



National association for gambling care,
educational resources and training

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BRIEFING PAPER 2

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Prevalence

The key survey is the Gambling Commission's 2011 British Gambling Prevalence Survey, which built on the 2007 British Gambling Prevalence Survey and 1999 survey commissioned by GamCare.

Definitions used by the Gambling Commission:

"problem gambling" means gambling to a degree that compromises, disrupts or damages family, personal or recreational pursuits

"prevalence of problem gambling" means estimating the number of adults who at any one time meet these criteria. Two measures were used (DSM IV and PGSI screens¹)

Key findings:

- 73% of population (c35.5 million) had gambled within the past year (cf 68% 2007)
- Problem gambling prevalence using DSM IV was higher in 2010 (0.9%) than in 2007 and 1999 (0.6% for both years). This equates to around 451,000 adults aged 16 and over in Britain².
- Problem gambling is more prevalent among men and younger age groups; and significantly associated with being of Asian/Asian British or Black/Black British origin.
- Problem gambling prevalence rates observed in Great Britain were similar to rates observed in other European countries, notably Germany (0.6%), Norway (0.8%) and Switzerland (0.8%); lower than countries like the USA (3.5%), South Africa (1.4%) and Hong Kong (5.3%); and higher than Sweden (0.3%), Canada (0.5%) and New Zealand (0.4%).

Only 450,000 people - what's all the fuss?

- The Survey is a snapshot at a point in time - problem gambling is dynamic, with people moving in and out all the time
- Problem gambling affects partners, families and friends - if every gambler has an impact on 4 others (a conservative estimate) that means over 1.8 million people are affected
- Survey also found that a further 1.8% of the population - over 900,000 people - were at "moderate risk" of becoming problem gamblers, and 5.5% - over 2.7 million people - displayed some risk factors.
- Current best estimates suggest that less than 1% of those in need of treatment actually embark on a treatment programme
- Compares with c327,000 problem drug users in UK (British Crime Survey)
- It is estimated that every problem gambler represents an annual cost to society of c£8,000, so the total annual cost of 451,000 problem gamblers is c£3.6 billion

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¹ The DSM IV screen is based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (4th Edition). PGSI: Problem Gambling Severity index.

² The DSM IV increase was statistically significant. The PGSI screen reported an increase from 0.5% in 2007 to 0.7% in 2010, but this was not statistically significant.