

**Licensing Authority statistics**

April 2014 to March 2019



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# Headline findings

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The headline findings in this report indicate areas of interest resulting from data provided by all 380 licensing authorities for the year ending 31 March 2019.

**51,541**

Permits/Notifications for gambling activity currently active.  
(-1.4% from March 2018)

**2,838**

Permits/Notifications for gambling activity issued this year.  
(-37% from March 2018)

**5,098**

Inspections/visits of premises where gambling activity takes place conducted by licensing authorities. (+1% from March 2018)

**13**

Average number of inspections/visits of premises where gambling activity took place per licensing authority. (No change from March 2018)

**105**

Total number of licensing authorities which did not conduct any inspections/visits of premises. (-13% from March 2018)

**140**

Total test purchasing visits conducted by all licensing authorities.  
(+77% from March 2018)

# Executive summary

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This report provides statistics by licensing authorities (LAs) in respect of their duties under the Gambling Act 2005 for the regulation of gambling in Great Britain.

This edition reports on the periods between April 2014 and March 2019. For reference, the accompanying Excel file contains comparative data dating back to April 2009.

As of March 2019, there are 51,541 permits and notifications in force for gambling-related activity in alcohol-licensed premises, clubs and unlicensed family entertainment centres across Great Britain. This represents a 1% decrease on last year, and a 7% decline over the last 5 years.

LAs reported that a total of 2,838 permits were issued or notifications received. Over a 5-year period, this figure has fallen by 1,729 (38%). The average quantity of permits issued/notifications received per LA was 7.

In addition, LAs have received 465 Occasional Use Notices (OUNs), allowing betting operators licensed by the Gambling Commission (the Commission) to take bets on tracks. A total of 9 Temporary Use Notices (TUNs) were submitted to LAs, permitting the holder of a non-remote casino operating licence (licensed by the Commission) to offer gambling activities at a temporary venue for a limited period of time.

The report also presents the quantity of LA conducted pre-planned inspections, follow-up inspections, inspections following a complaint, and test purchasing visits for age verification. During this reporting period (as part of their regulatory responsibility for gambling) LAs inspected or visited 5,098 premises, of which 3,290 were at locations where the operator is licensed by the Commission (for example, arcades, bookmakers, bingo halls, casinos and race tracks). Overall, this is an increase of 1% compared to last year. However, this is due entirely to visits to premises where the operator is not licensed by the Commission (Other). There have been decreases in all remaining areas. Over a 5-year period there is an overall decrease of 20% in the total quantity of inspections and visits conducted by LAs.

There is a decrease in inspections following a complaint and follow-up inspections, and an increase in pre-planned inspections and test purchasing visits. Compared to the previous reporting period, test purchasing visits rose by 77% and pre-planned inspections increased by 1%. Inspections following complaints fell by 12% while follow up inspections reduced by 21%.

There is a wide variation in the performance of LAs with respect to conducting inspections and visits. Of the 380 LA's, 6 (2%) conducted more than 100 inspections or visits in the year ending 31 March 2019. A majority of 253 (67%) conducted fewer than 10 inspections or visits during the year (including 105 LAs which conducted none). The average quantity of premises inspected or visited by each LA during this period was 13.

To make the system of shared regulation as effective and efficient as possible, the Commission notifies LAs of complaints and intelligence received regarding non-compliance and illegality in their geographical area which is primarily of a localised nature. These are referred to as Local Authority Compliance Events (LACE) referrals. During this reporting period, 85 referrals were made in the year ending March 2019, compared with 74 in the previous year (a 15% increase).

# Preface

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## The Gambling Commission

The Gambling Commission regulates commercial gambling in Great Britain, including arcades (excluding unlicensed Family Entertainment Centres), betting, bingo, casinos, gaming machine manufacturers and suppliers, gambling software providers, lottery operators and external lottery managers (excluding small society lotteries), remote gambling and the National Lottery.

The Commission does not regulate spread betting - this is the responsibility of the Financial Conduct Authority.

## Licensing Authorities

The Gambling Act 2005 established a system of shared regulation in gambling. It created one national regulator – the Commission – and many local regulators, the licensing authorities. The Act provides LAs with wide ranging powers to manage gambling provision locally, and with the ability to set fees in England and Wales (they are centrally set in Scotland) that cover the costs of discharging their responsibilities.

The Commission and LAs work in partnership to ensure that businesses which provide gambling do so in a way that; keeps crime out of gambling, keeps it fair and open for consumers, and protects children and other vulnerable people.

Although the Commission and LAs work in partnership, LAs tend to focus on the impact of gambling provision on local communities while the Commission's attention is more often focused at a national and regional level.

Within that overall framework, LAs have a range of specific responsibilities, including<sup>1</sup>:

- licensing and regulating premises for gambling activities
- considering notices given for the temporary use of premises for gambling
- granting permits for gaming and gaming machines in clubs and miners' welfare institutes
- regulating gaming and gaming machines in alcohol licensed premises
- granting permits to unlicensed family entertainment centres for the use of certain lower stake gaming machines
- granting permits for prize gaming
- considering occasional use notice for betting at tracks
- registering small society lotteries

## Licensing Authority Returns

LAs have a statutory duty to provide specific information to the Commission about aspects of gambling regulation – for example, the grant of premises licences and the annual return dataset. The Commission collates and analyses the LA returns to help it, LAs and the Government understand the local and national landscape of gambling regulation. The annual return is included in the Single Data List<sup>2</sup> that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has issued.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for explanation of terminology.

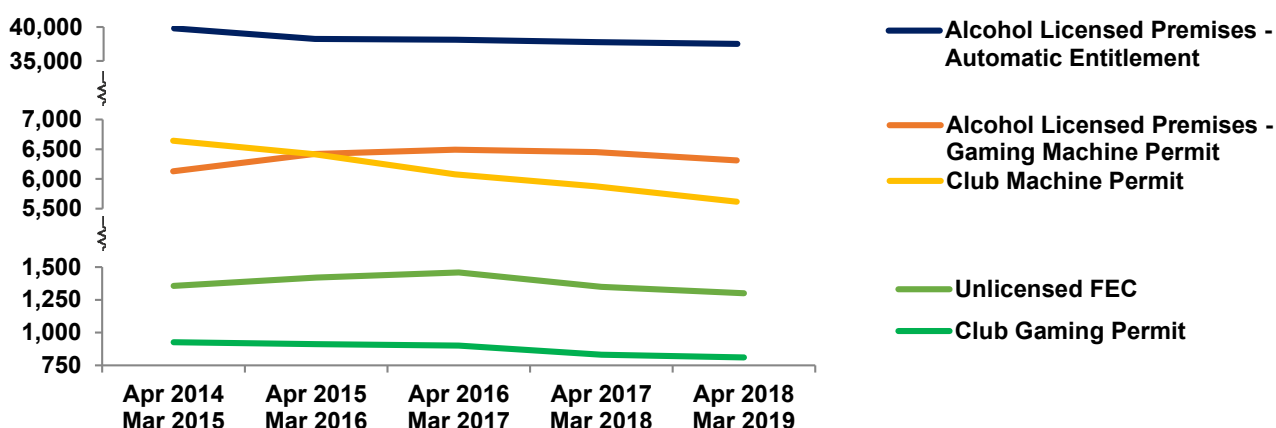
<sup>2</sup> The Single Data List is a catalogue of all datasets that LAs must submit in any given year to central government and such organisations as the Commission.



# Permits and Notifications

This section reports information on the different types of gambling permits and notifications<sup>3</sup>. The total number in force as at 31 March 2019 was 51,541, a decrease of 726 (1.4%) on last year's figure. Over a 5-year period, the total has decreased by 3,961 permits and notifications (7.1%).

Figure 1: Annual comparison of total permits in force



## Licensed Premises

In addition to the 51,541 permits and notifications currently in force, there are 10,866 premises in Great Britain where a licence has been granted by the LA. A premises licence, rather than a permit, is required when an operator is using a premises for a gambling business licensed by the Commission<sup>4</sup>.

Table 1: Number of active premises (licensed by the Gambling Commission)<sup>5</sup>

Gambling Sector	At 31 Mar 2015	At 31 Mar 2016	At 31 Mar 2017	At 31 Mar 2018	At 30 Sept 2018
Betting	8,995	8,915	8,802	8,557	8,425
Adult Gaming Centre (AGC)	1,610	1,549	1,546	1,511	1,436
Bingo	674	654	635	657	650
Family Entertainment Centre <sup>6</sup> (FEC)	331	345	319	219	203
Casino	148	152	149	151	152
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,758</b>	<b>11,615</b>	<b>11,451</b>	<b>11,095</b>	<b>10,866</b>

The total number of permits that LAs issued and notifications that LAs received was 2,838 for the year ending 31 March 2019. This is a decrease of 1,672 (37%) from the year prior. Over 5 years, the total cumulative number of permits and notifications has fallen by 3,961 (7%).

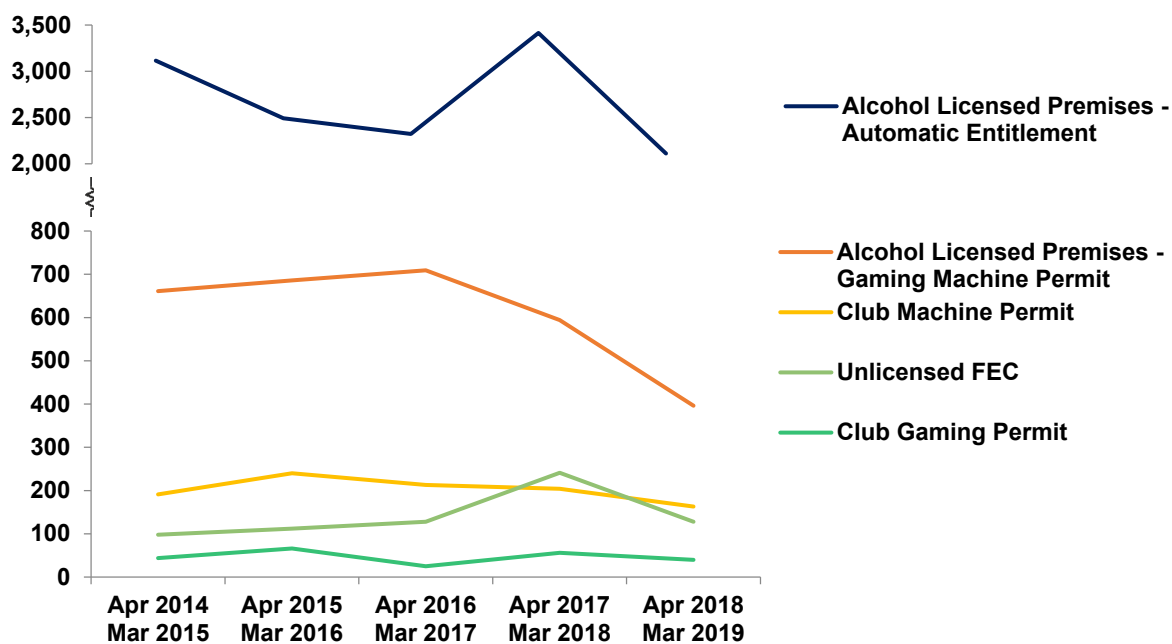
<sup>3</sup> Alcohol licensed premises have an automatic entitlement to make up to 2 category C or D machines available for use without requiring a permit. LAs need to receive a notification form from anyone wishing to take up this entitlement.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Gambling Commission, Industry Statistics (May 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Excluding casinos, the figures are taken from each operator's most recent return, as at the reporting period of the industry statistics publication the figures are sourced from.

<sup>6</sup> There are two types of FECs. One is licensed by the Commission and the other is granted a permit by the LA. The FECs referred to in the table are licensed by the Commission.

Figure 2: Annual comparison of permit types issued



Notifications received for Alcohol Licensed Premises - Automatic Entitlement accounted for 74.4% of all permits issued and notifications received during the year ending 31 March 2019. Alcohol Licensed Premises - Gaming Machine Permit accounted for 14.0%, Club Machine Permit 5.7%, Unlicensed FEC 4.5% and Club Gaming Permit 1.4%.

Over the last 5 years, the number of Unlicensed FEC permits issued increased by 15% from 111 year ending March 2014 to 128 year ending March 2019. Alcohol Licensed Premises - Gaming Machine Permits, Club Machine Permits, Club Gaming Permits and Alcohol Licensed Premises – Automatic Entitlement notifications issued have all decreased over the same period by 50%, 48%, 38% and 36% respectively.

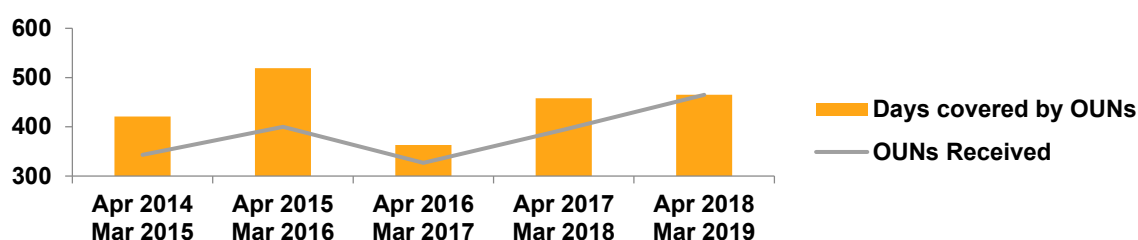
Many LAs reported that they had changed data recording systems during 2018-2019 which had identified previous reporting duplications, which they have addressed in this year's returns. A number of Club Machine Permits and Unlicensed FEC Permits had not been renewed when their 10 year permit expired.

# Notices

## Occasional Use notices

There were 465 Occasional Use Notices (OUNs) received by 85 LAs between April 2018 and March 2019. This represents a decrease of 3% of OUNs received over the previous 5 years. The number of days (465) which OUNs allowed betting operators licensed by the Commission to take bets on tracks has decreased by 17% over the same 5 year period. 295 LAs did not receive OUNs during the year ending 31 March 2019.

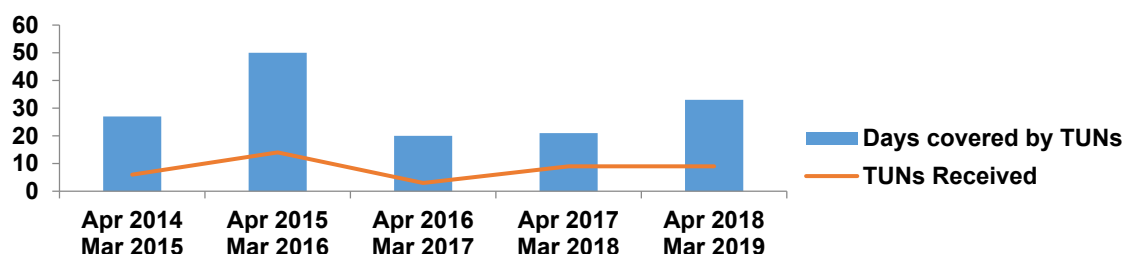
Figure 3: Annual comparison of OUNs issued and the number of days they permitted



## Temporary Use notices

There were 9 Temporary Use Notices (TUNs) received by 8 LAs between April 2017 and March 2018. This represents an increase of 29% of TUNs received over the previous 5 years. The number of days covered by the TUNs (permitting the holder of a non-remote casino operating licence, licensed by the Commission, to offer gambling activities at a temporary venue for a limited period of time), has decreased by 21% to 33 days over the last 5 years. 371 LAs did not receive TUNs during the year ending 31 March 2019.

Figure 4: Annual comparison of TUNs issued and the number of days they permitted



## Permits, Notifications and Notices Combined

Table 2: Annual comparison of combined permits/notification/notices

	Apr 2014 Mar 2015	Apr 2015 Mar 2016	Apr 2016 Mar 2017	Apr 2017 Mar 2018	Apr 2018 Mar 2019
<b>Total Permits / Notifications &amp; Notices Issued</b>	4,458	4,011	3,727	4,913	3,312
<b>Total Permits / Notifications &amp; Notices Issued excluding Alcohol Licensed Premises - Automatic Entitlement</b>	1,343	1,518	1,405	1,498	1,201



# Inspections and Visits

## Overview

The types of inspections reported as being undertaken by LAs are as follows:

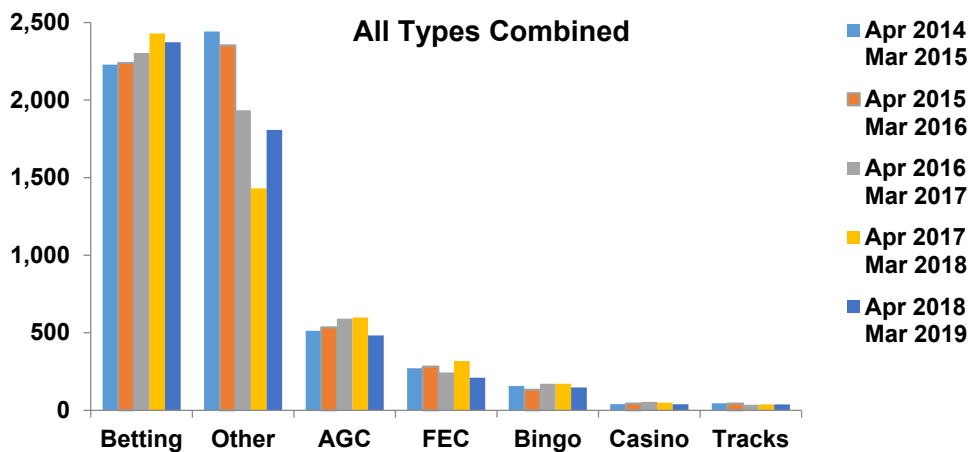
- Pre-planned inspections
- Follow-up inspections
- Inspections following a complaint
- Test purchasing visits

During the period April 2018 to March 2019, as part of their regulatory responsibility for gambling, LAs inspected or visited 5,098 premises, of which 3,290 were at locations where the operator is licensed by the Commission (for example, arcades, bookmakers, bingo halls, casinos and race tracks). The remaining 1,808 inspections were to 'Other' premises. These are mainly premises where no requirement to hold a gambling operating licence exists, such as pubs and clubs. 'Other' premises and betting premises comprise 82% of the inspections/visits conducted.

AGC, betting, bingo, casino, and FECs saw a decrease of premises inspected or visited; with 'Other' visits and inspections increasing by 377. (Figure 5).

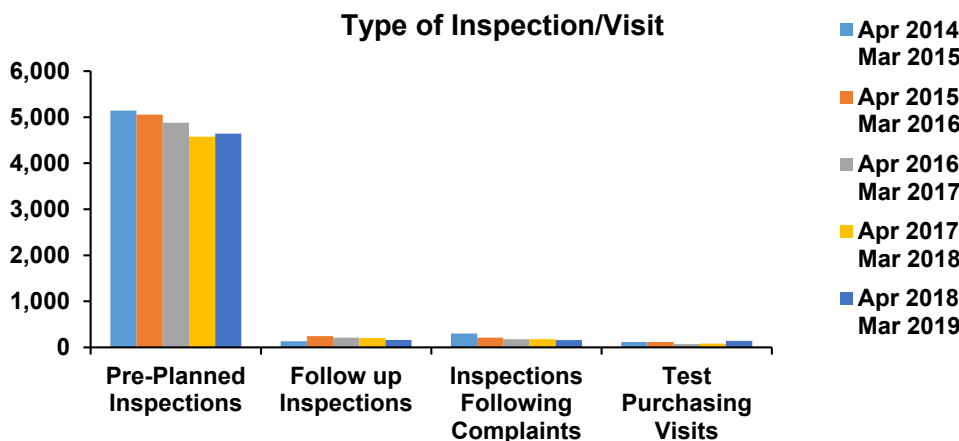
Primarily, visits rather than inspections take place when test purchasing.

Figure 5: Annual comparison by sector of total inspections/visits made



Over the last 5 years, the total quantity of inspections and visits conducted by LAs has decreased by 23% (from 6,367 conducted over the period April 2013 to March 2014) (Figures 5 & 6).

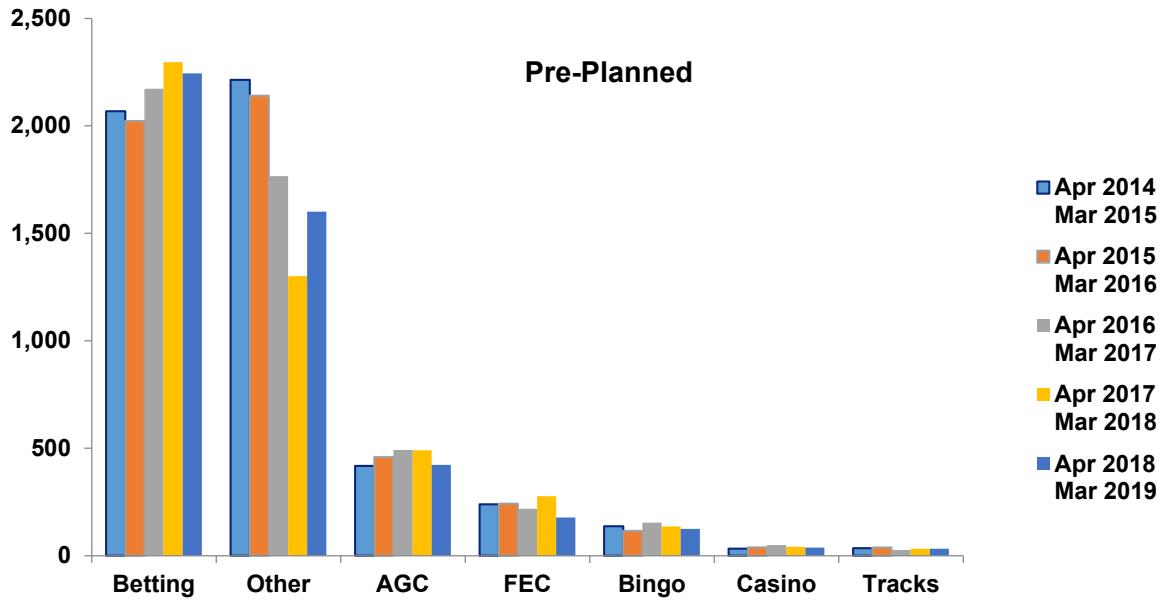
Figure 6: Annual comparison of types of inspection/visits made



# Pre-planned Inspections

Pre-planned inspections account for 91% of all inspection types. Betting and 'Other' accounted for 82% of all pre-planned inspections during the period April 2018 to March 2019.

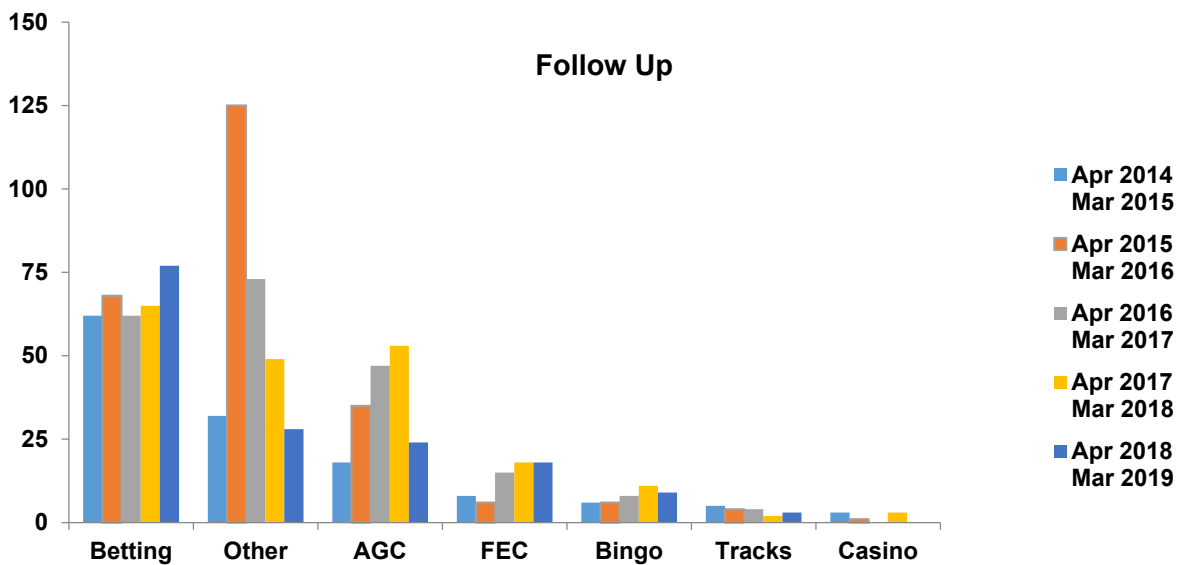
Figure 7: Annual comparison of pre-planned inspections by sector



# Follow-up Inspections

Betting accounted for 48% (77) of all follow-up inspections for the period April 2018 to March 2019, an increase of 12 (18%) compared to the previous 12 months.

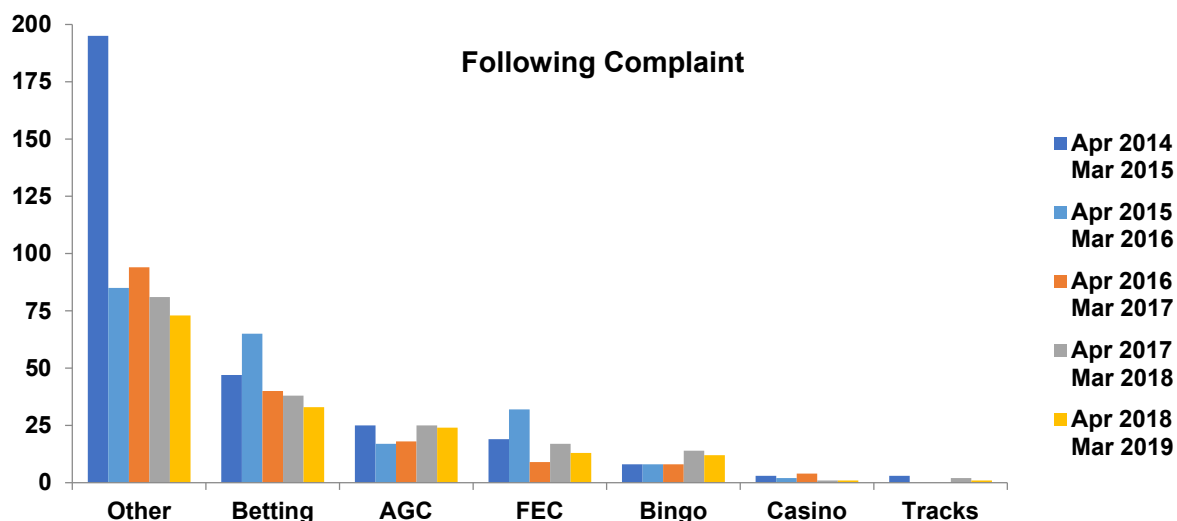
Figure 8: Annual comparison of follow-up inspections by sector



# Inspections Following a Complaint

'Other' accounted for 46% of all inspections following a complaint during the period April 2018 to March 2019. Betting accounted for 21% and AGCs accounted for 15% over the same period.

Figure 9: Annual comparison of inspections following a complaint



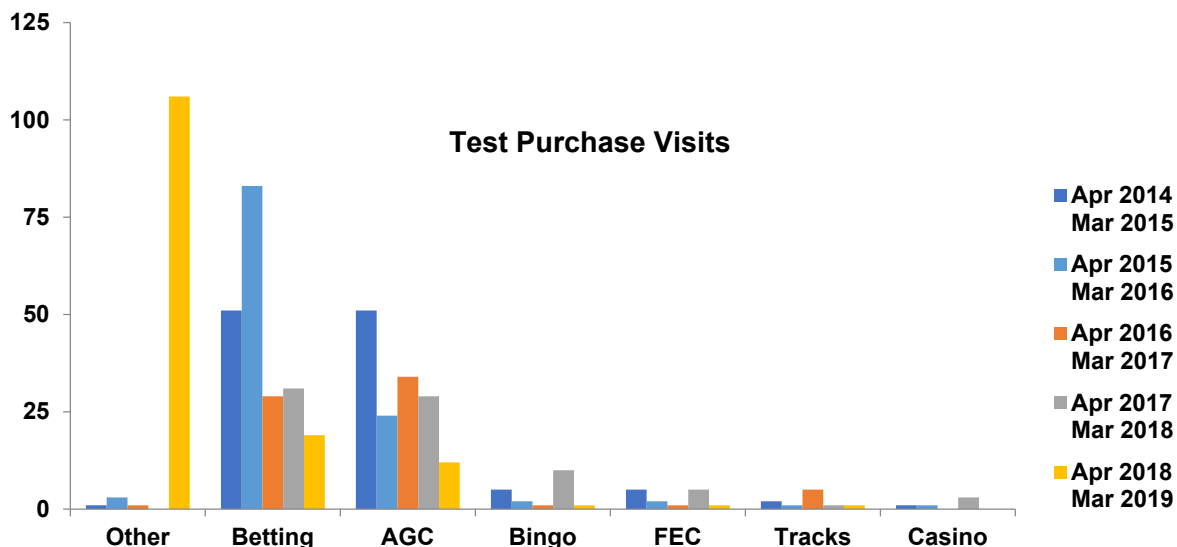
# Test Purchase Visits (for age verification)

LAs conducted 140 age verification related test purchasing visits in the year to March 2019. Although this is an increase of 61 (77%) over the previous year, it is 55 (28%) less than the number of test purchasing visits made 5 years ago. This increase was due to a focus on checking the age verification controls on over 18 (Category C) gaming machines in pubs.

Over the last year 76% of all test purchasing visits were to 'Other' premises, 14% were to betting. There were no visits to casino premises.

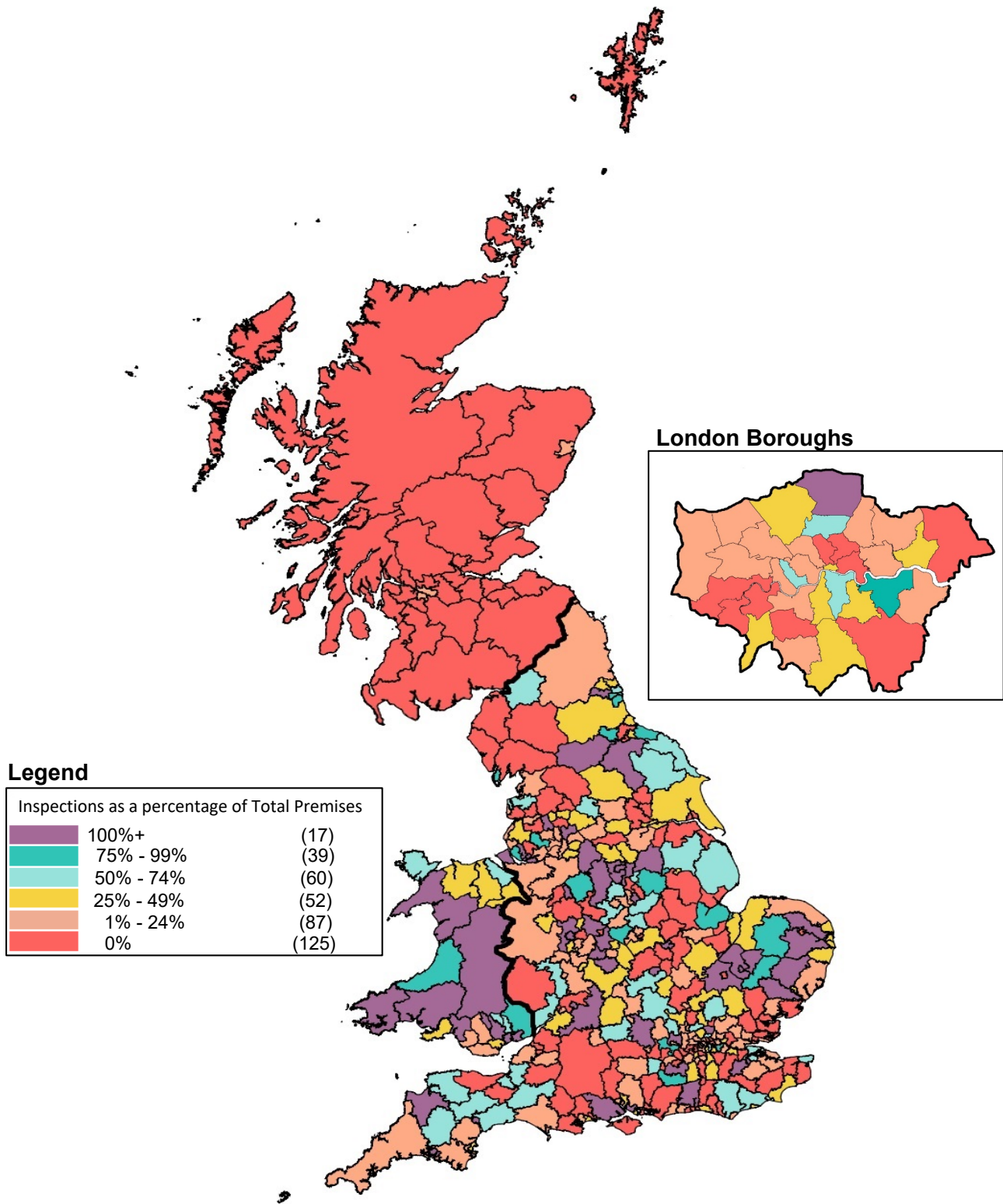
The figures reported relate to the number of test purchasing visits carried out, rather than the number of premises tested. The same premises may have been tested more than once.

Figure 10: Annual comparison of sectors covered by test purchasing visits



These figures include the underage gambling test purchasing conducted by local authorities in partnership with the Commission. More detailed information on test purchasing can be found on our [website](#).

Map 1: Inspections as a percentage of premises per LA during 2018/19



Pre-planned inspections are the only type of visits included in this mapping data. Map 1 illustrates the number of pre-planned inspections as a percentage of the total premises per licensing authority. A total of 7 LAs conducted either follow-up inspections or inspections following a complaint, but did not undertake any pre-planned inspections.

The Commission has published an advice note (The role of authorised persons in Scotland) to assist licensing authorities in Scotland in carrying out their functions under the Act.

The premises figures used to calculate the percentages in the map were obtained from the premises register, as of May 2019. We maintain a national register of premises licences for gambling, but we are reliant on data provided to us by licensing authorities and gambling businesses to populate this register. Consequently, whilst we make every effort to assure the data, it may contain errors, duplications or there may be omissions.

# Local Authority Compliance Events

To make the system of shared regulation as effective and efficient as possible, the Commission notifies LAs of complaints and intelligence received regarding non-compliance and illegality in their geographical area which is primarily of a localised nature. These are referred to as Local Authority Compliance Events (LACE). The responsibility for the LACE referral is then discharged from the Commission to the LA.

The complaints that instigate the LACE referrals come from a variety of sources, including licensed operators and members of the public. A number of them are received anonymously via the Commission's confidential intelligence phone line.

There were 85 LACE referrals to 66 LAs during the reporting period April 2018 to March 2019, a 15% increase compared to last year. Referrals can range from reports of illegal gaming in areas such as pubs and clubs, illegally sited machines in areas such as restaurants, pubs, taxi offices & take away retailers and could also relate to underage gambling.

**Table 3: Annual comparison of referrals**

	<b>Apr 2014 Mar 2015</b>	<b>Apr 2015 Mar 2016</b>	<b>Apr 2016 Mar 2017</b>	<b>Apr 2017 Mar 2018</b>	<b>Apr 2018 Mar 2019</b>
<b>Arcades</b>	3	5	21	9	4
<b>Betting</b>	36	36	24	33	28
<b>Bingo</b>	7	8	8	4	12
<b>Casino</b>	1	1	1	1	0
<b>Lotteries</b>	10	7	7	2	7
<b>Machines</b>	52	55	27	11	13
<b>Poker</b>	39	44	20	13	19
<b>Unallocated</b>	0	3	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	148	159	109	74	85

More detailed information can be found on the Excel version of this document.

# Appendix A: Terminology

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**Adult Gaming Centre (AGC)** – an arcade licensed by the Gambling Commission comprising a limited number of B3 and B4 machines and an unlimited number of category C and D machines. No one under the age of 18 is allowed to enter.

**Alcohol Licensed Premises - Automatic Entitlement** - Pubs and other alcohol licensed premises are automatically entitled to two category C or D gaming machines upon notification to the licensing authority of their intention to make gaming machines available for use.

**Alcohol Licensed Premises - Gaming Machine Permits** - Licensing authorities can issue gaming machine permits which allow additional category C and D gaming machines to be provided. Where a gaming machine permit authorises the making available of a specified number of gaming machines in particular premises, this will effectively replace, and not be in addition to, any automatic entitlement to two machines.

**Club Machine Permit - Club Machine Permits** allow the holder to have no more than three gaming machines in total. Members' clubs may site up to three machines from categories B3A, B4, C or D but only one B3A machine can be sited, by agreement, as part of this entitlement. Commercial clubs may site up to three machines from categories B4, C or D (not B3A machines). This permit also allows the holder to offer equal chance gaming such as poker or bingo with limits placed on stakes and prizes for both types of game.

**Club Gaming Permit – Club Gaming Permits** allow the holder to have no more than three gaming machines in total of categories B3A, B4, C or D, but only one machine of category B3A. This permit also allows the holder to offer equal chance gaming such as poker (with no limit on stakes and prizes) or bingo (with limits placed on stakes and prizes) and games of chance (ponton and chemin de fer only).

**Family Entertainment Centre (FEC)** – an arcade licensed by the Gambling Commission comprising unlimited category C and D machines. Under 18s are allowed in FECs but not into the area offering category C machines.

**Occasional Use Notice** - This notice permits betting operators, licensed by the Gambling Commission, to use tracks for short periods of betting at events which are temporary or infrequent. The notice must specify the day on which it has effect. Notices may be given in relation to consecutive days, up to an overall limit of eight days in a calendar year.

**Temporary Use Notice** - This notice permits the holder of a casino operating licence, licensed by the Gambling Commission, to offer gambling activities at a temporary venue for a limited period of time.

**Test Purchasing** - Test purchasing exercises are a method by which Local Authorities may measure the compliance of licensed premises with aspects of the Gambling Act 2005 and to assess whether effective controls are in place to prevent underage gambling.

**Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centre (UFEC) Gaming Permits** - Unlicensed FECs can offer only category D machines. Any number of category D machines can be made available with such a permit subject to other considerations, such as fire regulations and health and safety. Permits cannot be issued in respect of vessels or vehicles.



# Appendix B: Data Collection Methodology

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Data within this document has been collated by the Gambling Commission and is drawn from returns submitted by LAs and additional information provided through complaints and intelligence received by the Commission.

All LAs in England, Scotland and Wales were required to submit a return. The data submitted is quality checked and where anomalies appear they are followed up with the appropriate LA and amendments are agreed where applicable. The Commission is committed to working with LAs to increase the efficiency of the data collection process and explore methods to increase the value of this work to stakeholders.

Totals and percentages are calculated from unrounded figures.

The information contained in this document covers LAs in England, Scotland and Wales only.

The quality checks can sometimes require historical data to be amended. Consequently, the data provided in this report may differ from those provided previously.

The methodology for producing this report is consistent with Official Statistics guidelines.

At 31 March 2019, there were 380 LAs, of which 380 (100%) submitted a return to the Commission.

# Appendix C: Further Information

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Supporting data tables for the report's charts can be found in the [Licensing authority statistics – MS Excel document](#).

An up-to-date list of the notifications of grant for premises licences received from each LA can be found on the [premises register section of our website](#).

Further statistics and information relating to the Gambling Commission and gambling in Great Britain are available from [our website](#).

[Guidance to Licensing Authorities \(GLA\) on the Gambling Commission website](#).

## making gambling fairer and safer

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For further information or to register  
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