

# Performance measures across the cancer pathway: Key Stats

*Stats for: February 2026*

*Last updated: April 2026*

Cancer Intelligence Team



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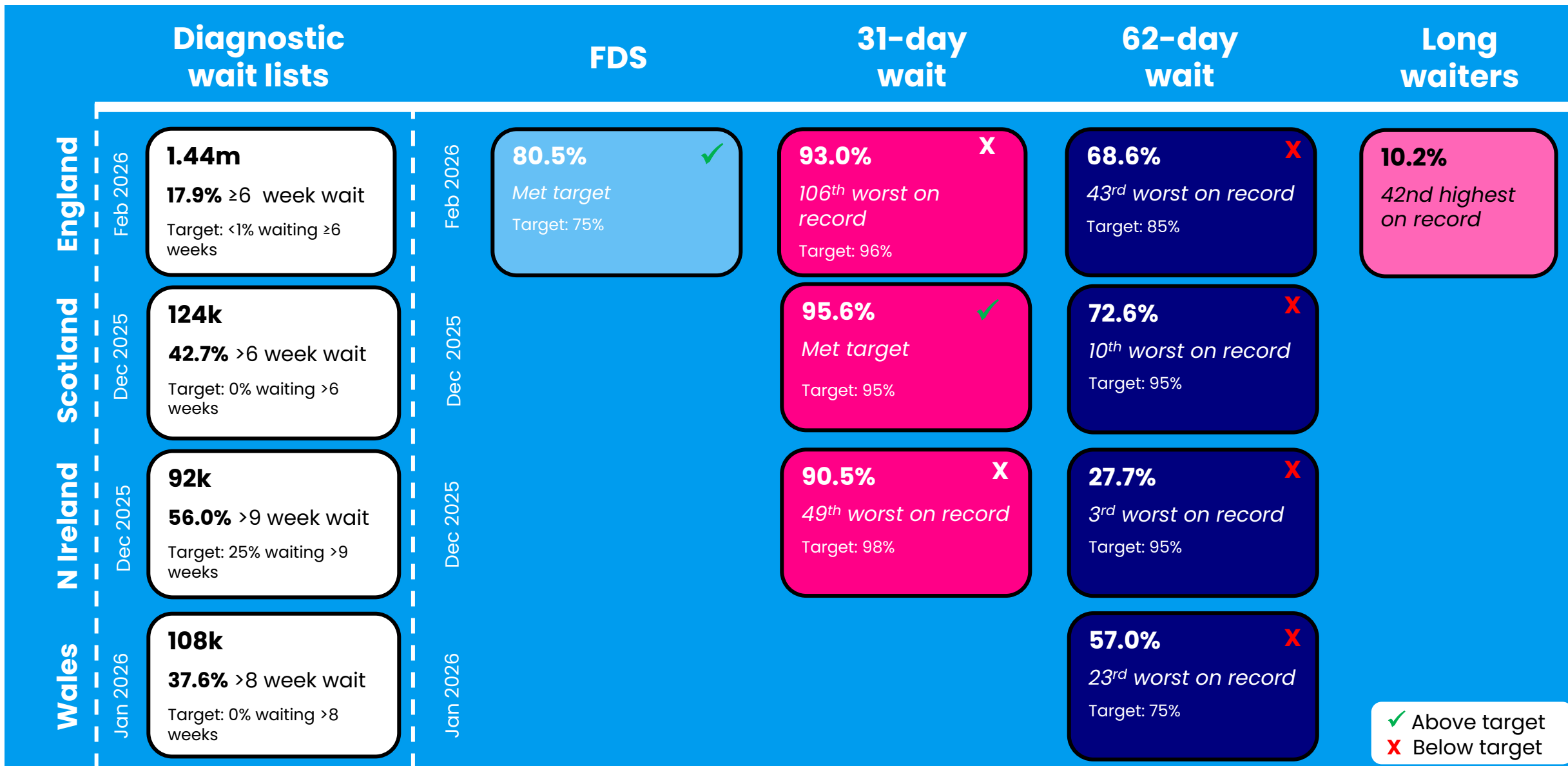
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# Cancer Waiting Times & Diagnostic Activity Data

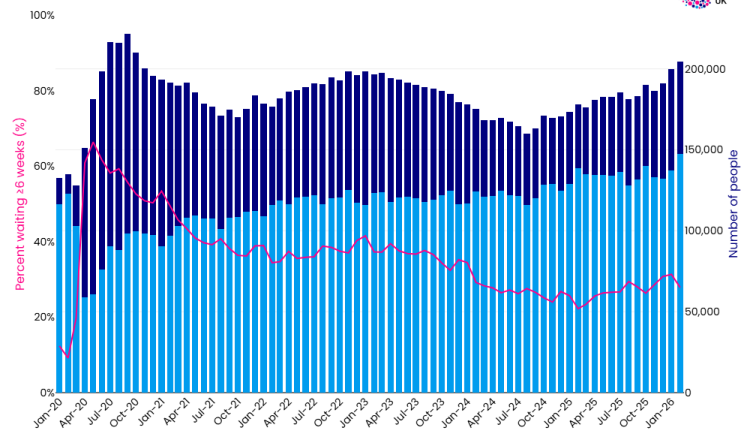
- This slide deck presents the latest monthly or quarterly data for:
  - Activity and waiting times for key diagnostic tests that could be used in the diagnosis of cancer
  - Activity and waiting times for cancer services from the Cancer Waiting Times dataset
- There are standards and targets on timelines 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. 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
- From October 2023 NHS England has streamlined the 10 existing cancer waiting times standards into 3 key cancer waiting times standards. The urgent suspected cancer referrals standard (Two Week Wait) was retired and replaced with the Faster Diagnosis Standard and new versions of the 31-day and 62-day standards. Data with the new measures has been published from December 2023.

# Key highlights

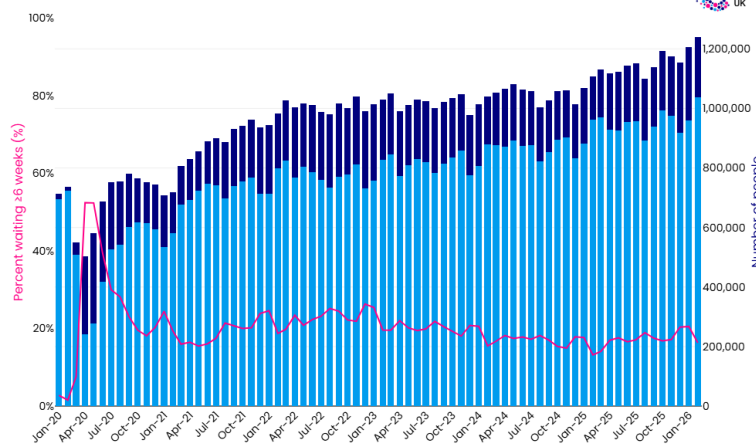


# Number of people waiting for a key diagnostic test is the highest on record in England

Endoscopy waiting list at the end of each month, England



Radiology waiting list at the end of each month, England



■ No. waiting <6 weeks ■ No. waiting ≥6 weeks — % waiting ≥6 weeks

February 2026

Test type	People waiting	People waiting 6+ weeks	% waiting 6+ weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	204K	56.9K	27.9%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	1.24M	202K	16.3%

## Key points

- In February 2026, around 1.44 million people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in England. Of these, 17.9% have been waiting 6 weeks or more.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 27.9% (around 56,900) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 16.3% (around 202,000) waiting 6 or more weeks.
- The number of people on the diagnostic radiology waiting list in England is the highest on record (since 2006).
- The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list (radiology and endoscopy) is the highest on record (since 2006).

## Notes about the data

- Figures NOT adjusted for working days
- Data source: NHSE Diagnostic Waiting Time and Activity
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

# Number of people waiting for a key diagnostic test remains high in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Test type	Scotland <i>December 2025</i>		Wales <i>January 2026</i>		Northern Ireland* <i>December 2025</i>		
	People waiting	People waiting >6 weeks	People waiting	People waiting >8 weeks	People waiting	People waiting >6 weeks	People waiting >9 weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	29.7k	17.3k	20.5k	9.7k	11.8k	5.7k	4.8k
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	94.3k	35.7k	87.9k	31k	80.1k	57.3k	46.7k

## Key points

- **Scotland:** Endoscopy waiting lists had 58.2% (around 17,300) waiting more than 6 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 37.9% (around 35,700) waiting more than 6 weeks.
- **Wales:** Endoscopy waiting lists had 47.3% (around 9,700) waiting more than 8 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 35.3% (around 31,000) waiting more than 8 weeks. The number of people on the radiology waiting list is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest on record (since 2009).
- **Northern Ireland:** Endoscopy waiting lists had 40.6% (around 4,800) waiting more than 9 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 58.3% (around 46,700) waiting more than 9 weeks. The number of people on the radiology waiting list is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest on record (since 2008).

### Notes about the data

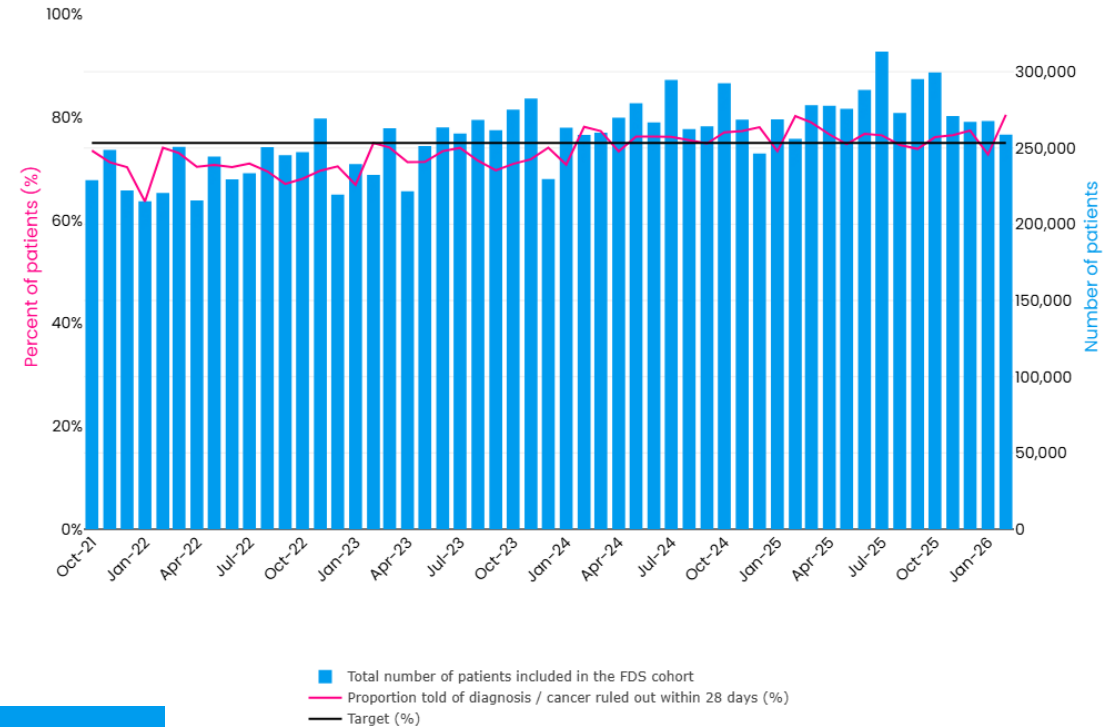
- Figures are NOT adjusted for working days
- Data source: Diagnostic Waiting Times data (Public Health Scotland, Dept. of Health NI, NHS Wales)
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

# Waiting times for Faster Diagnosis Standard met target (England)

February 2026

	No. who received a diagnosis or all clear	% within standard <i>Target 75%</i>	Additional people who would have had a diagnosis or cancer ruled out in time if target was met
All cancer types combined	259,000	80.5%	
Haematological (exc. acute leukaemia)	1,700	64.4%	180
Urological (exc. testicular)	22,000	65.7%	2,000
Lower GI	36,600	73.9%	390
Gynaecological	23,400	74.6%	90

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



## Key points

- 80.5% of people were diagnosed or had cancer ruled out within 28 days of an urgent suspected cancer referral, breast symptomatic referral, or an urgent screening referral, in England in February 2026, meeting the NHSE target of 75%.
- Note, systems were expected to achieve the Faster Diagnosis Standard from Q3 2021/22 onwards; the standard was not met throughout the initial run-in period (April–September 2021). 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%

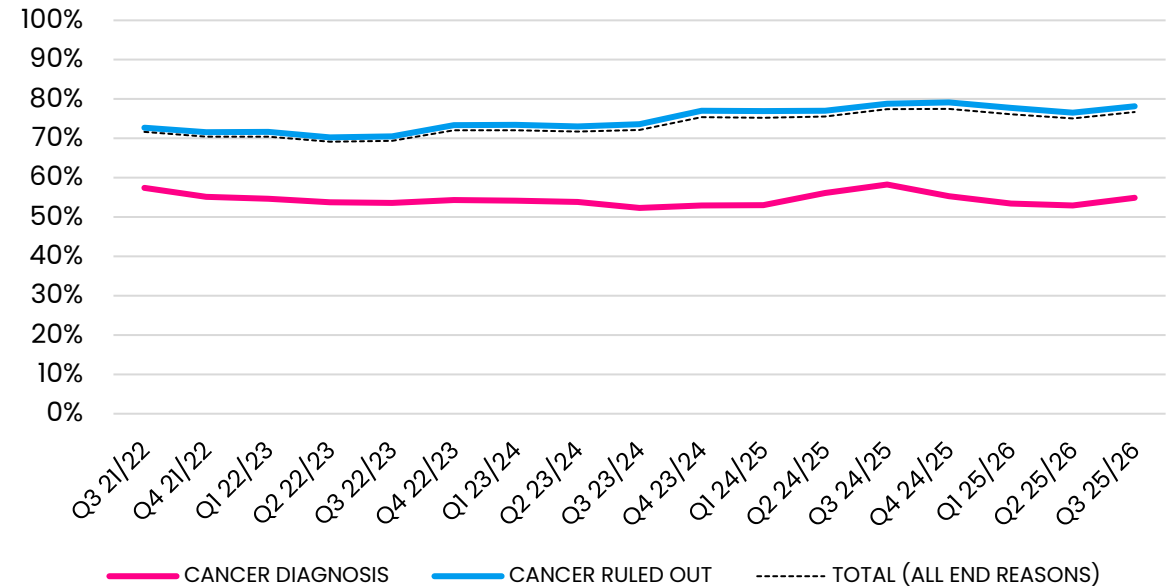
## Notes about the data

- Figures for 'All cancer types combined' presented in the table 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.
- Data source: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

# Waiting times for Faster Diagnosis Standard varied by referral outcome(England)

October – December 2025	% informed of outcome within 28-days	
	Cancer diagnosed	Cancer ruled out
All Cancers Combined	54.9%	78.2%
Urological (excl. testicular)	32.4%	72.5%
Sarcoma	33.5%	71.5%
Head & Neck	38.2%	79.9%
Gynaecological	38.6%	70.2%
Haematological	48.0%	67.0%

FDS Performance by Outcome  
All Cancers



### Key points

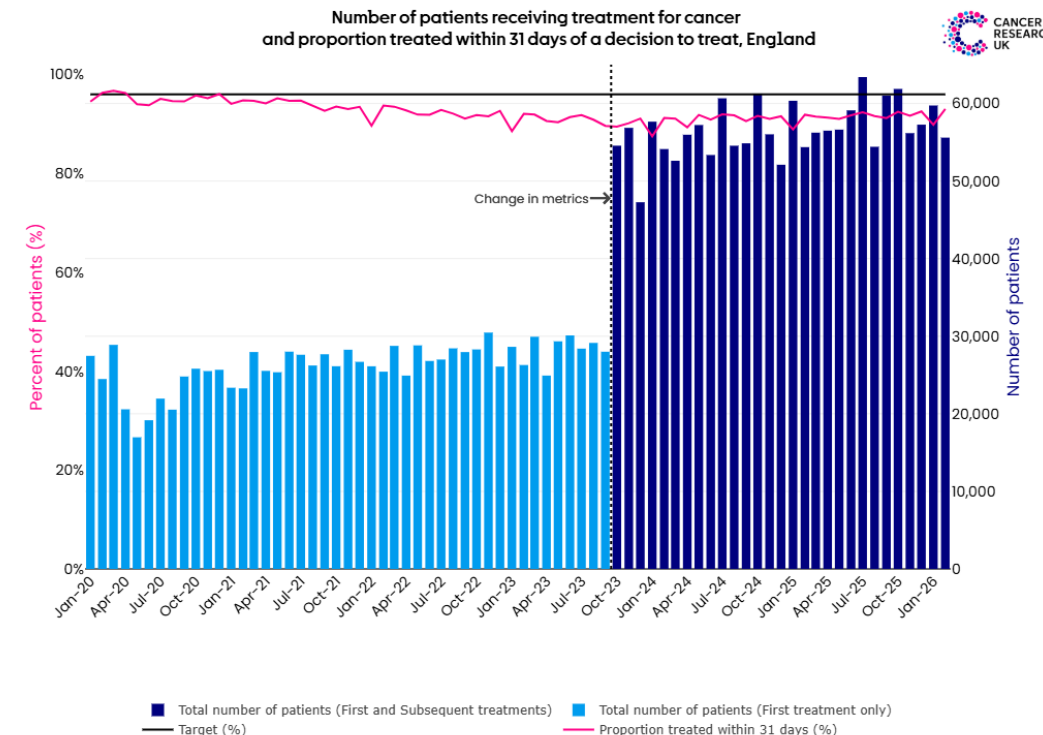
- Performance against the Faster Diagnosis Standard broken down by referral outcome showed that in October – December 2025, 54.9% of people diagnosed with cancer following an urgent referral met the 28-day standard, while the 28-day standard was met for 78.2% of people who had cancer ruled out.
- Trends show a general improvement for people with cancer ruled out while performance is stagnating for those with cancer diagnosis.

### Notes about the data

- Figures for 'All cancer types combined' presented in the graph
- Data source: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

# Waiting times for starting treatment within 31 days of decision to treat missed target in England and NI

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
<b>England* (February 26)</b> <i>Standard: 96%</i>	55,600	93.0%	1,700
<b>Scotland (December 25)</b> <i>Standard: 95%</i>	7,400	95.6%	
<b>Wales</b>	Metric not used		
<b>N Ireland (December 25)</b> <i>Standard: 98%</i>	1,000	90.5%	75



## Key points

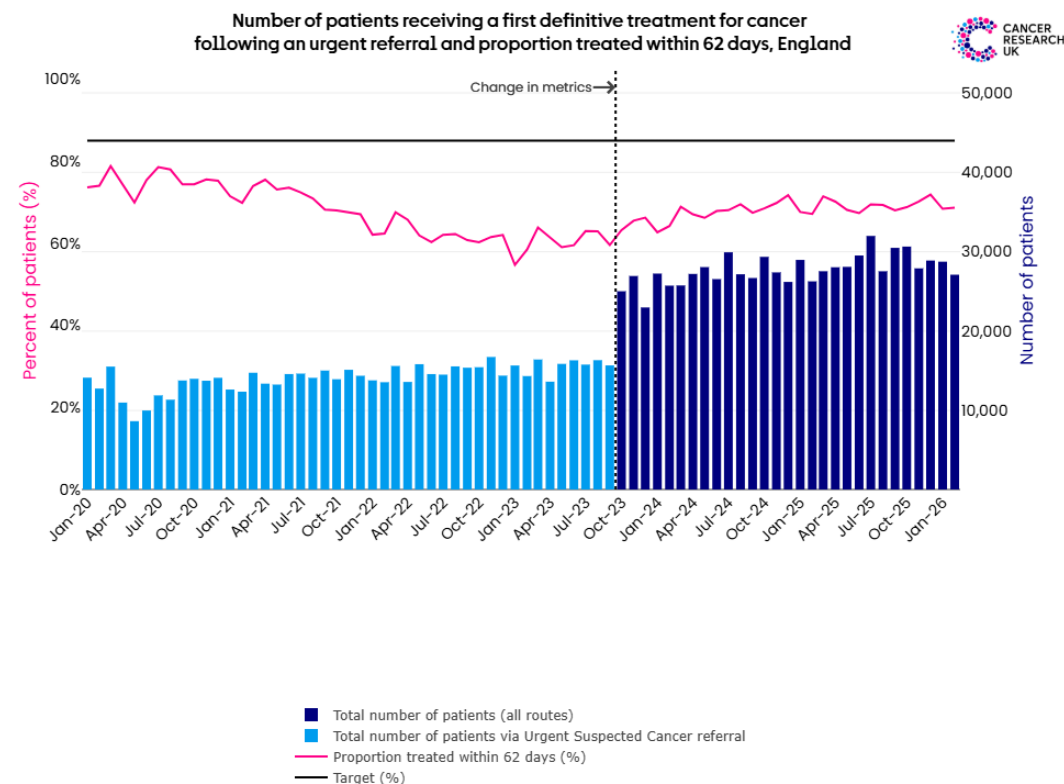
- Only 93.0% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in England in February 2026, missing the NHS E target of 96%.
- This target has not been met in England since December 2020.
- If the target was met in February 2026, around 1,700 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.
- 95.6% of patients started treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in Scotland in December 2025, meeting the target of 95%
- Data is also available by cancer type.

## Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times.
- \*31-day standard for England includes both first and subsequent treatment but only first treatment is included for Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

# Waiting times for starting treatment within 62 days of urgent referral missed target

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
<b>England (February 26)</b> <i>Standard: 85%</i>	27,100	68.6%	4,400
<b>Scotland (December 25)</b> <i>Standard: 95%</i>	4,800	72.6%	1,100
<b>Wales* (January 26)</b> <i>Standard: 75%</i>	2,100	57.0%	370
<b>N Ireland (December 25)</b> <i>Standard: 95%</i>	510	27.7%	340



## Key points

- Only 68.6% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in England in February 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 February 2026, around 4,400 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.
- Data are also available by cancer type.

## Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; Welsh Government Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times
- \*Wales reports Suspected Cancer Pathway including all patients from point of suspicion of cancer to first definitive treatment – other nations' 62 day wait figures refer only to patients diagnosed via urgent routes
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

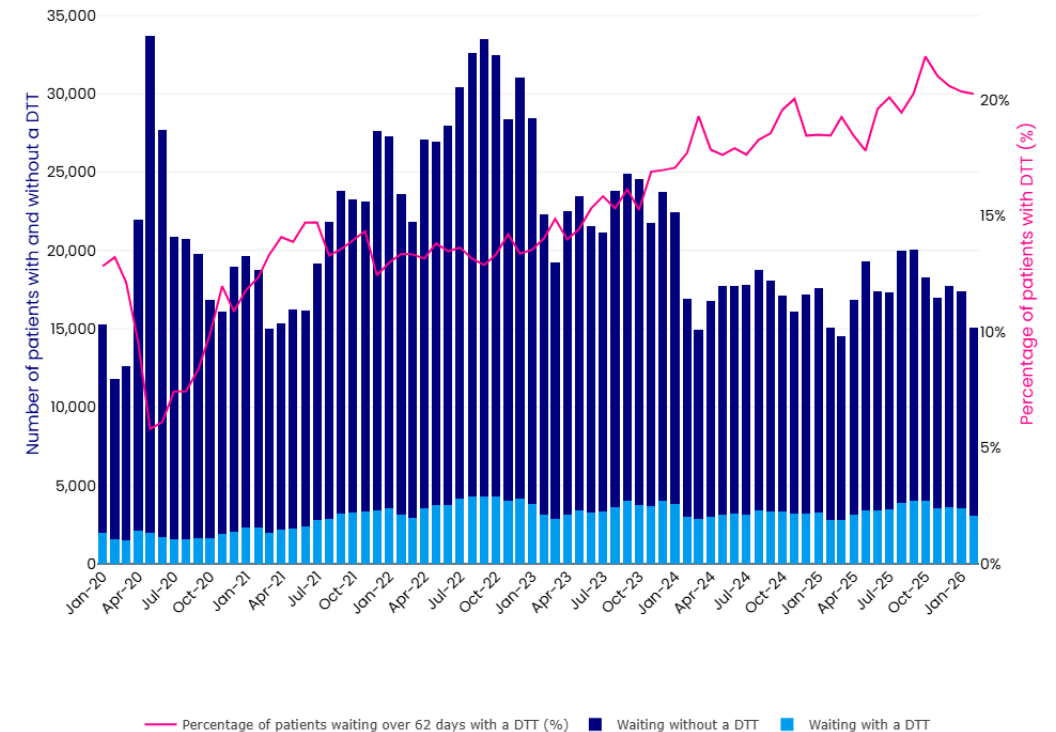
# Management Information: patients waiting more than 62 days following an urgent suspected cancer referral in England

	End of February 2026
Total number waiting over 62 days	15,100
Number (%) waiting without a Decision to Treat	12,000 (79.8%)
Number (%) waiting with a Decision to Treat	3,100 (20.2%)

## Key points

- There were around 15,100 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 February 2026.
- Around 8 in 10 (79.8%) 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 step increase in 2020/21, the percentage of people waiting more than 62 days who have a decision to treat has continued to increase from December 2021.

Number of patients waiting over 62 days from urgent suspected cancer referral with and without a decision to treat, and percentage waiting with a DTT out of all those waiting over 62 days, England

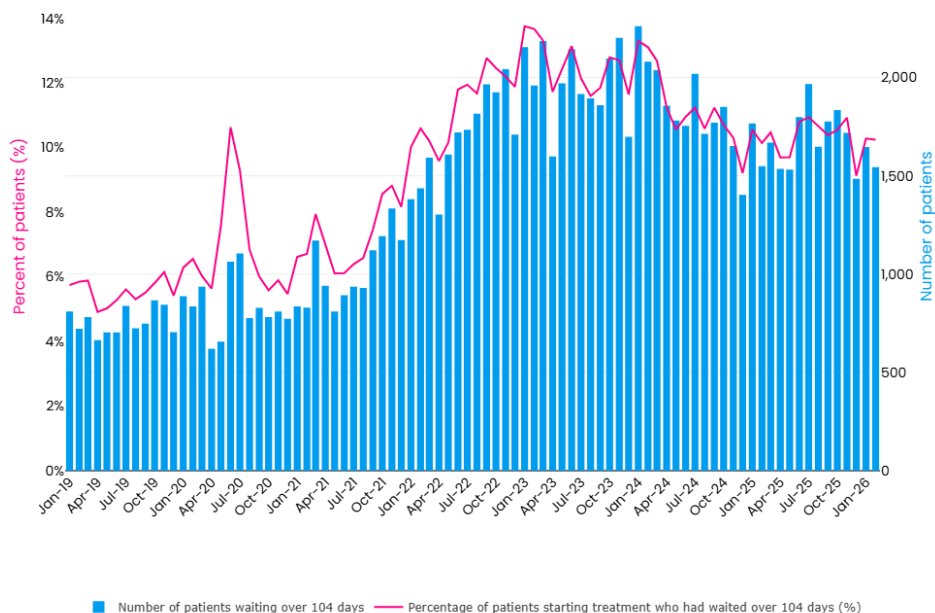


## Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

# Long-waiters: patients who waited more than 104 days to start treatment following an urgent suspected cancer referral in England

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



February 2026	No. waiting >104 days for treatment	% waiting >104 days for treatment
All cancer types combined	1,500	10.2%
Urological (excl. prostate)	140	18.0%
Lower GI	230	15.7%
Gynaecological	120	15.7%
Hepatobiliary	50	15.2%
Lymphoma	60	14.9%

## Key points

- **10.2% of patients who started treatment in February 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.**

### Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times data, NHSE Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 16/04/2026, next planned update for this slide July 2026

# Cancer waiting times standards and associated targets across the UK

Diagnostic interval

Treatment interval

Primary care interval

Secondary care interval

First presentation

Referral to secondary care

First specialist visit

Patient informed of diagnosis

Decision to treat

Start of treatment

## Faster Diagnosis Standard



People should have cancer ruled out or receive a diagnosis within 28 days of an urgent suspected cancer referral, a breast symptomatic referral or an urgent cancer screening programme referral.

Target: England: 75%



## 31-day Standard



Patients should begin their treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat.

Targets: England: 96%  
Scotland: 95%  
Northern Ireland: 98%



## 62-day Standard / Wales Suspected Cancer Pathway



**62-day Standard:** Patients should begin their first treatment within 62 days of:

- **England:** An urgent suspected cancer referral, a breast symptomatic referral, an urgent cancer screening programme referral or consultant upgrade.
- **Scotland:** An urgent suspected cancer referral, a screening referral or direct referral to hospital with symptoms consistent with cancer.
- **Northern Ireland:** An urgent GP suspected cancer referral, or a GP routine referral subsequently reclassified as urgent by a cancer specialist.

Targets: England: 85%  
Scotland: 95%  
Northern Ireland: 95%



**Wales Suspected Cancer Pathway:** Patients should begin their first treatment within 62 days of the point of suspicion (date of referral).

Target: Wales: 75%

