

Statistical bulletin

Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus (COVID-19) infection in the UK: 1 June 2022

Estimates of the prevalence of self-reported long COVID and associated activity limitation, using UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey data.

Contact:
Daniel Ayoubkhani, Piotr
Pawelek
health.data@ons.gov.uk
+44 1633 455825

Release date:
1 June 2022

Next release:
7 July 2022

Table of contents

1. [Main points](#)
2. [Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus infection in the UK data](#)
3. [Measuring the data](#)
4. [Related links](#)

1 . Main points

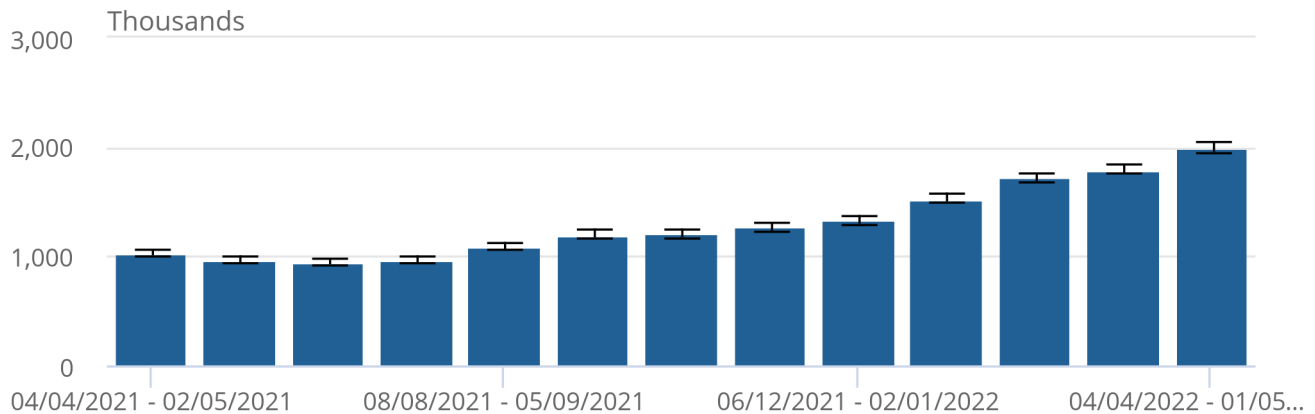
- An estimated 2.0 million people living in private households in the UK (3.1% of the population) were experiencing self-reported long COVID (symptoms continuing for more than four weeks after the first suspected coronavirus (COVID-19) infection that were not explained by something else) as of 1 May 2022 (see Figure 1).
- Of people with self-reported long COVID, 442,000 (22%) first had (or suspected they had) COVID-19 less than 12 weeks previously, 1.4 million people (72%) at least 12 weeks previously, 826,000 (42%) at least one year previously and 376,000 (19%) at least two years previously.
- Of people with self-reported long COVID, 593,000 (30%) first had (or suspected they had) COVID-19 before Alpha became the main variant; this figure was 239,000 (12%) in the Alpha period, 427,000 (21%) in the Delta period, and 619,000 (31%) in the Omicron period.
- Long COVID symptoms adversely affected the day-to-day activities of 1.4 million people (71% of those with self-reported long COVID), with 398,000 (20%) reporting that their ability to go about their day-to-day activities had been "limited a lot".
- Fatigue continued to be the most common symptom reported as part of individuals' experience of long COVID (55% of those with self-reported long COVID), followed by shortness of breath (32%), a cough (23%), and muscle ache (23%).
- As a proportion of the UK population, the prevalence of self-reported long COVID was greatest in people aged 35 to 69 years, females, people living in more deprived areas, those working in social care, teaching and education or health care, and those with another activity-limiting health condition or disability.
- The estimates presented in this analysis relate to self-reported long COVID, as experienced by study participants who responded to a representative survey, rather than clinically diagnosed, ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 or post-COVID-19 syndrome in the full population.

Figure 1: 2.0 million people were experiencing self-reported long COVID as of 1 May 2022

Estimated number of people living in private households with self-reported long COVID of any duration, UK: four-week periods ending 2 May 2021 to 1 May 2022

Figure 1: 2.0 million people were experiencing self-reported long COVID as of 1 May 2022

Estimated number of people living in private households with self-reported long COVID of any duration, UK: four-week periods ending 2 May 2021 to 1 May 2022



Source: Office for National Statistics – Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (CIS)

Notes:

1. Estimates relate to self-reported long COVID, as experienced by study participants, rather than clinically diagnosed ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 or post COVID-19 syndrome. Study participants were asked to respond to the following question: "Would you describe yourself as having 'long COVID', that is, you are still experiencing symptoms more than four weeks after you first had COVID-19, that are not explained by something else?"
2. Estimates include people living in private households. They do not include those in communal establishments such as halls of residence, prisons, schools, hospitals, or care homes.
3. [Estimates for the four-week period 6 February to 6 March 2021](#) are also available.

If you are worried about new or ongoing symptoms four or more weeks after having COVID-19, there are resources available to help. The [NHS webpage on the long-term effects of coronavirus](#) and the [NHS Your COVID Recovery website](#) has information that can help you to understand what has happened and what you might expect as part of your recovery. The time it takes to recover from COVID-19 is different for everyone. The length of your recovery is not necessarily related to the severity of your initial illness, or whether you were in hospital.

This is analysis of new, recently collected data. Our understanding of it and its quality will improve over time. Long COVID is an emerging phenomenon that is not yet fully understood. These are [Experimental Statistics](#), which are statistics that are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed.

More about coronavirus

- Find the latest on [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) in the UK](#).
- [Explore the latest coronavirus data](#) from the ONS and other sources.
- View [all coronavirus data](#).
- Find out how we are [working safely in our studies and surveys](#).

2 . Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus infection in the UK data

[Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection in the UK](#)

Dataset | Published 1 June 2022

Estimates of the prevalence and characteristics of people with self-reported long COVID and associated activity limitation, using UK Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey (CIS) data.

3 . Measuring the data

This analysis was based on 296,868 responses to our [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey \(CIS\)](#) collected over the four-week period ending 1 May 2022, weighted to represent people aged two years and over living in private households in the UK. Self-reported long COVID was defined as symptoms persisting for more than four weeks after the first suspected COVID-19 infection that were not explained by something else. Parents and carers answered the survey questions on behalf of children aged under 12 years.

Date of first (suspected) COVID-19 infection was taken to be the earliest of:

- the date of first positive test for COVID-19 during study follow-up
- the date of first self-reported positive test for COVID-19 outside of study follow-up
- the date of first suspected COVID-19 infection, as reported by the participant

Those with an unknown date of first (suspected) COVID-19 infection are in the estimates for "any duration", but not in duration specific estimates.

Of the 9,836 participants who described themselves as having long COVID in the latest four-week period, 7,117 (72%) had previously received a positive test (swabs for COVID-19 infection or blood test for COVID-19 antibodies), either during CIS follow-up visits, or outside of the study. The remaining 2,719 (28%) had never received or reported a positive COVID-19 test. This percentage was highest in participants who first had (or suspected they had) COVID-19 at least two years previously (37%), which was before the introduction of national testing programmes.

Various breakdowns were changed in our previous [Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus infection bulletin](#). These breakdowns have been continued in this publication. Notably, the reported breakdowns by variant period represent the percentage of people with self-reported long COVID in the current four-week reference period who were first infected (or suspected they were infected) during each of the variant periods. The breakdowns do not provide estimates of the likelihood of developing long COVID if infected with each variant. The estimates of the likelihood of developing long COVID symptoms after first infection compatible with the Delta or Omicron variants are provided in our [Self-reported long COVID after infection with the Omicron variant in the UK release](#).

The strengths and limitations of this analysis are described in a previous [Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus infection bulletin](#). The survey questions relating to self-reported long COVID can be found in Section F of the enrolment and Section D of the follow-up [CIS questionnaires](#). See Tables 2a to 2f of our [technical dataset](#) accompanying the latest Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey statistical bulletin for survey response rates.

4 . Related links

[Self-reported long COVID after infection with the Omicron variant in the UK: 6 May 2022](#)

Bulletin | Released 6 May 2022

The likelihood of reporting long COVID symptoms four weeks after a first coronavirus (COVID-19) infection compatible with the Omicron BA.1 or Omicron BA.2 variants compared with the Delta variant, using data from the COVID-19 Infection Survey.

[COVID-19 Infection Survey: methods and further information](#)

Methodology article | Last updated 7 February 2022

Information on the methods used to collect the data, process it, and calculate the statistics produced from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest insights](#)

Interactive tool | Updated as and when data become available

Explore the latest data and trends about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other official sources.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey: characteristics of people testing positive for COVID-19 in England](#)

Bulletin | Released fortnightly

Characteristics of people testing positive for COVID-19 from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey: technical data](#)

Dataset | Released fortnightly

Technical and methodological data from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland.

