

Performance measures across the cancer pathway: Key Stats

Stats for: May 2025

Last updated: July 2025

Cancer Intelligence Team



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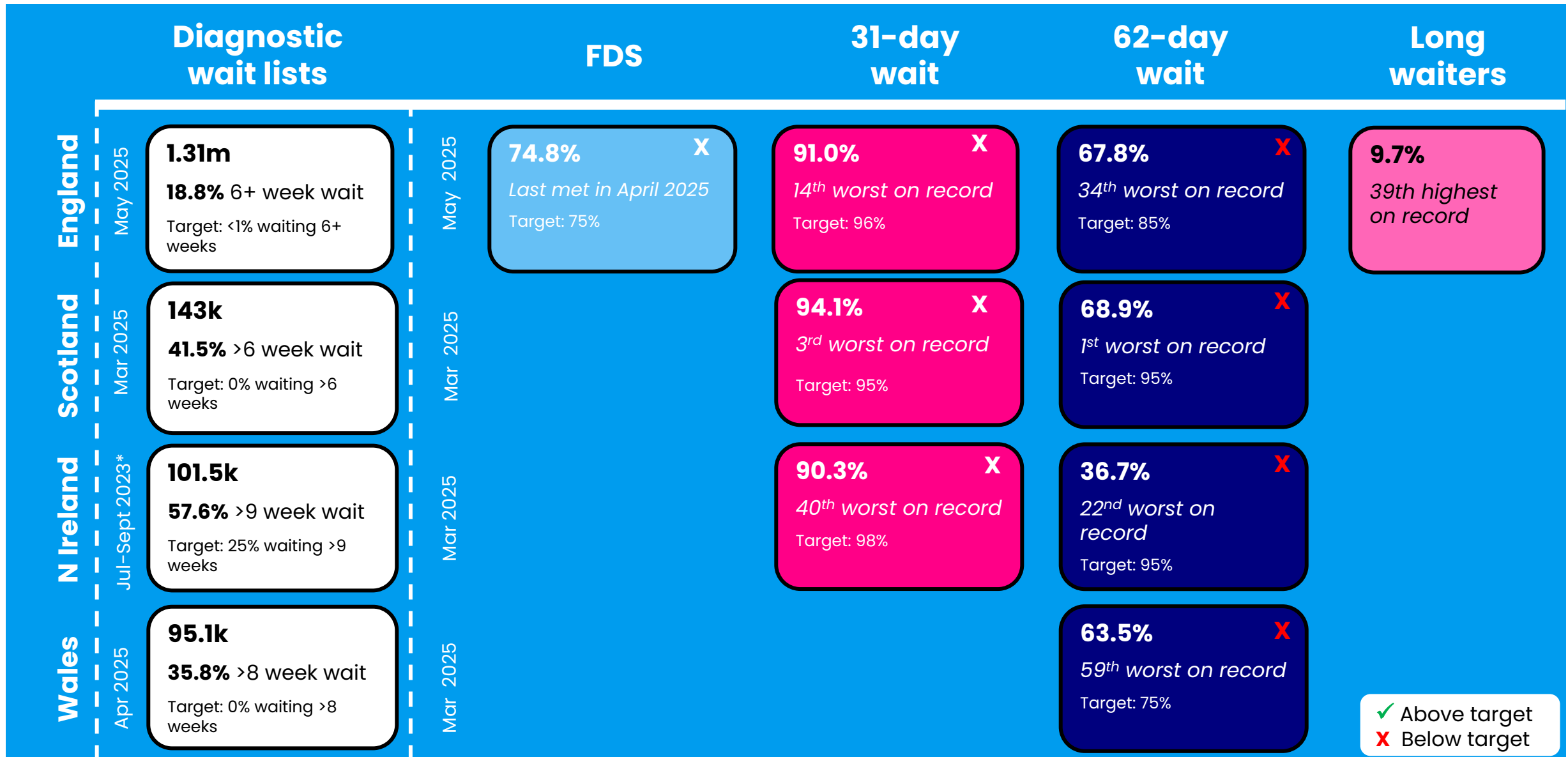
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Cancer Waiting Times & Diagnostic Activity Data

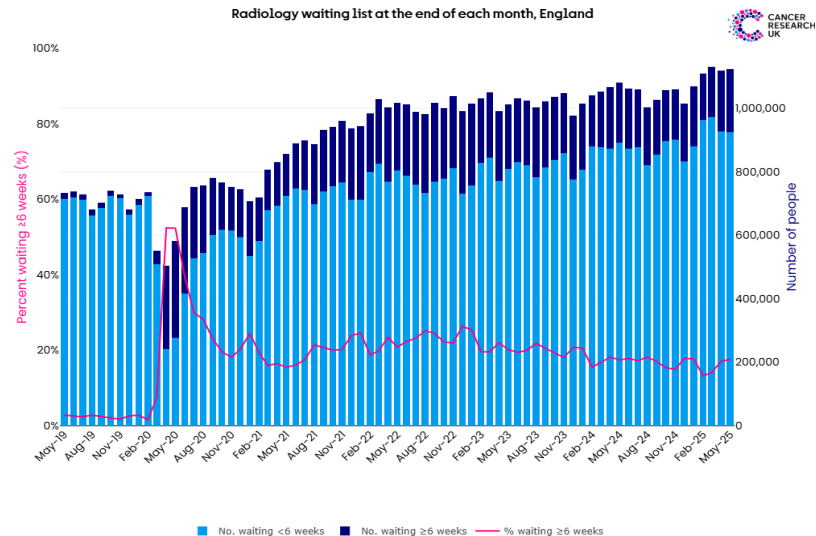
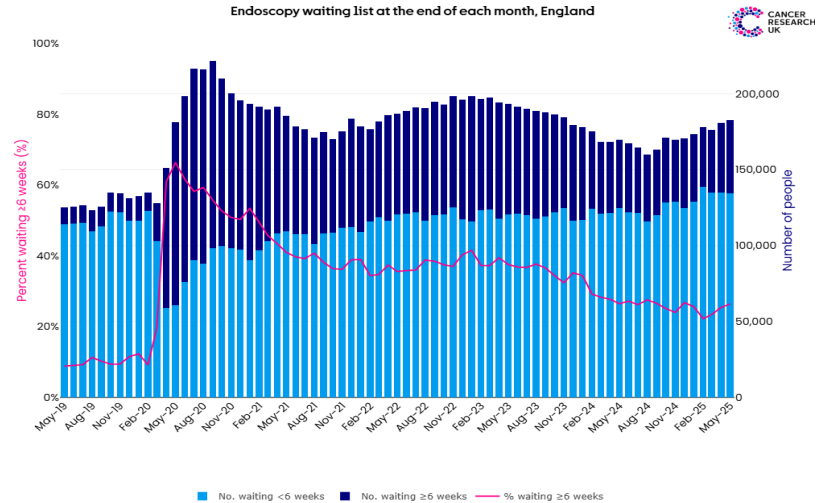
- This slide deck presents the latest monthly or quarterly data for:
 - Activity and waiting times for key diagnostic tests that could be used in the diagnosis of cancer
 - Activity and waiting times for cancer services from the Cancer Waiting Times dataset
- There are standards and targets on timelines 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



*For Northern Ireland, due to data infrastructure changes the latest complete national data is for July-Sept 2023 for diagnostic wait lists and Mar 2025 for cancer waiting times.

Number of people waiting for a key diagnostic test is the second worst on record in England



Test type	May 2025		
	Patients waiting	Patients waiting 6+ weeks	% waiting 6+ weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	183K	48.2K	26.4%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	1.1M	197K	17.6%

Key points

- In May 2025, around 1.31 million people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in England. Of these, 18.8% have been waiting 6 weeks or more.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 26.4% (around 48,200) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 17.6% (more than 197,000) waiting 6 or more weeks.
- The number of people on the diagnostic radiology waiting list in England is the second worst on record (since 2006).
- The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list (radiology and endoscopy) is the second worst on record (since 2006).

- Notes about the data
- Figures NOT adjusted for working days
 - Data source: NHSE Diagnostic Waiting Time and Activity.
 - Last updated 11/07/2025, next planned update for this slide October 2025

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

Test type	Scotland <i>March 2025</i>		Wales <i>April 2025</i>		Northern Ireland* <i>July-Sept 2023</i>		
	Patients waiting	Patients waiting >6 weeks	Patients waiting	Patients waiting >8 weeks	Patients waiting	Patients waiting >6 weeks	Patients waiting >9 weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	33.0k	18.5k	22.9k	13.5k	25.4k	19.2k	18.0k
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	110k	40.6k	72.2k	20.5k	76.1k	49.4k	40.4k

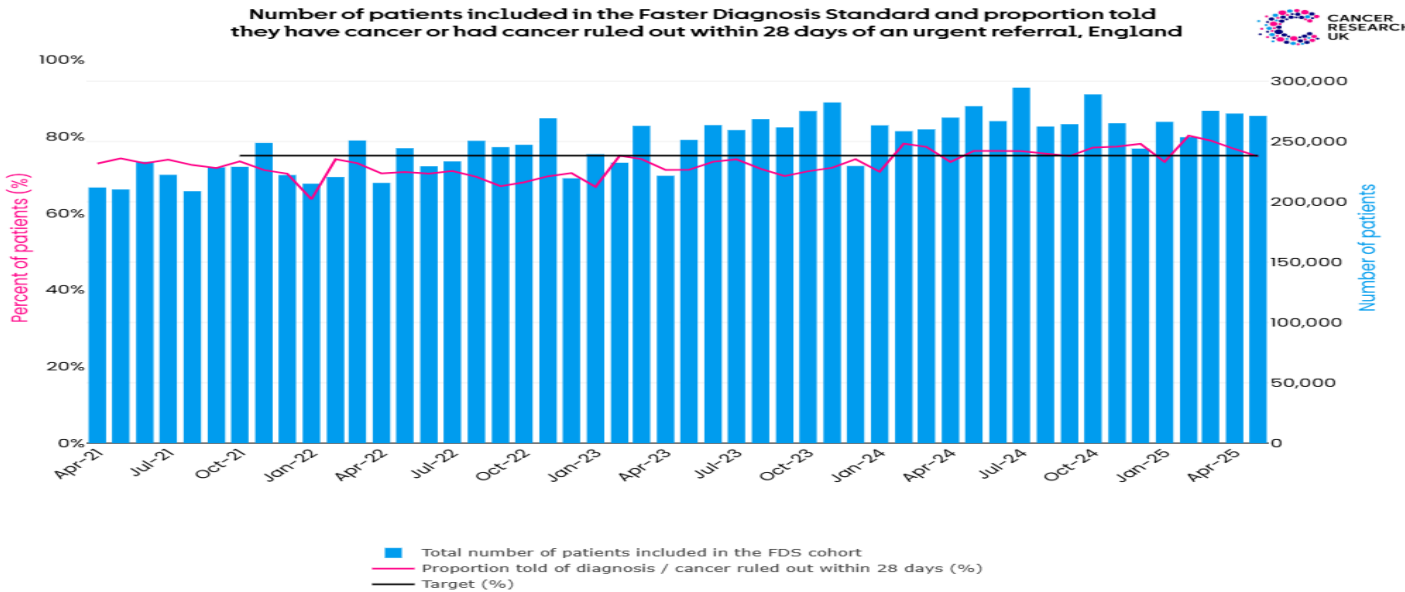
Key points

- Scotland: Total waiting lists remain substantially long for diagnostic tests. Endoscopy waiting lists had 56.2% (around 18,500) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 37.0% (around 40,600) waiting 6 or more weeks.
- Wales: Total waiting lists remain substantially long for diagnostic tests. Endoscopy waiting lists had 59.1% (around 13,500) waiting 8 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 28.4% (around 20,500) waiting 8 or more weeks.
- The number of people on the diagnostic radiology waiting list in Wales is the worst on record (since 2009).

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)
- * For Northern Ireland, due to data infrastructure changes the latest complete national data is for July-Sept 2023 for diagnostic wait lists. More recent sub-national data is available on the Dept of Health website.
- Last updated 11/07/2025, next planned update for this slide October 2025

Waiting times for Faster Diagnosis Standard met target (England)



May 2025	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	271,000	74.8%	580
Haematological (exc. acute leukaemia)	1,700	59.8%	260
Urological (exc. testicular)	22,400	57.3%	4,000
Lower GI	45,000	61.8%	5,900
Gynaecological	26,200	64%	2,900

- Key points**
- 74.8% 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 May 2025, missing the NHSE target of 75%.
 - The target was last met in April 2025.
 - 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 standard was originally set at 95%.

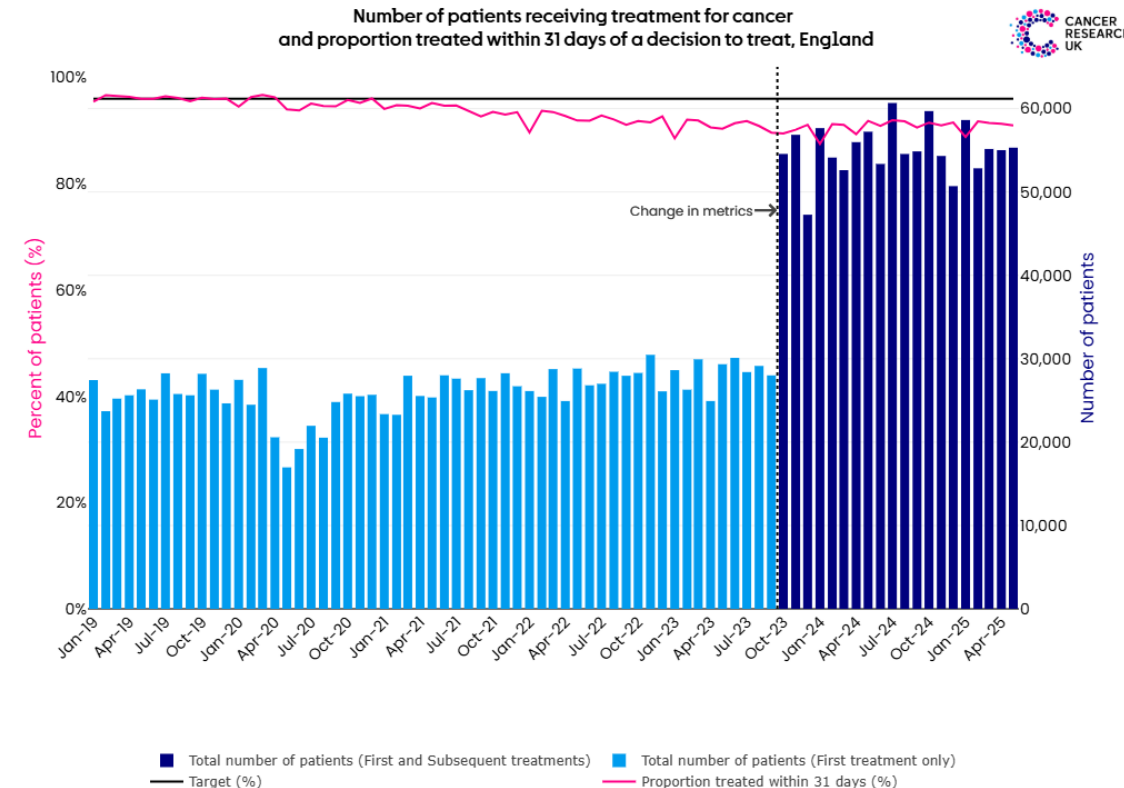
- Notes about the data**
- Figures for 'All cancer types combined' presented in the table include USC referrals, urgent screening referrals and breast symptomatic referrals
 - By cancer site results are presented for all routes combined where sites have multiple referral routes. Haematological and Urological figures are USC only.
 - Data source: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times
 - Last updated 11/07/2025, next planned update for this slide October 2025

Waiting times for starting treatment within 31 days of decision to treat missed target

	No. starting treatment	% within standard	Additional patients treated on time if target was met
England* (May 25) <i>Standard: 96%</i>	55,300	91.0%	2,800
Scotland (Mar 25) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	6,800	94.1%	65
Wales	Metric not used		
N Ireland (Mar 25) <i>Standard: 98%</i>	790	90.3%	60

Key points

- **Only 91.0% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in England in May 2025, missing the NHS E target of 96%.**
- **This target has not been met in England since December 2020.**
- **If the target was met in May 2025, around 2,800 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.**
- **Data is also available by cancer type.**



Notes about the data

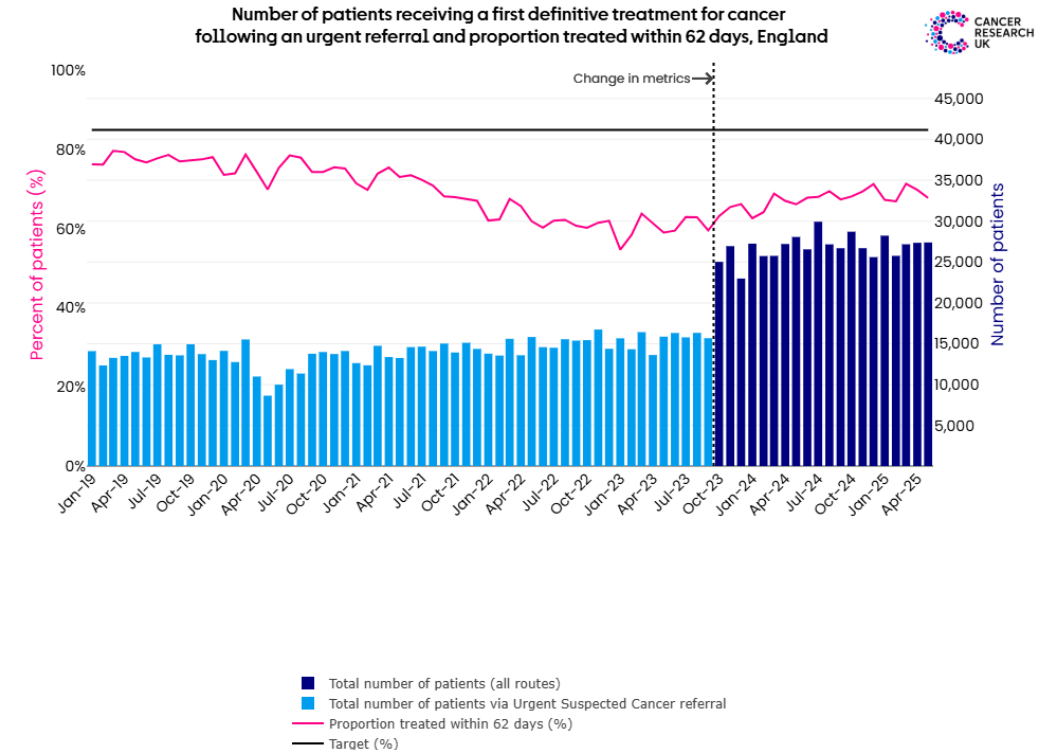
- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times.
- *31-day standard for England includes both first and subsequent treatment but only first treatment is included for Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Last updated 11/07/2025, next planned update for this slide October 2025

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
England (May 25) <i>Standard: 85%</i>	27,400	67.8%	4,700
Scotland (Mar 25) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	4,400	68.9%	1,100
Wales* (Mar 25) <i>Standard: 75%</i>	1,900	63.5%	220
N Ireland (Mar 25) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	390	36.7%	230

Key points

- **Only 67.8% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in England in May 2025, missing the NHS E target of 85%.**
- **This target has not been met in England since December 2015.**
- **If the target was met in May 2025, around 4,700 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.**
- **Data are also available by cancer type.**



Notes about the data

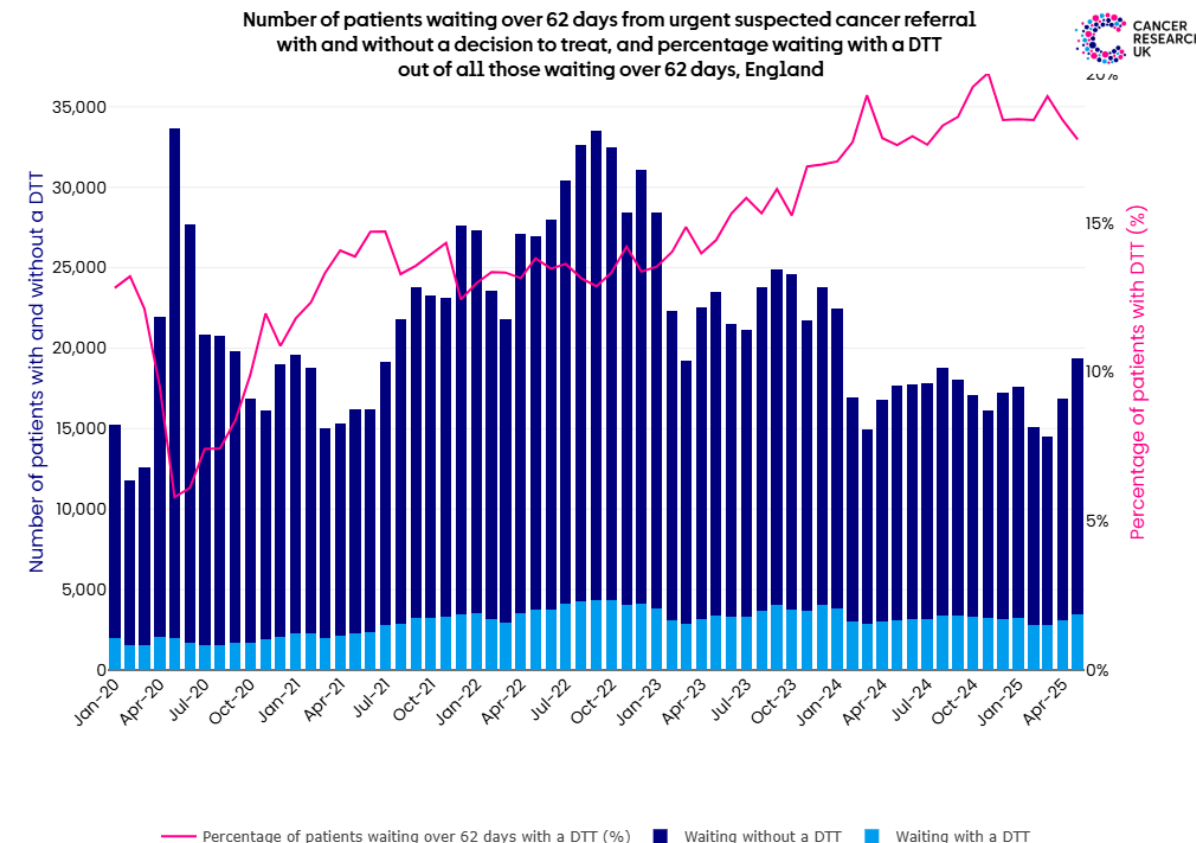
- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; Welsh Government Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times
- *Wales reports Suspected Cancer Pathway including all patients from point of suspicion of cancer to first definitive treatment – other nations' 62 day wait figures refer only to patients diagnosed via urgent routes
- Last updated 11/07/2025, next planned update for this slide October 2025

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

	End of May 2025
Total number waiting over 62 days	19,300
Number (%) waiting without a Decision to Treat	15,900 (82.2%)
Number (%) waiting with a Decision to Treat	3,400 (17.8%)

Key points

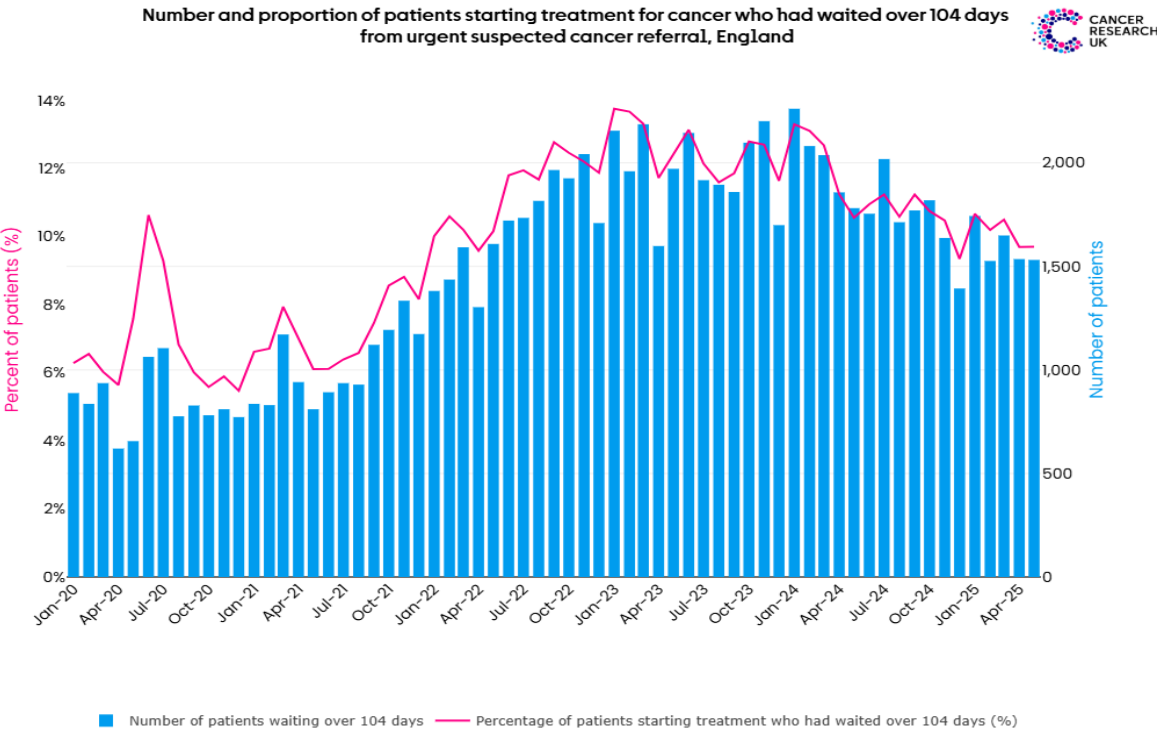
- There were around 19,300 patients waiting more than 62 days to begin treatment for cancer or have cancer ruled out following an urgent suspected cancer referral in England at the end of May 2025.
- More than 8 in 10 (82.2%) of these patients did not have a "decision to treat", indicating that they may still be waiting for diagnostic tests and results.
- May 2025 saw the highest number of patients waiting over 62 days following an urgent suspected cancer referral since January 2024
- Following an initial steep 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.



Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 11/07/2025, next planned update for this slide Oct 2025

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



May 2025	No. waiting >104 days for treatment	% waiting >104 days for treatment
All cancer types combined	1,500	9.7%
Urological	650	14.6%
Lower GI	200	13.6%
Lung	120	15.1%
Skin	95	2.7%
Breast	85	3.7%

Key points

- 9.7% of patients who started treatment in May 2025 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. However, since January 2024 there has been a gradual decrease in those waiting over 104 days to start treatment.

Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times data, NHSE Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 11/07/2025, next planned update for this slide Oct 2025

Cancer waiting times standards and associated targets across the UK

Diagnostic interval

Treatment interval

Primary care interval

Secondary care interval

