
PRESS STATEMENT

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Gambling charity publishes gaming machine research

The Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) has today published the first phase of its research into gaming machines in Great Britain. The report is a first step in an ongoing research programme commissioned by the RGT in order to better understand how people behave when playing on those gaming machines offering the highest stakes and prizes, and what helps people to stay in control and play responsibly.

NatCen Social Research (NatCen), a leading social research institute, has undertaken unprecedented research by analysing data held by 13 industry operators representing 80% of the highest stakes and prizes gaming machines market.

The first report has found that the data held by the industry tells us a lot about transactional data and provides a solid basis for further study of the patterns around consumer behaviour when playing these gaming machines. The next step in the research programme, to be conducted by NatCen, will follow three strands:

- Exploring use of player account data in the licensed betting office and casino sectors
- Interrogating transactional level data and providing basic overviews of volume of play
- Exploring within session play and patterns of behaviour using proxy session data from LBOs

In addition, the RGT will commission concurrent primary research which will immediately examine areas of interest in the gaming machine research agenda, including evaluating harm minimisation approaches and exploring the impact of stakes, prizes, game speed, accessibility and game features. The RGT aims to produce outputs from these next steps by autumn 2014.

Marc Etches, Chief Executive, said:

"The nature of this research is unprecedented and this report is an important milestone in achieving a much better understanding of the way people behave when playing these machines.

"The systematic assessment of industry-held data for research marks a step-change in how government, regulator and industry working in collaboration will better understand and aim to mitigate harm among gaming machine players. This exercise was a necessary building-block for

gaming machine research to provide insight into player behaviour, possible harm mitigation and the most effective options for evidence-based regulatory policy.

"Delivering this feasibility study was a huge challenge and I am grateful for the co-operation of the industry and the professionalism of NatCen in delivering this research to such a high standard.

"We are very aware that there is a great deal of political and public interest in high stakes gaming machines. It is the ambition of the RGT to deliver robust research which equips both the government and industry to minimise gambling-related harm in Great Britain."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT) is a national charity committed to minimising problem gambling and gambling-related harm in Britain through effective education and prevention techniques. (www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk).
- The Gambling Commission, the Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT), and the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) published a Statement of Intent in August 2012 in which it set out arrangements for prioritising, commissioning, funding and evaluating the research, education and treatment elements of a national responsible gambling strategy. <http://www.responsiblegamblingtrust.org.uk/PDFs/statementofintent.pdf>
- The RGSB provides the Gambling Commission with an independent, unbiased, evidence-based national responsible gambling strategy. The RGT implement the priorities set out in that strategy once endorsed by the Commission. The Commission was established by statute to regulate gambling in Great Britain and the members of the RGSB are appointed by the Commission.
- In November 2012, the Responsible Gambling Trust launched a £500,000 research programme into Category B gaming machines to be conducted by NatCen Social Research (NatCen). NatCen previously undertook the Government's Gambling Prevalence Study.
- Category B gaming machines are those that offer the highest stakes and prizes in Britain. There is a lack of robust evidence about how people play on these machines and what helps people to stay in control and play responsibly. This will be the largest programme of independent research into gaming machines ever undertaken in Britain and offers a unique opportunity to provide high quality, empirically-sound and peer-reviewed research to inform future policy-making.
- In order to ensure that all research commissioned is entirely independent the Trust has put in place a 'triple-lock' process to be applied to further underpin stakeholder confidence in the quality, objectivity and independence of the gaming machine research programme:

- Internally, all research activity is wholly the responsibility of the Responsible Gambling Trust's Research Committee which is chaired by Liz Barclay, Senior Independent Trustee. The Research Committee consists of five trustees who are wholly independent of the gambling industry and two RGT staff members, including the Chief Executive Marc Etches. All 'industry' trustees, including our Chairman, are entirely excluded from directing or otherwise influencing any research activity that the Responsible Gambling Trust undertakes.
- The research contracts with NatCen are subject to termination by either party if there is any interference from any third party that seeks to undermine the independence and objectivity of the research (a 'whistle-blower' clause);
- A further panel of experts has been appointed to provide academic oversight of both the development and the implementation of the research programme. This expert panel - the Machine Research Oversight Panel - is independent of both the RGT and the industry, and is chaired by the Deputy Chair of the RGSB, Emeritus Professor David Miers. All aspects of the research programme will be transparent to the RGSB and the Gambling Commission. There will be a rigorous and entirely independent peer-review process for all research outputs before publication of all subsequent reports.