

Gambling Exposure

WHAT IS THIS FACTOR ABOUT?

Gambling exposure describes the extent to which a person or population encounters gambling activities. There are many features of gambling that affect exposure; examples of these features include the type of gambling activity, location, and number of venues.

WHY IS THIS FACTOR IMPORTANT?

Gambling exposure is closely linked to gambling participation since without opportunities to gamble, people are unable to take part. Participation can lead to gambling problems if harm results (e.g. financial or personal distress), and some types of gambling have higher risk levels than others. A better understanding of the exposure factor can provide insight into what influences people to gamble.

WHAT TOPICS ARE INCLUDED IN THIS FACTOR?

Gambling Setting

Gambling takes place in different settings, which can vary depending on the location and type of venue. People often feel safe and comfortable in land-based venues like casinos and hotels, which may lead people to spend more time gambling than they may have planned. These venues can also influence a person's exposure to gambling in many ways. For instance, exposure can be limited by age restrictions, but it is enhanced by having easy access to money through ATMs, an attractive layout, and food and alcohol being readily available. These factors may encourage people to continue gambling. Land-based venues do, however, try to promote responsible gambling by using practices such as self-exclusion programs, behaviour tracking, policies against cash or credit advances, instituting time limits, and making clocks available so people know how much time they are spending at the venue. The extent to which these practices are applied, however, varies by jurisdiction.

Another setting that has grown rapidly in recent years is Internet gambling. This type of gambling is easy to access 24 hours a day from any location and allows the player to pay with credit. There is no clear evidence at present to determine if Internet gambling places people at greater risk of exposure to harm than land-based gambling.

Accessibility

Without access to gambling, one cannot be exposed to, or participate in, gambling activities. There has been an increase in access to gambling, particularly Internet gambling, over the past few decades. Greater availability of gambling and changes in attitudes toward gambling are believed to be related to an increase in participation, expenditures, and gambling related harms. Research suggests that policy and other factors such as economics, cultural practices, location, visibility of venues, and hours of operation, influence access to gambling.

Adaptation

There is a general lack of research regarding a person's or population's adaptation to gambling. The existing evidence suggests that when gambling becomes more widely available, there is an increase in gambling earlier on, but that this levels off over time. Some researchers believe that this is, in part, due to gambling becoming normalized; and also due to government policies and prevention efforts. It may be that greater awareness of risk and harm linked to continuous forms of gambling (where the delay between bets is very short), like slot machines and video lottery terminals, leads to changes in attitudes and less frequent participation.

Marketing and Messaging

Gambling is commonly featured in movies, television shows, and news outlets. These forms of media often present gambling in a positive way, which can influence audiences' attitudes toward gambling participation. The ads try to make gambling appear

fun and inviting. For example, ads for sports betting often link betting with male bonding and the love of sports. New sponsorships and social media marketing campaigns are replacing traditional ads and may be able to reach a wider audience.

Advertising is very important to gambling companies in a competitive marketplace. It helps them to attract new customers and to encourage existing customers to gamble more. The effectiveness of ads is often measured by the profits of gambling venues, although there is debate over the impact marketing has on gambling behaviour. Some research suggests that at the individual level marketing does influence how people feel about gambling. For example, there are places in Sweden where, despite an increase in gambling ads, gambling participation still decreases. This concept is referred to as “advertising fatigue”.

Other studies have found that ethnicity and the severity of gambling problems can have an impact on a person’s attitude towards gambling. People who have gambling problems often report that gambling ads influence their opinions. There is currently no research that examines the impact that gambling ads have at the population level.

Convergence of Gaming and Gambling

Gaming and gambling are very similar activities; the gambling industry even uses these terms interchangeably. The main difference between the terms is that for gaming the outcome is achieved by skill, not chance, whereas for gambling, the opposite is true.

Many gaming activities now include gambling features and vice versa. These activities are referred to as gambling-like gaming and gaming-like gambling. Due to the overlap in these activities, and the rapid growth of these activities in recent years, researchers have created a framework to help differentiate between them.

An example of gambling-like gaming is a video game that features mini-games you can bet on in a simulated casino. There are also many opportunities to participate in social casino games through social media. Another example is a video game that features loot boxes, where players can spend money for access to unknown game features. Some regions, however, have banned loot boxes because they are so similar to

gambling. Free gambling-like games are now more commonly played when compared to online gambling for money. Studies show that young adults and adults who are exposed to these types of games may be more likely to develop gambling problems. There is no evidence to support why this may be the case, although it may be due, in part, to how similar games have become to gambling. In recent years, there has also been an increase in the number of people who bet on different outcomes of video games.

An example of gaming-like gambling is an electronic gaming machine (EGM) that has the same theme as a popular television game show. Another example using EGMs is that they now have an element of skill, or a feature that makes it seem like skill is needed. Researchers believe that features such as these help to attract young participants and keep them gambling.

The convergence of these two activities may make gaming and gambling more exciting for players and lead to higher levels of participation. However, more research is needed to understand the true impact of the convergence of gambling and gaming.

This is a summary of the gambling exposure factor, one of eight interrelated factors that comprise the Conceptual Framework of Harmful Gambling. To learn more about this factor, please refer to the [full report](#) or visit the [gambling exposure factor webpage](#) on the GREO website.

