



NEWS RELEASE

Canada’s health-care wait times eclipsed 20 weeks in 2019; second-longest wait ever recorded

December 10, 2019
For immediate release

VANCOUVER—The median wait time for medically necessary treatment in Canada this year was 20.9 weeks, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

This is the second-longest wait ever recorded by the Fraser Institute, which has been measuring wait times across Canada since 1993 when patients waited just 9.3 weeks.

“Across Canada, patients continue to wait for more than four months for medically necessary treatment—a fact that should concern not just patients and their families but also policymakers in Ottawa and across the country,” said Bacchus Barua, associate director of health policy studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada, 2019*.

The study examines the total wait time patients face 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 has the shortest median wait time this year at 16.0 weeks, and Prince Edward Island recorded the longest wait time (49.3 weeks).

Nationally, wait times were longest for orthopedic surgery (39.1 weeks) and plastic surgery (28.7 weeks) and the shortest for medical oncology (4.4 weeks).

“Long wait times for medically necessary treatments increase suffering for patients, decrease quality of life, and in the worst cases, lead to disability or death,” Barua said.

“Policymakers in Ottawa and at the provincial level should review the outdated health policies that are contributing to long wait times for Canadians seeking medical treatments.”

Median wait times by province (in weeks)

PROVINCE	2018	2019	PROVINCE	2018	2019
British Columbia	23.2	24.0	Quebec	15.8	16.3
Alberta	26.1	28.0	New Brunswick	45.1	39.7
Saskatchewan	15.4	26.0	Nova Scotia	34.4	33.3
Manitoba	26.1	32.4	P.E.I.	39.8	49.3
Ontario	15.7	16.0	Newfoundland and Labrador	22.0	23.4

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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