

# One in five witness someone collapse who requires CPR but the majority do not act

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An estimated one in five adults in the UK witness someone collapse who needs immediate CPR, yet the majority of people do not act, according to new research funded by the British Heart Foundation.

The surprising findings have been released today on Restart a Heart Day - an annual day to increase awareness of the importance of CPR. This year, more than 150,000 young people across the UK will be trained in CPR in the largest ever event of its kind.

Cardiac arrest [survival rates](#) in the UK have remained stubbornly low and a collaboration of leading organisations are calling for all young people to be trained in CPR to help save more lives.

The BHF, Resuscitation Council (UK), St John Ambulance, British Red Cross, Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) and all the UK NHS ambulance services along with Fire & Rescue services are working together to address this.

Researchers at the University of Warwick carried out a survey of 2,000 people across the country to find out how likely people are to witness a life-threatening cardiac arrest. In addition to the vast numbers of people who have seen someone suffer a cardiac arrest, they also found that people were nearly three times more likely to perform CPR if they had received training (1). This highlights the importance of learning CPR to help improve survival rates.

Survival rates for out of hospital cardiac arrest in the UK are still worryingly low with less than one in ten people surviving. The BHF estimates that 10,000 people die every year in the UK (2) as rates of bystander CPR are as low as 39% (3) in some parts of the country. This is significantly worse than other places such as the Netherlands (66%), Seattle (69%), Victoria, Australia (69%) and Norway (73%) (1).

Every minute without CPR or defibrillation can reduce a person's chance of surviving a cardiac arrest by around ten per cent (4). If CPR is taught more widely, it's estimated that thousands of lives could be saved every year (6).

A survey conducted by the BHF (5) revealed that an overwhelming 89% of respondents also believe that CPR should be taught in all schools in the UK. The same survey showed that there is a significant reluctance to perform CPR with 40% of respondents stating that they lacked the skills and knowledge to perform CPR.

On and around 16 October, events will be taking place across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, in a bid to create over 150,000 new young lifesavers on Restart a Heart Day.

Prof Gavin Perkins, Professor of Critical Care Medicine at the University of Warwick, who led the research, said:

"Our research shows just how important it is for everyone to learn CPR. It is staggering to think that 1 in 5 of us will at some point have the opportunity to save a life by giving CPR.

"CPR is a vital step in the chain of survival after a cardiac arrest. The chance of surviving is almost zero if people collapse and receive no bystander CPR until the emergency services arrive. Thousands of deaths could be prevented if more people learn CPR."

Simon Gillespie, Chief Executive at the British Heart Foundation, said:

"CPR is the difference between life and death for thousands of people every year in the UK who suffer a cardiac arrest. Every second counts, and it simply isn't enough to hope that someone who knows CPR is present. We need everyone to learn this life-saving skill to give them the confidence to step in and give CPR when someone collapses after a [cardiac arrest](#). That's why we are urging secondary schools across the UK to apply for our free training kits and help create a Nation of Lifesavers."

Joe Mulligan, head of first aid education at The British Red Cross said:

"We want all young people to feel confident and willing to help when faced with a first aid emergency. Learning first aid helps to increase confidence levels and we believe it's a life skill everyone should have."

"Ultimately the British Red Cross would like everyone to have the opportunity to learn first aid throughout their lives, starting at school, so that a generation of people can be equipped with the skills they need to help in an emergency."

"Our free teaching resources and workshops are designed to give [young people](#) the skills, confidence and willingness to act in an emergency."

Sir Bruce Keogh, Medical Director for NHS England said:"When one in five people witness someone collapsing who clearly needs CPR but the majority don't feel able to help, it's time to act. Teaching CPR to school children equips them with the knowledge that will ensure they can act in times of need. Empowering a young person with such a skill will allow them to take control in such a situation and possibly ultimately save a life."

There are more than 30,000 out of hospital cardiac arrests across the UK every year but less than one in ten people survive. Mandatory training of all secondary school children in CPR would improve this rate of survival.

The BHF's Call Push Rescue CPR training kit is free for eligible secondary schools in the UK. Accredited by The PSHE Association for use in PSHE and PSE lessons, the kit comprises quality training equipment and resources needed to teach children life saving CPR skills.

**More information:** 1. Perkins et al. Attitudes to CPR and Public Access Defibrillation: a survey of the UK public. Resuscitation, 2017;118:e39 [www.resuscitationjournal.com/a... \(17\)30428-8/abstract](http://www.resuscitationjournal.com/article/S0950-2688(17)30428-8/abstract)

2. Rajagopal S., et al.Characteristics of patients who are not resuscitate in out of hospital cardiac arrest and opportunities to improve community response to cardiac arrest. University of Warwick. Resuscitation. 2016 Dec;109:110-115 [DOI: 10.1016/j.resuscitation.2016.09.014](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resuscitation.2016.09.014)

3. Hawkes C, Booth S, Ji C, Brace-McDonnell SJ, Whittington A, Mapstone J, et al.Epidemiology and outcomes from out-of-hospital cardiac arrests in England.Resuscitation 2017;110:133-40. [DOI: 10.1016/j.resuscitation.2016.10.030](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resuscitation.2016.10.030).

4. Philips (2013) Chain of Survival - Timing is everything

5. YouGov Survey - Figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 4306 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 14th - 18th September 2017. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

6. BHF estimate comparing survival rates seen in the UK with those reported in Stavanger, Norway (Linder TW et al. Good outcome in every

fourth resuscitation attempt is achievable. Resuscitation 2011.)

Provided by University of Warwick

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