

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

In 2015, City Council requested further work to identify the potential social impact to individuals and families due to gaming-related addictive behaviour and crime. City staff previously outlined the social and health considerations of expanded gaming at Woodbine in Appendix G of the City Manager's 2015 report to City Council. <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2015/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-81790.pdf>

A recent review of the research by City staff confirmed that key considerations highlighted in 2015 continue to reflect the state of evidence related to the social and health considerations of gambling. Key considerations in 2015 with updated evidence are provided below.

Evidence Review

Key social and health considerations in 2015 drew heavily on the 2012 review, *The Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling: Final Report*, by Canadian researchers and, *The Health Impacts of Gambling Expansion in Toronto*, a 2012 report by Toronto Public Health and the Problem Gambling Institute of Ontario (PGIO) at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH).

Problem Gambling: Problem gambling is a continuum of gambling behaviour that creates negative consequences for the gambler, others in their social network or for the community. The associated health impacts include, lower self-reported general health and wellbeing; mental health issues including stress and depression; co-addiction with alcohol, tobacco and drug use; suicide ideation and suicide; and family and community impacts such as financial problems, family breakdown and violence. An increase in the availability of gambling is associated with increases in problem gambling rates. However, it is not possible to determine the strength of this relationship or how this relationship changes over time. It is also difficult to assess the impact of problem gambling at a community level. According to the 2015 CAMH Monitor Survey¹, the prevalence of problem gambling among Ontario adults was 1.7% (self-reported, in 2014-2015). This is not a significant difference from 1.9% in 2005 and there were no significant differences by sex or age.

Recent research has informed a new proposed definition of gambling related harms: "Any initial or exacerbated adverse consequence due to an engagement with gambling that leads to a decrement to the health or well-being of an individual, family unit, community or population." A taxonomy of gambling related harms has been proposed and is conceptualized across seven domains: financial harms; relationship disruption, conflict or breakdown; emotional or psychological distress; decrements to health; cultural harm; reduced performance at work or study; and criminal activity.

¹ Ialomiteanu AR, Hamilton HA, Adlaf EM, Mann RE. (2016). CAMH Monitor e-Report: Substance Use, Mental Health and Well-Being Among Ontario Adults, 1977–2015 (CAMH Research Document Series No. 45). Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. Available at: www.camh.ca/en/research/news_and_publications/Pages/camh_monitor.aspx

The harms of gambling have a legacy beyond the gambling behaviour and can extend through the life course and even be intergenerational.² It is estimated that, on average, a problem gambler affects six other people.³ Moreover, the harms experienced by affected others are similar to those of the problem gambler.⁴

Crime: There is limited evidence on the relationship between increased access to gambling and changes in crime rates. However, researchers have identified potential mitigating factors including the availability of programs to prevent problem gambling, limiting access to low-cost alcohol at gambling venues, and enhancing security and policing in casinos.

Employment: A majority of studies show an increase in community employment resulting from the introduction of casinos, in particular, in impoverished areas and if patrons stay overnight in hotels.

Socio-Economic Inequality: Middle and high-income households contribute to the majority of gambling revenue. However, lower income households who participate in gambling spend a higher proportion of their income on gambling.

Quality of Life: Due to difficulties in defining and assessing quality of life indicators at the community level, most studies in this area focus on individuals (and their families) who are engaged in problem gambling behaviour. Recent systematic reviews reaffirm the impact of problem gambling on families including spousal impacts such as high levels of distress, parenting problems, physical health problems, isolation, and financial loss and devastation. Young children often experience loss of connection to the gambling parent due to physical or emotional unavailability; loss of safety, stability and trust; depression symptoms and conduct problems; and material deprivation, including not having enough food and loss of home.⁵ There is also an association between problem gambling and perpetration of intimate partner violence^{4, 6} and child physical abuse, neglect and maltreatment.^{4, 7}

Preventing Gambling-Related Harms: Overall, recent evidence (since 2015) reaffirms the measures to prevent gambling-related harm outlined in TPH's 2012 report, *The Health Impacts of Gambling Expansion in Toronto*. This report called for comprehensive strategies and policies to prevent or mitigate gambling-related harm, promote healthy choices, and protect vulnerable or high-risk populations.

² Langham et al. 2017. Understanding gambling related harm: a proposed definition, conceptual framework, and taxonomy of harms. *BMC Public Health*. 16:80.

³ Goodwin et al. 2017. A typical problem gambler affects six others. *International Gambling Studies*. 17(2):276-289.

⁴ Li, En et al. 2017. Breaking Bad: Comparing Gambling Harms among Gamblers and Affected Others. *J. Gambler Stud.* 33:223-248.

⁵ Kourgiantakis, Toulou, Marie-Christine Saint-Jacques and Joel Trembray. 2013. Problem Gambling and Families: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*. 13:353-372.

⁶ Dowling, N et al. 2016. Problem Gambling and Intimate Partner Violence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*. 17(1): 43-61.

⁷ Lane, W. et al. 2016. Child maltreatment and problem gambling: A systematic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*. 58:24-38.