RESEARCH QUESTIONS
What are public attitudes toward gambling in Britain? What are the relationships between gambling attitudes and gambling behaviour; problem gambling, and socio-demographic variables?

PURPOSE
In Britain, the Gambling Act 2005 placed fewer restrictions on gambling and allowed new freedoms for gambling promoters and consumers. However, very little research attention has been given to assessing public attitudes towards gambling. In the present study a scale that measure attitudes towards gambling (i.e., Attitudes Toward Gambling Scale) was developed and tested. British attitudes towards gambling, and the relationship between attitudes and engagement in gambling, problem gambling, and a number of socio-demographic characteristics were also examined.

HYPOTHESIS
None stated.

PARTICIPANTS
Participants were 8,880 adults aged 16 or older living in England, Scotland and Wales.

PROCEDURE
Data were collected as part of the second British Gambling Prevalence Survey. Private addresses were randomly selected from postcode sectors representative of different regions in England, Scotland and Wales. Potential participants received a letter informing them of the study, and field staff then went to the selected addresses in person to complete a household interview with a “household reference person.” Interviewers collected demographic data about each resident in the household and asked each person in the household 16 years or older to complete a questionnaire measuring attitudes towards gambling.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES
The Attitudes Towards Gambling Scale (ATGS) was developed for this study to measure participants’ attitudes towards gambling in general. The scale consists of 14 items measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Higher scores on the scale indicated more favorable attitudes towards gambling. A total score of 42 indicated an overall neutral attitude toward gambling. Scores below 42 indicated unfavorable attitudes towards gambling and scores above 42 indicated favorable attitudes towards gambling. Problem gambling behaviour was assessed using the 10-item Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-IV (DSM-IC) criteria for pathological gambling and the 9-item Problem Gambling Screening Instrument.

KEY RESULTS
Overall, participants held unfavorable attitudes towards gambling; however, the majority of participants agreed with the statement “people should have the right to gamble whenever they want.” Men held more favorable attitudes towards gambling than women did; however, men’s attitudes towards gambling were still below the neutral point of the scale. Participants aged 55 and above held particularly negative attitudes toward gambling. Those who engaged in gambling frequently, who had parents who gambled (but did not have a gambling problem), and started gambling as a teenager reported more positive attitudes toward gambling. Participants were classified as at-risk gamblers held higher than average attitudes towards gambling. Participants who currently smoked cigarettes and who reported having drunk more alcoholic beverages in the past week held more favorable attitudes towards gambling. The ATGS was found to be a valid (i.e., accurate) and reliable (i.e., consistent) measure of attitudes towards gambling in general.

LIMITATIONS
The ATGS measures general attitudes towards gambling and therefore cannot provide information about the public’s attitudes towards specific forms of gambling.

REFERENCES
CONCLUSIONS
Participants believed that people should have the right to gamble whenever they want, but they also believe that gambling is more harmful than beneficial for society. The ATGS was found to validly and reliably measure attitudes towards gambling. The results of this study could be used to inform public policy on gambling.

KEYWORDS: gambling, attitudes; public opinion, demographics, gambling activity, Britain

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