

Problem gaming

Online gaming and betting is a popular form of entertainment that is enjoyed by the vast majority of consumers. Typically, the rate of problem gaming in Europe lies at around 0.5 to 3%. The growth of the Internet has also not led in an increase in the incidence of problem gaming.

Consumer protection

While online gaming is a growing form of entertainment that the majority of consumers enjoy in a moderate and responsible way, the members of EGBA are not complacent and see it is their clear responsibility to take the appropriate measures to protect consumers. These include:

- Warning customers that gaming/betting could be harmful if not kept in moderation
- Providing advice on responsible gaming and betting
- Offering customers the ability to self-exclude or opt for cooling off periods from gaming
- Providing a clear link to the website of at least one organisation qualified to assist problem gamers (i.e. GamCare in the UK and Adictel in France)

Problem gaming prevention/policies need to be guided by clear facts and figures

Current studies have revealed the following:

The **Norwegian SINTEF study**¹ of December 2007, using a sample of 10,000 people, showed that the prevalence of problem gaming for both Internet and traditional games was 0.7% and therefore the same percentage as in 2002.

The **UK Prevalence Study**² of September 2007 used a sample of 9,000 people and concluded that the rate of problem gaming in 2007 was almost identical to that in 1999 (0.6% of population) even though Internet gaming was not included in the 1999 study.

The 2007 empirical study carried out by the Division on Addictions, Cambridge Health Alliance, a **Harvard Medical School**³ teaching affiliate, monitored and analysed the behaviour of 40,000 sports betting customers over eight months. The findings revealed 99 % of these customers exhibit moderate gaming behavior. Only 1 % is considered highly involved bettors, of whom a certain percentage may exhibit problematic gaming behavior.

Conclusion:

- Both UK and Norwegian studies show that a licensing model (like that of the UK) does not lead to more problem gaming than in a monopoly model (Norway).
- The development of Internet gaming in recent years has not led to an increase in the incidence of problem gaming.
- The large majority of online sports betting customers exhibit moderate gaming behaviour.

¹ <http://www.sintef.no/upload/Helse/SINTEF-Rapport%20Pengespill%202007.pdf>, page 2

² <http://www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk/pdf/british%20gambling%20prevalence%20survey%202007.pdf>

³ <http://www.divisiononaddictions.org>