

‘It’s not just the wealthy, they’re very normal people’ – demand for full facelifts has surged since pandemic struck, study shows

‘People are doing a lot more video calls and so everyone is seeing their face more,’ says cosmetic surgeon Cormac Joyce



Cosmetic surgeon Cormac Joyce said the facelift market in Ireland is a ‘very secretive’ one. Picture by Tony Gavin

Niamh Horan

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The demand in Ireland for full facelifts has increased significantly since the pandemic struck, according to one of the country’s leading cosmetic surgeons.

Cormac Joyce, who works as a full-time cosmetic surgeon, conducted the research alongside fellow surgeon Conor Sugrue on behalf of the Irish Association of Plastic Surgeons (IAPS). The study is the first of its kind in Ireland.

According to the study, 89 full facelifts were carried out across Ireland in 2019. That figure increased hugely in 2022, with Mr Joyce personally carrying out 223 full facelifts last year alone.

Speaking to the *Sunday Independent* this weekend, he said: “The aim of our 2019 study was to find the number of facelifts carried out by plastic surgeons on the specialist register here so that we could get a much clearer picture of what is happening.”

The data was collected by contacting the private secretaries of facelift surgeons as well as theatre managers in private hospitals who retain the number performed via their logs.

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“They can go home straight away with no drains, bulky dressings, stitches to come out, and less swelling. The procedure takes between two-and-a-half and four hours and, on average, the woman is ‘restaurant ready’ in a week.”

Mr Joyce also attributes the increase in demand for facelifts to the so-called ‘Zoom boom’.

“People are looking at their reflection a lot more, they are doing a lot more video calls and so everyone is seeing their face more,” he said.



Of the profile of his clients who book the procedure, 2pc are men, while 60pc come from outside Dublin. His oldest patient was a 92-year-old woman.

The market for facelifts in Ireland, he said, is “very secretive”.

“Some women don’t tell their husbands. I had a woman in last week who told her husband she was having dental work. Some tell their friends, some are guinea pigs for their friends — and then sometimes you’ll find when one gets it done, they’re all in.

“I had three sisters in last week. The mothers of either a groom or bride-to be also account for a huge proportion of clients.”

Mr Joyce, who trained in the Bella Vou cosmetic plastic surgery clinic in Tunbridge Wells, England, has also noticed a different attitude among Irish clientele.



“Irish people are adamant that they don’t want to be pulled like Nancy Reagan or Joan Rivers. They only want a ‘refreshed’ look. The goal is for friends to say ‘you’re looking great’ –but then they’re not quite able to put their finger on the reason why.”

He dismissed the idea that patients are predominantly wealthy, describing them as “very normal people”.

“I often book video calls with patients initially, and one guy was a 61-year-old farmer from Cork. He pops up on the screen in a field with a dirty face and he was booked in for a facelift. I asked him what his wife thought about it, and he looked at me like I had 10 heads and said, ‘she made the appointment’.”

After a festive break, he expects to be hard at it again in a few days’ time: “People want to be ready in time for Christmas, then I have a lull from December 16. But from January 3, it’s just boom — the appointments are off again.”

According to figures from the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons (ISAPS), the number of facelifts in the UK in 2019 was 7,377. The UK had 1,077 fully qualified plastic surgeons in 2019, whereas Ireland had approximately 50.

The population of the UK in 2019 was 66.84 million, meaning one person in every 9,060 there had a facelift. The Irish population in 2019 was 4.93 million and Mr Joyce’s figures showed one person in every 55,438 had a facelift.

