

Summer COVID wave develops in Germany

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A wave of COVID infections has been emerging in Germany for weeks this summer, debunking claims that the pandemic is supposedly over. Despite the warm season, the number of infections is constantly increasing and is now at the same level as at the beginning of the wave last autumn.

As a result, more people were ill at the beginning of July than ever before at this time of year. According to figures from the Robert Koch Institute (RKI), 5.1 million people in Germany are currently suffering from acute respiratory diseases. This means that the number of new respiratory infections is around 150 percent higher than before the pandemic.

According to Christian Karagiannidis, Head of the Intensive Care Register of the German Interdisciplinary Association for Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine, the evidence is “clear”: “A coronavirus summer wave is currently building up.”

This can be seen, for example, in wastewater monitoring. The infection radar of the Federal Health Ministry indicates a constantly rising viral load in all reported sewage treatment plants in recent weeks. While it was still at 42,000 gene copies at the beginning of May, it is now almost three times as high and stands at 119,000 gene copies. At the same time, the Health Ministry is also recording an increase in visits to the doctor due to COVID-19 infections.

Thomas Rhein, head of the North Rhine Pharmacists' Association, told the *Rheinische Post* newspaper: “Respiratory infections are well above the usual level in the summer months. Pharmacies are also feeling the effects. ... In general, the population's defence mechanisms no longer seem to be as efficient since coronavirus. In addition to rhinovirus, RSV and influenza viruses, the coronavirus is a fourth new major challenge for the immune defence.” Coronavirus tests are in high demand in pharmacies.

Matthias Blum, managing director of

Krankenhausgesellschaft NRW, explained that hospitals were also feeling the effects of the wave. “We are currently experiencing a surprising increase in coronavirus infections for the summer season.” The increase was “moderate,” but “this development” was “naturally also reflected in inpatient cases in hospitals.”

In recent weeks, the hospitalisation incidence level due to COVID-19 cases rose from 0.4 per 100,000 in May to 1.4 in July. This corresponds to around 1,170 hospitalisations per week. The number of hospitalisations is therefore more than three times higher than at the same time last year.

These developments refute the claims of politicians and the media that the coronavirus has gone from a pandemic to an endemic state. No serious scientist would ever describe the spread of a virus as endemic when over 10,000 people per week are hospitalised every year during the peak phase in winter and the virus does not disappear even during the “low phases,” with many hundreds still having to be admitted to hospital every week.

The consequences of the virus go far beyond immediate hospitalisations and deaths. In contrast to acute respiratory diseases such as influenza or RSV, one in 10 COVID-19 infections leads to long-term effects that can have devastating consequences and severely restrict the ability to work, move or see.

At the same time, new and more infectious mutations emerge every year due to the unhindered spread of the virus. The current summer wave is being driven by the Omicron sub-variants KP.2 and KP.3, which account for 13 percent and 52 percent of infections, respectively. Both variants are extremely contagious.

Furthermore, because of the dismantling of all health protection measures by all government parties, it is only a matter of time before a more deadly variant develops or another pandemic breaks out. The risk of a devastating H5N1 bird flu pandemic is currently

growing as well.

Regarding H5N1, Christian Drosten, chief virologist at Berlin's Charité hospital, called the situation "confusing and worrying," in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper. Although it was possible to get H5N1 under control, he said, he could "also imagine that we will soon be caught up in the next pandemic with H5N1."

In view of this situation, the debate in official politics and the media about a "reappraisal" of the coronavirus pandemic can only be described as criminal. As the WSWS has already commented, this demand from the ruling class does not serve the purpose of serious scientific evaluation, but rather the criminalisation of life-saving measures taken in the past.

There had been "decisions that were over the top," said Chancellor Olaf Scholz (Social Democrats, SPD) recently in the traditional "summer interview" by broadcaster ARD. And Finance Minister Christian Lindner (Liberal Democrats, FDP) denounced the COVID protection measures in the language of the far right as "encroachments on fundamental rights that were not justified."

In fact, the problem was not the health measures, but the fact that they were not consistently enforced internationally and were ended prematurely to keep the economy going and the profits flowing. As a result, more than 183,000 people died in Germany alone. It is this murderous "profits before lives" policy that needs a thorough "reappraisal." The working class must settle accounts with this policy by fighting for a scientifically based, socialist health policy.



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