

Institution: University of Birmingham		
Unit of Assessment: 4 – Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience		
Title of case study: Influencing UK policy to reduce the harmful impacts of gambling at Fixed Odds Betting Machines		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: January 2000–November 2007		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor James Orford	Professor of Clinical and Community Psychology	1993–November 2007
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 to December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Changes in gambling legislation occurred in 2018, which dramatically reduced the maximum stake from £100 to £2 on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals. These changes were based on a body of work which dates back to 2003 and evidence presented directly to parliamentarians and indirectly to lobbyists from major UK gambling charities regarding addictive forms of gambling. As a result of the changes in legislation, the betting industry reported a 99% (£1.1b) fall in gross gambling yield from Fixed Odds Betting Terminals within one year. This change has improved social welfare by reducing gambling losses, benefitting an estimated 188,000 people with gambling problems in the UK.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Prof. Orford has long-established expertise in the psychology of gambling addiction and led research on gambling at the University of Birmingham (UoB) from 1993–2007; he is the author of several books and review articles, as well as primary research papers on gambling addiction. On the strength of this research, Orford was invited to be a collaborator-advisor on the British Gambling Prevalence Survey (BGPS), a series of three national prevalence studies carried out between 1999 and 2010.</p> <p>BGPS were taken in response to heightened national interest in gambling behaviour with each survey based on a representative sample of between 7,000 and 9,000 UK adults. They were conducted by the National Centre for Social Research with Orford, whilst at UoB, one of three experts centrally involved in survey design, interpretation of findings and final report writing [e.g. R1]. Overall, the three BGPS surveys provide the only comprehensive and large-scale picture of the prevalence of gambling and problem gambling in Britain.</p> <p>The weight of these surveys in informing subsequent debate critically rested on the quality of the survey methods. Orford led analyses that established the reliability and validity of the two problem gambling screening scales that he contributed to the surveys [R2], with problem gambling defined using an internationally agreed threshold. His research also evidenced the negative public attitudes towards gambling which led to the inclusion of a new scoring questionnaire in the 2007 survey [R1]. Orford also led analyses that yielded some of the 2007 survey's most impactful findings, concerning the proportion of gambling occasions and gambling</p>		

spend attributable to problem gamblers [R1] *before* the 2005 UK Gambling Act liberalised gambling in 2007. Importantly, the problem gambling scales [R2] and analyses led by Orford [R3] continued to make a distinct and material contribution to the next two BGPS which were later used to analyse the implications of the UK Gambling Act. Upon his retirement, Orford continued his work on the BGPS as an Emeritus Professor at UoB.

Orford's research has **also documented the indirect effect of gambling on families** [R3]. His work specifically recognised the unequal balance of harm over benefit from gambling for families and communities and documented public opposition to further growth in gambling provision [R4]. Importantly, his research showed variation in the prevalence of problem gambling in different income and social groups [R1], with larger numbers associated with lower income levels and areas of higher economic and social deprivation. He showed that Fixed Odd Betting Terminals gambling was particularly damaging to young adults with lower incomes and those with gambling problems [R5].

Key Findings:

KF1: The BGPS is the most comprehensive and reliable picture of problem gambling in the UK [R1, R2].

KF2: The prevalence of problem gambling is on par with illicit drug consumption [R3] and leads to the conclusion that problem gambling is a significant public health problem in the UK [R4, R5].

3. References to the research

R1. Wardle, H., Sproston, K., Orford, J., Erens, B., Griffiths, M., Constantine, R., and Pigott, S. (2007). *British Gambling Prevalence Survey*. London: National Centre for Social Research.

This is the public, open access report on the second survey. It has been cited 695 times (Google Scholar, 2nd March 2021).

<http://www.nationalcasinoforum.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/British-Gambling-Prevalence-Survey-2007.pdf>

R2. Orford, J., *et al.* (2003). SOGS and DSM-IV in the British Gambling Prevalence Survey: Reliability and factor structure. *International Gambling Studies*, 3: 53–65. DOI: 10.1080/14459790304588

This journal is in the top third of all applied psychology publications (CiteScore Rank 2019) and has been cited 75 times (Google Scholar, 2nd March 2021).

R3. Orford, J., *et al.* (2003). *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Britain*. London: Brunner-Routledge.

This book has been cited 137 times (Google Scholar, 2nd March 2021). It argued that the move towards the easing of gambling regulation (prior to the 2005 Act) was likely to harm many individuals and their families.

R4. Orford, J. (2005). Disabling the public interest: gambling strategies and policies for Britain. *Addiction*, 100: 1219–1225. DOI: 10.1111/j.1360-0443.2005.01143.x

This output is published in a journal in the top 3% for Psychiatry and Mental Health (CiteScore Rank 2019). It was followed by five international commentaries and is cited 44 times (Scopus, 25th February 2021).

R5. Orford, J. (2003) Why the British government is wrong to continue to allow juvenile gaming machine playing. *Addiction Research and Theory*, 11: 375–382. DOI: 10.1080/16066350310001613053

4. Details of the impact

Changing UK gambling laws for Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBT)

Policymakers, including the FOBT All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) [S1] and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) [S2A, S2B], have made extensive use of Orford's **research-based evidence** to argue that liberalisation of gambling in the UK Gambling Act (2005) was harming problem gamblers and wider society [KF1 and KF2]. As a result, **legislative change was introduced** in 2018 to reduce the maximum FOBT stake from £100 to £2 [the *Gaming Machine (Miscellaneous Amendments and Revocation) Regulations 2018*].

Orford's evidence, based on the problem gambling scales used in the British Gambling Prevalence Survey (BGPS), demonstrated a significant increase in gambling prevalence between 2007 and 2010 linked to FOBT [KF1]. The APPG concluded national gambling legislation should be altered, making a strong case for a reduction in FOBT stake. This debate was widely reported in the media throughout 2017. The Chair of the APPG stated:

[Orford's] work on the highly damaging impact that Fixed Odds Betting Terminals were having on the vulnerable and the extent to which they preyed on those with gambling problems formed a critical part of the evidence base that led to the eventual stake reduction to £2. [S3].

In 2019, Orford also provided evidence to the House of Lords Gambling Industry Select Committee. The Lords have now made a series of recommendations, and a wider government review of the 2005 Gambling Act is imminent. Of particular note is the recommendation that the BGPS be reinstated as a first step towards understanding how gambling and gambling prevalence are changing in the UK [S4]. This directly recognises the importance of Orford's research, as the majority of Orford's evidence to parliament was derived from these surveys. That Orford's contribution to the surveys was distinct and material is testified to by the lead scientist running the surveys:

Prof Orford provided input and insight at all stages of survey design, delivery and analysis. This is particularly evident in the work he did [R4] developing the Attitudes to Gambling Scale for the 2007 study [...] [S5].

Furthermore, the Director of the National Problem Gambling Clinic reports:

His expertise shaped the only existing large-scale prevalence surveys in gambling, the British Gambling prevalence Surveys of 2000, 2007 and 2010. No further surveys have been of this quality or magnitude over the last ten years. [S6]

Improving social welfare by reducing problem gambling

The change to FOBT stakes took effect on 1 April 2019 and has led to **quantifiable reductions in financial harm for problem gamblers**. In originally justifying the change to parliament, the Under-Secretary of State said:

we [will] substantially impact on harm to the player and to wider communities. A £2 maximum stake will reduce the ability to suffer high session losses, our best proxy for harm, while also targeting the greatest proportion of problem gamblers. It will mitigate risk for the most vulnerable players, for whom even moderate losses might be harmful. [S7].

Prior to the legislative change, there were approximately 34,000 FOBT machines in the UK, used by an estimated 2.8m people per annum. The latest Gambling Commission industry

statistical report [S8] documents a 99% drop in gross yield from FOBTs (£1.1b) within the first year to April 2020, which contributed to a 25.6% reduction in yield across all forms of gambling machines. This will **translate into significant wellbeing impacts** attributable to Orford's research. Best estimates from the BGPS survey are that 23% of this FOBT yield is from those with gambling problems [S9], representing a saving of £253m, or an average of £1406 for each of the 180,000 problem gamblers in the UK.

Influential contributions to campaigns for legal change in gambling legislation

During the policy debate, the DCMS engaged in a national review of social responsibility measures associated with FOBT. The evidence [S2A, S2B] notes Orford's contribution, as well as the work of numerous **charitable organisations influenced by Orford's research**. Orford set up Gambling Watch in 2012 (www.gamblingwatchuk.org) to use the latest research to support these organisations. NGOs that Orford has influenced through Gambling Watch include:

1. GamCare, a leading national provider of information, advice, support and free counselling for the prevention and treatment of problem gambling across Great Britain. They commissioned the first of the BPGS surveys which Orford was instrumental in designing [KF1].
2. The Campaign for Fairer Gambling (www.fairergambling.org), an organisation which aims to protect children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed by gambling. The spokesperson states:

[Orford's] contributions to the design and analysis of the BGPS were crucial in informing our arguments about the impact of gambling in the UK. We campaigned for changes to the FOBT stake limits throughout 2012–2019, and the Campaign for Fairer Gambling became the most visible entity campaigning for changes in the FOBT regulations [S10].

3. Gambling with Lives (www.gamblingwithlives.org) is another NGO which is very successful in raising the issue of gambling's harm to individuals and families and its link to suicide and list Gambling Watch as a supporting organisation. The Co-Chairs testified to the influence of Orford and his research:

When we set up Gambling with Lives in 2018, Jim Orford was the first name that people mentioned when we wanted to know about gambling research [...] his knowledge was vast and in depth... and he was truly independent [S11].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1. The Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All-Party Parliamentary Group, Fixed Odds Betting Terminals Inquiry Report "[Fixed Odds Betting Terminals — Assessing the Impact](#)" (January 2017).

The report notes Orford as one of five "leading academics who have researched into different aspects of the impact of FOBTs" who gave evidence to the inquiry.

S2A. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport – [Consultation on proposals for changes to Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures](#) (October 2017)

The consultation document lists Prof. Orford as a respondent to the call for evidence. It also makes 15 references to two Gambling Commission reports, that in turn reference Wardle *et al.* 2011 [S10].

S2B. Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport – [Government response to the consultation on proposals for changes to Gaming Machines and Social Responsibility Measures](#) (May 2018)

The report of the Government Response notes Orford as one of seven academics or thinktanks who gave evidence.

S3. Testimony Carolyn Harris MP, Chair of the Gambling Related Harm All-Party Parliamentary Group (GRH APPG), formerly the Fixed Odds Betting Terminals All-Party Parliamentary Group (FOBT APPG). [Dated 11 February 2020]

S4. Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry, [Gambling Harm – Time for Action, 2 July 2020, HL 79 2019-21](#)

Orford is listed as the fifth witness called, providing both [written](#) and [verbal evidence](#)

S5. Testimony from Dr Heather Wardel, lead scientist on BGPS, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

S6. Testimony from Professor Henrietta Bowden-Jones Director of the National Problem Gambling Clinic, UK.

S7. [HC Deb 17 May 2018 vol 641 cc444-446](#) - Statement by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Tracey Crouch), 17 May 2018, justifying the introduction of the new £2 maximum stake:

S8. Gambling Commission - [Gambling Industry Statistics, April 2015 to March 2020](#).

This publication includes the first financial year of data submitted since the change of regulations; land-based sections of the industry were forced to stop trading due to Covid-19 restrictions from 20 March 2020, affecting the last 11 days of this reporting period (3%).

S9. Wardle, H., Moody, A., Spence, S., Orford, J., Volberg, R., Jotangia, D., Griffiths, M., Hussey, D., and Dobbie, F. (2011). [British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2010](#). London: National Centre for Social Research.

This report documents the changes in gambling behaviour and public attitudes, from the second survey prior to the relaxation of gambling regulations. It has been cited 664 times.

S10. Testimony from the Spokesperson for Campaign for Fairer Gambling not-for-profit entity. [Dated 5 December 2019]

The Campaign for Fairer Gambling was the most visible organisation campaigning for changes in the FOBT regulations. They were associate members of the FOBT APPG and the founder gave evidence to both the APPG [S1] and the DCMS inquiry [S2].

S11. Endorsement of Orford's book [The Gambling Establishment: Challenging the Power of the Modern Gambling Industry and its Allies](#). London: Routledge, 2020, by the Co-Chairs of Gambling with Lives. [Accessed 2 March 2021]