

SUMMARY

Kruize, A., M. Boendermaker, M. Sijstra, B. Bieleman (2016)

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The Dutch government is currently working on a gradual modernization of the entire Dutch gambling policy. The coming years, the government will evaluate the impact of these changes. Research and advice bureau INTRAVAL performed a baseline measurement commissioned by the Research and Documentation Centre (WODC) of the Ministry of Security and Justice. The baseline measurement serves primarily to assess the status of various indicators, even before the proposed changes to gambling policy come into force. It will form the basis for determining whether the proposed measures are implemented and the objectives of the gambling policy are realised in subsequent measurements.

Research Design

To gather information about the indicators that relate to gambling, we conducted a population survey of 5,873 respondents, aged 16 years and older. In addition, we have collected data through desk research, interviews and a phone survey with over 100 licensed providers, the Kansspelautoriteit (KSA, The Netherlands Gaming Authority), the Foundation Informatie Voorziening Zorg (IVZ, information provision for healthcare) and the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU).

Findings

The indicators are divided per the three objectives of the gambling policy: preventing gambling addiction; prevention of fraud and other crimes; and the protection of consumers. We have also mapped the current extent of gambling participation in the Netherlands.

Participation in gambling

Measurements from 2016 shows that a large part (62.1%) of the Dutch population aged 16 years and older recently (over the last 12 months) participated in gambling. For the largest part they participate in lotteries, followed by scratch cards, slot machines, bingo and casino games. Partly based on the location where the games are played, we made a distinction between participation in legal or illegal gambling. In the 2016 measurement, 61.8% recently participated in legal gambling. Participation in illegal gambling is significantly lower at 4.0%.

Based on the items from the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) we have made a subdivision by type of player. The SOGS is a screening tool for gambling addiction that could help health care providers to identify (potential) gambling problems. It is known that the use of the SOGS in a population survey, leads to an overestimation of the number of problem gamblers. In the measurement of 2016, The Netherlands has an estimated 8.4 million recreational players (8,265,000-8,610,000, with confidence intervals of 95%) 95,700 risk players (66,500-124,800) and 79,000 problem gamblers (52,700-105,500).

In 2005 and 2011 research has also been performed on gambling participation and the prevalence of problem gambling. However, the comparability with the findings of 2016 is limited. This is due to changes in the questionnaire and the weighting of the results. Given these changes, the numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Preventing gambling addiction

The extent to which licensees take measures to prevent gambling addiction, varies per gambling sector and licensee. Holland Casino (HC) – the sole licensee for casino games in 2015 – uses a gambling addiction prevention policy. The survey among operators of slot machines indicates that they take less action for preventing problem gambling. Most of the measures are applied by less than half of the operators. Comparison to gambling game providers on the Internet, based on data from licensees, is not possible yet since there is no licenced supply of remote gambling in 2015.

Fraud and other criminality

Because of the sometimes large sums of money circulating in gambling, some segments of the gambling market are sensitive to some forms of crime. HC uses different measures to counter this. The measures for the prevention of fraud and other crimes for licensees that operate gambling machines, are generally less extensive. Although this is not a prerequisite for obtaining a license, HC demands a certificate of good conduct (VOG) from all its employees. Among the operators of gambling machines, 38% indicates they ask their staff for a VOG.

Consumer protection

HC and licensed lotteries claim to implement various measures to protect consumer interests. The percentage of operators of gambling machines that applies measures, varies per measure and ranges from 7% (informing players about the policy for the protection of personal data) to 100% (informing that minors are not allowed to play the gambling machines). In 2015, complaints about advertising from three of the six licensed lotteries were reported to the Stichting Reclame Code (Dutch Advertising Code Authority). The complaints include: false indications of free participation; obtaining a welcoming gift; and arousing false expectations.