

PRESS RELEASE

Research finds gambling is seen as part of everyday life for children, young people and vulnerable adults and recommends action is needed to reduce the risk of gambling harms

- Exposure to gambling advertising, including on social media, can have an impact on attitudes towards the prevalence and acceptability of gambling, and in turn the likelihood that a child, young person or vulnerable adult will gamble in the future.
- The attitudes and gambling behaviours of peers and parents are critical in shaping gambling activity; they were significantly associated with both a young person's exposure to brands and advertising, as well as with current gambling amongst those aged 11-24.
- In the report, researchers identified a number of recommendations, including the need for clearer safer gambling messages and campaigns; a requirement to improve education initiatives; a reduction in the appeal of gambling adverts to children and improved use of advertising technology, to minimise the exposure of such content to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

London, 27 March 2020: GambleAware has today published the findings of the research commissioned to examine the impact of gambling advertising and marketing on children, young people and vulnerable adults.

The programme of research was conducted by two separate consortia, led by Ipsos MORI and the Institute for Social Marketing at the University of Stirling. The synthesis of findings across the research was written by Ipsos MORI. The research shows that regular exposure to gambling promotions can change perceptions and associations of gambling over time for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Among those who don't currently gamble, exposure to gambling promotions was one of the most significant associations with whether someone was likely to gamble in the future. However, the attitudes of peers and carers was also critical when looking at whether an 11-24-year-old was a current gambler. The report reveals that if a child or young person has a close friend or carer who gambles, that individual is six times more likely to be a current gambler, than those without such a connection.

However, when specifically looking at exposure, researchers observed that almost all (96%) of the 11-24-year-old participants had been exposed to gambling marketing messages in the last month. Furthermore, participants in the qualitative research were shown snippets of gambling logos and when asked to identify them, correctly identified an average of eight out of ten.

By using an age classifier on Twitter, researchers also found clear evidence of children following and engaging with gambling related accounts. It was estimated that 41,000 UK followers of gambling-related accounts on the social media platform were likely to be under 16 and 6% of followers of 'traditional' gambling accounts were found to be children, a figure that increased to 17% when looking specifically at eSport gambling accounts.

Researchers concluded that the rise of new forms of gambling marketing through social media have increased the ways in which children, young people and vulnerable adults can engage with gambling brands, which in turn helps to establish brand loyalty. One of the recommendations from the report was that more could be done to work closely with social media platforms to improve age screening tools, before individuals are allowed to follow accounts that promote gambling.

However, when examining where children and young people came across gambling in the past month, TV remained the most common source of exposure:

- More than four out of five (85%) aged 11-24 reported seeing gambling advertising on TV (including national lottery adverts).
- 70% of children and young people noticed gambling adverts in betting shops on the high street, window displays as well as promotions on shop floors and near tills. However, those aged between 18 to 24 had higher exposure to gambling during sports events, on smartphone apps, through merchandise, gambling websites, emails and from word of mouth.

- Two-thirds (66%) reported seeing gambling promotions on their social media channels, that were most likely to be in the form of video adverts while watching clips on YouTube or ads appearing while scrolling through Facebook feeds.

Researchers identified a risk that some advertising may play on the susceptibilities of children, young people and vulnerable adults, particularly when their understanding of the risk of gambling may be poor. The appeal of a gambling promotions, for example ones that imply limited risk, or inflated suggestions of winning, may not always result in an immediate bet. Instead, these adverts were successful in eliciting a range of emotional and cognitive responses from children, young people and vulnerable adults. This therefore was likely to shape their attitudes and the likelihood as to whether or not they would consider gambling in the future.

Responding to the research findings, **Marc Etches, CEO of GambleAware, has said:**

“Gambling is an adult activity, but this new research conclusively shows that it has become part of everyday life for children and young people. This constant exposure to it through advertising and marketing, or via close friends and family, has the potential for serious long-term implications for children and young people. The exposure to gambling on social media suggests there is a clear need for social media companies to improve age screening tools and for gambling companies to make full use of existing ones, to help protect children from potential harmful exposure to gambling. We must always be mindful that gambling is a public health issue and it can have serious implications for people’s mental health. This report is an apt reminder for us to ensure that the next generation is made aware of the risks of gambling as well as the help and support that is available via the National Gambling Treatment Service.”

Researchers at Ipsos MORI identified a number of recommendations to help protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from experiencing gambling harms. These included:

- The need for clearer safer gambling messages and campaigns, to increase the awareness of risk of gambling to children and young people.
- Improving safer gambling education initiatives, that extend to parents, as well as children and young people.

- Reducing the appeal of gambling advertising, by addressing specific features that may appeal to children, for example the use of celebrities or humour, while also avoiding references to confusing financial incentives.
- Improved use of advertising technology and age screening tools, to minimise the exposure of such content to children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Steve Ginnis, Research Director at Ipsos MORI, has said:

“The research points to the ubiquitous nature of gambling advertising, beyond sports and beyond television; and further demonstrates that the impact of exposure goes beyond traditional selling techniques that elicit an immediate response. The evidence captured in this research suggests that there is value in taking further action to reduce exposure and appeal of gambling advertising, which in turn is likely to help mitigate against the plausible risk of gambling-related harms among children, young people and vulnerable adults. Our recommendations are intended to help stimulate collective discussion and action.”

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NOTES

About the research:

- The programme of research was carried out by two separate consortia:
 - Institute for Social Marketing, University of Stirling; ScotCen Social Research; University of Glasgow; and the University of Warwick
 - Ipsos MORI; Demos; Ebiquity; University of Bristol; and the University of Edinburgh
- The final report and the executive summary are available in full on the GambleAware website.
 - [Final report](#)
 - [Executive summary](#)

The two ScotCen reports from the research programme are also available online [here](#) and [here](#).

- It should be noted that the key findings, conclusions and recommendations synthesised in the final report represent the views of Ipsos MORI, and do not necessarily represent the views of all the authors who contributed to the research study.
- The research was commissioned by GambleAware in March 2018 and was made up of ten different strands, including media monitoring, analysis of paid-for online ads using avatars, social media analysis, and focus groups and in-depth interviews with children, young people and vulnerable adults.
- The objectives of the research were to:
 - Explore whether and how gambling marketing and advertising influences children and young people's attitudes towards gambling.
 - Examine the tone and content of gambling marketing and advertising across all media.
 - Identify specific themes and features of gambling advertising that children, young people and vulnerable people are particularly susceptible to.
- The interim findings of the research were published in July 2019. An executive summary of the research can be viewed online [here](#) and the full report is available [here](#).
- The primary survey of children and young people aged 11-24 was conducted by ScotCen. The mixed mode survey was conducted postal-online-telephone between 21st May 2019 to 13th September 2019. In total 1091 young people took part; data was weighted to be representative of those aged 11-24 in Britain.
- The social media analysis was conducted by the Centre for Analysis of Social Media at Demos. Demos collected and analysed:
 - 888,000 Tweets sent from 417 gambling related accounts over a nine-month period in 2018;
 - details of the 825,000 followers of these accounts located within the UK; and
 - a total of 1.6 million Tweets sent from the UK which mentioned one of the 417 gambling related accounts by name.
- Led by Ipsos MORI and ScotCen, a combination of focus groups and diary based in-depth interviews were conducted with children, young people and vulnerable adults. In total, 143 people took part in April 2018 and February 2019.

About GambleAware:

- GambleAware is an independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433) that champions a public health approach to preventing gambling harms – see <http://about.gambleaware.org/>

- GambleAware is a commissioner of integrated prevention, education and treatment services on a national scale, with over £40 million of grant funding under active management. In partnership with gambling treatment providers, GambleAware has spent several years methodically building structures for commissioning a coherent system of brief intervention and treatment services, with clearly defined care pathways and established referral routes to and from the NHS – a National Gambling Treatment Service.
- The National Gambling Treatment Service brings together a National Gambling Helpline and a network of locally-based providers across Great Britain that works with partner agencies and people with lived experience to design and deliver a system, which meets the needs of individuals. This system delivers a range of treatment services, including brief intervention, counselling (delivered either face-to-face or online), residential programmes and psychiatrist-led care.
- In the 12 months to 31 March 2019, provisional figures show that the National Gambling Treatment Service treated 10,000 people and this is projected to rise to 24,000 people a year by 2021. Helpline activity is currently running at about 30,000 calls and on-line chats per annum. GambleAware also runs the website BeGambleAware.org which helps 4.2 million visitors a year, and signposts to a wide range of support services.
- GambleAware produces public health campaigns including **Bet Regret**. A Safer Gambling Board, including representatives from Public Health England, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and GambleAware, is responsible for the design and delivery of a campaign based on best practice in public health education. The Bet Regret campaign is being funded through specific, additional donations to the charity, in line with a commitment given to the government by the broadcasting, advertising and gambling industries. See <https://about.gambleaware.org/prevention/safer-gambling-campaign/>