

7,000 new infections in 24 hours: Germany's highest COVID numbers since beginning of pandemic

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The second coronavirus wave has arrived in Germany. The current numbers of daily new infections leave no doubt about this. On Friday morning, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) reported another record, with 7,334 new infections. On Thursday, the number had already soared to 6,638 new infections in 24 hours—the highest number ever recorded in Germany since the start of the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic. The number of COVID-19 deaths rose to a total of 9,739.

Throughout Europe, many countries are reporting record numbers of new infections every day. In Russia, the number climbed to 13,000, in France to 27,000 and in Britain, it has been over 17,000 for several days. After the new lockdown in Israel, there are again partial lockdowns in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. In Belgium, where infections are also rising rapidly, the incidence rate has been at 880 registered cases per 100,000 inhabitants for two weeks.

Despite all this, governments are sticking to their herd immunity strategy. This is especially true in Germany. After a long meeting on Wednesday evening, Chancellor Angela Merkel (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) and the heads of the federal states made it clear they will do nothing to effectively protect working people from the pandemic.

Merkel herself, who appeared before the press together with state premiers Michael Müller (Social Democrat, Berlin) and Markus Söder (Christian Social Union, Bavaria), showed how aware politicians are of the seriousness of the situation. "We are already in the exponential phase," said the chancellor. "Our announcements are not strong enough to avert disaster."

Nevertheless, together with the heads of the federal states, she recommended only somewhat stricter curfews and bans on alcohol sales. The obligation to wear masks should be considered binding from an incidence rate of 35 new infections per 100,000 inhabitants within seven days. The ban on tourist accommodation in several federal states, which the states could not agree on, was overturned by the Administrative Court in Baden-Württemberg a few hours

later.

In contrast to March, when the numbers initially rose sharply and schools and day-care centres were closed, politicians today are determined to continue exposing workers and caregivers, bus and train drivers, teachers and students to the risk of infection. To prevent a new lockdown at all costs, the ruling class is accepting massive new deaths.

This was repeated in multiple variations by leading politicians at the beginning of the week. Here are some examples:

- "It is now important to keep public life open, schools and day-care centres open, the economy open"—Armin Laschet, CDU, minister-president of North Rhine-Westphalia on October 12

- "We must protect the core areas of social life from another lockdown. Schools, kindergartens, universities and the economy must no longer be allowed to take these drastic measures"—Winfried Kretschmann, Greens, minister-president of Baden-Württemberg, in *Bild* newspaper

- "Our goal must be to prevent a second lockdown nationwide because we would not survive this economically"—Manuela Schwesig, SPD, minister-president of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, on October 12 in broadcaster ARD's *Mittagsmagazin*

This was formulated quite drastically by political scientist and former SPD secretary of state for culture Julian Nidda-Rumelin on Monday on the "Tagesthemen" programme, "Everyone agrees: A second lockdown would be a disaster." For him, the decline in figures after the first wave was in no way due to the lockdown, but rather "already came before the lockdown, that has been proven," he said.

To substantiate such hazardous assertions, politicians and the media are constantly conjuring up new pseudo-expert opinions and statements from business-oriented (or better: bought and paid-for) "experts" out of a hat.

Andreas Gassen, chairman of the board of the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians, for

example, warned against “false alarmism” in the *Osnabrücker Zeitung*. One should stop staring at the number of new infections like a rabbit at a snake. Instead, a look at the intensive care beds was called for. Accordingly, there was no fear of an overloading of the health care system in autumn and winter.

Virologist Hendrik Streeck, already known as an ideologist of herd immunity, also repeatedly calls for society to stop “over-dramatising” things and return to normality, because “Too much fear only hurts. In contrast to the spring, most coronavirus cases today are harmless,” Streeck claimed.

Yet this dangerous, misleading propaganda has long been refuted by serious studies and scientists. Virologist Melanie Brinkmann emphasised in *Stern* magazine, “This whole intellectual edifice that one could allow more infections as long as the disease ran a less severe course is nonsense in my view.”

The severe illnesses will follow, she predicted; it was high time to “counter [this] quickly and effectively.” She anticipated “10,000 newly infected persons in the near future.” One should “not only act when the number of occupied intensive care beds increases.”

This was confirmed by Charité virologist Christian Drosten in broadcaster NDR’s blog on October 13. In several other European countries, intensive care units were already full again, he said. “We are simply lagging two to three weeks behind. ... There is no reason why things should go differently for us.” The virus had already spread widely in Germany, he said. This was clearly shown by new outbreaks, even in remote regions and in rural areas.

Drosten identified the dangerous outbreak sites as “simmering clusters of sources,” which significantly fuelled the infection. This was proven by a large-scale study from India in *Science* magazine. This study, from the Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, had shown how “this disease spreads in clusters, in superspreading events.” He described such clusters as situations in which “too many people stay in closed rooms for long periods, too many of whom do not wear a mask.”

But it is precisely these situations that are occurring a thousand times over in schools, in many production plants and distribution centres, and on crowded buses and trains. Politicians and the media systematically and purposefully ignore this.

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is the only party and the WSWs the only daily publication that systematically focuses on this. The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and its sections around the world are calling on all workers in production and other sectors, bus drivers, carers, educators, students and others concerned to form

independent action committees and prepare a general strike to stop the second wave of the coronavirus.

New reports of Sars-CoV-2 outbreaks are currently accumulating in schools and day-care centres and refugee and elderly care facilities throughout the country. Here are just a few of the thousands of cases:

At the beginning of this week, the city of Freiburg im Breisgau reported new cases of coronavirus at 14 schools and eight kindergartens; 11 of 66 state schools are affected. There are further outbreaks in at least five different grammar schools in the district of Fürstenfeldbruck, at a grammar school in Bayreuth and another in Schweinfurt. In the district of Lippe (North Rhine-Westphalia), more than half of all boarding school students in a Bible school run by Evangelical Christians in Lemgo have become infected: 60 of 117 students tested positive.

A letter in which 20 parents’ associations call on the Merkel government to finally stop teaching without proper coronavirus protection states: “Many thousands of students have been infected with SARs-CoV-2, as have a large number of teachers and other educational specialists and other school staff. We currently expect at least 50,000 students and an additional large number of teachers to be in quarantine.”

There are also numerous outbreaks in refugee shelters. In the Hesse Initial Reception Facility (HEAE) in Kassel-Niederzwehren, 111 people tested positive for coronavirus; that is more than a third of the refugees in this facility. There are also seven positive cases in a refugee accommodation facility in Bergedorf near Hamburg.

As far as production plants are concerned, after the outbreak at meat processor Tönnies in Sögel, a turkey slaughterhouse in Mühldorf am Inn is now affected, where 39 employees had tested positive for COVID-19 by Wednesday. Three employees at Munich slaughterhouses are also infected.

In the meantime, the situation in intensive care units is anything but reassuring. As hospital doctors emphasise, there is a lack of trained personnel. But even the number of beds is not unlimited. As the DIVI Intensive Care Register reported on Thursday, 655 intensive care beds are occupied, twice as many as two weeks ago. Half of them, 329 beds, are occupied by patients who need to be ventilated. So far, it has been shown that one in four COVID-19 intensive care treatments end in death.



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