

When conducting research into gambling, **75% of young people** did not consider people like themselves to be gamblers. They talked of old men, men covered in jewellery or people with issues or experiencing harm among others. We asked if young people gamble and all they all said no.

However, are young people now exposed to gambling-style features more than ever through gaming?

Approximately **£270 million** was spent in the UK on microtransactions in 2019.

There have been growing calls to include loot boxes in any new gambling legislation but current law does not view paying money to win virtual goods as a form of gambling.

## What is gambling?

Gambling is the wagering of money or something of value on an event with an uncertain outcome, with the primary intent of winning money or material goods. Gambling thus requires three elements to be present: consideration, risk, and a prize.

Lotteries, slot machines and sports betting are just three examples. There are different age restrictions depending on the activity, with most set at 18.

## Are they the same?

To participate in most gambling activities, you need to be 18. However, many games that carry a 3 PEGI rating include loot boxes. Both activities involve the spending of money on an event with an uncertain outcome. However, unlike gambling, you are guaranteed to receive a prize when opening a loot box/skin/pack.

The issue being raised is both activities are similar in the psychological sense; They have addictive content which activate the brains chemical reward system and create feelings of uncertainty, anticipation and excitement.

As young people engage in the activity of opening loot boxes their brain becomes used to the rewards and craves more. The need to purchase a particular item, copy influencers, remain competitive with their friends, or satisfy the brains cravings leads to repeat purchases.

The other issue to be raised is how the graphics and sounds of loot boxes opening sound like gambling activities.

**Listen to the sound of a loot box opening. What noises can you hear?**

**Now listen to the sounds of some gambling style activities. What noises can you hear?**

It has been suggested loot boxes replicate the sounds and sights of gambling products. These sounds can become familiar in a child's subconscious so when passing an arcade for instance, the familiarity of these sounds draws them in.

Some might say there is no difference between a person continuously purchasing microtransactions to playing on slots.

When receiving an microtransaction, the anticipation of what they might receive compels them to continue, if they did not receive what they wanted, they will continue as they believe next time there is a chance they will get it. When a person plays on a slot machine and does not win, they believe their next go might be the one they do win or win bigger.

Two different activities but both have the same beliefs.



# What are the odds?

**Chance of winning the lottery is 1 in 45,057,474, million.**

**The chance of winning the jackpot on a slot machine  
is 1 in 262,144.**

**The chance to get Ronaldo in a FIFA pack is 1 in 150,000.**

**The chance of a rare skin in Fortnite is 0.0001%.**

Although the odds for microtransactions is less than gambling activities, and even if you do not receive the player/skin/weapon of choice you know you will get something, young people will still be spending large amounts of money on in-app purchases. Reports of children running up large debts on their parents credit cards show that young people often do not realise they are spending real money, or the worth of money or, their quest to get the prize they wanted outweighs the cost, just like gamblers can do.



Whether or not you agree or disagree with microtransactions being too close to gambling there are actions you can take to help your child;

- Teach your child the value of money. Do they realise how much they actually spend or what they could spend their money on instead.
- Set limits for spending money for microtransactions. Teach them they can buy purchases but to stay sensible. When the money runs out it is gone. This will help them in future life.
- Hold conversations with them around the odds of winning what they want. If they knew they had to spend £X amount to get their desired 'prize' would they still do it?
- Set parenting controls so that any spend requires authorisation.
- Discuss any limits with your child beforehand, this will make them more likely to engage.

