



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Social Activity Measure Jan 18th – 25th 2022

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

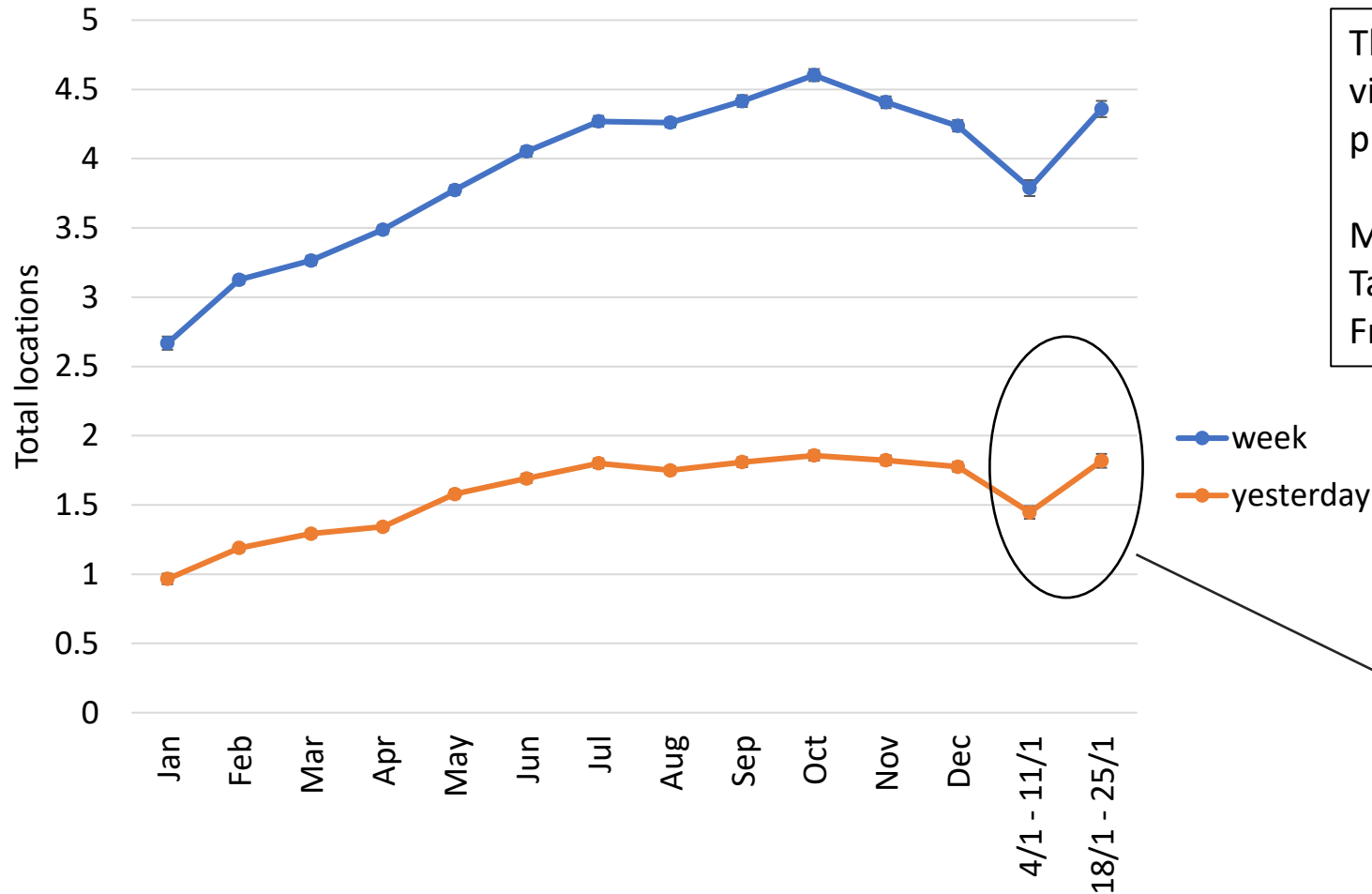
The Social Activity Measure (SAM) is a behavioural study that records the public response to the risk of COVID-19 infection over time. Designed by the ESRI's Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), SAM is an anonymous, interactive, online study that surveys people about their recent activity. The study offers 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 January 18th and 25th 2022. Data were collected during a period when high case numbers had begun to fall and hospitalisations had remained broadly stable. On January 20th, NPHET issued guidance about lifting restrictions. On Friday the 21st, the Taoiseach announced the lifting of the majority of the public health restrictions from the following day. Some analyses in this round of SAM split the sample between people surveyed before and after this announcement, i.e. comparing Tuesday 18th-Friday 21st versus Saturday 22nd-Tuesday 25th.

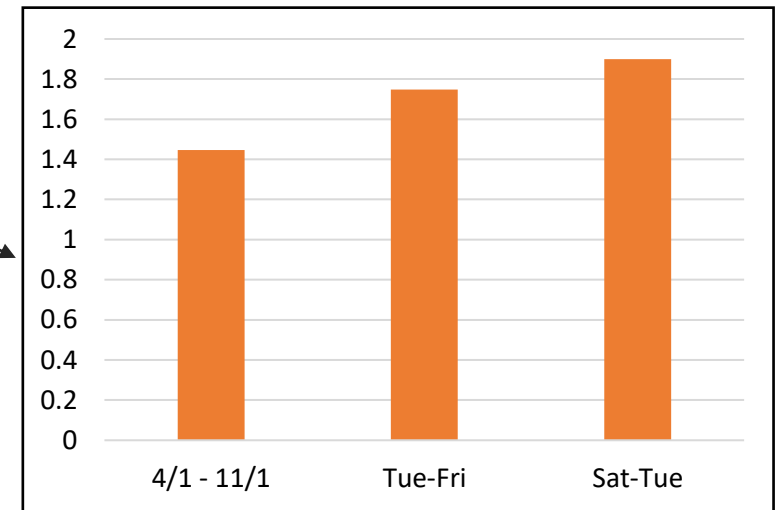


Total locations visited

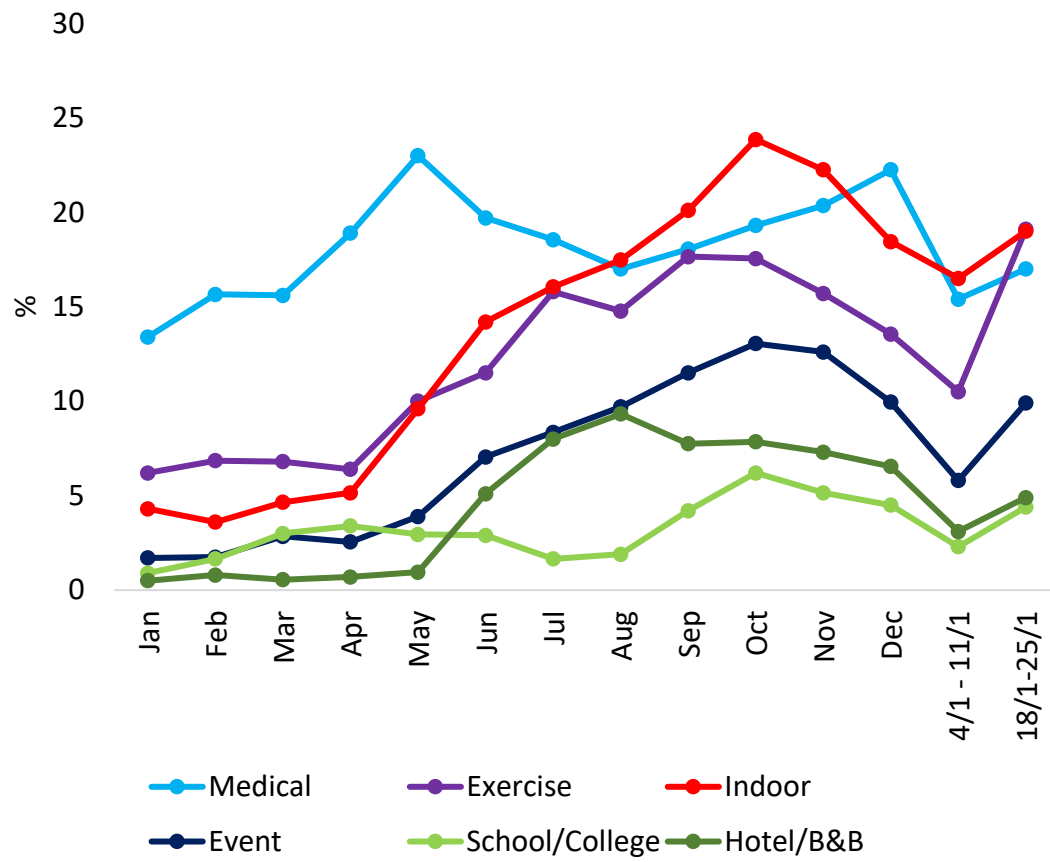
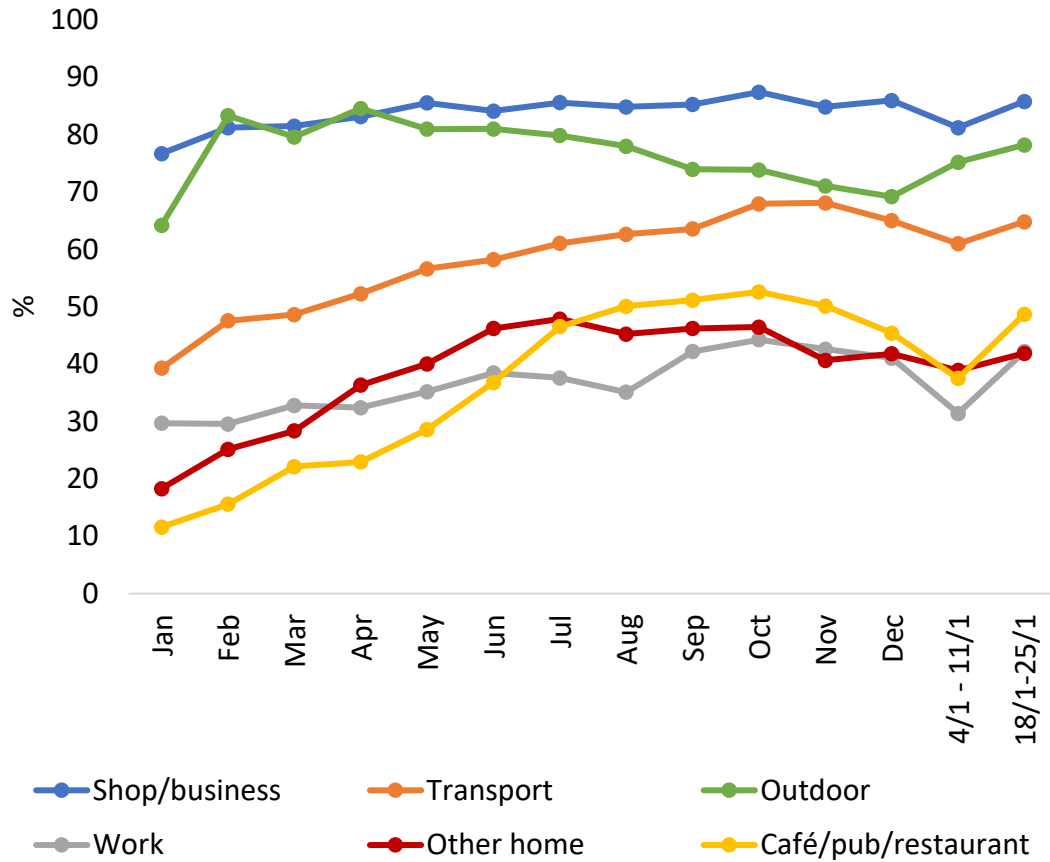


There was a significant increase in locations visited both over the previous week and the previous day.

Much of the increase occurred before the Taoiseach's announcement (Tuesday 18th-Friday 20th in the inset chart).

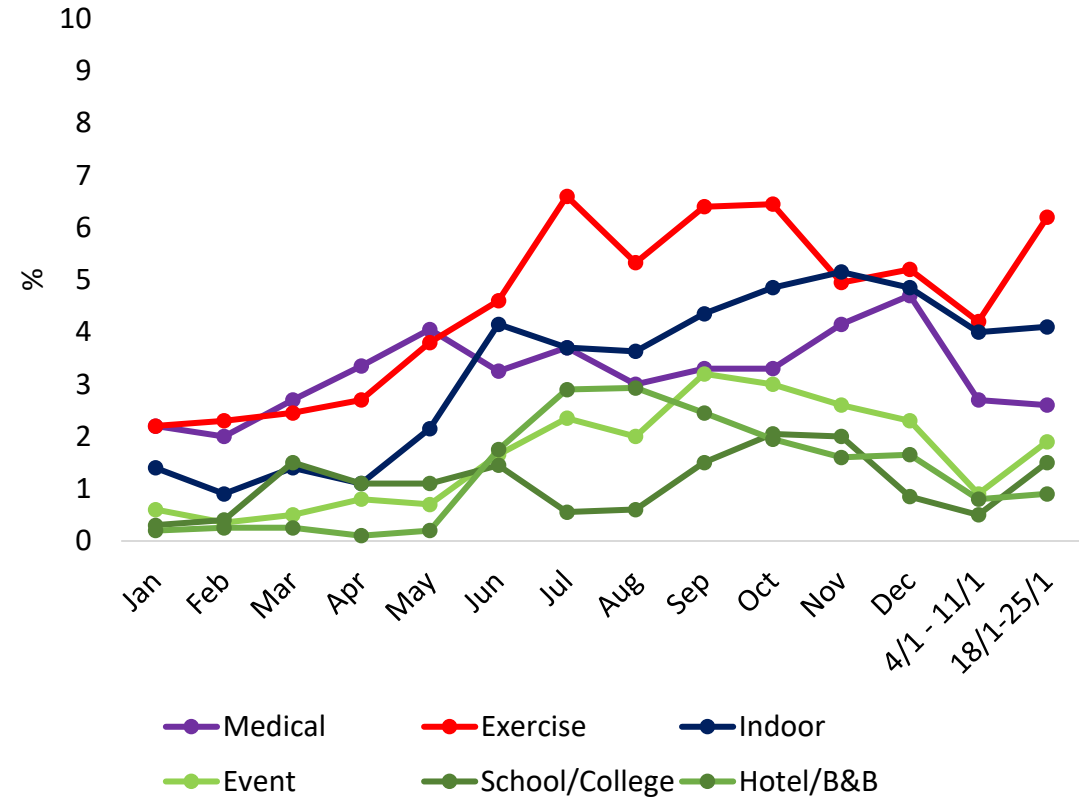
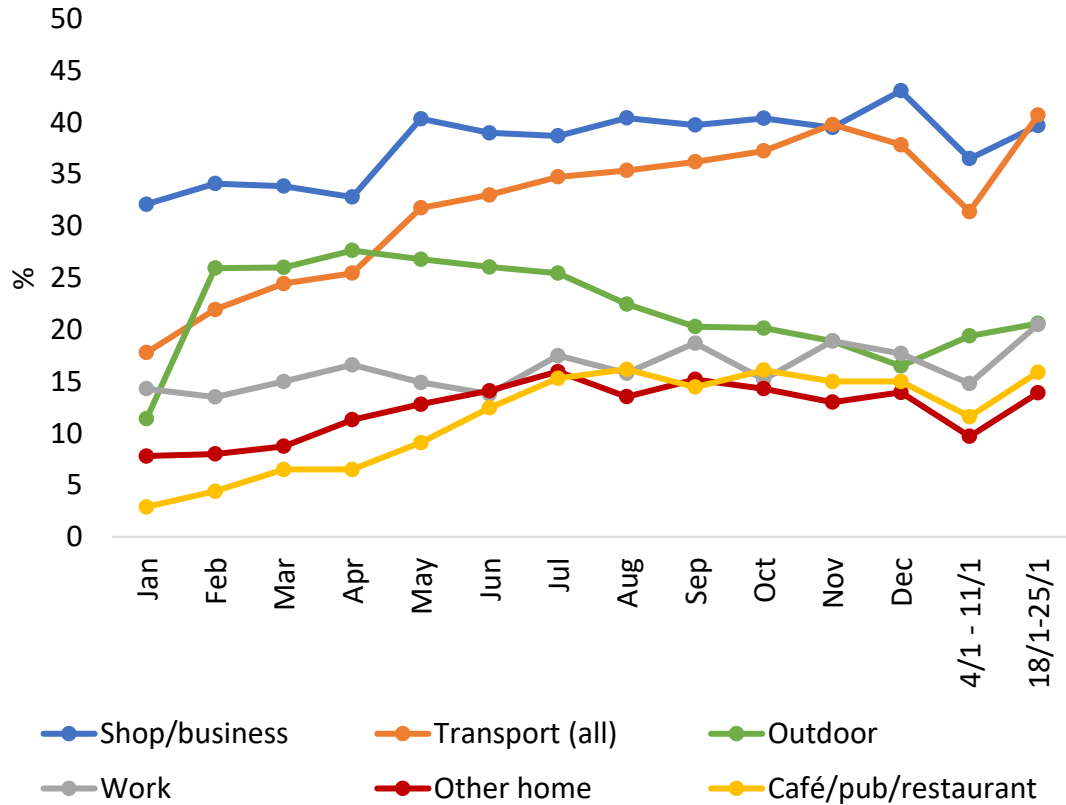


Locations visited (previous week)



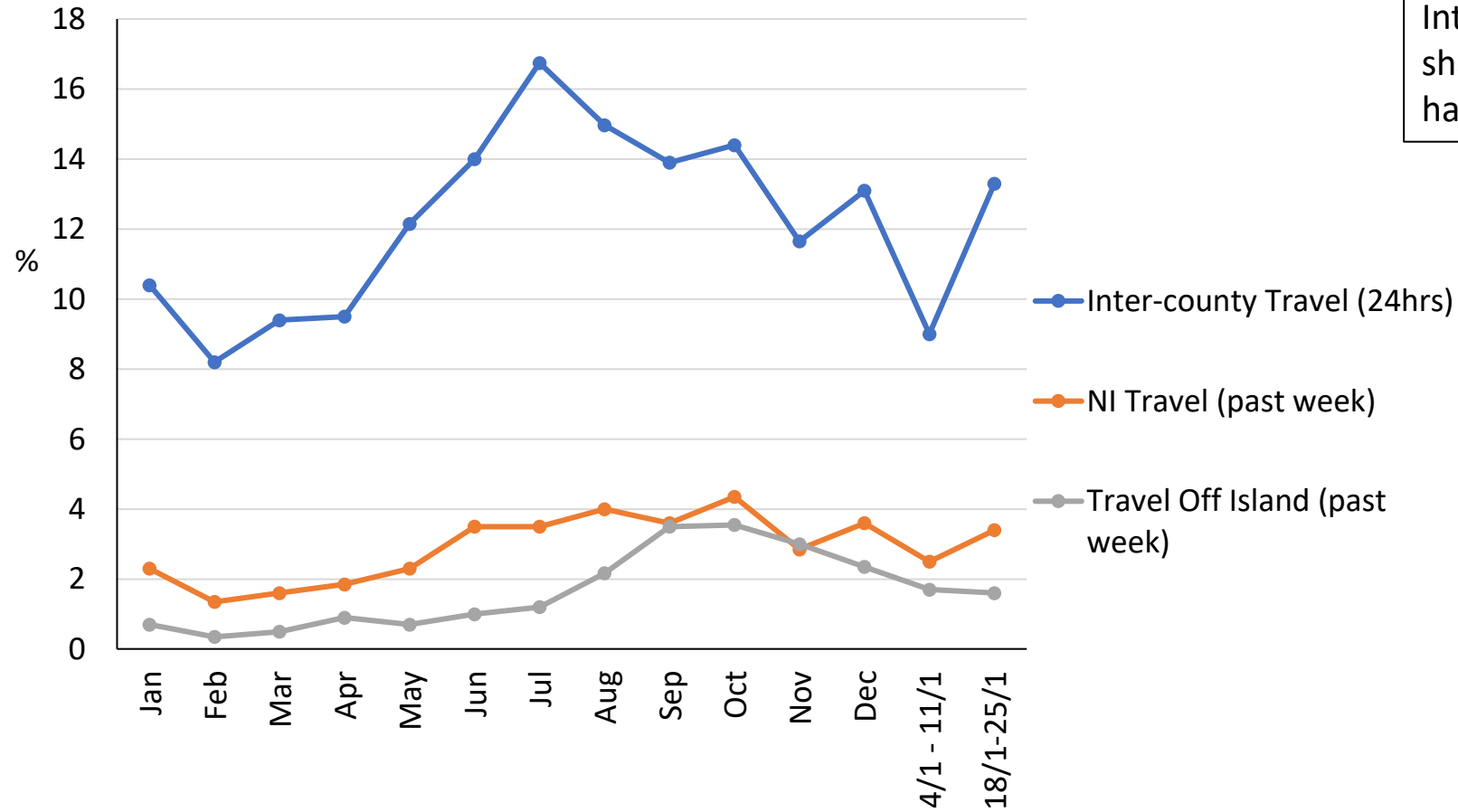
Visits over the week increased for all locations. Significant increases were seen in visits to shops/ businesses, work, café/pubs/restaurants, exercise, event, and hotels/B&Bs.

Locations visited (yesterday)



Visits the previous day increased for all locations. All were statistically significant except for visits to shops/business, outdoors, medical, indoor locations, schools/colleges, and Hotels/B&Bs.

National and international travel

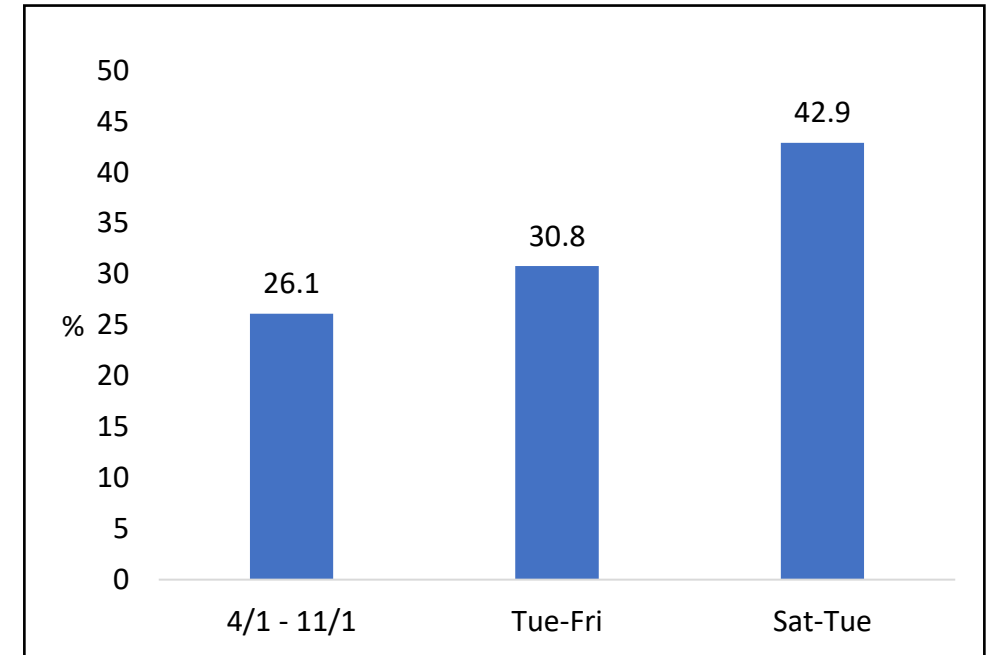
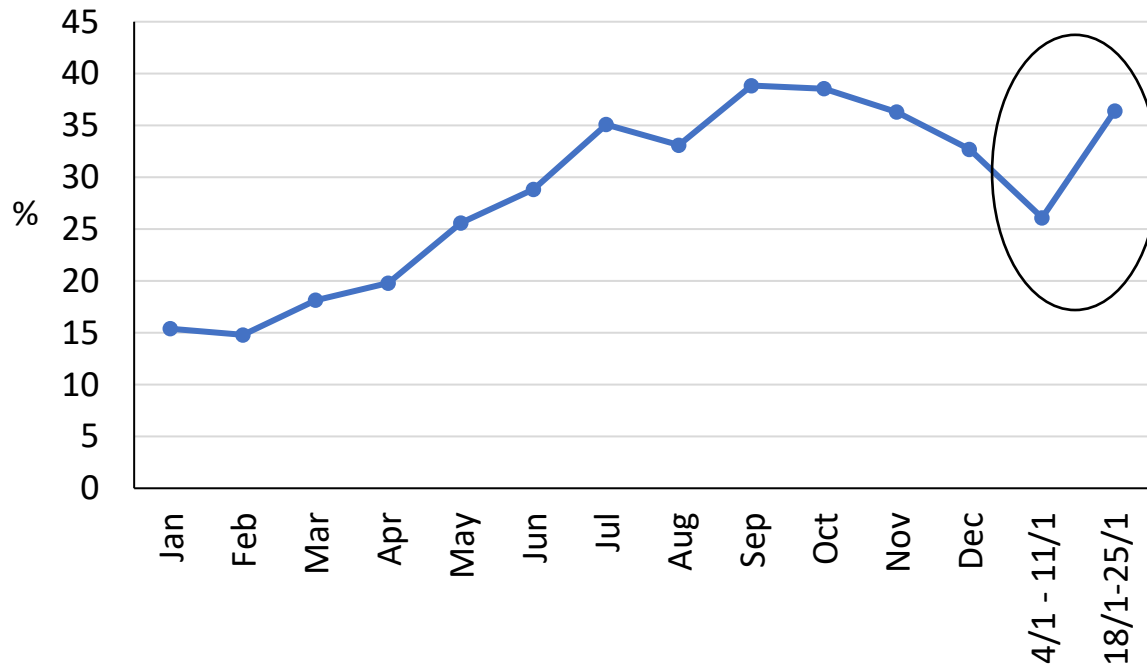


Inter-county travel recovered sharply and is now the highest it has been since October 2021.

Close contacts



Close contact in past 24 hours

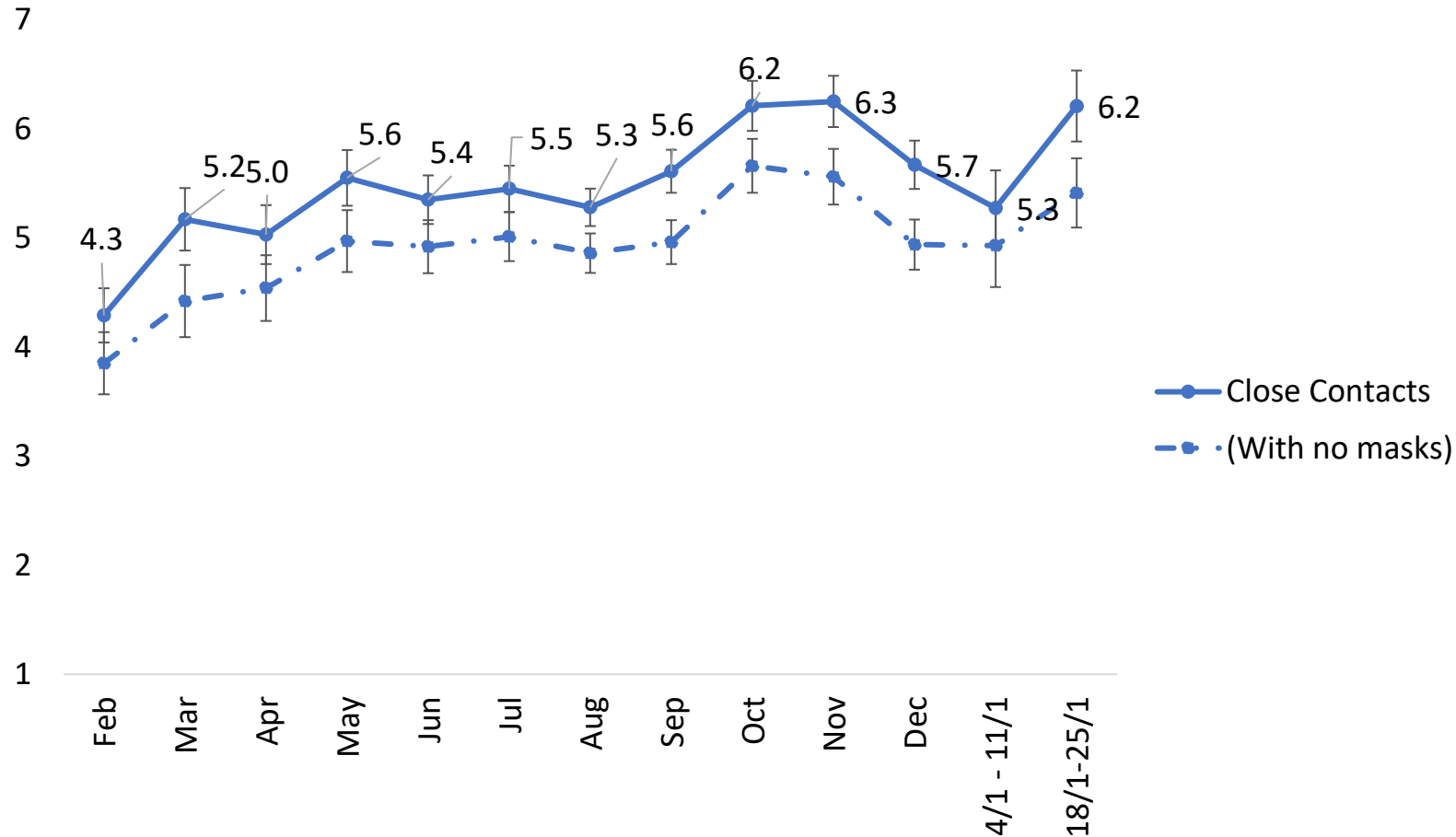


There was a large increase in the proportion of people who had a close contact the previous day. This greatly accelerated following the Taoiseach’s announcement, after which close contacts reached a higher level than recorded at any point in the previous 12 months.



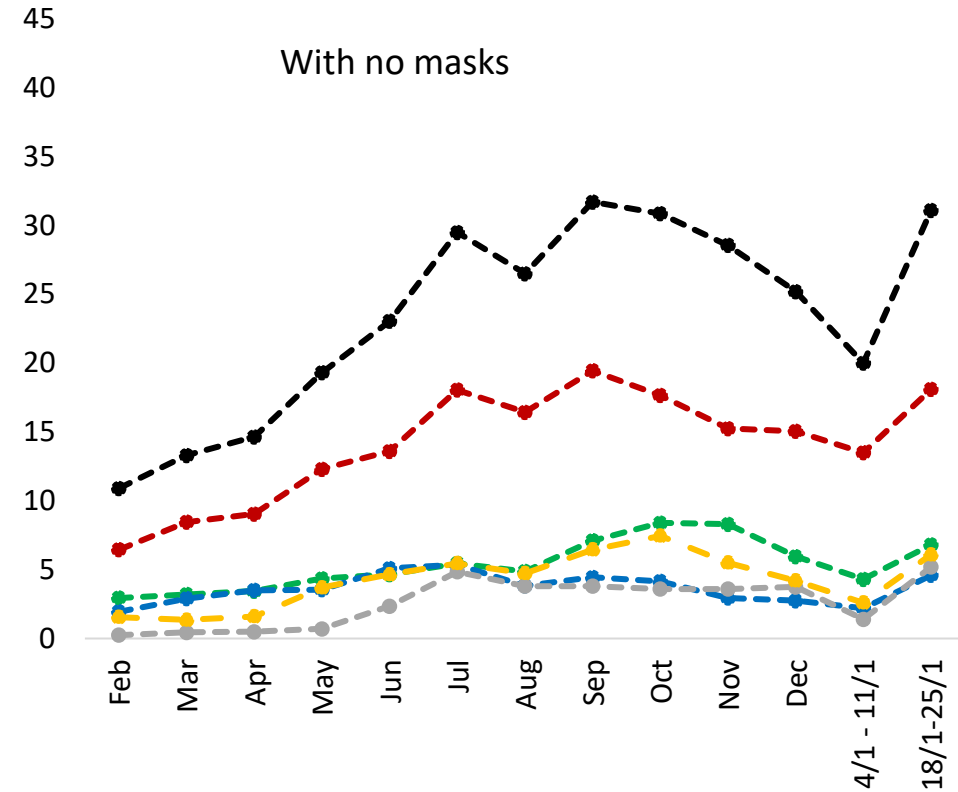
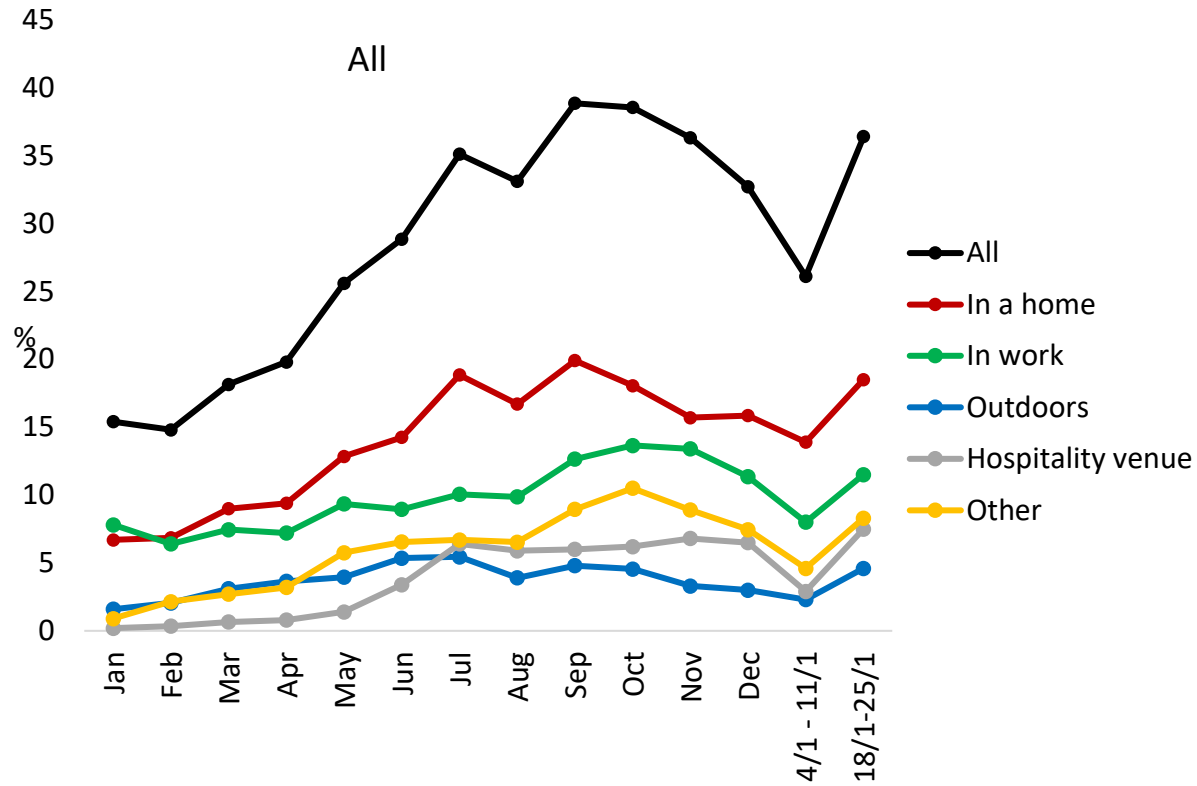
Number of close contacts

Average number of close contacts among those with at least one



Among those who had a close contact the previous day, the average number of close contacts rose, both for those who did and did not wear masks. The number of close contacts is now significantly higher than in December.

Close contacts - locations

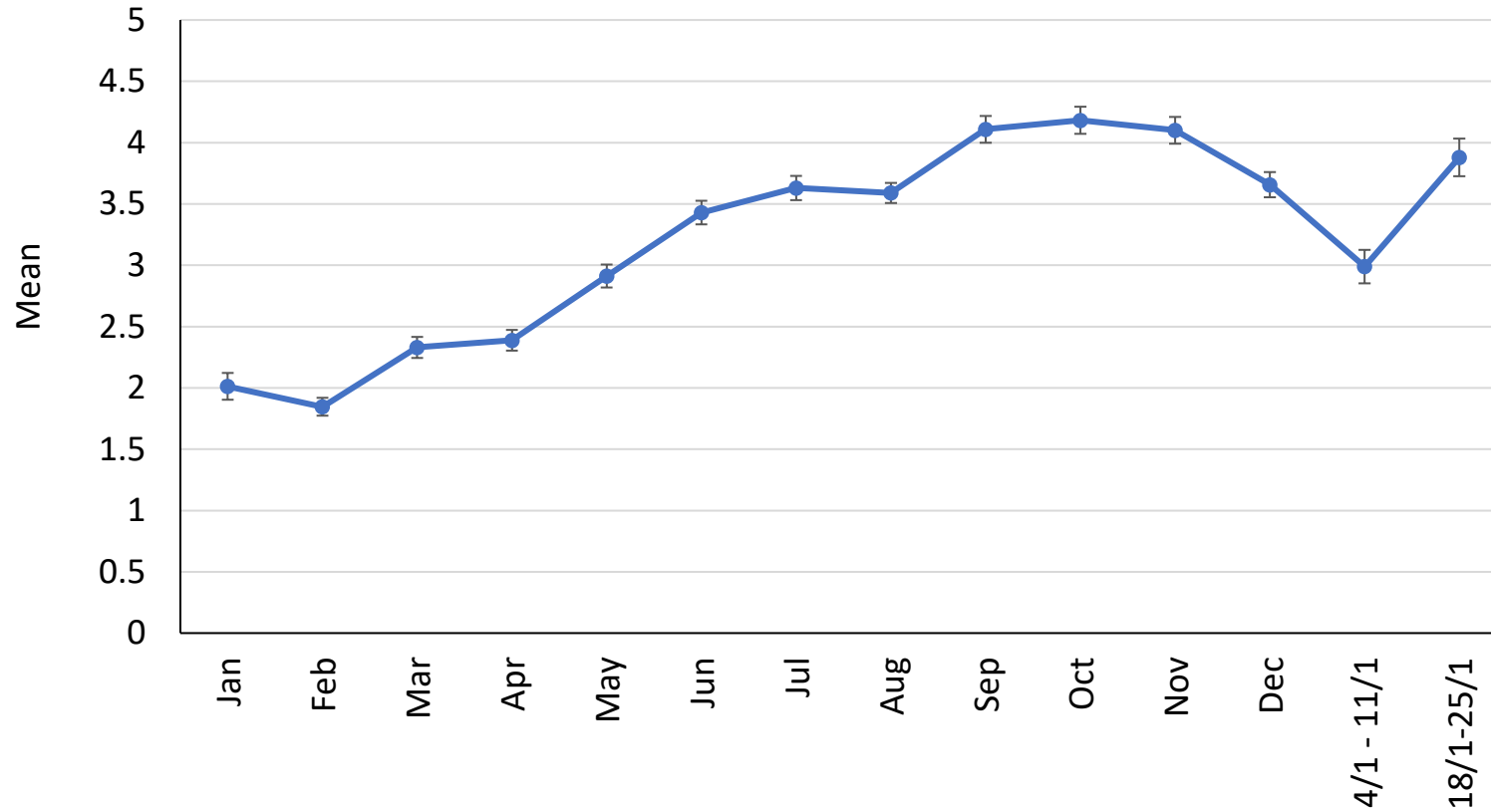


There was a rise close contacts in all types of location and in situations where people were not wearing facemasks. The increase was spread across all locations.

Number of people met



People from other households met in past 48hrs

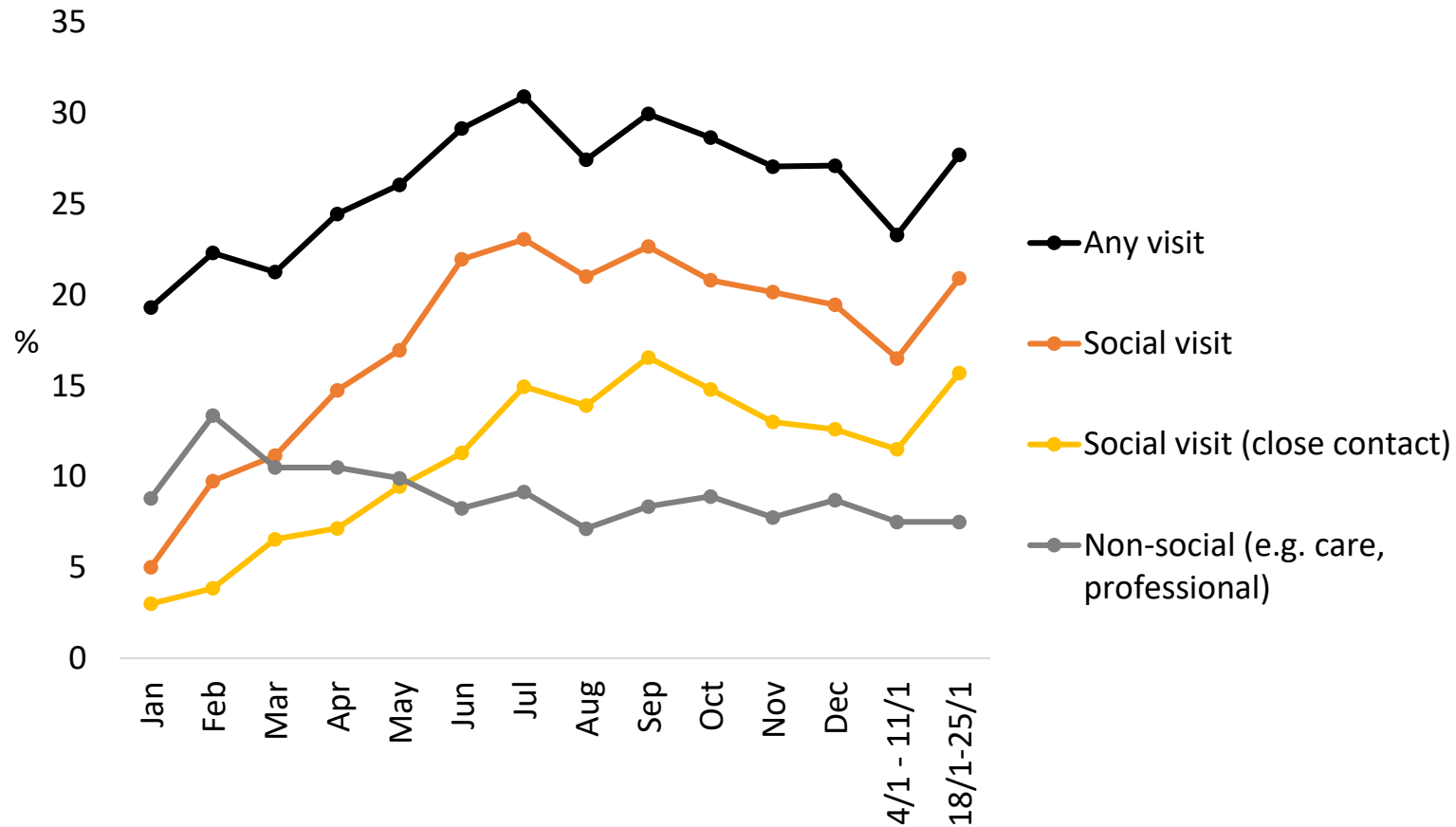


There was a significant increase in the number of people from outside their household that individuals met up with. This higher level was roughly constant across the period of data collection.

Home Visits

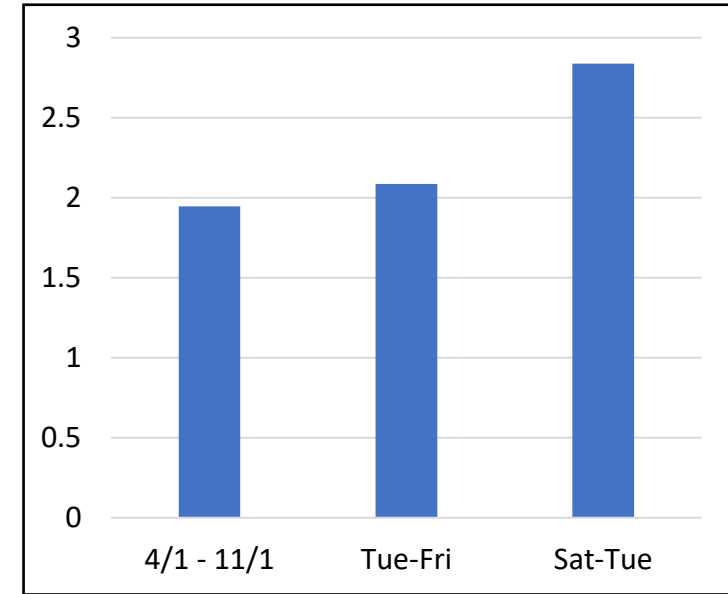
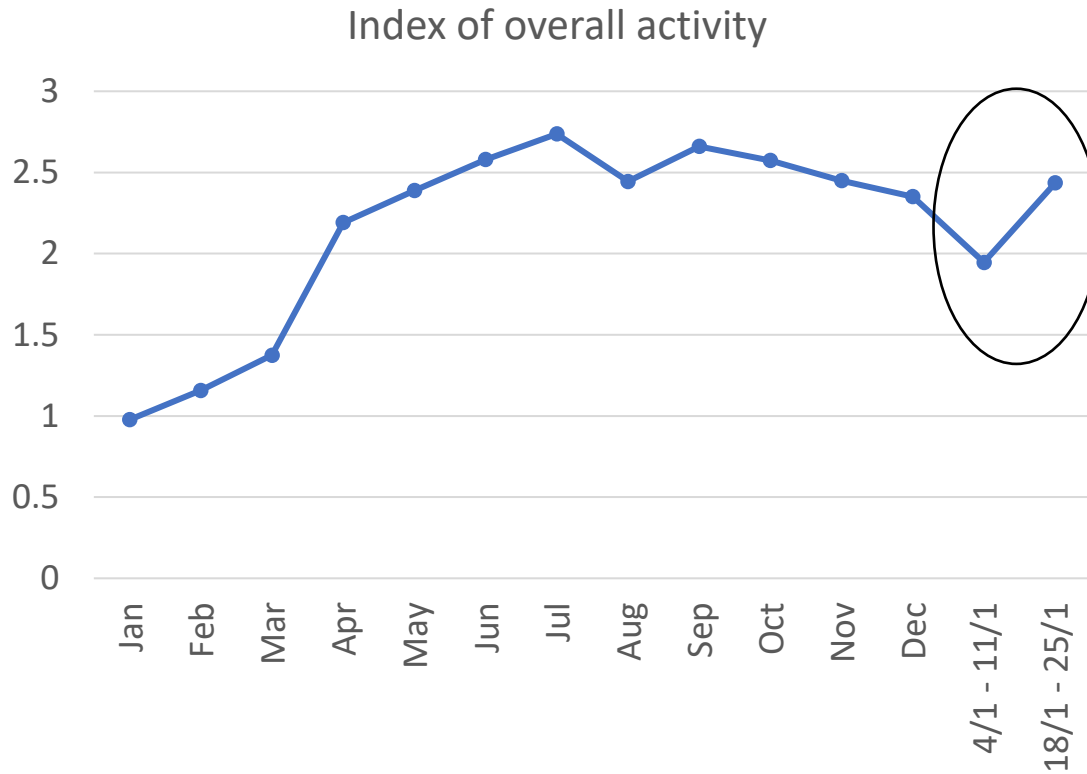


Proportion who had visitors or visited another household (previous day)



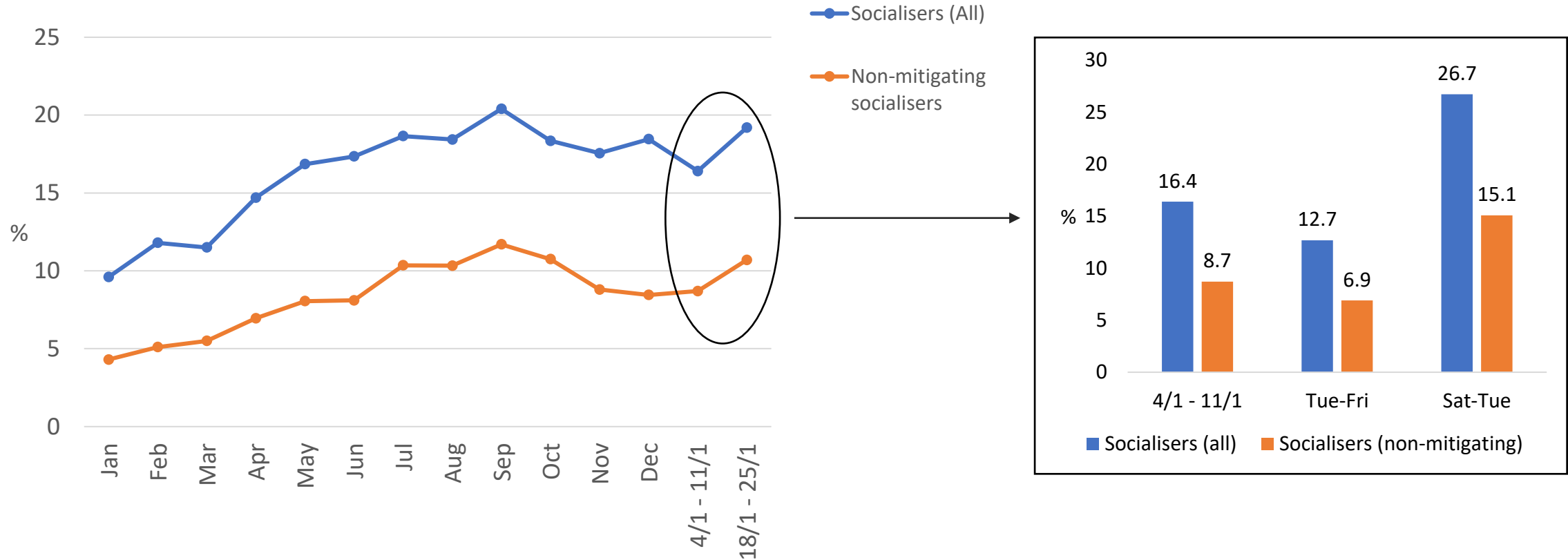
There was a significant increase in home visits the previous day, driven by an increase in visits for social reasons.

Overall social Activity



Overall social activity, measured by a combination of places visited and people met, rose substantially, but especially following the Taoiseach's announcement.

Socialisers

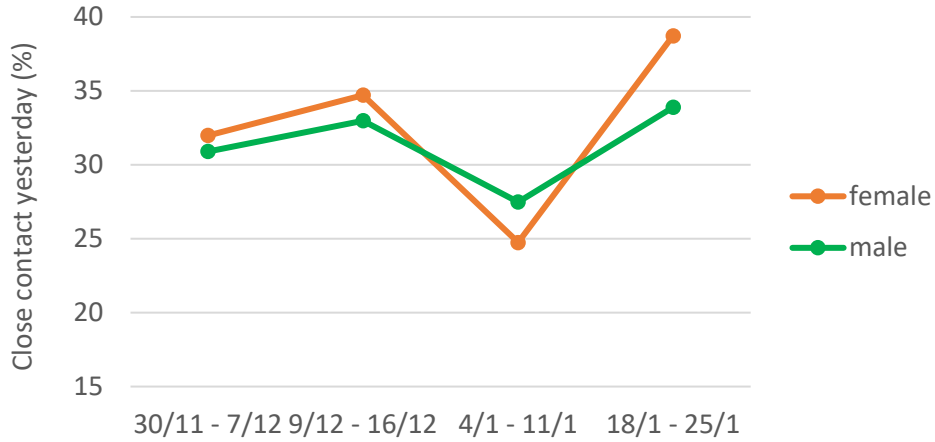


There were increases in the proportions of people engaging in particularly high levels of social activity ('socialisers') and who do so while taking few or no precautions, such as wearing a mask or maintaining 2m distance ('non-mitigating socialisers'). These proportions had been relatively stable since early Autumn. The increases occurred after the Taoiseach's announcement.

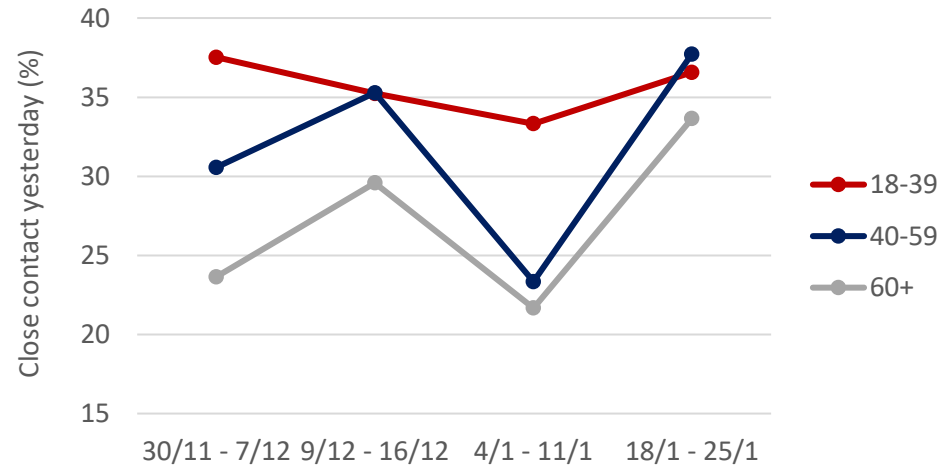


Close contacts by background characteristics (Dec/Jan)

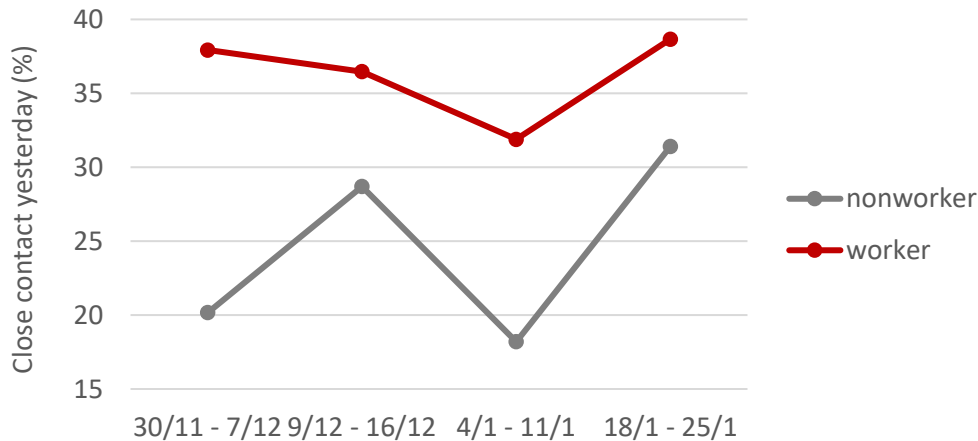
Close contacts by gender



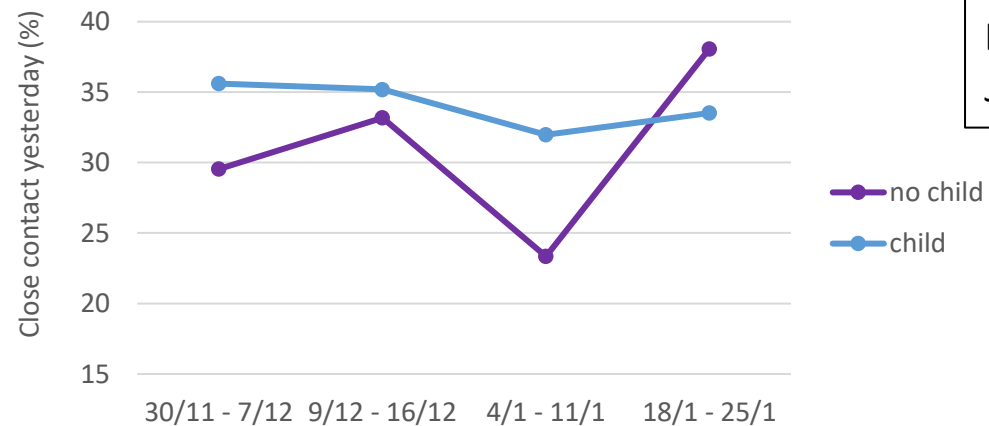
Close contacts by age



Close contacts by working status



Close contacts by whether household has child (under-18)

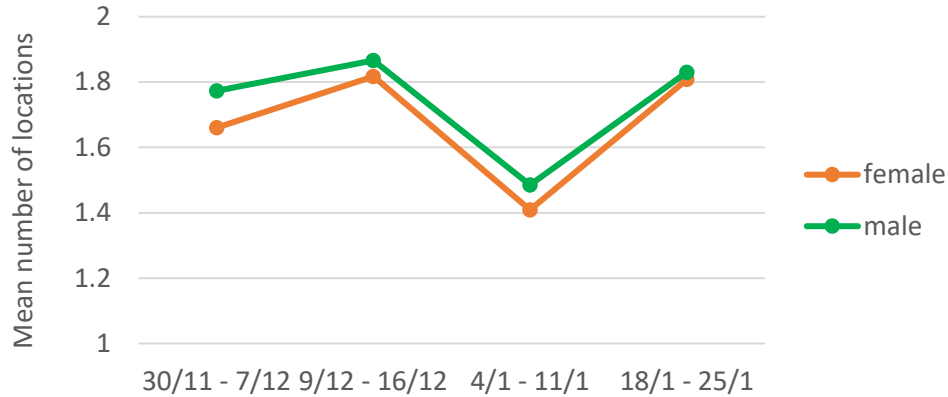


Women, older adults, nonworkers and those without children had the strongest increases in the likelihood of having close. These same groups were also the most likely to have reduced the likelihood of close contacts between December and early January.

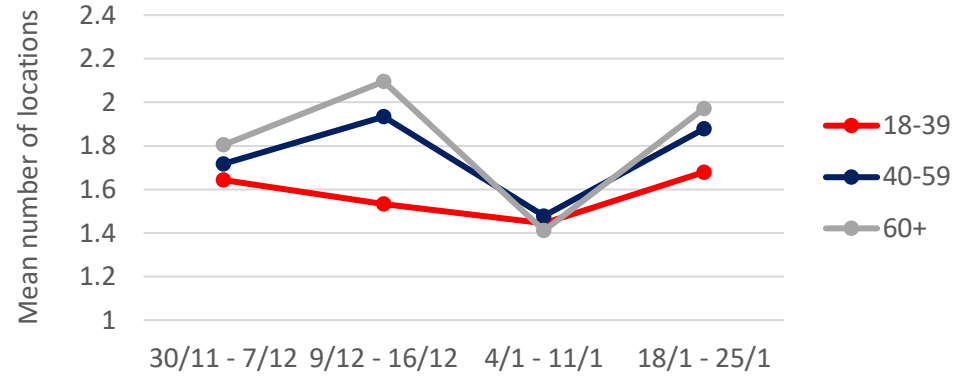
Locations visited outside the household by background characteristics (Dec/Jan)



Locations visited yesterday by gender

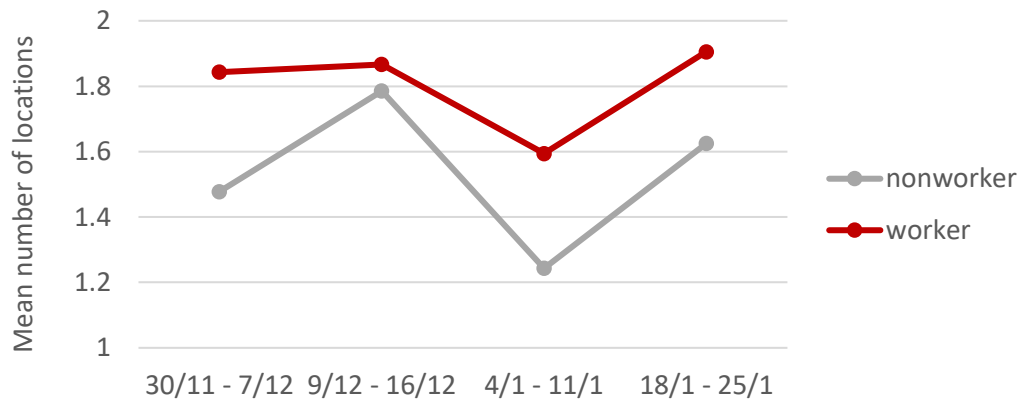


Locations visited yesterday by age

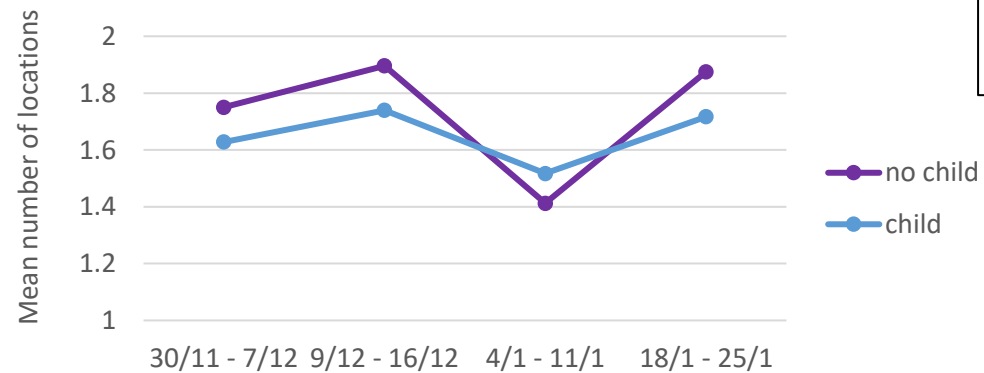


Older adults, nonworkers, and those without children were also the groups driving the recent reduction and then increase to the number of visits different locations.

Locations visited yesterday by working status



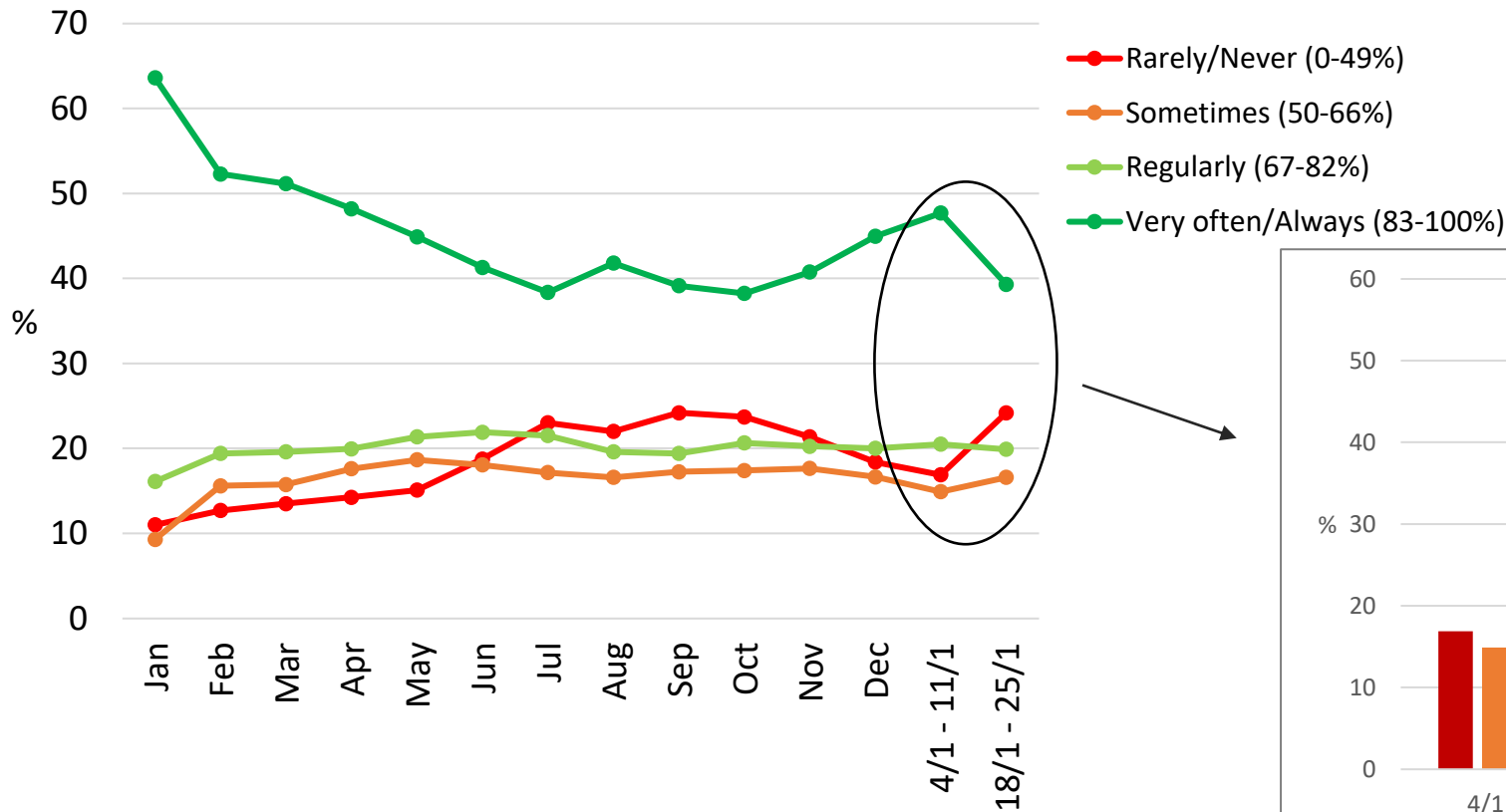
Locations visited yesterday by whether household has child (under-18)



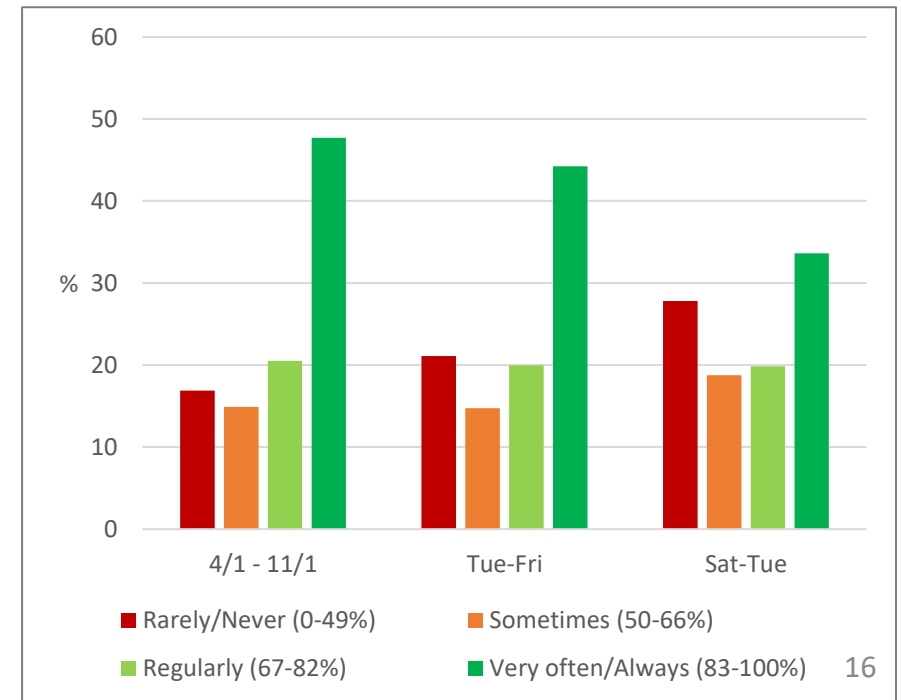
Mitigation



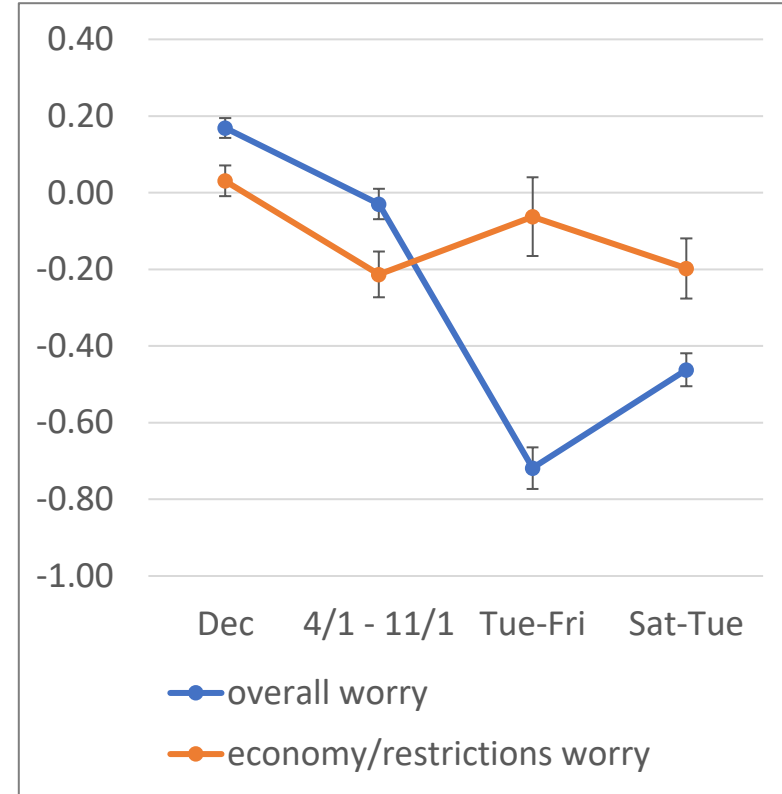
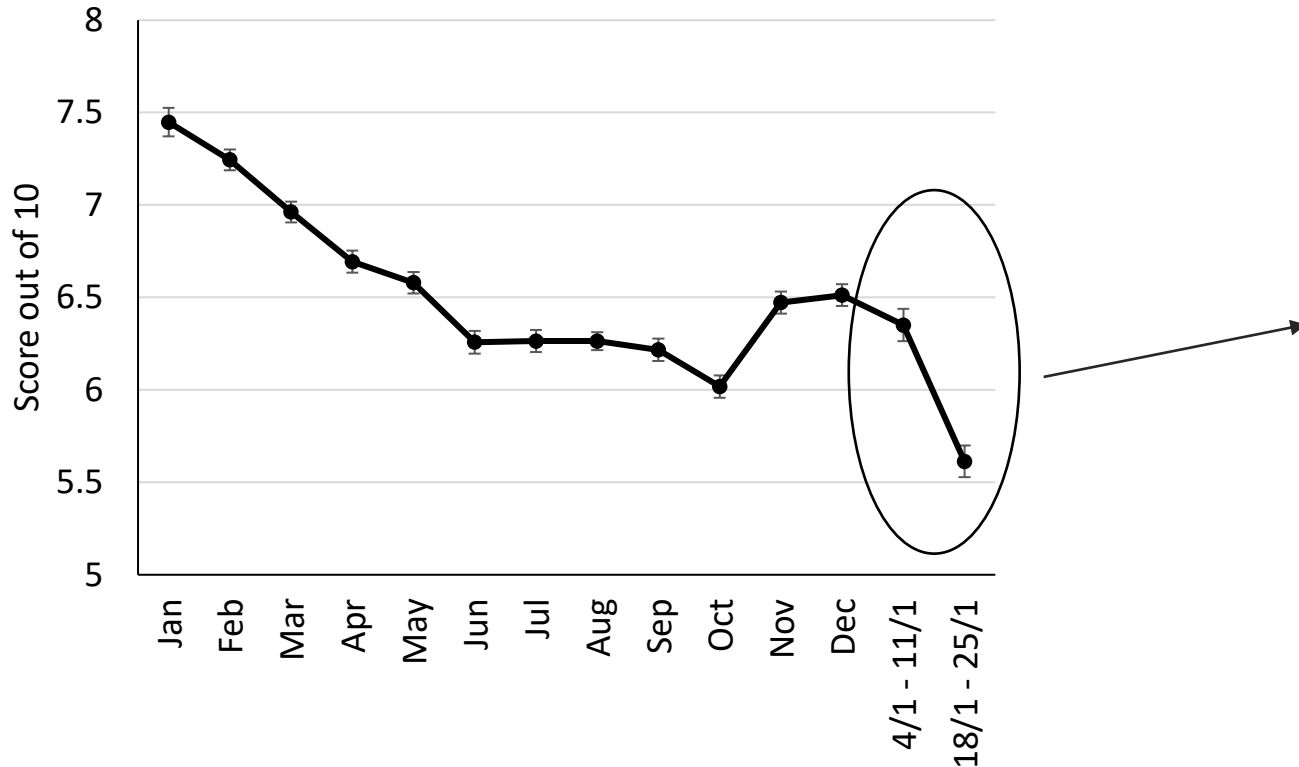
Frequency of mitigative behaviours (wearing a mask, keeping 2m, sanitising hands) when outside the home



There was a sharp decrease in mitigative behaviours (keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks).

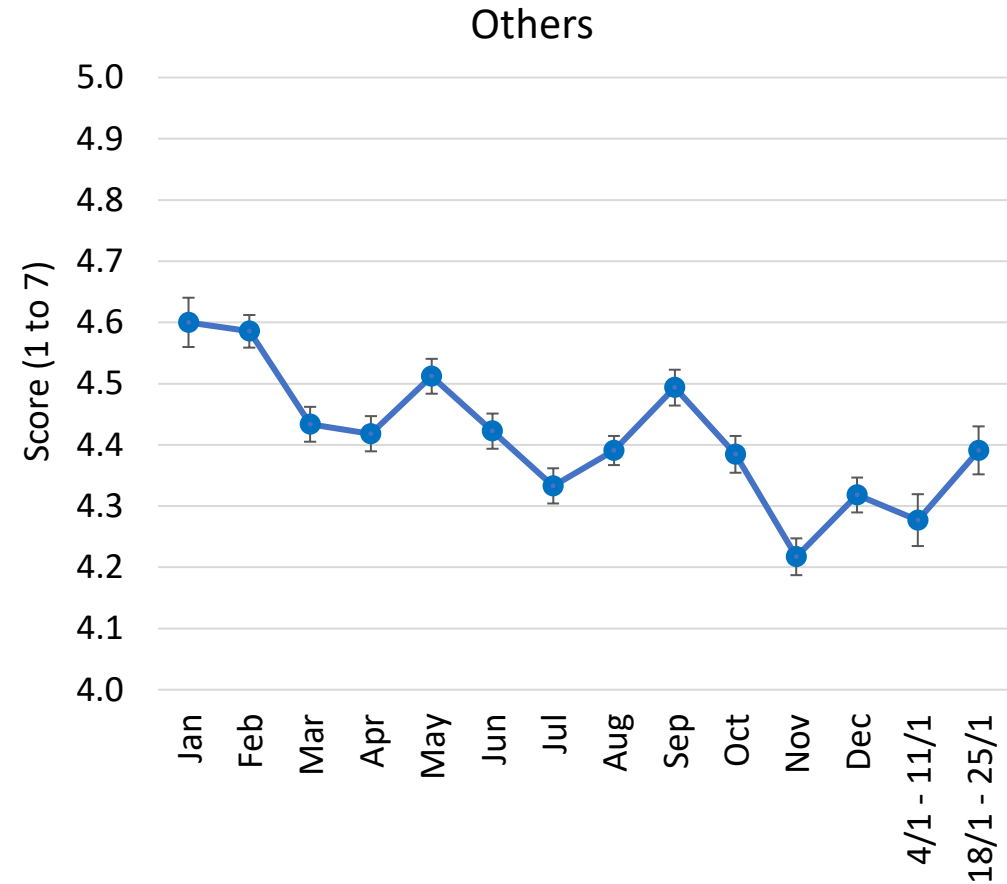
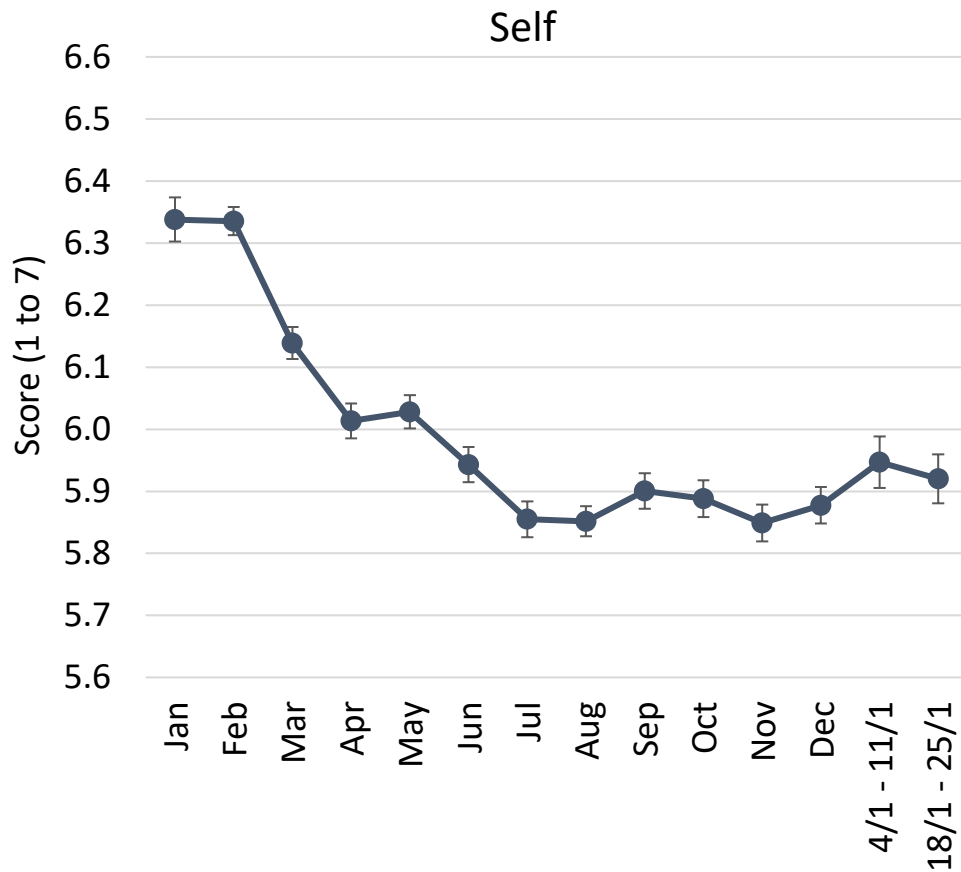


Worry



Worry about COVID-19 dipped sharply. This was the case for overall worry about the virus, but the level of worry about the economy and restrictions remained unchanged.

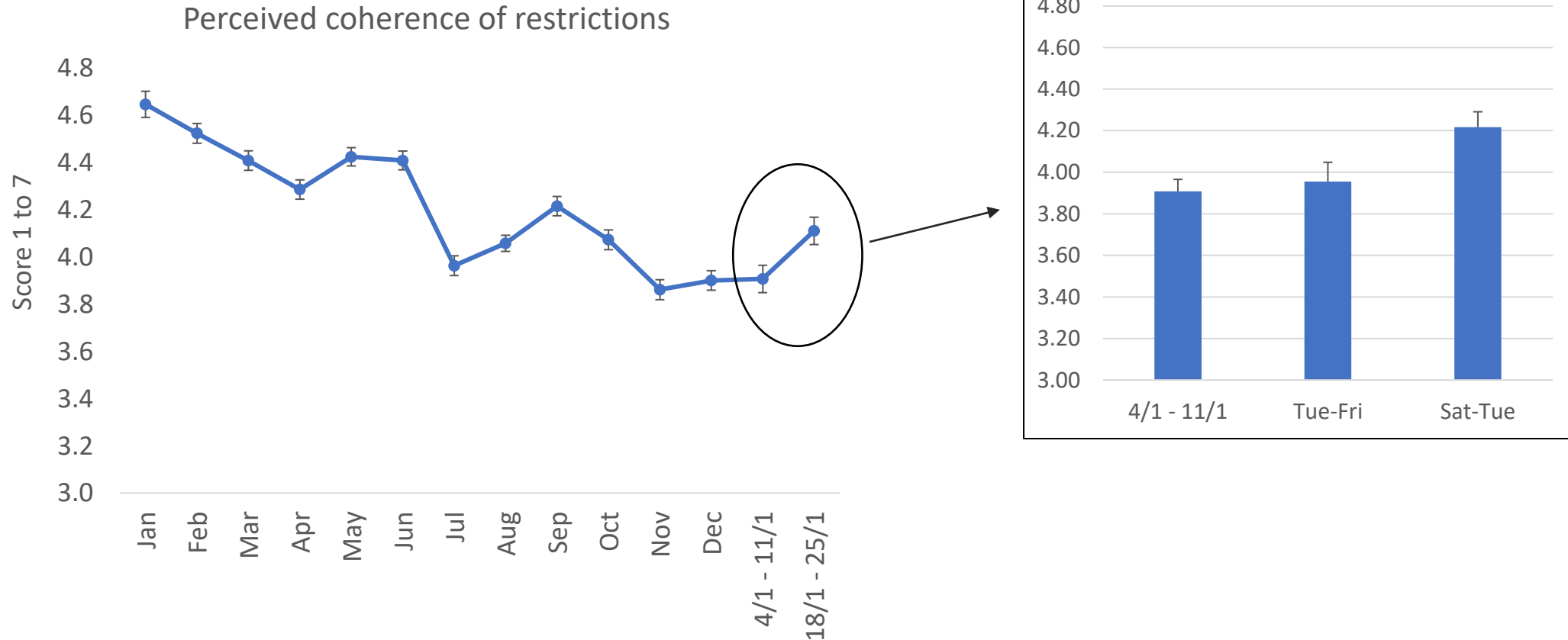
Self-Reported Compliance



There were no changes in self-reported compliance but the reported compliance of others increased.

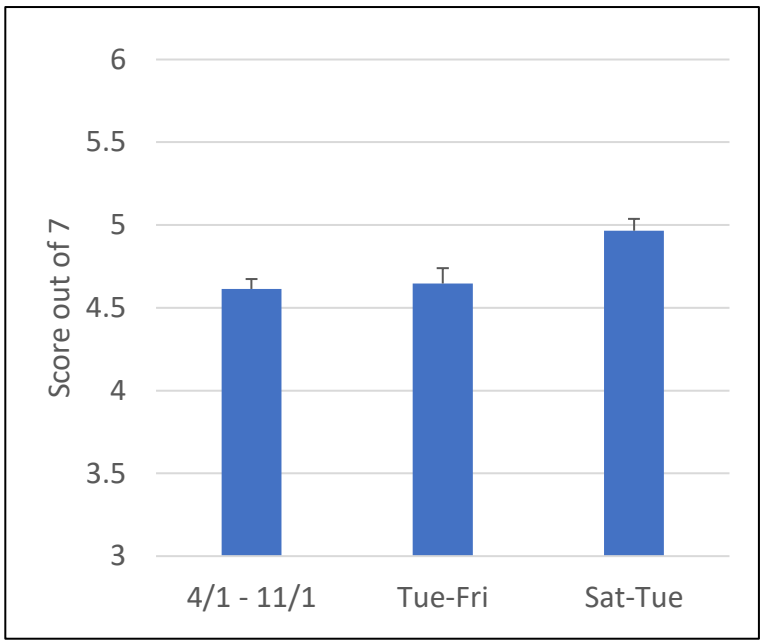
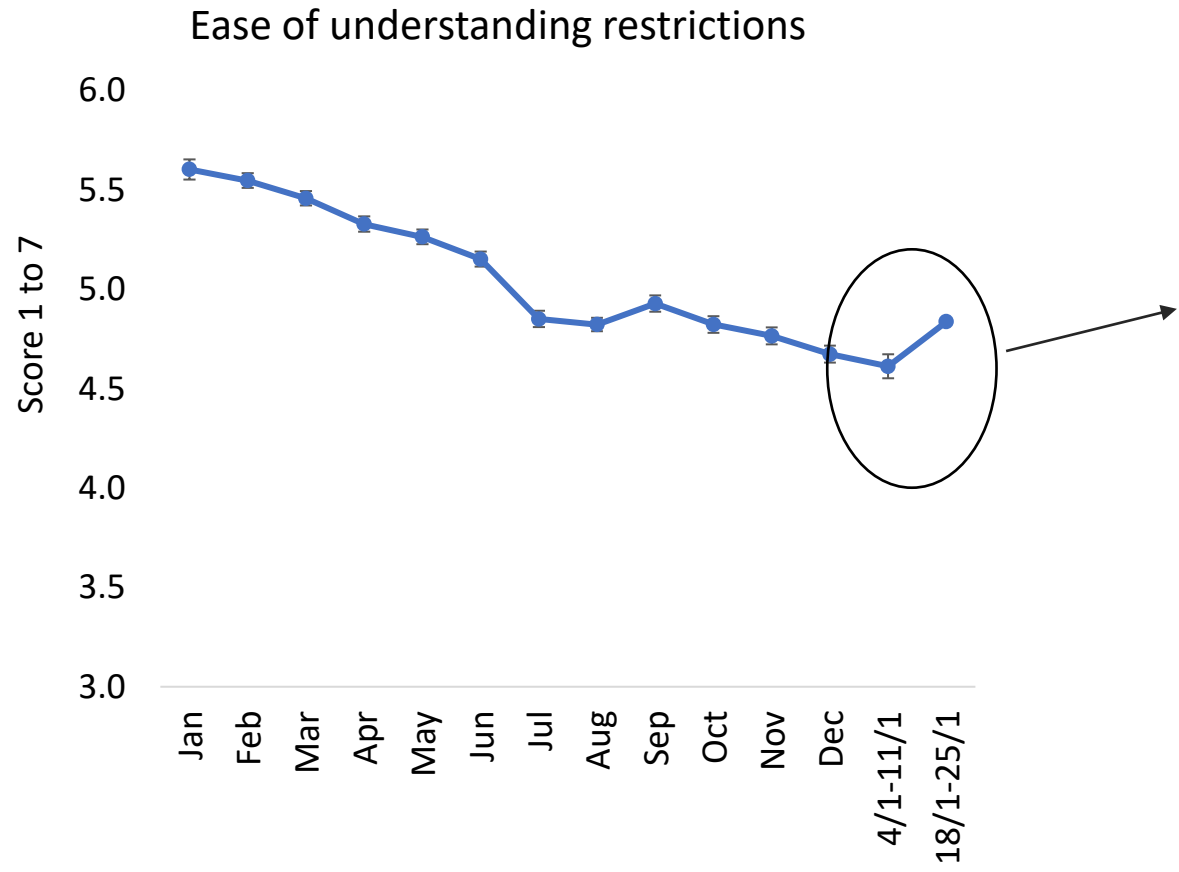


Perceived coherence of restrictions



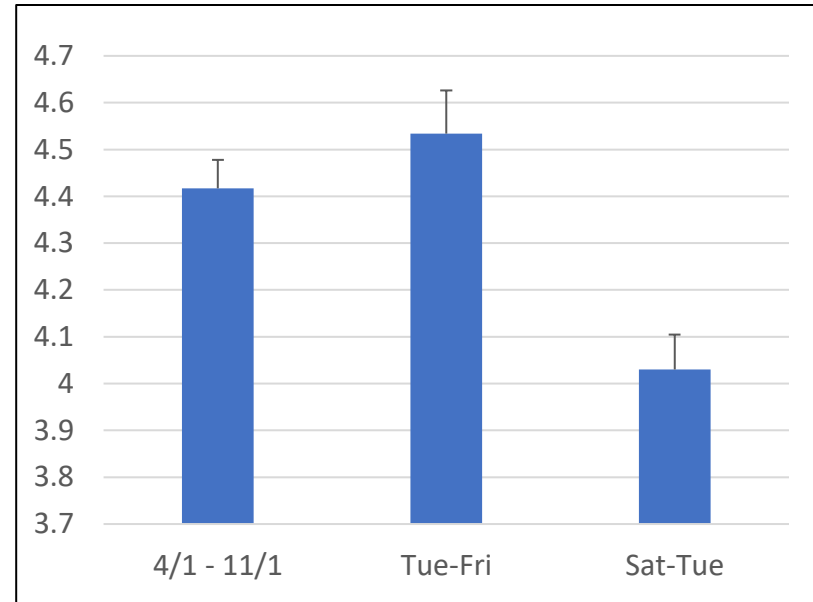
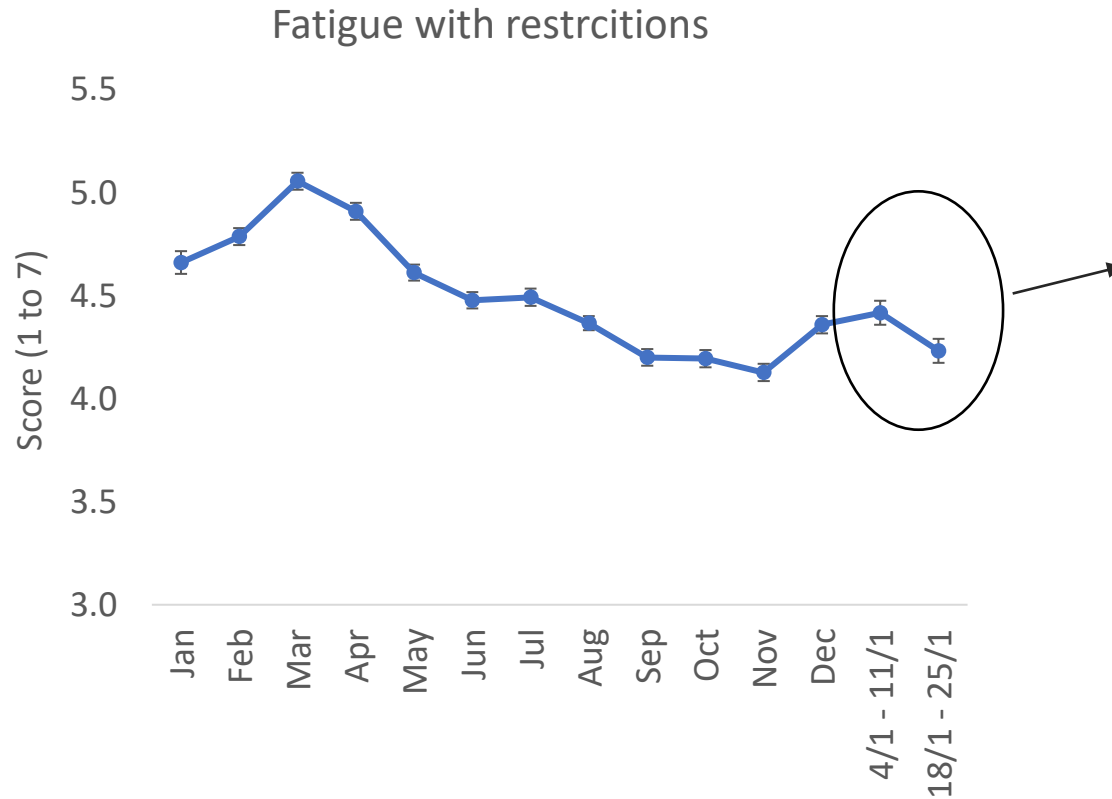
There was a significant increase in perceived coherence of restrictions, which occurred only after the Taoiseach's announcement.

Understanding of restrictions



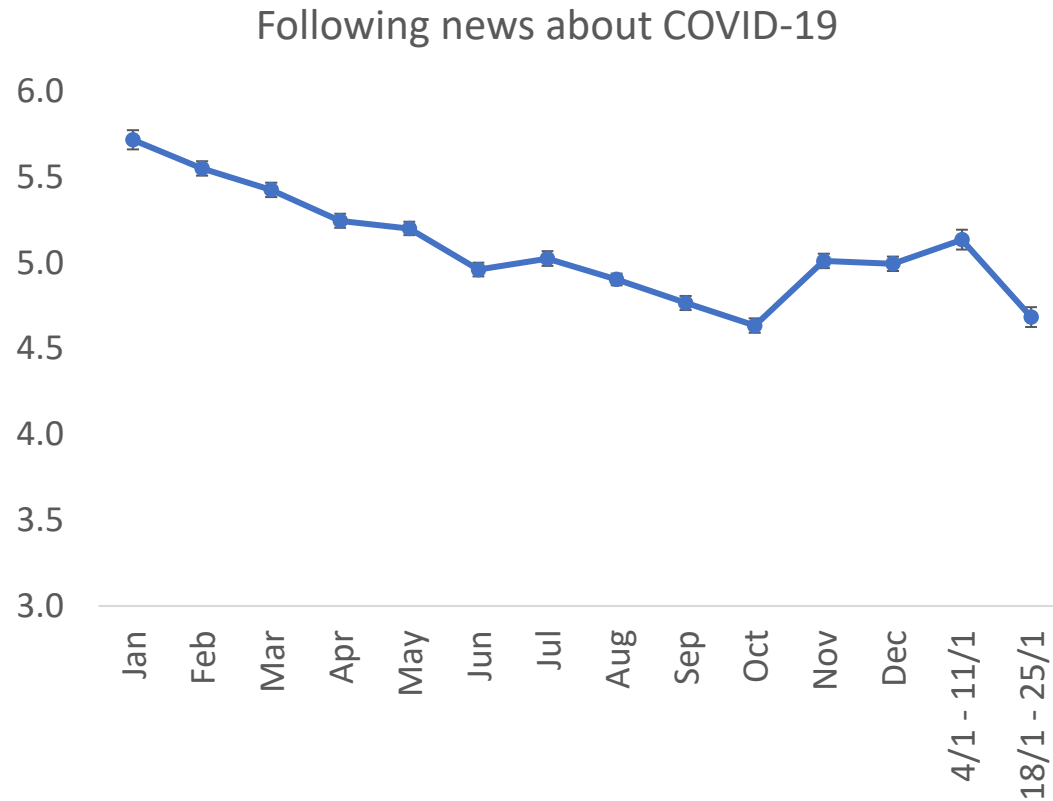
Restrictions became easier to understand following the Taoiseach's announcement.

Fatigue



Fatigue with restrictions continued to rise until the Taoiseach's announcement, following which it fell sharply.

Following news coverage

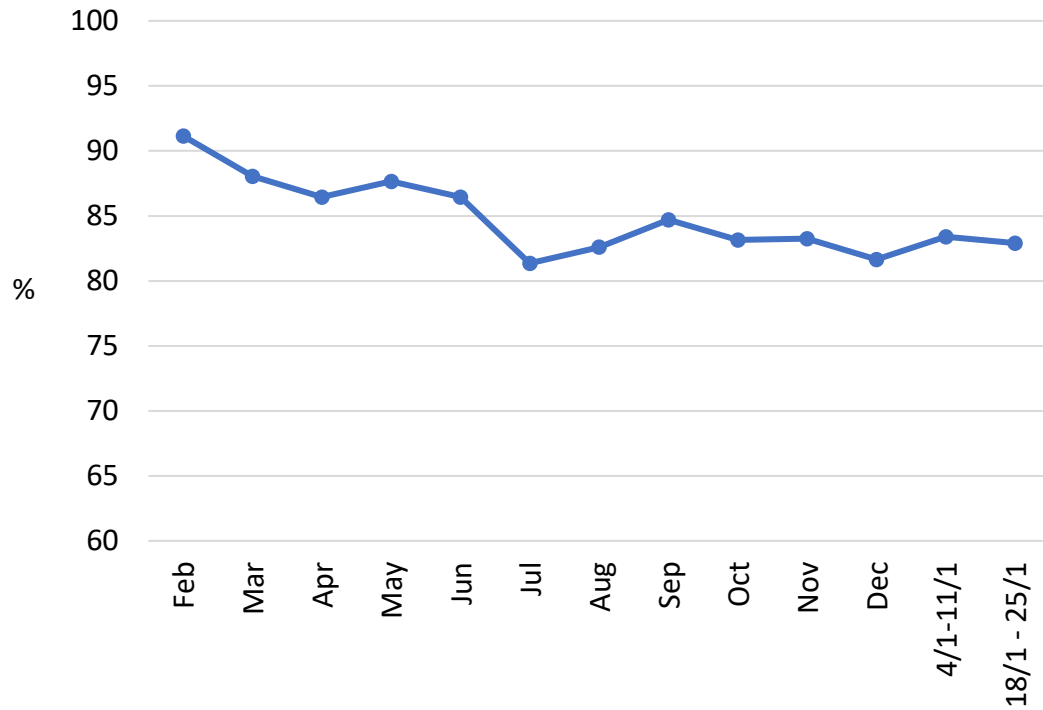


The extent to which people said they were following the news on COVID-19 fell to its lowest level since October. There was no change following the Taoiseach’s announcement.

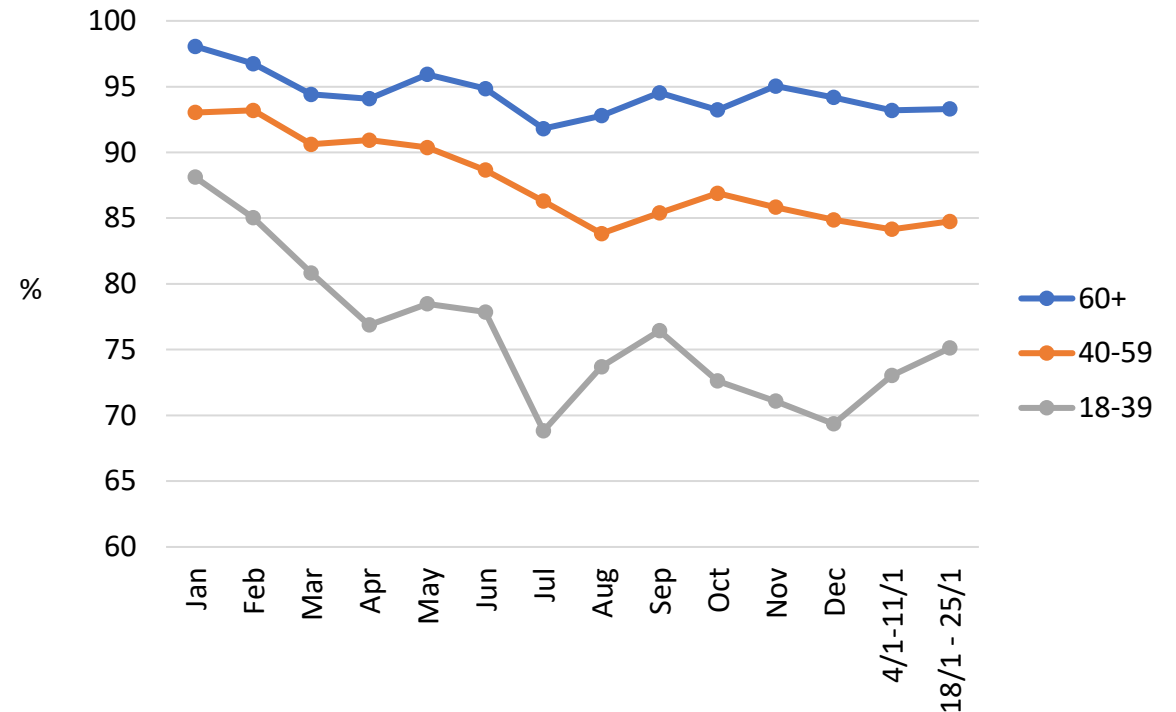
Overall support for the public health effort



Supportive of public health effort

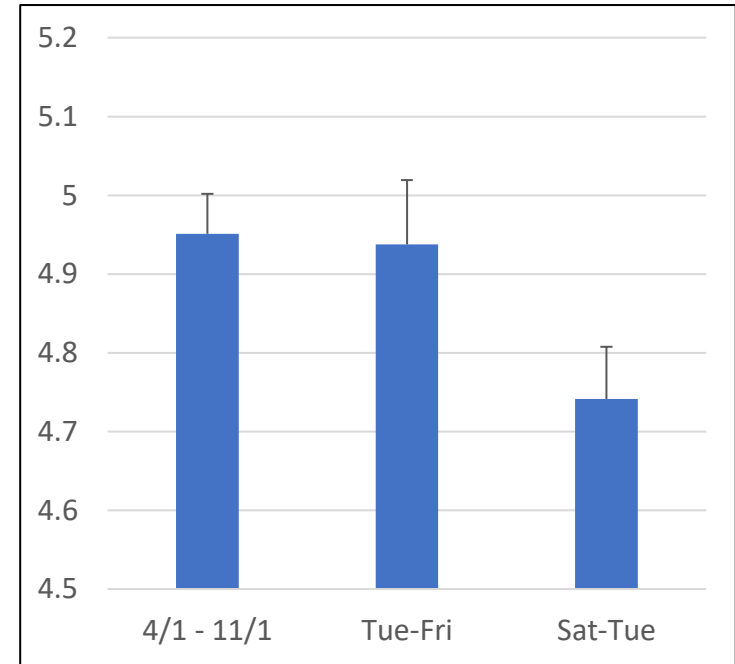
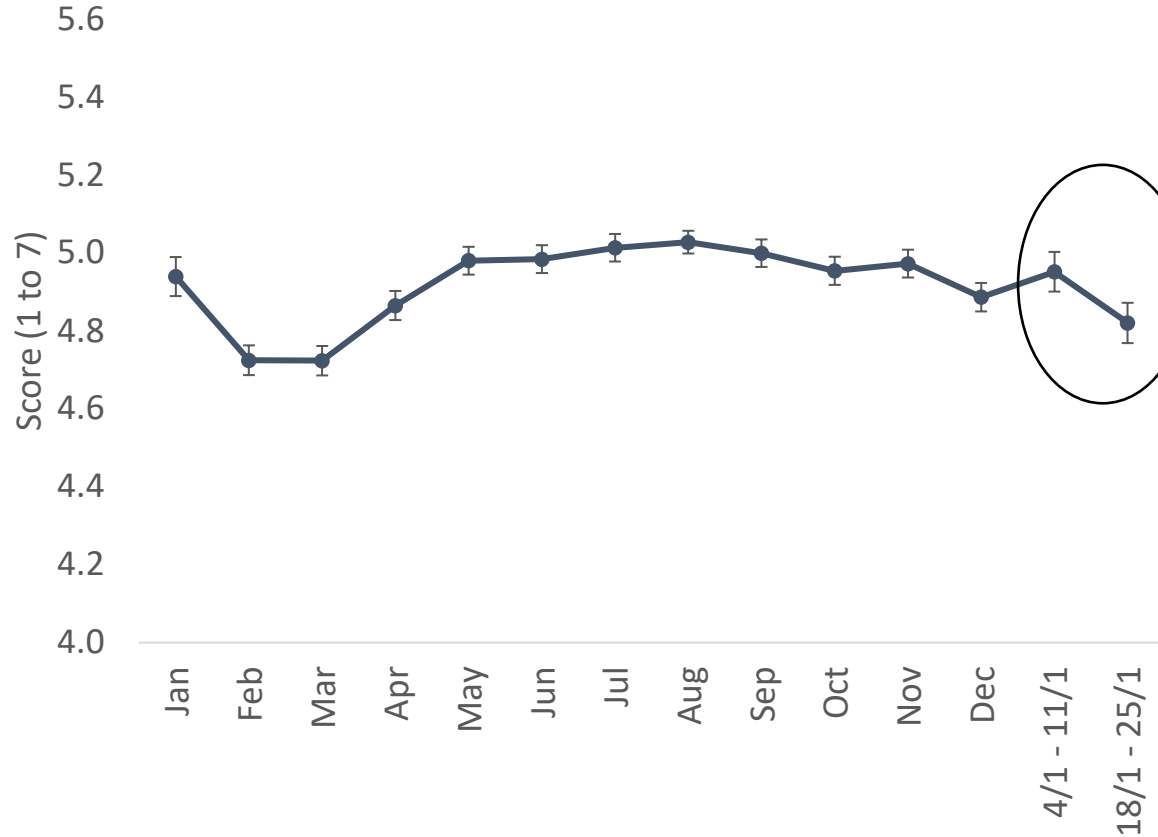


Support by age-group



Measured by a pattern of generally positive responses across multiple questions, overall support for the public health effort has remained fairly stable, but increased among younger adults during January.

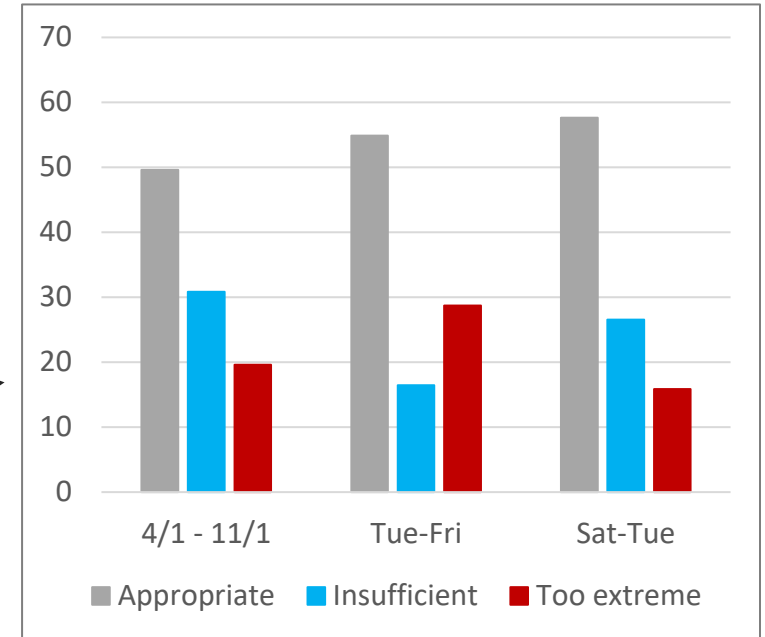
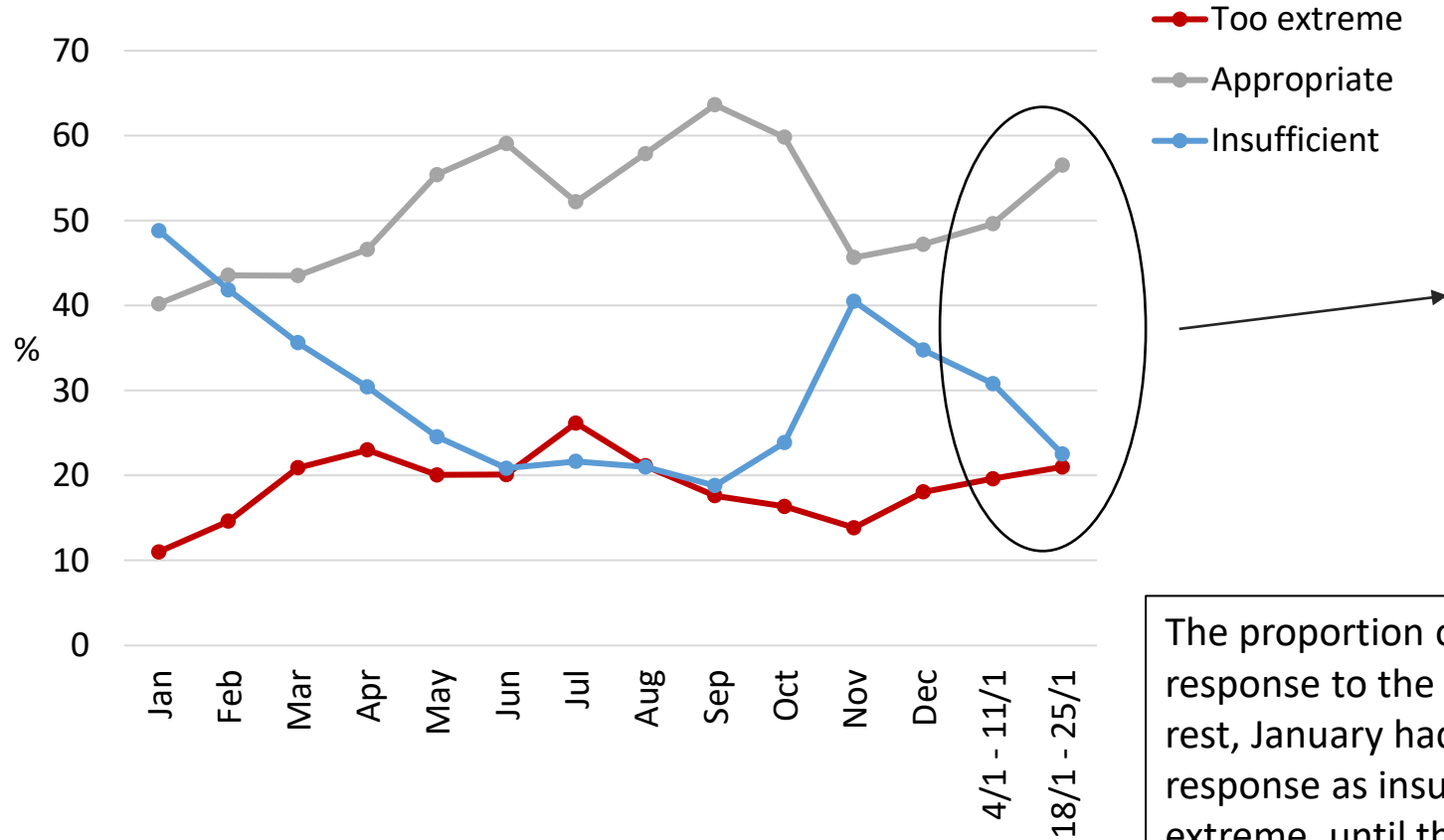
Wellbeing



Overall reported wellbeing fell following the Taoiseach's announcement.

Government Response to the Pandemic

Government's reaction to the pandemic has been...

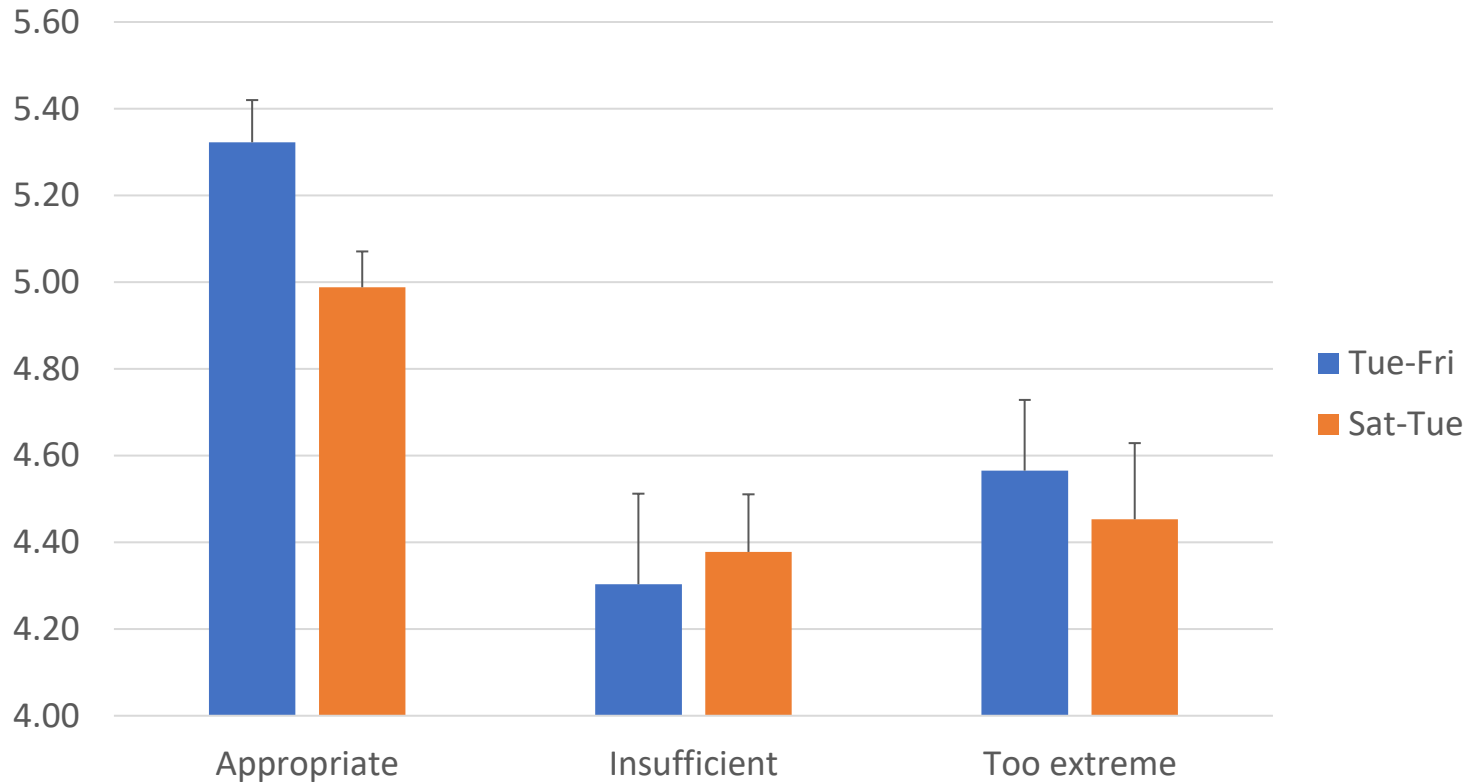


The proportion of people who viewed the Government's response to the pandemic as appropriate rose. Among the rest, January had seen a swing away from people viewing the response as insufficient towards people viewing it as too extreme, until the Taoiseach's announcement, when this pattern reversed. Following the announcement, over one quarter of the population viewed the response as insufficient.

Wellbeing and government response



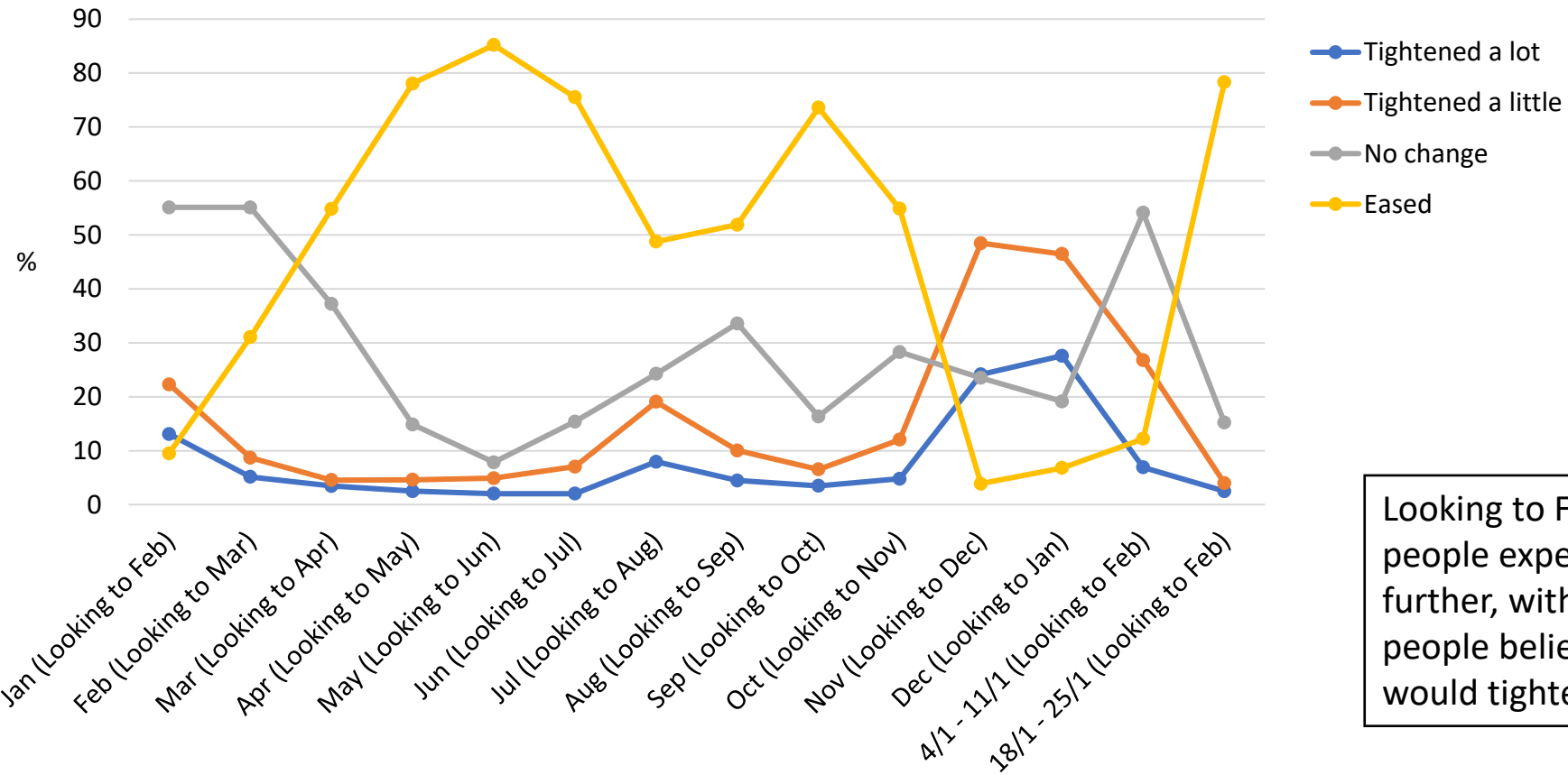
Change in wellbeing by perception of Government response



The drop in wellbeing occurred among those who view the Government response to the pandemic as appropriate, rather among those who see it either as insufficient or too extreme.



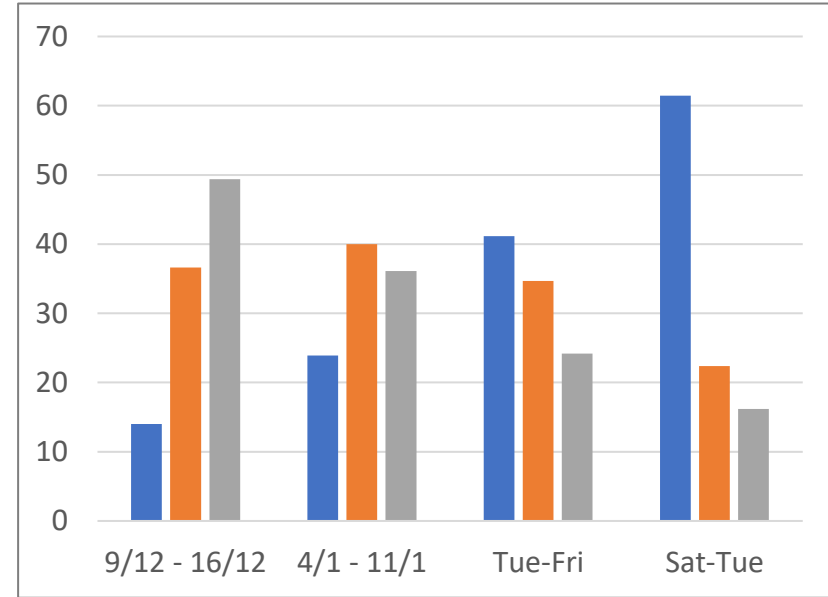
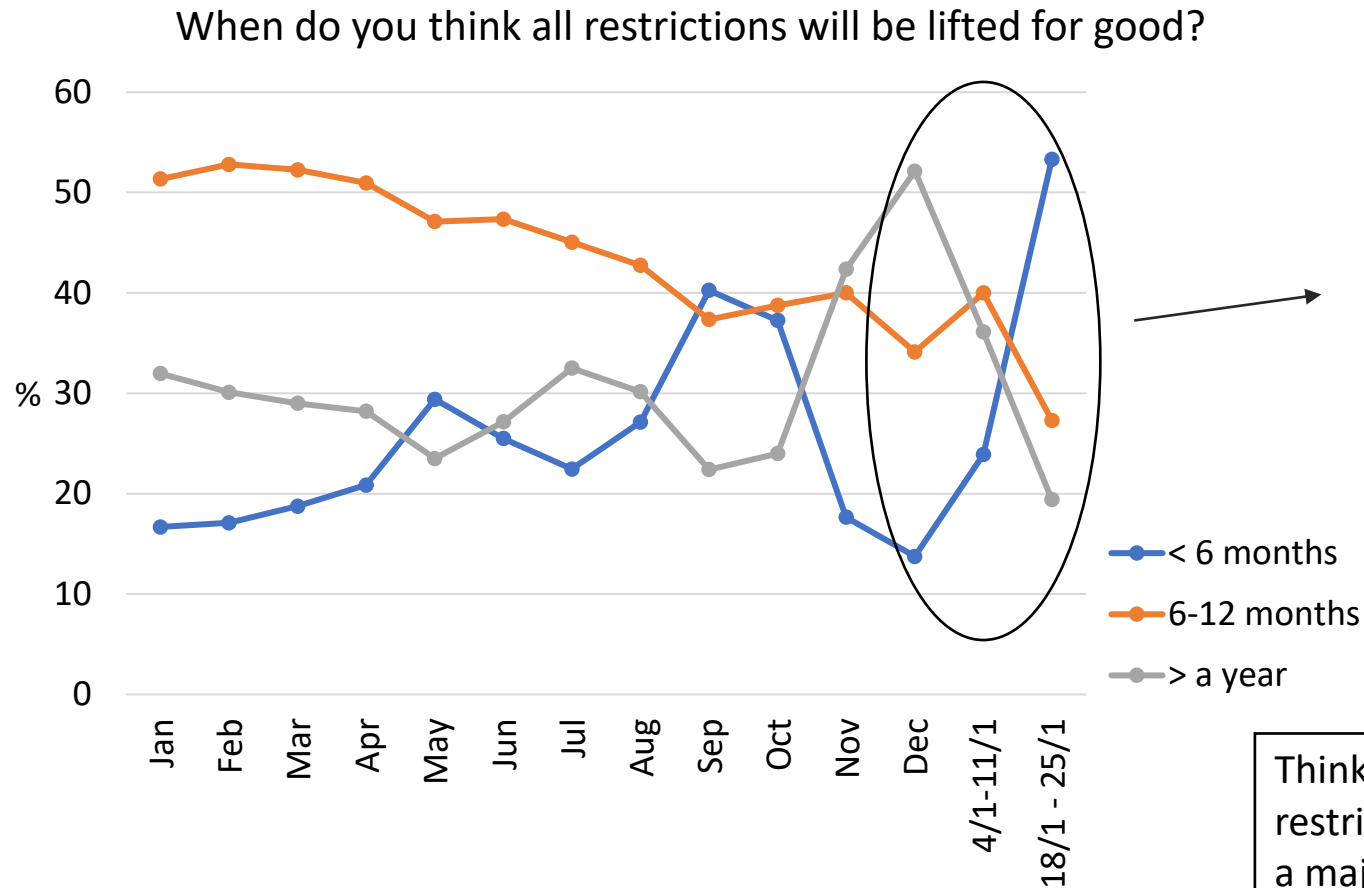
Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



Looking to February, almost 4 in 5 people expect restrictions to ease further, with just a small minority of people believing that the restrictions would tighten again.

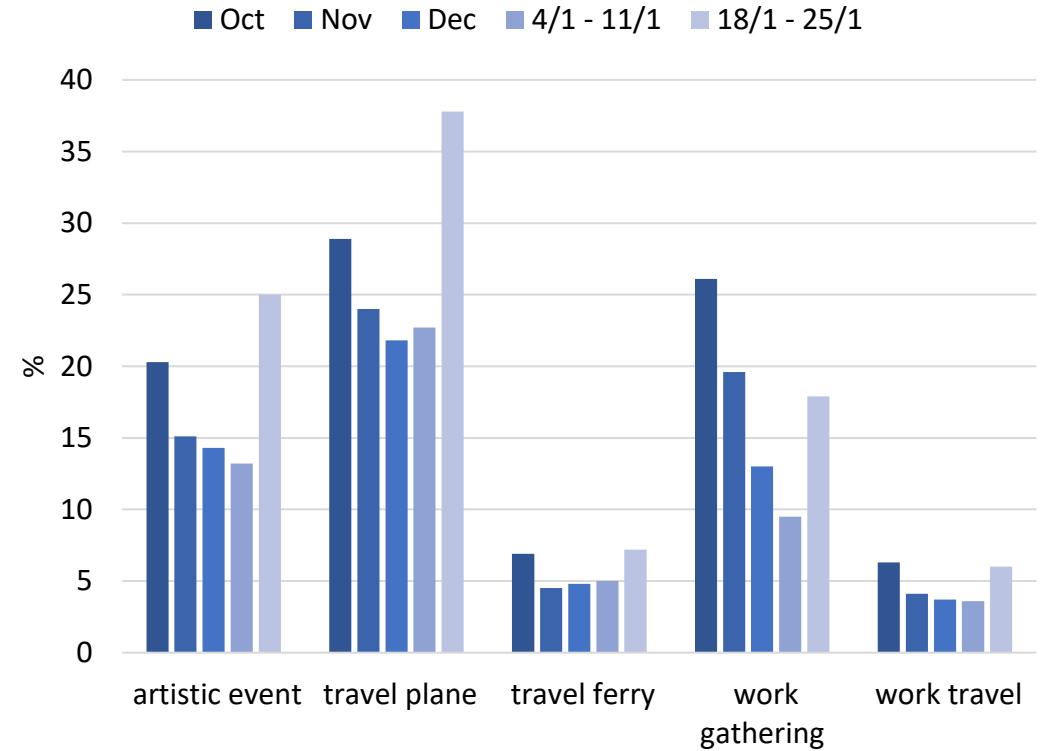
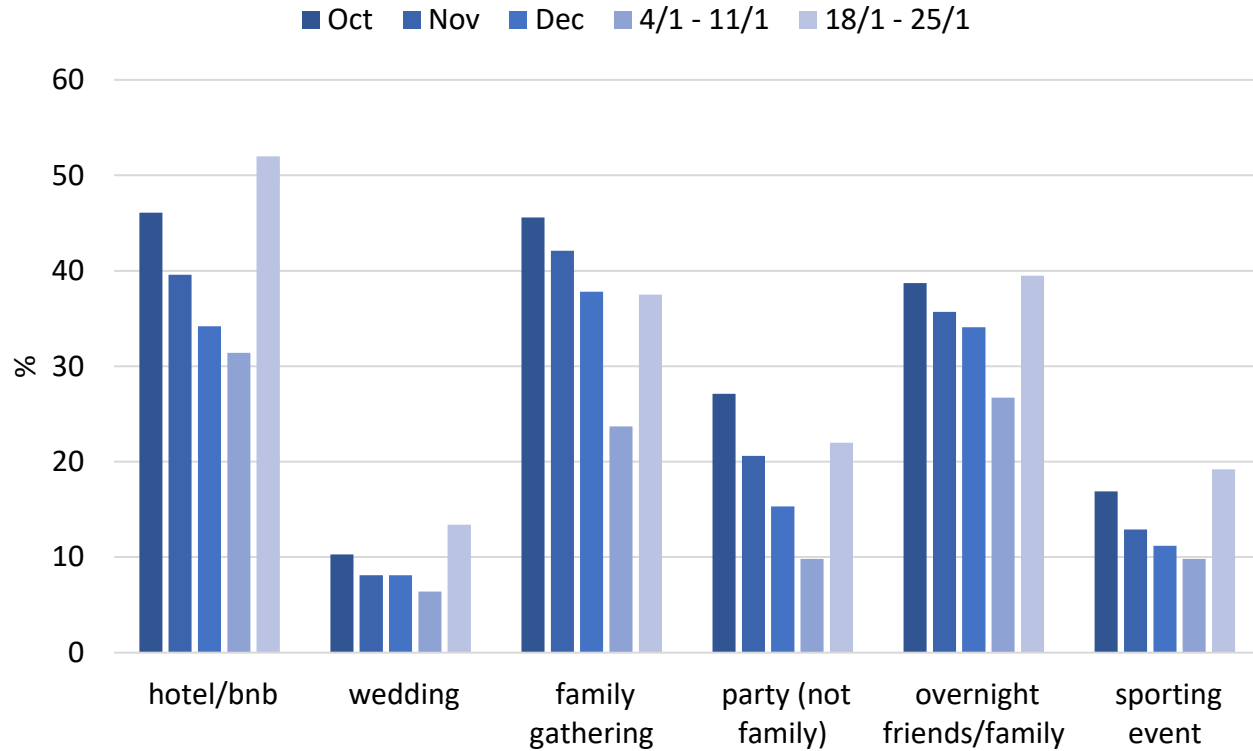


Long-term expectations



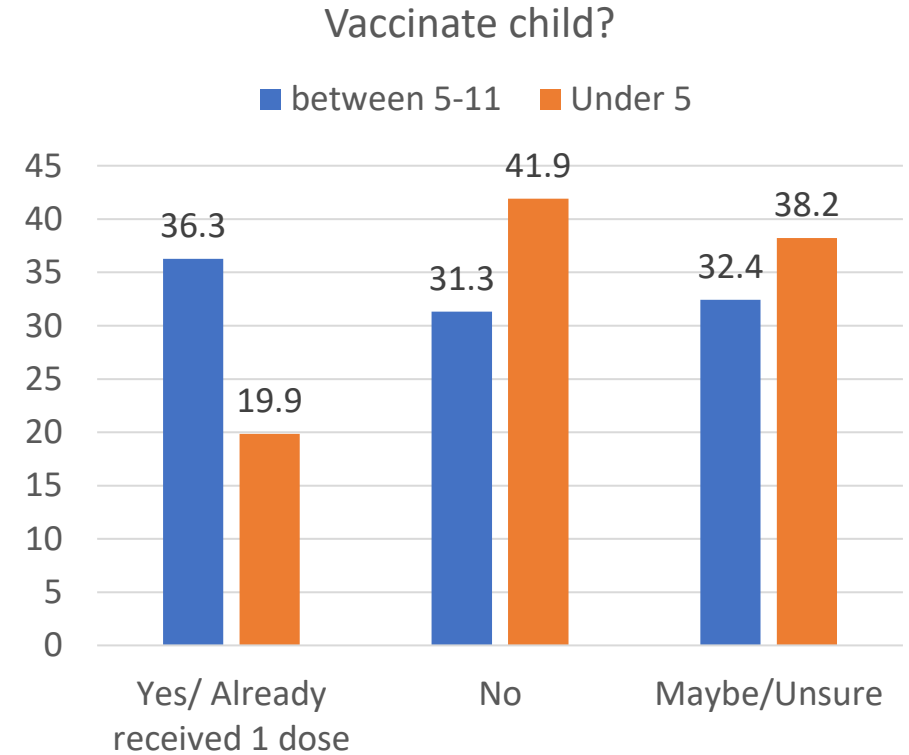
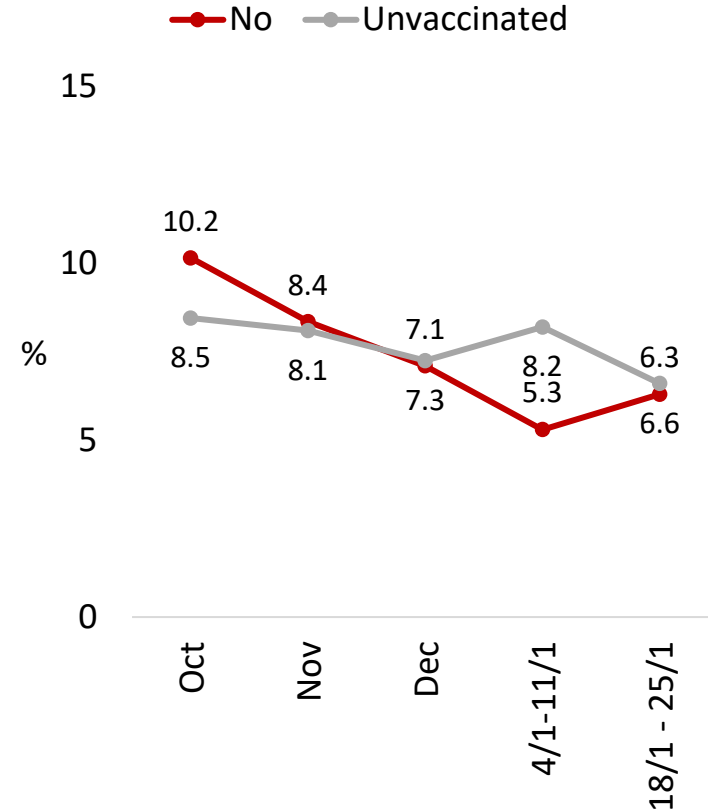
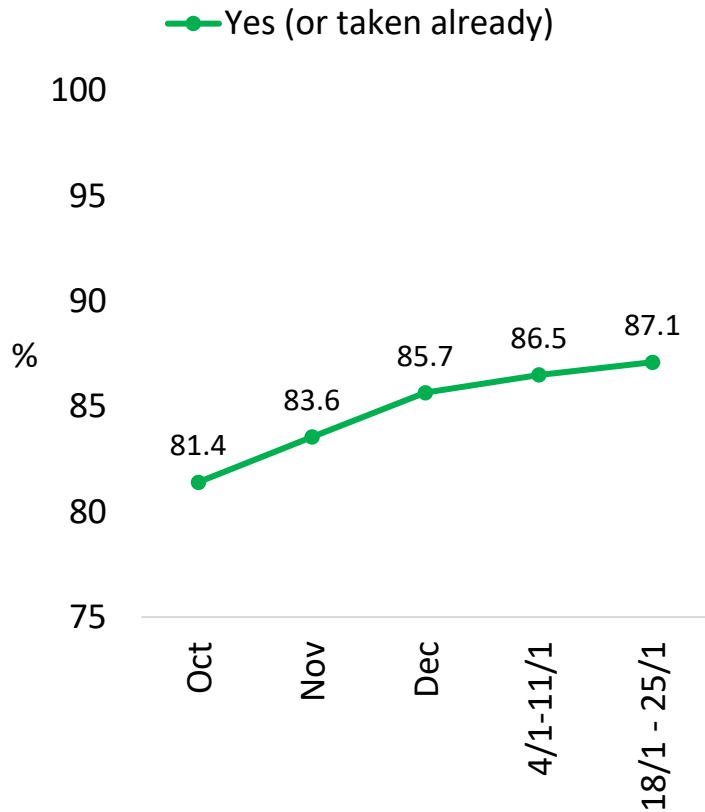
Thinking longer term, the proportion expecting restrictions to be lifted for good within 6 months reached a majority, with a sharp drop in those thinking it will take more than a year. This increase in optimism was greatly accelerated by the Taoiseach's announcement.

Plans



There was a sharp increase in the percentage of the population planning all kinds of social activities over the next 3 months. (People are asked to report only activities for which they have a specific plan and date in mind.)

Vaccine Intentions



The proportion of the population who have taken/intend to take a booster vaccine has steadily increased since October, but the declining trend in those planning to refuse the booster has halted. The proportion willing to vaccinate (or who have already vaccinated) their child is greater for parents with children aged 5 to 11 than for those with children aged under 5.