ESRI

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Social Activity Measure
Oct 19th-26th

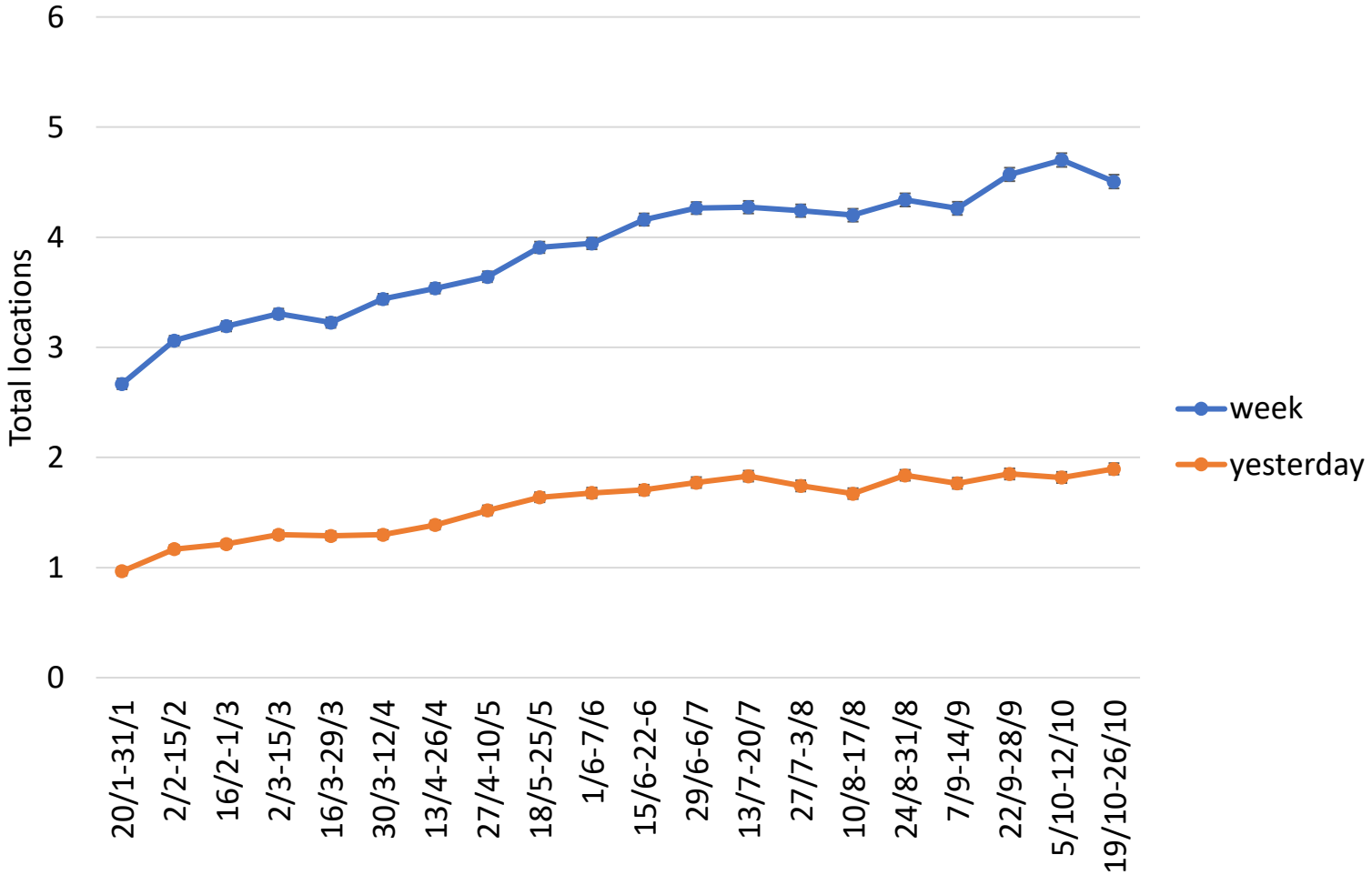
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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 survey has been updated in this round to include more detailed information on behavioural changes and future plans in light of the widespread lifting of restrictions in September. 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 October 19th and 26th. Data collection took place during a period of increasing case numbers. Night-time entertainment (e.g. nightclubs) re-opened for those with a Digital Covid Certificate and pub curfews were lifted on October 22nd. The period covered the October Bank Holiday weekend.

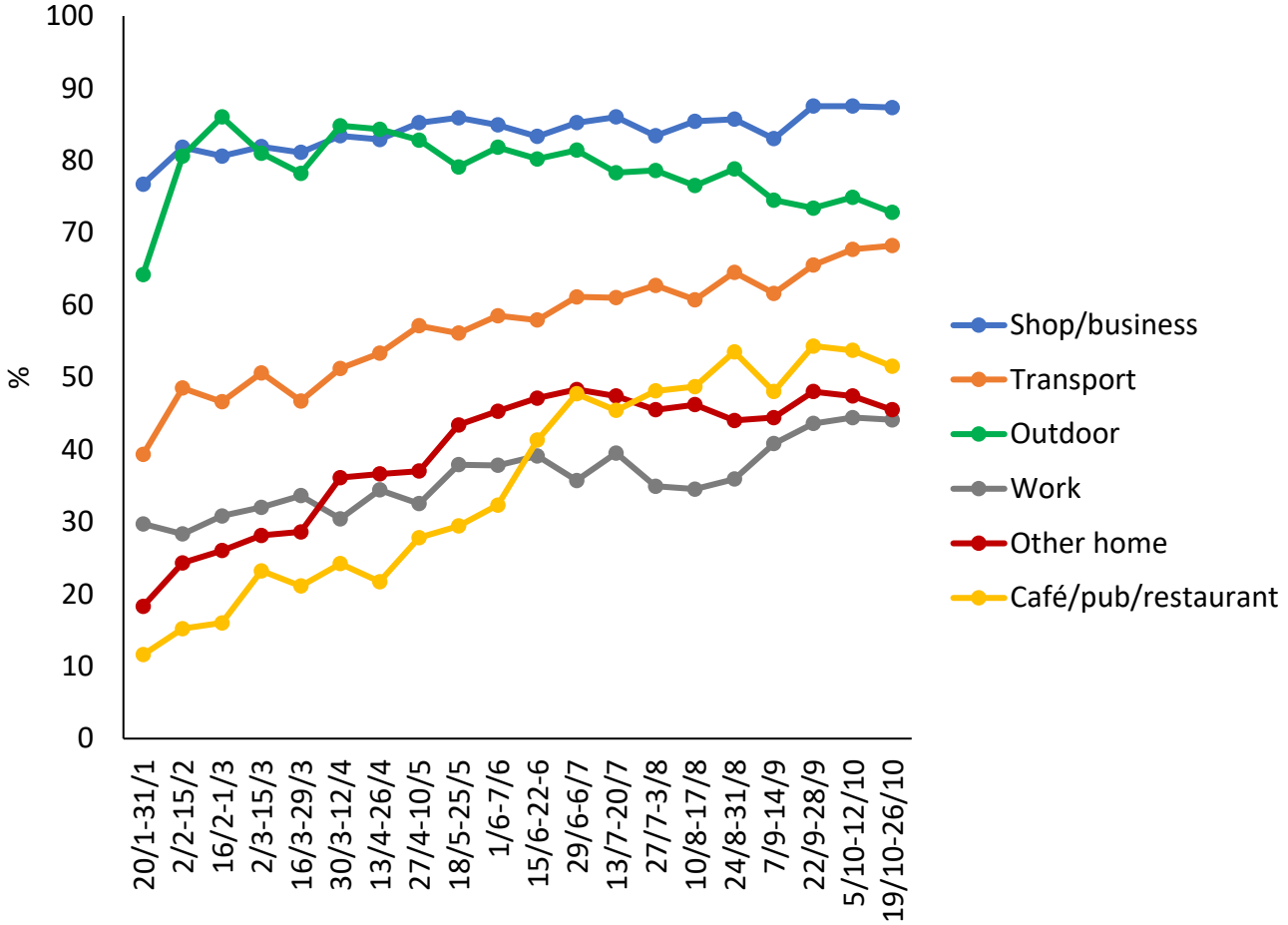
Total locations visited

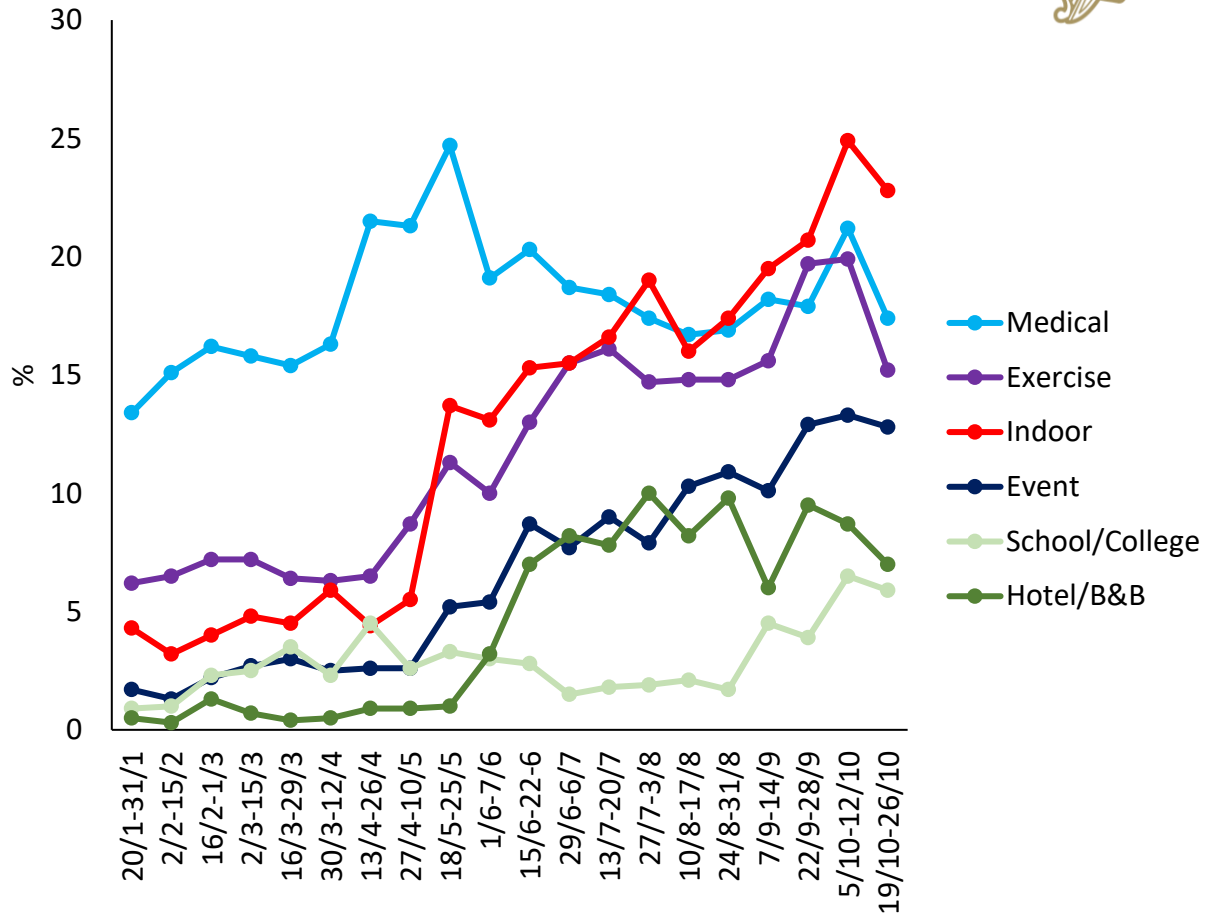


Total locations visited over the week declined relative to early October, returning to late-September levels. The Bank Holiday weekend probably accounts for this decline (next slide). There was no change in total locations visited the day before completing the study.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Locations visited (previous week)

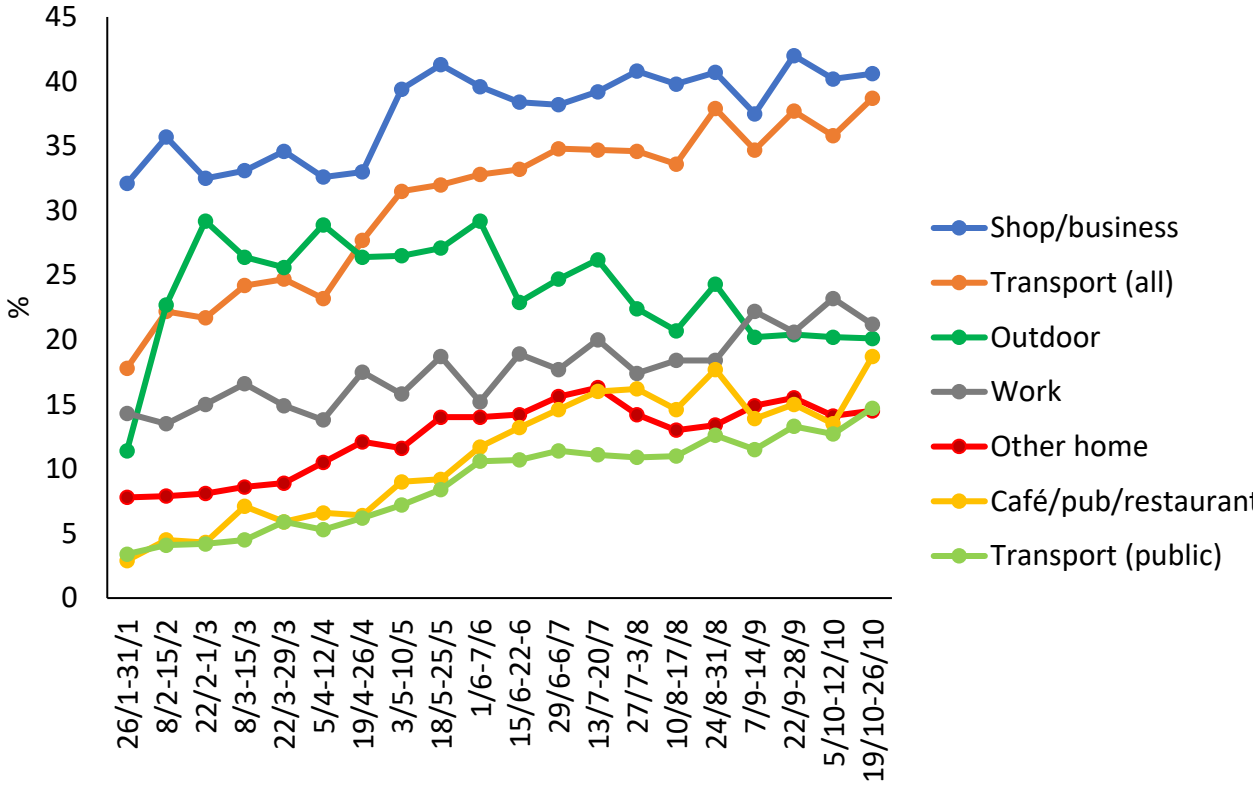


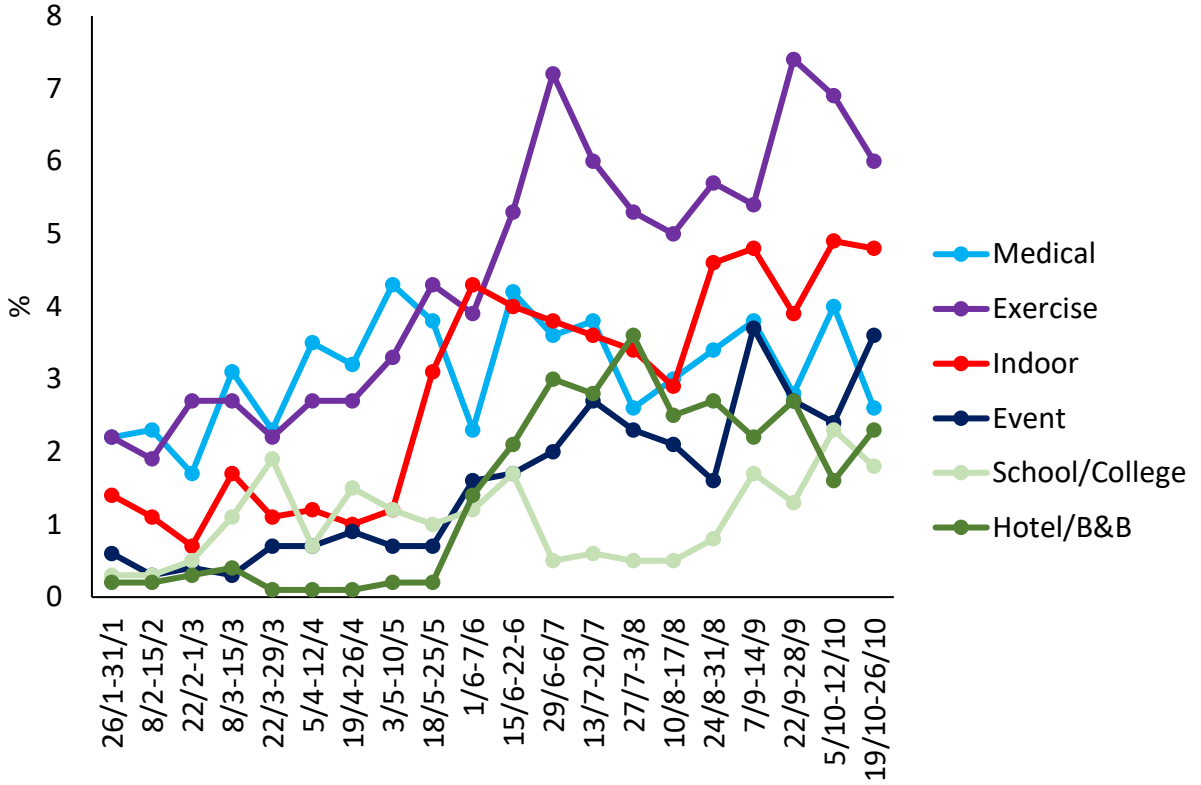


The charts show the proportion of the population who had visited each location at some point during the previous week. Note the different scales on the vertical axis. There was a small decline in visits to medical facilities and exercise facilities, likely linked to the Bank Holiday weekend.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Locations visited (yesterday)

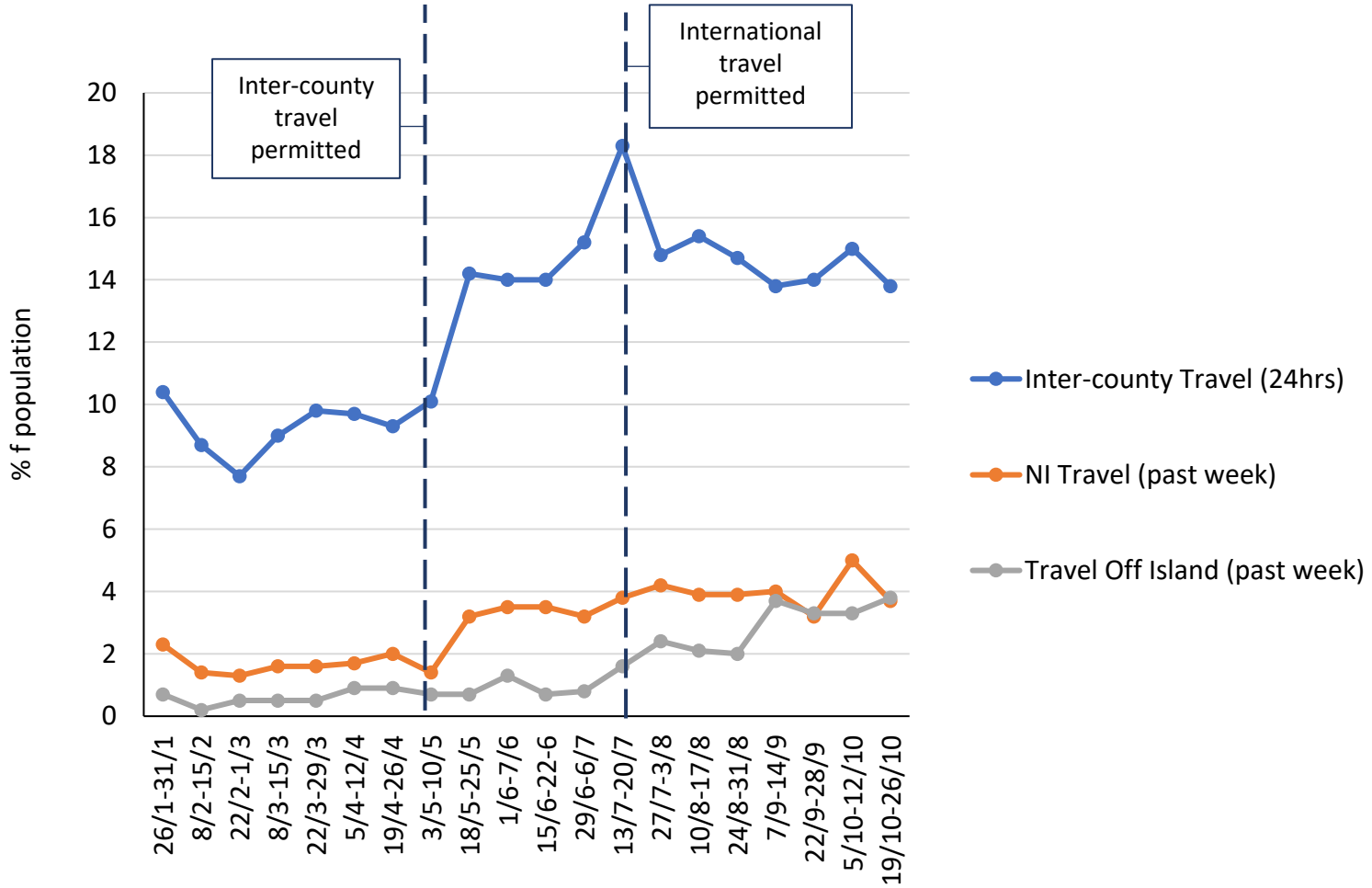




The charts show the proportion of the population who visited each location the previous day. Note the different scales on the vertical axis. Changes from the last wave were minor, except for small declines in visits to medical facilities and exercise facilities, which were probably due to the Bank Holiday.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

National and international travel

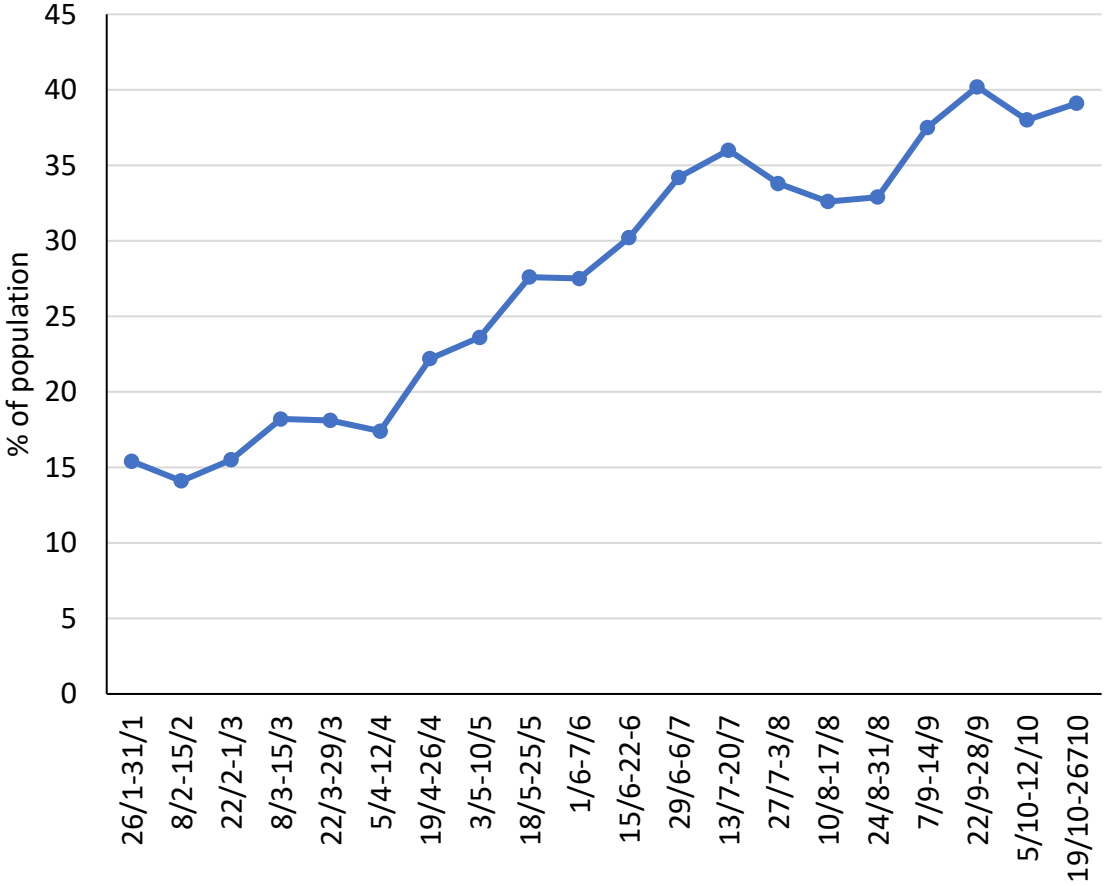


There was no significant change in travel patterns compared to early October.

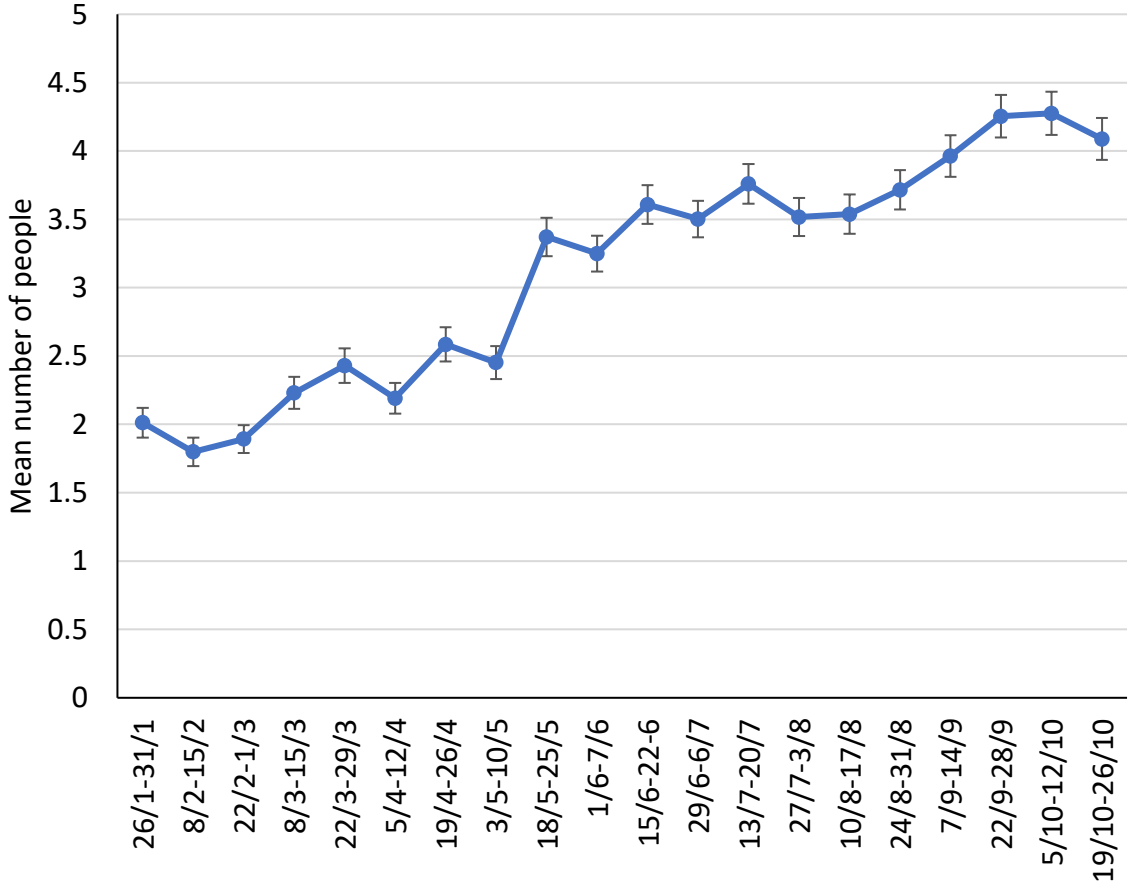
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Number of people met and close contacts

Close contact in past 24 hours



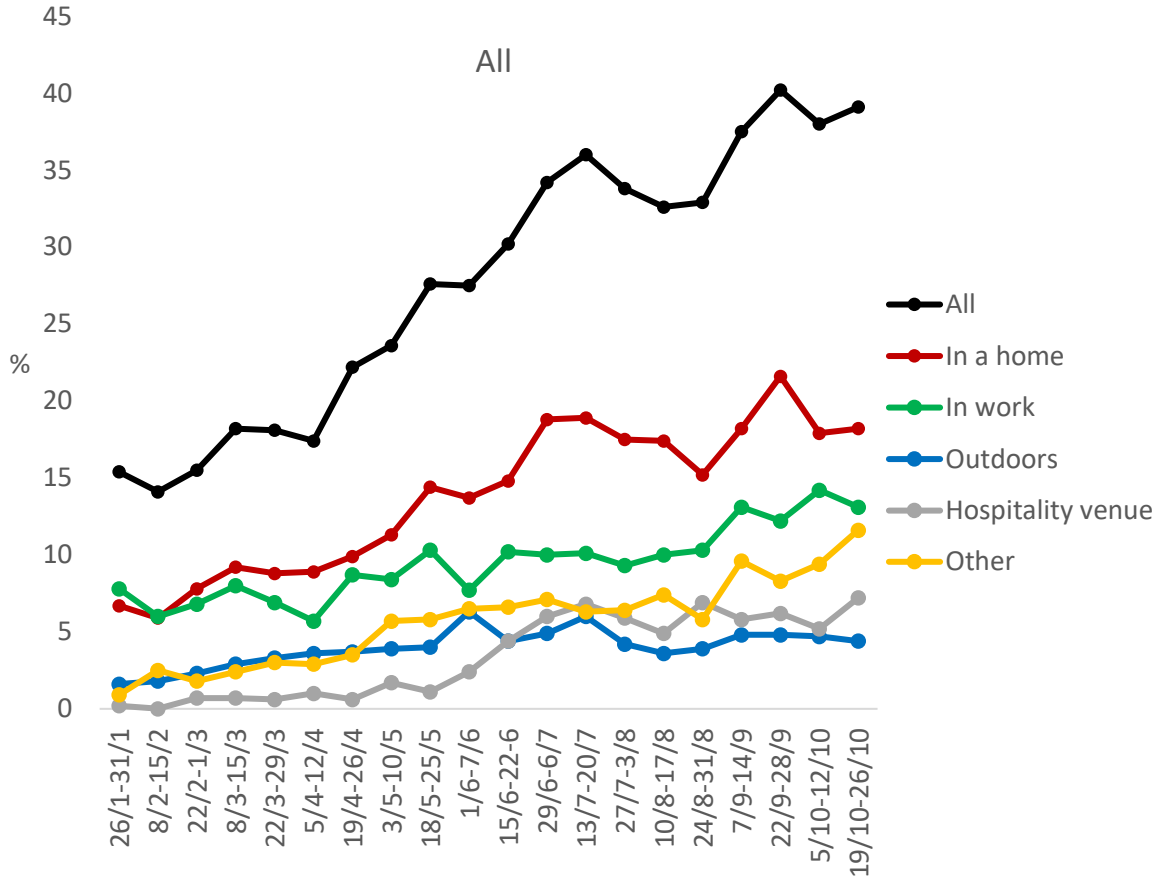
Mean number of people met in past 48hrs

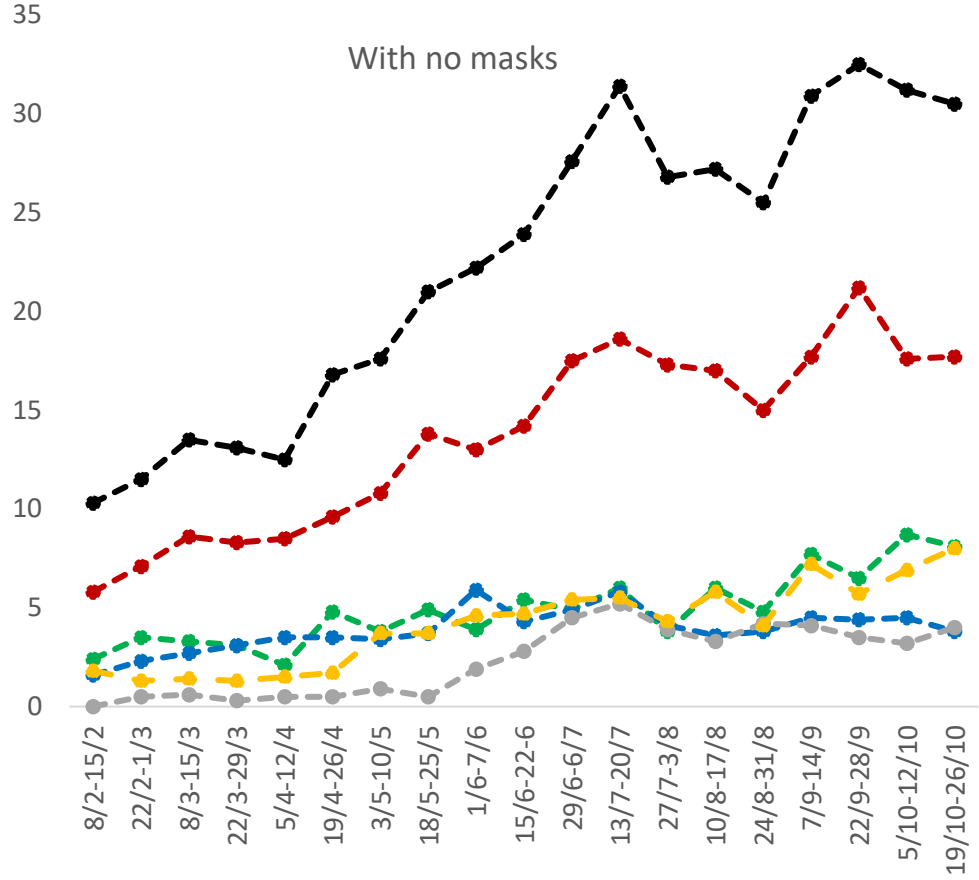


There was no change in the proportion of people who had a close contact interaction or the number of people met.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Close contacts - locations

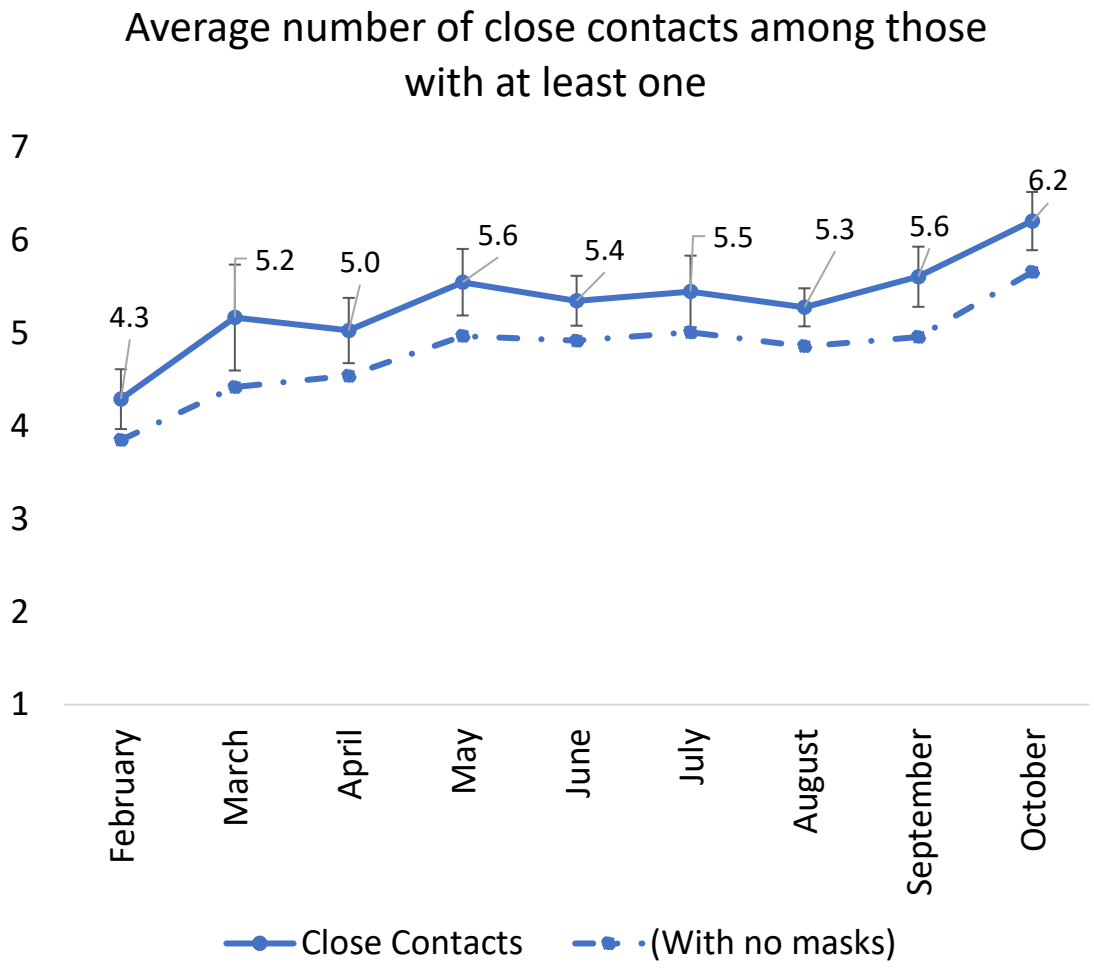




Home visits and workplaces continue to account for the largest share of close contact interactions. The share of close contacts attributed to 'other' locations is increasing and is primarily accounted for by specific gatherings and events (e.g. family occasions.)

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

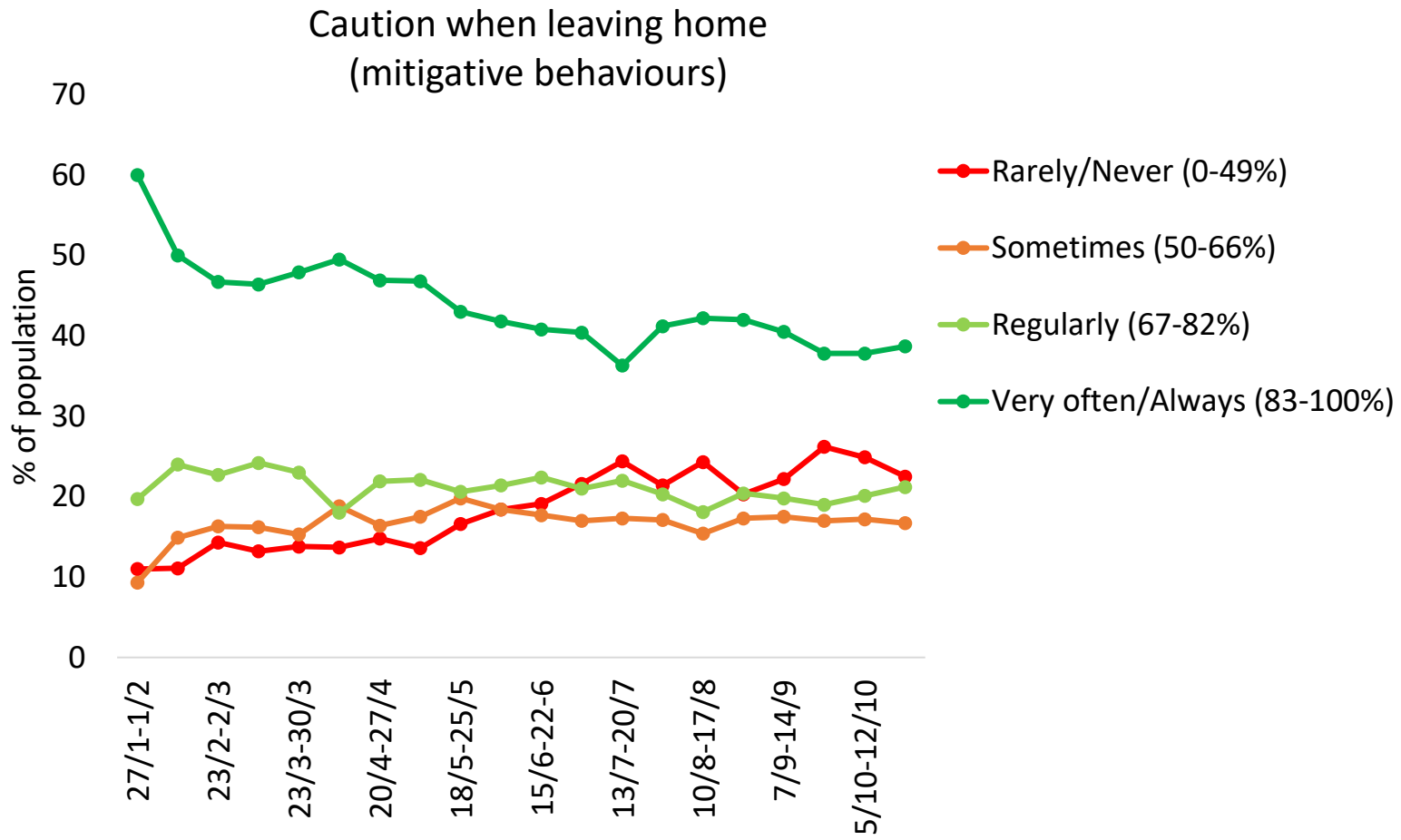
Close contacts -number



As the number of people having close contact interactions has climbed since early 2021, so has the number of close contacts they have. The average number of close contacts among those with at least one has risen significantly since August.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

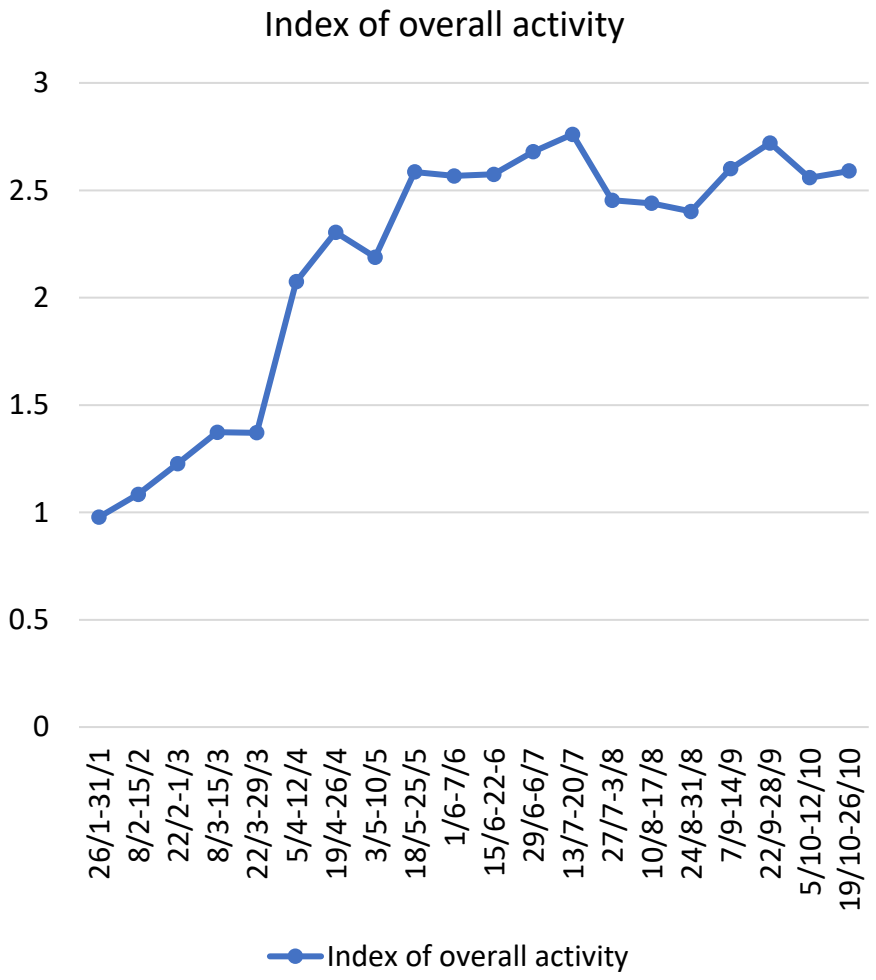
Mitigation

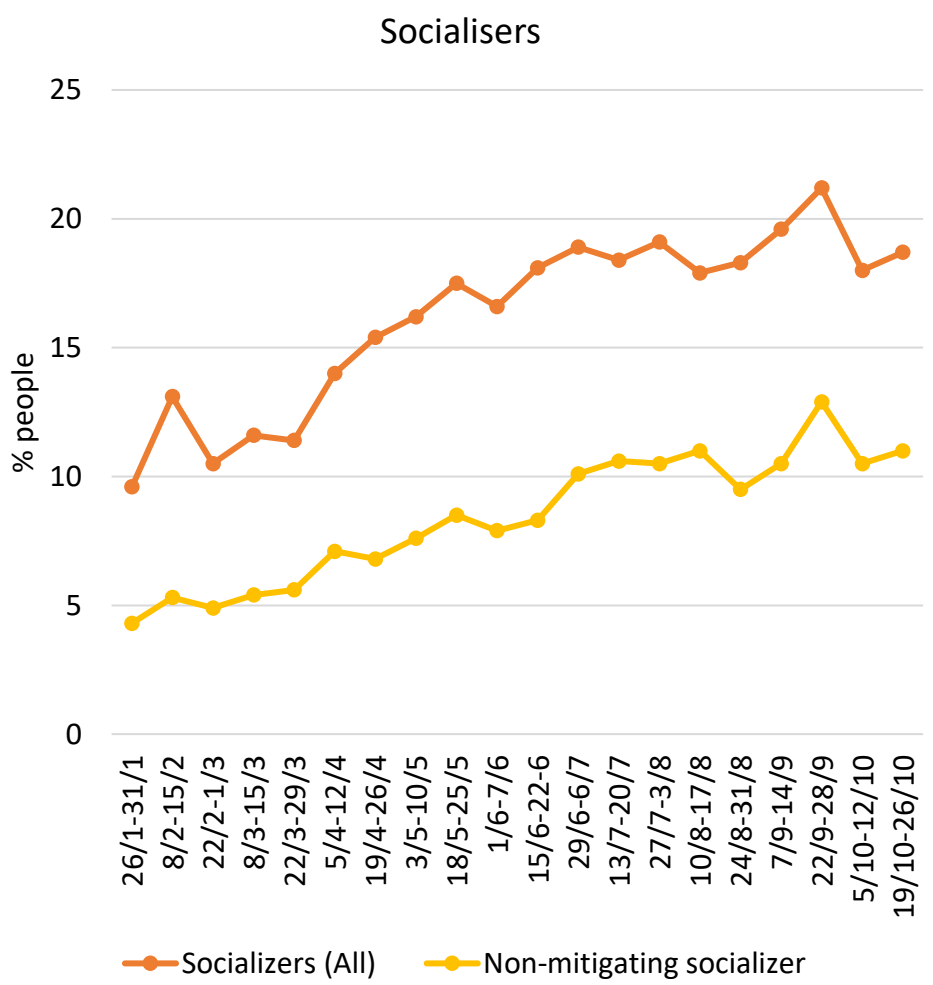


The proportion of people engaging in mitigative behaviours (keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks) has remained relatively stable since late Summer. The largest group of people take precautions almost all of the time, whereas approximately 1-in-5 people take precautions less than half of the time.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Social Activity

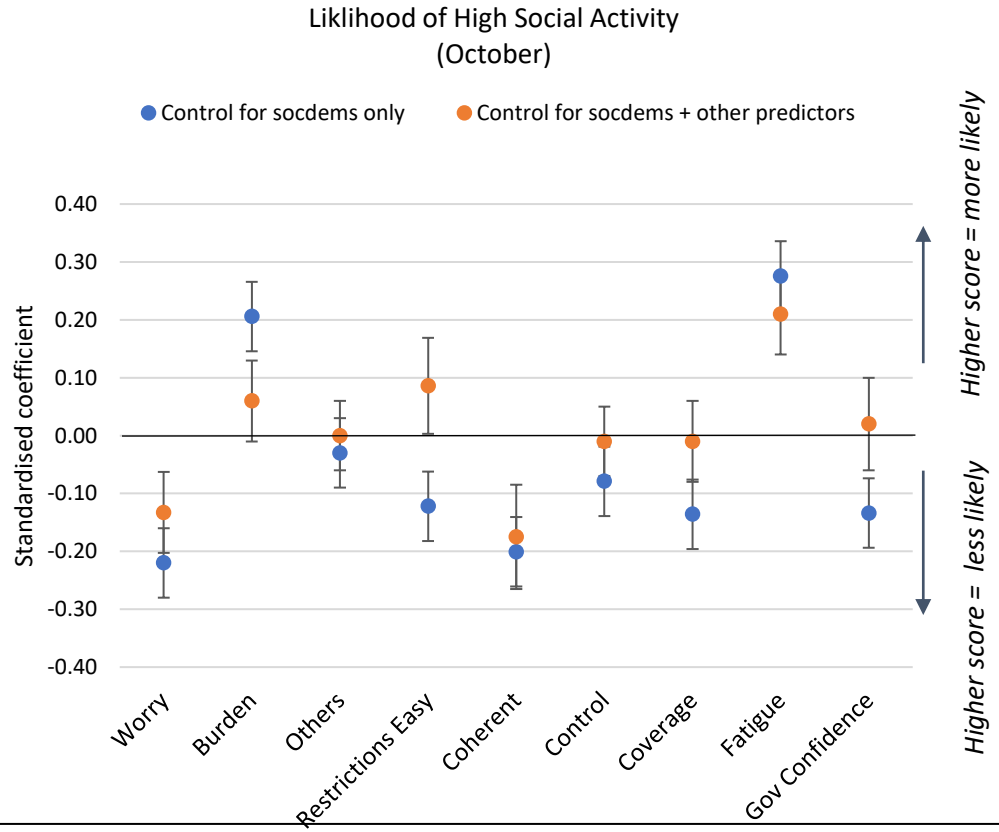


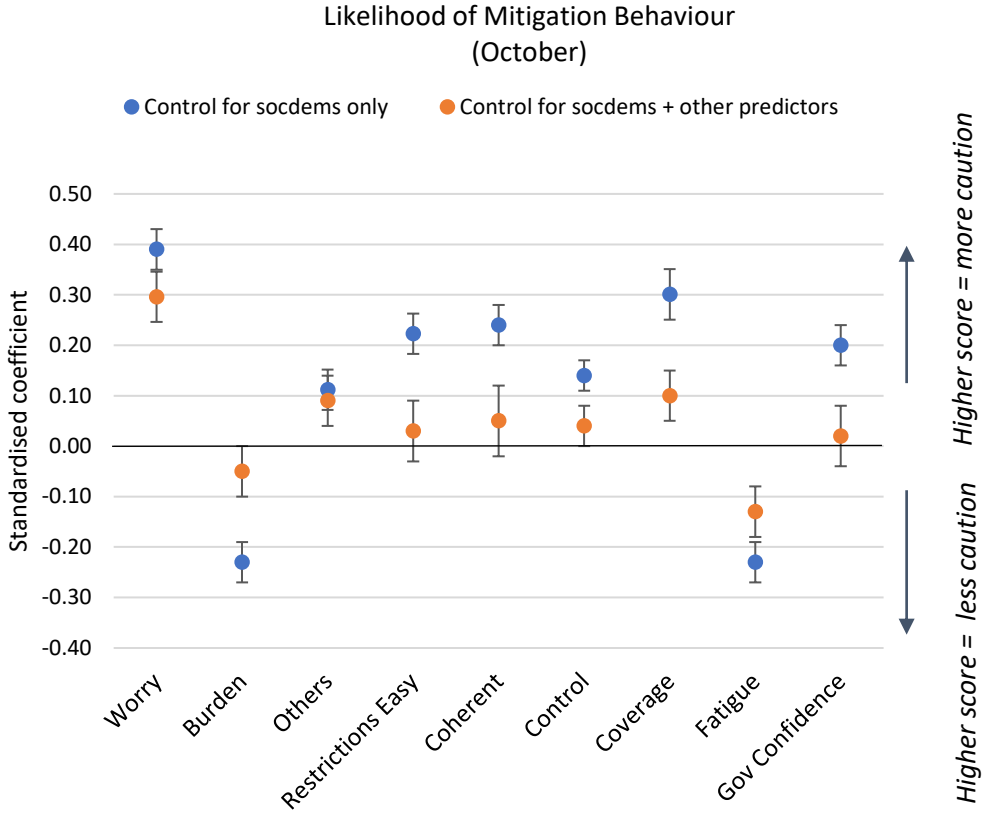


The left chart shows that overall social activity, measured by a combination of places visited and people met, has remained stable since the Summer. The right chart reveals that approximately 1-in-5 people engage in particularly high levels of social activity ('socialisers'), and 1-in-10 people do so while taking very few or no precautions, such as maintaining distance, (non-mitigating socialisers).

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Psychological Drivers

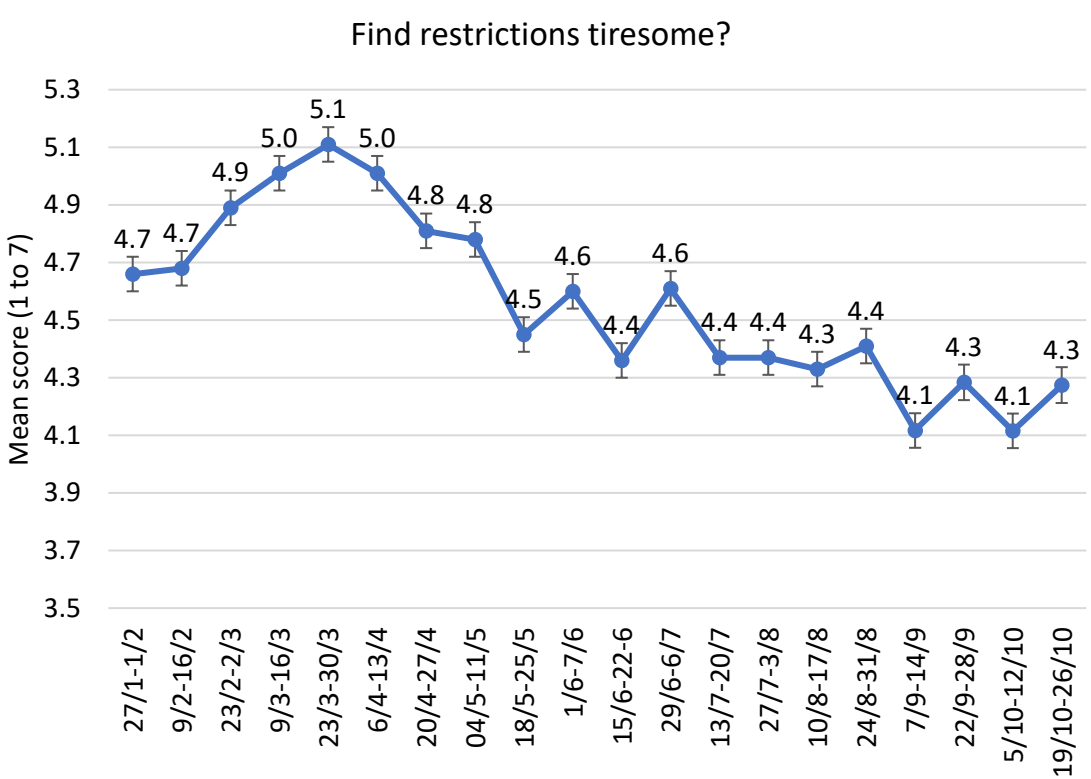


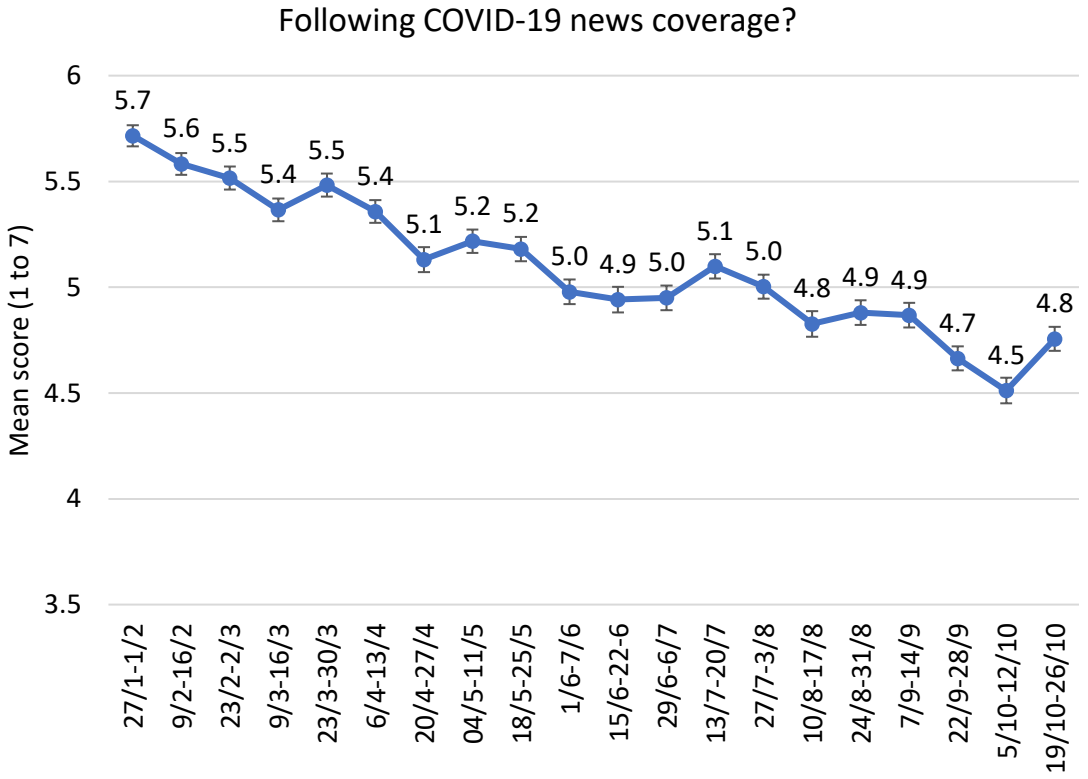


The charts show coefficients from statistical models that use psychological variables to predict being a socialiser (left) and taking mitigative measures (right) while controlling for socio-demographic characteristics. The further the dot is from zero, the stronger the relationship between the variable and the outcome. Being less worried about COVID-19, perceiving restrictions not to be coherent and higher fatigue with restrictions predict being a socialiser, once all other variables are accounted for. Worry, lower fatigue with restrictions and paying closer attention to news coverage predict mitigation behaviour.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Psychological Drivers of Behaviour

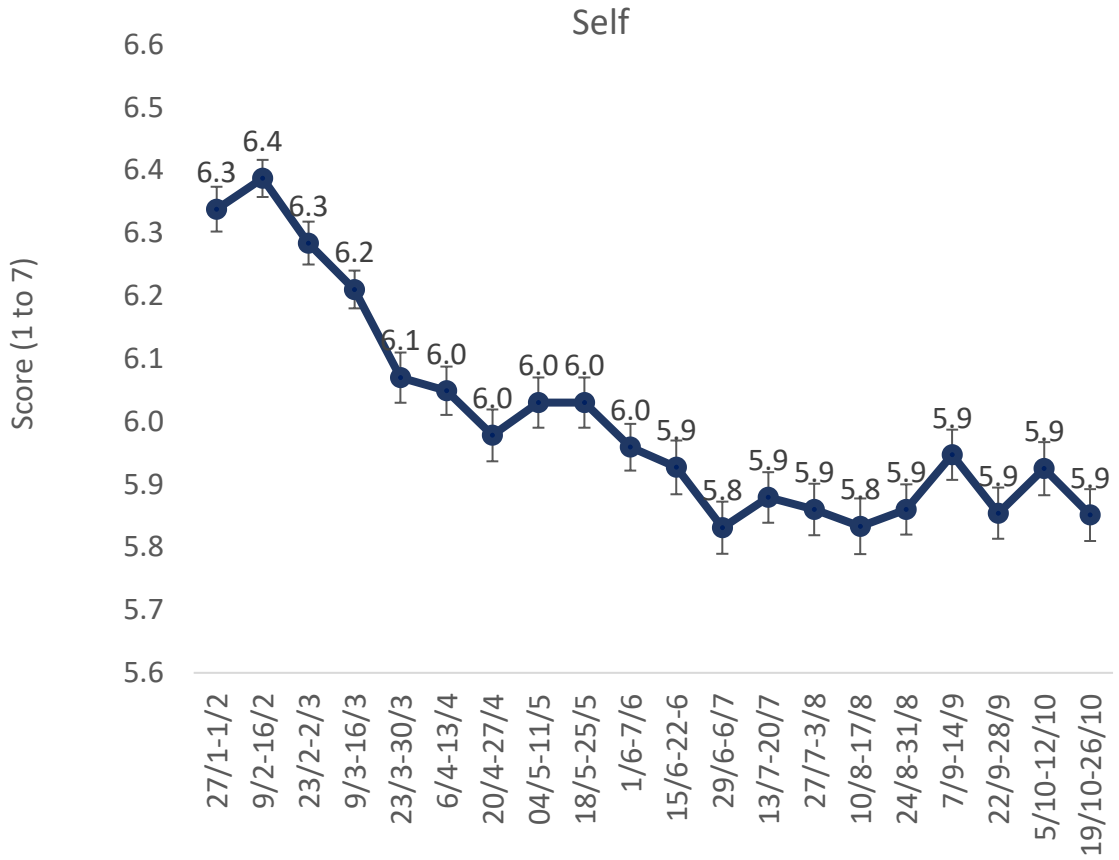


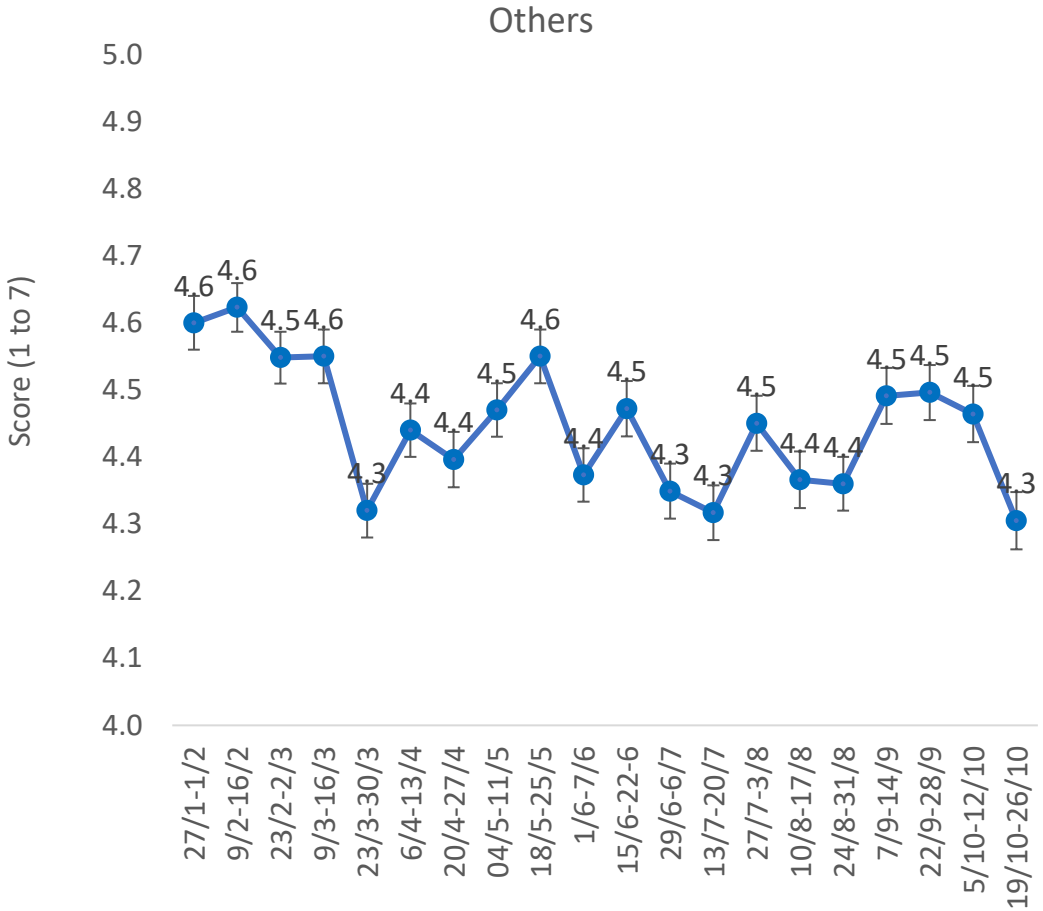


The left chart shows that fatigue with restrictions has been relatively stable since September. Attention to news coverage had been falling since early in the year but has increased significantly in late October, returning to late-August levels.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Self-Reported Compliance

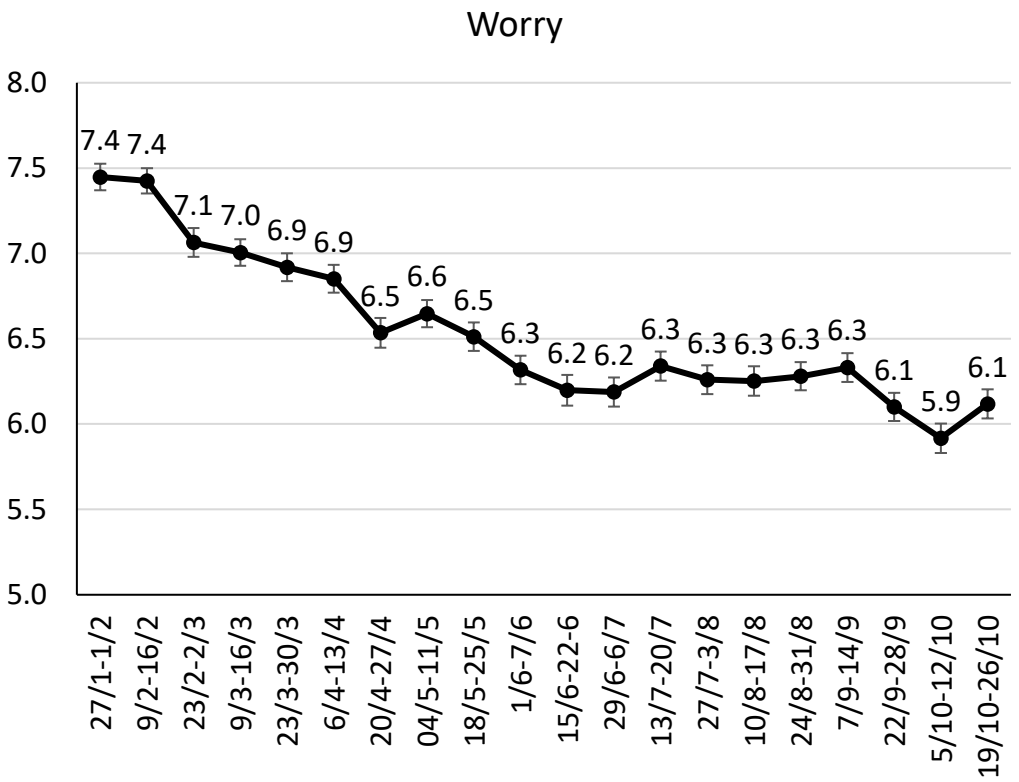


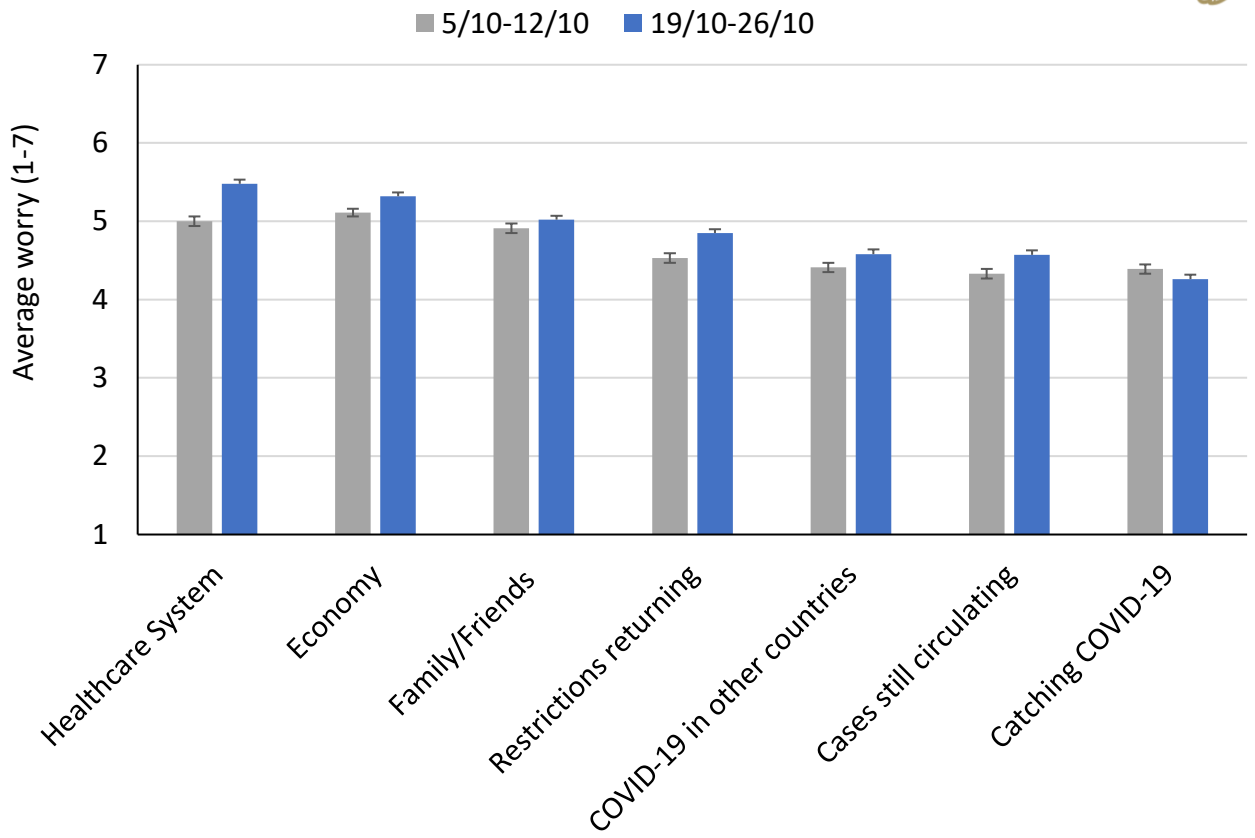


Self-reported compliance with public health guidelines remains relatively stable but perceptions that others are following the guidelines have dropped significantly in late October compared to levels in September and early October.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Worry

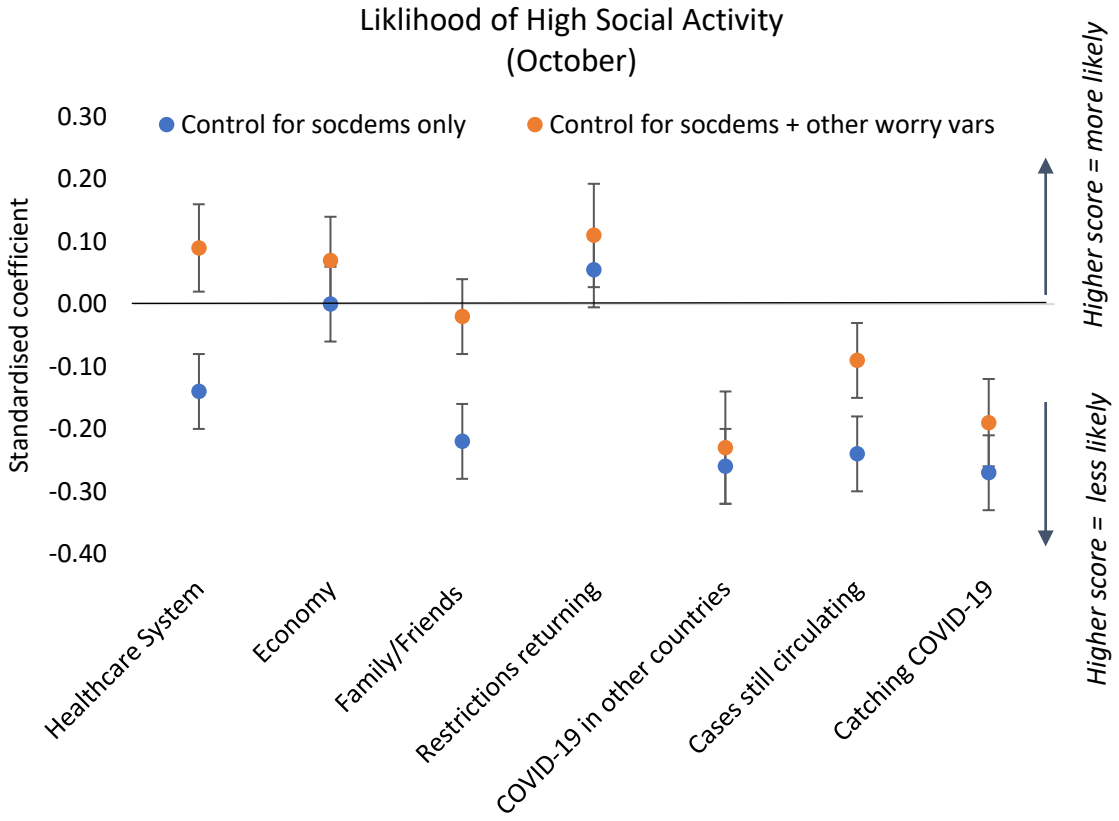


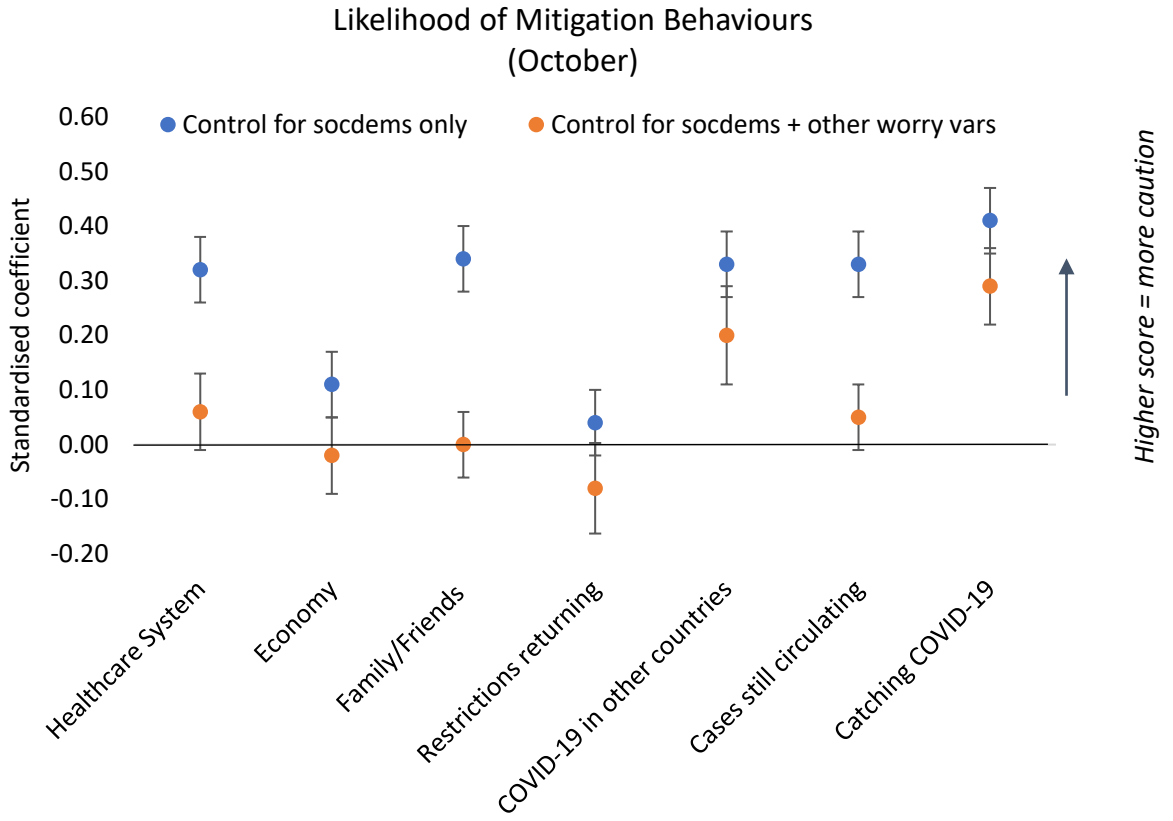


The chart on the left shows the average level of worry since the start of SAM. It has declined since January, but there was a marginally significant rise at the end of October. The chart on the right shows the average level of different aspects of worry related to COVID-19. Since early October, there has been a significant increase in worry about the healthcare system, the economy, restrictions being reinstated and returning to normal activity while COVID-19 is circulating.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Worry and Behaviour

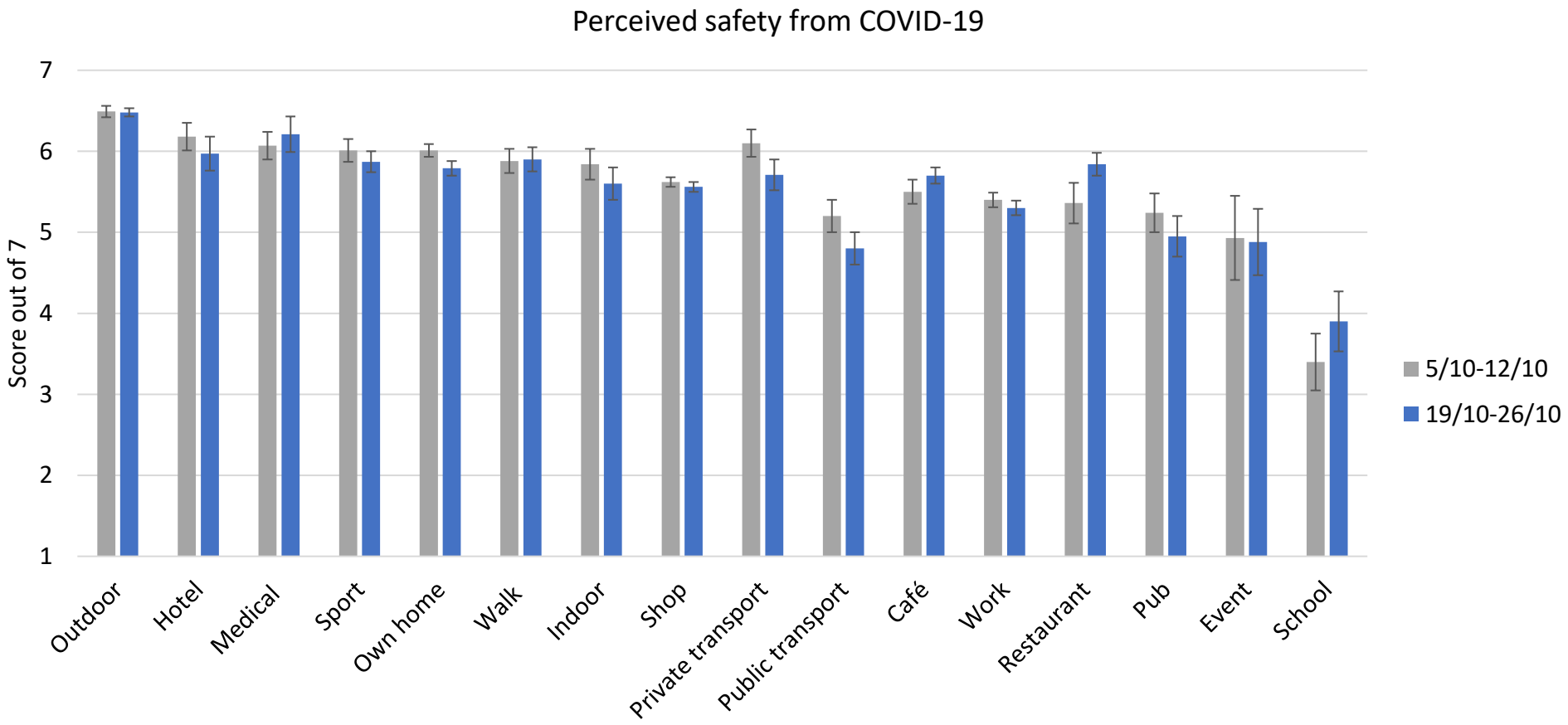




The charts show coefficients from statistical models of behaviour, predicting high social activity and caution, from the different aspects of worry. While most are linked to behaviour when analysed independently, only worry about catching COVID, returning to normal with COVID circulating and COVID in other countries are linked to being less likely to engage in high levels of social activity when taken together. Only worry about catching COVID and COVID in other countries is linked to taking more precautions

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

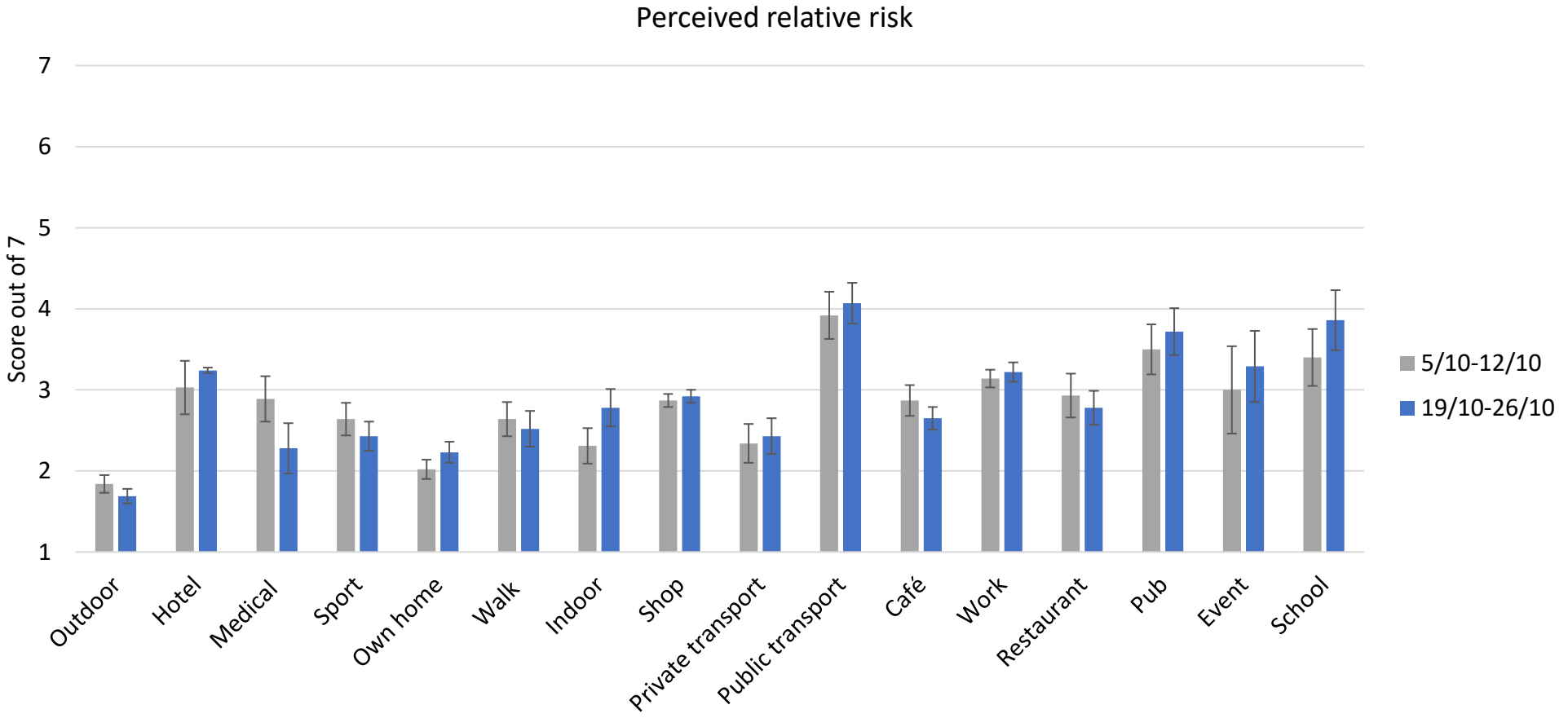
Perceived safety by location



These charts show how safe people felt at various locations in terms of the likelihood that they could catch COVID-19. There have been small but non-significant declines in perceived safety in most locations since early October, except for cafes, restaurants and schools.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

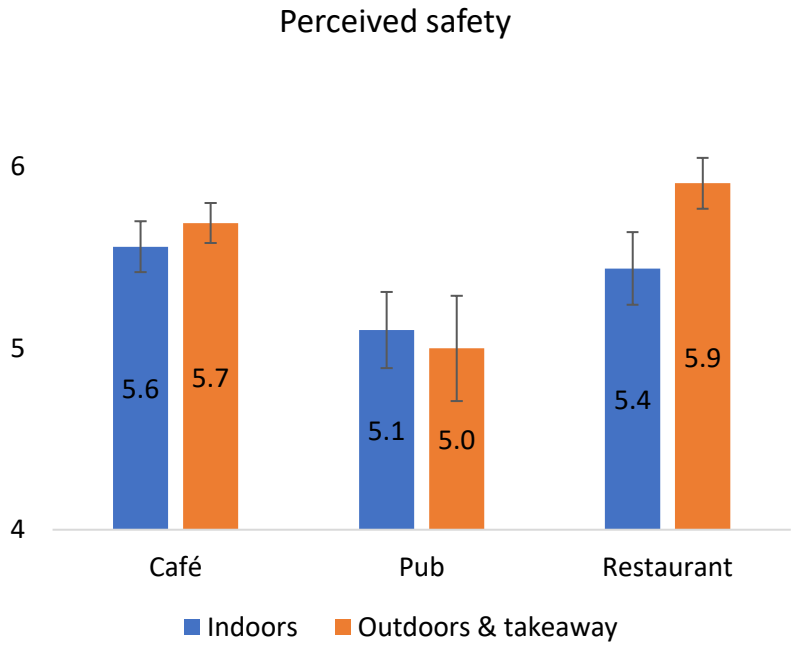
Perceived risk by location

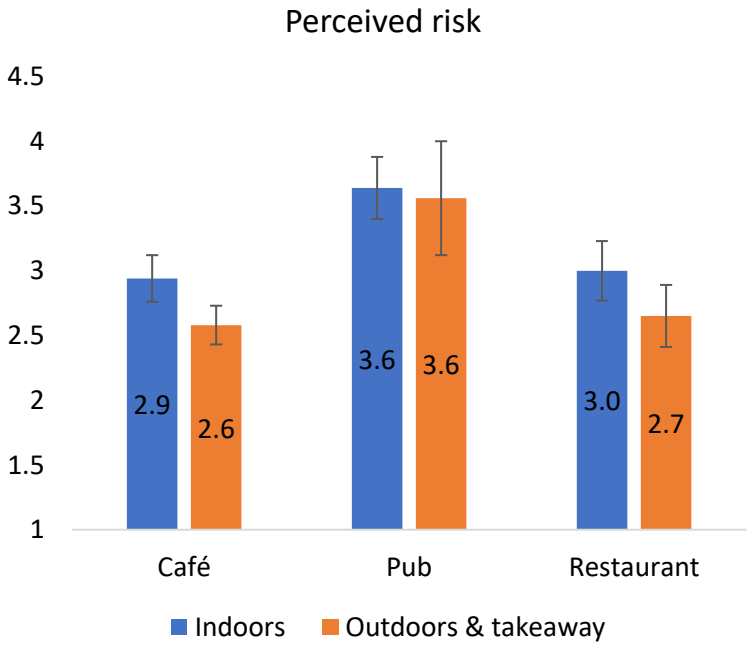


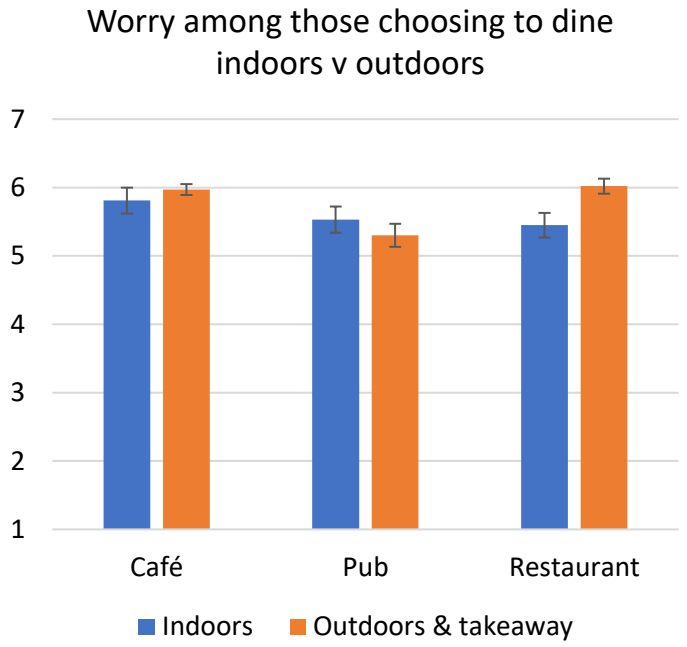
The chart shows people's perceptions of risk for various locations compared with other places they go. Public transport is perceived as the riskiest location and there was little difference across all locations since early October.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Perceived Safety & Risk - Hospitality



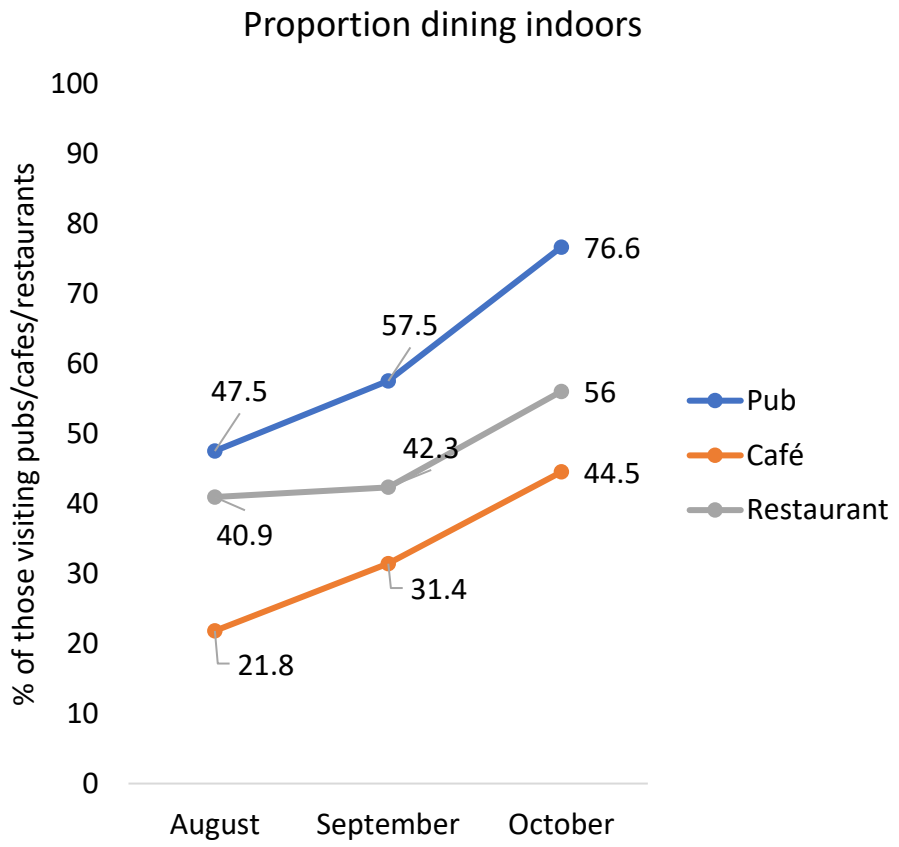


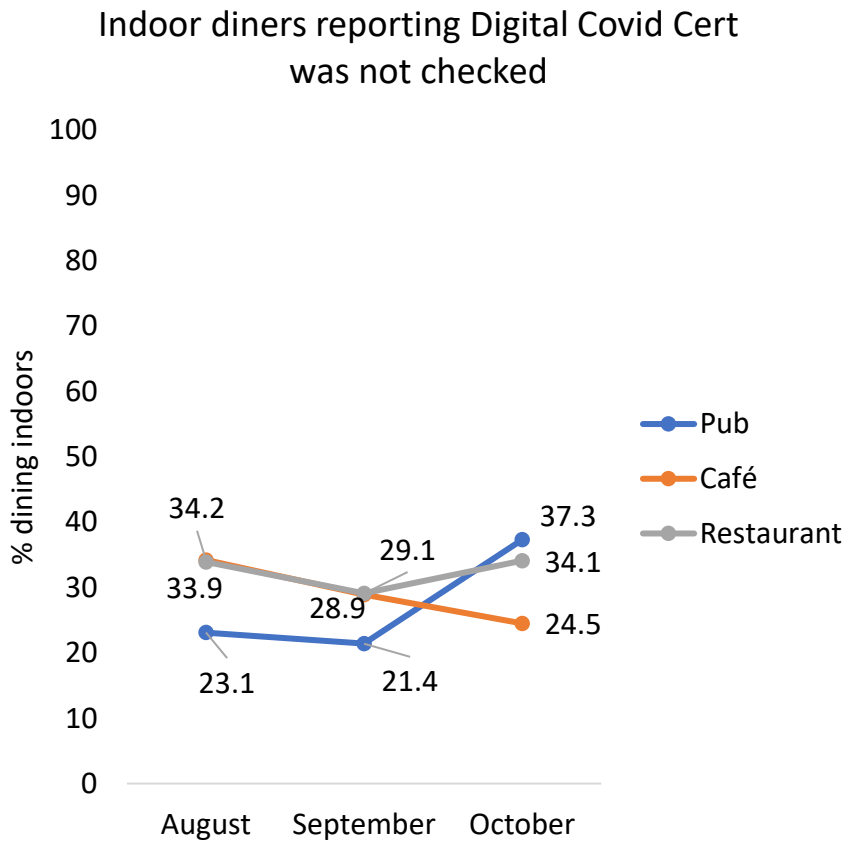


There is little difference in perceived safety and risk between dining indoors and outdoors and cafés, pubs and restaurants, and in worry among those choosing to dine indoors or outdoors. Indoor dining is perceived as safer and less risky than public transport (which is rated averages of 4.8 and 4.1 out of 7 respectively; slides 18 and 19).

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Hospitality – Digital Covid Certs



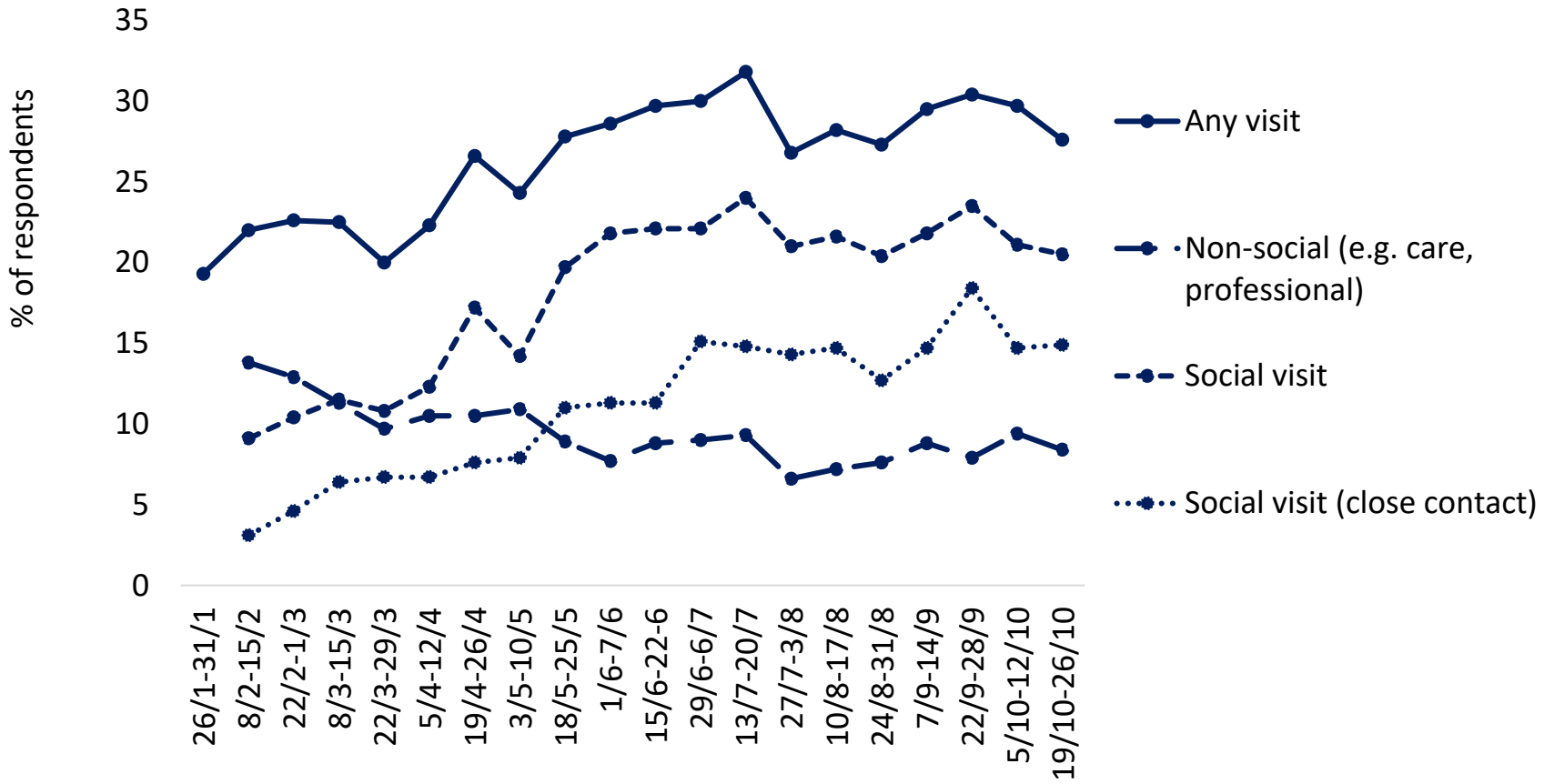


The proportion of people visiting hospitality venues and dining indoors continues to rise, with over 3-in-4 who visit pubs now sitting indoors. There was a sharp increase in October in the share of those sitting indoors in pubs reporting that their Digital Covid Cert was not checked, to over 1-in-3 visits.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Home Visits

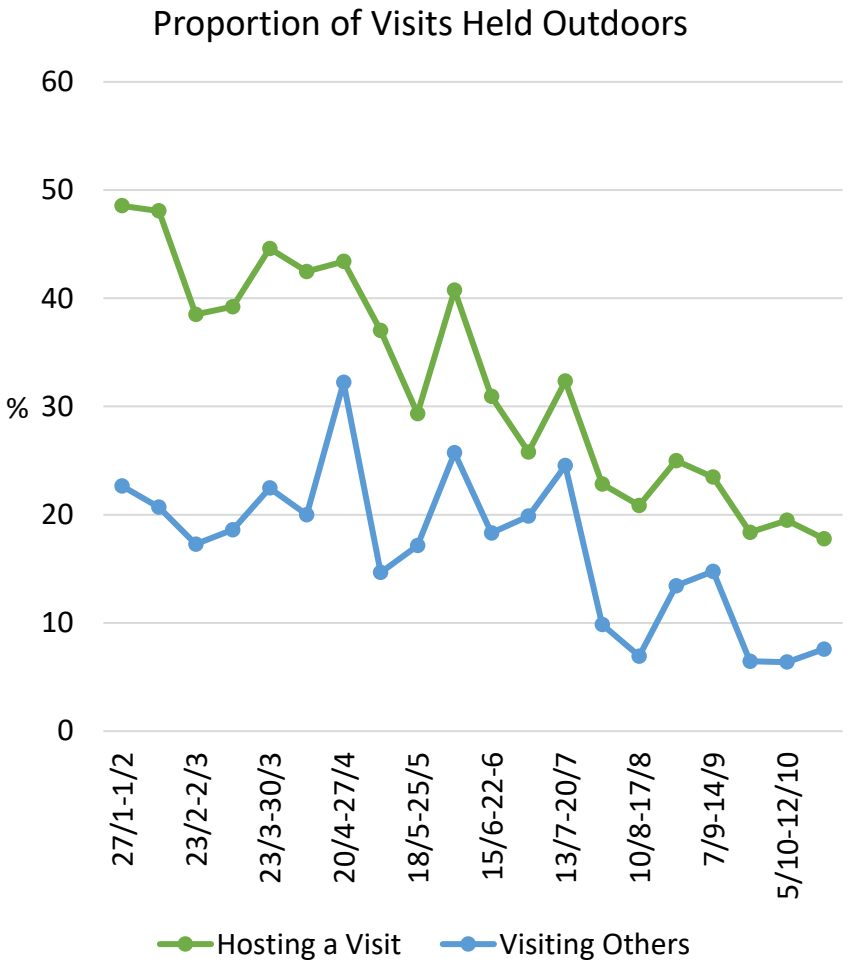
Proportion who had visitors or visited another household (previous day)

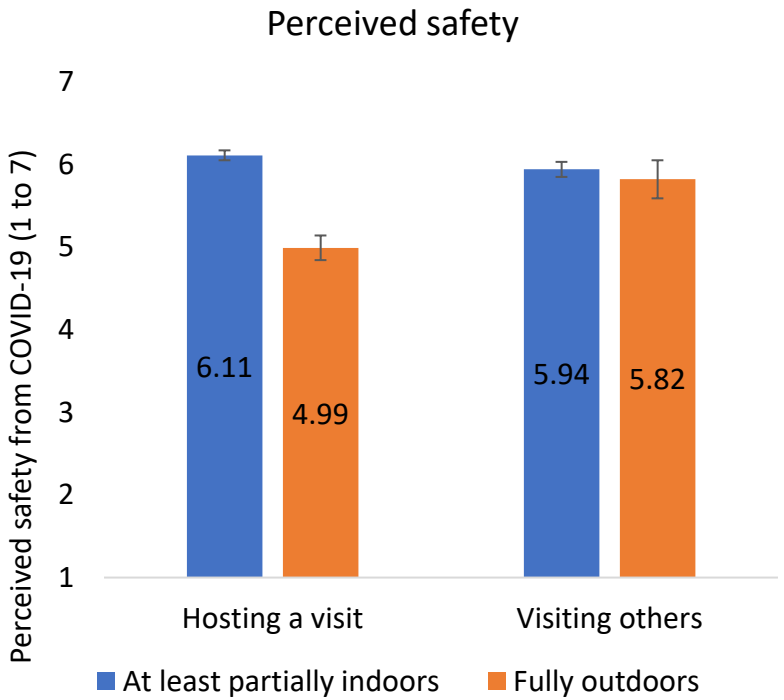


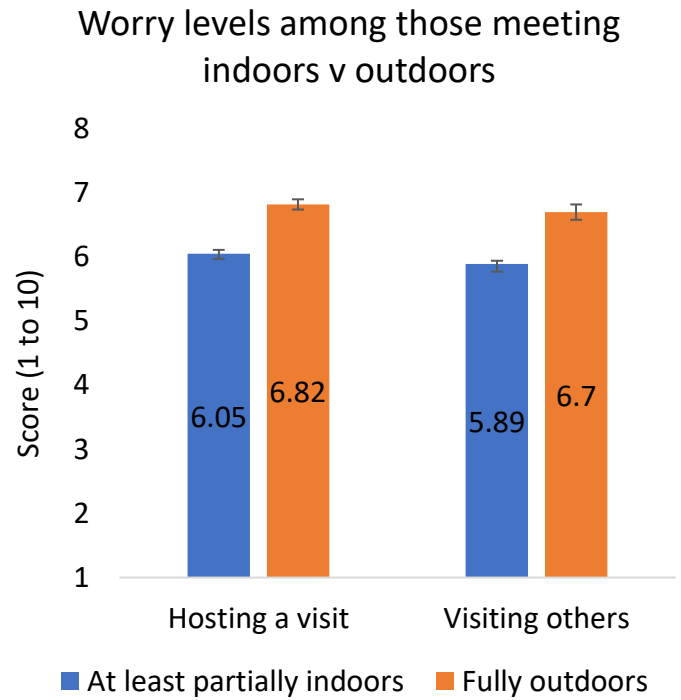
The frequency of home visits remains relatively stable.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Perceived Safety & Risk – Home Visits



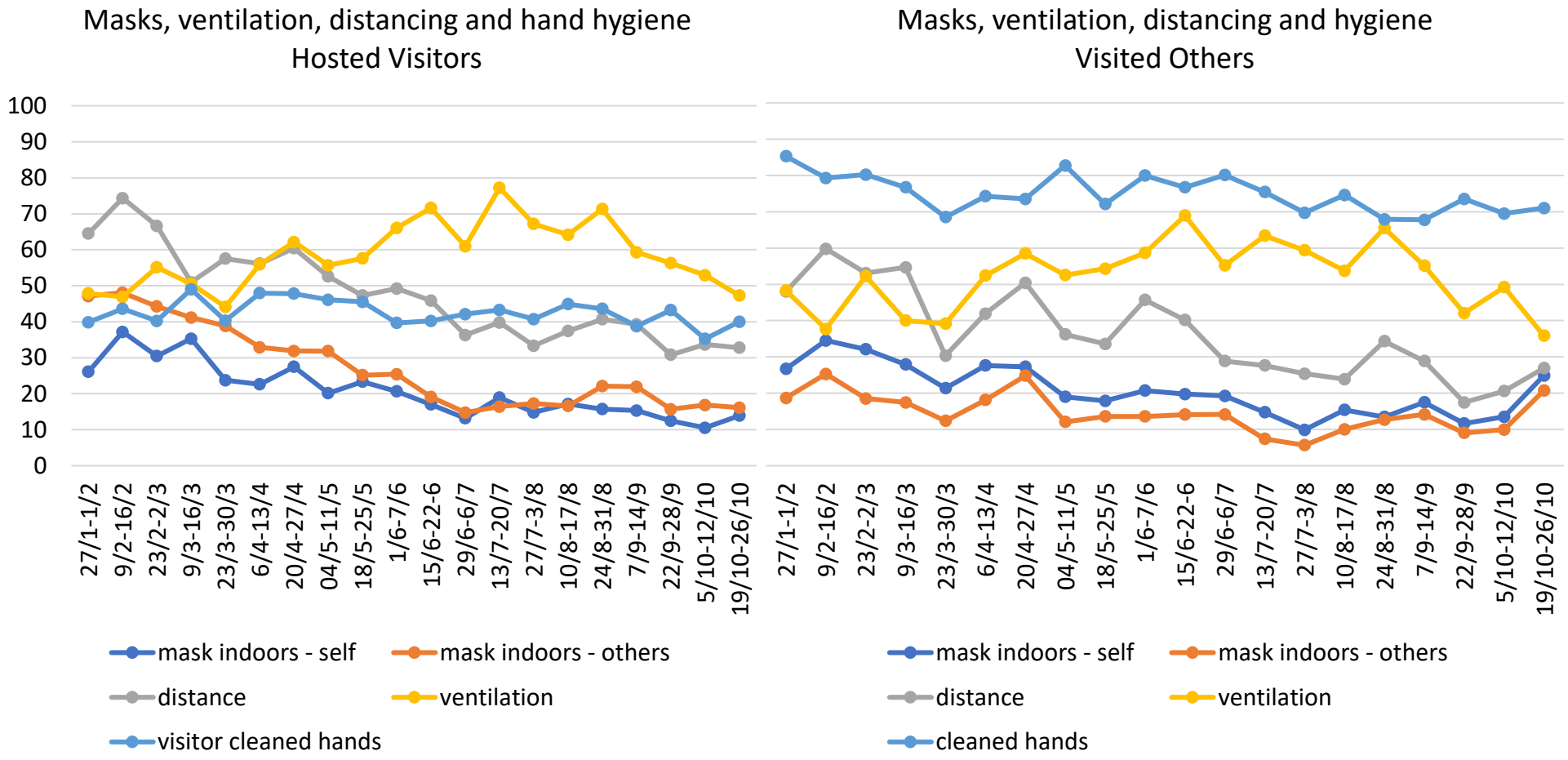




The proportion of household visits held outdoors continued to fall. Those who still meet others outdoors tend to feel less safe during visits and are more worried in general about COVID-19.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

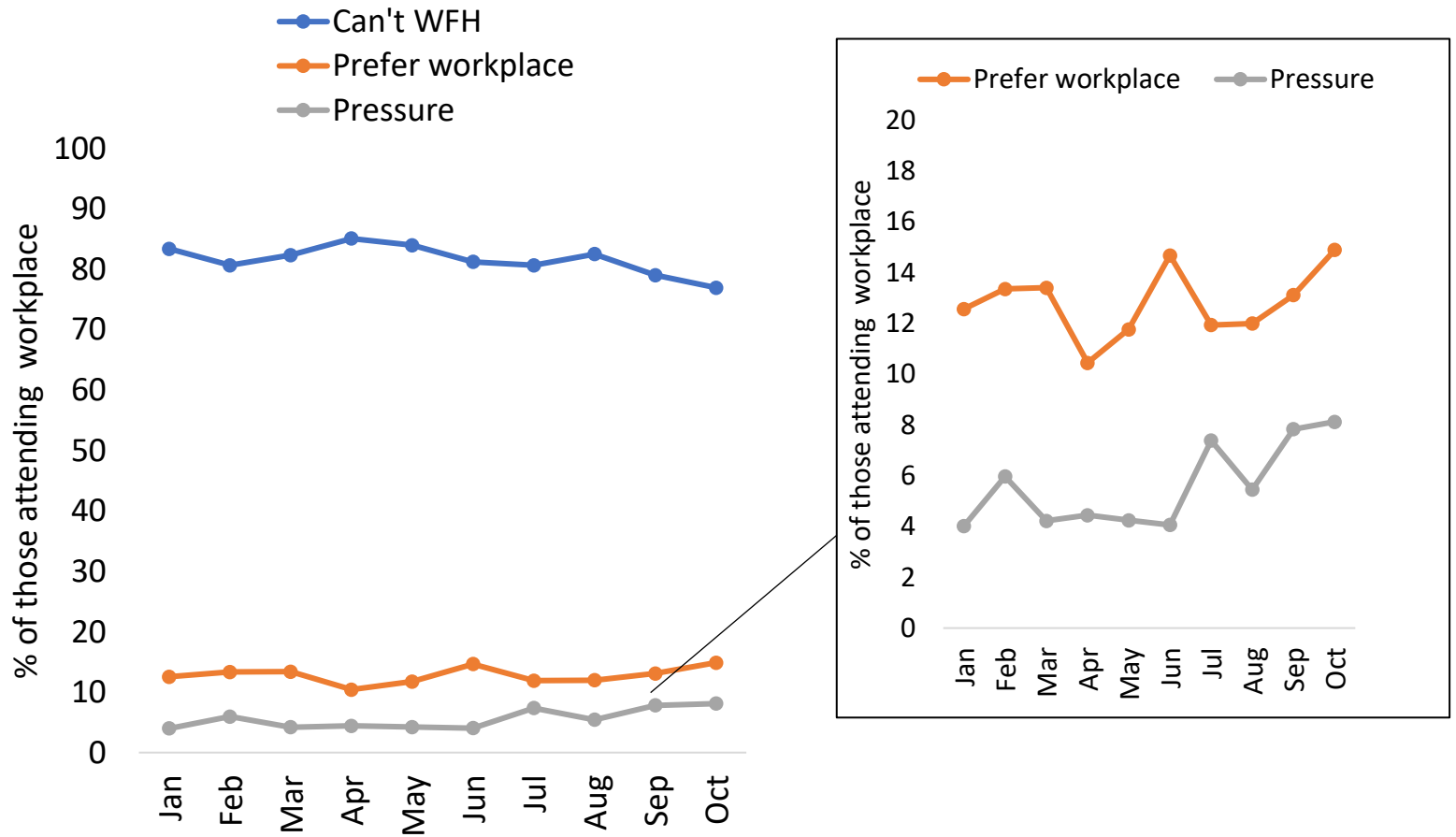
Risk Mitigation – Home Visits



The proportion of households visited that are well-ventilated has fallen sharply since August. Hand-hygiene remains the most common precaution taken during visits to others. Rates of mask-wearing and distancing when visiting others are low but seem to be increasing again.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

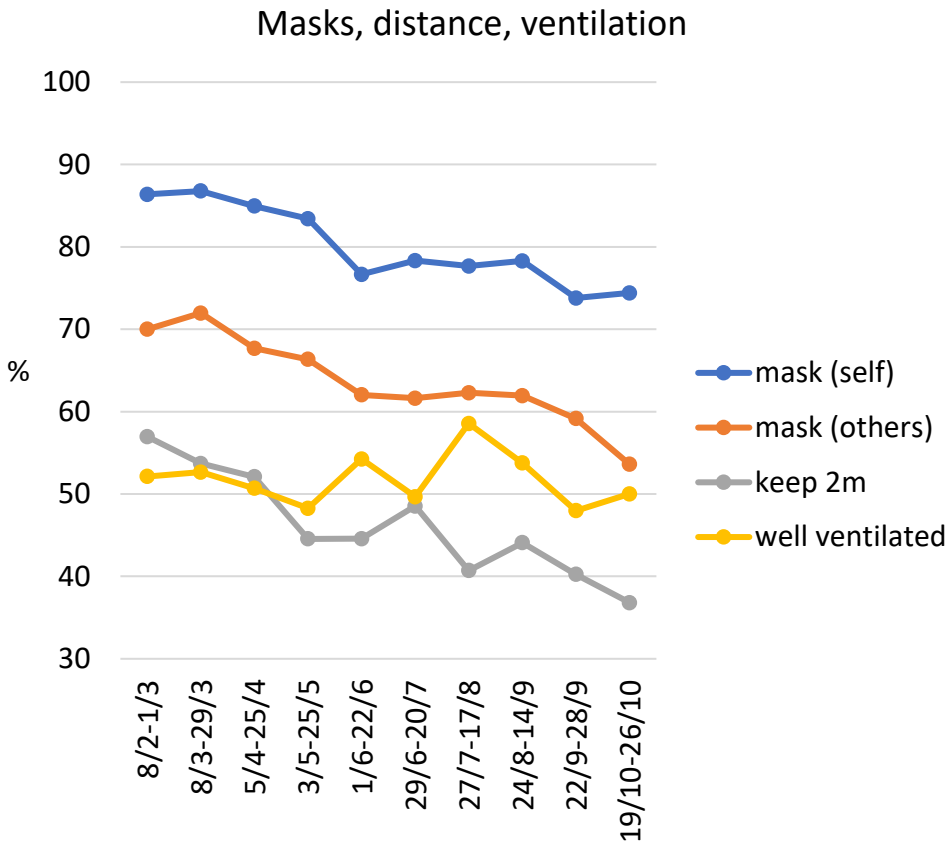
Attendance at Work

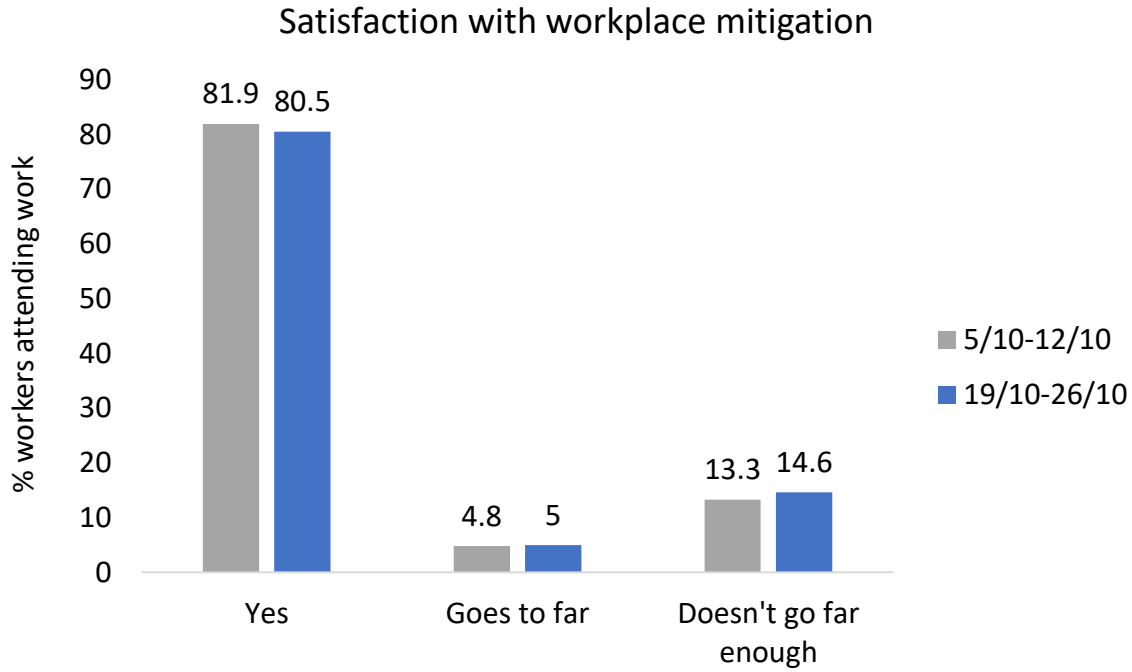


A small but rising share of those attending work report that they could work from home but prefer their workplace or feel pressured to attend.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Workplace - Mitigation

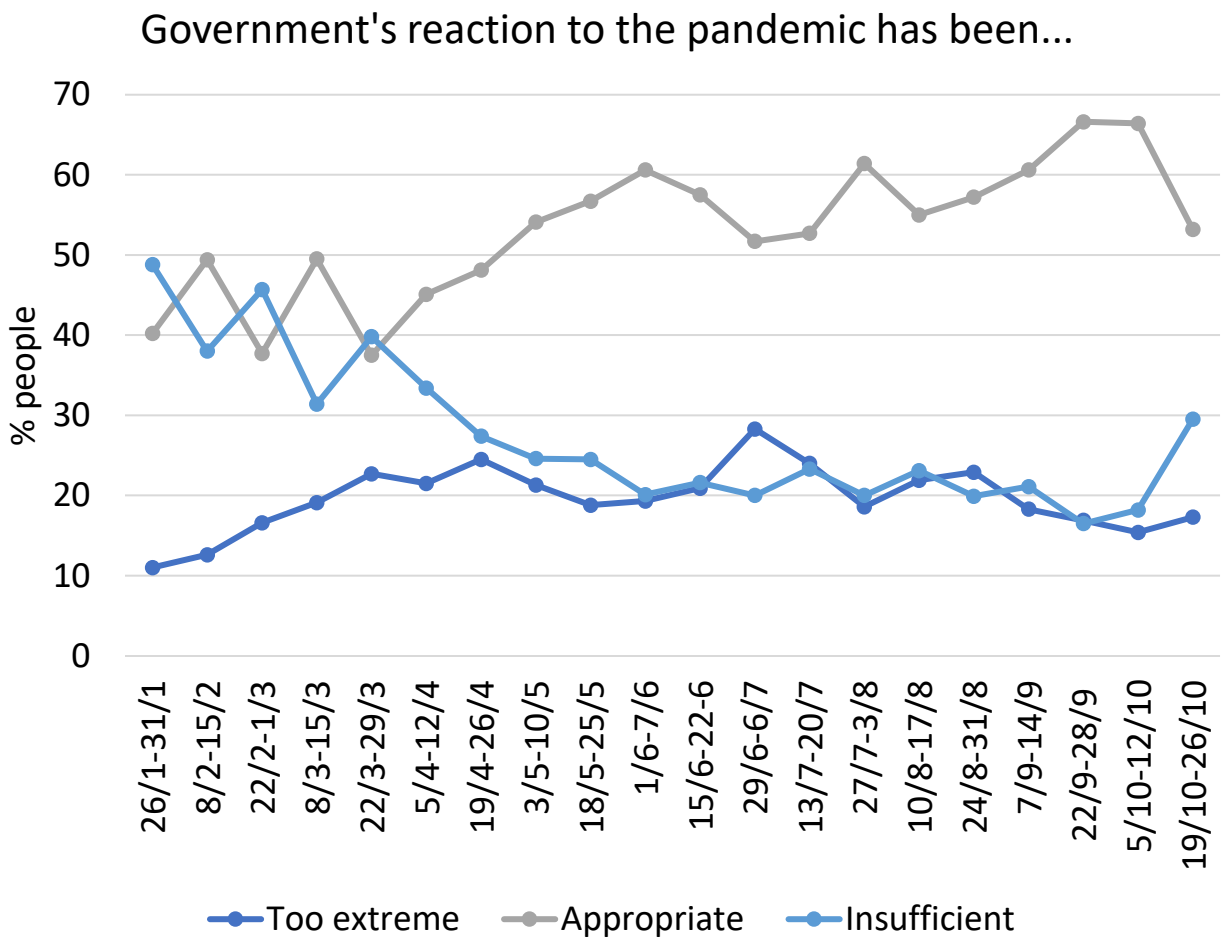




Precautions taken in workplaces continue to fall, but most workers are satisfied with the measures their workplace takes. However, 1-in-7 workers attending work feels their workplace does not have sufficient mitigation measures in place.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

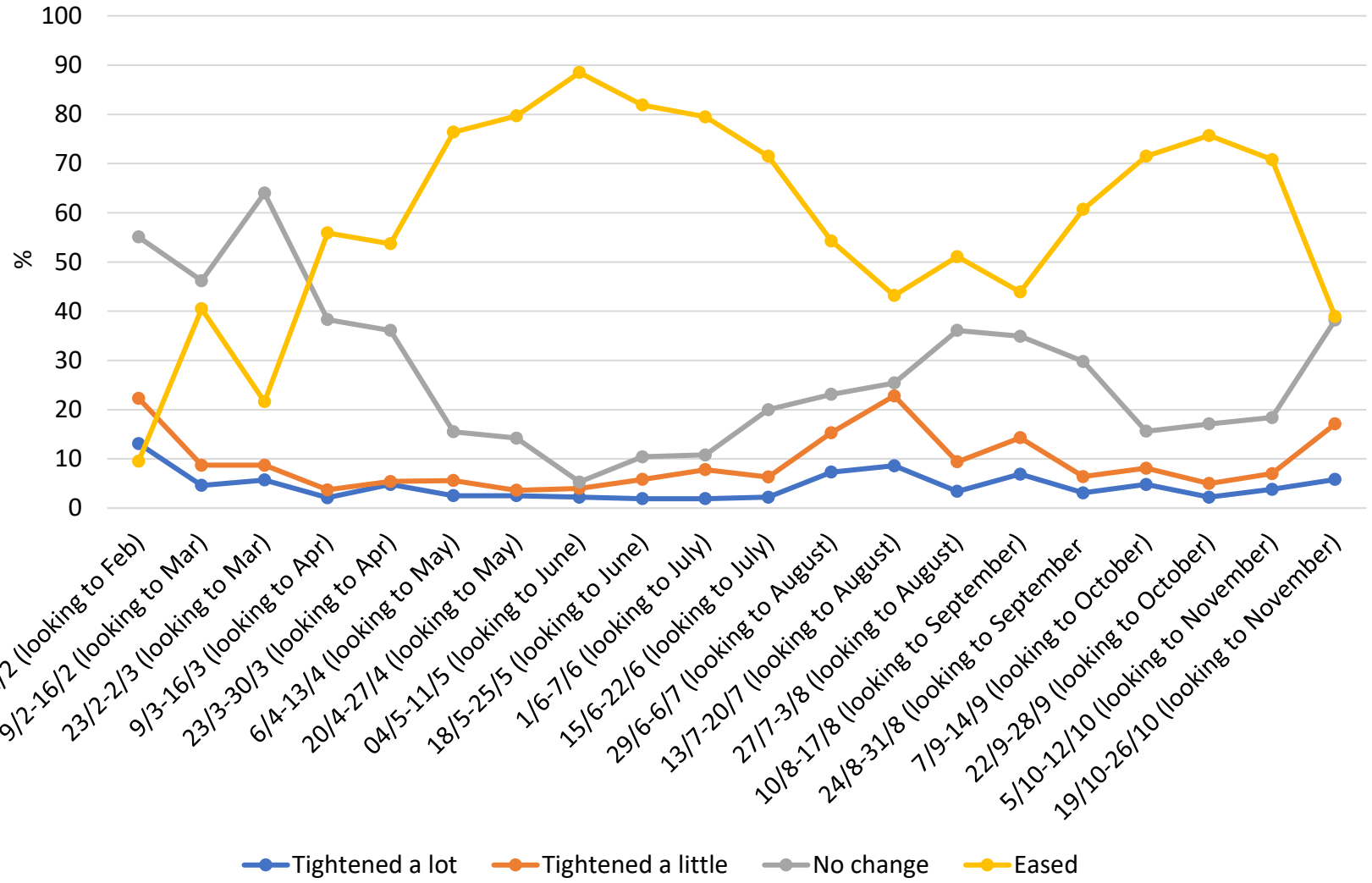
Government Response to the Pandemic



The proportion of people believing the response to the pandemic has been insufficient spiked in the last wave of SAM, to its highest level since mid-April. There was a corresponding drop in the proportion of people judging the response to the appropriate.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

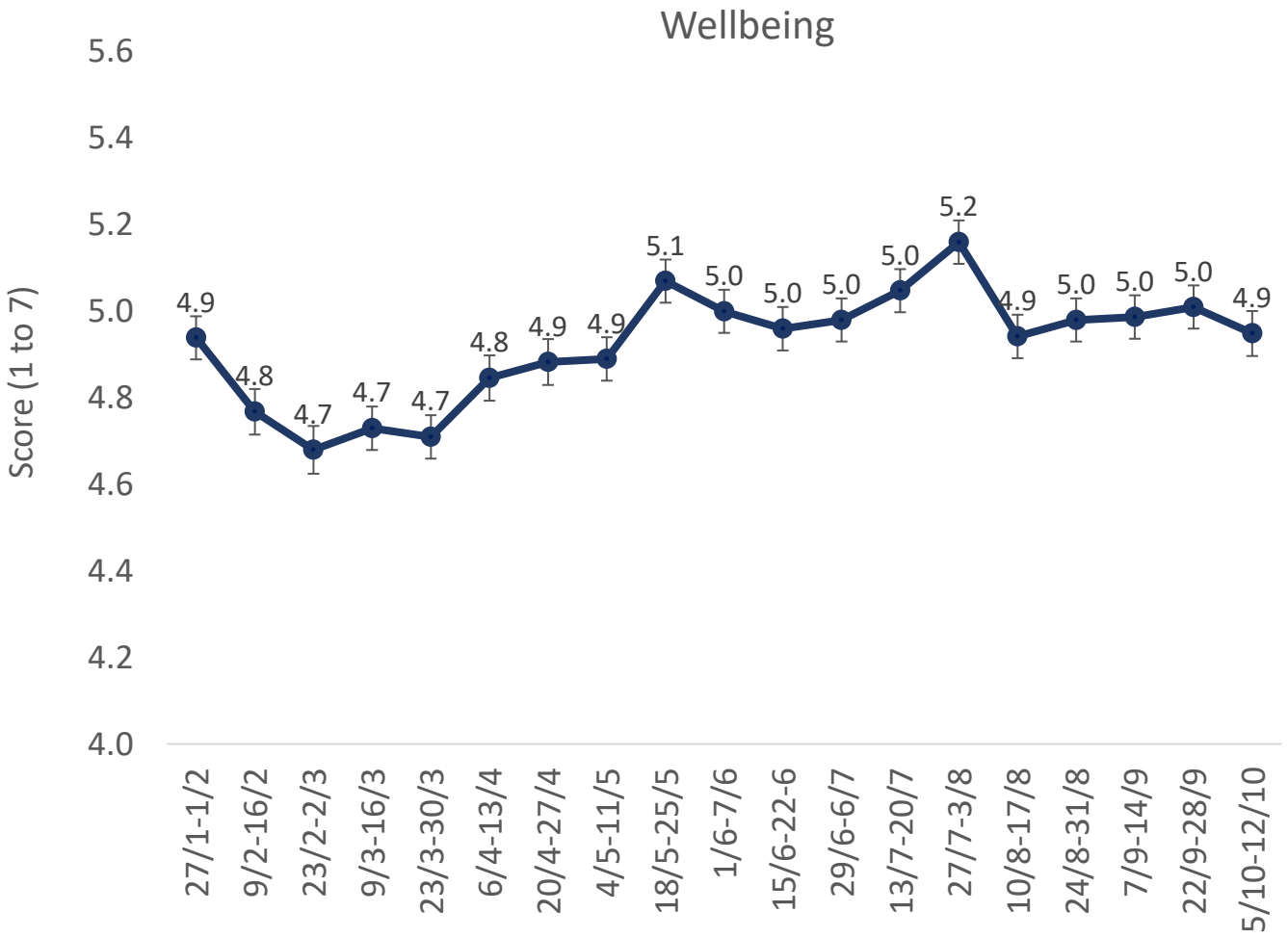
Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



The number of people expecting further easing of restrictions in November dropped sharply, with a rise in those who expect no change and a smaller rise in the number who expect some tightening of restrictions (up to almost 1-in-5).

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

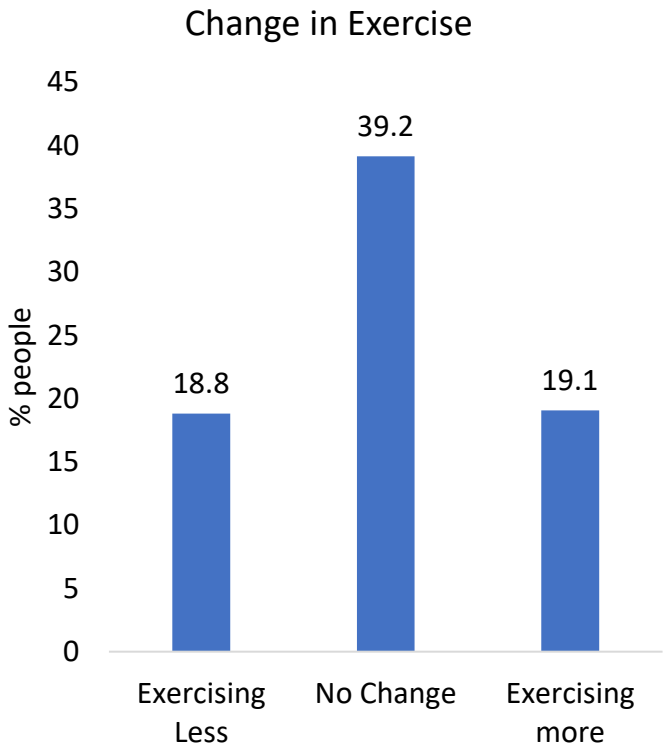
Wellbeing

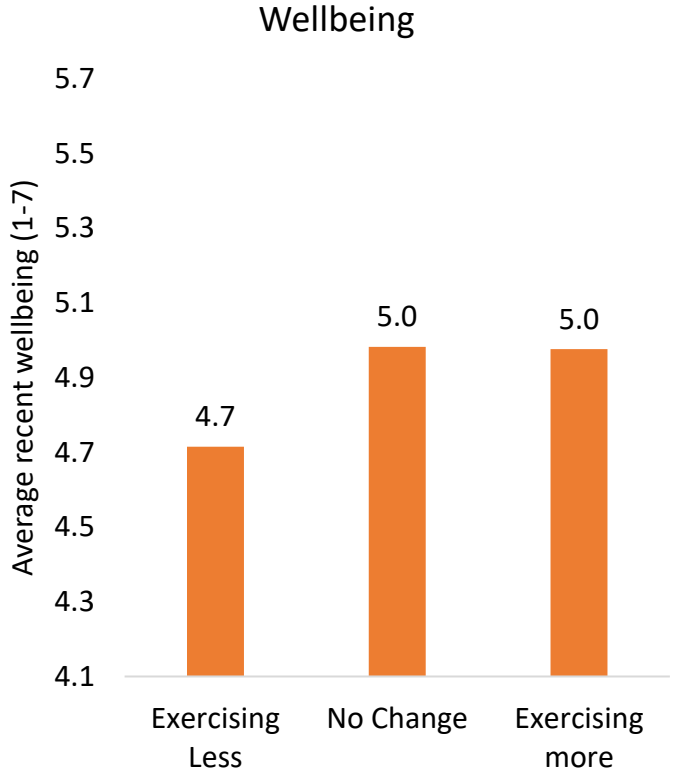


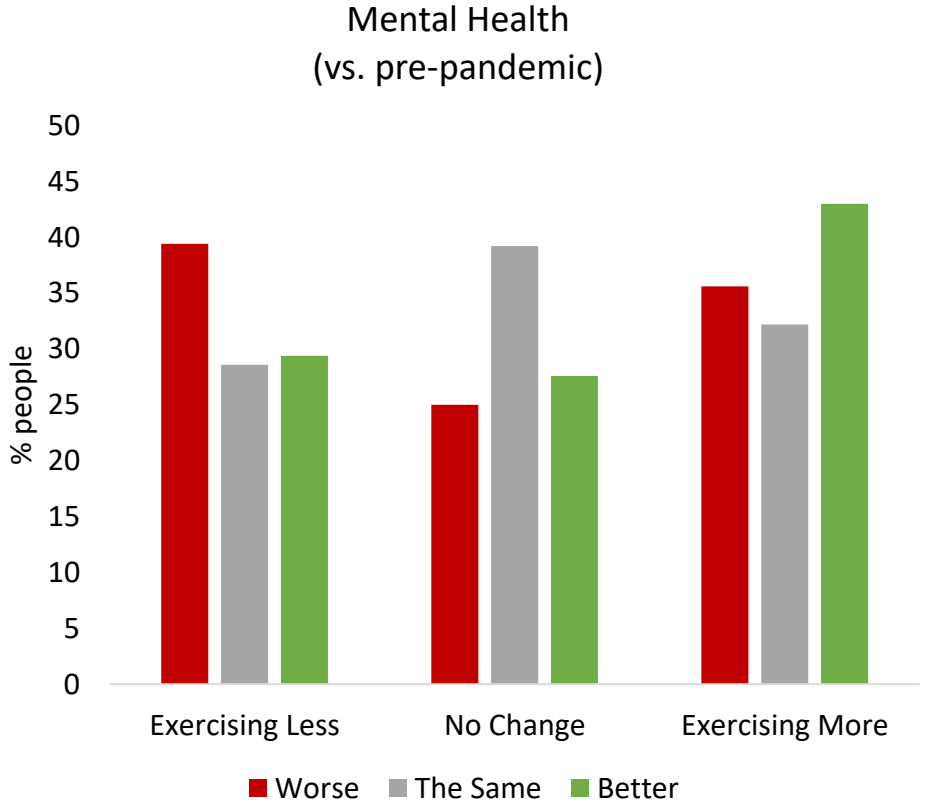
Wellbeing has been stable over the past 2-3 months.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Exercise and Wellbeing



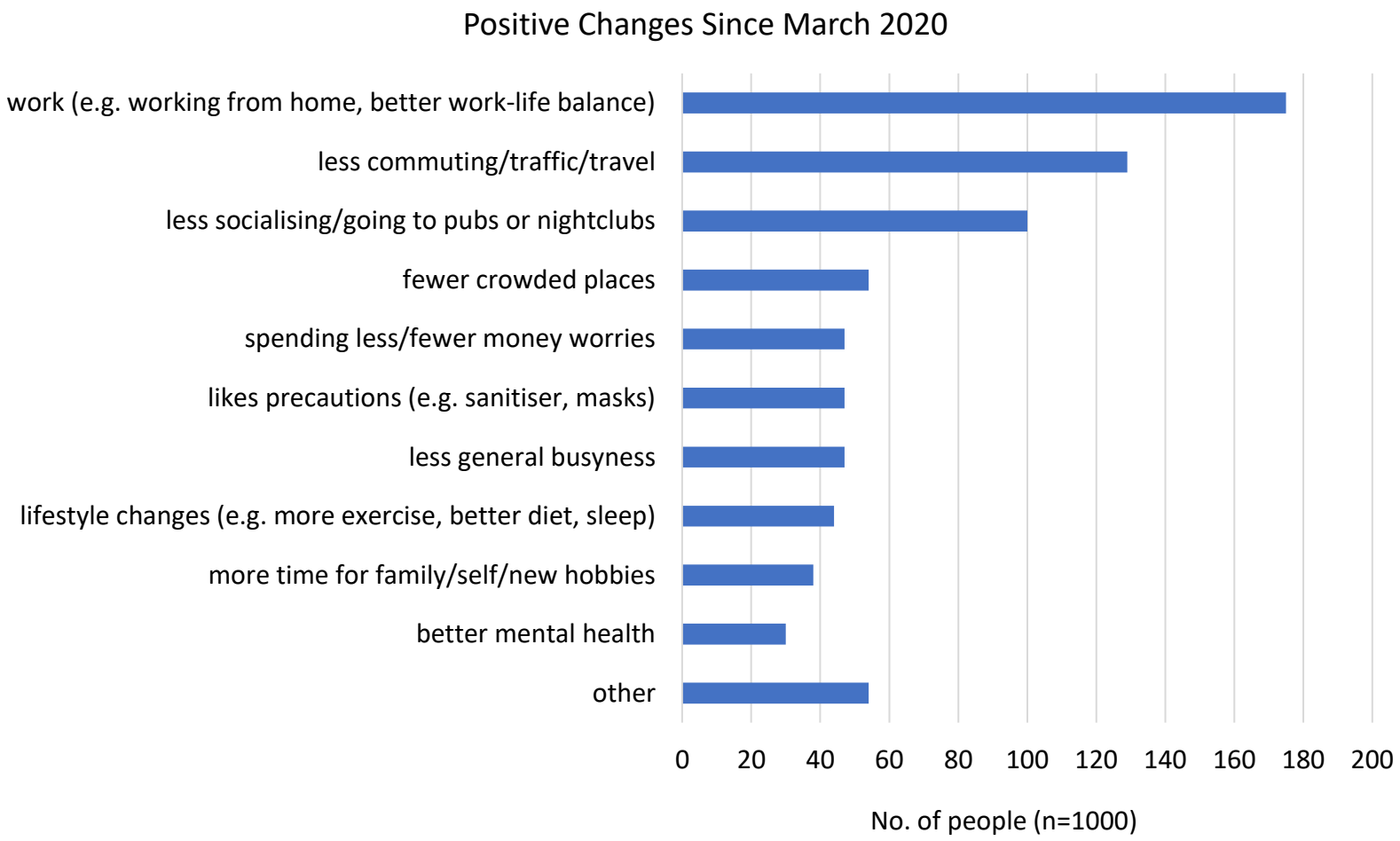




The left chart shows that an approximately equal proportion of people are exercising more now than they were before the pandemic as are exercising less. Exercising less is associated with worse recent wellbeing (middle chart), and with worse self-reported mental health compared to before the pandemic (right). These effects are significant also in statistical models that control for socio-demographic characteristics.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Positive Changes

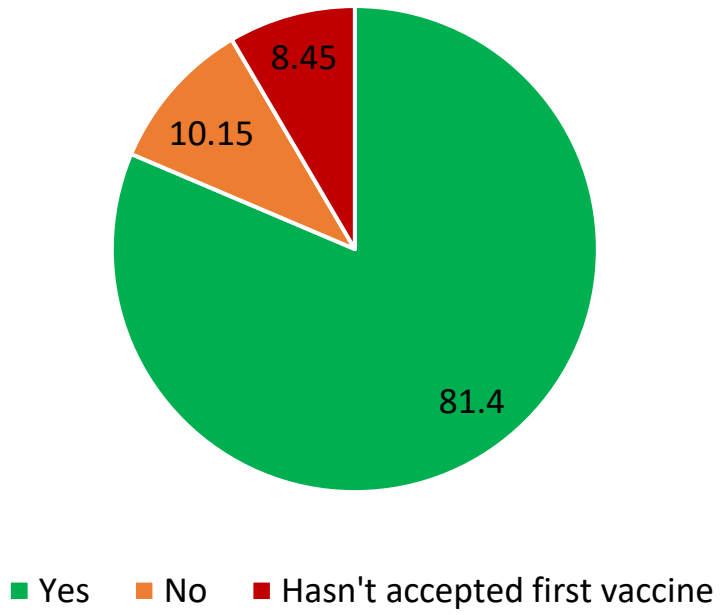


Almost half of the sample (49.3%) reported not wanting life to go back to how it was before the pandemic. They were asked an open text question about the kinds of things they did not want to return to. Responses indicate some positive changes in their lives since the onset of the pandemic. Changes to work patterns, commuting and reduced pressure to socialise are the most common positive changes.

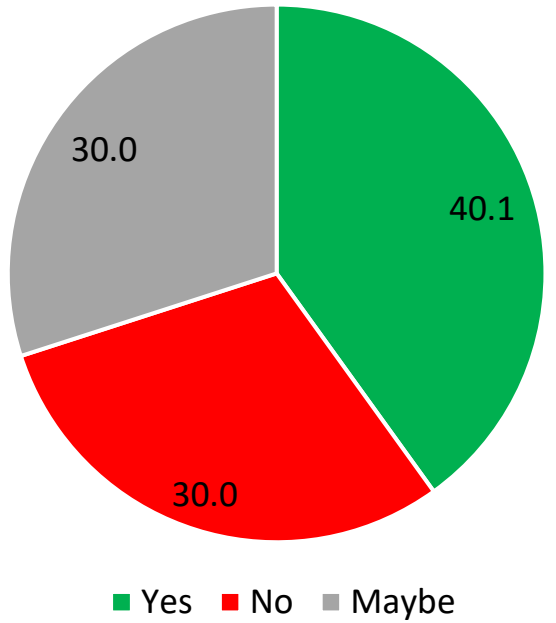
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Vaccine Intentions

Would you accept a booster?



Would you let your child under 12 get vaccinated?

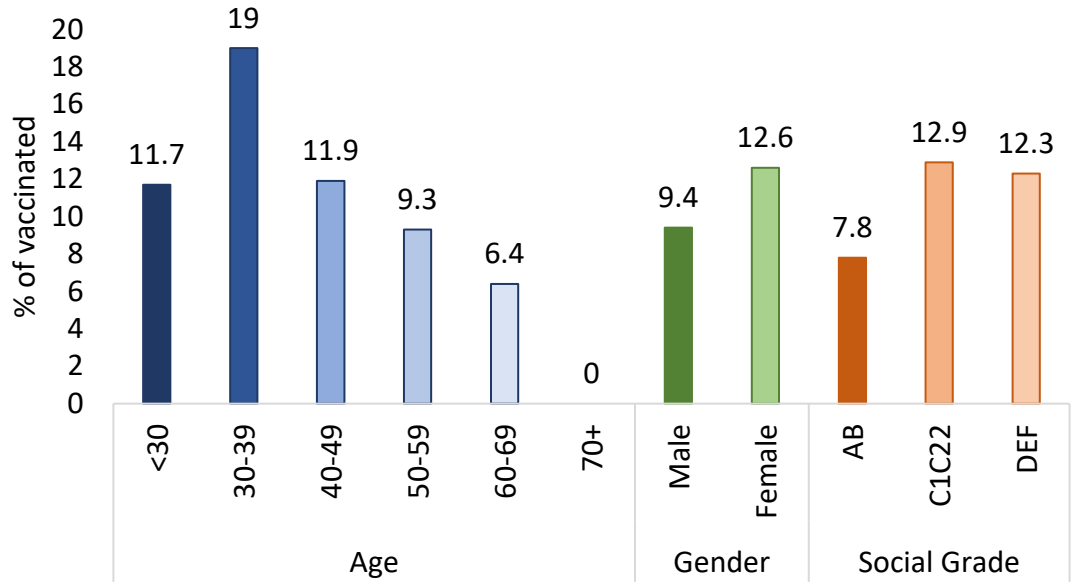


Most people say they would accept a vaccine booster if offered one, but a smaller proportion than those who accepted the first vaccine. Parents are divided on whether to allow their children under 12 to be vaccinated if it was recommended. The largest group report that they would, and the remainder are split between those would wouldn't and those who might.

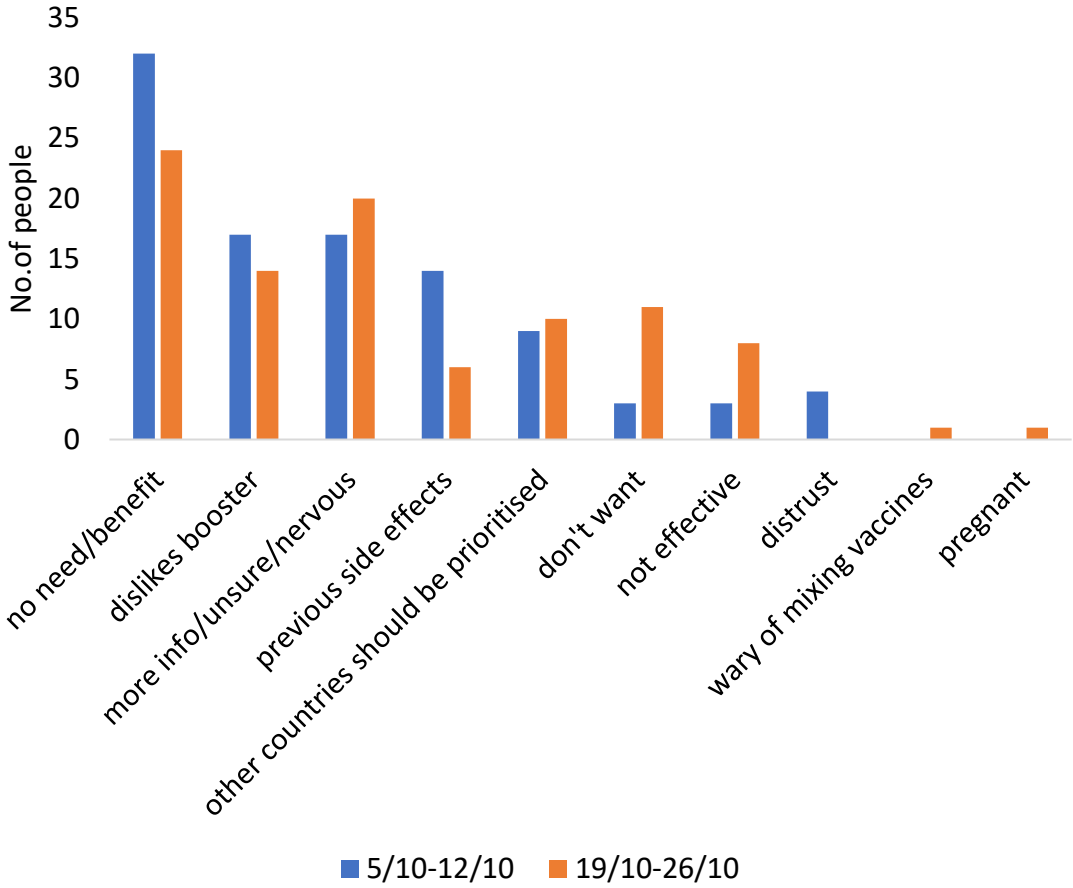
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Boosters by Age & Reasons for Refusing

Socio-Demographic Differences in Booster Refusal (if vaccinated)



Reasons for booster refusal (Among those fully vaccinated)

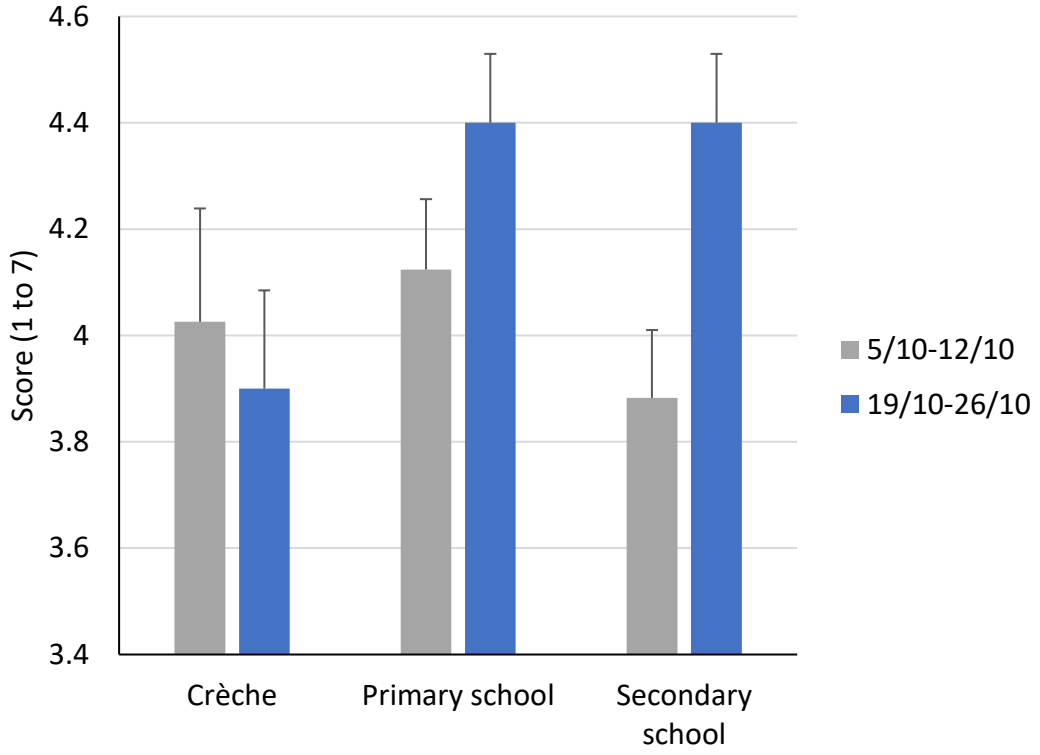


The left chart shows differences between subgroups in intentions to take a booster vaccine if offered (among those vaccinated). Hesitancy is highest among those aged 30-39. No over-70s express hesitancy. The chart on the right shows reasons for hesitancy over the last two waves of SAM. Not seeing a benefit to the booster is the dominant reason for intending to refuse it. A high proportion of the booster-hesitant group have not made up their mind (more info/unsure/nervous).

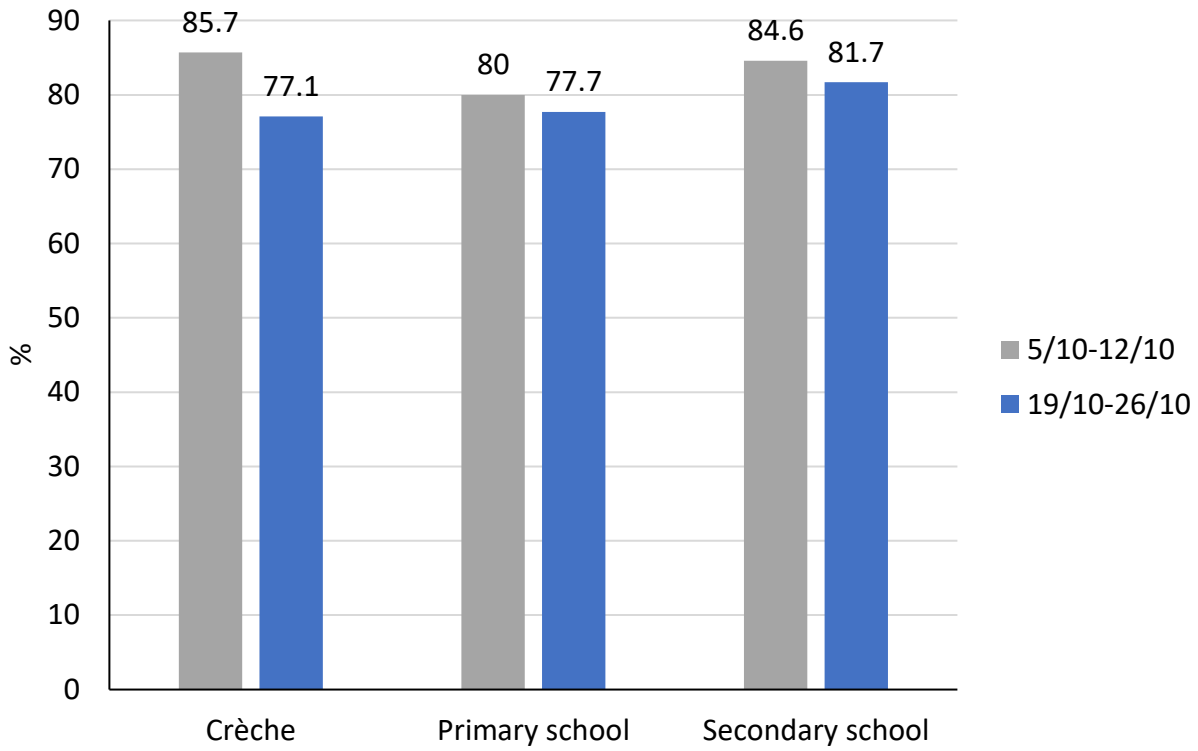
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Risk of COVID-19 for children

How likely do you think it is that your child could catch COVID-19 at...



Are you satisfied with COVID-19 measures in place at your child's...



Parents think there is some likelihood (average 4 out of 7) that their child could catch COVID-19 in crèche or school, but most are satisfied with the mitigation measures in place to protect against it.

Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach