

THE MALTA GAMING AUTHORITY PUBLISHES A SURVEY INTO THE CONSUMPTION OF GAMING SERVICES BY MALTESE RESIDENTS

The Malta Gaming Authority (MGA) has for the first time published a survey into the consumption of gaming services by Maltese residents, including economic and social considerations. The scientific survey which was carried out between 2015 and 2016 provides a fair assessment of the gambling behaviours in Malta. It also gives a clearer picture on the level of problem gambling in Malta.

The survey was announced and published during a press conference which was held at the Office of the Prime Minister, which was addressed by Hon Silvio Schembri, Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services, Digital Economy and Innovation and the MGA's Executive Chairman, Joseph Cuschieri.

Hon Schembri said, that this survey was needed in order to understand fully the effect of gambling behaviour on the social life of the Maltese population, as well as understanding the economic impact this has on their every day life. Whilst recognizing the positive effects of the gaming industry on the Maltese economy, Hon Schembri stressed the importance of the government's role in devising policies to safeguard this activity without impacting our society negatively. The Parliamentary Secretary also mentioned the important work carried out by the Responsible Gaming Foundation which launched a series of initiatives to help people with gambling problems, such as the 1777 helpline and self barring forms. Hon Schembri also thanked the Malta Gaming Authority for this initiative, which will provide a scientific basis for policies aimed at helping people who have gambling problems.

The MGA's Executive Chairman, Joseph Cuschieri highlighted the importance of this survey, "For the first time we are publishing a scientific survey which clearly articulates the gambling behaviours of the Maltese population. This should help all stakeholders to shape policies based on scientific data rather than impressions or myths hence a more informed debate about the economic and social effects of gambling in Malta. The survey also gives size and scale of potential gambling addiction problems in Malta".

Key highlights from this survey include:

- Gaming services have become an essential component of household recreational activities. This entails a contribution to economic activity, and needs to be managed in a way which does not impinge upon the sustainability of lifestyles,
- The Maltese population is estimated to have spent around €125 million in gaming services during 2015, equivalent to around 2.8% of total household consumption expenditure,
- National Lottery games are the most prevalent form of gaming, closely followed by expenditure on gaming parlours and outlets,
- Around 195,300 persons are estimated to have spent money on some form of gaming activity in 2015, which is close to 56% of the population aged 18 years and over. The average weekly expenditure by these persons stood at €12.30. Around 46% of the population engages in games available for free,
- The persons who engage in paid gaming activities are most likely those who are aged 45 and over, having an educational attainment up to Secondary level and not active in the labour market,

- In general, around 1% to 2% of the population (which can vary between 2,000 and 4,000 persons) who acquire gaming services for payment report some type of adverse effect between gaming activity and lifestyle. The findings of this study indicate that problems associated with gaming activities undertaken through regular channels are relatively contained. This is in line with the trends in other EU jurisdictions,
- This implies that, more likely than not, more extensive and serious problems associated with gambling would be emanating primarily from illegal activities,
- NGOs involved in social issues in relation to gambling emphasise the need for further resources to be dedicated to training of professionals in the area of gambling addictions,
- In line with these considerations, responsible gambling remains a top priority in guiding the MGA's regulatory ethos and policy objectives. Furthermore, more action is planned to tackle illegal gambling activities in Malta.

Whoever wishes to receive the complete version of the survey may send an email to info.mga@mga.org.mt.