

Over 1.3 million Americans are now being infected with COVID-19 each day

Bill Shaw
12 August 2024

On Monday, the Pandemic Mitigation Collaborative (PMC) released its updated model, estimating that over 1.3 million Americans are now being infected with COVID-19 each day as the summer surge deepens. At present, 1 in 38 Americans are infected with COVID-19, as documented extensively in a new report from PMC.

The Collaborative, which is run by Michael Hoerger, Ph.D. at Tulane University in New Orleans, just released version 2.0 of its PMC COVID-19 forecasting model. It is one of the most sophisticated models available, designed to inform the public about the current state of the pandemic, while encouraging people to take appropriate precautions to protect themselves.

Current levels of transmission exceed those seen during 91 percent of the pandemic to date and are the highest ever seen in mid-August during the entire pandemic. This deepening summer wave is the 9th wave of the pandemic in the US and is taking place amid a complete cover-up by the Biden administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the corporate media, all of whom have conspired to impose the homicidal “forever COVID” policy of unending mass infection, death and debilitation with Long COVID.

The PMC report includes a map of transmission levels by US state, a modified version of a map published by the CDC based on data from the National Wastewater Surveillance System (NWSS). While the CDC map uses pastel colors to try to portray the deluge of infections as harmless, the PMC report follows best practices in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) design, according to which they note “consensus is to use colors like red to indicate something is ‘hotter’ or greater cause for concern.”

The deepening summer surge coincides with the

emergence of the new viral variant KP.3.1.1, which has rapidly become dominant since first emerging in early June as a descendent of the KP.3 variant.

The confluence of the summer surge and a new viral variant, to which the population has less immunity, is highly dangerous. Combined with the timing of mid-August when children are beginning to return to schools and colleges, it raises the potential for a perfect storm to send viral transmissions even higher in the fall. Commenting on this, the report notes:

This is the highest level of transmission at the time of schools starting, so expect K-12 schools and universities to be hotbeds for COVID outbreaks unless they are using multilayered mitigation like indoor air quality that meets ASHRAE standard 241 (if they have never heard of this or cannot explain how they are meeting the standard, they likely are not meeting the standard), surveillance testing, free on-demand testing, and universal masking.

In fact, the reopening of schools with zero mitigations in place makes it challenging for the PMC model to predict the peak of the current summer surge. The report notes, “we are likely near the peak of the wave, unless the unprecedented context of back-to-school with no emphasis on mitigation pushes transmission higher in ways the model cannot predict statistically.”

Significantly, the PMC model estimates that Americans have now had COVID-19 on average 3.3 times. According to one study, people who self-report having had 3 infections have a 40 percent chance of developing Long COVID. The PMC model estimates

468,000 to 1,870,000 new cases of Long COVID per week at current transmission levels, an astounding level of new disability being created on a weekly basis.

This estimate comes on the heels of the latest groundbreaking study led by Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, which estimated that by the end of last year over 400 million people were suffering from Long COVID globally.

A key strength of the new version of the PMC model is that it incorporates three sources of data. The first is the NWSS data from the CDC. The second is BioBot wastewater data that used to be funded by the CDC, which has increasingly been less publicly available. The third source of data is the “true case” data from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), which correlated wastewater levels with daily new cases and was regularly updated through April 1, 2023.

Because the three sources of data overlapped for parts of the pandemic, it was possible for the Collaborative to build a statistical model that continues to estimate current case and transmission levels from the wastewater surveillance data. The two wastewater data sources are both used in the model, which enables the model to provide much more reliable estimates.

Overall, the Collaborative has provided a highly valuable service in creating a robust model and informing the public about surging COVID-19 levels in the United States. The fact that the CDC itself is not providing this type of modeling and analysis, as any true public health agency would, is an indictment of the capitalist system which instead has sought to keep the public in the dark.

Indeed, neither the Twitter account of the CDC nor its director, Mandy Cohen, has issued any warnings about the summer COVID surge. Nor have they urged the public to take precautions to avoid infection and reinfection, such as masks, air purification and avoiding crowds.

Several aspects of the PMC model emphasize the extent to which the ruling class has eviscerated public health protections. First, the shutting down of surveillance data has required the Collaborative to be creative in stitching together three different sources of data, which have been active at different times in the pandemic. In particular, the shutting down of the “true case” data is a complete violation of public health science and practice. Basic case reporting and surveillance is fundamental to the response to a deadly

and debilitating virus.

Second, the deliberate use of “welcoming” and “cool” colors in COVID-19 maps by the CDC serve to downplay the danger to the public of current transmission levels. The Collaborative’s red-shifted map paints a much more accurate picture of just how high transmission—and therefore the danger—is.

Third, the PMC model has only begun to be able to provide regional estimates of transmission levels within the United States. The Collaborative hopes to increase the robustness of its regional estimates in future versions of its PMC model, but the difficulty in doing so is again due to the systematic shutting down of case reporting and detection at the local, state and national levels by public health agencies.

The ongoing coverup of the pandemic and its true dangers is a social crime committed by the capitalist ruling class. They continue to subordinate the public’s health to private profit, no matter the immediate and long-term consequences to the public’s health. Their “let it rip” and “forever COVID” policies continue to generate mass death and disability.

The working class is the only social force capable of ending the pandemic and creating new institutions and policies that protect the public’s health and prevent new pandemics. It can only do so by overthrowing the capitalist system based on its own independent political program.



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact