

Statistical bulletin

Prevalence of ongoing symptoms following coronavirus (COVID-19) infection in the UK: 2 September 2021

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

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1 . Main points

- An estimated 970,000 people living in private households in the UK (1.5% of the population) were experiencing self-reported “long COVID” (symptoms persisting for more than four weeks after the first suspected COVID-19 infection that were not explained by something else) at 1 August 2021.
- 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.
- Of people with self-reported long COVID, 817,000 (84%) first had (or suspected they had) COVID-19 at least 12 weeks previously, and 384,000 (40%) first had (or suspected they had) COVID-19 at least one year previously.
- Symptoms adversely affected the day-to-day activities of 643,000 people (66% of those with self-reported long COVID), with 188,000 (19%) reporting that their ability to undertake their day-to-day activities had been “limited a lot”.
- Fatigue was the most common symptom reported as part of individuals' experience of long COVID (58% of those with self-reported long COVID), followed by shortness of breath (42%), muscle ache (32%), and difficulty concentrating (31%).
- As a proportion of the UK population, prevalence of self-reported long COVID was greatest in people aged 35 to 69 years, females, people living in the most deprived areas, those working in health or social care, and those with another activity-limiting health condition or disability.

If you are worried about new or ongoing symptoms four or more weeks after having COVID-19, there are resources available to help: see the [NHS webpage on the long-term effects of coronavirus](#) and the [NHS Your COVID Recovery](#) website, which 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, and 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, and our understanding of it and its quality will improve over time. Long COVID is an emerging phenomenon that is not yet fully understood. The estimates presented in this release are [experimental statistics](#), which are a series of statistics that are in the testing phase and not yet fully developed.

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 2 September 2021

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

3 . Measuring the data

This analysis was based on 320,825 responses to the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey](#) (CIS) collected over the four-week period ending 1 August 2021. The CIS covers people aged two years or 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 coronavirus infection that were not explained by something else. Parents and carers answered survey questions on behalf of children aged under 12 years.

The strengths and limitations of this analysis are described in a [previous release](#). The survey questions relating to self-reported long COVID can be found in Section D of the [CIS questionnaire \(PDF, 494KB\)](#). See Tables 2a to 2f of the technical datasets accompanying the [latest Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Infection Survey statistical bulletin](#) for survey response rates.

4 . Related links

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

Methodology article | Last updated 24 August 2021

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

A round up of the latest data and trends about the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic from the ONS and other official sources.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest data and analysis](#)

Web page | Updated as and when data become available

Latest data and analysis on the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in the UK and its effect on the economy and society.

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

Article | Updated fortnightly

Characteristics of people testing positive for COVID-19 from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection Survey, including antibody data by UK country, and region and occupation for England.