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Narratives, practice, representation: What is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups?

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Bristol Hub for

GAMBLING HARMS RESEARCH

Narratives, practice, representation: What is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups?

About this report

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About the Bristol Hub for Gambling Harms Research

Established in 2022, our purpose is to build interdisciplinary capacity in gambling harms research nationally and globally, in order to prevent and reduce harms at individual, community and society level. For more information, visit www.bristol.ac.uk/gambling-harms.

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Executive Summary

The work of the Bristol Hub for Gambling Harms Research is framed around four challenges:

These four Challenges broadly represent a 'gambling pathway' and are designed to create space for interdisciplinary approaches to the different dimensions of harmful gambling, namely: what initiates harmful gambling; what is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups; what social and spatial inequalities exacerbate gambling harms; and what socio-technical innovations can help prevent or reduce gambling harms.

To inform the work of the Hub, we conducted four scoping reviews, each of which addresses one of the Challenges set out above. Our scoping reviews followed the process outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). They were pre-registered on Open Science Framework and conducted according to PRISMA guidelines.

This report sets out the evidence from the scoping review for Challenge 2: What is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups?

In focusing on social groups, we aim to look beyond the individual to understand the wider impacts of gambling and gambling harms. For example, children may have different experiences in relation to gambling than adults; while peer groups may encourage or constrain harmful gambling behaviours.

This can help us understand how gambling harms within social settings can be prevented, as well as help treatment providers to develop effective interventions.

We deliberately limited the scoping review for this Challenge to qualitative studies only, which typically have smaller sample sizes than quantitative studies and are not intended to be representative of a particular population. This is because we wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how social groups experience gambling and gambling harms. Such rich insights are not available through quantitative studies that prioritise measurement (e.g. enumerating the number of people who are at risk of gambling harms and listing their characteristics) over depth of understanding. Quantitative studies in this area also substantially overlapped our scoping review on social and spatial inequalities (Challenge 3: How do social and spatial inequalities exacerbate gambling harms? See Wheaton et al., 2024a).

The evidence base for this scoping review is drawn from 97 qualitative studies and covers three topics.

1. The role of social groups during first experiences of gambling;
2. The role of social groups during continued gambling behaviour;
3. The role of social groups during the experience of – and recovery from – gambling harms.

The role of social groups during first experiences of gambling

- Most of the evidence on the role of social groups during first experiences of gambling comes from studies conducted in Australia. The evidence base includes studies with children and young people, as well as studies with adults.
- The evidence shows that sport provides an opportunity for people to be introduced to gambling as a normal social activity. Large sporting events – such as the Melbourne Cup (a major annual horse racing event in Australia) – can introduce individuals to gambling within social, and particularly family, settings.
- The initiation of gambling as a social activity is encouraged by the commercial actions of gambling operators, such as the marketing of gambling products and opportunities or incentives to gamble which co-exist alongside the relationship between sport and gambling.
- Childrens' first experiences of gambling, and their perceptions of gambling can be shaped by the behaviours of adults within their family or social group.
- There is some evidence that social casino games (free-to-play gambling-like games often found on social networking sites) influence online gambling behaviour for young people. While some young people did not see the link between social casinos and online gambling, others learned online gambling behaviours through playing on social casinos. Sites hosting social casino games were also reported as advertising

real-money gambling products thus blurring the lines between social and “real” casinos.

The role of social groups in continued gambling behaviour

- The evidence demonstrates how continued gambling can become part of an individual’s identity and social life, impacted and reinforced by commercial determinants such as the increased availability of technology-enabled gambling and marketing by gambling operators.
- There is evidence that gambling becomes a normalised aspect of social lives for some women, for example at sports events attended with friends and family, or meeting friends at commercial bingo halls. For men, gambling can be intertwined with masculine identity and becomes a normalised part of the consumption of sport.
- Gambling can also be a social activity for older adults that is carried out alongside other activities (such as playing slot machines when eating out with friends or going to a casino while on holiday), as well as for adolescents who may gamble with their peers while playing sport or during school-based settings.
- The body of reviewed evidence on poker players highlights how the distinction between skill and gambling is an important part of their social identity, which means they do not see poker as gambling.

Social groups during experiences of – and recovery from - gambling harms

- Gambling harms are experienced at the family or social group level, whether through the impact of gambling on relationships themselves, the role of social stigma, or indeed support groups which aid recovery for those who had experienced harmful gambling behaviours.
- There is a stigma associated with harmful gambling – or more specifically, the (perceived or real) inability to control harmful gambling behaviours – that can result in barriers that may block access to support. This stigma is also experienced by the family members of the person who gambles, as well as by professional athletes, whose fears about the reaction of teammates and team management may prevent them from disclosing harmful gambling.
- Our review found studies that explored the impact of gambling harms on social relationships, above all the partners and children of those experiencing harmful gambling but also wider family and friends. These harms can be wide-ranging, including the emotional and relationship harms experienced between family members, or the financial harms experienced by households.
- Social groups and support networks are important for recovery. These networks can include support systems or strategies from relatives,

professional help, Gamblers Anonymous groups, and other group-based approaches such as group therapy or self-help groups.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The work of the Bristol Hub for Gambling Harms Research is framed around four challenges:

These four challenges broadly represent a 'gambling pathway' and are designed to create space for interdisciplinary approaches to the different dimensions of harmful gambling, namely: what initiates harmful gambling; what is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups; what social and spatial inequalities exacerbate gambling harms, and what socio-technical innovations can help prevent or reduce gambling harms.

To inform the work of the Hub, we conducted four scoping reviews, each of which addresses one of the Challenges set out above. Scoping reviews aim to address wide-ranging topics where different study designs might be applicable (e.g. qualitative studies, quantitative surveys, laboratory experiments). As a result, they tend to be guided by broader research questions and do not assess the quality of included studies (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005).

This report sets out the evidence from the scoping review for Challenge 2: What is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups? The purpose of this scoping review is, firstly, to examine the extent, range and nature of research activity on this topic; and secondly to describe the findings of the research we identified for dissemination to academic and non-academic audiences (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005).

Gambling can impact individuals through a wide range of harms (Wardle et al., 2018). However, families and other social groups can also experience gambling harms (Hilbrecht, 2021). For example, children may have different experiences from adults, and those considered not 'at risk' may have different experiences of gambling from those within the same social group who are experiencing harmful gambling behaviours. The norms and cultures of different social groups may also lead to different behaviours and

consequences in relation to harmful gambling. For example, different peer groups may encourage or constrain gambling behaviours dependent on dominant group values. Members of social groups may experience complex financial and emotional harms resulting from loss of money borrowed from family or friends, and relationship-based harms through detrimental impacts on friendships. Within families, harms may also be experienced as household finances are eroded by losses. Exploring the experiences and intersection of gambling profiles within and between social groups can help us to understand how gambling harms can be prevented within specific social settings, as well as helping treatment providers develop effective interventions for these groups.

1.2 Research methods

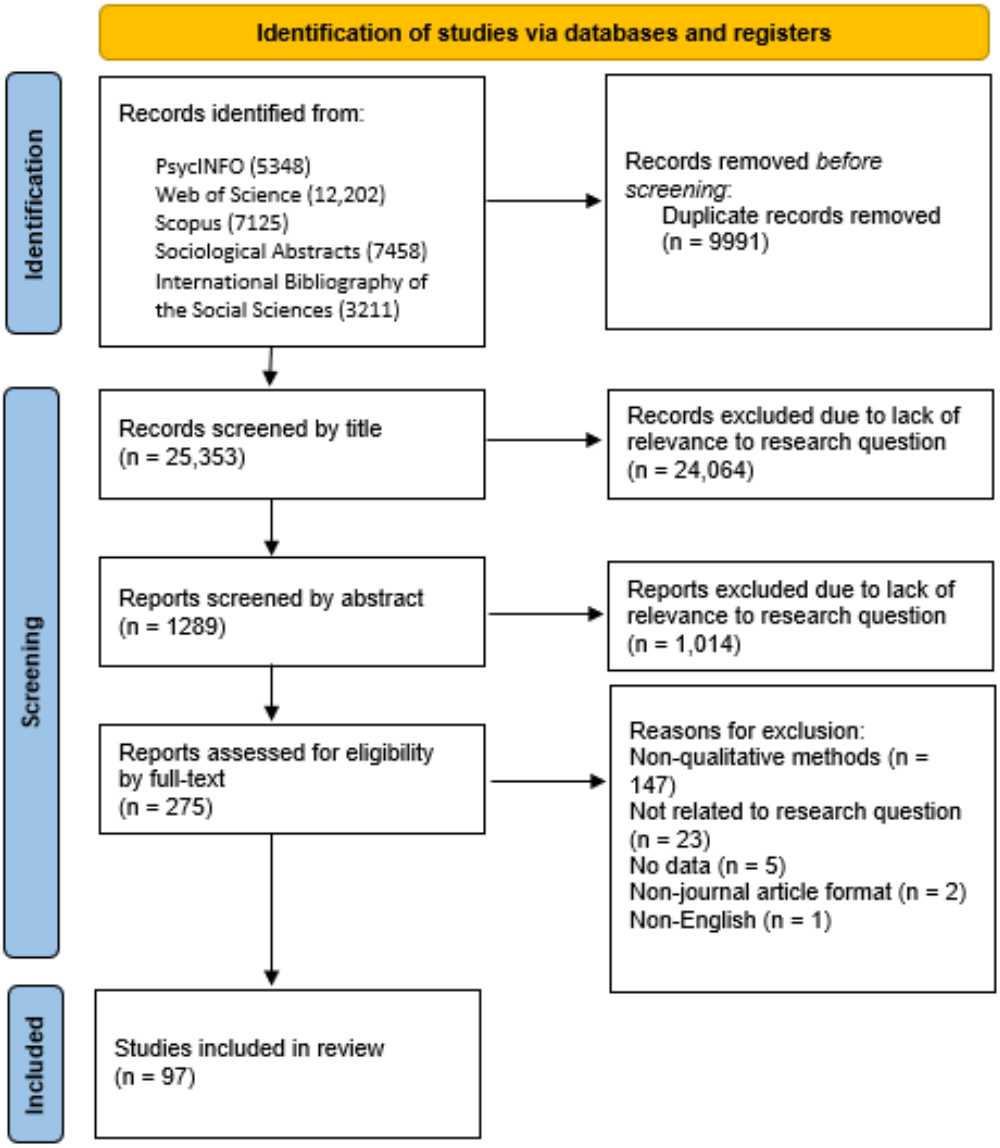
Our scoping review followed the process outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). It was pre-registered on Open Science Framework and conducted according to PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021). Guided by the research question 'what is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups?', we used key search terms to identify relevant studies from multiple academic databases: Web of Science, PsycINFO, Scopus, JSTOR and the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences. Full details of the search terms can be found in **Appendix One**.

To be included, research articles had to explicitly explore the portrayal of gambling and gambling-related harms amongst social groups. Papers needed to be published in English, focused on the economies of OECD member countries, published in or after 2005 (the year when the Gambling Act 2005 was passed), and be specifically linked to the research question. This scoping review focused solely on qualitative methodologies. Our initial searches found that quantitative studies were of two sorts: 1) they were cross-sectional studies that correlated demographic variables with gambling severity – the results of which have already been reported in other recent reviews (for example, see Public Health England, 2023); 2) – or there was substantial overlap with the papers included in our scoping review on social or spatial inequalities that are covered in Challenge 3: How do social and spatial inequalities exacerbate gambling harms? (Wheaton et al., 2024a). Not replicating the findings of these two sets of papers allowed us to concentrate on the deeper understanding of how social groups experience gambling afforded by qualitative research.

The process of the literature review is introduced in Figure 1. Papers were sourced in January 2023, and the initial search found 35,344 papers across all databases, with a working sample of 25,353 papers identified after deduplication. Papers were first sifted by title, according to the inclusion criteria, reducing the sample to 1,289 possible papers. Sifting by abstract reduced the working sample of papers further to 286 included studies. The final sift by full text resulted in a sample of 97 papers. The data were extracted to inform the findings of the scoping review. More details on the number of included papers and the number of excluded papers at each stage of the

scoping review can be found in **Appendix Two.** Several data variables were extracted for all articles: age; social group; gambling product; method; topic; country; summary/key points; limitations. These terms are fully defined in . These variables were then thematically analysed to develop the main themes in response to the above research question.

Figure 1: PRISMA flow chart for Challenge Two Scoping Review



1.3 This report

This report highlights the key findings of the scoping review which emerged from the reviewed qualitative evidence. Findings are reported within three main chapters, and relate to:

1. The role of social groups during first experiences of gambling;
2. The role of social groups during continuous gambling behaviour;
3. The role of social groups during the experience of – and recovery from – gambling harms.

1.3.1 A note on terms used in the report

Gambling harms are the short and long-term adverse impacts from gambling on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, communities, and society. These harms are diverse but three commonly referenced categories are resource harms, relationship harms, and health harms (Wardle et al., 2018). However, much of the extant literature focuses on the narrower concepts of 'problem gamblers/gambling' and 'pathological gamblers/gambling' which are defined in Table 1. These terms refer only to the person who gambles and are measured using standard screening tools, for example to estimate prevalence rates or for analytical or descriptive purposes.

We use the terms 'problem gamblers/gambling' and 'pathological gamblers/gambling' in this report in the same way as they are reported in the original studies, while acknowledging concerns that these terms are stigmatising, and that their use in measuring prevalence underestimates the harms caused by gambling. We use 'harmful gambling' as a default term to refer to gambling behaviours that may harm the individual and others, as this offers an alternative term that seeks to reduce stigma.

Table 1: Definitions of 'Pathological' and 'Problem Gambling'

Pathological Gambling	Persistent and maladaptive gambling behaviour that disrupts personal, family, or vocational pursuits (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 671).
Problem Gambling	Gambling behaviour that creates negative consequences for the gambler, others in his or her social network, or for the community (Ferris and Wynne, 2001, p. 8).

Table 2 sets out all the measures that are mentioned in this report and the screening tools from which they derive, along with the original reviews that first described them. The descriptions within each table also highlight how they are intended to be used in relation to their outcome measure. For example, some of the surveys intend to measure the prevalence of problem gambling in the general population, whilst others may measure pathological gambling, or urges to gamble in an individual.

Table 2: Glossary of gambling screening tools

Screening tool	Description	Outcome Measure
Addiction Severity Index amended for Gambling (ASI-G) (Lesieur and Blume, 1982).	A screening tool derived from the Addiction Severity Index, normally deployed to measure drug and substance addiction, developed to measure pathological gambling.	Pathological Gambling
Canadian Adolescent Gambling Inventory (CAGI) (Wiebe et al., 2007).	A 26-item screening tool comprising measurements of types of gambling activities, frequency of participation, time spent gambling, total money spent gambling, and psychological, social, financial aspects related to gambling risk or harm.	Pathological Gambling
Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) (Ferris and Wynne, 2001).	A 31-item screening tool to determine whether a person in the general population is experiencing problem gambling.	Problem Gambling
Fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (DSM-IV) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).	Ten criteria created by clinicians for diagnosis of pathological gambling.	Pathological Gambling
Gambling Abstinence Self-Efficacy Scale (GASS) (Hodgins et al., 2004)	A 21-item measure of gambling abstinence self-efficacy.	Gambling Abstinence
Gambling Symptom Assessment Scale (G-SAS) (Kim et al., 2009).	A 12-item self-rated scale designed to assess gambling symptom severity.	Gambling Symptom Severity
Gambling Related Cognition Scale (GRCS) (Raylu and Oei, 2004a).	A 23-item scale designed to assess gambling-related cognitions held by gambling. Aspects explored by the scale include interpretive control/bias, illusion of control, predictive control, gambling-related expectancies, perceived inability to stop gambling.	Gambling-related Cognitions.
Gambling Urge Scale (GUS) (Raylu and Oei, 2004b).	A six-item self-screening tool designed to measure gambling urges.	Gambling Urges

Table 2, cont.: Glossary of gambling screening tools

Screening tool	Description	Outcome Measure
Game Experience Questionnaire (GEQ) (IJsselsteijn et al., 2013).	A modular questionnaire that measures the multifaceted experience of gaming. The questionnaire has three modules: core, social presence, post-game	Flow, competence, positive and negative affect, tension, and challenge (core).
National Opinion Research Center DSM Screen for Gambling Problems (NODS) (Wickwire et al., 2008).	A 34-item telephone-screening tool that identifies gambling problems as defined by the DSM-IV.	Problem and Pathological Gambling
Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) (Ferris and Wynne, 2001).	A nine-item measure constructed specifically to measure problem gambling in the general population.	Problem Gambling
Short Gambling Harm Screen (SGHS) (Browne et al., 2018).	A short, 10-item screening tool to measure gambling harms.	Gambling Harms
South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS). (Stinchfield, 2002).	A 20-item questionnaire based on DSM-III criteria.	Pathological Gambling
Victorian Gambling Screen Harm to Self-Scale (VGS-HS). (Ben-Tovim et al., 2001).	A 15-item screening tool designed to measure the harm occurring to self as a result of gambling	Harm as a result of Problem Gambling

2 Social groups and first experiences of gambling

Chapter Summary

- This chapter explores the role of social groups during the initial experiences of gambling.
- Our evidence base is formed of 19 studies, with sample sizes ranging from ten participants to 200 participants interviewed during focus groups.
- Sport, or large sporting events such as the Melbourne Cup (an important horse race that takes place in Melbourne, Australia), can enable first experiences of gambling, introducing individuals to gambling within social, and particularly family, settings.
- The initiation of gambling is encouraged by commercial determinants such as marketing, incentives to gamble, and wider accessibility.
- The welcoming atmosphere created within land-based gambling venues can play a role in providing company or creating social groups.
- Childrens' perceptions of gambling can be shaped by their experiences of adults' gambling behaviour within their family or social group.
- Social casino games that imitate slots- and casino-style games can encourage online gambling behaviours, with social groups formed on gaming sites or social media. While some young people did not see the link between social casinos and online gambling, others learned online gambling behaviours through playing on social casinos. Sites hosting social casino games were also reported as advertising real-money gambling products.

2.1 Introduction

Our review found research that explored the influences of social groups on an individual's first experiences of gambling. We found that the first experiences of gambling can be influenced by close, social connections such as family and friends, while they can also be influenced by commercial determinants that seek to frame gambling as a normal, social activity. This chapter details the main literature which was uncovered in this area.

This chapter begins by briefly describing the evidence base which informs the above themes, before highlighting how sport is a particular enabler for the initiation of gambling as a social activity. Third, the chapter explores how the initiation of gambling is encouraged by the gambling industry, who utilise the relationship between sports and gambling. Fourth, the chapter examines how children's perceptions of gambling can be shaped by adults' gambling behaviour. Finally, the chapter shows how social casino games – or "online gambling-themed games that do not require payment to play or provide a direct payout or monetary prizes" (Gainsbury et al., 2015, p. 137) - can encourage actual gambling behaviour.

2.2 About the evidence base

The evidence base consisted of 19 studies, 11 of which were carried out in Australia. The full list of papers exploring this area is introduced in Table 3. Studies were also carried out in Canada, Denmark, Greenland, New Zealand, Scotland, and the UK. Sample sizes varied from 10 participants (Gainsbury et al., 2015), to focus groups with 200 participants (Carran and Griffiths, 2015). Samples also varied from children or young people who had experience with gambling whether through themselves or family members, or with adults who recalled their first experiences of gambling. The reviewed evidence also covered a wide range of research themes, such as social casino games, children's or young people's attitudes to gambling, or their reaction to marketing.

Table 3: List of studies focusing on introduction to gambling by family and friends

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of introduction to gambling
Bestman et al. (2017)	Australia	Authors interviewed 45 Australian children (aged 11 and above) who had attended a club which contained gambling products in the past year about their attitudes to electronic gaming machines (EGMs). Children highlighted an awareness of parents' or grandparents gambling behaviour on EGMs or arcade games.
Carran and Griffiths (2015)	UK	Twenty-three focus groups conducted with 200 British young people aged between 14 and 19 to explore the relationship between gambling-like games and real-money gambling. Participants felt that both types of game were easily accessible to them, and questions in relation to engagement with video gaming found that only nine participants out of 200 said they were not involved with any type of gaming at all.
Corney and Davis (2010a)	UK	Authors interviewed 25 females (aged 18 and over) who gambled frequently, to understand their motives for internet gambling. Their participants reported that the Internet was more attractive compared to land-based venues which are male dominated. Many participants also noted that they had originally played bingo in physical venues but have gone online because of the decline in Bingo Hall availability and because of the smoking ban.
Gainsbury et al. (2015)	Australia	Authors interviewed ten users of social casino games (aged 18 upwards) to understand the relationships between social casino gaming, gambling and 'problem gambling'. Most cited leading influence from peers and family members. Some described the constant messaging from Facebook to play these games. They also described the common approach of cross-promotion to real-money gambling as well as social casinos that were "practice sites".
Kim et al. (2016)	Canada	Authors interviewed 30 college students (aged 18-24) to explore potential links between social casino gaming and online gambling. Participants highlighted potential for social casinos to develop skills for online gambling. Social casinos may also introduce gambling behaviours to younger teenagers.
Kristiansen et al. (2018)	Denmark	Authors interviewed 48 young people with various levels of gambling for each year during the past three years. Authors uncovered three key themes: Types of games and contexts of experience; motivations and effects; links between simulated and real gambling.
Lamont and Hing (2019)	Australia	Focus groups with Australian men (aged 18-34) to explore the role of older males in the initiation of gambling. The authors uncovered key themes related to older male influence, social influence of betting both in-person and online, and the skill of sports betting.

Table 3, cont.: List of studies focusing on introduction to gambling by family and friends

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of introduction to gambling
McCarthy et al. (2020)	Australia	Interviews with 45 Australian women (aged 18-34) who had gambled at least once in the previous year to understand the factors that influence the normalisation of gambling. Participants highlighted exposure to gambling at young ages at family dinners, playing with older family members, or other larger events (such as the Melbourne Cup).
McCarthy et al. (2022)	Australia	Authors interviewed 41 women aged 20-40 on the normalisation on gambling. Young women in the study felt that gambling was now a normal hobby for women, and cited targeted advertising and new technologies which remove the experience of stigma from attending physical venues, as well as the increasing equality, independence (especially financially) of women. Some disagreed, however, and reported "taboo" of female gambling saying that women are less likely to talk about it with friends and feel more shame and embarrassment if they experienced problems.
McMullan et al. (2012)	Canada	Fifty children and young people (24 male, 26 female aged 13-18) interviewed within focus groups to explore their reaction to forms of gambling-related marketing. Most participants perceived marketing as conveying gambling as a form of entertainment, a way to make money, and a normal activity. Older participants recalled gambling illegally as part of transitioning to adulthood.
Nyemcsok et al. (2022)	Australia	Interviews with 16 young Australian men (18-24) who were regular sports bettors about their perceptions of the risks of sports betting. Participants described early gambling experiences from watching sport with family and friends, discussions around sports, and participation in fantasy football leagues. They also highlighted the role of peer rivalry within gambling behaviours.
Pitt et al. (2017a)	Australia	Authors interviewed 48 children aged 8-16 to understand what influences children's attitudes and consumption intentions towards gambling. The authors uncovered three key themes: 1) children’s perceptions of the popularity of different products were shaped by what they had seen or heard about these products, whether through family activities, the media (and in particular marketing) of gambling products, and/or the alignment of gambling products; 2) children’s gambling behaviours were influenced by family members and culturally valued events; 3) many children indicated consumption intentions towards sports betting influenced by factors including the alignment of gambling with culturally valued activities, their perceived knowledge about sport, the marketing and advertising of gambling products (and in particular sports betting), and the influence of friends and family. In particular, children reported being introduced to gambling by family and friends. Family members often spoke about gambling around the Melbourne Cup.

Table 3, cont.: List of studies focusing on introduction to gambling by family and friends

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of introduction to gambling
Pitt et al. (2017b)	Australia	Part of the same broader study explored by Pitt et al. (2017a), authors interviewed 48 children aged 8-16 to explore children's awareness of sports betting advertising and how this advertising may influence children's attitudes, product knowledge and desire to try sports betting. Four key themes emerged: the marketing strategies deployed by industry, advertising strategies that increased the perception of sports betting as a normal activity, the learning of the technical aspects of gambling, and perceptions of promotions and incentives.
Pitt et al. (2022)	Australia	Authors interviewed 54 young people (aged 11-17) on strategies which could prevent the normalisation of gambling. Five key themes emerged: 1) Reducing the accessibility and availability of gambling products; 2) Changing the nature of gambling products, and gambling infrastructure to help reduce the risks associated with gambling engagement; 3) Untangling the relationship between gambling and sport; 4) Restrictions on advertising; and 5) Counter-framing in commercial messages about gambling.
Reith and Dobbie (2011)	Scotland	Authors interviewed 50 recreational and 'problem gamblers' three times between 2006 and 2009 around the Glasgow area. Participants all reported being exposed to gambling by social groups. Themes highlighted the role of transmission across generations within families, with females associated with bingo and males associated with sports betting.
Thomas et al. (2009)	Australia	Authors interviewed 13 EGM 'problem gamblers' (aged 27-60) to develop a theoretical model of EGM 'problem gambling'. Participants who reported 'problem gambling' behaviours on EGMs highlight the introduction to EGMs as a social activity, an activity as a form of escapism, and within an inviting atmosphere.
Thomas et al. (2022)	Australia	Authors interviewed 41 Australian women aged between 20 and 40 with a range of experiences with gambling about their personal engagement in gambling, their experiences of gambling, their motivations to gamble, and their engagement with different gambling products and environments. Main themes reflected the role of gambling infrastructure in the convenient consumption of gambling products, the role of social groups in the perceived social value and competencies with gambling, and the impact of technology on facilitating new gambling practices, routinizing behaviours and building competencies.

Table 3, cont.: List of studies focusing on introduction to gambling by family and friends

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of introduction to gambling
Udesen et al. (2019)	Greenland (Denmark)	Authors conducted focus group interviews with 31 adolescents (aged 12-16) who have experience with gambling. They found the sample were accustomed to gambling even if they did not realise they had taken part in it. Participants reported being introduced to gambling by family, friends and televised sporting events, and introduced to bingo by elderly relatives.
Wurtzburg and Tan (2011)	New Zealand	Authors interviewed 13 New Zealand families (19 children aged 11-16, and 14 parents who had experienced 'problem gambling') to understand the impact of parental gambling on children. Questionnaires were also administered to parents, but only interview data were detailed in the paper. The authors found that children were being socialised into gambling by parents whose gambling behaviours often occurred alongside other comorbidities.

2.3 Sport can be a mechanism for the first experiences of gambling

It is clear that sport provides an opportunity for people to be introduced to gambling as a normal social activity. Studies into males' initial experiences in particular highlighted the role of sport betting. Lamont and Hing's (2019) interviews with Australian males (aged between 18 and 34) who engaged with sports betting found that participants described the important role of older male influences - such as fathers - who socialised them into gambling.

> "A couple of years back sitting in hospital and my old man was sitting next to me and we were watching the footy. He's on his phone... I said, "what are you doing?" He's like, "I'm just on Sportsbet putting some bets on". He won a couple of hundred bucks and he's like, "oh yeah!" Well, I'm sitting in hospital for six months... so I jumped on it, watched the footy in hospital and chucked some bets on" (Lamont and Hing, 2019, p. 251).

Nyemcsok et al. (2022) conducted interviews with 16 Australian, young men (aged between 18 and 24) who engaged with sports betting. Their earliest memories of betting were watching sports with families and friends, whilst discussing betting odds and participating in fantasy sports. Gambling was further stimulated through peer rivalry. "It's always good with your mates because if you watch a game with your mates and all your mates would have different bets on […] It becomes like a competition" (Nyemcsok et al., 2022, p. 6). Like the findings of Lamont and Hing (2019), males who were introduced to gambling by family or friends highlighted the role of gambling within the consumption of sport.

Women also highlighted the role of watching sport with family and friends in the initiation of gambling. Our review found that family influences seem to be particularly important for women, in contrast to peer influences for men. McCarthy et al. (2020) interviewed 45 Australian women aged between 18 and 34 who had gambled at least once in the previous 12 months. Many said they were exposed to gambling at a young age through events such as family dinners, playing with older family members (particularly their fathers), or were exposed when there were big cultural events such as the Melbourne Cup, a horse race that takes place annually in Melbourne, Australia. Others described how they started gambling with their male partners. Thomas et al.'s (2022) interviews with 41 Australian women aged between 20-40 similarly found that the social value of gambling often came from the connections it forged between different generations of the family.

> "My Nan used to bet on the horses. I would have been around 12 and I used to actually be the one who would call up and place her bets for her. We would go out for dinner and things like that, there would be a poker machine in the food area almost and I would sometimes sit on her lap and she would put money in the machine and we would press the button together" (Thomas et al., 2022, p. 6).

Participants highlighted childhood memories formed through participation in gambling activities – including sports betting - with older family members, with gambling seen as a harmless, enjoyable activity.

In Greenland, Udesen et al. (2019) conducted focus groups with 31 adolescents (aged 12-16) who had experienced gambling. They reported being introduced to gambling by family, friends, and television through sporting events such as the under-19s Greenlandic Football Championship. They also found that participants reported sporting competitions where they participated as a mechanism that enabled gambling. For example, “When we went to football competitions, we are playing Olsen, where we bet money” (Udesen et al., 2019, p. 5). Gambling opportunities therefore not only presented themselves through watching sport, but also the playing of sport.

2.4 The initiation of gambling is encouraged by commercial determinants

The relationship between gambling and social groups is also influenced by strategies developed by the industry. These strategies draw heavily on the social significance of sports betting. Betting on large sporting events that are part of Australian culture was a key driving force uncovered by Pitt et al.’s (2017a) interviews with 48 children aged between eight and 16. The children felt that ‘everyone’ bet on the Melbourne Cup, which made gambling appear popular and without risk. Some of the children said that gambling on these events made them more fun and exciting. For one 13-year-old participant, the Melbourne Cup was the only time they had ever gambled. “Well, once my Dad let me put $10 on the Melbourne Cup but other than that, no [I haven’t gambled]” (Pitt et al., 2017a, p. 7). The Melbourne Cup represented a cultural event where it was normal to gamble, even if children had reported never having gambled otherwise.

A separate paper from the same study by Pitt et al. (2017b) reported another three key findings: 1) the factors that influenced children’s perceptions of the *popularity* of different gambling products, 2) the factors that influence children’s gambling *behaviours*, and 3) the factors contributing to current and future gambling consumption *intentions*.

First, in relation to popularity of gambling activity, children perceived lotteries, sports betting and horse racing to be the most popular forms of gambling. They felt these were the most popular because they were what they saw advertised most on TV. Participants also thought EGMs were popular after seeing them at pubs and during family meals. On the other hand, participants generally had a negative view of these machines due to the risks and financial losses involved with EGM play, as well as negative media attention given to EGMs.

Second, in relation to influence on behaviour, participants felt that sports betting was normal and was culturally acceptable especially for big events

such as the Melbourne Cup, with betting making these events more fun and exciting. Children also felt they were heavily influenced by advertising that represents gambling as an activity where everyone wins, and that it is easy and fun. Some children also felt like “cash back” and “refund” (Pitt et al., 2017b, p. 8) options would reduce their chances of losing money. Incentive-based promotions were thus seen to be especially influential.

Finally, over two thirds of participants had no intention to gamble in the near future. Children who did not want to gamble feared losing money. Some even spoke about adult-related concepts of not being able to provide for their family or buy other valuable items. Many other children were cautious – and a little curious - about gambling despite having spoken about it with their parents.

In a later study, Pitt et al. (2022) interviewed young people (aged 11-17) about strategies that could prevent the normalisation of gambling. Five key themes emerged. (1) The participants felt the availability of gaming machines should be restricted, or removed from social spaces, thus having an impact on perceptions of gambling as normal. (2) They supported the use of mandatory limits of money or time spent on gambling. (3) Many saw the relationship between gambling and sport as harmful, and saw the prevalence of gambling advertising in sport as detrimental. Some argued that sports clubs should refuse money from these companies.

> “Well, again, it is their [sports clubs] choice but I think there should be less of a presence of gambling companies sponsorship in sports because there’s – like why do they need more money to fuel them to keep advertising?” (Pitt et al., 2022, p. 6).

(4) Participants overwhelmingly felt that there should be significantly less or no advertising of gambling. Some felt that gambling firms had a moral obligation to think about how their advertising might lead to harm. (5) Finally, some young people felt that there needed to be counter-messages that emphasised gambling harms. Some could recall the responsible gambling messages at the end of adverts, yet these messages were also highlighted as placing responsibility for gambling behaviours solely with the individual.

2.4.1 The digitalisation of gambling can lead to initiation

Another study related to the role of commercial determinants in initiating gambling highlighted how the digital transformation of the gambling industry meant that gambling was more easily accessible. McCarthy et al. (2022) interviewed 41 women - with a range of PGSI scores - on the normalisation of gambling. Participants most frequently gambled on horses and sports, lotteries, and EGMs. Gambling was cited as a normal pastime by younger women within the study. They cited the influence of targeted advertising and new technologies - such as online gambling - which remove the experience of stigma from attending physical venues, as well as the increasing equality and financial independence of women.

> “The availability, the ease of gambling, using an app. There’s more privacy to it. If there was ever a stigma for women to go into a TAB or something like that, they don’t have to worry about that anymore because they can gamble in the privacy of their own homes” (McCarthy et al., 2022, p. 824).

In summary, the authors found that the technological development of the industry – and its ability to ensure that gambling products are available on mobile phones – meant that participants were able to gamble more easily.

Digital transformation of the industry has also been accompanied by the marketing of gambling products. McCarthy et al.’s (2020) study found that while family members played an important role in helping young women to engage in gambling, the women they interviewed attributed the normalisation of gambling in part due to excessive marketing.

> “That’s how I even started the sports betting because it was on TV. Bonus bet, sign up today. Okay, that sounds good. So that’s what got me in” (McCarthy et al., 2020, p. 379).

The authors highlighted how marketing that featured incentives to gamble, without any messages on the risk of gambling, made gambling more appealing for young women.

Corney and Davis (2010a) interviewed 16 female ‘problem gamblers’ and nine frequent gamblers who gambled online to understand the role of family, social situations and work on their gambling behaviour. The most prominent theme of the interviews was accessibility. Their participants reported that the Internet was an attractive medium compared to traditional, male-dominated venues where they might feel embarrassed or uncomfortable. Many of the women noted that they had originally played land-based bingo but had moved online due to the decline in bingo hall availability and because of the smoking ban. For example,

> “you can’t smoke at all...I think that’s why online bingo has become more popular...You can sit and have a drink and have a smoke in your own home” (Corney and Davis, 2010a, p. 295).

Many said that they started after seeing an advert ‘pop up’ on the Internet. They viewed their own homes as a safe place to gamble, with the Internet offering anonymity. Many described that once they had progressed from free gambling to money gambling, it was an irreversible process.

2.4.2 The welcoming atmosphere and flexibility of land-based settings can initiate gambling

Land-based settings encouraged gambling within social groups by creating cosy, flexible environments. Thomas et al. (2009) interviewed 13 EGM ‘problem gamblers’ and six gambling counsellors from Australia. They

reported that personal circumstances of the individual impacts the attraction of land-based venues. Those with flexible structures such as single people, shift workers, and those without children can find a lot of time to gamble impulsively. For example,

> "You'd go and have a drink with the boys; they'd go home to their wives. Me being a bachelor I'd go in and play the pokies" (Thomas et al., 2009, pp. 102-103).

Those with less flexible structures have to fit the gambling around family and other work commitments. Many reported that one of the motivations for EGM-based gambling was the service of the venues that house the machines. Their findings suggest that initial EGM use was occasional, light-hearted and a social activity, with venues described as welcoming which appeared especially important for females who gamble. In some cases, the venues were depicted as an "oasis" (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 101) away from all the issues of everyday life. Their late opening hours and wide accessibility in terms of the number of venues were also reported as factors which encouraged gambling. Participants compared this to other potential activities such as sport or shopping which were time-limited and inaccessible for many hours or without others. Participants who felt lonely suggested that attending the venues provided passive adult company even if only a few wished to actually interact with other patrons.

Furthermore, Reith and Dobbie's (2011) interviews with 50 recreational and 'problem gamblers' in the Glasgow area - an area of relatively high unemployment and pockets of social deprivation – found that legal and illegal gambling venues were part of their communities. Participants also cited other behaviours such as smoking and heavy alcohol use and the presence of betting shops next to pubs and bars. Females attended games like bingo with their mothers, whilst males typically engaged with sports betting or horserace betting in land-based venues.

2.4.3 Gambling advertising can influence young people's social identity

Finally, there is evidence that marketing of casinos can interact with social identities of adolescents to encourage gambling behaviours. McMullan et al. (2012) conducted focus groups with 50 Canadian adolescents aged between 13 and 18 to examine the process by which youth perceived, received or rejected the form and content of gambling advertising and to determine what such advertising meant to their social identities. The authors found that younger participants (13–14-year-olds) were more likely to distance themselves from the tone or style of adverts that older participants found attractive. Additionally, while the 13-to-14-year-olds cited the risks and dangers of gambling, older participants were more ambivalent. For them, gambling was a form of independence from the restrictions of early adolescence as it was forbidden, helping them to establish their own identities. The authors highlight the story of one participant who

> "recounted how graduating from high school was connected to gambling as a rite of passage toward a more grown-up self-image. 'My prom', he stated, 'was at the casino' and he and others in his school 'played poker as part of the prom'" (McMullan et al., 2012, p. 843).

The practice of gambling can therefore become an important aspect of social identity during a time of transition to adulthood. The authors subsequently highlight a need for a heterogenous approach to socially responsible advertising, especially in relation to youth protection, with the assumption that single messaging will not be effective for adolescents of all ages.

In summary, the evidence points to a range of commercial determinants in the initiation of gambling. The role played by gambling on big sporting events within families has been successfully leveraged by the gambling industry. Digitisation has led to the easy accessibility of gambling, particularly for women who find land-based venues male dominated. Advertising is also widely cited as playing a key role in gambling initiation including online advertising which makes the jump from seeing an advert to placing a bet quick and easy.

2.4.4 Children's perceptions of gambling can be shaped by adults' gambling behaviour

The review found literature that highlights how children's initial perceptions or experience of gambling can be impacted by adults' gambling behaviour. Bestman et al. (2017) interviewed 45 Australian children aged between six and 16 who had attended venues containing EGMs during the previous 12 months about their attitudes to electronic gaming machines (EGMs). They found that participants recalled where EGMs were located, in addition to their physical appearances. Participants also retained information about the behaviours associated with gambling on EGMs, particularly the reasons why adults played them, and their attitudes towards EGMs were reinforced by their knowledge of adults' EGM behaviours. Some children highlighted their belief that adults gambled on EGMs for fun or entertainment. "It's a form of entertainment, it's sort of a little bit of pleasure and a bit of adrenaline that sort of 'what's it going to be?'" (Bestman et al., 2017, p. 6). One third of children said they knew someone who used EGMs but, interestingly, even if they knew their parents used them, few children said that their parent has used EGMs in their presence. Children who did mention a parent's gambling behaviour described self-limiting behaviours and only gambling on special occasions. "Everyone that I know, doesn't put that much in, and they don't do it very often. It's kind of just like a one-off thing" (Bestman et al., 2017, pp. 6-7). Many of the children reported not intending to gamble until they turned 18, if at all, for risk of losing money or wasting their lives on the machines.

On the other hand, Wurtzburg and Tan (2011) interviewed 13 New Zealand households (consisting of 14 parents experiencing 'problem gambling' and their 19 children aged 11-16), where children reported that gambling was all-pervasive in their lives, with nine of the children having reported gambling in

the past. One parent recalled how her son was encouraged into gambling after they took him to a gambling location.

> "Linda recalled a time when she took her son, Larry, to a gaming location: 'he was playing, and someone said, 'what are you going to do if you win?' And he said, 'I am going to play these machines!' I thought, 'I don't want him getting addicted to it'" (Wurtzburg and Tan, 2011, p. 47).

Four children within the authors' study recalled being taken to gambling locations by parents, although this was not mentioned by the parents themselves.

2.5 Social casino games can also encourage online gambling

Evidence suggests that social casino games (online games that you can play for free and that don't have monetary prizes but are gambling themed) can encourage online gambling behaviours. Gainsbury et al. (2015) explored the relationships between social casino gaming, gambling and 'problem gambling' through interviews with ten social casino gamers (aged 20 and above). Most cited the main influence in playing these games as peers and family members. Importantly, however, participants also commented on the cross-promotion by operators from social casino games to real-money gambling, in particular adverts providing incentives for real-money gambling.

> "…they want you to like Facebook [and] they want you to like their bingo centre on Facebook. If you do that you go in the draw to win $50 bingo vouchers…you are given further credits and games in terms of tokens if you like these sites or direct people to real bingo. If you like them on Facebook every Sunday they call out names [for] this draw" (Gainsbury et al., 2015, p. 143).

Some participants in the study used social casinos because they wanted to learn about games before gambling real money. Others used these products to control urges, to rehabilitate themselves if they were a 'problem gambler', or when they did not have enough money to play real gambling games. Most who spent money on social casinos did so infrequently with little cost and half felt happy to play without spending money, although a few said that social casino games did not match the thrill of real gambling. Only one participant said social casino games led them to real gambling, and this person was a 'problem gambler'.

> "I ended up starting just for fun, then I would pay for… credit… just to extend your time playing… and then I just decided well if I'm gonna do that… I might as well just play online slots with the real money… I just play the slots on casino sites. It depends on whether I've got money" (Gainsbury et al., 2015, p. 147).

Two participants had the opposite experience, where playing social poker stopped them from playing real gambling poker games.

Carran and Griffiths' (2015) focus groups explored the relationship between gambling-like games and real-money gambling. Some participants did not try real-money gambling as they perceived it riskier and more stressful. "I don't do gambling but I can imagine it being very stressful because you can like lose a lot of money" (Carran and Griffiths, 2015, p. 107). These participants were more comfortable with the no-money alternatives. Conversely, young people who already gambled saw little point in social gaming. Generally, the participants did not believe that the link between the two activities was particularly strong. Participants felt people played these games for completely different reasons, to socialise on the one hand or to make money on the other.

Kim et al. (2016) also explored the link between social casino play and online gambling. All participants were aware of social casino games on Facebook, describing them as a method to connect people. Favourable features were the socially competitive aspects of the games that connected them to their friends and allowed them to brag on Facebook. The participants also described a loss of control from gameplay, with games perceived as addictive and leading to obsessive-type behaviours. They generally agreed that social casino games were easy to access, and were a good way to learn how to gamble.

> "Facebook is just a place to learn. To learn how to gamble. My friends started playing on Facebook to learn and now they are playing on Poker Stars. It starts on Facebook" (Kim et al., 2016, p. 118).

However, others felt like social games were so enjoyable that they felt no need to gamble with real money at all. Some identified issues associated with a lack of age restrictions, whilst others argued that any transition to real gambling says more about the individual than the game features. Nonetheless, a number of participants still highlighted how playing social casino games can "pave the way for online gambling" (Kim et al., 2016, p. 118).

> "I know some friends of mine who started playing Texas Hold'em on Facebook and then they win and then they are on top on the leader board and they want to try in real life so they go to a real casino. So I think this is where it sends a bad message" (Kim et al., 2016, p. 118).

Therefore, while not demonstrating causality through longitudinal data, participants within Kim et al.'s (2016) study highlight how they perceived the pathway from social casino games to real-money gambling.

Kristiansen et al.'s (2018) interviews with 48 young people found three key themes. The first theme highlighted types of games and contexts of experience. This reflected how some stumbled across games unintentionally, whilst others sought them out specifically. They noted how previous knowledge was not required to access the games. Facebook was a common place to find online poker games and their appearance on Facebook gave them the appearance of safe games. Gaming sites were also common, where only a few were specific to poker. Poker-specific sites were also available to those interested in playing poker. These sites encouraged real poker-playing

behaviours, thus sometimes resulting in a transition to real-money gambling. Participants reported a transition between the different levels of involvement from discovering games by chance on Facebook to then seeking out websites such as Poker Clients. The men interviewed very often used such platforms to play poker, while the women used other gaming websites that offered other games.

The second theme of motivations and effects highlighted the importance of social connections, with participants playing with friends and acquaintances, or with online friends. Few said they played alone, in private or against strangers. Many mentioned Facebook as a place where they learnt to gamble. Although they did not play with real money, they still enjoyed winning, and were sensible with their virtual currency. Participants had swapped the financial status of real-money gambling with the social-status of simulated games (for example, ranking on the leader boards). The third theme highlighted the links between simulated and real gambling, reflecting the difficulty for young people in understanding where the distinction lies between simulated and real gambling, and some reported trying real-money gambling after being successful in simulated gambling.

> "So I've won say 800,000 in… of course you don't actually win it, it's just for fun. But sometimes, I think maybe I could do this for real, man… Some companies give you 30 to get started, but you have to be over 18. We tried it once at my mate's place, but we didn't win anything. Then, it asked to pay up, and we were a bit unsure whether we had done something wrong cos we had played for real money" (Kristiansen et al., 2018, p. 259).

The authors reported that simulated gambling games appeared to be a space where players got comfortable with the games, learned how to find them rewarding, and felt the "thrill" (Kristiansen et al., 2018, p. 260) of gambling.

2.6 Conclusion

The first experiences of gambling can be significantly influenced by families and other social groups, with participants reporting introductions by close contacts through specific gambling products such as sports betting, or specific events such as the Melbourne Cup. This can often work to the gambling industry's benefit, with commercial determinants also encouraging the initiation of gambling through strategies which include the marketing and positioning of online and physical venue products. Additionally, gambling can also be framed as a social activity. The findings from this chapter highlight how existing social behaviours can be leveraged by the industry to encourage initial gambling behaviours. Evidence also suggests that social activities can be a gateway to gambling itself.

3 Social groups and continued gambling behaviour

Chapter Summary

- This chapter explores the role of social groups in continued gambling behaviour.
- Our evidence base is formed by 29 qualitative papers with sample sizes ranging from 100 participants interviewed during focus groups, to four participants in interviews.
- The evidence shows how continued gambling can become part of an individual's social life, normalised by commercial determinants such as marketing, or the digital transformation of the industry.
- Gambling can be a normal aspect of social lives for women, for example at sports events attended with friends and family, or meeting friends at commercial bingo halls. Studies show that, for men, gambling can be intertwined with masculine identity; and becomes a normalised part of the consumption of sport.
- Gambling can also be a social activity for older adults during other activities (such as playing slot machines when eating out with friends or going to a casino on holiday), or adolescents who may gamble with their peers while playing sport or during school-based settings.
- The distinction between skill and gambling is an important part of the social identity of poker players, who in turn do not see poker as gambling.

3.1 Introduction

Our scoping review found that following the initiation of gambling behaviours, social groups can play an important role in the continuation of that behaviour. This continuation seems to be based upon continuous gambling behaviour becoming entwined with an individual's social identity. This chapter highlights the literature that explored the role of social groups in continuing gambling behaviour. After briefly describing the evidence base, the chapter explores the relationship between social groups and the maintenance of gambling behaviour for women, and then men, while also highlighting the role of commercial determinants. The chapter then explores how gambling can be a social and routine activity for older adults, before exploring how gambling can become a form of lifestyle consumption for social groups. Next, the chapter explores the role of gambling as a social activity for adolescents. Finally, the chapter explores the role of gambling in the social identity of poker players, highlighting the importance between the distinction held between gambling and skill.

3.2 About the evidence base

The evidence base that explores the relationship between social groups and continued gambling behaviour is larger than that which explored the initiation of gambling. The sample consisted of 29 papers, 13 of which focused on Australia. Other jurisdictions included the UK, Canada, France, Greenland, Norway, Poland, Spain, and Sweden. Sample sizes varied depending on the

specific groups under study. For example, Thomas et al.'s (2012) study drew upon the experiences of 100 participants who had gambled in the past year, whilst Radburn and Horsley (2011) analysed the experiences shared in interviews with four poker players. All 29 papers are introduced in Table 4 here, and explored in further depth below in relation to themes that reflect the relationship between continued gambling and social lives of women, men, older adults and adolescents, the role of commercial determinants, and the distinction between skill and gambling for poker players.

Table 4: Papers exploring the relationship between gambling and identity or social life

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of gambling and role in identity and social life
Bouju et al. (2013)	France	Authors interviewed 16 Texas Hold'em players (aged 18 and over) to understand their perceptions of the game and their identities. In nearly all cases, regardless of game type or online/offline, players started young and were introduced through their circle of friends with the main motivations being social and because of the element of skill, as well as potential for winnings.
Casey (2006)	UK	Author interviewed 15 women about the UK National Lottery as a leisure practice. Participation was reported as fitting in with the women's demands of daily life. The author suggests that the lottery was being used as a way to derive pleasure from the everyday responsibilities without abandoning their caring selves.
Deans et al. (2017)	Australia	Semi-structured interviews with 50 men between the ages of 20 and 37 were carried out to explore how young men construct the social 'norms' of sports betting. Sports wagering was reported as a normal and socially acceptable activity. There was minimal stigma and guilt as compared to other gambling types. The authors speculated that this may be due to marketing strategies or sports betting being intrinsically linked to sport as a valued cultural commodity.
Gordon et al. (2015)	Australia	Authors interviewed friendship grounds with young (aged 18 to 30) non-pathological sports bettors. Gambling provided a common group within these social groups, whilst those who did not engage within sports betting may have been marginalised.
Hagen et al. (2005)	Canada	Authors deployed narrative analysis after interviews with 12 adults over 60 years old about the progression of their gambling over time. Most participants described gambling activities as a form of social entertainment that was non-problematic, enjoyable and affordable. Predominantly, the benefits of gambling were described in relation to companionship, cheap and high-quality food, stimulation, giving back to charities, and an opportunity for cheap holidaying.
Harris and Mazmanian (2016)	Canada	Authors interviewed 24 (13 male) Canadian self-identified 'Internet gamblers' (aged 24-52) who were seeking treatment about their perspectives on CBT. The participants reported that the accessibility of gambling makes refraining from and avoiding gambling difficult, whilst also creating relationships between gambling and multiple areas of their lives (for example: home, computer, phone, work).

Table 4, cont.: Papers exploring the relationship between gambling and identity or social life

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of gambling and role in identity and social life
Johnson et al. (2022)	Australia	Authors interviewed 40 older adults (aged 55 and above) to explore how social practices influenced participation in gambling. Key themes highlighted how gambling fulfilled social needs, and how gambling assimilated with daily routines.
Lamont et al. (2016)	Australia	Authors conducted online focus groups with a sample of 39 regular sports viewers (including 21 males and 18 females; 18 aged 18-29 years, 21 aged 30-60; 18 regular sports bettors, and 21 non-sports bettors) to explore their responses to a variety of gambling promotions used during televised rugby broadcasts. A range of positive and negative affective responses were identified, including joy, anger, worry, and arousal. Authors also propose a conceptual model representing emergent affective response categories, message delivery techniques and moderating variables.
Lamont and Hing (2019)	Australia	Authors held focus groups and in-depth interviews with male Australian sports bettors aged 18-34 to understand their betting through a lens of masculinity. Four themes emerged from the data. In relation to identity and social life, sports betting was portrayed as social and non-social with peer influences greater in pubs, betting shops and match venues but also with mobile platforms and individual gambling prevalent and often augmented by social discussions.
Lamont and Hing (2020)	Australia	Authors conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with Australian sports bettors aged 18-34 to understand betting motives through the lens of self-determination theory. Nine themes were uncovered: Influence from family and friends; development of skill; Sociability of gambling; Motivation to win money; Increased engagement with viewing sport; Feelings of risk and excitement; Cultural influences and the encouragement of sports betting as a normal activity amongst men; Gambling out of habit; And gambling through inducements of free bet offers.
Lelonek-Kuleta (2022)	Poland	Author interviewed 80 gambling-addicted and non-addicted Polish women over the age of 55 about their motivations for gambling. For non-addicted women, there were 5 basic motivational categories: sensation; money; activity; socialisation; escape. Those experiencing addiction prioritised finances to continue gambling, and gambling as escapism.

Table 4, cont.: Papers exploring the relationship between gambling and identity or social life

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of gambling and role in identity and social life
Lim et al. (2017)	UK	Authors interviewed 11 British professional footballers who had undergone or who were receiving treatment for gambling problems. Interviews revealed a common experience of beginning to gamble when an apprentice for social reasons (e.g., card-schools, casinos, racetracks, bookies to and from training). Gambling – exacerbated by the routines of professional football – was initially a social activity. Gambling for emotional motives was common and the footballers felt that it was the activity of choice because sports betting is an accepted pastime / leisure pursuit that fits congruently with their sporting identity.
Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2019)	Spain	Authors conducted seven focus groups with 43 male sports bettors undergoing treatment for gambling disorder to explore whether the lack of stigma and positive perceptions of sports betting present an issue for self-identification of harmful gambling behaviour. The focus groups found two prevalent themes: lack of negative connotations with sports betting, and the presence of positive connotations which sanitised sports betting.
Mathieu and Varescon (2022)	France	Authors interviewed 21 male, regular poker players on their experiences of playing poker. Thematic analysis highlighted four key themes: confrontation with intense emotions and sensations during play, acquisition of knowledge about the game itself, a change in the gamblers' initial perception of poker, leading them to approach the game more rigorously, and the comparison of the regulation of emotions and the game before and now.
McCarthy et al. (2020)	Australia	Interviews with 45 Australian women (aged 18-34) who had gambled at least once in the previous year to understand the factors that influence the normalisation of gambling. Gambling was also described as a way that peer groups bonded, and they emphasised the positives of the social aspects, but these events were highly gendered i.e., groups of female friends going to the races together.
McCarthy et al. (2021)	Australia	Interviewed 20 Australian women over 55 who had suffered harm from EGM gambling. Women described the EGM venues as a place for social connection in communities where there were few social spaces where women could feel safe or be alone without being stigmatised. The venues allowed the women to find time for themselves and relieve the stresses of everyday life, and allowed the women to maintain their identities as socially outgoing and active people who lived busy and fulfilled lives.

Table 4, cont.: Papers exploring the relationship between gambling and identity or social life

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of gambling and role in identity and social life
McCarthy et al. (2023)	Australia	Authors interviewed 41 Australian women (aged 18-40) with a range of PGSI scores about their conceptualisations and motives for gambling. Five themes emerged, including a theme which highlighted how easily accessible gambling allowed women to escape everyday lives, including within their own homes.
McCormack and Griffiths (2012)	UK	Authors conducted interviews with three professional poker players, one semi-professional poker player, and five recreational poker players. Authors adopted a Grounded Theory approach in exploring what separates professional and recreational players. Professional poker players were found to have perceived poker as a profession or sport as opposed to a form of gambling.
McGee (2020)	UK	Focus groups with 32 adults (aged 18 to 35) on the normalisation of gambling. Key themes suggest that betting had become a normal aspect of consuming sport, prevalent in conversations around sport, and concern for the extent of gambling advertising in sport. Accounts also suggest that marketing increases consumption.
Nyemcsok et al. (2022)	Australia	Interviews with 16 young Australian men (18-24) who were regular sports bettors about their perceptions of the risks of sports betting. Participants described early gambling experiences from watching sport with family and friends, discussions around sports, and participation in fantasy football leagues. They also highlighted the role of peer rivalry within gambling behaviours.
Nyemcsok et al. (2023)	Australia	Authors interviewed 16 young men aged 18-24 who gambled online at least monthly and interpreted the data through a social-practice lens. Participants reported themselves as invariably part of groups of other men who gambled, (for example, from friendship groups, sports clubs, employment training sites, and workplaces). The links between social membership and gambling were strong, and gambling was normalised.
Pattinson and Parke (2017)	UK	Authors interviewed 10 females (aged 60 to 80) about their high frequency gambling behaviour. Interviews uncovered three key themes: “filling voids” where gambling satisfied psychosocial needs, “emotional escape”, and “overspending”.

Table 4, cont.: Papers exploring the relationship between gambling and identity or social life

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of gambling and role in identity and social life
Radburn and Horsley (2011)	UK	Authors conducted interviews with four men (aged between 21 and 27) who played casino poker to explore how poker players construct their identities. Four categories emerged: gambler, grinder, maverick, and nongambler, in addition to the categorisation of professional poker player.
Talberg (2018)	Norway	Author interviewed 15 poker players about their experiences. Three most prominent themes highlighted a perceived lack of understanding from those outside of poker, an unwillingness to talk to those outside of poker, and the ethical considerations related to opponents with gambling problems.
Thomas et al. (2012)	Australia	Authors conducted semi-structured interviews with 100 adults (62 male, 38 female, aged 18-88) who had gambled within the past year to explore how different groups of individuals interpret or respond to a range of marketing strategies used to promote gambling and gambling products. The authors found three key themes: “increased awareness of gambling advertising”, “the role of marketing in normalising gambling”, “and the impact of incentivization on gambling behaviours” (p. 119).
Thomas et al. (2022)	Australia	Authors interviewed 41 Australian women aged between 20-40 with a range of experiences with gambling about their personal engagement in gambling, their experiences of gambling, their motivations to gamble, and their engagement with different gambling products and environments. Participants reported how the social groups were constructed around gambling. Gambling connected them with a range of social groups and ages including peers, partners and older family members. The social value of gambling also often came from the connections it forged between different generations of the family, as well as the familiarity of the activity if it had been passed down through generations. Others felt that gambling facilitated feelings of belonging and inclusion, with gambling seen as normal.
Udesen et al. (2019)	Greenland (Denmark)	Authors conducted focus group interviews with 31 adolescents (aged 12-16) who have experience with gambling. Many of the interviews revealed that the children’s experiences were related to sports gambling and computer games (e.g., buying skins). Skins were seen as socially valuable and as providing prestige. Gambling was only seen as ‘gambling’ if purpose was to make money rather than socialise. The main reasons to gamble included for entertainment, and to socialise.

Table 4, cont.: Papers exploring the relationship between gambling and identity or social life

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus of gambling and role in identity and social life
Vinberg et al. (2021)	Sweden	Authors interviewed 30 Swedish male athletes, coaches and managers to understand how they experienced gambling behaviours and harm in their sport. Gambling was related to the need to make money and prove skill, with coaches encouraging gambling which improved team relationships.
Wilson and Ross (2011)	Canada	Authors conducted seven focus groups with a total of 36 students (aged 13-18) from high schools in Montreal to explore why children gamble, and what makes gambling activities popular to children where they live, study and play. Main themes reflected popular gambling activities, the reason why gambling is popular (to win money), the appeal of gambling for youth, and the popularity of video lottery terminals.

3.3 Gambling can be a normal aspect of social life for women

The scoping review also found that gambling can become a normal part of social life for women. For example, Thomas et al.'s (2022) interviews with 41 Australian women (aged 20-40) found that social groups were integral to the meaning they constructed around gambling. Gambling connected them with a range of social groups and ages including peers, partners and older family members. Gambling was clearly framed as a social activity. However, many also spoke about "reluctant participation" (Thomas et al., 2022, p. 5) and only gambled because partners and friends gambled.

> "(My ex-partner's) family were very big into gambling and they'd go to Crown Casino and spend a lot of money… So I'd be at Crown a lot with them. It was more through boredom than anything that I'd just sit on the pokies, I don't enjoy them, but I'd sit there because I was there" (Thomas et al., 2022, p. 5).

The social value of gambling often consisted of the connections it forged between different generations of the family. Others felt that gambling was normal as it facilitated feelings of belonging. When done with friends, gambling was accompanied with other activities such as alcohol consumption. The social nature of gambling was also seen as a way to build knowledge and competence.

McCarthy et al.'s (2020) study – also carried out in Australia - found that participants described ongoing gambling as a form of socialisation. The women reported that social events were highly gendered, with groups of female friends going to the races together. Although gambling was not the main purpose of social events, it did serve as an important aspect of their social lives with casinos, racecourses and community venues as female-friendly spaces during social events.

> "There was one occasion where I was at the casino and we were with some of my friends and we were waiting for other people to come. So we just [gambled] to pass time" (McCarthy et al., 2020, p. 378).

Gambling was thus entrenched as a regular event for participants, and incorporated alongside other activities that may have been the main reason for social gatherings.

Our scoping review also uncovered literature that explored the social aspects of gambling for older women. For example, McCarthy et al.'s (2021) interviews with 20 Australian women aged over 55 who had suffered harm from EGM gambling found that gambling behaviour was maintained in land-based venues in various ways. The participants noted that EGMs were easy to use and embedded within social settings. They described the EGM venues as "somewhere you could go, you could sort of meet people and talk to people and hear their different stories" (McCarthy et al., 2021, p. 4). The venues allowed the women to maintain their identities as socially outgoing, with busy

and fulfilled lives. For others, the venues afforded them the anonymity necessary for them to relax. Many women felt that financial losses were outweighed by the positive effects that gambling had on their social and emotional lives, especially for those experiencing loneliness. Generally, the participants felt that the EGMs were positive and improved their self-esteem. The provision of a welcome environment was important for the maintenance of the participants' gambling behaviour. Women described EGM venues as a place for social connection, especially in communities where there were few social spaces where women could feel safe, with a few participants reporting EGM venues as an escape from violent home environments.

> "I thought it was giving me all the social needs that I wanted. Being around people, being out, doing something on my own without having to run. It felt like my guilty pleasure… Like sitting in front of this innate object and not having to think about anything think about what was going on in my life" (McCarthy et al., 2021, p. 5).

Lelonek-Kuleta (2022) found that socialising was a strong motivator for Polish women over the age of 55 to gamble. Non-addicted women who led active lives used gambling to overcome the monotony of older age, and for socialisation. For example, gambling was often done with friends or in groups whether at gambling venues or at home. Overall, for non-addicted women, pleasure and entertainment were the major factor attracting women to gambling, especially because of the limited other opportunities for older women to entertain themselves. Gambling was also a ritualistic activity that helped participants deal with the boredom of retirement.

> "The thing is that when you go out, when you are going to meet other people, you need to wear more fancy clothes, put on make-up, get your hair done. It is a ritual of sorts. We will arrange with other girls what to wear. You know, this is different. What else is there for a retired person to do?" (Lelonek-Kuleta, 2022, p. 642).

For women experiencing addiction to gambling, there was a key difference in their motivational hierarchy. Although socialisation was not missing from the addicted groups' motives, less importance was placed on the social aspects of gatherings, with more on the social occasion or social groups facilitating gambling itself.

> "(...) I am usually attracted to people who like games, for example cards. I am particularly keen on cards. Initially, we would play at somebody's home. Now, at least once or twice a week we arrange to go by car or take two cars, and go to (...) the arcade" (Lelonek-Kuleta, 2022, p. 644).

In the UK, Pattinson and Parke's (2017) interviews with women aged between 60 and 80 about their high-frequency gambling behaviour found that going to the bingo halls gave participants a "reason to get dressed" (p. 246), and a way to relieve social isolation. Gambling helped them to feel a part of society, allowed them to build self-esteem, and had given them autonomy and purpose which they felt significantly outweighed any negative monetary losses. A

second theme represented emotional escape. Escapism was sought to overcome negative experiences such as increased loneliness after retirement through events such as bereavement, declining physical health and demanding caring roles.

> "If I have not been in for a bit, it kind of lifts you up, you feel a bit better like, but it was same whilst Michael was away [son the participant cares for at home]. I went to [gambling location] for the morning, and I had a go in the slots and that. I won. About £20 I think it was, and it was only on normal 10p games like." (Pattinson and Parke, 2017, p. 248).

They reported that gambling was exciting, engrossing and a great place for social interaction and escapism, giving them a place to discuss the undercurrent of past trauma and facilitated peer understanding and support. Participants were generally unsupportive of employees stepping in during gambling sessions. Participants felt that older age brought a reduced need to avoid risk and harm as they have less responsibility and very little else in their lives. In summary, the gambling opportunities enriched their lives even if they acknowledged the financial sacrifices they were making.

3.3.1 Women's engagement with gambling is influenced by its availability

In relation to the role that gambling plays in the social life of women, the review also found literature that explored the impact of the wider availability of gambling. In Australia, McCarthy et al. (2023) explored factors that influenced younger women's ongoing, routine engagement with gambling. Several participants (aged between 18 and 40) reported gambling to escape aspects of everyday life. They described how they made time to play scratchcards while the children were sleeping, or around busy work schedules. Some of those who said they gambled to overcome sadness or loneliness scored highly on the PGSI. Participants mainly gambled alone, however some incorporated gambling into date nights with their partners, or into extending the night out they were already having with friends. For others, the attraction was that gambling venues were accessible and open late, especially for those in areas with fewer social places.

> "It would probably be like a bar or a nightclub but then obviously now a lot of that closes quite early you know 1am, 2am, 3am, and you know some people still want to have another drink at the end of the night. So it's the only other place open and the only other real option is the casino" (McCarthy, 2023, p. 132).

Women also discussed how gambling was an extension of existing leisure activities. Women who bet on sports said that it enhanced their consumption of sport, thus making sport more enjoyable. Some also mentioned the ritualised nature of sports betting around certain events.

Thomas et al. (2022) interviewed 41 Australian women aged between 20 and 40. Availability and accessibility were key influences on behaviour, and gambling was characterised by convenient consumption. Embedded lottery terminals in retail outlets meant that participants perceived them as omnipresent. The participants also felt that online gambling removed stigma around gambling. Moreover, the embedding of gambling in leisure and entertainment spaces made them appear "family friendly" (Thomas et al., 2022, p. 5) and often came with other consumables like drinks, food and entertainment, becoming part of the routine consumption in these spaces. The authors also found that the impact of social groups and feelings of familiarity created a perception of competency especially when products were easy to engage with. Technology was also spoken about as a way to routinise gambling and an ability to set up automated transactions (for example, lottery), where participants could “set and forget” (Thomas et al., 2022, p. 7).

> “I only play the lottery, technically every day… I don’t even have the app on my phone… I log into the website once a month maybe, and just see if I need to chuck money in” (Thomas et al., 2022, p. 7).

Some forms of gambling were perceived as easier to engage in because they were automatic and did not require face-to-face interaction. The authors highlight the preference to gamble on poker machines rather than face-to-face forms of gambling such as table games, as an example. Online gambling also facilitated more complicated betting, such as bets that included the outcomes of multiple sporting events. Some felt that being able to consume gambling through digital technology made it more likely for them to win, with the authors detailing an example of a participant who felt that the ability to buy more entries into online bingo gave them a better chance of winning compared to someone playing land-based bingo.

3.4 Gambling can also become a part of daily life for women

In addition to literature that explored the role of gambling as a social activity for women, the review also found literature that explored gambling as a more mundane, and more frequent part of daily life for women. Casey’s (2006) study found that participants reported buying lottery tickets and how they could involve the whole family.

> “…the little un’ll say ‘Dad, I’ll get the lottery numbers’ and he gets the paper ready and ticks them off. Or Saturday… we went out on Saturday, so yesterday we checked (the winning numbers) on Teletext” (Casey, 2006, p. 9).

The author saw this as fitting in with the women's demands of daily life. The women emphasised that they would not spend money on the lottery if they did not have the money spare to do so. Men typically bought the tickets, but the women usually collected any winnings and would decide how it was spent. Additionally, participants distanced themselves from others who gamble on

other forms such as fruit machines, and from those who were irresponsible with their money, perceiving this as shameful and wasteful.

Our review also found evidence that gambling can evolve into a normal activity for women that may cause harm, after evolving from a social activity. Thomas et al.'s (2022) study (introduced above) found that, for a few of the women gambling was a normal, but solitary activity, often developed from previous social gambling. For example, as one participant told the authors:

> "It's no longer a special occasion, it's more frequent and it's more just to try and make money instead of just part of an experience, like a day with people. It's gone from a social thing to I do it by myself" (Thomas et al., 2022, p. 7).

This therefore provides evidence of how continuous gambling can become a frequent activity with the aim of making financial profit as opposed to gambling being a social activity.

3.5 Gambling and sport can be intertwined with masculine identity

The review found literature that highlights how the relationship between gambling and sports can be intertwined with masculine identity. This relationship meant that gambling was perceived as a natural aspect of the consumption of sport. For male sports bettors, Lamont and Hing (2019) found important links between the practice of betting and notions of masculinity. For example, "most blokes are risk takers aren't they? It's in our blood . . . it [sports betting] just makes it [watching sports] more exciting" (Lamont and Hing, 2019, p. 254). Social contexts such as pubs, betting shops and match venues provided opportunities for men to gamble and socialise. Participants felt that peer pressure to gamble was implicit, and improved status within the group achieved through winning bets. Moreover, there was a sense that the control over betting behaviours was related to strength of character.

Separately, Lamont and Hing (2020) conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with Australian men who engaged with sports betting, to understand betting motives through the lens of self-determination theory. Their findings included social factors such as bonding, conversation topic and sports betting as a routine leisure activity. The authors framed betting behaviour in relation to habit and identity construction, and internalising social identities in sports settings.

> "I moved schools and...my newer friends were really into football and then...[I] started to take a bit more of an interest in football and over the last four years...it sort of came from there, saw my friends you know, putting some money on and I probably did the same at the pub one night and you know, slowly become a bit more of a regular thing" (Lamont and Hing, 2020, p. 192).

Social status and demonstrating competence were important parts of male consumption communities built around sports betting. A few noted that whilst they did not approve of betting, they had a fear of being ostracised from their group for not conforming. The authors also found that "the ability to understand and interpret the betting odds and knowledge of the game" (Lamont and Hing, 2020, p. 199) ensured entry into social groups where sports betting formed part of their identity.

Gambling can therefore be a way of embedding oneself within a male-orientated group where it is already a routine or ritual social activity. A further example of this is reported in Lim et al.'s (2017) study with 11 professional footballers. Their interviews revealed a common experience of gambling within professional football for social reasons (for example through card schools, casinos, racetracks, and visiting betting shops when travelling to and from training). The authors found that this experience of gambling was perceived positively. These experiences provided a sense of fun and light-hearted competition, and promoted team spirit and bonding. Gambling was seen as a normal leisure pursuit that bridged the gap between younger and more senior players. However, they also noted that some players experienced harm.

> "[I cannot] stop gambling. I've lost all my money. Can't pay this, can't pay that. I've nowhere to go. So you tell lies, you tell more lies. Before you know it, you forget your own lies and you don't know what you said… urm… and you can't get out of this very horrible trap of borrowing money, to win money to borrow money to pay it back" (Lim et al., 2017, p. 133).

Despite this, footballers felt that sports betting aligned with their sporting identity. Similarly, Vinberg et al.'s study (2021) of Swedish male athletes, coaches and managers found that gambling was pervasive amongst elite athletes and sporting contexts. Gambling facilitated group cohesion, excitement, and generated income. The study found that coaches and managers wanted teams to be cohesive and were therefore likely to support betting behaviour.

Male social groups can also often be a place where additional gambling behaviours such as technical aspects and "skills" are developed. Nyemcsok et al.'s (2023) study found that participants were part of groups of other men who gambled (for example, friendship groups, sports clubs, training sites, and workplaces). For them, the links between membership and gambling were strong and gambling was clearly a routine activity. Some participants spoke about "punters' clubs" where friends all contributed money to be deposited into a bookmaker account.

> "We've got half a punter's club thing so we all chip in at the start of the year, like 100 bucks for horse racing or footy bets, and each week we put on a multi and split the winnings. Just rotates and if we put a 10 leg multi on the footy, put it into the (SMA) chat and go – 'does everyone agree with this or?' – If someone disagrees, we'll talk about it and change something" (Nyemcsok et al., 2023, p. 247).

Participants thought they could exert some control through skill-based betting and knowledge of sport. Through this knowledge they felt they had a competitive edge, and this sense of skill would then lead to betting on other sports, during the entire year, as opposed to betting taking place during a particular sporting or racing season. Spending also intersected with other social occasions such as going out with friends at the weekend and paying for weekend activities.

Separately, Nyemcsok et al. (2022) conducted interviews with young men (aged between 18 and 24) who were regular sports bettors about their perceptions of the risks of sports betting. A key theme was the role of peer rivalry, especially amongst those who scored moderate or lower risk on the PGSI screen.

> "It's always good with your mates because if you watch a game with your mates and all your mates would have different bets on, so you're all like fuckin' going at each other, trying to win a bit. It becomes like a competition" (Nyemcsok et al., 2022, p. 6).

The rivalry between friends normally existed beforehand (through playing or watching sport) and gambling became another avenue through which rivalry could exist. This rivalry enhanced their connectedness and enthusiasm to socialise. Comparisons to the behaviours of their friendship group often maintained participants' gambling by justifying their own level of betting behaviour. Many felt that other members of their peer group gambled more often than they did, and had less control over their gambling than they did. Some also spoke about systems and self-limiting strategies. These people had a decreased sense of risk. On the other hand, they sometimes changed their own limits as they felt like their previous limits were too restrictive. The authors also found that participants alluded to everyday social cues that nudged them towards gambling, and this was irrespective of PGSI scores. These social cues included recreational, work, and educational environments, all contributing to feelings of acceptance. Participants also reported that social messaging apps allowed conversations around sports betting to take place even when apart from their friends.

Deans et al. (2017) explored how young men constructed the social 'norms' of sports betting. They also highlighted the importance of punters' clubs. There was a strong perception within the sample that sports wagering is a normal and socially acceptable activity for sports fans, not only amongst their own social groups but also amongst most male sports fans. The participants suggested that there was minimal stigma associated with sports betting compared to other gambling types, thus increasing their engagement with sports betting.

> "If I said 'I'm going to put a bet on the football', 'oh okay'. But if I said I'm going to the pokies, 'don't waste your time'. It's like I've committed a sin. When you look at it, it's the same thing, but for some reason you say with pokies and people are like 'why?' But you say 'I'm going to put a bet on the first try scorer, I'm going to put it on this game or I'm

> backing it for $50', they're like 'oh yeah, I think they might win'" (Deans et al., 2017, p. 109).

The authors also uncovered social pressures to gamble. Like other activities that have found themselves implicitly linked to sporting events, such as alcohol consumption, betting had become an embedded and ritualistic part of sports consumption. Participants reported that punters' clubs had great social benefits, and they were unlikely to report any potential influence of punters' clubs on risky behaviour. Furthermore, men within punters' clubs borrowed and transferred money between each other which they felt reduced risky behaviours. Finally, the language used in sporting conversations was seen as facilitating a gambling culture amongst the men. Conversations about gambling were overwhelmingly positive, although a few questioned the dominance of gambling commentary. Gambling-related losses were rarely discussed.

3.5.1 The relationship between masculine identity, sport, and gambling can also be influenced by gambling marketing

The scoping review also found that the gambling industry deploys marketing strategies that appeals to the relationship between sport, gambling and masculine identity. The sample within Deans et al.'s (2017) study perceived sports betting to be acceptable amongst their own group but also amongst most male sports fans and suggested that there was minimal stigma and guilt as compared to other gambling types. The authors speculated that this may be in part due to marketing strategies or operators' sponsorship of sporting events that portrayed sports betting as a popular societal activity.

> "Every second ad now during a live sport event is a gambling ad or if you listen to the radio, every second ad's a gambling ad so that's got to give you some sort of indication that more people are gambling" (Deans et al., 2017, p. 108).

The authors found that an increased volume of gambling promotion within sports signalled to participants that more people were now betting on sports. Such marketing strategies, when combined with the significant role that sports betting plays in the consumption communities formed by men as highlighted earlier, serve only to entrench gambling as a continued pursuit rather than a one-off event.

McGee (2020) explored the normalisation of sports betting through focus groups and interviews with – and the gambling diaries of – men aged 18-35. Participants suggested that gambling had become a normalised aspect of the consumption of sport. Many also had concerns with the level of advertising related to sports betting. Promotional offers and incentives from the operators were depicted as enticing, with bettors incentivised to register for multiple accounts with different companies through loyalty and bonus offers. Participants specifically mentioned how free and matched bets were

advertised as focusing on the benefits of gambling, and concerns that adverts encourage impulsive betting especially in their age group.

> "I have had at least 15 accounts. I'd do it to receive sign up offers and free bets. Sometimes I wouldn't even use it again, I'd move on to the next one. Before long, it wasn't enough to bet over 90 min. I ended up betting more in-play. Goals and cards. I'd do stupid bets like more than nine corners or on one goal in the first half" (McGee, 2020, p. 92).

The constant barrage of promotional offers creates the sense that betting is a routine activity for many people, while also encouraging regular impulsive betting.

Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2019) conducted seven focus groups with 43 Spanish male sports-bettors who were undergoing treatment for gambling disorder. One of the main themes that emerged was the presence of positive connotations that "sanitised" (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2019, p. 571) sports betting. The proliferation of marketing contributed to this perception of gambling, whether through peer groups or in workplaces. Most participants felt the advertising and proliferation of betting terminals was excessive and detrimental. Many participants were worried about young people, especially about the use of celebrity endorsements and the lack of legal barriers to involvement.

> "A [mature] person sees [Cristiano] Ronaldo wearing Bwin in his jersey and won't do anything. But a 14-year-old kid sees that, then goes to the bar, sees the terminal with Bwin written on it, and will think: how is this going to be harmful if Ronaldo is carrying it in his chest?" (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2019, p. 579).

Most also said that whilst their families were places where they learnt that gambling was socially acceptable, interactions with peers in the workplace were the strongest drivers of social acceptability, whether through seeing colleagues gambling during working hours or workplace discussions on the subject of gambling. The erosion of any barrier between work and recreation time allowed by online gambling was cited as entrenching and routinising betting in a range of social spaces.

Nyemcsok et al.'s (2022) study with young men who were regular sports bettors found that participants believed that their sense of control over gambling was derived through exposure to marketing material, and "taking advantage" (Nyemcsok et al., 2022, p. 8) of promotions and odds. For example, "if you're going to be smart with it or if you do it at all (betting), you'd want to get the best value for money" (Nyemcsok et al., 2022, p. 8). Many highlighted the pervasive nature of targeted marketing promotions sent via emails, texts, notifications, phone calls and mobile apps. Participants also highlighted deposit-matching inducements. However, many also recognised that such offers encourage gambling and potentially risky behaviour patterns, with some participants having reported turning off notifications while others reported feeling that they might be missing out.

3.6 Commercial determinants encourage continued gambling amongst groups including both women and men

Whereas the previous sections highlight how commercial determinants normalise gambling for women and men respectively, the review also found research that explored the impact of commercial determinants on men and women together. Thomas et al. (2012) found significant awareness of gambling advertising. The authors describe this as “saturation advertising” (Thomas et al., 2012, p. 123), ensuring that messaging is unavoidable. Males within this study were especially aware of sports-related advertising and felt that it was directly targeting them as a group, whereas females mentioned a broader range of products. The interviewees consistently mentioned that advertising promoted the social acceptability and benefits of gambling behaviours. The males mentioned how sports betting adverts would enter their conversations around sport with friends. Most interviewees were concerned about the prevalence of marketing within family-friendly places, and its appeal to children. Promotions and incentives provided by gambling companies were also highlighted. Older women felt the incentives were mutually beneficial for themselves and EGM venues, but older men felt the costs of incentives outweighed the benefits to them as consumers.

Harris and Mazmanian (2016) interviewed 24 (13 male) Canadian self-identified ‘Internet gamblers’ who were seeking treatment about their perspectives on cognitive behavioural therapy. The participants reported that the accessibility of gambling made avoiding gambling difficult. For example, “[…] going to the casino is much easier to avoid. I have access to the Internet everywhere. Gambling has become associated with my home, computer and phone” (Harris and Mazmanian, 2016, p. 889). Participants also often reported a lack of alternative leisure activities, and gambling had become a main source of excitement, stress regulation, and escapism. Common ways to avoid gambling included socialising with friends, spending time with family, or exercising. Participants frequently reported modifying their environments and behaviour as important in avoiding high-risk situations that lead to urges and exposure. Many also utilised behavioural strategies by limiting their access or limiting their finances, such as leaving their laptops at work, blocking gambling accounts, cancelling credit cards, employing limit setting options, or setting spending limits.

Lamont et al. (2016) were interested in affective response to in-play sports betting promotions. Eight focus groups were conducted with males and females aged between 18 and 60 with a range of sports betting experience. Non-sports bettors generally responded negatively to advertising with only a few suggesting it increased interest in gambling, and explicit gambling messages during broadcasts were reacted to with strong negativity.

> “It’s too intrusive. It’s stupid. There’s no point in having it there. This stuff before the game, they should be doing pre-game interviews,

> talking about what's happening, not just focusing on what the odds are" (Lamont et al., 2016, p. 326).

Even amongst participants who did not respond negatively, static messages were ineffective at eliciting positive affect or interest and were lost amongst other marketing materials. On the other hand, integrated promotions based on game events were seen positively amongst regular sports-bettors but mostly when they were in breaks rather than interrupting play. Importantly, it was the explicit messages during breaks that participants felt made them gamble impulsively. Other important contextual effects mentioned that increased self-reported impulsivity were social viewing and alcohol consumption.

3.7 Gambling can be a social and routine activity for older adults

Our review found research that explored the role of social groups on the continued gambling of older adults. Johnson et al. (2022) interviewed 40 Australian older adults (aged 55 and above) to explore how social practices influenced their participation in gambling. Two major themes were prevalent within the interviews. The first theme centred around the role of social needs. Participants described how continued gambling was embedded in their social activities, and many described engaging with a wide variety of games while consuming food and drink. Frequency of gambling was mainly dictated by the peer groups, and gambling was often both the main activity and an *ad hoc* activity that followed a meal out together. Other times, gambling was a holiday activity that was associated with a sense of group belonging and bonding with family or friends. This was especially mentioned amongst those who gambled infrequently. Another important social group that encouraged gambling were colleagues, especially in relation to big cultural events. Here, gambling was seen as a way to embed oneself in the culture of the workplace and develop a sense of belonging. Another important social aspect was for those whole gambled alone to make connections with other people, with gambling therefore used to overcome loneliness and negative emotion.

The second major theme centred around how social practices developed gambling routines. Here, continued gambling behaviours became assimilated into everyday routines in very explicit ways such as specific days of the week, at specific times, or using the same machines or games. This ritualistic behaviour could be related to other activities at the venues, or availability of family members.

> "There's bingo, there's a group of four or five of us that go together. I leave when bingo's finished. We go another night, there's a meat raffle on the Friday night. I used to go to Trivia there too on a Tuesday night, Trivia's not on and the bingo's not on, so and no meat raffle on at the moment, that's when we've been playing the Keno. We'll sit there and we'll play Keno while we sit there and have a talk and that" (Johnson et al., 2022, p. 13).

The most routinised behaviour was the purchase of lottery tickets during grocery shopping when participants reported selecting the same numbers every week. The only exceptions to this were when the jackpot was higher, where they would then buy more tickets.

Hagen et al.'s (2005) study found that older adults described ongoing, routinised gambling activities as a form of social entertainment that was non-problematic, enjoyable and affordable. The benefits of gambling were mainly described in relation to companionship, cheap and high-quality food, stimulation, giving back to charities, and an opportunity for cheap holidaying. Gambling was a "safe way to be bad" (Hagen et al., 2005, p. 436), and participants detailed how gambling could give them a sense of thrill and risk-taking in a life that is full of caution and self-sacrifice. Almost all of the participants were aware of the risks of gambling and spoke specifically about strategies that they use to mitigate negative outcomes such as understanding the odds, setting money limits, avoiding notions of luck, quitting when ahead, not gambling alone, and using tricks to make money and time go further (e.g., use smaller amounts of money to ensure longer sessions of continued gambling).

3.8 Gambling can become an entrenched form of lifestyle consumption

We uncovered research that explored the role of social groups where gambling forms an entrenched consumption community, or a community in "which commonality of consumption is a present force" (Gordon et al., 2015, p. 2165). Gordon et al. (2015) interviewed friendship groups – that included young (18-30) Australian 'non-pathological gamblers' – through the lens of lifestyle consumption communities in the context of sports betting. The authors found that consumption communities were based on shared cultural values that fostered competition and loyalty, and the passion for sports represented through rivalries. Betting heightened these passions and feelings of rivalry (for example, friends betting against each other). As one participant highlighted, "I like it, it makes it interesting. One of my friends will go the opposite to what I do so it's more competitive" (Gordon et al., 2015, p. 2167). Competition and winning also gave heightened social status, although there was an expectation that winners would give back to the group in some way (for example, buying a round of drinks). "They just hit me up for a round, that's all right; I don't mind shouting a round, sure. That's protocol when someone wins. Well it is, like you, come on, you're buying all night" (Gordon et al., 2015, p. 2167). This also links with participants that spoke about traditions and rituals and sitting together in social groups watching sport on large televisions. The cultural value of loyalty was demonstrated through their connections to specific teams and players. This becomes a point of connection and shared interest – a common ground. This also worked the other way too by feelings of ingroup connectivity heightened by the observations of those who liked other sports not accepted by the group, or who did not bet. Participants also highlighted the

desire to build acumen and skill, evidenced through navigating the odds and knowledge of the game.

> "I'm a sports fanatic… I reckon I check daily odds around the world and different betting agencies as well. I don't reckon I go through an AFL weekend without looking at what the odds are" (Gordon et al., 2015, p. 2168).

Being able to navigate odds and multi-bets was highly regarded in the social groups. However, this skill gave a false sense of control, and led to risker betting behaviours. A greater understanding of betting than their peers gave the perception that participants were mastering a skill. The other main facet of acumen and skill was the knowledge of the game where demonstrations of knowledge are highly regarded and supposedly allow for 'nuanced' decisions to be made. This demonstrates again how sports betting becomes entrenched, thus making gambling continuous.

3.9 Gambling can be a social activity for adolescents

Our scoping review uncovered literature specifically exploring the role that continuous gambling can play in the social lives of adolescents. Udesen et al. (2019) conducted focus groups with 31 adolescents (aged 12-16) who have experience with gambling. Participants reported reasons for gambling as entertainment and for its social aspects. As one 13-year-old boy informed the study, "When we play football, then we try to hit different things and the one that hits it first gets the money" (Udesen et al., 2019, p. 5). At the same time, however, they suggested that games were only forms of gambling if money was at stake, and not if they were being played for social reasons.

> "It is also about the purpose. That is really what I feel define gambling. Is it just about the money or is it the comfort (hygge) around it… That we are doing it together" (Udesen et al., 2019, p. 4).

Furthermore, when asked about bingo, the children said that bingo was something they routinely played with their elderly relatives, but did not identify this as a form of gambling.

Wilson and Ross (2011) conducted seven focus groups with a total of 36 Canadian high school students to understand the appeal of video lottery terminals. They suggested that males liked participating in sports betting, dice and video lottery terminals with friends, whereas females preferred solitary activities like lottery and scratch cards. In terms of the locations where gambling occurs, participants described school as a place where they played dice and their homes as a place where they could gamble online.

> "Dice, especially here in this school. Since the principal keeps an eye on dice activity in the caf [cafeteria], so now we can't really play dice wherever we want. It's not like last year, when almost everybody used to play dice, everyday students used to bring dice and everybody was

like 'hey you got dice, you wanna play?' And they used to bet for money, sometimes 100 bucks, at school!" (Wilson and Ross, 2011, p. 132).

The authors argued that their results highlight the need for interventions that highlight the social aspects of gambling that appeal to children (males, in particular), while also acknowledging that children use their environment (such as school or home) to shape their gambling activity.

3.10 The perception of skill is an important part of the social identity of poker players

Poker is often seen as a different form of gambling thanks to the element of skill that is involved during play. Indeed, poker is often depicted in films such as *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965) as a sport or skill to be mastered. Our scoping review found that the distinction between skill and gambling played a key part of the ongoing social identity of poker players, who in turn do not regard poker as a gambling activity. Bouju et al. (2013) interviewed Texas Hold'em players to understand their perceptions of the game and their identities. Main motivations for playing were elements of skill and competition, and potential for winnings. Some conceptualised poker as a sport, with success requiring self-discipline, constant training and the ability to outsmart their opponents. "A great player said, 'If after a given time, you still have not spotted any pigeons at the table, it's because you are the pigeon'" (Bouju et al., 2013, p. 15). Players also spoke about emotional regulation strategies to maintain a cool-headed capacity, thus avoiding impulsivity and loss chasing. They found that players perceived poker as giving a chance for self-development (for example, through stress management and social relationships). "I like the psychological side, its scope reaches beyond the game itself to personal development in the management of emotions" (Bouju et al., 2013, p. 19). The authors found that participants integrated the feedback from game outcomes into their self-identity.

There are also different identities that poker players feel are present within the game. Radburn and Horsley (2011) explored how poker players construct their identities in relation to others. Four categories of identity emerged, in addition to the central category of professional poker player. These identities were related to the level of skill displayed by each player. Firstly, grinders were frequent long-term players who generated profits by playing their statistical edge daily to earn small but regular wins. They were differentiated from professional poker players by characteristics such as selfishness, aimlessness and a lack of fulfilment. Secondly, mavericks were associated with high levels of skill and control specific to poker but over time could show poor control and therefore lost money. Thirdly, gamblers were clearly constructed as 'others', seen to be recreational and trying to beat chance with a non-serious approach to the game. They were also portrayed as unintelligent, passive losers with low levels of skill and control. Professional poker players were not perceived

as gamblers and poker was played with skill and control, and was not gambling. However, the fourth identity, non-gamblers, comprised groups who were uninterested in poker, and those who were "judgemental" (Radburn and Horsley, 2011, p. 40).

> "When I started playing poker a lot of my friends who didn't play thought I was going to be taken for a ride. I mean, their idea of a poker room is not really up and coming with the twenty-first century. Their idea of a poker room is shady people who'll break your legs if you take money off them in the car park. I'm not joking, some of them were like 'be careful, you know some of these men could be mobsters' and stuff like that. They almost felt sorry for me, like I was being taken for a ride. Now I just laugh – after they've worked a weekend earning seventy quid and I'm sitting there with four hundred that I've made in a night doing something that I love. That's just because they didn't understand that if you know what you're doing, you can make a lot of money from playing poker. They see it like other forms of gambling, where you don't have any control over what you're doing. But now they're cool with it" (Radburn and Horsley, 2011, pp. 35-36).

Participants did not speak of social rewards of playing, nor did they see their play as recreational. They saw their occupation as unproblematic, and distanced themselves from gambling by stating the amount of control they have over their play.

McCormack and Griffiths (2012) explored the separation of professional poker players from recreational players. Professional players saw poker as skill-based rather than chance-based, with some comparing it to sport or the stock market.

> "I mean I see it more as… like investment bankers, they invest money and they're basically taking a gamble every day whether shares go up or down on a given day they don't know what's going to happen but long term there [sic] skill in sort of predicting what's going to happen they should make money and so… I consider it like that" (McCormack and Griffiths, 2012, p. 248).

Poker players differentiated themselves from recreational players by their discipline, treating poker as an occupation, playing for up to 10 hours a day. Four sub-themes emerged in relation to disciplined play; emotional detachment from the game; controlled gambling behaviour; risk avoidance; and not chasing losses. Some poker players who played online participated in up to eight games at a time. They frequently mentioned the importance of having a clear head, not using alcohol or substances, being able to accept losses as part of their work and not to react hastily. They generally acknowledged when they were being beaten and would often sit out for a few games afterwards to regain composure.

Talberg (2018) interviewed professional, amateur and 'old-timer' poker players about their experiences. They reported differences between playing online and in-person, with the latter allowing players to acknowledge that they are playing

for others' money, and allowing interactions with people over a long period of time with some of them losing regularly. This led players to distance themselves from the money involved, especially when the other players were perceived as clearly 'compulsive gamblers'.

> "When you play live, you see people that you know lose more than they can afford. It came as a shock for me at first, but after a while, you shrug it off and think that it is their choice, they came there voluntarily. For some of them, that is not true, they have gambling problems" (Talberg, 2018, p. 277).

They made a distinction between less-skilled players who could afford losing and others who simply appeared to have lost control. While many mentioned how they had seen – and won money from – 'compulsive' and 'problem gamblers', they also said that it was difficult to address these issues with the person experiencing such behaviours. Some players reported returning money to 'problem gamblers', while many of the older players found it easier to advise others to stop playing. Participants also reported social pressures around asking those experiencing 'problem gambling' behaviours to stop playing, reporting being met by negative comments from the person themselves. Amateur players, on the other hand, felt that professional players were dependent on 'compulsive gamblers' to make profit and sustain their lifestyle, "stealing" (Talberg, 2018, p. 280) money from them.

Mathieu and Varescon (2022) interviewed 21 male poker players who played at least once a week about their experiences and practice of playing poker. All the players reported spending time to learn more about poker and develop strategy, and they spent time in online communities such as forums, or on Skype. The authors also noticed the amount of poker-specific language used by participants. Using this language made the participants feel part of the community. The players wanted to appear as highly rational, discussing statistics, odds and variance, and stressing the absence of superstitious beliefs. The players reported how their approach to poker had changed over time from something recreational to something they approached in a serious and rigorous manner. They viewed – and prepared for - poker as a sport.

> "That's it, after having a healthy lifestyle, playing sports, not drinking well, not being tired, these are the elements, the key success factors for gambling well" (Mathieu and Varescon, 2022, p. 192).

Many participants were able to detach themselves from the emotions experienced during the game. Although, participants also reported previous experiences of frustration and anger, experiencing 'tilt' or a loss of control over their gambling activity and consequences. This not only impacted their finances but also the quality of poker being played, which is very important to them.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the role of social groups in the maintenance of continued gambling behaviour. Gambling can be an important social activity for different groups that forms an ongoing part of the social identity of members. Furthermore, its role as a social activity may also be influenced by the strategies deployed by the gambling industry. Therefore, whilst the role of social groups in continuous and regular gambling behaviours may not necessarily be harmful, the co-existing roles of industry and social identity can lead to harms if not, at the very least, acknowledged. The social identity of poker players is really quite different from the other social groups that have been researched. For this social group, poker is not seen as gambling at all but as a sport, requiring skill as opposed to luck in order to win.

4 Social groups during the experience of – and recovery from – gambling harms

Chapter Summary

- This chapter explores the roles of social groups during experiences of - and the recovery from - gambling harms.
- The evidence base for this chapter is 32 papers, with qualitative studies conducted across a wide range of jurisdictions.
- Harmful gambling - or more specifically, the (perceived or real) inability to control harmful gambling behaviours - can be exacerbated by social stigma, thus creating barriers to accessing support. This stigma can be experienced by the individual, or their family members.
- Gambling harms can impact the relationship between the individual and their partner, their children, and other relations and friends. These harms are wide-ranging, including the emotional and relationship harms experienced between family members and friends, or the financial harms experienced by households.
- Social groups and support networks are important for the process of recovery. These networks include support systems or strategies from relatives, professional help, Gamblers Anonymous groups, and other group-based approaches.

4.1 Introduction

The third key theme which emerged from our scoping review was related to the role of social groups during the experience of – and recovery from - gambling harms. Gambling harms are experienced at the family or social group level, whether through the impact of gambling on relationships themselves, the role of social stigma, or indeed support groups which aided recovery for those who had experienced harmful gambling behaviours. The chapter begins by describing the evidence base of literature which informed this theme. Secondly, the chapter explores the stigma associated with harmful gambling behaviours, and how this may prevent those experiencing harmful gambling from seeking support. The chapter then explores how gambling harms impact relationships between the individual and their partners, their children, and other family members. Finally, the chapter explores the importance of both informal and formal support networks.

4.2 About the evidence base

The evidence base which explored the role of social groups in the experiences of gambling harms emerged from 32 different papers informed by qualitative studies, all of which are introduced in Table 5. Eight of the papers emerged from studies in Australia, whilst seven emerged from Canada. Other jurisdictions under focus included Finland, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. Although the studies covered a range of themes, from stigma and the experience of harms to experiences of recovery, most studies included interviews with participants with lived experience, including both those experiencing harmful gambling and affected others.

Table 5. Papers exploring the role of social stigma

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus on gambling harms and social stigma
Borch (2012)	Norway	Author interviewed 23 Norwegian couples, nine of which had a partner in treatment. For those households dealing with gambling problems, the perception of gambling was dominated by a medical view and as a dangerous source of addiction. The afflicted partner was seen as somebody who needed help, with the other partner being charged with keeping the perception of gambling as something that has the potential to do harm.
Corney and Davis (2010b)	UK	Authors interviewed 16 female 'problem gamblers' and nine frequent gamblers to understand the role of family, social situations and work on their gambling behaviour. 'Problem gambling' had a major negative impact on relationships with partners because of the deception and lying and led to conflict, disillusionment and occasionally break-up. The women who had young children felt most guilty about their reduced involvement with them such as the amount of time spent or the quality of the time spent, or the money that was not spent on enriching their lives. Also, gambling impacts family relationships with deteriorated relationships with parents and siblings, often because of financial 'bail-outs'.
Côté et al. (2018)	Canada	Interviews with eight Canadian couples who had been living together for at least six months, where one member was a 'pathological gambler' to understand the strategies used by spouses to combat their partners gambling behaviour. In terms of the portrayal of gambling, gambling was seen as a harm which needed to be reduced or completely stopped. Spouses felt like they needed to make their partner aware of the negative consequences of their gambling to remind them why it is important to remain abstinent. Another main goal was to improve the wellbeing of the partner, couple and family.
Côté et al. (2019)	Canada	Interviews with 19 participants (eight couples comprising one 'problem gambler' and their partner, one partner of a 'problem gambler', and two 'problem gamblers') to explore how coping strategies impact gambling behaviours. Authors found that coping strategies initiated by partners can influence gambling behaviours.
Cunha et al. (2015)	Portugal	Authors conducted narrative analysis on a case studies of a couple in treatment for 'problem gambling' behaviour. Each partner demonstrated intersecting narratives regarding family, strengths, marital strengths, savings level, congruent position and psychological symptoms.

Table 5, cont.: Papers exploring the role of social stigma

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus on gambling harms and social stigma
Dąbrowska and Wieczorek (2020)	Poland	Authors interviewed 30 individuals who gambled and 60 professionals (comprising social workers, therapists employed in addiction treatment facilities, general practitioners, and psychiatrists) on perceived stigma. Individuals reported avoiding stigma as long as gambling disorder did not present itself as obvious. The professionals noted that it is not normally the gambling that causes the negative responses from loved ones, but instead the missed loan payments, missed mortgage payments, neglect of household duties.
Ferentzy et al. (2010)	Canada	Authors interviewed 39 experienced Gambler's Anonymous (GA) members to understand uniformity and variation in approaches to GA. It was found that personal motivation in the GA sphere is seen as important but insufficient on its own, and emphasis is placed on dependency upon family and social structures.
Ferland et al. (2022)	Canada	Authors interviewed 46 concerned significant others (25 partners, eight adult children, seven parents, six siblings) to understand whether harms differ by being close family members (CFMs) or partners. Findings highlight that harms for CFMs or partners can vary depending on their level of involvement with the gambler.
Harris and Mazmanian (2016)	Canada	Authors interviewed 24 (13 male) Canadian self-identified 'Internet gamblers' (aged 24-52) who were seeking treatment about their perspectives on CBT. Strategies undertaken alongside CBT included removing access to finances and laptops, the help of family around the control of money, and motivational interviewing.
Hing et al. (2013)	Australia	Authors interviewed 48 Australian significant others about their help seeking behaviour. Most significant others initially used self-help before seeking assistance from a helpline or professional sources. The main motivations for help included concerns that gambling might become a major issue, negative emotions, problems in maintaining normal daily activities, concerns about the welfare of dependants, and physical health concerns. Financial concerns were only highly prioritised among non-professional and self-help participants. Significant others also spoke about the barriers, including wanting to solve it alone, feeling ashamed for themselves and their family.

Table 5, cont.: Papers exploring the role of social stigma

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus on gambling harms and social stigma
Hing et al. (2016)	Australia	Authors interviewed 44 people (28 men) experiencing problems with their gambling behaviours about the role of stigma. The participants felt that 'problem gambling' attracts a great deal of public stigma and thought that most people believe it to be a personal failing, believing the public view 'problem gamblers' as 'stupid', 'foolish', 'weak', 'untrustworthy', 'secretive', 'losers', 'self-indulgent', 'lacking self-control', 'irresponsible', 'pathetic', 'desperate', 'lacking intelligence' and 'no hopers', which are typical stereotypes of 'problem gamblers'. Participants also noted that they felt like the public 'othered' them and kept social distance.
Holdsworth et al. (2013)	Australia	Authors interviewed 20 Australian women who gambled on EGM and were either 'recreational gamblers' or receiving treatment for 'problem gambling'. Against the backdrop of other comorbidities, gambling sometimes followed relationship breakdowns or caused relationship breakdowns and increased social isolation.
Jarvinen-Tassopoulos (2020)	Finland	Author deployed content analysis on 97 messages written by 40 partners (38 female) on an online Finnish drug-addiction forum written between 2007 and 2016. Messages indicated that partners found the forum after the extent of gambling harms was discovered. Findings indicated a lack of help due to stigmatisation.
Kalischuk (2010)	Canada	Author conducted with 47 interviews with 37 family members from 21 families involved in treatment for 'problem gambling'. Using the grounded theory approach, the author explores how 'problem gambling' impacts the family. The interviews uncovered seven main elements. The first two, trauma and trigger, were specific to participants who gambled. Both them and family members experience the other five elements: transition, tension and turmoil, transformation, transcendence, and termination.
Klevan et al. (2019)	Norway	Authors interviewed nine Norwegian women who lived with a partner with gambling problems to understand the experience of everyday family life. Three main themes were identified: the lone problem (how harmful gambling was experienced by the individual on their own), the lone parent (how participants experienced parenting during their partner's gambling), and the lone adult (how participants felt they were the only adult in the family during their partner's gambling).
Landon et al. (2018)	New Zealand	Authors interviewed ten affected others from New Zealand accessing social services about the impact of gambling on their lives. Main themes to emerge from the data reflected the negative impact of gambling on mental health and its impact on aspects of everyday life.

Table 5, cont.: Papers exploring the role of social stigma

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus on gambling harms and social stigma
Lim et al. (2017)	Great Britain	Authors interviewed 11 British professional footballers who had undergone or who were receiving treatment for gambling problems. Obstacles to help-seeking were similar to other 'problem gamblers', such as feeling the gambling was under control. Specific obstacles were the high incomes and difficulty tracking at what point expenditure became a problem, while participants were also worried that seeking help or disclosure might lead to being dropped from the squad. Typically, help was then not sought until the gambling was disrupting families, or debt was unmanageable.
Lopez-Gonzalez et al. (2019)	Spain	Authors conducted seven focus groups with 43 male sports bettors undergoing treatment for gambling disorder to explore whether the lack of stigma and positive perceptions of sports betting present an issue for self-identification of harmful gambling behaviour. The focus groups found two prevalent themes: lack of negative connotations with sports betting, and the presence of positive connotations which sanitised sports betting.
Mathews and Volberg (2013)	Singapore	Authors interviewed 50 Singaporean family members of individuals seeking treatment for harmful gambling. Authors uncovered financial, social and emotional gambling harms.
Miller and Thomas (2017)	Australia	Authors interviewed 100 (62 male) individuals from Australia who gambled with varying degrees of risk, on the role of stereotyping on gambling-related attitudes and behaviours. Authors found that the participants had internalised self-stigma and self-blame, whilst also feeling that these emotions were unfair.
Patford (2007)	Australia	Author interviewed 15 Tasmanian Adults who were children of late onset 'problem gamblers'. There were various histories of gambling before harmful gambling had emerged, with participants' experiences ranging from parents who had gambled before harmful behaviours had developed, to those who had no history of gambling. Themes on impacted social relationships highlighted the separation between the person they love and their gambling behaviour. Participants spoke about the hurt and disappointment by the 'problem gambler's' abandonment of family responsibilities, the shame of public press on their crimes, and the withdrawal of friends and family when the person who gambled asked for money. Also, there were many examples of the gambler's irrationality and emotional volatility. Another common theme was the lonely, financially exploited and emotionally abused non-gambling parent.

Table 5, cont.: Papers exploring the role of social stigma

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus on gambling harms and social stigma
Patford (2009)	Australia	Author interviewed 23 Tasmanian women who had expressed concerns around a current or previous partner's gambling (11 remained in relationships). Experiences uncovered by the author indicated that women are likely to be the victims and enablers of their partner's gambling, while they may also have provided informal care and support.
Piquette-Tomei et al. (2008)	Canada	Authors interviewed 14 women receiving counselling for 'problem gambling' to understand effective practices for female 'problem gamblers'. Authors uncovered five important categories: accessibility, a safe space, facilitators, format of therapy, and overcoming barriers to access. The core category that united these categories was the availability of women-only treatment options for 'problem gambling'.
Riley et al. (2020)	Australia	Authors interviewed 15 partners (three males) of non-help-seeking Australian 'problem gamblers'. Nine central themes emerged: social activity, realization, role conflict, stigma, denial, health issues, disconnectedness, hypervigilance, and security. Findings highlighted that living with a non-help-seeking partner was characterised by worry, conflict, and isolation.
Rogers (2019)	UK	Authors employed an ethnographic study of 20 meetings and interviews with eight regular attendees to understand the process and practice of Gambler's Anonymous (GA) in the UK. GA provides a consistent, regular space for mutual and effective help and advice. GA meetings were part of a crucial social network to help individuals cope with the struggle to maintain abstinence from behaviours that had become very harmful for them.
Syvertsen et al. (2020)	Norway	Authors interviewed nine attendees at self-help groups for gambling addiction. The attendees felt like self-help groups provided a space for understanding, being heard, and alleviated loneliness. They felt well supported by a community that understands them and were comfortable being open with them. This was something that many of the participants did not feel they could experience outside of these groups.

Table 5, cont.: Papers exploring the role of social stigma

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus on gambling harms and social stigma
Takiguchi et al. (2022)	Japan	Authors conducted two group interviews with six family members of people with adverse gambling problems in Japan. They found that family members keep up secrecy to avoid the stigma and social disqualification, sometimes not even speaking to their siblings. This is accompanied by distress and high levels of anxiety and affects family relationships. Those experiencing harmful gambling can feel 'stupid' for very long periods of time. Mothers, especially, blame themselves for enabling gambling and mothers are quickly criticised if portrayed as maintaining gambling activity. Participants faced a hard choice between bailing out family members who gambled, or leaving them vulnerable to social exclusion. There is also a lot of self-blame amongst non-gamblers, and they do not question the industry's role. In fact, the participants could not relate to the problems being generated in the socio-political-cultural environment and denied that industry should bear any responsibility.
Thomas et al. (2009)	Australia	Authors interviewed 13 EGM 'problem gamblers' (aged 27-60) to develop a theoretical model of EGM 'problem gambling'. Gambling venues were seen as an 'oasis' away from all the issues of everyday life. Authors found that participants did not wish to burden friends with issues. Participants generally suggested their coping strategies are designed to divert attention from the issue and all but three had used other maladaptive behaviours such as drinking, drugs, eating or ignoring.
Valentine and Hughes (2012)	UK	Authors interviewed 26 self-identified 'problem Internet gamblers' about their life histories and semi-structured interview with a significant other (partner (marital, co-habiting, and recently separated), parent, sibling, child and a paid carer). Harms which caused the most distress were often the emotional complications and the realisation of the harm and neglect they had caused as well as the lack of emotional commitment they were showing towards family. This had impacts on their identities such as the formation of being a 'bad parent' or a 'failed child'. Significant others described several losses such as the loss of trust and loss of honest relationships.
Venuleo and Marinaci (2017)	Italy	Authors conducted 35 interviews with Italian gamblers in Gambler's Anonymous and their relatives in Gam-Anon to understand how they understand their identities as 'problem gamblers'. The main themes highlighted a dominant view of 'problem gambling' as a lifelong chronic illness which opens the door to reconciliation with oneself and one's relatives.

Table 5, cont.: Papers exploring the role of social stigma

Author (Year)	Jurisdiction	Focus on gambling harms and social stigma
Vinberg et al. (2021)	Sweden	Authors interviewed 30 Swedish male athletes, coaches and managers to understand how they experienced gambling behaviours and harm in their sport. Importantly, authors found that athletes found it hard to reach out for help because it evoked shame and signified a loss of control.
Wurtzburg and Tan (2011)	New Zealand	Authors interviewed 13 New Zealand families (19 children aged 11-16 and 14 'problem gambling' parents) to understand the impact of parental gambling on children. Questionnaires were also administered to parents, but only interview data were detailed in the paper. Children found that their lives were negatively impacted by their parent's gambling, and they took on more household responsibilities as a result. Children often felt betrayed or like they had experienced a loss.

4.3 Harmful gambling behaviours are exacerbated by stigma

Our scoping review found that harmful gambling – or the inability to control harmful gambling – is stigmatised, and that a perceived inability or lack of understanding within social groups can provide a barrier for individuals to seeking help or support. Lopez-Gonzalez et al.'s (2019) focus groups with male sports bettors found there was no stigma attached to sports betting, but there was stigma attached to not being able to control sports betting behaviours. The authors' focus groups uncovered two main themes. The first theme was the lack of negative connotations associated with sports betting. Participants felt there was a lack of stigma associated with sports betting, citing this as a risk factor for gambling harms. Participants also reported a lack of stereotypes relating to sports bettors which made it more difficult for close others to identify them as 'problem gamblers'. Many suggested that it might be because much of their gambling takes place alone at home. Those who wagered in shops struggled to relate to patrons playing casino games or slots. The second main theme was related to the presence of positive connotations that "sanitised" (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2019, p. 571) sports betting. This was caused in part by participants' perceptions of a normal bettor. However, although none of the participants felt they were representative of a 'normal' bettor, they all had a conception of what a 'normal bettor' looked like. They felt that a 'normal bettor' wagered only small stakes and showed less regard for the outcome of wagers. Positive connotations - which were also generated through social normalisation, the proliferation of media communication and advertising, and through peer groups – contributed to the stigma attached with gambling addiction. For example, "people will think you're stupid." (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2019, p. 576). Stigma played an integral role within participants' perceptions. Participants showed self-blame and felt shame which they found hard to disclose.

Miller and Thomas (2017) interviewed 100 (62 male) people who gambled with varying degrees of risky behaviours (according to PGSI) to explore the role of stereotyping on gambling-related attitudes and behaviours. Participants felt that 'problem gambling' was associated with negative attitudes that portrayed those experiencing harmful gambling as irresponsible, out-of-control and undisciplined, therefore contributing to the stigma associated with not being able to control gambling behaviours.

> "You don't want the fact that you're a gambler made public knowledge. It would really, really impact on your level of society. I know for a fact that most of the big time gamblers down here wouldn't go to a local [help seeking] group because they'd be too afraid of being recognised. A lot of them are actually quite prominent business people. We all know each other, you know? You see each other in various [gambling] venues" (Miller and Thomas, 2017, p. 1294).

Most participants experiencing gambling problems had internalised the negative stereotypes and felt self-stigma and self-blame, while also feeling

that the negative judgements from others were unfair. These participants kept their gambling secret to avoid negative judgement and to avoid losing social status.

This secrecy was also reflected within Dąbrowska and Wieczorek's (2020) interviews with 30 people (aged 25-63, 27 males) enrolled in alcohol and drug outpatient facilities and from Gambling Anonymous groups and 60 professionals (42 females, aged 25-72). Participants with gambling disorder felt they could avoid stigma as long as their experiences were unidentified by close friends or family members.

> "As long as no one knows about it, there is no reaction. But when it comes to light, it is not treated positively. Because every addiction is understood as a sort of limitation" (Dąbrowska and Wieczorek, 2020, p. 285).

Those who gambled were worried and anxious about revealing their issues to partners or employers because of fear of rejection and shame. However, participants who had revealed their problems to families and social groups reported that their close ones appeared to value the honesty.

On the other hand, those who gambled also noted that they were afterwards perceived as untrustworthy as loved ones would often not agree to lend them money. Some participants reported how social reactions were initially strong after disclosure, although these reactions became moderate over time.

> "I feel that talking about it would be a hindrance in interpersonal contacts and in finding a job. I live in a tenement house, there are eight apartments and everyone knows that I have a problem so they treated me just like some madman, an outcast. I met with, I do not know, maybe a bit of rejection, as if people were afraid of me. Now, I think they're used to it – they see that I'm not so dangerous" (Dąbrowska and Wieczorek, 2020, p. 287).

Those who gambled felt that certain games (for example, lottery) were more acceptable than others (for example, poker, slot machines). The professional treatment providers noted how gambling itself did not cause the negative responses from loved ones, but negative responses were caused by the subsequent missed loan payments, missed mortgage payments, and neglect of household duties. The professionals noted that the stigma attached to substance use is more significant as it has a more severe effect on communities and society.

Thomas et al. (2009) found that the association between stressful life events and increased EGM gambling is also influenced in part by "inaccessible social support" (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 102). This was characterised by the experiences of four participants who did not wish to burden others with their gambling problems, particularly where those problems had existed for a long period. "But, you know as it, continued, through the years and years and years and I, I just thought, people don't want to hear it" (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 12). Harms reported by participants included financial, emotional and social issues

that led to reduced social lives, greater family conflict, lower self-esteem, guilt, suicide, anger, and self-loathing.

Hing et al. (2016) interviewed 44 Australian people (28 men) experiencing problems with their gambling behaviours about the role of both public stigma and self-stigma. The participants felt that 'problem gambling' attracts a great deal of public stigma and thought that most people perceive it as a personal failing, believing the public view those experiencing 'problem gambling' as "stupid", "foolish", "weak", "untrustworthy", "secretive", "losers", "self-indulgent", "lacking self-control", "irresponsible", "pathetic", "desperate", "lacking intelligence" and "no hopers" (Hing et al., 2016, p. 36). Half of those who gambled did not disclose their problems to anybody, but for the other half, most had experienced support from others, sometimes to a surprising degree, but some others had received negative reactions such as irritation, anger and blame.

> "My best friend… reacted really angrily because he felt like I was wasting my life and my money and my current situation with my family. And I thought he would've been more sympathetic to my situation, but he reacted angrily to me. It shocked me!" (Hing et al., 2016, p. 38).

Participants who had experienced judgement or discrimination also recalled feeling angry, defeated, inadequate, surprised and terrible. On the other hand, a small number of participants maintained that they were not affected by discrimination although the authors highlight this could reflect a "bravado" (Hing et al., 2016, p. 39) used as a coping mechanism to hide deeper feelings of self-stigma.

In terms of self-stigma, participants in Hing et al.'s (2016) study reported diminished self-esteem, self-efficacy and perceived social worth; they said they felt "weak", "stupid", "worthless", "bad", "ashamed" and "embarrassed", "anger", "guilt", "scared", "incomplete", "anxious", "saddened", "uneasy", while experiences of loss of dignity and "crying inside" were also described (Hing et al., 2016, p. 40). Some also felt physical symptoms such as stomach pain. When coping with stigma, secrecy was the most common tactic to avoid rejection and shame or the self-identification of a 'problem gambler'. It was especially evident for some who had relapsed that this significantly impacted their self-identity. For example, "I feel less of a person that I can't control something" (Hing et al., 2016, p. 40). There was limited evidence of any other coping mechanisms. Participants felt happier to self-exclude online because it was anonymous but conversely, found it hard to self-exclude at venues because of shame and humiliation, embarrassment and fear.

4.3.1 Stigma plays a role in the gambling of professional athletes

Stigma was also uncovered in studies that explored gambling experiences of professional athletes. Vinberg et al.'s (2021) study of Swedish male athletes,

coaches and managers found that players struggled to reach out for help because it evoked shame and signified a loss of control.

> "Admitting to gambling addiction can be tough and hard, I think. Well, it's nothing anyone wants to do… But if you want to look at it purely career-wise, I still think it is more difficult to admit that you feel crap mentally than having problems with gambling, even though it is obviously very close related. …It is even bad in front of teammates, but even more for the club management" (Vinberg et al., 2021, p. 1208).

All participants within the authors' study agreed that gambling problems were difficult to detect. However, this was compounded by a stigma around gambling harms that meant athletes felt unable to disclose gambling problems due to the fear of displaying weakness.

Similarly, Lim et al.'s (2017) study of gambling in professional football also found that players experience the stigma associated with gambling behaviours through the fear of displaying weakness to their coach.

> "I think people [footballers] are too scared to go and talk to him [manager] about things because if you went to the manager: 'I'm gambling loads', then he's not going to play you is he? Because he thinks you're not focussed on your football, so nobody goes and talks to the manager about it" (Lim et al., 2017, p. 134).

Players were worried that seeking help or disclosure might lead to them being dropped from the squad. Typically, help was then not sought until participants' gambling was disrupting their families, or their gambling-related debt became unmanageable.

4.3.2 Stigma can also affect family members

Our scoping review also found that social stigma can impact the families of those experiencing harmful gambling behaviours. Takiguchi et al. (2022) conducted two group interviews with six individual family members of people with adverse gambling problems in Japan. They found that family members maintained secrecy to avoid the stigma and social disqualification, including occasionally not speaking to their siblings. This is accompanied by distress and high levels of anxiety and affects family relationships. Those who gambled reported feeling "stupid" for long periods of time after stopping gambling (Takiguchi et al., 2022, p. 4). Mothers especially blamed themselves for enabling gambling, and they were quickly criticised if portrayed as maintaining gambling activity.

> "For five or six years, I repeatedly paid his debts, 10 million yen (75,000 USD) in total. I didn't know where I could get help. I didn't want to talk to anyone. I tried to do everything I could do within the family boundary. Keeping up appearances was most important" (Takiguchi et al., 2022, p. 4).

Family members often faced a difficult choice between bailing out those who gambled or leaving them vulnerable to social exclusion. Self-blame was also experienced amongst participants, who denied that the industry should bear any responsibility.

Klevan et al. (2019) interviewed nine Norwegian women who lived with a partner with gambling problems to understand the experience of everyday family life. Three main themes were identified in relation to the lone problem, the lone parent, and the lone adult. The lone problem explored how 'problem gamblers' experienced the problem from their own perspective, and the perspective from the society of which they were a part. The lone parent explored how participants experienced parenting while their partners experienced 'problem gambling'. Finally, the lone adult explored how participants felt like the only adult in the family, particularly when dealing with aspects of family life. There were strong feelings of shame and stigma associated with being with a 'problem gambler' and the spouses discussed how it also brought shame and stigma on the family. Spouses – who were experiencing embarrassment - felt unable to access support, and were reluctant to speak to friends and family. Even when looking for professional help, gambling harms were not widely recognised and there was little knowledge of the problem amongst health professionals. Help – when received – was targeted solely towards the individual who gambled rather than including the family.

4.4 Gambling harms can impact the individual and their partner

The review uncovered evidence that gambling harms can impact the individual in addition to their partner. For example, Corney and Davis' (2010b) interviews with female 'problem gamblers' and regular gamblers found that 'problem gambling' harmed relationships with partners as the deception and lying associated with gambling led to conflict, disillusionment and in one case, a relationship break-up.

> "Yeah it was [the gambling was the cause of the breakup]... I think definitely, because of the lies and deceit... and I think if he couldn't have got me through this or helped me through this, how was he going to be if another situation came up?" (Corney and Davis, 2010b, p. 299).

Holdsworth et al. (2013) interviewed 20 Australian women who gambled on EGMs and were either recreational gamblers or receiving treatment for 'problem gambling'. None of the recreational gamblers reported substance misuse or comorbidities, although some did report previous relationship breakdowns.

> "I had a relationship breakup. I think that was the major thing. It [gambling] on the pokies is an escape …I still gamble when I'm depressed or if something's happened that I just need to get away from

> or to forget, that's what I do. …And because I was on my own I just used to get depressed and just go gambling. It became a solitary thing. I didn't talk about it to anybody…" (Holdsworth et al., 2013, p. 323).

All ten of the help-seeking 'problem gamblers' that were interviewed reported a range of comorbid issues as well as various complex needs such as mental illness, substance use, financial concerns, work issues, crime, and relationship breakdown. For many, the comorbidities were many and compounding. For example, "depression, stress, gambling and alcohol abuse occurring together, as well as financial problems and debt and build-up" (Holdsworth et al., 2013, p. 322).

Kalischuk (2010) interviewed 37 members of 22 families in Alberta, Canada to understand the impact of 'problem gambling' on families. This sample included individuals who gambled, their spouses, their siblings, and their children. The author found that partners were particularly affected by the financial losses from gambling. For example:

> "You have no idea what I went through that night, lying there thinking ''how much are we losing?'' ''Where did he get the money from this time?'' ''Did he steal it this time?'' You always have doubts.... You know, every bad thing goes through your head. It is just horrible. And THAT is what I can't live with. I won't allow someone to put me through that, time after time. That is abuse" (Kalischuk, 2010, p. 12).

Patford (2009) interviewed 23 Tasmanian women who had concerns about a current or previous partner's gambling behaviour (11 had remained in relationships). Participants who reported a partner gambling early in a relationship never felt that gambling was a problem, rather perceiving it as a recreational pursuit. Some participants only became aware of their partners' gambling once financial harms could no longer be disguised. Participants could not pinpoint the development of their partner's gambling issues, citing lots of different risk factors but not being able to clearly relate them to the gambling behaviour. Participants reported that their partners' gambling had affected their financial security and caused emotional harms through "anxiety, depression, fear, anger, resentment, regret, sadness, despair, frustration, uncertainty, guilt and numbness" (Patford, 2009, p. 183).

All participants reported severe financial harms (for example, stealing, credit card debt, stolen children's savings) that would last into older age or be passed onto their children. Gambling also impacted relationships, through lying, absences, freeloading and neglect of family responsibilities. For many, the worst harm was the erosion of trust. For example, "...I don't know, because I don't trust anything he says to me anymore" (Patford, 2009, p. 182). Participants reported that their partners would not openly discuss the gambling and they therefore had to use other cues to understand the extent of gambling issues or losses. Participants also reported how tensions adversely impacted their sex lives, while almost half reporting physical violence, one reporting rape and threats with a gun. They also reported feeling like a caregiver rather than a partner, and partners felt they had to monitor and control the individual's finances and behaviour. Partners felt the need to manage the

gambling, sometimes taking out loans, working extra hours, providing money. A significant choice was whether to stay with or leave the person experiencing harmful gambling, with partners often leaving and returning several times before the final time. Many participants appeared to carefully weigh up the positive and negatives of the relationships, while others positioned themselves as the rescuer or having hope that their partners would change.

Riley et al.'s (2020) interviews with 15 partners (three males) of non-help-seeking Australian 'problem gamblers' found that those experiencing 'problem gambling' were either resistant to seeking help or were in denial of their issues. They also reported a time of realisation where they became aware - often suddenly at a time of crisis - of the extent of the issues.

> "'No idea. I mean I was just devastated and I just couldn't believe it. And I confronted him and said to him "where's the money gone, what did you do with it?" He gave me some reasons about "having the new house and money..." but I knew damn well in the end'.
>
> 'You've got to be kidding me. $8,000, [name], where's it gone?" And I said to him, "You have got to admit that you've got a problem" and he just turned his back and walked away'" (Riley et al., 2020, p. 2537).

They also felt shame that they did not notice sooner, and anger as their partners denied or minimised the problems. Verbal conflict (and less often, physical) was experienced at this stage. Partners felt a conflict between roles of being a partner and parent by monitoring their behaviour and controlling their finances.

> "I feel like he's my child because I feel like I'm constantly monitoring him like a teenager, what they're up to and are they telling lies, like I'm his mum. And he's 11 years older than me so I'd expect a little bit more - that's the point of going out with someone that's a decade older than you" (Riley et al., 2020, p. 2536).

This parenting was seen as infantilising their partners. Stigma was also experienced, with partners fearing being judged personally for staying with the person, but also wanted to protect their partner. Partners felt physically and emotionally exhausted, and they felt disconnected from their spouses, living parallel lives under the same roof. Partners felt that their spouses who gambled were constantly preoccupied. Partners would typically worry about their children's wellbeing, financial obligations and when the gambling may start again. They were worried about having no savings, buying presents for their children at Christmas, whether their partner would overcome their gambling, as well as the future of their relationship. Many participants described the ultimatums they had given their partners should they gamble again but also voiced concerns over not wishing the relationship to break down or their family to break up.

Jarvinen-Tassopoulos (2020) deployed content analysis on 97 messages written by 40 partners (38 female) between 2007 and 2016 on an online forum designed for 'problem gamblers' and their significant others, moderated by a Finnish drug and addiction online service. Many partners found the forum in

desperation at their partner's gambling behaviour. The author's content analysis was a novel approach, as it derived experiences from narratives that included details on family life, gambling harms, and help seeking. For many, gambling began as nothing to worry about until they were being asked by their partners to lend money. All of the partners at some point had experienced emotional harms, financial problems, and relationship issues. Many of the partners sought help from various informal and formal places. Partners were reluctant to seek help because of shame and fear of stigmatisation, leading to secrecy with friends and wider family. Many partners were worried about the breakdown of trust, leading to anxiety, arguments and doubt. After taking money off friends and family, those who gambled turned to loans sometimes even in the partner's name, or even taking money from their children's bank accounts. Partners reported how they took responsibility for the couple's finances after discovering the debts. Wealthier partners paid off everything and restricted access, but lower-income families struggled to pay rent and bills or buy food. Affected others reported feeling both love and hate towards their partners. Those that felt love sensed that the situation would improve, and the individual would quit once they received proper help. Unemployed women or full-time carers for children were afraid of being single parents without resources, and they had to weigh up whether it was financially possible to leave their partner who gambled. Other reasons to stay were to keep the family together, pregnancy, and concerns around joint custody arrangements because of lack of trust in partner's abilities to look after their children in the event of divorce. Barriers to staying together included the negative impact the gambling had upon their life, with divorce being the last option for issues that had existed for long periods of time.

Cunha et al. (2015) conducted narrative analysis on the case study of a couple in treatment for 'problem gambling' behaviours. The authors specifically did this by analysing each of the couple's individual responses to self-reporting questionnaires undertaken before treatment, as well as analysis of their couples therapy sessions. Each partner demonstrated intersecting narratives regarding family, strengths, marital strengths, savings level, congruent position and psychological symptoms. The account of the individual who gambled showed how their gambling impacted family and married life, as well as their own life (for example, memory issues, employment issues). The partner emphasised the impact on the family, marital and financial aspects, as well as psychological impacts. For example, "After this problem I'm not as loving any more, there has been a physical, intimate, and sexual distancing" (Cunha et al., 2015, p. 125). The partner also reported feeling like a victim, while the individual who gambled struggled to acknowledge how family issues were caused by their gambling possibly due to guilt, shame and denial. The partner often felt like a victim and can be disillusioned, whilst anger and resentment are common.

Borch (2012) interviewed 23 Norwegian households (consisting of 15 couples and eight single people), nine of which had reported an adult experiencing gambling problems. There was a sense from partners of individuals who gambled that their gambling behaviour was similar to a form of unfaithfulness. Households dealing with gambling problems viewed gambling as a medical

issue and a dangerous source of addiction. This meant that individuals experiencing gambling problems were viewed by their partners as needing help. For example, “I can get very angry and frustrated sometimes. But I know that this is a disease he cannot control on his own. That is why I stay” (Borch, 2012, p. 324).

Valentine and Hughes’ (2012) study into the histories of ‘problem’ online gamblers and their significant others found that gambling led participants to withdraw physically and emotionally from their families. Partners reported a complex mix of unconditional love for the those who gambled alongside anger, disappointment and frustration. However, similarly to those within Borch’s (2012) study, partners who characterised gambling as an addiction caused by life stressors were able to externalise the problem from the person, allowing them to continue loving them regardless.

> “I suppose it showed there is a vulnerable side to him maybe and that kind of, you know, straightaway wanting to just help him and take him out of the situation ... I don't think any less of him now, I don't think he's any less strong than he was before. I just see this thing has grip” (Valentines and Hughes, 2012, p. 250).

In summary, the evidence reviews demonstrated that harmful gambling can also incur relationship, emotional, and financial harms on the partner. The evidence also demonstrates mixed roles for partners of those experiencing harmful gambling. While there is evidence that partners can separate their loved ones from the gambling behaviour, the evidence highlights a mixture of emotions (such as lack of trust, or intimacy), or in some cases, the break-up of relationships.

4.5 Gambling harms can impact the individual’s children

Beyond the harms experienced by the individual and their partner, the review also found research that explored the impact of harmful gambling upon the individual’s children. For example, Patford (2007) interviewed 15 Tasmanian adults who were affected by parental gambling problems, and also experienced late-onset gambling problems themselves (for example, when they were already an adult or were close to the age of 18). Fourteen participants reported perplexity at discovering their parents' ‘problem gambling’. They were unable to comprehend why their parents who gambled stole money or possessions from them. Many suggested their current gambling issues may have been because of childhood trauma, with only two suggesting industry responsibility. A number cited other factors such as socio-economic disadvantage, mood disorders, personality disorders, medical illness, disabilities, substance or alcohol use. Participants reported differences in affection towards the parent they love and that parent’s gambling behaviour: “...underneath you know that there is still that person from years ago, that you really liked...” (Patford, 2007, p. 373). Participants also spoke about the hurt

and disappointment by their parents not taking on family responsibilities. For example,

> "I felt like I was the mother and she was the child. It felt really odd. And like I was the one giving her advice and telling her how to do that, when I felt like I needed a mum, you know. And I felt, I got... Yeah, I just needed my mum, and she wasn't there for me in a lot of things. It is sad. The time when I really get down is when I see other people's parents and things. Or I think about it sometimes, and it just gets me down. And she's not very much in my daughter's life. Not very much at all" (Patford, 2007, p. 374).

Participants also reported the shame of public press on their parents' crimes, and the withdrawal of friends and family when the gambling parent asked for money. Participants felt strongly and identified with their non-gambling parent and indignant about their mistreatment. In around half of the cases, participants reported themselves as the non-gambling parent's advisor, confidant, and the peacekeeper. Sibling relationships were also stretched in some cases where the burden fell more on one than the other whilst in other cases these experiences increased cohesion. Ten of the children reported significant stress affecting their health such as worry, negative emotion, lapses in concentration and difficulty sleeping.

Wurtzburg and Tan (2011) interviewed 13 New Zealand-based households (19 children aged 11-16 and 14 'problem gambling' parents) to understand the impact of parental gambling on children. The authors noted how gambling was pervasive in participants' lives, and that the parents were often suffering from other health problems such as the usage of alcohol, non-prescription drugs, tobacco, mental health conditions, and domestic violence. Many of the parents also remembered their own parents' heavy gambling behaviours. Parents generally understood the negative effects of gambling. Questionnaires also completed by parents found that 46% felt their children were highly aware of the effects of their gambling, while the other 54% did not feel they were fully aware and were not that affected. However, 74% of children stated their lives would be better if their parents stopped gambling. The children reported taking on more adult household responsibilities which made them feel divided from their peers with non-'problem-gambling' parents. As one parent admitted,

> "'I was irresponsible… [and] not looking after my child'. Her child, Bonnie, bluntly stated: 'she decides to put [money]… into a machine and we suffer" (Wurtzburg and Tan, 2011, p. 49).

Anxiety was reported by children in relation to the financial consequences and repercussions for family finances. Young children often assumed a friend role for their parents rather than an age-appropriate one and many parents (36%) relied excessively on their children for support. Children often felt betrayed or as though they had experienced a loss. Sibling relationships also experienced adversity, with older siblings taking on parental responsibilities for younger children. Sometimes, siblings had markedly different responses to their parent's behaviour depending on age, gender and personality. Childhood resilience was another key theme with many making positive statements about

their lives, their participation in extra-household activities and the maintenance of their wider social groups.

Valentine and Hughes' (2012) study found that gambling had incurred emotional harms – from the realisation of the harms caused to their family - impacted their identities, leading to them identifying as a "'bad' parent'" or a "'failed child'" (Valentine and Hughes, 2012, p. 248). Children felt like they had lost a parent, as well as losing out on material goods such as clothes, holidays and treats, and school trips. For example,

> "...my birthday's nearly coming up in a month and she's [her mother] just given me £50 I think and like I'll want to go to the pictures and then I'll want to go to a meal and then I'll want to go the pictures again. I'll want to go again like with my friends because they'll be inviting me and everything, because they will be inviting me and she'll say... 'Oh can't you wait a couple of weeks' [because she has got no money] and stuff like that" (Valentine and Hughes, 2012, p. 248).

Additionally, Kalischuk (2010) also found that the children of those experiencing harmful gambling also felt financial harms. As one participant – a partner of someone experiencing harmful gambling - told the author,

> "He [son] said ''you're broke; your money is gone.'' We sold our house last August and I thought the money from that was in the bank. And he said ''it's all gone.'' She wracked up all these credit cards and borrowed off all the kids and her sister and blew the money from the house. Well I was stunned; I couldn't believe it...I mean she never even played cards.... All the stuff we had planned to do around here. Everything else is gone because the money is gone, out the window" (Kalischuk, 2010, p. 12).

Therefore, the evidence reviewed highlights how children can also experience financial, emotional and relationship harms as a result of their parent's harmful gambling. While emotional and relationship harms may emerge from the impact of gambling on the individual's role as a parent, financial harms can emerge from the borrowing of money from a child, or from the spending of money previously reserved for family activities on gambling.

4.6 Gambling harms can also affect other family members

Beyond the harms experienced by partners and children, the evidence reviewed also included harms experienced by other family members. Other family members may experience gambling harms in different ways. For example, harms may incur relationship, health, or resource harms on partners, family members, or friends (Wardle et al., 2018). The evidence reviewed also included the comparison of harms experienced between partners and other family members. Ferland et al. (2022) interviewed 46 close family members (CFMs) - including 25 partners, eight adult children, seven parents, and six siblings- to understand the harms experienced by a close relative's gambling.

The authors compared the harms experienced by CFMs and partners according to Langham et al.'s (2015) framework of harms. Langham et al.'s (2015) framework includes eight categories of harm for the individual and those around them: financial harm; relationship disruption; conflict or breakdown; emotional or psychological distress; decrements to health; cultural harm; reduced performance at work or study; criminal activity; and lifecourse and intergenerational harms. The authors found that partners were more affected than other CFMs in relation to financial harms, as other CFMs were financially separate to those who gambled and their partners. Partners and other CFMs also experienced emotional or psychological distress in different ways. Other CFMs experienced emotional or psychological distress through a lack of understanding of circumstances of those experiencing harmful gambling, while partners had to tangibly compensate for their financial harms. Partners reported experiencing specific health issues (such as eating problems, chronic fatigue, or exacerbation of pre-existing illness) as a result of their partner's gambling behaviour – something not reported by other CFMs. Additionally, only partners reported themselves as victims of criminal acts committed by those experiencing harmful gambling (such as fraud).

Landon et al.'s (2018) study carried out in New Zealand found that gambling incurred a devastating impact on the lives of affected others (defined by the authors as "being affected by someone else's gambling" (Landon et al., 2018, p. 575)) who reported frustration, anger and sadness. Their interviews with ten affected others – all of whom reported different relationships to family members who gambled - found that many reported how the individuals who gambled appeared unaware of the harms occurring to family members as a result of their gambling. Many participants tried to link the gambling to the person's family history with gambling behaviours being "passed down" (Landon et al., 2018, p. 577) by previous generations. Some described the frustration and helplessness of trying to help, and then being faced with dishonesty. For example, "'We are all trying to help you but you don't want help. You can't stop someone who doesn't want to stop'" (Landon et al., 2018, p. 578). Additionally, the participants described how harms affect finances, intimate relationships, wider family and social relationships, and psychological issues. Stress and worry were also attributed to concerns around the impact of gambling harms on children, or around the safety of older family members who gambled.

4.6.1 Different cultural backgrounds can influence the experiences of gambling harms for families

Our review also found evidence of the impact of gambling harms on families that form an important basis for social organisation in Asian societies. This is pointed out by Mathews and Volberg (2013) whose interviews with 50 Singaporean family members of individuals seeking treatment for harmful gambling uncovered substantial financial impact experienced by families.

These impacts emerged from paying off gambling-related debts, the loss of savings, borrowing money from other family members, changing lifestyles, selling houses, and using family capital that was intended for their children. Participants also experienced isolation, and embarrassment from the distress caused to their neighbours whose houses were splashed with paint by loan sharks. Hypervigilance was experienced with great anxiety about being visited by loan-sharks.

> "He owed some $500; others $1,000. Some loans are for football betting; some belongs to other types of gambling. He's involved with too many things...I also not so sure. I suggested making police report when the loan sharks come to harass. So he went to the police station. I told him to provide all details on the loan sharks so that the police would have a record. Every day we live in fear that the loan sharks would come to harass. We were trying to help him. I managed to raise more than $10,000; together with my wife we managed to raise about $20,000. I borrowed some from my family; and she borrowed some from her family. Slowly we paid off the loans owed to the various groups of loan sharks until the last group" (Mathews and Volberg, 2013, p. 132).

Some participants experienced depression while children developed conduct disorders against the backdrop of the parents who were constantly arguing. The families had to regularly move house, with separation of children and parents leading to significant trauma. There were also threats of self-harm from those who gambled due to the sense that financial struggles would never end, with family members then experiencing anger and distrust towards the individual. Participants experienced difficulties with living up to the cultural norms in relation to family duties. Children who experienced harms also experienced cultural difficulties, with the culture under focus during the study expecting affection towards the parents in contrast to the experience of relationship harms shared by participants.

4.7 Informal support groups can consist of a range of strategies

Finally, our scoping review found that social groups are important for the process of recovery from harmful gambling behaviours. Informal support networks are a particularly important group and may comprise family or friends.

In Canada, Côté et al. (2018) interviewed 19 participants (ten men experiencing 'pathological gambling' and nine partners, all of whom were women) to explore the adaptation strategies used by spouses to combat their partner's harmful gambling behaviours. Participants reported two key goals: influencing their partner's gambling behaviour, and to increase the wellbeing of their partner, the couple, and the family.

Firstly, the authors found that participants sought to influence their partner's gambling behaviour by: (1) making them aware of the negative effects of gambling and the reasons for becoming abstinent; (2) convincing their partner that they should reduce or stop gambling; (3) learning the full extent of their gambling behaviour; (4) stopping a gambling session from occurring, or ending sessions already underway; (5) avoiding reinforcing gambling behaviour; (6) helping them to avoid risky situations; (7) helping them to begin and succeed in their treatment; and (8) helping them to develop behaviour that is incompatible with gambling.

Secondly, participants sought to increase wellbeing by: (1) protecting the 'gambler's', partner's, and couple's reputation, avoid worrying close family and friends, and avoid having to deal with their lack of understanding; (2) avoiding couple conflicts; (3) reducing one's personal suffering; (4) decreasing the financial strain on the family; (5) spending quality time together as a couple and family; (6) trying to understand genuinely the person's apparently irrational gambling problem; and (7) being loyal and helpful by taking care of the gambler. Over time spouses felt like they could use strategies that prioritised their own wellbeing. For example,

> "Waiting for him with a brick in my hand was a complete waste of time. So I stopped waiting for him. As simple as that. I stopped waiting for him and I stopped shouting at him when he got home. He got home when he got home. Great for him. And anyway, who cares?" (Côté et al., 2018, p. 52).

Spouses mentioned two key moments when strategies evolved, when those who gambled or couples entered treatment, and when those who sought treatment became abstinent. Only then could the spouses feel they could reduce their level of control, supervision and money management and start focusing on rebuilding their relationships.

Separately, Côté et al. (2019) through interviews with 19 participants (eight couples comprising one 'pathological gambler' and their partner, one partner of a 'pathological gambler', and two 'pathological gamblers') explored how partners felt they could influence the gambling habits of their spouse. Those who gambled feared losing their families, and spouses often used this in ultimatums to try and impact the gambling behaviours. However, some 'pathological gamblers' perceived this as controlling behaviour and could not cope with the pressure. Conversely, some felt that unconditional offers of love from the partner were necessary for them to stop or recover completely. Many said that they would not have sought help without the pressure from their partners. The partner also needed to understand triggers and cues. Partners' strategies and family activities were perceived as effective in the short-term. The partner taking control of finances was perceived helpful as it reduced accessibility to gambling and reduced cravings. However, these strategies of control and monitoring are associated with significant relationship issues, and can lead to increased deception and lying. Participants who gambled said they needed their partners to listen, to avoid confrontational language, and to remain calm. They also felt that positive reinforcement strategies were important to maintain recovery, and a sense of pride and self-efficacy, and

they commonly hoped that they would be able to rebuild the trust lost from the relationship.

Corney and Davis' (2010b) interviews with female 'problem' and 'regular gamblers' also explored "the process of trying to give up" (Corney and Davis, 2010b, p. 301). When trying to give up, the problem was often first vocalised by family or friends and denied by the individual. In other cases, participants were aware of their problem, but this led to greater secrecy. Overall, they found the experience of disclosing to their partners less troublesome than expected and many felt like it was a relief.

> "I thought well I have to tell someone and well he was the only person I could tell. Um, you know he was not particularly pleased but he was not as angry as I thought he would be, but he said he had a good idea, you know with me sitting there night after night" (Corney and Davis, 2010b, p. 302).

For the most part, the help from friends and family was helpful. Having a family motivated those experiencing harmful gambling to change their behaviour, especially if they felt the welfare of their children was at risk. On the other hand, they felt that they had to fill "the void" (Corney and Davis, 2010b, p. 304) left by gambling. For those with families, this often meant spending more time together. For others, time was spent at work, social activities, playing video games excessively, drinking, or non-Internet bingo.

Affected others also seek help from services for gambling harms. Hing et al. (2013) interviewed 48 (75% female) significant others about their help-seeking behaviour. While participants had sought some form of professional help for themselves and/or a person experiencing harmful gambling behaviours, most initially used self-help before seeking assistance from a helpline or professional sources. Non-professional help – such as that coming from a partner, other family members, friends and work colleagues – was used by two-thirds of participants. Self-help was used by 83% of respondents. The main motivations for help included concerns that gambling might become a major issue, negative emotions, problems in maintaining normal daily activities, concerns about the welfare of dependants, and physical health concerns. For example, "I was concerned about his health, and how to guide towards healthier options" (Hing et al., 2013, p. 400). Importantly, the authors concluded that significant others can experience difficulties in coping with their partner's gambling problems.

4.8 Forms of formal help can also provide important social support

The review also uncovered research that highlighted the role of formal support that can help the recovery from gambling harms. This support - consisting of more formalised help than that provided by family or friends - included formal counselling, or attendance at groups such as Gamblers Anonymous.

4.8.1 Gamblers Anonymous appears to be effective in helping the recovery from gambling harms

The review found research that demonstrates how members of Gamblers Anonymous (GA) respond to the medical model of addiction that underpins meetings. GA is a particular type of support group that have extremely strong bonds. However, GA – a form of support that also leans on themes of spirituality – also frames gambling harm as individual responsibility, a narrative that is unhelpful in reducing gambling harms or stigma (Wheaton et al., 2024b).

Nonetheless, our review found evidence that GA is effective in providing support. Venuleo and Marinaci (2017) conducted 35 interviews with individuals in GA and their relatives in Gam-Anon (a forum for affected others) to explore how they understand their identities as 'problem gamblers'. Those who attended GA reported a sense of a fixed "sick" (Venuleo and Marinaci, 2017, p. 148) identity as if their gambling behaviour is undetachable from themselves, but also as an identity which is external to themselves. They also appeared to understand their previous behaviour through this addiction identity which also allowed them to reshape their future.

> "GA offered me this great, great joy. GA gave me the chance to restart to live. Starting to live again means having faith in something good, and healthy. In this way, I got my wife back, my home, my daughter, my job, my serenity, my life" (Venuleo and Marinaci, 2017, p. 152).

Another key theme was change as a spiritual endeavour, with the introduction to GA being one of finding hope and forgiveness that acts as a counter to the anger, hostility and bitterness. This acts as their rebirth, allowing members to become a "well-adjusted person" (Venuleo and Marinaci, 2017, p. 153), and to obtain a new sense of self that is more highly valued by themselves and their significant others. The recovery that emerged from a history of 'problem gambling' was one filled with shame, guilt and self-contempt, and an activity that was inherently destructive with no thought given to loved ones. Participants also reported the idea of a "rupture" (Venuleo and Marinaci, 2017, p. 149), where they reported a peaceful history with the myriad of reasons one may have got involved with gambling downplayed, then a rupture caused by gambling which destroyed their lives. Social aspects – including an inability to satisfy social obligations due to gambling - played an important part of understanding problems with gambling and the decision to ask for help.

Rogers (2019) employed ethnography and interviews to understand the process and practice of GA in the UK. For many, GA provided a consistent, regular space for mutual, effective help and advice. GA was perceived as part of a crucial social network to help individuals cope with the struggle to maintain abstinence from harmful behaviours. GA helps many individuals to gain perspective on their lives, placing less emphasis on financial issues and more on other life domains such as personal relationships. GA members also

participated in other weekly meetings online, via social media and other websites.

> "At first I went to GA every night. I needed to. It worked for me. It is still working. Most of my friends are in GA. We did the Three Peaks walk at the weekend. I went with three friends who are all off a bet. I know where they are coming from. We all struggle. There is always someone I can talk to at GA. And I can. They will call me an idiot and tell me to sort myself out or talk in a more understanding way whatever I need. I am not afraid to tell them what I have done. When I meet new people now, part of my fear is that I will have to tell them. Which I will. It is part of my history, of what I have done. With the GA lot. They know don't they? So I don't need to go through all of that" (Rogers, 2019, p. 135).

Participants highlighted how the routine of GA, and the discussions during meetings, were a vital part of their recovery. Chairs of GAs were reported as skilled with their experience with gambling, but often lacked the understanding of comorbidities. Discussion of suicidal thoughts and attempts is common, as is the discussion around crimes committed to fund gambling.

Ferentzy et al. (2010) interviewed 39 experienced (26 men, 13 women) GA members to understand uniformity and variation in approaches within different GA groups. Personal motivation was revealed as important within the GA space, but this approach was insufficient. Emphasis was therefore placed on dependency on family and social structures, which is unlike those seen in Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous which also involve themes of spirituality. In GA, the pressure from family was seen as an important factor.

> "Most compulsive gamblers, male or female, come in with a partner, husband and wife, boyfriend and girlfriend. And if they don't have that support basically from that partner, they're almost doomed to fail whatever good intention they may have at the time" (Ferentzy et al., 2010, p. 493).

Women found that GA was not as effective given that GA-style groups were designed by men, to address men's gambling issues. Additionally, few husbands join GamAnon (an affected other forum). The two main reasons are that men were not inclined to join, and the women reported not wanting their husbands to do so either.

4.8.2 Social support found in other group-based approaches also helps the recovery from gambling harms

The evidence reviewed also highlighted the efficacy of other group-based approaches, with value placed on the ability to share experiences in a safe space. Harris and Mazmanian's (2016) study of 24 (13 male) Canadian self-identified Internet gamblers who were seeking treatment explored participants' experiences of cognitive behavioural group therapy. Cognitive Behavioural

Therapy is a form of treatment also explored in our report of the scoping review carried out for Challenge 4 (Wheaton et al., 2024b). The authors found that one particularly helpful aspect of treatment itself was motivational interviewing. Participants reported that overtly acknowledging the benefits and disadvantages of gambling was very useful especially in relation to evaluating personal values and long-term goals. The importance of support from other group members was also reported. This support helped participants to feel less isolated and also helped them to develop an insight into their own issues.

Syvertsen et al. (2020) interviewed nine Norwegian attendees at self-help groups for gambling addiction. The participants felt that self-help groups provided a space for understanding and being heard, as well as alleviating loneliness. Participants felt supported by a community that understands them and that they felt they received support which was not possible outside of these groups. Moreover, participants found helping other less experienced attendees with their gambling addiction to be rewarding, and they felt this was important for relapse prevention. For example,

> “new ones are arriving who are often receiving another form of treatment and... but then we give them tips and advice on, well, how to blacklist oneself from creditors, how to exclude oneself from Norsk Tipping, help with, with getting somebody else to manage the finances” (Syvertsen et al., 2020, p. 254).

There was, however, some disagreement over the meeting structure, with some participants feeling that trivial topics sometimes dominated discussions compared to gambling-focused sharing.

In Canada, Piquette-Tomei et al. (2008) interviewed 14 women participating in group counselling for ‘problem gambling’ to understand effective practices for female ‘problem gamblers’. Participants felt they needed a group that understood the different roles of employees, mothers, wives and friends, and that accessibility (for example, evening groups) was the key element for success. They also needed a safe space to discuss personal issues around other women who had similar experiences.

> "When I go to group… I realize there are other people that have just as large problem[s] as I did and that is helpful to me because I realize that I am not alone. There are other people out there that have it just as bad as I do and that is effective to me” (Piquette-Tomei et al., 2008, p. 282).

Participants highlighted the importance of facilitators who are knowledgeable, directed, good listeners and who provide good feedback. They also felt that groups should be age-inclusive and gender-exclusive.

4.8.3 Stigma can influence the outcomes of formal counselling

Our scoping review also found evidence that formal counselling can be affected by perceptions of stigma. Hing et al.'s (2016) study – carried out in Australia - consisted of in-depth interviews with 44 people experiencing gambling problems to explore how both public stigma and self-stigma in relation to gambling harms impact coping mechanisms and help-seeking. They found that about half of the participants received formal counselling, and expected counsellors to be supportive. Participants who received counselling sought help despite stigma. For example,

> "I haven't really felt that that [stigma] affects going to see a counsellor because generally, once you get to that point, you need to talk to someone, and the stigma doesn't really bother you" (Hing et al., 2016, p. 43).

On the other hand, a few participants who received counselling did not return as they felt judged by their counsellor. For example, "The counsellor is just waiting for me to fall out of line, and then it'll be no stopping her" (Hing et al., 2016, p. 43). The authors also found that half of their participants had sought help from Internet-based and telephone services. There was no indication that recipients of these services felt judged or stigmatised. Peer support groups were often unattended because participants felt they were not for them, or that they felt weak for not dealing with the issue on their own. A few said they were fearful of disclosure and stigma.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the intersection of social groups and experiences of gambling harms. The review found evidence that harmful gambling is exacerbated by stigma which can prevent an individual from seeking help or support. Gambling harms can impact different members of the family, including partners, children, and other family members such as siblings. On the other hand, the evidence reviewed demonstrated how social groups – whether through informal help or formal support groups such as GA – can provide support for gambling harms, albeit in complex ways.

5 Summary and conclusions

This report has explored the role of social groups during the different parts of the gambling journey, from the initial experiences of gambling and the continuation of gambling behaviour, to the experience of gambling harms and the recovery from harmful gambling behaviours. Firstly, the review found that family and friends can play a significant role in the first experiences of gambling, and sport – and significant sporting events – provide a mechanism for first experiences of gambling. However, the initiation of gambling is further encouraged by commercial determinants such as marketing or incentives to gamble. These strategies may normalise gambling as a social activity. The review found that children's perceptions of gambling can be influenced by adults' gambling behaviour, while individuals who play social casino games may be encouraged into gambling with real money through the cross-promotion of gambling products, or by transitioning to gambling products from similar social casino games.

Secondly, our review found that gambling – once initiated – can become a normal part of social life. We found research that highlights how gambling can become a routinised and ritualised part of social lives for women, while men can find that gambling and sport appear intertwined. However, the role of continued gambling as a social activity for women and men can be influenced by commercial determinants such as the wider accessibility of gambling, or marketing and incentives to gambling. Gambling can also be a routine leisure activity for adolescents and older adults, as well as becoming a consumption community in its own right across social groups. Gambling can also form an important part of the identity of poker players, with players treating poker as a profession or a sport as opposed to a gambling activity. In this sense, the identity of poker players is influenced by the distinction between skill and gambling.

Finally, we found that harmful gambling can be exacerbated by stigma which can prevent access to help and support. This stigma can impact specific groups such as professional athletes, as well as the family members of those experiencing harmful gambling. Gambling harms can impact the social relationships of gamblers, with research exploring the impact upon partners, children, and extended social networks. We also found that support networks are important for the recovery process. Support networks can encompass a range of approaches, whether professional or family-led strategies, while Gamblers Anonymous can also provide an important (although contested) network of social connections who have first-hand experiences of gambling harms. Other group-based approaches can also provide a safe place for those experiencing gambling harms to begin and continue their recovery.

Our findings should be considered against the limitations. Our scoping review was conducted according to search terms which we acknowledge may have omitted some papers which would have been relevant to our guiding research question. Importantly, these papers were informed by data mainly shared by those with lived experience, but there is a gap for further accounts given by treatment providers. We also acknowledge how the papers which have informed the key themes presented in our report are mostly from jurisdictions such as Australia, Canada or the UK. Our intention is not to generalise these

findings to other settings, but to highlight the findings of the literature in this area, and to inspire future research.

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Appendix One: Search terms and databases

The initial search for literature within this scoping review was guided by the overarching research question: “What is the everyday practice and portrayal of gambling in social groups?”. The search terms and databases were devised with guidance from academics acting as the Challenge Co-Leads.

The search terms were: “(gambl* AND (everyday OR narrative* OR representation* OR interview* OR portrayal OR experience OR math* OR model* OR peer* OR family* OR friend* OR money* OR (household AND finance*))”.

The search terms were entered into the following databases:

- Web of Science
- PsycINFO
- Scopus
- JSTOR
- International Bibliography of the Social Sciences

Appendix Two: Paper inclusion and data abstraction

To be included, research articles had to explicitly explore the portrayal of gambling and gambling-related harms amongst social groups. Papers needed to be focused on the study of qualitative data, published in English, focused on the economies of OECD member countries, as well as published in or after 2005 (post-Gambling Act 2005). Table A1 below details the numbers of included and excluded papers, as well as the reasons for exclusion. Papers, after de-duplication, were sifted by title, abstract, and then by full text.

Data were then abstracted from included texts, with specific criteria. These criteria are introduced in Table A2. Data abstracted under these criteria were subjected to narrative analysis, with the most prevalent themes within the data answering the guiding research question. Themes mainly emerged from data gathered under the 'Summary of Findings' criteria, but these data were developed in conjunction with other data highlighted within other fields.

Table A1: Details of included and excluded papers

Sift One: By Title	Sift Two: By Abstract	Full Text: Data Abstract
Titles Sifted: 25,353	Abstracts Sifted: 1,289	Texts Screened: 275
Titles Included: 1,289	Abstracts Included: 275	Texts Included: 97
Titles Excluded: 24,064	Abstracts Excluded: 1,014 *Reasons for Exclusion:*	Texts Excluded:178 *Reasons for Exclusion:*
Titles excluded due to not being clearly related to the research question.	Titles excluded due to not being clearly related to the research question, or not having carried out a qualitative methodology.	Quantitative methodology: 140
		Not related to research question: 19
		No data: 5
		Non-journal article format: 2
		Issues with methodology: 1
		Non-English: 1

Table A2: Criteria of data abstraction

Authors	Names of the authors who produced each paper.
Year of publication	The year in which each paper was published.
Title	The title of each paper.
Abstract	The abstract of each paper.
Social Group	The social group which was studied within each paper. These social groups consisted of couples, employees, families, older adults, poker players, problem gamblers, the public, social casino gamers, sports, sports communities, and young people.
Age	The age of social groups that was explored within each paper. These age categories consist of adolescents, adults, children, older adults, and young adults. The specific ages of participants varied across each paper.
Gender	The gender explored within each paper. One of male or female.
Game Type	The type of gambling explored in each paper. One of EGM, general, land-based, online gambling, poker, social casinos, sports betting, video lottery terminals.
Theme	The main theme under focus within each paper. Themes consisted of advertising, attitudes, context, coping, experiences, identity, impact, intergenerational, motives, perceptions, practice, stigma, treatment.
Methods	The methodology used within each paper. Papers consisted of those solely from a qualitative approach.
Overarching theme	The broad categories of themes emerging from the different categories under the 'theme' field. Overarching themes consisted of attitudes, motives and perceptions; environment; practice, experience and impact; treatment.
Country	The country or jurisdiction under focus within each country
URL	The URL of each paper.
Summary	The summary of findings made within each paper. Summaries consisted of the approach and sample size, the focus of the paper, and a summary of the key findings. These key findings may have consisted of the uncovered themes, in addition to implications for the sector.
Limitations	Limitations highlighted by the authors of each study.

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