

Social Activity Measure

Nov 3rd-10th

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

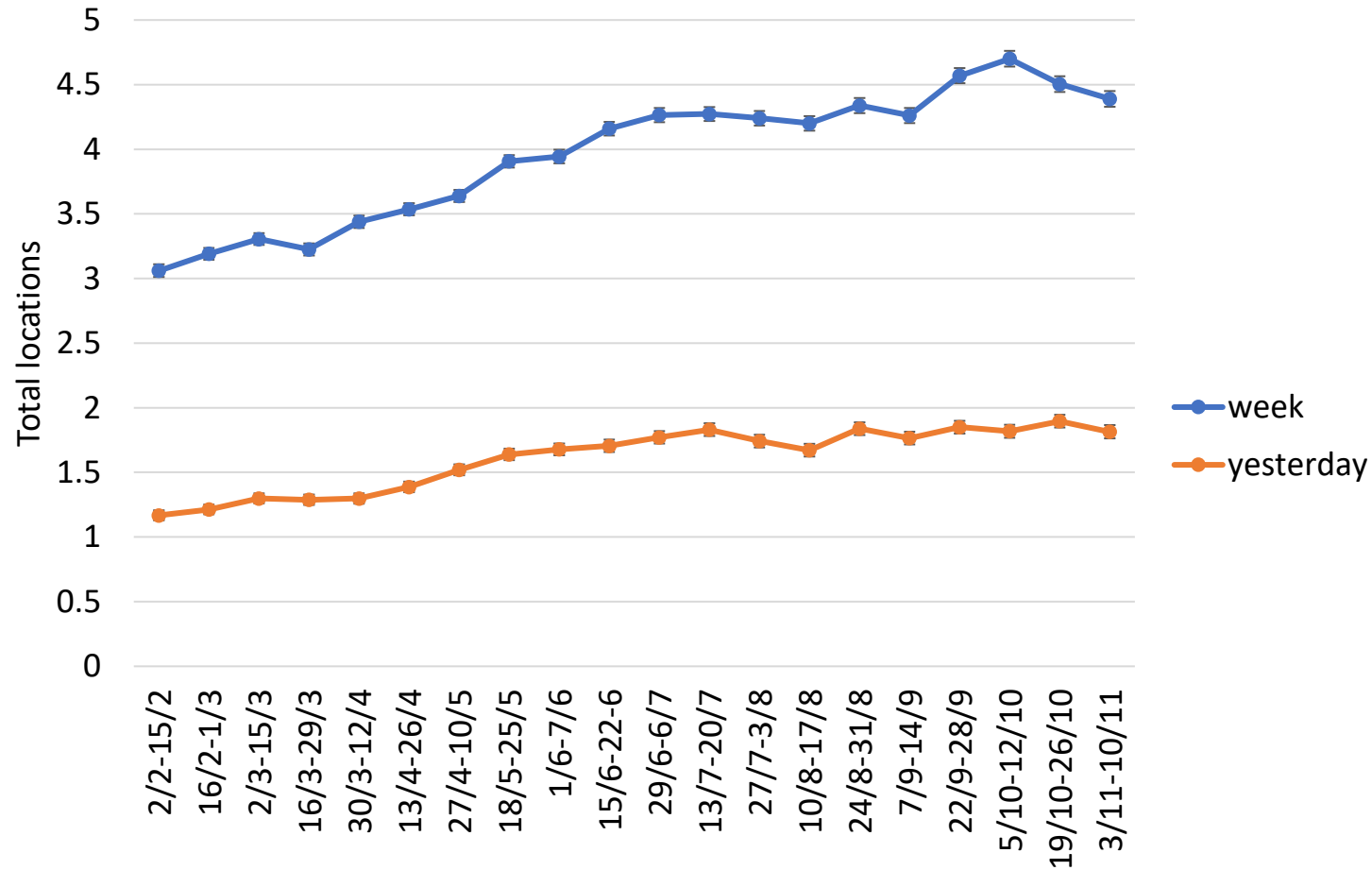
The Social Activity Measure (SAM) is a behavioural study that records the public response to the risk of COVID-19 infection over time. Designed by the ESRI's Behavioural Research Unit (BRU), SAM is an anonymous, interactive, online study that surveys people about their recent activity. The study offers 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 November 3rd and 10th. At the time of data collection, case numbers has been rising for approximately one month and had climbed above 3,000 positive cases per day.

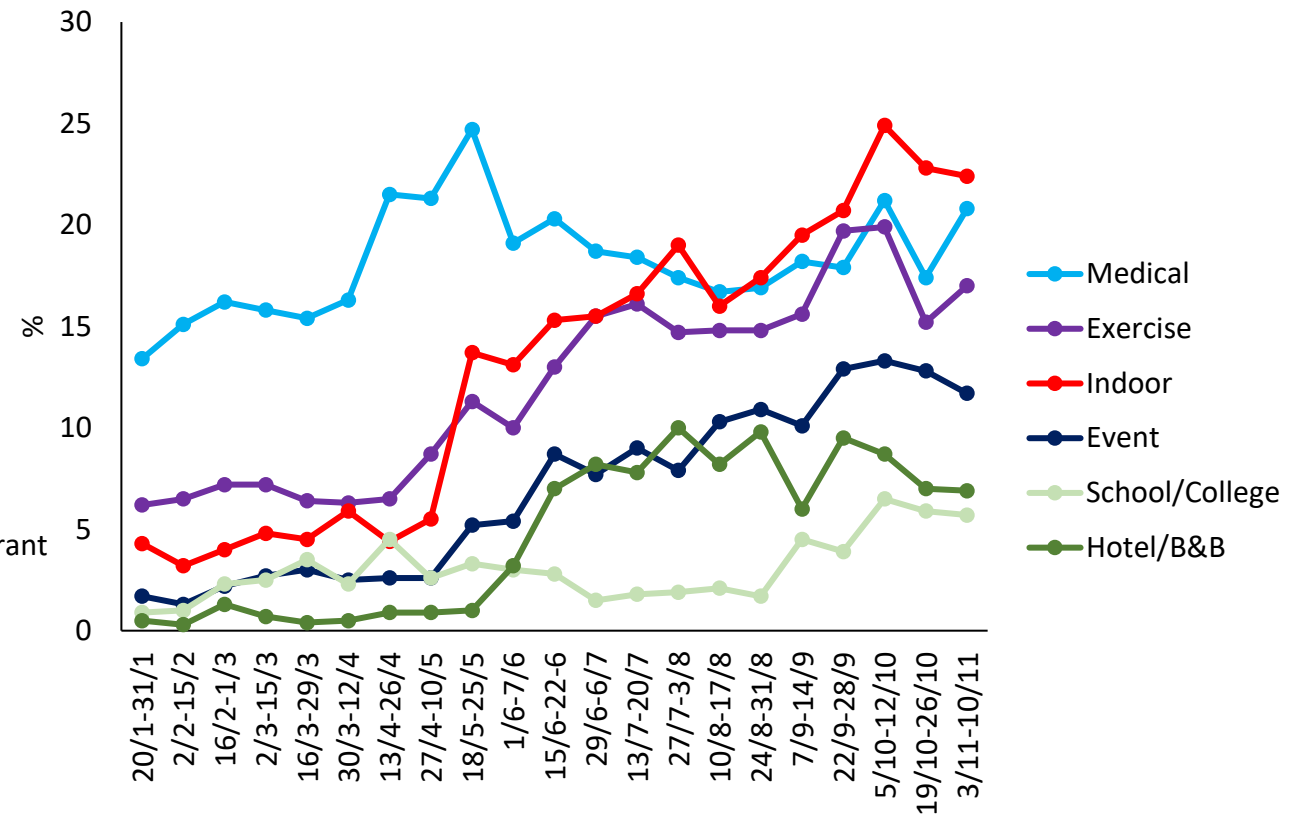
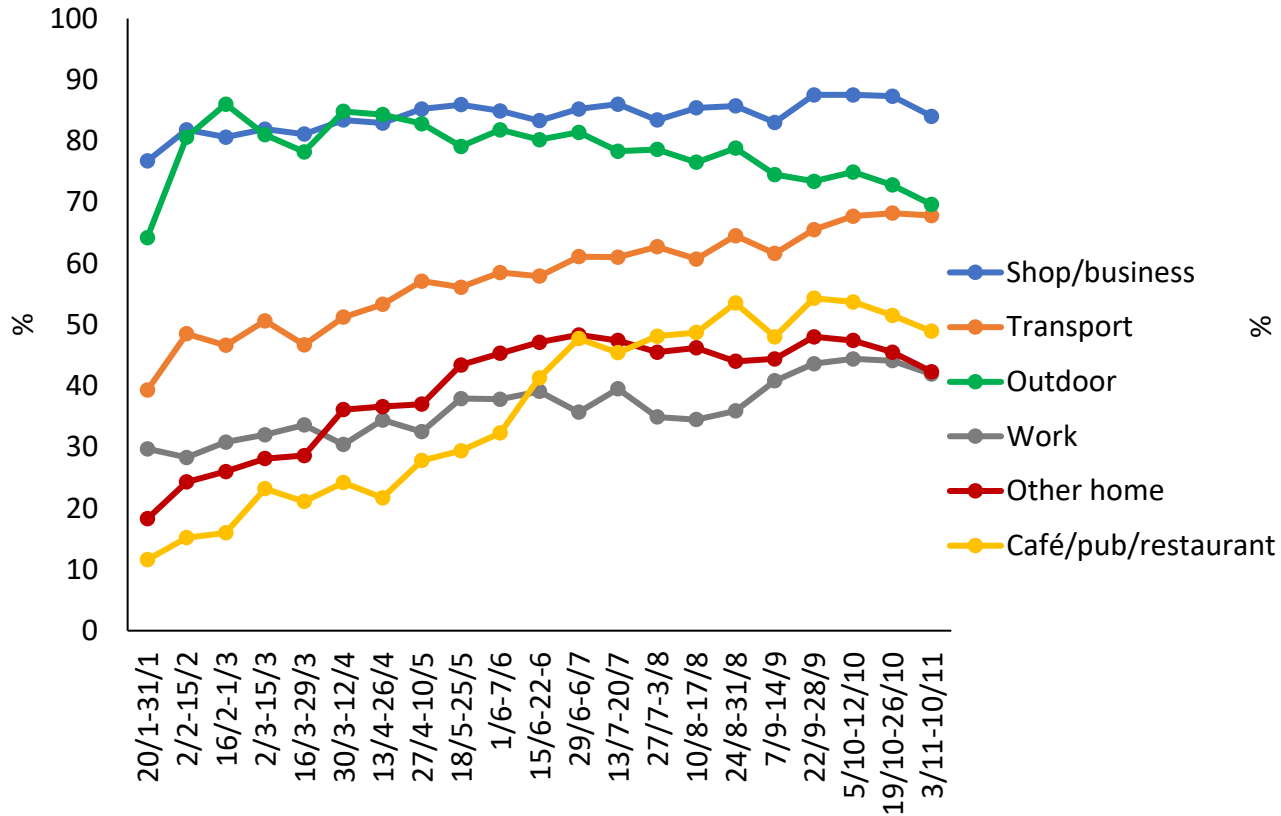


Total locations visited



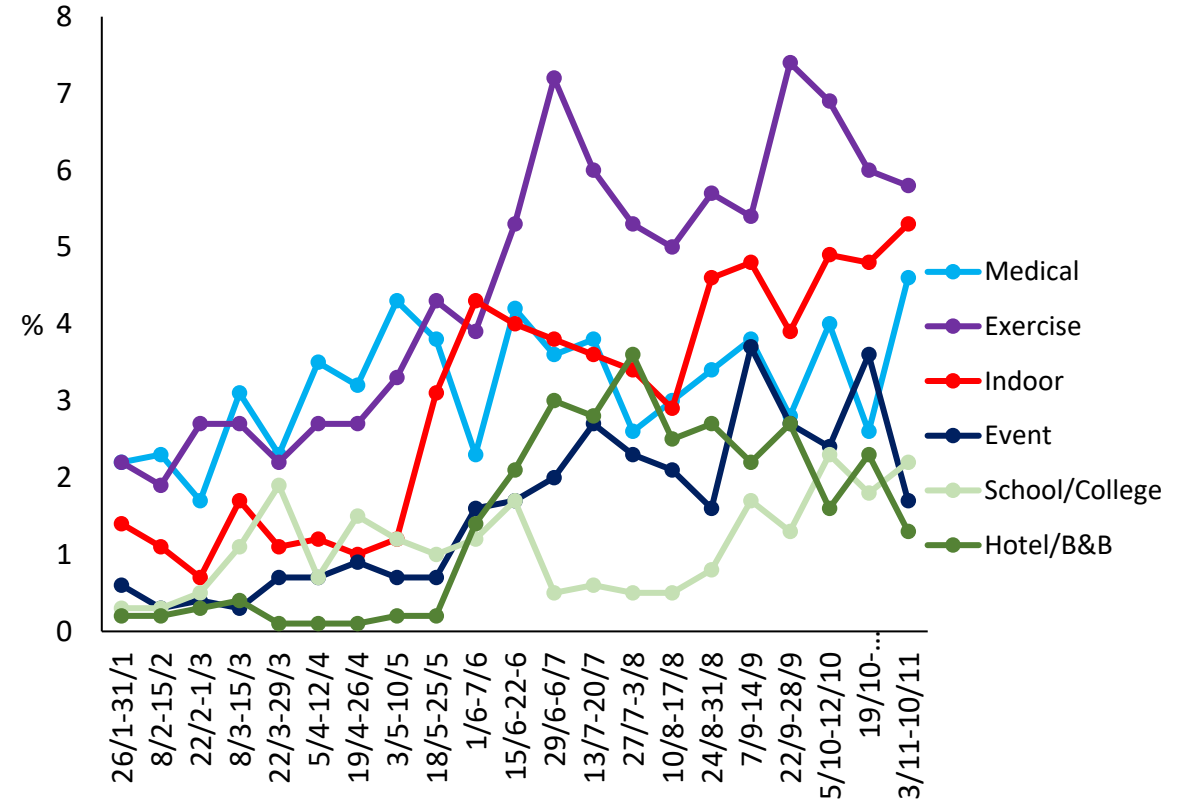
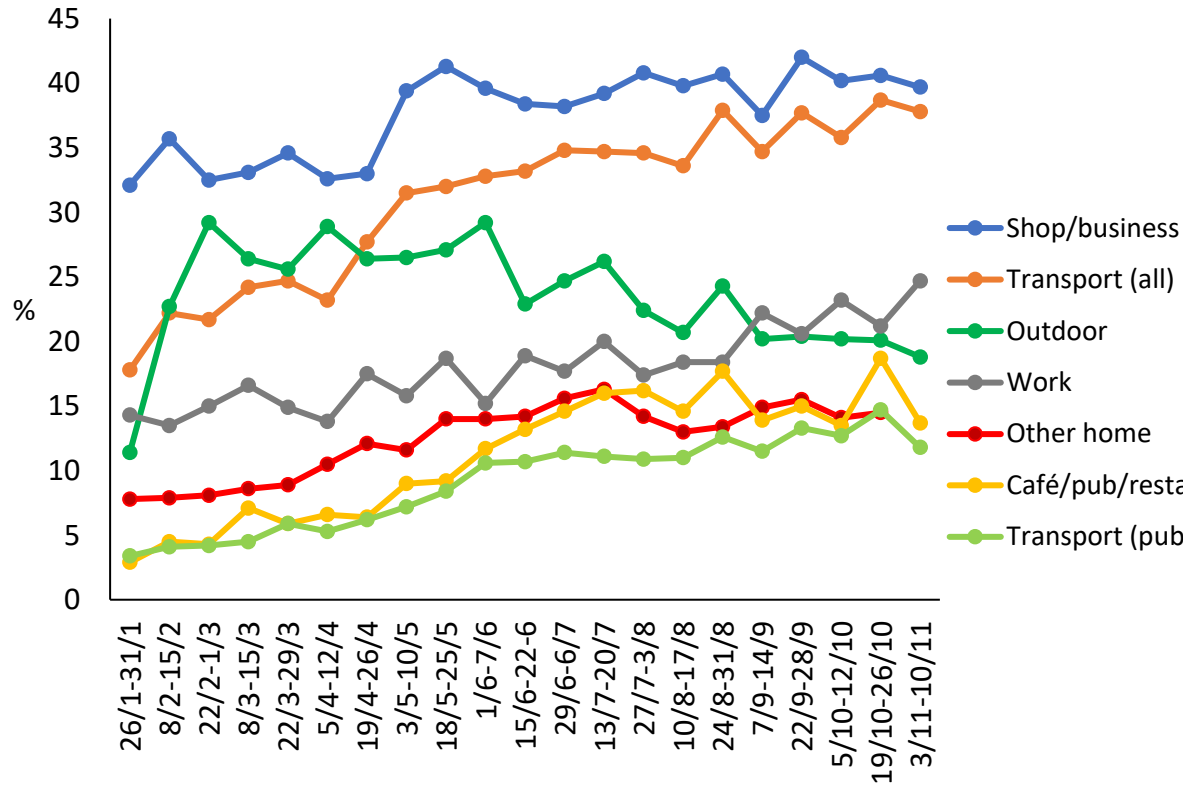
Total locations visited over the week (top) declined relative to October, returning to early-September levels. There was no statistically significant change in total locations visited the day before completing the study (bottom).

Locations visited (previous week)



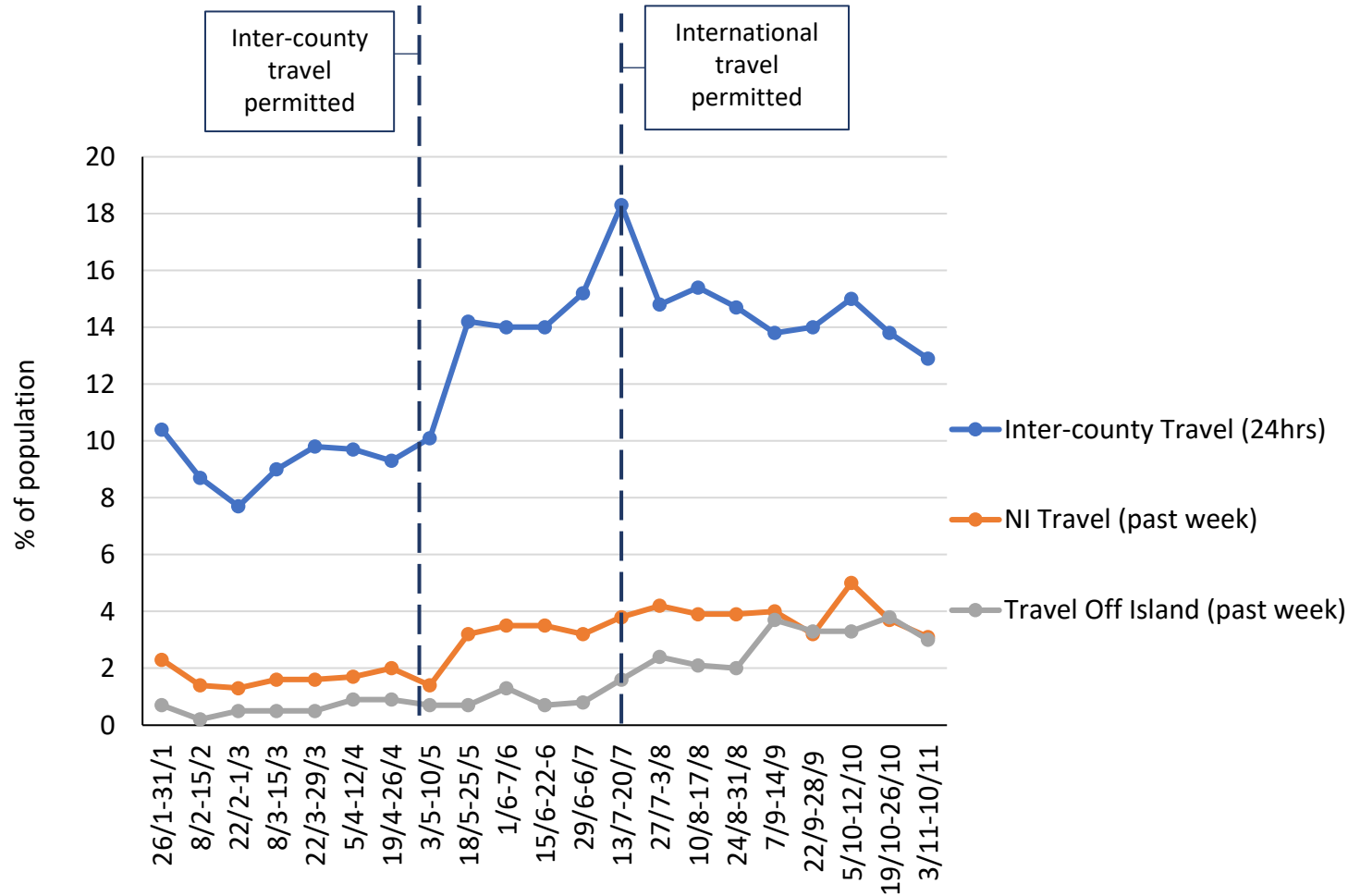
The decline in activity during the previous week was spread across almost all locations.

Locations visited (yesterday)



There was also a decline in most (but not all) locations visited the previous day, although individual changes were not statistically significant.

National and international travel

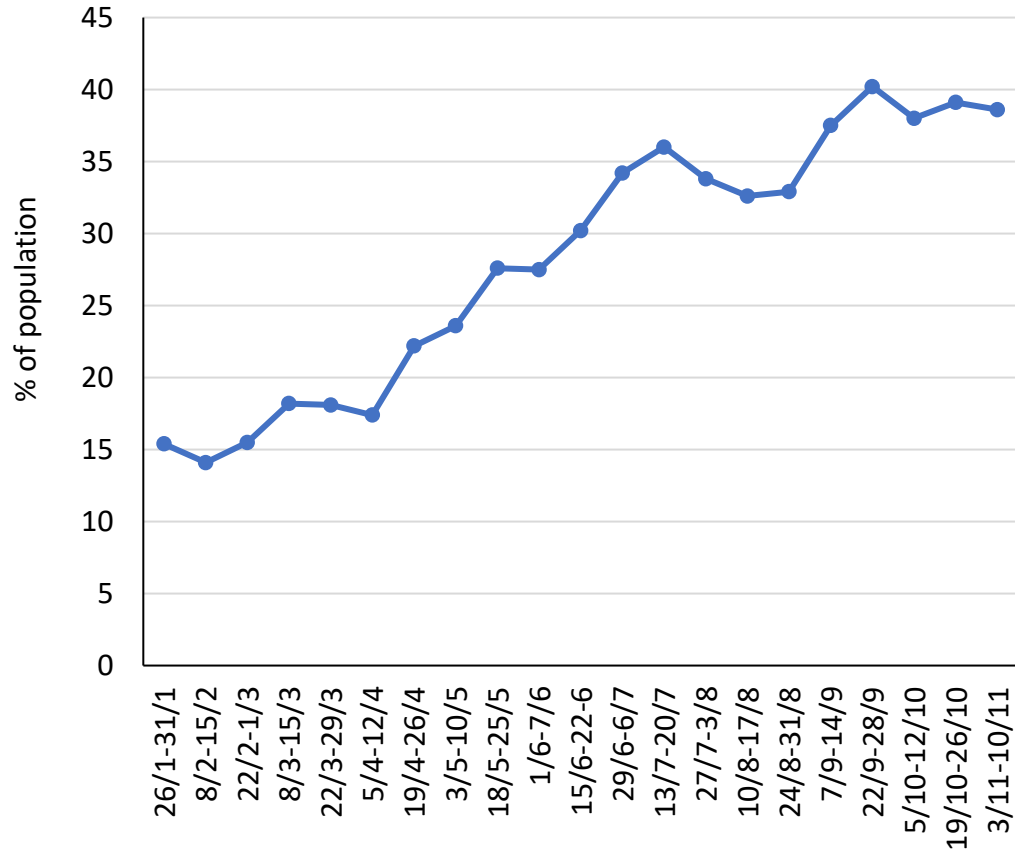


All three measures of travel declined. Although these falls were not large enough to be individually statistically significant, taken together, there was a significant but small fall in the total amount of travel.

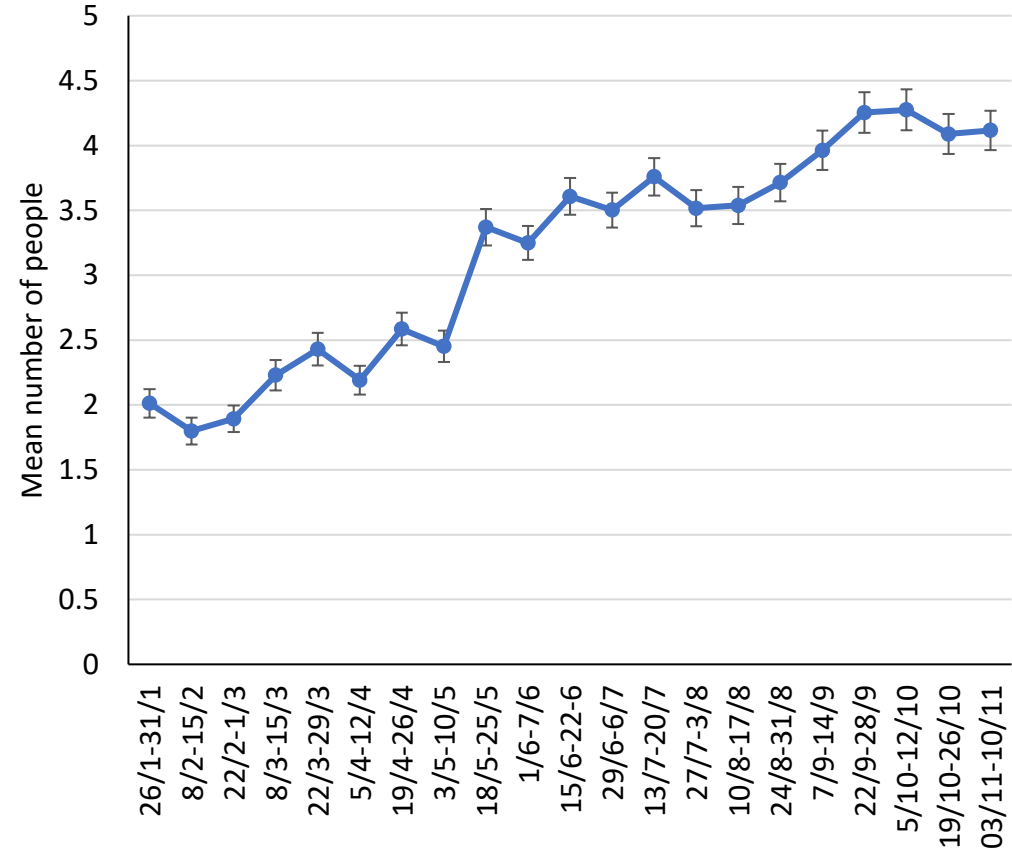


Number of people met and close contacts

Close contact in past 24 hours

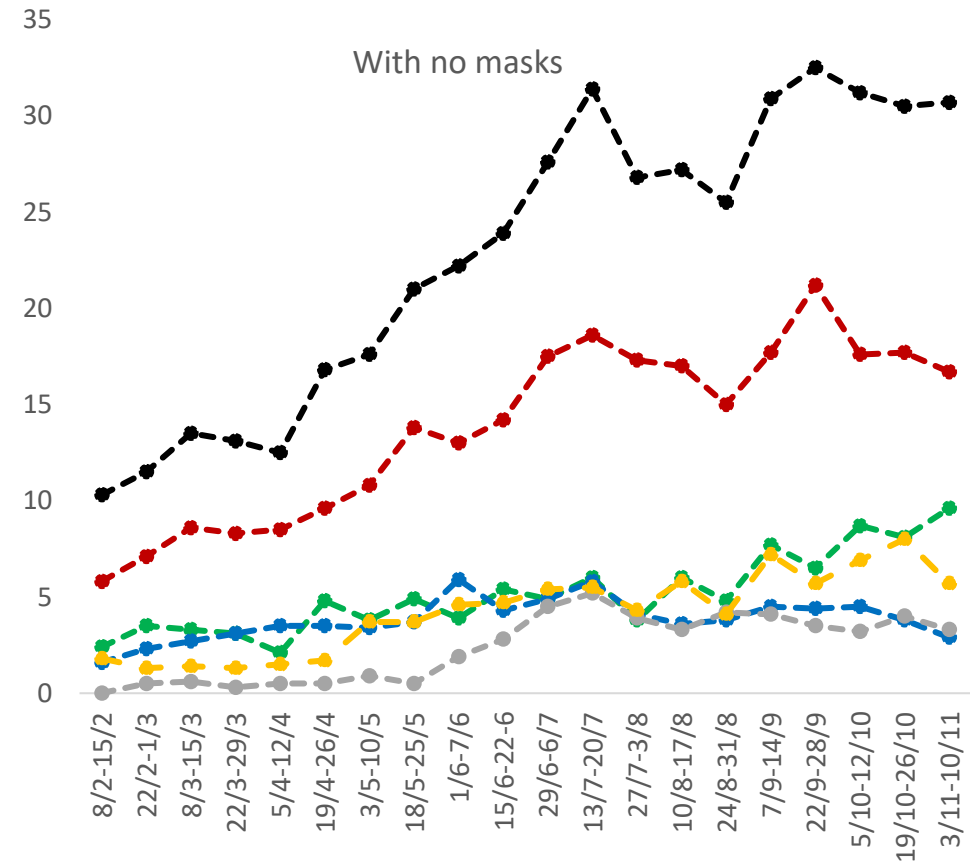
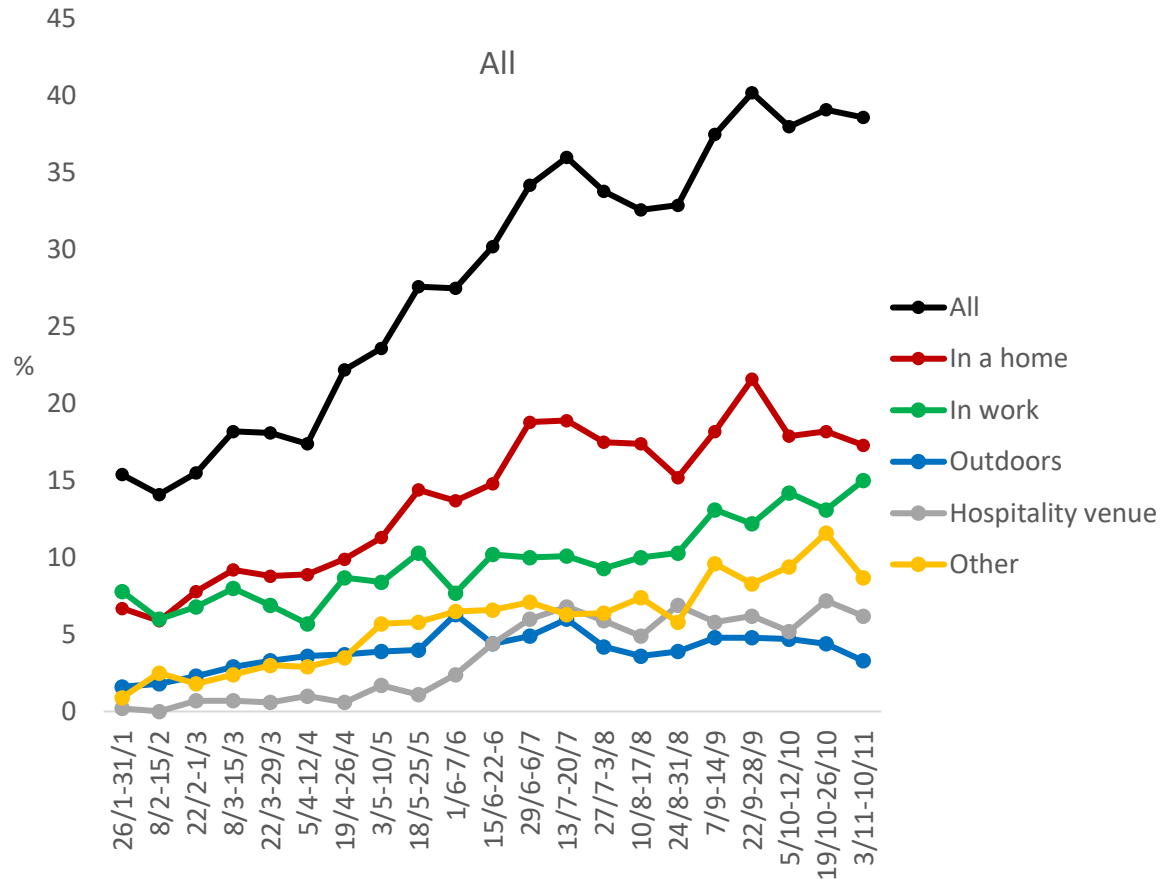


Mean number of people met in past 48hrs



There was no change in the proportion of people who had a close contact interaction or the number of people met.

Close contacts - locations

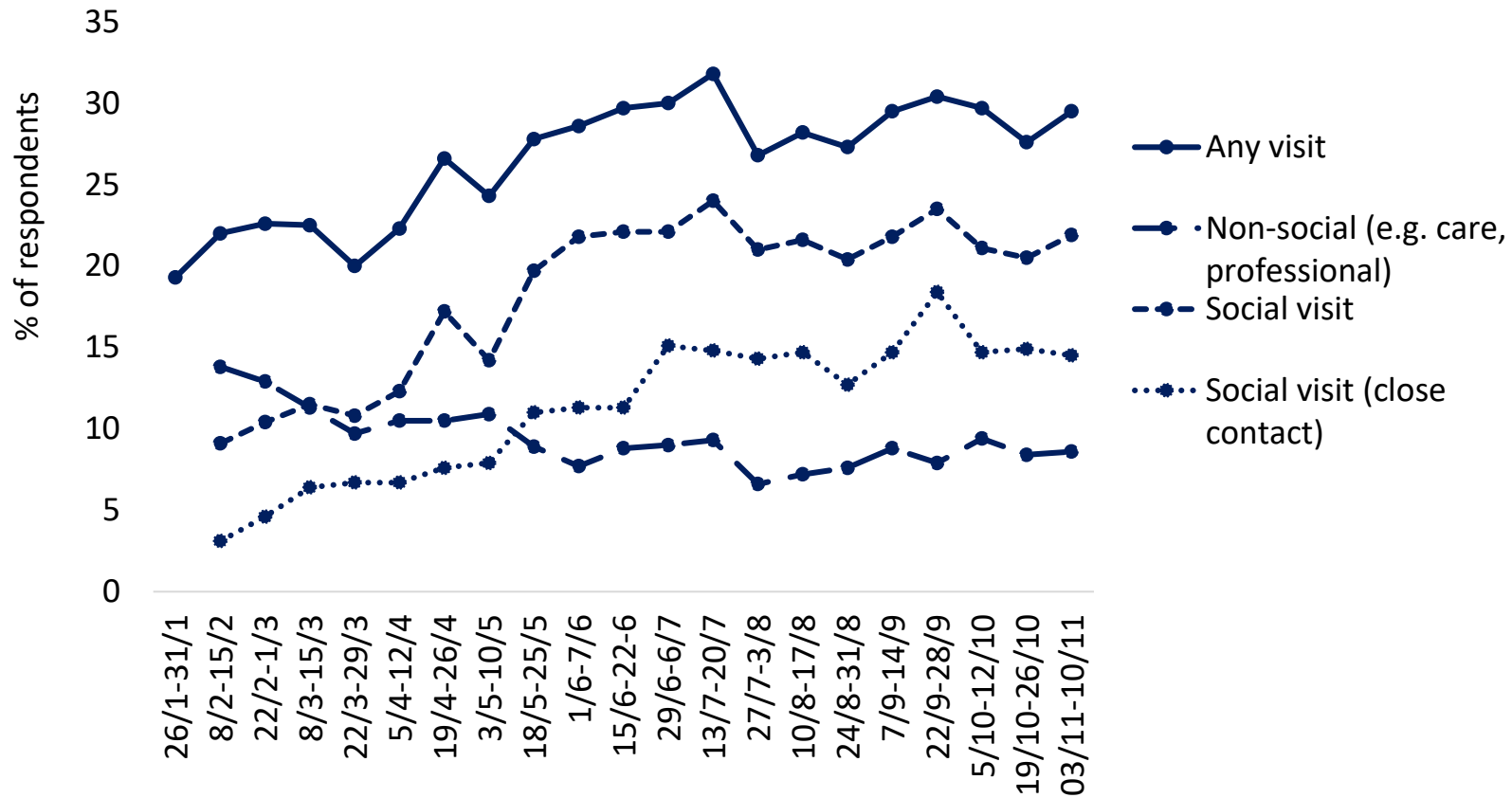


There were no significant changes in the composition of close contacts, although close contact at work was the only category not to decrease. Most close contacts arise in homes and at work.

Home Visits

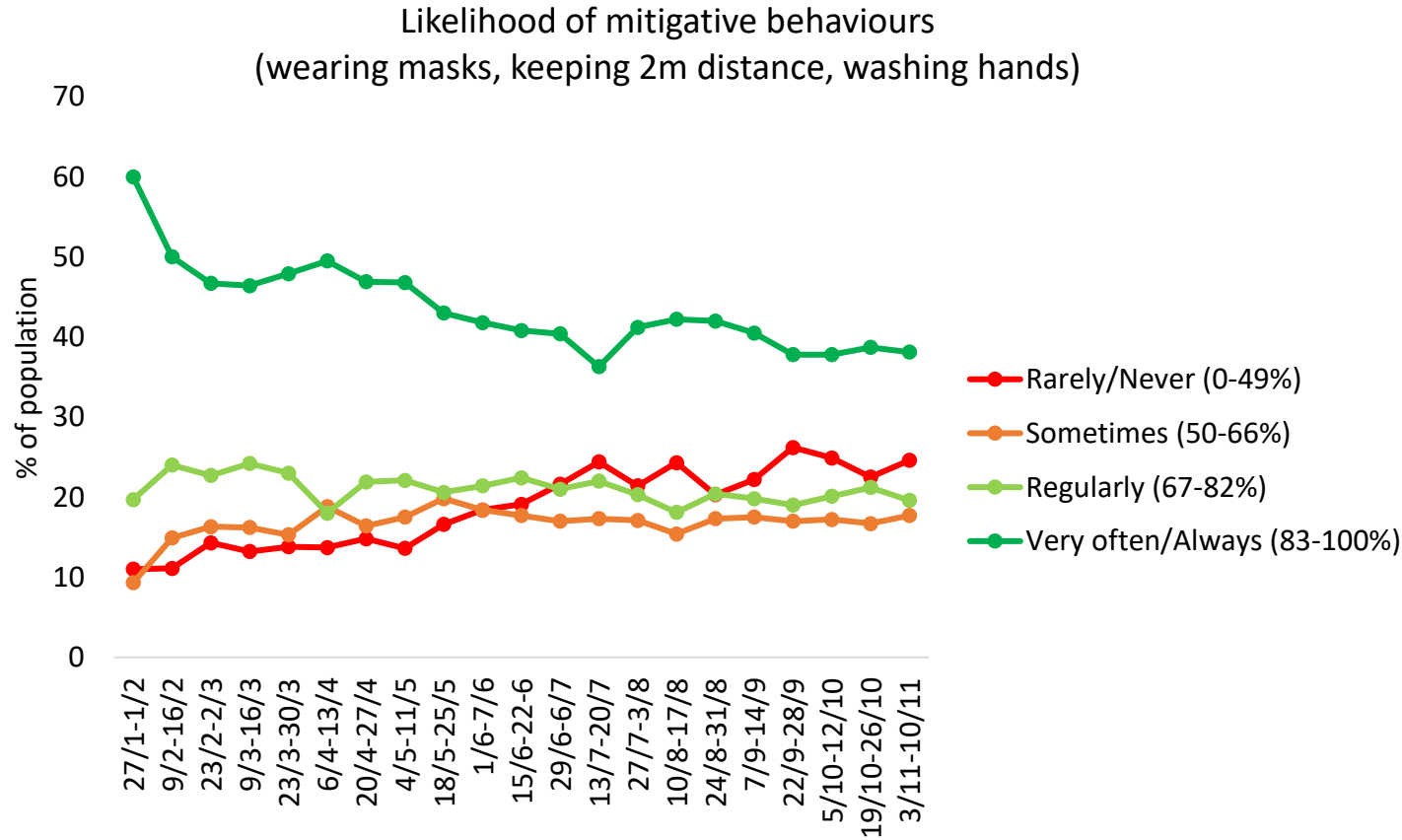


Proportion who had visitors or visited another household (previous day)



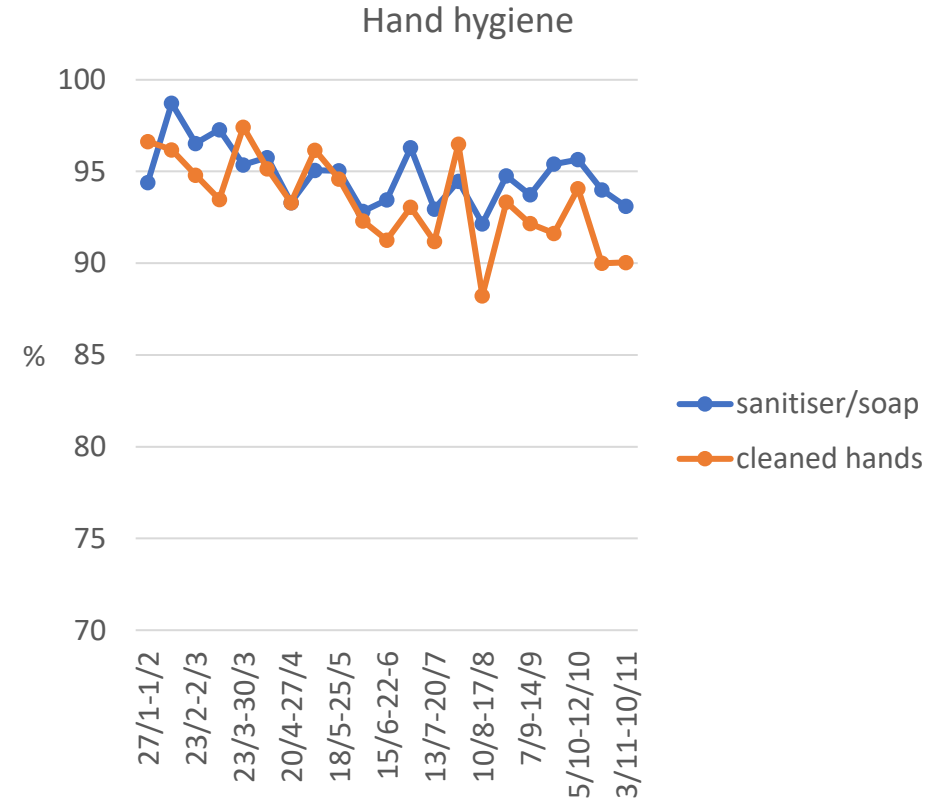
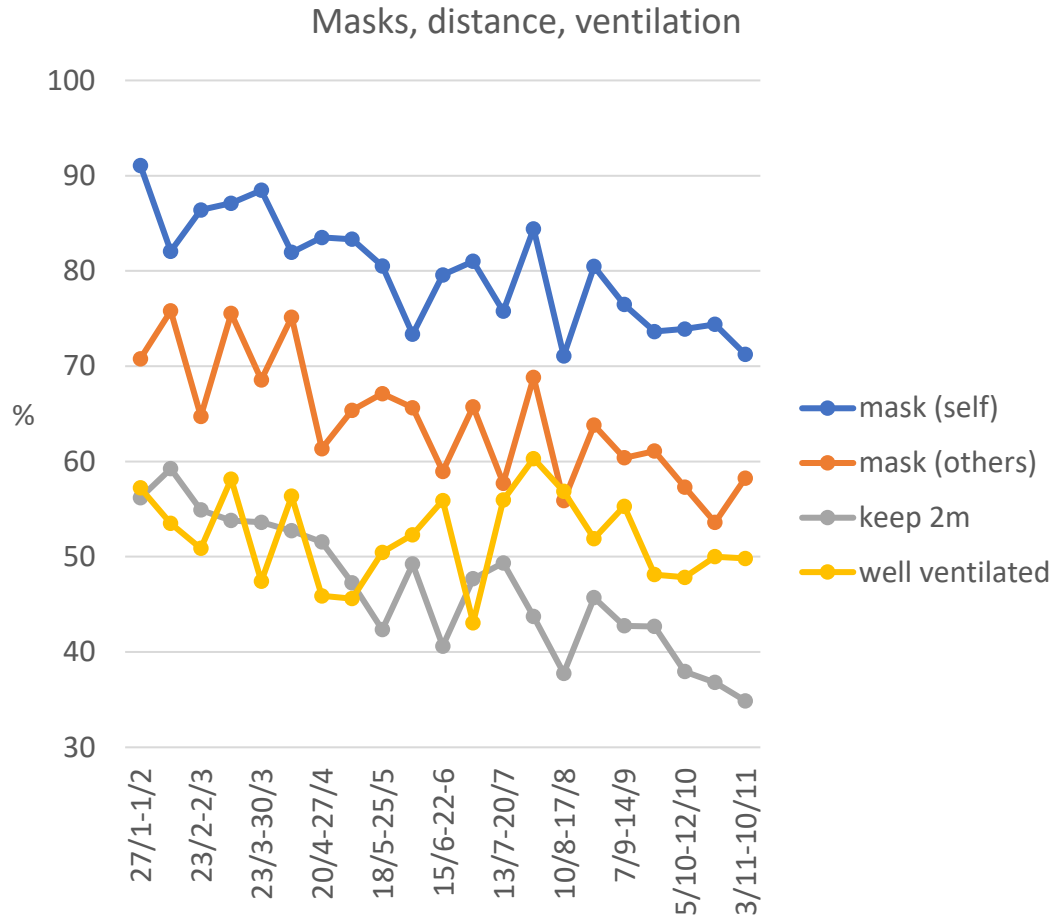
The frequency and composition of home visits remained unchanged.

Mitigation



The proportion of people engaging in mitigative behaviours (keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks) has been stable for some weeks and remained unchanged, despite rising case numbers. The largest group of people take precautions almost all of the time, whereas approximately 1-in-5 people take precautions less than half of the time.

Workplace - Mitigation

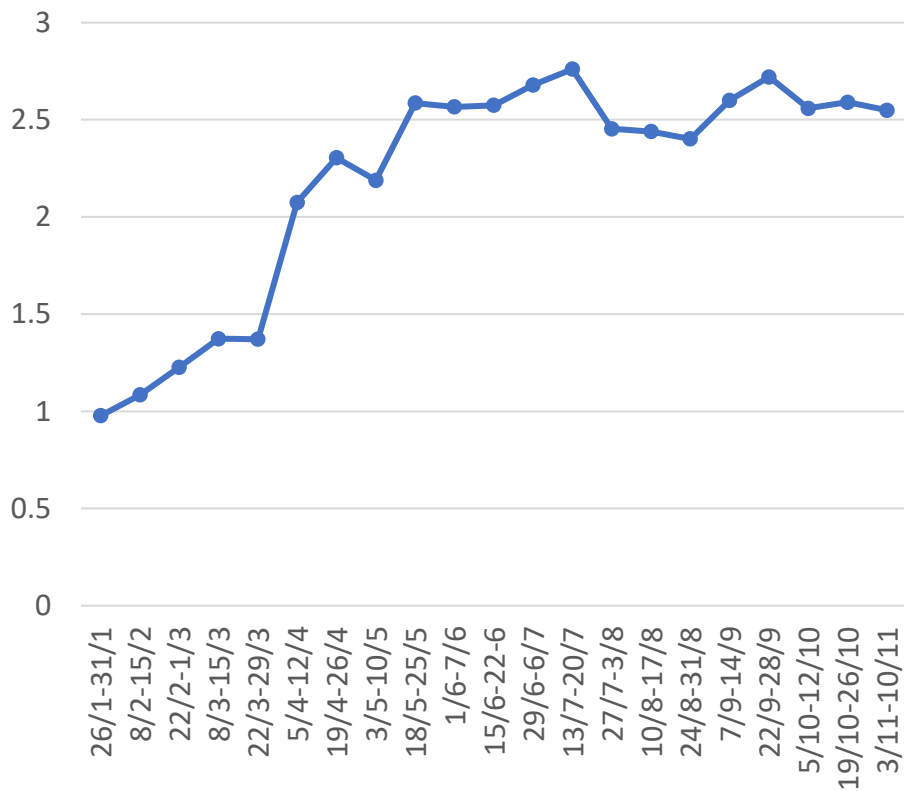


Mitigation practices in workplaces remain on a downward trend.

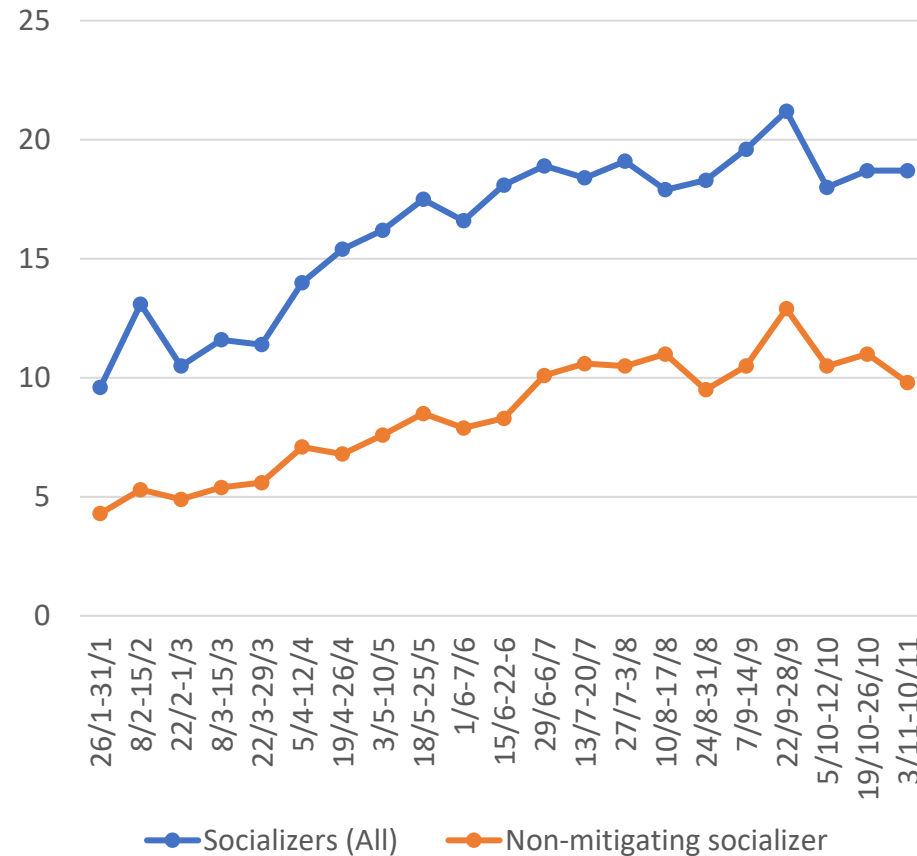
Social Activity



Index of overall activity

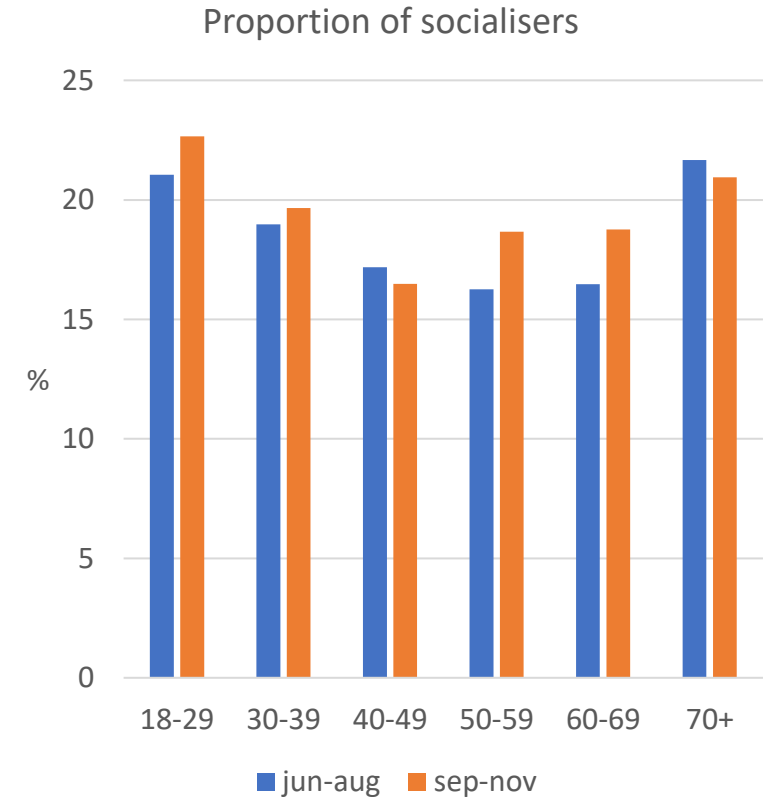
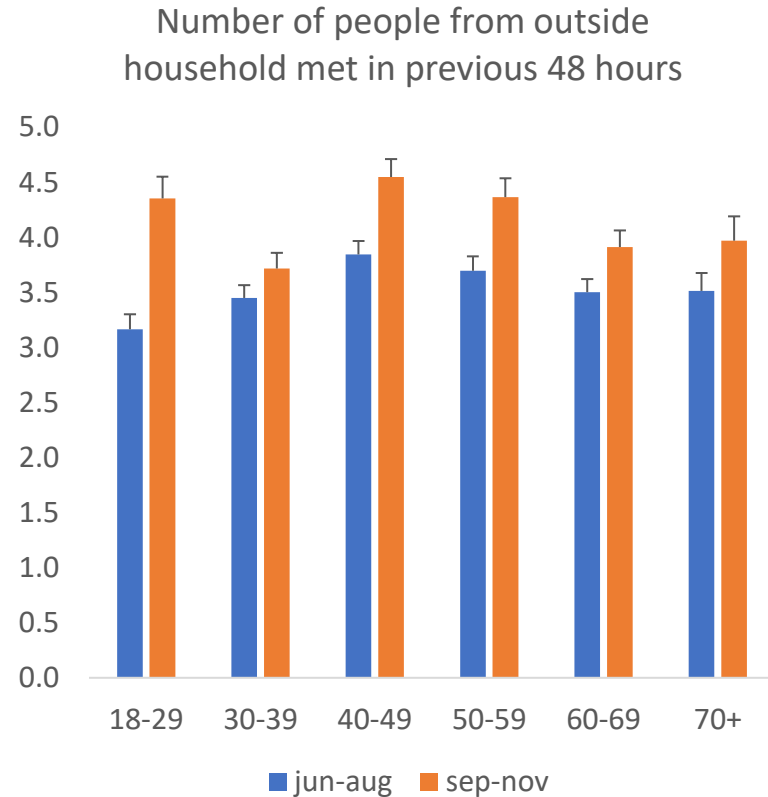
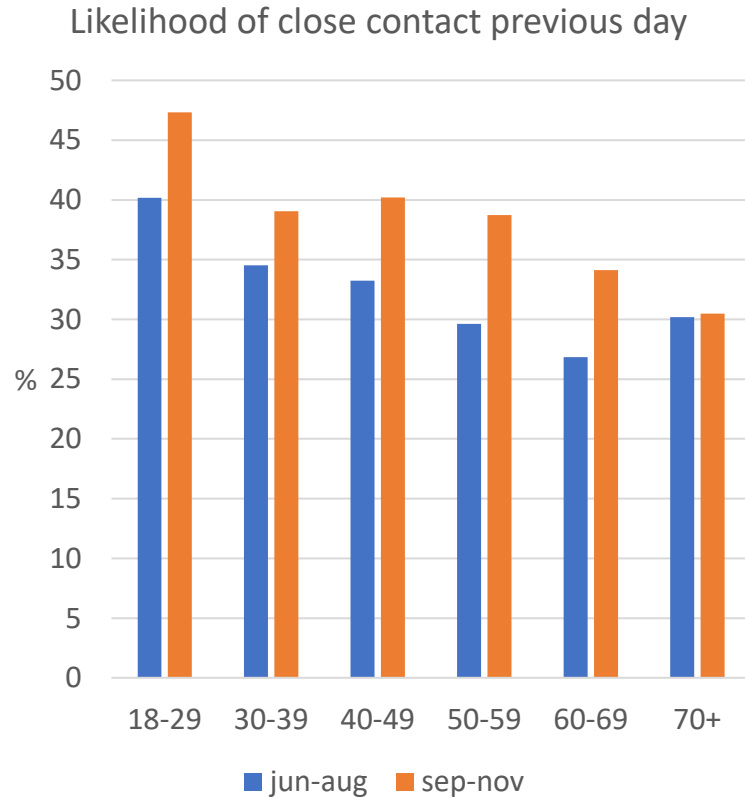


Socialisers



The left chart shows that overall social activity, measured by a combination of places visited and people met. Activity has stabilised. The right chart reveals that approximately 1-in-5 people engage in particularly high levels of social activity ('socialisers'), and 1-in-10 people do so while taking very few or no precautions, such as wearing a mask or maintaining 2m distance, ('non-mitigating socialisers'). The previous upward trends in both measures has ceased.

Risk taking by age – social activity

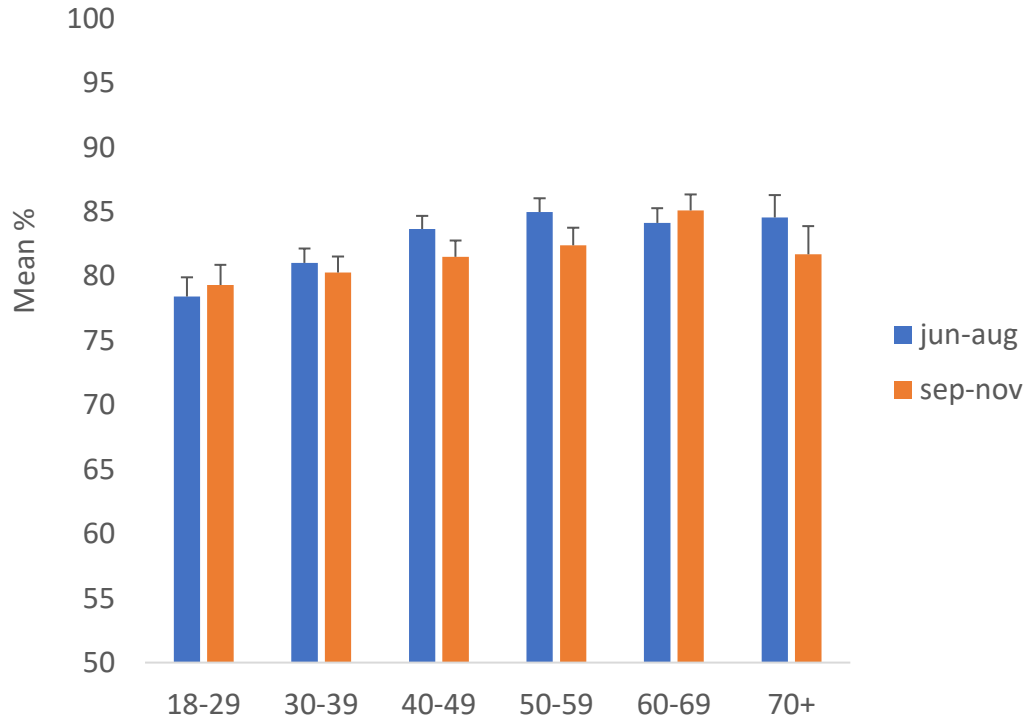


While older adults are somewhat less likely to have close contacts, they tend to meet as many people from outside their household and a minority are very socially active – more so than middle-aged people. This pattern is largely explained by differential participation in the labour market.

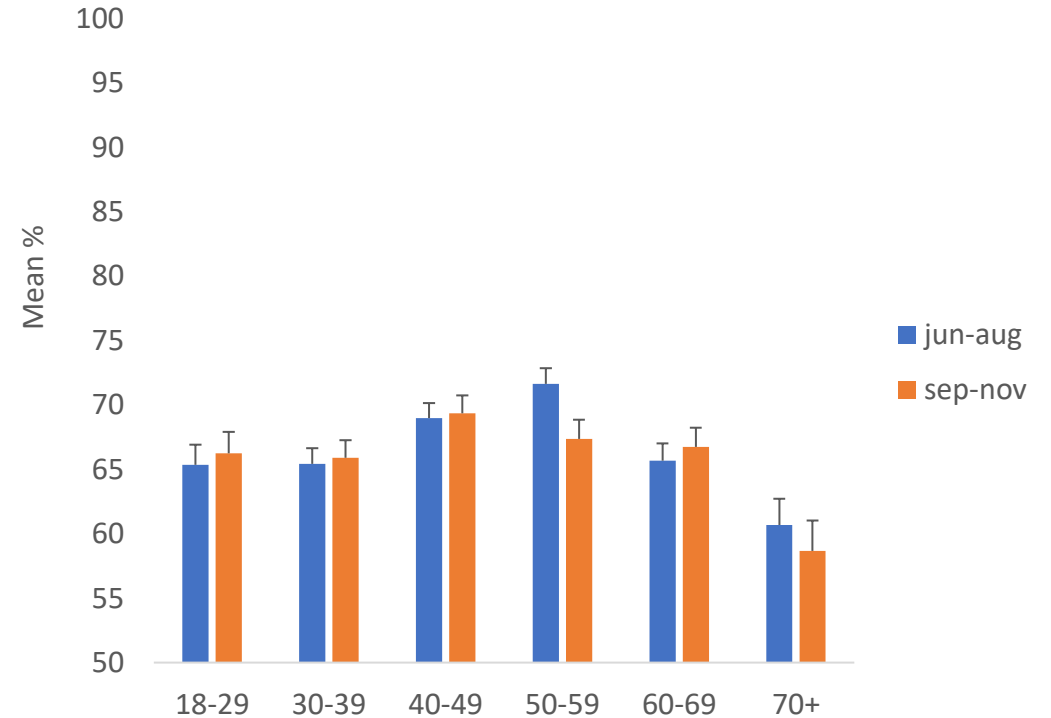


Risk taking by age - masks

Probability of wearing a mask in indoor locations other than homes

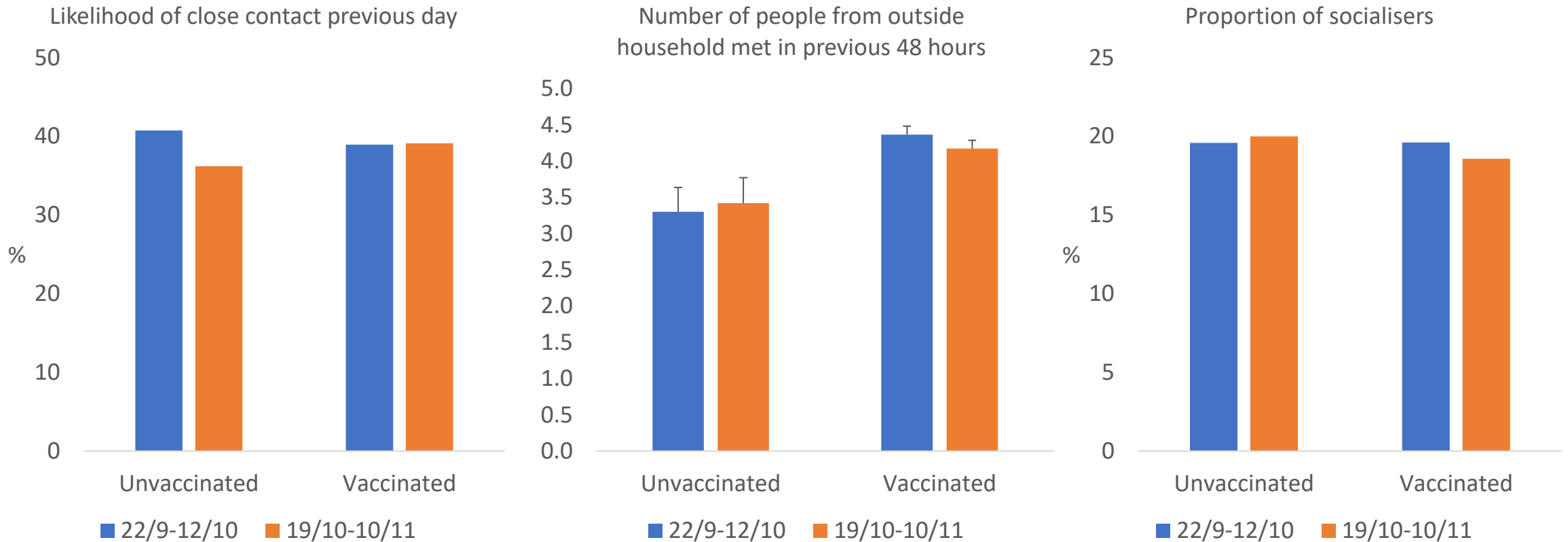


Probability of wearing a mask in indoor locations including homes



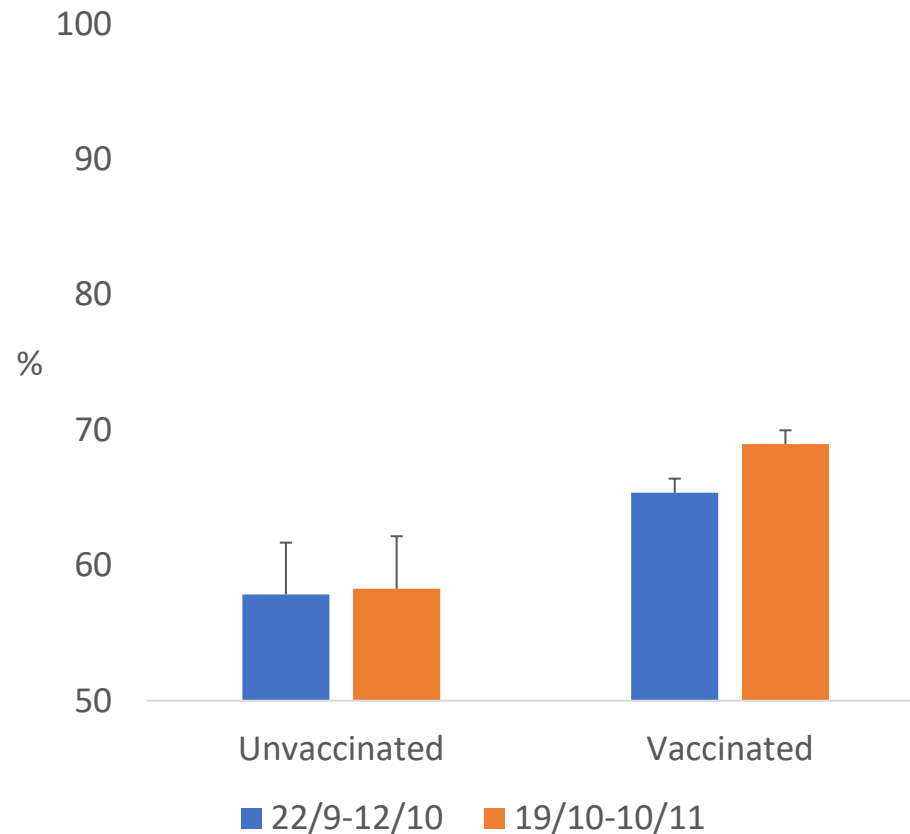
Older adults are more likely to wear a facemask when going to indoor locations outside of homes. However, once visits to homes are included in the analysis, older adults are actually less likely to wear a mask during social encounters, because more of their socialising takes place in houses.

Risk taking by vaccination status – social activity



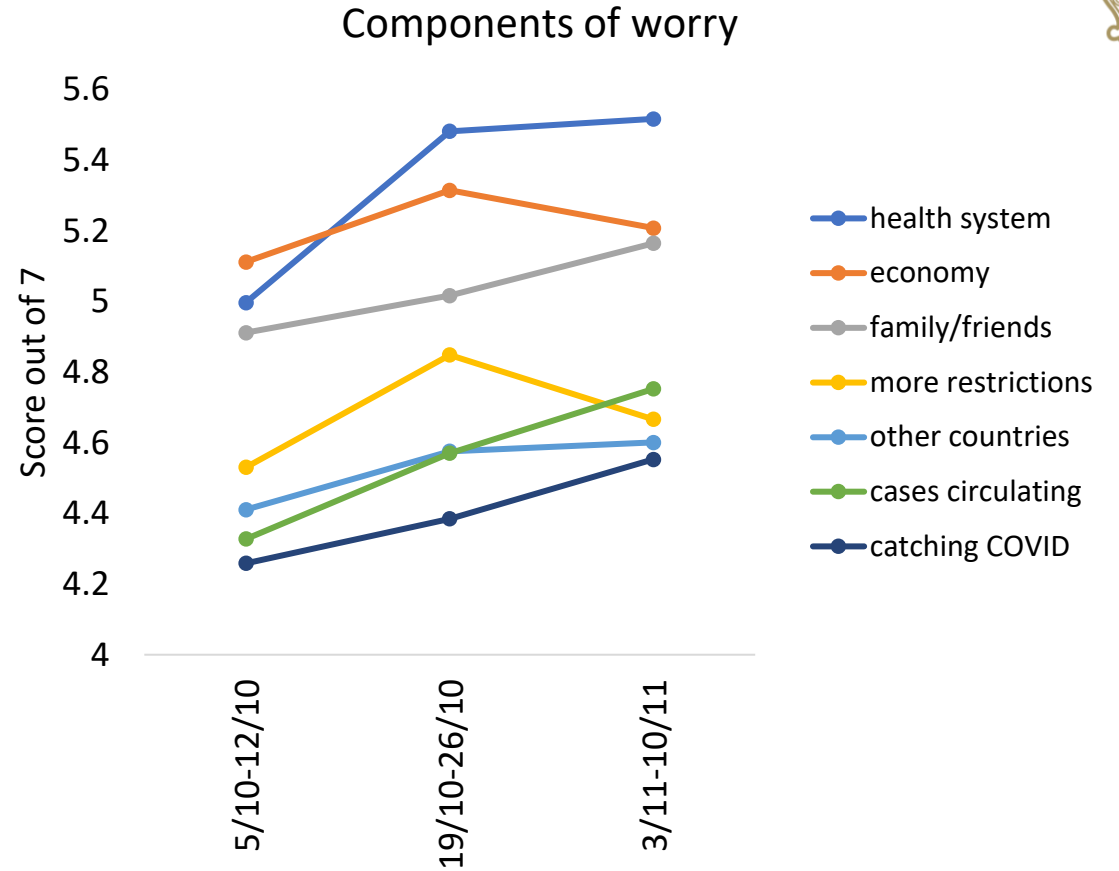
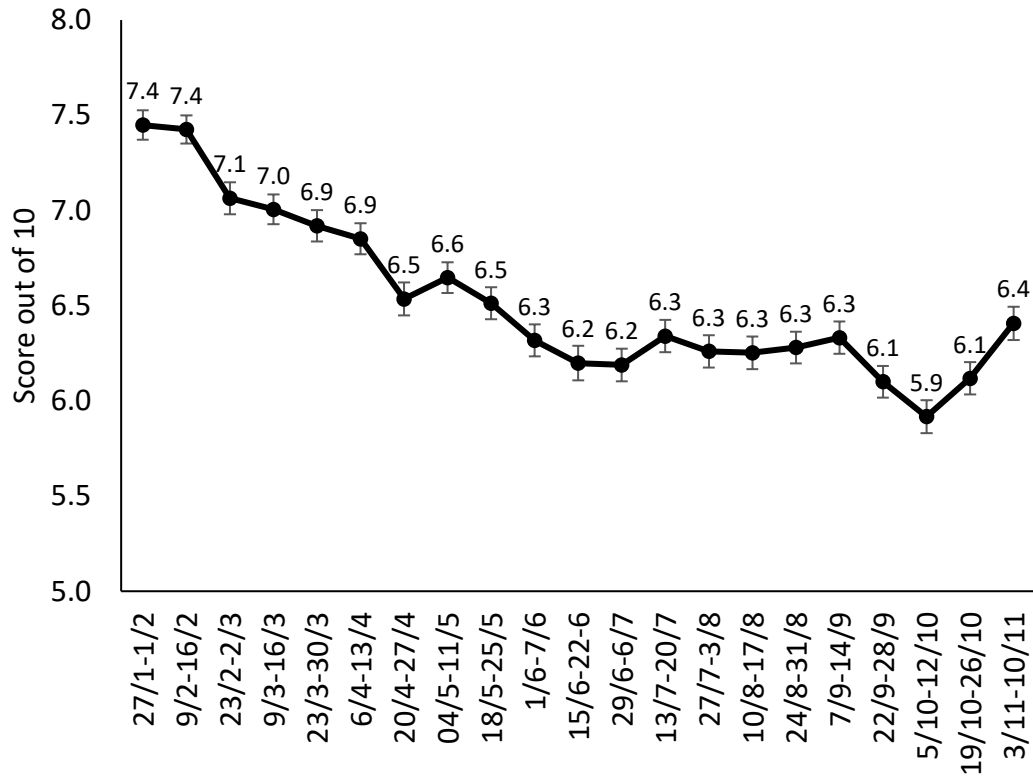
There is little evidence that unvaccinated people are taking less risk in relation to levels of social activity than vaccinated people, although they meet slightly fewer people on average. They are as likely to be in the minority who engage in a lot of social activity.

Risk taking by vaccination status - masks



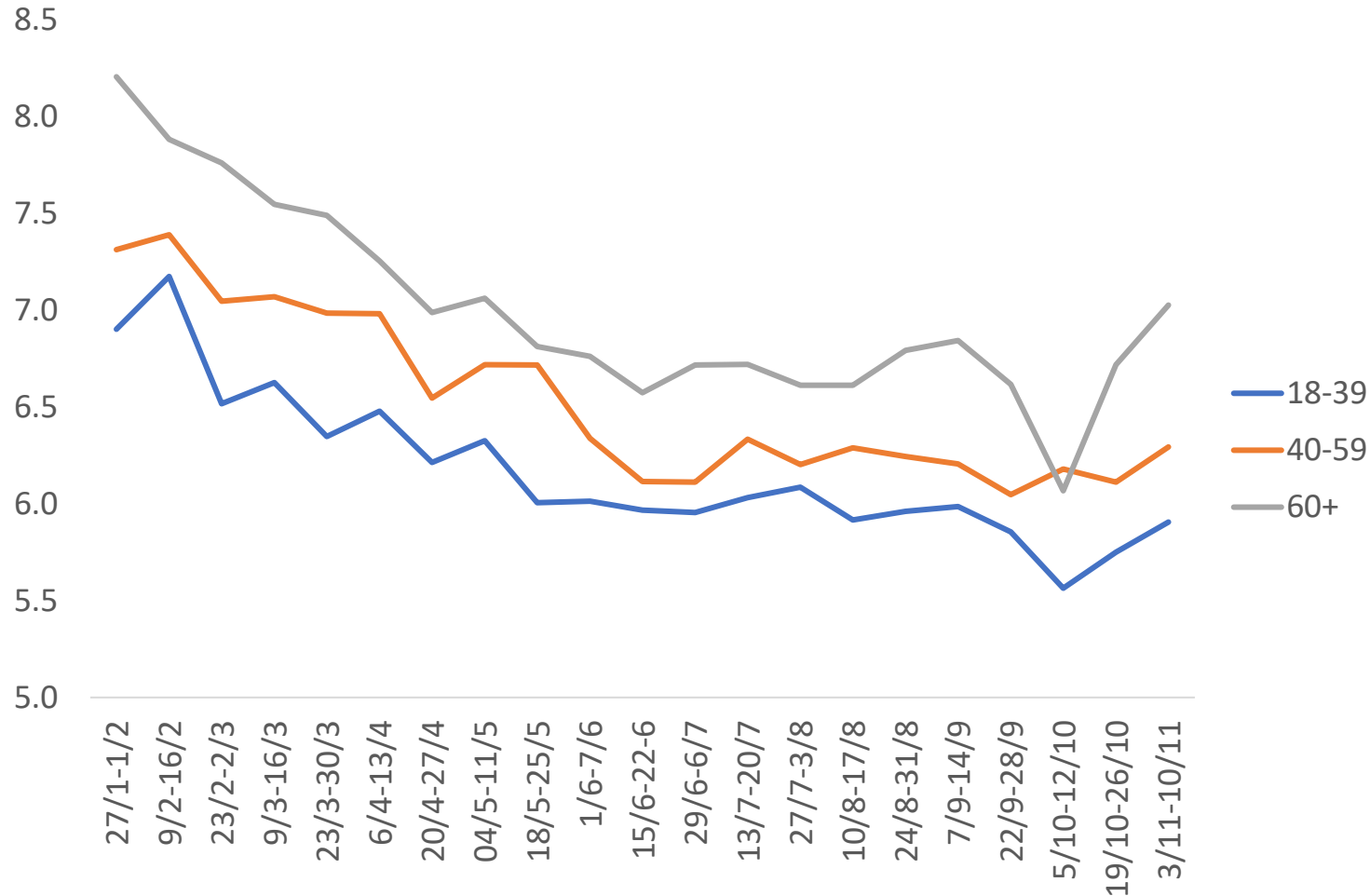
Unvaccinated people are less likely to wear a mask in social situations than people who are vaccinated.

Worry



The overall level of worry about COVID-19 climbed to its highest level since May. The increase is driven by significant increases in concern about the healthcare system, family and friends, the number of cases and catching the virus personally, although the latter remains the weakest component of worry. Concerns about the economy or the return of restrictions did not rise.

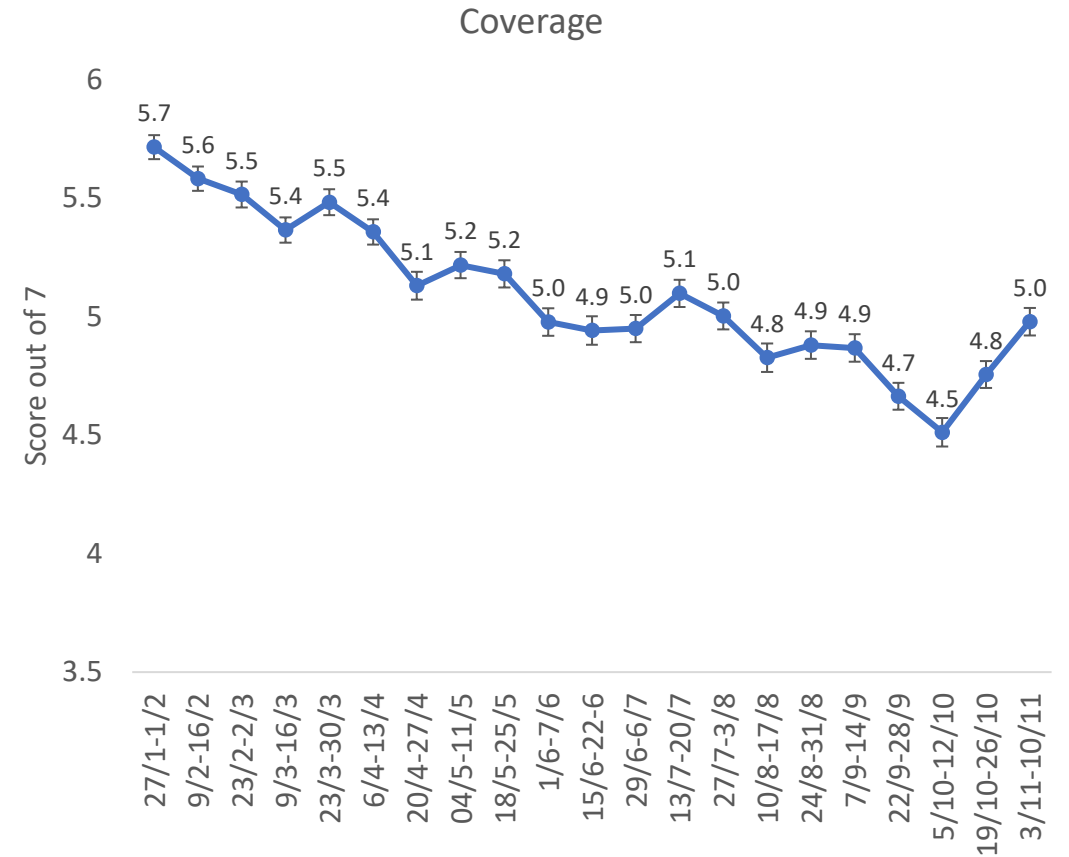
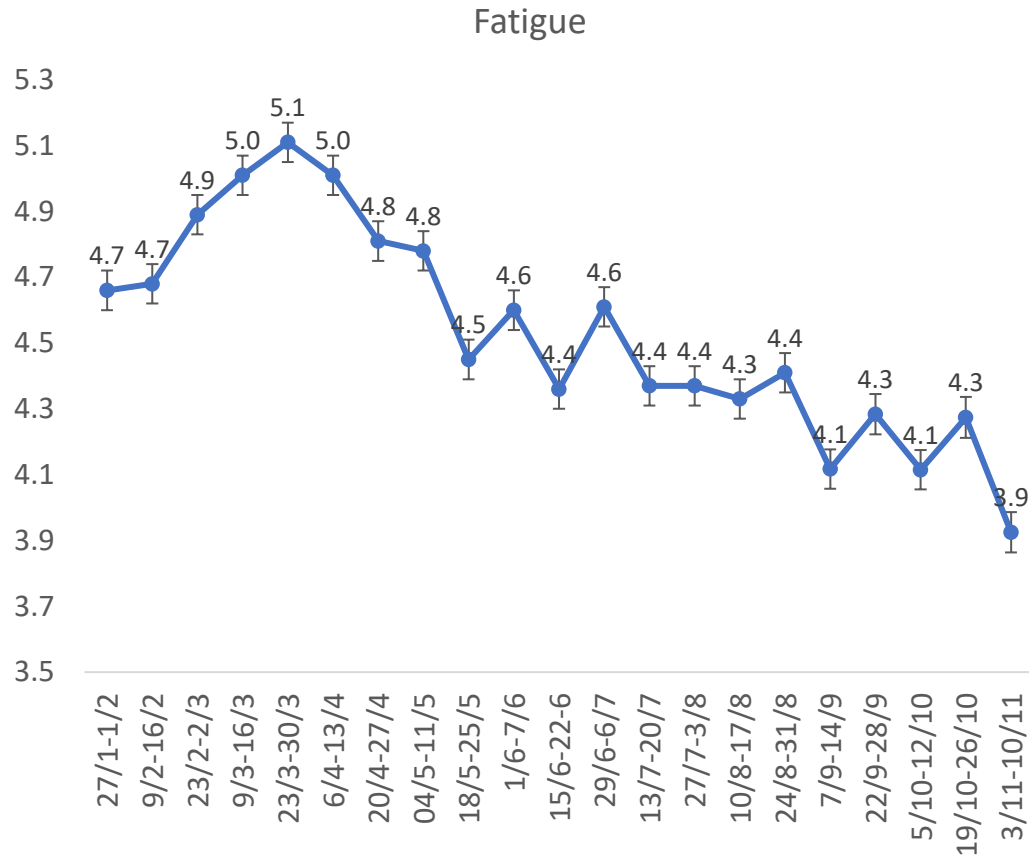
Who's increased worry?



The level of overall worry about COVID-19 has begun to rise among all age groups, but the increase is steeper among those aged over 60.

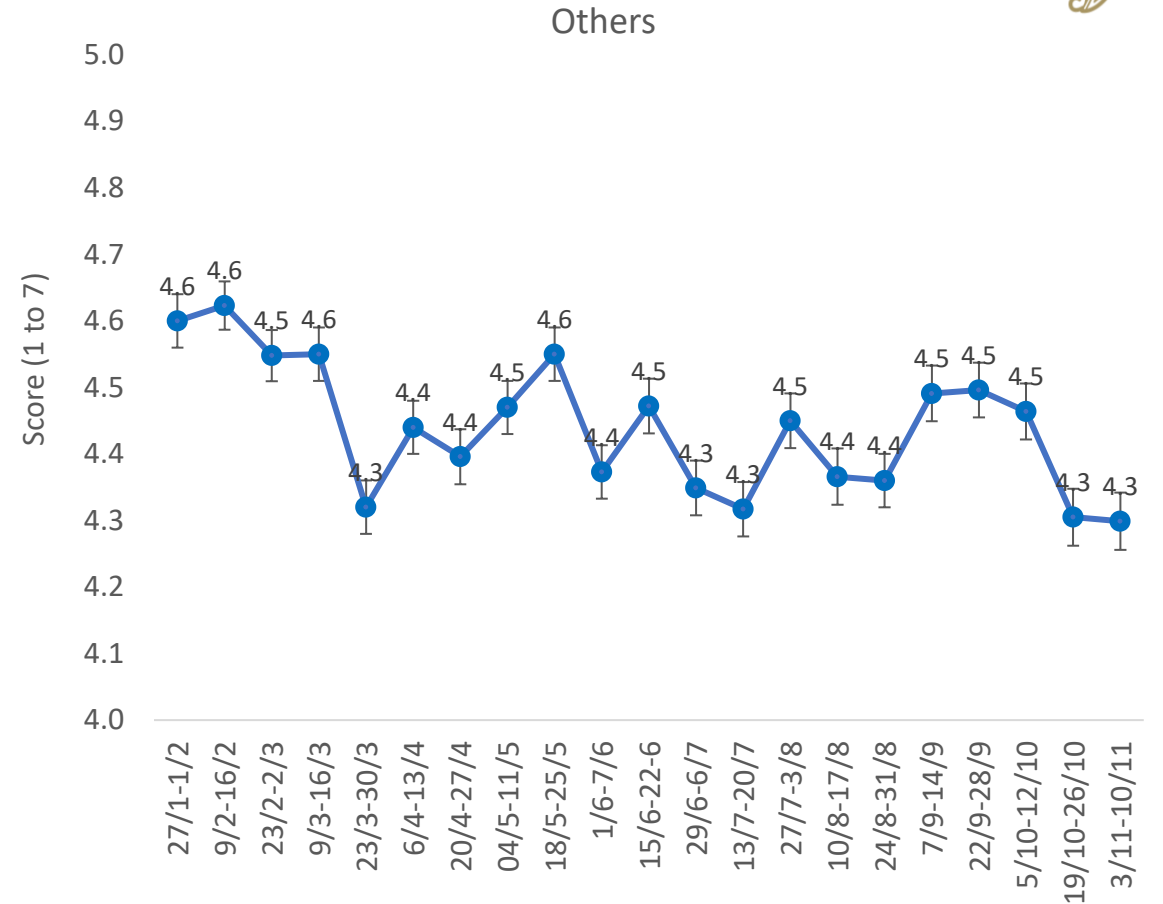
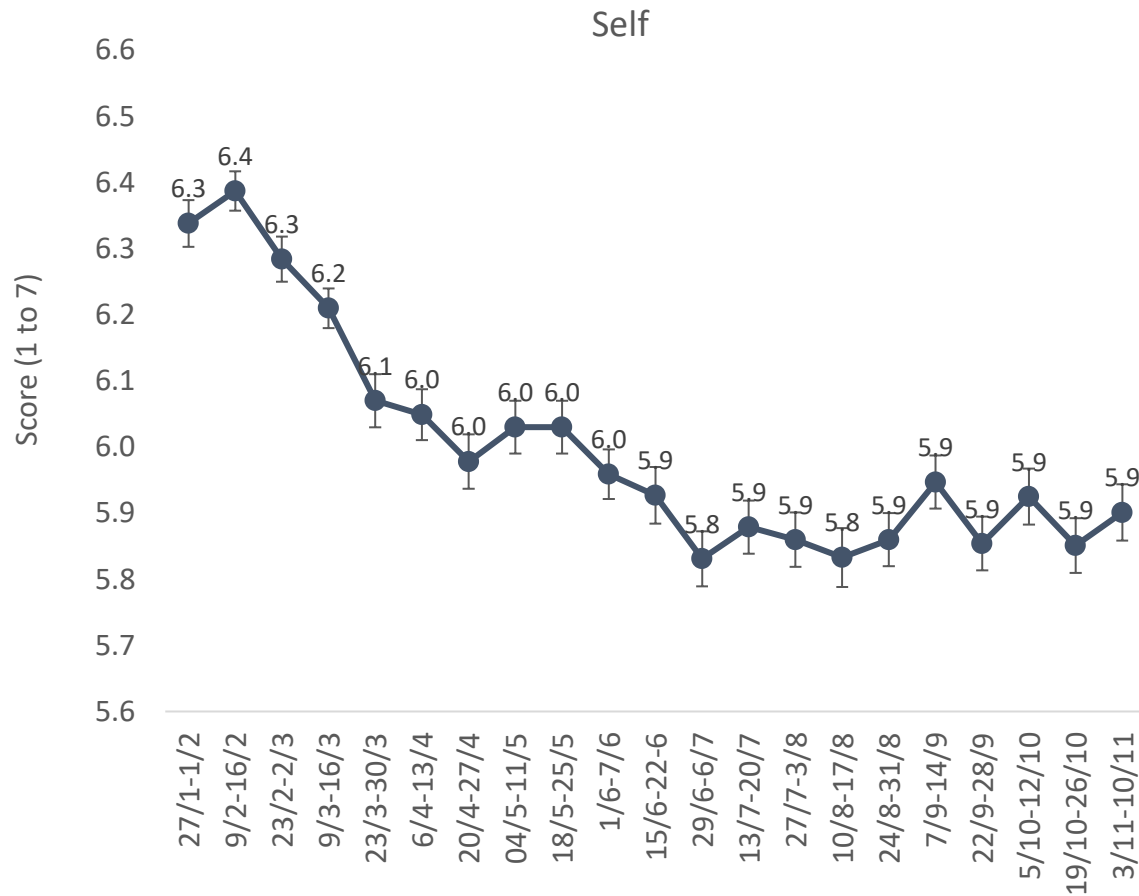


Psychological Drivers of Behaviour



Fatigue with restrictions is associated with more risky behaviour, but fell to its lowest level yet in 2021. There was a significant increase how closely people are following the news about COVID-19.

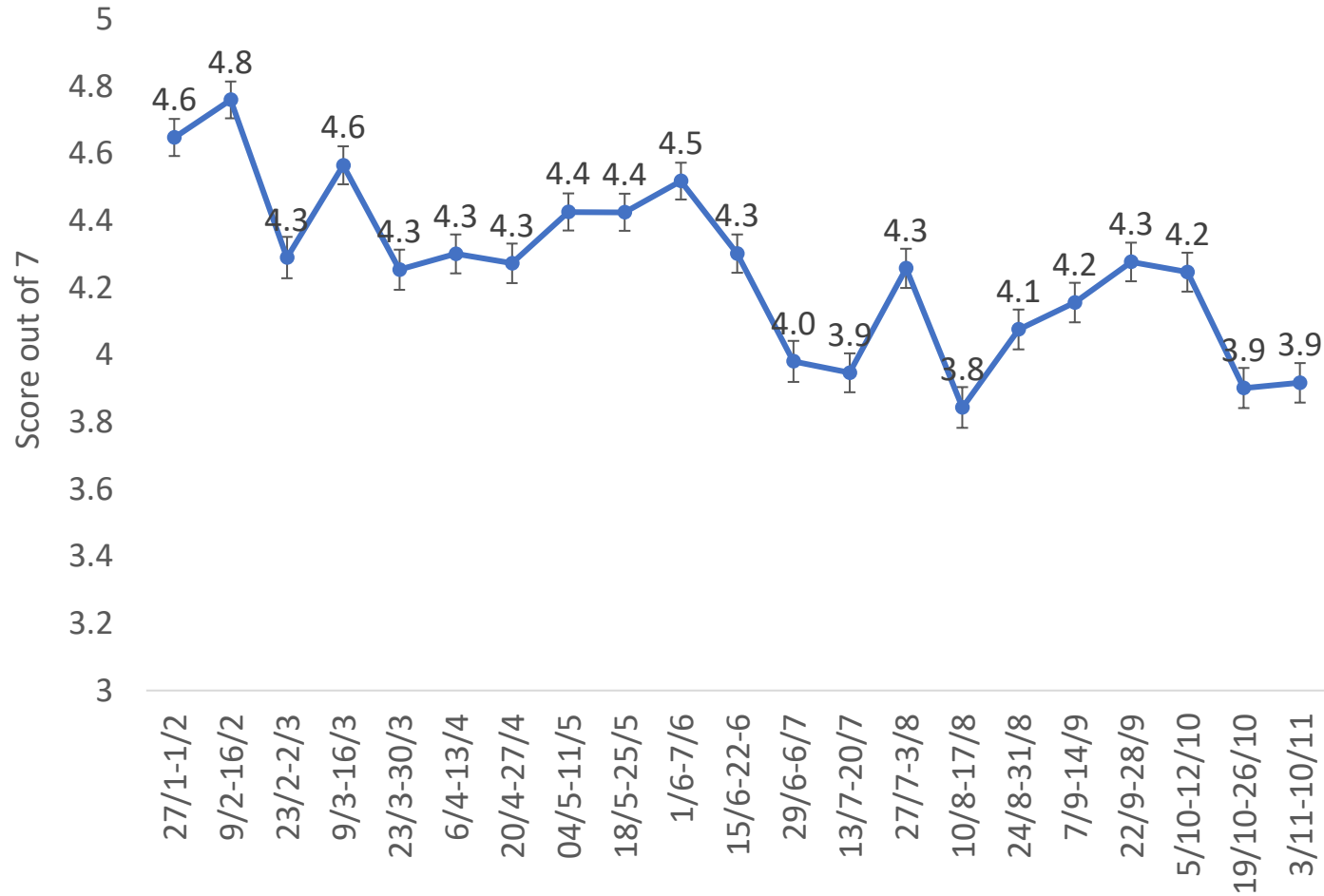
Self-Reported Compliance



There were no changes in self-reported compliance with public health guidance or in the perceived compliance of others, despite the rise in case numbers.

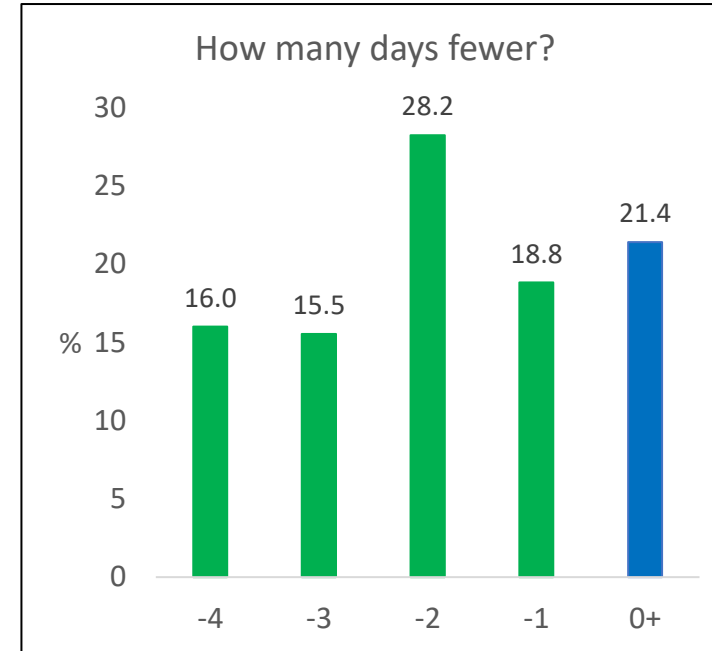
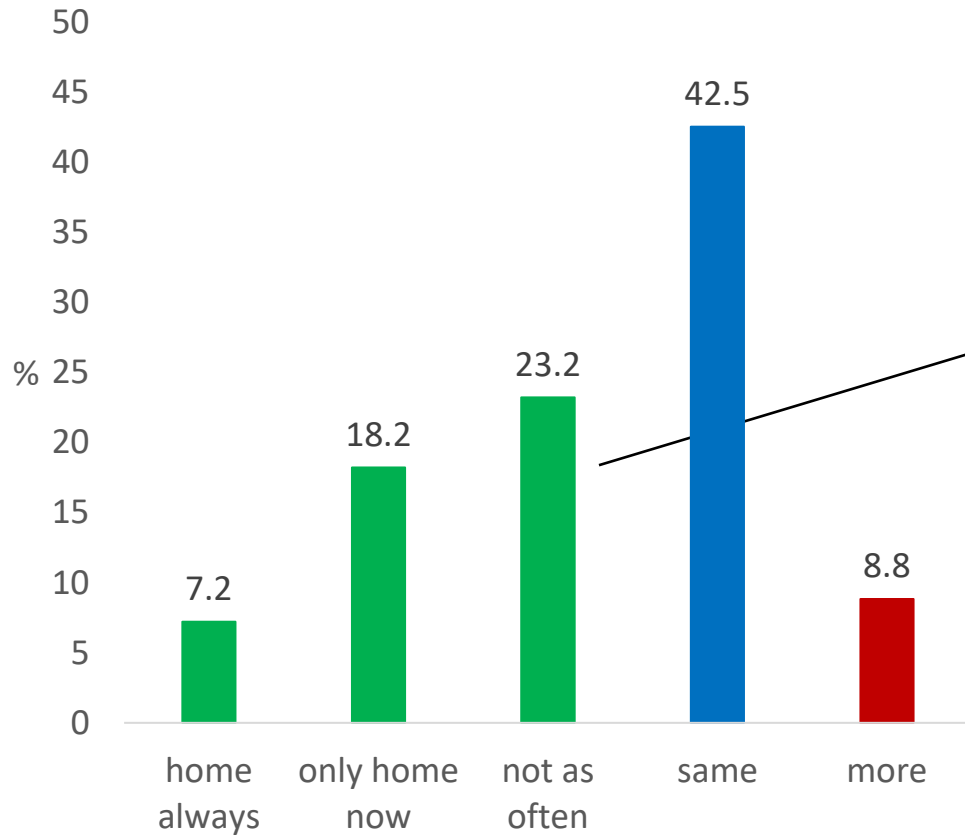


Coherence of restrictions



Behaviour is more cautious among those who perceive public health restrictions to be coherent. Perceived coherence declined during the last wave of SAM and remained at a lower level this wave.

Attendance at work relative to pre-pandemic

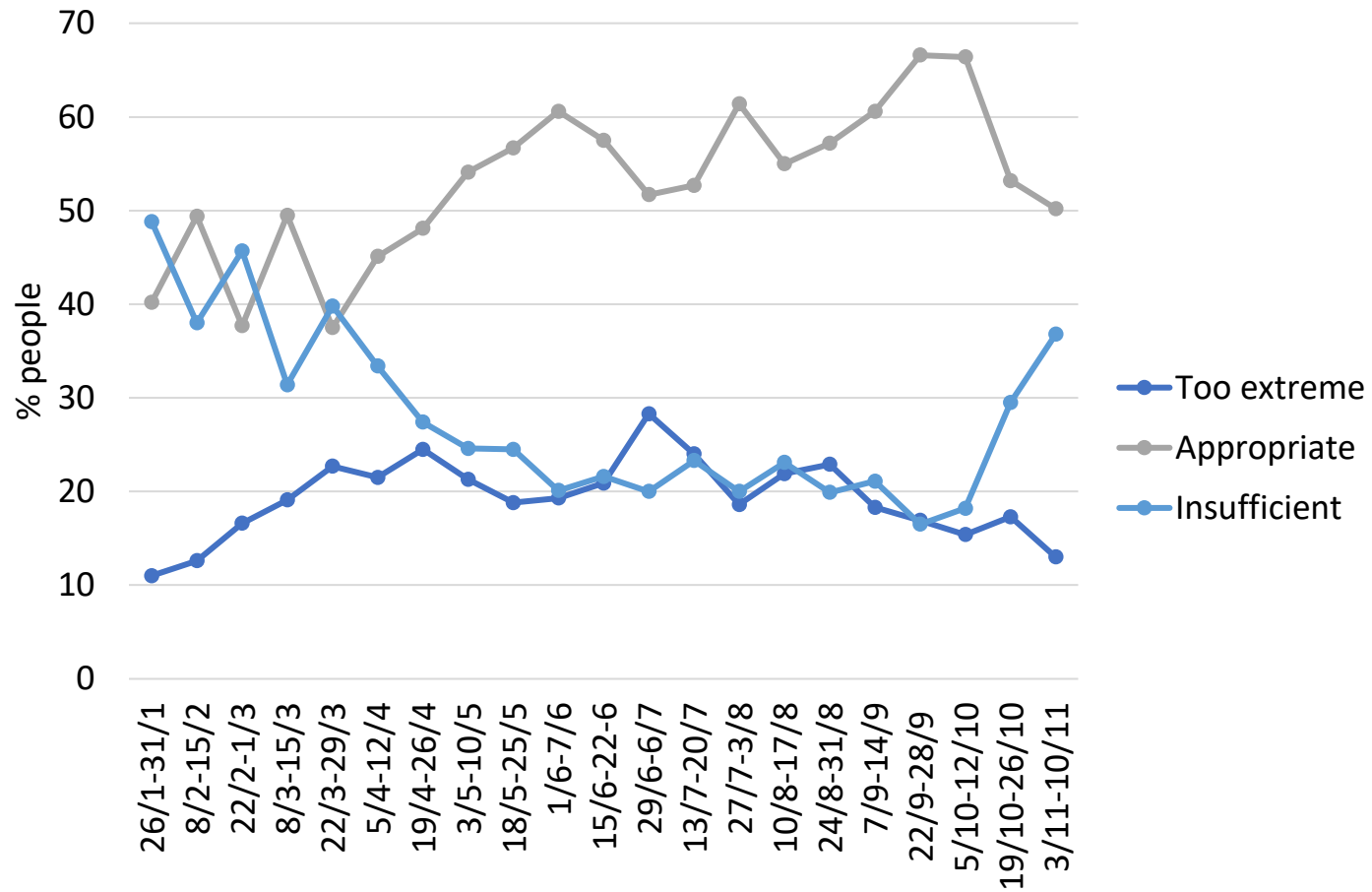


Just over 40% of the workers are going to their workplace less than before the pandemic, with almost half of these working entirely from home. Most of the rest have reduced the number of days they go to work by two or more.



Government Response to the Pandemic

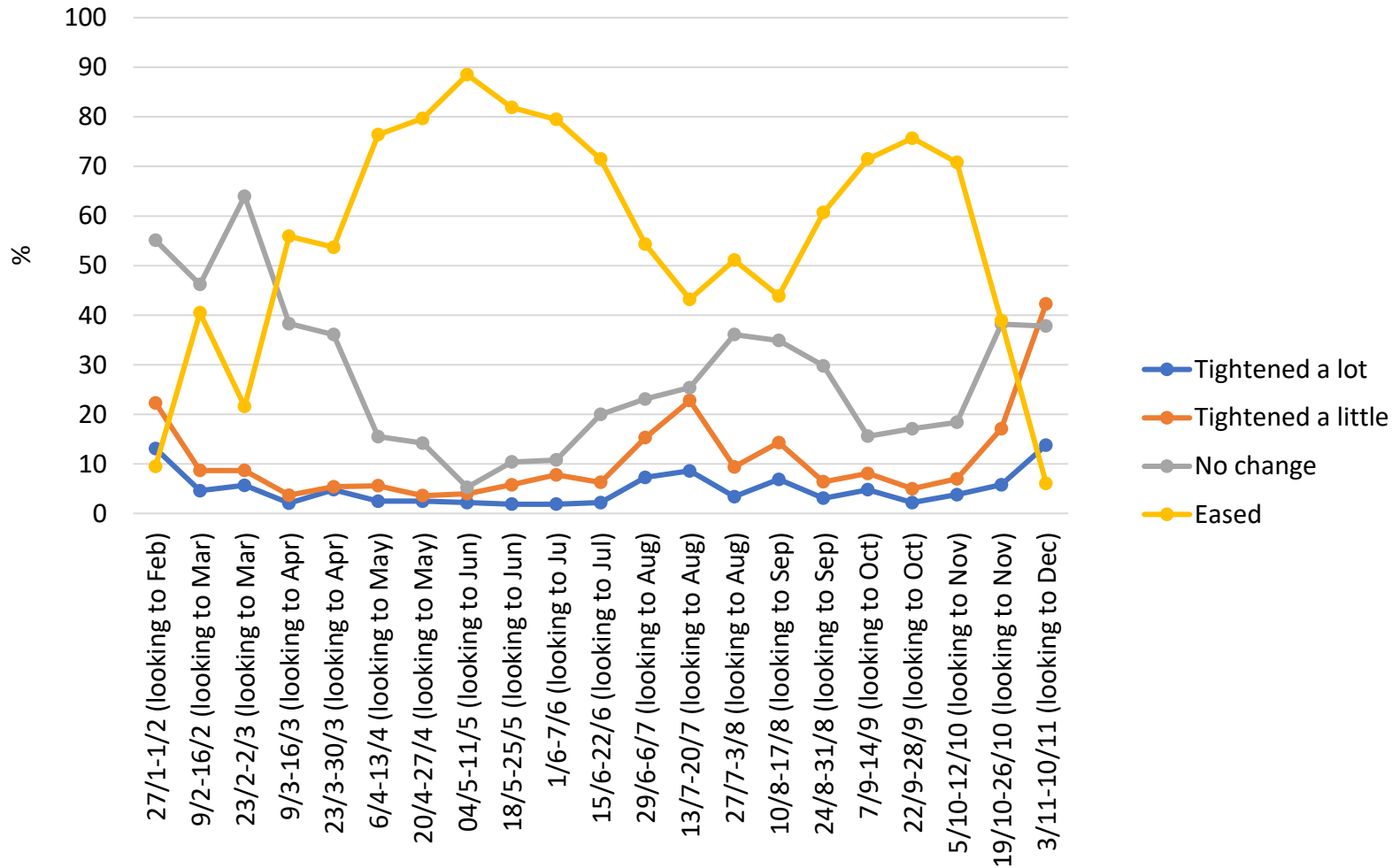
Government's reaction to the pandemic has been...



The proportion of people believing the response to pandemic has been insufficient climbed to its highest level since March.

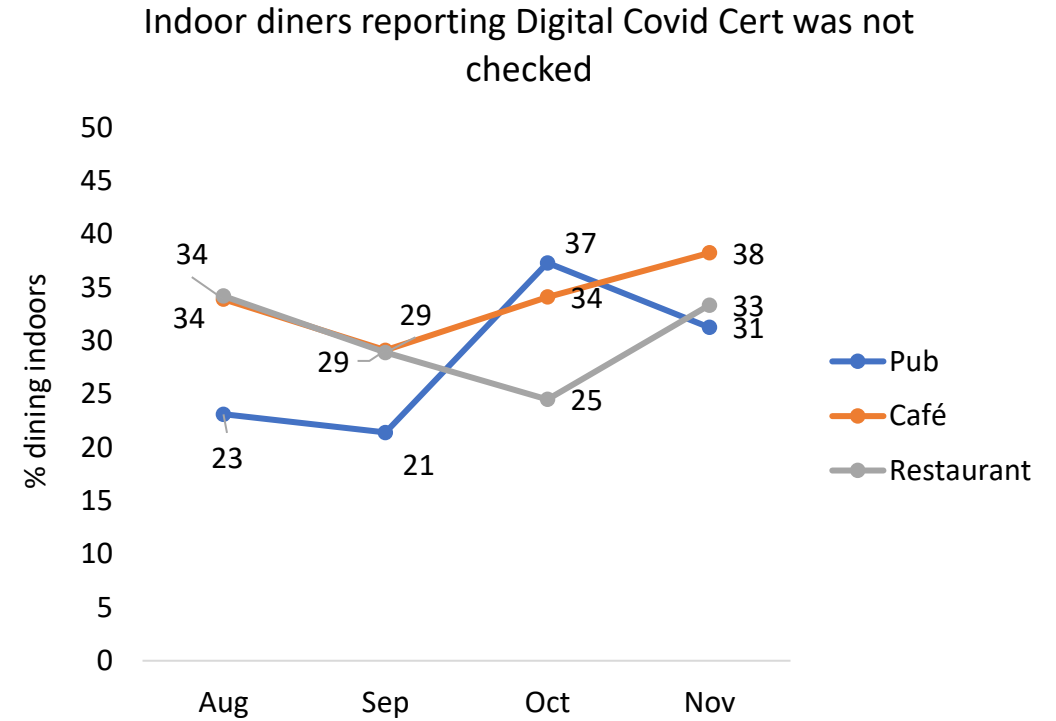
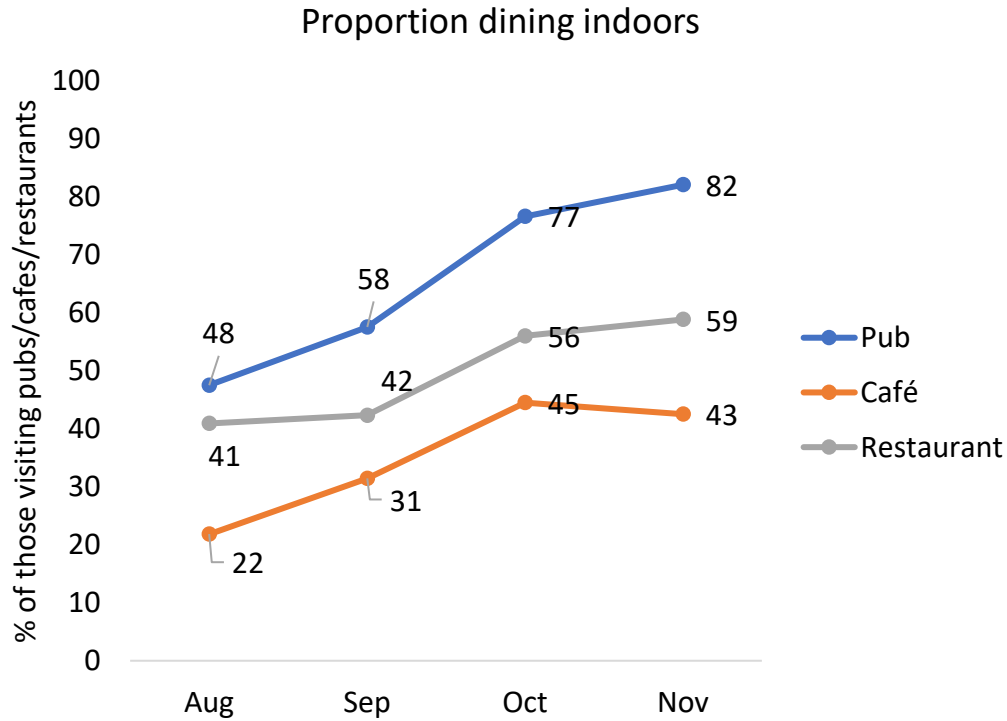


Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



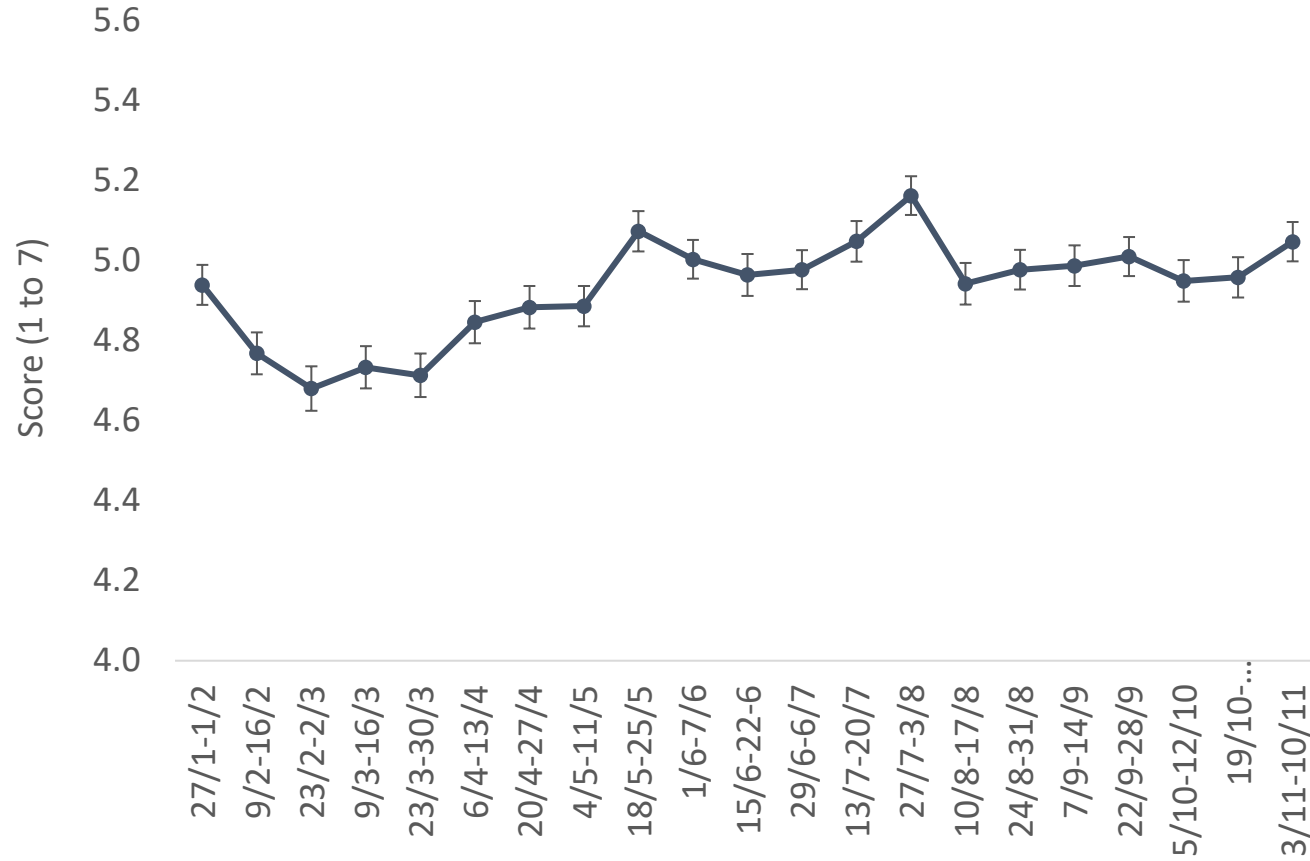
A majority of the population now expects some tightening of restrictions.

Hospitality – Digital Covid Certs



The proportion of people visiting hospitality venues and dining indoors levelled off. There was no statistically significant change in the proportion of hospitality venues checking digital covid certificates.

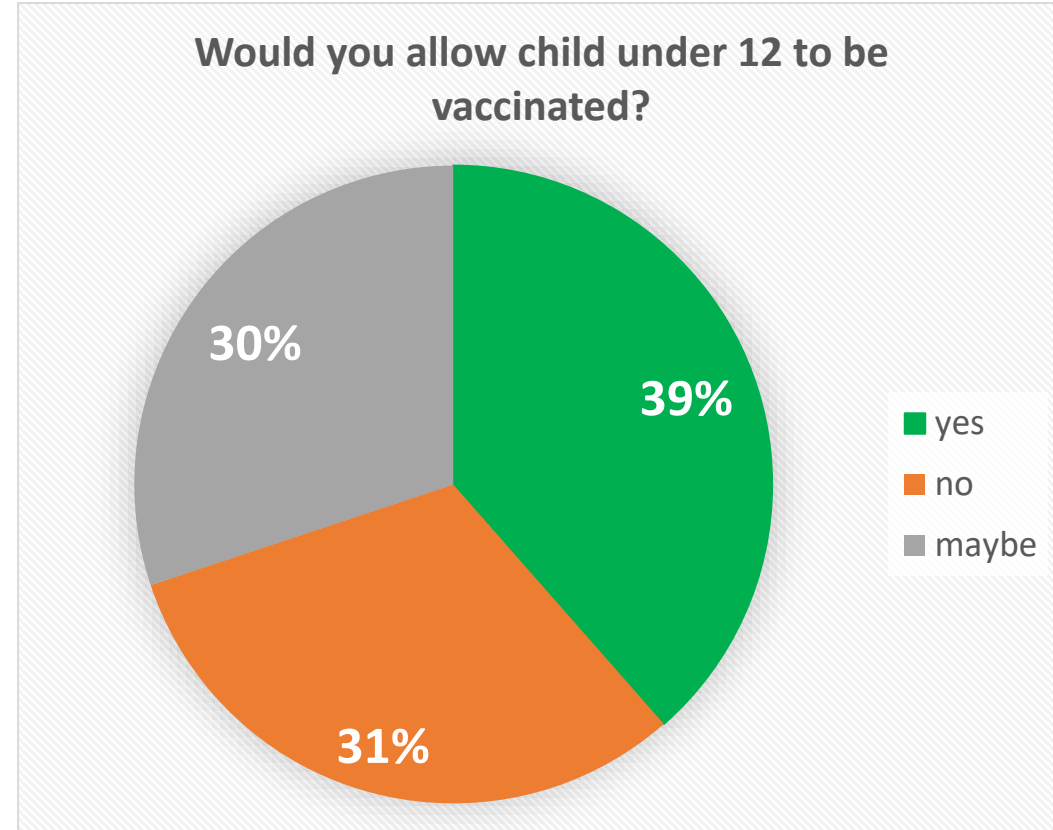
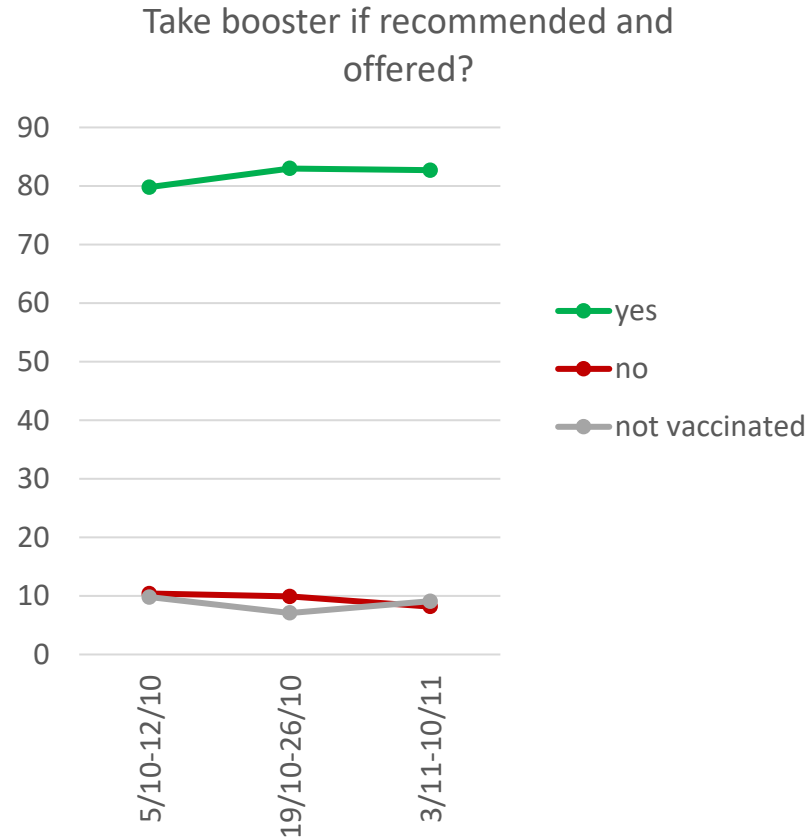
Wellbeing



Despite the increase in case numbers and expectation of returning restrictions, overall wellbeing has not fallen.



Vaccine Intentions



More than 80% of the population say they would take a booster vaccine if it was recommended and if offered one. Almost 40% of parents with children under 12 would allow their children to be vaccinated, but another 30% are unsure.