Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Sean Whellams
Head of Profession for Statistics
HM Revenue and Customs
(by email)

17 December 2021

Dear Sean

HMRC Betting and Gaming Statistics

I am writing to you following our recent review of HMRC's Betting and Gaming statistics. We carried out this compliance check as part of our follow-up monitoring of HMRC's progress against the recommendations set out in the quality review of HMRC's official statistics that we completed in spring 2020. I am pleased to confirm that these statistics should continue to be designated as National Statistics.

Our review found many positive features that demonstrate the quality and value of the statistics:

- Since our quality review, extensive data quality assurance processes have been put in place to minimise potential errors in published betting and gaming statistics. These include the joint assurance work of the HMRC Corporate Finance directorate and the KAI Data, Quality Assurance and Technology (DQAT) division, supported by HMRC's Trust statement, to provide mapping and documentation of finance data to ensure a clear understanding of data sources and resolve any inconsistencies identified.
- HMRC's plans to update a range of its production systems using reproducible analytical pipelines (RAP) within the next year. This removes any manual inputting errors and allows irregular results to be more easily identified, ensuring the data are of the highest quality.
- HMRC's work to ensure users were aware of the impact of the reduction to fixed stake betting in April 2019 on betting and gaming statistics. In response to the change in fixed stake betting, we commend HMRC for introducing Machine Game Duty rate data tables to aid users' interpretation of betting and gaming statistics.
- The clarity and insight offered in statistical bulletins, which clearly explain changes in the data, due to, for example, COVID-19 and tax changes. This prevents misleading conclusions being made and improves users' understanding of the statistics. Changes in the tax rate can make time series comparisons difficult to interpret and we therefore endorse the efforts of HMRC to bring these issues to the attention of users.

- HMRC taking steps to improve the accessibility of betting and gaming statistics by having moved all their releases into HTML format which is suitable for most assistive technologies.

We also identified an action to enhance the quality and value of the statistics:

- Triangulating betting and gaming statistics with statistics from industry bodies, such as the Gambling Commission, will help highlight to users the consistency and comparability of betting and gaming statistics. Doing so will assist users with interpretation, and provide further assurance on the quality and relevance of HMRC betting and gaming statistics.

Thank you to your team for their positive engagement during this review. We look forward to continuing to engage with you and the team. Please do get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further or if we can offer further assistance as these statistics continues to develop.

Yours sincerely

Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead