



NEWS RELEASE

Atlantic province’s health-care wait times longest in Canada

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For immediate release

HALIFAX—Atlantic Canadian patients continue to endure the longest health-care wait times in the country, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Consistently long wait times remain a defining characteristic of the patient experience in Atlantic Canada,” 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, 2021*.

The study, an annual survey of physicians from across Canada, reports a median wait time of 25.6 weeks—the longest ever recorded—and 175 per cent higher than the 9.3 weeks Canadians waited in 1993, when the Fraser Institute began tracking wait times for medically necessary elective treatments. Results from the same survey found that patients waited an estimated 20.9 weeks for medically necessary elective care in 2019—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, Nova Scotia recorded the longest wait time in Canada at 53.2 weeks, followed by Prince Edward Island at 41.6, and New Brunswick at 41.5. Newfoundland & Labrador came in as the second shortest provincial wait time in Canada at 21.1 weeks, just behind Ontario (18.5 weeks). (Although a positive result, Newfoundland and Labrador’s provincial wait time should be interpreted with caution this year due to a lack of data for certain specialties.)

Likewise, the longest wait times for specialist consultations after being referred by a GP are found in P.E.I. at 24.1 weeks, and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick at 19.0 weeks.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the survey’s response rate, but about one-in-ten physicians (9 per cent) across the country still participated, with more than 1,100 responses.

“Long wait times 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,” said Mackenzie Moir, Fraser Institute policy analyst and study co-author.

Median wait times by province (in weeks)

PROVINCE	2020	2021	PROVINCE	2020	2021
British Columbia	26.6	26.2	Quebec	18.8	29.1
Alberta	29.4	32.1	New Brunswick	41.3	41.5
Saskatchewan	21.7	30.9	Nova Scotia	43.8	53.2
Manitoba	23.7	31.5	P.E.I.	46.5	41.6
Ontario	17.4	18.5	Newfoundland and Labrador	29.2	21.1

MEDIA CONTACT:

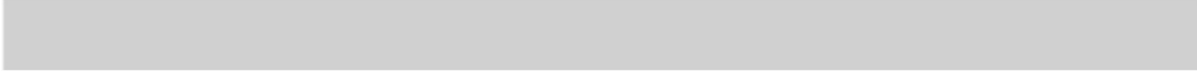
Bacchus Barua, Director, Centre for Health Policy Studies
Fraser Institute

Mackenzie Moir, Policy Analyst
Fraser Institute

For interviews or for more information, please contact:

Drue MacPherson, Junior Media Relations Coordinator Fraser Institute
Tel: (604) 688-0221 Ext. 721
E-mail: drue.macpherson@fraserinstitute.org

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