

APRIL 16, 2025

Gambling Availability and Advertising in Canada

Focus on Youth and Young Adults

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Presented by

Greo Evidence Insights

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The Partnership Symposium 2025

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About Us

Greo Evidence Insights is a Canadian, independent, not-for profit organization that has been working in gambling research and harm reduction for over 20 years.



Conflicts of Interest

No conflicts of interest to declare



Presentation Goals

- Describe how recent changes to the availability and advertising of gambling in Canada may be a concern to public health, particularly youth and young adults
- Describe what should be done to mitigate these harms.



Recent policy changes have led
to increased gambling availability
and advertising

Recent Policy Changes

- June 22, 2021, the Canadian Senate approved **Bill C-218 (the Safe and Regulated Sports Betting Act)** which gives provinces and territories discretion to conduct and manage single-event sports betting within their jurisdictions
- In April 2022, the **Ontario market was opened to large, private, international gambling corporations**

As a result of these changes

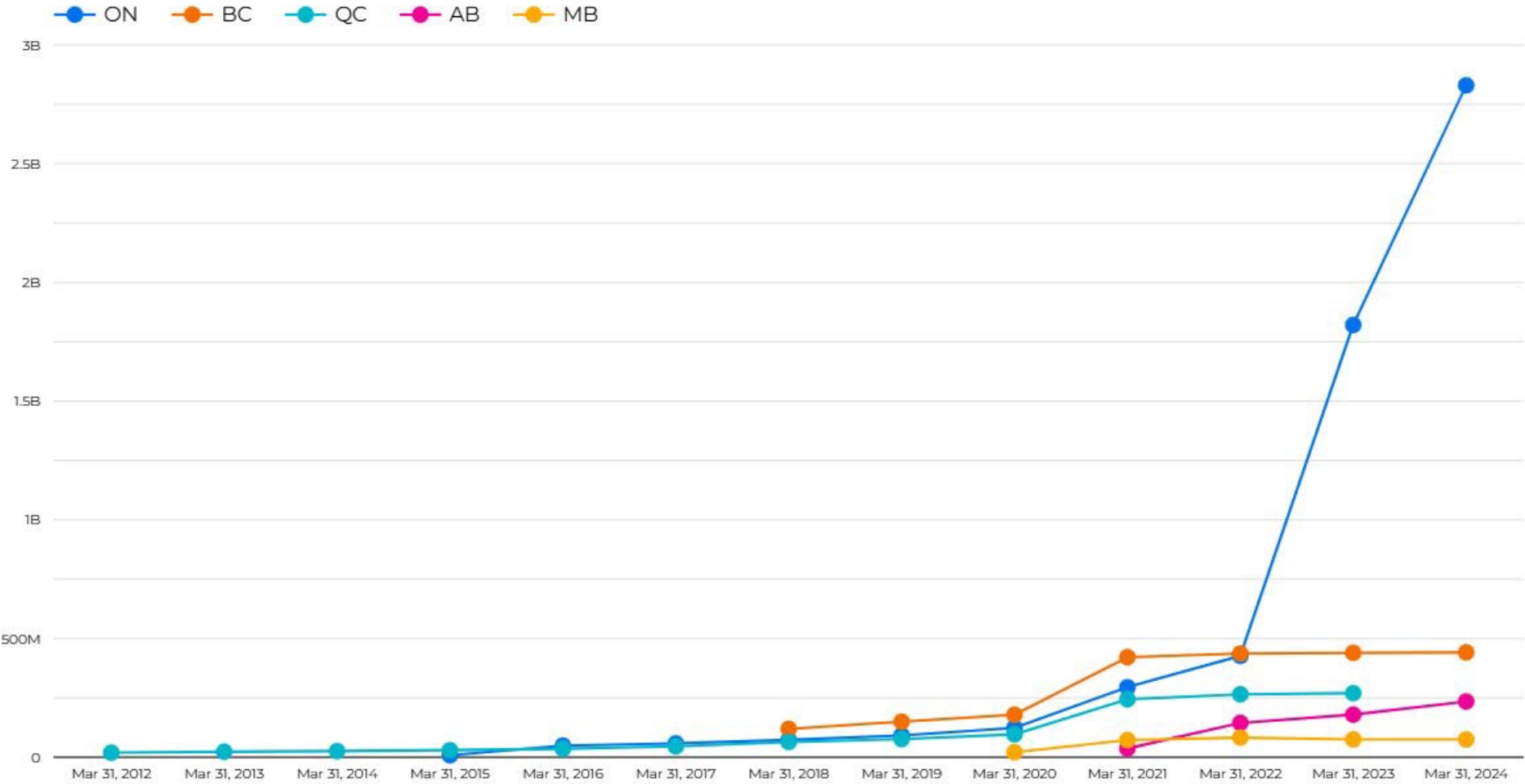
- More gambling advertising
 - 48% of Canadians agree that volume of gambling advertising is excessive and should be cut back¹
- More gambling participation
 - Amount wagered on online sites registered in Ontario:
 - FY 2022-23: \$35.5 billion
 - FY 2023-24: \$63 billion
 - Total amount wagered by Ontarians increased more than 300% from \$4.08 billion in Q1 (2022-23) to \$17.8 billion in Q4 (2023-24)²

¹ <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/how-much-too-much-nearly-half-canadians-think-gambling-ads-have-gotten-out-hand>

² <https://igamingontario.ca>

As a result of these changes

Online gambling net revenue by province



Source: AGRI National Project (ANP) Canadian Gambling Statistics (1970 – 2023): <https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/3f20dc8b-6e47-420d-8144-a15b18faabc9/page/p8VkB>

Is it simply a shift from illegal to legal market?

- Best estimate from before market liberalization → 1.5% of Ontarians participated in illegal online gambling¹
 - This is equivalent to 165,560 people living in Ontario in 2018
- In its first year, \$35.5 billion was wagered.
- If this \$35.5 billion was simply a shift from illegal to legal (market capture), then each person would have been spending more than \$200,000/year
- This does not seem plausible

¹ Mackey-Simpkin, S., Williams, R. J., Shaw, C. A., & Russell, G. E. H. (2023). Prevalence and predictors of illegal gambling in Canada. *International Gambling Studies*, 23(3), 387–402. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2022.2149833>



Concerns

Concerns

- 1 There is a potential for **increased gambling participation and increased gambling-related harm**;
- 2 The **types of gambling being promoted** (online and sports betting) are associated with greater risk of harm;
- 3 The **“normalization” of gambling** leads to gambling being seen as healthy, “normal” behaviour that “everybody” engages in; and
- 4 Impacts on **youth and young adults**.



1

Increased Gambling Participation

Gambling on apps available in the palm of your hand 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



1 Increased Gambling Participation

The greater a person's gambling participation, the more likely they are to experience gambling harm.

Table 4. Change in risk from reference group (i.e., ≤0.1%) occurring when gambling expenditure (%) per month predicts financial, relationship, emotional and psychological, and health harms (N=59,099)

	≤0.1%	0.11 to 0.50	0.51 to 1.00	1.1 to 2.0	2.1 to 3.0	3.1 to 4.0	4.1 to 5.0	5.1 or more
Sample size in category	17,634	15,926	7,708	6,250	2,988	1,700	1,082	5,811
HARM								
Financial								
Sample reporting harm (n)	335	535	429	507	337	221	144	1,510
% reporting harm	1.9%	3.4%	5.6%	8.1%	11.3%	13.0%	13.3%	26.0%
Risk relative to reference group		1.8X	3.0X	4.3X	5.9X	6.8X	7.0X	13.7X
Relationship								
Sample reporting harm (n)	173	249	207	287	178	129	99	1,045
% reporting harm	1.0%	1.6%	2.7%	4.6%	6.0%	7.6%	9.1%	18.0%
Risk relative to reference group		1.6X	2.7X	4.7X	6.1X	7.7X	9.3X	18.3X
Emotional/psychological								
Sample reporting harm (n)	441	638	460	616	374	250	178	1,551
% reporting harm	2.5%	4.0%	6.0%	9.9%	12.5%	14.7%	16.5%	26.7%
Risk relative to reference group		1.6X	2.4X	3.9X	5.0X	5.9X	6.6X	10.7X
Health problems								
Sample reporting harm (n)	142	221	157	219	133	87	76	776
% reporting harm	0.8%	1.4%	2.0%	3.5%	4.5%	5.1%	7.0%	13.4%
Risk relative to reference group		1.6X	2.5X	4.4X	5.5X	6.4X	8.7X	16.6X



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Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines

These guidelines were developed using the most current and highest quality scientific evidence available.

To reduce your risk of experiencing harms from gambling, follow all three of these guidelines:

1 HOW MUCH

Gamble no more than **1%** of household income before tax per month

Yearly household income	Maximum monthly amount
\$10,000	\$8
\$30,000	\$25
\$50,000	\$42
\$70,000	\$58
\$90,000	\$75
\$110,000	\$92
\$130,000	\$108
\$150,000	\$125

and

4 HOW OFTEN

Gamble no more than **4 days** per month

and


2 HOW MANY

Avoid regularly gambling at more than **2 types** of games

WHAT YOU PLAY MATTERS

- Fast-paced games that involve quick and repeated betting can more quickly and easily lead to problems.
- For example, with many forms of online gambling, slot machines, electronic gaming machines and poker, people can spend large amounts of money in a short time.

GAMBLING TYPES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:



HOWEVER, these limits may not be suitable for you. You should consider gambling less than these guidelines recommend or not at all if you ...

- Experience problems from alcohol, cannabis or other drug use
- Experience problems with anxiety or depression
- Have a personal or family history of problems with gambling

1

Increased Gambling Participation

Like alcohol, growing evidence of a reliable association between the total consumption in the population and the level of harm within that population.



2

Type of Gambling Promoted

In-play sports betting and online gambling are faster with frequent betting

- Previously, bets were made on a set of outcomes (parlay)
- Now, bets can be made on who wins the coin toss, the next faceoff, first penalty, etc.



WHEN GAMBLING, WHAT YOU PLAY MATTERS

GREATER RISK



Some types of gambling, such as electronic gaming machines or online poker, are faster paced, involve frequent betting and encourage you to play more often and for longer periods of time, and to spend more money.

LESS RISK



Other types of gambling, such as lottery tickets, are slower paced, less intense and involve less spending. For example, someone might buy a ticket weekly or monthly.

LRGG

Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines

WHEN YOU GAMBLE,

think about the type of game you're playing. The choices you make can make it easier or harder to stick to Canada's Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines.



EFFECT SIZES FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING RISK FACTORS

Large Effect Size	Medium Effect Size		Small Effect Size
Internet gambling	Attempted suicide	Games of skill	Sports pools
EGM and slot machines (excluding casino)	Casino table games	EGM and slot machines (casino only)	Instant win/scratch
EGM and slot machines (including casino)	Cardrooms	Ever been incarcerated	Sports events
Poker	Daily lottery	Horse, harness, or greyhound races	Poor physical health
	Problems due to alcohol/drugs	Internalizing symptoms	Out-of-province casino
	Keno	Depression issues	Ethnicity
	Problems due to alcohol	Illicit drug use	Age
	Casino gambling (EGM, slots, table games)	Daily tobacco use	Ever filed bankruptcy
	Suicidal thoughts	Ever been arrested or detained	Gender
	Card games	Any mental health problem	All lottery games (weekly, pulltab, instant)
	Pulltabs	Sports select	Marital status
	Pari-mutual (sports/races)	Binge drinking	Education
	Cocaine use	Marijuana use	
	Sports (all)	Private betting: card/board games with friends/family	
	Anxiety issues	Bingo	
	Family member ever had a gambling problem		

	Gambling Activity
	Psychosocial
	Substance Use
	Socio-Demographic

Source: [The WAGER, Vol. 26\(12\) – Problem gambling risk factors in the general adult population across 104 studies: How do they rank? - The Brief Addiction Science Information Source \(BASIS\) \(basisonline.org\)](#) based on information presented in Allami, Y., Hodgins, D., Young, M., Brunelle, N., Currie, S., Dufour, M., Flores-Pajot, M., & Nadeau, L. (2021). A meta-analysis of problem gambling risk factors in the general adult population. *Addiction*.

3

Normalization Of Gambling

Sports betting promotes the normalization of gambling – part of being a “good fan”

- Sports are considered an important, healthy activity by most cultures
- Repeatedly pairing sports with sports betting → gambling on sports integral part of sport and a healthy, “normal” behaviour



Youth are particularly vulnerable

4

Impact on Young People

- **Youth are widely exposed to gambling ads**, especially during sports broadcasts and on social media, despite regulations prohibiting targeted advertising to minors.
- **Young people are particularly vulnerable** to advertising due to impulsivity, lower self-control, and difficulty distinguishing between promotional and informational content.¹
- **Sports betting ads often target young men**, promoting gambling as a marker of masculinity, expertise, and loyalty—shaping positive attitudes and motivation to gamble.²
- **Early exposure to gambling ads is linked to earlier gambling onset** and greater risk of harm, highlighting the need for national advertising standards to protect Canadian youth.³

1. Pechmann, C., Levine, L., Loughlin, S., & Leslie, F. (2005). Impulsive and self-conscious: Adolescents' vulnerability to advertising and promotion. *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 24(2), 202-221. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jppm.2005.24.2.202>; Sandberg, H., Gidlof, K., & Holmberg, N. (2011). Children's exposure to and perceptions of online advertising. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 21-50. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/716/502>

2. Lopez-Gonzalez, H., Estévez, A., & Griffiths, M. D. (2018). Controlling the illusion of control: A grounded theory of sports betting advertising in the UK. *International Gambling Studies*, 18(1), 39-55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2017.1377747>; Jones, C. M., & Noel, B. (2021). Skin in the game — Erroneous beliefs and emotional involvement as correlates of athletes' sports betting behavior and problems. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 10(3), 412-421. <https://doi.org/10.1556/2006.2021.00034>.

3. Gupta, R., & Derevensky, J. L. (1998). Adolescent gambling behavior: A prevalence study and examination of the correlates associated with problem gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 14, 319-345. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1023068925328>; Volberg, R., Gupta, R., Griffiths, M. D., Olason, D. T., & Delfabbro, P. (2010). An international perspective on youth gambling prevalence studies. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 22(1), 3-38. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20491416/>



Impact of Recent Policy Changes on Adults and Youth

Impact of Policy Changes

We do not really know

- Last comprehensive national survey was in 2018
- Gambling and problem gambling was decreasing

Currently no systematic monitoring and surveillance of gambling-related harm in Canada

- Gambling-related bankruptcy
- Gambling-related divorce
- Gambling-involved suicide
- Problem gambling treatment demand
- Gambling-related crime



Brief Report: The Rise of Online Betting in Ontario

Nigel E. Turner^{1,2} · Lindsay Sinclair^{3,4} · Flora I. Matheson^{5,6}

Accepted: 15 November 2023 / Published online: 13 December 2023
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Abstract

In this paper we examine the nature of calls for the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline from June 2021 to Jan 2023 to determine if the increased marketing of online and sports gambling has changed the nature of calls to the helpline. An interrupted time series model comparing the monthly calls before and after the expansion of online gambling and advertising (April 2023), found a significant effect. Calls related to the other games examined did not have a significant interrupted time series effect of from the expansion and advertising of online gambling. The results of this analysis clearly indicate an association between the expansion of legalized gambling and gambling advertising with the number of people who call the helpline for problem related to online gambling.

Keywords Helpline data · Crisis calls · Sports gambling · Online gambling · Time series analysis

Calls to Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline

Turner et al., 2023

Limited data suggest increased availability and advertising is having a negative impact on population health

- Number of people calling Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline has increased significantly since 2021.

Turner, N. E., Sinclair, L., & Matheson, F. I. (2023). Brief report: The rise of online betting in Ontario. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-023-10268-1>

Helpline Calls

Turner et al., 2023

Limited data suggest increased availability and advertising is having a negative impact on population health

- Number of people calling Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline has increased significantly since 2021.

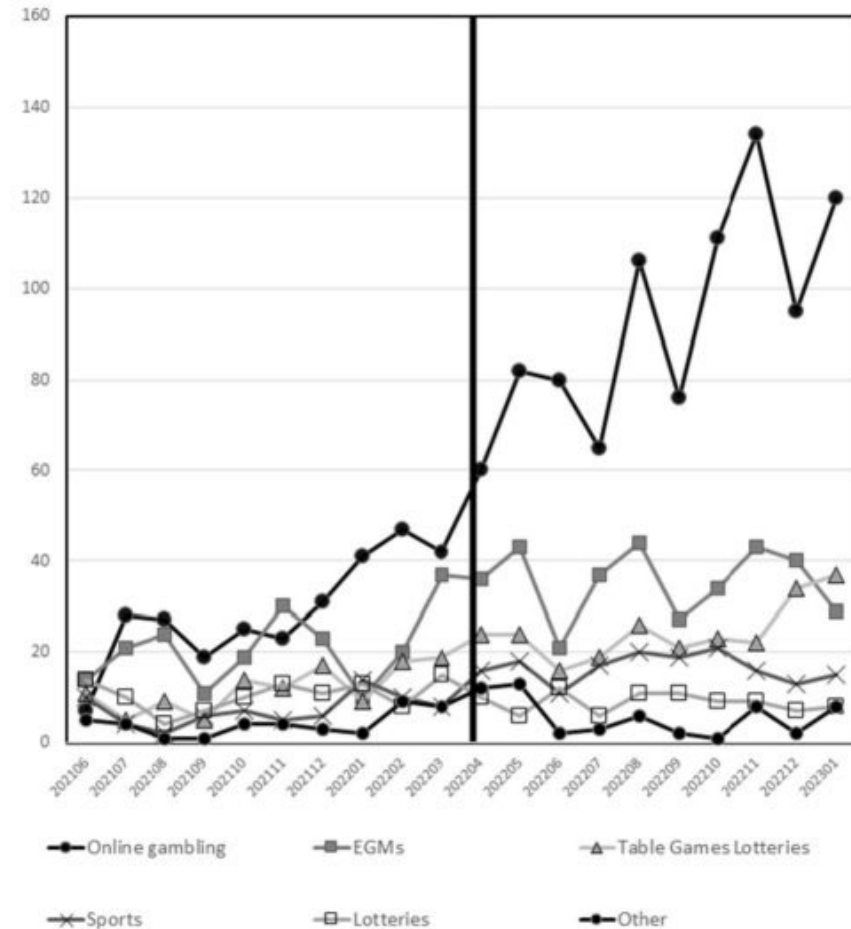


Fig. 1 Number of calls per game type from June 2021 to January 2023. The change in legislation is indicated by the solid vertical bar, April 2022

Turner, N. E., Sinclair, L., & Matheson, F. I. (2023). Brief report: The rise of online betting in Ontario. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-023-10268-1>



The need for a pan-Canadian
strategy to address gambling-
related harms

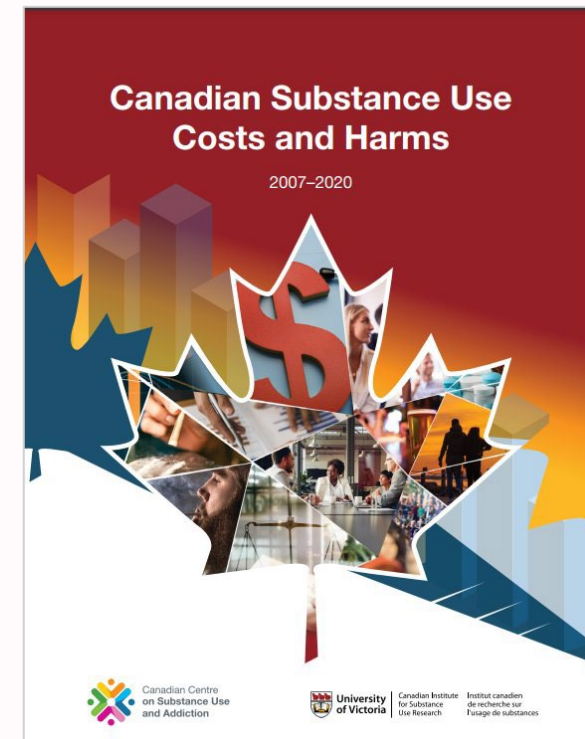
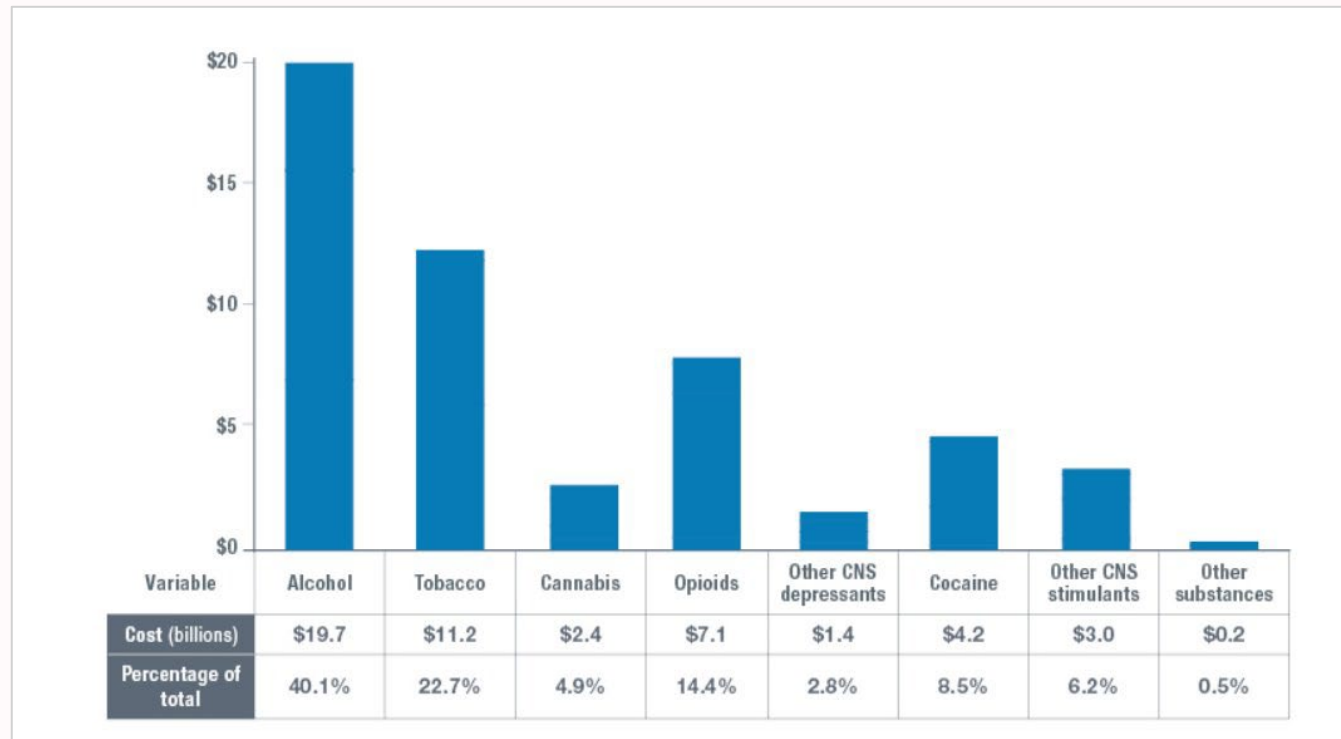
National Strategy to Address Gambling- Related Harms



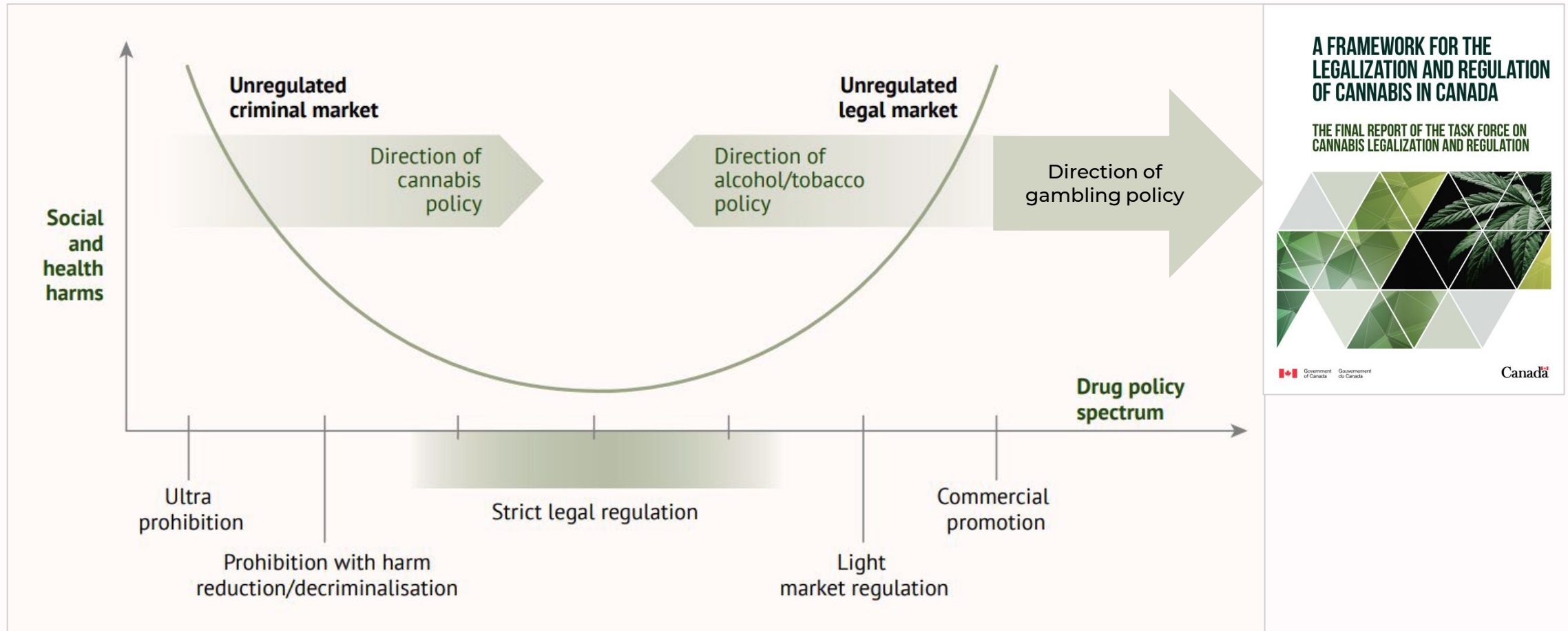
Ordinary Commodities?



Legal substances are responsible for greatest costs to society




Regulation/control vs Social and Health Harms



The advantage of state monopolies

Ordinary Commodities?



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Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis

Gaming


AGLC maintains the integrity of gaming activities, while maximizing the financial return to the programs and services that support Albertans.

Liquor

AGLC oversees the province's liquor industry, offering Albertans unparalleled selection, convenience, and responsible customer service.

Cannabis

AGLC is committed to providing the most innovative cannabis model that offers choices Albertans can trust.



AGCO


Alcohol and Gaming
Commission of Ontario

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Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario

We're responsible for regulating the alcohol, gaming, horse racing and cannabis retail sectors in accordance with the principles of honesty and integrity, and in the public interest.



The logo for the Liquor, Gaming & Cannabis Authority of Manitoba (LGCA). It features the letters "LGCA" in a large, bold, dark grey font. To the right of the "A" is a small graphic of a stylized mountain or triangle in green and blue. Below "LGCA" is the text "LIQUOR, GAMING & CANNABIS" in a smaller, bold, green font, and below that is "AUTHORITY OF MANITOBA" in an even smaller, grey font.

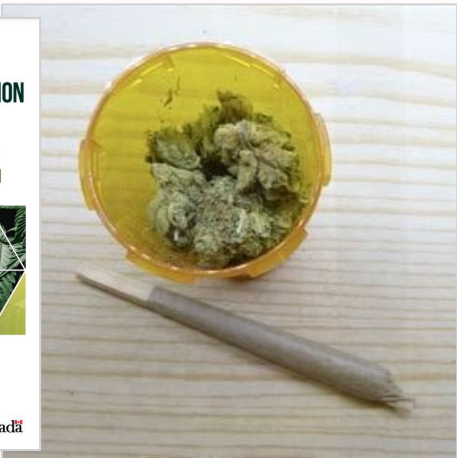
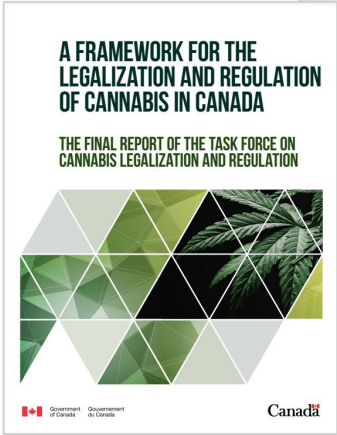
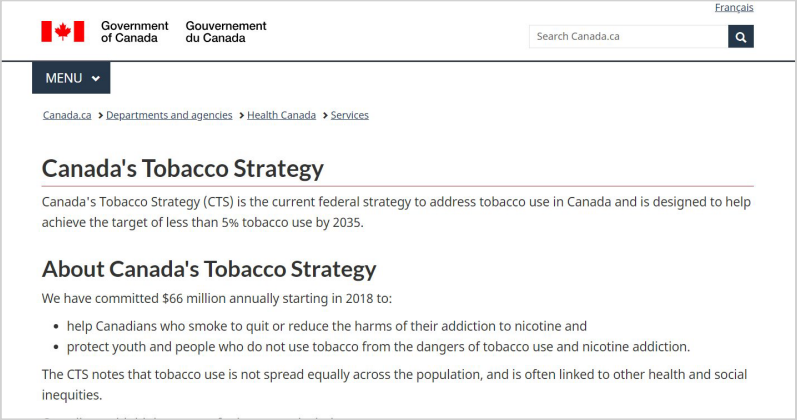
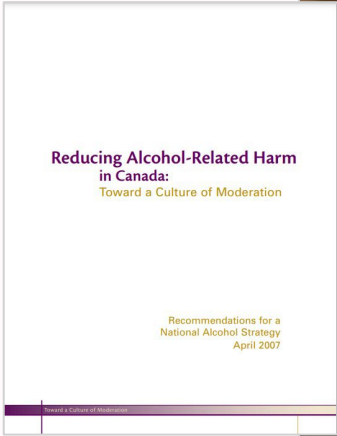
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National Strategies?



National Strategies?



National codes or advertising acts?



National codes or advertising acts?

Government of Canada

Gouvernement du Canada

Canada.ca

Services

Departments

Français

Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission

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Commercials

Codes

Code for broadcast advertising of alcoholic beverages

CODE FOR BROADCAST ADVERTISING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

1 August 1996

Commercial messages for alcoholic beverages shall not:

(a) attempt to influence non-drinkers of any age to drink or to purchase alcoholic beverages;

(b) be directed at persons under the legal drinking age, associate any such product with youth or youth symbols, or portray persons under the legal drinking age as persons who could reasonably be mistaken for such persons in a context where any such product is being shown or promoted.



CANADA

CONSOLIDATION

CODIFICATION

Tobacco and Vaping Products Act

Loi sur le tabac et les produits de vapotage

S.C. 1997, c. 13

L.C. 1997, ch. 13

CANADA

CONSOLIDATION

CODIFICATION

Cannabis Act

Loi sur le cannabis

S.C. 2018, c. 16

L.C. 2018, ch. 16





What can be done?

A Pan-Canadian Strategy Must Address:

- 1 The need for national standards governing the promotion and availability of gambling**
 - Unlike alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis there are no Canadian national standards or regulations governing gambling advertising – these are particularly needed to protect youth
 - Advertisements spill across Province / Territory borders
 - Gambling products that are legal in Ontario or Alberta may not be legal (i.e., grey market) for people in other P / T who are seeing advertisements for those products
 - Solutions to this problem will not be easy but must be addressed - other countries have started to ban or severely limit gambling advertising

A Pan-Canadian Strategy Must Address:

2 Problematic conflicts of interest among gambling stakeholders

- The gambling industry is wealthy and powerful
- Others also profit from gambling, such as:
 - Sports industry
 - Tech companies and affiliates
 - Media companies
 - Provincial & Territorial governments

A Pan-Canadian Strategy Must Address:

3 Inadequate funding for gambling harm prevention and reduction initiatives and research across jurisdictions

- Responsibility for gambling harm prevention/reduction has largely been left to gambling operators, i.e.,
- Crown lottery corporations
- Private operators licensed to offer online gambling and sports betting in Ontario
- There are currently few sources of funding for gambling research in Canada

A Pan-Canadian Strategy Must Address:

- 4 The absence of any systematic monitoring of changes in gambling-related harm, including any assessments of the social and economic costs of gambling.**
 - Need for a more comprehensive monitoring and surveillance system to assess and report on gambling-related harm
 - We have no estimates of the health and social costs of gambling as we have for hazardous products such as alcohol, tobacco and cannabis

Conclusions

- Recent federal and provincial policy changes have resulted in increased gambling availability and advertising in Canada
- We can expect well-funded lobby groups to be pressuring other provincial and territorial governments to follow Ontario's lead and liberalize their gambling markets



Conclusions

- As with other unhealthy commodities (alcohol, cannabis), evidence suggests that increased participation will likely be associated with increased harm
- Youth and young adults are likely to be harmed
- We do not currently have the ability to detect gambling-related harm if it happens or a strategy to manage it when it does





Questions and Comments

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Thank you!

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