

Social Activity Measure

March 29th – April 5th 2022

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

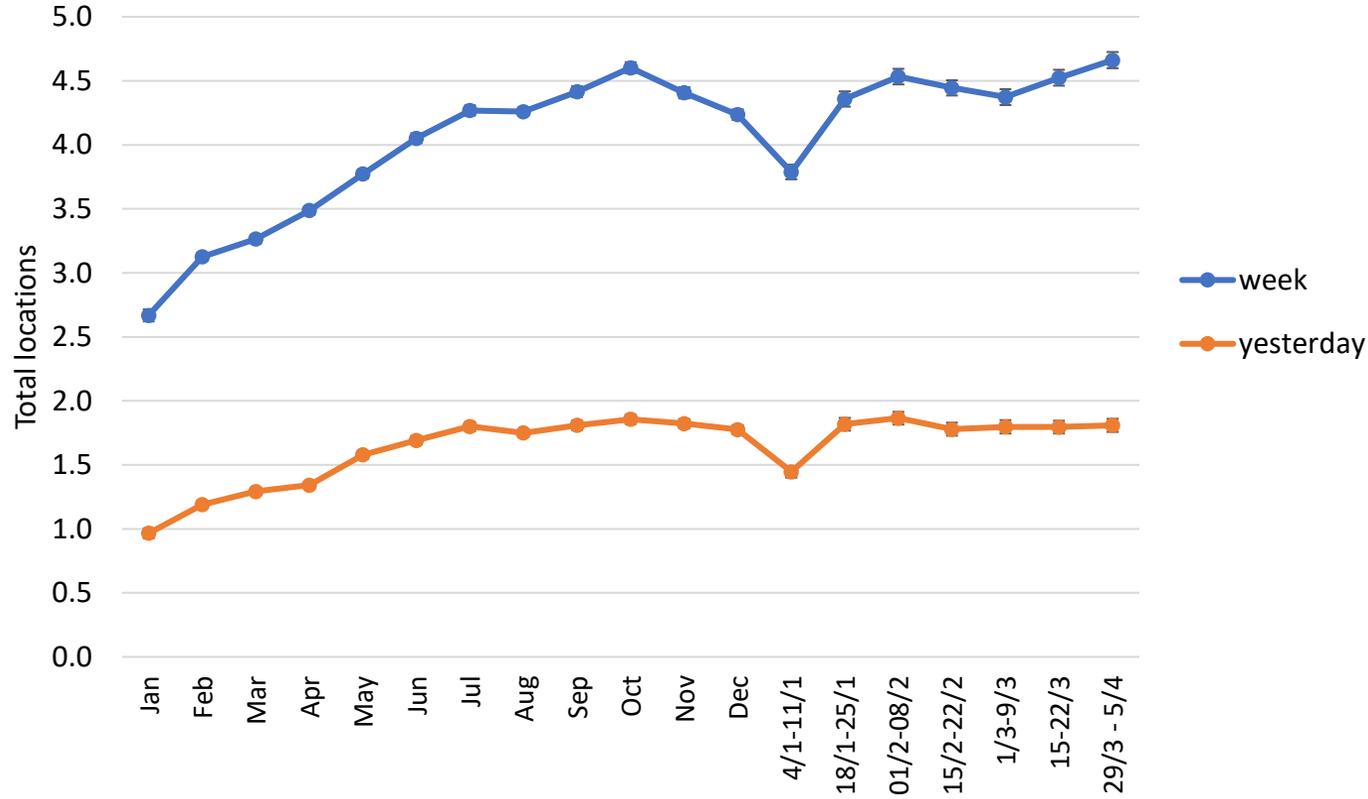
The Social Activity Measure (SAM) is a behavioural study that records the public response to the risk of COVID-19 infection over time. Designed by the ESRI's Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), SAM is an anonymous, interactive, online study that surveys people about their recent activity. The study offers 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 March 29th and April 5th 2022. Hospitalisations, which had been rising sharply through March peaked and began to fall across the week of data collection. ICU cases had increased slightly but remained fairly stable. There were public calls from some in the medical profession for the reintroduction of some public health measures to limit the spread of infection.



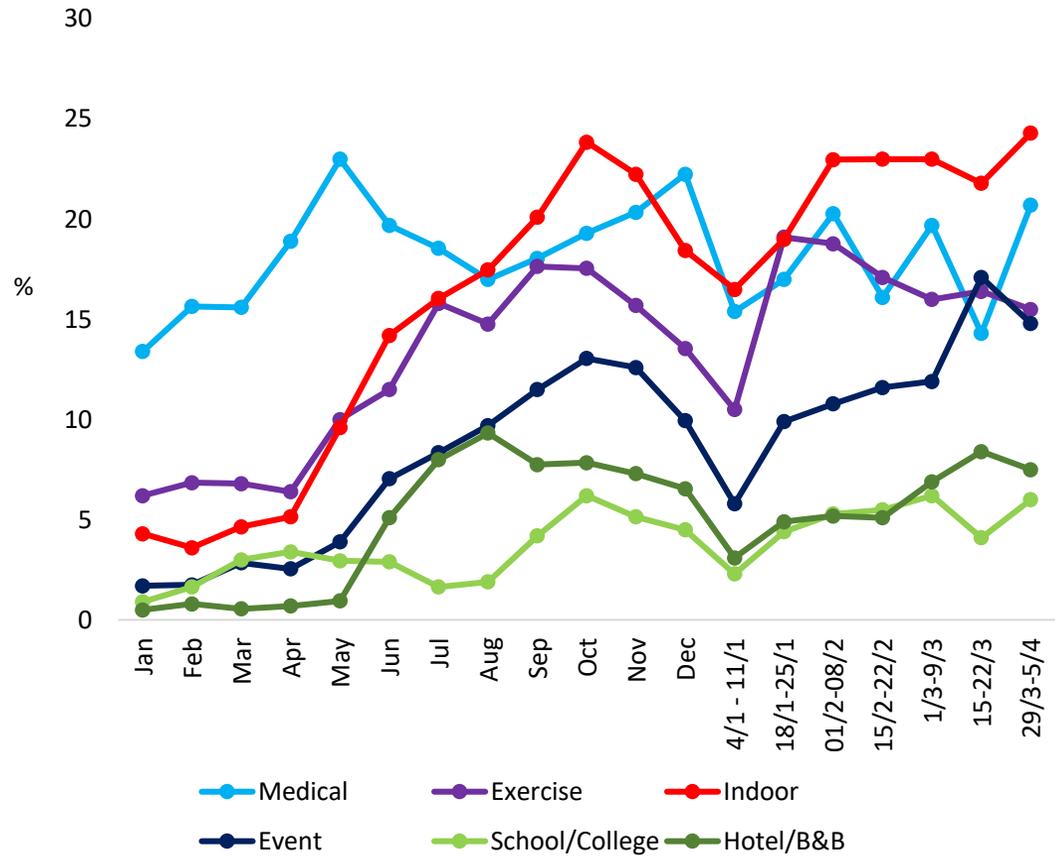
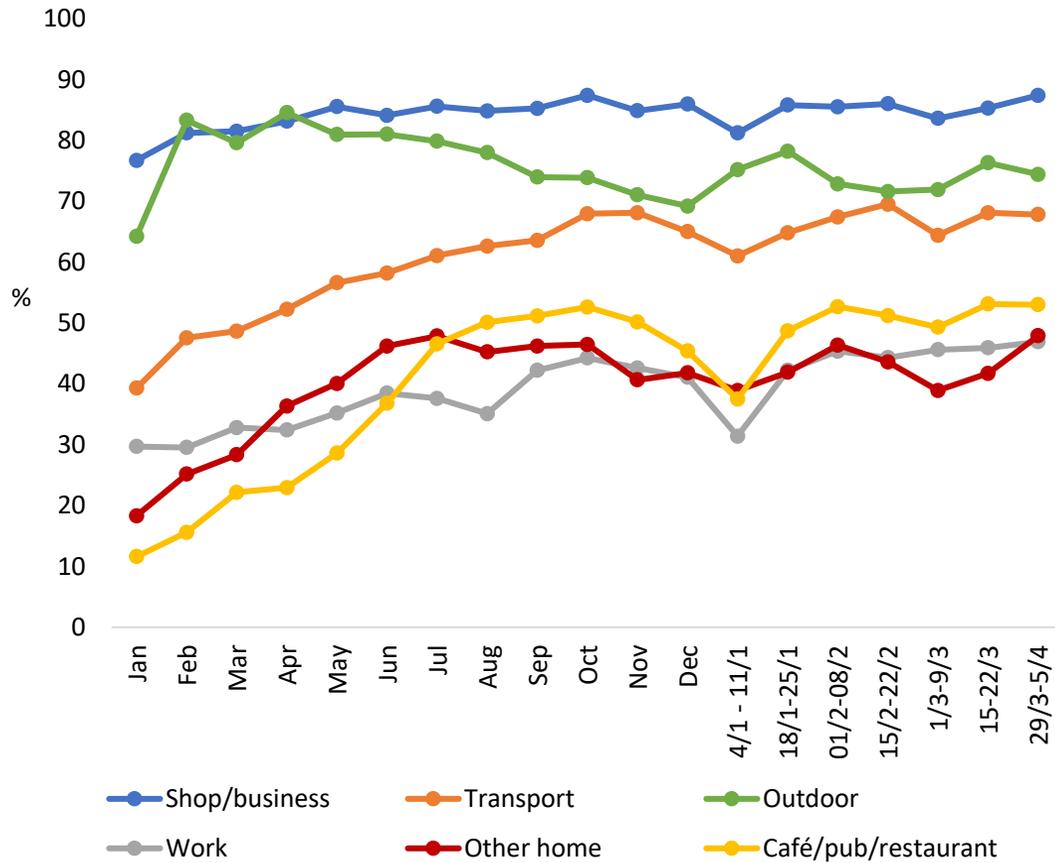
Total locations visited



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



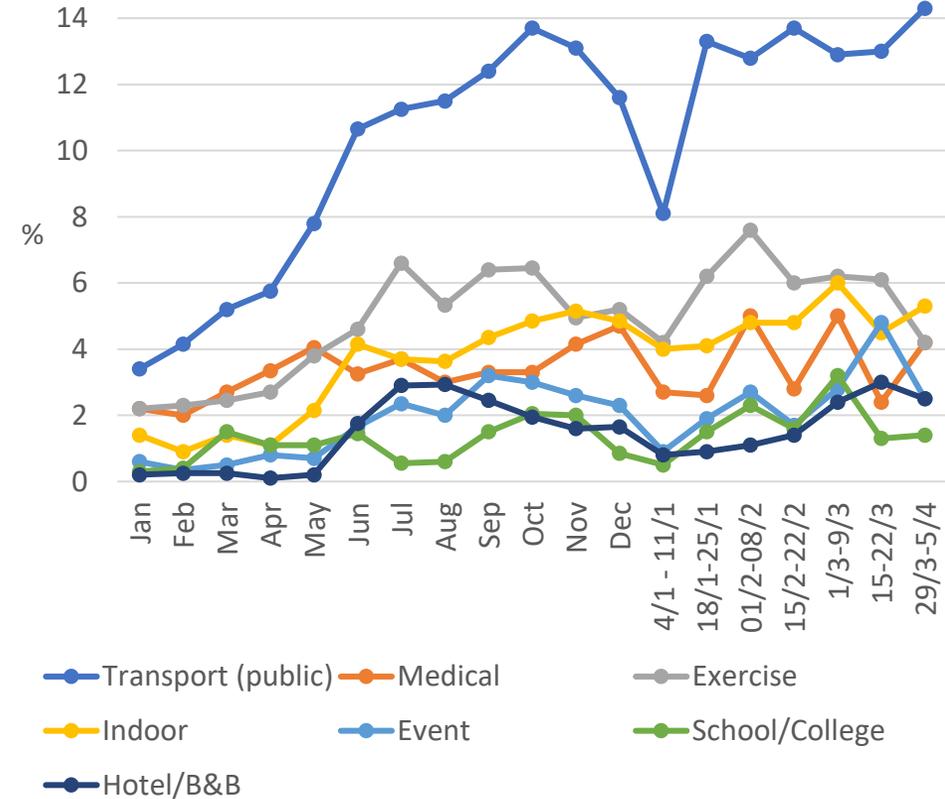
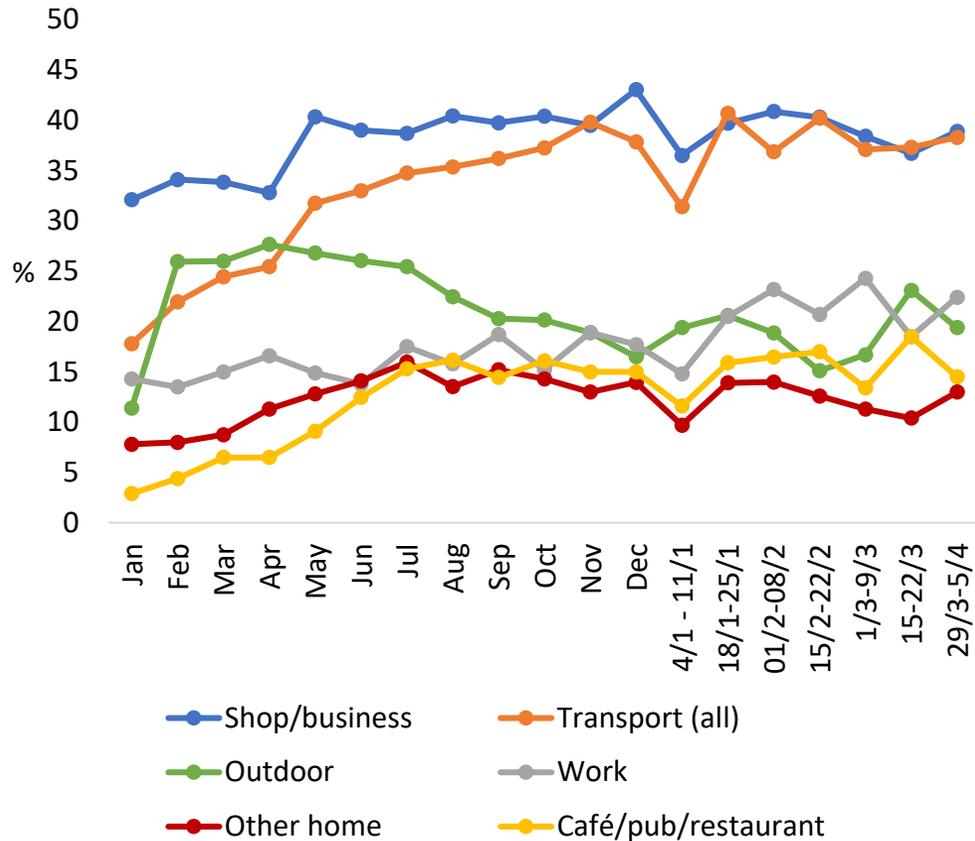
Locations visited (previous week)



There were no clear, significant increases in visits to different specific locations during the previous week relative to recent rounds of SAM.

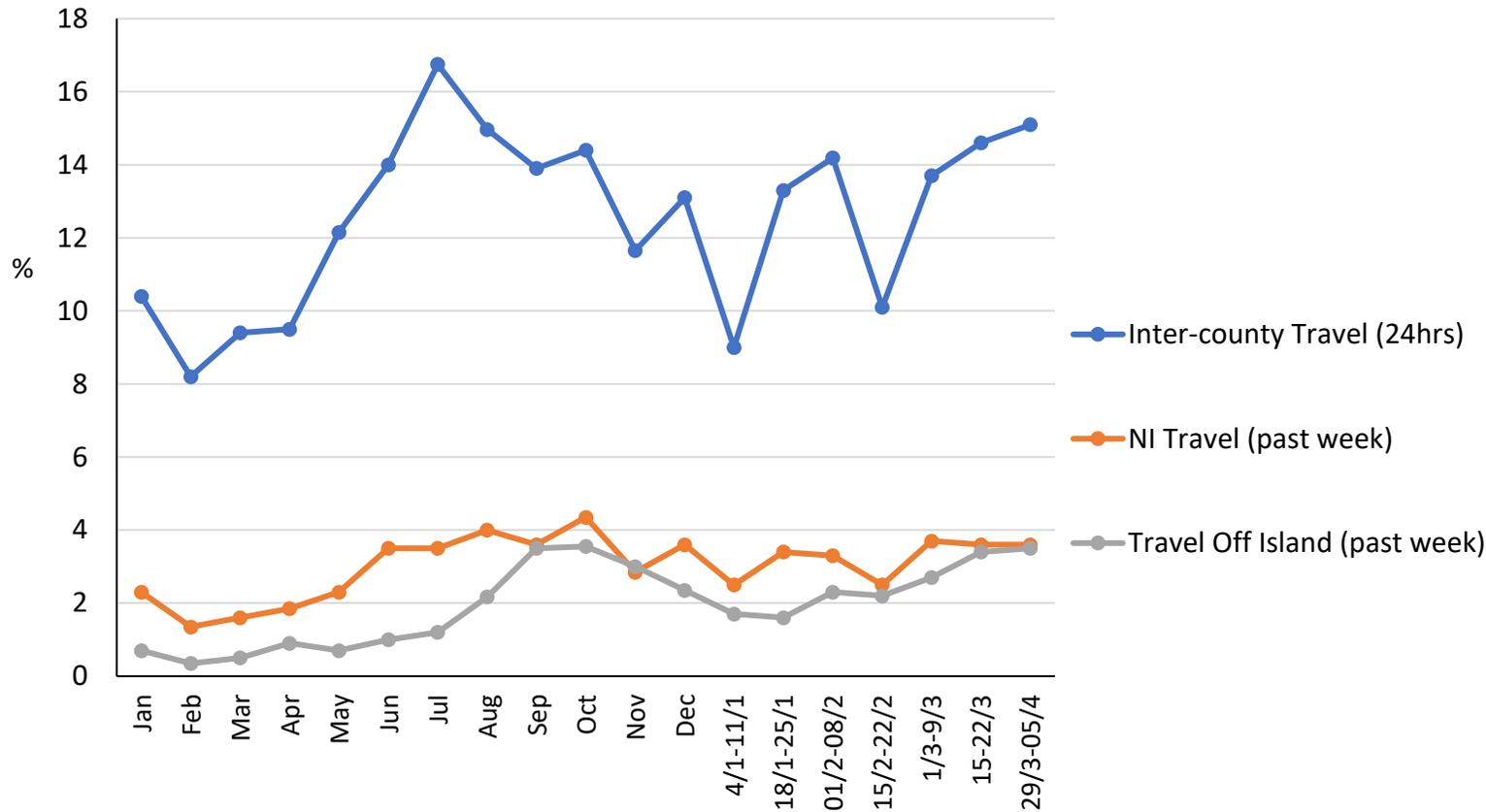


Locations visited (yesterday)



Patterns of visits to specific locations the previous day changed little, with some substitution between workplaces, hospitality and outdoor venues, due to the previous round of SAM covering the St Patrick's Day holiday.

National and international travel

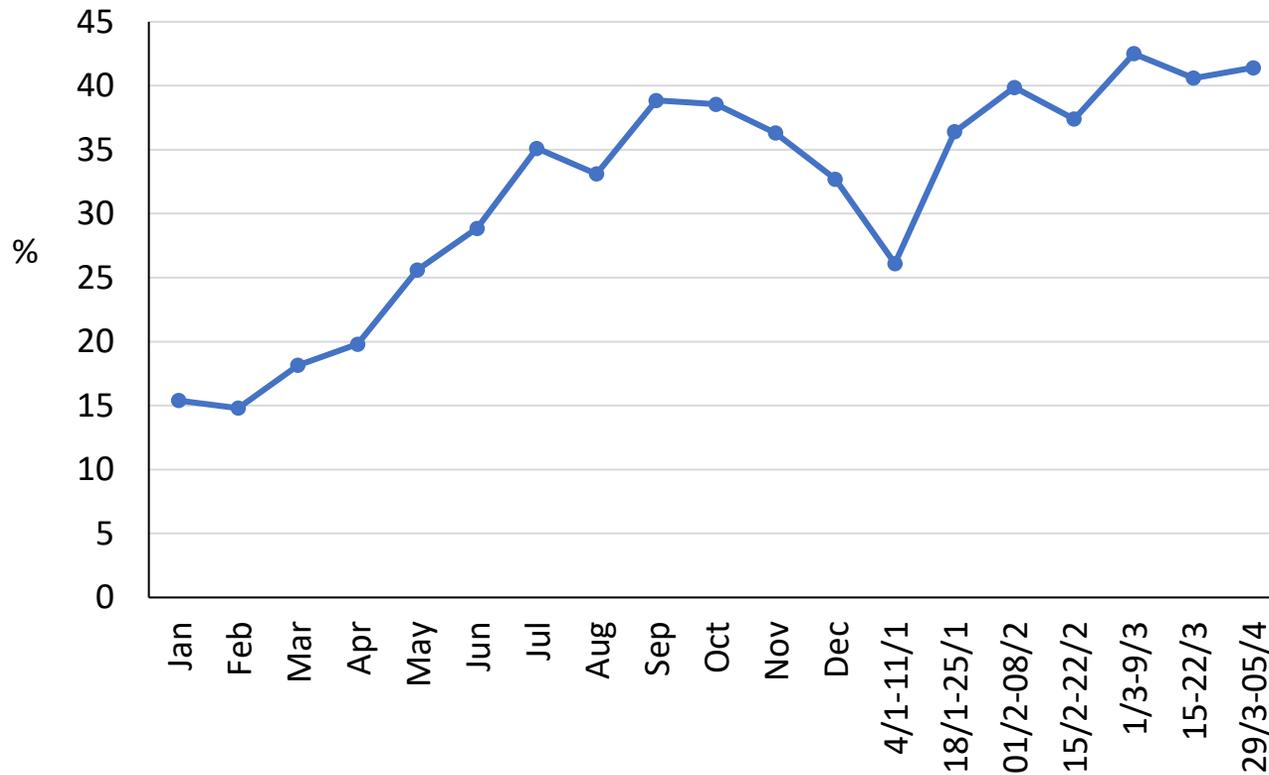


Ongoing upward trends in inter-county and international travel continued, although differences relative to the previous round of SAM were not statistically significant.

Close contacts



Close contact in past 24 hours

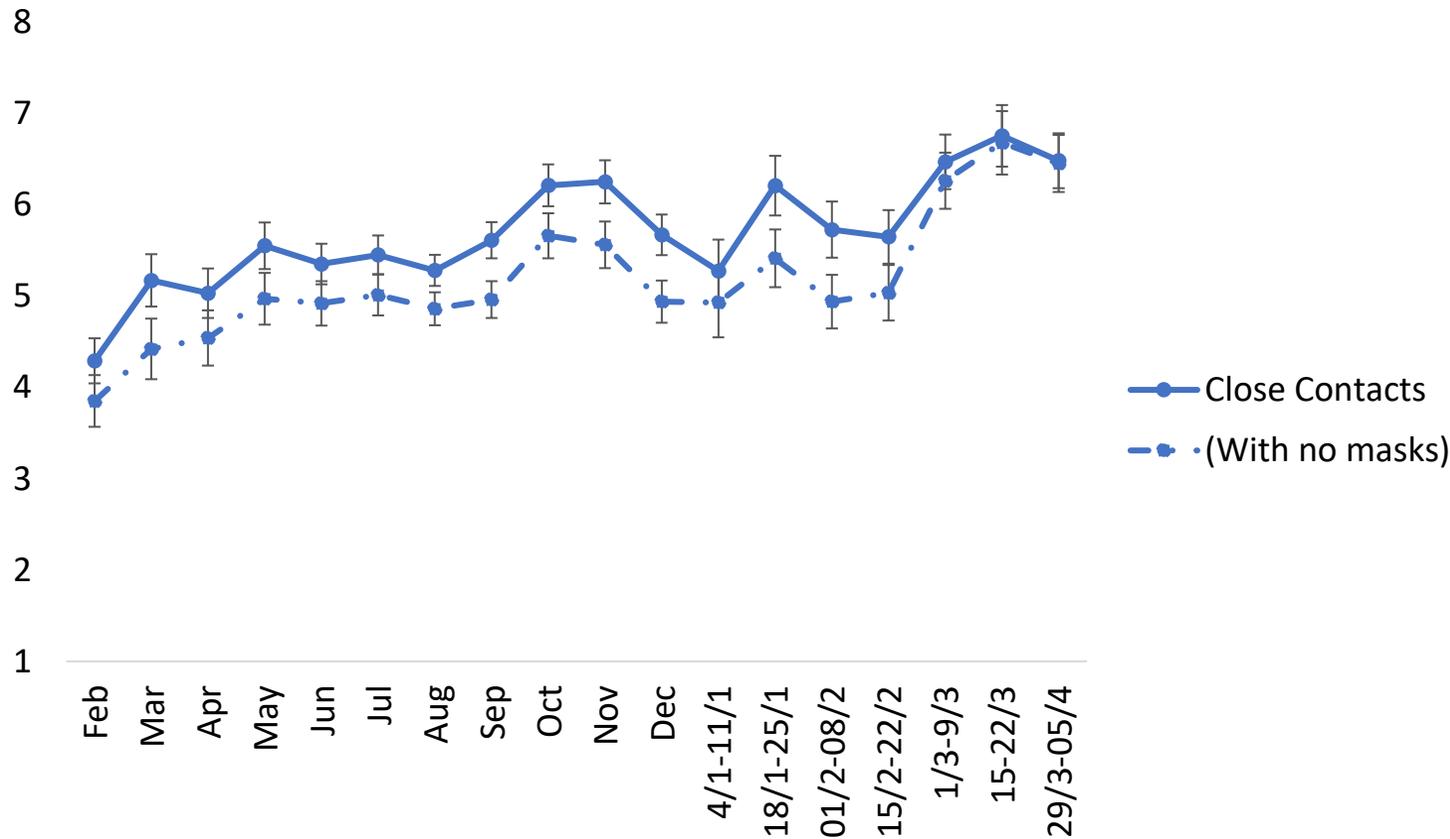


The proportion of people who had a close contact the previous day remained largely unchanged this round, at just over 40%.

Number of close contacts

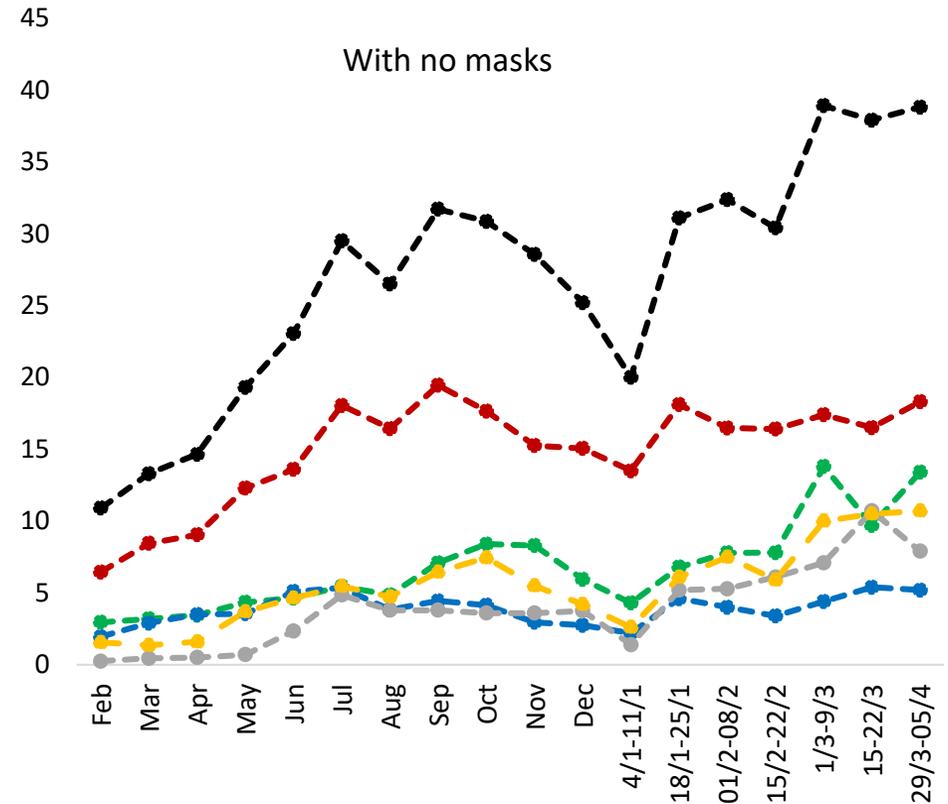
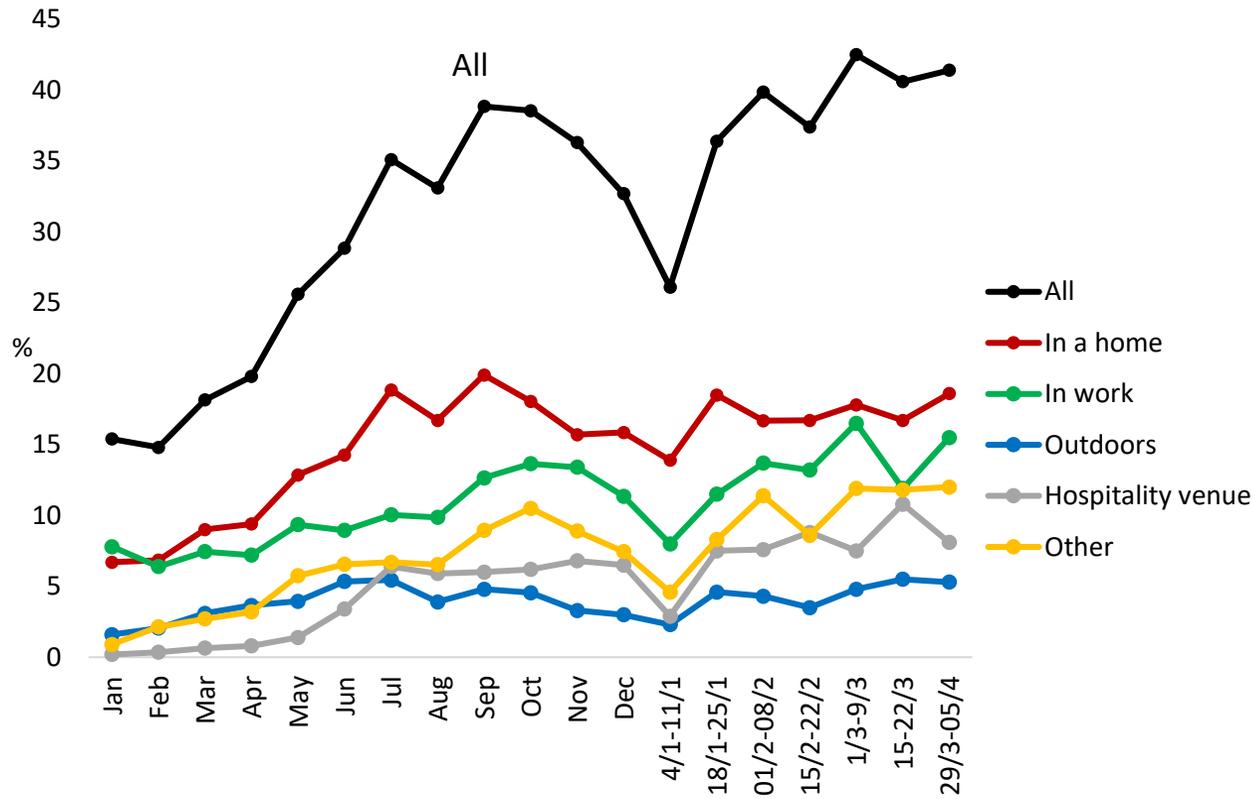


Mean number of close contacts among those with at least one



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

Close contacts - locations

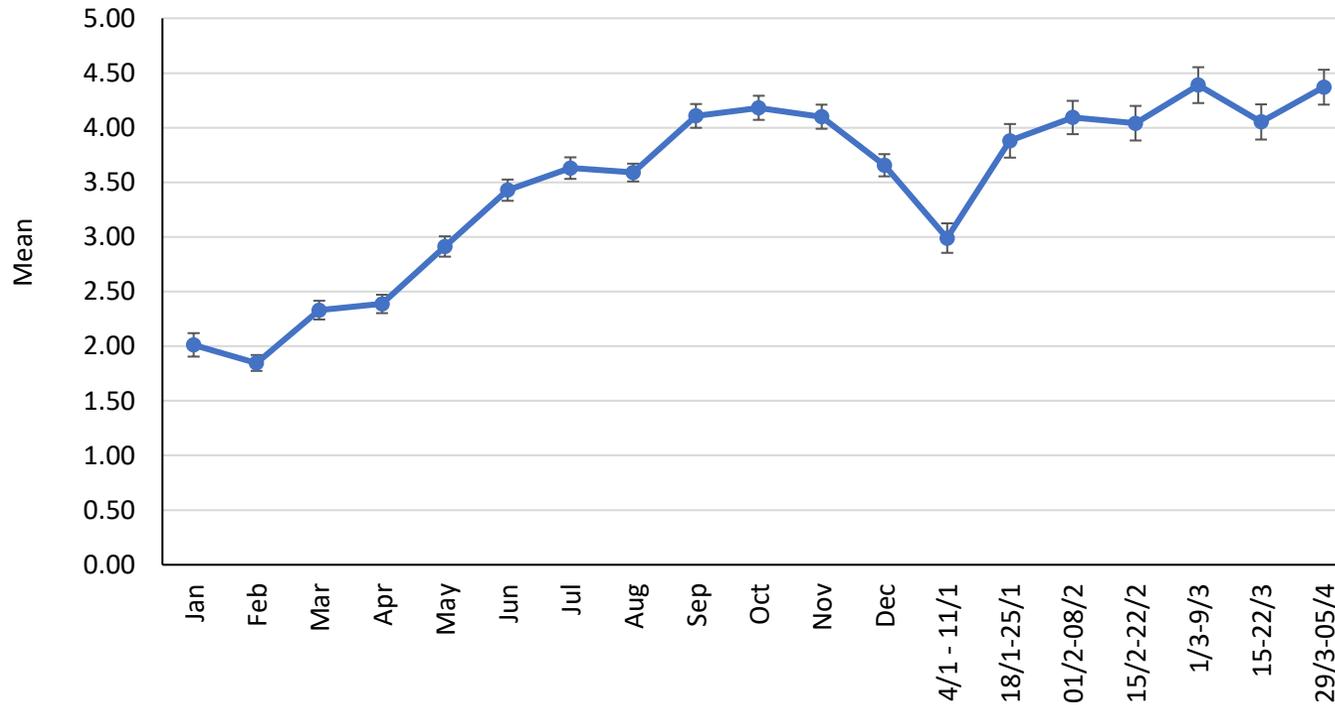


There were more close contacts in work, compensated for by fewer in hospitality venues, reflecting the fact that the previous round of SAM covered the St. Patrick's Day holiday. Almost all close contacts now occur between people not wearing masks.

Number of people met



People from other households met in past 48hrs

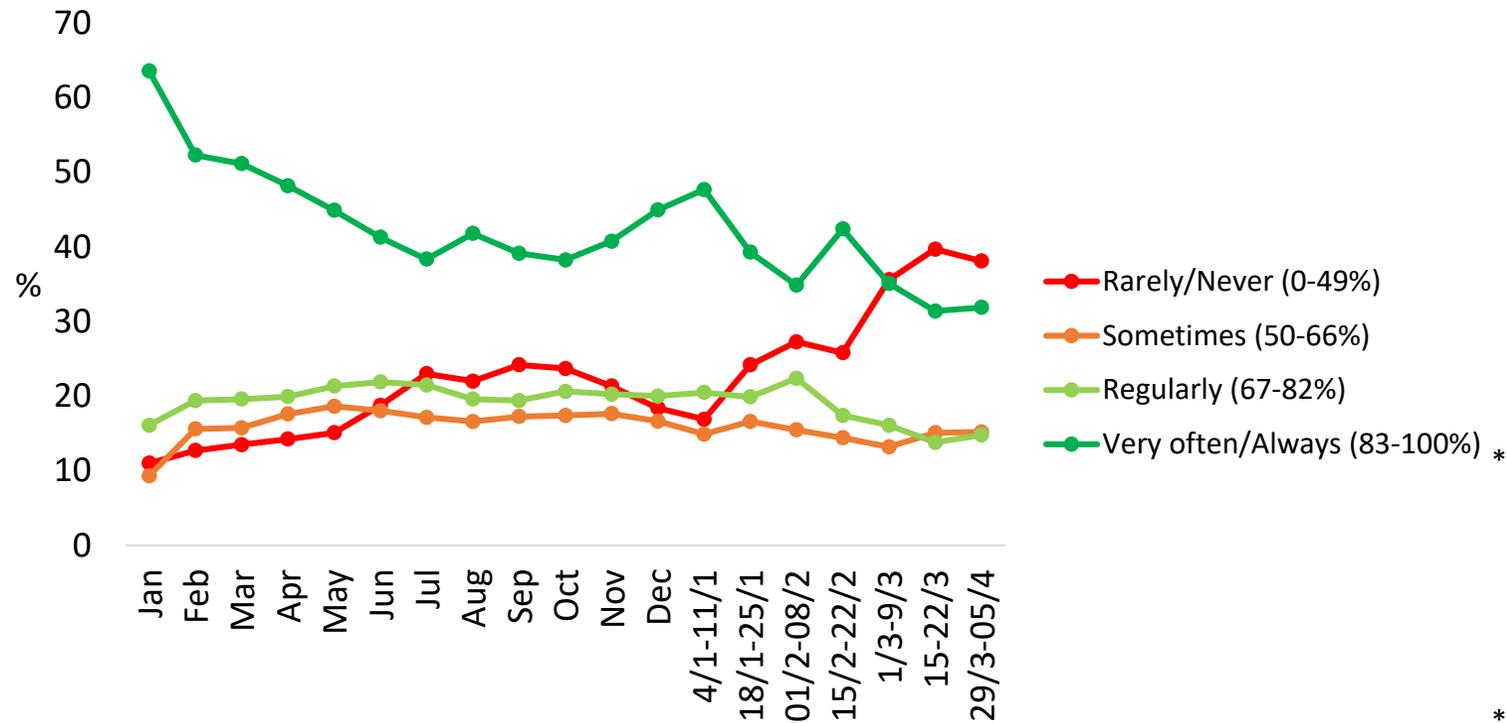


The average number of people met has remained broadly stable over the past two months.

Mitigation



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



Following recent significant changes in mitigation behaviour, the figures stabilised in this round of SAM.

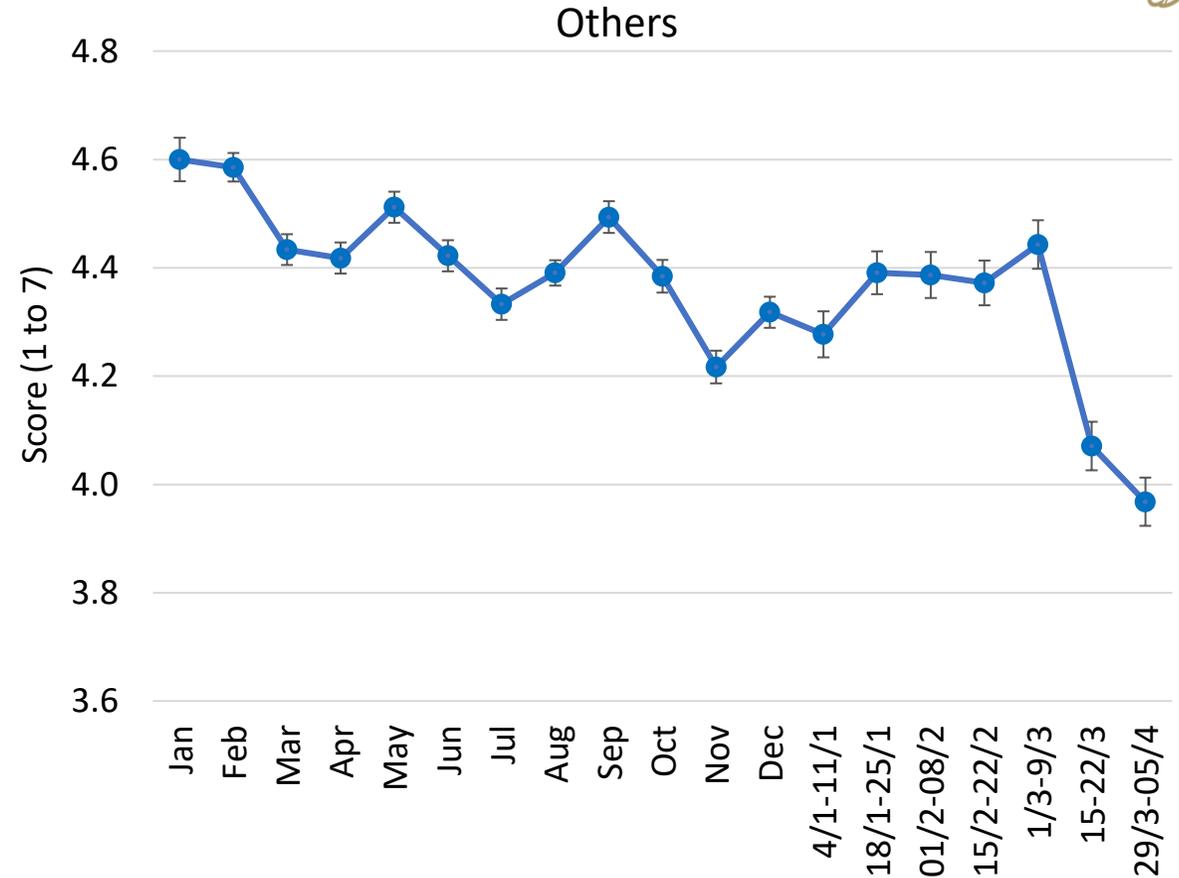
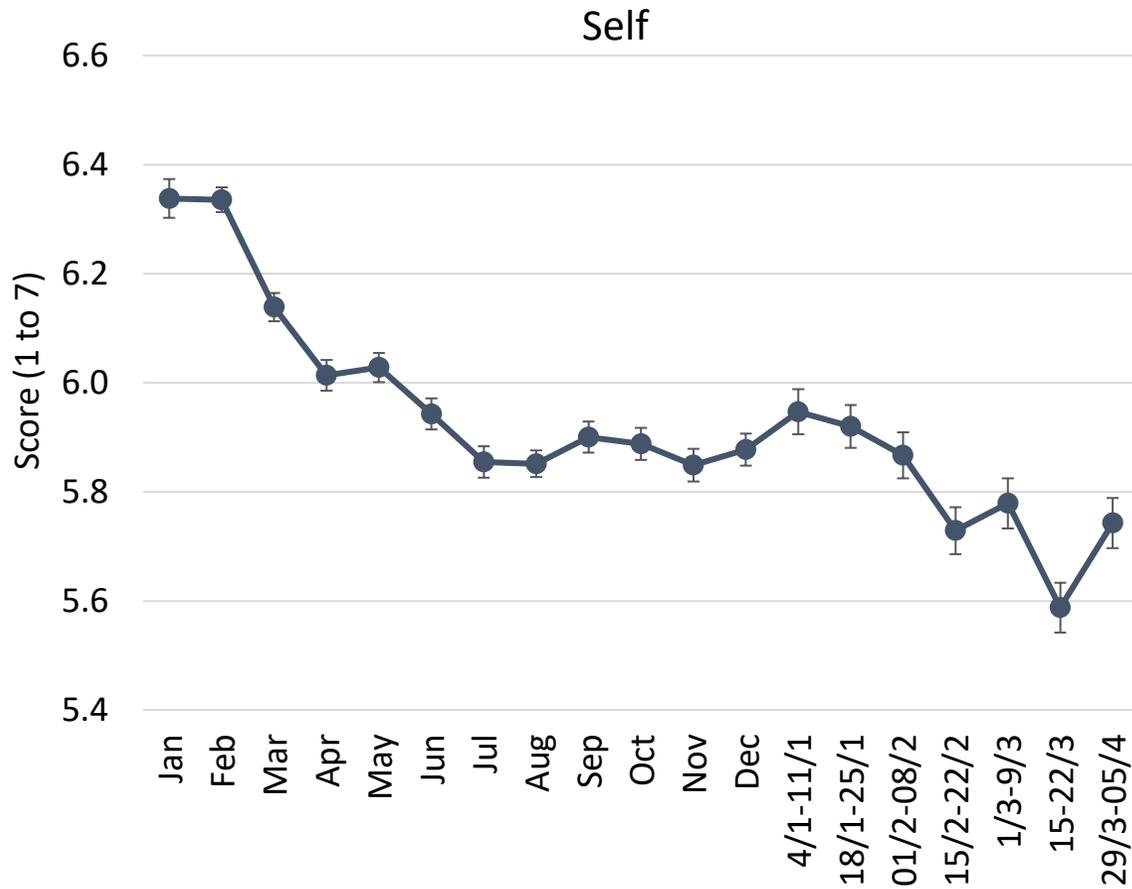
*included in this group are those who did not leave their home or have visitors the previous day.

Mask-wearing in key locations



The sharp drop in mask-wearing following the lifting of legal requirements on 28 February has stabilised, albeit with a very large gap between people’s reports of their own behaviour and the behaviour of those around them.

Self-reported compliance

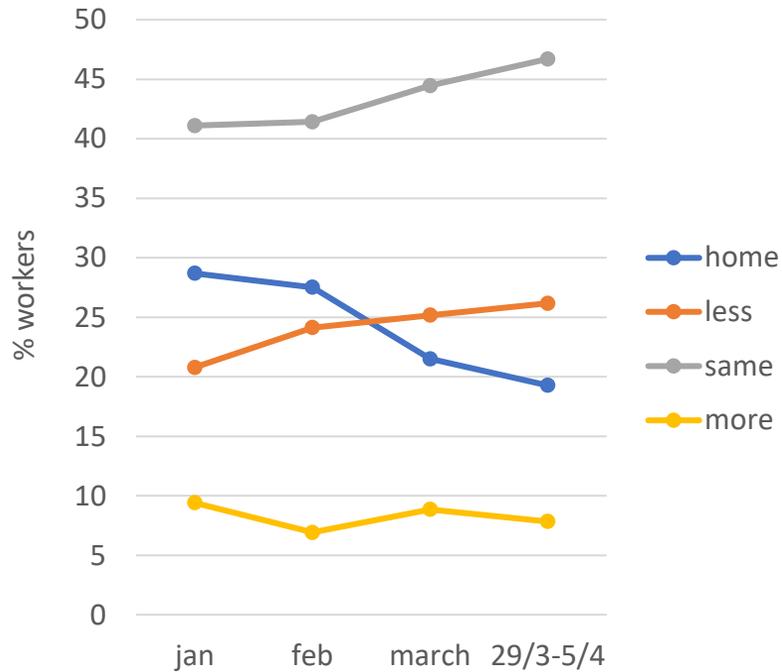


While self-reported compliance with public health guidance recovered somewhat this round, the perception that others are following guidance did not.

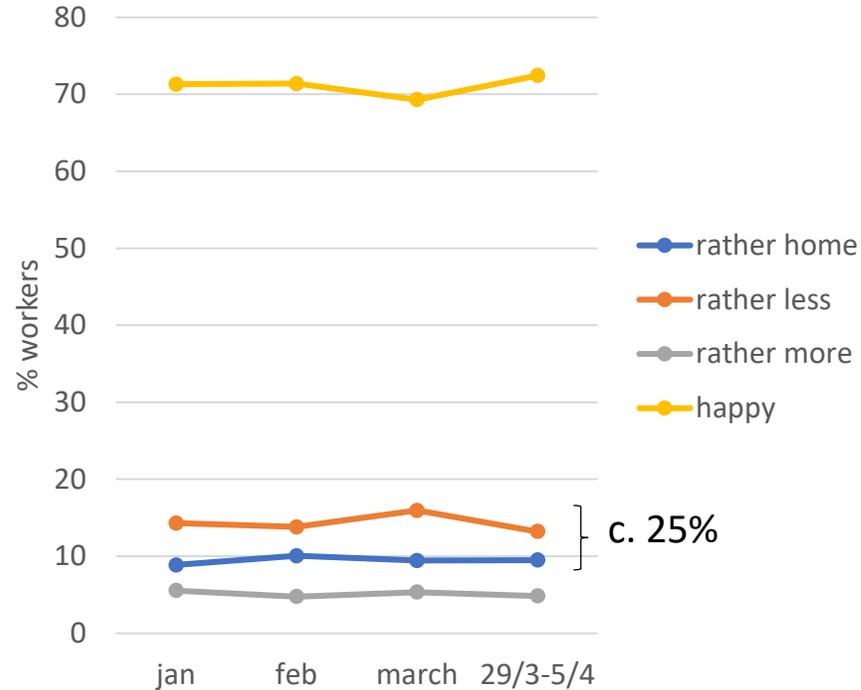
Return to workplaces



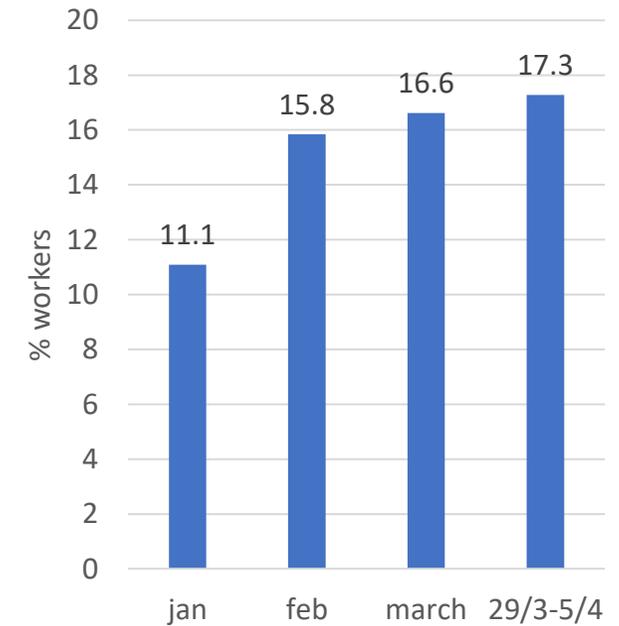
How often going to workplace compared to before pandemic?



Happy with workplace attendance?

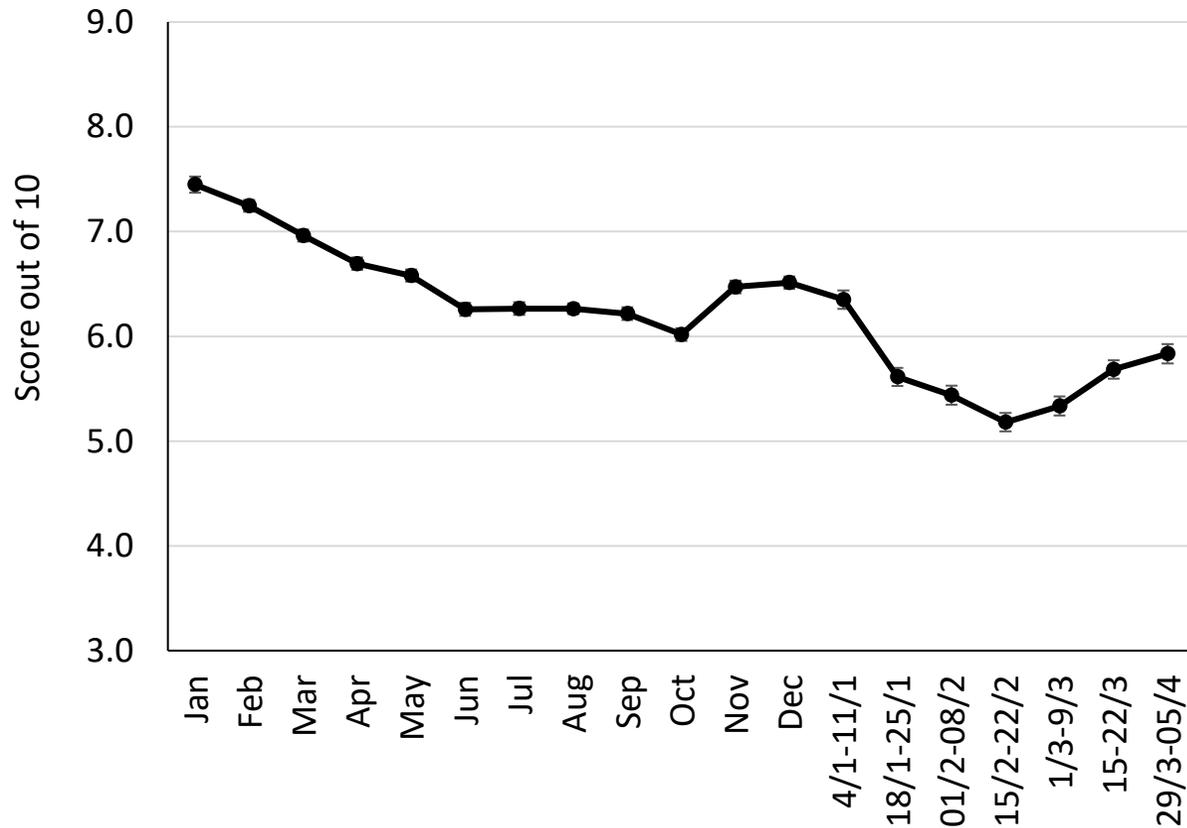


Employer requires attendance even though job could be done from home



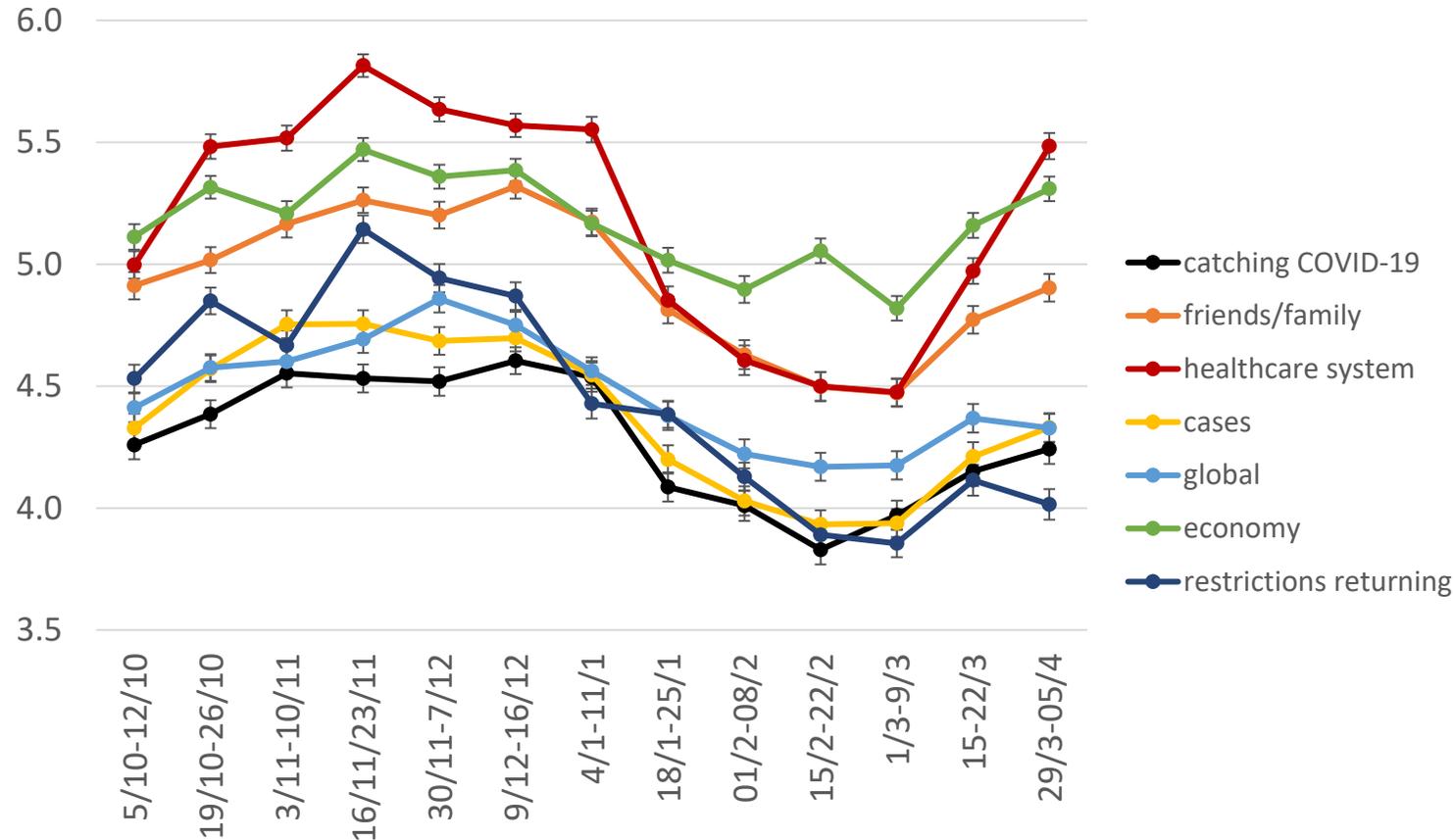
Fewer workers are working from home (left). Comparing the slopes of the blue, orange and grey lines, of those returning to the workplace since January, around half returned to pre-pandemic attendance levels and half to less, with 26% now going to work less often. While most workers are happy with their arrangements, one quarter want to attend less or work from home (middle). More than 1-in-6 say they are required to attend even though the job can be done from home (right) – a significant rise since January.

Worry



Overall worry about COVID-19 continued its upward trend, although the difference between the latest figure and the previous round of SAM was not statistically significant.

Components of worry

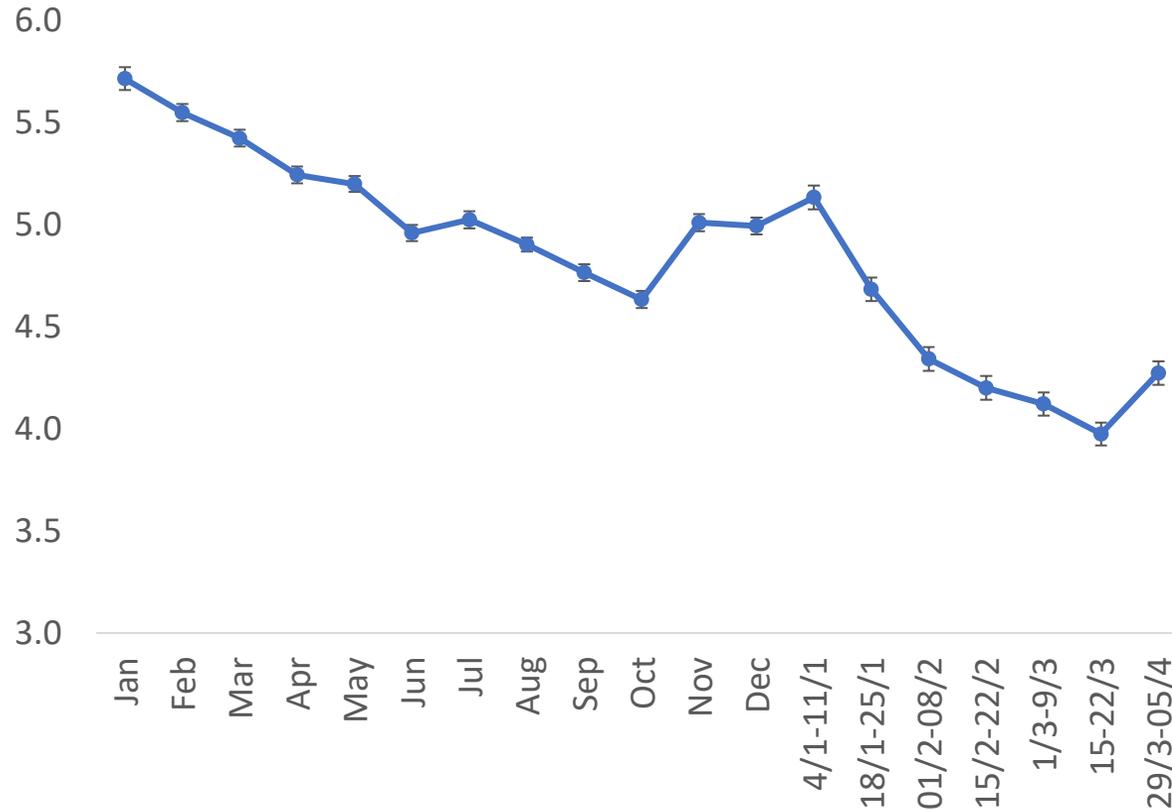


There was a strong and statistically significant increase in worry about the healthcare system being overwhelmed. Other components of worry did not change significantly this round.

Following news coverage

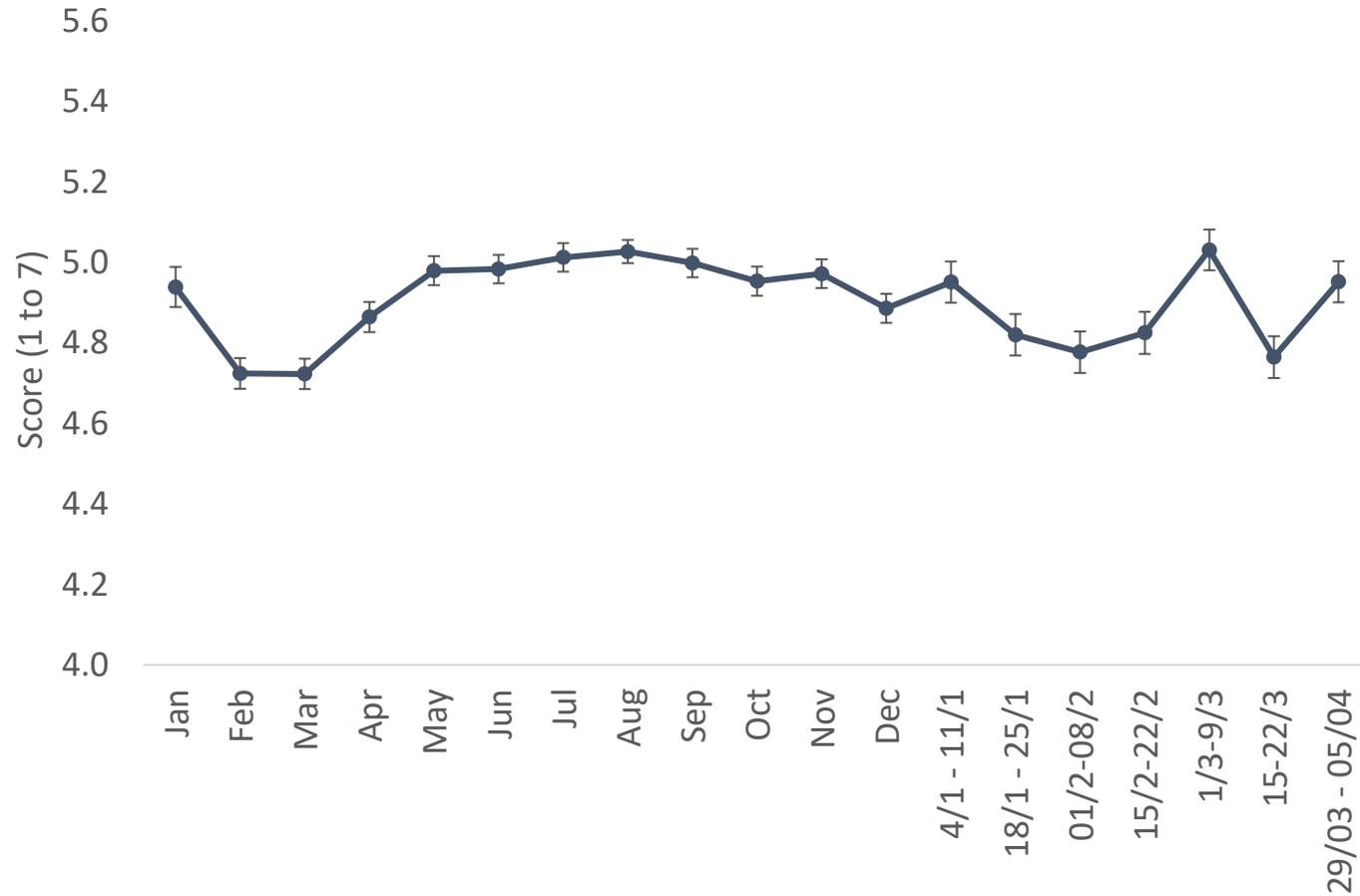


Following news about COVID-19



After a long period during which people followed less and less news coverage about COVID-19, there was statistically significant increase.

Wellbeing

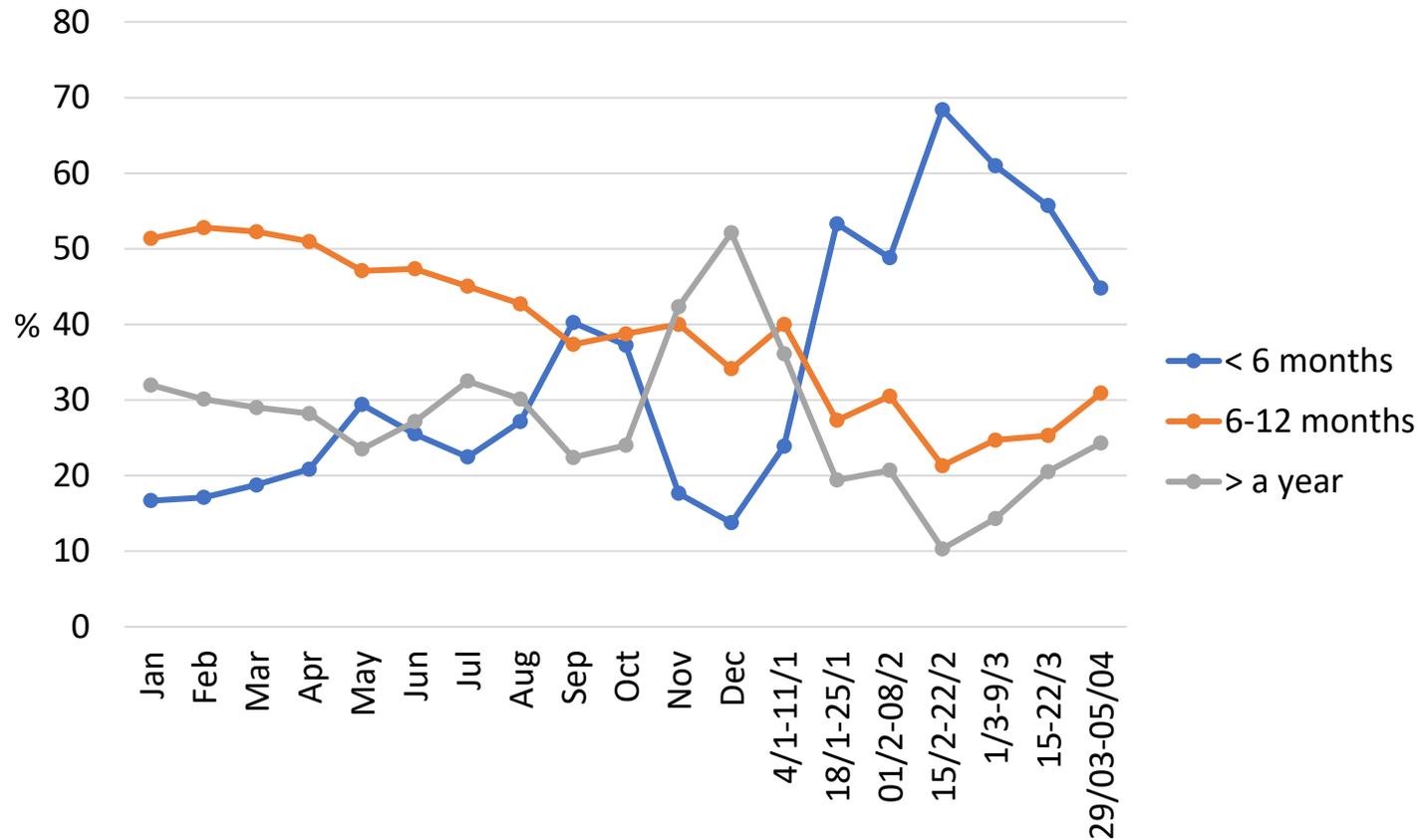


Self-reported wellbeing recovered, following the large and statistically significant drop recorded in the previous round of SAM.



Long-term expectations

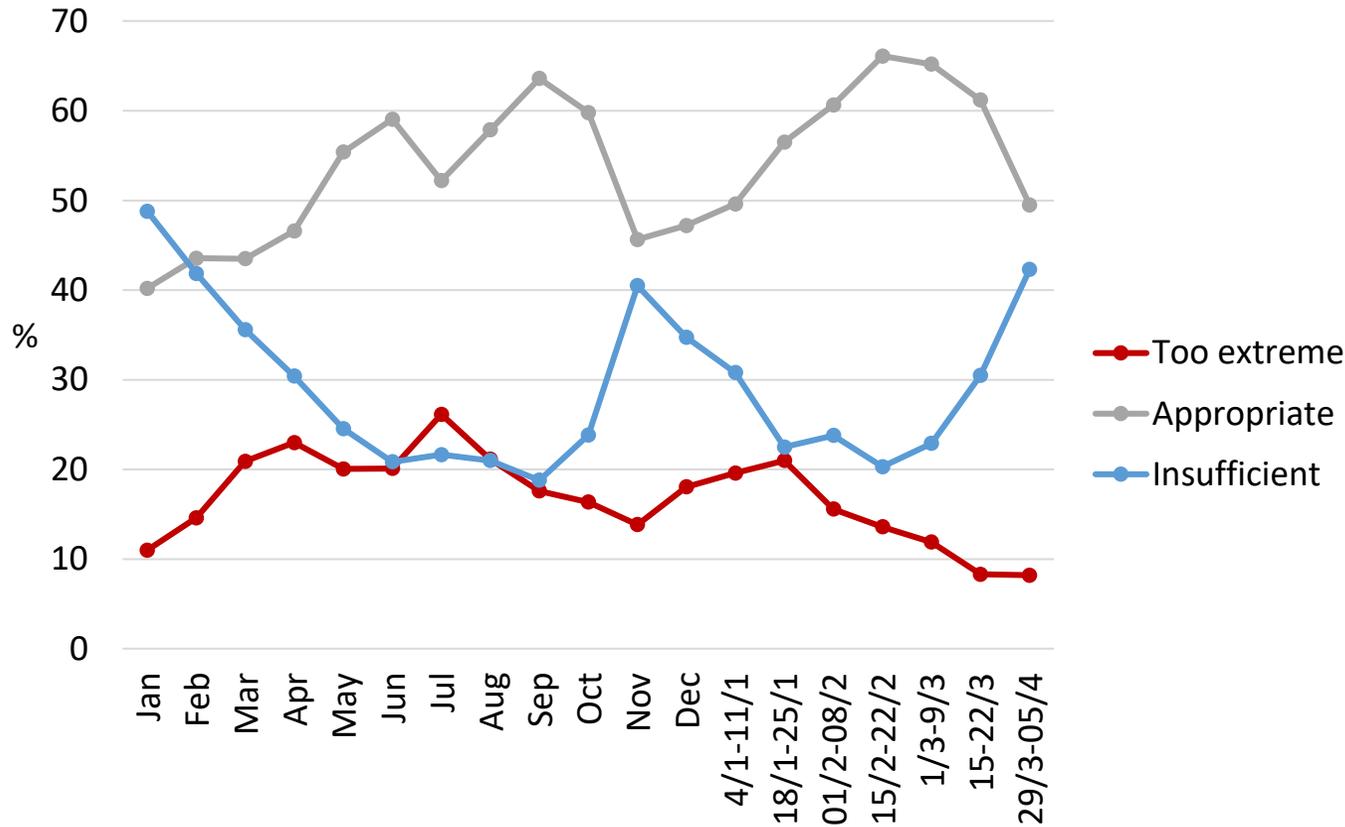
When do you think all restrictions will be lifted for good?



Long-term expectations again became more pessimistic. A majority of the population now believes that it will be more than another 6 months before all restrictions will be lifted for good.

Government Response to the Pandemic

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

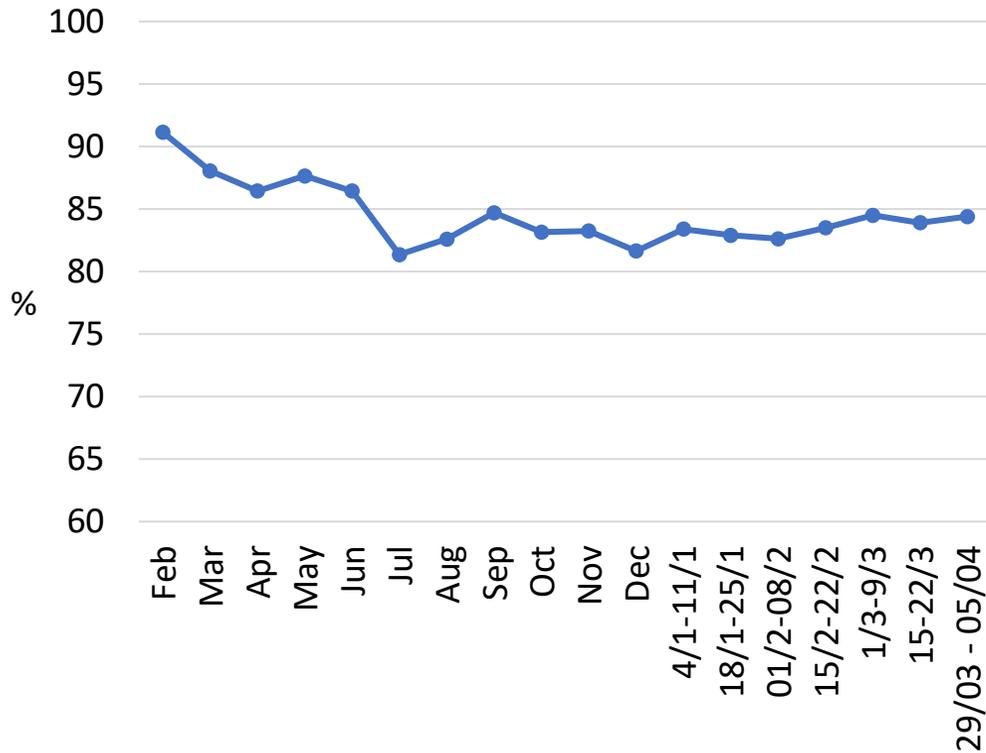


There was a further statistically significant rise in the proportion of the population that views the Government response to the pandemic as insufficient.

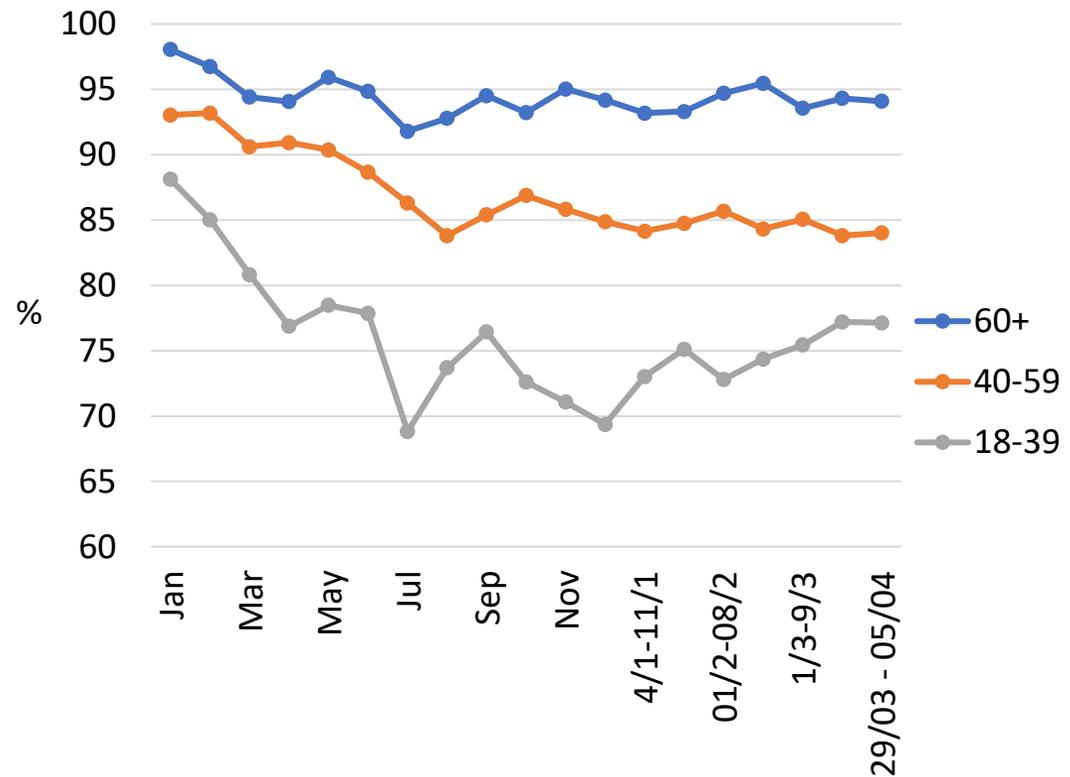
Overall support for the public health effort



Supportive of public health effort

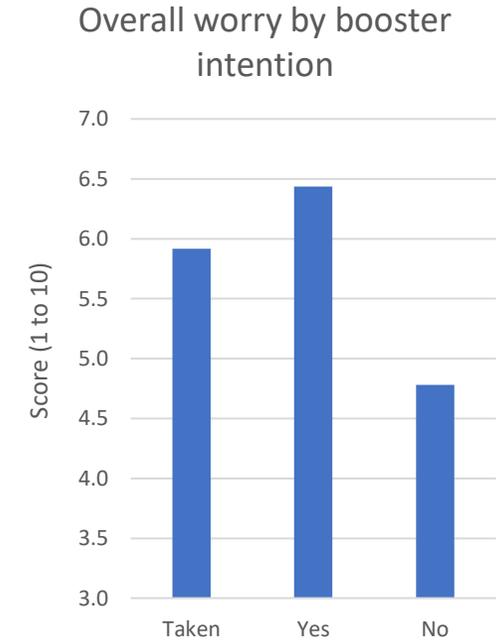
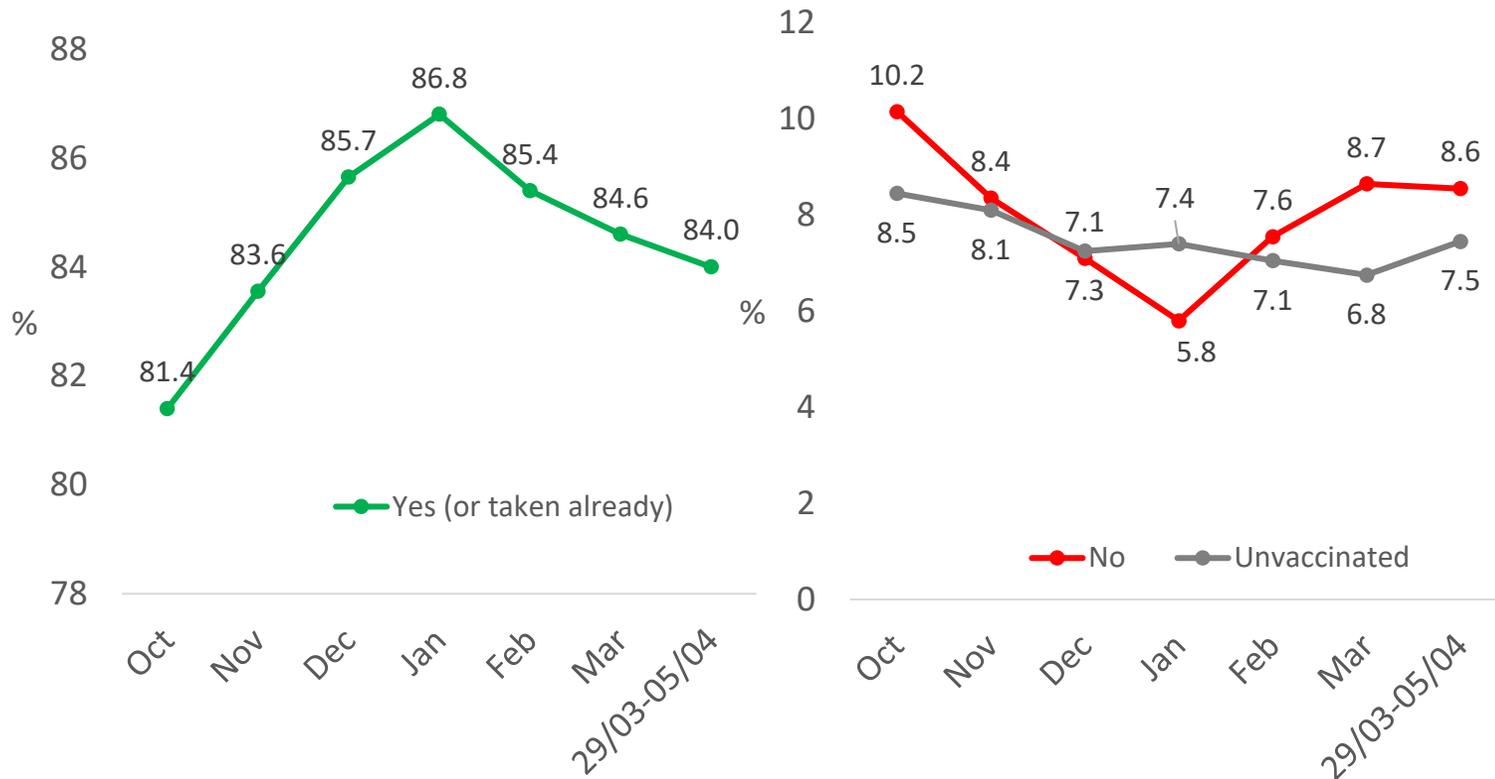


Support by age-group



Overall support for the public health effort remained stable among all age groups.

Booster vaccine



Compared to the previous round of SAM, changes in willingness to take a booster vaccine were not statistically significant. Willingness is strongly linked to overall worry.