

# WHO urges action as 17M long COVID cases estimated in Europe region

Thursday 15 September 2022, by [COLLIS Helen](#) (Date first published: 13 September 2022).

**Data highlights ‘urgent need for more analysis, more investment, more support, and more solidarity with those who experience this condition,’ says WHO Europe boss.**

Around 17 million people have been stricken with long COVID in the first two years of the pandemic across the European region, according to [modeling](#) conducted for the World Health Organization.

Rates of long COVID surged in 2020 due to soaring coronavirus cases, especially in the second half of the year when the highly transmissible Delta and Omicron variants emerged.

Across the WHO Europe region of 53 countries, the modeling finds that women are twice as likely as men to experience long COVID, which includes symptoms such as fatigue with bodily pain and mood swings, cognitive problems, and shortness of breath.

The risk increases dramatically among those who experienced severe COVID-19 that required hospital treatment, with one in three women and one in five men likely to develop long COVID.

Given the huge physical and mental health burden upon people’s lives, the WHO has called on countries to invest more in tackling this crippling syndrome.

The data highlights “the urgent need for more analysis, more investment, more support, and more solidarity with those who experience this condition,” Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, told a meeting of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe taking place in Tel Aviv, Israel.

Partnering with [Long COVID Europe](#), a network of patients’ associations, WHO Europe wants to see clearer reporting of cases, greater research into the complex condition, and rehabilitation that is evidence-based.

Globally, nearly 145 million people suffered from long COVID in the first two years of the pandemic, according to the modeling from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington.

“They cannot continue to suffer in silence,” Kluge said.

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