

23.2% of people were signposted to their GP following a Mobile Health Unit heart health check **(<https://www.activelink.ie/node/113067>)**



Almost a quarter of people who used the Irish Heart Foundation's Mobile Health Unit to have a heart health check were advised to see their GP for further assessment, a new report reveals.

A blood pressure reading was so high in one case that after being examined by their doctor, one patient ended up in A&E, according to an evaluation of the [Irish Heart Foundation's Mobile Health Unit](https://irishheart.ie/your-health/our-health-programmes/healthy-communities/mobile-health-unit/).

The charity's nurse-led vehicle, supported since 2022 by Pfizer Healthcare Ireland, travels the country offering free heart health checks, including blood pressure and pulse checks as well as a lifestyle assessment. In 2024, 6,000 free heart health checks were given to communities and groups across 26 counties.

Researchers from South East Technological University (SETU) evaluated its effectiveness and found that dozens of patients needed further check-ups when the health check nurse identified signs of [high blood pressure or hypertension](https://irishheart.ie/how-to-keep-your-heart-healthy/blood-pressure/).

The 'silent killer' is a leading cause of cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death globally.

High blood pressure is often present without symptoms and the World Health Organisation estimates that 46% of adults have it but are unaware of it.

A sample of 300 men and women who used the Mobile Health Unit across Ireland showed, more than a fifth (22.1%) were found to have high blood pressure, while almost double that number (42.9%) were deemed to be higher than normal.

A worryingly high 39.5% reported having no prior awareness of their blood pressure levels and almost a quarter (23.2%) were signposted to their GP based on the Mobile Health Unit readings.

Six weeks later, 182 of participants completed a follow-up questionnaire over the phone, which also revealed that of those who were signposted to their doctor, 28.2% underwent additional testing recommended by their GP, such as using an ambulatory blood pressure monitor.

A total of 10.3% received a diagnosis of high blood pressure and began taking medication, while 2.6% went to the emergency department due to dangerously high blood pressure levels.

The Mobile Health Unit checks also inspired reported lifestyle changes among almost half, with 20.9% making [dietary improvements](https://irishheart.ie/how-to-keep-your-heart-healthy/healthy-eating/), almost 20% becoming more physically active, a further 1.1% [quit smoking](https://irishheart.ie/how-to-keep-your-heart-healthy/quit-smoking/) and the same proportion reduced or abstained from [alcohol](https://irishheart.ie/how-to-keep-your-heart-healthy/alcohol/).

Janis Morrissey, Director of Health Promotion, Information and Training with the Irish Heart Foundation said the findings underline the importance of the charity's work in identifying people at high risk of heart disease and stroke.

"The findings from the SETU report are crucial, as 80% of premature heart disease and stroke is preventable," she said.

"The Mobile Health Unit service plays a vital role in identifying people at risk of heart disease and stroke.

"Everyone aged over 30 should get checked every five years and a GP can assess risk levels and may advise more

frequent checks.

“We rely on the generosity of the general public and corporates like Pfizer Healthcare Ireland to be able to provide the Mobile Health Unit service. Without our fundraisers, donors and sponsors we would not have the Mobile Health Unit and the outcome for so many people would be very different.

Country Manager of Pfizer Healthcare Ireland, Deb Mangone said: “Pfizer is delighted to support this worthwhile initiative.”

For more information on the Mobile Health Unit, visit [here \(https://irishheart.ie/your-health/our-health-programmes/healthy-communities/mobile-health-unit/\)](https://irishheart.ie/your-health/our-health-programmes/healthy-communities/mobile-health-unit/).

Region

Nationwide

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