



Behind the Odds: Gambling and Children and Young People in Great Britain

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Why should you care about gambling among children and young people?



In person and online, young people (those aged 11-25) are being exposed to high levels of gambling, which is seriously impacting their mental health, friendships, money and overall wellbeing.

49%

of **11-17 year olds**
have gambled in the
previous 12 months.¹



29%

of young people have
seen **someone they
live with** gamble.²

1 in 4



18-24 year olds
who gamble,
are experiencing
'problem gambling'
– **more than twice
the rate of adults
25 or older.**³

18-24



2x

as likely to experience
high levels of problems
from gambling.⁴

In the UK, 18-24
year olds are **less
likely to gamble**
compared to adults,
but those who do
are more than

What has this paper done?

This summary brings together
GambleAware's research
on young people and
gambling (11-24)
across Great Britain.

It isn't about
blaming anyone.

It's about helping
you understand
gambling, spot early
warning signs,
and know where
support is available.

WARNING



RISK AHEAD

¹Young People and Gambling 2025: Official statistics - <https://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/publication/young-people-and-gambling-2025-official-statistics>

²IBID

³GambleAware Treatment and Support Survey 2024

⁴IBID

What does gambling look like?

Gambling isn't just **casinos** or **betting shops** anymore. It can appear in:

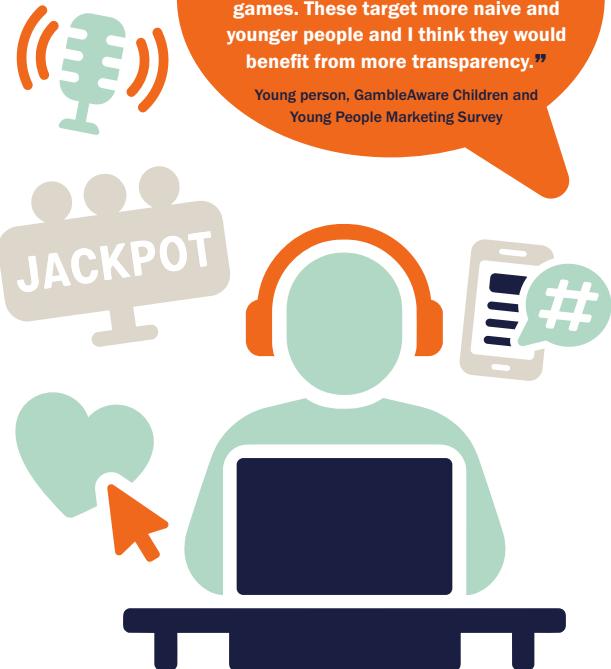
- **Loot boxes**, prize wheels and random reward systems
- **Fantasy sports**, esports betting, live match predictions
- **Influencers/streamers** promoting codes or “boosts”
- **TikTok**, YouTube, Instagram videos showing “big wins”
- **Games and apps** using bright colours, fast cuts, and flashy animations like gambling sites

“Using fun colours and noises attracts not only over 18s but also children. A tiny print of “gamble responsibly” won’t be read and won’t prevent anyone from gambling.”

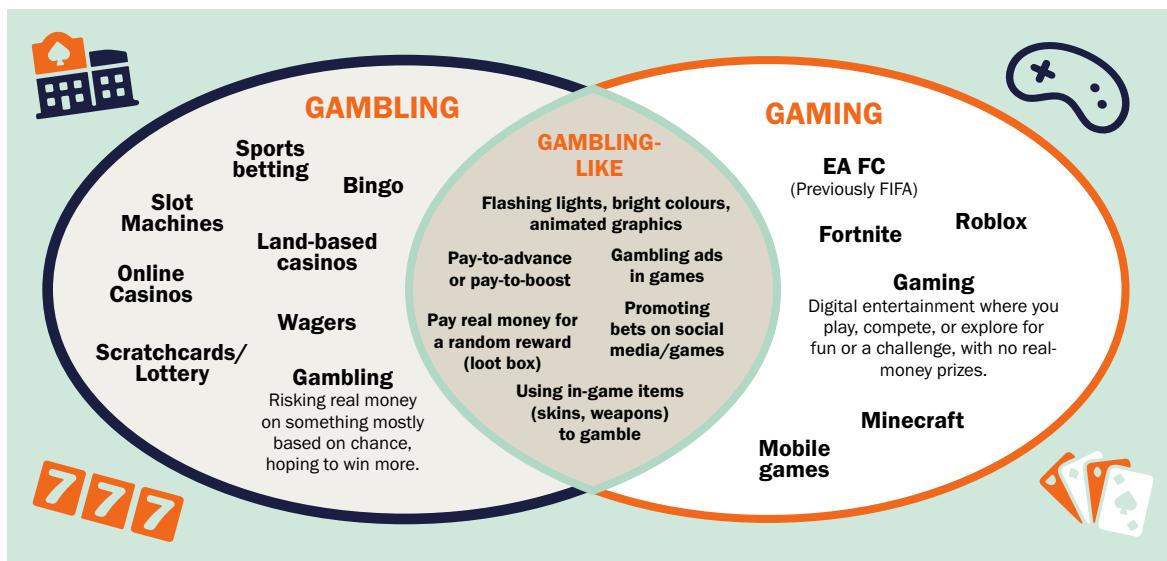
Young person, GambleAware Children and Young People Marketing Survey

“I think a lot of gambling adverts - particularly the kind I see on social media - don’t make it clear that they are promoting gambling, eg. omaze; pay to win mobile games. These target more naive and younger people and I think they would benefit from more transparency.”

Young person, GambleAware Children and Young People Marketing Survey



Gambling can feel fun or social — **but we are rarely shown the risks**. This makes gambling seem normal and harmless, even when it isn't.





What are gambling harms?

Gambling harms are any **negative effects from gambling** – yours or someone else's.

Gambling harms in young people may look like:

- Stress, anxiety, shame, or losing control
- Spending pocket/lunch money or savings on gambling
- Problems with friends or family
- Poor sleep or low mood
- Struggling with schoolwork or slipping grades



As a young person, you may be affected by gambling harm if you:

- Feel pressure to bet because friends or group chats are doing it
- Hide gambling from parents/teachers or using private browsers or deleting apps
- Follow influencers and celebrities known for streaming or placing large bets
- Have mood swings relating to losses and wins



Someone you know may be affected by gambling harm if they:

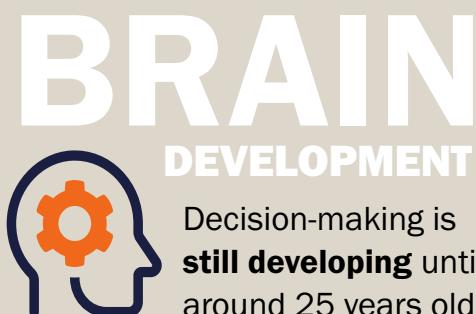
- Have money problems: they may need to borrow money, or can't explain where amounts are coming from or going
- Use gambling-related slang, like "acca", "parlay", "taking an L", "huge W", "hit a lick"
- Start selling or trading personal items (tech, trainers, games) to fund bets
- Spend too much time online checking odds or watching bets
- Get emotional about sports /esports results
- 'Crash out' and display extreme, over-the-top behaviour after a big loss

What increases gambling harms and why are young people more at risk?

A number of things can put young people **at risk of gambling harm** or make it more difficult to get support. These include:

“It’s as dangerous and addictive as nicotine, alcohol and illegal drugs. You’re not allowed to aim adverts for these things at children so why can you aim gambling at us? It’s wrong to have ads for gambling in half time for football games for example.”

Young person, GambleAware Children and Young People Marketing Survey



Many don't realise certain games or apps **are gambling**

LOW AWARENESS



LACK OF SUPPORT



Most support **isn't designed with young people or for them**



LACK OF RESEARCH

Most studies focus on adults, **not young people's experience**



Who is most affected?

Gambling harm doesn't affect all young people equally. **Gambling harm can be even more pronounced for young people from certain groups**, especially those relating to:

1 Lower-income backgrounds

Financial stability plays a key role in the experience of gambling harms. **Money struggles can make gambling seem more attractive** and there are more gambling venues in more deprived areas.

Young adults in the **top 20%** of most deprived areas report more than double the rate of "problem gambling" compared to those in the **bottom 20%** of least deprived areas (**11% vs. 4%**).

2 Ethnic minorities

Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds or migrant communities often face **additional pressures in society**, such as racism, discrimination, and marginalisation. This can make gambling seem like a good way to deal with this stress.

Among **18-24** year olds from ethnic minority backgrounds, those from Black ethnic groups experience the highest rates of harm: **42%** report some level of gambling harm, and **23%** experience 'problem gambling'.

3 Neurodivergence

Young people with Autism or ADHD **may take more risks, be more impulsive, or may seek more excitement** compared to neurotypical young people.

18-24 year olds who are **autistic** or have **ADHD** are nearly **three times** as likely to experience 'problem gambling' (PGSI 8+) as those who are neurotypical (**13% vs. 5%**).

4 Mental health issues

Young people **facing anxiety or low moods** may turn to gambling to cope with these issues, but they can often make emotional wellbeing worse.

Among **18-24** year olds experiencing any level of gambling problems, **45%** report low mental wellbeing and nearly a quarter (**23%**) are at a high risk of experiencing suicidal thoughts.

5 Gender

International research consistently shows that **young men and boys are more likely to take part** in gambling than young women and girls. Young men and boys have also reported participating in more types of gambling activities.

Boys are **eight times** more likely to participate in fantasy sports betting, **four times** more likely to participate in sweep stakes, and **three times** more likely to participate in esports betting.

⁵https://www.gambleaware.org/media/eglju4x/gaming_and_gambling_report_final_0.pdf



What can I do?

It can be difficult to navigate what to do.
Here we give some **helpful guidance**:

Do....



- **Question how gambling is presented to you**
 - Is an advert presenting gambling as **harmless fun**?
 - Is an advert or celebrity **trying to influence you** and how?
 - Are you only being **shown wins** and not losses?
- **Look out for gambling-like elements in video games**

LOOT BOXES
Paying for a **random reward**

PRIZE WHEELS/ DAILY SPINS
Chance-based **prizes** with flashing lights

SKINS BETTING OR TRADING
Using items as a **currency** to “win” more

PAY-TO-OPEN CHESTS OR CRATES
Using **real money** to unlock random items

- **Teach yourself and your friends the signs of gambling harms mentioned earlier**
- **Use language carefully**
 - Think about how **outdated terms** like ‘gambling addict’ or ‘getting clean’ create more shame among people experiencing harm from gambling.
 - Use **compassionate terms** like ‘person who gambles’ or ‘in recovery’.
 - For more guidance on **non-judgmental language**, click [here](#)

● Start a conversation

Encourage friends and family to **talk openly** if you or they seem to be suffering from gambling harms. For example:



● Plan in advance

If you (or someone else) would prefer to **manage gambling activities** rather than quit, consider ways to limit money or time spent on gambling, in advance

● Know where to get help if you are a young person struggling with gambling harms

- Contact Samaritans for **general mental health support** (UK number 116123)
- Reach out to **trusted family or friends**
- Find **National Gambling Support Network** services in your area or [here](#)
- [GamCare](#) offer a **free service** for anyone aged 18 and under in the UK who is at risk of experiencing harm because of gambling

● Know where to get help if you are supporting a young person struggling with gambling harms

- Use GambleAware's **guidance for family and friends** [here](#)
- Book Ygam's **gambling harms training** [here](#) if you work with young people
- Use **educational resources** [here](#)



Don't...

- **Suffer in silence**

Seeking help is one of the bravest things to do



- **Judge yourself or someone else struggling with harms**

This can make **shame worse** and can make seeking help harder

- **Chase losses by trying to win money back**

This can lead to **more stress** and gambling

Conclusion



The number of people who experience gambling harms is increasing,

and young people are especially at risk because they're:

1. Still developing
2. Heavily targeted online
3. In environments where gambling is normalised
4. Often not protected by current laws

But harms can be spotted early and help is available

If you're worried about how gambling is making you feel, there is **support available**.

Search:

GambleAware

OR



Contact:

The
National Gambling
Helpline



GambleAware is the leading independent charity
(Charity no. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433)
and strategic commissioner of gambling harm education,
prevention and treatment across Great Britain to keep people
safe from gambling harms.

For further information, please contact

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