Did the Euros really lead to a Covid spike?

There has been a lot of speculation about the impact of the Euros football tournament on Covid infection rates across the UK, so we thought it would be a good idea to see whether More Metrics data provides any insight on this topic. The answer is that it does!

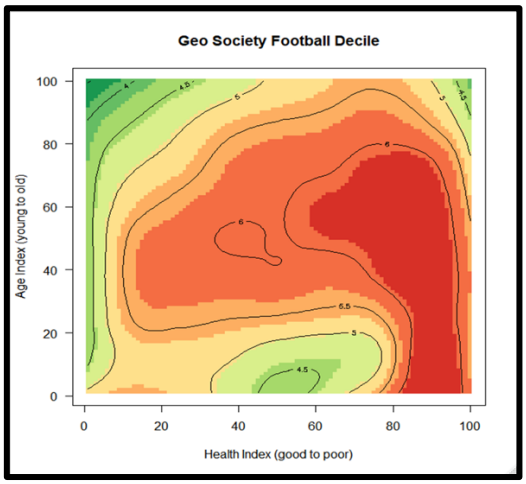
In fact, our unique combination of datasets allows us to identify that the Euros have almost certainly been a major driver of infection rate growth. This is supported by the different patterns seen in infection rate growth across the UK that is linked both to a neighbourhood's love of football and the nation's success in the tournament.

We have used our GeoSociety data on football lovers to classify every Output Area (about 7 postcodes) in the UK into ten deciles ranked on their love of football. Decile 10 indicates that a neighbourhood is chock full of football fans and decile 1 indicates that there is not a scarf or a rattle to be seen anywhere.

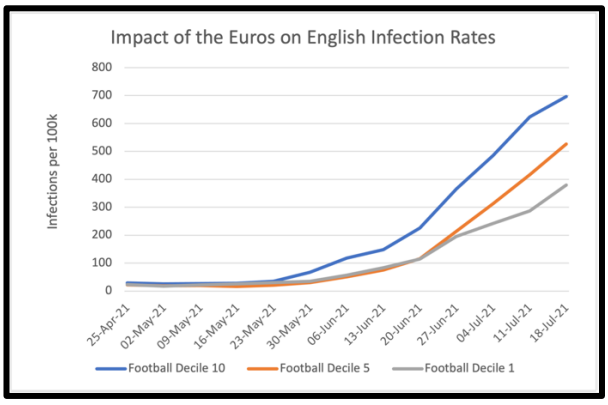
We then used our Output Area estimates of infection rates to calculate the average Covid infection rate per 100k for each decile split by Country and tracked this from the end of April onwards. This timeline spans the period of "friendlies" that occurred before the Euros proper as well as the finals that started on the 11th June and finished on the 11th July.

Three charts tell the Covid story for football fans over this period.

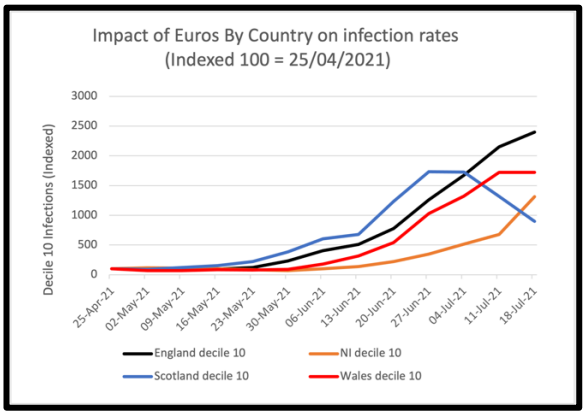
The first chart sets the Covid context for football fans, who tend to live in neighbourhoods that are young to middle-aged and have slightly worse health overall.



The second chart shows the difference in England for neighbourhoods that are mad keen on football (decile 10), not at all keen (decile 1) and those in the middle (decile 5). All three groups show a growth in infection rates over time, but the Infection rates for decile 10 start to move away from deciles 1 and 5 from the end of May onwards (friendlies) and move more sharply away after the finals start (11th June) and continue to race ahead over the whole of tournament. Only in the latest week do we see a flattening in the growth rate as the tournament ends. Decile 5 follows decile 1 until the end of June. Only after that, when England was progressing through the knockout stages, do we see a move away from decile 1.



The third chart shows how football fans (decile 10) in different nations were affected by their Nation's success in the tournament. We have indexed the data to make the country comparisons easier. England who progressed to the final, shows infection rate growth over the whole period; Scotland shows a hump in infection rates that is consistent with them not making it to the knockout stages; Wales shows growth that plateaus after being knocked out of the competition; and Northern Ireland, who did not qualify for the finals, only start to get interested at the very end of the competition.



Who knows what would have happened to infections if England had managed to win the penalty shoot-out!

Get access to our data

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