International Journal of Population Data Science

Journal Website: www.ijpds.org

Administrative Data as a Novel Source of Information on Postal Drug Delivery in Scotland: A Spatial Analysis of Illegal Consignment Seizure Data

Matthews, B^{1*}, Collier, B², McVie, S¹, and Dibben, C¹

¹The University of Edinburgh

²University of Cambridge

Since the development of cryptomarkets, researchers have been interested in the effects of these platforms on the 'cyber geography' of the drugs market. To understand these effects researchers have often focused on national or continent-level drugs flows inferred from data scraped from cryptomarket vendor listings. In this paper we demonstrate the value of administrative data as a complementary data source to understand the intra-national aspect of the supply of drugs through cryptomarkets. We use data from a UK law-enforcement agency to analyse the geographical distribution of drugs packages that were identified being delivered into Scotland in the post. We linked these data to information on neighbourhood deprivation to understand the characteristics of places to which packages were addressed and found that packages were, on average, more likely to be delivered both to deprived, urban areas and remote island localities. We contend that these results provide evidence that cryptomarkets have affected drug markets in remote island communities in the same way as legal e-commerce sites affected the markets for consumer goods. This further suggests that the spatial transformation of local drug dealing patterns by global cryptomarkets is in fact experienced differently in different places and geographies.

*Corresponding Author:

Email Address: ben.matthews@ed.ac.uk (B Matthews)