

Social Activity Measure

April 19th – April 26th 2022



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

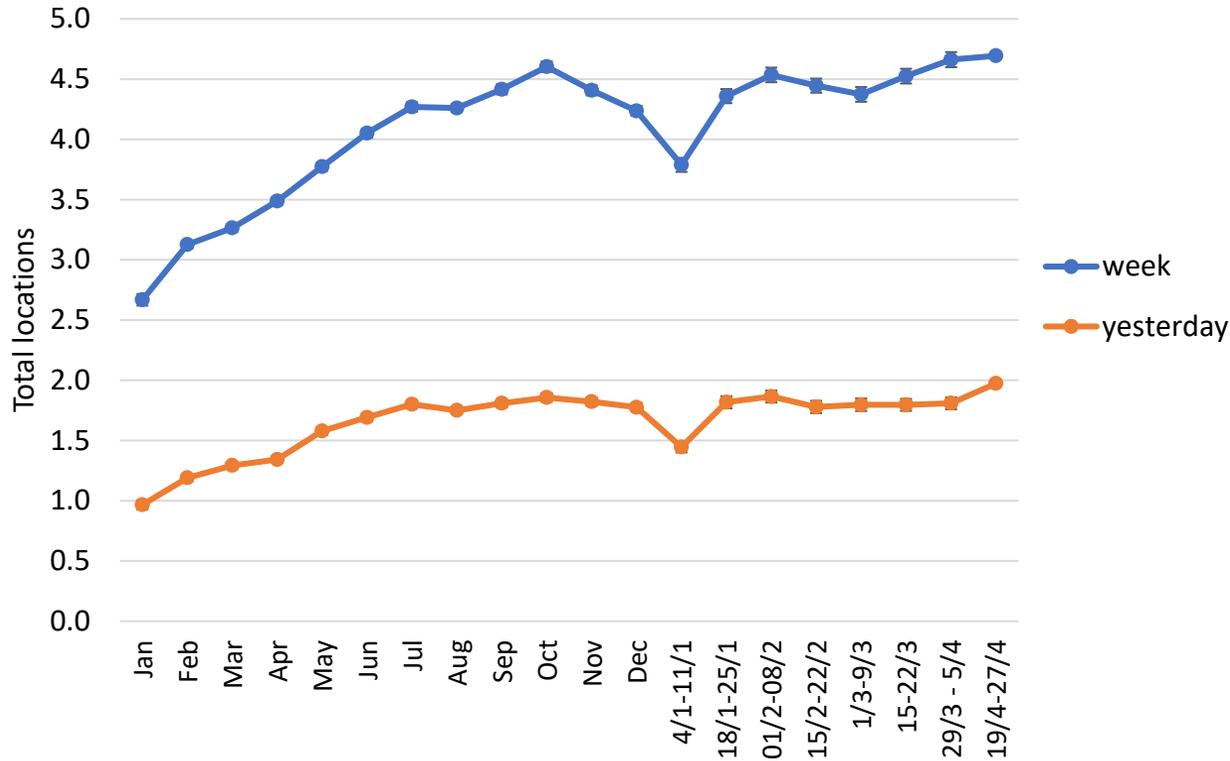
The Social Activity Measure (SAM) is a behavioural study that records the public response to the risk of COVID-19 infection over time. Designed by the ESRI's Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), SAM is an anonymous, interactive, online study that surveys people about their recent activity. The study offers 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 19th and 26th of April 2022. Data collection covered the second half of the Easter break. Hospitalisations continued to fall across the week of data collection. ICU cases had also begun to decline.

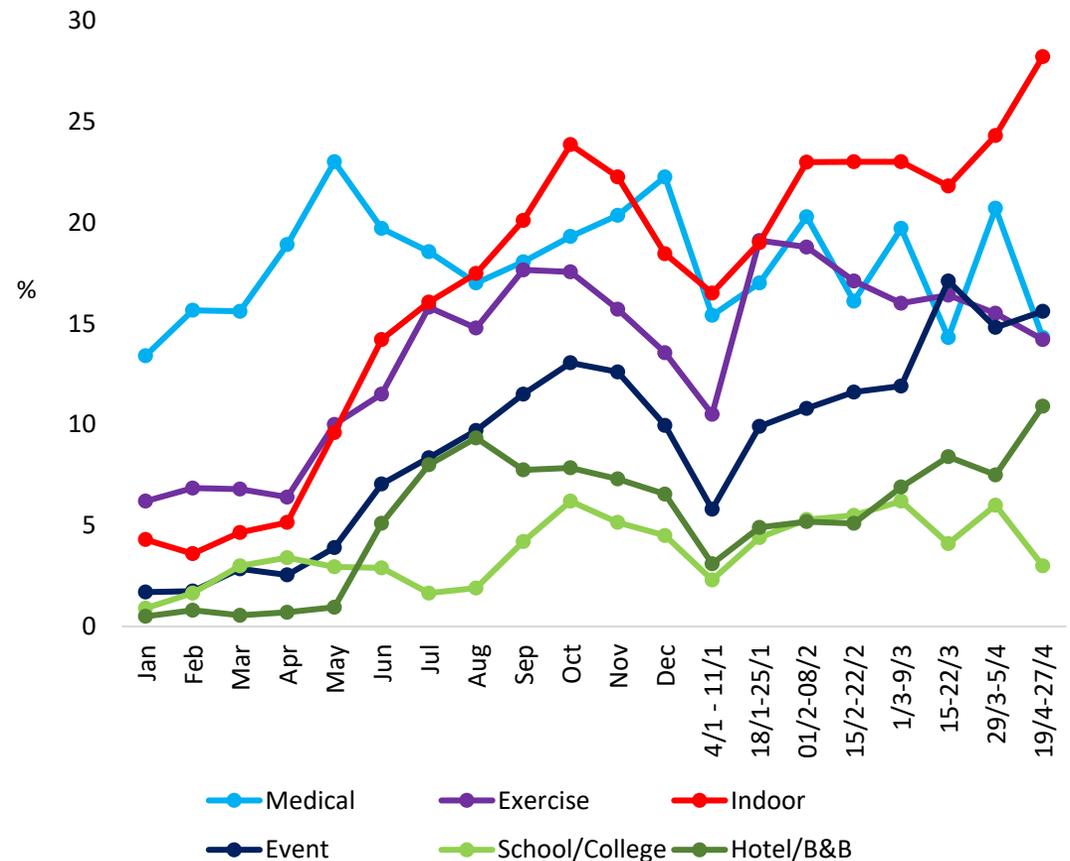
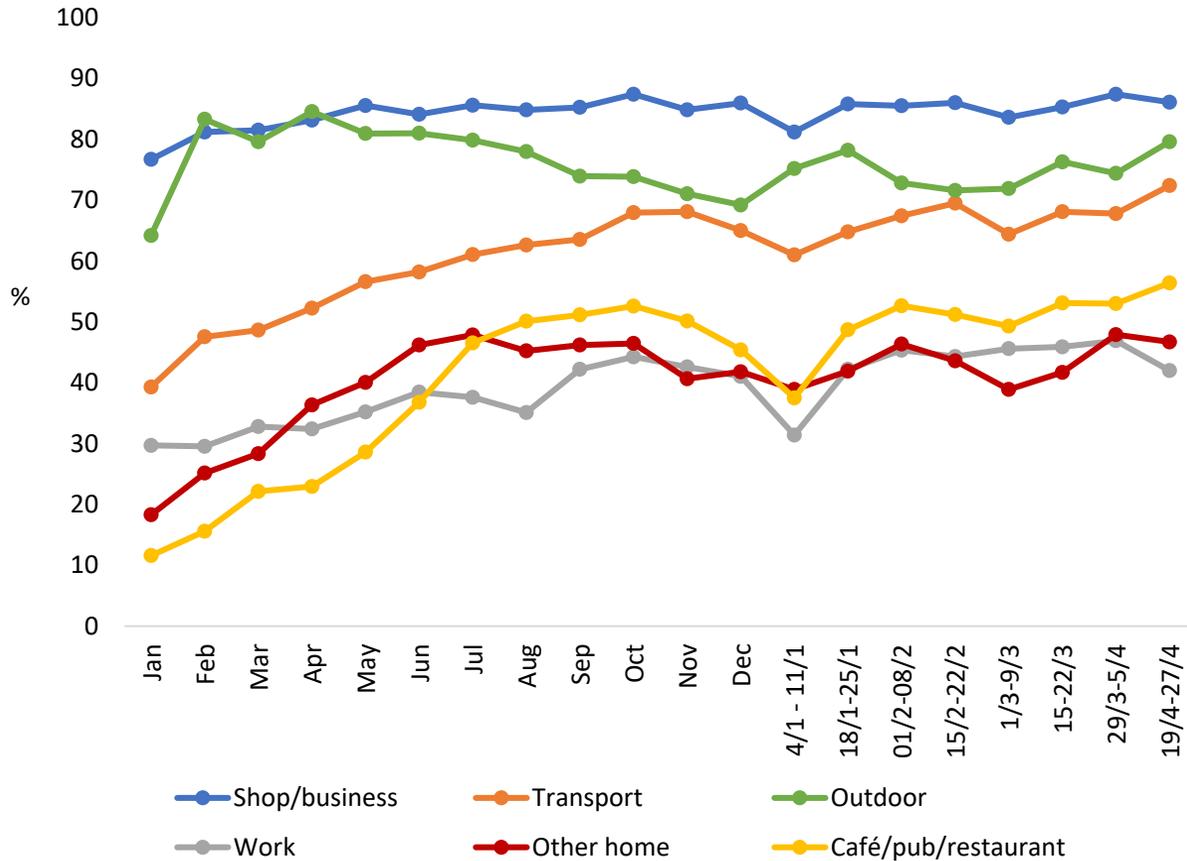


Total locations visited



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

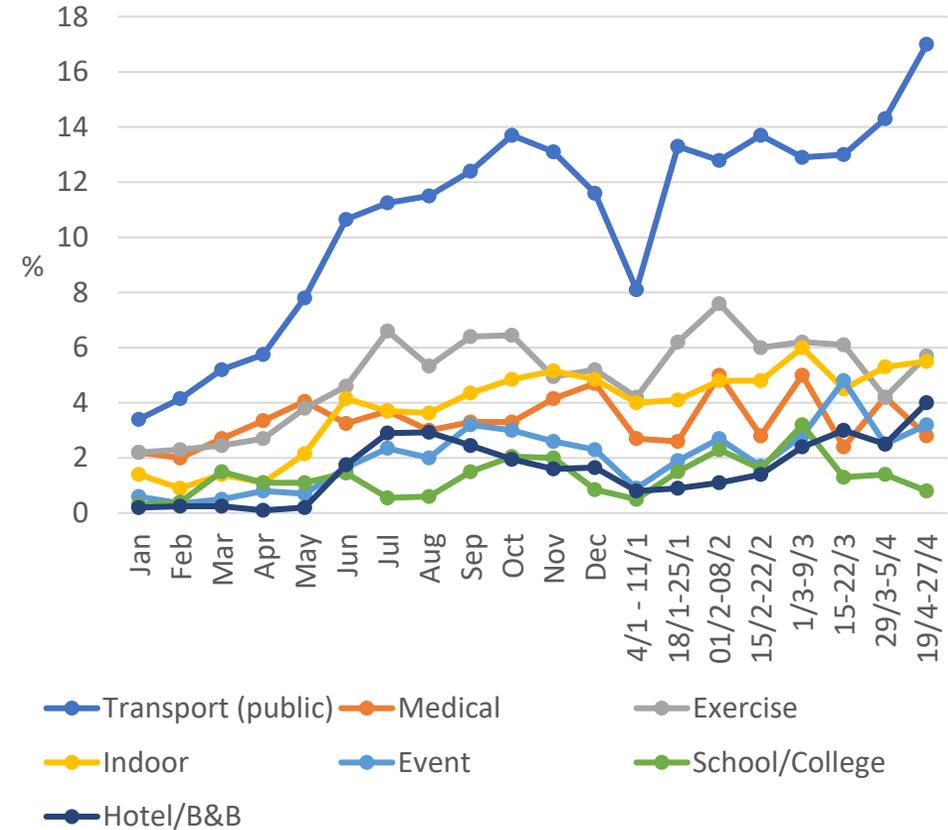
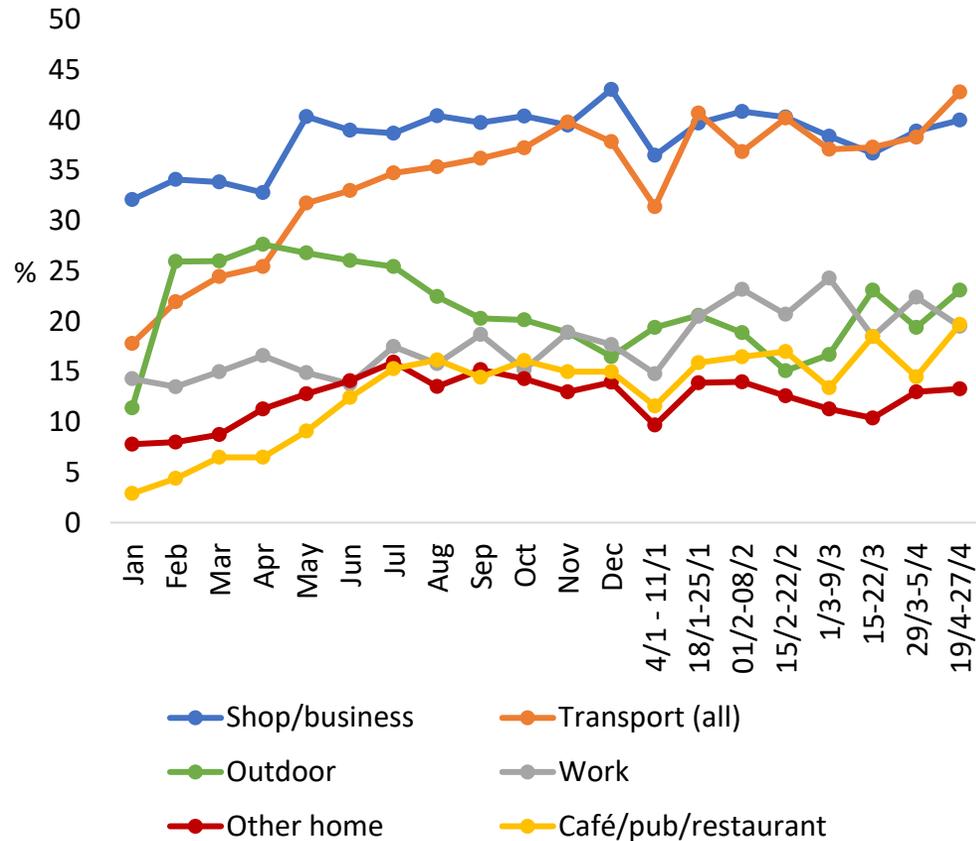
Locations visited (previous week)



There was a decline in going to work and school and medical visits compared to the previous week, and an increase in using transport and visiting hotels and indoor locations compared to the previous wave. These changes are likely due to the Easter holidays.

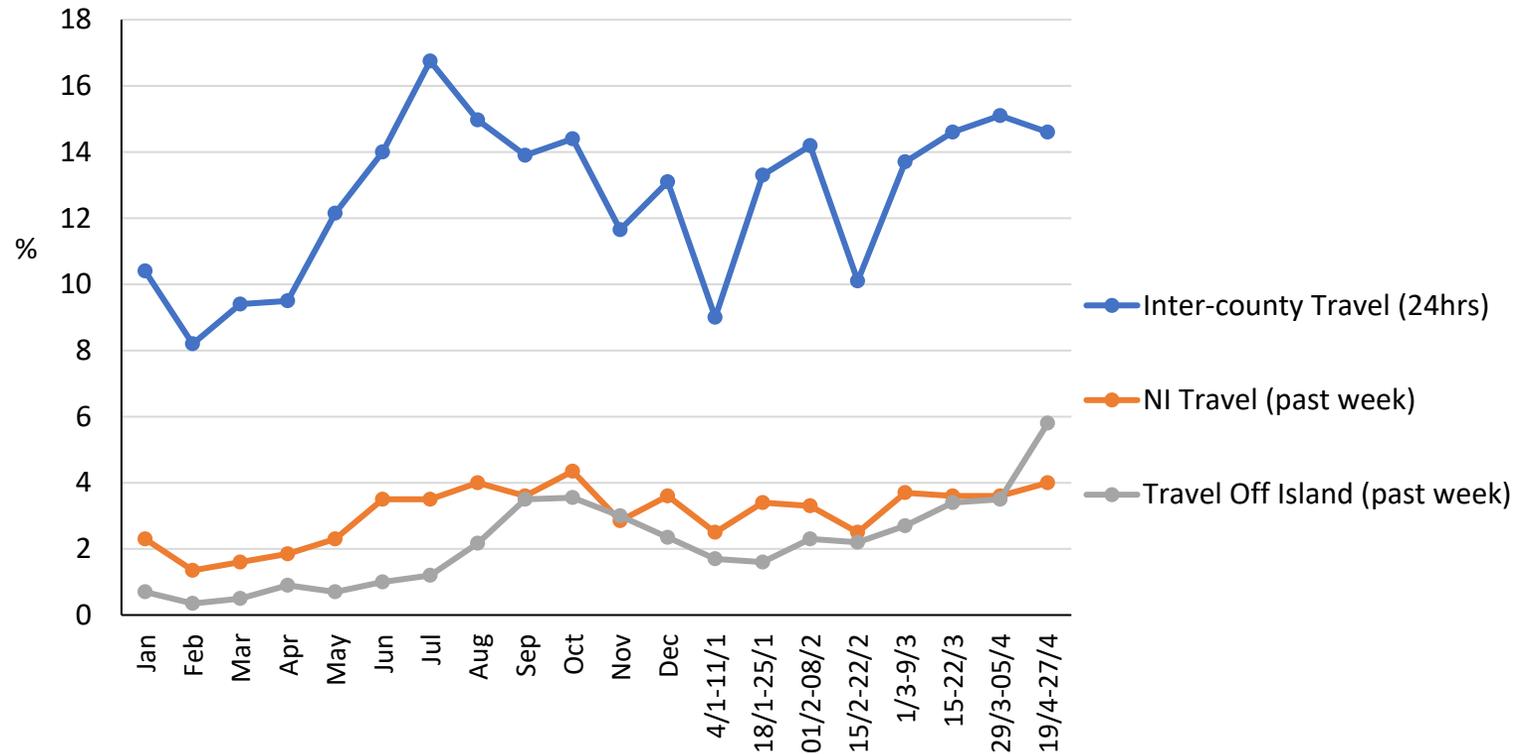


Locations visited (yesterday)



There was an increase to locations visited yesterday, with an increase in visits to other homes, cafés, outdoor venues, and usage of transport.

National and international travel

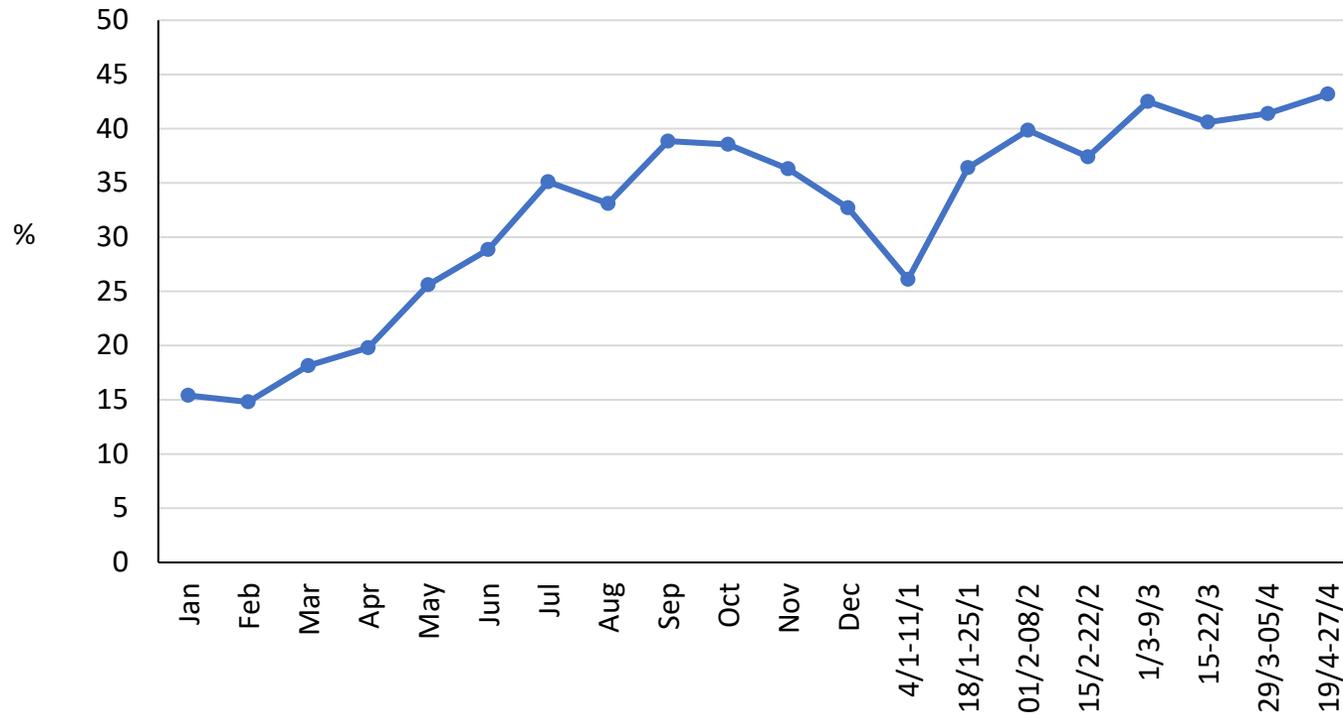


There was no change in inter-county travel or travel within the island compared to previous wave. The rate of international travel has been on an upward trend since late January and is significantly higher than the previous wave. It is now at it's highest level since SAM started.

Close contacts



Close contact in past 24 hours

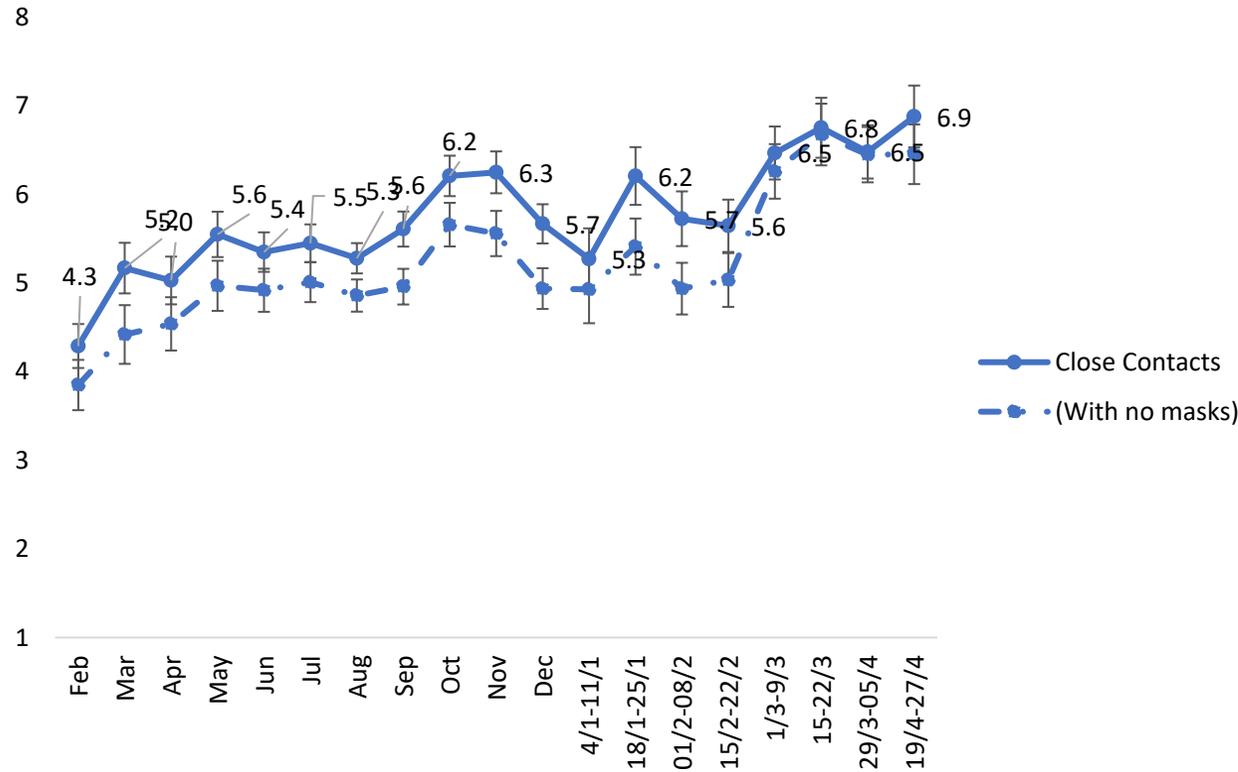


The proportion of people who had a close contact the previous day has been on an upward trend since January, but has not changed significantly compared to the previous two rounds.

Number of close contacts

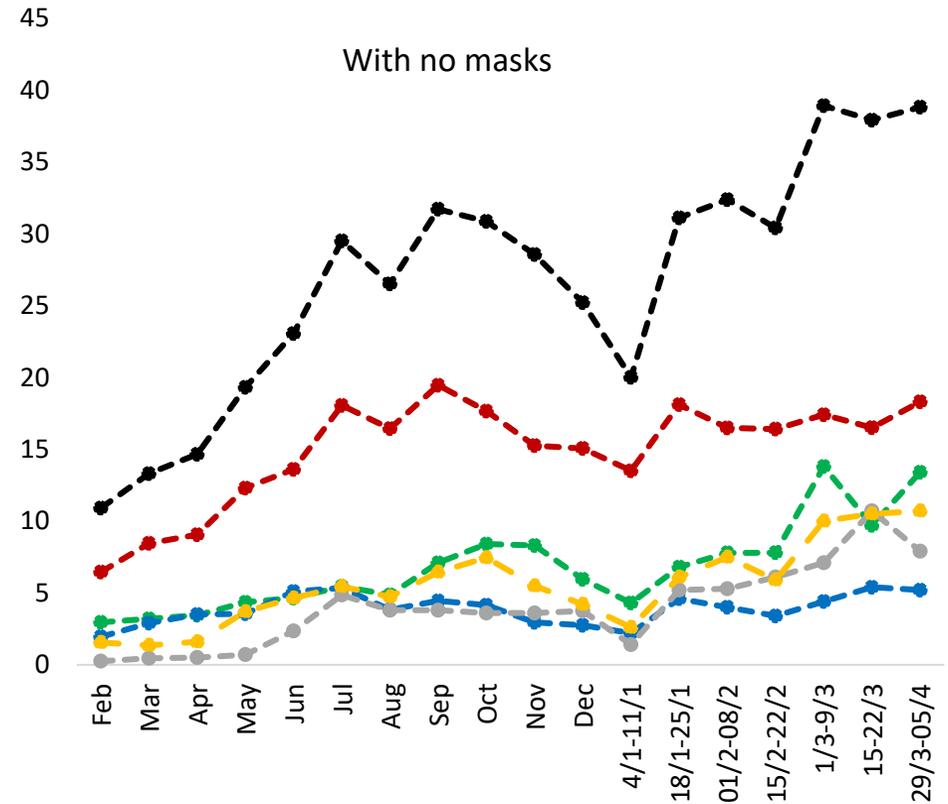
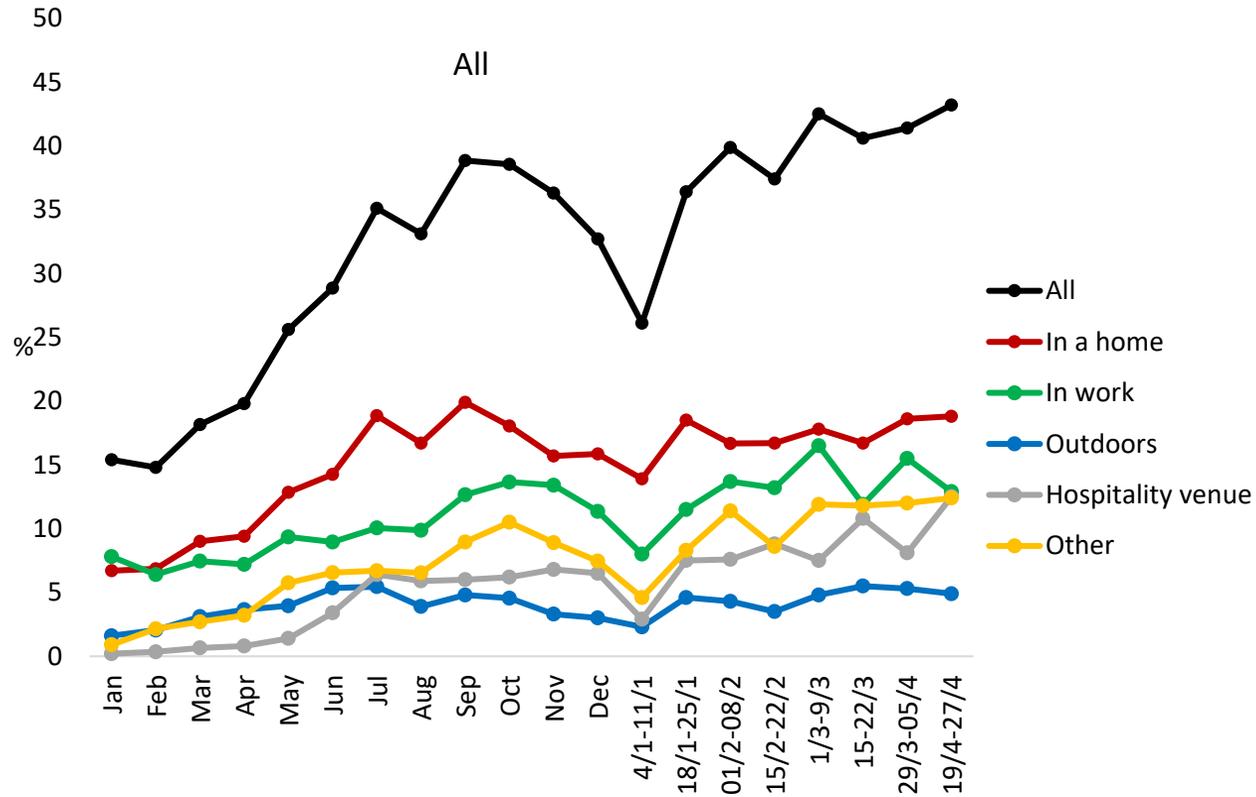


Mean number of close contacts among those with at least one



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

Close contacts - locations

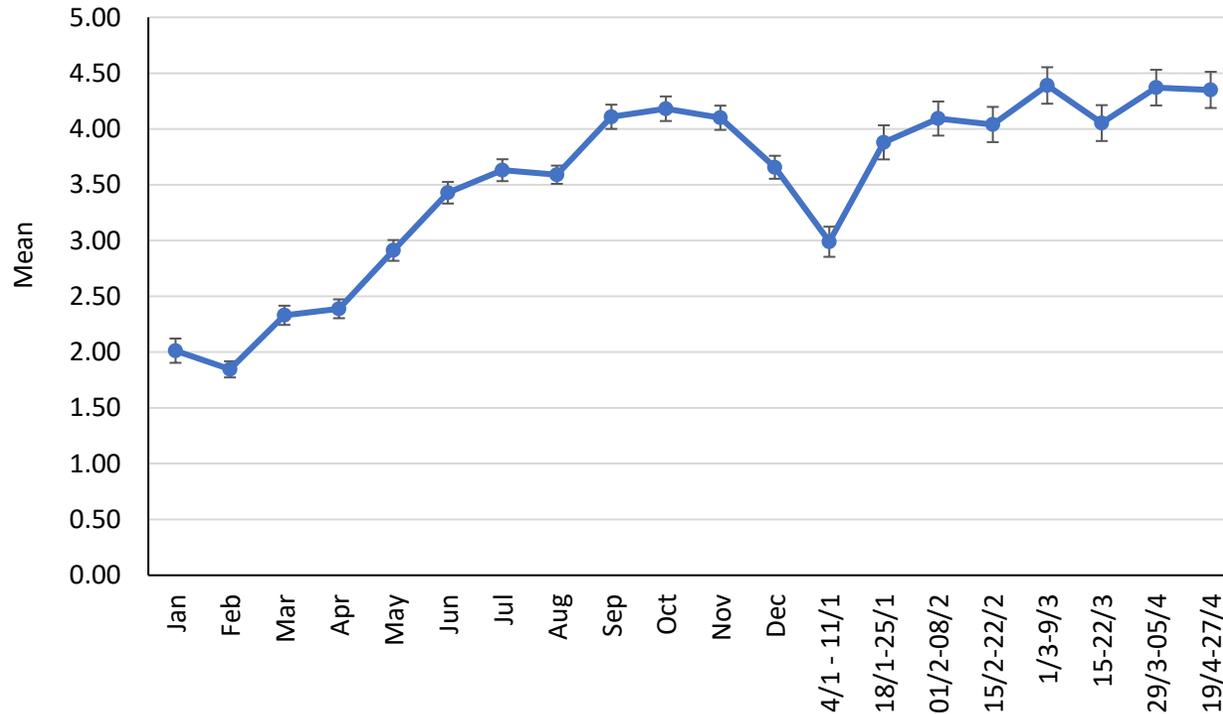


There was little change in the locations of close contacts, although more occurred in hospitality venues. Almost all close contacts now occur between people not wearing masks.

Number of people met



People from other households met in past 48hrs

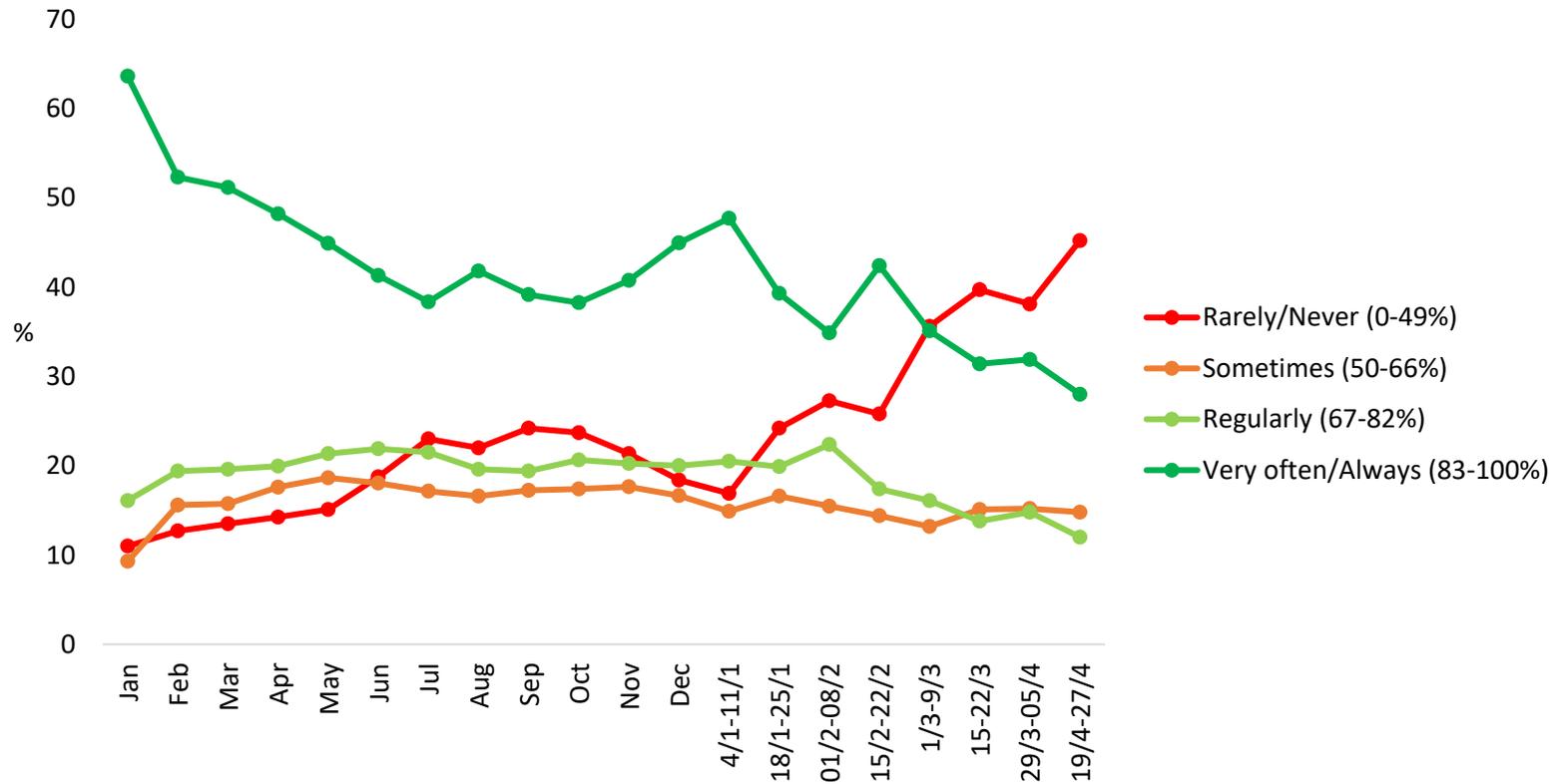


The average number of people met has remained broadly stable over the past two months.

Mitigation



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



The proportion of people saying they rarely or never engage in mitigative behaviours continues to increase, with almost half of the population falling into this category. The next largest category is those who very often or always take precautions.

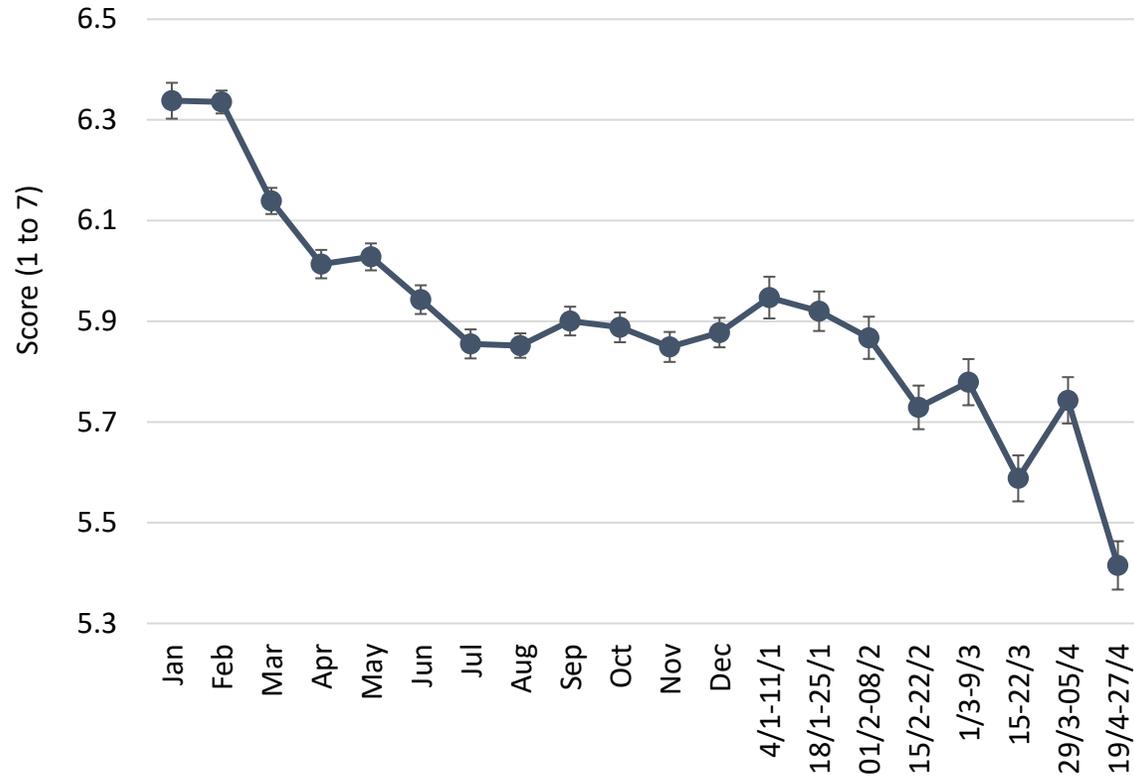
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*included in this group are those who did not leave their home or have visitors the previous day.

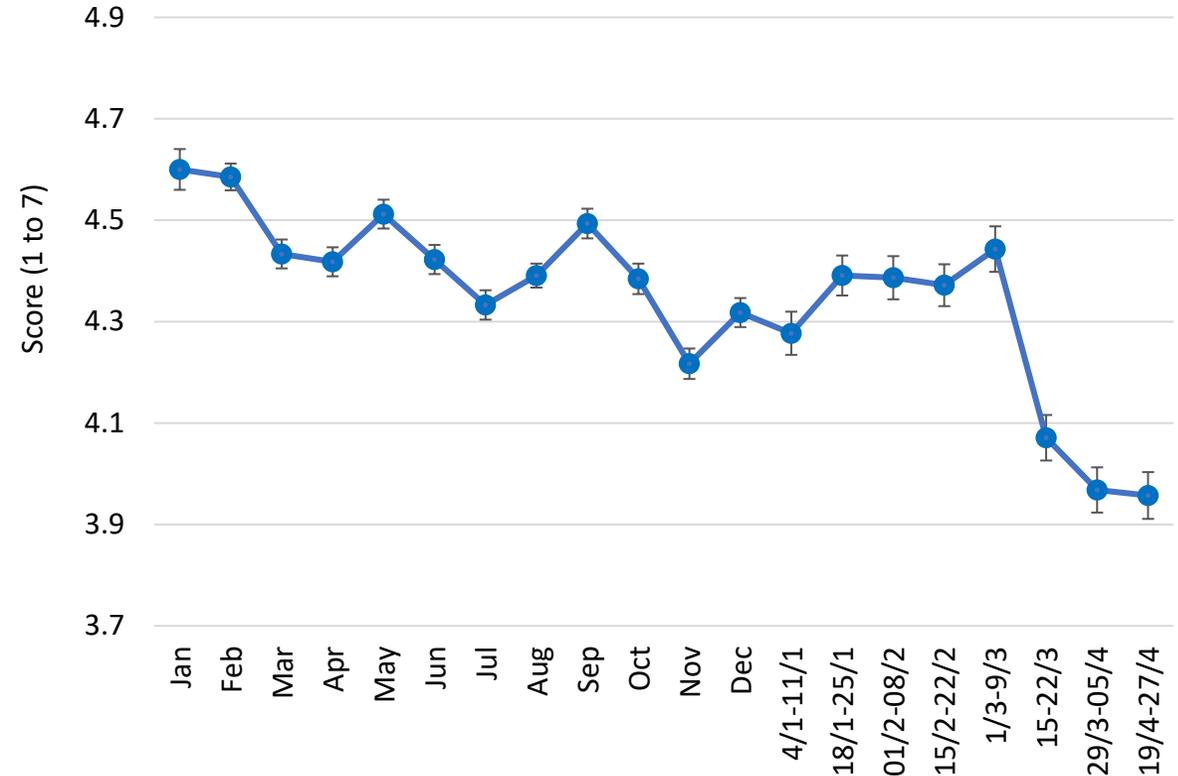
Self-reported compliance



Self

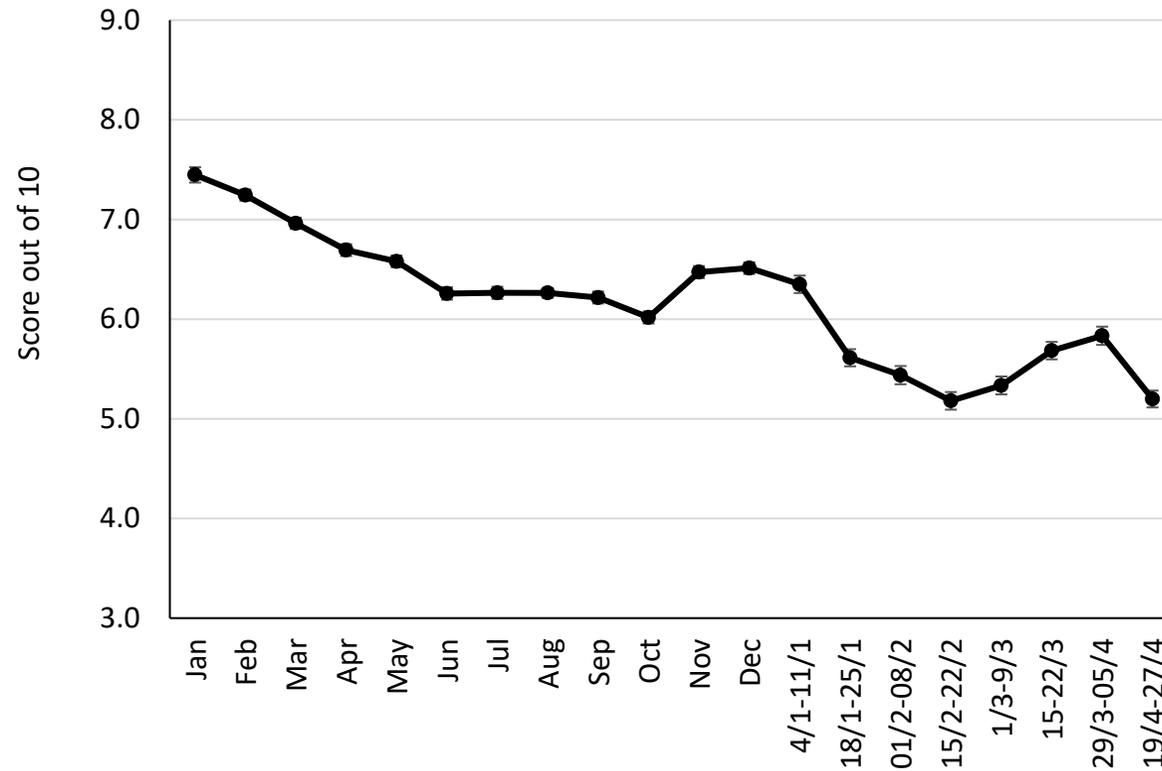


Others



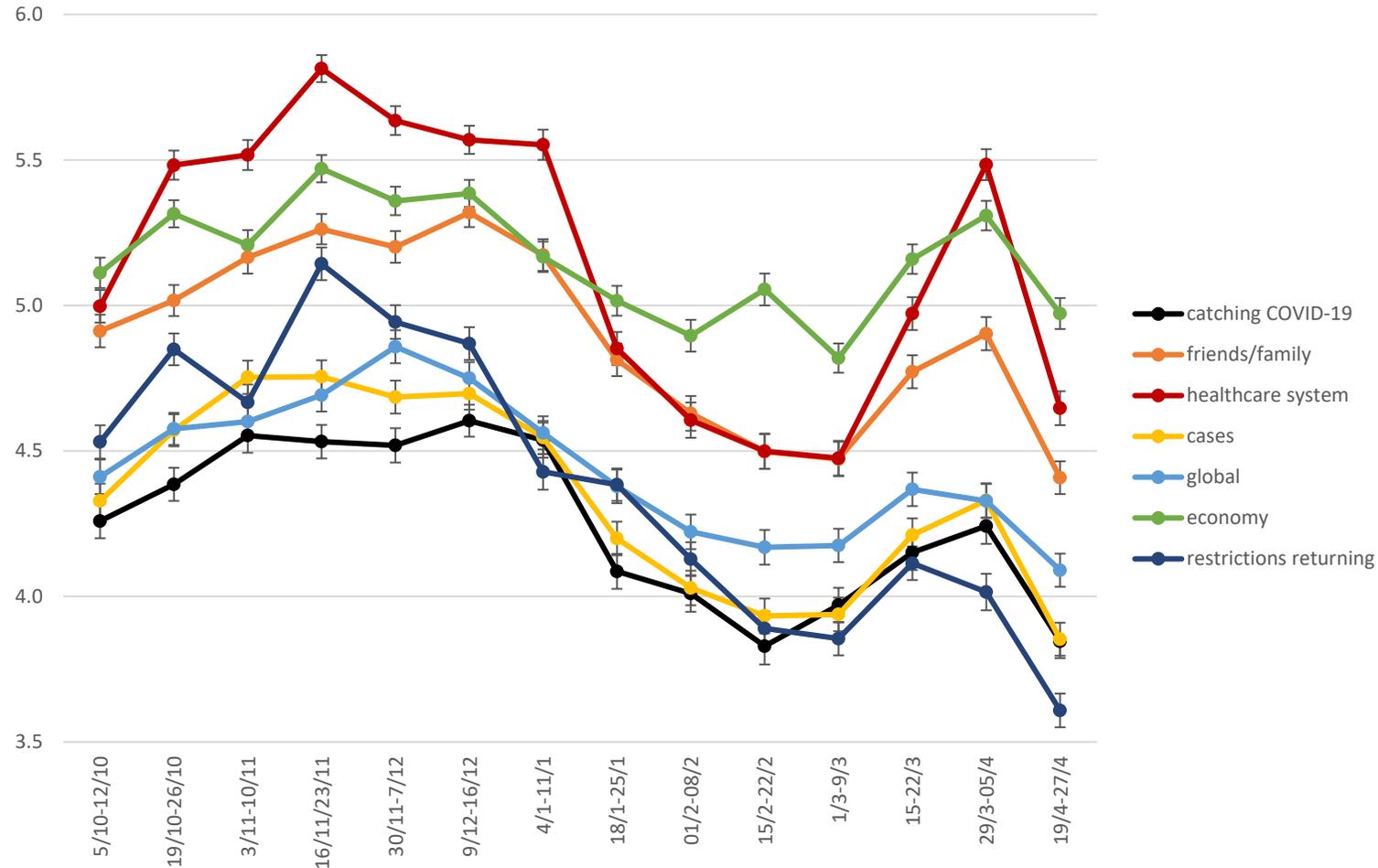
Self-reported compliance with public health remains on a downward trend this round despite some recovery in the last wave. The perception that others are following guidance did not change significantly compared to last wave.

Worry



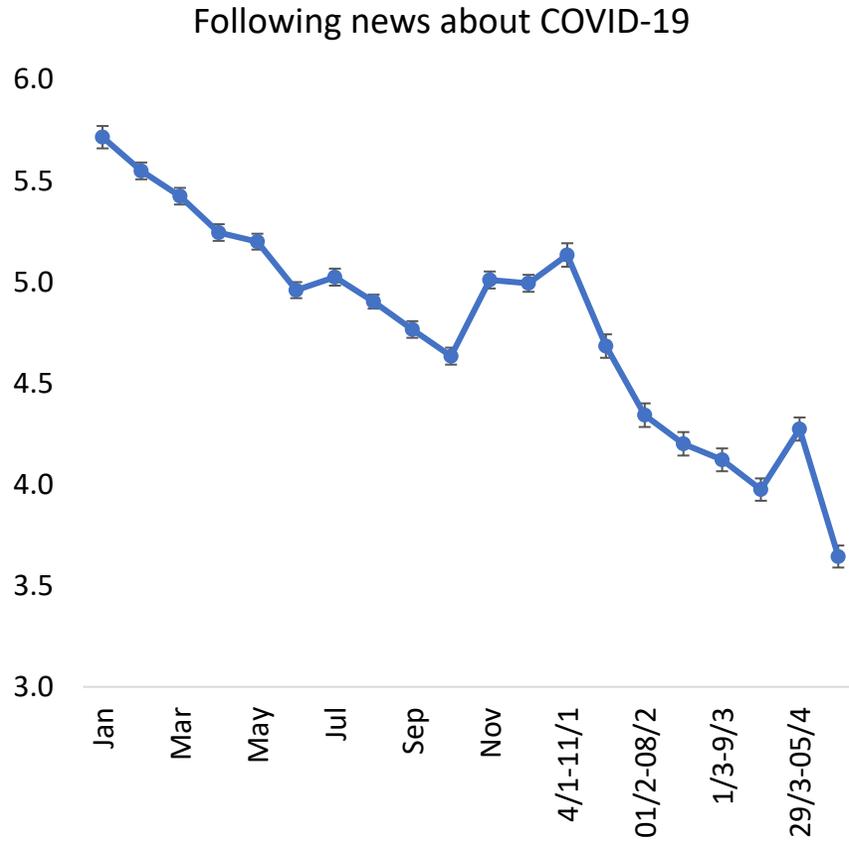
After being on an upward trend, worry about COVID-19 declined significantly compared to the previous round and is now back to levels observed in February.

Components of worry



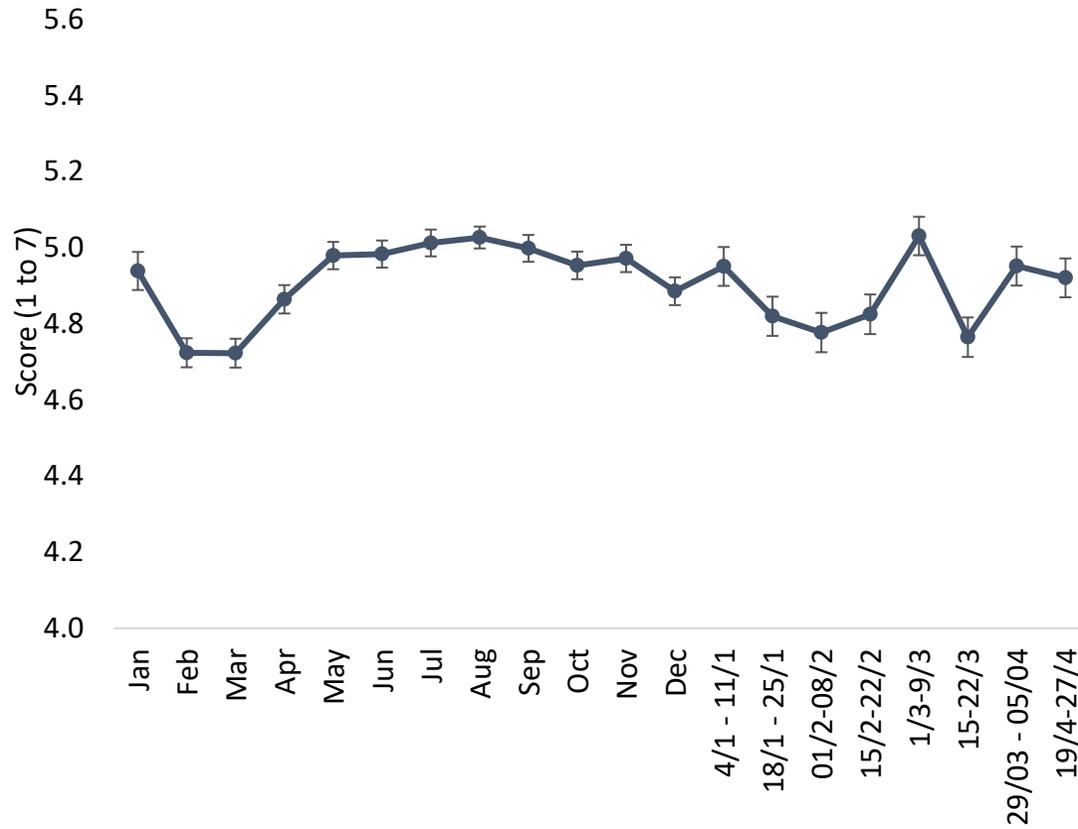
All components of worry has significantly declined since the previous round of SAM. The sharpest decline is worry about the healthcare system.

Following news coverage



Following last wave's uptick in following news coverage on COVID-19, there was a significant decline.

Wellbeing

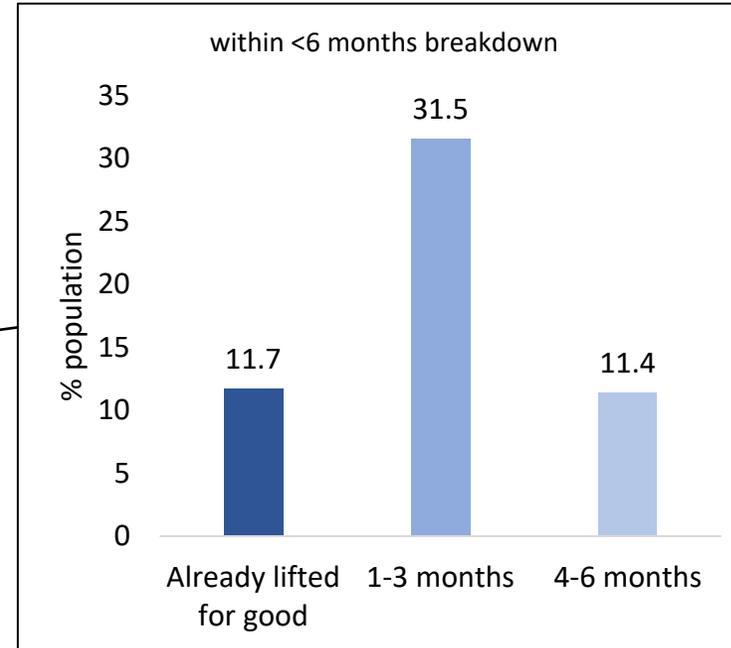
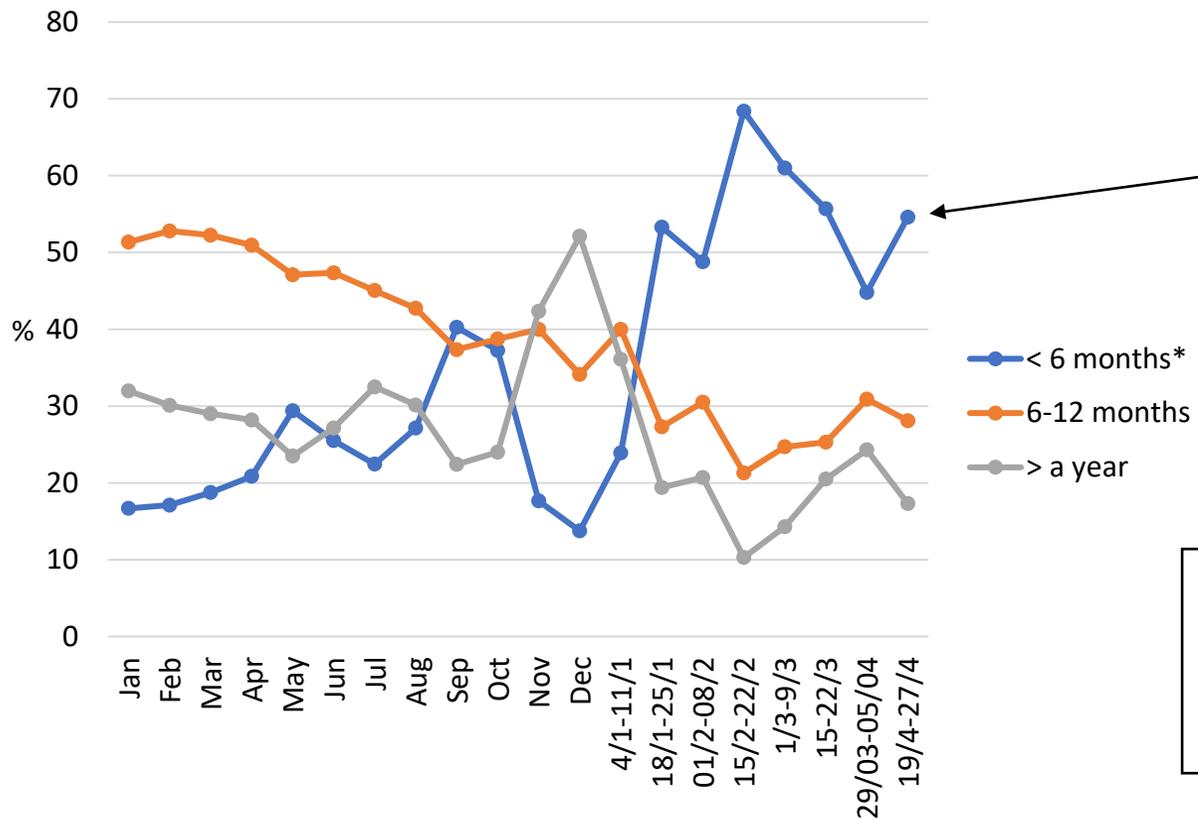


Self-reported wellbeing remains stable compared to the previous round of SAM.



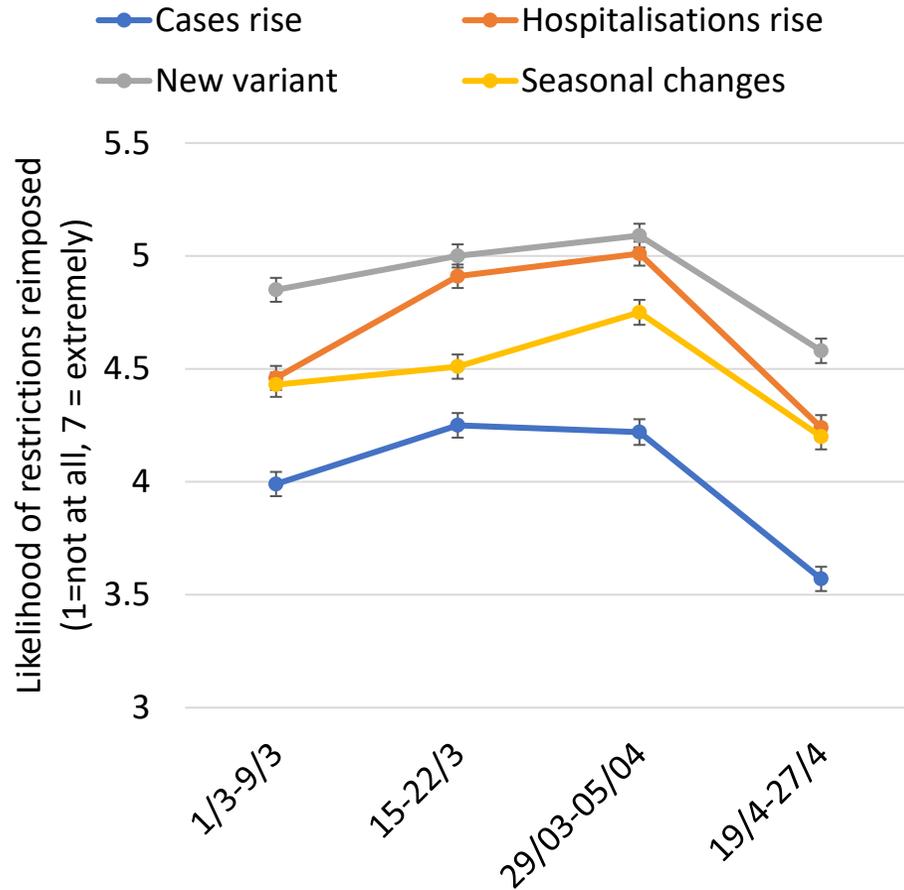
Long-term expectations

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



Long-term expectations became slightly more optimistic with over half of people expecting restrictions lifted for good within the next six months. This figure contains 12% who believe restrictions have already lifted for good.

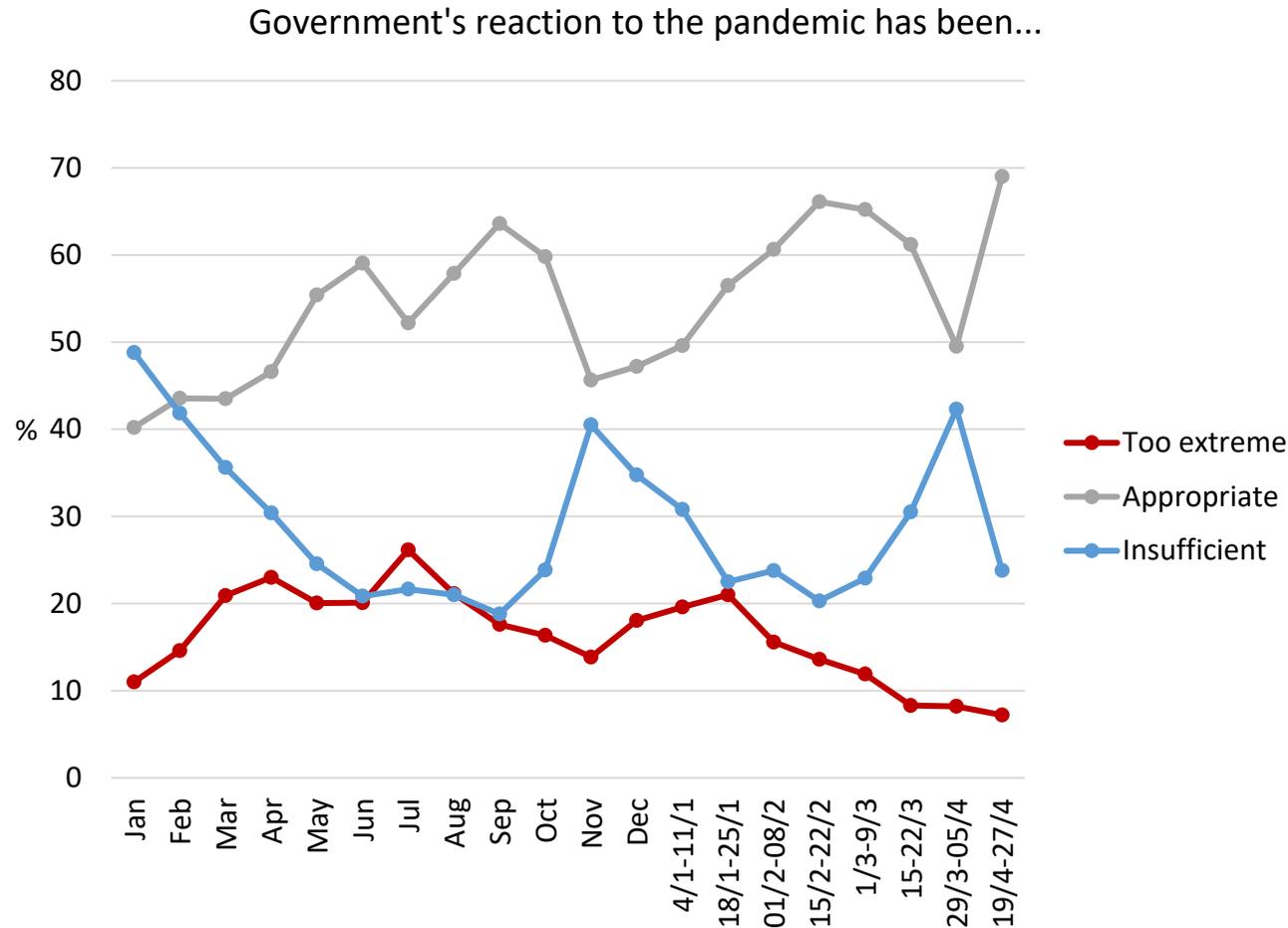
Future restrictions



Expectations that restrictions could be reimposed had been rising since the measure was introduced in early March but fell significantly across all reasons in this wave. The most likely reason for future restrictions is a new variant of concern, with expectations of restrictions due to case numbers below the mid-point of the scale.



Government Response to the Pandemic

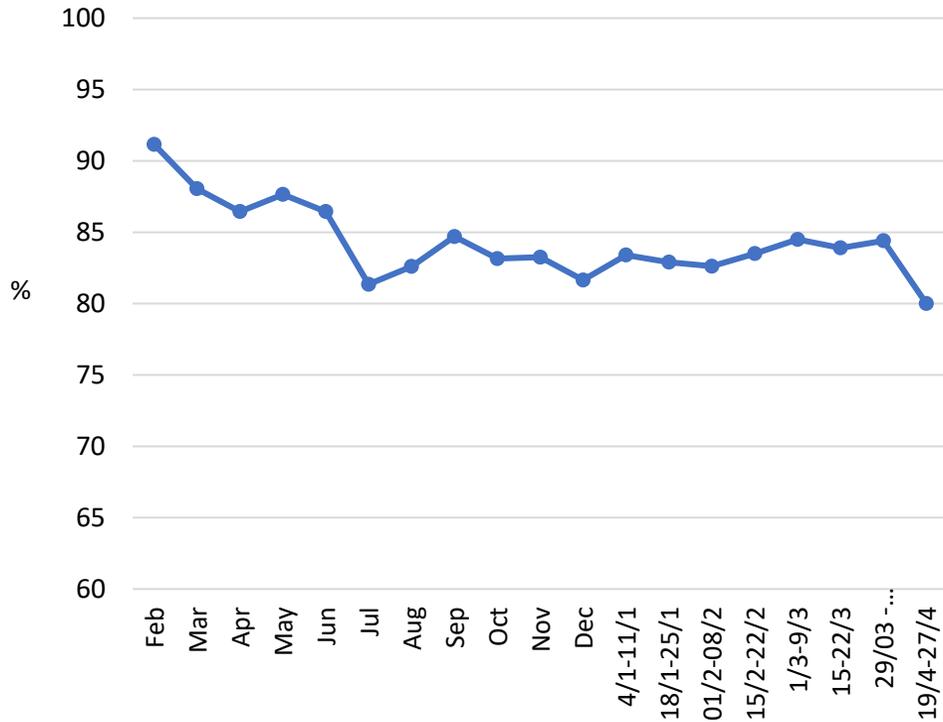


There was a shift in the views on the Governments response to the pandemic. The number of people who thought the response was appropriate increased, and is now at it's highest at 70%. Simultaneously, the proportion of people thinking it was insufficient decreased.

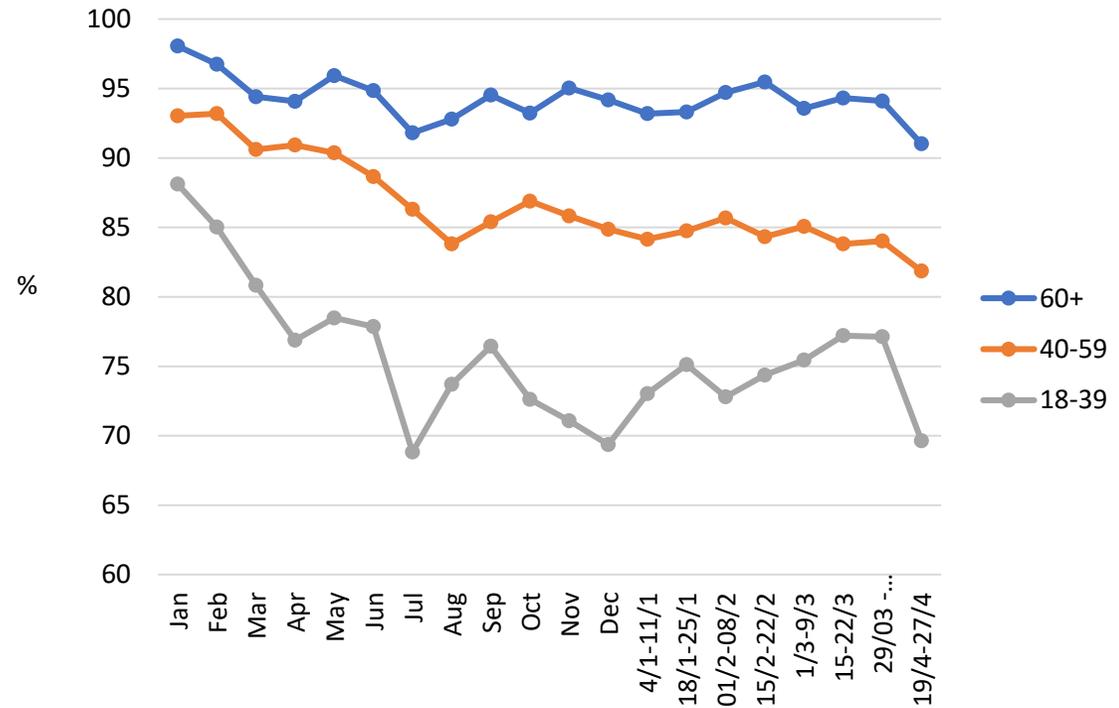
Overall support for the public health effort



Supportive of public health effort

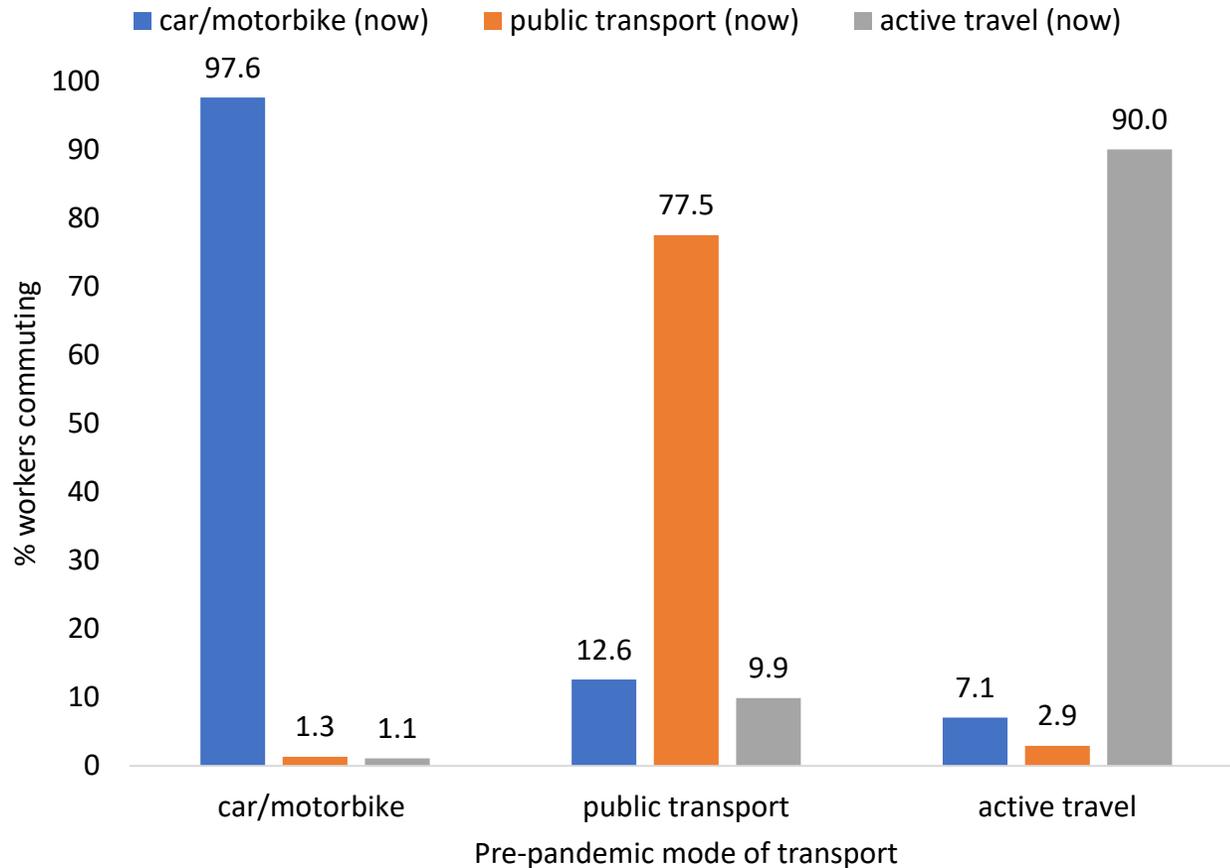


Support by age-group



Overall support for the public health effort dropped since last wave of SAM. The drop was driven by 18-39 year olds.

Changes to Work*: Commute



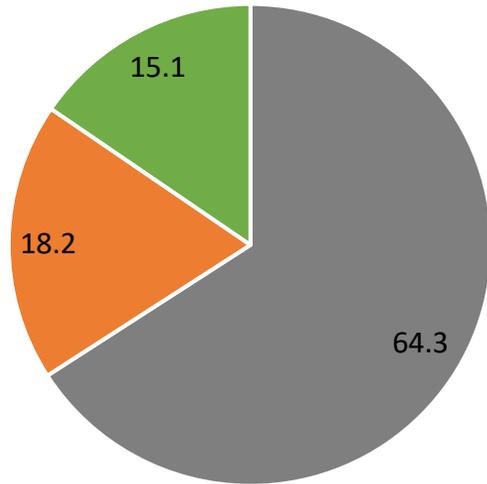
The chart shows main modes of transport for work commutes pre-pandemic and now, among workers who work at the same place they did before the pandemic. The vast majority who commuted by car or active travel (walk/cycle) before the pandemic continue to do so. More than one-in-five who used public transport 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.

*this analysis relies on all workers in the last three waves of SAM, giving a sample size of 1,983

Changes to Work*: Hybrid Working

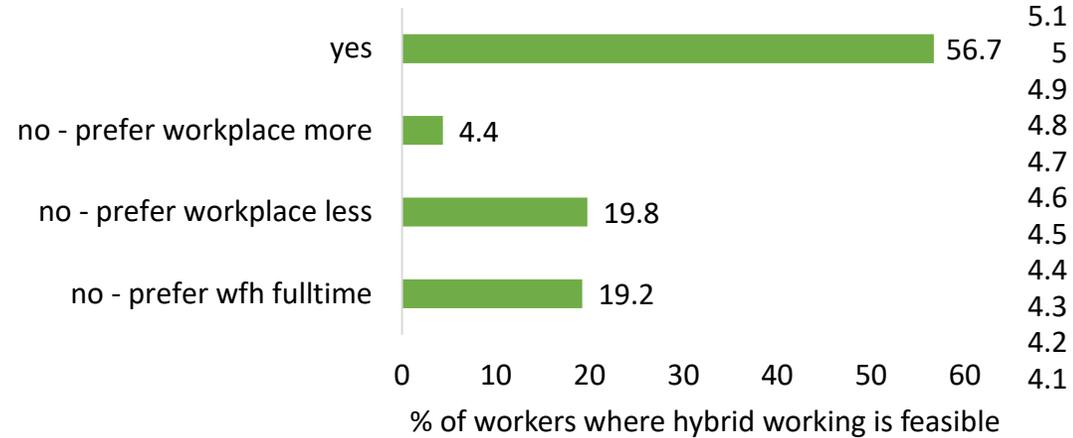


Hybrid working

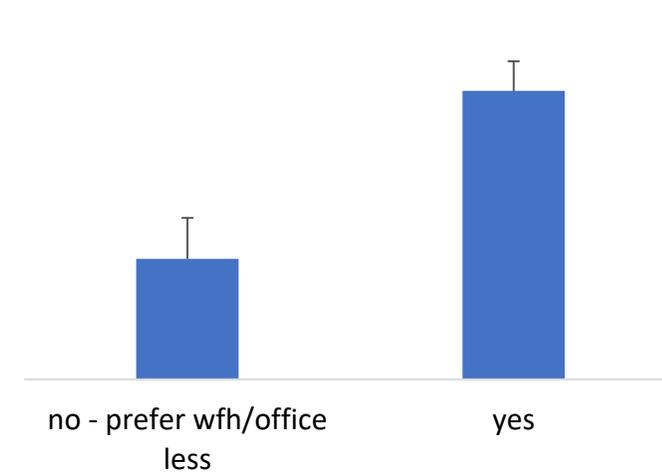


■ not possible ■ possible but not offered ■ offered

Happy with number of days in office



Work preference and wellbeing



Over half of workers who report they could work remotely say that their employer does not offer the opportunity. For workers for whom hybrid working is feasible, the majority 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. Wishing to spend fewer days at the office is associated with lower wellbeing, controlling for socio-demographic characteristics.

*this analysis relies on all workers in the last three waves of SAM, giving a sample size of 1,983