The Same or Different? Convergence of Skin Gambling and Other Gambling Among Children

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Risks and harms

## Sample

2881 pupils aged 11–16 who took part in the 2017 Youth Gambling Survey

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Creating a safe environment for children online

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Industry

# Abstract

There is increasing attention on the introduction of gambling-like practices within video
games. Termed convergence, this has been explored from the viewpoint of the product,
examining similarities in game/gambling mechanics. Understanding convergence of practice
is essential to map the epidemiology of these behaviours, especially among children.
This paper focuses on the betting of skins within video games to explore co-occurrence
with other forms of gambling among British children aged 11–16. Analysing the British
Youth Gambling Survey showed that 39% of children who bet on skins in the past
month had also gambled on other activities. Betting on skins and other forms of gambling
increased with age and concordance of skin gambling/betting was greatest for those who
also gambled online. Among gamblers, those who bet skins had higher rates of at-risk and
problem gambling than those who did not (23% vs. 8%), though they had a greater breath
of gambling involvement. Skin gambling alone was not significantly associated with at-risk
gambling when other forms of gambling activity were taken into account. Skin betting and
gambling on other activities cluster together, especially where the medium underpinning
the behaviours is the same. Children who engage in both skin gambling/betting and other
forms of gambling should be considered at-risk for the experience of harms because of
their heightened engagement in gambling and gambling-like activities.

# Outcome

"Both skin gambling/betting and gambling on other activities were relatively common
among British children aged 11–16, despite some legal restrictions on participation... Playing video games is even more common among this age group and among boys, the
gambling or betting of skins was the most prevalent form of ‘gambling’ activity. Evidence
from this analysis shows that there is some overlap in who gambles or bets with skins and who takes part in other forms of gambling (confirming hypothesis 1), with 3% of children
aged 11–16 saying that they did both. Whilst this may seem like a small number, this
equates to around 100,000 children aged 11–16 in Britain. Furthermore, observed/expected
ratios show that these two behaviours co-occur more than would be expected given their
independent population prevalence, indicating greater overlap between these behaviours
than is expected. Notably, the greatest level of overlap was between skin betting and gambling
and other forms of online betting or gambling. This is perhaps unsurprising, given
the common media underpinning these consumptions. This therefore supports the notion
of a ‘convergence’ in behaviours among some children who are engaging in both activities.
These patterns of behaviour ‘convergence’ were greatest for boys, older children and those
who felt they were doing less well at school, confirming hypothesis 2. However, there was
little evidence that this clustering of behaviour occurred disproportionately among those
from more disadvantage backgrounds. This may be related to the measure (receipt of free
school meals) used to proxy low income households. However, the evidence is not unequivocal. The most common pattern among those who
bet or gambled with skins was that they did not also engage in other forms of gambling.
At younger age groups, children tended either to bet on skins or to gamble on other things,
if they did this at all. Among older children, skin gambling/betting was more likely to be
combined with gambling on other activities, though half of skin gamblers did this activity
alone. This suggests a need for greater clarity when talking about processes of convergence... Notably, rates of at-risk and problem gambling were highest among gamblers who also
engaged in skin gambling/betting" (Wardle, 2019: 1118-1122).