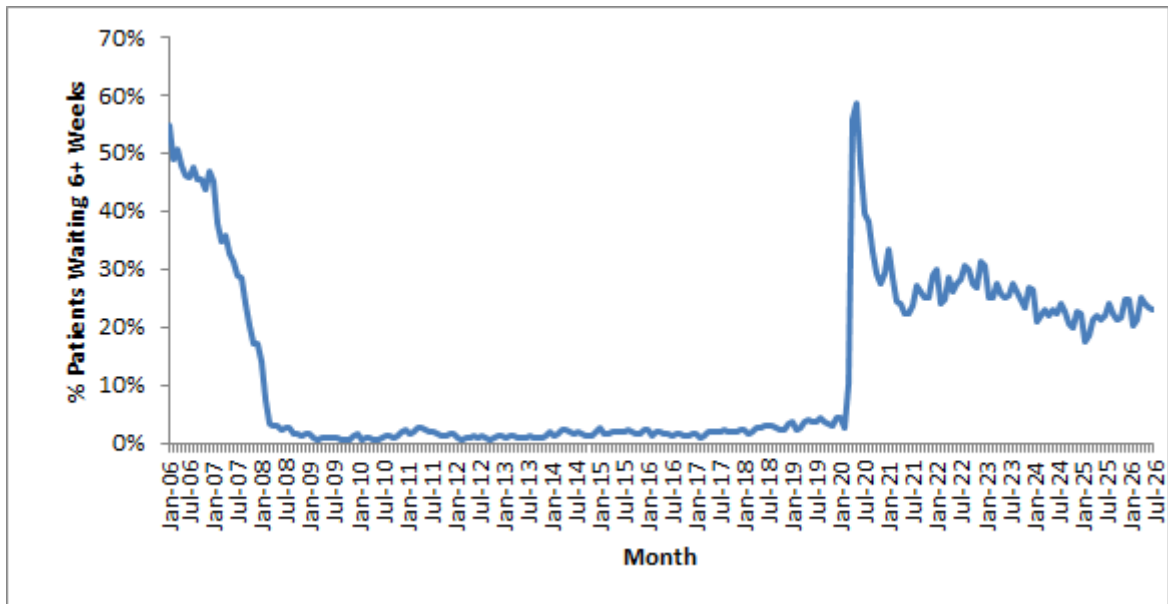
- 3.1.1. The total number of patients waiting six weeks or more dropped sharply between January 2007 and March 2008 (Chart 1), as Trusts worked towards the NHS Improvement Plan (June 2004) milestone that no one should wait six weeks or more for a diagnostic test by March 2008. Subsequent fluctuations 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 July 2026 there was a decrease of 5,300 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 July 2026**



- 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 20.3% (February 2026) and 24.9% (April 2026). The 1% operational standard was last met in November 2013.

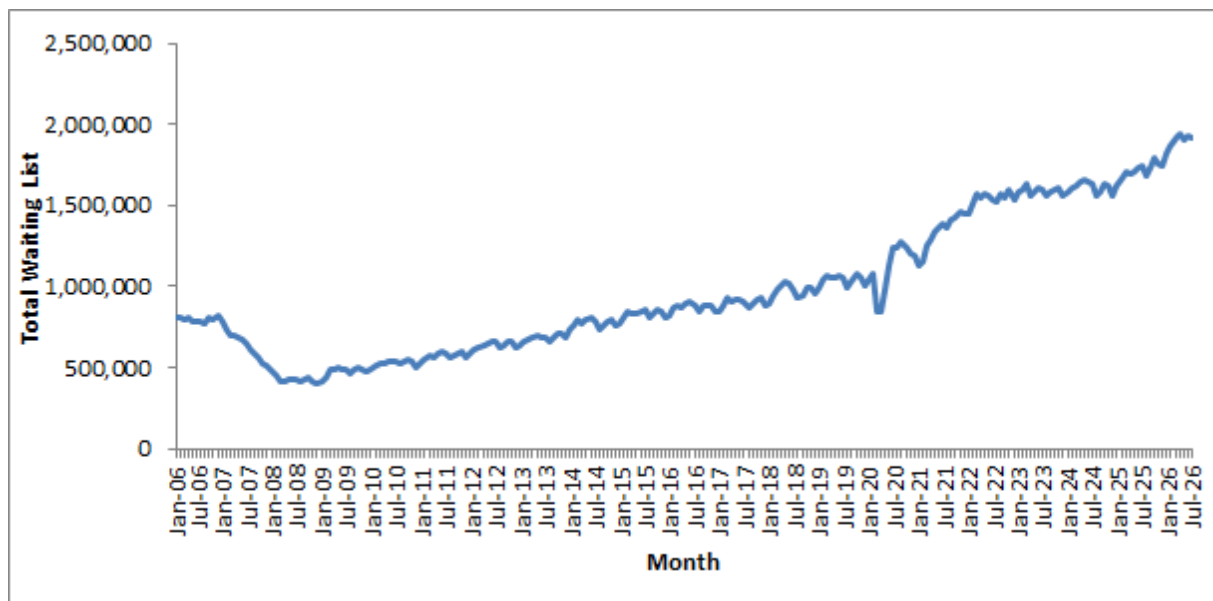
**Chart 2: Percentage of patients waiting 6+ weeks at month end for all tests
January 2006 to July 2026**



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.

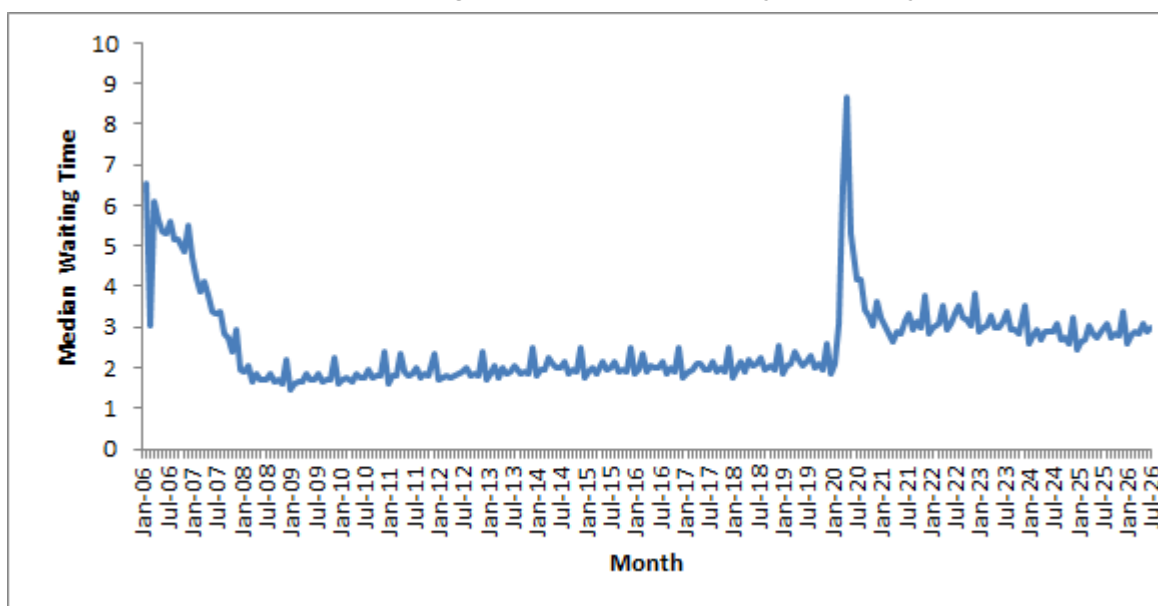
**Chart 3: Total number of patients waiting at month end for all tests
January 2006 to July 2026**



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 3.4 weeks (December 2025) and a low of 2.6 weeks (January 2026). The median waiting time in July 2026 was 3.0 weeks.

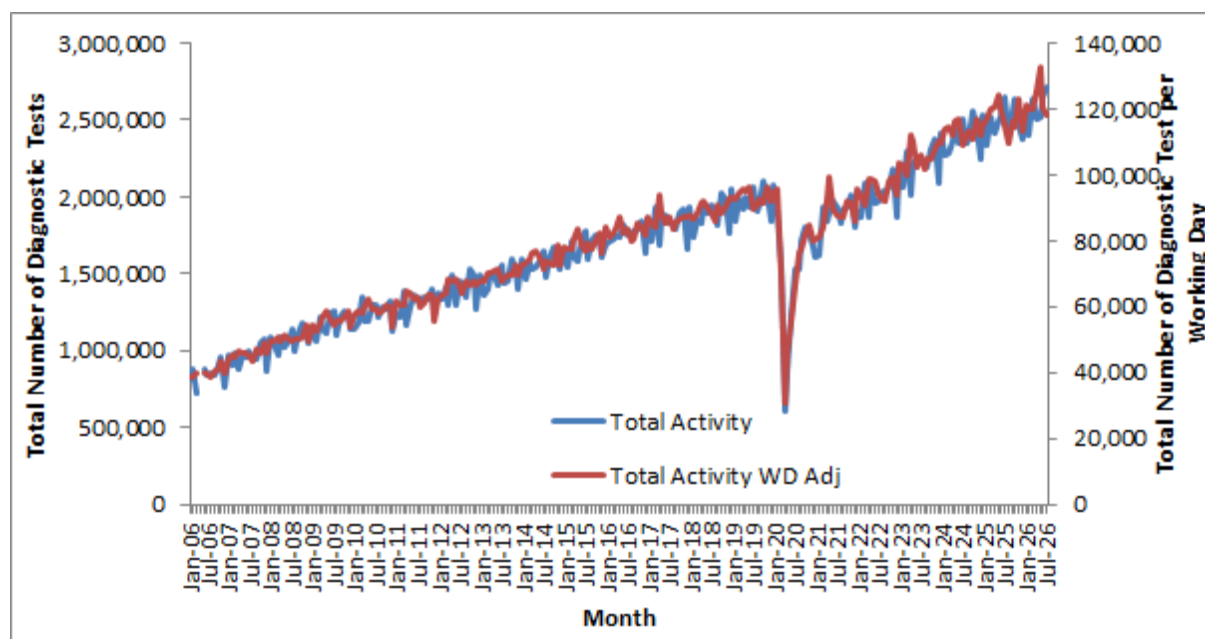
Chart 4: Median waiting time for all tests – January 2006 to July 2026



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 July 2026**



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 Barium Enema and Cystoscopy, where July 2026 activity was 0.8% higher per month than July 2025 (Table 1).

Table 1: Total activity, by test – July 2025 and July 2026

	Jul-25	Jul-26	Average monthly growth
MRI	433,154	452,866	0.4%
CT	801,710	839,573	0.4%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	803,361	808,584	0.1%
Barium Enema	4,888	5,406	0.8%
Dexa Scan	54,516	56,831	0.3%
Audiology Assessments	133,406	132,331	-0.1%
Echocardiography	184,223	187,854	0.2%
Electrophysiology	133	139	0.4%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	23,166	22,008	-0.4%
Sleep Studies	24,246	25,088	0.3%
Urodynamics	6,590	6,824	0.3%
Colonoscopy	59,596	59,631	0.0%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	16,575	17,053	0.2%
Cystoscopy	33,345	36,481	0.8%
Gastroscopy	70,142	69,268	-0.1%
All Tests	2,649,051	2,719,937	0.2%

4 July 2026 Data

This section analyses the July 2026 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 July 2026, there were a total of 443,200 patients waiting six weeks or more from referral for one of the 15 key diagnostic tests. This was 23.1% of the total number of patients waiting at the end of the month.
- 4.1.2. Compared with July 2025, the number of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 61,100, while the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more increased by 1.3%.
- 4.1.3. Compared with July 2025, the test with the largest increase in the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was Peripheral Neurophysiology, which increased by 7.1 percentage points. The test with the largest decrease was Electrophysiology, which decreased by 43.7 percentage points (Table 2).

Table 2: Proportion of patients waiting 6+ weeks, by test – July 2025 and July 2026

	Jul-25	Jul-26	Difference (%age points)
MRI	16.8%	21.4%	4.6
CT	11.0%	9.9%	-1.0
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	18.9%	19.6%	0.6
Barium Enema	18.4%	25.3%	6.8
Dexa Scan	13.5%	19.4%	6.0
Audiology Assessments	44.8%	41.5%	-3.3
Echocardiography	31.0%	28.5%	-2.5
Electrophysiology	58.2%	14.4%	-43.7
Peripheral Neurophysiology	36.7%	43.8%	7.1
Sleep Studies	28.3%	33.3%	5.0
Urodynamics	39.6%	42.5%	2.9
Colonoscopy	27.3%	30.8%	3.6
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	29.2%	32.1%	2.9
Cystoscopy	26.5%	24.4%	-2.0
Gastroscopy	25.3%	29.0%	3.7
All Tests	21.9%	23.1%	1.3

Note: Figures may differ due to rounding.

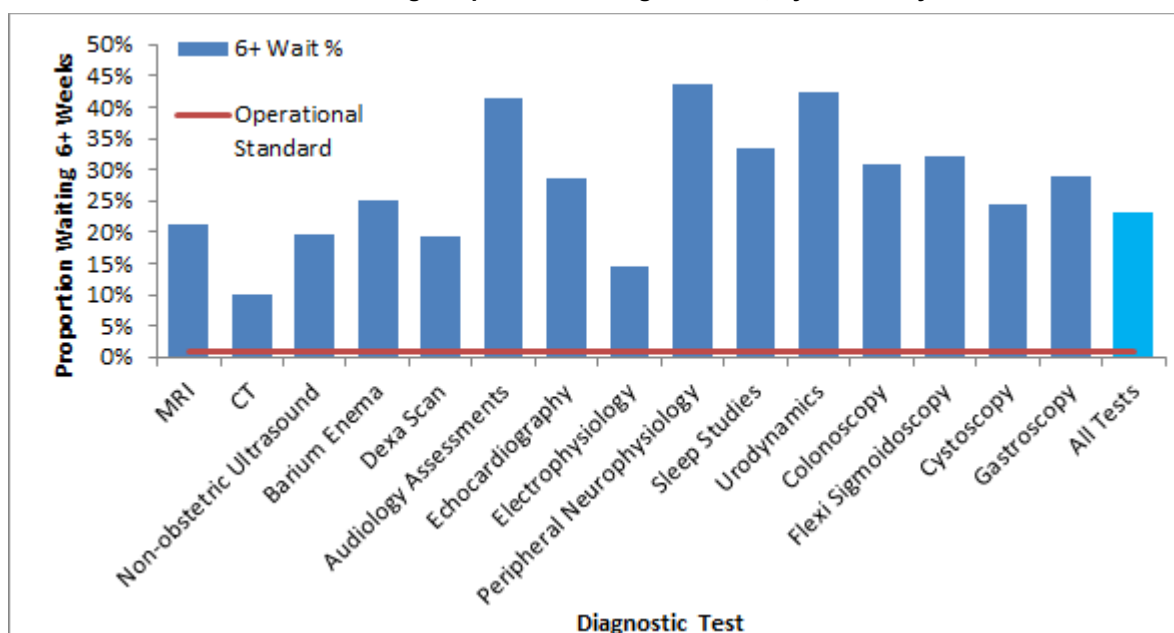
- 4.1.4. Compared with July 2025, the test type with the smallest change in the proportion of patients waiting six weeks or more was Physiological Science with a decrease of 1.1 percentage points. Imaging increased by 1.8 percentage points and Endoscopy increased by 2.9 percentage points (Table 3). See section 5.4 for which tests are included under the different test types.

Table 3: Proportion of patients waiting 6+ weeks, by test type – July 2025 and July 2026

	Jul-25	Jul-26	Difference (%age points)
Imaging	16.9%	18.7%	1.8
Physiological Science	36.4%	35.3%	-1.1
Endoscopy	26.7%	29.5%	2.9
Total	21.9%	23.1%	1.3

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 (9.9%), whilst the test with the highest proportion was Peripheral Neurophysiology (43.8%) (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Percentage of patients waiting 6+ weeks, by test – July 2026

- 4.1.6. 129 of the 134 acute trusts that submitted data for July 2026 failed to meet the 1% operational standard.
- 4.1.7. All 37 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 13.5% (North West region) and 31.2% (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: July 2026 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	72,357	21.7%	333,429	451,288	2.8
South West	28,287	17.3%	163,122	264,782	2.8
South East	64,437	22.9%	281,878	411,797	3.0
Midlands	112,709	28.9%	389,528	507,912	3.4
East of England	76,916	31.2%	246,398	306,684	3.7
North West	30,301	13.5%	224,899	366,710	2.5
North East and Yorkshire	57,326	21.2%	270,477	399,402	2.9
England	443,202	23.1%	1,915,281	2,719,937	3.0

*Includes all independent sector providers and excludes centrally commissioned.

4.2 Total Waiting List

- 4.2.1. At the end of July 2026 there was a total of 1,915,300 patients still waiting for a diagnostic test. This is an increase of 167,800 (9.6%) from July 2025.
- 4.2.2. The test with the largest waiting list was Non-obstetric Ultrasound, which accounted for 34.9% of the total waiting list, or 668,400 patients. The test with the smallest waiting list was Electrophysiology, which accounted for 0.02% of the total waiting list, or 300 patients (Table 5).

Table 5: Total number of patients waiting at month end, by test – July 2025 and July 2026

	Jul-25	Jul-26	Growth (%age)
MRI	341,525	391,764	14.7%
CT	176,213	196,277	11.4%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	631,045	668,435	5.9%
Barium Enema	3,836	4,981	29.8%
Dexa Scan	57,167	69,999	22.4%
Audiology Assessments	121,481	124,667	2.6%
Echocardiography	151,585	160,384	5.8%
Electrophysiology	184	347	88.6%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	38,730	41,086	6.1%
Sleep Studies	30,721	42,670	38.9%
Urodynamics	9,398	9,978	6.2%
Colonoscopy	68,890	79,510	15.4%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	23,023	24,064	4.5%
Cystoscopy	24,745	24,958	0.9%
Gastroscopy	68,981	76,161	10.4%
All Tests	1,747,524	1,915,281	9.6%

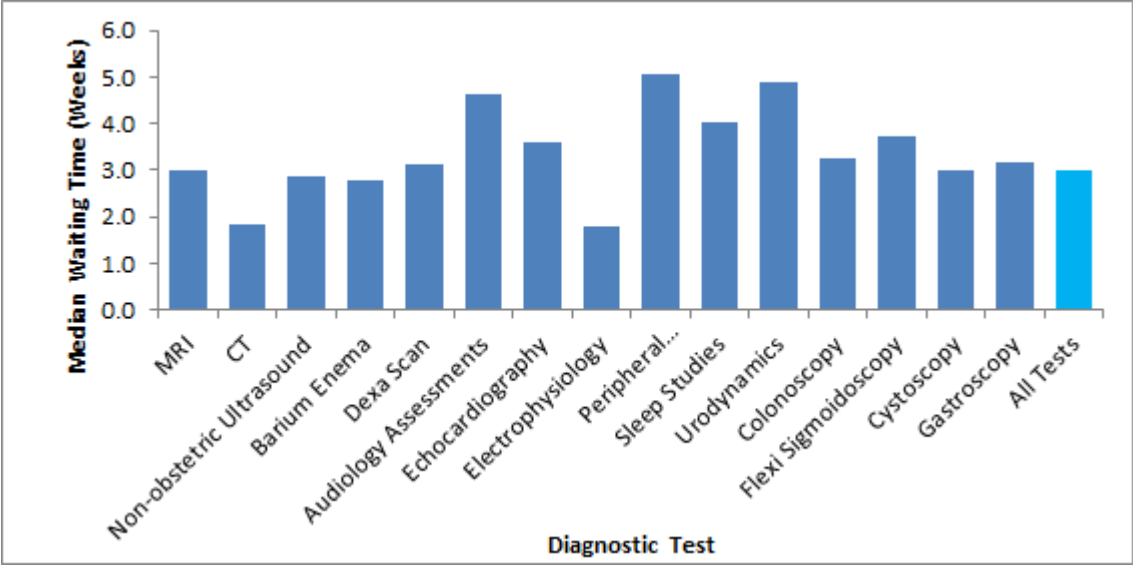
Note: Barium Enema is a test that should be replaced by Colonoscopy or CT Colonography, so the number of tests undertaken should be reducing.

4.2.3. The largest proportional increase in the number of patients waiting by test has been for Electrophysiology where the reported waiting list grew by 88.6% compared with July 2025.

4.3 Median Waiting Times

4.3.1. At the end of July 2026, the estimated median waiting time for all 15 diagnostic tests was 3.0 weeks from the time of referral, an increase of 0.1 from the previous month. The test with the shortest median waiting time was Electrophysiology at 1.8 weeks. The test with the longest median waiting time was Peripheral Neurophysiology at 5.1 weeks (Chart 7).

Chart 7: Median waiting time by test – July 2026



4.4 Total Activity

- 4.4.1. In total 2,719,900 of the 15 key diagnostic tests were performed during July 2026. This is an increase of 70,900 from July 2025, which is an increase of 2.7%, which remains 2.7% when adjusted for working days (Table 6).
- 4.4.2. The test with the highest activity was CT with 839,600 tests taking place. This accounted for 30.9% of all activity in July 2026. The test with the lowest activity was Electrophysiology with 100 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 3.3% from the same period last year, which becomes 2.5% when adjusted for working days.

Accredited Official Statistics

Table 6: Total activity and growth, by test – July 2025 and July 2026

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

	Jul-26	Jul-25	YTD 26/27	YTD 25/26	Growth Jul 26 vs Jul 25	Growth YTD 26/27 vs YTD 25/26	Adjusted Growth Jul 26 vs Jul 25	Adjusted Growth YTD 26/27 vs YTD 25/26
MRI	452,866	433,154	1,741,298	1,682,153	4.6%	3.5%	4.6%	3.5%
CT	839,573	801,710	3,230,061	3,082,793	4.7%	4.8%	4.7%	4.8%
Non-obstetric Ultrasound	808,584	803,361	3,087,891	3,020,988	0.7%	2.2%	0.7%	2.2%
Barium Enema	5,406	4,888	20,372	17,669	10.6%	15.3%	10.6%	15.3%
Dexa Scan	56,831	54,516	209,782	204,594	4.2%	2.5%	4.2%	2.5%
Audiology Assessments	132,331	133,406	510,182	490,730	-0.8%	4.0%	-0.8%	4.0%
Echocardiography	187,854	184,223	710,465	687,779	2.0%	3.3%	2.0%	3.3%
Electrophysiology	139	133	1,153	469	4.5%	145.8%	4.5%	145.8%
Peripheral Neurophysiology	22,008	23,166	84,765	87,302	-5.0%	-2.9%	-5.0%	-2.9%
Sleep Studies	25,088	24,246	93,890	85,488	3.5%	9.8%	3.5%	9.8%
Urodynamics	6,824	6,590	26,862	24,612	3.6%	9.1%	3.6%	9.1%
Colonoscopy	59,631	59,596	221,326	228,737	0.1%	-3.2%	0.1%	-3.2%
Flexi Sigmoidoscopy	17,053	16,575	63,434	65,077	2.9%	-2.5%	2.9%	-2.5%
Cystoscopy	36,481	33,345	134,886	126,060	9.4%	7.0%	9.4%	7.0%
Gastroscopy	69,268	70,142	258,341	268,442	-1.2%	-3.8%	-1.2%	-3.8%
All Tests	2,719,937	2,649,051	10,394,708	10,072,893	2.7%	3.2%	2.7%	3.2%

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 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 published in September 2026 for the months September 2025 through to March 2026.

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

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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