Social Activity Measure Nov 30th-Dec 7th

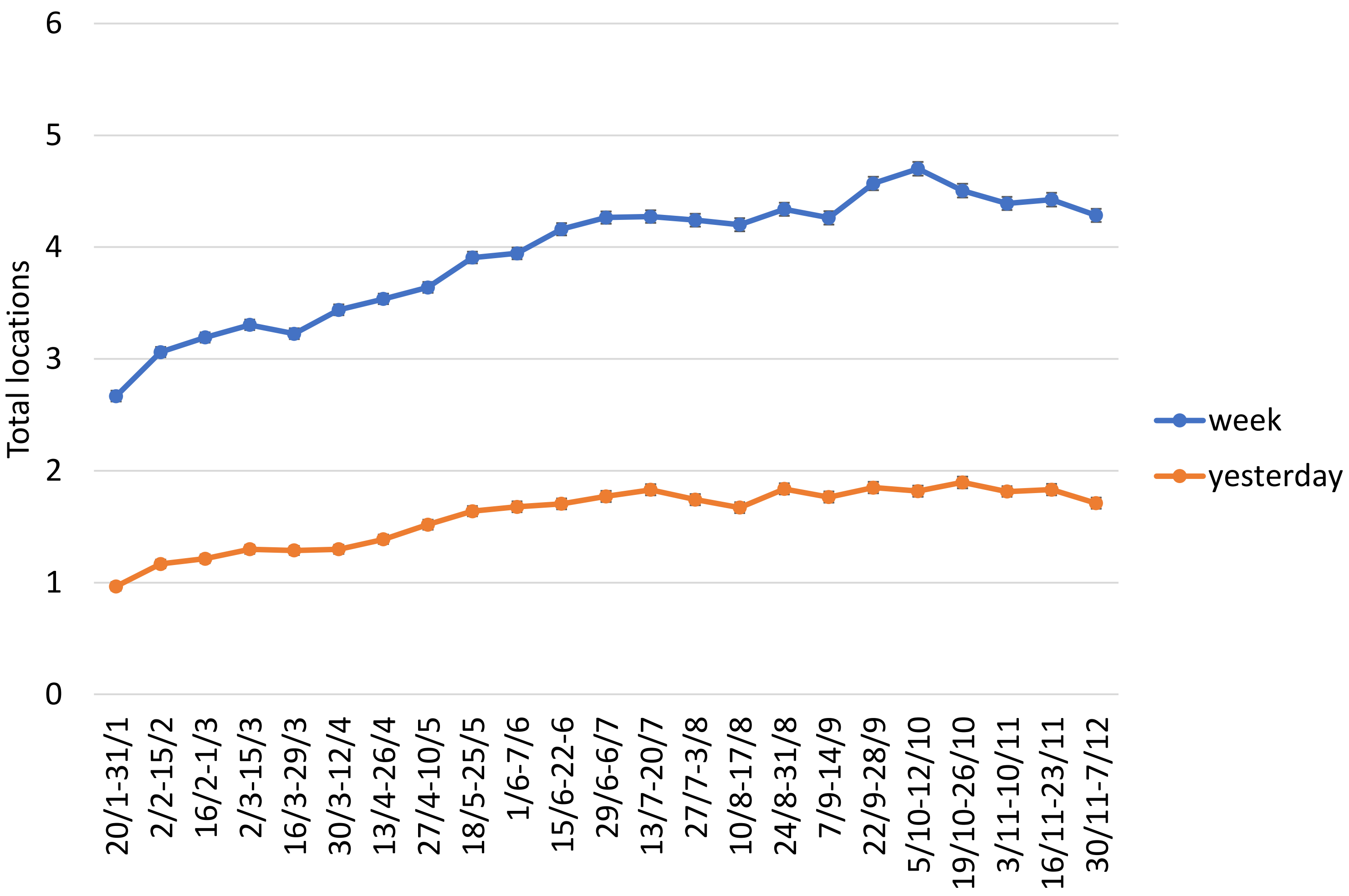
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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 was updated in October 2021 to include more detailed information on behavioural changes and future plans. 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 November 30th and December 7th. Data were collected after the WHO designated Omicron as a variant of concern. During data collection, cases had begun to stabilise (at high levels). New restrictions were announced, including midnight closure for hospitality venues, a return to working from home where possible, PCR tests for international travel and a recommendation for children 9-12 years old to wear masks in school.

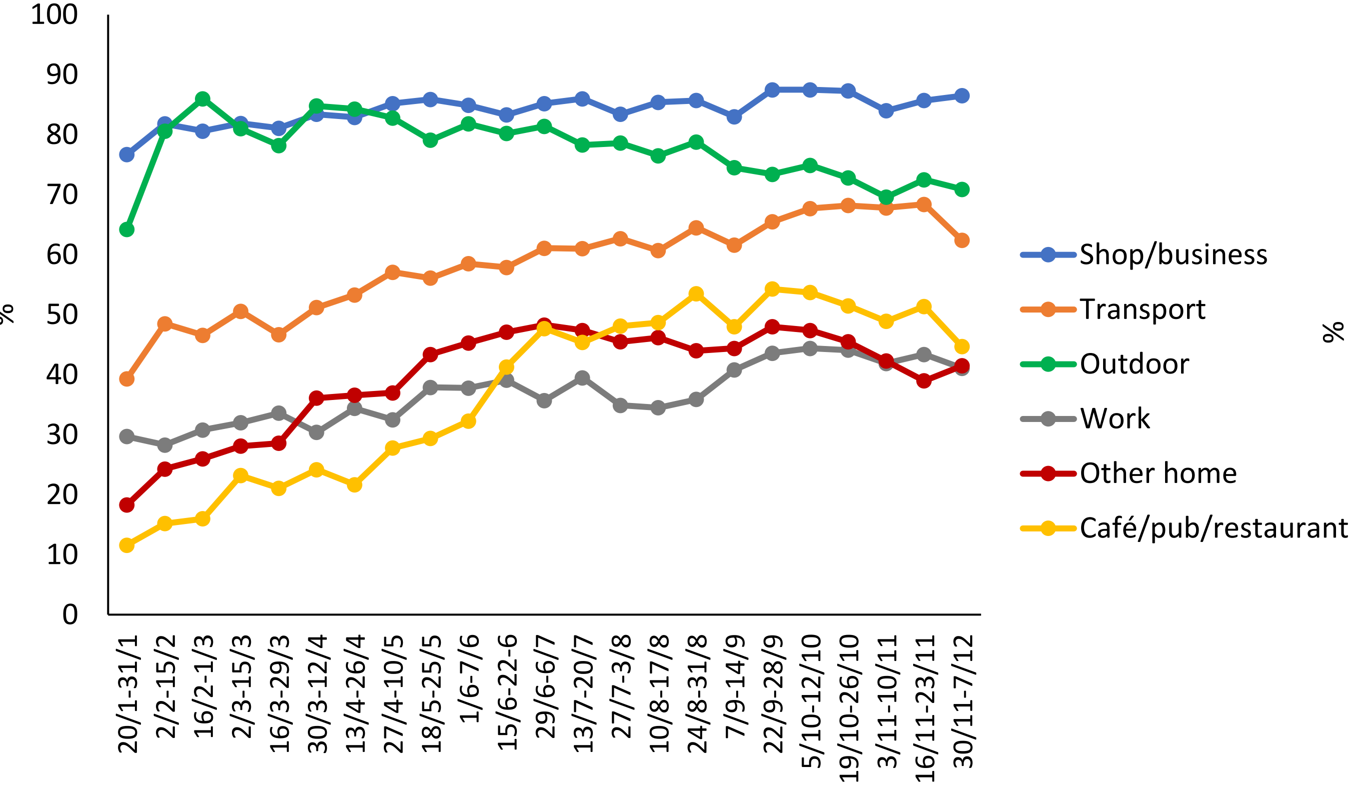
Total locations visited

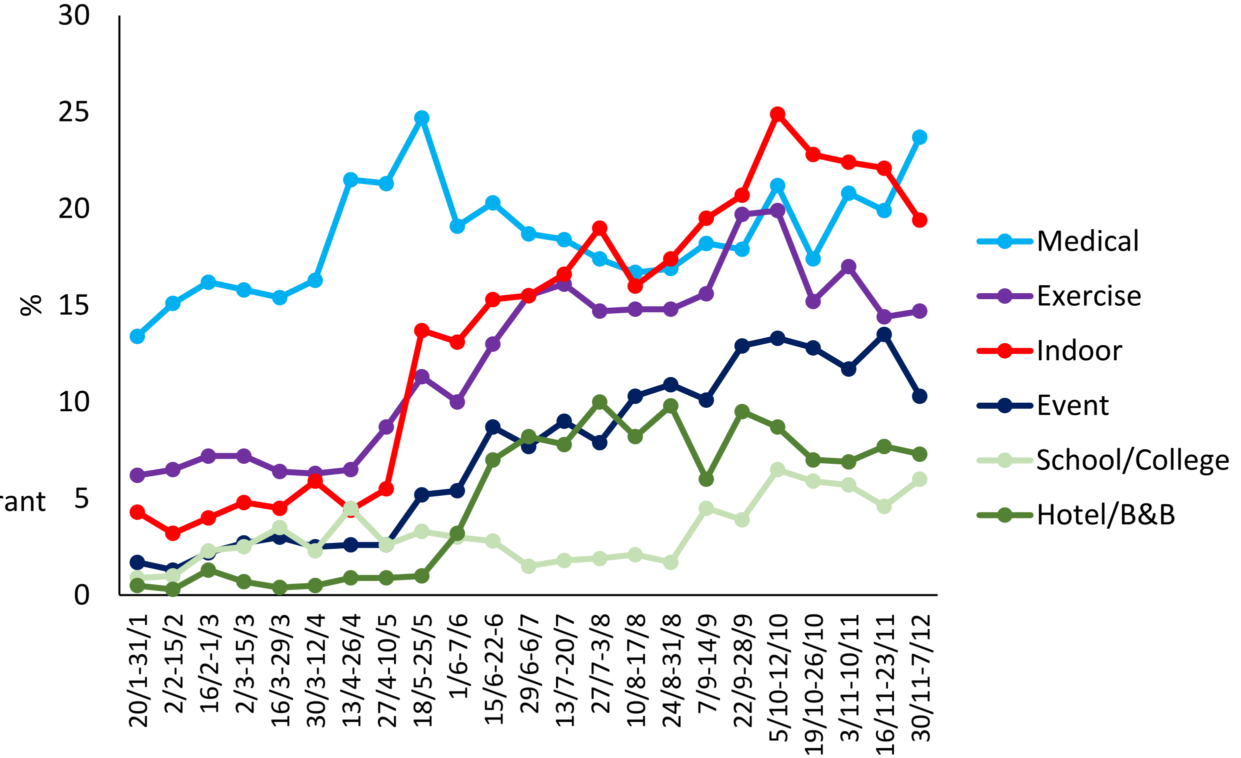


People visited fewer locations the week and the day before completing the survey compared to the last wave of SAM, and the drop is marginally statistically significant.

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

Locations visited (previous week)

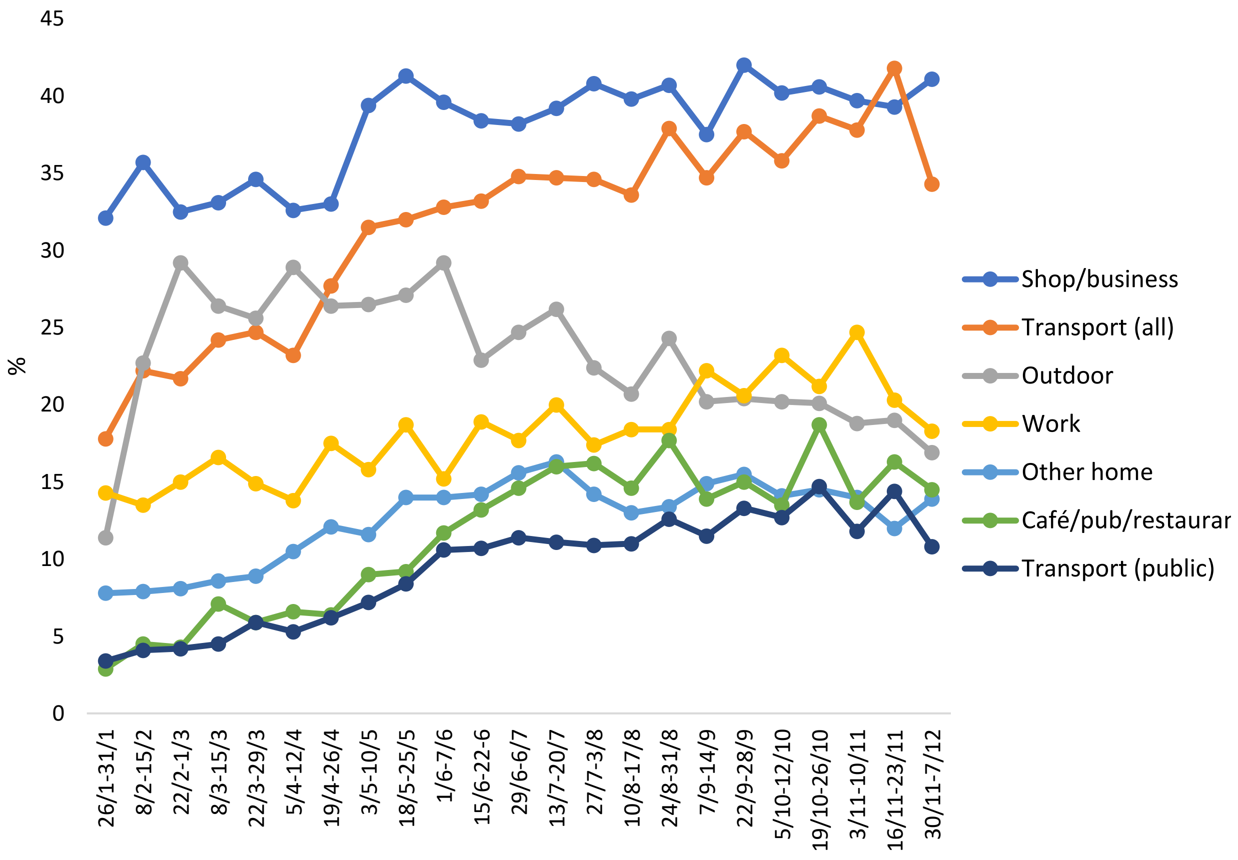


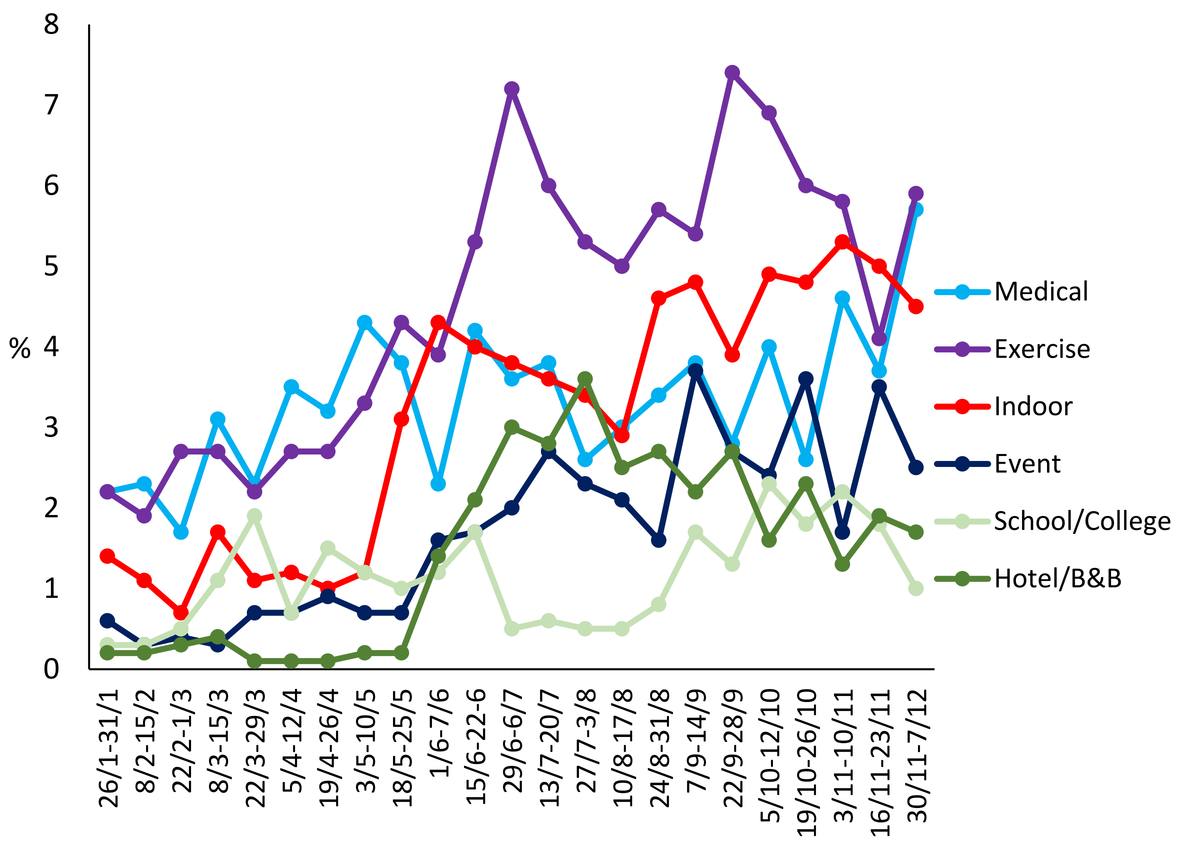


There were statistically significant declines in the number of people who used enclosed transport, went to cafes/pubs/restaurants and attended gatherings/events over the past week. There was a rise in attendance at medical facilities.

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

Locations visited (yesterday)

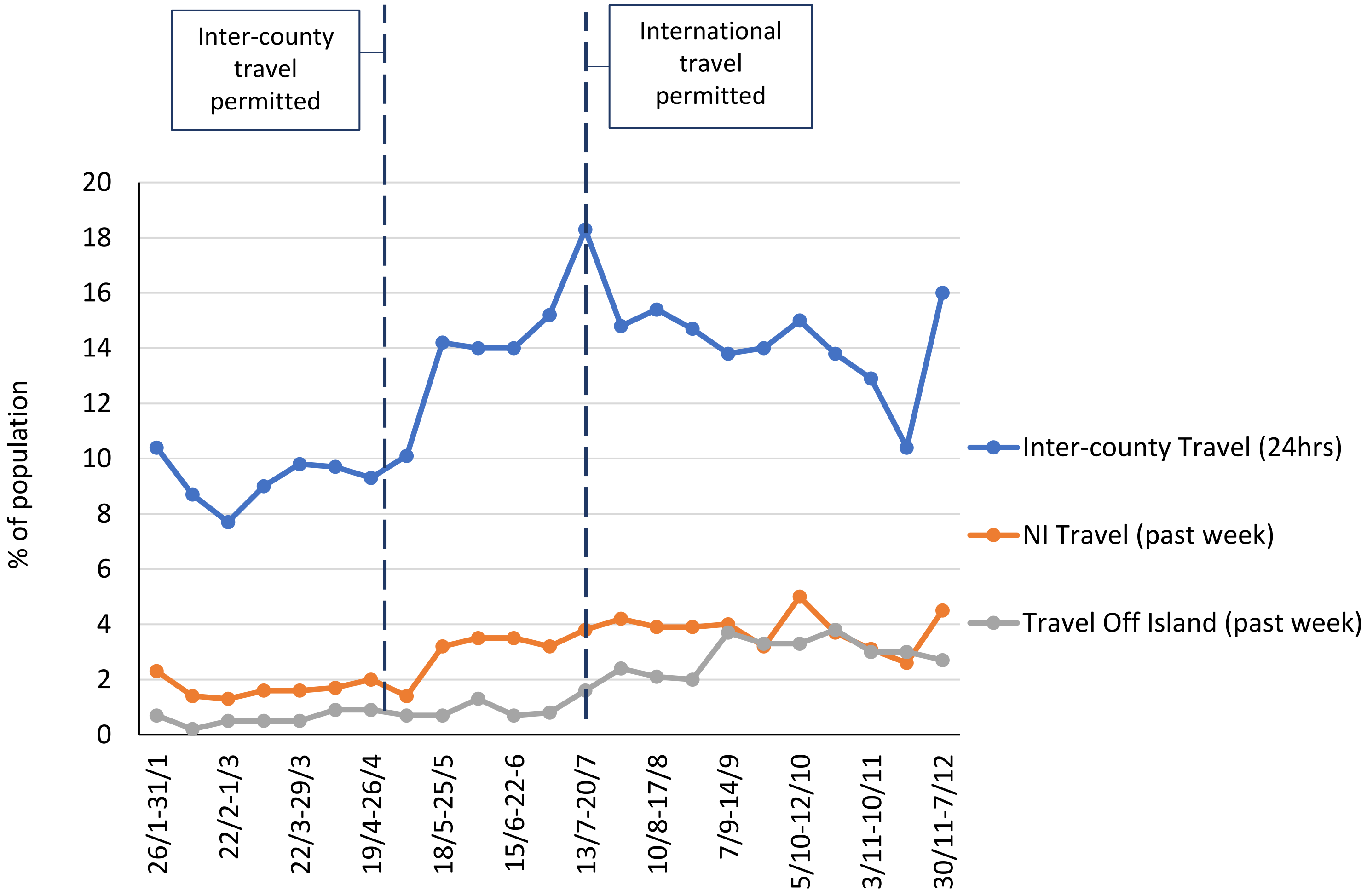




There was a significant decline in use of enclosed transport the day before completing SAM, driven by a decline in use of public transport. Attendance at medical facilities rose significantly to its highest level since SAM began. The dip in attendance at exercise facilities observed in the last wave recovered.

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

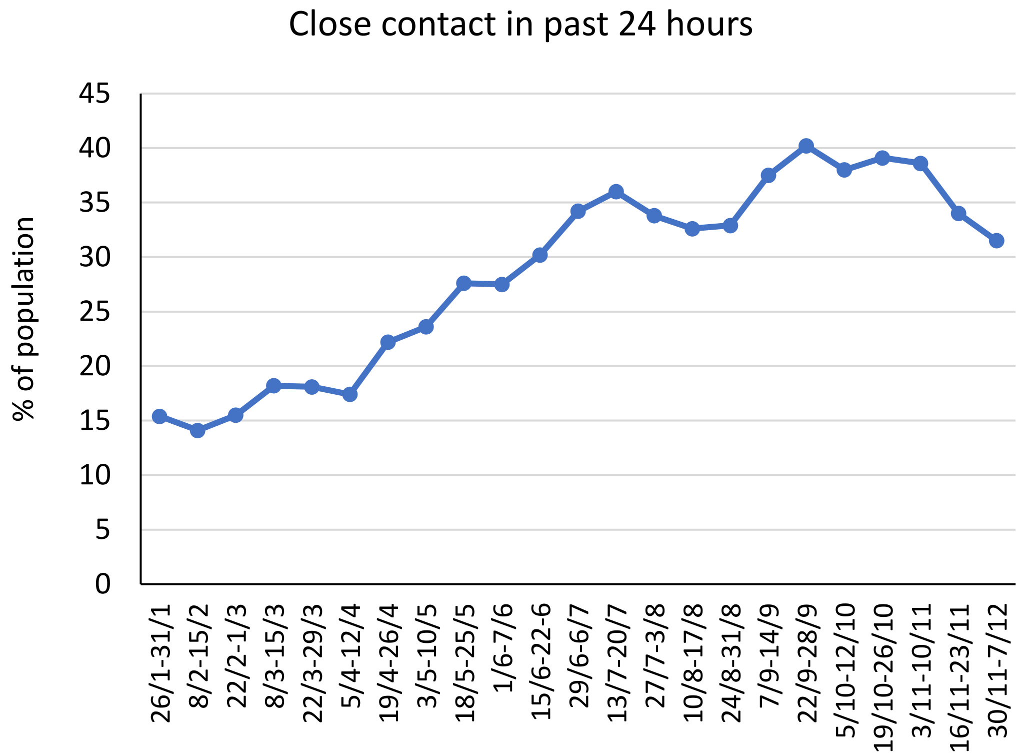
National and international travel

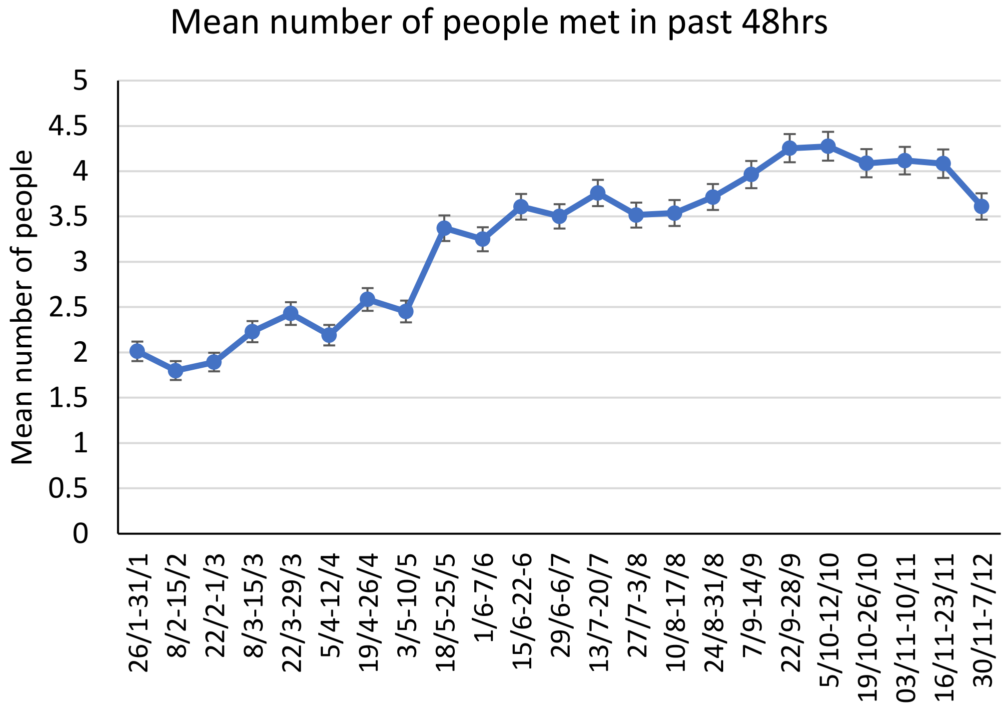


Both inter-county travel and travel to Northern Ireland increased. Inter-county travel is at its highest since mid-Summer.

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

Number of people met and close contacts

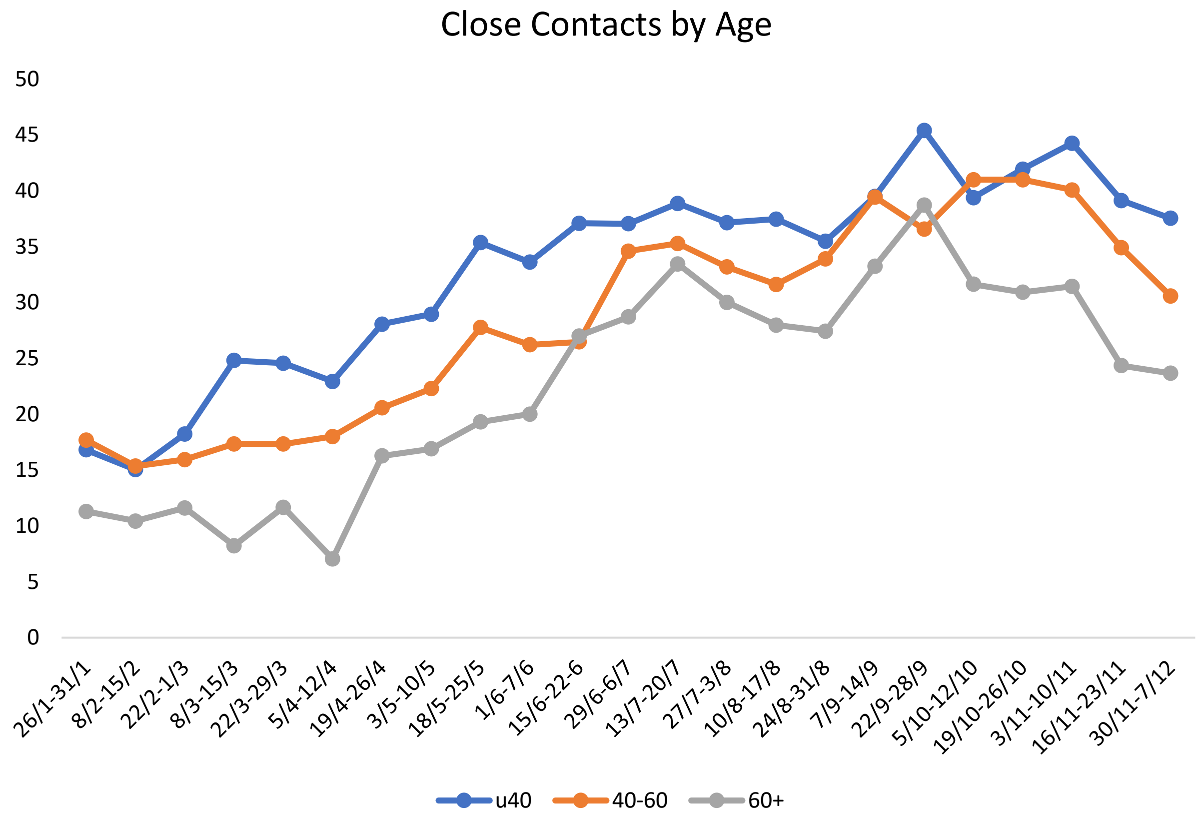


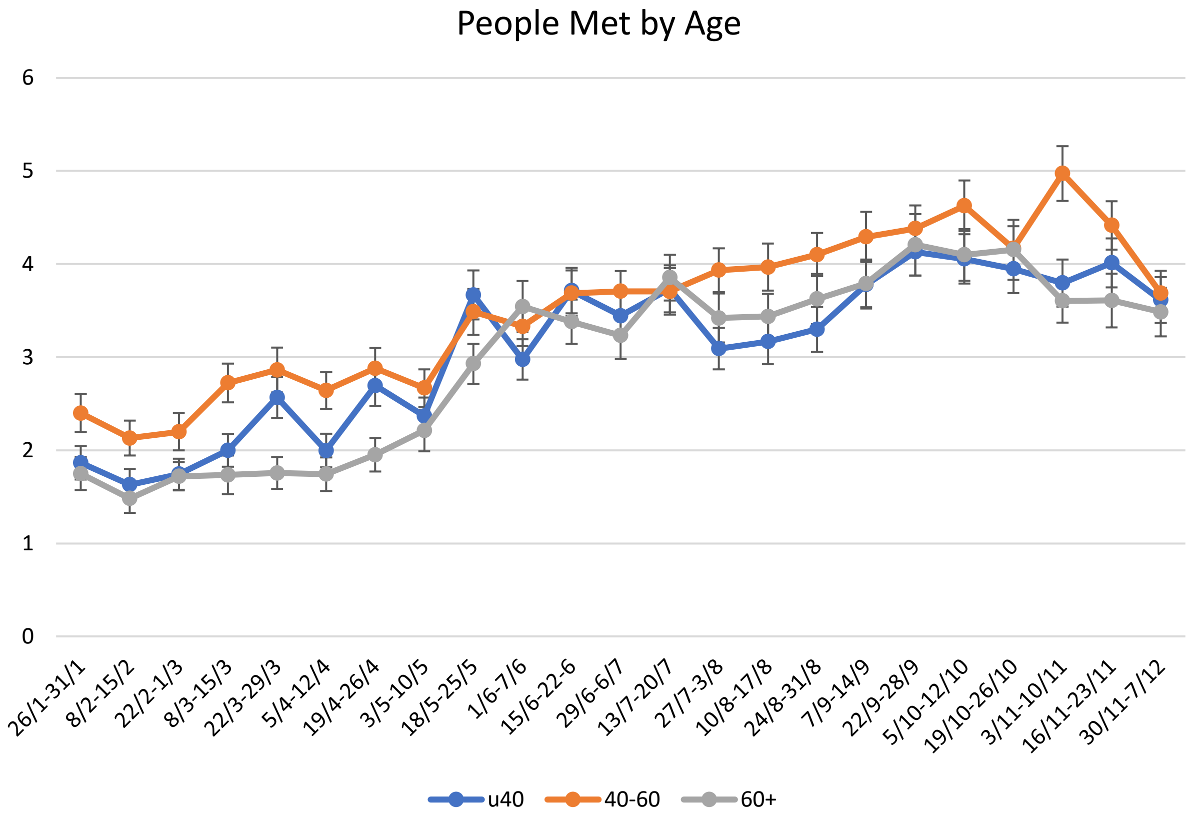


The proportion of people who had a close contact the previous day is at its lowest since June, although the comparison with the previous wave of SAM was not significant. The average number of people met in the past 48 hours also declined significantly.

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

Number of people met and close contacts

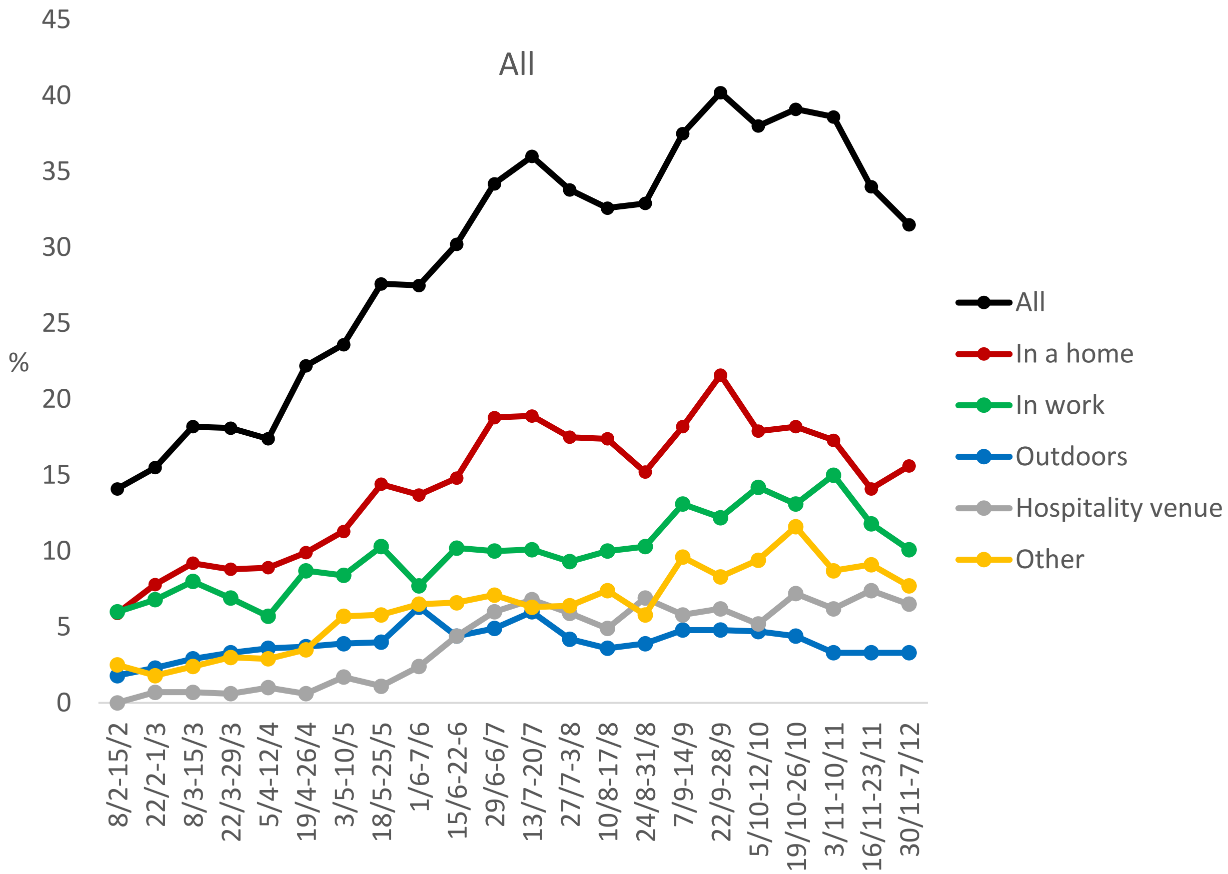


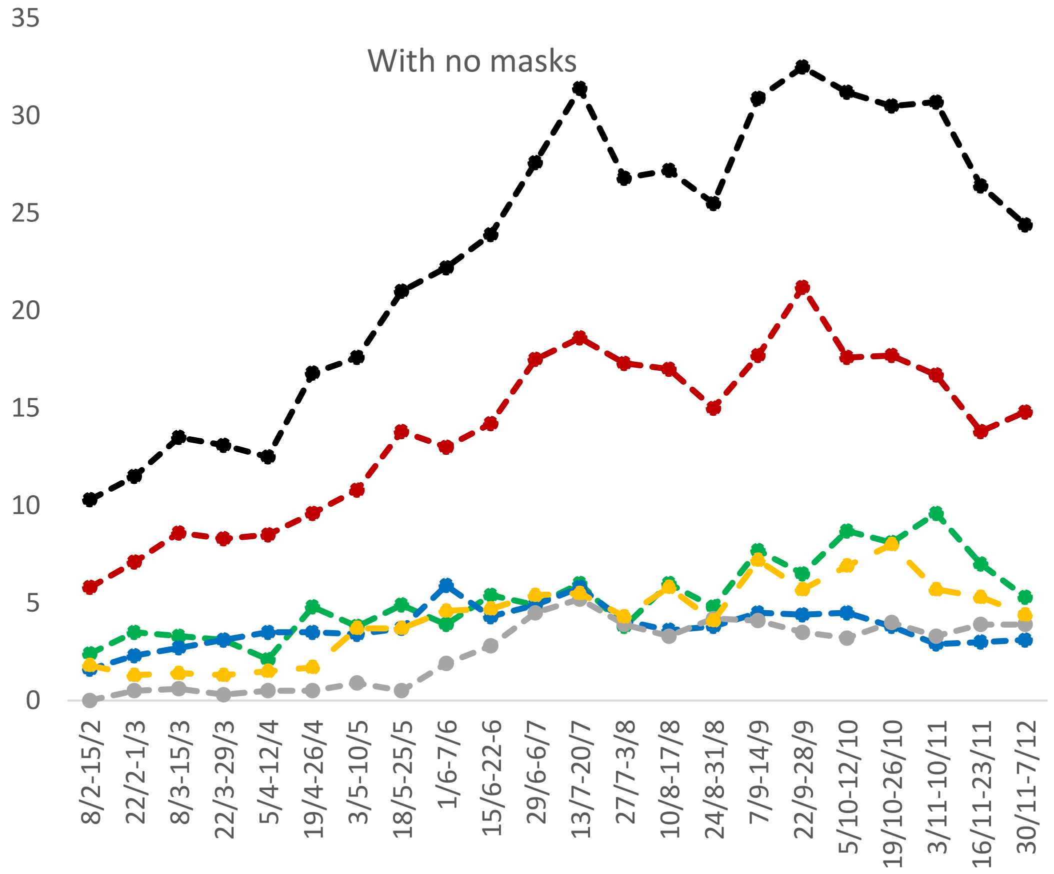


The overall reduction in close contacts was not attributable to any one age group. There were declines in people met in all age groups, although the sharpest decline was observed in the 40-60 year group, who had been meeting the most people.

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

Close contacts - locations

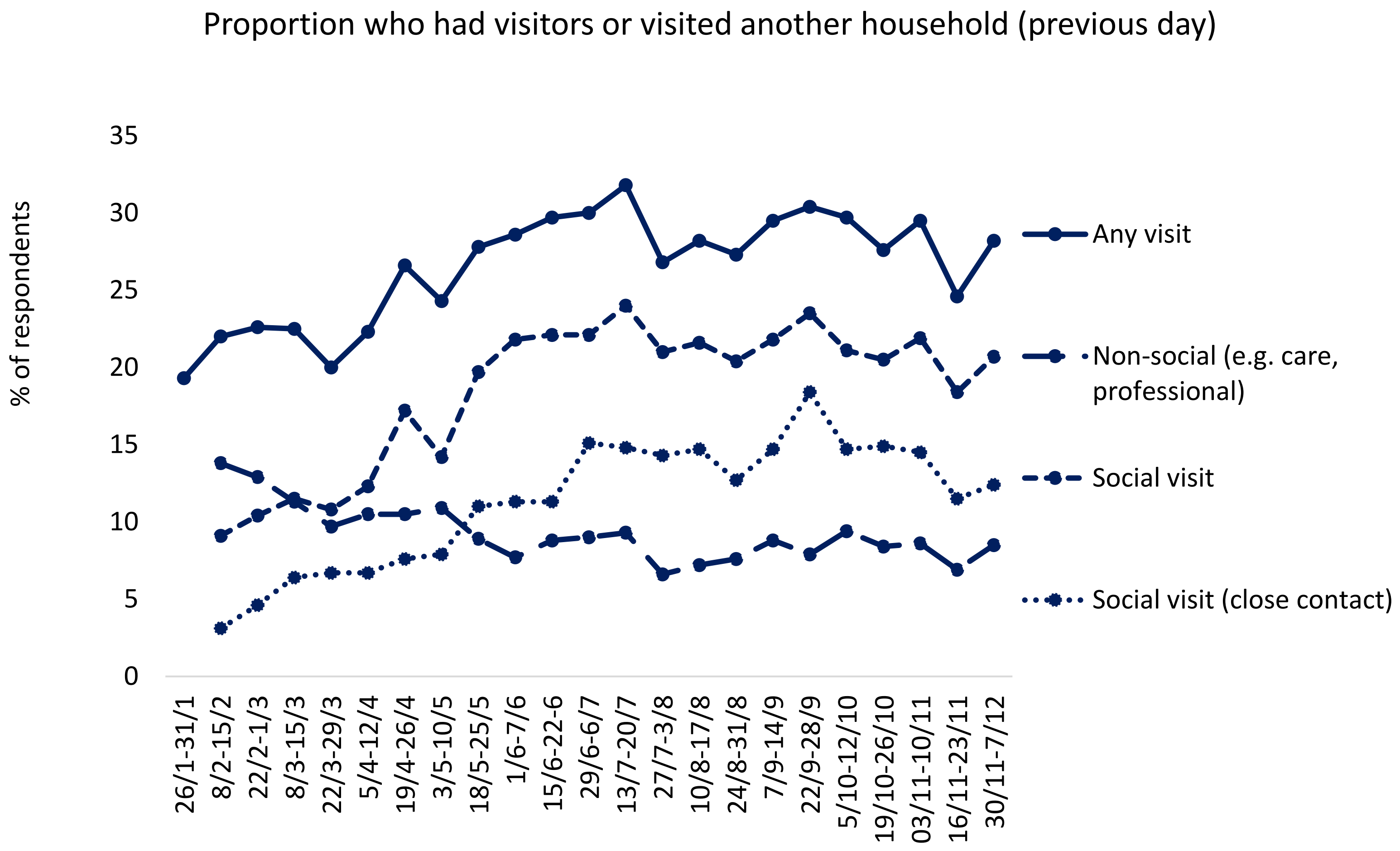




The decline in close contacts was driven by small, non-significant declines in most locations except in a home and outdoors. The decline in close contacts since early November is mostly driven by the reduction in people having close contacts at work.

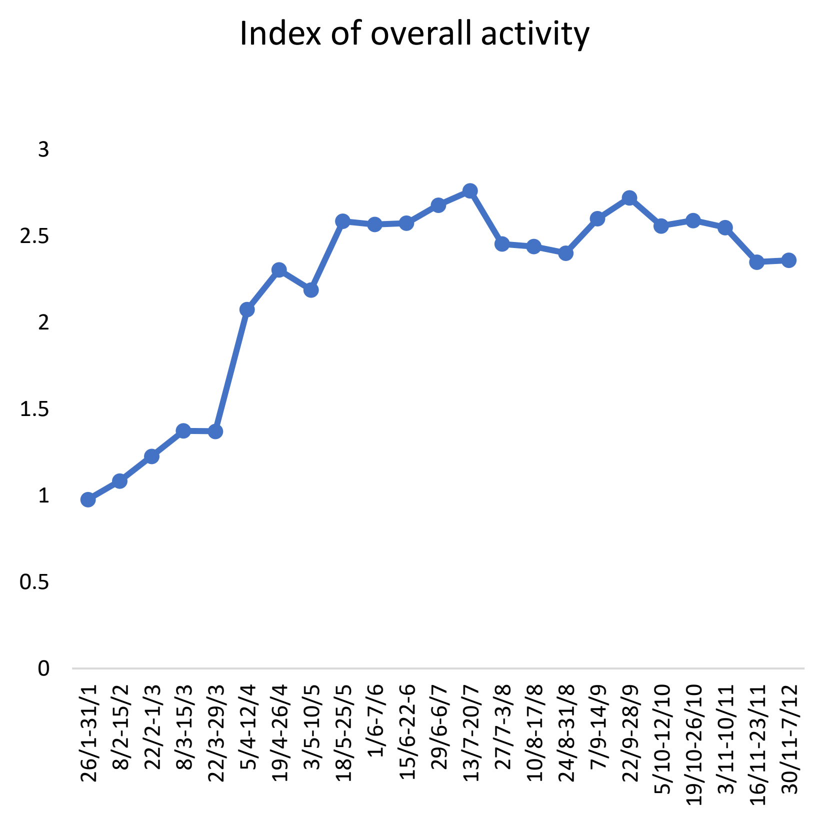
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

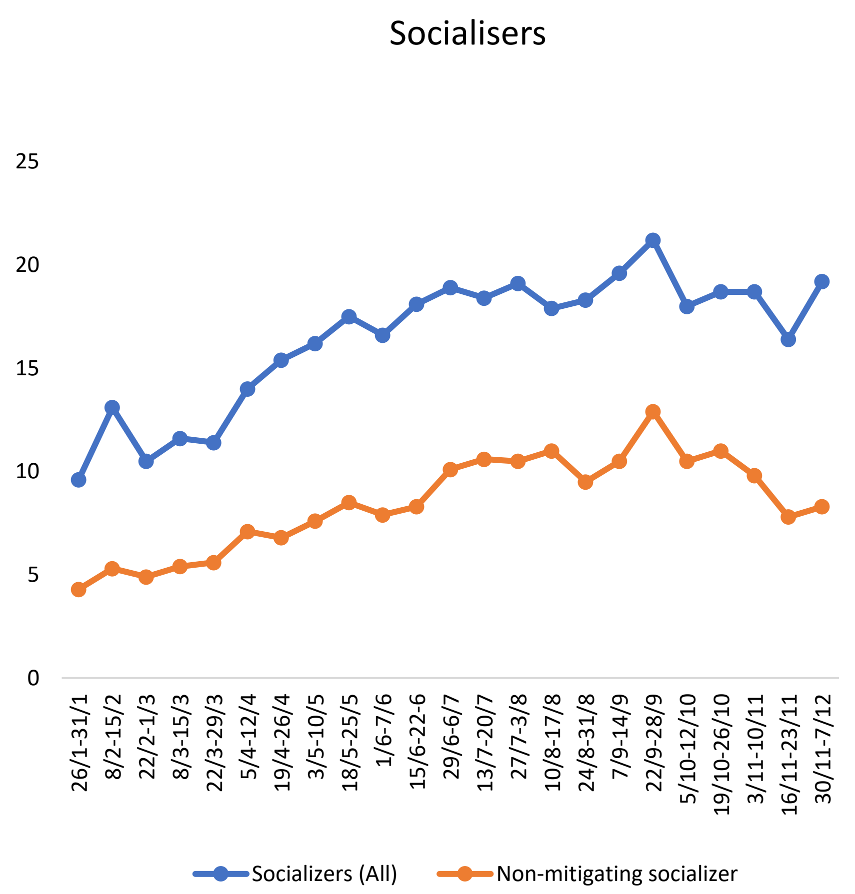
Home Visits



The last wave of SAM showed a drop in home visits for both social and non-social visits, but that has reversed in the latest data.

Social Activity

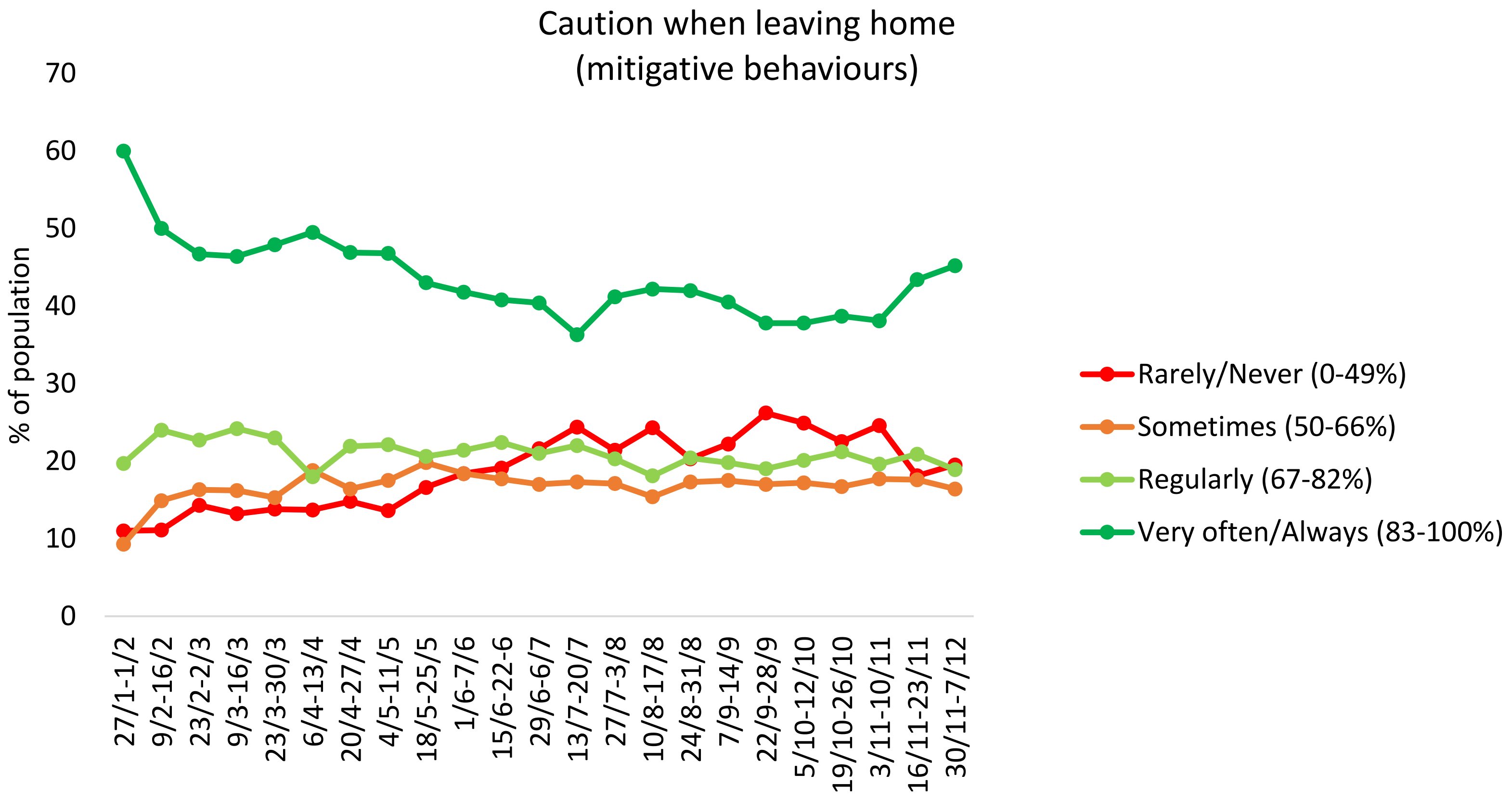




The left chart shows overall social activity, measured by a combination of places visited and people met. Activity is marginally below October levels and significant lower than September. The right chart shows the percentage of people who engage in particularly high levels of social activity (‘socialisers’) and those who do so while taking few or no precautions, such as wearing a mask or maintaining 2m distance, (‘non-mitigating socialisers’). The trend in increasing numbers of socialisers that had been apparent over a few months has stalled and the number of non-mitigating socialisers, the riskiest group, has declined significantly since October.

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

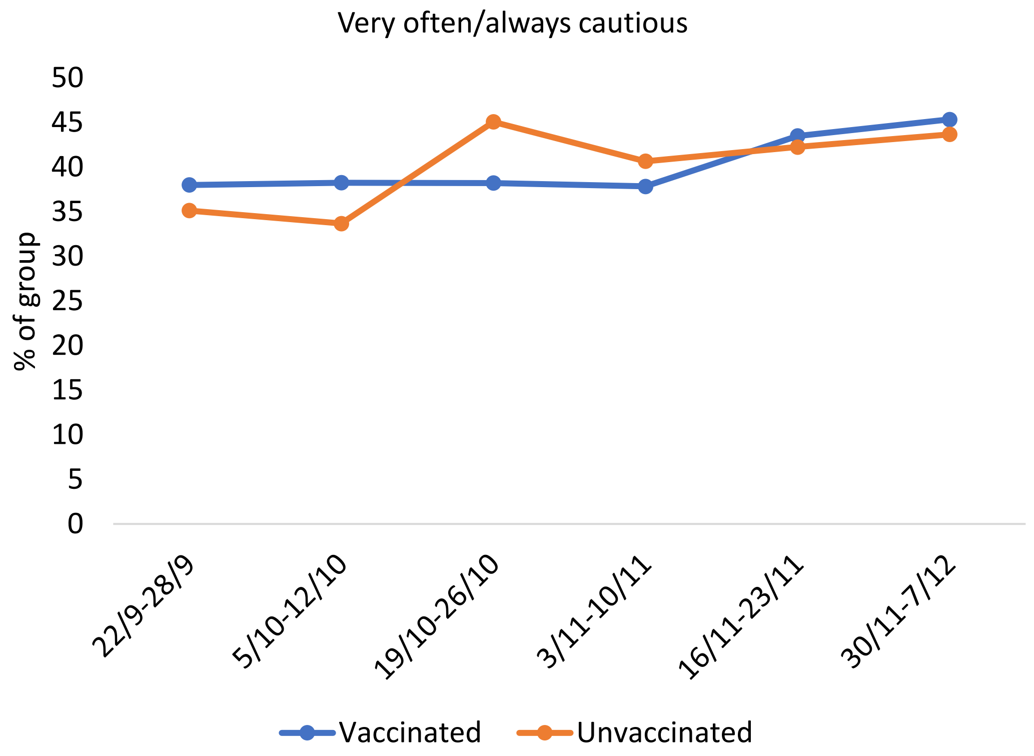
Mitigation

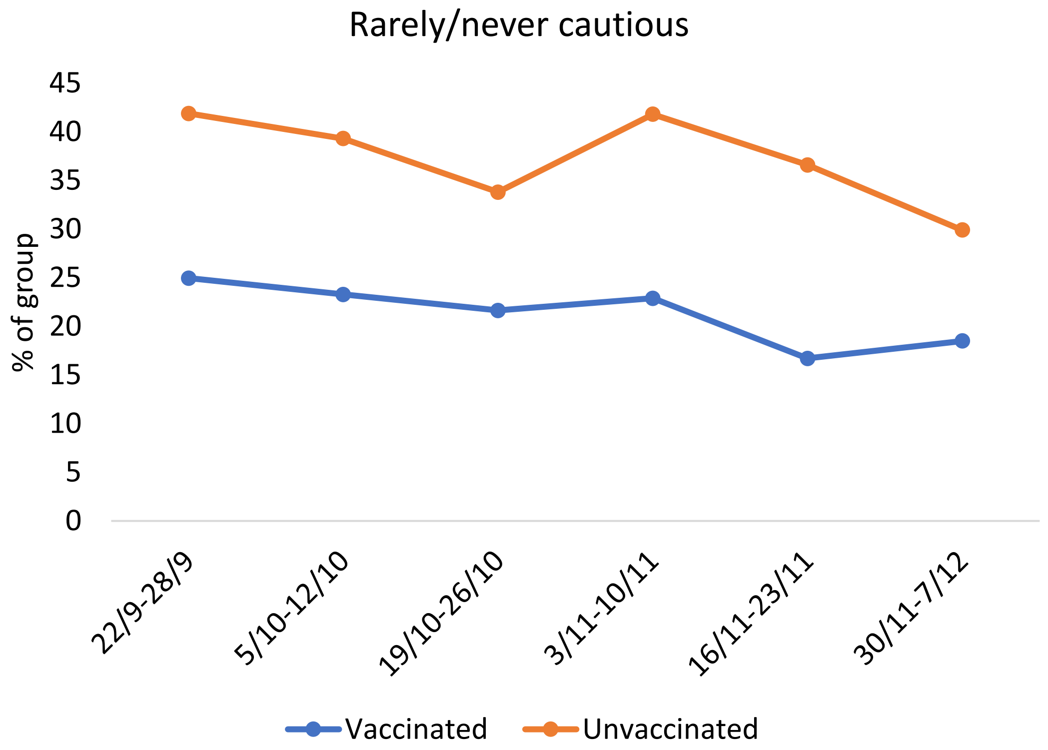


More people continue to engage in mitigative behaviours (keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks). The percentage who report taking these precautions most of the time is significantly higher in this wave of SAM compared to early November.

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

Mitigation by vaccine status

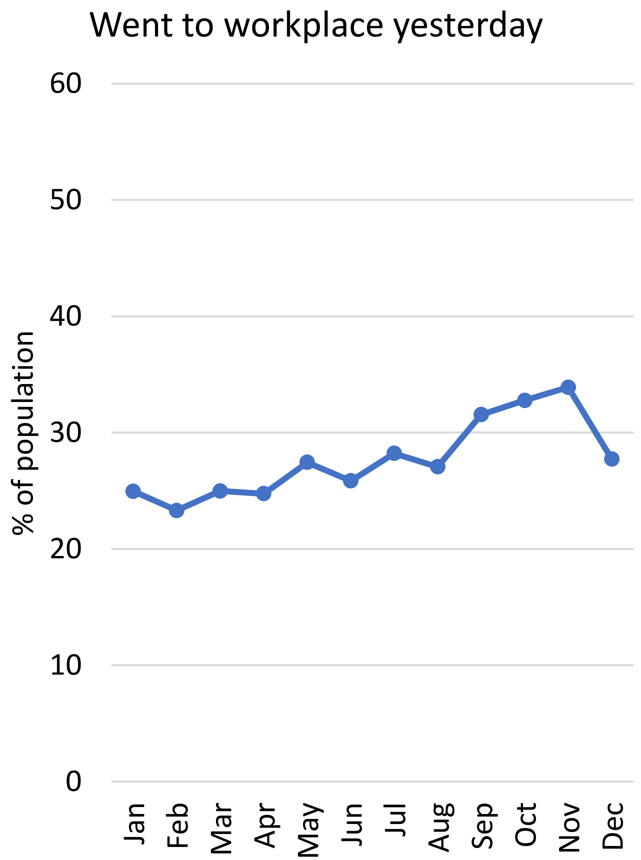


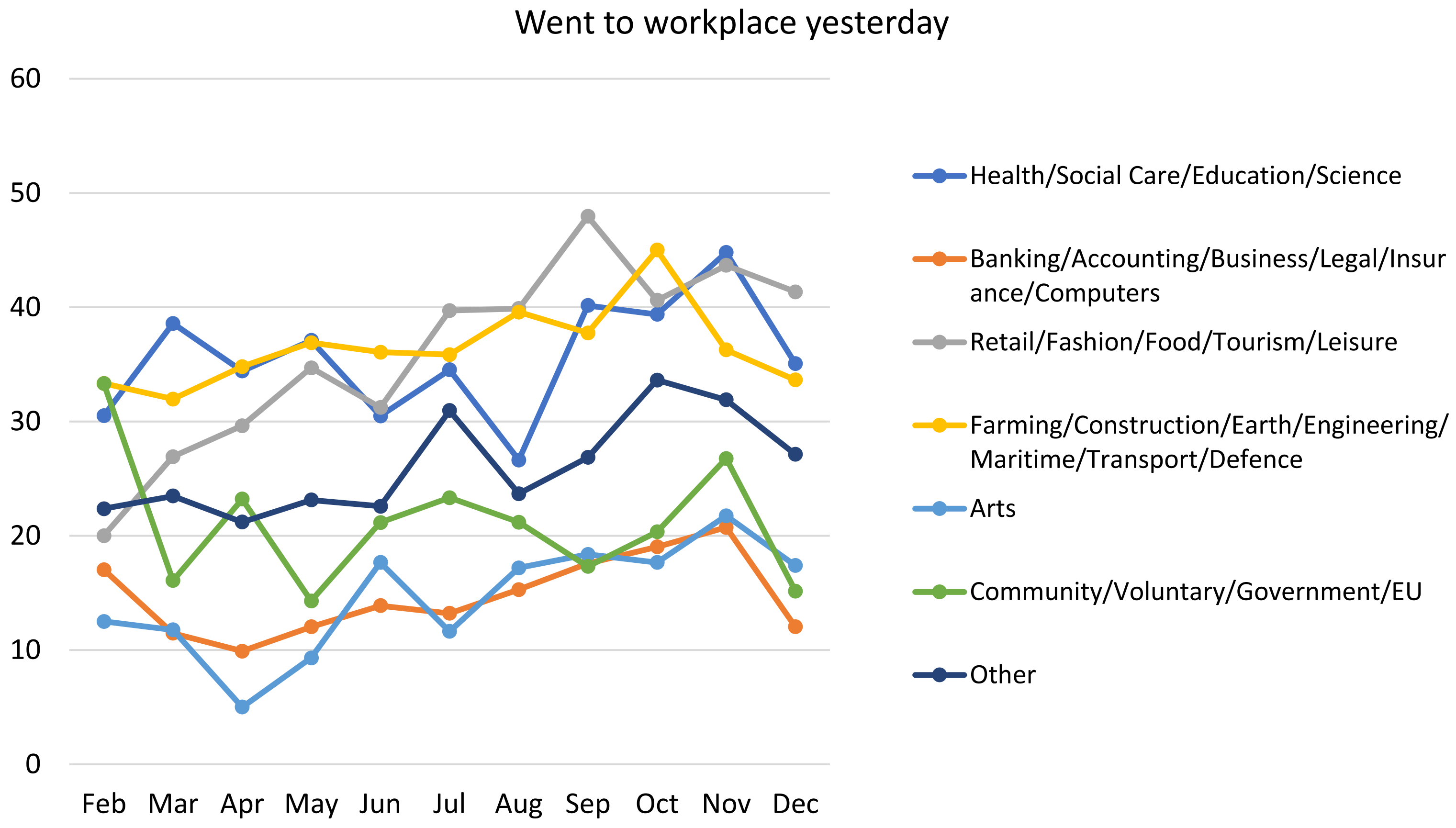


The proportion of unvaccinated people who report rarely or never taking precautions has fallen since early November but remains higher than the proportion of those who are vaccinated.

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

Workplace Attendance

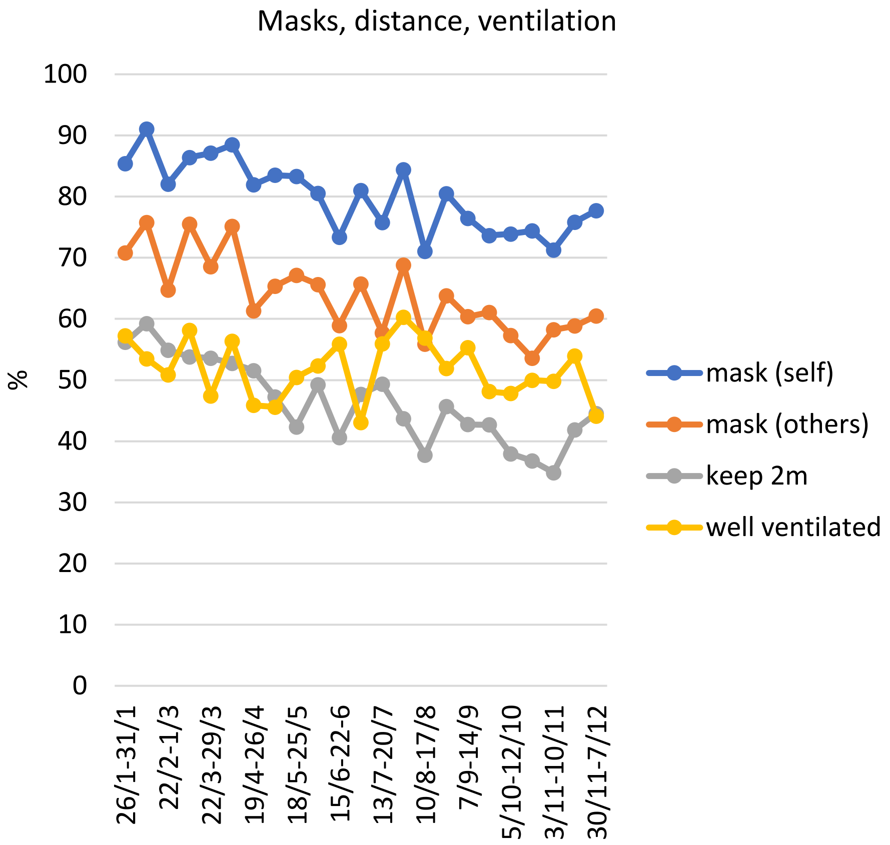


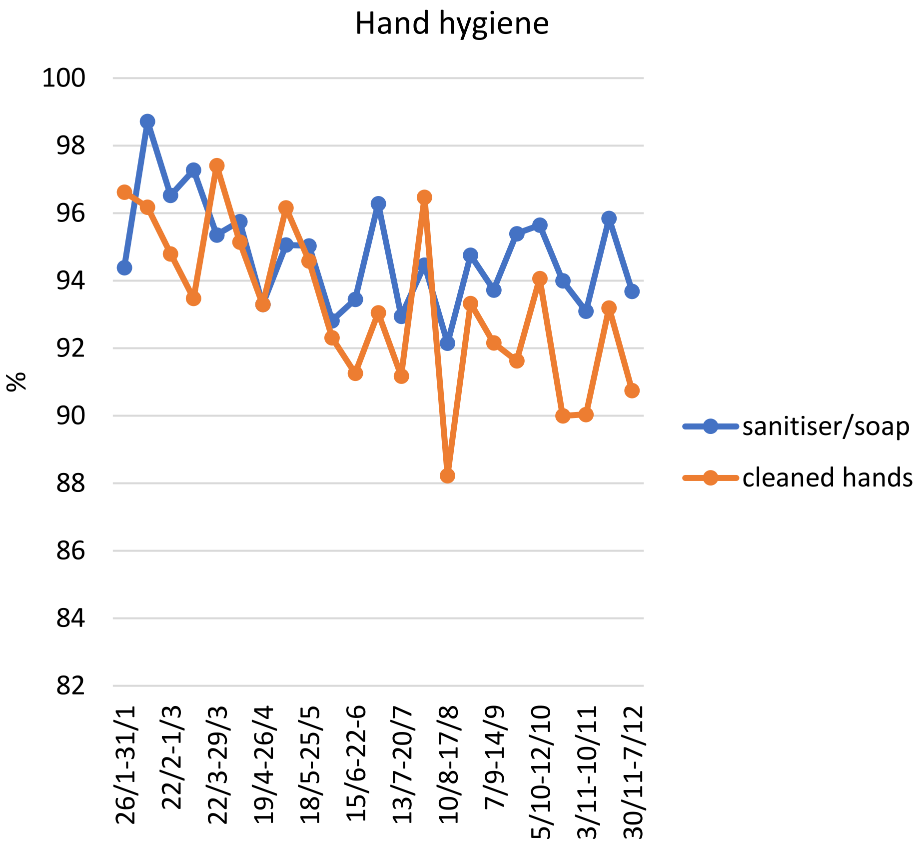


Numbers attending the workplace fell sharply in December. This was driven largely by those working in Health/Social care/Education/Science and in Banking/Accounting/Business/Legal/Insurance/Computers, which make up almost half of workers.

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

Workplace - Mitigation

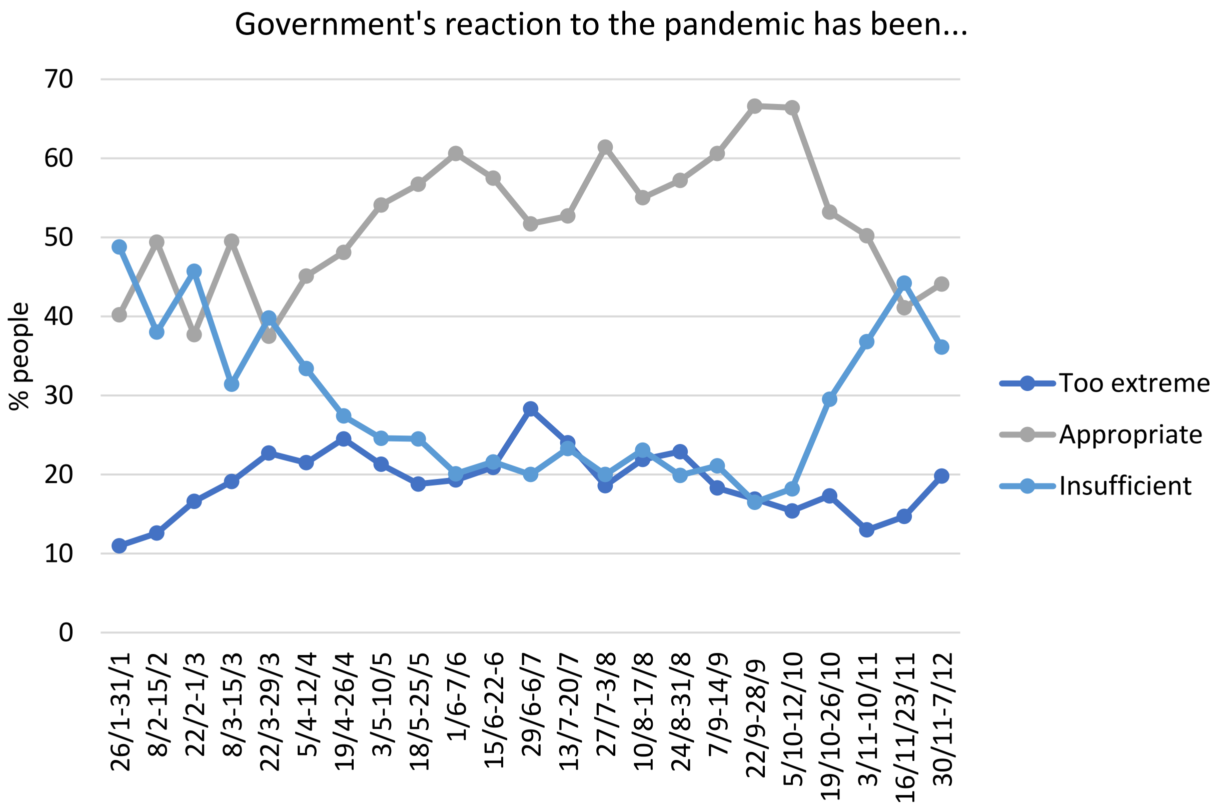




There was a reduction in those who reported that their workplace was well ventilated. Reported mask-wearing and social distancing have risen slightly for consecutive waves, however the changes are not statistically significant.

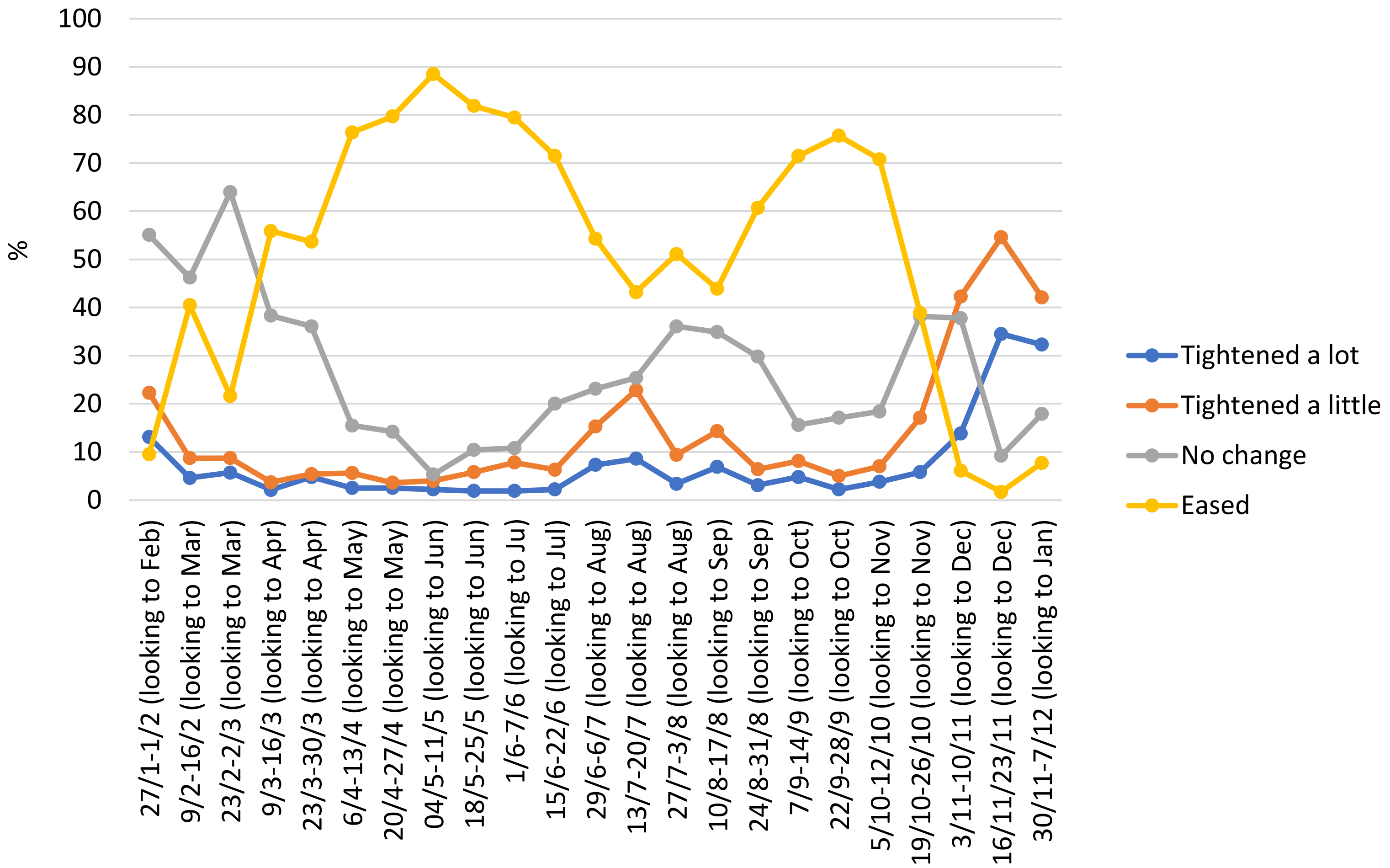
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Government Response to the Pandemic



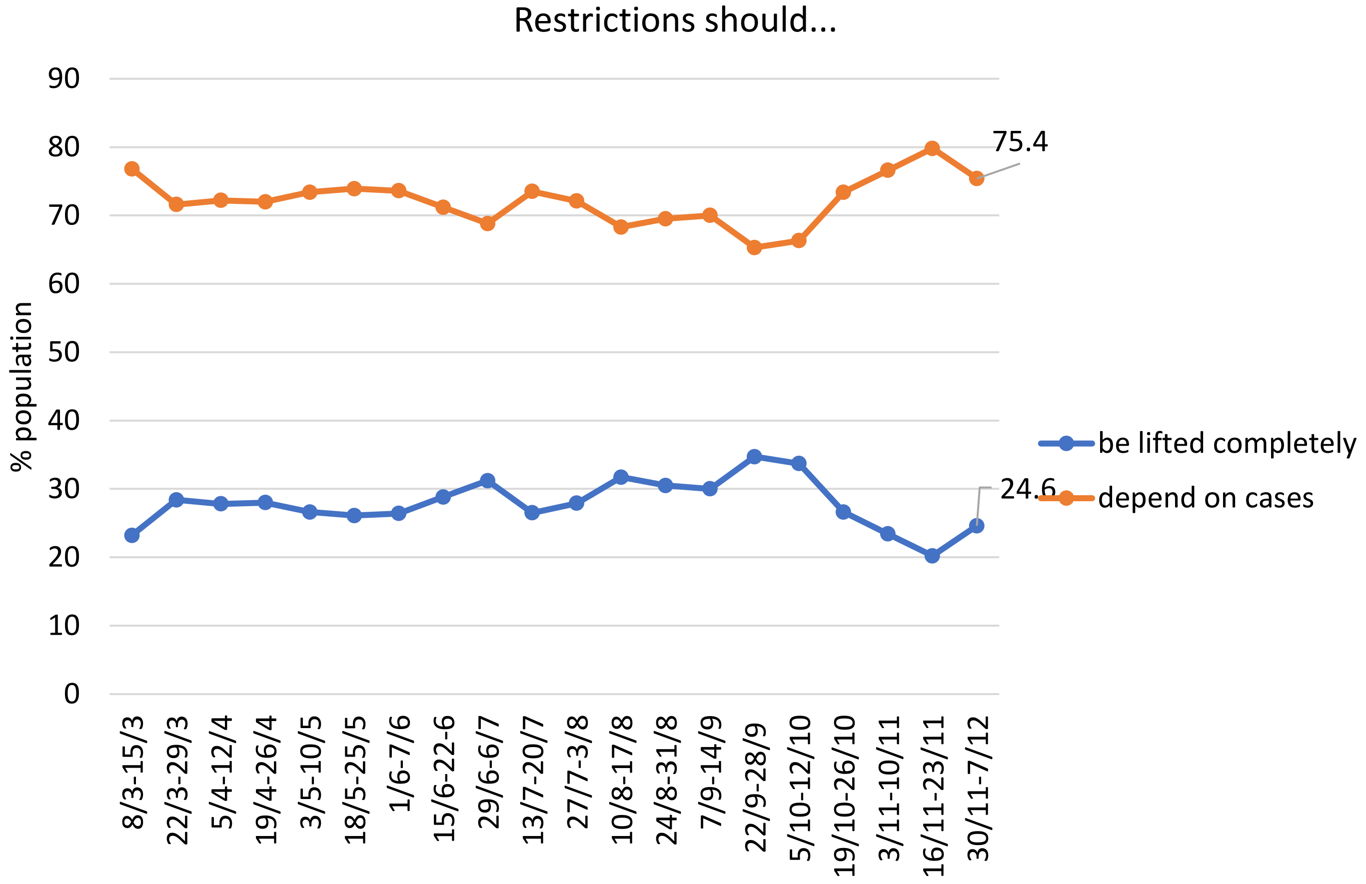
Fewer people thought that the Government's response to the pandemic was insufficient this round and more people thought that it was too extreme. The largest group judge it to be appropriate.

Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



The increasing numbers who expected restrictions to tighten in December have levelled off when thinking forward to January. There was no change in those who expect them to tighten a lot but fewer people think they will tighten by a little and more people think they will either ease or stay as they are.

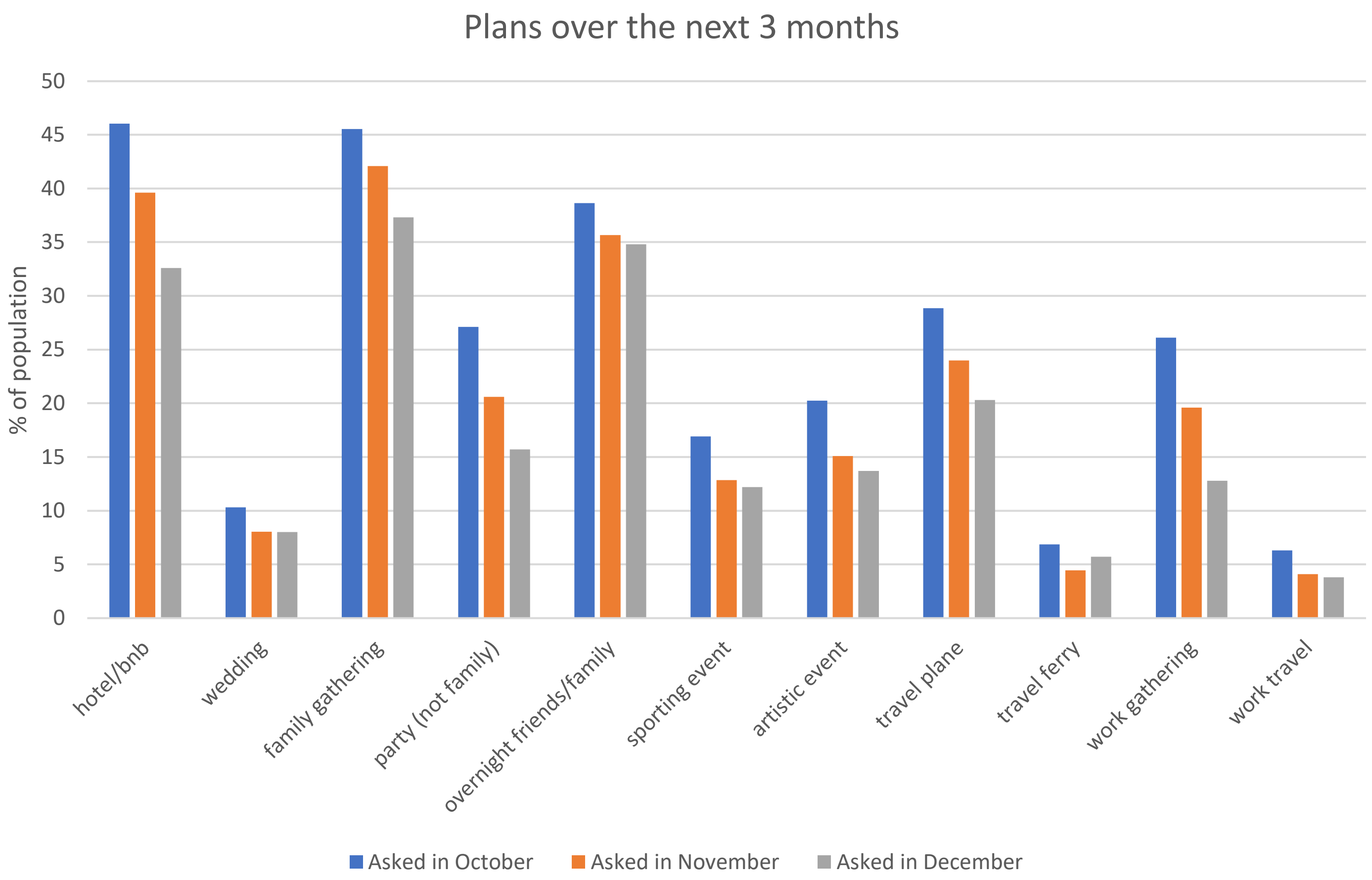
Restrictions



The proportion of people who believe restrictions should remain dependent on cases has risen since late September and is currently back to the level observed during the early stages of the vaccine rollout, at approx. 3 in 4 people.

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

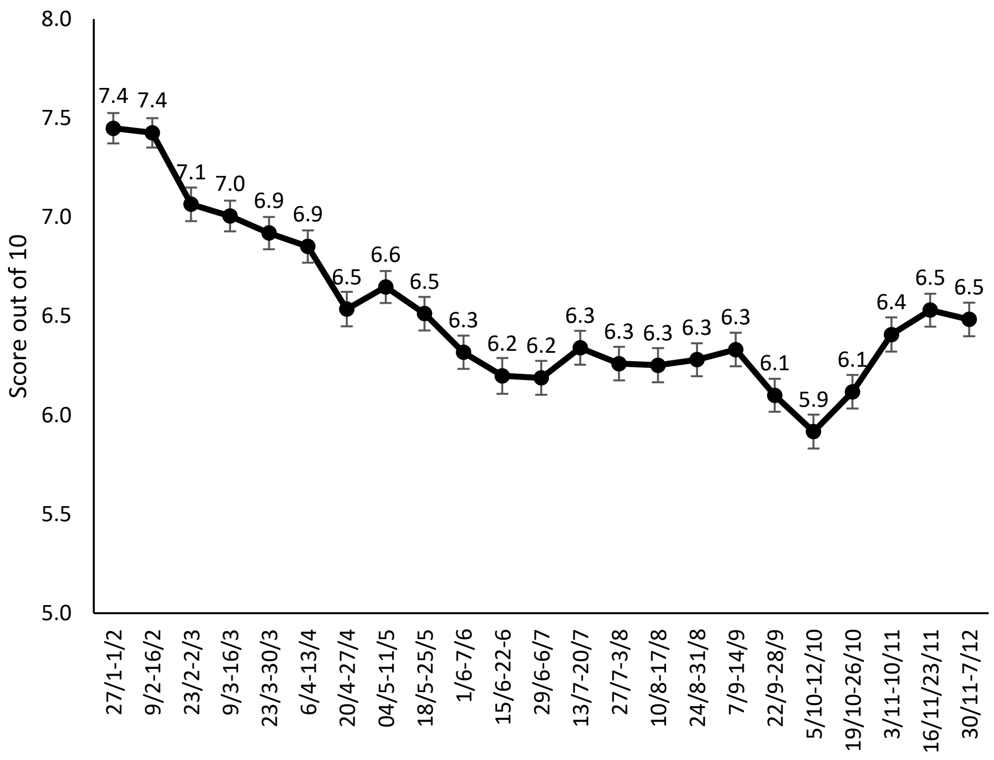
Plans

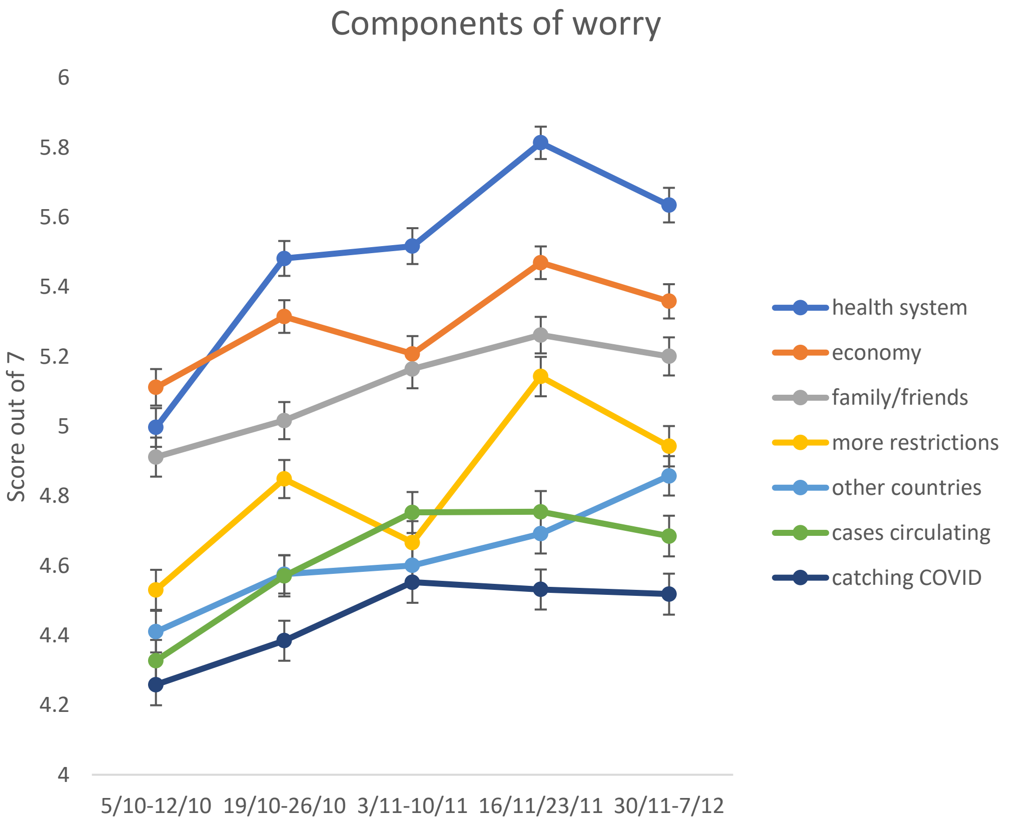


This chart shows the percentage of the population who have definitive plans to take part in any of these activities over the next 3 months. Plans for all activities had dropped between October and November, and have done so again in December for hotel/BnB stays, family gatherings, parties (not family), plane travel and work gatherings.

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

Worry

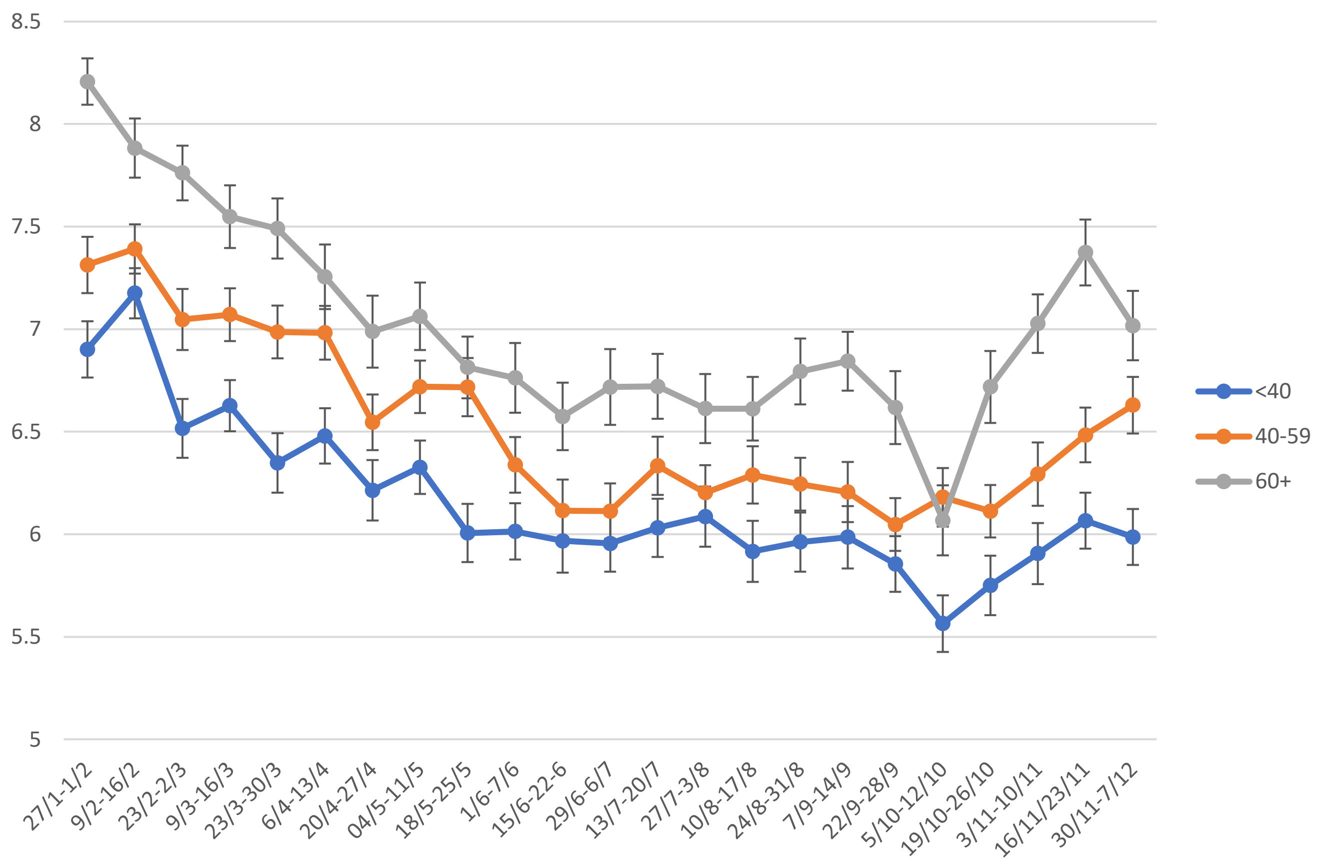




Having increased for three consecutive rounds of SAM, there was no further change in worry. Worry about the healthcare system, and more restrictions coming in both dropped while worry about other countries rose this round.

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

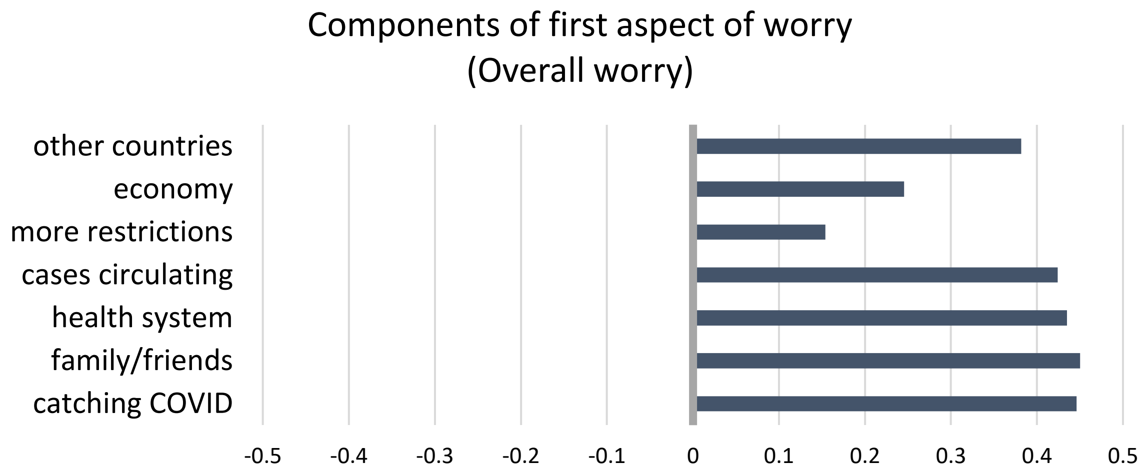
Worry by age

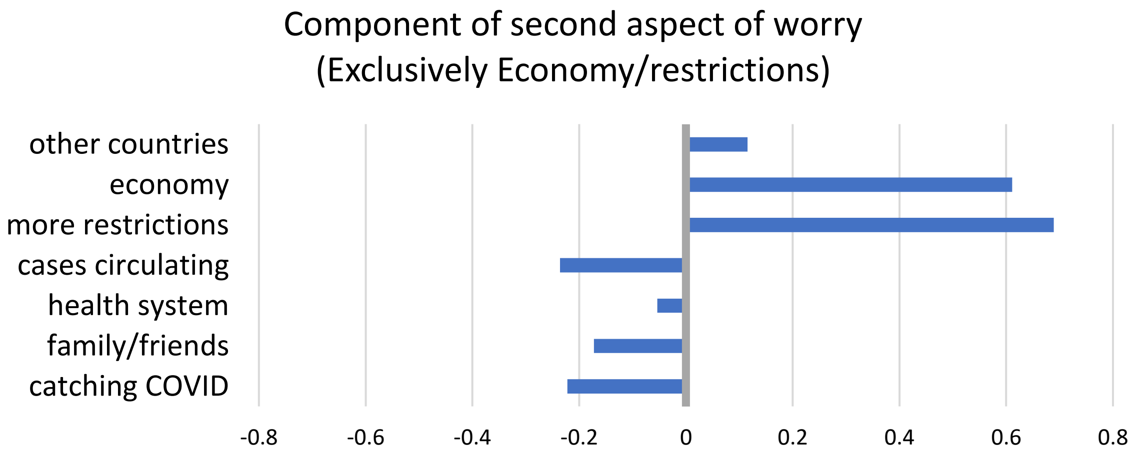


The level of overall worry about COVID-19 remained unchanged in all age groups and decreased slightly among those over 60, although this was not significant.

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

Components of worry

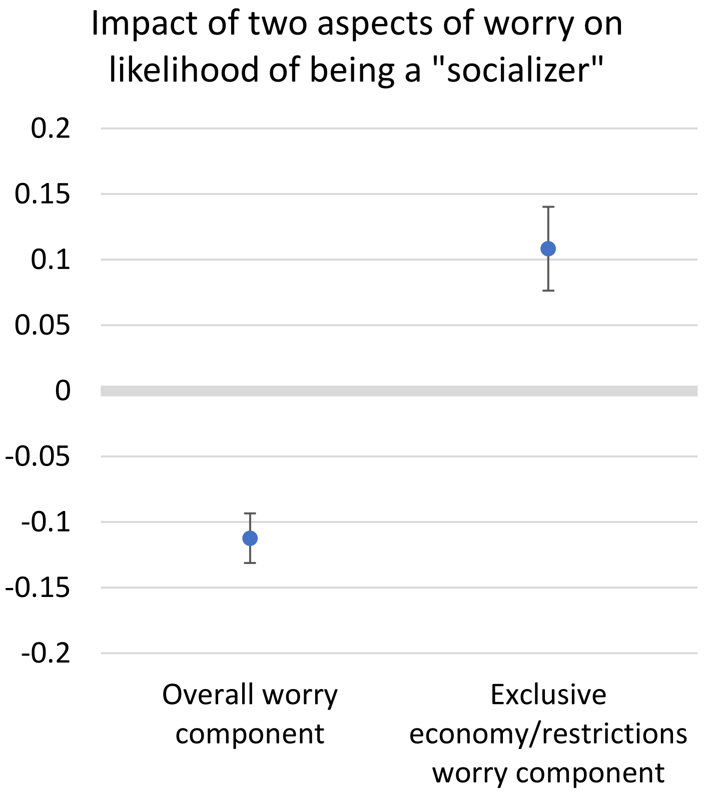


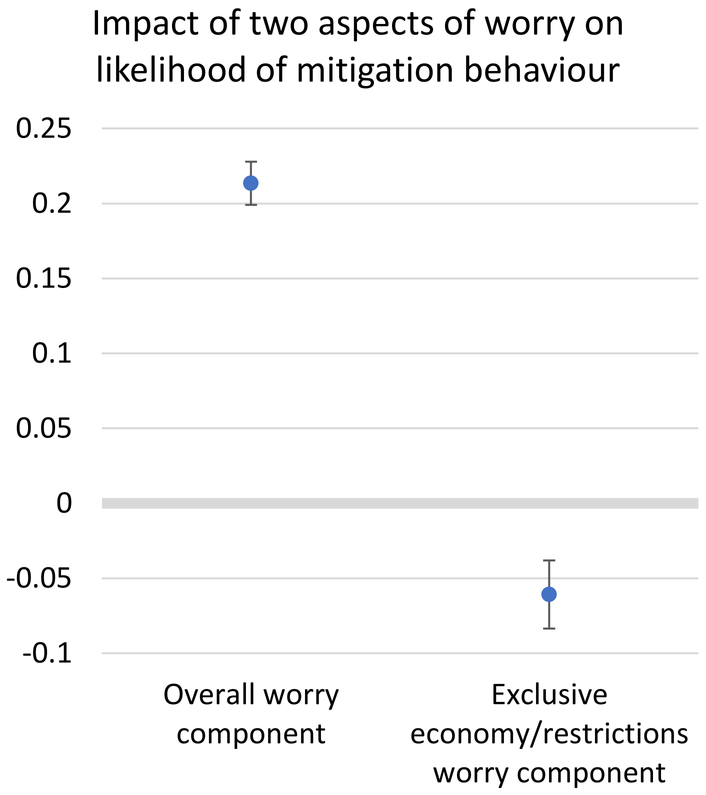


In SAM, we ask respondents how worried they are about catching COVID, family/friends catching COVID, the healthcare system, returning to normality while cases are circulating, more restrictions coming in, the economy, and COVID-19 in other countries. Ratings about level of worry about these different things tend to cluster in two ways. One is an overall worry about most of these things but with relatively little worry about the economy or restrictions. The second is a worry about the economy and restrictions to the exclusion of other worries.

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

Components of worry and Behaviour

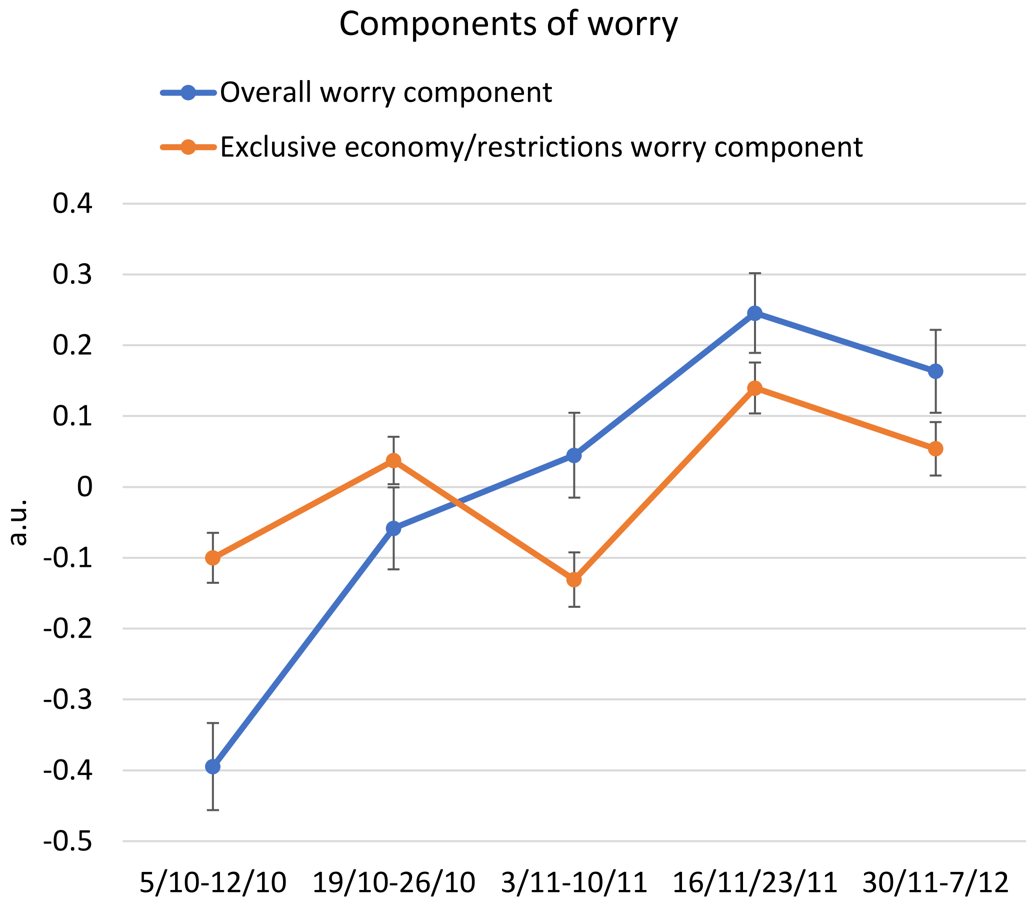




These two clusters of responding make reverse predictions about how much people are socializing and how frequently they engage in mitigative behaviours when out and about. Higher levels of overall worry are associated with less socializing and more mitigative behaviour while higher levels of exclusive worry about the economy and restrictions are associated with more socializing and less mitigative behaviour.

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

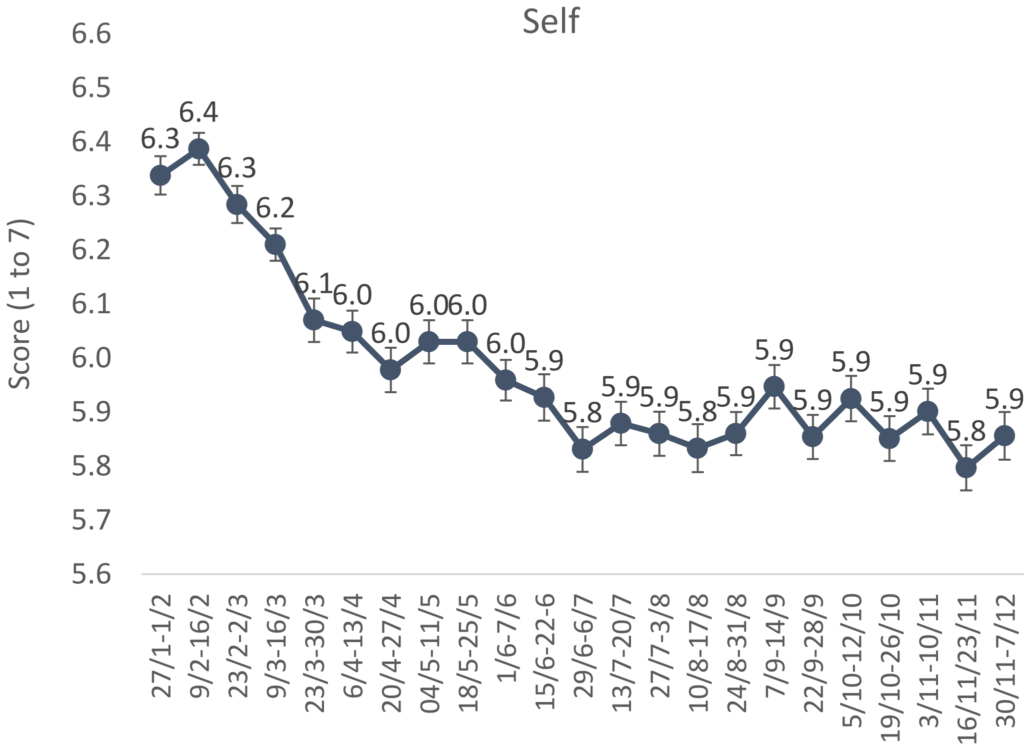
Components of worry over time

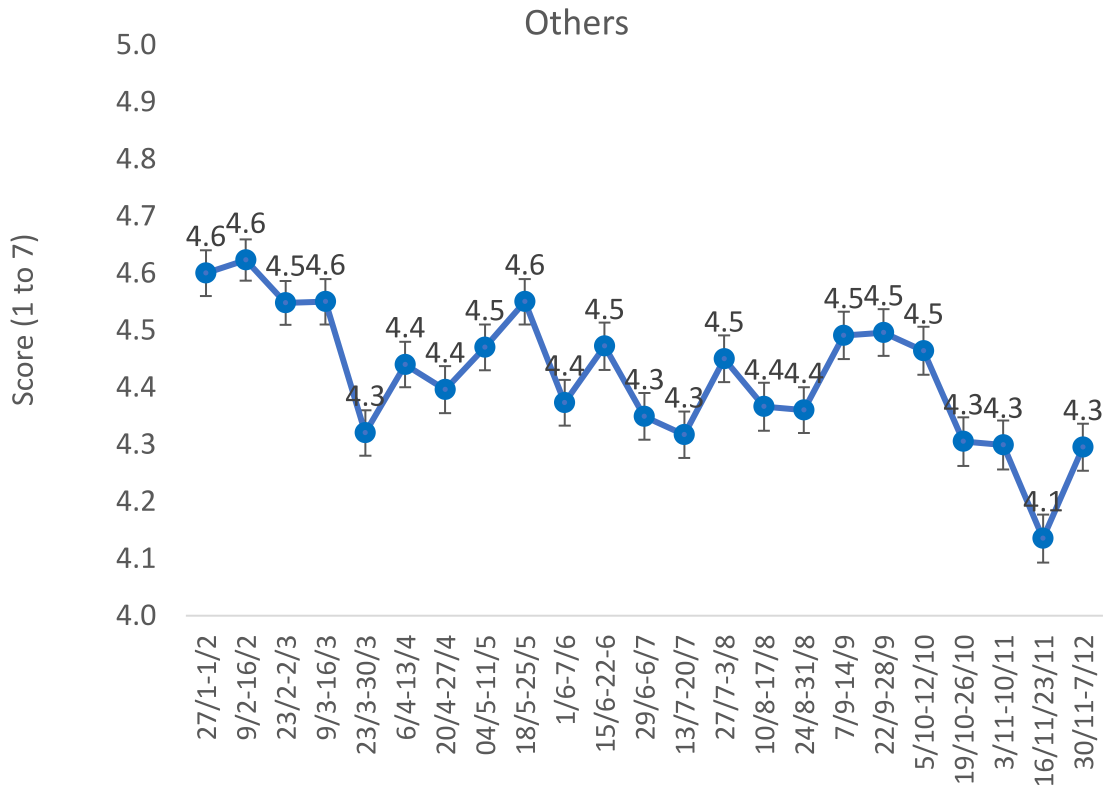


The overall worry component has risen since the start of October but did not change in this round of data collection. The worry component that is exclusive to the economy and restrictions has also risen since the beginning of October but to a lesser extent.

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

Self-Reported Compliance

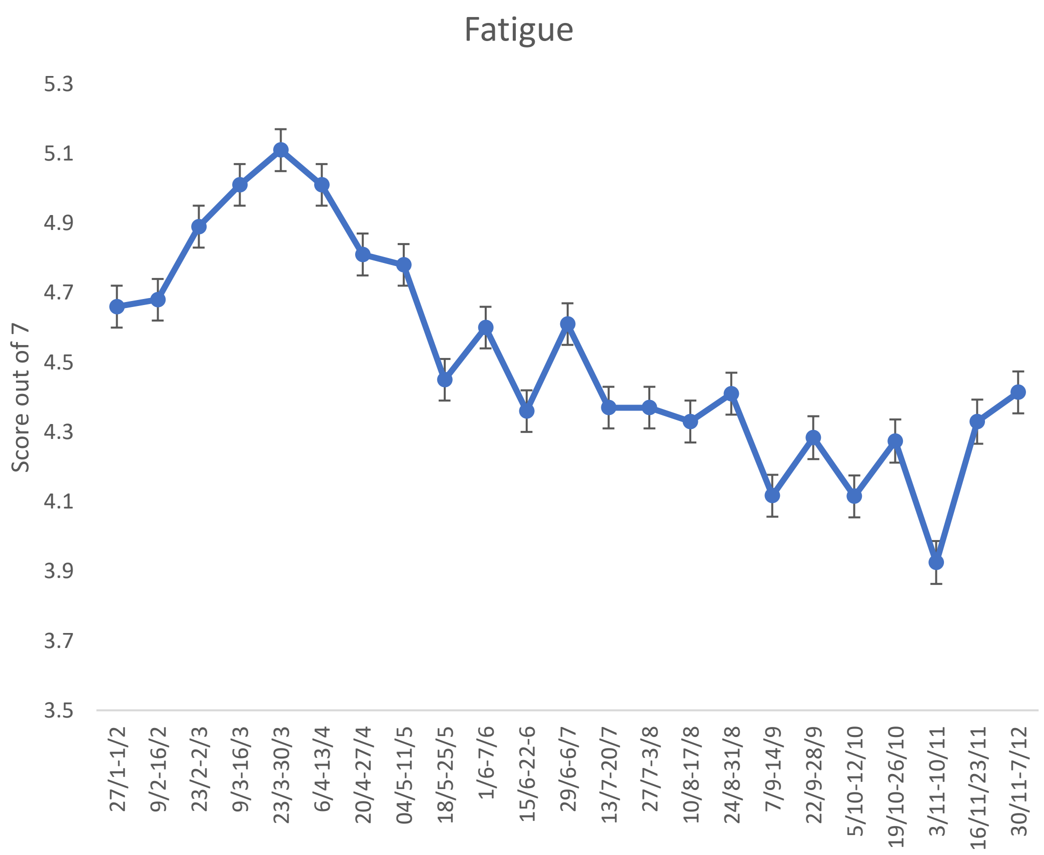


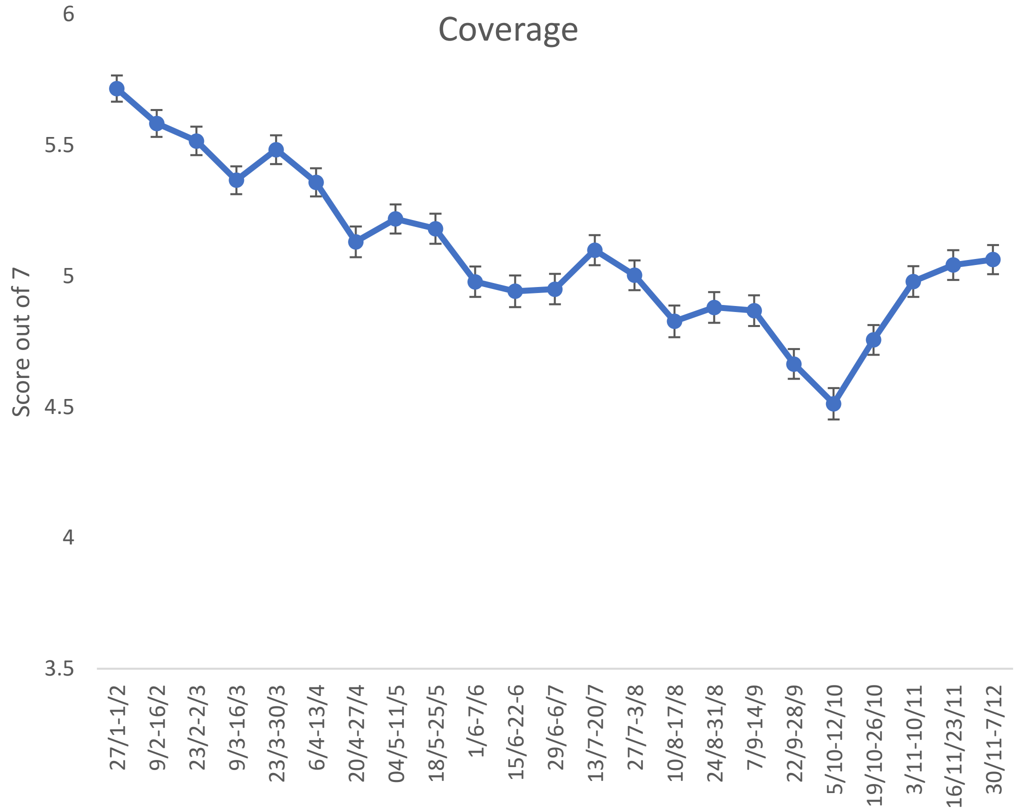


There were no changes in self-reported compliance with public health guidance but the dip in reported compliance of others that had taken place the previous round rebounded this round.

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

Psychological Drivers of Behaviour

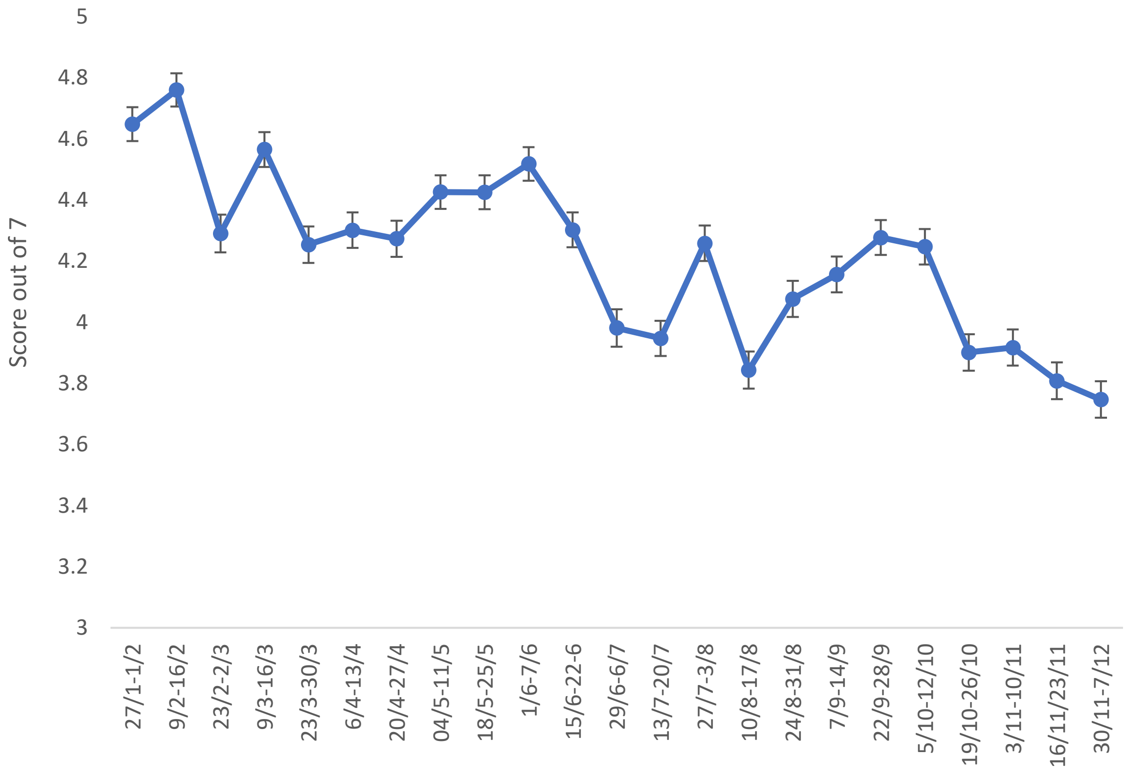




Neither fatigue with restrictions or coverage of COVID-19 news changed this round of data collection.

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

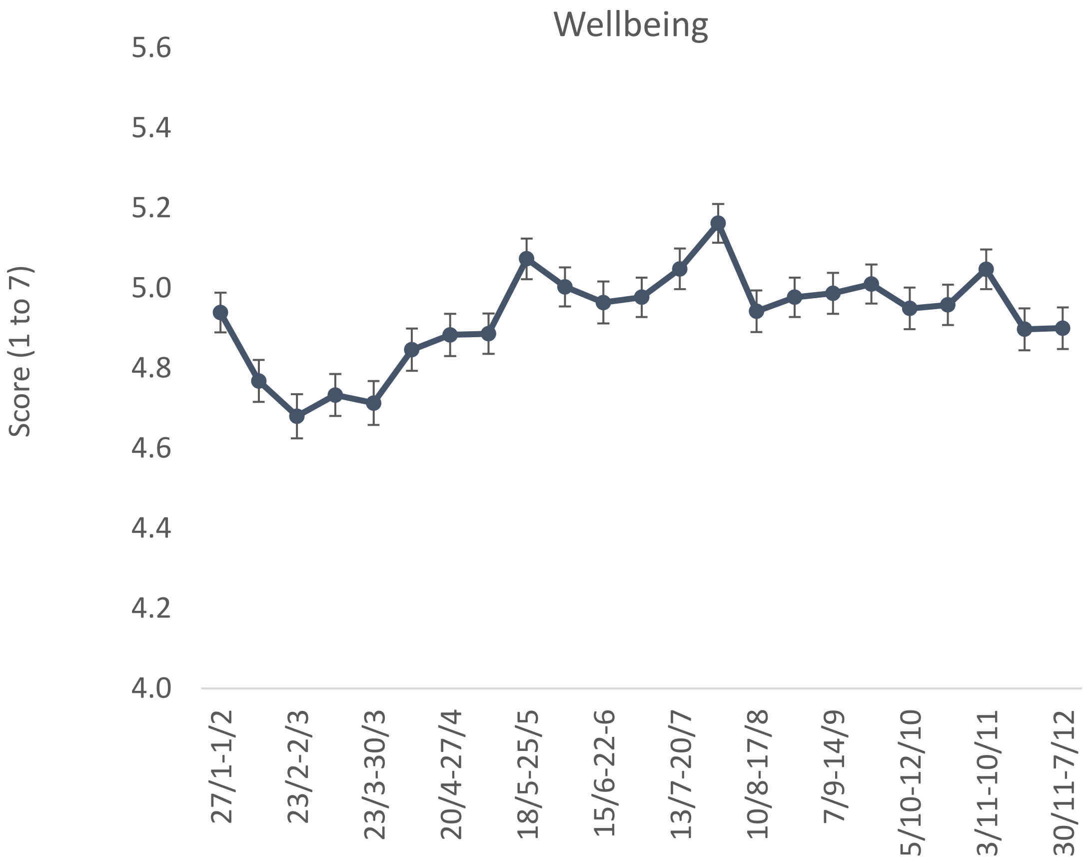
Coherence of restrictions



Perceived coherence of restrictions was lower this round of data collection than it was at the beginning of November and is at its lowest level since SAM began.

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

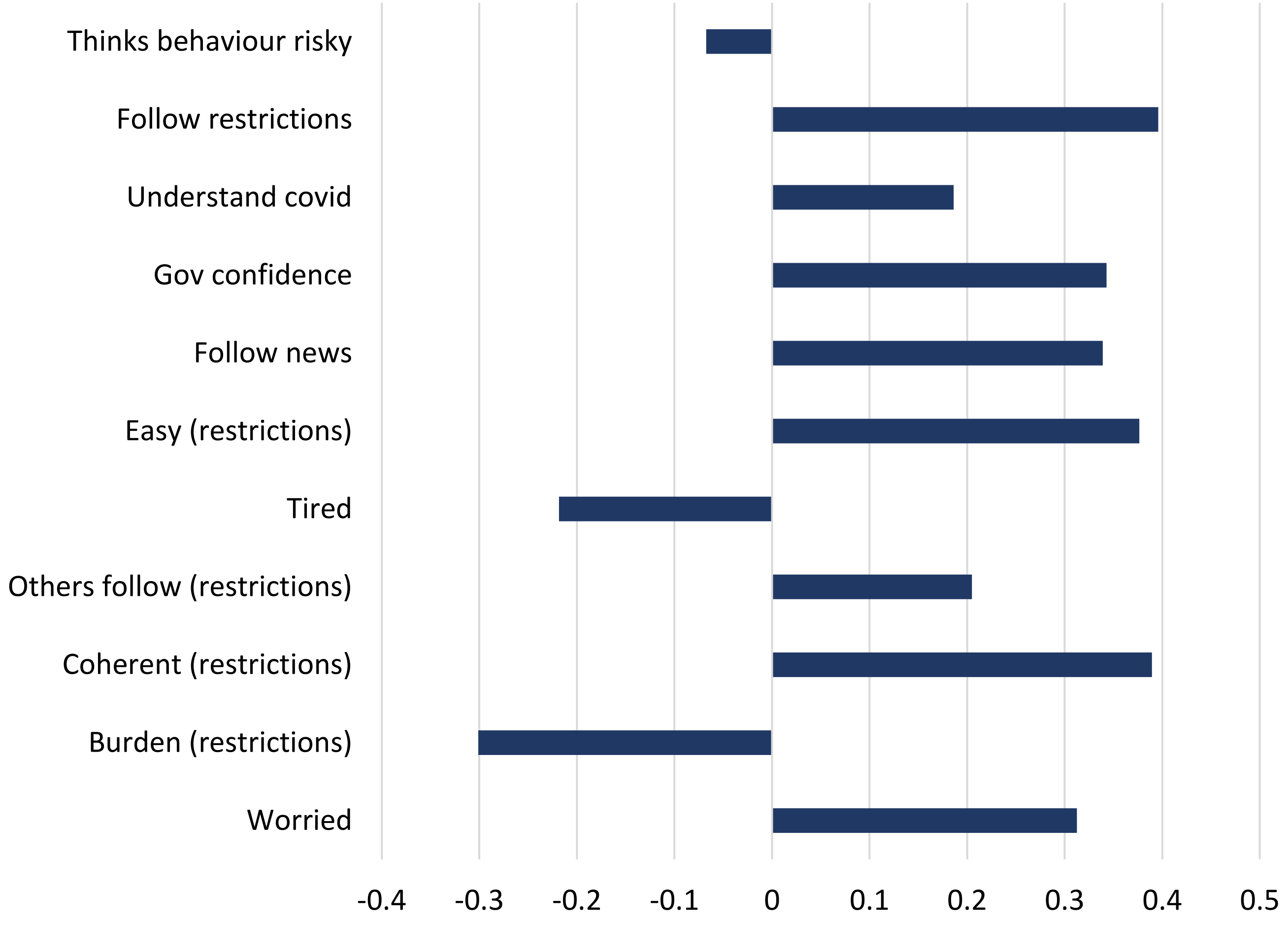
Wellbeing



Overall wellbeing did not change this round of data collection.

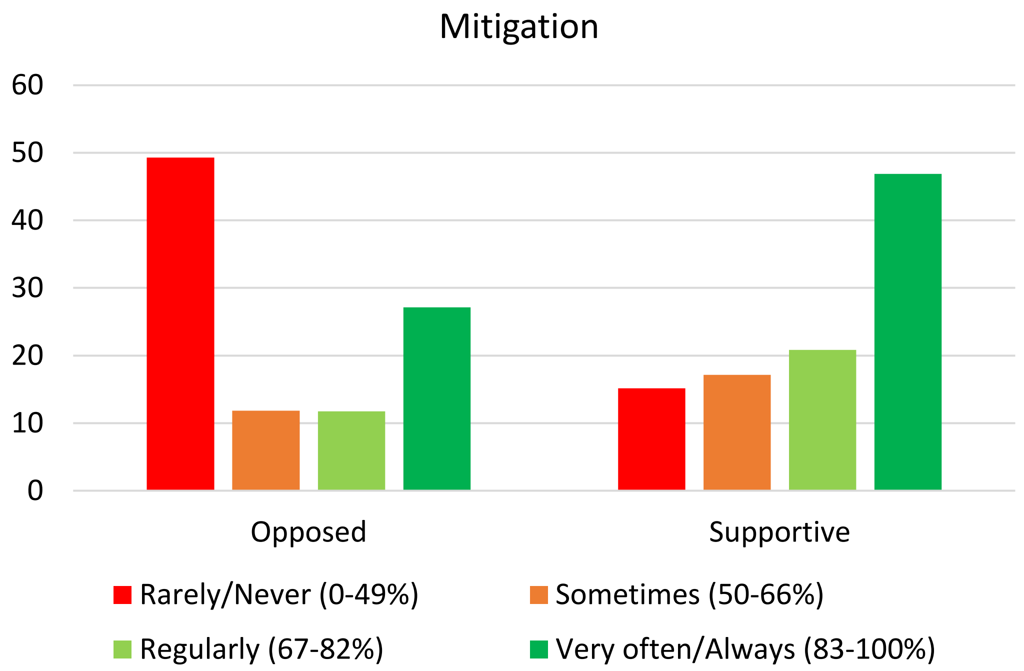
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

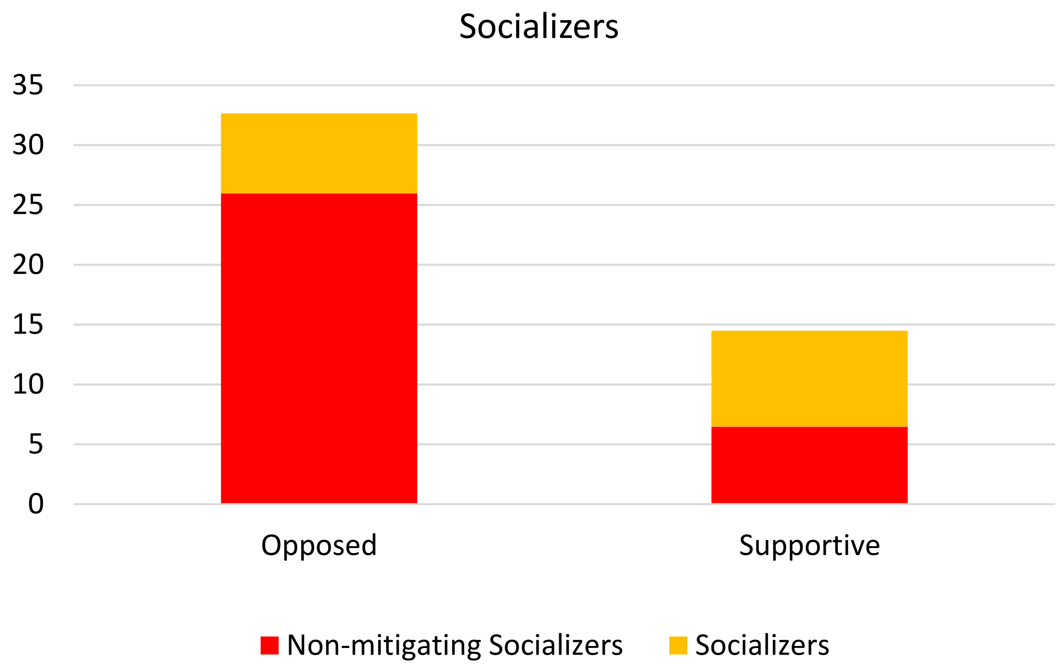
“Supportive” Response Cluster



By looking at how responses to series of questions tend to cluster, we find an overall pattern of responses that we have labelled as being “supportive”. This cluster tend to be worried about Covid-19, think that mitigation is important and following the guidelines. Those who give the opposite pattern of answers are labelled as being “opposed”.

Being “Supportive” and Behaviour

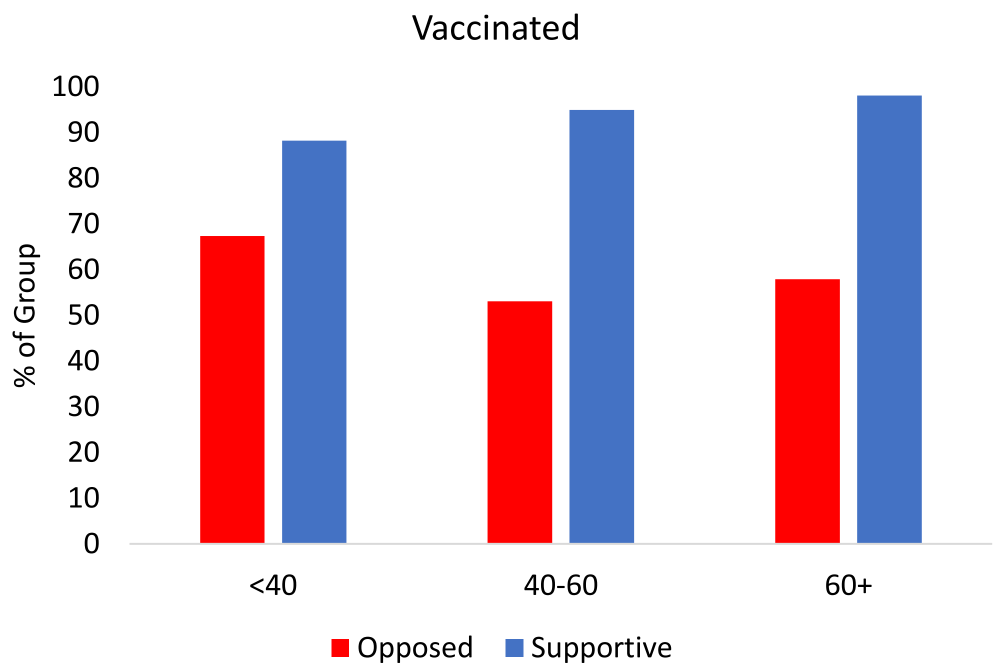


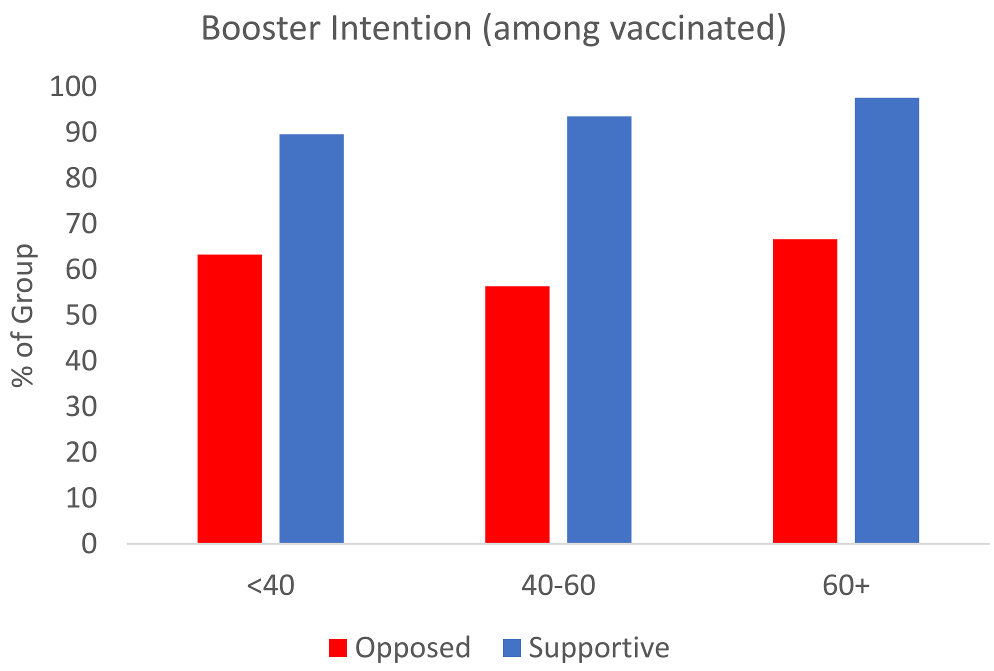


Those who are “supportive” are more likely to engage in mitigation behaviours and are less likely to be a socializer or a non-mitigating socializer than are those who are “opposed”.

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

Being "Supportive" and Vaccination

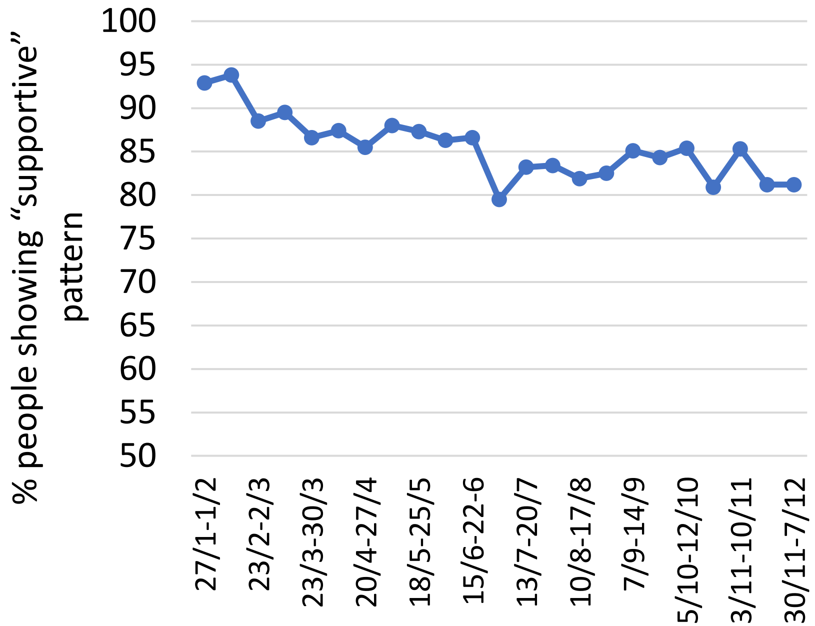


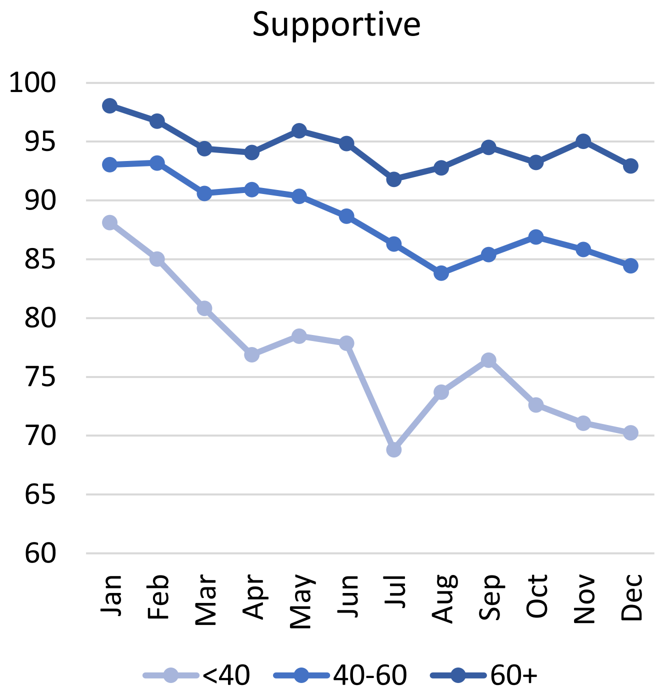


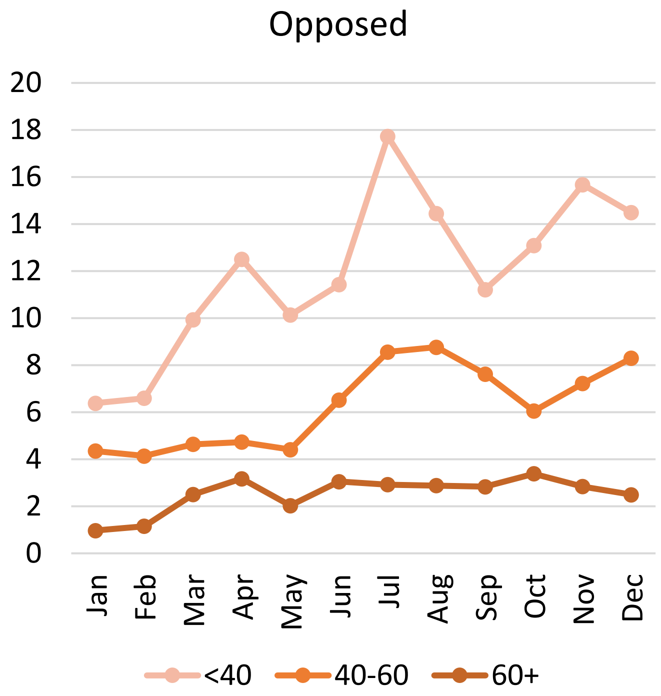
Those who are "opposed" are less likely to have accepted a Covid-19 vaccine across all age groups. Among those who did accept a vaccine, those who are "opposed" are less likely to report intending to take a booster.

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

Being "Supportive" over Time



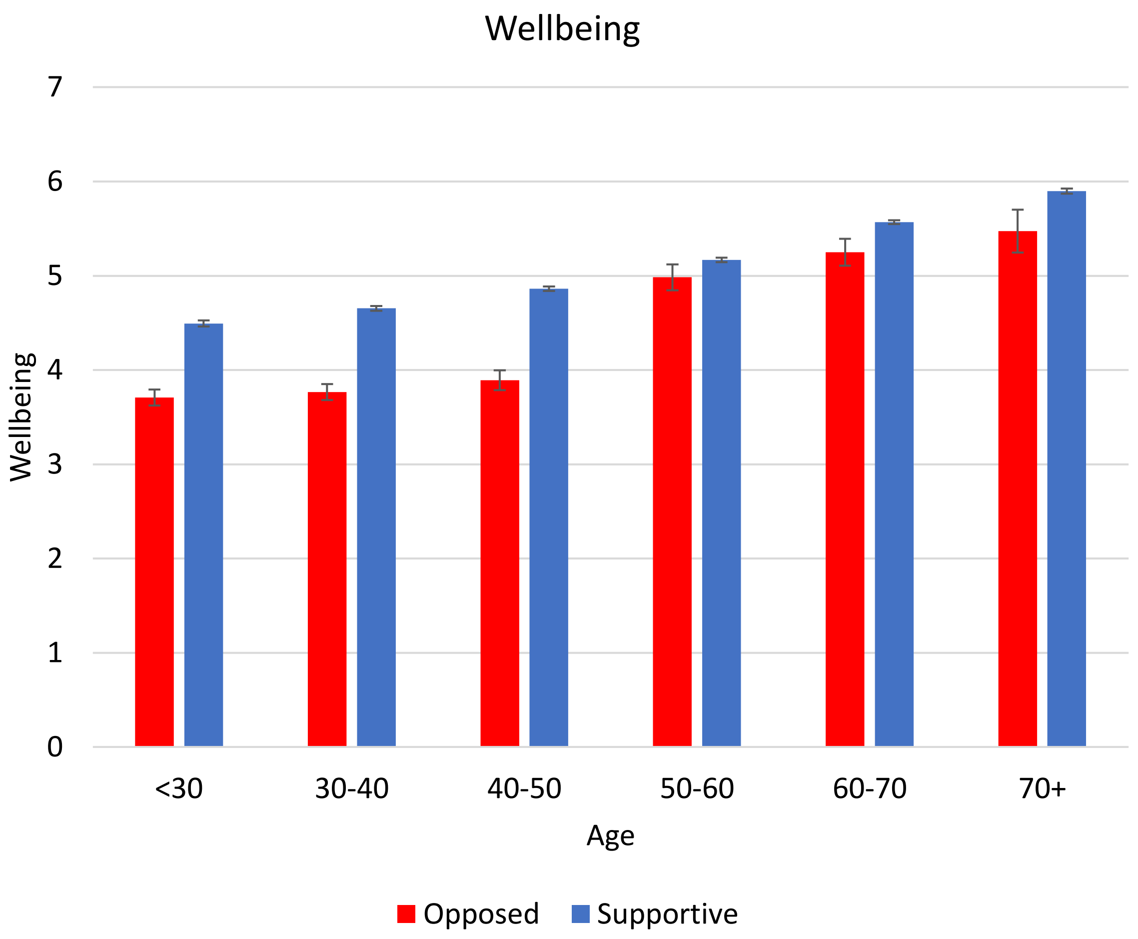




A majority show the "supportive" pattern of responding, although the proportion is declining.
The drop has been steeper amongst younger age groups.

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

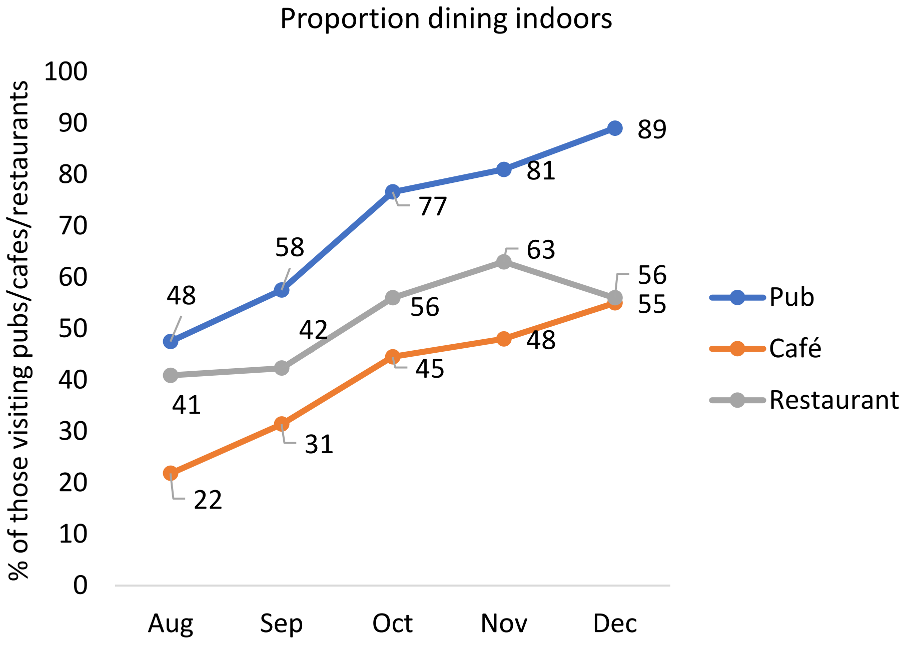
Being "Supportive" and Wellbeing

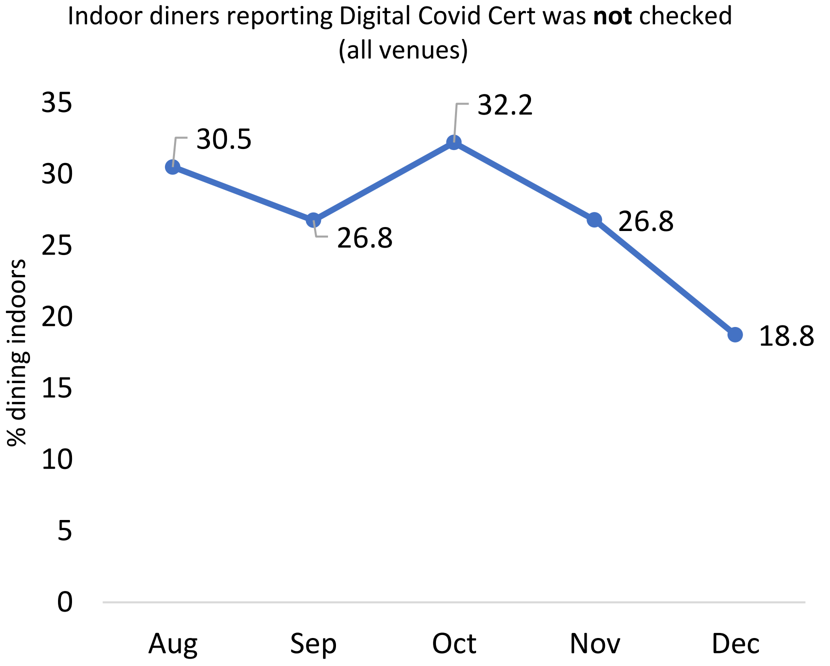


Being "supportive" is associated with benefits in terms of wellbeing. This is more true for younger people than it is for older people.

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

Hospitality – Digital Covid Certs



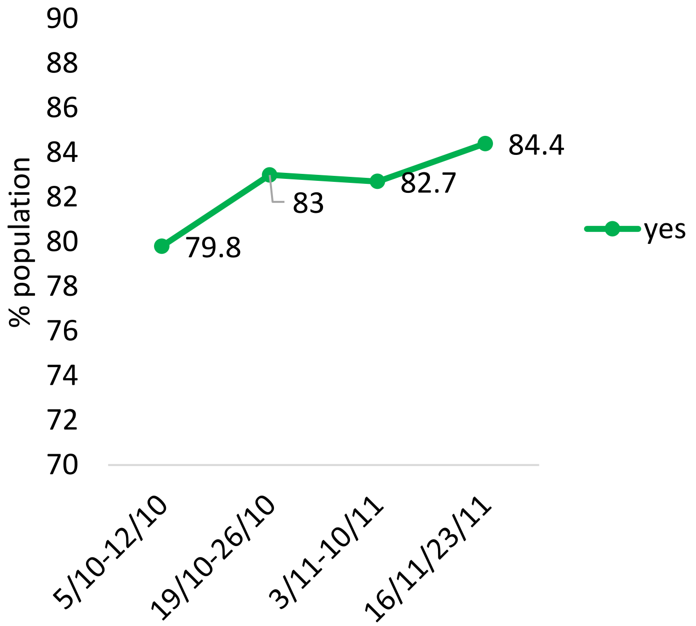


The proportion of those visiting hospitality who dined indoors has been steadily increasing since August, though the changes this round were not significant. Aggregating across venues, a smaller proportion of those who dined indoors reported that their Covid Cert was not checked compared to October.

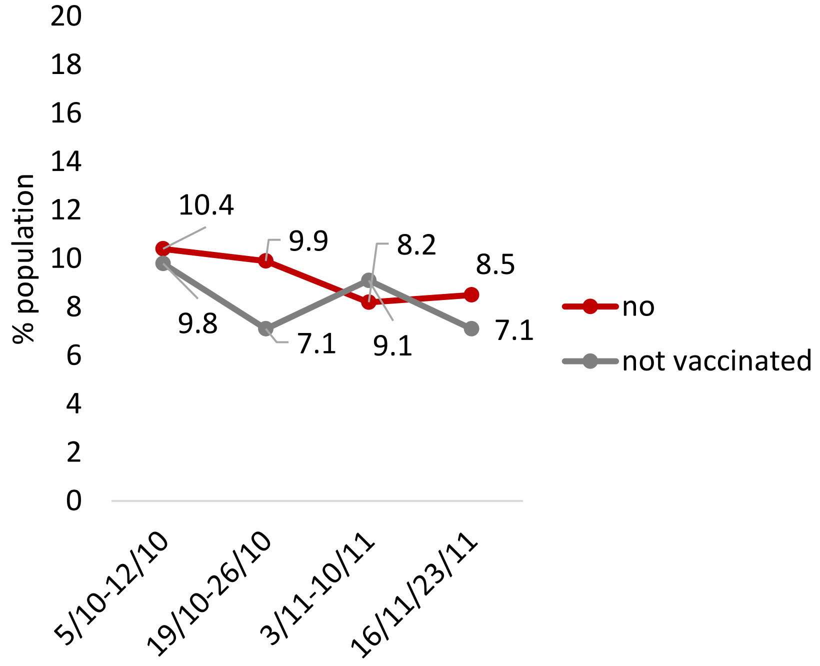
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Vaccine Intentions

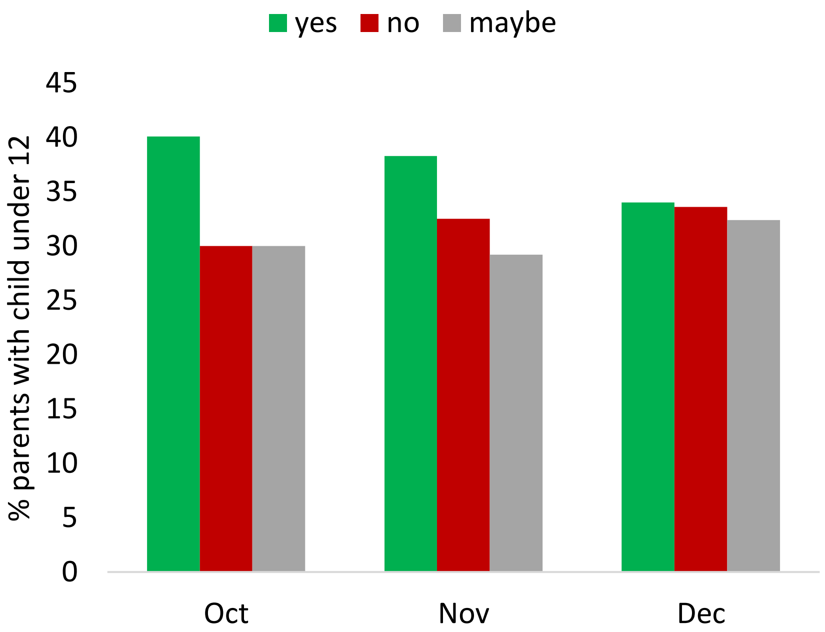
Take booster if recommended and offered?



Take booster if recommended and offered?



Would you allow your child under 12 to be vaccinated?

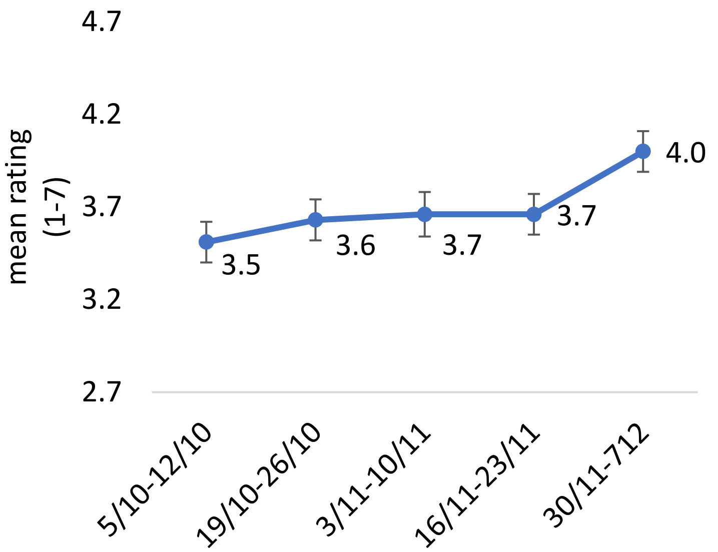


The proportion of the population who intend to take a booster has risen significantly since the start of October, although the size of the effect is small. Almost 85% of the population intend to take a booster. The proportion of parents who intend to allow their child under 12 to take a vaccine has not changed since October. Approximately 35% of parents intend to do so while approximately 30% intend not to.

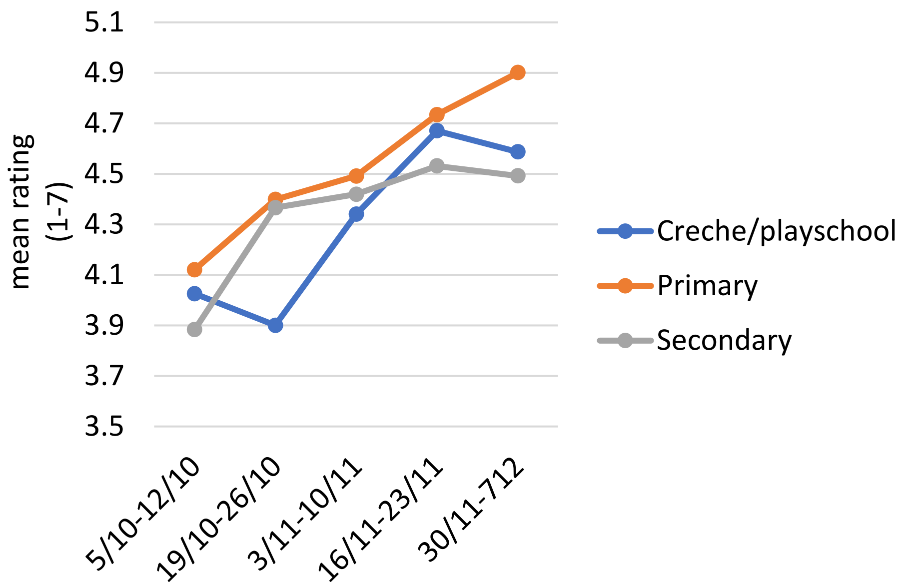
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Children and Schools

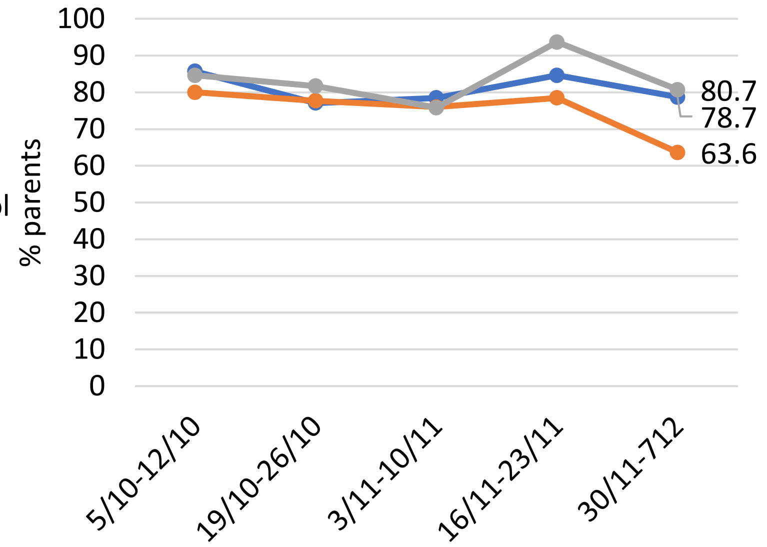
How worried do you think your child is about COVID-19?



Likely child could catch COVID-19 at school



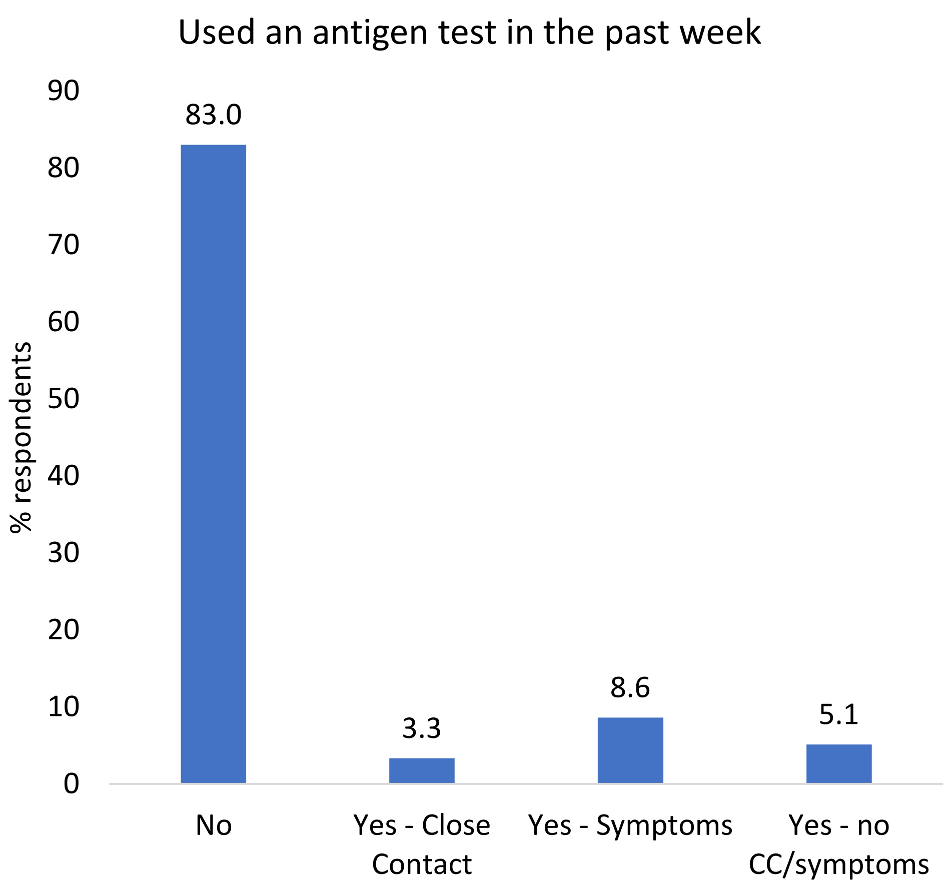
Satisfaction with safety measures in schools

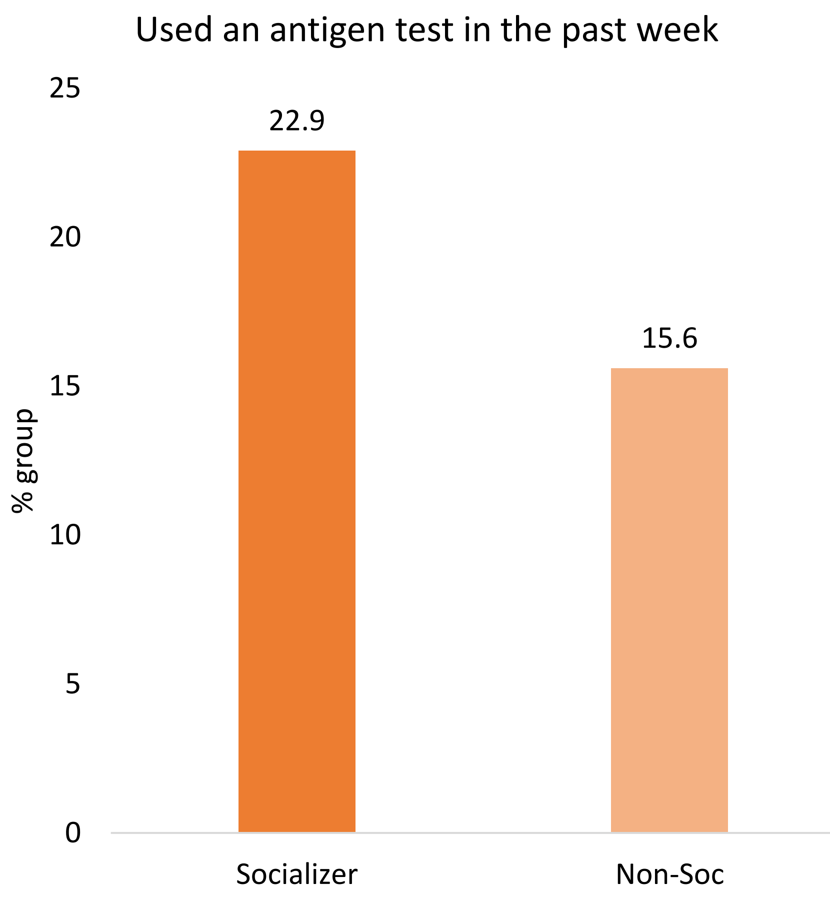


Parents reported that their child is more worried about COVID-19 than earlier in November. Belief that their child could catch COVID-19 at school has increased since October for all schools, but particularly primary schools. The proportion of parents with children in primary school who are satisfied with the school's safety precautions has dropped in the latest wave of SAM, to 63% from approx. 80%.

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

Antigen Tests





One-in-eight people report using an antigen test in the past week, most commonly because they are experiencing symptoms. Those who engage in high levels of social activity are more likely to report having used an antigen test. However numbers from one wave of SAM are too small to allow for detailed analysis.

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