

# Publication Report



## Diagnostic Waiting Times

Quarter ending 31 March 2011

Publication date – 31 May 2011

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## About ISD

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world combining high quality, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up.

Information Services Division (ISD) is a business operating unit of NHS National Services Scotland and has been in existence for over 40 years. We are an essential support service to NHSScotland and the Scottish Government and others, responsive to the needs of NHSScotland as the delivery of health and social care evolves.

**Purpose:** To deliver effective national and specialist intelligence services to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Scotland.

**Mission:** Better Information, Better Decisions, Better Health

**Vision:** To be a valued partner in improving health and wellbeing in Scotland by providing a world class intelligence service.

## Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of 'Official Statistics'. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. The Code of Practice is produced and monitored by the UK Statistics Authority which is independent of Government. Under the Code of Practice, the format, content and timing of statistics publications are the responsibility of professional staff working within ISD.

ISD's statistical publications are currently classified as one of the following:

- National Statistics (ie assessed by the UK Statistics Authority as complying with the Code of Practice)
- National Statistics (ie legacy, still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- Official Statistics (ie still to be assessed by the UK Statistics Authority)
- other (not Official Statistics)

Further information on ISD's statistics, including compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, and on the UK Statistics Authority, is available on the [ISD website](#).

The United Kingdom Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for 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 National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

## Introduction

In 2007, the Cabinet Secretary of Health and Wellbeing stated that "A whole journey waiting time target of 18 weeks from general practitioner referral to treatment ... by December 2011". Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of this 18 Weeks Referral To Treatment target (18 Weeks RTT).

Information on the following eight key diagnostic tests and investigations waiting times has been collected nationally since 2006:

### Endoscopy

- Upper Endoscopy
- Lower Endoscopy (excluding Colonoscopy)
- Colonoscopy
- Cystoscopy

### Radiology

- CT Scan
- MRI Scan
- Barium Studies
- Ultrasound

The Scottish Government introduced a 9 week maximum waiting time for these 8 key diagnostic tests and investigations from 31 December 2007. This wait was reduced to 6 weeks from 31 March 2009.

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests and investigations at the end of the month, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester.

## Key points

At 31 March 2011, 39,683 patients were waiting for 1 of 8 key diagnostic tests and investigations. Of these patients:

- Over 97.6% were recorded as having been waiting no longer than 6 weeks. This compares to over 93.6% of patients waiting no longer than 6 weeks at 31 December 2010.
- Over 95.8% were recorded as having been waiting no longer than 4 weeks. This compares to over 91.0% of patients waiting no longer than 4 weeks at 31 December 2010.

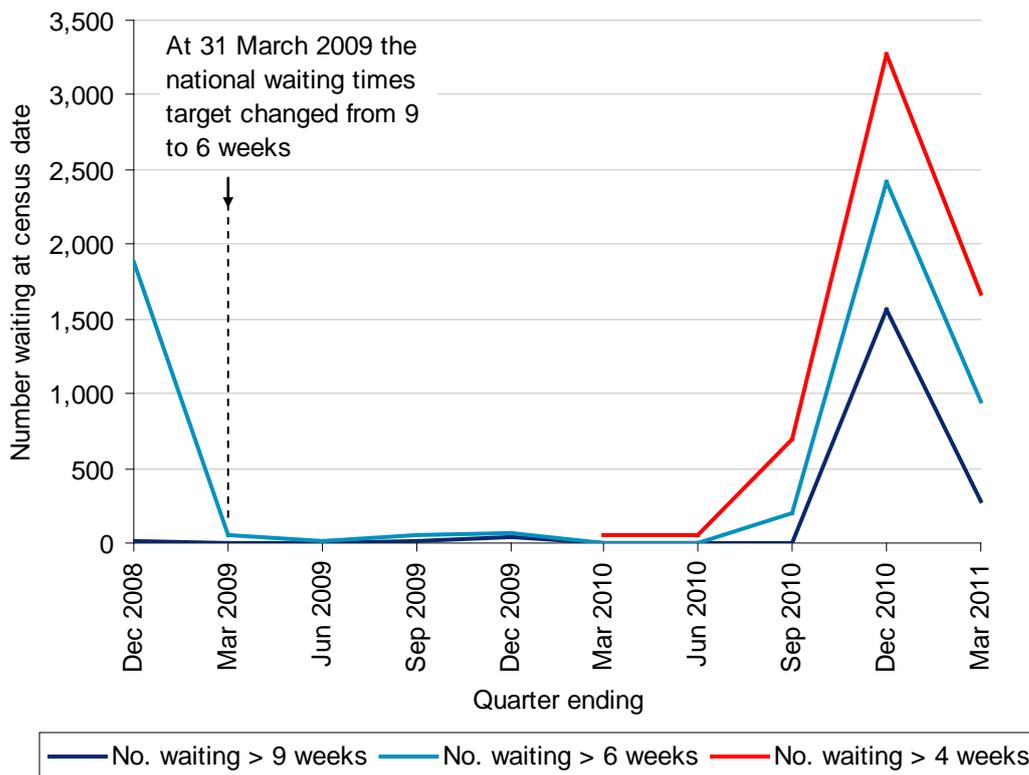
## Results and Commentary

The total number of patients waiting over nine, six and four weeks at the census date for the 8 key diagnostic tests and investigations is presented below at Scotland level for quarters ending 31 December 2008 to 31 March 2011.

Chart 1 shows that of 39,683 patients waiting at 31 March 2011, 946 patients were recorded as having been waiting longer than 6 weeks at the census date. This is a decrease from census date 31 December 2010 due to local improvement plans being put into place in order to increase capacity, including service redesign, development of new job plans and the appointment of additional staff.

The sharp fall in patients waiting over 6 weeks between census date 31 December 2008 and census date 31 March 2009 corresponds to the reduction in the maximum waiting time target from 9 weeks to 6 weeks from 31 March 2009.

**Chart 1: Patients waiting at the census date for the 8 key diagnostic tests and investigations**



NHS Board level data is provided in [Table 1](#)

## Glossary

**Diagnostic test:** test or procedure that is used to identify a person's condition, disease or injury to enable a medical diagnosis to be made.

**Patients waiting:** number of patients waiting at the census date, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester. The number of patients waiting at the census date in each time band corresponds to the time that has elapsed from the receipt of the referral.

## List of Tables

Table No.	Name	Time period	File & size
1	<a href="#">Waiting times for diagnostic tests : monthly and quarterly census dates</a>	31 December 2008 to 31 March 2011	Excel [396KB]

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## Further Information

Further information can be found on the [ISD website](#)

## Appendix

### A1 – Background Information

Diagnostic Waiting Times are an important component in the delivery of the 18 Week Referral To Treatment target (18 Weeks RTT) with information on the eight key diagnostic tests and investigations waiting times being collected nationally since 2006.

The Scottish Government introduced a 9 week maximum waiting time for these 8 key diagnostic tests and investigations from 31 December 2007. This wait was reduced to 6 weeks from 31 March 2009.

NHS Boards also supply data that allows measurement of the number of patients waiting over 4 weeks. The number of patients waiting over 4 weeks is included from 31 March 2010. From January 2010, the Scotland total includes Golden Jubilee National Hospital.

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests and investigations at the end of the month, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester.

NHS Boards submit to ISD the number of NHS patients who are waiting for any of the eight diagnostic tests at the end of the month, including those who have an appointment date or who have been seen but whose verified report has not yet been received by or made available to the requester. This includes all referral routes (i.e. whether the patient was referred by a GP, by a hospital-based clinician or other route) and also all settings (i.e. outpatient clinic, inpatient ward, x-ray department, primary care one-stop centres etc.).

The diagnostics waiting times national delivery team has worked with NHS Boards and ISD over recent years to support the compilation of the diagnostic waiting time data. Common definitions have been established and reporting systems improved so the coverage and quality of these data has improved month-on-month from April 2006.

ISD receives aggregate diagnostics data from each NHS Board and so patient-level information is not systematically validated by ISD. The derivation of the figures and data accuracy is carried out by individual NHS Boards in collaboration with ISD.

## A2 – Publication Metadata (including revisions details)

Metadata Indicator	Description
Website	<a href="http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/4451.html">http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/4451.html</a>
Description	Monthly and quarterly summary of eight key diagnostic tests and investigations waiting lists.
Theme	Health and Social Care
Topic	Access and Waiting Times
Format	Excel workbooks
Data source(s)	Aggregate counts accredited and derived from individual NHS Scotland Boards are submitted monthly to ISD using a defined Excel template. Associated with individual NHS Scotland Boards Local Delivery Plans integrated to the 18Week RTT national standards.
Date that data is acquired	Deadline for data submission is the 22nd of each month, though files can be resubmitted up to 1 week before publication where the quality assurance process identifies differences with local figures.
Release date	The last Tuesday of the month for each publication.
Frequency	Quarterly.
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Data from July 2009 to date. There have been no delays in reporting.
Continuity of data	From January 2010 Golden Jubilee National Hospital data is included in the Scotland total.
Revisions statement	Historic data is not normally revised unless revision of data is required due to NHS Board resubmission of revised local data following publication.
Concepts and definitions	A Guidance and Definitions document is available in printed and electronic form. These have been provided to all NHS Boards' key DMMI contacts. This information is not yet published. Frequently Asked Questions are available at <a href="http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/5012.html">http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/5012.html</a>
Relevance and key uses of the statistics	Waiting times are important to patients and are a measure of how the NHS is responding to demands for services. Measuring and regular reporting of waiting times highlights where there are delays in the system and enables monitoring of the effectiveness of NHS performance throughout the country. The NHS in Scotland has been set a number of targets for maximum waiting times. Other uses of the data include information requests for a variety of customers, e.g. research charities; public companies; freedom of Information requests; information support to Boards; health intelligence work; parliamentary questions and HEAT targets.
Accuracy	ISD only receives aggregate data from each NHS Board where the data for the previous quarter is confirmed by the submitting Board. Although aggregated data can not be systematically validated by ISD, reported data are compared to previous figures and to expected trends. Derivation of the figures and data

	accuracy is a matter for individual NHS Boards. Reported data are compared to previous figures and to expected trends.
Completeness	100% of submitted data is used for analysis and publication.
Comparability	Comparative waiting times information is not possible at present using these data due to inconsistencies in definitions of waiting times for treatment across the four countries. Collaborative efforts by the health departments of the four countries to produce comparable figures on waiting times is currently underway by the UK Comparative Waiting Times Group.
Accessibility	It is the policy of ISD Scotland to make its web sites and products accessible according to published guidelines. See attached link for further details: <a href="http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/Accessibility/">http://www.isdscotland.org/About-ISD/Accessibility/</a>
Coherence and clarity	Key statistics for the latest quarter are presented on the front Diagnostics page, which is linked to on the main Waiting Times page of the publication. Statistics are presented within Excel spreadsheets. Geographical hierarchies and national figures are presented using drop down menus. Further features to aid clarity: 1. Tables use drop down menus to display data by a single Board. 2. Tables are printer friendly. 3. Key data presented graphically.
Value type and unit of measure	Count of number of patents waiting, number and percent waiting over 6, 9 and 4 weeks for Scotland and NHS Scotland Health Board
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics.
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Completed assessment by UK Statistics Authority. Report published 29 July 2010. <a href="http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf">http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-55---nhs-waiting-times-in-scotland.pdf</a>
Help email	<a href="mailto:NSS.isddmmi@nhs.net">NSS.isddmmi@nhs.net</a>
Date form completed	30/11/2010

### **A3 – Early Access details (including Pre-Release Access)**

#### **Pre-Release Access**

Under terms of the "Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008", ISD are obliged to publish information on those receiving Pre-Release Access ("Pre-Release Access" refers to statistics in their final form prior to publication). The standard maximum Pre-Release Access is five working days. Shown below are details of those receiving standard Pre-Release Access and, separately, those receiving extended Pre-Release Access.

Standard Pre-Release Access:  
Scottish Government Health Department  
NHS Board Chief Executives  
NHS Board Communication leads

#### **Extended Pre-Release Access**

Extended Pre-Release Access of 8 working days is given to a small number of named individuals in the Scottish Government Health Department (Analytical Services Division). This Pre-Release Access is for the sole purpose of enabling that department to gain an understanding of the statistics prior to briefing others in Scottish Government (during the period of standard Pre-Release Access).

Scottish Government Health Department (Analytical Services Division)

These statistics will also have been made available to those who needed access to 'management information', ie as part of the delivery of health and care:

These statistics will also have been made available to those who needed access to help quality assure the publication: