



# **THE LONG ROAD OF LONG COVID: AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY OF ADULTS AGE 50-PLUS**

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May 2022

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## KEY FINDINGS

# Key findings

In a short survey among a nationally representative sample of **adults aged 50 and older**:

**Three in 10 (29%) said they have had COVID.** One-third (34%) said a member of their household had COVID.

Among those who had COVID, **two-thirds (66%) said their symptoms were moderate to severe.** Only 6% said they had no symptoms.

Among those who had symptomatic COVID:

- Four in 10 (39%) experienced lingering symptoms beyond the one-to-two-week period, at least to some extent.
- Another 37% for a total of **three-quarters (76%) said they experienced lingering symptoms, at least to a small extent.**



# Key findings (cont.)

**Among employed respondents, one-third (33%) said lingering symptoms of COVID impacted their job in some way.** Two-thirds (67%) said their ongoing symptoms either did not impact their job (47%) or they had to quarantine with pay (20%).

Among those who had a household member with COVID, three in 10 (29%) said they experienced long COVID.

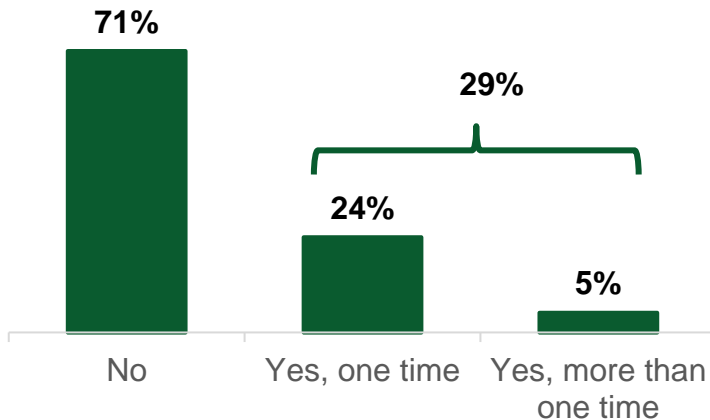
One in five (21%) said they were not at all familiar with the term “long COVID.”



# Three in ten adults aged 50+ have had COVID at least once.

According to Statista 2022 data as of 3/27/2022, 20.5 million cases of COVID have been reported in adults aged 50+ (18% of the population aged 50 and older). Results from this survey, where nearly three in 10 (29%) said they have had COVID, suggest some cases of COVID have not been reported to health departments. Additionally, one-third (34%) say someone in their household has had COVID.

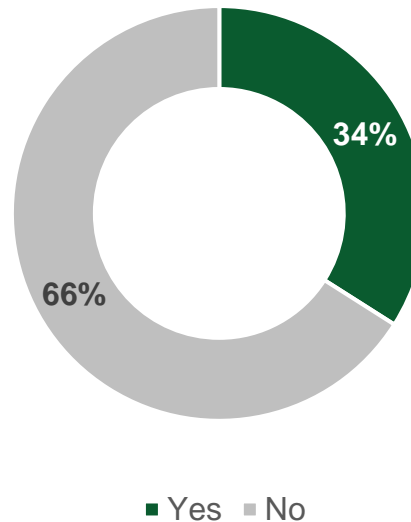
## Have you ever had COVID?



Q3. Have you ever had COVID? (N=1,018)

Q4. Has anyone in your household had COVID? (N=1,018)

## Has anyone in your household had COVID?

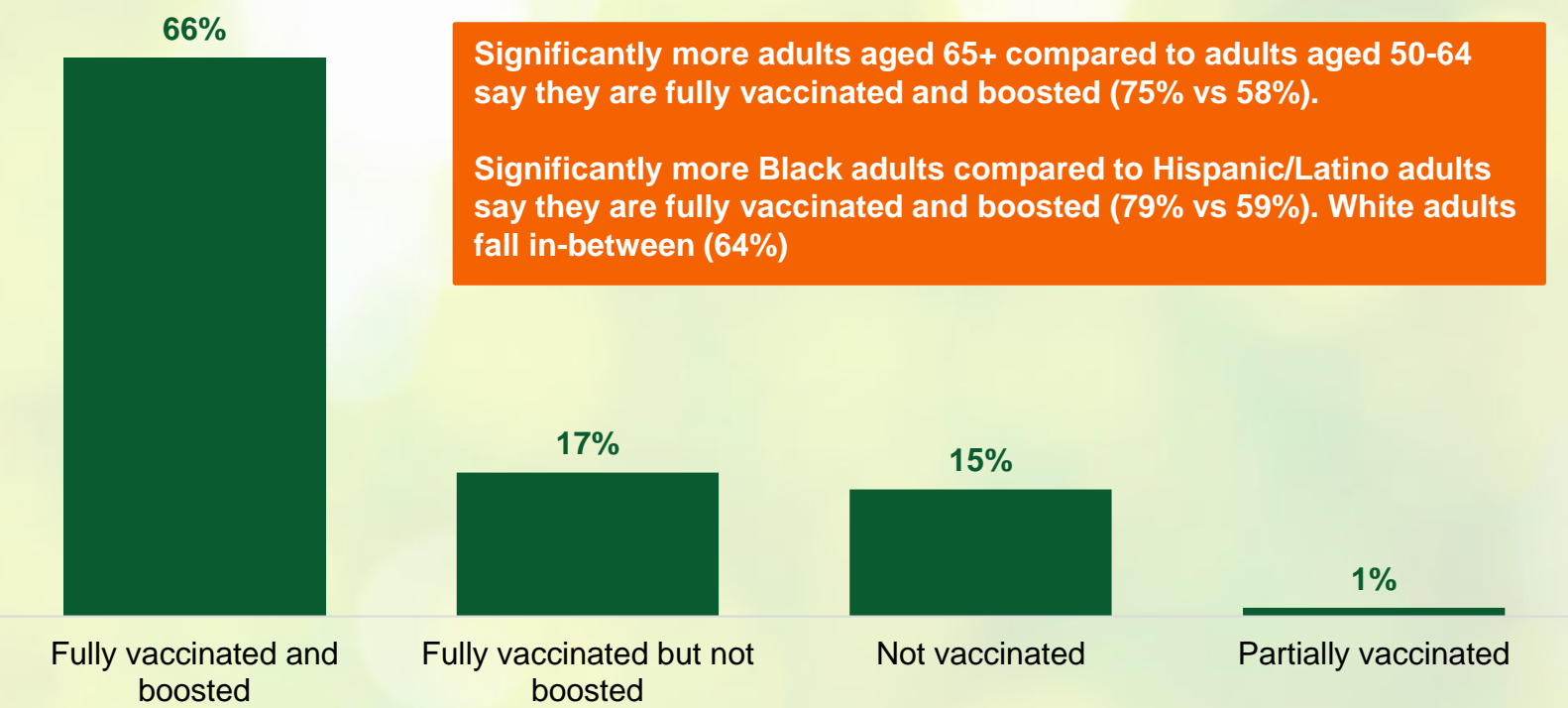


- Significantly more adults aged 50-64 said they had COVID compared to adults aged 65 and older (34% vs 23%).
- Significantly more Hispanic/Latino adults said they had COVID compared to other races/ethnicities:
  - Hispanic/Latino: 50%
  - White: 29%
  - Multiple races, non-H/L: 21%
  - Black: 10%



# Two-thirds of adults are fully vaccinated and boosted.

Which of the following best describes your COVID vaccination Status?



Most adults aged 50 and older are fully vaccinated and boosted. More than eight in 10 (83%) have been vaccinated to some extent.

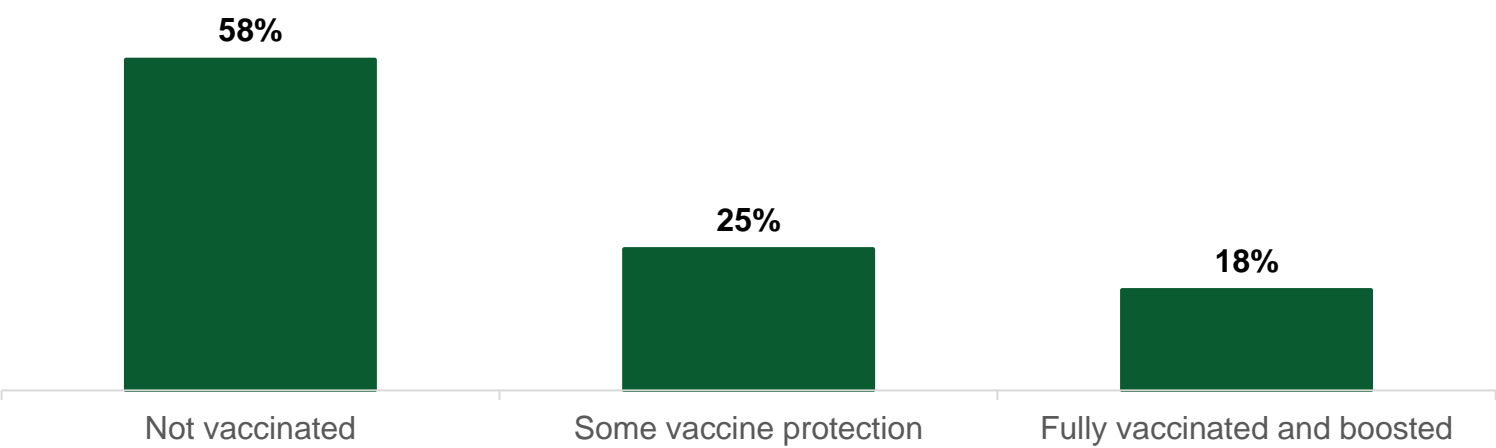
Older adults and Black adults are more likely to be fully vaccinated and boosted.

Q5. Which of the following best describes your COVID vaccination status? (N=1,018)

# Six in 10 adults who got COVID did not have vaccine protection at the time of infection.

One-quarter (25%) of adults aged 50 and older got COVID when they had some vaccine protection -- either partially vaccinated or fully vaccinated but not boosted. Fewer than one in five (18%) got COVID when they were fully vaccinated and boosted.

Vaccination status at the time of COVID diagnosis

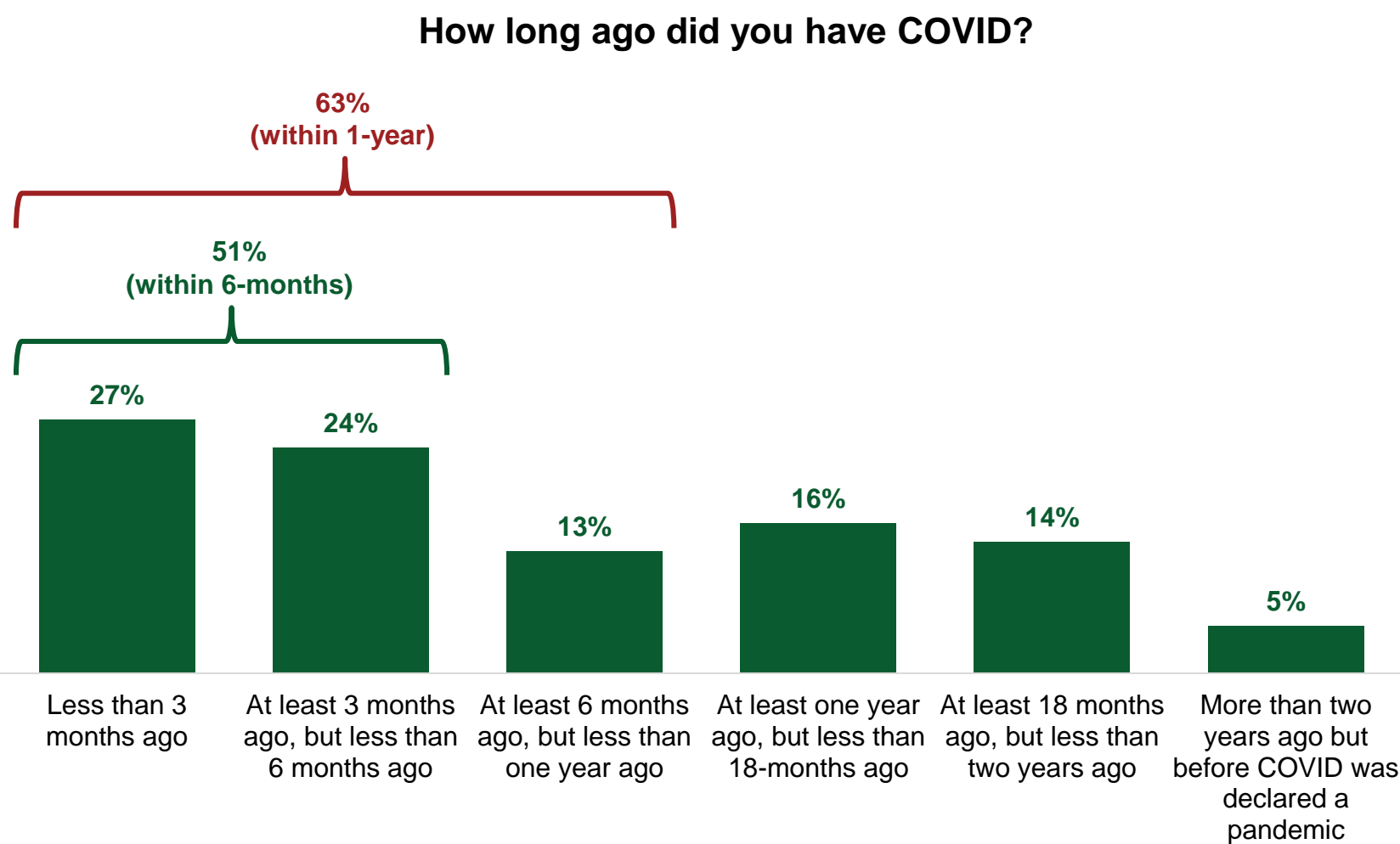


Computed variable (N=288): Q5: Which of the following best describes your COVID vaccination status? Base: Had COVID, not vaccinated Q7. Which of the following best describes the timeframe for when you had COVID? Base: Had COVID, Fully vaccinated and boosted Q8. Which of the following best describes the timeframe for when you had COVID? Base: Those who have had COVID and are partially vaccinated or fully vaccinated but not boosted



# Half of those who said they had COVID report having it within the last 6-months.

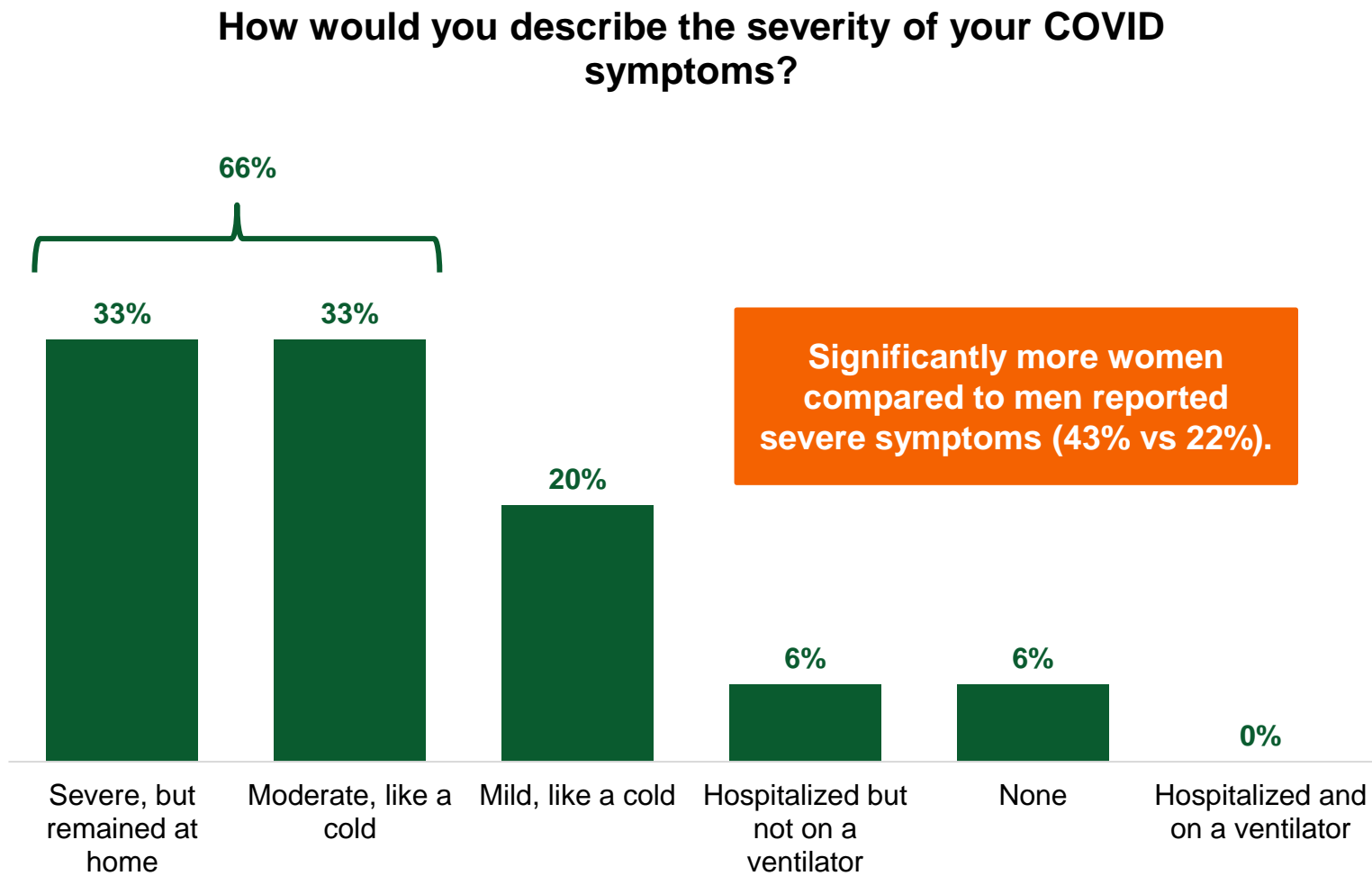
Only one in 20 (5%) adults aged 50+ said they got COVID prior to its designation as a pandemic. More commonly, adults had COVID in the last year (63%).



Q6. How long ago did you have COVID? (N=291; had COVID)

# Two-thirds who had COVID said their symptoms were moderate to severe.

Relatively few (6%) adults said they had no symptoms of COVID and relatively few said they were hospitalized (6%). The majority (66%) had moderate to severe symptoms.



Q9. How would you describe the severity of your COVID symptoms? (N=291; had COVID)

# Fatigue was noted as the most common COVID symptom.

Additionally, many adults experienced cough, fever or chills, muscle/body aches, headache, nasal congestion, and loss of taste or smell. For some symptoms, significant differences were noted by age and gender.

Symptoms	% who experienced each symptom
Fatigue	82%
Cough	69%
Fever or chills	61%
Muscle or body aches	61%
Headache	53%
Congestion or runny nose	52%
New loss of taste or smell	50%
Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	43%
Sore throat	34%
Diarrhea	21%
Nausea or vomiting	20%
Persistent pain or pressure in the chest	14%
New mental confusion	12%
Inability to wake or stay awake	12%
Other	4%
Pale, gray, or blue-colored skin, lips, or nail beds, depending on skin tone	3%



**More younger adults compared to older adults experienced:**

- Muscle or body aches (68% vs 49%)
- Headache (62% vs 38%)
- Nausea or vomiting (27% vs 7%)

**More women compared to men experienced:**

- Nausea or vomiting (28% vs 10%)
- Persistent pain/pressure in chest (20% vs 7%)
- New mental confusion (17% vs 6%)

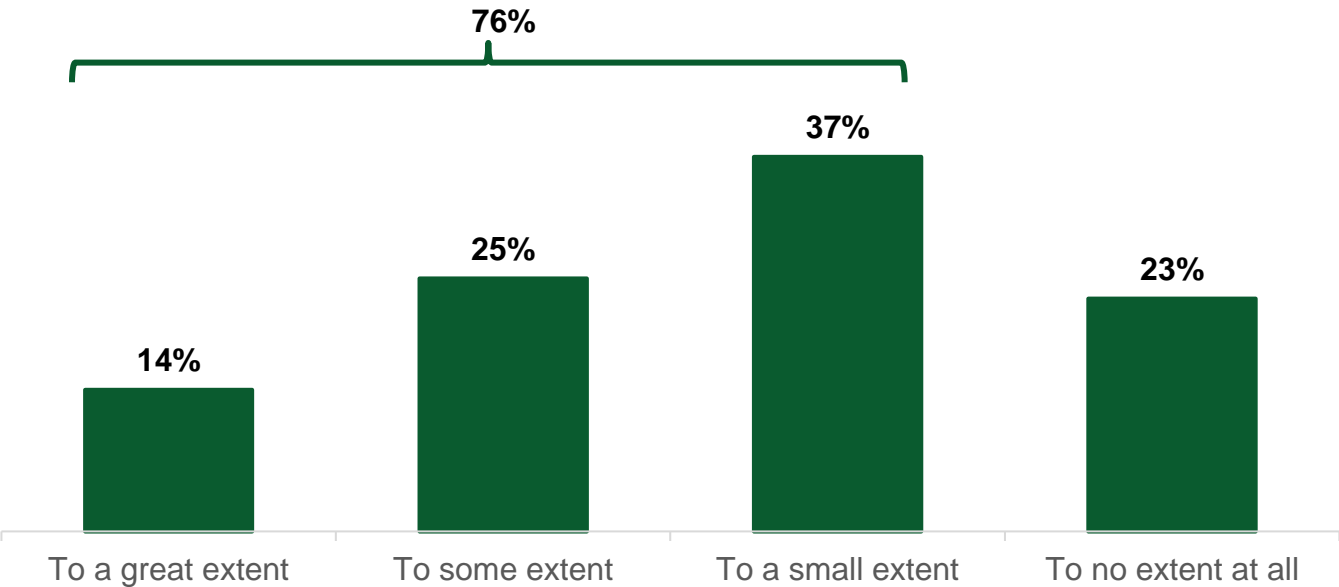
Q10. Which of the following COVID symptoms have you experienced?(check all that apply) (N=272; had COVID, had symptoms)



# Three-quarters of adults who had symptomatic COVID experienced lingering symptoms.

Among adults aged 50 and older who had symptomatic COVID, most said they experienced COVID symptoms beyond the typical 1-to 2-week period, at least to a small extent. Significantly more adults aged 50 to 64 compared to adults aged 65+ said they experienced lingering COVID symptoms “to a great extent” (19% vs. 6%).

To what extent did you experience COVID symptoms after the typical 1- to 2-week period?



More younger adults compared to older adults said they continue to experience COVID symptoms “to a great extent” (19% vs 6%).

Q11. To what extent did you experience COVID symptoms after the typical 1- to 2-week period? (N=266, had COVID, had it at least a month ago, had symptoms)

# Fatigue is the most-reported lingering COVID symptom.

Among adults aged 50+ who had ongoing COVID symptoms, one-third (34%) said they continued to have a cough and three in 10 (31%) experienced cognitive problems such as brain fog. One in 10 (11%) continued to have difficulty with taste and smell.

Symptom	% who experienced each symptom
Fatigue	57%
Cough	34%
Cognitive problems such as brain fog	31%
Shortness of breath	26%
Difficulty concentrating	25%
Muscle pain	22%
Joint pain	18%
Anxiety	16%
Headache	16%
Depression	12%
Loss of taste and smell*	11%
Chest pain	8%
Other	5%
Intermittent fever	3%
Hair loss*	1%



**More younger adults compared to older adults experienced ongoing symptoms of:**

- Difficulty concentrating (33% vs 13%)
- Muscle pain (30% vs 9%)

**More women compared to men experienced ongoing symptoms of:**

- Cognitive problems such as brain fog (43% vs 15%)
- Anxiety (24% vs 4%)

Q12: Which of the following symptoms did you continue to experience weeks or months after COVID infection? (check all that apply) (N=205, had COVID, had it at least a month ago, had symptoms, had lingering symptoms)

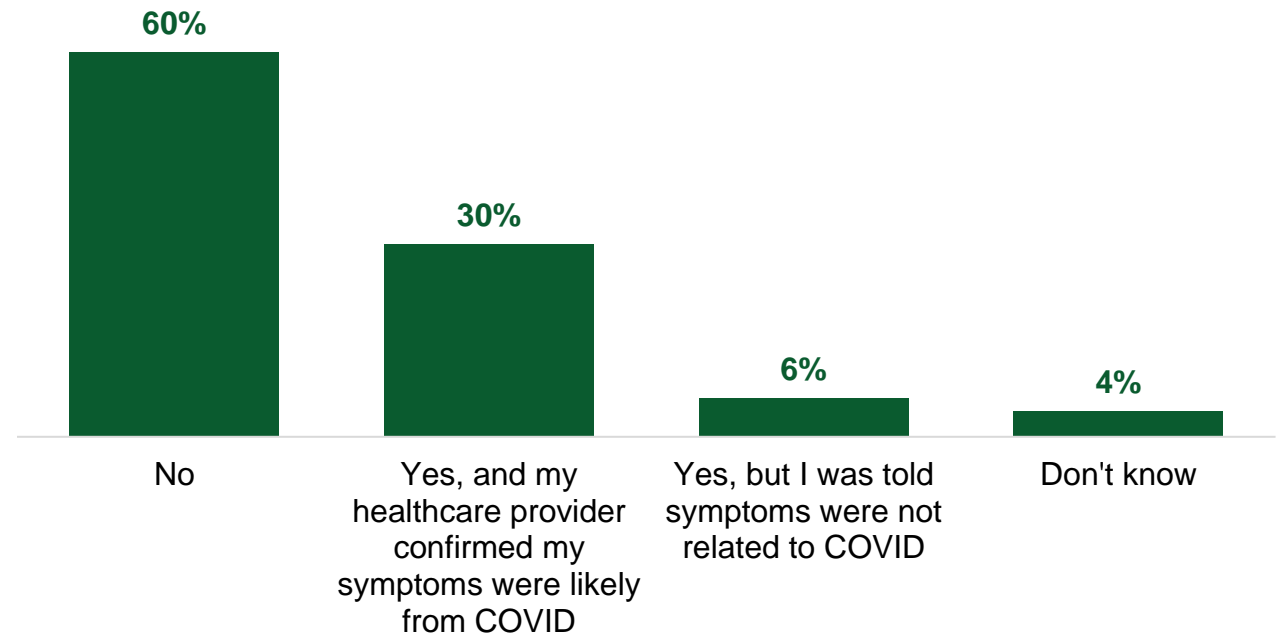
\*These symptoms were extracted from the open-ended “other” category and the “other” category percentage was adjusted.

# Most adults did not see their healthcare provider to address their ongoing COVID-related symptoms.

Three in 10 (30%) saw their doctor and it was confirmed that their lingering symptoms were due to COVID.



Did you see a healthcare provider for your ongoing COVID-related symptoms?



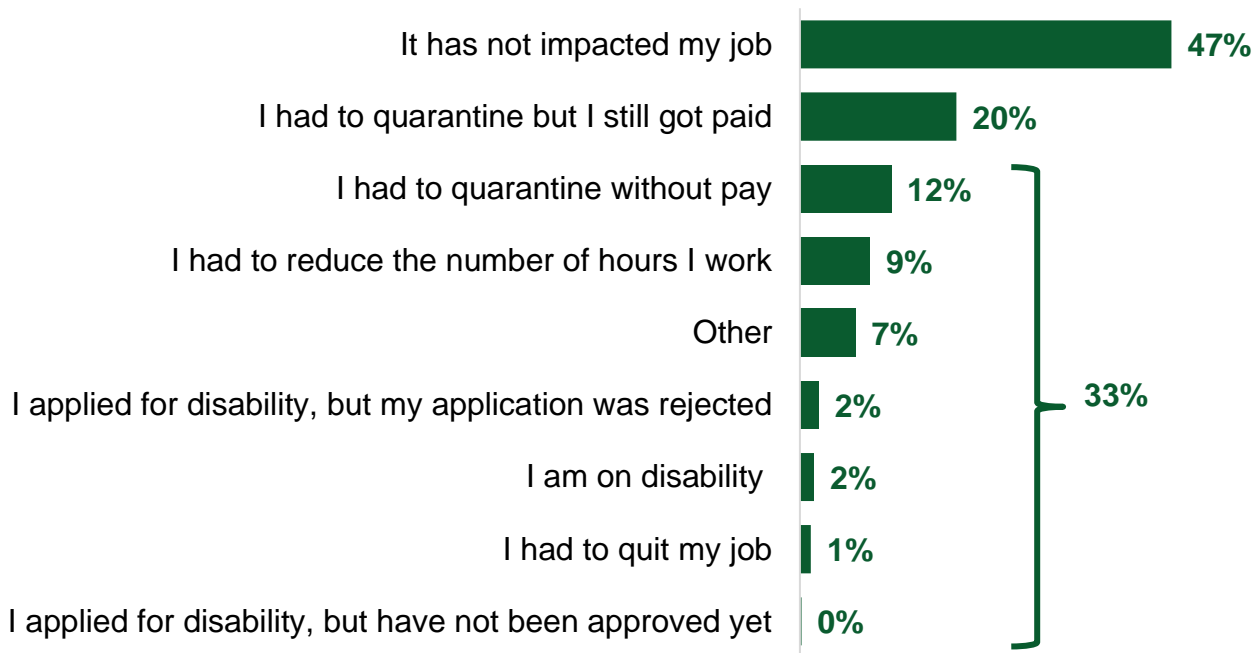
Q13. Did you see a healthcare provider for your ongoing COVID-related symptoms?  
(N=205; had COVID more than one month ago, had symptoms of COVID, and had lingering symptoms of COVID)



# One-third of those who had long-term COVID symptoms said their job was impacted in some way.

The remaining two-thirds (67%) of adults aged 50 and older with lingering COVID symptoms said their job was not impacted (47%) or they had to quarantine but they continued to be paid (20%).

## How, if at all, have the long-term symptoms from COVID impacted your job?

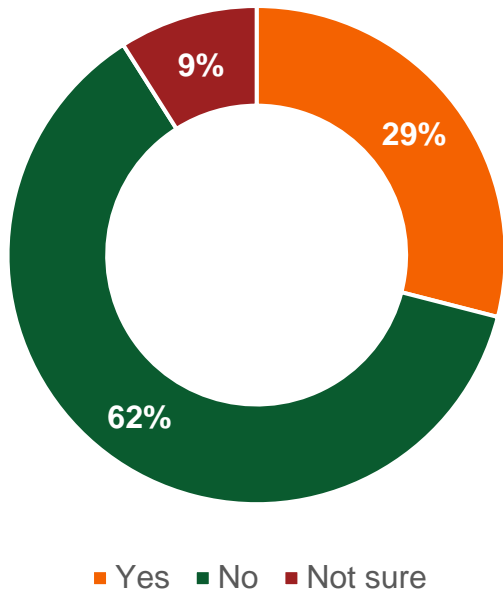


Q14: How, if at all, have the long-term symptoms from COVID impacted your job? (N=109, excluding the N/A responses)

# Three in 10 adults said someone in their household experienced lasting COVID symptoms.

Among adults aged 50 and older who said a household member had COVID, six in 10 (62%) said this person did not experience lingering COVID symptoms, while one in 10 (9%) were not sure.

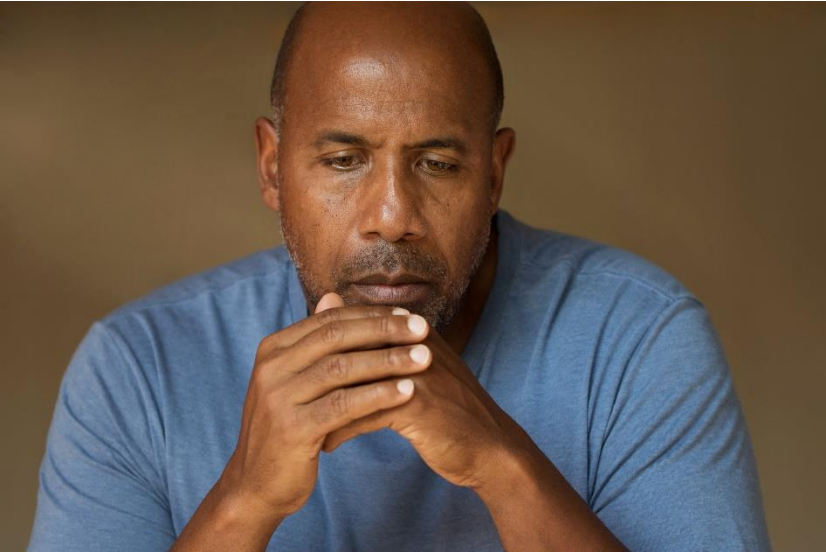
Has anyone in your household experienced lasting COVID symptoms beyond the typical one-to-two-week period?



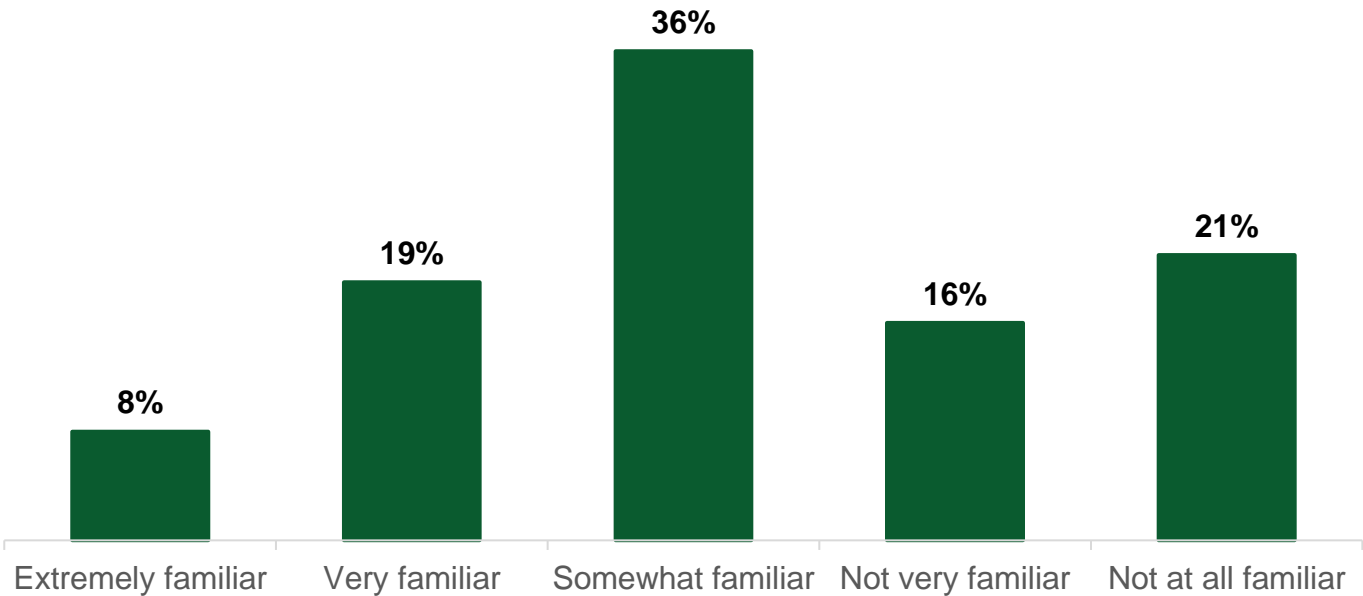
Q15. Has anyone in your household experienced lasting COVID symptoms beyond the typical one-to-two-week period? (N=347, respondents who had a household member with COVID)

# Six in 10 adults aged 50+ are at least somewhat familiar with the term “long COVID.”

One-quarter of adults are extremely/very familiar with the term “long COVID,” but, one in five (21%) are not at all familiar.



How familiar are you with the term “Long COVID?”



Q16. How familiar, if at all, are you with the term “Long COVID?” (N=1,018)





# IMPLICATIONS

# Implications

A higher proportion of Hispanic/Latino adults experienced COVID infection compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Further research to explore the potential impact of long COVID on Hispanic/Latino adults may help to clarify the need for additional supports for this and other identity groups.

Three-quarters of adults who were infected with COVID experienced lingering symptoms beyond the typical one-to-two-week period. Further research into the impact of long COVID on individuals would aid in further understanding this relatively new phenomenon.

Most adults who experienced the lingering symptoms of COVID did not seek medical attention. Additional research into the reasons more individuals did not see a healthcare provider may help to understand the relationship between COVID and access to healthcare.







# METHODOLOGY

# Methodology

- **Objectives:** To understand awareness of the phenomenon “long COVID” and to get a sense of the prevalence of long COVID among adults aged 50 and older.
- **Methodology:** Nationally representative mixed mode survey (online and telephone) via NORC’s Foresight 50+ panel.
- **Qualifications:** Age 50 and older; those who have not participated in the previous Omni survey.
- **Sample:** NORC Foresight 50+, n=1,018.
- **Interviewing Dates:** March 24-28, 2022.
- **Weighting:** Data are weighted to the latest Current Population Survey (CPS) benchmarks developed by the U.S. Census Bureau and are balanced by gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, region and AARP Membership. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of adults ages 50 and over.
- **Margin of error:**  $\pm 4.17$  percentage points.





# About AARP

AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation's largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org) or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

# About NORC

NORC at the University of Chicago conducts research and analysis that decision-makers trust. As a nonpartisan research organization and a pioneer in measuring and understanding the world, NORC has studied almost every aspect of the human experience and every major news event for more than eight decades. Today, NORC partners with government, corporate, and nonprofit clients around the world to provide the objectivity and expertise necessary to inform the critical decisions facing society. Please visit [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org) for more information.



# APPENDIX

# Demographic overview

Total (N=1,018)

## Gender

Male	47%
Female	53%
Married	51%

## Education:

HS graduate or less	40%
Vocational/Tech school/Some college	25%
Bachelor's degree or higher	34%

## Race/ethnicity:

White, non-Hispanic	71%
Hispanic	12%
Black, non-Hispanic	11%
Asian, non-Hispanic	4%
Other, non-Hispanic	3%

## Mean age

65.1 (years)

50-64	53%
65+	47%

## Employment

Employed	38%
Not employed	62%

## Mean income

\$72,062





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