Viewpoint: Do we still need to wear masks outdoors? Taking face coverings off in restaurants is 'like watching people put on seatbelts in parked cars, then unbuckling them when they drive'

One [systematic overview of COVID-19 case studies](#) concluded that the risk of transmission was 19 times higher indoors than outside. That's why wearing a mask is so important in, say, a CVS, but less crucial in, say, the park.

At the restaurant, however, I saw an inversion of this rule. Person after person who'd dutifully worn a mask on the uncrowded street took it off to sit still, in close proximity to friends, and frequently inside. I felt like I was watching people put on their seatbelts in parked cars, then unbuckle them just as they put the vehicle in drive.

Perhaps a bit of weirdness should be expected. Rising vaccinations and burbling variants make for an awkward transition period in which it's legitimately confusing to know when masking is… necessary.

…

[O]ne could argue that outdoor mask mandates build a sense of social solidarity around taking the pandemic seriously, which might have all sorts of positive spillover effects, such as visually reminding people that the pandemic isn't over.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other 'disruptive' innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.
[SIGN UP](#)

But as more and more of the population is vaccinated, governments need to give Americans an off-ramp to the post-pandemic world. Ending outdoor mask mandates — or at the very least telling people when they can expect outdoor mask mandates to lift—is a good place to start.

[Read the original post](#)