Gambling as a public health issue in Wales

Gambling is increasingly recognised as a public health problem. While only a minority of gamblers develop gambling problems, the financial, health and social harms associated with gambling can extend beyond the gambler to impact families, communities and wider society. Understanding the nature of gambling harms, the populations at risk and impacts of policy options can support effective practice to prevent gambling harms in Wales.

£14.4 billion was lost[a] by people gambling in 2017/18 in Great Britain

The estimated cost[b] to Welsh public services from problem gamblers in 2015/16 was **£40-£70 million**

More than half of adults in Wales participate in gambling

Of Welsh residents aged 16+ years[c]:

55% **spent money on gambling** in the last year (40% excluding those only playing the National Lottery)

3% were identified as 'at-risk' gamblers

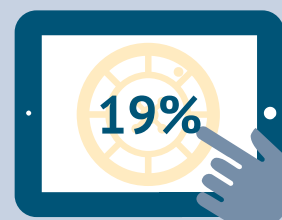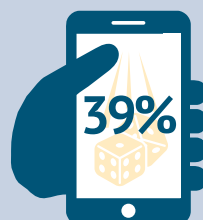**1%** were identified as **problem gamblers**

14% of 11-16 year olds
in Great Britain have gambled in the past week[d]

This is approximately **450,000 children**

Almost 1 in 5 adults in Great Britain gamble online[e]

Laptops are the most commonly used devices for online gambling but use of mobile phones and tablets is increasing

used by **50%** of online gamblers

39%

19%

The number of gambling adverts aired on TV in the UK has risen dramatically[f]

2006	2012
152,000	1,390,000

Exposure to gambling advertisements

Adults	Children
2 per day	4 per week

Gambling harms are the adverse impacts from gambling upon the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities and society

Examples of gambling harms include...

Resources
• Debt
• Crime
• Job loss
• School drop out
• Financial insecurity
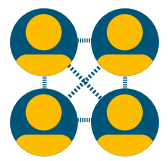• Lost work productivity
• Increased benefit claims

Health
• Stress
• Anxiety
• Suicide
• Depression
• Physical inactivity
• Alcohol misuse
• Substance abuse

Relationships
• Neglect
• Loss of trust
• Inequalities
• Domestic abuse
• Social isolation
• Separation and divorce
• Loss of parental support

Which groups can be more vulnerable to gambling harms[g]

Low income households	Unemployed people	Immigrants	Problem gamblers	Young people
People who have suffered ACEs[h]	Deprived communities	People in debt		Minority ethnic groups
People who are homeless	Smokers & alcohol drinkers	People with poor mental health	Students	Military veterans

What could Wales do to prevent gambling harms?

Increase **public awareness of gambling harms,** among young people and parents

Integrate gambling harms as an outcome and factor in other **public health policies**

Invest in **professional training** across multiple agencies e.g. healthcare, education

Advocate for policy change at UK-level **restricting advertising and marketing**

Improve services for those affected by gambling harms, including support for families

Develop the **evidence base** of what works to reduce gambling harms in different settings

Other **evidence-based interventions** which may be useful:

Restrict access to funds while gambling

Set limits on the time and money spent on gambling

Assist at-risk gamblers to **self-exclude** from gambling venues and services.

Action should be both **universal** and **targeted**, offering greatest support to those most in need

Consensus needs to be found among policy makers and the public on the **appropriate level of restrictions on gambling**

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