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Background:

The global Covid-19 pandemic response depends heavily on non-pharmaceutical interventions to protect population health. This aim of this study was to provide insights into levels and determinants of adherence to travel restrictions and wearing of face coverings during the early phase of the pandemic response in Ireland.

Methods:

A series of four cross-sectional surveys were administered through random digit dialling of mobile and landline numbers during May-June 2020. Questions were asked about compliance with local travel restrictions and where relevant, the reasons for travel. A question on mask use was added to the final wave of data collection.

Results:

Overall, across the four waves, 73.4% reported adhering to the travel restrictions and these levels were maintained over time (wave 1: 72.1%, wave 2: 73.7%, wave 3: 67.3%, wave 4: 79.7%) and were broadly similar across different socioeconomic groups. Higher proportions reported travelling for non-exempt reasons over time particularly in the final wave of data collection including exercise (from 3% in wave 1, 5% in wave 2 up to 8% in waves 3 and 4) and recreational or social activities (2% in waves 1 and 2, 4% in wave 3, up to 15% by wave 4). Overall, over two-thirds of respondents reported use of masks in the final wave, (72% of women, 65% of men) with shops or supermarkets the most common place of use. Among primary respondents, older age (Age 70+ vs. 18k-44, OR 3.2 [2.4-4.3]), attending higher education (attending vs. completed third level OR 2.2 [1.6-3.0]) and female gender (OR 1.2 [1.1-1.4]) were independently associated with compliance with travel restrictions.

Conclusions:

The findings demonstrate high levels of adherence to travel restrictions during the early stages of the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, albeit with a modest trend towards reduced compliance over time. There was a high uptake of mask use in advance of relevant national guidance.

Adherence to non-pharmaceutical interventions for COVID-19: a national survey

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