



***“All I need are cigarettes
and bagatelle”***

or

**Is gambling *really* the new
tobacco...and what are the
consequences if it is?**

**European Association for the
Study of Gambling
Rome, September 2024**

The new tobacco?

“a public health approach to gambling focusing on prevention, early intervention and treatment. This approach is similar to how we tackle tobacco consumption or unhealthy food consumption, and would require cross-government support.”

Public Health England, 2021



Public Health
England

The new tobacco?

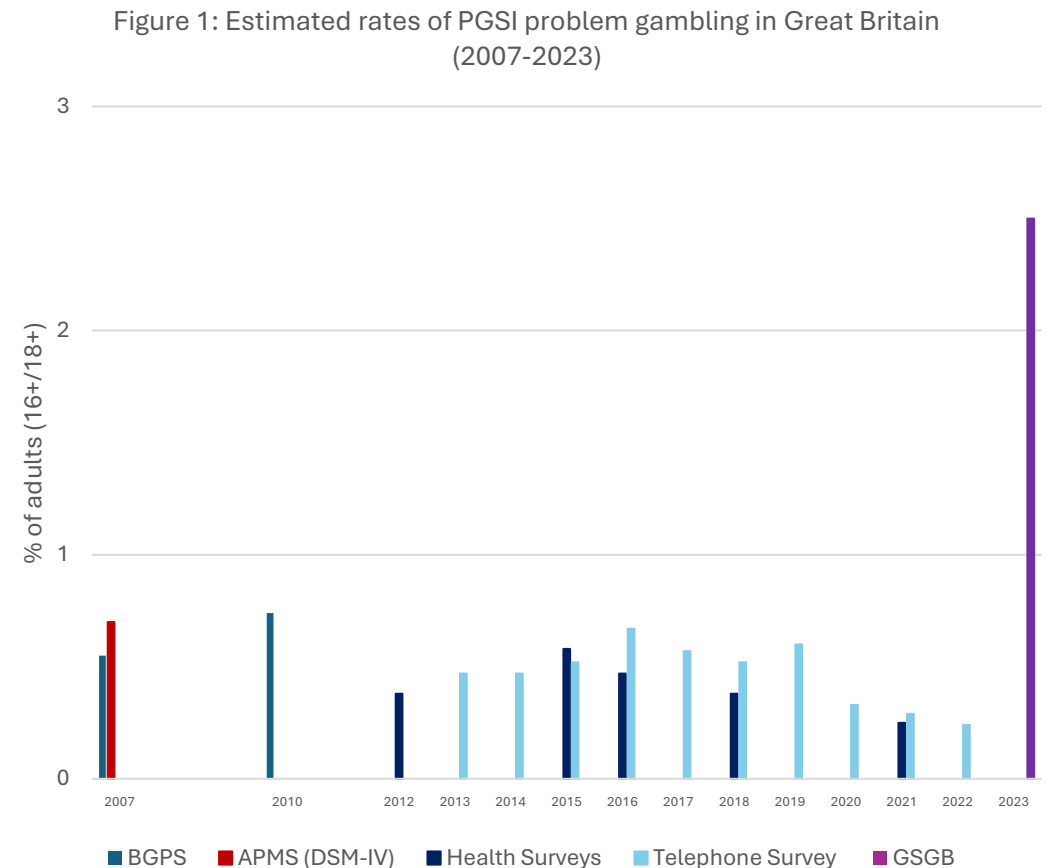
The view from the Old School

(arguments for the prohibition of tobacco use and how gambling has been perceived in the past)

Tobacco prohibition arguments	Gambling
High rates of addiction	✘
Inherently harmful	✘
Impacts on affected others	✔
Heavy costs to the state	?
No benefits/ negligible benefits	✘

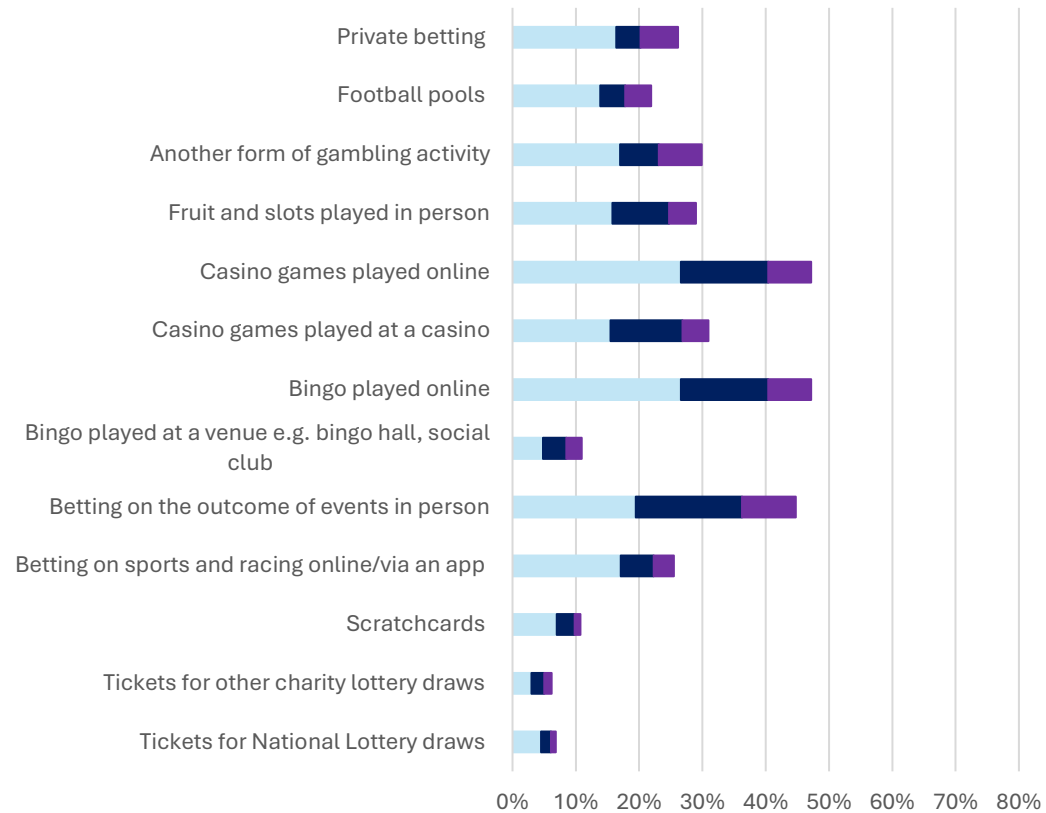
High rates of addiction?

- Changes to the way that prevalence data is collected is resulting in much higher reported rates of ‘problem gambling’
 - Ireland
 - Great Britain
 - North America
- Evidence of substantial over-reporting due to selection bias
 - Topic salience
 - Online data collection
- When is a prevalence survey not a prevalence survey?

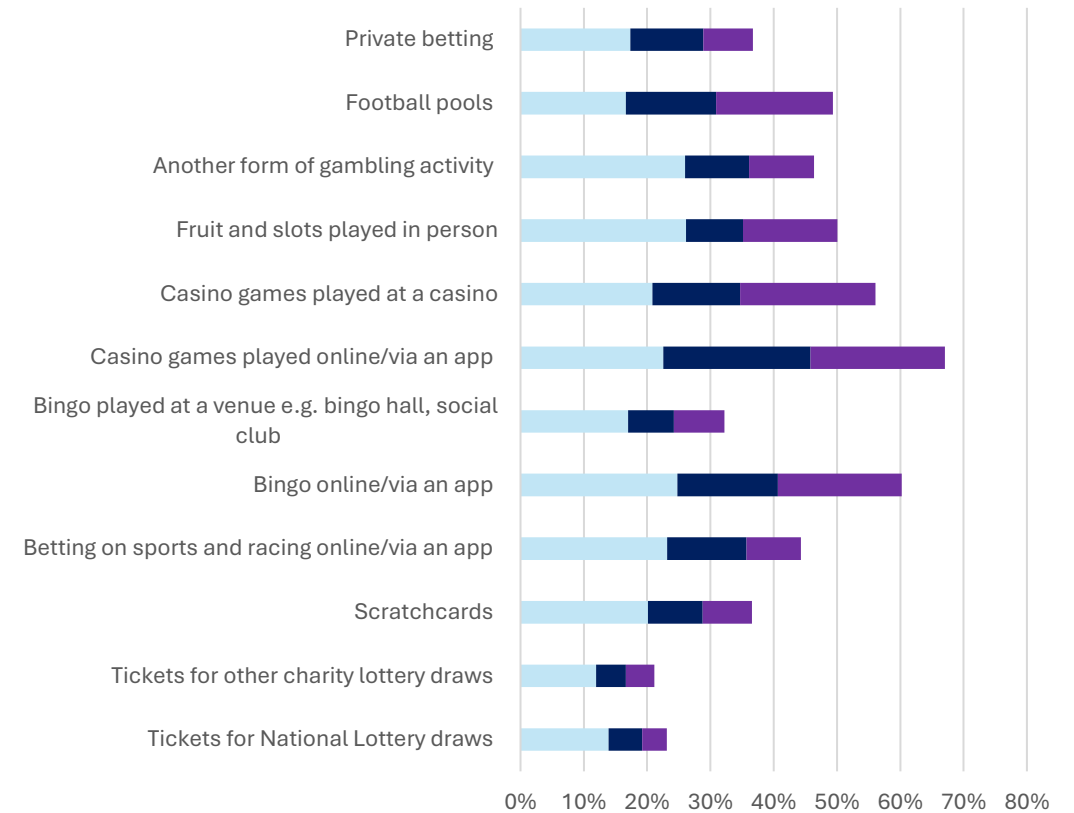


High rates of addiction?

Estimated rates of 'at risk' and 'problem' gambling (HSE 2018)



Estimated rates of 'at risk' and 'problem' gambling (GSGB 2023)



High prevalence of health harms?

- Shift in focus from ‘problem gambling’ to harm
 - An important perspective...
 - ...but should it be the only perspective?
- Significant issues in measurement
 - Definitions of harm
 - Importance of context
 - Gambling as a risk factor or causal factor?
 - Priming
- Practical significance of insights gained
 - Are we looking through the wrong end of the telescope?

For information on the use and misuse of the GSGB, please visit:
<https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/about-us/page/guidance-on-using-statistics-from-the-gambling-survey-for-great-britain>

Prevalence of harms <i>caused by gambling</i>	Gamblers	Affected others
Adverse consequences		
Reduce spending on everyday items		198,280
Used savings or borrowed money		
Experienced conflict or argument		
Feel isolated		
Lie to family		
Absent at work		
Borrowed money		
Experienced health problems		
Experienced embarrassment, guilt or shame		
Severe harms		
Lost something of financial value		
Experienced relationship breakdown		
Experienced violence or abuse		
Committed a crime		
Experienced a crime		
Used		
Men		
Food		
Relatic		
Gamblin		
Access to		
Problem gambler		
Moderate risk gambler		
Low risk gambler	4,300,000	n/a



Heavy cost to the state?

In recent years, numerous studies on the social and economic costs of gambling have been published...but what do they actually tell us?

- Costs in isolation
- Correlation ≠ cause
- Mathematical and statistical literacy

*“Even if a policy change had a relatively low proportionate effect on the consumption benefit and a relatively low proportionate effect on the economic and social cost, the absolute value of these two effects may nevertheless each be large. Therefore it is important that any regulatory policy proposal should incorporate **formal consideration** of both **the potential effect on consumption benefit** and **the potential effect on the harm from problem gambling.**”*

Forrest, 2013

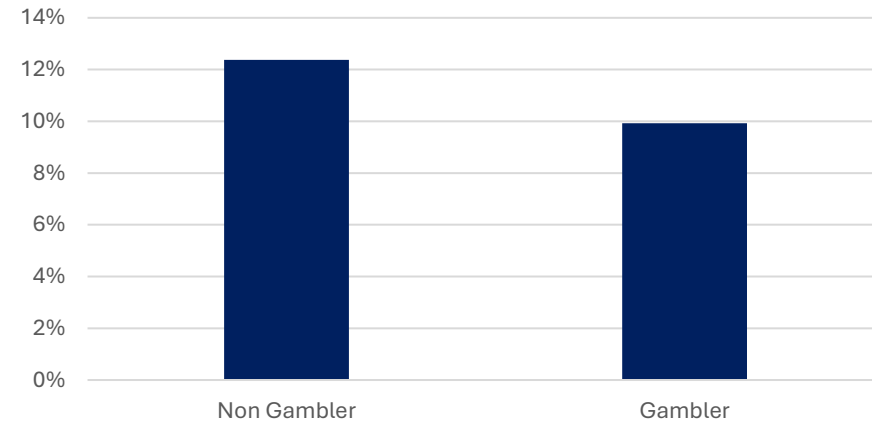
Year	Organisation	Cost estimate	Benefit estimate
2016	IPPR	£260m - £1,160m	N/a
2021	Public Health England	£1,270m	N/a
2023	Office for Health Improvement and Disparities	£1,050m - £1,770m	N/a
2023	NIESR	£1,400m	£3,500m

Cost estimates contingent on the official estimate of ‘problem gambling’ prevalence. Estimates therefore likely to increase substantially if GSGB figures are used.

Negligible benefits?

- Social rewards and community
- Mental stimulation and intellectual challenge
- Mood change
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Consumer surplus

Prevalence of probable depression - gamblers and non-gamblers (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale).
NHS/UK Data Service



*“A full economic evaluation of the gambling industry could be **slightly awkward politically** as it would fund work to identify the benefits of gambling but – to me – feels like the most balanced approach. **It’s likely that we would be critical of any industry-funded effort to estimate the benefits of the gambling industry.**”*

Gambling Commission, 2021

Consequences – towards prohibition?

Consumers

- Successive tightening of restrictions on consumers
- Discrimination and stigmatization
- Harms reduced...or increased?

Market operation

- Decreased visibility
- Increased costs

Researchers

- Diversity or narrowing of scope?
- Inclusion or exclusion (e.g. no platforming, black-listing)?

Public health's tobacco playbook

- *Operators' duties to rise each year above the rate of inflation*
- *Ban in-play betting on sports events*
- *Ban all gambling in venues where young or vulnerable people are present*
- *Universal ban on all gambling marketing, advertising, and promotions*
- *Ban sale and consumption of alcohol at land-based gambling venues*
- *All gambling products to have plain packaging*

Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022

“I’m gonna throw it back to you”

Questions

www.reguluspartners.com