22 Countries Drop Mask Mandates

Description

A total of 22 countries around the world have dropped mask mandates since January this year.

As debates over masks have returned to the United States after a judge struck down a federal mask mandate for interstate travel, the nation joined nearly two dozen countries that have ended broad mask and pandemic measures this year.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the withdrawal of mask mandates in public places on Jan. 19, citing information from government researchers suggesting that the worst of the Omicron variant cases had already peaked.

Additionally, face coverings are no longer legally required on public transportation in England.

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosts various members of the armed services at a military reception at 10 Downing Street on Sept. 18, 2019, in London. (John Nguyen/WPA Pool/Getty Images)

On April 18, Scotland implemented its previously discussed changes on masks and dropped the legal requirement for most indoor locations and public transportation.

The same goes for the rest of the UK, including Northern Ireland and Ireland: Masks are no longer required, but encouraged in some indoor venues.

However, health care facilities are an exception, and wearing a protective face covering is still enforced.

Latin America, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile, and the Dominican Republic have all ended government-regulated mask requirements.

Mexico also relinquished the demand for face coverings in most states.

The Dominican Republic, a popular Caribbean tourist destination, ditched its mask mandates in February after the government canceled its COVID-19 state of emergency in October 2021.

"It's time to recover all our freedoms and way of life," Dominican Republic President Luis Abinader said.

Several countries announced the end of their national health emergencies in April, including Paraguay, Brazil, Italy, and South Africa.

Italy, one of the worst-hit countries for severe COVID-19 cases and deaths in the early months of the pandemic, isn't being cavalier in its approach to ending the mandates.

Face coverings will no longer be compulsory outdoors, but are still required indoors until April 30, after

Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi promised a gradual return to normal.

"Our goal is to reopen fully, as soon as possible," Draghi said during a February speech delivered from Florence, Italy.
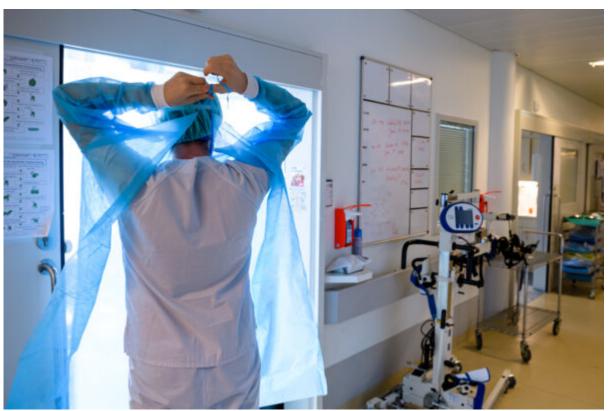
Health experts aren't unanimous on the possible consequences of dropping mask mandates and scaling back COVID-19 preventative measures.

Dr. Shruti Gohil, associate medical director of epidemiology and infection prevention at the University of California–Irvine Medical Center said about mask mandates, "You've got to end it sometime."

With the arrival of the BA.2 subvariant of Omicron, some experts feel governments have been hasty in abolishing mask mandates.

Dr. Deepti Gurdasani, an epidemiologist at the Queen Mary University of London, says that while the link between COVID-19 cases and severe outcomes has decoupled, the new variants shouldn't be taken lightly.

"Although some [deaths after a positive test] are incidental, there is a very large proportion that are deaths due to COVID-19. It's a very concerning situation," Gurdasani said.

A doctor works in the COVID-19 intensive care unit at a hospital in Leipzig, Germany, on Nov. 18, 2021. (Jens Schlueter/Getty Images)

Nevertheless, that hasn't stopped a domino effect of countries releasing their people from mask mandates. Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, and The Netherlands have all rolled back such requirements.

Health care facilities remain the baseline exception across the board.

International tourist hubs that took an economic blow from pandemic lockdowns, such as Maldives and Aruba, followed suit by ending mask mandates and appealing to a broader network of travelers.

Other European countries jumping on the bandwagon include Poland, Latvia, Croatia, and the Czech Republic. Even France has relaxed its strict approach to the compulsory use of face masks, except for public transit and in health care facilities.

The United States is a battleground over President Joe Biden's mask mandate after a federal judge suspended the enforcement of the measure on April 18.

U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle ruled that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which initially issued the mandate, had exceeded its authority and failed to seek public comment before issuing the mandate.

Demonstrators gather outside the Massachusetts State House to protest COVID-19 vaccination and mask mandates in Boston on Sept. 17, 2021. (Joseph Prezioso/AFP via Getty Images)

When it comes to ending mask mandates, health experts say the primary concern is preventing the transmission of COVID-19. And Gohil doesn't think ending mandates means the world is done with masks forever.

Health care facilities remain the baseline exception across the board.

International tourist hubs that took an economic blow from pandemic lockdowns, such as Maldives and

Aruba, followed suit by ending mask mandates and appealing to a broader network of travelers.

Other European countries jumping on the bandwagon include Poland, Latvia, Croatia, and the Czech Republic. Even France has relaxed its strict approach to the compulsory use of face masks, except for public transit and in health care facilities.

The United States is a battleground over President Joe Biden's mask mandate after a federal judge suspended the enforcement of the measure on April 18.

U.S. District Judge Kathryn Kimball Mizelle ruled that the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which initially issued the mandate, had exceeded its authority and failed to seek public comment before issuing the mandate.

Demonstrators gather outside the Massachusetts State House to protest COVID-19 vaccination and mask mandates in Boston on Sept. 17, 2021. (Joseph Prezioso/AFP via Getty Images)

When it comes to ending mask mandates, health experts say the primary concern is preventing the transmission of COVID-19. And Gohil doesn't think ending mandates means the world is done with masks forever.

"When rates go up, we should get those masks back on, and when rates go back down, we might be able to be more liberal," she said.

With the new BA.2 subvariant, data aren't showing deaths rising at the same rate as recent cases in most countries, which is consistent with the original strain of Omicron discovered in November 2021.

The CDC has identified the Omicron variant and its subvariants as more transmissible, but said they cause less severe illness in patients than earlier strains of COVID-19.

By Autumn Spredemann

Autumn is a South America-based reporter covering primarily Latin American issues for The Epoch Times.

Category

1. Freedom-Free speech-Resitance & H-rights
2. Health-Wellness-Healing-Nutrition & Fitness
3. Main
4. Politics-Geopolitics-Gov.-Events

Date Created
05/01/2022