



Reducing gambling harms in LGBTQ+ communities

Summary

While most people who gamble online do so within safe limits, a significant minority are at risk of developing gambling addictions. Understanding the potential risk factors associated with gambling, and how they can be used to enhance prevention and design interventions is crucial. As vulnerability to gambling-related harms is often driven by social exclusion and discrimination, research should focus on exploring risk factors, including minority sexual orientation and gender identity.

About gambling in LGBTQ+ communities

Previous evidence suggests that gay/lesbian and bisexual women report 'disordered gambling' scores 2.57 times higher than heterosexual women, and that gay and bisexual men are seven times more likely to experience the most severe forms of gambling harms than heterosexual men. Yet, despite these findings, research on the impact of gambling and gambling-related harms among LGBTQ+ communities remains limited, with no clear picture of the causes of these harms.

Given that LGBTQ+ people often report a high number of life stressors (i.e., stigma, discrimination, isolation, mental health issues), we sought to understand how gambling might offer relief from these pressures and potentially lead to escalating levels of harms.

About the research

To understand these pressures, we looked at the influencers on gambling and gambling-related harms within LGBTQ+ communities via an online survey and interviews. We explored the relationships between life stressors often experienced within LGBTQ+ communities and levels of gambling.

Fundamental to this work has been our engagement of LGBTQ+ people with lived experience of gambling harms.

If you're in the closet and you just want to escape from reality, it's a route to escape.

Research participant

As a community, we tend to be vulnerable to all sorts of addictions.

Research participant

If someone's been a victim of hate crime or something that could probably get them into the habit.

Research participant

Key facts

- Life stressors experienced by LGBTQ+ people (i.e. harassment, discrimination, isolation, victimisation, difficulties with gender expression) are linked with higher levels of problem gambling.
- Many LGBTQ+ people who gamble say they turned to gambling as a way to cope with the distress caused by certain life stressors.
- Problem gambling is statistically linked with increased levels of depression and reduced quality of life.

Our work with LGBTQ+ people who gamble told us that...

- Many have experienced losing control over their gambling and/or gambling-related harms at some point in their life.
- Many reported that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity could influence problematic gambling, particularly so online.
- Many reported not feeling safe or welcome in land-based gambling venues, with online gambling being viewed as more inclusive for them.
- Many engage in riskier forms of gambling such as matched betting, which exposes them to countless gambling promotions every day.
- Many felt that current gambling support services do not cater for the unique needs of LGBTQ+ people.

Policy

recommendations

The Government should:

- Require gambling operators to provide tailored training to staff to ensure they can support all marginalised groups wherever possible.

There needs to be trained support people who are from the LGBT community...they will know the things that might have driven us to turn to gambling.

Research participant

Gambling operators should:

- Offer tailored land-based and online support to people from marginalised groups experiencing gambling-related harms.
- Fund further research to investigate how life stressors experienced by marginalised groups can lead to problem gambling.
- Communicate more about the risks associated with gambling and how this can be influenced by one's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Ensure that safer gambling messaging is representative of – and targeted to – all groups, so that these messages feel relevant to LGBTQ+ people.

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