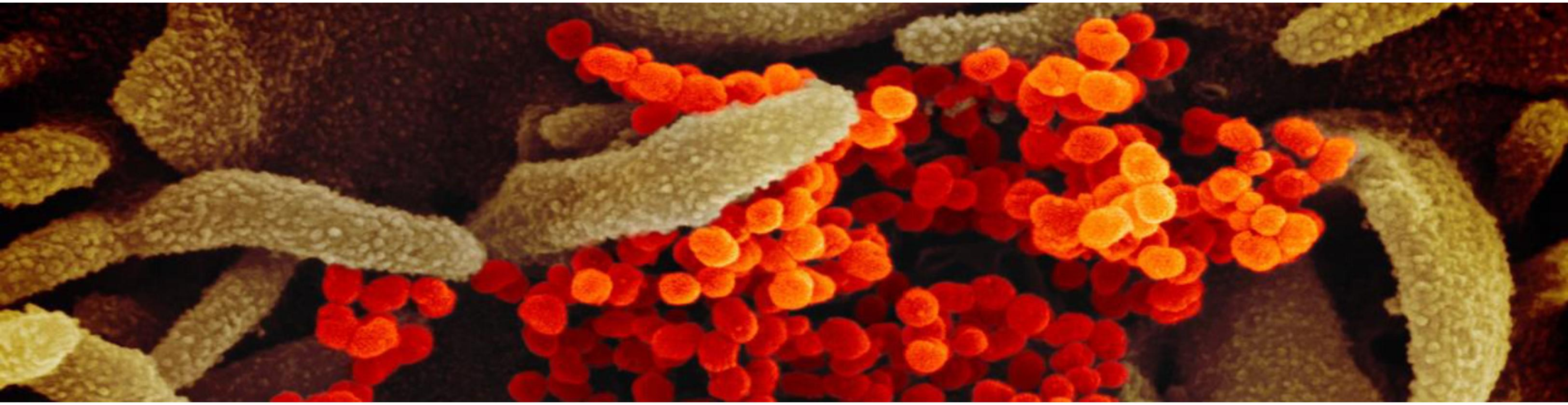


COVID-19 Mobility Report

An Assessment of Social Distancing in Northern Ireland :

COVID-19 Community Mobility: Changes up to Friday 27th of November.

INFORMATION ANALYSIS DIRECTORATE

Department of Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Männystrie O Poustie
www.health-ni.gov.uk

Introduction

This report is the latest in a series of publications which show movement trends in Northern Ireland (NI), across different categories of places. The data used to produce this report is sourced from COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports which are publicly available and updated sporadically (typically at least once a week). Analysis is also presented for the UK overall and NI council areas / Local Government Districts (LGDs).

Figures shown relate to mobility for that date compared with a baseline day, and reported as a positive or negative percentage. A baseline day represents a *normal* value for that day of the week. The baseline day is the median value from the 5-week period Jan 3 – Feb 6, 2020.

Google release data at LGD level. An average of the figures for each of the LGDs presented is used as a representation of NI as a whole within the report.

Categories of places

Retail & recreation: change in total visitors for places like restaurants, cafes, shopping centers, theme parks, museums, libraries, and movie theaters.

Supermarket & pharmacy: change in total visitors for places like grocery markets, food warehouses, farmers markets, specialty food shops, drug stores, and pharmacies.

Parks: change in total visitors for places like national parks, public beaches, marinas, dog parks, plazas, and public gardens.

Public transport: change in total visitors for places like public transport hubs such as subway, bus, and train stations.

Workplaces: change in total number of people visiting places of work.

Residential: change in duration of time spent at home.

Mobility changes up to Friday 27th November

The data shows how visitors to (or time spent in) categorised places change compared to baseline days. A baseline day represents a *normal* value for that day of the week. The baseline day is the median value from the 5-week period Jan 3 – Feb 6, 2020. Data from the 17th August to 8th September has recently been revised and updated by Google to ensure consistent data reporting in the retail & recreation, supermarket & pharmacy, parks, public transport and workplace categories.

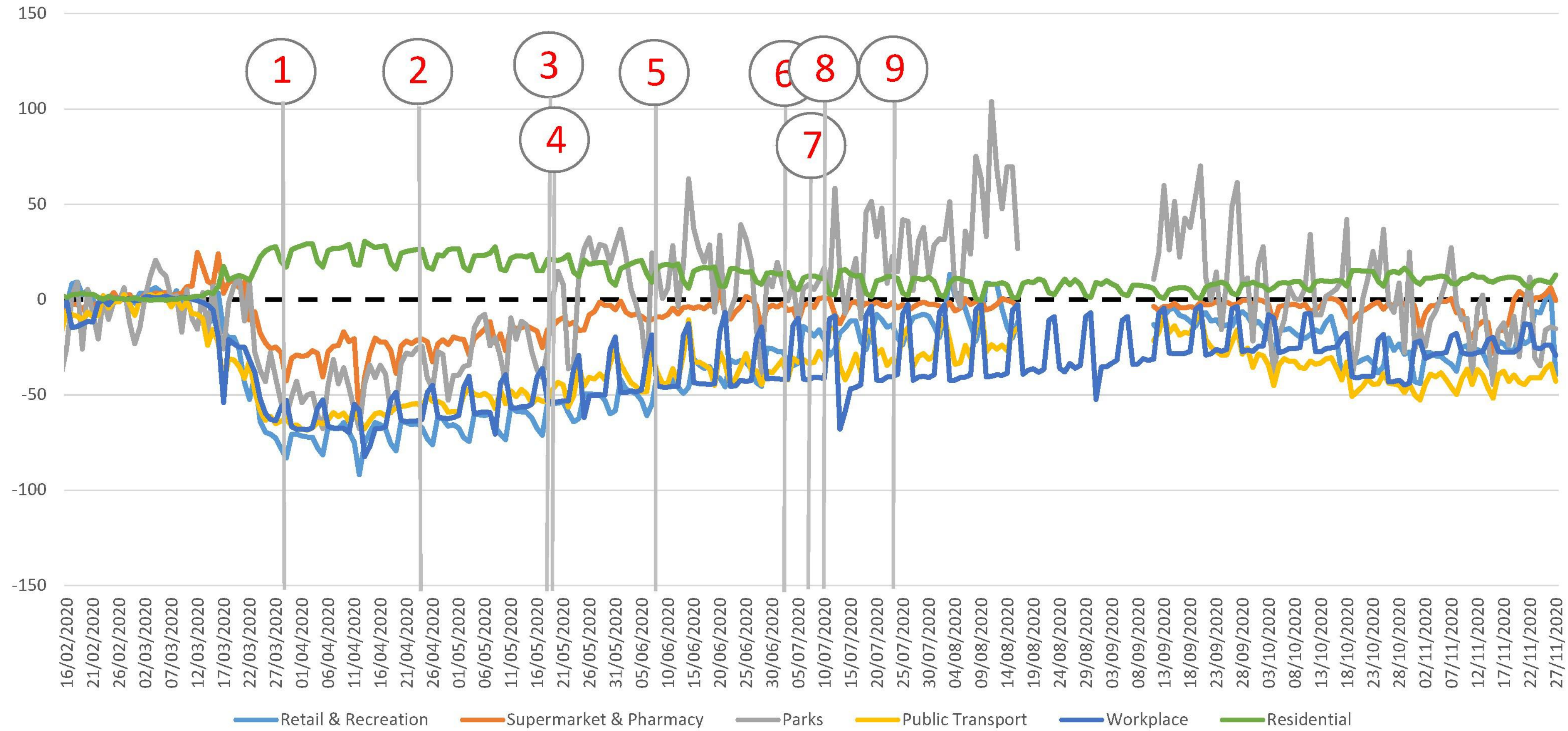
Table 1. Mobility changes for NI Council average and UK up to Fri 27th Nov when compared with baseline period

	NI Council average	UK
Retail & Recreation	-40%	-47%
Public Transport	-43%	-50%
Parks	-15%	-2%
Workplace	-29%	-38%
Supermarket & Pharmacy	-1%	-7%
Residential	13%	16%

For Friday 27th November, mobility trends for public transport, retail & recreation and workplace activity showed the largest evidence of Covid-19 restrictions across NI council areas with activity decreases of 43%, 40% and 29%, respectively. Activity decreases in NI were observed across all mobility categories analysed with the exception of residential where activity was 13% above normal levels.

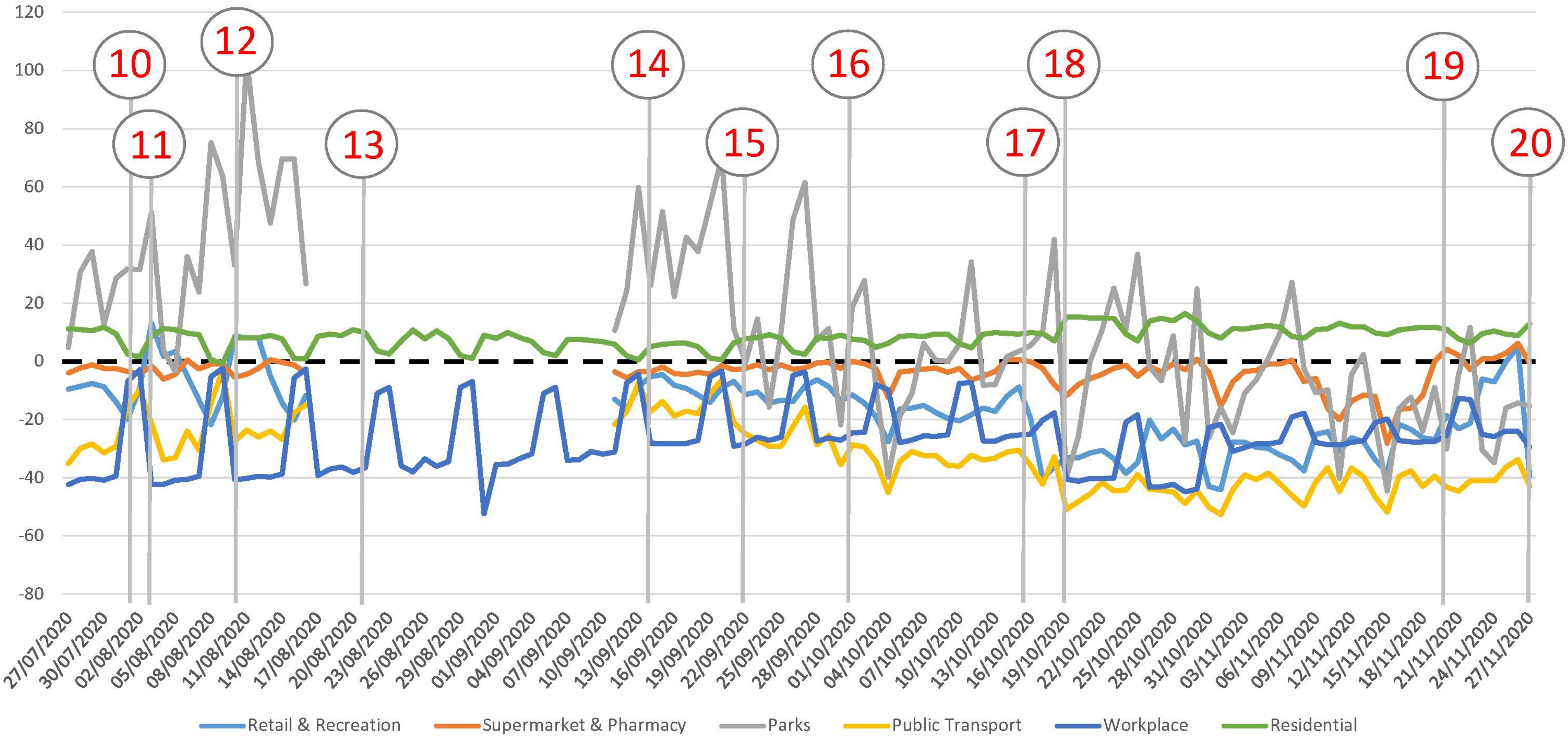
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

Mobility changes in NI since pre-lockdown (based on council average)



Information for Retail & recreation, Supermarket & pharmacy, Parks and Public transport is not presented between 17th Aug – 10th Sep due to insufficient data.

What patterns are we seeing in mobility changes in NI in the last four months?



Information for Retail & recreation, Supermarket & pharmacy, Parks and Public transport is not presented between 17th Aug – 10th Sep due to insufficient data.

Timeline of Covid-19 restrictions in NI

1 **28 March:** Coronavirus, Restrictions came into operation in NI.

2 **24 April:** Opening of cemeteries on a restricted basis.

3 **18 May:** Allowance to travel to garden & recycling centres; Marriage ceremonies allowed for terminally ill.

4 **19 May:** Allowance to travel to places of worship for individual prayer; attend drive-in cinemas, church services, live music or theatre performances; take part in certain outdoor activities, such as tennis, golf and angling; meet in groups of up to six people outdoors.

5 **8 June:** People shielding able to spend time outside with people from their own household; attend to welfare of animals; marriage/civil partnership ceremonies can take place outdoors, (limited to 10 people); opening of outdoor sports facilities, outdoor non-food retailers, car retailers; retailers of light motor vehicles, lorries/trailers; retailers of caravans/motorhomes, and retailers of agricultural or other large machinery; opening of non-food retail outlets with lower frequency customer visits and/or with a greater propensity for larger store areas will be permitted.

6 **3 July:** Hotels, bars and restaurants have been allowed to reopen, subject to conditions & restrictions. Tourist attractions and museums were also allowed to reopen.

7 **6 July:** Hairdressers spas, tattoo parlours, holistic therapies, massage and reflexology providers allowed to reopen. Visits to hospitals and care homes were allowed to continue

8 **10 July:** indoor fitness studios and gyms; bingo halls and amusement arcades; outdoor playgrounds, courts and gyms; and cinemas are able to reopen.

9 **24 July:** The maximum number of people allowed to gather in a residential setting increased from six to 10 if they come from no more than 4 different households, overnight stays in a different household are allowed, community centres and halls are able to reopen, spectators are able to attend outdoor competitive games, swimming pools in leisure centres, hotels and private facilities are able to open, bowling alleys are able to reopen and indoor and outdoor funfairs are able to reopen.

10 **1 August:** Those shielding in Northern Ireland are now able to leave their homes.

11 **3 August:** Eat Out to Help Out scheme was implemented

12 **10 August:** It is now compulsory to wear a mask in shops and other enclosed public spaces.

13 **21 August:** The number of people able to meet outdoors is now limited to 15 and group meetings indoors are limited to six people from two households.

14 **14 September:** Local restrictions put in place in Belfast, Ballymena and parts of Glenavy, Lisburn and Crumlin. People in these areas can no longer visit others in their homes.

15 **22 September:** Local restrictions broadened to include all postcodes in Northern Ireland. People in all areas are no longer able to visit others in their homes.

16 **1 October:** Bars and restaurants in Northern Ireland told to close from 11pm from midnight 30th September.

17 **16 October:** Closure of the hospitality sector, apart from deliveries and takeaways. No indoor sport or organised contact sport involving mixing of households, other than at elite level, no mass events involving more than 15 people, close-contact services such as hairdressers to close.

18 **19 October:** Schools to close for 2 weeks across NI.

19 **20 November:** Close contact services and unlicensed premises such as cafes and coffee shops able to open with restricted opening hours to 8pm for 1 week before closing again on the 27th November.

20 **27 November:** The restrictions on hospitality have been extended for another 2 weeks. Close-contact services and cafes are to close again. Non-essential retail also to shut for the 2 weeks. Places of worship to close.

What patterns are we seeing in mobility changes in NI (based on council average)?

As can be seen, from mid to late March when coronavirus restrictions came into place in NI there have been notable decreases across all activities with the exception of mobility for places of residence where activity has been higher. However, prior to the most recent restrictions on 16th October which included closure of the hospitality sector, the only activities where mobility had remained notably lower were public transport (visits and time spent at places like public transport hubs such bus and train stations), workplaces and retail and recreation.

Although park visits had been below baseline levels up to the middle of May, for most days since they have been above baseline levels coinciding with the announcement from the NI Executive to allow the public to take part in certain outdoor activities, such as tennis, golf, angling, and meeting in groups of up to six people outdoors from the 19th May. Activity around parks has since shown a slight decrease, albeit with daily fluctuation. It is important to note however that visitors to parks are heavily influenced by the weather therefore you can expect more dramatic changes. For instance, as of Friday 27th November, park visits were 15% below baseline levels.

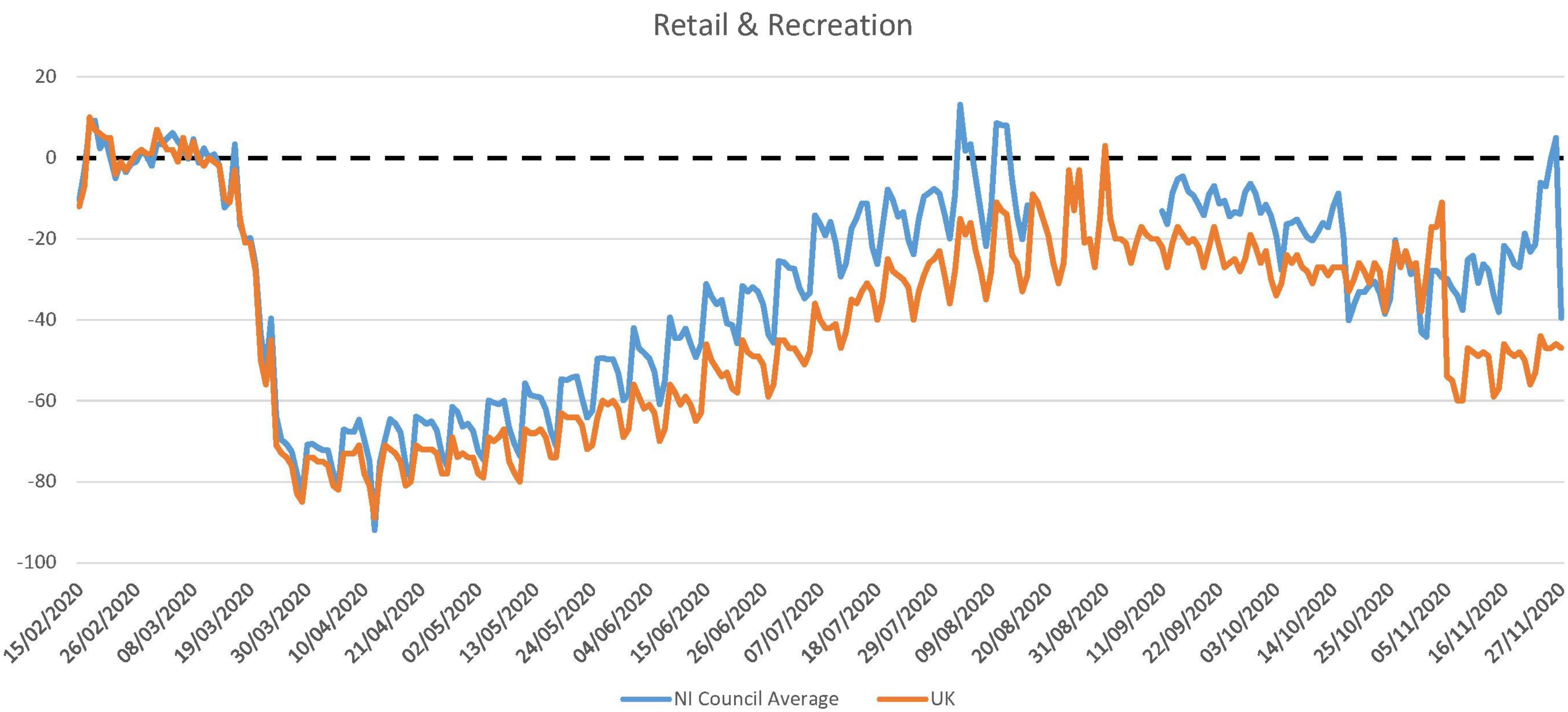
While there was a sizeable increase in supermarket and pharmacy activity before UK school closures were announced on the 20th March, activity then fell; as of the 5th April, activity was 41% below baseline levels. Activity has since gradually increased and has remained around normal levels since early June. As of the 27th November, activity was just 1% below normal levels.

Visits and time spent at retail and recreation locations fell steadily for a few weeks when UK guidance on working from home was announced on the 16th March. As with most categories, activity has gradually increased from mid-May. The Eat Out To Help Out scheme which applied to restaurants on Mondays to Wednesdays during August had led to increases in activity above baseline levels on days when the scheme was in place however since the scheme ended, activity levels have been lower. As of the 27th November, activity was 40% below normal levels, coinciding with the latest restrictions being placed on the hospitality sector and non-essential retail.

Easing of restrictions on the 8th June for the opening of additional retailers followed by additional easing in early July including the reopening (with restrictions) of hotels, bars, restaurants, hairdressers, gyms, outdoor playgrounds, cinemas etc. led to slight increases in activity for most categories, mainly public transport and workplace. On the 16th October, the hospitality sector closed (apart from deliveries and takeaways) along with no indoor sport or organised contact sport involving mixing of households, other than at elite level, no events involving more than 15 people and close-contact services closed. These measures led to a decrease in activity for most categories. On 20th November, close contact services and unlicensed premises such as cafes and coffee shops were able to open for one week until the 27th November.

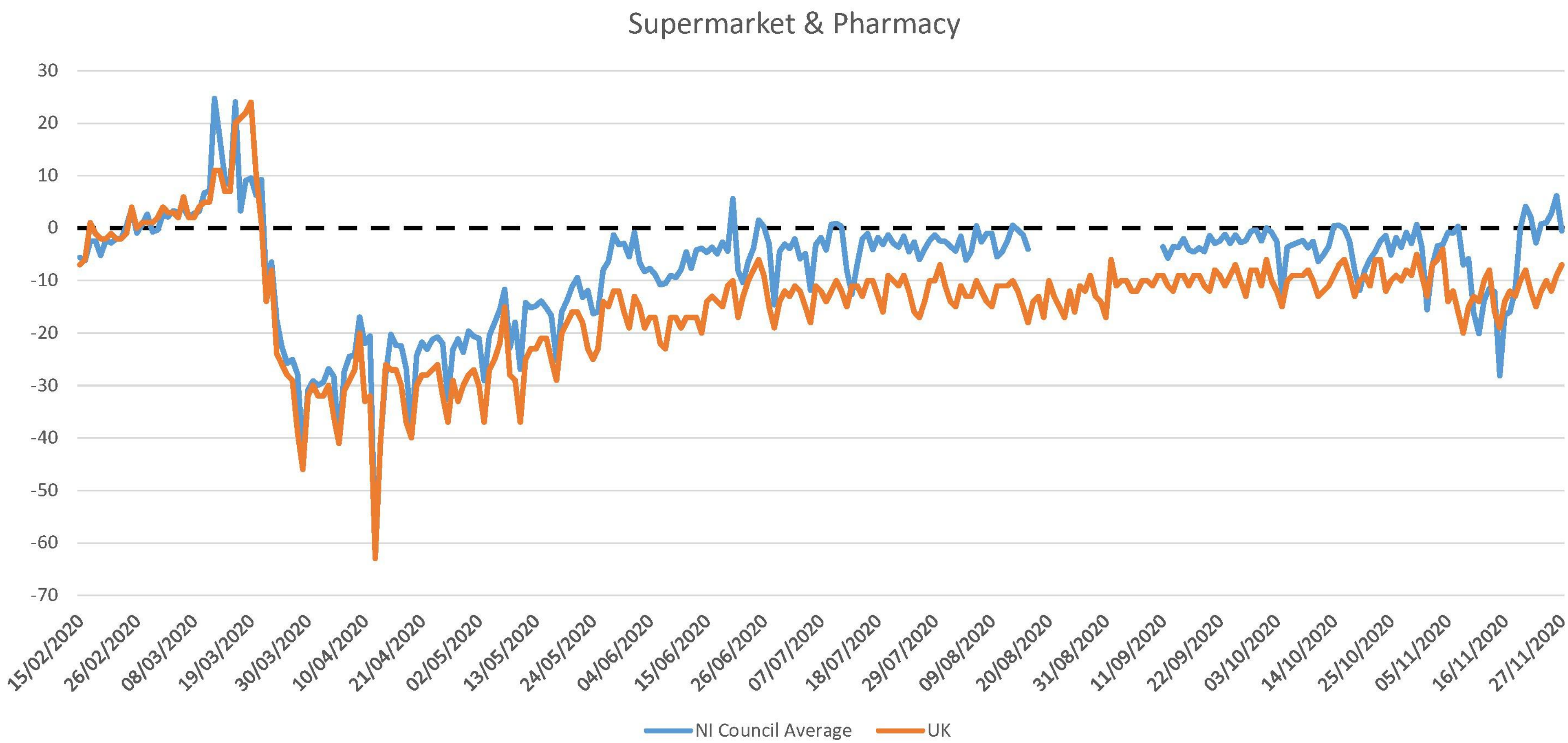
How do the patterns we are seeing in mobility changes in NI (based on council average) compare with the UK overall?

Similar to the UK overall, visits and time spent at places like restaurants, cafes, shopping centres, theme parks, museums, libraries, and movie theatres fell sharply for a few weeks in NI council areas from the 16th March. Since mid-April however there had been a gradual increase in the trend in retail and recreation activity. In August, for the first time since the 16th March, figures had went above the baseline levels. This is likely due to the implementation of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme in August as figures were above baseline levels specifically on days of the week that the scheme was implemented. Levels had begun to lower again since the scheme ended, although showing a gradual increase in activity since mid-November, with figures going above the baseline level on the 26th November. However, on the 27th November activity decreased to 40% below baseline levels, coinciding with the latest restrictions put in place on the hospitality and recreation sectors.



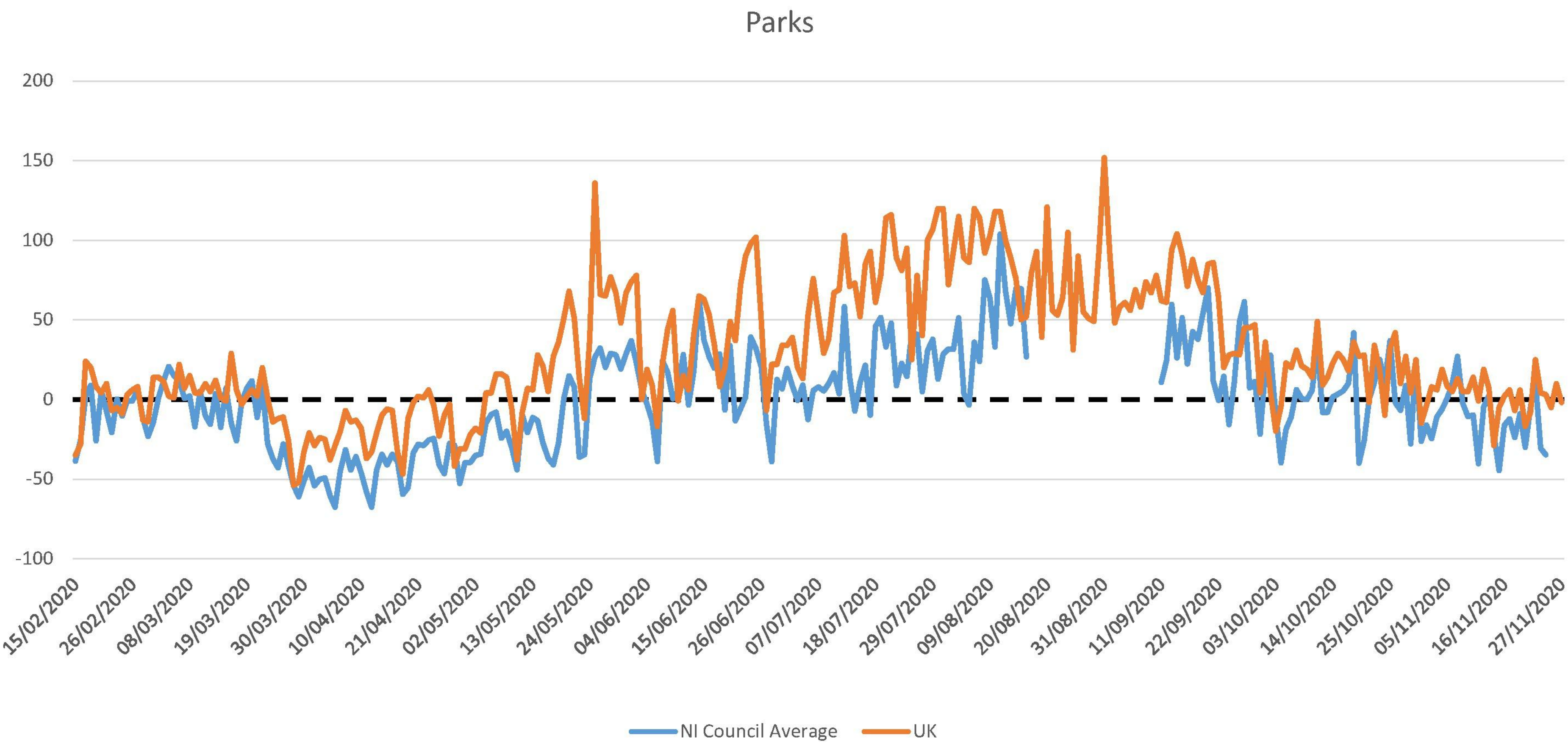
Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Retail & Recreation from the 17th August – 8th September has been revised and updated by Google to ensure consistent data reporting across categories.
Data is not presented between 17th Aug – 10th Sep at NI level due to insufficient data.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

The NI council average has also seen fairly similar trends to the UK overall for visits to places like supermarkets, food warehouses, farmers markets, specialty food shops, chemists, and pharmacies. However, on the 20th June there was an increase above the baseline (6% above normal levels) for the first time in NI since lockdown restrictions were introduced, and since then, levels in NI have generally remained close to normal, with activity sitting at 1% below the baseline as at 27th November, compared with 7% below normal levels for the UK overall.



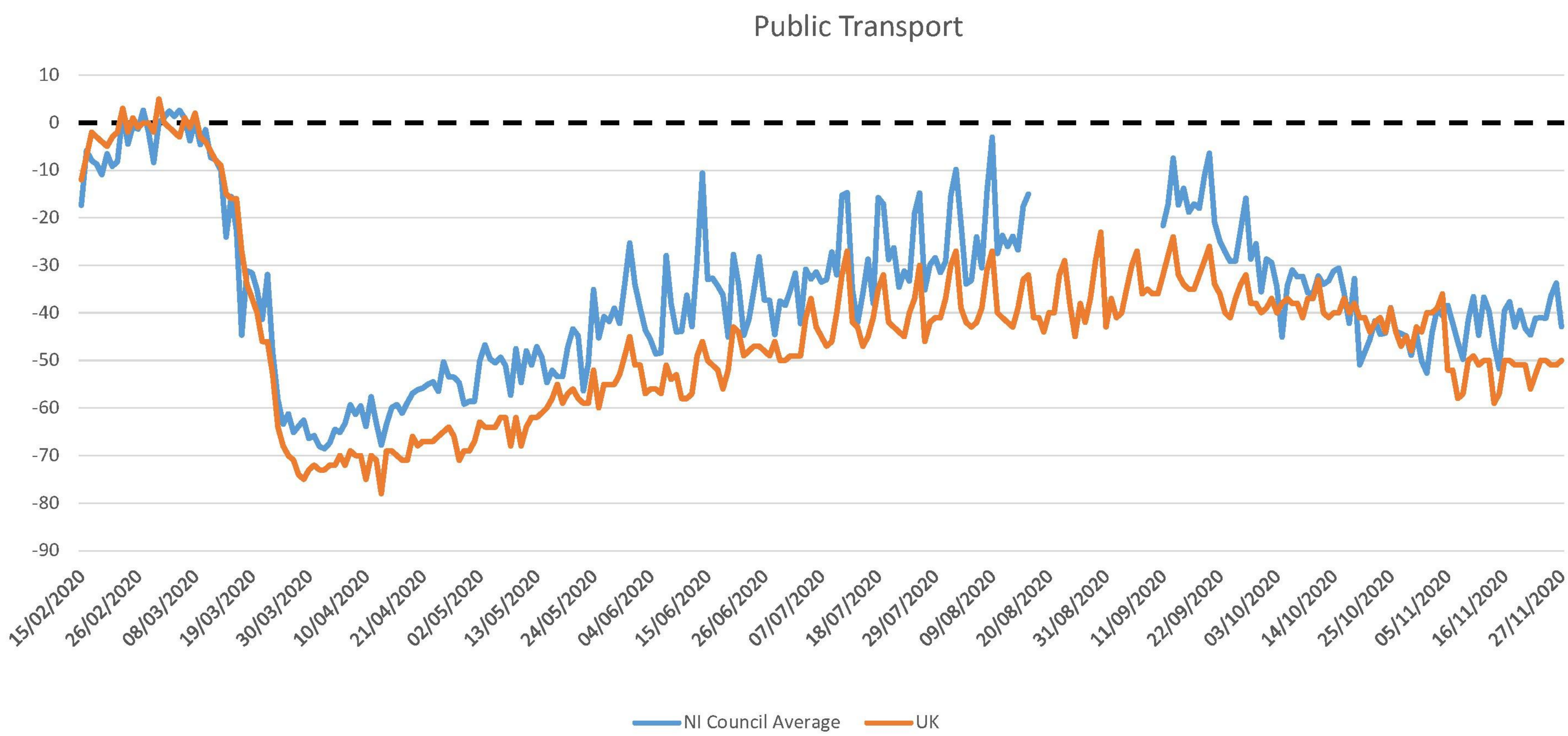
Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Supermarket & Pharmacy from the 17th August – 8th September has been revised and updated by Google to ensure consistent data reporting across categories.
Data is not presented between 17th Aug – 10th Sep at NI level due to insufficient data.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

Data on parks typically refers to official national parks and not the general outdoors found in rural areas. It is important to note however that visitors to parks are heavily influenced by the weather therefore you can expect more dramatic changes. While initially visits to parks had fallen markedly below baseline levels in NI and the UK as a whole, there were notable increases in activity observed from May through September, most likely due to the partial relaxation of social distancing guidelines and good weather. As of the 27th November however, NI park visits stood at 15% below baseline levels while activity was 2% below usual levels for the UK overall.



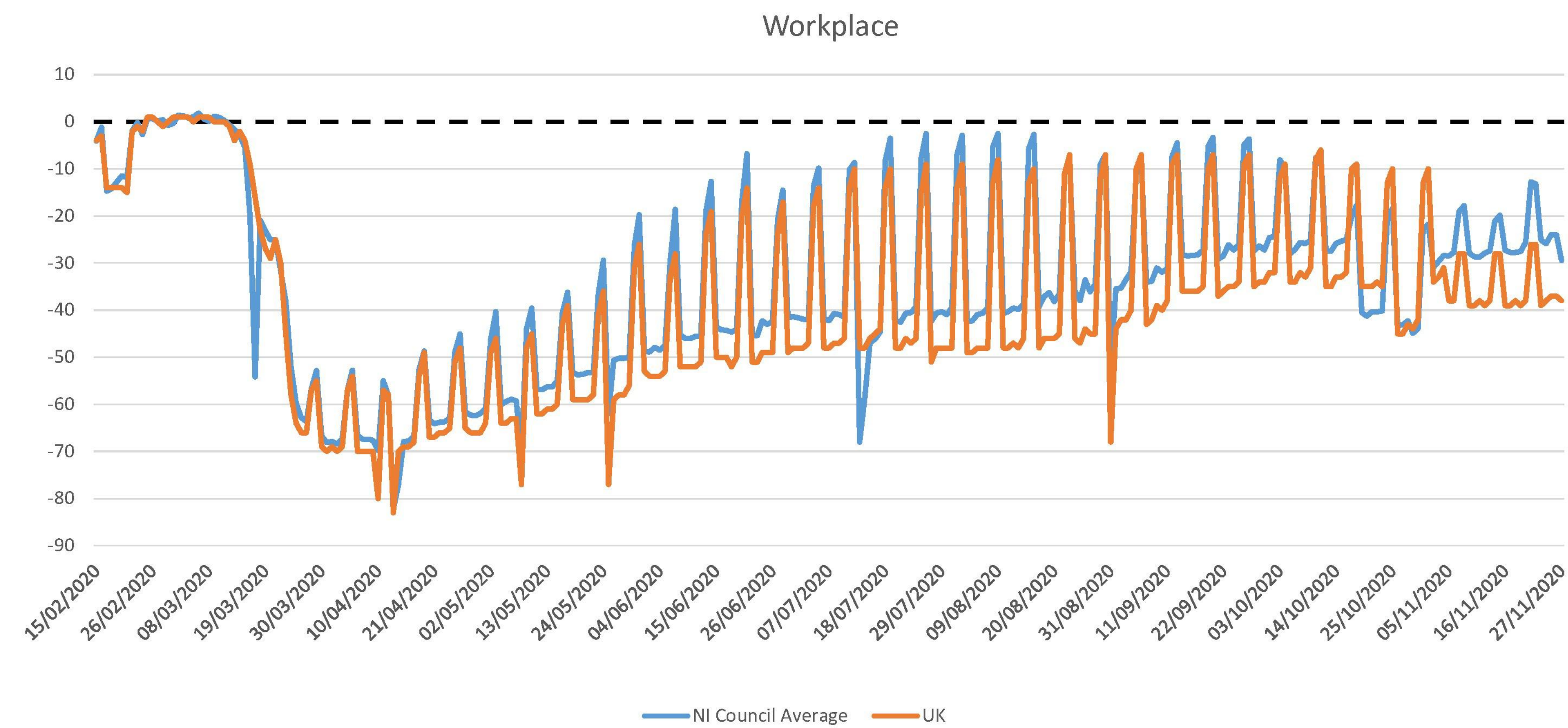
Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Parks from the 17th August – 8th September has been revised and updated by Google to ensure consistent data reporting across categories.
There was no reported mobility data for park activity in NI during the period 17th Aug – 10th Sep.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

Similar to the UK overall, visits and time spent at places like public transport hubs such as bus and train stations had been falling sharply in NI since the start of March, followed by a gradual increase in activity from mid-April. From mid-September however there has been a notable drop in activity and, as of the 27th November, use of public transport in NI was 43% below baseline levels, while the overall UK was 50% below normal levels.



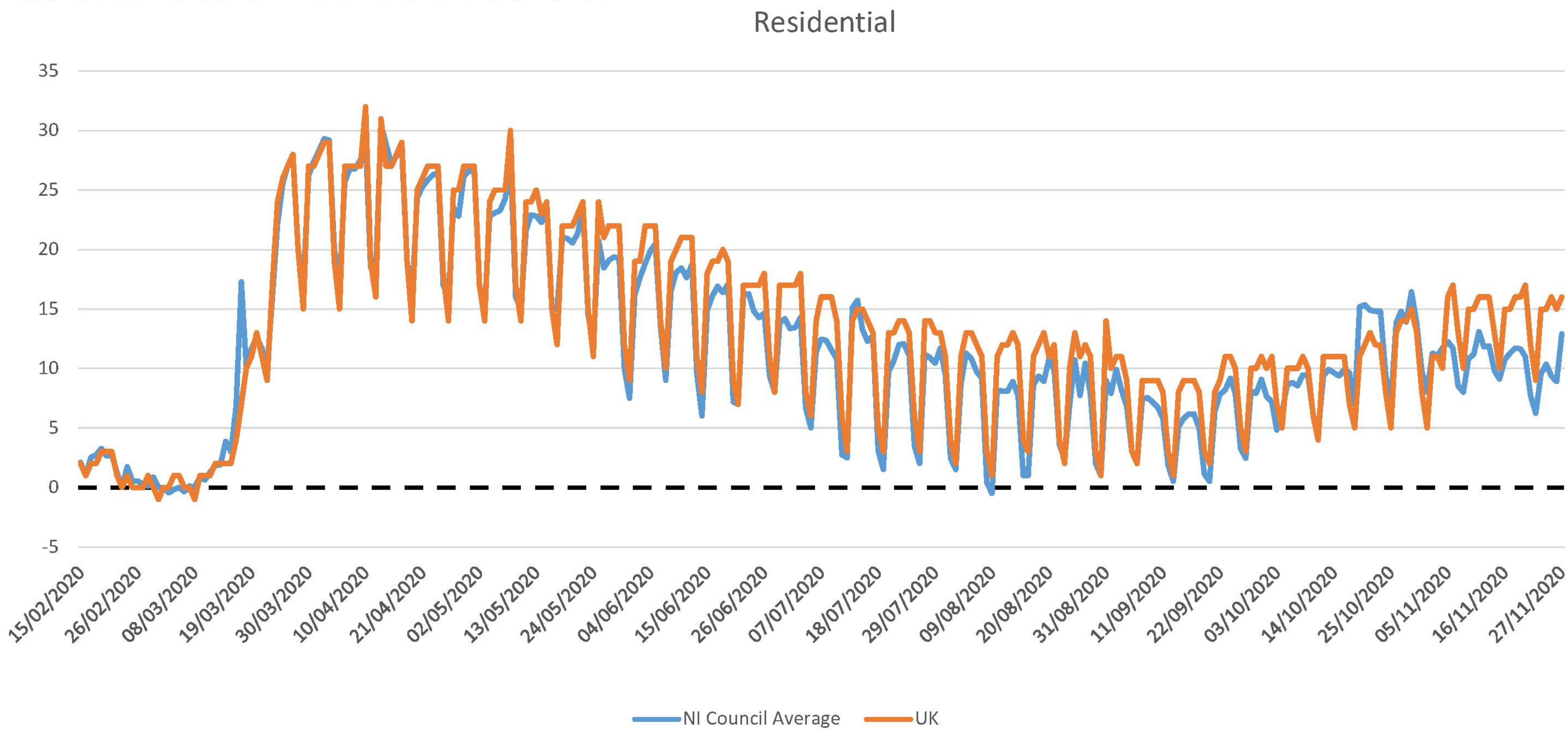
Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Public Transport from the 17th August – 8th September has been revised and updated by Google to ensure consistent data reporting across categories.
Data is not presented between 17th Aug – 10th Sep at NI level due to insufficient data.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

The reduction in travel to workplaces in NI is largely comparable with the UK overall. Increases in activity observed between May and July were most likely due to the easing of restrictions on some workplaces and the opening of additional retail outlets such as garden and recycling centres, hotels, bars and restaurants. The large drops in activity seen sporadically throughout the chart coincide with bank holidays being observed in some or all of the UK constituent countries. While weekday decreases in workplace activity have been less pronounced in NI when compared with the UK overall, the restrictions that came into effect in NI from the 16th October appeared to have reversed this trend initially. However, as of the 27th November, levels of travel to the workplace in NI and UK stood at 29% and 38% below baseline levels, respectively.



Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Workplace from the 17th August – 8th September has been revised and updated by Google to ensure consistent data reporting across categories.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

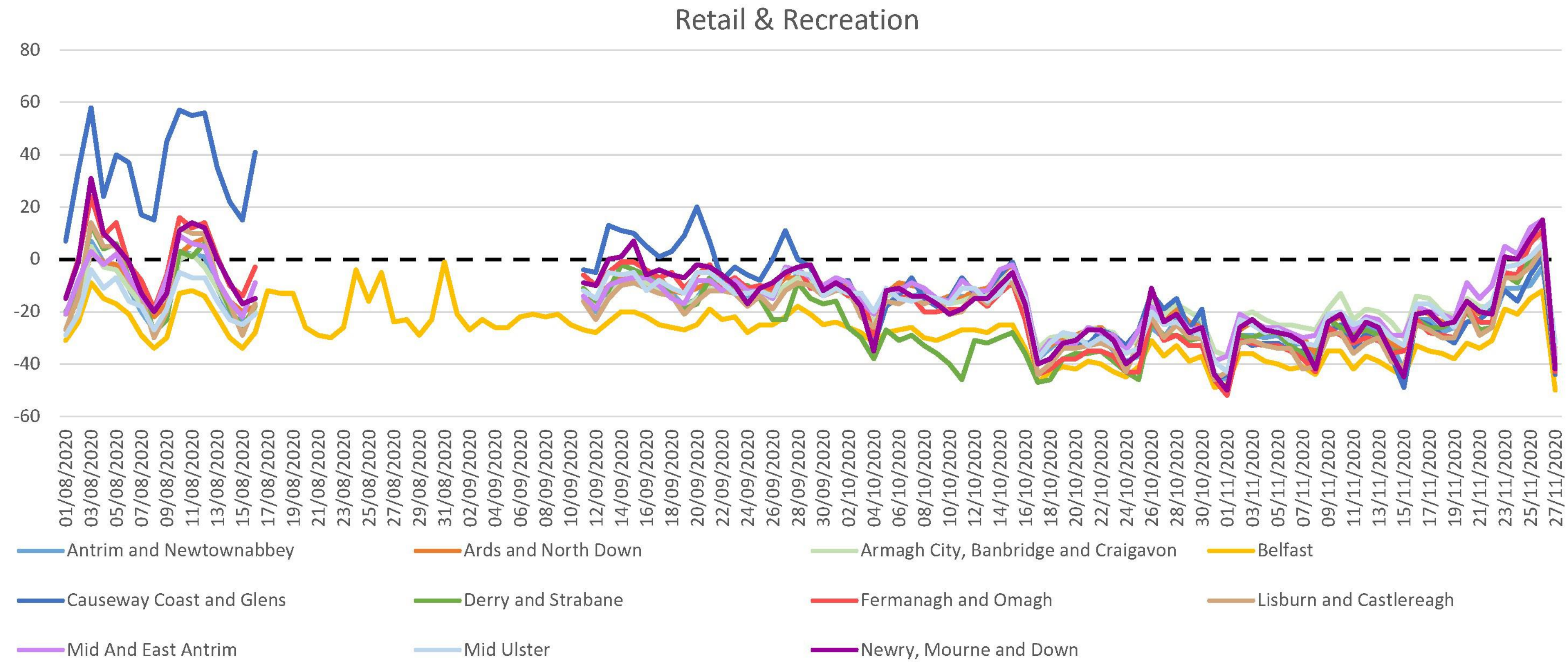
The Residential category shows a change in ***time spent*** at home— the other mobility categories presented measure a change in ***total visitors***. Because people already spend much of the day at home (even on workdays), the capacity for change isn't so large. Since the introduction of social distancing measures, the NI council average and the UK average have seen increases in mobility for places of residence. This increase is notably lower at weekends. Overall, NI and the UK had seen increases of around 15-30% in residential activity compared with baseline levels. Activity had been lowering gradually since mid-May as a result of increased activity to non-residential locations. However, since mid-September activity for places of residence has slowly began to rise, likely due to local, followed by regional, restrictions being put in place across NI. As of the 27th November activity for places of residence stood at 13% above usual levels for NI and 16% for the UK overall.



Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

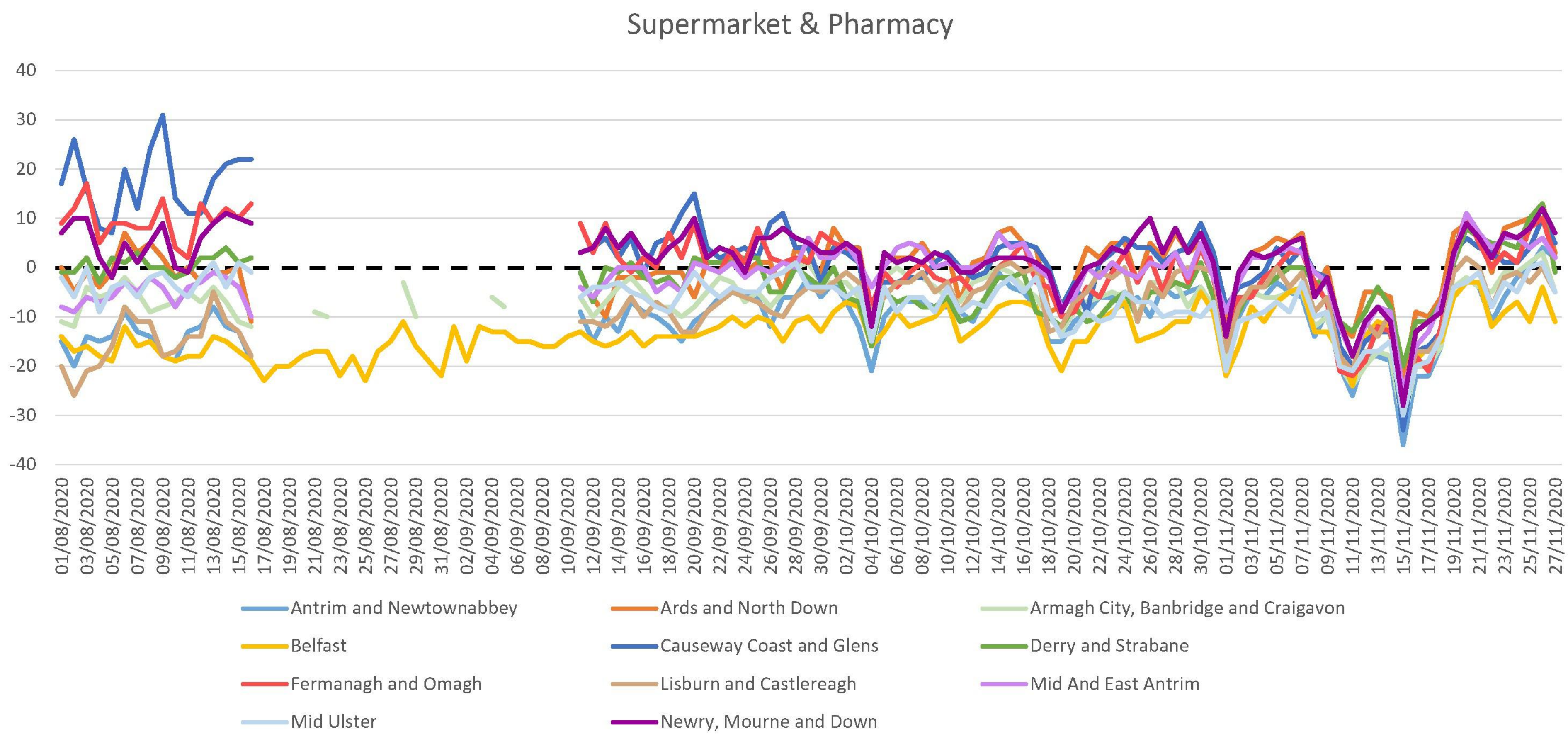
How do the patterns we are seeing in mobility changes compare across Councils / Local Government Districts (LGDs) in NI?

An increase in activity in retail and recreation in August for a number of LGDs, most notably Causeway Coast & Glens, coincided with the implementation of the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme. Activity notably decreased in all LGDs after the scheme had ended. There had been notable decrease in activity for the majority of LGDs from Friday 16th October when the restrictions on the hospitality and recreation sectors were implemented, with activity slowly rising again to above normal levels. However, with the latest restrictions put in place on the 27th November, activity has dropped dramatically for all council areas, with Belfast (50% below usual levels) and Causeway Coast & Glens (44% below usual levels) showing the largest decreases.



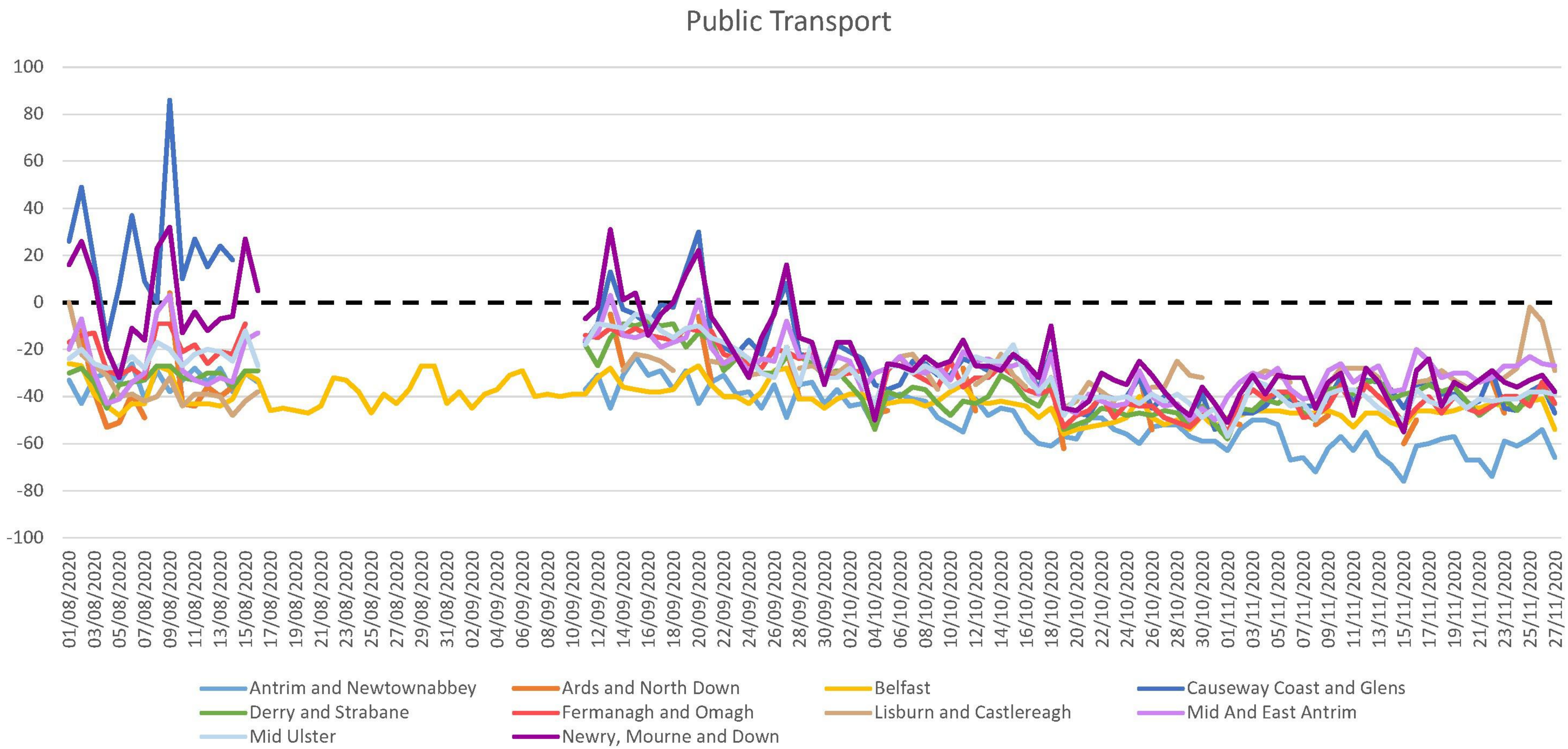
Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Retail & Recreation was not reported for all LGDs between 17th Aug - 10th Sep.
Analysis for Parks category has not been included at LGD level, due to a lack of comprehensive data.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

Recent mobility data for Supermarket & Pharmacy had shown that activity had begun to go back to usual levels across most LGDs. However, as of 27th November, only four LGDs showed a decrease in activity. Belfast saw the largest decrease with 11% below baseline levels), closely followed by Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon, Lisburn & Castlereagh and Mid Ulster LGDs (each with activity 5% below baseline levels). The largest increase in activity was seen in Newry, Mourne & Down with activity 7% above normal levels.



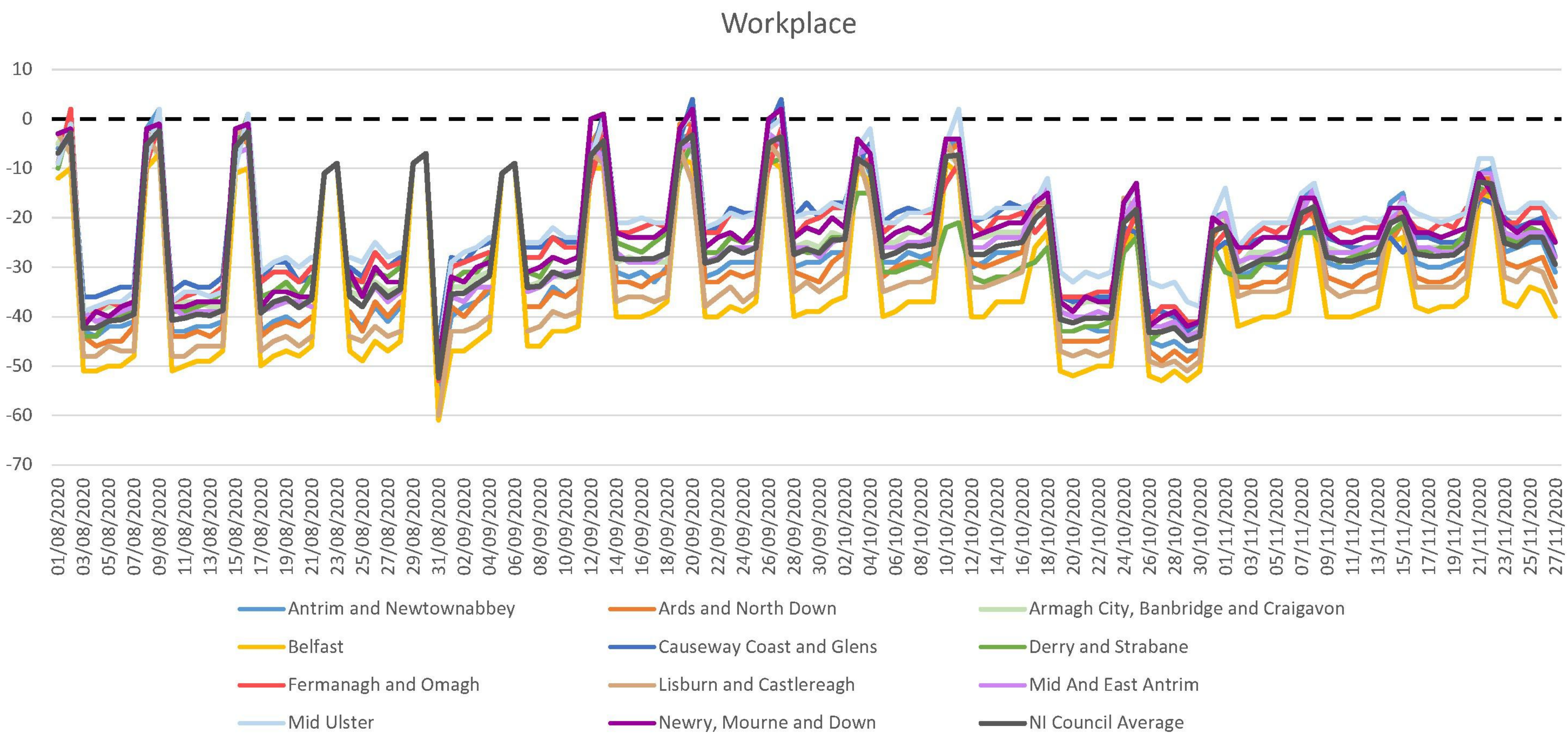
Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Supermarket & Pharmacy was not reported for all LGDs between 17th Aug - 10th Sep.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

Visits and time spent at places like public transport hubs such as bus and train stations had been gradually falling across all LGDs since mid-September. As of the 27th November, public transport activity in all LGDs was below usual levels, the largest decrease of which was found in Antrim and Newtownabbey council area (66% below usual levels).



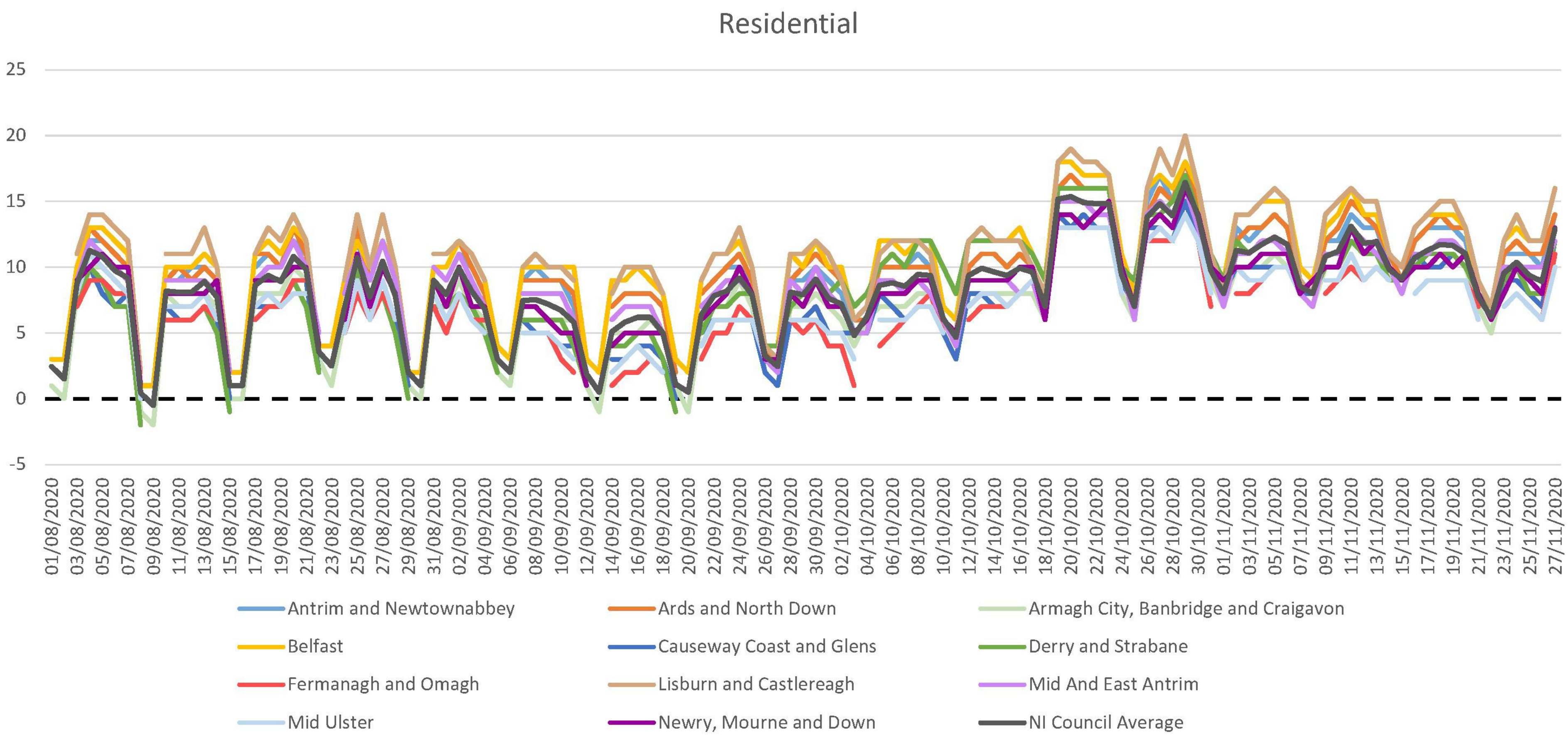
Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Public Transport was not reported for all LGDs between 17th Aug - 10th Sep.
Data for Public Transport activity was not available from Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

Since the beginning of August, travel to work during weekdays had been increasing across all LGDs in NI, albeit still notably below normal levels, while activity levels at weekends had generally been at normal levels. However, since the 16th October and the re-introduction of some restrictions, activity at workplaces dropped across all LGDs, including at weekends. On the 27th November, Belfast had the largest decrease in activity from the baseline position (40% below usual levels), followed by Lisburn & Castlereagh (37% below normal levels).

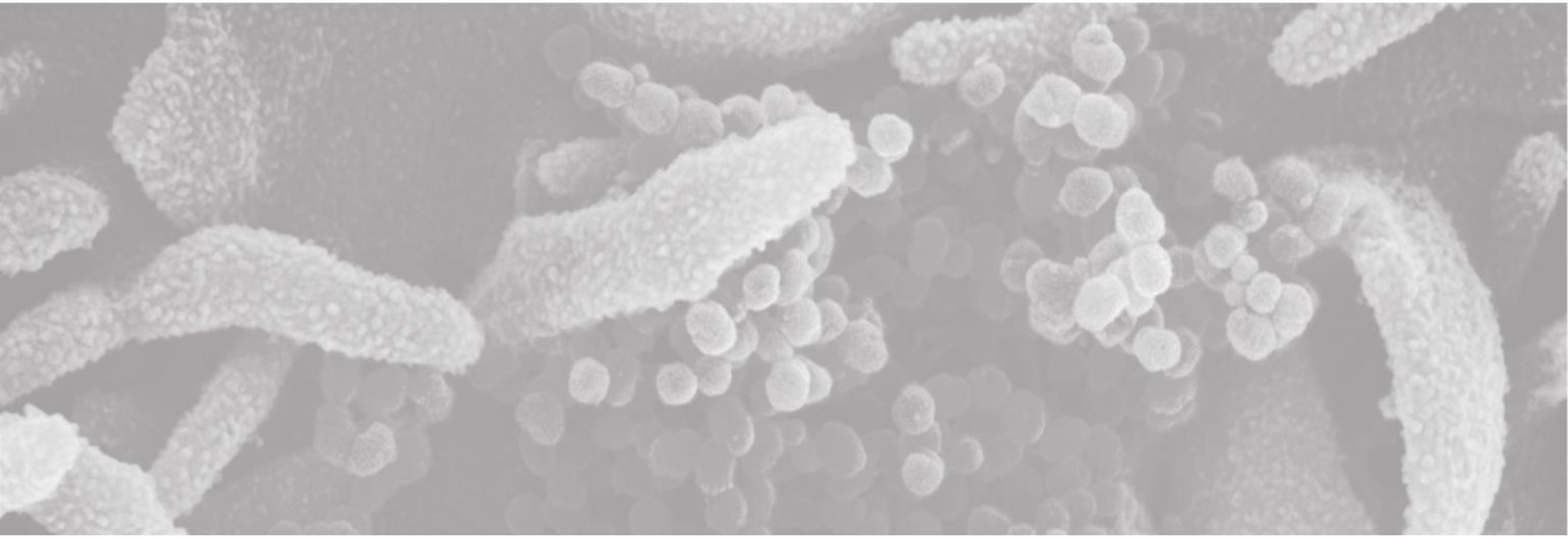


Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data was not available for the weekends from 22nd Aug – 5th Sep for all LGDs, excluding Belfast.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en

The Residential category shows a change in ***time spent*** at home— the other mobility categories presented measure a change in ***total visitors***. Because people already spend much of the day at home (even on workdays), the capacity for change isn't so large. Since the start of August, residential activity across all LGDs has remained at around 5-15% above normal levels, except for weekends when time spent at home is only slightly higher than normal for most LGDs. However, in recent weeks activity for places of residence has slowly began to rise, likely due to local, followed by regional, restrictions being put in place across NI. As of the 27th November, Belfast and Lisburn & Castlereagh council areas had the highest increase in residential activity (16% above usual levels), while the lowest increase in activity was seen in Mid Ulster (10% above normal levels).



Note: Figures for NI are based on an average of council-level figures.
Data for Sundays was not available for most areas with the exception of Belfast and Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon.
Link to Google Mobility Report: https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/index.html?hl=en



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