



“There is no evidence”

Use of evidence and research practice in contested spaces - a case study of gambling

“Regulators often fail to act because we have not yet statistically "proven" an association between an exposure and a disease....

If we can escape from the false dichotomy of "proven vs. not proven,"then we can make decisions based on what we do know rather than what we don't”

(Philips & Goodman, 2004)

Governments, politicians and regulators

Industry

Complex stakeholder environment

Researchers/academics

Campaigning groups

The public

Views of evidence

“the standards for gambling are even higher than for alcohol as the licensing objectives in the Gambling Act specifically refer to gambling.”

“asserting the existence of vulnerable people in the area - but so what? It’s not presenting evidence that these people are being harmed - a district judge wouldn’t accept it.”

“sometimes I think that people demand standards of evidence that are almost impossible to generate because they are looking for causal connections...and it’s really, really hard to demonstrate. Even in medicine, it’s really hard to demonstrate that A causes B”

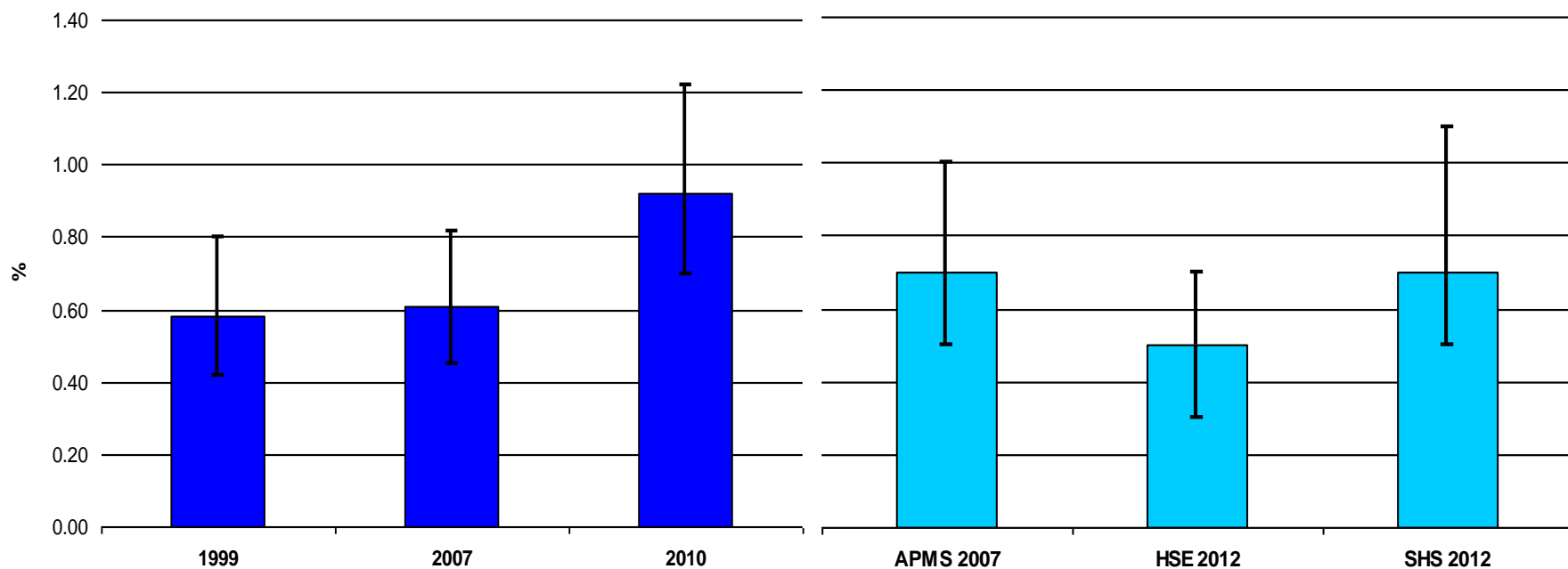
““The holy grail is to change the discourse from 'prove it, prove it" which the smoking industry used in the 1950s to precautionary principles and trying to put in place the measures to avert risk.”

Key debates

- Extent and trends in problem gambling
- The relationship of problem gambling to activities
- B2 gaming machines in bookmakers
- Risk and vulnerable people

Problem gambling rates over time

Comparison of Problem Gambling prevalence rates in 1999, 2007 & 2010



Addicts a very small proportion
of gamblers, says report

**284,000 are gambling addicts - 'and
it'll get worse'**

**Gambling addiction hooks
600,000 people, says report**

**Betting
addicts
soar to
800,000**

THE number of gambling addicts has more than doubled in less than a decade, a study will say this week.

The Government-sponsored report is expected to show that around 800,000 people have problems with regular and uncontrolled gambling.

Differing interpretations among stakeholders

“levels of problem gambling remain broadly the same as before the Act was implemented”

“The best evidence is suggesting that it [the number of problem gamblers] is far from stable, that it has actually gone up significantly over the last three years”

“the BGPS methodology was “suspect” as “you need to tick only three? boxes on the problem gambling scale and you are a problem gambler by definition”

“using data from the HSE/SHeS compared with the BGPS do seem to suggest that problem gambling has decreased in Great Britain”

How to navigate this complexity?

- SRA high quality research protocol
 - Transparency

And:

- Immerse
- Empathise
- Engage
- Reflect
- Teach

A final reflection...

“The facts speak only when the historian calls on them; it is he who decides to which facts to give to the floor, in what order and in what context.”

E.H CARR

Thanks!!

Heather@hwresearch.co.uk