ESRI

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Social Activity Measure
Feb 15th – 22nd 2022

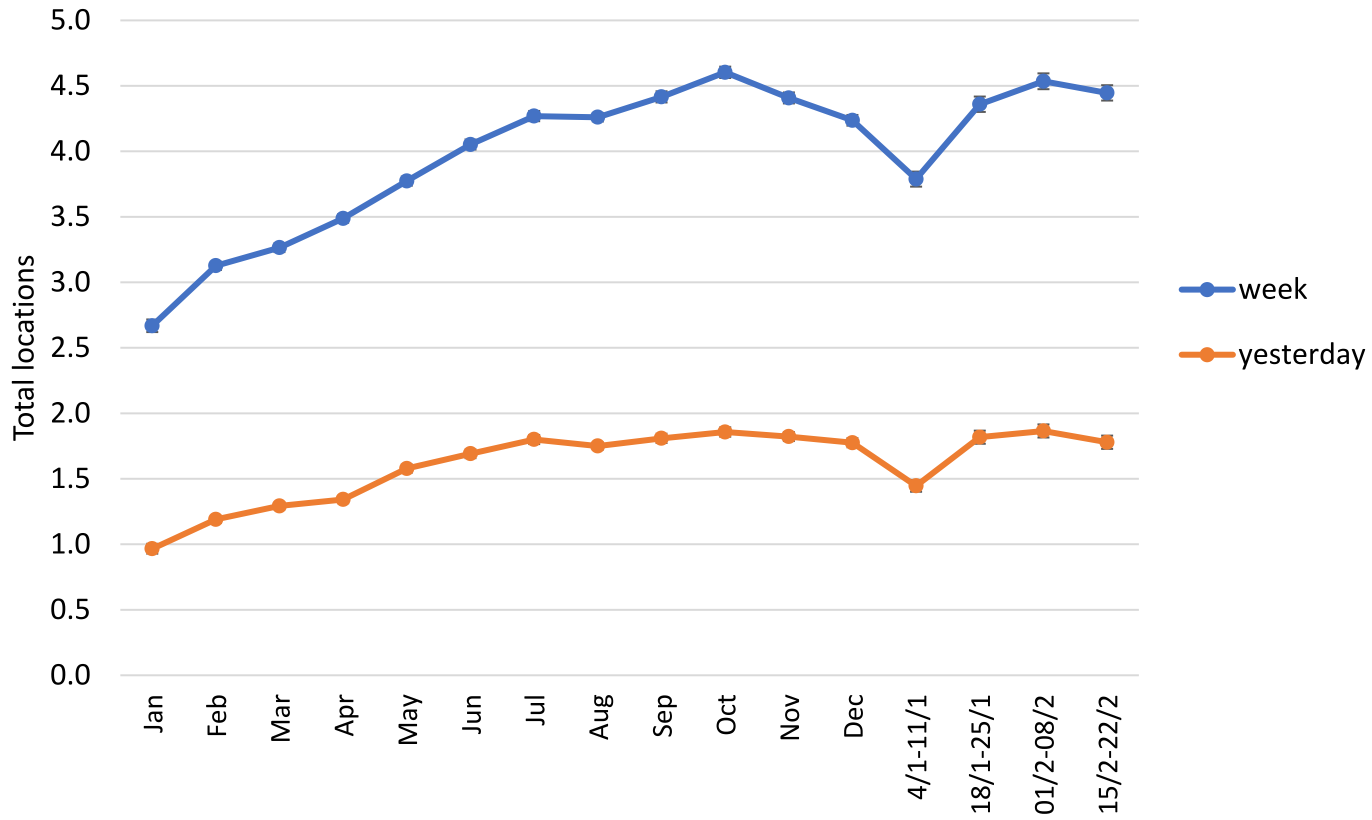
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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 15th and 22nd 2022. Data were collected one month after the lifting of the majority of public health restrictions. During data collection (February 18th), there was an announcement that remaining public health measures would ease from February 28th. Data collection covered a period of particularly bad weather, notably Storms Eunice and Franklin.

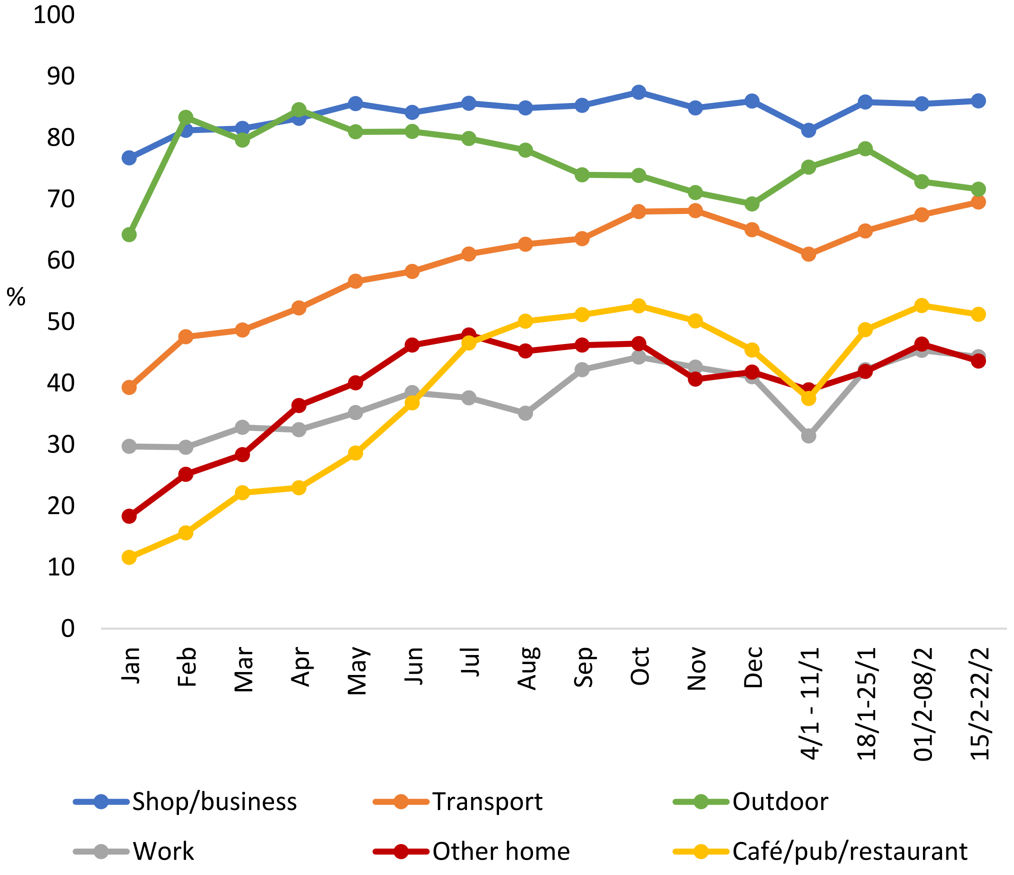
Total locations visited

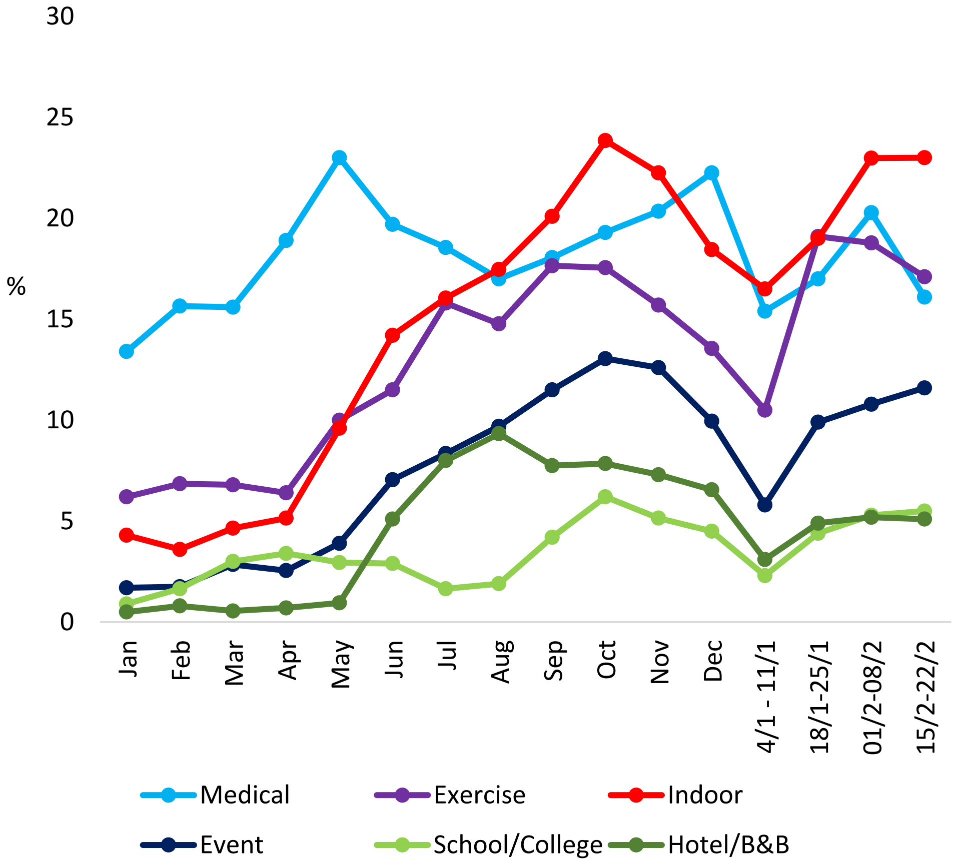


There was no significant change in locations visited either over the previous week or the previous day.

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

Locations visited (previous week)

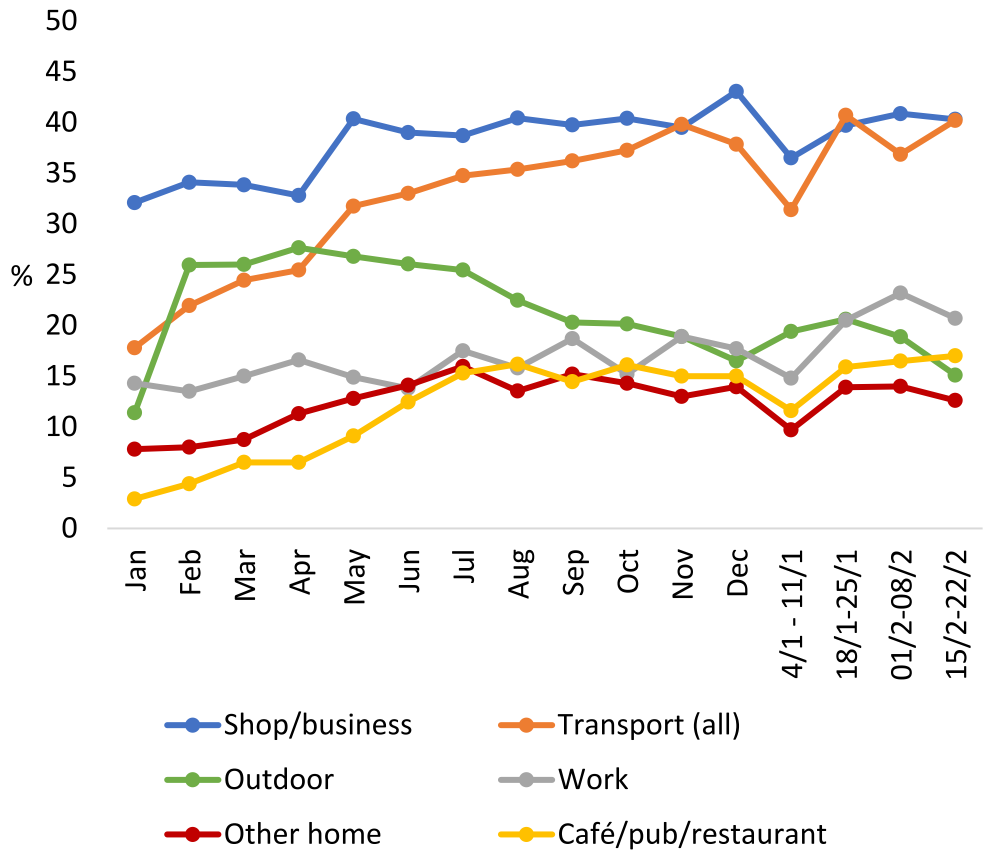


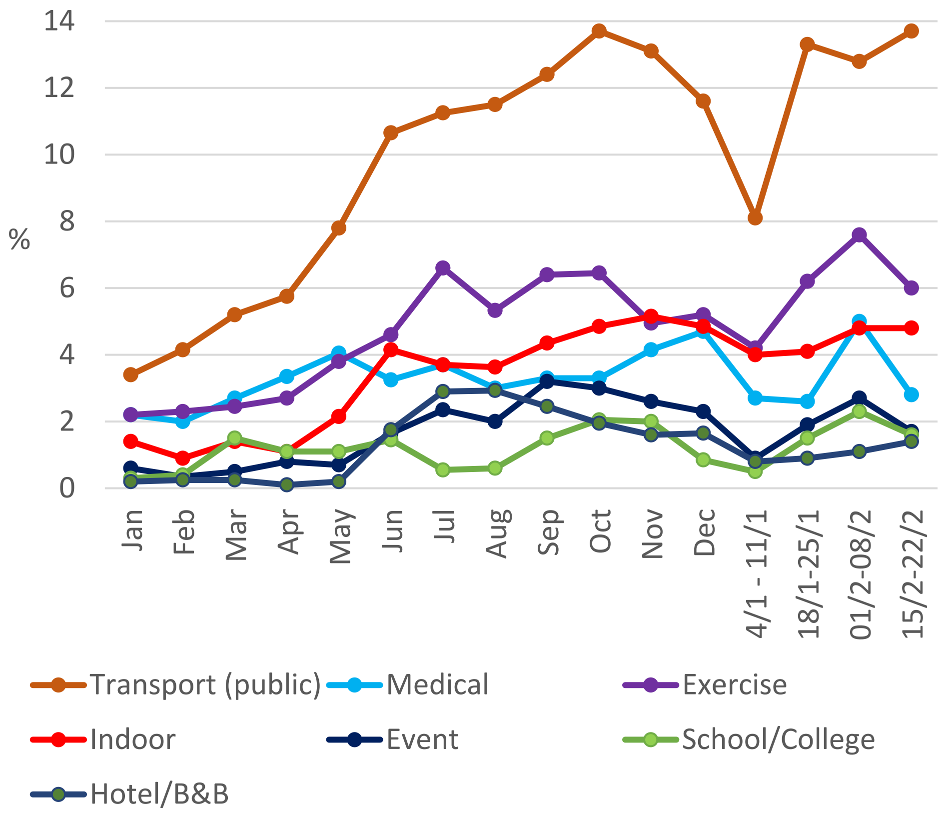


There were no significant changes in visits over the previous week except for a decline in visits to medical facilities. Visits to outdoor locations were significantly lower than in January. Note that ‘Exercise’ relates to visits to exercise facilities and not other activities like walking or running.

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

Locations visited (yesterday)

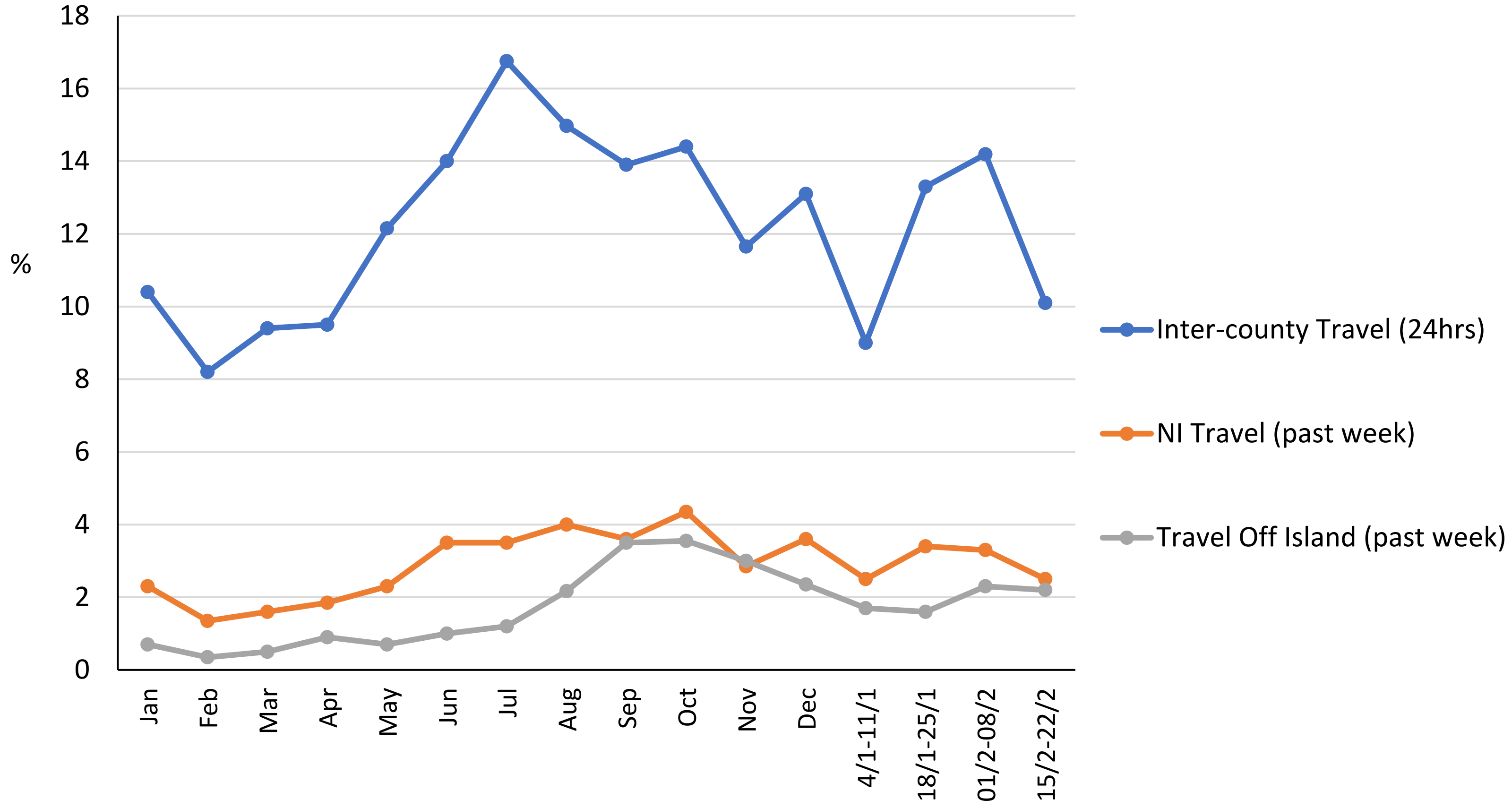




There were significant declines in visits to medical facilities and outdoor locations the previous day but no significant changes in visits to any other locations.

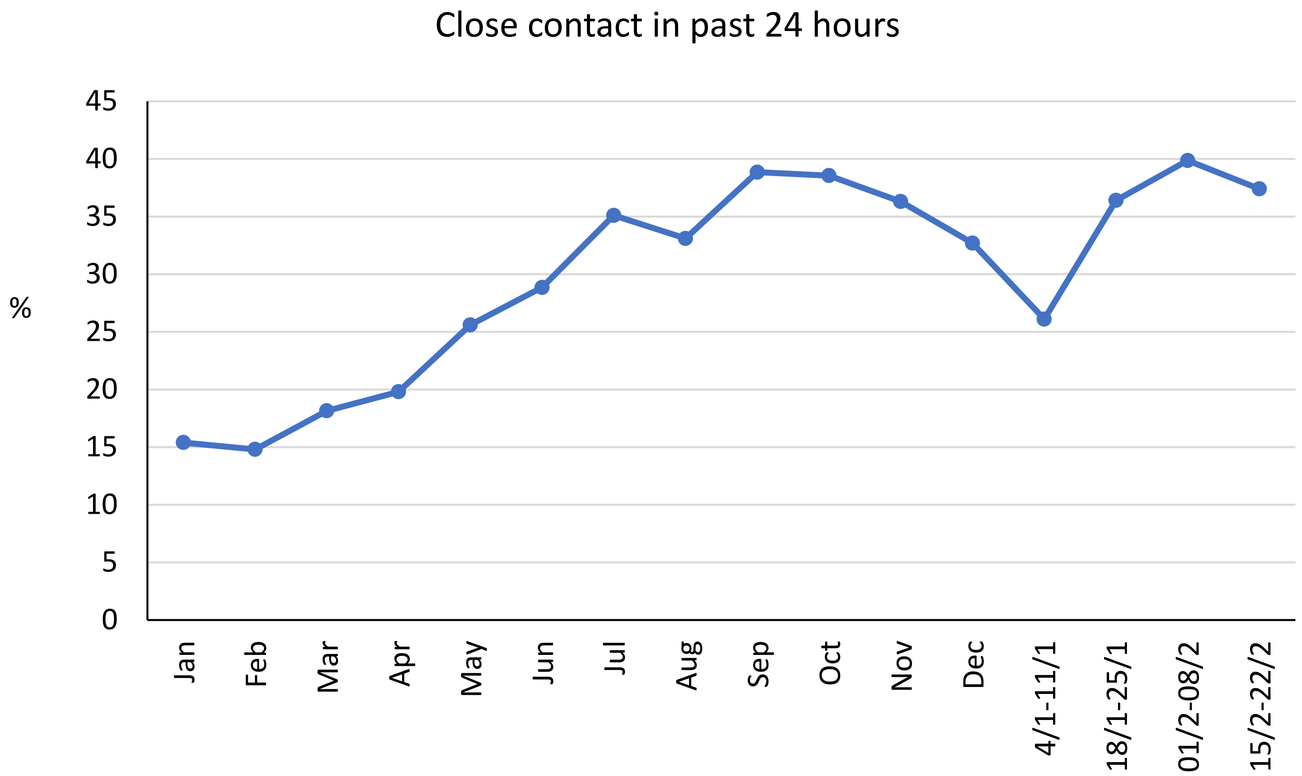
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

National and international travel



There was a significant drop in inter-county travel but no changes in travel otherwise.

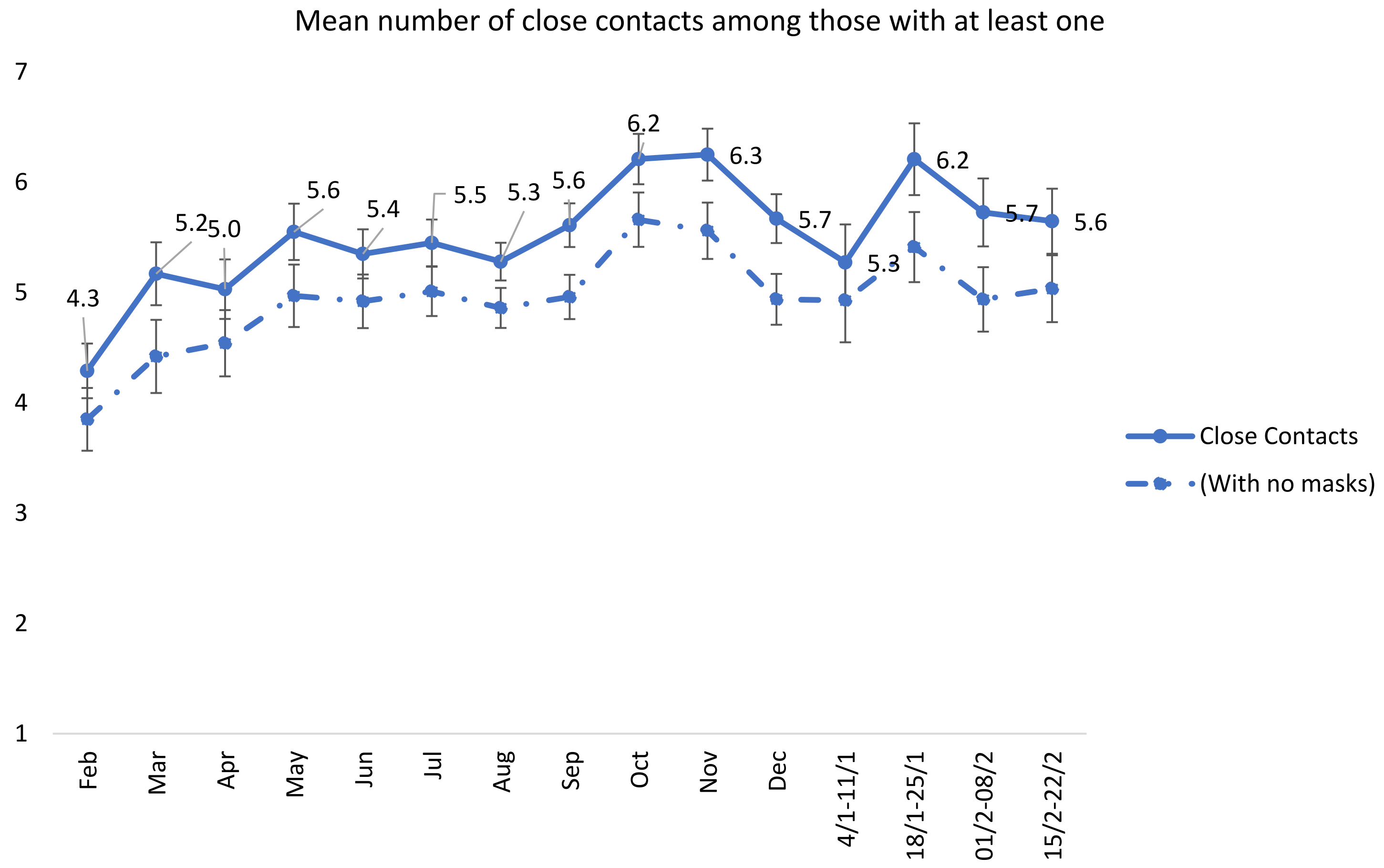
Close contacts



The proportion of people who had a close contact the previous day did not change significantly in this round of SAM.

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

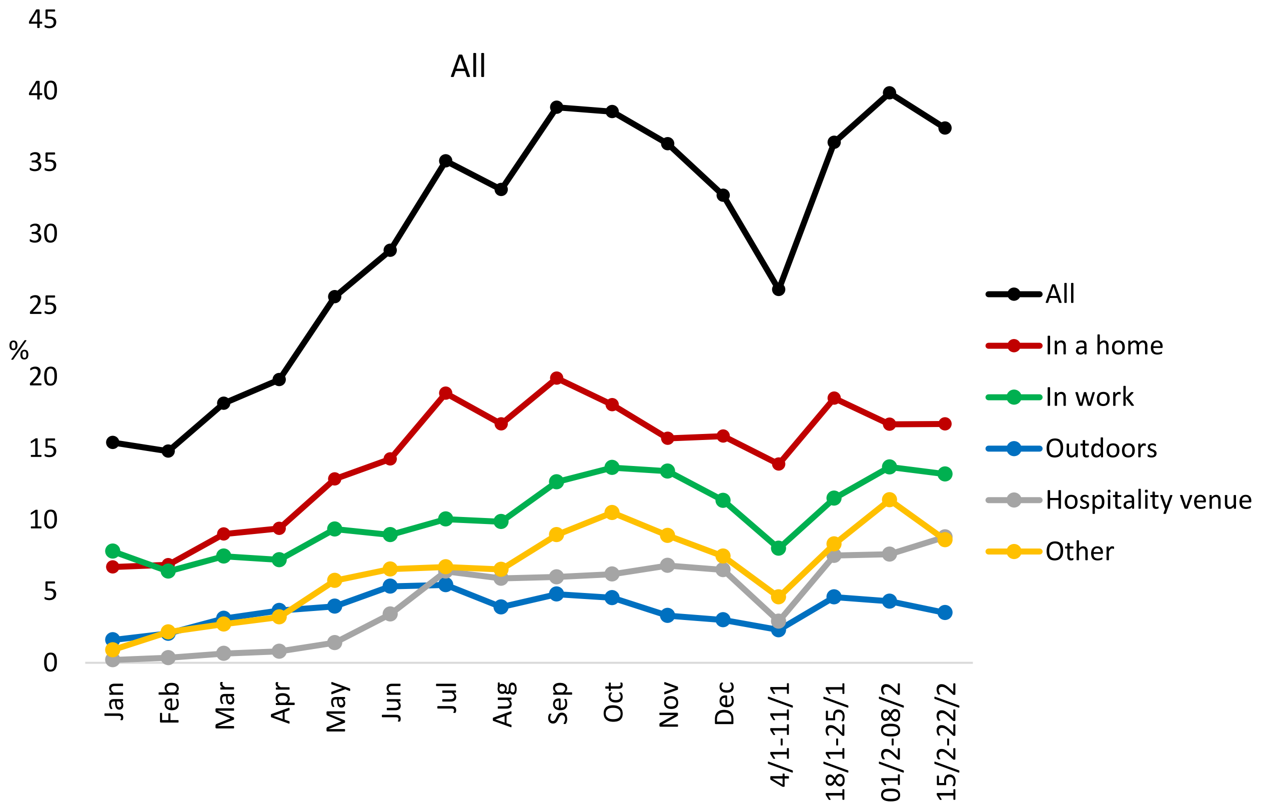
Number of close contacts

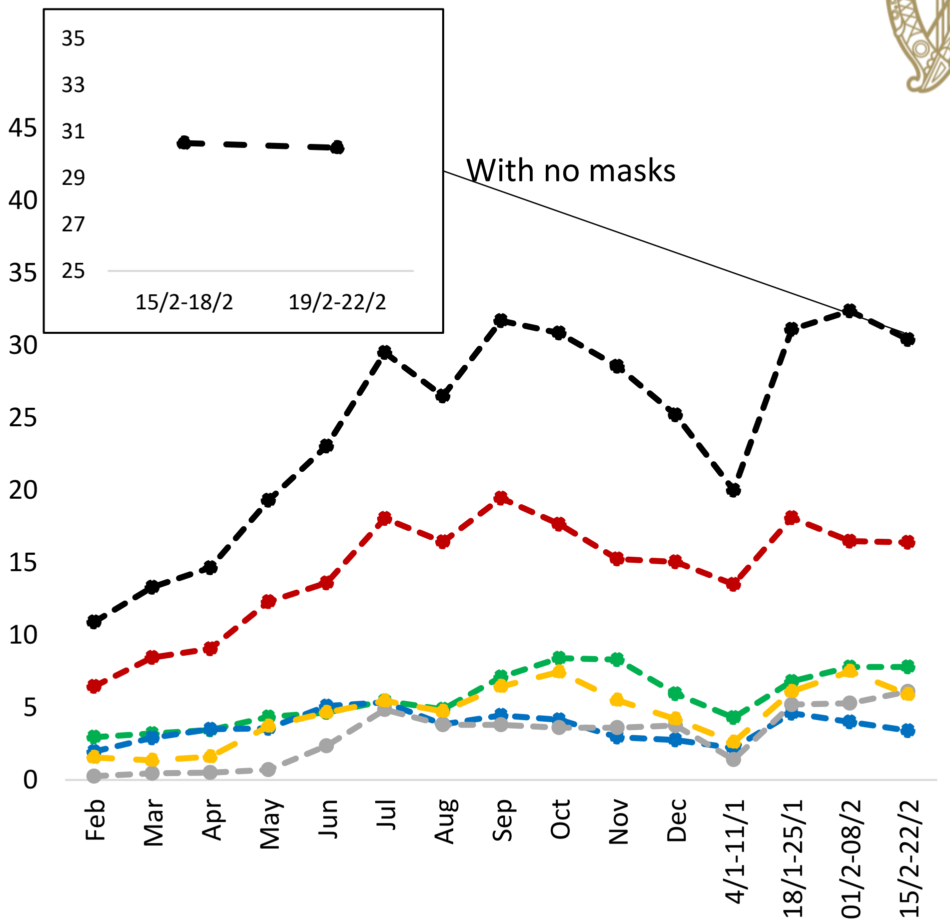


Among those who had a close contact the previous day, the mean number of close contacts was unchanged.

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

Close contacts - locations

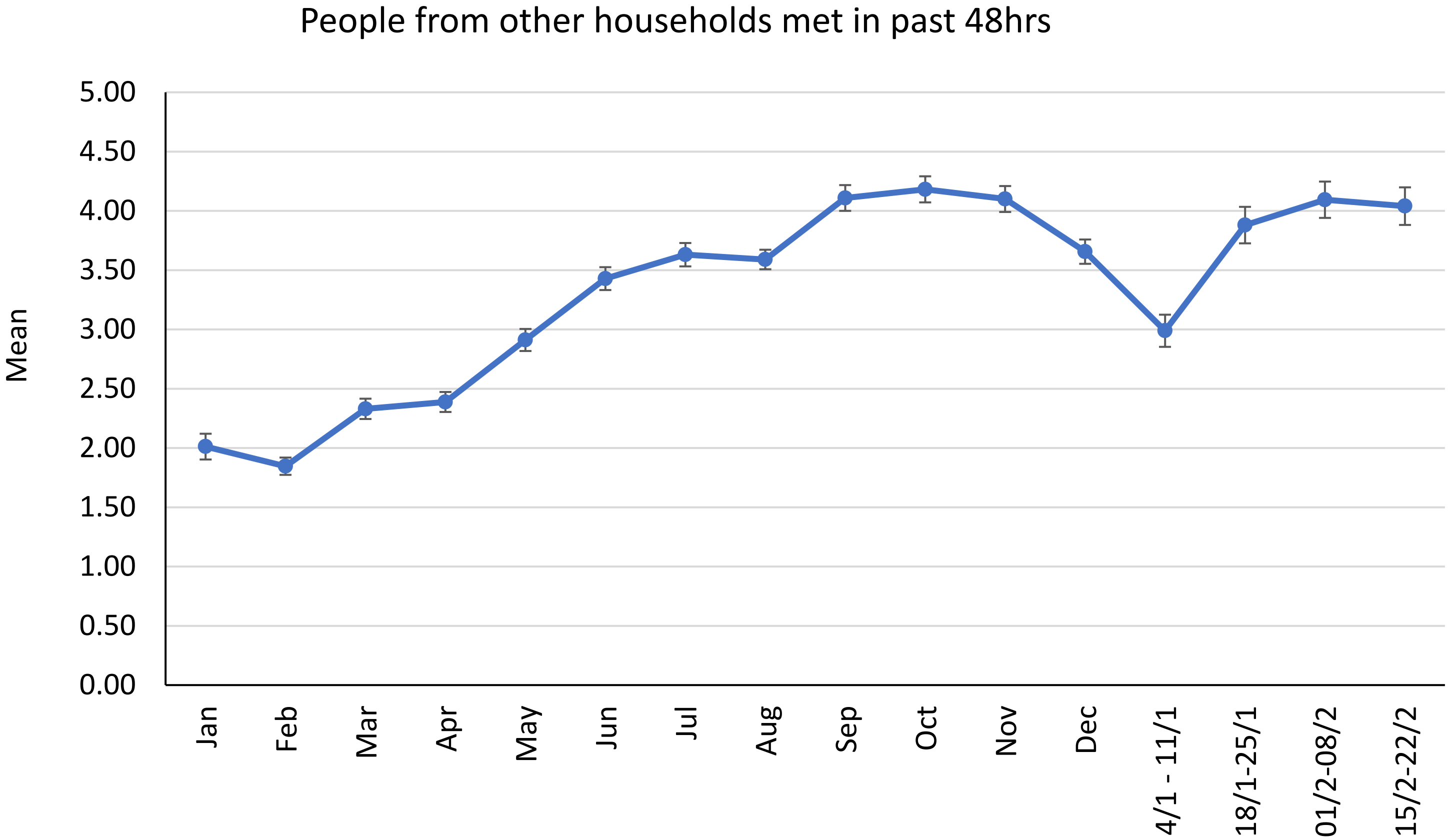




There was no significant change in the proportion of the population who had a close contact, either with or without masks. The inset on the left chart compares unmasked close contacts either side of the announcement on Feb 18th and shows no evidence that unmasked close contacts increased following the announcement on Feb 18th.

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

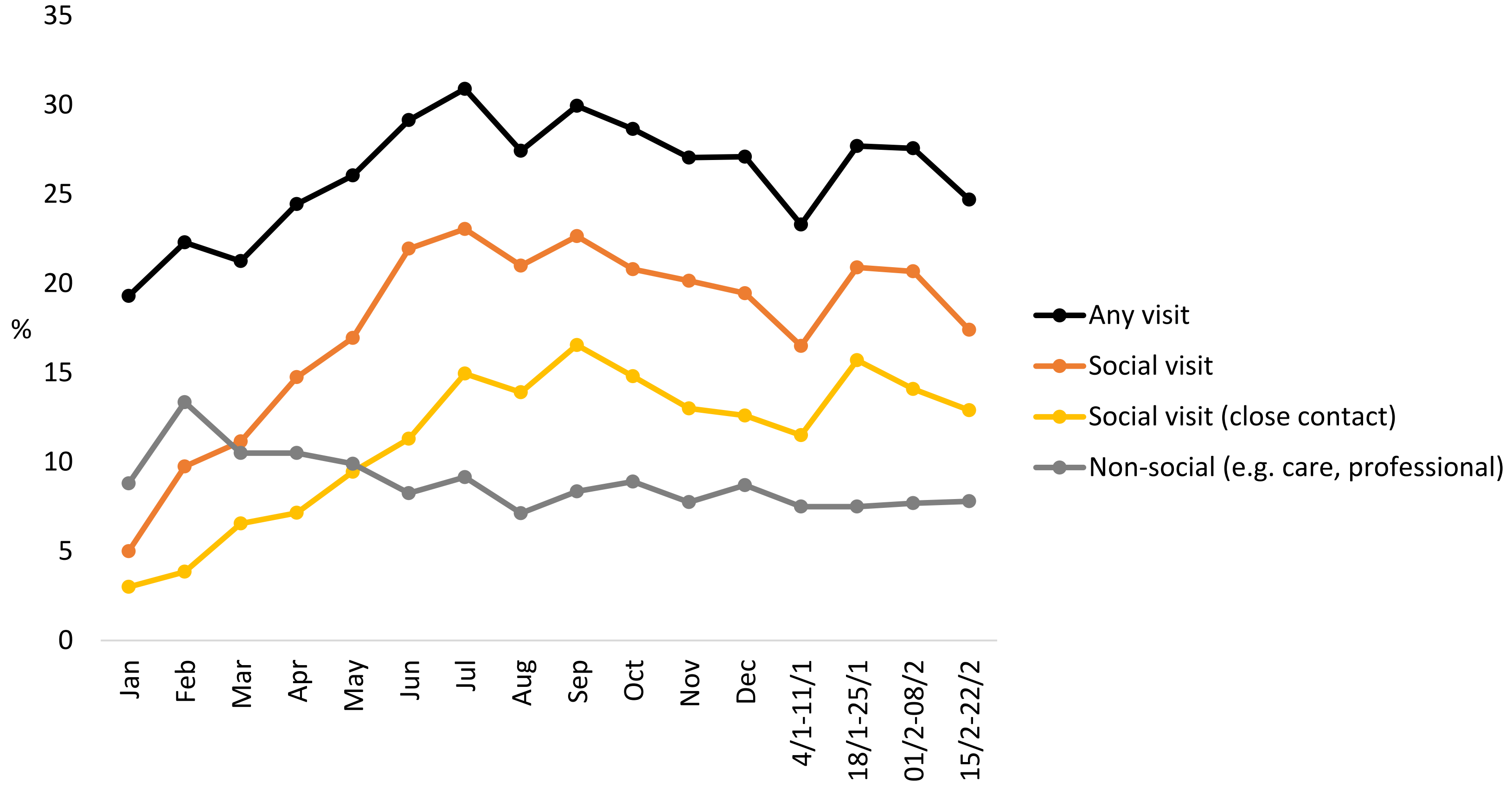
Number of people met



There was no significant change in the mean number of people individuals met up with from outside their own household over the previous 48 hours.

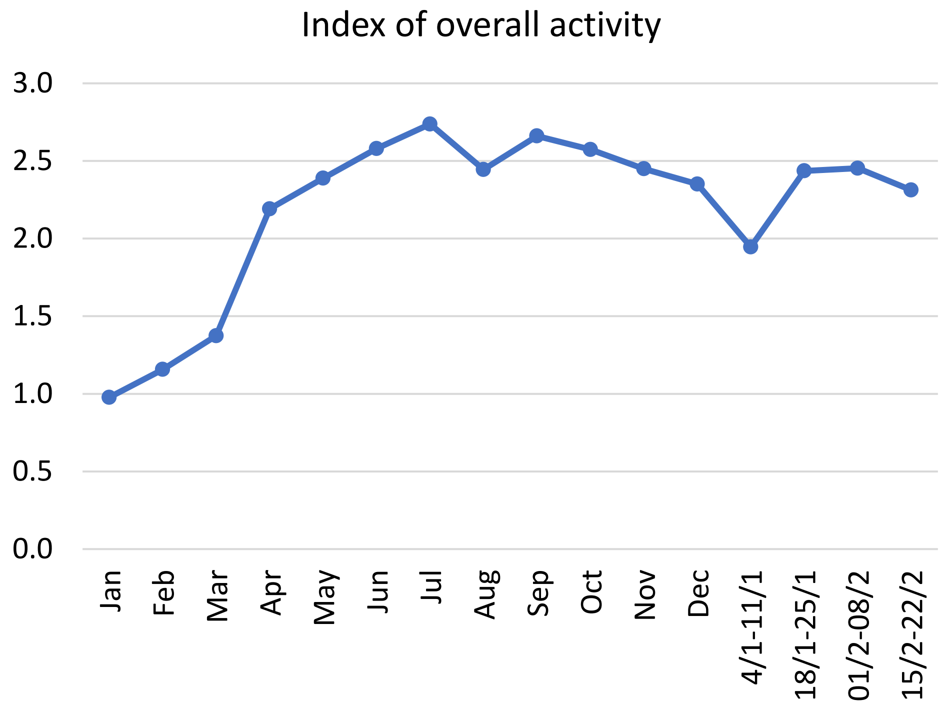
Home Visits

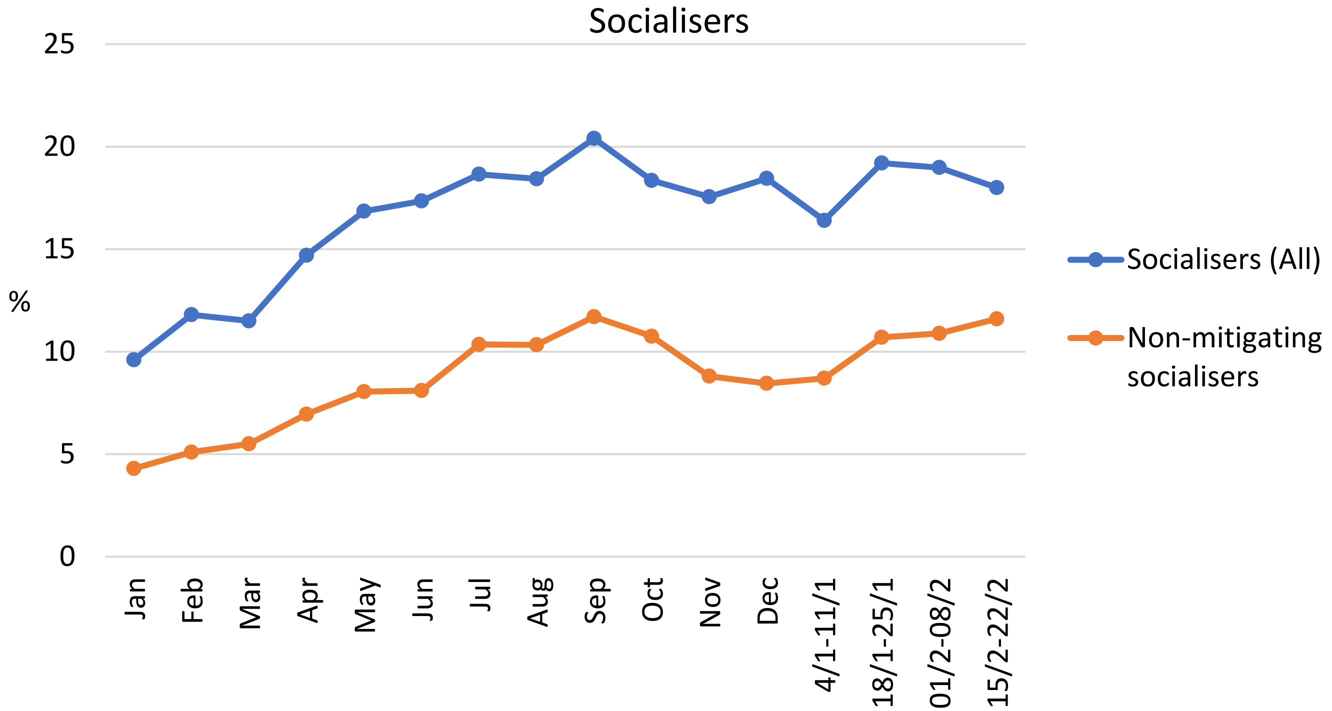
Proportion who had visitors or visited another household (previous day)



There was a slight drop in the proportion who visited other households, but it was not significant.

Overall social activity

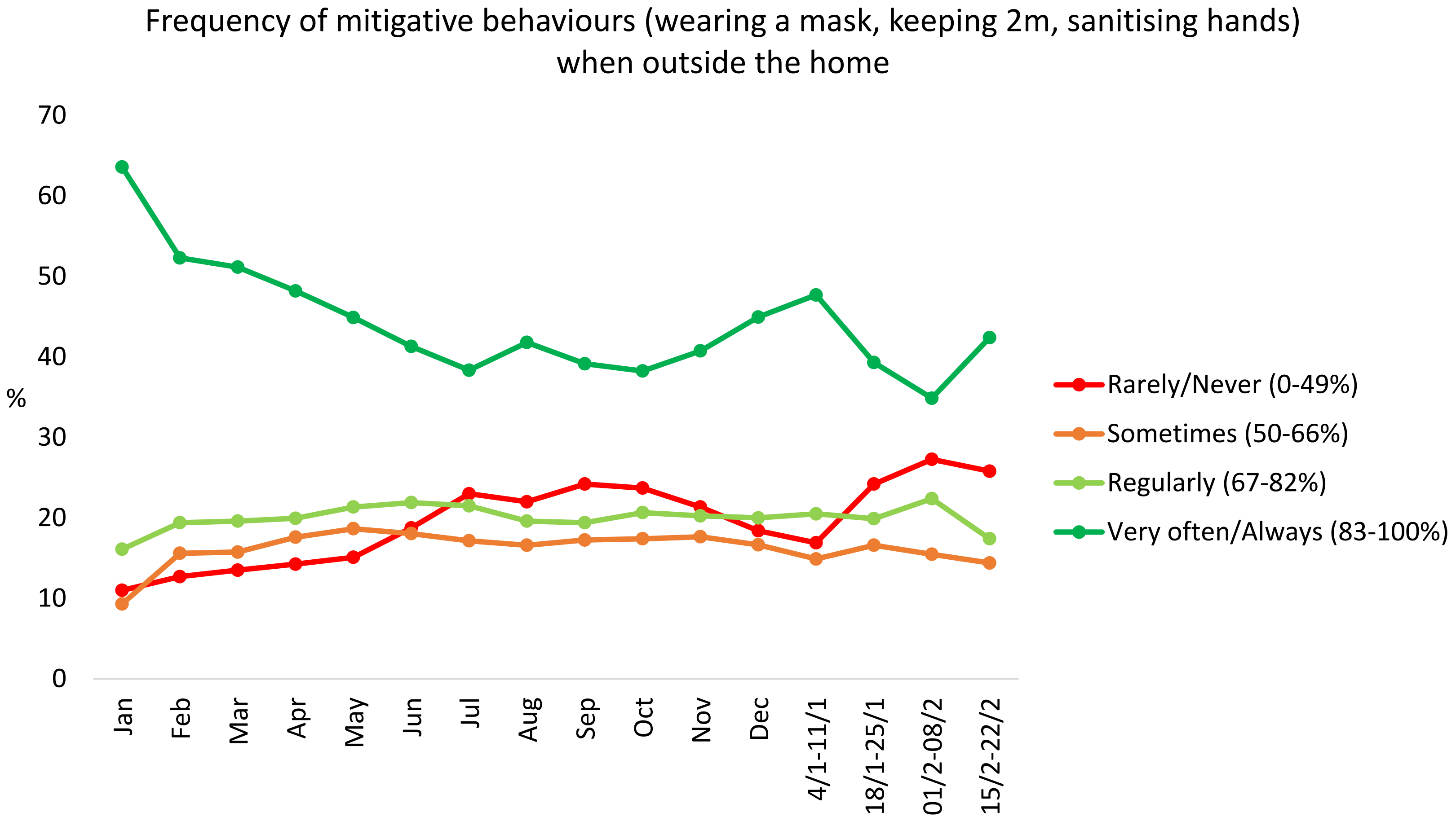




Overall social activity has remained stable since restrictions were lifted in late January, as has the proportion of people engaging in particularly high levels of social activity ('socialisers') and the proportion who did so while taking few or no precautions, such as wearing a mask or maintaining 2m distance ('non-mitigating socialisers').

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

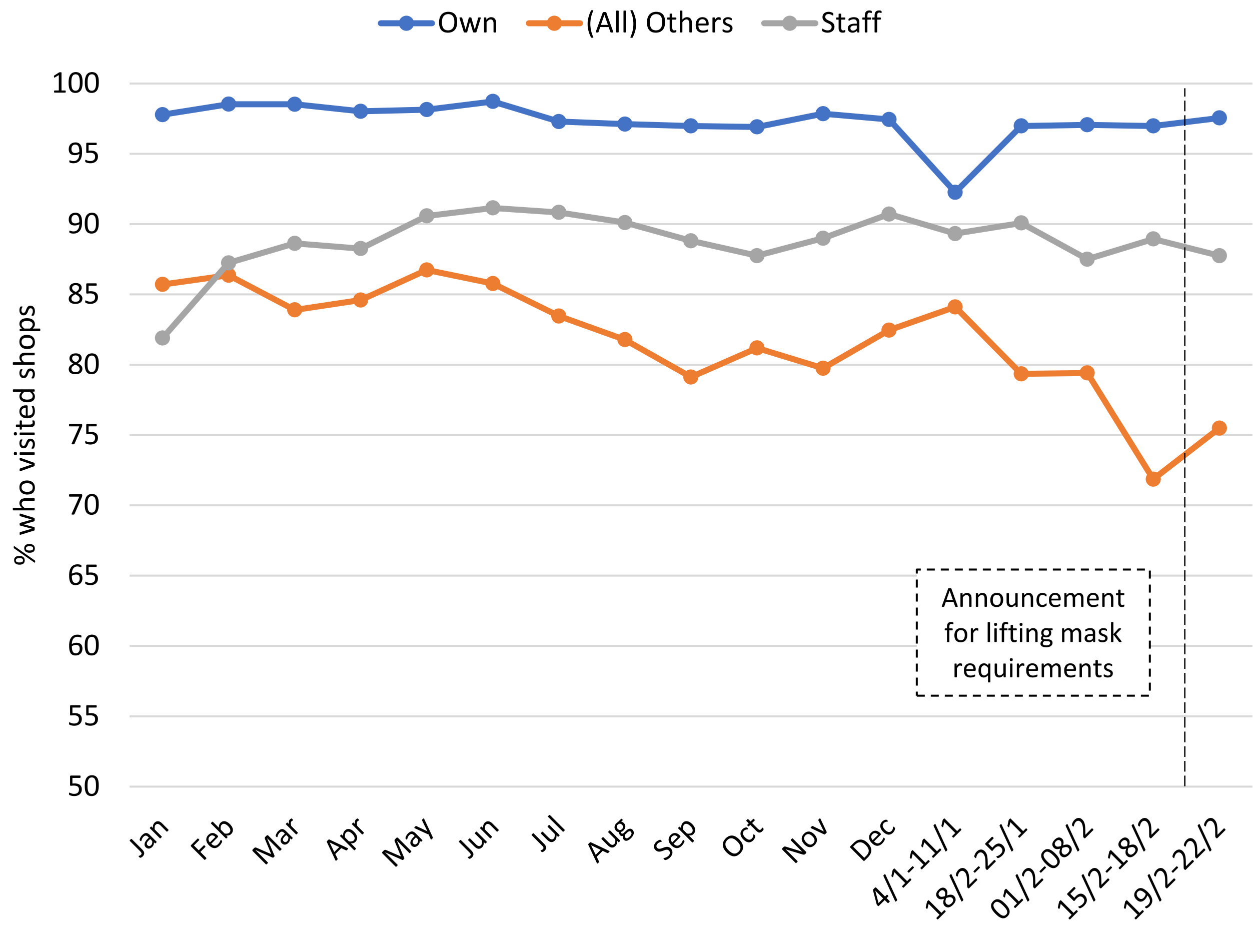
Mitigation



The decrease in mitigative behaviours (keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks) that had been taking place reversed this wave, but only among the most cautious. There was an increase in the proportion saying that they very often/always engage in such behaviours with a corresponding decrease in those saying they do so regularly. However, there was no significant change in the proportion reporting that they sometimes or rarely/never engage in mitigative behaviours.

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

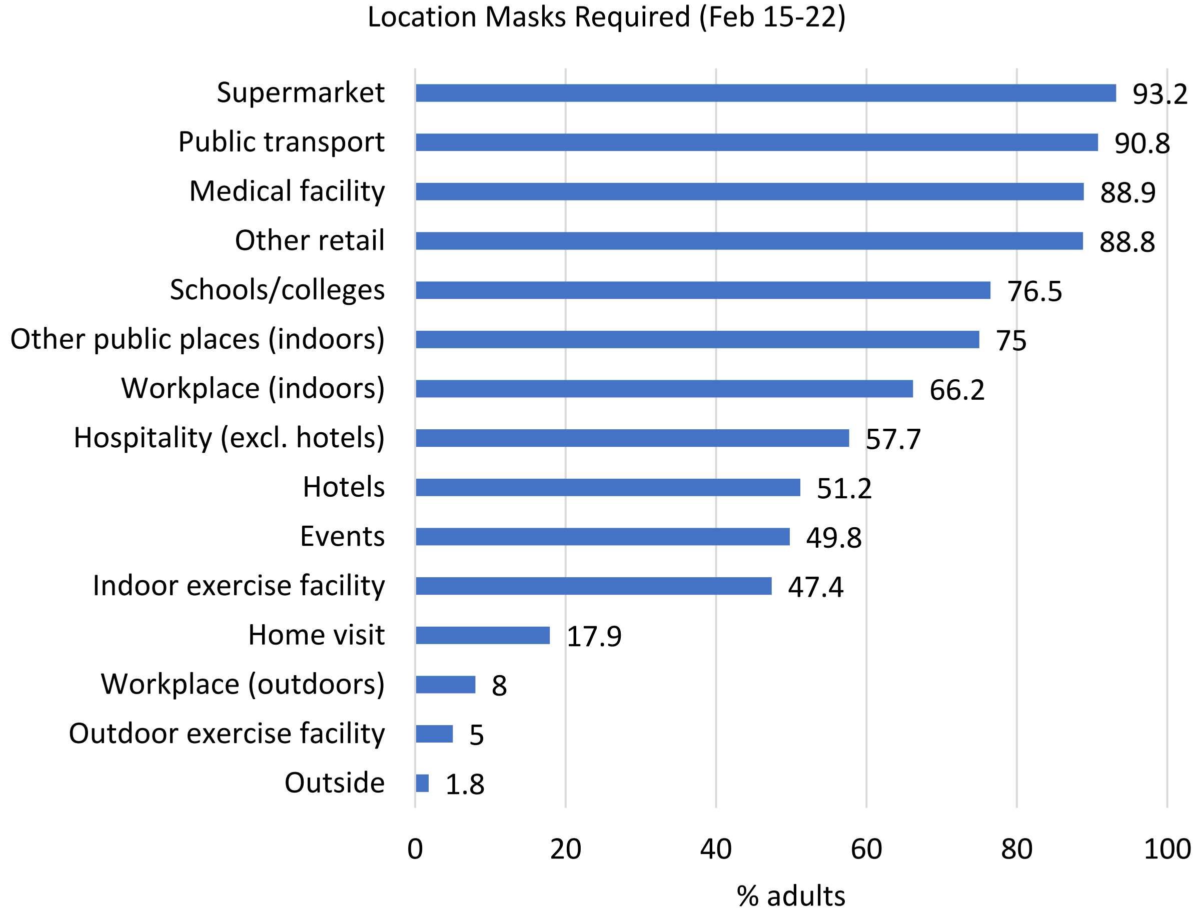
Masks in Retail

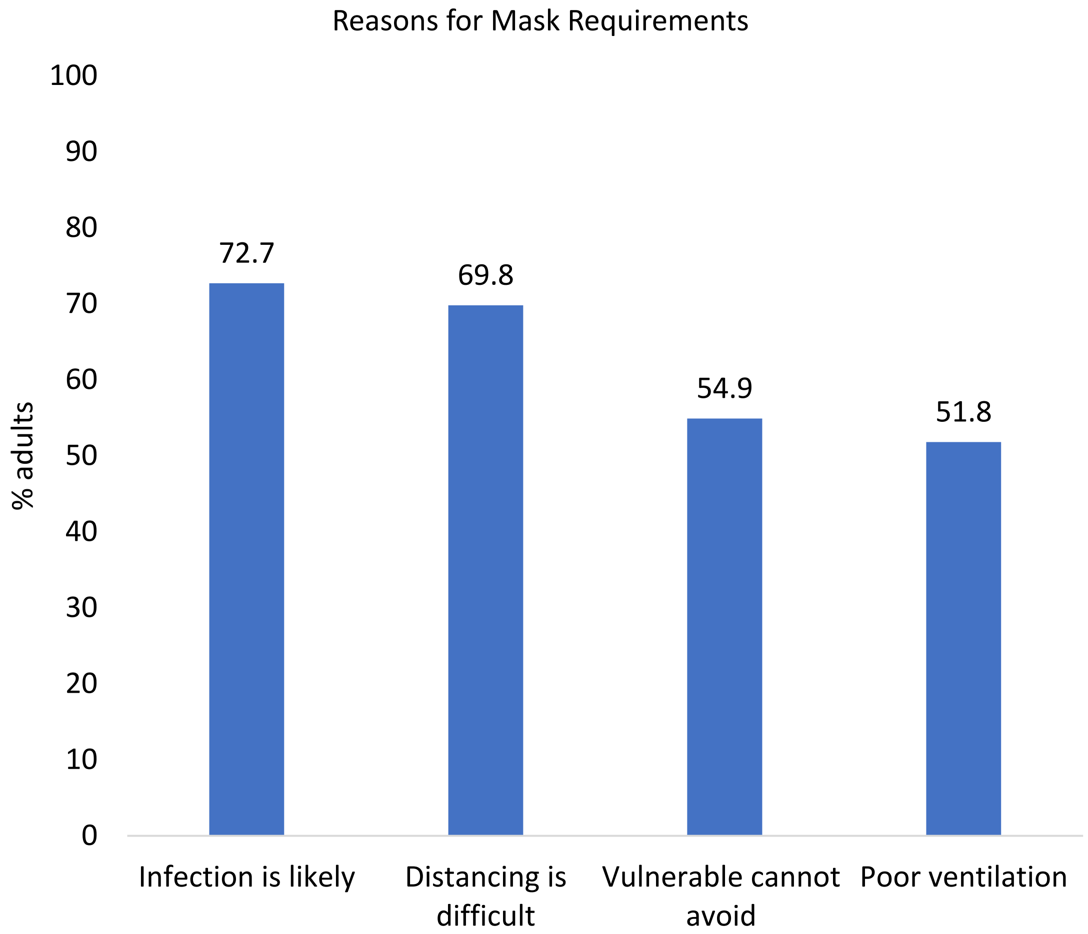


The chart shows the percentage of those visiting shops who report that they themselves wore a mask, that all other customers wore a mask and that the staff wore masks. The announcement that mask requirements in retail would be lifted from Feb 28th seems to have no effect on self- or staff-mask wearing. Reports that all other customers wore masks have trended downwards since early January.

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

Masks – where & why

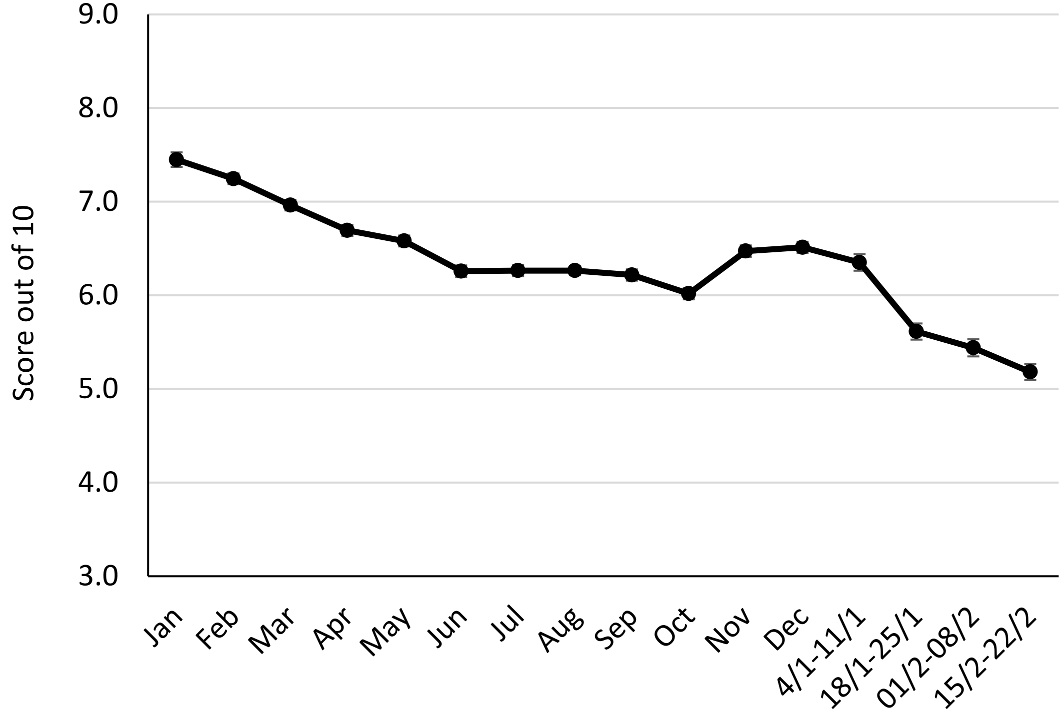


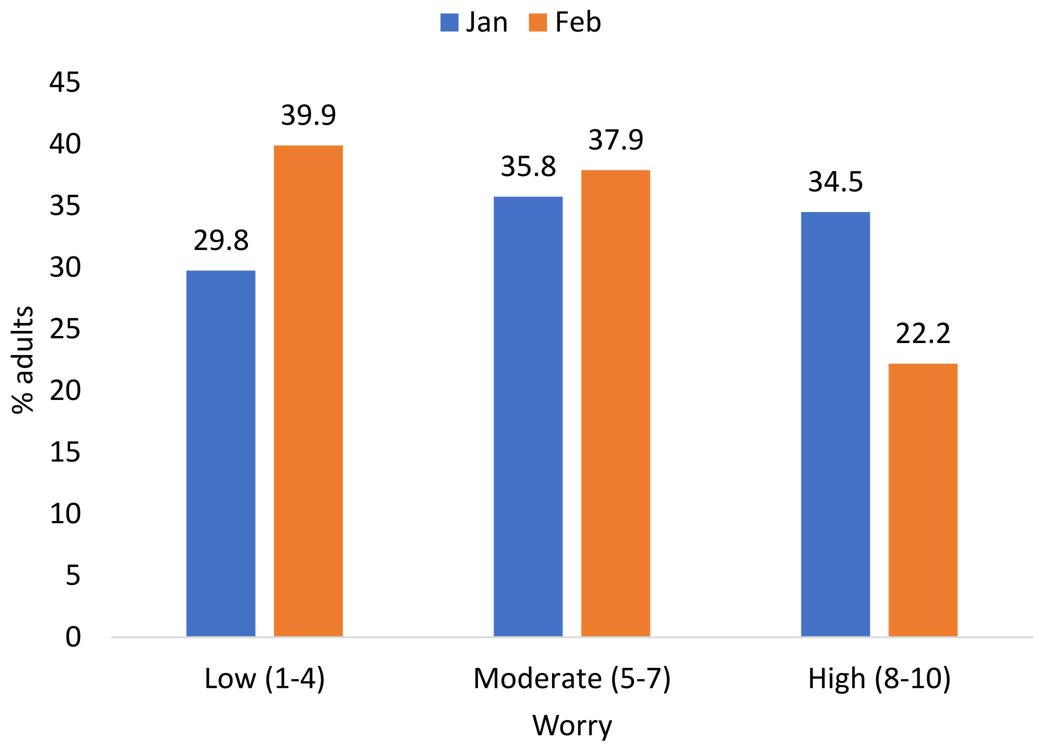


At the time of the survey, awareness of the requirement for masks in retail stores, on public transport and in medical facilities was high. Most people think the reasons for mask requirements are because infection is likely in these settings.

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

Worry

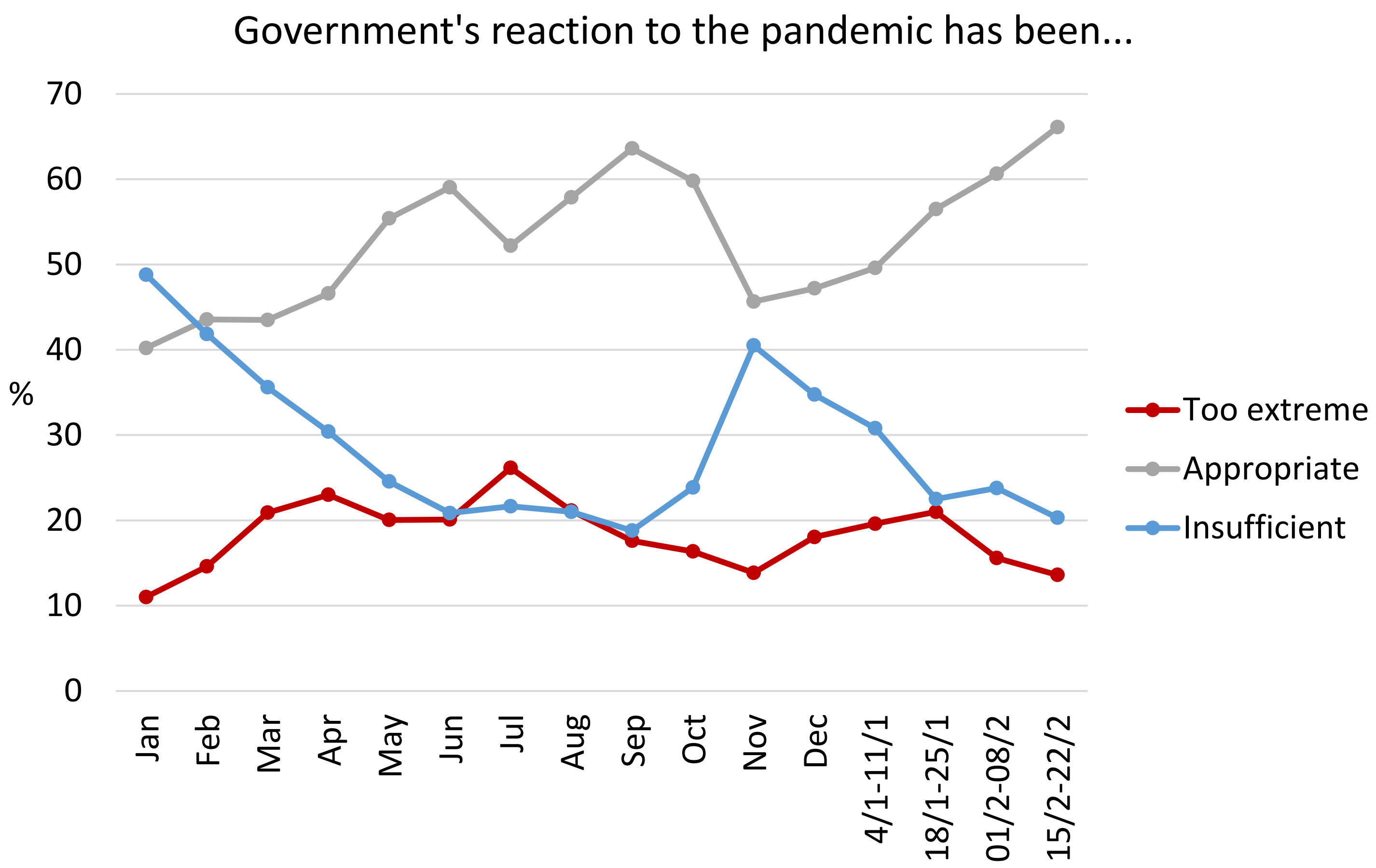




Overall worry about COVID-19 is at its lowest level since SAM began, following a sharp drop in January, though 1 in 5 people still maintain a high level of worry.

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

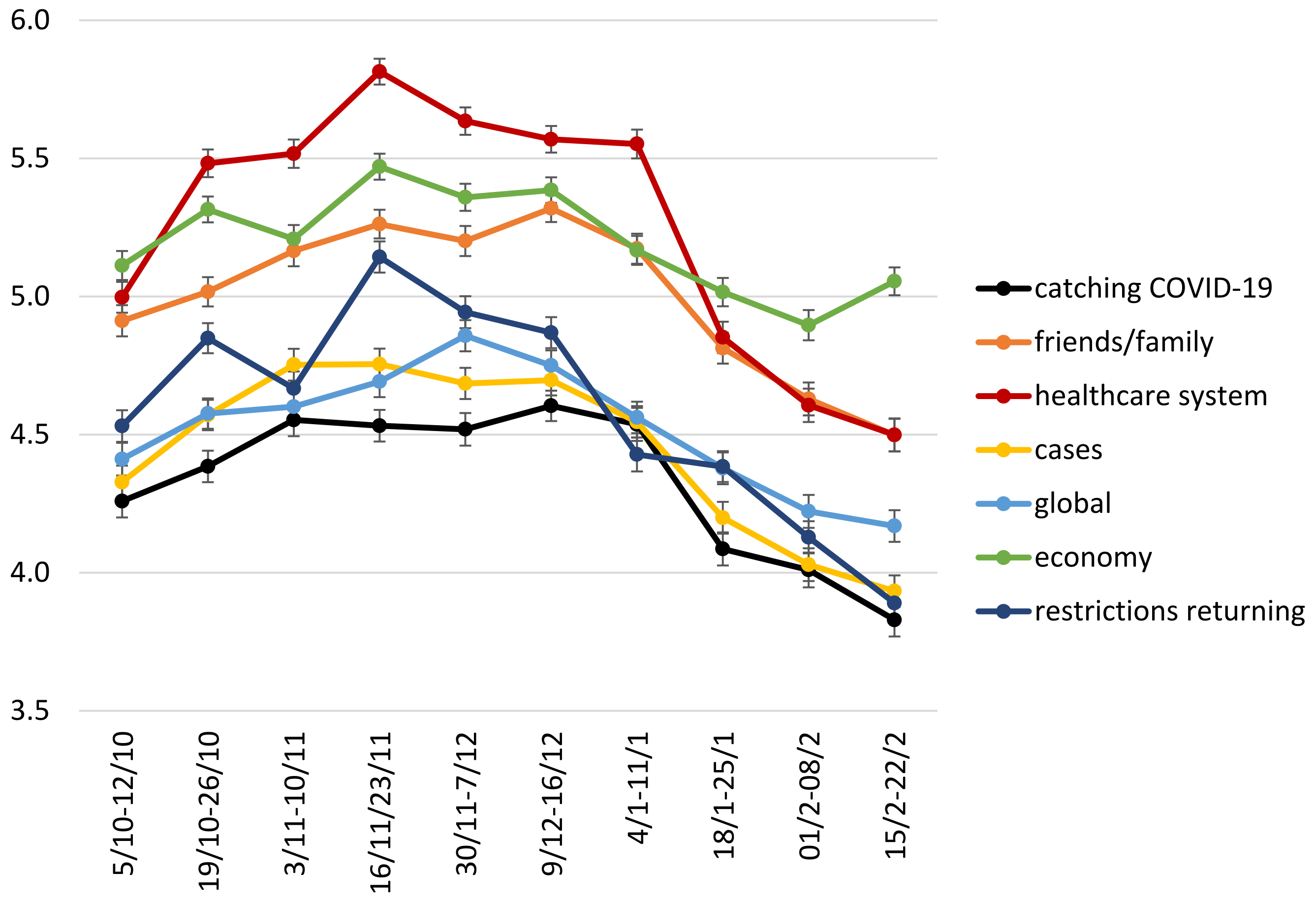
Government Response to the Pandemic



The proportion of people who view the Government's response to the pandemic as appropriate again increased significantly. The proportion who view it as insufficient dropped significantly while the proportion viewing it as too extreme remained unchanged.

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

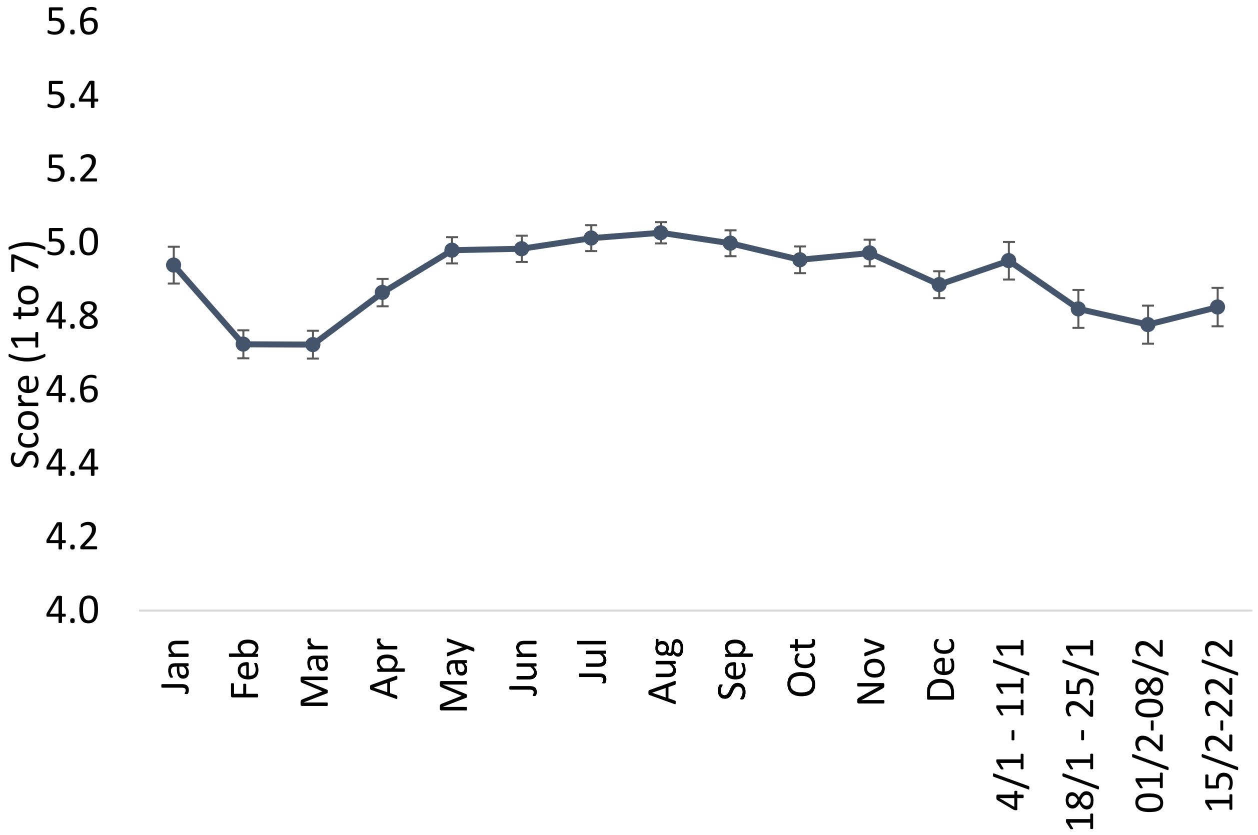
Worry



Most individual sources of worry continue to decline, with the exception of worry about the effect of the pandemic on the economy. However, the only significant changes were drops in worry about catching COVID-19 and restrictions returning.

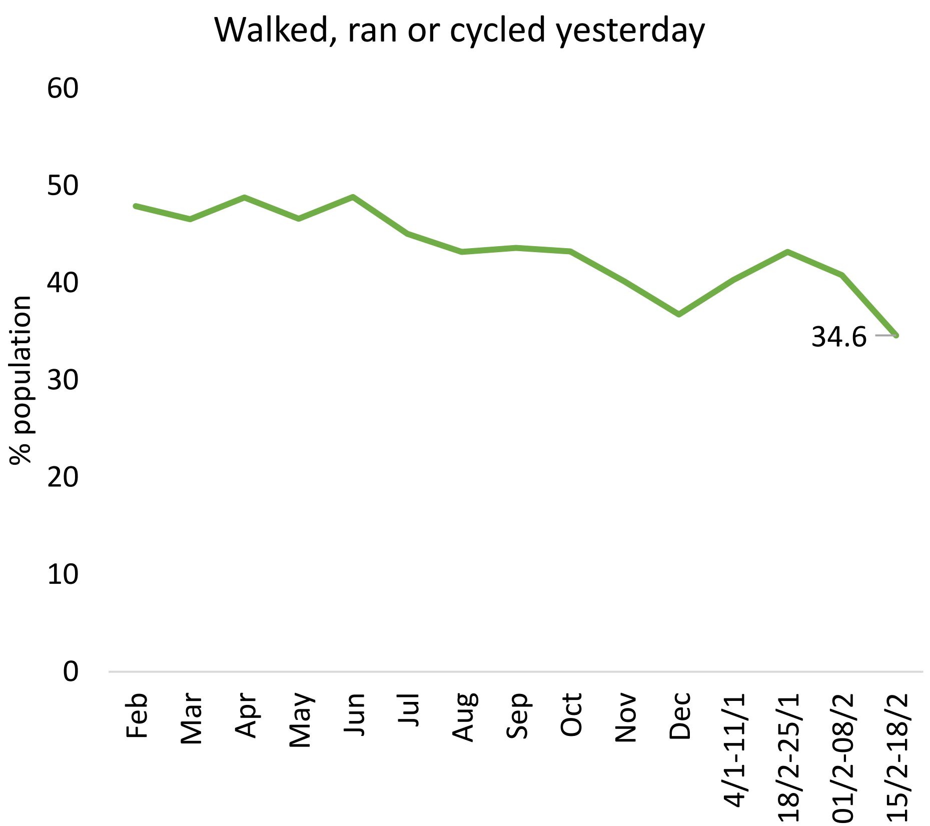
Source: ESRI Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

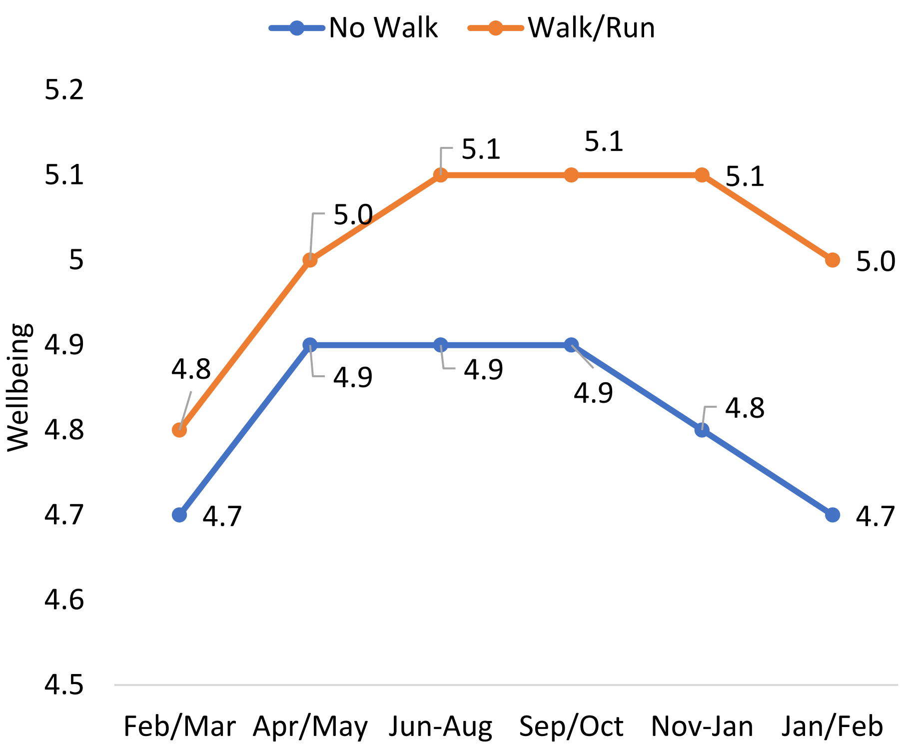
Wellbeing



Self-reported wellbeing did not change significantly in this round of SAM, but it remains significantly below the preceding Summer, Autumn and Christmas periods.

Wellbeing and Exercise

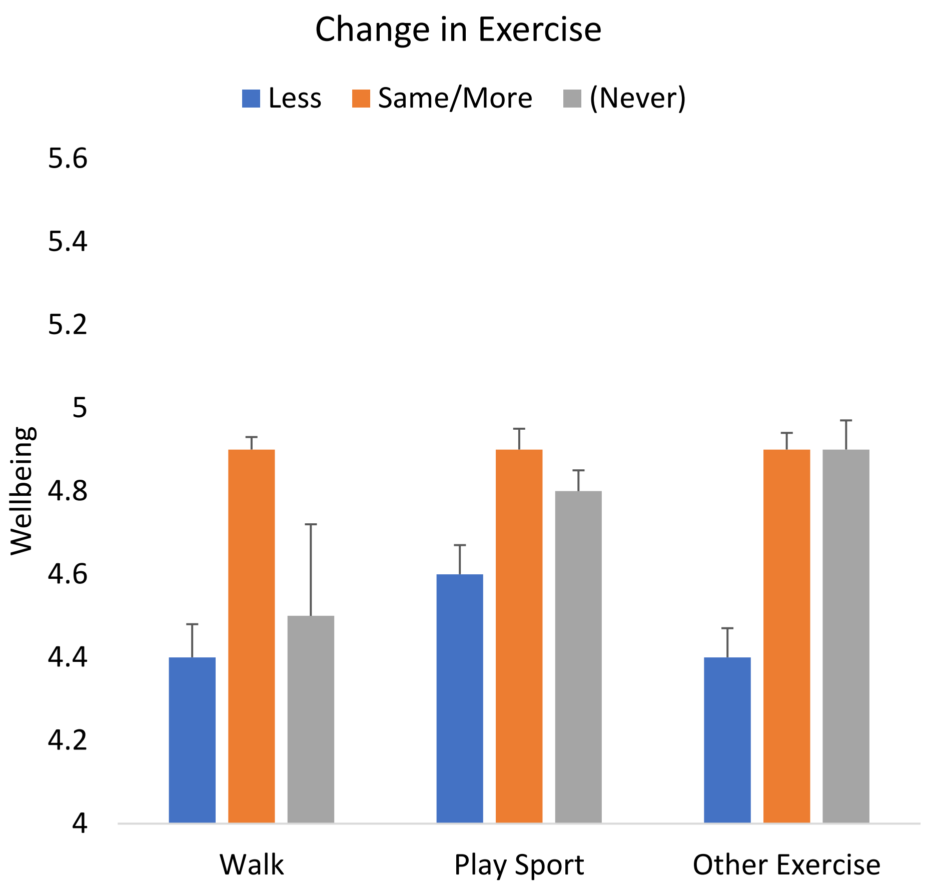




The proportion of the population who reporting going for a walk, run or cycle in their local area was significantly lower in the latest wave of SAM than all other timepoints (excl. Christmas week), likely due to bad weather (left chart). Statistical models of wellbeing and places visited shows a consistent relationship between going for a walk, run or cycle in the local area and better wellbeing. The gap in wellbeing between those who have and have not exercised the day before completing the survey widened throughout 2021.

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

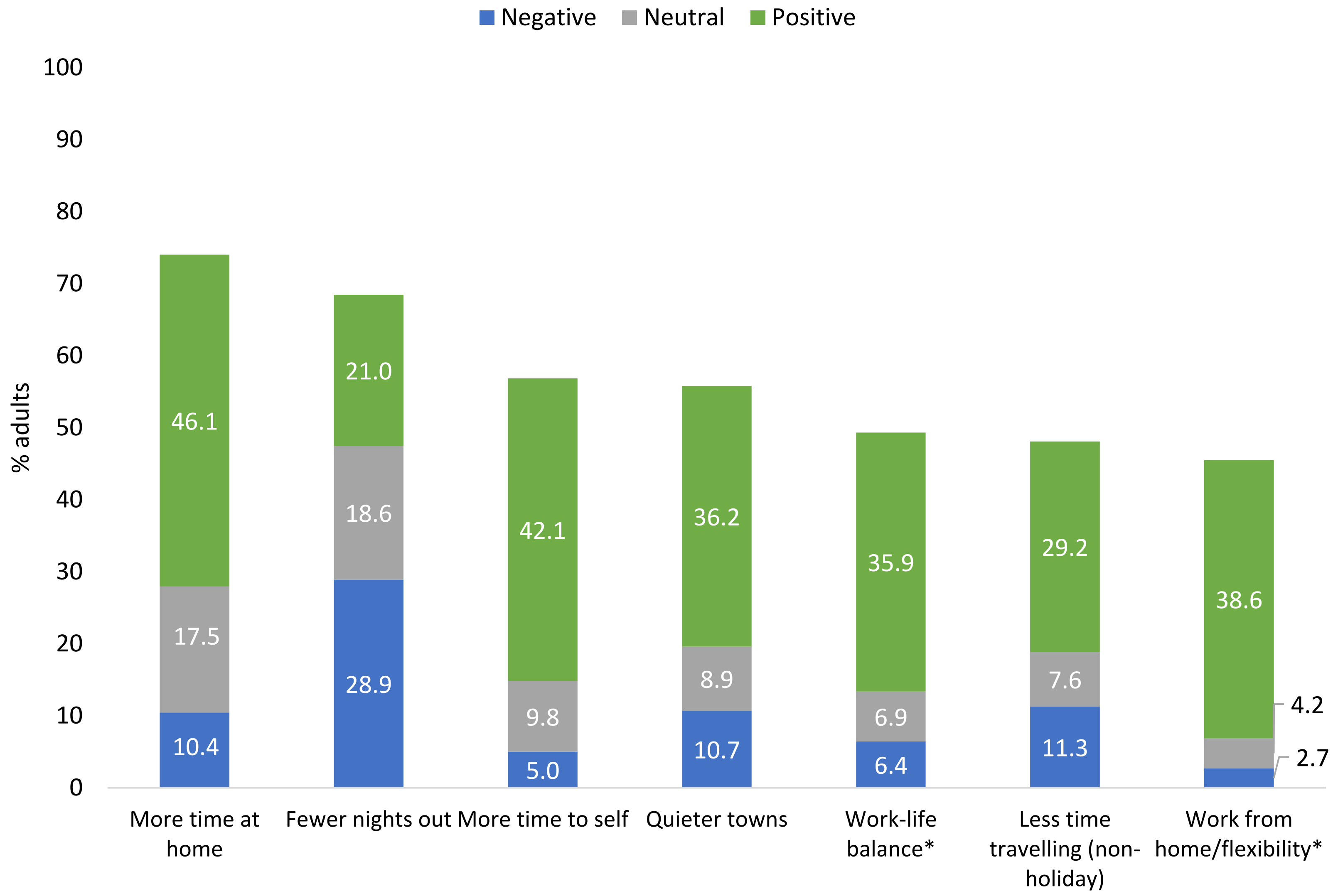
Wellbeing and Exercise



Wellbeing is consistently lower among groups who are exercising less now than they were before the pandemic.

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

Life Changes Since March 2020

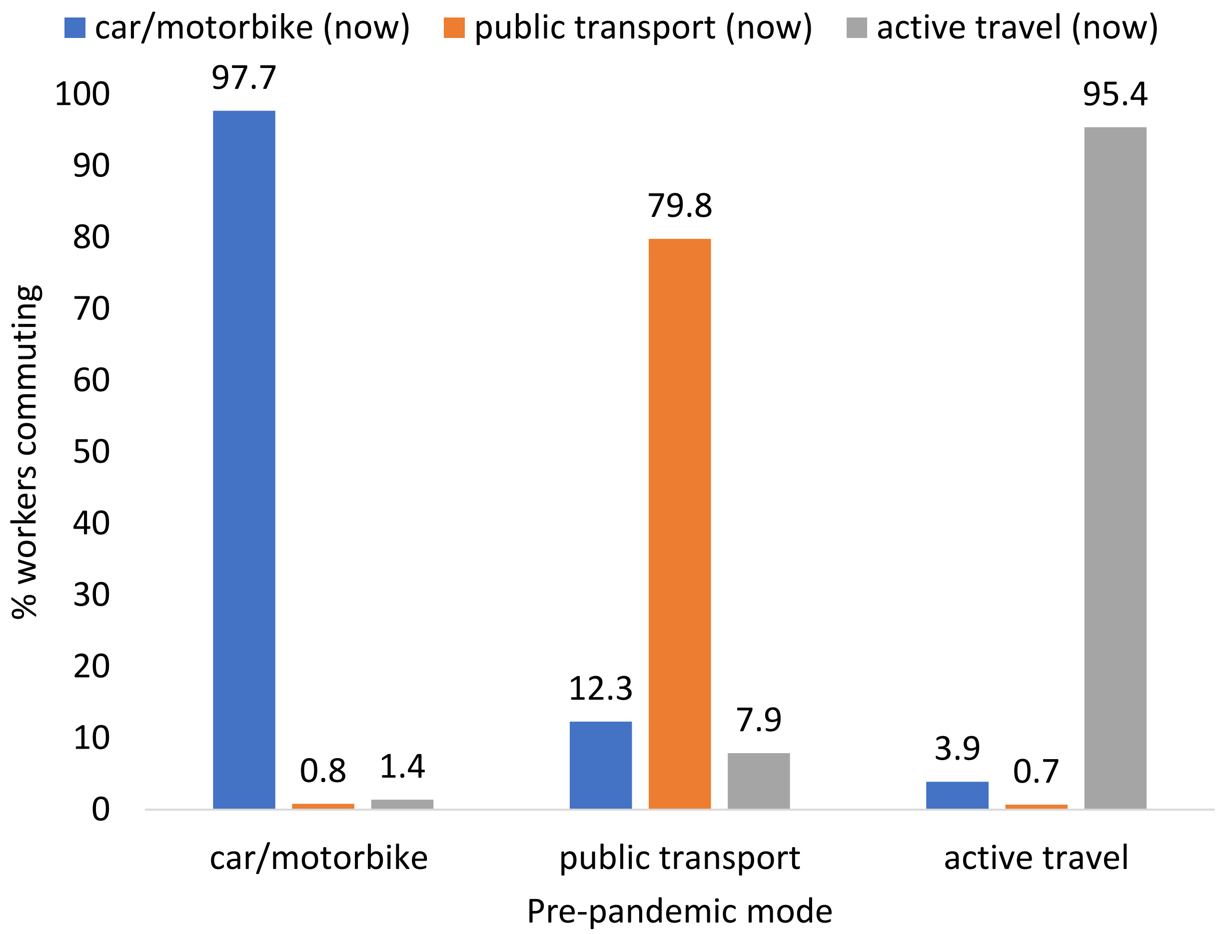


* % of workers

The chart shows the percentage of adults who reported different life changes since the onset of the pandemic. Bars are split by whether the change was rated as negative (1-3), neutral (4) or positive (5-7) on a 7-point scale from very negative to very positive.
The majority who experienced any change in their lives judged that change to be positive, with the exception of having fewer nights out.

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

Changes to Work*: Commute

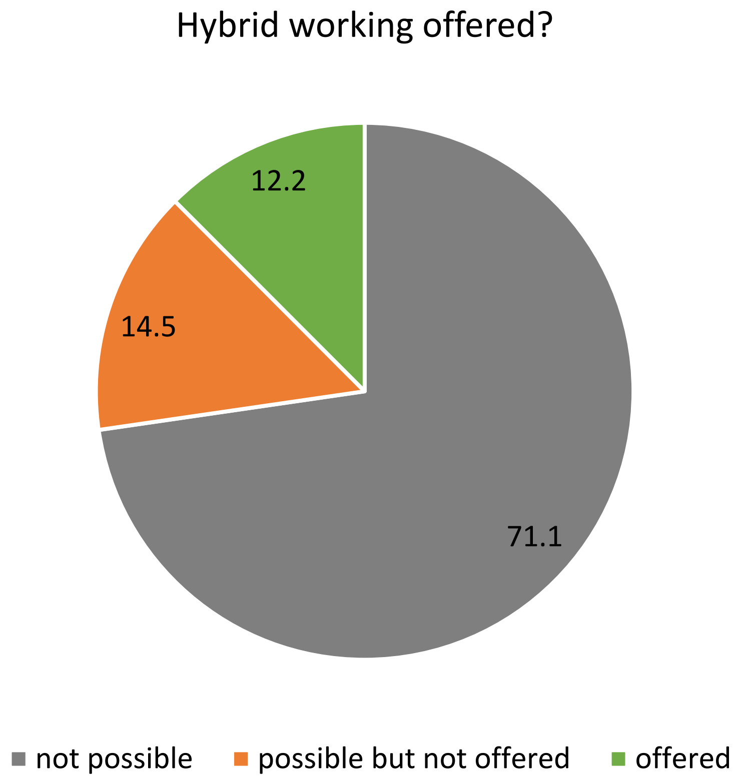


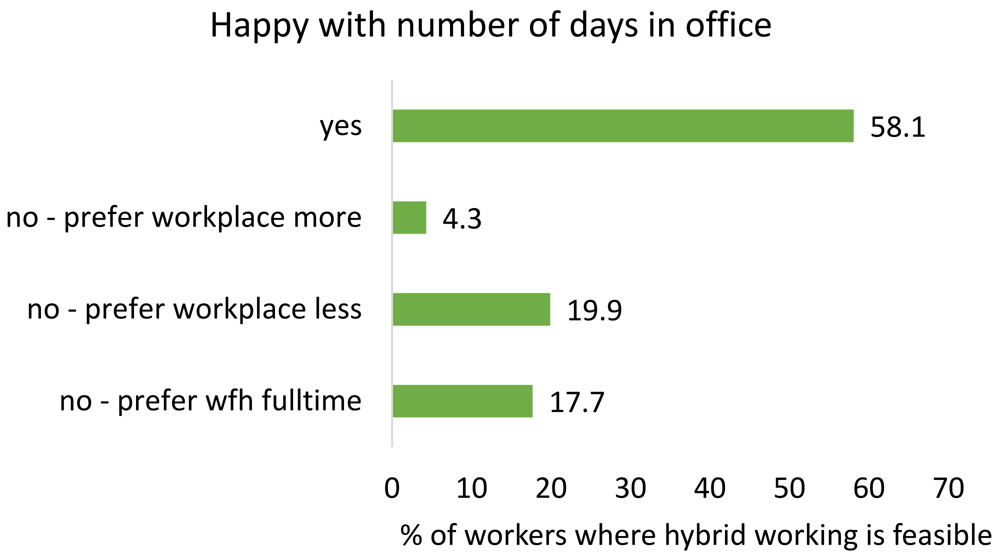
*this analysis combines all workers in the last three waves of SAM, giving a sample size of 1,599.

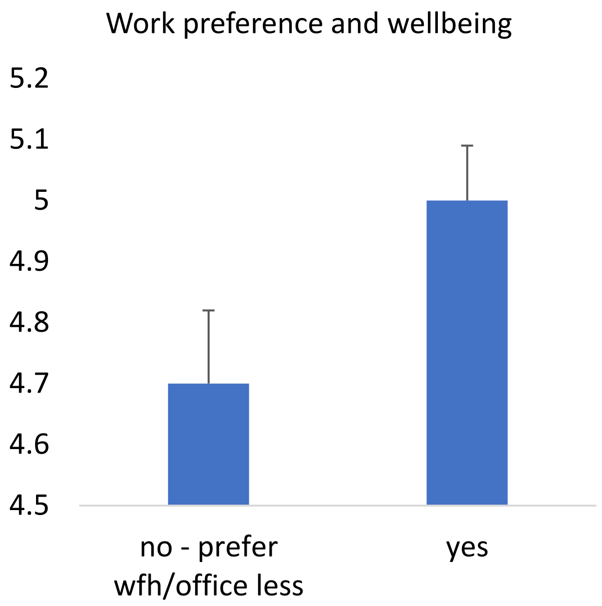
The chart shows main modes of transport for work commutes pre-pandemic and now, among workers who work at the same place they did before the pandemic. The vast majority who commuted by car or active travel (walk/cycle) before the pandemic continue to do so. One in five who used public transport previously no longer do so, with the majority switching to commuting by car.
There is no link between commute mode and general wellbeing once socio-demographic characteristics are controlled for.

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

Changes to Work*: Hybrid Working





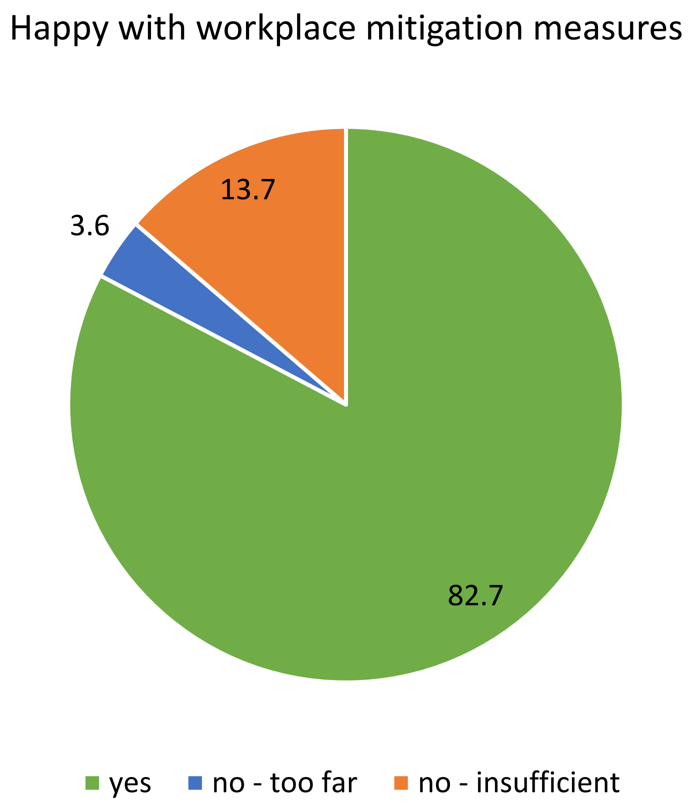


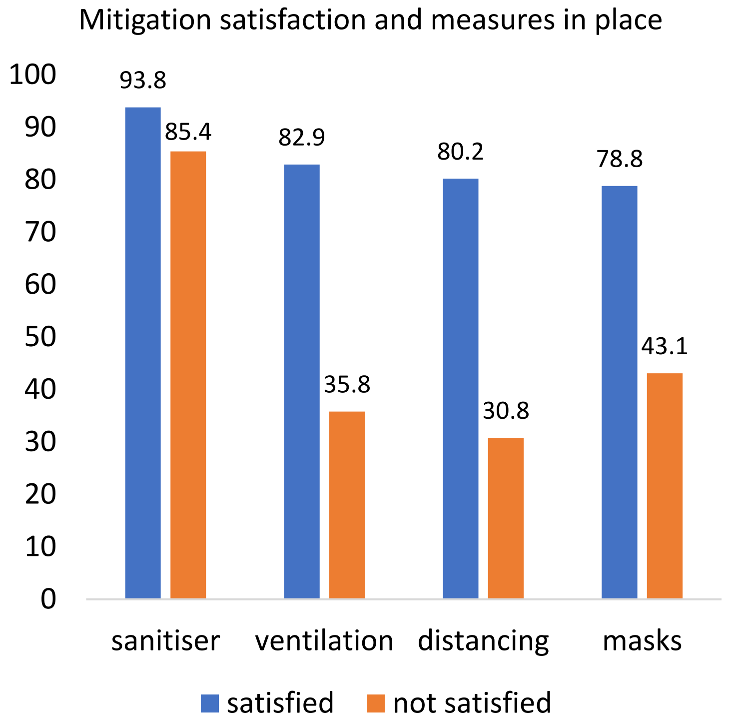
The majority of workers are happy with the number of days they attend their place of work (middle chart) but a large minority would prefer to attend fewer days.
For those where working from home is feasible, wishing to spend less fewer days at the office is associated with lower wellbeing, controlling for socio-demographic characteristics.

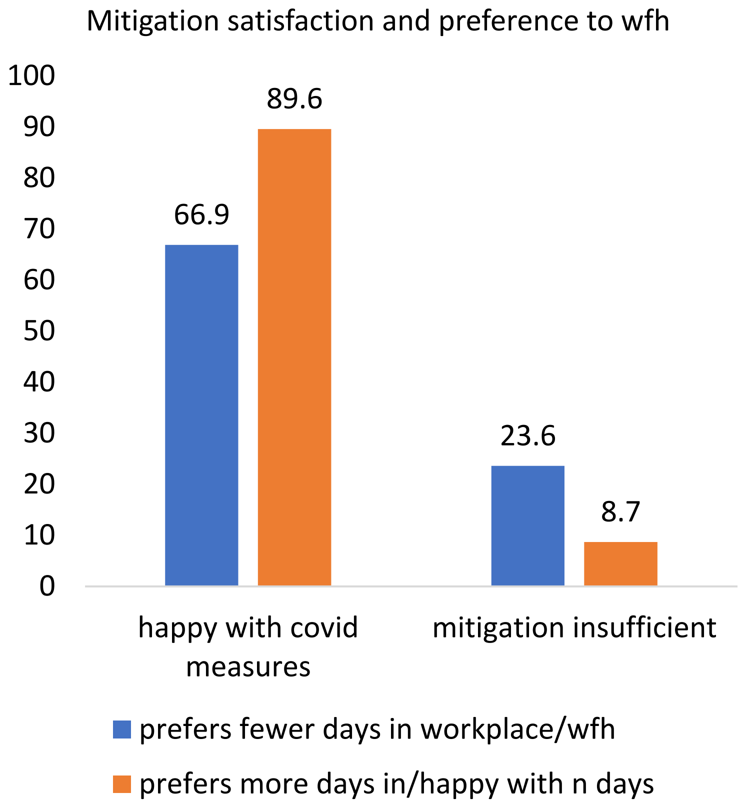
*this analysis combines all workers in the last three waves of SAM, giving a sample size of 1,599.

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

Changes to Work*: Mitigation Measures



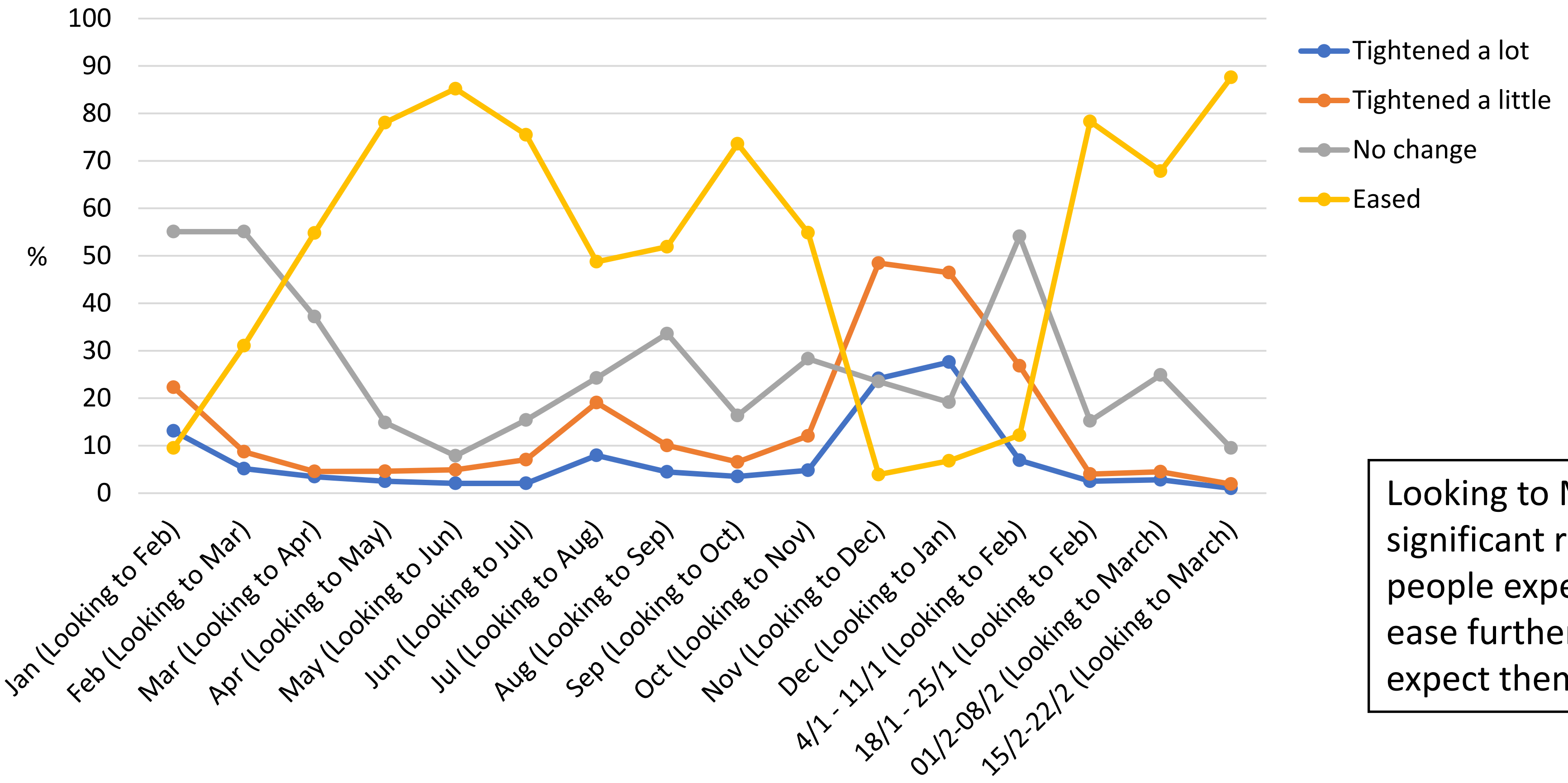




*this analysis combines all workers in the last three waves of SAM, giving a sample size of 1,599.

A large majority of workers are happy with the mitigation measures in their workplace. There is an association between perceiving measures to be insufficient and wishing to work fewer days in the office. Satisfaction with mitigation measures is strongly linked to ventilation, social distancing and requirements for mask-wearing.

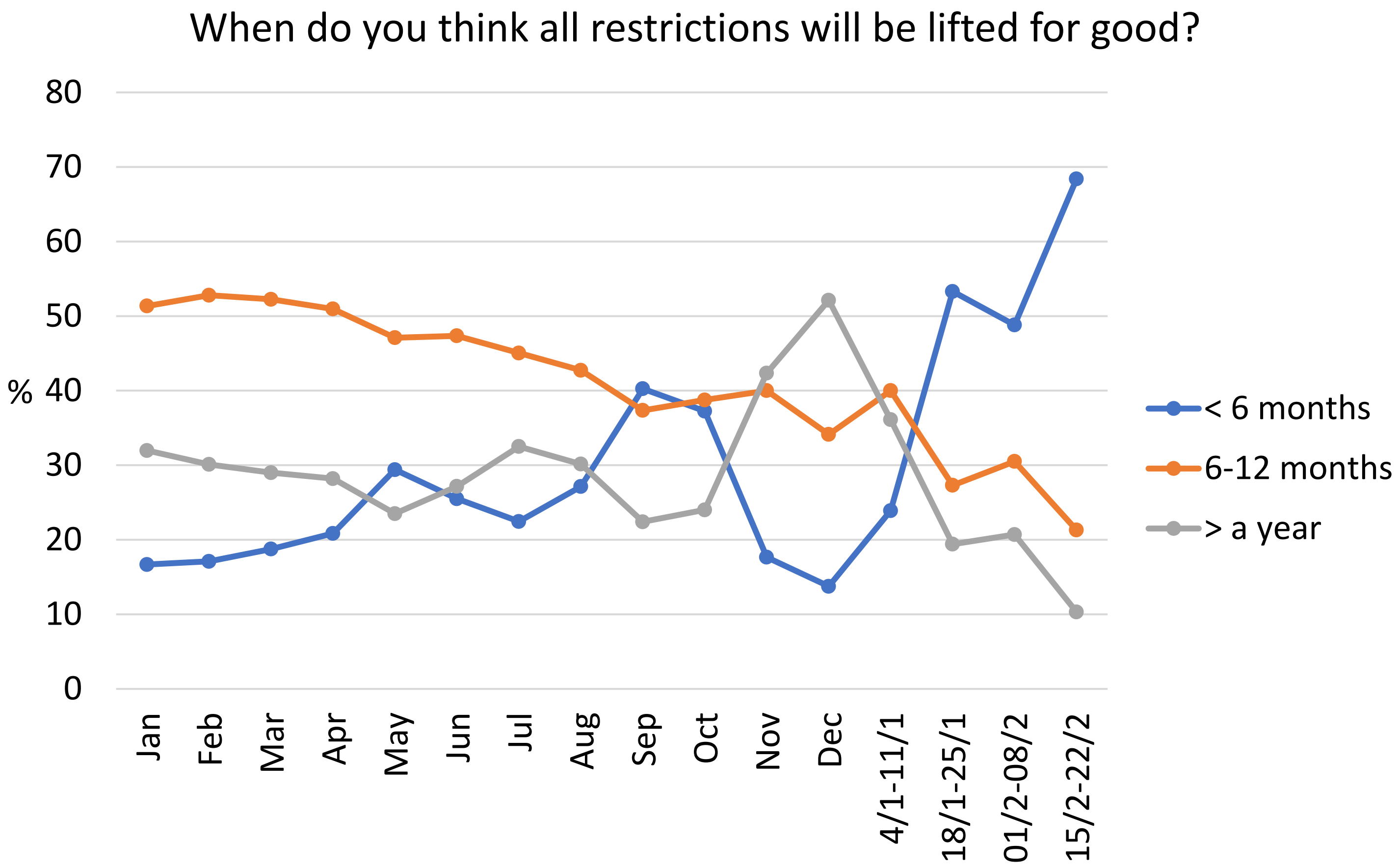
Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



Looking to March, there was a significant rise in the proportion of people expecting restrictions to ease further. Almost 90% of people expect them to be eased.

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

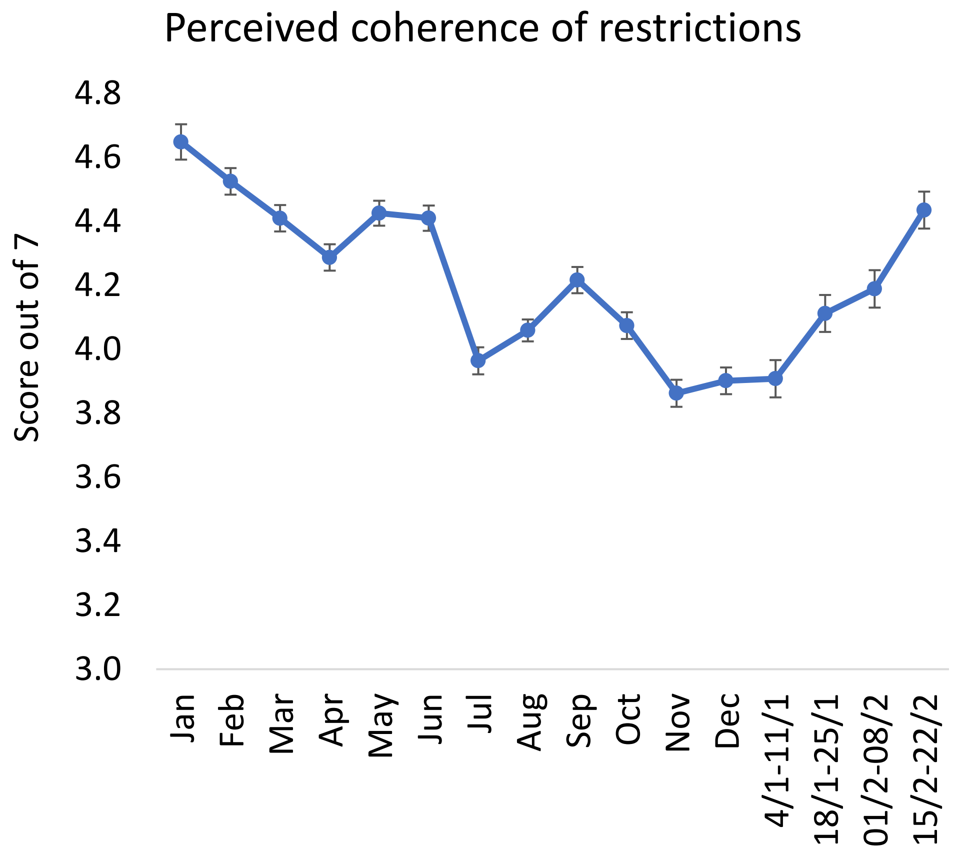
Long-term expectations

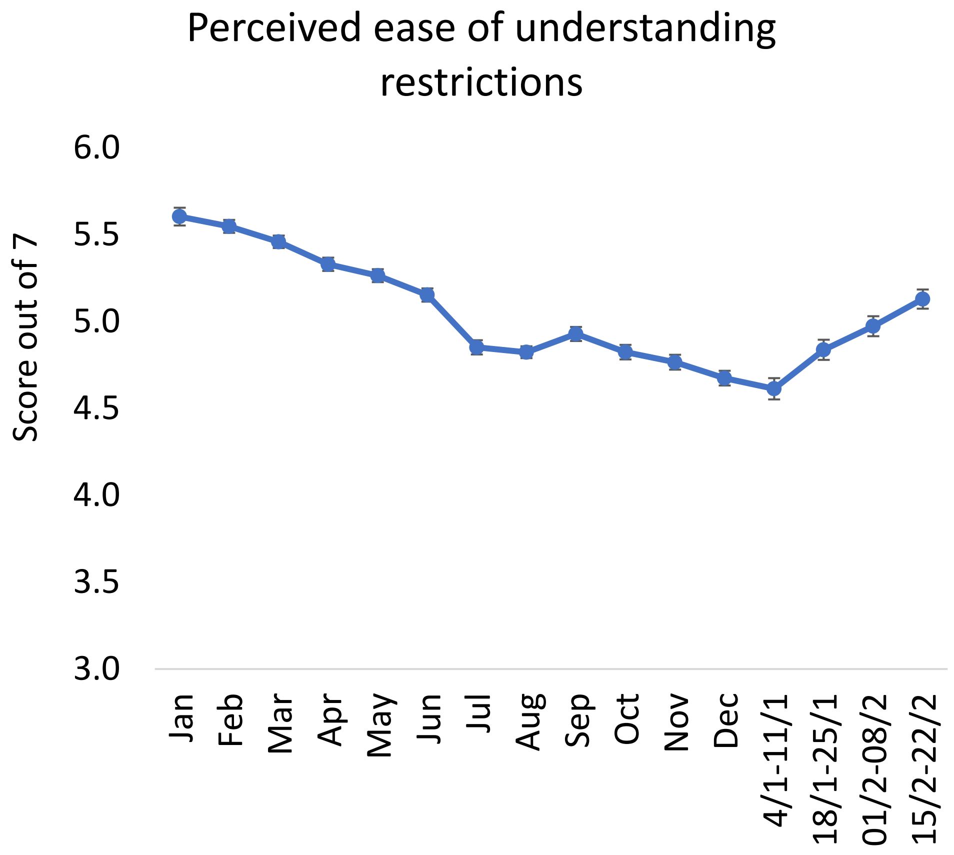


Longer term expectations this round of SAM were at their most optimistic level since SAM began. Almost 70% of people expect restrictions to be lifted for good within 6 months.

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

Perceptions of restrictions

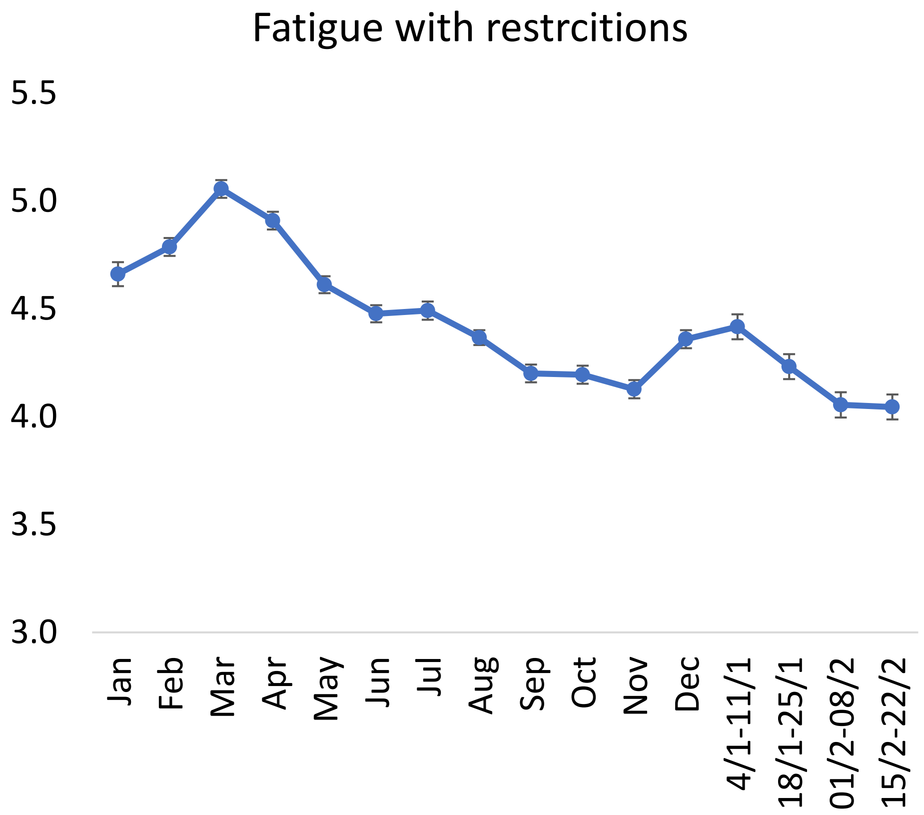


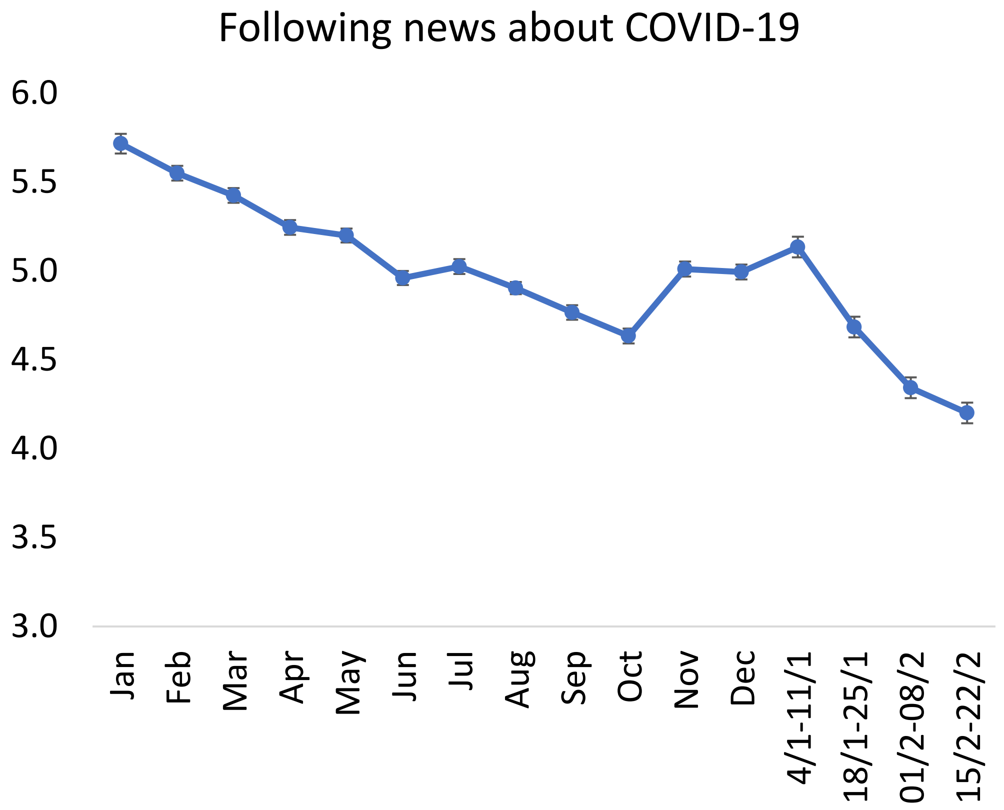


Both the perceived coherence and the ease of understanding restrictions have continued to increase following the lifting of many of them.

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

Fatigue and following coverage

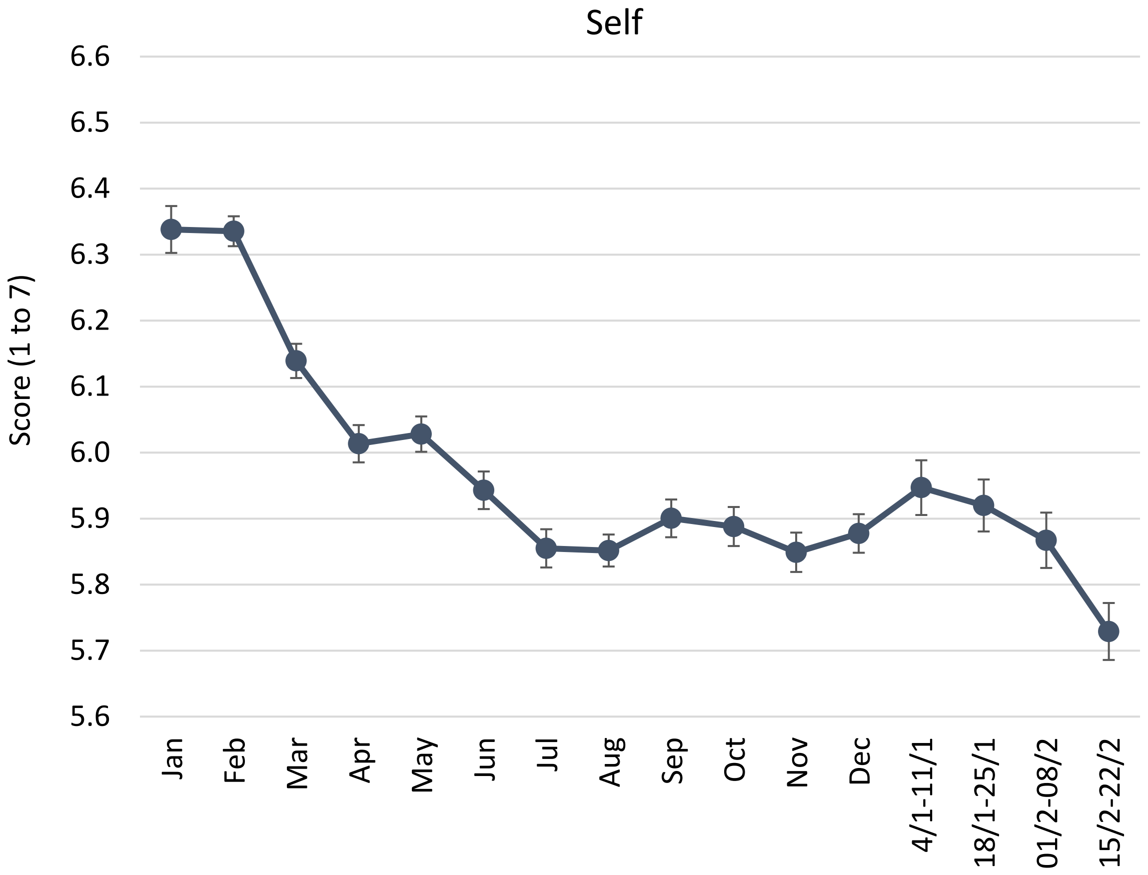


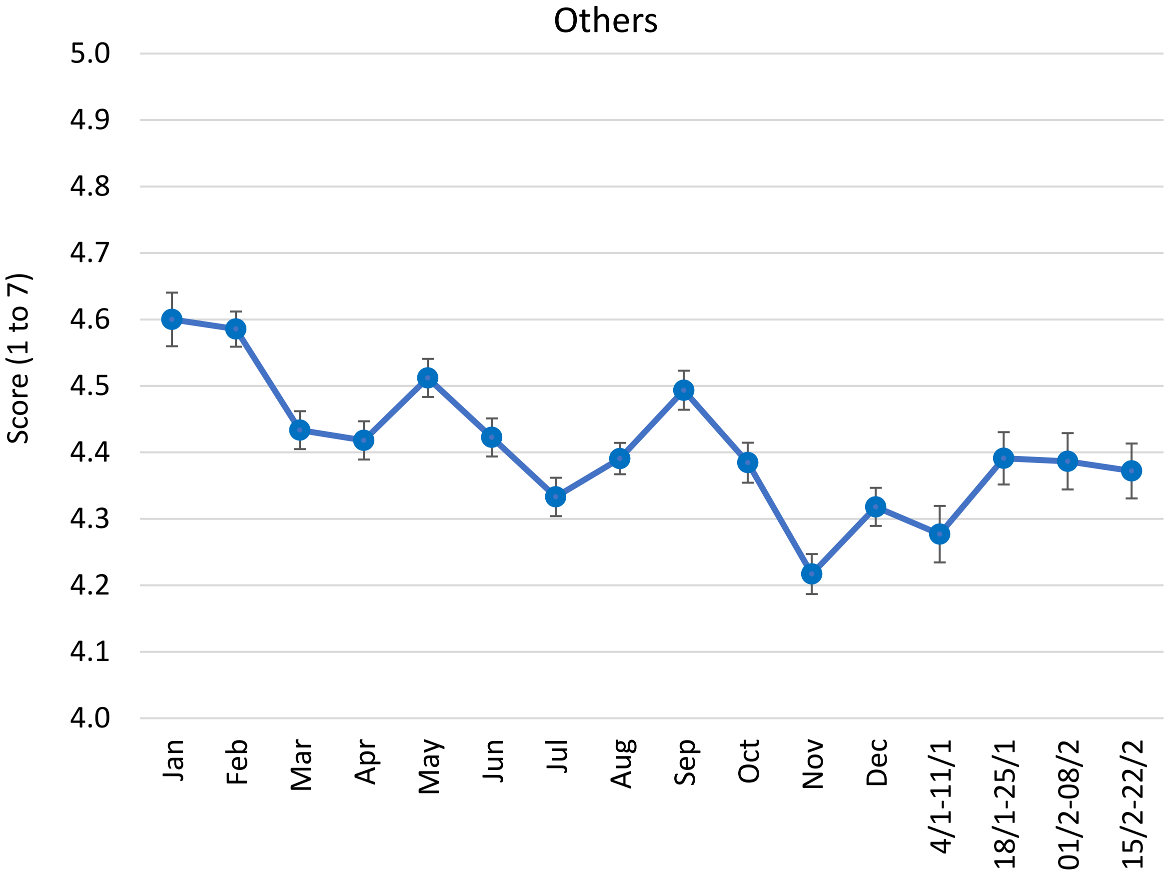


Both fatigue with restrictions and the extent to which people are following the news about COVID-19 are at their lowest levels recorded since SAM started. However, neither changed significantly since the last round of SAM.

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

Self-reported compliance

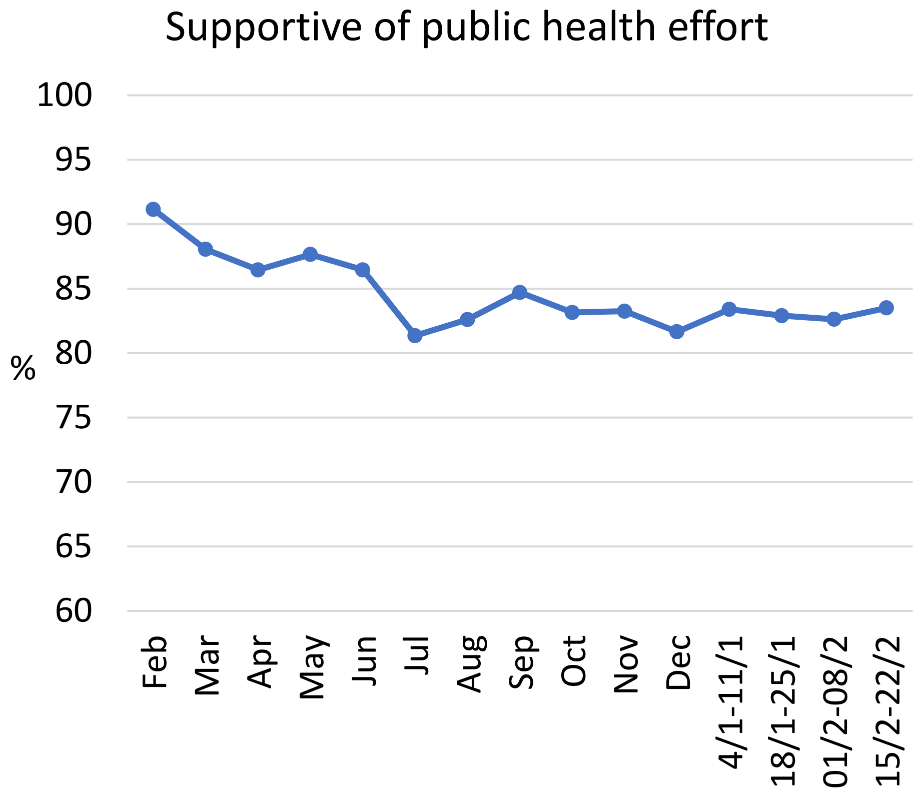


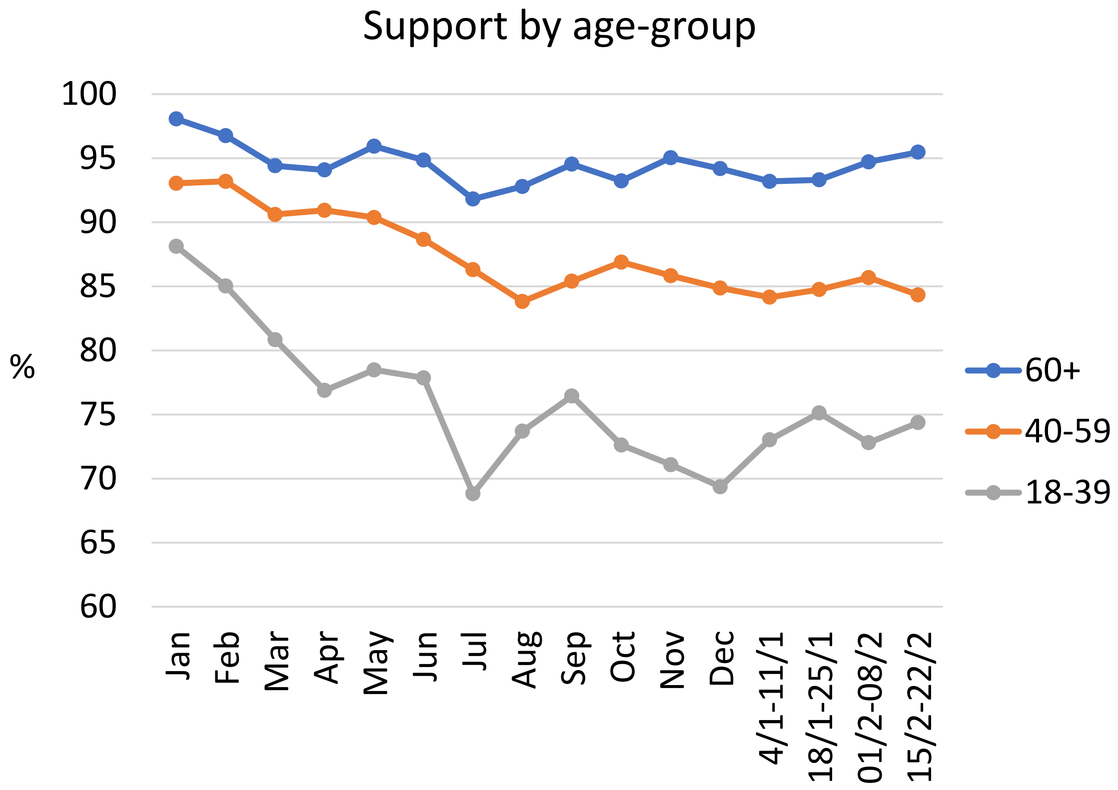


Self-reported compliance with public health guidance fell to its lowest point since SAM began but perceived compliance of other people remained unchanged.

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

Overall support for the public health effort

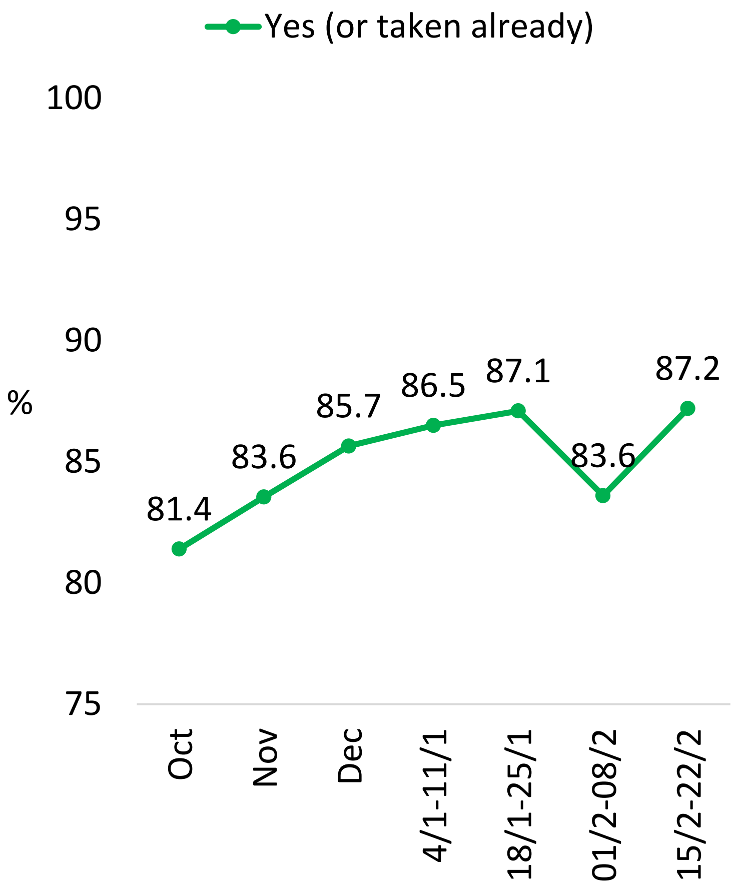


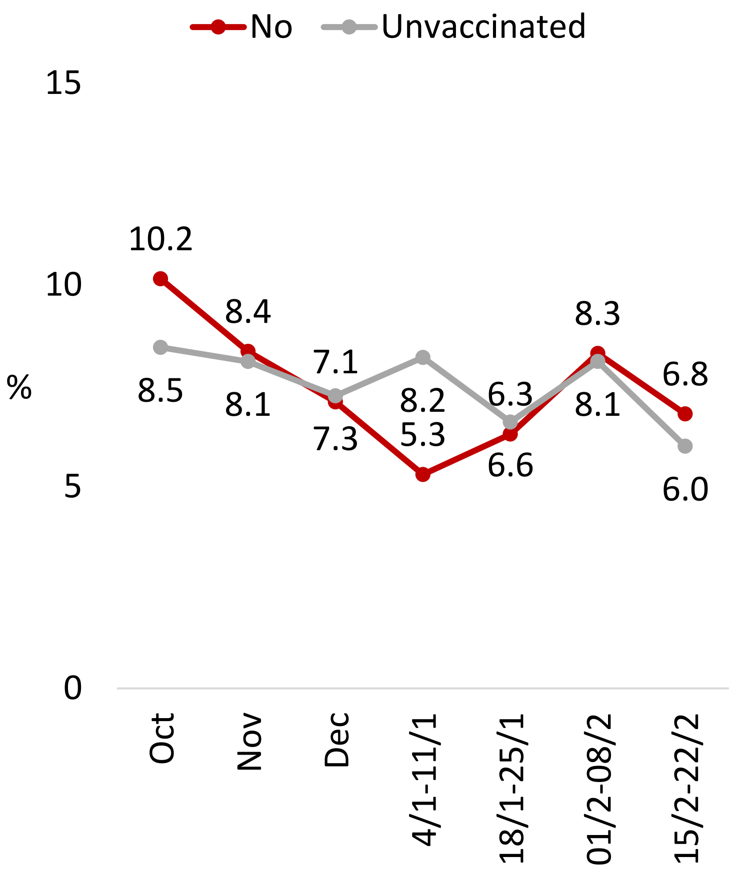


Overall support for the public health effort measured across a range of questions has remained stable, with no significant changes within age-groups.

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

Booster vaccine intentions

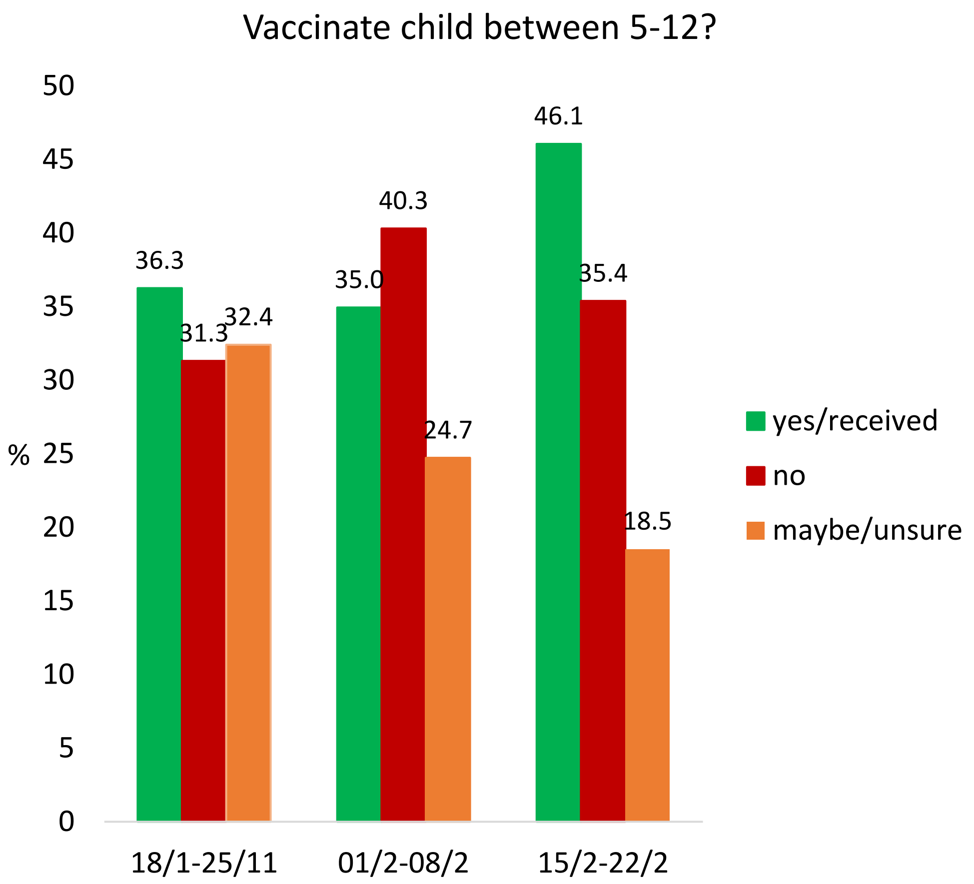


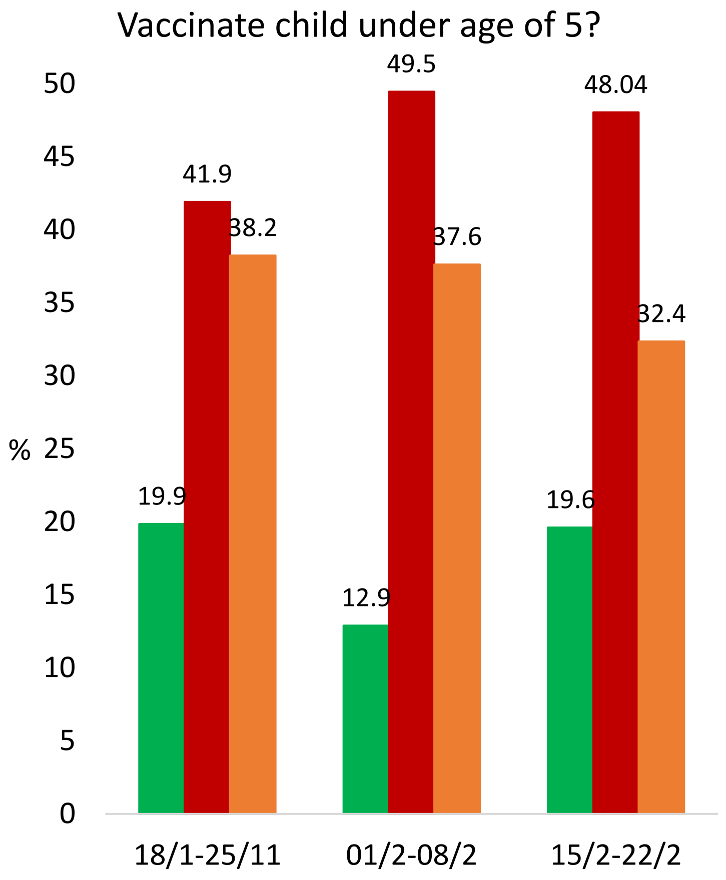


The proportion of the population intending to take the booster returned to the same level as two waves ago.

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

Child vaccine intentions

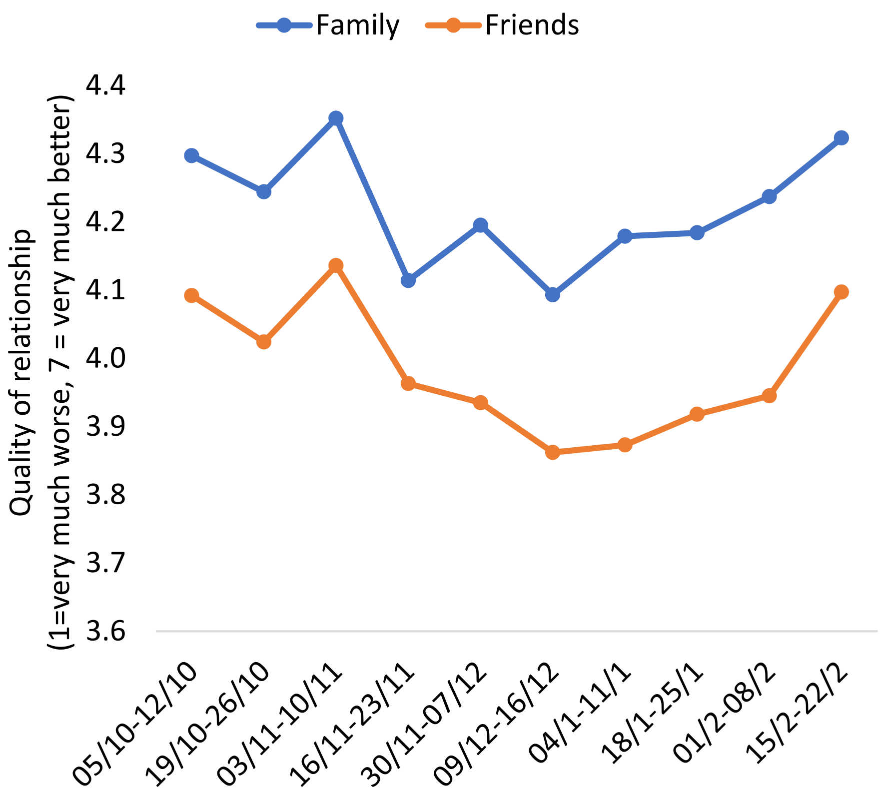


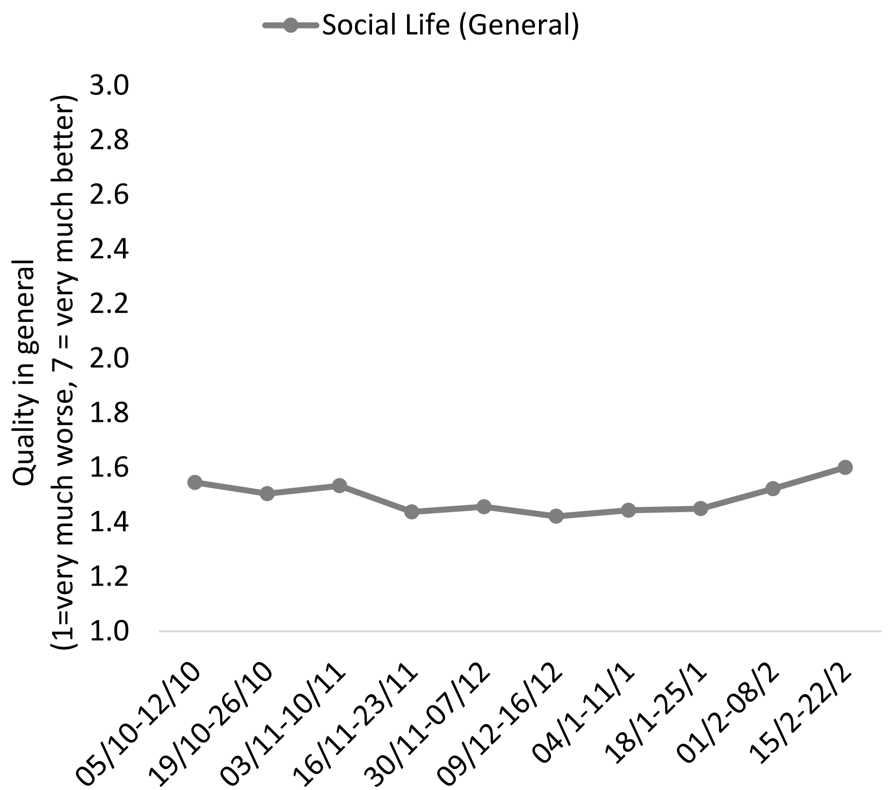


Intentions among parents to vaccinate children became more positive. However, given the small samples of parents with children of the requisite age, these changes fell short of statistical significance.

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

Quality of Relationships & Social Life





People judged the quality of relationships with friends and family to have worsened during the lockdown period but the lifting of restrictions has coincided with a significant improvements for both. Peoples' judgements of the quality of their social life in general follows the same pattern, but remains very low.

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