

Performance measures across the cancer pathway: Key Stats

Stats for: November 2025

Last updated: January 2026

Cancer Intelligence Team



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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.

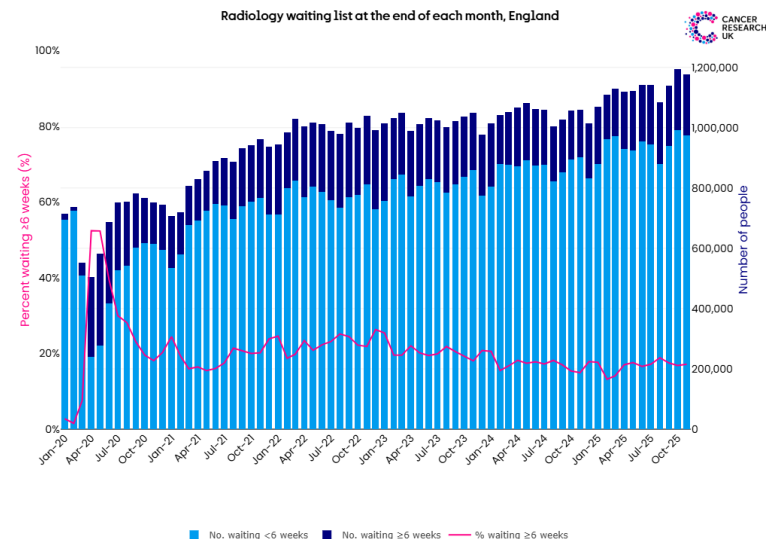
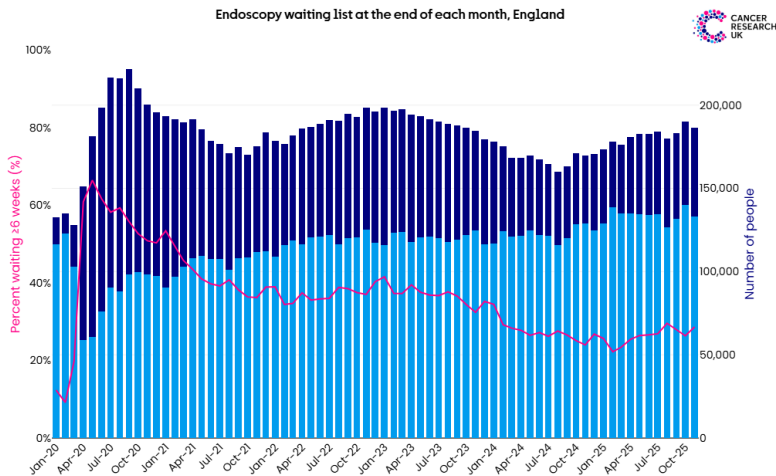
Key highlights

		Diagnostic wait lists		FDS	31-day wait	62-day wait	Long waiters
England	Nov 2025	1.36m 18.7% ≥6 week wait Target: <1% waiting ≥6 weeks	Nov 2025	76.5% ✓ <i>Met target</i> Target: 75%	91.7% X <i>64th worst on record</i> Target: 96%	70.2% X <i>51st worst on record</i> Target: 85%	10.9% <i>28th highest on record</i>
Scotland	Sep 2025	146k 45.6% >6 week wait Target: 0% waiting >6 weeks	Sep 2025		95.1% ✓ <i>Met target</i> Target: 95%	70.7% X <i>5th worst on record</i> Target: 95%	
N Ireland	Sep 2025	89k 59.4% >9 week wait Target: 25% waiting >9 weeks	Sep 2025		86.8% X <i>12th worst on record</i> Target: 98%	30.9% X <i>8th worst on record</i> Target: 95%	
Wales	Oct 2025	111k 35.5% >8 week wait Target: 0% waiting >8 weeks	Oct 2025			59.4% X <i>37th worst on record</i> Target: 75%	

✓ Above target
 X Below target

*For Northern Ireland, due to data infrastructure changes the latest complete national data is for July–Sept 2023 for diagnostic wait lists.

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



Test type	November 2025		
	People waiting	People waiting 6+ weeks	% waiting 6+ weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	187K	53.4K	28.6%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	1.18M	202K	17.2%

Key points

- In November 2025, around 1.36 million people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in England. Of these, 18.7% have been waiting 6 weeks or more.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 28.6% (around 53,400) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 17.2% (around 202,000) waiting 6 or more weeks.
- The number of people on the diagnostic radiology waiting list in England is the 2nd worst on record (since 2006), with October 2025 being the worst.
- The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list (radiology and endoscopy) is the 2nd worst on record (since 2006), with October 2025 being the worst.

Notes about the data

- Figures NOT adjusted for working days
- Data source: NHSE Diagnostic Waiting Time and Activity
- Last updated 15/01/2026, next planned update for this slide April 2026

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

Test type	Scotland <i>September 2025</i>		Wales <i>October 2025</i>		Northern Ireland* <i>September 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)	30.8k	17.8k	22.2k	11.9k	11.8k	6k	5.4k
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	115k	48.7k	89.2k	27.6k	77.5k	55.6k	47.6k

Key points

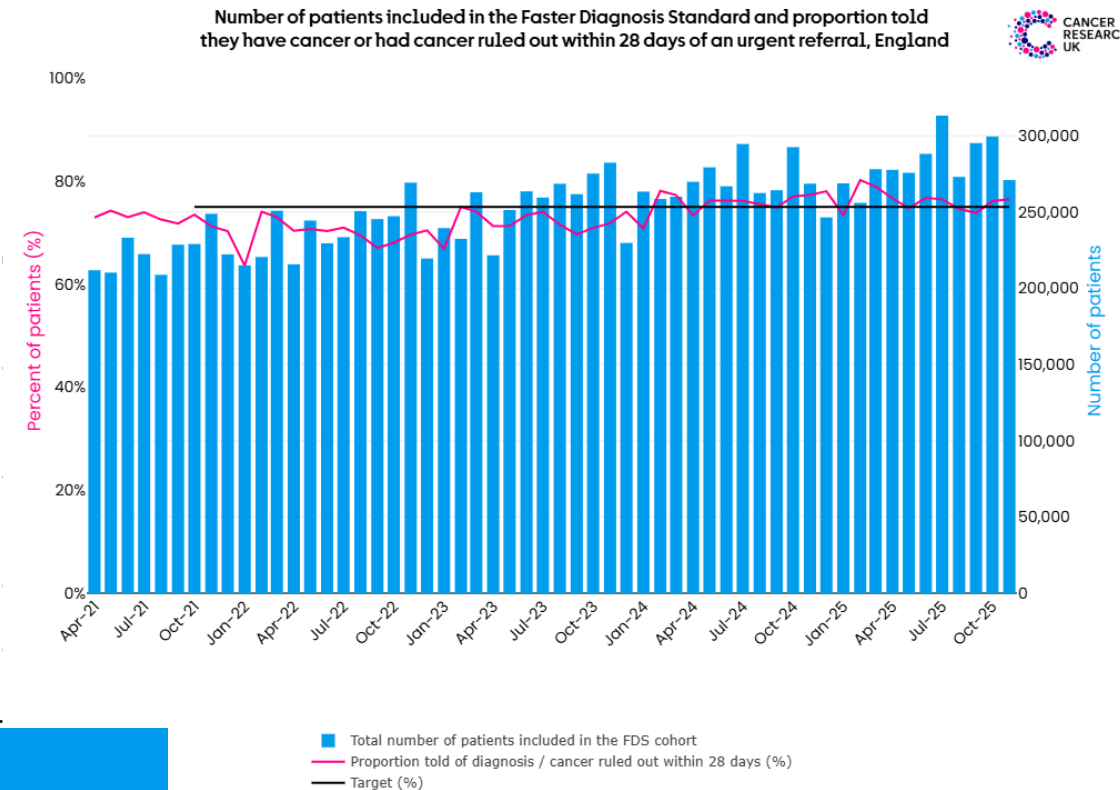
- Scotland: Endoscopy waiting lists had 57.9% (around 17,800) waiting more than 6 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 42.3% (around 48,700) waiting more than 6 weeks.
- Wales: Endoscopy waiting lists had 53.5% (around 11,900) waiting more than 8 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 31.0% (around 27,600) waiting more than 8 weeks. The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list is the worst on record (since 2009).
- Northern Ireland: Endoscopy waiting lists had 45.9% (around 5,400) waiting more than 9 weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 61.5% (around 47,600) waiting more than 9 weeks. The number of people on the radiology waiting list is the 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)
- * 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 15/01/2026, next planned update for this slide April 2026

Waiting times for Faster Diagnosis Standard met target (England)

November 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	76.5%	
Haematological (exc. acute leukaemia)	1,700	63.4%	200
Urological (exc. testicular)	21,900	64.8%	2,200
Lower GI	45,200	67.6%	3,400
Gynaecological	25,600	68.6%	1,600



Key points

- 76.5% 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 November 2025, meeting the NHSE target of 75%.
- Performance against the Faster Diagnosis Standard broken down by outcome showed that 55.1% of people diagnosed with cancer following an urgent referral met the 28-day standard, while the 28-day standard was met for 78.0% of people who had cancer ruled out.
- 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

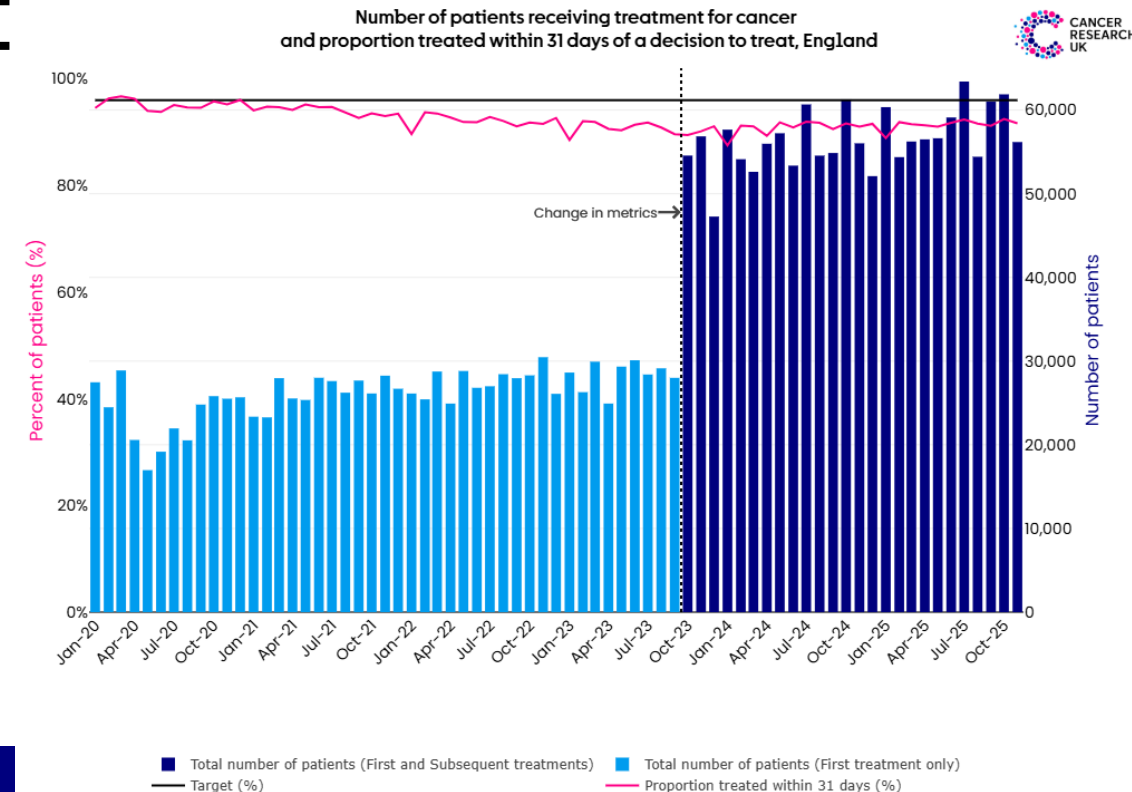
- Figures for 'All cancer types combined' presented in the table include USC referrals, urgent screening referrals and breast symptomatic referrals
- By cancer site results are presented for all routes combined where sites have multiple referral routes. Haematological and Urological figures are USC only.
- Data source: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times
- Last updated 15/01/2026, next planned update for this slide April 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
England* (November 25) <i>Standard: 96%</i>	56,200	91.7%	2,400
Scotland (September 25) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	7,400	95.1%	
Wales	Metric not used		
N Ireland (September 25) <i>Standard: 98%</i>	1,000	86.8%	110

Key points

- Only 91.7% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in England in November 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 November 2025, around 2,400 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.
- 95.1% of patients started treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in Scotland in September 2025, meeting the target of 95%
- Data is also available by cancer type.



Notes about the data

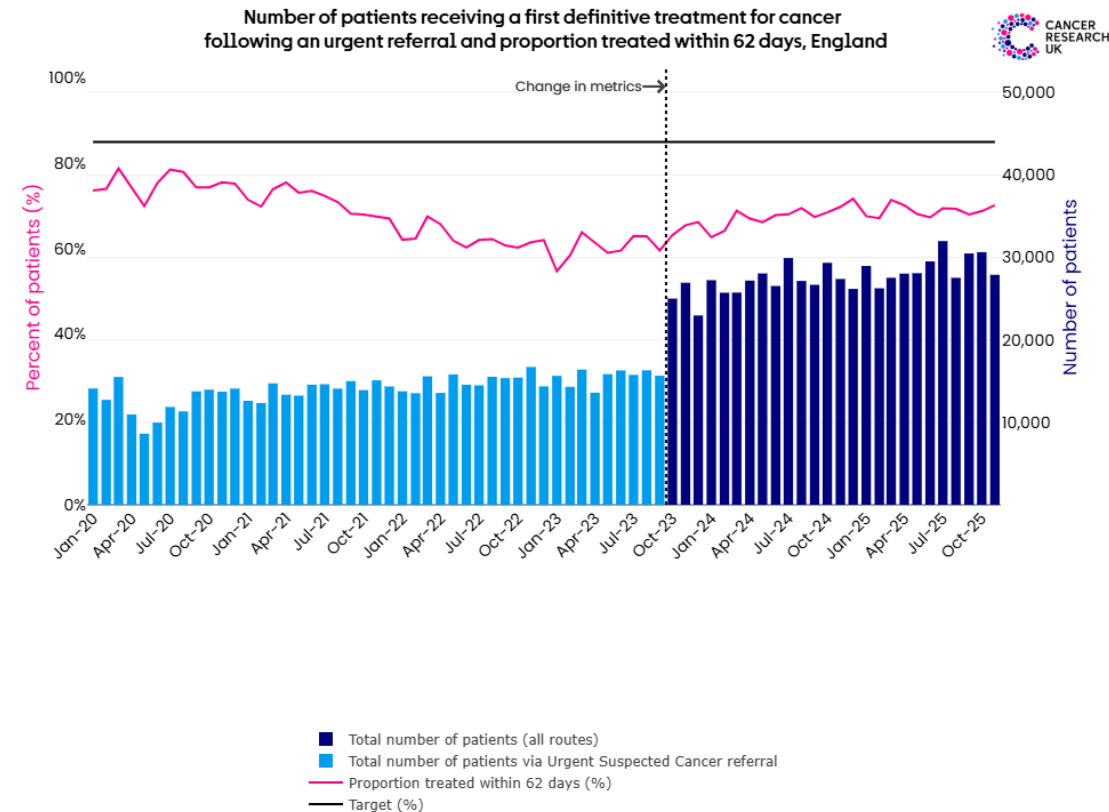
- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times.
- *31-day standard for England includes both first and subsequent treatment but only first treatment is included for Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Last updated 15/01/2026, next planned update for this slide April 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
England (November 25) <i>Standard: 85%</i>	27,900	70.2%	4,100
Scotland (September 25) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	4,800	70.7%	1,200
Wales* (October 25) <i>Standard: 75%</i>	2,100	59.4%	330
N Ireland (September 25) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	520	30.9%	330

Key points

- Only 70.2% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in England in November 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 November 2025, around 4,100 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.
- Data are also available by cancer type.



Notes about the data

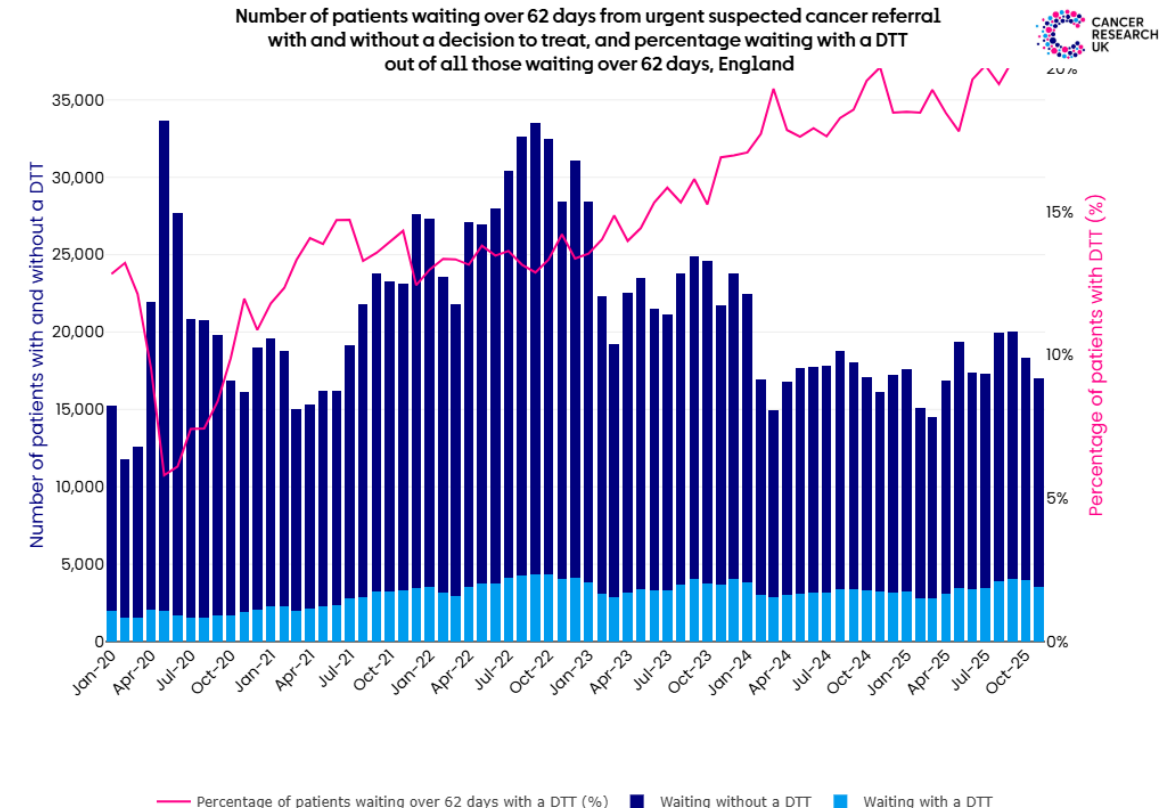
- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; Welsh Government Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Cancer Waiting Times
- *Wales reports Suspected Cancer Pathway including all patients from point of suspicion of cancer to first definitive treatment – other nations' 62 day wait figures refer only to patients diagnosed via urgent routes
- Last updated 15/01/2026, next planned update for this slide April 2026

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

	End of November 2025
Total number waiting over 62 days	17,000
Number (%) waiting without a Decision to Treat	13,400 (79.0%)
Number (%) waiting with a Decision to Treat	3,600 (21.0%)

Key points

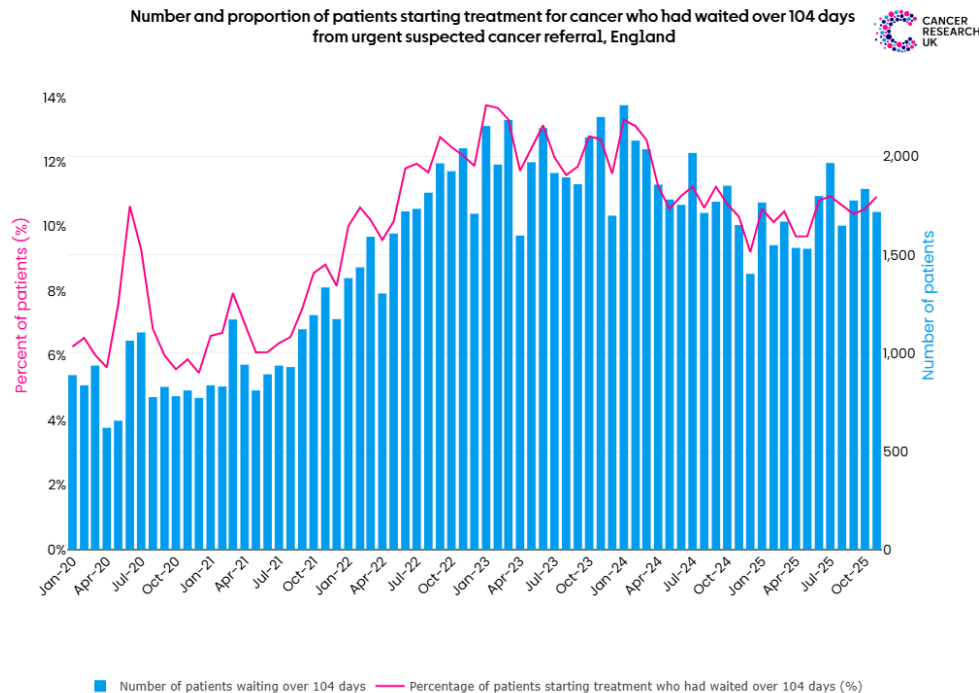
- There were around 17,000 patients waiting more than 62 days to begin treatment for cancer or have cancer ruled out following an urgent suspected cancer referral in England at the end of November 2025.
- Around 8 in 10 (79.0%) of these patients did not have a "decision to treat", indicating that they may still be waiting for diagnostic tests and results.
- September 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 16/01/2026, next planned update for this slide Apr 2026

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



November 2025	No. waiting >104 days for treatment	% waiting >104 days for treatment
All cancer types combined	1,700	10.9%
Urological	640	15.0%
Lower GI	210	14.6%
Lung	95	12.9%
Skin	170	4.4%
Breast	160	7.2%

Key points

- 10.9% of patients who started treatment in November 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. Since January 2024 there has been a gradual decrease in those waiting over 104 days to start treatment. However, this decline has recently stabilised.
- November 2025 had the highest number of long-waiters on record for Breast Cancer treatment.

Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times data, NHSE Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 16/01/2026, next planned update for this slide Apr 2026

Cancer waiting times standards and associated targets across the UK

Diagnostic interval

Treatment interval

Primary care interval

Secondary care interval

