

One year after Biden's lie that "the pandemic is over"

Excess deaths due to the COVID-19 pandemic reach 26 million

Evan Blake
18 September 2023

On Sunday, the *Economist's* tracker of excess deaths attributable to the COVID-19 pandemic reached a staggering 26 million globally, nearly four times the official COVID death toll of 6.9 million. According to this tracker, an average of 7,000 people continue to die each day above the pre-pandemic baseline, with the overwhelming majority either directly from COVID-19 or due to the myriad negative long-term health impacts caused by the virus.

The 26 million excess death milestone was reached exactly one year after US President Joe Biden falsely declared that "the pandemic is over" during an interview with CNN at the Detroit auto show on September 18, 2022.

While Biden's claim was widely denounced by scientists and public health advocates at the time, it set the stage for the complete unwinding of all official pandemic response in the US and globally. It is worthwhile to examine what has actually happened with the pandemic over the past year, as well as the present situation as we head into the fourth fall and winter seasons of the pandemic.

According to official figures tallied on Worldometer, known to be vast undercounts, there have been 92,883 deaths from COVID-19 in the US and 360,852 globally in the year since Biden's statement. According to the *Economist*, there have been 161,741 excess deaths in the US and 4.5 million globally over the past year.

Just three months after Biden's comments, after an unrelenting campaign that included threats by major corporations such as Nike to move production elsewhere, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) lifted its Zero COVID elimination policy. This unleashed a catastrophic wave of mass infection and death, which multiple scientific studies have since estimated caused at least 1–2 million deaths in China from COVID-19 as virtually the entire population of 1.4 billion people were infected.

At the same time, Biden's lie was seized upon by the corporate media and virtually every world government to deepen their propaganda campaign aimed at forcing the population to accept unending waves of mass infection, death and debilitation from COVID-19. This culminated in the unscientific ending of the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE) declarations by the World Health Organization (WHO) on May 5, 2023, and the Biden administration on May 11, 2023.

Just six weeks later, in late June, the latest wave of the pandemic began to sweep across the United States. Due to the complete ending of testing, case reporting and other surveillance by the Centers for Disease Control and Transmission (CDC), it has only been detectable through wastewater sampling, which shows that viral transmission has rapidly increased more than three-fold in the past three months.

Extrapolating from the wastewater data, infectious disease modeler JP Weiland estimates that 10–12 percent of the US population has been infected or reinfected with COVID-19 during the present surge, a

staggering 33–40 million people. He projects that in the next six weeks another 23–33 million people will be infected, meaning that in total this wave will likely have infected 56–73 million Americans, or 17–22 percent of the US population.

At the same time, COVID-19 hospitalizations have more than tripled across the US, with 20,538 hospitalized from COVID during the week ending September 9, the most recent data available. As this is a lagging indicator, it will continue to rise in the weeks ahead.

According to Weiland, the average American has now been infected with COVID at least twice, and by this winter likely three times. Similar rates exist in virtually every country except China, where the majority of the population has only been infected once since the lifting of Zero COVID.

There is nothing like this scale of infection with any virus or pathogen in human history, in which a population of 8 billion people is being subjected to repeated waves of global mass infection in such a concentrated time frame.

The current global wave is being fueled by multiple Omicron variants, including the immune-evasive EG.5 (nicknamed "Eris"), and a number of variants referred to as "FLip" because they contain a combination of mutations that flip the positions of two amino acids, labeled F and L.

The highly-mutated Omicron BA.2.86 subvariant (nicknamed "Pirola") continues to concern scientists globally. Initial studies have produced contradictory results on Pirola's level of immune escape and infectiousness, but it continues to spread globally at an alarming rate.

Noted variant tracker and molecular biologist Marc Johnson tweeted Sunday, "BA.2.86 has remained the fastest growing lineage in the world since it emerged, with sequence numbers doubling about every week. If the advantage is not coming from immune evasion, it must have something else going for it."

Most leading variant trackers have warned that the descendants of Pirola could pick up mutations which make it more transmissible, potentially causing an Omicron-type event of global mass infection in the weeks or months ahead.

The very evolution of this variant is a sign of the continued fitness of SARS-CoV-2 (its ability to reproduce efficiently) and thus its ability to mutate further. It highlights the ongoing danger that a variant could evolve that combines greater immune escape, infectivity and lethality, rendering existing vaccines totally ineffective and causing far greater levels of death. This very real danger is completely ignored by every world government and corporate media outlet.

Furthermore, SARS-CoV-2 is evolving under conditions in which genomic surveillance has collapsed alongside aspects of pandemic surveillance, particularly since the ending of the PHE declarations in May.

Contrary to the lies and propaganda of Biden and the corporate media,

the pandemic is not going away. All principled scientists understand that we remain in the beginning stages of the pandemic and that under existing policies COVID-19 will remain a dangerous pathogen for the foreseeable future.

Trevor Bedford, one of the world's top evolutionary biologists, recently told the *Seattle Times*, "I'm generally very concerned about the overall rate of evolution for SARS-CoV-2. No single [Omicron] variant has been that impactful, but the overall accumulation of these mutations is having significant impact."

At the American Society of Virology conference in June, Bedford said that SARS-CoV-2 is "evolving just as fast as it was in 2021, evolving about two-and-a-half times faster than influenza H3N2 ... and is not really showing signs of slowing down."

Biologist Arijit Chakravarty, who heads a research team that has made some of the most prescient analyses throughout the pandemic, made similar statements in a July interview with the *World Socialist Web Site*. He stressed that the very policies now in place only accelerate the process of viral evolution, creating a high likelihood that at a certain point a variant will evolve that causes existing vaccines to be unable to protect against severe disease and death, essentially putting mankind back at square one or even worse.

In the interview, Chakravarty said,

I can't predict the outcome of the next wave. I can't predict the outcome of the next five waves. But, at the rate that we are going, a prediction can be made with a high degree of certainty that something bad will happen sooner than later along these lines. Keep this pandemic running for another five years and you'll face a debacle on a scale that you haven't yet seen. That's a given.

Characterizing the ending the PHE declarations as "Orwellian Newspeak" which leave society with nothing in place to protect against a more dangerous variant, he commented,

In that kind of reactive strategy what will happen is billions will be infected before we realize something is wrong. And that's too late to do anything about it. So not only is the pandemic very much not over, but by creating the *impression* that the pandemic is over in the face of rampant viral spread and continuing rapid viral evolution, we are essentially sticking our chin out and asking the virus to do its worst.

Finally, Chakravarty stressed that this is only the beginning of the pandemic, saying,

The path that we are on with respect to the pandemic is unsustainable, meaning neither is it inevitable, nor is it something that can continue indefinitely... This is Act One of a three-act play, and in Act Two things could really get ugly, to be honest. Things look dark now because what we have done from a public health standpoint is we've declared the war over unilaterally.

Alongside the dangers of viral evolution, the breadth of Long COVID continues to expand into what is now undeniably a "mass disabling event" throughout the world.

Multiple comprehensive studies indicate that at least 10 percent of

people infected with COVID-19 go on to develop Long COVID. This risk is only slightly reduced by vaccination and is compounded with each reinfection. Recent studies have indicated that even asymptomatic cases can lead to SARS-CoV-2 persisting in the body, potentially causing long-term damage without the patient even being aware of it.

Due to the criminal response of world capitalism, no treatments for Long COVID are yet available and it is unclear when such treatments will be available. Multiple scientists have predicted that in the years ahead potentially billions of people could be suffering from one or multiple Long COVID symptoms, placing ever greater strains on healthcare systems and the basic functioning of society.

In a recent report published in *Nature*, the authors wrote,

The oncoming burden of long COVID faced by patients, health-care providers, governments and economies is so large as to be unfathomable, which is possibly why minimal high-level planning is currently allocated to it. If 10% of acute infections lead to persistent symptoms, it could be predicted that ~400 million individuals globally are in need of support for long COVID.

Again, this scale of mass debilitation is unprecedented in human history. The horrific reality now confronting hundreds of millions of people, many of whom suffer debilitating symptoms such as extreme fatigue, evidently does not factor into the calculations of Biden or any other politician who pretend that the pandemic is over.

The only political party in the world which has opposed all propaganda surrounding the pandemic is the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), which publishes the *World Socialist Web Site*. While reporting on the daily spread of the pandemic, we have fought to arm workers with a scientific understanding of the global elimination strategy that must be implemented to stop the pandemic once and for all.

At the same time, through the Global Workers' Inquest into the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have continued to document and uncover the lies, misinformation and criminal policies responsible for the death and debilitation of millions.

We urge all workers, scientists and anti-COVID advocates to participate in the Inquest by sharing your experiences during the pandemic, and to join in the fight to build a mass movement to force a change in pandemic policy throughout the world.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)