



FACT SHEET

The COVID-19 pandemic and spinal cord injury

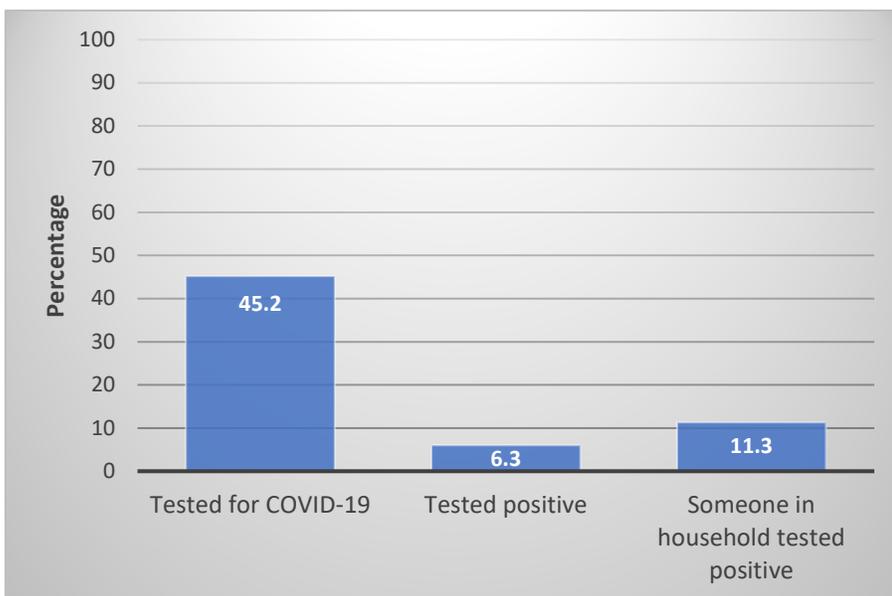
What and who did we study?

We continue to study the effects of the COVID-19 on the lives of people with spinal cord injury (SCI). We asked participants how COVID-19 has affected their lives, whether they have been tested, and if they intend to take the vaccine. Participants were identified through the South Carolina SCI Database, a project funded by the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund (SCIRF).

Current results in this fact sheet are based on the 272 responses obtained between December 7, 2020 and May 4, 2021. Men made up 68.3% of the participants. The average age was 57.8 years old and participants averaged 12.9 years since the onset of their SCI. Just over 72% percent were able to walk to some degree.

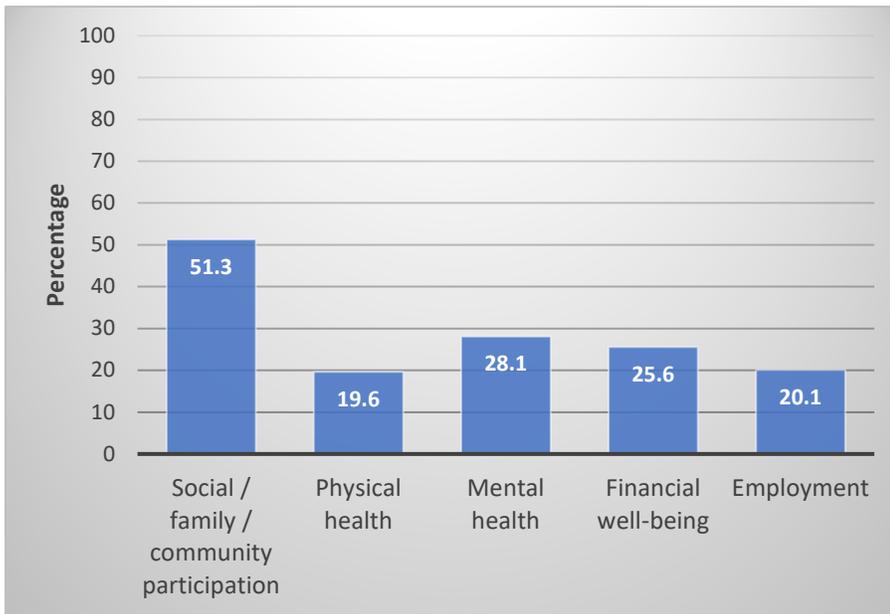
What did we find?

COVID-19 Testing



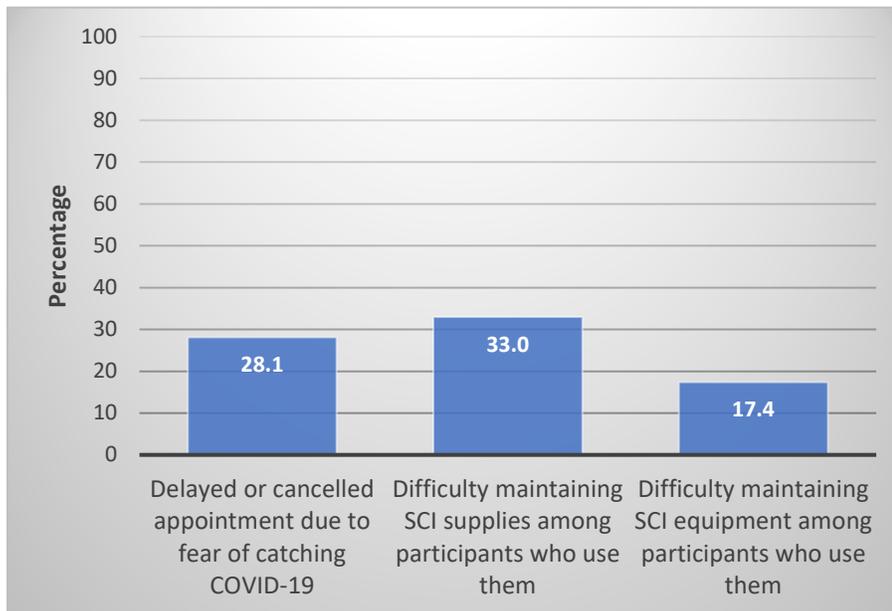
- Just over 45% of the participants had been tested for COVID-19. Of these, 13.8% tested positive. Therefore, 6.3% of the participants overall were tested and had positive tests.
- In addition, 11.3% reported having at least one other person in their household test positive for COVID-19.

Negative effects of COVID-19



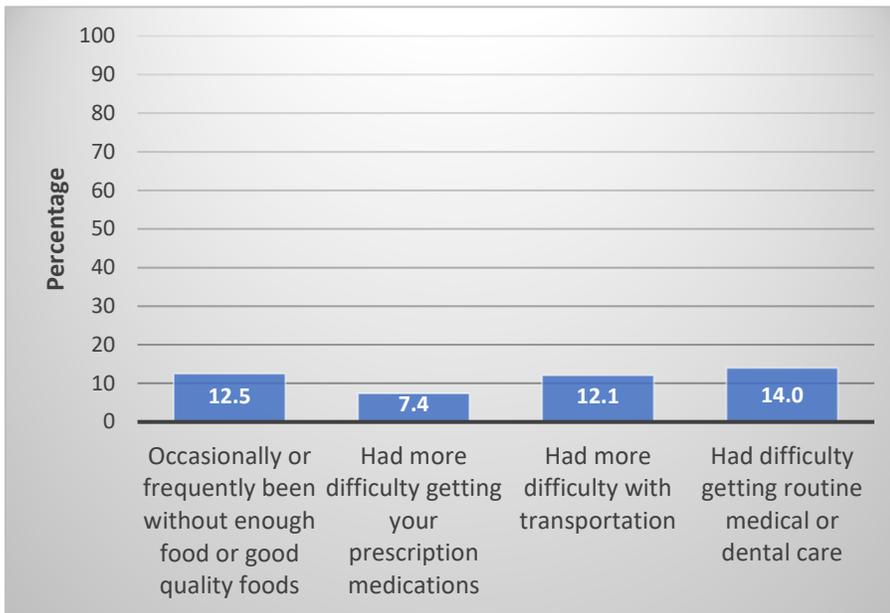
- Most participants indicated that the pandemic affected at least one area of life. The area impacted most greatly was social, family, and community participation, at 51.3%.
- No other area of life affected more than 28.1% of the participants.

Access to Routine Treatment, Supplies, and Equipment



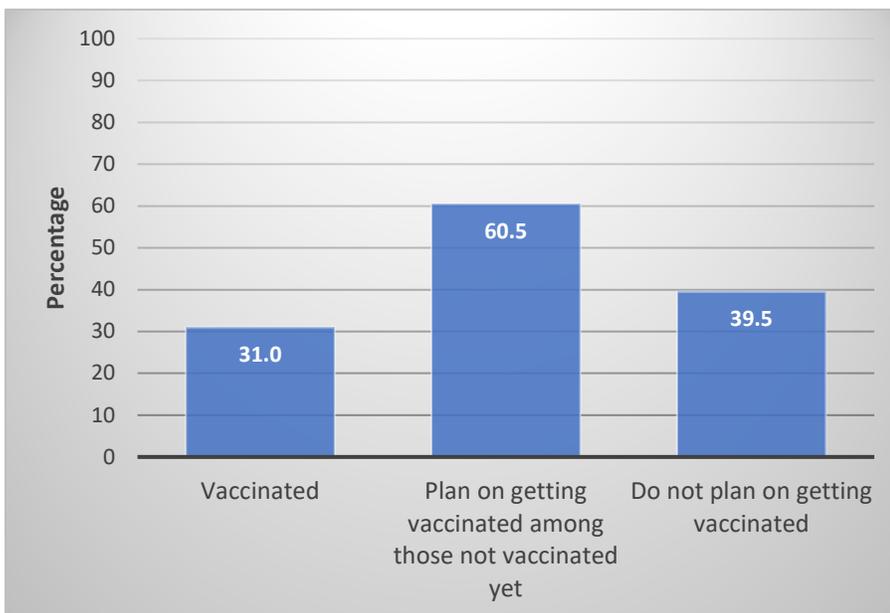
- A little over a quarter (28.1%) of participants delayed or postponed some type of routine treatment due to fear of catching COVID-19.
- 37.3% stated they used supplies (e.g., gloves and catheters). Of these, 1 out of every 3 participants reported having difficulty maintaining their supplies.
- 41.3% stated they used SCI equipment, such as a wheelchair, walker, or hospital bed. Of these, 17.4% reported difficulty getting maintenance of their equipment because of the pandemic.

How COVID-19 affected access to daily necessities



- Less than 1 out of 5 participants reported having difficulty getting daily necessities in getting food, prescription medications, transportation, or routine medical care.

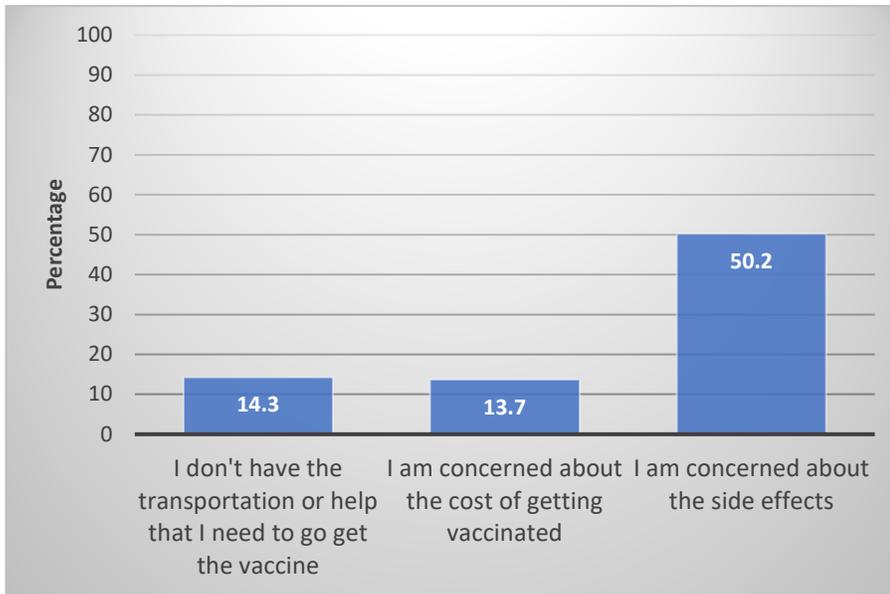
COVID-19 Vaccination



- Of those who had the vaccine available to them, approximately 3 out of every 10 people with SCI had been vaccinated (31.0%).
- Of those who had not been vaccinated, only 60.5% are planning on getting vaccinated, while 39.5% do not plan on getting the vaccine.

Note: the relatively low vaccination rate is partly due to the start of the study at a time when the vaccine was not readily available.

Concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine



- Just over half of our participants (50.2%) were concerned about the side effects of the vaccine.
- Much smaller percentages were concerned with transportation to get to/from a vaccine site (11.7%) and any potential cost of the vaccine (11.5%).
- Of those who have indicated that they do not plan on getting vaccinated, they have a much higher concern about the side effects (68.8%).

Should I be worried about side effects of the vaccine?

In the general population, some side effects that have been observed include headache, tiredness, fever, and a sore arm. We are not aware of any studies on side effects specifically on people with SCI. There is agreement among health professionals that the benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh the risks.

What can I do to prevent getting COVID-19?

To reduce your risk of getting or spreading COVID-19, practice social distancing, have good hygiene (particularly hand washing), use personal protective equipment, and take the vaccine once it is available to you. Some vaccines require two doses approximately 19-23 days apart and taking both doses is important.

Support: This newsletter is a product of the South Carolina spinal cord injury outcomes database, which is a study of outcomes among people with spinal cord injury (SCI) in the state of South Carolina. The study was designed to help us better understand the needs of people with SCI in South Carolina and is supported by the South Carolina SCI Research Fund, grants 2017 SI-02 and 09-001. This newsletter is not meant to replace the advice of your physician or other healthcare provider. You should always consult your physician or healthcare provider before making changes to behavior, treatment, or use of medicine.