

## British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2007

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**This report presents results from NatCen's British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2007. This is the second nationally representative survey of its kind, and its overall aim is to provide data on participation in gambling, and the prevalence of problem gambling, in Britain. A random sample of 9,003 individuals participated in the survey.**

**Since the 1999 survey, the nature of gambling in Britain has changed substantially – due to changes in legislation, and an increase in the number of gambling products available. As well as allowing comparison with results from 1999, this survey provides baseline data for the new Gambling Act which came into force on 1 September 2007.**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Approach

A number of changes were made for the 2007 survey. When enquiring about engagement in different forms of gambling, it was necessary to add a number of new forms, such as playing fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) in a bookmaker's, online betting with a bookmaker, and use of a betting exchange. Questions about gambling expenditure were modified in an attempt to collect net expenditure.

The survey uses two sets of screening questions for estimating the prevalence of problem gambling. One set of questions is based upon the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM IV). This allows direct comparison with the 1999 study. The second set of questions uses the Canadian Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) which was developed in 2001 and has been used on a number of studies.

Public attitudes to gambling have been more systematically studied in the 2007 survey.

Specifically, the aims of the 2007 survey are to:

- Measure the prevalence of participation in all forms of commercial and private gambling (including estimates of expenditure and information on venue).



- Estimate the prevalence of 'problem gambling' and look at which activities have the highest prevalence of 'problem gamblers'.
- Investigate the socio-demographic factors associated with gambling and with 'problem gambling'.
- Assess attitudes towards gambling.

## Participation in gambling activities

- 68% of the population, that is about 32 million adults, had participated in some form of gambling activity within the past year. This compares to 72% (about 33 million adults) in 1999.
- Excluding people who had only gambled on the National Lottery Draw in the last year, 48% of the population, or about 23 million, had participated in another form of gambling in the past year. This compares to 46% (about 22 million adults) in 1999.
- The most popular activity was the National Lottery Draw (57%), though participation rates had decreased since the previous survey in 1999 (from 65%).
- The National Lottery Draw was followed by scratchcards (20%), betting on horse races (17%), and playing slot machines (14%).
- There were only three activities that showed a reduction in participation between the two surveys; the National Lottery Draw (from 65% to 57%), football pools (from 9% to 3%) and scratchcards (from 22% to 20%).
- Only a small proportion of people (3%) gambled online (like playing poker or casino games) or placed bets with a bookmaker using the internet (4%). 3% used fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs) and 4% gambled in a casino.
- Overall, 6% of the population used the internet to gamble in the past year.



- Men were more likely than women to gamble overall (71% compared with 65%), and on each individual activity, with the exception of bingo (4% of men compared with 10% of women).
- Respondents who described their ethnic origin as white were more likely to be past year gamblers (70%) than those who classified themselves as Black (39%) or Asian (45%).
- People in higher income households were more likely to gamble – the rate increased from 61% among those in the lowest income households, to 72% for highest income households.
- In terms of education, respondents with higher levels were less likely to gamble – 61% of those with a degree compared with 73% who were educated to GCSE/O level equivalent.

### **Problem gambling. Two measures of problem gambling were used: the DSM IV and the PGSI**

- The rates of problem gambling in the population were 0.6% and 0.5% respectively. This equates to around 284,000 (DSM IV) and 236,500 (PGSI) adults (aged 16+) in Britain.
- The problem gambling prevalence rate, according to the DSM IV, was the same as it had been in 1999 (0.6%).

- The prevalence of problem gambling among past year gamblers was 0.9% for the DSM IV (compared to 0.8% in 1999), and 0.8% according to the PGSI.
- Excluding those who only played the National Lottery Draw increases the estimate of problem gambling, among past year gamblers, to 1.3% according to the DSM IV, and 1.2% according to the PGSI.
- Problem gambling was more prevalent among men than women, and tended to be more prevalent among younger age groups (though the association with age was less clear-cut than in 1999).
- In 1999, problem gambling was significantly associated with being male, reporting that a parent was or had been a problem gambler, and being in the lowest income category.
- In 2007, a significant association was again found between problem gambling and being male and also parental regular gambling (particularly if a parent had a gambling problem). Problem gambling was also associated with poor health, and being single.
- In addition, according to the DSM IV, problem gambling was significantly associated with being Asian/Asian British or Black/Black British, being separated/divorced, having fewer educational qualifications, and (according to the PGSI) being younger than 55 years old.
- Looking at international studies of problem gambling prevalence, the rate in Britain is higher than that found in Norway, and similar to that of Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland, and lower than Australia, South Africa, the US, Singapore, Macao and Hong Kong. (Comparisons should be treated with caution, as different methodologies have been used in different countries).
- The highest prevalence of problem gambling was found among those who participated in the past year in spread betting (14.7%), fixed odds betting terminals (11.2%) and betting exchanges (9.8%) – all estimates are from the DSM IV.

### **Attitudes to gambling. A new 14-item scale for measuring general attitudes towards gambling was developed for the 2007 survey**

- The overall sample average for the total scale, and for 12 of the separate items, indicated an attitude towards gambling that was more negative than positive. The average view was that gambling was more harmful than beneficial for individuals, and for society, and should not be encouraged.
- The two exceptions indicated that the average person tended to support the view that people had a right to gamble and to reject total prohibition.
- The most favourable attitudes to gambling were shown by: the under 35s; heavier drinkers; those who have engaged in more than four different types of gambling activity in the last 12 months; or more than three types in the last week; and those who were classified as a problem gambler according to either screen.
- The least favourable attitudes to gambling were shown by: the over 55s; the widowed; those describing themselves as Asian or Asian British or of one of the 'other' ethnic groups; non-gamblers; and those with a parent or close relative with a gambling problem.



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