

# Information Release

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

5<sup>th</sup> June 2003

## Northern Ireland Waiting Lists – March 2003

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 2003, 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 2003 stood at 55,577.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of March 2003 with the end of December 2002 (57,649), the total number waiting has decreased by 2,072 (-3.6%).

Over the year, comparing the end of March 2003 with the end of March 2002 (58,996), the total number waiting decreased by 3,419 (- 5.8%).

**Table 1: Quarterly Waiting Lists – March 2003**

Waiting for:	Quarter ending March 2003	Change compared with end previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter – previous year
Ordinary Admissions	25,100	- 1,865	- 4,435
Day case Admissions	30,477	- 207	+ 1,016
Total Waiting	55,577	- 2,072	- 3,419

Source: CH1

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



#### A National Statistics Publication

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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 55,577 people waiting for admission to hospital at the end of March 2003, 25,100 (45.2%) were waiting for ordinary admission and 30,477 (54.8%) were waiting for day case admission (Table 1).

Since the end of December 2002, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has decreased by 1,865 (-6.9%) and the number waiting for day case admission has decreased by 207 (- 0.7%).

In comparison with March 2002, the number of cases waiting for ordinary admission has decreased by 4,435 (-15%) and the number waiting for day case admission has increased by 1,016 (3.4%).

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

The number of excess waiters at the end of March 2003 stood at 6,659 or 12% of the total waiting.

Over the quarter, comparing the end of March 2003 with the end of December 2002, the number of excess waiters decreased by 1,685 (- 20.2%).

Over the year, comparing the end of March 2003 with the end of March 2002, the number of excess waiters decreased by 2,108 (- 24%).

**Table 2** Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> – March 2003

Waiting for:	Quarter Ending March 2003	Change compared with end of previous quarter	Change compared with end same quarter previous year
Ordinary admissions	5,158	- 993	- 1,323
Day case admissions	1,501	- 692	- 785
Total Waiting	6,659	- 1,685	- 2,108

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

Source: CHI

## Peak Figures

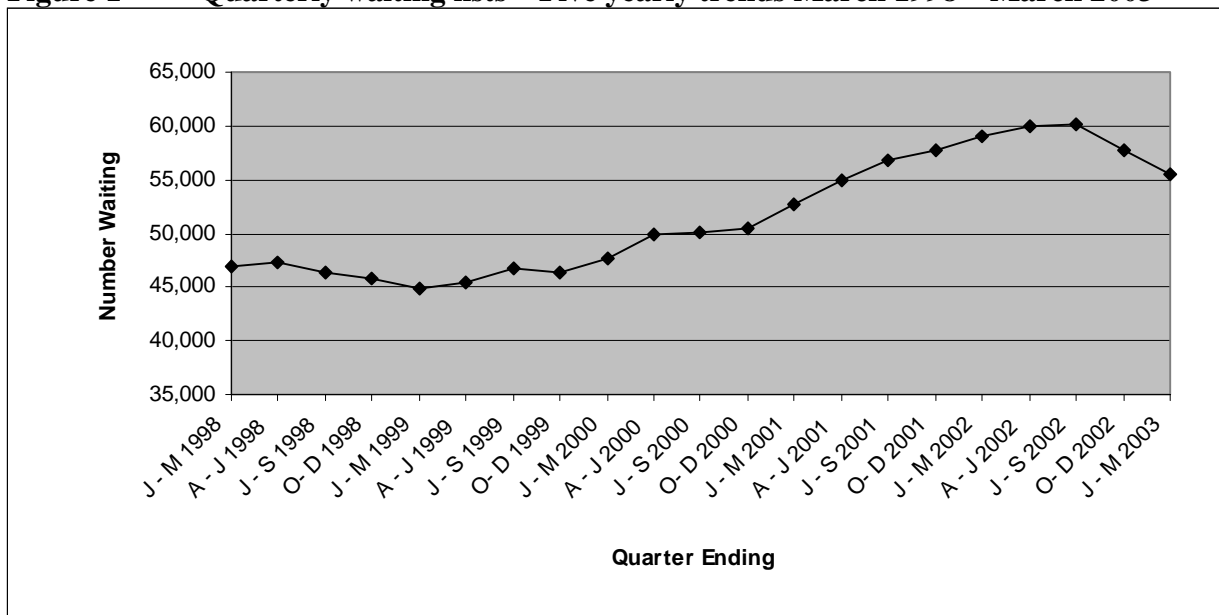
The end of March 2003 total of 55,577 on the inpatient waiting list represents a decrease of 4,613 (-7.7%) on the peak waiting list figure of 60,190 (end September 2002).

The number of excess waiters has fallen to 6,659 at the end of March 2003, and represents a decrease of 2,499 (-27.3%) on the peak figure of 9,158 recorded at the end of September 2002.

## Trends

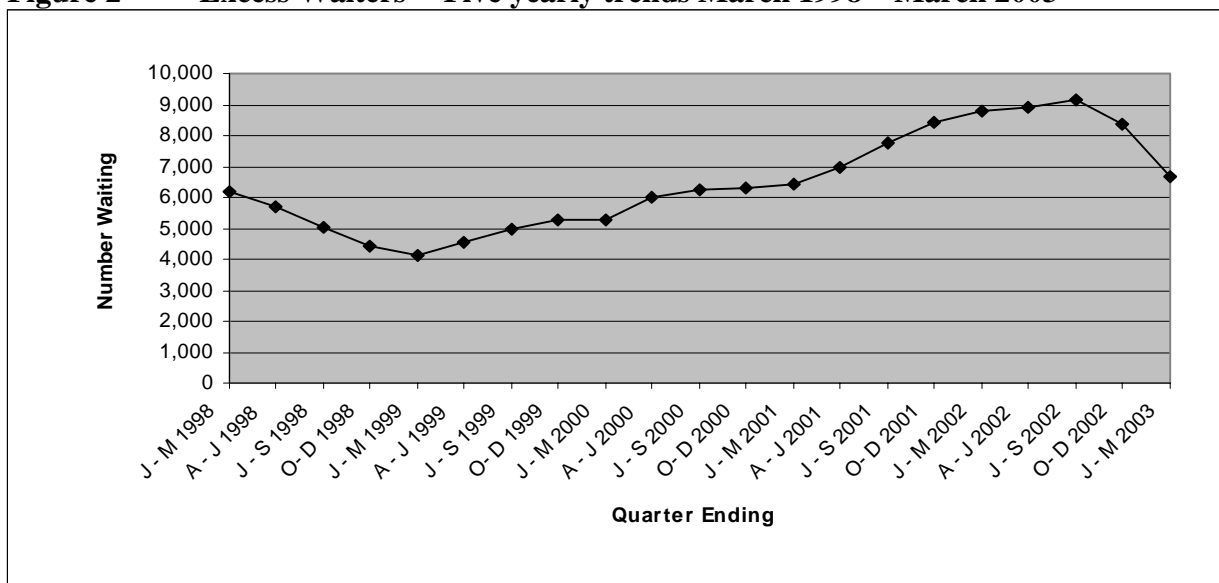
Since March 1998 the total waiting was on a generally downward trend until September 1999, when the trend reversed and total waiting rose to peak in September 2002. The total waiting decreased during the quarter ending December 2002 and has continued to decrease in the current quarter (Figure 1). Excess waiters have followed a similar trend and also continued to decrease in the current quarter (Figure 2).

**Figure 1 Quarterly waiting lists – Five yearly trends March 1998 – March 2003**



Source: CH1

**Figure 2 Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> - Five yearly trends March 1998 – March 2003**



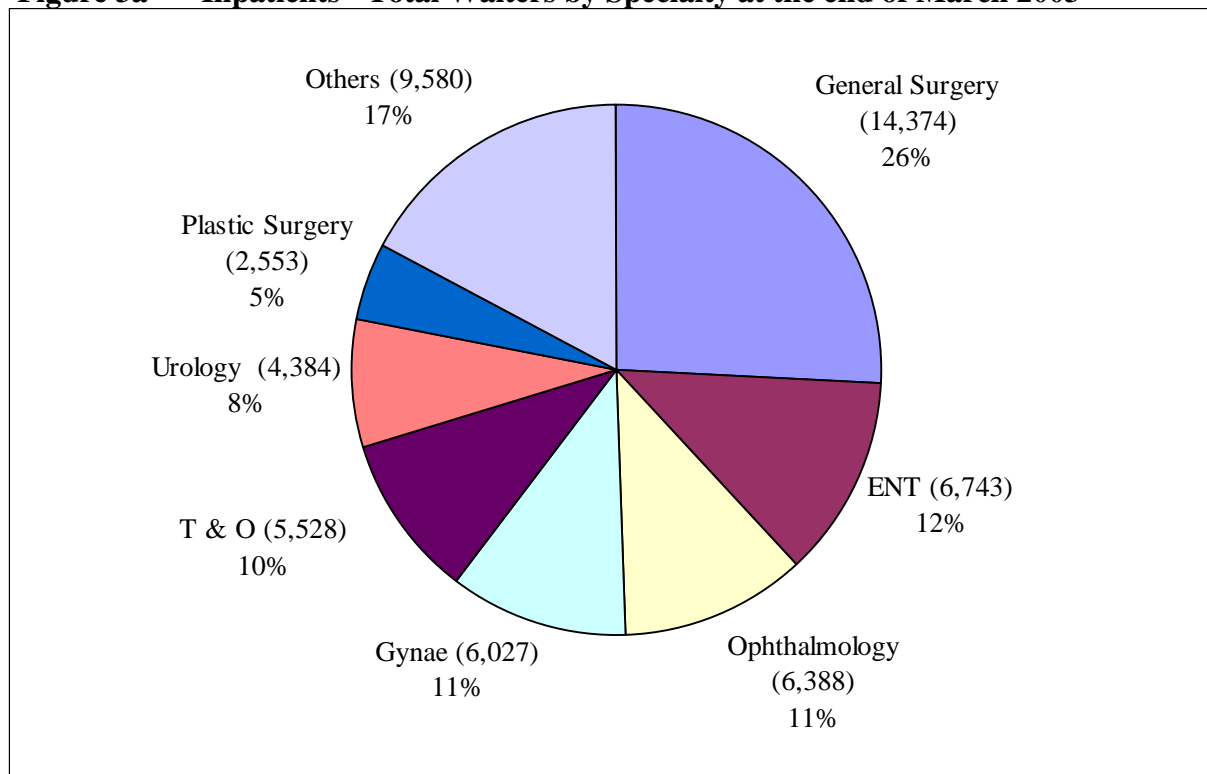
<sup>1</sup>See Notes to Editors (paragraph 5) for definition of Excess waiters.

Source: CH1

## Inpatients Waiting by Specialty

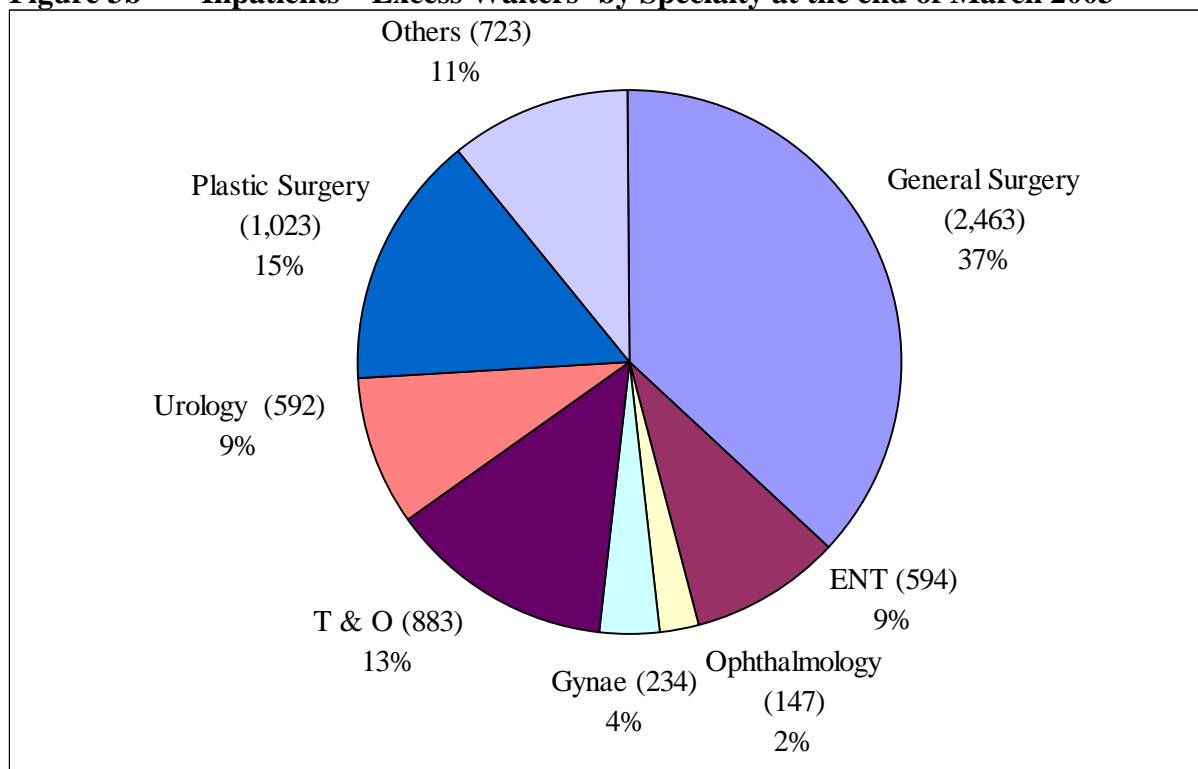
The overwhelming majority of those waiting (83%) were within seven specialties: General Surgery; Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); Ophthalmology; Gynaecology (Gynae); Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery (T&O); Urology and Plastic Surgery (Figure 3a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 3b.

**Figure 3a Inpatients - Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of March 2003**



Source: CH1

**Figure 3b Inpatients – Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> by Specialty at the end of March 2003**



<sup>1</sup>See 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 38,371 inpatients were admitted to hospital (excluding those who had previously refused an offer of attendance) during the March 2003 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 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
A - J 2002	74.4%	20.4%	3.3%	1.0%	0.9%	36,885
J - S 2002	72.9%	21.9%	3.3%	1.1%	0.7%	33,522
O - D 2002	74.1%	20.3%	3.5%	1.2%	0.9%	38,009
J - M 2003	74.1%	19.5%	3.8%	1.4%	1.2%	38,371

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 2002	29,091	28,217	57,308	8,673	15.1%
April 2002	28,994	29,249	58,243	8,886	15.3%
May 2002	29,443	29,484	58,927	9,044	15.3%
June 2002	29,161	29,324	58,485	9,125	15.6%
July 2002	29,102	30,486	59,588	9,385	15.7%
August 2002	29,141	30,194	59,335	9,673	16.3%
September 2002*	28,534	30,102	58,636	9,254	15.8%
October 2002*	27,830	29,912	57,742	8,809	15.3%
November 2002*	26,857	29,531	56,388	8,371	14.8%
December 2002	26,483	29,657	56,140	8,260	14.7%
January 2003	25,702	29,967	55,669	7,450	13.4%
February 2003	25,061	29,730	54,791	6,863	12.5%
March 2003	24,502	29,362	53,864	6,600	12.3%

Source: CHA

\*Estimated Figures – See Note 15

The monthly waiting list figures have shown an overall decrease in the 3 month period since December 2002. This confirms the downward trend shown 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	21,090	98	95	0
Northern	5,692	8,570	398	661
Southern	3,751	20	7,672	164
Western	1,033	49	56	4,515
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>31,566</b>	<b>8,737</b>	<b>8,221</b>	<b>5,340</b>

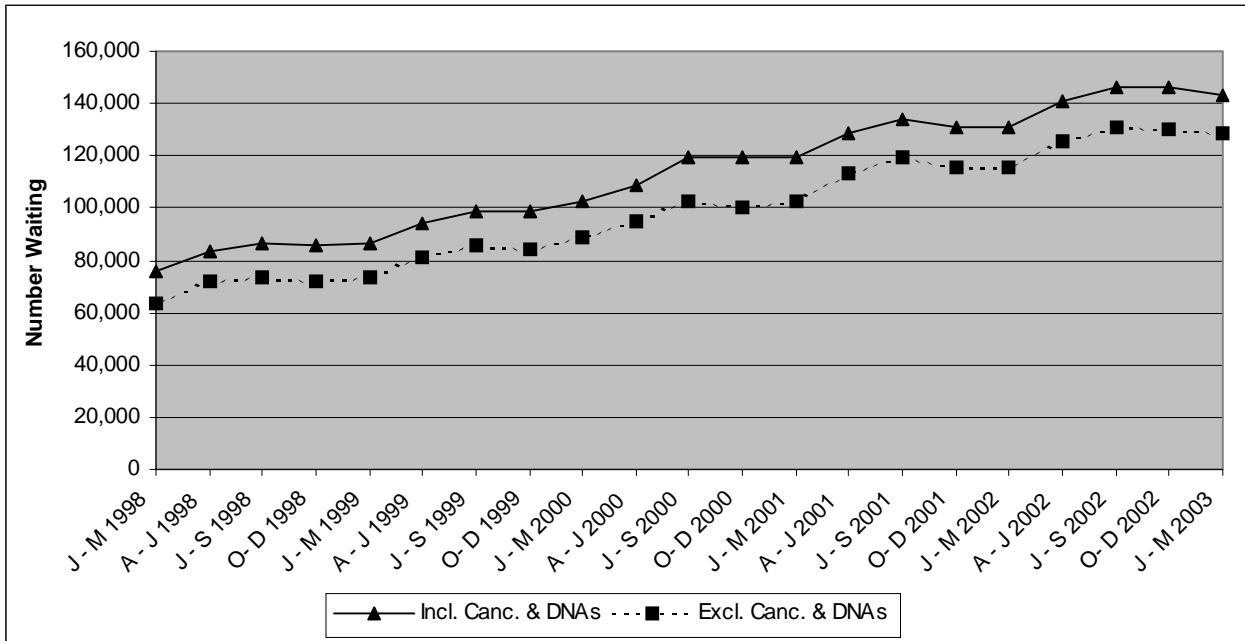
Source: CHA

# Outpatients

## Headline Totals

The number of patients waiting for admission as outpatients (including cancellations and deferrals) at the end of March 2003 stood at 143,028 representing a decrease of 2,925 (- 2.0%) over the quarter and an increase of 12,297 (9.4%) compared with the same quarter in the previous year. Corresponding quarterly and annual changes (excluding cancellations and deferrals) were -1.0% and 11.2% respectively. Outpatient waiting lists have been on a generally upward trend since March 1998, however, the total waiting has shown a small decrease in the two most recent quarters (Figure 4).

**Figure 4 Outpatients Waiting for a First Appointment (including and excluding cancellations and deferrals) March 1998 – March 2003**



Source: CH3 Parts 1&2.

## Outpatient Completed Waits

Waiting times for completed outpatient waits are shown in Table 7. During the March 2003 quarter a total of 85,054 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 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%	88,331
J - M 2002*	72.4%	25.3%	1.4%	0.6%	0.3%	85,856
A - J 2002*	74.9%	22.7%	1.4%	0.5%	0.4%	82,282
J - S 2002*	71.0%	26.3%	1.8%	0.4%	0.4%	79,986
O - D 2002*	70.2%	26.6%	2.0%	0.6%	0.6%	88,056
J - M 2003*	70.0%	25.6%	2.4%	0.9%	1.2%	85,054

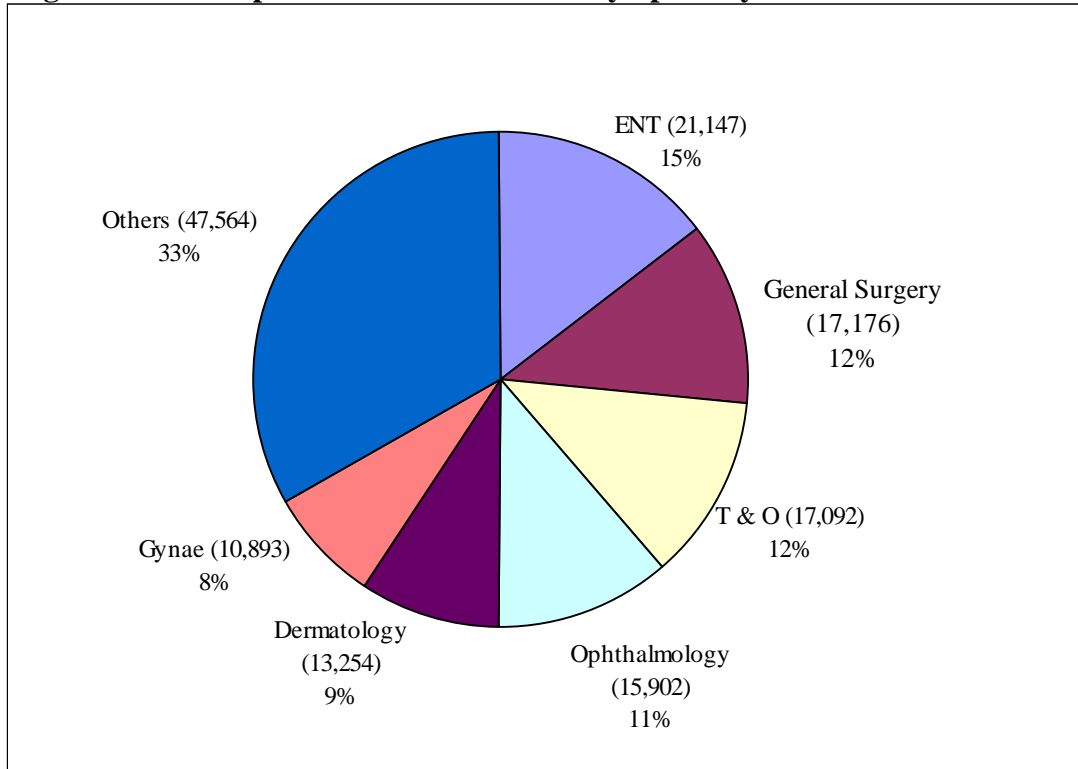
Source: CH4 Part 1

\* Estimated figures – See note 14.

## Outpatients Waiting by Specialty

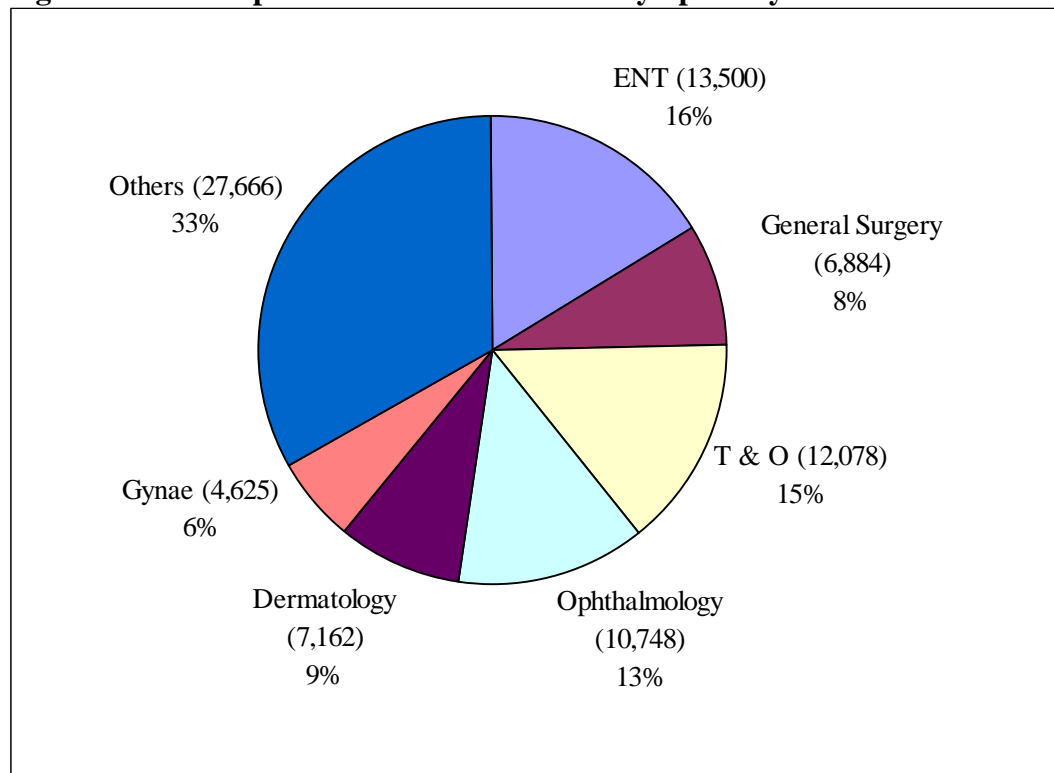
The majority of those waiting (67%) were within six specialties: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT); General Surgery; Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery (T&O); Ophthalmology; Dermatology and Gynaecology (Gynae) (Figure 5a). Corresponding figures for excess waiters are shown in Figure 5b. All figures include those who are waiting for their first appointment including those who have cancelled or missed a previous appointment during the March 2003 quarter.

**Figure 5a Outpatients – Total Waiters by Specialty at the end of March 2003**



Source: CH3.

**Figure 5b Outpatients – Excess Waiters<sup>1</sup> by Specialty at the end of March 2003**



<sup>1</sup> 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. Due to reasons beyond the control of the Trust, United Hospitals HSS Trust has been unable to produce CH4 data for all quarters between December 2001 and March 2003. This Trust has provided estimated totals for these 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 data shown in Table 7. When CH4 data becomes available these estimates will be recast.
15. Greenpark HSS Trust was unable to provide waiting list figures for long waiters in the Trauma and Orthopaedic Specialty by Health Board of Residence for months ending September, October and November 2002. Estimated figures have been included in the monthly data shown in Tables 5 and 6.
16. Some of the data is provisional and may be subject to revision in subsequent quarters.
17. Figures relating to the quarter ending June 2003 will be released on Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2003.
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  
Annexe 2  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont  
BT4 3UD

Internet address: [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/stats&research/pubs.html](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/stats&research/pubs.html)