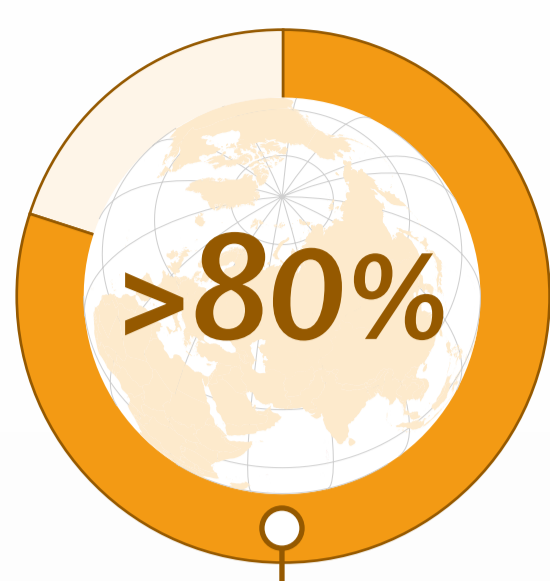


# The Lancet Public Health Commission on gambling

Gambling is now available 24/7 to anyone with internet access. The negative effects from gambling are far reaching and go beyond individuals experiencing gambling disorder, impacting families, friends, and society more widely.

## An expanding public health threat



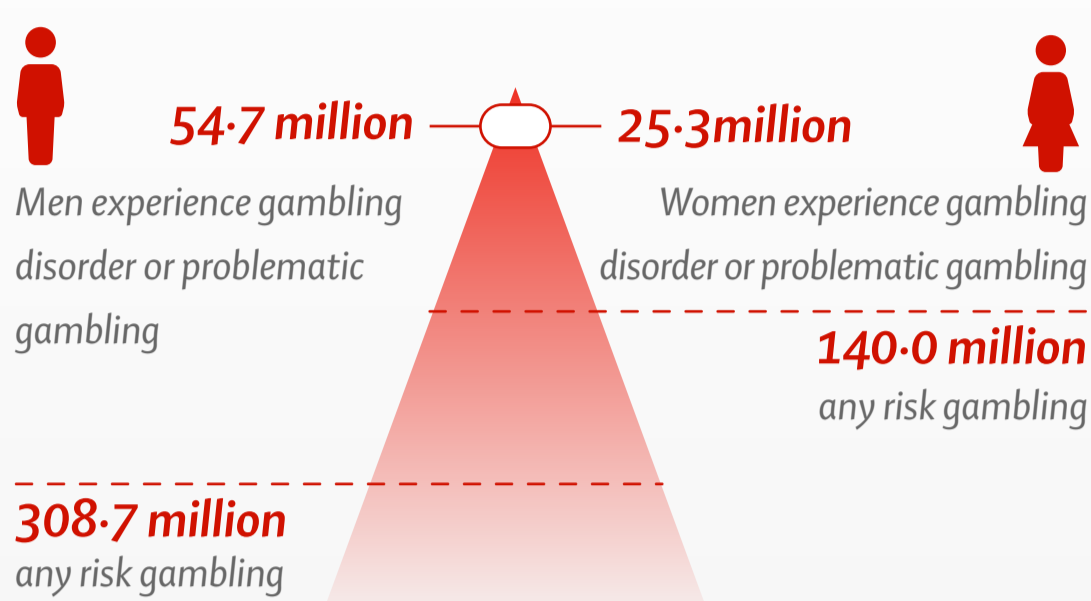
Not only through traditional environments or products, such as casinos or lotteries

But also digital environments, such as apps and websites



Countries around the world where commercial gambling is legally available

The Commission estimates that approximately:



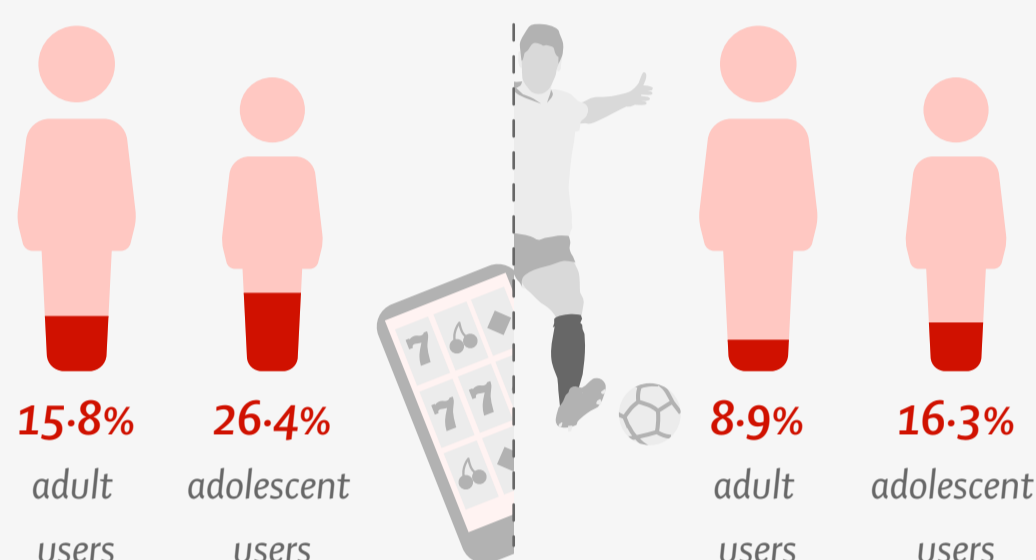
These estimates are likely to be conservative; many more people are harmed by the gambling of others

The digital transformation of the global gambling industry extends its reach to areas with little previous experience of commercial gambling, making it widely accessible even where it is not legally permitted. This rapid expansion is particularly concerning in low-income and middle-income countries, where regulatory frameworks are often weak.

Commercial gambling is associated with a wide range of negative consequences such as:

- » Financial loss and the risk of financial ruin
- » Physical and mental health problems
- » Domestic violence
- » Increased crime against property and people
- » Relationship and family breakdown
- » Heightened risk of suicide
- » Loss of employment

**Online casino** and **online sports betting** are two of the most rapidly expanding areas for commercial gambling globally. In these areas, gambling disorders could affect:



## The commercial determinants of gambling

To support expansion, the commercial gambling sector promotes its products and protects its interests by adopting corporate practices designed to influence consumers behaviour, undermine legitimate science on the impact of gambling, and influence political processes around gambling regulation.

### Product and system design

- Design of gambling products, including structural characteristics, that make products more harmful
- Deployment of online choice architecture and dark patterns techniques to influence behaviours.
- Development of boundary-spanning products (eg, social casino games, daily fantasy sports etc); and cross selling of gambling products

### Commercial practices and partnerships

- Direct and indirect marketing, advertising, and promotion, drawing on data surveillance for profiling and targeting
- Widespread partnerships and sponsorships with sporting, media, charitable and benevolent, and financial organisations, creating a complex commercial ecosystem with vested interest in commercial gambling expansion
- Use of social media and influencer promotions to promote brands and products that normalises gambling

### Shaping politics and regulatory agendas

- Lobbying of policy makers, regulators, and decision makers, including funding political campaigns
- Shaping the evidence base by controlling research funding and agendas, and access to data, while undermining legitimate science and research
- Resisting regulatory change, presenting industry as a legitimate stakeholder in the policy and decision-making process

### Shaping public perception

- Framing gambling as harmless leisure and emphasising the industry's role in wealth creation, employment, and revenue generation
- Associating sole responsibility for harms with the shortcomings of individuals and not a consequence of commercial products, practices, and policies
- Promoting corporate social responsibility and related policies that focus on the individual and to deflect attention away from commercial practices

## Key recommendations

The Commission makes seven recommendations for achieving lasting and impactful change to control the gambling industry and prioritise public health over economic revenues:

### For governments



- » Governments should prioritise protecting public health over competing economic motivations when setting policy
- » In all countries—irrespective of whether gambling is legally permitted—effective gambling regulation is needed
- » Jurisdictions that permit gambling need a well resourced, independent, and adequately empowered regulator
- » Gambling-related policy, regulation, treatment, and research must be protected from the distortionary effects of commercial influence; we advocate for a rapid transition away from industry-funded research and treatment, coupled with and enabled by increased levels of investment from independent sources

### For civil society and intergovernmental organisations



- » At the international level, UN entities, such as WHO, and intergovernmental organisations should incorporate a focus on gambling harms into their strategies and workplans for improving health and wellbeing broadly
- » There is a need to develop an international alliance—including civil society, people with lived experience of harms related to gambling, researchers, and professional organisations—to provide thought leadership, advocacy, and convening of interested parties
- » This Commission recommends the instigation of the process to adopt a World Health Assembly resolution on the public health dimensions of gambling

Read the full *Lancet Public Health Commission* report for more details