

# Over half of people with multiple long-term conditions experience chronic pain

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People with multimorbidity—two or more long-term health conditions—showed a greater association with chronic pain, according to a new study.

The new research—from the University of Glasgow and published in the *Journal of Multimorbidity and Comorbidity*—represents the first study of the prevalence of [chronic pain](#) in people with a broad range of [long-term conditions](#) and different levels of multimorbidity.

The study found that over half (53.8%) of people with two or three long term conditions—and around 75% of those with 4 or more long-term conditions—reported at least one site of chronic [pain](#). This means that, respectively, those people were twice as likely and four times as likely to experience chronic pain than that of a person with no long-term conditions.

Chronic pain is defined as pain lasting for three months or more; and may be experienced in relation to a specific body site, such as [low back pain](#), or be present in multiple sites of the body. A recent study reported that approximately 43% of UK adults live with chronic pain; and between 11% and 17% report widespread pain.

The study used data from UK Biobank to also examine the relationship between the number and type of long-term conditions in participants who self-reported chronic pain.

In total, 218,656 participants self-reported chronic pain and, of these, over 36% of people reported at least two long-term conditions. In more than 31 different health conditions examined, more than 50% of those people experienced chronic pain.

Participants with four or more long-term conditions were over three times likely to have chronic pain and more than 13 times as likely to have widespread chronic pain as those with no long-term conditions.

Dr. Barbara Nicholl, Senior Lecturer at the University's Institute of Health and Wellbeing, said: "This study is important because it

highlights a much-neglected area of healthcare—namely the coexistence of chronic pain and multimorbidity. Our study shows that the presence of chronic pain should be a key factor for consideration in the management of patients with 2 or more other long-term conditions.

"Going forward, this area needs more research and clinical consideration." "It's vital for healthcare providers to understand the impact of chronic pain on health-related outcomes in order to inform the needs and management of care in people who experience chronic pain alongside other long-term conditions.

Dr. Neha Issar-Brown, Director of Research at Versus Arthritis, commented "Chronic pain affects millions of us in the UK and over 80% of people living with arthritis tell us they experience pain most days. Almost a third of people over the age of 45 with a major long-term condition also have a musculoskeletal condition such as arthritis and that is why we are pleased to have funded the first study to ascertain and understand the prevalence of chronic pain in people affected by multiple long-term conditions.

These findings are important not only to improve our understanding of chronic pain associated with multiple long-term conditions but will also lead to improved management and treatments for the millions of people who experience the devastating impact of living with pain."

The study, "Prevalence of chronic pain in LTCs and multimorbidity: A cross-sectional study using UK Biobank," is published in the *Journal of Multimorbidity and Comorbidity*.

**More information:** Prevalence of chronic pain in LTCs and multimorbidity: A cross-sectional study using UK Biobank, *Journal of Multimorbidity and Comorbidity*, [DOI: 10.1177/26335565211005870](https://doi.org/10.1177/26335565211005870)

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