

**Ipsos MORI****Response to Professor Mark Griffiths, Nottingham Trent University report  
commissioned by Leaguenotion****27<sup>th</sup> September 2006**

Two reports were submitted by Professor Mark Griffiths of Nottingham Trent University. In both reports, the Professor makes criticisms of a survey which was carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of Blackpool Council. The following is our response to these criticisms in general and in detail.

**Ipsos MORI Credentials**

The Blackpool Council Resident survey is just one of the hundreds of other high level and important surveys we carry out for official purposes and, below, provide examples of some of our clients:

- Prime Minister's Office
- Cabinet Office
- ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister)
- Government Departments (e.g. DfES, Home office, DoH, DCA, FCO, DFID, etc.)
- National Audit office
- Audit Commission
- Local Authorities
- Select Committees
- Embassies
- Police Authorities
- Health Authorities
- Agencies e.g. HMRC
- ONS
- Regulators (e.g. Ofcom, Ofwat, Ofgem, Oflet, Postcomm, etc)
- Parliament and Health Ombudsman
- Local Government Ombudsman

Quality has always been one of Ipsos MORI's guiding principles. Ipsos MORI's research operations are governed by the Market Research Society (MRS) Code of Conduct.

Ipsos MORI is the first agency in the world to hold the Marketing Quality Assurance (MQA) ISO 20252 accreditation. We have been ISO 9001 since January 1994 and in December 1996 MORI became one of the first companies to achieve accreditation to the MRQSA (Market Research Quality Standards Association) Services Standard. This sets out minimum standards for each stage of a market research project and is designed to enable accredited companies to provide a superior service to its clients. It offers clients reassurance that key aspects of the project are being undertaken to externally imposed and audited standards.

We regard these various standards as minimum requirements and not as goals in their own right. In addition to the regular surveillance visits carried out by external bodies in connection with IQCS, ISO and MRQSA, Ipsos MORI has its own auditing and quality teams who continuously monitor, with the help of feedback from our clients, the quality of service we provide. We also survey all our clients on our performance on individual projects and our scores are very positive.

A list of our Accreditations is as follows:

- Market Research Society (MRS) Member
- European Society for Opinion and Marketing Research (ESOMAR) Member
- ISO 9001 accredited since January 1994
- Market Research Quality Standards Association (MRQSA) Founder Member
- European Consortium for Online Research (ECOR) Founder Member

### **Other Ipsos MORI Quality Monitoring**

- Quality Implementation Committee (QUIC)
- Best Practice Action Plans (e.g. translation and back-checking)
- Customer Satisfaction Monitor (CSM) Scheme

### **Background and Methodology for the Ipsos MORI Survey**

Blackpool Council commissioned Ipsos MORI to undertake an independent and authoritative survey among a robust and representative sample of adults who reside in the Fylde Peninsula.

Ipsos MORI carried out a total of 1,194 interviews with a sample of adults aged 18 years and over resident in the Fylde Peninsula between 15<sup>th</sup> February and 26<sup>th</sup> March 2006. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in respondents' homes using paper-based questionnaires. A "quota" sample of residents were interviewed across 181 sampling points with quotas set by age, gender and work status. The sampling points were randomly selected across the entire Fylde peninsula and each point consisted of an ONS Census Output Area (OA).

One of our objectives was to identify the prevalence of problem gambling and, to help achieve this, we used one of the two more popular screening instruments – the DSM-IV (Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). We have successfully used this screening instrument before on behalf of clients such as the ABB (Association of British Bookmakers). Given the sensitivities surrounding the administration of such questions, we decided to administer this set of questions at the very end of the interview and, given the sensitivities surrounding the questions contained within this screening instrument, this final section of the interview was a self-completion exercise.

Out of all 1,194 respondents 1,132 agreed to complete this final self-completion section – a very high response rate of 95%. Within this instrument we define a problem gambler as a person who tests positively on three or more of the measures within the test.

If the sample had been selected pro-rata to the true geographic distribution of adults resident within the entire sampling area, we believe we would have interviewed too few adults in the Blackpool Resort core area (i.e. those who live closest to the proposed development area and thus possibly most affected by the outcome) to allow for a thorough and meaningful analysis of their behaviour, experiences, preferences and opinions. It was therefore decided to **boost** the number of interviews in the Blackpool Resort core area from 11% (i.e. the proportion of adults 18+ who actually live in this area) to 33% of total interviews conducted. Out of the 1,194 interviews, 389 were carried out in the Blackpool Resort and 805 in the surrounding area. The resultant data were weighted to 130 and 1,064 respectively – that is, back to the true population proportions for the entire sampling area.

For this survey, Ipsos MORI deliberately **exceeded our minimum requirements** in terms of standard procedures and quality checking and all questionnaires went through an enhanced quality checking procedure on their return to Ipsos MORI's office.

All interviewing was undertaken by Ipsos MORI's own internal fieldforce consisting of highly trained and experienced interviewers, supervised by our local, full-time Area Manager. All interviewers are members of the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) recognised by the Market Research Society (MRS), which lays down industry-wide minimum standards - on interviewer recruitment and training, supervision and back-checking - with records and procedures subject to rigorous annual inspection. In fact, quality control at Ipsos MORI goes well beyond the IQCS requirements – particularly for a study such as this where great care and attention was placed on all aspects of the survey design.

The interviewers chosen to work on this survey were hand-picked and all received a full and detailed personal briefing from the study Director prior to undertaking any of the interviews. This was to ensure that they all fully understood the importance of this survey and the survey content.

All Ipsos MORI interviewers carried their **MRS Identification Cards**, with their name and photograph, to reassure respondents that the survey was genuine. Respondents were given a thank you leaflet at the end of each interview, which stressed the confidentiality of the answers given and provided the telephone number to call if they had any further queries.

We also carried out a **pilot study** prior to progressing to the main stage of the survey and, on the basis of this, made a number of enhancements to the survey materials.

Great care and attention has been placed in the design and execution of the Blackpool Council Residents' Survey and we believe that it is fully fit for the purpose to achieve its set objectives.

Professor Mark Griffiths directed a number of criticisms at this survey and we address each in turn.

***A quota rather than probability sampling methodology was employed***

A large number of Ipsos MORI's surveys involve a multi-stage **quota** sample technique similar to that used for the Blackpool Council Residents survey. This methodological approach provides the optimal balance between practicality and statistical purity. Small, localised geographic areas which in this case were ONS's Census Output Areas (OAs) were selected on a random basis across the Blackpool Area core resort area and across the remaining area of the Fylde Peninsula. For those OAs selected within these geographic areas, respondents were chosen on a "quota" basis, with quota controls set tightly according to the up-to-date demographic profile of this specific localised area and based on the 2001 Census Data. Within each OA selected, quota controls were set by age, gender and working status.

Whilst it is true that for the non-probability (e.g. "quota") sampling technique used here, there is no control over the likelihood of individual respondents in an area being or not being, selected to the sample, one can minimise the amount of "free-run" the interviewers have to make their selection of respondents by making the final sampling units as small as possible. One can go further than this and say that the method Ipsos MORI adopted for this survey was **a type of "stratified sampling"** in which selection of OA sampling units within strata (e.g. age, sex, work status) was done by interviewers on a non-random basis, controlled to some extent by quotas allocated to these different strata.

Each of our experienced and fully trained Ipsos MORI interviewers selected to work on this survey was given an assignment of interviews to carry out, specifying how many of them were to be with men and how many with women, how many with people in various age groups, work status and so forth. These "quotas" were calculated from recent available data (e.g. 2001 Census) to arrange that, for the sampling area (i.e. the OA), gender, age groups and work status were represented in the sample in the same proportions as in the adult population as a whole for this geographic region.

We believe that this sampling procedure was fully fit for purpose for this survey and is the most common type of sampling carried out for Ipsos MORI Resident surveys.

As with any quota sample, accuracy is dependent upon the quality of the sampling frame. Ipsos MORI experienced a step-change in improvement in this respect at the beginning of 2004 when the full national OA-level census data became available in a useable form.

One of the main reasons why we adopted a quota rather than random probability based sample methodology for this survey is on the basis of cost - the latter being two to three times the cost of the former.

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind one of the drawbacks of using a random sample and that is that such random samples often have associated with them an element of

**geographic clustering.** This is for practical reasons to minimise travel times and costs. Such clustering would itself lead to widening of confidence intervals and loss of effective sample size.

There are occasions where we are able to test out the accuracy of using such quota sample techniques and, to exemplify, MORI's final poll of the 2005 General Election campaign, published in the London *Evening Standard* on election day, predicted the Conservative and Liberal Democrat shares of the vote spot-on, and missed Labour by two percentage points – well within the normally accepted margins of error. Though not complacent, and vividly aware that every new election throws up new challenges, we regard this performance as satisfactory. This was a quota sample of adults and is vindication of our belief that it is perfectly possible to achieve a representative sample of the British or regional public through well-executed quota sampling methods, with no need for radical weighting.

*Professor Mark Griffiths's report claimed that the Ipsos MORI data is wholly unreliable (it even states that "great care must be taken when drawing conclusions from this result as it is based on a very small sample size")*

The survey was carried out among a robust sample in excess of 1,000 and, in total, we interviewed 1,194 adults aged 18 years and over. We believe this is a sufficiently large sample on which to gauge attitudes, opinions and views of the resident population and the key sub-sample groups within. From this large sample we did identify the proportion of problem gamblers and found that 11 fell within this category. We do recognise that this is a small number and, in an ideal world and given a substantially larger budget we would have liked to interview many thousands of residents. A caveat "great care must be taken when drawing conclusions from this result as it is based on a very small sample size" was included to ensure that the reader did not try and undertake any further sub-sample analysis among those in this group and try, for example, to drill further down further into these results.

Within our report we defined a **problem gambler** as a person who tested positively on three or more of the measures within the DSM-IV test. Within this survey, our best estimate of the prevalence of problem gambling was 0.7% of those who agreed to complete the self-completion questionnaire. This compared with 0.9% identified in the most recent Prevalence Study carried out in Britain by the National Centre for Social Research in June 2000.

We believe that the sample size is sufficiently large to provide a good estimation of the proportion of problem gamblers resident within the Fylde Peninsula and is comparable with the results from the British Gambling Prevalence Survey (2000).

The National Prevalence Survey (2000) was carried out among a total of 7,680 adults aged 16 years and over and, as 0.9% were classified as problem gamblers, that is around 69 respondents in all.

***The Ipsos MORI survey is not statistically robust***

We believe that a sample consisting of 1,194 adults is sufficiently large to be able to draw valid conclusions and to accurately gauge opinions, attitudes and actions of the population of those residents in the Fylde Peninsula.

As with any sample survey, when interpreting the results it is important to take into consideration the margins of error. The sample tolerances that apply to the percentage results in this report are clearly indicated in the final Ipsos MORI report and vary with the size of the sample and the size of the percentage results.

***Gambling prevalence and problem gambling in Blackpool correspond to the national average is questionable***

We see no problem with comparing the incidence of problem gambling identified as part of this survey with that of the National Prevalence survey and comment on the similarity in the results to the two surveys above.

***Omission of a highly venerable group susceptible to problem gambling (16 and 17 year olds)***

The principal objective of this survey was to investigate the leisure activities of residents in the Fylde Peninsula and, in particular, their gambling activities. In addition, the survey was carried out to gauge opinion on the proposed Conference Casino Quarter on Blackpool's seafront. As gambling is restricted to those aged 18 years and over, we decided to interview only those in this age group. We appreciate the comment by Professor Griffith that other research studies in the UK have found the prevalence of problem gambling to be higher among those aged 16 and 17. However, we believe that this was outside the scope of our survey remit. We further believe that, for this survey, it would have been inappropriate to question those under 18 on their gambling activities and attitudes to a casino. The Conference Casino Quarter proposed by Blackpool Council will not be accessible to those in the 16 – 17 year old age group. If our central brief from Blackpool Council had been to achieve this, we would have carried out a completely separate programme of research where the methodological approach and content of the survey would have been significantly different (to accommodate for the sensitivities of questioning those in this age group on such a subject).