GAMBLING HARMS MAP

This map informs our public health approach to gambling harm reduction by summarizing the factors that contribute to gambling harm and the ways in which this harm is distributed throughout the population. Shifting to a systems approach that addresses the social and environmental determinants of gambling harm can transform gambling policy, prevention, and support service delivery, and may ultimately reduce the burden of gambling harm in our communities.

Ethnocultural Factors and Colonization

Factors that may increase risk of problematic gambling within ethnocultural communities include: challenges associated with acculturation; language barriers; cultural values, attitudes, and beliefs about gambling; and religious beliefs. In addition to these factors, trauma related to colonization is associated with gambling problems among Indigenous Peoples.

Stigmatization

Negative stereotypes of people who gamble or have gambling problems may include being impulsive, greedy, and antisocial. Some cultural messaging frames the avoidance of gambling harms as a personal responsibility, which may increase self-stigma and decrease help-seeking among gamblers, and may continue to contribute to societal stigma surrounding gambling.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mental health concerns and gambling harms tend to co-occur -- mental health concerns can be a risk factor for experiencing gambling harm, and gambling harm can lead to more or worse mental health concerns. Gambling harms also co-occur with some physical and intellectual health challenges such as brain injury, cognitive decline, and obesity.

Substance Misuse and Addictions

Problematic gambling behaviour often co-occurs with substance misuse and behavioural addictions. This may occur because of shared underlying issues or risk factors, such as anxiety and genetic risk factors, that make an individual more susceptible to both problematic gambling behaviour and substance misuse or addiction.

Crime and Deviance

Prison populations typically have high rates of problem gambling, which tend co-occur with mental health concerns, violence, and drug use. This may occur because gambling is related to a deviant lifestyles more generally, or because the consequences from problem gambling can lead people to commit crimes.

Changes in the Gambling Environment

Online and mobile gambling permits convenient and unsupervised play, which can allow gamblers to play while intoxicated and to play with credit. Features of video gaming and gambling are increasingly blurring, and research suggests that young people playing games with gambling themes (e.g.. lootboxes) may be at higher risk for experiencing gambling problems.

Socioeconomic Status

People with lower socioeconomic status spend proportionately more of their income on gambling than higher income earners and are more likely to live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which have a greater density of gambling activities. Lower educational attainment and performance also increase vulnerability to gambling harms.

Lifespan

Motivation and attitudes towards gambling, and risk factors for experiencing harms, differ across the lifespan. The blurring of gaming and gambling places young people at higher risk of experiencing gambling harms, particularly those who are motivated by risk-taking. Factors such as isolation, fixed-finances, and co-occurring health concerns place some older adults at higher risk of experiencing gambling harms.

GAMBLING RESEARCH EXCHANGE ONTARIO
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GAMBLING HARMS

MAP - PLANNING TOOL

Which factors can we address to reduce gambling harm?

What are steps we can take to address these factors?

Ethnocultural Factor and Colonization

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