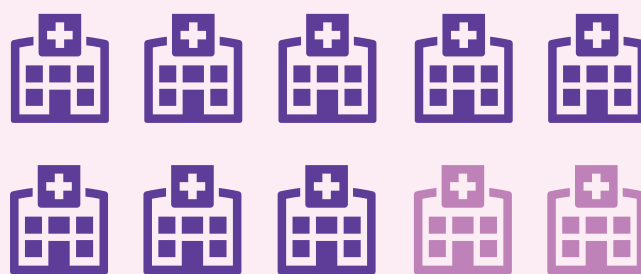


Unreported imaging studies – departments can't keep up with demand

The **£88 million**

spent on outsourcing annually is equivalent to the salaries of 1,028 full time consultant radiologists

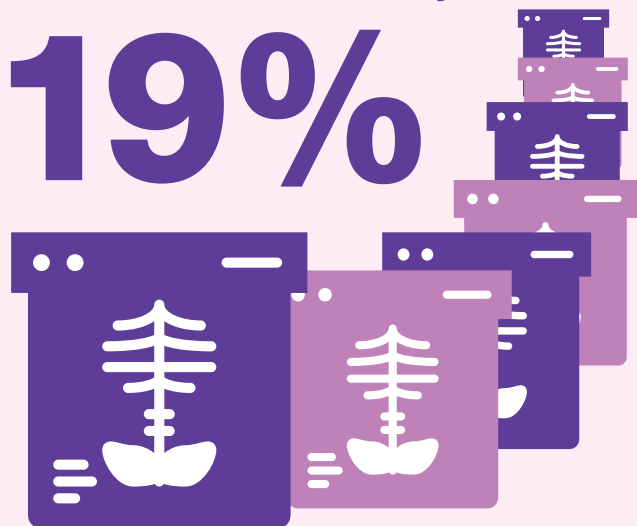


8 out of 10

English trusts have imaging studies unreported for 31 days or more

Between 2016 and 2017, the number of imaging studies going unreported for over a month has increased by

19%



Between 2016 and 2017 there has been a

22%

increase in the number of unreported imaging studies (for 11 days+)





Unreported imaging studies: a snapshot of English NHS acute trusts

Delays in diagnoses of serious medical conditions such as cancer can result in poor outcomes and increased stress and anxiety for patients and their families and carers. Backlogs of unreported scans in radiology departments can feed into these delays meaning that it takes longer to establish and initiate an appropriate course of action and treatment.

The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) has been periodically monitoring the number of unreported scans in English NHS trusts since 2014.

These key findings are the results of the survey that was sent to clinical directors at all English NHS trusts in April 2017.

- The number of departments (that responded to the survey) with scans going unreported for 31 days or more has increased from 75% in February 2016 to 79% in April 2017. Almost all (96%) NHS trusts in England have imaging studies going unreported for 11 days or more.
- If it is assumed that the 57% of trusts that responded to the survey are representative of all trusts, at any one time there are an estimated 136,175 patients waiting for 31 days or more, and 274,077 patients waiting 11 days or more for the result of their imaging studies.

- Nearly all (97%) radiology departments that responded to the survey had been unable to meet their reporting requirements within their contractual hours. To manage the excess workload, radiology departments employ a number of methods such as:
 - 96% pay radiologists overtime to report outside of contracted hours
 - 78% outsource reporting to independent companies
 - 52% employ *ad hoc* locums.

Based on survey responses, the total spending on these activities was an estimated £88 million (in the 2015–2016 financial year, a similar level of spending as in 2014–2015); a £30 million increase on the estimated spending between 2013–2014.

The spending on additional reporting and outsourcing is equivalent to the combined salaries of 1,028 full-time consultant clinical radiologists*.

The significant spending to meet reporting demands demonstrates the current imbalance between the clinical radiology workforce and the demand for diagnostic imaging. It is crucial that this growing imbalance is addressed to enable patient scans to be reported on promptly, ensuring treatment can be initiated as quickly as possible to provide better outcomes for patients.

*Based on point 5 of the 2016–2017 NHS consultant pay scale for England.

This report summarises the findings of the April 2017 England survey, which was sent to radiology clinical directors at all English NHS trusts. 89 of the 155 acute trusts (57%) responded to the survey.

An imaging study is a single examination of a patient. Depending on the type of modality used, it may be made up of a single or multiple images.