The BMJ

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2021;375:n2542
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2542>
 Published: 18 October 2021

Covid-19: Prevalence rises among schoolchildren in England

Elisabeth Mahase

An estimated one in 120 people in England were infected with SARS-CoV-2 in September, shows a study of more than 100 000 volunteers.¹

The latest report from the React-1 study, published on 14 October by Imperial College London and the pollster Ipsos MORI, said that between 9 and 27 September 2021 a total of 764 positive results came from 100 527 swabs, giving a weighted prevalence of 0.83%.

The authors said that prevalence seems to be remaining fairly stable overall, with the infection rate growing among under 18s (R number of 1.18) and falling among those aged 18-54 (R=0.81).

Other notable findings from the report included that:

- Prevalence was higher in people of black ethnicity (1.41%) than white (0.78%)
- Prevalence was higher in larger households, ranging from 0.33% in single person households to 1.75% in households with six or more people
- Prevalence was also higher in households with children (1.37%) than in those without children (0.4%)
- Prevalence was 0.56% in people reporting two doses of vaccine and 1.73% in unvaccinated people, and
- Overall effectiveness of vaccines against infection was estimated at 63% to 66%.

Ipsos MORI's managing director for public affairs, Kelly Beaver, said, "While the rise since our last React-1 round in prevalence is concerning, it is encouraging that there has not been a commensurate rise in hospitalisations and deaths from covid-19."

The React study programme director at Imperial, Paul Elliott, said, "Our latest data show that infections are high and rising in school aged children. Households with children also had a higher prevalence of infection, suggesting that children may be passing on the virus to those that they live with. These trends reinforce how important it is for children aged 12 and above to get vaccinated and help curb the spread of infection and minimise disruption to education."

¹ UK Health Security Agency. REACT-1 study of coronavirus transmission: September 2021 final results. Oct 2021. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/react-1-study-of-coronavirus-transmission-september-2021-final-results/react-1-study-of-coronavirus-transmission-september-2021-final-results>.

This article is made freely available for use in accordance with BMJ's website terms and conditions for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic or until otherwise determined by BMJ. You may use, download and print the article for any lawful, non-commercial purpose (including text and data mining) provided that all copyright notices and trade marks are retained.