

NEWS BRIEF

Provided by: National Insurance Services

Long COVID-19 Keeping Up to 4 Million Workers Out of Labor Market

Long COVID-19—long-term effects stemming from COVID-19 infection—continues to impact the labor market and the health of employees. The U.S. Census Bureau's June to July 2022 Household Pulse Survey found that 16.3 million working-age Americans currently have long COVID. It has been reported that long COVID is even keeping some workers out of employment; an estimated 4 million workers are out of the labor market, according to Brookings Institution's nonresident senior fellow Katie Bach. With so many out of work, employers should continue to monitor trends such as long COVID rates, the effect long COVID is having on their workforce's productivity and other related issues so they can be prepared to respond effectively.

The University of Southern California's Understanding America Study about its COVID-19 longitudinal survey reported that 24.1% of individuals who have had COVID-19 have long COVID, and 25.9% of people with long COVID reported that their condition affected their employment or working hours. However, the study finds that most people with long COVID remain employed but work fewer hours compared to their long COVID-free counterparts.

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As many as 4 million workers are likely out of work due to long COVID, according to an analysis published by Katie Bach, nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

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While exact estimates of the number of workers that may be kept out of the labor market vary between 2 to 4 million, the midpoint of 3 million is equivalent to 1.8% of the entire U.S. workforce. Based on the average U.S. wage of \$1,106 per week, it is estimated that with 1.8% of the workforce out of work due to long COVID, around \$170 billion a year will be lost in unearned wages.

What's Next?

Even with the number of COVID-19 cases declining, long COVID remains a major issue. The presence of long COVID continues to affect the labor market and employee health, which in turn can directly affect employers. From decreased productivity to the loss of employees from the workforce entirely, long COVID can pose serious risks for employers if they do not stay up to date on trends surrounding its rates and other related topics such as strategies other employers are using to respond to long COVID.

Employers should stay tuned for updates from National Insurance Services.

