

Young men put betting before drink and women

Richard Alleyne

Daily Telegraph

October 7, 2005.

UK--Forget drinking or dating, gambling is now the preferred pastime for many young men.

"Lads" are turning their backs on traditional pursuits and turning instead to betting to get their kicks.

New figures suggest that more than 90 per cent of them enjoy a regular flutter and some say they would prefer to spend pounds 5 on a bet than at the pub or taking out their girlfriend.

The explosion in gambling addiction among young men can be put down to internet betting, with the web now taking the bulk of the cash from young males.

About pounds 5 billion a year is wagered online, with 93 per cent of people with web access making an internet punt.

Record numbers of gamblers are logging on to football, lottery, horse racing and poker sites in the hope of a life-changing win.

Most online money is staked on the lottery, which gets pounds 1.65 billion a year, but punters are also switching on their computers to gamble pounds 1 billion on football, pounds 935 million on internet casinos, pounds 665 million on horse racing and pounds 43 million on poker.

Overall, Scots are the biggest gamblers with 48 per cent gambling an average of pounds 40 per month, according to research by Nuts magazine, which questioned 1,100 people.

The increase in the number of online sites has made it easier to gamble, while celebrities have made gambling, especially poker, more fashionable. The rise of the phenomenon of "extreme gambling", where people stake all they have on one bet, is also said to have fuelled the obsession.

Ashley Revell, 33, a Londoner who sold his worldly goods for pounds 76,840, and then went to Las Vegas to put it all on red in a game of roulette, said the gambling culture had exploded.

Mr Revell, who walked away with pounds 153,680 after he doubled his money, said: "Gambling has always been a huge part of British culture but recently it has been taken to a whole new level."

The survey showed that about eight per cent of men would rather spend pounds 5 on gambling than at the pub and two per cent would place a bet ahead of going out on a date.

A compulsive gambler at Gamblers Anonymous said: "I have been in GA for almost a decade and when I first came the average age of first-timers was in their forties but now it's early twenties. People are getting the habit much younger because of the internet."

The poll of men aged between 18 and 35 showed that most males gambled to make an event more interesting or were convinced they would win a lot of money.

Phil Hilton, editor of Nuts, said: "Gambling's explosion can be attributed to men's innate drive for competition.

"Gambling has recently been accepted as a sport or hobby and the fact that people are winning money only serves to make it more appealing. Gone are the days when gambling was for mugs." ralleyne@telegraph.co.uk