

PRESS RELEASE

GAMBLEAWARE PROVIDES FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY WITH TOOLS AND TIPS FOR PREVENTING HARM FROM GAMBLING

- New research from the Behavioural Insights team analyses bank transactional data to explore whether this could offer new insights into gambling behaviour and the impacts of gambling.
- Behavioural data from 1.5 million HSBC customers and 10,000 Monzo customers have been analysed by researchers to explore if these datasets can be used to understand a customer's financial wellbeing, for example via insights into the profile of gamblers, as well as the use of gambling blocking tools.
- GambleAware commissioned the Personal Finance Research Centre to create a guide for finance professionals to assist in preventing gambling related harm among their customers.

LONDON, 14th JULY 2021: GambleAware has today published a new report by the Behavioural Insights Team which analyses behavioural datasets to understand whether these could be used to build a clearer picture of the ways in which people gamble, identify possible harms, and eventually inform prevention, treatment, and support responses.

The commissioned research analysed bank transactional data from Monzo and HSBC, aiming to shed new light on what these datasets can, and cannot, tell us about gambling behaviour. The reports demonstrated that bank customer and transactional data can offer valuable insights into the success of gambling blocking tools and also provide unique profiles of gamblers. For example, of those using Monzo's gambling blocker, it was found that the week before gamblers activated the block, their average daily gambling spend tripled. Specific profiles of gamblers were also revealed by the research, such as that gamblers had less money on average in their Monzo internal saving pots than non-gamblers, or that gamblers ranked 'Very Concerning' by HSBC had on average 35.6 gambling transactions per month, compared to 15.6 in those ranked 'Concerning', and just 1.2 in the 'Control' group.

Taken individually however, these datasets are not enough to understand whether a customer is at risk of experiencing gambling harms. A dataset from a single bank is unlikely to offer a full picture of an individual's spending, and so these exploratory research projects illustrated that

further research is needed to create a fuller picture of an individual's overall financial wellbeing. To see the full customer datasets, please view the individual reports [here](#) and [here](#).

Dr Simon McNair, Advisor at BIT said: *“Our research with HSBC and Monzo has demonstrated that bank transactional data can be a useful tool in identifying gambling behaviours and the unique profiles of gamblers, but further work is needed to understand how such data can be used robustly. Different banks may use different factors, and different thresholds to identify gambling, and future work could look at developing a more standard operating model of how this kind of data should be used to identify those at risk of harm.”*

Maxine Pritchard, Head of Financial Inclusion and Vulnerability at HSBC, said: *“Our research with GambleAware helps us to understand gambling-related behaviours so that we can provide the best support to our customers. This includes opt-in solutions such as a gambling restriction feature to help people control their urge to gamble and automatic declines or referrals for lending to help prevent the customer getting into debt. Customers can also appoint third parties to help manage their finances either through a third-party mandate or our Independence Service. In addition, our specialist support team are on hand to aid customers at risk of financial harm and can refer to trusted external organisations where needed. We continue to work with charities such as Gamble Aware on other ways in which we can ensure these customers have access to the right support.”*

Natalie Ledward, Head of Vulnerable Customers at Monzo said: *“Our work with the Behavioural Insights Team has provided us with important insights into gambling behaviour and the impacts of gambling. At Monzo, this is an area we care deeply about and we've had amazing success so far with our gambling block, which has been used by more than 350,000 customers since its launch in 2017. We're excited to use these insights to inform future work in this area, further reduce gambling harm and provide our customers with even more control over their financial lives.”*

GambleAware has commissioned the Personal Finance Research Centre at the University of Bristol to produce a practical guide¹ for financial services seeking to protect customers from gambling-related financial harms. The guide offers real-life examples of what firms can do to identify and support customers who are at risk of gambling-related financial harms. It highlights the value of financial firms proactively analysing customer transaction data for spending patterns and behavioural signs that might indicate gambling-related vulnerability and enable firms to take action to prevent harm occurring.

Other data sources can also be instructive – one bank analysed its customer complaints where gambling was mentioned and found that around 40% were from customers who thought the bank should not have lent to them because of their gambling. The guide covers other practical actions that financial firms can take, including building staff skills and capabilities around responsive customer interactions and communications, and taking gambling harm into account when designing products and services.

¹ The guide was produced using evidence collected between September 2020 and April 2021, including interviews with people impacted by harmful gambling, qualitative research with regulated firms and qualitative research with gambling treatment and support professionals.

Professor Sharon Collard, Research Director at the University of Bristol's Personal Finance Research Centre said: *“At a conservative estimate, at least five million people in Britain experience harmful gambling, either because of their own gambling or someone else’s. Regulated financial services firms are well-placed to address the financial harms linked to gambling-related vulnerability and our practical guide shows them how. Doing this may have knock-on benefits for other dimensions of gambling harm, such as people’s mental health.”*

Zoë Osmond, CEO at GambleAware, said: *This research from the Behavioural Insights Team is a good first step to explore how bank transactional data may be able to identify behaviours indicative of gambling harm. Whilst more research is needed into this area, we encourage all financial institutions, including those from non-bank settings, to make the most of the new guide to see what they can do to protect their customers from gambling harm. By working with financial services and promoting the advice and support available, we can work collaboratively to respond to customer need to keep people safe from gambling harm.’*

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About the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) research

HSBC

- BIT partnered with HSBC UK on the basis of an agreed analysis plan. The final report can be viewed [here](#).
- HSBC UK conducted the analyses internally and shared the outputs with BIT. HSBC UK’s sample included any customers who had made a transaction in the gambling sector between March 2019 and February 2020. In total, 1.5m HSBC UK customers were included in the sample, which represents approximately 19% of HSBC UK’s customer base. Gambling transaction data for these customers was drawn from March 2016 – February 2020.
- HSBC UK created four customer segments: “In Control”, “Unsure”, “Concerning” and “Very Concerning” based on monthly gambling deposits and ratio of gambling deposits to disposable account income.
- The average HSBC UK customer in the sample was aged 42, showed a yearly account income of £47,000 and deposited £93 a month on gambling over the total observation period, or £148 a month when looking only at months where gambling occurred.

Monzo

- BIT partnered with Monzo to deliver this research and the final report can be viewed [here](#).
- Monzo shared daily transaction records for 10,000 customers, spanning an average of 10 months per customer. All data was anonymised. The sample included customers who had made at least one gambling related transaction between May 2018 – November 2019.
- BIT categorised customers into three groups: non-gamblers, below-average gamblers, and above-average gamblers.
- The average Monzo customer sampled was aged 39 and lived in an urban location.

About the PFRC guide

- The final guide is available to view [here](#) and the executive summary is available [here](#).
- This is the second instalment of the MAGPIE programme and is targeted at banks and building societies as well as non-bank lenders and debt advisors.
- Launched in September 2019, Money and Gambling: Practice, Insight, Evidence (MAGPIE) is a three-year strategic programme and partnership between the University of Bristol's Personal Finance Research Centre (PFRC) and GambleAware. The first MAGPIE publication in July 2020 looked at [bank card gambling blockers](#).

About GambleAware

- GambleAware is an independent charity (Charity No. England & Wales 1093910, Scotland SC049433) that champions a public health approach to preventing gambling harms – see <http://about.gambleaware.org/>.
- GambleAware is a commissioner of integrated prevention, education, and treatment services on a national scale, with over £40 million of grant funding under active management. In partnership with gambling treatment providers, GambleAware has spent several years methodically building structures for commissioning a coherent system of brief intervention and treatment services, with clearly defined care pathways and established referral routes to and from the NHS – a National Gambling Treatment Service.
- The National Gambling Treatment Service brings together a National Gambling Helpline and a network of locally based providers across England, Scotland and Wales that works with partner agencies and people with lived experience to design and deliver a system, which meets the needs of individuals. This system delivers a range of treatment services, including brief intervention, counselling (delivered either face-to-face or online), residential programmes and psychiatrist-led care. It is a free service that accepts self-referrals, as well as from healthcare and advice providers.
- GambleAware produces public health campaigns including Bet Regret. A Safer Gambling Board is responsible for the design and delivery of a campaign based on best practice in public health education. The Bet Regret campaign is being funded through specific, additional donations to the charity, in line with a commitment given to the government by the broadcasting, advertising, and gambling industries. See <https://about.gambleaware.org/prevention/safer-gambling-campaign/>

About the Behavioural Insights Team

- The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) is one of the world's leading behavioural science organisations, working around the world to improve people's lives.
- Through its teams in the UK, France, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Singapore, BIT works in partnership with governments, local authorities, businesses and NGOs in over 30 countries, often using simple changes to tackle major policy problems and deliver improved public services and social outcomes.
- BIT was established by the UK government in 2010 and in 2014 became an independent social purpose company, owned by the Cabinet Office, innovation charity Nesta, and BIT employees.
- For more information on BIT's work and our team visit www.bi.team and follow us on Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and Medium.