

## Relevance of Rising Recoveries - COVID-19

### What is the issue?

- The number of people who have recovered from COVID-19 in India, from the time the first ever case was recorded, has exceeded the number of active cases (as of 11 June 2020).
- The rise in the recovery rate is cause for cheer, but it gives no room for complacency seen in the light of the nature of the disease and the cases.

### Why does this have little relevance now?

- The figures on recovered cases neither mark the beginning of the end of the epidemic, nor the arrival of the “peak”.
- It does not mean either that the number of cases would be declining from now on.
- In fact, seen along with number of deaths, it is learnt that less than 50% of the total infected people (2.86 lakh) have recovered so far.
- The total recoveries, in fact, work out to 49% of all cases.
- More importantly, total recoveries and the number of active cases are not comparable metrics.
- Total recoveries account for everyone who has recovered from the disease since the start of the outbreak.
- It is an accumulated number.
- The active cases, on the other hand, are only those that have been infected in the last 14 days.
- This is again only if it is assumed that every infected person, apart from those who die, is recovering in 14 days.
- It must also be remembered that the Indian government revised its discharge policy.
- No longer does a patient have to test negative twice over an interval of 24 hours.
- Any patient who does not show any symptom over 3 days is allowed to go home now.
- Likewise, patients who were on critical care require only one negative test to be discharged.
- [Discharge is likely to be followed up with home isolation for a period of 7 days or 2 weeks, with restrictions on movement outside the home.]

## How does recovery rate work?

- It is no surprise that with the passage of time the number of recoveries will progressively rise.
- Even when seen as a percentage of total infections in the country, the recovery rate will rise.
- Right now, the fatality rate in India is about 2.8%.
- But that is only because India is measuring the number of dead against the infections that have been confirmed through testing.
- Most likely, there are many more people who are also carrying the infection, but are unknown because they have not been tested.
- In large population groups, like that in India, the exact number of people infected during an epidemic may in fact never be known.
- Theoretically, when those untested and unconfirmed infections are also accounted for, the overall fatality may certainly remain below 1%.
- Scientists thus expect the overall fatality to be below 1%.
- So, if this remains the case, then, by the end of the pandemic, eventually, more than 99% of the infected would be expected to have recovered.

## What then is a safe metric?

- The ratio of the number of daily recoveries to the number of new cases detected every day is perhaps a better metric.
- If the number of people recovering on any given day is more than the new cases being detected on the day, it would suggest a favourable trend.
- If this trend holds for more than two weeks, then it can be an indication of the disease having 'peaked' and a decline having started.
- In India, that stage is yet to be reached.
- As and when recoveries begin to exceed new cases, the trend would become evident in some states even before getting visible at the national level.
- So, meanwhile, the focus on health care must not be lost at this point in the continuum of fighting this epidemic.

**Source: Indian Express, The Hindu**