

Primary care physician consultations for continuing health issues after COVID-19

(Monthly Sentinella survey, data as of 24.05.2023)

Monitoring continuing health issues following COVID-19 in the Sentinella system

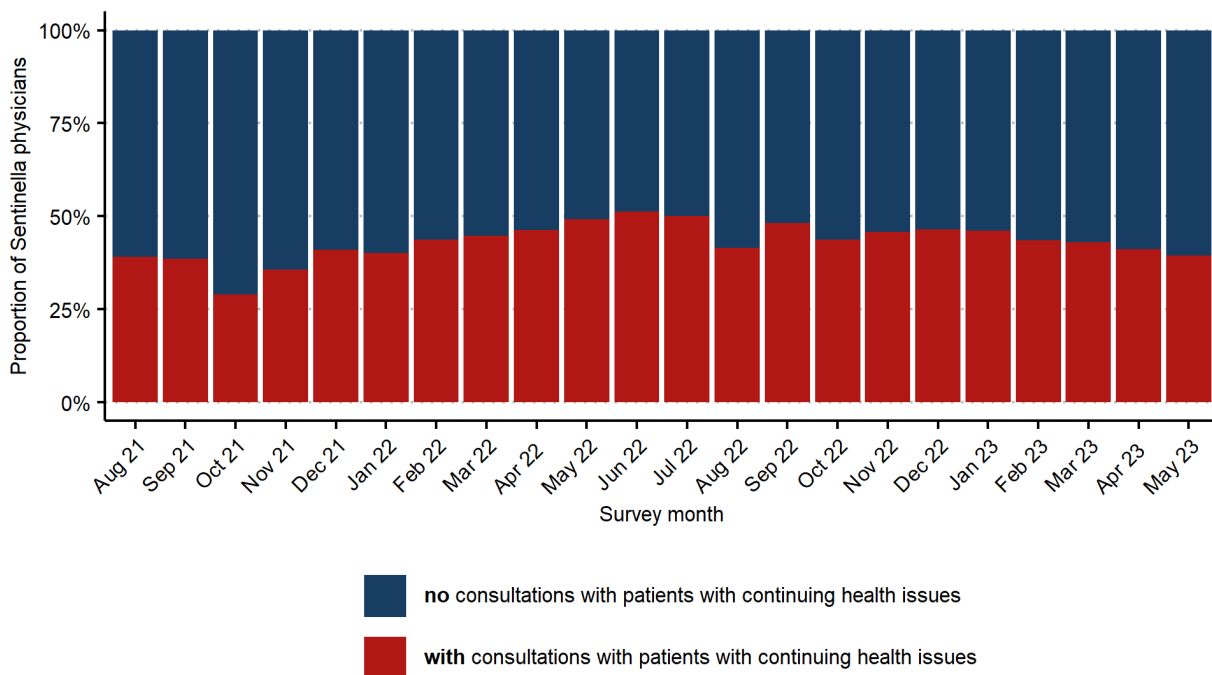
The [Sentinella Reporting System](#) is intended to monitor acute infectious diseases and to promote research in the primary care field. As part of the system's monthly surveys, data are presently recorded on the frequency with which patients with continuing health issues following a SARS-CoV-2 infection seek primary medical care. Such data include the (counted or estimated) number of patients with more than 12 weeks of such continuing health issues following COVID-19 who have sought such consultation since the previous such survey. The definition of 'continuing health issues' broadly corresponds to the WHO's definition of [post COVID-19 condition](#), which is also used by the FOPH.

Survey results

According to the latest such survey in May 2023, 39% of the primary care physicians who responded had had consultations in the previous month with patients suffering continuing health issues which had persisted for more than 12 weeks following COVID-19. This figure has ranged between 29% and 51% over the full survey period, with an average value of 43% (Figure 1).

The responding primary care physicians thus reported a median 0 such patients per 1000 physician/patient contacts (PPCs)¹ in the latest monthly survey. 75% of respondents registered between 0 and 5.7 such patients per 1000 PPCs, while 95% registered between 0 and 12.5 such patients per 1000 PPCs (Figure 2).

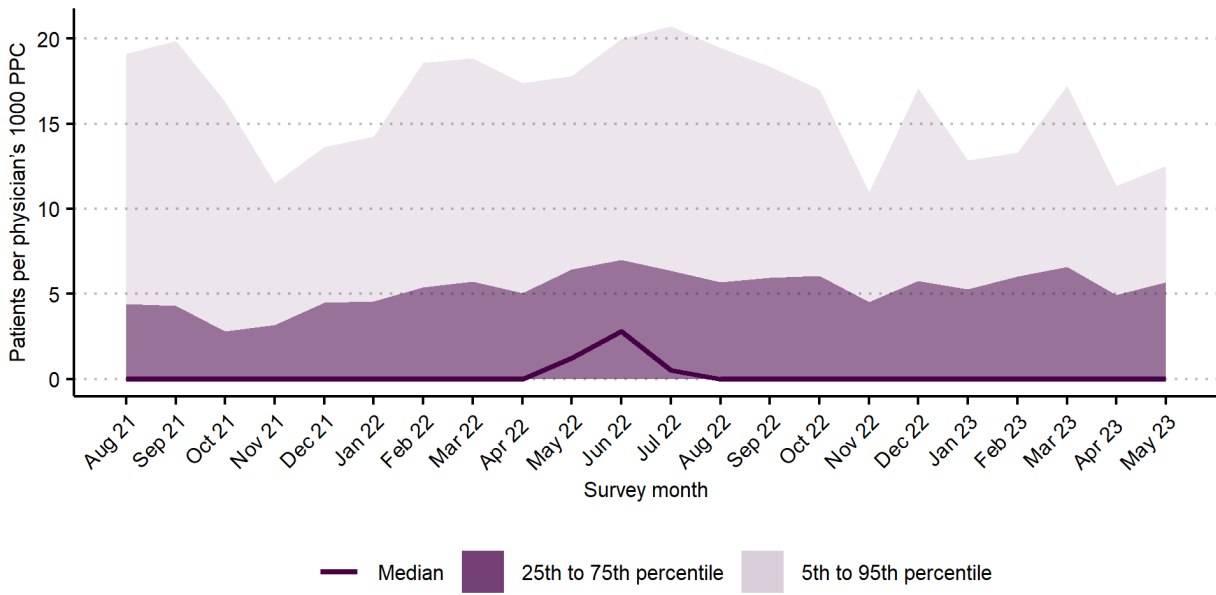
If only those respondents are considered who held such consultations with patients as a result of their continuing post-COVID-19 health issues, a median of 6.3 such patients were seen per 1000 PPCs. Among the 50% of such physicians in the interquartile range between the 25th and 75th percentiles, the number of such patients ranged between 5.0 and 8.7 per 1000 PPCs (Figure 3).



FOPH, data state: 2023-05-24

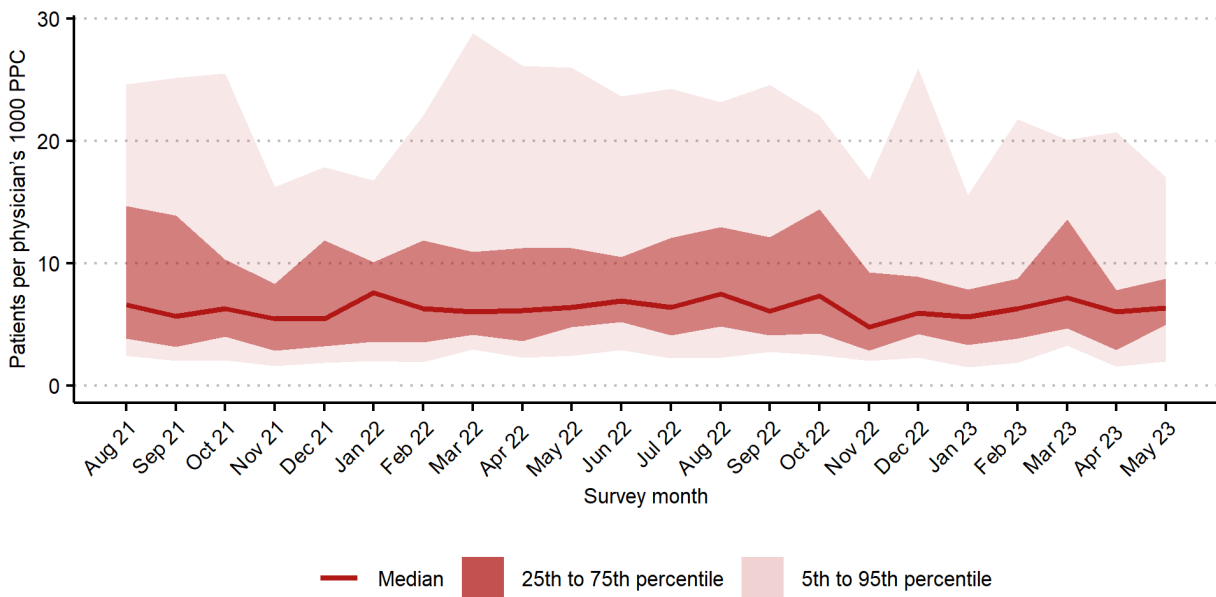
Figure 1: Proportion of Sentinella physicians reporting consultations during the survey month with patients with post-COVID-19 health issues continuing for more than 12 weeks. For each monthly survey, responses were received from 86-95% of the 82-138 primary care physicians participating.

¹ For physician/patient contacts, see also the 'Further survey information' at the end of this report.



PPC = physician/patient contacts
FOPH, data state: 2023-05-24

Figure 2: Number of patients with continuing health issues more than 12 weeks after COVID-19 seen during the survey month compared to the total number of physician/patient contacts (PPCs) in the month for the Sentinella physician concerned. The line shows the median number of such patients per 1000 PPCs. The dark purple area indicates the range of such patient numbers registered among the middle 50% of respondents (25th to 75th percentile), and the light purple area indicates the range of such patient numbers registered among the middle 90% of respondents (5th to 95th percentile). For each monthly survey, responses were received from 86-95% of the 82-138 primary care physicians participating.



PPC = physician/patient contacts
FOPH, data state: 2023-05-24

Figure 3: Number of patients with continuing health issues more than 12 weeks after COVID-19 seen during the survey month by physicians with such patients compared to the total number of physician/patient contacts (PPCs) in the month for the Sentinella physician concerned. The line shows the median number of such patients per 1000 PPCs. The dark red area indicates the range of such patient numbers registered among the middle 50% of respondents (25th to 75th percentile; interquartile range), and the light red area indicates the range of such patient numbers registered among the middle 90% of respondents (5th to 95th percentile). For each monthly survey, responses were received from 86-95% of the 82-138 primary care physicians participating.

Further survey information

Since December 2020, the physicians participating in the Sentinella Reporting System have been taking part in a monthly survey on COVID-related burden in medical practices. As part of this survey, data have been obtained since August 2021 on the numbers of cases of continuing health issues following a SARS-CoV-2 infection, and it is these data that form the basis of this report. The aim in recording such data on long-term post-COVID-19 health issues was to estimate the scale of the problem within the primary care sector and to plan further studies within the overall Sentinella Reporting System framework. As a result of the approach adopted, these surveys can offer only a rough estimate of the frequency of such consultations for continuing health issues following a SARS-CoV-2 infection.

To permit comparisons to be made between physicians and also over time, the numbers of such consultations for continuing health issues following COVID-19 are expressed as a proportion of the total physician/patient contacts (PPCs) for each physician in the period concerned. This approach pays due regard to the fact that the volumes of patient consultations within a particular practice may vary over time, and that such volumes may also vary considerably from practice to practice. In view of the relatively small number of survey participants, the variations in results over time are not significant in statistical terms.