



# NEWS RELEASE

## Canada’s health-care wait times hit 25.6 weeks in 2021—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 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.

“The results of this year’s survey suggest 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, 2021*.

“Results from the same survey reveal 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 18.5 weeks—still up from 17.4 weeks in 2020. Nova Scotia recorded the longest wait time in Canada at 53.2 weeks.

Among the various specialties, national wait times were longest between a referral by a GP referral and neurosurgical procedures (49.2 weeks) and shortest for radiation treatments (3.7 weeks).

Patients also experience significant waiting times for various diagnostic technologies across the provinces. This year, Canadians could expect to wait 5.2 weeks for a computed tomography (CT) scan, 10.2 weeks for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, and 3.6 weeks for an ultrasound.

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

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.

“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.”

**Median wait times by province (in weeks)**

PROVINCE	2020	2021	PROVINCE	2020	2021
British Columbia	26.6	<b>26.2</b>	Quebec	18.8	<b>29.1</b>
Alberta	29.4	<b>32.1</b>	New Brunswick	41.3	<b>41.5</b>
Saskatchewan	21.7	<b>30.9</b>	Nova Scotia	43.8	<b>53.2</b>

Manitoba	23.7	<b>31.5</b>	P.E.I.	46.5	<b>41.6</b>
Ontario	17.4	<b>18.5</b>	Newfoundland and Labrador	29.2	<b>21.1</b>

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