

# Information Release

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety  
An Roinn Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteacht Phoiblí

12<sup>th</sup> June 2001

## Northern Ireland Waiting Lists – March 2001

This information release gives details of the number of people waiting for inpatient or outpatient treatment at hospitals in Northern Ireland at the end of March 2001, the most recent quarter for which figures are available.

### Inpatients

#### Headline Totals – Table 1

The total number of patients waiting to be admitted to hospitals in Northern Ireland at the end of March 2001 stood at 51,996.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of March 2001 with the end of December 2000 (49,920), the total number waiting has increased by 2,076 (4.2%).

Over the year, comparing the end of March 2001 with the end of March 2000 (47,323), the total number waiting increased by 4,673 (9.9%).

**Table 1: Quarterly Waiting Lists – March 2001**

Waiting for:	Quarter ending March 2001	Change compared with end previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter – previous year
Ordinary admissions	26,417	+ 1,017	+ 1,725
Day case admissions	25,579	+ 1,059	+ 2,948
Total Waiting	51,996	+ 2,076	+ 4,673

Source: CHI

The figures in this bulletin include private patients and also patients resident outside Northern Ireland. At the end of March 2001, the waiting list excluding these patients stood at 50,467, representing an increase of 3,047 (6.4%) since the end of March 2000 (see Table 5).

Outpatient waiting list figures for December 2000 have been revised to reflect updated information. For details see note 17 in the Notes to Editors.

**Detailed notes and definitions are shown in the attached Notes to editors.**



#### A National Statistics Publication

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

## Numbers Waiting for Ordinary Admission and Day Case Treatment

People on the inpatient waiting list in Northern Ireland can be waiting for admission to hospital as day cases or as ordinary admissions.

Of the 51,996 people waiting for admission to hospital at the end of March 2001, 26,417 (50.8%) were waiting for ordinary admission and 25,579 (49.2%) were waiting for day case admission (Table 1).

Since the end of December 2000, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has increased by 1,017 (4.0%) and the number waiting for day case admission has increased by 1,059 (4.3%).

In comparison with March 2000, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has increased by 1,725 (7.0%) and the number waiting for day case admission has increased by 2,948 (13.0%).

### Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> – Table 2

The number of excess waiters at the end of March 2001 stood at 6,430 or 12.4% of the total waiting.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of March 2001 with the end of December 2000, the number of excess waiters increased by 156 (2.5%).

Over the year, comparing the end of March 2001 with the end of March 2000, the number of excess waiters increased by 1,137 (21.5%).

**Table 2** Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> – March 2001

Waiting for:	Quarter ending March 2001	Change compared with end previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter – previous year
Ordinary admissions	4,596	+ 194	+ 697
Day case admissions	1,834	- 38	+ 440
Total Waiting	6,430	+ 156	+ 1,137

<sup>1</sup>See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess waiters.

Source: CH1

## Peak Figures

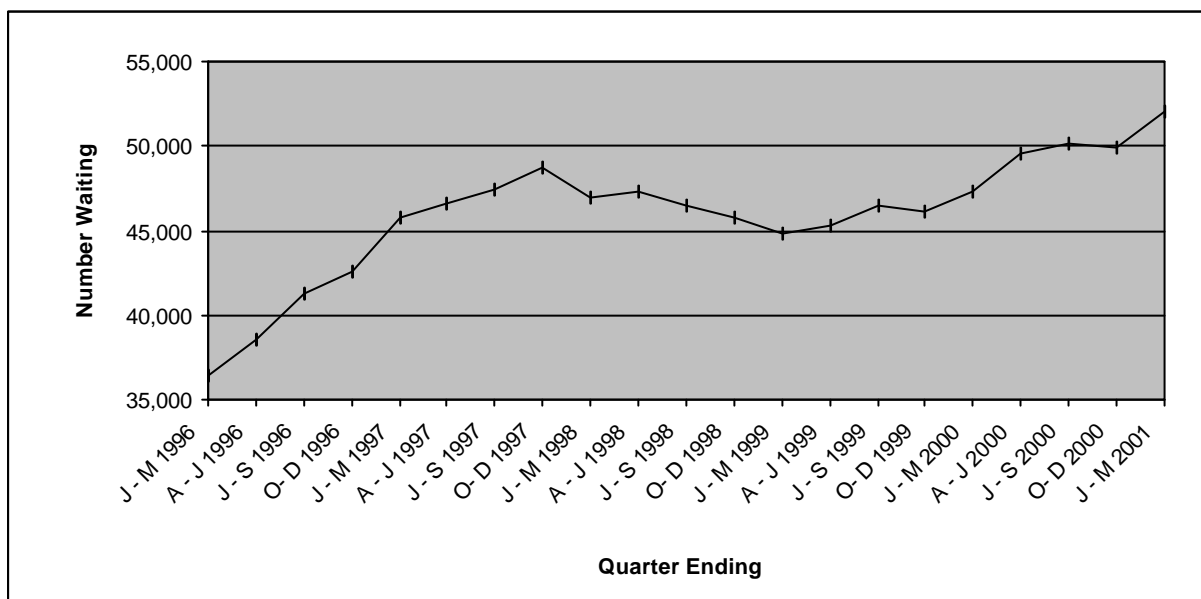
The end of March 2001 total of 51,996 on the inpatient waiting list represents an increase of 1,812 (3.6%) on the previous peak waiting list figure of 50,184 (end September 2000).

Although the number of excess waiters has continued to rise to 6,430 at the end of March 2001, it is still 165 (2.5%) below the peak of 6,595 recorded at the end of December 1997.

## Trends

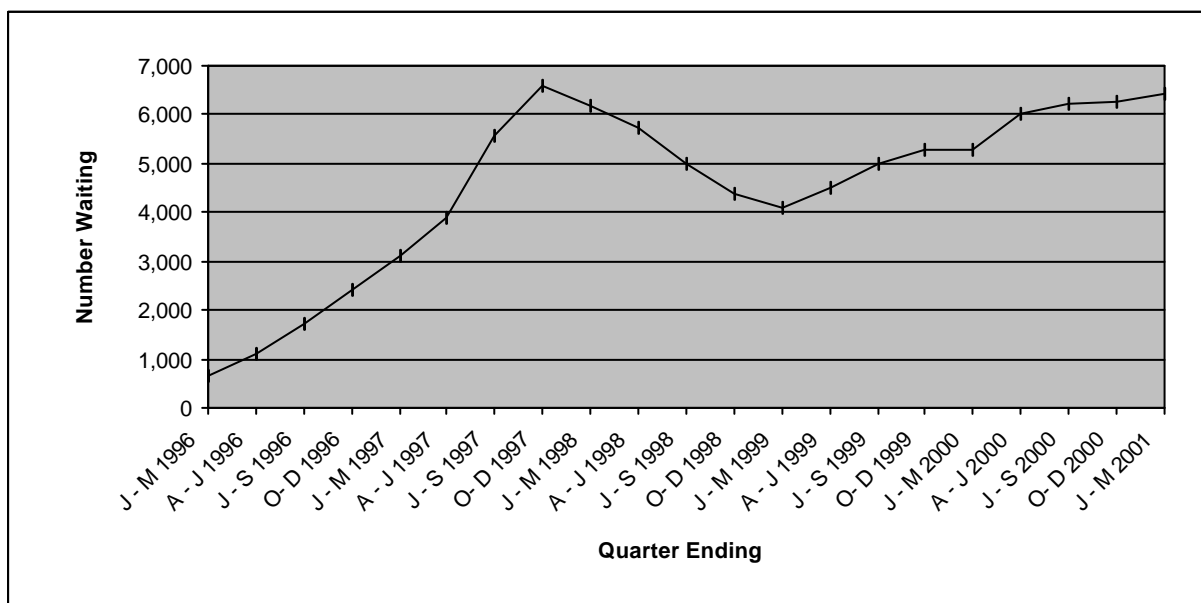
Over the past five years both the total numbers waiting and the numbers of excess waiters were on a generally upward trend until December 1997. Subsequently the total waiting went on a generally downward trend until September 1999 when the trend reversed and total waiting rose to peak in the current quarter (Figure 1). Excess waiters have followed a similar trend but have not yet reached their previous peak at December 1997 (Figure 2).

**Figure 1** Quarterly waiting lists – Five yearly trends March 1996 – March 2001



Source: CH1

**Figure 2** Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> - Five yearly trends March 1996 – March 2001



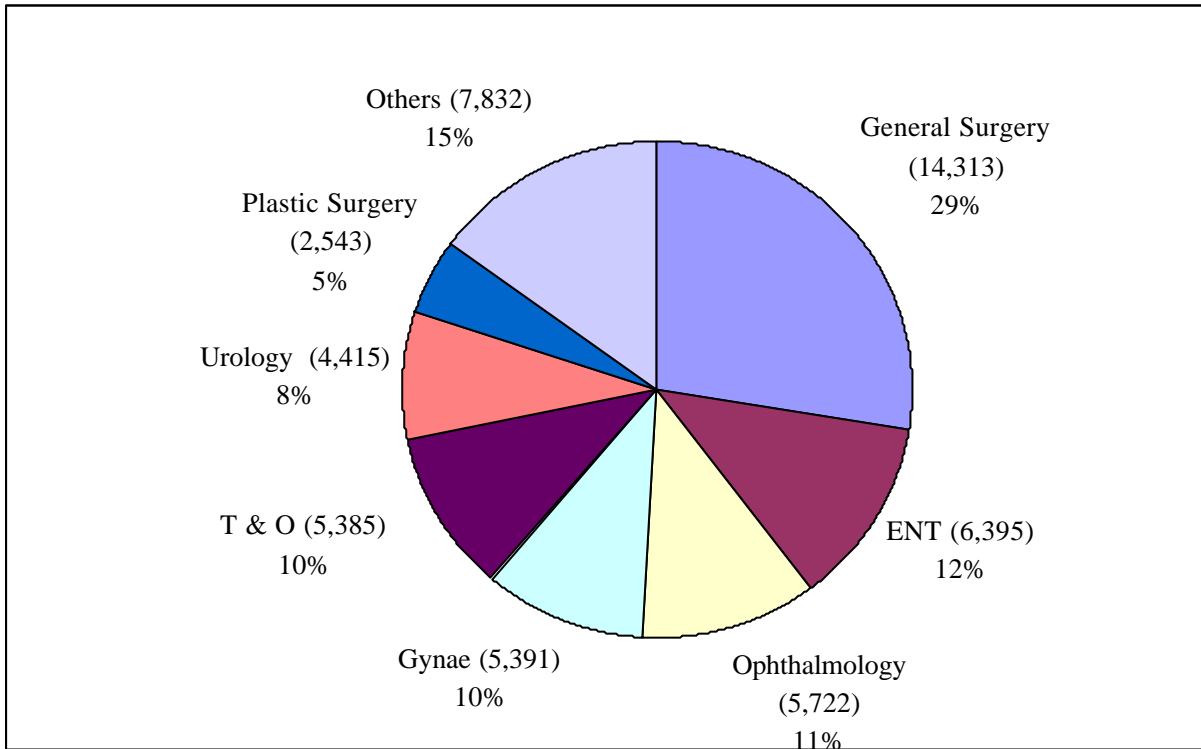
<sup>1</sup>See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess waiters.

Source: CH1

## Inpatients Waiting by Specialty

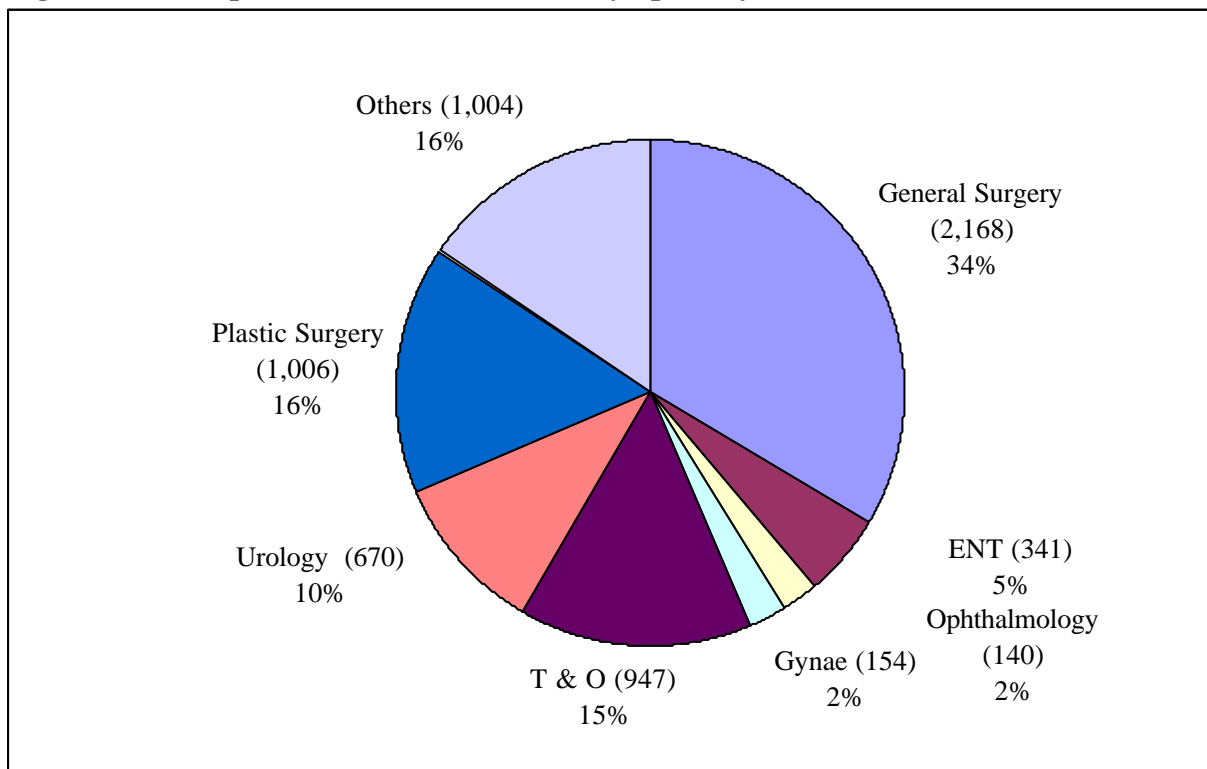
The overwhelming majority of those waiting (85%) were within seven specialties: General Surgery; Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Ophthalmology; Gynaecology (Gynae); Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery (T&O); Urology and Plastic Surgery (Figure 3a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 3b.

**Figure 3a Inpatients - Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of March 2001**



Source: CHI

**Figure 3b Inpatients – Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> by Specialty at the end of March 2001**



<sup>1</sup>See notes to editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess Waiters.

Source: CHI

## Inpatients Waiting by Health Board Provider

Table 3 shows the total number waiting for admission to hospitals in each of the four Health Boards at the end of the March 2001 quarter.

**Table 3: Inpatients Waiting by Health Board Provider – March 2001**

Board	Total Waiting		Excess Waiters	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Eastern	32,066	62%	5,190	81%
Northern	6,408	12%	343	5%
Southern	7,728	15%	874	14%
Western	5,794	11%	23	0%
Total	51,996	100%	6,430	100%

Source: CH1

## Completed Waits

Waiting times for completed inpatient waits are shown in Table 4. A total of 36,377 inpatients were admitted to hospital (excluding those who had previously refused an offer of attendance) during the March 2001 quarter.

**Table 4 Completed Inpatient Waits**

Quarter	Time Waiting in Months (Percentage of total waits in each time band)					Total
	0-2	3-11	12-17	18-23	24+	
J - M 1998	73.8%	19.6%	4.0%	1.6%	1.0%	38,848
A - J 1998	74.5%	19.9%	3.1%	1.2%	1.2%	40,637
J - S 1998	73.5%	21.1%	2.9%	1.2%	1.2%	34,067
O - D 1998	75.1%	19.6%	3.2%	1.0%	1.1%	37,192
J - M 1999	75.5%	19.8%	2.9%	0.8%	1.0%	38,185
A - J 1999	75.6%	20.0%	3.0%	0.7%	0.8%	36,171
J - S 1999	75.8%	20.2%	2.7%	0.7%	0.6%	33,518
O - D 1999	77.0%	18.7%	2.7%	0.8%	0.7%	35,765
J - M 2000	75.4%	20.1%	3.0%	0.8%	0.7%	35,637
A - J 2000	76.4%	19.5%	2.6%	0.8%	0.7%	36,307
J - S 2000	74.2%	21.2%	2.9%	1.0%	0.7%	33,322
O - D 2000	76.7%	18.9%	2.9%	0.8%	0.7%	37,183
J - M 2001	76.9%	18.7%	2.7%	0.8%	0.8%	36,377

Source: CH2 Part 1

## Monthly Inpatient Waiting Lists

The Department also collects monthly data on the size of the inpatient waiting list excluding private patients and non-NI residents. These figures are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 Monthly Inpatient Waiting Lists**

Month Ending	Admission method		Total Waiting	Excess waiters	
	Ordinary	Day case		Number	% of total
Mar - 2000	25,276	22,144	47,420	5,668	12.0%
Apr - 2000	25,078	22,813	47,891	5,929	12.4%
May - 2000	25,186	22,932	48,118	6,097	12.7%
Jun - 2000	25,154	23,199	48,353	6,081	12.6%
Jul - 2000	25,518	23,758	49,276	6,194	12.6%
Aug - 2000	25,283	22,982	48,265	6,297	13.0%
Sep - 2000	25,235	23,402	48,637	6,192	12.7%
Oct - 2000	25,340	23,462	48,802	6,204	12.7%
Nov - 2000	24,723	23,355	48,078	6,043	12.6%
Dec - 2000	25,025	23,509	48,534	6,320	13.0%
Jan - 2001	25,446	24,270	49,716	6,114	12.3%
Feb - 2001	25,324	23,970	49,294	6,035	12.2%
Mar - 2001	25,971	24,496	50,467	6,346	12.6%

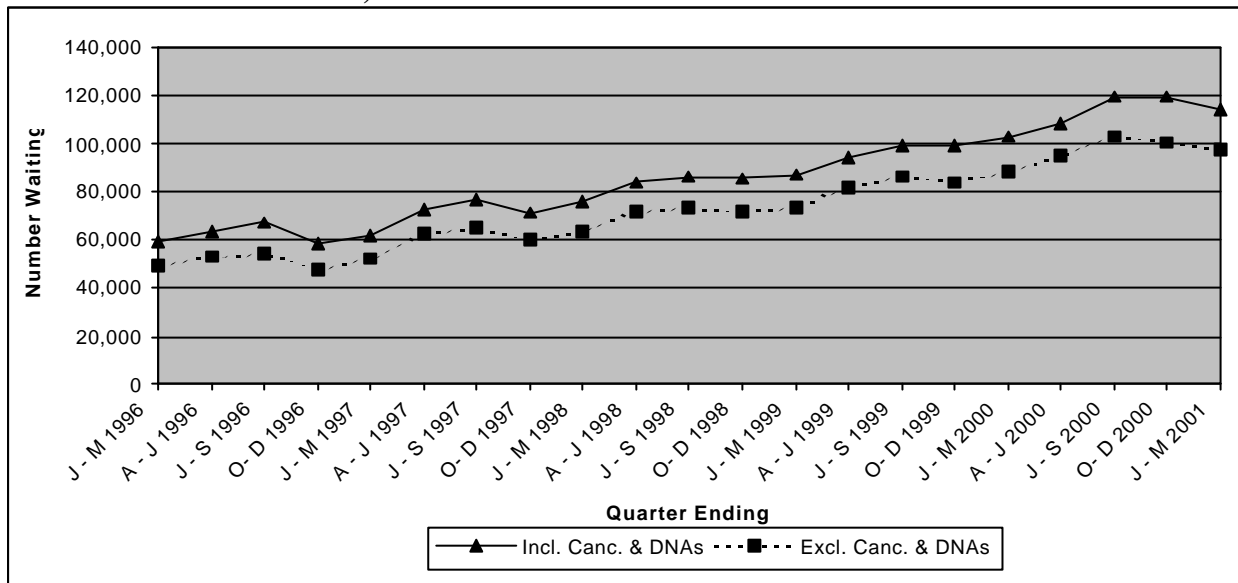
Source: CHA

# Outpatients

## Headline Totals

The number of patients waiting for admission as outpatients (including cancellations and deferrals) at the end of March 2001 stood at 113,598 representing a decrease of 5,894 (-4.9%) over the quarter\* and an increase of 11,043 (+10.8%) compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Corresponding quarterly and annual changes (excluding cancellations and deferrals) were -3.5% and +9.4% respectively. Outpatient waiting lists have been on a generally upward trend for more than four years apart from falls in the December quarters (Figure 4), however for the first time in the March quarter a small decrease has been recorded.

**Figure 4 Outpatients Waiting for a First Appointment (including and excluding cancellations and deferrals) March 1996 - March 2001**



Source: CH3 Parts 1&2.

## Outpatient Completed Waits

Waiting times for completed outpatient waits are shown in Table 6. During the March 2001 quarter a total of 78,593 outpatients attended their first appointment without having cancelled or missed a previous appointment.

**Table 6 Completed Outpatient Waits for First Appointment**

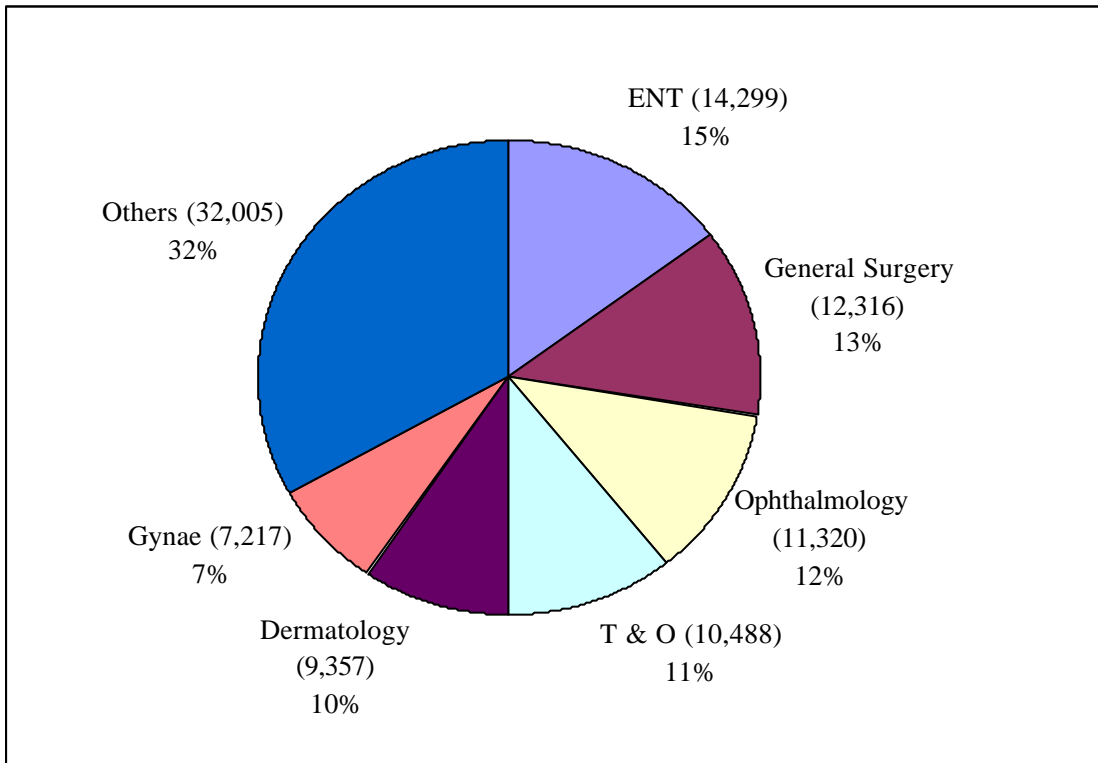
QTR	Time Waiting in Months (Percentage of total waits in each time band)					Total
	0-2	3-11	12-17	18-23	24+	
J - M 1998	82.8%	16.3%	0.7%	0.2%	0.0%	78,694
A - J 1998	82.9%	16.5%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	78,980
J - S 1998	78.8%	20.6%	0.4%	0.1%	0.0%	73,141
O - D 1998	79.4%	20.0%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	83,321
J - M 1999	79.9%	19.2%	0.6%	0.3%	0.1%	83,143
A - J 1999	80.9%	18.3%	0.6%	0.1%	0.1%	77,691
J - S 1999	77.3%	21.7%	0.8%	0.2%	0.1%	75,075
O - D 1999	76.5%	22.4%	0.8%	0.2%	0.1%	82,658
J - M 2000	77.2%	21.7%	0.9%	0.2%	0.1%	78,485
A - J 2000	78.9%	19.9%	0.9%	0.2%	0.2%	63,975
J - S 2000	75.4%	23.1%	1.2%	0.2%	0.1%	61,678
O - D 2000	74.5%	23.5%	1.6%	0.3%	0.2%	77,121
J - M 2001	75.7%	22.5%	1.3%	0.4%	0.2%	78,593

Source: CH4 Part 1 \* Estimated figures – See note 16.

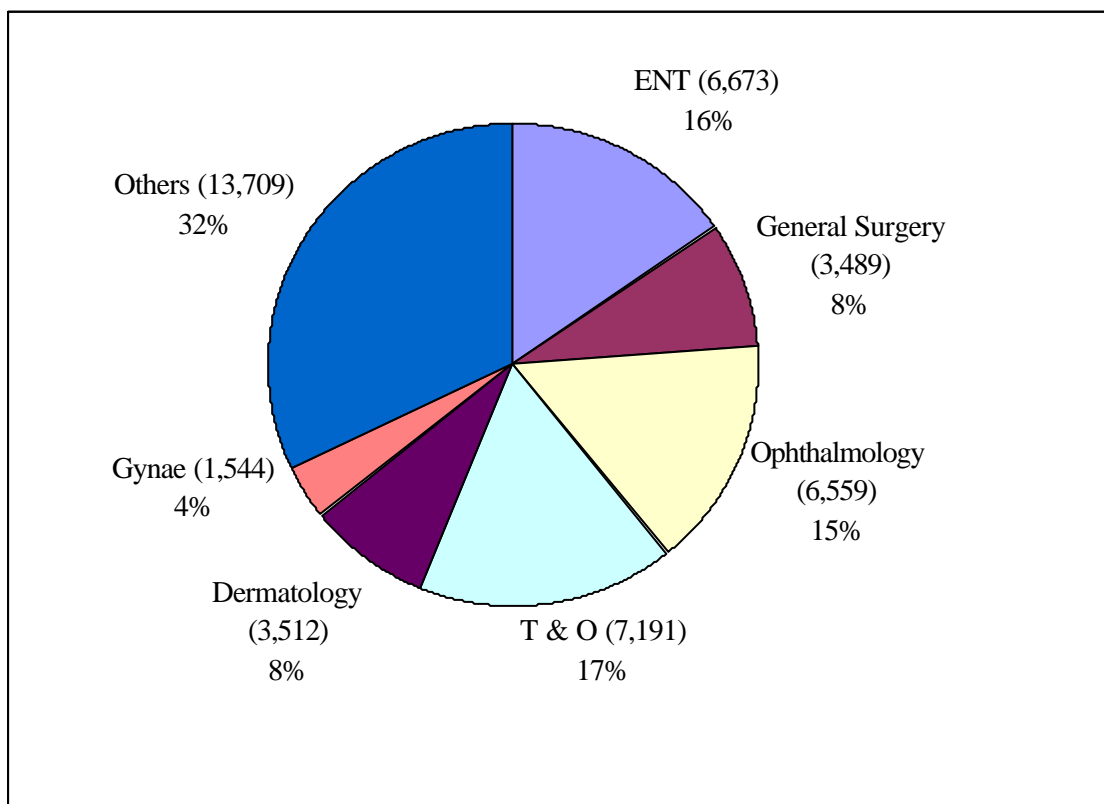
## Outpatients Waiting by Specialty

The overwhelming majority of those waiting (68%) were within six specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery (T&O); Ophthalmology; Dermatology and Gynaecology (Gynae) (Figure 5a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 5b. All figures include only those who are waiting for their first appointment without having cancelled or missed a previous appointment during the March 2001 quarter.

**Figure 5a Outpatients – Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of March 2001**



Source: CH3 Part 1.



**Figure 5b Outpatients – Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> by Specialty at the end of March 2001**

<sup>1</sup>See notes to editors (paragraph 6) for definition of Excess Waiters.

Source: CH3 Part 1.

## Notes to Editors

1. Unless otherwise stated hospitals and patients mentioned in this release refer only to HPSS hospitals and patients.
2. The sources for the data contained in this release are the Charter Monitoring Returns CH1, CH2, CH3 and CH4. These returns collect information from Hospital Trusts on a quarterly basis. The CHA return collects information from Health Boards on a monthly basis.
3. There is a fundamental difference in coverage between Board based and Trust based information. Board based (CHA) returns exclude all patients living outside Northern Ireland and all privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals.
4. Apart from Table 5, figures include all privately funded patients waiting for treatment in Health Service hospitals and those patients who are resident outside Northern Ireland.
5. In Northern Ireland, inpatient excess waiters are defined as those having to wait 12 months or more for admission to the Cardiac Surgery specialty and those having to wait 18 months or more to other specialties.
6. For outpatients, excess waiters are defined as those having to wait more than 3 months for a first outpatient appointment.
7. Ordinary admissions include both (a) patients admitted electively with the expectation that they will remain in hospital for at least one night, and (b) non-elective admissions (e.g. emergency admissions). A patient who is admitted with either of the above intentions, but who leaves hospital for any reason without staying overnight, is still counted as an ordinary admission. Day cases are not included.
8. Day Cases are patients admitted electively during the course of a day with the intention of receiving care who do not require the use of a hospital bed overnight and who return home as scheduled. If this original intention is not fulfilled and the patient stays overnight, such a patient is counted as an ordinary admission.
9. The inpatient figures presented include people waiting to be admitted as inpatients either as day cases or ordinary admissions. They do not include:
  - Patients admitted as emergency cases;
  - Outpatients;
  - Patients undergoing a planned programme of treatment e.g. a series of admissions for chemotherapy;
  - Maternity (specialties 510 and 520);
  - Patients already in hospitals but included on other waiting lists;
  - Patients who are temporarily suspended from waiting lists.
10. Outpatient waiting list figures presented do not include maternity specialties 510 and 520.
11. Waiting time begins from the date the clinician decided to admit the patient. Patients subsequently offered a date but unable to attend have their waiting times calculated from the most recent date offered. These are known as self-deferred cases and are included in the total waiting.

12. The source for the monthly waiting list figures is the monthly CHA return. The monthly figures presented here are produced from an ad-hoc reporting system which does not go through the more stringent validation processes which produce the quarterly figures. For this reason and the fact that the two sets of figures are run-off at different points in time mean that there may be anomalies when comparing the monthly figures with the quarterly figures.
13. The source for outpatient waiting list data is the quarterly Charter Monitoring Return CH3.
14. Figures relating to the quarter ending June 2001 will be released Tuesday, 11th September 2001.
15. Some of the data is provisional and may be subject to revision in subsequent quarters.
16. One Trust (the United Group of Hospitals) has been unable to produce CH4 data for the quarters ending June 2000, September 2000, December 2000 and March 2001. Estimates for these missing data for the United Group of Hospitals have been included in the June 2000 to March 2001 data shown in Table 5. When CH4 data becomes available these estimates will be recast.
17. Outpatient waiting list figures for December 2000 have been revised to reflect updated information. The net effect of the revision is to increase the December 2000 figure by some 1,100.
18. For general enquiries about National Statistics, contact the National Statistics Public Service on

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You can also find National Statistics on the internet –

Go to [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk).

### **Additional Information**

Further information on waiting lists in Northern Ireland is available from:

Office Information Manager  
Regional Information Branch  
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety  
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Internet address: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hpss/statistics>