ESRI

Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

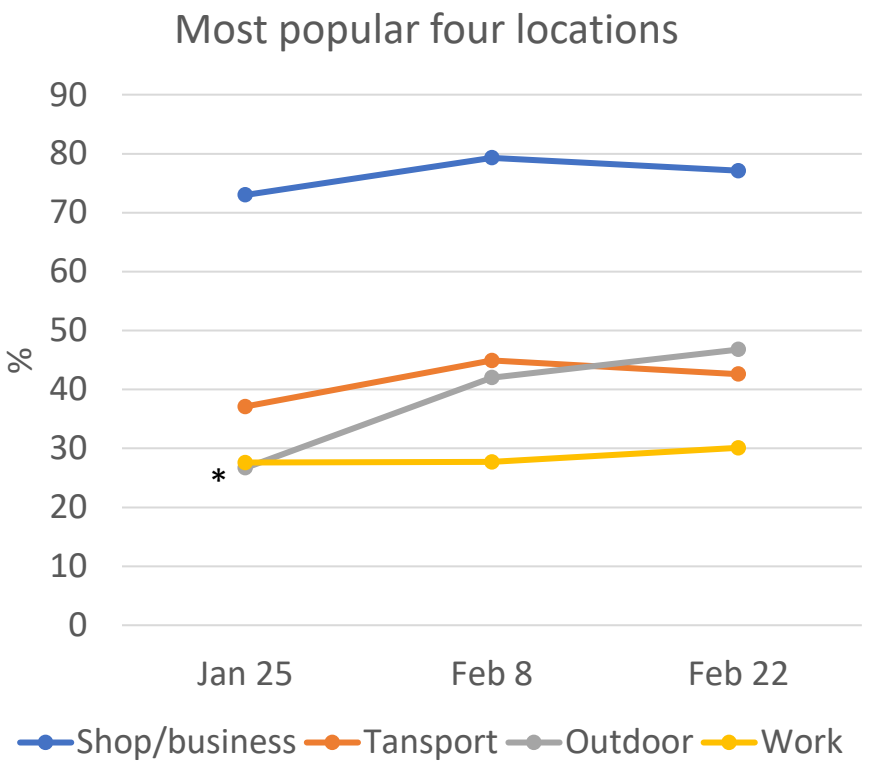
Social Activity Measure
Week Beginning: February 22nd

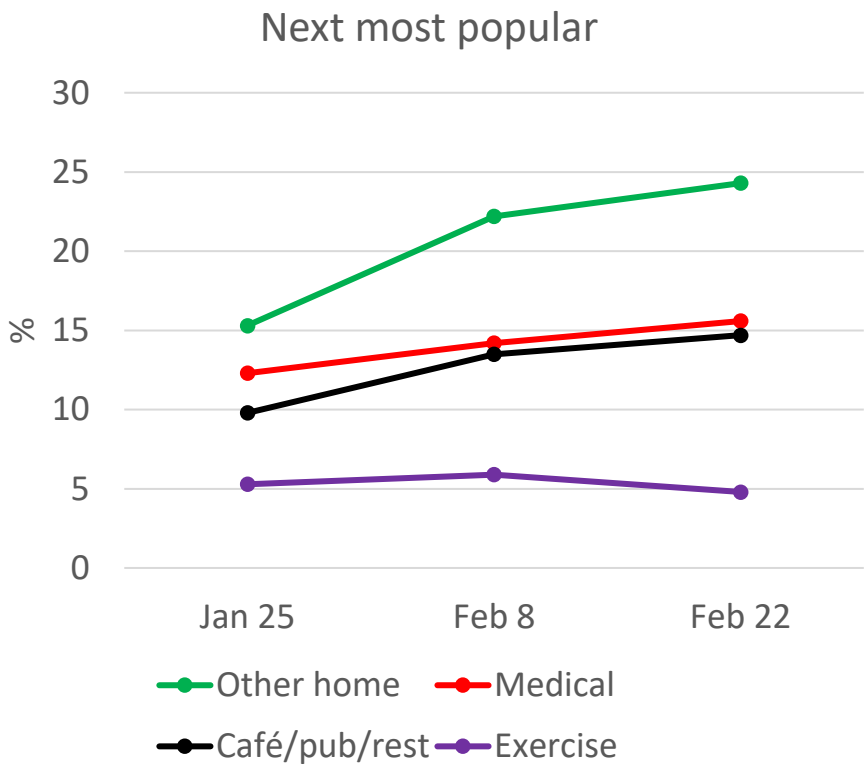
ABOUT THE RESEARCH

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 22nd 2021. Where comparisons between survey rounds are highlighted, they are statistically significant.

Locations visited (previous week)



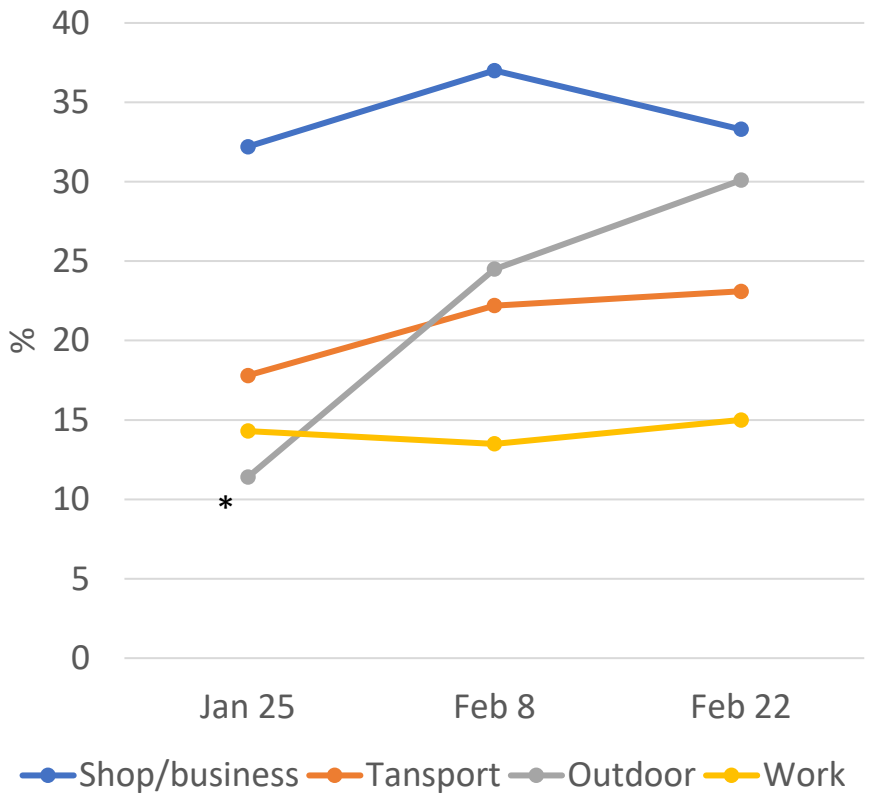


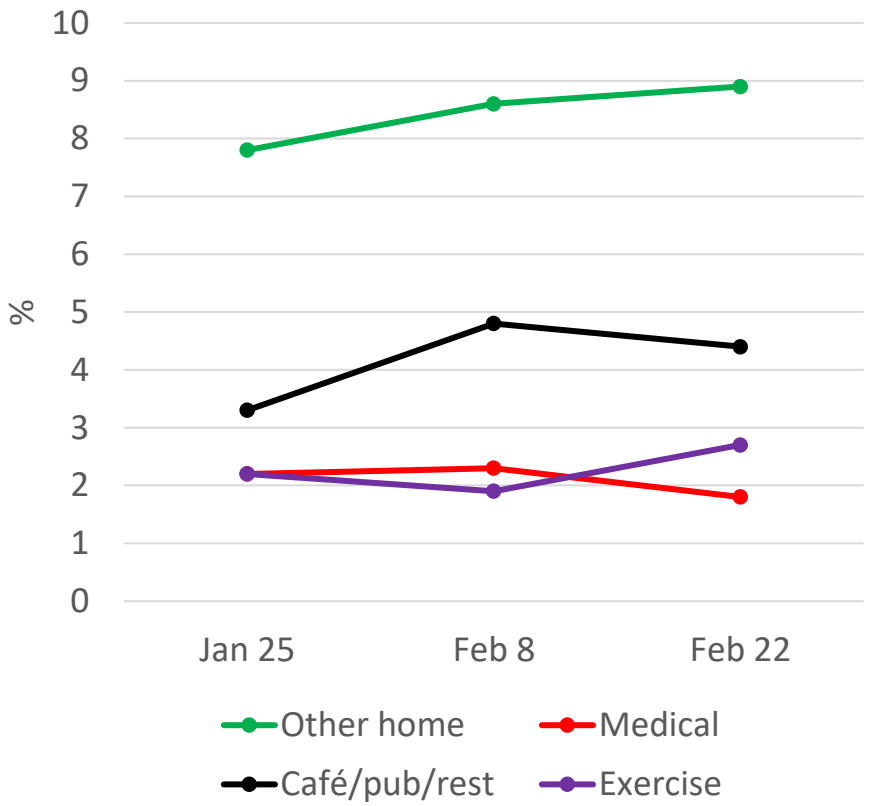
There has been a small increase in activity. Visits to 7 out of the 8 most popular locations are higher now than 4 weeks ago. The largest increases are for household visits and outdoor locations (parks/beaches etc.)

**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

Locations visited (previous day)





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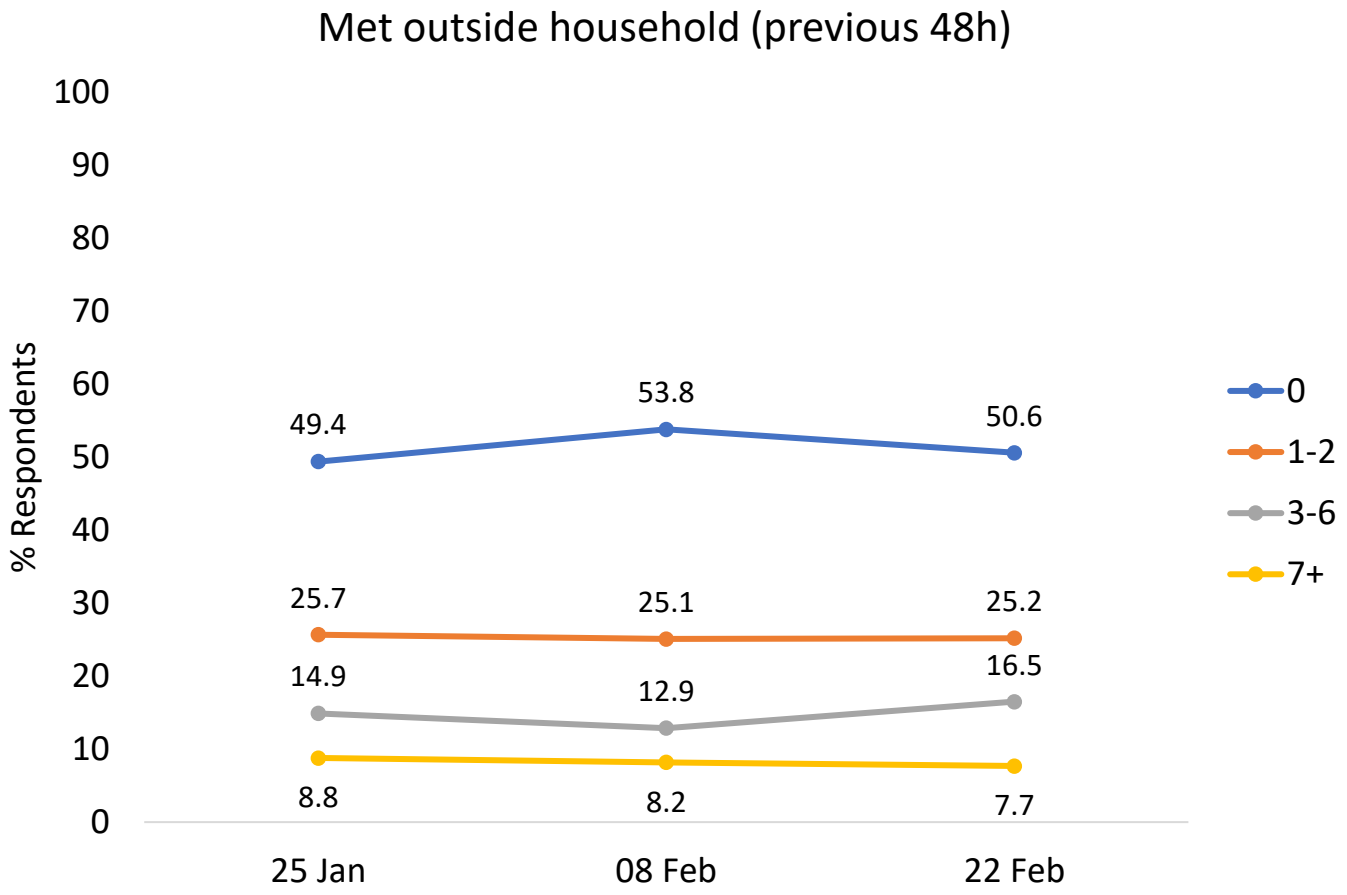
Source: ESRI's Social Activity Measure for the Department of the Taoiseach

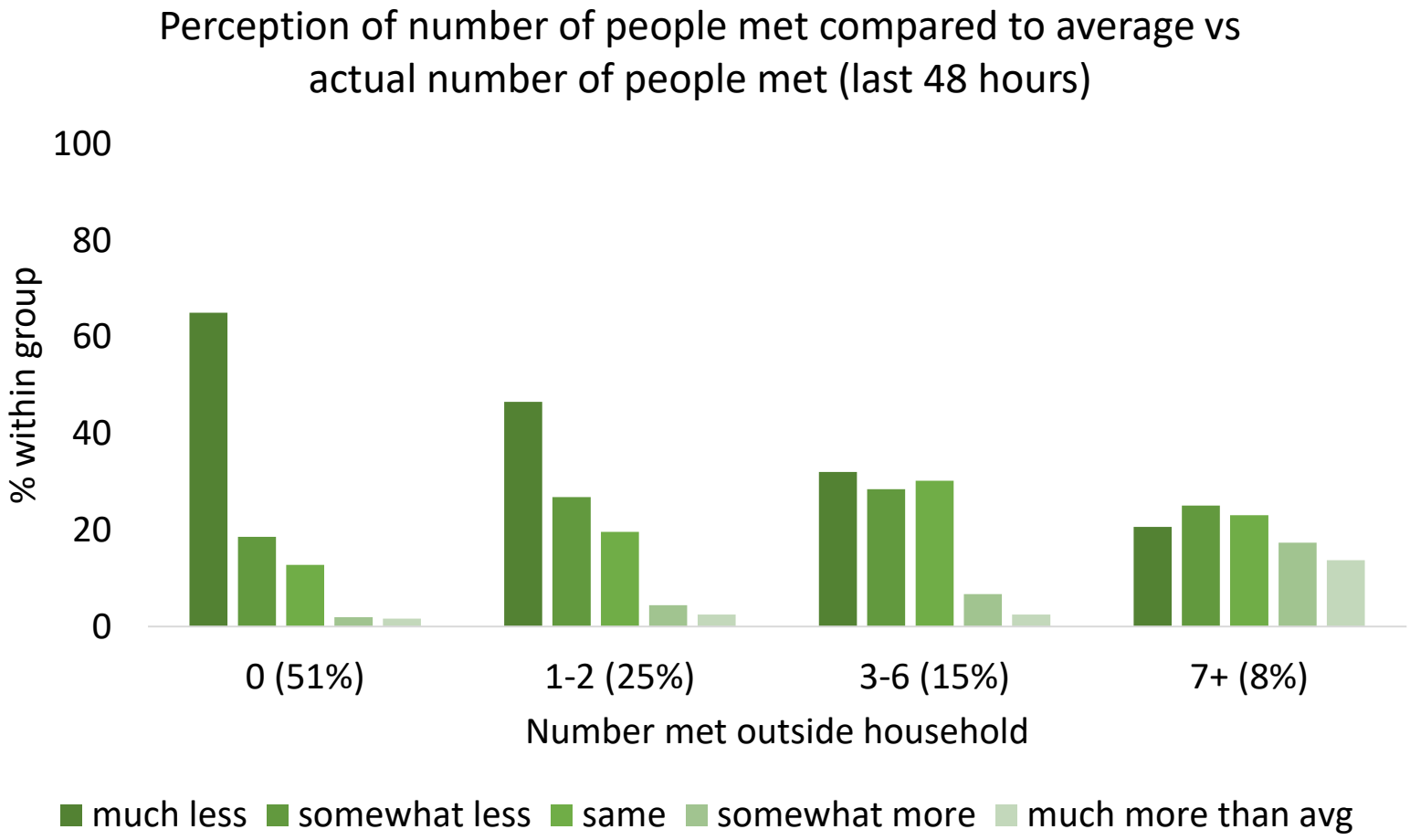
Meeting people outside the household

Approximately half the population meets with no one outside their household over a 48 hour period. The numbers of such meetings have remained stable over the 4-week period.



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

Perceptions of Self vs. Others



Over 50% of people had met nobody outside their household in the previous 48 hours. The minority who met 3 or more others mistakenly think that they meet up with fewer people than average.

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

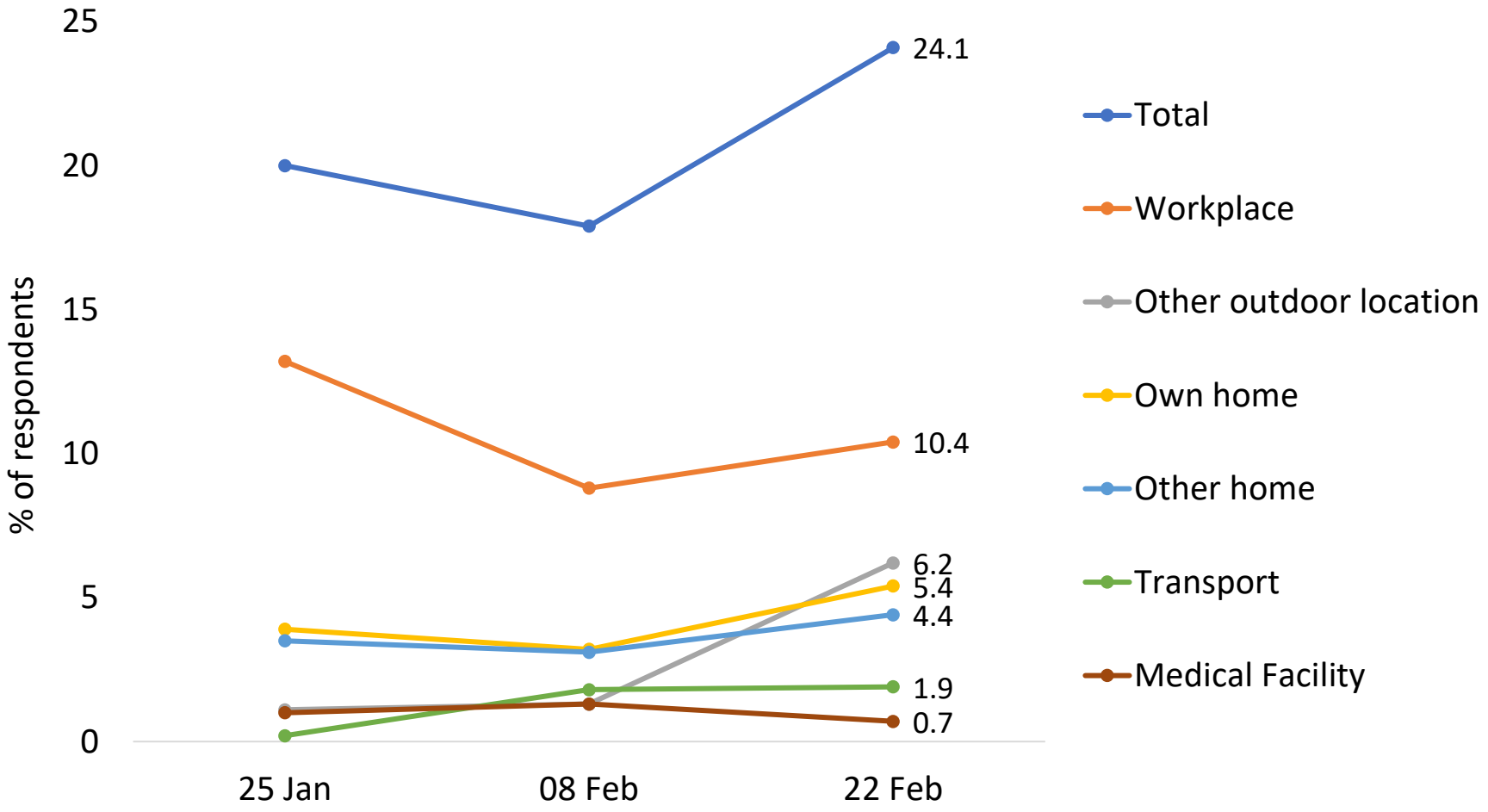
Perceptions of Self vs. Others

One possible reason why people might overestimate the activity of others could have been be that essential workers, who have to be more active, compare themselves against other essential workers. However, this chart shows that, in fact, the misperception is larger among non-essential workers.

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

Close Contacts*

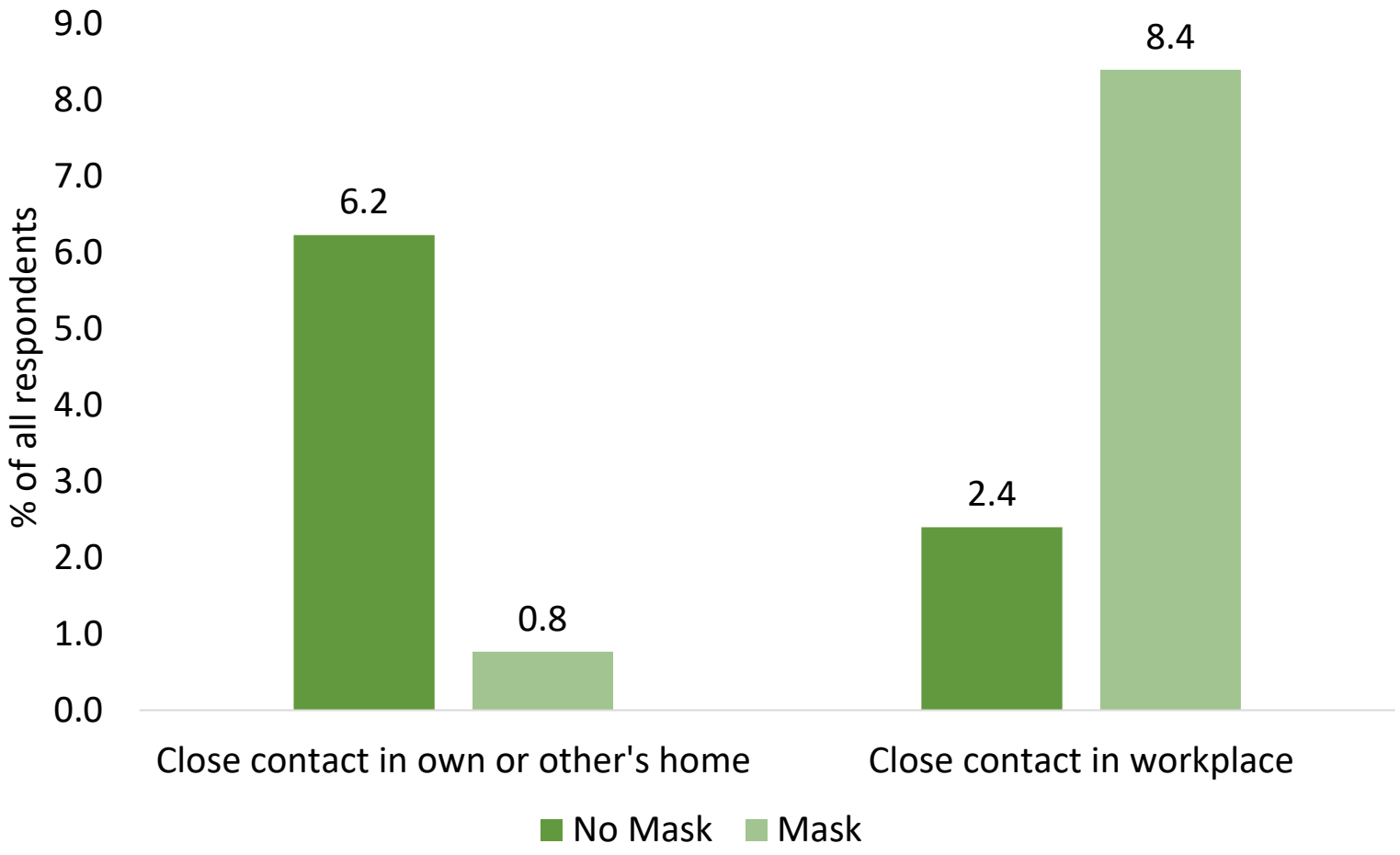
There has been an increase in close contacts from previous weeks, mostly due to an increase in close contacts in outdoor locations. There was also a smaller but significant increase in the number of close contacts in homes.



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

*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)

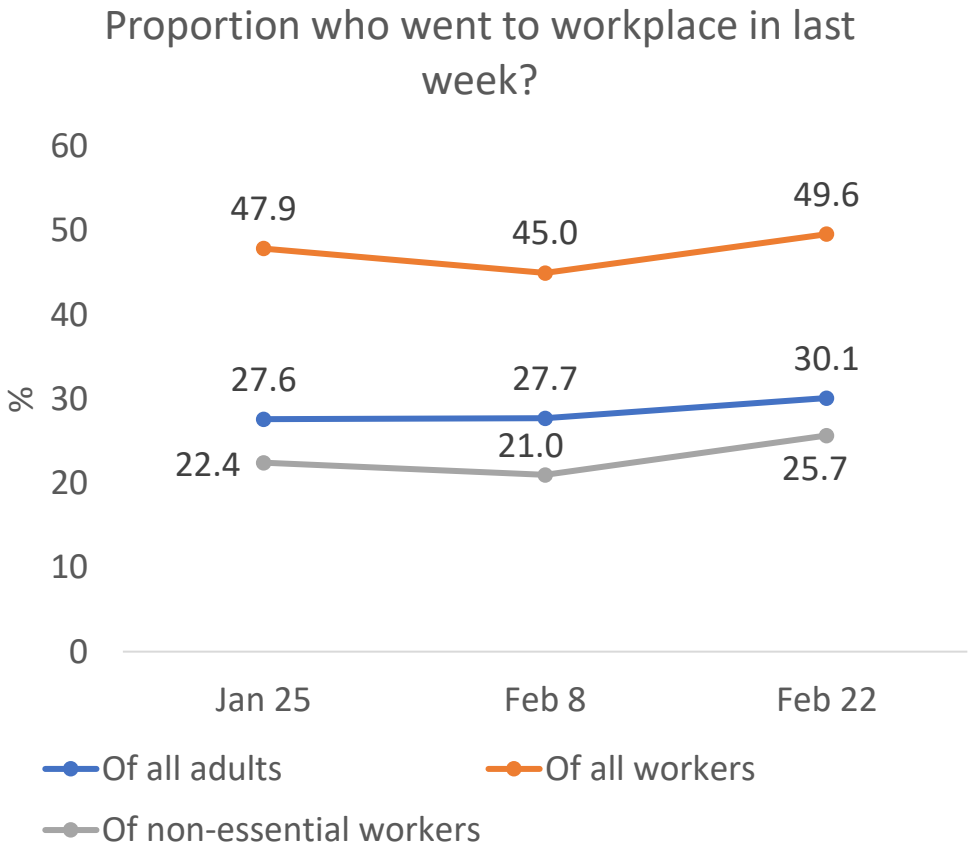
Mask Wearing

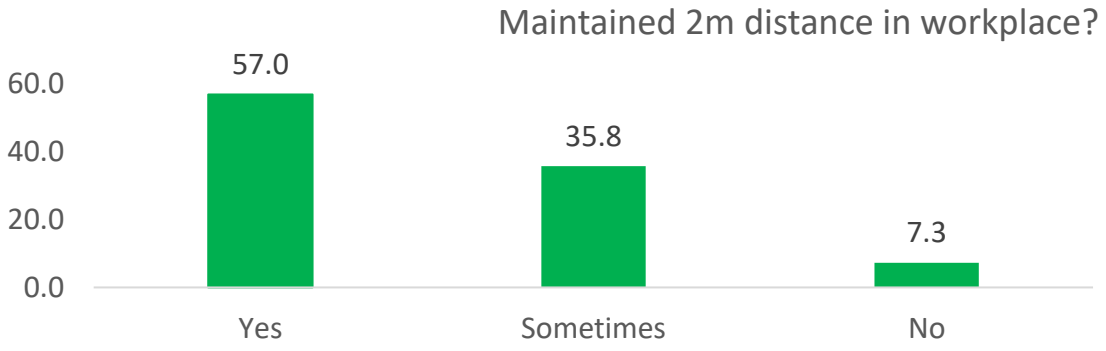


This chart shows the percentage of respondents who had a close contact in a home with or without a mask, and the percentage who had a close contact in a workplace with or without a mask. Most close contacts in workplaces happen while at least one person is wearing a mask. Most close contacts in the home happen when no one is wearing a mask.

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

Working Outside the Home

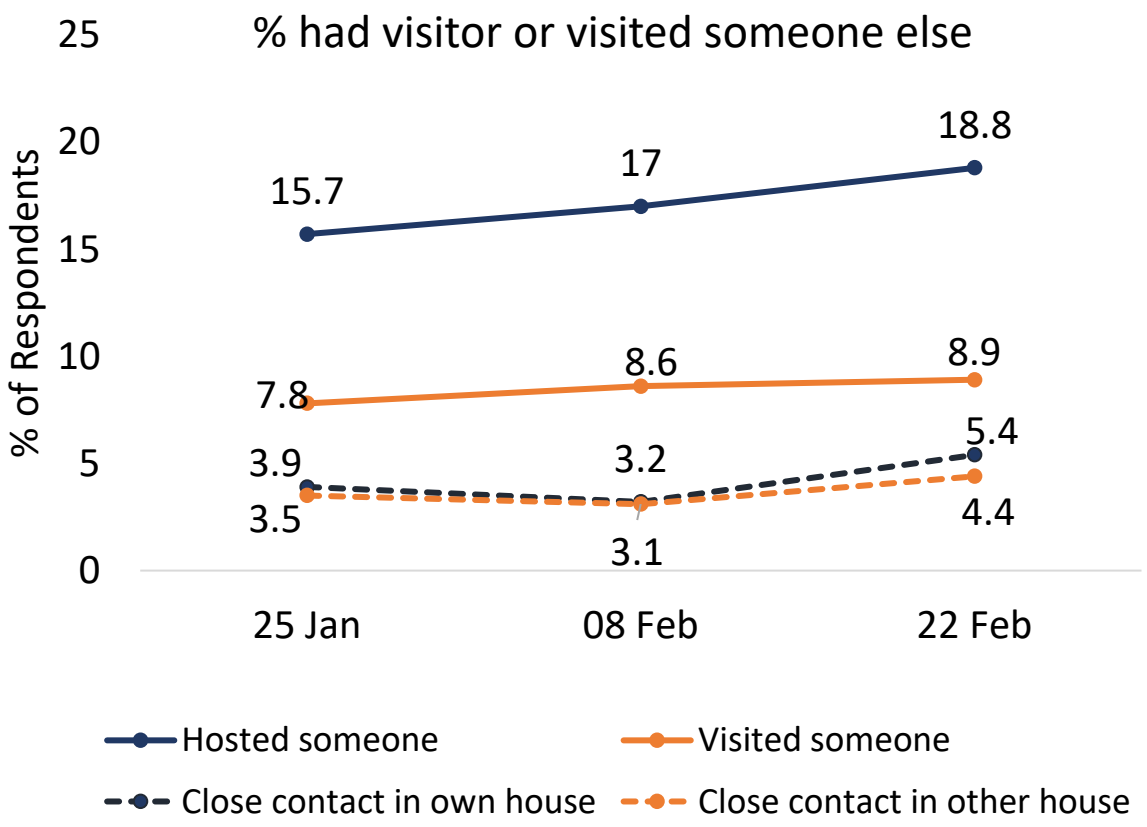


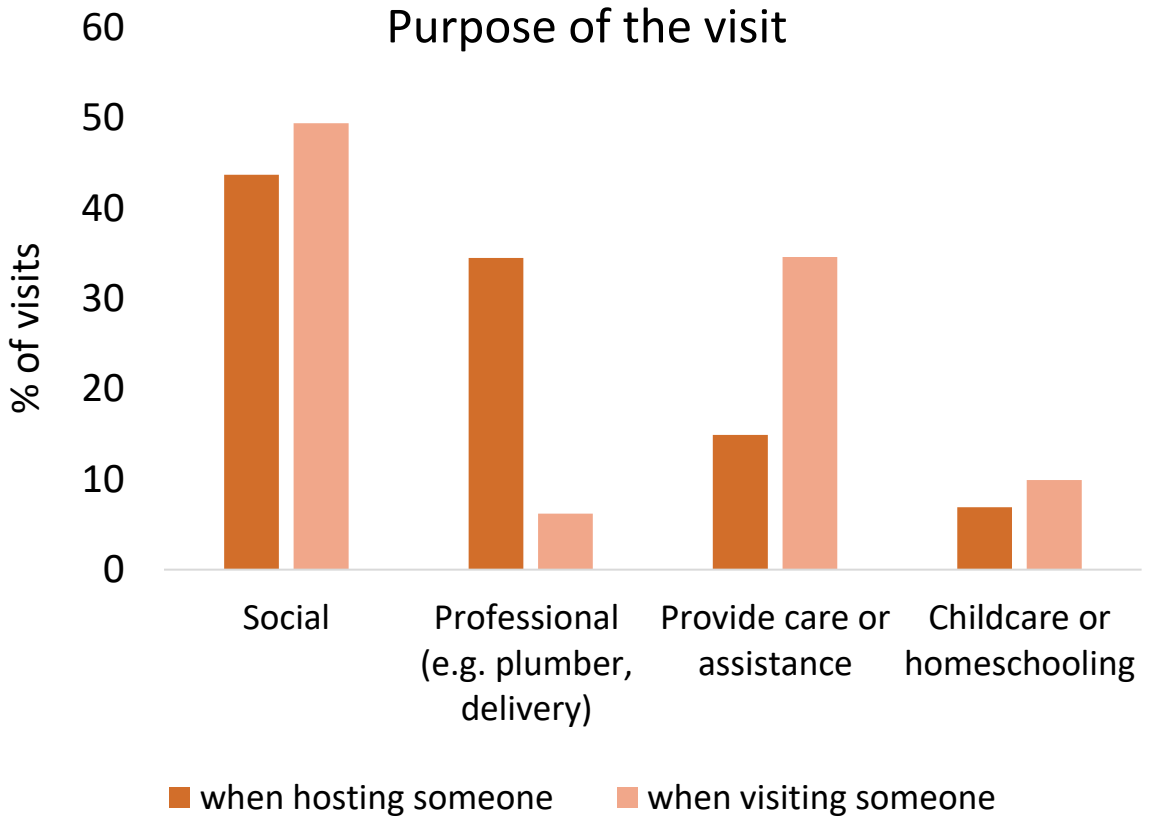


The left-hand chart shows the percentage of respondents who left home to attend their place of work. There has been a small increase, with more than 1-in-4 non-essential workers going to their workplace in the last week. Mask wearing in workplaces is high, but maintaining 2m distance perhaps more difficult.

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

Household Visits

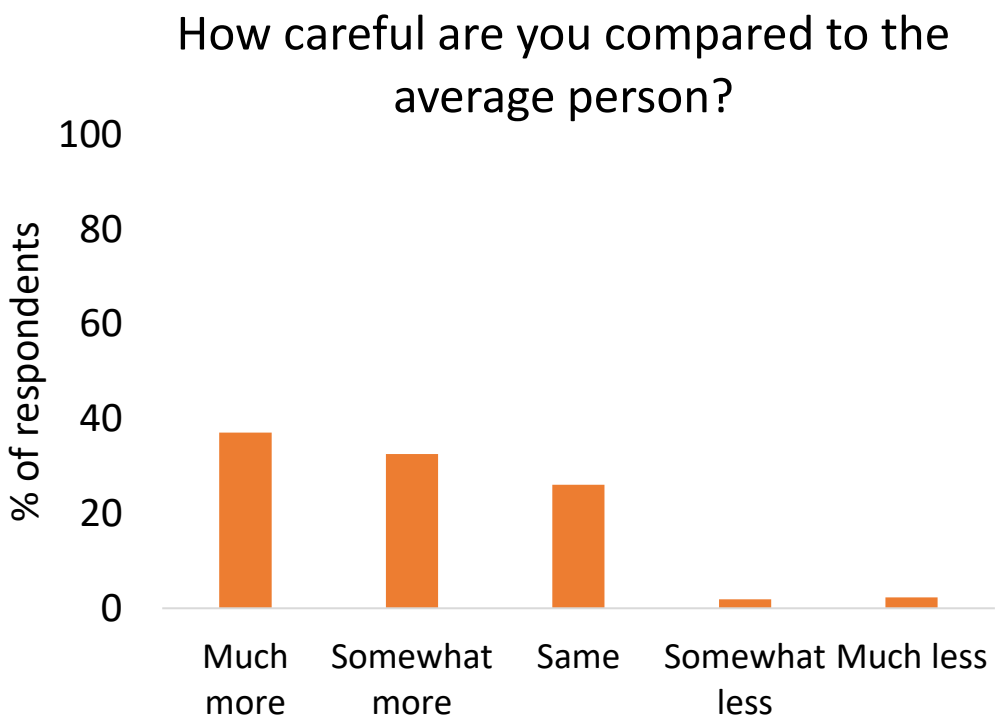


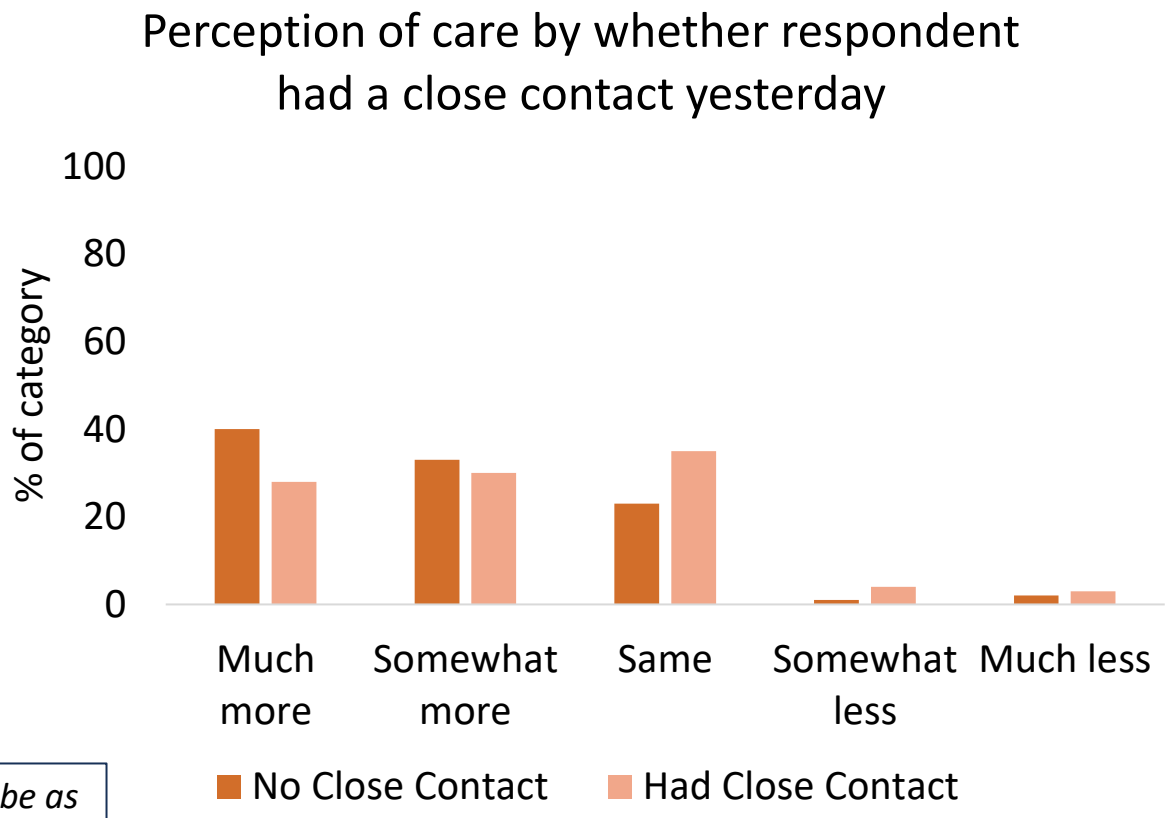


The charts show a slight increase in the number of visits to households the day before the survey. Just less than half were social visits. The other half were mostly professional reasons or to provide care.

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

Perceptions of Self vs. Others

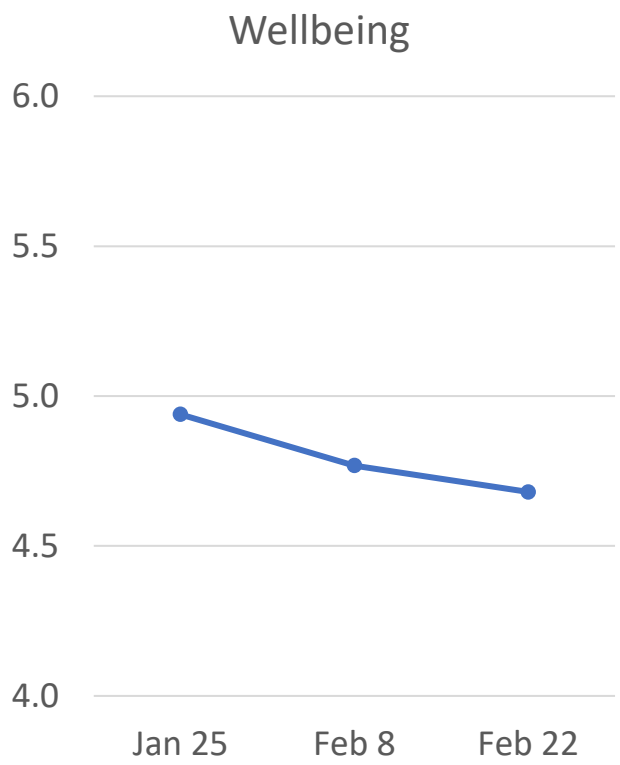


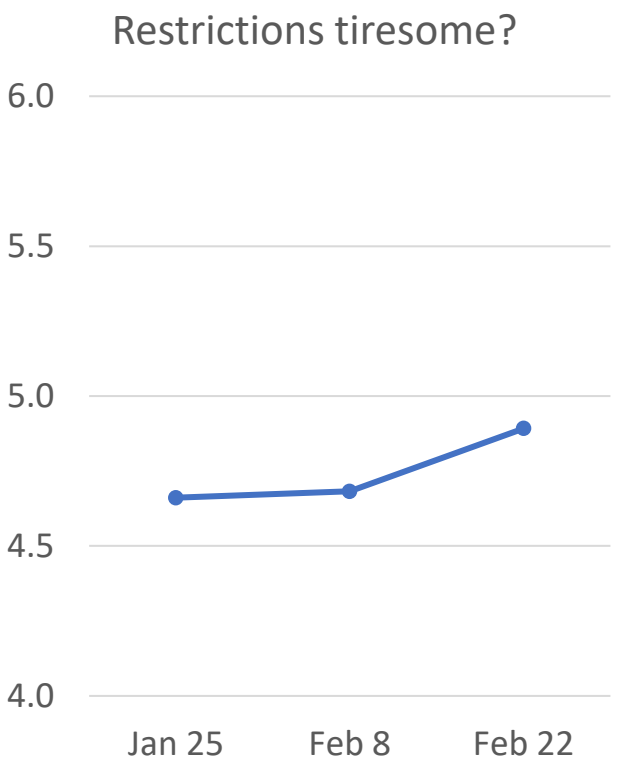


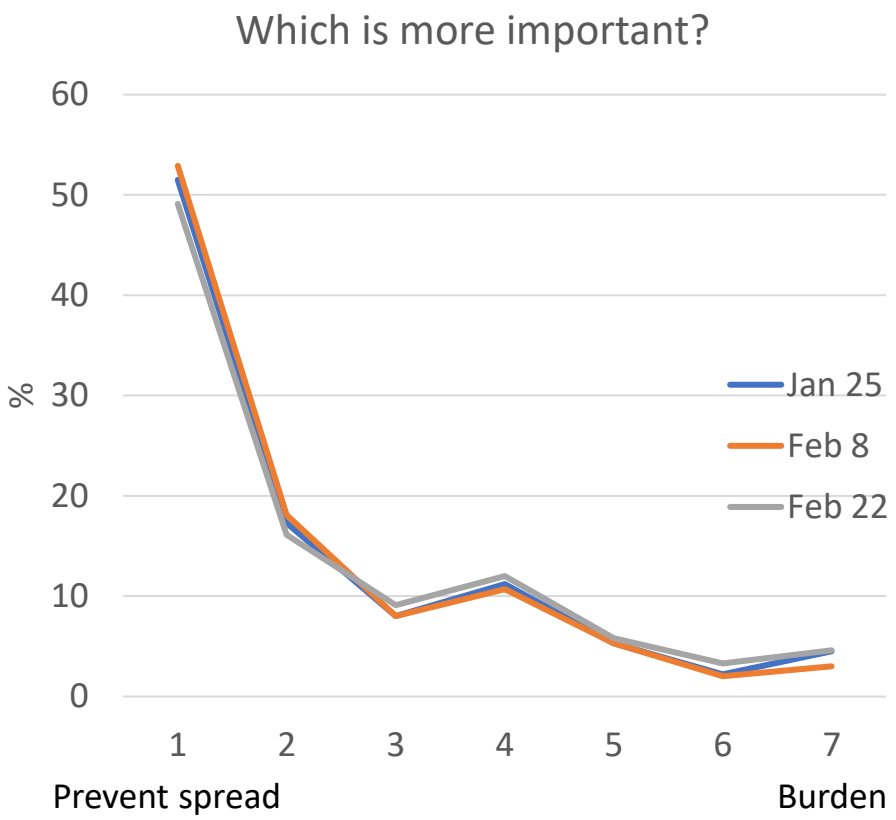
The chart shows that almost all respondents considered themselves to be as or more careful than the average person, including the 24% of respondents who had had a close contact the day before completing the survey.

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

Psychological Variables



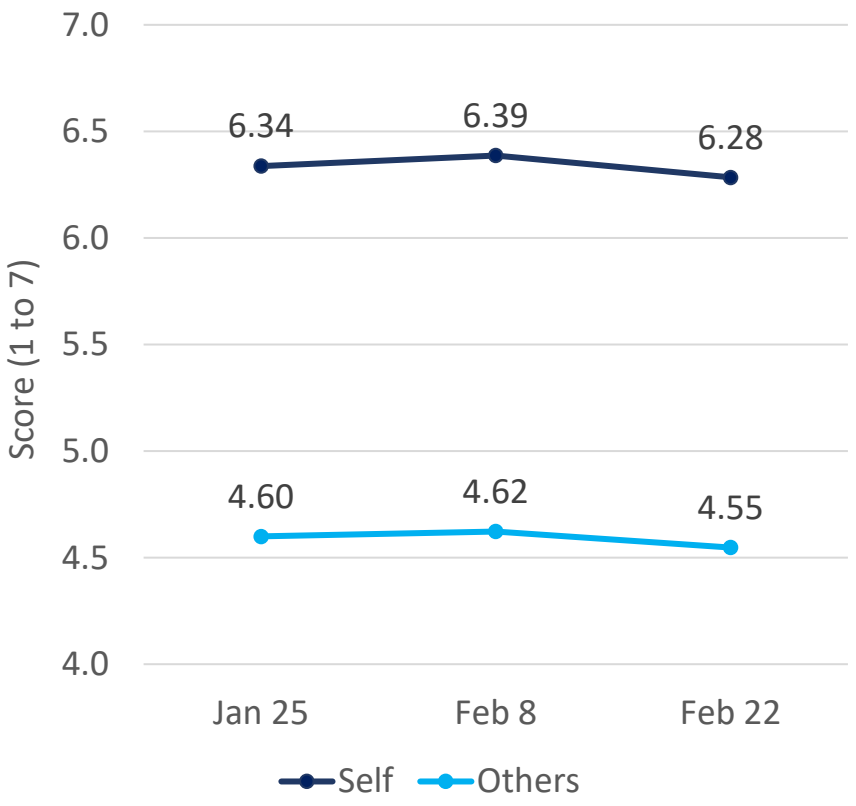


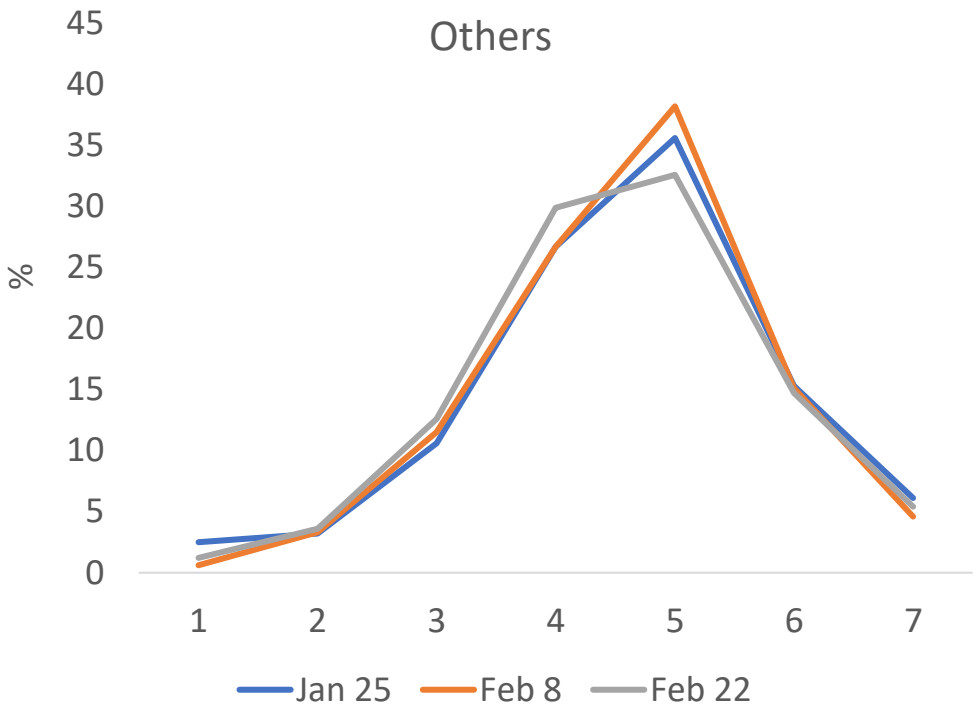


With the extension of Level 5 restrictions, reported wellbeing has declined and tiredness with restrictions increased. However, there has been no change in people's view about the relative importance of prevent the spread of Covid-19 and the personal burden of the restrictions.

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

Reported compliance with public health guidelines

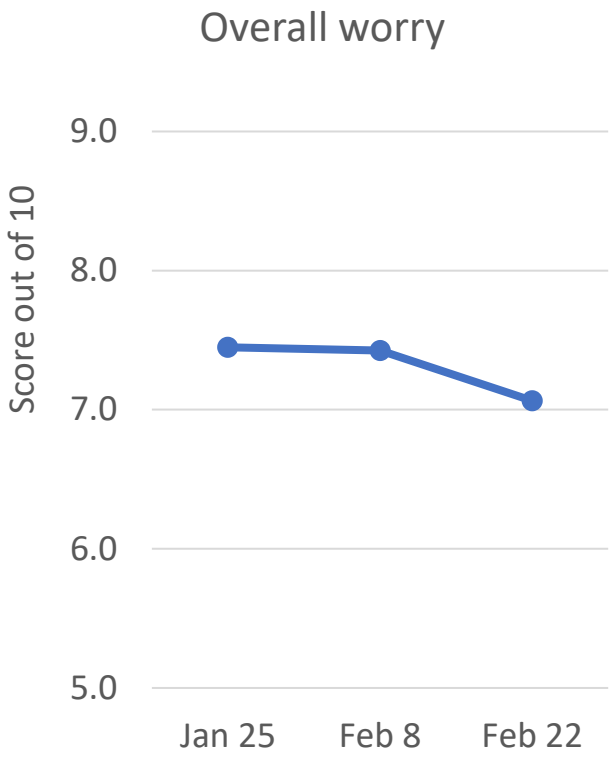


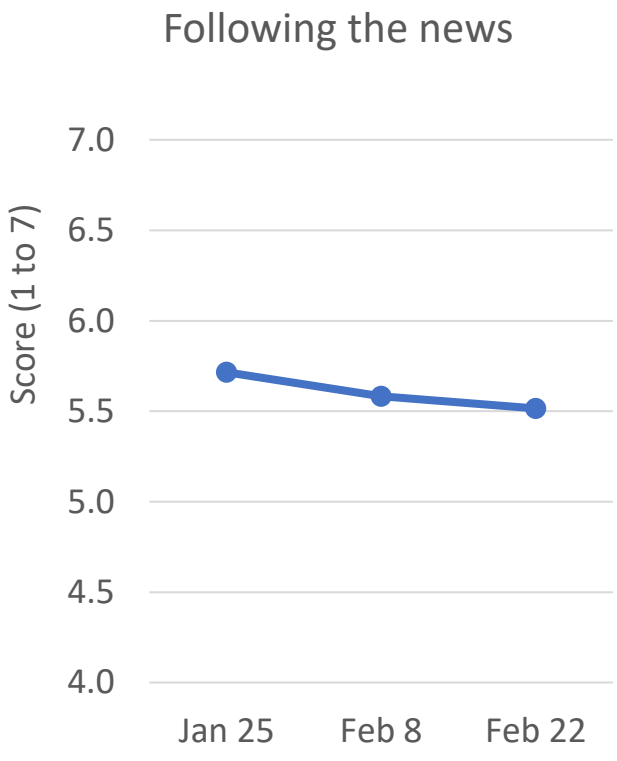


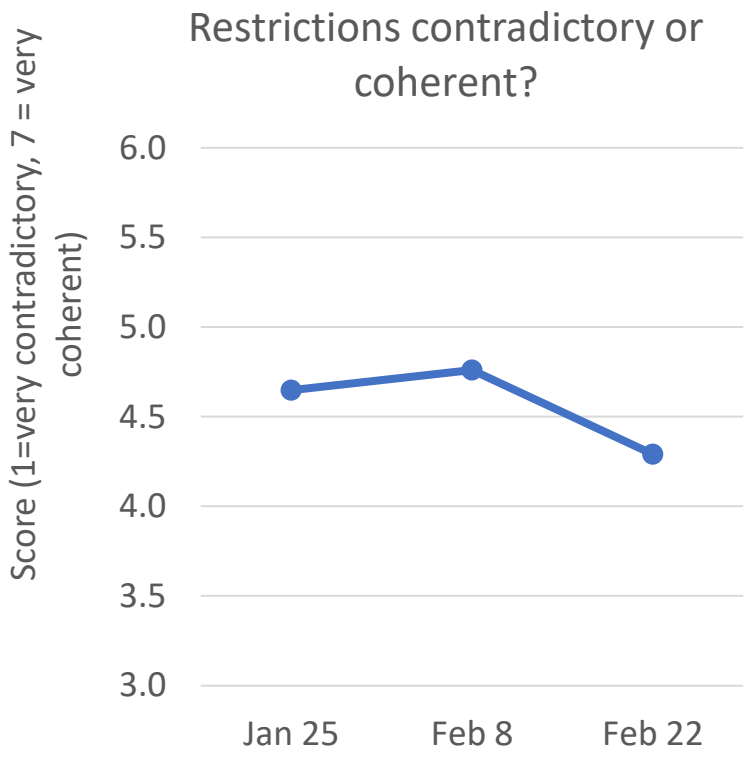
Reported compliance of both self and others with public health guidelines has reduced very slightly. The difference is short of 5% statistical significance.

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

Psychological Variables



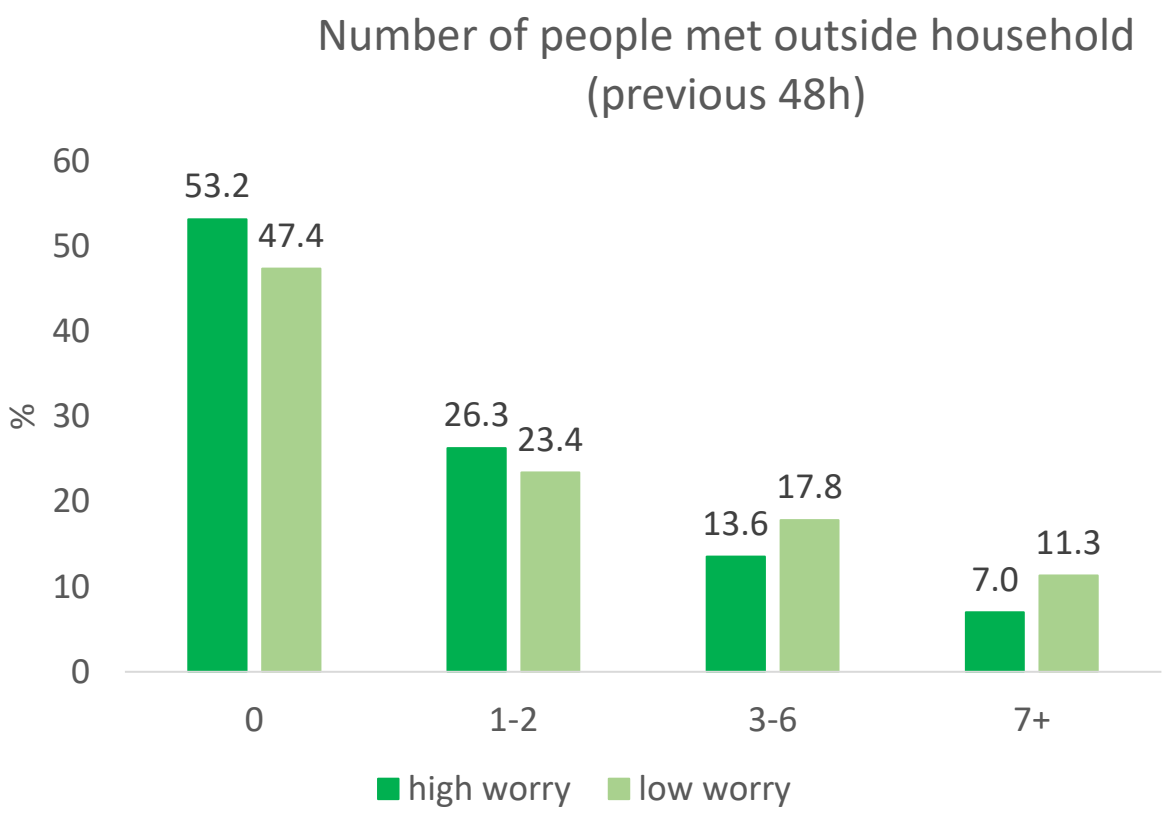


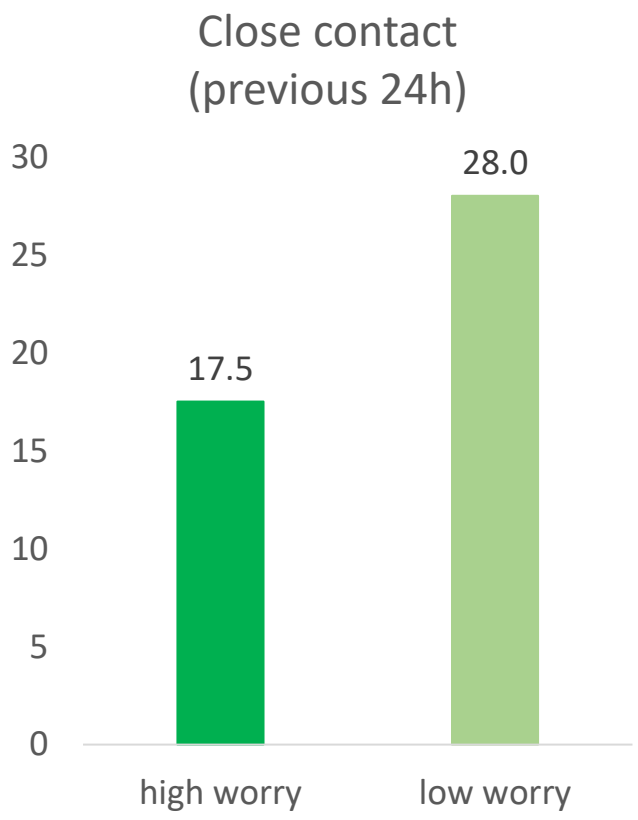


Overall worry about Covid-19 has fallen as case numbers have come down. The proportion of people following the news about Covid-19 closely has fallen too, although it remains high. The period has seen a drop in the proportion who view the current public health restrictions as coherent.

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

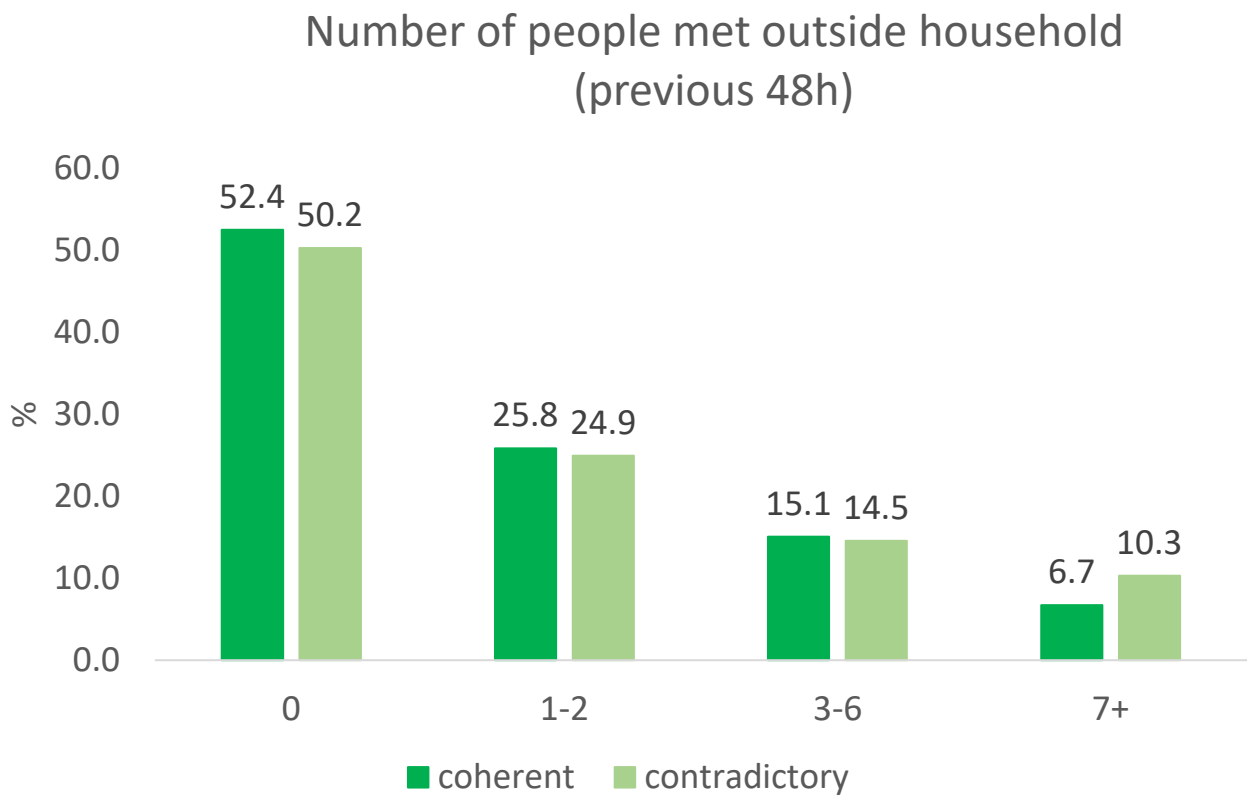
Social activity by overall level of worry about Covid-19

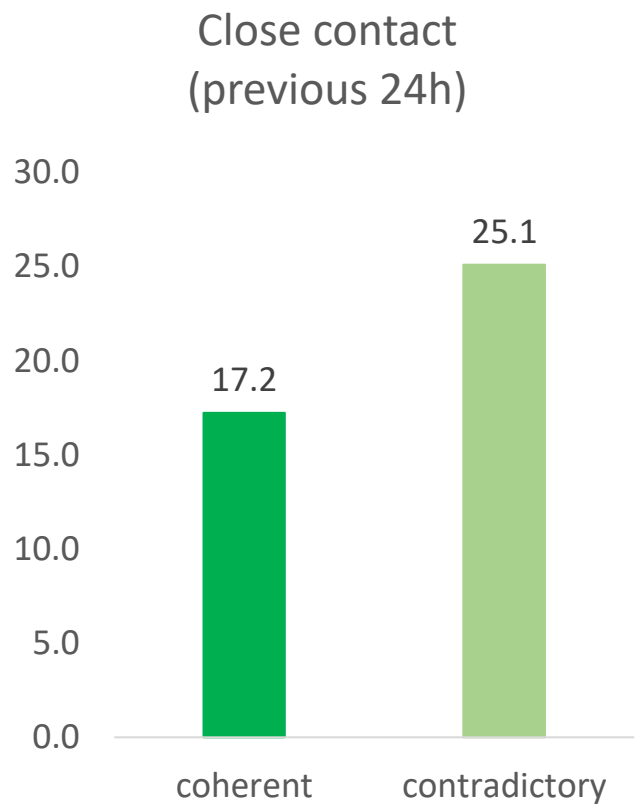




People with a greater overall level of worry about Covid-19 meet fewer people from outside their household and are less likely to have a close contact.

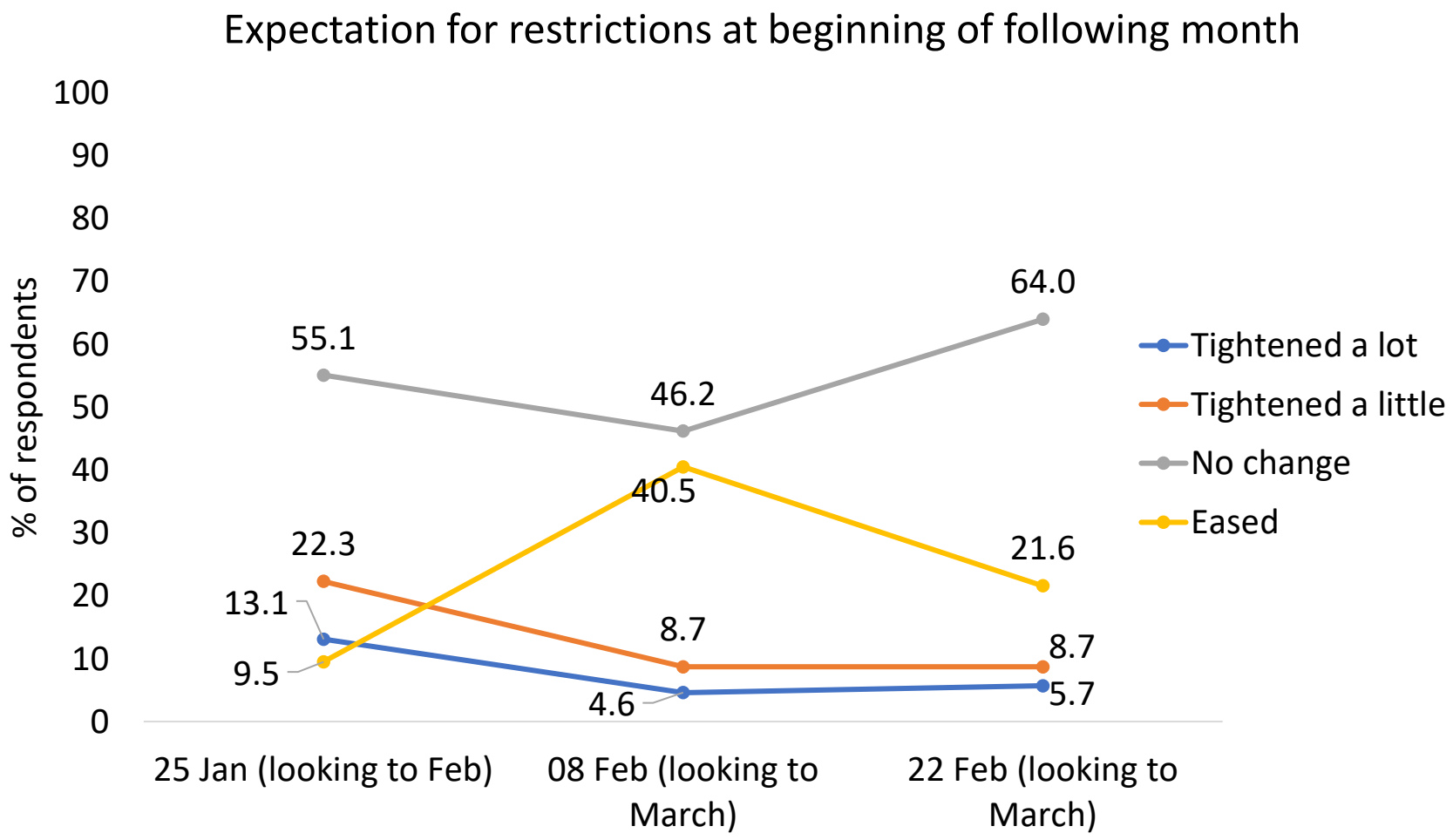
Social activity by perceived coherence of restrictions





People who report that they find the restrictions contradictory rather than coherent are more likely to meet others outside the household and more likely to have a close contact.

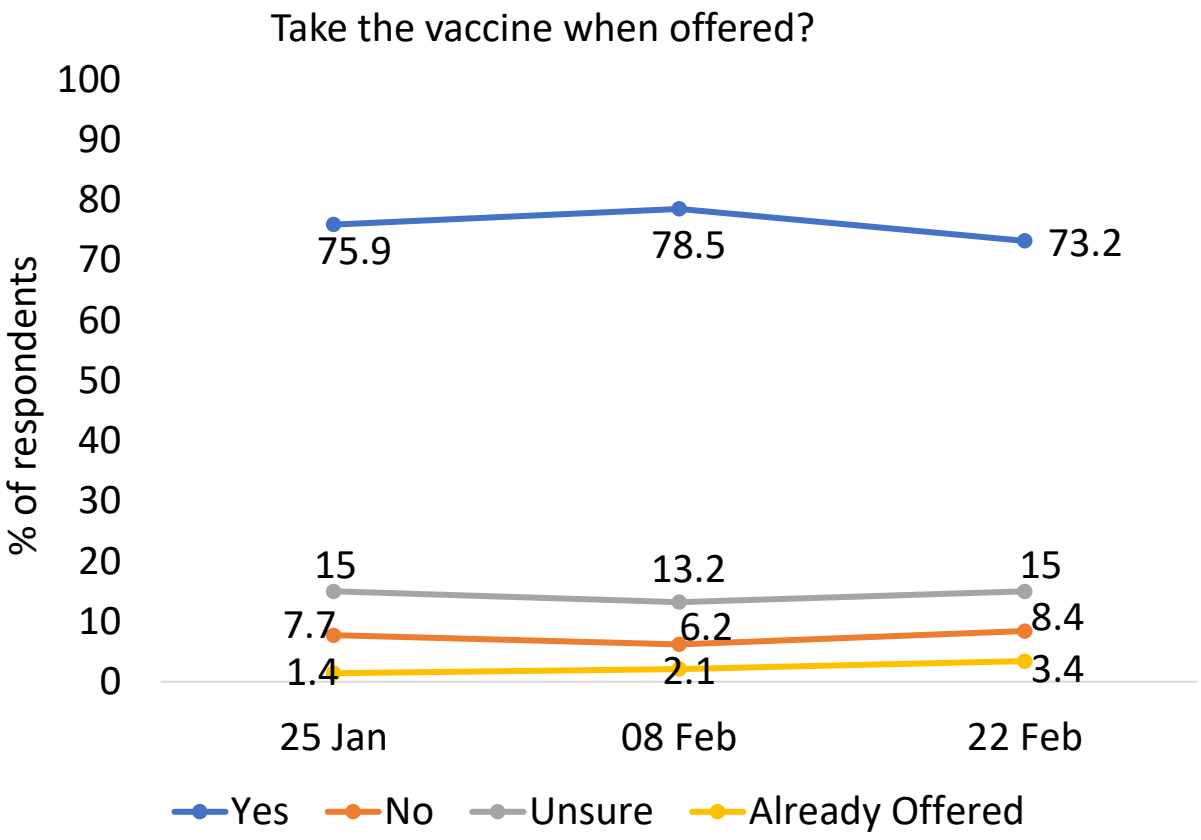
Expectations for restrictions

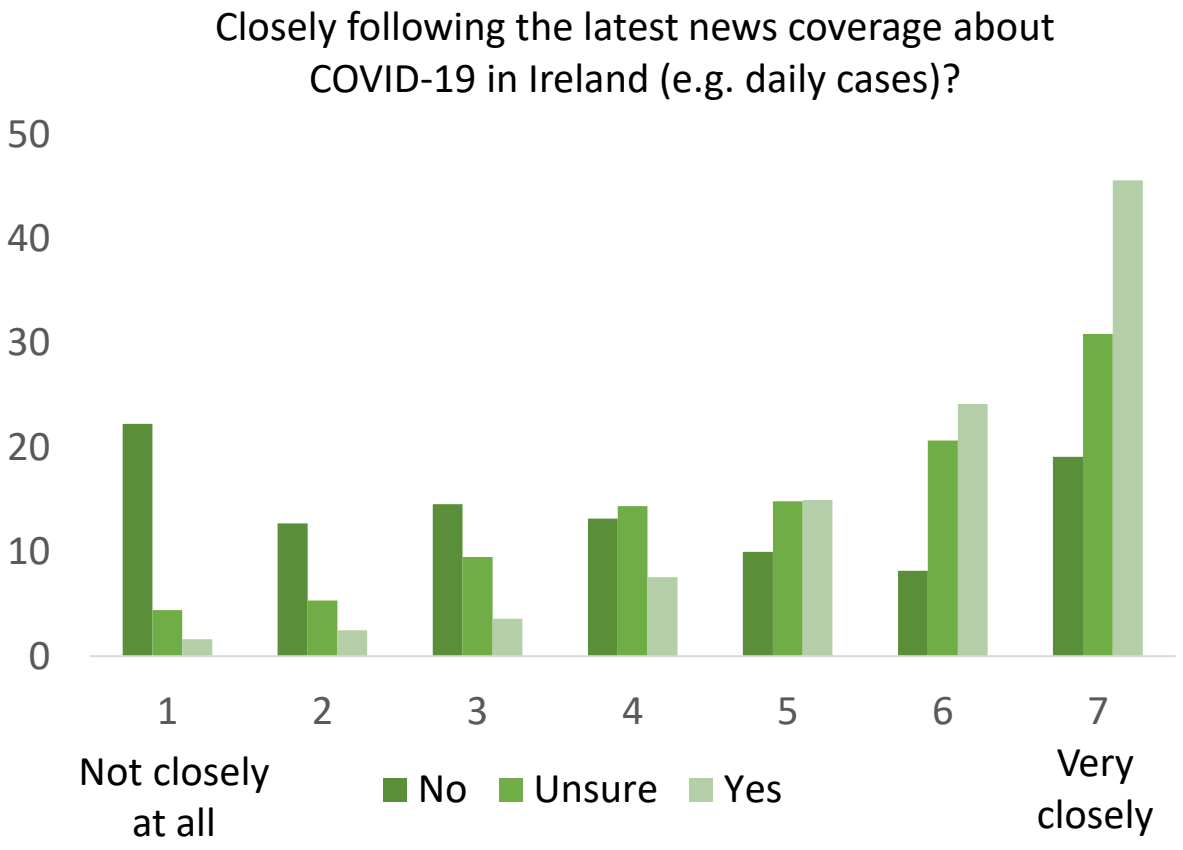


Expectations that public health restrictions would be lifted soon have fallen somewhat, with the majority now believing that restrictions are set to remain in place beyond the end of the month.

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

Vaccinations and Vaccination Intentions

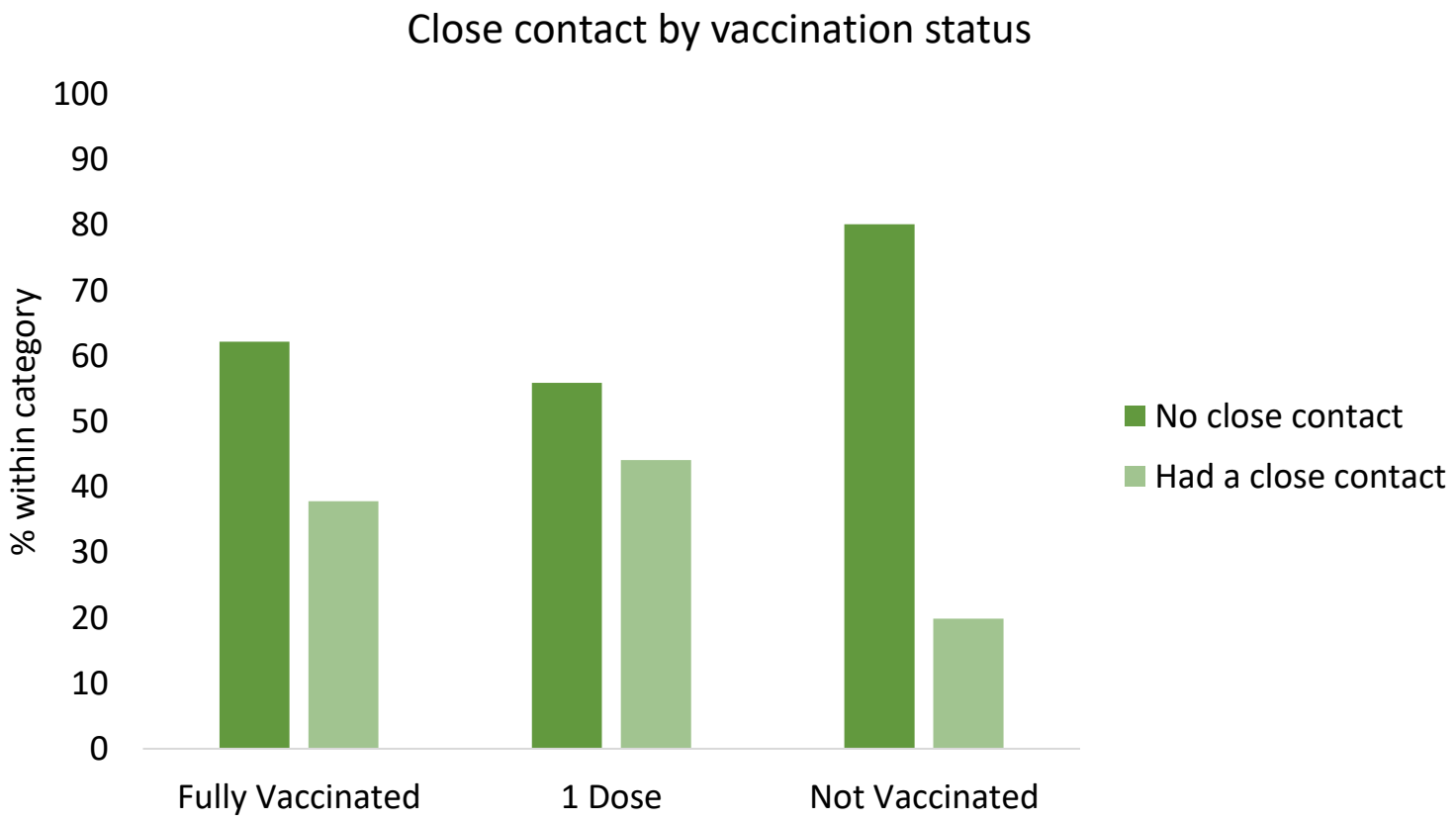




People who follow more news coverage about COVID-19 are much more likely to choose to be vaccinated against it.

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

Close contacts after vaccination



People who have been vaccinated are more likely to have met more people and to have had a close contact. However, this is explained by the fact that most are essential workers.

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