

Latest findings from COVID-19 study published: January 2021

- Over 167,600 volunteers tested in England between 6 and 22 of January 2021 as part of one of the most significant COVID-19 studies
- Final findings from Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI show infections remained very high throughout this period with 1 in 64 people infected
- Everyone must continue to stay at home, not have contact with others unless absolutely necessary and follow the rules to protect the NHS and save lives

The final findings from the [eighth report of REACT](#), one of the country's largest studies into COVID-19 infections in England, have been published today by Imperial College London and Ipsos MORI.

The latest REACT study provides a snapshot of the levels of infection in the general population between 6 and 22 January. The findings show infections in England have flattened but are at the highest level recorded by a REACT study, with the indication of a decline at the end of the reporting period.

The NHS is under significant pressure in England with over 37,000 people in hospital with the virus, twice as many as the first peak in April. 4,076 people are on ventilators, more than at any time in the pandemic. Everyone must play their part by staying at home to help reduce infections, protect the NHS and save lives.

Levels of infections varied across the regions and was highest in London, with 1 in 35 people infected, and highest nationally among those aged 18 to 24.

The main findings from the eighth REACT study for the period 6 to 22 January show:

- national prevalence was 1.57%, or 157 per 10,000 people infected
- national R is estimated at 0.98 with a range of 0.92 to 1.04
- regional prevalence was highest in London at 2.83%
- East of England at 1.78%
- West Midlands at 1.66%
- South East at 1.61%
- North West at 1.38%
- North East at 1.22%
- East Midlands at 1.16%
- Yorkshire and the Humber 0.80%

- South West at 0.87%
- prevalence increased nationally in all adult age groups and was highest in 18 to 24 year olds at 2.44%. Prevalence in the over 65s is 0.93%
- large household size, living in a deprived neighbourhood, and black and Asian ethnicity were more likely to test positive compared to smaller households, less deprived neighbourhoods and other ethnicities
- healthcare and care home workers, and other key workers were more likely to test positive compared to other workers

While the levels of infections are lower in Yorkshire and the Humber and the South West compared to other regions, they are still high.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

These findings are a stark reminder of the need to remain vigilant.

Infection rates this high will continue to put a strain on our NHS and add to the significant pressures dedicated health and care staff are already facing.

We must bring infections right down so I urge everyone to play their part to help save lives. You must stay at home unless absolutely necessary, follow social distancing rules and minimise contact with others.

Professor Paul Elliott, director of the programme at Imperial, said:

The number of people infected with the virus is at the highest level that we've recorded since we began testing last May.

We're not seeing the sharp drop in infections that happened under the first lockdown and if infections aren't brought down significantly, hospitals won't be able to cope with the number of people that need critical care. We all need to stay at home wherever possible and help bring the virus under control and protect our already over-stretched health system.

While the vaccine programme continues to expand to protect as many people as possible, with over 6.8 million people vaccinated, we do not know whether being vaccinated stops someone from passing the virus on to others. It will also be some time before the impact of the vaccination programme reduces pressures on hospitals.

It is critical everyone continues to follow the rules, stays at home, reduces contact with others and maintains social distancing – remembering hands, face, space.

Kelly Beaver, Managing Director – Public Affairs at Ipsos MORI, said:

In the latest REACT snapshot across round 8 we continue to see very high levels of COVID-19 at a national level, which continues to be worrying. While we do see the suggestion of a downturn in the last few days of the study, which is encouraging, this is only tentative.

REACT continues to provide a powerful look across England at prevalence and spread of the pandemic and I thank all of the over 160,000 people who have taken part in this round for helping us provide this insight to government.

This report is the latest from the REACT study which was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and carried out by a world-class team of scientists, clinicians and researchers at Imperial College London, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust and Ipsos MORI.

Over 167,000 randomly selected people over the age of 5 from across England volunteered to provide nose and throat swabs for this REACT report. These were tested for antigens indicating the presence of the virus to show whether someone is currently infected with COVID-19.

The study does not go out to the same participants in each round but selects new, randomly selected participants each time.

By randomly selecting participants, the study captures both those who display symptoms and those who do not, providing a greater insight into the levels of infection across the country. REACT does not run continuously but provides a timely two-week snapshot of prevalence in England at that specific time.

In line with government guidance those with positive test results and their household will be asked to self-isolate and referred to NHS Test and Trace for contact tracing.

The [pre-print report embargoed to 0.01 Thursday 28 January 2020 can be downloaded here](#) (Claim ID: ZBDHaZPdKkgKRtpB, claim passcode: 6KcEg43cRevfpKEn)

See [more information on the Real-time Assessment of Community Transmission \(REACT\) programme of work](#).

This study falls under pillar 4 of the COVID-19 National Testing Programme, which focuses on mass surveillance in the general population.

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