



Chartbook

Wait Times for Priority Procedures in Canada, 2021

Focus on the First 6 Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic

June 2021

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About this chartbook

The findings in this chartbook reflect wait times for patients who had their procedures done between April and September 2020, and provide comparisons with the same period in previous years.

In 2020, many health care services were cancelled, delayed or modified due to the COVID-19 pandemic (see [CIHI's COVID-19 Intervention Scan](#) for more information). This data doesn't represent the experience of all patients during this period, such as those who had their surgeries delayed or rescheduled and who were still waiting as of October 2020.

The following slides are provided for reuse in your own presentations.

Additional resources

The following companion products are available on CIHI's website:

- [Wait times for priority procedures in Canada](#)
- [Wait times data table](#)
- [Wait time metadata](#)



For data-specific information:

healthreports@cihi.ca

[cihi.ca](https://www.cihi.ca)

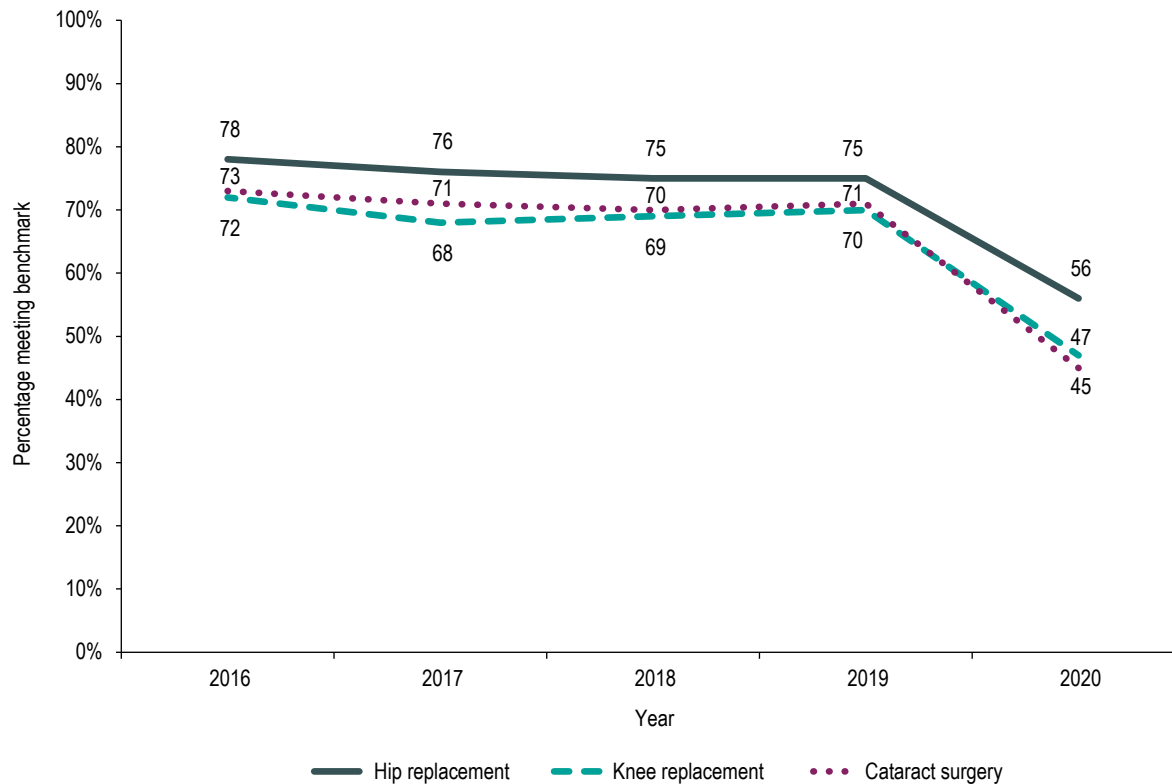


Wait times in Canada, 2020: Key findings

- Cancelled and delayed procedures during the COVID-19 pandemic led to longer wait times for joint replacements and cataract surgeries in 2020. Around half of Canadians did not receive their procedures within recommended time frames, compared with around one-third in 2019.
- For urgent procedures such as radiation therapy and hip fracture repair, most Canadians continued to receive care within benchmark time frames, and the number of procedures done was comparable with that completed in 2019.
- Median wait times improved by 2 or 3 days for Canadians who received breast, bladder, colorectal and lung cancer surgery, while the number of cancer surgeries decreased by about one-fifth compared with 2019.
- Wait times for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans continued to be longer than those for computed tomography (CT) scans, although the number of diagnostic imaging scans decreased. Wait times varied across provinces.

Half of Canadians did not receive hip and knee replacements or cataract surgeries within recommended wait times

Percentage of patients treated within benchmark time frames, joint replacement and cataract surgery, Canada, April to September, 2016 to 2020



For hip and knee replacements and cataract surgeries, the total number of procedures in 2020 decreased by over one-third compared with 2019.

Procedure	Benchmark time frame
— Hip replacement	182 days
- - - Knee replacement	182 days
••• Cataract surgery	112 days

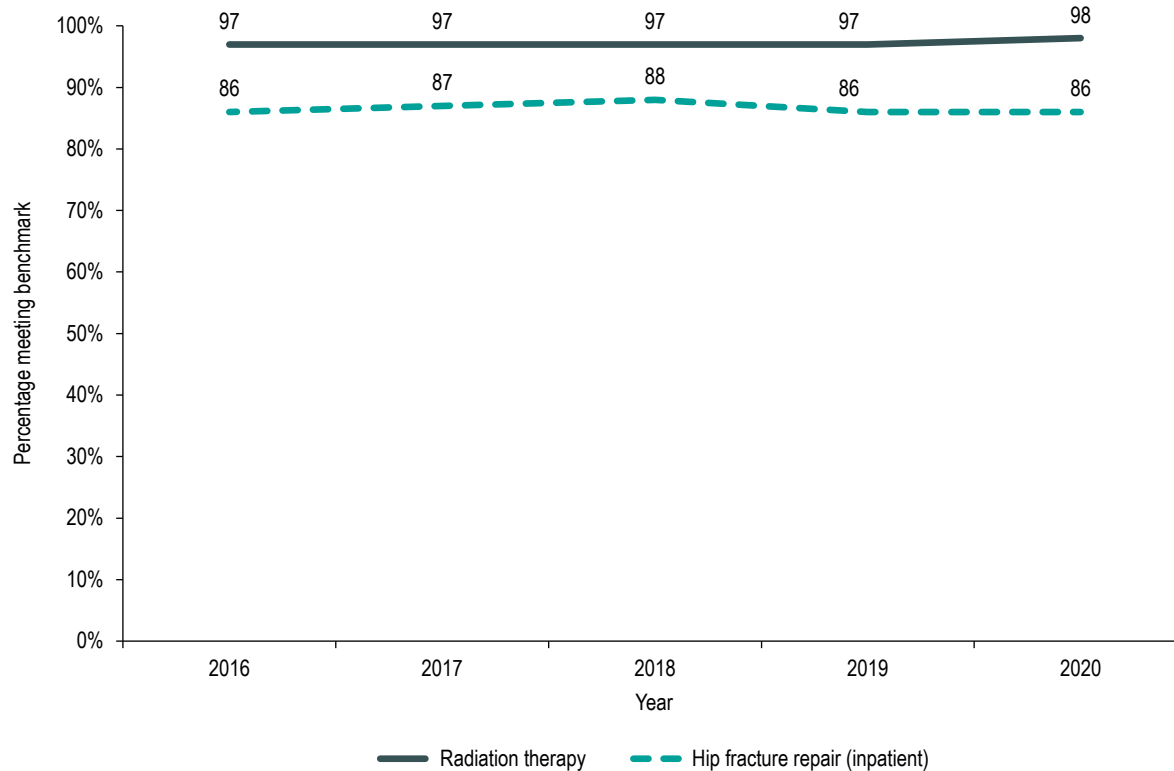
Notes

Wait time data excludes the territories.

For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#).

Most Canadians continued to receive urgent procedures within benchmark time frames

Percentage of patients treated within benchmark time frames, radiation therapy and hip fracture repair, Canada, April to September, 2016 to 2020



For both radiation therapy and hip fracture repair, the number of procedures done in 2020 was similar to that done in 2019.

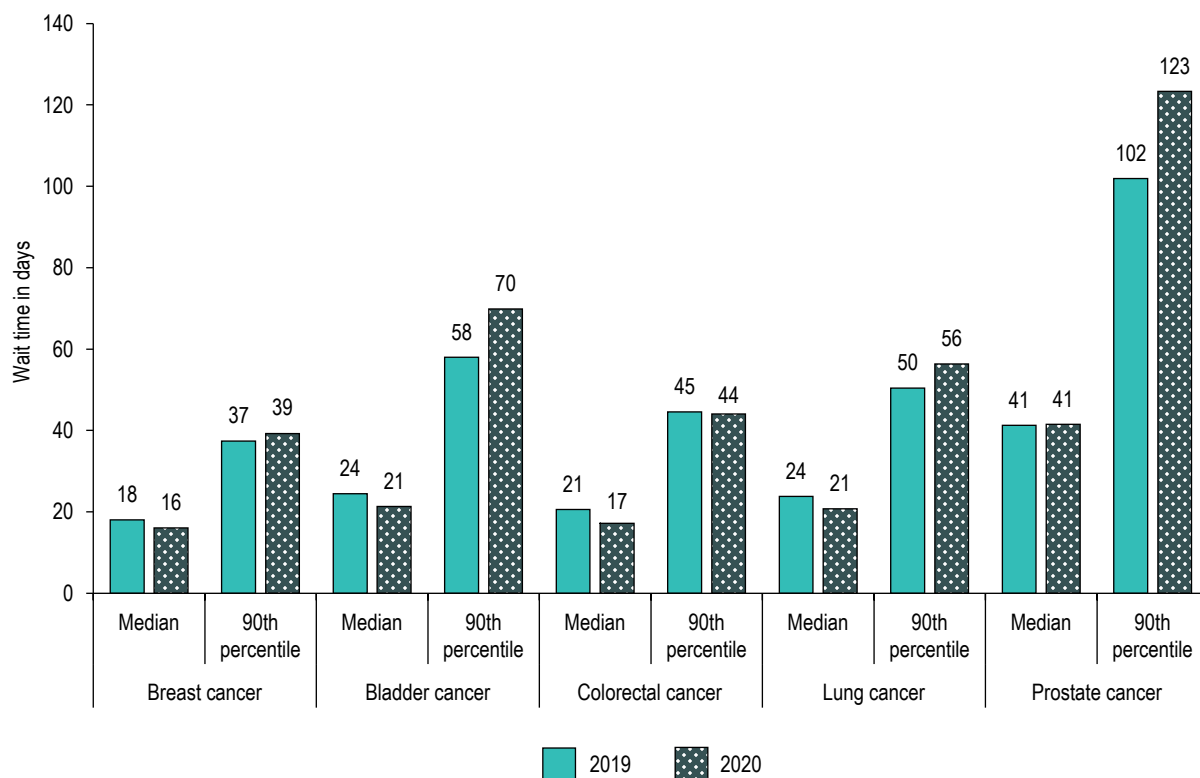
Procedure	Benchmark time frame
— Radiation therapy	28 days
- - Hip fracture repair (inpatient)	48 hours

Notes

Wait time data excludes the territories. Hip fracture repair wait time data excludes Quebec. For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#). For hip fracture repair, the data source is CIHI's Discharge Abstract Database. For all other procedures, data was provided by provincial health ministries and agencies as part of the annual wait time data submission.

Median wait times improved for most cancer surgeries in 2020 compared with 2019

Median and 90th percentile wait times for cancer surgery, by surgery type, Canada, April to September, 2019 and 2020



The number of cancer surgeries decreased in 2020 by about one-fifth overall, compared with 2019.

Median: Half of all patients waited this many days before receiving care.

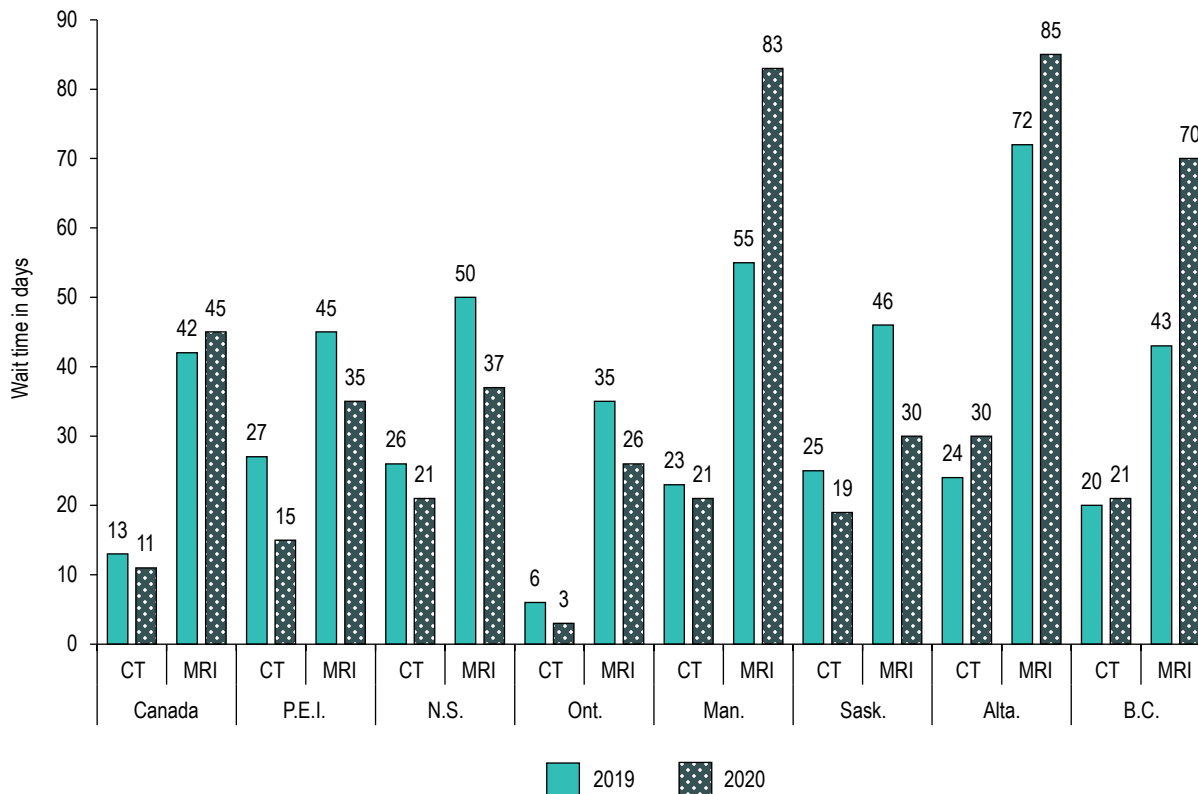
90th percentile: 1 out of 10 patients waited this many days or more before receiving care.

Notes

Wait time data excludes the territories. Manitoba data is not available for bladder, colorectal and prostate cancer wait times. For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#).

Wait times for MRI scans continued to be longer than those for CT scans

Median wait times for MRI and CT scans, by province, April to September, 2019 and 2020



In 2020, the number of MRI scans decreased by over one-quarter, and CT scan volumes decreased by nearly one-fifth, compared with 2019.

Notes

Diagnostic imaging wait time data excludes Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Quebec and the territories. For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#).

Appendix

Text alternatives for figures

Text alternative for figure on page 5

Table: Percentage of patients treated within benchmark time frames, joint replacement and cataract surgery, Canada, April to September, 2016 to 2020

Surgery	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Hip replacement	78%	76%	75%	75%	56%
Knee replacement	72%	68%	69%	70%	47%
Cataract surgery	73%	71%	70%	71%	45%

Notes

Wait time data excludes the territories.

For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#).

Text alternative for figure on page 6

Table: Percentage of patients treated within benchmark time frames, radiation therapy and hip fracture repair, Canada, April to September, 2016 to 2020

Procedure	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Radiation therapy	97%	97%	97%	97%	98%
Hip fracture repair (inpatient)	86%	87%	88%	86%	86%

Notes

Wait time data excludes the territories. Hip fracture repair wait time data excludes Quebec.

For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#).

For hip fracture repair, the data source is CIHI's Discharge Abstract Database. For all other procedures, data was provided by provincial health ministries and agencies as part of the annual wait time data submission.

Text alternative text for figure on page 7

Table: Median and 90th percentile wait times for cancer surgery, by surgery type, Canada, April to September, 2019 and 2020

Year	Breast cancer		Bladder cancer		Colorectal cancer		Lung cancer		Prostate cancer	
	Median (days)	90th percentile (days)	Median (days)	90th percentile (days)	Median (days)	90th percentile (days)	Median (days)	90th percentile (days)	Median (days)	90th percentile (days)
2019	18	37	24	58	21	45	24	50	41	102
2020	16	39	21	70	17	44	21	56	41	123

Notes

Wait time data excludes the territories. Manitoba data is not available for bladder, colorectal and prostate cancer wait times. For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#).

Text alternative text for figure on page 8

Table: Median wait times for MRI and CT scans, by province, April to September, 2019 and 2020

Year	Canada		P.E.I.		N.S.		Ont.		Man.		Sask.		Alta.		B.C.	
	CT (days)	MRI (days)	CT (days)	MRI (days)	CT (days)	MRI (days)	CT (days)	MRI (days)	CT (days)	MRI (days)	CT (days)	MRI (days)	CT (days)	MRI (days)	CT (days)	MRI (days)
2019	13	42	27	45	26	50	6	35	23	55	25	46	24	72	20	43
2020	11	45	15	35	21	37	3	26	21	83	19	30	30	85	21	70

Notes

Diagnostic imaging wait time data excludes Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, Quebec and the territories. For information on wait time definitions and data sources, please see [CIHI's wait time metadata page](#).



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