

# Performance measures across the cancer pathway: Key Stats

*Stats for: August 2024*

*Last updated: October 2024*

Cancer Intelligence Team



# Contents

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**01** [Overview](#)

---

**02** [Key Highlights](#)

---

**03** [Diagnostic Waiting times \(England\)](#)

---

**04** [Diagnostic Waiting times \(Devolved\)](#)

---

**05** [Faster Diagnosis Standard](#)

---

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**06** [31-day wait](#)

---

**07** [62-day wait](#)

---

**08** [Long-waiters](#)

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**09** [Management Information](#)

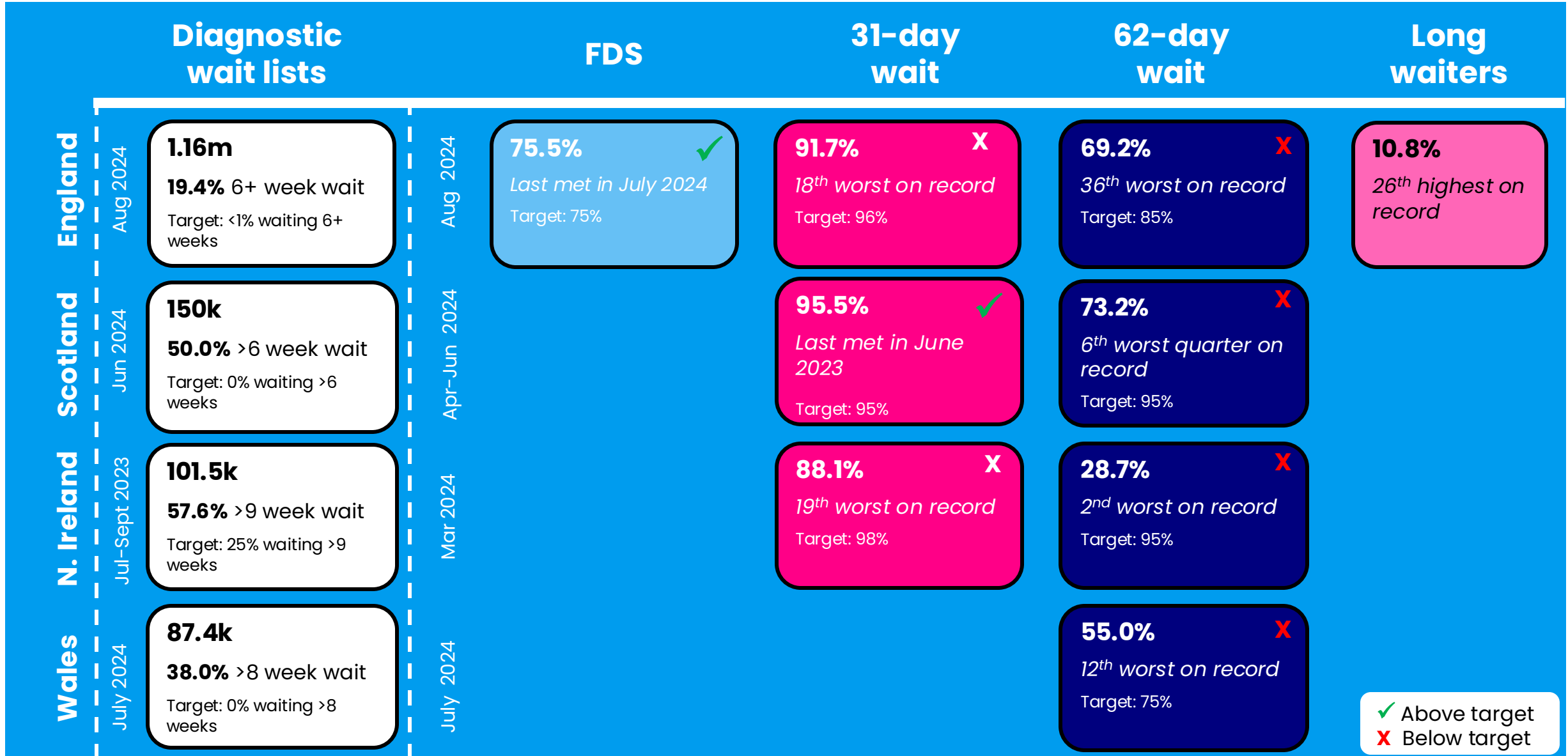
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**10** [Cancer Waiting times targets infographic](#)

# Cancer Waiting Times & Diagnostic Activity Data

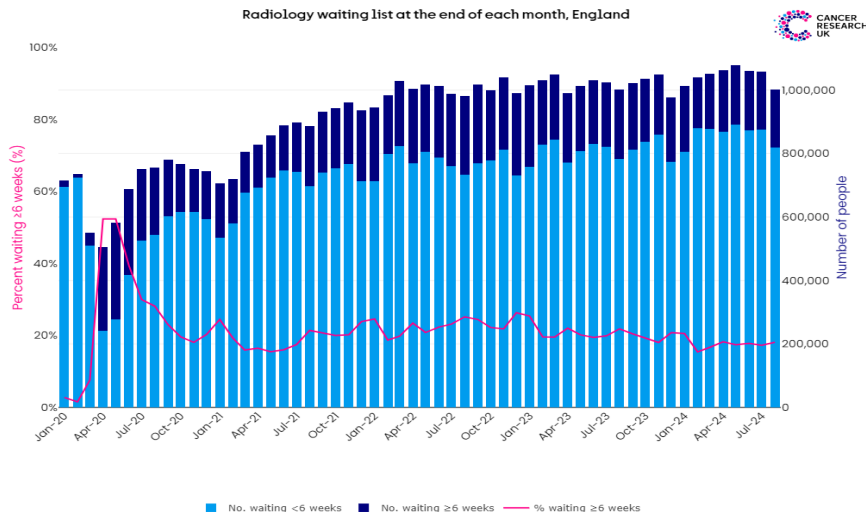
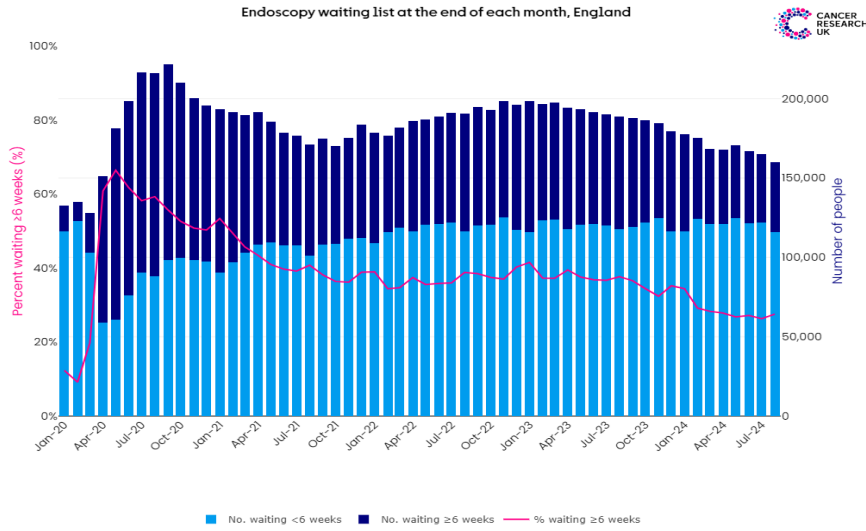
- This slide deck presents the latest monthly or quarterly data for:
  - Activity and waiting times for key diagnostic tests that could be used in the diagnosis of cancer
  - Activity and waiting times for cancer services from the Cancer Waiting Times dataset
- There are standards and targets on timelines 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 September 2023 for Diagnostic wait lists and March 2024 for Cancer waiting times.

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



Test type	August 2024		
	Patients waiting	Patients waiting 6+ weeks	% waiting 6+ weeks
Endoscopy (colonoscopies, flexi-sigmoidoscopies, cystoscopies, gastroscopies)	160K	44.1K	27.6%
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	1.00M	181K	18.1%

## Key points

- In August 2024, around 1.16 million people were waiting for key diagnostic tests in England. Of these, 19.4% have been waiting 6 weeks or more.
- Endoscopy waiting lists had 27.6% (around 44,100) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 18.1% (around 181,000) waiting 6 or more weeks.
- The number of people on the diagnostic radiology waiting list in England is the 24th worst on record (since 2006).
- The number of people on the combined diagnostic waiting list (radiology and endoscopy) is the 29th 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 10/10/2024, next planned update for this slide January 2025

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

Test type	Scotland <i>June 2024</i>		Wales <i>July 2024</i>		Northern Ireland * <i>July-September 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)	34k	20.4k	24.6k	15.4k	25.4k	19.2k	18.0k
Radiology (MRI scans, CT scans, non-obstetric ultrasound, barium studies)	116k	54.6k	62.7k	17.8k	76.1k	49.4k	40.4k

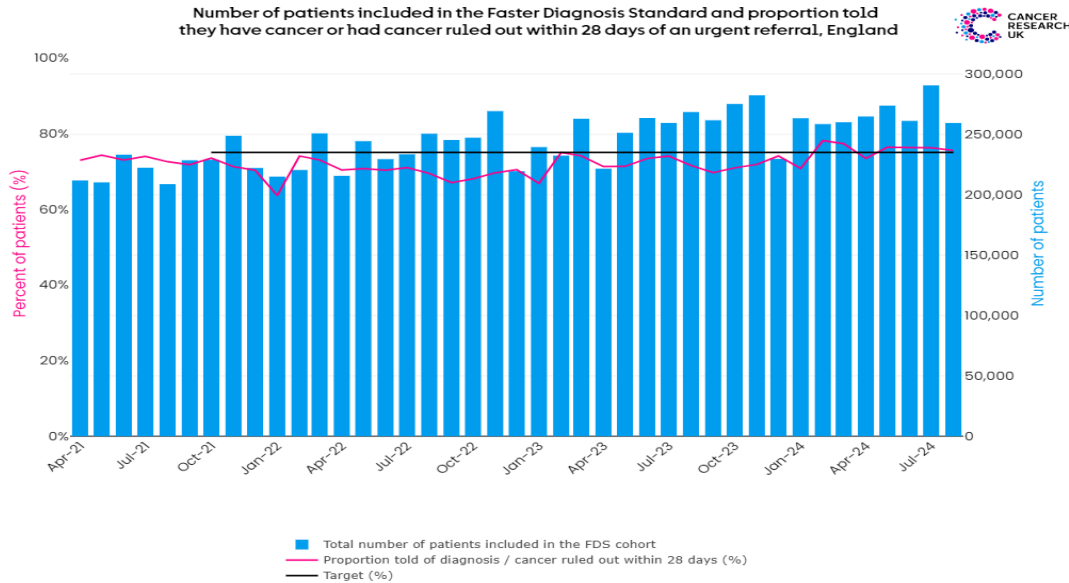
## Key points

- **Scotland: Total waiting lists remain substantially long for diagnostic tests. Endoscopy waiting lists had 60.0% (around 20,400) waiting 6 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 47.1% (around 54,600) waiting 6 or more weeks.**
- **Wales: Total waiting lists remain substantially long for diagnostic tests. Endoscopy waiting lists had 62.6% (around 15,400) waiting 8 or more weeks, while radiology waiting lists had 28.4% (around 17,800) 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 to September 2023 for diagnostic wait lists, more recent data exists on the Dept. of Health website but is non-complete.
- Last updated 10/10/2024, next planned update for this slide January 2025

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



August 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	259,000	75.5%	-
Haematological (exc. acute leukaemia)	1,700	57.4%	300
Urological (exc. testicular)	19,400	60.2%	2,900
Lower GI	42,100	61.3%	5,800
Gynaecological	24,800	64.3%	2,600

**Notes about the data**

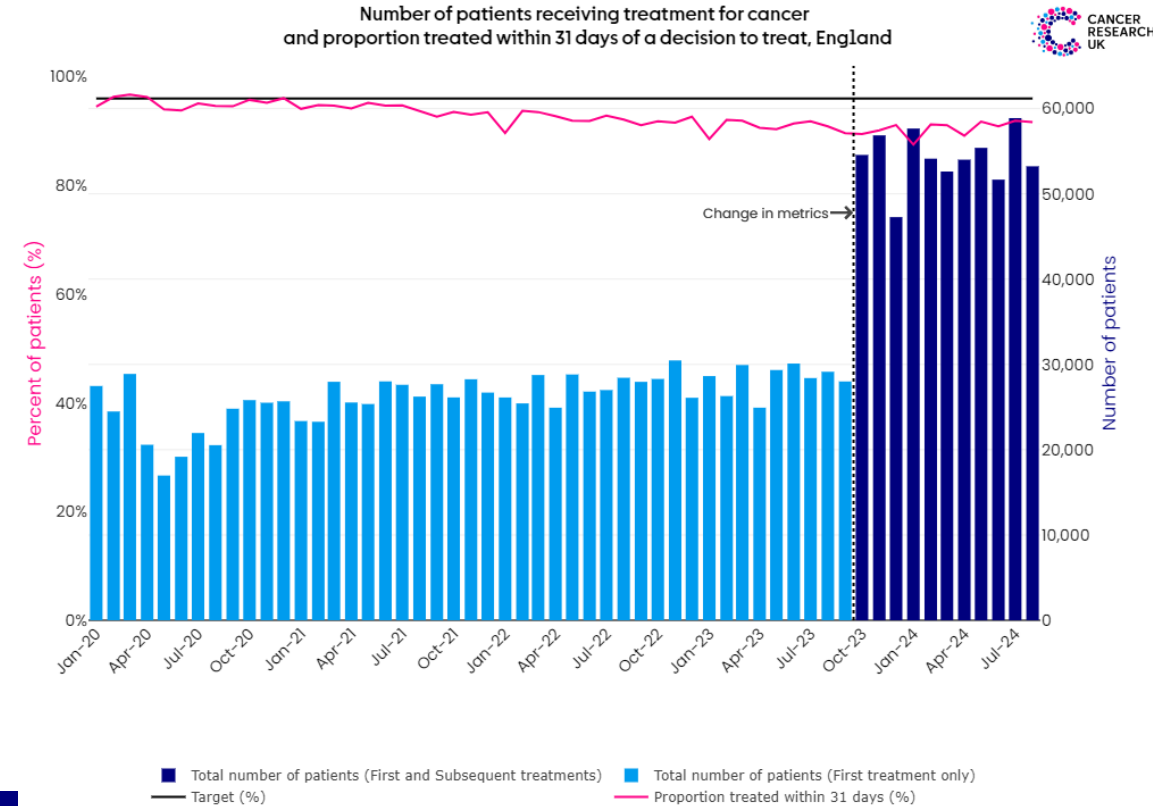
- Figures for 'All cancer types combined' presented in the table include USC referrals, urgent screening referrals and breast symptomatic referrals
- By cancer site results are presented for all routes combined where sites have multiple referral routes. Haematological and Urological figures are USC only.
- Data source: NHS-E&I Cancer Waiting Times
- Last updated 10/10/2024, next planned update for this slide January 2025

**Key points**

- 75.5% 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 August 2024, meeting the NHS E target of 75%.
- This is the sixth 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 95%.

# 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
<b>England (Aug 24)</b> <i>Standard: 96%</i>	53,200	91.7%	2,300
<b>Scotland (Apr – Jun 24)</b> <i>Standard: 95%</i>	7,000	95.5%	–
<b>Wales</b>	Metric not used		
<b>N Ireland* (Mar 24)</b> <i>Standard: 98%</i>	920	88.1%	90



## Key points

- Only 91.7% of patients started cancer treatment within 31 days of a decision to treat in England in August 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 August 2024, around 2,300 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.
- Data is also available by cancer type.

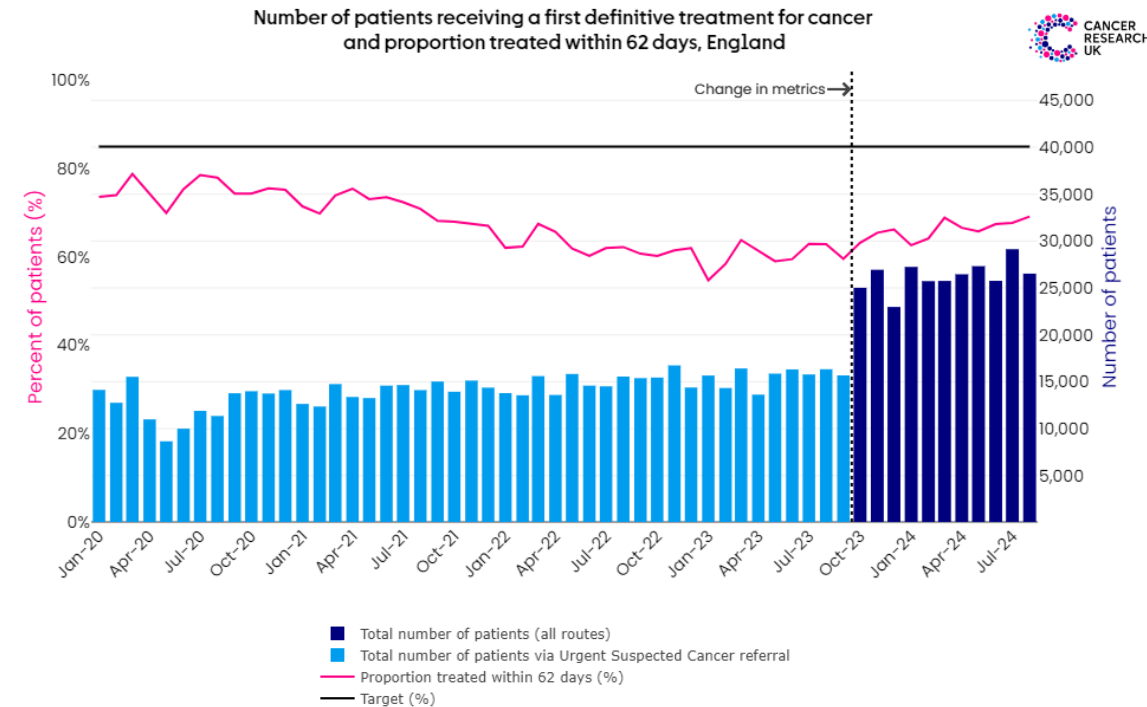
## Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHS-E&I Cancer Waiting Times data; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Waiting Times Statistics.
- \* For Northern Ireland, due to data infrastructure changes the latest complete national data is for March 2024 for Cancer waiting times, more recent data exists on the Dept. of Health website but is non-complete.
- Last updated 10/10/2024, next planned update for this slide January 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
<b>England (Aug 24)</b> <i>Standard: 85%</i>	26,500	69.2%	4,200
<b>Scotland (Apr – Jun 24)</b> <i>Standard: 95%</i>	4,500	73.2%	970
<b>Wales* (Jul 24)</b> <i>Standard: 75%</i>	2,000	55.0%	410
<b>N Ireland** (Mar 24)</b> <i>Standard: 95%</i>	330	28.7%	220



## Key points

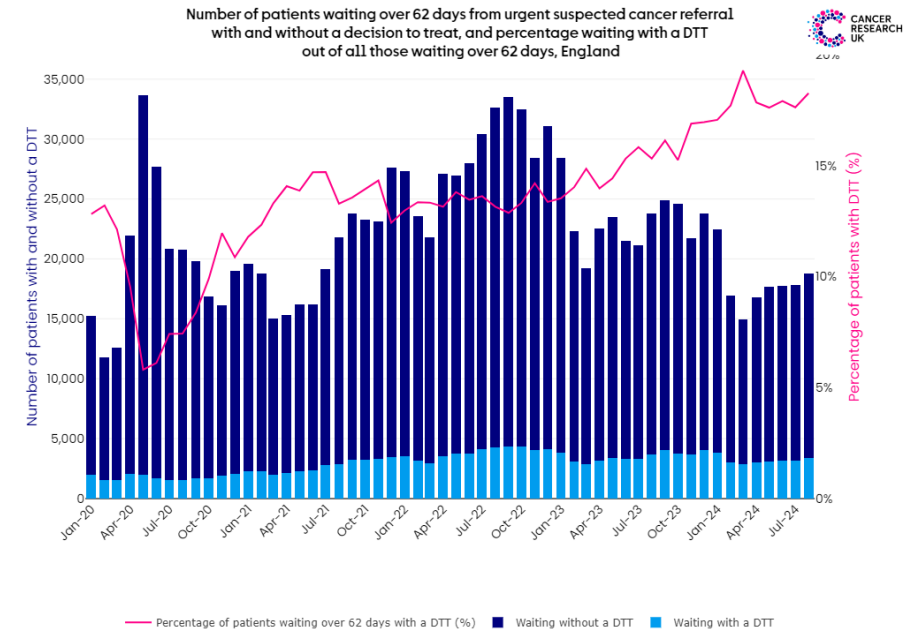
- Only 69.2% of patients started treatment within 62 days of an urgent suspected cancer referral in England in August 2024, missing the NHS E target of 85%.
- This target has not been met in England since 2015.
- If the target was met in August, around 4,200 additional patients in England would have been treated on time.
- Data are also available by cancer type.

## Notes about the data

- \*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
- Data sources: NHS-E&I Cancer Waiting Times data; Public Health Scotland Cancer Waiting Times; Welsh Government Cancer Waiting Times; and Dept. of Health Northern Ireland Waiting Times Statistics
- \*\* For Northern Ireland, due to data infrastructure changes the latest complete national data is for March 2024 for Cancer waiting times, more recent data exists on the Dept. of Health website but is non-complete.
- Last updated 10/10/2024, next planned update for this slide January 2025

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

	August 2024
Total number waiting over 62 days	18,800
Number (%) waiting without a Decision to Treat	15,300 (81.7%)
Number (%) waiting with a Decision to Treat	3,400 (18.3%)




## Key points

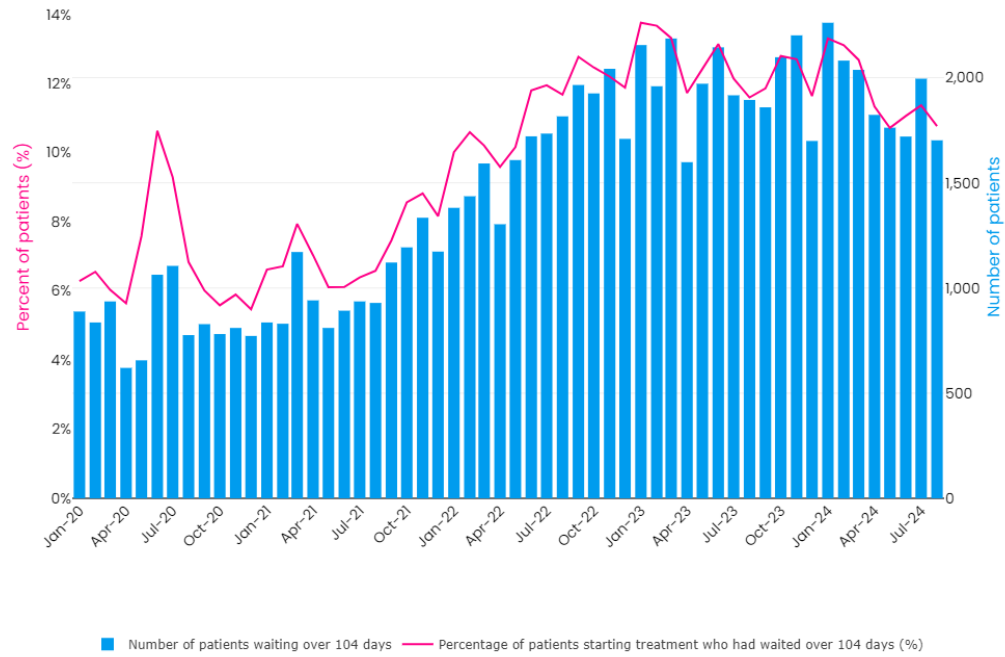
- There were around 18,800 patients waiting more than 62 days to begin treatment for cancer or have cancer ruled out following an urgent suspected cancer referral in England at the end of August 2024.
- More than 8 in 10 (81.7%) of these patients did not have a "decision to treat", indicating that they 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.

## Notes about the data

- Data sources: NHS-E&I Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 10/10/2024, next planned update for this slide January 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 



August 2024	No. waiting >104 days for treatment	% waiting >104 days for treatment
All cancer types combined	1,700	10.8%
Urological (exc. Testicular)	700	17.0%
Lower GI	230	15.4%
Lung	150	17.0%
Skin	130	3.4%
Breast	95	4.1%

**Key points**

- **10.8% of patients who started treatment in August 2024 waited more than 104 days after an urgent referral to begin treatment for cancer. This is the 26th highest percentage of 'long-waiters' on record (available since June 2015).**
- **January 2023 saw the highest percentage of 'long-waiters' on record. Since then, 9 out of 10 months with the highest percentage of 'long-waiters' have occurred.**

**Notes about the data**

- Data sources: NHS-E&I Cancer Waiting Times data, NHS-E&I Management Information on Cancer
- Last updated 10/10/2024, next planned update for this slide January 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%