

Build it and they will search

*The impact of using double-header fixtures
to boost the profile of women's cricket*

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July 2024

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About this study

Women's sport has continued to go from strength to strength in recent years, with increased exposure, pay and opportunities at the top level (Mitigating, 2022; Sherry and Taylor, 2019; Sky Sports, 2022). Cricket is no exception: the women's Ashes has attracted record viewings, peaking at 795,000 – the highest ever for a women's T20 international match (England and Wales Cricket Board, 2022; Nicholson, 2021). And more recently, the International Cricket Council (ICC, 2023) committed to awarding equal prize money to men's and women's teams (Sky Sports, 2023a).

Against this backdrop, many have claimed that we have witnessed a “game-changing decade” for women's sport (BBC, 2020). Yet despite the clear progress made, a landmark report published by the Independent Commission for Equity in Cricket (ICEC, 2023) found cricket in the UK is racist, elitist and sexist, with many women and girls being “emotionally or mentally harmed by their time in the game”. Thus, while we have seen some advancements, particularly at the highest levels, cricket largely remains exclusionary, and further interventions and new approaches are needed to ensure the game is truly inclusive.

In the UK, the continued push for shorter formats for cricket has led to the introduction of the Hundred, which can be played in approximately two and a half hours. Now with three seasons completed, all of the 2023 men's and women's matches were played as double-header events (ie a men's and women's match is played on the same day, at the same venue), whereas in the earlier seasons, there were some standalone events (with the women relegated to inferior grounds) and some double-headers (BBC Sport, 2023a). Although double-header events have been heavily criticised in the past, for “reducing the women's game to a sideshow” (Nicholson, 2014), the format appears to be thriving in the Hundred, for instance, with crowds that are “bigger than anything we have seen before in women's cricket outside Worlds Cup finals” (Nicholson, 2021).

In this study, we aim to measure the impact of hosting women's matches alongside men's on levels of interest in the women's game. We hypothesise that many fans who are exposed to women's cricket due to the double-header offering will become interested in the women's game in its own right. We build two time-series datasets – one using Wikipedia Page Views data and another using Google Trends data – and analyse how search volume (for each of the women's players) has differed pre- and post-double-header events. We find consistent evidence of a positive and statistically significant effect of double-header matches on interest in women cricketers.

With this in mind, we argue for the further integration of men's and women's cricket, through the introduction of mixed gender cricket, in a format that could be easily rolled-out, at both the grassroots and elite level. Specifically, we propose bringing together women's and men's cricket into a single game by interleaving innings of the men's and women's (currently stand-alone) matches, thus requiring minimal modifications while boosting the profile of women's cricket and providing spectators with an entirely new experience.

Introduction

Women's cricket has historically been under-funded and received little exposure compared to men's cricket (Velija et al., 2014). One only has to look as far as the symbolic "Home of Cricket", Lord's cricket ground, to see the extent of the exclusion that many have faced from the sport, with women having to wait 212 years to become members of the Marylebone Cricket Club, which owns Lord's (Malcom & Velija, 2008).

Women remain severely under-represented on the hallowed turf. As with many other international grounds, men have considerably more playing days, formats, levels and fixtures compared to women, at Lord's. For instance, in 2023, over 15 times as many days have been reserved for men's-only matches (47 days) than for women's matches (three days) (Lord's, 2023). Women are yet to play a test match at Lord's, with a single solitary (T20) international slot for 2023, compared to 10 days of men's international cricket (ICEC, 2023).

While women cricketers have historically been excluded, considerable progress has been made in recent years (Robertson et al, 2019). Ticket sales for the 2023 women's Ashes series almost tripled the amount sold for the prior 2019 tournament (over 94,000 tickets sold compared to the 32,000 total attendance for the 2019 series) (Duke-Giles, 2023; Nicholson, 2023). This total attendance figure surpassed the 50,000 tickets for all England women's internationals in 2022 (BBC Sport, 2023b). Internationally, the Women's Premier League, in India, drastically raised the bar in terms of commerce and marketing in women's cricket. The highest paid women's player (Smritia Mandhana) was paid over £300,000, a previously unheard-of figure for a female cricketer, particularly for a very short tournament (BBC News, 2023). The final, which was won by Mumbai Indians, was watched by 10 million new viewers, demonstrating the commercial viability and popularity of women's cricket (Kuanal, 2023).

Elsewhere, Cricket Australia's new memorandum of understanding with the Australian Cricketers Association provides women with a 66% increase in payments, ensuring that women's retainers, while not yet equal, are at 70% of their male counterparts – a significant step forward (Australian Cricketer's Association, 2023). The 2023 Women's Big Bash Tournament for the first time, featured standalone women's matches at the historic Melbourne Cricket Ground and Sydney Cricket Ground (Khan, 2023). Alistair Dobson, the general manager of the Big Bash Leagues, noted: "The WBBL has long been the world's leading cricket league for women and the natural progression of the League is to have the best players in the world playing at the best cricket venues in the world" (CA Communications, 2023).

The growth of women's cricket must be viewed against the backdrop of rising enthusiasm for and interest in women's sport (Williams, Pope & Cleland, 2023). The Lionesses' historic triumph at the 2022 Uefa Women's Euros resulted in a surge of interest, with 87,192 people attending the final at Wembley, and with claims that "women's football will never be the same again" (McNulty, 2022). The 2023 women's football World Cup saw the biggest investment made by Fifa yet, with US\$152m (£118m) provided to ensure all players are paid and that the prize money is on a "pathway to equality" with the equivalent men's tournament (Bowes, 2023).

The newfound support has been evident in ticket sales, broadcasting figures, merchandise sales and fan festival participation (Beissel et al., 2023). For example, just days into the month-long event, more than 1.5 million tickets had been sold, making the tournament the most well-attended edition in its history (Pender, 2023). It is in this context that Karen Carney, the chair of a new independent women's football review, recently said that with adequate investment, and reforms at both the elite and grassroots levels, women's football could become a billion-pound industry in the next 10 years (Sky Sports, 2023b). The review's report, which is fittingly titled *Raising the Bar: Reframing the opportunity in women's football*, produced 10 recommendations, aimed at ensuring that minimum standards are met across a range of key areas (DCMS, 2023). Considering the very modest targets that have typically been included in the EDI plans of sporting bodies (e.g. Marylebone Cricket Club, 2021), grounds and clubs, the report must be applauded for its ambition.

Nonetheless, in both cricket and other sports such as football, women have repeatedly reported feeling like second-class citizens (BBC Sport, 2023c). In reflecting on the findings of the recently published ICEC report, the England women's cricket captain, Heather Knight, said: "I started out playing men's club cricket and being asked "Do you do the ironing for the men when you finish playing?". The ICEC (2023: 21) report, underpinned by thousands of survey responses, found that those who do not possess the "right" characteristics "are often faced with barriers that they cannot overcome, denied opportunities to progress or, worse, are emotionally or mentally harmed from their time in the game". Additionally, it noted that many in the game are so resistant to change that they "may even feel like victims in response to the drive towards greater diversity and inclusion" (ICEC: 2023: 27).

It is often argued that women should not receive equal pay and/or opportunities until they have built up the same following as the men, thus suggesting that equality rests upon the ability to perform and/or generate sufficient revenue (Grey, 2020; UCL School of Management, 2020). However, this outdated and discriminatory view fails to recognise the right to equality and non-discrimination and the vital importance of facilitating and supporting historically discriminated against women players to enable them to be able to perform and to become popular (ICEC, 2023). Holding women to an arbitrary standard to be able to receive exposure effectively doubles down on the discrimination already

encountered, by using historical discrimination to justify a current discrimination. This approach has been taken all too often in the past – for example, when women footballers were paid less due to not having the same sponsorship and TV rights, even though they had not been given adequate airtime to attract this sponsorship (Alvarez, 2019). Several academics have thus noted that more opportunities (salary, exposure etc) for women athletes “makes them more interesting to the public, evident from professional football players”, and we thus “need to pay women more first and then the market will equalise (UCL School of Management, 2020).

In line with the damning ICEC report findings, data on participation in sport paints a stark picture in regard to the gap that still exists between girls and their male counterparts (Binlot, 2020; Guthold et al., 2020; Hopkins et al., 2022). Decades of studies have supported the vital importance of physical activity (e.g. Eime et al., 2013; Powell & Pratt, 1996), and various sporting bodies have rolled out targeted campaigns and initiatives to increase girls’ participation in sport (e.g. Sport England 2019). Regardless, girls continue to participate in organised sports and physical activities to a far lesser extent than boys (O’Reilly et al., 2023); they also drop out at twice the rate of boys (Binlot, 2020; Women’s Sport Foundation, 2023). Concerningly, girls often drop out for entirely preventable reasons, such as a lack of access to facilities, lack of funding or lack of female role models (Women’s Sport and Fitness Foundation, 2008). While the prevalence of insufficient physical activity has reduced among boys since 2001, it has remained unchanged for girls, leading to widening gender differences over time (Guthold et al., 2020). A particularly prominent time for dropouts from sport (for males and females) is adolescence, although the risk is far higher for girls (Hopkins et al., 2022). With only 15% of female adolescents globally meeting World Health Organisation-recommended levels of physical activity, there is a need for urgent action and revamped formats of sport (Guthold et al., 2020).

One intervention that has been attempted in recent years is the scheduling of “double-header” matches, in which men’s and women’s matches are scheduled for the same venue on the same day, with a ticket for one serving as a ticket for both (BBC Sport 2023a). This intervention type has historically been critiqued by gender equality advocates, for example, for reducing the women’s match to a warm-up activity for the men’s match (Nicholson, 2014). However, it has been viewed far more favourably in the Hundred tournament, with high attendance for both the men’s and women’s fixtures (Nicholson, 2021). In theory, this approach leads to an increase in interest in women’s cricket, on the basis that once exposed to the sport, people become interested, but otherwise have too few opportunities for incidental exposure. Moreover, people might (inaccurately) assume that they would not be interested in the women’s game, and so would not independently seek out attendance at these games.

Watching two matches in succession on the same day is only plausible in short-form versions of cricket. Two tournaments which make use of double-headers are the Hundred series in England, and the Big Bash series in Australia.

About the Hundred

The Hundred is a professional franchise played in the summer in England. The tournament includes eight men's and eight women's teams located in major cities across England and Wales, and has taken place since 2021, after a delay due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The format was invented with the expectation that each match would last around two and a half hours, and all matches are televised for free by the BBC. Almost all matches take place as back-to-back double-headers at the same venue on the same day. One ticket gives access to both the men's and women's games. The men's salaries are four times higher than the women's, but the tournament prize money is equal.

About the Big Bash

The Big Bash leagues comprise two Australian professional Twenty20 cricket leagues, a women's league and a men's league. The men's league was established in 2011, with the women's league established in 2015-16. Each league features eight city-based teams, and the tournament takes place in the Australian summer each year.

As with other Twenty20 tournaments, 20 overs are played by each team, for a total of 120 balls per side. The matches in the Women's Big Bash tournament have more variety in whether they have been played as double-headers with the men's game, with the two tournaments running consecutively rather than concurrently in more recent years.

Timeline: Big Bash tournament

- 2009/10-2014-15: Cricket Australia conducted a national women's T20 competition, the Australian Women's Twenty20 Cup, which ran in conjunction with the Women's National Cricket League (50-over competition) (Allan, 2015).
- 2011: Cricket Australia established the men's Big Bash competition (replacing the KFC Twenty20 Big Bash), featuring eight city-based franchises (Belzer, 2016).
- 2012: Expansion of the BBL tournament, from 28 to 32 group stage matches (AAP, 2016).
- January 2014: Belinda Clark, former Australian women's test captain and head of Brisbane's Centre of Excellence, revealed that planning for a women's Big Bash league was underway (Macpherson, 2016).
- February 2015: Cricket Australia announced that a women's Big Bash league (WBBL) would be launched in the 2015-16 season, with the teams aligned to the existing men's competition (Allan, 2015).
- July 2015: Official WBBL launch, with the full fixture list and each team's first player signing unveiled (Smith, 2015).
- 2015-16: WBBL|01 held, with players earning between \$3,000 and \$10,000 (Mitchell, 2016).
- January 2016: Network Ten moved a Melbourne derby between the Stars and Renegades to Ten's main channel for the first time (Westbury, 2016).
- April 2016: Minimum and maximum WBBL retainers increased to \$7,000-\$15,000 (Cricket Australia, 2016).
- August 2017: CA announced the biggest pay rise in the history of women's sport in Australia (ABC News, 2017), resulting in minimum WBBL retainers increasing to \$10,292 (average of \$19,926).
- 2018: The inaugural season of the WBBL was included by ESPNcricinfo in its 25 Moments That Changed Cricket series (ESPNcricinfo, 2018).
- 2018: Spectator admission fees introduced for the WBBL (Godde, 2018), with the WBBL|04 final at Drummoyne Oval becoming the league's first match to sell out (Jolly, 2019a).
- April 2018: Announcement of six-year broadcast rights deal, in which 23 women's matches of each season would be aired live on the Seven Network and on Fox Cricket (Smith, 2018).

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- ♦ 2018-19: Further expansion to a total of 56 regular season matches (i.e. each team playing all others twice) (Guardian Sport and agencies, 2018).
 - ♦ 2019-20: Cricket Australia announced that all 59 matches would also be streamed live and on demand through Kayo Sports (Cricket Australia, 2019).
 - ♦ 2019-20: Following a steady increase in media coverage and popularity since its launch, the WBBL moved to a standalone calendar slot, shifting away from the men's tournament (Jolly, 2019b).
 - ♦ 2020-21: Overall number of matches televised on the Seven Network and Fox Cricket increased from 23 to 26 (Jolly, 2020).
 - ♦ 2021-22: CA and the ACA announced a \$1.2 million increase in domestic retainers (\$400,000 for the WBBL) (ACA, 2021).
 - ♦ 2021-22: Fox Cricket broadcasted an additional 23 matches, meaning WBBL|07 was the first time that all games were televised (Cricbuzz staff, 2021; Malcolm, 2021).
 - ♦ January 2023: Seven Network and Foxtel announced as the sport's broadcasters in Australia (including WBBL broadcasting) for the next seven years in a \$1.5 billion deal (ABC News, 2023).
 - ♦ 2023: Stand-alone women's matches played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Sydney Cricket Ground for the first time (Cricket Australia, 2023a).
 - ♦ April 2023: CA and the ACA agreed to a new five-year MOU, leading to the WWBL salary cap increasing to \$732,000 per year, with the average WBBL retainer doubling to approximately \$54,000 (Guardian Sport & Australian Associated Press, 2023).

Timeline: The Hundred tournament

- ♦ September 2016: A new city-based T20 cricket tournament, similar to the Indian Premier League was proposed by the ECB (Guardian Sport, 2016).
- ♦ 2016: Deloitte report predicted that the Hundred tournament would make approximately £27 million profit annually (Dixon, 2023).
- ♦ April 2017: ECB members voted 38-3 in favour of pushing ahead with the new competition (Hoult, 2020).
- ♦ October 2017: Sanjay Patel, the ECB's chief commercial officer, proposed to switch the format to an entirely new format featuring 100 balls per side (Hoult, 2020).

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- ♦ April 2018: The Hundred tournament was announced by the ECB (ESPNcricinfo staff, 2018).
 - ♦ May 2018: The ECB framed the Hundred Tournament as an idea that could help the ECB engage the British Asian population, in their South Asian Action Plan (Wigmore, 2021).
 - ♦ September 2018: Two pilot games were played, at Trent Bridge, between teams of county players designated as “North “and “South “(Gardner, 2018).
 - ♦ 2021: Former England player and head coach of the Northern Superchargers Dani Hazell noted that the tournament would assist with investment into the women’s regional structure (Botcherby, 2021).
 - ♦ 2021: The initial tournament was delayed by one year due to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic (ESPNcricinfo staff, 2021 Henry and Matthews, 2020).
 - ♦ 2022: The ECB reported that the Hundred had made an £11.8 million profit (Dixon, 2023).
 - ♦ July 2022: The ECB and Sky Sports announced a four-year English cricket rights extension, thus seeing England internationals and the Hundred remain on the UK pay-TV network until 2028 (SportsPro Media, 2022).
 - ♦ November 2022: The ECB received a £400 million private equity approach, which would have seen it relinquish majority ownership of the tournament (Hoult, 2022).
 - ♦ 2023: Reported loss (by chartered accountant Fanos Hira) of £9 million in the first two years, not including the £24.7 million promised to the counties and Marylebone Cricket Club. (SportsPro Media, 2023).
 - ♦ 2023: ECB chief executive Richard Gould said he expected the tournament was “here to stay” beyond the current deal with Sky Sports, which runs until 2028 (Dixon, 2023), while others claimed that the “Hundred’s days now look numbered” (Burnton, 2023)
 - ♦ 2023: ICEC (2023) report called for equal salary tiers, salaries and captain’s bonuses, by 2025.
 - ♦ 2023: Eight of the women’s Hundred games featured in the top-10 most-watched women’s domestic sports broadcasts on Sky Sports in 2023 (Sky Sports, 2023c).
 - ♦ 2024: Pay increase announced, with the ECB set to invest an additional £800,000 in wages for the women’s Hundred in 2024 (regardless, significant pay gap remains) (Roller, 2024).

Do double-headers lead to an increase in interest?

Double-header matches are postulated to increase interest in women’s cricket relative to “single-header” matches (Nicholson, 2021). However, whether or not this is the case is an empirical question, which we aim to investigate in this paper.

It is straightforward to investigate the pattern of interest in women’s cricket around the matches that they play in either of the two tournaments of interest. This pattern is shown in the data below, looking at hits to individual cricketers’ Wikipedia pages in the days before and after the matches in which women play cricket, for first the Hundred, and then the Big Bash tournament.

Figure 1: Number of hits on the Wikipedia pages of women’s cricketers on days relative to match days in which they are playing – Hundred tournament

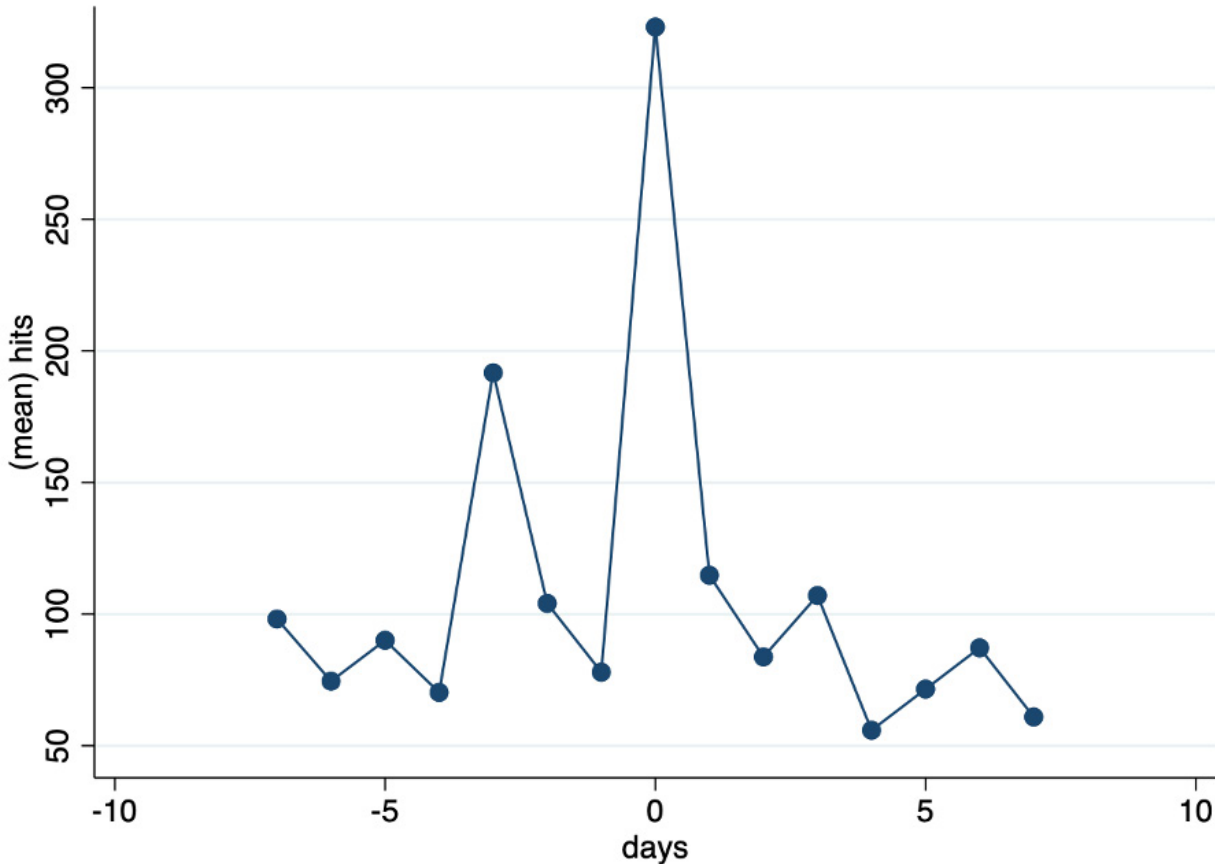
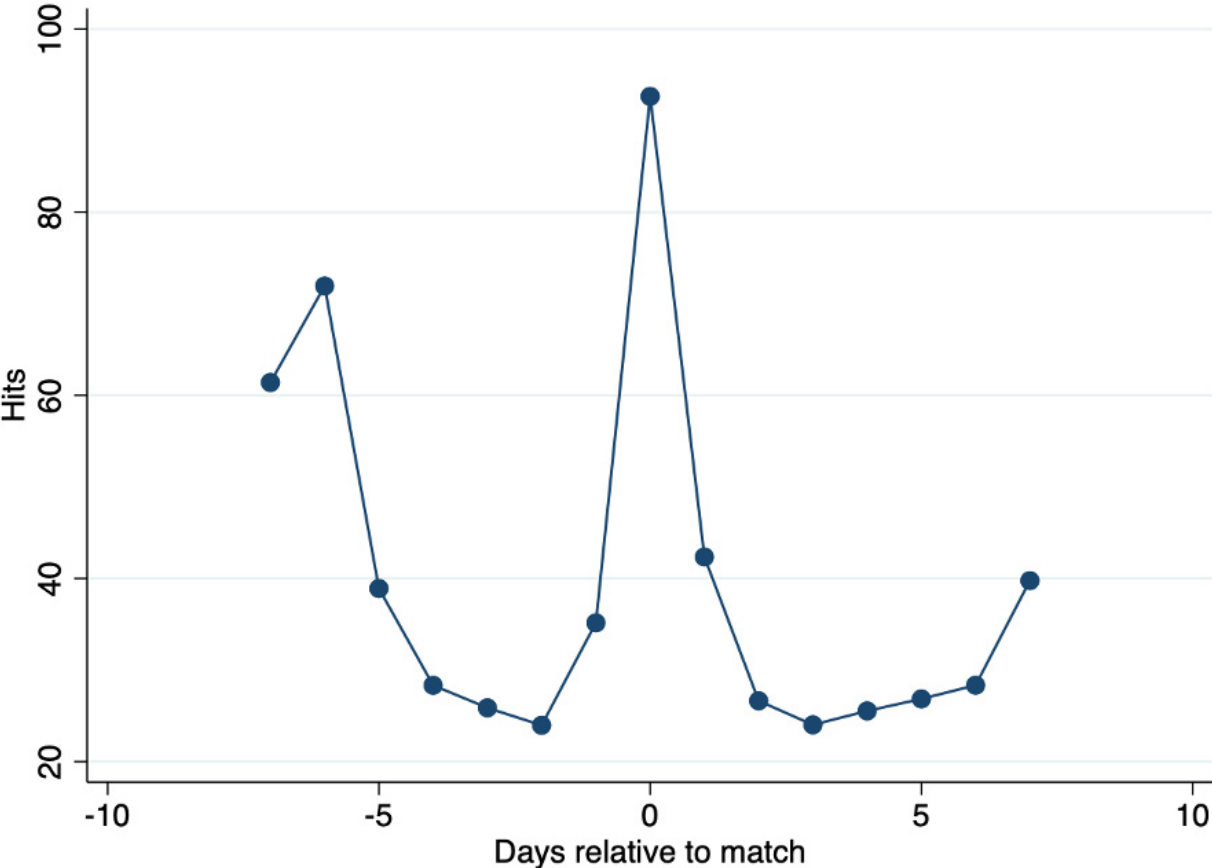


Figure 2: Number of hits on the Wikipedia pages of women’s cricketers on days relative to match days in which they are playing – Big Bash tournament



In both cases, we see a pronounced spike in interest in women’s cricket on the days that they play matches during these tournaments. There is also evidence of spikes elsewhere, most likely because the week before and after a match are not “clean” – these are tournaments in which three days before one match might be the day of another.

This spike in hits is interesting, but does not allow us to attribute causality, which we consider next.

Identifying impacts

Identifying the impact of one thing on another is challenging, particularly where randomisation is impossible, as in our context. First, we need to have a sufficient number of double-headers, as well as a sufficient number of women's single-header matches. Within the history of the Hundred thus far, this only includes a single stand-alone women's match in 2021, meaning comparison is only possible for the Australian Big Bash tournament.

To investigate, we make use of a “quasi-experimental” approach called difference-in-differences analysis, whereby we compare outcomes between a treatment group with a comparison group, before and after the treatment is administered (Shadish et al., 2002).

In our context, this means comparing the number of hits related to a cricketer involved in a double-header match before that match, with the number of hits related to a cricketer involved in a single-header match, and then making the same comparison on the days of, or after, the match.

As we saw above, players are involved in multiple matches in a tournament, and so the window we are able to investigate is relatively small, if we want to maximise our sample. To do this, we take a five-day window – the two days before and after a match, and the matchday itself, and exclude any games where another game was played within that window. This gives us 122 matches, and 226 players, from 2015 to 2022. Of these, 43 relate to double-header matches.

In order to estimate interest in women's cricket, we look at two sources of time-series data: Google Trends and Wikipedia hits. Specifically, we aim to demonstrate that if stakeholders in the sporting ecosystem give opportunities for women's sport to be seen, it is watched. We analyse the extent to which interest in women cricketers (measured by the number of online searches, for each women's player, per day) increases, after they have featured in a double-header Hundred tournament match (i.e. being given equal prominence to the men).

About the Wikipedia data

Wikipedia page views is a tool that allows users to instantly query Wikipedia pageview traffic data for a particular timeframe and keyword/s (Vardi et al., 2021). Our Wikipedia data is downloaded directly from Wikipedia and reports the raw number of hits that a given page receives on a given day, for each of the years in which the Big Bash tournaments took

place. We identify for every female cricketer within each year of the Big Bash tournament the most relevant Wikipedia page (often suffixed with “cricketer” where the name does not uniquely identify a cricketer), and download the data for each player in each of the years for which they were a participant. Some cricketers change their names, mostly due to marriage, over the course of several years of tournaments, and their Wikipedia pages reflect their name at the time of our search, not at the time of any given tournament. Where this is the case, Wikipedia entries are matched manually to a particular player in a particular year.

About the Google Trends data

Google Trends is a publicly available source of data which allows users to visualise changes in time series data related to the public’s interest in particular keywords (Mavragani et al., 2018). It provides normalised data on the rate of search for given search terms over a window of interest. Daily data is limited to 31 days downloaded at a time, and only five search terms can be included at once. All responses are indexed, such that the search term/day within the terms under consideration with the highest search rate is normalised to 100, and all other values are expressed relative to that (Google, 2024). As such, it is difficult to make comparisons across different time periods or search terms, as there is no objective search data available.

In order to overcome this challenge, the data was downloaded with four novel cricketers included in each batch and a single cricketer retained across all search queries within a season of the tournament, allowing us to re-normalise different players against that reference player. For example, if the reference player’s level of interest on 1 November 2017 was indexed as 100 in one set of five players (including the reference player), and 50 on the 1 November 2017 in another set of players, we can harmonise the scale by doubling the original indexed scores of the other four players in the second set.

In addition, because tournaments lasted for more than 31 days, requiring two different periods to be downloaded for each player/tournament set, a single overlapping date was picked for the two periods, so that we could renormalise data values for time periods using the same approach as players.

These datasets were combined into a single harmonised dataset across all players and tournament dates, ready for analysis.

Results

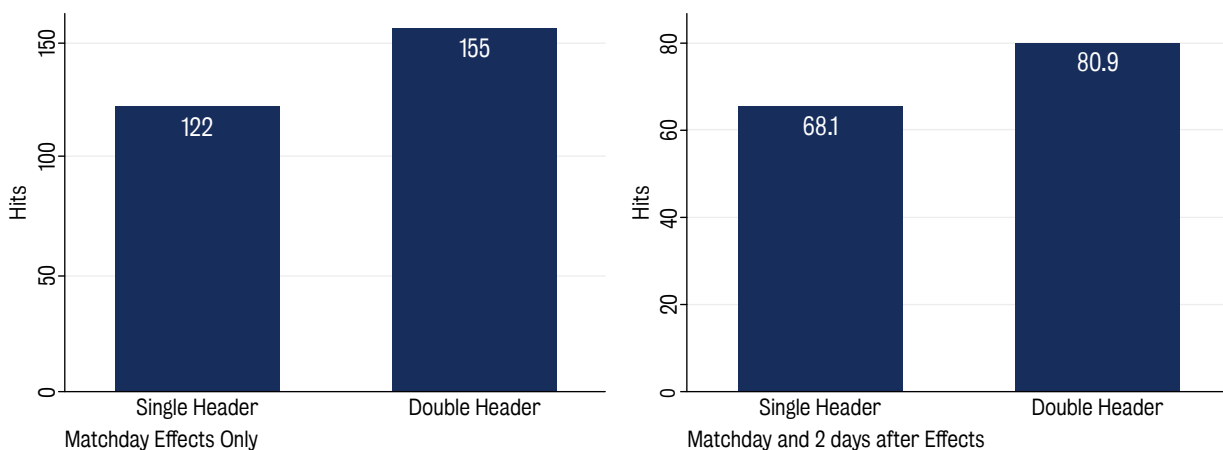
Wikipedia data

First, we present the results of our analysis of Wikipedia data, where we consider the impacts of double-header events on the number of hits received by the Wikipedia pages of the women cricketers playing on that day.

We build a regression model in which the number of hits on a treated day (the day of the match in our first model, and additionally the two days after in our second) is on a treatment variable, ie whether or not the data relates to the days of or after a double-header, rather than a single-header. Because our data is made up of “counts” – the number of hits in a given day -- we make use of a Poisson regression model, with controls for year of tournament (because treatment status is correlated with the year in which the match takes place, as some years have more double-header matches than others), and a second model additionally controlling for the lagged number of hits (that is, the number of hits per day in the two days preceding the match). For each of these models, we test them with two sets of dates – just the match day, and the match day and the two days thereafter.

In our most robust model (including controls for lagged hits), we find positive and significant effects of the double-header events compared with the single-header events. These events are larger – at a 27.4% increase – for the day of a match itself (N=3,267), compared to a 18.3% increase when we include the two days after the match (N=9,800). This increase is of course even smaller in absolute terms, because so many fewer hits take place on the days after the matches, compared to the day of the match itself. This overall effect is shown in the bar charts below.

Figure 3: Effects of double headers on Wikipedia hits for women’s cricket players



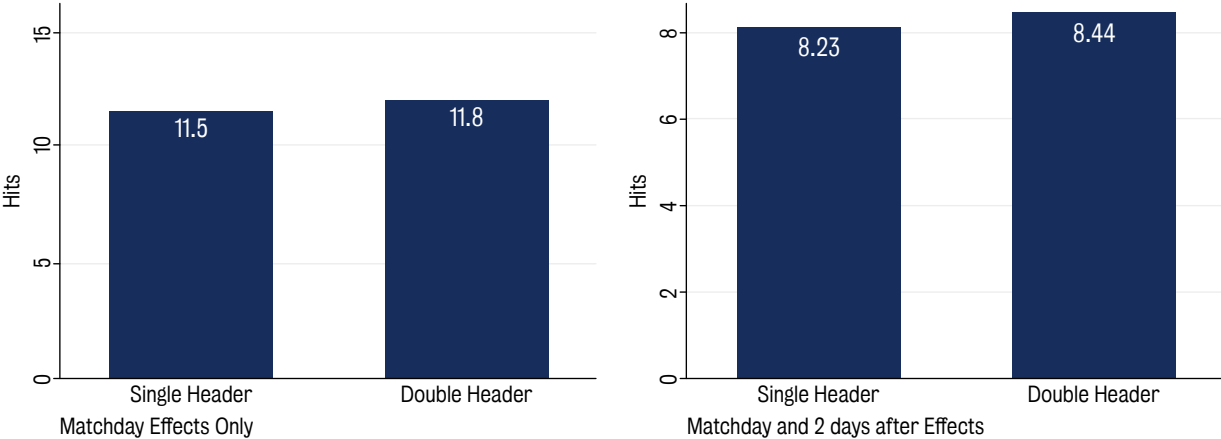
Google Trends data

We now turn to the Google Trends data. As described above, this data is more complicated as normalised searches within a given search set (a range of dates and players) is presented, not raw numbers of hits. We re-normalise ranges within each year as best we can, giving a more stable comparison within a year, but in any case our identification strategy is robust to this normalisation.

In terms of the Google Trends data, again estimating using a Poisson regression, we find a significant, but much more modest impact on the number of Google searches for players playing in double-header matches compared to those playing in a single-header match. As shown in the graphs below, the effects are more in the scale of a single digit percentage increase in hits, and although this remains statistically significant at conventional levels, the change – of 2.7% in both cases – is too small to be described as particularly meaningful.

The discrepancy between the 2.7% increase in Google searches and the 27% rise in Wikipedia page hits for players in double-header matches could be attributed to various factors, for example, the depth of information sought, with Wikipedia users likely seeking more comprehensive details about players, and Google searches reflecting more immediate, surface-level queries. Additionally, Wikipedia’s high visibility in search results and direct referrals from social media could drive larger increases in page hits, bypassing the need for initial Google searches.

Figure 4: Effects of double header matches on normalised Google searches for women cricketers



Discussion

The coordination of women's and men's cricket matches through "double-header" events, in which one ticket allows spectators to watch both matches, is an approach that, it has been suggested, could increase parity of esteem and interest between women cricketers and their male counterparts (e.g. Nicholson, 2021).

Previous research has not, however, investigated this empirically. In this paper, we have made use of a difference-in-differences approach to investigate the impacts of double-headers, by comparing the trends in interest, measured through Wikipedia page hits and Google searches, before and after women's matches which either are, or are not, played as double-header matches. By drawing together tournaments and players across multiple years, we have nearly 10,000 observations that can be included within this analysis.

What we find is consistent evidence of a positive and statistically significant effect of double-header matches on interest in women cricketers, although the magnitude is quite different, with Google searches only increasing by an average of 2.7% as a result of matches being played as a double-header, compared to a 27% increase in Wikipedia page hits.

This discrepancy could be influenced by various factors, such as the differing nature of the platforms, content availability and quality, and seasonality and contextual factors. Evidently, Google and Wikipedia serve different purposes and might capture different aspects of interest, with Wikipedia potentially indicating a desire for more in-depth information, such as player biographies, career statistics, and history. Additionally, if Wikipedia offers comprehensive and well-maintained pages on women cricketers and matches, it might attract more readers seeking detailed information. Furthermore, if there were other major sporting events and/or news stories at the same time, the volume of Google searches may have been impacted more than Wikipedia hits.

Taken together, our results suggests that coinciding men's and women's cricket has a positive impact on interest in women's cricket, but that it is difficult to be sure of exactly how large the impact of this is. This difficulty highlights the complexities of interpreting digital metrics and the importance of considering multiple data sources when assessing the impact of double-header events. If sequential games played at the same ground under the same ticket has been effective, as shown in this study, we think that this could potentially be increased by greater integration – for example, by interleaving innings of the men's and women's game, rather than having one follow the other (usually the men's match following the women's, which has been critiqued under an equality lens). While the idea of mixed-gender cricket has been proposed at the global level previously, it is yet to be taken forward. We believe it is now particularly timely to explore a new format which brings women's and men's cricket together into a single game, given the rise of short-format competitions, the

continuous growth of women’s cricket and the shocking findings of the ICEC report on equity in the sport. We also note that there has been some commentary about the Hundred’s days “looking numbered”, although there seems to be little consensus on how it could be revamped, with alternatives being “sure to provoke a row” (Burnton, 2023).

In our revamped format, each game would require the men’s and women’s sides of two teams to alternate their innings in such a way that two standalone matches would be merged into one. Each team would bat for one innings of one hundred balls, while the same-gendered team fields (see Figure 5 below for an example). The game would be won by the team with the highest combined scores across their men’s and women’s team.

This format would work particularly well in tournaments such as the Hundred and the Big Bash League, in which each participating club has both a men’s and women’s team. It is our hope that this revamped form of cricket could encourage more diverse participation, while also providing more exposure to women’s cricket for spectators, many of whom may continue to follow women’s cricket in its own right.

Figure 5: Proposed format for new mixed-gender cricket

	BATTING	FIELDING
SESSION 1	TEAM 1 WOMEN	TEAM 2 WOMEN
SESSION 2	TEAM 2 MEN	TEAM 1 MEN
SESSION 3	TEAM 2 WOMEN	TEAM 1 WOMEN
SESSION 4	TEAM 1 MEN	TEAM 2 MEN

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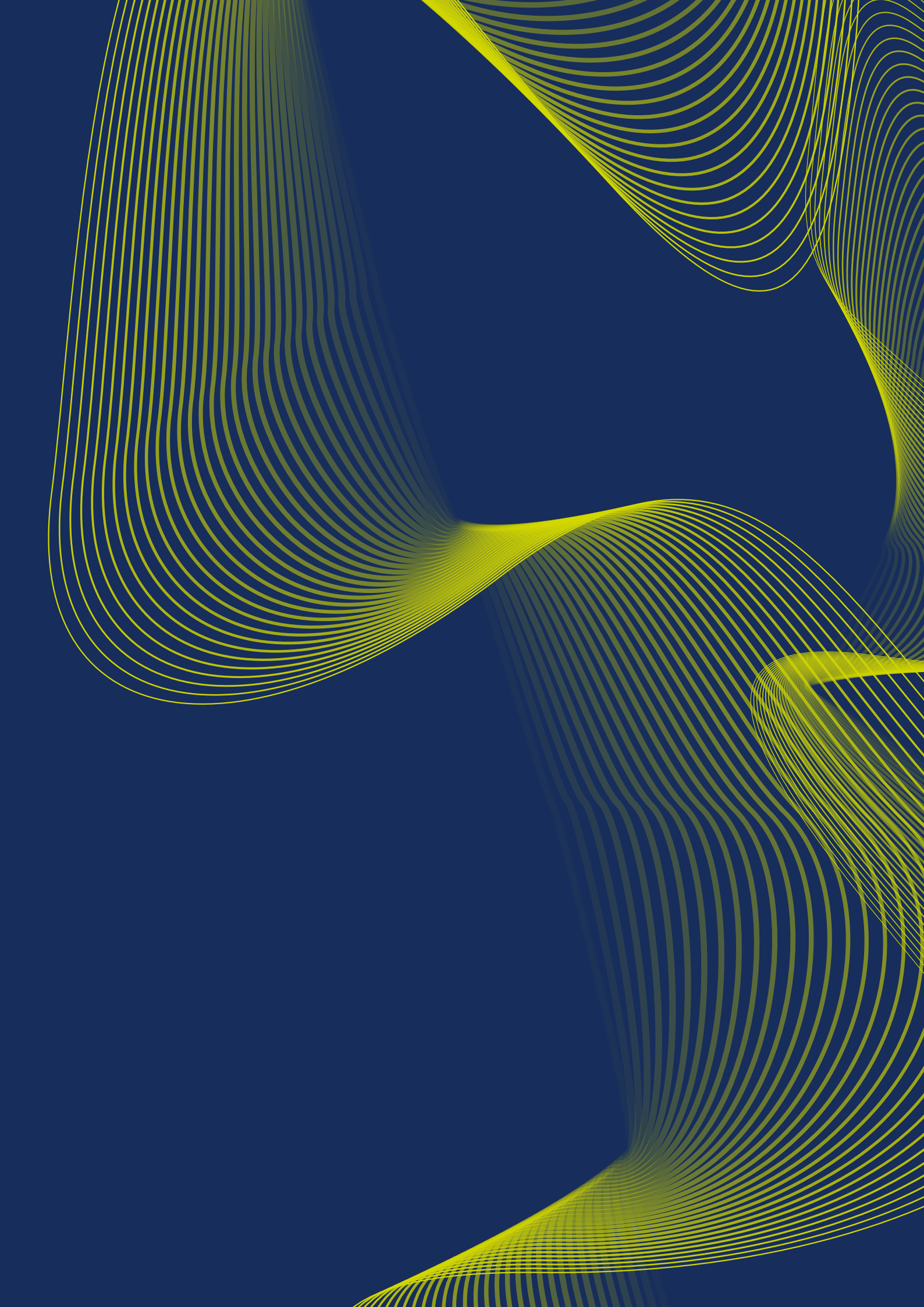
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