



# IMPACTS OF PROBLEM GAMBLING ON PUBLIC HEALTH

June 2021

AN INFORMATION BOOKLET ON  
HOW PROBLEM GAMBLING IMPACTS THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

DEVELOPED FOR OREGON  
HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS,  
PROGRAM SPECIALISTS, AND POLICY MAKERS



## PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

The purpose of this information booklet is to provide user-friendly information to help members of the public and professional communities understand important points about the relationship between problem gambling and other public health concerns. For ease of use, the booklet is organized to provide an overview of how and why problem gambling is considered a serious public health issue followed by stand-alone one to two-page information sheets on important relationships between problem gambling and selected other public health concerns. Each information sheet summarizes the literature on the topic, calls out important points, provides calls for action, and links users to relevant resources.

The topics commonly associated with problem gambling that are emphasized in this information booklet include problem gambling and: mental health, substance use, criminality, physical health, the economy, relationships, and identified groups.

## WELCOME

Oregon Problem Gambling Services is pleased to provide this information booklet on impacts of problem gambling on public health including resources for those who want more in-depth information about preventing and treating gambling problems.

The Oregon Health Authority's Problem Gambling Services envisions a healthy Oregon where problem gambling is prevented through a comprehensive system of programs and services. Oregon Problem Gambling Services works collaboratively with individuals and their families, counties, other state agencies, providers, advocates, and communities to support better health, better care, and a healthier economy by promoting a public health approach to gambling related harms.

With the help of Problem Gambling Solutions, Inc., we created this booklet to advance the dialogue with each other to reduce harm to individuals, families, and our communities from problem gambling.



This booklet describes several areas of gambling impacts at the personal, interpersonal, and society levels. The categorizations of impacts are not limited to those presented within this booklet and were chosen due to a wealth of evidence highlighting the interconnectedness of problem gambling to each category and associated impact. Further, we added extra attention to describing the impact of problem gambling on specific groups within our community. These “identified groups” were chosen due to their relevance to initiatives driven by community partners and collaborators with an interest in better understanding and addressing problem gambling within a specific group or population. We hope this booklet will stimulate more interest, new collaborations, and a growing list of “identified groups”.

Please reach out to us, we look forward to collaborating with you!

*Greta Coe, Problem Gambling Services Manager*

*Roxann Jones, Problem Gambling Prevention & Outreach Specialist*

*David Corse, Problem Gambling Treatment & Recovery Specialist*

**Explore our other resources at Oregon Problem Gambling Services:**

[www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/)

## PROBLEM GAMBLING AS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

What does it mean to look at problem gambling as a public health issue? To understand this, we need to look back at how public perception of problem gambling has evolved. This journey takes us back to the 18th and 19th century where gambling problems were viewed as evidence of a weak will or a moral failing. Not until 1957, with the foundation of Gamblers Anonymous, was “gambling addiction” considered a “disease” among recovery communities. The medical community did not recognize gambling disorders until “Pathological Gambling” was recognized in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-III). Under the DSM III, Pathological Gambling was viewed narrowly as a clinical condition with an emphasis on the individual. This conceptualization of problem gambling dominated our thinking until 1999 when Korn and Shaffer argued for a public health approach to gambling.<sup>1</sup>

Today, gambling impacts are recognized at the personal, interpersonal, and society levels. Personal level refers to the individual experiencing gambling problems themselves and interpersonal level to people close to the individual with a gambling problem: friends, family, and work colleagues. Impacts are now viewed beyond individuals to costs to society. For example, gambling problems drive up health care costs and contribute to societal problems such as homelessness, bankruptcy, and crime.

Within a public health approach, wellness is promoted across the system of care. Promoting wellness empowers individuals, families, peers and communities to not only increase control over, but to improve their health. Ensuring that prevention efforts are focused on impacting risk and protective factors that can influence wellness including problem gambling behaviors. Interventions are extended beyond the individual and examine external influences that contribute to the development of gambling problems or the exacerbation of gambling related harm. This includes understanding the various impacts of problem gambling on other public health concerns and applying strategies and practices that have proven useful in other areas of public health toward the issue of problem gambling.

By including problem gambling into the discussion of various public health issues, we will be more effective in addressing those issues, whether they are focused issues such as suicide prevention or broader issues such as building stronger and more equitable communities.

### Korn and Shaffer's Argument for a Public Health Approach to Gambling <sup>1</sup>

“Unlike narrower clinical models of gambling, a public health perspective addresses all levels of prevention as well as treatment and rehabilitation issues. It promotes the welfare of individuals by fostering healthy, strong, and safe families, communities, and workplaces. It views the individual within a social milieu and explores the influence of cultural, family, and community values on behavior. It looks not only at the behavior of individuals but at organizational and political behavior. It examines public policy (e.g., income, education, health care, and employment) and asks whether the policy fosters or discourages health.” (p.306).

### RECOMMENDED READING

<sup>1</sup> Korn DA, Shaffer HJ. (1999). *Gambling and the health of the public: Adopting a public health perspective.* *J Gambli Stud.*, 15(4):289-365.

Latvala, T., Lintonen, T., & Konu, A. (2019). *Public health effects of gambling—debate on a conceptual model.* *BMC public health*, 19(1), 1077.

## IMPACT OF PROBLEM GAMBLING ON PERSONAL, INTERPERSONAL, AND SOCIETY LEVELS

The figure below represents several areas of gambling impacts at the personal, interpersonal, and society levels. The categorizations of impacts are not limited to those presented and were chosen due to a wealth of evidence highlighting the interconnectedness of problem gambling to each category and associated impact.



# INFORMATION SHEETS ON PROBLEM GAMBLING AND:

- MENTAL HEALTH
- SUBSTANCE USE
- CRIMINALITY
- PHYSICAL HEALTH
- ECONOMY
- RELATIONSHIPS
- IDENTIFIED GROUPS

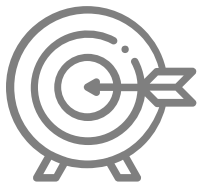
## MENTAL HEALTH & PROBLEM GAMBLING



Systematic reviews of epidemiological research have consistently revealed high rates of comorbidity between gambling and mental health disorders, as exemplified by one finding that 57% of individuals with a gambling disorder had a comorbid mood or anxiety disorder.<sup>1</sup> Among the more troubling association found is that people with a gambling problem are 15 times more likely to take their own life, according to the largest study of its kind.<sup>2</sup>

### If you are a mental health provider, how likely are you to see people with a gambling problem?

In a study designed to answer this question, 837 adult patients attending a broad range of community-based mental health services were surveyed about their gambling. The prevalence of problem gambling was 6.3% and moderate-risk gambling was 8.3%, which is around eight and three times greater than in the general population, respectively.<sup>3</sup>



### WHY THIS MATTERS

Co-morbid mental health disorders and problem gambling have an additive and reciprocal relationship. Each influence intensifies the other's harms to the individual with a gambling problem, to their family and close friends, and to the community. If you are not asking about gambling, you may be missing a critical clinical issue that needs attention.



### ACTION STEPS

1. Educate the persons you serve about risks related to gambling. Free educational resources and brochures about problem gambling are available at <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/Pages/Resources.aspx>
2. Screen for problem gambling. If you are a mental health provider, individuals with gambling problems will show up in your caseload and many will be reluctant to disclose their gambling behaviors.
3. Learn about Oregon's publicly funded gambling treatment system. Specialized treatment is **FREE** and can be an important component of your client's mental health treatment.



### LEARN MORE

Visit [Oregon's Problem Gambling Services web page](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/). Here you will find prevention tools, workbooks, guides, screening tools, and toolkits.

<sup>1</sup> Lorains, F. K., Cowlishaw, S., & Thomas, S. A. (2011). Prevalence of comorbid disorders in problem and pathological gambling: Systematic review and meta-analysis of population surveys. *Addiction*, 106(3), 490-498.

<sup>2</sup> Karlsson, A., & Håkansson, A. (2018). Gambling disorder, increased mortality, suicidality, and associated comorbidity: A longitudinal nationwide register study. *Journal of behavioral addictions*, 7(4), 1091-1099.

<sup>3</sup> Manning, V., Dowling, N. A., Lee, S., Rodda, S., Garfield, J. B. B., Volberg, R., ... & Lubman, D. I. (2017). Problem gambling and substance use in patients attending community mental health services. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 6(4), 678-688.



## SUBSTANCE USE & PROBLEM GAMBLING



Substance use disorders (SUDs) co-occur commonly with problem gambling. A meta-analysis determined an average prevalence of SUDs (including alcohol or illicit drug use disorders and nicotine abuse and/or dependence) among a community sample of individuals with gambling disorder to be 57.5%.<sup>4</sup> In a meta-analysis examining individuals seeking treatment, the prevalence of any alcohol or substance use disorder among individuals averaged 22.2%.<sup>5</sup> Smoking is also common among individuals with gambling problems.<sup>6</sup> In one study, persons classified as having a gambling problem were significantly more likely to have smoked more than 100 cigarettes in their lifetime and be current smokers compared with those who recreationally gambled.<sup>7</sup>

### If you are an addiction professional, how likely are you to see people with a gambling problem?

Between 15% to 20% of those seeking treatment for SUDs are expected to meet the lifetime criteria for problem gambling, and 11% for current problem gambling.<sup>8,9</sup> In an Oregon study, within SUD clients who screened positive for disordered gambling, 30% identified gambling as a concern in their recovery efforts, yet only 14% reported having gambling addressed in treatment.<sup>9</sup>



### WHY THIS MATTERS

Individuals with cooccurring substance use and gambling disorders are faced with more challenging recovery due to factors such as cross priming and addiction switching. If you are not asking about gambling, both present and past, you may be missing a critical issue that can impact long term recovery.



### ACTION STEPS

1. Have the conversation about problem gambling, provide education and resources.
2. Screen for problem gambling. Individuals with gambling problems are in your caseload and many will be reluctant to disclose their gambling behaviors.
3. Learn about Oregon's publicly funded gambling treatment system.

[www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/)



### LEARN MORE

Visit [Oregon's Problem Gambling Services web page](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/). Here you will find more information about the relationship between alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and gambling. You will also find prevention tools, workbooks, guides, screening tools, and toolkits. [www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/)

<sup>4</sup> Lorains, F. K., Cowlshaw, S., & Thomas, S. A. (2011). Prevalence of comorbid disorders in problem and pathological gambling: Systematic review and meta-analysis of population surveys. *Addiction*, 106(3), 490-498

<sup>5</sup> Dowling, N., Cowlshaw, S., Jackson, A., Merkouris, S., Francis, K., & Christensen, D. (2015a). The prevalence of comorbid personality disorders in treatment-seeking problem gamblers: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of personality disorders*, 29(6), 735-754.

<sup>6</sup> McGrath D.S., Barrett S.P. (2009). The comorbidity of tobacco smoking and gambling: a review of the literature. *Drug Alcohol Rev.*;28(6):676-81.

<sup>7</sup> Abbott M, Bellringer M, Garrett N, Mundy-McPherson S. (2014). *New Zealand 2012 national gambling study: gambling harm and problem gambling*. Auckland: Auckland University of Technology.

<sup>8</sup> Cowlshaw S, Merkouris S, Chapman A, Radermacher H. (2014). Pathological and problem gambling in substance use treatment: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Subst Abus Treat.*;46(2):98-105.

<sup>9</sup> Leavens, E., Marotta, J., & Weinstock, J. (2014). Disordered gambling in residential substance use treatment centers: an unmet need. *Journal of addictive diseases*, 33(2), 163-173.

## CRIMINALITY

### *Problem Gambling and Crime and its Costs*

For those that develop gambling problems, the more severe their problem is, the more likely it is to lead to crime.<sup>10</sup> Compared to all other groups (general population, people with substance use disorders, etc.), prison populations have the highest proportion of disordered gamblers.<sup>11</sup>

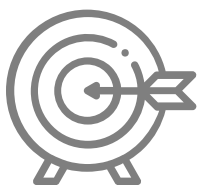


The connection between gambling and crime may exist because gambling losses combined with loss of control from gambling create pressure to commit income-generating crimes. Alternatively, problem gambling and crime may co-occur as a pattern of behaviors with common underlying risk factors that reinforce one another. Non-violent financially motivated crime, such as theft, selling drugs, forgery, and embezzlement, is the most common type of crime associated with gambling.<sup>12</sup>

### **If you work in criminal justice, how likely are you to see individuals in custody with a gambling problem?**

In a recent study of gambling problems amongst adults in custody entering the Oregon Department of Corrections, 50% of females and 29% of males scored within the problem gambling range on a standardized measure. However, only 13% of all adults in custody self-identify as having a gambling problem.<sup>13</sup> If you do not ask individuals in custody about gambling, problem gambling will remain hidden.

### **WHY THIS MATTERS**



Problem gambling and crime have significant societal and personal costs. An Oregon study found about 1 in every 60 adults in custody reported their current incarceration was “primarily” due to gambling.<sup>13</sup> With appropriate attention and resources, the criminal justice system could take a role in prevention and treatment of these behaviors and reduce their costs. With intervention, the cycle of gambling, debt, and criminal activity to alleviate losses may be broken, leading to decreased reincarceration rates and cost savings.

### **ACTION STEPS**



1. Integrate problem gambling education and awareness into programming to address multiple risky behaviors.
2. Screen individuals in custody for gambling problems, and if living in the community, pre-trial or on parole or probation, refer persons with gambling problems to Oregon’s free publicly funded gambling treatment system.
3. Utilize treatment courts for persons with gambling related crimes.
4. Include the topic of problem gambling in addiction treatment programs and offer problem gambling education in pre-release programs.

### **LEARN MORE**

Visit [Oregon’s Problem Gambling Services Web page](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/). Here you will find prevention tools, workbooks, guides, screening tools, and toolkits.  
[www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/)



<sup>10</sup> Williams RJ, Rehm J, Stevens R. (2011). The social and economic impacts of gambling. The social and economic impacts of gambling.

<sup>11</sup> Banks, J., Waters, J., Andersson, C., & Olive, V. (2019). Prevalence of gambling disorder among prisoners: a systematic review. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur, J. N., Williams, R. J., & Belanger, Y. D. (2014). The relationship between legal gambling and crime in Alberta. Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 56(1), 49-84.

<sup>13</sup> Marotta JJ, Coe G, Highberger J. (2020). Problem gambling among incarcerated adults entering Oregon prisons. Manuscript in preparation.

# PHYSICAL HEALTH

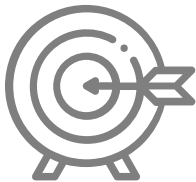
## Health Impacts of Problem Gambling



Problem gambling has been associated with a broad range of negative health correlates.<sup>14</sup> Individuals with gambling problems commonly report high amounts of stress and often engage in unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, such as watching more than 20 hours of television per week, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, poor nutritional practices, less regular exercise, and poor sleep practices. These gambling related impacts are believed to contribute to higher rates of heart conditions, high blood pressure, headaches, weight loss, stomach disorders, cardiac arrest, arthritis, indigestion, tachycardia, angina, cirrhosis, and other liver diseases.<sup>14,15,16</sup> Notably, individuals with gambling problems had a higher body mass index and were more likely to be classified as obese.<sup>14</sup>

### If you are a healthcare provider, how likely are you to see people with a gambling problem?

Rates of gambling disorders range from 6%<sup>17</sup> to 15%<sup>18</sup> among U.S. primary care attenders (relative to estimates from population-based studies that range from 0.2% to 1.0%).<sup>19</sup> Additionally, around 7% of patients reported gambling problems among family members.<sup>20</sup>



### WHY THIS MATTERS

There is need for improved understanding of the burden of, and responses to, patients with gambling problems in general practices, and strategies to increase identification to facilitate improved care and early intervention.

### ACTION STEPS

1. Educate the persons you serve about risks related to gambling. Free educational brochures about problem gambling and resources are available at <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/Pages/Resources.aspx>
2. Screen for gambling problems. A simple screen can reveal patients whose health is affected by gambling issues that might otherwise remain undiscovered.
3. Learn about Oregon's publicly funded gambling treatment system. Specialized treatment is free and can be an important component of your patient's overall health.



### LEARN MORE

Visit [Oregon's Problem Gambling Services Web page](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/). Here you will find prevention tools, workbooks, guides, screening tools, and toolkits.



<sup>14</sup> Black DW, Shaw M, McCormick B, Allen J. (2013). Pathological gambling: relationship to obesity, self-reported chronic medical conditions, poor lifestyle choices, and impaired quality of life. *Compr Psychiatry*, 54(2):97-104.

<sup>15</sup> Morasco BJ, Pietrzak RH, Blanco C, Grant BF, Hasin D, Petry NM. (2006). Health problems and medical utilization associated with gambling disorders: results from the national epidemiologic survey on alcohol and related conditions. *Psychosom Med.*, 68(6):976-84.

<sup>16</sup> Langham, E., Thorne, H., Browne, M. et al. (2015). Understanding gambling related harm: a proposed definition, conceptual framework, and taxonomy of harms. *BMC Public Health* 16, 80.

<sup>17</sup> Pasternak AV 4th, Fleming MF. (1999). Prevalence of gambling disorders in a primary care setting. *Arch Fam Med*, 8(6): 515-520

<sup>18</sup> Morasco BJ, Vom Eigen KA, Petry NM. (2006). Severity of gambling is associated with physical and emotional health in urban primary care patients. *Gen Hosp Psychiatry*, 28(2): 94-100.

<sup>19</sup> Petry NM, Blanco C. (2013). National gambling experiences in the United States: will history repeat itself? *Addiction*, 108(6): 1032-1037.

<sup>20</sup> Cowlshaw, S., Gale, L., Gregory, A., McCambridge, J., & Kessler, D. (2017). Gambling problems among patients in primary care: a cross-sectional study of general practices. *British Journal of General Practice*, 67(657), e274-e279.

# ECONOMY

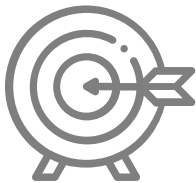
## *Economic Impacts of Problem Gambling*

The positive impacts of gambling revenues and their spill over to funding public services are relatively easy to see and describe. The negative economic impacts are often hidden and much more difficult to quantify.<sup>21</sup> Many of the negative economic impacts result from consequences associated with disordered gambling and include:



- ✚ **Employment costs & productivity loss:** Problem gambling causes productivity losses, absenteeism, impaired working relationships, termination of employment, and increased unemployment benefit payments.<sup>22</sup>
- ✚ **Houselessness:** Studies have estimated that an average of 12 to 39% of people who are homeless reported having gambling problems.<sup>23</sup>
- ✚ **Bankruptcy:** It is estimated that 10 to 20% of people with a gambling disorder declare bankruptcy.<sup>24</sup>
- ✚ **Social inequality:** There is a large amount of evidence that the “lottery tax” falls disproportionately on those with lower income, as they spend a higher proportion of their incomes on the lottery.<sup>25</sup>
- ✚ **Criminal justice costs:** Gambling increases criminality in several ways.<sup>26</sup> One Oregon study estimated problem gambling related imprisonments account for at least \$10 million a year in Oregon Department of Corrections custody costs.<sup>27</sup>

### WHY THIS MATTERS



In a search for needed revenue, every year our policy makers are presented with proposals to change the gambling landscape. The formation of policy on gambling needs to be informed to protect public health and understand both the positive and negative economic impacts.

### ACTION STEPS



1. Help educate our policy makers on the social-economic impacts of gambling and problem gambling and the need to ensure responsible gambling measures are in place with each piece of gambling expansion legislation.
2. If you are a policy maker, advocate for studies on the impacts of gambling related proposals and make fully informed decisions.

### LEARN MORE



Visit Oregon’s Problem Gambling Services Web page. Here you will find more information on problem gambling. [www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/)

<sup>21</sup> Latvala, T., Lintonen, T., & Konu, A. (2019). Public health effects of gambling—debate on a conceptual model. *BMC public health*, 19(1), 1077.  
<sup>22</sup> Eby LT, Mitchell ME, Gray CJ, Provolt L, Lorys A, Fortune E, et al. (2016). Gambling-related problems across life domains: an exploratory study of non-treatment-seeking weekly gamblers. *Community Work Fam.*, 19(5):604–620.  
<sup>23</sup> Sharman S, Dreyer J, Clark L, Bowden-Jones H (2016). Down and Out in London: Addictive Behaviors in Homelessness. *J Behav Addict.*, 5(2):318-24.  
<sup>24</sup> Grant JE, Schreiber L, Odlaug BL, Kim SW (2010). Pathologic gambling and bankruptcy. *Compr Psychiatry*. Mar-Apr; 51(2):115-20.  
<sup>25</sup> Clotfelter CT, Cook PJ. (1990). On the economics of state lotteries. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 4(4):105-19  
<sup>26</sup> Williams R, Rehm J, Stevens R. (2011). The social and economic impacts of gambling. *Canadian Consortium for Gambling Research*.  
<sup>27</sup> Marotta JJ, Coe G, Highberger J. (2020). Problem gambling among incarcerated adults entering Oregon prisons. Manuscript in preparation.

## RELATIONSHIPS

### *Interpersonal Impacts of Problem Gambling*

It has been estimated that one person's gambling problem typically affects 5 to 10 people.<sup>28,29</sup> People whose lives are negatively impacted by problem gambling include partners, children, parents, co-workers, employers, and victims of gambling related crime.



**Partners** of individuals with a gambling problem commonly experience significant distress. Isolation, loneliness, self-blame, depression, and physical symptoms, like headaches, insomnia, panic attacks, and feelings of tiredness or exhaustion have been well documented.<sup>30</sup> Conflict and loss of trust can drive couples to separation or divorce. It is not uncommon for significant others to experience intimate partner violence. In one study, 38% of individuals with a gambling problem had experienced physical intimate partner violence, and 37% were perpetrators of physical intimate partner violence.<sup>31</sup>

**Families** in which one parent has a gambling disorder and in which dependent children live at home are also impacted by problem gambling. Family members may suffer from an emotional burden, financial problems, broken relationships and failing social networks, health issues, intimate-partner violence and/or family violence, and housing difficulties.<sup>32</sup> The impacts of children can be lasting because of neglect and uninvolved parenting.<sup>33</sup>



### WHY THIS MATTERS

If partners and family members of individuals with a gambling problem cannot find help due to a lack of awareness or fear of stigmatization, they may suffer from health inequality, social marginalization, and long-term impacts.<sup>34</sup>

### ACTION STEPS



1. Be an ambassador for raising awareness. Bring the topic of gambling into relationship education and wellness conversations.
2. If you learn of a family member with a gambling problem, probe for mental health, physical symptoms, abuse, neglect, and family violence. When indicated, refer and/or collaborate with social service professionals.
3. Learn about the free counseling available in Oregon to partners and family members dealing with a loved one's gambling problem.



### LEARN MORE

Visit [Oregon's Problem Gambling Services Web page](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/). Here you will find prevention tools, workbooks, guides, screening tools, and toolkits.

[www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/](https://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/)

<sup>28</sup> Goodwin, B., Browne, M., Rockloff, M., & Rose, J. (2017). A typical problem gambler affects six others. *International Gambling Studies*, 17(2), 276-289.

<sup>29</sup> Productivity Commission 2010, *Gambling*, Report no. 50, Canberra.

<sup>30</sup> Patford J. (2009). For worse, for poorer and in ill health: how women experience, understand and respond to a partner's gambling problems. *Int J Ment Heal Addict Springer-Verlag*, 7(1):177-89.

<sup>31</sup> Dowling N, Suomi A, Jackson A, Lavis T, Patford J, Cockman S, et al. (2016). Problem gambling and intimate partner violence. *Trauma Violence Abuse*. 17(1):43-61.

<sup>32</sup> Dowling N A, Suomi A, Jackson A C, Lavis T. (2016). Problem Gambling Family Impacts: Development of the Problem Gambling Family Impact Scale. *J Gamb Stud*, 32(3):935-955.

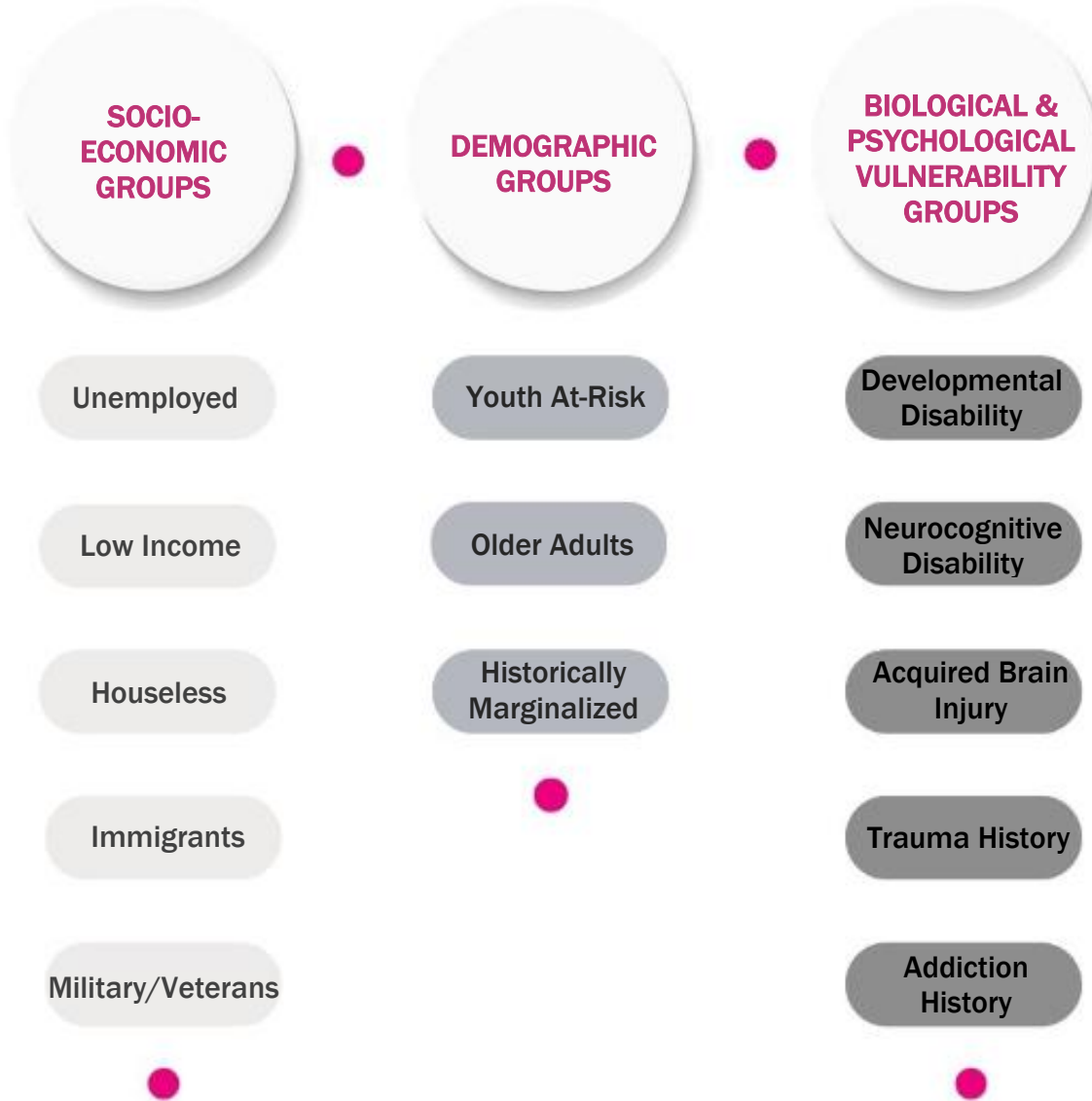
<sup>33</sup> Darbyshire P, Oster C, Carrig H. (2001). The experience of pervasive loss: children and young people living in a family where parental gambling is a problem. *J Gamb Stud.*, 17(1):23-45.

<sup>34</sup> Järvinen-Tassopoulos, J. (2020). The impact of problem gambling: Are there enough services available for families with children? *Public Health*.

# IDENTIFIED GROUPS FOR GAMBLING HARM

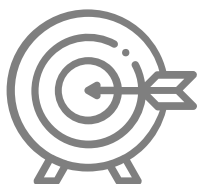


Within the general population, certain groups are more vulnerable to disordered gambling. Societal and economic factors can influence an individual's experience with gambling and gambling harms. For example, low income is associated with significantly increased odds of gambling disorder.<sup>35,36</sup> Other risks for problem development include biological vulnerabilities<sup>37</sup> and psychological vulnerabilities, such as trauma history.<sup>38</sup> Certain demographic groups are commonly found to have higher than average problem gambling prevalence such as youth and certain historically marginalized groups.<sup>39</sup> Finally, some groups, such as older adults, are considered high risk not due to higher incident rates but rather other vulnerabilities such as high risk of isolation, cognitive impairment, and inability to make up for gambling losses. Among the groups listed below, gambling related harm is of great concern as is the need for targeted prevention and treatment programs.



### Problem gambling prevalence in Oregon and high-risk groups

Based on the 2015 Oregon Adult Gambling Behaviors Survey, it is estimated that 2.6% of the adult population experiences moderate or serious problems with gambling.<sup>40</sup> However, that figure is based on an estimate of the entire adult general population in Oregon. Among our communities are groups that experience much higher rates of problem gambling. Some of those groups are depicted in the graphic. It is important to note that just because a group is highlighted as being at greater risk, does not mean that all people in those groups will experience harm.



#### WHY THIS MATTERS

Being able to recognize those who are at risk to develop a gambling disorder or problematic gambling behavior is the first step toward developing effective prevention and early intervention programs. Public health workers, such as clinicians and prevention specialist, need to be aware of these population groups. By recognizing problem gambling is more prevalent in specific segments of the population, we may be able to identify problems related to gambling as they are emerging, thereby providing early intervention that may reduce gambling-related harm.



#### ACTION STEPS

1. Be an ambassador for raising problem gambling awareness in the community. If you work with individual's belonging to groups associated with higher problem gambling risks, educate your clients and colleagues of those risks, steps to prevent a problem from occurring and that help is available.
2. Screen for problem gambling and ask about family member concerns. Many individuals with gambling related problems are reluctant to disclose this information without direct questions.
3. Learn about the free treatment in Oregon for persons with gambling problems and their partners and family. Visit [OPGR.org](http://OPGR.org) to learn more.



#### LEARN MORE

Visit [Oregon's Problem Gambling Services Web page](http://Oregon's Problem Gambling Services Web page). Here you will find prevention tools, workbooks, guides, screening tools, and toolkits.

[www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/](http://www.oregon.gov/oha/HSD/Problem-Gambling/)

Browse the literature at [Gambling Research Exchange Ontario](http://Gambling Research Exchange Ontario)

<https://www.greo.ca/en/index.aspx>

<sup>35</sup> van der Maas, M., (2016). Problem gambling, anxiety and poverty: An examination of the relationship between poor mental health and gambling problems across socio-economic status. *International Gambling Studies*, 16(2): p. 281-295.

<sup>36</sup> Day, B., Rosenthal, G., Adetunji, F., Monaghan, A., Scheele, C., & Tracy, J. K. (2020). Evaluating for Differences by Race/Ethnicity in the Association Between Income and Gambling Disorder. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 1-13.

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