

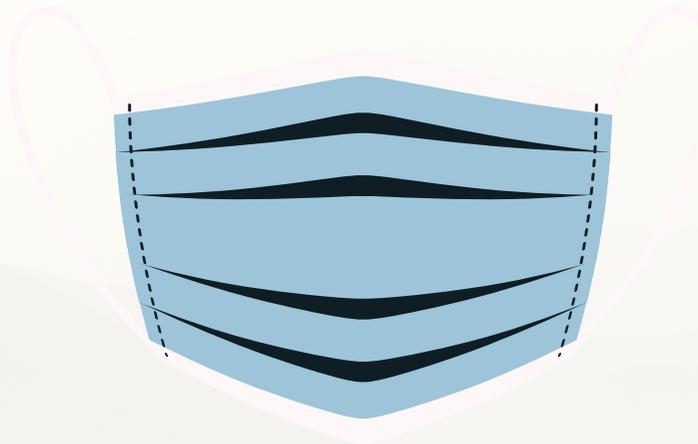
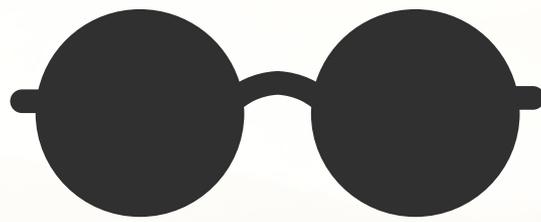
# UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT NET IMPACT GRADUATE CHAPTER

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OFFICIAL MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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March 2021



**MASKS - CURSE OF COVID 19 ?**

COVER  
COUGH

SOCIAL  
DISTANCE

WASH  
HANDS

**- VINEELA KURUVA**

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Masks have become a norm in our daily life with the Corona virus pandemic. Anywhere we go, from malls, grocery stores and restaurants, face coverings are now a requirement. Everyone out there young, old, rich and poor are now accustomed to wearing masks day in, and day out. We can agree that seeing people wearing masks is definitely hopeful and helps control the pandemic, but the kind of masks they're wearing and how they're being disposed should also be considered. Especially with the unalterable effects they're causing to the environment.



Masks are now rivalling the dreaded plastic carrier bag as yet another waste product making its irreversible, infectious and hazardous mark on the environment.

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# EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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According to a study, an estimate of 194 billion masks and 65 billion gloves are being utilized every month globally and these take 450 years to degrade. And since disposal of the same isn't being done efficiently. Once these are left discarded in an animal's natural habitat- be it land or water- this may cause animals to mistake this trash for food, which could lead to entanglement, choking, ingestion and death.



In our efforts to combat corona virus, we gave birth to a new promise of pollution through an ecological timebomb that is masks. One that is set to become ubiquitous as billions of people around the world turn to disposable masks.

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Masks a significant part of marine that was already worse to begin with. Aquatic species like dolphins are mistaking masks for food and wash up dead on the shores.



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There have been reports of animals having to be rescued after being trapped in the elastic straps of the masks. These hazards extend to people too knowing that in certain conditions, the virus can survive on a plastic surgical mask for seven days. This puts workers on the frontline like such as cleaners, garbage collectors and other people who spend a great deal of time in public spaces at direct risk of exposure to coronavirus.

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# TYPES OF MASKS

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We have three major types of masks available out there,

- N95, KN95 and other conical masks (stops over 95% particles)
- Surgical disposable masks (Stops up to 60% particles)
- Washable cloth masks (Stops over 50% particles)



While it can be established that the first kind of masks are the most effective, the other two are on the same level with only one major difference. Disposable masks are a huge threat! These disposable masks, making up 90% of those worn by the public, use three layers of plastic, including polypropylene, as well as a strip of metal to grip around the nose. Three layers of material are needed for masks to be effective. That's fine for the textile-produced face masks, wherein the three fabric layers can be washed and reused but for disposable masks it could mean waste piling up.

# WHAT CAN WE DO ?

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A recent working paper by the Plastic Waste Innovation Hub at University College London has put the current domestic demand for the UK at 24.7 billion masks a year. However, the demand for domestic face masks in the UK drops dramatically – to around 136 million a year – if only reusable masks are used.

There lies our answer!

**RESUSABLE MASKS >>>> DISPOSABLE SURGICAL MASKS**

Awareness is the key.

Spread the message, as students we should be the forerunners of change.

It's never too late.

Realize and React!!



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