

More Americans wear masks, more education needed

July 17 2020, by Lisa M Shiota



Credit: University of Hawaii at Manoa

While there has been an increase in the number of Americans wearing cloth face coverings in public due to COVID-19, more education is needed to encourage audiences to consistently and effectively use face

coverings. Those are the findings of a national study undertaken by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and a University of Hawai'i at Mānoa faculty member. The study was published on July 14 in the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, which is considered the "voice of the CDC."

Data results

On April 3, 2020, the White House Coronavirus Task Force and CDC recommended that people wear cloth face coverings in public to slow the spread of COVID-19. As a result, higher rates of cloth face covering use were observed from April to May and remained sustained.

Among the survey participants who reported leaving their homes, 61.9 percent reported using a cloth face covering in April; this percentage increased to 76.4 percent in May. Higher prevalence estimates of cloth face covering use were also reported in May compared to April for all socio-demographic groups, with the largest increases occurring among those 65 years of age or older, residing in the Midwest and White, non-Hispanic people. Overall, the highest rates of face covering use in May occurred among Black, non-Hispanic people, those ages 30–39, and those living in the Northeast.

"Wearing a cloth face covering is one of the most important behaviors we can do to protect ourselves and those around us. We were happy to observe that face covering usage has increased but additional work still needs to be done," said Jack Barile, co-author and interim director of the Social Science Research Institute in the College of Social Sciences. "I have been happy to see local leaders modeling this behavior. Social distancing and the use of cloth face coverings are critical to preventing transmission of SARS-CoV-2."

Next steps

The study said [public health messages](#) should target audiences not wearing cloth face coverings and reinforce positive attitudes, perceived norms, personal agency, and the physical and health benefit of obtaining and wearing cloth face coverings consistently and correctly.

"Research among persons who report not wearing a cloth face covering while in public is needed to understand potential barriers and to shape services or messages that would facilitate and encourage adoption of this recommendation," said the report.

More information: Kiva A. Fisher et al. Factors Associated with Cloth Face Covering Use Among Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic—United States, April and May 2020, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (2020). [DOI: 10.15585/mmwr.mm6928e3](https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6928e3)

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