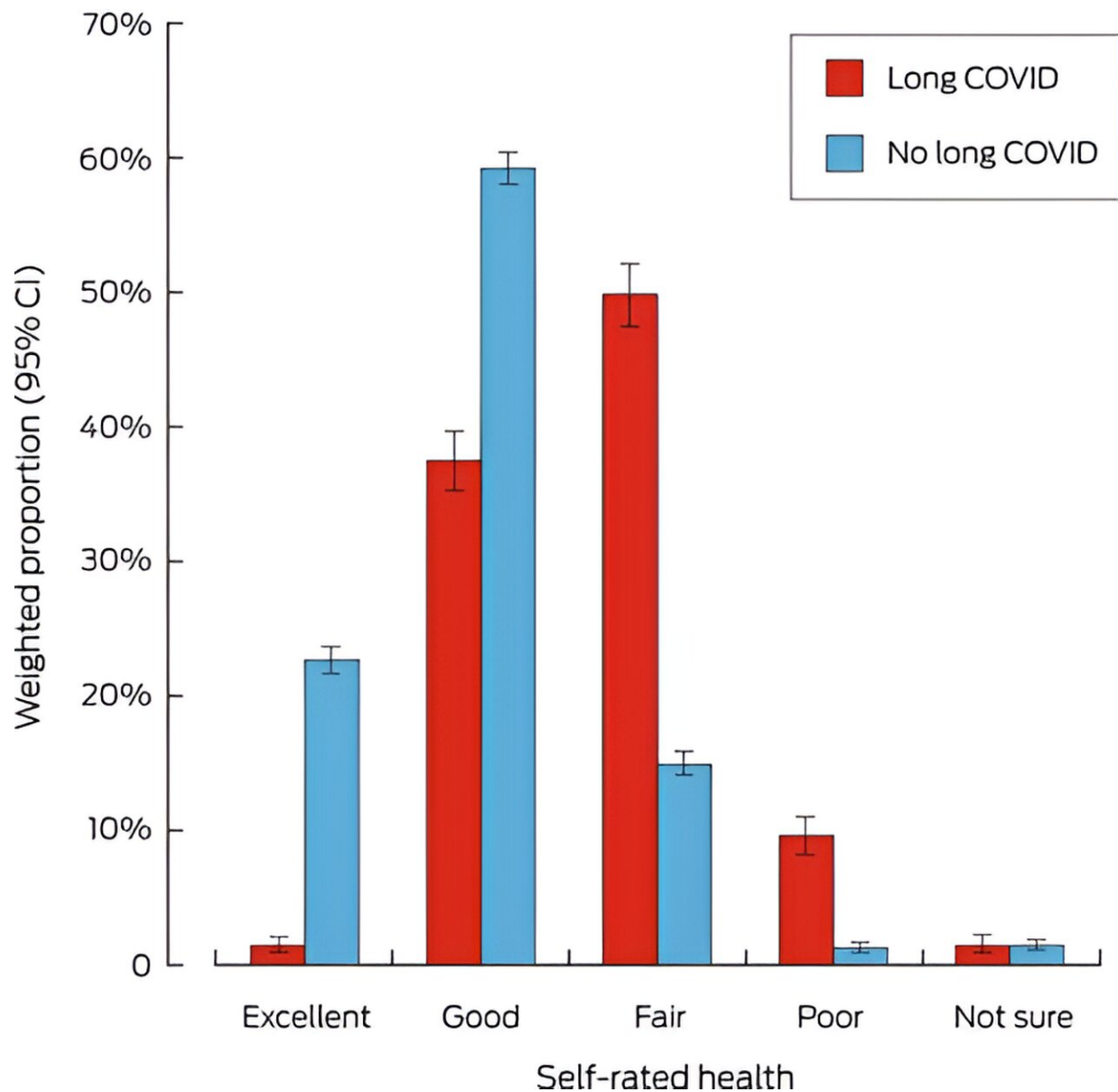


Almost one in five Australians are suffering from long COVID, finds study

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Self-reported health of adult Western Australian residents who responded to our long COVID survey, 14 October–1 November 2022 Total numbers of respondents: 2130 with long COVID, 9537 without long COVID. Credit: *Medical Journal of Australia* (2024). DOI: 10.5694/mja2.52256

A study of more than 11,000 Australians who tested positive to COVID-19 in 2022 has revealed almost 1 in 5 were still experiencing ongoing symptoms three months after their initial diagnosis, according to new research from The Australian National University (ANU).

The study was conducted in Western Australia (WA), with participants drawn from the almost 71,000 adults who tested positive to COVID-19 in WA between 16 July 2022 and 3 August 2022. The results are [published](#) in the *Medical Journal of Australia*.

Lead researcher, Dr. Mulu Woldegiorgis, said the results show the risk of developing long COVID from the omicron variant is higher than previously thought.

"It is more than double the prevalence reported in a review of Australian data from earlier in the pandemic, and higher than similar studies done in the U.K. and Canada," Dr. Woldegiorgis said.

"The risk of long COVID was greater for women and people aged 50 to 69, as well as those with pre-existing health conditions and people who'd had fewer vaccine doses."

The researchers found 90% of the study participants with long COVID reported experiencing multiple symptoms.

The most frequently reported symptom was tiredness and fatigue (70%),

followed by difficulty thinking or concentrating, or "brain fog," sleep problems and coughing.

A third of women with long COVID also reported changes in their menstrual cycle.

"More than a third of individuals with persistent long COVID—38%—had sought [medical care](#) in the month prior to the survey," Dr. Woldegiorgis said.

"This most frequently involved a visit to a GP, hospitalizations or trips to the [emergency department](#) were thankfully less common."

Most people with long COVID (64%) were able to fully return to work or study within a month of their infection, but 18% reported still not being well enough to do so three months after their infection.

"Further studies could help us better understand the duration and severity of long COVID and identify effective treatments," Dr. Woldegiorgis said.

"We are currently looking into a six-month follow up survey with this same group."

More information: Mulu Woldegiorgis et al, Long COVID in a highly vaccinated but largely unexposed Australian population following the 2022 SARS-CoV-2 Omicron wave: a cross-sectional survey, *Medical Journal of Australia* (2024). [DOI: 10.5694/mja2.52256](https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.52256)

Provided by Australian National University

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