97,000 school-age children tested positive for COVID-19 in late July — most had no or mild symptoms

Pictures of packed school hallways in Georgia and news of positive tests on the first day of classes in Indiana and Mississippi sparked the latest fraught discussions over the risk the coronavirus presents to children — and what's lost by keeping them home from school. [August 7] brought reports of more infections among Georgia students, with dozens forced into quarantine in Cherokee County, among other places.

For months, parents and teachers, epidemiologists and politicians have chimed in with their views on the many still-unanswered questions about the extent to which the virus is a threat to children — and the extent to which they can fuel its spread.

A report from leading pediatric health groups found that more than 97,000 U.S. children tested positive for the coronavirus in the last two weeks of July, more than a quarter of the total number of children diagnosed nationwide since March. As of July 30, there were 338,982 cases reported in children since the dawn of the pandemic.

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"There has been a lot of attention to the fact that people who are older have a worse course and if you're young, it doesn't feel as dangerous, so they might think, 'Why be as careful?'"

[Feinberg School of Medicine's Sadiya] Khan said she worries schools that don't enforce mask-wearing and social distancing can be laboratories for superspreader events rippling out to the broader community.

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