

## PEOPLE FROM BIRMINGHAM UP TO 55% MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE GAMBLING HARM COMPARED TO NATIONAL AVERAGE

*Charity GambleAware encourages people to open up about gambling by bringing to life the 'clouded' feeling that someone experiencing gambling harm often feels.*

- Up to 38,000 adults in Birmingham are experiencing 'problem gambling' – the most serious level of gambling harm – 55% higher than the Great Britain average.
- Evidence shows that stigma disproportionately impacts people from minority communities – with those who gamble being twice as likely to experience gambling harm compared to white British people (42% vs 20%).
- New data comes as GambleAware launches campaign to tackle the stigma, which represents the single biggest barrier to people seeking support with (75%) of those impacted by gambling-related difficulties hesitant to confide in their family and friends.
- The campaign is supported by ex-Stoke City Player Tony Kelly, alongside numerous national and regional partners, including Football Supporters' Association, Fans for Diversity, Aquarius, Armada FC, Bluepool FC and Nechells Athletic FC.

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024:** New data from GambleAware shows up to 38,000 adults in Birmingham are estimated to be experiencing high level of harms from gambling, meaning rates of problem gambling in Birmingham are 55% higher compared to the national average. The research comes as GambleAware looks to encourage the city to 'open up about gambling' as part of a wider campaign to tackle stigma, which represents the single biggest barrier to people seeking support.

For many people who experience gambling harm, feelings of shame and embarrassment can often mean they struggle to talk about the issue with loved ones, and the research shows that up to three quarters (75%) of those who experience problems with gambling do not feel able to open up to family and friends. In addition, three in five (61%) are put off speaking to those experiencing gambling harms due to concerns around stigma.

As part of the campaign, GambleAware has installed a special build in St Martins Square, inspired and co-produced by those who have experienced gambling harms first-hand, the billboard emphasises the emotion that gambling can make you feel with a message; "Gambling clouded everything I did" alongside details on local support and advice.

'Problem gambling' is classed as the most serious form of gambling harms, and the broader research in the region shows that as many as 3.9% (168,000) adults in the West Midlands are experiencing 'problem gambling', with the region showing a 25% higher number of people experiencing problem gambling compared to the national average.

The research also shows that those who gamble from minority groups were twice as likely to be experiencing any level of gambling harm than white British people (42% vs 20%), despite being less likely to have gambled in the past four weeks (31% vs 48% respectively).

The effects of gambling harms on ethnic minority groups are compounded by them reporting a stronger sense of stigma associated with gambling, acting as a barrier to opening up and seeking relevant support. Over a quarter (28%) believe if a person from their background gambled, it would bring embarrassment and shame on people from the same community, compared to just 9% from White British participants.

Importantly, the research supports the benefits of opening up, as three out of four (76%) who had talked about their problems stated they felt better after speaking to someone. As gambling harms often manifest as intrinsically 'hidden' and isolating, GambleAware is aiming to bring to the surface the power of conversations and provide reassurance that help is available.

**Zoë Osmond, Chief Executive of GambleAware, said:** *“Gambling harm can affect anyone and is a serious public health concern. We want to make sure that more people feel they can open up and get the help they need. Gambling can be addictive, and our data shows just how many people could be impacted by gambling harm in the area.*

*“This is why our stigma campaign is working to encourage people to open up about their experiences of gambling and seek the free help and support that is available by searching GambleAware. It is vital that people impacted, in Birmingham and across Great Britain, are aware of the wide range of support services available, and that they feel safe to come forward.”*

**Dr Joanne Lloyd, Associate Professor and gambling harms expert, University of Wolverhampton, said:** *“Stigma is a massive issue in relation to gambling harms as it is one of the biggest barriers to people seeking treatment. Understanding stigma in relation to gambling harms is not as advanced as some other conditions – so we still have a lot to learn from the research that is currently underway. Most importantly, there’s no shame in asking for help, it’s one of the best steps you can take if you are suffering.”*

**Niran Kahlon from West Midlands-based gambling treatment provider Aquarius, said:** *“It’s scary to first tell someone that you are experiencing problems with gambling. Often, we see some people suffering have been prevented from coming forward earlier due to the stigma surrounding the condition, which is deepened in certain ethnic minority communities where stigma can be a bigger barrier. Gambling can be just as harmful for an individual as other conditions, like anxiety or depression. It’s imperative that we challenge the outdated views of society towards gambling harms and foster an open conversation where people feel that they won’t be judged.”*

**Bianca Colclough, aged 43, who lives in the West Midlands and has lived experience of gambling harms said:** *“When I started opening up about my gambling a huge weight lifted off my shoulders. I felt deep shame about my gambling, but I soon realised that once you open up, people understand you and it becomes easier to overcome the problems you have. No one should have to struggle on their own, and help is out there.”*

There are a vast range of resources available and anyone who is worried that gambling might be affecting themselves or someone they love are encouraged to use the [self-assessment tool](#) to get free and confidential support tailored to them and their specific needs. GambleAware has also created tools to help users calculate the time and money spent gambling, served with recommendations in line with the internationally proven Lower Risk Gambling Guidelines.

GambleAware commissions the National Gambling Support Network (NSGN) which provides, free confidential treatment. The NSGN is available for anyone who is experiencing harm from gambling and wants support for it, as well as those who are affected by someone else's gambling. All services are free and confidential, with one-to-one support available to help you get back on track.

**Stuart Andrew, Minister for Gambling, said:** *"Stigma around gambling is one of the main barriers in the way of people seeking help. This research shows the benefits of opening up and the importance of telling people if you are struggling."*

*"We are determined to protect those most at risk of gambling harm, in the West Midlands and across Great Britain, and are implementing the measures included in our gambling white paper at pace."*

*"As part of this, we recently introduced stake limits for online slot games and will soon be outlining our plans for a levy on gambling companies to go towards research to better understand gambling harms."*

**Stephanie Peacock, Shadow Minister for Gambling, said:** *"We are now in an era where rapid developments in technology mean it is now possible to gamble anywhere and at any time."*

*"In this context, it is important that those who experience problems with gambling are able to open up to family and friends, and access the vital support they need – whether that be through GambleAware or elsewhere."*

**Andrew Rhodes, Chief Executive Officer of the Gambling Commission, said:** *"It's wonderful to witness the ongoing progress of the GambleAware stigma campaign, along with the unveiling of the new billboard in central Birmingham."*

*"Acknowledging the courage, it takes to initiate conversations about gambling, any efforts to dismantle barriers to addressing gambling harms are truly appreciated."*

If you're worried about how gambling makes you feel, we can help. For free and confidential advice, tools and support, search GambleAware or contact the National Gambling Helpline, available 24/7, on 0808 8020 133.

**ENDS**

For more information, or to request an interview with campaign spokespeople, please contact [gambleawarecampaigns@freudsplus.com](mailto:gambleawarecampaigns@freudsplus.com).

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## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### About GambleAware

- GambleAware is the leading independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433) and strategic commissioner of gambling harm education, prevention and treatment across Great Britain to keep people safe from gambling harms.
- GambleAware commissions the National Gambling Support Network (NSGN) which provides, free confidential treatment, as well as the National Gambling Helpline which takes around 50,000 calls a year.
- The charity is independent and evidence-based, with a robust governance process in place to ensure the industry has absolutely no input or influence on our work.
- Gambling harms can affect anyone, and not just those who gamble, but also their families and communities. These harms particularly affect communities that already face inequality.

### About the Stigma Prevention Campaign

- The Stigma Prevention Campaign is an important plank of GambleAware's wider prevention programme, which uses a variety of interventions to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors against gambling harm.
- This regional launch builds on the success of the first phase of the campaign, which was recognised by over 75% of the target audience. The independent evaluation also found that 93% of those in the target audience recognising the campaign reported taking an action as a result, such as contacting the helpline, using online chat, starting a conversation or going online for advice.
- The GambleAware website is now the world's leading website for those seeking advice or support with over 6.5 million visits in 2023.

### About the data

#### New data analysis

Data used for this campaign was commissioned by GambleAware. Prevalence data is based on findings from the YouGov Treatment and Support Survey for 2022, the method of which data was collected can be found below:

Total sample size was 18,305 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 31st October - 22nd November 2022. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

- 'PGSI' stands for the 'Problem Gambling Severity Index' and is a standardised measure of gambling problems, where a higher score indicates higher levels of problems.
- An adult experiencing significant harm from their gambling is defined as experiencing "problem gambling" (PGSI score of 8+) on the PGSI scale.

- Data at local authority level (e.g., Birmingham) has been modelled using multilevel regression with poststratification to provide estimates (infographics for other local authorities can be found [here](#)).

Other estimates may produce different results. The Gambling Commission (the provider of official statistics) has recently published their latest prevalence figures [here](#) but these do not yet include a view of gambling harms overall or by area.

- [Supporting data](#)
- A [summary of background research and data insights](#) used to support the stigma campaign is available (April 2023).
- Ipsos UK have produced two national-level online survey's on stigma and gambling harms, including [Ipsos research explores stigma around gambling harms](#) (April 2023) and [Ipsos research explores barriers to opening up about experiencing problems with gambling](#) (November 2023)
- Data on minority communities has been drawn from [Minority Communities & Gambling Harms: Quantitative Report](#) (March 2023)