Mask Usage of New Orleans During the Pandemic SARS-CoV-2

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In response to the rising cases experienced in Orleans Parish, I conducted this study to observe people's reactions through mask-wearing behavior. I hypothesized that mask usage would be low despite public health guidelines especially on public transportation. The lack of a mandate would relate to the wave of cases experienced in July. As a result, I divided each day of July into 25 different 30-minute time slots that were randomly generated as periods of observation. The three main categories of observations were gender, age, and physical movement. Observation occurred on St. Charles Ave between Cadiz and Valence, as four RTA stops exist near the area. After 31 days of observation, 6919 people were counted, with 4522 on the RTA. The ratio of men to women was 6:4, and total mask usage was around 42.6% of the total population. However, correct mask usage was only observed by 33.7% of people. Divided by gender, women were more likely to wear masks correctly than men: 81.9% to 77.3%, respectively. It can be concluded that the face mask mandate in mid-July had somewhat of an effect on the linear trend of total cases observed in New Orleans. Therefore, to restore public health and save lives, masks are proven to be critical. More enforced mandates of mask usage in public areas may be necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as it is demonstrated that without enforcement, very few will follow public guidelines.

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