



# **Report on deliverables from Theme 3 Work Package 5**

Prepared for  
**The PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on  
transmission and environment**

**PROTECT (2023)  
National Core Study Report**

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**The PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on transmission and environment is a UK-wide research programme improving our understanding of how SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) is transmitted from person to person, and how this varies in different settings and environments. This improved understanding is enabling more effective measures to reduce transmission – saving lives and getting society back towards ‘normal’.**

The aim of this research is to understand what influences the wearing of face coverings. This paper seeks to answer 3 key research questions: what is the prevalence of face covering use in work, public transport and indoor leisure settings; how has the prevalence of face covering use in work, public transport and indoor leisure settings changed over time, and; what factors determine face covering use, as well as testing the hypothesis ‘people who form if-then plans (“implementation intentions”) will be more likely to wear face coverings than people who do not.’ The research was carried out using a randomised controlled trial, in collaboration with a survey panel company (YouGov).

Participants reported decreasing levels of face covering over time in work, public transport settings and indoor leisure contexts as rules around the wearing of face coverings relaxed. Perceptions of capabilities, opportunities and motivations to wear face coverings were consistently associated with the actual wearing of face coverings across the three settings, with marked decreases in motivations over time. Decreases in motivations seem to explain best the reasons for declining levels of face covering. Implementation intentions could be effective in promoting reuptake of face covering, but likely only in the context of a clear threat (e.g., declared pandemic) and/or legal mandate.

This report and the research it describes were funded by the PROTECT COVID-19 National Core Study on transmission and environment, which is managed by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on behalf of HM Government. Its contents, including any opinions and/or conclusions expressed, are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect UK Government or HSE policy.

# **Report on deliverables from Theme 3 Work Package 5**

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## **Overview:**

### **Work Package Aims**

Objective 3.5: To test the effectiveness of an implementation intention-based intervention for promoting the wearing of face coverings in three key settings, namely: public transport, workplaces and leisure activities.

The aim of the present research is to understand what influences the wearing of face coverings. Only by understanding what influences the wearing of face coverings can we begin to develop interventions to promote uptake, reuptake (if necessary) and sustained use of face coverings.

Our research questions are:

1. What is the prevalence of face covering use in work, public transport and indoor leisure settings?
2. How has the prevalence of face covering use in work, public transport and indoor leisure settings changed over time?
3. What factors determine face covering use?

The third research question is particularly important because understanding what are the drivers of face covering use will provide the building blocks with which to develop interventions to promote uptake, reuptake (if necessary) and sustained use of face coverings.

We are addressing these questions using a 4-wave survey among a representative sample of the UK population. Our analysis of wave 1 showed that deficits in people's automatic motivation (e.g., habits, emotional reactions) is key to understanding people's wearing of face coverings.

At wave 3, we have therefore deployed an intervention that we know addresses people's automatic motivation. Specifically, we are asking a random sample of people to form if-then plans. We have previously shown that when people form if-then plans, they are more aware of critical situations ("ifs") and that their responses ("thens") to those critical situations are speeded up. Crucially, we have shown that if-then plans change automatic motivation and actual behaviour in everything from helping people be more physically active to reducing levels of self-harm.

We therefore have a fourth research question:

1. People who form if-then plans will be more likely to wear face coverings than people who do not.

### **Design/methods**

Randomised controlled trial embedded within a prospective survey with two timepoints amongst a general population sample (N=6000), in collaboration with a survey panel company (YouGov). The main outcome measure will be wearing of face coverings on public transport, in workplaces, and for leisure activities. All participants will complete baseline and follow-up surveys. Participants in the intervention group will additionally be asked to form implementation intentions with respect to wearing face coverings. Participants will be

presented with the stem “If I am tempted not to wear a face covering consistently...” and given 10 options with which to complete as many “if-then” plans as they like. These ten options have been taken from the literature and have been shown to be effective with respect to changing numerous behaviours, including self-harm, smoking, alcohol consumption and physical activity.

## **Deliverables**

3.5.1 Draft paper on mask intervention

## **Publications**

Christopher J. Armitage, Chris Keyworth, Nicola Gartland, Anna Coleman, David Fishwick, Sheena Johnson, Martie van Tongeren. Identifying targets for interventions to support public use of face coverings. *British Journal of Health Psychology* Published on 01 September 2022. DOI: <https://bpspsychub.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/bjhp.12620>

## **Draft papers**

### **1. Utility of the Capabilities, Opportunities, Motivations Model for Understanding Changes in Behavior**

Christopher J Armitage<sup>1,2,3</sup>, Chris Keyworth<sup>4</sup>, Nicola Gartland<sup>5,6</sup>, Anna Coleman<sup>5,6</sup>, David Fishwick<sup>5</sup>, Sheena Johnson<sup>7</sup>, Martie van Tongeren<sup>5,6</sup>

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Submitted to *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* journal.

## **2. Theory-Based Intervention to Promote Uptake and Sustained Use of Face Coverings**

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Will be submitted to *Health Psychology journal*.

