

MASK MESSAGING STUDY

What's the right message to persuade people to wear masks in public?

Engagious

DIALSMITH

MASK MESSAGING STUDY

BACKGROUND

To control the spread of COVID-19, both the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control have recommended the use of face masks in public when unable to social distance. But despite the advice of healthcare and government organizations, there is still a segment of the US population that will not wear or will rarely wear a face mask in public regardless of setting.

The goal of the Mask Messaging Study is to assist organizations in identifying the type of messaging that is most effective in persuading Americans to wear masks or facial coverings in public.

HOW WE CONDUCTED THE STUDY

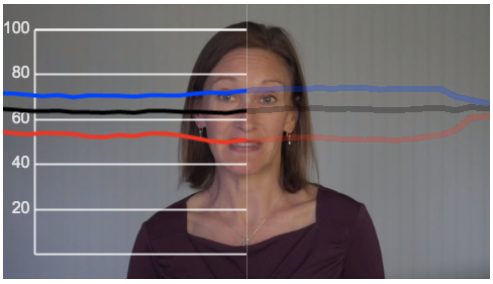
The study was conducted by evaluating two distinct messaging approaches aimed at persuading people to wear masks or face coverings in public. One messaging approach was “assertive,” while the other approach was “gentle.”

The study evaluated feedback from 142 adults from across the US. Respondents who completed the study fell into one of two groups: ***Sometimes-Mask-Wearers,*** comprising of those that agreed with the statement, “I wear a mask or face covering out in public, only when I am not able to social distance from other,” and ***Never-Mask-Wearers***, comprising of those that agreed with the statement, “I rarely or never wear a mask or face covering out in public.” Each respondent answered basic questions, including demographics, attitudes regarding COVID-19, and habits related to wearing masks. Then using our online dial testing tools, each respondent watched one of two, two-minute videos in which a speaker presented an argument intended to persuade people to wear masks in public more often.

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Respondents were randomly shown one of the following mask messaging videos. Using an online dial testing tool, they were asked to continuously rate the video on a scale of 0 (Don't Agree) to 100 (Completely Agree).

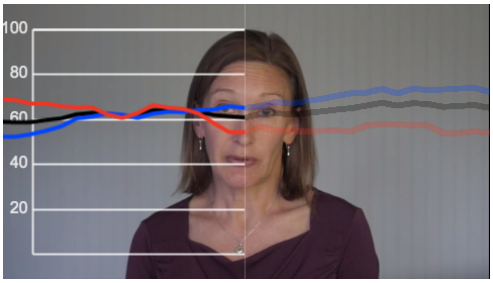
MASK MESSAGE VIDEO 1: ASSERTIVE



View Video/Results

The Assertive approach attempts to persuade based on fear of COVID-10 (it's excruciating, people die), and rational arguments why wearing a mask helps prevent disease spread. It urges respondents to "do the right thing," make a sacrifice for the public good, and follow mask rules. It speaks from a place of authority and certainty.

MASK MESSAGE VIDEO 2: GENTLE



View Video/Results

The Gentle approach attempts a more empathetic approach to mask wearing. It acknowledges the conflicting information/advice about wearing masks, and stakes out a small declaration of mask independence (situations where masks don't need to be worn). It takes a "play it safe" mindset in the face of uncertainty, and appeals to generosity, but leaves the decision up to the listener.

KEY TAKEAWAY

NEVER-MASK-WEARERS AND SOMETIMES-MASK-WEARERS HAD THE WIDEST GAP IN ATTITUDES.

Never-Mask-Wearers are skeptical about the reality of the pandemic and if wearing a mask would be effective regardless. While the Sometimes-Mask-Wearers are not opposed to wearing masks at all (similar to those we surveyed who always wear masks in public). The gap is apparent when looking at how each of these groups responded to the two messaging videos they were shown.



Never-Mask-Wearers



Sometimes-Mask-Wearers

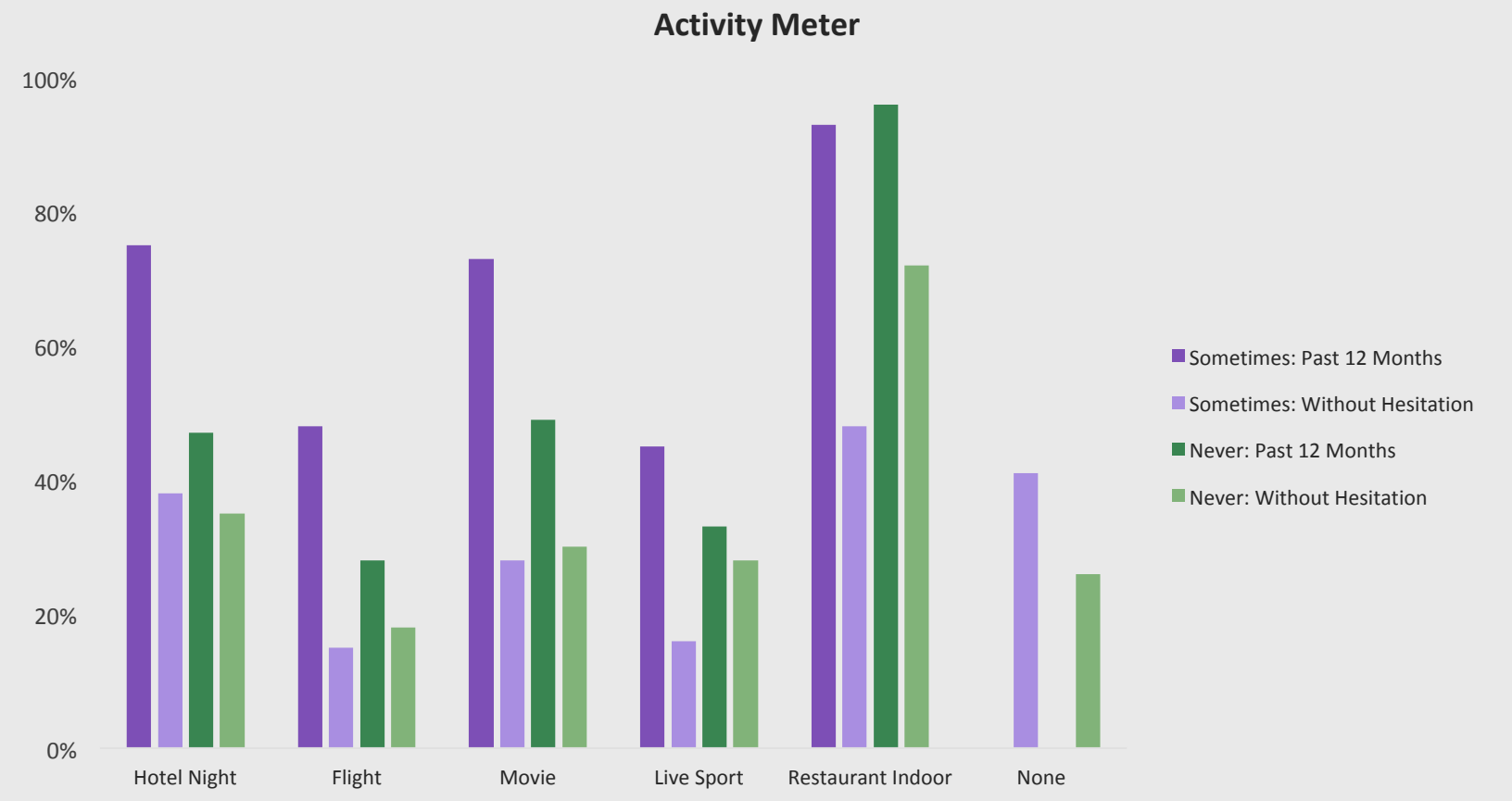
KEY TAKEAWAY

HISTORICALLY MORE ACTIVE, SOMETIMES-MASK-WEARERS ARE NOW LESS LIKELY TO FEEL COMFORTABLE RETURNING TO NORMAL ACTIVITIES.

Demographically, the SOMETIMES group is more active in travel and leisure activities (>50% more likely to have stayed at a hotel, taken a flight, or seen a movie in a theater) and over-indexes in the Northeast region, younger, suburban, and higher education.

Attitudinally, the SOMETIMES group is over 50% LESS likely to be comfortable returning to normal activities, especially live sporting events and indoor restaurant dining. And over half of the SOMETIMES group would choose a store that requires masks over one that doesn't, while half of the NEVER group would prefer a store that doesn't require masks.

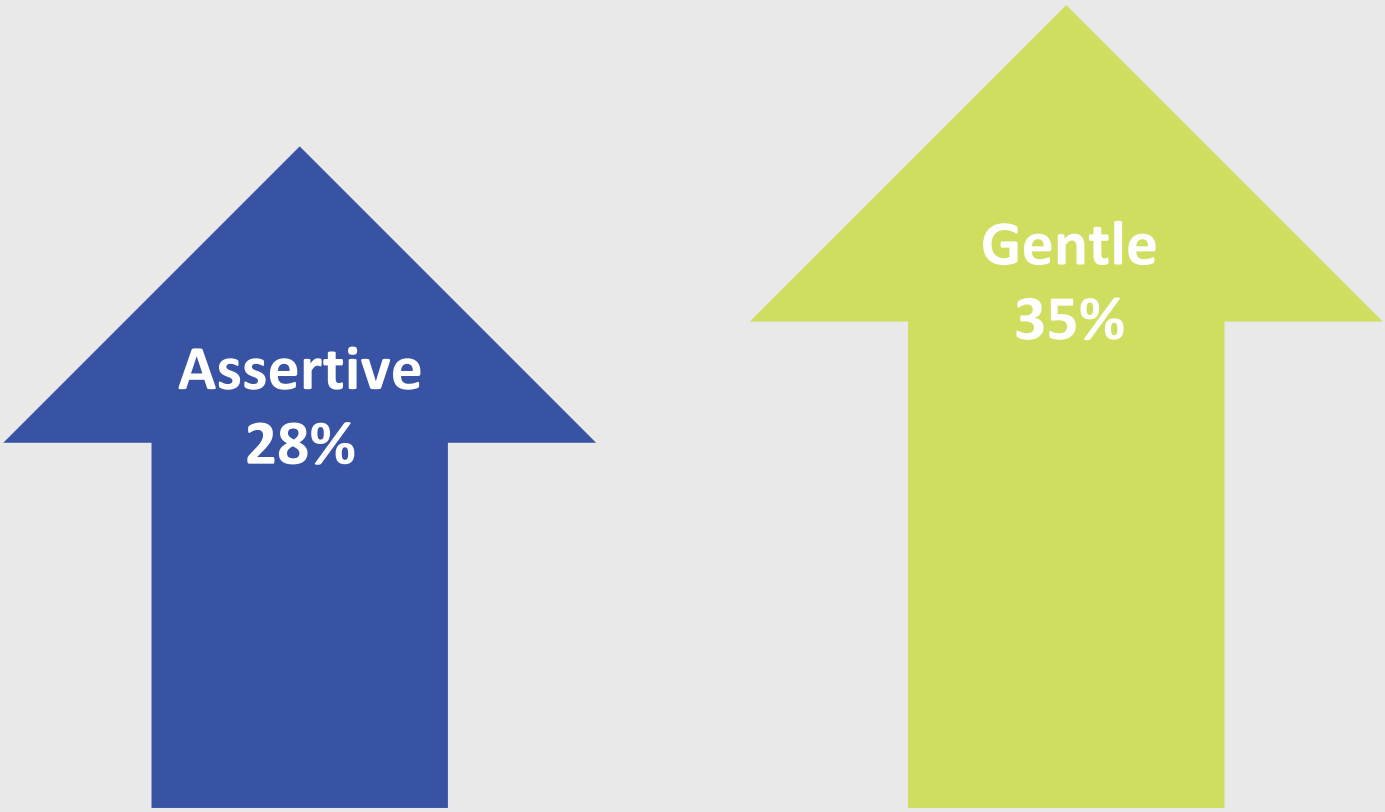
Participants were asked to tell us what activities they had done in the past 12 months. They were then asked which activity they would do now without hesitation, this included the option of no activities (None).



KEY TAKEAWAY

BOTH MESSAGING VIDEOS WERE MODERATELY EFFECTIVE IN PERSUADING MEMBERS OF BOTH GROUPS TO WEAR MASKS MORE OFTEN.

The Assertive version of the video showed a 28% increase ACROSS BOTH GROUPS, while the Gentle version showed a 35% increase.



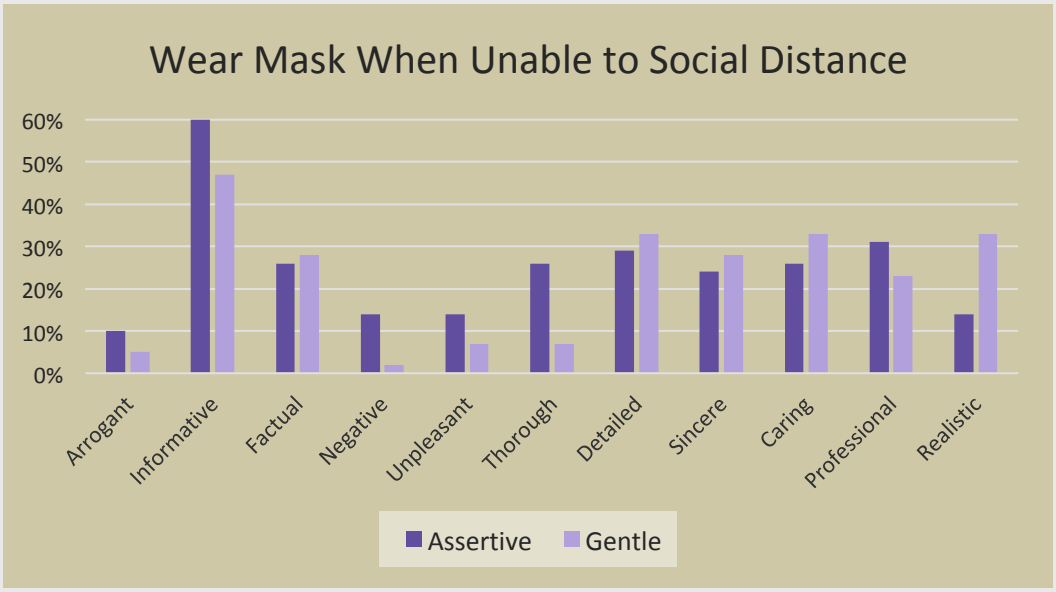
KEY TAKEAWAY

THE GENTLE APPROACH WAS RATED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE SINCERE AND CARING BY THE NEVER-MASK-WEARERS.

The Sometimes-Mask-Wearers and Never-Mask-Wearers differed in their perceptions of each video. Sometimes group thought the Assertive approach was informative, professional, detailed, factual, and thorough. While the Never group were three times more likely to find it arrogant and negative. Interestingly, the Gentle approach was seen equally as caring and sincere, with no difference between the groups.

Respondents chose three words from a list that best described the tone of the video. Percentages represent the percentage of respondents in the group that selected each word.

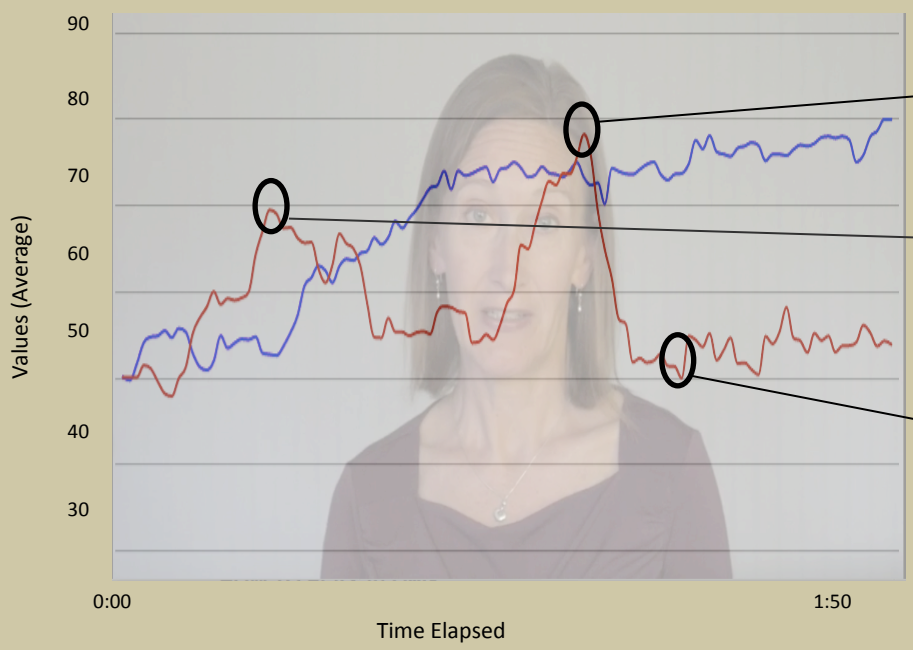




KEY TAKEAWAY

OVERALL, THE NEVER-MASK-WEARERS RESPONDED BETTER TO THE GENTLE APPROACH WITH HIGHER PEAKS AND A BETTER OVERALL DIAL TEST SCORE.

GENTLE VIDEO

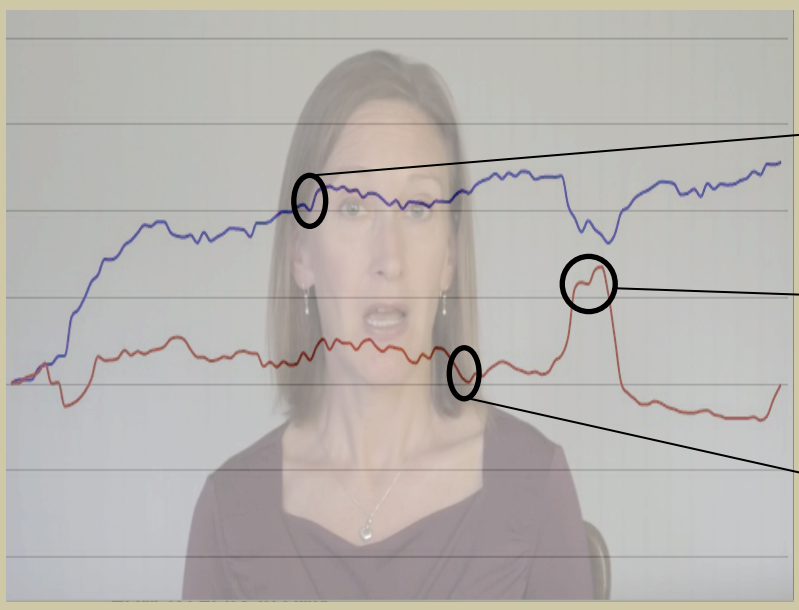


If I am able to social distance or exercising, then no mask is required.

Small Sample studies show that wearing a mask won't prevent contracting COVID-19.

In a store, a mask is reasonable. A mask limits the sharing.

ASSERTIVE VIDEO



Even if you feel fine and don't have any symptoms you can spread it to other people.

Some Americans resist being told what to do and are not wearing a mask.

The CDC strongly recommends wearing a mask to help keep droplets out of the air.

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CONCLUSION

While both message approaches moved the needle in persuading the ***Sometimes-Mask-Wearers*** and the ***Never-Mask-Wearers*** to wear masks or facial coverings more often in public, the Gentle approach resonated better with the Never group, which saw it as much more caring and sincere than the Assertive approach. The Gentle approach also outscored the Assertive approach in believability with respective mean scores of 3.57 (out of 5) to 2.90.

Based on these results, we have concluded that in order for a mask message to effectively persuade both groups and have the biggest impact to influence behavior, it's important to take a gentle approach and leverage common ground.

We will put these conclusions to the test in the next phase of the study, when **we dial test a new message that leverages the recommendations from this first phase**.

DISCLAIMER

The key findings in this report are based upon the opinions and feedback from a limited number of respondents, and may not be representative of the greater US population.

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Have questions?

Looking to test a message of your own?

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