

Do later kick-off times contribute to an increased risk of violent crime and disorder at football fixtures and surrounding areas?

Mixed methods research study investigating the relationship between violent crime and evening kick-offs for a sample of five London clubs' football fixtures.

Key details

Lead institution	University College London
Principal researcher(s)	Graham Younger graham.younger.19@ucl.ac.uk
Police region	London
Level of research	Masters
Project start date	September 2023
Date due for completion	June 2025

Research context

This research aims to investigate the relationship between evening kick-off times for football fixtures in London and an increase in violent crime using five football clubs located in a similar geographical area as case studies:

- AFC Wimbledon
- Chelsea
- Crystal Palace
- Queens Park Rangers (QPR)
- West Ham United

This involves investigating the link between football and violent criminal offences, specifically how kick-off times and days impact their frequency. It also considers other factors influencing this violence, including drugs, alcohol, fan behaviour and the physical environment in which sporting stadia operate. In addition to using secondary crime data, policing subject matter experts (SMEs) will take part in semi-structured interviews to explain their understanding and perceptions of these relationships and the associated risks.

Hypothesis and research questions

H1: Match day kick-off time and/or day (of the week) influences the volume of violent crime (increase or decrease) within the stadium locality (1 km radius of stadium).

1. Do later kick off times contribute to an increased risk of crime at football stadiums and surrounding areas?
2. Do matches played on weekends contribute to an increased risk of crime at football stadiums and surrounding areas?
3. Does match day kick-off time and day (of the week) influence (increase or decrease) the perception of risk from policing decision makers?

Research methodology

This is a mixed methods study, with multi-level regression analysis combined with subject matter expert (SME) interviews to provide context to the data analysis. This study is using crime data from the Jill Dando Institute Research Laboratory (JDRL) covering volume crimes for the years 2015–2020.

For H1 (research questions 1 and 2), the dependent variable will be crime count within a 1km radius of the stadium during the time period identified as relevant to the fixture, while the tested variable is either the day of the week or the time of day that the fixture was played. Other variables have been included based on their importance to the predicted crime count (Kurland 2010, 2014). This allows for further observations as to whether patterns or correlations identified vary between clubs (Kurland 2010).

This approach is in line with other similar studies (Kurland and Johnson 2012, Kurland and others 2018, Ristea and others 2018) looking at crime volumes associated with a large stadia based

sporting event.

SPSS has been used to perform statistical analysis on the data collected in this study. A negative binomial stepped regression model will be applied.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight SMEs from the Metropolitan Police. Their roles and expertise cover match-day football policing as qualified Public Order Public Safety Bx/Sx Match Commander (POPS) or Operational Football Officers (OFO) for the clubs sampled.

These interviews were transcribed and thematically coded, following methods previously used by King (2001), O'Neill (2005) and Pearson and Stott (2007), in similar circumstances. Those themes will be analysed for the potential cultural, situational and social contexts of violence at evening kick-offs.

References

King A. 2001. 'The end of the terraces: The transformation of English football in the 1990s'. Leicester University Press.

Kurland J and others. 2010. 'Does the timing of football matches influence crime rates? An analysis of evening kick-offs and crime patterns'. Home Office Research Study. London: Home Office.

Kurland J, Johnson SD and Tilley N. 2013. 'Football matches and crime patterns in London'. Security Journal, 26(3), pp 1–22.

Kurland J, Johnson SD and Tilley N. 2014. 'Offenses around stadiums: A natural experiment on football match days'. Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 51(1), pp 5–28.

Kurland J and Johnson SD. 2012. 'Exploring spatial displacement patterns in football hooliganism: An analysis of crowd behavior at football matches'. Journal of Criminal Justice, 40(4), pp 296–304.

Kurland J, Johnson SD and Tilley N. 2018. 'Spatial displacement of crime: A review of the evidence'. Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice, 12(1), pp 62–70.

O'Neill M. 2005. 'Policing football in Scotland: A study of "policing on the inside"'. Journal of Criminal Justice, 33(4), pp 273–284.

Stott C and Pearson G. 2007. 'Football "hooliganism": Policing and the war on the "English disease"'. Pennant Books.

Ristea A, van Bavel M and Leitner M. 2018. 'Spatial crime analysis of sports stadia: The influence of events on local crime patterns'. *Journal of Spatial Science*, 63(2), pp 235–253.