

CDC estimates US COVID infections now close to 140 million

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The United States has had about 140 million COVID infections since the

start of the pandemic, new data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show.

That number is far higher than the 74.3 million [confirmed COVID-19 cases](#) nationwide as of Jan. 31.

The new findings are from the CDC's national antibody seroprevalence survey of blood tests for [antibodies](#) to the coronavirus triggered by infection, not by vaccination.

As of late January, about 43% of the U.S. population had been infected with the virus, the CDC said. That includes nearly 60% of children up to age 18, almost half of people ages 18-49, 37% of those ages 50-64, and 23% of those 65 and older, according to the CDC.

The highest seroprevalence rate was in Wisconsin (56.1%) while the lowest was in Vermont (17.8%).

"I think this reflects more exposure than immunity," Dr. Peter Hotez, dean of the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, told CNN. "I think what people should take from that is about half the country's been infected with COVID-19, which is pretty extraordinary itself."

The difference between the seroprevalence rate and the confirmed number of cases may be due to a large number of asymptomatic or mild cases of COVID-19 that are not spotted through testing, CNN reported. Also, many Americans have started relying on [at-home tests](#), and those results generally aren't included in CDC databases.

While the CDC seroprevalence data can reveal the number of people with antibodies, the presence of antibodies does not guarantee protection from reinfection and the data do not show people's levels of antibodies,

CNN reported.

"What the data doesn't tell us is: Are those [antibodies](#) high enough to actually protect against infection if the virus would come that person's way again?" Keri Althoff, an associate professor of epidemiology at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, told CNN.

"The COVID infections themselves have created a lot of immunity. How durable, how strong, what the duration of that immunity is, remains to be determined," Dr. William Schaffner, a professor in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, told CNN.

"What these data are designed to give us a sense of is: What's the magnitude of the issue? It's a little like looking at some mountains across a big plain," he added. "You can see where the mountains rise, where they peak and where they fall. You don't have to count every tree to get the big picture."

More information: Visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for more on [COVID infections](#).

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