



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Social Activity Measure

## May 4th-10<sup>th</sup>

### 2021



## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

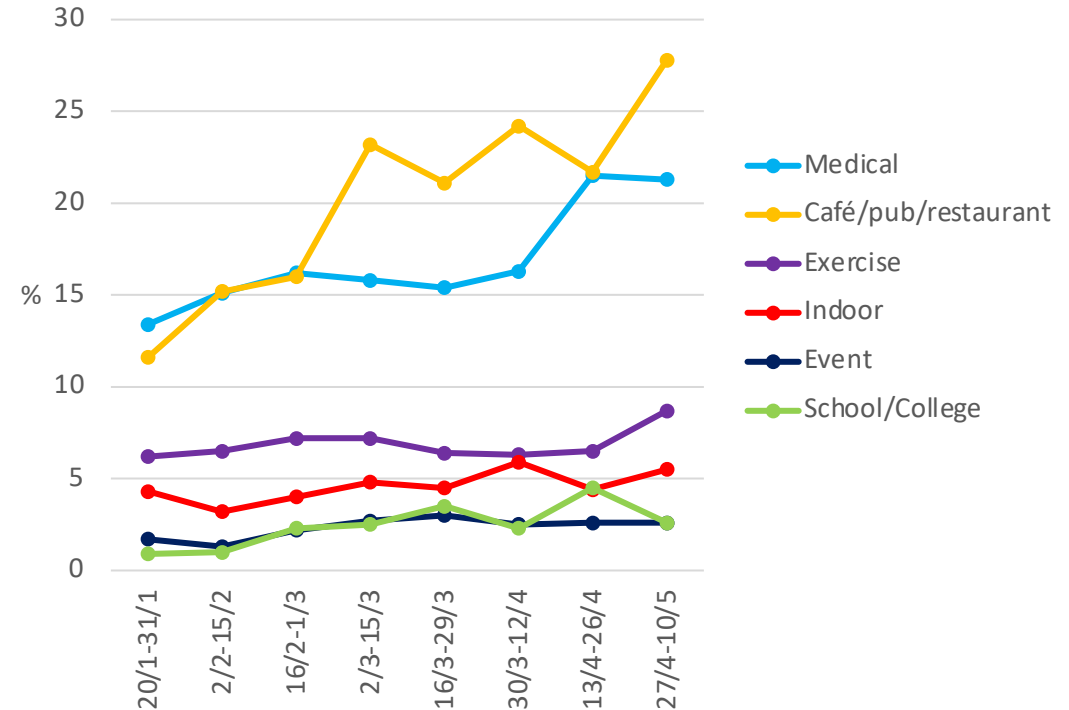
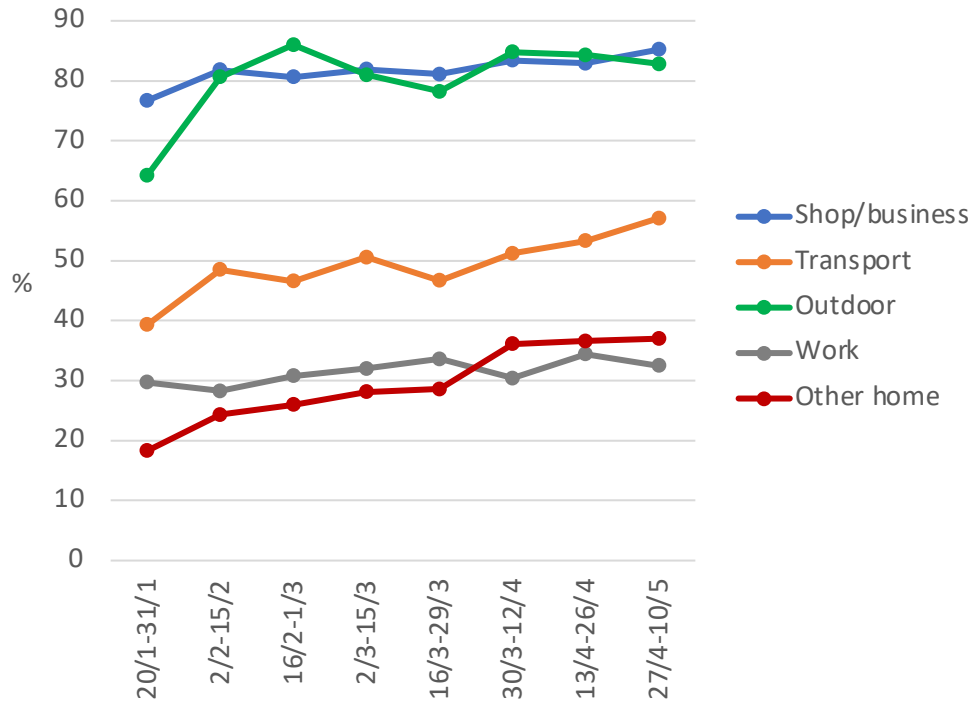
The Social Activity Measure (SAM) is a behavioural study that records the public response to the risk of COVID-19 infection over time. Designed by the ESRI's Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), SAM is an anonymous, interactive, online study that surveys people about their recent activity. The study offers 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, which funds the work. 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 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May. Data were collected following a bank holiday weekend and during a period when restrictions on activity were gradually being eased. The restriction to travel only within 5km of the home was lifted on 12<sup>th</sup> April. Elite sports and GAA training had returned on 19<sup>th</sup> April. Outdoor attractions and a range of outdoor activities and training were permitted from 26<sup>th</sup> April. From May 4<sup>th</sup>, construction and other outdoor workers returned to work, two households were permitted to meet to socialise outdoors (but not in gardens) and fully vaccinated people were permitted to meet other fully vaccinated people indoors.



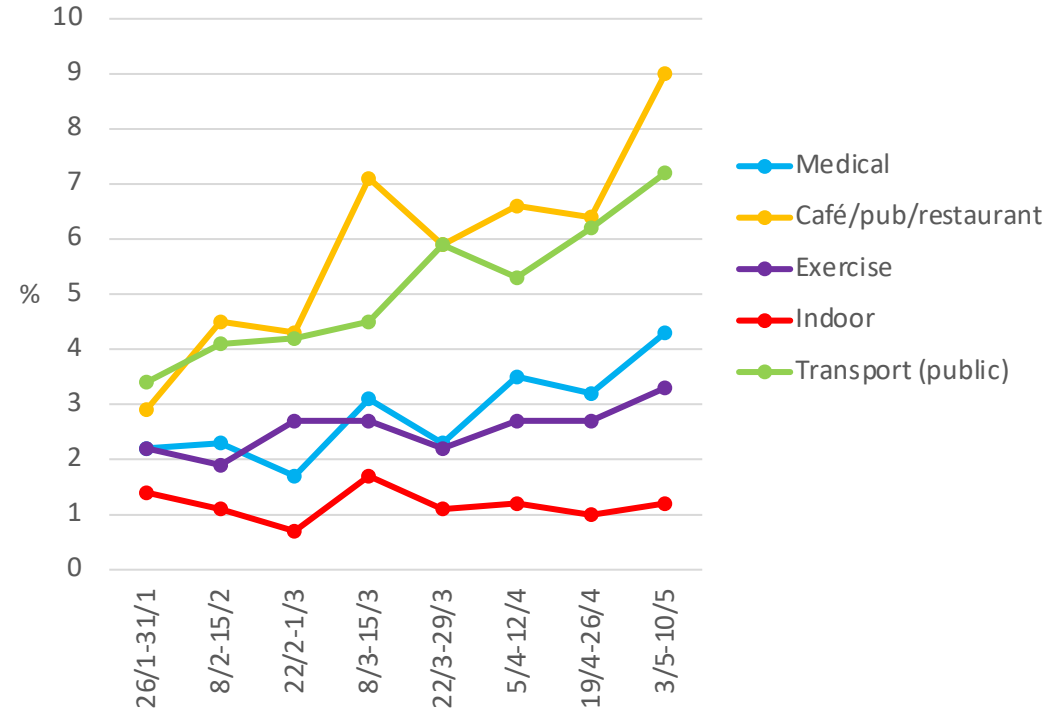
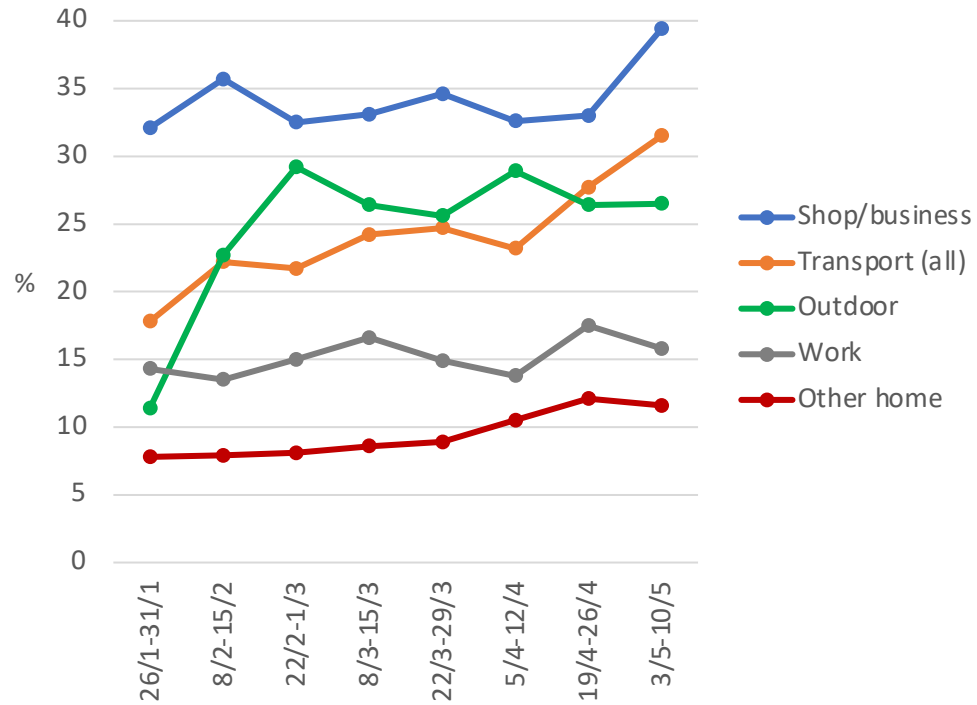
# Locations visited (previous week)



*The charts show the proportion of the population who had visited each location at some point during the previous week. Note the different scales on the vertical axis. The largest increase was for attending a café, for a take-away coffee.*



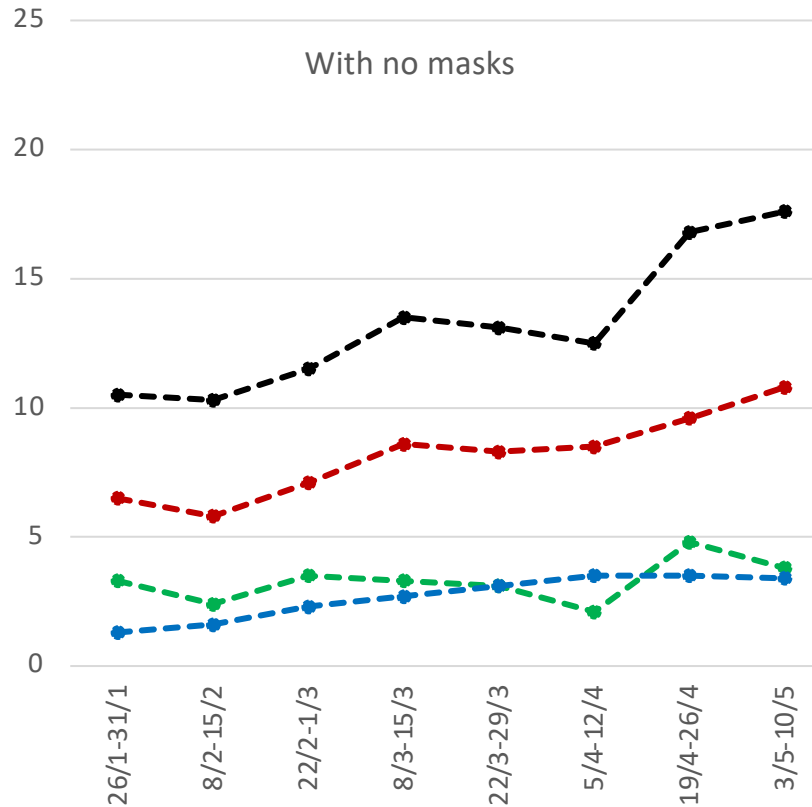
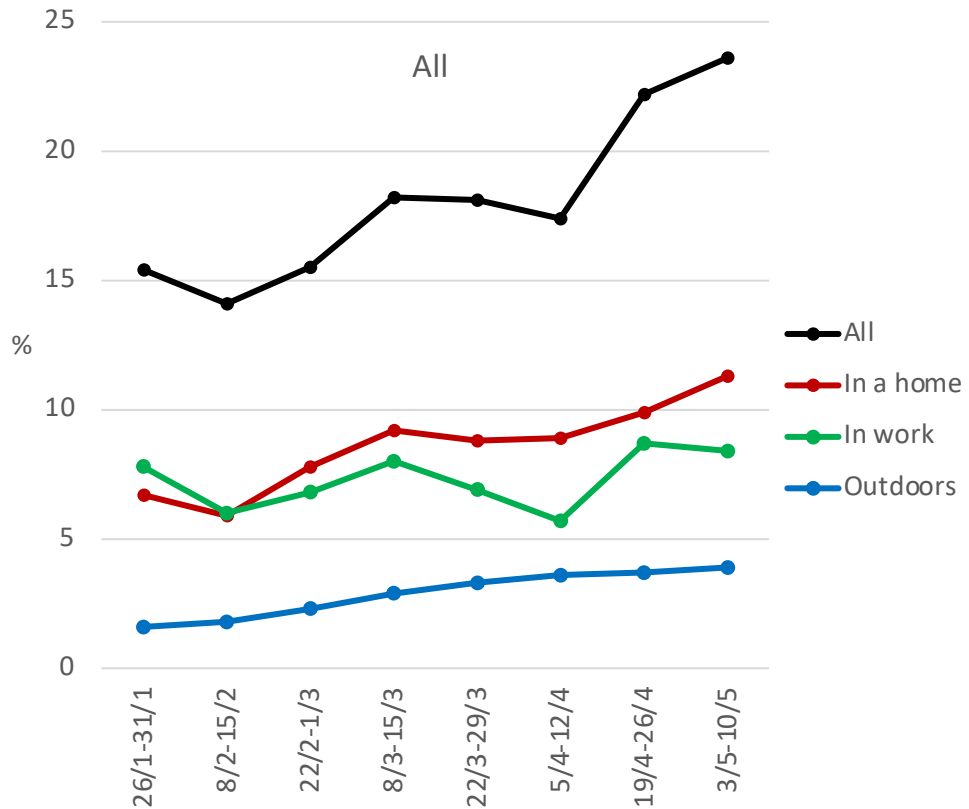
# Locations visited (yesterday)



*The charts show the proportion of the population who had visited each location at some point the previous day. Note the different scales on the vertical axis. The largest increases were for going to shops/businesses and visiting cafés.*



# Close contacts\* (previous day)



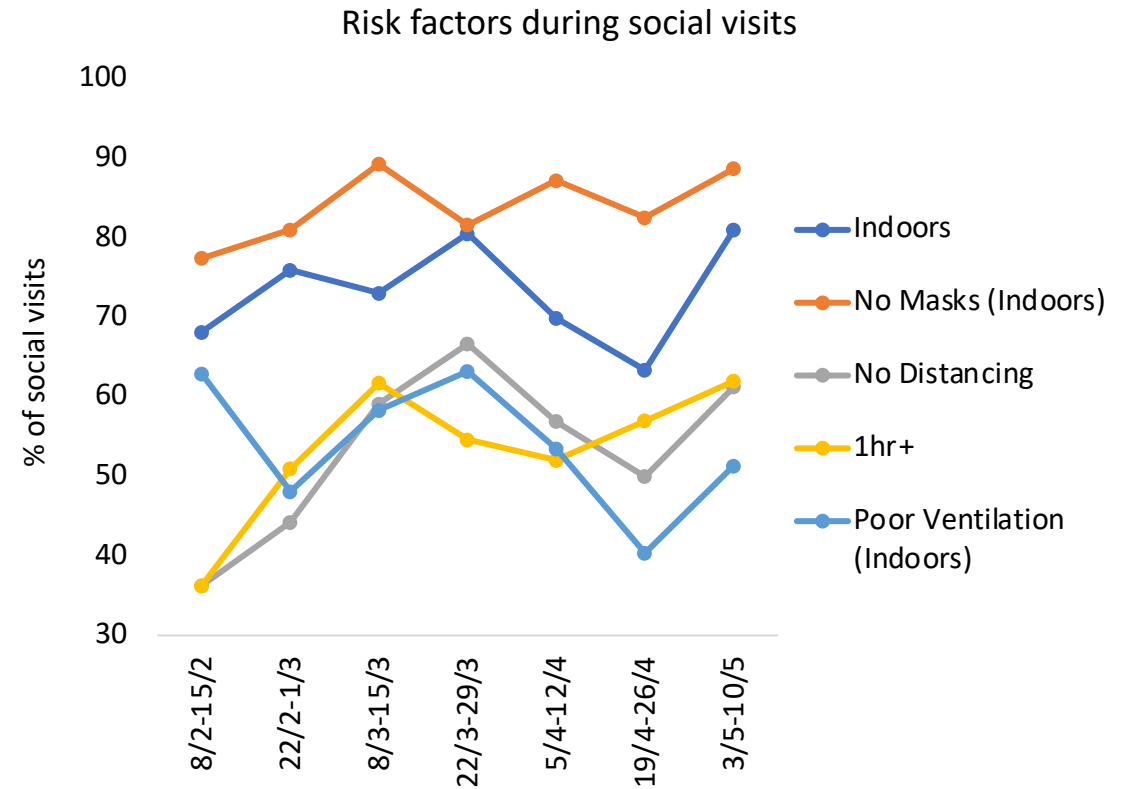
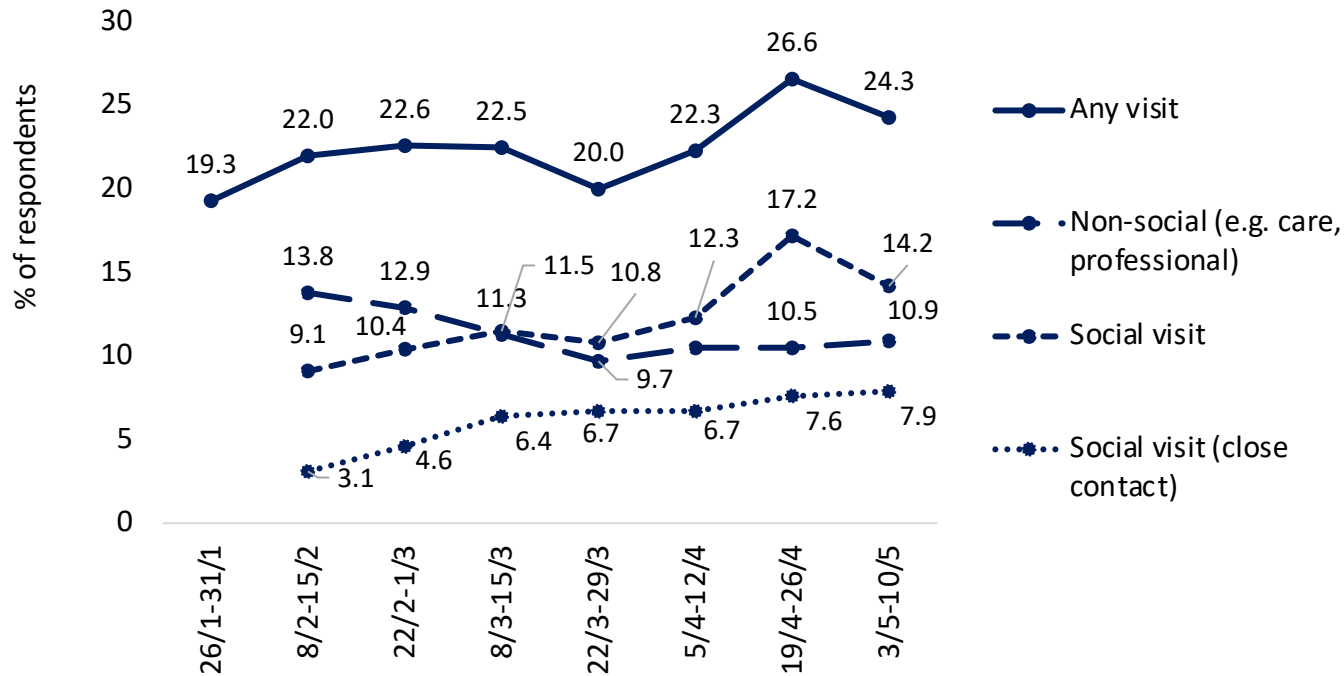
*There was a further small but non-significant rise in close contacts, driven mostly by more close contacts in homes. The increases also applied to close contacts in which people were not wearing facemasks. Slide 7 shows these contacts may be accounted for by vaccinated individuals.*

\*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).

# Visits to homes

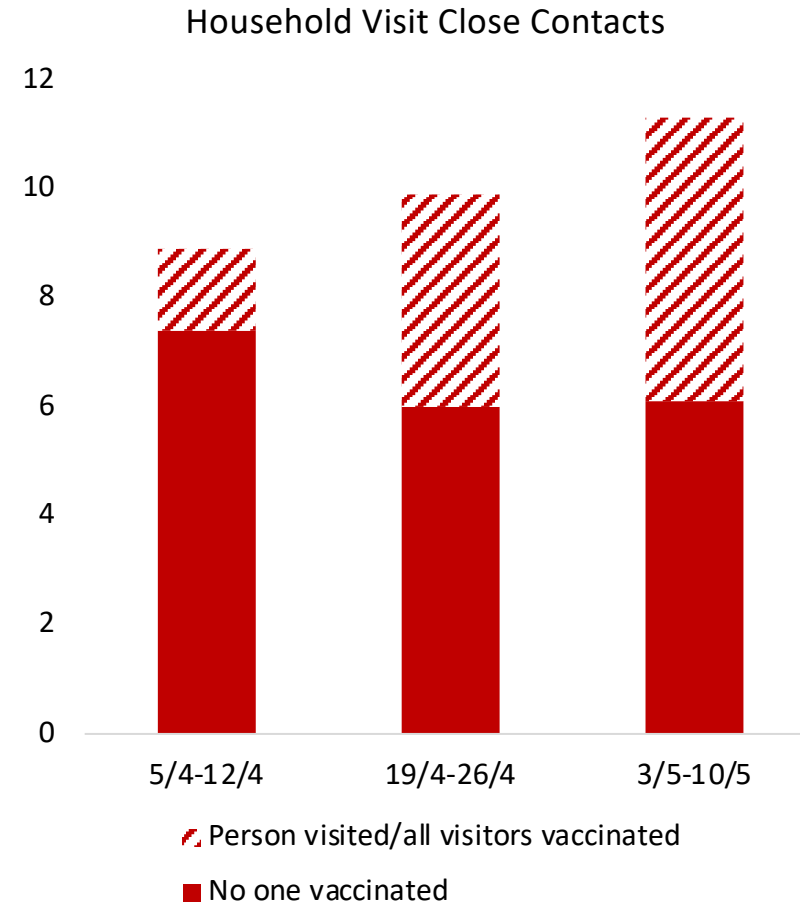
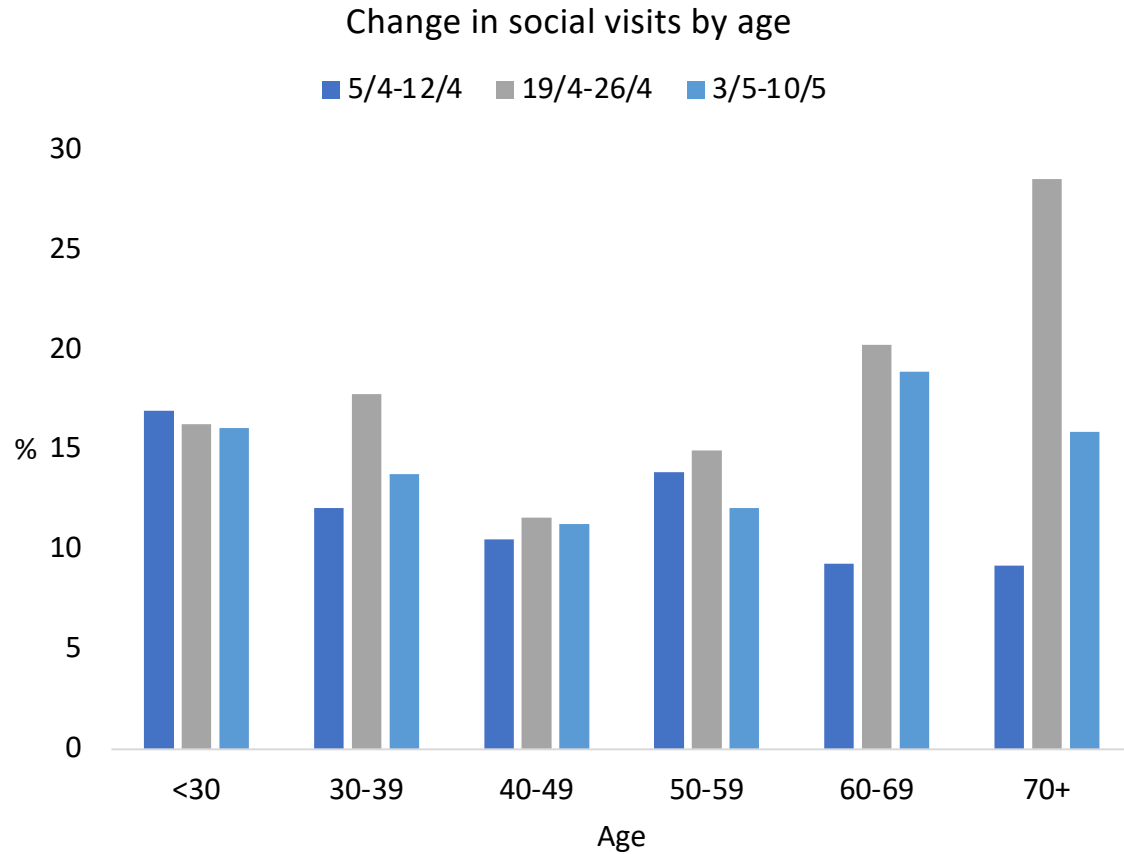


Proportion who had visitors or visited another household (previous day)



*There was a small but non-significant drop in social visits to homes, concentrated among over 70s (Slide 7). Close contact social visits, however, remained stable. All risk factors during these visits increased, with significant increases in meeting indoors and not maintaining social distance.*

# Close Contacts at Home by Age and Vaccination

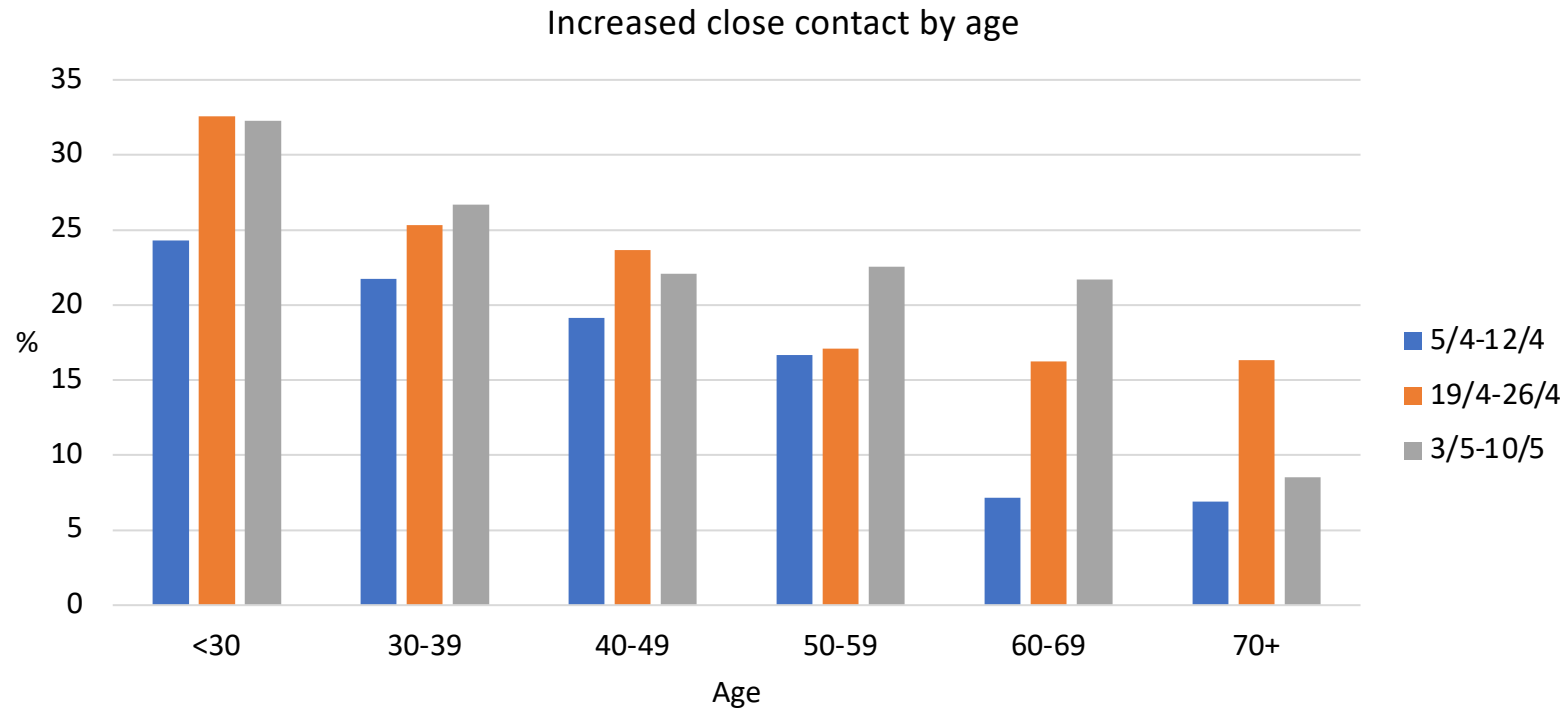


*The left chart shows the percentage of each age group who had a social visit. Over 70s saw the largest drop in social visits, following a spike in late April.*

*The chart on the right shows population who had a close contact with others at home. The striped bars show incidents where at least one of the households was fully vaccinated. The chart suggests that the rise in close contacts at home is driven by vaccinated individuals, although it should be noted that these individuals may have received just one dose.*



# Close contacts – other factors



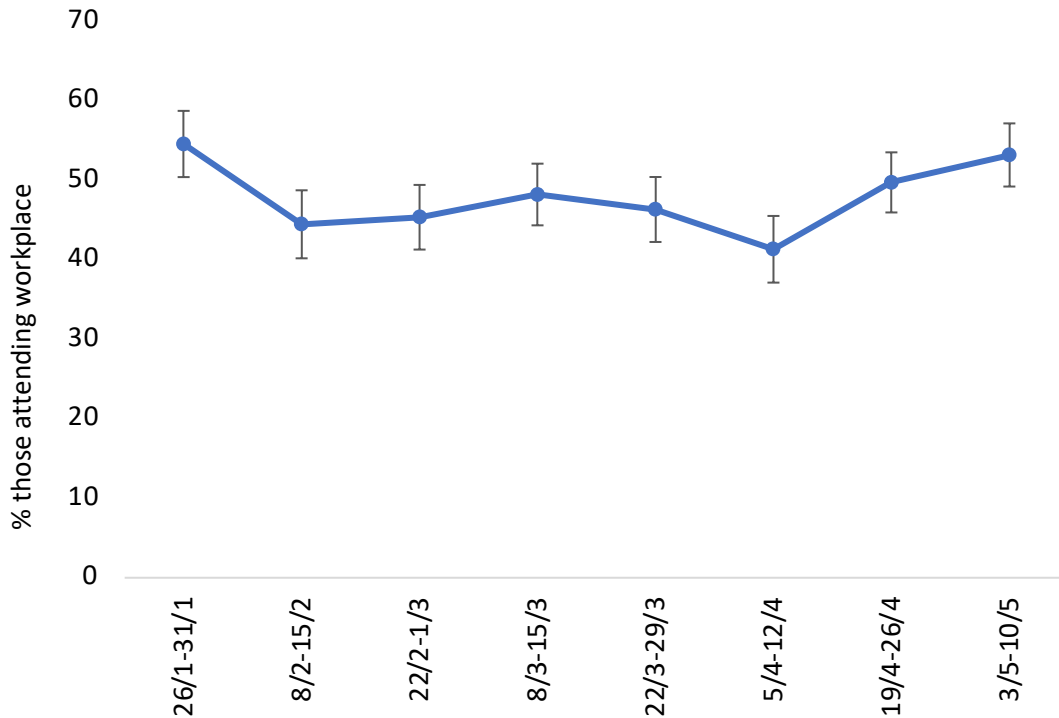
*The rise in close contacts since late April is concentrated in those aged 50-69, with a drop in close contacts among those over 70 that aligns with the fall in social visits.*





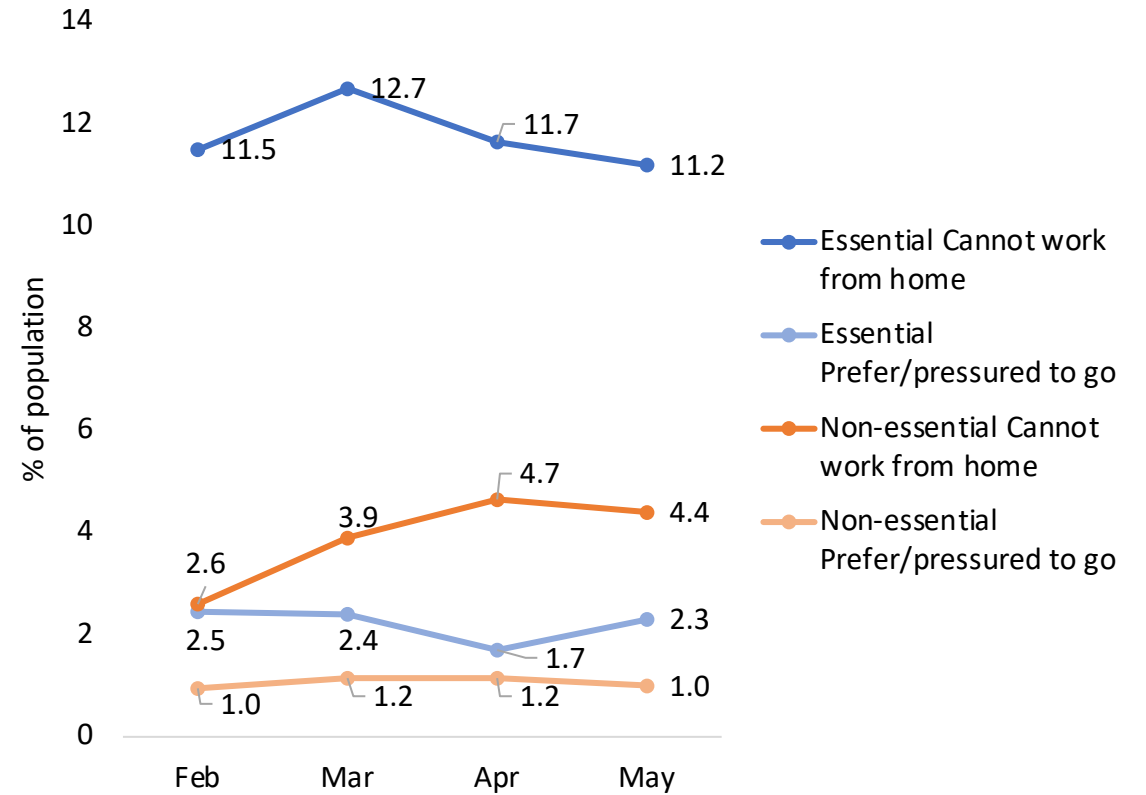
# Close contacts – work

Proportion going to workplace who had close contact at work (previous day)



*The chart on the left shows that workers who attend work on a given day experience a close contact has remained relatively stable at around 50%.*

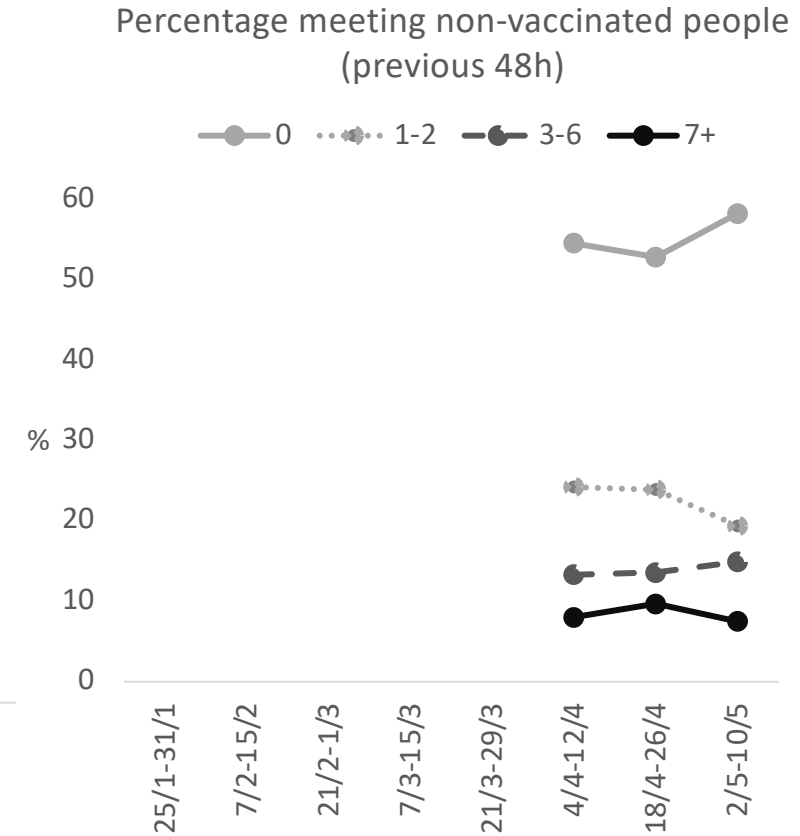
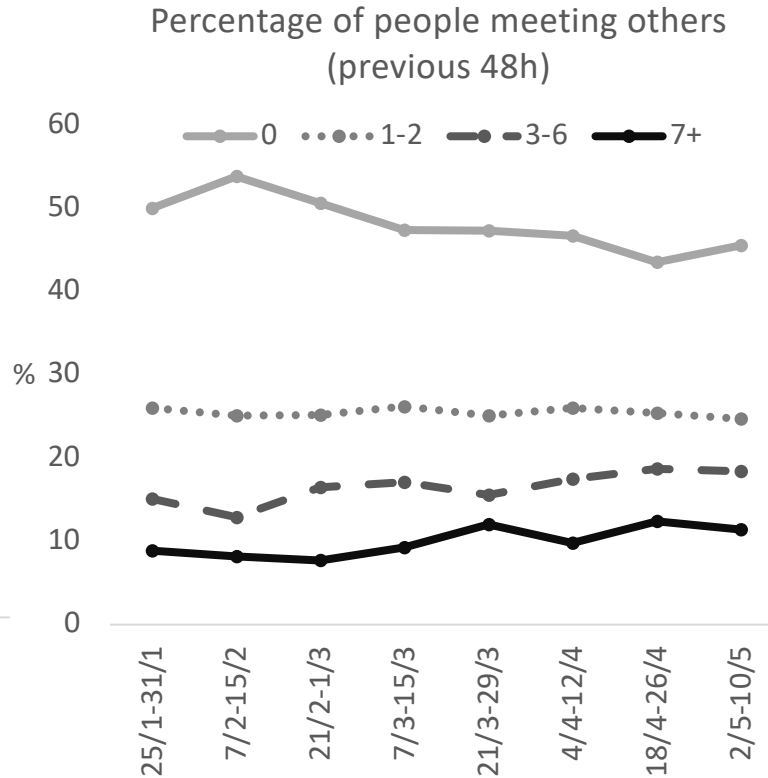
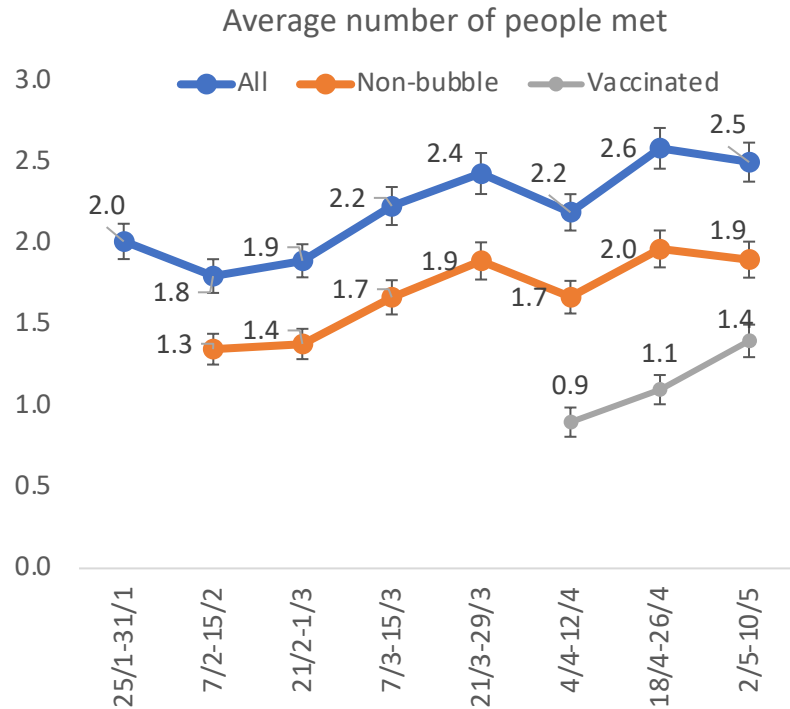
Reasons for Attending Workplace



*There has been no increase in the percentage of the population feeling pressure to attend their workplace.*



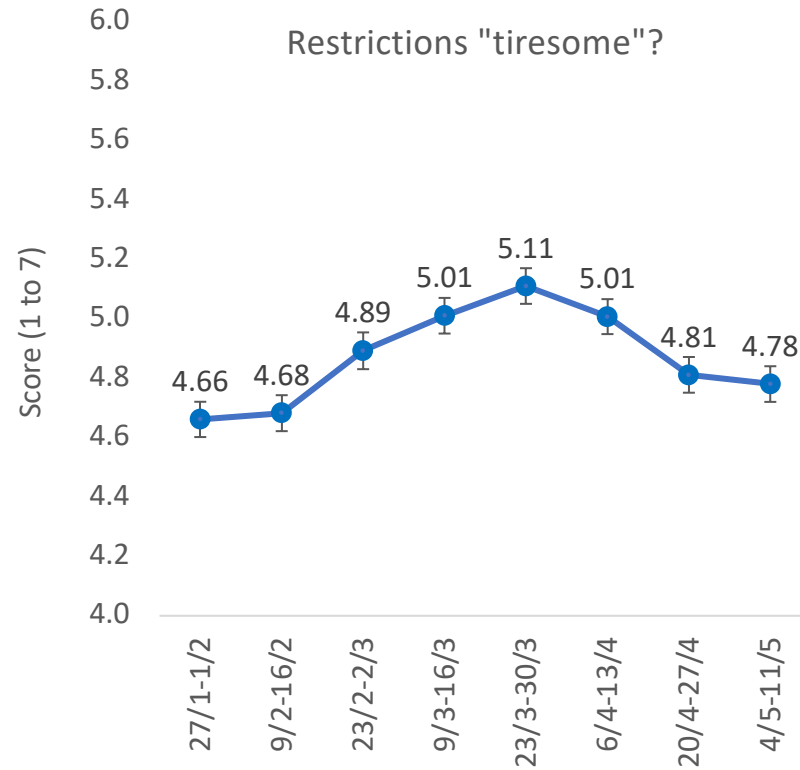
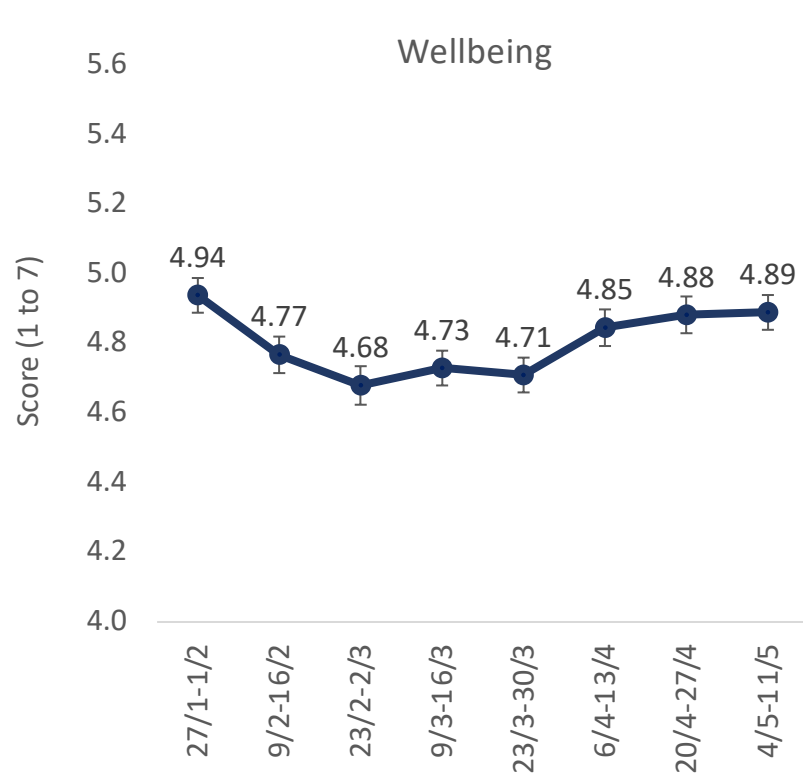
# Meeting people outside the household



*There was no further decline in the proportion of people who met no one outside of their household over the past 48 hours, nor an increase in the average number of people met. People who have been vaccinated are more likely to meet someone outside of their household than those who are not yet vaccinated (61.1% vs. 51.4%). Almost 60% of people report meeting no un-vaccinated others in the past 48 hours.*

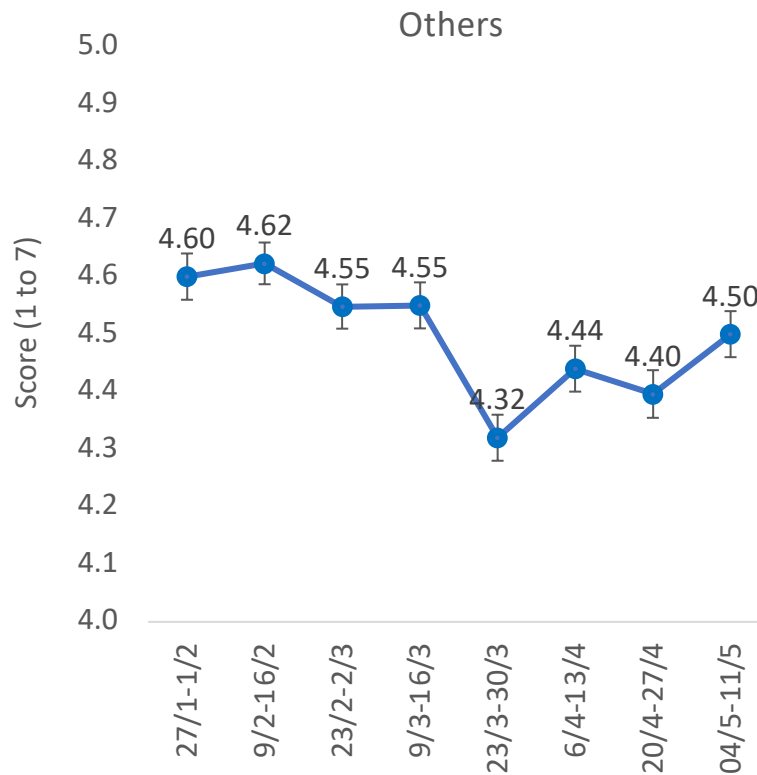
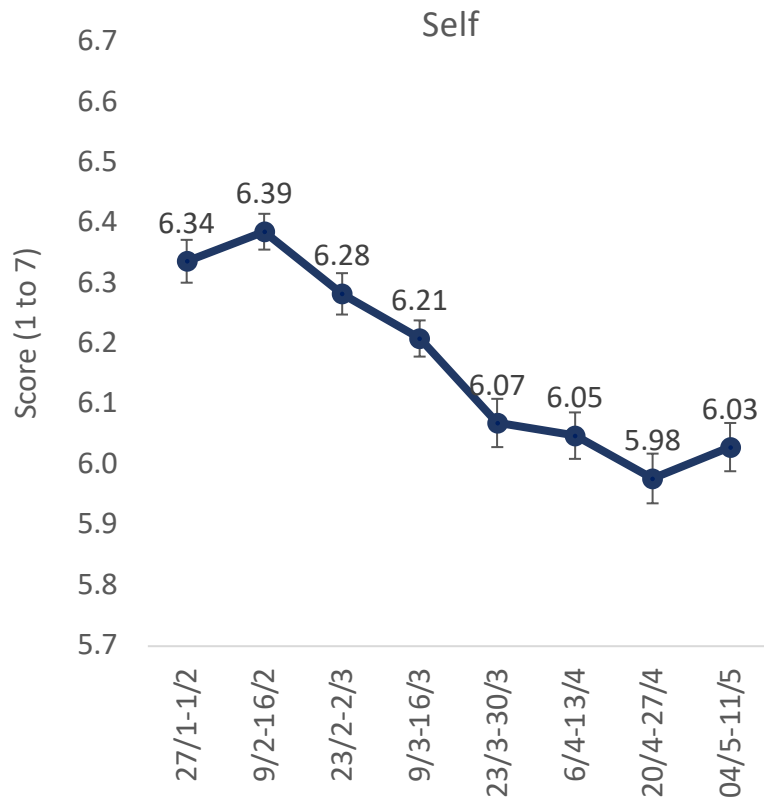


# Wellbeing and Fatigue



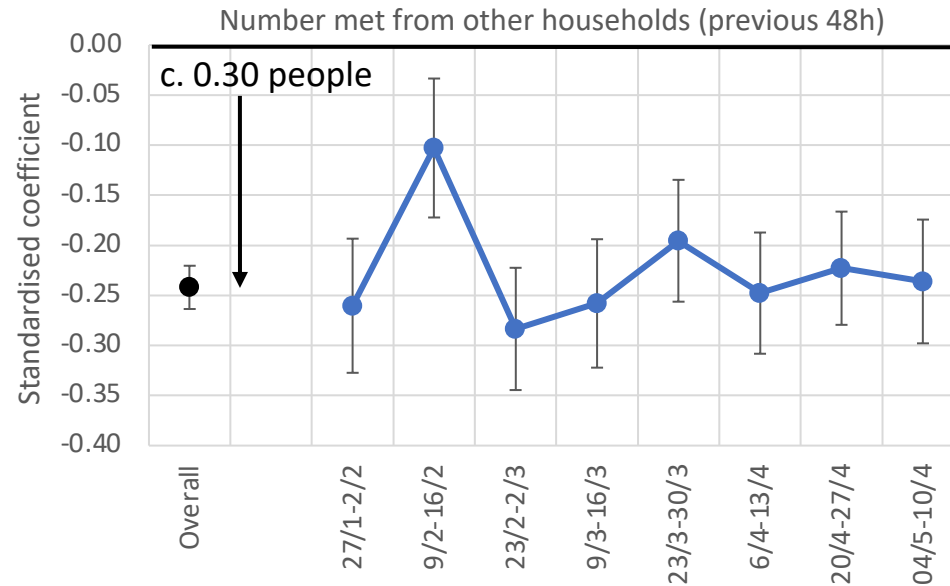
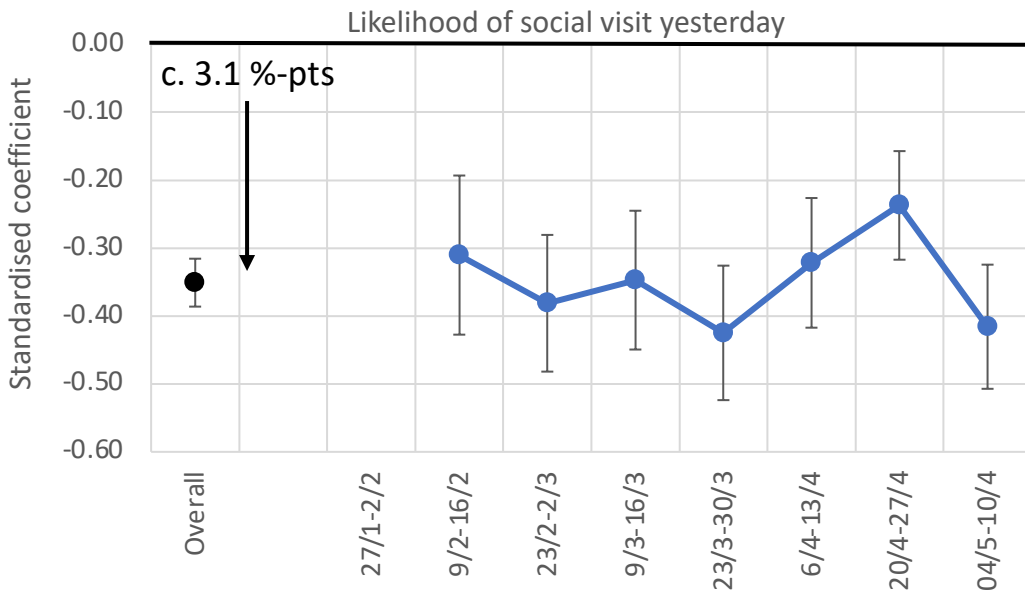
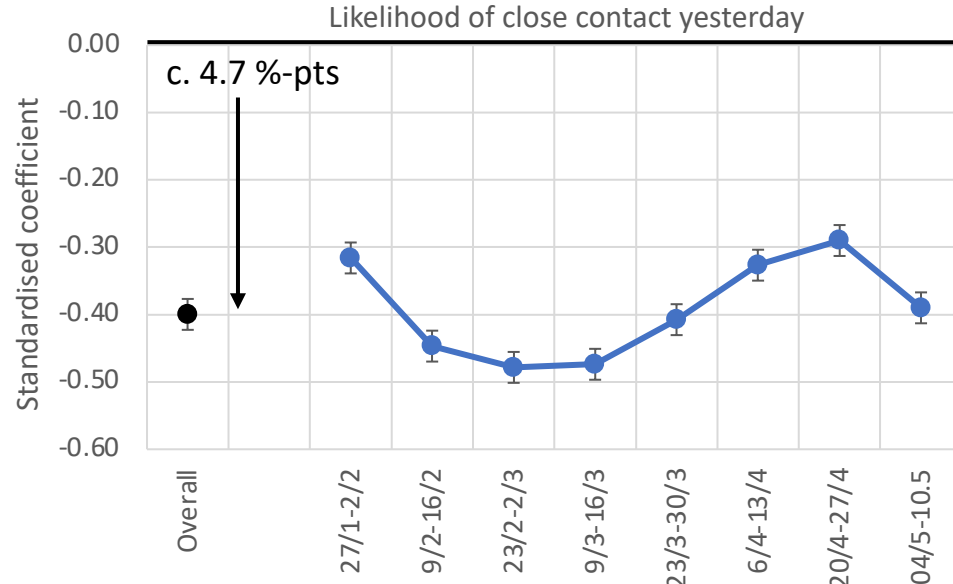
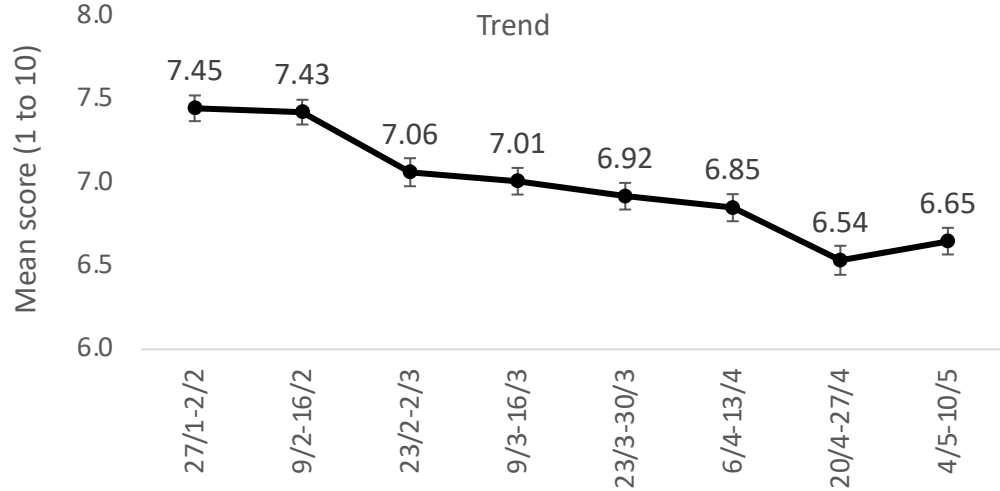
*The period of uncertainty regarding the extension of Level 5 coincided with low wellbeing, which has since recovered. Since the first announcement that some restrictions would be lifted, there has been a reduction in how tiresome people are finding keeping to the restrictions.*

# Compliance



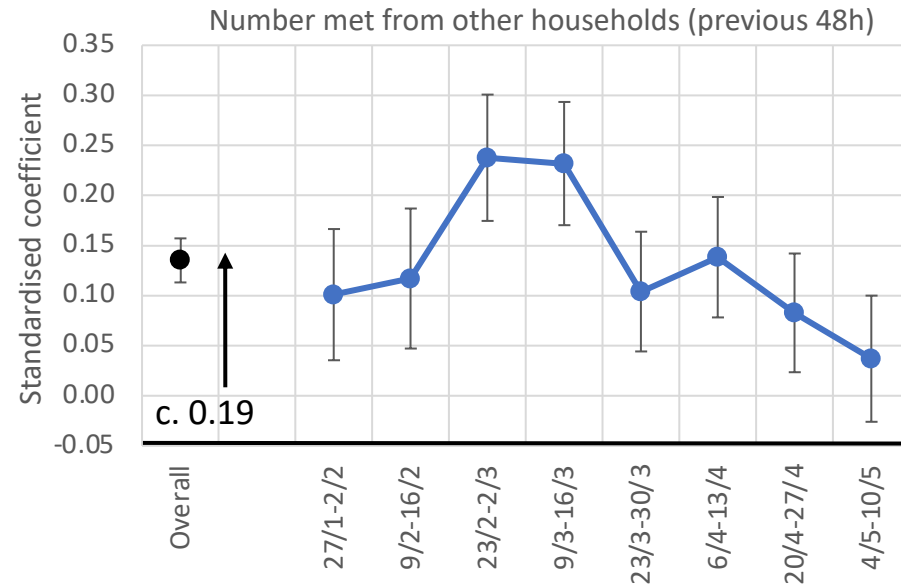
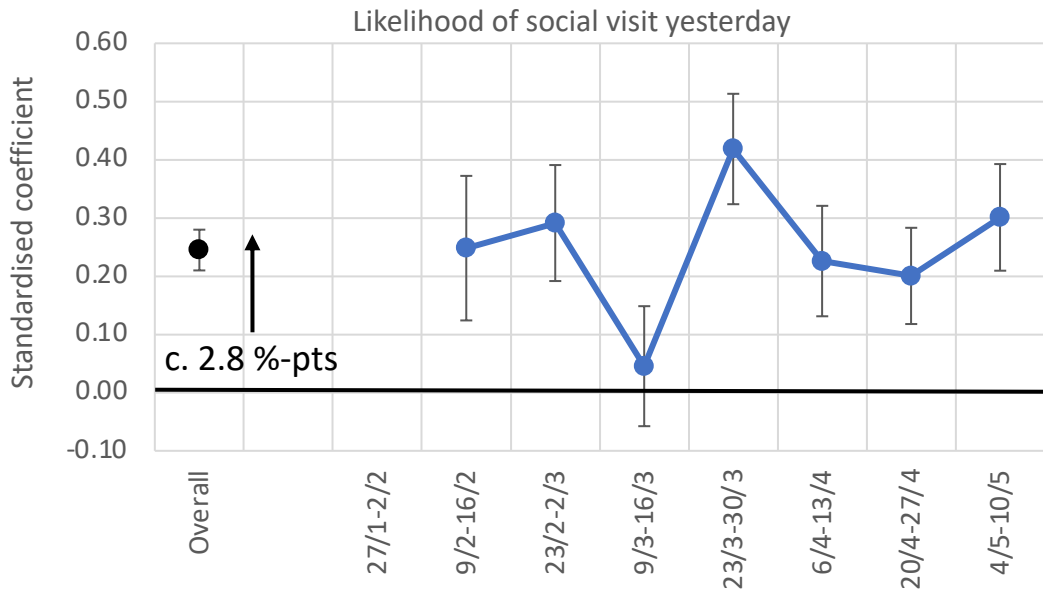
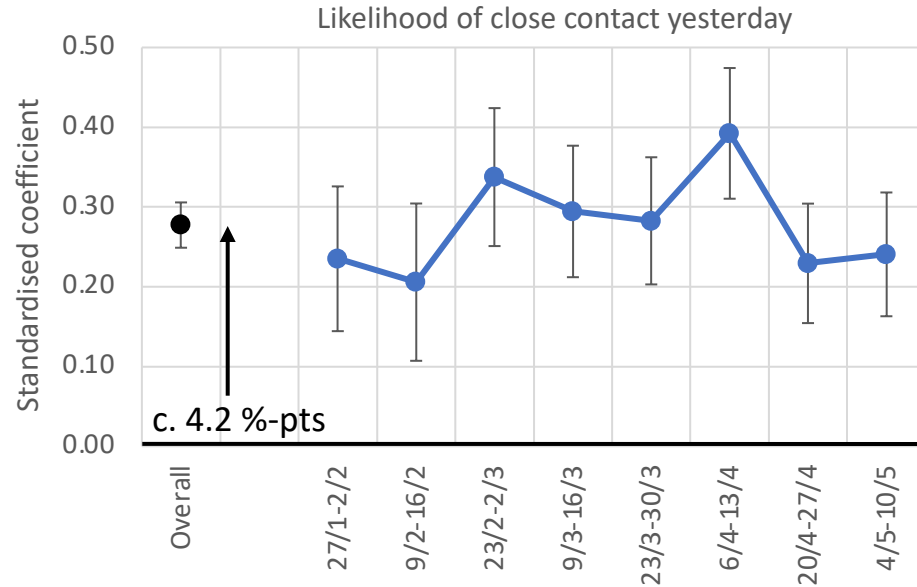
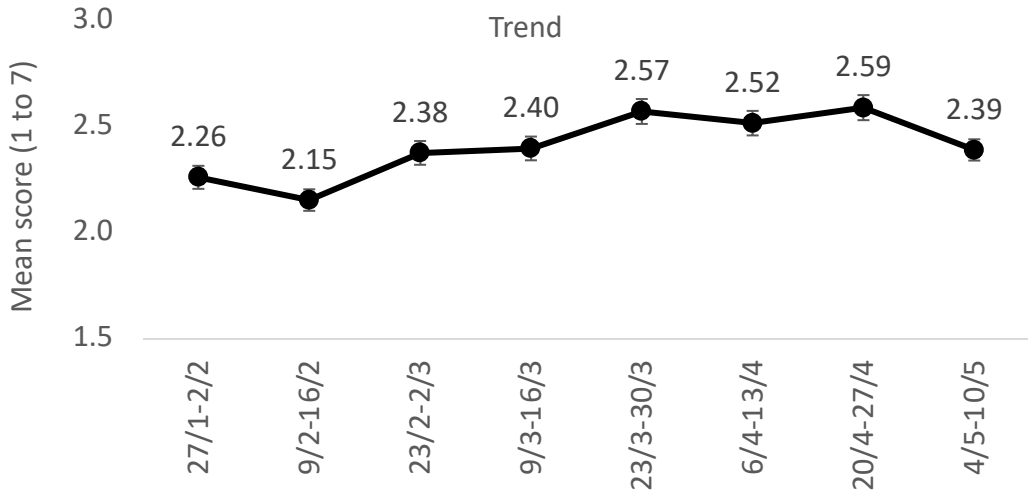
*The drop in self-reported compliance appears to have stabilised at a score of 6 on a 7-point scale. There was a significant increase in judgements that others are following the guidelines.*

# Worry



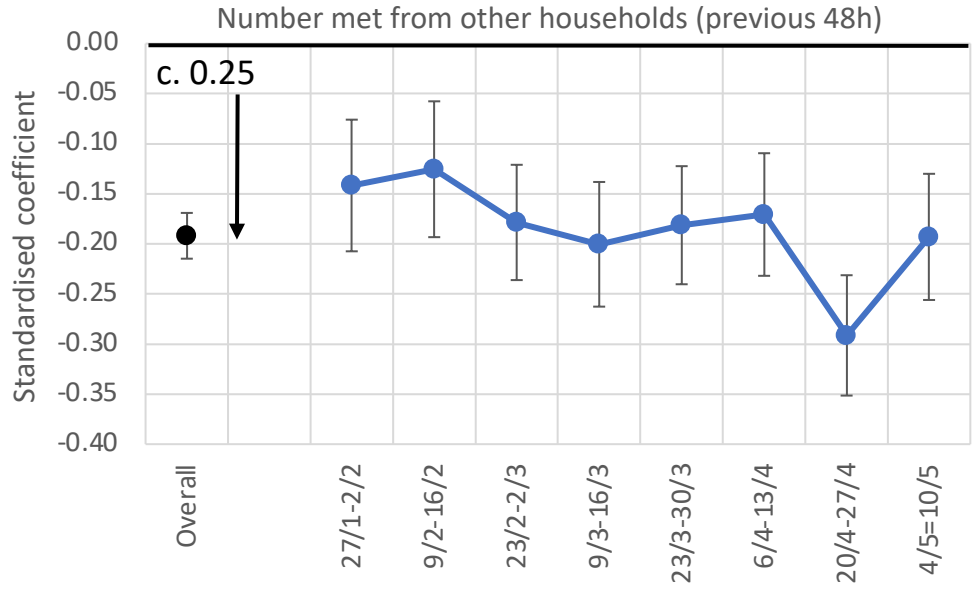
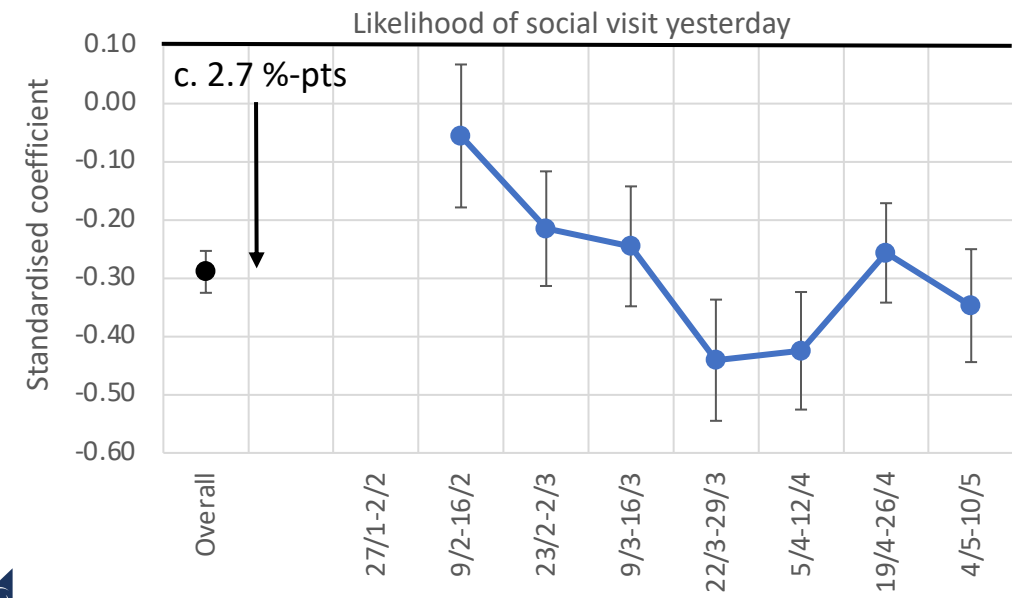
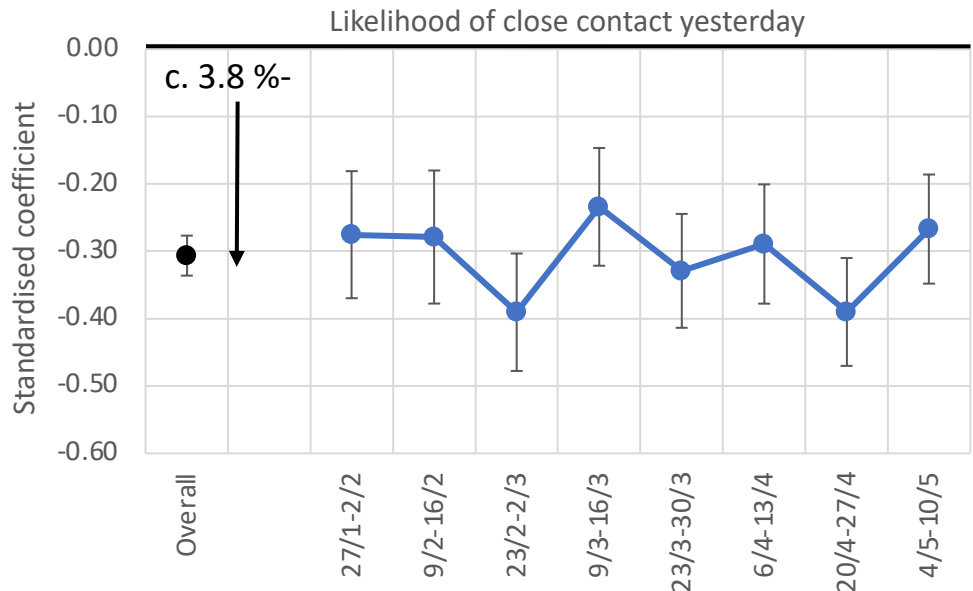
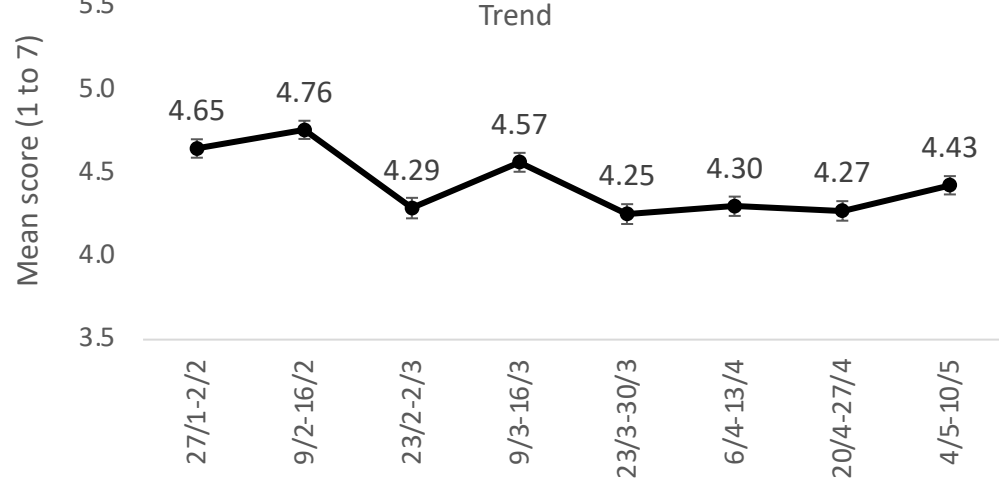
*The trend shows that overall level of worry seems to have stabilised. The other three charts show how worry predicts activity. People with a one standard deviation higher level of worry are less likely to have a close contact, less likely to be involved in a social home visit, and meet fewer people from other households. The arrows indicate the strength of these effects. The strong association between worry and behaviour had been weakening over previous weeks, but has strengthened again in May.*

# Prevention-burden trade-off



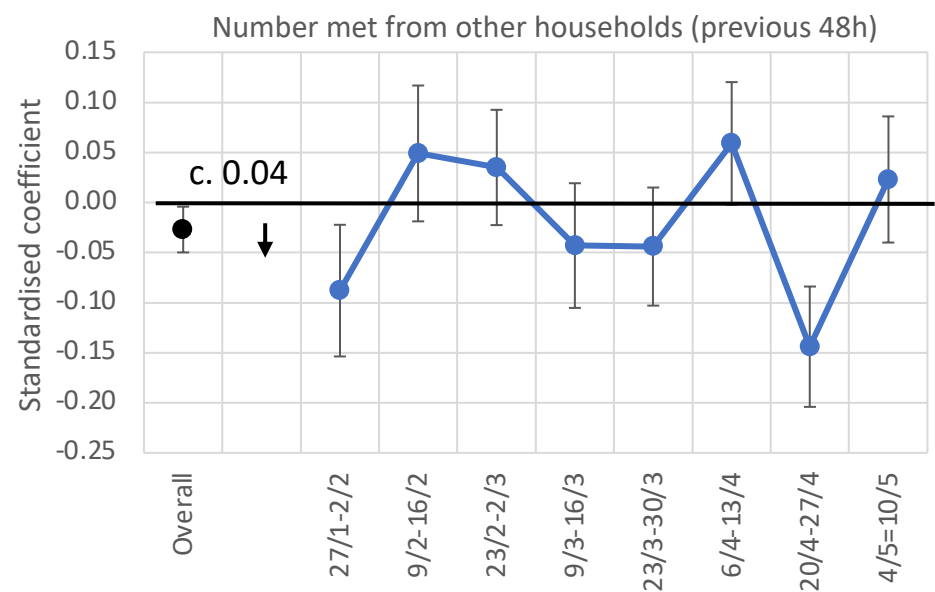
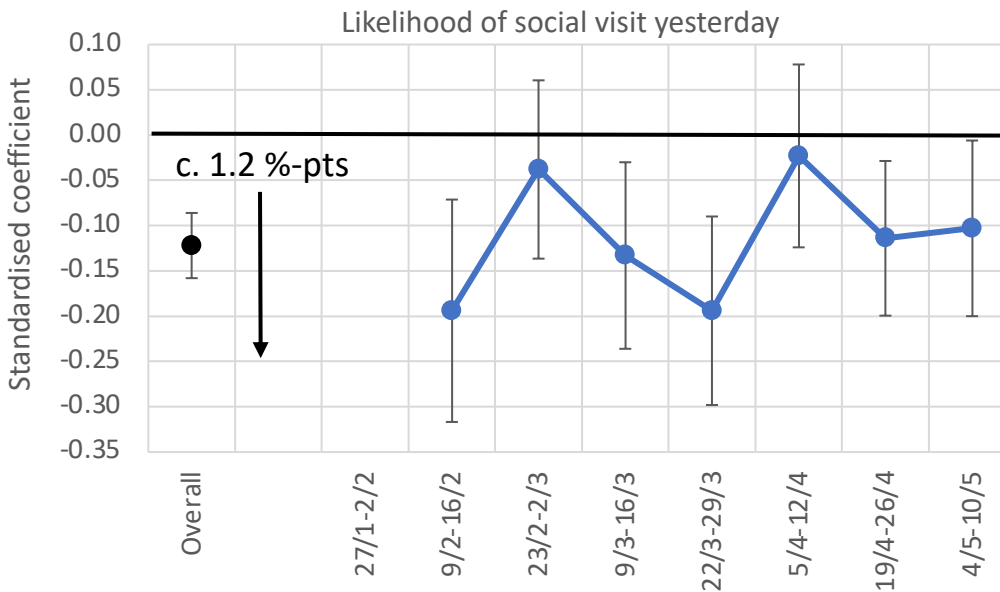
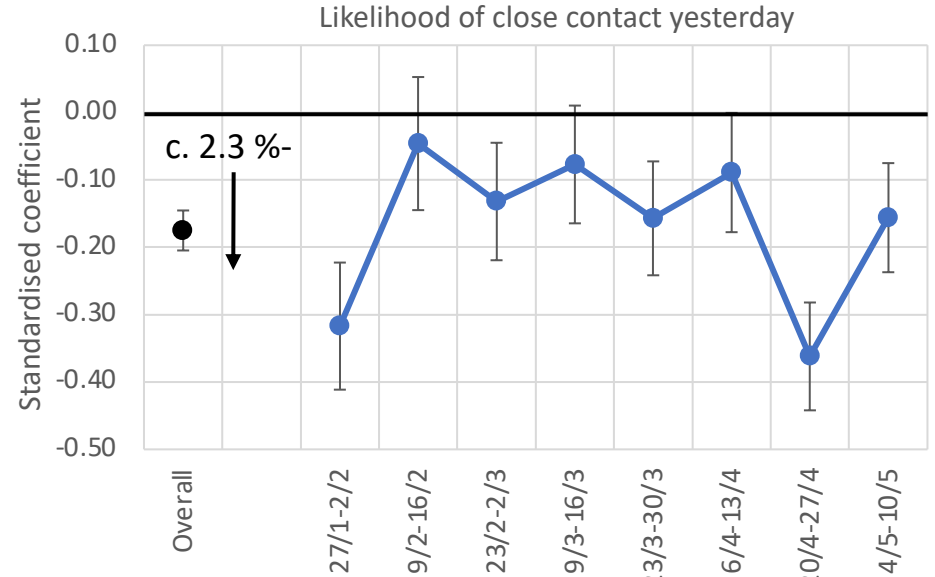
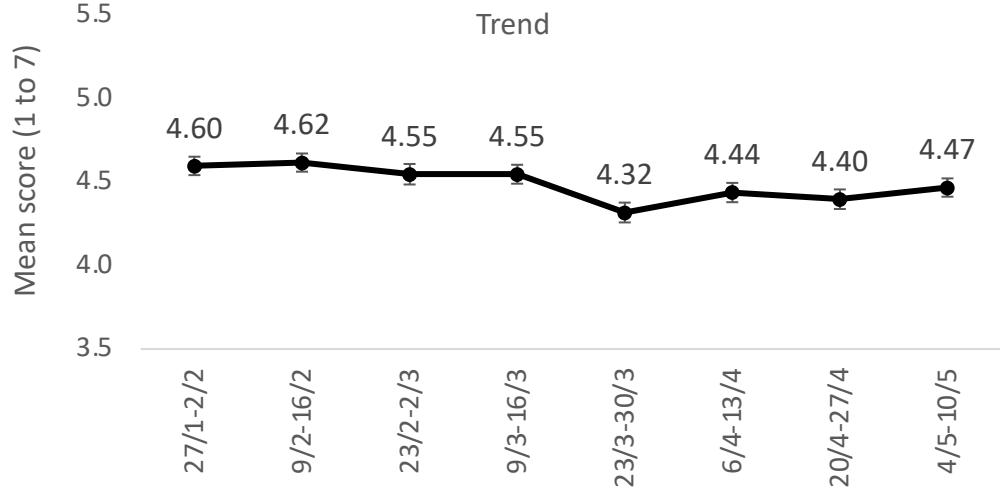
*When asked which is more important, preventing the spread of the virus (=1 on the scale) or the burden of restrictions (=7), most people give a score below 3. The trend rose to the end of March but levelled off with the easing of restrictions. People with a one standard deviation higher score are more likely to have a close contact, more likely to be involved in a social home visit, and meet more people from other households in a 48-hour period. The effect of prioritising the burden of restrictions on meeting more people is weakening.*

# Perceived coherence of restrictions



*Since late January, the perceived coherence of the restrictions has fallen marginally, but has been stable since the announcement on 30<sup>th</sup> March. People who perceived the restrictions to be one standard deviation more coherent are less likely to have a close contact, less likely to be involved in a social home visit, and meet fewer people from other households in a 48-hour period. This effect seems to have strengthened since restrictions began to be lifted but has since stabilised.*

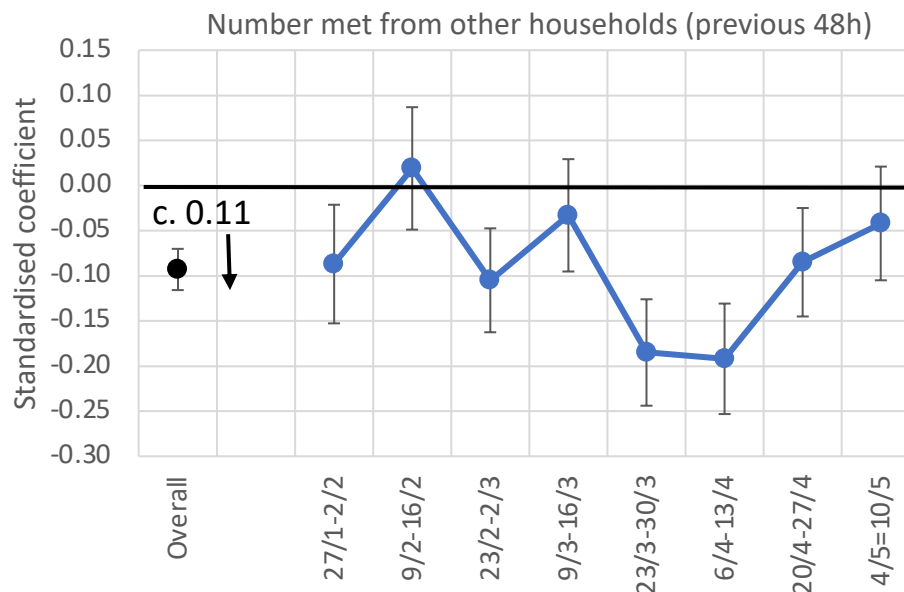
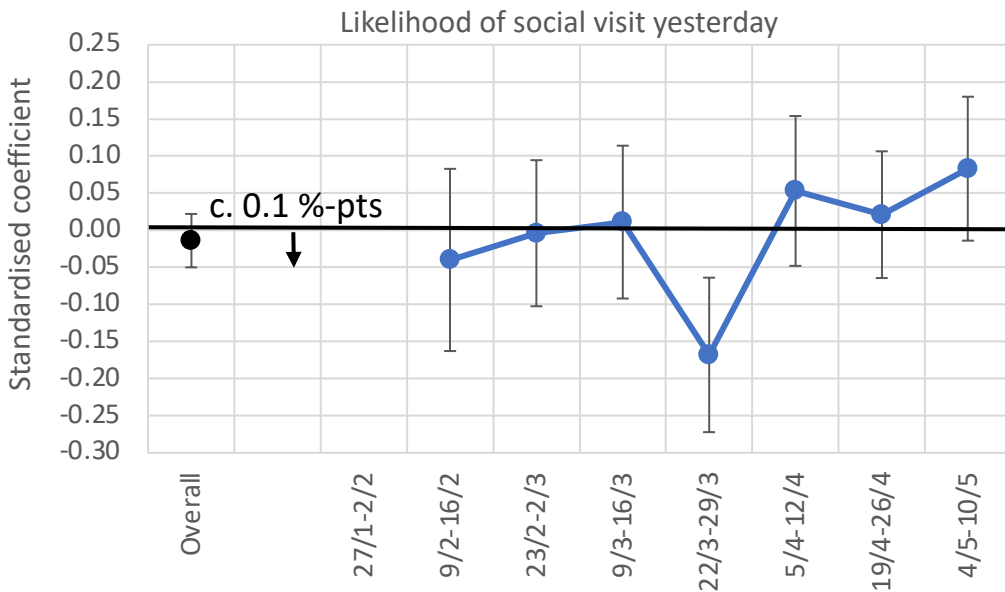
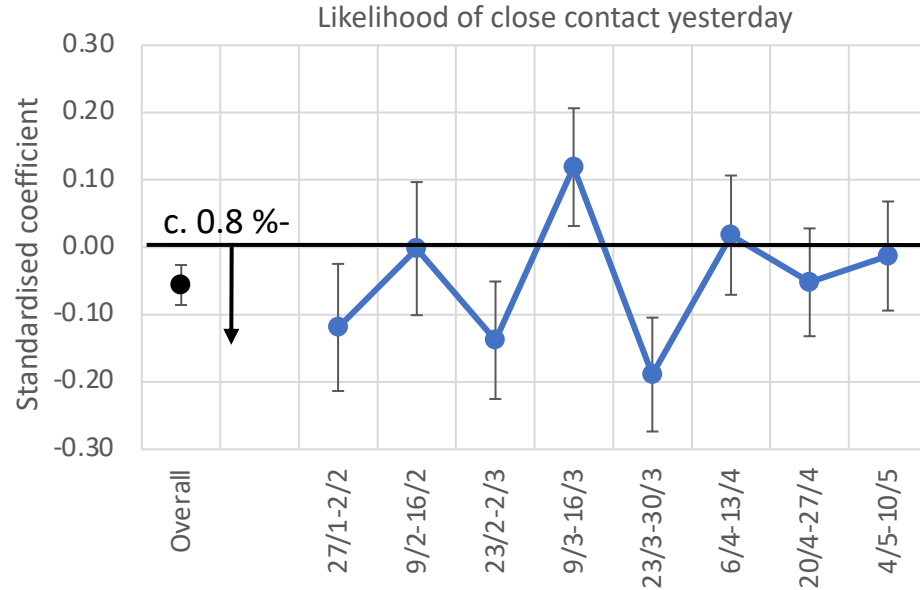
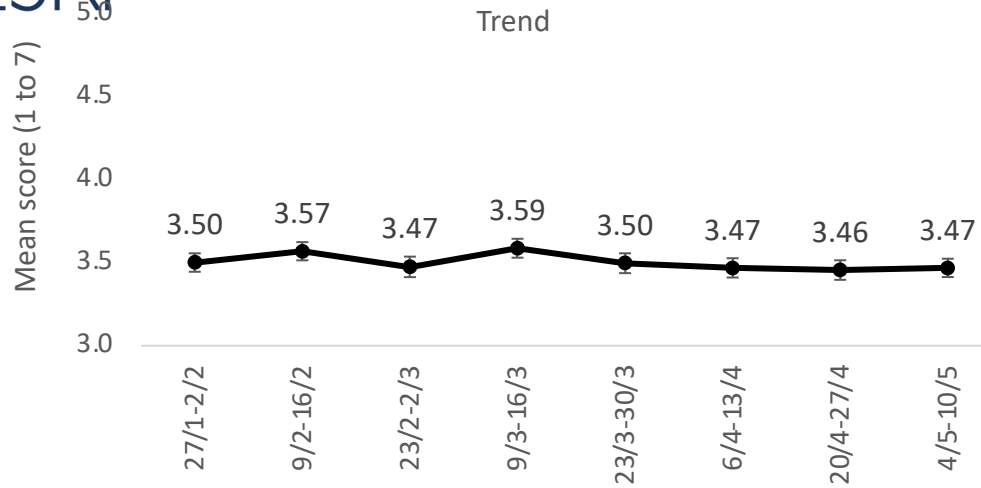
# Perception of others



*Perceptions that others were following guidelines fell between January and late March but have since stabilised and may be rising. People with a one standard deviation higher judgement that others are following guidelines are less likely to have a close contact and less likely to have a social visit. There's little effect on the number of people met.*

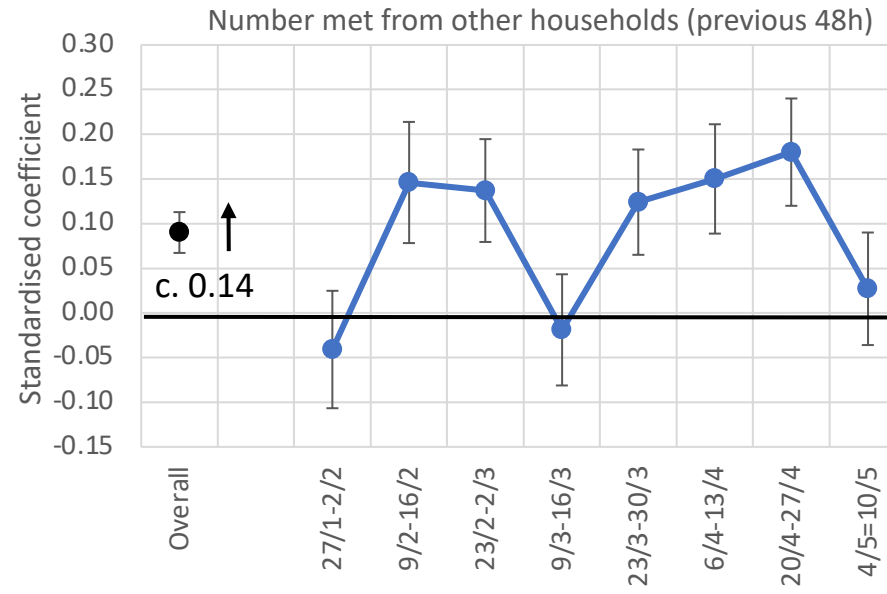
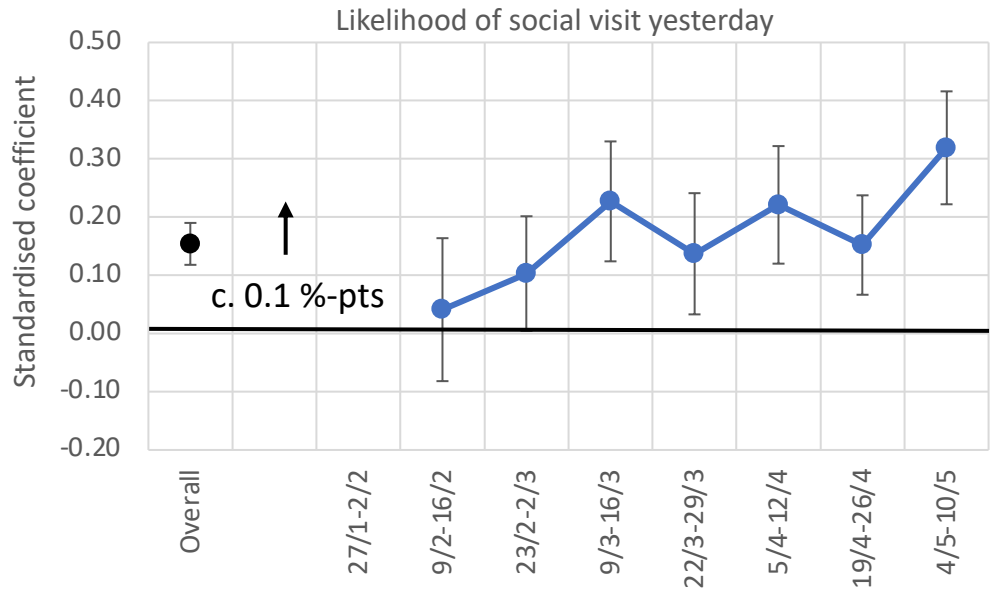
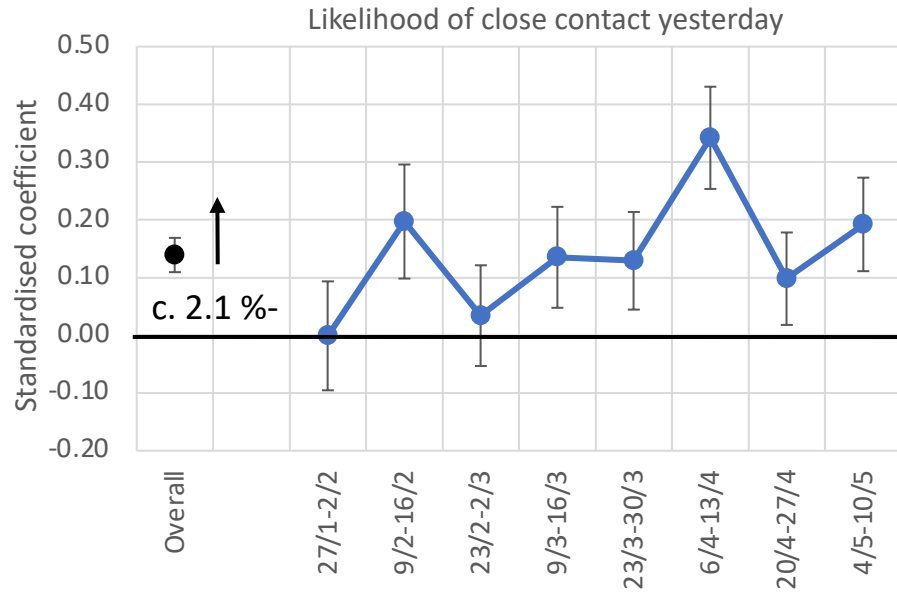
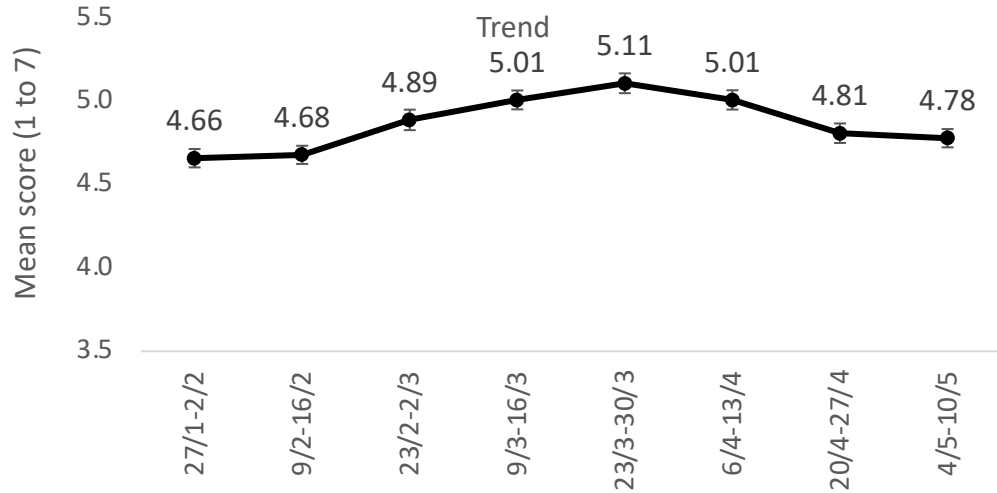


# Deterrence



*Belief that fines would be enforced for breaching guidelines (e.g. hosting or attending a large gathering) has remained stable since January. One standard deviation increase in belief of enforcement was associated with meeting fewer people in late March and early April, although the effect has since weakened.*

# Restrictions Tiresome

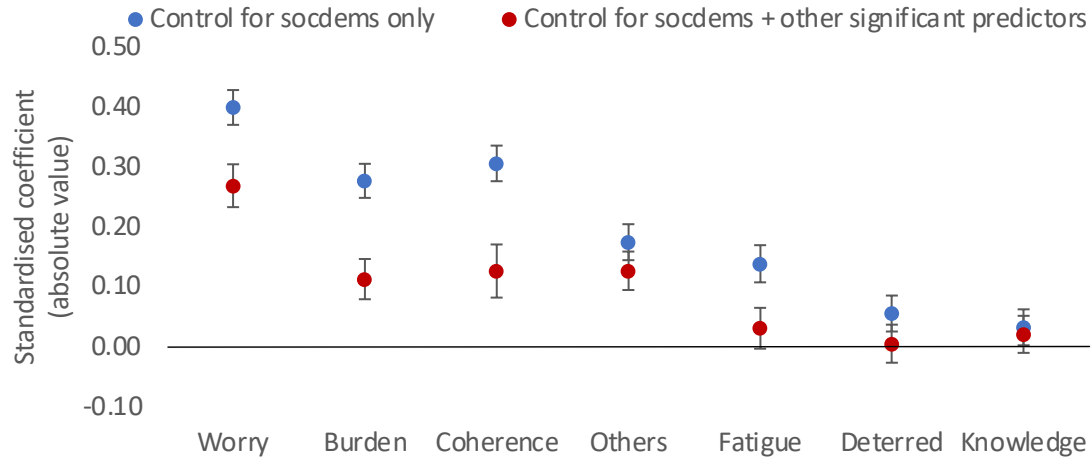


*Finding the restrictions to be tiresome has declined since late March. A one standard increase in finding the judgements tiresome is associated with being more likely to have a close contact, have a social visit and meet with more people from other households. The effect seems to be strengthening, although it does not hold when other psychological variables are controlled for (next slide).*

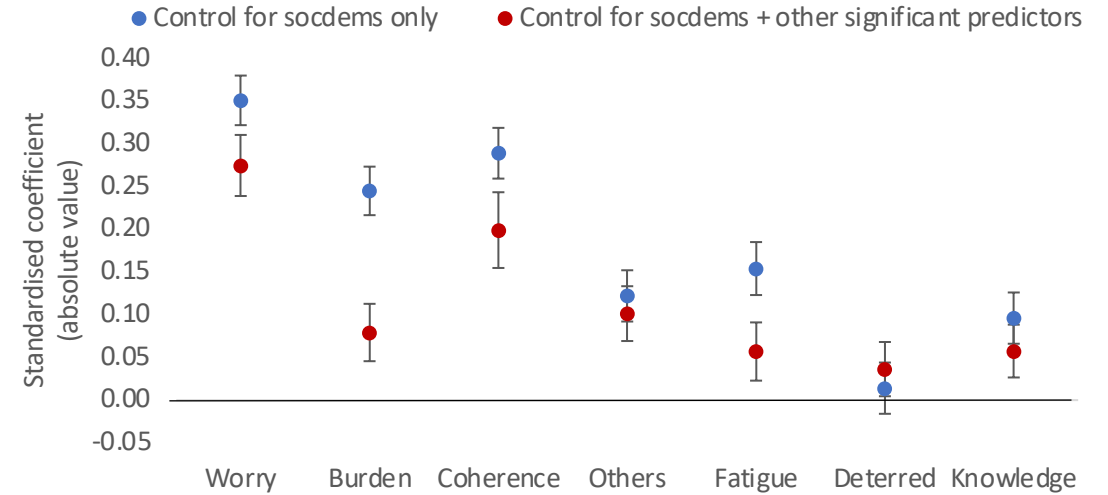
# Psychological Variables



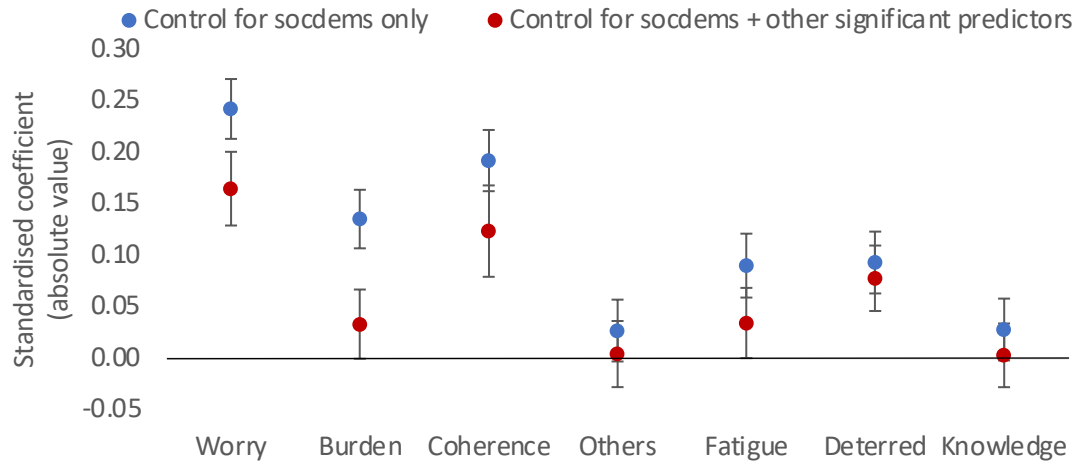
Likelihood of Close Contact  
(all waves)



Likelihood of Social Visit  
(all waves)



Likelihood of Meeting More People  
(all waves)

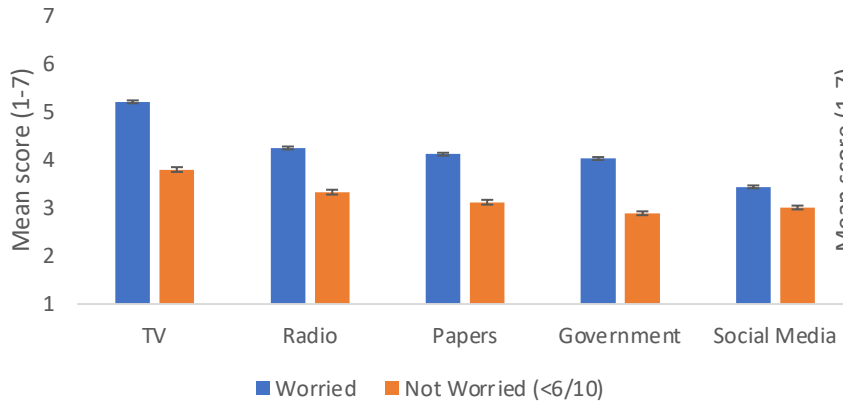


*The charts show the relative strength of the association between psychological predictors of behaviour on having a close contact, a social visit and meeting more people. Blue dots show the relationship between only that predictor and the outcome variable, controlling for socio-demographic characteristics. Red dots show the association when all other significant psychological predictors are controlled for. Worry, burden and coherence are the most consistent predictors, with perceptions of others important for close contacts and social visits and deterrence important for meeting more other people.*

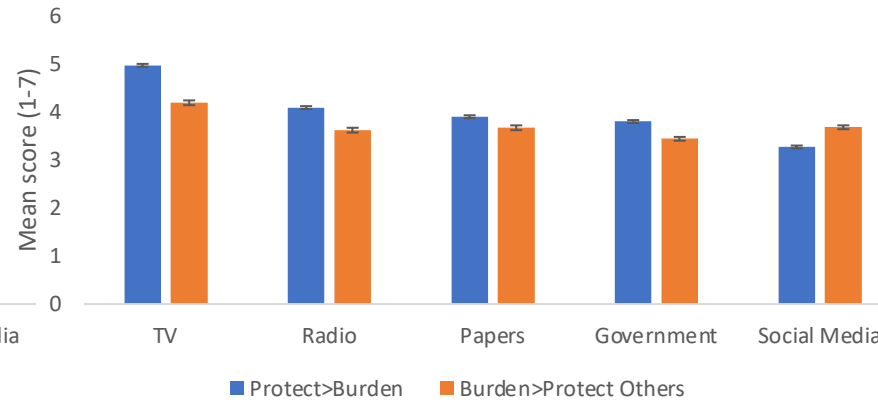


# Psychological Variables – Info Sources

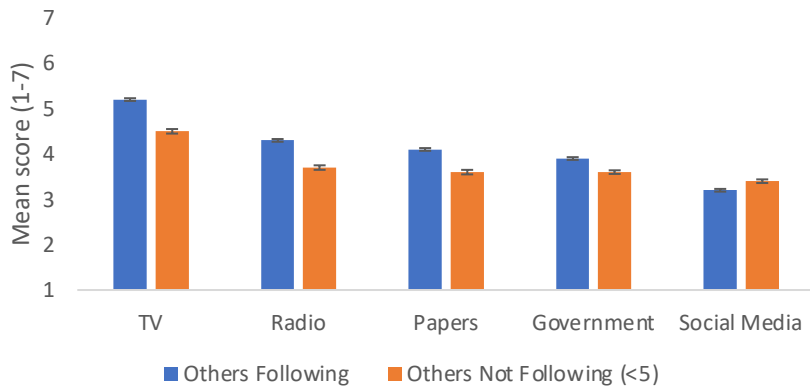
Information Sources by Worry



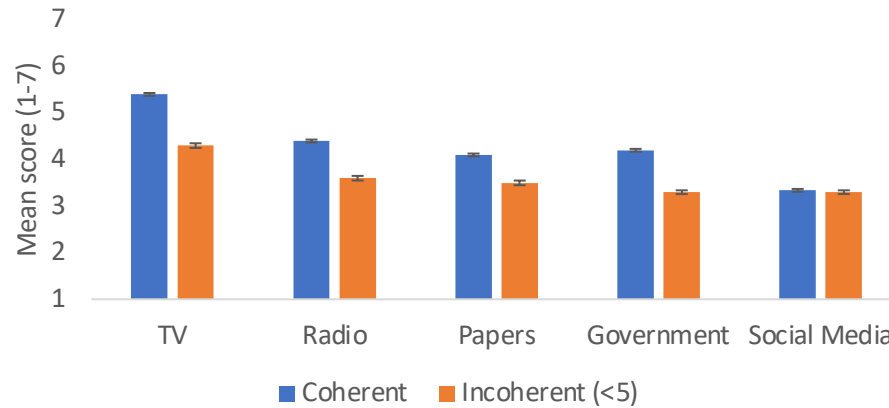
Information Sources by Burden



Information Sources by Perception of Others

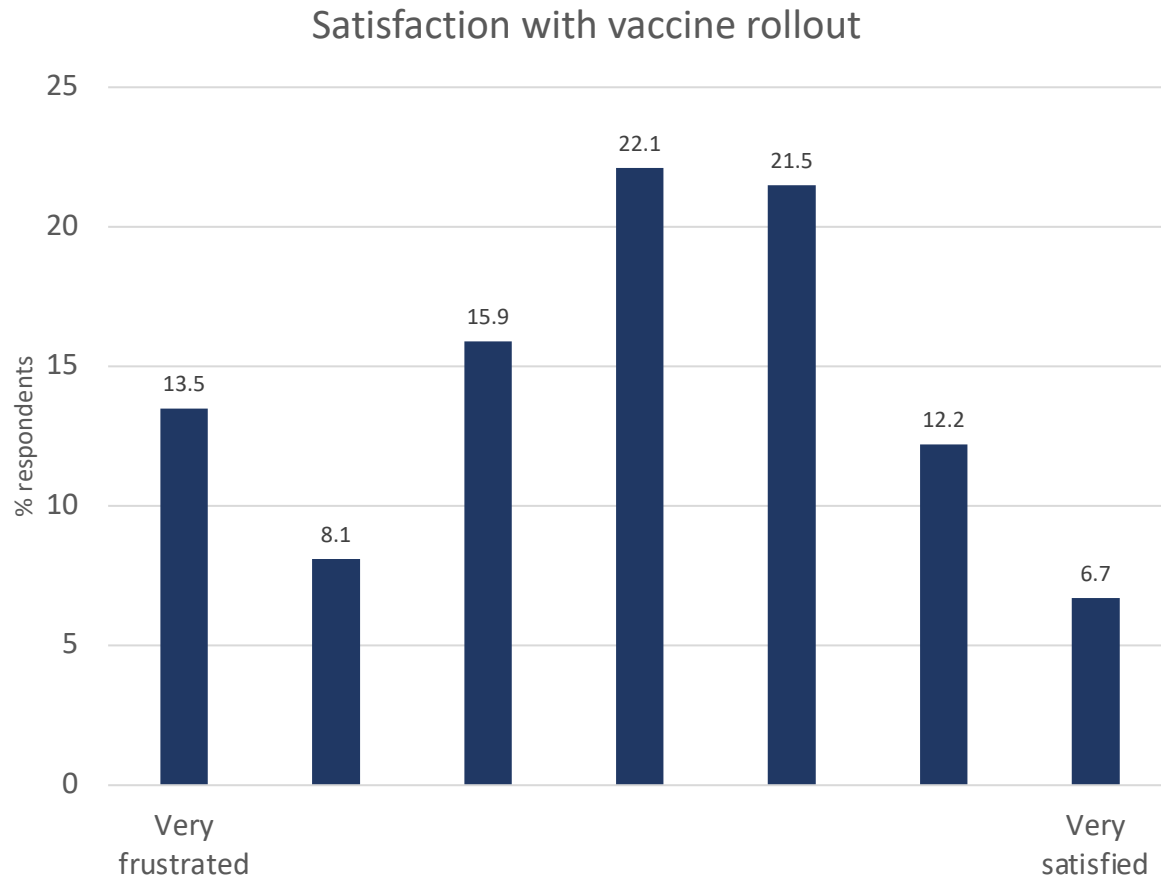


Information Sources by Coherence



*These charts show the extent to which individuals get information about COVID-19 from different sources, split by scores on important psychological drivers of behaviour. Less worried people pay less attention to information from all sources. Those who judge the burden of restrictions to be more important than protecting others, who judge restrictions to be less coherent and who think others are following the restrictions less tend to get information from all sources less than other people, except for social media.*

# Vaccine perceptions

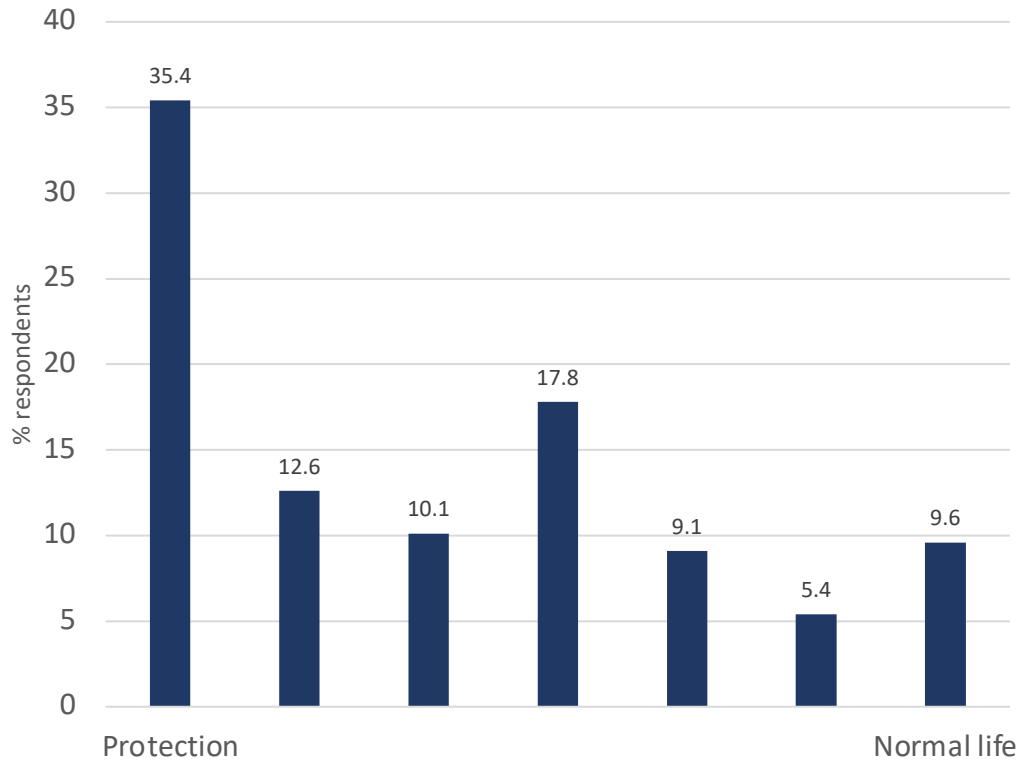


*This chart shows that perceptions of the vaccine rollout are mixed, with approx. 40% giving a response above the midpoint of the scale and 38% giving a response below the midpoint. The average response is 3.9.*

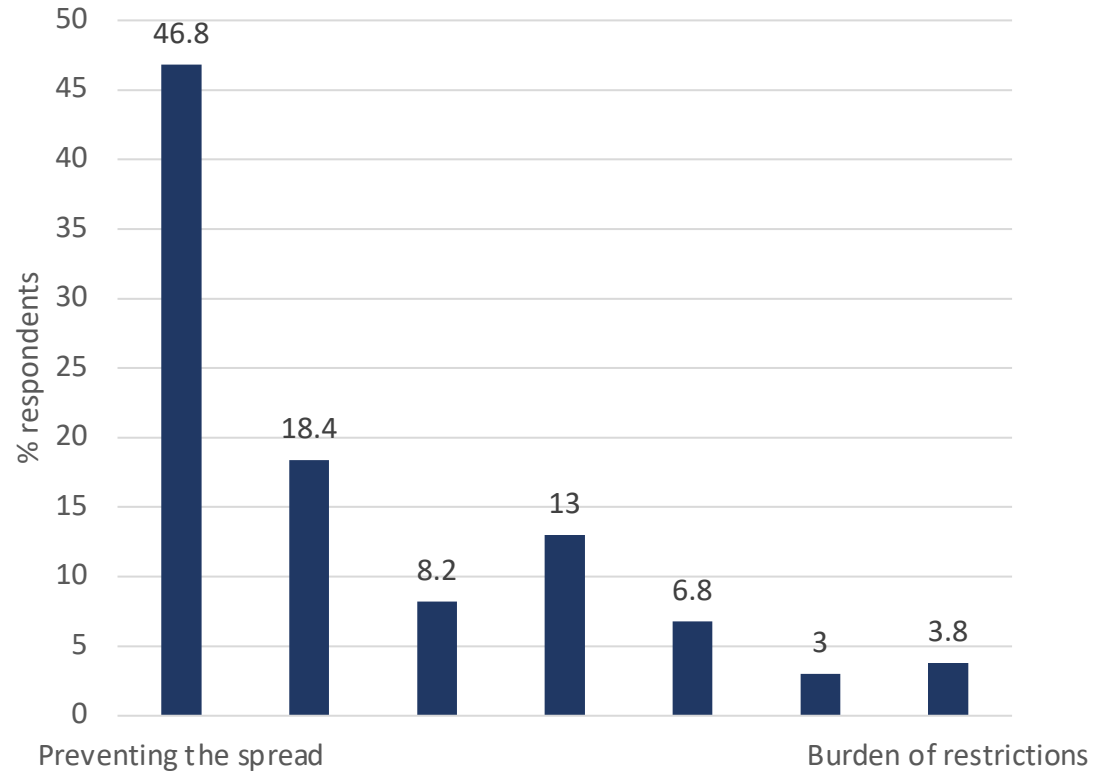
# Protection vs. Returning to "Normal"



Importance of protecting others vs resuming normal life

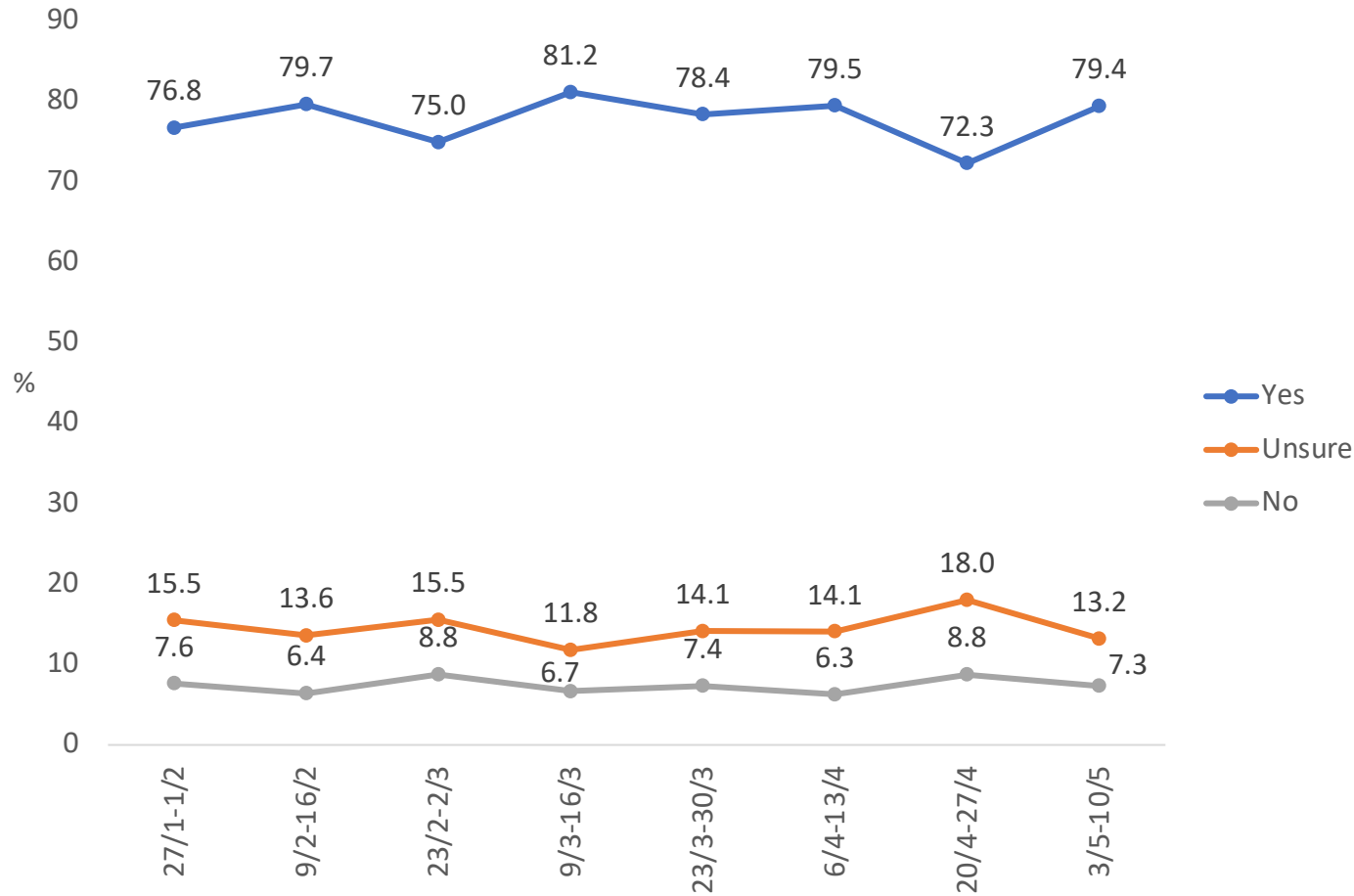


Importance of preventing the spread of the virus vs the burden of restrictions



*When considering the importance of different implications of the vaccines, a majority give a response closer to “protecting friends and family” than “returning to normal life”. This finding aligns with the consistent finding that most people value preventing the spread of the virus over the burden of restrictions.*

# Vaccine intention



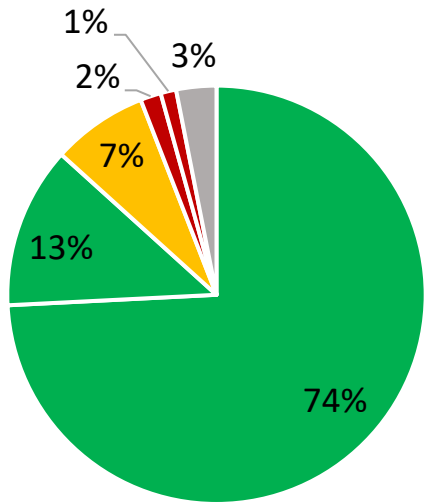
*The level of support for the vaccine has remained consistently high among those not yet vaccinated. Note that, since the most willing individuals were first to be vaccinated, this trend likely hides an increase in willingness among the remainder of the population.*

# Vaccine: Intentions of others



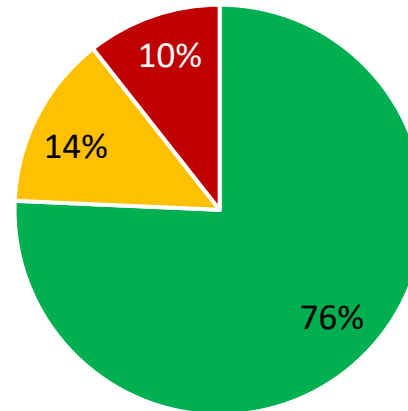
Will people closest to you get the vaccine?

- Almost all will
- Some will, some won't
- None will
- Most but not all will
- Most won't
- Not sure



Would you recommend the vaccine to a friend/family member that is unsure?

- Yes
- Maybe
- No



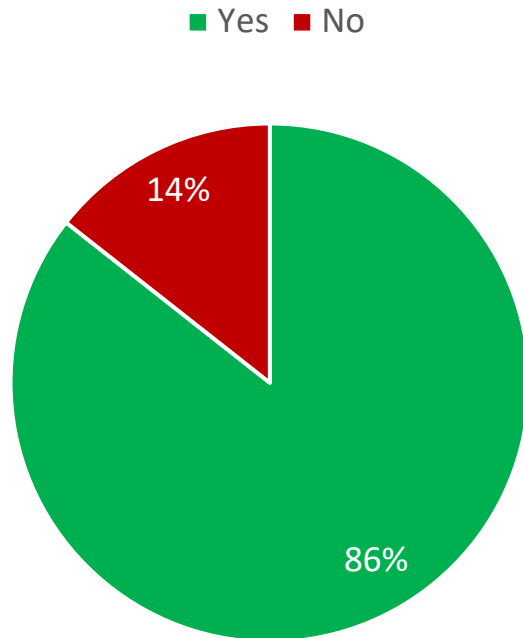
*A large majority believe most people close to them will take the vaccine and most would recommend the vaccine to friends or family members who are unsure.*



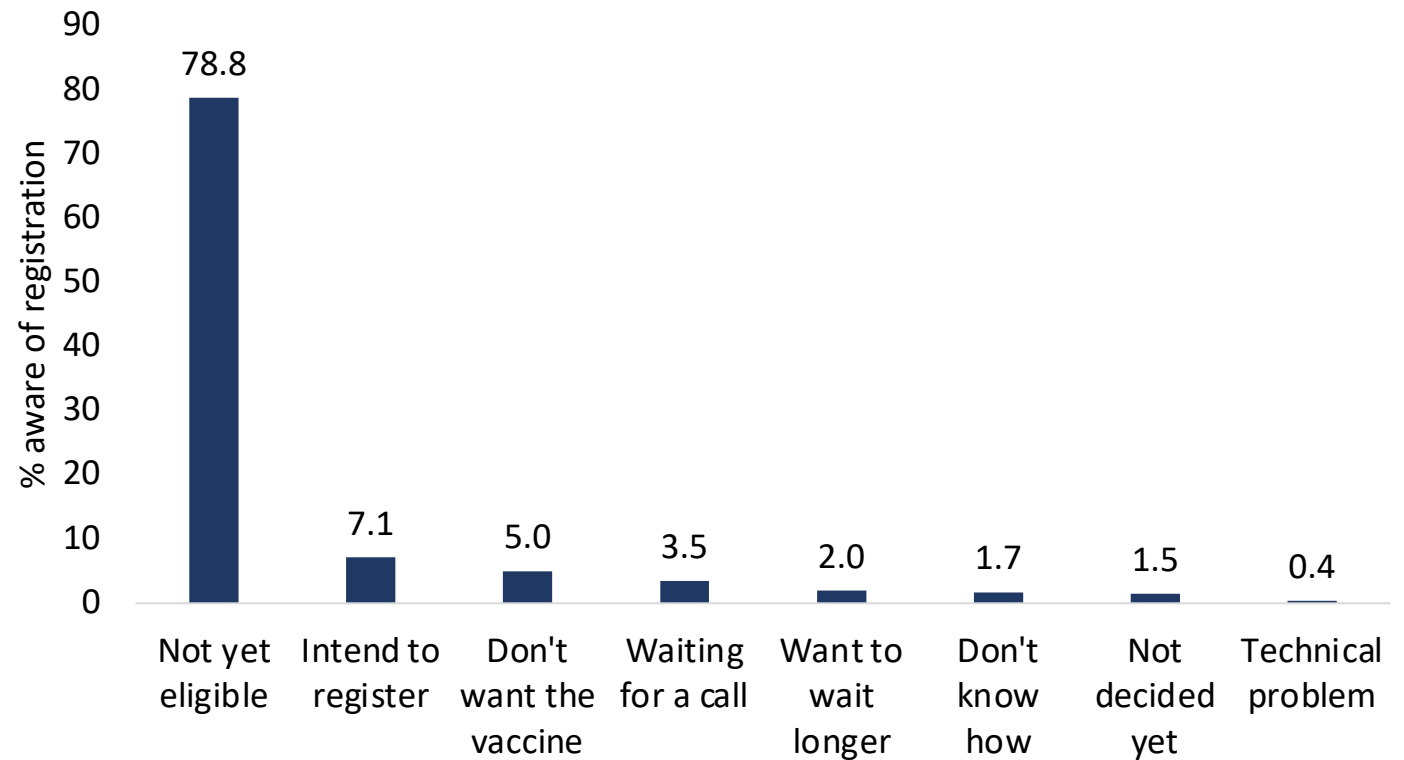


# Vaccine: Registration

Aware of the need to register  
(among those not yet vaccinated)



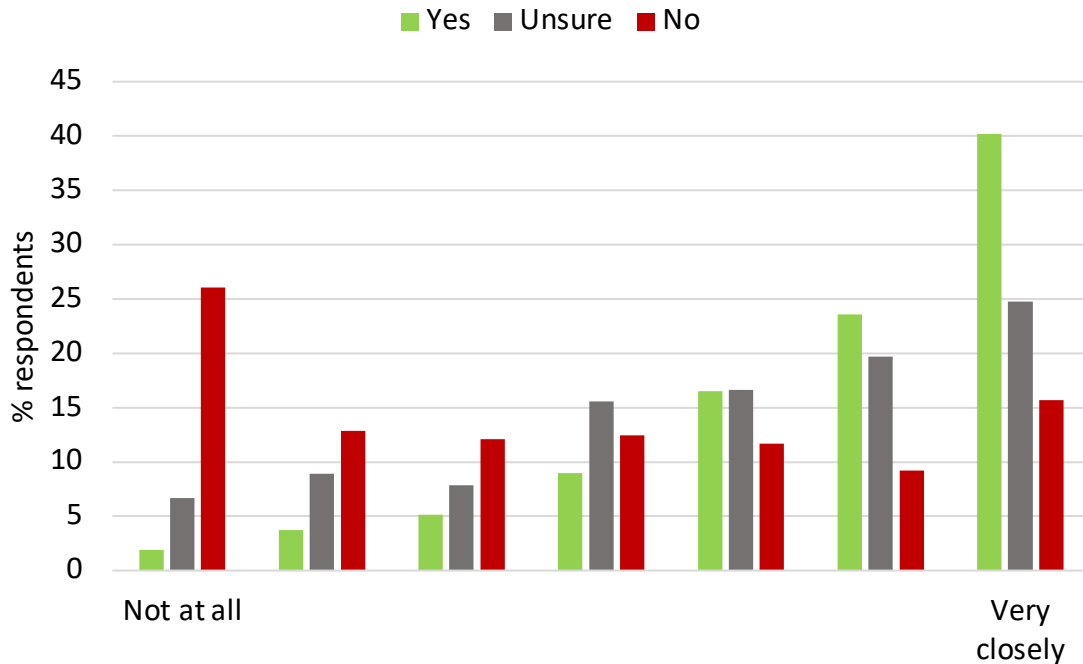
Reasons for not having registered yet



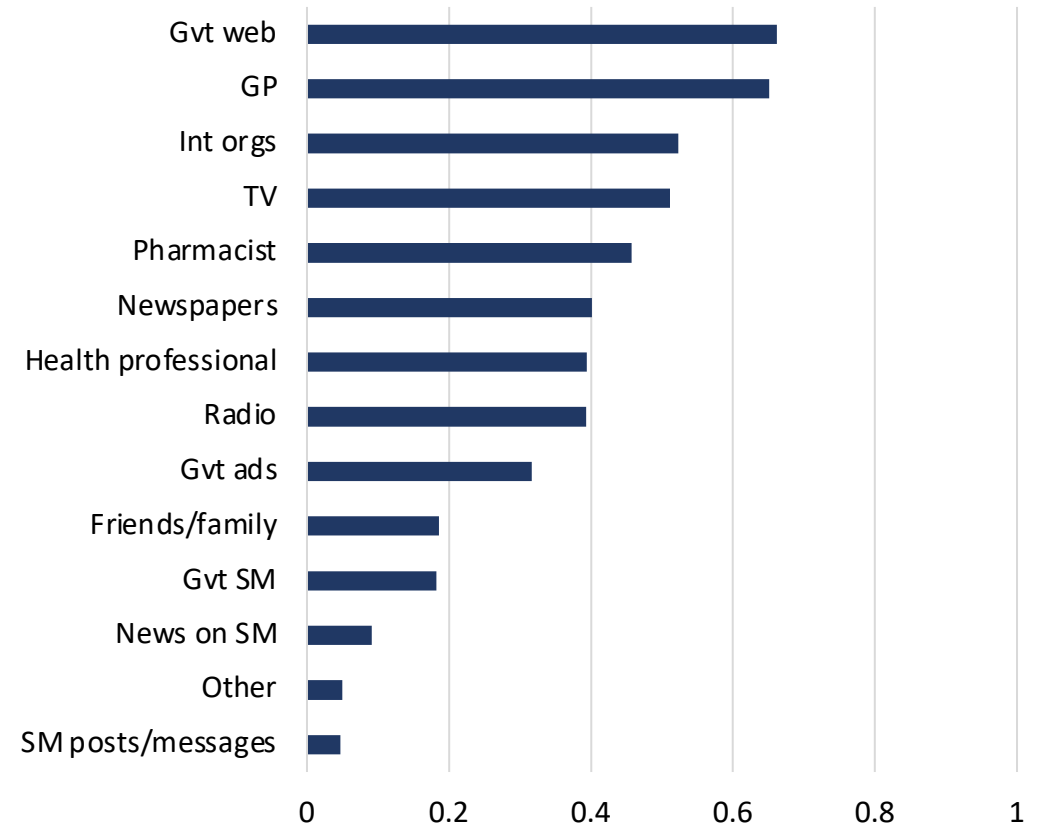
# Vaccine: Following news & information sources



Vaccine intention and following news coverage on COVID-19



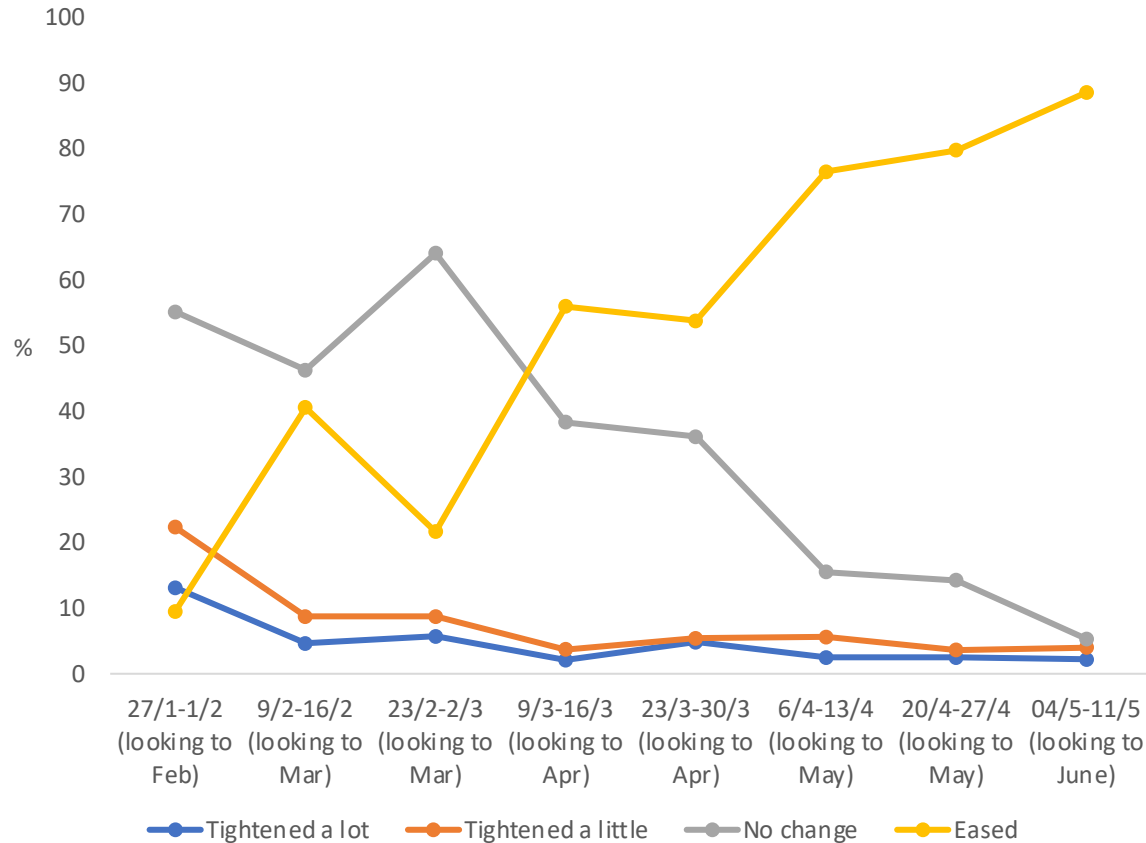
Trusted sources of information



*Following news coverage of COVID-19 is strongly associated with willingness to take the vaccine. The Government website and GPs are the most trusted sources of information about the vaccine.*



# Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



*There is a continued increase in people expecting further easing of restrictions, accompanied by a drop in those expecting no change. Over 88% of people expect restrictions to be eased in early June.*