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Quaker Action on Alcohol and Drugs

1. BACKGROUND

The Gambling Prevalence Study was published in February 2011. It was commissioned by the Gambling Commission, which regulates gambling in the UK, and carried out by the independent research group NatCen. It surveyed 7,756 people. The study showed that a rise in both gambling and problem gambling has taken place since 2007.

This is the first study to be undertaken since the Gambling Act of 2005 was implemented. A similar study was conducted in 2007, which showed relatively little change from the one prior to that (in 1999). Various provisions of the Gambling Act did not come into force until 1st September 2007, including television advertising of gambling.

2. KEY FINDINGS

- ☒ 73% of adults gambled in the past year, which is a rise from 68% in 2007, but not significantly different from 72% in 1999. 'Past week' gambling rates were 43%; not significantly changed since 2007.
- ☒ When those who only bet on the National Lottery are excluded, the past year figure is 56% (compared with 46% and 48% in 1999 and 2007) – a significant increase.
- ☒ 59% of people had gambled on the National Lottery in the past year, and 36% in the week prior to being surveyed (a little higher than in 2007, but much lower than the past week figure of 47% in 1999).
- ☒ The figures generally indicate a broadening of gambling activities from the previously very dominant position of the National Lottery.
- ☒ Men are still much more likely to gamble than women, (except on scratch-cards and bingo), and also to be problem gamblers. However, gambling amongst women has risen significantly, from 65% in 2007 to 71%.
- ☒ Gambling is higher among the middle age ranges than in younger or older age groups.
- ☒ One of the largest increases in gambling was in the buying of other lotteries tickets – often charity lotteries, (8% in 1999, 25% in 2010). Betting on events other than horse races or dog races with a bookmaker also rose, from 3% in 1999, to 9% in 2010. Other increases were in buying scratchcards (20% in 2007, 24% in 2010), and in gambling online on poker, bingo, casino and slot machine

style games also rose (3% in 2007, 5% in 2010). Gambling on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals also rose (3% in 2007, 4% in 2010).

- ☒ 81% of people gambled in person, and 19% had done so on-line, but only 2% gambled on-line only. Internet gambling rose slightly, by approximately 1% (from 6 to 7%, but the method of data collection was slightly different between surveys)
- ☒ The report considered regular gamblers (gambling more than once a month) in terms of how much time and money they spent. They devised three categories: high spend gamblers, high time, and gamblers who were both high-time and high-spend.
- ☒ Overall, 85% of regular gamblers were classified as not falling into any of the above categories; 6% were high-time/high-spend gamblers and 4% each were high-time and high-spend gamblers.
- ☒ 'High-spend only' gamblers had a varied socio-demographic profile. This group had the highest proportions of graduates (35%) and those in paid employment (70%). Compared with the other groups, they showed a relative preference for betting on sports events and horse races.
- ☒ The profile of 'high-time only' gamblers consisted disproportionately of those with poorer socio-economic indicators. For example, 7% were unemployed. (4 percentage points higher than unemployment rates observed for all regular gamblers (3%). After the National Lottery, bingo was the most popular activity among this group. This group also displayed a relative preference for playing poker at a pub/club.
- ☒ 'High-time/high-spend' gamblers, like high-time only gamblers, displayed the most adverse socio-economic profile. They were more likely to live in areas of greater deprivation, live in low income households and be unemployed. This group showed a relative preference for betting on horse races, fixed odds betting terminals and playing casino games.
- ☒ Attitudes to gambling are still generally more negative than positive, but less so than they were at the time of the last survey. People remain averse to prohibition.
- ☒ The Study did not survey minors, but the results indicated (as previous studies have done) that problem gamblers are more likely to have started gambling before the age of 15. (The UK is one of the few jurisdictions to allow minors to gamble, including on low prize slot machines).

3. FINDINGS IN RELATION TO PROBLEM GAMBLING

- ☒ Two screens were used to assess problem gambling - one that is usually used in clinical settings (the DSV-IV) and one which is more often used to screen general populations (the PGSI). The data from both screens has to be considered in relation to the (different) statistical confidence intervals for each method.
- ☒ **Percentages.** Using **DSM-IV** clinical screening questions, around **0.9%** of the population are problem gamblers, up from 0.6% in 2007. This **is** a statistically significant increase. (0.3% of females / 1.5% of males). Using **PGSI** population surveillance questions, around, **0.7%** are problem gamblers, up from 0.5%. This is **not** a statistically significant rise.

- ☒ **Numbers:** In 2007, the PGSI indicated that there were between 189,000 and 378,000 adult problem gamblers, and the DSM-IV indicated between 236,000 and 378,000. **The figures quoted as 2007 estimates were 236,000 problem gamblers according to the PGSI, and 284,000 according to the DSM-IV.**
- ☒ The 2010 figures equate to somewhere between 254,000 and 507,000 adults according to the PGSI, and between 342,000 and 593,000 adults according to the DSM-IV.
- ☒ **The 2010 figures indicate that in the UK there are now likely to be 360,000 problem gamblers according to the PGSI, and 451,000 according to the DSM-IV.**
- ☒ Associations were also found on the different screens with living in some of the more deprived areas, being unemployed, smoking, drinking more alcohol, and having poor health.
- ☒ Problem gamblers were more likely to be male, current cigarette smokers, and have parents who had experienced gambling problems. The DSM-IV indicated that problem gamblers were more likely to be aged 16-24 than 45 or over, and more likely to be Asian British, even though this ethnic group gambled less than average overall. According to the PGSI, problem gamblers were more likely to be in bad health and to be unemployed.
- ☒ Aside from those classed as problem gamblers, the report considers those who are 'at risk' of becoming so. On the PGSI screen, 7.3% were 'at risk', with most (5.5%) being 'low risk' gamblers. The general findings indicated similar associations to problem gamblers. However, moderate risk gambling was not associated with a lower household income, though low risk gambling was.

4. COMMENT

- ☒ Taken together, the two methods of data collection indicate a rise in problem gambling. **2007** study figures were often combined, and indicated that there were around **260,000** problem gamblers. Using the corresponding figure for **2010** indicates that there are now likely to be about **400,000 adult problem gamblers in the UK.**
- ☒ Addressing the numbers rather than the percentages indicates how many more people are likely to be suffering, and data suggests that those experiencing other forms of social or health disadvantage are likely to be disproportionately affected.
- ☒ It has been stressed that the increase of problem gambling on the DSM-IV is 'at the margins of statistical significance.' However, it **is** statistically significant, and a rise of this scale in a mere three/four years is extremely worrying, given that a seven/eight year gap between previous studies showed little change.
- ☒ The caveats state that it is not possible to tell at this stage whether this is a trend or a 'temporary fluctuation.' The significant change in regulation seems by far the most likely explanation for the rise, but this is being downplayed.
- ☒ At the time of the Gambling Act of 2005, it was stated that if problem gambling rose, corrective action would be considered. Although it is now a different administration, this needs to be followed through. Limiting the availability and accessibility of gambling by regulation is likely to lower rates, or at least keep them stable.
- ☒ The 2010 study shows FOBTs are one of the forms of gambling particularly played by high time/high spend gamblers.

- ☒ Since the Act was passed, the gambling industry has been allowed to expand the numbers of slot machines or increase the value of stakes and prizes on the basis of an economic case. By contrast, evidence about the risks of making gambling more available and accessible has been minimised. The Prevalence Study results should now underline the need for caution, particularly since parental problem gambling is a risk factor for children developing problems of their own.
- ☒ National Lottery gambling was dominant in 1999, but had fallen by 2007, when the general level of gambling also dropped. 2010 general figures are at roughly 1999 levels, but other forms of gambling have assumed a more varied position. The rise in problem gambling in 2010 may indicate that the National Lottery paved the way for 'harder' forms of gambling, with a consequent rise in problem rates.

QAAD is pressing for measures including:

- ☒ **Local Authorities to be given the power to refuse gambling licences** if they feel they have too many premises in their areas. This would give them the ability to limit concentrations of slot machines and FOBTs.
- ☒ **Funds for a directly comparable Prevalence Study** in 3-4 years' time to be agreed promptly, given that the rise in problem gambling may continue.
- ☒ Stricter **advertising controls**
- ☒ That the **proposals** to increase the stakes and availability of **B3 slot machines to be dropped**.
- ☒ **No further de-regulatory measures** until the next Prevalence Survey.
- ☒ **A limit on the proportion of gambling representatives** or former employees of gambling businesses on the various gambling advisory, regulatory, and research boards.
- ☒ **UK research into the proportions of profits that derived from problem gamblers, including an examination of the various forms of gambling.** A study by Williams and Wood, (2007) in Canada concluded that 36% of revenue derived from gamblers with some level of problem. The level varied with the gambling activity – it was 18% for lotteries, for example; for slot machines it was much higher - the authors concluded that as much as 61% of revenue in Ontario may come from problem gamblers.
- ☒ That the **industry be required to contribute** to research education and treatment with **funds that rise with problem gambling rates**.
- ☒ **Greater security of funding for treatment providers**
- ☒ **Data to be gathered from helping agencies** about which forms of gambling, if any, callers find most problematic (as is routine with drug and alcohol services).
- ☒ Problem gambling in the **new casino areas** to be particularly closely monitored, including thorough baseline studies.
- ☒ Problem gambling to be included on screening tools for offenders (OASYS and ASSET for adult and juveniles respectively) and for it to be addressed as a key indicator for children at risk and 'looked after' children.