The Purpose of Mask Mandates

Unfortunately, the year 2019 is known as the year of quarantine. Additionally, the year 2020 is known for the start of mask mandates. Although the controversial topic has been popular for some time now, mandatory mask mandates have been enforced within the past year due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. At first, the public was confused about the new virus. A year later, the public questioned governmental enforcement regarding the mask mandate.

The mask mandate refers to the authoritative governmental policy of wearing a mask in certain settings when out in public. Recently, with declines in COVID-19 cases and the option of vaccines, the mask mandate has been lifted and altered within certain situations. In this paper, it is important to know the difference between a mandate and recommendation. Enforcement is the key difference, this will be explained later in detail. As a controversial topic, the main sides that divide this issue refer to the compliance and non-compliance of the mask mandate.

Unfortunately, this turn in society had many questioning the purpose and well as the authority. The noncompliant side questions the true effectiveness of the mask mandate. The viral disease was new with few studies to provide accurate and desperately needed answers to oftenly sought questions. From the beginning, everyone was given information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and was told to follow their guidelines. However, many realized that the [CDC guidance is not an enforceable mandate](https://www.healthline.com/health-news/heres-the-difference-between-a-covid-19-mask-recommendation-and-a-mask-mandate%252525252523Recommendations-vs.-mandates) but rather a recommendation that officials make in hopes for the public to utilize. This realization led to the questioning of the governmental authority of enforcing the mandate, referring to the [breach of constitutional rights.](https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/the-constitutional-issues-related-to-covid-19-mask-mandates)  Although there are many claims, the main one that is often brought up is the violation of the constitution’s First Amendment. This side, more often than not, implies that the mask mandate “represents forced political expression” since no specific federal law exists regarding the matter.

Contrary, the compliant side refers to those who oblige to the mask mandate, wearing masks where it is indicated. This side often fears the consequences of not complying, such as contracting the virus or spreading it to loved ones. In return, the compliance in this case ties connection to the purpose of the mask mandate. The overall purpose is to [reduce transmission](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7010e3.htm) of communicable disease. Statistically, noticeable declines were present with the implementation of masks in not only county level cases but also death rates. This side, as opposed to the other, recognizes that although no specific laws might exist, current public health laws encourage and empower the mask mandate.

Although there are many approachable sides to the heated and debatable topic, one thing is certain. Mask mandating has undoubtedly created a divide in society. Due to a high demand for answers, sources are being evaluated and pulled from anywhere and everywhere. A question in this circumstance to consider is how reliable and accurate is data? Similar to other health policies and policies in general, many sources are being found with many contradicting one another. Which one the reader and the majority of the public sides with is based on how accurate and influential the informational comes off.

According to [Nature’s news feature on what science says about lifting mask mandates](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01394-0), the lifting of the mask mandate has moved too fast. A claim is that public comfortableness affects the decision on whether or not the majority chooses to follow regulations. A key factor in addressing this issue is introducing the mandate in a quick action. Research supports this action by mentioning how a city in Germany was able to drop COVID-19 cases a miraculous 75% in just 20 days of implementation. This suggestion is further supported through the realization of how China quickly adopted the mask mandate and most likely led to the prevention of a large-scale spread of the disease. A considerable point made to question the effectiveness of the mandate, questions if the United States would have seen a further deduction in COVID rates if the national mandate was implemented earlier on. Unfortunately, no evidence can support the “what if” since no research at the time was conducted in relation to the implementation placed afterwards. The tone throughout the article is suggestive of being cautious with unmasking. The author includes current stances on business owners and their level of comfortableness on the unmasking ordeal. The core explanation on the issue is based on a majority of businesses finding the unmasking order now cautious because it feels invasive to identify if every customer walking in is vaccinated. This message issue of some business still requiring masks has also stirred a commotion. The overall message conveyed in this article implies that a majority of people still fear the aftermath of unmasking.

In an alternative view, according to the [Fox News source](https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/tucker-carlson-new-mask-guidelines-politics-control), no one is fighting for the rights of those who don't want the COVID vaccine. There is a clear angry tone with a passion for self rights. Comparisons are being drawn between what is strong and weak. The recent Biden administration is described as weak. The mask mandate is reflected off of weak leadership in terms of living in terror and ruling by force due to having no choice. Mandating masks comes off as an irrational command. This message comes across as something crucial that needs to be recognized for the sake of human rights. The way the author conveys the message and tone implies a loud and noticeable action is necessary to stand against the mandate. Another strong term usage used in the article refers to being “ a rational person” and having “sane leaders”. A claim this article makes is that the government needs no medical justification for their determination. The public is to either obey or “news sources will call you a murder” if it is questioned. According to the [Fox News source](https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/tucker-carlson-new-mask-guidelines-politics-control), this is how our government works. However, contrary to this claim, there is no available evidence to support it. In other words, the demand for mandatory vaccines and masks is not lightly taken especially in connection to public health. Although there are demands that this is only about politics and social control, with governmental ownership of the body, no evidence supports this opinionated claim.

Contrary to the statements above, according to the [Journal-Constitution source](https://www.ajc.com/education/get-schooled-blog/opinion-as-mother-of-young-children-i-beg-cobb-to-mandate-masks/YY2CZ3HHXFDT3OPMANYEN57WCQ/), mask mandates need to be a requirement in schools. There is a concerning tone over parents fearing the safety of their children. The argument that is COVID-19 mainly targets the elderly and adults is shut down. A pediatric recommendation provides insight on how it is not innocuous to children, through introduction of possible end results of more susceptibility to life altering diseases after recovery. Although a healthcare professional is a great source when discussing health issues, no actual research evidence is provided to support this recommendation. There is a sense of guilt tripping through the usage of “what if'' and “what then”. Considerations are made to imagine the unchangeable negative impacts in upcoming years and the guilt of not having done early interventions. Although this is a possibility, there is no evidence to support what the future holds for anyone. The children are viewed as endangered with no choice. Suggestions imply that the general public should make the right choices, sacrifice personal comfort and preferences, and listen to the experts such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and the World Health Organization. Both of these health experts support the recommendation of universal masking for everyone over the age of 2, regardless of vaccination status, to keep children safe.

One factor playing a major role in this issue is culture. The culture of a community and society helps identify what is normal and what is not. Since the start of the pandemic, communities have been altered and divided due to the implementation of new changes (mask mandates) that were implemented rather quickly. Social trends are now showing that this change, although it has it’s negatives also has some positives. Cultural change is showing to aid in addressing public uneasiness and cautiousness. The adaptation to mask mandates is becoming less and less unusual. Through familiarization, the idea is that the general public will become more comfortable wearing masks willingly. Respectfully, any new introduction to a change is not taken lightly, the mask mandate is just one of many. It is suggested that over time, the adaptation of masks will come easy through [cultural comfortableness](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01394-0).

However, masked or unmasked, the reality is the issue is controversial. Mask mandates were enforced for the purpose of protecting people. This enforcement that was initially intended for a reduction in the health crisis but is now being viewed as an increase in governmental control. Understandably so, people have the right to fear. The question is which fear overpowers the other? The fear of the government controlling our rights or the fear of contracting a viral disease with a potential deadly consequence. The phrase “better safe than sorry” can be implemented on both sides of the argument but how safe can one be if they’re unknowingly contracting a communicable disease? This fear not only affects one’s self rather it extends to loved ones, such as children.

Currently, vaccinated individuals are not required to wear a mask. The mask mandate has been lifted with the exception of some businesses still having the right to remain masked. A valid argumentative point is why do these businesses still remain masked when the government declared that mask mandates are no longer required? The biggest comparison between these two sides is fear. One side fears the noncompliance resulting in the increase of health risks. The other side fears that forceful compliance implies that the government has the right to control basic human rights. The biggest issue is finding common ground which can be difficult when looking at both sides. If an individual no longer feels the need to wear a mask and believes their right should be respected then the same concept applies to the business that believes it's their right to still implement mask mandates. Ultimately, both sides have rights and both sides feel the need to be respected. However, respect will not always grant you access to situations.

When looking at data, statistics have overall proven that mask mandates have [decreased the rate of coronavirus cases.](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7010e3.htm) The results from these statistics have correlation to the purpose which was to reduce transmission. In regards to governmental control and the overpowering of basic human rights, currently no specific laws exist that support this stance. In addition, although there are demands that mask mandates are only about politics and social control, with governmental ownership of the body, there is no concrete evidence supporting this. Therefore, statements related to this are categorized out as an opinionated claim. A fact is that current public health laws do encourage the mask mandate for general public safety. However, these public health laws focus on maintaining the health of the general public, not constricting their rights. Whether this controversial issue is viewed from a health or political view, one thing remains clear. The purpose of mask mandating is to reduce transmission of communicable disease in hopes of protecting the general public.