

Amsterdam, Rotterdam order use of masks in busy streets

August 5 2020



Face masks are offered to people in Amsterdam, Wednesday Aug. 5, 2020. The Netherlands' two most populous cities began ordering people to wear face masks in busy streets Wednesday amid rising coronavirus infection rates. Amsterdam ordered masks to be worn in the red-light district and busy shopping streets and markets. (AP Photo/Mike Corder)

The Netherlands' two most populous cities began ordering people to wear face masks in busy streets Wednesday amid rising coronavirus infection rates, but many people in the Dutch capital's famous red-light district still did not wear them.

Police in Rotterdam said a number of people opposed to the mask order staged a protest in the downtown area where masks became obligatory.

Amsterdam ordered masks to be worn in the red-light district and busy shopping streets and markets. Many visitors to the narrow lanes and canal-side roads of the historic neighborhood ignored the instructions, despite signs informing people of the new measure.

Municipality workers stood at the entrance to one downtown Amsterdam shopping street wearing signs saying in Dutch and English that [masks](#) were required and handing them out to people who didn't have one.

The Dutch capital's local health authority said around 5% of people who got a test over the last week were positive, more than double the 2% from the previous week.

Among clusters being tracked in the city was one at a strip club in the red-light district where at least one customer and 10 staff have tested positive, according to a statement from the health authority. The owner voluntarily closed the club.

Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema said she understood people's wish to socialize again at home, at weddings or in bars after weeks of tough restrictions aimed at reining in the spread of the coronavirus.



People wearing facemasks to prevent the spread of the coronavirus walk through Amsterdam, Wednesday Aug. 5, 2020. The Netherlands' two most populous cities began ordering people to wear face masks in busy streets Wednesday amid rising coronavirus infection rates. Amsterdam ordered masks to be worn in the red-light district and busy shopping streets and markets. (AP Photo/Mike Corder)

"But the numbers show that the coronavirus is spreading at these kinds of locations," she said. "It is striking that [young people](#) in particular are now becoming infected and therefore pose a risk to the entire city and region."

The mask orders came into force a day after the Dutch public health institute reported a near-doubling in confirmed infections in a week to

2,588, with a quarter of the people who tested positive aged in their 20s.

Coronavirus infections in the Netherlands have been on the rise since many restrictions that had successfully reined in the disease were lifted July 1.

The Dutch COVID-19 death toll stands at 6,150 confirmed deaths. The true toll is likely higher because not all who were suspected to have died of the [coronavirus](#) were tested.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte scheduled a press conference for Thursday to discuss the rising infections.

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