Young People's Reflections on Gambling Marketing: Executive Summary of findings among those aged 11-17

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Introduction

Who did this research?

This research was conducted by YouGov on behalf of GambleAware, drawing on academic expertise from Dr Raffaello Rossi (University of Bristol) and Dr Glen Dighton (Swansea University).

Why was this research done?

Exposure to gambling at scale and early onset of gambling behaviours in youth are associated with an elevated risk of developing gambling-related harms later in life[1].

Official statistics from the UK Gambling Commission (2025) show that 49% of 11–17-year-olds have gambled in the past 12 months. Around 1.2% of children are experiencing gambling problems, with a further 2.2% at risk[2].

Although marketing is widely understood to influence gambling behaviour, large-scale, nationally representative studies on children's views and attitudes towards gambling marketing are largely missing.

Accordingly, this research aimed to understand children and young people's views and attitudes towards gambling marketing in Great Britain, using nationally representative survey data from 3,260 participants aged 11–24. This included 1,645 who are 11–17-years-old.

What does this report show?

This report provides an overview of the method, key findings, recommendations and opportunities for future research with young people. The findings in this report focus specifically on the findings from 11–17-year-olds as, despite not being of legal age to engage in gambling, they are still exposed to gambling marketing and gambling-like activities.

The full report can be accessed on the GambleAware website.

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[1] **Perez (2024).** Too Young to Gamble: Long-term Risks from Underage Gambling. Available at: **https://ouci.dntb.gov.ua/en/works/7W3ObPD7/**

[2] **Gambling Commission (2025),** Young People and Gambling 2025: Official statistics. Available at: https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/publication/young-people-and-gambling-2025-official-statistics

Methodology

Phase 1: Background research

- A consultation phase (28th August - 18th September 2025) captured responses from 12 relevant stakeholders via an online survey focused on identifying priority areas to address.
- A focus group was conducted on the 16th of September 2025 with five young people between the ages of 19 and 23, recruited via Ygam. This sought their input on important topics to cover and how the target group may engage in or interpret different aspects of the survey.

Phase 2: Cognitive interviews

- Nine individual cognitive interviews were conducted (1st - 8th October 2025) with children and young people between the ages of 11 and 24, with the survey subsequently refined based on their feedback e.g. wording simplified, examples added.
- Whilst nine cognitive interviews offered solid refinement insight, it is recognised that nuanced interpretations or colloquial framing of gambling-adjacent content by children and young people could have still been missed

Phase 3: Quantitative research

- The final phase involved surveying 3,260 children and young people on their experience and perception of gambling marketing, sourced from YouGov's online panel. This included 1,645 who are 11-17-years-old.
- The survey was informed by findings from the stakeholder consultation, focus group interviews with children and young people, and cognitively tested among the target audience before being set live.
- This sample was designed to be representative of children and young people (aged 11 to 24) in Great Britain by age, gender, region, and ethnicity.
- Fieldwork was undertaken between the 20th October and 5th November 2025, including a pilot stage to ensure everything was working as intended.
- We acknowledge the limitations of online recruitment, including issues of digital exclusion and the under-representation of low-income children and young people.

Key findings

Awareness of gambling brands and exposure to gambling content is high

- One in five (20%) 11-17s could mention three or more gambling brands unprompted (e.g. Bet365, Paddy Power, Betfred), indicating familiarity with gambling.

- When shown logos (including Sky Bet, the National Lottery, Stake.com, etc.), 58% of 11–17s could recognise three or more logos. This demonstrates how widespread exposure to gambling is, and how accessible it is.

- Most 11–17s (66%) recall being exposed to gambling marketing (e.g. adverts on TV or social media or shop/window displays) in the past month.

Young people are most frequently exposed to gambling ads online or on TV

- This is the case for three in ten (31%) 11-17s citing online, followed by TV (28%).

- One in seven (14%) 11-17s report seeing gambling adverts more often in public spaces (e.g. billboards, shops or sport venues). Only four percent say they mostly hear them on the radio.

Gaming and sports sponsorship drive high awareness and interaction among young people

- Three in ten (31%) 11-17s say they've seen games that feel like gambling, with 30% of this audience saying they usually interact with them. A similar proportion (32%) have seen sports or gaming footage featuring gambling logos on clothing, with one in five (21%) of this group interacting with it.

- Interaction, rather than passive exposure, highlights the significance of these findings for prevention efforts.

- The largest gap appears with online casino and betting adverts: 38% report awareness, while 8% report interaction.

Most say that gambling ads make gambling seem harmless, with not enough warning of the risks

- Around 3 in 5 (61%) 11-17s say gambling ads make gambling seem harmless. This perception of gambling as harmless is important, as it represents a key risk factor for early gambling initiation.

- A similar proportion (55%) say gambling ads do not give enough warning about potential risks.

Alternative messages previously identified in research[3] such as 'gambling comes at a cost' and 'gambling is addictive' are seen as more effective than Take Time to Think

- 1 in 3 11-17s say that 'gambling comes at a cost' is the message that most shows the potential risks of gambling, higher than Take Time to Think (32% vs. 5%).

- A similar pattern exists for the message most likely to prevent someone gambling before they turn 18 (23% for 'gambling comes at a cost' vs. 8% for Take Time to Think).

There is strong support for tighter rules – many back banning or restricting gambling ads across all platforms

- The majority (82%) of young people think adverts should be banned or restricted on social media popular with children, with high proportions also saying this for the TV/radio (77%), video games (75%) and in shop windows (71%).

- Three in five (60%) 11–17s support a complete ban on gambling adverts on social media popular with children.

Most want clear risk warnings on ads and websites, with gambling advertising seen as hard to avoid

- The majority of 11–17s (64%) agree that it's difficult to avoid gambling advertising and content.

- Similar majorities say that more should be done to reduce the amount of gambling advertising/content they see (71%) and there should be messages about the risk of gambling on gambling adverts and websites (83%).

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[3] **YouGov (2024), I**mproving safer gambling messaging on operator adverts – Full report. Available at: https://www.gambleaware.org/our-research/publication-library/articles/improving-safer-gambling-messaging-on-operator-adverts-full-report/

Recommendations

Produced by Dr Raffaello Rossi and Dr Glen Dighton

Around 15% of children (11-17-year-olds) in this study said they gambled because of advertising, which promotes an illegal activity for under-18s. Regulators should treat this as a priority harm. We recommend that the following changes be implemented via statutory regulation rather than self-regulation. At present, Great Britain is a global outlier in relying primarily on industry self-regulation for gambling advertising[4].

Policy and legislation

1. **Limit the volume of gambling advertising**
   Children's exposure to gambling ads is high, and current rules in Great Britain focus on content rather than volume. Statutory limits or bans on when and where gambling ads can appear are increasingly introduced across Europe. We suggest the following to reduce the exposure to children:

   a. **Watershed ban**

      Similar to the forthcoming fast-food advertising restrictions, introduce a statutory watershed on gambling advertising – for example 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. – on television, radio and paid-for online advertising to reduce children's exposure.

   b. **Ban gambling content marketing**
      Over one-third of young people engaged with content marketing such as memes or jokes about gambling, and previous research shows this is particularly appealing to children[5]. Gambling content marketing (e.g. influencer reel, TikTok challenges) should be banned.

   c. **Reduce child-facing sponsorship and branding**
      Phase out prominent gambling branding in spaces with large child audiences, such as during major sporting events, in public-transport or around schools.

      Sports or gaming footage featuring gambling logos on clothing has high awareness and high engagement amongst young people online. A land-based policy will be impactful in reducing exposure to gambling logos online.

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[4] **Ipsos (2024),** Drivers of Gambling Marketing Restrictions – An International Comparison. Available at: https://www.gambleaware.org/our-research/publication-library/articles/drivers-of-gambling-marketing-restrictions-an-international-comparison/

[5] **Rossi, R & Nairn, A (2024)** Clearly (not) identifiable – The recognisability of gambling content marketing. Available at: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14707853241292953

Regulations and enforcement

2. Introduce online-specific rules for gambling marketing

Smartphones and online platforms are currently the primary source of gambling ads for children, yet specific regulatory rule for digital advertising remain limited. However, current rules are poorly equipped to deal with targeted, data-driven and sharable content. We recommend:

a. **Create a central repository for online gambling ads**
Require all online gambling advertisements to be logged in a publicly accessible repository, enabling independent scrutiny of creative content, targeting and spend.

b. **Default opt-out for under-25s**
Social media platforms already offer controls to limit gambling ads, but these are hidden in settings. For users under 25, the default should be to opt out of gambling marketing, with an active choice required to opt in.

c. **Stronger duties on platforms and independent audits**
Place a legal duty on platforms not to serve gambling ads to under-18s, backed by independent audits of age-gating, targeting and enforcement. Clear penalties should be in place to ensure adherence.

Public health, messaging, and education

3. Mandate strong, youth-tested safer gambling messaging

Children and young people rated messages such as "Gambling comes at a cost" and "Gambling is addictive" as most effective:

a. **Standardised, prominent health warnings on all gambling messaging**
Require clear, evidence-based health warnings on all gambling marketing and branded communications, including adverts, sponsorship, and in-app promotions.

b. **Independent, youth-tested campaigns**
Develop safer gambling campaigns independently of industry and re-test them with young people annually to ensure that messages are salient, understandable and more prominent than brand or promotional content.