

Past four week gambling participation

Briefing note, October 2016

1 Preface

- 1.1** On Tuesday 25 October we published new data relating to past four week gambling participation and rates of problem gambling for the year to September 2016, compiled from four quarterly surveys completed between October 2015 and September 2016.
- 1.2** The findings are broadly consistent with those published in the 2016 annual report in February 2016 and the previous quarterly data release in July.
- 1.3** There are however some methodological considerations to make when interpreting this quarter's data.
- 1.4** A number of changes were made to the methodology from March 2016 with the aim of improving the robustness and accuracy of the data. Data collected since these changes were introduced now makes up 75% of the latest data reported, and so these changes should be considered when using the figures presented. The changes made are as follows:
- 1.5** In March 2016 the data collection period was extended to last the full month, in order to increase response rates and to cover both weekends and weekdays - thereby minimising non-response bias. This has improved the accuracy of the method, however in some cases has resulted in capturing increased participation rates for certain activities.
- 1.6** In March 2016 two activities listed as part of the participation questions were expanded to provide more accurate data:
- 'Fruit or slot machines' was expanded to separate all possible locations, with new options added for pubs, gaming centres / arcades, casinos and bingo halls.
 - 'Sports betting' was expanded, with new options added for betting on football, betting on tennis, and betting on other sports.
- Participation will be reported by each location following a full year's data collection. In this publication the responses have been combined into the old categories.
- 1.7** In June 2016 a mobile boost was applied to the same to ensure a more representative split of landline and mobile-only households. We will continue to review the impact of this boost of participation rates as data collection continues.

2 Key findings

Participation

- 2.1** Overall past four week participation in the year to September 2016 is 47%. This is level with the year to September 2015, and also consistent with the figure published in the previous quarterly release.

- 2.2** Online gambling participation has increased from 14% in year to September 2015 to 16.5% in year to September 2016. This increase is particularly prominent in 16-24 year olds (likely driven by sports betting, particularly football), and respondents aged 45+ (also driven by betting on football, as well as participating in other lotteries online).
- 2.3** The most popular activity is still the National Lottery draws, with 31% of respondents participating in the past four weeks. This is still showing a decrease from 33% in year to September 2015, however when looking at the data from individual waves participation appears to have stabilised.
- 2.4** The latest data also shows increased in participation in the following activities:
- **Scratchcards** (12% in year to September 2016) – this increase has also been seen in the recently published Scottish Health Survey data and in the headline findings from the Commission’s Welsh Problem Gambling Survey.
 - **Fruit or slot machines** (4% in year to September 2016) and **sports betting** (6% in year to September 2016) – increases likely due to methodology changes explained in section 1.
 - **Private betting** (6% in year to September 2016) – as this increase is particularly prominent in younger ages we plan to explore this in more depth by adding an open comment option for respondents who state that they have bet privately so that we can find out what they are betting on.

Problem Gambling (according to the PGSI mini-screen)

- 2.5** The overall problem gambling rate for the year to September 2016 is 0.7%. This is an increase of 0.3% since year to September 2015, but is the same as the figure reported in the previous quarterly release.
- 2.6** It is important to note that these figures do not constitute the Commission’s headline problem gambling rate as this is collected via the much larger Health Surveys. Therefore the figures published in this release should be treated as indicative and with caution. We have prepared some lines for use when responding to queries from press or other stakeholders:

4 Lines for communications

- 4.1** *The latest data shows the overall problem gambling rate to be 0.7% - consistent with previous quarterly publications and the 2012 combined Health Surveys, in which the overall problem gambling rate was 0.6%. Whilst the quarterly data provides us with regular updates on problem gambling based on the short-form PGSI, it is important to note that these figures do not constitute the Commission’s headline problem gambling rates, as collected via the much larger and more robust Health Surveys which include the full PGSI and DSM-IV screens. Therefore the figures used should be treated as indicative and with caution.*
- 4.2** *We will continue to monitor the problem gambling rate for individual groups and validate this with the new Health Survey data to be published in early 2017. This is particularly so for the 16-24 age group where the problem gambling rate has increased from 0.8% in year to September 2013 to 1.4% in year to September 2016. However this rate is again consistent with the rate reported in the 2012 combined Health Surveys which was 1.4% for 16-24 year olds.*

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