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Fly-tipping during the Pandemic

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Key Finding: Although some local councils in the UK experienced significant increases in fly-tipping, the majority experienced a decrease during the early stages of the national lockdown, in comparison with expected rates based on the previous three years.

Figure 1: Recorded Fly-tipping, January 2017 to July 2020

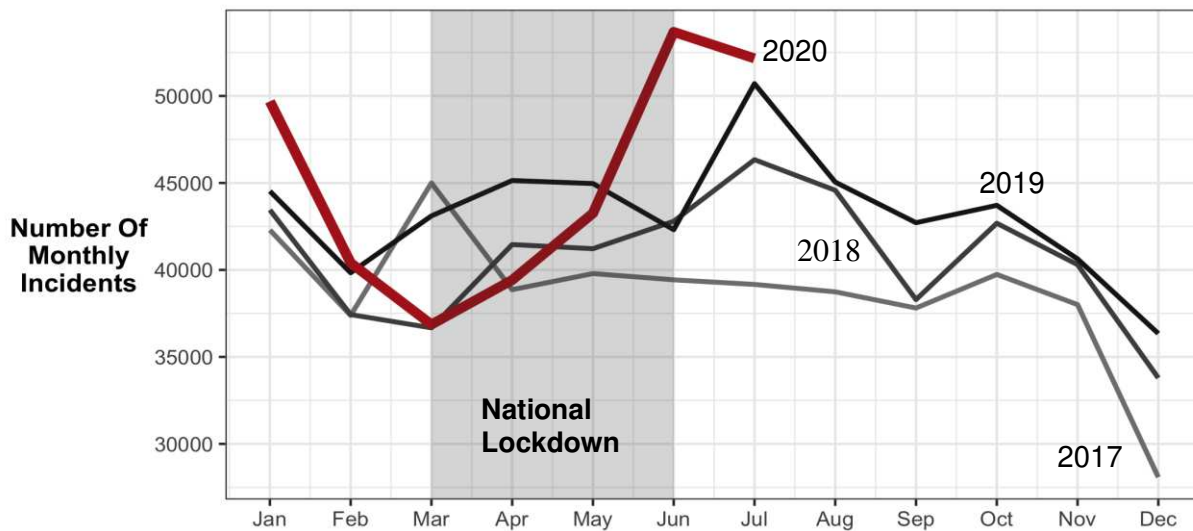
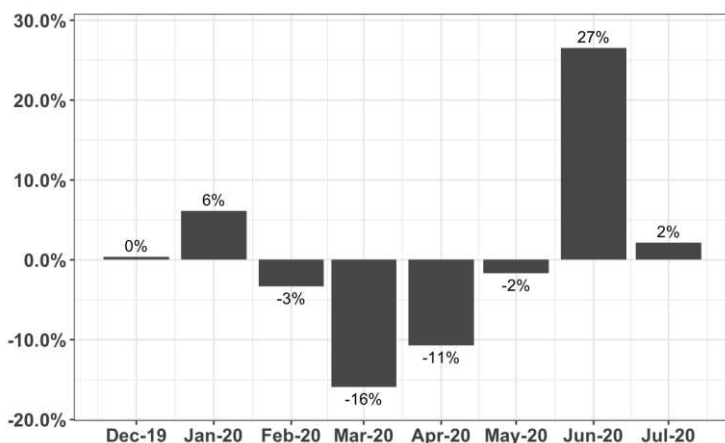
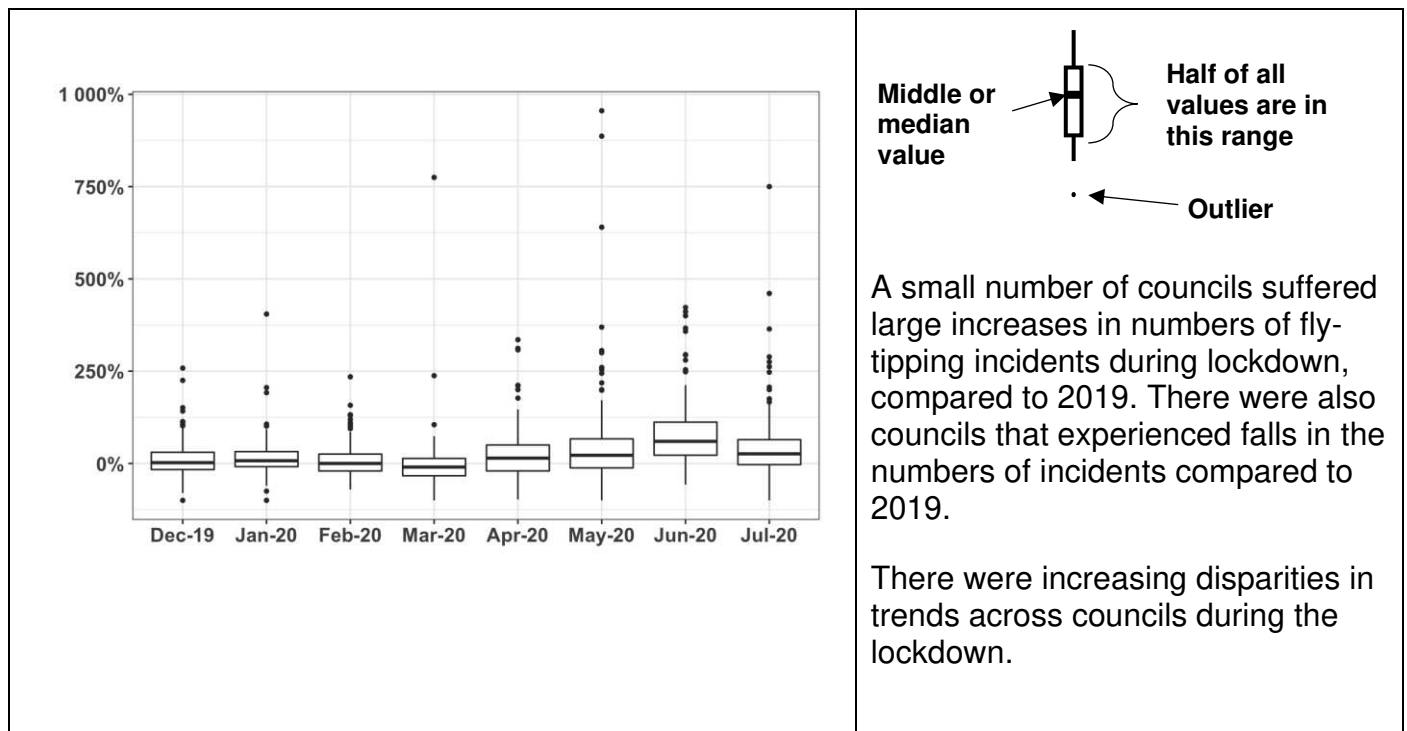


Figure 2: Changes in fly-tipping from expected values, December 2019 to July 2020



Following the first national lockdown in March 2020 there was initially a substantial fall in fly-tipping relative to expected. By June monthly falls had turned to a marked increase. July saw a return to close to the expected number of incidents.

Overall, the difference between the expected amount of waste for Jan to Jul 2020 is very close to the actual amount of waste reported. There is a less than one per cent difference, in our sample of councils, between the expected and the actual amount of waste reported.

Figure 3: Percent change in number of fly-tipping incidents (2019 to 2020) by council

Comment: One explanation could be as follows. Fly-tipping declined due to movement restrictions during March and the first national lockdown. There was variation between councils, but reduced waste collection and closure of local tips occurred. This may have led to an accumulation of waste which was subsequently fly-tipped as movement restrictions were reduced. Further research could explore the extent to which local variations reflect variation in disposal policies.

Note: The data used here resulted from a Freedom of Information request to all councils in the United Kingdom. Over 300 requests resulted in 140 councils providing monthly counts for the complete date range. There is no reason to believe that non-responses were systematically different.

The data relate to counts of recorded fly-tipping incidents only and do not reflect any variation in the size of tips that would affect the overall amount of waste.

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