

NEWS RELEASE

Canada’s health-care wait times hit 27.4 weeks in 2022—longest ever recorded

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Canadian patients waited longer than ever this year for medical treatment, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

The study, an annual survey of physicians across Canada, reports a median wait time of 27.4 weeks—the longest ever recorded, longer than the wait of 25.6 weeks reported in 2021—and 195 per cent higher than the 9.3 weeks Canadians waited in 1993, when the Fraser Institute began tracking wait times.

“The results of this year’s survey indicate that COVID-19 and related hospital closures have exacerbated, but are not the cause, of Canada’s historic wait times challenges,” said Bacchus Barua, director of the Fraser Institute’s Centre for Health Policy Studies and co-author of *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada, 2022*.

“Previous results revealed that patients waited an estimated 20.9 weeks for medically necessary elective care in 2019—long before the pandemic started.”

The study examines the total wait time faced by patients across 12 medical specialties from referral by a general practitioner (i.e. family doctor) to consultation with a specialist, to when the patient ultimately receives treatment.

Among the provinces, Ontario recorded the shortest wait time at 20.3 weeks—still up from 18.5 weeks in 2021. Prince Edward Island recorded the longest wait time in Canada at 64.7 weeks.

Among the various specialties, national wait times were longest between a referral by a GP and neurosurgical procedures (58.9 weeks) and shortest for radiation treatments (3.9 weeks).

Patients also experience significant waiting times for various diagnostic technologies. This year, Canadians could expect to wait 5.4 weeks for a computed tomography (CT) scan, 10.6 weeks for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, and 4.9 weeks for an ultrasound.

Crucially, physicians report that their patients are waiting over six weeks longer for treatment (after seeing a specialist) than what they consider to be clinically reasonable.

“Excessively long wait times remain a defining characteristic of Canada’s health-care system” said Mackenzie Moir, Fraser Institute policy analyst and co-author of the report.

“And they aren’t simply minor inconveniences, they can result in increased suffering for patients, lost productivity at work, a decreased quality of life, and in the worst cases, disability or death.”

The aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to impact the survey’s response rate, but hundreds of physicians across the country still participated this year, with more than 850 responses received across the 12 specialities (975 when psychiatrists are included).

Median wait times by province (in weeks)

PROVINCE	2021	2022	PROVINCE	2021	2022
British Columbia	26.2	25.8	Quebec	29.1	29.4

Alberta	32.1	33.3	New Brunswick	41.5	43.3
Saskatchewan	30.9	30.1	Nova Scotia	53.2	58.2
Manitoba	31.5	41.3	P.E.I.	41.6	64.7
Ontario	18.5	20.3	Newfoundland and Labrador	21.1	32.1

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