NATIONAL STUDY OF MASK ADHERENCE AND DISTANCING

Manual of Procedures for

Systematic Observation of Masking Adherence and Distancing (SOMAD)

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Background

Masking is a vital part of the strategy to control the COVID-19 pandemic, as masks limit spread of the air droplets that contain the virus. The public, however, has received mixed messages about wearing masks and the issue has become politicized, compromising the ability to end the pandemic in the United States.

In order to understand more about the populations that adhere to masking recommendations and those that do not, we propose an observational study to document the characteristics of individuals in public spaces who wear or don't wear masks and do or do not maintain physical distancing according to recommended guidelines.

Masks should be worn to cover the nose and mouth as well as the chin. Some people allow a mask to drop below the nose, defeating its ability to block exposure. Others carry a mask and only don it when they think they are close to others. Documenting the settings and the masking behavior of individuals within them may help future efforts to improve masking adherence and physical distancing and thus help control the spread of COVID-19.

A critical part of this study is that data collectors take every precaution to protect themselves. All observers must wear masks that cover their noses and mouths and maintain at least a six-foot distance from those in the area. If possible, conducting observations from the safety of a private automobile will be preferred.

This study seeks to answer these main questions:

- Do people in outdoor public spaces adhere to mask and physical/social distancing guidelines?
- Are there observable differences in perceived demographic (age, gender, race/ethnicity) and neighborhood adherence to mask and social distancing guidelines?
- Does level of physical activity engagement impact mask adherence?

Method

Public areas for observations will be identified based on whether or not there is the potential for people to be near and interact with others. Preferred areas include public streets, walking paths, parks, and playgrounds. Trained observers will identify the observation locality, its current public masking recommendations/requirements, the date, time, and location of the observation and whether the ratio of space to people is sufficiently large to enable people to maintain a 6-foot distance from each other.

There are two types of settings in which observations will occur. One is to establish a location where people spend time, outlined in a series of target areas within a park or playground; the second is a path or sidewalk that has a single point through which people will pass by. In both cases, the documentation of mask adherence and distancing is done on an individual basis. In the case where a large target area is

chosen, observations will be made by scanning from left to right with information entered for a single individual before going on to the next person. For the path observations, information for individuals as they pass the observer. (See figure 1.)



Figure 1: Target areas in playground and parks and path scan at a commercial corridor or path

Target Setting Documentation

A. Target area observations

The first setting type involves an established location where people spend time (e.g., park or playground), typically within a specific diverse **target area** (e.g. a field, playspace, basketball court).

Prior to initiating data collection, observers must set boundaries to define the specific space/area they are to observe. In these locations (i.e., target areas) observers scan from left to right recording information about each person before observing the next one. Once the boundaries are established, the observer starts at the most left-hand side of the space and documents the masking and distancing behavior of the first person there.

The information entered (e.g., characteristics, activity level) should reflect what the observer saw at the moment they began counting the person. Once observers record data for each individual in that specific area (e.g., basketball court), they move on to the next target area (e.g., playing field). They DO NOT repeat observing in the same target area within the same time observation frame (e.g., A MORNING), even when the scans take less than one hour.

B. Sidewalk/path observations

The second setting type involves along a path or sidewalk where people pass in front of an observer stationed at a single point (called a coding station). Observers record information about each person who passes by that established point.

Observers select specific spot where they can stay at least 6 feet away and be able to record individuals going by in either direction without interfering with them.

RECORDING TECHNIQUE. As each person passes by, the observer records the characteristics of that person and then continues to enter data for the next person who passes by.

It may be challenging to accurately record all individuals a path is busy (e.g., large groups). While be ideal to record each person passing by, some may be missed. We recommend that you enter data for no more than 4 individuals at one time. For example, if a group of 6 people passes by, remember the characteristics and record for the first four. If others pass by while you are entering these data, just finish the data entry and resume when you are done. There is not an expectation to capture each and every person if an area is very busy. If there are unusual circumstances, send an email to describe the experience to: Deborah.a.cohen@kp.org.

If same person passes by the coding station more than once during the allocated time, do not record him/her a second time.

NOTES:

Be sure to record the characteristics behaviors of individuals at the first moment you see them, even if they change their behavior immediately thereafter.

If you cannot determine the gender or race/ethnicity of the person, record unable to determine.





Commercial Street - Broad and Girard Playground - Franklin Square Playground



Neighborhood Park – Clark Park

Figure 2. Examples of commercial street, playground, and neighborhood park

Study Sites

We hope to get a broad representation of data from across the United States to reflect a variety of outdoor settings where people congregate.

We invite data collectors to choose study sites that illuminate the demographic, neighborhood, environmental, and policy contributions/influences on face covering and social distancing. Our main interests are in commercial streets, parks, and playgrounds. These spaces will provide a range of observational data across varying scales of space size, density, and expected activity levels. (See Figure 2.)

A. Instruments

As an observer, you will be asked to complete three forms: a one-time informed attestation indicating you recognize your roles and responsibilities, a site documentation form, and an observation form of individuals in that space. These forms can be accessed on a smart phone or tablet through the internet.

<u>Attestation Form – To be completed once</u>. You will need to complete this online before you gain access to the forms for recording data.

Observer Attestation for Data Collection

We are inviting you to collect data for the research study, "Systematic Observation of Mask Adherence and Distancing" (SOMAD). The study is being led by Dr. Deborah Cohen (RAND Corporation and Kaiser Permanente, Research and Evaluation) and Meghan Talarowski (Studio Ludo). The purpose of the study is to better understand and document the public response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the degree to which people adhere to face covering and social distancing requirements and recommendations.

Your participation will entail visiting locations in which people have the potential to interact with others. For each observation location you visit, we request that you spend at least one hour documenting mask and distancing adherence. We ask that you do this at the same location on a weekday and a weekend. If you do this each month on the same day and time, we will be able to document behavioral trends. We ask that you strictly follow the protocol as outlined.

For your personal safety, you must visit only locations where you are confident that you will be able to wear a mask and maintain at least a 6-foot distance from others or observe from inside an automobile parked near the coding station. If you have doubts about your safety, we ask that you not observe that location. Observe all public health orders and regulations in effect in your location, and take all reasonable precautions against COVID-19, such as use of hand sanitizer.

You are engaging in data collection at your own risk, and you are responsible for ensuring that your activities are performed in a safe manner. None of the organizations associated with this study will be liable for any injuries, damage, or other harm that you may incur through your own conduct or the conduct of others.

Collecting data for this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Currently, there will be no compensation for participation.

We plan to share all data collected for this study. In particular, we will give you full access to the data collected in your locality and share summary data collected in other U.S. localities, so you can compare your findings with other settings.

By signing below, you agree to assist with the data collection effort and assume full liability for your field work. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Deborah Cohen at <u>Deborah.a.Cohen@kp.org</u>.

Thanks for your contribution.

Name	Signature
Email	
Affiliation	

Variables

Location and Setting Variables

For each observation hour we ask:

Observer name, date, time, city, presence of a local masking policy, type of location, and the location name and address, and zip code.

Type of location options: commercial street, neighborhood park, playground, play street, trail and other, which allows you to write in.

Location name: refers to the official name of the place, but if it doesn't have a name (e.g., a street downtown), just write in "downtown". This is primarily helpful for local teams who want to associate data with the specific place quickly. The address enables everyone to determine the location. Put in cross streets if there is no apparent address (e.g., "25th st and Ocean Park Blvd").

Social Distancing: There is also a question as to whether people are able to socially distance. This refers to the ratio of space to people. If people have enough room to stay at least 6 feet apart from other, answer "yes".

Once this screen is complete you may not need to enter this information again, except if you are able to document more than 30 people. Once you have reached 30 people on the next screen, you will have to submit and re-enter these data before you can get to the screen to document individual characteristics.

Individual-level variables

For each person, complete the options by scrolling down the page. When people are in a group, if they are moving quickly, you may be able to enter the characteristics of them in clusters, assigning the variables for 2-3 at one time, as you scroll down. It is important not to mix up the characteristics of the individuals if you do a group entry.

Age group

Enter: infant/toddler (ages 0-2), child (3-12), teen 13-19adult (20-59 and senior (60 and older).

Gender

Enter male or female, or "don't know" if unable to judge.

Apparent Race/ethnicity

Choose only one from the following: white, Black (African American) Asian, Latino, Unable to determine, or other.

Enter "Asian" for a person appearing to have origins from South Asia (e.g. India, Pakistan, Bangladesh) and from East Asia (e.g. China, Japan, Vietnam). If unsure, choose "don't know". If the individual appears to be an American Indian, Pacific Islander, or another origin, enter "other".

Physical activity levels – Sedentary, Moderate, Vigorous

DETAILS CAN BE FOUND AT: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vci6eX_Nvng

- Record people lying down, sitting, standing still or being carried (e.g., child on an adult's shoulders) as sedentary
- Record people walking or slow biking as moderate
- Record people running or climbing— anything requiring more energy than a brisk walk-as vigorous.

Mode of transportation

On wheels or not on wheels. On wheels refers to being on a bicycle, skateboard, wheelchair, stroller, or other device moved with wheels. "Not on wheels" usually means on foot. Record people sitting on a bench or a swing as "Not on Wheels".

Record people moving on a skateboard or other wheeled device that requires balancing **at least at** a moderate level. Record those on wheels not requiring their personal energy to move (e.g., in a wheelchair) as sedentary.

Face Covering Adherence – On, Partially on, Not on but visible, Not on

- Mask on: nose, mouth, and chin are fully covered
- Face covering partially on: nose or mouth is covered, but not both
- Face covering not on, but visible (e.g. mask in hand or dangling from ear)
- No visible face covering

Examples:



"The Sniffer"





"The Escape Hatch"

"The Nose Plug"

Face covering partially on



Face covering visible, but not on. Images by Rochester regional

Group Information

A group is defined as 2 or more people who appear to be hanging out together or traveling together and likely know each other.

Group –Not in group, In group (2), In group (3-5), In group (6-10), In group (10+)

• Count the number of people appearing to be in the group

Distancing – Not within 6 ft of people, Within 6 ft of others, including those in the group with which one appears to be associated.

Give your best guess/approximation. Not within 6 feet of others is usually someone who is alone and not near others. A couple walking together are likely to be within 6 feet of each other.

Additional Notes

Record what you see at the moment you observe the person. (E.g., if a person takes off his/her mask off after you first observed them, still record 'mask ON")

- Do not double count. Do not record the same person twice, particularly on playgrounds and inparks where people may move frequently or around a small circular pathway.
- For play and commercial streets, select one or multiple observation points that allows you capture many people without you having to change locations. In a playground or park, you divide the space into multiple target areas for ease of observation.

Screenshots of Data Entry Forms

Site Survey and Documentation Forms

To be completed the first time visiting each site

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Individual Characteristics forms.

The form scrolls down to enter all characteristics for each person, but scrolls right to add more people. Do not submit until you are done or have reached 30 people, or you will have to start over entering site information. After you get to the end of the hour, or have reached 30 people click submit at the bottom. If the hour is not over, you will have to start again and use another form.

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