

# NEWS RELEASE

## Canada’s health-care wait times hit 20 weeks in 2016—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 20 weeks—the longest ever recorded—and more than double the 9.3 weeks Canadians waited in 1993, when the Fraser Institute began tracking wait times for medically necessary elective treatments.

Before this year, the longest recorded median wait time was 19 weeks in 2011.

“Excessively long wait times remain a defining characteristic of Canada’s health-care system, but this year is the longest we’ve ever seen and that should trouble all Canadians,” said Bacchus Barua, senior economist for health-care studies at the Fraser Institute and co-author of *Waiting Your Turn: Wait Times for Health Care in Canada, 2016*.

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 15.6 weeks—up from 14.2 weeks in 2015. New Brunswick recorded the longest wait time (38.8 weeks) in Canada.

For the fourth year in a row, British Columbia recorded an increase in wait times with the median now sitting at 25.2 weeks—the longest ever measured in the province.

Among the various specialties, national wait times were longest for neurosurgery (46.9 weeks) and shortest for medical oncology (3.7 weeks).

It’s estimated that Canadians are currently waiting for nearly one million medically necessary procedures. Crucially, physicians report that their patients are waiting more than three weeks longer for treatment (after seeing a specialist) than what they consider to be clinically reasonable.

“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,” Barua said.

“The experiences of other countries prove that long waits for treatment aren’t a necessary by-product of a universal health-care system. It’s time for policymakers to consider reforming the outdated policies that contribute to long wait times in Canada.”

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

PROVINCE	2016	2015	PROVINCE	2016	2015
British Columbia	25.2	22.4	Quebec	18.9	16.4
Alberta	22.9	21.2	New Brunswick	38.8	42.8
Saskatchewan	16.6	13.6	Nova Scotia	34.8	26.1
Manitoba	20.6	19.4	P.E.I.	31.4	43.1
Ontario	15.6	14.2	Newfoundland and Labrador	26.0	42.7

**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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