

Cancer waiting times across the pathway: key statistics

Last updated: August 2026

What you will find in this document

This brief presents data and key trends on diagnostic testing and cancer waiting times across the UK.

- It includes information on:
- Activity (number of tests and patients seen)
 - Waiting times (performance against key targets)



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Background

There are standards and targets on timelines for the care of patients who are suspected of having cancer. The aim is to ensure that patients can be diagnosed and begin treatment as quickly as possible, which can lead to improved outcomes and patient experience.

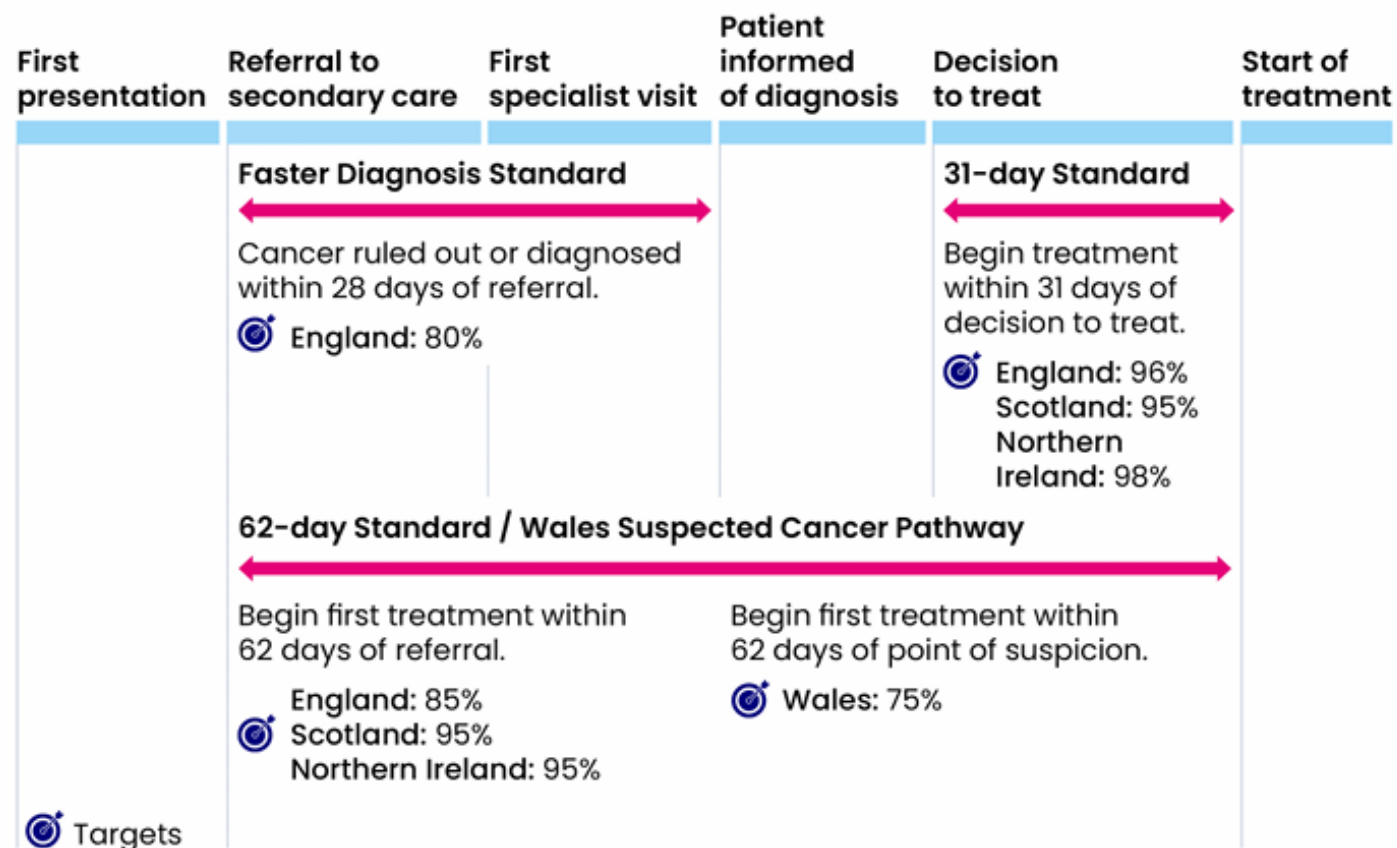
This brief provides the latest data and time trends for waiting time measures across UK nations. Overall, there are four standards that cover different elements of the cancer pathway across the UK nations:

- Faster Diagnosis Standard – England only
- 31-day standard – England, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- 62-day standard – England, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Suspected Cancer Pathway – Wales only

Data is also collated for those awaiting a diagnostic test in the UK. This is not specific to those with cancer referrals but are a gauge for how stretched the NHS is for diagnostic capacity over time. This brief includes data on waiting list size and the proportion waiting over a set number of weeks.

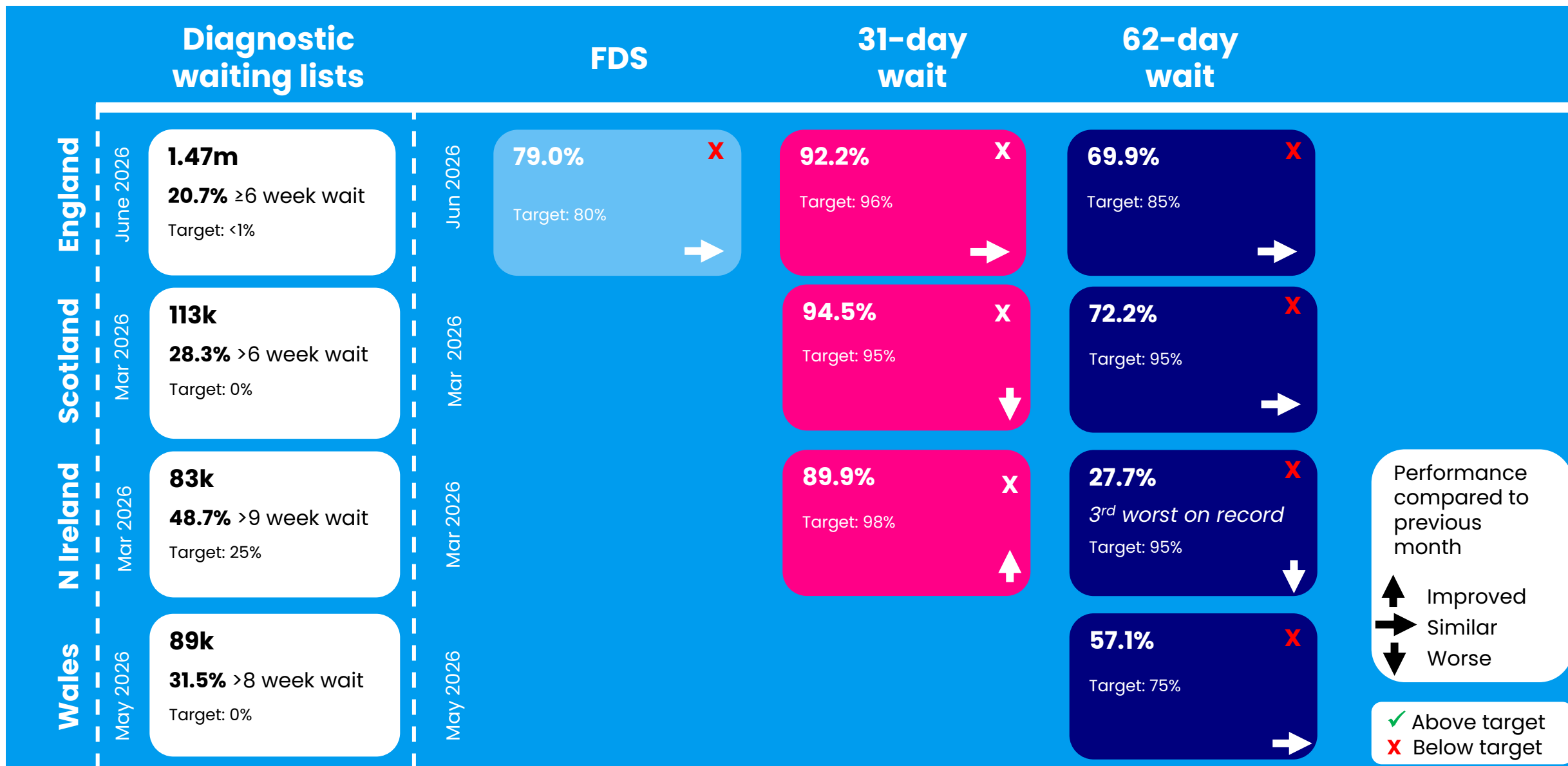


Cancer waiting times standards and associated targets across the UK



Summary of the latest data

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*Note: only the highest or lowest five months of data are highlighted as best/worst on record.



Summary of the latest data

Additional Measures: (England only)

FDS by Referral Outcome

Those with cancer diagnosed: : 54.8%

Those with cancer ruled out: : 79.5%

Performance gap: 24.7%

Long waiters (over 104 days)

10.0% waiting over 104 days

Around 1,700 patients waiting over 104 days to start treatment

Key observations - June 2026 Release

- In England, the updated FDS performance target of 80% continues to be missed. There remains a substantial performance gap between those diagnosed and those with cancer ruled out, but this has fallen slightly by 0.6 percentage points in Apr-Jun 2026 compared to the previous quarter.
- The proportion of people waiting over 104 days to start treatment increased from 9.4% to 10% in the latest month of data for England. This included notable increases in several sites, including gynaecological, lung, lymphoma and urological (excl. prostate)
- Only 27.7% of people started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in Northern Ireland, the 3rd worst performance on record. Diagnostic data also shows that nearly half of those waiting for a key diagnostic test in Northern Ireland have been waiting more than 9 weeks.

[For more detailed data breakdowns please visit our Cancer Waiting Times Data Hub](#)

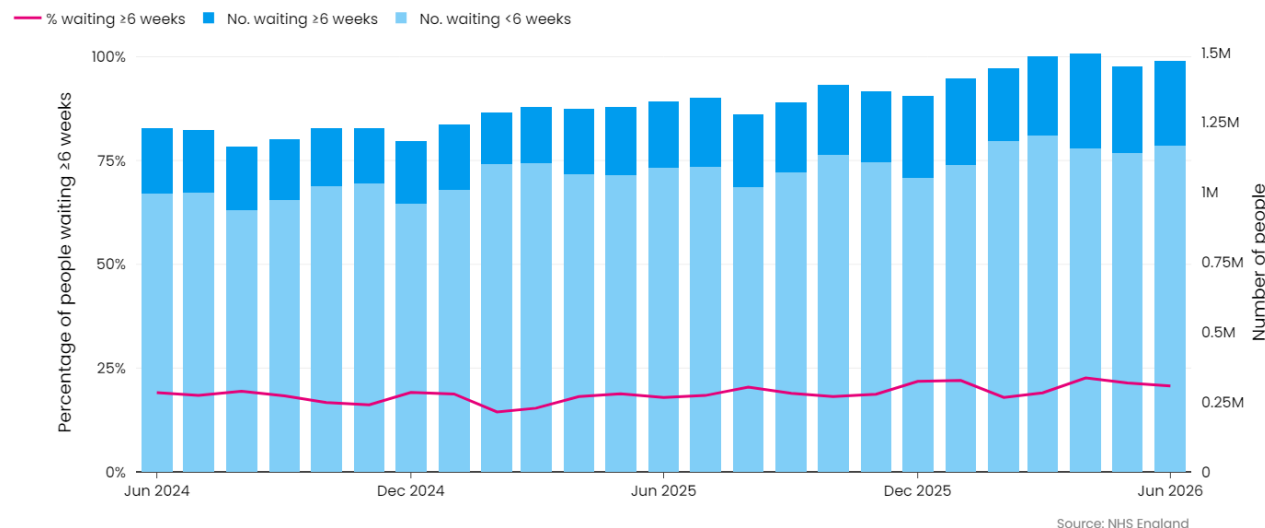
Diagnostics waiting lists *(All UK nations)*



The number of people waiting for a key diagnostic test is the 3rd highest on record in England

- In June 2026, around 1.47 million people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in England. Of these, 20.7% have been waiting 6 weeks or more.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 30.6% (around 62,900) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 19.1% (around 242,000) waiting 6 or more weeks.
- The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list (radiology and endoscopy) is the 3rd highest on record (since 2006).

Total diagnostic tests waiting list at the end of each month
England, June 2024 to June 2026



Test type	June 2026		
	People waiting	People waiting 6+ weeks	% waiting 6+ weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	205K	62.9K	30.6%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	1.27M	242K	19.1%

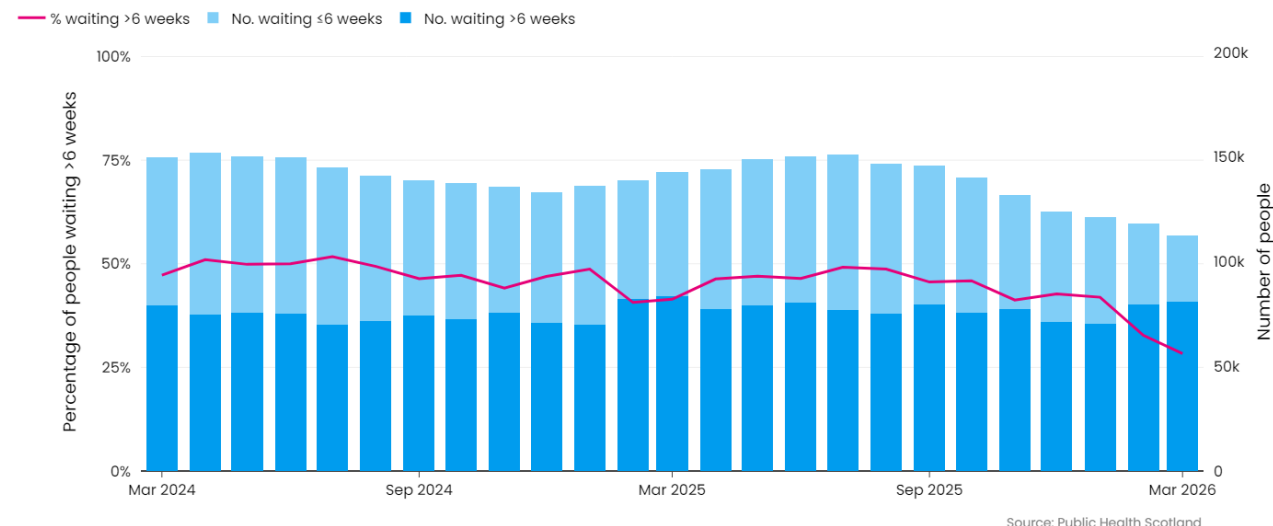


The number of people waiting for a key diagnostic test in Scotland is declining

- In March 2026, around 113,000 people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in Scotland. Of these, 28.3% have been waiting more than 6 weeks.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 48.4% (around 13,500) waiting more than 6 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 21.7% (around 18,400) waiting more than 6 weeks.

Total diagnostic tests waiting list at the end of each month

Scotland, March 2024 to March 2026



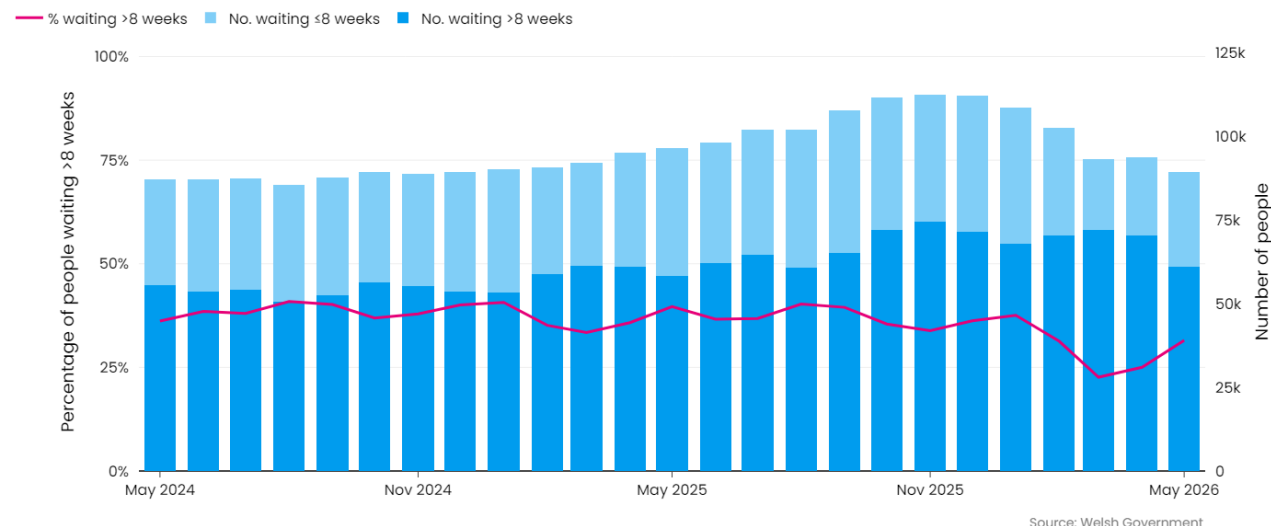
Test type	March 2026		
	People waiting	People waiting >6 weeks	% waiting >6 weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	27.9K	13.5K	48.4%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	84.8K	18.4K	21.7%



Nearly a third of people are waiting more than 8 weeks for a key diagnostic test in Wales

- In May 2026, around 89,200 were waiting for key diagnostic tests in Wales. Of these, 31.5% have been waiting more than 8 weeks.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 36.7% (around 5,400) waiting more than 8 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 31.5% (around 22,700) waiting more than 8 weeks.

Total diagnostic tests waiting list at the end of each month
Wales, May 2024 to May 2026



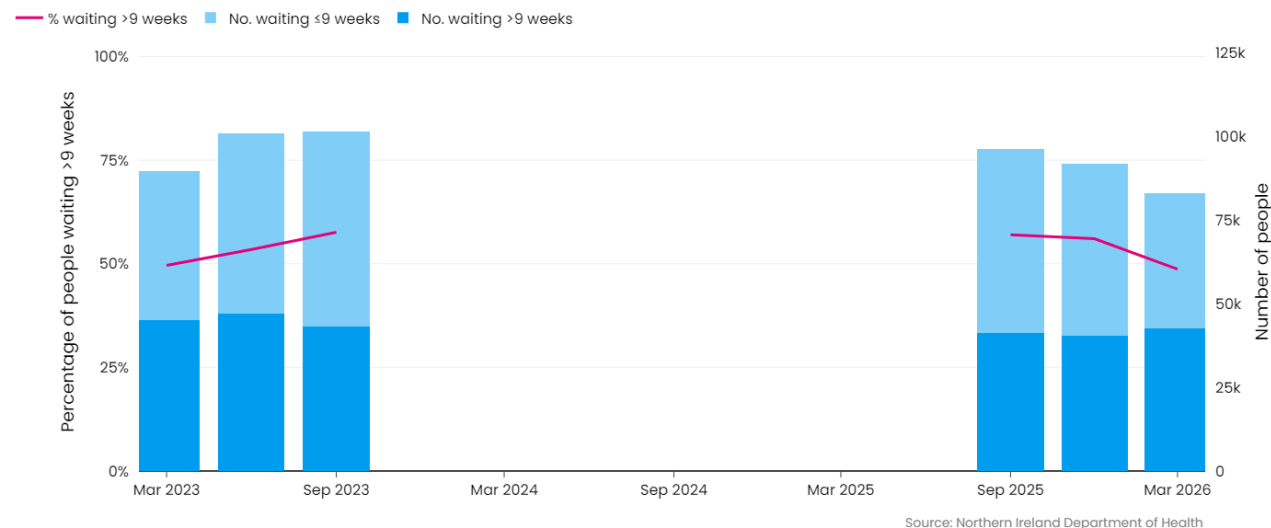
Test type	May 2026		
	People waiting	People waiting >8 weeks	% waiting >8 weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	14.8K	5.4K	36.7%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	74.5K	22.7K	30.5%



Nearly half of people are waiting more than 9 weeks for a key diagnostic test in Northern Ireland

- In March 2026, around 82,900 people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in Northern Ireland. Of these, 48.7% have been more than 9 weeks.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 34.9% (around 3,600) waiting more than 9 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 50.7% (around 36,800) waiting more than 9 weeks.
- The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list (radiology and endoscopy) is the 7th highest on record (since 2008).
- Please note that data are not complete at the national level from quarter ending December 2023 to quarter ending June 2026. This is due to the roll out of a new electronic patient record system.

Total diagnostic tests waiting list at the end of each financial quarter
Northern Ireland, March 2023 to March 2026



Test type	March 2026		
	People waiting	People waiting >9 weeks	% waiting >9 weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	10.3K	3.6K	34.9%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	72.6K	36.8K	50.7%

Faster Diagnosis Standard *(England only)*

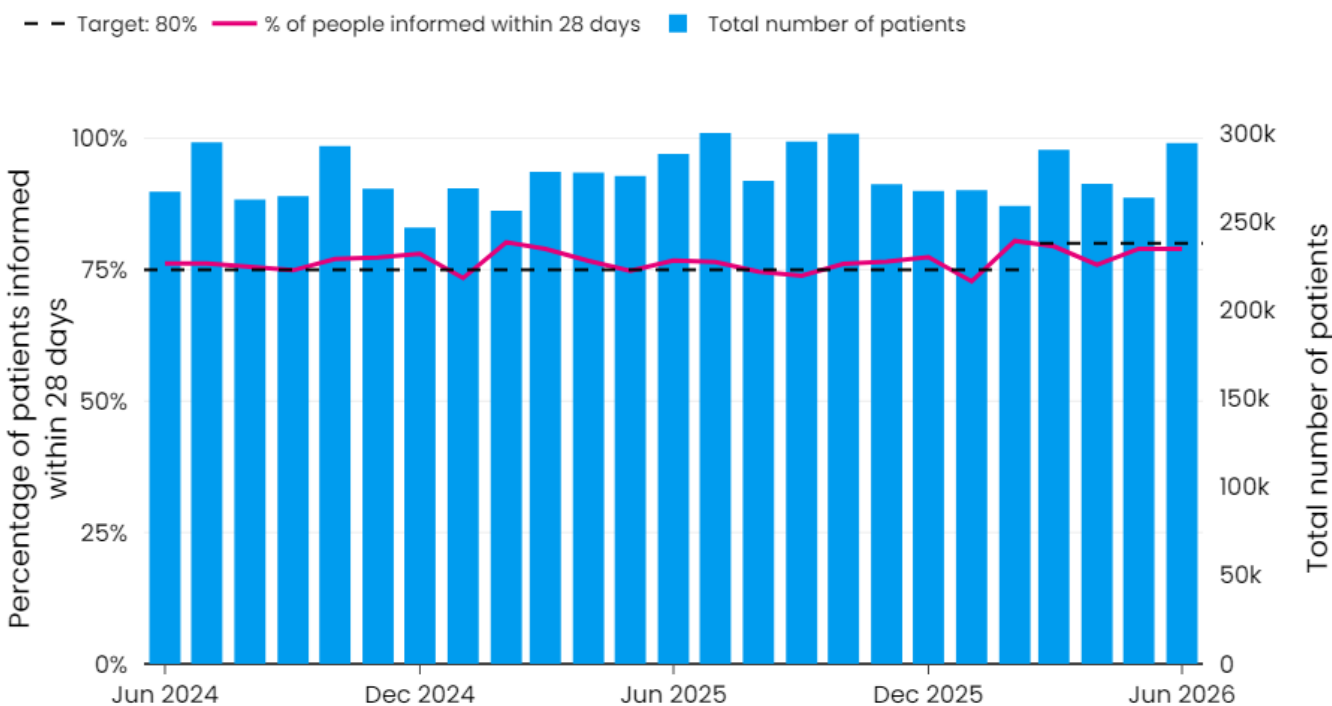


The Faster Diagnosis Standard target has not been met

- In June 2026, 79.0% of people were diagnosed or had cancer ruled out within 28 days of an urgent referral, missing the NHSE target of 80%.
- The originally proposed FDS standard was set at 95%, but a 75% target was implemented at launch. In March 2026, the operational standard increased to 80%.

Number of patients included in the Faster Diagnosis Standard and proportion told they have cancer or had cancer ruled out within 28 days of an urgent referral

England, June 2024 to June 2026



FDS operational standard changed from 75% to 80% from March 2026

Source: NHS England

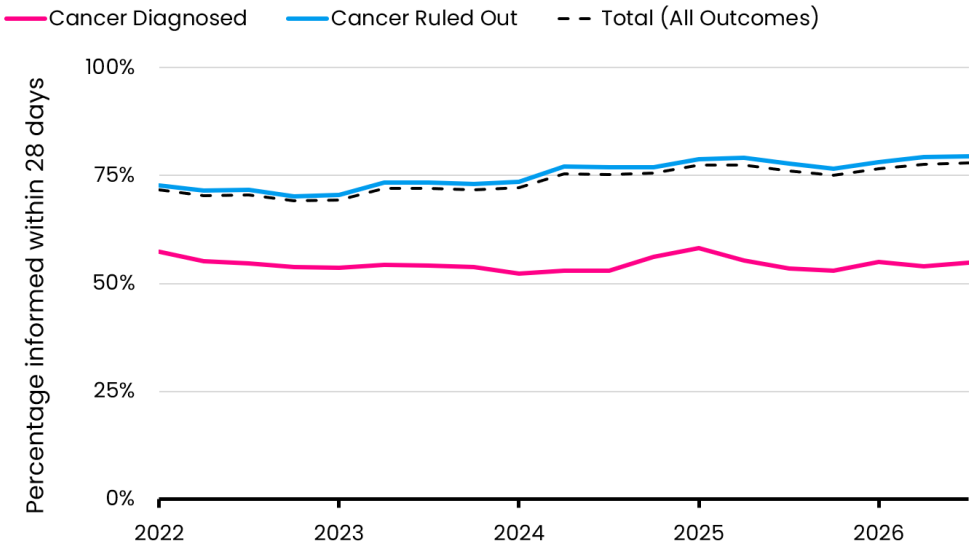


Waiting times for Faster Diagnosis Standard varied for people with cancer diagnosed versus ruled out

April – June 2026	% informed of outcome within 28-days	
	Cancer diagnosed	Cancer ruled out
All Cancers Combined	54.8%	79.5%
Haematological	50.0%	65.0%
Urological (excl. testicular)	31.0%	70.8%
Lower GI	55.3%	66.7%
Gynaecological	37.6%	70.0%
Sarcoma	33.5%	74.9%

FDS performance by referral outcome

All cancers combined by quarter



Source: NHS England

- Performance against the Faster Diagnosis Standard broken down by referral outcome showed that in April–June 2026, **54.8%** of people diagnosed with cancer following an urgent referral met the 28-day standard, while the 28-day standard was met for **79.5%** of people who had cancer ruled out.
- Trends show a general improvement for people with cancer ruled out while performance is stagnating for those with cancer diagnosis.

Time to treatment targets

31-day (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland)

62-day (England, Scotland and Northern Ireland) & Suspected Cancer Pathway (Wales)

Long waiters & Management Information (England only)

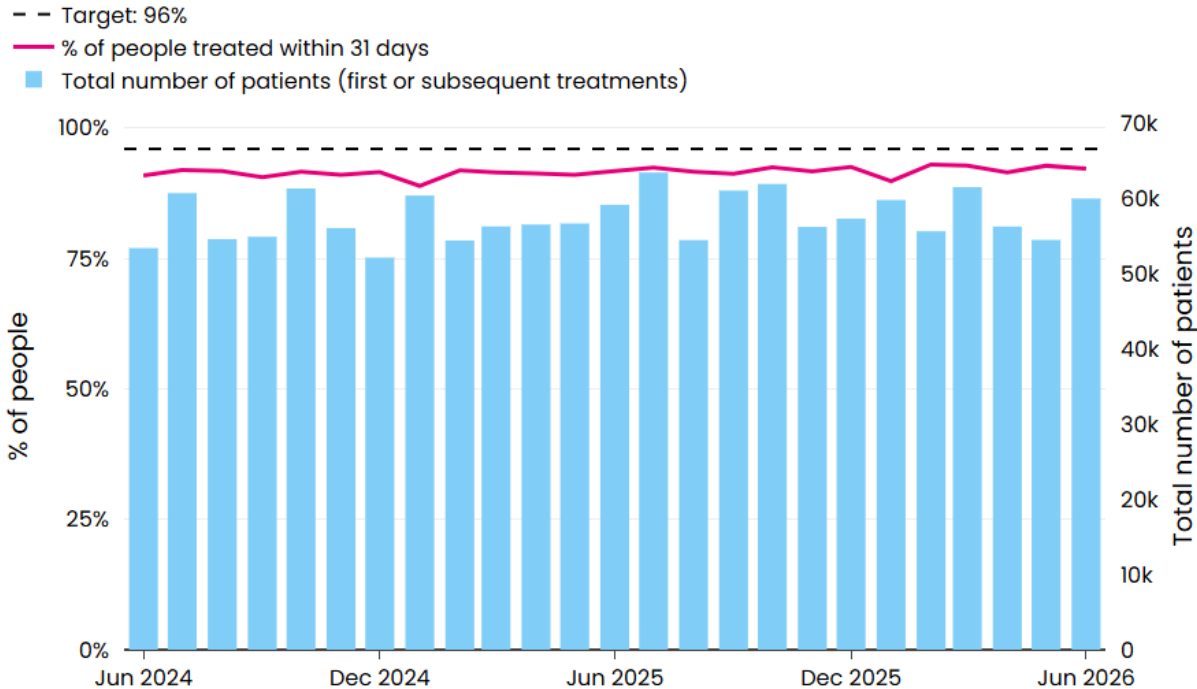


The target for starting treatment within 31 days of decision to treat was missed in England

- Only 92.2% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in England in June 2026, missing the NHSE target of 96%.

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
England (June 26) Standard: 96%	59,900	92.2%	2,300

Number of patients receiving treatment for cancer and proportion treated within 31 days of a decision to treat
England, June 2024 to June 2026



Source: NHS England



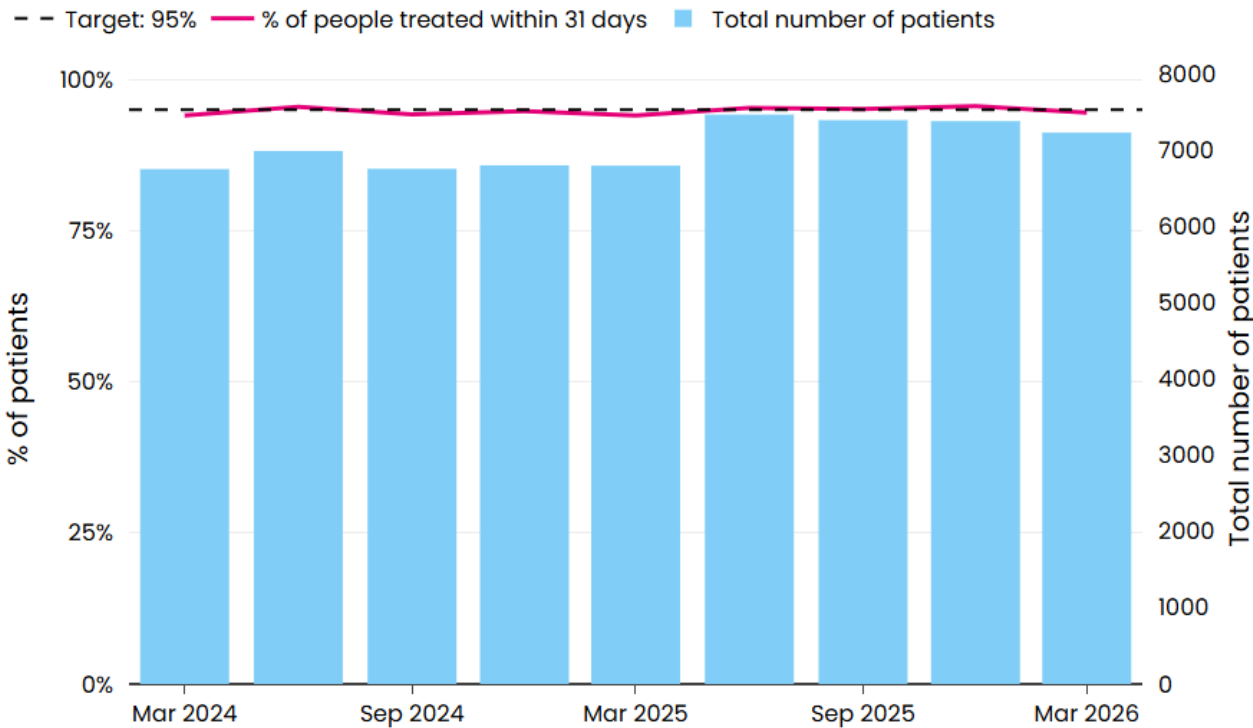
The target for starting treatment within 31 days of decision to treat was missed in Scotland

- Only 94.5% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in Scotland in March 2026, missing the target of 95%.

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
Scotland (Quarter ending March 26) Standard: 95%	7,200	94.5%	35

Number of patients receiving treatment for cancer and proportion treated within 31 days of a decision to treat

Scotland, March 2024 to March 2026



Source: Public Health Scotland

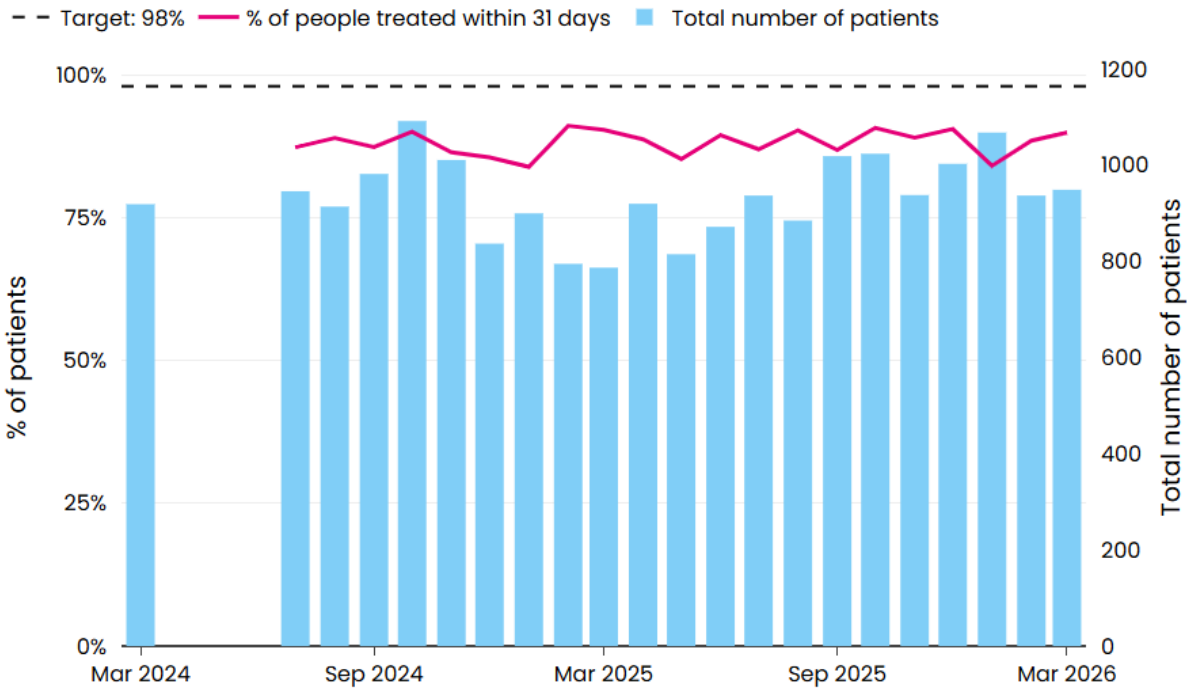


The target for starting treatment within 31 days of decision to treat was missed in Northern Ireland

- Only 89.9% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in Northern Ireland in March 2026, missing the NHSE target of 98%.

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
Northern Ireland (March 26) Standard: 98%	950	89.9%	75

Number of patients receiving first definitive treatment for cancer and proportion treated within 31 days of a decision to treat
Northern Ireland, March 2024 to March 2026



Source: Northern Ireland Department of Health

*Complete Northern Ireland data is not available between April 2024 and June 2024 due to the ongoing rollout of Northern Ireland's new data infrastructure.

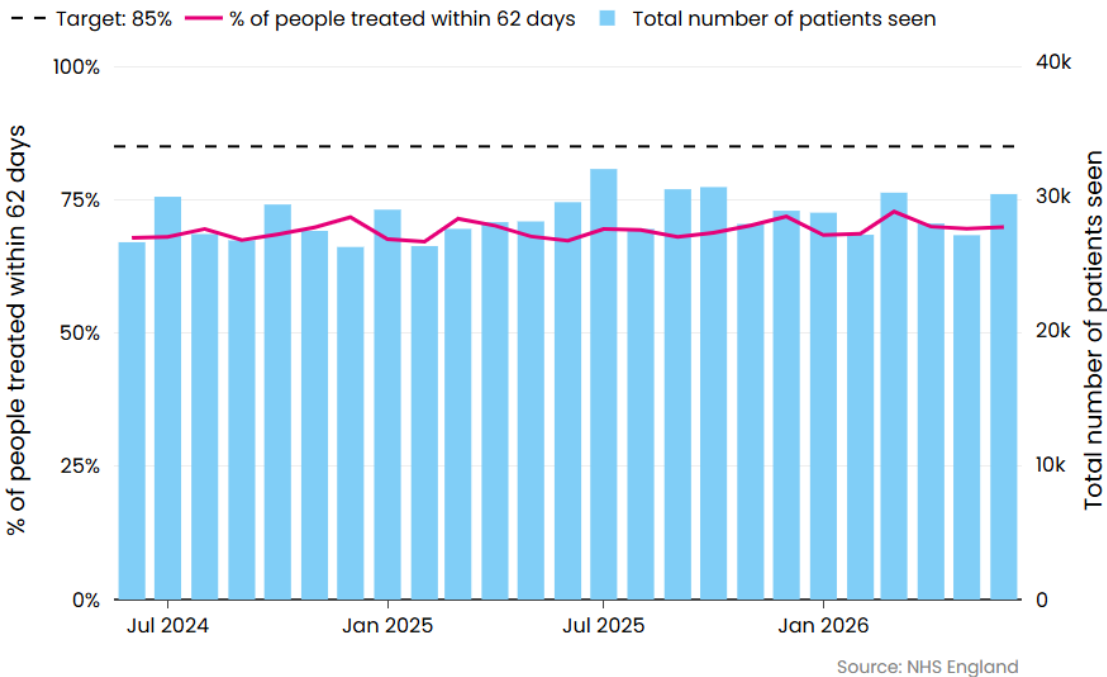


The target for starting treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral was missed in England

- Only 69.9% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in England in June 2026, missing the NHS E target of 85%.
- This target has not been met in England since December 2015.
- If the target was met in June 2026, around 4,600 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
England (June 26) Standard: 85%	30,100	69.9%	4,600

Number of patients receiving a first definitive treatment for cancer following an urgent referral and proportion treated within 62 days
England, June 2024 to June 2026



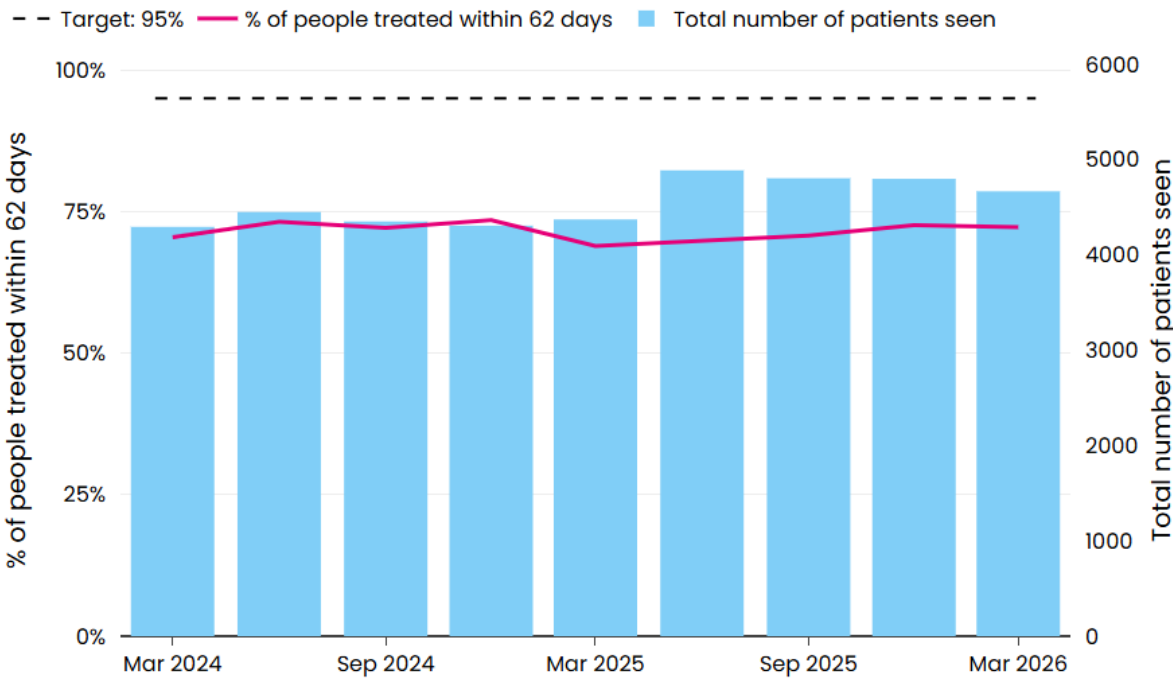


The target for starting treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral was missed in Scotland

- Only 72.2% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in Scotland in March 2026, missing the target of 95%.
- This target has not been met in Scotland since December 2012.
- If the target was met in March 2026, around 1,100 additional patients in Scotland would have been treated on time.

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
Scotland (Quarter ending March 26) Standard: 95%	4,700	72.2%	1,100

Number of patients receiving a first definitive treatment for cancer following an urgent referral and proportion treated within 62 days
Scotland, March 2024 to March 2026



Source: Public Health Scotland

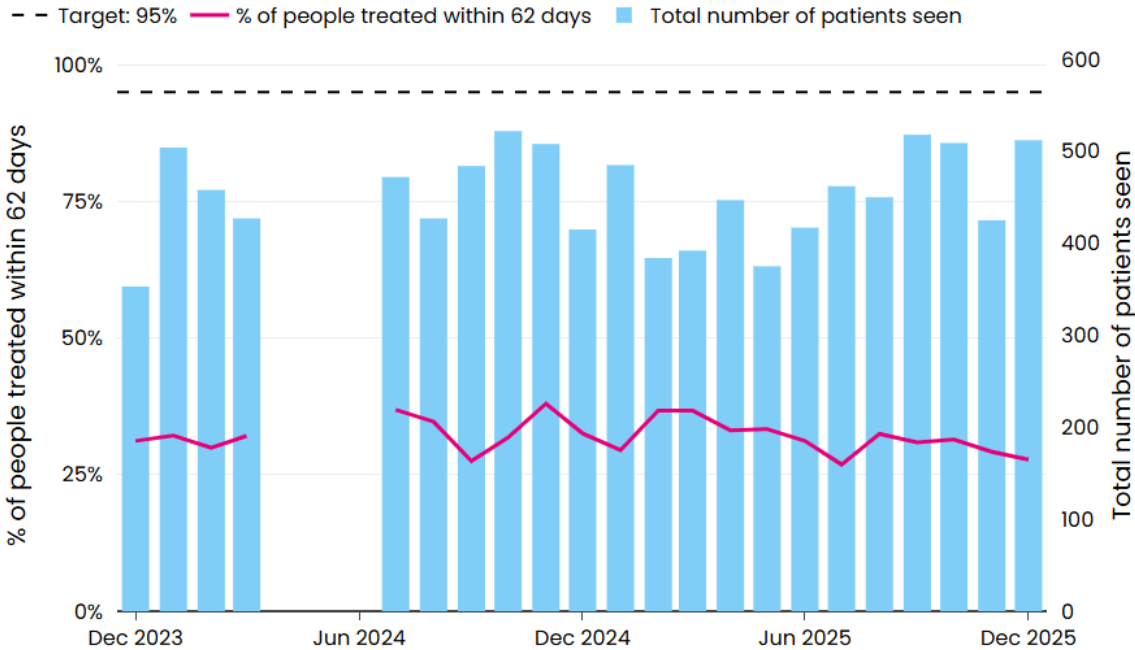


The target for starting treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral was missed in Northern Ireland

- Only 27.7% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in Northern Ireland in December 2025, missing the target of 95%.
- This target has not been met in Northern Ireland since records began in April 2008. Performance in December 2025 was the 3rd worst on record.
- If the target was met in December 2025 around 340 additional patients in Northern Ireland would have been treated on time.

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
Northern Ireland (December 25) Standard: 95%	510	27.7%	340

Number of patients receiving a first definitive treatment for cancer following an urgent referral and proportion treated within 62 days Northern Ireland, December 2023 to December 2025



Source: Northern Ireland Department of Health

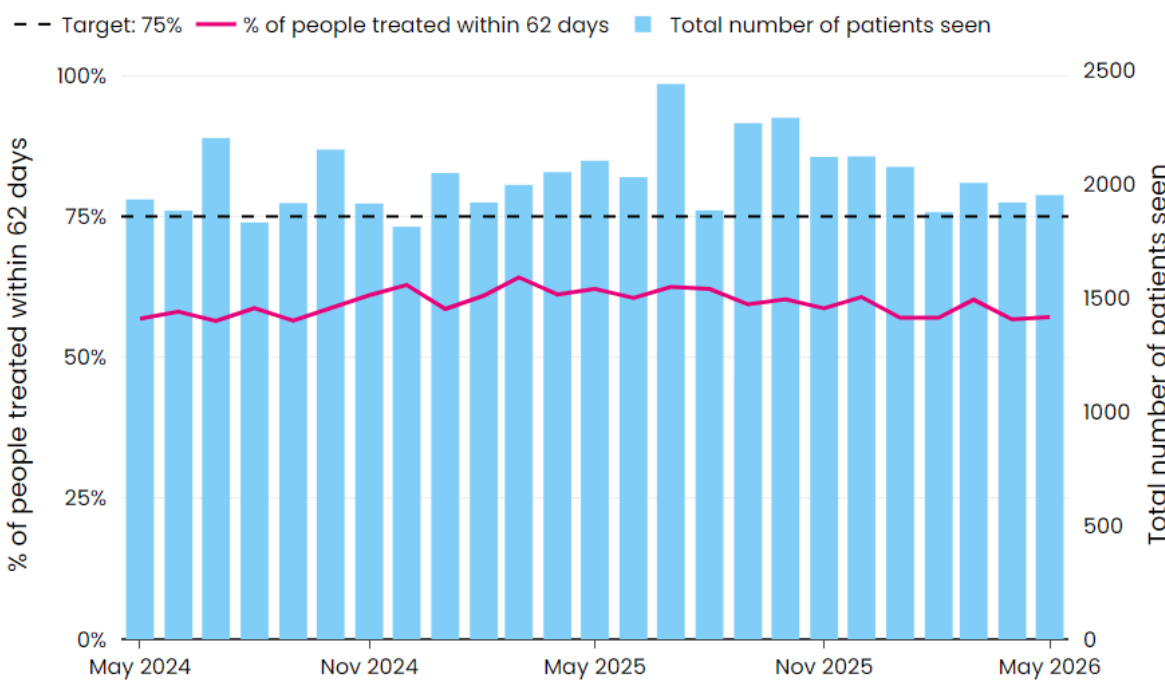
**Complete Northern Ireland data is not available between April 2024 and June 2024 due to the ongoing rollout of Northern Ireland's new data infrastructure.*

The target for starting treatment within 62 days of the point of suspicion of cancer was missed in Wales

- Only 57.1% of patients started treatment within 62 days of the point of suspicion (a referral) in Wales in May 2026, missing the target of 75%.
- This target has not been met in Wales since the Suspected Cancer Pathway was implemented in June 2019.
- If the target was met in May 2026, around 350 additional patients in Wales would have been treated on time.

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
Wales (May 26) Standard: 75%	2,000	57.1%	350

Number of patients receiving a first definitive treatment for cancer and proportion treated within 62 days of the point of suspicion
Wales, May 2024 to May 2026



Source: Welsh Government

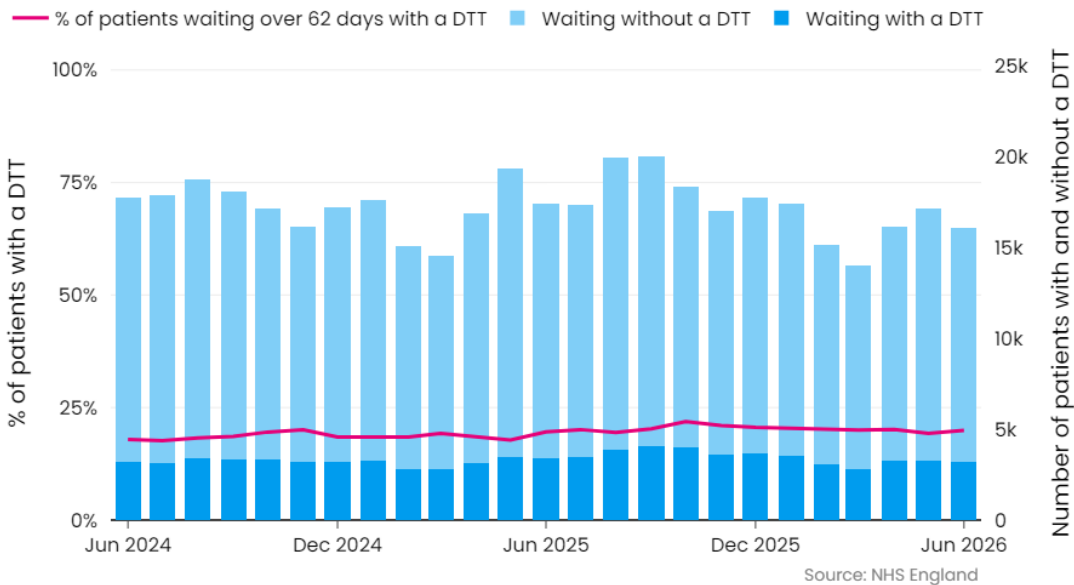


Most patients waiting over 62 days to start cancer treatment in England do not have a decision to treat

- There were around 16,100 patients waiting more than 62 days to begin treatment for cancer or have cancer ruled out following an urgent suspected cancer referral in England at the end of June 2026.
- Around 8 in 10 (80.1%) of these patients did not have a "decision to treat", indicating that they may still be waiting for diagnostic tests and results.
- Following an initial steep increase in 2020/21, the percentage of people waiting more than 62 days who have a decision to treat increased from December 2021 until October 2025, before plateauing.

	End of June 2026
Total number waiting over 62 days	16,100
Number (%) waiting without a Decision to Treat	12,900 (80.1%)
Number (%) waiting with a Decision to Treat	3,200 (19.9%)

Number of patients waiting over 62 days from an USCR with and without a decision to treat, and percentage waiting with a DTT out of all those waiting over 62 days
England, June 2024 to June 2026

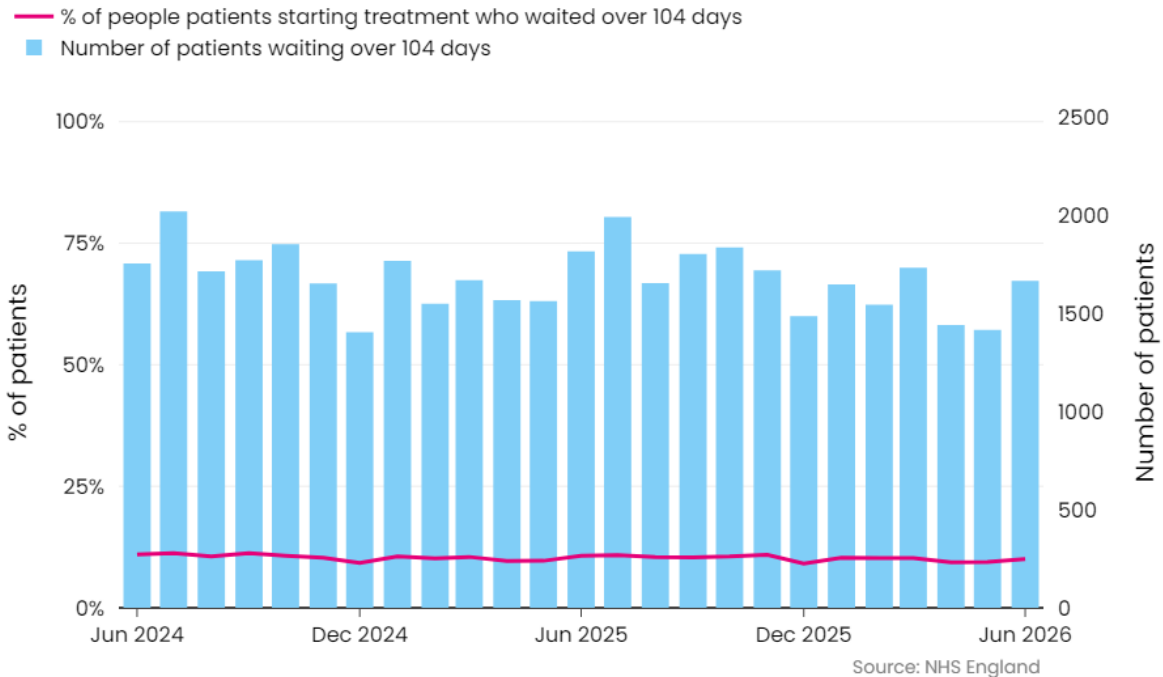




Some patients are waiting over 104 days to start cancer treatment in England

June 2026	No. waiting >104 days for treatment	% waiting >104 days for treatment
All cancer types combined	1,700	10.0%
Urological (excl. prostate)	190	20.8%
Lower GI	220	13.4%
Gynaecological	120	14.1%
Lung	130	18.5%
Lymphoma	80	16.6%

Number and proportion of patients starting treatment for cancer who had waited over 104 days from an urgent suspected cancer referral
England, June 2024 to June 2026



- 10.0% of patients who started treatment in June 2026 waited more than 104 days after an urgent referral to begin treatment for cancer.
- January 2023 saw the highest percentage of 'long-waiters' on record. Since January 2024 there has been a gradual decrease in those waiting over 104 days to start treatment. However, this decline has recently stabilised.

Further Information

About this data brief

Reference

This report should be referred to as follows:

Cancer Research UK, August 2026. Cancer waiting times across the pathway: Key statistics

[To explore more detailed data breakdowns please visit our Cancer Waiting Times Data Hub](#)

Authors

Cancer Intelligence team in the Health Policy & Evidence department, Cancer Research UK

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the many organisations across the UK which collect, analyse, and share the data which we use, and to the patients and public who consent for their data to be used. Find out more about the sources which are essential for our statistics here <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/cancer-stats-explained/data-collection-implications>.



Notes about the data

Sources

NHSE Diagnostic Waiting Times and Activity. Scotland NHS waiting times – diagnostics. NHS diagnostic waiting times, Welsh Government. Diagnostic waiting times, Department of Health, Northern Ireland.
NHSE Cancer Waiting Times, Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times, Welsh Government Cancer Waiting Times, Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times.

Last Updated

August 2026,

Next Updated November 2026

Data notes

- Complete Northern Ireland data is not available between April 2024 and June 2024 due to the rollout of Northern Ireland's new data infrastructure.
- Figures for 'All cancer types combined' presented under FDS referrals include USC referrals, urgent screening referrals and breast symptomatic referrals. By cancer site results are presented for all routes combined where sites have multiple referral routes. Haematological and Urological figures are USC only.
- The target for the Faster Diagnostic Standard moved from 75% to 80% from March 2026 data.
- 31-day standard for England includes both first and subsequent treatment but only first treatment is included for Scotland and Northern Ireland



Site Summary: Lung

Faster Diagnostic Standard Missed at 78.4%



Those with lung cancer diagnosed: 55.3 %
Those with lung cancer ruled out: 84.1 %

Performance Gap: 28.8 pp

31-day Missed at 94.7%



Overall – 92.2%

62-day Missed at 61.3%



Overall – 69.9%

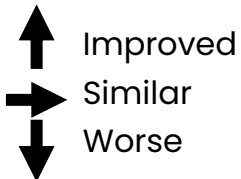
Long waiters (over 104 days)

18.5 % waiting over 104 days
One of highest proportion across sites.

Overall, across waiting times data for lung cancers in England we see:

- Performance against 62-days well below target and the overall average.
- Just over half (55.3%) of people subsequently diagnosed with cancer waiting more than 28 days to be informed of their diagnosis.
- A higher proportion of long waiters than for other cancer types, increasing from 13.2% to 18.5% over the last two months of data.

Performance compared to previous month





Site Summary: Lower GI

Faster Diagnostic Standard Missed at 66.6%



Those with cancer diagnosed: : 55.3%
Those with cancer ruled out: : 66.7%

Performance Gap: 11.3pp

31-days Missed at 92.3%



Overall – 92.2%

62-days Missed at 59.5%



Overall – 69.9%
Performance was 66th worst on record

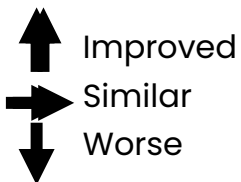
Long waiters (over 104 days)

13.4 % waiting over 104 days
One of highest proportion across sites.

Overall, across waiting times data for lower GI cancers in England we see:

- Just over half (55.3%) of people subsequently diagnosed with cancer waiting more than 28 days to be informed of their diagnosis.
- Performance against 62-days well below target and 10pp below the overall average.
- A higher proportion of long waiters than in other sites.

Performance compared to previous month





Site Summary: Urological (excl. Prostate)

Faster Diagnostic Standard →
Missed at 65.4%

Those with cancer diagnosed: : 31.0%
Those with cancer ruled out: : 70.8%

Performance Gap: 39.9pp

31-days →
Missed at 89.6%

Overall – 92.2%

62-days →
Missed at 62.1%

Overall – 69.9%
Performance was 27th worst on record

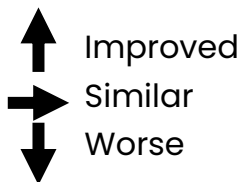
Long waiters (over 104 days)

20.8 % waiting over 104 days
One of highest proportion across sites.

Overall, across waiting times data for urological cancers in England we see:

- The FDS performance gap between those subsequently diagnosed and ruled out was 39.9 percentage points.
- Performance against 62-days well below target and the overall average.
- A higher proportion of long waiters than in other sites, and the 11th highest month on record for long waiters in this site grouping.

Performance compared to previous month





Site Summary: Gynaecological

Faster Diagnostic Standard Missed at 70.2%



Those with cancer diagnosed: 37.6%
Those with cancer ruled out: : 70.0%

Performance Gap: 32.4pp

31-days Missed at 92.9%



Overall – 92.2%

62-days Missed at 59.6%

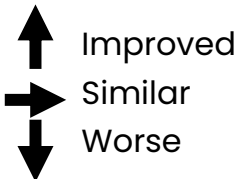


Overall – 69.9%
Performance was 26th worst on record

Long waiters (over 104 days)

14.1 % waiting over 104 days
One of highest proportion across sites.

Performance
compared to
previous
month



Overall, across waiting times data for gynaecological cancers in England we see:

- The FDS performance gap between those subsequently diagnosed and ruled out was 32.4 percentage points.
- Performance against 62-days well below target the and 10pp below the overall average.
- A higher proportion of long waiters than in other sites, and up from 11.3% in May, an increase of 2.8 percentage points.