

# Veterans, Gambling, and Mental Health

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# Transition from active service to *Civvy Street*



There are an estimated 3 million Armed Forces veterans in the UK (The Royal British Legion Household Survey, 2014).

Up to 10% of ex-Service households (approx. 430,000 people) report not having enough money for daily living costs, and end up in debt (The Royal British, 2014).

During transition to civilian life, veterans may be vulnerable to high-risk behaviours, such as alcohol- and substance-abuse, and excessive gambling.

Disorders linked to excessive gambling, such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, and substance-use disorders are also common in veterans.

# International Prevalence of Problem Gambling in Armed Forces Veterans



4.2% deemed *at-risk or probable pathological gambling* (Whiting et al., 2016)

0.2% to 10.7% in treatment-seeking veterans (Edens & Rosenheck, 2012; Westermeyer et al., 2013)



17% of PTSD treatment-seeking veterans (Biddle et al., 2005)



Little is known about the nature and extent of gambling related problems among serving and ex-serving members of the UK Armed Forces ...

# The Need to Assess Gambling-related harm among Armed Forces Veterans

Recently, the Centre for Social Justice recommended commissioning research into the “prevalence and drivers of problem gambling with the UK Armed Forces and veterans community”.



The Responsible Gambling Strategy Board has bemoaned the absence of prevalence studies from “certain population groups more likely to be more vulnerable to harm” such as “armed forces personnel”.



Education, Prevention, Identification and Control (EPIC), who provide gambling assessment and treatment consultancy services to organisations, report that rates of problem gambling are growing among members of the armed forces.



The GambleAware strategy 2016-2021 identified need for more work with vulnerable groups such as the ex-military.

## GambleAware



# Veterans and Gambling Study

**First phase:** Secondary data analysis of an existing, large dataset (*Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey 2007*)

- Prevalence of gambling related problems in veterans and non-veterans.
  - Relations with length of service, prior trauma, and family support.
- **Second phase:** UK-wide prevalence survey of community-dwelling and treatment-seeking veterans
- Explore possible links with risky behaviours and the use of emergency financial services.
  - Type of gambling (betting shops, online, and smartphone apps, etc.)
- **Further phases:** Explore impact of coping with a hidden gambling problem on veterans' families; develop and test a pre-screening intervention to identify excessive gambling before or during deployment.

# Further details

Web: [dymondlab.org/veterans-and-gambling-study/](http://dymondlab.org/veterans-and-gambling-study/)

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