

Study finds travel restrictions most undesirable lockdown feature

March 23 2022



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Public health experts find not being able to travel within Aotearoa or overseas the most undesirable feature of lockdowns, a new study from the University of Otago has found.

They are least bothered by the requirement to wear masks in public.

The research, conducted by Dr. Dennis Wesselbaum and Professor Paul Hansen from the Department of Economics, asks 16 COVID-19 experts to rank what [lockdown](#) features they found most inconvenient and unpleasant, independent of their effectiveness at controlling the pandemic.

Dr. Wesselbaum says while lockdowns were used around the world to slow COVID-19 transmission, reducing transmission depends on people's compliance with lockdowns.

The aim of the study, published yesterday in the *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, is to help policymakers design lockdowns that are both effective in public health terms and most likely to be complied with—should they be needed in the future.

"Given policymakers have discretion over which features to include and how stringent to make them, greater understanding of how people feel about the various ways a lockdown can be configured will be useful for policymakers striving for designs that foster high compliance," he says.

The results found that experts rank the travel-restrictions feature almost four times more inconvenient or unpleasant (24.6 percent) than being required to wear [masks](#) in public (6.5 percent).

The cost of vaccination through taxes was seen as the second most undesirable feature (22.1 percent).

School closures (19.4 percent) and being made to work from home (17.9 percent) are also relatively undesirable features yet being required to stay home (9.6 percent) is relatively acceptable and seen as not much worse than the mask requirement.

Dr. Wesselbaum says this ranking seems intuitively plausible, as for

most people, wearing a mask is a minor inconvenience compared to the other interventions.

Staying at and working from home should be feasible without too much inconvenience for high income academics and researchers.

"It is, therefore, not surprising that [travel restrictions](#) affecting work and holidays and school closures are the least desirable features," he says.

He did, however, find the result that participants are willing to give up four months of normal life in order to not experience a year with COVID-19, surprising.

Dr. Wesselbaum says, while this research studies the preferences of [public health experts](#), it would be interesting to compare these to the preferences of the general public.

"A larger-scale study involving the [general population](#) could be conducted in the future, given that COVID-19 and its variants show no sign of disappearing soon."

He hopes his study will contribute to the emerging literature on the optimal design of lockdowns to maximise compliance and minimise virus transmission.

More information: Dennis Wesselbaum et al, Lockdown design: which features of lockdowns are most important to COVID-19 experts?, *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* (2022). [DOI: 10.1080/03036758.2022.2048675](#)

Provided by University of Otago

Citation: Study finds travel restrictions most undesirable lockdown feature (2022, March 23)
retrieved 8 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-03-restrictions-undesirable-lockdown-feature.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.