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COVID-19 infections continue to explode in Germany

Hardly any other country is currently recording such a rapid rise of COVID-19 infections as Germany. On Monday, the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) reported a record seven-day incidence rate of 201 infections per 100,000 inhabitants, which exceeds the previous high of 198 on December 22, 2020. On Tuesday this rose to 214 infections per 100,000 inhabitants. There were 20,800 confirmed COVID-19 infections on Monday, followed by 26,622 on Tuesday.



A medical worker carries out a Corona test in a shopping mall in Frankfurt, Germany, on November 8, 2021. (AP Photo/Michael Probst)

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The highest seven-day incidence rates among Germany's 16 states are in Saxony (491), Thuringia (427) and Bavaria (316). Districts like Sächsische Schweiz/Ost-Erzgebirge are already approaching an incidence rate of over 1,000, with the current rate standing at 924 infections per 100,000 residents over the past seven days. This means that almost one in 100 residents there was infected with COVID-19 in the last week. Only two federal states, Schleswig-Holstein (75) and Bremen (89), have incidence rates below the mark of 100 infections per 100,000 inhabitants.

Since the government scrapped the incidence rate of 50 as the benchmark for the reintroduction of stricter measures in early September, the number of infections has risen steadily. But cases have truly exploded over the past three weeks. The graphs expressing increased infection rates all point in only one direction: steeply upwards. On average, over 24,000 people are being infected every day, a figure that was last reached at Christmas time last year, shortly before the pandemic claimed its highest daily death tolls.

A quarter of a billion people worldwide have contracted COVID-19, and officially over 5 million, unofficially up to 17 million, have died. In Germany, according to the Worldometers website, the number of officially registered deaths is 97,073. At the current rate of fatalities, this figure will soon pass 100,000.

Many intensive care units are already overcrowded again. At the beginning of the week, 2,532 intensive care patients were counted, and 1,280 patients are currently on ventilators. The scientific director of the Divi intensive care register, Prof. Christian Karagiannidis, warned on Monday on WDR public television that the intensive care units nationwide were approaching 90 percent capacity.

In North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the situation is currently worrying, as the director of care at the Münster University Hospital, Thomas van den Hooven, reported on Monday. He remarked that he views the next few weeks with concern. There are currently only 640 free intensive care unit beds in NRW that could be used for COVID-19 patients. Health care workers are tired and at the limits of their capacities, he added.

Like last year, retirement homes are once again becoming death traps. The RKI reported 135 active outbreaks in nursing and elderly care homes in the last week alone.

Outbreaks in workplaces are also increasing, although many corporations and companies systematically suppress all information about them, and the media largely ignores the issue.

A fire department magazine reported on an example of such an outbreak. At the Hamburg fire station in Stellingen last Tuesday morning, before the start of the shift, a routine round of rapid tests came back negative for all colleagues. During the day, however, the entire team was ordered to take a PCR test because a colleague reported a suspected case in his family. By the evening it was announced that no fewer than 12 out of 31 men had tested positive.

Twelve construction workers also tested positive on a construction site in Sylt. Numerous outbreaks have likely occurred in the last few weeks in several slaughterhouses in Lower Saxony.

In the district of Cloppenburg, the incidence rate of 200 infections per 100,000 people was exceeded by the end of October. In the district with the highest incidence rates in Lower Saxony, the hospitals are overloaded. Without giving precise details, the district administration reports that “a particularly large number of Eastern European workers are infected,” for example “from slaughterhouses in Garrel, Essen and Emstek, but also from vegetable farms.” The politicians responsible have apparently learned nothing from the massive outbreaks among meatpacking and agricultural workers last summer.

Children and young people are particularly affected everywhere. The number of infections among these groups, which are particularly worthy of protection, are rising rapidly.

News4Teachers reported that one of the most dangerous COVID-19 hotspots is the Elbe-Elster district in Brandenburg, which has a rate of infection of 615 per 100,000 people. The incidence among 5- to 14-year-old children there is an incredible 2,421. In other words, almost 1 in 40 children living in the district were infected over the past week. The health department in question, to which over 100 new COVID-19 cases are reported every day, has stopped tracking the contacts of those who test positive. Despite all this, schools and day care centers remain open.

Outbreaks in schools have driven up the infection rate in Brandenburg. It has now reached 227 infections per 100,000 residents in the past seven days. Among the teachers in Brandenburg, 124 were infected with COVID-19, more than twice as many as in the previous week (56).

Politicians from every party are determined to prevent a new lockdown at any cost. The “epidemic state of emergency of national scope” will expire on November 25. Rapid tests, which were previously available free of charge to the public, were discontinued last month, and most mask mandates in schools have been abolished.

Leading politicians from the so-called “traffic light” coalition, the Social Democrats, Free Democrats and Greens, which appear set to form the new federal government, are determined to continue the murderous COVID-19 policy of the outgoing grand coalition. They have vehemently ruled out consistent public health measures and lockdowns. On the Tagesschau on public broadcaster ARD, Katrin Göring-Eckardt (Greens) said on Monday, “You will not legally be able to have a complete lockdown with so many people who have been vaccinated.”

For the incoming government, vaccination remains practically the only countermeasure against the pandemic. This is criminal for several reasons. Firstly, the Delta variant, which now accounts for over 99 percent of infections, cannot be controlled by vaccines alone. Delta is about twice as contagious as the so-called “wild strain” of COVID-19. Second, due to the low vaccination rate, just 67 percent of the entire population, nearly 30 million people, including all children under the age of 12, are virtually without any protection against the virus. And third, a strategy that relies exclusively on vaccination while allowing the virus to run rampant creates the conditions for new, even more contagious virus mutations.

Germany’s federal and state governments are pursuing a deliberate policy of mass infection that places the protection of profits before human lives and endangers the health and lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Even the most elementary measures to protect the population have been dismantled with the cynical argument that the authorities are overwhelmed.

For example, the state of Baden-Württemberg has stopped tracking COVID-19 cases altogether. The *Ärzteblatt* reported on November 5, “In view of the skyrocketing number of COVID-19 cases in Baden-Württemberg, health authorities will no longer call most infected people and their contact persons directly in the future. The Ministry of Health announced today that an infected person would have to take care of this themselves. The so-called ‘individual case management’ will be discontinued in the entire southwest to relieve the authorities.”

Under these conditions, it is the task of the working class to seize the initiative and enforce the measures that are scientifically necessary to eliminate COVID-19. These include strict lockdown measures—above all, the closure of schools and universities and nonessential production with full compensation—combined with mass vaccinations, contact tracing and the isolation of infected people.

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