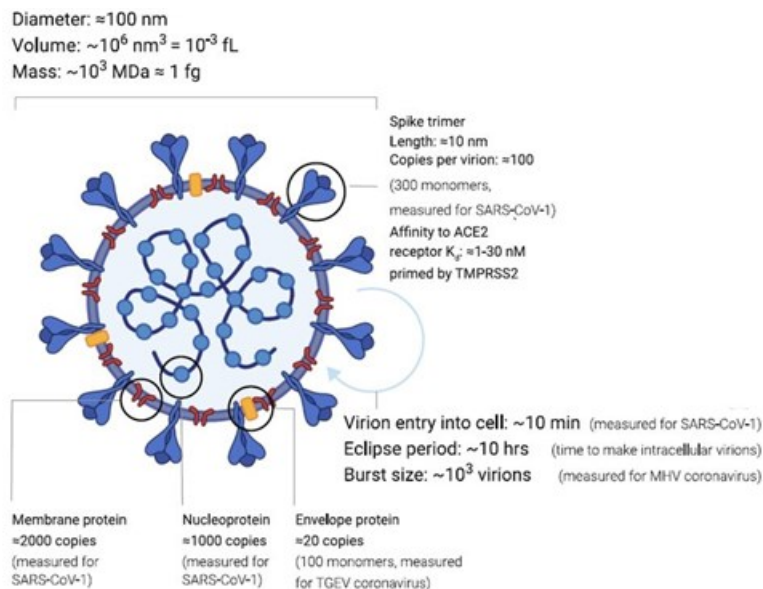


Blood tests to be conducted on 19,000 people in nine provinces

By [James Stent](#)

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Blood samples are to be taken from up to 19,000 people across all provinces, in the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) two-phase nationwide Covid-19 seroprevalence survey.



A graphic of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19. Image by Hanna Vega Yinon MBar-On, Avi Flanholz, Rob Phillips, and Ron Milo via Wikimedia, published in Cell Biology by the Numbers (CC BY-SA 4.0)

The HSRC has released details of the seroprevalence survey, which joins several other efforts underway or soon to begin. These surveys will bridge a gap in our understanding of the true extent of the spread of Covid-19. The surveys test people for the antibodies to the virus — SARS-Cov-2 — that causes Covid-19. They can help estimate the percentage of the population that has been infected.

This survey, called the National Covid-19 Antibody Survey, was announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa in September.

Along with blood samples, field workers will gather data from 20 minute interviews to assess “the history of infection, exposure to contacts, co-morbidities, and practices such as hand washing and social distancing”.

Also, 10% of participants in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Pretoria will be asked to provide an additional blood sample “to be tested to ascertain how the body responds to the Covid-19 virus”.

The first wave of the survey is underway and will be completed at the end of December. The second wave will run from January to February next year.

The survey is led by the HSRC, with support from independent health research NPO Epicentre, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, the National Health Laboratory Service, and the South African Medical Research Council.

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