

January 2026

Ending a Losing Streak

Public opinion on gambling,
addiction and regulation



**More in
Common**



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About More in Common

More in Common is a think tank and research agency working to bridge the gap between policy makers and the public by helping people in Westminster to understand those voters who feel ignored or overlooked by those in power. Our 'British Seven' segmentation provides a unique lens at understanding what the public thinks and why. We've published ground-breaking reports on a range of issues from climate and refugees to culture wars to crime. We are a full-service research agency offering quantitative and qualitative research and are members of the British Polling Council.

This research was conducted in the Summer and Autumn of 2025. Full methodological information can be found at the end of the report.

We are grateful to the Coalition to End Gambling Ads for funding this research. More in Common has retained full editorial control over this report.

The Seven Segments

This polling uses More in Common's new segmentation of the British public. Based on extended research into Britons' core beliefs, their values and behaviours, this segmentation allows us to look upstream not just at what different groups think, but why they think it. Going beyond a simple left-right spectrum, it reflects deeper differences in how people relate to authority, change, community and the future, which help explain why traditional party loyalties have weakened and political volatility has increased.

Segmentation is a particularly powerful way of detecting and understanding differences and commonality in people's values and in their broader orientation towards society and the big issues facing the country.

The analysis produces seven segments within the British population:

Progressive Activists – 12 per cent of the population

A highly engaged and globally-minded group driven by concerns about social justice. Politically active but feeling increasingly alienated from mainstream party politics, they prioritise issues such as climate change and international affairs. Occasionally outliers on social issues, they maintain a strongly held and sometimes uncompromising approach to their beliefs.

Incrementalist Left – 21 per cent of the population

A civic-minded, community-oriented group holding views which are generally left-of-centre but with an aversion to the extreme; they prefer gradual reform over revolutionary change. They trust experts and institutions yet are largely tuned out of day-to-day politics

and can be conflict-averse, stepping away from issues they see as particularly fraught or complex.

Established Liberals – 9 per cent of the population

A prosperous, confident segment who believe the system broadly works as it is and who trust experts to deliver continued progress. They have a strong belief in individual agency which can make them less empathetic to those who are struggling. Institutionally trusting, they maintain faith in democratic processes and have a strong information-centric way of engaging with issues.

Sceptical Scrollers – 10 per cent of the population

A digitally-native group whose unhappiness with the social contract means they have lost faith in traditional institutions and seek alternative sources of truth online. Often shaped by their experience of the Covid pandemic, they prefer individual influencers over mainstream media and are increasingly drawn to conspiratorial thinking.

Rooted Patriots – 20 per cent of the population

A patriotic but politically untethered group which feels abandoned and overlooked by political elites and yearns for leaders with common sense, but does not want to overthrow the system as a whole. They are particularly concerned about community decline and the pressures of migration. Interventionist on economics but conservative on social issues, they have shaped much of Britain's politics over the past decade.

Traditional Conservatives – 8 per cent of the population

Respectful of authority and tradition, Traditional Conservatives believe in individual responsibility and established norms that have served them well. Nostalgic for the past but optimistic about the future, they are deeply sceptical of many forces of change such as immigration or the path to net-zero.

Dissenting Disruptors – 20 per cent of the population

Frustrated with their circumstances and with an appetite for radical solutions, Dissenting Disruptors crave dramatic change and strong leadership. Highly distrustful of institutions, opposed to multiculturalism and feeling disconnected from society, they are drawn to political movements that promise to overhaul the status quo and put people like them first.

Foreword

More in Common's report provides a powerful account of the British Public's attitudes towards the gambling sector that will be invaluable in helping assess areas in need of gambling reform. The report shows that tougher regulation of the gambling sector would not only be uncontroversial but would carry strong public support from voters across the political spectrum.

The fact that more people would prefer an empty shop on their high street than a gambling shop should tell the government about how the public view the sector. People think that gambling harm is going to get worse, and that's from a deeply concerning baseline of 1.4 million Britons experiencing problem gambling and many millions more impacted directly and indirectly.

Public concern is particularly focused on children who are bombarded with gambling advertisements. It's unsurprising therefore that 68% of the public don't think children should see any gambling advertising at all.

Even those who gamble support a tougher stance on the industry, supporting moves to track expenditure and ensure limits on unaffordable losses. In fact, more gamblers want the sector to shrink than to grow. These findings directly contradict the gambling industry who tell us repeatedly that they represent the views of gamblers when they demand looser regulations.

It is worrying but unsurprising that public faith in the institutions that are supposed to protect us from the harms of gambling has been eroded. Only a third of the wider public have any trust in the Gambling Commission to properly regulate the sector.

It is a rare thing for a policy that will protect people from harm to also help deliver economic growth, cost the government nothing, and have popular public support. Gambling reform is one such policy – and it represents a big opportunity for government.

If we are to protect the next generation from gambling harm; we must act. I hope that the Department of Culture Media and Sport give this report the attention it deserves, move towards public opinion, and start to reform gambling in Britain for the better.

The Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith

Executive Summary

Gambling is everywhere in Britain. Betting shops can be found on every high street, adverts dominate TV and social media, and a range of mobile apps allow people to bet, spin and go all-in at any time and any place. While many Britons enjoy an occasional bet and see nothing wrong with gambling per se, the intensity of gambling promotion and its ubiquity in our lives is leading many Britons to worry about the effect it is having on their communities, families and children.

Certain groups are particularly at risk of gambling harms – regular and high stakes gambling is particularly common among young men, and problem gambling occurs at a higher rate among those who are struggling financially. The power of targeted advertising, both online and on TV, only exacerbates this risk. Being able to gamble online and on their phones has supercharged people's ability to lose large amounts of money quickly, and many Britons are seeing the negative consequences of this first hand. One in five say that they personally or someone close to them has been affected by problem gambling.

Britons tend to think that the nature of addiction means habitual gamblers lack self-control, and existing measures to combat problem gambling (such as self-banning from gambling venues) will never be enough to stop them causing harm to themselves and those around them. They also feel that the industry lacks the proper incentives to intervene and reduce gambling harms when they see them taking place.

The industry is already regulated by the Gambling Commission, with legally binding terms for their operating licences, code of practice and personal licence conditions. In broad terms these aim to prevent gambling harms by requiring training, age verification, time limits, self-exclusion schemes and the prohibition of the use of credit cards. But this research shows that the public does not think this goes far enough. In focus groups Britons explain they see reminders such as “when the fun stops, stop” as little more than token gestures and taglines from companies who are otherwise perfectly happy to take money from those suffering with addiction.

Because Britons believe problem gamblers are unable to self-moderate, and that the gambling industry will not effectively self-regulate, they instead see greater Government regulation as the only effective solution. That support for greater regulation spans the political spectrum. In particular, the three segments that were central to the current Government's election victory – Progressive Activists, the Incrementalist Left and Rooted Patriots – are the most supportive of stronger state intervention on gambling.

The public believe that there is an urgency around action on gambling regulation – not just because it is a public health concern in the here and now, but because they also worry that problem gambling will get more prevalent among future generations. Under-18s cannot legally gamble, but their digital habits mean they are exposed to gambling advertising to a

degree not possible twenty years ago. This research shows there is clear public demand for more to be done to reduce or eliminate the visibility of gambling for children and to address their concerns about future generations becoming hooked on gambling.

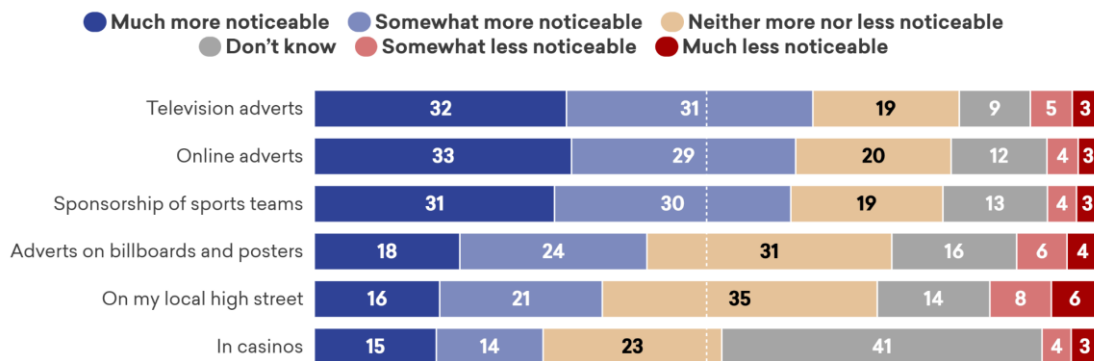
Britons are by no means puritans and are happy to see gambling enjoyed in moderation, and regard some forms of it to be harmless fun, but they also think the Government should be doing more to tackle its harms by stepping in and regulating to protect those most vulnerable, especially in the forms of gambling they perceive to be highest risk and most damaging. Britons generally think of gambling as a vice, no different to alcohol or tobacco. The government has a strong mandate to start treating it like one.

Chapter 1 | Attitudes to gambling

More noticeable than ever

From the high street to sports teams, to social media and advertising, the public say that gambling increasingly permeates many aspects of their lives. Some of this is highly visible (betting shops on the high street), and some is more subtle (the flash of a phone screen in a pub). [With industry yield growing nationally](#), Britons are taking notice.

In recent years, would you say that gambling has become more or less noticeable in the following areas:



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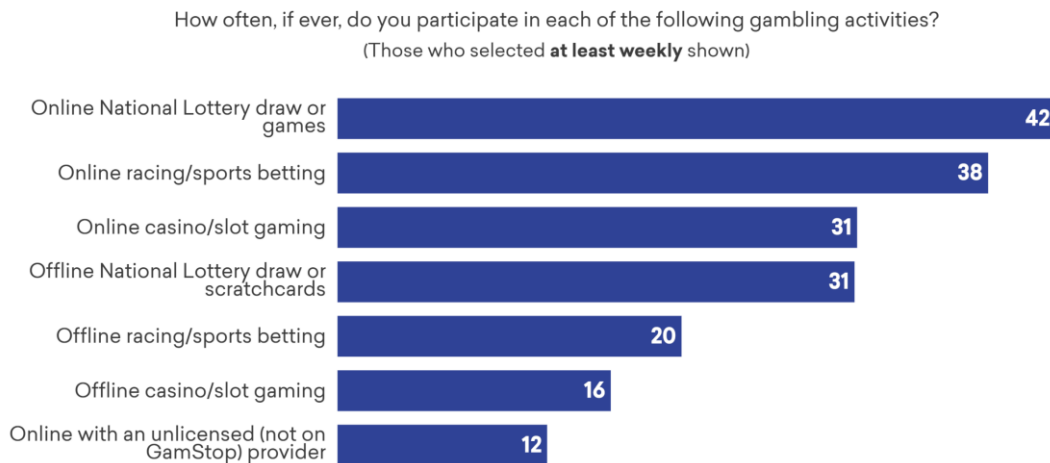
Almost two-thirds (63 per cent) of Britons say that they now see more gambling advertising on TV in recent years, with the same number saying they see more online adverts for gambling and more gambling advertising as sports team sponsors. Britons have noticed the visibility of the gambling industry across their towns, communities and clubs. In focus groups, Brits explain they now regularly come across gambling in parts of their lives they had never expected to see it – for example, when ordering a takeaway pizza.

You go to order a Domino's, and they offer you a free spin for a meal. Yeah, you just go and order a takeaway from Uber and it's a free spin for a free dessert or free something. There is gambling in everything that you do, and you don't realise.

Alison, Nurse, Clacton-on-Sea

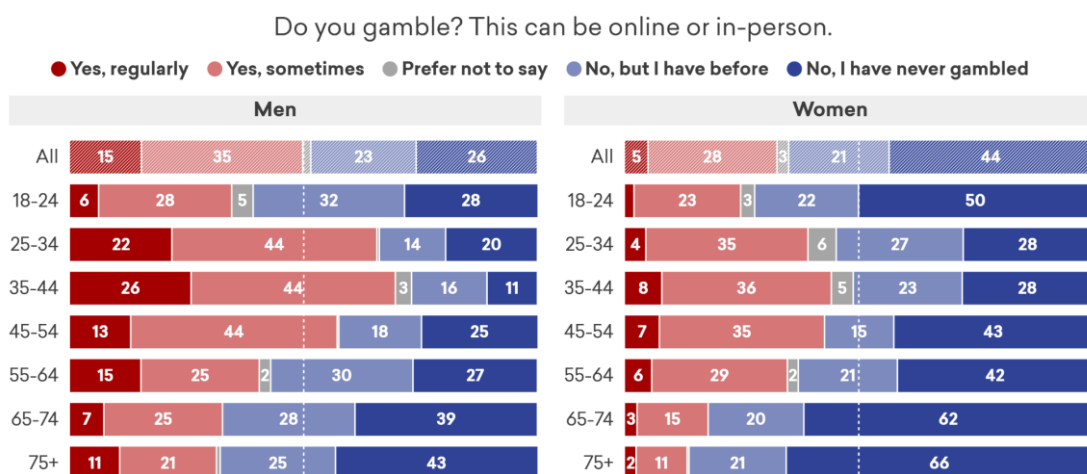
Many Britons gamble themselves – more than two in five Britons say that they gamble either sometimes or regularly. Of these, the National Lottery is the most popular form, with 42 per cent taking part at least weekly. Online sports betting is increasingly popular among British gamblers, with 38 per cent saying they put money on football or horse races at least once a week. A further 12 per cent of British gamblers say that they use unlicensed betting providers at least once per week.

How Britons gamble



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Question was asked to those who currently gamble

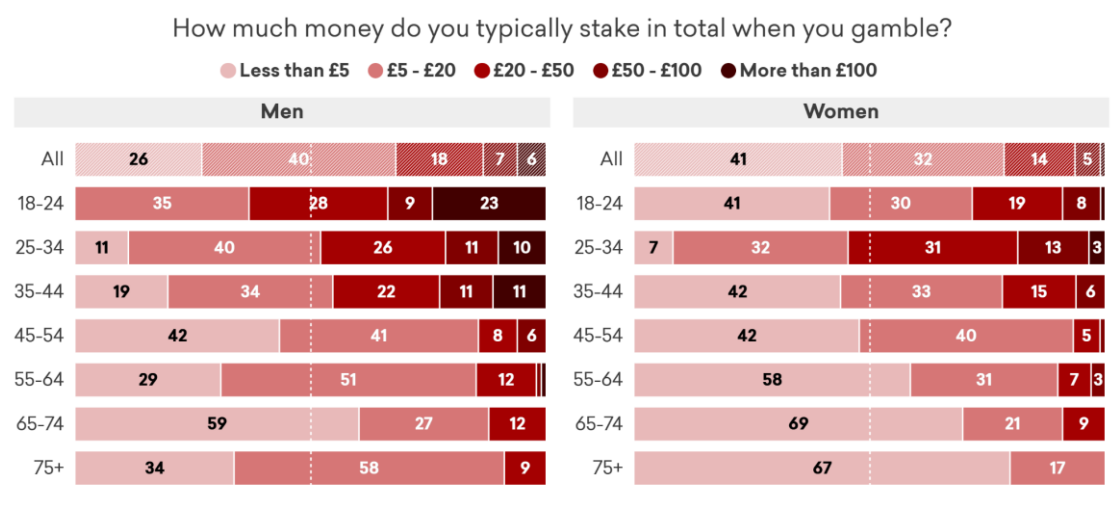
These rates of gambling are not evenly split across the population. Men are more likely to gamble than women, and the young are much more likely to gamble than the old. The group most likely to gamble are men aged 35-44, of whom 7 in 10 gamble 'sometimes' or 'regularly' with over a quarter of these men being regular gamblers. Young women are least likely to gamble regularly but one-fifth still gamble some of the time.



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Young men are not only more likely to gamble regularly, but they are also more likely to place larger wagers on those bets than the average Briton. High stakes gambling was also understood in focus groups to be particularly harmful; the public are far more worried about gamblers' ability to lose thousands of pounds on games such as slot machines, as opposed

to placing small bets on horse races or buying a lottery ticket. At the same time, women between the ages of 25-34 are far more likely to place higher value bets than older women. In focus groups, some describe this age group as a particularly high-risk time of life for addiction, as young people enter the work force and may have access to more disposable income for the first time.



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Question was asked to those who currently gamble

The public do not take a ‘one-size fits all’ approach; instead they see clear, qualitative differences between different forms of gambling, the frequency at which people take part, and the stakes which are placed. Most distinguish between what they consider to be a harmless game, and a dangerous and addictive activity. One such form of relatively inconsequential gambling is buying lottery tickets, which many are quick to defend. On the other hand, there are more damaging, and often lonely forms of gambling, that they are equally quick to call out.

In many cases, it is the context in which the gambling takes place which is important: whether it is people alone, spending money they don’t have; or whether it is convivial and low stakes, while in the company of others.

I think it's more the intent of it to be fair. I've got friends who gamble a lot with a drink. But I know people who have been down on their luck, trying to save their money for bills... and it's always saving that last little bit of hope that maybe you can turn your luck around. You go out to the corner shop and you buy a scratch card, but it's not affecting you, you're not using the money that you need for essentials or bills, et cetera.

Jason, Customer services, Wigan

You say “gambling” and people just assume that people are obsessed with it and have got a problem. But I’ll put the lottery on, I’ll do a scratch card, I’ll go to the races with my friends and put a few bets on, but then I just walk away.

Jen, Social worker, Wigan

Obviously different people have got different experiences. My dad would put hundreds, thousands of pounds down on a horse or card games and stuff. I couldn’t do that. I’d rather buy a new top. But the little amount that I spend I don’t have a problem with and I don’t see it as a problem. I don’t see it as a vice.

Natalie, Dance teacher, Clacton-on-Sea

Many Britons quickly make the distinction between how they see in-person and digital gambling as a clear fault line across the gambling sector. In-person gambling is seen as more strictly regulated, through both government laws and social convention. However, in conversation Britons often turn to their worries about the low barriers of entry to digital and mobile gambling, citing a lack of social connection, as well as regulation, on how often, when and where people can gamble.

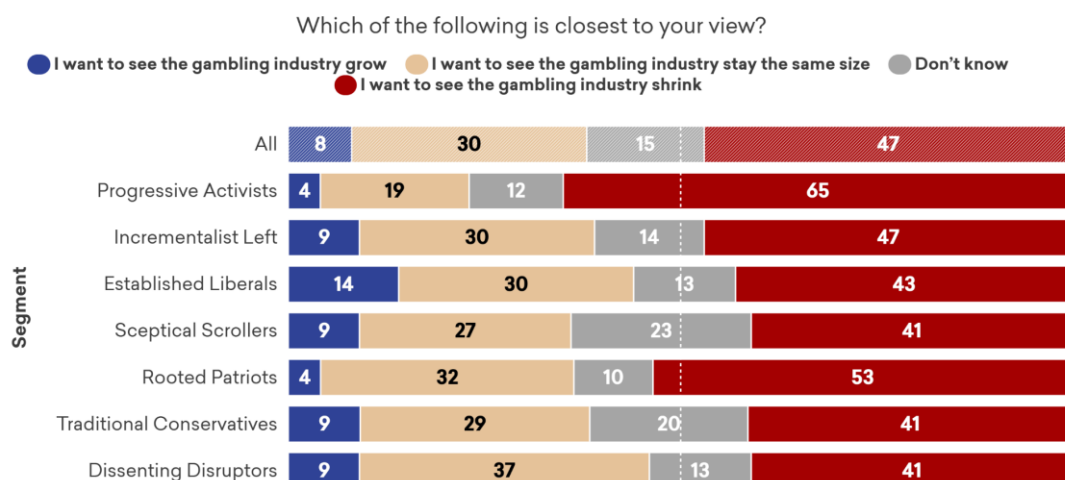
Well, I think everyone’s on their phones now, aren’t they? Even walking down the street, having a coffee, wherever. And it’s just more accessible for people, isn’t it? Whereas you have to literally go into a betting shop or whatever, now it’s there at your fingertips, middle of the wherever. So yeah, it’s much easier for people to get addicted that way.

Lorna, Dog groomer, Clacton-on-Sea

Perceptions of the industry

The public’s perception is that the gambling industry is growing. The majority of Britons say they’ve seen more gambling advertising in recent years, and many express concerns about the ease of access of many forms of digital and online gambling that have become much more popular in the country over the last decade and a half.

A plurality of Britons wants to see the gambling industry shrink in the UK. Across the Seven Segments, and including those with more socially liberal or socially conservative starting points, at least two-fifths want to see the gambling industry get smaller.



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Those who gamble either ‘sometimes’ or ‘regularly’ are also more likely to say that they would like to see the industry shrink rather than grow (27 per cent and 17 per cent respectively), but a plurality say they would like it to stay the same size (44 per cent). Of Britons who have never gambled, over two-thirds want to see the industry shrink (69 per cent).

The expansive nature of gambling means that Britons have different starting points on ‘what counts as gambling’. In conversation, examples that first came to mind were bookies on the high street – the most visible gambling companies due to their amount of advertising and grand events such as horse racing and the betting alongside it. However, as conversations progress, examples arose of gambling that was more moot. In Clacton-on-Sea participants discussed whether games on the pier, which cost money and are reliant on chance, should be considered a form of gambling and therefore subject to regulation.

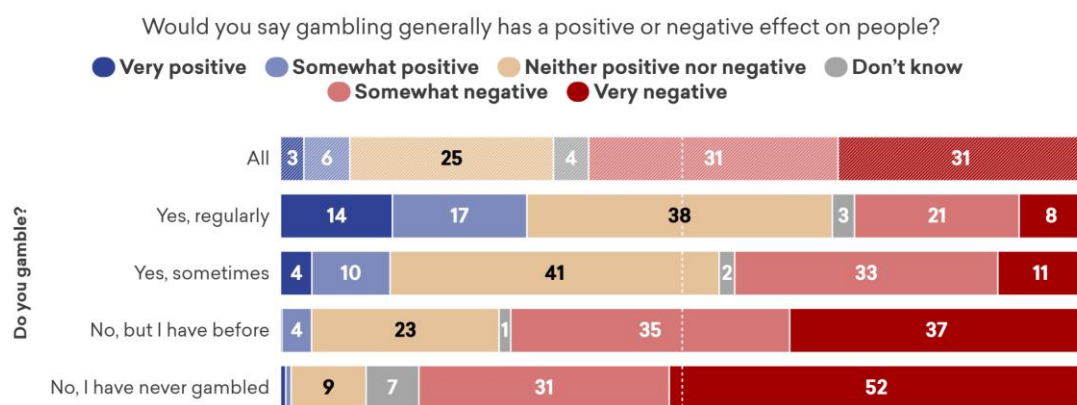
It's interesting, isn't it? Because even the little grabbing machines that bring out one of the toys are gambling but you see children leaping up and down with glee.

Mary, Retired, Clacton-on-Sea

What emerges from Britons’ topline views on gambling and the gambling industry is a permissive-but-not-without-limits view. Britons are willing to give some forms of gambling the benefit of the doubt, and value individual choice and enjoyment, but the recent growth in advertising and what Britons see as the exploitative tendencies of digital gambling go beyond what the public think should be tolerated. The next chapter explores Britons’ views on who has been most, and worst, impacted by the growth in gambling.

Chapter 2 | Risks and harms

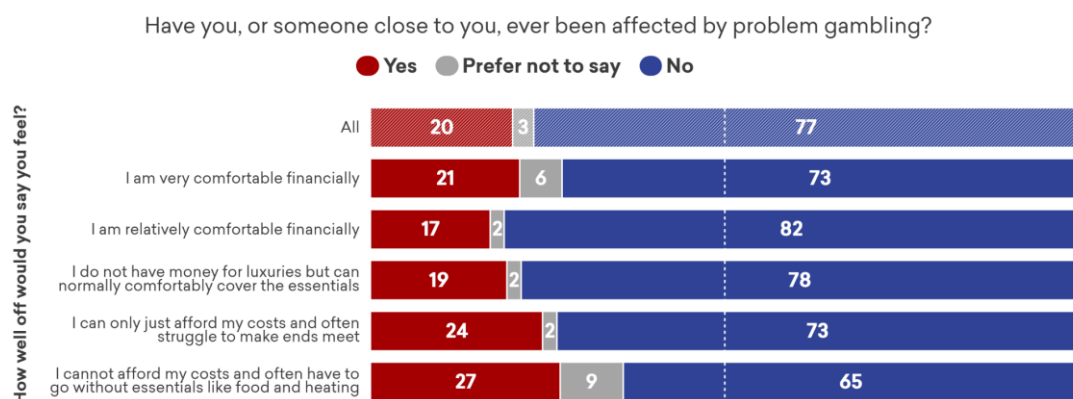
Negative views towards gambling can in part be explained by how harmful Britons perceive it to be. Britons overwhelmingly think that gambling generally has a negative impact on people: nearly two thirds of the public say that it has a somewhat or very negative effect, while only one in ten say it has a positive one. Even those who gamble regularly do not tend to think it has a particularly positive impact: three in ten say that it has a positive impact, but another three in ten say the opposite.



As more Britons become aware of the presence of gambling online, on TV and on the high street, they notice its harms, too. One in five tell us that they, or someone close to them, have been affected by problem gambling. This is even higher among those who are struggling financially, and the public expects it to get worse with time.

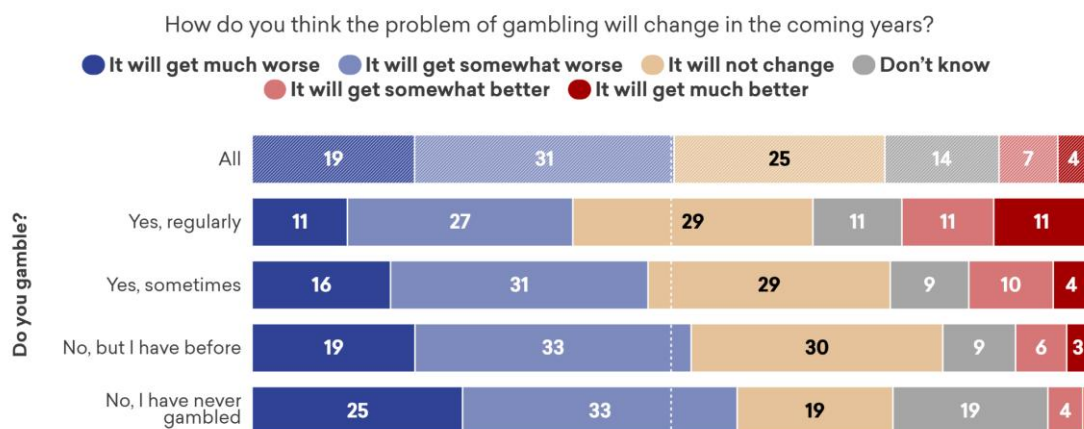
Because they're down to their last few quid. They think they put some money on and win some. It's going to get somewhere. But they're really desperate I suppose.

Mo, Retired, Clacton-on-Sea



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Respondents were given a definition of problem gambling

Many Britons also worry that this problem will get worse with time. Half of Britons say that problem gambling will get much or somewhat worse in the coming years, while only a tenth think it will get better. This sentiment persists among punters themselves – 4 in 10 regular gamblers also think that things will get worse.



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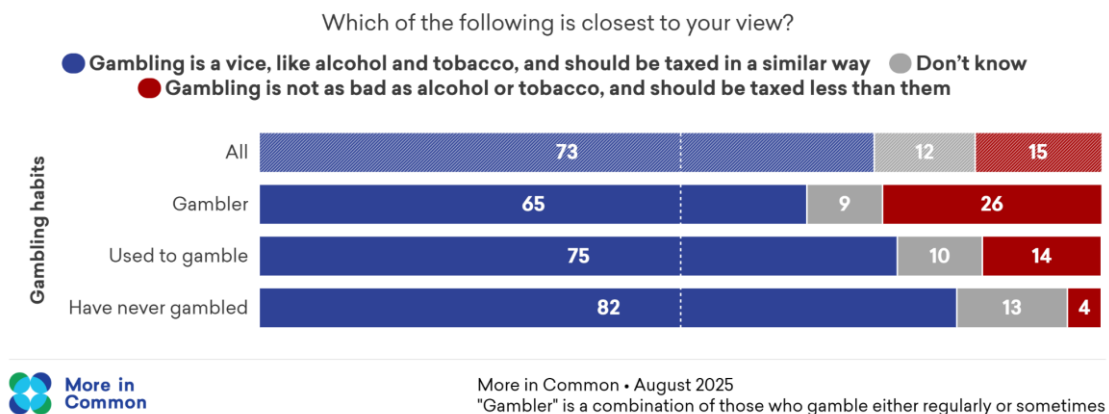
Compounding harms

Focus group participants link susceptibility to problem gambling with a variety of social ills, intuitively connecting how poor financial situations, mental health, and suffering from other addictions can all feed into dangerous gambling habits.

I think sometimes you find that if somebody's got one of these addictions, you might find that they've got other addictions as well... if somebody's addicted to gambling they might have an alcohol problem or something like that as well.

Nicola, Betting shop employee, Newmarket

The public sees gambling in a similar vein to other addictive substances, such as alcohol, drugs or tobacco, and a majority of the public want to see it taxed in a similar way.



Many Britons recognise that gambling can often go hand in hand with drinking alcohol. Focus group participants note the dangers of the combination and its potential to create a downward spiral into impulsive behaviour and addiction.

I was always confused whenever there was a pub, there used to be a bookmakers next door to it. As I got older I could understand it, I'd see all the lads going, just walking and doing their bets and going back for their pint.

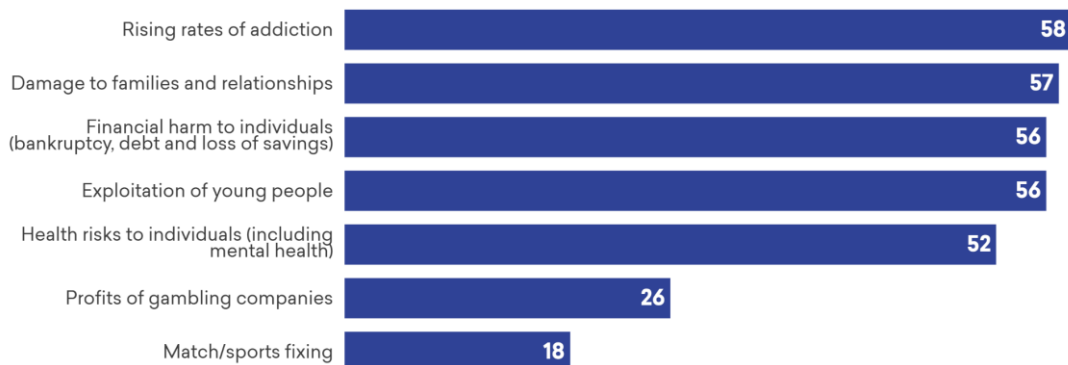
John, Plumber, Brent

In focus groups, those who themselves had experienced spells of problem gambling in the past often described them as being the lowest point in their lives. The knock-on effects of problem gambling – social, financial and even physical – are well-understood by the public.

I was going to say it doesn't have any physical effects, but it does have physical effects: it has mental health effects with gambling. Drinking is going to affect different organs of your body, but gambling, and becoming seriously embroiled in gambling debt and hiding and the lies and the deceit and all the things that go alongside that, will have an effect on somebody's mental health which can lead... I know it can lead to somebody taking their own life because they're so far down that hole that they reach out and they can't get the help or the support they need. I suppose it's a bit like being a bit disgusted and embarrassed by what you are doing and that whole web that you're creating.

Mel, Primary school teacher, Newmarket

For each of the following issues around gambling indicate how concerned or unconcerned you are about each of the following...



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(Net score % who say 'greatly' or 'somewhat' concerned minus those who say 'not very' or 'not at all' concerned).

While some aspects of gambling are viewed as having a negative impact, the public is less concerned about the profits accrued by the industry (or the possibility of corruption of sport or politics as a result), and much more concerned about how gambling can harm families and cause social, financial and even health problems for those caught up in problem gambling. In this sense, the public's concern is not a puritanical moral concern about gambling, but a practical concern about the negative impact of problem gambling and the potential for gambling to affect their family, friends, and communities.

I've had residents that no longer speak to their partners, or split up with partners... bailing them out constantly, and they've had enough. So yeah, that could have a massive impact. So then it's the social connections that they're losing, people around them, that are the most important to them.

Shauna, Homeless charity worker, Wigan

The vicious cycle – which sees those who have already lost money to gambling, gambling even more – is well understood, and Britons are also concerned in general that those who are the most financially vulnerable, who may feel they have less to lose and are willing to take more of a risk, and roll the dice on the chance of a big win. Britons are keenly aware of gambling and betting shops being clustered in more deprived parts of their neighbourhoods, and in conversation Britons raise their frustration with the approach as one that feels exploitative.

There is one already in Harlesden and they're proposing to open quite a larger space just around the corner. So to have two of those spaces in a quite socially deprived area just feels, I don't know, it feels wrong to me.

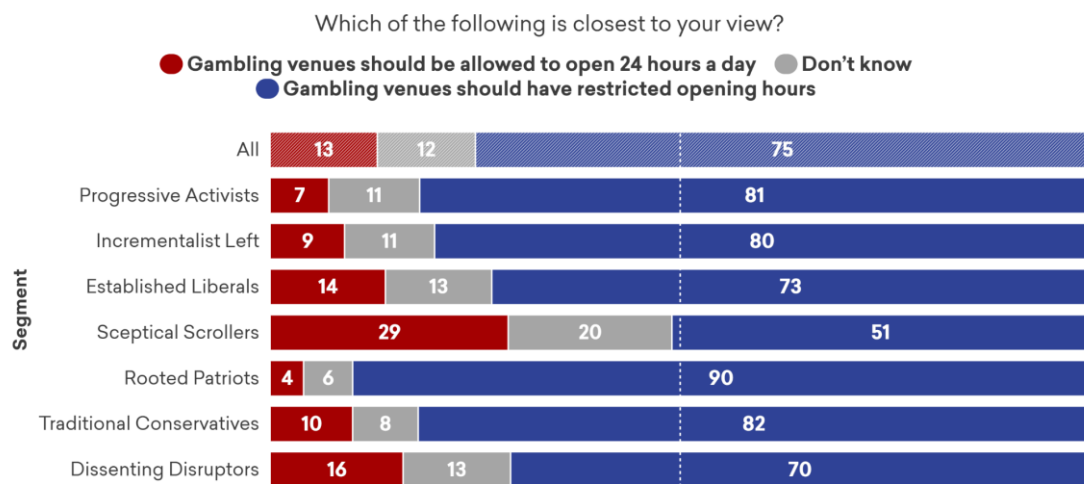
Pete, Graphic designer, Brent

The costs of convenience

Conversations about gambling addiction among the public often focus on online gambling. Online gambling is considered by Britons to be gambling in its most harmful form – as it is too accessible, too easy to hide from those trying to help you, and too addictive.

Because they're so accessible, and it takes two minutes to load it, and you can do it anytime. You can do it when you're making a cup of tea, when you're waiting for a bus, when you're sitting on the toilet, you can just do it at any time and it's just so easy to access.

Nicola, Betting shop employee, Newmarket



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Based on their own experiences, Britons often talk about how the transition from cash, to card, and now to electronic payments has made it harder for them to keep track of their spending, and intuitively link this to a similar problem facing those who gamble on their phones.

...handing over the physical cash or taking your card out to use it, there's some sort of cognitive impact of what's happening, the money you're losing. But online on your phone it's so easy to hide what you're doing, so people around you don't see you getting up in the middle of the night doing it, or in the car on the way to work. There's so many downfalls, so many ways to hide it and the impact it has on relationships and connections and just life in general, it's not in control.

Claire, Teaching assistant, Newmarket

That lack of tangibility often leaves Britons horrified at the prospect of how much money could be lost in such a short space of time.

It's just a number on a screen... It's just a figure. A hundred, 500. Does it make a difference? If it was physical money going into a bookmaker, you'd see what you are losing. But then I look at it as just a number on a screen, a hundred pounds wiped out.

Martin, Driver, Clacton-on-Sea

Britons then had particular concerns about tech-fluent young people, who could easily be drawn into more harmful modes of gambling.

I think they [young men] are more tech savvy, more online. They're more used to using their cards online, the money's there and they can get their payday loans, they can get Klarna, they can get all these things to borrow money, and they can just borrow, borrow, borrow. And then all of a sudden they can't borrow anymore, they've got nowhere to go, and they've got no way to pay it... and the only way they can go is if they end their lives... I think for a lot of them it's too late.

Alison, Nurse, Clacton-on-Sea

Risks to children

The growing accessibility and visibility of gambling worries the public for many reasons, but a central concern is how it could impact children and young people. Younger generations are growing up with access to personal electronic devices and the internet from a very early age and, given that phones and tablets are where gambling is expanding fastest, Britons have concerns about what this will mean for young people's gambling habits.

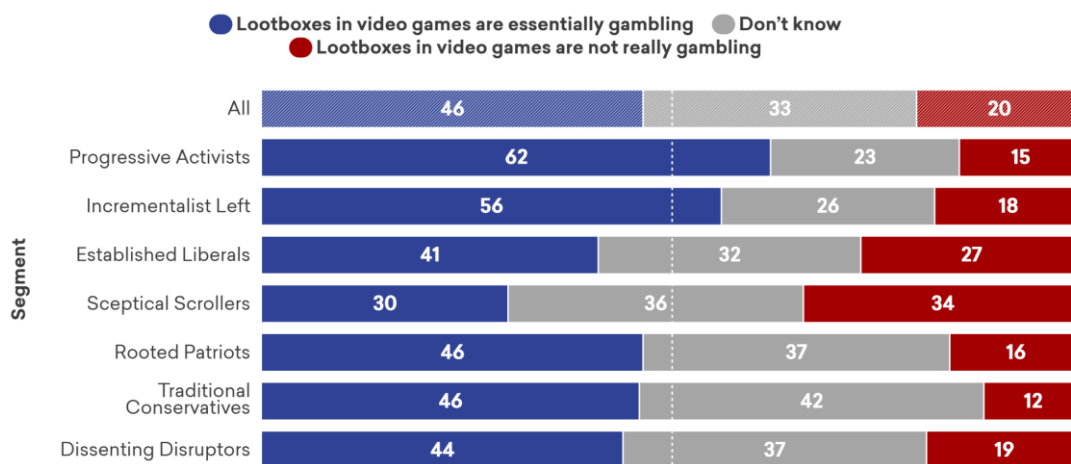
If my children now are trying to get into a betting shop, they'd be turned away by the assistant who works there and told they're not old enough. But now if they wanted to, they could access it online easily without having to identify their age or anything.

Shauna, Homeless charity worker, Wigan

There are also qualitatively new forms of gambling which children are even more exposed to than adults. Some of the most popular video game series among teenagers (EA Sports FC, Roblox, Counter-Strike) contain "lootboxes" – virtual items which, when opened, reward the player with a random selection of in-game items of varying rarity and value. The public (especially gamblers) tends to think that these are essentially gambling products and should be regulated as such. The risks of young children becoming hooked by such games of random chance, with financial stakes, are obvious.

In video games, “Loot boxes” are virtual items which, when opened, reward the player with a random selection of in-game items of varying rarity and value. These “loot boxes” can often be bought and unlocked using real money.

Which of the following is closest to your view?



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A focus group participant pointed out how online forms of advertising either inadvertently, or deliberately, will be marketed at children through the likes of YouTube and social media.

I put something on at school the other day to watch something on YouTube and there was a video, an advert in the middle of it, and it was for gambling. It had nothing to do with the PG video clip that I was trying to show them.

Claire, Teaching assistant, Newmarket

Protecting young people and children is, as a result, one of the public's top priorities for how the government should approach gambling.

Chapter 3 | Addiction and the blame game

As many Britons notice gambling more and more, and are becoming increasingly concerned about negative impacts, they also view parts of the industry quite unfavourably. The next Chapter discusses how they would like to see much of it regulated. However, the public do not necessarily lay blame for gambling addiction at the feet of the industry alone.

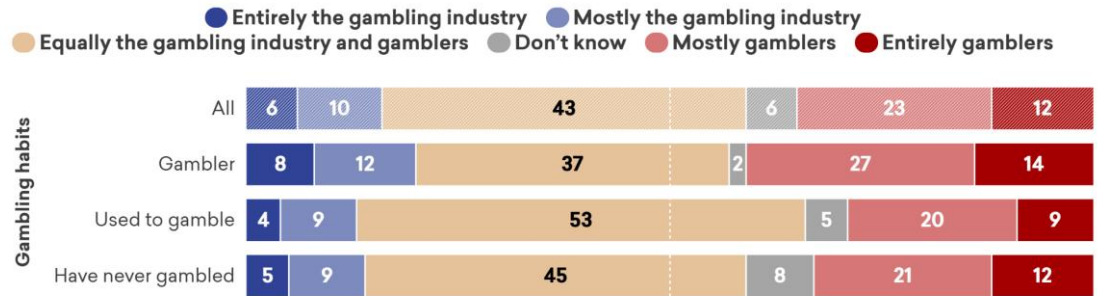
The question of who is responsible for addiction is central to debates around gambling in society. If individuals are seen to be mostly at fault, unable to control their impulses and lacking self-control, then it would follow that tightening the regulatory grip on gambling would do little to reduce problem gambling in Britain. Addicts would always find ways around restrictions, bans, limits, and on to the black market. On the other hand, if the gambling industry is solely to blame for addiction, and gambling is broadly understood to be a vice with little benefit, then it begs the question of why we would even tolerate having a gambling industry at all.

As is often the case, Britons do not fall neatly into one camp or the other. Problem gambling is generally understood to be a personal weakness, exacerbated by a regulatory framework that is too weak to curb the worst excesses of the gambling industry.

The individual

Much like with some other public health issues (e.g. [obesity](#)), many Britons say that individuals only have themselves to blame for their addiction. While nearly half the public (43 per cent) think that the gambling industry and gamblers themselves are equally at fault, another 35 believe it is mainly the fault of the people gambling. Only one in ten Britons say that the gambling industry is mostly at fault for problem gambling.

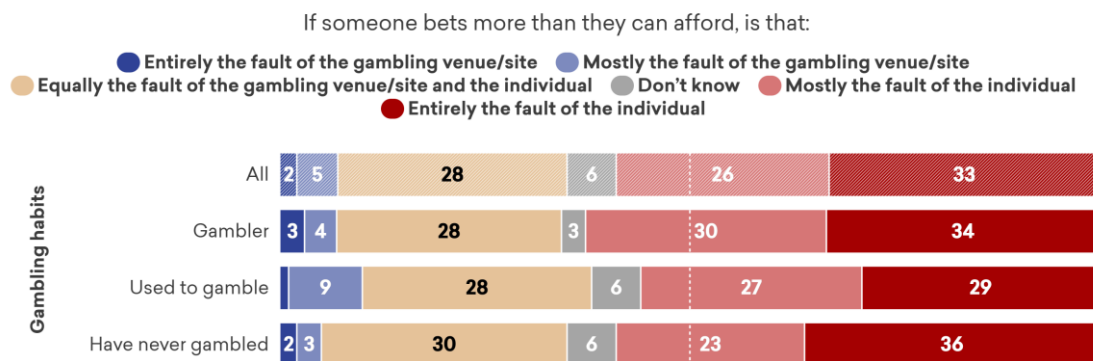
Problem gambling is gambling behaviour that is damaging to a person or their family, often disrupting their daily life and career. Who is more responsible for problem gambling?



I think that's what it comes down to. I think it comes down to being able to control what you're doing.

Alison, Nurse, Clacton-on-Sea

The public are even less sympathetic towards those who bet more money than they can afford. Six in ten say that this is the fault of the individual, while only seven per cent think that the venue or website is to blame.



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"Gambler" is a combination of those who gamble either regularly or sometimes

In both cases, regular gamblers are more likely than most to think that individuals are at fault for their losses and for falling into addiction. A very common sentiment among gamblers in focus groups is that they personally have the self-control and discipline that others lack.

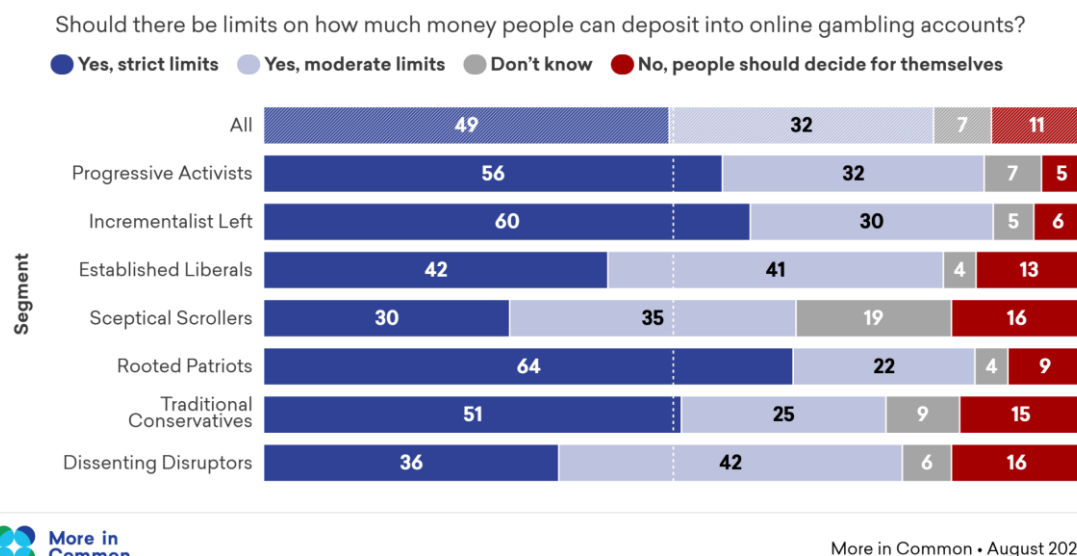
I think it all depends on the character of the person. I think some people can have an addictive personality, whereas I've learned to have some self-control.

Bryan, Retired, Newmarket

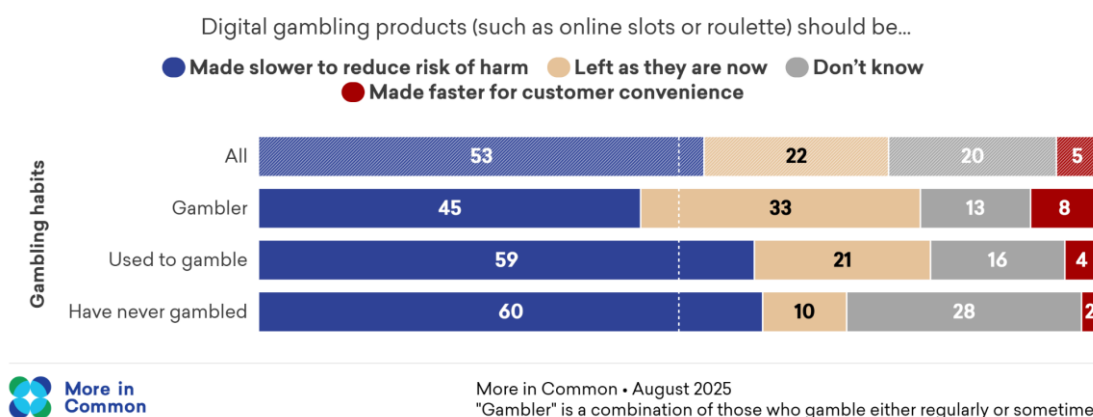
This sentiment shapes how the public thinks problem gambling should be tackled. In focus groups, many expressed their feeling that problem gamblers are beyond help and will always find ways around the rules and support networks to continue feeding their addiction.

The industry

This is not to say that the public is not worried about how the gambling industry is enabling gambling harms and therefore actively contributing to growing rates of addiction. Many Britons readily say that gambling companies are not doing enough to prevent harm on their watch.



Online gambling is designed to be as fast and convenient as possible, and is becoming more so. The public is particularly worried about the speed at which people can bet – and lose – their money online, and a majority would support slowing the speed of online slots or roulette to reduce harm and addictiveness.



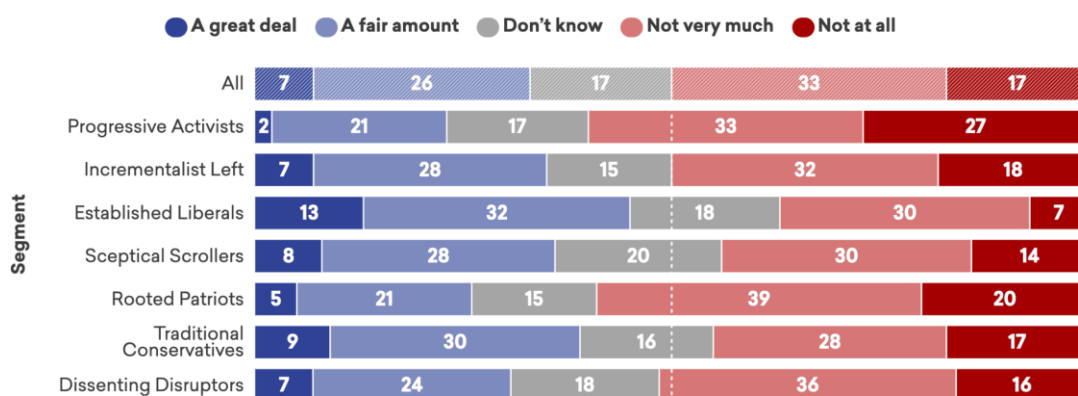
Britons take a dim view on the gambling industry's own existing measures to reduce or prevent harm. Generally, the public consider these to be ineffective – in focus groups, members of the public point to similar campaigns like Drinkaware and explain they feel that a campaign to reduce gambling which is funded by gambling profits has a conflict of interest.

So it's the same as Drinkaware... just that constant chasing my tail, because the gambler is being told not to gamble by the gambling institution. So they're never going to be that hard hitting or make a strong enough message because they don't want people to stop gambling.

Ann, Teacher, Brent

Ultimately, a self-regulation system where campaigns on problem gambling are funded from gambling profits is viewed by the public as an ineffective approach to tackling addiction. Programmes such as GambleAware, GamCare and even the Gambling Commission itself are seen by many Britons to be offering token gestures towards reducing and preventing rates of addiction, which fall far short of what is needed.

How much, if at all, do you trust the Gambling Commission to properly regulate the gambling industry in Great Britain?



...it's a half-arsed approach, the gambling industry were being pressured and had to do something, but they don't want people to stop. They want the money.

Claire, Teaching assistant, Newmarket

Many believe there are inherent limitations to existing anti-gambling measures, including those who work in the industry itself.

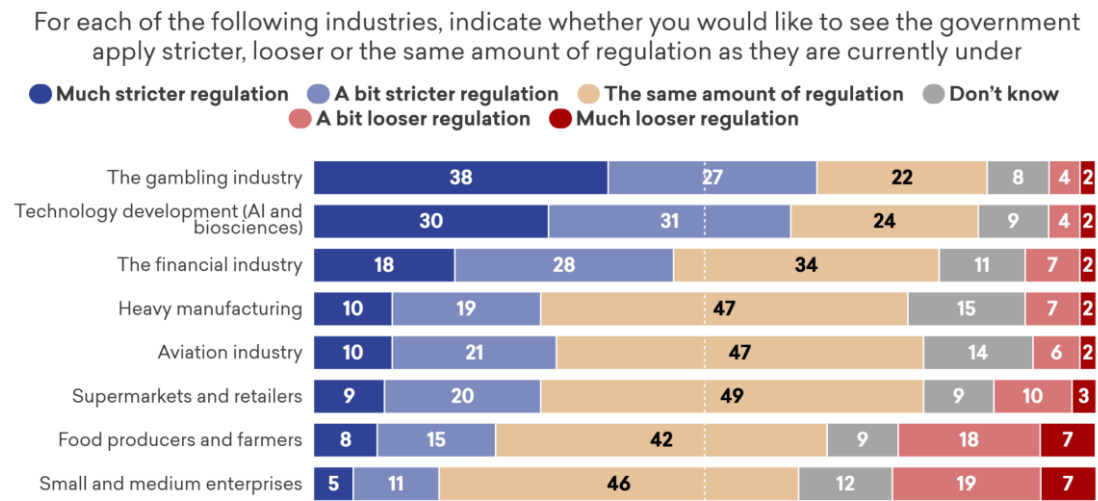
The thing is, we can keep an eye on people in the local area, but then if they choose to go to a different town or Cambridge or something like that and go into the gambling shop, then obviously we wouldn't recognise them.

Nicola, Betting shop employee, Newmarket

Chapter 4 | The rules of the game: regulation, advertising and tax

The public do not believe enough problem gamblers are able to self-moderate and impose limits on themselves, nor do they believe the gambling industry is properly incentivised to self-regulate and reduce gambling harm. As a result, public support for greater regulation of gambling is broad. Some aspects of gambling are considered to be particularly harmful by the public who therefore want to see stricter legislation introduced to protect people against harm. Other aspects of gambling are of lower concern to the public and they take a more permissive attitude to them.

Britons believe that gambling needs more regulation, even when compared to other high-risk sectors such as artificial intelligence or financial services. 65 per cent of Britons say that they want to see stricter regulation on the gambling industry, more than those who say the same for tech companies (61 per cent) and the finance industry (46 per cent).



There is a cross-party consensus among voters that the industry needs tighter regulation, with 46 per cent net support for tighter regulation from those who voted Reform in 2024, growing to 67 per cent of Conservative voters and 65 per cent of Labour voters.

In general, the Seven Segments of Britain tend to diverge on questions of regulation and government involvement in the economy. However, across all of the Seven Segments, Britons are more likely to say that they would like to see stricter regulation on the gambling industry rather than looser. The segment most in support of this is the Progressive Activists, with the Rooted Patriots and Incrementalist Left heavily in favour of stricter regulation.

These were the three segments core to Labour's 2024 election win, and they express support for much stricter regulation on the gambling industry.

Even Traditional Conservatives and Dissenting Disruptors, the segments more sceptical of the role of 'big' government and more likely to say that gambling addiction is a personal failure rather than a systemic one, still want to see the government do more to regulate the industry.

For each of the following industries, indicate whether you would like to see the government apply stricter, looser or the same amount of regulation as they are currently under



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Focus group participants discuss gambling as a problem which cannot be managed just by individuals experiencing addiction, nor can the gambling companies or industry itself be trusted to self-regulate.

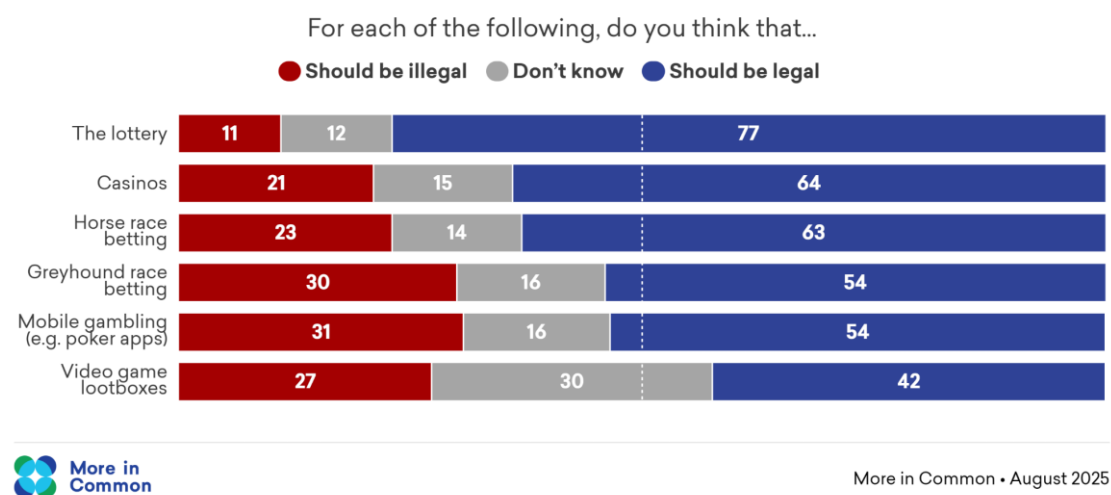
There are so many downfalls, so many ways to hide it and the impact it has on relationships and connections and just life in general, it's not in control. No. Even in shops where clients have signed to put a ban or a restriction on themselves, quite often the shops don't take any notice of them because the companies want that money.

Claire, Teaching assistant, Brent

That leads many Britons to feel there is a need for the government to step in and take some responsibility where the customers and industry cannot themselves tackle gambling harms.

The public do not take a 'one-size fits all' approach to increasing gambling regulation; different types of gambling may need stricter or looser regulation. Britons do not support blanket bans across the industry – for example, just 11 per cent of the public want to see the

lottery banned, while 77 per cent support its legal status. Mobile gaming on the other hand, is somewhat more contentious, with almost a third of Britons saying it should be illegal.



The public see some forms of gambling as harmless fun, such as the lottery, raffles and penny arcades, while many others, such as mobile gambling and electronic slot machines, are considered to be more dangerous.

I love the seaside resort and not so much the fruit machines, the penny arcades. And I'm thinking surely you literally get a pound's worth of two pence pieces. You can't wait to lose it all to get onto the next ride or something. But is that where it starts? No, it's a small amount compared to putting 500 quid on a horse.

Natalie, Dance teacher, Clacton-on-Sea

Residents of Clacton-on-Sea tended to support the arcades and the activities on their Pier. Even if it was technically a form of gambling, it was seen as mostly relating to tourism and holidays and less likely to be addictive. Equally, the cost of playing the machines on the arcade was relatively low, and therefore again seen as less of a problem. Notwithstanding arcade machines are aimed at children, it was mostly seen as harmless fun, rather than developing long term habits into adulthood. As a result, participants tended to think that things like the arcades in Clacton did not need to be the focus of government intervention on gambling.

I mean in terms of the arcade and stuff like that, you're taking your family there or whatever for a day out and stuff like that. You can't always see that as a beginning for being a gambling addict.

Tom, Carpenter, Clacton-on-Sea

In these instances, where the forms of gambling are seen as less harmful (i.e. low cost, and non-addictive), Britons are less inclined to regulate or ban them. For example, many

explained the lottery felt 'harmless', with few people getting addicted to it in the long run. However, other participants did raise the long-term cost of buying a few tickets every week.

Have you ever won? For how many years have you spent a pound or two pound or three pound a week doing a lottery ticket? Maybe more in a big win, but how much have you actually won over the years?

Alison, Nurse, Clacton-on-Sea

In other instances, however, Britons tend to feel harms are going ignored – many Britons turn to gambling on mobile apps as an example of a form of gambling that is relatively unchecked by the government and which puts those under 18 most at risk. This contrasted somewhat with casinos or even betting shops, which were seen to have a legacy of regulation in which there are physical barriers to entry for young people and those addicted to gambling through staff and social connection. For Britons, the forms of gambling that are seen as more dangerous are digital gambling, in which those connections are severed and where gambling sites can continue to extract money from the gambler long after the odds of a physical, in-person game would have changed.

Going back to what's safe and what isn't... the roulette machines, why people think yeah, you can win a little bit, you are going to make some wins, but the machine is never ever going to lose. It's going to eventually; it gets you into that mentality of chasing the losses and they are so dangerous.

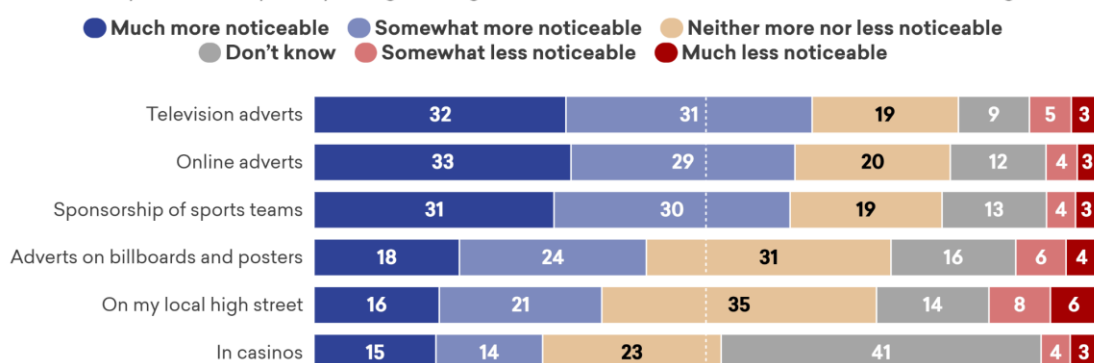
Claire, Teaching assistant, Brent

Focus group participants tended to feel better about forms of gambling which are in person, in a physical environment, and social, as they create natural or organic barriers against the most damaging forms of addiction. Mobile and digital gambling often fall outside of these natural constraints and therefore, in the mind of many Britons, require government regulation or intervention.

Gambling advertising

The area where Britons have most noticed a growth in the visibility of the gambling industry is in advertising.

In recent years, would you say that gambling has become more or less noticeable in the following areas:



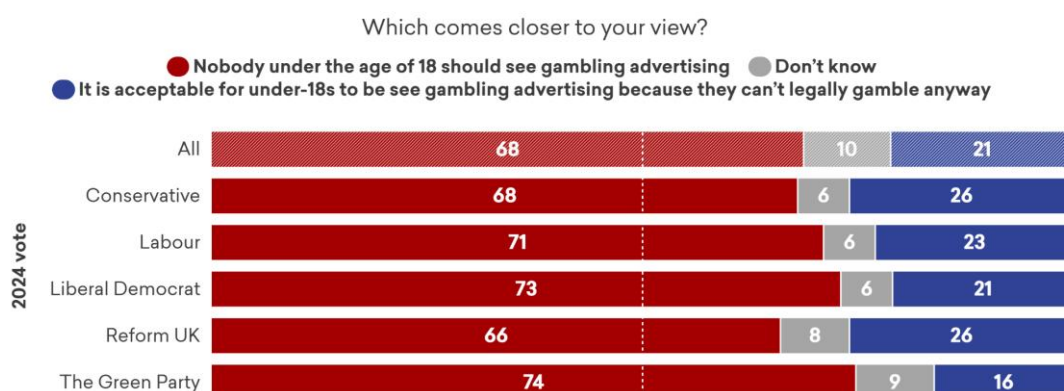
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Almost two-thirds of Britons (63 per cent) say that they notice more gambling advertising on the TV. A further 62 per cent see more online and 61 per cent see more in the sponsorship of sports teams in recent years. Rather than being constrained to one area - the industry is expanding its advertising across multiple platforms.

Within that general concern about the growth of gambling advertising is the impact it could have on the nation's young people and children.

Ten years ago, you wouldn't think that you wouldn't see cigarette adverts on the television anymore and you don't see it today... I remember there was a time that cigarette adverts could only be after a certain time at night because kids would be in bed, and now it's completely forbidden. It probably would be a good thing if betting took the same route.

Andreia, Self-employed, Newmarket



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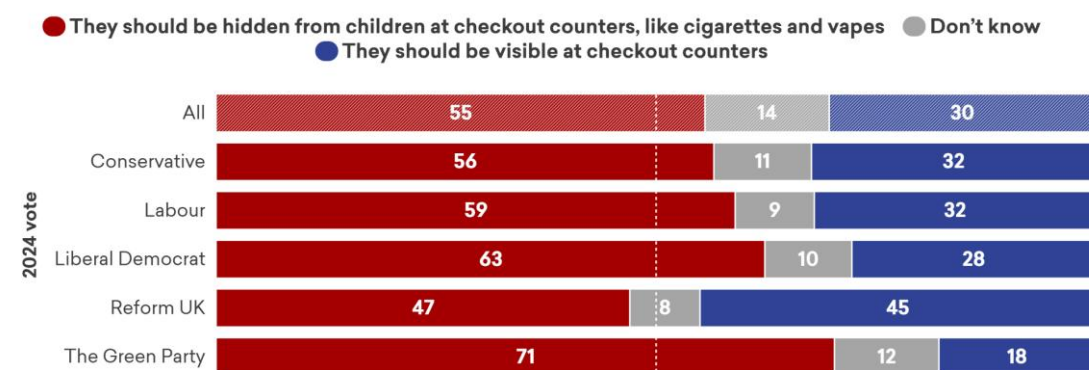
Two-thirds of Britons (68 per cent) say that under-18s should not see gambling advertising at all. From two-thirds of Reform voters to three-quarters of Green voters, across the political spectrum there is a consensus that it is unacceptable for gambling advertising to be shown to children. Some Britons go further and see any activity as a 'gateway', as although under-18s cannot yet gamble legally, it creates an interest in an industry which then sucks them in.

You can see inside the shops, you can see all the machines and everything, and I think that the younger generation might be looking at that and all the lights going, and it makes it sound a bit appealing or exciting to be in there. And although if you are under 18 you can't go into a shop, it might make some of the younger generation think, "when I'm 18, I'm going to get in that shop."

Andreia, Self-employed, Newmarket

Britons are more likely to say that lottery tickets and scratchcards should also be kept out of the sight of young people. 55 per cent of Britons say that they should be treated like cigarettes and kept hidden at the checkout counters. In conversation, Britons explain that keeping these products out of sight is more about curtailing the attractiveness of gambling in future rather than stopping them from buying the cards underage.

Thinking about the National Lottery and Scratchcards, which of the following is closest to your view?



Many Britons are also worried by what they see as an explosive number of gambling adverts in sports matches, which again is likely to have an outsized impact on young people.

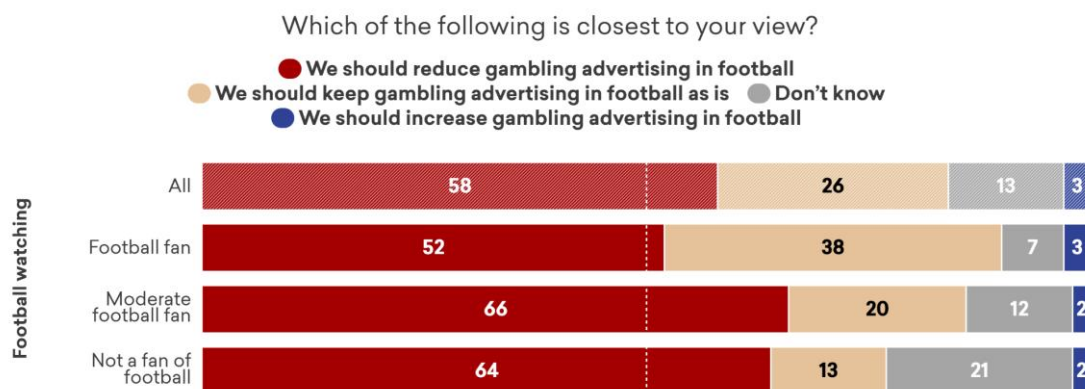
Every time you watch a football match, there's something like 9 or 10,000 seconds of adverts for gambling that comes in on a football match, or something like that – that you subconsciously don't see.

Alison, Nurse, Clacton-on-Sea

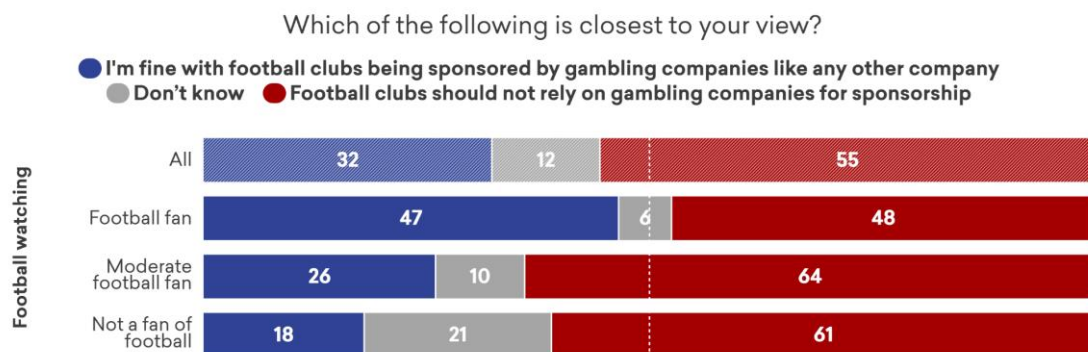
They're sponsored by them. People idolise them from a young age. So it's printed on the shirt, it's right in front of you again.

Tom, Carpenter, Clacton-on-Sea

The majority of Britons say they want to see a reduction in the amount of gambling advertising in football, and even most football fans (those who watch football weekly) think there should be less gambling advertising in the sport. Only 3 per cent of football fans want to see an increase in the amount of gambling advertising.



In fact, most Britons want to see not only the reduction of advertising for gambling in football but also the separation of the two industries entirely, with a majority of Britons believing that the sport should not be reliant on gambling companies for sponsorship. The Premier League's voluntary ban on front-of-shirt betting sponsorship, is likely to be welcomed by many football fans, around half of whom believe football clubs should not be reliant on gambling.



However, some football fans in focus groups discuss the mutual dependence of gambling and sport, and that removing one from the other could have a negative impact on the financial performance of clubs, some of which are already struggling. Meanwhile others feel that gambling advertising does not have a major impact on the viewer while watching the game.

A lot of that doesn't catch your eye when you're watching the game, and I think it's very blown up about how much it entices you watching a football game. I personally don't think, but then maybe I haven't got an eye for it. It depends on the person, the individual.

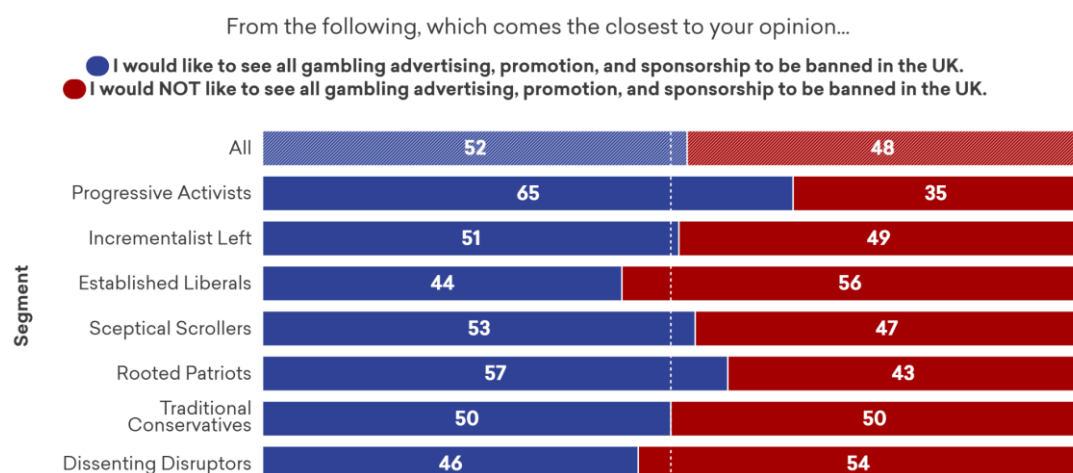
Tom, Carpenter, Clacton-on-Sea

Again, for some, their primary concern with the prevalence of gambling advertising in football was the risk to young people, who are likely to be football fans and eagerly watch their team's matches – which are likely to be sponsored by a gambling company.

It's pretty bad, really, because you've got kids who love football and they're watching it, and then at half time it flashes up certain odds for different things and it's too much in your face, I think.

Danny, Car salesman, Wigan

Overall, when asked if they would like to see a blanket ban on gambling advertising and sponsorship banned in the UK, Britons are almost evenly split. Advertising is most strongly supported by Progressive Activists and Rooted Patriots, and most strongly opposed by Dissenting Disruptors.



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However, this binary question on a ban obscures the nuance in how the public think about gambling regulation – most want a focus on children and protection for players racking up big losses without anyone checking on their welfare. Britons also want reform of the ways in which gambling is advertised, specifically reducing the role it plays in football as well as protecting children from being exposed to gambling adverts.

Who's regulating whom?

The public's desire for greater regulation is borne out of a feeling that the current approaches aren't doing enough to protect Britons, especially the young, from gambling harms. Despite current regulation around gambling in the UK, including deposit limits, financial vulnerability checks and licensing conditions, in conversation many Britons feel as though the industry does not do enough to protect people from social harms. Focus group participants raised unprompted the industry funded charity, GambleAware, saying that the charity seemed more focused on supporting the gambling industry than reigning it in.

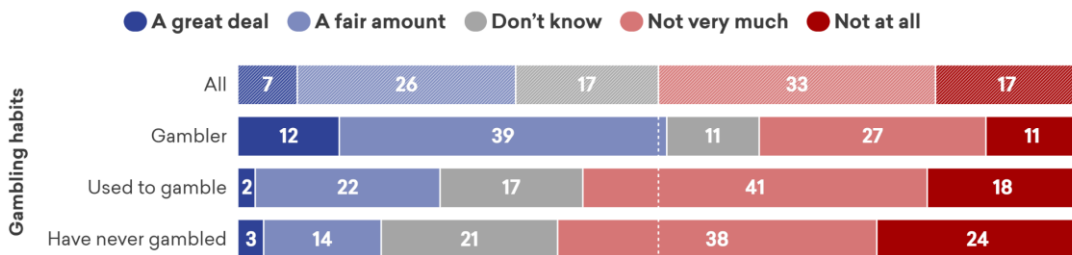
That's always made me laugh about the ads for gambling – they say about being responsible, that little sign. But then they'll offer you the free bet. That's what you always see. Even online you see it now, the first free bet.

John, Plumber, Brent

The Gambling Commission, the government agency with responsibility for regulating the industry, does not fare much better in the eyes of the public. Half of Britons (50 per cent) say that they do not trust the Commission 'very much' or 'at all' to regulate the industry. The Commission is most trusted by those who gamble regularly, with 51 per cent of gamblers

saying they trust the industry body, rising to 62 per cent of those who gamble most frequently.

How much, if at all, do you trust the Gambling Commission to properly regulate the gambling industry in Great Britain?



More in Common • August 2025

"Gambler" is a combination of those who gamble either regularly or sometimes

Only Established Liberals – a high trust, highly institutionalist segment – are likely to say they trust rather than distrust the Gambling Commission, with every other segment expressing mostly distrust.

Regulating online

Online gambling and digital gambling are a key concern to the public, many of whom discuss being frightened by the speed and ease at which people can bet and lose money. As such, they are strongly supportive of measures to curtail the rate at which people can gamble online. A majority of Britons are in favour of online gambling apps (such as slots and roulette) being slowed down, giving gamblers – and particularly problem gamblers – more time to consider their actions.

The ease of access to online gambling websites, and the fact that people could gamble anywhere, any amount, and at any time, concerns Britons. In conversation, they discuss the impact on the mental health of those who use these gambling apps most frequently.

Whether you are surrounded by love and support, you can still go off and especially people in their own rooms now on their phone, they can slide off to their rooms and be doing things even sitting next to you. They can be having a bet or doing because it is that excitement.

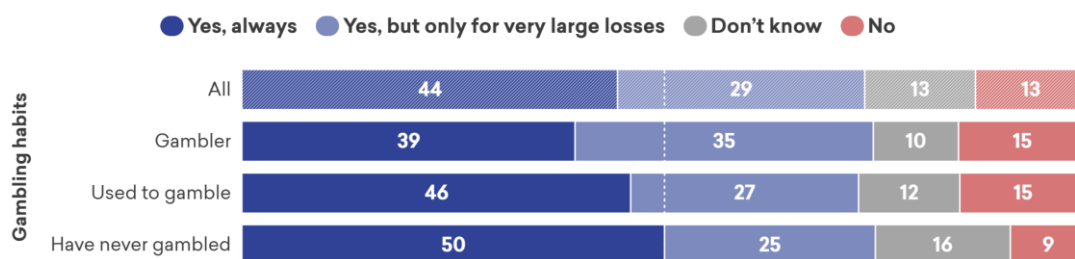
Mary, Retired, Clacton-on-Sea

Because they're so accessible, and it takes two minutes to load it, and you can do it anytime. You can do it when you're making a cup of tea, when you're waiting for a bus, when you're sitting on the toilet, you can just do it at any time and it's just so easy to access.

Nicola, Betting shop employee, Newmarket

Alongside slowing down the speed of gambling, the public broadly supports tracking losses in online gambling. In conversation Britons discuss the difference between placing cash bets in a bookmaker's as opposed to using card transactions online.

Should gambling venues be required to track how much customers have spent on machines to prevent unaffordable losses?

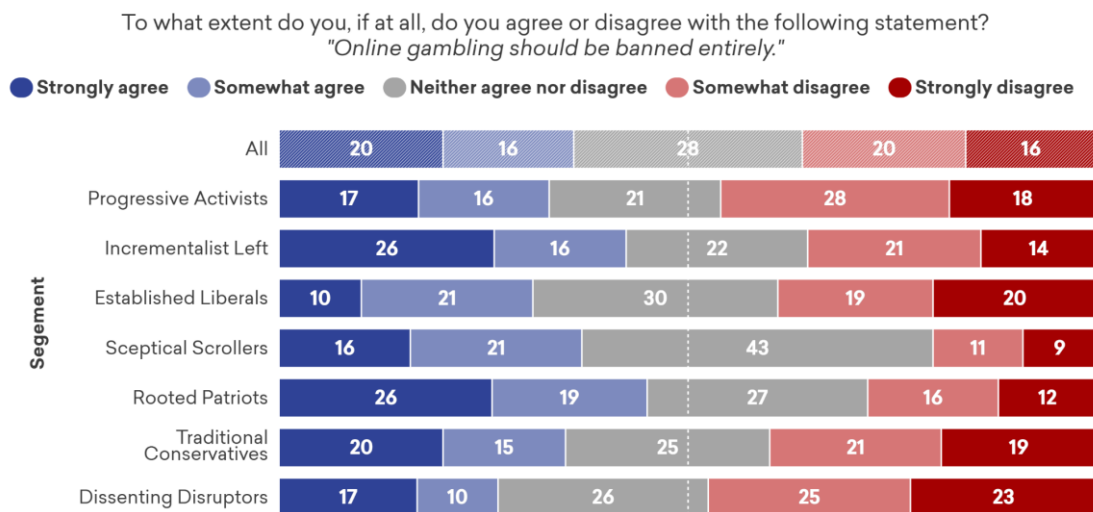


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"Gambler" is a combination of those who gamble either regularly or sometimes

A majority (73 per cent) of Britons support tracking players against especially large losses, with a further two-fifths of Britons who want to see every transaction being tracked to prevent unaffordable losses to the gamblers. Tracking attracts support from gamblers and non-gamblers alike, with three-quarters (74 per cent) of non-gamblers wanting to see some sort of limit tracking introduced and 26 per cent opposed the idea. At the same time, three-quarters of those who have never gambled say they would prefer to see gambling losses tracked, with only nine per cent opposed.

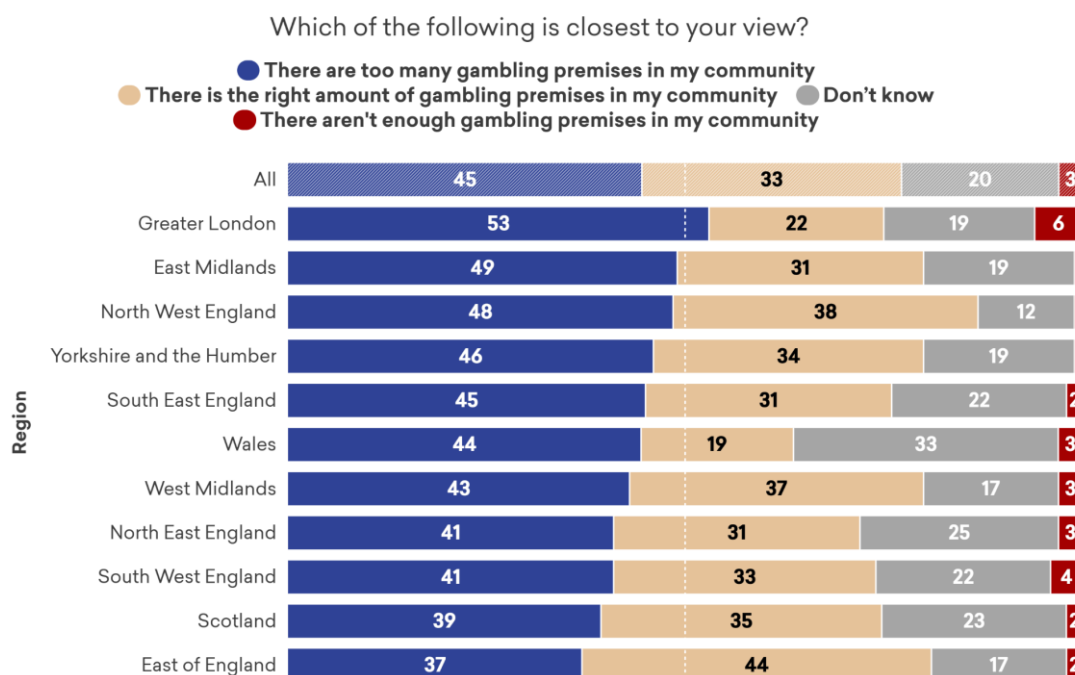
Asked if online gambling should be banned entirely, the public is again evenly split between support and opposition to a ban. 36 per cent say online gambling should be banned entirely, while 36 per cent say that it should not, and a further 28 per cent are unsure.



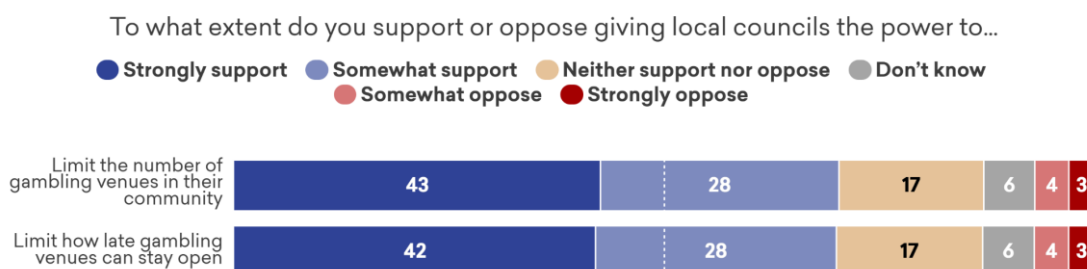
Progressive Activists and Dissenting Disruptors are the most likely to oppose the banning of online gambling entirely. Again, this suggests Britons support targeted measures against the most dangerous forms of gambling, rather than blanket bans across the industry, which many also see as bringing fun and enjoyment.

Gambling in towns and spaces

At a local level there is clear support from the public to give greater powers to local councils when it comes to deciding what happens on their own streets. Since the 'aim to permit' laws have been introduced in local councils – a legal duty to permit gambling (with the power to attach conditions to licences) rather than start out to prevent it altogether – many Britons feel as though there are now too many gambling premises in their community.



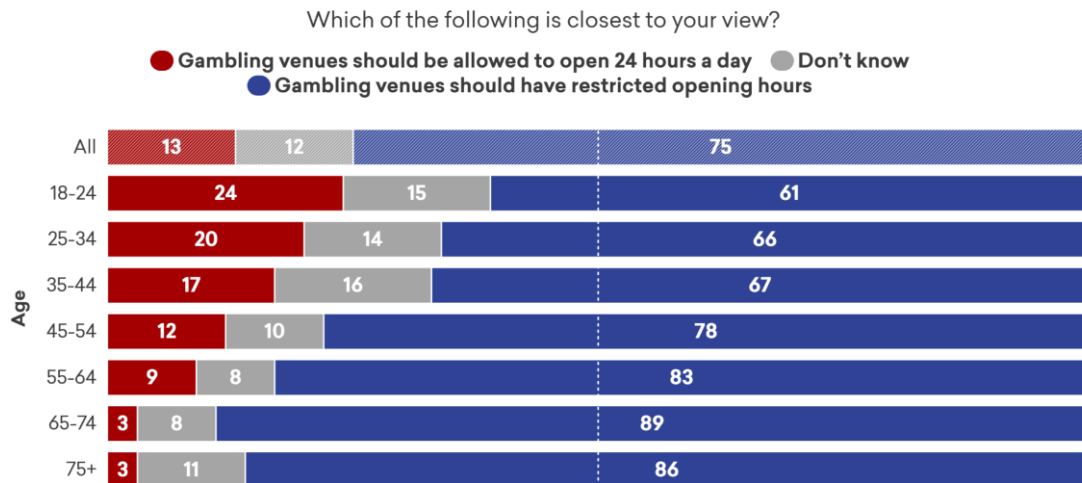
With close to half of Britons believing that there are too many gambling premises in their local area, it is no surprise that many support the idea of local councils being able to have more ability to limit the number of gambling venues in the community. At the same time, many view the presence of gambling venues as signs of social degradation.



There's people that just chill out there for eight, ten hours a day because it's open all the time. And I don't know, these people are up to no good, basically. That's just my opinion.

Aiden, Quantity surveyor, Brent

Many Britons perceive a co-dependent relationship between gambling and other nighttime activities such as heavy drinking, leading three quarters of the public to support restrictions on gambling venues opening hours.

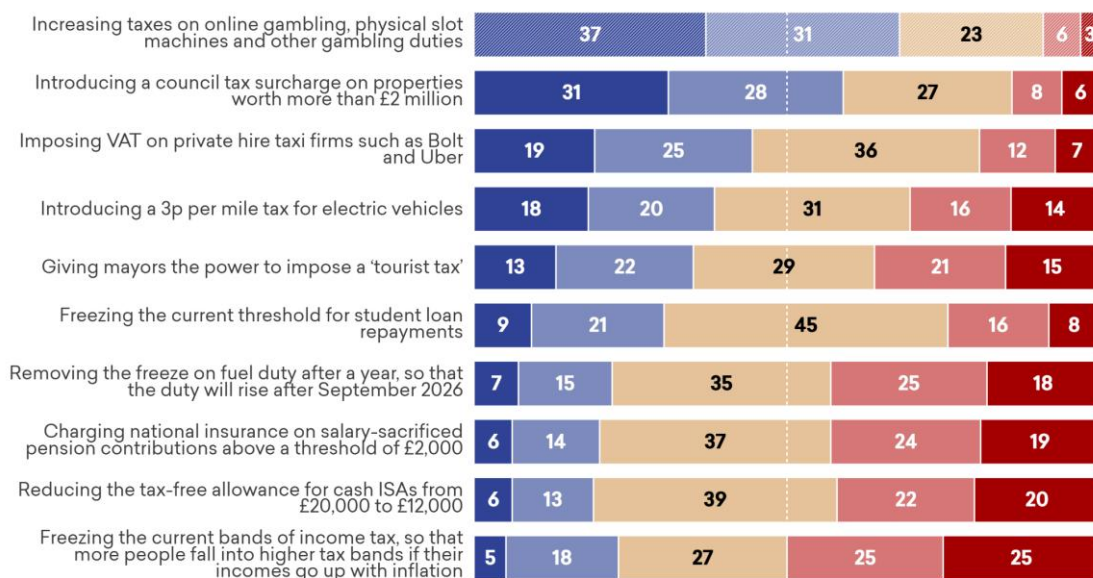


Taxation

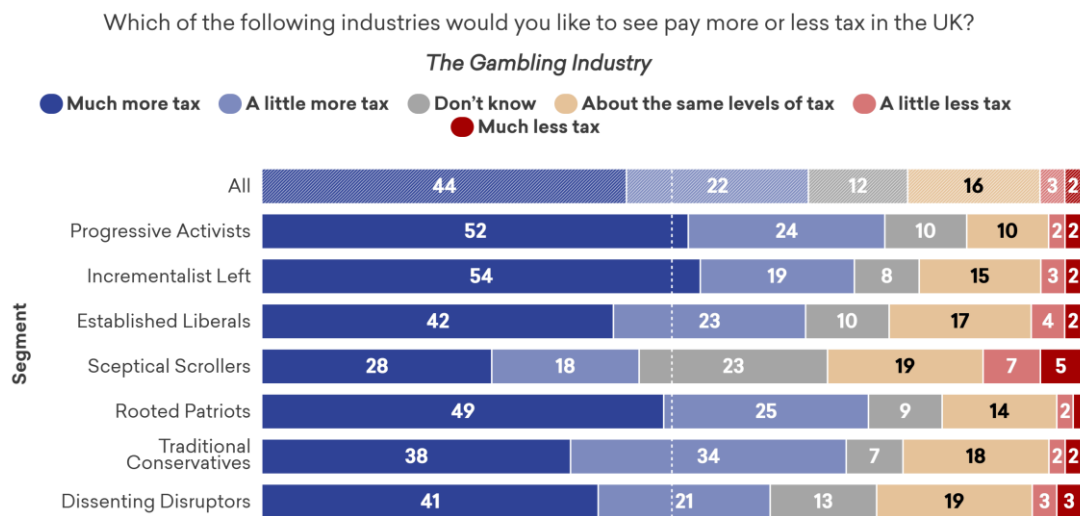
In their 2025 Autumn Budget, the Labour Government raised the tax rate paid by online gambling companies, while cutting the rate that is paid by bingo. These moves are broadly supported by the British public, with more than two-thirds of Britons in favour of the industry paying more tax on revenue from slot machines and online gambling – the most popular measure tested.

Below is a list of tax measures in the Government's budget. For each of them, please indicate whether you support or oppose them:

● **Strongly support**
● **Somewhat support**
● **Neither support nor oppose**
● **Somewhat oppose**
● **Strongly oppose**



Again, there is a clear consensus across the three segments who helped deliver Labour's victory in the 2024 General Election, the Progressive Activists, Rooted Patriots and Incrementalist Left segments all in support of increasing the rate of tax paid by the gambling industry.



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Similarly, a majority of all voting groups support the idea that the gambling industry should pay more tax.

However, in focus groups some Britons worry that the government could become too reliant on the taxation of gambling, and in doing so shift the focus away from protecting the public against gambling harms towards using the industry as a financial resource.

Just thinking where the gambling companies will get that money from? Is it coming from gamblers? If it is, what's the point?

Martin, Driver, Clacton-on-Sea

To others, increasing taxes on gambling companies to address issues such as poverty is seen as antithetical, as many see gambling as creating the issues which those taxes are seeking to heal (such as financial instability or child poverty). To some, it seemed like a 'reverse Robin Hood', taking from the least well off to be given to the government to tackle the problems of the least well off – and not all Britons trust them to do this.

I think it's just going straight back into the government. They're taxing the poor and all that money, I mean they're going to tax the gambling companies. That means the money that the poor people, or a group of gamblers like... poor people are gamblers. That's just their money going back into the government.

Tom, Carpenter, Clacton-on-Sea

It's just that they [government] want it [the gambling industry] to grow instead of opening services up, community support groups and spending the money on that, where people can go... I think it's sad they want that to happen.

Shauna, Homeless charity worker, Wigan

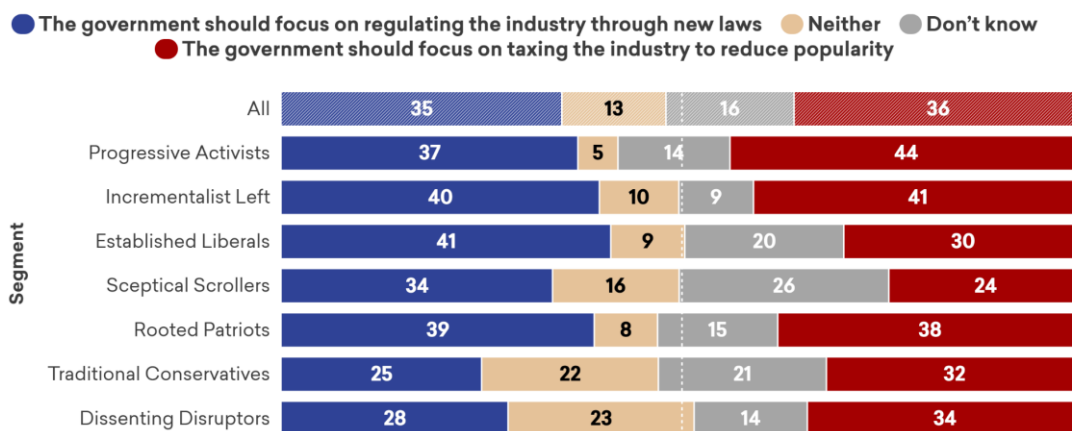
Others shared scepticism that the government would be able to collect the tax, with a suspicion that gambling companies would attempt to avoid tax hikes.

I think a lot of them don't even pay taxes in the UK. A lot of them are registered in Gibraltar and stuff like that.

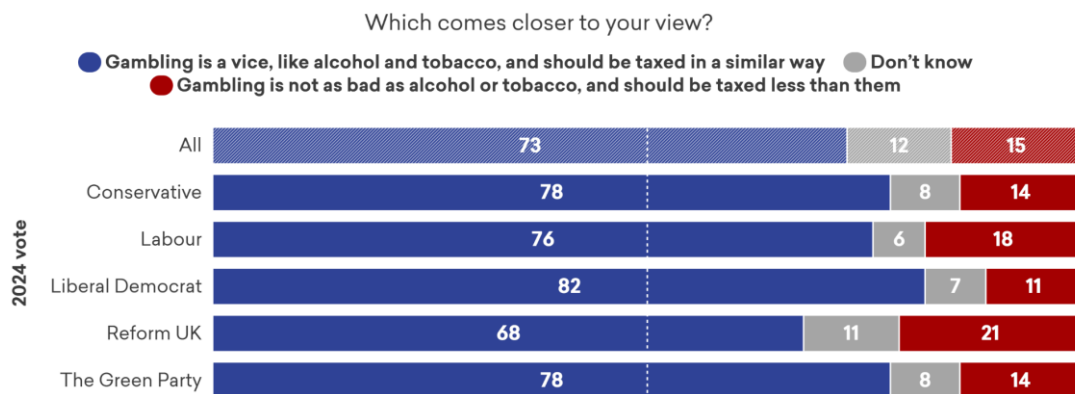
Danny, Car salesman, Wigan

Given the two options, either focusing on regulation against harms or taxes to decrease the popularity of gambling, the public are split. 35 per cent of Britons say they would rather see the government focus on regulation, 36 per cent say they would rather use taxation to reduce its popularity and 13 per cent say neither.

When it comes to regulating the gambling industry, which of the following comes closest to your view?



Across the segments there is an even split, with the more interventionist segments of the Rooted Patriots, Progressive Activists and Incrementalist Left favouring greater taxation. The more regulation-sceptic segments of the Traditional Conservatives and Dissenting Disruptors are more likely than any of the other segments to say that the industry should neither be taxed nor regulated, however, over half favour some form of regulation in both segments.

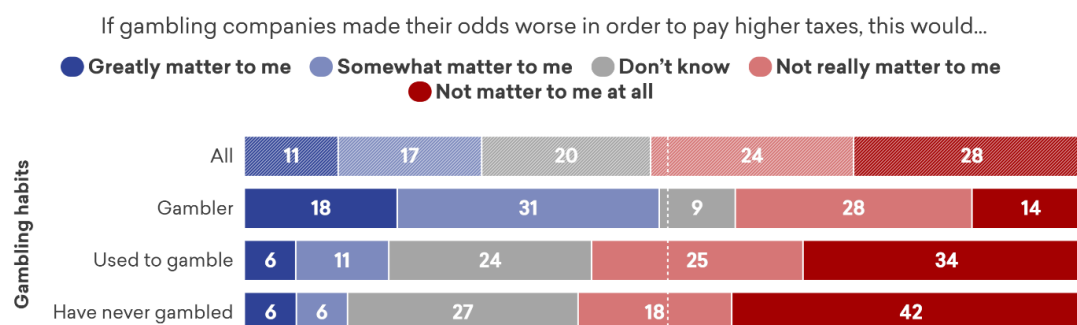


Britons do not think regulation should aim to support sustained growth of the gambling industry, but rather halt and even reverse its rapid growth over the last decade. From the public's perspective, further regulation around gambling harms should centre on young people and protect them from current and future gambling habits, while also exploring ways to curb the speed and ease of accessing and spending money on online and mobile gambling. While there is clear support for the government to increase taxes on the industry, most want that to go hand in hand with further regulation.

What are the risks?

Undoubtedly, Britons want to be free to have the occasional 'flutter' on gambling, which they see as harmless, but there are also serious issues that they want the government to address.

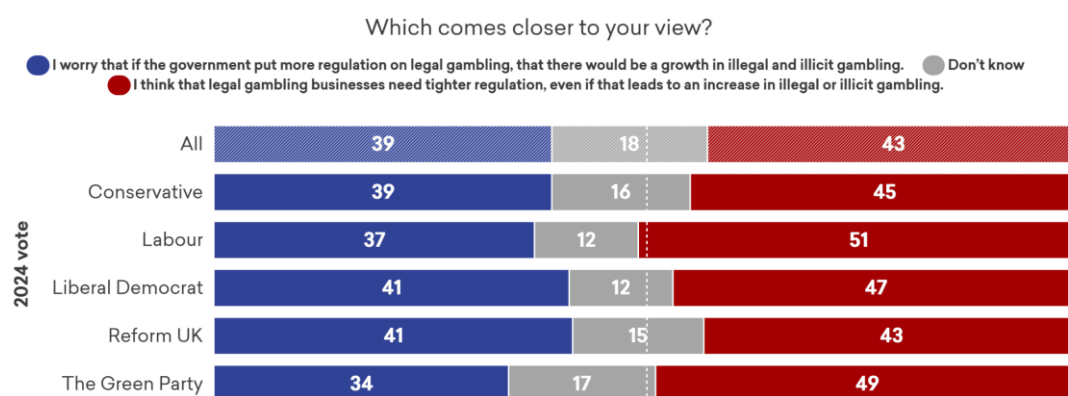
A concern about greater taxation is that the costs would be passed onto the customer. Over half of Britons say an increase in taxes leading to worse odds in gambling would not matter to them. Among gamblers however, almost half (49 per cent) say that this would be a concern to them.



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 "Gambler" is a combination of those who gamble either regularly or sometimes

If the public felt that the cost was being borne purely by gamblers, rather than the industry itself, taxation is likely to be unpopular.

However, another concern for many Britons is the risk of gamblers being pushed into unregulated black markets by new regulation. While Britons are more likely to support regulation of the industry, even if that means a rise in illegal or illicit gambling, a large proportion of the public worry about the implications of black market gambling, which could create worse gambling harms than those the public seek to address in the legal gambling industry.



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While most Britons think an occasional bet is harmless, and many partake themselves, they believe it is still worth prioritising reducing gambling harms, even at the expense of making it harder for casual gamblers. The majority of the public (68 per cent), including casual gamblers (at 58 per cent), say the government's role should be to reduce gambling harm, even if this makes it more difficult for people to place the occasional bet.



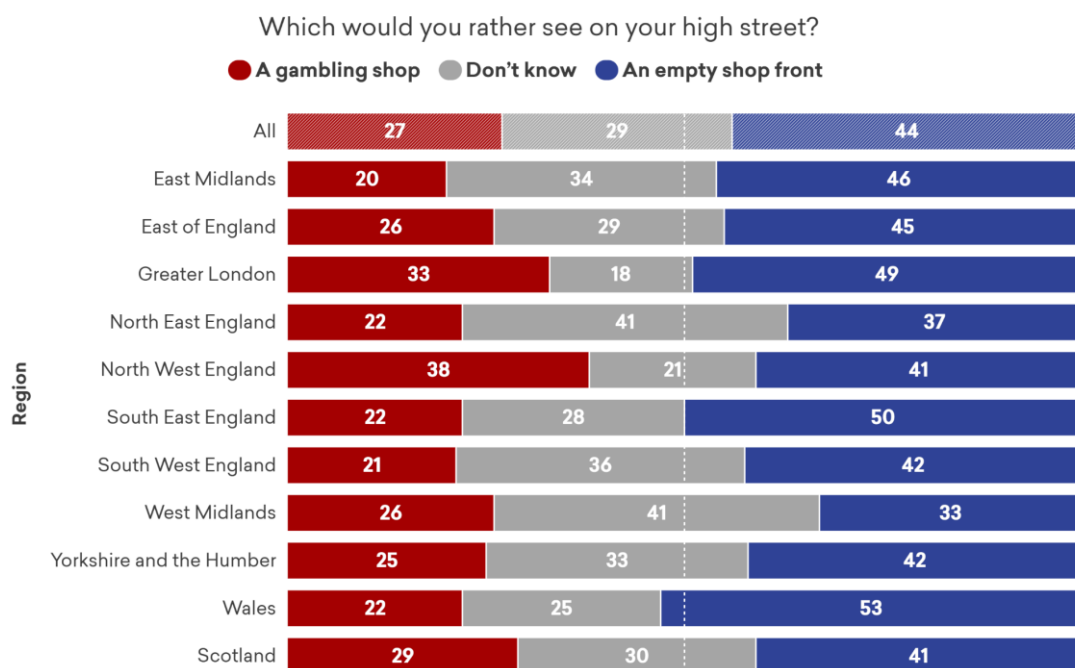
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[Some in the gambling industry](#) suggest tighter regulation would lead to the closure of thousands of shops across the UK. This argument is based on the economic benefit which the gambling industry says it gives to high streets and communities around the UK, but is out of line with how the public sees the presence of gambling shops as a sign of community decline. In focus groups, participants discuss the negative effects of these shops on their streets, often referencing their relationship with heavy drinking, violence and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

It defies logic why you need six betting shops, and I think it's just the antisocial behaviour that comes with it. And like others, I've said there's chicken shops as well. I don't know what the thing is between chicken shops and betting shops, but that seems to be the sort of common denominator and I just think it just brings the area down. If I'm being honest.

Zahid, Account manager, Brent

Similarly, focus group participants do not feel that the benefit to their community is real, and certainly not enough to counteract the negative social impacts gambling shops bring to their neighbourhood. It should be no surprise that Britons, across every region of the country, would rather have an empty shop on their high street than a gambling shop.



They're low [paying] jobs, it's not very much they pay the workers, so it's bullshit. It's what a lot of companies say, and it's not true.

Harini, City planner, Brent

I imagine much of – if we're talking about slot machines – a lot of that is automated anyway, so it's not like those machines are getting paid.

Pete, Graphic designer, Brent

So I don't know, in other places probably, I don't look in betting shops in other places, but in Newmarket in my opinion it's extremely high. It's on every corner you have a shop.

Andreia, Self-employed, Newmarket

It is clearly not a priority of the British public to maintain gambling shops on their high street. Instead, their priority is to protect their communities from the negative social impacts they often see as coming alongside such establishments.

The next chapter will discuss the public opinion implications for any party or government that would want to seek or avoid placing further regulation on the industry.

Chapter 5 | Fixing the odds: what Britons want their politicians to do

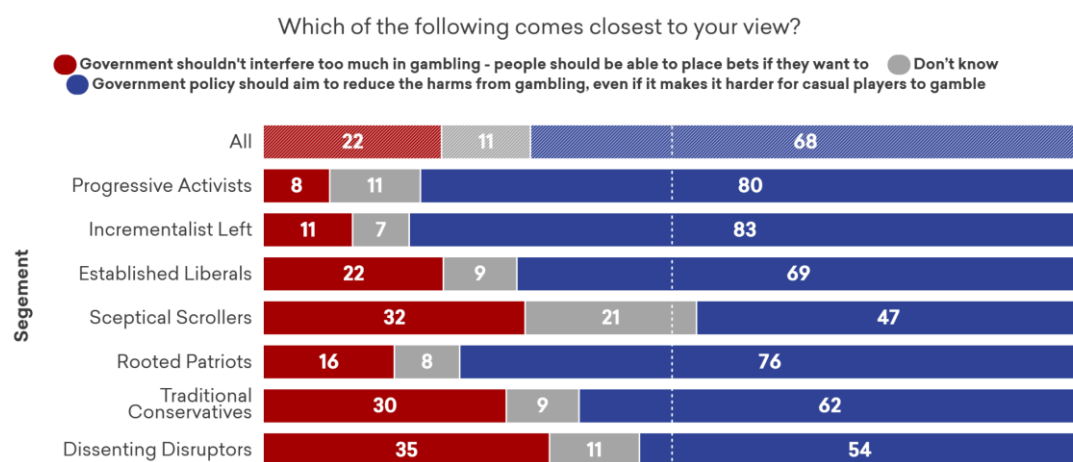
The Government finds themselves in an increasingly precarious political position, losing voters to Reform on their right and the Greens and Liberal Democrats on their left. The Government has, perhaps understandably, been wary of rocking the boat further with controversial measures – a so-called “[war on fun](#)” could appear politically costly at first glance.

What the data shows, however, is that moves to regulate the gambling industry are not only uncontroversial from a public opinion perspective but could be politically expedient and popular among the segments who were vital to Labour’s victory in 2024.

An opportunity for the Government

Most Britons believe that government policy should focus on reducing gambling harm, even if this impacts people’s ability to gamble – by 68 per cent to 22 per cent. The margin is greater still among those segments that matter most to Labour’s electoral coalition. The Incrementalist Left overwhelmingly places greater value on protection from harm than the freedom to bet, at a rate of 83 per cent to 11 per cent. Progressive Activists, among whom Labour have lost support to their left, are similarly in favour of greater regulation – 80 per cent to 8 per cent. Rooted Patriots, who make up the greatest group of Labour to Reform switchers since 2024 and who often live in the “Red Wall” are similarly aligned, 76 per cent to 16 per cent.

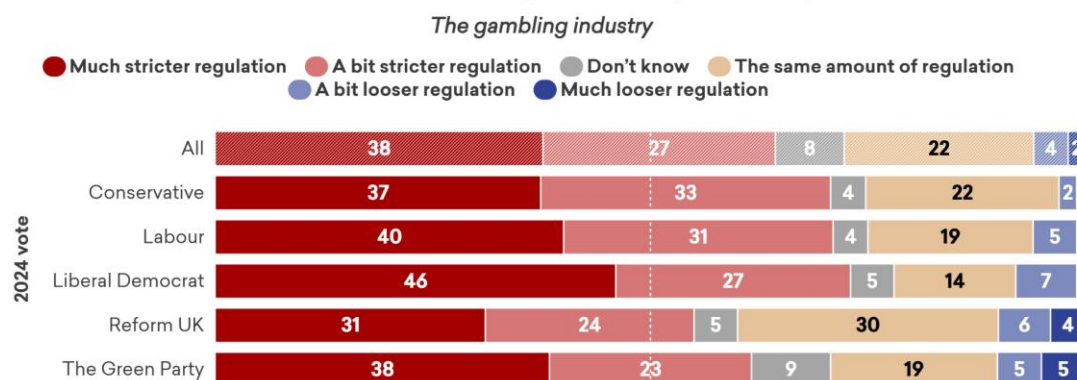
In truth, the extent of support for gambling regulation means it is unlikely any party would benefit from the perception of being too close to the gambling industry. Labour in particular has the most to lose from being seen as having a “light touch” in areas where their coalition has concerns about the social harms of the industry.



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There is support for increased regulation of gambling across the political spectrum – from Reform voters to Labour. Labour to Reform switchers are in fact some of the most likely to support regulation of the industry, with two-thirds (67 per cent) in favour of greater regulation.

For each of the following industries, indicate whether you would like to see the government apply stricter, looser or the same amount of regulation as they are currently under



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The dangers of playing it safe

The public worries that gambling is extending into more areas of their lives, that problem gambling is getting worse, and the industry is a net negative in their communities. A government which appears unequal to the task of regulating this, at best, risks appearing too weak to tackle a growing societal problem. At worst, conversations with focus group participants suggests the government risks appearing to collude with the industry or using them as a tax cash cow.

They are just there to earn money and they try, but they must be making the government money then. So the big gambling corporations might be one of the big corporations that are actually paying tax... instead of all the ones that you hear aren't.

John, Plumber, Brent, Labour voter

In Wigan residents argued tolerating the gambling industry was antithetical to some of the principles of the Labour party – to advocate for the poorest in society and particularly for children of low-income parents – and instead was doing them harm by putting gambling first.

I just think that she [local MP] also supports social care and stuff like that, and I think if she came and did a day in my job and looked at people who are suffering really bad with gambling issues and are spiralling out of control, and when people are actually feeling suicidal because they've lost everything.

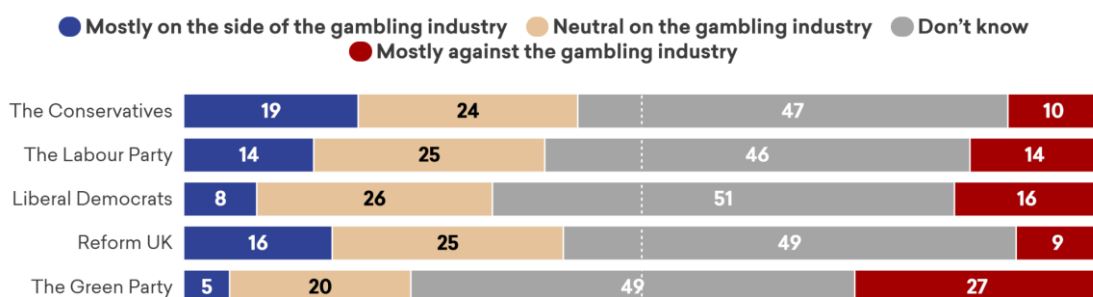
Shauna, Homeless charity worker, Wigan, Labour-Reform switcher

They've [Labour] not actually fulfilled much of their manifesto in terms of the budget or spending and in terms of gambling itself, again, it's having a negative impact, which could be something that's regulated or something that is more accessible for help. So I don't think I'll be voting Labour if there was an election anytime soon.

Jason, Customer services, Wigan, Labour-Reform switcher

Zooming out from gambling, More in Common's research finds Britons increasingly feel as though the government does not care about them or have the ability to make their lives better. Gambling is another piece of that puzzle, which makes British citizens feel that politicians aren't grasping the big issues ordinary people face.

For each of the following parties, state whether you think they are on the side of, or against, the gambling industry



In the 2025 Autumn Budget, the gambling levy was increased. However, while increasing taxation on gambling is popular, taxation **without additional regulation** runs the risk of

making the government appear reliant on revenue from harmful vices. In focus groups, participants pointed out that taxing the industry, but not strictly enforcing tighter regulation, will indicate that the government themselves are happy to profit from gambling, and thus lack an incentive to reduce gambling harm.

The government do nothing because it's tax money. It's tax, isn't it? It's just easy money, and they're just going to increase it this year I believe... it's just going to be targeting for more money for the government. They're not going to do anything to protect the gamblers and protect the vulnerable, like what they've done with cigarettes, what they've done with everything.

Alison, Nurse, Clacton-on-Sea, Reform voter

The economics of gambling are just one part of the story in how the public think about the harms of gambling, while being less of a priority than the social impacts and the dangers to young people. More tax would be popular in its own right, but is a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for reassuring the public that gambling is being taken seriously.

Conclusion

The British public does not have confidence that those suffering with gambling addiction can take action on their own to reduce harm. They worry those suffering with addiction lack self-control and do not trust the industry to properly self-regulate with money to be made. This leaves a gap for government regulation to fill.

Views of the gambling industry are not one size fits all. There are parts of it which are close to Britons' heart, such as the penny arcades on seaside piers up and down the country, placing a bet at the races, and the ability to have a drink and place a bet while at a social event. On the other hand, mobile and digital gambling in particular are seen as being out of control, trapping vulnerable people in limitless and fast ways to lose money out of sight of their loved ones and those who can help them.

While recent increases to the taxation of online gambling have broad support among the public, this alone might not be enough. If the government fails to make clear efforts to reduce the reach of the gambling industry and gambling harms at the same time, then it risks being seen as a profiteer from them.

The public are particularly concerned about the impacts on the young, and the risks of introducing gambling habits to under-18s and exposing them to the associated harms. For them, and anyone else suffering from addiction, the easy access, insufficient checks and balances and availability of mobile and online gambling are of the greatest concern.

There is a clear political opportunity in taking strong action on gambling to rebuild trust and credibility with the public by tackling an issue which has visibility on every high street in Britain. A thoughtful and targeted response to this issue could help the governing party's fortunes while tackling a growing public health concern.

This research points towards the following key recommendations from public opinion on the matter:

- Regulating against the social harms of gambling, as well as utilising taxation to reduce its popularity.
- Restricting advertising, particularly where young people are likely to see it.
- Mobile and online gambling should be slowed and have greater barriers to entry, particularly to the young or people living with addiction.

Methodology

Quantitative research

Polling in this report was conducted by More in Common, a member of the British Polling Council.

Polls are weighted and allocated to be representative of the adult population of Great Britain.

Most of the analysis in this report is drawn from polling conducted on the following dates:

- 22nd – 26th August 2025, N=2,032

Additional data were used from these polls:

- 14th – 16th November 2025, N=2,062
- 26th – 27th November 2025, N=1,507

Data tables for this research can be found at www.moreincommon.org.uk/our-work/polling-tables/

Qualitative research

This report draws on four focus groups conducted online via Zoom, with representative participants from the following areas:

- Brent (25th September 2025)
- Wigan (21st October 2025)
- Clacton (21st October 2025)
- Newmarket (23rd October 2025)

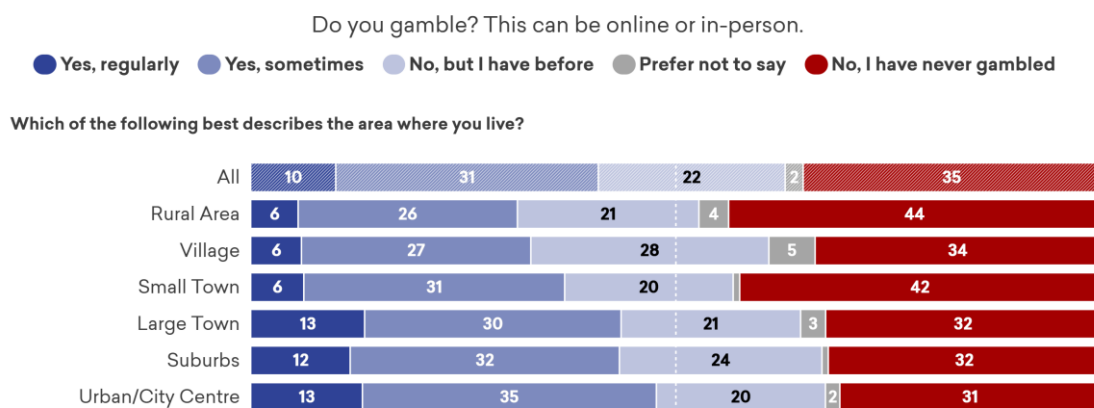
Participants were recruited using an independent recruitment company.

Appendix

Gambling habits in Britain

Gambling's growing presence across Britain is not felt evenly. As discussed in Chapter 1, younger men are more likely to gamble than others, and will typically place bigger wagers. However, this is not the only predictor of gambling habits.

Likely due to having greater access to betting shops and casinos, Britons in urban areas are more likely to be regular gamblers than average, and twice as likely as those in rural areas, villages or small towns.

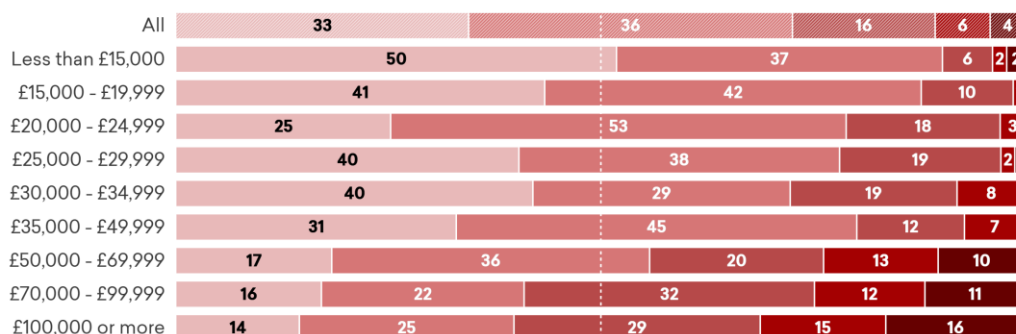


Affluence has a clear effect on the types of gambling that Britons take part in, and the amounts of money that they stake. Those on lower incomes are significantly more likely to place single-digit wagers when they gamble, while those earning more than £50,000 p/a are much likelier to bet £50 or more.

How much money do you typically stake in total when you gamble?

Less than £5 £5 - £20 £20 - £50 £50 - £100 More than £100

What is your annual personal income before tax?

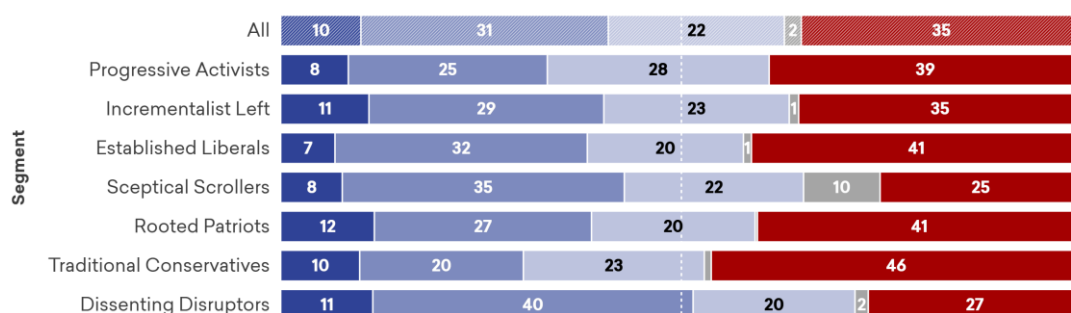


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Question was asked to those who currently gamble

Of the Seven Segments, Dissenting Disruptors stand out as the most likely to be current gamblers, with more than half saying that they gamble regularly or sometimes. Although Progressive Activists are the most anti-gambling segment, this is not simply a function of being the least likely to gamble: Traditional Conservatives and Established Liberals are the most likely segments to say that they have never gambled before.

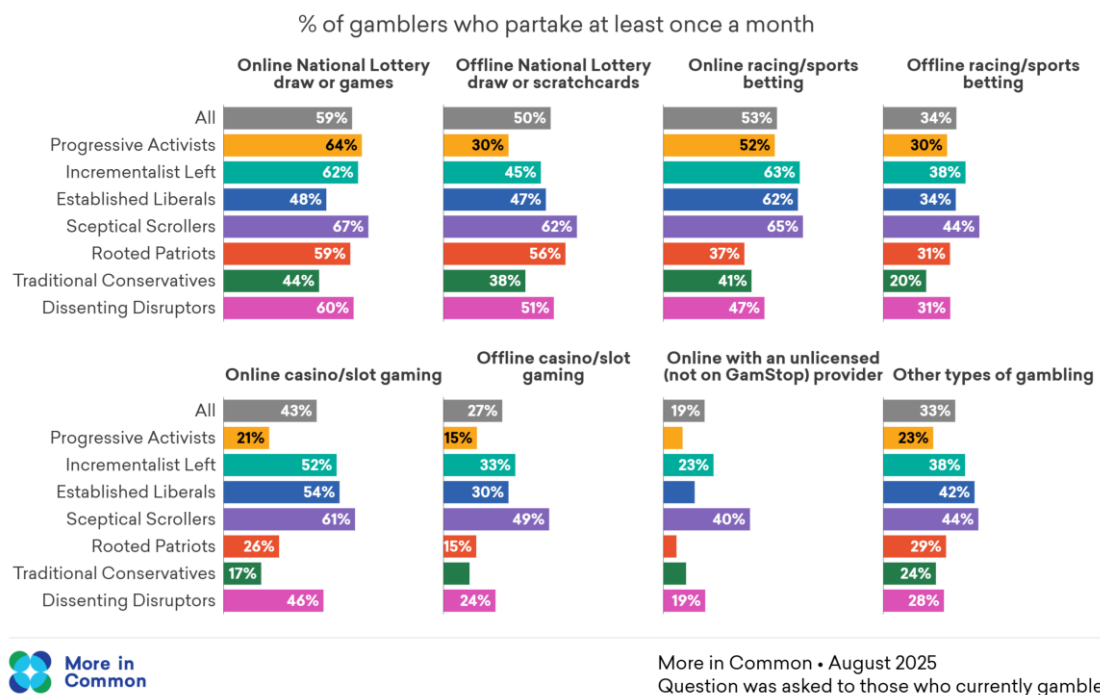
Do you gamble? This can be online or in-person.

Yes, regularly Yes, sometimes No, but I have before Prefer not to say No, I have never gambled

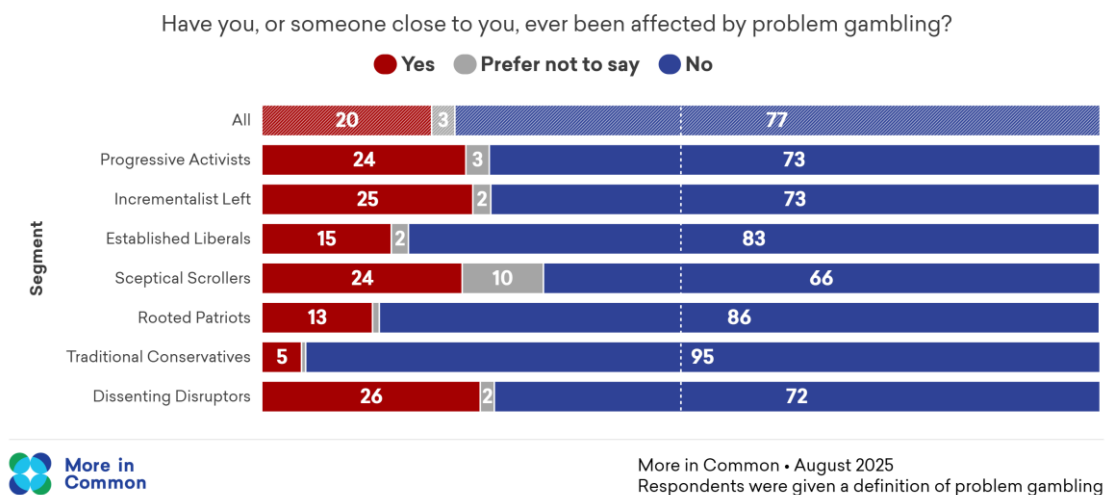


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The Seven Segments also gravitate towards different types of gambling. The Incrementalist Left, Established Liberals and Sceptical Scrollers are keener than others on online sports betting, while Rooted Patriots and Dissenting Disruptors are more likely to buy in-person lottery tickets and scratchcards than most other segments. Online lotteries are popular across the majority of the segments, with more than half of all but Established Liberals and Dissenting Disruptors saying they partake at least once a month.



While a fifth of Britons told us that they have been impacted by problem gambling, this rises to a quarter among Progressive Activists, the Incrementalist Left, Sceptical Scrollers and Dissenting Disruptors.



This is not merely a proxy for how much each segment gambles. The rate at which Britons report being affected by problem gambling varies by whether they currently gamble or used to gamble, and by segment. While those who have quit gambling among Progressive Activists, Established Liberals and Rooted patriots are more likely to report being affected, Dissenting Disruptors, Sceptical Scrollers and the Incrementalist Left are more likely to say they have been affected by problem gambling if they are still gambling today.

