


# GAMBLING COMMISSION

Item X  
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## Quarterly Research Briefing 04/14 (November 2014)

For Board approval	
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**Prepared by:**

**Officer - Data Analyst**

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## Quarterly research briefing 04/14

### Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this briefing note is to provide both the Board and all Gambling Commission (Commission) employees with a short summary of significant research that has either been published recently, or is due to be published in the near future. We will share this, and future, research briefings with the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB).
2. Copies of the full research documents featured in this briefing, or more detailed summaries, are available on request. Full citations of the studies featured in this briefing are provided in the annex.

### Recent/current research

#### Gambling Commission research

3. **Gambling participation: activities and mode of access, year to July 2014**  
Gambling Commission (2014)

The following findings are based on a set of questions commissioned by the Gambling Commission in omnibus surveys conducted by ICM Research. These questions ask respondents about their gambling participation in the past four weeks. The data in this report is from the four quarterly surveys conducted in the year to July 2014.

#### Key Findings

##### Gambling participation in the past four weeks

- An average of 55% of respondents had participated in at least one form of gambling in the previous four weeks. This matches the proportion for the year to July 2013.
- A larger proportion of male than female respondents had participated in gambling in the previous four weeks (60% of males and 51% of females).
- An average of 16% of respondents had participated in at least one form of online gambling in the previous four weeks. This compares with 15% in 2013.
- A larger proportion of male than female respondents had participated in online gambling in the previous four weeks (19% of males and 13% of females).
- If those respondents only playing the National Lottery online are excluded, the proportion of respondents who had participated in online gambling falls to 11%. This compares to 9% in 2013.

##### Participation in each activity

- The most popular gambling activity was National Lottery tickets (39% of respondents). This was followed by other lotteries (15%), scratchcards (10%) and Horse races (7%).
- No other individual activity attracted more than 4% of respondents to participate.

##### How people gamble

- Overall, 71% of past four week gamblers had gambled 'in person only'. A further 17% had done so both 'online' and 'in person', and 13% had gambled 'online only'.
- Participating 'online only' was the most popular method of gambling for spread betting, sports betting, and betting on other events.
- Among past four week bettors, betting in person at a bookmakers was the most common option for horse races and dog races, whilst betting online with a

bookmaker was the most popular method for sports betting and betting on other events.

### **Gambling involvement**

- The interviewees were asked how often they gambled over the last four weeks by activity. The most common frequency of participation for past four week gamblers was 'once a week' with this being the most common frequency for eight activities. For seven activities, respondents indicated that their participation was 'once a month, less than once a week'. These were the most notable trends from the analysis, however other frequency categories considered gambling 2+ days a week and less than once/month.

## **Information to players and responsible gambling**

### **4. Personalised feedback in the promotion of responsible gambling: a brief overview. Auer & Griffiths (2014)**

- This paper discusses the literature on personalised behavioural feedback and focuses on how to evaluate player responsibility. One strand of this is measuring the impact of the information that players receive while gambling.
- The paper makes recommendations on how operators can use behaviour feedback to promote responsible gambling.
- It draws parallels between gambling and smoking cigarettes to show how motivational interviewing can help motivate those experiencing addictive behaviours to overcome this.

### **5. Is "pop-up" messaging in online slot machine gambling effective as a responsible gambling strategy? Auer et al (2014)**

- This study of a 'real-world gambling environment' investigates the effects of slot machine pop-up messages through the use of behavioural tracking data. The pop-up messages reminded gamblers of how long they had been playing and how many slots had been played. Comparisons were made across 400,000 randomly selected gambling sessions from 200,000 gamblers.
- The findings show that nine times more gamblers stopped their gambling session after viewing the pop-up message compared with those who did not view the message.
- The paper makes recommendations around the use of pop-up messages as a helpful social responsibility tool in reducing excessive play.

## **Young People**

### **6. Attitudes toward gambling among adolescents. Delfabbro et al. (2014)**

- This paper examines the findings of a cross-sectional study of seventeen year olds in Norway. The purpose of the research was to discover the relationship between demographic, personality, motivational and social variables and gambling attitudes.
- A discussion of the results showed that adolescents were more likely to favour gambling if they were male, seeking sensation and having a family member who gambles/gambled.

7. **The Role of Anxiety and Dissociation in Young Australian Gamblers.** Cartmill et al (2014)
  - The study investigates the relationship between anxiety and dissociation as predictors of what is termed 'escape style' gambling. The authors claim that previous research in this area has neglected the relationship between different modes of gambling and escapism. The 142 participants in the sample were aged between 18 and 35 years old, and living in Australia.
  - The findings show that anxiety and dissociation do play an important role in 'escape style' gambling. By understanding this relationship, it should be possible to identify further research to inform how mental health issues such as anxiety can be re-channelled towards healthier pursuits.
8. **Adolescent Alcohol-Drinking Frequency and Problem-Gambling Severity: Adolescent Perceptions Regarding Problem-Gambling Prevention and Parental/Adult Behaviors and Attitudes.** Balodis et al (2014).
  - This paper assesses the behaviours and attitudes of 1,609 high school students and their parents by using a survey tool. The sample was divided into the following categories: low-frequency/non-drinking and high-frequency drinking groups, and low-risk and at-risk/problematic gambling groups.
  - The findings conclude that high-frequency drinking was associated with problematic attitudes towards gambling. In terms of parental attitudes, young people whose parents approved of drinking were more likely to be at-risk problem gamblers.

## **Problem Gambling and its impacts**

9. **Problem gambling subtypes based on psychological distress, alcohol abuse and impulsivity.** Dowling et al. (2014).
  - The study bases its findings on a cluster analysis of over two hundred problem gamblers currently undergoing treatment in the United States. Previous research has focused on patterns of multiple co-occurring morbidities, rather than on expanding understanding of gambler sub-types.
  - Gambler sub-types are defined into four groups: gamblers with comorbid psychological problems, 'pure' gamblers without other comorbidities, gamblers with comorbid alcohol abuse and multimorbid gamblers.
  - Findings showed that Gamblers with comorbid alcohol abuse were more likely to be young men who used stimulant drugs, endorsed a higher quality of life and worked full-time. Multimorbid gamblers were more likely to experience comorbidities, have general problems related to their health and report high rates of hostility and aggression. Gamblers with comorbid psychological problems were more likely to be older women on low income, reported a family history of psychological problems and often played electronic gaming machines.
10. **Problem gambling and family violence: family member reports of prevalence, family impacts and family coping.** Abbott et al. (2013)
  - This paper builds on evidence of family violence in problem gambling populations in Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong using a large scale survey that sheds light on patterns and prevalence.

- Findings demonstrated that parents, current and ex-partners were most likely to be both perpetrators and victims of family violence. Sessions of problem gambling tended to follow episodes of violence as a reaction to anger and frustration. On the flipside, victims were likely to experience violence in the aftermath of gambling losses and the frustration that stemmed from this.

**11. The impacts of problem gambling on concerned significant others accessing web-based counselling.** Dowling et al. (2014)

- This paper addresses the issue of the impact of problem gambling on significant others. Focusing on the experience of problem gamblers seeking treatment, the researchers identified family, financial and intrapersonal issues. The sample of 366 significant others that had contacted Gambling Help Online in Australia between December 2010 and September 2012 were offered web-based counselling.
- The authors discovered that the majority of significant others were female partners of problem gamblers. Concerns revolved around impacts upon relationships, social lives and finances.

## Other

**12. A snapshot of youth in the digital playground: digsogames & digsinos (digital + social + games & digital + social + casino games). A research report for the International Social Games Association.**

- This study examines the relationship between Digsogames (digital+social games) and Digsinos (digital+social+casino games) using data from a sample of 12 million players across the United Kingdom, United States, Australia and the European Union. Although these games do not fall under the definition of gambling, research in this area has made like for like comparisons between the two types of play. The report pays specific attention to the nature of play and levels of expenditure, and its findings serve to dispel a moral panic around problematic behaviour and social gaming.
- Findings show that only 0.004% of Digsino players who paid for the games were under the age of 18 years. Overall, 99% of players were adults over the age of 18 years. It was inferred that the 'pay to play' section of the sample could be regarded as insignificant. The average spent for adults was \$191 per month.
- The paper concludes that there is a lack of evidence to support the notion that Digsinos are a threat to young people and/or lead to problem gambling.

**13. The interaction between gambling activities and modes of access: a comparison of internet-only, land-based only, and mixed-mode gamblers.** Blaszczynski et al (2014)

- This study considers how potential harms of problem gambling are associated with various forms and modes of gambling. An online survey of 4,594 people allowed respondents to self evaluate their gambling behaviour. During the analysis the sample was divided into modes of gambling such as: 'internet only', 'land-based only', or 'mixed mode'.
- The findings demonstrate that gamblers were likely to have a problem with different gambling products depending on whether they gambled with online or land-based operators or with both. For example, internet gamblers tended to attribute problematic behaviour with betting on sports and races.

14. **Understanding Positive Play: an exploration of playing experiences and responsible gambling practices.** Griffiths & Wood (2014)
  - This study explores a group of gamblers identified as 'positive players'. The sample of 1484 participants was defined by using a Lie/Bet screen where no signs of at-risk or problem gambling behaviour were present.
  - The aim of the research was to examine the behaviours, attitudes and motivations of players that show no signs of at-risk or problem gambling behaviour.
  - A smaller sample of 209 problem gamblers were then identified and compared with the larger sample.
  - The authors conclude that positive players were likely to be motivated by enjoying a leisure experience, whereas problem gamblers tend to play to enhance their mood. In addition, online gambling was identified as a safer way to gamble as time and money limits were easier to abide by.
  
15. **Determinants of Internet Poker Adoption.** Abarbanel & Philander (2014)
  - This paper aims to discover how the role of demographic, economic, political, technological, and/or sociological determinants contribute to online poker gambling adoption. The authors argue that online poker participation is viewed as controversial topic and they provide a theoretical discussion to attempt to understand the relationship between social characteristics and taking up poker play.
  - Results from the analysis demonstrate that there was an association with each of the possible determinants when assessing why poker players began gambling in this way.
  
16. **Gambling and the onset of comorbid mental disorders: a longitudinal study evaluating severity and specific symptoms.** Afifi et al. (2014)
  - This paper adds value to the body of research on pathological gambling and comorbid mental disorders because it is based on a longitudinal study carried out in the United States which highlights trends over time. The overarching research question is to determine whether different levels of gambling behaviour and gambling-related symptoms were associated with the onset of psychiatric disorders.
  - Gamblers were divided into three subsections: gambling disorder, sub-threshold gambling disorder and recreational gambling. Three years after the initial intake interview, these groups were compared with non-gamblers.
  - The findings revealed that those reporting any gambling behaviour were at increased risk to have any mood, anxiety, or substance use disorders.
  
17. **Inside Information, Horseracing and Betting Integrity in Great Britain.** Miers (2014)
  - This paper examines the regulatory regime in place, both in Great Britain and internationally, that oversees and disciplines betting integrity. Horse racing takes the focus, however the domestic commercial betting market is central to the discussion.
  - The second half of the piece assesses the obligations and powers of the Gambling Commission in light of crime prevention and ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way.
  - The discussion concludes that the Gambling Commission encourages operators to comply with the licensing objectives in this area. It notes that the Commission seeks to pre-empt betting malpractice and to reduce risks to these objectives through the way in which it uses its licensing, compliance and enforcement tools. This allows the Commission to assess regulatory risk across all gambling forms. While risk

management is the responsibility of the operator, the regulator's role is to ensure that operators are managing risks to their own licences.

## **Forthcoming research**

- NLC Youth tracker survey (November, 2014)
- RGT's machine research (December, 2014)
- Scottish Health Survey results (December, 2014)
- Omnibus – perceptions and participation (January, 2015)

## Annex A – full citations

Abarbanel & Philander (2014) Determinants of Internet Poker Adoption. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. Vol 30 (3) pp. 609–623.

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Auer et al. (2014) Is "pop-up" messaging in online slot machine gambling effective as a responsible gambling strategy?" *Journal of Gambling Issues*. Issue 29.

Blaszczynski et al (2014) The interaction between gambling activities and modes of access: a comparison of internet-only, land-based only, and mixed-mode gamblers. *Addictive Behaviors*. Vol 41 pp. 34-40.

Balodis et al (2014) Adolescent Alcohol-Drinking Frequency and Problem-Gambling Severity: Adolescent Perceptions Regarding Problem-Gambling Prevention and Parental/Adult Behaviors and Attitudes.

Cartmill et al. (2014) The Role of Anxiety and Dissociation in Young Australian Gamblers. *Journal of Gambling Studies*.

Delfabbro et al. (2014) Attitudes toward gambling among adolescents. *International Gambling Studies*.

Dowling et al. (2014) Problem gambling subtypes based on psychological distress, alcohol abuse and impulsivity. *Addictive Behaviors*. Epub ahead of publication.

Dowling et al. (2014) The impacts of problem gambling on concerned significant others accessing web-based counselling.

Gambling participation: activities and mode of access (2014). Prepared for the Gambling Commission by ICM Research.

Griffiths & Wood (2014) Understanding Positive Play: an exploration of playing experiences and responsible gambling practices. *Journal of Gambling Studies*.

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Miers (2014) Inside information, horseracing and betting integrity in Great Britain. *Gaming Law Review and Economics*. Vol 18 (6) pp. 527-539.