



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Social Activity Measure Week Beginning: April 5th



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

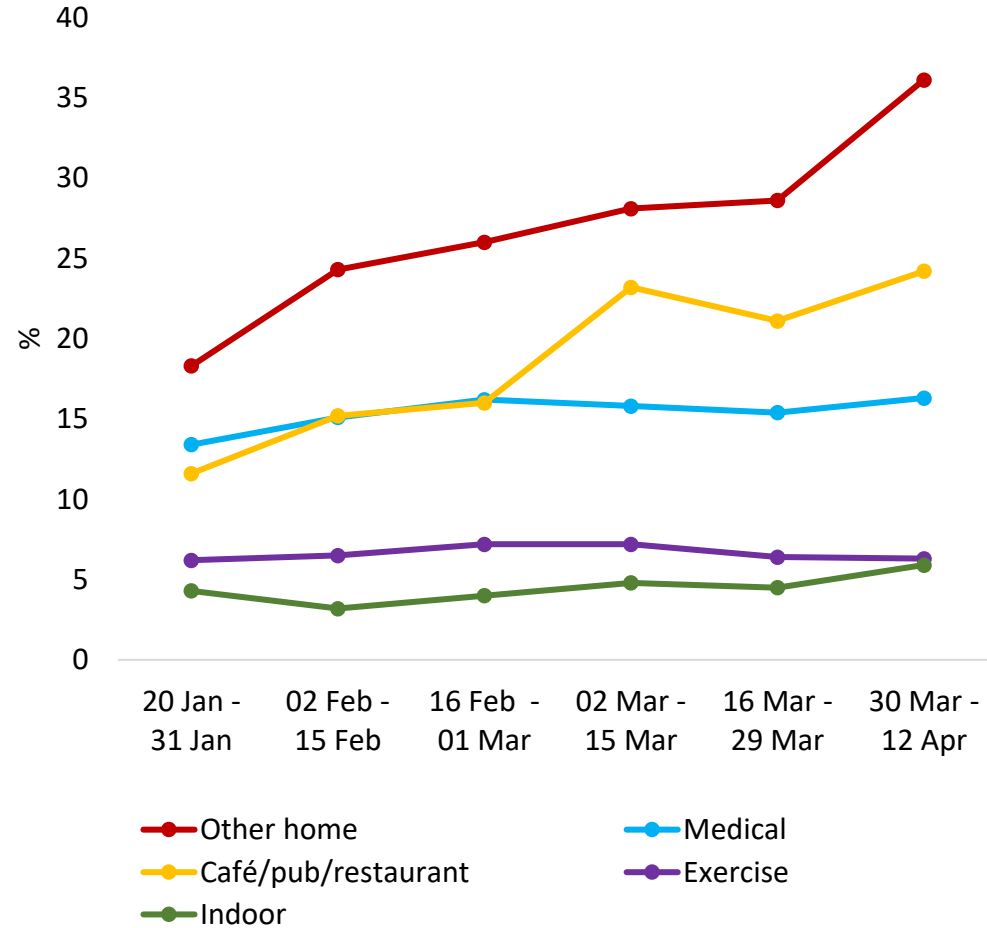
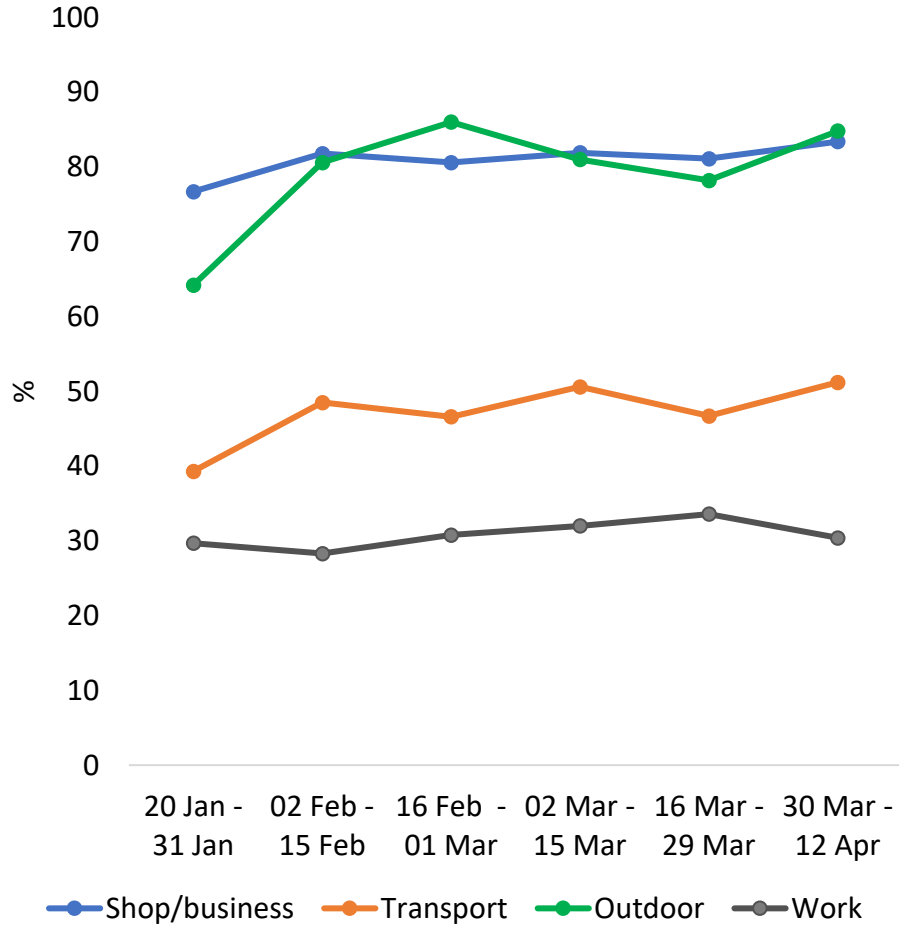
The Social Activity Measure (SAM) is a behavioural study that records the public response to the risk of COVID-19 infection over time. Designed by the ESRI's Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), SAM is an anonymous, interactive, online study that surveys people about their recent activity. The study offers insight into where and how risks of COVID-19 transmission arise. SAM aims to inform policy regarding the opening of parts of the economy and society, while keeping COVID-19 under control. The research was designed by the BRU in consultation with the Department of the Taoiseach, and is funded by them. The survey is completely anonymous. Where comparisons between survey rounds are highlighted, they are statistically significant.

TIMING

This slide deck presents results from a nationally representative sample of 1,000 people aged 18 and over who participated in the study between 6th and 13th April. Since the study is retrospective, locations visited over the past week includes the Easter weekend. Some restrictions, including the 5km limit, were lifted on 12th April. The study covers the period after the announcement about this on 30th March and the first day of easing. We have given the dates that questions refer to in graphs. Notable news stories during data collection included a change to the vaccine rollout strategy and a concern raised about blood clots from the AstraZeneca vaccine.



Locations visited (previous week)

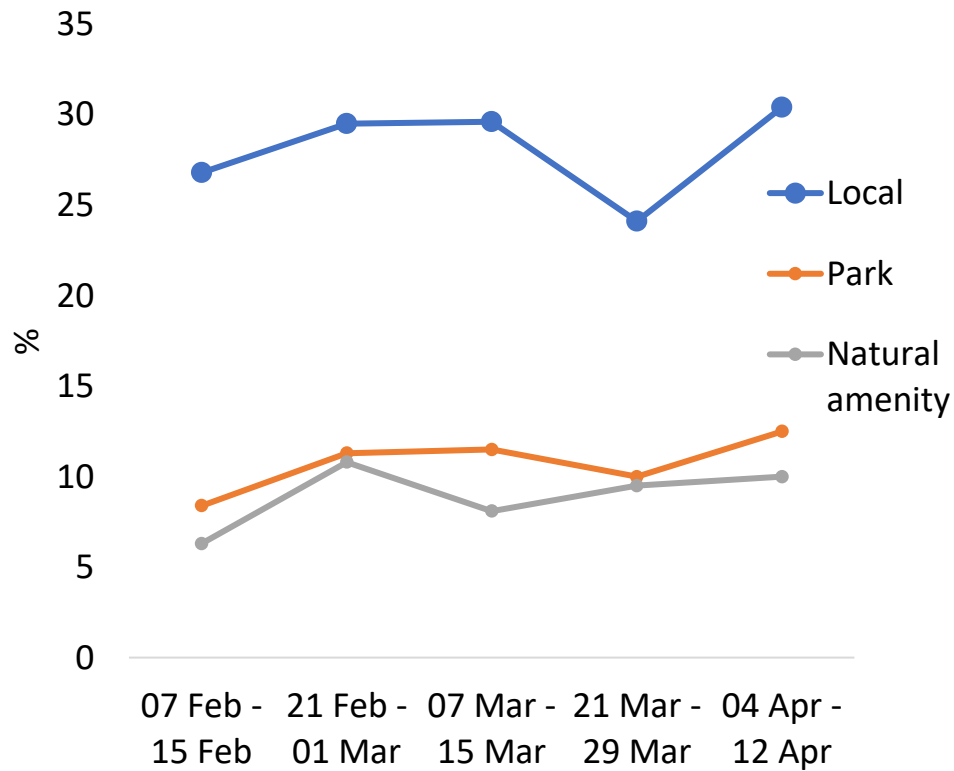


There has been an increase in transport, in visits to outdoor locations and to other homes, although see slide 9.

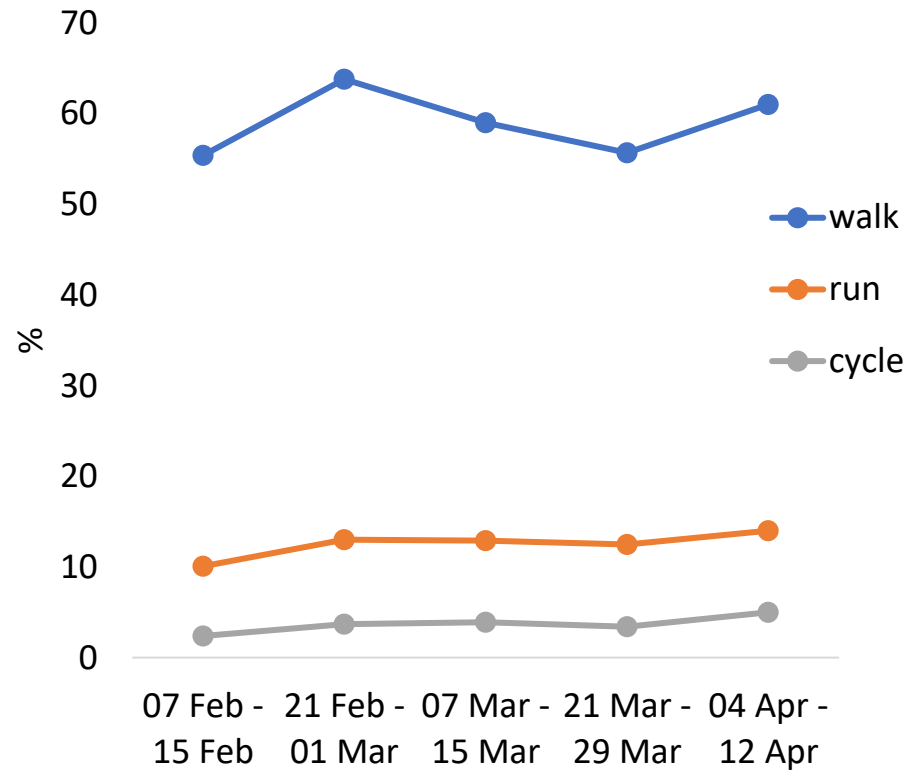


Outdoor activities (previous 2 days)

Outdoor locations



Exercise (previous 48h)

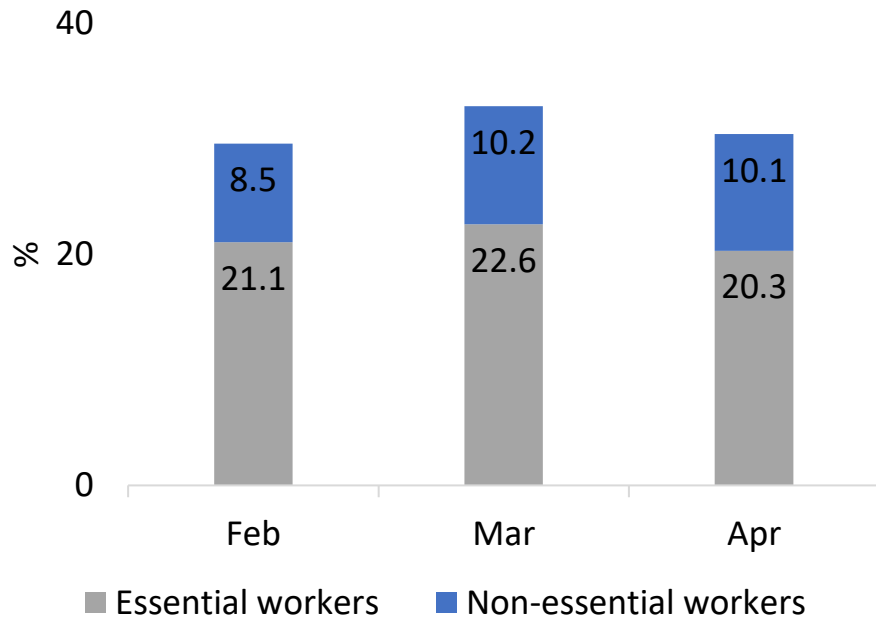


There has been an increase in the numbers visiting their local area and parks. There has also been an increase in the numbers going for a walk.

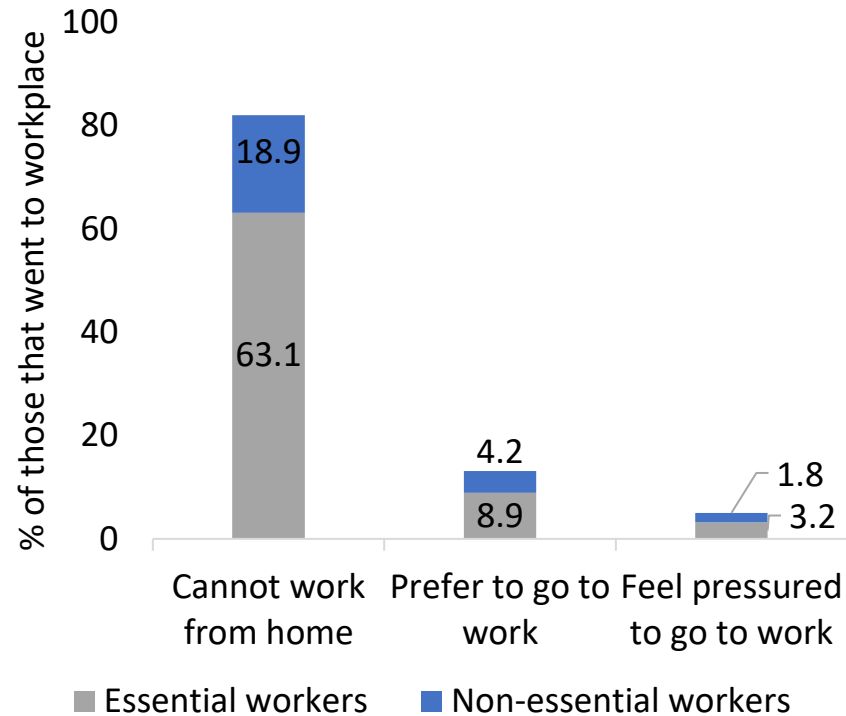
Working Outside the Home



Proportion who visited workplace in previous week



Reasons for going to workplace



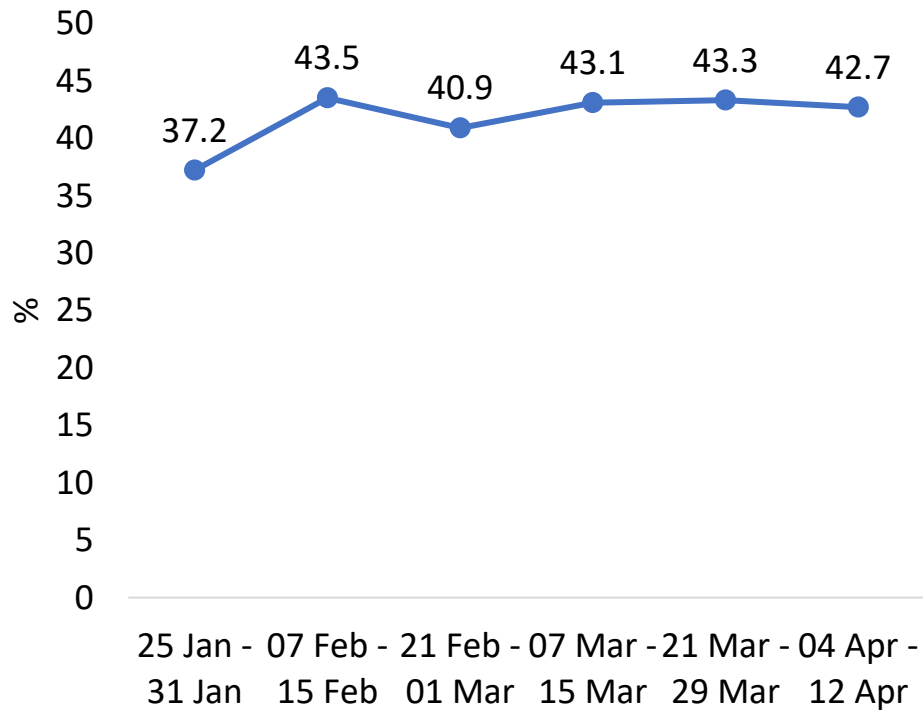
The percentage of people visiting their workplace has not continued to increase from February. Note that April only includes half of April and part of the Easter weekend for some respondents.

Where people attended the workplace, most reported that they could not work from home (all rounds of SAM) but almost 1 in 5 reported that they can work from home but prefer to go to work (13%) or feel pressured to (5%).

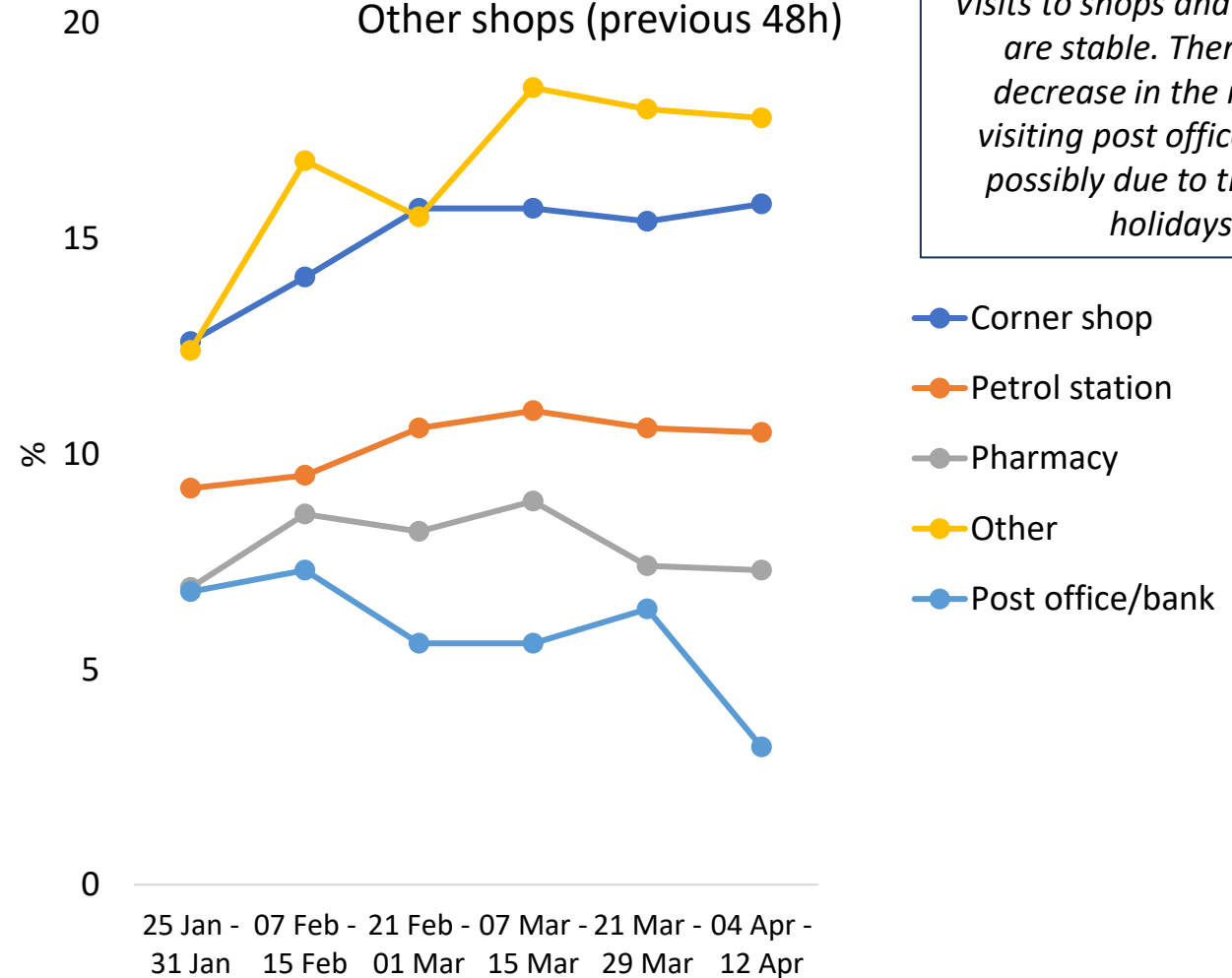
Shops and businesses (previous 2 days)



Supermarket (previous 48h)



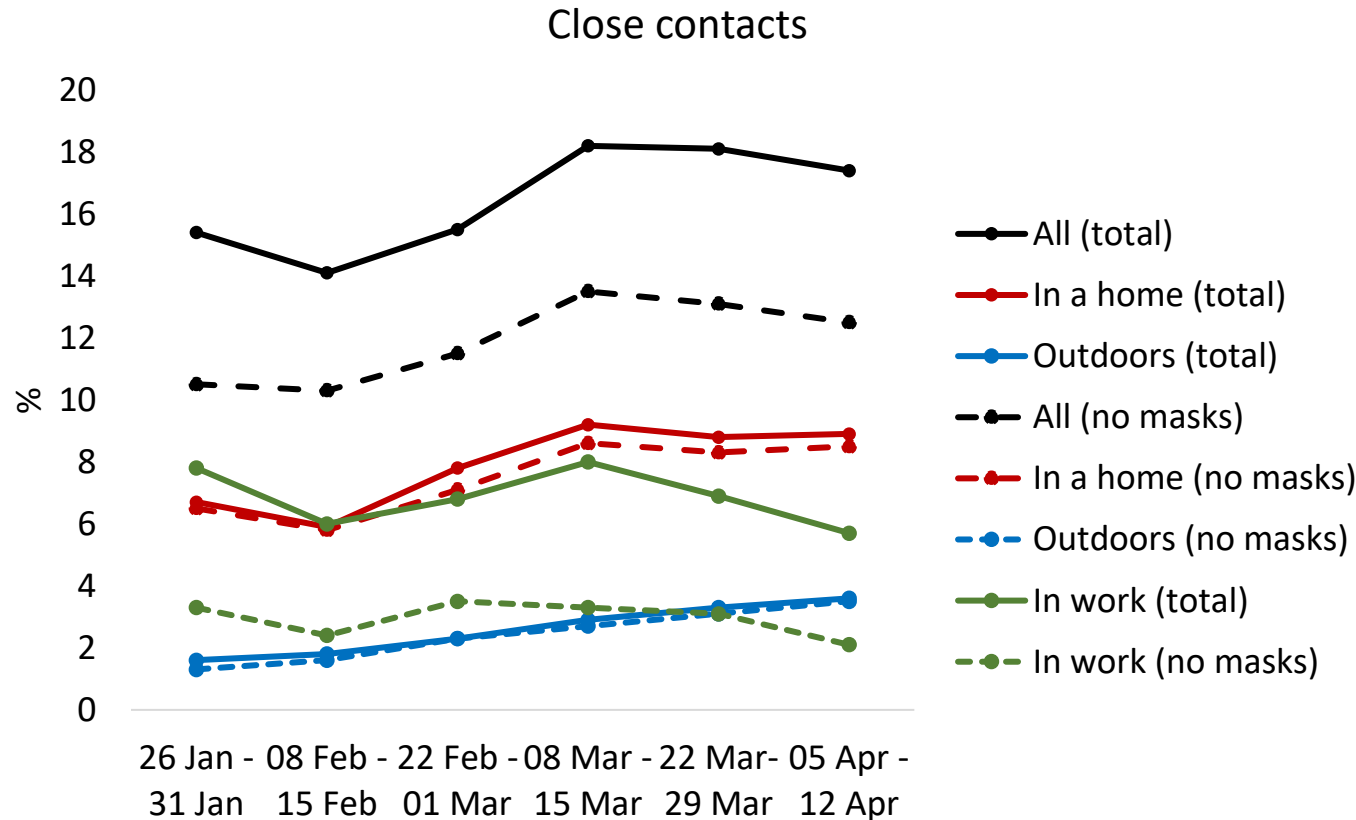
Other shops (previous 48h)



Visits to shops and businesses are stable. There was a decrease in the numbers visiting post offices/banks, possibly due to the Easter holidays.

- Corner shop
- Petrol station
- Pharmacy
- Other
- Post office/bank

Close contacts*



The percentage of people who are deemed likely to have had a close contact remains at a similar level to March.

Mask-wearing in close contact situations varies across different settings – it is more common in work but uncommon during home visits or outdoor meetings.

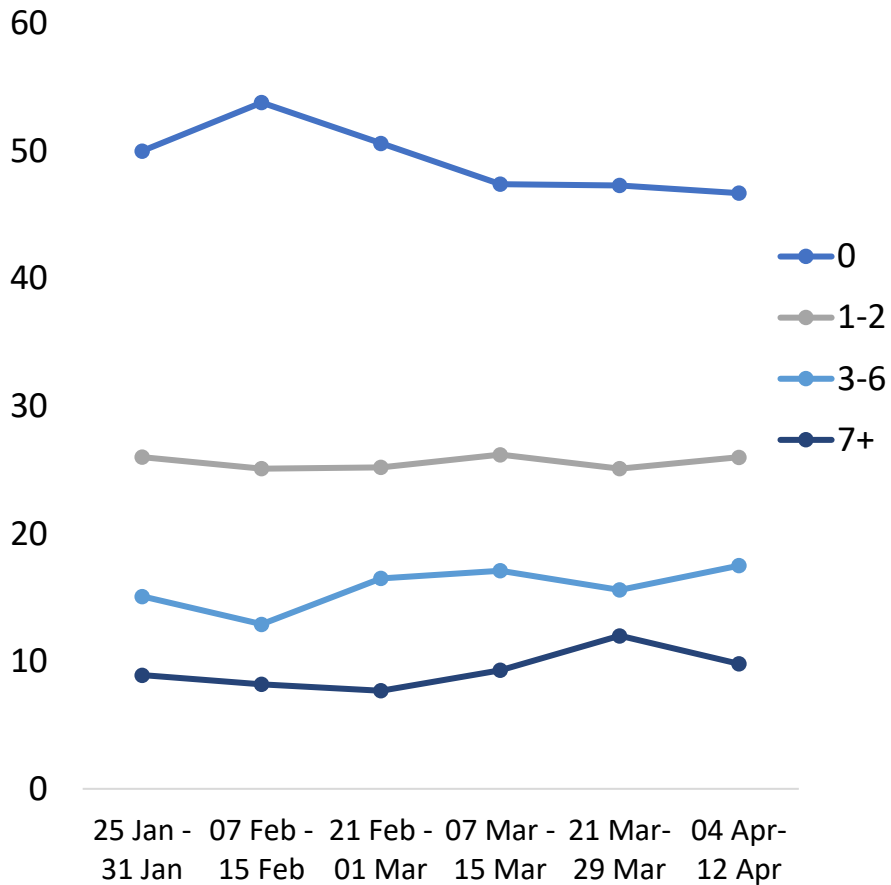
*Close contact interactions are defined as those that are likely to have lasted for longer than 15 minutes without a 2m distance being maintained at all times or that took place indoors for longer than 2 hours in a space that was not well ventilated (hse.ie)

Note that the classification of close contact settings has been refined compared to earlier rounds, in order to reduce the possibility that 'incidental' encounters (e.g. passing by in a park) are counted. Hence this approach is now more conservative but reduces noise to improve comparisons over time.

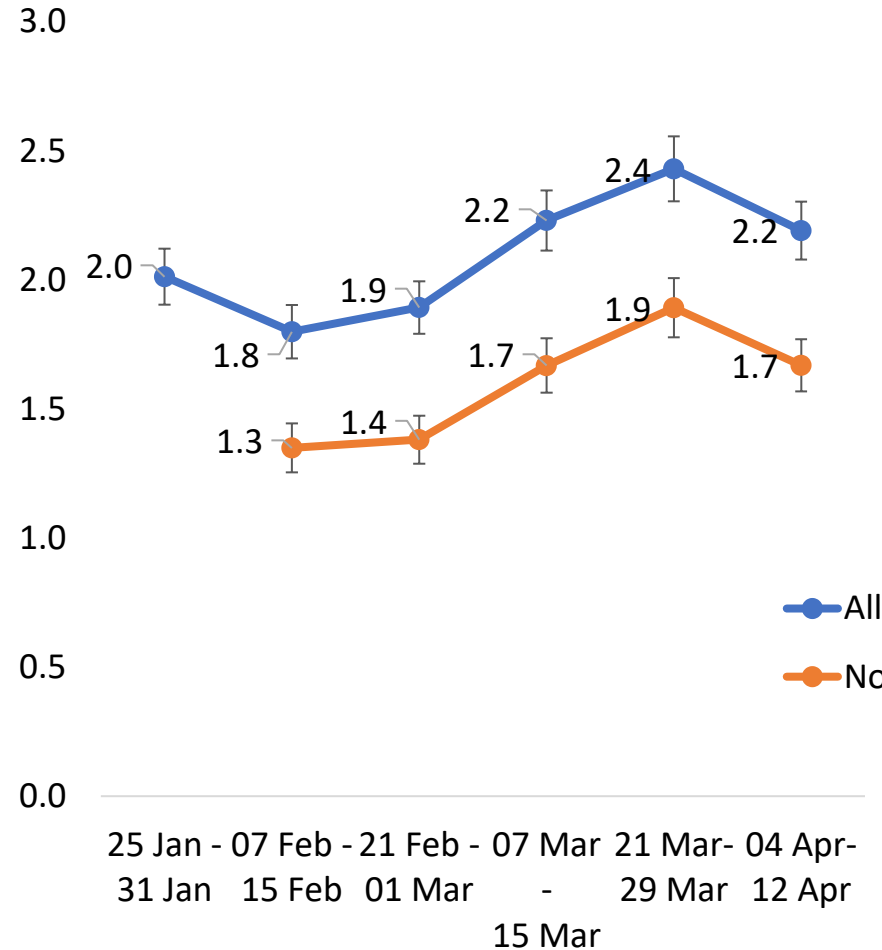
Meeting people outside the household



Number of people met (previous 48h)



Mean



The number of people met from outside the household in the previous 48 hours has not changed.

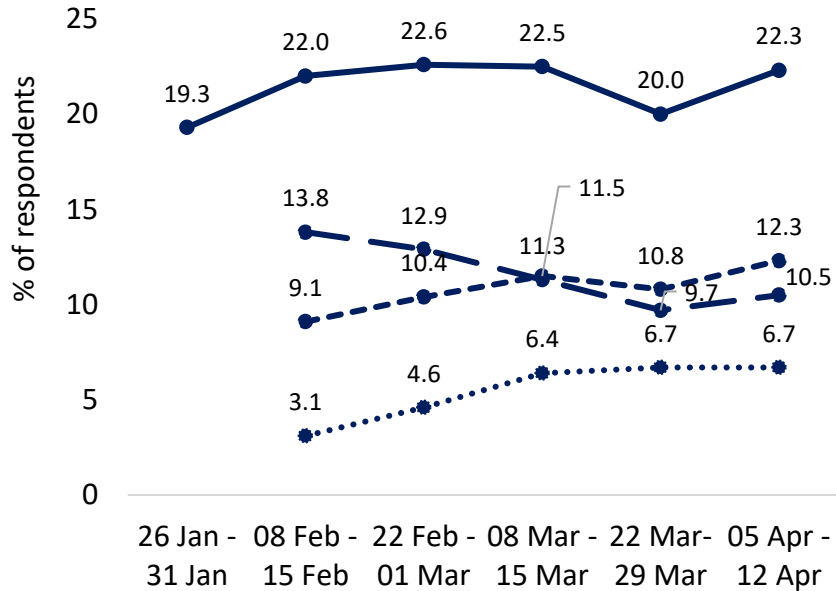
Almost half of people (47%) continue to meet no one outside of their household.

*People met from outside the household who do not fall under the definition of people within the individual's "support bubble".

Visits to homes

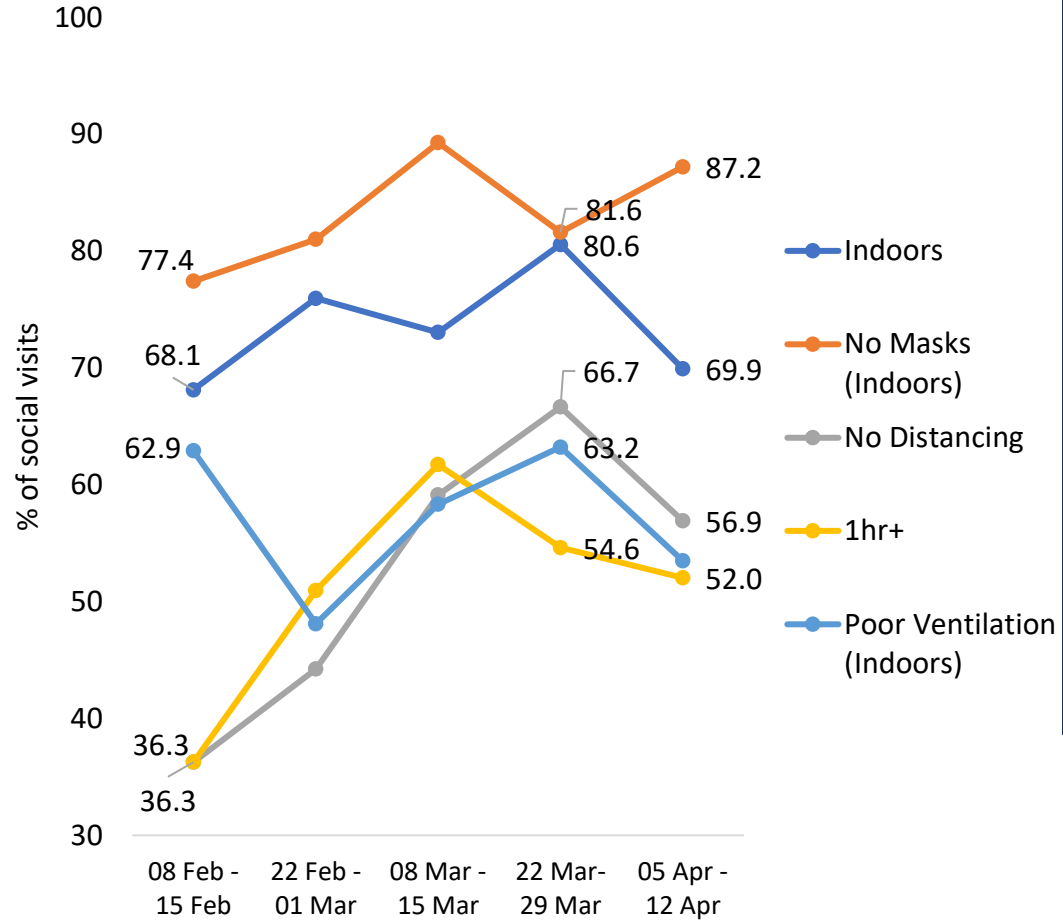


Proportion who had visitors or visited another household (previous day)



- Any visit
- Non-social (e.g. provide care, professional reasons)
- -●- Social visit
- ...●... Social visit (close contact)

Risk factors during social visits



There was no significant increase in home visits the previous day.

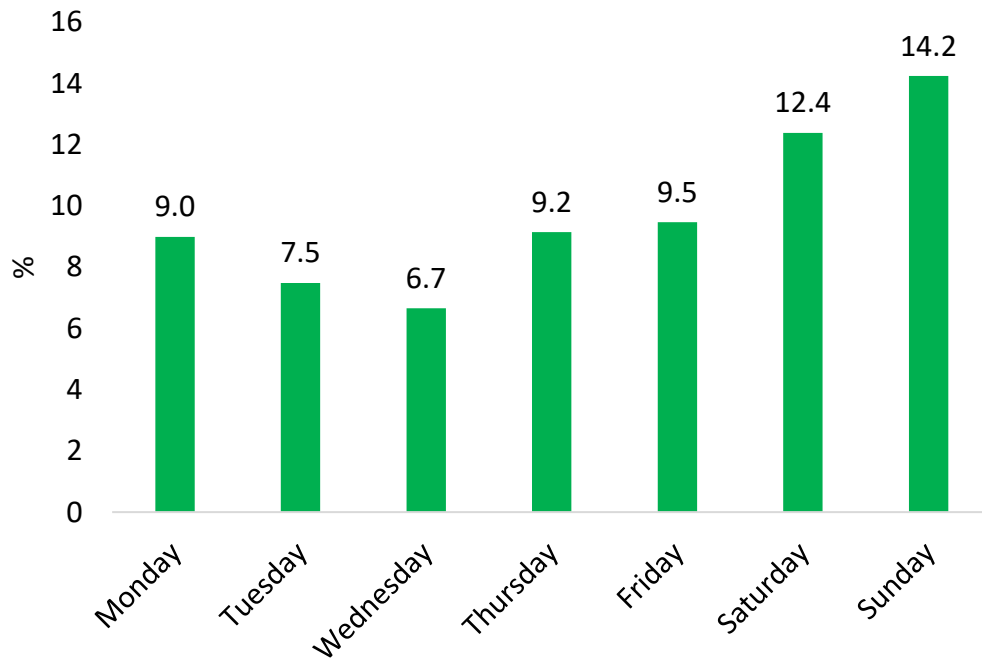
When visits took place they were less likely to take place indoors, but when they did take place indoors they were likely to be meetings without masks worn.

The mean number of people met from other households during social visits with close contact was 2.1 in own home and 2.8 in another's home.

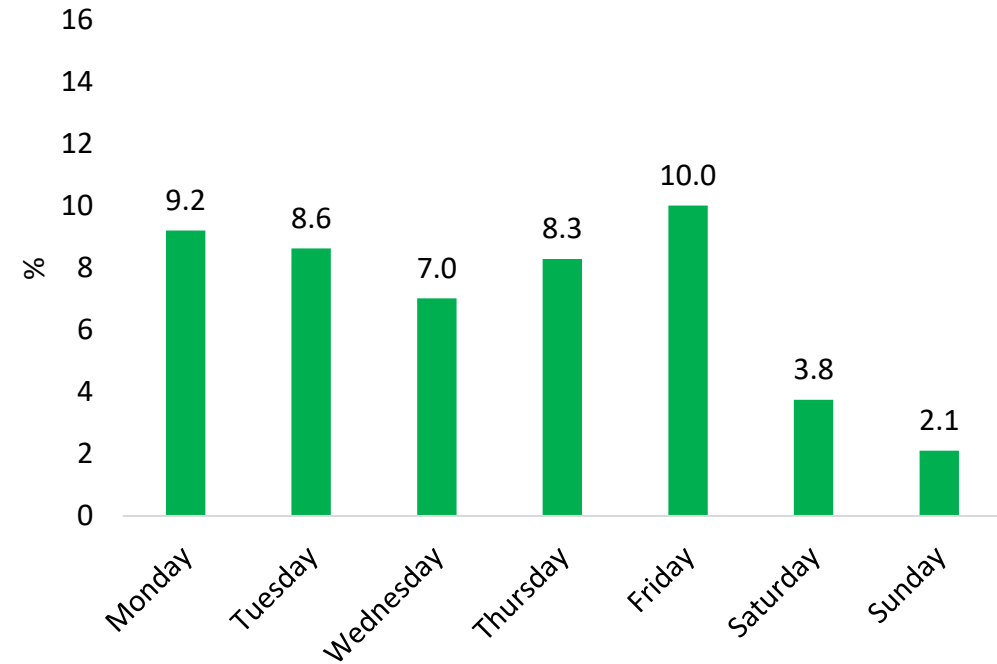


Behaviour by Days of the Week

Social Visit (Day Before)



Close Contact at Work (Day Before)

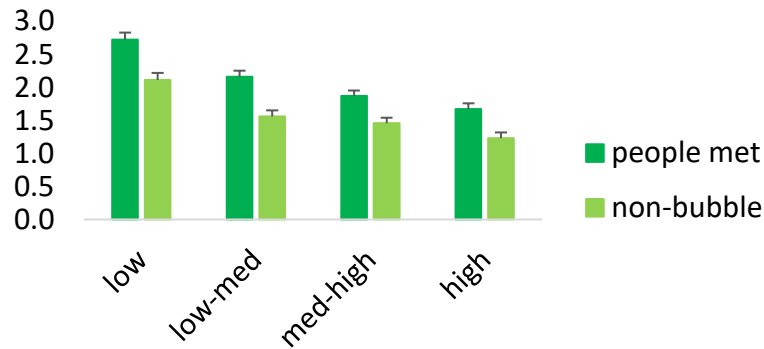


Social visits are more likely to take place at weekends and work close contacts are more likely on weekdays.

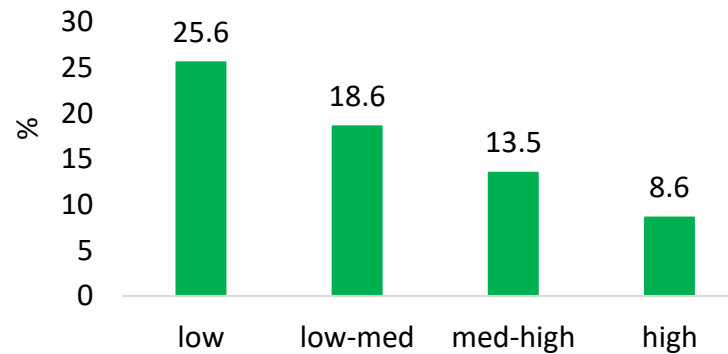
Worry and behaviour



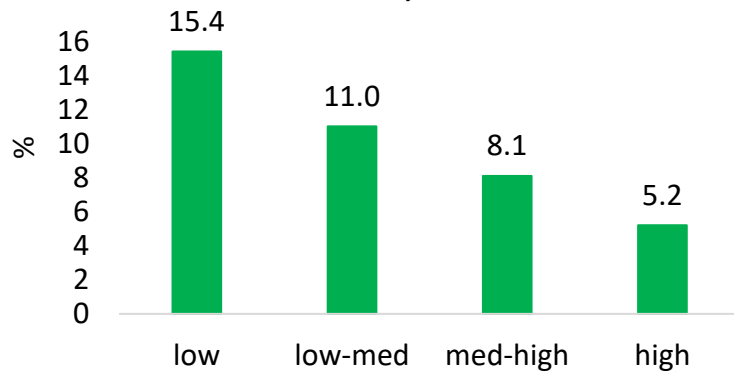
Meeting people (previous 48h) by level of worry



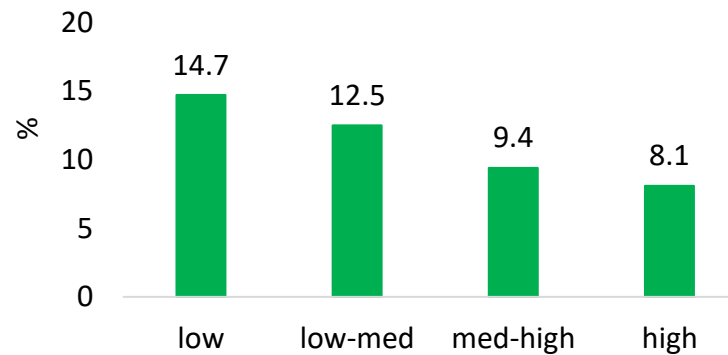
Close contact (previous day) by level of worry



Social visit (previous day) by level of worry



Close contact at work (previous day) by level of worry

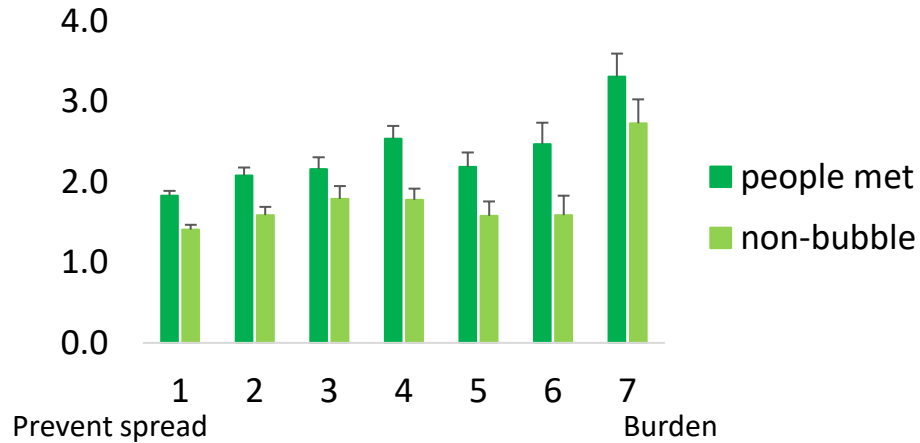


In statistical models that control for socio-demographic background and a range of psychological variables collected by SAM, an individual's level of worry in general about COVID-19 is the single strongest predictor of their behaviour. These charts categorise worry into four levels, which displays the strength of the effect.

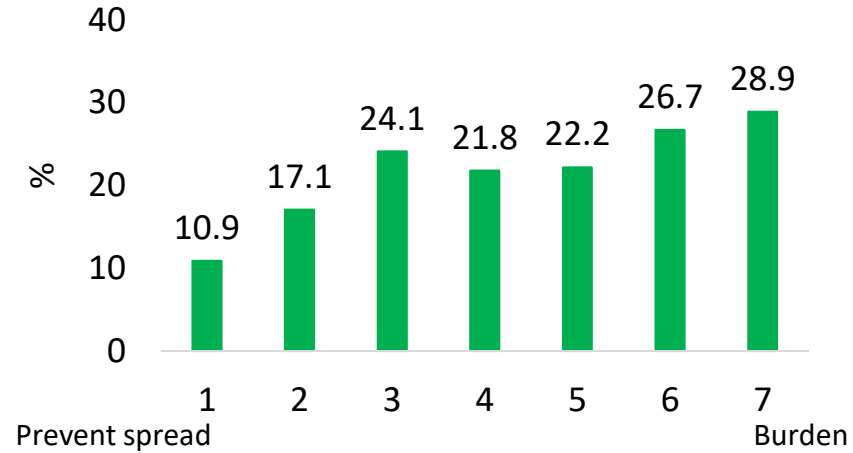
Prevention-burden trade-off and behaviour



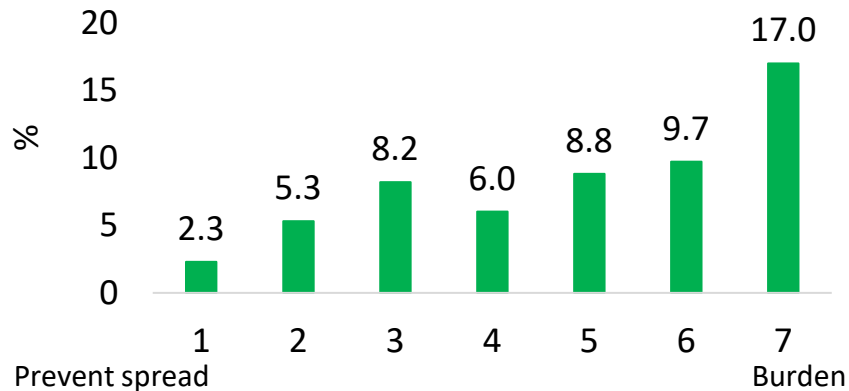
Meeting people (previous 48h) by prevention-burden trade-off



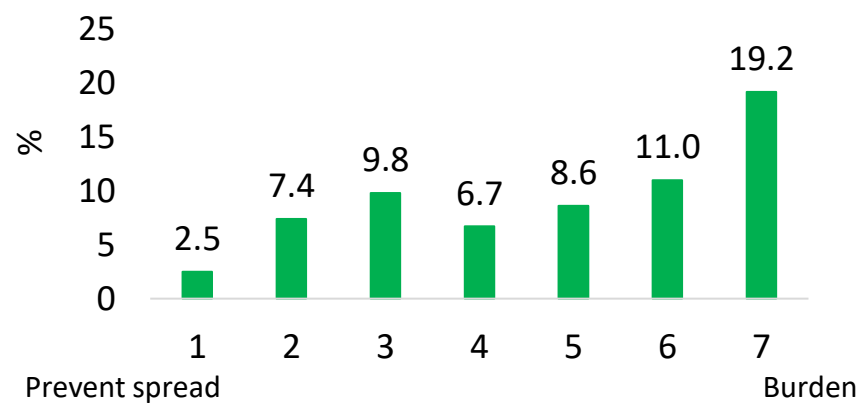
Close contact (previous day) by prevention-burden trade-off



Close contact during social visit (previous day) by prevention-burden trade-off



Close contact in private setting* (previous day) by prevention-burden trade-off



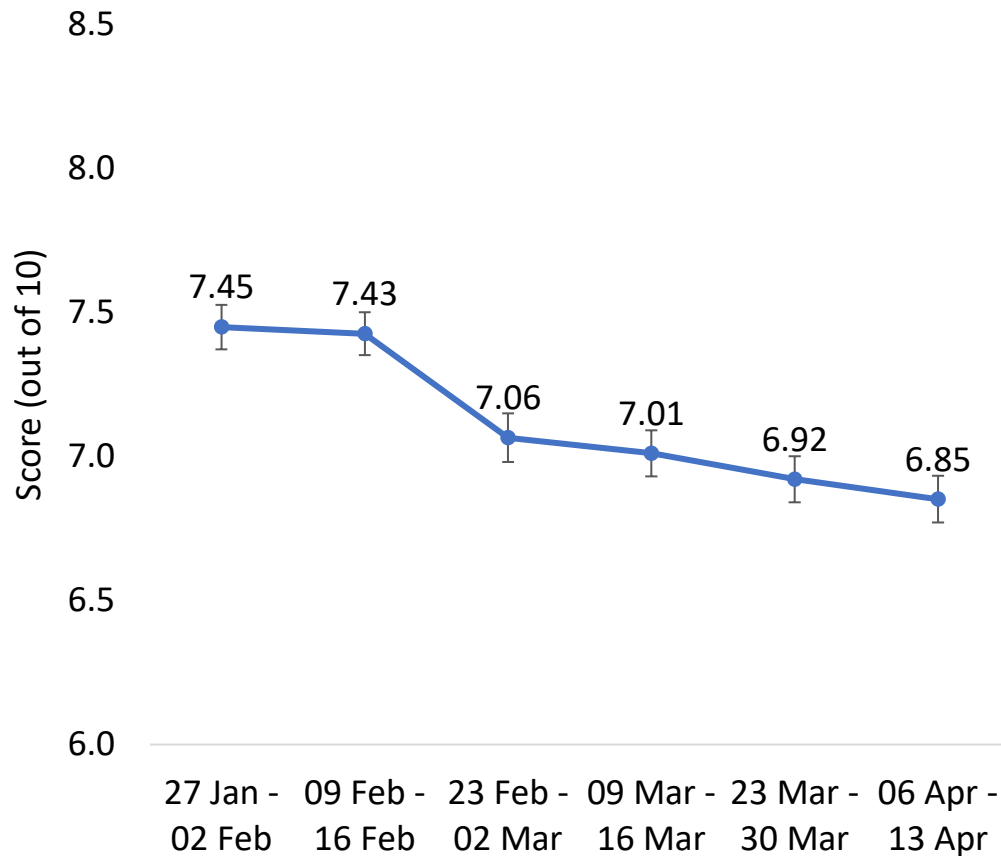
In statistical models that control for socio-demographic background and a range of psychological variables, whether an individual views preventing the spread of COVID-19 or the burden of restrictions as more important is a predictor of their behaviour.

*private setting includes social visits to houses, private transport and gatherings

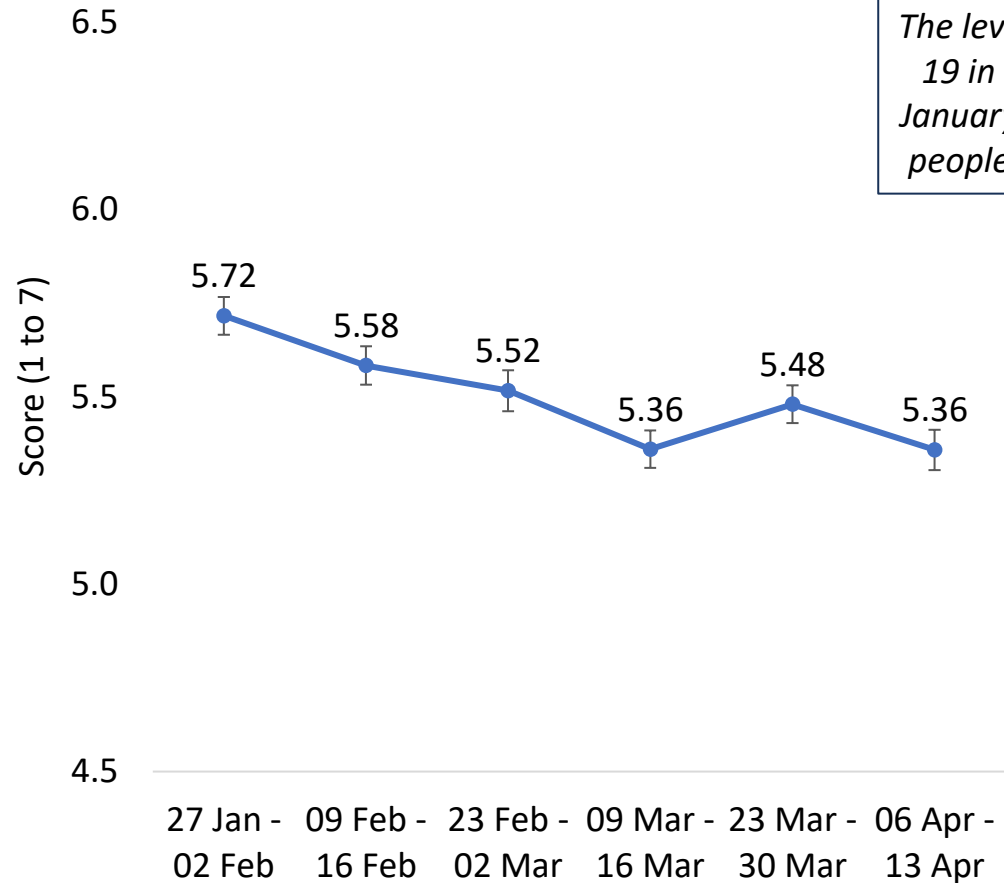
Levels of worry and media engagement



Worry



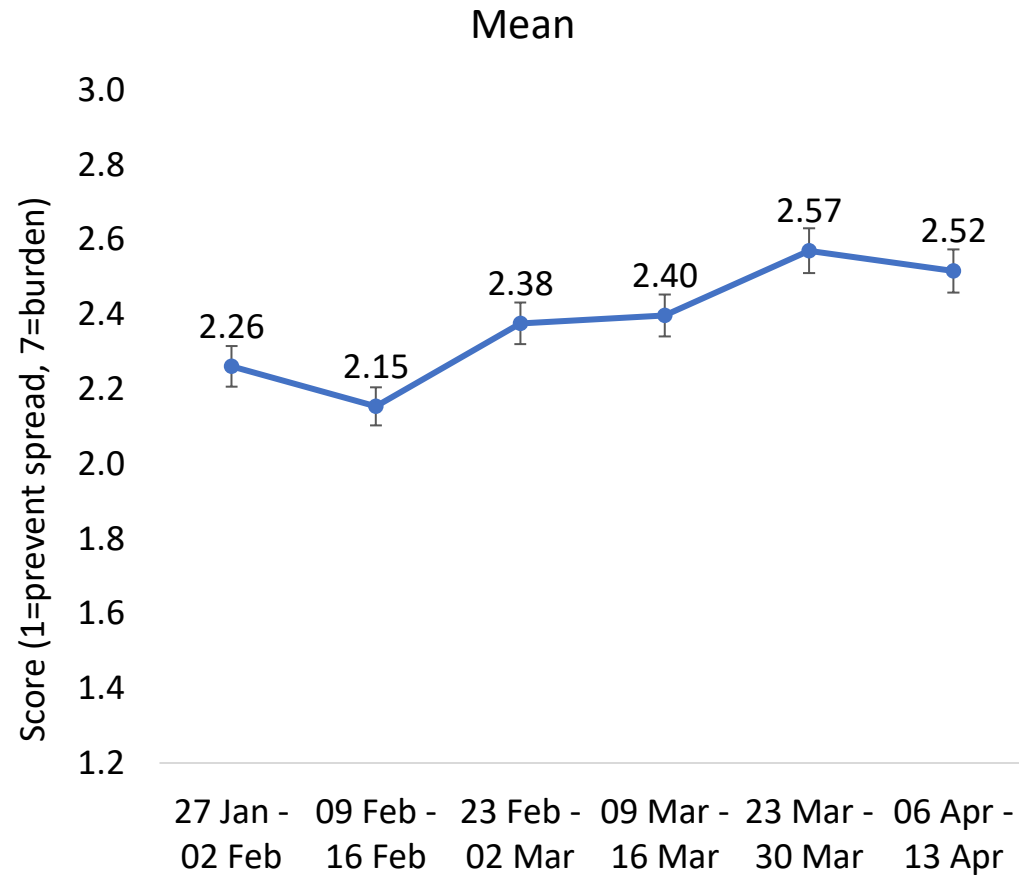
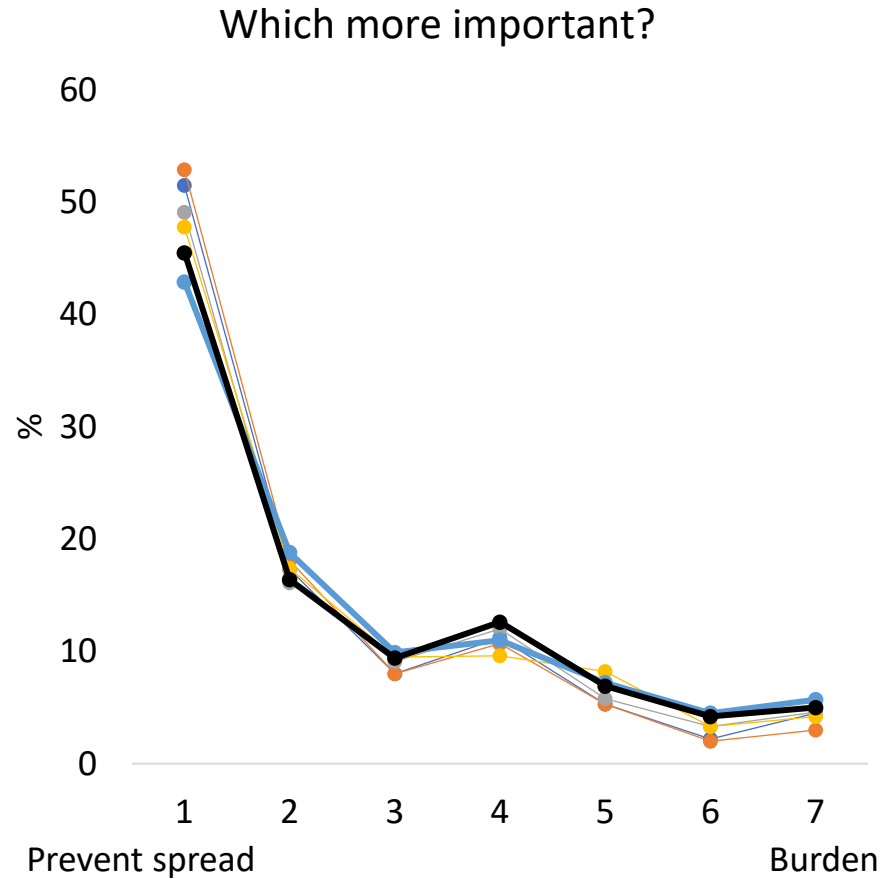
Following the news



The level of worry about COVID-19 in general has fallen since January, along with how closely people are following the news.



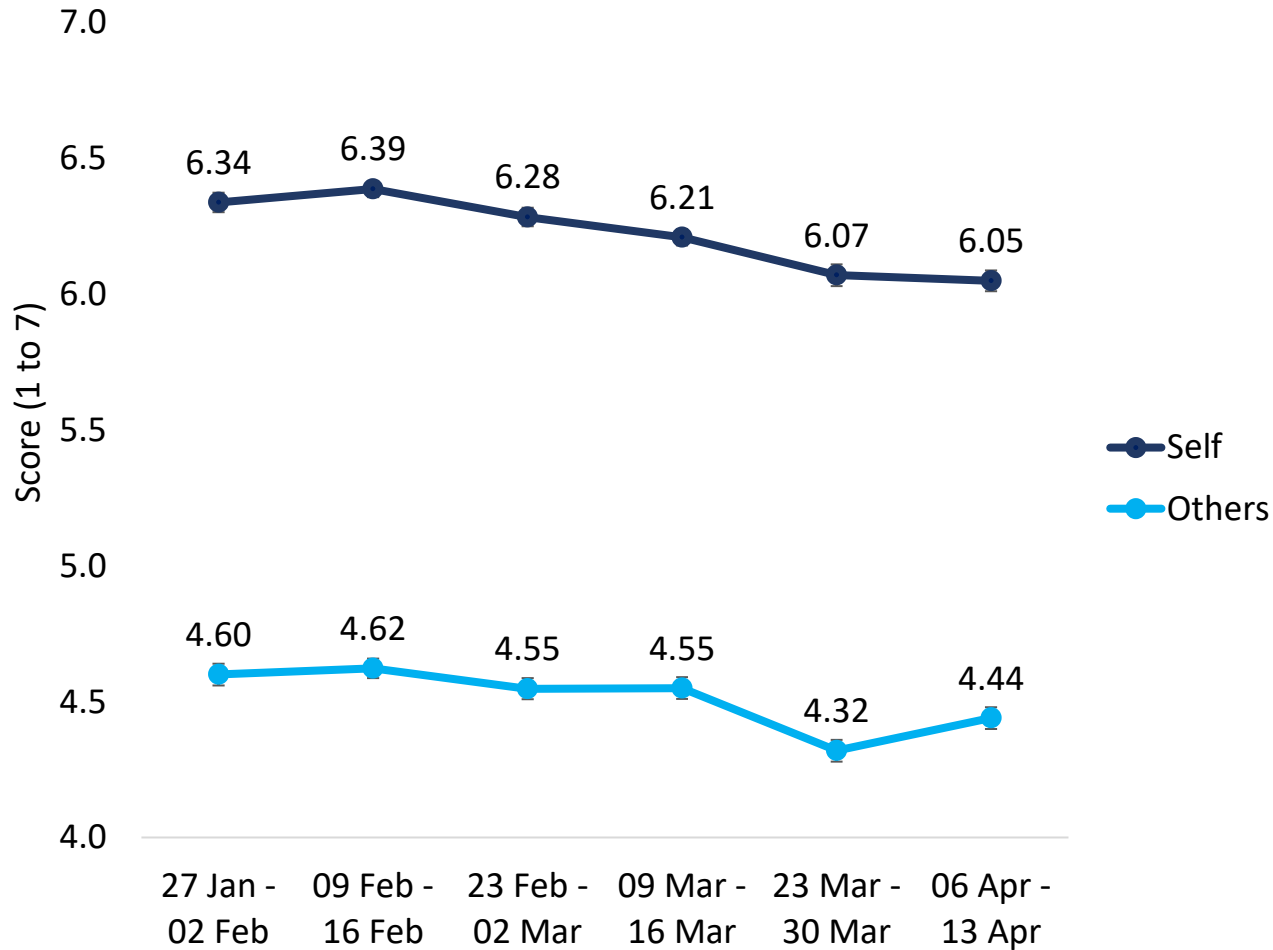
Prevention-burden trade-off



When asked directly which is more important, preventing the spread of COVID-19 or the burden of restrictions, at least 75% opt for the former in all six rounds of SAM. There was a small but significant rightward shift in the distribution over February and March, but this did not continue to shift in early April.

- 27 Jan - 02 Feb
- 09 Feb - 16 Feb
- 23 Feb - 02 Mar
- 09 Mar - 16 Mar
- 23 Mar - 30 Mar
- 06 Apr - 13 Apr

Self-reported compliance



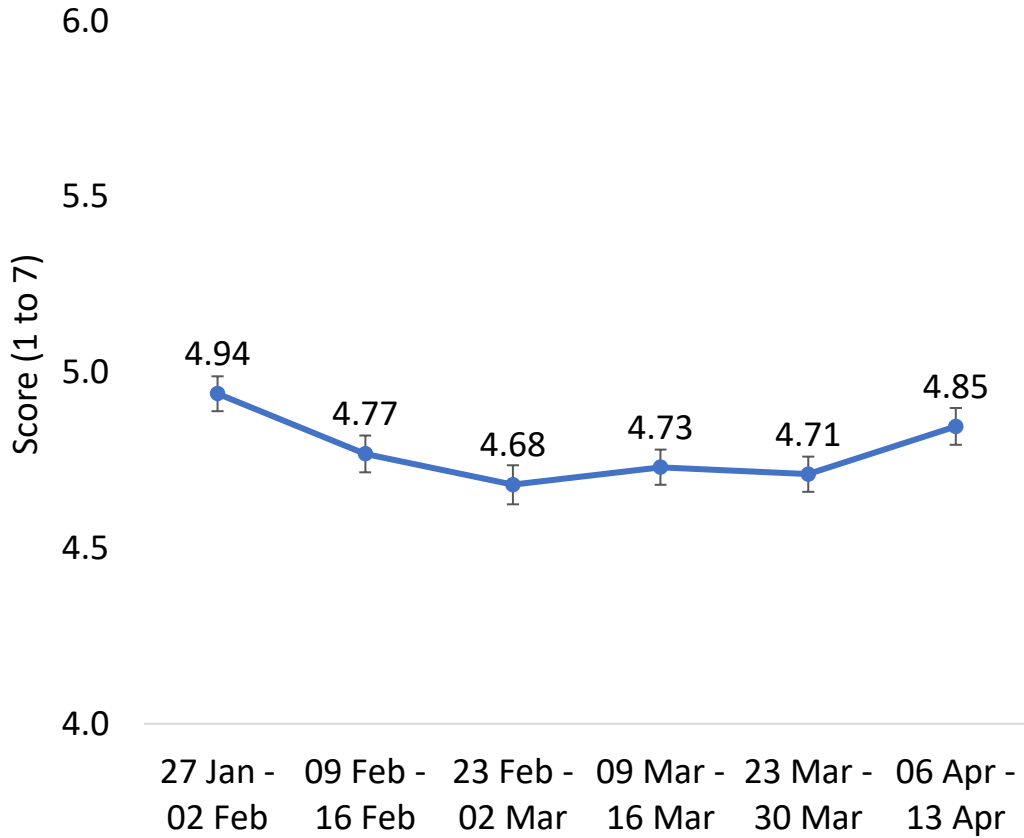
There was no change in average self-reported compliance with Government recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 since March. The average remains high (>6 out of 7).

The very large majority of people believe that their own behaviour is more cautious and compliant than the behaviour of other people. There was an uptick in perceptions of others' behaviour.

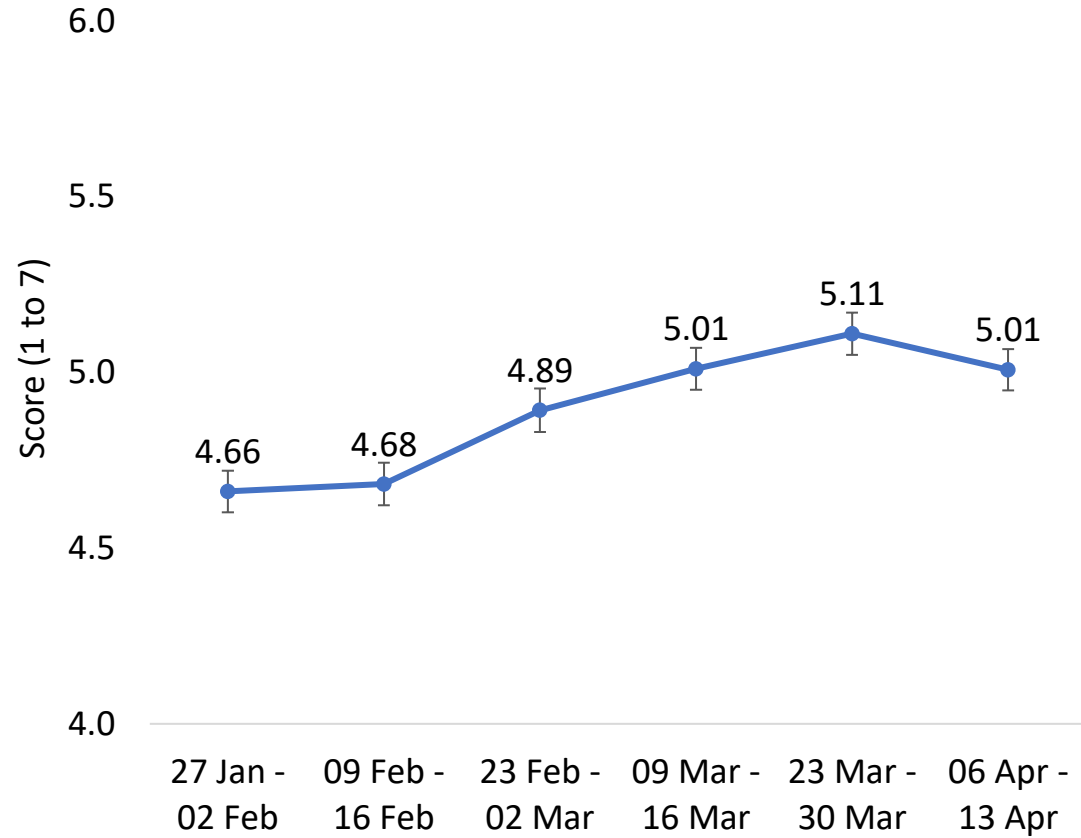
Wellbeing and Fatigue



Wellbeing

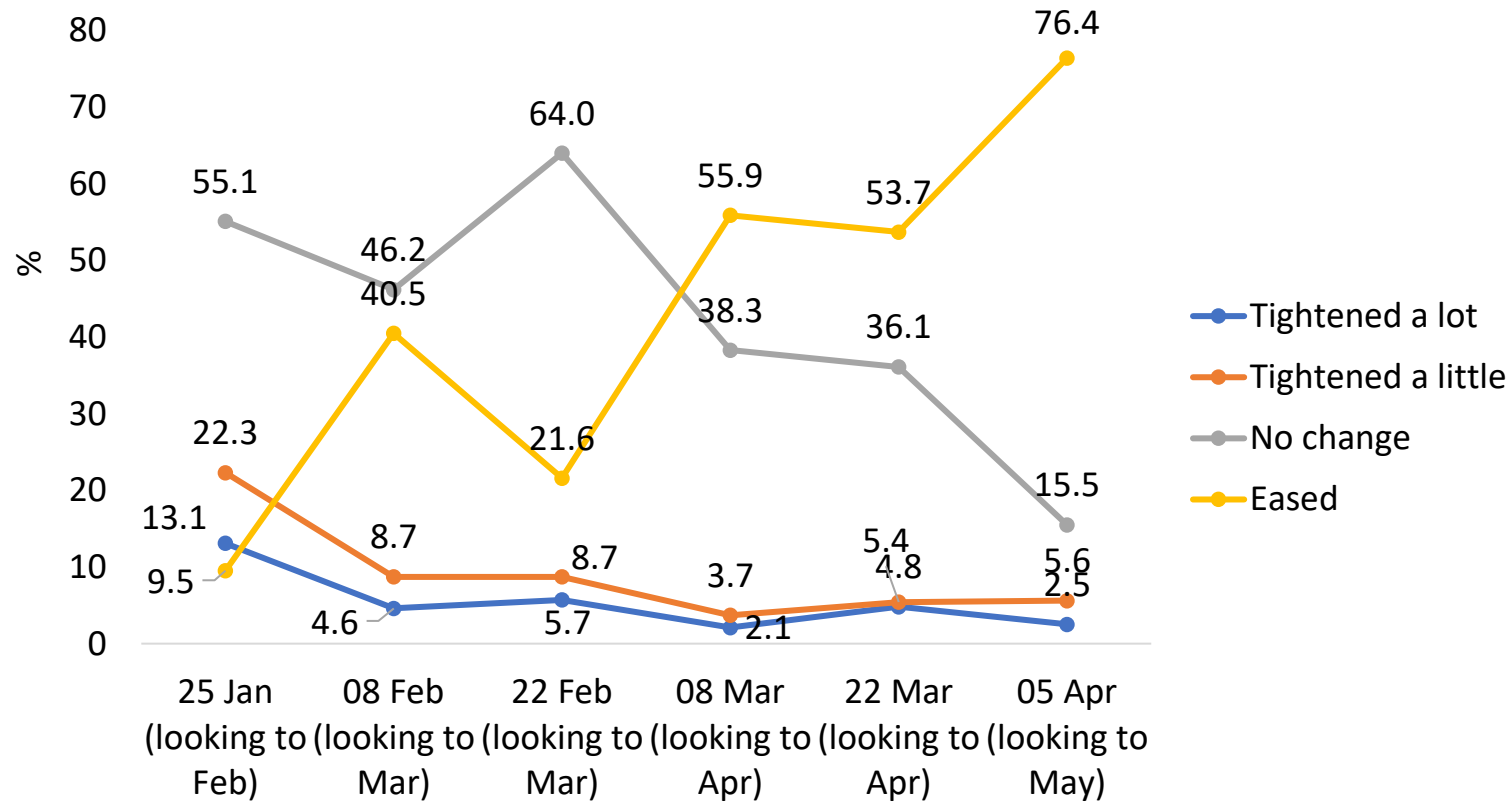


Restrictions tiresome?



There has been a slight increase in wellbeing and no further increase in how tiring respondents report finding the restrictions.

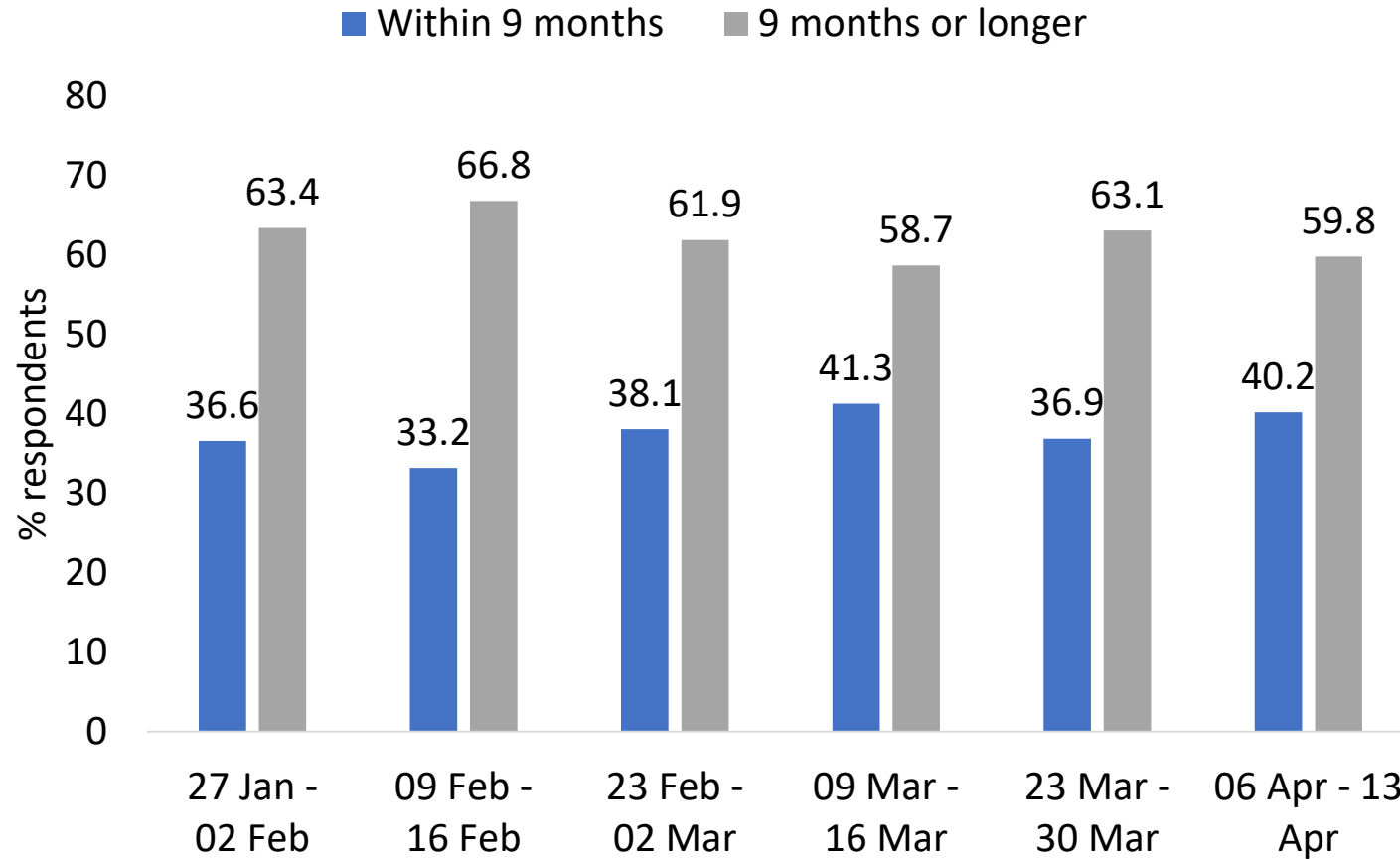
Expectation for changes to restrictions in the following month



This chart needs to be read carefully, as the question changes slightly from round to round. The question relates to expectations for restrictions the following month.

In early April, the majority of the population expect some easing of restrictions in May.

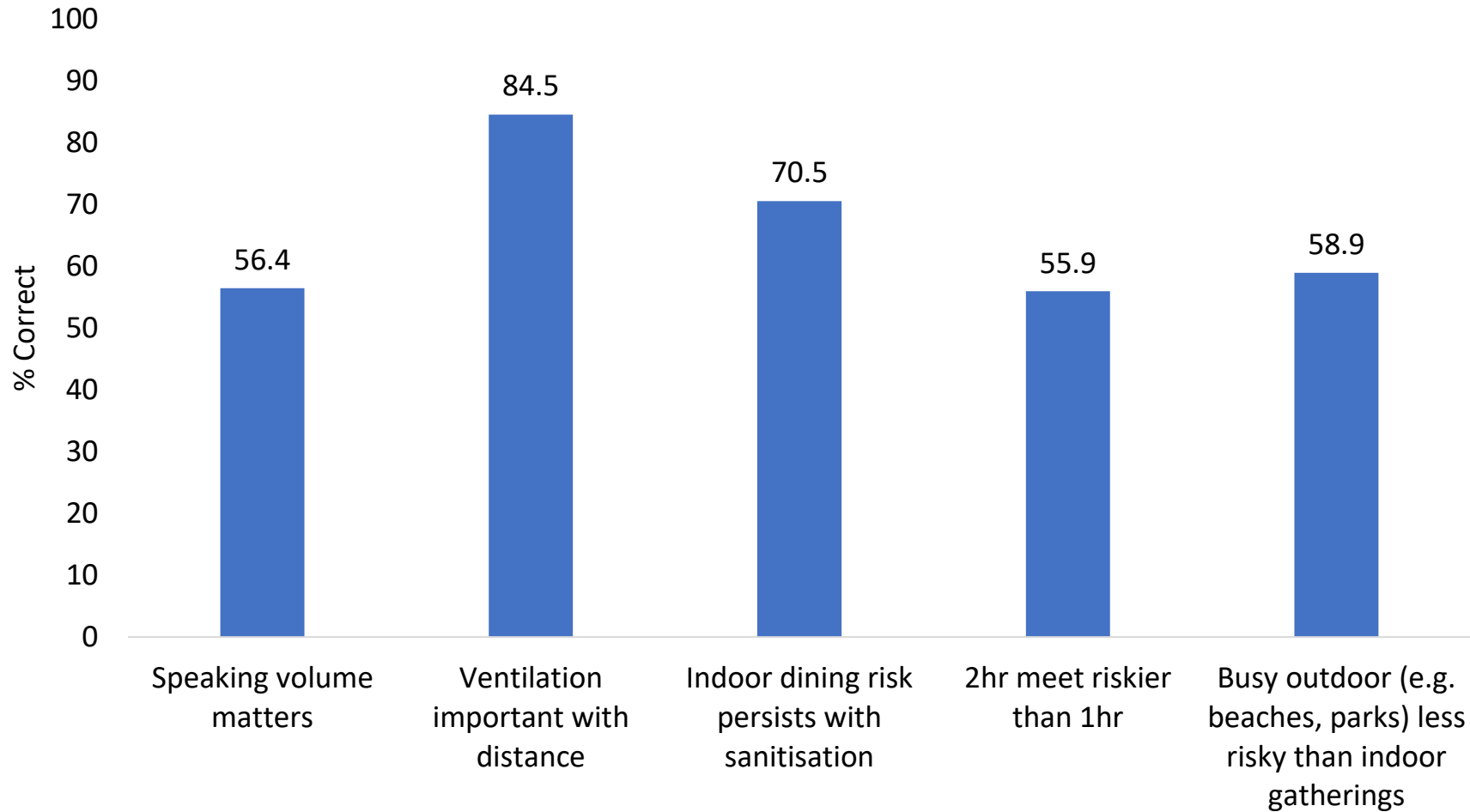
Longer Term Expectations



Most people still expect restrictions in place for at least a further 9 months from the point at which the question was asked.



New Comprehension Questions



Most people understand that ventilation is important and that risk persists indoors, even with sanitation.

Only just over half realise that speaking volume matters, that 2 hours is riskier than 1 hour and that being in a busy outdoor space is still less risky than being indoors, all else equal.

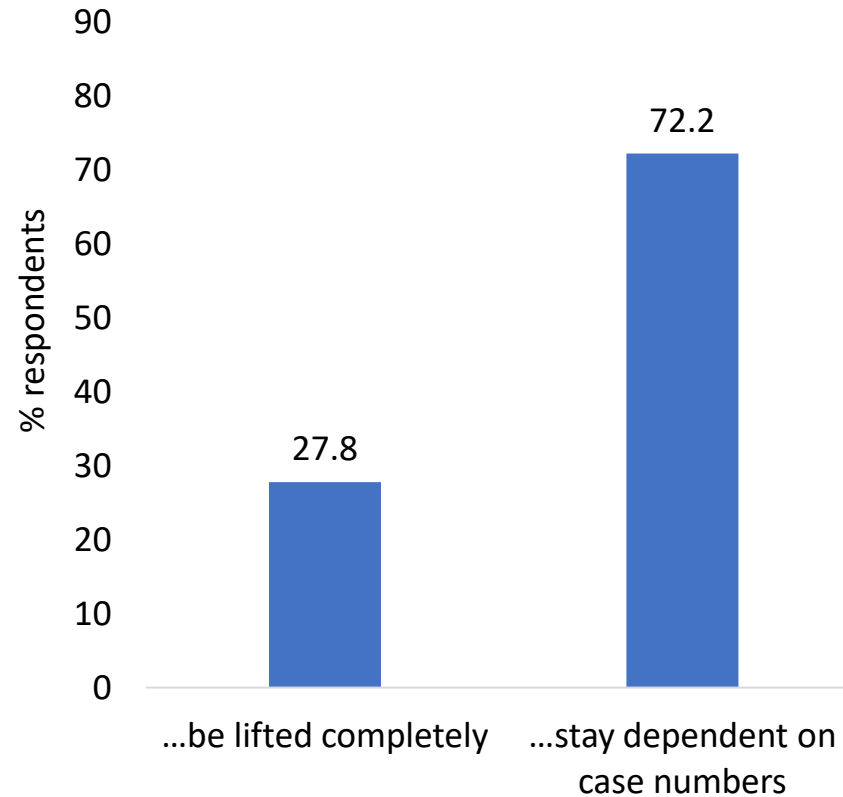
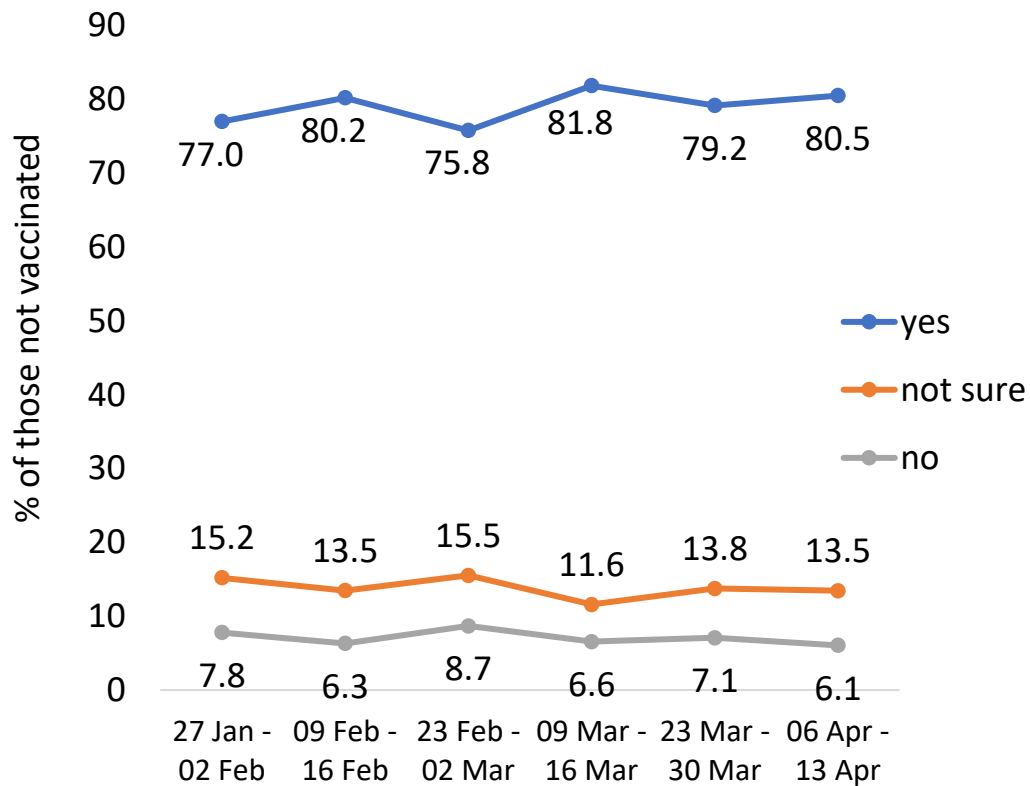
Answering these questions correctly does not reliably predict behaviour.

Vaccine intention



Vaccine intention

Once vulnerable groups are vaccinated, restrictions should...



Intention to take the vaccine among those not yet vaccinated remains stable.

A majority believe that restrictions should stay dependent on case numbers, even after vulnerable groups are vaccinated.