

Title: Attitudes Towards Mask Wearing and Social Gathering Between April 2021 and September 2022 in five countries in the iCARE Study

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Background: When the COVID-19 pandemic was announced in March 2020, governments around the world implemented several policies to reduce virus transmission (e.g., mask and social gatherings), which can affect the population in different ways (e.g., sociodemographic characteristics).

Objective: The current study aimed to describe attitudes towards two preventive behaviours (wearing a face mask and avoiding small social gatherings) in five countries (Canada, Colombia, France, Ireland, and Italy) by sociodemographic and health variables.

Methods: We report data from the International COVID-19 Awareness and Responses Evaluation (iCARE) Study using five countries' representative samples from April 2021 to September 2022 (5-time points; $n = 35,418$). Participants were asked about their attitudes and how often they engaged in mask wearing and avoiding social gatherings.

Results: In April 2021, participants reported wearing a mask and avoiding social gatherings 93% and 61% most of the time, respectively, and in September 2022, these dropped 46% and 26%. We observed a similar trend for importance, going from 84% and 57% and dropping to 51% and 31% for wearing a mask and avoiding social gatherings, respectively. Across the five countries, the attitude and level of engagement in preventive behaviours predicted each other, and female participants aged between 18 and 44 were more likely to adhere to both preventive behaviours and find them very important for reducing COVID-19 virus transmission ($ps < 0.01$).

Conclusion: The results show that there was a change in attitudes and in the practice of preventive behaviours in five countries as the pandemic progressed, by sociodemographic characteristics, and they predicted each other.

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