

Weekly Poll - COVID-19: Face Coverings on Public Transport

Each week Disability Equality Scotland send out a poll question to our members on a topical issue. On Wednesday 10 June 2020, we asked a question about face coverings on public transport.

Results

If a face covering were to be mandatory on public transport, would you wear one?

- YES –99% (762 respondents)
- NO – 1% (6 respondents)

Comments

The following is a summary of the main themes and key concerns of our members regarding face coverings on public transport. We provide verbatim comments where appropriate to illustrate strength of feeling or personal experience.

Support Face Coverings Becoming Mandatory

The vast majority of respondents are supportive of face coverings on public transport. It is widely accepted that as more people start to use public transport, face coverings will act as an extra precaution alongside existing measures to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

“It should already be mandatory”

“If it helps save lives, why would you not do it”

“I would feel a lot better about using public transport if everyone had to wear a face covering of some kind.”

“I have been wearing them with my kids and they see it as a bit of fun which takes away any fear factor.”

“I think this would be a positive move and I would feel better using public transport if people wore face coverings.”

“I feel that if it's not made mandatory, then all of the service users as well as drivers are put at risk.”

“I think this is overdue and needed as passenger numbers increase.”

“More comfortable and confident with it being mandatory. Feel safer from infection spreading.”

“I get nervous when other people are not wearing face coverings on the bus so this would help as it would mean everyone would be protecting each other. It would also make sure we protect the bus driver as an essential worker.”

Health and Public Reaction

Some concerns are raised from people with certain medical conditions which would make it difficult to wear a mask. There are also comments about public reaction if someone is not wearing a mask, which could be for legitimate medical reasons.

"Arms and hands don't go up to face (spinal problem], ergo unable to get on or off. Someone else could do it, but I would panic if I couldn't get it off."

"I've got breathing problems and to have anything cover my face is hard."

"I personally would wear one but I would be concerned about people challenging others who may not be wearing a mask for valid medical reasons."

"I suspect there would be an increase in aggression from the general public towards people who are not wearing face coverings for potentially valid reasons."

"I have COPD and difficulty breathing so face masks don't work for me, but I pull up my scarf over my nose and mouth when I'm out. The fit to face isn't so tight but it does the job and doesn't panic my briefing."

Hearing Impairments

Face coverings present significant challenges to people with hearing impairments who rely on non-verbal cues, facial expressions and lip reading to communicate. There are face masks that have been developed with clear windows over the mouth to help lip readers communicate with others.

"I would like to see more clear and transparent face coverings used by all service workers to enable those of us who need to lip read to be able to do so. Also others with other impairments need to be able to read people's faces and cannot do this when a person's face is totally obscure by material but, as usual in this country, the needs of us disabled people always comes last."

Availability

Some respondents were concerned by the affordability of face coverings, whilst others suggested that they should be distributed for free by transport providers.

"Masks or coverings need to be made affordable for everyone."

“Transport operators should provide face masks or coverings initially to get people into the habit of wearing them and staff should wear them too as this will make passengers more likely to wear them.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, the majority of respondents support wearing face coverings on public transport, which allow people to travel with confidence and feel safer. Concerns were raised about people who cannot wear face coverings due to pre-existing medical conditions, and the potential reaction from the general public if masks became mandatory.

Disability Equality Scotland, June 2020

About Disability Equality Scotland

Disability Equality Scotland is a national charity working to achieve full access and inclusion for disabled people in Scotland.

We promote access in its widest sense. This includes access to the built and natural environment and access to the same opportunities as are enjoyed by others in our communities thus promoting a life of dignity, respect and independence. This extends beyond physical access to include access to information, access to inclusive communication and inclusion in decision-making, whether with planners over inclusive design or transport providers about accessible travel.

Our aim is for every disabled person to have the opportunity to participate in a fulfilling life and for their voice(s) to be heard. We represent the views of individuals with any type of impairment, as well as disability organisations and groups who share our values.

We are a membership organisation and as such listen to the views of disabled people and champion on their behalf. We work to influence the policies of the Scottish Government, which affect how disabled people live, and work to encourage others to be inclusive and informed in their attitudes towards disabled people.

We are also the umbrella organisation for all disability Access Panels in Scotland and the principal provider of support and guidance to the Access Panels presently representing disabled persons at a local level throughout Scotland. Access Panels are committed to improving access and equality in its widest form, which means access to the physical environment, Education, Housing, Health, Transport, Leisure & Recreation and Social Justice amongst other areas.