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# Repeat surveys key to decode herd immunity: Scientists

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Pune: The Indian Institute of Science Education and Research scientists have stressed that a repeat longitudinal sero survey would help in understanding the herd immunity developed by the same population.

The first survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) with the collaborating institutes revealed that Covid-19 had infected around 51% of a sampled population in parts of Pune. Scientists claimed that it was a fresh evidence of extensive and silent spread of the coronavirus infection.

Professor LS Shashidhara of the Ashoka University, who led the survey, said their study revealed that a much larger proportion of people did not know that they had any infection, meaning they were asymptomatic. “We are consulting more experts on what appropriate measures one could recommend in such a situation,” he told TOI, stressing on continuing with tests and isolation because cases were still being reported from some of the sampled prabhags (areas).

He said, “The fact that so many people were infected without any major crisis for hospital beds, ICUs or ventilators gives the health care authorities the confidence that they can deal with the situation systematically.”

Pune divisional commissioner Saurabh Rao said they were awaiting recommendations from the IISER and the team that conducted the first sero survey in the city. “Based on it, we shall continue with aggressive testing in Pune and focus on super spreaders,” he said.

Shashidhara said, “We definitely need to do more sero surveys and cover more prabhags (areas). Longitudinal study of the same prabhags surveyed one or more times will help understand better the (Covid-19) spread across the city and if these antibodies stay longer in the system. The protective role of these antibodies and the question of herd immunity are being investigated systematically by our people. This is a lengthy experiment and may take 5-6 weeks for us to report the results.”

