



Gambling Harm and Women as Affected Others

How someone else's gambling impacts women

Gambling harm does not only affect the person who gambles. Women described a wide range of impacts from the gambling of partners, family members, friends, and colleagues. This study analysed responses from 136 women in Victoria and New South Wales who reported being negatively impacted by someone else's gambling. Gambling harms were often interconnected, shaping financial security, relationships, and emotional wellbeing.

1 Who is affected

Women reported being impacted by the gambling of:

- partners
- parents and family members
- friends
- children
- colleagues and extended networks

Harm was not limited to close relationships, but extended across social networks.

2 The main types of harm

Financial Harm

- Loss of household income
- Debt and financial instability
- Borrowing or stolen money
- Inability to pay for essentials

Relationship Harm

- Loss of trust
- Secrecy and dishonesty
- Conflict and arguments
- Relationship breakdown

Childhood impacts

- Growing up in unstable environments
- Lack of financial security
- Exposure to conflict
- Feeling neglected or not prioritised

Emotional Harm

- Stress and constant worry
- Feeling overwhelmed or responsible
- Reduced enjoyment of life
- Supporting others in distress



They loved gambling more than me



3 How harms are experienced

Harms were interconnected and rarely isolated. Financial impacts, such as debt or lost money, often affected relationships through conflict, loss of trust, or breakdown.

These experiences then contributed to emotional stress and reduced wellbeing. Over time, these harms built on each other and could affect multiple areas of women's lives.

4 How women make sense of harm

- Gambling was often framed as an issue of individual responsibility
- Concerns focused on whether someone could "control" their gambling
- Broader influences, such as environments and industry practices, were rarely recognised

This reflects dominant public messaging about 'responsible gambling'.

5 Why this matters

Harm extends beyond the individual to families and communities

Even lower-level harms can have significant cumulative impacts

Emotional distress is one of the most common experiences

Children can experience long-term impacts



BASED ON: McCarthy, S., Thomas, S.L., Pitt, H., Warner, E., Roderique-Davies, G., Rintoul, A. and John, B., 2023. "They loved gambling more than me." Women's experiences of gambling-related harm as an affected other. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 34(2), pp.284-293.