



Social distancing at City Hall MRT station.  
TNP PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

## Local transmission of Covid-19 low, but so is herd immunity: Study

Local transmission of Covid-19 in the community has been low, at least until the middle of last month, researchers from the Covid-19 research group at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) have found.

This shows Singapore's contact tracing efforts were effective, with those likely to be infected successfully identified for isolation, according to a study by the centre.

However, this also means that immunity rates here are low and much of Singapore's population remains susceptible to the virus, NCID executive director Leo Yee Sin told reporters yesterday.

The ongoing study, a collaboration between NCID and Duke-NUS Medical School, is aimed at measuring how widespread Covid-19 is in the community.

Researchers tested blood samples taken from 268 children aged 16 and below, as well as 506 adults of all ages.

The samples, contributed by the National University Polyclinics, the National University Hospital and the KK Women and Children's Hospital, were taken from anonymous patients who had their blood drawn as part of their routine care.

They were grouped by age to test if adults are more likely to carry antibodies indicating a past infection than children.

One concern the study attempted to address is if some infected individuals – especially children – have only mild symptoms or even no symptoms.

But the study found that none of the subjects had antibody levels that indicated Covid-19 infection.

Dr Mark Chen, who heads NCID's research office, said this showed a "very low" proportion of the community in Singapore were infected as of the middle of last month and community transmission of the virus was not widespread.

More tests are planned for early next month and the researchers hope to gather more samples from children, Dr Chen said. – REI KUROHI