

A scan of gambling treatment services across provinces in Canada

What this research is about

Gambling disorder is linked to many financial, social, and health-related harms. However, gambling often receives less attention than substance use disorders when it comes to public health planning. Support services for people who experience harms from gambling can vary greatly by jurisdiction. A lack of access may partly explain why few people seek help.

In Canada, each province provides its own mental health and addiction services. This leads to differences in services across provinces. Few studies have mapped gambling treatment services in Canada. The current study looks at the types of gambling treatment services that are offered across Canada and the challenges that they face.

What the researchers did

The researchers conducted an environmental scan of gambling support services in each Canadian province. They searched for publicly available information using Google, public health websites, and directories of addiction services. They also contacted gambling helplines to request lists of organizations that they refer people to. The researchers focused on programs with more than one clinician offering gambling treatment services. They did not include individual practitioners or general mental health and addiction programs.

The researchers then invited program managers to complete a brief survey. The survey addressed the following topics:

- Types of services offered and addictive behaviours treated.

What you need to know

In Canada, each province manages its own mental health and addiction services. Support services for people experiencing harms from gambling vary across provinces. In this study, the researchers conducted an environmental scan of gambling-specific support programs in Canada. The researchers also surveyed eight program managers to learn more about their programs and the challenges they face. There are significant differences in specialized support for gambling across provinces. While some provinces have high levels of support, others offer general addiction services with limited gambling-specific support.

- Funding received (publicly funded or funded by other sources).
- How the program is managed (independently or managed by a government agency).
- Any comments about supporting people experiencing harms from gambling in psychosocial programs.

What the researchers found

Environmental scan

Access to gambling-specific treatment services varies across provinces. Some provinces offer programs that specialize in treating people who experience harms from gambling. Others offer general addiction services with limited gambling-specific support. People in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta have access to various gambling-specific treatment services. While

Manitoba offers mental health and addiction services, their websites provide no information on gambling-specific services. In Saskatchewan, people may contact the Problem Gambling Helpline and be referred to outpatient programs in Saskatoon and Regina, the two largest cities in the province.

Prince Edward Island is the only Atlantic province to have a gambling support unit within its government. No centralized access point for gambling treatment services was found for Nova Scotia. In New Brunswick, gambling support services are supposed to be available in each health zone. In Newfoundland and Labrador, gambling support is offered by family physicians or regional health authorities within inpatient programs that combine gambling and other addictive behaviours.

Overall, 7 provinces offer counselling, 5 provinces offer inpatient treatment, 5 provinces have a gambling helpline. The peer-led support group Gamblers Anonymous is available in all provinces.

Survey with program managers

In total, 8 program managers completed the survey: 3 were from Ontario, 3 from Quebec, 1 from Prince Edward Island, and 1 from British Columbia.

Besides gambling, the 8 programs offered support for other addictive behaviours. All 8 programs provided help with alcohol use, 7 offered help with substance use, and 4 offered support for video gaming addiction. Two programs each provided support for sexual, shopping, and work addictions. All 8 programs offered group counselling, and 7 offered individual counselling. Most programs also offered other types of support, such as family counselling and tailored support for specific groups.

Four program managers touched on several challenges in relation to supporting people who experience gambling harms. These included addressing stigma, affordability and accessibility of programs, treating underlying issues, and the risk of overspecializing treatment services that may overlook other co-occurring health issues.

How you can use this research

The findings indicate unequal services across Canadian provinces for people who seek support for

gambling harms. Policy makers and health authorities can use the findings to improve gambling support across Canada.

About the researchers

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About Greo Evidence Insights

Greo Evidence Insights is an independent, non-profit organization specializing in research, knowledge mobilization, and evaluation in the health and well-being sectors. Greo transforms research and insights into actionable strategies to prevent and reduce harm related to gambling, gaming, technology use, and substance use. To learn more about funding for Research Snapshots visit [our website](#).

