



***Participation in gambling and rates of  
problem gambling – England 2015***  
***September 2017***

**GAMBLING  
COMMISSION**

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## Headline findings

The headline findings in this report indicate key statistics on participation in gambling and the prevalence of problem gambling in England during 2015:

**62.2%**

Percentage of people who have spent money on at least one gambling activity in the past 12 months

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**45.1%**

Percentage of people who had played on at least one gambling activity in the past 12 months, excluding those who had *only played the National Lottery draw*

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**0.9%**

Proportion of respondents who were identified as problem gamblers  
According to **either** the PGSI or the DSM-IV

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**3.9%**

Proportion of respondents who were identified as low or moderate risk gamblers  
According to the PGSI

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## Preface

### The Gambling Commission

The Gambling Commission was set up under the Gambling Act 2005 to regulate commercial gambling in Great Britain in partnership with licensing authorities. We also regulate the National Lottery under the National Lottery etc. Act 1993.

Further details can be found on our website <http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/home.aspx>

### The Health Survey for England (HSE)

Until 2010, gambling behaviour was monitored through the British Gambling Prevalence Survey (BGPS), with studies conducted in 1999, 2007 and 2010. In 2010 the decision was taken to include questions about gambling participation and the experience of gambling problems in various national health surveys instead of commissioning a fourth BGPS study. Survey questions were first included in the HSE in 2012 and subsequently in 2015. The HSE 2015 also feeds into our Combined Health Survey 2015 alongside data from the Scottish Health Survey 2015 and the Wales Omnibus Survey 2015. The Combined Health Survey 2015 can be accessed at <http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/PDF/survey-data/Gambling-behaviour-in-Great-Britain-2015.pdf>

### Methodology

The HSE monitors trends in the nation's health and health related behaviours. Information is collected about adults aged 16 and over, and children aged 0 to 15, who live in private households in England. The data collection methodology consists of an interview, followed up by a visit from a nurse to take a number of samples and measurements.

As with previous HSE surveys, the methodology for 2015 involved using a stratified, random probability sample designed to represent the population living in private households in England.

The sampling frame used was the small user Postcode Address File (PAF). The small proportion of households (less than 1%) living in addresses not on the PAF (those living in institutions such as care homes) were outside the scope of the project. The sample consisted of 9,372 addresses selected at random from 579 postcode sectors. The achieved sample size for 2015 was 8,034 adults aged 16 and over.

### Problem gambling screening instruments

#### DSM-IV

The DSM-IV screening instrument is based on criteria from the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-IV). This contains ten diagnostic criteria ranging from 'chasing losses' to 'committing a crime to fund gambling'. The DSM-IV criteria constitute a tool created for diagnosis by clinicians of pathological gambling, and were not intended for use as a screening instrument among the general population. Therefore, there is no recommended questionnaire version of the DSM-IV. An adapted version of the DSM-IV to use in a survey setting was developed for the BGPS series and was subject to a rigorous development and testing process, including cognitive testing and piloting. Each DSM-IV item is assessed on a four-point scale, ranging from 'never' to 'very often'. Responses to each item can either be dichotomised to show whether a person meets the criteria or not, or allocated a score and a total score produced (The PGSI uses this latter method, see below). The BGPS series used the dichotomous scoring method and it is this method that is presented in this chapter. A total score between zero and ten is possible. The scoring of each of the DSM-IV items is described in Appendix A.

Among clinicians, a diagnosis of pathological gambling is made if a person meets five out of the ten criteria. Many surveys, when adapting the DSM-IV criteria into a screening instrument for use within a general population survey, have included a further category of 'problem gambler' for those who meet at least three of the DSM-IV criteria. This approach was adopted for the BGPS series and is replicated here.

## **PGSI**

The PGSI was developed by Ferris and Wynne over a three-year period. It was specifically developed for use among the general population rather than within a clinical context. It was developed, tested and validated within a general population survey of over 3,000 Canadian residents. The instrument itself has been subject to critical evaluation and was revised in 2003.

The PGSI consists of nine items ranging from 'chasing losses' to 'gambling causing health problems' to 'feeling guilty about gambling'. Each item is assessed on a four-point scale: never, sometimes, most of the time, almost always. Responses to each item are given the following scores: never = zero; sometimes = one; most of the time = two; almost always = three. When scores to each item are summed, a total score ranging from zero to 27 is possible. A PGSI score of eight or more represents a problem gambler. This is the threshold recommended by the developers of the PGSI and the threshold used in this report. The PGSI was also developed to give further information on sub-threshold problem gamblers. PGSI scores between three and seven are indicative of 'moderate risk' gambling and a score of one or two is indicative of 'low risk' gambling.

## **Reporting**

Figures included in the report relate to 2015 only, but where possible comparisons to 2012 have been made where a change is statistically significant. As the detailed dataset for 2015 is not yet available to us, we cannot accurately compare all of the trends in the data between 2012 and 2015.

The term 'significant' throughout the report refers to statistical significance (at the 95% level) and any significant changes have been verified by NatCen.

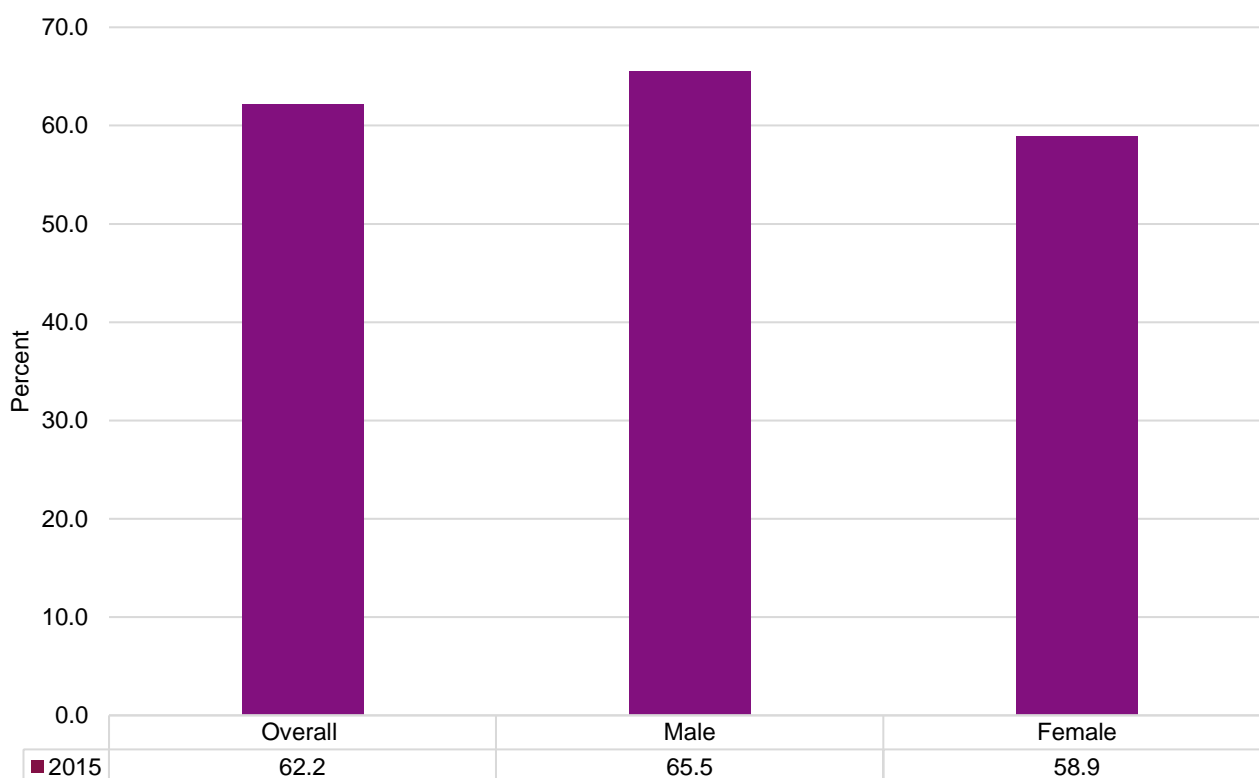
## Statistics

### Participation

This section reports on gambling participation in England in 2015.

In 2015, the overall gambling participation rate in England was 62.2%. For men, the rate was 65.5% and for women the rate was 58.9%.

**Figure 1: Overall gambling participation by sex (2015)**



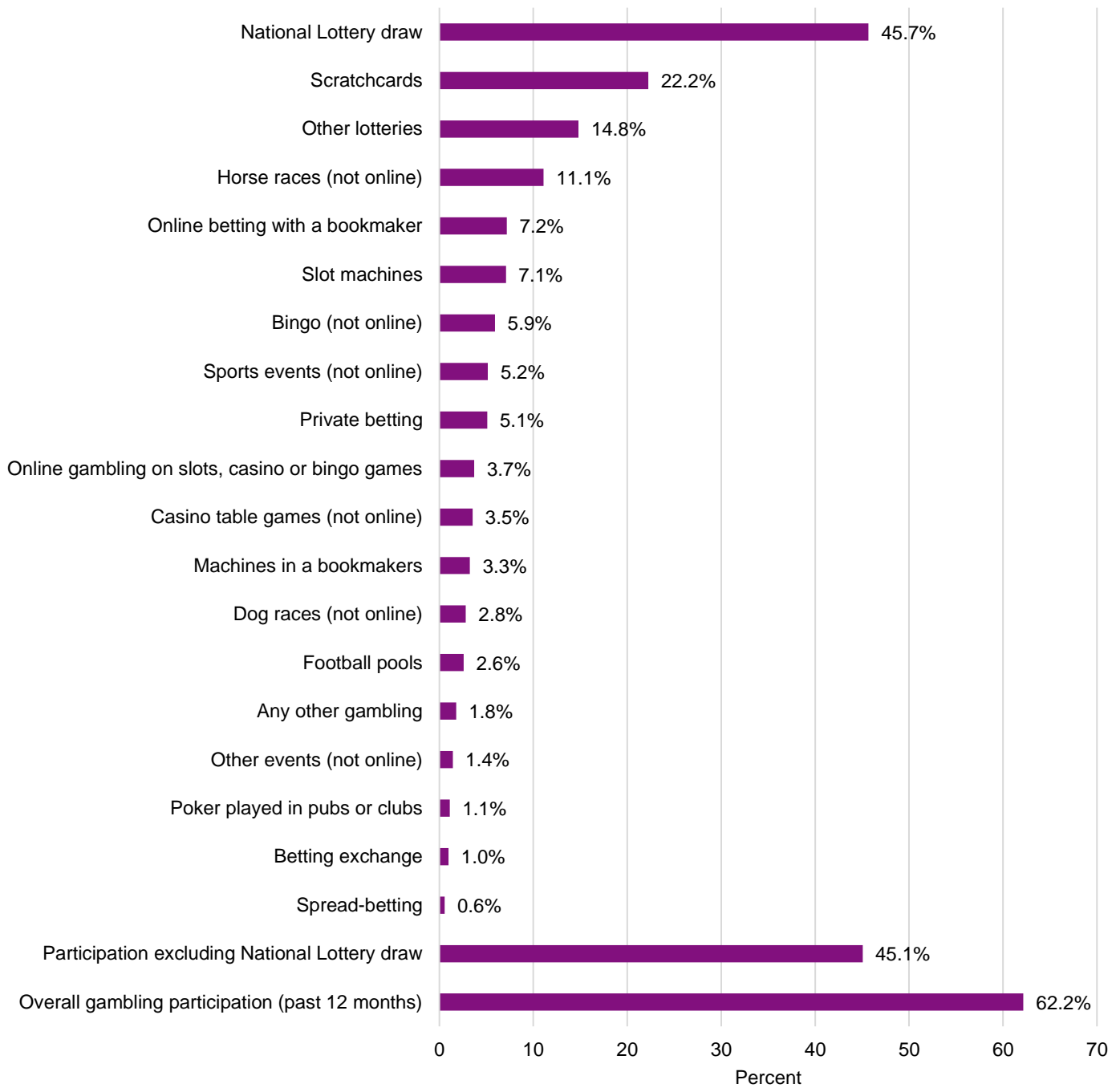
When respondents who have only played the National Lottery draws are excluded, the overall gambling participation rate in 2015 was 45.1%, a significant increase since 2012 (42.0%).

The online gambling or betting rate (excluding National Lottery) was 9.4%, a significant increase since 2012 (6.6%)<sup>1</sup>.

Based on observed data, the National Lottery draws were by far the most popular form of gambling in England with participation at 45.7%. The next most popular gambling products were Scratchcards (22.2%) and other lotteries (14.8%).

<sup>1</sup> This is lower than was reported by the Commission in their quarterly participation data, where participation in online gambling in Great Britain was 18%. However, it is important to note that this data was collected under a different methodology, during a telephone survey during which respondents from across Great Britain were asked about their *past four week* participation.

**Figure 2: Gambling participation by product (2015)<sup>2</sup>**



Based on observed data, overall participation in any form of gambling activity was most common among those aged 35-44 (67.1%) and least common among those aged 75 and over (53.9%) and those aged 16-24 (53.7%). However, when those who have only participated in the National Lottery draws are excluded, gambling participation is highest among 25-34 year olds (56.3%), followed by 16-24 year olds (50.5%). Those in the middle age groups had the highest participation for the National Lottery and other lotteries were most commonly played by those in the upper age groups.

<sup>2</sup> Respondents give multiple responses where they participate in more than one activity

Table 1: Gambling participation by age (2015)

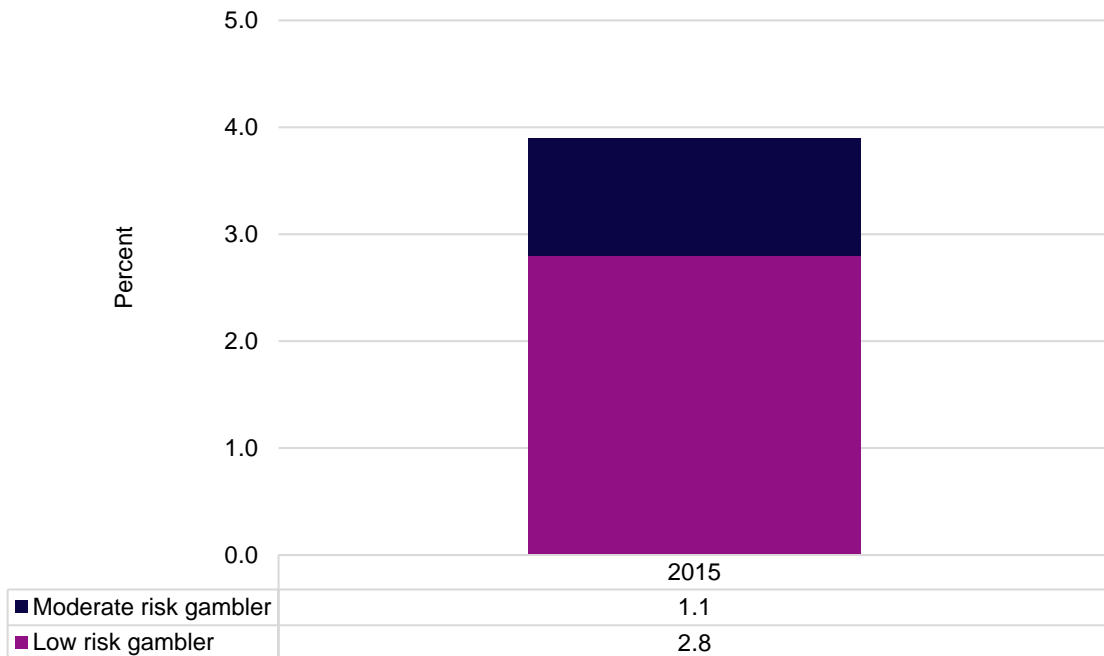
Gambling activity	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
<b>Lotteries and related products</b>							
National Lottery draw	21.4	45.4	52.5	54.6	54.0	46.9	38.0
Scratchcards	34.9	34.7	26.4	18.2	12.7	11.2	8.7
Other lotteries	6.2	12.1	14.0	16.1	17.5	21.9	18.8
<b>Machines/games</b>							
Football pools	8.7	3.1	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.1	1.0
Bingo (not online)	8.4	7.9	5.8	4.6	3.0	4.9	7.0
Slot machines	11.8	12.6	9.0	5.6	3.2	1.9	1.7
Machines in a bookmakers	8.4	6.9	3.1	1.5	0.4	0.3	0.6
Casino table games (not online)	6.7	8.2	2.7	2.2	1.3	0.8	0.9
Poker played in pubs or clubs	1.8	2.3	1.5	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.1
Online gambling on slots, casino or bingo games	6.2	6.9	4.5	3.0	1.9	1.1	0.3
<b>Betting activities</b>							
Online betting with a bookmaker	9.3	14.7	8.8	6.7	3.2	2.2	0.7
Betting exchange	2.4	1.4	1.6	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1
Horse races (not online)	11.7	14.1	12.9	11.0	10.0	8.3	6.7
Dog races (not online)	3.7	3.6	3.9	3.6	1.6	0.9	0.9
Sports events (not online)	9.4	8.9	5.0	4.8	2.8	1.8	0.7
Other events (not online)	2.8	1.9	1.4	1.2	1.1	0.7	0.2
Spread-betting	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.1
Private betting	10.4	8.9	4.4	3.6	2.2	1.9	2.3
<b>Other gambling activity</b>							
Any other gambling	3.1	2.5	1.6	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.6
<b>Summary</b>							
<i>Any gambling activity</i>	53.7	65.1	67.1	64.8	64.5	60.5	53.9
<i>Any gambling (excluding National Lottery draw only)</i>	50.5	56.3	48.3	43.2	37.2	37.2	36.0
<i>Any online gambling (excluding National Lottery draw only)</i>	13.2	18.4	11.0	8.5	4.6	3.0	0.8



## At-risk gambling

3.9% of all respondents were identified as low or moderate risk gamblers in 2015.

**Figure 3: Prevalence of at-risk gambling (2015)**



**Table 2: Prevalence of at-risk gambling (according to PGSI) by age and sex (2015)<sup>3</sup>**

PGSI status	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+
<b>All respondents</b>							
Non gambler / non problem gambler	92.1	91.8	95.3	96.4	97.4	98.3	99.5
Low risk gambler	5.2	5.1	3.2	1.8	1.8	1.0	0.3
Moderate risk gambler	1.9	2.1	0.7	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.2
Problem gambler	0.8	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.2	0.2	-
<b>Men</b>							
Non gambler / non problem gambler	87.9	88.4	92.3	94.5	96.4	97.3	98.9
Low risk gambler	8.7	7.4	5.0	2.6	2.3	1.3	0.6
Moderate risk gambler	1.9	2.3	1.5	1.5	1.1	0.9	0.6
Problem gambler	1.5	1.9	1.2	1.4	0.2	0.5	-
<b>Women</b>							
Non gambler / non problem gambler	96.3	95.1	98.4	98.3	98.3	99.3	100.0
Low risk gambler	1.6	2.9	1.4	1.1	1.3	0.7	-
Moderate risk gambler	1.9	1.8	-	0.5	0.3	-	-
Problem gambler	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	-	-

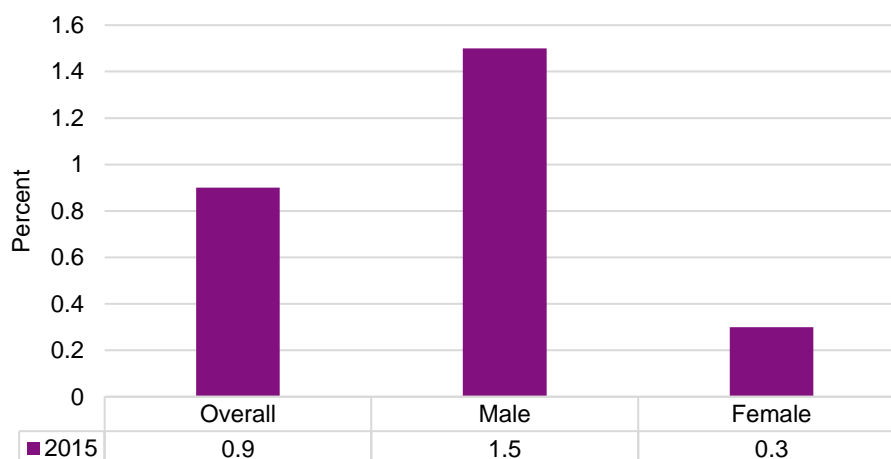
Observed rates showed that those aged 25-34 and 16-24, were most likely to be identified as at low or moderate risk according to the PGSI screen (7.2% and 7.1% respectively). This is particularly so amongst men aged 16-24, where the overall rate of at-risk gambling was 10.6%. Amongst women rates of at-risk gambling were highest amongst those aged 25-34 at 4.7%.

<sup>3</sup> Reporting conventions:  
 '-' No observations (zero values)

## Problem gambling

In 2015, 0.9% of those surveyed were classified as problem gamblers using either the PGSI or the DSM-IV screening instruments. The problem gambling rate for men was 1.5%, and the rate for women was 0.3%.

**Figure 5: Prevalence of problem gambling (2015)**



Across all age and gender groups, rates of problem gambling were observed to be highest amongst males aged 25-34 years (2.3%), followed by males aged 45-54 (2.1%).

Amongst women, the age group with the highest prevalence of problem gambling was 25-34 year olds (0.8%).

**Table 3: Prevalence of problem gambling (according to either the DSM-IV or PGSI screens) by age and sex (2015)<sup>45</sup>**

DSM-IV and PGSI scores	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	Total
<b>All respondents</b>								
Non-problem gambler according to <b>either DSM-IV or PGSI</b>	98.9	98.5	99.1	98.8	99.4	99.7	99.9	<b>99.1</b>
Problem gambler according to <b>either DSM-IV or PGSI</b>	1.1	1.5	0.9	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.1	<b>0.9</b>
<b>Men</b>								
Non-problem gambler according to <b>either DSM-IV or PGSI</b>	98.1	97.7	98.5	97.9	99.0	99.3	99.8	<b>98.5</b>
Problem gambler according to <b>either DSM-IV or PGSI</b>	1.9	2.3	1.5	2.1	1.0	0.7	0.2	<b>1.5</b>
<b>Women</b>								
Non-problem gambler according to <b>either DSM-IV or PGSI</b>	99.8	99.2	99.7	99.7	99.9	100.0	100.0	<b>99.7</b>
Problem gambler according to <b>either DSM-IV or PGSI</b>	0.2	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.1	-	-	<b>0.3</b>

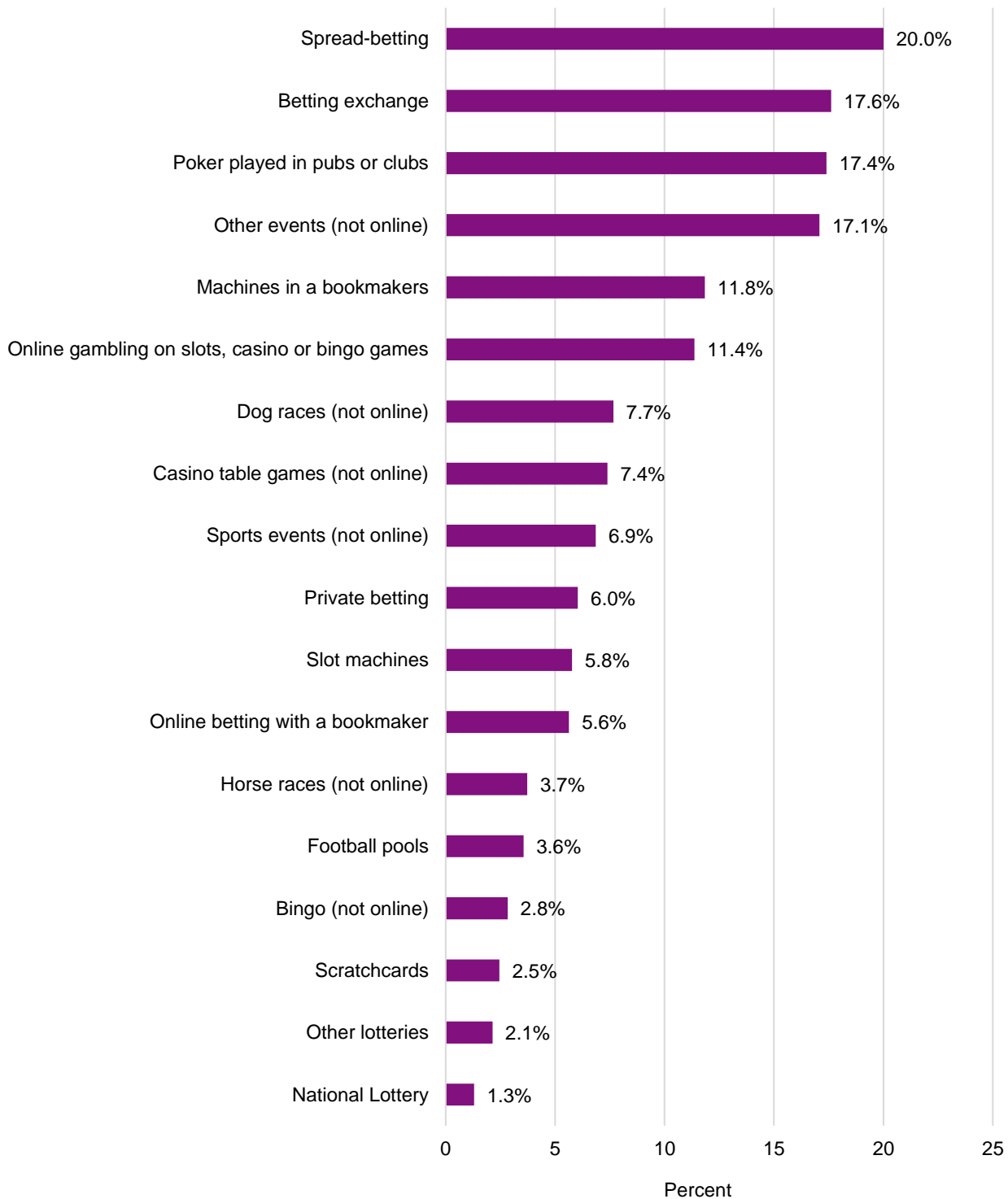
Of those that have gambled on an activity in the past 12 months, the products with the highest rates of problem gambling in 2015 were spread betting (20.0%<sup>6</sup>), betting via a betting exchange (17.6%), playing poker (17.4%) and betting on other events not online (17.1%).

<sup>4</sup> Problem gambling status has been defined according to **either** the DSM-IV **or** the PGSI. As there are many different ways to measure problem gambling in population based surveys, surveys measuring problem gambling in Britain have tended to include to include two different instruments, as they capture a slightly different range of people and problems.

<sup>5</sup> Reporting conventions:

'-' No observations (zero values)

<sup>6</sup> Caution should be taken due to small sample size

**Figure 6: Problem gambling rates by activity amongst past year gamblers (2015)**

## Appendix A: Survey questions

## EVERYONE PLEASE ANSWER

**Q19** Have you spent any money on any of the following activities **in the last 12 months?**  
Please tick **ONE box** for each activity

	<b>Tick ONE box</b>	
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Tickets for the National Lottery Draw, including Thunderball and Euromillions and tickets bought online	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 01
Scratchcards (but not online or newspaper or magazine scratchcards)	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
Tickets for any <u>other</u> lottery, including charity lotteries	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
The football pools	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
Bingo cards or tickets, including playing at a bingo hall (not online)	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
Fruit or slot machines	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
Virtual gaming machines <u>in a bookmakers</u> to bet on virtual roulette, poker, blackjack or other games	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
Table games (roulette, cards or dice) <u>in a casino</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02
Playing poker in a pub tournament/ league or at a club	<input type="checkbox"/> 01	<input type="checkbox"/> 02

Online gambling like playing poker, bingo, instant win/scratchcard games, slot machine style games or casino games <u>for money</u>	01	02
Online betting <u>with a bookmaker</u> on any event or sport	01	02
<b>Betting exchange</b> <i>This is where you lay or back bets against other people using a betting exchange. There is no bookmaker to determine the odds. This is sometimes called 'peer to peer' betting.</i>	01	02
Betting on <b>horse</b> races <u>in a bookmaker's, by phone or at the track</u>	01	02
Betting on <b>dog</b> races <u>in a bookmaker's, by phone or at the track</u>	01	02
Betting on <b>sports events</b> <u>in a bookmaker's, by phone or at the venue</u>	01	02
Betting on <b>other events</b> <u>in a bookmaker's, by phone or at the venue</u>	01	02
<b>Spread-betting</b> <i>In spread-betting you bet that the outcome of an event will be higher or lower than the bookmaker's prediction. The amount you win or lose depends on how right or wrong you are.</i>	01	02
Private betting, playing cards or games for money with friends, family or colleagues	01	02
Another form of gambling in the last 12 months	01	02

**IF YOU TICKED 'YES' FOR ANY OF THE ACTIVITIES AT Q19, PLEASE GO TO Q20  
OTHERWISE GO TO Q40.**

**Q20** Thinking about all the activities covered in the previous question would you say you spend money on these activities:

- Two or more times a week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week, more than once a month
- Once a month
- Every 2-3 months
- Once or twice a year

For the next set of questions about gambling, please indicate the extent to which each one has applied to you in the last 12 months.

**In the last 12 months...**

Tick **ONE** box

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<b>Every time I lost</b>	<b>Most of the time</b>	<b>Some of the time (less than half the time I lost)</b>	<b>Never</b>
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Q21 When you gamble, how often do you go back another day to win back money you lost?

1	2	3	4
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Tick **ONE** box for each question

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<b>Very often</b>	<b>Fairly often</b>	<b>Occasionally</b>	<b>Never</b>
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Q22 How often have you found yourself thinking about gambling (that is reliving past gambling experiences, planning the next time you will play, or thinking of ways to get money to gamble)?

1	2	3	4
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<p>Q23 Have you needed to gamble with more and more money to get the excitement you are looking for?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
<p>Q24 Have you felt restless or irritable when trying to cut down gambling?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
<p>Q25 Have you gambled to escape from problems or when you are feeling depressed, anxious or bad about yourself?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
<p>Q26 Have you lied to family, or others, to hide the extent of your gambling?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
<p>Q27 Have you made unsuccessful attempts to control, cut back or stop gambling?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
<p>Q28 Have you committed a crime in order to finance gambling or to pay gambling debts?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
<p>Q29 Have you risked or lost an important relationship, job, educational or work opportunity because of gambling?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>
<p>Q30 Have you asked others to provide money to help with a desperate financial situation caused by gambling?</p>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>

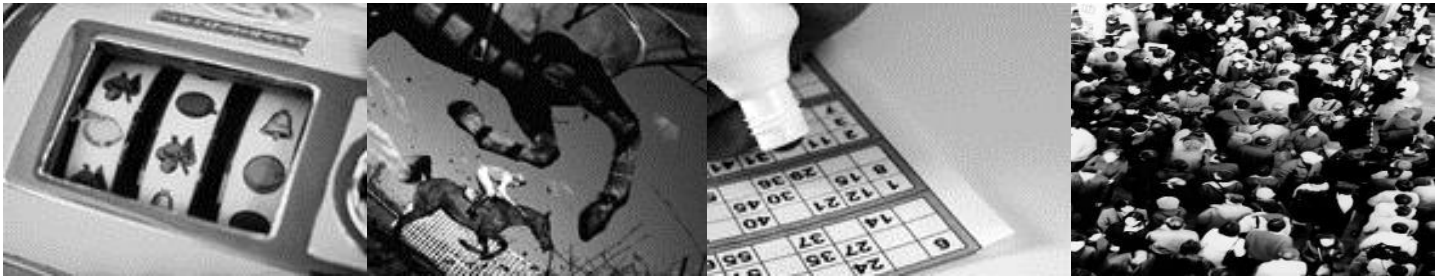
### In the past 12 months, how often...

Tick **ONE** box for each question

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		<b>Almost always</b>	<b>Most of the time</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
Q31	...have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q32	...have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same excitement?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q33	...have you gone back to try to win back the money you'd lost?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q34	...have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q35	...have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q36	...have you felt that gambling has caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q37	...have people criticised your betting, or told you that you have a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it is true?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q38	...have you felt your gambling has caused financial problems for you or your household?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Q39	...have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4





## *Keeping gambling fair and safe for all*

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)

Copies of this document are available in alternative formats on request.

Gambling Commission  
Victoria Square House  
Victoria Square  
Birmingham B2 4BP

**T** 0121 230 6666  
**F** 0121 230 6720  
**E** [info@gamblingcommission.gov.uk](mailto:info@gamblingcommission.gov.uk)

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