

Performance measures across the cancer pathway: Key Stats

Stats for: November 2024

Last updated: January 2025

Cancer Intelligence Team



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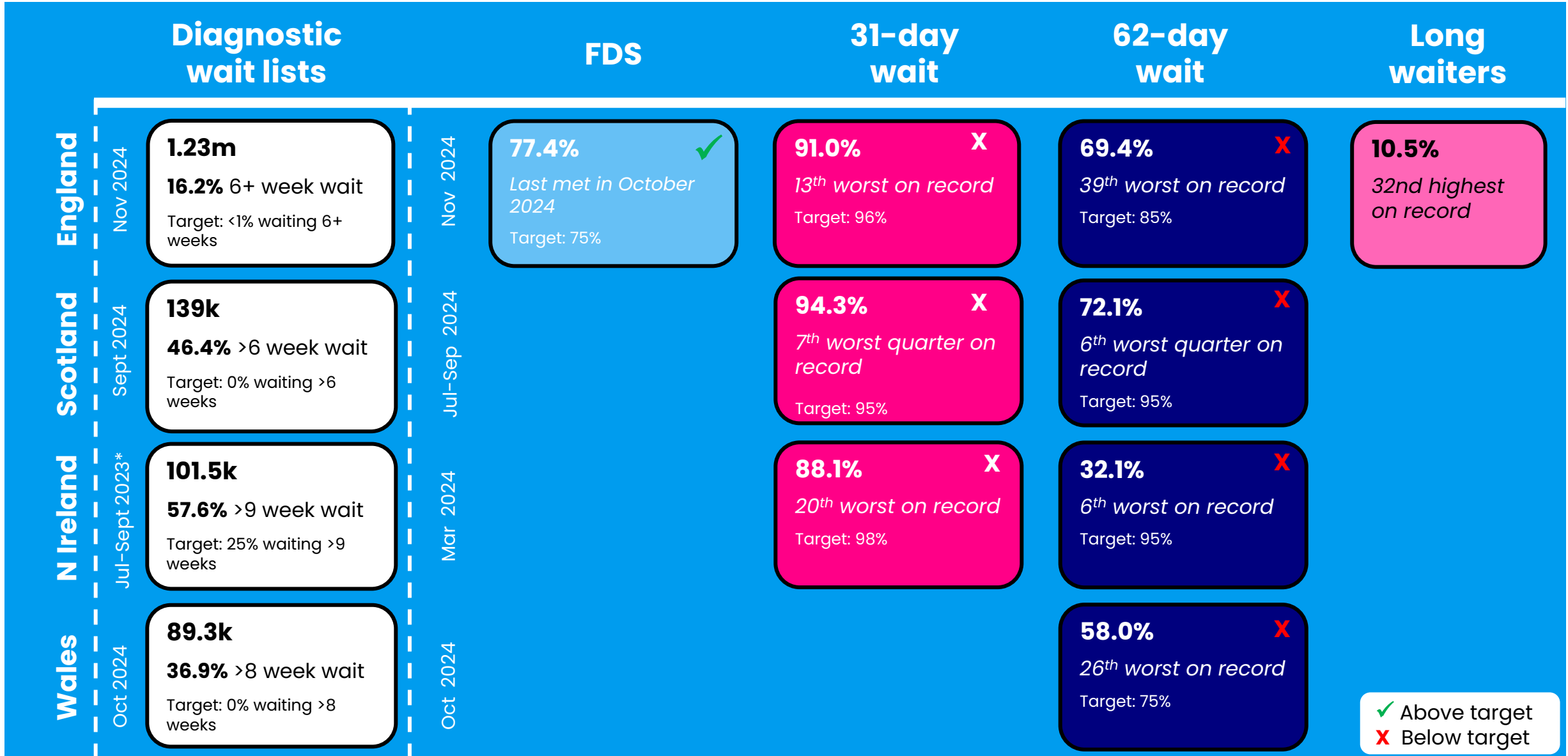
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Cancer Waiting Times & Diagnostic Activity Data

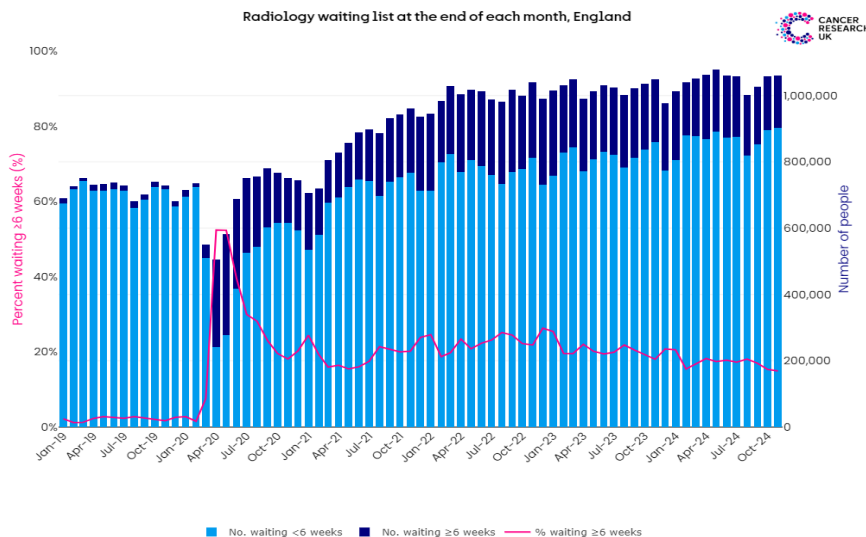
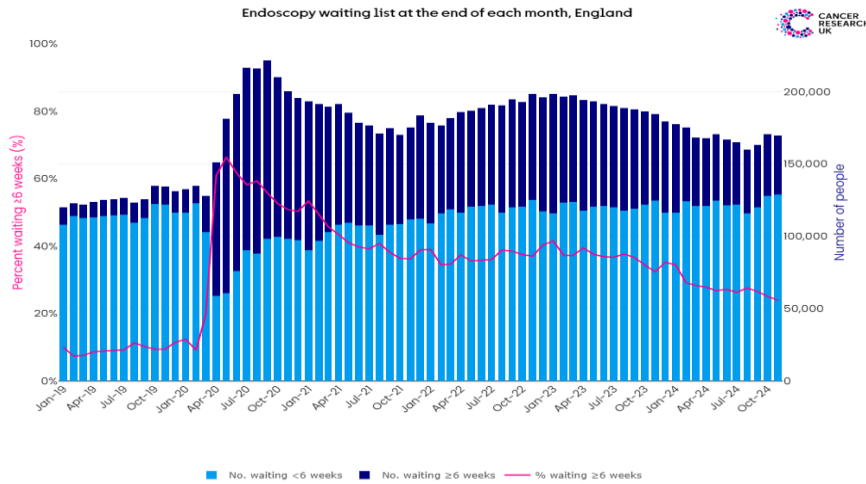
- This slide deck presents the latest monthly or quarterly data for:
 - Activity and waiting times for key diagnostic tests that could be used in the diagnosis of cancer
 - Activity and waiting times for cancer services from the Cancer Waiting Times dataset
- There are standards and targets on timelines 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 2024 for cancer waiting times.

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



Test type	November 2024		
	Patients waiting	Patients waiting 6+ weeks	% waiting 6+ weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	170K	40.7K	24.0%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	1.06M	158K	14.9%

Key points

- In November 2024, around 1.23million people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in England. Of these, 16.2% have been waiting 6 weeks or more.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 24.0% (around 40,700) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 14.9% (around 158,000) waiting 6 or more weeks.
- The number of people on the diagnostic radiology waiting list in England is the 4th worst on record (since 2006).
- The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list (radiology and endoscopy) is the 6th 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 13/01/2025, next planned update for this slide April 2025

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

Test type	Scotland <i>Sept 2024</i>		Wales <i>Oct 2024</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)	32.4k	19k	25.2k	15.7k	25.4k	19.2k	18.0k
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	106k	45.4k	64.1k	17.3k	76.1k	49.4k	40.4k

Key points

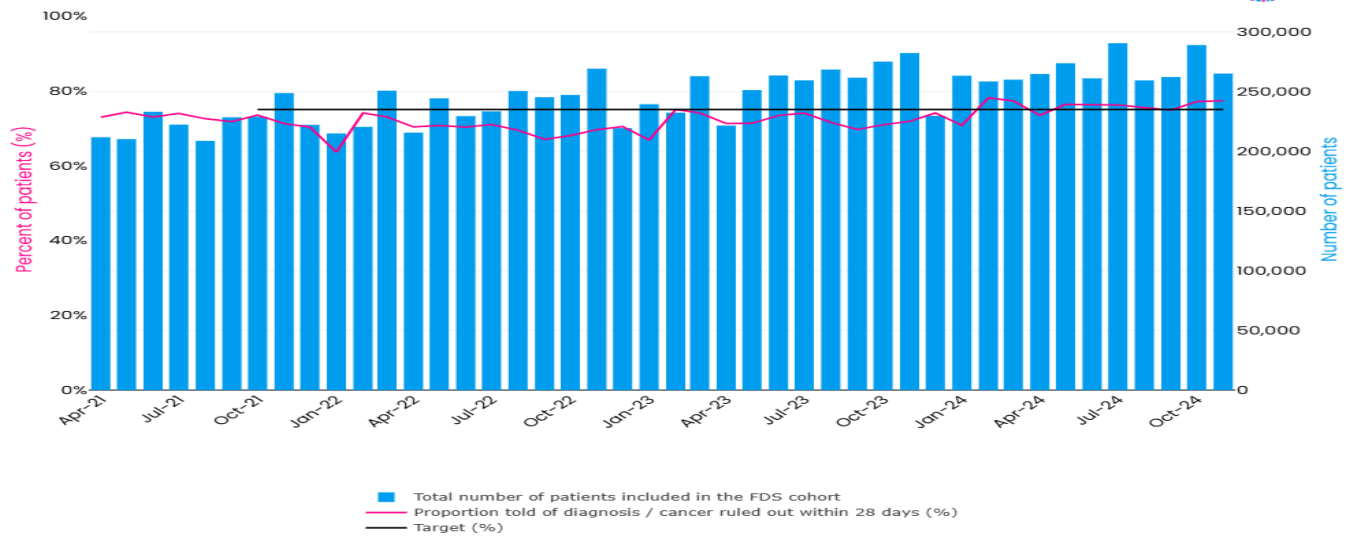
- **Scotland: Total waiting lists remain substantially long for diagnostic tests. Endoscopy waiting lists had 58.7% (around 19,000) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 42.6% (around 45,400) waiting 6 or more weeks.**
- **Wales: Total waiting lists remain substantially long for diagnostic tests. Endoscopy waiting lists had 62.4% (around 15,700) waiting 8 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 26.9% (around 17,300) waiting 8 or more weeks.**

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 13/01/2025, next planned update for this slide April 2025

Waiting times for Faster Diagnosis Standard met target (England)

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



November 2024

	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	265,000	77.4%	–
Haematological (exc. acute leukaemia)	1,700	59.3%	270
Urological (exc. testicular)	20,600	64.7%	2,100
Lower GI	43,100	64.3%	4,600
Gynaecological	26,400	66.8%	2,200

Notes about the data

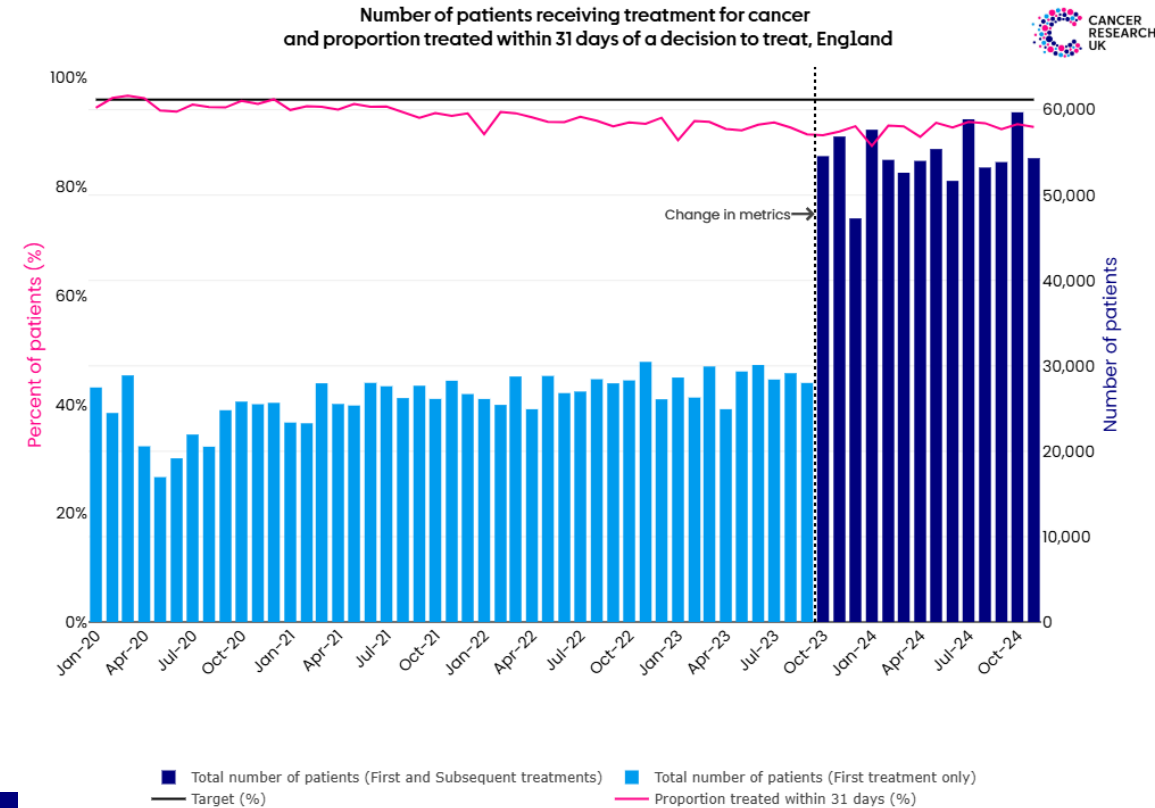
- Figures for 'All cancer types combined' presented in the table include USC referrals, urgent screening referrals and breast symptomatic referrals
- By cancer site results are presented for all routes combined where sites have multiple referral routes. Haematological and Urological figures are USC only.
- Data source: NHSE Cancer Waiting Times
- Last updated 13/01/2025, next planned update for this slide April 2025

Key points

- 77.4% 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 2024, meeting the NHS E target of 75%.
- This is the eighth time the target has been met since its introduction in April 2021.
- 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

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* (Nov 24) <i>Standard: 96%</i>	54,300	91.0%	2,700
Scotland (Jul – Sep 24) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	6,800	94.3%	50
Wales	Metric not used		
N Ireland** (Mar 24) <i>Standard: 98%</i>	920	88.1%	90



Key points

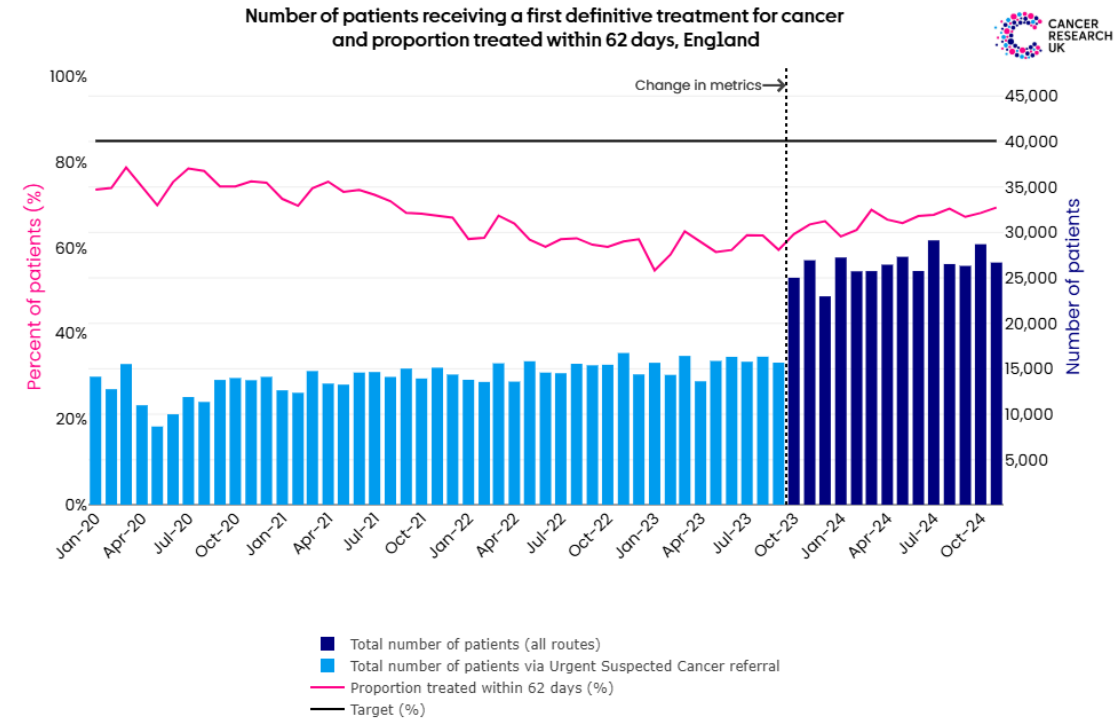
- Only 91% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in England in November 2024, missing the NHS E target of 96%.
- This target has not been met in England since December 2020.
- If the target was met in November 2024, around 2,700 additional patients in England would 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
- ** For Northern Ireland, due to data infrastructure changes the latest complete national data is for March 2024 for Cancer waiting times. More recent sub-national data is available on the Dept of Health website.
- Last updated 13/01/2025, next planned update for this slide April 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 (Nov 24) <i>Standard: 85%</i>	26,700	69.4%	4,200
Scotland (Jul – Sep 24) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	4,400	72.1%	1,000
Wales* (Oct 24) <i>Standard: 75%</i>	2,100	58.0%	350
N Ireland** (Mar 24) <i>Standard: 95%</i>	430	32.1%	270



Key points

- **Only 69.4% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent referral in England in November 2024, missing the NHS E target of 85%.**
- **This target has not been met in England since 2015.**
- **If the target was met in November 2024, around 4,200 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
- ** For Northern Ireland, due to data infrastructure changes the latest complete national data is for March 2024 for cancer waiting times. More recent sub-national data is available on the Dept of Health website.
- Last updated 13/01/2025, next planned update for this slide April 2025

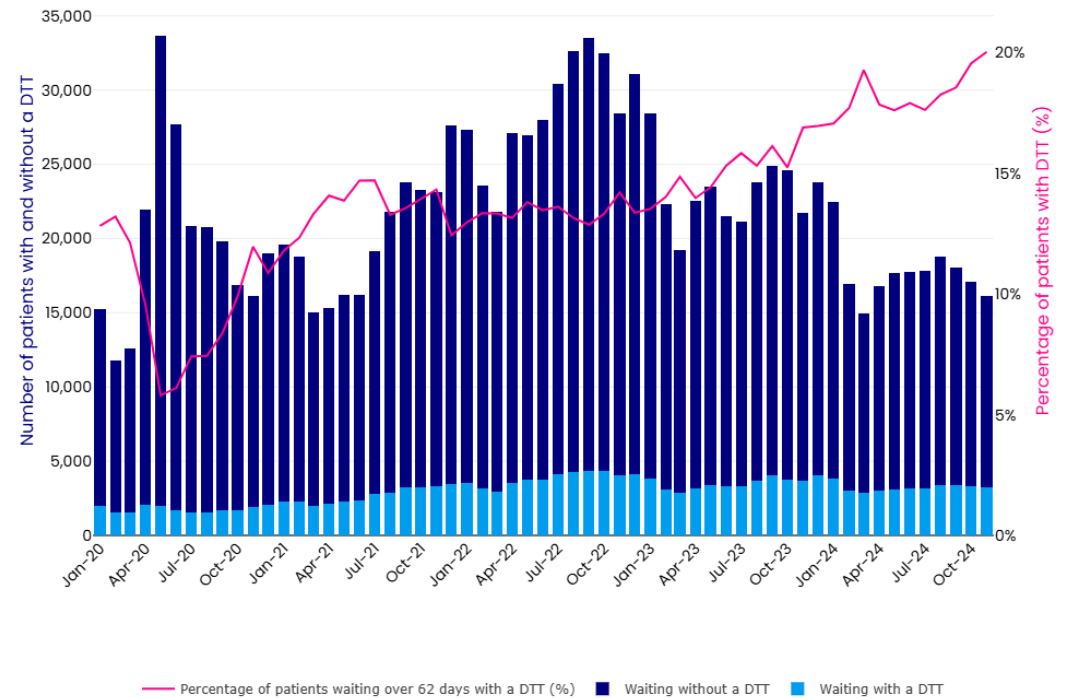
Management Information: patients waiting more than 62 days following an urgent suspected cancer referral in England

	November 2024
Total number waiting over 62 days	16,100
Number (%) waiting without a Decision to Treat	12,900 (80.0%)
Number (%) waiting with a Decision to Treat	3,200 (20.0%)

Key points

- 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 November 2024.
- 8 in 10 (80.0%) of these patients did not have a "decision to treat", indicating that they may still be waiting for diagnostic tests and results.
- September 2022 had the highest number of patients waiting over 62 days following an urgent suspected cancer referral since the height of the pandemic (May 2020). However, the most recent months have seen a decrease and then levelling off in numbers waiting more than 62 days.
- The percentage waiting more than 62 days who have a decision to treat has been generally increasing 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

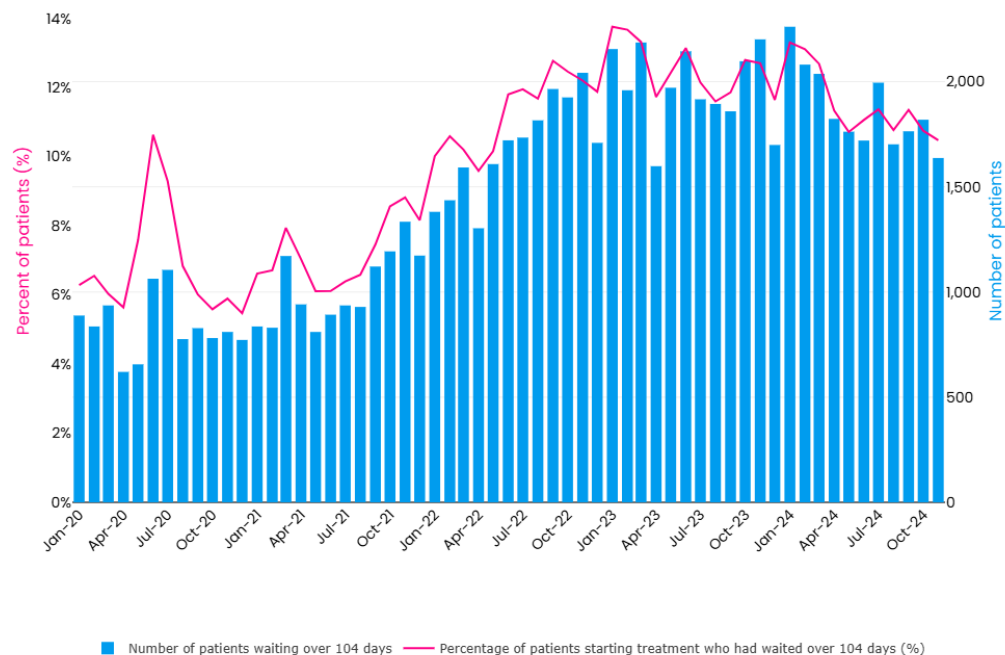


Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHSE Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 13/01/2025, next planned update for this slide April 2025

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



November 2024	No. waiting >104 days for treatment	% waiting >104 days for treatment
All cancer types combined	1,600	10.5%
Urological	580	14.6%
Lower GI	230	15.1%
Lung	140	16.7%
Skin	150	4.0%
Breast	95	4.2%

Key points

- **10.5% of patients who started treatment in November 2024 waited more than 104 days after an urgent referral to begin treatment for cancer. This is the 32nd highest percentage of 'long-waiters' on record (available since June 2015).**
- **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 13/01/2025, next planned update for this slide April 2025

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%