

**AMERICA'S INFECTED** Almost NINE MILLION Americans 'may have had coronavirus in March... but 80 percent never knew it'

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**RESEARCHERS** have long estimated the number of US coronavirus infections has been under-counted, but a new study suggests the true figures is much higher than the official tally.

Only 100,000 cases were confirmed by the end of March, but the study argues

that more than 8.7 million Americans may have been infected during a three-week period of March 8 to March 28.



**A new study suggests that as many as 8.7 million Americans could have been infected with COVID-19, but were unaware** Credit: AP:Associated Press

The eye-popping report published Monday by the Journal Science Translational Medicine is based on the number of patients who sought medical care while experiencing influenza-like symptoms in March.

Although these patients were never diagnosed with COVID-19, the flu or any other viral diseases.

Researchers noticed a surge of people with influenza-like illnesses (ILI) during a three-week period in March that was much higher than the seasonal average.

According to the report, if one-third of those patients were infected with the virus, but were never tested, the surge could have corresponded to more than 8.7 million infected.



**The study says that within a three-week span in March of 2020, 80 percent of Americans could have had the virus**

Credit: Reuters

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## **Only 100,000 COVID-19 cases were confirmed at the end of March**

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The peak of the virus is now months removed and testing for COVID-19 in the US has become common.

The report suggests that more than 80 percent of those infected remain undiagnosed across the country.

The study reveals that in March of 2020, many states, including New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey and Louisiana showed a surge in the number of non-influenza ILI case.

“In the fourth week of March, 2020, New York State saw approximately 2 times higher non-influenza ILI than it had ever seen since the inception of the ILINet surveillance system within the US,” the study reads.

The results suggest that surveillance networks for influenza-like disease offer an important tool to estimate the number of infected by COVID-19.

Many scientists suspect that the true number of infected is much higher than the cases confirmed due to the low availability of testing and some individuals showing no symptoms.

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Contrary to President Trump's call to reduce coronavirus testing, the authors

of the study said widespread testing bring benefits in the fight against the virus.

“Confirmed cases are thought to be underestimates of true prevalence due to some unknown combinations of patients not reporting for testing, testing not being conducted, and false-negative test results,” they wrote.

“Estimating the true prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 would inform the scale of upcoming surges in hospital demand, the proportion of individuals who remain susceptible to contracting the virus.”