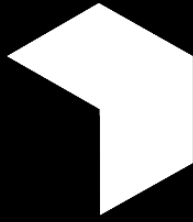


Young people's gambling-related experience during major sports events

A Euro 2024 diary-study





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Abbreviations

ASA	Advertising Standards Authority
CAP	Committees of Advertising Practice
GC	Gambling Commission
LE	Lived Experience of Gambling Harm
PGSI	Problem Gambling Severity Index

Glossary of terms

- **Bet builders** - A feature on sports betting platforms that allows users to combine multiple selections from a single event into a single, customised bet.
- **Bonus** - A promotion by gambling operators where players receive reward upon signup or as part of a promotion. This may include monetary rewards, enhanced odds, or increased payouts if a bet is successful.
- **Gambling** - The act of betting money or wagering something valuable on an unknown outcome with the knowledge of risk and hope of gain. Some examples:
 - **Sports betting:** Betting on the outcomes of sporting events, such as the winner of a horse race or the first goal scorer in a football match;
 - **Slot/fruit machine:** Inserting money into a digital or physical machine to bet that it will show special symbols that trigger a jackpot;
 - **Casino:** Playing games of chance typically found in casinos, such as betting that the ball on a roulette table will land on a certain number;
 - **Lottery:** Buying a physical or digital ticket of numbers, with the hope that your numbers are drawn to win a prize.
- **Gambling operator** - A company or entity that provides and manages gambling services and activities, such as casinos, online gaming sites, and betting shops.
- **Influencer** - A person with a significant online following who uses their platform to promote products, services, or ideas, often shaping opinions and purchasing decisions within their audience. In the world of gambling, influencers often provide betting tips and promote operator websites or specific gambling products to their audience.
- **Odds** - A number expressing how much people who bet on a certain event can win if that event happens. For example, if 5/1 odds are offered for a team winning a football match, those correctly betting on the winning team get back five times the amount they bet.
- **Tipsters** - Tipsters provide gambling advice or predictions, particularly in sports betting, often for a fee.
- **Unregulated gambling** - Gambling activities facilitated by companies and individuals not in possession of the required licences.
- **Wagering requirements** - A common feature of bonus offers in gambling that stipulate the number of times consumers must play through, or stake, bonus funds before they can withdraw winnings derived from the bonus.

Use of language

Language commonly used to describe individuals who gamble and individuals experiencing gambling harms can be potentially stigmatising. This does not necessarily reflect an intention by the person using the language, especially when used in everyday speech. BIT aims to follow GambleAware's guidance on inclusive language¹. In our study, there were instances where participants used non-inclusive/potentially stigmatising language. However, given the qualitative nature of the study, we chose to retain the language used by participants in order to reflect their perspectives accurately. In these cases, we paraphrased their words using inclusive terminology and included the original terms in quotation marks for transparency. For example, participants used the phrases "Addiction", "addicted", and "addictive" to describe gambling harm. Participants did not elaborate on what they understood by these terms, but in some cases, they were discussed in conjunction with loss-chasing or when it is being relied upon as one's only source of income. In other cases, it was juxtaposed with "being reasonable" and "under control" of one's gambling.

¹ GambleAware. (2022). How to reduce the stigma of gambling harms through language. A language guide. ([Available here](#)).

Executive summary

Background

Major sports events are widely enjoyed by young people in the UK, offering opportunities for social connection and entertainment. Gambling has become an increasingly prominent feature of these events, driven by media coverage, marketing and opportunities to gamble embedded within the sporting experience. Young people are a key demographic for policymakers, particularly in understanding how this exposure may impact their gambling behaviour. However, research in this area remains limited.

This study used the UEFA Euro 2024 tournament as a case study to explore young people's attitudes, beliefs, and engagement with gambling-related activities, including formal advertising and informal discussions with peers and family. It aimed to understand how young people engage with this environment; what they enjoy, what concerns them, and what changes they would like to see, whilst also exploring the potential influence of this exposure on their gambling behaviour.

The research involved 40 young people aged 16-24, divided into two age cohorts: 16-17-year-olds and 18-24 year olds. Using qualitative methods—including interviews, a diary study during the tournament (18-24-year-olds only), and workshops—the research examined their views, behaviours, and experiences over time, with a particular focus on the role of Euro 2024 in shaping their engagement with gambling.

Exposure to gambling messages

Young people reported encountering gambling marketing and advertising across broadcast media, online platforms, and public spaces. Many noted an increase in such content during Euro 2024, with some expressing concern over its normalisation of gambling, particularly during major sporting events.

The advertising featured promotions for betting apps, free bets, bonuses, and sponsorships, often accompanied by eye-catching visuals, celebrity endorsements, and overwhelmingly positive portrayals of gambling. Despite regulations aimed at restricting underage exposure to these promotions, high-profile personalities remained influential, particularly among younger audiences.

While some viewed offers like free bets as harmless, others saw them as strategies designed to encourage gambling, capitalising on the excitement of major tournaments without clearly explaining the risks. Although safer gambling messages were observed by young people, they were perceived as far less prominent than promotional content.

Social media played a significant role in exposing young people to gambling-related content, with betting advice from tipsters, influencers, and celebrity endorsements appearing frequently. Many encountered this content unexpectedly, reinforcing gambling's presence in their digital environment. Content shared by influencers and friends was particularly appealing and seen as more trustworthy, while the excitement of the tournament further heightened young people's receptiveness to gambling messaging.

Young people's gambling behaviour

Participants in both age groups fell into three categories: those who had never gambled, those who gambled occasionally, and those who gambled regularly.

For 16-17-year-olds, gambling behaviours during Euro 2024 remained consistent with pre-tournament habits, whereas among 18-24-year-olds, those who gambled regularly reported increased activity. Some occasional or first-time gamblers in this older cohort also participated more due to the excitement associated with the tournament. However, a subset of 18-24-year-olds refrained, citing financial concerns or lack of interest.

For 16-17-year-olds, the frequency of their gambling depended on access. Some in this group accessed gambling either directly (using fake IDs and unregulated platforms) or indirectly through adults (relatives or borrowed accounts). Their gambling activities included informal social betting (e.g., wagers with friends and sweepstakes) as well as formal activities like sports betting, lotteries, and slot machines, with a strong focus on football during the tournament.

Among 18-24-year-olds, those who gambled frequently engaged in a wide range of activities, combining formal betting (sports betting, casino games, and lotteries) with informal gambling (Fantasy Football and sweepstakes). Online gambling via apps was the most common form of formal betting, driven by convenience and promotional incentives like free bets. Unlike their younger counterparts, this group

showed no indication of using unregulated platforms, potentially due to their legal access.

Young people's experiences of gambling during Euro 2024 revealed a strong emotional impact. While many found that gambling enhanced their excitement and engagement with the event, others reported feelings of distress, particularly following losses. Those with more experience of betting appeared to cope better with losses, indicating a normalisation of the risks involved. However, the heightened emotions associated with gambling sometimes diminished the enjoyment of watching sports without a stake.

Reasons for gambling behaviour

Young people's motivations for gambling were driven by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, the desire for emotional and mental stimulation, such as fun, excitement, and the opportunity to test sports knowledge, was a key driver. The prospect of financial gain was also a motivating factor, with some participants influenced by the perception that gambling could be a profitable activity.

These impulses were further reinforced by social influences and financial pressures, as some young people observed peers turning to gambling and saw social media influencers portray betting as a profitable endeavour. Externally, the pervasive presence of gambling advertising, the convenience of online betting platforms, and the continuous excitement surrounding England's success in the tournament all contributed to making gambling a constant consideration.

The combination of these internal impulses and external triggers often amplified the overall impact on young people, encouraging them to engage in gambling. Past experiences, whether marked by wins or losses, also shaped future gambling behaviour: wins tended to reinforce the desire to continue gambling, while losses had mixed effects—detering some and prompting others to chase losses. In contrast, those who abstained from gambling during Euro 2024 cited reasons such as a lack of confidence, financial concerns, emotional reservations, and personal beliefs.

Conclusions

Major sporting events like Euro 2024 provide an environment where young people perceive gambling as both acceptable and desirable, shaped by social influences,

heightened emotions, and pervasive marketing. Young people viewed gambling as a natural extension of their engagement with sports, often encouraged by peer dynamics, media exposure, and promotions that linked betting to excitement and financial gain. Even young people who claimed advertisements had little impact acknowledged that they kept gambling top of mind and reinforced positive associations.

Gambling behaviours formed during such events can persist over time, with some young people reporting an increased likelihood of betting in future tournaments and others being introduced to gambling for the first time. A lack of gambling education, coupled with the influence of unregulated platforms and social media tipsters, further exposes young people to gambling-related risks.

The study demonstrated the valuable insights young people have about the changes they want to see made in relation to gambling. Key themes that emerged included advertising regulation, addressing gambling misconceptions, and safer gambling. We would encourage young people's perspectives to be meaningfully incorporated into future research and policy-making.

1. Introduction

Gambling has become increasingly prevalent among young people in Great Britain^{2,3}, driven in part by changes to the gambling landscape since the 2005 Gambling Act. The growth of online gambling platforms⁴, along with widespread advertising on social media and during sporting events⁵, has contributed to greater exposure among young audiences. This trend has led to discussions about potential gambling-related risks within this demographic⁶. Understanding how sporting events shape young people's attitudes, beliefs, and participation in gambling can help inform strategies that enable them to engage with these events whilst minimising potential risk.

Sports events and young people

Major sporting events like Euro 2024 attract significant interest from audiences across Great Britain, particularly among young people. The final drew a combined television audience of 23.8 million viewers in the UK, with millions more estimated to have watched via streaming services or at public events⁷. Research indicates that live sports remain one of the few categories that consistently capture the attention of young viewers⁸, especially on digital platforms⁹.

These events have become increasingly intertwined with gambling, marked by a substantial rise in gambling advertisements and sponsorships¹⁰. While there are questions surrounding whether there is a direct causal link between advertising and harmful gambling¹¹, evidence suggests these events can act as a 'gateway' into

² Gambling Commission. (2023). Statistics on gambling participation – Annual report Year 1 (2023): Official statistics. ([Available here](#)).

³ Gambling Commission. (2024). Young People and Gambling 2024: Official statistics. ([Available here](#)).

⁴ Gambling Commission. (2022). Changes in the gambling landscape - sharing our latest evidence. ([Available here](#)).

⁵ Comptroller and Auditor General. (2020). Gambling regulation: problem gambling and protecting vulnerable people. In National Audit Office (NAO) (p. 36). The Gambling Commission. ([Available here](#)).

⁶ Gambling Commission. (2023). Statistics on gambling participation – Annual report Year 1 (2023): Official statistics. ([Available here](#)).

⁷ Ingle, S. (2024). TV audiences are plummeting, so how is sport bucking the trend? The Guardian. ([Available here](#)).

⁸ YouGov. (2023). The Global Sports Media Landscape: What are the challenges and opportunities for sport in an evolving media landscape? ([Available here](#)).

⁹ YouGov. (2023). The Global Sports Media Landscape: What are the challenges and opportunities for sport in an evolving media landscape? ([Available here](#)).

¹⁰ University of Bristol. (2024). Investigation exposing huge surge of gambling marketing at start of Premier League season prompts urgent call to kick "out of control" industry into touch. Bristol.ac.uk. ([Available here](#)).

¹¹ Weston, T. (2024, April 22). The impact of gambling marketing. House of Lords Library. ([Available here](#)).

gambling for young people¹², with promotional offers like free bets proving particularly influential in driving betting activity¹³. The prominence of content marketing by gambling operators, known to appeal to children who may struggle to recognise its commercial nature, further complicates this landscape¹⁴. Despite the widespread gambling presence in sporting events, qualitative research exploring how this affects young people's attitudes and behaviours remains limited.

Gambling harm among young people

Research has shown that young people, particularly those aged 16–24, are especially vulnerable to gambling-related harm due to a combination of biological, social, and cultural factors. The prefrontal cortex, which plays a key role in decision-making and impulse control¹⁵, does not fully mature until around age 25¹⁶, leaving young adults more prone to risk-taking and impulsive behaviour¹⁷. Among young adults who do gamble, 17.6% are considered to be at low risk of gambling-related harm, while a further 4.8% are classified as high-risk^{18;19}. This vulnerability is further heightened by factors such as increased social and financial independence, peer norms, pervasive social media advertising, and the influence of sports culture^{20;21}.

The consequences of gambling-related harm in this age group are significant. Nearly half of university students who gamble report negative effects on their academic performance, social lives, and financial well-being²². Despite awareness

¹² Taylor, D. (2023). The impact of the World Cup on gambling attitudes and behaviours. Gambling Commission. ([Available here](#))

¹³ Brummitt, R., & Adegbola, C. (2024). More than football: A deep dive into Euro 2024 betting. Gambling Commission. ([Available here](#)).

¹⁴ Rossi, R., Wheaton, J., Moxey, M., & Tozzi, E. (2023). New Season, More Self-regulation, More marketing. The Prevalence of Gambling Adverts during the Opening Weekend of the English Premier League 2023/2024. University of Bristol. 5 News. ([Available here](#)).

¹⁵ El-Baba, R. M., & Schury, M. P. (2023). Neuroanatomy, Frontal Cortex. PubMed; StatPearls Publishing. ([Available here](#)).

¹⁶ Arain, M., Haque, M., Johal, L., Mathur, P., Nel, W., Rais, A., Sandhu, R., & Sharma, S. (2013). Maturation of the Adolescent Brain. *Neuropsychiatric Disease and Treatment*, 9(9), 449–461. ([Available here](#)).

¹⁷ National Research Council, Board on Children, Youth, & Committee on the Science of Adolescence. (2011). The Science of Adolescent Risk-Taking: Workshop Report. In www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov (pp. 35–46). National Academies Press (US). ([Available here](#)).

¹⁸ Gambling Commission. (2023). Statistics on gambling participation – Annual report Year 1 (2023): Official statistics. ([Available here](#)).

¹⁹ Gambling Commission. (2024). Young People and Gambling 2024: Official statistics. ([Available here](#)).

²⁰ Gambling Commission. (2021). Understanding how consumers engaged with gambling advertising in 2020. ([Available here](#)).

²¹ Responsible Gambling Council (RGC). (2024). Young Adults and Gambling | Safer Play | For the Public | Responsible Gambling Council. ([Available here](#)).

²² CENCUSWIDE, commissioned by YGAM and GAMSTOP. (2024). Student 2024 Gambling Survey. ([Available here](#)).

of the risks, young people are more likely to engage in risky gambling behaviours²³, and safer gambling tools are often underutilised²⁴.

Research aims and objectives

The Gambling Commission (GC) has highlighted the need to better understand early gambling experiences and pathways to gambling, with a focus on developing effective early prevention strategies. A key research priority is exploring the role of major sporting events as gateways to gambling, particularly among those new to gambling²⁵.

This study aims to address this gap by examining how major sporting events influence young people's attitudes, beliefs, and engagement in gambling-related activities. It then explores strategies for promoting a safer, more positive experience during such events.

The research questions examined are:

1. How do young people experience the gambling-related aspects of major sporting events, and what impact do these have on their attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and gambling-related behaviour?
 - What external and internal factors influence young people's decision to engage in gambling during Euro 2024?
 - How do young people engage in gambling-related activities during Euro 2024?
2. What strategies can be implemented to create a positive experience for all young people watching major sports events, while minimising gambling-related risks and harms?
 - What changes would young people who participate in sports-related gambling suggest to minimise the risks of gambling harm during major events?

²³ RGC. (2024). Young Adults and Gambling | Safer Play | For the Public | Responsible Gambling Council. ([Available here](#)).

²⁴ Gambling Commission. (2021). Understanding how consumers engaged with gambling advertising in 2020. ([Available here](#)).

²⁵ Gambling Commission. (2024). Evidence theme 1 - Early gambling experiences and gateway products. ([Available here](#)).

- What changes would young people who do not engage in gambling-related activities like to see to ensure major sports events remain safe and enjoyable?
- What steps can be taken to inform young people about gambling risks and harms, and how can they be supported in managing their gambling behaviour?

Structure of this report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows: Section 2 outlines the research methodology. Sections 3, 4, and 5 present the findings on exposure to gambling messages, gambling behaviour, and the reasons for gambling. Section 6 concludes the report, summarising young people's recommendations and proposing next steps.

2. Methodology

The study combined interviews, a diary study during Euro 2024, and exploratory workshops with two cohorts of young people (see Figure 1).

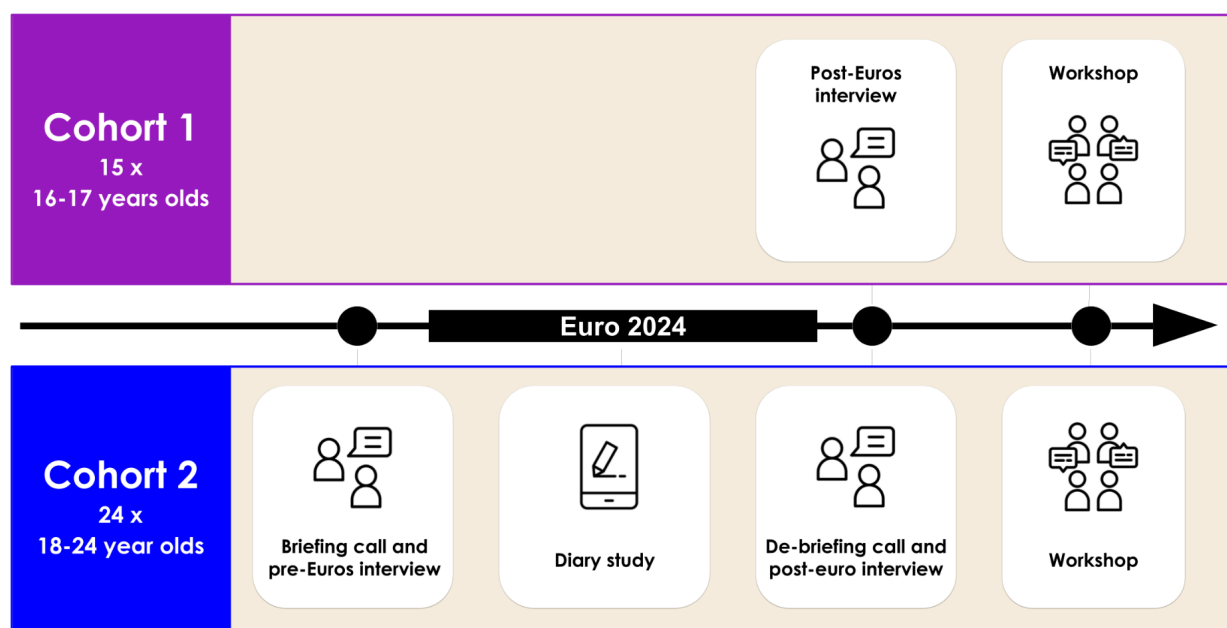


Figure 1. A flow chart of the methodology for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2.

Sample design and recruitment

The research sample consisted of 39 young people aged 16-24, selected using purposive sampling. To ensure the sample contained sufficient range and diversity, we sought a mix of young people based on gender, location, education/employment status, ethnicity, and family gambling habits. Sample breakdowns are provided in [Appendix 1](#). Participants were recruited through a specialist recruitment agency. Incentives were provided to all participants based on their engagement in various aspects of the study.

Data collection

The study was divided into two cohorts, each following a slightly different methodology, to account for the fact that the minimum age for participating in gambling in the UK is 18.

Cohort 1: 16-17 year olds. 15 young people aged 16-17 years took part in a single online in-depth interview after the 2024 Euros had finished, lasting up to an hour. The interviews aimed to understand this cohort's perceptions of how gambling activities were presented throughout the tournament and how the event influenced their gambling-related attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and behaviours. The interviews also explored perceptions of and engagement with safer gambling initiatives during Euro 2024.

Cohort 2: 18-24 year olds. 24 18-24 year olds took part in the research. Only the perspectives of the 19 who completed the whole study are shared in this report. They participated in:

- A baseline interview pre-tournament to explore their gambling-related views, experiences and behaviours prior to Euro 2024 and brief them on the diary study;
- A diary study consisting of four weekly sets of questions during the tournament to document their real-time reflections (see [Appendix 2](#) for more information);
- A post-Euro 2024 interview exploring their diary entries and overall experiences.

Subsequently, 10 young people from each cohort took part in separate online workshops (1.5 hours) focused on what could be done differently to reduce the risk of gambling-related harm during sporting events.

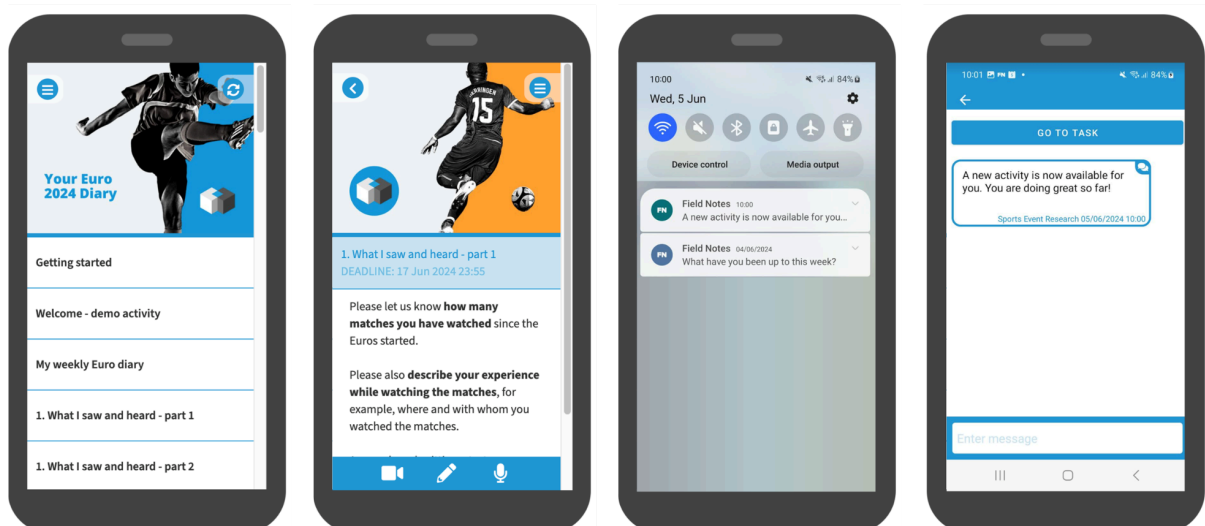


Figure 2. The diary study mobile application used to collect data and examples of notifications received by the participants.

Analysis

A Framework approach was used for data management to facilitate thematic analysis. The data analysis aimed to draw out the range of behaviours, experiences, and views from the data, while identifying similarities, differences and links between them.

Ethics

Gambling is a sensitive topic, and this study addressed behaviours that may be considered risky or legally complex. A full ethics review was completed ahead of the study's launch to ensure principles for ethical research were met and appropriate participant safeguards were in place. Informed consent was obtained from all participants ahead of the study commencing.

3. Exposure to gambling messages

This chapter discusses the two main forms of gambling-related content and discussion young people reported being exposed to: a) formal marketing and advertising, and b) informal messaging on social media and in interactions with friends, family and wider social networks.

Key findings:

- Young people encountered gambling-related marketing across broadcast, online, and public spaces, observing a surge during Euro 2024. Some found it intrusive and concerning, as it appeared to normalise gambling, particularly during major sporting events.
- Euro 2024 adverts featured app promotions, free bets, bonuses, and sponsorships, often using vivid visuals, celebrity endorsements, and positive depictions of gambling. Despite regulations, celebrity appearances remained influential, especially for younger audiences.
- While some saw free bets as harmless, others viewed them as tactics to encourage gambling, exploiting tournament excitement. Safer gambling messages were recalled but considered less prominent than promotions.
- Social media played a key role, featuring betting advice from tipsters, influencers, and celebrities. Young people often encountered this content unexpectedly and felt prompted to gamble. Social media predominantly showcased wins, making gambling appear appealing and trustworthy, particularly when shared by influencers or friends.
- Young people's engagement in conversations about gambling depended on their social networks' involvement and the influence of advertisements and high-profile events. Educational initiatives at school were mentioned, as were discussions about safer gambling with friends and family, though often triggered by news of gambling harm.

3.1 Formal marketing and advertising

Where and how often they saw it

Young people reported encountering gambling-related marketing and advertising in a wide range of ways, including:

- **Broadcast media**, e.g. television, radio and podcasts;
- **Digital platforms**, e.g. social media, gambling apps and online adverts;
- **Physical spaces**, e.g. billboards, bus stop /train station adverts, betting shopfronts, pub posters, and live sports venues.

Young people who reported seeing gambling-related marketing or advertising during Euro 2024 said they saw more of it during the tournament and that they often came across it unexpectedly. For example, 18–24-year-olds registered with gambling operators reported receiving more emails during Euro 2024 promoting free bets, boosted odds, and upcoming football games. These emails were reported to encourage betting on England to win and featured players like Jude Bellingham. Those who came across gambling-related advertising more unexpectedly did so while using the internet, both when browsing content related to Euro 2024 and during unrelated activities such as using mainstream streaming sites, and when using social media platforms like TikTok.

Young people reported that gambling content spiked at the beginning and end of the tournament, corresponding with the high number of fixtures at the start and major England games towards the end.²⁶ Some young people reported encountering content from the “moment they woke up” and viewing as many as three separate adverts within 15 minutes. Some felt that this was intrusive and hard to ignore, leaving them feeling “exposed” and “vulnerable”.

“They're literally now the only adverts that really come up. They come up quite a lot. [...] I feel quite exposed to these adverts as they are very persuasive and persistent.” [18-24 year old]

“I am constantly reminded of betting and the Euros without even leaving my house or turning on the main TV.” [18-24 year old]

²⁶ England came second in the tournament.

Young people had noticed that gambling advertisements became more frequent around major sporting events, particularly during high-profile football tournaments such as Euro 2024, the Premier League, the World Cup, and previous Euros, as well as during boxing matches and horse racing events like Cheltenham. The combination of frequent advertising and extensive sponsorships heightened awareness of gambling-related content. Indeed, the perceived prominence of ads aired during these events led some young people to feel that this might encourage people to associate sports with betting.

These findings highlight two key concerns: unintended and pervasive exposure to gambling-related marketing and advertising, which left some young people feeling vulnerable, and the normalisation of gambling through the close association of gambling-related marketing and advertising with sporting events.

What they saw

As illustrated by the screenshots in Figure 3, the content of gambling-related marketing and advertising that young people noticed included:

- **Adverts for gambling apps or bookies**, including personalised adverts;
- **Promotional betting offers**, e.g. free bets, new joiner bonuses and “favourable” odds;
- **Sponsorship** of sports teams, events, and figures;
- **Adverts for other forms of gambling**, e.g. lotteries, slot games or casino games.

Young people's observations of gambling-related marketing and advertising during the tournament illuminated several key themes that shaped their attitudes and perceptions towards gambling and towards the content they saw: the visual appeal of the adverts, celebrity endorsements, offers and promotions, the positive depiction of gambling and safer gambling messages.



Figure 3. Example of promotions shared by diary study participants

Visual appeal

Sports betting adverts were described as highly noticeable and appealing to young people even before Euro 24, due to the use of pop-ups and bold colours. When describing the advertising during Euro 2024, both age cohorts picked up on features they thought enhanced the visibility and appeal of gambling for young people. The use of vivid colours and imagery was thought to be highly appealing to younger audiences and to create the impression that they can easily make money from gambling.

"Some of them have a lot of colours (such as gold or very bright colours) and coins, which would make people feel like it's an easy way to make money."
[18-24 year old]

Positive depiction of gambling

Young people who actively disapproved of gambling-related advertising were concerned that the positive portrayal of gambling could encourage young people to start engaging in it. Advertisements were criticised for exaggerating the chances of winning and depicting gambling as fun. At the same time, they were thought to downplay the risks and negative consequences of gambling and to omit important details such as hidden terms (like the requirement to wager a certain amount before accessing free bets) and safer gambling messages.

Social media content was seen as particularly problematic because it mimicked TV adverts but with even less emphasis on gambling management messages (see [Safer gambling messages](#)). Some 16-17-year-olds also mentioned seeing content by potentially unknown or unregulated gambling operators, who used social media to promote their gambling apps. These adverts showed influencers boasting substantial wins and portraying gambling as easy and fun without sharing safer gambling warnings or terms and conditions.

"It promotes the image of gambling being fun without mentioning the negative effects of it; All the images show people celebrating and happy - there should be at least a bit more information on the negative side so people know what they're getting into." [16-17 year old]

"Definitely on TikTok you'll see people... It would be like a scam to say, like, something how they haven't got any money, and they played this game and now all of a sudden they've got loads of money and can do what they want to do. I definitely saw a lot of that during the Euros, those sorts of adverts on TikTok." [16-17 year old]

Young people expressed concern about the positive portrayal of gambling in advertisements and believed that 16–17-year-olds were more susceptible to it than older generations. This was based on the assumption that younger age cohorts were newer to gambling and less knowledgeable about the odds of winning. Some 16-17 year olds themselves seemed especially struck by imagery of people happily celebrating wins.

"One thing that really stuck with me and caught my eyes was the advert where people were sat down at the betting machines, at all the machines, sat there playing it. When one person won, they started jumping up, celebrating, and that really stuck with me because it's showing that you can win and that when you win, you get that personal satisfaction and that I could be happy like them one day if I start doing that. That's why it stuck with me because it showed me their happiness and their celebration that came from betting." [16-17 year old]

Celebrity endorsements

The use of football players and well-known celebrities was thought to make the adverts more relatable to young people and to be more persuasive. For example,

comedian Chris Rock was seen in an MGM advert, and actor Danny Dyer appeared in a PaddyPower advert. Both age cohorts considered such figures role models, making their promotion of gambling particularly influential. For instance, referring to the Danny Dyer advert, a young person remarked "you can tell he loves to bet" and "it's like he's one of us". Furthermore, professional footballer Peter Crouch had been seen in gambling adverts (although not specifically mentioned in relation to Euro 2024). His involvement was seen as highly compelling for young football fans.

"Because if they see them doing it, they'll want to do it. It's like when you grow up as a kid and you watch a certain footballer and then you want to start playing football. If you see someone that you appreciate gambling, it might make you want to start gambling." [16-17 year old]

"People like, Peter Crouch, if you're watching football, you know who he is, so it probably makes you feel like you want to bet with them [that particular gambling operator] more than someone who isn't showing celebrities." [16-17 year old]

This is concerning, as ASA regulations prohibit exposing underage individuals to gambling adverts featuring current or former football players likely to be of appeal to young people²⁷, underscoring the challenge of effectively restricting such content for this age group.

Offers and promotions

As mentioned, **gambling-related adverts featured promotional offers such as free bets, bonuses for new joiners, and odds boosts.**

"I've received a few free bets for England games and stuff like that. I've received power-ups, odds boost, stuff like that. I've received notifications sometimes talking about [how] they've put a power price on Jude Bellingham to foul or something like that. But yeah, so I've received quite a lot." [18-24 year old]

The findings also indicate a lack of understanding among some young people of the terms related to free bets and other gambling offers, such as wagering requirements. One view was that free bets were harmless because they did not require consumers

²⁷ Advertising Standards Authority (ASA). (2024). Gambling, betting and gaming: Appeal to children. ([Available here](#)).

to spend money, and that they offered a safe way to gamble. There was, however, some recognition that free bets might serve as a tactic to encourage gambling, potentially leading to gambling harm.

"I feel these offers are harmless if you do not add in extra of your own money as you have nothing to lose. However, as I did for my first bet, I was eager to add more money as you got more returns which always looks appealing." [18-24 year old]

Young people's diary entries illustrated the way in which the content of adverts evolved over the course of the tournament, with free bets, offers and odds frequently tied to specific matches and England's performance. These entries highlighted the potential influence of gambling adverts during major tournaments particularly in prompting impulsive betting.

Gambling-related advertising and promotions provoked indifference in some young people. Several reasons underpinned this, highlighting a combination of awareness, disinterest, and deliberate avoidance. For some, this was simply due to having no interest in gambling. Others felt that the pervasive nature of such content had normalised it to the point that it no longer captured their attention. Some were aware that promotions, especially those offering "free bets," were deliberately designed to entice them, and made a conscious effort to ignore or resist their influence. Those who actively avoided gambling advertisements described various strategies to minimise their exposure, such as scrolling past them on social media, leaving the room when such ads appeared on TV, or diverting their attention to their phones.

Safer gambling messages

Young people recalled encountering safer gambling messages even before Euro 2024, which suggests these messages were memorable. The messages they recalled consisted mainly of warnings at the end of gambling ads on TV, social media, and radio. Those who gambled regularly also noticed messaging in operator apps, emails, and social media posts. Messages young people picked up included taglines like "When the fun stops, stop" and "Be GambleAware," and messages emphasising harm, risks and age restrictions. More exceptionally, young people recalled celebrity case studies and social media or TV stories highlighting the consequences of gambling-related harm.

The safer gambling content encountered during Euro 2024 was largely similar to what young people had seen before the tournament. Warnings or taglines on gambling adverts were especially well-remembered. These typically consisted of small-text warnings at the end or bottom of gambling promotions on TV, social media, and radio. Young people noted that safer gambling messages on social media adverts tended to be shorter than on TV. Some also described seeing stories of individuals with lived experience of gambling harm, which featured impactful narratives, often involving celebrities or football players like Paul Merson sharing their struggles with gambling addiction.

According to diary entry data, young people recalled fewer instances of seeing safer gambling content as the tournament progressed; however, it is unclear whether this reflects less content being shared or whether they grew less attentive to it over time. Nevertheless, young people perceived promotions to be more prevalent than safer gambling adverts, with some disapproving of this balance. In fact, some noted an absence of safer gambling messages in advertising of free bets, which were considered particularly high-risk for gambling harm.

"I saw all these companies advertising, 'Here's a free bet,' but I didn't see any aftercare on it, and I thought, surely if you're advertising something that could be such an addictive trade, there would be more on like, 'If you're struggling with gambling addiction, here are some helplines, or here's something that can be put in place.' Just so people are aware." [18-24 year old]

While the safer gambling content that young people encountered was valued, it also attracted criticism for failing to effectively safeguard vulnerable individuals and communicate risks. Consequently, these messages were viewed as superficial and unengaging. Furthermore, there was a perception that safer gambling messages were token gestures tacked onto operator advertising to deflect criticism and fulfil regulatory requirements rather than to offer genuine, impactful support.

These findings highlight various ways in which young people, particularly 16–17-year-olds, may be drawn to start gambling by marketing and advertising during sports events that present an overly positive narrative, exaggerates win chances, minimises risks, and lacks transparency. Furthermore, young people's reports suggest social media advertising poses a heightened risk, with unregulated content and influencers promoting gambling without responsible gambling

messages. The research also suggests that where safer gambling messages are featured, they are too brief or inconspicuous to be effective for younger audiences.

3.2 Informal content and conversations

Social media content

TikTok, X, Snapchat, Instagram, and Facebook were examples of social media platforms reported by young people to feature informal gambling-related content, consisting of posts, videos and discussions generated by users. While exposure to such content predated Euro 2024, young people's experiences during the tournament illuminate the nature and variety of content encountered during a major sporting event. This included:

- Betting advice shared by tipsters;
- Posts encouraging betting by influencers, sports stars, and betting companies;
- Invitations from other users to join their personal Fantasy Football leagues;
- Encouragement to loss-chase (e.g. "you can't lose forever") from tipsters;
- Safer gambling messages, mostly as part of advertising and promotional content.

There were mixed perceptions of the frequency of this content, both before and during Euro 2024. While some young people only ever saw a few posts or none at all, others reported encountering them frequently. Some young people perceived a notable increase in online posts during the tournament, "constantly on every platform", which they said served as a persistent reminder to bet. Furthermore, those with greater exposure to gambling-related social media content, even before Euro 2024, noted that it made them perceive gambling as more prevalent than previously thought.

"It has opened my eyes to the amount of people that do gamble. You'll look at a TikTok and the comments, there'll be 30,000 comments, and they're all betting, as well. It's just crazy how many people are actually betting." [18-24 year old]

Exposure to gambling-related content on social media was often inadvertent, appearing in young people's feeds, even without them actively seeking it out.

Content shared on social media was widely perceived as appealing, largely because it was often shared by influencers whom young people trusted. While some influencers were openly sponsored by betting companies, for others, this was ambiguous and created the impression of authenticity. Social media posts on gambling also came from friends, which amplified feelings of trust and fostered a fear of missing out for those not gambling.

Similarly to the formal marketing and advertising discussed above, **the content young people described seeing on social media often portrayed gambling positively,** featuring influencers and celebrities showcasing their wins and betting activities. Posts from influencers and tipsters were especially influential, as young people perceived their tips as reliable, despite recognising that such posts often emphasised wins over losses.

"If someone's giving you predictions, instantly you're going to think, 'That's quite a good hint', and take your chances. Whether that's £1 or £100, you're going to take it." [18-24 year old]

In contrast, **some of the content encountered outside of Euro 2024 was perceived by young people as misleading and manipulative, demonstrating an awareness of potential inauthenticity.** While it is not clear why they were more receptive to this content during Euro 2024, it may be that the emotion and excitement of the tournament played a role.

The findings suggest that the prevalence of gambling-related content that some young people are exposed to on social media, particularly during major events like Euro 2024, has the potential to normalise gambling among young people. Given that they came across this content without actively seeking it out means it could be difficult to avoid and could increase their vulnerability to its influence. Trust in influencers and friends who share gambling-related posts heightens the risk of young people being influenced, especially when sponsorships are not transparent. Furthermore, the emotional excitement of major sporting events and a focus on wins while minimising losses may lead young people to develop

unrealistic expectations of gambling outcomes and feel more receptive to the idea of gambling.

Social networks

Young people tended not to engage in gambling-related conversations or activities with their social networks if their friends and family did not participate in gambling. In

contrast, those whose friends or family gambled described observing others gambling or frequently discussing it with friends, family members, colleagues, and wider social networks in person and via text, in group chats. Some also mentioned overhearing discussions about betting at work or in public spaces, such as pubs.

They discussed sports betting, especially during sports events, and other forms of gambling such as live casino games, lottery tickets, and sweepstakes.

Conversations centred on sharing predictions, discussing near misses, exchanging tips on bets and discussing new or less familiar types of gambling. While these conversations often arose organically, they were sometimes prompted by advertisements. While these conversations were mostly described as exciting, fun and harmless, they occasionally got heated due to big losses, which made these discussions off-putting.

Safer gambling was sometimes the focus of these conversations, often prompted by news of others experiencing harm. **Some young people also mentioned educational initiatives at school**, ranging from ad-hoc discussions led by teachers to structured sessions featuring speakers with lived experience of gambling-related harm.

These findings highlight that young people's engagement with gambling-related conversations can depend on their social networks' involvement, with the added influence of advertisements and high-profile events. Young people mentioned educational initiatives at school and discussions about safer gambling with friends and family, though often triggered by news of gambling harm.

4. Gambling behaviour

This chapter describes young people's gambling behaviour and experiences of gambling. We focus on their behaviours and experiences during Euro 2024 to illuminate what happens during a major sporting event.

Key findings:

- Young people fell into three groups: non-gamblers, occasional gamblers, and regular gamblers. During Euro 2024, 16-17-year-olds largely maintained pre-tournament habits, while many 18-24-year-olds gambled more, especially regular gamblers, but also some who had rarely or never gambled. Others refrained due to financial concerns or disinterest.
- For 16-17-year-olds, gambling frequency depended on access, either directly (via fake IDs or unregulated platforms) or indirectly (through adults). They participated in informal betting (friend wagers, sweepstakes) and formal gambling (sports betting, lotteries, slots), with football being the main focus during Euro 2024.
- The more frequently they gambled, the more diverse the types of gambling 18-24 year olds engaged in. This consisted of a mix of formal gambling (sports betting, casino games, and lotteries) and informal activities (Fantasy Football and sweepstakes), with a strong focus on football-related bets during Euro 2024. Young people who gambled rarely in this cohort participated in fewer and simpler activities, such as scratch cards or sweepstakes.
- Most gambling in this group occurred online via apps, driven by convenience and promotions, with no signs of unregulated platform use, likely due to age-compliant access to regulated operators.
- Young people's experiences of gambling during Euro 2024 highlighted the emotional impact it had. While it enhanced excitement and engagement with the event, it was also reported to cause distress, particularly after losses. Those with more experience of betting coped better, suggesting a normalisation of risks. For some, heightened emotions reduced the enjoyment of watching sports without betting.

The first two sections of this chapter explore each age cohort separately due to the differences in how they engaged in gambling. They cover whether and how often they gambled, the types of gambling they engaged in and how they accessed gambling platforms.

4.1 16-17 year olds' gambling behaviour

Whether and how often they gambled

While some 16-17-year-olds reported never gambling, others did so occasionally or regularly. Their gambling frequency largely depended on access, as they often relied on friends or family to help them or pretended to be 18 to participate.

The gambling behaviour of 16-17-year-olds during Euro 2024 closely mirrored their pre-tournament habits. Those who did not gamble beforehand continued not to and those who gambled before the tournament generally continued during it. However, some who gambled occasionally pre-tournament chose not to participate. They cited reasons like lack of interest, concerns about losing money, difficulty predicting outcomes, or a preference for focusing on the sport itself.

Types of gambling they engaged in

The types of gambling 16-17 year olds who gambled took part in ranged from informal social betting to more formal gambling activities. This mirrored the gambling activities that those aged 18-24 reported engaging in when they were underage. Informal social betting typically involved low-stakes bets with family or friends, such as casual bets on game outcomes or participation in sweepstakes. More formal gambling activities consisted predominantly of sports betting, but also lotteries, scratch cards, slot machines and online casino games. While football was the primary focus of sports betting, they also bet on other high-profile events such as boxing matches, the Grand National and Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC).

During Euro 2024, the range of gambling activities 16-17 year olds engaged in was very similar, also consisting of more and less formal activities.

- **Formal gambling**, primarily focused on official bets placed on Euro 2024 matches. No other sports that young people bet on prior to Euro 2024 were mentioned during the tournament, although one young person mentioned betting on a different football tournament: the Copa America games. As before,

other forms of gambling, such as the lottery, scratch cards, slot machines, and casino games, were also mentioned.

- **Informal gambling**, consisted mainly of small bets between friends and participation in sweepstakes.

How underage young people accessed gambling

Both before and during Euro 2024, young people aged 16-17 either engaged in gambling themselves or got adults to gamble on their behalf.

- **When gambling themselves**, this typically involved gambling as opposed to betting. This could be in person, such as in age 18+ sections of arcades and on slot machines in pubs or online using fake IDs to create accounts with regulated operators. Some used unregulated platforms that did not require age verification (see case example 1).
- **Those who placed bets through others** mainly did this through relatives like parents, extended family members and siblings, as well as through older friends. Some also “borrowed” others’ accounts on regulated betting sites. Pocket money or savings were commonly used to fund the bets.

Case example 1: Experience with likely unregulated gambling sites

Before Euro 2024, “Lisa” discovered a gambling site through a pop-up advertisement while watching a video. The site featured colourful games, which she believed were designed to attract younger users like herself. Registration required only a name and email address, with no ID verification. Although she played just a couple of games, the site continued to send her frequent promotional emails promoting opportunities to win money. During the Euros, “Lisa” placed bets on another site she often came across on social media, specifically on her TikTok “For You” feed, where it was promoted by paid influencers. This site offered 10–15 games and incentives like winning money or free clothes by sharing referral links or playing games, though she thought it was very difficult to win. Despite stating that users had to be 18 or older, the site did not verify her age or provide any guidance on safer gambling practices. *[16-17 year old]*

These findings highlight the ease with which participating young people accessed gambling and circumvented age requirements and point to potential weaknesses in regulatory enforcement.

4.2 18-24 year olds' gambling behaviour

Whether and how often they gambled

As with 16-17 year-olds, **18-24 year-olds' gambling behaviour pre-tournament fell into three categories: regular, rare, or not at all. Among those who gambled regularly, this behaviour remained largely consistent during Euro 2024.** These young people tended to gamble more during major sporting events, such as the World Cup and previous Euros, compared to their usual weekly or monthly habits. During Euro 2024, some placed more bets in the early stages when there were more matches, while England supporters placed more bets as the tournament progressed in support of the team.

The behaviour of those who never or rarely gambled pre-tournament was more nuanced, with these 18-24 year olds either deciding against gambling, gambling for the first time or more than usual during Euro 2024. 18-24 year olds who had tried gambling a few times pre-tournament (by participating in occasional sweepstakes or by getting others to gamble on their behalf) fell into two camps. One group chose not to gamble, citing reasons such as previous losses, a desire to save money, a lack of football knowledge, or religious beliefs. In contrast, a second group gambled more, either doing so as planned or due to the influence of others.

A further group of 18-24 year olds became more receptive to gambling in future throughout the tournament, but without actually gambling during Euro 2024. This was due to the influence of friends and family, as well as media and marketing promoting gambling during the tournament (see Case example 2).

Case example 2 - Euro 2024 environment changing intention to bet in the future

"Naomi", a university student working part-time, has been a football fan since childhood and enjoys watching games with friends and family. She had engaged in gambling with her family in the past, placing a few bets on horse races and

football. Due to these experiences resulting in losses, she had no interest in gambling during Euro 2024. However, the experience of the tournament changed her outlook. By the end, she found herself more inclined to gamble during future sporting events. Her perspectives shifted due to a combination of peer pressure, summer boredom, a desire to show support for her team, pervasive gambling promotions on social media, and the intense emotions during the games. [18-24 year old]

What they did

Both before and during Euro 2024, the forms of gambling 18-24 year olds took part in varied by how often they gambled, with those gambling more often engaging in multiple and more wide-ranging gambling activities. The types of gambling 18-24-year-olds who gambled rarely engaged in were slightly less diverse, and they tended to engage in single rather than multiple activities. The types of gambling 18-24-year-olds engaged in before and during Euro 2024 included formal sports betting and non-sports related gambling like casino games, bingo, arcade or pub games, lottery tickets, scratch cards and sweepstakes.

During Euro 2024, football-related betting was a key focus of gambling activity. The tournament also prompted participation in informal football-related betting (e.g. Fantasy Football or sweepstakes). Below, we take a closer look at these formal and informal Euro 2024-related gambling activities.

Formal gambling

One group of 18-24 year olds placed bets exclusively using gambling apps that they had pre-existing or newly opened accounts with, or that they accessed through others. Those who created new accounts did so after seeing adverts offering promotions, such as free bets, which they said they would not have signed up for otherwise. Additionally, some operators offered a limited time to use the free bets, which led to rushed decisions.

"What they also have on the free bets is you can't just keep it there, you have around a week to use it all. So, then you're rushing to use it all in each game and then you don't really think about what you're betting on, you're just trying to get the credits out of your account [...], so it's not great." [18-24 year old]

They tended to use betting platforms that offered bet types tailored to the tournament format, such as bet builders. This allowed them to place bets on different scenarios within each game, rather than on the overall outcome only. This format was viewed positively as it was perceived to offer a novel, more versatile and fun way of betting on Euro 2024.

Across both age groups, betting on online platforms was more widespread than going to physical betting shops, potentially due to convenience. There were no mentions of engaging with unregulated platforms among 18-24-year-olds, possibly because they met the age requirements for betting with regulated operators.

Informal gambling

Young people engaged in a range of informal ways of betting, which supplemented rather than replaced more formal betting discussed above. Informal betting included participating in sweepstakes, engaging in Fantasy Football, or competing with friends on WhoKnowsWins, an app that allows friendship groups to bet together.

While some young people chose not to gamble, the findings illustrate the way in which major sporting events encourage first-time or increased gambling in young people. The findings demonstrate the role of novel betting formats and convenient online gambling apps in encouraging gambling among young adults during events like Euro 2024. Additionally, informal gambling facilitated in social and workplace settings demonstrates how gambling becomes integrated into everyday life during major sporting events.

4.3 Experiences of gambling

Young people in both age groups reported feelings of enjoyment and distress when gambling during Euro 2024. They described experiencing fun, excitement, and a thrill when having something at stake. Betting on less prominent matches and participating in Fantasy Football enhanced engagement with the tournament, while winning or seeing others win heightened excitement.

"We'd watch a game, someone would get a shot on target, and that would be their winning bet, and everyone would just go crazy." [16-17 year old]

Distress was typically experienced when young people lost bets. Losing bets could affect the enjoyment of the game and cause financial concern, especially among young people who were struggling with money. For others, the ups and downs of betting were considered part of the experience, with the downs being less acute when small amounts of money were involved or when tempered by receiving promotions such as free bets, which were considered to compensate for losses.

The diary study completed by 18-24-year-olds offered deeper insights into the emotional dynamics of gambling during the tournament, suggesting that while losses provoked temporary distress, the passage of time eased these negative emotions.

Participants described feelings of frustration, disappointment, and self-criticism immediately after losses, using terms like "frustrated," "silly," and "let down." However, in post-tournament interviews, they reflected more positively, expressing overall satisfaction with their gambling experiences. For some, promotional offers such as free bets enticed them to bet again.

"After gambling [I] felt frustrated to lose again. However, when gifted free bets I would bet again." [18-24 year old]

Broader experiences of betting, such as during other sporting events, indicated that emotional responses to gambling losses varied by age and gambling experience.

Among 16–17-year-olds, losses often triggered feelings of disappointment, guilt, and embarrassment, with some reporting that "chasing losses" worsened their distress, leading to anger and feeling "really down." In contrast, 18–24-year-olds, particularly those who gambled regularly, seemed better equipped to manage losses, likely due to greater experience. Less frequent gamblers within this group experienced losses more intensely, describing feelings of being "gutted" or that losing "ruined the experience of watching sports." For some, these negative emotions discouraged future gambling, while others developed a general aversion to it.

The heightened emotions associated with sports betting appeared to affect young people's enjoyment of football. Some noticed that betting made watching games without a stake feel less exciting after experiencing the intense thrill of betting. In contrast, others preferred not to bet on sporting events in order to keep betting and watching sports separate, thereby preserving their enjoyment of the game.

"I wouldn't let the betting side of it and watching the football mix because I wouldn't want to ruin a good football match because of a silly bet." [18-24 year old]

These findings demonstrate the emotional impact of gambling on young people during Euro 2024. While it enhanced excitement and engagement with the tournament, it also caused distress, particularly after losses. While young people with more experience of betting coped better with losses, potential normalisation of the risks of gambling could, in turn, lead to riskier behaviour. Additionally, the influence of promotions encouraged repeated betting and blurred the perception of financial loss, while the heightened emotions associated with gambling sometimes diminished the enjoyment of watching sports without a stake.

5. Reasons for gambling behaviour

This chapter discusses the influences on young people's gambling decisions, using the [Gambling Commission's Path to Play Framework](#). It explores internal impulses (underlying motivations); external triggers (situational nudges), and play outcome (the impact of winning or losing).

Key findings:

- Young people were motivated to gamble by excitement, the chance to test sports knowledge, and potential winnings. Social influences and financial pressures played a role with online social media influencers promoting betting as a profitable activity.
- External triggers, such as social pressures, media exposure, marketing incentives (e.g., free bets), online convenience, and England's tournament success, reinforced these internal impulses, often interacting to amplify their impact.
- Prior wins and losses played a role in young people's subsequent gambling behaviour. Whilst early wins led to more optimism, the experience of losses had mixed effects. For some, it served as a deterrent, while for others, it motivated loss-chasing. Missed opportunities or "near-wins" could intensify young people's desire to gamble.
- Young people who had never gambled and chose not to during Euro 2024 cited four main reasons: lack of confidence, financial concerns, emotional factors, and personal beliefs.

5.1 Reasons to gamble

Internal impulses

The internal impulses motivating young people's decisions to gamble consisted of emotional and mental stimulation and the chance to win money.

Regarding emotional stimulation, **the prospect of fun and excitement, often in social settings, motivated gambling among young people during sporting events.** Their experiences during Euro 2024 specifically highlighted the influence of spontaneous urges to gamble, possibly linked with external triggers discussed below, and of feeling lucky. These feelings are often tied to immediate, situational triggers rather than reflective reasoning and are therefore more likely to have surfaced during a live tournament.

The mental stimulation reported to motivate gambling included the chance to test sports or football knowledge and to alleviate boredom. Young people's diary entries during Euro 2024 demonstrated how emotional and mental stimulation motivated gambling, particularly early on in the tournament, to add excitement to less engaging matches.

"You're watching the football anyway and it's two teams that you have no interest in, it'll give you something to root for, give you a bit more interest in the game." [18-24 year old]

The desire to win money varied in intensity as a motivation for gambling, ranging from being the primary motivation for gambling to being a more casual, secondary motivation, especially when placing free bets.

"To win money. At the end of the day, that's what we all bet for. We bet to try and win money. There's no point in doing it just to lose money!" [18-24 year old]

"I was going to watch the game anyway and thought I had nothing to lose for placing a bet while watching. It is also interesting to see if any predictions are correct. And since I had free bets I would make more for my money." [18-24 year old]

Young people noted that their desire to gamble for financial reasons was amplified by adverts promoting potential winnings on online betting platforms and confidence in their chances of success.

During Euro 2024, some young people reported gambling specifically to generate income for socialising or to fund more gambling. For example, one young person mentioned playing casino games to generate money for sports betting during the tournament.

These findings demonstrate young people's vulnerability to risky gambling behaviours. They show that gambling decisions can be impulsive rather than considered and highlight the influence of betting ads and social media influencers on increasing the appeal of gambling, particularly to those experiencing financial strain.

External triggers

External factors reinforced young people's internal impulses to gamble. These included social pressures, media and marketing exposure, online gambling's convenience, and tournament developments like England's success.

Social pressures

Among young people whose social circles engaged in gambling, their communities (i.e. family, friends, and broader social settings) were a key factor in their gambling decisions. Indeed, during Euro 2024, social pressures appeared to have a strong influence due to young people's fear of declining an invitation to bet or missing out and wanting to be socially accepted. There were three main interlinked dimensions of this: social play, social norms and emulating others.

Social play: as a social activity, gambling fostered friendly competition, collaboration, and enjoyment. Young people enjoyed shared experiences of betting with peers and family when supporting a team, attending bingo nights, or visiting casinos. Wins were celebrated together, reinforcing a sense of community.

Social norms: young people described social expectations to bet on certain sports, like horse racing, boxing and football, viewing this as part of wider gambling culture in the UK. For example, parents and friends were said to encourage betting and family members placed bets on behalf of under-18s.

"My dad would say, 'Just pick one and I'll put like £1 on,' and then I'd just pick whatever horse." [16-17 year old]

"I actually only placed a bet because a family member told me about his bet. And I rushed to put one on as it was just before the England game started." [18-24 year old]

Place was a factor too, betting was described as a topic of conversation in pubs and stadiums, leading to bets being placed both individually and in groups.

Social norms, such as viewing gambling as a rite of passage at the age of 18, also motivated gambling. Here, gambling was associated with a sense of adulthood and excitement about being able to start gambling.

Emulating others: Observing family members, peers, or older friends gambling also led young people to gamble. For example, one 16-17-year-old said his own interest in gambling came from watching his older peers appear to have fun and win money gambling. Other young people bet for nostalgic reasons, for example, one participant mentioned placing bets in memory of her grandfather:

"It's like the sense of putting one on in memory of him, just because he was the one that really rooted it. So I think for even placing the bet, it was more of an emotional attachment to the family as well." [18-24 year old]

Gambling-related media and marketing

Gambling-related media and marketing prompted young people to place bets by reminding them about gambling, by offering incentives such as free bets or by prompting further conversations or interest in gambling, which later motivated them to engage. For example, one participant mentioned that adverts, such as the ones featuring professional footballers like Harry Kane, and those sharing odds, made him gamble even when he was not intending to.

However, **while some young people acknowledged being prompted to place bets as a result, others did not directly attribute their betting to the content they were exposed to.** This was particularly the case if they were already actively gambling and planning to bet on Euro 2024. In fact, **the diary study demonstrated that young people could believe they were unaffected by media and marketing but nonetheless acted on promotions and adverts** by, for example, signing up for new betting apps and placing "free bets".

Those who were influenced by media and marketing to bet attributed this to free bets and "good odds" being advertised and encouragement from tipsters they followed (see case example 3). In the quote below, one participant commented on the intensity of free bets being advertised, leading to more betting. However, it should be noted that more betting did not always equate to higher spending, as some young people placed more bets but with lower stakes.

"[I have] been pretty heavily influenced by betting as the ads are pretty over the top. Skybet offers free bets every day so it is pretty intense. I am not betting on every game just every so often but I deffo have been betting more than I would have before." [18-24 year old]

"The ads definitely play a role in prompting me to place bets. I do feel I would have placed bets regardless of seeing ads or not but I think the amount of bets placed have increased as a result of ads of sports betting" [18-24 year old]

Case example 3. The influence of X tipsters on gambling behaviour

Before Euro 2024, "Fred" gambled regularly on sports when he felt confident in his chances. He began following a tipster on X, trusting their research despite knowing they likely shared more wins than losses. During the tournament, he bet more frequently, driven by notifications, boredom at work, and the tipster's apparent success. Though he lost all his football bets, he viewed his gambling as "safe" since he only wagered what he could afford and wasn't disappointed in the end.

"I'd get the notification through what [the tipster] was going to put in and I'd put a fiver on that just because, I don't know, I was a bit bored. I might not even be able to watch the whole game, but I'd stick that on just because I've got a notification through. If I didn't see a notification, I probably wouldn't have thought about betting at all." [18-24 year old]

Marketing and advertising had a wider impact on young people, beyond actually placing bets. One effect was that it generated hype around betting, leading to betting being on their minds and becoming a topic of conversation with friends. The second was that it increased optimism around the chances of winning and the positive impact of gambling on people's lives.

Ease and convenience

The convenience of online betting appeared to make gambling during Euro 2024 easier and more appealing. Young people noted they might not have engaged in sports betting if it were not so easy. One young person had only ever visited a bookmaker once and said he would have bet less if he had to go to a shop.

Developments in the tournament

Young people's decisions to gamble shifted in line with developments in the Euro 24 tournament. Whereas early on, young people gambled to add excitement to the tournament, England's ongoing success subsequently drove betting, whereby placing bets represented a show of support for the national team. This was, for some, reinforced by encouragement from friends and family.

This shift was mirrored in the media and marketing that young people noticed throughout Euro 2024. They reported seeing increasingly more free bets and promotions off the back of England's continuing success. Some young people remarked on advertising taking advantage of heightened emotions surrounding England's success as a lever to encourage betting.

As touched on above, **external triggers were sometimes interlinked, for instance, adverts prompted conversations with friends; in turn, leading to young people placing bets.** Indeed, external factors in combination rather than in isolation, appeared to be particularly impactful. For example, young people with no intention of betting before the tournament, reported feeling compelled to bet during it.

"I don't normally feel influenced by betting but due to England winning the semi finals I felt like I could have placed a bet because the atmosphere was amazing." [18-24 year old]

The findings illustrate the powerful influence of various external triggers that, combined with internal impulses, can drive young people to gamble, especially during the heightened excitement of major sporting events. Within this context, a key concern is the ease of online apps, which allow immediate access to gambling with minimal effort.

Play outcome - the impact of winning or losing

Prior experiences with gambling played a role in reinforcing young people's desire to continue gambling or to stop gambling, largely due to the emotional and financial rewards of winning. Specifically, early or initial wins led the young people to feel optimism and excitement about future gambling outcomes.

"So I was up on money within my first time of placing a bet, and I think obviously that's why I kept going back." [18-24 year old]

In contrast, **the experience of losses had mixed effects. For some, it served as a deterrent, prompting them to stop gambling. For others, losses motivated further gambling behaviour.** Some observed their peers developing gambling habits driven by a desire to chase losses. They noted that their peers frequently viewed gambling with small stakes as low-risk or harmless, even though they were likely to lose money over time. Additionally, witnessing others win after their own losses reinforced the belief that future wins were possible, motivating some to continue gambling.

"If you win, you want to do it more. If you lose and you see someone else win, that also makes you want to do it more because you think that you have a chance to win as well." [16-17 year old]

Furthermore, missed opportunities or "near-wins" could intensify young people's desire to gamble. One participant recalled a football game that he decided against betting on, only for his team to unexpectedly win. The missed opportunity led him to consider betting in future:

"Maybe I should have put a bet on because I would have won myself a little bit of a change there because we actually won." [18-24 year old]

These findings highlight the influence of both positive and negative play outcomes in encouraging gambling. It is concerning that young people perceive small-stakes gambling as harmless or low-risk, since this could lead to them minimising losses. Furthermore, the regret provoked by missed opportunities or "near-wins" could lead to greater risk-taking.

5.2. Reasons not to gamble

Young people who had never gambled cited four main reasons: lack of confidence due to limited gambling or sports knowledge or a belief that winning was unlikely; financial concerns about losing money or a reluctance to spend it; emotional factors such as disinterest, fear of harm (e.g., addiction or overspending), or concerns that gambling would reduce their enjoyment of sports; and personal beliefs, including religious views. Some actively chose to enjoy football without betting, or felt gambling would bring more worry than excitement. Tournament

developments, like fewer games or their team's elimination, also influenced decisions not to gamble. Socially, some refrained to avoid the stigma associated with gambling. Those who had tried gambling but stopped often cited regret over past losses or discussions with friends or family about its risks.

6. Conclusions and next steps

Conclusions

Overall, young people viewed sporting events as natural opportunities to engage in gambling, whether continuing existing habits or placing their first bets. Several factors contributed to this perspective, including the social aspect of gambling, particularly when it was common among their peers, workplaces, or families. This perception was further shaped by gambling-related media and marketing, the heightened emotions associated with sports events, and the association of betting with team support and national pride.

While some young people did not find gambling-related advertisements particularly persuasive, they still played a role in shaping their awareness and attitudes. Adverts kept gambling prominent in their minds, linked it to the excitement of the sporting event and reinforced perceptions of gambling as a source of entertainment, potential financial gain, and social connection. Promotional offers, such as free bets, encouraged young people to create new betting accounts, often with limited exposure to safer gambling information.

This pattern was consistent with past experiences, with some reporting that their participation in one event made them more likely to bet in future tournaments, and with some noting that the current event increased their likelihood of betting in future tournaments. Others saw major sporting events as an entry point into gambling.

Young people reported seeing limited safer gambling messages during the tournament. When present, these messages were often subtle, brief, or general in nature, making them easy to overlook. Statements like "gamble responsibly" lacked specific warnings about potential harms or actionable advice on what young people should do. Additionally, young people noted a stark contrast between the appeal of gambling advertisements and the visibility and effectiveness of safer gambling messaging. This contrast was seen as potentially limiting awareness of the risks associated with gambling.

Young people's recommendations

We conducted two workshops with both participant cohorts to explore their perspectives on addressing the challenges they identified regarding gambling,

major sports events, and young people. Below is a list of all the ideas they suggested. To accurately reflect their views, we have presented these ideas as given, without additional commentary on their impact or feasibility.

Ideas
<i>Reducing exposure to gambling content</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Introduce bans on gambling advertisements in spaces commonly accessed by or targeted at young people under 18, including social media platforms and children's sports shirts. ■ Restrict gambling advertisements by limiting their broadcast to specific times of the day, reducing their presence during live matches, and imposing limits on their duration.
<i>Reduce the appeal of gambling content</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Prohibit the use of celebrities, particularly athletes and influencers, in all gambling advertisements. ■ Enhance transparency by prominently displaying gambling risks, warning messages, and clear information about free bets to help counteract impulsive behaviour.
<i>Correct misconceptions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support informed decision-making by clearly communicating the chances of winning, emphasising that individuals are more likely to lose than win. ■ Ensure adverts and offers provide accurate and transparent information on the true odds of winning and their implications. ■ Increase the salience of the risk of gambling-related harm by sharing real-life personal stories and data on the consequences of gambling.
<i>Safer gambling messages and approach</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maximise the impact of gambling harm warnings, using approaches such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Using vivid language and imagery, akin to cigarette warning labels. □ Incorporating real experiences from individuals affected by

gambling harm, including both those who experienced harm directly and affected others.

- Strengthen safer gambling approaches by:
 - Targeting new users with safer gambling inductions when they create accounts and incorporating regular prompts, such as pop-ups or chatbot check-ins, on operator websites and gambling apps to encourage self-reflection.
 - Exploring the use of rewards, such as discount codes for gambling products, to drive engagement with safer gambling campaigns.
 - Encouraging open conversations about mental health and safer gambling, and sharing more practical information on recognising signs of harm amongst peers.

Next steps

Whilst major sporting events provide enjoyment and excitement for young people through their engagement with the sport, they also increase exposure to gambling content and opportunities. This exposure can be difficult to avoid, even for those with little interest in gambling. Additionally, the heightened presence of advertising during these events reaches those under the legal gambling age, which raises questions about the potential for early normalisation.

Our project found that young people are interested in gambling and its regulation, and they have specific ideas about the changes they would like to see. Young people's perspectives are an important aspect of discussions on gambling regulation and protection, and we recommend that their views be meaningfully incorporated into research or regulatory conversations.

Potential key areas for future research and policy development, incorporating the views of young people, are:

Advertising

The advertising landscape has evolved significantly, particularly with the rise of social media platforms such as TikTok and live streaming. Throughout this project, young people shared concerns about the volume of gambling advertisements, the

influencers and celebrities promoting operator brands, and the potential for misleading messaging. As outlined above, the young people we engaged with suggested a range of changes, from stricter advertising restrictions to watershed policies and prohibiting celebrity endorsements.

We encourage regulators to consider the experiences of young people when updating advertising codes and regulations. Establishing youth panels or feedback groups within regulatory bodies could ensure their perspectives are actively considered in decision-making processes. We would urge any review of regulations and advertising codes to be completed ahead of upcoming major tournaments, such as the 2026 World Cup and Euro 2028, to ensure protections are in place for young people.

Education

Young people expressed frustration over common misconceptions about gambling, particularly concerning free bets and incentives. Many found the terms and conditions of gambling promotions to be complex and misleading, often leading them to gamble more than they had intended. They highlighted the need for clear, accessible, and engaging education that not only addresses these misconceptions but also provides information on gambling risks, harm reduction, and available support.

While the national curriculum includes education on online gambling and its potential harms, further research is needed to better understand the specific misconceptions young people hold and the most effective ways to address them. Future studies could explore the optimal timing, format, and delivery methods for gambling education, ensuring it is both relevant and impactful for young audiences.

Safer gambling

Safer gambling messages were perceived as ineffective or easily missed by young people. This was due to their vague language, lack of clear advice and their limited visibility compared to other promotional content. Different demographics may require different safer gambling approaches.

We recommend that future research in this space focuses on uncovering what constitutes an effective safer gambling message for young people, including the

most appropriate medium. Participatory approaches could be considered here, for example co-design of campaigns.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Cohort 1. 16-17 year olds - total of 15 participants		
Primary sampling criteria		Sample size
Gambling activity	No	4
	Yes	11
Type of gambling activity*	Placing a bet (includes bets for money between friends or family, or placing bets on a website)	10
	Lottery, or lottery-style games; games and gaming machines (e.g. fruit or slot machines); bingo; casino games; other	8
Gambling activity frequency	2 or more times a week	2
	2-3 times a month; Once a week	3
	Every 2-3 months; Once per month	3
	Once or twice a year	1
	Not disclosed or not applicable	6
Family gambling activity	No, never	0
	Yes, sometimes or often***	14
	Prefer not to disclose or not clear	1
Secondary sampling criteria		
Gender identity	Female	6
	Male / other	9
Ethnicity	Non-white ethnicities	6

Age	16 years old	8
	17 years old	7**
<p>* Some participants engaged in both types of gambling activities.</p> <p>** One participant turned 18 years old during the study.</p> <p>*** The behaviour of family members was complex: some had gambled in the past but had since stopped; some had both relatives who had never engaged in gambling and others who gambled regularly; and in some cases, it was unclear how frequently family members gambled. Across all these cases, participants reported having at least some family members who gambled occasionally or frequently.</p>		

Cohort 2. 18-24 year olds - total of 24 participants*		
Primary sampling criteria		Sample size
Gambling activity	No	8
	Yes	16
Type of gambling activity	Placing a bet (includes bets for money between friends or family, or placing bets on a website)	14
	Lottery, or lottery-style games; Games and gaming machines (e.g. fruit or slot machines); Bingo; Casino games; Other	12
Gambling activity frequency	2 or more times a week	3
	2-3 times a month; Once a week	5
	Every 2-3 months; Once per month	5
	Once or twice a year	3
Family gambling activity	No, never	1
	Yes, sometimes or often**	17
	Prefer not to disclose or not clear	6

Primary sampling criteria.		
Gender identity	Female	11
	Male / other	13
Ethnicity	Non-white ethnicities	11
Student/ employment status	In full-time education	6
	Working part-time	5
	Working full-time	13
<p>* 19 completed the diary study and the post-Euro interview. Out of the 19 who completed the diary study, two only completed the first three weeks.</p> <p>** The behaviour of family members was complex: some had gambled in the past but had since stopped; some had both relatives who had never engaged in gambling and others who gambled regularly; and in some cases, it was unclear how frequently family members gambled. Across all these cases, participants reported having at least some family members who gambled occasionally or frequently.</p>		

Appendix 2

The Diary Study Content

Data was collected semi-randomly, with participants completing one diary entry, composed of four prompts each week. Each diary entry took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete, and participants could provide their responses through text, audio, video recordings, or photos.

Question 1: My Euros Diary

This section was accessible to participants from the start of the study, allowing them to provide any general reflections on betting and gambling at any point throughout the study without the need for specific prompts. This open-ended approach allowed us to gather insights not covered by other questions and get a better understanding of internal motivations and impulses to gamble.

Question 2: What I saw and heard

This section consisted of three questions, repeated weekly. These questions examined external influences that may have affected participants' attitudes, behaviours, beliefs, and emotions related to gambling, along with their reflections on the perceived impact of these influences. Additionally, this section evaluated the visibility and perceived impact of safer gambling initiatives during the 2024 Euros.

Question 3: What I did this week

This section consisted of a weekly survey to explore participants' views and decision-making processes related to gambling. The survey aimed to link these decisions with the influences discussed in previous sections.

Question 4: Experiences and reflections

This section consisted of 5-6 parts and was repeated weekly. The focus was on understanding participants' personal experiences with gambling and observing others gamble during the Euros. It aimed to identify the factors that influenced participants' gambling decisions, as well as how the gambling experience and its outcomes affected their likelihood to gamble again. Additionally, it explored participants' perspectives on others' gambling behaviours, providing insights into the social influences that may encourage or discourage gambling. For those who did

not gamble or witness others gambling, this section focused on their experience of the sporting event as a non-gambler.

The diary study prompts were adapted based on whether participants actively engaged in sports-related gambling. This approach ensured that participants who did not gamble were not encouraged to start gambling, while also capturing how the gambling-related aspects of the 2024 Euros impacted those who did not engage in gambling.

The Diary Study Rationale and Technical Considerations

This method of data collection was chosen to enable participants to record their experiences in real-time, enhancing the accuracy of the data and reducing the risk of recall bias. This approach allowed us to observe the direct impact of the Euro matches, advertisements, public discussions, and other environmental and social influences on participants' thoughts and behaviour patterns.

To ensure maximum engagement, several design considerations were implemented. A welcome message and clear instructions were provided to guide participants on how to submit their responses and what was expected of them. The prompts included a variety of task types to maintain participant interest. Focussed, open-ended questions with bullet-pointed sub-questions were used to encourage detailed storytelling rather than brief, closed responses. Advanced settings were used to ensure that participants were able to submit pictures and videos as expected. Additionally, a test task was conducted prior to the study to ensure the quality and clarity of responses met the required standards.

Several technical factors were also considered when designing the diary study to ensure optimal data quality and participant engagement:

- The measurement frequency was 3 times a week, this frequency was selected to minimise disruption to participants' daily routines, improving compliance and reducing attrition rates.
- A semi-random assessment approach was used, combining both fixed and random timings for data collection. While certain prompts were scheduled at regular intervals (e.g., during key football matches), other prompts were released at random. This method allowed the flexibility to capture data at

unexpected times and helped reduce the likelihood of participants anticipating questions, thereby minimising reactivity.

- One momentary assessment was included each week, allowing participants to record their thoughts and reflections in real-time. Most prompts, however, were retrospective, giving participants some delay before responding. This design aimed to reduce participant burden and increase completion rates.
- Participants were given until the end of each Friday to respond to prompts, increasing the likelihood that they would be able to complete all tasks, therefore improving data accuracy and retention.



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