The Effectiveness of Government Masking Mandates On COVID-19 County-level Case Incidence Across The United States, 2020

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Evidence for the effectiveness of masking on SARS-CoV-2 transmission at the individual level has accumulated, but the additional benefit of community-level mandates is less certain. In this observational study of matched cohorts from 394 US counties between March 21 and October 20, 2020, we estimated the association between county-level public masking mandates and daily COVID-19 case incidence. On average, the daily case incidence per 100,000 people in masked counties compared with unmasked counties declined by 23 percent at four weeks, 33 percent at six weeks, and 16 percent across six weeks postintervention. The beneficial effect varied across regions of different population densities and political leanings. The most concentrated effects of masking mandates were seen in urban counties; the benefit of the mandates was potentially stronger within Republican-leaning counties. Although benefits were not equally distributed in all regions, masking mandates conferred benefit in reducing community case incidence during an early period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Journal:

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