

The French Are Scared of Vaccines, as Measles Ravages Europe



By Alex Berezow — August 28, 2018



Credit: Storyblocks [1]

Anti-vaxxers insist that measles is just a harmless childhood infection. After the Disneyland outbreak, anti-vaxxers derided public health concerns by referring to it as "Mickey Mouse Measles." The facts indicate otherwise.

In 2016, just shy of 90,000 people died from measles infections. According to the [World Health Organization](#) [2], that number is down from over a half million in the year 2000, showing just how effective the global vaccination campaign has been. Yet, while the developing world is doing everything it possibly can to get more people vaccinated, the rich world is going in the opposite direction.

A new [report](#) [3] in *The Economist* highlights the extent of the problem:

In the past decade, measles-vaccination rates in some European countries have often fallen below those in parts of Africa. Italy, France and Serbia, for example, have lower child-vaccinations rates than Burundi, Rwanda and Senegal.*

The article also indicates that more than 40% of French people believe that vaccines are unsafe. To make matters worse, [Italy](#) [4] recently has made it easier for parents to skip vaccinating their kids. The results of all this are entirely predictable. Right now, [Europe is fighting a measles outbreak](#) [5] that has infected more than 41,000 people and killed 37.

Europe, of course, is not alone in its collective idiocy. The United States remains the global

headquarters of the anti-vaxxer movement. Even in California, which quite rightly responded to the Disneyland measles outbreak by making it harder for parents to get a vaccine exemption, people are finding ways around the law. An [editorial](#) [6] in the *Los Angeles Times* says that the number of medical exemptions has skyrocketed, even though "no more than 3% of school-aged children should reasonably qualify for a medical exemption." In some schools, the medical exemption rate is 10%.

Crime and Punishment

In the vaccine wars, literally nothing seems to be working. If watching people get sick and die from an entirely preventable disease doesn't convince parents to vaccinate their kids, then what will? Some localities are now temporarily [jailing parents who refuse to vaccinate their children](#) [7].

Anti-vaxxers cry foul. "I have the right to decide what I put in my body," they claim. Many pro-vaccine people accept that argument. However, the point only makes sense if the person lives like a hermit in the middle of nowhere. By choosing to live in a community, people are bound by the law and basic decency to avoid recklessly endangering other people. That's why it is perfectly legal to get rip-roaring drunk, but not when behind the wheel of a car. A person's right to act like a complete idiot ends where another person's right to health and safety begins.

Similarly, unvaccinated people are walking time-bombs who recklessly endanger the lives of those around them. Not everybody can get vaccinated, particularly infants and those suffering from immune disorders. Vaccines also aren't 100% effective, and some wear off over time. Protecting the most vulnerable among us is why herd immunity is so important to public health.

Therefore, municipalities may feel justified in trying to up the ante in the vaccine wars. Drunk drivers who kill somebody can be charged with manslaughter. Perhaps they have a point in saying this law should be extended to those who, through negligence, sicken or kill another person with a vaccine-preventable illness. That is certainly a far more palatable option than filling up tiny coffins.

**Note: Not to be outdone, children in Seattle have [lower polio vaccination rates](#) [8] than children in Rwanda.*

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Links

[1] <https://www.storyblocks.com/stock-image/syringe-and-red-cross-rvuhvmsxuwj6gnpuim>

[2] <http://www.who.int/immunization/diseases/measles/en/>

[3] <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/08/25/anti-vax-fears-drive-a-measles-outbreak-in-europe?source=acsh.org>

[4] <https://www.thelocal.it/20180706/mandatory-vaccinations-italian-parents-will-no-longer-need-to-provide-doctors-note>

[5] <https://www.bbc.com/news/health-45246049>

[6] <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-vaccine-exemption-crackdown-20171108-story.html>

[7] <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-41504796>

[8] <http://archive.kuow.org/post/seattle-kids-have-lower-polio-vaccination-rate-rwanda>