ESRI

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Social Activity Measure
Feb 1st – 8th 2022

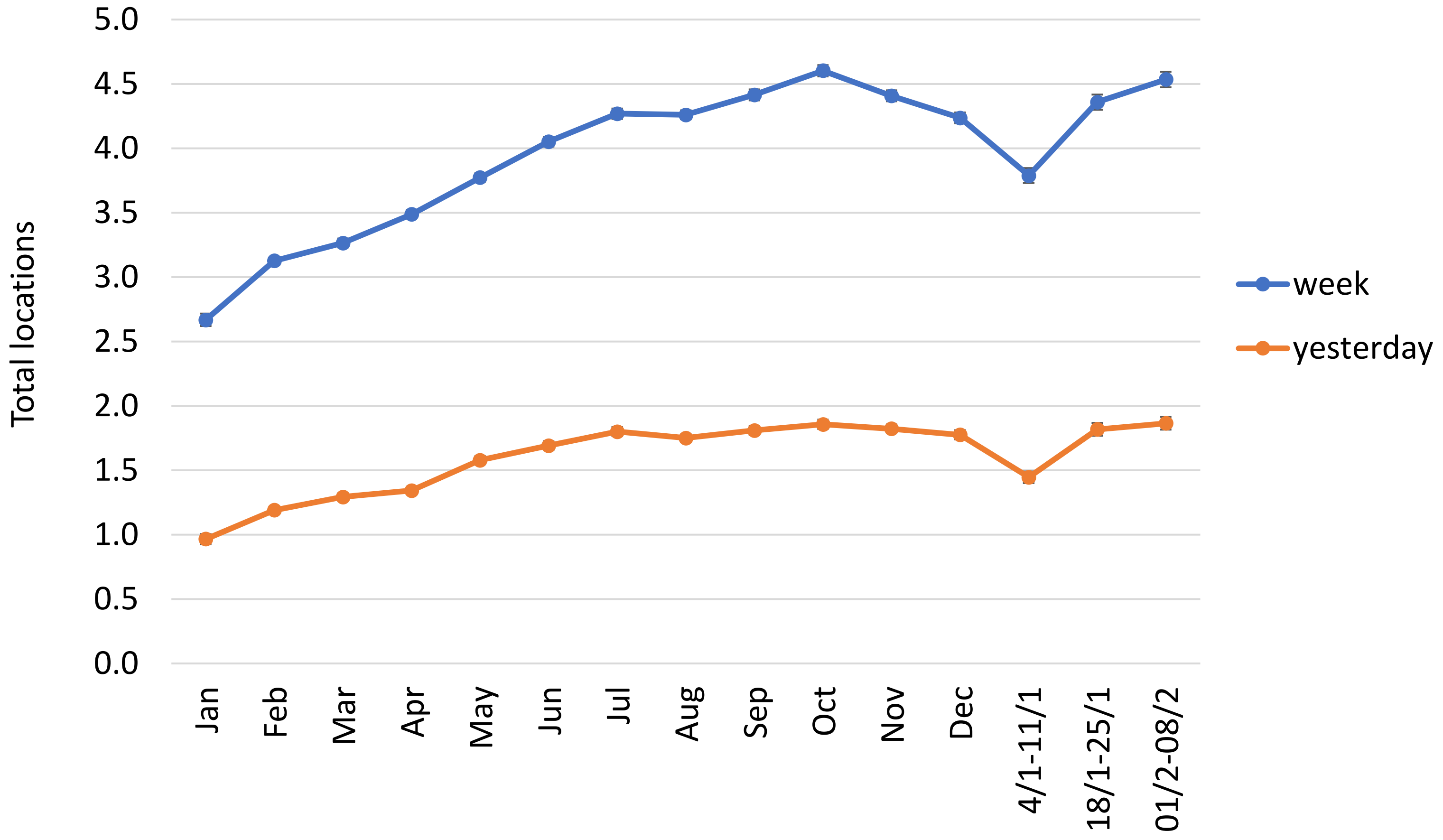
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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 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 February 1st and 8th 2022. Data were collected 11-18 days after the lifting of the majority of public health restrictions. COVID-19 case numbers and hospitalisations had remained broadly stable following the change.

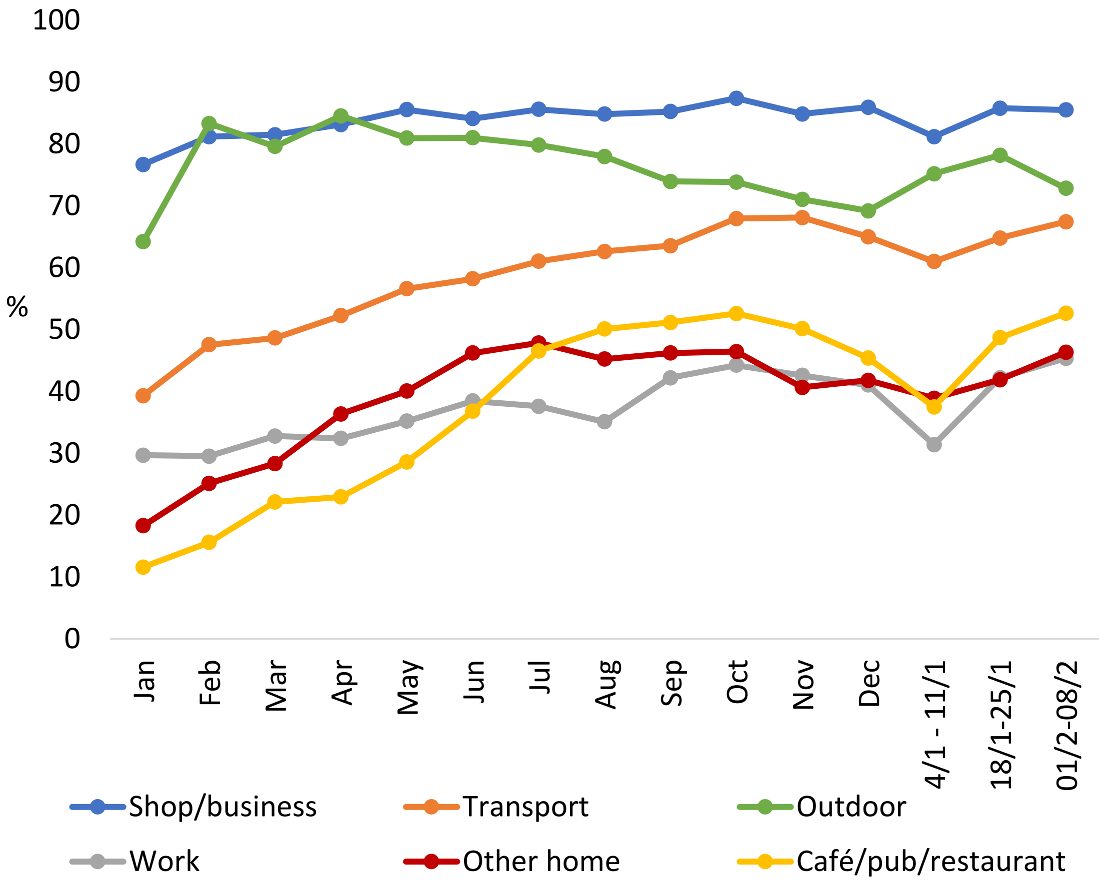
Total locations visited

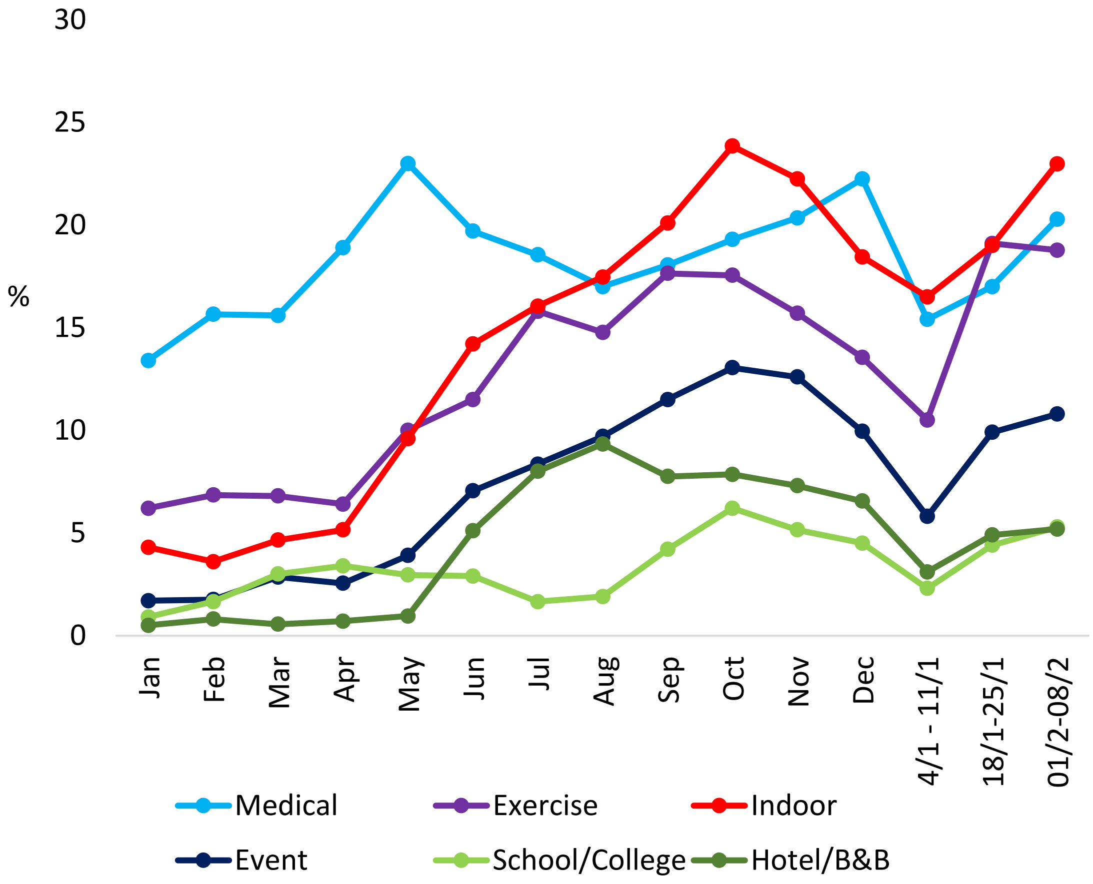


There was a significant increase in locations visited both over the previous week, but a smaller non-significant increase in locations visited the previous day.

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

Locations visited (previous week)

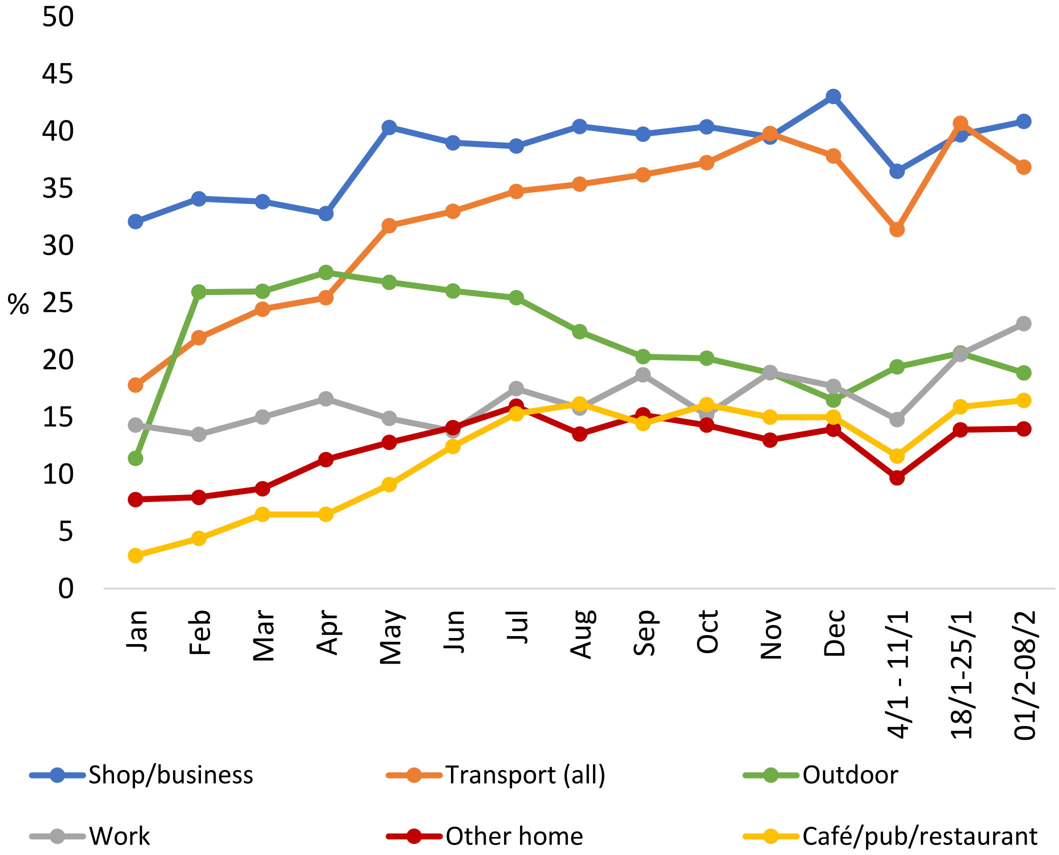


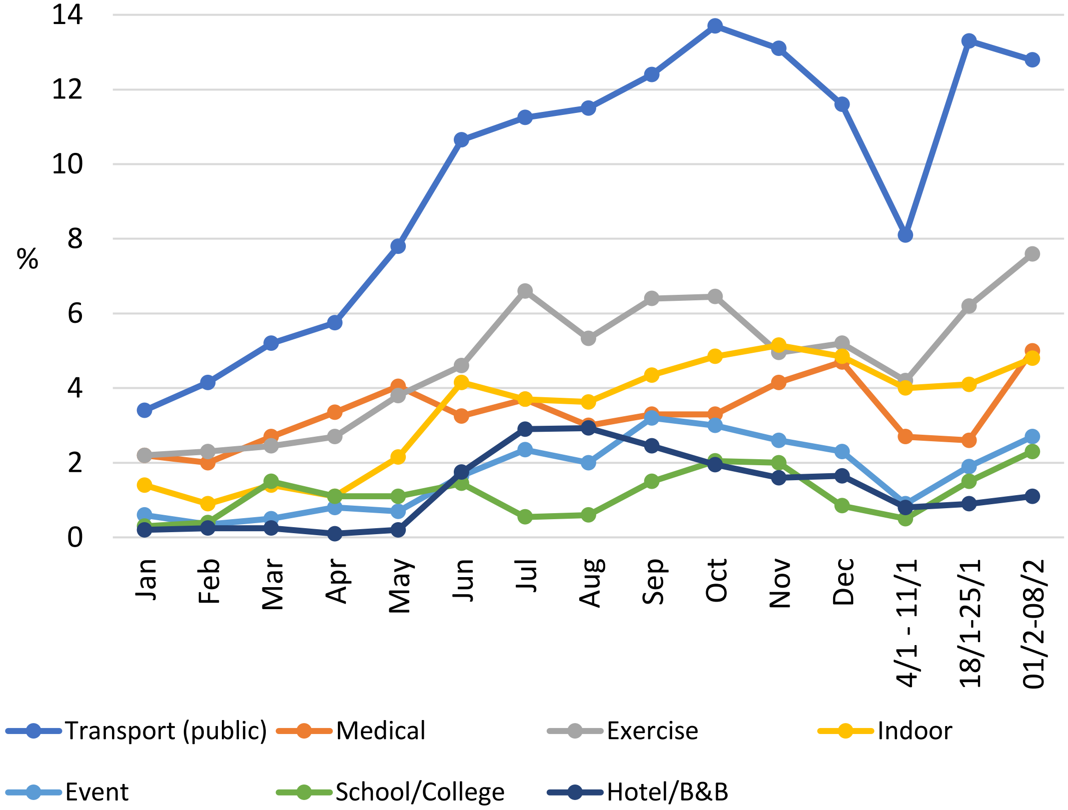


Increases in visits to workplaces, hospitality venues, other homes, medical facilities and other indoor locations continued, although in general at a slower pace than measured during the previous round of SAM. 63% of workers had visited their workplace during the previous week, up from 51% in early January.

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

Locations visited (yesterday)

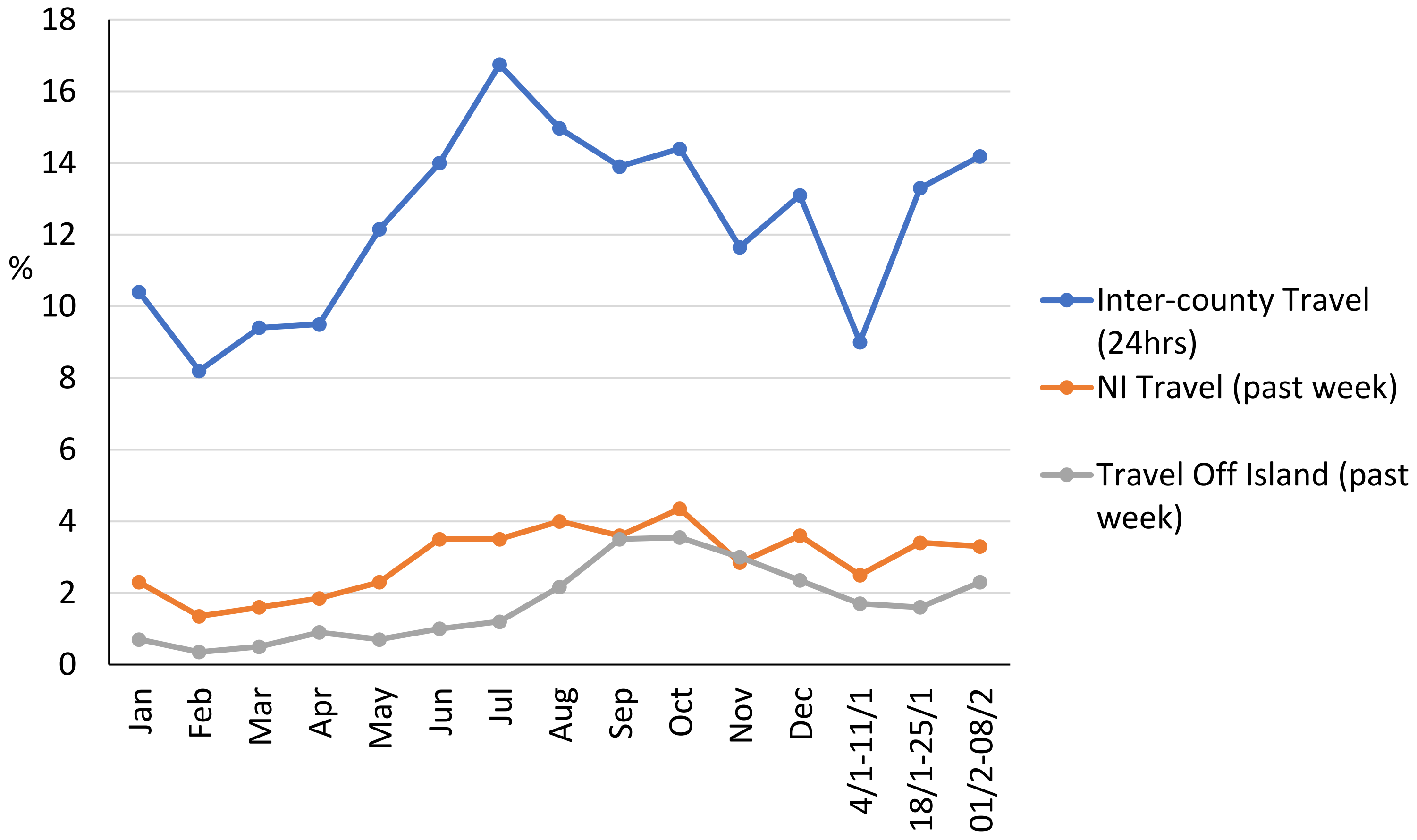




There were significant increases in visits to workplaces and medical facilities the previous day, but upward trends for most other locations slowed.

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

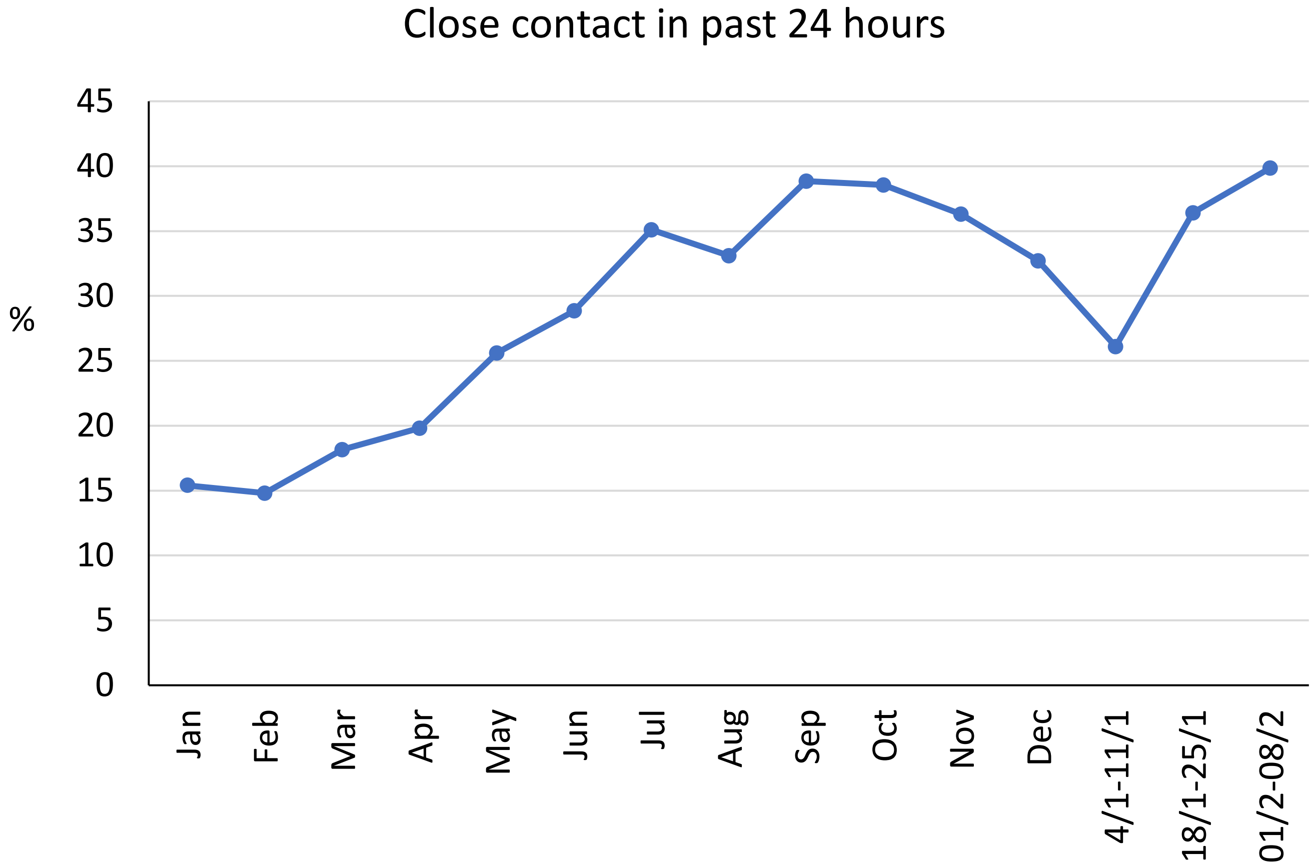
National and international travel



Rates of travel were broadly unchanged.

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

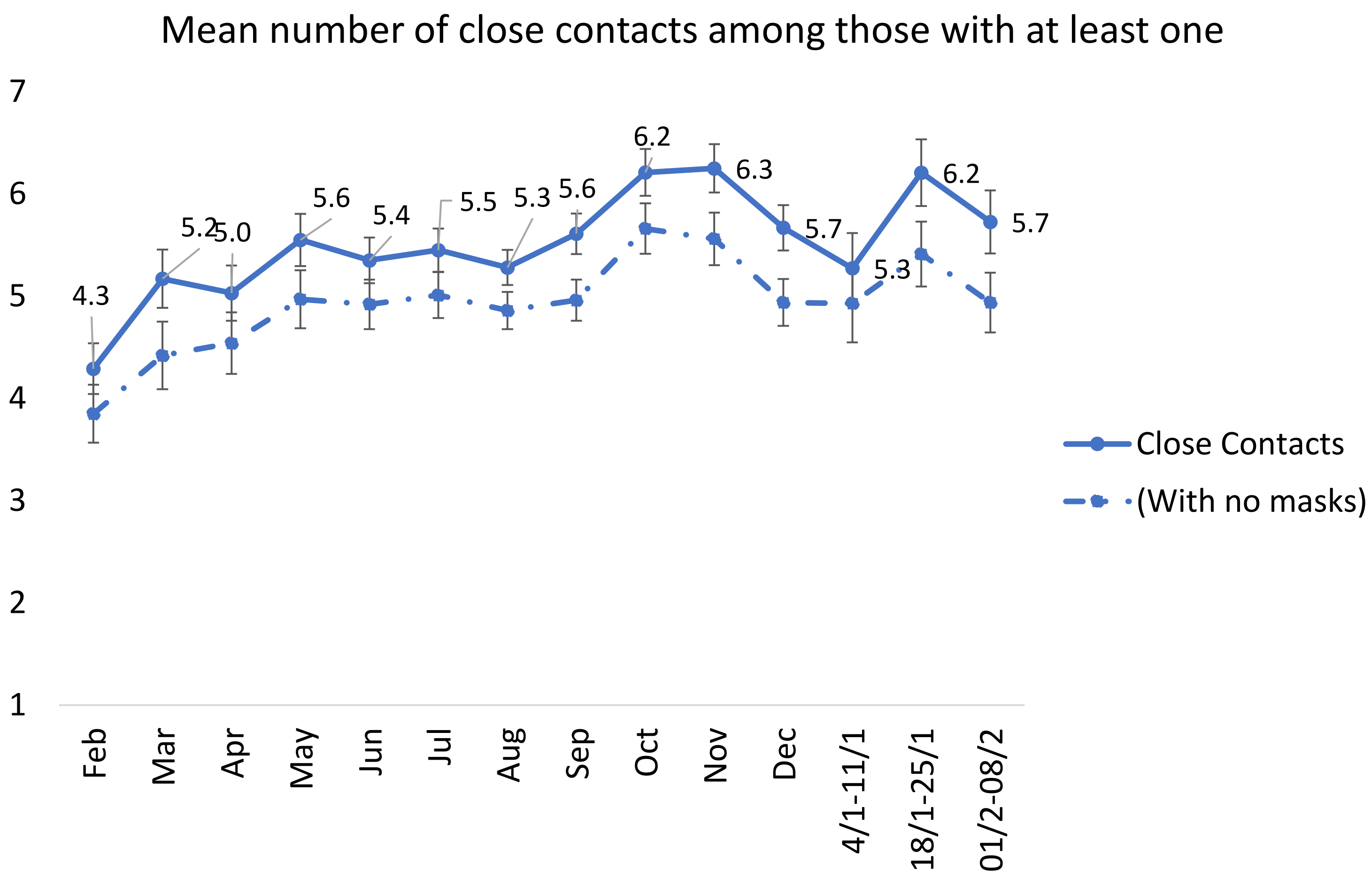
Close contacts



The proportion of people who had a close contact the previous day reached its highest level recorded over the year since SAM began recording it.

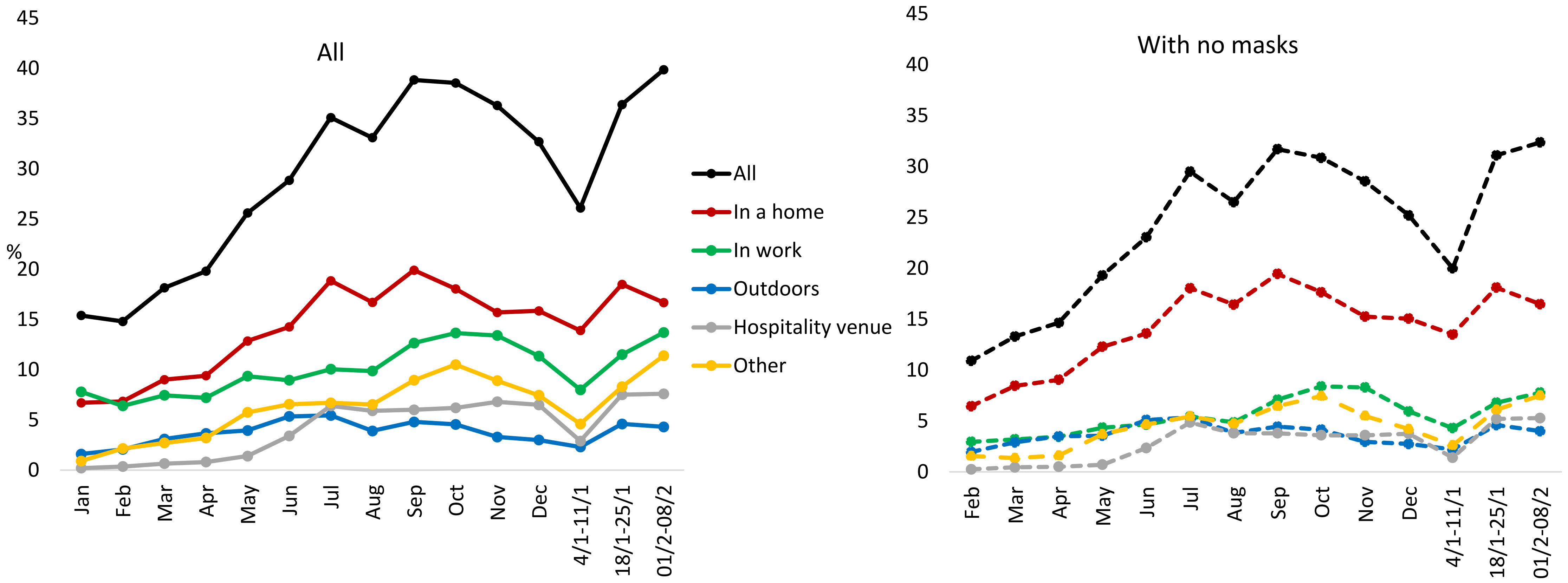
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Number of close contacts



Among those who had a close contact the previous day, the mean number of close contacts was unchanged.

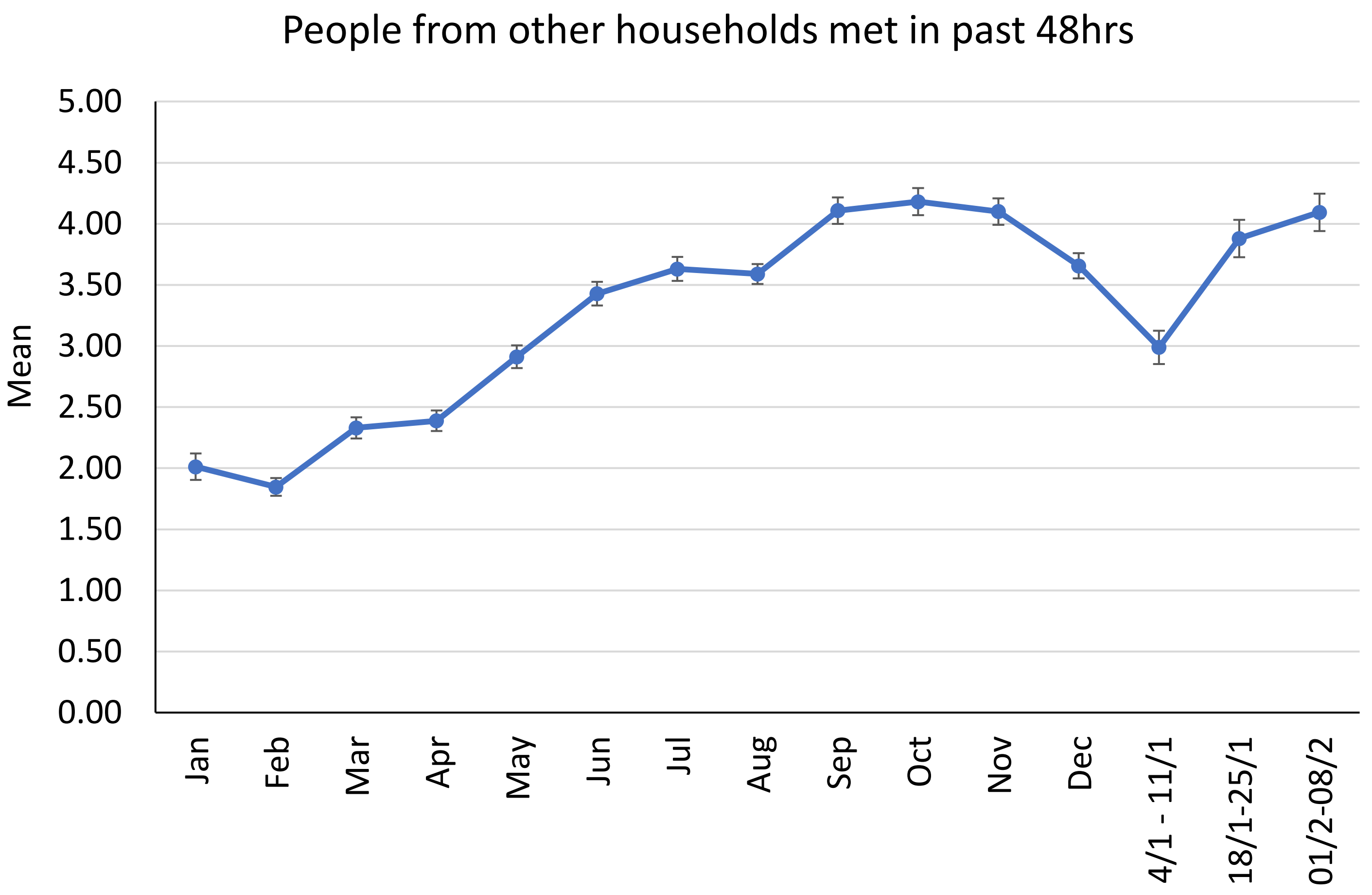
Close contacts - locations



Workplaces and other indoor locations (apart from homes and hospitality venues) accounted for the increase in the proportion of people having close contacts.

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

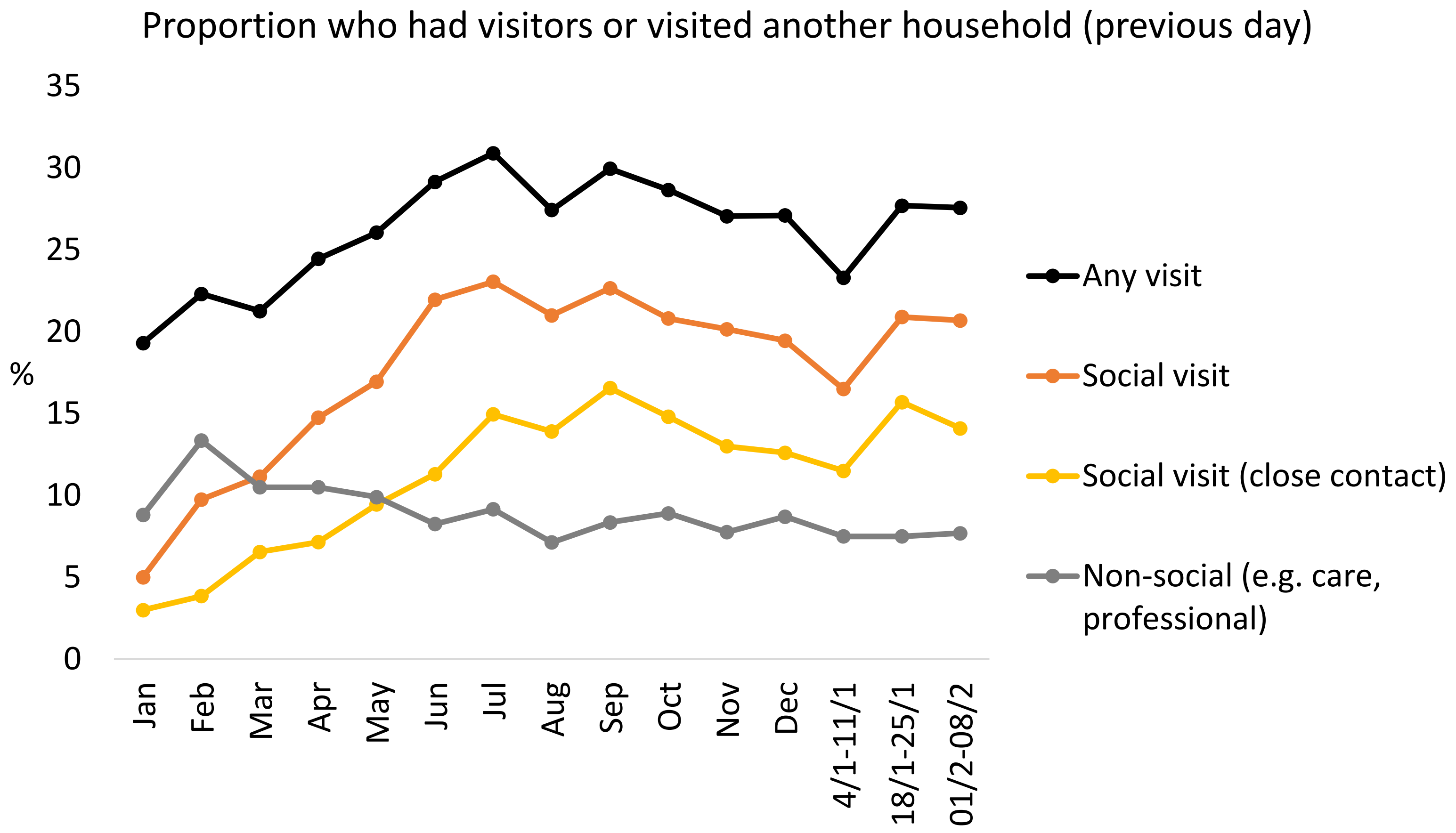
Number of people met



The mean number of people individuals met up with from outside their own household over the previous 48 hours has reached just over 4.

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

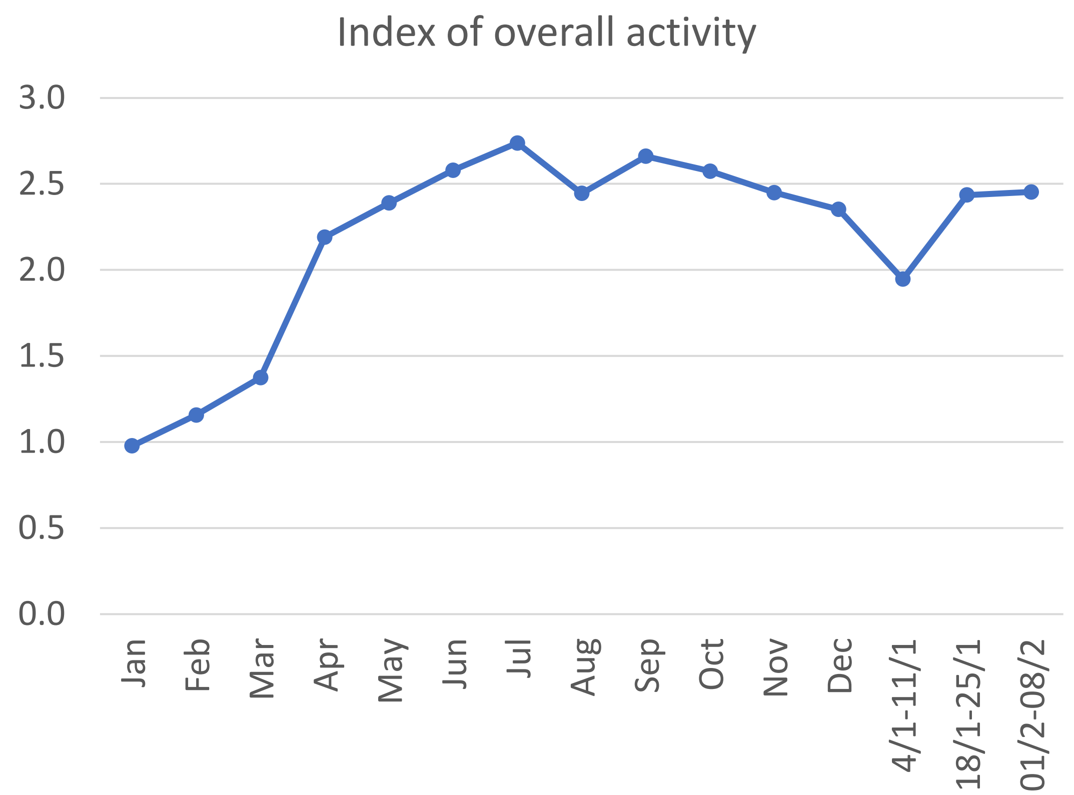
Home Visits

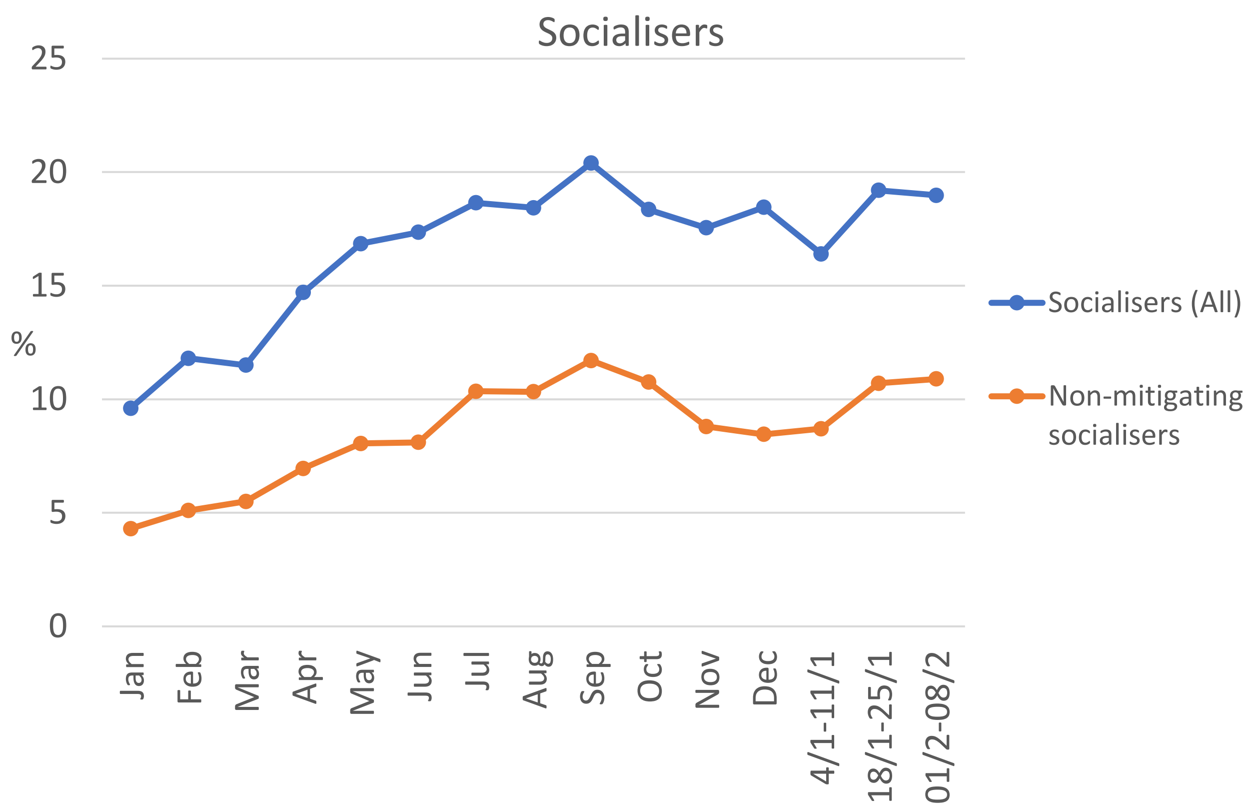


The proportion who visited other households was unchanged.

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

Overall social activity

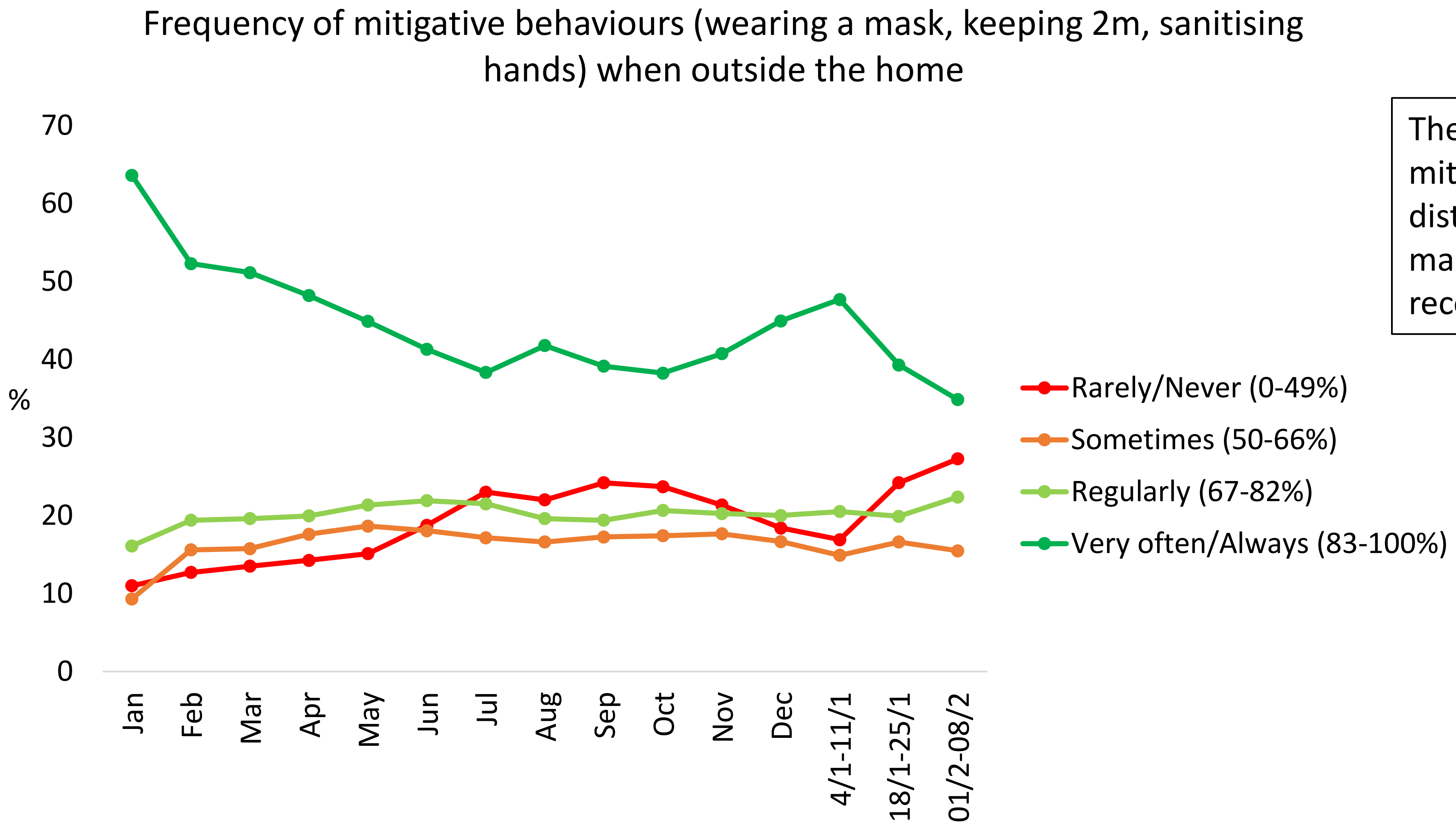




Overall social activity was unchanged, as were the proportions of people engaging in particularly high levels of social activity ('socialisers') and who did so while taking few or no precautions, such as wearing a mask or maintaining 2m distance ('non-mitigating socialisers').

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

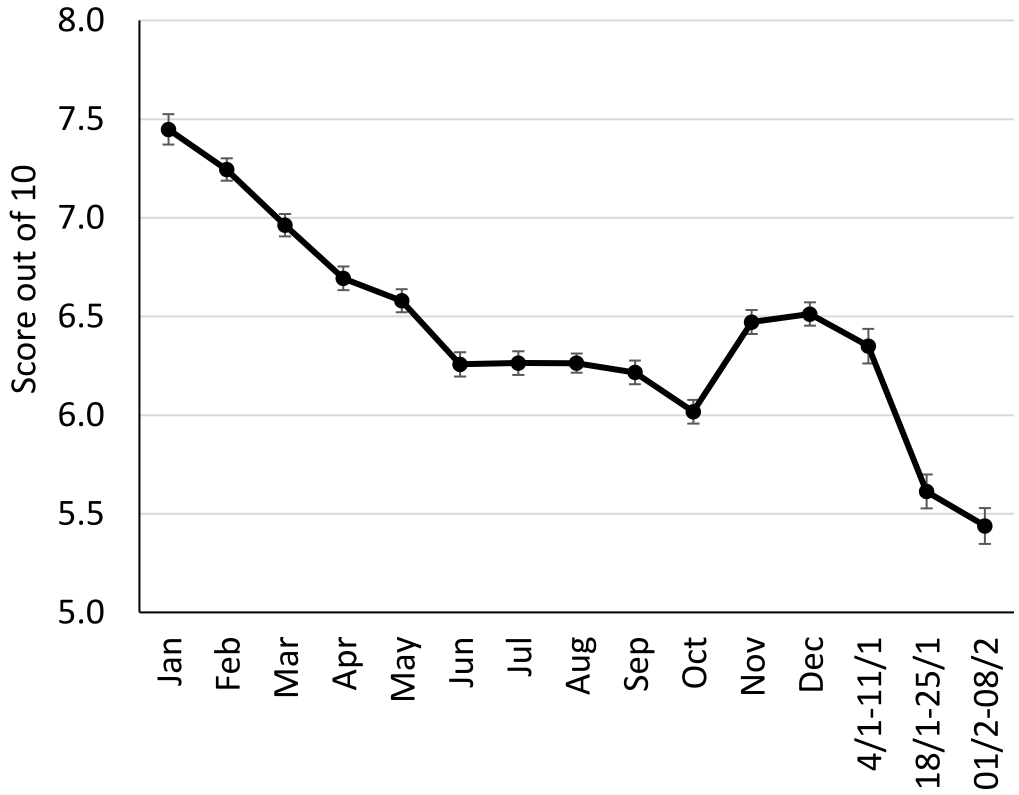
Mitigation

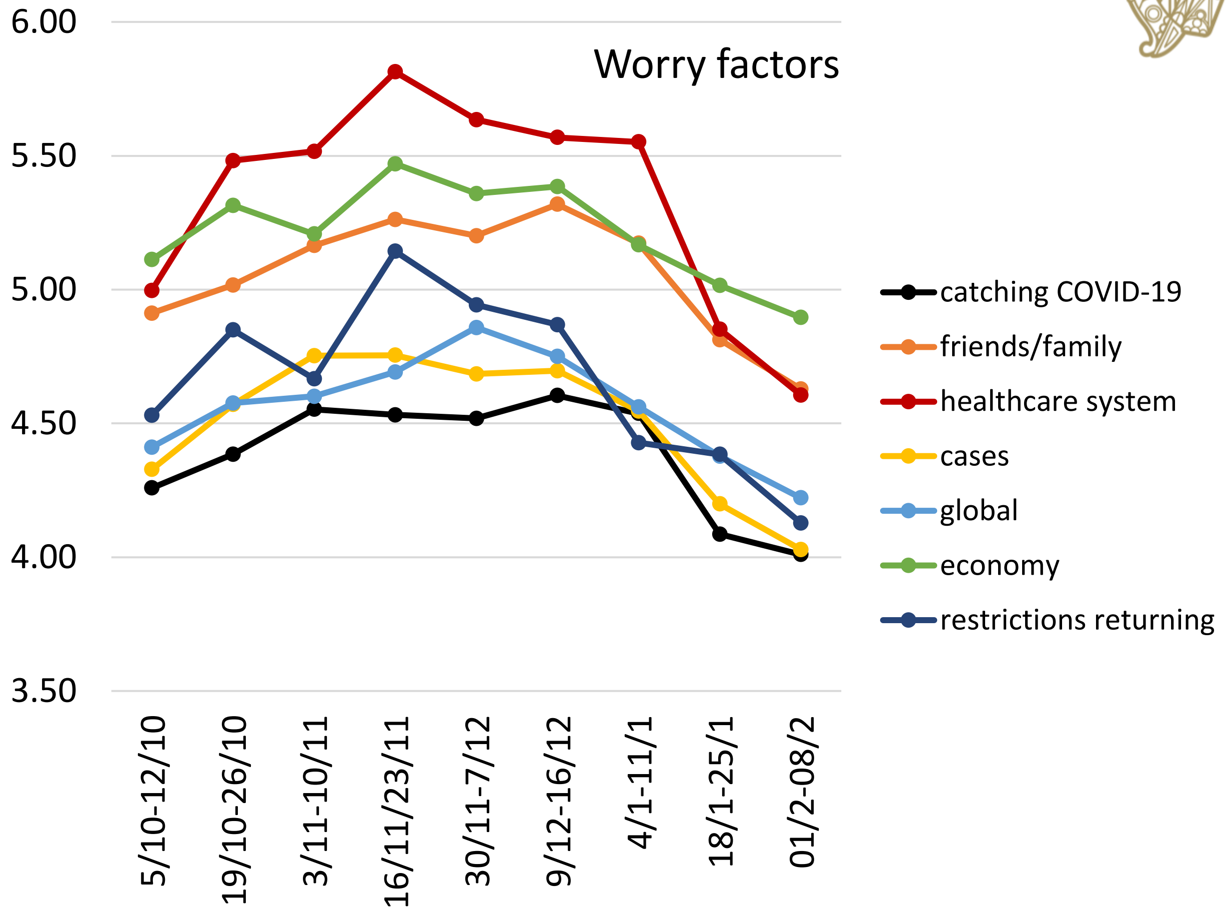


There was a further decrease in mitigative behaviours (keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks), to the lowest level recorded by SAM thus far.

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

Worry

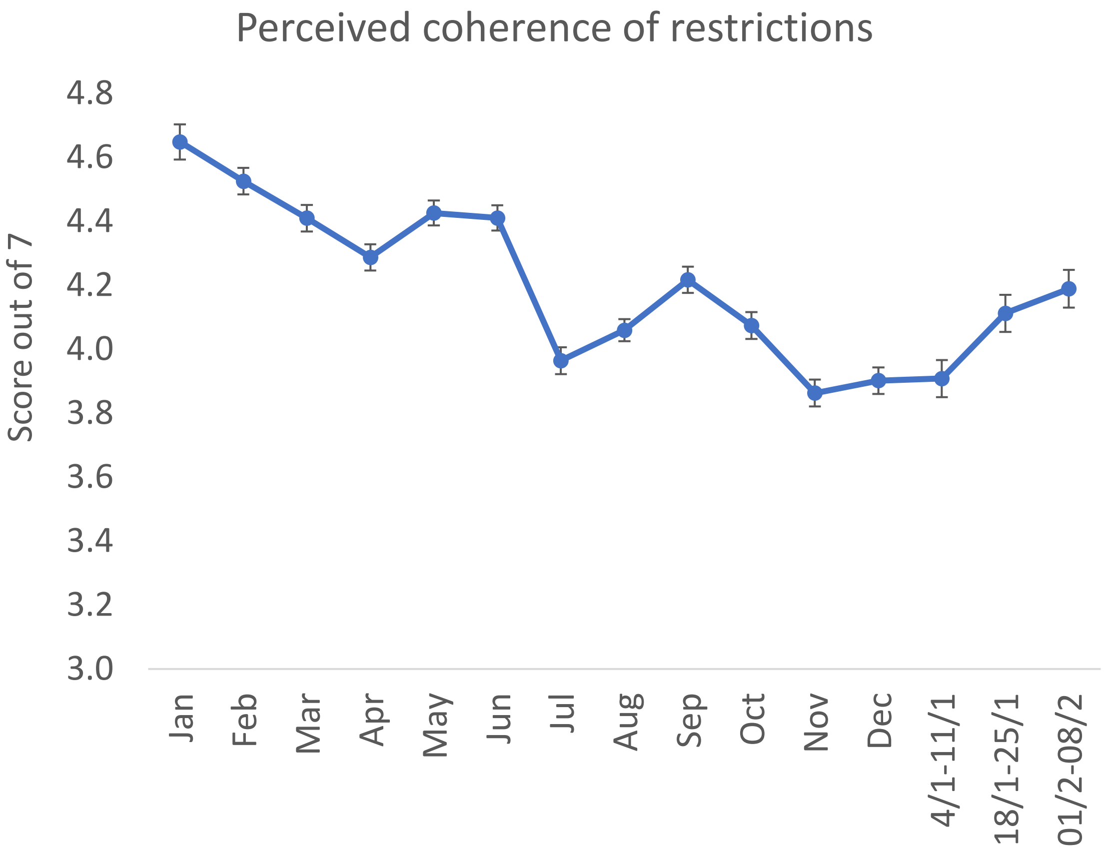


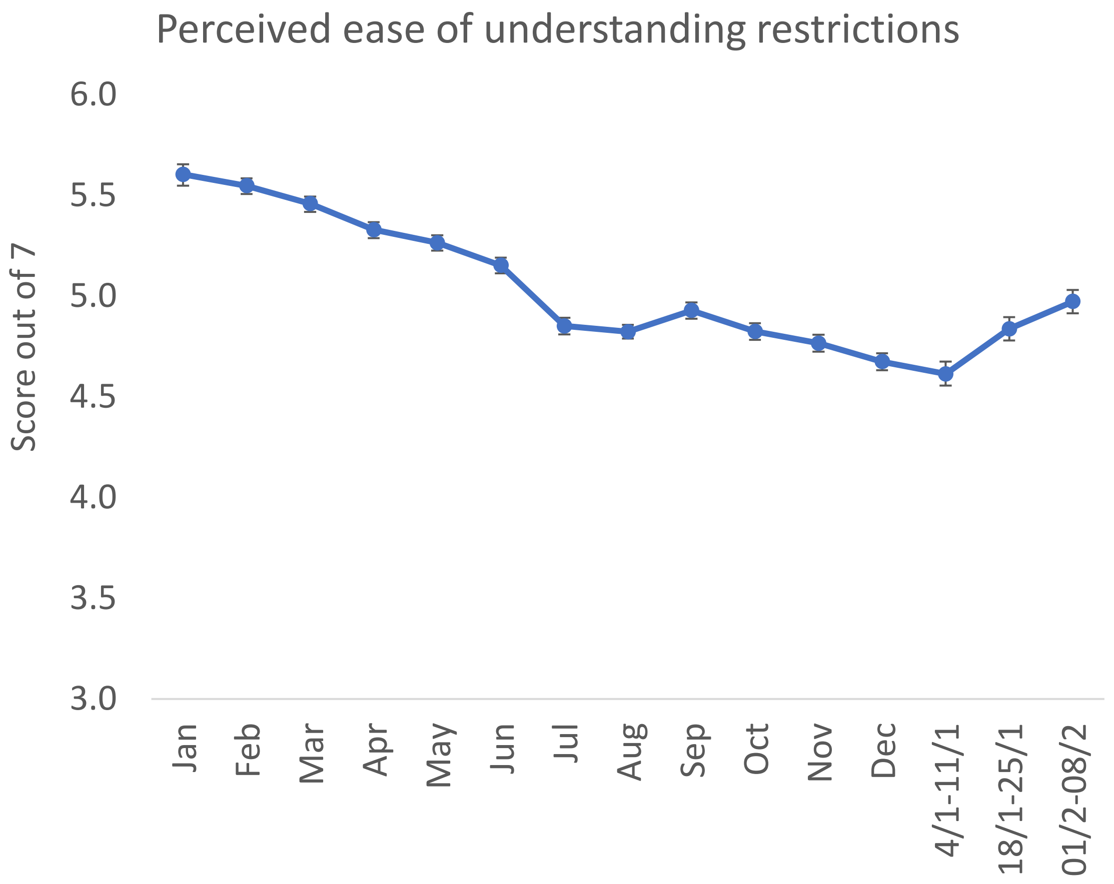


Overall worry about COVID-19 is at its lowest level since SAM began, following a sharp decline in January. While multiple sources of worry declined, worry about the healthcare system, which had been the dominant source of worry, displayed the steepest drop, followed by worry about catching COVID-19. Worry about the economy is now the strongest.

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

Perceptions of restrictions

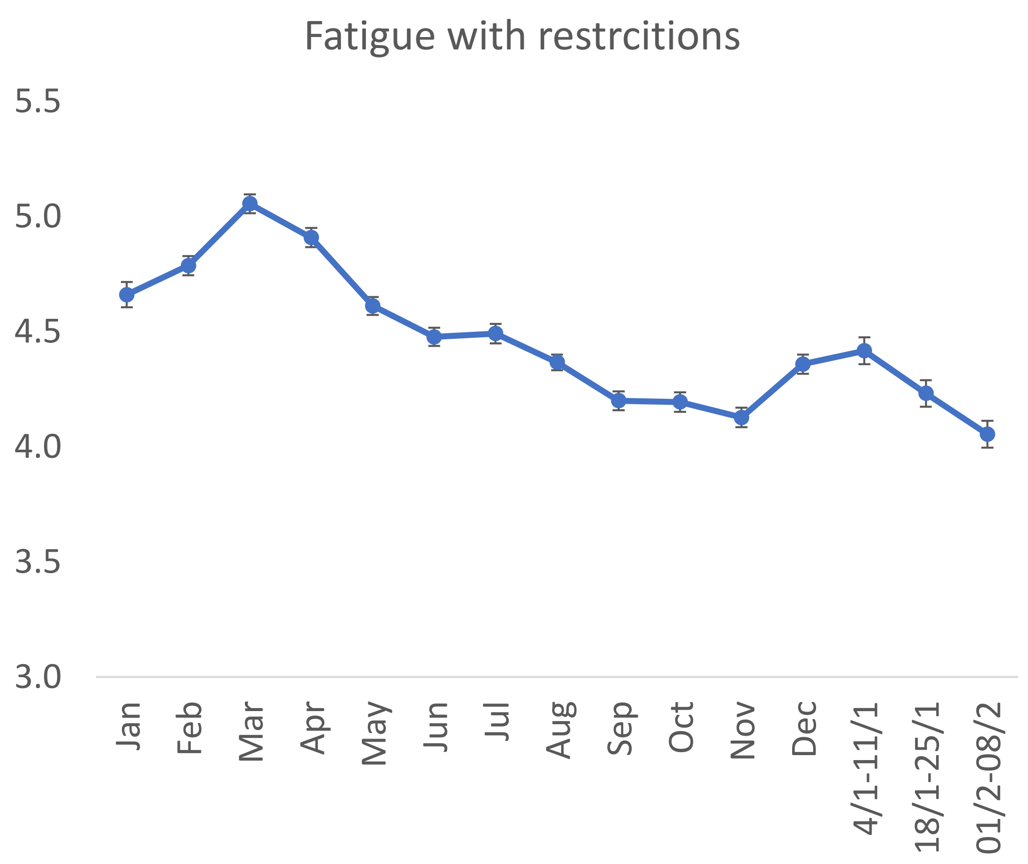


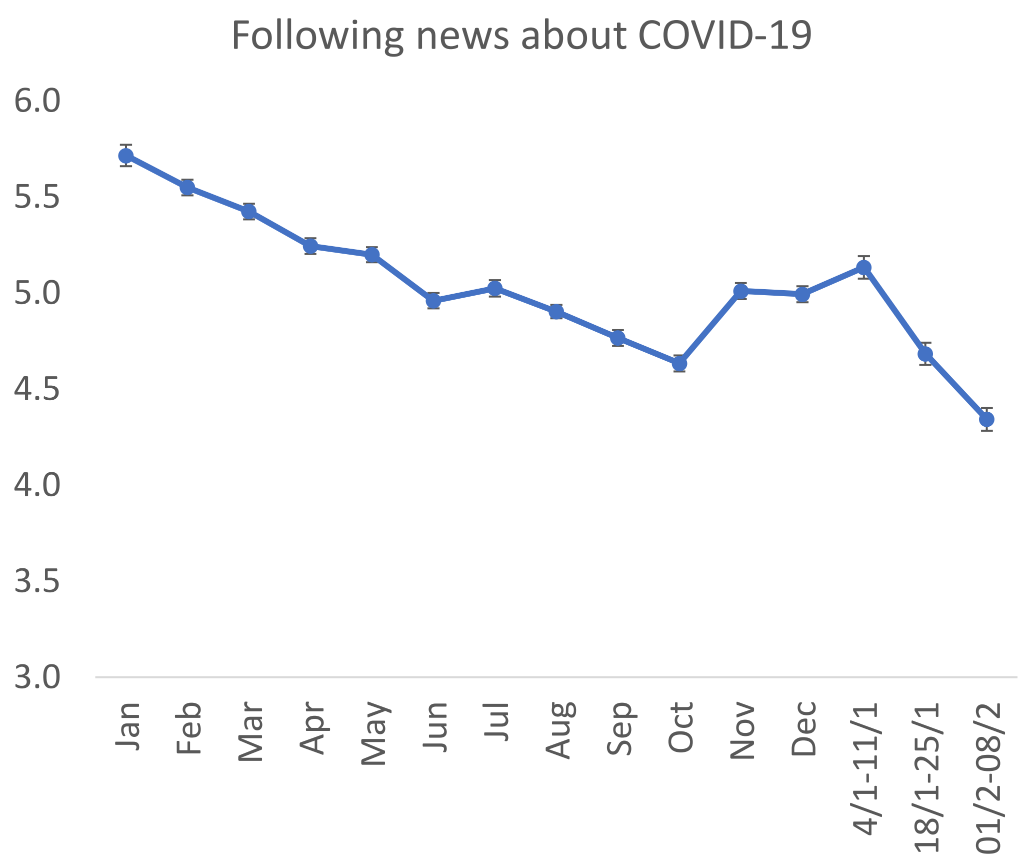


Both the perceived coherence and the ease of understanding restrictions have increased following the lifting of many of them.

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

Fatigue and following coverage

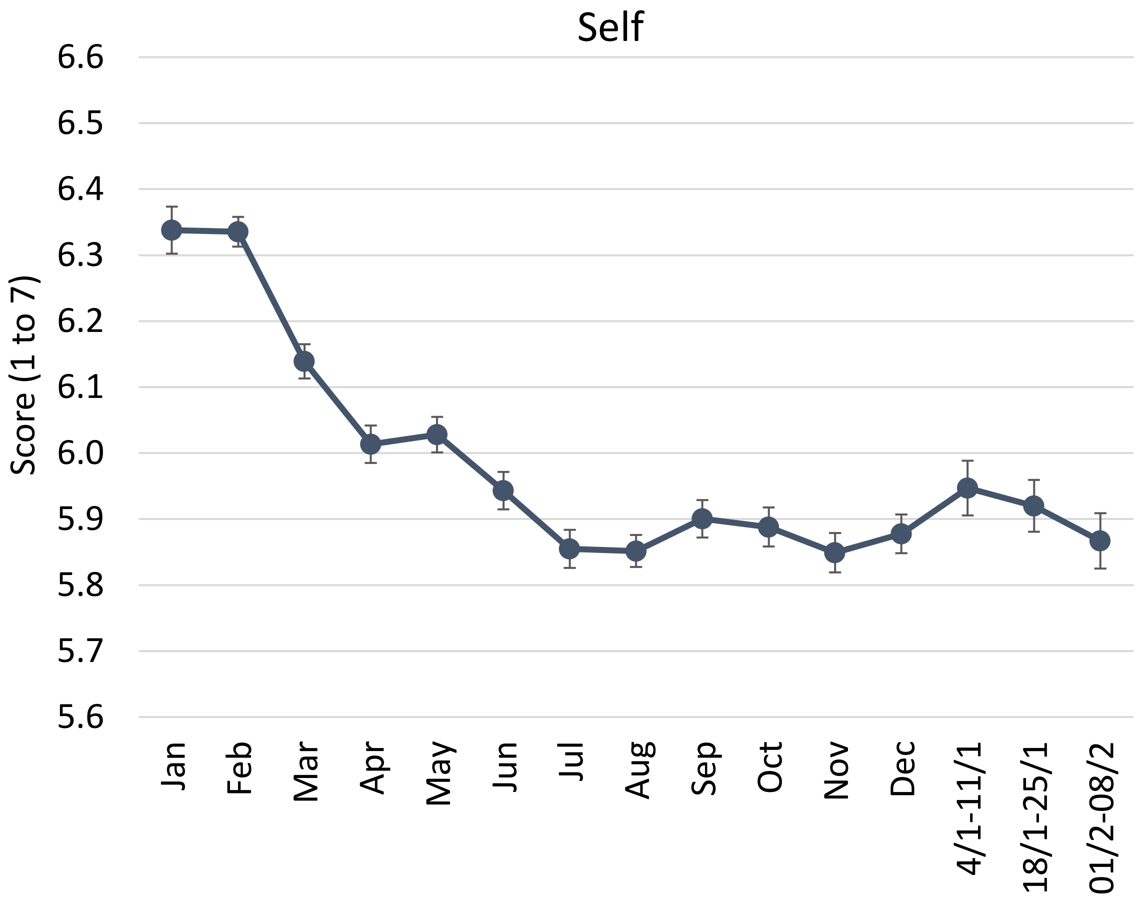


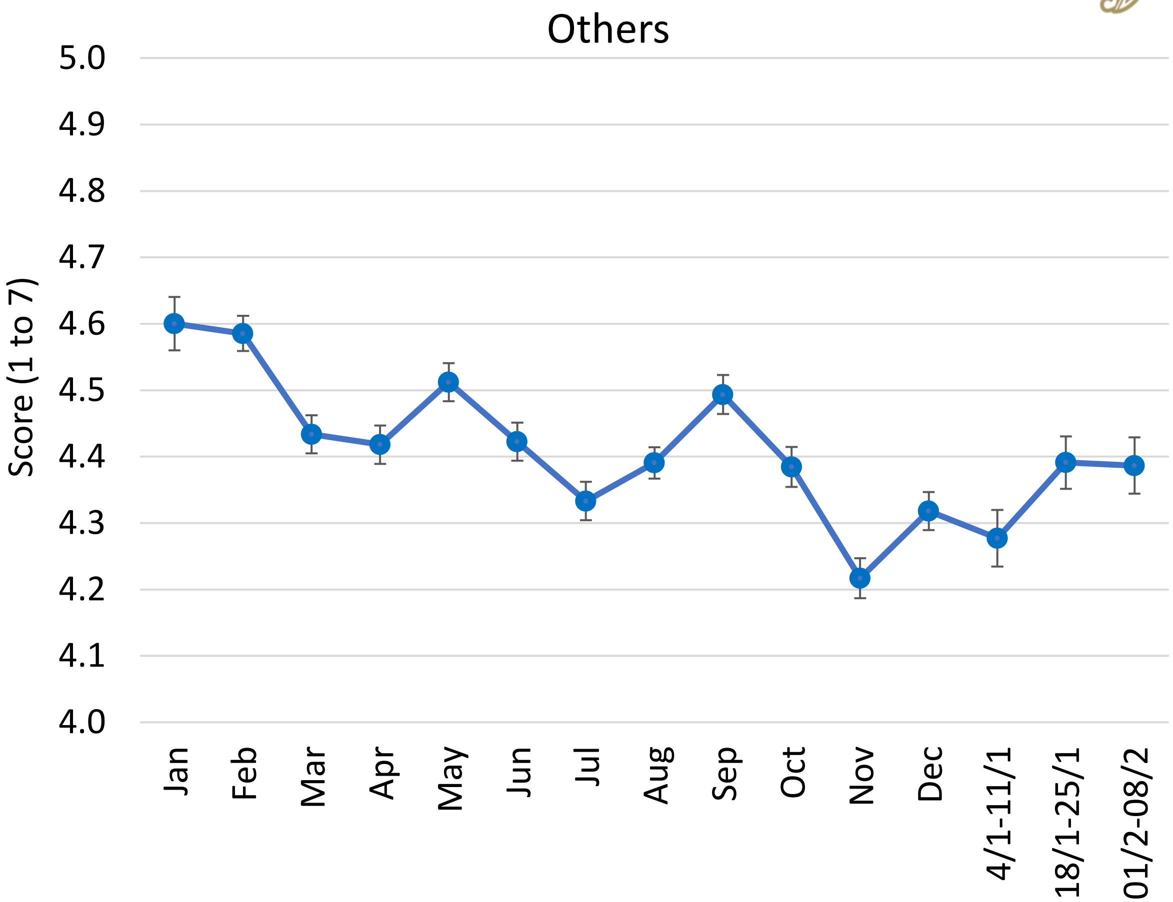


Both fatigue with restrictions and the extent to which people are following the news about COVID-19 fell to their lowest levels recorded since SAM started.

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

Self-reported compliance

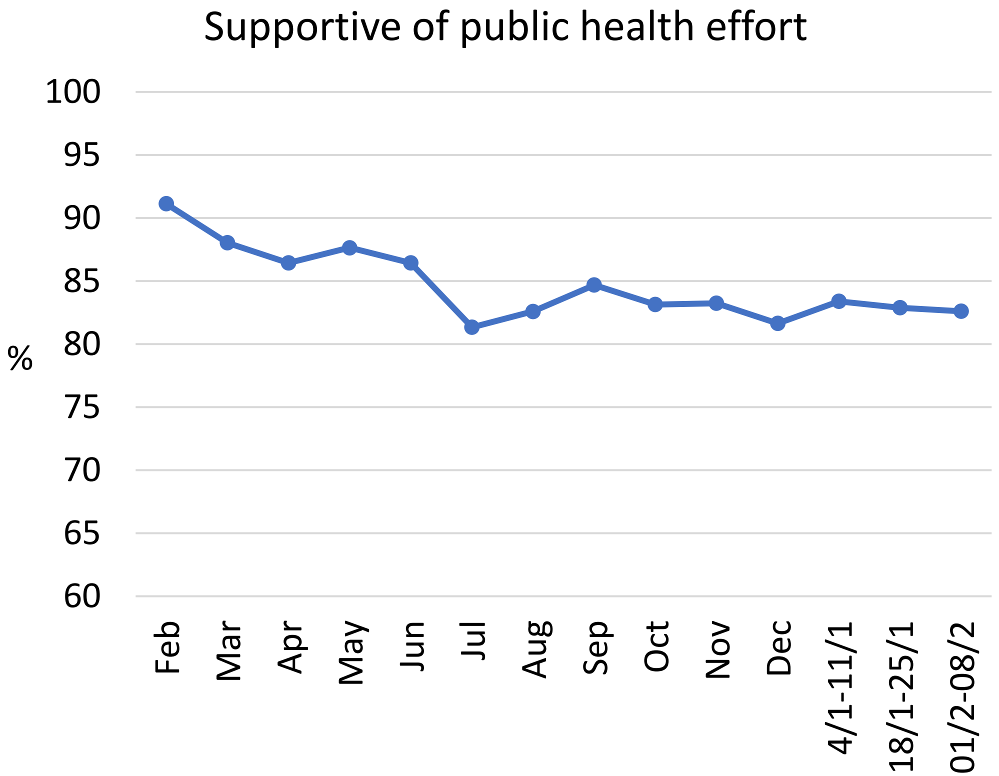


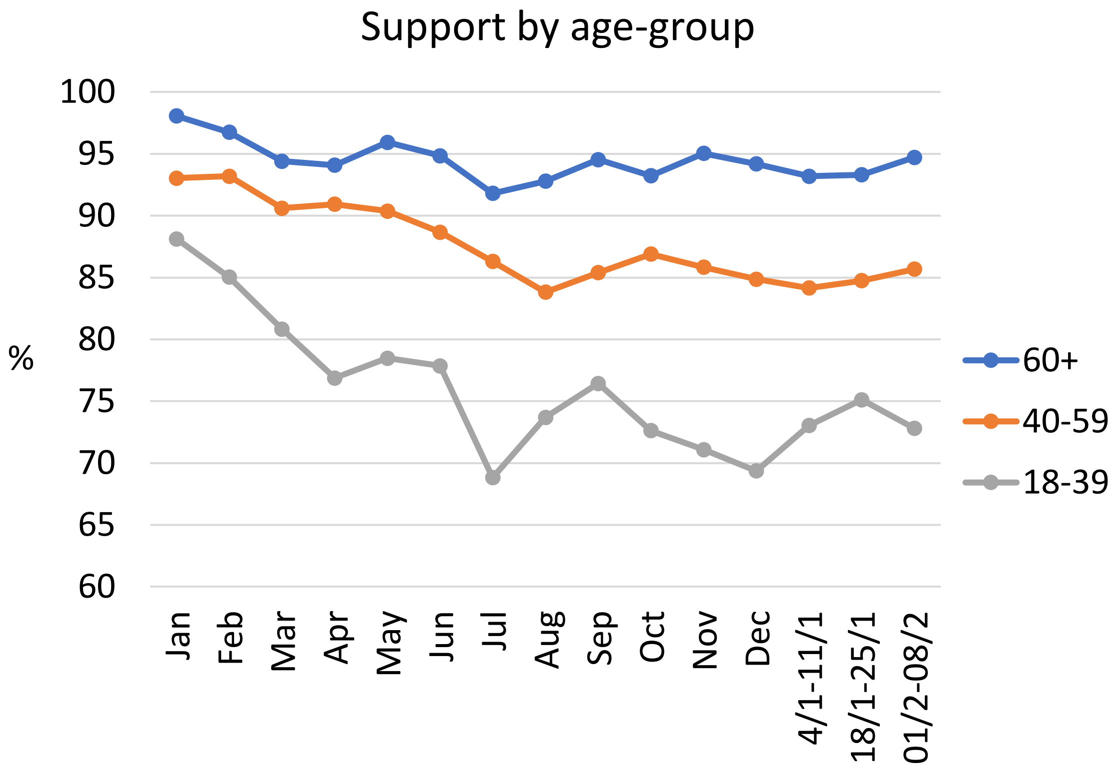


Self-reported compliance with the remaining restrictions and perceptions of others' compliance were stable.

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

Overall support for the public health effort

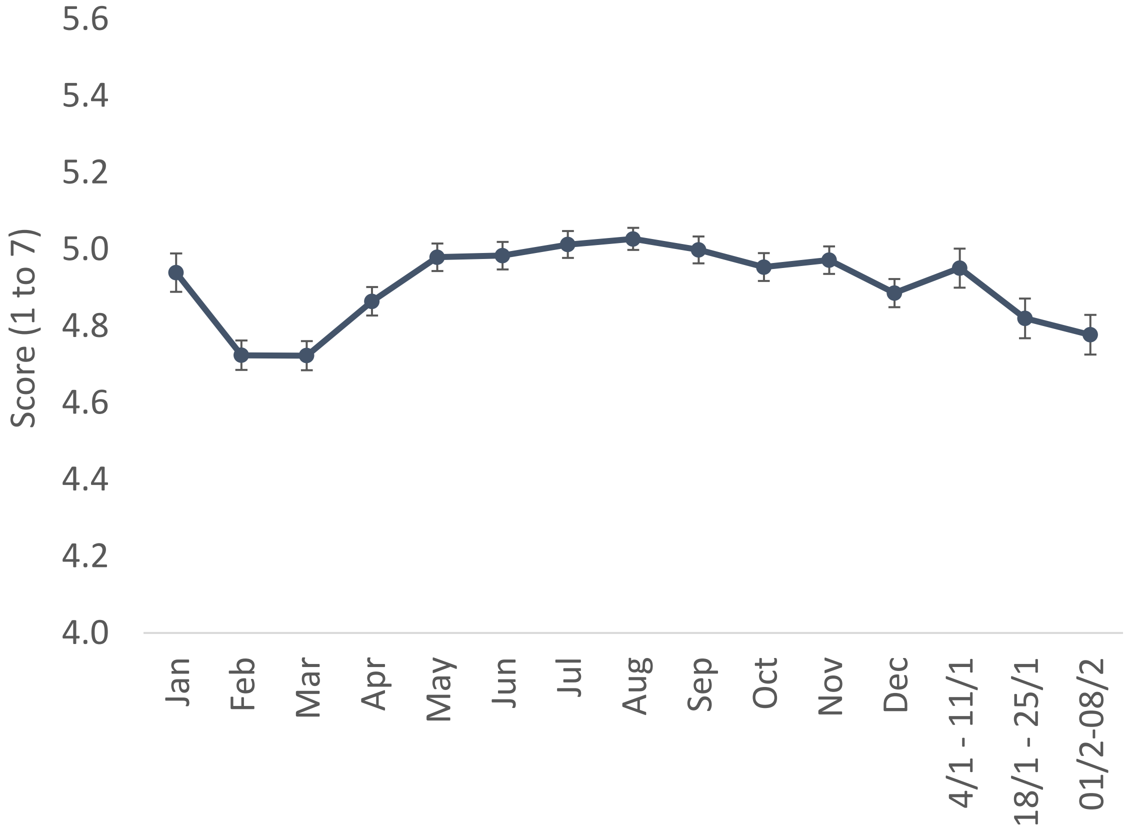


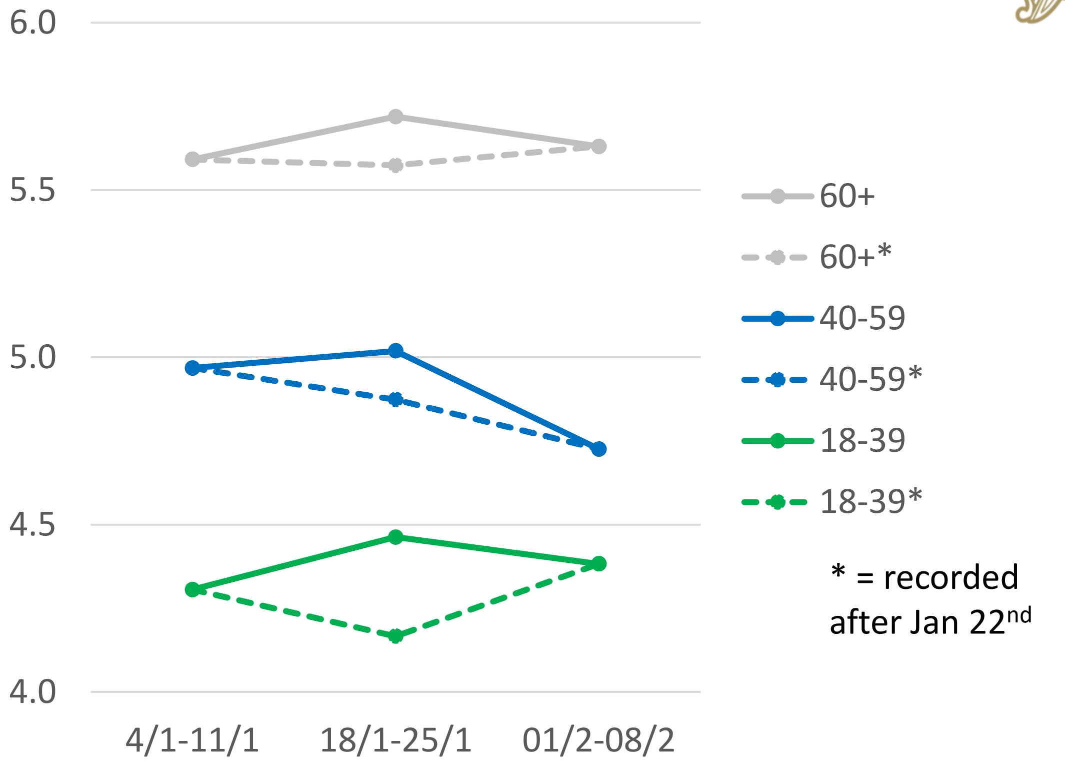


Overall support for the public health effort measured across a range of questions has remained stable, with no significant changes within age-groups.

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

Wellbeing

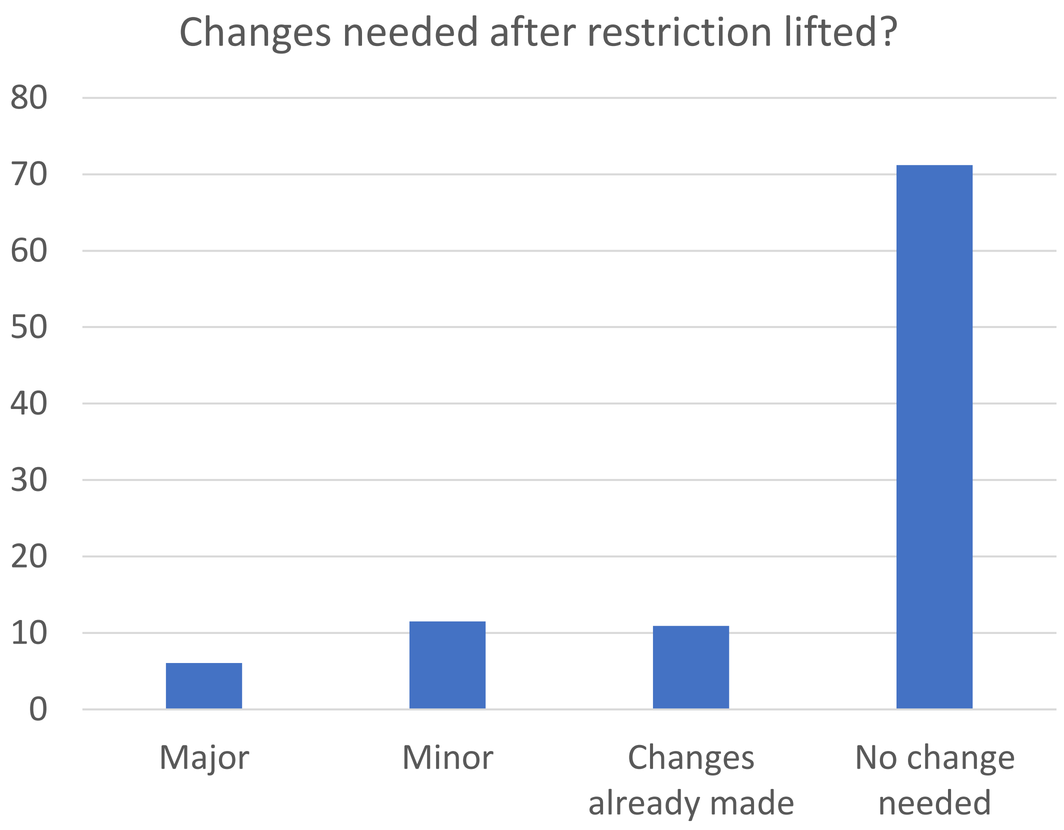




Self-reported wellbeing dropped immediately after restrictions were lifted on January 22nd. Overall, it has not recovered, but the pattern varies by age. While wellbeing had dropped for all age groups (dashed lines in chart of right), it recovered to at least the levels of early January for those aged 18-39 and 60+. The overall decline in well-being was thus driven by the fall among 40-59 year olds.

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

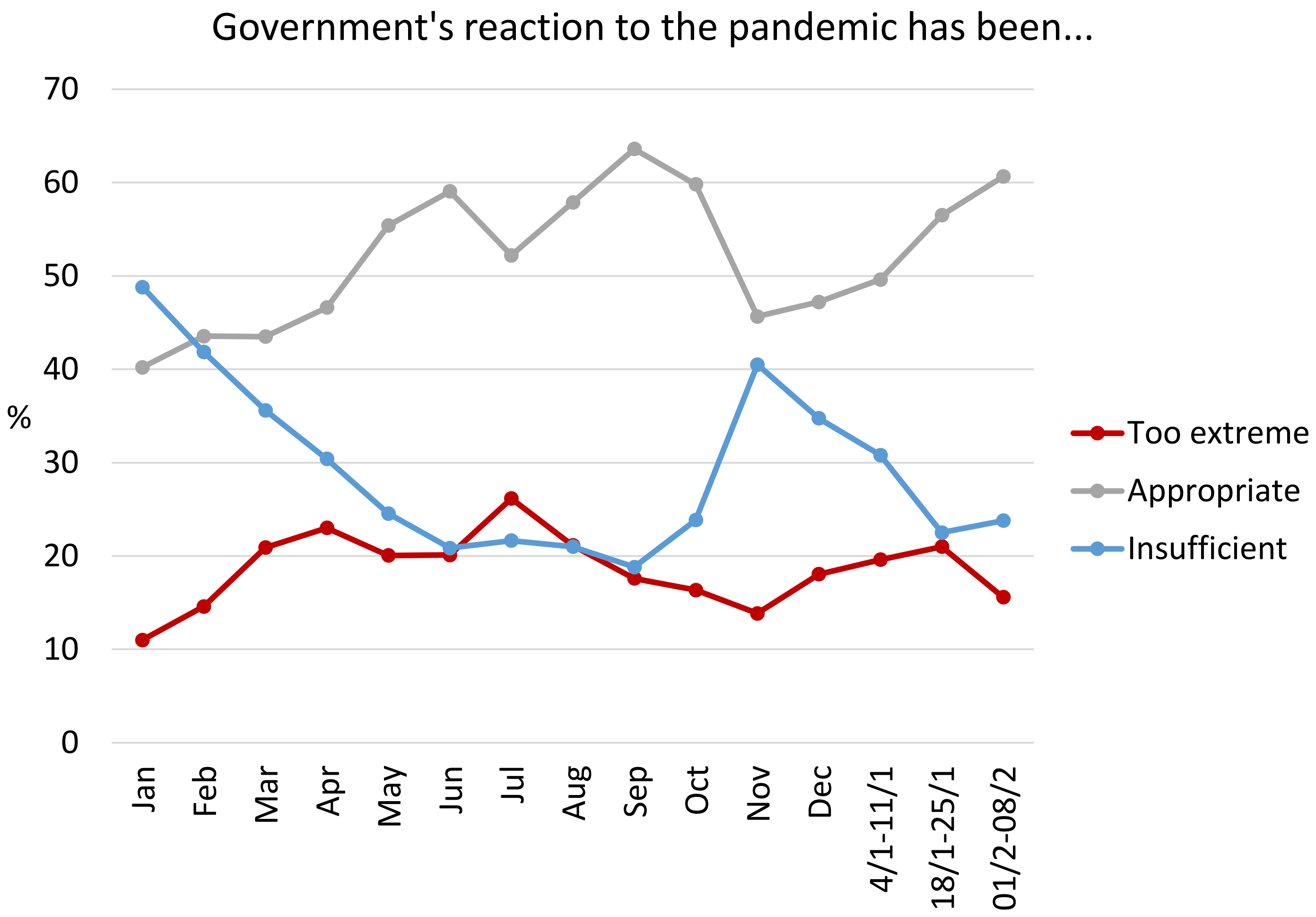
Childcare



The large majority of parents do not need to change childcare arrangements following the lifting of restriction and most that do have either done so or changes are minor.

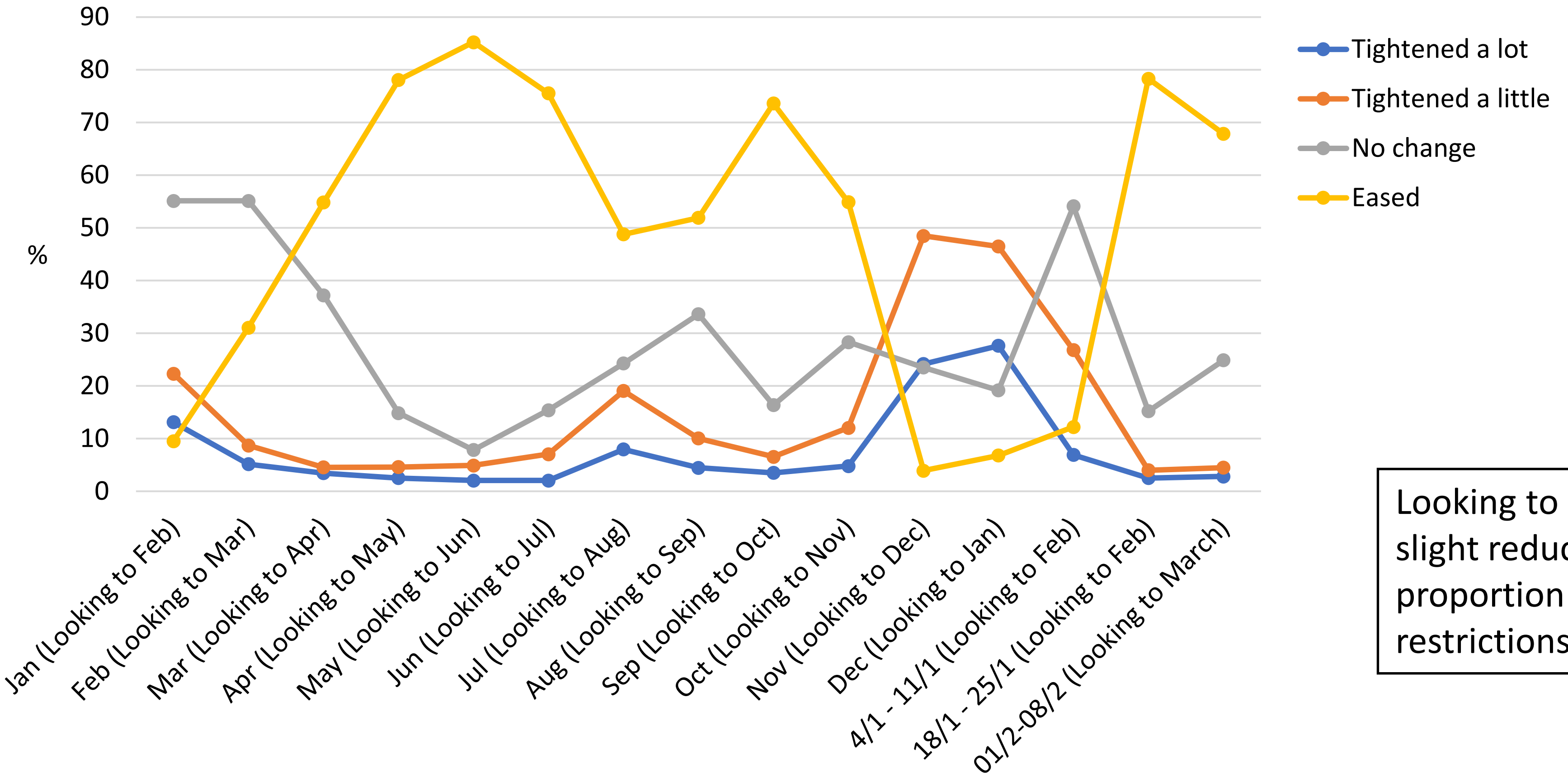
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Government Response to the Pandemic



The proportion of people who view the Government's response to the pandemic as appropriate again increased significantly, as the minority who view the response as too extreme declined further.

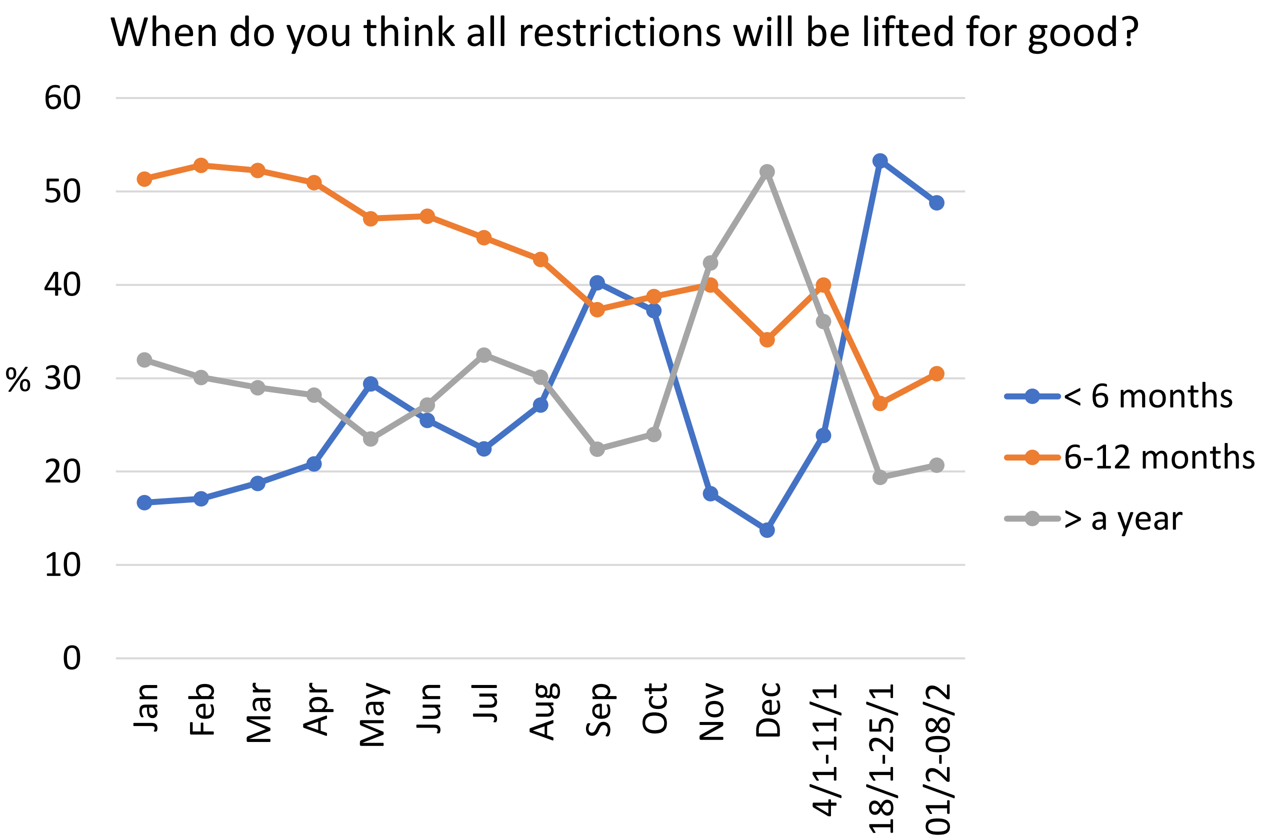
Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



Looking to March, there was a slight reduction in the proportion of people expecting restrictions to ease further.

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

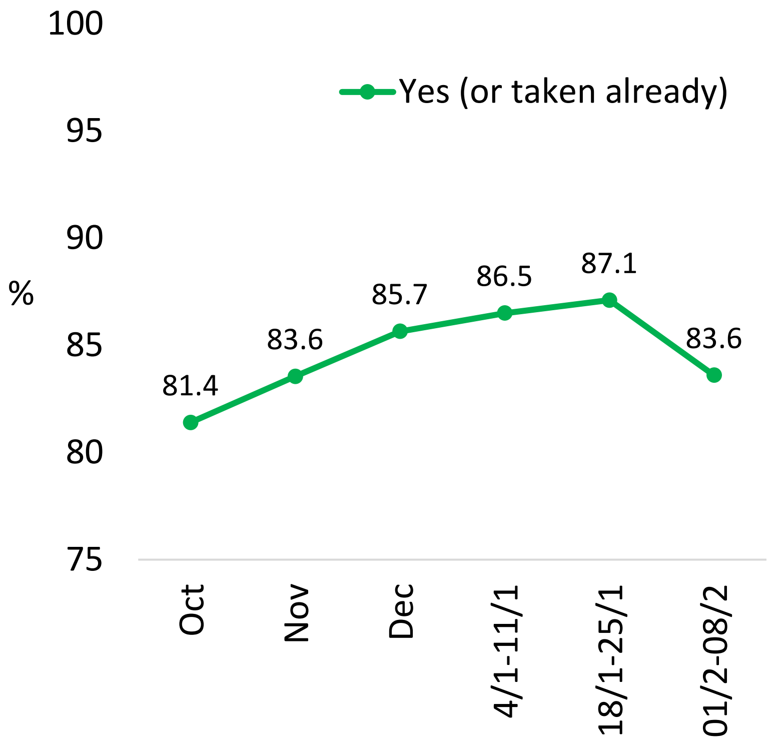
Long-term expectations

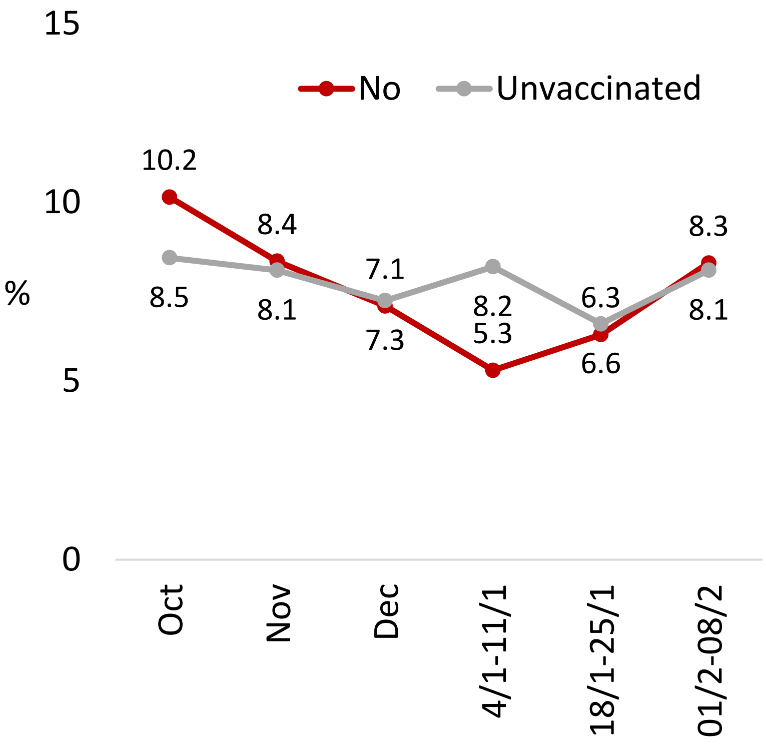


Longer term expectations also became slightly more pessimistic following the very large shift in expectations that accompanied the January 22nd announcement that many restrictions would be lifted.

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

Booster vaccine intentions

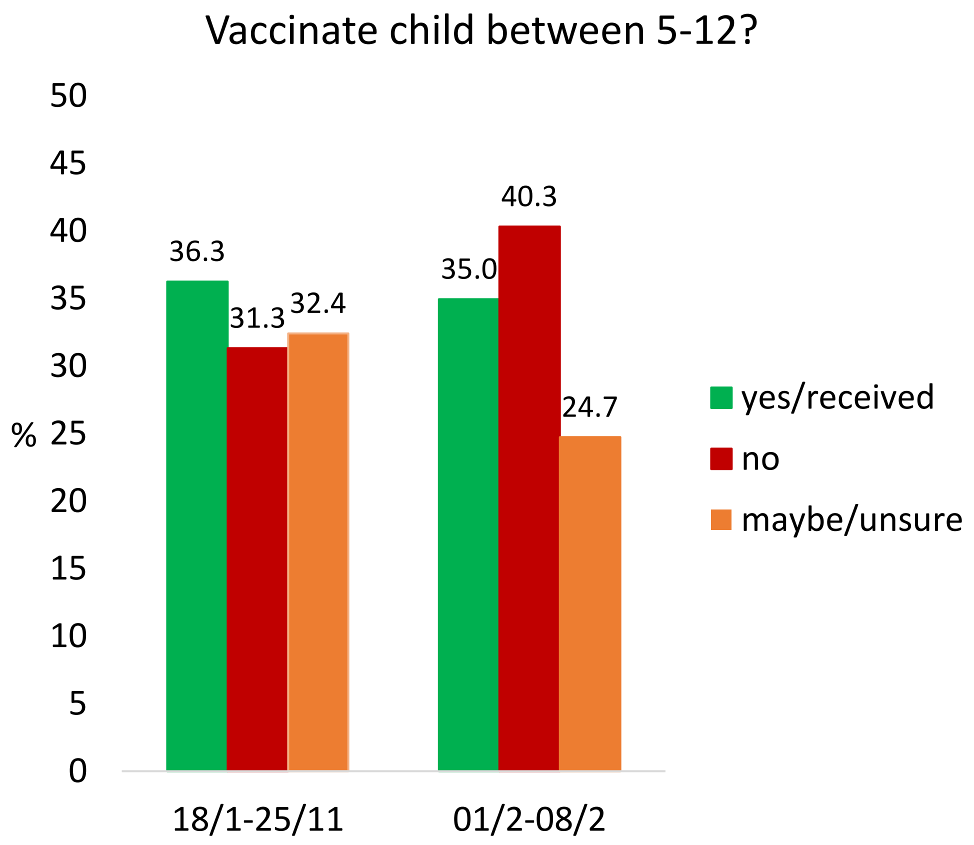


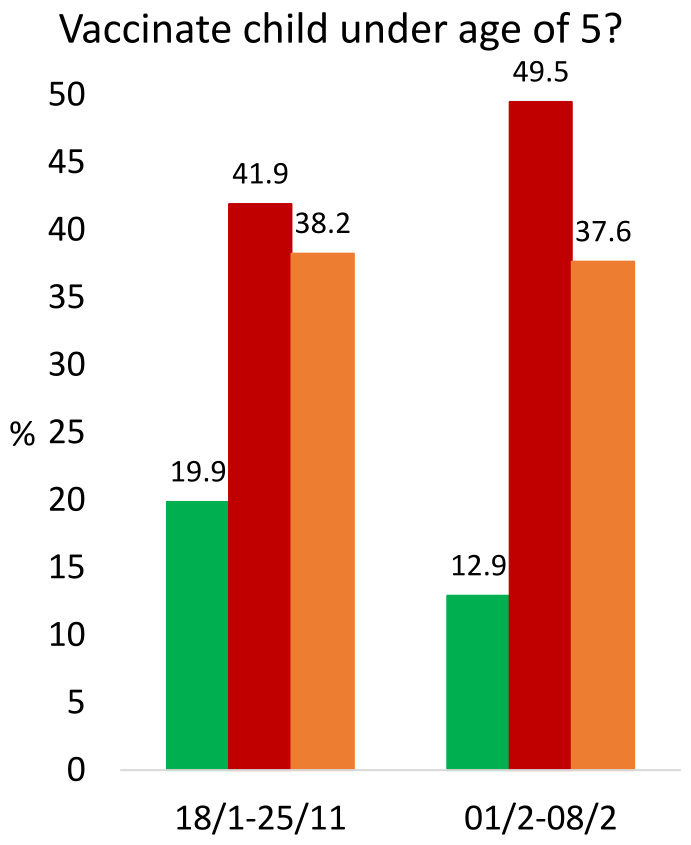


The proportion of the population not intending to take a booster vaccine increased. The trend towards acceptance of the booster vaccine has reversed following the lifting of restrictions on January 22nd. Two common reasons cited for refusing the booster are people's experiences of some side-effects from initial vaccines and that they cannot see the benefit.

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

Child vaccine intentions

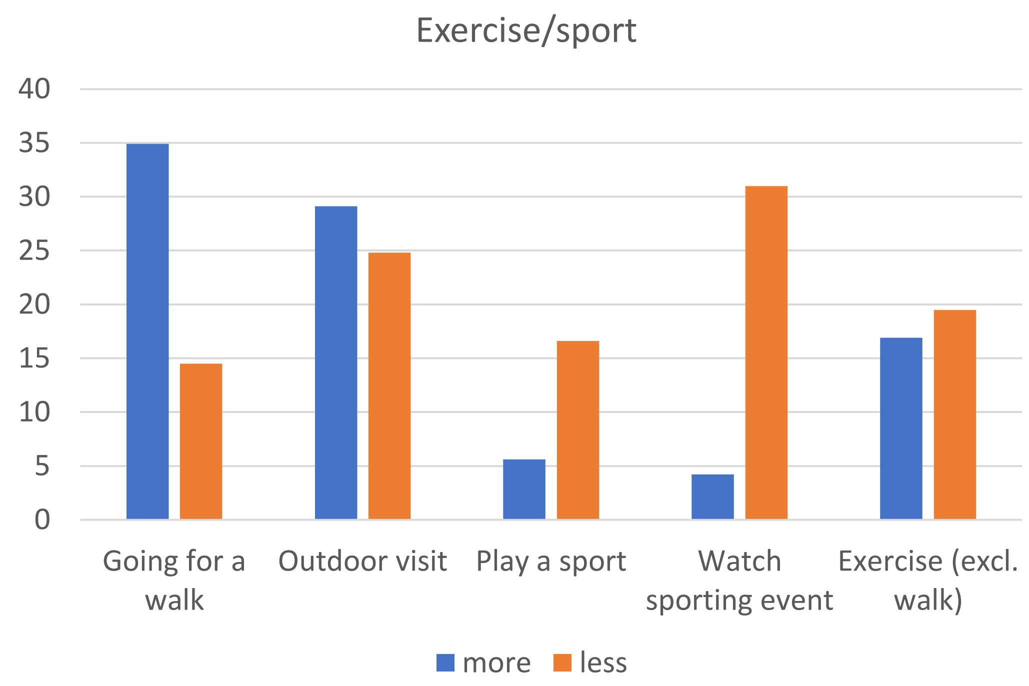


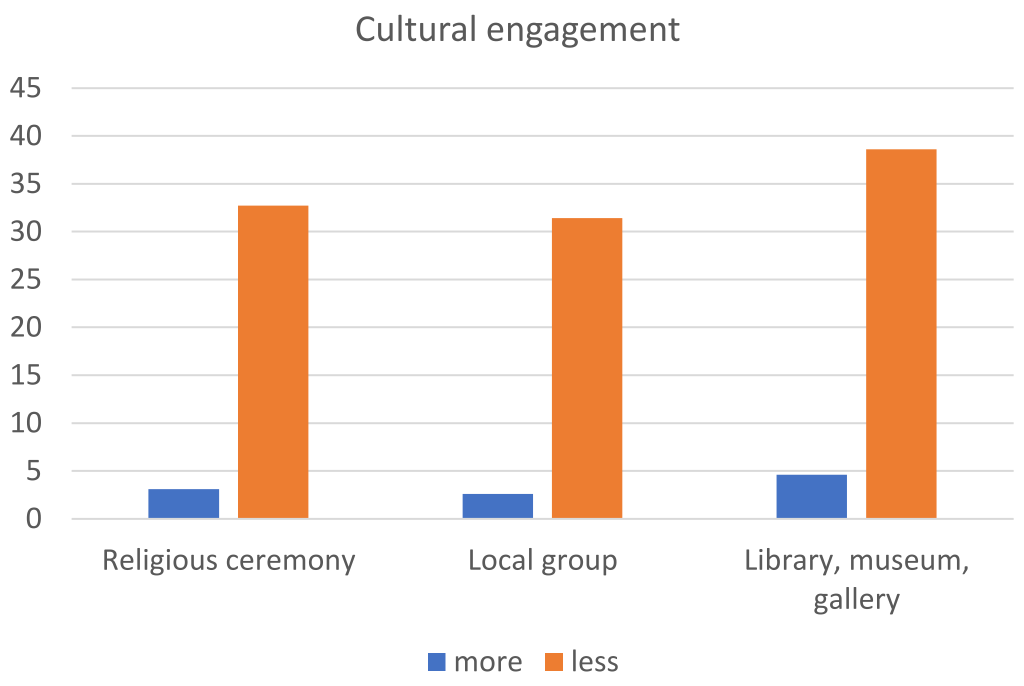


Intentions among parents to vaccinate children also became more negative. Given the small samples of parents with children of the requisite age, these changes fell short of statistically significance, but all changes in vaccine intentions of both adult and children were in the same direction – towards greater reluctance.

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

Compared to pre-pandemic?

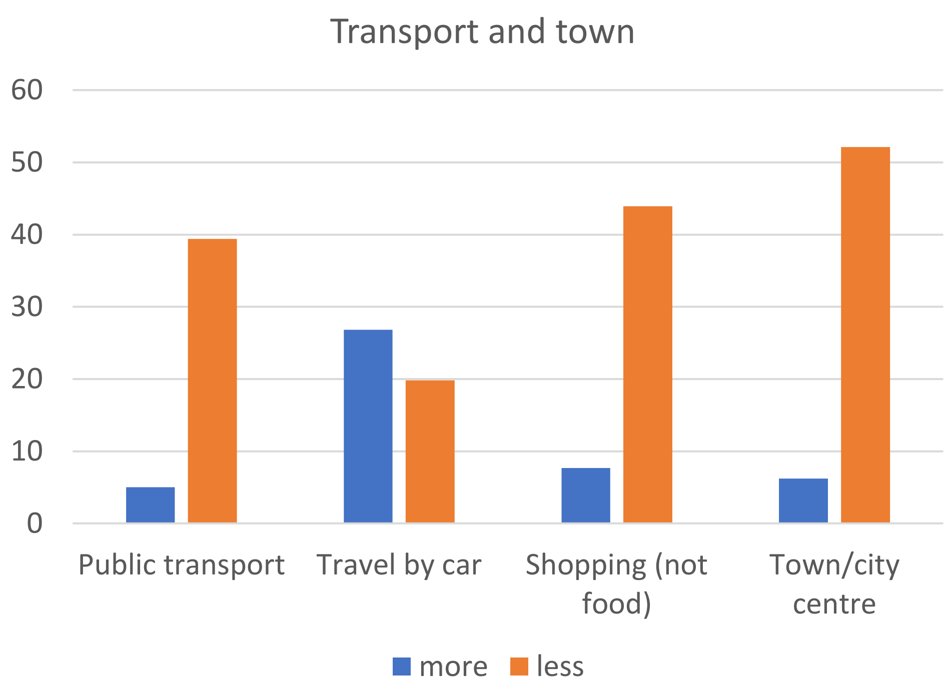


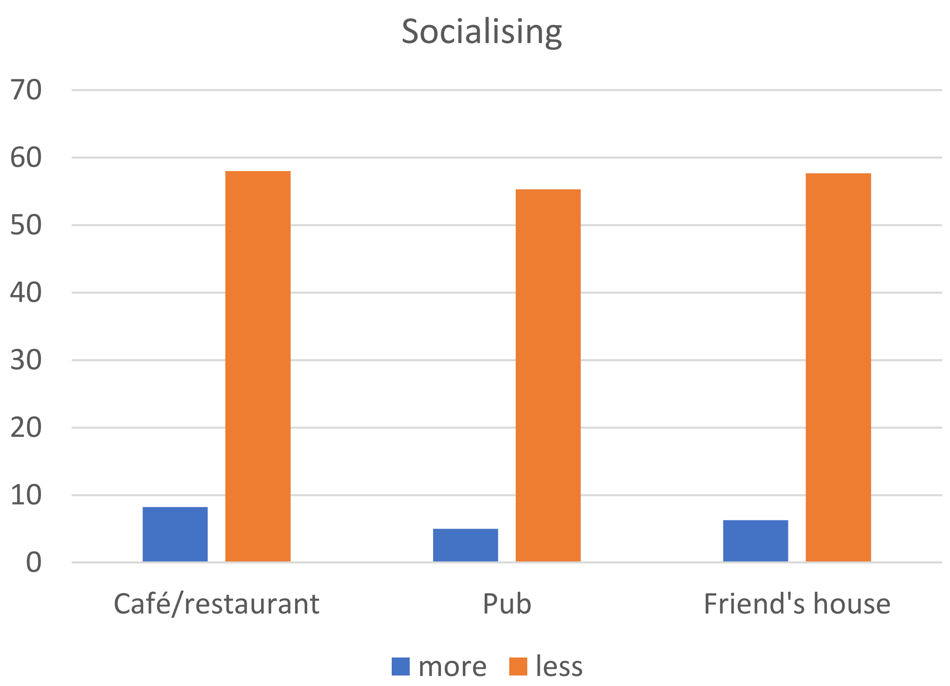


Participants were asked to compared their levels of activity now with pre-pandemic. While some exercise and outdoor activities have increased, especially walking, people are playing and watching sport less. Cultural engagement is also yet to recover.

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

Compared to pre-pandemic?

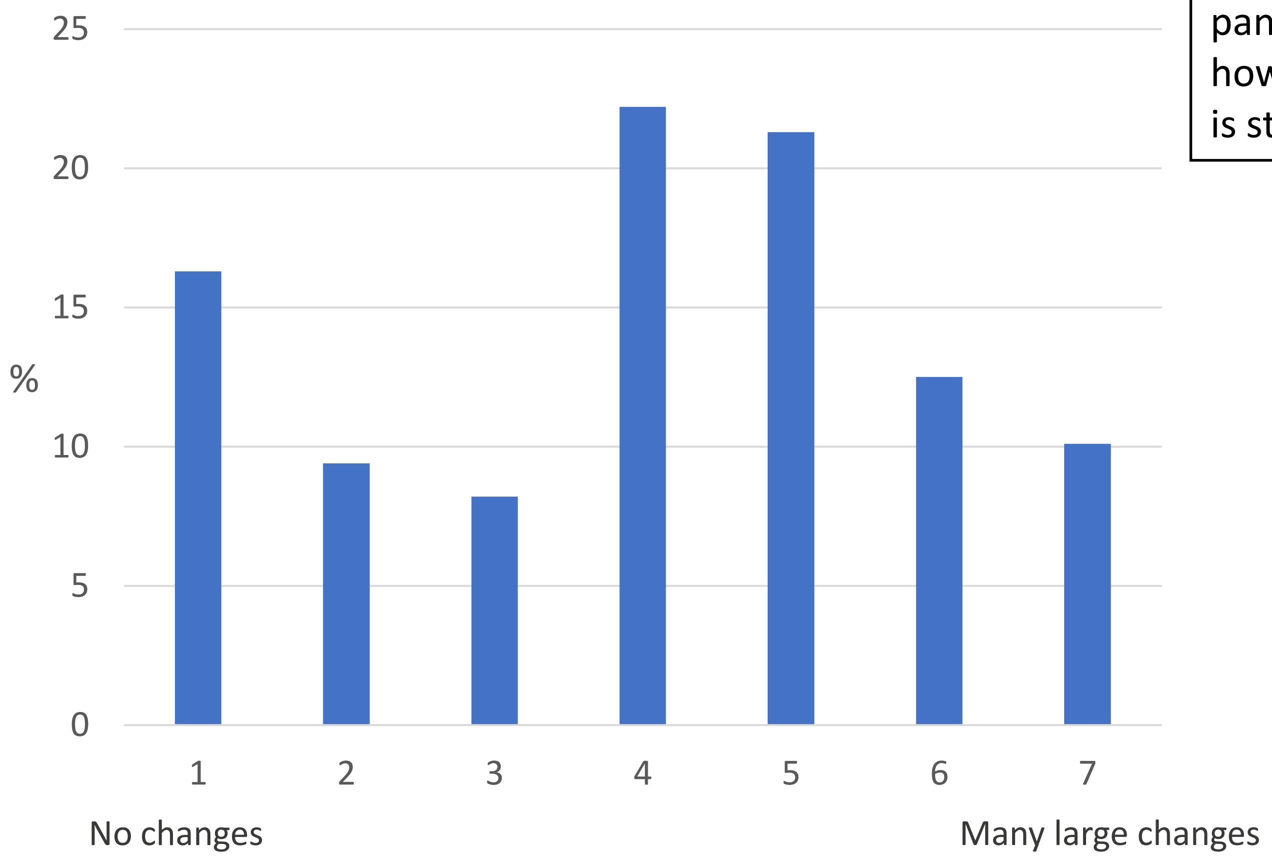




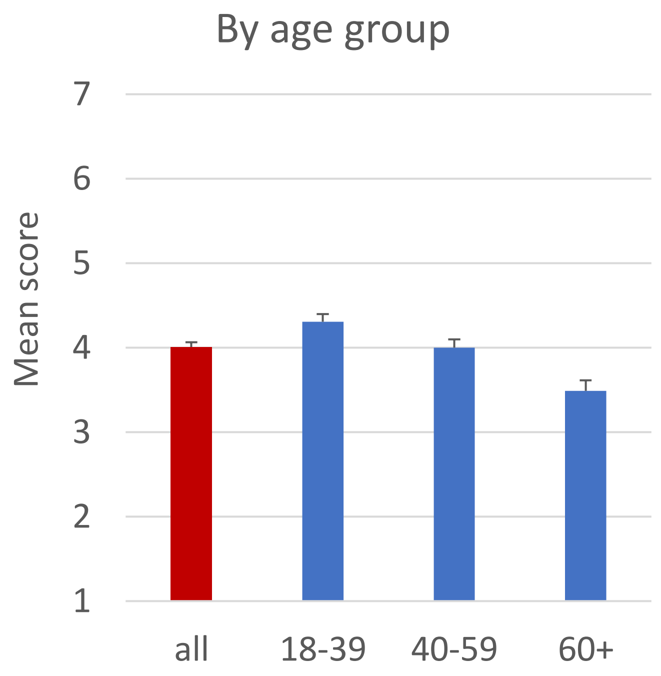
People are travelling more by car, despite engaging in less activity. 39% of the population is using public transport less. Many are still shopping and visiting town centres less. The majority are going less to cafés, restaurants, pubs and other people's homes.

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

Do you want things to return to as they were before the pandemic?

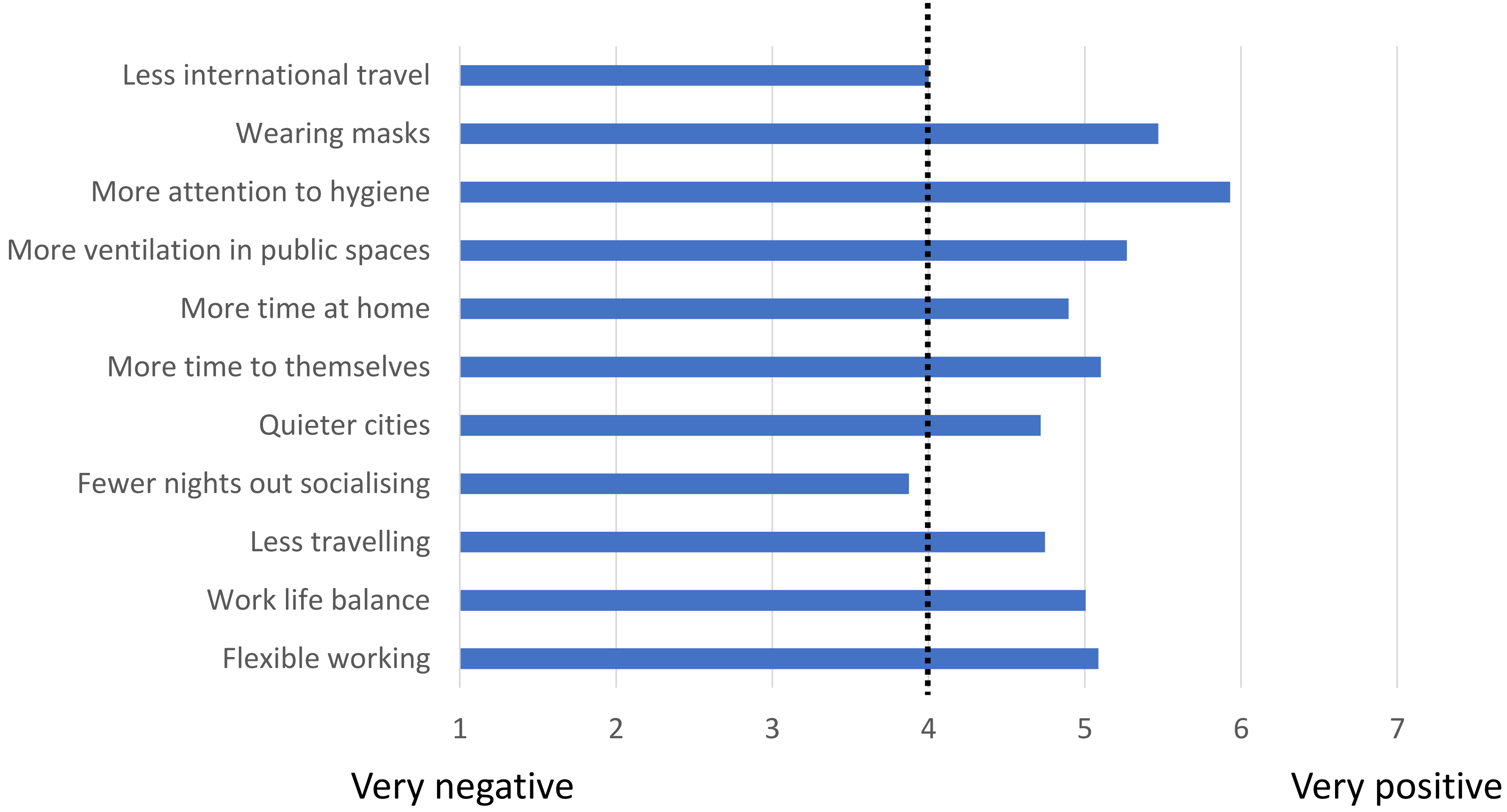


People are more likely to express a desire for life after the pandemic to be different than to want life to return to how it was before the pandemic. This appetite for change is stronger among young adults.



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

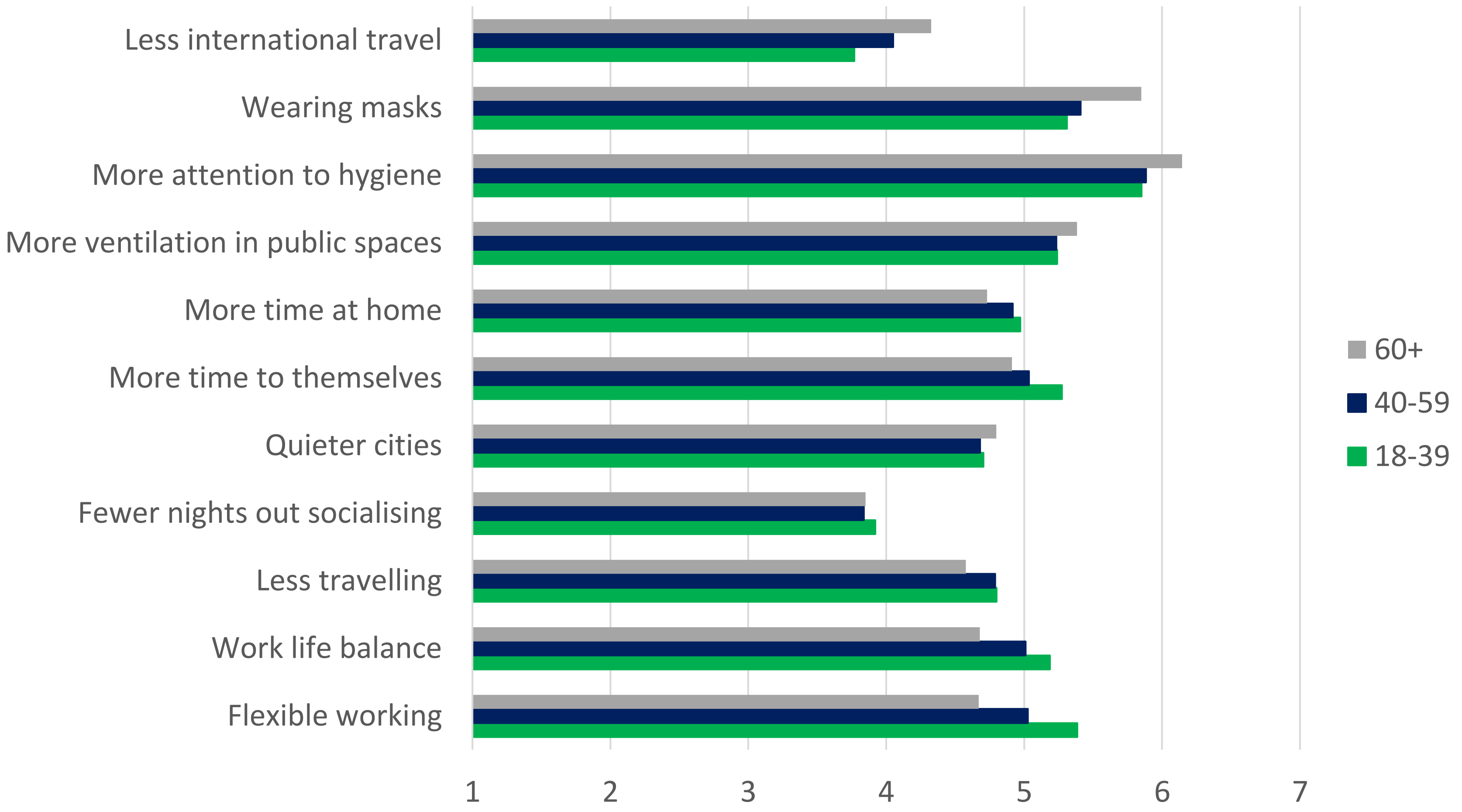
Are changes positive or negative?



The chart shows how positively or negatively people view specific changes brought about by the pandemic. Efforts to reduce transmission of infection are viewed positively, as are changes to the flexibility of working and work-life balance. On average, there is a positive response generally to leading a quieter life. People are equivocal about the reduction in international travel and nights out.

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

Views of changes by age

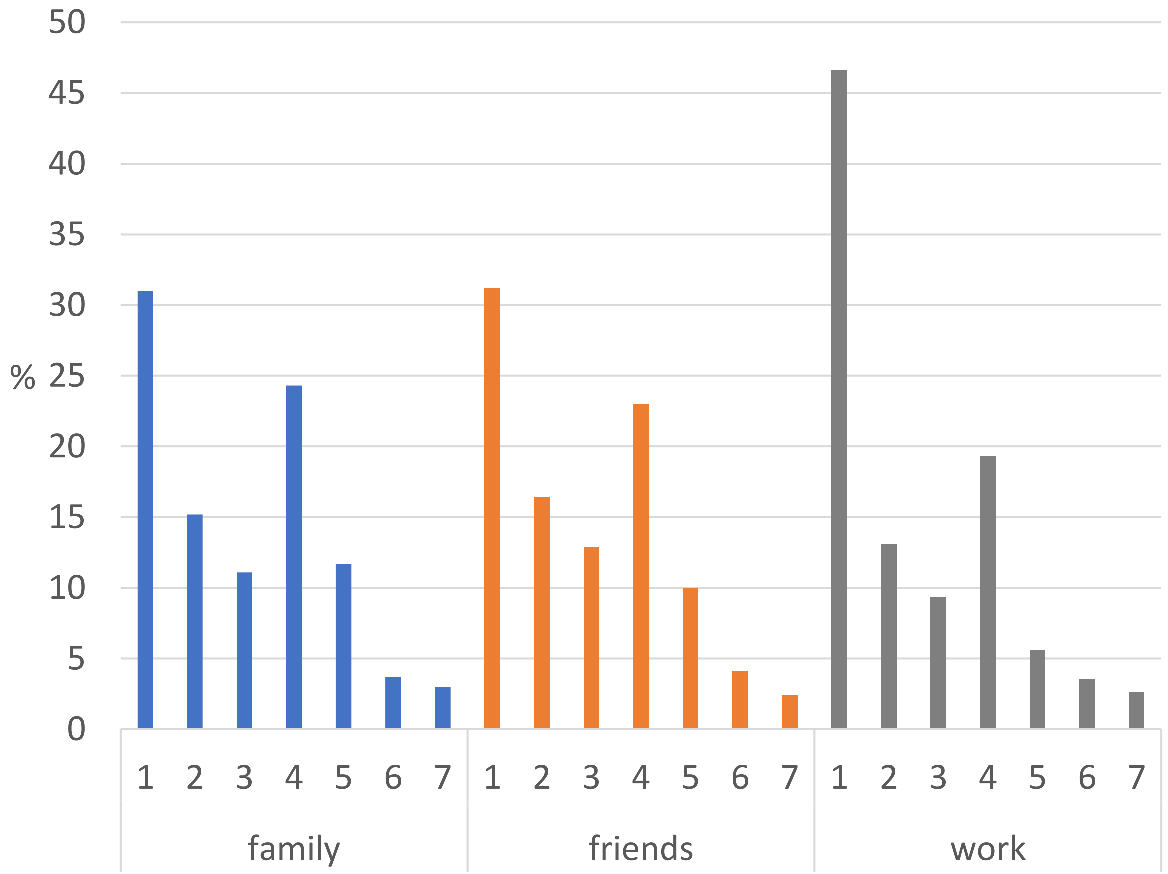


How positively or negatively people view specific changes brought about by the pandemic does not vary greatly by age, but there are some differences. Younger adults particularly welcome flexible working and changes to work-life balance, including more time to themselves. Older adults particularly welcome efforts to reduce transmission of infection.

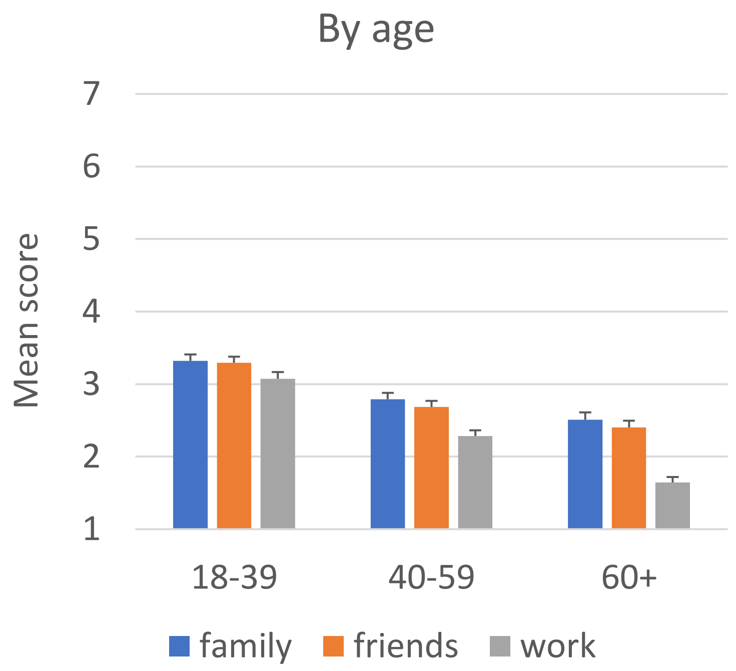
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Do you feel pressure to socialise?

A majority of the population feels some pressure to socialise, with a minority feeling more intense social pressure. Social pressure is strongest from family and felt more by younger adults.



1="not at all"   7="a lot"



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