



Survey Highlights Negative Brain Health Impacts of Long COVID

Over 80% say the virus has negatively or very negatively impacted their brain health

MONTREAL and TORONTO, Wednesday, May 4, 2022 – A pan-Canadian survey of more than 1,000 COVID long-haulers, individuals with COVID-19 symptoms that last weeks or months after the initial infection, highlights the negative brain health impacts of Long COVID. COVID-19's consequences on brain health persist over the long-term, sometimes over a year after infection. The survey, which launched on March 23 and closed on April 13, 2022, was prepared by [VINEx](#) and distributed through the [COVID Long-Haulers Support Group Canada](#) and [Neurological Health Charities Canada \(NHCC\)](#) membership. It is a follow up to a [survey](#) of more than 1,000 Canadian COVID long-haulers conducted in May 2021 by [VINEx](#), the [COVID Long-Haulers Support Group Canada](#) and [NHCC](#), which demonstrated the broader impacts of Long COVID on quality of life. A detailed report on the survey is available on the [VINEx website](#).

“The direct and indirect effects of COVID on the brain are disconcerting for the thousands of Canadians living with Long COVID. Multiple reinfections are cumulatively damaging the most vital organ in the body, the brain,” says Susie Goulding, founder of the COVID Long Haulers Support Group Canada. “Because of these effects Canadians are suffering great health loss, are unable to work and in need of support. We are deeply concerned the pace of science is not meeting the needs of rapidly growing numbers of disabled Canadian COVID Long-Haulers. This is a mass disabling event and the funding must meet the needs. Robust meaningful research must be made a top priority by policy makers. Our work force and economy depend on it.”

While there are as many as 200 reported Long COVID symptoms by [some counts](#), the survey demonstrates that many of the most frequently reported are neurological or psychiatric. The findings confirm that the brain health [impacts](#) of Long COVID exist and persist for Canadians from coast-to-coast and negatively impact their daily life and ability to work. The most frequently reported brain health impacts include difficulty concentrating and thinking, short-term memory loss, sleep disturbances, headaches, dizziness, and depression.

“Social and mainstream media have given people with lived experience platforms to share and amplify their stories, and to advocate for multidisciplinary care clinics and research to understand the short-, medium- and long-term impacts of the SARS-CoV-2 virus,” says Inez Jabalpurwala, Global Director of VINEx. “While governments have responded to these calls, including with the \$20 million commitment to fund research on the long-term impacts of COVID-19 in the latest federal budget, we need to ensure the investments match what is becoming the pandemic after the pandemic—affecting health, society and the economy”.

Key findings

- The survey received responses from 1,050 long-haulers in nine provinces and one territory.
- More than **60%** of respondents are **between the age of 40 and 59**.
- Over **87%** of respondents identified as **women**. This is consistent with studies which demonstrate that women are [disproportionately](#) affected by Long COVID, by as much as a **4 to 1 ratio**. **10.5%** of respondents identified as a **visible minority or member of a minority cultural community**.
- **Only a quarter** of respondents **were initially believed and received appropriate care** when they described their Long COVID symptoms to a healthcare professional.
- **Over 80%** of respondents say Long COVID has had a **negative or very negative impact on their brain health**.
- For those experiencing **neurological or psychiatric symptoms**, **more than 80%** say it has **negatively or very negatively impacted their daily life**.
- **Close to 75%** of long-haulers surveyed have **sought medical care for their neurological or psychiatric symptoms**.
- **Over 70% had to take leave from work** as a result of living with Long COVID, sometimes for over a year, with some having to leave the workforce.

About

Viral Neuro Exploration (VINEx) is a non-profit corporation advancing research at the intersection of the environment and brain health. Its vision is to understand how viruses and other infectious agents impact brain health, and address gaps in knowledge and funding at the intersection of different fields and disciplines. VINEx is an action tank which has impact by gathering evidence about the current state of science; consulting with leading scientists, researchers, clinicians, and people with lived experience; and determining the path forward to accelerate progress at points of intersection, where leadership is needed to change paradigms and promote new ways of thinking and new approaches.

The [Covid-Long Haulers Support Group Canada](#) is creating awareness of the effects COVID-19 has on long-haulers, symptomatically, financially and economically. They lobby for recognition from government officials and the public and want it to be understood that long-haulers are not recovered. There is still robust, longitudinal research and rehabilitation targeted for long-haulers that need to be funded. Through their efforts of sharing lived experiences with media and creating momentum, they hope to create change.

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