

Swiss Policy Research.org - <https://swprs.org/face-masks-evidence/>

2. Studies claiming face masks are effective

An overview:

1. A **meta-study in the journal Lancet**, commissioned by the **WHO**, [claimed that](#) masks “could” lead to a reduction in the risk of infection, but the studies considered mainly N95 respirators in a hospital setting, not cloth masks in a community setting, the strength of the evidence was reported as “low”, and experts found [numerous flaws in the study](#). Professor Peter Jueni, epidemiologist at the University of Toronto, called the WHO study [“essentially useless”](#).
2. A study in the journal **PNAS** [claimed that](#) masks had led to a decrease in infections in three global hotspots (including New York City), but the study did not take into account the natural decrease in infections and other simultaneous measures. The study was so flawed that over 40 scientists recommended that the study [be withdrawn](#).
3. A **US study** [claimed that](#) US counties with mask mandates had lower Covid infection and hospitalization rates, but the authors had to withdraw their study as infections and hospitalizations increased in many of these counties shortly after the study was published.
4. A **German study** [claimed that](#) the introduction of mandatory face masks in German cities had led to a decrease in infections. But the data does not support this claim: in some cities there was no change, in others a decrease, in others an increase in infections (see graph below). The city of Jena was an ‘exception’ only because it simultaneously

introduced the [strictest quarantine rules](#) in Germany, but the study did not mention this.

5. A **Canadian study** [claimed that](#) countries with mandatory masks had fewer deaths than countries without mandatory masks. But the study compared African, Latin American, Asian and Eastern European countries with very different infection rates and population structures.
6. A small review by the **University of Oxford** [claimed that](#) face masks are effective, but it was based on studies about SARS-1 and in health care settings, not in community settings.

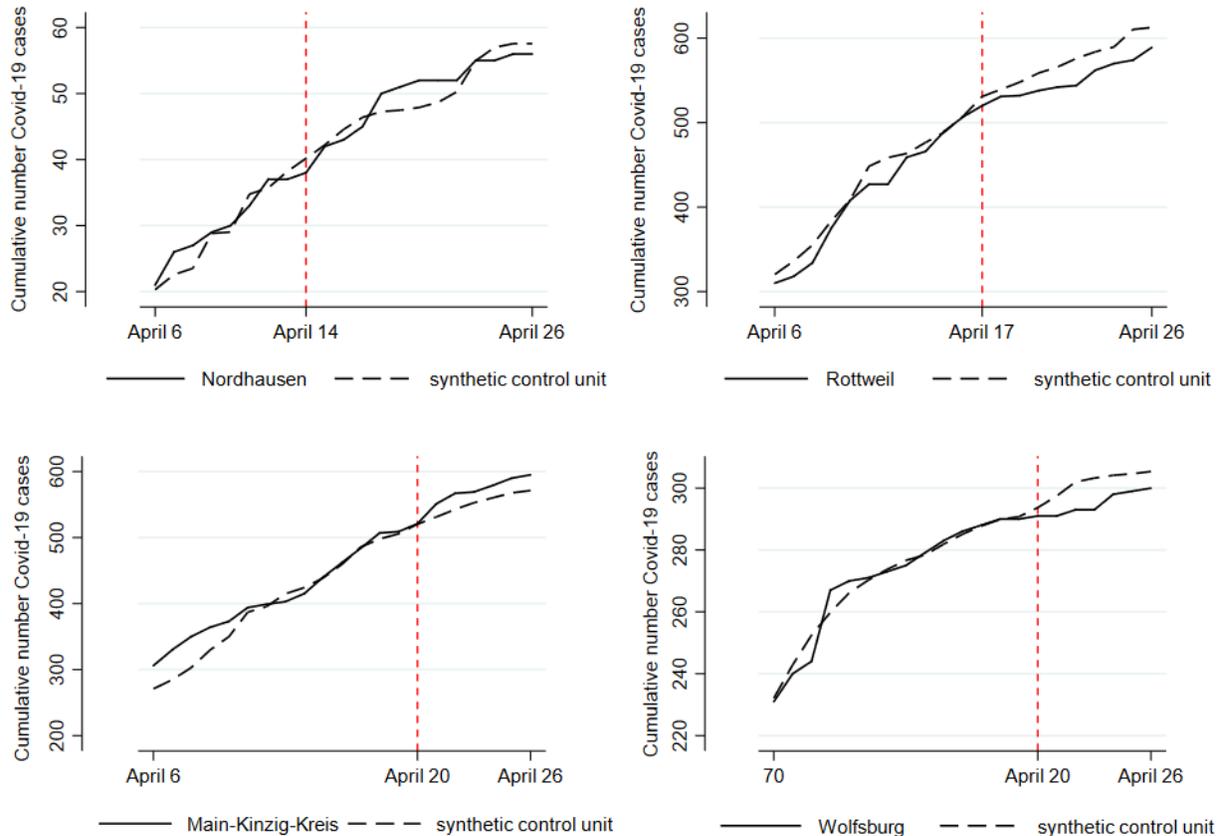


Figure A7: Treatment effects for introduction of face masks in other cities
Mandatory masks in German cities: no relevant impact. ([IZA 2020](#))