

# COVID-19 prevalence survey update

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Manatū Hauora – the Ministry of Health has agreed that the COVID-19 prevalence surveys should not advance in their proposed current format. Aotearoa New Zealand has passed the emergency stage of its COVID-19 response, with the virus endemic in our communities. The results of any COVID-19-focused prevalence survey would be unlikely to meaningfully alter any current public health response as there are only two pandemic-related mandates still in place (the 7-day isolation period and mask use for visitors to healthcare facilities).

COVID-19 infection prevalence and seroprevalence surveys are complex projects involving a number of agencies, stakeholders and external providers. The Ministry accepts it took longer than expected to reach this conclusion, given the challenges of a multi-stakeholder, complex project developed during the health reforms.

Prevalence surveys are expected to be a key tool in any future effective population and public health knowledge surveillance system. Any future survey design will benefit from lessons learned during the COVID-19 prevalence surveys project and, where appropriate, will leverage technologies and ways of working established during the pandemic.