ESRI

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

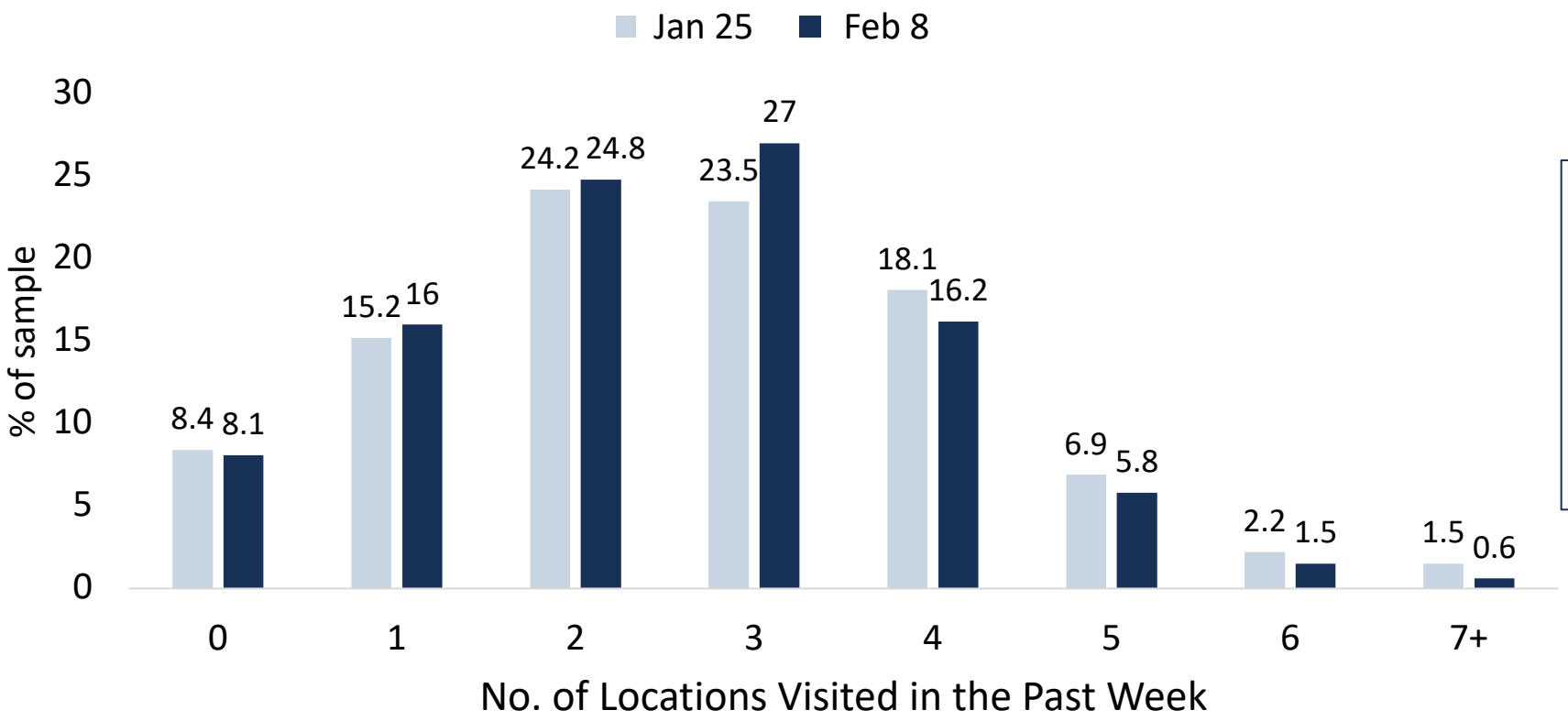
Social Activity Measure
Week Beginning: February 8th

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 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, and is funded by them. The survey is completely anonymous.

This slide deck presents results from a new nationally representative sample of 1,000 people aged 18 and over who participated in the study on the week beginning February 8th 2021. Where comparisons between survey rounds are highlighted, they are statistically significant.

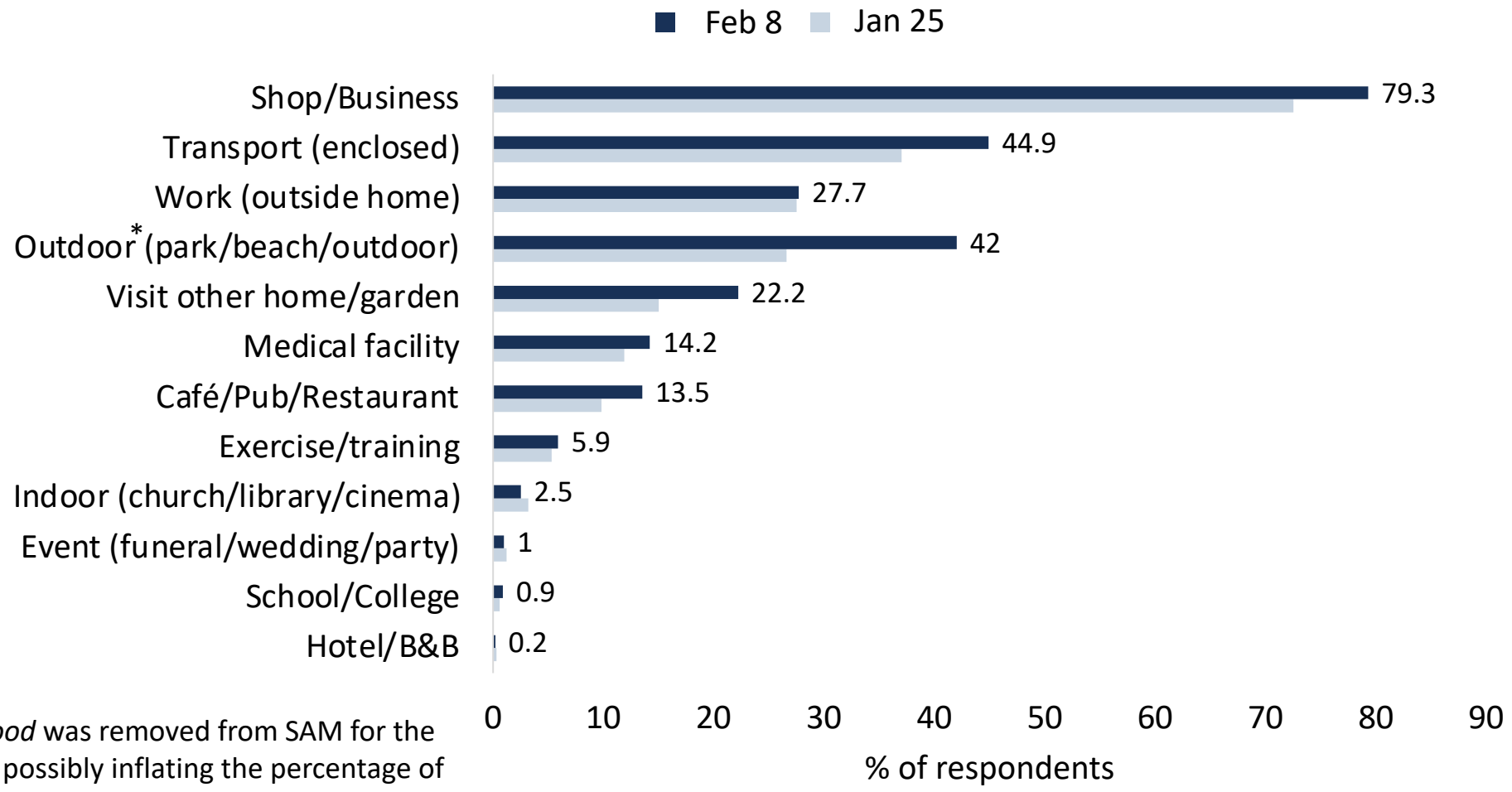
Locations visited (past week)



The chart shows the number of different locations visited by people over the previous week in the Jan 25th Wave of SAM and the Feb 8th Wave of SAM. There is a slight shift towards more locations visited in the Feb 8th Wave.

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

Locations visited (past week)

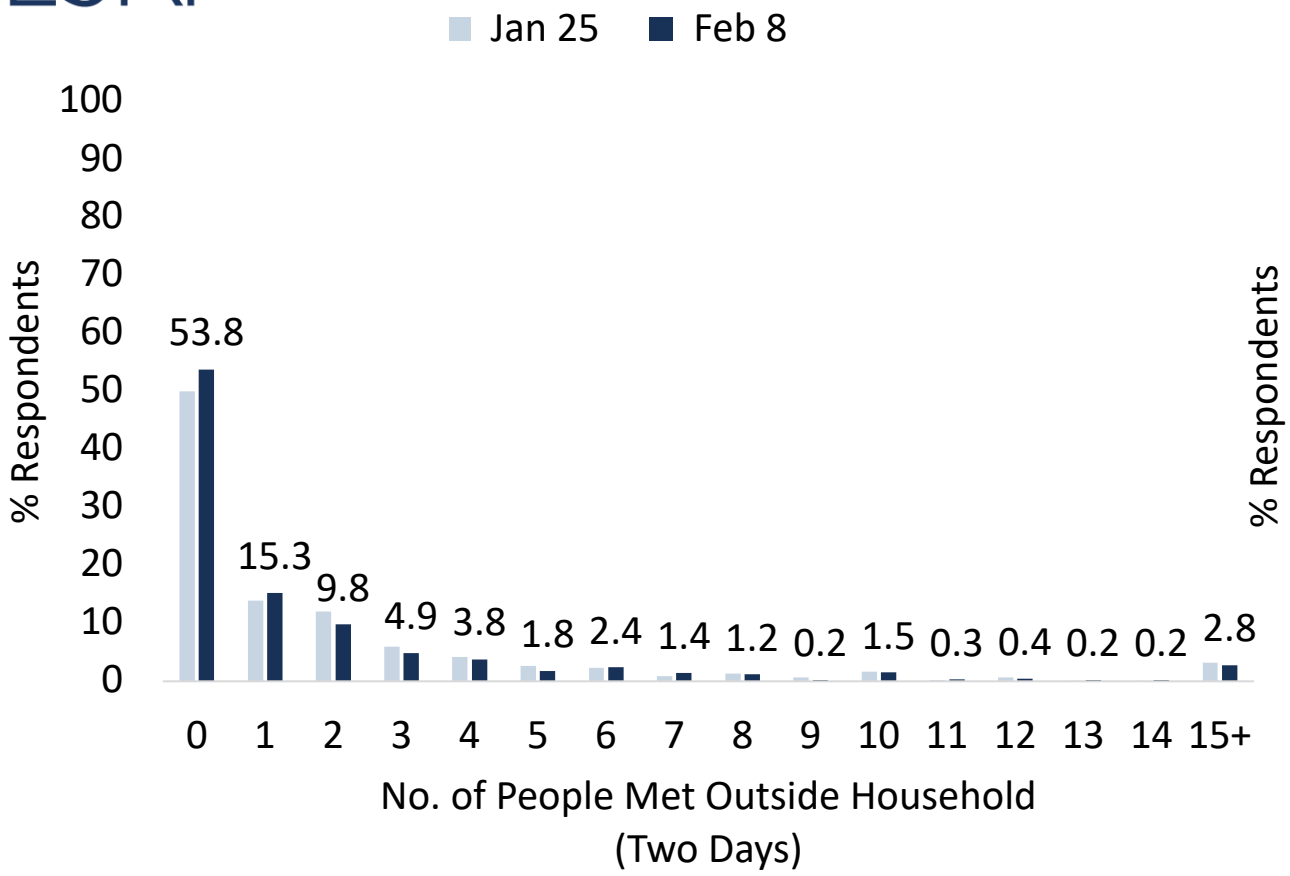


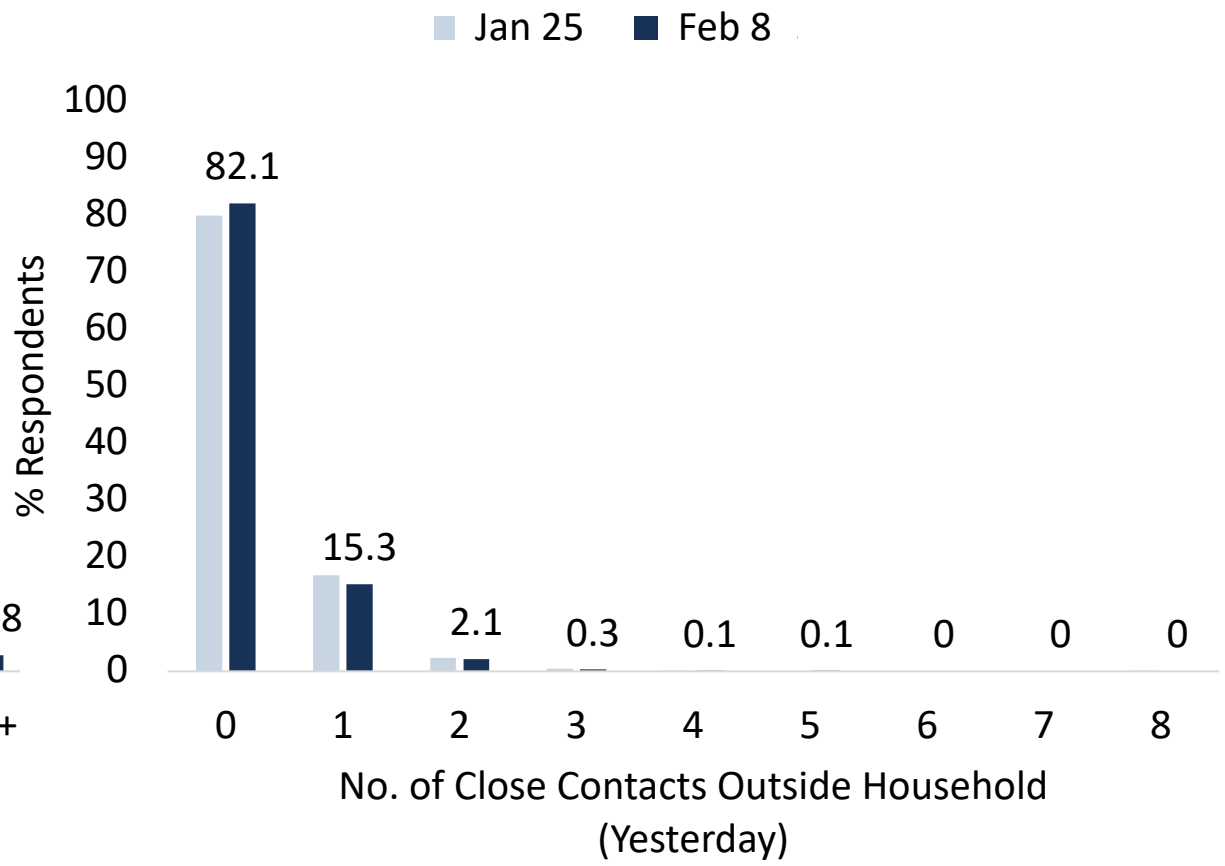
The chart shows the types of locations visited by people over the previous week. More people visited shops/businesses, outdoor amenities and other homes and gardens in the Feb 8th Wave of SAM. This increase is possibly related to a change in weather.
Enclosed transport use (mainly private cars) is also higher.

**Neighbourhood* was removed from SAM for the Feb 8th Wave, possibly inflating the percentage of people including their local area in *Outdoor.*

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

Interactions With Others



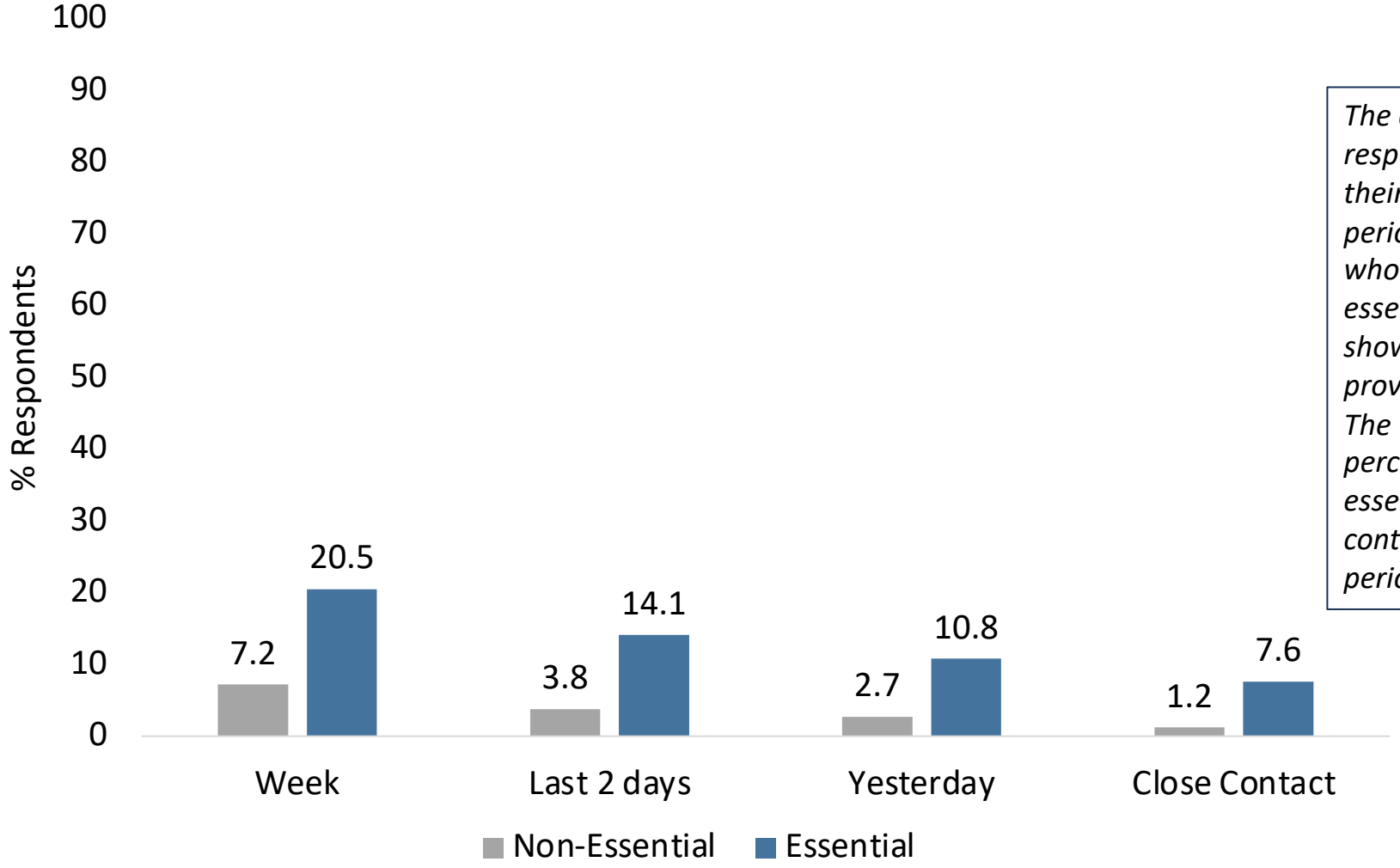


Despite slightly higher movement, there was no substantial change in number of people met or number of close contacts between the Jan 25 and Feb 8 waves of SAM.

*Close contact interactions are defined as those that lasted for longer than 15 minutes in which 2m distance was not maintained at all times or that took place indoors for longer than 2 hours in a space that was not well ventilated (hse.ie)

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

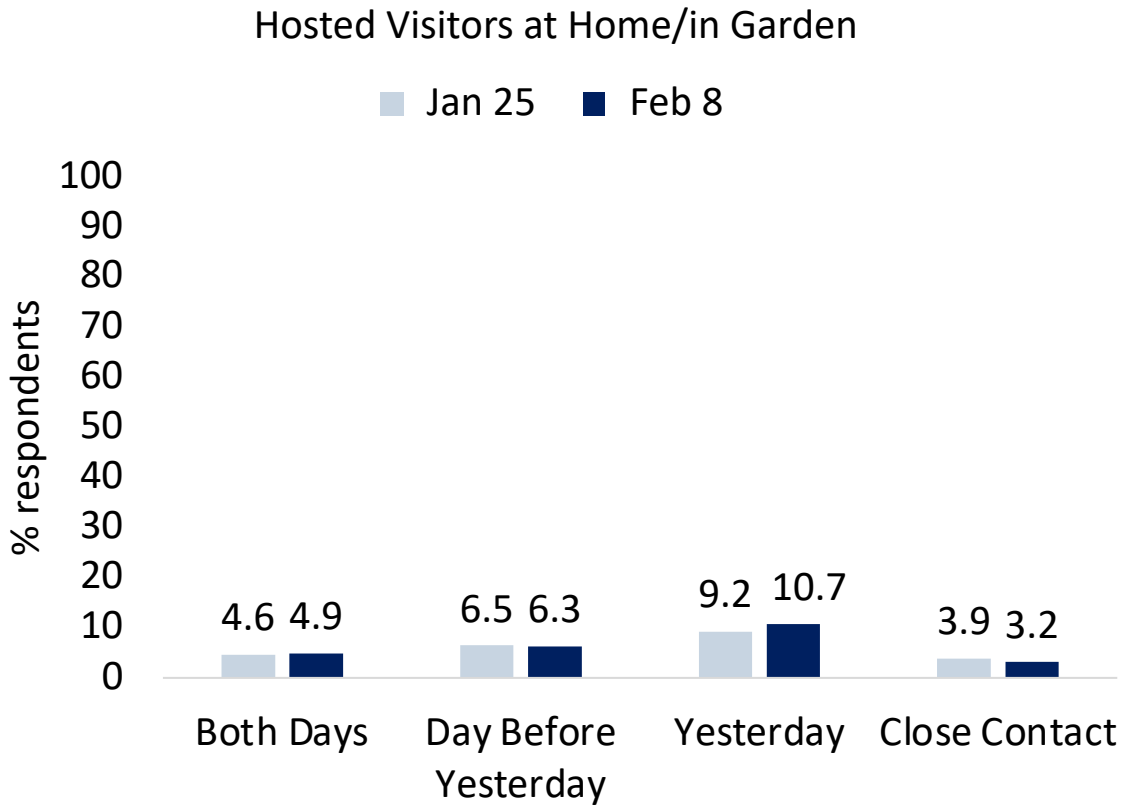
Working Outside the Home

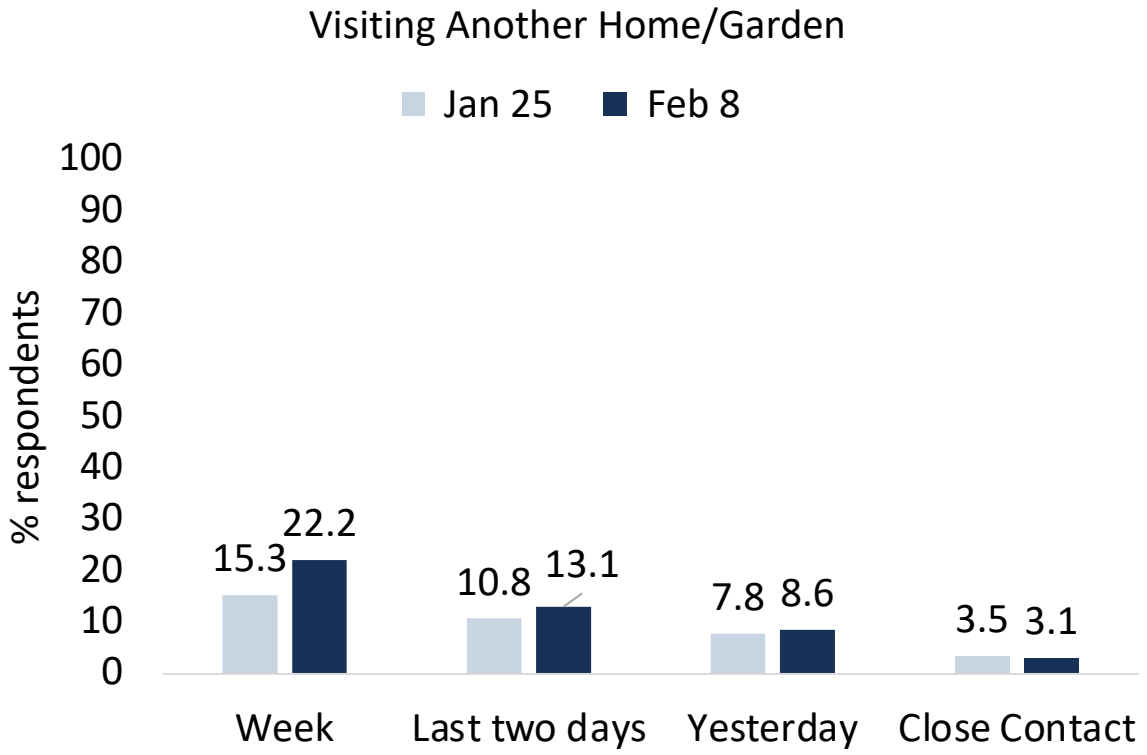


The chart shows the percentage of respondents who left home to attend their place of work over the study period, with darker bars showing those who work in the provision of an essential service and lighter bars showing those who work in the provision of a non-essential service. The "Close Contact" bars show the percentage of essential and non-essential workers who worked in a close contact environment over the study period.

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

Household Visits



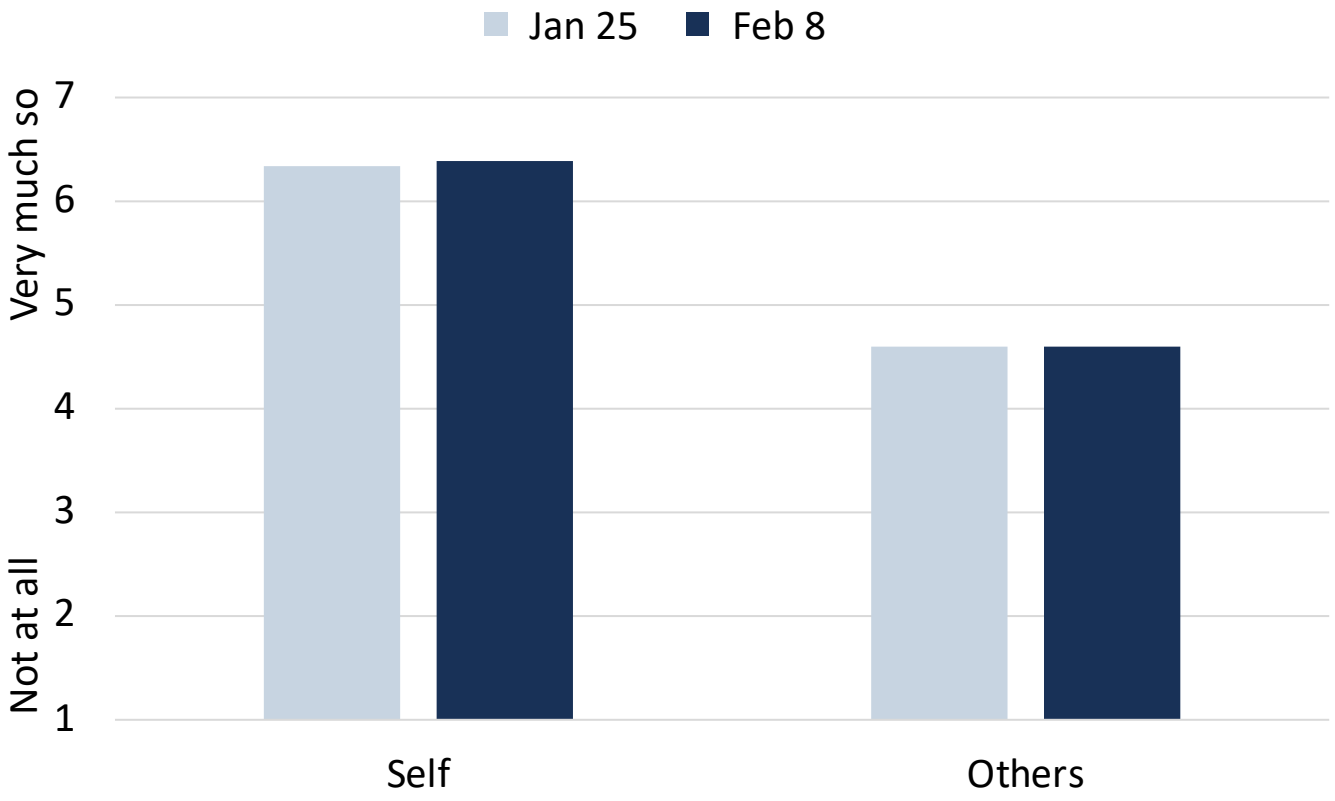


The charts show that 10.7% of people hosted a visitor to their home the day before completing the survey and 8.6% visited another person's home or garden. Approximately one in three home visits were coded as close contact encounters. Respondents seldom reported wearing a mask during these visits.

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

Perceptions of Self vs. Others

Following recommendations from the Government to prevent the spread of coronavirus?

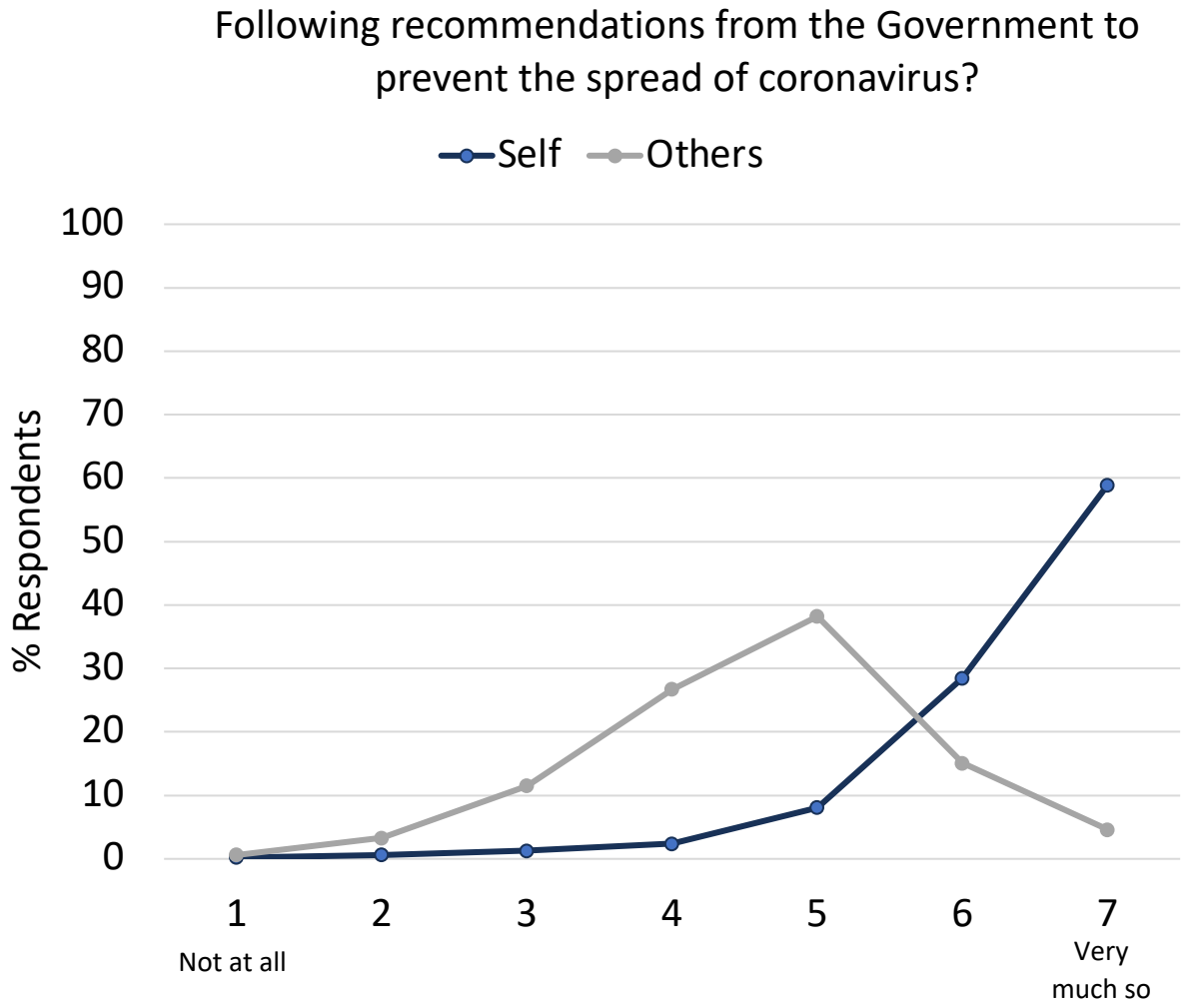


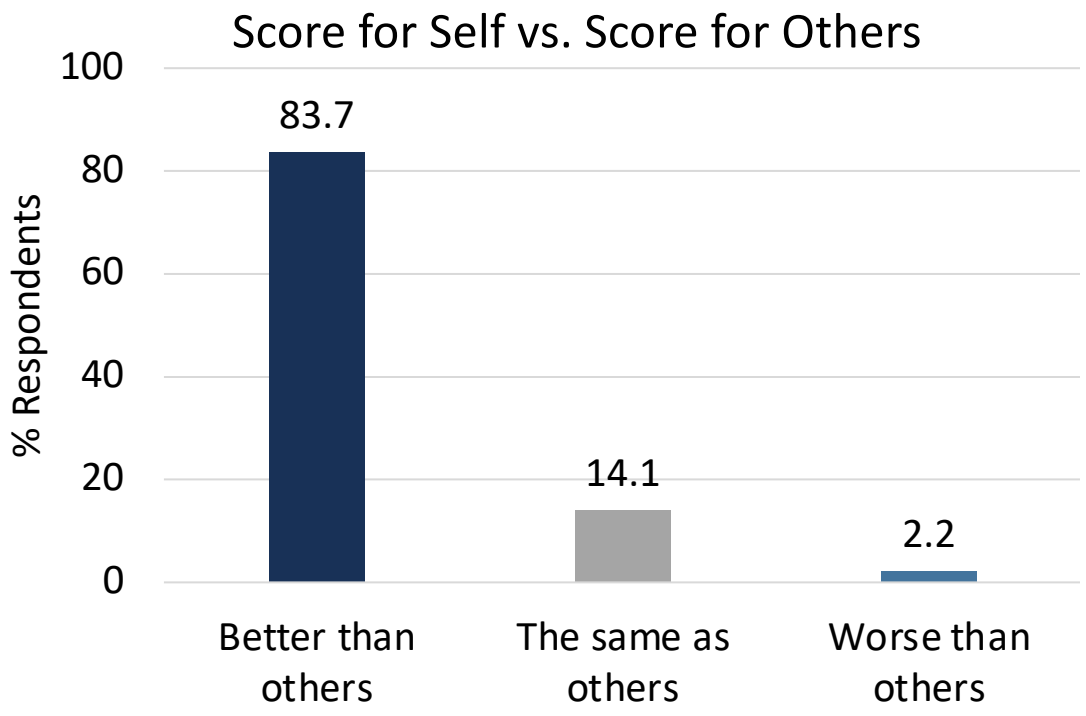
Belief in the extent to which they themselves and others are following restrictions was unchanged between the Jan 25th Wave of SAM and the Feb 8th Wave.

Most people believe they are following the restrictions better than others (next slide).

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

Perceptions of Self vs. Others

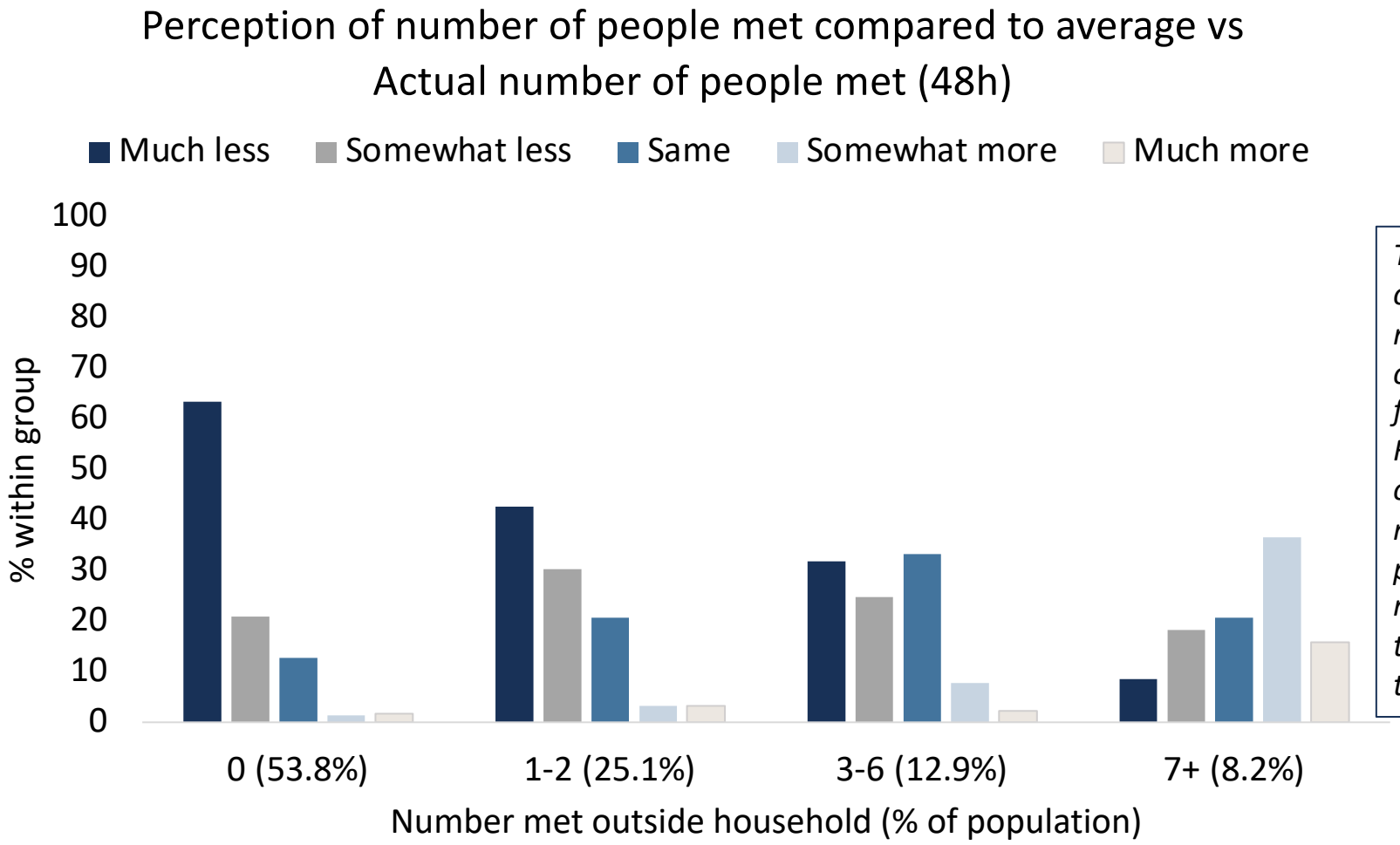




Better than others = score given to self is greater than score given to others
The same as others = score given to self is the same as score given to others
Worse than others = score given to self is less than score given to others

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

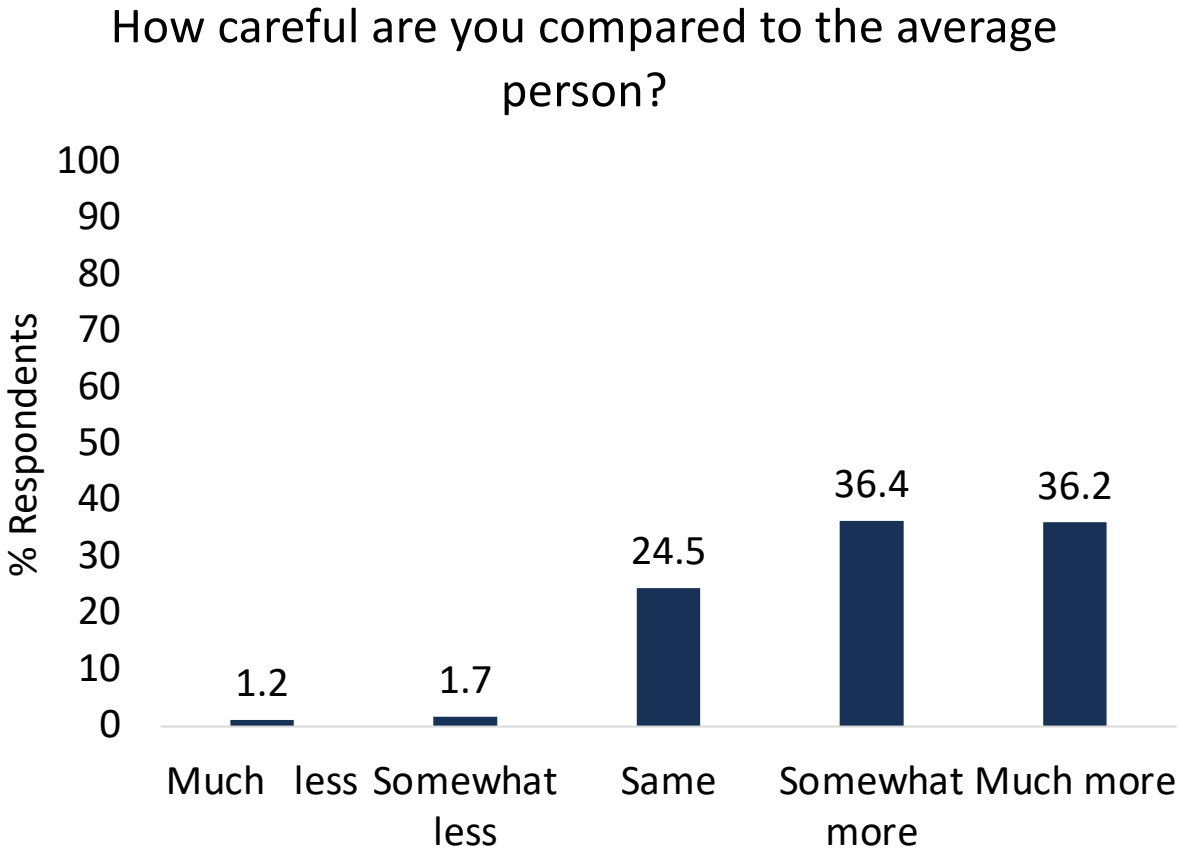
Perceptions of Self vs. Others

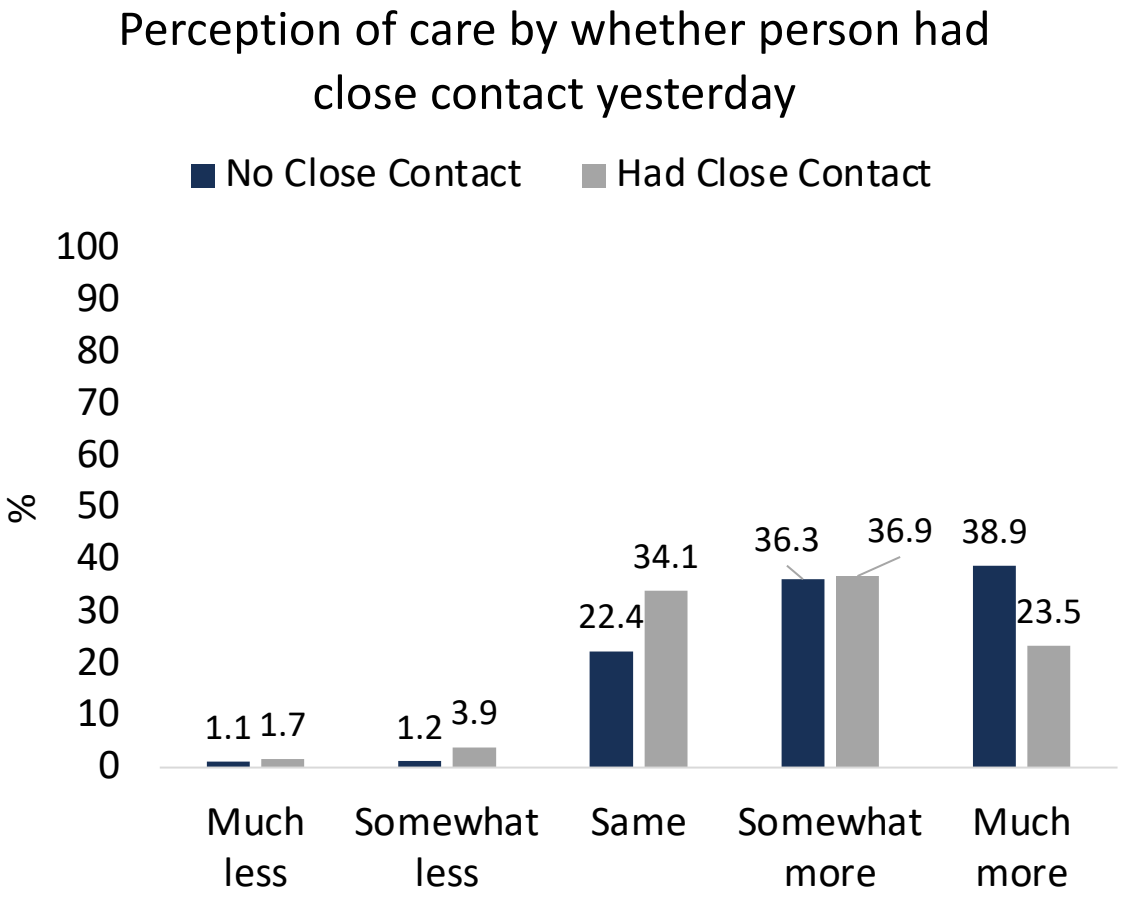


The chart shows that, although over half of people met 0 others, most of those who met 1 or 2 others thought they had met fewer people than average. Few of those who met 3 to 6 others realised they had met more people than the average person. Almost half of those who met 7 or more others believed they had met the same or less than the average person.

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

Perceptions of Self vs. Others

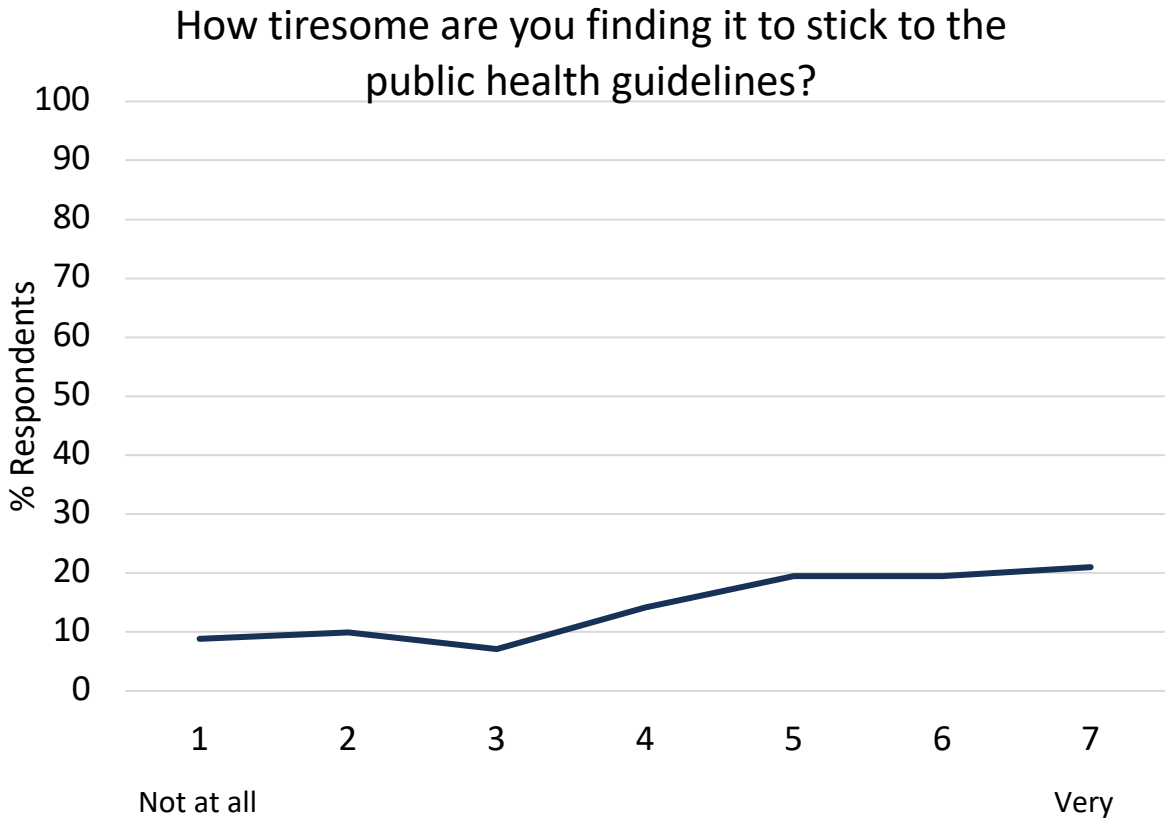


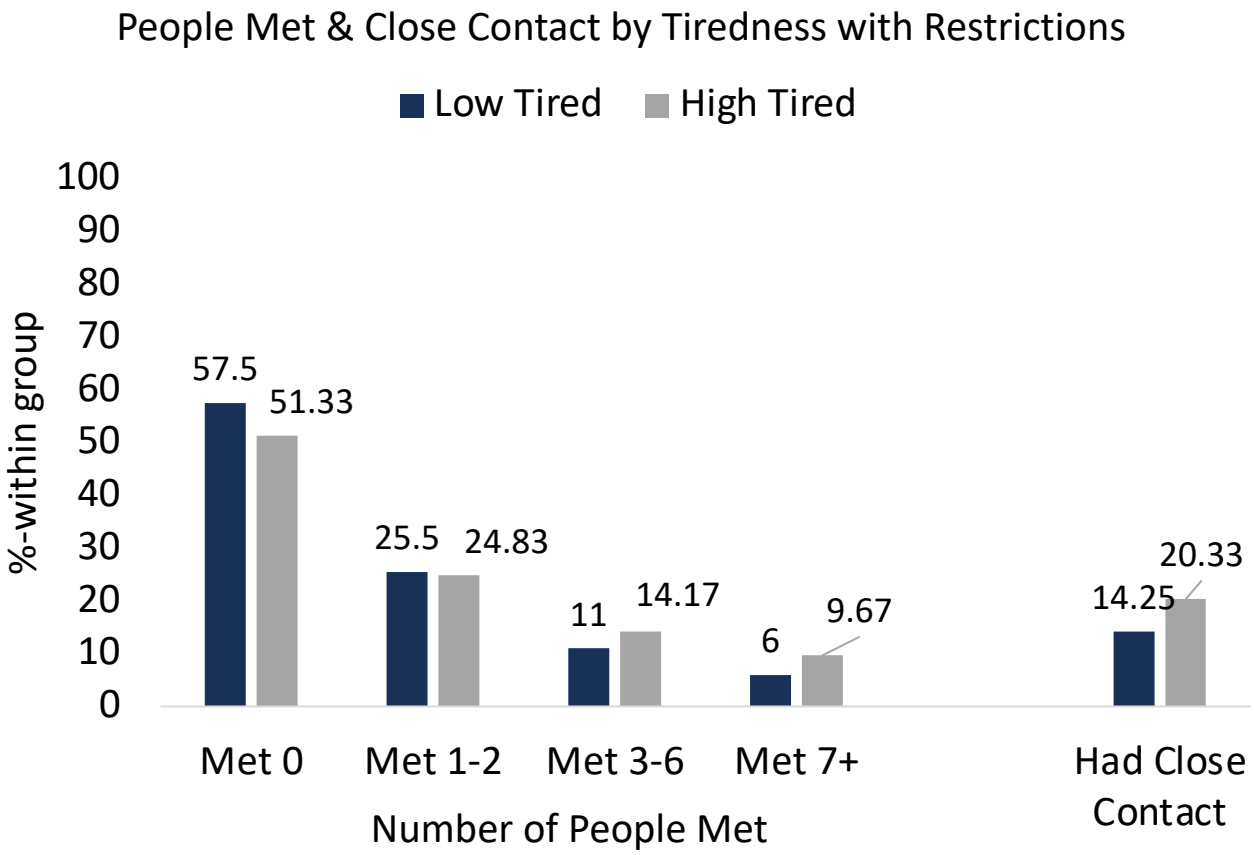


The chart shows that almost all respondents considered themselves to be as or more careful than the average person, including the 18% of respondents who had had a close contact the day before completing the survey.

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

Psychological Variables





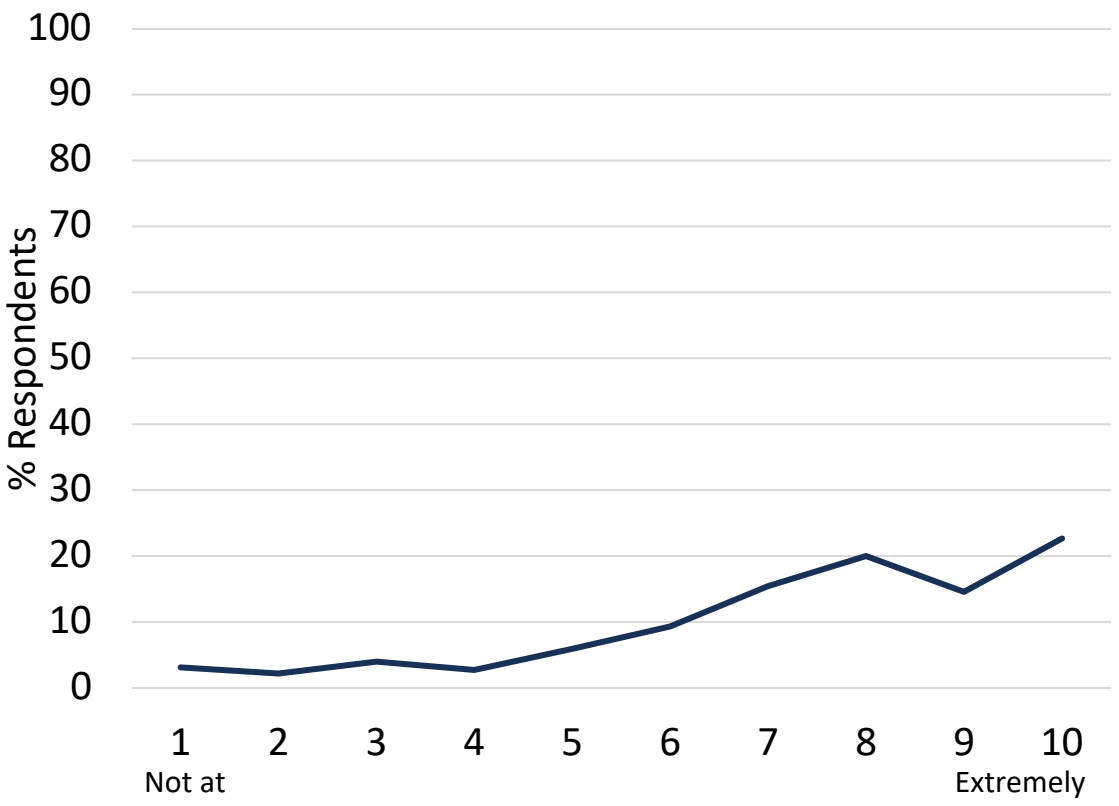
(High Tired is defined as a score greater than 4 on the scale.)

While those who reported feeling restrictions to be more tiresome were more likely to have had a close contact, this relationship was not statistically significant when other factors were included in statistical models (e.g. worry).

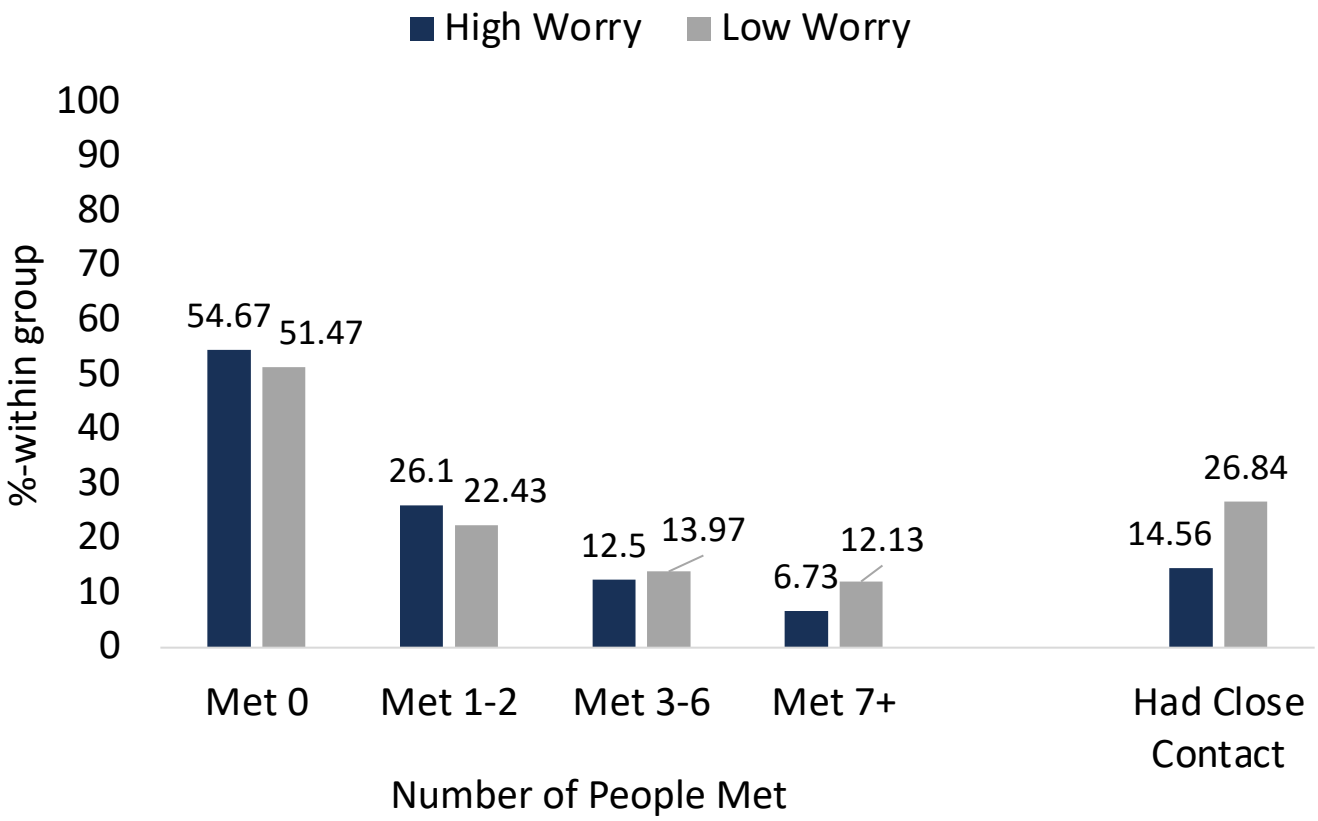
Source: ESRI's Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

Psychological Variables

How worried are you personally about COVID-19?



People Met & Close Contact by Worry about COVID-19

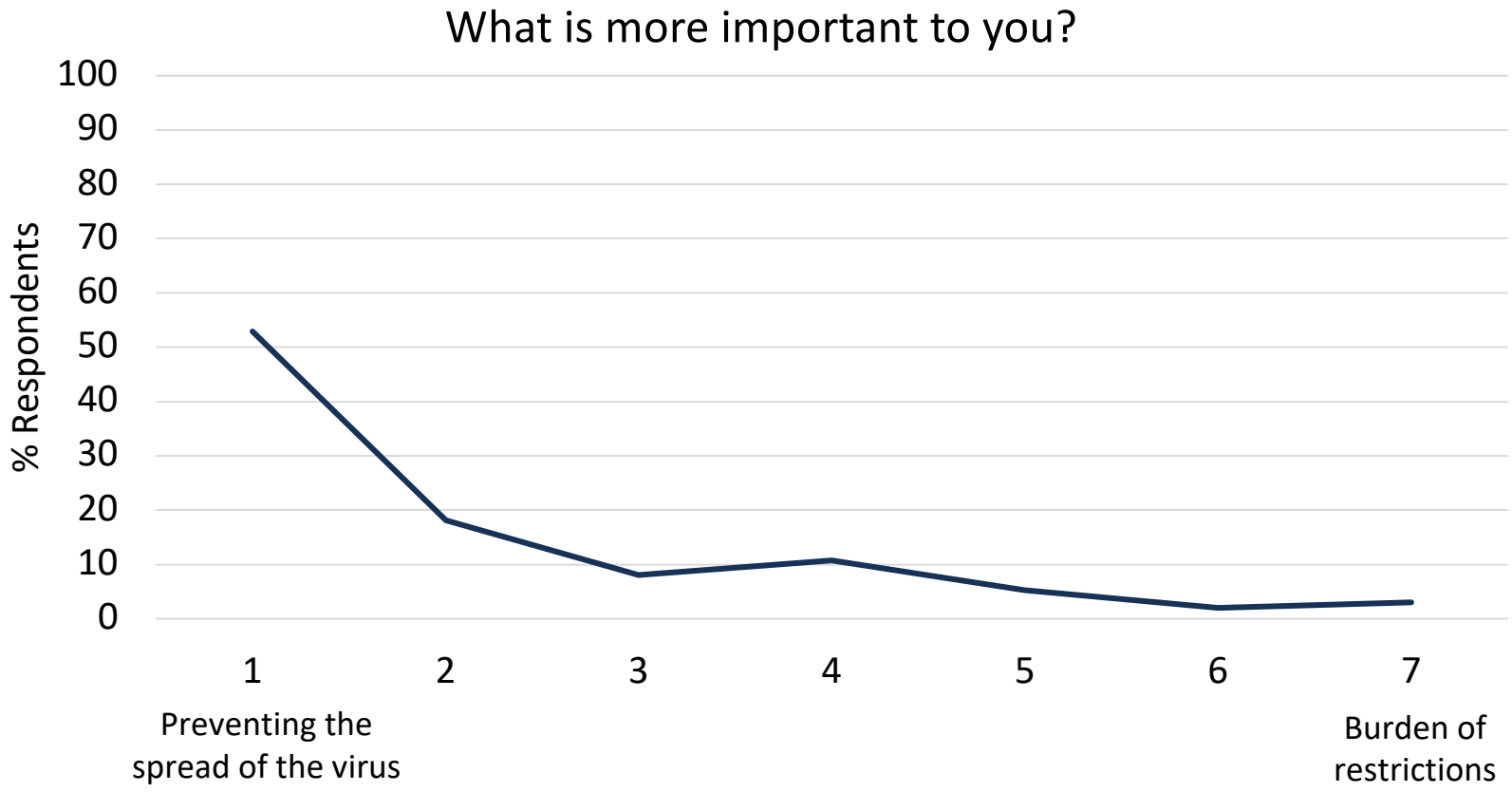


(Low Worry is defined as a score less than 7/10 on the scale.)

Feeling worried about the virus was one of the most reliable factors related to meeting others and having had a close contact.

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

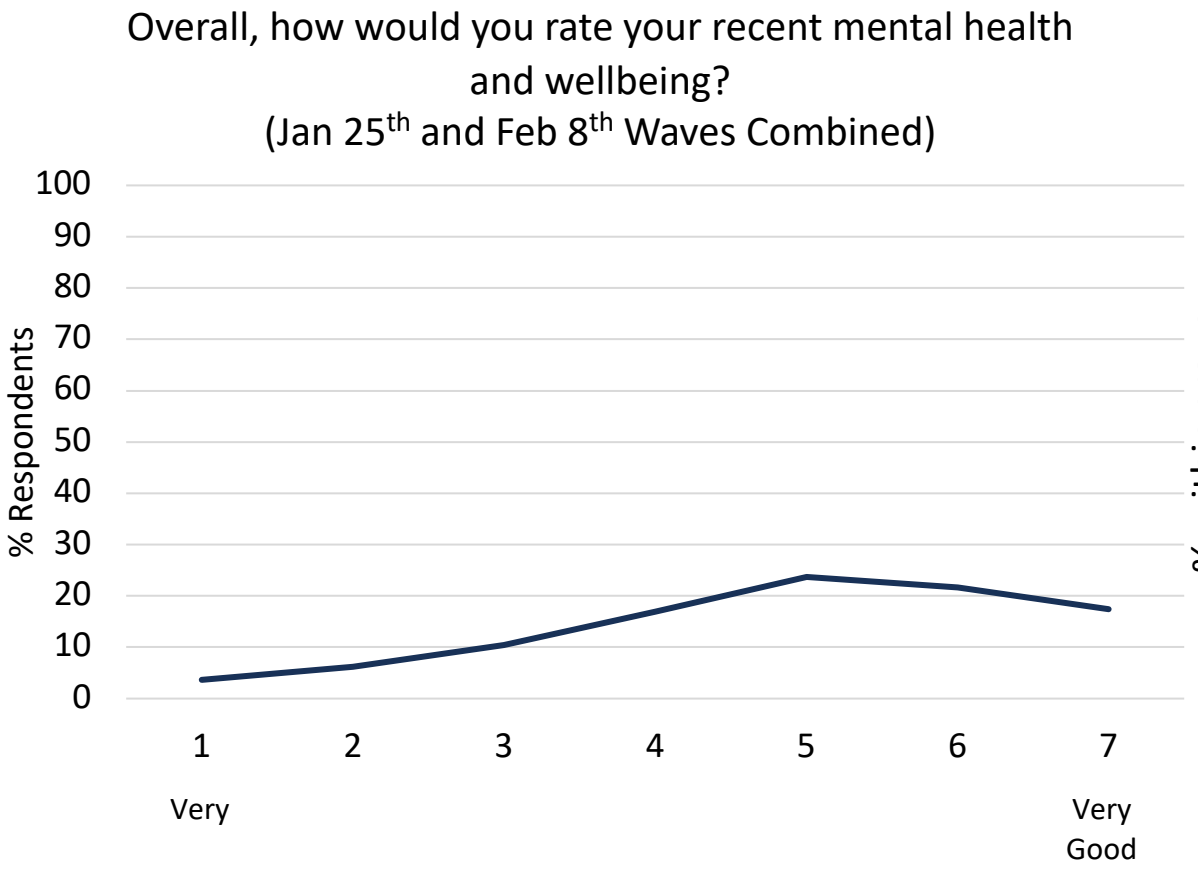
Psychological Variables

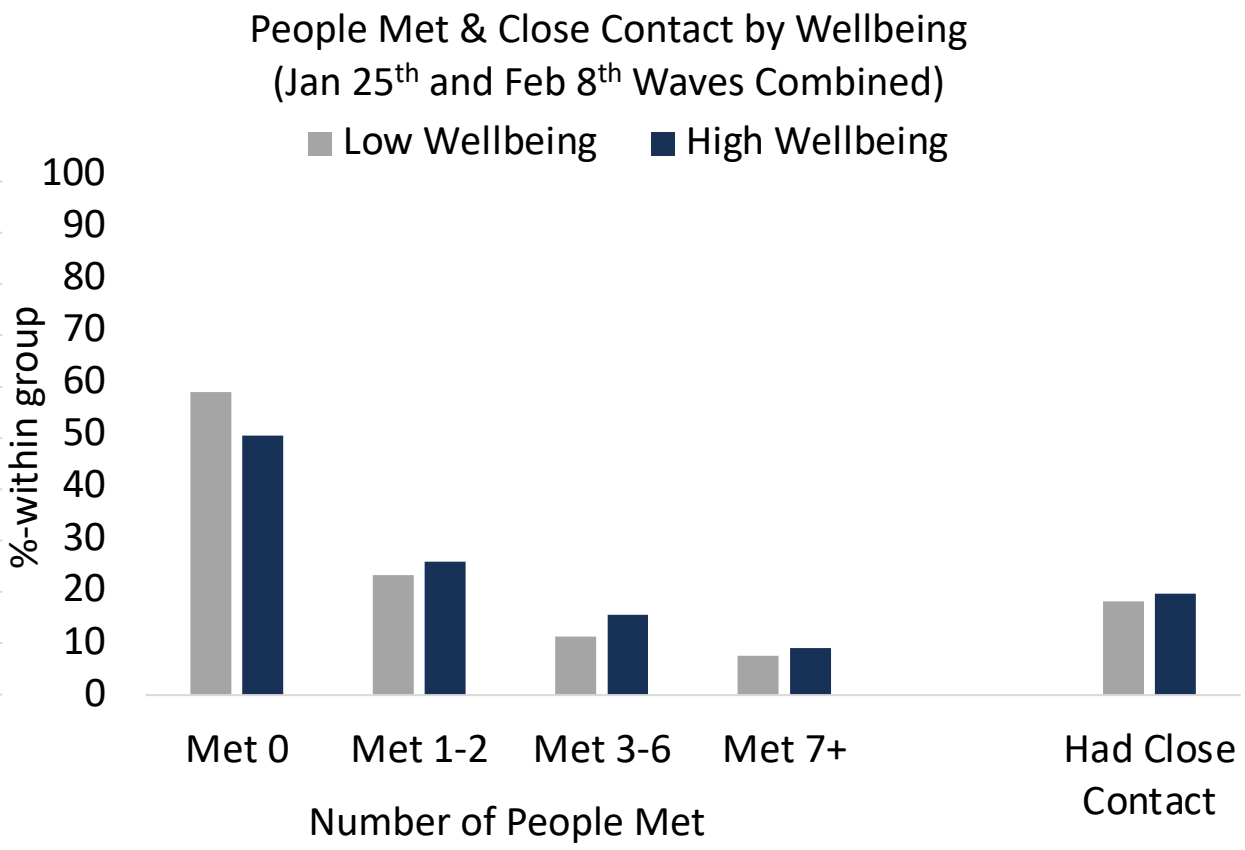


Seventy-nine percent of the population judged preventing the spread of the virus to be more important than the burden of restrictions (a score of 1-3). Eleven percent judged both to be equally important (4) and the remainder (10%) judged the burden of restrictions to be more important than preventing the spread of the virus (5-7). These figures are in line with Wave 1 responses.

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

Psychological Variables

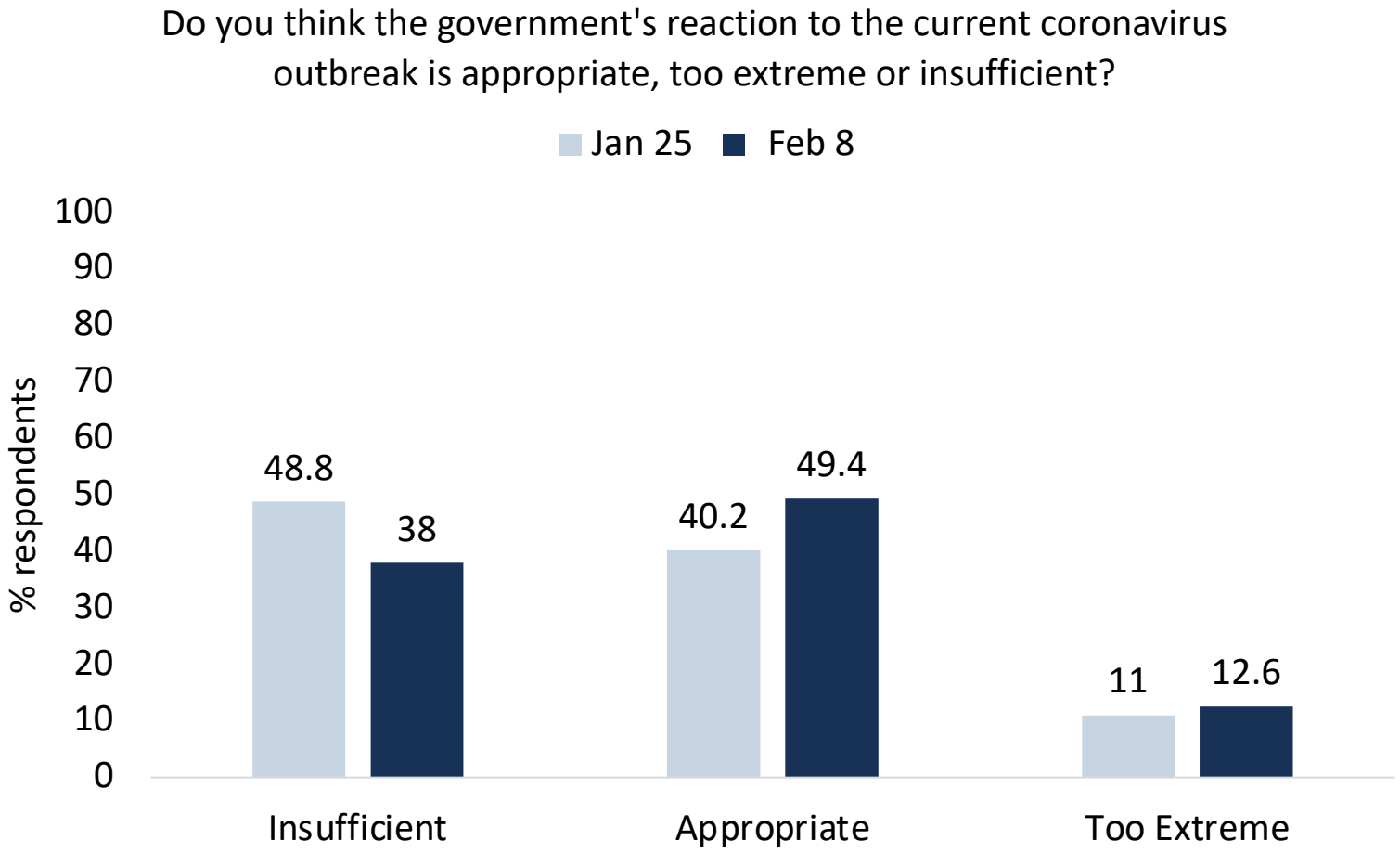




In general people reported their wellbeing as quite high, around 5 out of 7. Those with greater wellbeing (5 or above) were more likely to have met someone from outside of their household in the past two days, but not more likely to have had a close contact.

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

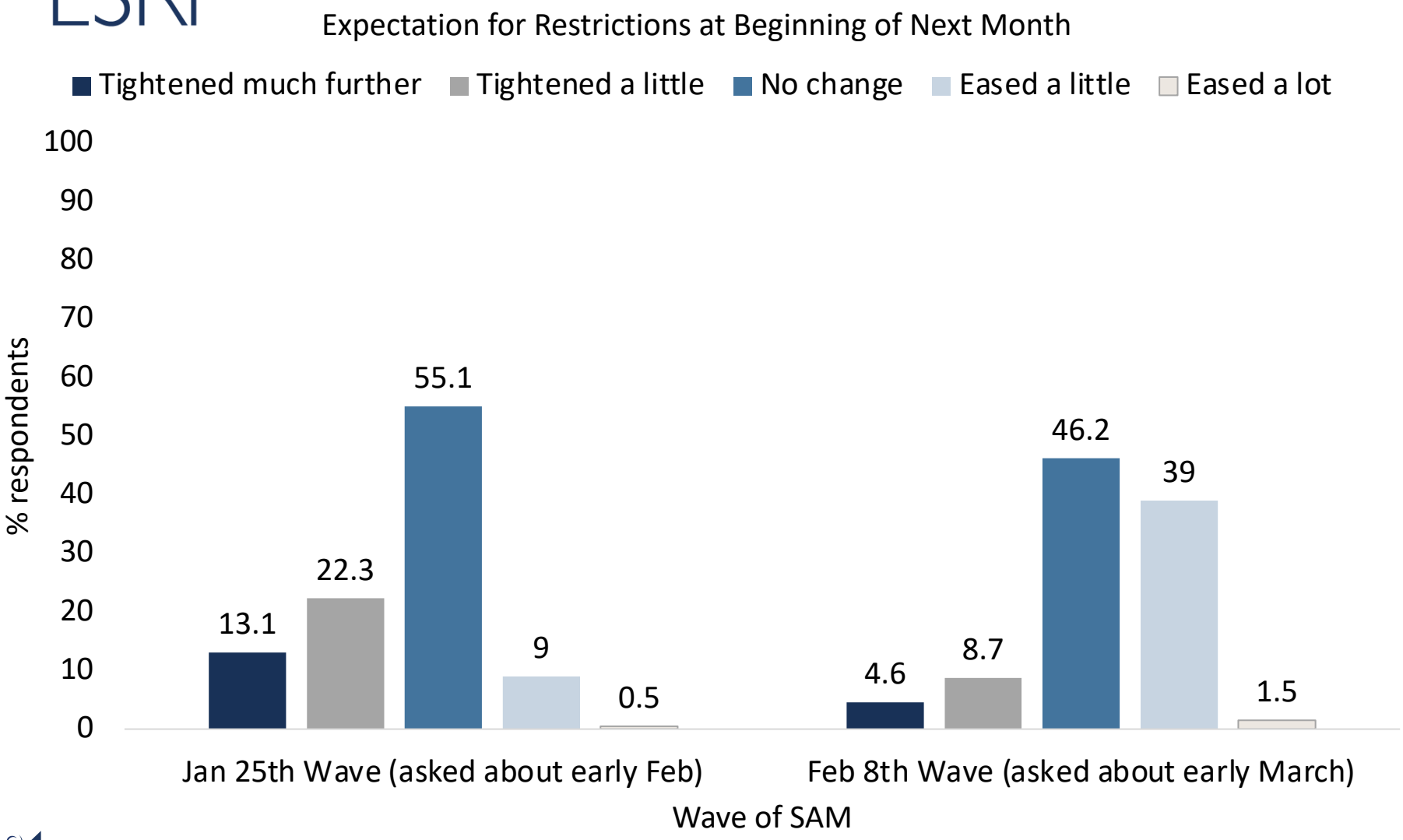
Government Response



Fewer people judged the Government response to be insufficient in the Feb 8th Wave of SAM compared to the Jan 25th Wave, with more judging the response to be appropriate.

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

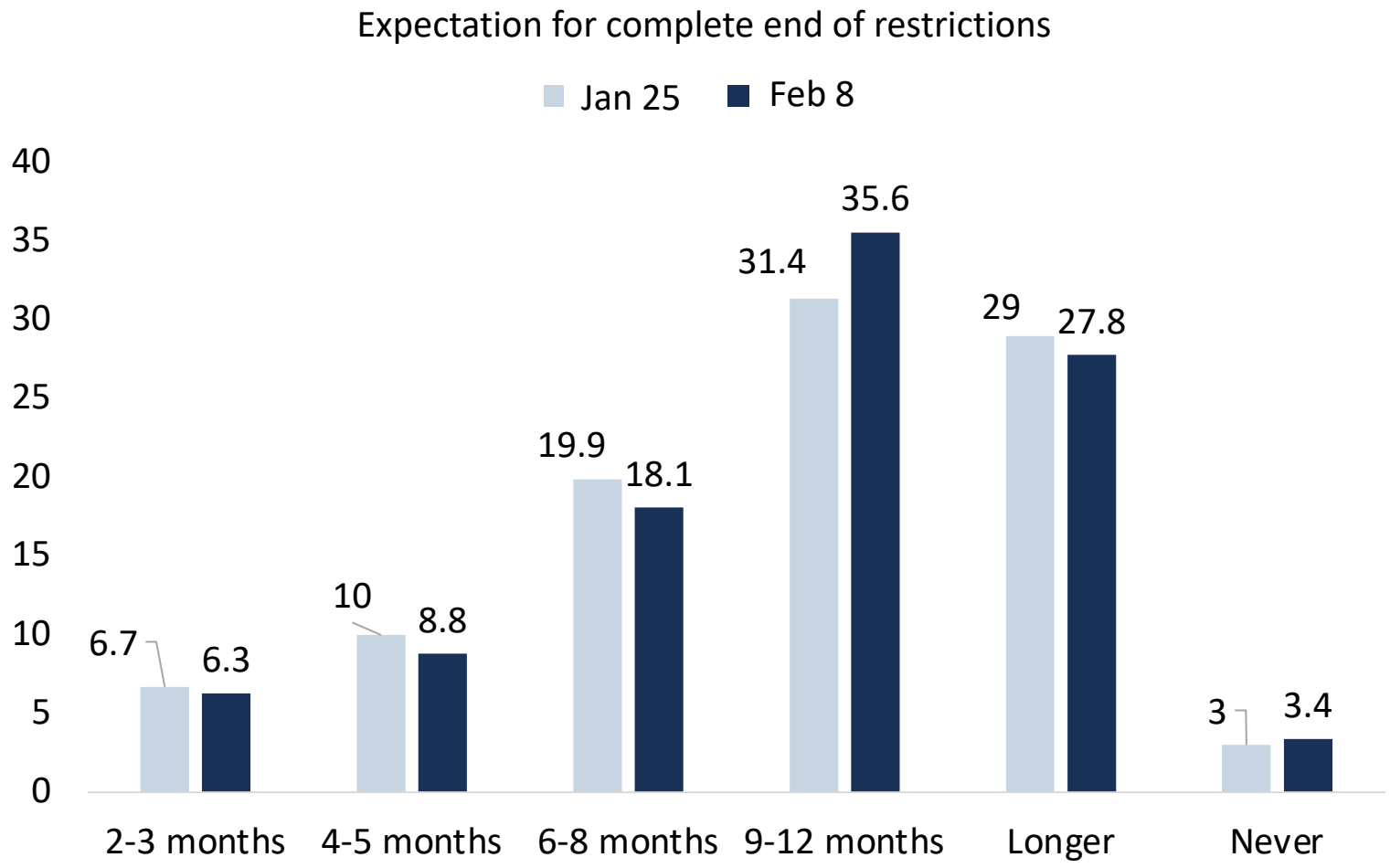
Expectations for restrictions



In the January 25th Wave of SAM, only 10% of respondents expected any easing of restrictions by the start of February. This contrasts to 41% who expected some easing of restrictions by the start of March in the February 8th Wave.
The next wave of data collection will be able to assess whether respondents' expectations have changed as the start of March draws closer.

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

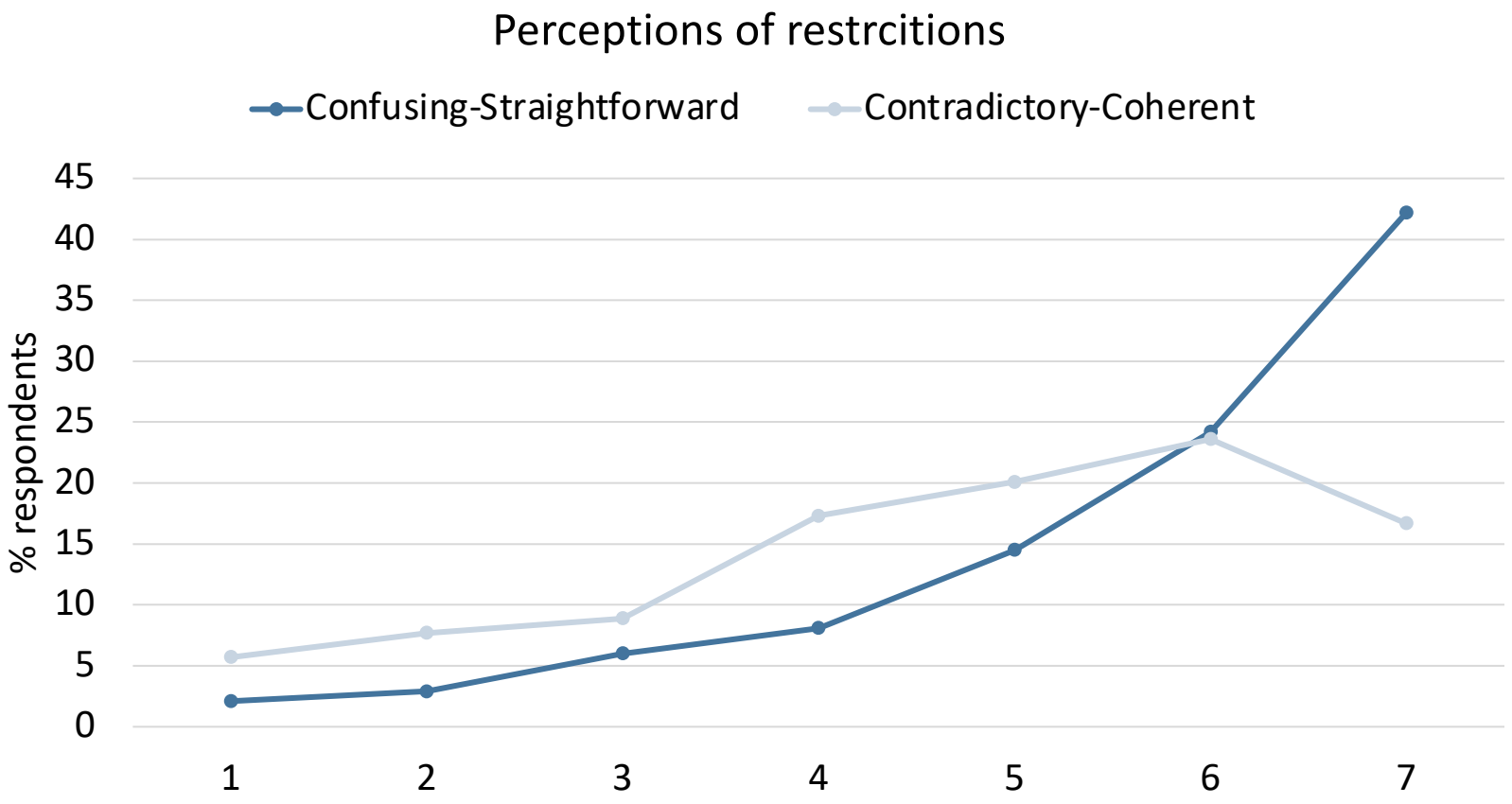
Expectations for restrictions



A majority in both waves expected restrictions to be in place for a further 9 months or longer.

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

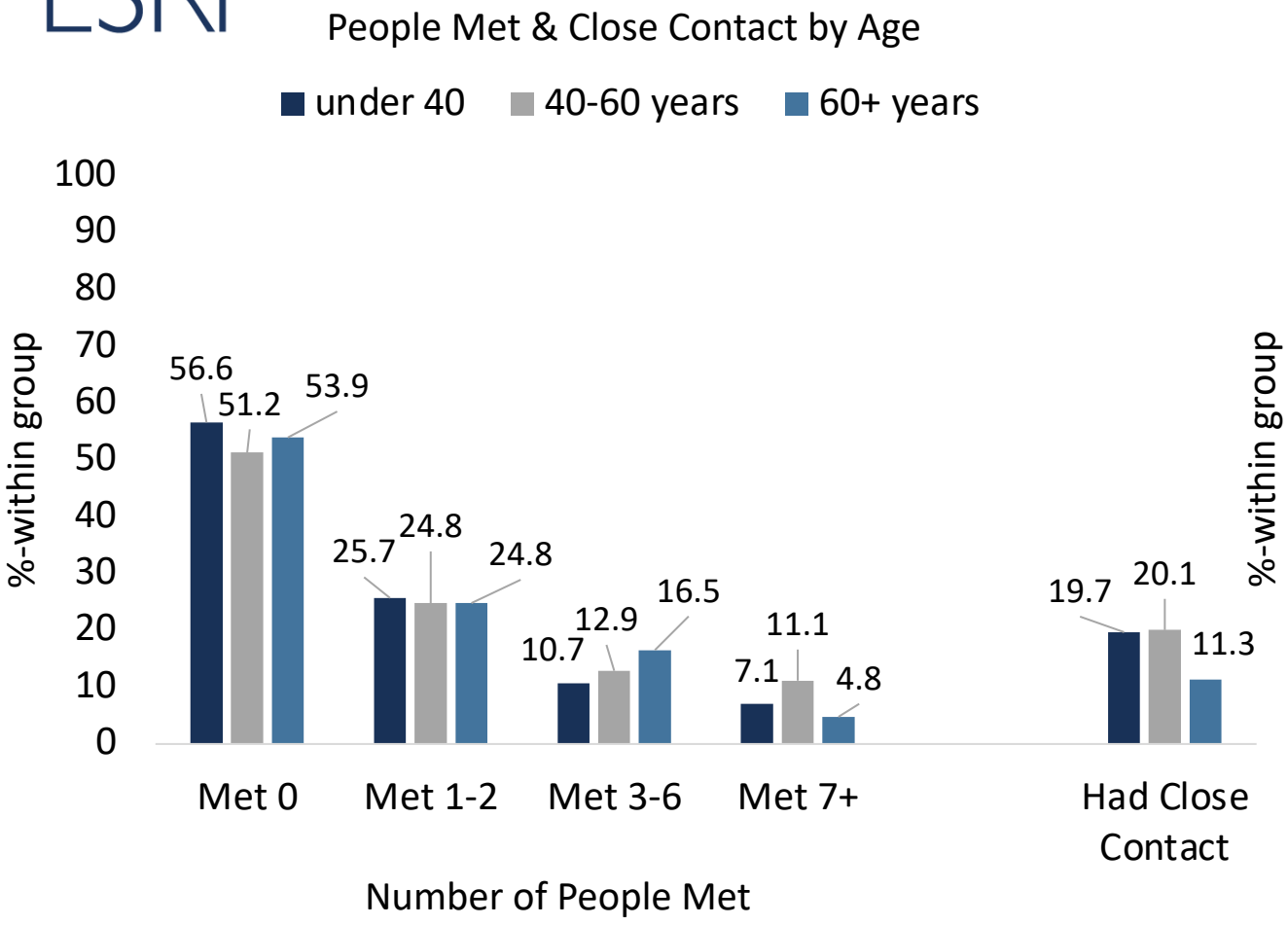
Perception of restrictions

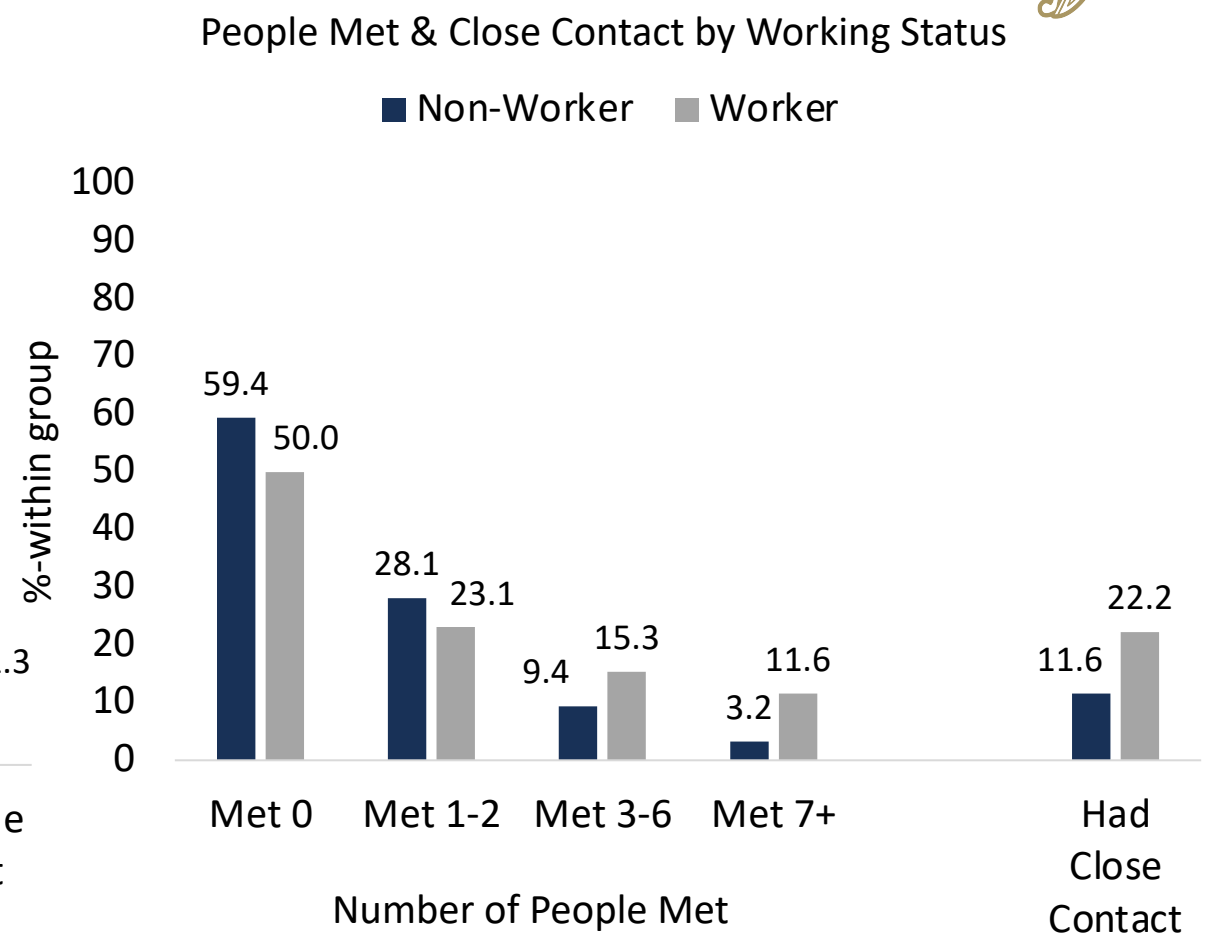


Most respondents rated the current restrictions straightforward and coherent.

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

Socio-Demographic Variables

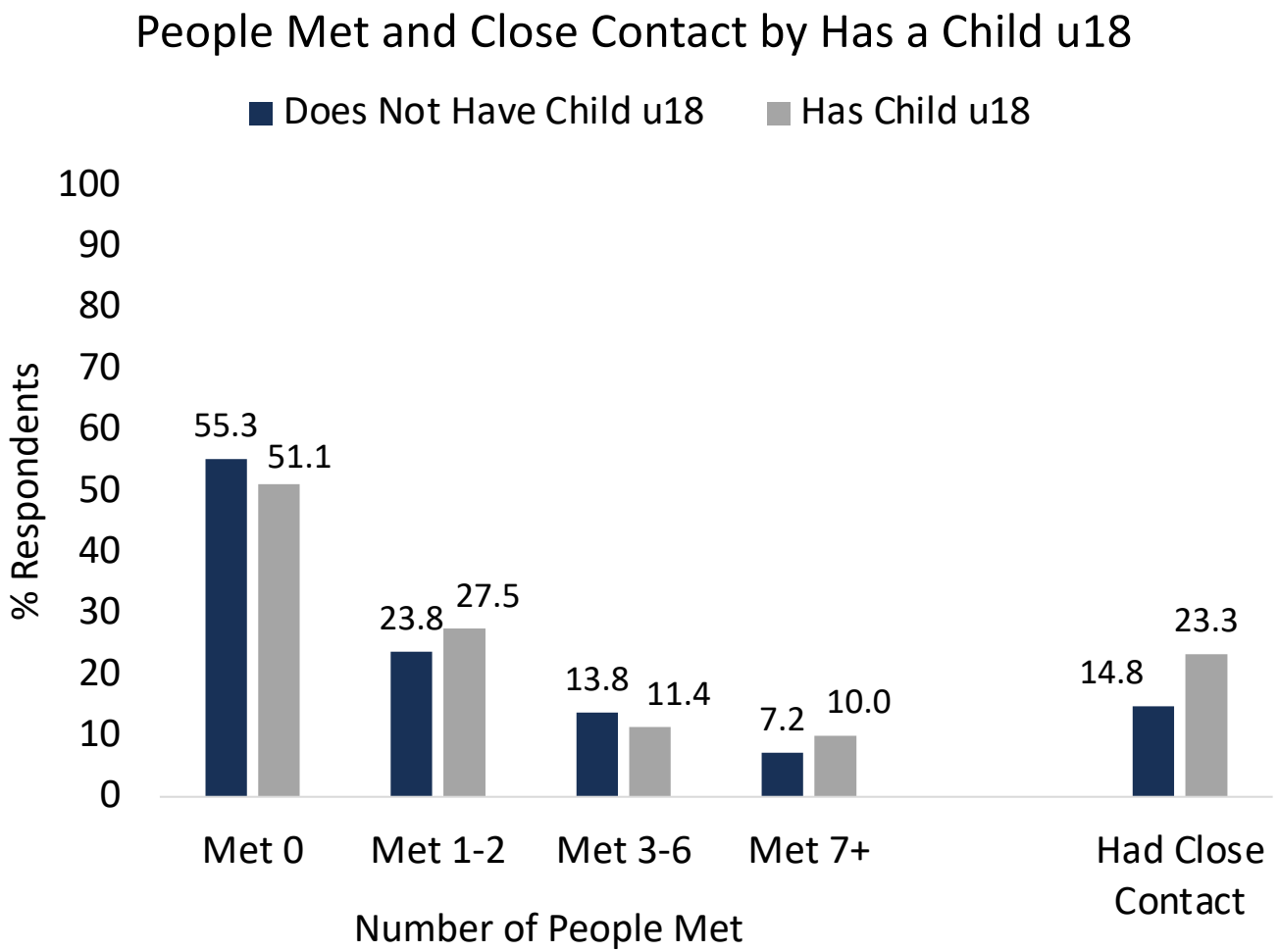




Workers met more people than non-workers and were more likely to have had a close contact, although this difference is explained by those who went to their workplace. Once working was factored in, people aged 18 to 40 were less likely to have met someone from outside of their household than the other two age groups.

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

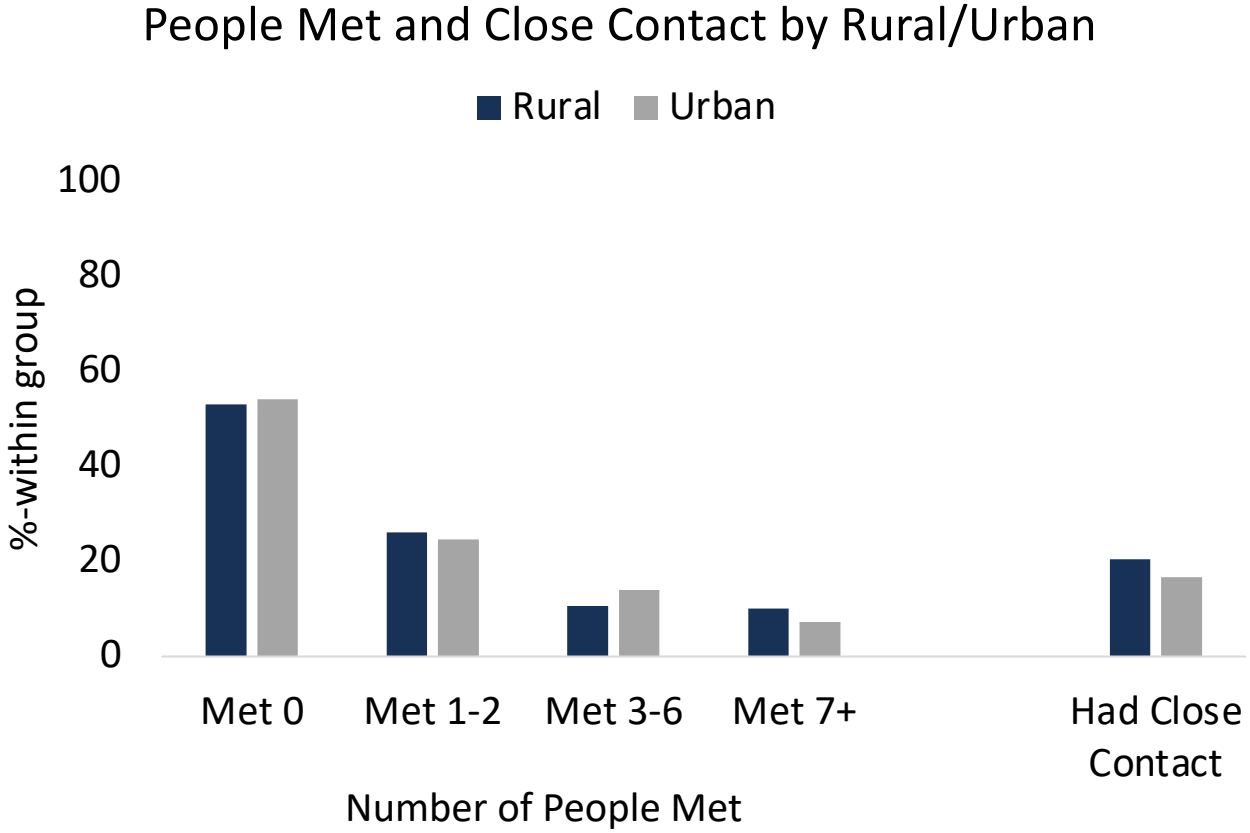
Socio-Demographic Variables

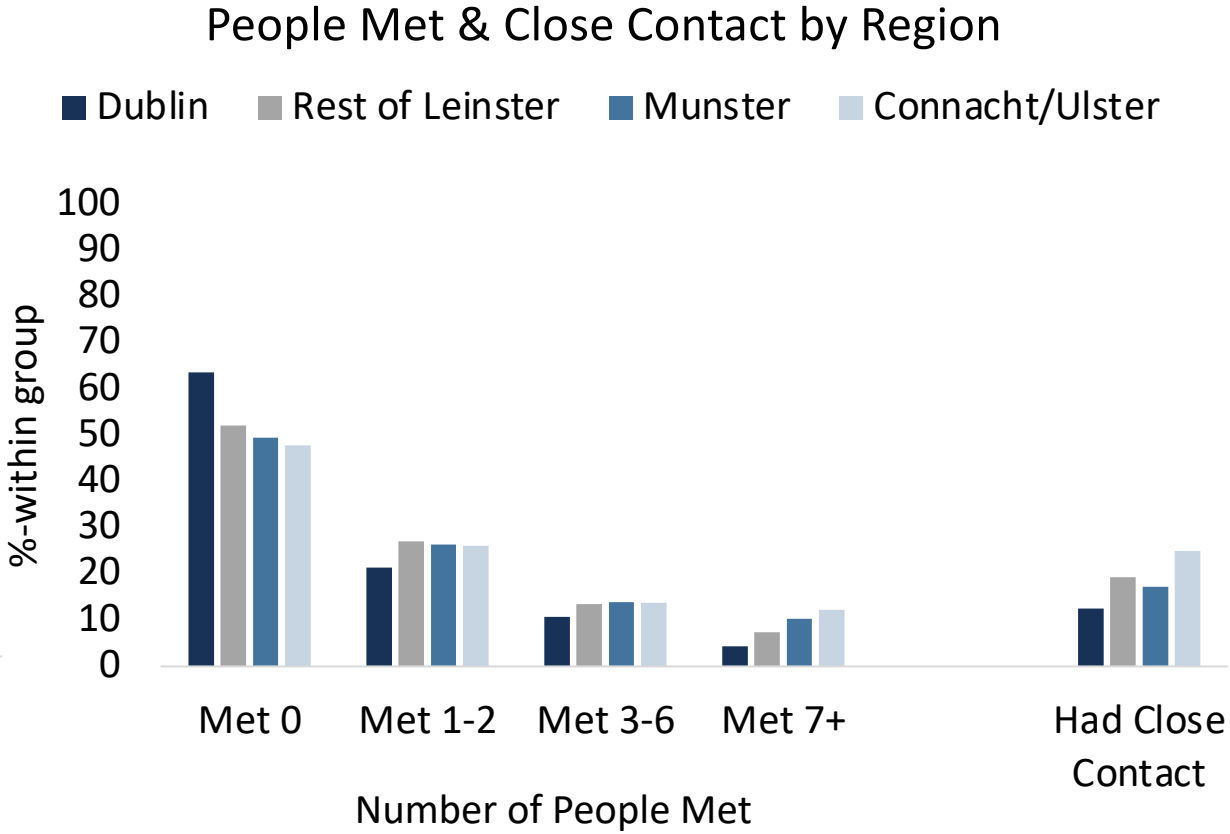


People with children under the age of 18 were more likely to have met people outside of their household and to have had a close contact than those without children under 18.

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

Socio-Demographic Variables

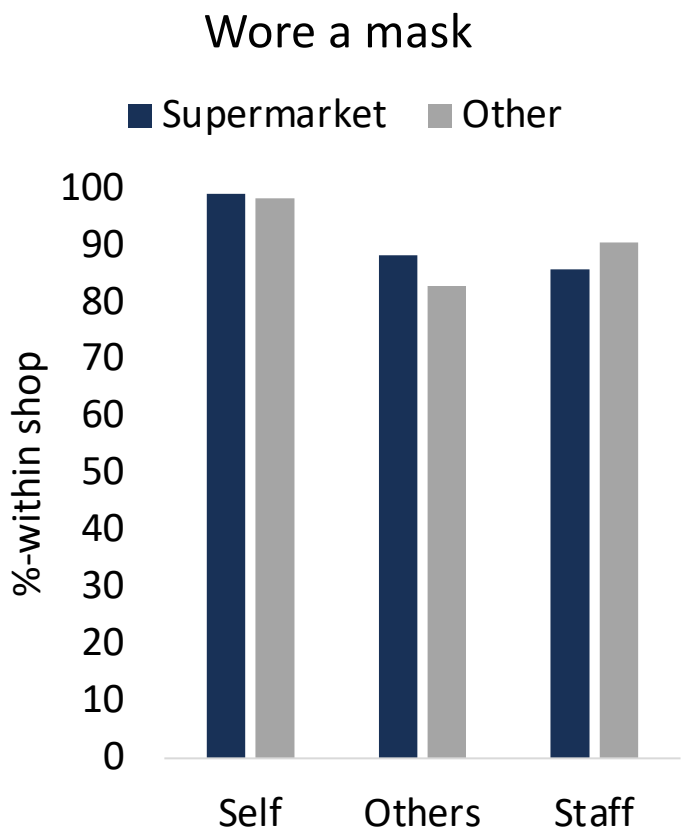


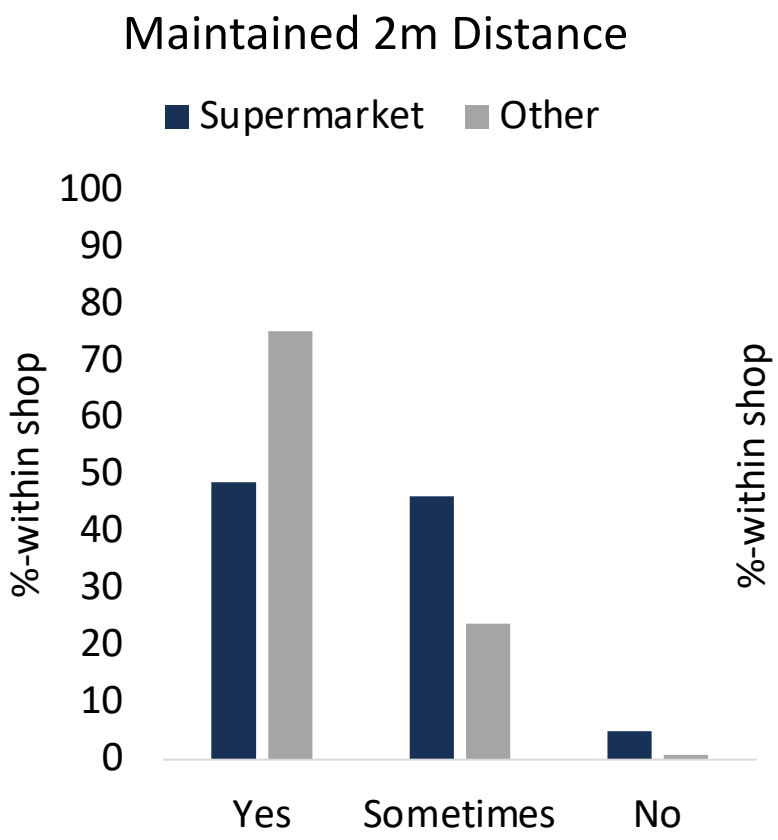


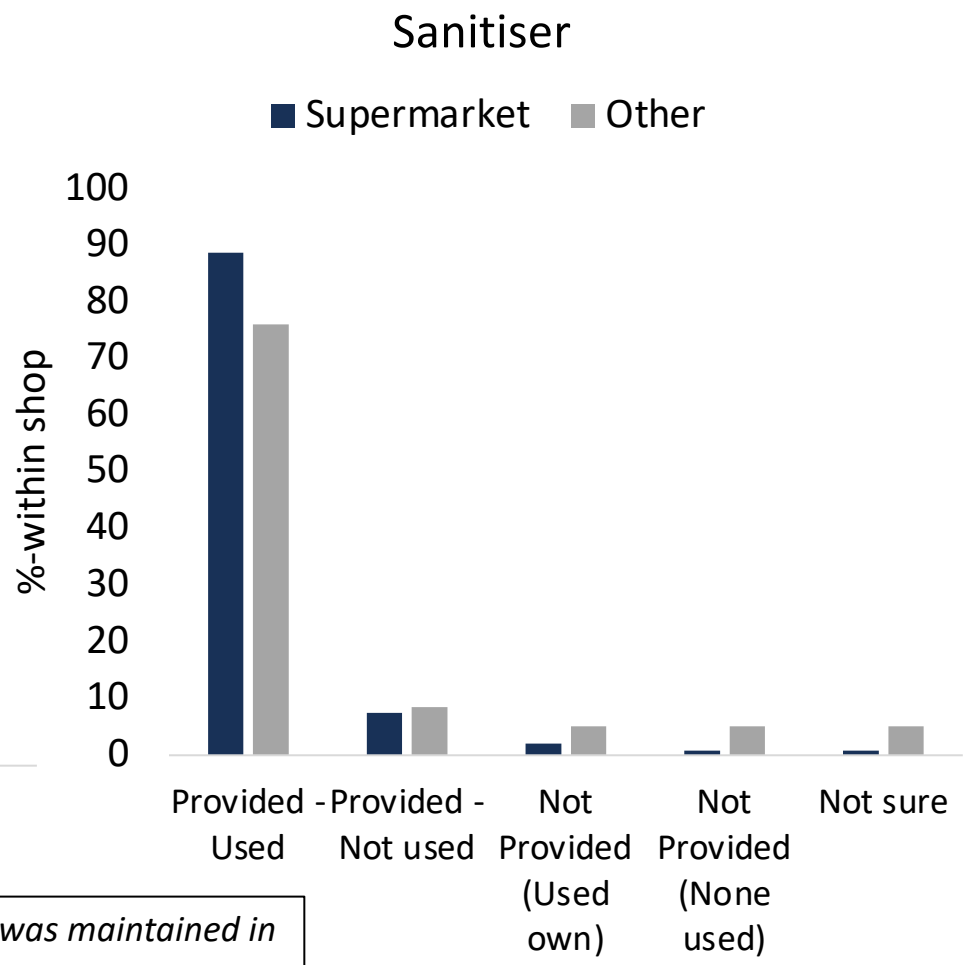
Respondents living outside of Dublin had met more people in the previous 48 hours and were more likely to have had a close contact than those in Dublin. Respondents living in Connacht/Ulster were more likely to have had a close contact than respondents in any other region.

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

Shops and Businesses





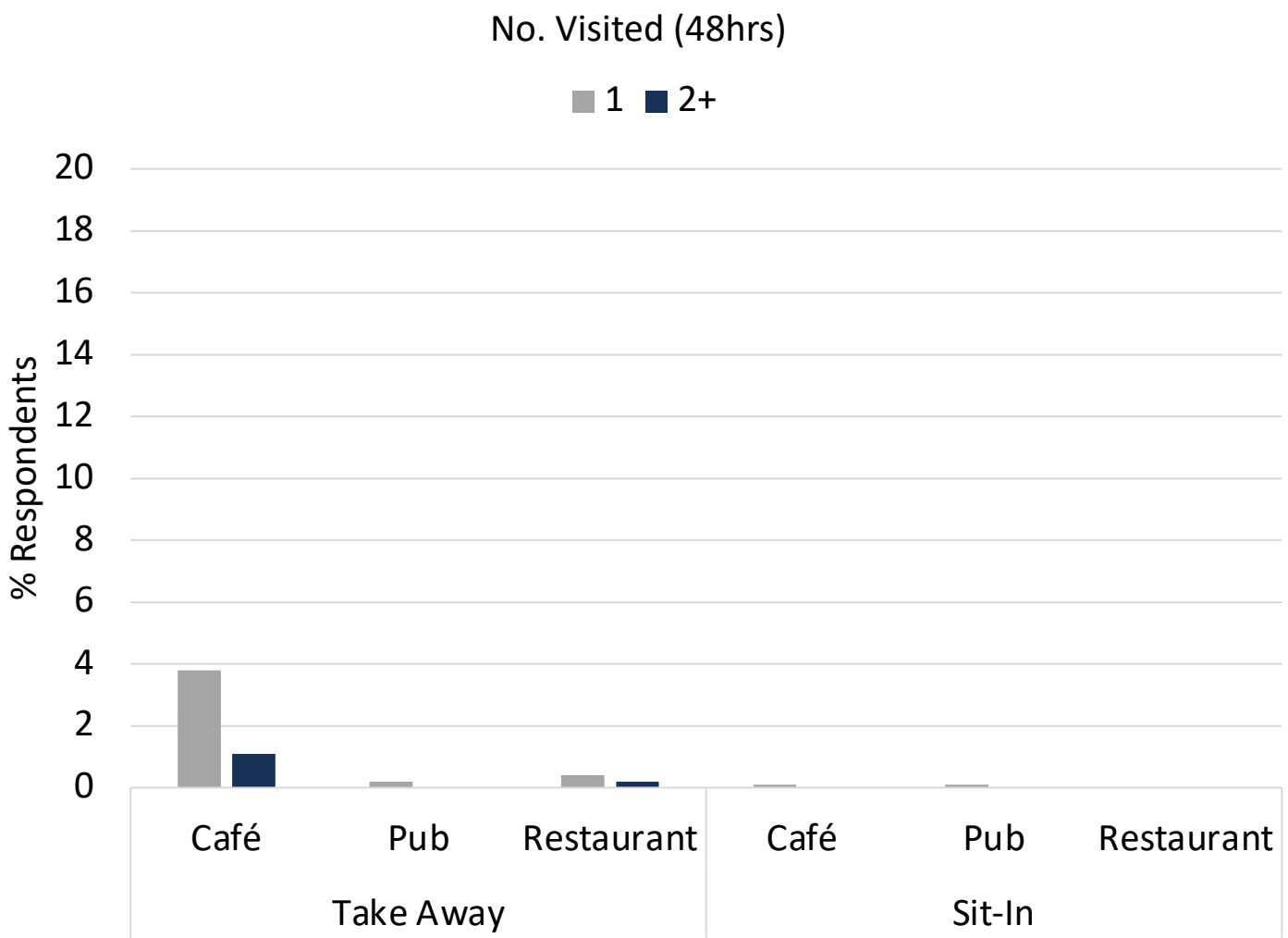


Mask-wearing and sanitiser use is high in shops and businesses, although social distance was maintained in only half of all supermarket visits.

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

Cafés, Pubs and Restaurants

Few people visited cafes, pubs and restaurants.



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