Public Health England

NHS

COVID-19 Equity of Cancer First Treatment Volumes: Summary of Latest National Results

Collaborative project between:
Cancer Alliance Data, Evidence and Analysis Service (CADEAS),
NHS England and NHS Improvement
National Cancer Registration and Analysis Service (NCRAS),
Public Health England

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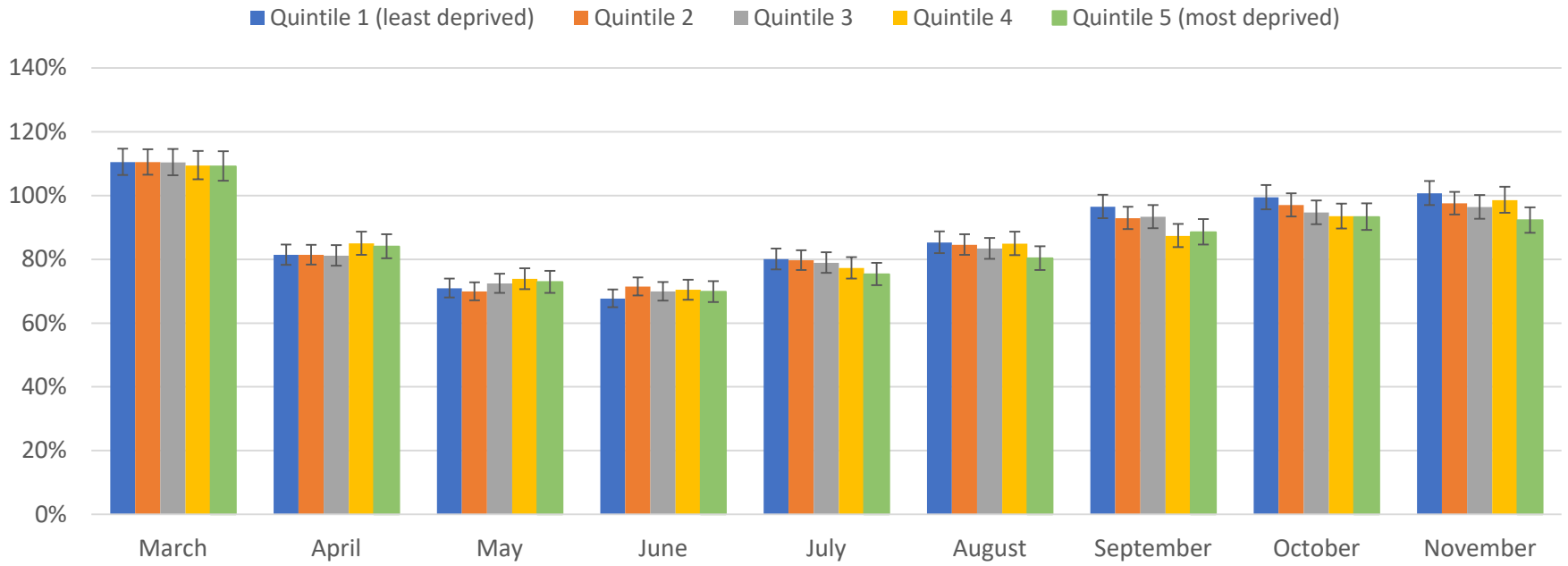
NHS England and NHS Improvement

Summary

- This slide set presents a brief summary of the findings in the accompanying COVID-19 Cancer Equity Data Pack, available here. The data pack presents the latest activity data on the number of first treatments, at national, regional and Cancer Alliance level, broken down by tumour type and patient factors: deprivation, age, sex and ethnicity. The figures present the working day adjusted proportion of the pre-COVID-19 baseline (same month from 2019).
- Our analysis shows little significant impact of the pandemic on inequalities in first treatment activity by ethnicity or sex.
- There was lower first treatment activity for patients from more deprived communities (in more recent months) compared to pre-pandemic levels. This may be due to the delayed effect of slower urgent referral activity from more deprived communities highlighted in the Referrals COVID-19 Cancer Equity Pack, following through to patients diagnosed and treated.
- There was also lower first treatment activity for breast cancer patients in their 50s and 60s compared to pre-pandemic levels. Our assumption is that this difference by age is due to disruption in the breast cancer screening programme earlier in the pandemic, and all 78 breast screening units are now issuing routine invitations so we should start to see an impact in the data.
- As such, these data are being used to directly inform ~~central and local~~ activity in the restoration and recovery of cancer services, including targeting messaging in the national Help Us Help You (HUHY) campaign to support people coming forward with symptoms indicative of cancer to their GP. The data and findings are also being shared with Cancer Alliances and regional teams to support targeting of local campaign messages. Reducing the inequality gap in urgent referrals should in turn reduce the inequality gap in first treatments
- We will continue to monitor and publish these data monthly.

Deprivation

National: Percentage of the baseline level of first treatments, broken down by deprivation quintile (March - November 2020)

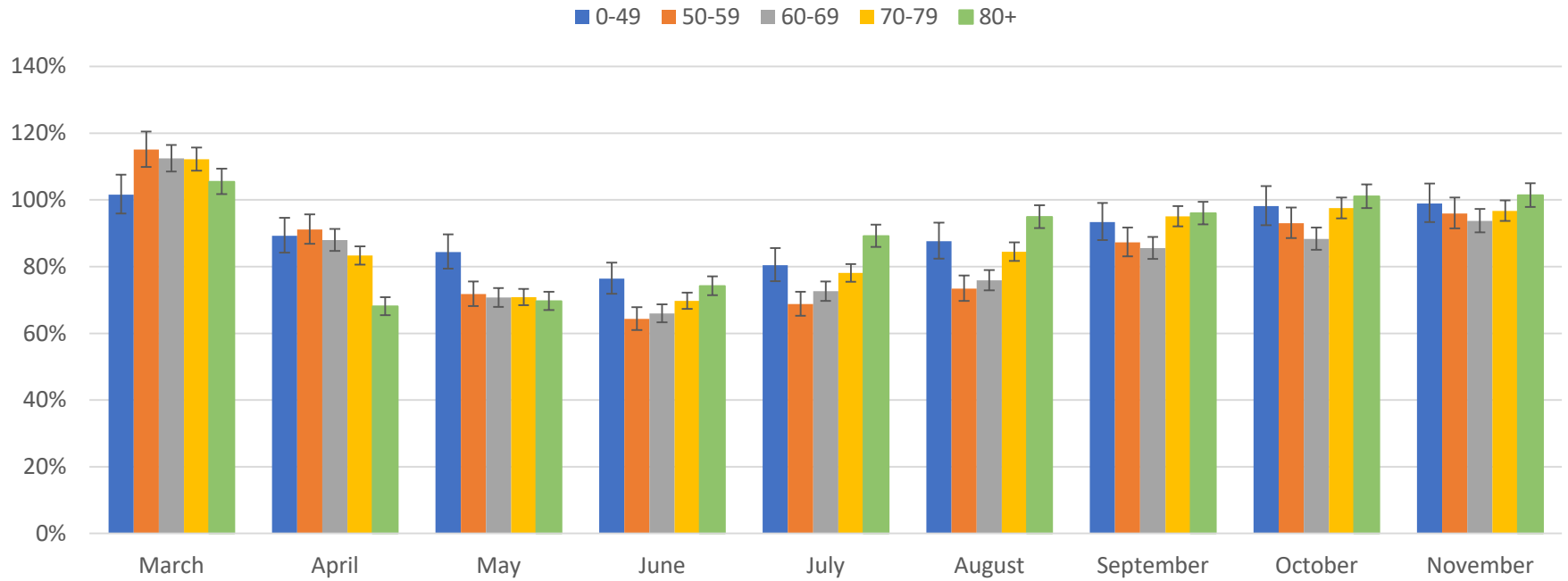


Compared to a baseline of the number of first treatments per deprivation category in the same month in 2019, the percentage of first treatments dropped off notably in April across all patient quintiles and continued to drop to the lowest point in June (68-71%). In each month between June and November 2020 the percentage of first treatment compared to baseline increased. There was a statistically significant difference in first treatment compared to baseline over the nine months of March to November as a whole between the least deprived (88%) and most deprived (85%) quintiles. In November, there was a statistically significant difference in first treatment volumes across deprivation quintiles with a recovery gap of 9 percentage points (pp) between the least deprived and most deprived quintiles (101% and 92% respectively).

For March to November, when broken down by tumour types, there was a statistically significant difference between the least deprived (97%) and most deprived (90%) quintiles for skin cancer.

Age

National: Percentage of the baseline level of first treatments, broken down by age group (March - November 2020)

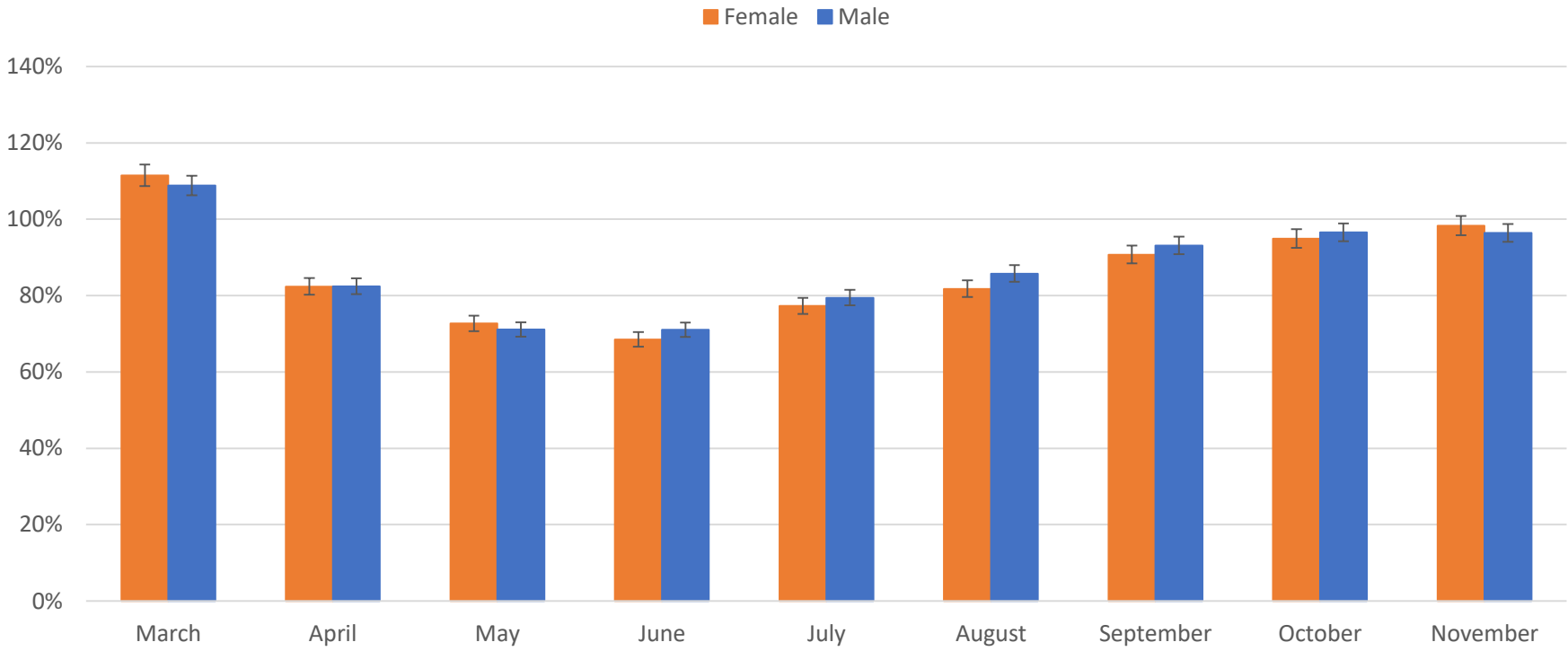


Compared to a baseline of the number of first treatments per age group in the same month in 2019, the percentage of first treatments dropped to their lowest in April for patients aged 80 and over (68%), but not until June for those aged less than 50 (76%), 50-59 (64%), 60-69 (66%) and 70-79 (70%). First treatment for those aged 80 and over recovered statistically significantly quicker than in other age groups, more quickly than those aged 50-59 and 60-69 between June and September, and more quickly than those aged 70-79 in July and August. In November those aged 60-69 (94%) were recovering statistically significantly slower than those aged 80+ (101%).

Compared to baseline, first treatment for the whole nine-month period March to November 2020 was statistically significantly higher in those patients aged <50 (90%), 70-79 (87%) and 80+ (89%) than for those aged 50-59 (84%) and 60-69 (84%). This was largely driven by lower treatment rates compared to baseline for breast cancer patients in their 50s (73%) and 60s (66%) compared to <50 (87%), 70-79 (79%) and 80+ (79%). For haematological cancer patients, treatment rates were higher for the under 50s (102%) compared to patients in their 70s (88%) and 80+ (88%).

Sex

National: Percentage of the baseline level of first treatments, broken down by sex (March - November 2020)

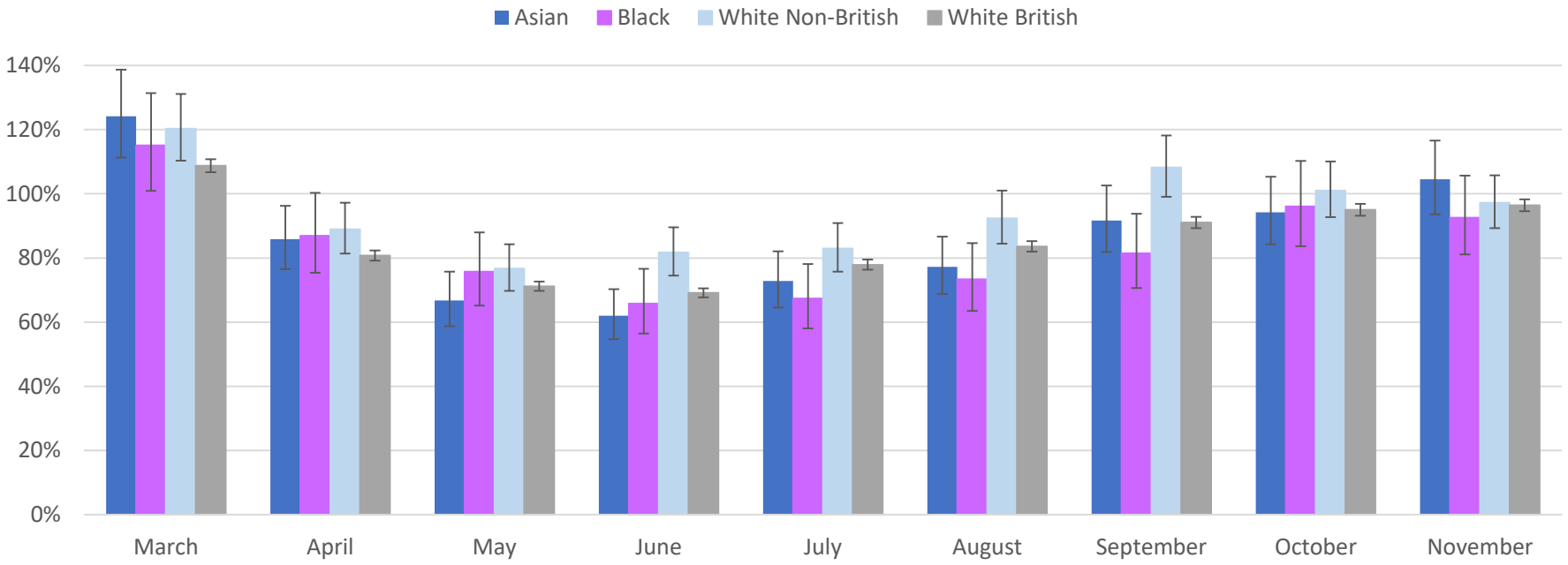


Compared to a baseline of the number of first treatments for each sex in the same month in 2019, the percentage of first treatments dropped off sharply in April for men and women and continued to drop to the lowest point in June, 71% and 69% respectively. In each month between June and November 2020 the percentage of referrals compared to baseline increased in both men and women, although there was a small statistically insignificant drop for men in November. There was a statistically significantly gap in referral volumes compared to baseline between women (82%) and men (86%) in August, but no statistically significant gap over all months between March and November combined.

Over all months, when broken down by tumour types, there are no notable differences between men and women.

Ethnicity

National: Percentage of the baseline level of first treatments, broken down by ethnicity group (March - November 2020)



Compared to a baseline of the number of first treatments per ethnicity category in the same month in 2019, the number of first treatments dropped to their lowest in either May (77% for White Non-British) or June (63-69% across White British, Asian and Black). In each month between June and October 2020 the percentage of first treatments compared to baseline increased for White British, Asian and Black ethnic groups, with no statistically significant difference between these groups. Across the nine months from March to November the proportion of first treatments compared to baseline was statistically significantly higher for White Non-British patients (94%) than for White British (86%), Black (84%) and Asian (86%) patients.

When broken down by tumour types there were no statistically significant differences between the ethnicity groups, partly due to relatively small numbers in some groups.

Notes: Ethnicity data is compiled from hospital data. “Unknown” ethnicity only accounts for around 4% of all patient treatments. Mixed / Multiple, Other and Unknown ethnicity categories are not shown here but can be found in the ethnicity tab of the pack