

# **British Survey of Children, the National Lottery and Gambling 2008-09**

Report of a quantitative survey

July 2009

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# Summary

## Introduction

The 2008-09 British Survey of Children<sup>1</sup> and Gambling was carried out by Ipsos MORI's Social Research Institute and the Centre for the Study of Gambling at the University of Salford on behalf of the National Lottery Commission. The research consisted of a quantitative survey of nearly 9,000 children aged between 12<sup>2</sup> and 15 in England and Wales<sup>3</sup>. Children filled out self-completion questionnaires which captured information about their experiences of, and attitudes towards, gambling on a range of games. Questionnaires were administered via schools; overall a school-level response rate of 22% was achieved.

This research study uses the same methodology, and covers similar topics, as surveys conducted in 1997, 1999, 2000, and 2005-06.

Please note that throughout the report, reference is made to 'problem' and 'social' gamblers. Problem gambling, or pathological gambling, is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as 'persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behaviour that disrupts personal, family, or vocational pursuits', gambling that becomes a compulsion despite the negative consequences it causes. Social gambling is defined as, 'gambling which lasts for a limited amount of time with predetermined acceptable losses'. The survey uses the DSM-IV-MR-J screen to identify whether respondents who gamble are problem or social gamblers. Further details of this screen can be found in the Problem Gambling section below.

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<sup>1</sup>'Children' will be referred to throughout the course of this report, and for the purposes of this study were considered to be those aged 12 to 15 in full-time education. All children who took part were in school years 8 or 10 (S2 or S3 in Scotland).

<sup>2</sup> A small minority of participants stated their age as 11; this is likely to be pupils who were pushed up a year at school.

<sup>3</sup> In total 4,446 boys and 4,447 girls were interviewed; data have been weighted by gender and region to ensure results were representative on these variables.

## Key findings

### Rates of past week gambling

The proportion of children buying National Lottery tickets with their own money in the seven days preceding their interview has fallen significantly in recent years. In the current survey two percent had played Lotto in the past seven days – down from five percent in 2005-06 – and four percent had bought scratchcards (down from six percent in 2005-06).

In line with the decline in the proportion of children actually spending money on National Lottery games, the proportion of children trying to buy tickets is also on a downward trend: two percent of children attempted to buy National Lottery tickets in the past seven days, compared with five percent in 2005-06; and four percent tried to buy scratchcards, down from eight percent in 2005-06.

Rates of gambling on other commercial and non-commercial forms of gambling have also fallen over time. One fifth (21%) of children had gambled (on any type of game) in the past seven days, down from 26% in 2005-06. Most significantly, rates of playing slot machines – although still higher than other forms of gambling among children – have fallen sharply from 17% in 2005-06 to nine percent currently<sup>4</sup>. This fall coincides with the increasingly limited availability of these machines following the introduction of new legislation.

### Levels of problem gambling

Levels of problem gambling among young gamblers was assessed using a youth-adapted problem gambling screen (DSM-IV-MR-J). Rates of problem gambling have fallen since 2005-06<sup>5</sup>: 2% children were identified as problem

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<sup>4</sup> In 2008-09 we asked children to indicate whether they had played 'fruit machines' and 'other gambling machines' in the past seven days. In this report 'slot machine players' refers to children who ticked either or both 'fruit machines' and 'other gambling machines' categories. In previous surveys only 'fruit machines' were asked about. See section, Gambling in the past week, for more details.

<sup>5</sup> The way in which questions used for the problem gambler screen were asked – and the way they were scored – were modified slightly on the current survey. Previously, the DSM-IV-MR-J problem gambling screen related only to fruit machine and

gamblers compared with 3.5% in 2005-06. It is likely that this drop reflects falling levels of gambling among children over time, particularly on potentially more addictive forms of gambling such as slot machines.

### **Deterrents to purchasing National Lottery tickets or scratchcards**

When asked what would deter them from buying National Lottery tickets, a third (34%) of young gamblers say being asked to prove they were over 16 would be off-putting. However, among those who were refused when trying to buy a National Lottery ticket in the past seven days, 30% say they were refused once, 19% say they were refused twice, and 28% were refused more than twice<sup>6</sup>, suggesting that some children will persistently try to buy tickets, even if they are initially refused.

### **Where do children buy National Lottery tickets and scratchcards?**

Children are most likely to buy their National Lottery tickets and scratchcards at cornershops and newsagents (62% of those who had bought in the past seven days used these outlets, which equates to two percent of all children buying tickets in these outlets), while supermarkets and other retailers are used much less frequently, suggesting that regulatory focus on this type of outlet may be of greatest value in tackling underage play.

### **Awareness of gambling advertising**

More than three quarters (78%) of children recall recently seeing television adverts or internet pop-ups relating to the National Lottery and other gambling like poker, bingo and sports betting.

Those who had gambled in the past seven days (84% recall) and those who had played free gambling games online (82%) were more likely than average

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scratchcard play, while on the current survey it covered all forms of gambling a child had engaged in within the past 12 months. In past surveys, only those answering all elements of the screen were classified as a problem/social gambler, while in the current analysis anyone who scored sufficient points to be classified as a problem gambler has been classified (even if all elements of the screen were not completed). These changes, if they have any impact on results, are likely to *increase* the proportion of problem gamblers identified in the population and we are therefore confident that the drop in the proportion of problem gamblers over time is real and not due to modifications in the way the screen was administered.

<sup>6</sup> Another 23% could not remember how many times they had been refused.

(78%) to recall seeing gambling advertisements. Children who engaged in other illegal behaviours were also more likely than average to recall seeing gambling advertisements: for example, 82% who had taken illegal drugs and 83% who had played truant remembered these advertisements. The findings highlight the value of closely monitoring these types of advertisements to limit their potential appeal to underage players as far as possible.

### **Awareness of legal age limits**

Children were asked to name the legal age limit for buying National Lottery tickets, buying cigarettes, buying alcohol, driving and placing a bet in a betting shop. Children were less likely to know the correct age limit for buying National Lottery tickets than any other activity asked about<sup>7</sup>. Underage National Lottery players, and those identified as problem gamblers, were more likely than average to say they thought National Lottery tickets could legally be purchased by people under the age of 16<sup>8</sup>. The findings suggest that work to promote the legal age limit for buying National Lottery tickets would be of value generally, and that this may also help to further limit rates of underage gambling, as some underage players are potentially unaware that they are too young to purchase tickets legally.

### **Perceptions of parent's views**

Results across the survey indicate that parental influence and behaviour plays a key role in underage participation in gambling but that parents may be less likely to discuss gambling with their children than other potentially risky behaviours. For example, those who said their parents gambled were also more likely to gamble themselves (25%, compared with 12% of those who said their parents do not gamble). However, when asked to indicate how their parents would feel about children engaging in a number of potentially risky behaviours – such as smoking, taking drugs, drinking and gambling – children were less likely to know how their parents would feel about gambling on the

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<sup>7</sup> 47% correctly stated the National Lottery age limit, compared with 64% who stated the correct age for buying alcohol and 61% who knew the age limit for buying cigarettes

<sup>8</sup> Among those who had done any gambling, 12% gave an age younger than 16; among National Lottery and Scratchcard players 17% stated an age under 16; and 22% of problem gamblers gave an inaccurately young age.

National Lottery or fruit machines than other behaviours (23% and 20% respectively did not know what their parents would think, compared with five percent who were unaware of their parents' views on cigarettes).

### **Free practice online gambling games**

Despite high levels of internet use among children, relatively small numbers (one percent) had gambled with money online in the seven days preceding their interview. However, there is a strong relationship between playing free trial games online and 'offline' gambling. Regression analysis carried out by researchers at the University of Salford – which identified child characteristics that were associated with an increased probability of a child being a gambler or a problem gambler – revealed that playing free online gambling games in the past seven days was the single most important predictor of whether a child had gambled for money in the seven days preceding their interview, and one of the most important predictors of problem gambling among those who had gambled. The very high correlations might be interpreted as suggesting that it is not only the thrill of winning and losing money that makes a child gamble: those who are drawn to 'real' gambling are also attracted to 'pretend' gambling. The findings underline the importance of further research to investigate the relationship between playing trial games and real gambling, and the potential risks involved in children being able to access free trial games.

### **Characteristics of young gamblers**

There were some interesting differences in gambling behaviours by ethnic group which may warrant further research. The regression analysis showed that Asian children were no more likely than white and black children to gamble but Asian children who gambled were more likely to be problem gamblers<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> This finding was true even when propensity to lie was removed from the analysis – results on lying about gambling were not driving the increased likelihood of Asian children being classified as problem gamblers, and therefore the possibility that stricter parenting among Asian families accounts for this difference does not appear to explain the difference.

The regression modelling showed that where children live has a limited effect on their gambling behaviours: broadly, child gambling and problem gambling patterns were similar for children with similar characteristics attending similar types of school irrespective of region.

Statistical analysis identified a number of characteristics which are associated with significantly higher probabilities of children becoming gamblers and, among underage gamblers, higher probabilities of displaying problem gambling behaviours. The regression models had a high degree of explanatory power, and could potentially be useful in targeting groups of children most at risk of developing problem gambling behaviours; for example, children attending schools where high proportions of the school roll are eligible for free school meals are more likely than those children attending schools where no pupils are eligible for free school meals to become problem gamblers, if they are gamblers (see section Characteristics of young gamblers, and Appendix 5 for full details).

# Conclusions

The National Lottery Commission has commissioned several surveys to examine rates of child gambling in the past decade; the overall trends in youth participation revealed in these studies are encouraging. Not only are rates of seven-day gambling on the National Lottery on the decline but smaller proportions of children are *attempting* to buy National Lottery tickets and scratchcards. More generally, rates of gambling among children (on any type of game) are falling and, in line with this, the proportion of children classified as “problem gamblers” has also fallen significantly over the past ten years.

While some of the trends in participation over time are indicative, due to changes in the way questions were phrased across surveys, there appears to be a steady trend towards falling participation, as illustrated in the table below.

**Table 13: Indicative trends over time in attempted and actual purchasing of gambling tickets.**  
**Note: due to changes in question wording across waves of the survey, not all findings are strictly comparable (please see footnotes for details) and indicative comparisons are not always available**

	<i>Attempted to buy in preceding seven days<sup>10</sup></i>		<i>Actually spent money in preceding seven days on ...<sup>11</sup></i>			<i>Problem Gambler<sup>12</sup></i>
	<i>NL ticket</i>	<i>Scratchcard</i>	<i>Lotto</i>	<i>Scratchcard</i>	<i>Any gambling</i>	
1996-7	N/A	N/A	12%	8%	N/A	N/A
1999	N/A	N/A	11%	12%	N/A	N/A
2000	9%	8%	8%	9%	N/A	4.9%
2005-06	5%	8%	5%	6%	26%	3.5%
2007 YPO <sup>13</sup>	N/A	N/A	4%	3%	23%	N/A
2008 YPO <sup>14</sup>	N/A	N/A	5%	4%	20%	N/A
2008-09	2%	4%	2%	4%	21%	2%

<sup>10</sup> Wording has changed over time for this question. Most significantly, before 2008-09 children were asked about whether they had 'gone into a shop or supermarket' to try to buy tickets, whereas no location was specified on the current survey wording.

<sup>11</sup> Note that question took similar format from 2005-06 to 2008-09: children were shown a list of gambling games and asked to indicate which they had spent their money on in the past seven days. In 1996-2000 children were asked separately whether they had played the main National Lottery draw (with options for yes and no) and scratchcards. The format of the question is likely to have some impact on the higher participation figures in the earlier surveys.

<sup>12</sup> In 2008/09 problem gambler screen administered for all gambling games played in past 12 months; in 2000-2005-06 related to scratchcards and fruit machines only. Classification criteria also differed in 2008-09: all those scoring four or more points classified as problem gamblers, irrespective of whether full screen completed. In previous years, only those answering all nine component questions were classified.

<sup>13</sup> Young People Omnibus covered children in curriculum years 7-11. Results are based on students in curriculum years 8 and 10 only for comparability with current survey. (N=850)

<sup>14</sup> Young People Omnibus covered children in curriculum years 7-11. Results are based on students in curriculum years 8 and 10 only for comparability with current survey. (N=825)

There are several possible factors behind the fall in participation over time. The National Lottery Commission itself seeks to ensure that there are controls in place to protect against underage play. Camelot, for example, have a strategy to ensure that the design and promotion of National Lottery games do not encourage underage play. In addition, the licence requires the operator to conduct test purchases to ensure retail sales are not made to Under 16 year olds

Over time, these activities have reported increasing success: in 2008 Camelot made over 9,000 checks on retailers, and 93% refused to sell tickets to customers who looked underage<sup>15</sup>. More generally, changes in legislation to limit the availability of slot machines in non-gaming-specific venues (e.g. fish and chip shops) have coincided with a steep fall in the proportion of children reporting they have played these machines in the seven days prior to their interview. Taken together, these findings suggest that regulatory activity can play an effective role in tackling child gambling.

To some extent, falling participation on National Lottery products among children mirrors patterns observed among adults over the same period of time. For example, the British Gambling Prevalence Survey (BGPS) found that 47% adults had purchased tickets for the main National Lottery draw (Lotto) in the week preceding their interview in 1999; this fell to 33% in 2007<sup>16</sup>. Given the importance of parental influence in children's involvement in gambling, it seems likely that falling levels of interest in the National Lottery among adults have directly impacted on children's participation.

In a review of the youth gambling literature, May-Chahal et al. (2004)<sup>17</sup> found no evidence that youth gambling prevalence rates varied across jurisdictions according to regulatory practices. One possible reason for this is that, if denied easy access to commercial gambling, children may simply substitute

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.nfrnonline.com/cgi-bin/item.cgi?id=535>

<sup>16</sup>

<http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/UploadDocs/publications/Document/Prevalence%20Survey%20final.pdf>, Table 29, p. 34

<sup>17</sup> May-Chahal et al, *Young People and Gambling in Britain; Systematic and Critical Review of the Research Literature Relating to Gaming Machine, Lottery and Pools Coupon Practice by Children and Young People Under 18*, DCMS, London, Technical Paper No. 8, November 2004

gambling among themselves. However, the survey data show that, here, rates of participation in non-commercial forms of gambling (e.g. playing cards for money with friends) are also on the decline, suggesting that perhaps gambling has simply become less appealing to children.

While rates of participation in gambling are falling, the survey data indicates a high level of awareness of gambling among children. For example, 78% children recalled seeing an advertisement for gambling on television or the internet in the seven days preceding their interview. Open-ended data captured at the end of the survey also suggested that children are highly aware of gambling advertising: advertisements were spontaneously mentioned by children when they were asked what they thought about when they heard the word 'gambling', for example. Those who had gambled in the past seven days were slightly more likely than average to recall seeing these types of advertisements (82% compared with 78%). The findings highlight the value of continued vigilance in monitoring gambling advertisements to limit their potential appeal to children.

The survey results also indicate that education campaigns around the legal age for gambling, and the potential risks of gambling, may be of value. When asked to state the legal age limit for purchasing National Lottery tickets, cigarettes and alcohol, and for driving and placing a bet in a betting shop, children were less likely to give the correct age limit for the National Lottery than for any of these other activities. In total, just under half (47%) correctly stated the National Lottery age limit; this compared with 61% who correctly stated the legal age for buying cigarettes as 18, despite the fact that that cigarette purchasing limit has changed quite recently. Those who had actually played the National Lottery were more likely than average to state that the legal age limit was under 16. It is not implausible to think that some children may genuinely be unaware that the legal age limit is under 16 (particularly, for example, where they have played National Lottery games alongside parents) and education campaigns to educate children about the legal age limit may be useful in further reducing rates of child gambling.

In line with previous surveys, the research highlighted that parental influence can play a key role in children's gambling. Statistical regression modelling,

for example, showed that having parents who bet is associated with significantly higher probabilities of child gambling. However, when children were asked how their parents would feel about children their age taking part in a number of potentially risky behaviours, children were much less likely to know how their parents would feel about gambling than other activities such as smoking and drinking. The data suggests that parents are less likely to discuss gambling with their children than other issues.

While rates of participation are falling, it appears that children are fairly persistent in their attempts to buy National Lottery tickets. For example, the results indicated that, among those who had purchased a National Lottery ticket in the past seven days, an average of 2.3 attempts had been made to buy tickets. When asked what would deter them from buying tickets again in the future, the most frequently cited answer was being refused by the shopkeeper. The results suggest that continuing strict controls and checks on retailers will help to contain youth gambling.

Although small numbers of children had gambled online for money in the past seven days, the statistical regression analysis showed a strong relationship between children playing free trial games online and gambling offline. Playing free online gambling games in the past seven days was the single most important predictor of whether a child had gambled for money in the past seven days, and one of the most important predictors of problem gambling among those who had gambled. Although only small numbers of children have managed to gamble money online in the past seven days, the research findings suggest that further research to investigate the relationship between playing trial games and real gambling, and the potential risks involved in children being able to access free trial games, would be useful.

The regression models identified a number of characteristics that are statistically associated with higher probabilities of children gambling, and of child gamblers developing problem behaviours, some of which may warrant further exploration:

- Asian children were no more likely than white and black children to gamble; however, Asian children who gamble were more likely to be problem gamblers.
- Children living in households without siblings were more likely than those who lived with siblings both to gamble and to display problem gambling traits.
- Children with more pocket money or earning more income were much more likely to gamble and, if they did so, rather more likely to display problem gambling traits.
- Children attending schools with more deprived student populations were slightly less likely to gamble than those attending schools with more affluent student bodies, but, where they gambled, were much more likely to display problem gambling characteristics.
- The regression models, when used to forecast the probability of a child gambling and the probability that a child gambler would also be a problem gambler, generated very different forecasts for children with different profiles. This makes it feasible that results from the model could inform practical choices on whether youth workers should be particularly alert to gambling issues in respect of some of their clients and which groups of children (for example, those in deprived schools) might be most effectively targeted in terms of problem gambling education.
- The methods developed for the regression analysis could equally inform policy towards child drinking, smoking and drug-taking since this survey also collected information on children's habits in these areas.