

Children Account for More New COVID-19 Cases as the Pandemic Rolls On

By [Sarah D. Sparks](#) on [December 1, 2020 12:29 PM](#)

Children are less likely to catch the coronavirus than adults and tend to have less severe symptoms if they do get infected. But as more people get tested and researchers learn more about COVID-19, children's vulnerability to the virus is becoming more apparent.

A study **published Tuesday in the journal Pediatrics** finds there have been more than a half million children diagnosed with COVID-19 as of Sept. 10, a rate of 729 cases per 100,000 children. Researchers from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children's Hospital Association analyzed coronavirus case data from April to September from 49 state health departments as well as those of New York City, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and Guam. (New York State does not report coronavirus cases by age.)

Children under 18 make up nearly 23 percent of people in the United States, but researchers found they've so far made up only 10 percent of the more than 6.3 million cumulative U.S. cases of coronavirus, as the chart below shows.

The study did not look at whether children transmit the virus more easily than adults do, but the findings do suggest that the virus may be more common among children than school leaders expect.

While more children are being identified with the virus, they have not become more likely to face severe symptoms from the disease. As of Sept. 10, less than 2 percent of all children who had ever had COVID-19 needed to be hospitalized, and less than .01 percent died. Children have represented .07 percent of all U.S. deaths from the pandemic, and those rates have not changed as the pandemic has continued.

Big holes remain in the data. It's still difficult to tell exactly how many children have had the virus for a variety of reasons. States count children differently, with some including those only up to age 14, while others go up to age 20. In many states still short on coronavirus tests, children are unlikely to be tested unless they show major symptoms of the disease, such as a high fever coupled with severe coughing or breathing problems. And other studies have found children, particularly those under 10, are significantly less likely to even spike a fever.