

## British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2007 Executive Summary

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### Introduction

The British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2007 (the Survey) benchmarked participation in gambling in Britain and provided a range of data to inform our regulation of the industry. The Survey built on the 1999 British Gambling Prevalence Survey (the 1999 Survey) commissioned by GamCare.

The nature of gambling has changed substantially since 1999. The Gambling Act 2005 (the Act) provides new regulations for both old and new forms of gambling. For example, the Act recognises and accommodates the technological changes in gambling that have occurred over the last 40 years and covers the regulation of remote gambling in Britain for the first time. The Act also allows for wider advertising of gambling.

As well as allowing comparisons with results from 1999, the Survey provides baseline data before the Act came into force on 1 September 2007. According to the Survey there has been little change in the percentage of people participating in gambling and the percentage of problem gamblers since 1999. The prevalence of problem gambling is relatively low compared with that found in other countries.

However, the Gambling Commission (the Commission) remains concerned that there are still over a quarter of a million problem gamblers in Britain. There is a clear need for the industry and the Commission to work together to reduce the harm caused by gambling. This is tackled through the licensing regime introduced by the Act that requires that gambling operators comply with the Commission's Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice.

Specifically, the Survey aimed to:

- measure the prevalence of participation in all forms of commercial and private gambling
- estimate the prevalence of problem gambling
- investigate the socio-demographic factors associated with gambling and problem gambling
- assess attitudes towards gambling.

The Commission intends to carry out national gambling prevalence surveys every three years in order to collect information on how gambling behaviour changes over time. The next survey will be published in 2010.

### How was the information gathered?

The Survey was carried out by the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen). Just over 9000 people, aged 16 years and over, participated in the Survey. They were selected from a random sample of addresses taken from the Postcode Address File. Participants were invited to fill in a questionnaire collecting detailed information about gambling behaviour and attitudes to gambling. The data were weighted to reflect age, gender and regional distribution of the British population according to estimates by the Office of National Statistics.

## What is the level of gambling participation in Britain?

The participation rate in gambling has decreased slightly from 72% (33 million people) in 1999 to 68% in 2007 (32 million people). This decrease can be mostly accounted for by a decrease in National Lottery participation. Excluding those who had only gambled on the National Lottery Draw, gambling participation rose slightly from 46% (22 million people) in 1999 to 48% (23 million people) in 2007.

Comparing the results of the 1999 and 2007 surveys it can be seen that the most popular gambling activities have remained similar over this period. Table 1 below shows these gambling activities and the percentage of the adult population who gambled on them according to the 1999 and 2007 surveys:

**Table 1: Most popular gambling activities**

Activity	2007	1999
National Lottery Draw	57%	65%
Scratchcards	20%	22%
Betting on horse races	17%	13%
Fruit / Slot machines	14%	14%

Some gambling activities have become more popular since 1999, whilst others have decreased in popularity. The biggest changes in participation are highlighted in Table 2 below. The table shows the percentage of adults who gambled on the activity according to the 1999 and 2007 surveys:

**Table 2: Changes in participation of gambling activities since 1999**

Activities with increased popularity	Activities with decreased popularity
Lotteries other than National Lottery (8% to 12%)	National Lottery Draw (65% to 57%)
Betting on horse races (13% to 17%)	Football pools (9% to 3%)
Betting with a bookmaker (3% to 6%)	Scratchcards (22% to 20%)

New forms of gambling such as internet gambling (6%) and fixed odds betting terminals (FOBTs)<sup>1</sup> (3%) have emerged since 1999 and show a similar level of popularity to more established gambling activities such as playing table games in a casino (4%).

Contrary to some expectations, participation in these new activities did not cause the overall participation of gambling to increase. One possible explanation is that remote gambling is having a displacement effect from more traditional forms of gambling.

<sup>1</sup> Fixed odds betting terminals ('FOBTs') now come under the Gambling Act 2005 definition of a gaming machine (set out in section 235) and meet the requirements for category B2 gaming machines (eg, relating to stake and prize).

## Who gambles?

The Survey revealed that gambling participation varied by a number of socio-demographic, health and lifestyle characteristics. Table 3 looks at a range of these characteristics and outlines which population groups were more and less likely to participate in gambling activities. The percentages given in the table show the participation levels for the relevant population groups only, not the whole population.

**Table 3: Gambling participation by socio-demographic groups**

	Groups more likely to gamble	Groups less likely to gamble
<b>Gender</b>	Men (71%)	Women (65%)
<b>Age</b>	35-44 (73%)	75+ (57%)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	White (70%)	Black/Black British (39%), Asian/Asian British (45%)
<b>Income</b>	Higher income households (73%)	Lowest income households (61%)
<b>Education</b>	GCSE/O-level educated (73%)	Degree educated (61%)
<b>Marital status</b>	Separated/ Divorced (72%), Married (70%)	Widowed (60%)
<b>Economic activity<sup>2</sup></b>	Paid employment (71%)	Full time education (51%)
<b>Social Position<sup>3</sup></b>	Lower supervisory & technical households (75%)	Managerial & professional and intermediate households (both 67%)
<b>Health</b>	Fair (72%)	Bad/very bad (62%)

There was also variation in the choice of gambling activities by different socio-demographic groups. Table 4 offers an example of this by looking at the differences in how men and women gambled. The table shows the most popular gambling activities by gender along with the percentage of men or women participating in them.

**Table 4: Gambling activities by gender**

2007		1999	
Men	Women	Men	Women
National Lottery Draw (59%)	National Lottery Draw (56%)	National Lottery Draw (68%)	National Lottery Draw (62%)
Horse races (22%)	Scratchcards (20%)	Scratchcards (22%)	Scratchcards (22%)
Slot machines (19%)	Horse races (13%)	Fruit / Slot machines (20%)	Bingo (10%)
Scratchcards (19%)	Other Lotteries (12%)	Horse races (18%)	Horse races (9%)
Private bets (15%)	Bingo and slot machines (both 10%)	Private bets (17%)	Other lotteries and slot machines <sup>4</sup> (both 8%)

<sup>2</sup> This was based on the activity of the household reference person – the person who responded to the introductory questionnaire.

<sup>3</sup> As measured by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). This was measured for the household reference person only.

## How many people are problem gamblers?

The surveys show that overall there had been little change in the prevalence of problem gambling since 1999. 'Problem gambling' is defined as gambling to a degree that compromises, disrupts or damages family, personal or recreational pursuits<sup>4</sup>.

The Survey employed two internationally recognised measurement screens to estimate the prevalence of problem gambling in Britain. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders, Edition IV (DSM IV) screen was retained from the 1999 Survey and concentrates on the psychological motivations underpinning problem gambling. The second screen, the Canadian Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), was introduced to reflect international best practice and focuses on the harms and consequences associated with problem gambling.

Both the DSM IV and PGSI consist of a number of screening questions relating to problem gambling behaviours. If the respondent scores above the problem gambling threshold they are defined as problem gamblers.

By using more than one method to measure problem gambling the Commission was able to check for reliability within the Survey, make comparisons with the 1999 survey and make international comparisons. The measurement screens found problem gambling prevalence of 0.6% (DSM IV) and 0.5% (PGSI); these are listed, along with the number of people they correspond to, in Table 5 below:

**Table 5: Prevalence of problem gamblers in adult population**

Screen	2007	1999
DSM IV screen	0.6% (284,000 people)	0.6% (275,000 people)
PGSI	0.5% (236,500 people)	n/a

Among past year gamblers, rather than the overall adult population, the problem gambling prevalence was 0.9% for the DSM IV screen and 0.8% for the PGSI screen. Excluding those who only played the National Lottery Draw increases the estimate of problem gambling amongst past year gamblers to 1.3% according to the DSM IV and 1.2% according to PGSI.

## How many people are 'at risk' gamblers?

The PGSI allows for greater distinction among gamblers and provides a better understanding of the distribution of gamblers from low risk to problem gamblers. This allows the screen to identify people who may be 'at risk' of becoming a problem gambler.

The PGSI uses two categories to measure those who score on the scale but fall below the problem gambling threshold. The table below shows the PGSI categories and the percentage of respondents who fall into these categories.

**Table 6: PGSI categories and the percentage of adult population in each category**

PGSI classification categories	Percentage of adult population
Low risk gambler	5.1%
Moderate risk gambler	1.4%

<sup>4</sup> Lesieur, HR & Rosenthal, MD (1991). *Pathological gambling: A review of the literature (prepared for the American Psychiatric Association Task Force on DSM-IV Committee on disorders of impulse control not elsewhere classified)*. Journal of Gambling Studies 7, 1, 5-40

## What forms of gambling do problem gamblers play?

The Survey found that on average problem gamblers participated in over six forms of gambling. This means that it is not possible to single out particular form(s) of gambling that are especially related to problem gambling. However, the Survey showed that certain gambling activities have larger proportions of problem gamblers participating in them (as measured by the DSM IV screen):

1. Spread betting (14.7%)
2. Fixed odds betting terminals (11.2%)
3. Betting exchanges (9.8%)
4. Online gambling (7.4%)
5. Table games in a casino (5.2%)
6. Dog races (5.2%)

The Survey cannot be used to indicate causality. Problem gamblers typically participate in a range of gambling activities. It is not possible to conclude from the survey if certain activities led to problem gambling.

## What factors are associated with problem gambling and ‘at risk’ gambling?

As in 1999, the Survey found a significant association between problem gambling and being male and having a parent that gambled regularly (especially if the parent had a gambling problem). Other factors associated with problem gambling included poor health, being single, being Asian/Asian British or being Black/Black British, being separated/divorced, having fewer educational qualifications and being younger than 55.

The survey found a number of variables that were associated with being a ‘moderate risk’ gambler as measured by the PGSI screen. These variables were sex (men), age (25-34), social position<sup>5</sup> of household reference person (semi routine and routine occupations), parental gambling behaviour (parents regularly gambled, but did not have a problem with their gambling) and general health status (fair health).

## What is the public’s attitude to gambling?

A new 14-item scale for measuring general attitudes towards gambling was developed for the Survey. Overall, and for 12 of these items, attitudes towards gambling were 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. However, the average view also supported a person’s right to gamble and rejected total prohibition. The Survey found that people who gamble had a more favourable attitude to gambling as did the under 35s, heavier drinkers and those 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/Asian British or one of the other ethnic groups, non-gamblers and those with a parent or close relative with a gambling problem.

## How do we know this information is accurate?

There are a number of problems that researchers undertaking surveys face, including interviewing a sample which is representative of the whole population, potential bias in the individuals participating, and untruthful responses. NatGen incorporated a number of safeguards in their methodology to minimise the risk of potential issues having an impact on the final results.

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<sup>5</sup> As measured by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). This was measured for the household reference person only.

These included checking the characteristics of respondents against the whole population, following up people who did not respond initially, and undertaking the Survey in such a way as to encourage frank disclosure. The report was peer reviewed by two leading international academics who found the study to be one with many strengths and a high quality of data.

## How is the Commission building on these results?

The data collected during the Survey forms the basis for a range of secondary analysis projects that will develop understanding in key policy areas. With this in mind the Commission is working with academics and research organisations on a number of areas. These include further analysis of gambling participation, gambling on the internet, co-morbidities and social variables. The Commission will publish the results of this additional analysis either on its website or in journals.

The dataset for the Survey is available to researchers and other interested parties through the UK Data Archive ([www.data-archive.ac.uk](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk)). Making the dataset available allows interested parties to undertake secondary analysis and provide further insight into gambling and problem gambling in Britain.

## Where can I get further information?

This summary is intended to serve as an introduction to the Survey's findings and briefly outlines the Commission's position in relation to key points. The full report, together with the questionnaires that were used, is available on the [Commission website](#).

**Gambling Commission July 2008**

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The Gambling Commission regulates gambling in the public interest. It does so by keeping crime out of gambling, by ensuring that gambling is conducted fairly and openly, and by protecting children and vulnerable people from being harmed or exploited by gambling. The Commission also provides independent advice to government on gambling in Britain. For further information or to register your interest in the Commission please visit our website at: [www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk](http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk)

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