

# research snapshot

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## Women's experiences of gambling-related harm as an affected other

### What this research is about

Gambling can cause financial, psychological, and social harm to people who gamble, their families, and their communities. Researchers have tended to focus on the harm that gambling does to the person who gambles. To better understand the extent of gambling-related harm, it has been argued that research should look at “affected others”: people who are harmed by another person’s gambling in some way. For example, they can be affected financially or through relationship difficulties with the person who gambles. In the context of affected others, women are also at increased risk of partner and family violence. However, little is known about women’s experiences as affected others who: 1) are friends or colleagues, rather than partners, and 2) also gamble themselves.

The purpose of this study was to better understand the gambling-related concerns that women who gamble have about someone in their social network. The researchers also wanted to know what negative consequences these women think are associated with gambling, as well as the effects of other people’s gambling have on their lives.

### What the researchers did

This study was part of a larger online survey study with 1,040 women who were over the age of 18 and had gambled in the past 12 months. All the women were living in the states of Victoria and New South Wales, Australia. For this study, the researchers focused on the open-text responses of 136 women who identified as someone who had been negatively impacted by another person’s gambling.

The researchers focused on data collected in four sections of the survey. Demographic information

### What you need to know

When someone’s gambling is problematic, it can harm people in their social network. These people are known as affected others. The authors of this study wanted to better understand the experiences of women as affected others. They analysed the open-text responses from 136 women who gambled and identified as an affected other from an online survey. The women had concerns about the gambling behaviour of a broad range of people in their social network, including partner, family, friends, and others. They described how they had been negatively affected by someone else’s gambling. The responses were categorised into four themes: financial harms, social harms, psychological harms, and harms experienced as a child of someone who gambled.

included age, education level, employment status, and income. Participants were asked about what types of gambling they had engaged in during the past 12 months (e.g., sports betting, casino gambling). Participants were asked to identify whose gambling they had been concerned about from the options of family member, partner, friend, child, or other. They were then asked to describe those concerns. Participants were also asked to describe how they had been negatively impacted by someone else’s gambling.

The researchers coded and identified themes from the responses. Three categories were created to help analyse the data: 1) who participants had concerns about, 2) the content of the concerns (what), and 3) how participants were negatively affected.

## What the researchers found

The people that participants were concerned about included partners (~29%), family members (~28%), friends (~20%), children (~5%), and others (work colleagues, ex-partner, relative of partner, ~9%). The content of concerns fell within four areas: financial, social, psychological/emotional, and having been a child of someone whose gambling affected them.

Financial concerns were the most commonly described area of impact by participants. The person who gambled was often described as careless and irresponsible with their gambling by gambling too often or by betting too much money. If partner was the person in question, it often negatively impacted the participant's finances. Some participants were in debt or in a difficult housing situation. Other participants were stressed about being asked to lend money or have their money stolen.

There were many social harms described by participants. Participants experienced tension and loss of trust in the person whose gambling negatively affected them. Lying, secrecy, and stealing often resulted from gambling, which harmed the relationship. Some participants described the other person's gambling made them feel like they were not a priority, and thus they felt excluded or neglected.

The psychological harms described were mostly related to the person who gambled, not the participants. Depression, suicide, irritability, and anger were brought up as negative effects of gambling on the person who gambled. A few participants also described emotional harms that they experienced from the other person's gambling.

Additionally, some participants were negatively affected as a child by a parent who gambled. Participants described having a bad childhood, being impoverished, experiencing an unstable home environment, witnessing fighting, and feeling neglected due to their parent's gambling.

## How you can use this research

This study expanded our understanding of women's experiences as affected others. The researchers

identified four areas of harms (financial, social, psychological, childhood). These harms were often interconnected. This study could be useful to public health approaches that consider and respond to the unique experiences and perspectives of women.

## About the researchers

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