

Herd immunity policy leads to four-digit COVID-19 incidence levels in German schools

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21 November 2021

Daily infection levels are at an all-time high in Germany, currently doubling every 14 days. The seven-day incidence rate per 100,000 inhabitants was more than 340 on Friday, after 65,371 people were infected in a single day on Wednesday. The increase runs across all age groups, but children and adolescents have the highest rates. The seven-day incidence level is currently 395 in the 15- to 34-year-old age group and 819 among 5- to 14-year-olds.

Incidence rates are highest in Saxony, with 935 among 15- to 34-year-olds and 2,284 among 5- to 14-year-olds. This means that one to two percent of all schoolchildren in Saxony are becoming infected every week. In Brandenburg, Berlin, Bavaria and Saxony-Anhalt, the incidence level among 15- to 34-year-olds is also in the four-digit range.

According to figures from the Conference of State Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, there were around 45,000 known coronavirus cases among schoolchildren last week—almost double the figure of 23,000 cases in the previous week. Currently, nearly 87,000 of 10 million students nationwide are in quarantine. In addition, there are about 2,100 teachers quarantining.

The number of coronavirus outbreaks in schools remains higher than in any previous wave, according to the weekly report by the Robert Koch Institute (RKI). In the last four weeks, 856 school outbreaks have been recorded, although the last two weeks cannot be conclusively assessed yet because of late reports. On average, there are five to six cases per outbreak.

The catastrophic increase among largely unvaccinated—and thus defenceless—schoolchildren is a consequence of the criminal policy of deliberate mass infection supported by all parties. After the summer break, all federal states started with full in-person

classes and gradually dismantled protective measures that were still in place.

Regulations benchmarking the level above which distance learning had to take place were eliminated. Even the requirement to wear a mask was suspended in some states. Students told the WSWs that quarantine regulations were mostly reduced to requiring only the infected person themselves to be quarantined—not even those who sit in their immediate vicinity. Since testing is usually only provided for unvaccinated students, those who are vaccinated often unknowingly infect fellow students. Also, very few schools are equipped with air filters, so ventilation must continue with open windows, even as winter approaches.

These deadly policies are being implemented by all bourgeois parties. Currently, Saxony (governed by the Christian Democratic CDU, Greens and Social Democratic SPD) has the most infections, followed by Bavaria (governed by the Christian Democratic CSU and the right-wing Free Voters) and Thuringia (Left Party, SPD and Greens). The parties of the planned federal “traffic light” (SPD, Greens and the Liberal Democrats-FDP) government under Olaf Scholz decided on Thursday to end the designation of an “epidemic emergency of national scope” on November 25, thus removing the basis for important protective measures.

The unions also support the removing of all barriers to the spread of the virus. GEW education union President Maike Finnern spoke out against school closures in late October.

On the other hand, opposition to this policy of deliberate mass infection is growing. In a joint press release, the State Parents’ Association for High Schools (LEV), the Association of Directors of Bavarian High Schools (BayDV) and the Bavarian

Philologists' Association (bpv) recently stated, "Parents, school administrators and teachers are unanimous: Talking up the situation at schools won't help!"

They write, "In the first few weeks, work habits and structure had to be practiced again in class, and that took up a lot of time. Add to that the growing number of students in quarantine: they have to be provided with materials, they must not lose touch." Due to quarantining and the first waves of illness, there had been a lot of coming and going in the classroom, and regular lessons were often impossible, they said. "Maintaining normal operations and managing coronavirus at the same time—this balancing act has become too great in many places."

"The situation at schools is coming to a head," reports LEV chairwoman Birgit Bretthauer from the parents' point of view. "We receive reports every day that the mental health of many students has declined significantly and that gaps in subject matter are also increasingly causing problems in everyday school life." Walter Baier, Chairman of the School Directors' Association, said, "The wish for a normal school year has unfortunately not become reality—and everyone must admit this and draw immediate conclusions from it."

Broad opposition in the population to the herd immunity policy is particularly evident in a petition calling for protective measures in schools and day care centres, which received more than 45,000 signatures in less than a week. The initiators are largely teachers and medical professionals.

The petition calls on Chancellor-designate Olaf Scholz (SPD) to "demonstrate leadership ... in the fight against the pandemic." The petition refers to a recent letter from 35 renowned scientists who stated, "Once again, the time for early action has passed, despite all warnings. Infectious disease is spreading unchecked. The health care system is in danger of collapse."

The petition calls the impending end to the designated epidemic emergency "a serious political mistake [that] Germany may pay for with tens of thousands of additional coronavirus deaths. The overriding goal must be to contain new infections to low levels. High incidence levels overburden the health care system and put the entire population at risk—including the vaccinated."

The strong support for these demands reflects immense opposition among workers and youth. But a humane pandemic policy cannot be achieved by appealing to the common sense of the politicians responsible for executing the herd immunity policy. Governments are not refusing to implement the necessary measures because they are ill-informed or unaware of the current situation.

Politicians like Olaf Scholz are regularly advised by leading scientists and are fully aware of the suffering their policies cause. In the penultimate debate in the Bundestag (federal parliament) to end the designation of an emergency situation, Scholz declared, "We know what the consequence will be: Very, very many of those who are not vaccinated will become infected, and many of those who become infected will become ill, and of those who become ill, some will be struggling for their lives in the intensive care units of our hospitals."

Politicians of all the establishment parties are not implementing the necessary measures because above all else, they defend the economic interests of the banks and corporations. Even in the first lockdown, Scholz, as Finance Minister, organized the billion-euro handouts for the banks and corporations. The necessary coronavirus protection measures, however—such as the closure of schools and nonessential businesses—run counter to the profit maximization of the corporations and are therefore not taken.

For this reason, the ruling class's policy of deliberate mass infection must be met with a working class offensive for the elimination of the virus. Students, teachers and parents must unite in independent rank-and-file committees and together force the necessary action.



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