

BRITISH PUBLIC WELCOMES COMPULSORY MASKS IN ALL INDOOR PUBLIC SPACES

- Just under two-thirds of the public, 65%, agree that “mask wearing in indoor public spaces should be compulsory”
- “Reassured” (42%), “positive” (32%), “more safe than usual” (29%), “relieved” (28%), and “relaxed” (14%) were the top emotions selected to describe how seeing others wearing masks made the general public feel
- Three-quarters – a higher figure that support of compulsory masks – agree that “senior politicians should wear masks in indoor public spaces wherever possible”
- Despite this, one in four still agree that “wearing masks does not significantly reduce the transmission of coronavirus”

LONDON, 16 July 2020 – As England prepares for the implementation of compulsory mask wearing on 24 July, a preview of the fourth Kekst CNC COVID-19 international tracking survey reveals the British public, across every demographic, political group and region surveyed, welcome compulsory mask-wearing in indoor public spaces.

The findings suggest there is no major backlash to the government’s announcement, and that the vast majority, 65%, of the public support it.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	
<i>“Mask wearing in indoor public spaces should be compulsory”</i>	
Agree	65%
Disagree	16%
Neither agree nor disagree	15%
Don’t know	4%

With 75% of respondents agreeing that senior politicians should wear masks in indoor public spaces wherever possible, it is clear that the public are also looking to the government to lead the way, upholding politicians and senior figures to a higher standard for when it comes to mask-wearing.

Despite the overwhelming support for compulsory masks, the survey found that scepticism regarding their effectiveness in reducing the transmission of the virus remains. 26% of respondents believe that “wearing masks does not significantly reduce the transmission of coronavirus”, with nearly a third of men (29%) and the over-65s (30%) being the most sceptical of the health benefits – groups where lower take-up may feature. This scepticism demonstrates the importance of messaging, and implies that the government has not wholly communicated the medical benefits of mask wearing. This could result in a slightly lower take-up than the self-reported enthusiasm about the mandatory policy suggests.

Addressing public sentiment, the research found that overall, people are more likely to associate positive feelings with seeing others wearing facial coverings. The top emotions selected to describe how others wearing masks in public included “reassured” (42%), “positive” (32%), “more safe than usual” (29%), “relieved” (28%), and “relaxed” (14%). Only 11% said they felt “anxious”, 5% say they felt “scared,” and 5% that they felt “less safe than usual”, suggesting there will not be

a strongly negative effect on consumer confidence and that, if embraced and messaged in the right way, uptake of the policy could have a positive effect.

Does seeing other people wearing masks in public make you feel...?	
Reassured	42%
Positive	32%
More safe than usual	29%
Relieved	28%
Relaxed	14%
Anxious	11%
Nervous	9%
Bemused	8%
Negative	6%
Less safe than usual	5%
Scared	5%
None of the above	14%
Don't know	4%

James Johnson, Kekst CNC's Senior Advisor and former pollster at 10 Downing Street, said,

"The British public supports the compulsory wearing of facemasks – not just in shops, but in all indoor public spaces. And they want to see all senior politicians setting an example.

"The commentators, businesses and politicians that have expressed fears that masks will deter people from shopping may be surprised: people overwhelmingly say they feel reassured, relieved and more safe than usual when they see others in masks. Rather than drive people away, mask wearing can be a positive for businesses and embracing another change to our daily lives can deliver a boost to the high streets."

James Johnson is available for interview, and would be delighted to provide additional comments on the latest research findings. If you would like to speak with James, please contact Joe Shipley/Harriet Adams.

For further insights and regular updates on strategic challenges of the coronavirus crisis and the role of communications, please visit our [Kekst CNC COVID-19 Hub](#).

About Kekst CNC

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As trusted advisors, the firm contributes its expertise on such high-stake matters as: M&A, shareholder activism and governance, crisis communications, restructurings, regulatory investigations, litigation support, investor relations, IPO communications, issues and reputation management, change management and employee engagement, as well as digital and social communications.

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