

# How specialist waitlists are impacting patients and doctors in BC

More than 1,000 specialist and family physicians participated in this survey, with family physician input a new addition in 2025. The results show that waitlists and wait times continue to grow to unprecedented levels, contributing to declining patient health across the province and increased strain on specialists and their family physician colleagues.

10%

Waitlists further increased by 10% between 2024 and 2025.

## Average Wait Times

British Columbia exceeds the national average.



4 weeks urgent cases

10 months non-urgent cases

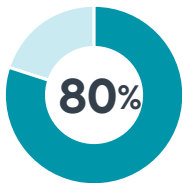
10 weeks semi-urgent cases

12+ months for many specialties

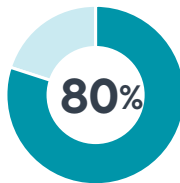


70% of specialists report an increase in the size of their waitlist over the past year, while another 23% report no improvement.

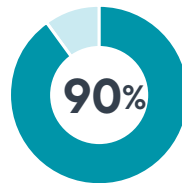
## By the numbers



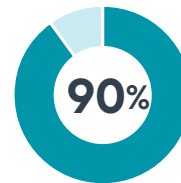
Approximately 80% of specialist respondents believe patients don't have appropriate access to specialist care and that there are **not enough specialists in BC to meet the population's needs.**



Similarly, 80% of family physician participants believe our **health care system has worsened in effectively providing patients with access to specialists,** and nearly 90% have found it difficult for their patients to access specialist care over the past year.



Almost 90% of specialist respondents indicate that **waitlists are contributing to specialist burnout,** and another 70% are experiencing moral distress because they **cannot provide their patients with the access to care they need.**



Likewise, nearly 90% of family physician respondents reported an **increase in moral distress, stress, anxiety, or burnout** as the main effect of lengthy wait times for specialist consultation on them and their practice.



36% of specialist participants indicated they have either partially **closed their practice to new referrals or may do so in the next year,** while nearly 5% have already fully closed their practice to new referrals or are considering doing so.

## In your own words

### Comments from specialists:

"As the primary care access crisis is addressed, more patients will have a primary care provider to refer to specialists, but with less access to specialists, a new bottleneck is created. Action is required now to support our specialists; otherwise, they will leave or find other work. This is already happening. The cost to retain our talented specialists is much less than the cost required to recruit."

"Because of the burden of having to triage consultation requests (as well as moral distress knowing that I cannot provide timely care), I have essentially closed my office to new referrals (I could not cope with the overwhelming influx of consult requests)."

### Comments from family physicians:

"For many specialties, lengthy wait time means the patient's condition deteriorates, not only causing increased visits to emergency and urgent care but also resulting in increased hospitalizations and deaths that could have been prevented."

"Patients are having to wait far longer than ever before, to see virtually every specialist that I try to refer them to, for help with conditions that are beyond my scope, as a family physician with 33 years' experience."