ESRI

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Social Activity Measure
Sep 22nd – 28th

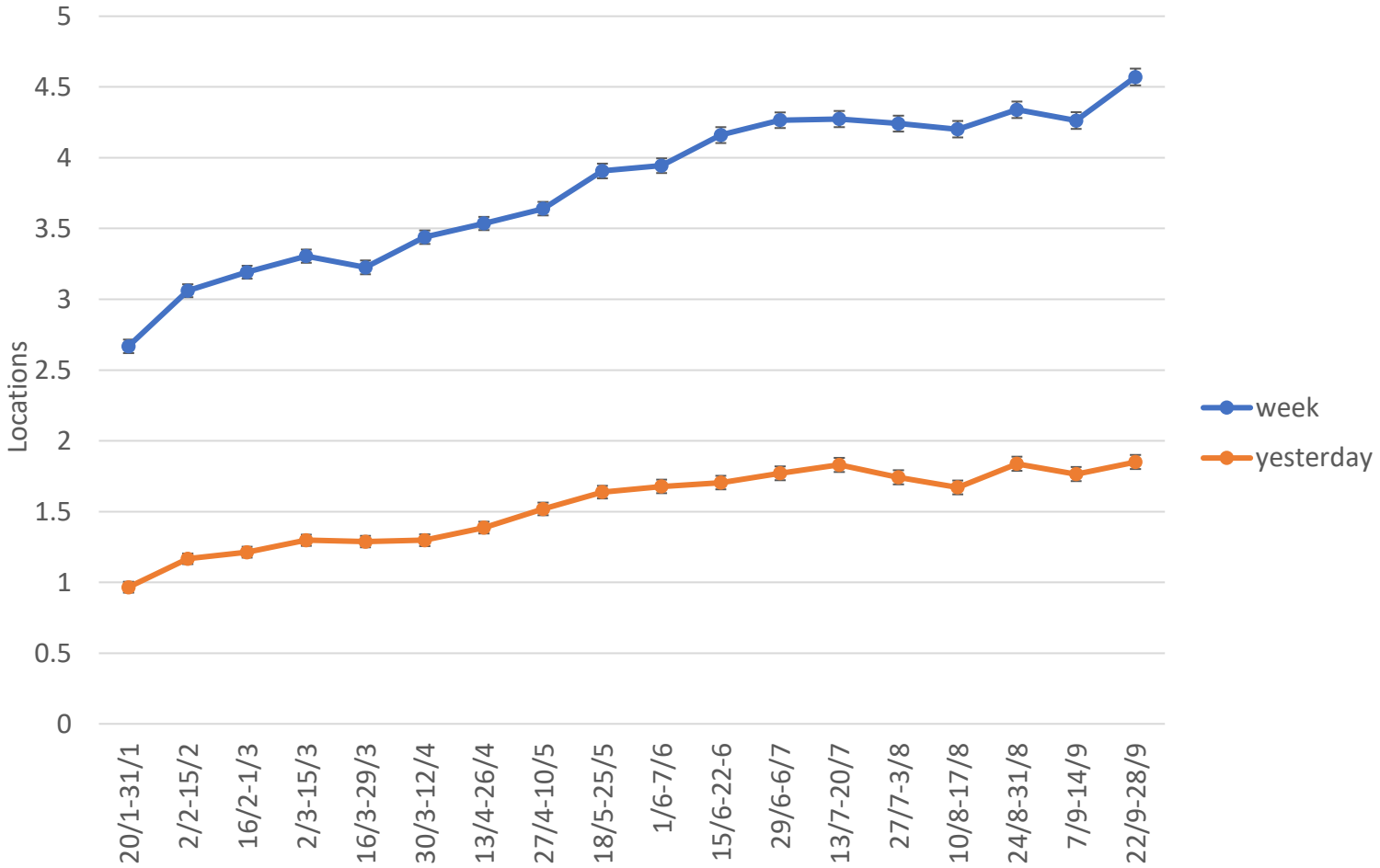
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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

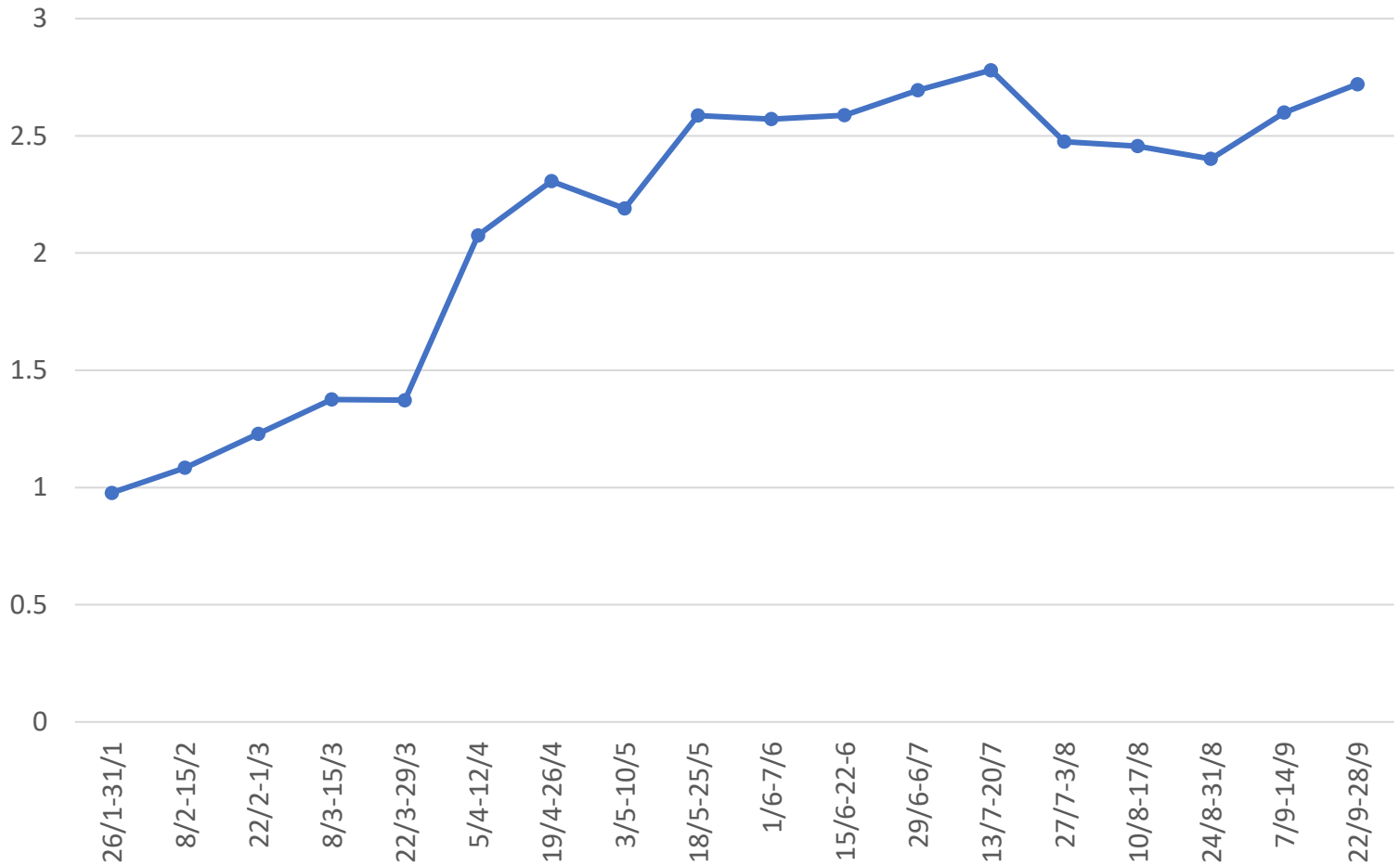
This slide deck presents results from a nationally representative sample of 1,000 people aged 18 and over who participated in the study between September 22nd and 28th. Data collection took place shorty after the beginning of a staggered return to work starting on September 20th. Restrictions on outdoor group activities were also lifted, together with some additional relaxation of restrictions on organised indoor events.

Total locations visited



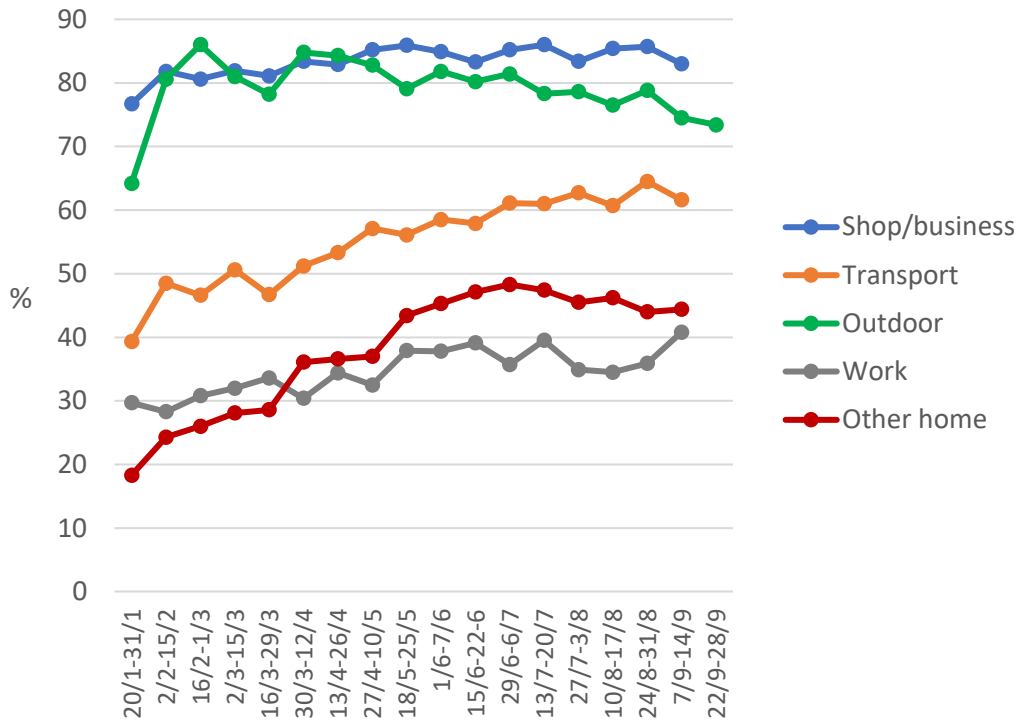
Overall activity increased, with, a significant rise in the number of locations visited over the past week and a more modest rise in locations visited the previous day.

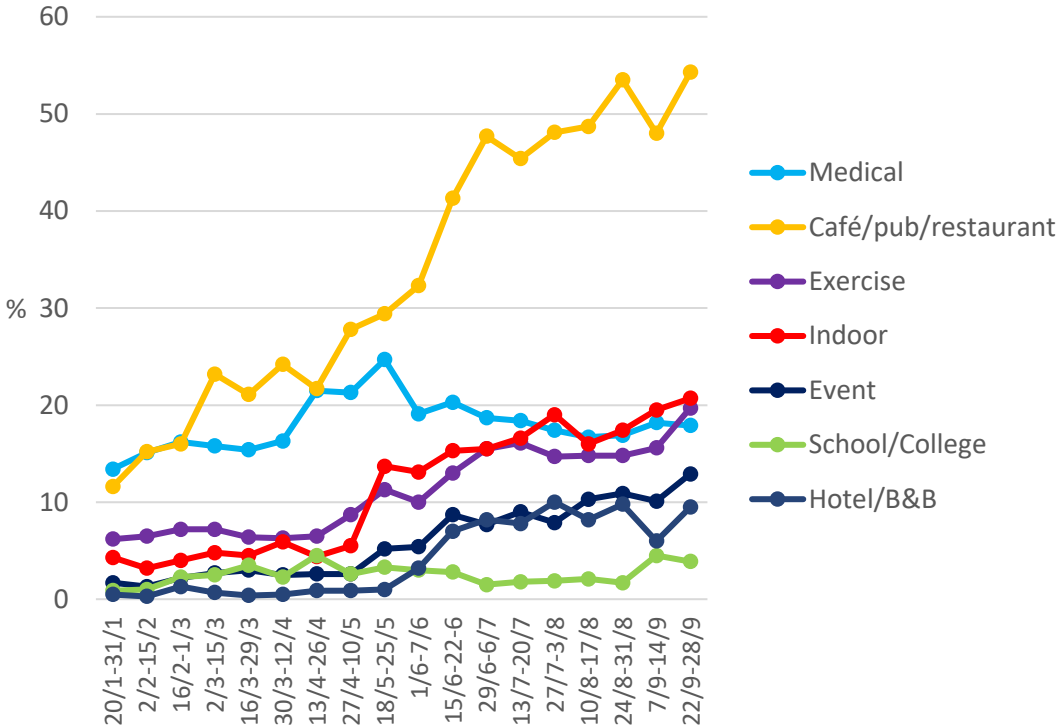
Index of overall activity



The chart shows an index of how much activity people are engaged in overall (how many places they go, how often and how many people they meet). The dip over the summer holiday season is now behind us.

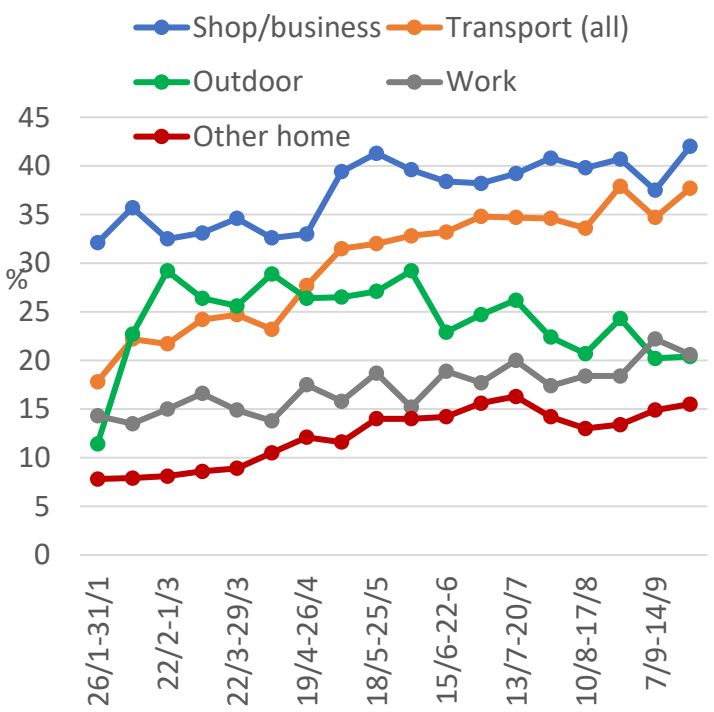
Locations visited (previous week)

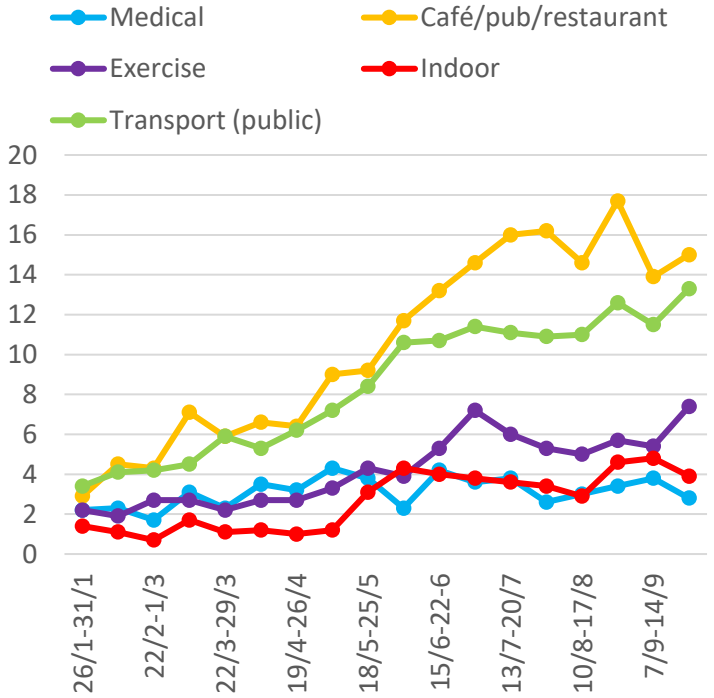


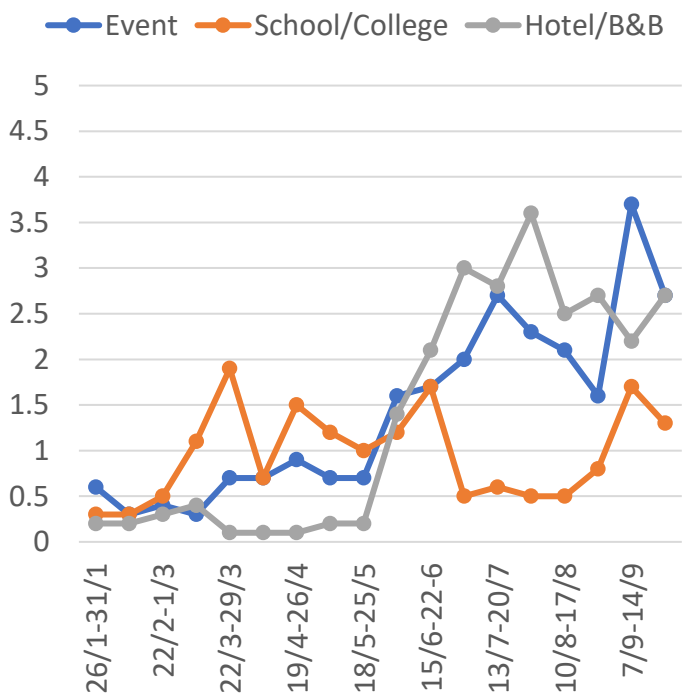


The charts show the proportion of the population who had visited each location at some point during the previous week. Note the different scales on the vertical axis. More than 40% of the population visited a workplace during the previous week – the highest level since January. Hotels, exercise facilities and café/pubs/restaurants all saw greater activity.

Locations visited (yesterday)

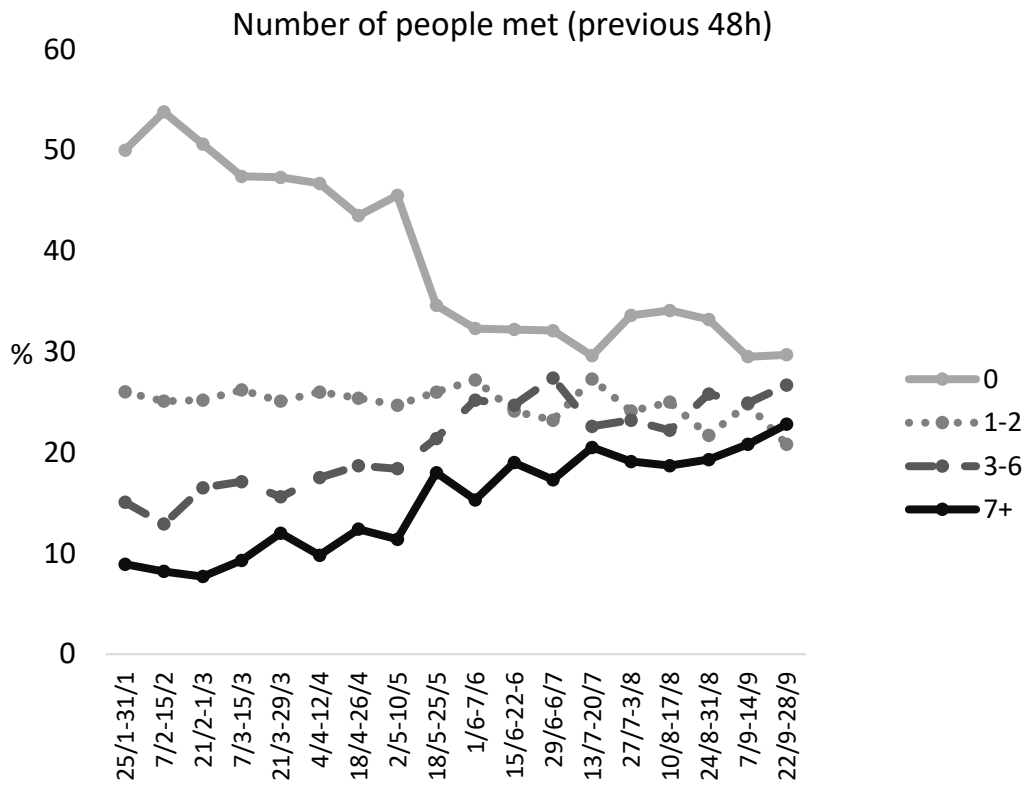


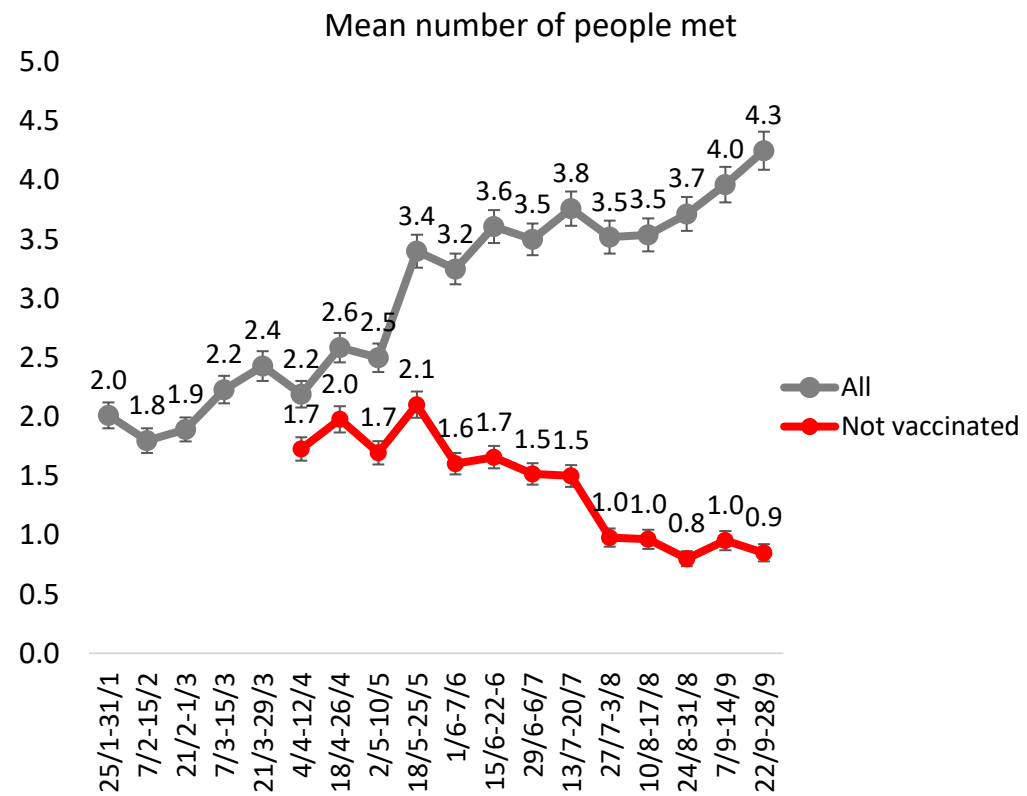




The charts show the proportion of the population who had visited each location at some point the previous day. Note the different scales on the vertical axis. Most locations saw increases in daily activity.

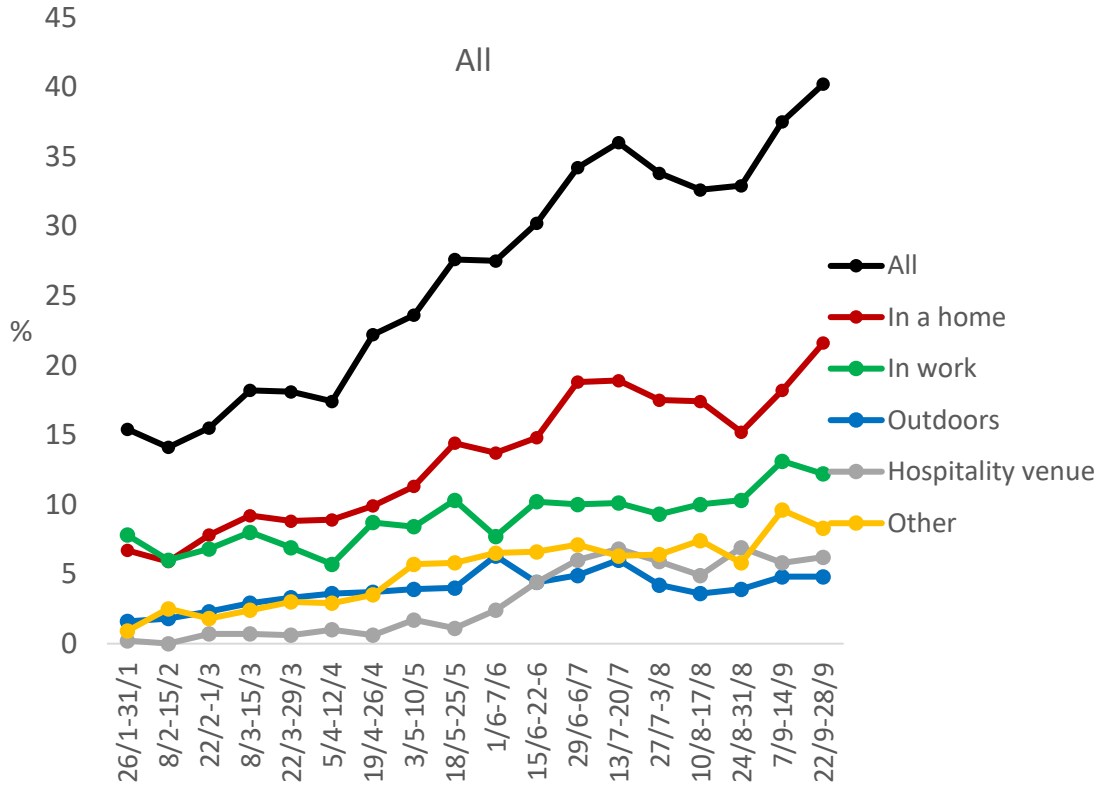
Meeting people outside the household

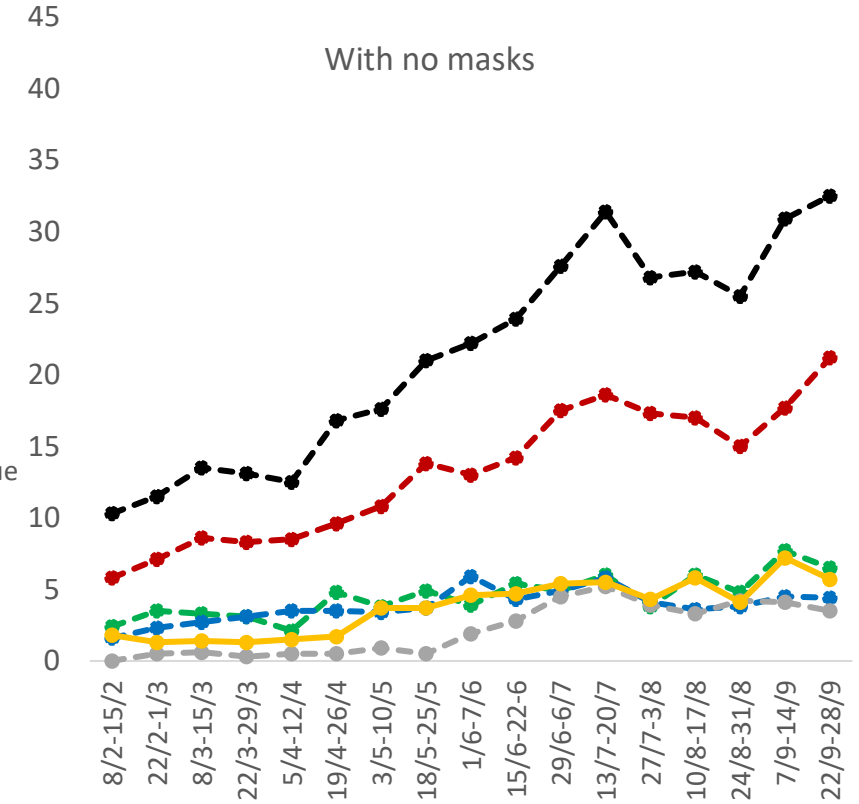




The number of people from outside the household each individual met continued its upwards trend, driven by a higher proportion of people meeting three or more people over the previous 48 hour period. The proportion who met no-one from outside of their household continued to be steady at around 30%.

Close contacts* (previous day)

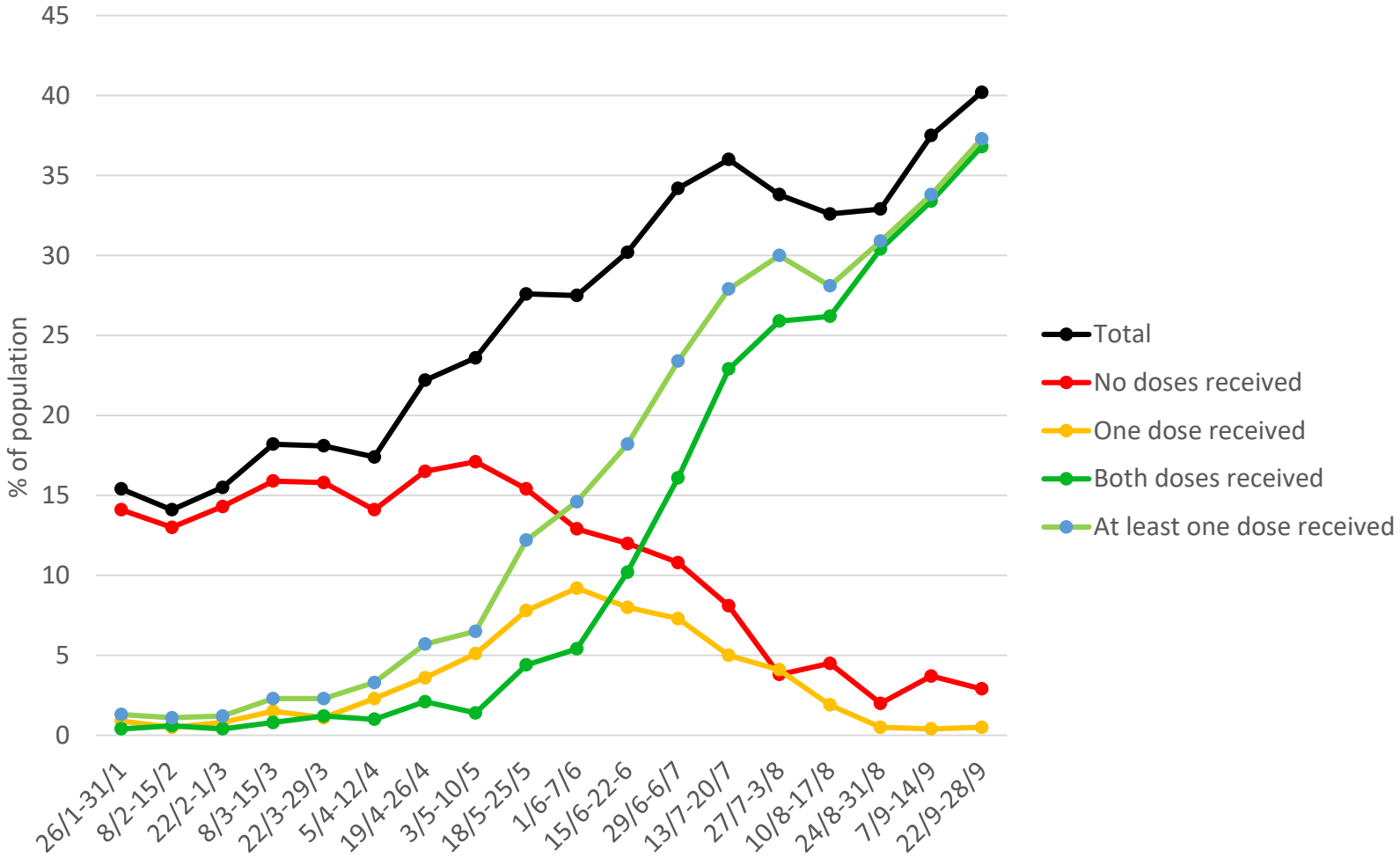




*Close contact interactions are defined as those that are likely to have lasted for longer than 15 minutes without a 2m distance being maintained at all times or that took place indoors for longer than 2 hours in a space that was not well ventilated (hse.ie).

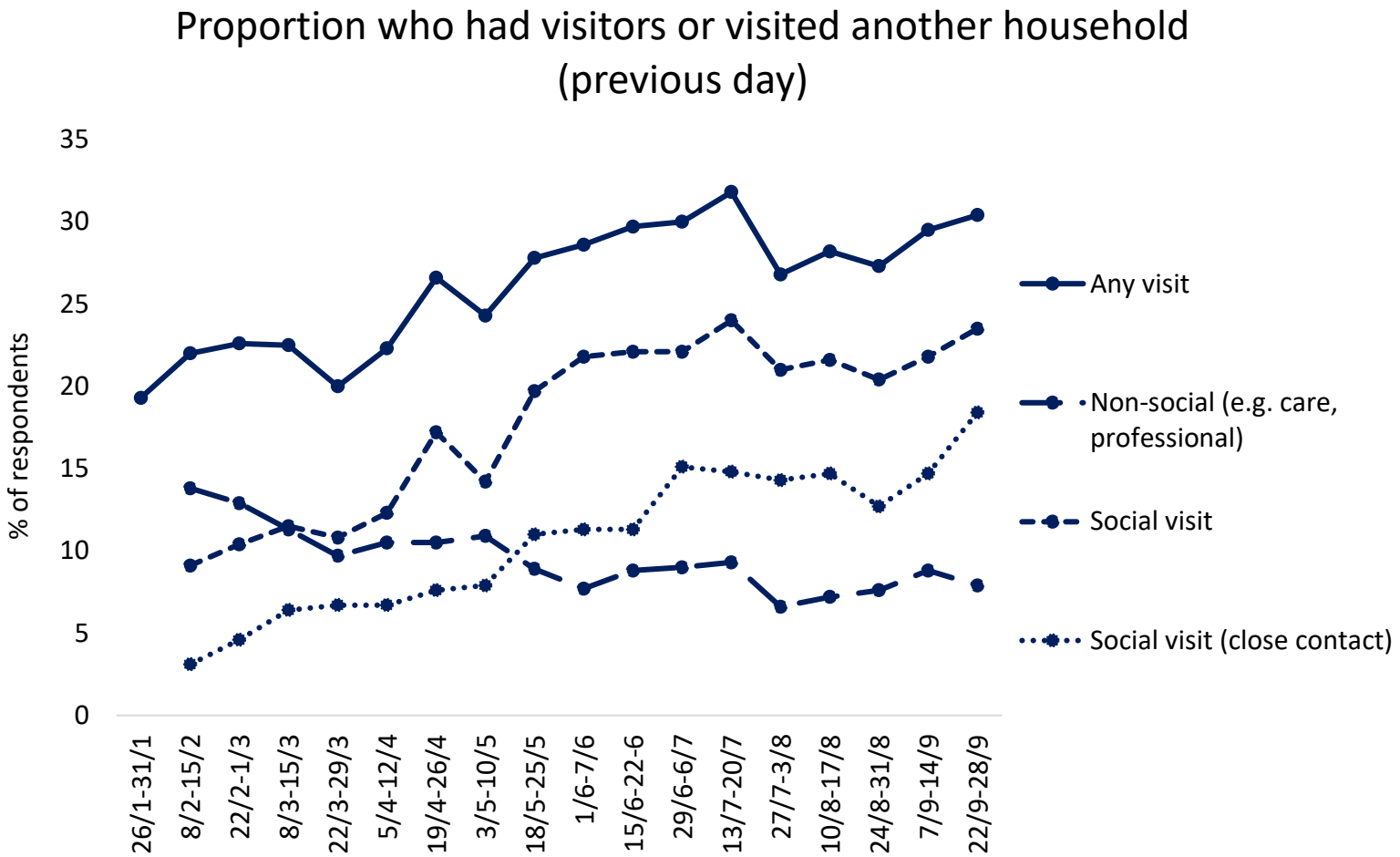
There was a further increase in close contacts compared to the previous wave, which reached 40% of the population each day for the first time. This increase was due to more close contacts during household visits.

Close contacts by vaccine status



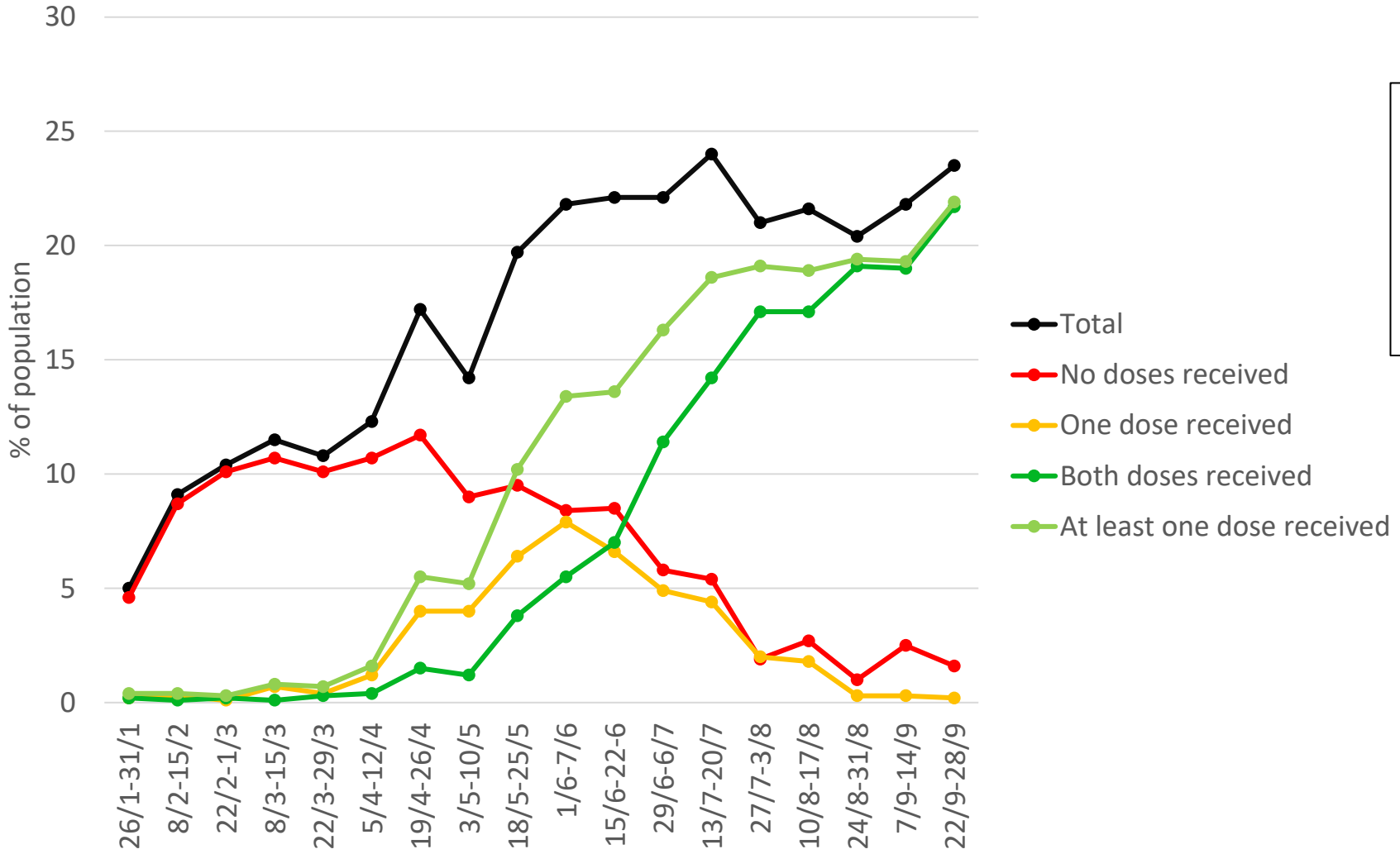
The increase in close contacts was entirely among vaccinated individuals.

Visits to homes



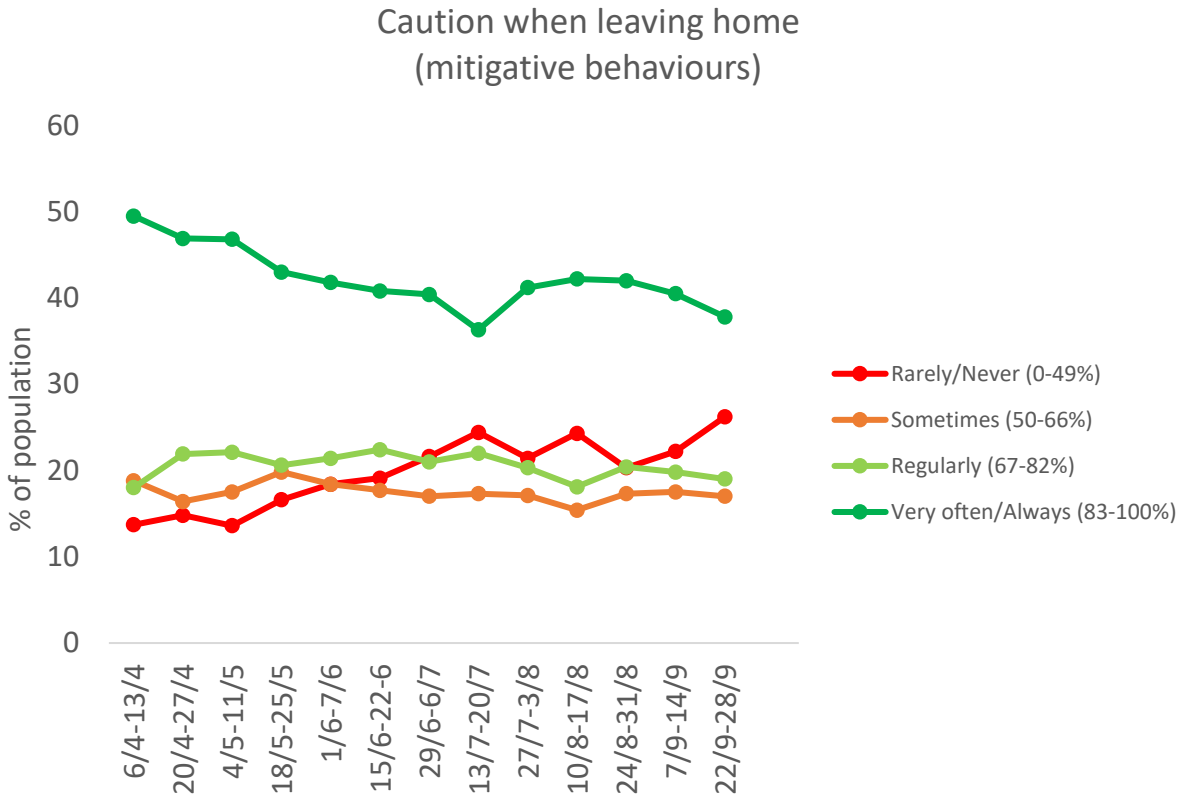
There increase in visits to homes was due to more social visits, with a higher proportion resulting in a close contact.

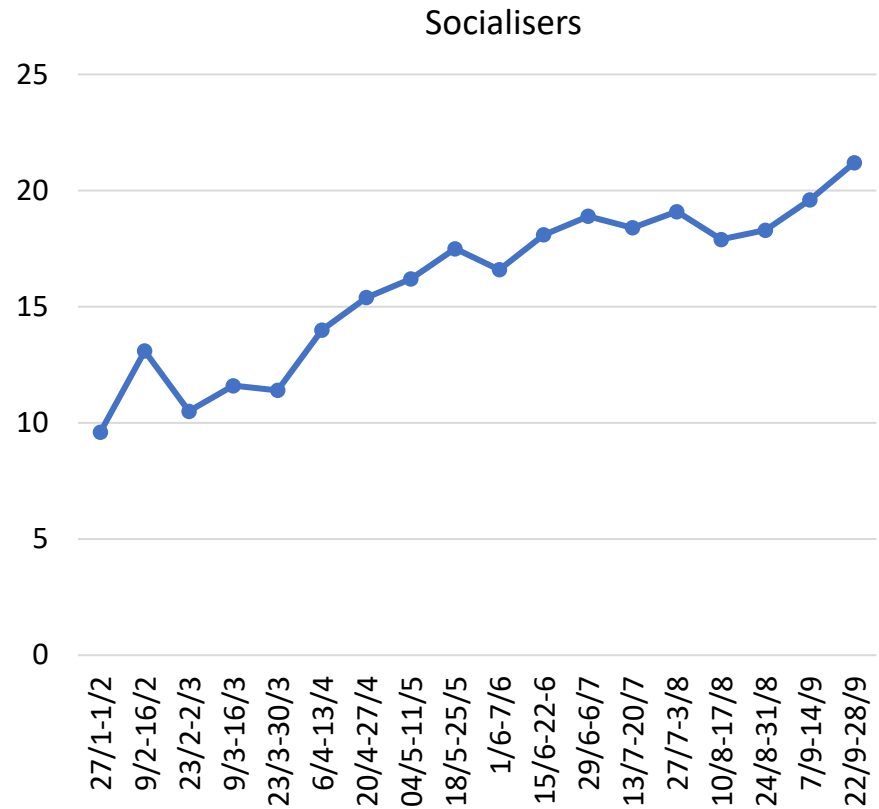
Social visits to homes by vaccination status



The increase in social visits to homes was entirely due to more visits involving vaccinated individuals.

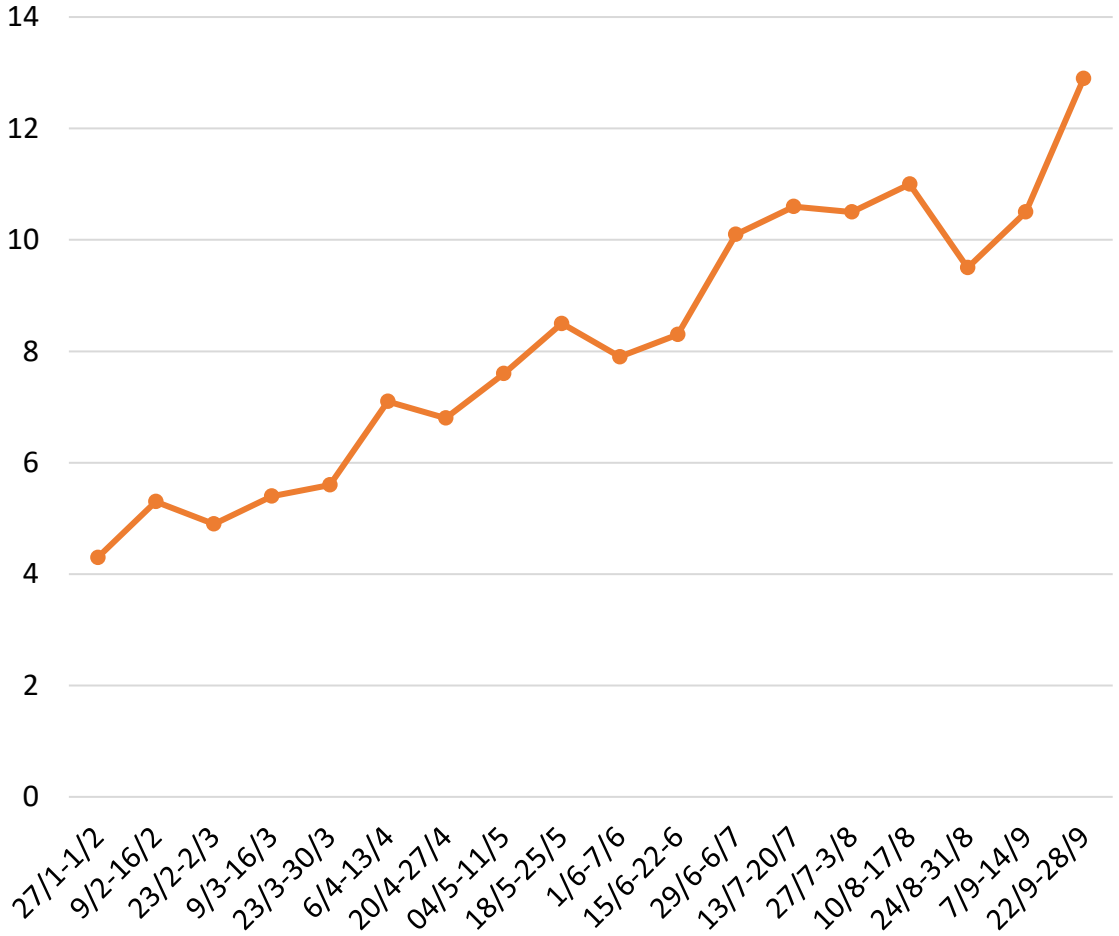
“Mitigators” and “Socialisers”





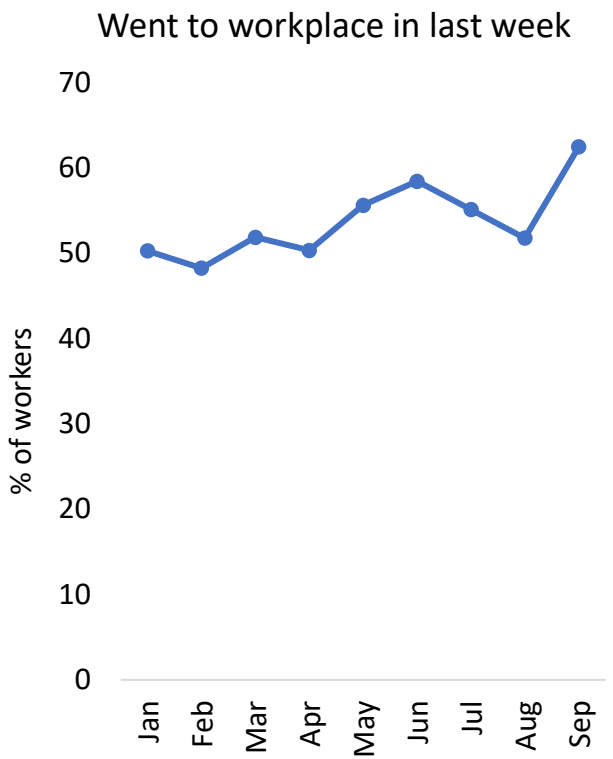
The proportion of people engaging in mitigative behaviours (keeping distance, washing hands, wearing masks) has decreased, with more than one quarter of people now taking these actions less than 50% of the time. More than 1-5 people classify as “socialisers” – people who go to substantially more risky settings than the bulk of the population.

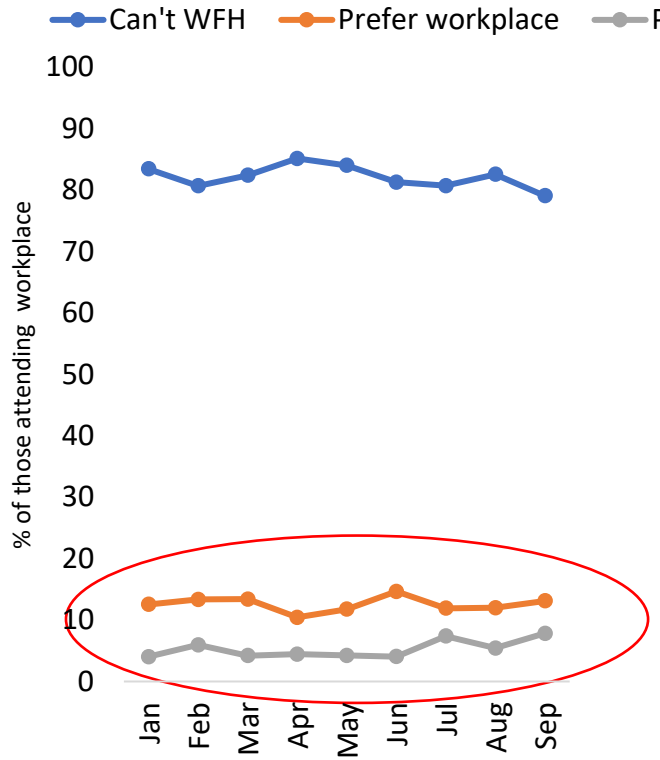
Non-mitigating socialisers

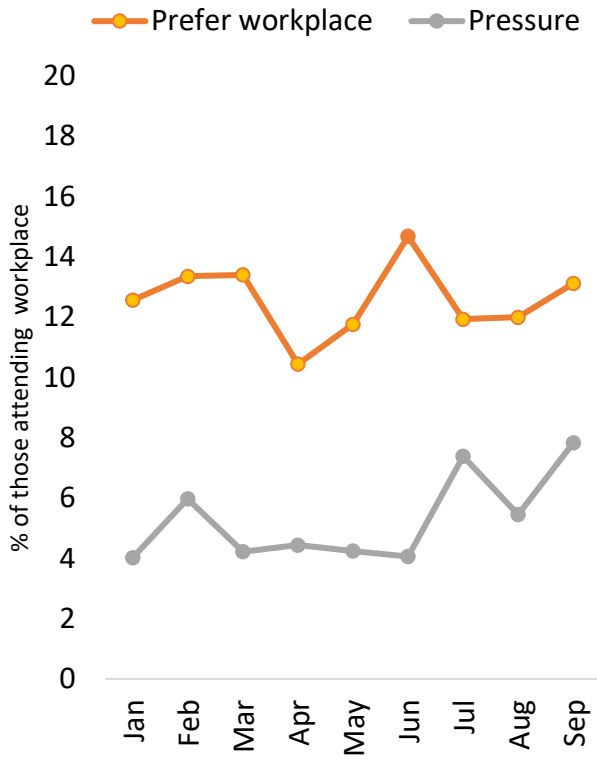


This chart shows the proportion of "non-mitigating socialisers", i.e. people who engage in a lot of social activity and rarely take precautions. The proportion of people falling into this category has increased.

Attendance at the workplace

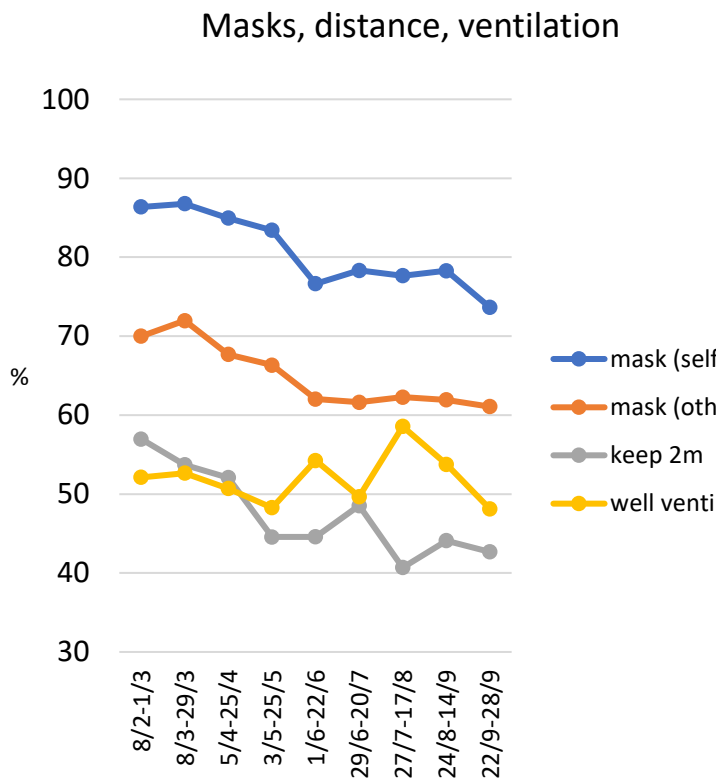


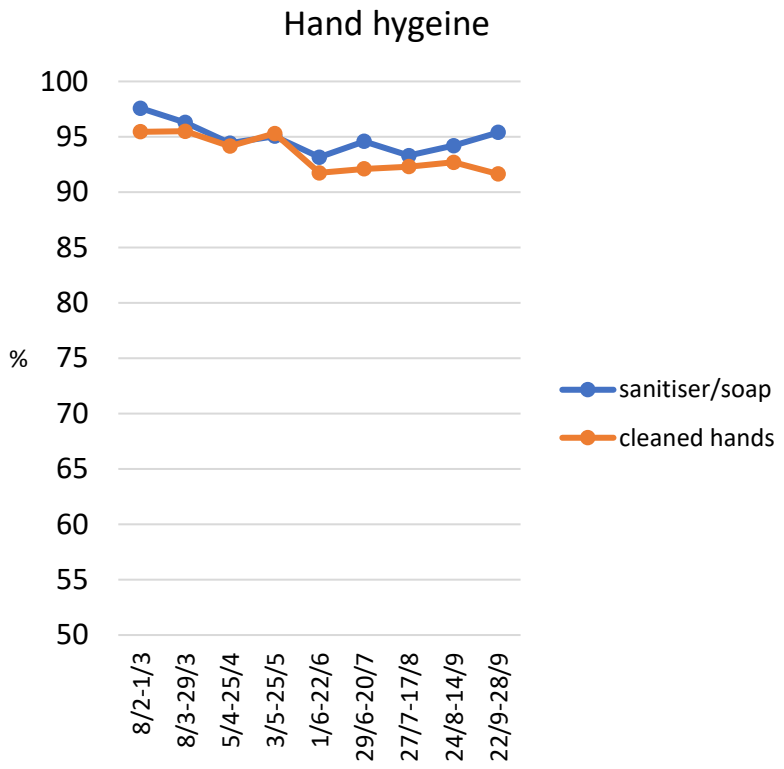


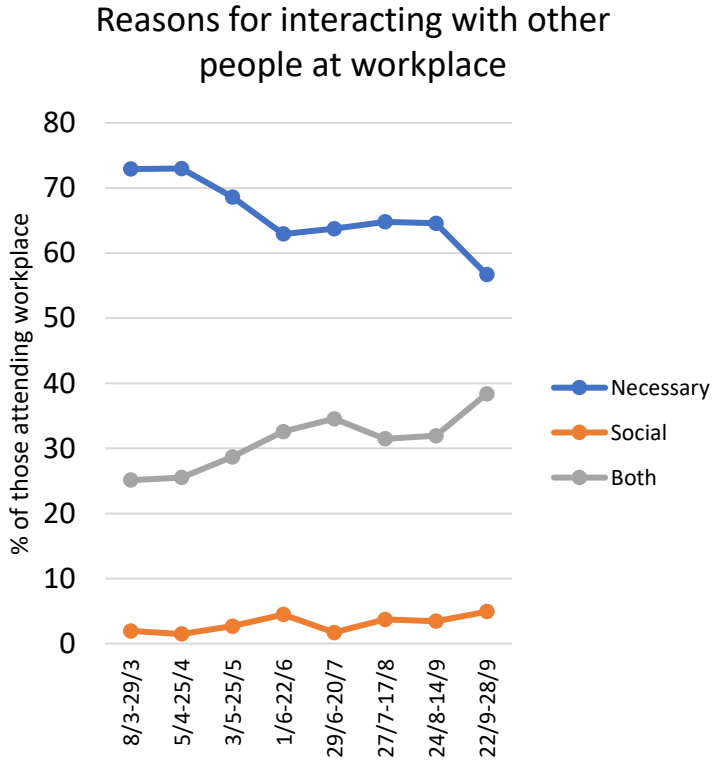


September has seen a sharp increase in workers attending the workplace. Those going to work mostly say they cannot work from home or prefer to be at the workplace, although there has been a modest increase in the minority reporting pressure to attend.

Mitigation behaviours in the workplace

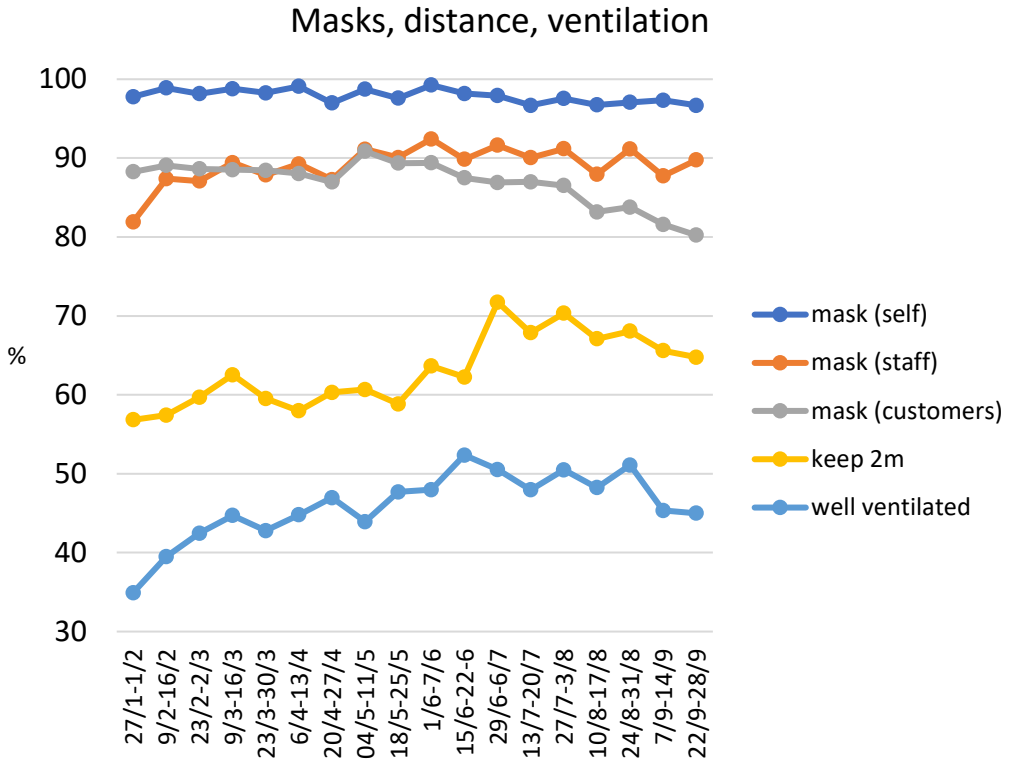


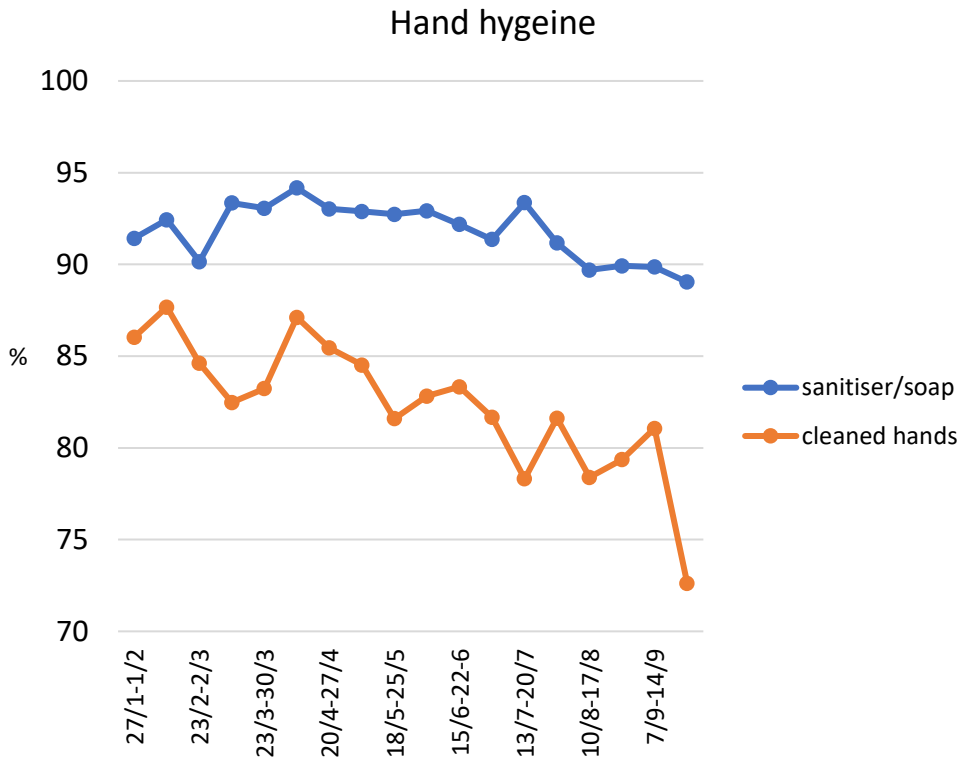




Overall, mitigation behaviours in the workplace have declined and social interaction in the workplace has increased following a dip during the Summer holiday period.

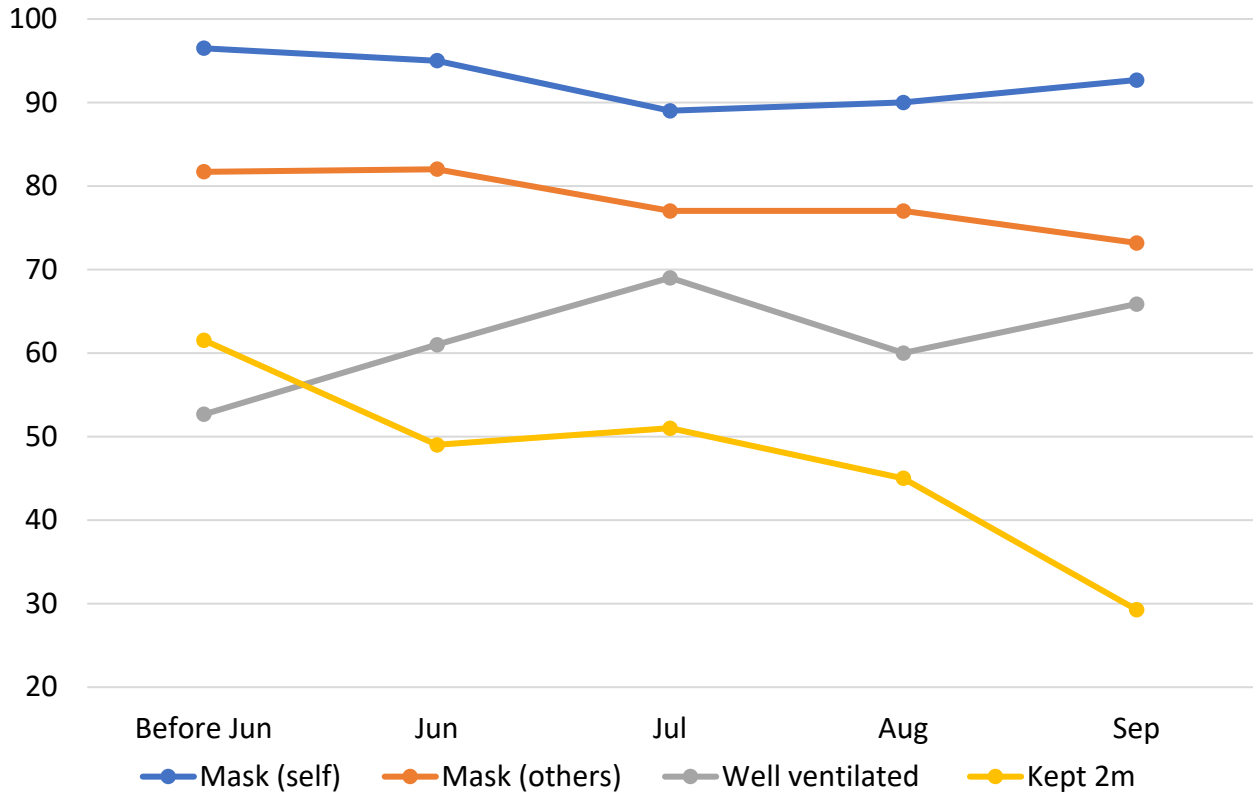
Mitigation behaviours in the shops





In shops, initial upward trends as shops other than food shops opened up have turned downwards, with lower reports of mask wearing, social distancing and good ventilation. There was a sharp drop during September in customers cleaning their hands on entry/exit.

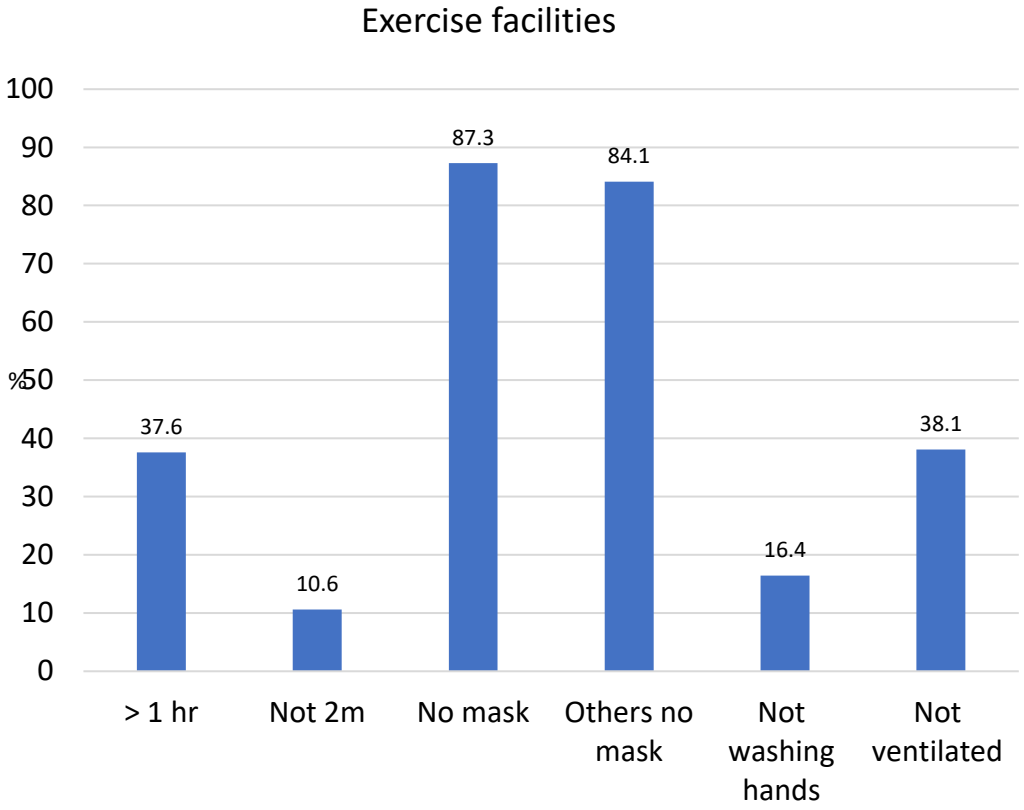
Mitigation behaviours on public transport

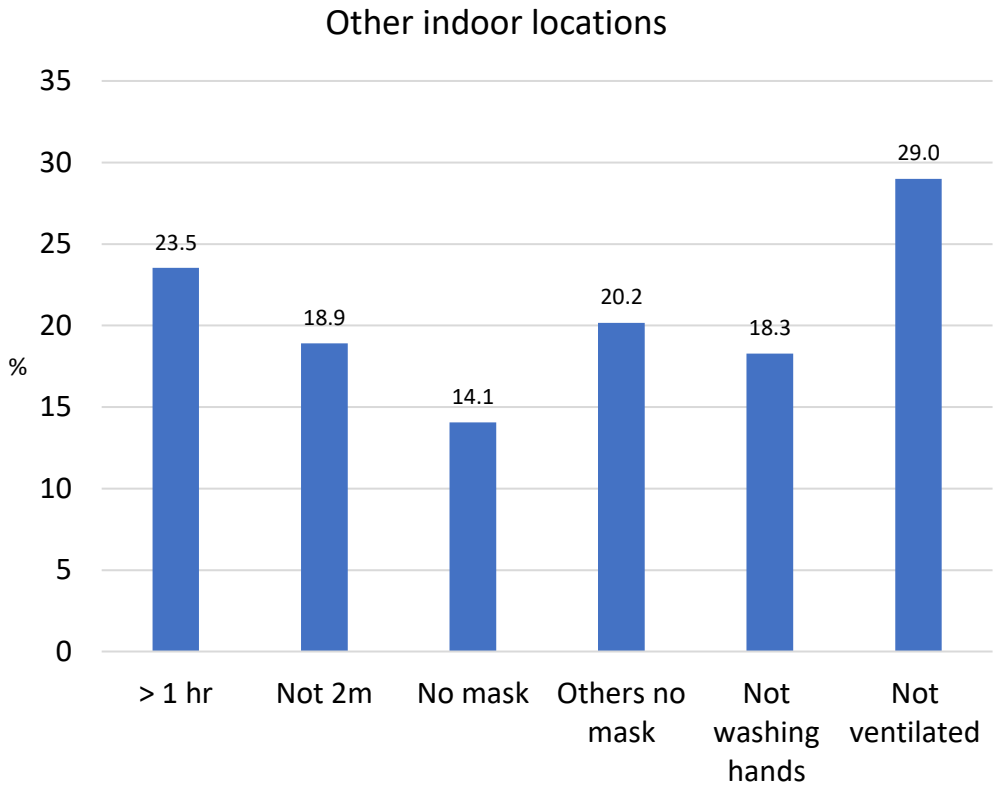


On public transport, social distancing and reports of others wearing masks have both fallen.

Mitigation in recreational indoor locations

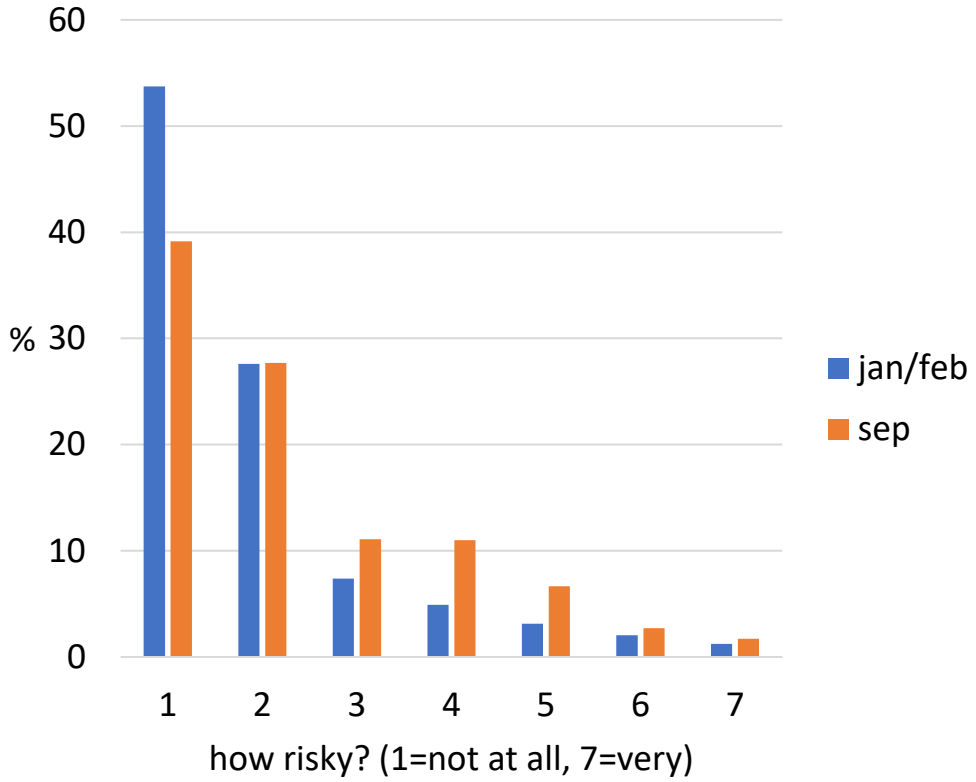
(not including homes, workplaces, schools/colleges, medical facilities, shops, hospitality)

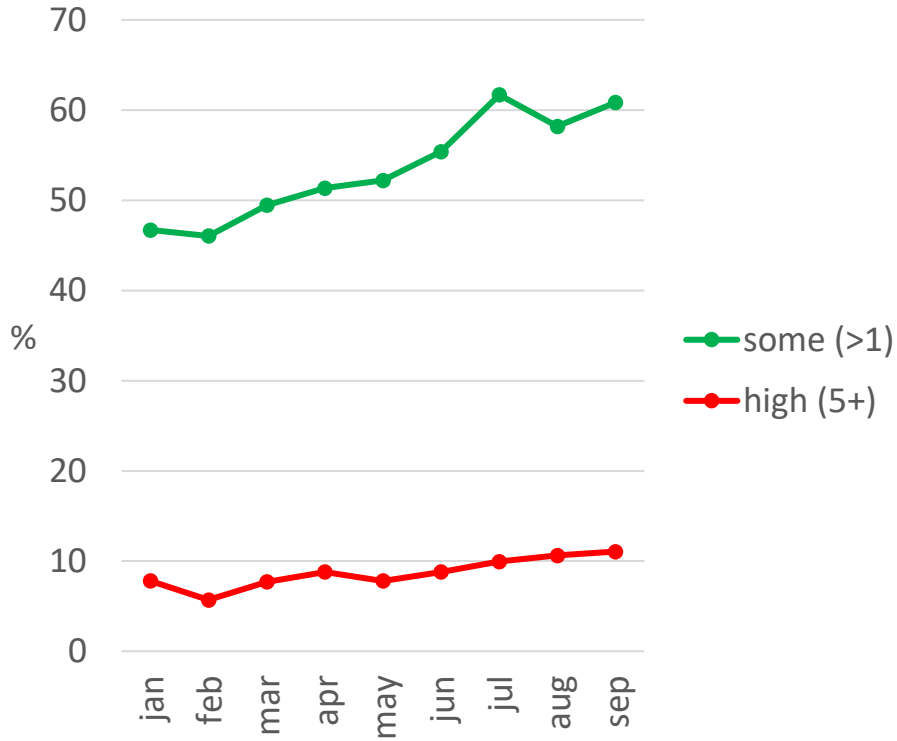




The left chart shows that the large majority who exercised at an indoor location did not wear a mask. More than one third of indoor exercise locations were reported not to be well ventilated. The right chart shows that the large majority of people wear masks in other indoor locations, although ventilation is reported to be an issue across indoor locations.

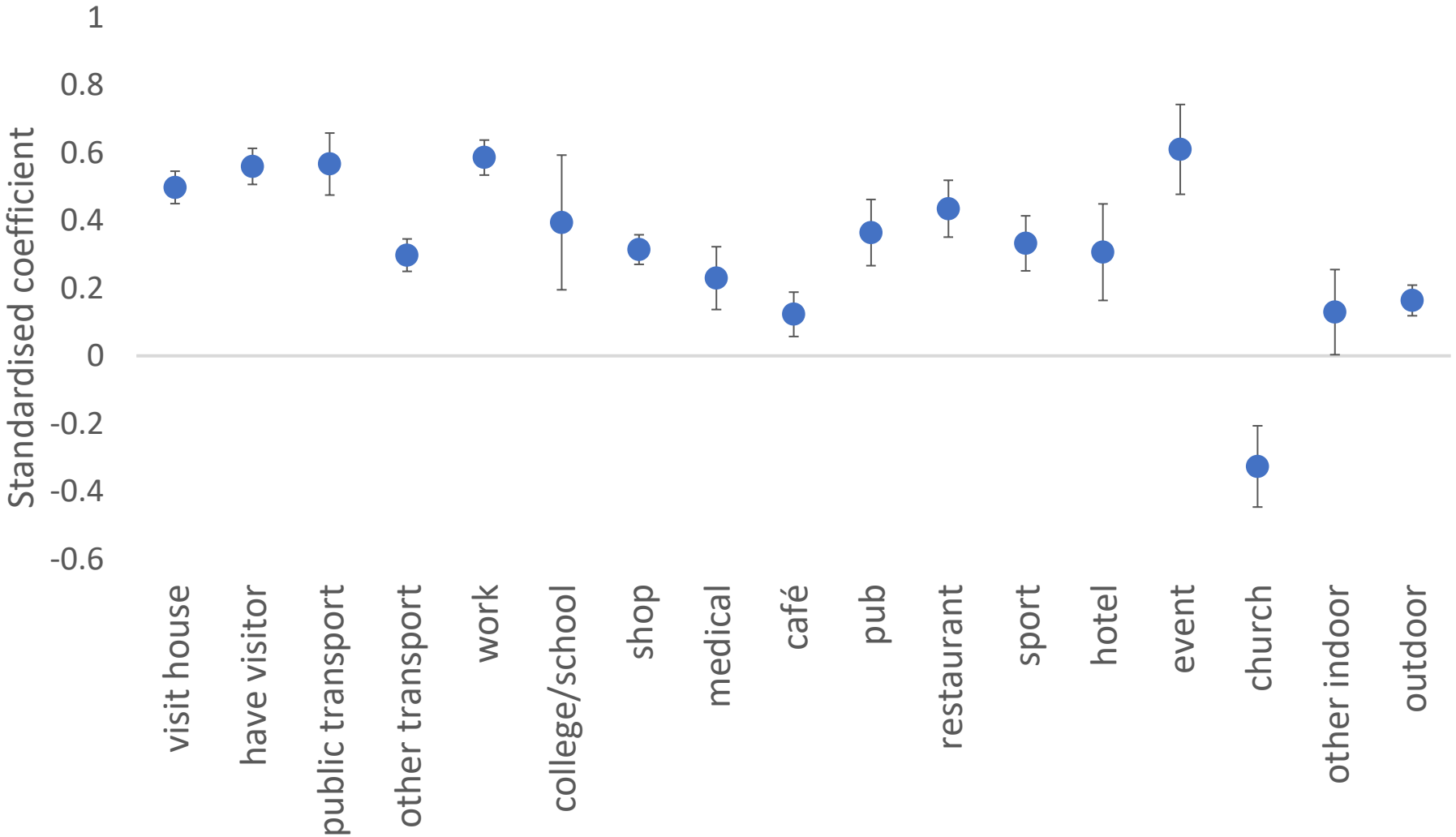
Overall, how risky do you think your behaviour has been over the last 2 days (in terms of contracting or spreading COVID-19)?





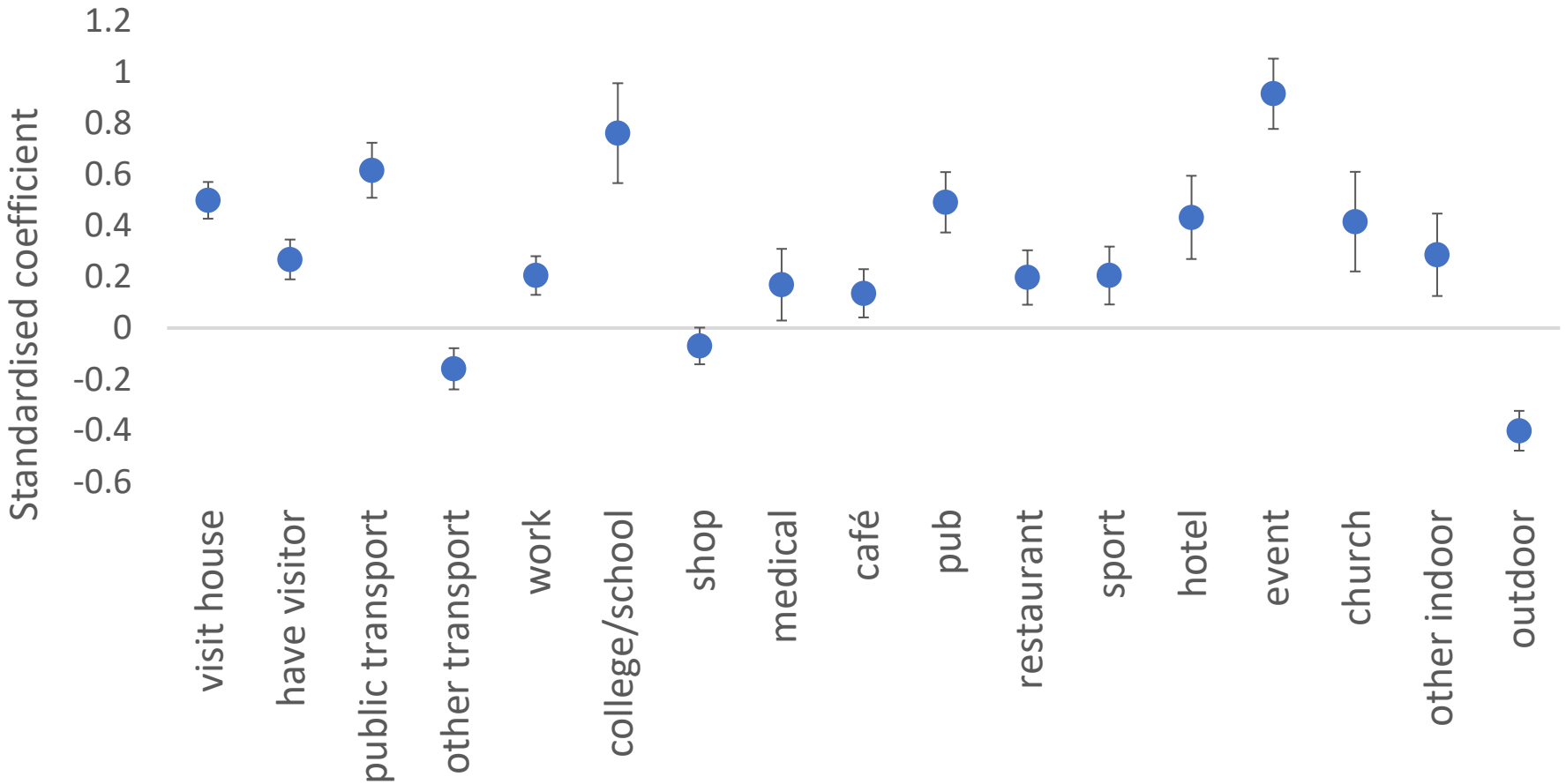
The left chart shows that people generally believe that their risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 is higher now than earlier in the year. The right chart reveals that most of this increase involves people who were taking very little risk now taking some, although more than 10% believe their behaviour in the previous 48 hours was high (at least 5 out of 7).

Likelihood of perceiving some risk (>1 out of 7) by location (data from May onwards)



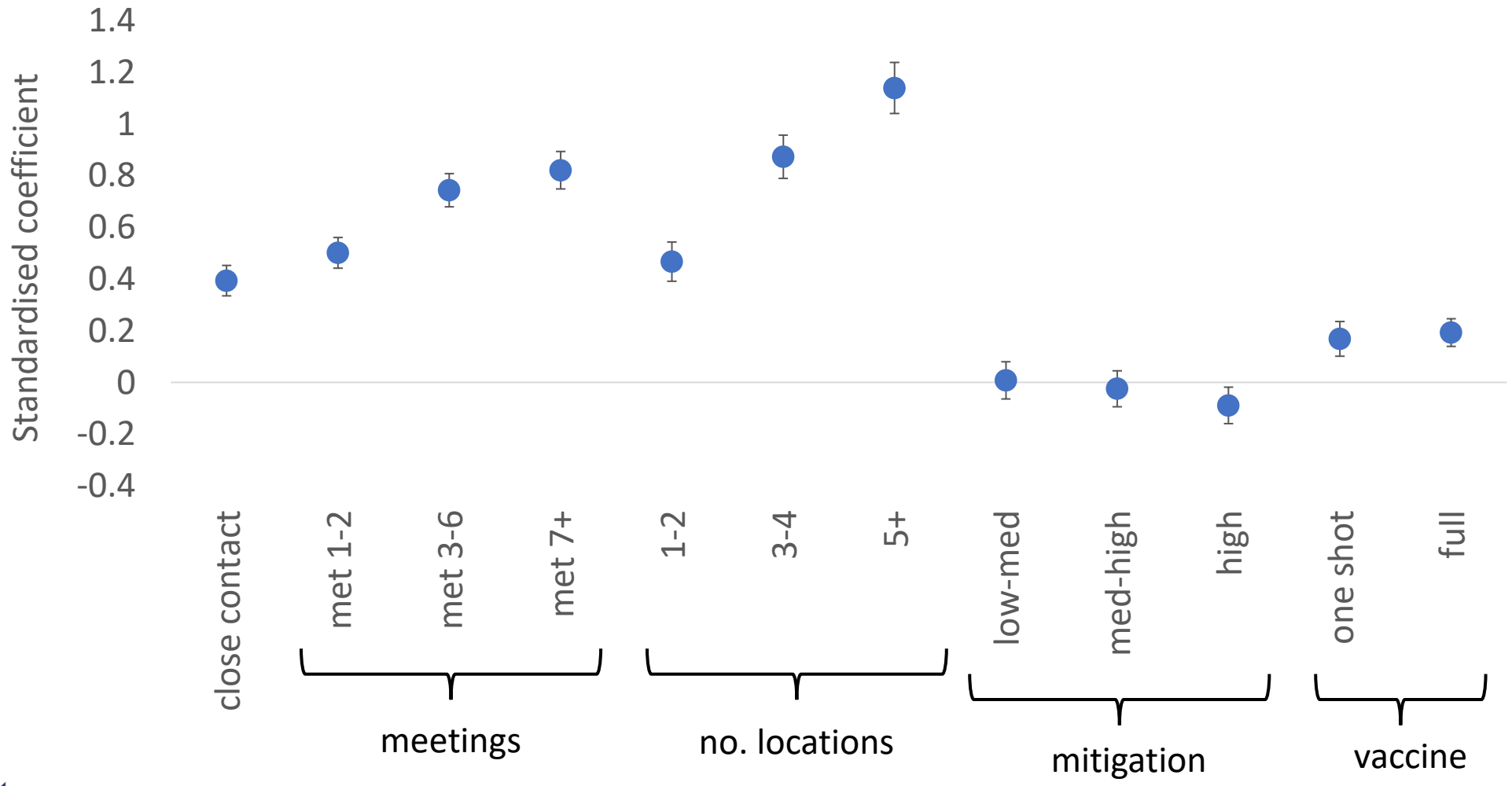
The chart shows the output of a statistical model exploring the relationship between visiting specific locations during the previous 48 hours and people's perception of whether they took any risk. Attending events (e.g. weddings, funerals), going to work, visiting other homes and using public transport are most likely to be perceived as involving some risk. Those who went to church appear to believe that it protected them from risk more than exposing them to it.

Likelihood of perceiving high risk (5+ out of 7) by location (data from May onwards)



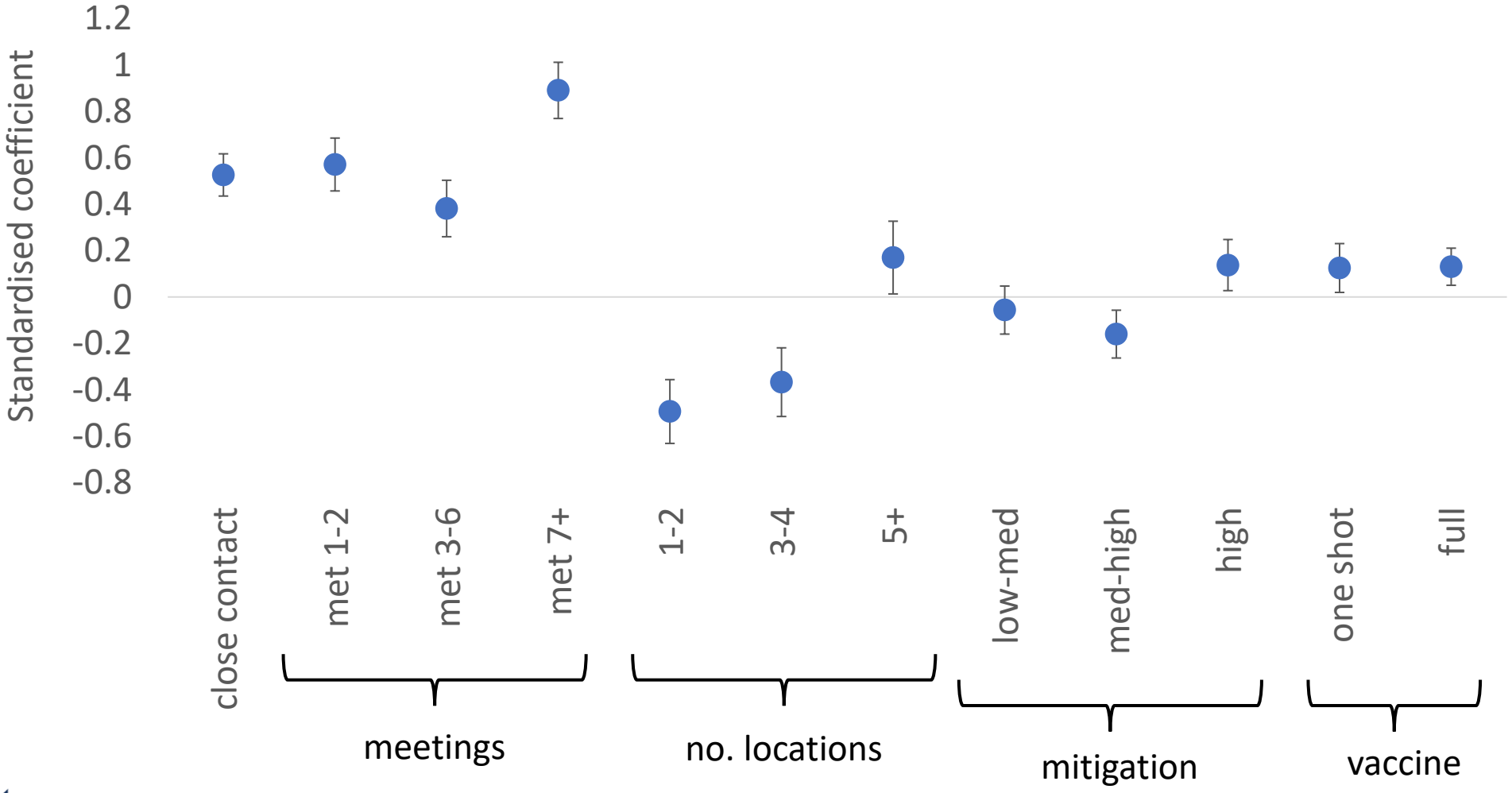
A statistical model of the relationship between visiting specific locations during the previous 48 hours and perceiving high risk (5+ out of 7) shows that attending events (e.g. weddings, funerals), going to college/school and using public transport are perceived as highest risk. The negative coefficient for outdoor activity may indicate that some people substituted outdoor activity for indoor activity and, therefore, that their risk was reduced.

Likelihood of perceiving some risk (>1 out of 7) by behaviour (data from May onwards)



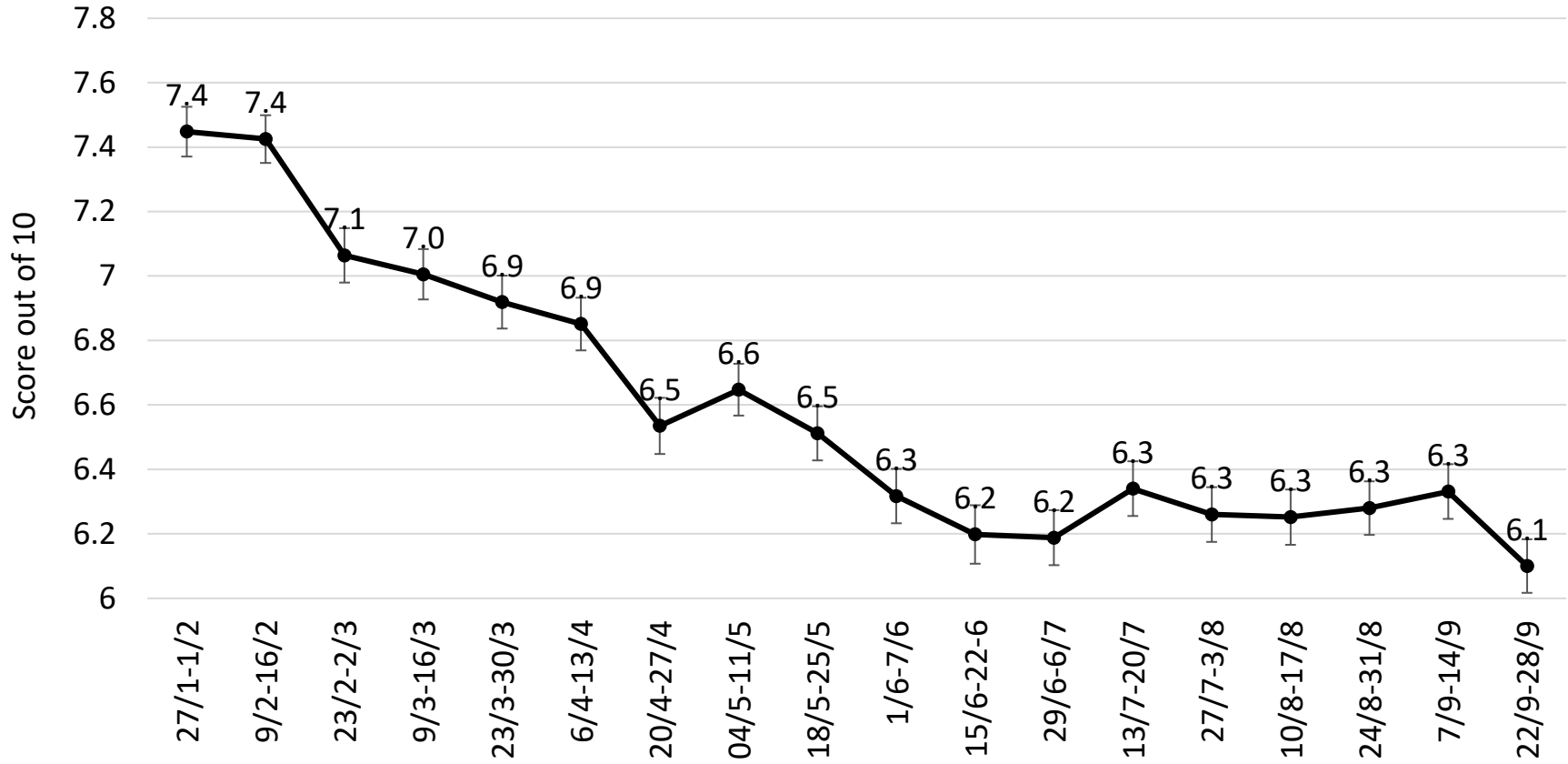
The chart shows the output of a statistical model of the relationship between behaviour during the previous 48 hours and people's perception of whether they took any risk. People associate some risk of catching COVID-19 with the number of people they meet and the number of different locations they go to, but perceive little impact of mitigation behaviours (e.g. wearing a mask, handwashing, keeping 2m distance). (The relationship with having had the vaccine is not straightforward to interpret, since people who perceive more risk are more likely to take the vaccine).

Likelihood of perceiving high risk (>5 out of 7) by behaviour (data from May onwards)



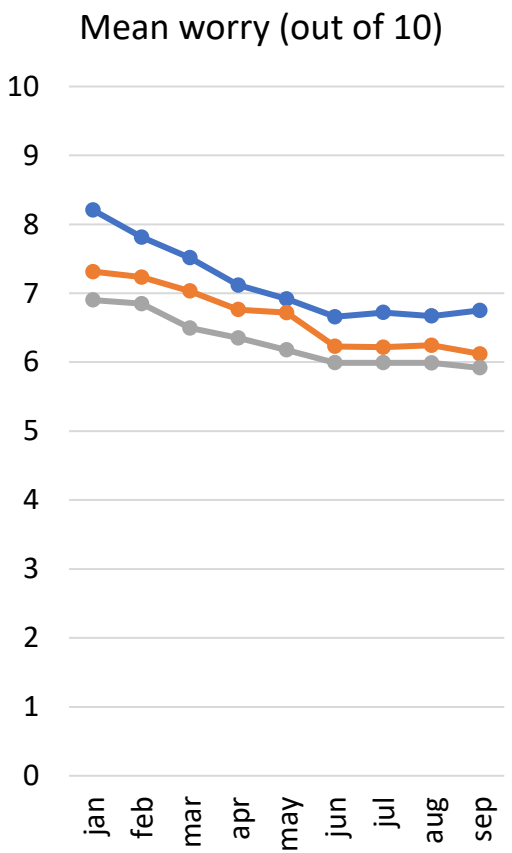
The chart shows the output of a statistical model of the relationship between behaviour during the previous 48 hours and perceiving high risk (5+ out of 7). People primarily associate high risk with the number of people they meet and number of locations they visit, with little account taken of mitigation behaviours. (The relationship with having had the vaccine is not straightforward to interpret, since people who perceive more risk are more likely to take the vaccine).

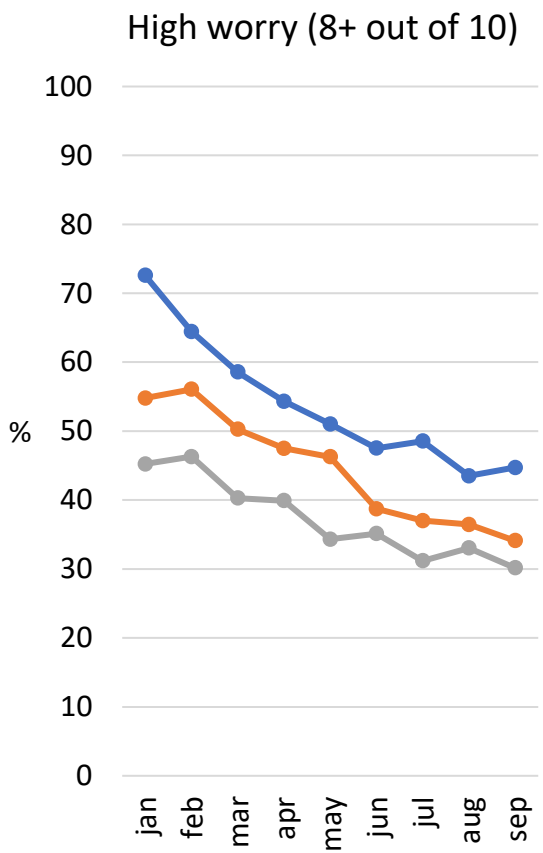
Worry

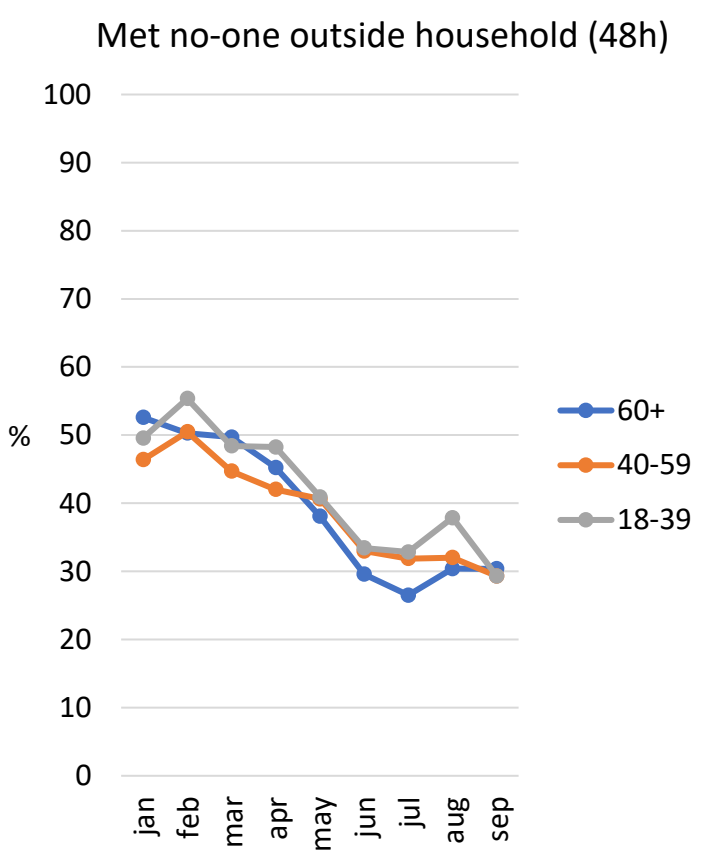


The average level of overall worry about COVID-19 fell to its lowest level since January. However, this average masks large individual differences, with one third of the population giving a score of 8 or more out of 10.

Overall worry and meeting people by age

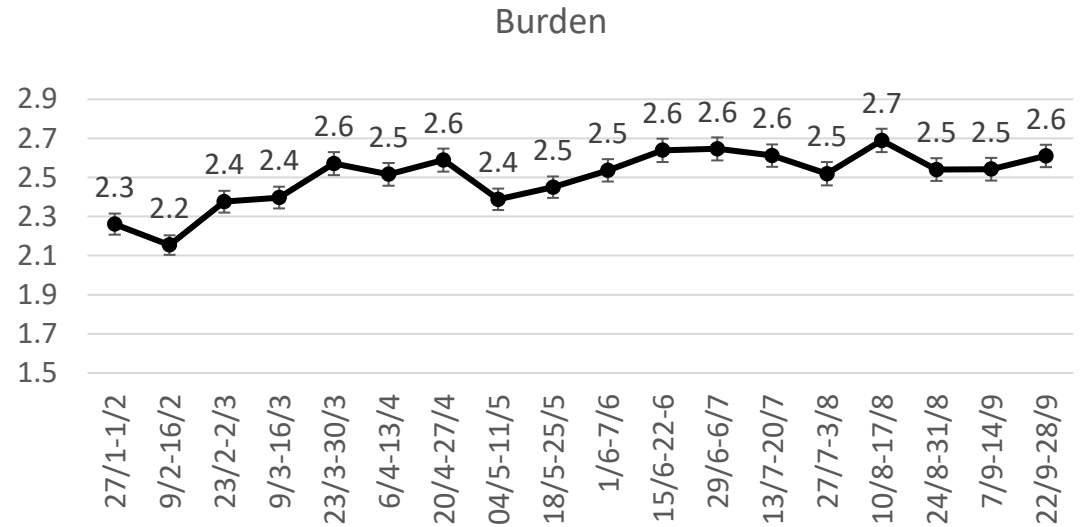


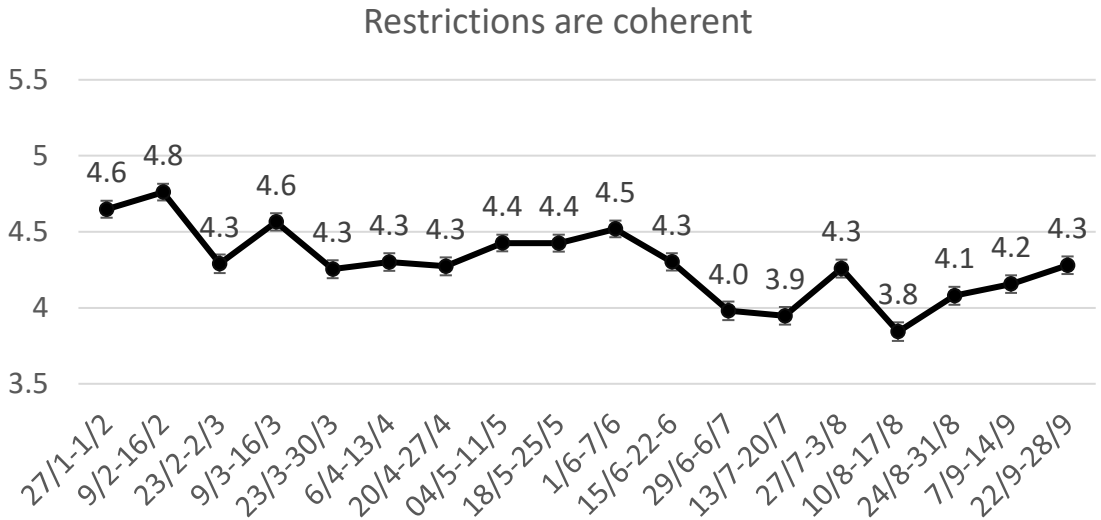


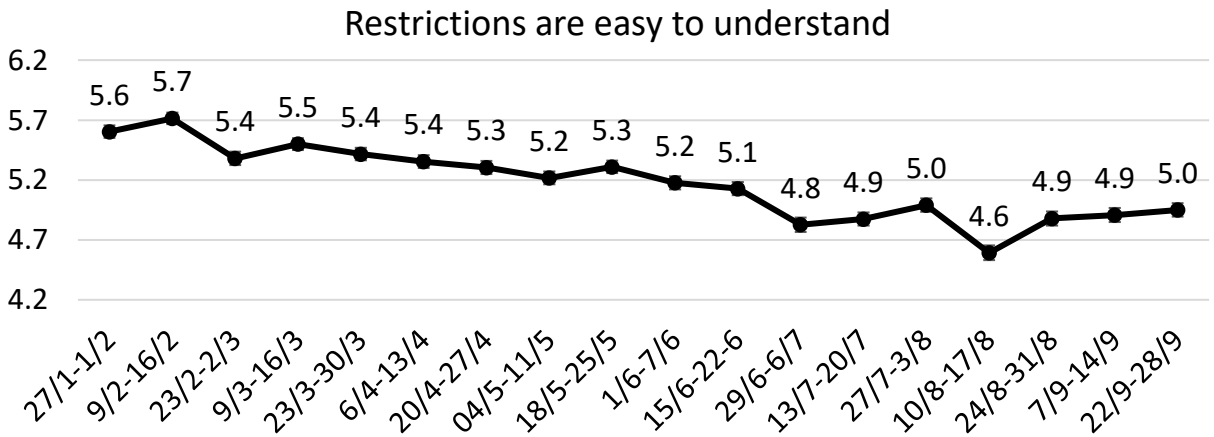


While worry has been consistently lower among younger adults, it fell more between January and September among older people, i.e. the age gap narrowed. This applied to both the mean score (left chart) and the proportion who have high worry (over 8 out of 10, middle chart). Worry strongly predicts whether an individual meets people from outside their household. Almost 1-in-3 meet no-one from another household over a 48-hour period. This is similar across age groups (right chart). Worry levels are generally higher among women and people in lower socio-economic groups, although these differences are smaller than the differences by age.

Perception of restrictions

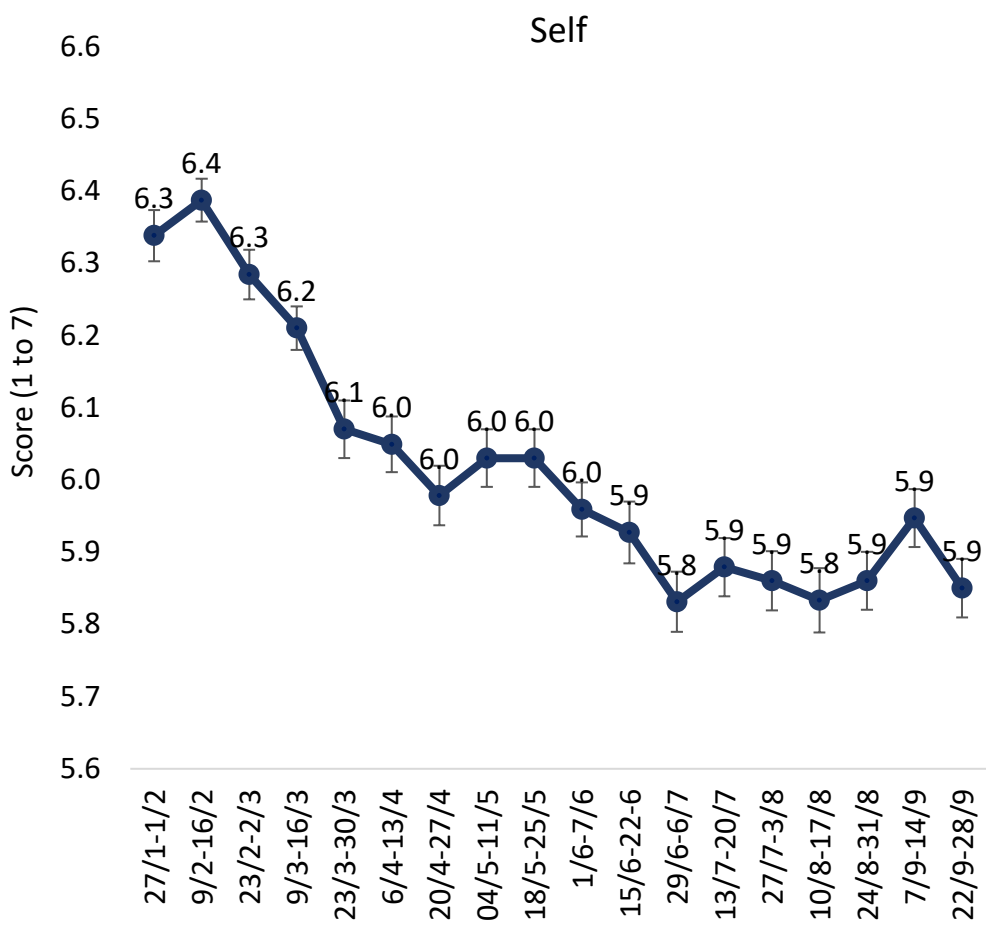


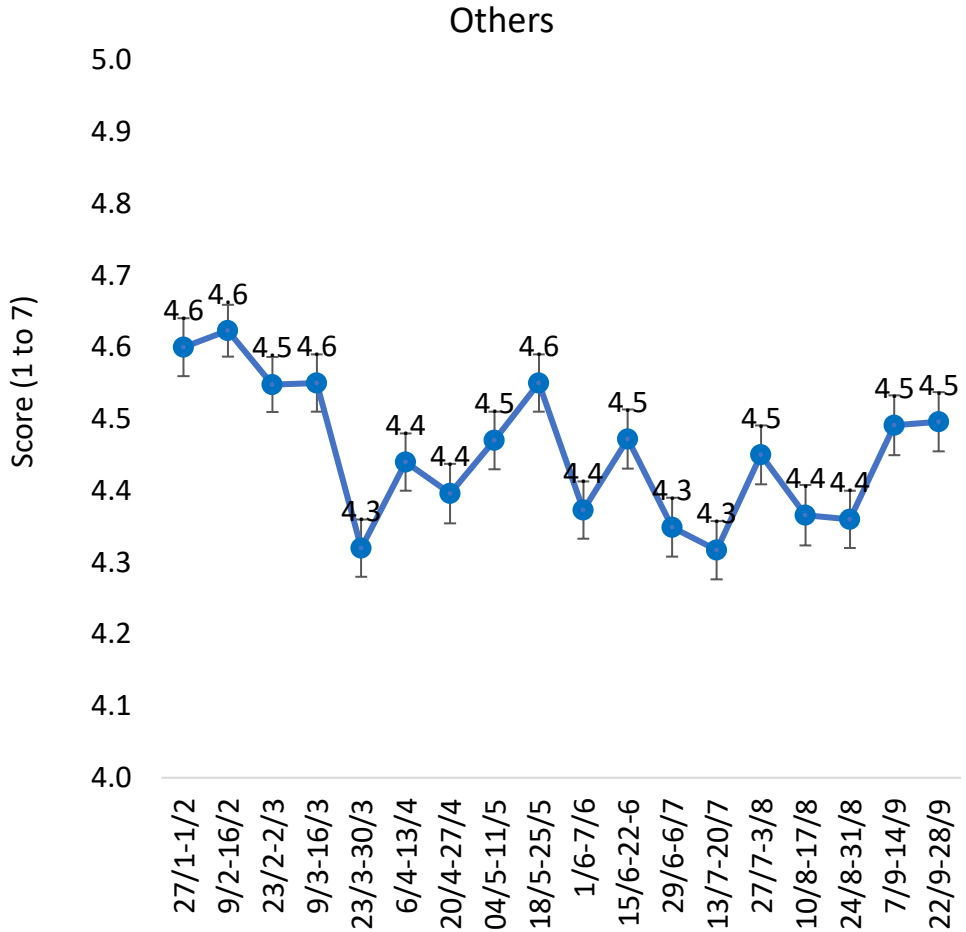




A majority still judge preventing the spread of the virus to be more important than the burden of restrictions. Perceived coherence of restrictions and ease of understanding restrictions have continued upward trends following a dip in August.

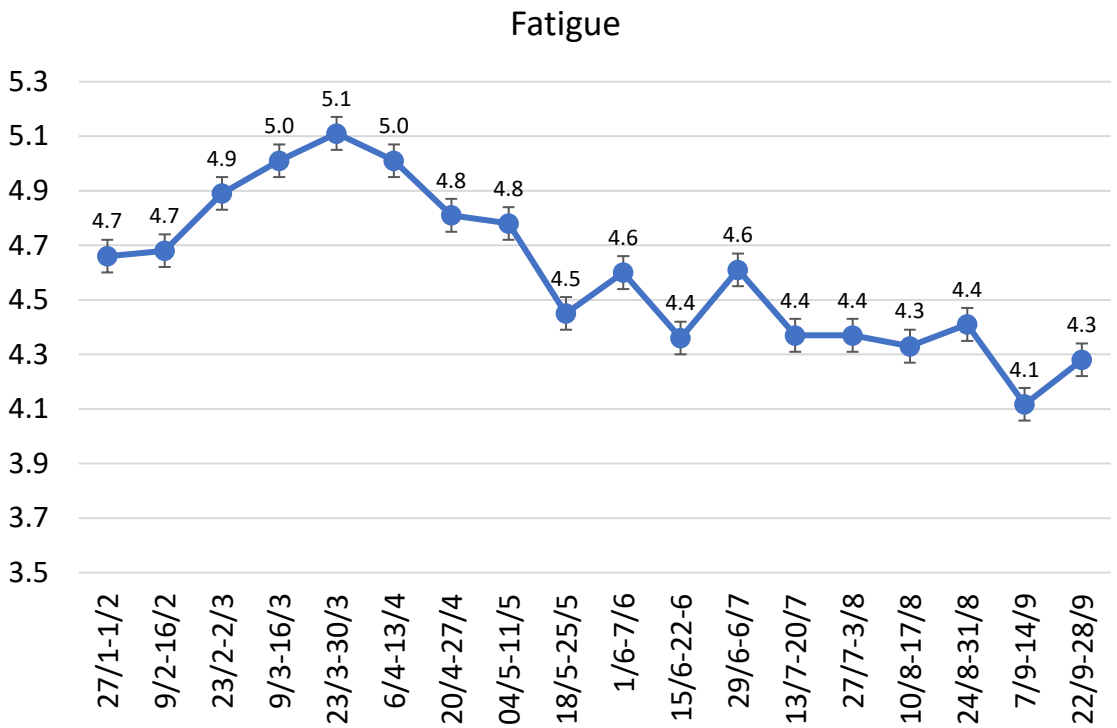
Compliance with restrictions

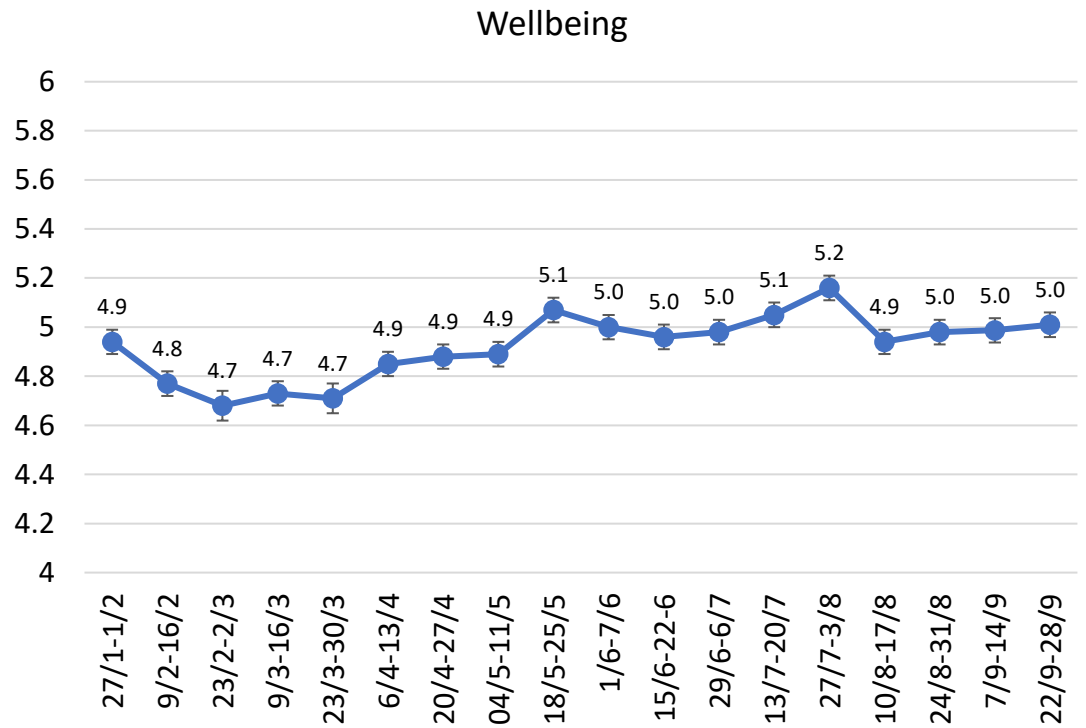




Self-reported compliance with restrictions and perceptions that others are complying were steady.

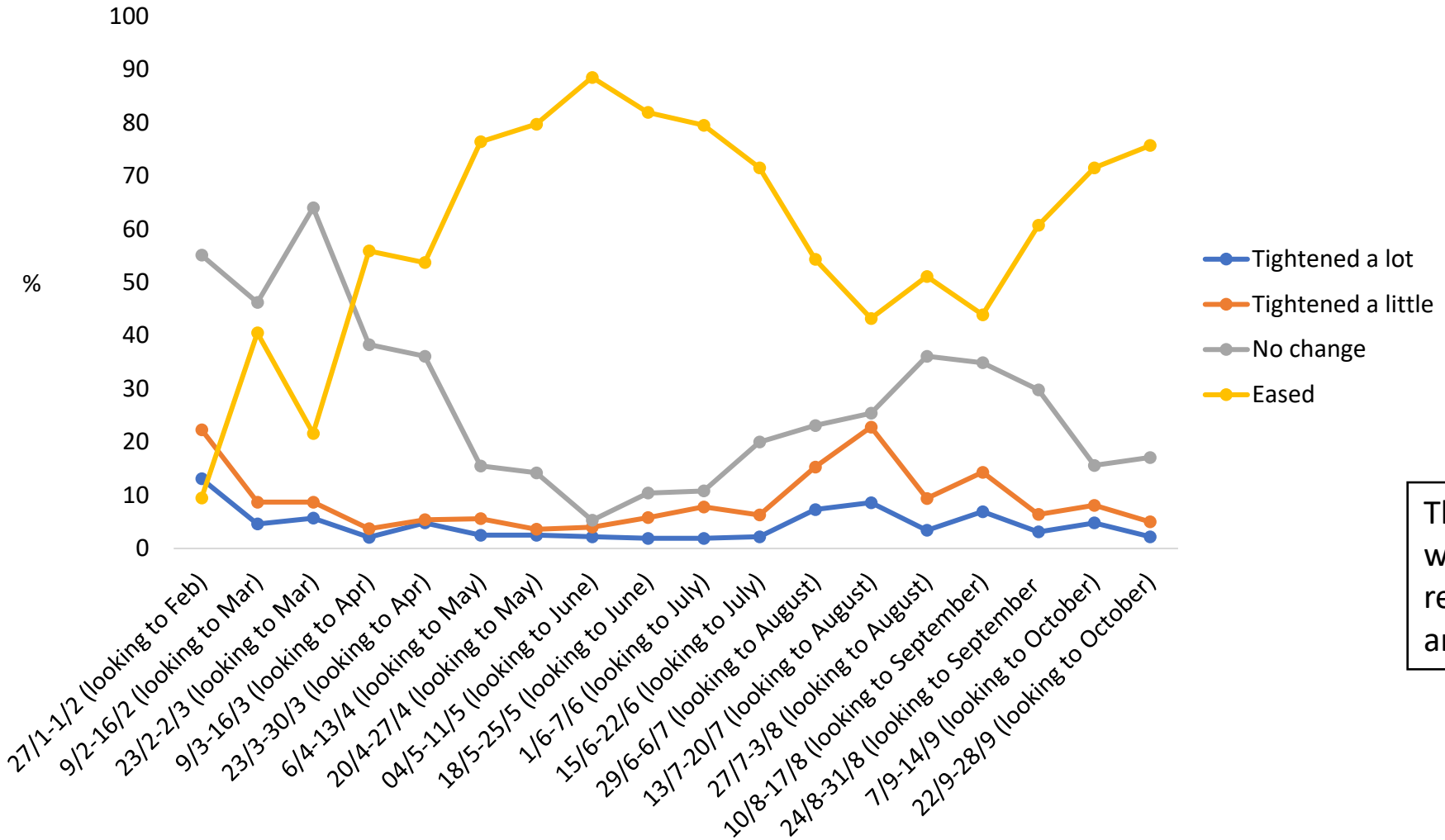
Wellbeing and Fatigue





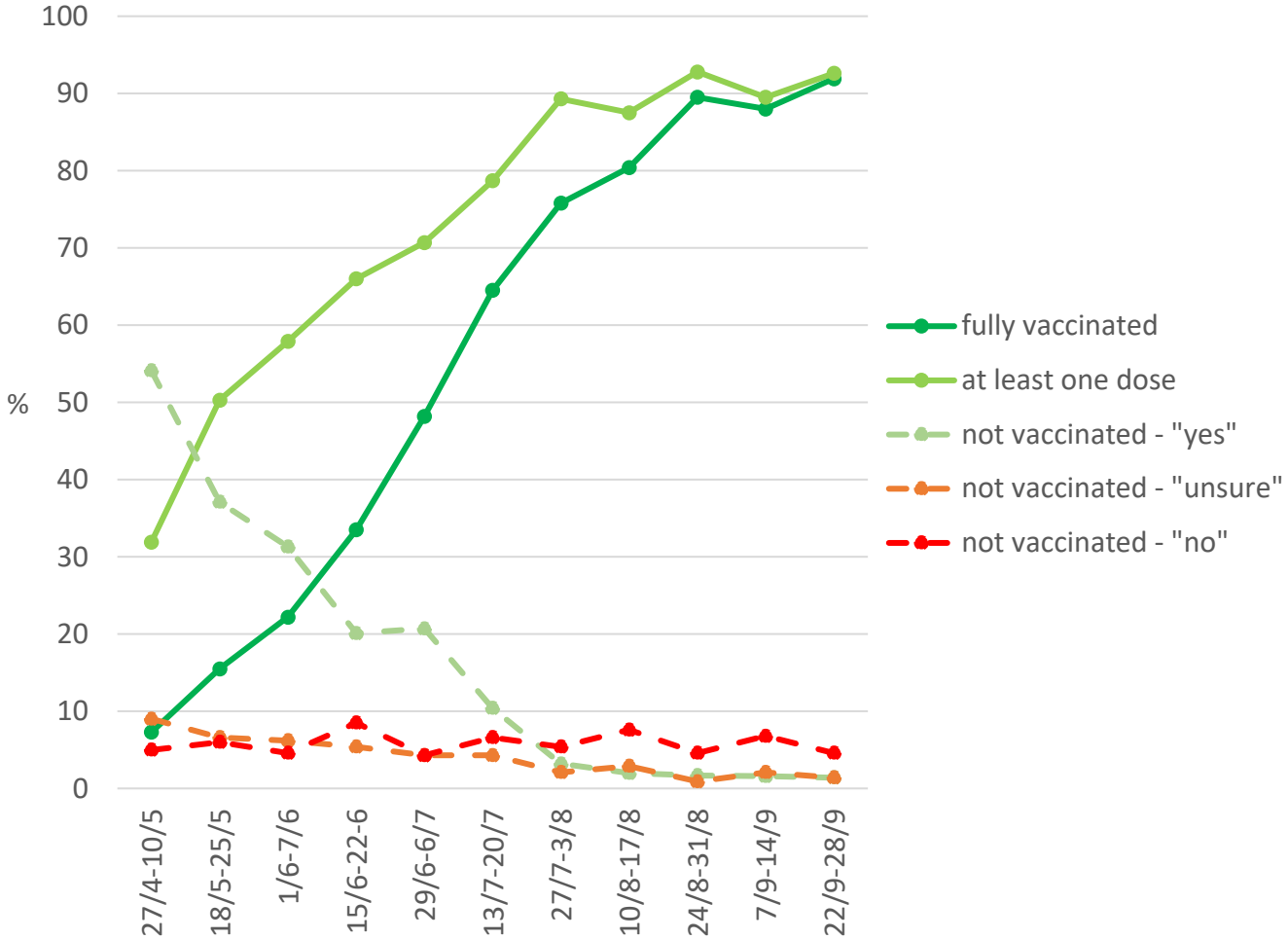
Reported wellbeing and tiredness with restrictions remained stable.

Expectations for easing restrictions (next month)



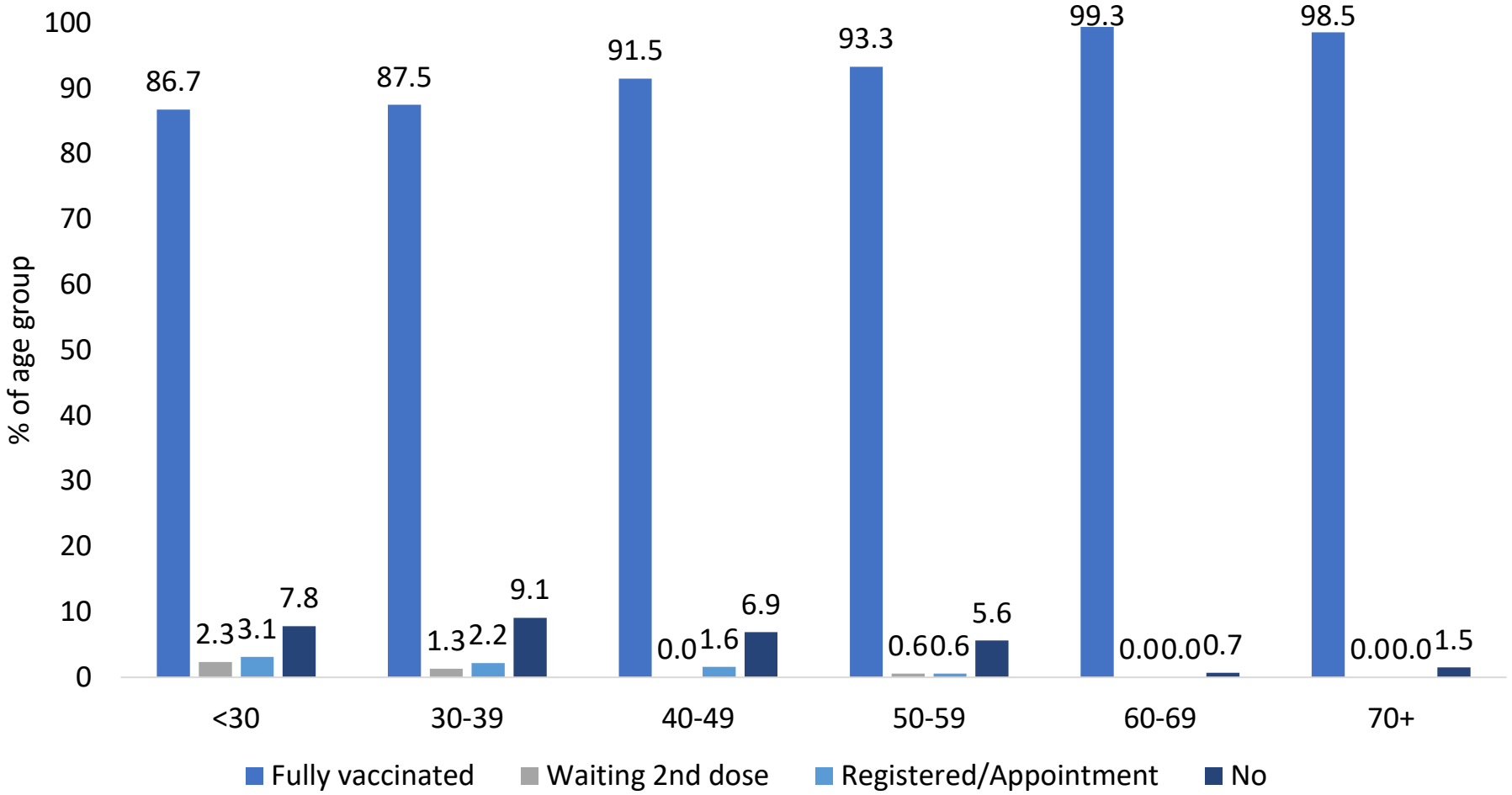
The proportion of people who expect further easing of restrictions continues to rise and is now over 75%.

Vaccine uptake and intention



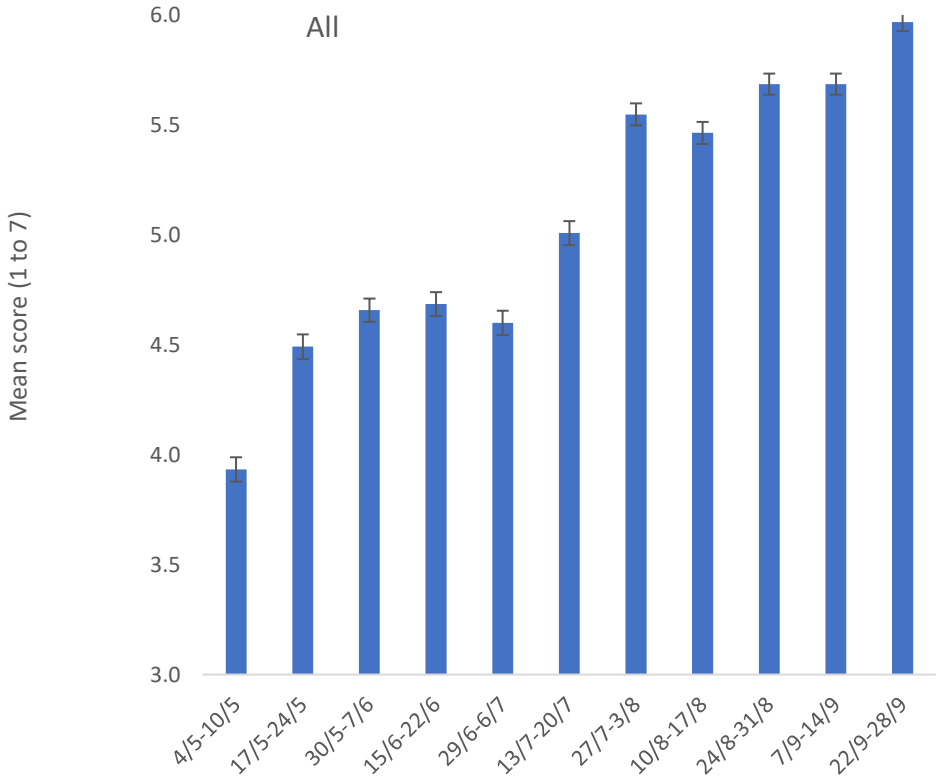
Trends in vaccine status and intention, have now plateaued. Most of those who are not yet vaccinated do not intend to take the vaccine.

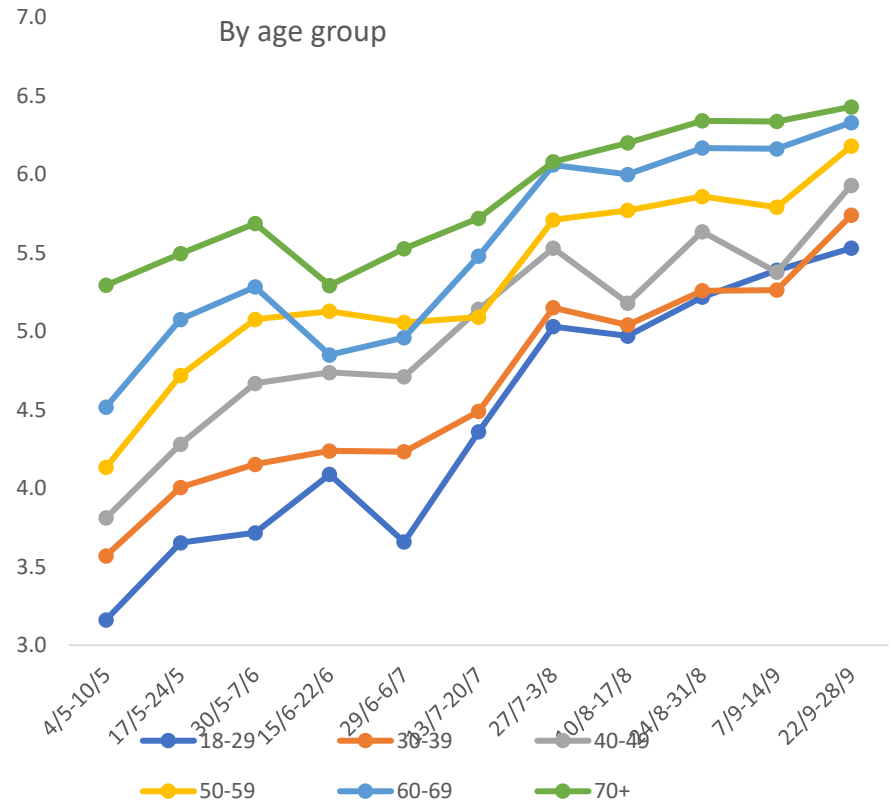
Vaccine status by age



The level of vaccination is now very high in all age groups, with only a small number awaiting a second dose.

Vaccine rollout satisfaction





There was a further significant increase in satisfaction with the vaccine rollout, which is high across all age-groups.

EU Digital Covid Certificate

The main chart shows that 90% of adults have now received their EU Digital Covid Certificate (DCC). The three right-hand charts shows that around one third of diners did not have their certificates checked when dining indoors in cafés or restaurants and one quarter when drinking/dining indoors in pubs.