

Despite the cover-up, current coronavirus wave reaches new heights in Germany

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In a Perspective article published at the end of the year, the *World Socialist Web Site* described 2023 as the “year of the total COVID cover-up.” We wrote: “the contrast between the objective reality of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the delusional fantasy promoted by capitalist politicians and the corporate media has never been greater.” This assessment applies in full to Germany.

The year 2022 ended with a massive campaign by establishment politicians and the media declaring that the pandemic was over and all protective measures had to be lifted. In 2023, this was aggressively put into practice: even the obligation to wear masks in local and long-distance transit, as well as in health and care facilities, was lifted nationwide and the Coronavirus Occupational Health and Safety Ordinance abolished.

At the same time, monitoring of the virus was discontinued. The Robert Koch Institute (RKI) published its last COVID-19 weekly report in June and since then has only reported COVID-19 developments in one or two paragraphs of its eleven-page weekly report on acute respiratory illnesses. The RKI also discontinued the pandemic radar on July 1. Only a few reports about the virus can still be found in the bourgeois media and even these do not describe the real situation in any way.

However, contrary to the official propaganda about its supposed end, the pandemic continued to rage in 2023 and cost many lives. By the end of the year, almost 180,000 people in Germany had officially fallen victim to the virus, almost 18,500 of them last year. It can be assumed that the actual figure is significantly higher: The last estimates of excess mortality in Germany from April 2023 already came to 180,000 deaths at that time (ifc Institute) or even 195,000 for 2020 and 2021 alone (WHO). The effects of the pandemic are also particularly evident in the fact that life expectancy in Germany has fallen by almost six months since the start of the pandemic.

In addition to the thousands who died from the virus last year, there are hundreds of thousands who have developed long-term consequences as a result of infection. Although the exact extent of how many people are affected by Long COVID is barely known, more and more is coming to light about the severity of the long-term effects of the virus and the impact on the daily lives of hundreds of thousands.

In a recent article in *taz* newspaper entitled “Coronavirus—Long-term consequences: The statistics are breath-taking,” the head of the Long Covid Outpatient Clinic in Koblenz, Astrid-Weber, reports on the everyday lives of many of those affected: “Many voluntarily reduce their [working] hours and go part-time. Others just drag themselves to work. They can just about manage, but their hobbies, leisure time and family are reduced to zero. There are a lot of people who cut everything but their job—and they don’t appear in any statistics.”

Jena psychiatry professor Martin Welter also supports these observations. He told *taz*: “The post-infectious disease situation is not over, and at the moment we are helping to increase the problem for the future.” The article also refers to Epiloc, a study from Baden-Württemberg with almost 12,000 participants, which concluded that a quarter of COVID-19 sufferers were still experiencing symptoms six to twelve months later.

Another study by the University of Greifswald, which has not yet been published, observed the progress of 200 patients who attended the university’s Long COVID consultation for an average of eight months after a coronavirus infection. At their first visit, 47 percent of these patients were unable to work. Six months later, this proportion was still 33 percent.

The lie about the end of the pandemic is most clearly refuted by the fact that the highest incidences ever were reached towards the end of the year. The RKI officially reported 29,051 cases last week. That is 10,000 more than

in the previous week. However, the RKI itself states that it estimates the actual 7-day incidence rate at 3,000 per 100,000 inhabitants, based on information from FluWeb. This corresponds to just under 2.5 million new cases per week. For the previous week, the RKI had estimated the incidence rate at 2,600.

Other indicators also confirm the sharp rise. The RKI's Wastewater Monitoring for Epidemiological Situation Assessment (AMELAG) currently indicates a value of 727,275 detected gene copies of SARS-CoV-2 per litre of wastewater. This also represents a new record value for wastewater data, which has been evaluated since June 2022. Just the previous week, the value was 687,386 gene copies per litre of wastewater.

SentiSurv, a project of the Mainz University Medical Centre, which collects data from 14,000 people from Rhineland-Palatinate who regularly test themselves and make the results available, also reported an incidence rate of between 3,000 and 4,000 for the last few weeks.

In recent days, the BA.2.86 "Pirola" sub-variant has become the dominant strain in Germany and currently accounts for around 55 percent of infections. Pirola is characterized by its approximately 30 mutations in the spike protein, which make it more difficult for the variant to be recognized by the body's immune system in vaccinated and recovered people.

At the same time, the proportion of the Pirola offshoot JN.1 has increased to 35 percent. JN.1 has an even better immune escape and is classified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a "variant of interest," the precursor to a "variant of concern." JN.1 is currently causing an increase in the number of cases worldwide.

It is particularly worrying that there has also been a high number of severe cases recently. Over the last six weeks, there have been consistently more than 7,000 hospitalizations per week; in calendar week 49, the number was as high as 8,710 and in calendar week 50, it was 7,998. In view of the fact that follow-up reports are still outstanding, the hospitalization incidence rate is therefore between ten and twelve.

In comparison, at the peak of the first wave in 2020, the hospitalization incidence rate was 7.5, at the peak of the second it was 15 and at the peak of the third wave it was 9.8. Contrary to claims that the virus has become harmless, the hospitalizations are thus around the level of previous coronavirus waves.

Infectiologists such as Julian Schulze von Wiesch from the University Medical Centre Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) suspect that even the hospitalization incidence rate

is only of limited significance. "There will be a high number of unreported cases," he explains, as many patients are not even tested for COVID-19 in hospital.

Hospitalization rates are particularly high in Berlin. The rate there is currently at 19, an increase of 20 percent compared to the previous week. The Charité hospital also announced that the number of coronavirus patients requiring intensive medical care was increasing. Nationwide, this figure currently stands at 1,254 (previous week: 1,214).

The number of deaths is also rising again. Over 300 people have died every week since November. Last week there were 361, in the previous week 347.

Charité expert Leif Sanders warned on broadcaster Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB) that the time of severe cases was not over. A coronavirus infection could still make you "quite ill," he said. This included "the kind of manifestations we saw a few years ago," which could be due to the fact that many people were vaccinated a long time ago.

Numerous hospitals across Germany are responding to these drastic developments by independently introducing masking requirements and visitor restrictions. The government had lifted the statutory masking requirements in care and health facilities at the beginning of the year.

The murderous let-it-rip pandemic policy of Germany's coalition government can be seen in all areas. While it intensified the war against nuclear power Russia in Ukraine last year, it is supporting the Israeli government's genocide of the Palestinian population in the Middle East.

This policy has its roots in capitalism. The ruling class will literally walk over dead bodies to defend its profit interests. The fight to end the pandemic, like the struggle against war, therefore requires the mobilization of the working class on the basis of an international socialist programme.



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