Guidance on using statistics from the Gambling Survey for Great Britain

The guidance set out here is designed to help anyone who wishes to use data from the Gambling Survey for Great Britain (GSGB) to ensure it is reported correctly, this could include policy makers, academics, the gambling industry, the media, members of the public and any other interested users. It is produced in accordance with the Code of Practice for Statistics, Value 3.4 Clarity and Insight (opens in new tab).

If you wish to get in touch about the GSGB, or would like some advice on how best to use or communicate our statistics please email statistics@gamblingcommission.gov.uk

We have published this guidance because the official statistics from the GSGB are new and they are collected using a different methodology than previous official statistics. The guidance takes on board the recommendations from Professor Sturgis's independent review of the GSGB (opens in new tab) and his analysis of the impact of the change in methodology. We will continue to keep this guidance updated where further clarity is needed, or as a result of further work undertaken.

The GSGB, in common with other surveys, collects information from a sample of the population. Consequently, statistics based on the survey are estimates, and are subject to sampling error. Sampling error is commonly expressed in the form of a confidence interval. The intuition of a confidence interval is that, were we to repeat the survey in exactly the same way many times, the true value of the statistic in the population would be within the range given by the 95 percent confidence interval in 95 samples out of 100. Confidence intervals are affected by the variability of concept being measured, the size of the sample and other features of the sample design, such as stratification and weighting. Generally, the larger the sample, the smaller the confidence interval and, therefore, the more precise the estimate.

Confidence intervals should be taken into consideration by users, this is particularly true for PGSI estimates where base sizes can be small. We have provided confidence intervals for PGSI estimates within the data tables. Where differences are commented on in the annual report, these reflect the same degree of certainty that these differences are real, and not just within the margins of sampling error. Such differences can be described as statistically significant.

Summary of Comments on 20250813 Revised GSGB guidance_clean.pdf

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The GSGB can be used:

- to look at patterns within the data of gambling participation, PGSI, and consequences amongst different demographic groups
- to assess trends and changes in gambling participation, PGSI scores, and consequences of gambling, measuring changes against the 2023 baseline which was published in July 2024
- to compare patterns in gambling participation, PGSI estimates, and consequences of gambling for England, Scotland and Wales and regionally where sample sizes allow.
- to provide estimates of gambling participation, PGSI scores, and consequences of gambling amongst adults (aged 18 and over) in Great Britain.

For example, you could say:

"The Gambling Survey for Great Britain estimates 48 percent of adults in Great Britain aged 18 and over have gambled in the last 4 weeks." (GSGB Year 1, 2023)

"Estimates suggest approximately 2.5 percent of adults in Great Britain aged 18 and over had a PGSI score of 8+." (GSGB Year 1, 2023)

- to describe the range of consequences that someone may experience due to a person's own gambling and as a result of someone else's gambling.
- Provided that confidence intervals and methodological context are clearly communicated, GSGB results can be used to 'gross up' gambling participation and PGSI estimates to be expressed as numbers in the whole population.

For example, you could say: "Approximately 25 million adults in Great Britain have gambled in the past 4 weeks." (GSGB Year 1, 2023)

Previously, we have advised against extrapolating PGSI scores to the population level due to concerns about potential overestimation. However, a recent experimental study, led by Professor Patrick Sturgis and an independent team at NatCen, found evidence that the GSGB's self-completion methodology may elicit more accurate reporting of gambling

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Number: 1 Author: [redacted] Date: 12/08/2025 20:34:00 +01'00'
the previous advice suggests it would be better to say here 'estimates between 47 and 49 percent' or similar.

Number: 2 Author: [redacted] Date: 07/08/2025 14:51:00 +01'00'
Combine with participation above

Number: 3 Author: [redacted] Date: 13/08/2025 08:38:00 +01'00'
The bullet above suggests confidence intervals should be used, so perhaps express in that way rather than 'approximately' or add something along the lines that for more public-facing communications 'approximately' can be used instead of the interval.

> behaviours. Based on these findings, we are able to retract our earlier caution.

The GSGB should not be used:

- to provide direct comparisons with results from prior gambling or health surveys:

  > For example, it is not reasonable to say "there has been an x percentage increase or decrease in PGSI scores since 2018 compared to a previous survey."
  >
  > You could say “the Gambling Survey for Great Britain estimates that 2.5 percent of adults have a PGSI score of 8 or more. This is higher than estimates produced by other studies which use different methodologies.”

- as a measure of addiction to gambling

Impact of new methodology

The push-to-web survey approach enables better understanding of patterns and trends in gambling behaviour compared to periodic in-person interview surveys, and was endorsed by Professor Patrick Sturgis in his independent review of the GSGB methodological approach. However, Professor Sturgis also emphasised the need to conduct further research to examine the impact of the new methodology on estimates of gambling participation and PGSI rates (see here for the full list of recommendations).

To address some of these recommendations, we commissioned Professor Patrick Sturgis and an independent team at NatCen to examine how the GSGB’s methodology impacts reported gambling behaviours. Using an experimental design, the study tested whether estimates of gambling participation and PGSI scores varies based on:

1) Whether the survey invitation explicitly mentioned gambling;
2) The mode of administration (online self-completion vs. telephone interview); and
3) The comprehensiveness of the gambling activity list included in the survey.

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Number: 1 Author: [redacted] Date: 13/08/2025 08:40:00 +01'00'

I would omit this. I don't think this change in guidance really follows from the experimental research, it is just that both %s and grossed up frequencies need to include appropriate caveats around uncertainty. If it is necessary to acknowledge the change, just say after further consideration our guidance has changed on this.

Number: 2 Author: [redacted] Date: 05/08/2025 12:12:00 +01'00'

I think this remains as our key outstanding 'don't do' if we are comfortable in relaxing the other bits of caution

Number: 3 Author: [redacted] Date: 12/08/2025 13:18:00 +01'00'

A lot of this covered in previous section, do you think we need both?

Number: 4 Author: [redacted] Date: 12/08/2025 15:25:00 +01'00'

I agree . I've removed the 'comparability' section as we state not to compare with other surveys in the section above that too.

Number: 5 Author: [redacted] Date: 12/08/2025 12:28:00 +01'00'

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Number: 6 Author: [redacted] Date: 12/08/2025 12:38:00 +01'00'

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The study found that mentioning gambling in survey invites resulted in a small increases in estimates of gambling participation but did not significantly affect PGSI estimates. The study also found that participants who completed the survey online were more likely to score 1 or more on the PGSI, compared with those who completed the survey via telephone. This finding suggests that responses to PGSI questions may be supressed in interviewer-led surveys, due to social desirability bias (the tendency for people to respond to surveys in a way that they believe will be viewed favourably). In contrast, the GSGB's self-completion methodology mitigates this measurement bias and encourages more accurate reporting of gambling behaviours. Finally, the study showed that providing participants with a more extensive and up-to-date list of gambling activities (as in the GSGB) slightly increased gambling participation estimates, but this was not statistically significant. The updated activity list also had no effect on the rate of participants scoring 1 or more on the PGSI. Overall, this experimental research provides robust evidence that the GSGB produces valid estimates of gambling behaviour and PGSI scores.

Be careful reporting base numbers

To ensure we can include all relevant content within the GSGB, core questions are asked on both the online and paper version of the survey whereas some topical or modular questions are only asked on the online version of the survey. The Gambling Commission will clearly label any statistics which are based on online responses only, and users should do the same.

The GSGB asks a range of questions, some of which are applicable to all participants, some which are only applicable to people who have gambled and some which are only asked in the online version of the survey.

It is important to correctly reference whether statistics are based on all participants, or whether they are a subset of all participants, such as people who have gambled in the past 12 months or participants who completed the online version of the survey to set the findings in the correct context.

Through our stakeholder engagement we know that stakeholders are interested in multiple ways of presenting the data, for example at a population level including people who do not gamble as well as a focus on people who have gambled.

This distinction is important as the first group includes people who have not gambled on any activity in the past year, whereas the second group is based only on people who have gambled in the past 12 months. In the report we have also included a third group which excludes people who have only taken part in lottery draws. This is because lotteries are so much more popular than any other form of

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Number: 1 Author: [redacted] Date: 13/08/2025 08:50:00 +01'00'

I would be inclined to generalise this to 'questions about negative impacts of gambling'. There is no reason to think that this effect would be limited to the PGSI.

Number: 2 Author: [redacted] Date: 13/08/2025 08:54:00 +01'00'

This is too strong. I would say 'helps us to understand why surveys with different methodologies produce different estimates of gambling and its impacts. It demonstrates that the GSGB's self-completion design improves the accuracy of measurement for these outcomes.

gambling with a large proportion of people only participating in this activity, therefore, it can mask patterns of what is going on with other types of gambling. For this reason, in the report we sometimes present findings excluding the people who have only taken part in a lottery draw and not taken part in any other type of gambling. Where findings excluding those who have only taken part in a lottery draw are used, they should be clearly labelled.

Care should be taken when reporting statistics relating to the PGSI to make sure you are correctly stating if the results are based on the responses of all participants, or if they are based on people who have gambled. This is an area where we have previously seen misreporting.

It is also worth noting that new questions in the GSGB about the wider consequences of gambling are all presented as a proportion of participants who have gambled in the past 12 months or as a proportion of participants who know someone close to them who gambles, so should be reported in this way. This is an example of how you should report the data:

"Of those who know someone close to them who gambles, x percent had experienced relationship breakdown because of someone else's gambling."

Annual versus wave specific data

In a typical year there will be four wave specific publications from the GSGB plus an annual publication. Where possible, the annual data should be used as the priority with wave specific data being used when you want to look at patterns of gambling participation within a year, or where modular questions have only been asked in certain waves.

The GSGB collects data continuously throughout the year. Survey data will be available:

- on a quarterly basis via wave specific publications
- annually where data for the calendar year will be combined to provide a more detailed breakdown.

Annual datasets will be published to UK Data Service (opens in new tab).

We recommend using annual data as the default as this will be based on a large sample size (9,742 in Year 1 and approximately 20,000 from Year 2 onwards) and will allow for more analysis at sub population level. This is also how we will track trends over time. Annual publications will include findings on the consequences of gambling.

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Wave specific data should be used if you need data for a specific time period, and to track trends or patterns within a calendar year. These publications will focus predominately on participation in gambling in that time period.

Language

Use a person centric approach when reporting statistics about gambling.

Do not stigmatise or victimise those people experiencing adverse consequences from gambling.

Do not describe PGSI as a measure of gambling addiction.

The language we use matters. People who gamble are defined by more than their actions when they gamble. That is why we recommend a "person-centric" or "person first" approach. Whilst taking this new approach may use more words, it is important in lowering stigma and barriers to people seeking help for gambling addiction.

For example, instead of writing "x percent of gamblers…", you can write "x percent of people who gamble…".

There is more information available on why language matters from organisations including the University of Glasgow (opens in new tab), GambleAware (PDF) (opens in new tab) and Manchester Combined Authority (PDF) (opens in new tab).

The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) consists of nine questions which measure both behavioural symptoms of gambling disorder and certain adverse consequences from gambling. The PGSI should not be confused with a measure of gambling addiction. More information on how the PGSI is measured can be found here.

Wider evidence base

The GSGB is one source of data in the Commission's wider evidence base.

The Gambling Commission uses a range of data, research and insights to inform the decisions that we make and provide advice to the Government about gambling behaviour and the gambling market. To be the most effective regulator possible, we require a robust evidence base. The GSGB forms one source of evidence for our evidence base and should be considered alongside a wealth of other evidence and information which we use to fill our evidence gaps and priorities 2023 to 2026.

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If statistics are used incorrectly

We encourage people to use our statistics to support understanding of important issues related to gambling.

We expect that anyone using our official statistics should present the data accurately and in accordance with the guidelines presented here. This includes ensuring that the data is not taken out of context, manipulated, or presented in a way that could materially mislead others.

We have set out further information on the action we will take if we spot misuse of official statistics .
If you wish to get in touch about the GSGB, or would like some advice on how best to use or communicate our statistics please
email statistics@gamblingcommission.gov.uk

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