

No Rise In Number Of Problem Gamblers

Britons are no more addicted to gambling than they were eight years ago, a surprising new report has found.

The survey by the Gambling Commission said around 32 million people took part in some type of gambling activity in the past year – a million down on the 33 million who gambled in 1999.

If the number of people playing just the National Lottery are discounted, the findings showed the number of gamblers betting in other types of games had increased by 2% from 46% to 48%.

It was feared the number of problem gamblers was on the rise, but the latest figures show there are 250,000 problem gamblers in Britain – roughly the same as eight years ago.

Problem gamblers – defined as as people who gamble „to a degree that compromises, disrupts or damages family, personal or recreational pursuits“ – are said to comprise 0.6% of the adult population.

Rates of problem gambling were found to be higher among men than women, and tended to be among younger age groups.

The highest percentage of gamblers with a problem were found among spread betters, at 14.7%, and those using fixed odds betting terminals, at 11.2%.

Of the 6% of people using gambling websites, 7.4% were classed as problem gamblers.

Everything from the National Lottery to betting shops and online gambling was covered by the British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2007, the first major study of its kind in eight years.

It follows the introduction of new gambling laws earlier this

month which make it easier to advertise casinos and online gambling sites on television.

Gambling Commission chairman Peter Dean said: „It indicates that problem gambling has largely been unchanged since 1999, but we remain concerned about the upwards of a quarter of a million people whose lives are harmed by gambling.“

Shadow Minister For Tourism, Licensing & Gambling Tobias Ellwood told Sky News Online the report's most worrying finding was the high rate of problem gambling among the new types of gaming.

„The key message is not that there is ,little change since 1999', but new forms of gambling are presently creating unacceptable numbers of problem gamblers,“ he said.

„These figures are all the more alarming as it is the new forms of gambling which will now predominantly be promoted on our TV screens.“

„The Government missed an opportunity by legislating before they had this evidence and by failing to create a framework in which internet gaming companies would operate under a socially responsible regime within the UK.“