

Poker

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British poker playing is on a roll

The chips are anything but down for British poker as latest research from MINTEL finds that nearly a quarter (23%) of British adults (some 7 million people) have played poker in the last year alone. And for many this is not just a one off, with almost one in ten (7%) players sitting down for a hand or two every day and a further 14% playing at least once a week.

What is more, for many of these poker fans*, the taking part is simply not enough, with half (50%) watching the game on TV. The importance of showing poker on television should not be underestimated, as more than a fifth (21%) of poker players say that it was seeing the game on the TV that motivated them to start playing.

"The popularity of poker has soared in recent years as the game undoubtedly has an element of 'cool'™ that is lacking from many other forms of gambling. The growing TV coverage has also played a key role. In 2006 nearly 540 hours of poker were broadcast across the range of terrestrial, Sky and Eurosport channels, compared with just 13 hours in 2001," explains Matt King, senior leisure analyst at MINTEL.

Just for fun

While the stakes were high for Daniel Craig as James Bond in Casino Royale, MINTEL finds that as many as a third (35%) of British poker players are playing for the sheer fun of it, choosing not to put money on the game.

"For the industry, it is clearly not ideal that so many players do not play for real money. But it does highlight that people do still feel intimidated by the game and that potential gamers are reluctant to dive straight in without having a chance to figure out the basics first. But once they have got a grasp on the game, they are then more likely to put their money where their mouth is," explains Matt King.

Going Live

Despite the online revolution, playing in live games at home with friends (14%) remains just as popular as an online game (14%). In addition, a third (34%) of players say that live games in person are more exciting than playing online.

"It is interesting to see that live games are just as popular as online ones, considering that getting people round to play is more of an effort than just switching on the laptop. It would appear that the extra excitement and the social side of the game is still an important aspect for many players," comments Matt King.

The full implementation of the 2005 Gambling Act has presented the poker industry with several opportunities for continuing growth, such as permitting casinos and online gambling websites to advertise in the UK, and the provision for poker to be played in pubs.

* Played poker in the last twelve months

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