

# GambleAware

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## PRESS RELEASE

### Online gambling operators can spot customers at risk of problem gambling 'in-the-moment'

**London, 30 August:** New GambleAware research demonstrates that online gambling companies can use the data they hold on how customers play to identify those with gambling problems or at risk of developing problems. This means companies could act to help players change the way they gamble or get the help they need in a way that is tailored to their level of risk and type of behaviour. The research has been welcomed by remote operators as it will help their industry further develop best practice in customer protection.

The report, commissioned by GambleAware and completed by PwC, uses an internationally-recognised problem gambling assessment tool and data provided by four UK-facing gambling operators. Over 10,000 customers gave permission for their data to be used. In the data on gamblers' play, the research found indicators that, when considered collectively, are strong signs of potentially problematic gambling. They include:

- **Average number of bets per day** – non-problem gamblers typically bet between 2-7 times a day, whereas problem gamblers typically bet between 5-90 times a day;
- **Higher average value of bet placed** – non-problem gamblers typically bet just £14 on a day when they bet, whereas problem gamblers bet on average £98;
- **Time of day and week** – problem gamblers in the study were more likely to place bets between midnight and 4.00am, and to gamble throughout the week, rather than mainly on a Saturday, when non-problem gamblers do most of their gambling;
- **Deposits** – problem gamblers make more deposits, even after taking into account that they gamble more. The occurrence of a failed deposit was also a risk indicator;
- **Volatility** – problem gamblers in the study experienced high variation in the amount won and the amount lost, and extreme losses.

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**Chair:** Kate Lampard CBE

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**Chief Executive:** Marc Etches

The research identified distinct groups of gamblers based on the way they play and what they bet on. For example, distinction can be made between irregular stakes of variable sizes or regularly placing many bets of comparable size. This kind of segmentation makes detection of problematic gambling more accurate, as comparisons can be made to those with similar gambling styles, rather than to all gamblers.

The research also determined indicators of problem gambling based on how people are playing that day. This opens the possibility of immediate interventions 'in-the-moment', at the point a player is gambling in a risky way.

In addition to play habits, certain demographics such as age, gender, employment status and marital status are associated with problem gambling. Researchers trialled the application of these additional markers to create a preliminary assessment of risk. The report findings indicate that, if such information could be reliably sourced, such scores could be assigned at account creation, for example flagging young, unmarried, men who are not employed but are currently looking for work, as being at risk. More specific risk scores for a customer can be developed after as little as one week's betting, with much greater accuracy between three to six months, providing more effective targeting of interventions.

**Marc Etches, Chief Executive of GambleAware** said:

*"Almost everyone has a smartphone in their pocket these days, so we have access to gambling websites anytime, anywhere. We're pleased to see the remote gambling industry working together to explore effective ways to help identify problem gamblers and people at risk."*

*"In the next stage of the research project, we'll focus on testing designs and intervention methods for online sites. It's essential the necessary advice and protection are made available to those who need them, wherever and however they choose to gamble".*

**David Trunkfield, PwC Partner**, said:

*"Gambling organisations are sitting on a data mine of customer play habits, which if used responsibly and combined with the latest behavioural analytics techniques, can be used to help keep customers safe."*

*"The purpose of the research was to explore whether data already held by the industry can be used to identify problem gamblers in 'real time'. With customer data and behavioural gambling patterns, we believe a risk score can be calculated for all customers. This approach would enable the industry to tailor the most effective intervention for the individual, and minimise the risk of gambling-related harm going undetected."*

*"Emerging technologies can play a vital role in helping to solve important societal issues. Therefore we look forward to this being tested in a live operational"*

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*environment and working with the industry further to develop and test the most effective ways to help potentially at-risk players.”*

**Clive Hawkswood, Chief Executive, Remote Gambling Association,** said:

*“The remote gambling industry is committed to making sure there are suitable safeguards in place for all online gamblers and particularly those at most risk. The co-operation of our members made this research possible and its findings will provide a benchmark for current and future analytics systems to be measured against.*

*It demonstrates that we can spot those most at risk, based on the data we already have available to us and the challenge now is to disseminate best practice and have it implemented. However, identifying risky play is pointless if we cannot remedy it and so we’re keen to continue with the third stage of the project as soon as possible to evaluate the most effective forms of interaction with customers once their gambling has been assessed as potentially causing harm.”*

This research is the second stage of a three-part project. Stage three of the research includes live tests to determine the most effective ways of helping different groups of consumers. There will also be several workshops with operators to support the development of an industry-wide standard for identifying those at risk and taking action to protect them. Stage three of the project will report in early 2018.

**-ENDS-**

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**NOTES**

**About the research:**

- The report can be viewed [here](#).
- Data caveat: Journalists should note, as with all research, the data used in this report contains some biases, which mean it is not possible to read across from findings to the general population or even all gamblers. The large sample from operators is representative of a significant portion of the online gambling industry, which gives confidence that the indicators identified are robust indicators of risky play. However, there are some identified and unidentified biases in the sample which mean the precise figures (e.g. number of bets placed) should not be generalised to the population of gamblers as a whole.
- The research was commissioned by GambleAware and completed by PwC. This release is based on the results from phase two of the research. Phase one was published in April 2016 and can be viewed [here](#).
- For the phase 2 study, a survey was distributed to over 160,000 randomly selected UK-based customers from four large remote gambling operators, of which 10,635 responded and gave consent for access to their gambling data. The survey used the

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internationally-recognised Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) screen to classify gamblers into non-problem, low risk, moderate risk, and problem gamblers. Demographic and behavioural questions supplemented this, such as use of multiple online accounts and use of other gambling products (e.g. retail gaming machines).

- In phase 2 operator data and access to customers was provided by Bet365, Ladbrokes, Sky Betting & Gaming, and William Hill. To respect privacy of customer data and PGSI self-reported scores there was no identification of customer names or addresses at any stage of the research.
- The 10,000 respondents' transactional and account data were collected from the operators. This was unified into one consistent data set. Analysis identified which indicators in the data were associated with problem gambling, as identified by PGSI scores.
- The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) is a standardised measure of the risk of problem gambling.

#### **About GambleAware:**

- GambleAware is the leading charity in the UK committed to minimising gambling-related harm. As an independent national charity funded by donations from the gambling industry, GambleAware funds education, prevention and treatment services and commissions research to broaden public understanding of gambling-related harm. The aim is to stop people getting into problems with their gambling, and ensure that those that do develop problems receive fast and effective treatment and support. For more information, please go to: <http://about.gambleaware.org/>
- GambleAware aims to raise a minimum of £10 million each year in voluntary contributions from the gambling industry operating in Great Britain. This donation-based system was proposed under the Gambling Act 2005 and is prescribed by the Gambling Commission in its Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice.
- GambleAware's programme of treatment, education, harm prevention and research is guided by the National Responsible Gambling Strategy, which is defined by the independent Responsible Gambling Strategy Board (RGSB) and endorsed by the Gambling Commission. The RGSB, the Gambling Commission and GambleAware work together under the terms of an agreement in place since 2012: <http://about.gambleaware.org/media/1216/statementofintent.pdf>. Research is conducted under the terms of a 'Research Commissioning and Governance Procedure' agreed in 2016 by the RGSB, the Gambling Commission and GambleAware: <http://about.gambleaware.org/media/1270/research-commissioning-and-governance-procedure-may-2016-final.pdf>.
- The RGSB endorsed GambleAware's £10m funding goal in January 2017: <http://www.rgsb.org.uk/press-releases/responsible-gambling-strategy-board-publishes-assessment-of-the-quantum-of-funding-required-to-deliver-the-national-responsible-gambling-strategy.html>
- GambleAware funds the *Gordon Moody Association*, the *NHS National Problem Gambling Clinic*, *GamCare* and a network of charities across Great Britain to provide a full range of free treatment for problem gamblers and support for those affected by them. GambleAware also runs the website **BeGambleAware.org** which helps 2.7

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million visitors a year, and supports the **National Gambling Helpline – 0808 8020 133**.

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