

High excess mortality as coronavirus death rates rise in Germany

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Excess mortality has reached record levels in Germany and coronavirus deaths are higher than in any previous year. Nevertheless, governments of all parties at federal and state level have declared the pandemic over and lifted the last remaining protective measures.

According to a press release from the German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis), average excess mortality so far in 2022 is 9 percent, meaning deaths this year are 9 percent higher than the median of the last four years, 2018-2021.

Throughout most of the summer, excess mortality was in double digits: 9 percent in June, 12 percent in July, 11 percent in August and 10 percent in September. In October, excess mortality reached a record 19 percent. Calculations by the EuroMOMO network show that there is a similar trend in other European countries.

A total of 92,000 people died in Germany in October, 14,560 more than the average per month for the last four years. The high number of additional deaths can be attributed in significant part to those dying as a result of infection with the coronavirus. According to the Robert Koch Institute, 4,334 people succumbed to the virus in October, significantly more than in the same period in pandemic years 2021 (2,493 deaths) and 2020 (1,482 deaths).

Compared to previous pandemic years, excess mortality this year can no longer be readily attributed to deaths resulting directly from infection with the virus. In 2020, excess mortality was almost entirely consistent with the number of reported coronavirus deaths. In 2021, this was still largely the case. By 2022, these accounted for just under half of the excess mortality.

However, several scientists believe that a crucial proportion of the higher excess mortality is due to indirect consequences of the pandemic, such as

hospitals and hospital staff being overloaded.

For example, Jonas Schöley of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research (MPIDR) in Rostock, Germany, notes that in the autumn of 2022, “only about half [of excess mortality] can be explained by registered COVID mortality.” For the remainder, “it is still open what the reason is.” However, he believes, “it is plausible that we will see more indirect effects in 2022.”

Schöley points to the example of England and Wales. There, excess mortality is also caused by ambulances being delayed for more than 10 minutes. This is a consequence of the overloading of the health care system and thus indirectly of the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking to *Der Spiegel* magazine, Carsten Tschöpe, a cardiologist and head of the cardiomyopathy unit at Berlin’s Charité hospital, pointed out the potentially serious long-term consequences of a COVID infection. With the blood vessels, SARS-CoV-2 attacks “a very central structure of the body.” There is no organ in the human body that was not dependent on blood vessels, he said. “The organs lose parts of their function when they are no longer sufficiently supplied with blood. This causes global damage throughout the body.” According to the magazine, Tschöpe was convinced “that COVID late effects also contributed to the 19 percent excess mortality in October.”

Other scientists also cite the earlier-than-usual onset of the flu epidemic and the circulation of other respiratory illnesses as possible contributors to the high excess mortality. The flu epidemic had been absent in recent years due to existing pandemic measures around the world. Once these were lifted, the flu wave returned particularly aggressively, creating a “twindemic” in which dangerous dual infections from COVID-19 and influenza are also possible.

Regardless of the exact different direct triggers for high excess mortality, the deeper cause lies in the subordination of public health to private profit, which found its sharpest expression in the response to the pandemic by all governments. Worldwide, life expectancy fell because of the pandemic—by nearly half a year in Germany, where more than 158,000 people officially succumbed to the virus.

And the situation is worsening with each passing day. About 1,000 people in Germany are dying from the virus every week, while even more infectious variants are spreading. On Bavarian Radio, Federal Health Minister Karl Lauterbach (Social Democratic Party, SPD) warned of a winter wave—but is doing nothing to avert it.

On the contrary, federal and state governments are ending the last remaining measures. A week ago, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and Schleswig-Holstein lifted the quarantine requirement, and other states have already announced their intention to follow suit. Because of this decision, the *Kieler Nachrichten* already reported that teachers who are coronavirus-positive but have no symptoms of the disease will have to continue teaching.

Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein also plan to lift the requirement to wear a mask on public transport in a few weeks. In March, Bremen senator (state minister) and chairwoman of the state transport ministers, Maike Schaefer (Greens), also advocates a nationwide abolition of the requirement to wear a mask on public transport. She told the dpa news agency, “My goal is for the federal states to agree on a uniform approach here.” For the upcoming special conference of department heads, Bremen had therefore submitted a motion to abolish the mask-wearing requirement for public transportation nationwide when the “Deutschlandticket” (enabling local and regional travel over the summer for just €9 a month) was introduced at the beginning of March.

The reckless approach of governments at all levels in lifting the remaining coronavirus protections despite the enormous excess mortality illustrates the indifference of the ruling class to human life. It deliberately pursues policies that place profits above human lives and aim to reduce life expectancy. If the ruling elites get their way, health and welfare spending will be reduced not only through direct budget cuts, but

also by perpetuating the pandemic and thus mass death.

Workers and youth must understand this as a warning and take the fight to end the pandemic—and the inhumane system that underlies it—into their own hands. Elimination of the virus can only be achieved through an international movement of workers and youth against capitalism.



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