

Information Release

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

6th June 2002

Northern Ireland Waiting Lists – March 2002

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 2002, 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 2002 stood at 58,997.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of March 2002 with the end of December 2001 (57,704), the total number waiting has increased by 1,293 (2.2%).

Over the year, comparing the end of March 2002 with the end of March 2001 (52,645), the total number waiting increased by 6,352(12.1%).

Table 1: Quarterly Waiting Lists – March 2002

Waiting for:	Quarter ending March 2002	Change compared with end previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter – previous year
Ordinary Admissions	29,535	+ 319	+ 2,899
Day case Admissions	29,462	+ 974	+ 3,453
Total Waiting	58,997	+ 1,293	+ 6,352

Source: CH1

The figures in this bulletin include private patients and also patients resident outside Northern Ireland. At the end of March 2002, the waiting list excluding these patients stood at 57,308, representing an increase of 6,615(13.1%) since the end of March 2001 (see Table 5).

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



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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 58,997 people waiting for admission to hospital at the end of March 2002, 29,535 (50.1%) were waiting for ordinary admission and 29,462 (49.9%) were waiting for day case admission (Table 1).

Since the end of December 2001, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has increased by 319 (1.1%) and the number waiting for day case admission has increased by 974 (3.4%).

In comparison with March 2001, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has increased by 2,899 (10.9%) and the number waiting for day case admission has increased by 3,453 (13.3%).

Excess Waiters¹ – Table 2

The number of excess waiters at the end of March 2002 stood at 8,767 or 14.9% of the total waiting.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of March 2002 with the end of December 2001, the number of excess waiters increased by 369 (4.4%).

Over the year, comparing the end of March 2002 with the end of March 2001, the number of excess waiters increased by 2,338 (36.4%).

Table 2 Excess Waiters¹ – March 2002

Waiting for:	Quarter Ending March 2002	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter previous year
Ordinary admissions	6,481	+ 297	+ 1,886
Day case admissions	2,286	+ 72	+ 452
Total Waiting	8,767	+ 369	+ 2,338

¹See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess waiters.
Source: CH1

Peak Figures

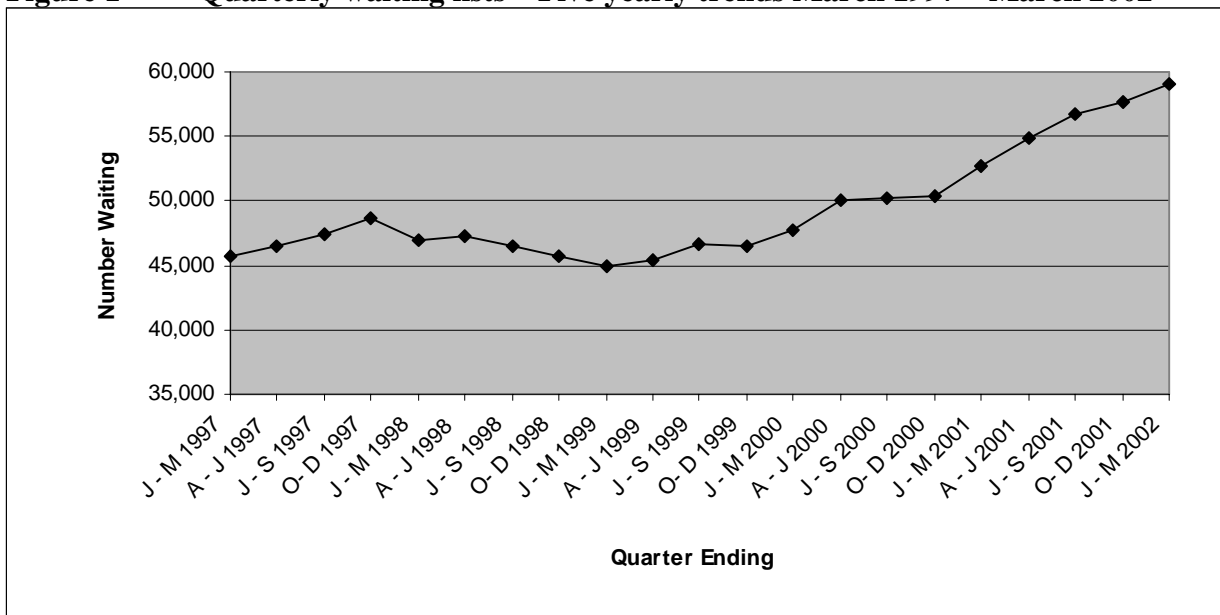
The end of March 2002 total of 58,997 on the inpatient waiting list represents an increase of 1,293 (2.2%) on the previous peak waiting list figure of 57,704 (end December 2001).

The number of excess waiters has continued to rise to 8,767 at the end of March 2002, and represents an increase of 369 (4.4%) on the previous peak figure of 8,398 recorded at the end of December 2001.

Trends

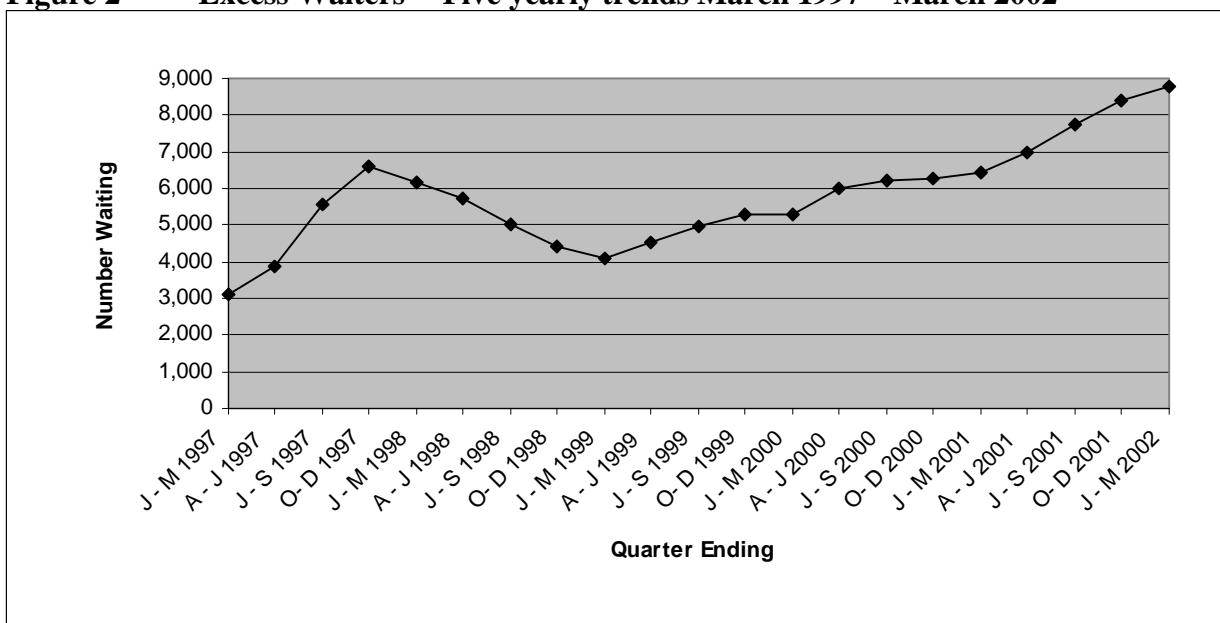
Over the past five years both the total numbers waiting and the numbers of excess waiters were on a generally upward trend until December 1997. Subsequently the total waiting went on a generally downward trend until December 1999 when the trend reversed and total waiting rose to peak in the current quarter (Figure 1). Excess waiters have followed a similar trend and also rose to peak in the current quarter (Figure 2).

Figure 1 Quarterly waiting lists – Five yearly trends March 1997 – March 2002



Source: CH1

Figure 2 Excess Waiters¹ - Five yearly trends March 1997 – March 2002



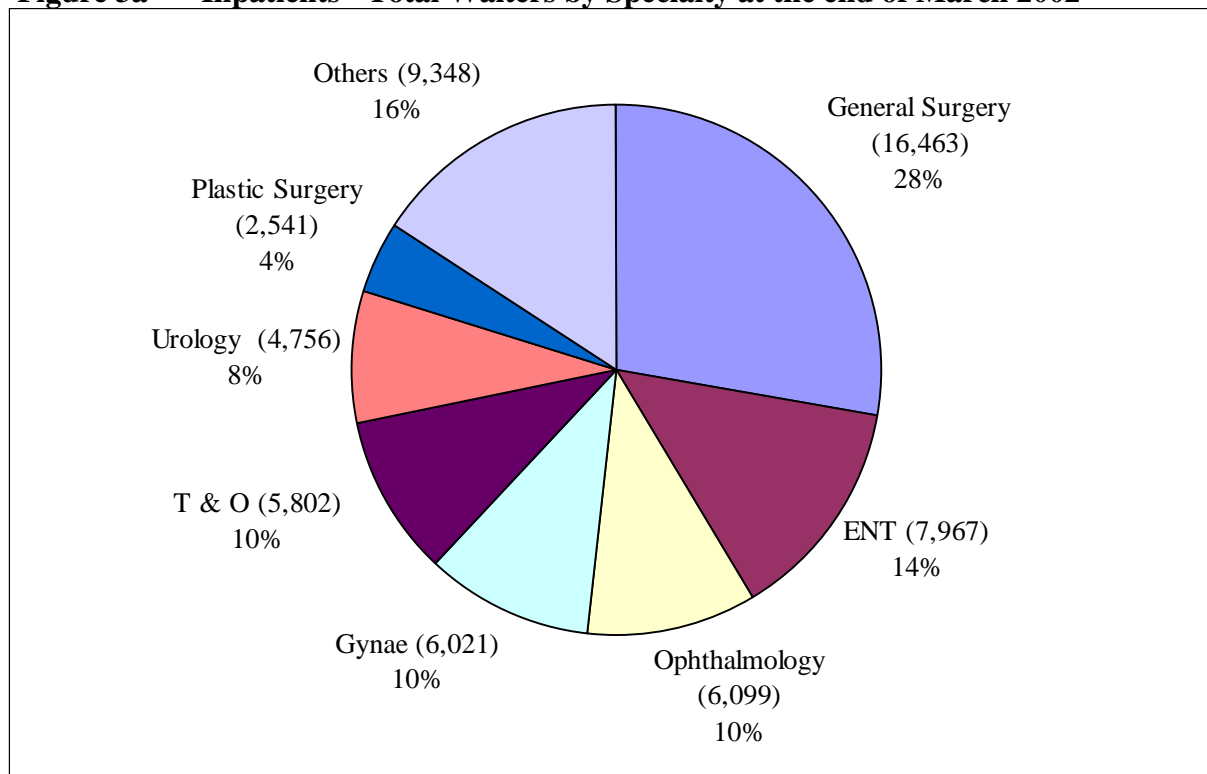
¹See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess waiters.

Source: CH1

Inpatients Waiting by Specialty

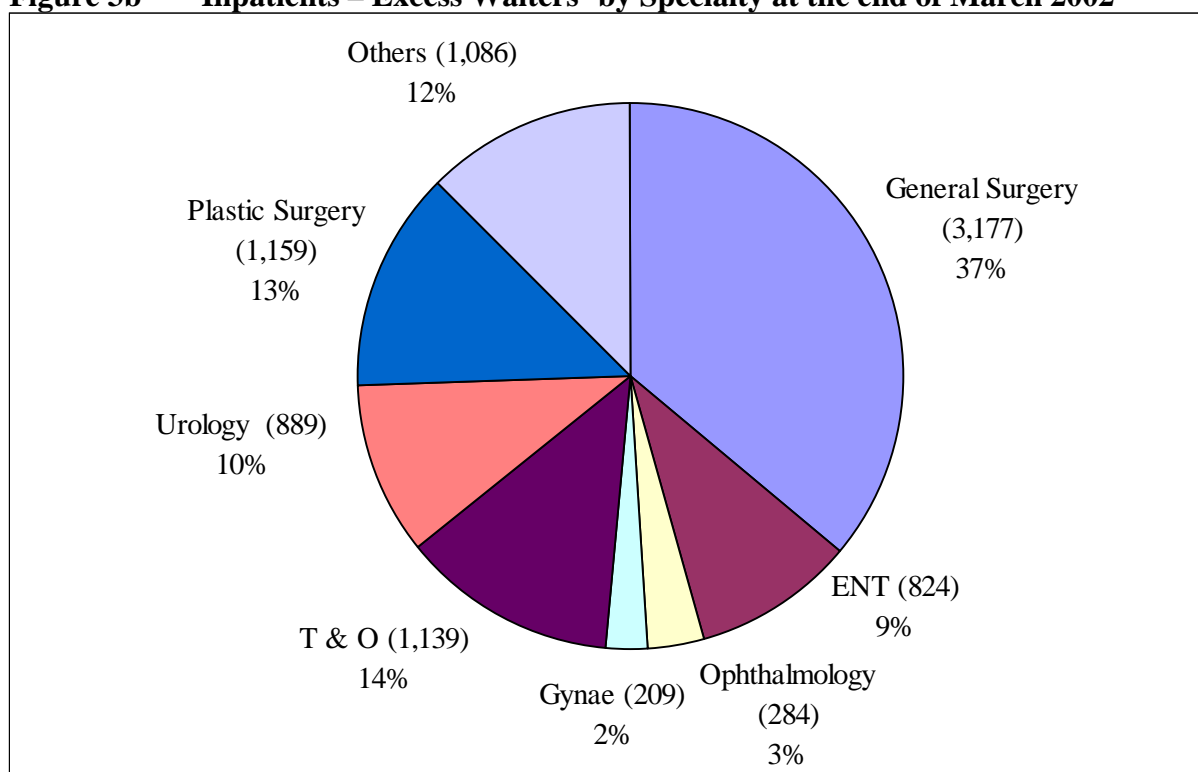
The overwhelming majority of those waiting (84%) were within seven specialties: General Surgery; Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Ophthalmology; Gynaecology (Gynae); Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery (T&O); Urology and Plastic Surgery (Figure 3a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 3b.

Figure 3a Inpatients - Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of March 2002



Source: CH1

Figure 3b Inpatients – Excess Waiters¹ by Specialty at the end of March 2002



¹See notes to editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess Waiters.
Source: CH1

Completed Waits

Waiting times for completed inpatient waits are shown in Table 4. A total of 38,042 inpatients were admitted to hospital (excluding those who had previously refused an offer of attendance) during the March 2002 quarter.

Table 4 Completed Inpatient Waits

Time Waiting in Months (Percentage of total waits in each time band)						
Quarter	0-2	3-11	12-17	18-23	24+	Total
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
A - J 2001	76.6%	19.4%	2.5%	0.8%	0.7%	35,858
J - S 2001	74.4%	20.8%	3.1%	1.0%	0.8%	33,271
O - D 2001	75.0%	20.0%	3.1%	1.0%	0.9%	37,656
J - M 2002	74.9%	19.7%	3.6%	1.1%	0.8%	38,042

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 Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 Monthly Inpatient Waiting Lists

Month Ending	Admission method		Total Waiting	Excess waiters	
	Ordinary	Day case		Number	% of total
March 2001	26,197	24,496	50,693	6,346	12.5%
April 2001	26,249	24,250	50,499	6,564	13.0%
May 2001	26,757	24,868	51,625	6,699	13.0%
June 2001	28,167	25,364	53,531	6,853	12.8%
July 2001	28,099	25,249	53,348	6,945	13.0%
August 2001	28,350	25,907	54,257	7,367	13.6%
September 2001	28,532	26,327	54,859	7,602	13.9%
October 2001	28,121	26,873	54,994	7,564	13.8%
November 2001	28,479	26,819	55,298	7,842	14.2%
December 2001	28,725	27,370	56,095	8,272	14.7%
January 2002	29,293	27,890	57,183	8,388	14.7%
February 2002	29,426	28,050	57,476	8,468	14.7%
March 2002	29,091	28,217	57,308	8,673	15.1%

Source: CHA

The monthly waiting list figures have shown an overall increase in the 3 month period since December 2001. This confirms the upward trend recorded in the quarterly waiting list figures.

Patients resident in a Health Board Area may receive treatment in any of the four Health Boards. Table 6 shows the number of residents in each Health Board Area waiting for admission to hospitals in their own and other Health Board Areas.

Table 6 Monthly Inpatient Waiting Lists by Board of Residence and Board of Treatment

Board of Residence	Board of Treatment			
	EHSSB	NHSSB	SHSSB	WHSSB
Eastern	22,719	101	71	0
Northern	6,163	8,842	424	577
Southern	3,820	11	8,188	115
Western	1,127	60	59	5,030
Northern Ireland	33,829	9,014	8,742	5,722

Source: CHA

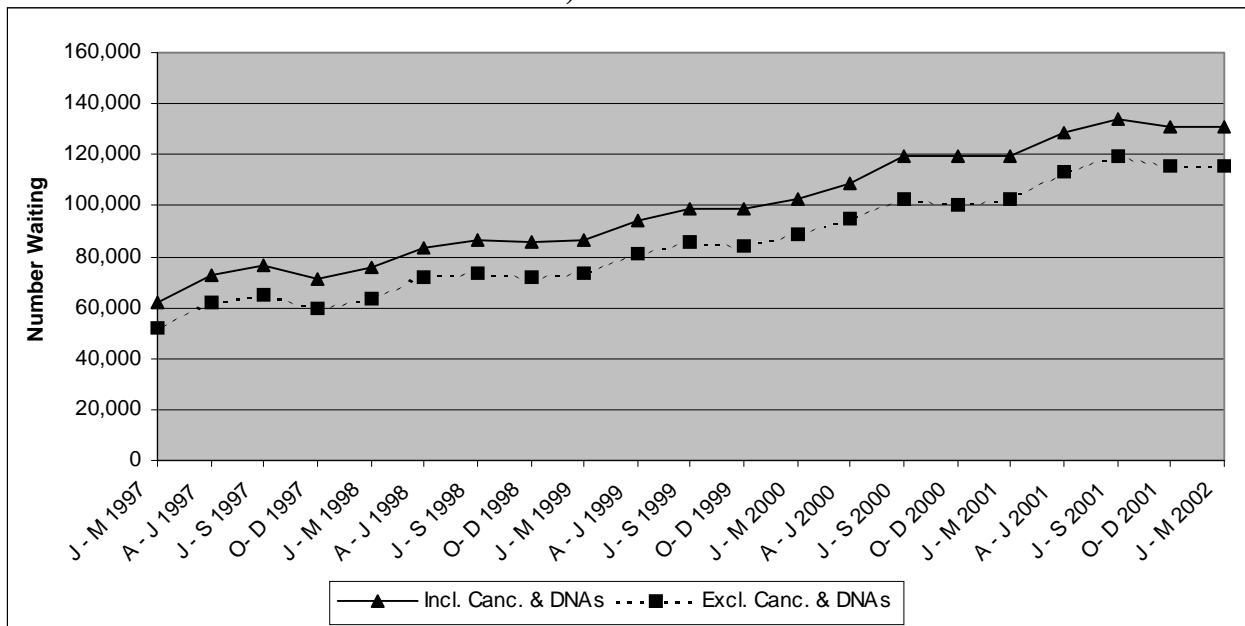
Outpatients

Headline Totals

The number of patients waiting for admission as outpatients (including cancellations and deferrals) at the end of March 2002 stood at 130,723 representing a decrease of 443 (-0.3%) over the quarter* and an increase of 11,313 (9.5%) compared with the same quarter in the previous year*.

Corresponding quarterly and annual changes (excluding cancellations and deferrals) were <1.0% and 12.6% respectively. Outpatient waiting lists have been on a generally upward trend for more than four years, this is the first time in that period there has been a decrease in two successive quarters (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Outpatients Waiting for a First Appointment (including and excluding cancellations and deferrals) March 1997 – March 2002



Source: CH3 Parts 1&2.

Outpatient Completed Waits

Waiting times for completed outpatient waits are shown in Table 7. During the March 2002 quarter a total of 85,856 outpatients attended their first appointment without having cancelled or missed a previous appointment.

Table 7 Completed Outpatient Waits for First Appointment

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 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	77.0%	21.7%	0.9%	0.2%	0.1%	84,604
A - J 2000	78.5%	20.1%	0.9%	0.3%	0.2%	77,699
J - S 2000	75.4%	23.1%	1.2%	0.2%	0.1%	75,721
O - D 2000*	74.5%	23.5%	1.6%	0.3%	0.2%	84,326
J - M 2001*	75.6%	22.5%	1.3%	0.4%	0.2%	86,024
A - J 2001*	77.2%	21.0%	1.2%	0.4%	0.2%	82,161
J - S 2001*	74.4%	23.7%	1.2%	0.5%	0.3%	77,880
O - D 2001*	72.4%	24.7%	1.8%	0.7%	0.3%	79,744
J - M 2002*	72.4%	25.3%	1.4%	0.6%	0.3%	85,856

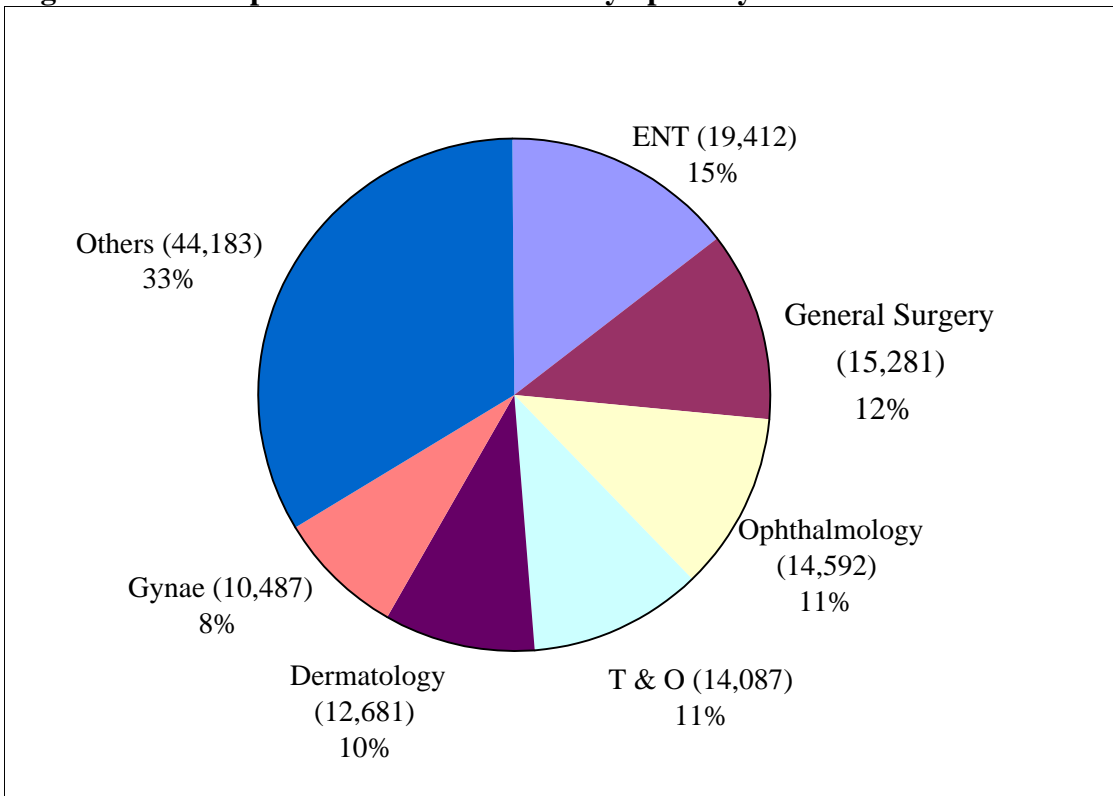
Source: CH4 Part 1

* Estimated figures – See note 14.

Outpatients Waiting by Specialty

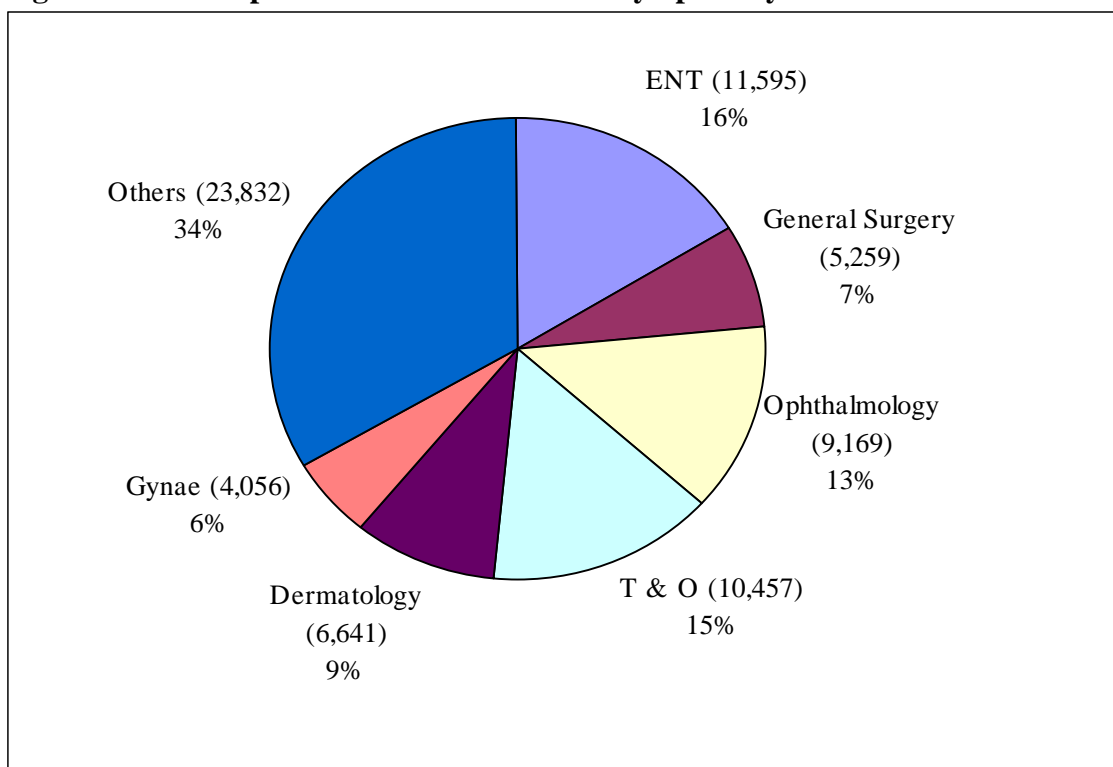
The majority of those waiting (67%) were within six specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery (T&O); Ophthalmology; Dermatology and Gynaecology (Gynae) (Figure 5a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 5b. All figures include those who are waiting for their first appointment including those who have cancelled or missed a previous appointment during the March 2002 quarter.

Figure 5a Outpatients – Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of March 2002



Source: CH3.

Figure 5b Outpatients – Excess Waiters¹ by Specialty at the end of March 2002



¹ See notes to editors (paragraph 6) for definition of Excess Waiters.

Source: CH3.

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 Tables 5 and 6, 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. Health Board residents included in Table 6 are not always assigned a Health Board of treatment as some patients may be waiting for admission to a hospital outside Northern Ireland.
14. One Trust (the United Group of Hospitals) has been unable to produce CH4 data for the quarters ending December 2000, March 2001, June 2001, September 2001, December 2001 and March 2002. This Trust has now provided estimated totals for the quarters and estimates for each time band have been calculated. These new estimates for the missing data for the United Group of Hospitals have been included in the December 2000 to March 2002 data shown in Table 7. When CH4 data becomes available these estimates will be recast.
15. Some of the data is provisional and may be subject to revision in subsequent quarters.
16. Figures relating to the quarter ending June 2002 will be released on Thursday, 5th September 2002.
17. 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 –

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Additional Information

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

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