Gambling in children and young people in the UK
- an overview of the evidence

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Children and young people

Child: age 11-15 years
Young person: age 16-24 years

Adolescent: - transition stage from childhood to adulthood
- biological, psychological and social changes
- typical age 13-19 years
Vulnerability of children and young people

- cognitive immaturities: illusions of control over outcomes
- lack of development of executive function
- increased impulsivity and risk-taking behaviours
- susceptibility to family and peer influences
- messages from marketing campaigns
- exposure to videogames and internet from an early age
Gambling in children and young people: Recent evidence from the UK

- Young people and gambling: Gambling Commission October 2019
- Health Survey for England 2018: NHS Digital December 2019
- Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) June 2019
Prevalence of gambling in British children 2019

- Gambling in last year: 36%
- Gambling in last 7 days: 11% (13% boys 7% girls)

Gambling Commission 2019
Prevalence of gambling in children across Europe

Gambling in last year-
• Range 35% (Italy) to 79% (Iceland)

Problem and at risk gambling-
• Range 0.2% - 12%

Calado et al 2017
Patterns of gambling in British children

• Private bet for money 5%
• Fruit slot machines 4%
• Lottery/scratchcards 3%
• Online 3%

Gaming:
• 44% have paid money to open loot boxes
• 6% have bet with in-game items on websites outside of the game or privately (e.g. with friends).

Gambling Commission 2019
Problem gambling in children

• 1.7% classified as problem gamblers (DSM IV) (boys 2%; girls 0.7%)

• 2.7% as ‘at risk’ gamblers
NHS Digital - Gambling in last year

All respondents aged 16-24y: 39%

Males 16-24y: 45%

Females 16-24y: 33%
NHS Digital- Gambling online

![Bar chart showing percentages of online gambling by age group and gender.](chart.png)
NHS Digital- Problem Gambling

Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) scores for aged 16-24y:

Moderate risk (> 3 on PGSI)  
All: 1.2%  Males 1.9%

Problem gambling (>8 on PGSI):  
All: 1.0%  Males 1.9%
Young adult participants completed computer-administered gambling surveys in research clinics, online, and on paper. Sample sizes were 3757 at age 17 years, 4340 at 20 years, and 4345 at 24 years.

Data collected 2009-2018
Gambling activity in last year

54% of 17-year-olds
68% at 20 years
66% at 24 years
Regular and Problem gambling in young people

Regular gambling (weekly or more) - male bias
- 13% at 17 years → 18% at 20 years → 17% at 24 years

Problem/moderate risk gambling (> 3 on PGSI)
- 5.9% at 17 years → 6.5% at 20 years → 6.0% at 24 years
  OR = 7 (3-21) → OR = 43 (16-96)
Patterns of regular gambling in young people
Family associations of problem gambling in children and young people

• Parents with lower educational attainment

• Families with lower SES/previous financial difficulties

• Regular gambling by parents  
  Forrest & McHale 2018; Vachon et al 2004

• Less monitoring by parents  
  Lee et al 2014

• Present when their children are gambling  
  Gambling Commission 2019; Vachon et al 2004
Individual associations of problem gambling in children and young people

- Lower IQ at 8y
- Preferred playing videogames at 13y
- High hyperactivity scores on SDQ at 16y (Breyer 2009)
- External locus of control at 16y (Lloyd et al 2019)
- High sensation seeking scores at 15y (Nower et al 2004)
- Lower well-being scores at 17y (Report on ALSPAC Gambling Study 2019)
Correlations of problem gambling in young people: mental health and well being

- **Depression** at 24y: $1.41 (0.75, 2.63)
- **High social media use** at 24y: $4.28 (1.81, 10.13)
- **Involvement in crime** at 24y: $2.47 (1.54, 3.97)
- **Living independently** at 24y: $0.59 (0.38, 0.92)
Correlations of problem gambling in young people: other addictions

- Smoking tobacco daily at 24y 2.76 (1.71, 4.44)
- Problematic use of alcohol at 24y 2.51 (1.56, 4.03)
- Use of illicit (hard) drugs at 24y 6.64 (3.44, 12.84)
Conclusions 1

- Gambling is prevalent in young people - most gamble without any problem
- Internet gambling and in-game betting increasing, esp in males
- Gambling rates stable during childhood, but increase after age 16
- Regular gambling patterns established by age 20: 17% young adult males
Conclusions 2

• Problem/moderate risk gambling in 4-6% young adult males
• Problematic usage of drugs and alcohol
• Weak associations with low well being, depression, criminal behaviour
• Education, regulation, and treatment approaches are needed to protect vulnerable children and young people