

METRO

2.7 million New Yorkers may have been exposed to coronavirus, study finds

By Bernadette Hogan and Aaron Feis

April 23, 2020 | 1:32pm

One in five Big Apple residents screened in the state's first round of **coronavirus antibody testing** were found to have been exposed to the contagion — and some 2.7 million people could have been infected statewide, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Thursday.

The state tested 3,000 random New Yorkers across 19 Empire State localities for the presence of antibodies, which would indicate that they were exposed to the coronavirus at some point and may have built up some level of immunity to it.

Of the tests conducted in the five boroughs, 21.2 percent returned positive results — significantly higher than the rate of **approximately 1-in-8** that city Health Commissioner Dr. Oxiris Barbot postulated earlier Thursday.

Statewide, 13.9 percent tested positive, a number that, if it's indeed reflective of the larger reality, would translate to some 2.7 million people, Cuomo said.

Men tested positive at a higher rate than women — 15.9 percent versus 12.0 percent — while Latino and black New Yorkers were hit at a disproportionately higher rate than others, at 22.5 and 22.1 percent, respectively.

The state Health Department began collecting the samples Monday at grocery markets and other stores across the Empire State — and produced the results just four days later. However, officials warned the sample was not entirely random because they could only check people who ventured outdoors.

Leaders including Cuomo have pointed to more widespread antibody testing as key to restarting the economy because it would indicate which workers may have acquired some immunity to the bug.

But others including White House coronavirus expert Dr. Anthony Fauci have **cautioned against leaning too hard** into the tests, and the availability of kits remains a major hurdle, which Cuomo has **sought the feds' help** in clearing.



The results were revealed as another “breathtakingly tragic” 438 New Yorkers succumbed to the virus in the 24-hour period ending at midnight Thursday, raising the state death toll to 15,740, Cuomo said.

“That number is not coming down as fast as we’d like to see that number come down,” he said of the daily fatality count.

The three-day rolling average of new hospitalizations has also stalled, standing at 1,359 on Wednesday, down slightly from 1,366 on Tuesday and 1,367 on Monday.

“That’s the best indicator of how containment is working, and how the close-down policies are working,” he said. “Which is not great.”

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