

# Impact of Covid-19 on Hospital Waiting Times

POSITION AT 31st DECEMBER 2020

## Introduction

The Department of Health publishes quarterly statistical reports and tables on Hospital Waiting Times. This publication will highlight the provisional Inpatient, Outpatient and Cancer Waiting Times positions for 31<sup>st</sup> December 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 ahead of the official statistics for the quarter ending December 2020 published at the end of February (Inpatients and Outpatients) and the end of March (Cancer). These data will give an indication of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on services.

This management information (MI) has been drawn from data extracts from the Patient Administration System (PAS) and Cancer Patient Pathway System (CaPPS) at a point in time and has not been quality assured or processed to the standards required to be official statistics. In addition, this information is provisional and has not been derived to the same methodology as the National Statistics published quarterly so will not be directly comparable. However, similar principles have been applied. The data presented excludes a small number of medical specialties which are not captured on PAS.

## Outpatient Waiting Times

It should be noted that Outpatient figures are provisional and the December 2020 figures exclude a small number of patients not recorded on the Patient Administration System. Data include those patients waiting for their first consultant led outpatient appointment at a Day case Procedure Centre (DPC) for cataracts.

### Total Waiting

The number of patients waiting for an outpatient appointment at 31st December 2020 (330,146) was 8% (25,129) higher than at the same point last year (305,017). This was comprised of a decrease of 28.2% (18,549) in the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks, a 13.9% (17,691) decrease in the number of patients waiting between 9 and 52 weeks, and a 54.8% (61,369) increase in the number waiting over 52 weeks.

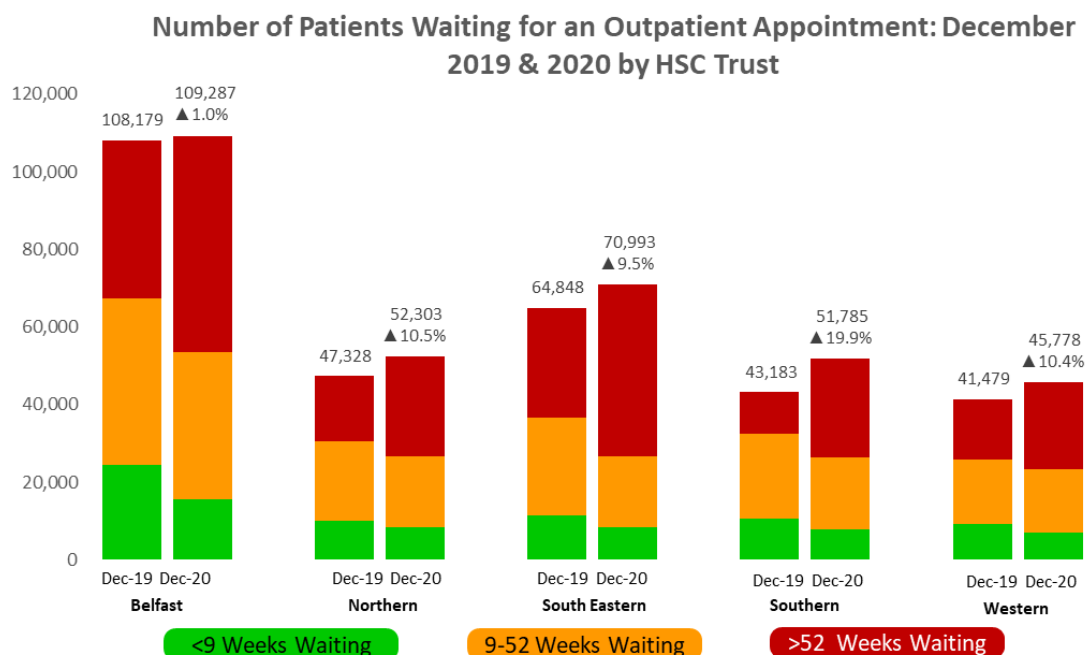
Month	Total Waiting	Waiting > 9 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
Dec 2019	305,017	239,130	111,963
Dec 2020	330,146	282,808	173,332

### By Urgency

At 31st December 2020, 67,251 (20.4%) patients were waiting for an urgent appointment, with the remaining 262,895 waiting for a routine appointment. A breakdown by priority is not available for December 2019.

### By Trust

Waiting lists in all HSC Trusts increased between December 2019 and December 2020.

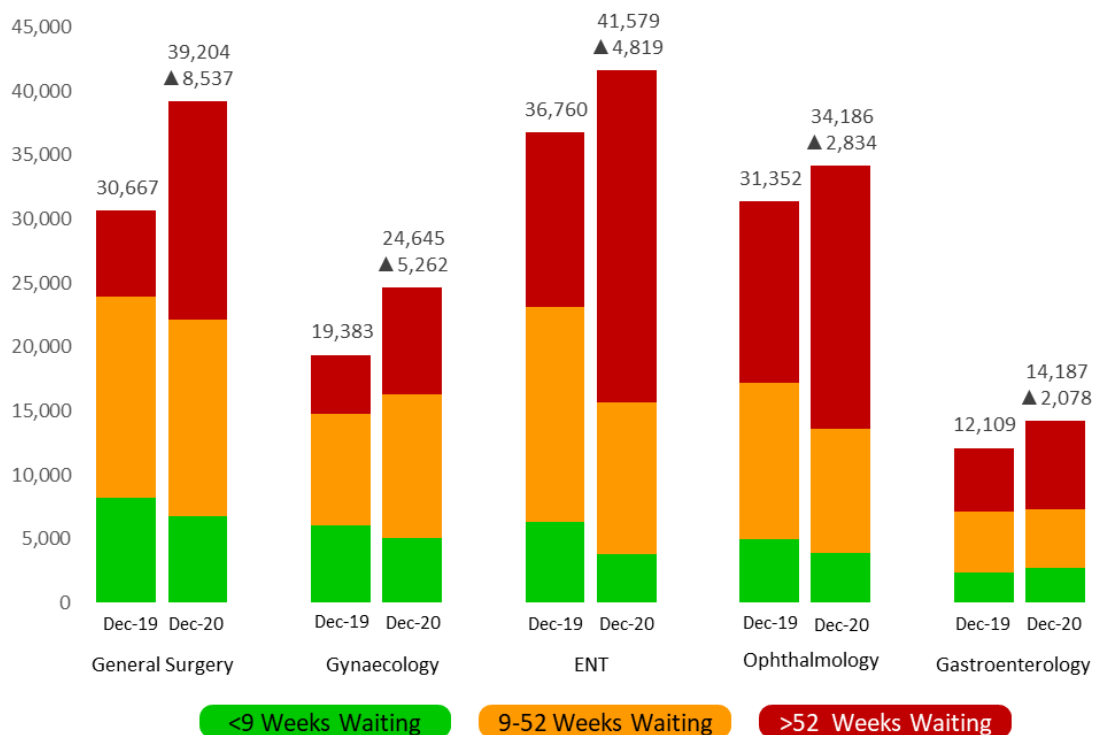


Across all HSC Trusts, the number of patients waiting less than 9 weeks in December 2020 decreased from December 2019, whilst across the same period, the number waiting over 52 weeks increased considerably in all HSC Trusts.

### Specialties with Largest Increases in Number of Patients Waiting

There were 39,204 patients waiting for General Surgery in December 2020, an increase of 8,537 (28%) from December 2019 (30,667). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. Gynaecology, ENT, Ophthalmology and Gastroenterology also showed large increases across this period.

**Number of Patients Waiting for an Outpatient Appointment:  
December 2019 & 2020 - Specialties With Largest Increases**



## Inpatient Waiting Times

### Total Waiting

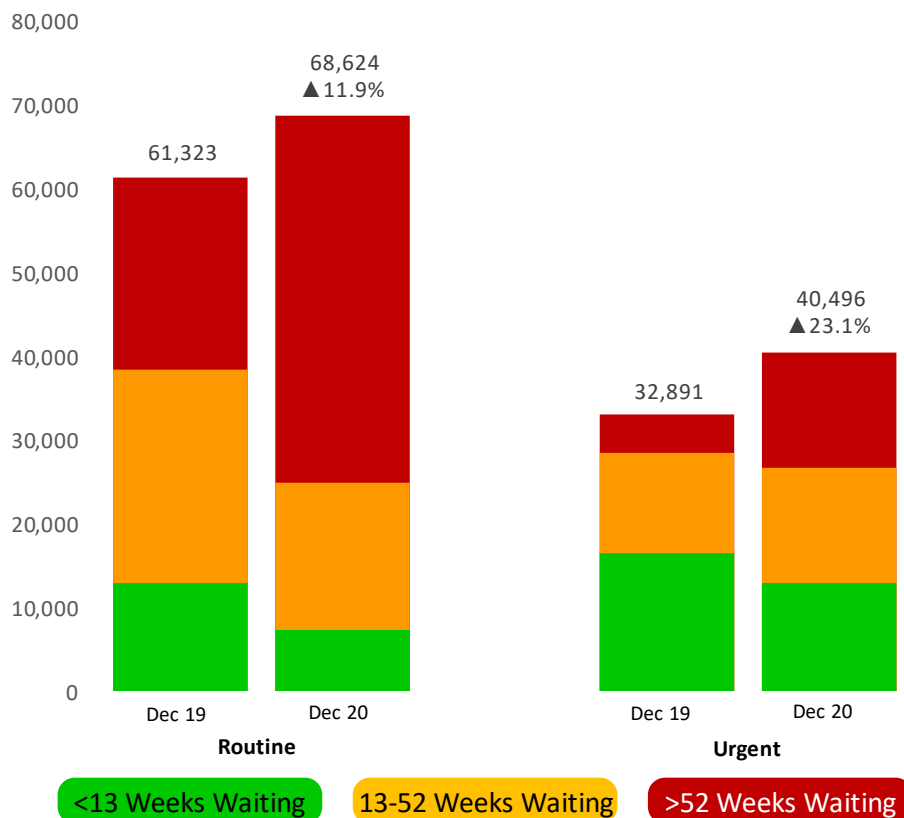
The number of patients waiting for an inpatient or day case appointment at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020 (109,120) was 15.8% (14,906) higher than the same period last year (94,214).

	Total Waiting	Waiting > 13 weeks	Waiting > 52 weeks
December 19	94,214	64,870	27,479
December 20	109,120	88,859	57,788
Difference	▲ 14,906 (15.8%)	▲ 23,989 (37.0%)	▲ 30,309 (110.3%)

### By Urgency

The number of patients awaiting urgent appointments increased by 7,605 (23.1%), accounting for 51.0% of the total increase. A further increase of 7,301 (11.9%) patients was seen in the waiting list for routine appointments.

### Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: December 2019 & 2020 by Urgency

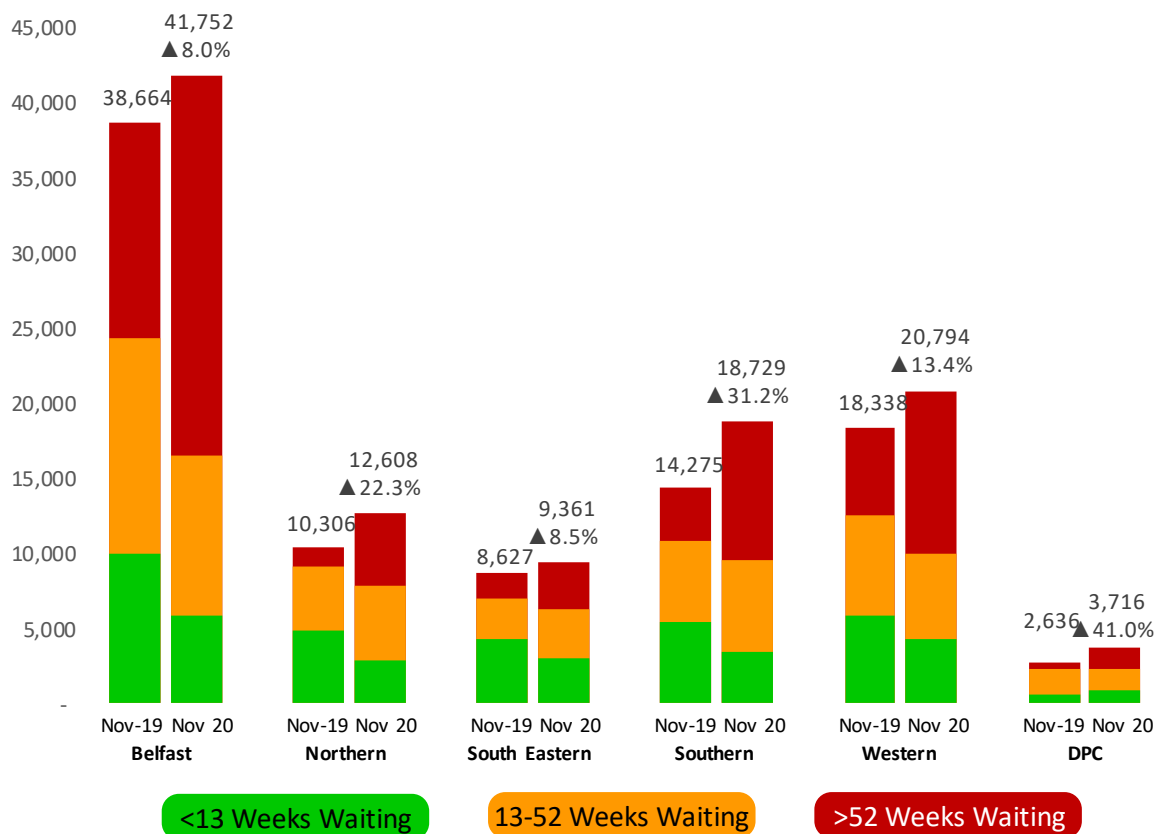


### By Trust

Between December 2019 and December 2020, the Southern HSC Trust waiting list increased by 30.1% (4,446). Across the same period there was an increase of 25.9% (2,670) in the number waiting in the Northern HSC Trust, while the Belfast, South Eastern and Western HSC Trust waiting lists each increased by less than 15%.

There were 4.2% (156) more patients waiting at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) in December 2020 compared with December 2019.

### Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: November 2019 & 2020 by HSC Trust



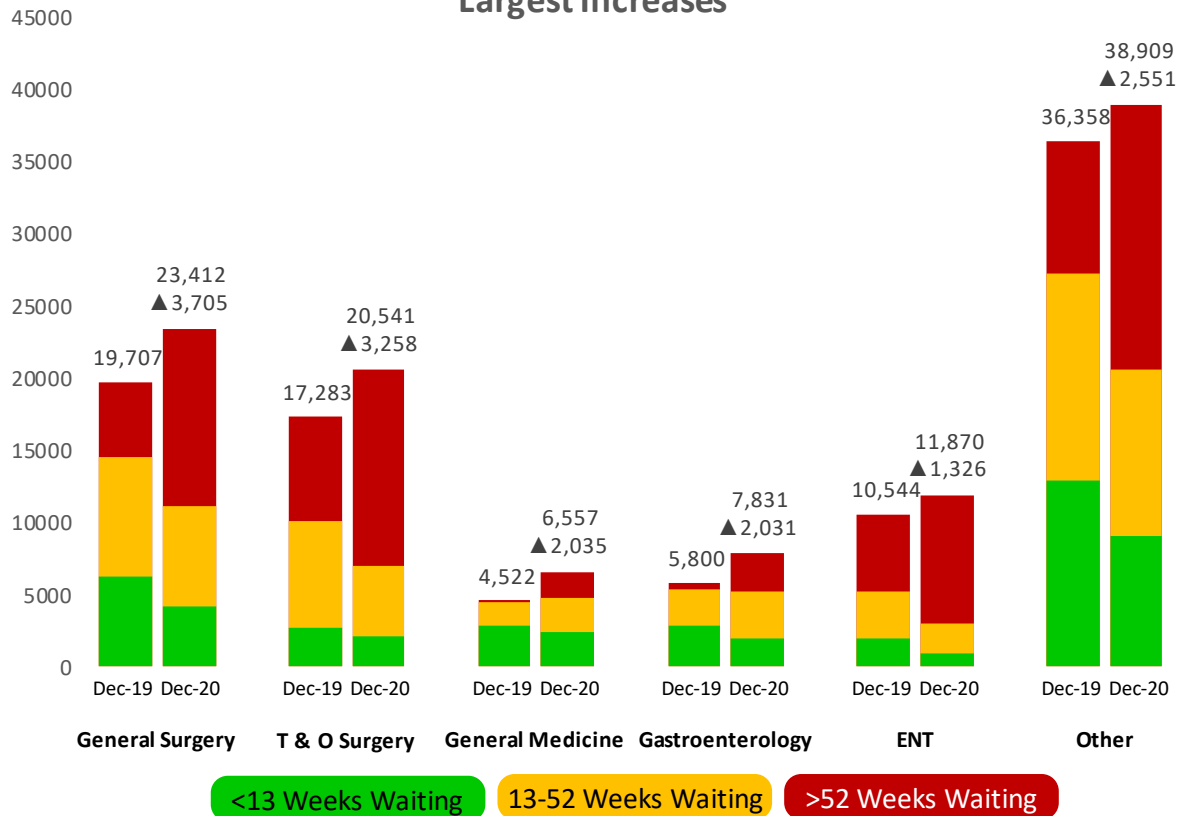
The number of patients waiting more than 13 weeks increased by almost three-quarters in the Northern HSC Trust (an increase of 71.9%, 4,238 patients). The number waiting over 13 weeks in the Southern HSC Trust increased by almost two-thirds (65.1%, 6,224), the South Eastern HSC Trust increased by over two-fifths (46.5%, 2,136), the Western HSC Trust by almost a third (30.0%, 3,905) and the Belfast HSC Trust by a quarter (25.0%, 7,267).

There were 8.1% (219) more patients waiting over 13 weeks at a Day Case Procedure Centre (DPC) in December 2020 compared with December 2019.

### Specialties with Largest Increases to Waiting Lists

There were 23,412 patients waiting for General Surgery in December 2020, an increase of 3,705 (15.8%) from December 2019 (19,707). This was the largest increase across this period of any specialty. T & O Surgery, General Medicine, Gastroenterology and ENT all showed large increases across this period.

**Number of Patients Waiting for an Inpatient or Day Case Appointment: December 2019 & 2020 - Specialties With Largest Increases**

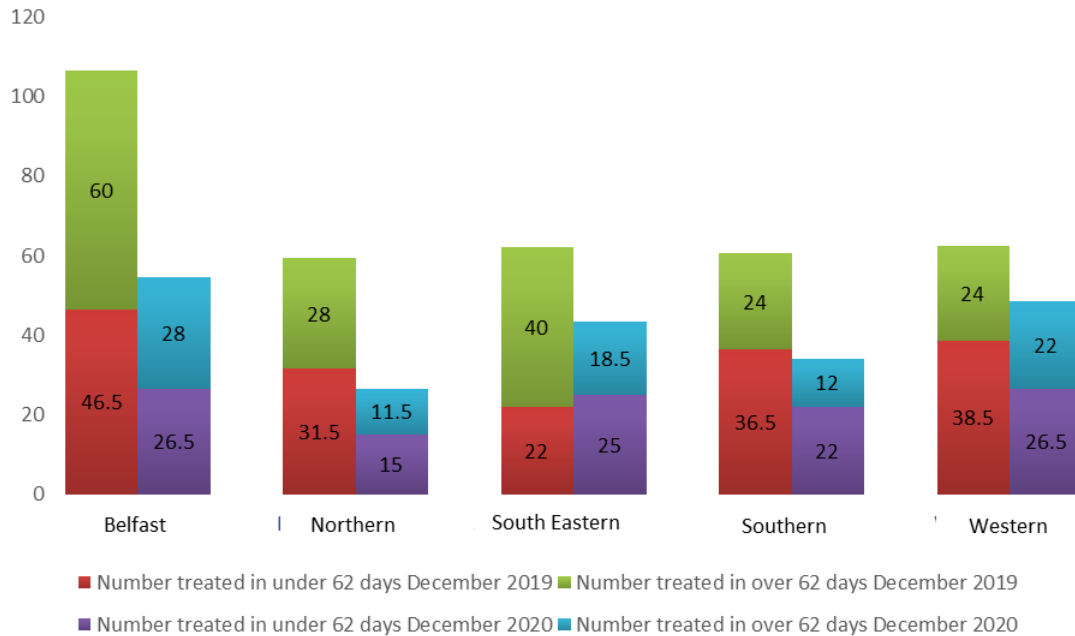


## Cancer

### 62 day Ministerial Target

There was a decrease of 41% in the number of patients who started treatment following an urgent GP referral in December 2020 (207) compared with December 2019 (351), with the percentage seen within the target of 62 days increasing from 49.9% to 55.6% during the same period.

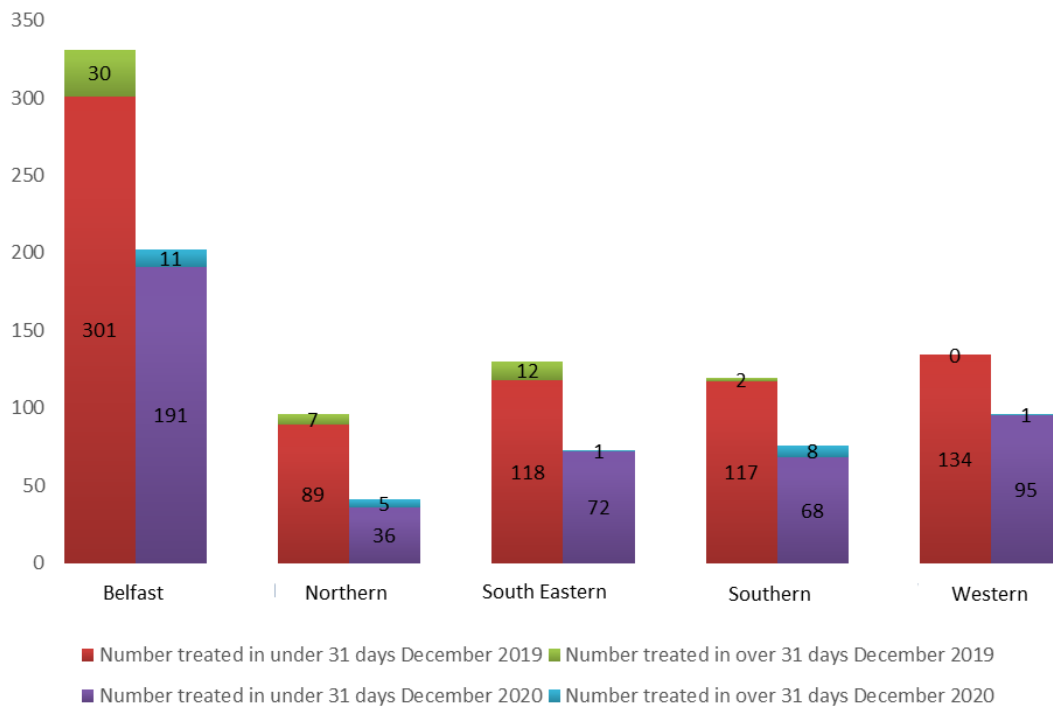
**Number of patients treated within 62 days of an urgent GP referral for suspect cancer by HSC Trust in December 2019 and December 2020**



### 31 day Ministerial Target

There has been a decrease in the number of patients who started treatment within 31 days following a decision to treat. In December 2020, 462 out of 488 (94.7%) started treatment within 31 days, compared with 759 out of 810 (93.7%) in December 2019. The number of patients who began treatment within 31 days decreased between 2019 and 2020 in all HSC Trusts.

**Number of patients treated within 31 days of a decision to treat by HSC Trust in December 2019 and December 2020**

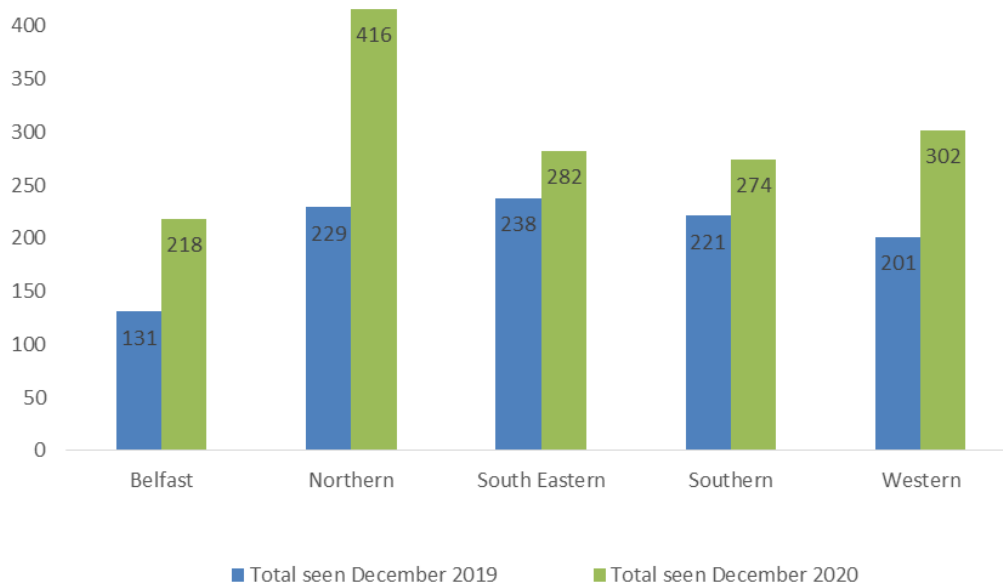




### 14 day Ministerial Target

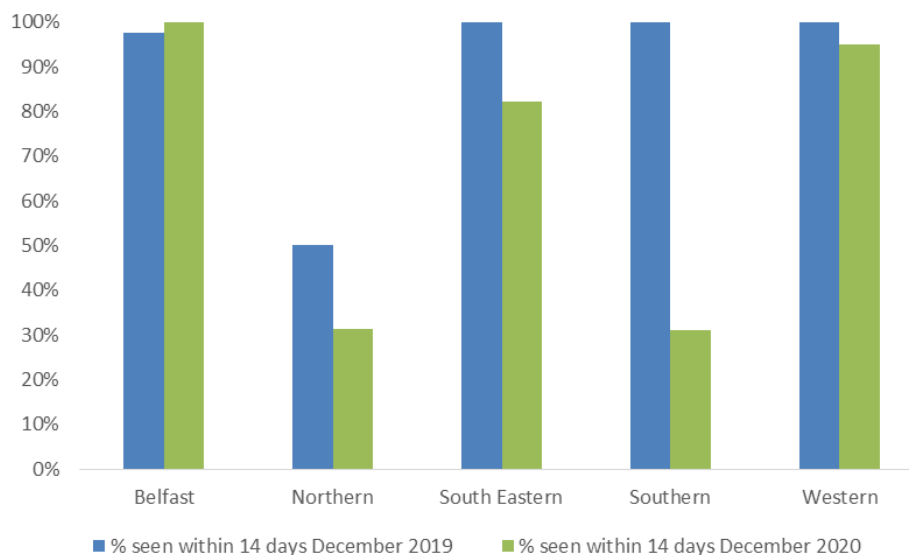
In December 2020, 1,492 patients were seen by a breast cancer specialist following an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer, an increase of 46% on the 1,020 seen in December 2019. All HSC Trusts reported an increase in the number of patients seen by a breast cancer specialist during this period.

**Number of patients seen by a breast cancer specialist by HSC Trust in December 2019 and December 2020**



The percentage of patients seen within the target of 14 days decreased from 88.5% to 63.8%, with only Belfast HSC Trust meeting the 100% target in December 2020.

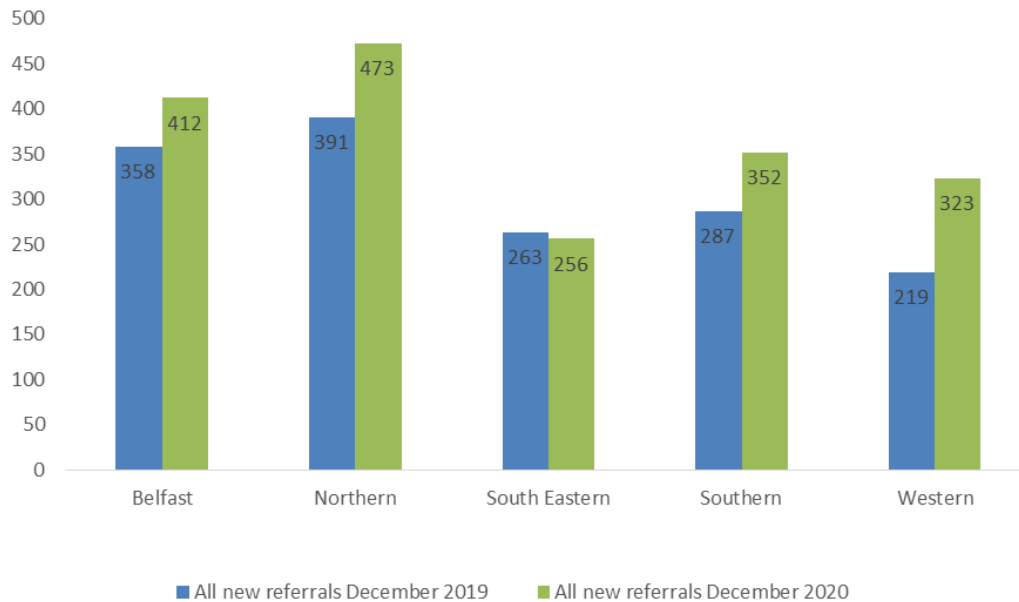
**Percentage of patients seen within 14 days of an urgent referral for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in December 2019 and December 2020**



## Breast Cancer Referrals

There was an increase of 19.6% in new breast cancer referrals in December 2020 (1,816), when compared with December 2019 (1,518). Within this, urgent breast cancer referrals saw an increase from 1,055 in December 2019 to 1,321 in December 2020. All HSC Trusts, except South Eastern, reported an increase in the number of breast cancer referrals in December 2020 when compared with December 2019.

**Number of new referrals for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in December 2019 and November 2020**



All HSC Trusts reported an increase in the number of urgent breast cancer referrals in December 2020 when compared with December 2019.

**Number of new urgent referrals for suspect breast cancer by HSC Trust in December 2019 and December 2020**

