



NEWS RELEASE

Canada’s health-care wait times hit new record— 21.2 weeks

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For immediate release

VANCOUVER—Wait times for medically necessary treatment hit a new record in 2017 and eclipsed 20 weeks for a second year in a row, 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 from across Canada, reports a median wait time in 2017 of 21.2 weeks—the longest ever recorded. By comparison, Canadians waited 9.3 weeks in 1993 when the Fraser Institute first reported wait times for medically necessary elective treatments.

“Excessively long wait times remain a defining characteristic of Canada’s health-care system,” said Bacchus Barua, associate director of health policy studies at the Fraser Institute and author of *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada, 2017*.

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 again recorded the shortest wait time at 15.4 weeks—nearly four months—and New Brunswick recorded the longest wait time (41.7 weeks).

For the fifth year in a row, British Columbia saw an increase in wait times with the median hitting 26.6 weeks—the longest ever measured in that province. Alberta also experienced its longest wait time ever at 26.5 weeks this year, and wait times in Quebec also crossed the 20 week mark for the first time since 2003.

Among the various specialties, national wait times were longest for orthopaedic surgery (41.7 weeks) and neurosurgery (32.9 weeks) and shortest for medical oncology (3.2 weeks).

“Long wait times are not a trivial matter—they can increase suffering for patients, decrease quality of life, and in the worst cases, lead to disability or death,” Barua said.

“It’s time for policymakers to consider reforming the outdated policies that continue to contribute to long wait times in Canada.”

Median wait times by province (in weeks)

PROVINCE	2016	2017	PROVINCE	2016	2017
British Columbia	25.2	26.6	Quebec	18.9	20.6
Alberta	22.9	26.5	New Brunswick	38.8	41.7
Saskatchewan	16.6	19.8	Nova Scotia	34.8	37.7
Manitoba	20.6	24.9	P.E.I.	31.4	32.4
Ontario	15.6	15.4	Newfoundland and Labrador	26.0	21.5

Note: The number of survey responses in Atlantic Canada were lower than other provinces, which may result in reported median wait times being higher or lower than those actually experienced.

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