

Gambling harm from a public health perspective



**GAMBLING RESEARCH
EXCHANGE ONTARIO**
DRIVING KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION

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Gambling Research Exchange Ontario

Who are we?

- An independent knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) organization

Our vision

- Eliminate harm from gambling

Our mission

- To create, translate, and disseminate knowledge to support evidence-informed decisions about gambling, including its potential for harm

We translate the best evidence from around the world to inform leading-edge responsible gambling policies, standards, and practices

Gambling in the public health landscape

Is it on your radar?



So many opportunities

- Scratch tickets
 - Bingo
 - Lottery tickets
 - Raffle tickets
 - Skill-based games
 - Virtual reality
 - Sports betting
 - Fantasy sports
 - Dice games
 - Horse racing
 - Online casino games
 - Video game betting
 - Social casino games
 - Land-based casino games
 - Poker
 - Blackjack
 - Baccarat
 - Slot machines
 - Keno
- The list goes on....*

Initial project components

1. Scoping Review

- Social determinants
- Overlapping themes between gambling and other addictions

2. Literature Review

- Comorbid disorders
- Inequitable distribution of gambling harm

3. Environmental Scan

- Previous activity
- Current strategy
- Needs and knowledge gaps

What we found





Contributors to the distribution of gambling harm

Increased availability

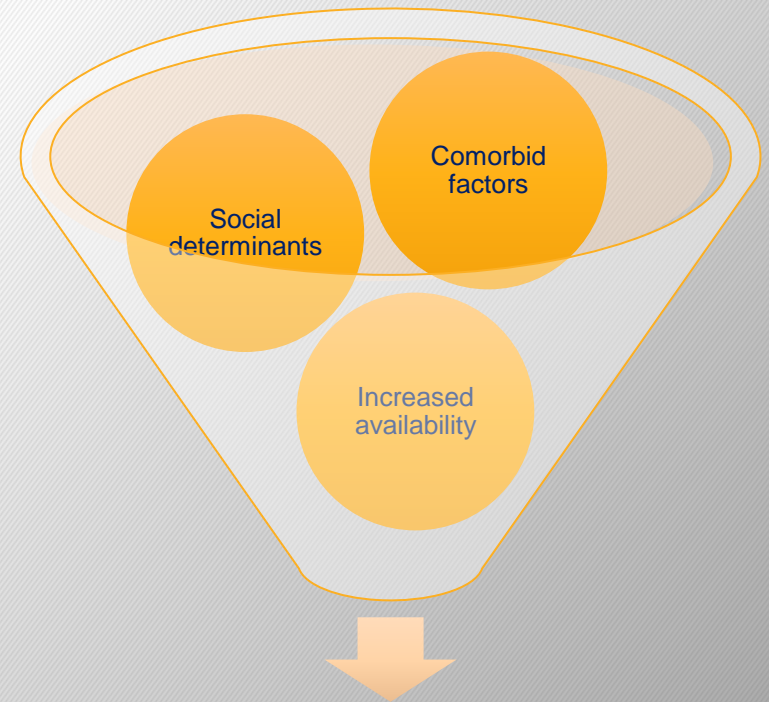
- Adolescents
- Neighbourhood access

Comorbid factors

- Major depression, antisocial personality disorder
- Cannabis, alcohol, tobacco dependence
- Obesity, physical activity, sedentary behaviour

Social determinants

- Socioeconomic status
- Education
- Ethnicity



Distribution of harm

Environmental scan

Our work:

- Review of past and current gambling-related work
- Key informant interviews
- Potential partnerships

People we spoke to

- Public Health Managers, Supervisors
- MOHLTC
- Public Health Nurses
- Public Health Physicians
- Local Epidemiologists
- Associate Medical Officers of Health
- Community Development Workers
- Health Promotion Specialists



Gambling on public health radar

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Gambling and Health

This Position Statement on the health impacts of gambling is issued in the context of gambling expansion in Ontario. Over the past two decades, gambling expansion has been identified as a significant public health issue in Canada and internationally due to its prevalence and associated health impacts.

Problem gambling is defined as gambling behaviour which includes continuous or loss of control over gambling; preoccupation with gambling and money with which to gamble; irrational thinking; and continuation of activity despite adverse consequences.¹ Toronto Public Health uses the term problem gambling to describe a continuum of gambling behaviour that creates negative consequences for the gambler, others in his or her social network, and the community.

- **Problem gambling is an issue of significant public health concern.** Researchers who define problem gambling as including both moderate risk and the most severe form of problem gambling estimate that the prevalence of problem gambling in Ontario is between 1.2% and 3.4%.^{2,3} Based on data collected through the 2007/08 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), the most severe form of problem gambling affects an estimated 11,000 people aged 18+ (0.2%) in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and 25,000 (0.3%) in Ontario. In addition, there are approximately 129,000 people aged 18+ (2.8%) in the GTA and 294,000 people aged 18+ (3.0%) in Ontario who are considered at-risk gamblers, based on their gambling behaviour and likelihood of experiencing adverse consequences from gambling.⁴
- **Problem gambling has adverse health impacts on individuals, families and communities.** Problem gambling is associated with a range of negative impacts on physical and mental health, including ill health, fatigue, co-related substance use and addiction, depression and suicide among others. These impacts occur alongside others such as alcohol-related traffic fatalities, financial difficulties, family breakdown, divorce and compromised child development that also affect the health and well-being of family, friends, colleagues and communities.^{5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21}
- **The impacts of problem gambling are not evenly distributed in the community.** Problem gambling affects some groups disproportionately, including males, youth, older adults, Aboriginal peoples, and individuals and families with low incomes, and therefore contributes to poverty and socioeconomic inequalities.^{5,8,16,22,23,24}
- **Increased availability and accessibility of gambling in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), including new casinos or slot machines, will likely result in an increase in the prevalence of problem gambling in Toronto.** Availability and accessibility of gambling opportunities has a strong association with problem gambling. Proximity to a gambling venue is a determinant of problem gambling.^{25,26}

social impacts of problem gambling. This is a result of low uptake of interventions, i.e. only a minority of problem gamblers (1-2% per year) seek or receive treatment, as well as a lack of evidence on how to effectively treat problem gambling.^{5,8,28,29,30}

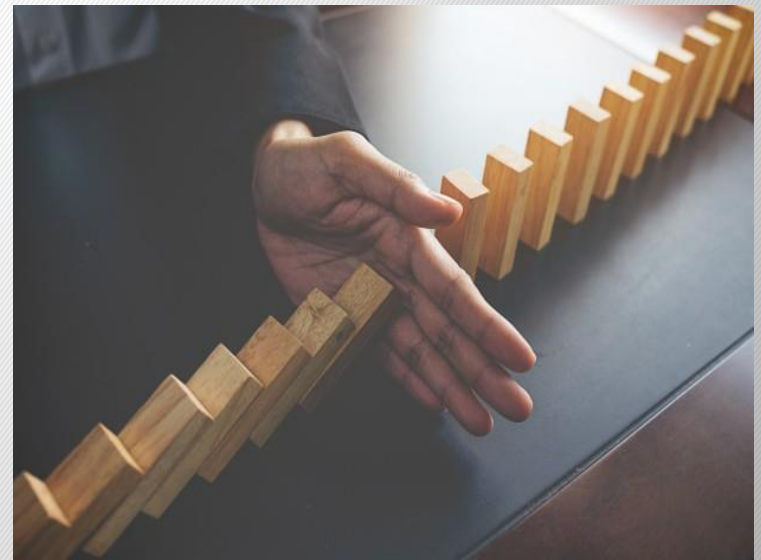
- **A broad range of strategies and policies that focus on prevention are needed to minimize the probability of problem gambling occurring and to reduce health impacts to problem gamblers and their families.** Given the current evidence base on treatment effectiveness and low uptake of treatment, simply treating problem gambling will not adequately address the issue of problem gambling. A public health approach calls for prevention, research and awareness interventions, which focus on preventing exposure to gambling in order to minimize the probability of problem gambling from occurring. In the context of gambling expansion, a comprehensive program of harm mitigation measures should be put in place to minimize the risks associated with problem gambling.^{4,7}
- **Any decision on whether to expand gambling access in Toronto must adequately weigh the potential negative health impacts.**

Ontario's health units and gambling:

- Health Impact Assessments
- Position Statements
- Work with community organizations

Challenges to implementing gambling harm strategy

- Lack of community data
- Burden of disease
 - Budgetary constraints
- Lack of knowledge of best practices
- High-profile community priorities
 - Opioid crisis
 - Cannabis legalization



What would a public health approach look like?



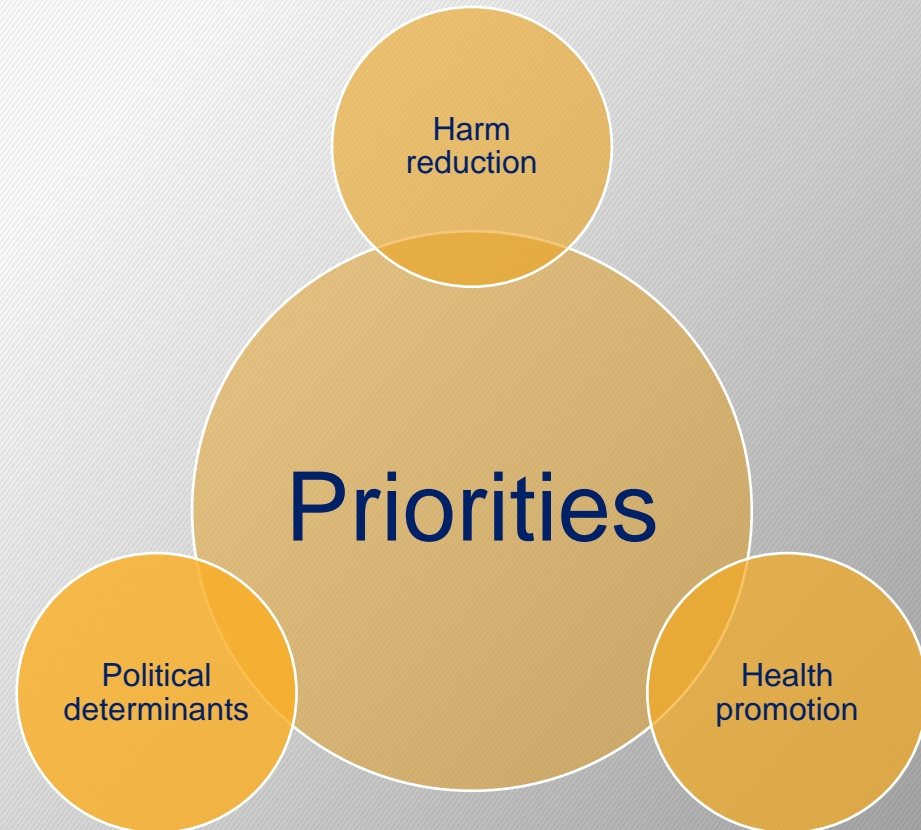
Public health framework

Mitigate inequitable distribution of harms:

- At the individual and community level
- For people from low-SES backgrounds
- In the physical environment
- In youth
- In those struggling with mental health issues and substance use and addictions

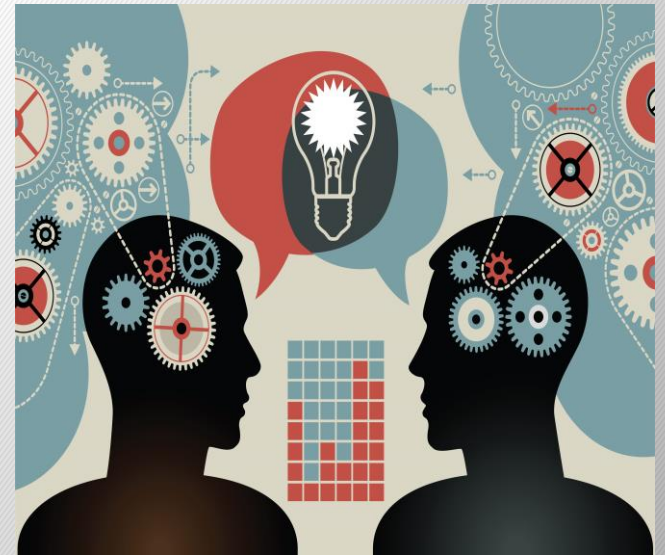
Some examples:

- Price & taxation
- Daily loss maximum
- Eliminate casino royalty programs
- Prohibit ATMs on casino floors
- Inform legislation around youth exposure (video games, social casino games)



Join the conversation

- Rethink gambling harm
- Sharing knowledge, best practices, capacity
- Advocate healthy lifestyle
- Reduce harms from gambling
- Reduce comorbid harms
- Improve health equity
- Join our Working Group



BET Funding

Who's it for?

- Not-for-profit community organizations
- Academic organizations in partnership with community organizations
- Local or provincial health agencies and community health service providers

What we can help you with:

- Conducting situational assessments
- Designing interventions to reduce gambling harm and promote healthy living
- Policy development
- Creating educational tools
- Mobilizing a strategy
- Developing partnerships

What can GREO do for you?

- Translate and disseminate evidence-based research
- Knowledge of best practices
- Extensive multidisciplinary stakeholder network
- Capacity to fund community-based intervention and needs assessment
- Consulting services in Knowledge Mobilization (KMb) and evaluation training



For more information

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