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Friday, August 7, 2026

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No. 63,796

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Hospital wait time figures 'very stark'

■ Near 9,500 people aged 75 or above waited over 24 hours for bed

Niamh Griffin
Health Correspondent

Almost 9,500 people aged 75 or over waited longer than 24 hours to get a hospital bed this year, as climate change-induced heatstroke now becomes a factor that health chiefs must grapple with.

The HSE said seasonal factors can affect numbers, "including health complications of heat stress", but that no single factor is driving the summer surge that has led to what advocates call "stark" and "hugely concerning" figures from hospital emergency departments so far this year.

It has warned of risks of "dehydration, heat exhaustion, and heatstroke" — especially for older people and other vulnerable groups. Met Éireann said July was the second hottest since 1900.

The HSE said: "Factors driving emergency department attendances and waiting times are complex. Seasonal factors may influence attendances, including health complications of heat stress, but as a specific factor, this is difficult to disaggregate from data available."

Overall, 27,791 patients spent more than 24 hours in an emergency department between January and June. In addition, 58,894 left without being seen, including 10,650 for May alone.

However, delays facing older patients have raised serious concerns.

In June at Cork University Hospital, some 231 over-75s spent longer than 24 hours in the emergency department. At University Hospital Kerry, it stood at 31.

In University Hospital Limerick, 59 older patients waited that long. University Hospital Waterford was one of only four hospitals without patients in this category in June. The highest was St Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin, which saw 178.

Studies repeatedly show negative effects from these delays, including the risk of increased mortality and death.

Camille Loftus, head of advocacy and public affairs at Age Action, said: "It is a horrendous situation for anybody, but if you're older and unwell, that's an even more difficult situation to manage."

"Those figures are really concerning, and it's obviously really concerning for the staff too."

She said there is "clearly a need for more beds" and called for more support for preventative medicine programmes.

"We'd like to see that because it will help reduce admissions but it's never going to eliminate them," she said. "And 24 hours is an enormous length of time to wait."

The data was released to Sinn Féin health spokesman David Cullinane, who said the figures are "very stark". He warned: "This is not just a winter crisis anymore. The figures for older people are especially worrying. Almost 9,500 patients aged 75 and over waited more than 24 hours."

"These are often frail and vulnerable patients who should not be left sitting in an emergency department for that length of time."

Nearly 59,000 people leaving an emergency department without being seen "should be a major warning sign for the Government", he said, adding: "People do not leave an emergency department for no reason. In many cases, they have been waiting too long and feel they have no other option."

At Mercy University Hospital, between 203 and 318 people left early every month. Similarly, at Tipperary University Hospital, between 143 and 222 people left. At University Hospital Waterford, between 225 and 400 left monthly.

"The staff are doing their best in very difficult conditions," Mr Cullinane said.

He called for Government funding for published plans for "thousands of new hospital beds", saying "announcing beds is not the same as building and staffing them".

A spokesperson for HSE Dublin and South-East said its hospitals saw just over 10,000 more patients this year so far.

She linked the pressures to more older patients, seasonal illness, and "higher numbers of acute injuries and illnesses".

In contrast, at Children's Health Ireland, summer activity is as expected, despite a 2.7% jump in numbers compared to last year.

Its patient time in emergency departments is "improving all the time", and it has seen a significant decline in the number of children leaving early.

Cúl Hand Luke



Luke Montgomery, Conor McKeown, and Shay Daly get ready to save a shot on goal during the Kiltha Óg Cúl Camp in Castlemartyr, Co Cork, yesterday.

Picture: Howard Crowdy

€59.6bn tax revenue in first six months of year

Louise Burne
Political Correspondent

Tánaiste and finance minister Simon Harris has warned that Budget 2027 will have to "strike a careful balance", despite exchequer return figures showing tax revenues rising to nearly €60bn for the first seven months of the year.

The returns published yesterday confirmed that tax revenue to the end of July stood at €59.6bn, up €1.6bn (2.8%) on 2025.

However, last year's figures included money paid to the State following a ruling from the Court of Justice of the European Union,

compelling Apple to repay €13bn in corporation tax.

When the Apple money is excluded from the 2025 figures, 2026's tax receipts are up €3.4bn (6%) on last year.

Excise duty receipts for July amounted to €600m. This was down by €8m on last year, as excise cuts on petrol and diesel continue.

However, the Government has said these cuts may be unwound gradually from September.

When asked yesterday in Belfast whether the plans to reinstate the excise duty will go ahead given the ongoing uncertainty in the Middle East, the Taoiseach promised that "the forthcoming

budget will focus on cost of living".

"Through taxation measures, we intend to reduce the burden of income tax on workers," Micheál Martin said.

"The cost of childcare is an area where we can help to reduce the burden of cost of living on people, as well as the disability sector, and working on initiatives like the cost of disability."

The Taoiseach said the exchequer returns showed Ireland had a "robust economy", that provides a "certain degree of resilience, notwithstanding the very uncertain world out there that we are living in".

However, Mr Harris said that Budget 2027, which will be announced on October 6, will have to feature balance.

"In a deeply uncertain world, it is more important than ever that we maintain a sensible and sustainable approach to fiscal policy."

"Budget 2027 will strike a careful balance: we will deliver a package that will help workers keep more of their earnings, while continuing to invest in our public services and critical infrastructure," he said.

Mr Harris also said that the Government must continue to save money into its long-term savings accounts and "run surpluses".

The exchequer returns confirmed a deficit of €600m was recorded to the end of July. This compares to a €4.1bn surplus this time last year. However, this was largely inflated by the Apple judgement money.

There have also been "higher transfers" to the Future Ireland Fund and the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund (ICNF), which the Department of Finance argued "largely" explains the deficit.

The summer economic statement, published last month, commits to €8.5bn in new measures in Budget 2027. This included a €1.5bn tax package.

'Night of hope' vigil for injured boxer

Manon Gilbart

A "night of hope" community vigil is set to take place in Limerick this evening to support local boxer Lee Reeves, who is still in a "critical but stable" condition in hospital after being rushed there following a knockout blow in a bout last weekend.

Mr Reeves, aged 31, from Roxboro in the city, was stretched from the ring after being knocked out by Gary Cully in their BUI Celtic super-lightweight title bout at Dublin's 3Arena last Saturday night.

Mr Reeves underwent surgery before being placed in an induced coma. He has been in Beaumont Hospital in the capital for the week.

The vigil, which will take place at Honan's Quay from 7pm, has been set up by Limerick Treaty Suicide Prevention — a patrol group with which Mr Reeves has volunteered since 2017, having lost his mother

Cathy to suicide in 2015.

Limerick Treaty Suicide Prevention has invited the people of the city to show up for the boxer, who has "dedicated countless hours to helping others".

"He has always been there for those who needed support, compassion, and hope," the group said.

"Now it's our turn to stand beside him. This will be a community vigil, a chance to light a candle, reflect, and show Lee and his family that they are not facing this journey alone. Everyone is welcome."

Volunteer David O'Mahony told the *Irish Examiner*: "Lee has given so much to our city; now it's time we give something back."

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Fifa's backing of Infantino 'means nothing', says Uefa

Nick Ames and Matt Hughes

European football governing body Uefa has doubled down on its threat to boycott Fifa-run competitions and reiterated its loss of confidence in Gianni Infantino's presidency.

Uefa said Fifa's public backing of Mr Infantino on Wednesday night "changes nothing" and explained it had not been provided with certainty that repeats of the past nine days' crisis will not occur.

Last week, Uefa's 55 member associations agreed to boycott Fifa tournaments if Mr Infantino did not withdraw his Fifa Forward Enterprise plan that would see 20% of future World Cups sold off to private investors, namely the brother of Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, among others.



Gianni Infantino's leadership has been called into question.

Although the scheme was scrapped last Friday, Uefa said the terms necessary to avert the boycott have not been met.

"Uefa's associations were very clear about the conditions attached to their non-participation in Fifa competitions," a statement read.

"First, the proposals to sell off the major competitions had to be withdrawn, and secondly, assurances have to be made that such attempts to disfigure the game

in this way will never be made again."

It leaves the turmoil enveloping football's governance no closer to being resolved. If no accord is reached before the U20 Women's World Cup, which begins in Poland on September 5, that would be the first tournament subjected to a Uefa-led boycott.

Ireland's senior women's football team is due to take to the field in a World Cup play-off against Kazakhstan in October, before a final against either Belgium or Poland before the end of the year. The Women's World Cup is to be played in Brazil next year.

Uefa's repeat of its boycott threat was followed by the release of another strongly-worded statement from global players' union Fifpro, which condemned Fifa and Mr Infantino for their alleged abuse of power.

Oscar-winning actress was a 'free spirit'

Gráinne Ní Aodha

Brendan Gleeson, Jim Sheridan, Kevin Bakhurst, Brendan O'Connor, Ray D'Arcy, and costume designer Joan Bergin were among the mourners at the funeral Mass of Oscar-

winning actress Brenda Fricker in Dublin yesterday.

Ms Fricker was remembered as a mischievous and kind "free spirit" who was happiest in the historic area of Dublin where she lived.

Locals applauded as her wicker coffin arrived at St

Catherine's Church on Meath St, adorned with a green cloth bearing a gold harp and a coat of arms of Dublin. The funeral was followed by a private burial.

Ms Fricker, aged 81, died in Our Lady's Hospice in Dublin's Harold's Cross on July 16 after a period of ill health.

Mourners heard that she wanted her funeral to be "no fuss" with "no grand display", and full of laughter.

Her friend Liz Duffy, described as "her rock", said: "Please, please be happy for

her, because that's what she wanted — smiles and laughter and funny stories."

Jailhouse Rock was played as Ms Fricker's coffin was carried out of the church at the end of the service, prompting some people who had gathered outside to dance and sing along.

Mourners heard that while Ms Fricker won a best supporting actress Oscar for her performance as Bridget Fagan Brown in 1989's *My Left Foot*, the trophy was not what mattered to her.

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Brenda Fricker died on July 16, after a period of ill health.

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