COVID-19 recovery

25th June 2021

**Title**: New research shows 2 million people may have had long COVID

Department of Health & Social Care | REACT | 24th June 2021

Over 2 million people in England are thought to have had one or more COVID-19 symptoms lasting at least 12 weeks according to one of the largest studies of the virus.

The study is based on self-reported data from 508,707 adults aged 18 and above who took part in REACT-2 rounds 3 to 5 carried out between September 2020 and February 2021.

Around a fifth of those surveyed reported having had a COVID-19 symptom previously, with over a third reporting persistent symptoms lasting at least 12 weeks. Around a tenth of those with symptoms said they lasted at least 12 weeks and were severe.

The findings suggest prevalence of persistent symptoms, or long COVID, increases with age, with a 3.5% increase in likelihood in each decade of life. It shows long COVID is higher among women, people who are overweight or obese, who smoke, live in deprived areas, or had been admitted to hospital. Persistent COVID-19 symptoms were lower in people of Asian ethnicity.

Further detail: [New research shows 2 million people may have had long COVID](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-research-shows-2-million-people-may-have-had-long-covid)

Full report: [Persistent symptoms following SARS-CoV-2 infection in a random community sample of 508,707 people](https://spiral.imperial.ac.uk/bitstream/10044/1/89844/2/REACT_long_covid_paper_FINAL.pdf)

See also:

[Third of people infected have long term symptoms](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1626) | BMJ

[Up to one in three people who have had COVID-19 report long COVID symptoms](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/up-to-one-in-three-people-who-have-had-covid-19-report-long-covid-symptoms/27979) | NIHR

[Long Covid: More than two million in England may have suffered, study suggests](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-57584295) | BBC News

**Title:** Up to one in six people with COVID-19 report long COVID symptoms

Kings College London | 24th June 2021

The CONVALESCENCE study, led by researchers at UCL and King’s College London, analysed anonymised data from 1.2 million primary health records across the UK, together with data from 45,096 participants in 10 population-based cohort studies.

The study found that one in six (17%) middle-aged people who reported having had COVID-19 also reported long COVID symptoms, with this figure falling to one in 13 (7.8%) among younger adults. Using a stricter definition of long COVID as symptoms impacting routine daily activities, the researchers found that it affected 1.2% of 20-year-olds who had COVID-19, but 4.8% of people in middle age.

The preliminary findings also found that women were 50% more likely to report long COVID than men. In addition, the risk of long COVID was linked to poorer pre-pandemic mental and physical health and was associated with a previous diagnosis of asthma. Non-white ethnic minority groups had lower odds of reporting long COVID (about 70% less likely).

Further detail: [Up to one in six people with COVID-19 report long COVID symptoms](https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/up-to-one-in-six-people-covid-19-long-covid-symptoms)

**Title:** Funding boost for young people’s mental health services

NHS England | 22nd June 2021

Children and young people will benefit from a cash injection to mental health services which includes addressing the increasing demand for the treatment of eating disorders. An extra £40 million has been allocated to address the COVID impact on children and young people’s mental health and enhance services across the country.

Full detail: [Funding boost for young people’s mental health services](https://www.england.nhs.uk/2021/06/funding-boost-for-young-peoples-mental-health-services/)

**Title:** Future of covid-19 vaccine pricing: lessons from influenza

BMJ | 2021; 373: n1467 | 22nd June 2021

This BMJ analysis reports that routine use of covid-19 vaccines could strain health budgets if pricing follows the pattern seen with influenza vaccines.

Evidence is emerging that the novel coronavirus will continue to evolve and that immunity from vaccines is likely to be time limited, requiring use of booster doses or modified vaccines. Bilateral bulk purchasing agreements between individual countries and manufacturers have allowed vaccines to be procured at lower prices and dispensed to patients without charges. After the pandemic, however, the future pricing landscape of covid-19 vaccines remains unclear.

Multiple parallels exist between covid-19 and influenza vaccines with respect to their development history, market, and administration. If the pattern observed with influenza vaccines is repeated, higher prices for covid-19 vaccines set by companies in the future would have important implications for health spending, public health programme budgets, and insurance premiums.

Full detail: [Future of covid-19 vaccine pricing: lessons from influenza](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1467)

**Title:** Global covid-19 vaccine rollout and safety surveillance—how to keep pace

BMJ | 2021; 373: n1416 | 18th June 2021

This BMJ analysis argues that an agile internationally harmonised surveillance system is essential to maintain safety and trust in vaccines.

Key messages:

* The development of rare, serious adverse events after covid-19 vaccination highlights the critical importance of robust vaccine safety surveillance systems
* The widespread rollout of covid-19 vaccines creates an opportunity for international harmonisation of pharmacoepidemiological designs, data, and safety endpoints
* Enhanced active vaccine safety surveillance systems could overcome existing barriers in ascertaining vaccine exposure and adverse events at a population level
* National regulatory authorities should establish formal collaborations across regions to promote sharing of safety data

Full detail: [Global covid-19 vaccine rollout and safety surveillance—how to keep pace](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1416)

**Title:** How can we manage covid fatigue?

BMJ | 2021; 373: n1610 | 24th June 2021

Up to 376 000 people in the UK have reported ongoing symptoms more than 12 months after contracting the virus, with persistent mental and physical fatigue a troubling reality for many. Most people make a good recovery, but the wide range of covid related illness and organ damage weave a complex prognostic picture. This presents clinicians with a range of challenges.

This article asks what’s the long term outlook after covid? and what’s the prognosis for health systems and staff struggling with covid pressures, waiting lists, and stretched resources?

Full detail: [How can we manage covid fatigue?](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1610)

**Title:** Chronic fatigue syndrome and long covid: moving beyond the controversy

BMJ | 2021; 373: n1559 | 24th June 2021

Many patients with “long” covid are experiencing extreme fatigue, a situation that has re-polarised approaches to treatment and rehabilitation, as this BMJ Feature reports.

Full detail: [Chronic fatigue syndrome and long covid: moving beyond the controversy](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1559)

**Title:** Did social factors buffer against the effect of adversities on self-harm during the COVID-19 pandemic? A longitudinal analysis of 49,227 UK adults

medRxiv | 22nd June 2021

There is concern that the COVID-19 pandemic as well as its economic aftermath will have a negative impact on suicides, although this is not inevitable. This is hypothesised to occur via reductions in protective factors such as social connectedness and increases in risk factors such as domestic abuse and unemployment.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic is having a detrimental impact on a number of known risk factors for suicide, little is known about how social factors such as social support, social contact, and loneliness may interact with these risk factors to exacerbate or buffer their impact on self-harm thoughts and behaviours. The aim of this study is therefore to establish which social factors are associated with changes over time in self-harm thoughts and behaviours in a large sample of UK adults across the first 59 weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The findings of this study suggest the importance of the quality of social support, rather than the mere presence of contact, is important for reducing the likelihood of self-harm behaviours in the context of COVID-19 pandemic-related adversity and worry.

*Note: This article is a preprint and has not been certified by peer review. It reports new medical research that has yet to be evaluated and so should not be used to guide clinical practice.*

Full article: [Did social factors buffer against the effect of adversities on self-harm during the COVID-19 pandemic? A longitudinal analysis of 49,227 UK adults](https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2021.06.19.21259173v1.full.pdf)

**Title:** Test and trace in England – progress update

National Audit Office | 25th June 2021

This is the second report from the National Audit Office on government’s approach to test and trace services in England and it focuses on the period from the beginning of November 2020.

This second report provides an update, focusing on the period from November 2020 to April 2021. It is factual and does not present a full value‑for‑money assessment. This reflects the time period covered and the changing and ongoing response to the pandemic. The report covers:

* major developments in the test, trace and isolate programme from November 2020 (Part One);
* funding and spending for the programme in 2020-21, including its use of contracts, consultants and its utilisation rates (Part Two);
* the performance and effectiveness of test and trace services up to the end of April 2021 (Part Three); and
* current plans for the future delivery of test and trace services, including transition arrangements to the new UKHSA, and securing a longer-term benefit from the investment into test and trace services (Part Four).

The report warns effectiveness of the service is still being undermined by low levels of public compliance, both in terms of coming forward for testing and adhering to isolating. It also pointed out that just 14% of the 691 million rapid tests sent out to the public had been registered as used.

Full report: [Test and trace in England – progress update](https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Test-and-trace-in-England-progress-update.pdf)

Press release: [Test and trace in England – progress update](https://www.nao.org.uk/press-release/test-and-trace-in-england-progress-update/)

See also:

[NHS Test and Trace: lack of progress is “deeply disappointing”](https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1636) |BMJ

[Test and Trace costs remain a concern as performance falls seriously short](https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/nuffield-trust-test-and-trace-costs-remain-a-concern-as-performance-falls-seriously-short) | Nuffield Trust

[NHS Test and Trace weaknesses remain, says watchdog](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-57601097) | BBC

**Title:** More than half fear lockdown ending as pandemic's impact on mental health laid bare

Mind | 18th June 2021

The majority of people are worried about seeing and being near others once lockdown restrictions are fully relaxed, research carried out by the mental health charity Mind has found.

The study, which nearly 10,000 people in England took part in, revealed 55 per cent of adults and young people had this concern, with 46 per cent of those who have already been vaccinated saying they are still worried they will catch coronavirus.

A total of 1 in 4 adults and more than 1 in 6 young people experienced mental distress for the first time during the pandemic, according to Mind’s research. The latest NHS figures also show the number of people in contact with mental health services is the highest since the first lockdown (1.27million) and the number of urgent referrals to crisis care.

Full detail: [More than half fear lockdown ending as pandemic's impact on mental health laid bare](https://www.mind.org.uk/news-campaigns/news/more-than-half-fear-lockdown-ending-as-pandemics-impact-on-mental-health-laid-bare/)

**Title:** SARS-CoV-2 Variants and Vaccines

New England Journal of Medicine | 23rd June 2021

The emergence of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) viral variants of concern arouses concern regarding possible escape from vaccine-elicited immunity. Global strategies involving integration of clinical rollout with systematic investigation are presented in this special report.

Full detail: [SARS-CoV-2 variants and vaccines](https://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/NEJMsr2105280?articleTools=true)

**Title:** Vaccine effectiveness of the first dose of ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 and BNT162b2 against SARS-CoV-2 infection in residents of long-term care facilities in England (VIVALDI): a prospective cohort study

The Lancet Infectious Diseases | 23rd June 2021

The effectiveness of SARS-CoV-2 vaccines in older adults living in long-term care facilities is uncertain. This study investigated the protective effect of the first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca non-replicating viral-vectored vaccine (ChAdOx1 nCoV-19; AZD1222) and the Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA-based vaccine (BNT162b2) in residents of long-term care facilities in terms of PCR-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection over time since vaccination.

The authors found that single-dose vaccination with BNT162b2 and ChAdOx1 vaccines provides substantial protection against infection in older adults from 4–7 weeks after vaccination and might reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission. However, the risk of infection is not eliminated, highlighting the ongoing need for non-pharmaceutical interventions to prevent transmission in long-term care facilities.

Full paper: [Vaccine effectiveness of the first dose of ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 and BNT162b2 against SARS-CoV-2 infection in residents of long-term care facilities in England (VIVALDI): a prospective cohort study](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1473-3099%2821%2900289-9)

**Title:** Effectiveness of BNT162b2 and ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 COVID-19 vaccination at preventing hospitalisations in people aged at least 80 years: a test-negative, case-control study

The Lancet Infectious Diseases | 23rd June 2021

On Dec 8, 2020, deployment of the first SARS-CoV-2 vaccination authorised for UK use (BNT162b2 mRNA vaccine) began, followed by an adenoviral vector vaccine ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 on Jan 4, 2021. Care home residents and staff, frontline health-care workers, and adults aged 80 years and older were vaccinated first. However, few data exist regarding the effectiveness of these vaccines in older people with many comorbidities. In this post-implementation evaluation of two COVID-19 vaccines, the authors aimed to determine the effectiveness of one dose in reducing COVID-19-related admissions to hospital in people of advanced age.

The study found that one dose of either BNT162b2 or ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 resulted in substantial risk reductions of COVID-19-related hospitalisation in people aged at least 80 years.

Full paper: [Effectiveness of BNT162b2 and ChAdOx1 nCoV-19 COVID-19 vaccination at preventing hospitalisations in people aged at least 80 years: a test-negative, case-control study](https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S1473-3099%2821%2900330-3)

**Title:** A perfect storm: the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of young people

The Pharmaceutical Journal | 23rd June 2021

Mental health services for children and young people were struggling before the COVID-19 pandemic, but data suggest they are now reaching crisis point. Data obtained exclusively by The Pharmaceutical Journal suggest increasing numbers of young people were prescribed antidepressants during the pandemic, while facing ever longer waits for psychological support.

NHS figures, analysed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and published in April 2021, show that 80,226 more children and young people were referred to mental health services between April 2020 and December 2020, up by 28% on 2019​​.

In addition, the analysis revealed that the number of children and young people needing urgent or emergency crisis care — including assessments to see if someone needs to be sectioned because they or others are at risk of harm — had increased by 18% compared with 2019. The authors suggest however, that this is ‘the tip of the iceberg’, in terms of need.

Full detail: [A perfect storm: the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of young people](https://pharmaceutical-journal.com/article/feature/a-perfect-storm-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-the-mental-health-of-young-people)

**Title:** Young people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health | 24th June 2021

There has understandably been widespread concern about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions on the mental health of children and young people, with evidence of recent increases in the prevalence of mental health problems.

Yet there has been relatively little evaluation of how mental health has changed over the pandemic and varied for children and young people living in a range of circumstances. This Comment piece discusses the UK based Co-SPACE study, which through the collection of monthly data from a population with diverse social and demographic backgrounds provides a unique opportunity to examine how things have changed over time throughout the pandemic, and, crucially, for whom.

Full detail: [Young people's mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642%2821%2900177-2/fulltext)

Related: [Children’s mental health: One year in the pandemic](https://cospaceoxford.org/findings/report-10-changes-in-childrens-mental-health-throughout-one-year-of-the-covid-19-pandemic/) | Co-SPACE study

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