



FEDERAL RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON DRUGS

SUMMARY

GAMSPON

The relationship between gambling sponsorship and the normalization of gambling

Prof. Liselot Hudders (UGent), Dr. Steffi De Jans (UGent), Prof. Bram Constandt (UGent), Prof. Charlotte Colman (UGent), Dr. Stefaan Demarest (Sciensano), Dr. Elise Braekman (Sciensano), Sarie De Graeve (UGent), Bram Hartmann (UGent), Catho Boone (Sciensano), Dr. Valerie Verdoodt (UGent), Michelle Bouw (UGent)

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Contract - DR/95/GAMSPON

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PROMOTORS: Prof. Liselot Hudders (UGent)
Dr. Steffi De Jans (UGent)
Prof. Bram Constandt (UGent)
Prof. Charlotte Colman (UGent)
Dr. Stefaan Demarest (Sciensano)
Dr. Elise Braekman (Sciensano)

AUTEURS: Prof. Liselot Hudders (UGent)
Dr. Steffi De Jans (UGent)
Prof. Bram Constandt (UGent)
Prof. Charlotte Colman (UGent)
Dr. Stefaan Demarest (Sciensano)
Dr. Elise Braekman (Sciensano)
Sarie De Graeve (UGent)
Bram Hartmann (UGent)
Catho Boone (Sciensano)
Dr. Valerie Verdoodt (UGent)
Michelle Bouw (UGent)



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WTCIII

Simon Bolivarlaan 30

Boulevard Simon Bolivar 30

B-1000 Brussels

Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 238 34 11 - Fax: +32 (0)2 230 59 12

<http://www.belspo.be>

<http://www.belspo.be/drugs>

Contact person: Prof. Liselot Hudders

Tel: +32 9 264 91 89

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Gambling advertising and -sponsorship in Belgium

Where do we draw the line?

GAMSPON*-project (2022-2026)
*GAMbling SPONsorship

Research on exposure to and the impact of gambling advertising and -sponsorship among Belgian youth and adults, with a central focus on the normalization of gambling

Collaboration between Ghent University and Sciensano

Input from policymakers, people with lived experience, and prevention and support services

Multi-method approach

The research

Combination of:

Quantitative research

- National Health Interview Survey (2023–2024): 4,926 Belgians (aged 15 and older)
- EURO 2024 survey: 1,611 participants from Flanders
- 4 experimental studies: 950 adult participants from Flanders

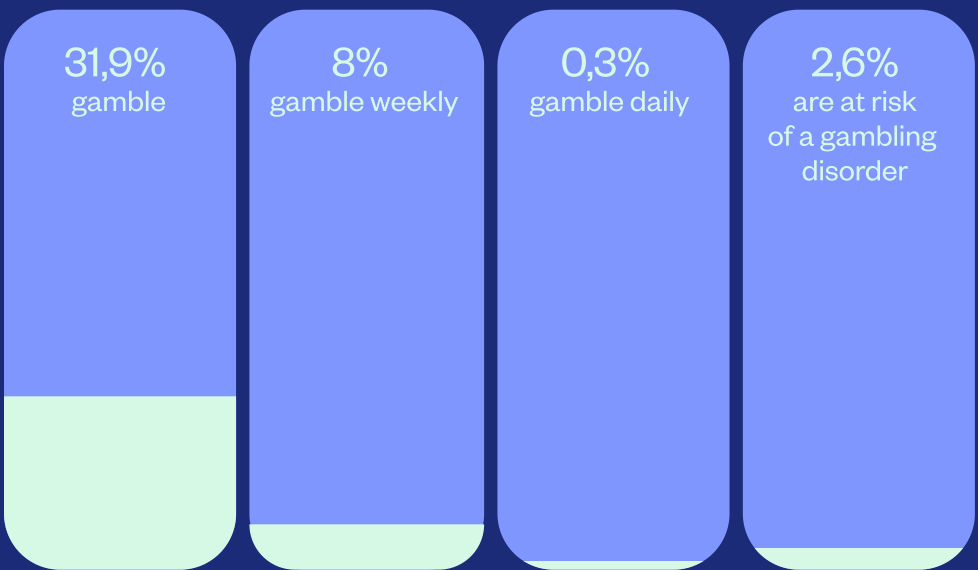
Qualitative research

- In-depth interviews: 12 Flemish adolescents (ages 16–18)
- 2 focus groups: 6 individuals with lived experience
- 2 co-creation sessions: 15 professional stakeholders and 7 academic experts

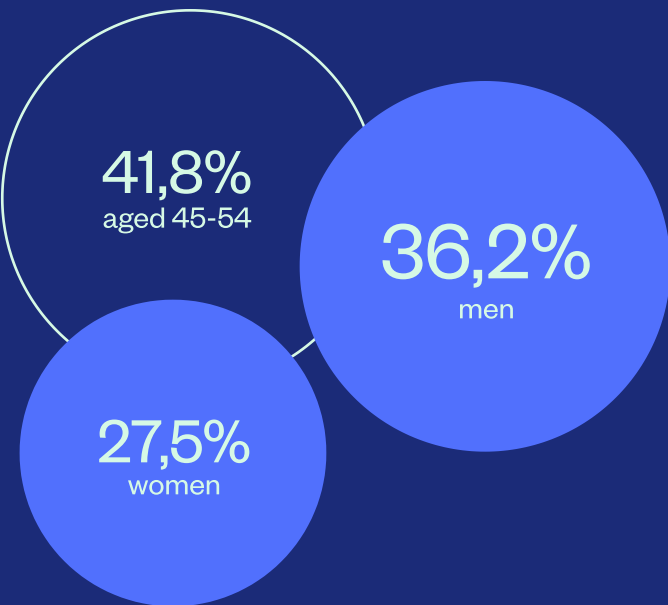
Results

Prevalence and frequency of gambling

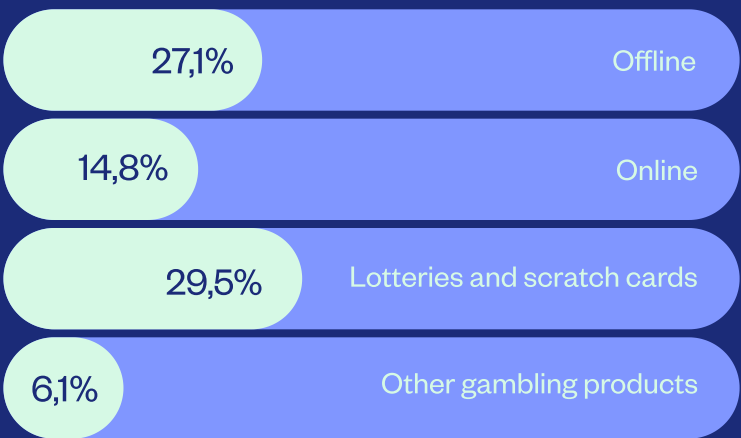
Gambling in Belgium



Who gambles the most?



Most popular gambling activities



Exposure to gambling advertising and -sponsorship

- Exposure remains high, even after the tightening of gambling advertising regulations
- 53.6% of Belgians reported seeing gambling advertising weekly during the past six months
 - No significant difference before and after the advertising ban
 - Highest exposure among men and people aged 15–34
 - Main channels: television, websites and apps, social media
- 61.1% reported frequent exposure to gambling sponsorship
 - Mainly through: television, sports coverage, during sports events

Relationship exposure to gambling advertising and -sponsorship and gambling behavior

- Greater exposure is associated with increased gambling behavior
- Sponsorship has more impact than traditional social media advertising (because altruistic motives are attributed to the gambling brand)
- Belgians are more critical of gambling sponsors than of non-controversial sports sponsors
- The normalization of gambling is an explanatory factor

Policymakers and public health organizations

Individuals with lived experiences

Academic experts

1. **Change the narrative around gambling: from entertainment to a commercial and potentially harmful activity**

- Position gambling as a public health issue, not merely an economic activity
- Standardize terminology in government communication: use gambling, gambling products, people who gamble instead of games of chance, players
- Adopt 'person-first language' in policy

2. **Anchor gambling policy in independent research and monitoring**

- Provide structural funding for independent research on the impact of gambling advertising and -sponsorship
- Develop a permanent monitoring system for the early detection of new marketing practices
- Establish regular evaluations of gambling advertising policy

3. **Work toward a total ban on gambling advertising and -sponsorship, this would ensure:**

- Clarity: no exceptions or interpretative differences
- Effectiveness: no shift toward loopholes
- Protection: reduced exposure among youth and other risk groups
- Denormalization: no structural visibility of gambling

4. **Treat the National Lottery like other operators**

- Apply the same rules for advertising and sponsorship

5. **Strengthen oversight and enforcement, provide the Belgian Gaming Commission with stronger enforcement powers**

- Ensure effective sanctions and create an accessible reporting mechanism
- Promote structural collaboration between policy domains (economy, consumer protection, public health)

6. **Think beyond national borders**

- European and international coordination is necessary for effective protection

7. **Invest in targeted prevention**

- Provide fact-based information about risks without promoting gambling
- Focus on youth, young adults, and other risk groups
- Engage parents, schools, sports organizations, and leisure activities
- Reduce the visibility and availability of gambling products
- Implement effective warning messages and provide information on support resources