Mask Mandates Are Still Necessary

**Since the outbreak of COVID-19, there has been no shortage of debate around the world about how to deal with it.** *[While this is a true statement, it could be more engaging. Consider starting with a specific anecdote or statistic related to mask mandates to grab the reader's attention.]* It would be safe to say that a common goal among people is to get rid of it, but we can’t seem to agree on how to get rid of it. Of all the debates arising around the world about how to deal with the virus, whether or not to wear masks has been one of the biggest. One could argue that no one really knows for sure whether or not masks work because no one has experienced the Coronavirus before now and the mortality rate doesn’t support either side completely. Does that statement in itself say that masks are ineffective? It is hard to say since we don’t know what the mortality rate would be if masks were never implemented. Maybe that isn’t the point at all. So what is the purpose of a government-issued mask mandate?

**The government is made up of individuals who have committed to leading this country the best way they possibly can.** *[This statement is overly idealistic and doesn't acknowledge the complexities and potential shortcomings of government. Revise to be more neutral.]* They are devoted to keeping us safe, keeping the economy fair, and keeping peace with everyone in the country and internationally around the world. They have the best technology and most knowledgeable people at their disposal to do these things as best as possible. Yet, this country is not perfect and there are a lot of problems still within it. That doesn’t always mean that the people running this country are bad at their jobs, in fact, means that there are some things that no one really knows the answer to. When COVID-19 hit the United States, it became another thing that the government simply didn’t know all the answers to. However, they did what they could with the knowledge that they knew to try to stop it from spreading. They knew that the virus spreads through the mouth, nose, and eyes, and so it simply made sense for people to try wearing masks. An article from heathaffairs.com explains that with masks, “intervention decreases transmission of the coronavirus and is a readily scalable measure to ensure the public’s health” (Gupta, 2020). They describe masks as a preventative measure in hopes that it would decrease the likelihood of contracting the virus. There was a hope that it would get rid of the virus entirely, but they never claimed that it would. One of the largest debates among people who don’t wear masks is that they don’t work. In Indiana specifically, theherald.com claims that “Since Governor Holcomb instituted the mandate in July, Covid cases and Covid deaths have not decreased” (Warden, 2021). While it is true that it is still possible to get the virus while wearing a mask, the mask significantly lowers the chances of getting it and can also protect surrounding people who are at a higher risk. (Lawrence, 2020).

Since no one really knows exactly how to get rid of the Coronavirus, it can be hard to get constructive advice on how to combat it. When researching the necessity of masks, it is important to find reliable sources that won’t lead the reader astray. On political issues such as this one, it is equally important to consider both sides. By taking a stance without fully researching the subject from the opposing point of view, it can be dangerous and cause more harm than good in many situations. For this project, I will be taking a look at several different articles about the necessity of masks and mask mandates. They do not all have the same views on the subject, so I will be thoroughly evaluating each one without a bias and seeing what information they have to offer.

The first article on this subject that I’m looking at comes from a website called Nature.com. This article is called What the Science says about Mask Mandates and dives into the logistics of masks being required in businesses. The author Lynne Peeples talks specifically about a business in New Hampshire that continued to require masks in their shop after the state-wide mandate for masks had been lifted. The CDC had lifted its requirements for vaccinated people to wear masks in shops. However, the dilemma for shop owners was that they didn’t want to have to ask people whether or not they were vaccinated to enforce the law. After talking with a few highly educated people on the subject from various colleges including Dartmouth and the University of California, Peeples concluded that the lifting of the mandate for masks was allowed too early. Peeples explains that masks are effective in protecting the wearer as well as the people around them because “Masks can block viral particles that hitch rides on droplets and aerosols” (Peeples, 2021). Jena, Germany, the first city to require masks during the COVID-19 outbreak saw a 75% decrease in Coronavirus cases in the first twenty days of the mandate. The problem in the United States and many other countries was the lack of compliance from the inhabitants. Regardless of the outcomes, Peeples believes that the lifting of the mandates in the United States came too early and that although masks aren’t 100% effective, they are proven to be preventative and that is enough of a reason to wear them.

The second article that I am looking at comes from Fox News. It is common knowledge that Fox news tends to be more conservative and the conservative party has been more keen to reject the mask mandates since the COVID-19 outbreak. Tucker Carlson, the author of this article titled New Mask Mandates are about Politics and Control claims that no one is fighting for the rights of people that don’t want the vaccine. The vaccine is a different debate than that mask mandates, but Carlson brings up a very legitimate question. He simply asks why masks are still required to the people who are vaccinated since the vaccine was advertised as a shield against the virus. If someone is already protected against the virus, why do they still need to wear a mask? Carlson believes that the reason is not scientific, but political. When Fox News asks the Biden Administration this question, they respond by saying it is because they have determined from data that masks provide extra protection from the virus. Carlson doesn’t view it in that way, however. In fact, his response to the Biden Administration was that the reason why masks are still required is that they said so. In other words “they issue the rule, without explaining it. You then obey it. If you question it, CNN calls you a murderer. That’s how our government works” (Carlson, 2021). Carlson is pleading to his audience to recognize that COVID-19 survivors have survived without the help of a vaccine and that they, along with masks, are simply a ploy from insane leaders of the country. He claims that weak leaders resort to irrational and bizarre demands out of delusion and panic. According to Carlson and Fox News, the masks are unnecessary and simply are being used to reel people into a plot by the government to control people and are overall an unnecessary measure.

Finally, a concerned mother writes an article about the necessity of the mask mandates in schools for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. She appeals to people’s emotions in an effect that Carlson does not. Maureen Downy, the author of the article, begs for the mandates to be in place during the upcoming school year because “we’re still in the midst of a deadly and dangerous pandemic” (Downey, 2021). According to Downy, schools in Atlanta are encouraging masks but not requiring them, and she is not the only mother who is concerned about sending her young children to an environment where they are not protected. The number of COVID-19 cases in her county had more than tripled within a two-week period. Marietta City Schools, the district that her children attend, are the only ones making masks optional for students and staff. The author recounts the excitement of a new school year that can be euphoric to children and parents. However, those happy feelings have been replaced by concern and worry due to the uncertainty of the virus that is not being actively fought against with masks. The problem, however, still lies in the individualistic views of the citizens. Every health organization has recommended masks as a critical and effective means of protection from the virus, but people fight back. The reason that people fight back is not necessarily explored in this article, but it is possible that some of Tucker Carlson’s views may be shared. As Tucker Carlson’s views in the last article showed, some people take a mask mandate as a personal offense and refuse to comply in fear of being controlled by the government.

Regardless of the views of individuals and political parties, the use of masks has been proven to reduce the number of COVID-19 cases. People and organizations are pleading and fighting for common compliance from the public to follow the suggestions of health organizations around the world and simply take an extra step of precaution. It is doubtful that the world will ever share the same views as a whole, but hopefully, people can continue to be considerate of each other and wear masks for the good of the general public.

The United States is a free country that allows everyone to have opinions and to live their lives how they want to live them. There are laws in place to keep people safe, but if there isn’t a law about something, U.S. citizens can pretty much do, say, or think whatever they want. This is a privilege that is very special and important, but it also causes a lot of division among beliefs and can cause anger towards one another. When COVID-19 hit, one of the first defenses that were encouraged to fight the virus was masks. Wearing a mask was advertised as a way to fight against the virus and decrease the chances of contracting it or spreading it to other people. After two years of living with the virus, people have started to question the necessity of masks and their effectiveness. **In a world where everyone believes something different, I have to choose for myself on whether or not to wear a mask and why.** *[This is a good transition to your personal stance, but it could be stronger. Consider briefly mentioning the key factors that influenced your decision. ]*

The influence of other people can have a large effect on the decisions that people make. As someone who does a lot of traveling, the pressure to do certain things fluctuates depending on where I am. I lived in a different state than I do now when COVID hit and the masks requirements and cooperation of others were a lot different than it is here. Even my own views on the subject have changed over the past two years. After being vaccinated my view has changed as well. There are new variants and many other variables to consider and I think that both sides of this argument have a reasonable opinion.

Tucker Carlson from Fox News claims that “masks are just a ploy” and our government is made up of “insane leaders” and that wearing masks is unnecessary (Carlson, 2021). Is his argument valid? I suppose it is possible, but there have been significant drops in COVID-19 cases when masks are being worn. The major issue that I have noticed people struggling with this topic is the effectiveness of masks. We have seen a large drop in numbers when masks are being worn and they are proven to be a repellent of sorts to the virus. However, they aren’t 100% effective. I understand the reasoning behind people who think that masks don’t work because it is still possible to contract the virus even when wearing a mask. Science has proved that masks can be effective, so the idea that masks are just a ploy from the government doesn’t line up, but it makes sense to feel as if they are unnecessary.

On the opposite side of the coin, some people will not leave their house without a mask. This is a practice that was highly encouraged at the beginning of the pandemic, and still to this day is required in some places. In other places, however, the mask mandates have loosened so much that people will look at me weird if I wear a mask there. The majority of places that I go, however, still have a common belief that masks are effective. They may not work to completely repel the virus all of 100% of the time, but “masks are effective in protecting the wearer as well as the people around them” (Peeples, 2021). We have seen that with a drop in COVID cases when masks are worn. There is a reason why all airlines require masks and why entering or leaving the country is illegal without vaccination and a mask. Masks are required on public transport and in restaurants, and in most establishments. I have spoken already about a school in Georgia that is not requiring masks for the first time and parents are scared to send their children to school. The plea from mask wearers in the United States is to wear a mask for the protection of others if not yourself. Some people are at higher risk of contracting the virus, and although masks aren’t the perfect solution, they can help keep people healthy.

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**Summary Feedback:**

The introduction needs a stronger hook and a clearer thesis statement. While you attempt to address both sides of the mask mandate debate, the background section lacks specific information about the history and implementation of mask mandates. Including key dates, events, and relevant legal frameworks would strengthen your argument. The analysis section demonstrates a good understanding of the chosen sources, but it relies too heavily on summary. Focus on analyzing the rhetorical strategies employed by each author, providing specific examples from the texts to support your claims. In the response section, you effectively present your personal stance on mask mandates, but the argument could be more nuanced by acknowledging the limitations of masks while still emphasizing their importance as a public health measure. Overall, the essay shows potential, but it needs further development and refinement to fully address the assignment requirements.

**Rubric Feedback:**

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| Project Portion | Ideal Criteria | Overall Feedback |
| Introduction | • Engaging • Shows importance of question • Indicates major parts and content | - The introduction needs a stronger hook and a clear thesis statement that directly addresses the essay's central question: What is the purpose of a mask mandate? |
| Background | • Uses credible, neutral sources • Effectively and sufficiently explains essential information • Written objectively in own words • Well organized and focused paragraphs with transitions • Minimal error | - While the background section provides a general overview of the mask mandate, it needs more specific information about the history and implementation of mask mandates. Include key dates, events, and relevant legal frameworks. Also, define the different types of masks and their effectiveness. |
| Analysis | • Smooth transition from background • Summarizes accurately and in own words two opposing answers and one objective answer to the question • Recognizes bias • Reasonable observations about how all sources make their arguments impactful • Well-organized and focused paragraphs with transitions • Minimal error | - The analysis of sources is superficial. Instead of summarizing, focus on analyzing the rhetorical strategies used by the authors to persuade their audiences. Identify and discuss the use of emotional appeals, logical fallacies, credibility markers, and biased language. Provide specific examples from the texts to support your analysis. |
| Response | • Smooth transition from analysis • Incorporates strong points from sources • Draws a reasonable and well-supported conclusion, answering the question • Provides satisfying conclusion to the project • Good transitions between focused paragraphs • Minimal error |  |