



EVIDENCE BRIEF

Gambling Prevalence and Problem Gambling in LGBTQ2+ Communities

OVERVIEW

- The LGBTQ2+ community is a diverse group of people and includes individuals who fall into many different sexual and gender minority groups.
 - Sexual minorities include homosexual, bisexual, queer, pansexual, asexual, and two-spirit individuals, among others.
 - Gender minorities include transgender, non-binary, and gender diverse individuals, among others.
- LGBTQ2+ communities are at a greater risk of poor health outcomes because of the stigma, discrimination, and prejudice often experienced.^{1,2}
- These poorer health outcomes could also put them at greater risk of experiencing problem gambling and gambling-related harms.
- However, few studies have focused on the risks of problem gambling and gambling-related harms in LGBTQ2+ communities, with those that do exist mainly focusing on sexual minority men.
- LGBTQ2+ individuals who do experience problem gambling may face additional barriers in seeking help due to the compounding stigma around problem gambling and their sexual and/or gender identity.³

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON LGBTQ2+ COMMUNITIES FOR GAMBLING?

- Minority stress theory suggests that sexual and gender minorities are at greater risk of poor health outcomes because of the social stress experienced from living in an environment that includes stigma, discrimination, and prejudice due to their sexual² and/or gender identity.¹

- This can explain why sexual⁴ and gender^{5,6} minority individuals often experience poorer mental health than heterosexual and cisgender individuals.
- Within LGBTQ2+ communities, poorer mental health caused by minority stress may contribute to the increased rates of substance use^{7,8} as well as the heavier alcohol use⁹ that many sexual minority adults experience.
- Increased rates of mental health and substance use problems within LGBTQ2+ communities may make them more vulnerable to experiencing gambling problems, as these problems often co-occur.¹⁰⁻¹⁴

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT GAMBLING AMONG LGBTQ2+ COMMUNITIES

GAMBLING PARTICIPATION

- Few studies have compared gambling participation across groups within the LGBTQ2+ community, but one study has found that sexual minority men tend to gamble more frequently than sexual minority women.¹⁵
- Few studies have compared gambling participation between cisgender, heterosexual populations and LGBTQ2+ populations. The studies that have compared have found:
 - Gender minority youth show similar gambling participation levels to cisgender youth;¹⁶ and
 - Sexual minority men gamble less often and spent less money in each gambling session than heterosexual men.¹⁷
- Therefore, gambling participation does not appear to be higher in LGBTQ2+ communities, however more data are needed to verify this.
- One Australian study found that heteronormative themes and images in gambling advertisements and in gambling spaces have caused some people within the LGBTQ2+ community to deliberately avoid or at least not seek out gambling.³

PROBLEM GAMBLING AND GAMBLING-RELATED HARMS

As with gambling prevalence, very few studies have examined problem gambling and gambling-related harms in LGBTQ2+ communities. Many of the studies that do exist focus on problem gambling in sexual minority men, with little research focusing on gambling-related harms or focusing on other sexual and gender minorities.

Sexual minority men

- Studies comparing the risk of problem gambling in sexual minority and heterosexual men find mixed results, with some suggesting sexual minority men may be at higher risk,^{15,18,19} lower risk,¹⁷ or no difference in risk.^{20,21}
- One study found sexual minority men and heterosexual men experienced similar levels of gambling-related harms (e.g., financial or emotional harm).¹⁷
- Some risk factors, such as impulsivity and mistaken beliefs about gambling, were linked to problem gambling in both heterosexual and sexual minority men.¹⁷ However, perceived stigma due to sexual and gender identity also increased the risk for problem gambling and gambling-related harms in sexual minority men.¹⁷
- Within sexual minority men, there can be nuanced effects of sexual orientation on risks of problem gambling.
 - One study found that men who identified as mostly-heterosexual, bisexual, or mostly-homosexual were at higher risk of problem gambling than those who identified as homosexual.¹⁹

Sexual minority women

- Sexual minority women were more likely to experience problem gambling than heterosexual women.^{15,21}
- Sexual minority women were more likely to experience social isolation and psychological distress, which may in turn increase risks of problem gambling.²¹

Gender minority individuals

- One study found gender minority youth had higher rates of problem gambling than cisgender youth, despite having similar levels of gambling involvement.¹⁶
 - Gender minority youth who were assigned male at birth were at particularly high risk of experiencing problem gambling.¹⁶

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN TERMS OF REDUCING STIGMA AND STRENGTHENING TREATMENT APPROACHES?

- Reducing societal stigma around problem gambling and sexual and gender identity could help reduce the risks of gambling-related harms for people in LGBTQ2+ communities.
 - Experiencing stigma is associated with problem gambling and gambling-related harms among LGBTQ2+ individuals.¹⁷

- Some people gamble to escape stress related to their sexual and/or gender identity, or to avoid the stress of coming out.³
 - Gambling stigma can be compounded with the stigma and marginalization LGBTQ2+ communities already face, making it especially difficult for sexual and gender minorities to acknowledge their gambling problems or seek support.³
- In addition to societal stigma, LGBTQ2+ individuals experience many barriers to accessing health services.^{22,23}
- When mental health professionals have a poor understanding of sexual and gender identities it creates additional barriers for LGBTQ2+ individuals seeking help for various issues, including gambling problems.³
- To improve access to gambling harms services, service providers can:
- Provide services tailored to LGBTQ2+ communities;³ and/or
 - Better educate general service providers on LGBTQ2+ issues.³

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