



Commission on Crime &
Gambling Related Harms



Exploring gambling and its role within prison culture: “You can be flying high, then fighting”

The report of the Commission on
Crime and Gambling Related Harms

Written by Penal Reform Solutions

March 2023

Preface

This report outlines the experience and impact of gambling in prison, through the lens of prison culture. It also examines the role gambling plays within prison and how people in prison, staff and affected others understand gambling culture. The research has illuminated cultural rules associated with gambling and gambling harms, highlighting key cultural codes and subcultures that operate within prison. In addition, it has outlined the variety of roles gambling plays within prison and extends the literature on gambling harms within a prison environment. The current research was commissioned by the Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms and focuses on people with lived experience of gambling and crime related harms, their families and prison staff. Thanks is extended to the Governing Governor of the research site, who shows unswerving commitment to prison improvement and cultural reform. Appreciation also goes to all the people who supported this project and dedicated their time to tell their stories. The research team would also like to thank Anita Dockley, Catryn Yousefi and Dr Helen Churcher from the Howard League for Penal Reform for their support and trust in the research team. Finally, this research would not hold the richness and insight it does, without the four peer researchers who currently work with Penal Reform Solutions on the Growth Project. They demonstrated insight, professionalism, and commitment to this research and while their names cannot be disclosed, their input is recognised, valued, and respected.

Contents

Trigger warning	6
Glossary of terms and acronyms	6
Executive summary	7
1. Introduction and context	13
Key points	
2. Methodology	17
Co-production	
Participants	
Procedure	
Analysis	
Ethical considerations	
Methodological limitations	
Key points	
3. Key findings I: The experience and awareness of gambling in prison	23
The normality of gambling culture	
Visibility	
Gambling subcultures	
Key points	
4. Key findings II: The role of gambling in prison	33
The need to feel	
Engineering freedom	
To survive - “Everything is about survival”	
To be validated - “If you won you were the man for the day”	
Meaningful relationships - “It creates a bond though it depends how often you do it. It’s a boy thing, you gain a friendship and become part of a team.”	
Key points	
5. Key findings III: The impact of gambling in prison - “One minute you can be flying high and the next you can be fighting”	39
Community	
Harm and vulnerability	
Loss	
Mental health	
Growth or de-habilitation?	
Key points	

6. Case studies	50
Case study one, Thomas (Community sample)	
Case study two, Harry (Resident sample)	
Key points	
7. Conclusion and recommendations	54
Recommendations	
References	59
Acknowledgements	62
About the Howard League for Penal Reform	
About the Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms	
About the authors	

List of figures

Figure 1: *Percentage of participants from each sample.*

Figure 2: *Age of people in prison who participated in the research.*

Figure 3: *Age distribution across the whole research site.*

Figure 4: *Ethnicity of people in prison, who participated in the research.*

Figure 5: *Ethnicity of people in prison, across the whole research site.*

Figure 6: *The percentage of people in prison who reported that gambling was linked to their offending, during the research.*

Figure 7: *Representation of the gambling subcultures within prison*

Figure 8: *Participants' response to the impacts of gambling in prison.*

Figure 9: *Participants' response to the impact of gambling on relationships.*

Figure 10: *Responses from participants with lived experience of prison and residents, when asked 'Does gambling in prison influence rehabilitation?'*

Figure 11: *The Principles of Growth.*

Trigger warning

We recognise that some of the subject matter and experiences detailed in this report may be upsetting and could cause distress. In addition to gambling addiction, the issues detailed in this report include: violence, self-harm, suicide, sexual assault and substance misuse.

You can find support lines and websites via [St John Ambulance mental health advice and support directory](#).

Glossary of terms and acronyms

Association	The time residents are allowed out of their cell to socialise and carry out domestic duties.
Blacklisting	To be excluded/banned from the underworld.
C-NOMIS	Computer-National Offender Management Information System.
Canteen	A canteen service provided by DHL, similar to online shopping. Items are ordered using an order form and then delivered to the prison and received by people in prison weekly. Items include food, toiletries and vapes.
Debt head	Someone who gets into debt and/or carries out favours to clear their debt.
Double bubble	Prison slang for doubling the amount/stakes of a bet
Double or quits	A scenario whereby another bet is introduced by the player who has lost, which offers double the current winnings, or the player collects his current winnings.
Hot water	When a resident throws hot boiling water over/on another person
Loot	Money.
Negatives	A negative entry on a residents C-NOMIS file
People in prison/ Residents	This report refers to 'prisoners' as either people in prison or residents, to humanise their contributions and not define them by their current situation.
Potting/shit up	Whereby people in prison excrete in a bucket and pour this over a targeted member of staff.
PRS	Penal Reform Solutions.
Screw	Slang for prison officer.
Snitches	To tell someone in authority that someone else has done something bad.
The block	The segregation unit
Underworld	A network/community involved in organised activity, which manages the hidden economy within prison.

Executive summary

This research was commissioned by the Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms in response to a lack of existing literature about the role and impact of gambling within prison, particularly in England and Wales. The research aims were:

- To understand how gambling is conceptualised in prison by residents and staff.
- To understand how gambling is experienced within the cultural context of a prison by residents and staff.
- To understand the role of gambling in prison, both positive and negative.
- To understand the impact of gambling in prison on residents, staff and affected others and the support needed to address associated harm.
- To assess how aware staff and residents are of the role gambling plays within prison culture and its impact on the rehabilitative environment.

This research examined how gambling was understood and experienced in prison through the lens of culture, and the impact gambling has on people, both inside and outside of prison. A range of qualitative methods were adopted to promote engagement. The findings of this research highlighted that gambling played a significant role within prison culture. The role of gambling generated a sense of meaning and stimulation, acting as a form of escapism from boredom and was perceived as a tool to aid survival. The impact and experience of gambling were dependent on the subculture the person belonged to and where they were positioned within the hierarchy of the prison.

This report outlines key recommendations that aim to address the harms associated with gambling within prison. While the findings and recommendations based on this study may not be uniformly applicable to the whole male prison estate in England and Wales, it is hoped that this research will assist prisons in creating meaningful strategies, to address the issues relating to gambling in prison.

Methodology

One hundred and forty-one people participated in the research, comprising 90 people in prison, 24 prison staff, 17 family members of those in prison and ten people with lived experience of prison. Data was collected using assisted questionnaires, interviews, and in-depth interviews. The data was analysed with the research team and included four peer researchers who live in prison, two researchers from Penal Reform Solutions (PRS) and a researcher from Betknowmore UK.

Key findings

The experience and awareness of gambling in prison

- Gambling is culturally embedded within prisons, described as a ‘normal’ pastime by residents and staff. While gambling is prohibited in prison (PSI 01/2022 Manage prisoner finance, Prisoners Earning Act, 1996), staff reported that they did not see gambling as problematic and mostly viewed it as ‘harmless betting’ and low-level. Residents highlighted that gambling is mostly hidden from staff and managed by residents, however there is a willingness among staff to turn a blind eye, to keep the “*wings calm and quiet*”, as “*everyone is well behaved, not causing any problems*”. A lack of knowledge around gambling harms meant that staff felt a sense of powerlessness in their ability to effectively control gambling. This lack of guidance and inconsistent response to gambling contributed to a confusing and enabling culture.
- A hierarchy among residents was evident, and the position in this hierarchy influenced how residents experienced gambling. The analysis identified several subcultures which varied in terms of risk, harm, and intensity. However, these subcultures were not consciously determined or overtly discussed, but were silently categorised based on factors including vulnerabilities, wealth, influence, communication skills, confidence, and intent. It was made clear by the residents that people could move between subcultures if they adopted the norms associated with the subculture and were able to survive within its belief system.
- These subcultures were identified as: (1) small and ‘safe’ gambling, (2) temptation, (3) risky and (4) ‘immune’ gambling (see Figure 7). Small and ‘safe’ gambling was understood to be low-level gambling, described as “*gentlemanly*” fun between friends, where little or no harm occurred. Temptation gambling indicated a threshold between ‘safe’ and ‘risky’ gambling. Higher rewards enticed some residents to engage in riskier gambling, increasing harms when they lost. Risky gambling was the point where the cultural tone changed and at this point staff involvement was activated, with staff acknowledging that some residents were experiencing gambling harms or funding addictions. Staff were also identified to operate within this risky subculture, from smaller bets to higher stakes, often associated with corruption. This space was managed by members of the hierarchy, who enforced non-payment of gambling debts. This included residents being made to give favours, store drugs, or enforce violence. The final subculture was described as ‘immune gambling’, with those involved referred to as ‘influencers’. Violence and harm were instigated and managed in this subculture and deemed as protected from the harmful cultures of the “*underworld*”. Only very few individuals were part of this subculture, and many were not willing to discuss this echelon of prison culture. Although they were

immune from retribution associated with losing, when they lost a game, the need to regain status increased and this was achieved by extreme violence or acts of humiliation.

- The findings indicated that, proportionally, 'safe' to 'risky' gambling differed across prisons. For example, it was reported that in the youth estate, gambling was seen more often and deemed 'riskier'; in which harm often occurred quicker, was often hidden and extreme.
- Awareness of the risks of gambling in prison is needed at the pre-sentence stage. Incorporating screening and identification, to support effective decision-making, would allow people to get the support they need, in the community.

The role of gambling in prison

- 'The need to feel' was articulated in two ways; to alleviate boredom and to generate stimulation. It brought a sense of joy and excitement and provided relief from the "*dullness*" of prison, where there were limited options for education or employment. For some, gambling was an aid to "*numb everything*", to self-soothe and manage the pains of incarceration. In addition to this, gambling added meaning to life for many. Residents and staff stated that gambling added meaning to recreational activities (e.g. playing pool) and gave some residents a purpose, for example, having their own in-cell shop.
- Residents used gambling to engineer freedom, describing gambling as an "*escape*" from prison and a way to generate a sense of normality and to "*pass the time*".
- Survival was a consistent theme within the data. Gambling was also described as a route to gain goods of value, which operated as currency across the underground economy (where food, property, drugs, and phones could be bought illegally). Staff and residents acknowledged that if people did not have family support and money was not sent into prison, residents would struggle due to the small food portions, poor food quality and low prison wages. Some residents explained that gambling was an "*earner*" that meant they did not need to "*burden*" their families.
- Gambling was also used to validate friendships and status and enabled people in prison to build new relationships or reconnect with those relationships from outside prison. For new connections, gambling allowed trust and friendships to be built, reducing loneliness. In turn, this formed communities within prison.

The impact of gambling in prison

- The impact of gambling differed depending on where an individual was positioned within the prison community, and which subculture they identified with. Some research participants with lived experience of prison and residents described the positive impact gambling could have on prison culture and community, highlighting that it brought people together, occupied their time and helped build relationships with residents and other staff. Others described the potentially negative impact of gambling on the prison community, due to its impact on the prison dynamics, causing serious disruption, and tension and in some cases violence.
- Harm was the most prevalent theme within the data and related specifically to 'risky' gambling (both gambling related-harm, and broader harms associated with the prison environment). Residents described various trauma, including witnessing acts of violence due to non-payment of gambling debts, illuminating how the cultural rules dictate that residents are unable to disclose information to staff. Financial harms associated with gambling were highlighted, describing how gambling affected people in and outside prison, explaining how some people can leave prison with thousands of pounds worth of debt. This harm extended to families, who were reported to be pressurised to bring in phones and drugs, to settle gambling debts, as well as experiencing the financial burden placed on them, while under threat.
- Harm and vulnerability were observed when a person was blacklisted from the 'underworld', banished from the underground economy. Increased vulnerability was identified for those whose gambling was linked to their offending. An environment whereby gambling was embedded into the culture was viewed as unsafe for those who had a gambling addiction.
- Loss was evident in several forms, causing a sense of shame, insecurity, and powerlessness. This affected relationships inside and outside of prison. The cultural rules and limited support available for gambling meant that feelings of powerlessness were increased, and there was little to no help for those experiencing gambling harms.
- The harms associated with mental health were frequently acknowledged, including depression and anxiety associated with gambling. Vicarious trauma was not acknowledged by participants, although it was evidenced from the experiences shared and the way in which they were articulated.
- Irrespective of gambling and the culture that surrounded it, the lack of rehabilitation more generally within prison was clear. There was a divided perspective from people in prison regarding the impact of

gambling on rehabilitation. However, there was a consensus among those who were no longer in prison that gambling negatively impacted on rehabilitation, and the harms of gambling were seen to de-habilitate and remove key opportunities for residents.

Recommendations

Experience and awareness

- Further co-produced prison-based research is needed to enable HMPPS and individual institutions to review current practices regarding gambling addiction (identification, support in prison and through the gate). Further research exploring staff culture and responses to gambling would enhance practices. Further exploration into subcultures associated with gambling would deepen understanding of the ways in which subcultures are reinforced, enforced, and governed in prison more generally. It is also recommended that in light of the prevalence of disordered gambling in the prison population, a collaborative review of the prison regime would be advised, to consider how best relationships can be developed and purposive activities can be promoted.
- Awareness-raising, education and training should take place across the system (for both staff and residents). Mechanisms should involve accessible and visible resources and could involve digital media such as a short co-produced digital film for new residents and available to prisons nationwide, to raise awareness around the cultural rules of gambling in prison and the risks of gambling, both in prison and in the community.
- Awareness-raising and training for staff should be centred on professional curiosity and dynamic security. Staff should be equipped to investigate games and activity, and have the knowledge and skills to develop professional, trusting relationships, so people in prison feel safe enough to share their challenges associated with gambling.
- Awareness about the prevalence and risk of gambling activity in prison is needed at the start of the criminal justice journey. Screening and identification processes should be built into each stage of the criminal justice process, in tandem with a more holistic approach to facilitate trust and safe relationships. Acknowledging this at the pre-sentence stage, to support effective decision-making, would allow people to get the support they need in the community.
- Signposting support to family members affected by gambling would ensure additional support to those in need. Specific prison-related support should be developed for friends and families who have a loved one in prison. This could include Visitors Centres working alongside

gambling charities such as Betknowmore.

- It is also recommended that HMPPS respond to the issues illuminated in this report and review their stance on gambling, in collaboration with those who live and work in prison. Establishing a considered, clear, meaningful response will provide clarity moving forward, in light of the findings from this Commission.

Role of gambling

- Healthy alternatives should be provided in prison regimes, in order to divert people away from gambling and towards rehabilitative-focused activities in line with PRS's Principles of Growth (Lewis and Hands, 2022), which suggests that gambling currently provides a false sense of hope and purpose for people in prison.

Impact of gambling

- Investment in prison culture is needed in order to address gambling related harm in prison and encourage safe behaviour. Where gambling occurs, a safe and well-managed environment with openness and support equivalent to that in the community is needed. To support its effectiveness, the support of people who live in prison is imperative. A collective action committee (including residents, staff, and families) should be created within the prison in order to co-design a meaningful cultural strategy to address the systemic issues that prisons have historically faced. This approach should be integrated into HMPPS working groups.
- People working and living in prisons should strive for a recovery culture centred on harm reduction. Drawing on the experiences of gambling harms in prison can be an effective tool to discuss with people in prison how to gamble safely, addressing gambling harms and providing a safe and person-centred space, where staff and residents can speak openly about gambling and prison culture. In addition, this will provide additional opportunities for those with a gambling addiction to access help and support and feel safe enough to share their challenges.
- Person-centred education about gambling safety should be used as an opportunity for growth, integrating key discussions around gambling into key worker sessions and dynamic security, adopting a professionally curious approach. To achieve this, prison staff need further investment to learn how to work effectively with people in prison to develop trust and allow gambling harms to be unearthed.

1. Introduction and context

Penal Reform Solutions (PRS) is an organisation that focuses on transforming penal culture and creating spaces which are meaningful, trusting and nurturing, to support personal and organisational growth. It is an evidence-based organisation, which draws on academic, practitioner and prison experience. It has extensive experience in prison growth, relationship work and specialises in service user involvement, supporting a variety of organisations in the criminal justice system. Betknowmore UK is a charity established by people with lived experience of gambling harms and provides support to people currently experiencing the harms caused by gambling, as well as raising awareness to prevent harms from occurring.

This research forms part of a broader research agenda by the Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms. The Commission aims to explore the harms of gambling, its links with crime and the experience of gambling, within the context of criminal justice.

The following research questions were established by the research team:

- How is gambling understood in prison, by residents and staff?
- How is gambling experienced within the cultural context of a prison, by residents and staff?
- What role does gambling play in prison culture, from the perspectives of residents and staff?
- What is the impact of gambling on residents, staff, and significant others (family and friends), including its perceived impact on rehabilitation?

Gambling is an increasingly normalised activity within the wider community and there is increasing concern about gambling related harms and addiction (The Gambling Commission, 2022). Previous research suggests that the experience of imprisonment can reinforce gambling behaviours, and be counterproductive in addressing gambling problems, with prisons lacking sufficient support for people with gambling addiction (Smith, 2022a). Historically, there has been a lack of research on the relationship between crime and gambling related harms in England and Wales, with most peer reviewed research adopting an international focus (Ramanauskas, 2020). There has been little research that examines the extent of gambling in prison and why people engage in it (Abbott and McKenna, 2005; Beauregard et al, 2013). However, a 2017 study of English and Scottish prisons suggested a 12 per cent prevalence of problem gambling (May Chalal et al, 2017). Another study identified gambling in prison to be a significant part of the prison subculture (Williams and Hinton, 2006). Williams and Hinton (2006) acknowledge the variety of forms and reasons for gambling in prison, including the need to alleviate boredom, socialise with others, feel a sense of excitement, and foster a sense of community (Hing et al, 2016). Gambling is therefore a complex phenomenon (William and Hinton,

2006) and worth exploring, to consider its role within the prevailing culture of prison. However, little is known about how gambling is experienced and the risks people in prison face around gambling (McEvoy and Spirgen, 2012). In fact, McEvoy and Spirgen (2012) highlight that little work has focused on how correctional organisations can respond to such risks and harms associated with gambling. With gambling harms becoming more prevalent, new research is being commissioned and published, exploring how gambling escalates and how it can result in committing crime (Smith, 2022b). Despite this burgeoning awareness there is currently no systematic screening (or resulting criminal justice process) to understand the number of people in the prison system, or wider criminal justice system, who identify a gambling addiction as a causal or contributory factor in their offending (see for example: Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms, 2021; Page, 2021; Smith, 2022a and 2022b ; Churcher, 2022).

Academic research has linked the negative impacts of gambling on mental health (Lorains et al 2011; Roberts et al., 2017), identifying increased rates of anxiety and depression compared to the general population and how these mental health issues may contribute to the development and maintenance of a gambling disorder (Blanco, C et al. 2006). These risks are furthermore increased for those in prison, with prisoners experiencing a higher rate of mental health disorders, due to the additional harms of a prison environment (Fazel and Danesh 2002).

The National Gambling Impact Study Commission carried out in America (NGISC, 1999) found that gambling in prison can lead to an increased likelihood of recidivism, as people in prison may turn to illegal activities to support their gambling habits. Additionally, the NGISC (1999) found that gambling can distract people in prison away from participating in educational and vocational programmes, which are key components of rehabilitation. Understanding the impact of gambling in an English and Welsh context will build on this work, considering ways in which prisons can become more meaningful places for rehabilitation, to serve the public.

Cultural rules allow worlds to become more predictable, enabling people to understand the 'way of being'. They are the 'norm' of an environment and are socially constructed over time, embedded into the fabric of a place. While Raylu and Po Oei (2004) explore individual cultural variables within the context of gambling (including cognitions, personality, biological and familial factors), it is important to note that these individual variables are situated within larger cultural norms that are at play in prison. This research focused on the organisational culture and subcultures that exist within prison, acknowledging that time spent in prison does not occur in a vacuum (Bronson, 2006).

Subcultures can be defined as the cultural values, beliefs, and habits of a particular group, which are distinctive from other subcultures and exist within a larger culture. Sykes (1958) explored the cultural codes and habits within

prison, examining how cultural rules influence order and control. Sykes's seminal work observed prison rules such as 'no snitching', 'do not interfere with another person's business' and 'be tough', and examined how these were socially constructed and used to cope with the 'pains of imprisonment'. These 'pains' included a loss of liberty, a deprivation of goods or services, heterosexual relations, personal safety or security and autonomy (or personal freedom). These key institutional deprivations have been seen to influence the emergence of subcultures, creating a set of informal rules, known as a 'code', which are used to govern interpersonal communication and regulate conduct (Bell et al, 2022). Understanding how prison 'codes' operate within the context of gambling will provide a new insight into the social and relational conditions, which reinforce conformity to subcultures. Research into the underground prison economy also exists, where prison-defined currencies are exchanged to aid survival. A study by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) found that gambling can lead to the formation of illegal economies within the prison, which can be controlled by powerful individuals (known as 'influencers') and can lead to the exploitation of vulnerable prisoners (AIC, 2017).

Harm is referenced throughout this report in two ways: clearly defined gambling related harm, and a broader concept of harm related to prison. Langham et al (2016) defined gambling related harms as:

Any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement to the health or wellbeing of an individual, family unit, community, or population.

These specific gambling harms experienced by people who gamble (see Langham et al 2016 Table 1 A taxonomy of harms experienced by people who gamble) are also experienced by those in prison. However, these harms are further exacerbated within prison by the environment, cultures and the widespread of gambling within prisons (Smith, 2022a). Further to this, Langham et al (2016) acknowledge that gambling impacts individuals, families and communities and therefore gambling related harms are not contained to people with a gambling problem, in isolation. For this report, harms associated with gambling have been referred to as 'gambling harms'. The term 'harm' is used where it has been identified on a broader level, associated with the harm that takes place within prison as opposed to being related to gambling.

Key points

- The research aims to understand the nature and experience of gambling within the cultural context of prison - What roles does it play? What impact does it have? And how is gambling in prison related to broader questions about the links between gambling, crime, and criminal justice?
- Gambling is an increasingly normalised activity, giving way to increasing concerns about gambling related harm and addiction.
- Limited research exists regarding the relationship between crime, criminal justice and gambling harm and addiction. That which does exist suggests there is a significant prevalence of gambling related harm and addiction among the prison population; there is limited awareness and appropriate action regarding gambling harm and addiction across the criminal justice system; there is limited support for gambling harm and addiction in prison; and prison can exacerbate gambling harm and addiction.
- Gambling behaviour and activity can be influenced by societal culture (both more broadly, and within prisons). Prison subculture is well-documented, and gambling must be viewed through this lens when discussing its role and impact in prison.

2. Methodology

Co-production

The research team consisted of four peer researchers (SS, IH, EH, SGT), who currently reside in prison, Dr Sarah Lewis, and Justine Best MSc (Penal Reform Solutions), and Dr Liz Riley (Betknowmore UK). Assisted questionnaires were designed by the research team, specifically for people in prison to improve engagement in the research and were delivered by the peer researchers. Parity was sought at every stage of the research, to ensure that the research team collectively owned the research and were invested in the process. This is in line with a peer led/participatory model of research and is fundamental to Penal Reform Solutions' principles, which seek equality of involvement throughout the process.

Interviews were designed and carried out by the PRS researchers. Staff interviews explored how they perceived the current gambling culture within the prison. The research team also designed a questionnaire that was distributed by the Families Team at the research site.

Procedures

PRS interviewed 24 members of staff and carried out ten in-depth interviews with people with lived experience of prison, who have now been released. Additionally, two members of the Families Team (non-operational prison staff that support men and their families within the prison, acting as an intermediary between PRS and families) supported PRS in collating 17 questionnaires from friends and families of those currently residing in prison. The PRS peer researchers also conducted 90 assisted questionnaires with people in prison across all houseblocks, excluding the Segregation Unit.

Participants

The site for most of the primary data collection was in a multiple security category men's prison. Data was collected using assisted questions and interviews with 141 people. This comprised 90 people in prison, 24 prison staff and 17 families of those in prison. Assisted questionnaires were carried out on houseblocks excluding the segregation unit. In addition, ten people with lived experience of prison were interviewed via video call or via phone.

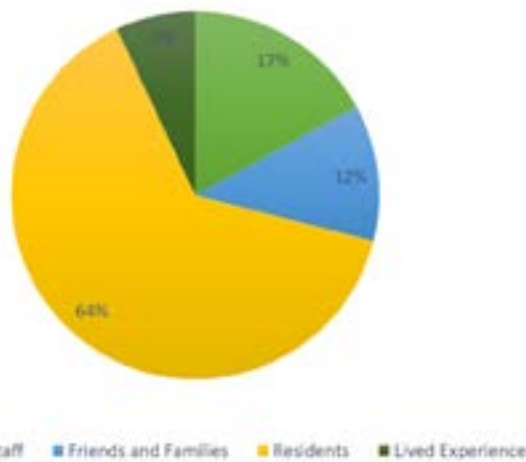


Figure 1: Percentage of participants from each sample

Most of the resident sample were aged 26-35, with a broad range of ages noted across the sample as outlined in Figure 2. Those participants who had left prison and had lived experience of the prison environment were distributed across all ages, with one person aged between 21 and 25, one aged between 26 and 35, five aged between 36 and 44, one aged between 45 and 50, and two older than 50. The age range of the entire population in the research site is shown in Figure 3.

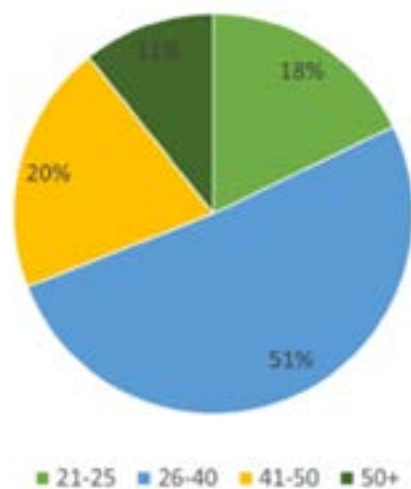


Figure 2: Age of people in prison who participated in the research

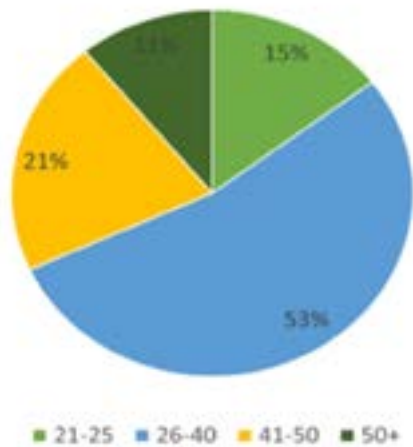


Figure 3: Age distribution across the whole research site

Demographic data regarding the age and ethnicity of the core resident sample was collected. With respect to ethnicity, most participants in prison stated that they were White British (49), nine described their ethnicity as Asian and the remaining sample came from a range of other ethnicities, as outlined in Figure 4. Those who participated with lived experience of prison were also from a range of ethnicities; three stated they were “Black British”, four as “Black”, one as “British Asian” and three as “White British”. Figure 5 outlines the ethnicity of the prison population at the research site, highlighting that the research sample was fairly representative of the prison.

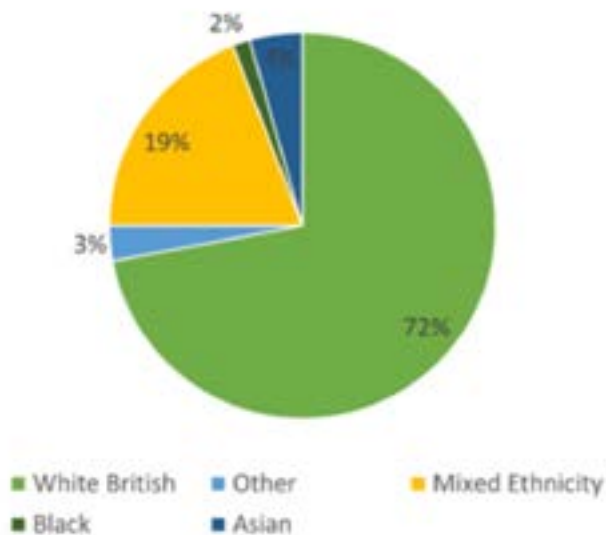


Figure 4: Ethnicity of people in prison, who participated in the research

This can be compared to Figure 5, which outlined the distribution of different ethnicities across the whole research site.

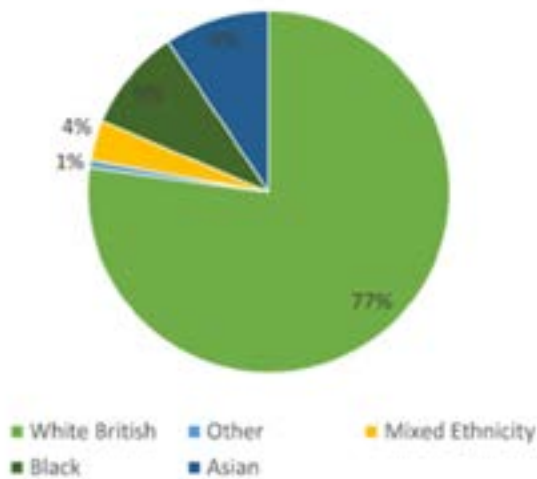


Figure 5: Ethnicity of people in prison, across the whole research site.

Participants were asked about their experience of gambling. One participant with lived experience of prison disclosed that his offending was linked to gambling. In response to assisted questionnaires distributed across the prison (excluding the Segregation Unit), eleven participants stated that their offence was linked to gambling (see Figure 6). One participant in prison agreed to carry out an in-depth interview with one of the peer researchers and one participant with lived experience gave an in-depth interview with a PRS researcher. These interviews focused on the pathways to offending linked to gambling and the impact it had on their lives and those around them.

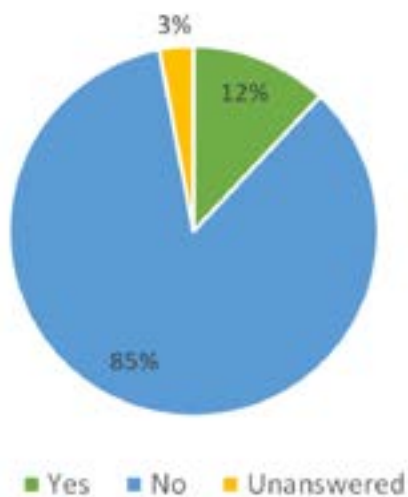


Figure 6: The percentage of people in prison who reported that gambling was linked to their offending, during the research.

Analysis

The data was analysed with the research team, identifying patterns captured to inform the themes that emerged (Braun and Clarks, 2006). Data saturation was established by the PRS research team, following weekly reviews, to ensure that only the necessary amount of data collection took place. Peer researchers were asked to identify key terms and phrases from the data collection, and focused discussions followed to identify specific themes, concepts, and ideas which were deemed significant to answer the research questions.

Following the analysis of the data collected, a summary of the key findings was presented by the research team at an event at the research site. Attendees included the Governing Governor, the senior leadership team, middle managers, officers, non-operational staff, the rehabilitative culture lead, the Howard League for Penal Reform, Betknowmore UK and the peer researchers. This provided a space for the peer researchers to share the findings and recommendations. This led to a discussion on how the findings could be integrated into strategic plans associated with wellbeing and culture at the research site. Steps had already been made to support those in prison with gambling and there was a clear ambition to develop sustainable plans, and to raise awareness around gambling harms for both staff and residents.

Ethical considerations

This research was approved by the HMPPS National Research Committee, ensuring all ethical considerations were addressed, including obtaining consent, the safety of participants/researchers and anonymity.

Peer researcher training included an overview of gambling harms, led by Dr Riley. The PRS team trained the peer researchers in epistemology, research methods and questionnaire design, ethical practice, safeguarding, analysis, dissemination, and research skills. All peer researchers received support throughout the collection and analysis process. Role clarity was discussed with participants by all peer researchers at the start of the assisted questionnaire research process.

An information sheet and an informed consent form were created for all participants to sign, prior to taking part in the research. If a participant identified they were unable to read, this was read aloud to them and explained. The peer researchers reported that six participants required this support, due to reading challenges. Support services were signposted at the end of each interview, as well as support information resources associated with gambling. This was created specifically for this project, in collaboration with Betknowmore UK.

Methodological limitations

It should be noted that this was a case study and therefore the findings cannot be generalised across all male prisons. The research focused on participants' experiences of gambling culture across all prisons, not specifically the research site. Staff from operational and non-operational backgrounds and across different ranks were included in the sample, to capture multiple perspectives of the culture across prison sites, rather than solely at the research site.

There was a noticeable reluctance by some residents to participate in the research. A minority of staff discouraged the peer researchers on some house blocks because gambling was a part of prison life, which should not be discussed. Some residents reported that they feared that gambling would be stopped, with one commenting *"they will take away the only positive thing we have in our existence."* Some staff and people in prison reacted to the peer researchers in a negative way, questioning their intentions, suggesting they were spies or 'snitches.' One peer researcher refrained from further data collection following such comments, to safeguard their wellbeing. Notably, the opposite was experienced with those interviewed in the community with lived experience of prison, highlighting how research in prison brings with it complex challenges around engagement and the pursuit of knowledge.

Key points

- The study was conducted across two research sites: a multiple security category men's prison (with both residents and staff), and in the community with people with lived experience of prison.
- Data collection methods included assisted questionnaires and in-depth interviews.
- The research was co-produced by a team of researchers and peer researchers who live in prison. The participatory model of research was central to the project and co-production occurred at every stage.
- The subject matter resulted in some challenges around data collection, due to the role that gambling plays in prison.

3. Key findings I: The experience and awareness of gambling in prison

The experience of gambling was heavily dependent on one's position within the prison (e.g. staff or resident). This, in turn, was found to influence the way in which gambling was conceptualised, and the importance it was ascribed within the prison environment.

There was a clear consensus among staff and people in prison that gambling was not allowed, as outlined in the PSI 01/2022 Manage Prisoners Finance 2.3.13 (Prisoners Earning Act, 1996), which states, "*Convicted prisoners are not permitted to carry out ... gambling or the making of payment for other games of chance*". Section 3.13 prohibits: "*Gambling, sweepstakes and other games of chance played for potential financial gain: Prisoners are not permitted to take part in any of the above, or similar activities. Typical examples being: Lottery, Pools, Betting.*"

When residents enter prison, they sign a contract (known as a Compact) at reception, to confirm that they are aware that gambling is prohibited and that no borrowing should take place within the prison. Despite this, it was clear that gambling and betting more generally were prolific among people in prison. This was echoed in the staff experience, to a lesser extent. Residents and those released from prison discussed bets associated with sport (including Formula One, horse racing, the World Cup, and football more generally), as well as a variety of card games, including poker, kalooki and blackjack. Other means of gambling consisted of game-based activities on the prison wing, including dice, pool, dominoes, chess, and draughts. Gambling activity also extended to sports that took place in the prison, for example badminton or football matches.

Betting was an experience described as a 'normal' pastime in prison by residents and staff within prison, with or without a physical reward. It was reported that people in prison bet on the number of rats viewed in one day, the time their door was unlocked, and how long a resident would live in the prison before being transferred out, due to poor behaviour. These bets occurred between residents and with staff, were viewed as "*banter*" and welcomed by both, with efforts to address the larger cultural tensions of 'them and us', inherent within prison culture.

Currency involved in gambling was also creative in nature, with one resident stating plainly "*if you own it, you can bet with it*". Those with lived experience of prison described using cash, bank transfers, clothes and vapes as dominant currencies, alongside food. As one participant stated, "*food is wealth*", indicating that success around gambling was invariably evaluated by the amount of food and property a person accrued. Currency was not only limited

to material goods, but also services, which were carried out by those who lost bets. It was reported that people were forced to clean people's cells, move or store drugs or prison-made alcohol, or perpetrate violent acts to clear their debts.

The normality of gambling culture

Gambling was an accepted aspect of prison culture, which was described as a *"necessary evil"*, which was *"an ingrained part of everyday life"* and a *"part of prison"*. Several experienced staff reminisced on the historical culture of prison, with *"bookies operating on the wings"* in the 1990s, suggesting an entrenched history which was culturally embedded. It was also noted that gambling on a small scale was encouraged, to engage and build relationships with people in prison and to elicit information from them. One staff member stated, *"we were encouraged to bet a Mars bar on a game of pool, so we could build a rapport with a prisoner and find out what was going on in the wing, it was intentional and encouraged"*. That said, it was clear that the appetite for small bets was later discouraged in prisons culturally, following greater knowledge around corruption and the implementation of the Gambling Act 2005. Since then, gambling appeared to have become an invisible concern, with other issues consuming prison staff and leaders, including self-harm, violence, drug use and the emergence of (new) psychoactive substances such as spice. One staff member summarised this view, stating *"the prison is worried about drugs and diversity, not gambling. Realistically it's not a priority"* with another commenting *"it's not on the table at the moment"*.

Visibility

A lack of knowledge

The research brought with it an element of surprise and intrigue for staff, who had not considered gambling to be problematic on a general level. Staff across ranks stated that gambling was rarely reported. Gambling was instead viewed as *"harmless betting"*.

That said, staff described a gambling culture among colleagues in a comparable way to the experience of those in prison and the community. For staff, gambling functioned as a shared pastime, which included sweepstakes for sporting events, online betting, and giving *"tips"* to one another. This was seen to encourage a gambling environment. To this end, gambling was an accepted and a normal part of the staff culture (while it invariably occurred within acceptable limits), and this was reflected within a prison environment whereby gambling between staff was viewed as harmless and a part of everyday life.

There was no knowledge that gambling was problematic among residents and little connection was made between gambling harms and the cultural

norms of prison, and how gambling addiction may be supported within such an environment. Nonetheless, it was common knowledge within the resident sample that gambling took place, sometimes under the guise of 'betting'. The term 'betting' was seen as small stakes on events or likelihoods, whereas the term 'gambling' was seen to be more serious, with high stakes on specific games.

There was a proportion of staff that did not 'see' gambling at all within the prison. Staff would discuss debt and attributed this to drugs but were surprised to consider how gambling might feed into this issue. Some openly stated that *"I don't see it"* and little security intelligence pointed towards gambling issues. One experienced member of the operational team said, *"Staff don't identify the issues, it's not emphasised enough, it's underground, it (gambling) is laced in conversations around debt, but we never ask the questions"*. From the perspective of people in prison, gambling was actively managed and hidden from staff. One resident stated, *"there is always a bookkeeper - quiet, trusted, switched on, no flags, no OCGs [Organised Crime Groups]"*, highlighting an intention to keep gambling hidden. Therefore, in order to fully address gambling in prison, it is recommended that residents are included in strategies, to address gambling related harms, taking a collective action approach to this important issue.

Turn a blind eye

Most people who lived and worked in the prison acknowledged that there was a wilful blindness associated with gambling. For staff, this included ignoring gambling and bets as *"it is their [residents'] escape"* and highlighting that gambling served staff positively, in maintaining a quiet and ordered environment. This was illustrated by one staff member who noted that, *"I think on the wings which are calm and quiet, staff close their eyes and ignore it, even though it is forbidden. I was on an enhanced wing where everybody was well behaved and not causing any troubles, so there we had all kinds of gambling"*. The level of acceptance was also described by those with lived experience, with one person stating, *"they don't care, they knew it was happening, and accepted it"*. This was echoed consistently in the data, with terms such as *"if they [staff] don't see it, it doesn't happen"*, they are *"blind to it"*, *"they don't take notice"*, they see it as *"harmless fun"* and they *"don't care"*. Others acknowledged that gambling by residents was almost impossible to enforce, due to the hidden nature of it. This resulted in a sense of powerlessness among staff and that was also noted by people in prison. This powerlessness stemmed from being unable to grasp the full extent of the harms and practices of gambling, with gambling operating in spaces where staff were unable to monitor (e.g., in cells). Gambling could be described as a 'silent' aspect of prison culture which was both concealed and operated around other harms, such as violence and drug use. Staff appear to have little nuanced knowledge about gambling's place within prison culture. Without this knowledge, effectively controlling gambling was not possible.

No one cares

The findings indicated that there seemed to be a lack of guidance and/or consistent response to gambling. This lack of consistency contributed to a confusing culture, for example, one person in prison stated, *“Some would stop it, others report it, it depends on the staff and the amounts (at stake)”*. Some overlooked gambling for other reasons, with one person in prison inferring, *“they don’t want to see it, but it happens under their noses. Some staff gamble too”*. This lack of action was interpreted differently, with a person in prison stating *“some (staff) turn a blind eye, as long as you can pay you can do it, if you gamble and you ain’t got the money or stuff to pay and report to staff, they will say it’s your fault unless there’s a bullying issue”*. This view was echoed by some people with lived experience. One resident explained *“staff’s attitudes were ‘you’re scumbags, [you] don’t deserve to have fun’”* with another resident stating that staff *“are desensitised. It is what it is. In terms of gambling, it [the consequences of gambling] is deserving”*. This highlights the perception that some staff prevented gambling to add additional punitive elements into the lives of those in prison, while others demonstrated a perceived lack of care, due to the ‘them and us’ cultural divide between staff and residents, which has led to a disengagement from their emotions.

The nature of gambling and experience of it, seemed to be dependent on who you were as an individual, the status you held within the prison, the number of associations an individual had, and the amount of spare time people had in prison. Therefore, for those residents who were unemployed, association was their main form of interaction with other residents. While one resident suggested, *“Long term people bet more, as they know more people and have longer association times, with more activities”*. Open prisons were also discussed in terms of strict rules associated with gambling, where less gambling activity took place out of fear of returning to closed conditions if they were caught gambling. Despite this, it was disclosed by those who had experienced open conditions that there was significantly more gambling, compared to closed conditions, due to the additional freedom, less surveillance, and empty time to occupy. One person with lived experience described a *“gambling raid”* that occurred in open conditions, whereby staff entered a communal space and locked people in the room, to contain them. In this instance, they described people climbing out of windows and absconding from prison, due to gambling debts. However, it was stated that the issues associated with gambling were not addressed but instead moved to a different location and pushed underground.

Gambling subcultures

The role someone played in the prison influenced whether and how they experienced gambling. There were clear subcultures, which aligned to the beliefs surrounding personal survival of the resident, though these were not consciously determined or discussed. Residents did not allocate themselves

to a subculture but were instead silently categorised by the culture, based on a variety of factors including vulnerabilities, wealth, influence, communication skills, confidence, and intent. These shared values existed alongside clear power dynamics, which were not overtly acknowledged, but understood by those in prison. It was made clear by the residents that people could move between subcultures if they adopted the norms associated with the subculture and were able to survive in it. These subcultures within the prison will be outlined in turn and are presented in Figure 7.

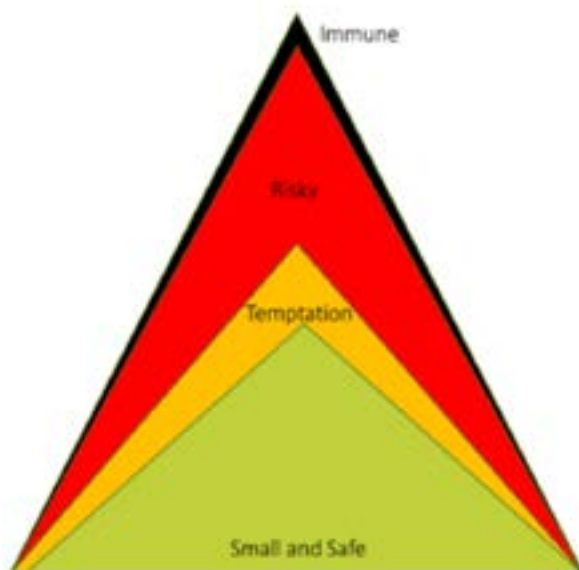


Figure 7: Representation of the gambling subcultures within prison

Small and 'safe' gambling

The analysis identified several subcultures related to gambling, which varied in terms of risk, harm, and intensity. The first subculture was understood to be a low level 'safe' gambling, where little or no harm occurred. The social norms associated with 'safe' gambling were associated with playing with trusted friends who played fair. For example, one resident commented *"you put your cards above the table to stop others being paranoid"* and another described gambling conduct as *"gentlemanly"* in nature. Within this subculture, people made small (50p-£1) bets and remained within their limits, agreeing the bet and rules prior to the game: *"once you have shaken hands, there is an agreement."* One resident described his experience of gambling, stating *"It is a harmless thing, it's not loud and no one draws attention to you. It is only when it gets visible, someone gets hurt"*. Another resident highlighted the difference between this subculture and riskier gambling subcultural rules which operated in the prison, stating *"If you are playing with your mates, and even if they don't have it, they won't get hurt and you just wait. If [you're playing with] outsiders, you don't have the same respect for them"*.

Within this gambling subculture, people described *"friendly gatherings"*, *"good experiences"* and people *"knowing their limits"*. One person with lived experience explained *"I gambled, but they were small and safe. Only what*

I could afford. I never got into trouble. I only gambled with my friend". There was also a sense of patience and compassion highlighted, with people both in prison and with lived experience reporting that they would be happy to wait for debts to be cleared or would waive the forfeit: "I give the vapes back sometimes if I win because I feel guilty because they have lost something and they have nothing."

Temptation

The findings indicated that there was a threshold between 'safe' play and 'risky' play, with gambling presenting itself as glamorous and tempting to some. One resident described this temptation, stating *"I haven't gambled in jail, but I have seen it happen ... it looks like it can be fun, but it can also lead to violence"*. Others commented *"it's inviting when you see the loot"* and *"it looks like fun, seeing prizes makes it tempting for myself too"*. This enticement led to a strong urge to play for higher rewards and were visible to those in prison, but not always visible to staff. They went on to explain that gambling could start *"safe"* but escalate quickly if an individual was unaware of the consequences or 'cultural' rules that existed *"higher up the ranks"*. Another resident stated, *"Some people just can't stop or help themselves"* with another saying *"It always starts small, and it snowballs, especially if you lose and they say double or quits... it's about being one of the guys"*. There was a reported desire to fit in and experience a sense of belonging, having made social bonds with others, though it felt fleeting for some, who said *"you can be flying high, then fighting"*. This highlighted how quickly circumstances and the cultural tone of gambling could change.

Risky gambling

The next subculture identified was defined as 'risky' gambling and it was at this point that overt or clear harm was introduced into the world of gambling in prison. Up until this point, gambling was viewed as credible, fair, and played by *"men of their word"* as described by one person with lived experience. However, when entering this 'risky' subculture, the tone changed, and participants started to question its fairness and credibility. This space was operated by a higher rank (see immune gambling which follows), whereby those members at the top of the prison subculture hierarchy *"Prey on the weak and addicted, manipulating the vulnerable"*. Vulnerability was also highlighted for those with money, with one person with lived experience stating, *"I thought they were loaded, and they got money, and this was a problem because if you are spunking a lot of money, you could become a target"*. This was a space where harm was prevalent if individuals could not pay their debts. It was described by one resident as being where *"the enforcers of violence"* lived.

Within this riskier space, one resident stated, *"the rules change as you go along"*, illustrating how gambling can create greater tension and pressure. It was clear that if a debt was not paid, violence was the expected outcome, enforced by those who were 'immune' at the top of the 'resident rank structure'.

This was evidenced by comments from some residents such as *“Don’t pay, you get your kicked head in”* and *“If you don’t pay, you get battered and named a debt head”*. If an individual could not pay their debt, depending on their status, they would be given a service to carry out on behalf of those in control. For example, one resident commented *“You can pay your debt off if you become a debt collector for someone”*. Others described favours including housing drugs or enforcing violence. It was accepted that the stakes are higher within this riskier subculture, and that most of the time, violence was proportional to the stakes.

The findings indicated that staff involvement was activated at the point at which someone was hurt (if they were aware of it). For example, one person in prison stated *“On canteen, you openly talk about what is owed. Staff just ignore it. Unless someone is getting assaulted”*. Another commented *“The staff don’t do a lot, unless it is becoming a problem. So, they leave it. They acknowledge that it is happening. It is hard to know if it is just a game or if it’s something more serious. They also gamble in cells, so it is not seen”*. This highlights the difficult task of enforcing rules when most activities associated with gambling are hidden.

Staff operating within the risky subculture

This risky subculture was not only entered into by people who lived in prison, but by those that worked in prison. Several people in prison disclosed that staff gambled in prison, from smaller debts to higher stakes associated with corruption. One resident stated, *“There is a good number that will partake with the prisoners”*. Another commented *“They don’t say nothing, they don’t do nothing. In fact, some gamble with prisoners too, the prize being that you’ll get extra association”*. This was reiterated by others, who said, *“Some staff get involved and use chocolate bars or vapes as currency, saying its friendly bets”* and *“I have never known them to stop anyone bet ... known a few staff to have bets with inmates for vapes, chocolate, or jobs or negatives or association unlock”*. There seemed to be an unspoken understanding that gambling brought with it a *“quiet life”* for some staff and was a way in which staff could *“Build relationships with the top level for gains”*. When staff were involved, the currency changed, away from physical items and towards regime-based reward and punishment such as positive or negative entries on the prison database, or behavioural warnings to those who lost their bets with staff. Some staff gained some pleasure in observing gambling, as interested bystanders. One resident stated, *“some staff encourage it by either betting themselves, egging people on or watching the pool games, asking who wins, but most just don’t care”*. Staff sometimes distributed their winnings (e.g. vapes) to those *“who need it”*, or to those of influence, to build relationships.

It was clear from the findings that gambling was invariably managed by people in prison and those associated within the ‘immune’ gambling subculture. If staff demonstrated extra vigilance, enforcement and monitoring, the findings

suggested that the gambling activity and related/more general prison-related harms would become buried further into the belly of the prison culture. One participant stated, *"I remember they (staff) would say "I hope you are not gambling," we couldn't do it openly, it was more hidden"*. Another commented on a past experience he had, *"the prison tried to control it and it just goes underground"*. Staff on the other hand believed it needed to be controlled by the prison, with one staff member drawing on their past experiences, stating *"HMP [prison not named] gave prisoners bingo, and it was organised by the prison, it was brilliant. It addressed the violence and it (gambling) stopped going underground. It is about the prison controlling it, not the prisoners"*. Another member of staff highlighted that gambling can be *"fun"* and *"positive"* if it is controlled, without fully acknowledging that there may be people in prison experiencing gambling harms or addiction.

'Immune' gambling

The final subculture described by the sample of people in prison and with experience of prison were those who participated in 'immune gambling', often referred to as 'influencers' within the prison environment. It was confirmed by the peer researchers that those associated within this subculture participated within the research, though knowledge of this subculture invariably derived from experience outside of this cultural space. This space was where violence and harm were instigated and managed. There were members of the prison community who were deemed as protected from the harmful cultural rules of *"the underworld"*. These individuals were not subjected to the standard cultural norms of prison, for example double bubble, nor openly judged for their behaviour towards others, even if that behaviour was of a sexual nature. One participant from the community outlined this in more detail: *"Depending on who you are, you get beat up, bullied, put pressure on your family to help you. Certain people are immune, depending on your stature. If you are somebody, people will try and navigate the situation. If you are a face, people are a lot more diplomatic. You still need to pay it back though ... If you try and go in heavy with someone, there is likely to be a war. Everything is about survival."*

Another person in prison highlighted that while cultural rules existed within this subculture, they were unspoken and not discussed. He stated, *"If you are 'someone', you say double or quits... the other person knows they have to lose, otherwise there is trouble"*. The cultural rules at this level seemed to stem from an acceptance that the standard rules would not be upheld, because there were no repercussions for those who were immune. One participant commented, *"I have watched others play poker and realised that the game was fixed, you have no chance, but you can't do anything"*.

Very few were willing to discuss this echelon of the prison culture, though reported that those with influence would instruct violence, irrespective of circumstance, because they *"have a reputation to uphold"* (resident). It was stated that these individuals kept 'clean' and instead instigated and instructed

violence as opposed to carrying it out. That said there were times when this was not the case, as disclosed here: *“I heard of someone being taken into his cell, getting loved ones on a call, and threatened ... I also heard of people that were molested, stripped naked, told to crawl under a chair and raped. The guy was a big face, he was an utter beast.”*

Within this subculture only very few individuals existed. It was reported that the rules were ruthless and not necessarily proportional or fair. It was here where residents were labelled ‘debt heads’, were referred to as “assets”, and were instructed to repay debts through a service. One resident commented *“so they tell you to shit up this officer, or hot water that person. It may be someone you get on well with”*. Within this subculture, stakes for bets were high, with hundreds of pounds being reported on some games. One resident stated, *“People have played a game of poker for a thousand pounds, it can last all weekend, it would be a really long game”*. Another said, *“The biggest gamble I ever did was 500 quid on a game of pool. Me and gambling have never been friends. I was 17. Never again. I paid it in cash. It left a sour taste”*.

Those with immunity did not always escape the retribution associated with losing at gambling. While it was reported that they did not suffer violence, others stated that they were shamed and teased if they lost in a game. It was at this point that there was a need for an individual to regain his status, either through extreme violence or proposing double or quits, knowing the individual who was playing would lose, because the *“stakes of humiliation are too dangerous”*. People would also pay ‘currency’ to be associated with those who were deemed immune, *“like protection in a sense”* explained one participant. This would mean that influencers would *“stand up for their investments”* by protecting those who owe them money until their debt is collected. Those influencers also had the power to blacklist people, without challenge from the prison community at large. It was an accepted cultural rule that if an individual was blacklisted from gambling and the prison underworld (e.g. cell shops, drugs) then this was upheld, without question and without conversation. Blacklists were communicated by word of mouth and people in the immune tier determined when they were removed from the list.

Stepping back from these key subcultures, the findings indicated that the proportion of types of gambling subcultures (e.g. ‘safe’ to ‘risky’ gambling) differed across prisons. Several residents referred to the youth estate and how gambling was *“rife”* in young offender institutions (YOIs). This was described as a less tolerant environment, in which patience and the skills and resources to manage the emotions attached to debt were lacking. One resident suggested that gambling was *“adopted as a coping strategy”* and highlighted that this tended to *“stick”* later in life. Another resident shared his experience in a YOI: *“I used to do it a lot more. I used to buy large boxes of sweets, but as I got older, I just saw a decline in it. But a lot of people get into the habit, and it stays with them. It is a rule they adopt as a coping strategy.”* Others described the need to pay debts a lot quicker in the youth estate, as people are *“looking*

for a fight". One compared his experiences of different custodial settings: *"In here [Cat B] it is quite relaxed, but in a YO, you would get your head smashed in with a kettle pretty quickly."* The recollections of people in prison and with lived experience suggested that there was a higher percentage of 'risky' gambling, compared to prisons with an older population. This highlighted how developing maturity might influence the cultural norms within prison.

Key points

- Gambling activity in prison was widespread and diverse, accessed by both residents and staff. It was a normalised activity, often seen in a positive light.
- The currency with which people gambled ranged from money to material goods, to acts of service.
- Despite being culturally normal and entrenched within prison culture, there was a degree of secrecy surrounding gambling activity as it was not officially sanctioned.
- There was limited awareness of the ways in which gambling activity in prison could be problematic. Moreover, if gambling behaviour was recognised, it was often left to continue.
- Gambling activity in prison occurred within a set of subcultures: 'Small and safe'; 'Temptation'; 'Risky'; and 'Immune'. Related harm increased as one moved up through the subcultures.
- Gambling activity among those in the 'Risky' and 'Immune' categories was sometimes associated with serious acts of bullying, manipulation, and violence.

4. Key findings II: The role of gambling in prison

The role of gambling in prison was examined and four themes were identified: (1) the need to feel; (2) engineering freedom; (3) to survive; and (4) meaningful relationships. The role of addiction featured within each of these themes and was discussed during the thematic analysis with the peer researchers. It was agreed that addiction was a by-product of these core needs, which led people in prison to survive and achieve a sense of thrill, significance, connection and meaning, through unhealthy means.

The need to feel

This was a prevalent theme from the data and was articulated in two main ways: the alleviation of boredom; and the stimulation or feeling gambling can bring, which engineers a sense of joy and excitement.

The thrill of gambling

The excitement and entertainment that could be derived from gambling was well-documented. Staff acknowledged that people in prison may “do it [gambling] for the buzz”, for “adrenaline”, for “energy”, or as a form of excitement and to ease boredom. This was echoed by those in prison. People in prison described the reasons for gambling as “entertainment” and “competition”, with several noting the monotony and boredom they experienced in prison and how gambling eased this dullness. It was clear that those who did not engage in employment and education found themselves struggling to occupy their minds and therefore resorting to any means by which they could feel something. To illustrate, one person in prison stated, “there’s limited TV channels and association, it is so boring with nothing to do”. Another added “Everyone is surrounded by gambling ... there’s nothing better to do” and that it “keeps people entertained, not a lot else to do”. These findings suggest that, culturally, gambling is likely to continue if meaningful activity is absent in prison. One resident and one person with lived experience pointed out that by gambling well, people in prison could build up resources for a shop and this in turn would be “something to keep them busy ... like a business”. Managing and maintaining an in-cell shop generated a sense of purpose and excitement. This highlighted how people in prison would create opportunities and structures to maintain a sense of excitement, while utilising their skills and knowledge of business. While those who had been released from prison reflected on gambling as a “thrill”, there was a sense in the prison sample that the alternatives were limited and there was an acceptance that gambling was stimulating yet risky. Those in prison who won at gambling were animated in recalling their stories, yet others described how gambling “numbed everything”. This comment suggested that there were some whose

emotions, fears and anxieties were managed through the process of gambling, to self-soothe and manage the pains of incarceration.

Adding meaning to life

While gambling was viewed as an activity that stimulated people, the data also indicated that it added a greater sense of meaning. One resident stated, *“it makes boring days better, boring games more exciting ... but it can also do the opposite”*. This was echoed by staff, who stated, *“gambling adds interest”* and another who said, *“it adds meaning”*. People in prison stated that it made activities more interesting (e.g. pool) and *“gave people a purpose”*, highlighting that their role (and status) within the gambling world brought a sense of significance. However, those who were released from prison reflected on their experiences and viewed it differently, acknowledging that this was how they felt at the time of their incarceration, but stated that it was a *“falsified purpose”* which distracted them from the real purpose of prison (to rehabilitate). This links closely to how gambling was viewed as a *“false hope”* with people in prison wanting and believing that gambling could achieve freedom, peace, respect, and connection, when their reality was contrary to this.

One participant highlighted that gambling brought meaningful support in conjunction with raising the quality of life, to improve one’s relational and financial capital in prison: *“Some use it as a form of support – if you don’t have support on the outside and you are good at gambling, you can use it to supplement your income.”* This identifies that gambling not only brought a false sense of meaning, with respect to significance, but also financial meaning, though this was heavily contingent on the skill a person had for specific card games, rather than gambling on chance-based activities.

Engineering freedom

Statements associated with running, escaping, and living elsewhere, away from their current position and life were common within the data. For example, one person who had left prison stated gambling was *“Something to have in their lives, something to remind them of life”*. Those who had left prison referred to gambling as an *“escape”* or representing *“normality”*, with one resident stating that gambling contributed to a feeling of *“running, to taste freedom.”* This too was echoed by those who were currently in prison: they gambled as a way *“To feel like outside”* and to *“participate in what will feels like an outside experience”*.

Passing time to feel a sense of normality

There was an indication that gambling transported people away from their prison experience and helped them to *“kill time”* or *“pass the time”*. Although staff acknowledged this, staff also suggested that gambling practices were imported into the prison, suggesting that people who gambled in the

community invariably gambled in prison. The data showed that 46 per cent of resident participants gambled, both in the community and in prison. Nine per cent reported that they gambled in the community but did not gamble in prison, compared to 21 per cent reporting that they do not gamble in the community but do gamble in prison. Nineteen residents also stated that they did not gamble, either in the community or in prison. The proportion of people gambling in prison (who did not partake in the community) supports the notion that gambling is carried out in prison to alleviate boredom. Fifty-one percent of the resident sample stated that they gambled in the community, but gambling was not linked to their offending. One person in prison commented that the need for relief and release was not always achieved by gambling if he lost at a game. He commented *“If I lose, I would do drugs”*, highlighting a range of other coping strategies that were at play for this individual, in the event he could not engineer the sense of freedom through gambling alone.

To survive - *“Everything is about survival”*

Survival was a theme which emerged consistently, between all sample groups. Gambling was utilised by participants to procure money and to manage the challenges of prison. Two residents stated, *“It’s an earner”*, and that *“gambling is profitable”*. Staff and people in prison acknowledged that if people did not have family support and money was not sent into the prison, residents would struggle due to the small food portions, poor food quality and low prison wages. Despite increases in the cost of food, there has been little to no increase to food budgets within prisons. In 2014 the food allowance per day for a resident, which covers three meals a day was £2.02; in 2022 it was reported this daily allowance was approximately £2.15 per day (*Inside Time 2022*). Therefore, portion sizes have significantly reduced in order to accommodate the inflation of the cost of food. In addition to this, the cost of items bought on the canteen were substantially higher in prison, compared to the community (for example, a tin of mackerel costs 80p in the community and £1.85 in prison). Prison wages were £2.50 per week for those who were unemployed (at the time of the fieldwork, 60 to 70 per cent of residents) and approximately £10.50 per week for those who were in education or employment. The relationship to gambling was summarised by one resident who said, *“There are less opportunities to get jobs in this prison and the wages are so low, that causes problems, more gambling and less paying”*. This highlights how the regime and lack of meaningful work influence the levels of gambling activity. Participants referred to survival in many ways, describing reasons for gambling as a sign of *“desperation”* or to fund an addiction (be it gambling or drugs). Others acknowledged that winning increased their quality of life by *“beefing up my canteen”*, highlighting a variety of survival techniques. One participant with lived experience of prison stated, *“I was too proud to ask my family and burden them”* and so used gambling to earn money to maintain a better quality of life. This participant recognised that he was talented at poker and used this resource. This was also evident in the residents’ views, with one person

saying, “*you only get involved in big bets unless you’re sure or desperate to get money*”. It seemed that those who were confident and controlled when gambling perceived something to gain from gambling, as something that could increase their quality of life. However, most participants who had previously lived in prison recognised that while the reason for gambling was to improve quality of life, gambling was in fact a “*false hope*”. This may be attributed to the observation made by one of the participants with lived experience, who observed “*Gamblers only tell you about their wins*”, highlighting how false hope may be built.

To survive, is peace

Others recognised that gambling was once a mechanism to survive in the community, and these coping strategies had been transferred into the prison environment, when hardship was experienced. Gambling was described as a route to receive goods of value, which worked as currency across the underground market. This currency replaced money and goods such as additional food, reduced stress, and provided peace. To illustrate, one person in prison stated, “*on the football everyone had to put a pound of value in before they got their numbers ... it had to be a usable pound of value; shower gels or food ... not a pound of rubbish*”. Peer researchers reflected that gambling brought a sense of peace to people, by reducing the struggles of living in prison, by drawing on the resources that were available to them in order to provide additional items. While this worked for some, those with less experience of gambling would “*try their luck*” at a game, in the hope that a win would give them access to resources for a better quality of prison life.

To be validated - “*If you won you were the man for the day*”

There was a real sense that gambling was linked to status. While one member of staff commented that gambling brought a sense of power to those who won, current and previous residents articulated that they felt and observed a sense of power when winning. Gambling was viewed as a mechanism by which someone could “*prove something*” for a way to gain “*...respect and ratings, to prove a point*”. Other residents stated that to ‘win’ in prison was significantly more important and symbolic than in the community, as it brought respect and honour, which was rare in prison.

To validate others

Gambling was also a way to validate potential friendships, with one participant stating, “*you learn who to trust and be with and who not to*”. For those that were influencers, it was clear that they had a significant amount of power, instructing violence and banishing people from using the underworld which operated within prison. This was compared to being blacklisted or barred from using services within the community. These individuals were viewed variously as calculating, intelligent, and ruthless. The process of validation, however, continued to play a role relating instead to the extent to which the influencer

demonstrated brutality and how quickly they instructed violence after a debt had not been paid. When asked if these individuals were ever questioned, it was clear that they maintained their position, even if they committed acts of violence, or from two accounts, sexual violence. This highlights that receiving validation and status was an important aspect of gambling for those in prison, this being achieved through winning. However, both staff and people in prison acknowledged that gambling problems for residents and staff held a stigma, whereby people lacked sound decision making and self-control, viewing gambling as a “*dirty taboo*” in the words of a member of staff. This was reinforced by a participant with lived experience stating, “*you only hear about it (gambling), if they are winning*”, highlighting how, culturally, there appeared to be a restrictive and silent social custom, associated with gambling problems and failures.

Meaningful relationships - “*It creates a bond though it depends how often you do it. It’s a boy thing, you gain a friendship and become part of a team*”.

The building of meaningful relationships was centred on what was described as ‘low level’ gambling. Participants who lived in prison or who had experience of living in prison highlighted these benefits, whilst staff did not.

To build communities and subcultures

A participant with prison experience acknowledged the larger impact that gambling had on a prison, as it “*builds a community*”. This was echoed by others in prison who stated that gambling “*brings people together*”. One resident commented that he used gambling to make friends, and another commented that it “*helps develop relationships with everyone*”. Exploring this further during the analysis phase, it was noted by the peer researchers that the term ‘everyone’ may only refer to those people within their social circle. For others it was clear that gambling damaged relationships, caused tension and fuelled isolation for those who could not pay their debts, though it seemed from the data that those who kept to a ‘safe’ set of rules (e.g. only bet what you have, only bet with your friends, only bet small amounts), were unaware of the additional subcultures that operated, where gambling was a risky and dangerous game.

To connect and reconnect

Participants commented on how friendship groups outside of prison, particularly those associated with gangs, used gambling to connect and experience excitement together, and it was an accepted culture within a group dynamic. The pastime of gambling outside of prison, within gang culture, meant that gangs could reconnect within prison and continue to ‘exploit’ those who are vulnerable. Cultural rules also put pressure on people to gamble and this pressure came from those who were taking part in gambling activities within the prison. While some stated that they gambled due to

peer pressure, this was dependent on the level of bond and identity that contributed to the subculture. It seemed that if an individual wanted to belong to a new subculture, they gambled to “fit in”, whereas already established groups viewed gambling as a normal, accepted way of life. To illustrate, one participant stated, “As a first timer it is all about fitting in”, with another commenting that gambling is used “to be more sociable and get involved with others”. The alternative was also discussed and this weighing up of connecting with people versus being solitary emerged, with one participant stating “(it) helps people socialise instead of being stood around on the wings”. Gambling, therefore, seemed to build trust and relational cohesion, reinforcing group membership but also presented as a mechanism by which people could connect with meaning. In the absence of healthy opportunities to connect, gambling presented as an increasingly valid alternative, and the peer pressure experienced seemed to pull residents towards this alternative which, in their minds, held relational benefits.

Key points

Gambling served a particular purpose within the prison environment, organised around four themes:

- The need to feel - gambling provided excitement, entertainment and competition, emotions that were not often present within the prison environment. It created a structure of meaning around mundane prison life.
- Engineering freedom - gambling engendered a sense of escapism or normality for people in prison. It represented structured and purposeful activity that reflected life in the community.
- To survive - gambling enabled residents to access or purchase goods which were essential to their daily life (e.g. additional food) and supplemented their income in prison. It also provided cultural capital which both enhanced and reflected prison hierarchy, safety, and relationships.
- Meaningful relationships - gambling as a social activity, facilitated residents and staff to develop relationships, both within and between groups.

5. Key findings III: The impact of gambling - *“One minute you can be flying high and the next you can be fighting”*

It was clear that the impact of gambling differed, depending upon where an individual positioned themselves in the prison community and which subculture they identified with. Figure 8 outlines the extent to which the participant groups differed, when asked if gambling impacts on people in prison (referring to residents). The graph highlights that most residents believed it did impact people in prison, which was reinforced by those who had lived experience of prison and family members. From the thematic analysis carried out with peer researchers, five key themes emerged: community; harm and vulnerability; loss; mental health; and growth.

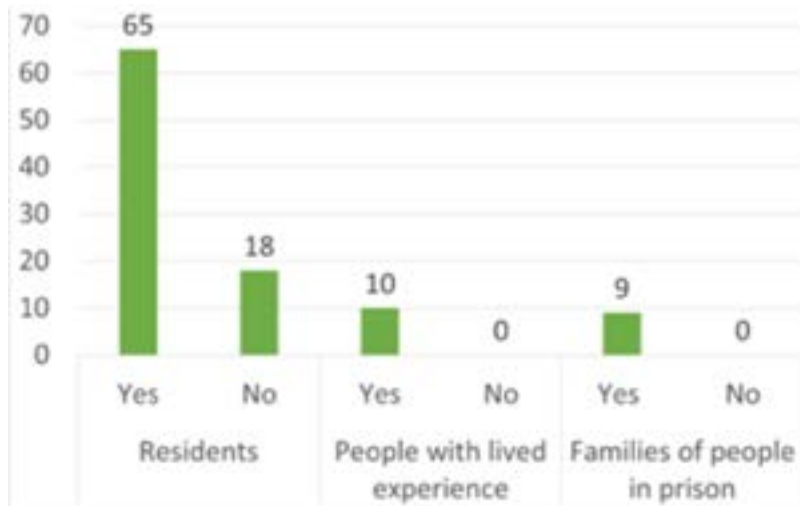


Figure 8: Participants' response to the impacts of gambling in prison.

Figure 9 outlines participants' responses to the question 'Does gambling impact people's relationships?' From the qualitative findings, residents highlighted that when gambling was risky, it did impact on relationships, whereas when it was deemed as 'small and safe', there was no impact. Staff recognised that gambling did impact people's relationships in prison, though focused on the relationship between residents and their families, if the resident fell into debt because of his gambling. There was a consensus among those with lived experience of prison, stating that it did have a detrimental impact on their relationships. Families were unaware, due to their limited knowledge of gambling in prison.

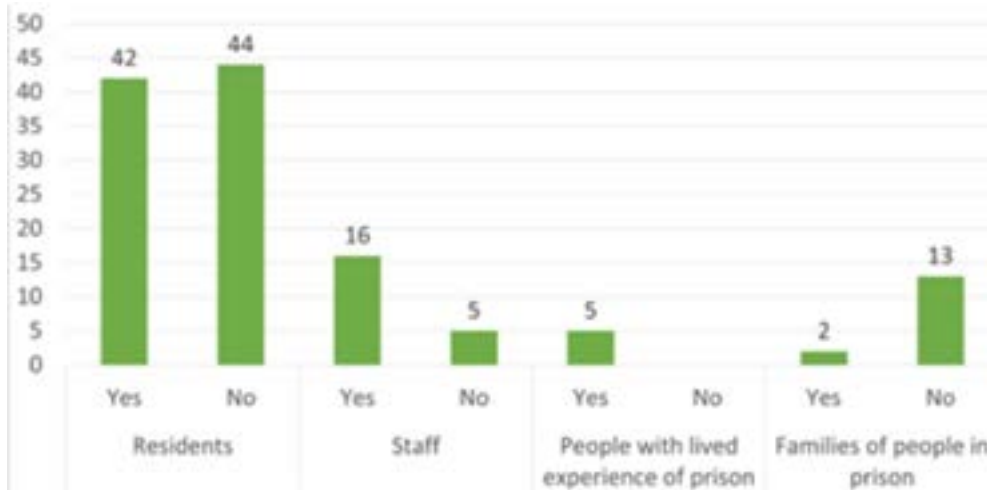


Figure 9: Participants' response to the impact of gambling on relationships.

Community

Some people in prison highlighted the positive impact gambling can have on a prison culture. For example, people in prison stated, *“gambling occupies your time”*, it *“brings everyone together”* and *“makes prisoners happy”*. Staff reinforced these positives by highlighting how people in prison *“socially bond”* during games and it can build a *“sense of community”*. One member of staff highlighted that gambling could have a positive impact on relationships, commenting *“gambling builds relationships and rapport between staff and prisoners, when it’s fun”*. This indicates that a ‘safe’ gambling subculture can bring numerous benefits, which not only impact on those who participate, but the broader community.

Conversely, some residents highlighted ways in which when gambling is not ‘fun’, it could negatively impact the prison community. One person in prison stated, *“it changes the dynamics in prison, it can lead to serious disruptions in the prison community”*. Others highlighted that gambling could build tension in the atmosphere, for example one resident stated, *“It breeds negativity in the houseblock, everyone knows about it but the pressure mounts”*. Staff and resident relationships were reported to be put under pressure, as residents were moved to different house blocks due to debt issues and staff having to manage the aftermath of such movements. This also impacted on relationships and building enough trust to share concerns around gambling (and other issues). This suggests that ‘risky’ gambling can start to influence the prison environment and escalate harm, which impacts on the lived experience of those who live and work in prison, irrespective of whether they are directly involved in gambling. One participant stated. *“You take it out on staff, and they ask you what the problem is, you both know but neither of you can talk about it”*. This emphasises the existence (and conflict) of cultural rules that on the one hand determine that gambling is unspoken and yet, at the same time, dictate

that even when both parties are aware of gambling, neither can share the reality of their circumstance. It impacted the depth and openness within staff-resident relationships due to the inability to discuss such topics.

Harm and vulnerability

Harm was identified as the most prevalent theme within the findings and related specifically to those subcultures who participated in 'risky' gambling. People in prison were explicit about the lack of proportionality that emerges when gambling escalates in risk. To illustrate, one resident stated, *"I have seen people get beaten up over a tin of tuna"*. Another person with lived experience recalled *"The most violent thing I saw was two black guys stabbed over chocolate cake"*. Others described fighting (during and after gambling activities), with one resident stating, *"Some people have arguments during games, accusing others of cheating, so it can lead to violence quick enough"*. Others described the impact of gambling as *"friction"*, *"tension of what can happen if I don't pay"*, *"violence"*, *"conflict"*, *"danger"*, and how these feelings and fears can lead to a place where self-harm becomes an option to cope and release tension. One member of staff acknowledged the impact of debt more broadly, stating *"Debt is 80 per cent of prisons' issues"*. However, they did not see that gambling played a significant role in this.

Financial harms related to gambling were enhanced by the prison culture. Participants described *"loan sharks"* who *"create an incentive to get it [debt] sorted"*. Loan sharks enforced violence in order to send a message to the individual with debt, to incentivise them to pay faster. Financial issues were also cited by people in prison and their families (both while in prison and upon release). This was evident in one comment made by a person in prison, who said *"Some people are coming out of prison with thousands of pounds worth of debt"*. One participant who lived in prison shared his experience of the financial harms associated with gambling:

I got into massive debt once and had to fuck a few people up. It was weird and I was on edge because if I got caught, I would get extra [prison] time. You have to do it, or your family get hurt. You are concerned for their safety. My family was threatened, and I just lied to them about it. The guy I owed then told me it [the money sent by my family] hadn't gone into his bank. Sometimes people can clock up over £500 using this method and you just have to pay until he says it is sorted.

Participants explained how families are often asked for money, with one resident in prison stating, *"The families have to pay for it"*. Others described indirect experiences of how families were impacted by gambling, stating *"people ring people's families for money or send people to their house, I've seen it myself"*. This harm extended to families, who were reported to be pressured to bring in phones and drugs to settle gambling debts, as well as

experiencing the financial burden placed on them, while under threat. To add complexity, other cultural rules increased harm significantly. The cultural code which dictates that a person in prison is not allowed to disclose information to staff (referred to as 'no snitching' or 'grassing') remains strong within prisons, with people in prison being reluctant to share information, at the risk of being seen as an informant, (e.g., 'screw boys' or 'rats'). One resident articulated this:

There is no protection in prison, the prison is against us. If you say anything, it gets back to the prisoner, and you are at risk. If you get moved off the houseblock you are viewed as a snitch and the rumours follow you, you will inevitably get beaten up, wherever you are.

This cultural norm of silence was particularly prevalent when people were dealing with the 'immune' gambling fraternity, as the consequences of disclosing acts of violence and coercion to staff were perceived as a greater risk, compared to the future harms that may be experienced at the behest of the immune group. When exploring the disclosure of sexual violence with a participant from the community, he stated *"if someone sexually harms you, you tell no one, no way"*. He went on to describe how, reputationally, an act of sexual violence associated with debt was viewed differently to sexual offences committed in the community. Immunity and reputation remained intact for the influencer involved. This reinforced the notion that *"tolerance [of people] varied depending on who you were"*.

The impact of being blacklisted from the 'underworld' was also acknowledged. One resident discussed this hidden culture which operates outside of the gaze of staff and stated that those blacklisted were not only banished from gambling activities but *"from everything until the debt is cleared"*. He added that this was never questioned and the prison community, at large *"obeys, or you get a slap"*. This was expressed by another resident as: *"if you don't pay your Mars bars, you get Mars barred"*.

One resident highlighted the additional harms that could occur when staff became involved in gambling issues (seen by staff as debt), stating *"when it's not fun, it fuels corruption"*. There was a clear sense that people in prison made a real distinction between what they saw as 'safe' gambling and conversely how gambling can impact the prison at large if it becomes risky in nature. Corruption was a regular discussion among all samples (except for families and friends), with people articulating significant disdain for staff corruption. Gambling presented itself as a mechanism by which corruption could be instigated by influencers within the immune subculture and control could be maintained and deepened through gambling deals, which built the necessary relationships between staff and residents to activate corrupt trajectories. The alienation of staff by staff was attached to these practices, alongside staff's stigma felt towards those that could not handle their gambling habits.

For those whose gambling was linked to their offending, their vulnerability was substantially increased entering prison. An environment where gambling was embedded into the culture was not viewed as a place of safety for a resident with a gambling addiction. It was clear that the impacts of gambling could escalate and become uncontrollable, to the point of serious harm.

Within the already challenging context of prison, these vulnerabilities played out in several ways. Residents shared numerous transactional and coercive threats, including: *“if you don't pay you get your head kicked in or get stabbed (e.g. cutting of the face)”*; *“If you don't pay, you'll get beaten or get bullied for your canteen, medication or anything else”*; and *“If you don't pay, you get a bad name”*. Participants also acknowledged the increased vulnerability when pressure and threats of violence were placed on families. Participants acknowledged the risk of family members being bullied and intimidated, with one participant stating, *“Visits were fraught because you had to tell your families you owed hundreds and hundreds of pounds and tell them ‘You are going to get a visit’”*.

Gambling debts were also said to remain on an individual's cell, once the individual was moved from the houseblock, transferred to another prison, or released. One participant in the community shared his personal experience of this:

Some run up big debts and don't pay ... If you move [off the wing] then debts have stayed on the cell. That happened to me once ... I told them to fuck off. They test the waters, try their luck ... They didn't touch me, because I held my own and they knew it wasn't going to happen. A lot of people innocently get dragged into other people's situations though.

This highlights how the visibility (or perceptions) of one's vulnerabilities places individuals at greater risk, irrespective of their involvement in the debt.

Vulnerability was also discussed within the context of people being targeted to engage in gambling activity. To illustrate, one resident stated, *“People are targeted to gamble, and they pick on people on remand because they have less consequences if they get caught”*. While sentence status was evaluated by those controlling the gambling world in prison, other individual vulnerabilities were disclosed to increase risk of harm. To illustrate, one resident shared: *“I heard of an autistic guy being forced to give a guy a blow job for a box of vapes he owed. He was an older man and the victim had to stay quiet, you can't talk about that shit, that's why people go into isolation.”* This highlights how vulnerability and cultural silence can create significant harms if they are not addressed.

These findings start to challenge the work of Williams and Hinton (2006) who found that, within the context of gambling in prison, a minority of cases led to violence and victimisation. More research into the relationships between

prison related harms and gambling (or gambling debt) is needed to assess the prevalence of violence.

Loss

Loss was presented in several forms throughout the data. Firstly, the loss of pride was described by one participant, stating that *“gambling teaches you humility”*. While respect and honour were outcomes of winning, it was noted that losing brought with it a sense of shame and insecurity.

Others described a loss of control when responding to failure or continuing to gamble after failure. One participant in prison stated, *“some people don’t know when to stop, get into too much debt and go behind their door”*, with another sharing, *“I saw a guy lose a bet and smash his cell up, he was so angry, but you can’t talk about it”*. While loss of control occurred, the hidden nature of gambling meant that this could not be discussed with staff, leaving people in prison to manage in isolation. This chimed with other accounts of asking families for money but not disclosing the reason, due to fear or shame. This highlights how gambling related harms within a prison environment can influence behaviour and impact on mental wellbeing and relationships with families.

The loss of connection was also reinforced inside the prison, if residents had to *“run to the block”* or move wings, due to gambling debt. This meant that any support they received within their houseblock would be removed as they made the decision to carry out behaviour that would mean they were taken out of their cell and moved to the segregation unit. One resident stated, *“I knew a gambler, but they were depressed and scared, so he stayed away from everything”*. This loss of connection was not only initiated by people who were in debt due to gambling, but by those who did not receive payments following a win. One participant in prison explained *“if people don’t pay, you don’t speak to them anymore”*, highlighting a distancing from those who were in their gambling subculture. This suggests that something which may have initially brought a sense of belonging can ultimately lead to isolation. Staff reiterated this distancing from their perspective, stating *“Prisoners isolate themselves, stay in their cell, we lock them in for their own safety”*, describing an active disconnection with the prison world.

A loss of relational connections emerged as a sub-theme as participants described ruptures between families and people in prison, due to gambling debt. One resident explained *“you are in debt, constantly ringing family, asking for money to go into accounts. This causes issues with your family; they think you are on drugs and that is not the case”*. Ruptures also were reported to happen if gambling bets were not placed by family members, with participants stating that arguments would occur, if the bets were not placed as requested. Another participant in prison stated that when he gambled, it *“makes my mum*

worried and upset, and there is a breakdown in relationships". When asking families and friends about their view on the impact of gambling, the majority commented that they believed gambling did have an impact, drawing on their experiences of arguments, the impact on loved ones' mental health, fights, and stress. That said, some did not feel it impacted on their own relationships with loved ones, though this was contingent on their experiences of having a loved one in prison who did not gamble. The comments made by all sample groups highlighted that gambling activity and resultant harms had the potential to create distance between people in prison and their loved ones, increasing a sense of disconnection and isolation for both. Only one member of the family sample disclosed that their loved one's gambling was linked to their offending, and in this instance, they commented that it impacted on their relationship. When asked about their views of gambling in prison, most of the family sample stated that they did not know it existed or had no knowledge of gambling, highlighting an additional layer of prison life hidden from view.

People in prison described loss of power and sense of powerlessness in a variety of ways, including the lack of support for people who gamble and the inability to discuss the issues associated with it. One participant stated plainly *"With no help available, I will carry on doing it"*. Others described a feeling of being stuck, due to gambling problems, stating *"I think gambling traps people in an unbreakable cycle"*. There was an absence of knowledge regarding support opportunities and a lack of communication around gambling. One participant reflected on the challenges of seeking help in prison, where it is not possible to identify relevant support or information as one might in the community. A minority of participants mentioned gambling flyers, leaflets, and posters, which were normally available in multi faith rooms, limiting access to only those who frequented these areas. One resident shared his experience of powerlessness: *"I was introduced to gambling in prison, you have no one to turn to and it causes a lot of violence, but you have no way out."* This powerlessness was exacerbated when support channels were made known but were not accessible. For example, one participant stated, *"I have no support (for my gambling) – the GamCare number is given to us, but it didn't work on the phones"*.

Those who participated in 'risky' gambling described a greater sense of powerlessness, as the cultural rules around gambling were unclear and ever-changing. One participant commented on how gambling debt left some feeling an intense sense of hopelessness, commenting *"if you are a 'debt head' people will know and not bet with you, no one will lend to you"*. The act of blacklisting meant that individuals in debt could not access any other channels of the *"hidden economy"*, which were used to survive imprisonment. To illustrate, one community participant stated *"If you don't pay, you get a bad name. So, you get blacklisted from accessing your wing shop, drugs, the whole underworld"*.

The mechanisms through which people could repay significant debts in order to be removed from the blacklist were unclear but the cultural rule dictated that people needed to either pay their debt, move prison, or be released. One participant expressed how difficult the repayment process became: *“I have been attacked, jumped by two lads in my cell, if you can’t pay it, they’ll double it and double it, I’ve had enough.”* That said, while the debt was reported to leave with the person in prison upon release, if they were recalled or remanded for another crime, this debt was reactivated. One participant commented that returning to significant debt can act as a deterrent to committing crime, rather than the prison sentence itself. Debt was also found to be transferred to a cell mate if an individual left the prison or was moved out of the wing. Again, this sense of powerlessness, particularly for those who were not directly involved in the debt but punished through association, left people fearful of those who were sharing a cell with someone who was participating in ‘risky’ gambling. A sense of powerlessness was also reported if a person were to win a significant bounty through gambling, as others wanted to borrow or take the winner’s loot.

A minority of participants described a sense of powerlessness from gambling with staff. One participant highlighted the power differences and how the cultural rules shifted due to the staff’s status in the prison, mirroring that of someone who was immune to gambling. He said, *“the staff participate but with no cost, so therefore there are no repercussions”*. Another resident commented how they experienced the power advantage when staff won, even when the bet was small. He said, *“you felt you were in their pockets, if you owed two Mars bars”*.

Mental health

Gambling harms focused heavily on those harms associated with mental health, as participants described feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression as well as thoughts of suicide, when gambling spiralled into debt and conflict. This was further exacerbated by the prison environment. One participant commented *“it can be destructive, people hide away from other issues”*, with others recognising that not addressing issues (such as family problems, loss, or a lack of confidence), could lead to addiction and suicide. To illustrate, one person in prison said, *“people get into debt, some people then turn to self-harm, even suicide in some cases”*. Another commented *“people get sad and can take their own lives, under pressure and stress”*. The vicarious trauma associated with gambling was “triggering” to some, as they witnessed others, isolating themselves, living in fear and getting hurt. One participant described the extent of this: *“I see people slashed up due to gambling and people refusing to come out of their cells.”* While no one acknowledged the harms associated with witnessing acts of violence, self-harm, and suicide, there was clear evidence that people in prison experienced vicarious trauma through witnessing acts of harm. One participant expanded on this, explaining *“The anxiety that comes from other people can be really detrimental. Especially*

if you are not savvy to it". This highlights the need for people to have an awareness of how vicarious trauma and mental health may influence the people living and working in the prison community.

Growth or de-habilitation?

While residents were divided in their views around whether gambling impacts rehabilitation, people who had been in prison consistently stated that gambling negatively impacted on rehabilitation. Some residents stated that gambling helped keep people *"competitive"*, *"gave them a challenge"* and was *"character building"*, with one resident stating, *"it helps, (you) learn to make your own choices, actions and consequences"*. Another commented that gambling was *"a way to control anger, release of stress built up (and) another way to meet people with the same mind set"*. This view was only articulated by a small minority of the resident sample, while the majority of those in prison stated that gambling impacted rehabilitation negatively, particularly for those who participated in 'risky' and 'immune' gambling. One resident reflected on his gambling and stated that *"I used to gamble excessively on poker, it was a serious habit and I found it hard to break the cycle in prison"*. Others reinforced the message that prison was not a place to address gambling problems, with one resident stating: *"It can be a distraction. It can also be a hindrance because you are in debt, and you are not thinking about sorting your life out. You are thinking about how to get out of this situation. When it becomes problematic, then that's when it would affect your rehabilitation."* Another commented *"Gambling takes away where your concentration should be, concentrating on change and rehabilitation, instead you are concerned about the next bet, where to get the money and pay gambling debts"*. Some residents reflected on responses from family and friends, who might ask *"why are you betting in prison? You're supposed to be sorting out your life"*.

Figure 10 highlights that most people in prison believed gambling did not affect an individual's rehabilitation, viewing it as unrelated and not appreciating that there may be some people in prison with an addiction to gambling. From the qualitative findings, there was a disconnect among residents and staff that acknowledged the consequences of gambling and the impact this has in prison and more broadly, upon release. When asking people with lived experience, there was a clear consensus that gambling was viewed as a distraction away from personal growth, and that it could become problematic, particularly if people in prison belonged to the 'risky' or 'immune' subculture.

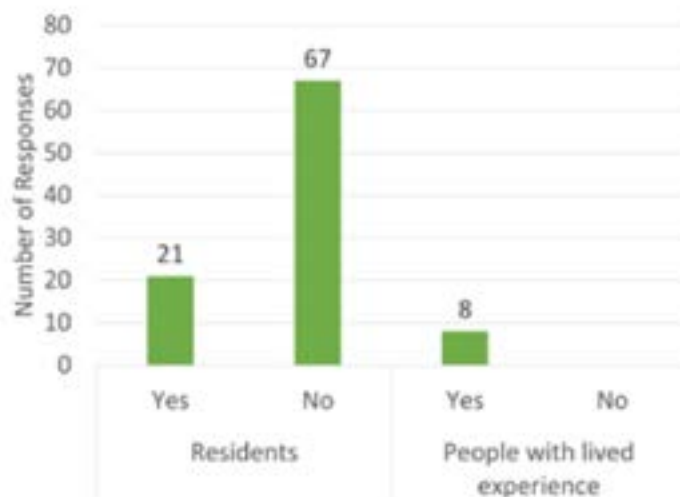


Figure 10: Responses from participants with lived experience of prison and residents, when asked 'Does gambling in prison influence rehabilitation?'

Residents highlighted the lack of rehabilitation and purposeful activity for people in prison: *“there’s no rehabilitation when every day is just the same, unlock and playing pool every day for an hour and then back to lock up.”* This was reiterated by another resident who commented that self-isolation due to gambling debts removed key opportunities to rehabilitate oneself, stating *“if you’re hiding because you owe people, you won’t go to education or work or anything ... just stay in your cell so you won’t get anything from prison”*. Some saw prison as a missed opportunity to acknowledge and address risk factors, instead of *“getting out not knowing you have a problem and realise you have”* (resident). Some extended this argument by suggesting that gambling dehabilitates individuals, with one participant stating, *“people with gambling issues will get worse and it could possibly lead to drink and drugs, which will result in the individual ending up back in prison”*. Another highlighted how it could worsen an individual’s situation, stating *“if people are using violence to chase up debts, they won’t get rehabilitated and if you’re getting threatened and staff won’t help you, you won’t be keen on them or engage ... you’ll have to do something to put yourself in the seg”*.

Key points

- The impact of gambling related to an individual's place within the prison community and subculture.
- Community - While gambling activity was recognised as fostering positive relationships and a sense of community, it was also seen to impact negatively on these things (e.g. trust, violence).
- Gambling related harm and vulnerability - gambling in prison has the potential to impact severely on people's safety. Well-documented gambling related harms were intensified in the prison environment (e.g. the impact of debt in prison). The negative effects of gambling extended to people's wider networks outside prison. The cultural rules of the prison environment exacerbated gambling related harm. The context of the prison environment was detrimental to people already experiencing gambling related harm and addiction.
- Loss - gambling activity could facilitate a dismantling of people's coping mechanisms (e.g., mental balance and control, relationships). The prison environment and culture created an enhanced sense of loss and powerlessness for people experiencing gambling related harm and addiction.
- Mental health - the practical ramifications of gambling in prison (e.g. debt, violence, social status) impacted negatively on people's mental health. Gambling related violence increased anxiety and vicarious trauma.
- Growth - participant's views about the effect of gambling on personal growth and rehabilitation were mixed. For people in prison, it represented purposeful activity and a way to survive. For people who had been released from prison, it represented risky behaviour and was seen as a distraction.

6. Case studies

Two in-depth interviews took place with participants who disclosed that gambling was linked to their offending. The following accounts have been constructed from these reports. One individual had been out of prison for two years while the other was still in prison.

Case study – Thomas (community sample)

Thomas, a 37-year-old man, went to prison for burglary and was released during the COVID pandemic in 2020. He explained his childhood, growing up in boarding school from a young age, with a “*pat on the back mentality*”. Following his university degree, Thomas secured a job as a broker in London, living with his partner. He described a distancing between his partner during his time in London and reflected that this was an unhappy time for him, feeling isolated, in a high-pressure working environment. He said, “*I was having relationship problems, we were different people, and I went into a spiral of depression... we weren't partners anymore*”.

During this time, he stated that he “*always dabbled in the horses and at the casino*”, though his gambling was not problematic at this time in his life. Following a disagreement with his boss he was fired from his job and found it difficult to tell his partner or family. Thomas reflected that he was always seeking that pat on the back which he received at school. When mistakes took place in his life, he found it hard to communicate this to those he loved. He stated:

I lost my job and to keep up the façade, gambled to make money ... sometimes I won big. I used to trade for a living and a client would give me money and I would make profit ... it was my lifestyle. I felt I had control, saying to myself “I will win the next”, but I didn't. When I lost, I started using drugs. I just wanted to numb everything.

Thomas described a sense of losing part of his identity at this time, saying “*I lost my sense of adventure, a feeling I have had all my life and with every hit I had, I was going down deeper. I felt depressed and was alone. I was a lost human being before I went to London. I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. My girlfriend was well off, so I wanted to work with her*”.

Thomas described the feeling of wanting to escape from his current challenges and resorted to gambling to achieve this escape and potentially earn money. He also described a different side to his gambling, highlighting how he experienced shame when it started to become harmful and ultimately, describing how it led him down the path of offending. Thomas said:

I didn't want anyone to see me at the machines because I was ashamed. I used to dress in a suit, pump two grand in and it was gone. I had one hundred quid left, so used it for cocaine, drink, or food. I would punish myself with unhealthy, filthy food, like a triple burger. I was still having commissions coming in (through work), so I would keep gambling. I was broken and at a low point when my cocaine dealer offered me two and a half grand to handle stolen goods. I wish I had just rung my family, but I was too proud.

After a spell in prison, Thomas was released and engaged in a new relationship, securing a new job. He had not addressed his gambling issues while in prison and described being released and entering a toxic relationship, which led him down the familiar path of poor mental health. He shared *"I spent all my company's money and reverted back to my old ways, gambling, and drugs ... I genuinely loved life at the time but looking back, I hate it now. I felt alive and a sense of belonging, but this was all a falsified purpose"*.

He described the feeling of sharing something with those he gambled with, stating *"gambling was something we shared. We shared the 11am shame [standing outside the casino before it opened]"*. From this experience, he began burgling houses to fund his gambling and drug habit. This continued up until his arrest and return to prison, stating that his arrest opened his eyes to his problems, commenting *"At the time I knew it was a problem but until I was arrested, it didn't fully set in ... I had just numbed everything (with gambling and drugs)"*.

Thomas explained that he did not gamble at all during his time in prison. He commented that he witnessed a lot of gambling and saw a great deal of violence due to gambling debts: *"I saw guys escaping from prison due to their debts. In small prisons, you would have debts over cookies, then the guy gets shanked. If you owe money, you owe."* He shared his experience of the staff in some of the more notorious prisons for violence, saying *"The staff ignored the ones in debt who needed help, everyone knew it, but they just abandoned them ... they are trying to get respect from the big players instead, to make their lives easier"*.

He described how people with gambling problems were taken advantage of and the consequences of losing were significantly high, leading him to the decision to refrain from gambling. He said:

Guys are nice to you - next thing you know, you are in debt, you are getting beaten up, favours need to be done, the fear to owe anyone money, it sounded horrific. I heard of it going outside the prison, through visits, finding out the reg[istration] plate and your families names. I wasn't interested in that.

The fear of gambling debt-related violence seemed to act as a meaningful deterrent to Thomas, who was adamant that he would never want to ask his family for money and was afraid of the trouble that could stem from gambling. He stated that when he moved to open conditions that fear remained, but the consequences of being caught gambling included going back to closed conditions (which were invariably more violent in nature).

Thomas reflected on his time in prison and having remained out of prison. He has secured a job that brings him meaning and he has reignited his passion for sport. He reported being in a much better place. Thomas reflected how gambling brought him a sense of status and significance, earning respect if he won. But he shared that he has found a way to feel a sense of belonging, through his work and in his relationships, which have helped him to address his problems linked to gambling. He has found new ways to find a sense of significance.

Case study - Harry (Resident sample)

Harry is a 23-year-old man who is currently on remand in prison for accused drug charges. He explained how he placed his first bet at 12 years old on horses. Growing up in Cheltenham, horse racing was a big part of his childhood. He shared his experience of attending the horse racing, where there would be a good atmosphere, with singing and fun and lots of money. Later in his teenage years he moved to another area, where there were only three shops; a bookie, a bargain booze shop, and a “chippy”, and stated plainly “so you were bound to be a gambler, an alcoholic or fat”. He suggested that in this sense, gambling was inevitable.

His teenage years involved watching and learning how to win a bet, sharing, “I can only remember the wins and with my mates nicking push bikes to sell to get money to gamble”. This escalated into smoking cannabis and committing more crime. This is when Harry saw that selling cannabis brought him a possible profit, giving him more money to gamble, making him feel he “was the man”. This quickly turned into owing money and Harry turned back to gambling to get ‘quick’ money, to clear his debt. He saw his friends betting on the football accumulator and winning, surrounded by pretty girls, new trainers and tracksuits and he expressed the desire to want that lifestyle too. A £5,000 win left him thinking he had “made his way up the ladder”. This escalated through his teenage years, with Harry going to parties and taking cocaine. Harry highlighted that this ‘phase’ ended because he realised it was “a mugs game”.

Harry then turned his focus back to spin machines and quickly found himself chasing the “big win”. This quickly spiralled out of control, and following a drug raid by the police, where Harry had “flushed the drugs down the toilet”, those supplying the drugs wanted their money back. This led to his first short prison

sentence. Following release, Harry was offered a way to clear his debt by committing further crimes. It was during this time that Harry had stopped taking drugs, but his gambling had become an addiction. He was now selling Class A drugs and his income was high, therefore having more money to spend at the casinos.

Two years on, Harry explained how his life consisted of a new partner, another baby on the way, selling drugs and living a *“good life”* but, once again, he started taking drugs and drinking alcohol. He stated that he was spending a large amount at the casino so he would be given free drinks, encouraging him to stay for longer periods of time. His personal life became challenging, and the casino and drugs became his escape from reality.

Shortly after this time, the police raided his house for drugs, leading to his current remand in prison. He had stopped taking drugs but was still able to gamble in prison. Harry shared that he often phones friends and family to place £100 bets on sports games. He explained he mainly gambles in prison due to boredom and it *“kills time and sometimes the (whole) day. Making it enjoyable, win or lose”*.

Key points

- The case studies illustrate the diverse ways in which gambling can relate to crime.
- Crimes were committed to fund gambling activity and addiction – e.g. theft, handling stolen goods, and drug dealing.
- Gambling featured as part of broader lifestyle choices which can be problematic e.g. alcohol and drug use.
- Gambling addiction existed as a vulnerability which could result in distorted decision-making or exploitation.
- Both cases illustrate the pervasive role and nature of gambling in prison.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The findings suggest that gambling is currently a normal, natural, and inevitable part of prison culture, with positive and negative effects on the prison community. Gambling can provide a way to pass the time and alleviate boredom, but it can also lead to financial problems, mental health issues, disciplinary infractions, and conflicts and violence. Moreover, it can negatively impact the rehabilitation process and be a source of corruption and exploitation. Creating alternative ways in which people in prison can fulfil their needs and cope with the pains associated with prison will bring about positive sustainable change, which will not only benefit those in prison, but those affected by gambling harms and crime more broadly.

This research illustrates the prevalent nature of gambling in prison despite its prohibition, and the range of gambling methods that both mirror gambling in the community and are prison-specific gambling activities. It highlights the breadth and depth of gambling related harms, not only on those who participate in gambling but also on staff, families, and the wider prison community. These harms were enhanced by the prison environment. The research explored how the impact and experience of gambling in prison was related to the subculture an individual belonged to within the prison. For some, gambling maintained its element of fun, and facilitated the forming and maintaining of relationships while providing a distraction from prison life and a way to ‘feel’ and survive. For others, ‘risky’ gambling threatened safety, both physically and psychologically, and threats were enforced by those within an ‘immune’ subculture. While staff understood problems and risks associated with debt, this was largely focused on drug debt. This prison logic or preferred understanding of this debt appeared to be drug use rather than gambling, with little understanding of how gambling addictions could be exacerbated, due to the prison culture that existed. Families were also mostly unaware of gambling, and only those who had direct experience of a loved one gambling in prison fully appreciated the risks associated with it.

Sykes’s (1958) seminal work specific to prison culture resonates clearly within this examination of gambling culture. It highlights the struggle for prisons to maintain institutional order and the importance of using power effectively to motivate people in prison. Sykes’s observation that “the guard buys compliance or obedience in certain areas at the cost of tolerating disobedience elsewhere” (1958: 57) is echoed in the stories shared within this research. Gambling culture in many ways is tolerated, due to the perceived benefits, without full recognition of its impact and power, differing from the prison approach to drug related debt which is seen as purely harmful. Cultural codes clearly operated and guided (if not imposed) a set of behaviours associated with gambling. The process of aligning oneself to a subculture was not always determined through active and conscious choices; because the culture dictates, tempts and coerces people into a certain space as a

mechanism for survival. The cultural code, originally articulated by Sykes (1958), featured within this exploration into gambling culture, as gambling seemed to exacerbate the pains someone may experience within prison, even though the motives behind gambling can be interpreted as an attempt to alleviate such pains.

The Principles of Growth, featured in Figure 11, highlight the key ingredients to a growth-focused rehabilitative culture, which have been used to implement effective cultural change in prisons (See Lewis and Hands, 2022). The findings highlight that people in prison are using gambling to achieve some of these principles, including the need to experience joy, peace, and freedom. Creating environments and activities which redress the ‘pains of imprisonment’ and promote the Principles of Growth may start to tackle the inherent and entrenched culture within prison, not only combatting the issues and harms linked to gambling but allowing people in prison the space to reimagine their identity, recognise their capabilities and grow into future citizens, who will inevitably live among us. If a growth-focused counterculture is successfully achieved against the prevailing ideas and beliefs of the current dominant culture, prisons might become more effective places of rehabilitation.



Figure 11: The Principles of Growth

This perspective highlights how the current prison culture prevents people in prison from achieving certain basic needs. The needs identified within the findings illuminate the need for social interaction, belongings, safety, and freedom, all of which resonate significantly with Sykes's 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 1958). The findings suggest that gambling is used as a tool to meet these needs, in the absence of alternative, healthier avenues, to achieve these fundamental needs. Creating meaningful spaces which nurture social interaction and agency will provide a new set of opportunities for people in prison, without consequent harm. If the prison culture is a response to the pains associated with imprisonment, creating pain-free places for rehabilitation may be the answer.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were co-created with the research team. These recommendations mirror previous recommendations from Smith (2022a and 2022b) that prisons should provide more support and recovery for people experiencing gambling related harm and addiction. Improving awareness, assessment and treatment is therefore needed. This study also concurs that there is secondary impact of gambling harms on affected others. Affected others should be recognised as invested others and, as such, they should be engaged in processes that allow more informed solutions and insights, which in turn can lead to bespoke support.

Experience and awareness

- Further co-produced prison-based research is needed to enable HMPPS and individual institutions to review current practices regarding gambling addiction (identification, support in prison and through the gate). Further research exploring staff culture and responses to gambling would enhance practices. Further exploration into subcultures associated with gambling would deepen understanding of the ways in which subcultures are reinforced, enforced, and governed in prison more generally. It is also recommended that, in light of the prevalence of disordered gambling in the prison population, a collaborative review of the prison regime would be advised, to consider how best relationships can be developed and purposive activities can be promoted.
- Awareness-raising, education and training should take place across the system (for staff and residents). Mechanisms should involve accessible and visible resources and could involve digital media such as a short co-produced digital film for new residents and available to prisons nationwide, to raise awareness around the cultural rules of gambling in prison and the risks of gambling, both in prison and in the community.
- Awareness-raising and training for staff should be centred on

professional curiosity and dynamic security. Staff should be equipped to investigate games and activity, and have the knowledge and skills to develop professional, trusting relationships, so people in prison feel safe enough to share their challenges associated with gambling.

- Awareness about the prevalence and risk of gambling activity in prison is needed at the start of the criminal justice journey. Screening and identification processes should be built into each stage of the criminal justice process, in tandem with a more holistic approach to facilitate trust and safe relationships. Acknowledging this at the pre-sentence stage, to support effective decision-making, would allow people to get the support they need in the community.
- Signposting support to family members affected by gambling would ensure additional support to those in need. Specific prison-related support should be developed for friends and families for those who have a loved one in prison. This could include Visitors Centres working alongside gambling charities such as Betknowmore.
- It is also recommended that HMPPS respond to the issues illuminated in this report and review their stance on gambling, in collaboration with those who live and work in prison. Establishing a considered, clear, meaningful response will provide clarity moving forward, in light of the findings from this Commission.

Role of gambling

- Healthy alternatives should be provided in prison regimes, in order to divert people away from gambling and towards rehabilitative-focused activities in line with PRS's Principles of Growth (Lewis and Hands, 2022). The research suggests that gambling currently provides a false sense of hope and purpose for people in prison.

Impact of gambling

- Investment in prison culture is needed in order to address gambling related harm in prison and encourage safe behaviour. Where gambling occurs, a safe and well-managed environment with openness and support equivalent to that in the community is needed. To support its effectiveness, the support of people who live in prison is imperative. A collective action committee (including residents, staff, and families) should be created within the prison in order to co-design a meaningful cultural strategy to address the systemic issues that prisons have historically faced. This approach should be integrated into HMPPS working groups.

- People working and living in prisons should strive for a recovery culture centred on harm reduction. Drawing on the experiences of gambling harms in prison can be an effective tool to discuss with people in prison how to gamble safely, addressing gambling harms and providing a safe and person-centred space, where staff and residents can speak openly about gambling and prison culture. In addition, this will provide additional opportunities for those with a gambling addiction to access help and support and feel safe enough to share their challenges.
- Person-centred education about gambling safety should be used as an opportunity for growth, integrating key discussions around gambling into key worker sessions and dynamic security, and adopting a professionally curious approach. To achieve this, prison staff need further investment to learn how to work effectively with people in prison to develop trust and allow gambling harms to be unearthed.

References

- Abbott, M.W., and McKenna, B.G. (2005) Gambling and Problem Gambling Among Recently Sentenced Women in New Zealand Prisons. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 21(4), 537–558. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-005-5562-6>
- Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) (2017) Gambling in prison. Retrieved from <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi532>
- Beauregard, V., Chadillon-Farinacci, V., Brochu, S., and Cousineau, M.-M. (2013) Enforcing Institutional Regulations in Prison Settings: The Case of Gambling in Quebec. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 23(2), 170–184. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1057567713486806>
- Bell, C., Kinzel, A., and Akakpo, (2022) Continuity of the “code”: A review of the subcultures and informal social norms in prison, streets, and schools. *Sociology Compass*, 16 (8), 1-14.
- Blanco, C., Hasin, D. S., Petry, N., Stinson, F. S., Grant, B. F., and Simpson, H. B. (2006) A pilot study of anxiety and depression in pathological gambling. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 194(5), 369-372.
- Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology, *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2), 77-101, DOI: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Bronson, E.F. (2006) Medium security prisons and inmates subculture: The ‘Normal Prison’. *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice*, 3(2), 61-85.
- Churcher, H. (2022) Police awareness and practice regarding gambling-related harms, London: Howard League for Penal Reform.
- Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms (2021) State of play: Crime and problem gambling, London: Howard League for Penal Reform.
- Fazel, S., and Danesh, J. (2002) Serious mental disorder in 23000 prisoners: A systematic review of 62 surveys. *Lancet* (London, England), 359(9306), 545–550.
- Gambling Commission (2022) Gambling Industries Statistics (April 2015-March 2021). Retrieved from: https://assets.ctfassets.net/j16ev64qyf6l/28S8FTf7zv5diiHhnxvniC/8212e03e7ed434ddb484f1a74add58fd/Industry_Statistics_-_July_2022_Revision.pdf
- Gambling Act (2005). C.19. Retrieved from: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/19/introduction>

GOV.UK Managing prisoners' money: PSI 01/2012. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-prisoners-money-psi-012012>

Hing, N., Breen, H., Gainsbury, S., and Delfabbro, P. (2016) Gambling in correctional facilities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 32(2), 533-551.

HMPPS (2020) Manage prisoner finance, PSI 01/2012. Available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-prisoners-money-psi-012012>

Inside Time (2022) Food budget of £2.15 per day is not enough, says IMB Retrieved from: <https://insidetime.org/food-budget-of-2-15-per-day-is-not-enough-says-imb/>

Langham, E., Thorne, H., Browne, M., Donaldson, P., Rose, J., and Rockloff, M. (2016). Understanding gambling related harm: a proposed definition, conceptual framework, and taxonomy of harms. *BMC Public Health*, 16 (80)

Lewis, S., and Hands, E. (2022) Growth - An Emerging New Philosophy to Transform Correctional Culture, *Advancing Corrections Journal* 14 (7), ISSN: 2517-9233

Lorains, F. K., Cowlishaw, S., and Thomas, S. A. (2011) Prevalence of comorbid disorders in problem and pathological gambling: Systematic review and meta-analysis of population surveys. *Addiction*, 106(3), 490– 498.

May Chalal, C., Humpreys, L., Clifton, A., Francis, B., and Reith, G. (2017) Gambling Harm and Crime Careers. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 33, 65-84.

McEvoy, A., and Spirgen, N. (2012) Gambling among prison inmates: Patterns and implications. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 28, 69-76.

National Center for Responsible Gaming (NCRG) (2012) Gambling in correctional facilities. Retrieved from <https://www.ncrg.org/gambling-in-correctional-facilities>

National Gambling Impact Study Commission (NGISC) (1999) National Gambling Impact Study Commission report. Retrieved from <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/national-gambling-impact-study-commission-final-report>.

Page, S. (2021) Sentencers' understanding and treatment of problem gamblers, London: Howard League for Penal Reform.

Raylu, N., and Po Oei (2004) Role of culture in gambling and problem gambling. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23 (8), 1087-1114.

Exploring gambling and its role within prison culture

Ramanauskas, S (2020) Crime and Problem Gambling a Research Landscape. The report of the Commission on Crime and Problem Gambling. *Howard League for Penal Reform*.

Smith, L. R. (2022a) Gambling and Crime: An exploration of gambling availability and culture in an English Prison, *Criminal Behaviour and Mental Health* 32 (6), 389-403.

Smith, L. R. (2022b) "Surviving, not living"; Lived experience of crime and gambling. The report of the Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms. *Howard League for Penal Reform*. <https://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Lived-Experiences-report-FINAL-2.pdf>

Sykes, G. (1958) *The Society of captives: A study of a maximum-security prison*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Williams, D. J., and Hinton, M. L. (2006) Leisure Experience, Prison Culture, or Victimization? Sex Offenders Report on Prison Gambling. *Victims & Offenders*, 1(2), 175–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15564880600626155>

Acknowledgements

Firstly, we are extremely grateful to everyone within the research site, for their openness, time, and flexibility. Secondly, to all the participants for their time and trust to share their experiences with us.

We would like to express special thanks to the peer researchers (SS, IH, SGT, EH) for their complete commitment and professionalism during the data collection and analysis process and to the Families Team within the research site for their support in the data collection, ensuring families and friends voices were also heard. In addition to this, we would like to thank Liz Riley at Betknowmore for her valuable advice and support throughout the training and data process and Steven Nyandu for sharing his lived experience and knowledge, while supporting us.

Furthermore, we would like to share our thanks and appreciation to Anita Dockley and Helen Churcher from the Howard League for their support and guidance throughout the commission.

Final acknowledgement and thanks also go to Dr Kerry Ellis Devitt for her patience, advice, and guidance with the NRC application process.

About the Howard league for Penal Reform

The Howard League for Penal Reform is a national charity working for less crime, safer communities, and fewer people in prison. We campaign and research on a wide range of issues including short term prison sentences, real work in prison, community sentences and youth justice. We work with parliament and the media, with criminal justice professionals, students, and members of the public, influencing debate and forcing through meaningful change to create safer communities. Our legal team provides free, independent, and confidential advice, assistance, and representation on a wide range of issues to young people under 21 who are in prisons or secure children's homes and centres. By becoming a member, you will give us a bigger voice and give vital financial support to our work. We cannot achieve real and lasting change without your help. Please visit www.howardleague.org and join today.

About the Commission Crime and Gambling Related Harms

The Commission on Crime and Gambling Related Harms was launched by the Howard League for Penal Reform in June 2019. It is scheduled to run for three years, and it will try to answer three questions:

- What are the links between gambling related harms and crime?
- What impact do these links have on communities and society?
- What should be done?

About the authors

Dr Sarah Lewis and Justine Best MSc are part of Penal Reform Solutions (PRS). Dr Sarah Lewis is the Director of Penal Reform Solutions (PRS), and Justine Best is a consultant. PRS is an organisation that supports correctional organisations to develop a culture that transforms people. PRS is an evidence-based organisation, which draws on academic and prison experience, both nationally and internationally. PRS has extensive experience in prison growth and reform and provides consultancy, research, training and interventions within criminal justice and schools. The PRS team comprises of people with probation, prison, and police experience, as practitioners and service users, drawing on diverse knowledge and experience to bring about positive change.

**Howard League
for Penal Reform**

1 Ardeigh Road
London
N1 4HS

t 020 7249 7373
e info@howardleague.org
w www.howardleague.org
@TheHowardLeague

Company limited by guarantee
No. 898514
Registered charity
No. 251926

ISBN 978-1-911114-77-2

March 2023