

Report finds one-fifth of patients in areas of Northern England have suffered from long COVID

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Credit: Liza Summer from Pexels

New research led by Dr. Stephanie Scott found people in the North of England are among the worst affected by long COVID, which follows

patterns highlighting the devastating impact of COVID-19 across northern regions in comparison to southern areas.

Regional inequalities are evident in the North East and Yorkshire, where rates in the most deprived areas were 5.2% higher than in the less deprived areas.

The regions with the lowest rates were the South West (3.4%) and the South East (3.6%), which falls below the average for England at 4.4%.

The [report](#), published by Health Equity North, shows the alarming inequalities in long COVID rates and a clear North-South divide.

'Our research offers a glimpse into reality'

As part of the research, academics conducted interviews with participants who have experienced or continue to experience long COVID, and the findings showed the significant impact it has on the personal and [professional lives](#) of those with the condition.

Many of the participants involved in the research had been demoted, fired, forced to resign, or switched to part-time work because of long COVID, and upon investigation, only 3 out of 10 northern employers contacted offered a specific rehabilitation package to employees living with long COVID.

Dr. Stephanie Scott, lead author of the report and senior lecturer in public health at Newcastle University, said, "Long COVID is a complex condition that goes beyond physical and [mental symptoms](#), affecting other parts of people's lives including their sense of self and professional identity. This can then lead to feelings of social isolation.

"Currently, there is little evidence-based treatment for long COVID, and

the health system focuses on managing symptoms. This needs to change. Our research has offered a glimpse into the reality of what it is like to live with this often-debilitating condition and the knock-on effects it has on people's personal and professional lives.

"I hope that the evidence presented in this report cuts through to policymakers and gets the attention it deserves so more research into long COVID is funded, and so measures can be put into place that enable employers to better support their workforce with long COVID."

1.9 million people in England experienced long COVID symptoms

Long COVID encompasses physical, cognitive, and mental impairments, with brain fog, fatigue, breathlessness, low mood, and depression among the most common symptoms.

In England, 1.9 million people experienced self-reported long COVID symptoms as of March 2023, with 79% saying it had a negative impact on their day-to-day activities. One participant in the research even felt "surprised" to wake up the next morning, as it felt like they were experiencing stroke-like symptoms.

The findings have prompted calls for more research into long COVID and for the government to undertake a series of consultations with patients so they can better understand the condition and to implement care plans to facilitate rehabilitation and management of the condition.

More information: Navigating the Long Haul: Understanding Long Covid in Northern England: [www.healthequitynorth.co.uk/ap ...
EPORT-2024-FINAL.pdf](http://www.healthequitynorth.co.uk/ap...EPORT-2024-FINAL.pdf)

Provided by Newcastle University

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