

About 1 in 14 US adults have had long COVID

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One in every 14 American adults has suffered from long COVID, a new

federal survey has found.

About 7% of adults have ever had long COVID and more than 3% still have it, according to the 2022 National Health Interview Survey.

The survey, published Tuesday as an [NCHS Data Brief](#), also found that certain groups are more likely to develop long COVID—women, [young adults](#), the less wealthy and people living in rural areas or small towns.

Children have been much less likely to develop the syndrome, the survey found. A little more than 1% of all U.S. children have ever had long COVID, and about half a percent continue to have it.

Long COVID involves clusters of different symptoms that affect different parts of the body.

These symptoms can include "brain fog," [chronic fatigue](#), continuing cough, heart palpitations, headaches, difficulty sleeping, depression or anxiety.

Researchers remain in the dark about long COVID and how many people actually suffer lingering symptoms, said [Dr. Amesh Adalja](#), a senior scholar with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security.

"We are really still scratching the surface when it comes to long COVID," Adalja said. "We are still using very blunt tools and definitions and lack a diagnostic test."

It is thought that long COVID symptoms vary among people because it's caused by the different ways the coronavirus attacks different organ systems in the body—the brain versus the heart versus the lungs, for example.

"It may be the case that long COVID, which is an umbrella term, represents several different conditions. There are some hypotheses regarding cause which are being investigated currently, but there is much we do not know," Adalja said.

"We have some general ideas about who is at higher risk and some correlations with certain blood markers, but it will be some time before science and medicine have a clear understanding of what is a very nebulous condition," he added.

For the survey, the U.S. National Center for Health Statistics polled more than 27,600 adults and 7,400 children across the nation. Adults and children were asked if they had any symptoms lingering three months or longer that they did not have prior to their COVID infection.

Among adults, the survey found that:

- Women were more likely than men to ever have long COVID (9% versus 5%) or to have it currently (4% versus 2%)
- Adults ages 35-49 were most likely to ever have long COVID (9%) or have it currently (5%), compared with those 18 to 34 (7% and 3%), 50-64 (8% and 4%), and 65 and older (4% and 2%)
- Hispanic and white Americans were more likely than Asian or Black Americans to develop long COVID
- Wealthier families were less likely than middle-class and [poor families](#) to have a member with long COVID

The survey also found that adults living in [large cities](#) were less likely than those in [rural areas](#) or [small towns](#) to report long COVID—about 6% compared to nearly 8%.

"I think it is an interesting finding regarding the metropolitan size having

some correlation with long COVID," Adalja said. "I am curious as to what this is a marker for [timing of infection, timing of vaccination, presence of co-morbidities]."

However, Adalja said he was "not surprised by the fact that long COVID is less common in [children](#)."

The [children's survey](#) found that teens 12-17 were more likely than [younger children](#) to report long COVID, 2% compared to around 1%. As with women, girls were more likely than boys to develop long COVID.

It's been shown that vaccination does protect against long COVID, Adalja said.

"Data does exist that shows that long COVID is much more common in those who were unvaccinated when they contracted COVID," Adalja said. "This is one reason why everyone should have been vaccinated, even if they were not in a risk group for severe COVID."

More information: HealthDay has more about [COVID-19](#).

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