

The MGA publishes results of its Inquiry on the Consumption of Gambling and Gaming Services Consumption by Maltese Residents in 2017

National Lottery games remain the most prevalent form of gambling activity, 1%-2% of population reported some form of adverse effect on their lifestyle after acquiring a gambling services against payment.

During the launch of the inquiry on the consumption of gambling and gaming services by Maltese residents that was conducted for the second time, Parliamentary Secretary for Financial Services, Digital Economy and Innovation, Hon. Silvio Schembri, said that the survey provides a clear picture on how all those involved can work better together to be more effective on the help provide to victims and their families.

The survey which was published by the Malta Gaming Authority takes into account economic and social considerations whilst providing an assessment of the gambling and gaming behaviours in Malta through a scientific survey carried out during 2017.

When addressing the press conference, Hon. Schembri said that despite the fact that there's the tendency to talk about economic growth however, at the core of the Government's work there's the social aspect. "The survey looks into different aspects, from how much money an individual spends every week, the average time spent by individual players in gaming activities, and the increase in the use of gaming related services" said Hon. Schembri while adding that in this way one can better move towards a holistic approach in addressing effectively social challenges gaming brings about.

The new gaming Act that was put into effect as from this year which strengthened the regulator's work whilst putting consumer's protection at the heart of our work. The 1%-2% of the population that admitted to having a gambling problem is very similar to the trend in Europe. "To address this issue a holistic approach is necessary hence in the coming months, the Responsible Gaming Foundation will upscale its work through the Take Action programme funded by the European Social Fund aimed at training social workers and through research amongst the victims of gambling. In this way we will have a clear picture of what is the best way forward to address effectively such issues" said Hon. Schembri while adding that the survey is going to be carried out every two years this time by the Responsible Gaming Foundation.

The MGA's Chief Executive Officer, Heathcliff Farrugia, stressed on the importance of such scientific studies in order to properly assess the impact of gambling services consumed by the Maltese population. "Players are always at the core of all our policies, hence it is extremely important to gather as much information as possible on the gambling behaviour of punters coming from different socio-economic backgrounds, in order to be able to better achieve the cardinal regulatory objective of protecting them. This survey shows that over the last two years, there was no increase in the percentage of persons who are considered problem gamblers. Having said this, behind the statistics there are persons and families who are adversely affected and as such, it is our duty together with all those who are offering gambling services, to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect and provide guidance to those in need."

Kayne Said, from the Responsible Gaming Foundation, explained the work the Foundation has done so far since its establishment and emphasized on the importance of working together to sustain the help being given.

Economist Gordon Cordina explained some of the key highlights of the survey;

- The total amount of money spent by the Maltese population on gaming services in 2017 is estimated at €128 million, an increase of €3 million over the 2015 estimate;
- National Lottery games remain the most prevalent form of gambling activity, taking up around 73% of expenditure on gambling and gaming activities in Malta;
- Around 52.8% of the population aged 18 and over are estimated to have spent on average €11.30 per week on some form of gaming activity in 2017. The proportion of population who engages in games which are available for free is estimated at around 47.2%;
- The average time spent by individual players in gambling and gaming activities is estimated to be around 33 minutes per week; well over half of the players spend no more than 10 minutes in playing each week, reflecting the strong component of players involved in National Lottery games;
- The persons who engage in gambling are most likely to be young adults or senior citizens, have a secondary level of education. They are less likely to be unemployed, part-time employees or students.;
- The share of population who reported some form of adverse effect on their lifestyle after acquiring gambling services against payment is found to be around 1% to 2% (which can vary between 1,900 and 3,800 persons). The findings of this study indicated that problems associated with gambling undertaken through regulated channels are relatively contained, in line with 2015 results;
- The protection of consumers, minors and vulnerable persons is one of the MGA's main objectives and is at a guiding principle at the heart of the manner in which the Authority regulates the industry. The new Gaming Act and the associated regulatory instruments, which have been introduced in 2018, further enhance consumer protection standards and responsible gambling measures with the aim of ensuring that the necessary safeguards are in place for players to gamble safely and responsibly, with the risk of addiction being curbed, and that the persons who are at risk are properly identified and helped; and;
- The MGA also supports the Responsible Gaming Foundation, which undertakes educational and other awareness campaigns within its remit, and is operating the national gambling helpline (1777) to provide assistance to persons with issues of addiction to gambling.

A full copy of the Gambling Survey Report can be accessed [here](#).