

Characteristics and Experiences of Employees who Gamble at Work

A Mixed-Methods Study

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Résumé de l'article

Given that little is currently known about gambling in the workplace, we conducted a mixed-methods study to describe the characteristics and experiences of people who gamble at work. We administered a Canada-wide online survey (n = 2,000) of adults who 1) gamble, 2) are currently employed full-time, and 3) have internet access at work. A descriptive analysis of quantitative survey data showed that individuals who gamble at work had lower job satisfaction and higher rates of problem gambling compared to those who do not. Among those who gamble at work, we quantitatively described the types of gambling, the consequences experienced, and the motivations for gambling. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 18 individuals who met the criteria for problem gambling and who gamble at work. Data were integrated to provide a richer description of the experiences of those who gamble at work, including their motivations, the role of work–life satisfaction, and the dynamic influence of work as a social context. Motivations for workplace gambling included excitement, social connection, avoidance, and coping with stress or emotions. The results highlight the importance of understanding the varied motivations of individuals who gamble at work, and the role of work experiences in shaping meaning regarding gambling behaviours.

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Characteristics and Experiences of Employees who Gamble at Work: A Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract: Given that little is currently known about gambling in the workplace, we conducted a mixed-methods study to describe the characteristics and experiences of people who gamble at work. We administered a Canada-wide online survey (n = 2,000) of adults who 1) gamble, 2) are currently employed full-time, and 3) have internet access at work. A descriptive analysis of quantitative survey data showed that individuals who gamble at work had lower job satisfaction and higher rates of problem gambling compared to those who do not. Among those who gamble at work, we quantitatively described the types of gambling, the consequences experienced, and the motivations for gambling. Qualitative interviews were conducted with 18 individuals who met the criteria for problem gambling and who gamble at work. Data were integrated to provide a richer description of the experiences of those who gamble at work, including their motivations, the role of work-life satisfaction, and the dynamic influence of work as a social context. Motivations for workplace gambling included excitement, social connection, avoidance, and coping with stress or emotions. The results highlight the importance of understanding the varied motivations of individuals who gamble at work, and the role of work experiences in shaping meaning regarding gambling behaviours.

Keywords: Gambling, gambling research, mixed-methods, work

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Introduction

Harmful gambling has been associated with a range of consequences for individuals and communities, including financial burdens, work / study harms, relationship disruption, emotional and psychological harm, as well as detriments to physical health (Hilbrecht et al., 2020; Hodgins et al., 2011; Langham et al., 2016; Li et al., 2017). Harmful gambling can be understood as “any type of repetitive gambling that a person engages in that leads to (or aggravates) recurring negative consequences” (Abbott et al., 2018, p. 4). Such negative consequences can be experienced not only by individuals engaged in gambling, but also family members, friends, co-workers, and communities (Langham et al., 2016; Li et al., 2017).

The Conceptual Framework for Harmful Gambling Factors (CFHGF, Hilbrecht et al., 2020) highlights risks and contributing factors to harmful gambling, which are both gambling specific (such as gambling exposure, environment, and types of gambling) and general (including social, cultural, psychological, and biological factors).

The CFHGF is helpful for understanding the workplace as a social location where individuals could encounter and engage in gambling, and where gambling-related risks and harms might be experienced (Hilbrecht et al., 2020). This understanding is useful both in contextualizing harmful gambling and in expanding the understanding of gambling disorder. As defined by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

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Disorders (DSM-5), gambling disorder is diagnosed when there is “persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress,” and when four or more behavioural indicators are present, such as preoccupation with gambling and having jeopardized or lost important relationships, work, or educational opportunities (APA, 2013).

Gambling Specific Considerations: Workplace as a Gambling Space

In an era of radical technological changes, access to gambling has become ubiquitous and gambling spaces exist anywhere with smartphone and internet access (Hing et al., 2022). The increased availability of gambling opportunities has generally been linked to increased levels of problem gambling (e.g., Gainsbury et al., 2012; Hing et al., 2022). In Canada, online gambling is now legal in every province (Joannou, 2020; Provost, 2023; Williams et al., 2021). Numerous features of internet gambling potentially undermine an individual’s ability to control their gambling (Wood et al., 2012), including a sense of unreality connected to digital money (Hing et al., 2015). Greater loss of control while internet gambling was also attributed to fast, easy access to large amounts of credit online, the privacy afforded by the online environment, and the ease of access to online gambling (Hing et al., 2015).

Wood and Williams (2007) reported that 15% of adult gamblers who are employed full-time report gambling in the workplace. For individuals who engage in internet gambling, 16.3% gamble in the workplace at least occasionally (Wood & Williams, 2011). While gambling in some contexts might enhance camaraderie and engagement in the workplace environment (for example, joint office pools with the intent to share winnings), for individuals with a vulnerability to problem gambling, there are multiple potential consequences of workplace gambling (Griffiths, 2009). Issues of internet abuse and gambling in the workplace have been identified as serious

occupational issues (Griffiths, 2009; Griffiths, 2010). Despite the identification of workplace gambling as a potential issue, and the fact that the DSM-5 diagnostic criteria for gambling disorder describes the occupational and interpersonal consequences of gambling (APA, 2013), there continues to be very little research on the actual experiences of workplace gambling.

An understanding of work-related risk factors is important to conceptualize the experiences of workplace gambling because the workplace environment itself might facilitate or hinder gambling behaviour (Binde & Romild, 2020; Nicoll, 2019). For example, increased access to gambling through internet connectivity and mobile phones can lead to a greater frequency of workplace gambling (Griffiths, 2009; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2021). Workplace gambling can also be more common among employees whose jobs involve unsupervised time, such as those that work from home (Griffiths, 2009; Revheim & Buvik, 2009). While attention has been given to the issues of “time theft” (e.g., taking longer breaks, using work time for non-work activities) as concerns for employers (Henle et al., 2010; Hu et al., 2023), this focus obscures the harms to individual employees and how these behaviours can be shaped by work environments that include exposure to gambling. Employees who work in the gambling industry are also more likely to develop gambling disorder, in part because of their high exposure to gambling opportunities (Guttentag et al., 2012; Hing & Gainsbury, 2013).

Understanding experiences of workplace gambling is important, as the risks and harms experienced can impact not only individuals engaged in gambling, but also co-workers, employers, and family members (Hilbrecht et al., 2020; Li et al., 2017). One particularly consequential aspect can be a failure to meet important work obligations as a result of gambling behaviours (Eby et al., 2016; Hodgins et al., 2011; Langham et al., 2016; Latvala et al., 2019), including absenteeism from work and poor job performance due to distraction or tiredness,

which could result in involuntary job loss (Langham et al., 2016; Latvala et al., 2019). In severe cases, gambling disorder can lead to criminal acts at work, such as embezzlement or theft, to address the financial demands of gambling (Binde, 2016; Langham et al., 2016; Latvala et al., 2019). Given that negative impacts to employment are considered a symptom of gambling disorder by definition, it is unsurprising that gambling in the workplace is a significant predictor for the development of gambling disorder, with individuals who gambled at work or instead of studying having greater risk of being newly classified as at-risk for gambling disorder one year later (Binde, 2016). Workplace gambling is also relatively common among people seeking help for gambling disorders, with 34% having reported using their work or study time to gamble (Salonen et al., 2018). While gambling in the workplace has been identified as an important issue that warrants greater attention (Griffiths, 2009; Nower, 2003), very few studies have examined experiences of workplace gambling specifically, or identified factors that can contribute to workplace gambling (Revheim & Buvik, 2009).

Workplace Gambling: Sociocultural and Individual Factors

While one way that problem gambling is defined is through the negative impacts of gambling behaviours on work, it is also important to examine the role of work, workplace relationships, and work satisfaction in shaping gambling behaviours. Work is integral in people's lives as a potential source of meaning, identity, connection, and livelihood. Further, the concept of decent work highlights the importance of recognizing the rights of employees to basic conditions of work being met, such as adequate pay, safety, and opportunity to enjoy non-working time (Duffy et al., 2016; International Labor Organization, 2008). Meaningful work can be seen as aspirational, though no less important (Blustein et al., 2023). There is a dynamic influence

between work and mental health, and there is a strong correlation between work satisfaction and overall well-being (Blustein et al., 2019; Robertson, 2013a, 2013b). Despite this understanding of the important role of work in people's lives, there are continued calls within the discipline to address more directly the issues of work and career as they relate to mental health and well-being (Blustein et al., 2019; Hudson Breen & Lawrence, 2021). Attention to this interplay between experiences of work and mental health is important to understanding factors that might contribute to gambling-related harms.

Socioeconomic conditions can also shape gambling behaviour, including gambling in the workplace (Binde & Romild, 2020; Hahmann et al., 2021). Gambling and gambling disorder tend to be higher among working-class occupational groups, such as people with transportation jobs, shop salespersons, and work that may be less likely to have properties of decent or meaningful work (Binde & Romild, 2020; Hahmann et al., 2021; Revheim & Buvik, 2009). Even when the probability of financial gains is low (e.g., lotteries), gambling can provide individuals with an opportunity to fantasize about what could be done with the prize money, and how it could allow them to improve their quality of life (Beckert & Lutter, 2013). Other potential explanations for why some individuals might be more likely to gamble in the workplace than others include a stress-coping model, which holds that individuals gamble in an effort to cope with stressful working conditions (Buchanan et al., 2020; Cowlshaw et al., 2020; Hing & Breen, 2008). Gambling as a form of escape might be especially attractive for individuals who experience monotony or feelings of meaninglessness in their work lives, with studies showing that job satisfaction and perceived meaningfulness are associated with lower rates of gambling and gambling problems (Beckert & Lutter, 2013; Wu & Wong, 2008).

Finally, some workplaces might have a culture of gambling together in lotteries, sports, or other

events through office sweepstakes that encourage participation (Binde & Romild, 2020; Griffiths, 2009; Nicoll, 2019). Gambling in groups can have positive social consequences, such as cementing and expanding relationships, and providing a way to participate in a shared group identity, rather than simply an economic opportunity (Guillén et al., 2012). In addition to participating in office pools, individuals can be influenced to gamble by their coworkers' general gambling habits (Beckert & Lutter, 2013; Nicoll, 2019) and a sense of the normalization of gambling through social relationships with colleagues (Russell et al., 2018). When gambling is normalized, encouraged, or hidden within the workplace, it can obscure the issue of missing work to gamble—a “reliable early warning sign” of risk of gambling harms experienced both by those who gamble and others in their relational context (Li et al., 2017, p. 239).

A critical, social constructionist approach is helpful when exploring the phenomenon of workplace gambling, locating gambling behaviour within social contexts and processes that shape meaning, and taking a critical stance towards accepted knowledge (Burr, 1995). A social constructionist understanding of work offers a critical lens to examine the relationship between work and gambling, inviting consideration of how the experience of work is embedded in relational and cultural contexts that shape individuals' meaning-making processes (Schultheiss, 2007), recognizing work as a context through which individuals construct their lives (Richardson, 2012). A social constructionist approach to understanding career lives problematizes traditional understandings of career, which tend to be individualistic and devoid of considerations of culture, gender, and interactions between individuals and their environments (Richardson, 2012; Young & Collin, 2004). In addition, as Richardson (2012) notes, a critical social constructionist perspective emphasizes the importance of understanding work—both paid and unpaid—“as contexts

through which people construct lives” (p. 202). In this study, we focus mainly on the context of paid employment, or “market work” as Richardson (2012) defines it, and in turn, market-work relationships as possible social contexts of gambling.

The current lack of knowledge about workplace gambling in Canada is problematic because workplace gambling has the potential for harm to both employees and employers (Griffiths, 2009; Nower, 2003). While the impacts of problem gambling on work responsibilities are well established, less is known specifically about individual experiences of gambling in relation to work. Given the expanded accessibility and complexity of gambling, understanding the nature and implications of workplace gambling is important. Accordingly, this research had three main objectives:

- 1.0 The first research objective was to understand the nature and consequences of workplace gambling in Canada, including a description of
 - 1.1 Rates of problem gambling and gambling expenditures among those who gamble at work.
 - 1.2 Preferred gambling activities and methods (i.e., online vs. in-person gambling, office pools) of workplace gambling.
 - 1.3 The work-related consequences of workplace gambling.
- 2.0 Our second research objective was to identify the risk factors associated with workplace gambling, including the potential individual-level socio-demographic variables, as well as work-related factors such as income, access to internet gambling, job satisfaction, and field of occupation.
- 3.0 The third research objective was to better understand individuals' motivations for gambling in the workplace.

Methods

Given the paucity of literature on workplace gambling and the complexity of the issue, we opted to use a fully integrated mixed-methods design to allow a more holistic approach to this phenomenon, where there is an interdependence between different data sources throughout the research process (Creamer, 2017, 2020; Onwuegbuzie & Hitchcock, 2019; Poth, 2018). Mixed-methods research is well suited to examining the complexity of gambling experiences, moments, and spaces, and how these overlap with work. Gambling-related harms, such as relationship difficulties and job loss, are difficult to measure (Hilbrecht et al., 2020), therefore the integrated mixed-methods approach offers further opportunity to explore the experiences of individuals who gamble at work through the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative data sources.

We conducted an initial cross-sectional survey through [Leger](#), which hosts Canada's largest online panel. While this approach has limited generalizability in terms of population prevalence, online panels are advantageous when conducting research with special sub-populations for whom there is an expectation of low base rate (Mellis & Bickel, 2020). Quantitative survey data were collected over a period of 15 days, with Leger reporting that 15.7% of overall panel participants were eligible to complete the survey (endorsed gambling in the past year). Leger participants received a minimum guaranteed incentive of \$1.00 per survey, increasing based on overall survey length, as well as eligibility for additional monthly draw incentives. Initial quantitative analysis was conducted to support purposive sampling for in-depth interviews to elaborate on the quantitative results.

Figure 1 presents a visual of the dynamic, integrated design (Creamer, 2020). Fully integrated analysis includes the use of crossover mixed analysis, where both qualitative and quantitative data are recognized as socially constructed information derived from experiences, and analysis and interpretation techniques from one tradition can thus inform and enhance interpretations of other forms of information (Onwuegbuzie & Hitchcock, 2019). This includes attention to integration from conceptualization and planning through implementation and dissemination (Onwuegbuzie & Hitchcock, 2019; Poth, 2018). Integration of findings is represented here through the use of joint displays of findings (Guetterman et al., 2021; McCrudden et al., 2021).

A subset of survey participants who reported gambling at work and who met criteria for a DSM-5 diagnosis of gambling disorder were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews about their experiences of workplace gambling. While gambling-related harms can be experienced by those who do not meet the criteria for gambling disorder (Hilbrecht et al., 2020), this purposive sampling was in line with the integrated mixed-methods approach, allowing for the selection of interview participants who would be able to speak more extensively about their experiences of workplace gambling and gambling-related harms, given the particular focus in the survey questions on work and relationship harms. Interviews were conducted in English by telephone or video call and lasted between 35–55 minutes. The interviewers provided the informed consent information and interview questions ahead of time, and participants were offered a thirty dollar honorarium. Institutional ethics approval was obtained prior to beginning data collection.

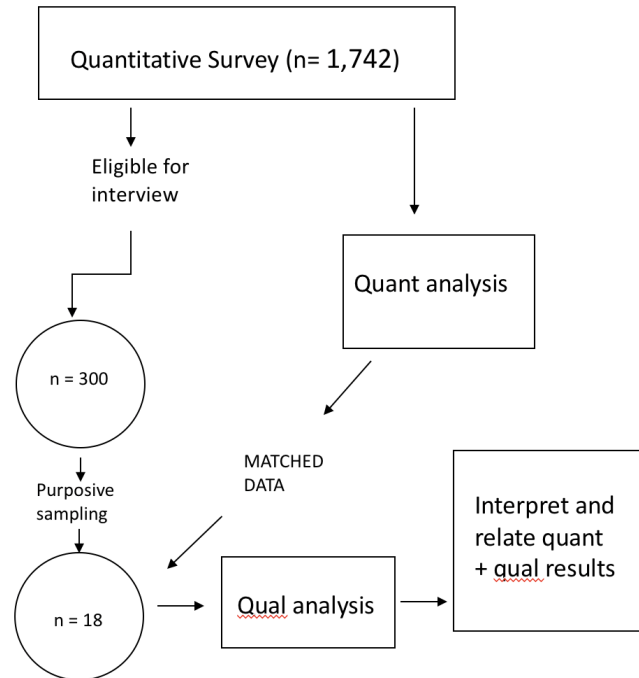


Figure 1. Mixed-methods design.

Participants

Adults aged 18 and older were invited to participate in the survey if they were employed full-time, had access to the internet while working, and participated in non-lottery gambling activities at least once per month. A total sample of $n = 1,742$ participants responded to the survey, with 38.0% from Quebec, 30.7% Ontario, 9.8% Alberta, 7.6% British Columbia, 4.3% Manitoba, 2.4% New Brunswick, 2.4% Newfoundland, 2.5% Nova Scotia, 1.8% Saskatchewan, and 0.5% Prince Edward Island. This distribution is broadly proportional to the population of Canada. The survey was available in French or English, Canada’s official languages. Other sociodemographic information about the survey sample is shown in Table 1.

For qualitative interviews, we sampled $n = 18$ participants who reported gambling in the workplace and endorsed the DSM-5 criteria for gambling disorder, as we expected that they would be best able to deepen our understanding of both the overall experience of workplace

gambling as well as potential risks and harms. Among the 18 participants, 83% were male (15 individuals), with a mean age of 42.5 years. Fifty percent were from Ontario (9 individuals), with 22% from Quebec (4), and with the remaining 28% (5) from Alberta, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia. In terms of occupations, 22% were employed in sales and services (4 individuals); 22% trades, transport, and equipment operators (4); 22% business, finance, and administration (4); 17% management (3); with the remaining 17% in other occupations including social, community, and government services (3). Interview participants provided a pseudonym, and all personal and employment identifiers were removed from the qualitative data to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

Survey Measures

All participants provided demographic information and workplace characteristics, including field of occupation, whether employed in the gambling industry, and computer and mobile phone access. Job satisfaction was

assessed using a single job satisfaction item that has good reliability and validity (Dolbier et al., 2005). Overall gambling was assessed, including gambling expenditures, online versus non-online gambling, and gambling disorder status. The severity of gambling behaviours was assessed using both the DSM-5 criteria (APA, 2013) and the Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM) (Williams & Volberg, 2010, 2014). The PPGM is a newer instrument compared to other measures of problem gambling (Williams & Volberg, 2010, 2014). The PPGM demonstrates equivalent internal consistency (Cronbach alpha = .76 – .81) and one month test–retest reliability ($r = .78$), but better overall classification accuracy (kappa = .96) compared to the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (kappa = .56), DSM-IV (kappa = .68), or South Oaks Gambling Screen (kappa = .62) (Williams & Volberg, 2014). DSM-5 criteria were used to identify clinical diagnosis and to establish inclusion criteria for the second stage of the project; whereas the PPGM was used to evaluate the linear nature of workplace gambling, if any, among recreational, at-risk, problem gamblers, and pathological gamblers. Gambling motives were assessed using an adaptation of the Gambling Motives Questionnaire (Stewart & Zack, 2008).

Participants reporting that they gambled with their own money while working completed an additional survey of workplace gambling behaviour, including whether gambling was part of an office pool with the intent to share winnings, methods of accessing gambling at work, and type of gambling activities. Additionally, participants were asked to indicate adverse consequences due to gambling at work (discipline or termination), and the main reason for engaging in gambling at work for each gambling activity. Participants could select from eight main reasons for each gambling activity, which were categorized into four motivations: 1) Social (to be social; to be a part of a group); 2) Avoidance (to avoid tasks; boredom); 3) Gambling-centric (it's exciting; I like the feeling); or 4) Coping (to target my worries; it

helps when I am feeling nervous or depressed). Participants could select multiple motivations for workplace gambling.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Interview questions included elaboration on work satisfaction, experiences of gambling at work, and perceptions of the interplay between work and gambling experiences. Interviewers followed up participant responses with various prompts to clarify and expand on ideas. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed prior to analysis.

Analysis

Research Objective 1.0: Nature of Workplace Gambling

We used counts and percentages to describe the full sample of 1,742 survey participants, including their sociodemographic characteristics, workplace variables, and indicators of gambling severity (Table 1). The sample was stratified between workplace gamblers and non-workplace gamblers. To address Research Objective 1.1, we assessed the strength of the association between workplace gambling and the indicators of gambling (DSM gambling disorder, PPGM status, and gambling expenditures). For DSM-5 gambling disorder status, we used a binary logistic regression (unadjusted) with workplace gambling (yes/no) as the outcome and DSM-5 gambling disorder status (yes/no) as the independent variable. For PPGM status, we used a multinomial logistic regression (unadjusted) with workplace gambling (yes/no) and gambling severity level (recreational, at-risk, problem, pathological) as the independent variable. The recreational level was the reference category in the resulting odds ratios. Lastly, to assess the statistical significance of the difference in median gambling expenditures between workplace gamblers and non-workplace gamblers, we used a Mann–Whitney U test.

To address Research Objective 1.2, we graphically displayed the percentage of respondents who engaged in each gambling activity at work (Figure 2), the percentage of respondents who used each method of access to gambling at work (Figure 3), and the number and percentage of gambling activities that were part of office pools (Figure 4). To assess whether significant differences existed in the proportion of each gambling activity that were used in office pools, we used chi-squared tests.

To address Research Objective 1.3, we described the number and percentage of survey respondents who reported ever being disciplined at work for gambling, ever lost their job because of gambling, or who would face discipline if their employer were fully aware of their gambling in the workplace.

Research Objective 2.0: Risk Factors

We conducted bivariate and multivariate logistic regression analyses to identify potential risk factors for workplace gambling. We conducted preliminary bivariate analyses using a series of binary logistic regressions (unadjusted) that can be found in the Appendix. Next, we conducted a multivariate analysis to distinguish whether associations of some potential risk factors with workplace gambling were an artifact of their correlation with other variables that were primarily responsible for the relationship. If risk factors were found to have a robust association with workplace gambling, we interpreted this as strengthening the evidence for potential causal contribution. The potential risk factors selected for entry into the multivariate analysis included sociodemographic characteristics that have been previously associated with gambling disorder, such as male gender, age, non-married, and lower levels of education and income (Dowling et al., 2017). Potential work-related risk factors included being employed in the gambling industry (Guttentag et al., 2012; Hing & Gainsbury, 2013), as well as having computer and mobile device access at work due to the increased access to

internet gambling they afford. We included job satisfaction, which has shown to be a protective factor against gambling disorder (Beckert & Lutter, 2013; Wu & Wong, 2008). Finally, we included the sector of occupation to investigate whether the conditions of certain job types might contribute to workplace gambling.

All regression analyses were conducted using [Stata 17](#). The outcome (workplace gambling) was missing for 12 (0.7%) cases that were excluded from the analysis, leaving a total sample size of $n = 1,730$. Multiple imputation using chained equations was used to account for other missing data (Statacorp, 2021). All variables were used as predictor variables in the imputations, and 30 iterations were used. The variables with the highest proportion of missing data were PPGM status (5.8%), DSM-5 Gambling Disorder status (4.7%), income (3.9%), and percent of monthly gambling online (2.7%).

Research Objective 3.0: Understanding Motivations for Workplace Gambling

To describe participants' motivations for gambling at work, we graphically presented the percentage of respondents who endorsed each gambling motivation (social, avoidance, gambling-centric, or coping) for each of the 10 gambling activities (Figure 5). We used chi-squared tests to assess whether the differences in motivations for each gambling activity were statistically significant.

Integration of Qualitative Findings

Qualitative findings were integrated to illuminate and expand on three topics identified from the quantitative survey data: 1) the consequences of workplace gambling (Research Objective 1.3); 2) the influence of job satisfaction on workplace gambling (related to Research Objective 2.0); and 3) the motivations for workplace gambling (Research Objective 3.0).

Qualitative analyses were conducted inductively using the six-step thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2021) with [NVivo 12](#)

software. When coding for the topic of gambling motivations, the coding was partially “top-down” because we initially grouped the participants’ motivations for gambling at work into predetermined categories (social, avoidance, gambling-centric, coping). However, within each of these broad categories, we used an inductive approach to generate more detailed themes. The second author conducted the coding and generated a provisional hierarchy of themes and subthemes, which were reviewed by the first author for conceptual coherence and credibility. In line with our mixed-methods approach,

qualitative findings were presented narratively alongside the quantitative findings. For the topic of gambling motivations only, we integrated the quantitative and qualitative finding using a joint display (Figure 5). In terms of qualitative data, we used the following descriptors: if 3–4 participants described a theme, we use “some” or “several”; if more than 4 but fewer than half participants have described a theme, we use the term “many”; if more than half of participants but fewer than 14 (<75% of participants) shared a theme, we use “majority”; and if the theme was shared by more than 75% of participants, we use “most.”

Results

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics and workplace characteristics of survey participants.

Participant characteristics	Workplace gambling (n = 754)	Non-workplace gambling only (n = 976)	Total (n = 1,730)‡
Sociodemographic characteristics			
Age (n = 1,721)			
Mean (standard deviation)	37.5 (10.8)	42.8 (12.2)	39.0 (11.9)
Male gender (n = 1,729)	246 (32.6%)	400 (41.0%)	1,083 (62.6%)
Married / common-law	519 (68.8%)	595 (61.0%)	1,114 (64.4%)
Education (n = 1,725)			
Did not complete high school	9 (1.2%)	19 (2.0%)	28 (1.6%)
Completed high school	82 (10.9%)	189 (19.4%)	271 (15.7%)
Some university / college	119 (15.8%)	149 (15.3%)	268 (15.5%)
Completed university / college	424 (56.4%)	494 (50.8%)	918 (53.2%)
Professional or graduate degree↓	118 (15.7%)	122 (12.5%)	240 (13.9%)
Income (n = 1,662)			
\$0–49,999	194 (26.1%)	285 (31.0%)	479 (28.8%)
\$50,000–\$89,000	320 (43.1%)	379 (41.2%)	699 (40.4%)
\$90,000+	228 (30.7%)	256 (27.8%)	484 (28.0%)
Work-related factors			
Computer access at work	711 (94.3%)	863 (88.4%)	1,574 (91.0%)
Mobile device access at work (n = 1,728)	732 (97.2%)	900 (92.3%)	1,632 (94.3%)
Participant satisfied with job (n = 1,727)	491 (65.3%)	701 (71.9%)	1,192 (69.0%)
Gambling industry (n = 1,719)	54 (7.3%)	14 (1.4%)	68 (4.0%)

Occupation (n = 1,706)

Art, culture, recreation, and sport	17 (2.3%)	20 (2.1%)	37 (2.2%)
Business, finance, and administration	122 (16.4%)	164 (17.0%)	286 (16.8%)
Education, law, and social and government services	103 (13.9%)	151 (15.7%)	254 (14.9%)
Health	62 (8.3%)	92 (9.6%)	154 (9.0%)
Management	115 (15.5%)	113 (11.7%)	228 (13.4%)
Manufacturing and utilities	63 (8.5%)	73 (7.6%)	136 (7.9%)
Natural resources, agriculture, and related production	28 (3.8%)	21 (2.2%)	49 (2.8%)
Sales and services	98 (13.2%)	165 (17.1%)	263 (15.4%)
Sciences	71 (9.6%)	65 (6.7%)	136 (8.0%)
Trades, transport, and equipment operators	64 (8.6%)	99 (10.3%)	163 (9.6%)

Indicators of gambling severity

Gambling expense per month			
Median (interquartile range)	\$150 (\$70–\$330)	\$105 (\$50–\$230)	\$120 (\$60–\$276)
Range	\$0–\$43,400	\$0–\$5,150	\$0–\$43,400
DSM-5 Gambling Disorder (n=1,649)	254 (36.1%)	73 (7.7%)	327 (19.8%)
PPGM classification (n = 1,630)			
Recreational gambler	183 (26.4%)	531 (56.6%)	714 (43.8%)
At-risk gambler	213 (30.8%)	284 (30.3%)	497 (30.5%)
Problem gambler	52 (7.5%)	56 (6.0%)	108 (6.6%)
Pathological gambler	224 (35.3%)	67 (7.1%)	311 (19.1%)

‡ n = 1,730 is the total for each variable unless otherwise specified. The total for each variable may change due to missing data.

↓ Includes law, medicine, dentistry, Master's, or PhD

1.1 Problem Gambling and Gambling Expenditures

Research Objective 1.1 was to describe the rates of gambling disorder and gambling expenditures among workplace gamblers. Among all the survey respondents included for the analysis (n = 1,730), 754 (43.5%) reported gambling in the workplace in the past 12 months. People who reported workplace gambling were more likely to endorse items related to gambling problems and report higher monthly gambling expenditures. In the binary logistic regression

analysis of DSM-5 gambling disorder, people who gambled in the workplace had 6.7 times higher odds of meeting criteria for DSM-5 gambling disorder compared to those who did not gamble in the workplace (Odds Ratio (OR): 6.72; 95% Confidence Interval: [5.07, 8.92]; P<0.001). Similarly, in our multinomial logistic regression analysis of PPGM, people who gambled in the workplace had 2.2 times higher odds of being at-risk gamblers compared to recreational gamblers (OR: 2.2; [1.70, 2.78]; P<0.001). The same analysis also showed that people who gamble in the workplace have 2.7 times the odds of being

problem gamblers (OR: 2.73; [1.78, 4.07]; $P < 0.001$) and 10.6 times higher odds of being pathological gamblers (OR: 10.60; [7.69, 14.53]; $P < 0.001$) compared to recreational gamblers. Finally, in terms of total gambling expenses, the median gambling expense for workplace gamblers (\$150) was significantly greater than for non-workplace gamblers (\$105) ($P < 0.001$ from Mann–Whitney *U* test).

1.2 Gambling Activities and Access in the Workplace

Research Objective 1.2 was to describe workplace gamblers’ preferred gambling activities and methods. Among people who gambled in the workplace ($n = 754$), the most common gambling activities reported were lottery (45%), sports betting (43%), and scratch and win (28%) (Figure 2). The most frequent method of access was the internet (76%), followed by mobile phone (28%), and in-person gambling (23%) (Figure 3). Participating in office pools was common among people who gamble in the workplace, with 56% reporting participation

in any office pool (Figure 4). Raffles and lotteries were significantly more likely to be played as part of an office pool, whereas Video Lottery Terminals were less likely to be played through an office pool (Figure 4).

1.3 Work-Related Consequences of Workplace Gambling

Research Objective 1.3 was to describe the consequences of workplace gambling. Among people who reported gambling during work ($n = 742$), 16% (117 individuals) reported being disciplined for gambling at work at least once in their life, and 13% (83 individuals) reported that they had lost their job at least once in their life as a result of gambling at work. Most of the 83 individuals who reported ever losing their job fell into the pathological gambler category (81%), compared to problem gamblers (6.0%), at-risk gamblers (9.6%), or recreational gamblers (3.6%). Forty-six percent reported that they would face discipline if their employer or supervisor were fully aware of their gambling in the workplace.

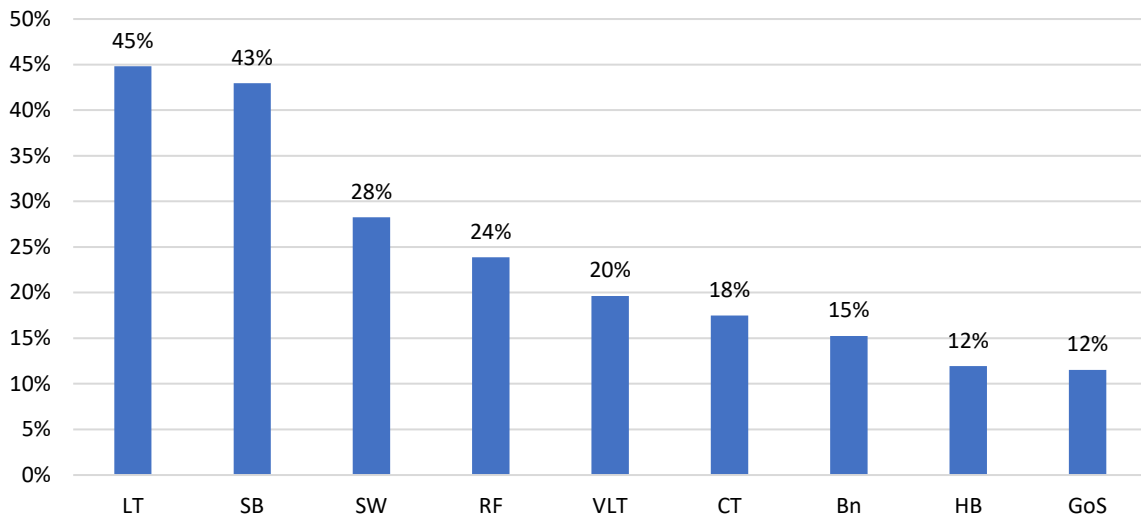


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents who engaged in each gambling activity among those that reported gambling during work in the past 12 months ($n = 754$).

LT= Lottery, SB= Sports Betting, SW= Scratch & Win, RF= Raffles & Fundraisers, VLT= Video Lottery Terminals, CT= Card & Table Games, Bn= Bingo, HB= Horse Betting, GoS= Betting on Games of Skill

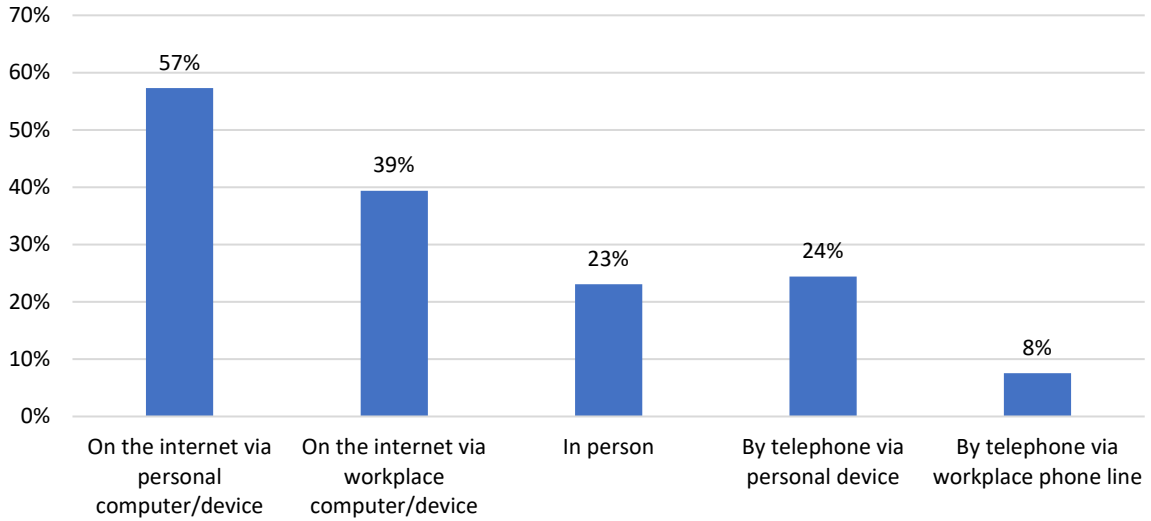


Figure 3. Percentage of respondents who used each method of access to gamble among those that reported gambling at work in the past 12 months (n = 754).

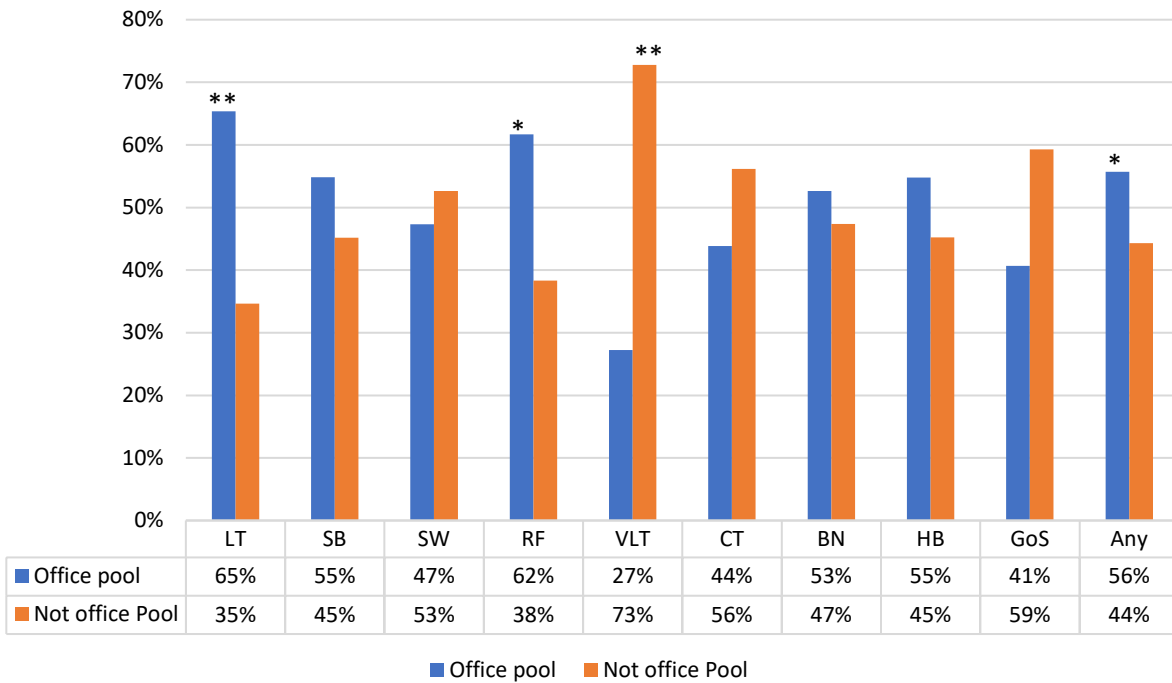


Figure 4. Number and percentage of gambling activities that were part of office pools among those that reported gambling at work in the past 12 months (n = 754).

LT= Lottery, SB= Sports Betting, SW= Scratch & Win, RF= Raffles & Fundraisers, VLT= Video Lottery Terminals, CT= Card & Table Games, Bn= Bingo, HB= Horse Betting, GoS= Betting on Games of Skill, Any= Reported participating in an office pool for at least one gambling activity

*Chi-square test of equivalence significant at P <0.05

**Chi-square test of equivalence significant at P <0.001

In qualitative interviews, many participants described how gambling in the workplace can lead to reduced productivity due to distractions and lost work time. For example, participants described being frequently distracted by checking scores of games they had bet on, while others were preoccupied with online gambling and experienced frequent thoughts or urges to return to gambling websites. This preoccupation was experienced by Jessica:

Well, I'm actually anxious because I'm edgy, cause I'm like "I want to keep playing," but I can't... But while I'm doing my work, I'm thinking of the game I just left. The game I just stopped playing, and I want to get back to it. (Jessica)

The majority of participants also spoke about how gambling impacted their work time. For many, this was because they took a gambling break that extended for longer than intended, which left some of them feeling like they were stealing time from their employer by being off task. Many other participants stated that they were less efficient and took longer to complete tasks, their work was of poor quality because they were rushed, or they had to stay overtime to finish their work tasks because they spent too much time gambling. For example, Jordan felt he had not been contributing to the best of his ability due to gambling: *"I'm obviously not contributing to the best of my ability, right? ... obviously, things take longer to get done; they may not get done to the best quality that they could be done at"* (Jordan).

The majority of participants also described various emotional consequences of workplace gambling, including stress, guilt, and shame. People felt guilty and ashamed for wasting time at work, neglecting their responsibilities, and taking advantage of their employer. Some participants were also worried about getting caught and gaining a negative reputation among their co-workers and supervisors. As a result, they tried to hide their gambling as much as possible.

Several people also expressed fear of facing possible reprimands from their employer, including potential job loss. For example, Ron described feeling anxious, guilty, and ashamed of his workplace gambling:

You don't want to be, like, a dishonest employee or anything, right? So it feels, like, crappy and ... you always feel nervous, cause you're doing something you're not supposed to be doing during work, and, I don't know. It lowers your self-esteem. (Ron)

2.0 Risk Factors for Workplace Gambling

Our second overall research objective was to identify risk factors associated with workplace gambling. In the multivariate analysis, sociodemographic characteristics that were associated with workplace gambling included younger age (Adjusted Odds Ratio (AOR) per year older = 0.96; 95% Confidence Interval: [0.95, 0.97]), male gender (AOR = 1.37; [1.09, 1.72]), and married / common-law status (AOR = 1.48; [1.19, 1.85]) (Table 2). While education-level was found to contribute to the model significantly overall, none of the individual education levels were found to be significantly different from "did not complete high school" (Table 2). Income was also not significantly associated with the odds of workplace gambling (Table 2).

Work-related factors associated with workplace gambling included working in the gambling industry (AOR = 4.37; [2.35, 8.16]), having computer access at work (AOR = 2.15; [1.45, 3.19]), and having mobile device access at work (AOR = 2.48; [1.48, 4.17]) (Table 2). Although several fields of occupation were associated with workplace gambling in the bivariate analysis shown in the Appendix (i.e., management; sales and services; and trades, transport, and equipment operators), these associations became non-significant after controlling for confounding variables in the multivariate analysis (Table 2).

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of sociodemographic characteristics and work-related factors associated with gambling in the workplace, with multiple imputation.

Sociodemographic characteristics	Adjusted Odds Ratio [95% Confidence Interval]	P-value
Age	0.96 [0.95, 0.97]	<0.001***
Male gender	1.37 [1.09, 1.72]	0.006**
Married / common-law	1.48 [1.19, 1.85]	0.001**
Education		Overall: 0.03*
Did not complete high school	Reference	
Completed high school	1.11 [0.46, 2.68]	0.81
Some university / college	1.94 [0.81, 4.69]	0.14
University / college	1.76 [0.75, 4.16]	0.20
Professional or graduate degree↓	1.83 [0.74, 4.50]	0.19
Income		Overall: 0.82
\$0–49,999	Reference	
\$50,000–\$89,000	1.07 [0.82, 1.40]	0.62
\$90,000+	1.10 [0.81, 1.50]	0.54
Gambling industry	4.37 [2.35, 8.16]	<0.001***
Computer access at work	2.15 [1.45, 3.19]	<0.001***
Mobile device access at work	2.48 [1.48, 4.17]	0.001***
Satisfied with job	0.72 [0.57, 0.89]	0.006**
Art, culture, recreation, and sport	0.86 [0.40, 1.86]	0.71
Business, finance, and administration	0.88 [0.57, 1.36]	0.56
Education, law, and social, and government services	0.80 [0.51, 1.26]	0.35
Health	0.72 [0.44, 1.20]	0.21
Management	1.09 [0.69, 1.71]	0.72
Manufacturing and utilities	1.20 [0.73, 1.97]	0.48
Natural resources, agriculture, and related production	1.23 [0.62, 2.45]	0.56
Sales and services	0.74 [0.48, 1.14]	0.18
Sciences	0.92 [0.55, 1.53]	0.75

* Statistically significant with P < 0.05

** Statistically significant with P < 0.01

*** Statistically significant with P < 0.001

↓ Includes law, medicine, dentistry, Master's, or PhD

Note: Trades, transport, and equipment operators omitted due to collinearity

The multivariate analysis showed that job satisfaction was associated with lower odds of gambling in the workplace (AOR = 0.72; [0.57, 0.89]) (Table 2). This association was consistent with the qualitative findings, in which some participants expressed that a lack of fulfillment can contribute to workplace gambling. Gambling was especially common for a majority of participants who felt there was not enough work to keep them busy. A majority also expressed that when they did not feel their work was challenging, interesting, or intrinsically rewarding, feelings of monotony could lead them to gamble during work to seek money or excitement. As Ron described:

If you don't feel satisfied in a job, that—for myself, anyway—could lead to more gambling. And I think, personally, if I was in some job that I felt kind of a high at every day, you know, and I had good income? ... [For example], if I was dedicated and working at NASA all day, you know, the hell with gambling! ... So, I think gamblers, we're always seeking kind of excitement and reward and that's, if we're not getting that in our job, we could go back into gambling. (Ron)

Additionally, a lack of recognition at work, such as a lack of career advancement or pay raises, left some individuals feeling unmotivated and uninvested in their job. These participants felt like there was no reason not to gamble during work time, given that their hard work was not rewarded anyway:

[In] my mind—it's not like I'm sacrificing or negatively affecting my job prospects [by gambling at work], right? Or my ability

to advance at the company... when I was more invested at work in the position, those prospects or opportunities weren't presented either. (Jordan)

This sense that lack of work satisfaction can feed into motivations for gambling is important, as it highlights the interconnected nature of work and mental health and the importance of understanding the mutually influencing and co-constructed nature of experiences of work and gambling.

3.0 Gambling Motivations

Research Objective 3.0 was to better understand individuals' motivations for gambling in the workplace. Survey respondents were able to select multiple motivations for each of the nine gambling activities. The most frequently reported motivation for gambling during work was gambling-centric motivations (52%), followed by social (44%), avoidance (34%), and coping (12%) (Figure 5). The mean number of different motivations endorsed was 1.9 (mode = 2). Gambling-centric was the most commonly reported motivation across all gambling activities, except for raffle and lottery, for which social motivations were highest (Figure 5). Motivations described by participants in the qualitative interview helped to expand some of the responses from the survey. Within the avoidance motivation, participants described how they gambled to avoid work tasks because they wanted to take a mental break from work or to give themselves a reward for working hard. This was often done opportunistically, such as choosing to delay work that wasn't urgent anyway.

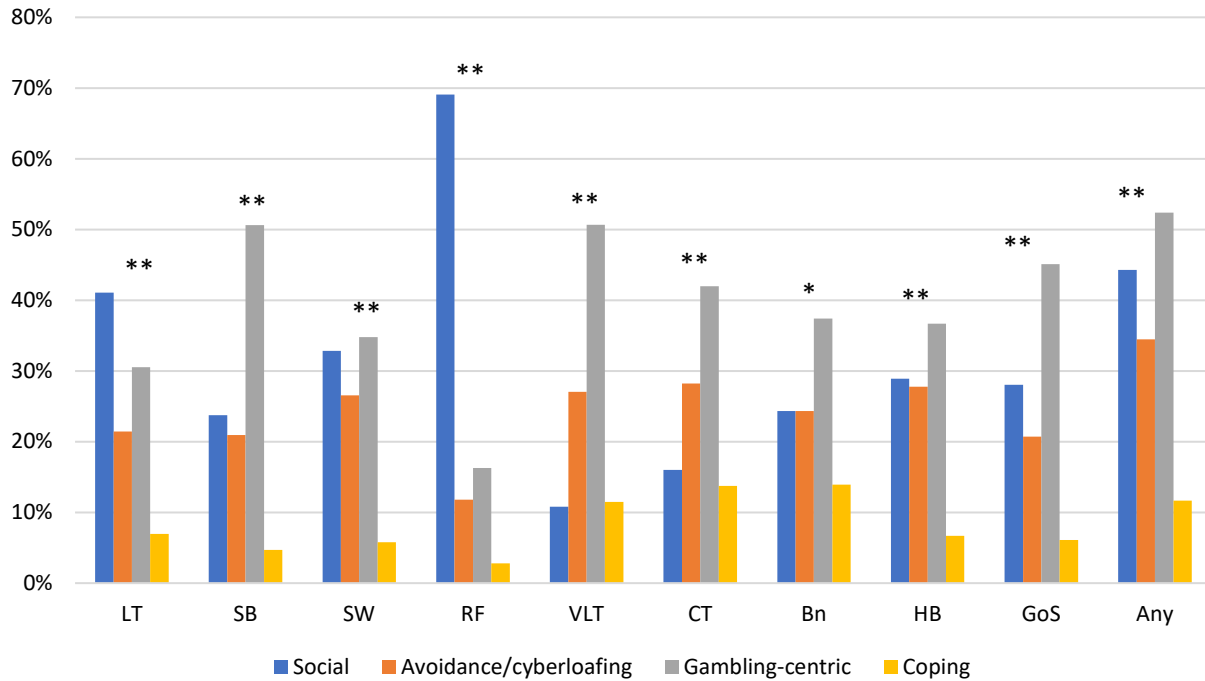




Figure 5. Number and percentage of the main motivations for gambling activities that respondents engaged in during work (n = 754), with qualitative data presented for elaboration.

RF= Raffles & Fundraisers, SW= Scratch & Win, LT= Lottery, SB= Sports Betting, HB= Horse Betting, Bn= Bingo, CT= Card & Table Games, VLT= Video Lottery Terminals, GoS= Betting on Games of Skill, Any= Reported this motivation for at least one gambling activity


* Chi-square test of equivalence among motivations within each significant at P <0.05

** Chi-square test of equivalence among motivations within each activity significant at P <0.001

Social 	Choices on survey: a) To be social b) To be part of a group									
	LT 41%	SB 24%	SW 33%	RF 69%	VLT 11%	CT 16%	Bn 24%	HB 29%	GoS 28%	Any 44%
Qualitative analysis Building social connections at work					Exemplar quote					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For many, gambling at work can help build connections between co-workers who might not otherwise have much in common. Gambling together can also help build a sense of group cohesion. A majority gamble to be a part of an office pool. 					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"There's camaraderie... If one of the guys is betting ... we sit down and say 'Hey, do you like this game, do you like that game? Oh I don't like that, oh I think this game might be good,' and then we'll go in together... Chances are, we'll go have brunch, watch the game before or after work, we'll go watch the game."</i> (James) 					

Peer pressure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some participants felt they needed to gamble to be a part of the group, which can be challenging if they are trying to cut down or stop gambling. 				Exemplar quote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"It's very hard to control. Like, you have someone come up and ask you if you wanted to bet on this. I've never said no... You know, [I want to] be part of the group, part of the guy thing."</i> (Bernie) 						
Avoidance 		Choices on survey: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To avoid tasks Boredom 								
	LT 21%	SB 21%	SW 27%	RF 12%	VLT 27%	CT 28%	Bn 24%	HB 28%	GoS 21%	Any 34%
Qualitative analysis Gambling to escape boredom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gambling at work can be a way to alleviate boredom and help pass the time for a majority, especially during slow periods when there is little work to be done anyway. 				Exemplar quote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"It's mostly when I have dead time, when I'm up to date with my work and I'm waiting for the second batch of my work to come in, because that's how it is. I gotta wait for something to finish before it gets to me. So, I'm waiting, and I'm waiting, so I'm like—okay, might as well [gamble]."</i> (Jessica) 						
Taking a break <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A majority conceptualized gambling as a way to avoid doing work temporarily in order to give themselves a needed mental break or a reward after working hard. Participants gambled during scheduled breaks (e.g., lunch time), but also took unscheduled breaks throughout the day. The unscheduled mental breaks were often taken opportunistically, such as when work did not need to be done right away. For many, gambling breaks can become a habit that is initiated automatically. These gambling breaks may be difficult to control and may extend longer than intended, which can cut into work time. 				Exemplar quotes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Yeah, exactly like a break... Like I do find because now there's just so many meetings; especially when I'm in Canada for weeks on end, I find there's a lot of meetings. So, to break it up ... let's say I have 45 minutes—I don't really want to invest that into a presentation or something—maybe I'll just close my office door and go on one of my [gambling] websites."</i> (Harry) <i>"I kind of started by just sitting there and just getting bored one day and doodling around with the cell phone. And one thing led to the next—next thing I knew, I was on an online gambling site, and I basically played that for a few minutes, and then it kind of just escalated from there. I went from minutes to like a good hour."</i> (Peter) 						

Gambling-Centric	Choices on survey: a) Because it's exciting b) Because I like the feeling									
	LT 31%	SB 51%	SW 35%	RF 16%	VLT 51%	CT 42%	Bn 37%	HB 37%	GoS 45%	Any 52%
Qualitative analysis Excitement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gambling to achieve a thrill or adrenaline rush, especially when the stakes are very high. 					Exemplar quote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"There was always—I don't know if it's really adrenaline or what the chemical is in your body, but ... it was always fun ... It was exciting, in a negative way, there was a danger element if you lost."</i> (Eric) 					
Making money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making money was cited as a primary motivation for the majority of participants, including some individuals who conceptualized gambling as their "second job" that enabled them to earn extra money while at work. Many others experienced a negative feedback loop, in which they were motivated to win back their losses (i.e., chasing losses). 					Exemplar quote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"So basically, I work ... it's a job. It's my second job. And on the weekends, that's my job."</i> (James) 					
Satisfy gambling urge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals can develop a preoccupation with gambling such that they are motivated to gamble to satisfy a craving or an urge. 					Exemplar quote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"It [gambling] could be just sort of a 'got [an] urge, you know, and better scratch the itch' sorta thing."</i> (Ron) 					
Gambling as an enjoyable activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many participants thought of gambling as an enjoyable hobby. As long as it is under control, it is like other forms of entertainment or pastime. Among people who bet on sports, using their analytic skills to predict game outcomes offered a sense of achievement. 					Exemplar quote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"It was fun... some people like to see movies, they are movie fans, okay? I was a gambling fan."</i> (Beth) 					

Coping 	Choices on survey: a) To forget my worries b) Because it helps when I am feeling nervous or depressed									
	LT 7%	SB 5%	SW 6%	RF 3%	VLT 11%	CT 14%	Bn 14%	HB 7%	GoS 6%	Any 12%
Qualitative analysis Managing stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many individuals may gamble to help escape their work-related stress. Others may gamble to help them relax after a particularly busy or stressful period of work. 					Exemplar quote <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"It was a big stress-buster for me... for a moment, I'm happy or relieved because it was helping me to forget the reasons why I am stressed. So during work times, it was helping me."</i> (Michael) 					

Additionally, participants gave much more detailed and nuanced descriptions of gambling-centric motivations than had been asked in the survey (e.g., “because it’s exciting” or “because I like the feeling”). Most participants described how gambling was motivated by making money, with several describing that it was like a second job for them. Among some people who bet on sports, gambling was gratifying because they could use their analytical skills and knowledge to predict games. The majority described feeling that gambling was similar to any other pastime or hobby, such as movies or sports, as long as it was under control. For some who had developed more of a preoccupation with gambling, they were often motivated by the need to satisfy urges or cravings.

Discussion

Given the lack of prior research on experiences of workplace gambling, the role of work-related harms in the DSM diagnosis of gambling disorder (APA, 2013), and the role of both gambling-specific and more general risks and contributing factors to harmful gambling (Hilbrecht et al., 2020), this study explored the nature and characteristics of the issue of work and gambling within a broader population sample. We sought to illuminate individual experiences within the nexus of work and gambling spaces, and to

explore how work experiences and gambling experiences are intertwined within the larger socioeconomic context, with a range of potential gambling-related harms. We employed fully integrated mixed methods to gain a broad understanding of both the nature of workplace gambling in Canada and the experiences of individuals who gamble during their working hours, including the types of workplace gambling (Objective 1) as well as the risk factors (Objective 2) and motivations (Objective 3) for workplace gambling. Further, we employed a critical social constructionist lens to explore the co-constructed nature of gambling in the workplace. The integrated findings offer a deeper understanding of the nuanced experiences of workplace gambling, including the ways relational contexts and work environments shape gambling behaviours, the dynamic interplay between job satisfaction and gambling, and how experiences of workplace gambling include both perceived harms and benefits.

Workplace Gambling in Context

Overall, our findings highlight the importance of examining how workplace gambling is shaped by environment and social context. Consistent with the framework for harmful gambling factors, this includes an understanding of how workplaces expose individuals to gambling risk and harms, as

well as considering how specific gambling activities can play a role in the production of workplace gambling and its attendant harms (Hilbrecht et al., 2020). Several environmental factors, including working in the gambling industry and having access to online gambling through computer or mobile device, were significantly associated with workplace gambling. Additionally, the main route of access was through personal devices. This is consistent with previous research, which highlighted the erosion of non-gambling spaces by smartphone use (Hing et al., 2022; Hing et al., 2023; Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2021). The ubiquity of online gambling means that there is greater overlap between work spaces and gambling spaces, as the workplace becomes a gambling space that contributes to engagement in gambling for both gambling-centric and social motives.

Our findings also highlight the important role of social context in shaping workplace gambling. For many participants, gambling at work was described as a social activity—a way to connect and be included in workplace groups. As Nicoll (2019) notes, gambling may offer a “valuable and reliable joining function” (p. 137) that facilitates social cohesion. Raffles and fundraising and lottery were the most common gambling activities associated with social motivations, and they were often accessed through office pools. Additionally, even though participants tended to name more gambling-centric motives for sports betting, the social influence of sports betting was also clear in the qualitative data. Specifically, participants described sports betting as a common topic of conversation that led to social bonds, such as watching games together and sharing knowledge that informed the placement of bets. For many, sports betting was seen as a normalized part of workplace conversations about and enjoyment of sports, highlighting the role of workplace environment and relationships in shaping workplace gambling and the potential role of colleagues in influencing participation in gambling (McGee, 2020).

In addition to social influences on gambling, working conditions and job satisfaction can also shape engagement with gambling. Several participants described how gambling might serve as a means of avoidance or a way of coping with challenging aspects of work. This was consistent with stress-coping models of gambling, in which gambling is conceptualized as a strategy to escape stress (Buchanan et al., 2020). For example, in one grounded theory study of gambling involvement during stressful life events, Holdsworth et al. (2015) found that individuals who were already experiencing gambling problems were more apt to turn to gambling as a coping method during times of adversity.

While prior studies have shown that job dissatisfaction and lack of perceived meaning are associated with greater gambling problems (Beckert & Lutter, 2013; Wu & Wong, 2008), our finding that job satisfaction is linked to gambling within the workplace is novel. Given the cross-sectional design of this study, it is difficult to determine the directionality of the relationship between job satisfaction and workplace gambling. It is possible that workplace gambling contributes to job dissatisfaction, and vice versa. However, the qualitative findings suggested that, when participants lacked work that was challenging, interesting, or intrinsically rewarding, many chose to gamble during work to seek money or excitement. For these participants, the workplace could become a site productive of gambling behaviour, as they sought to cope with a lack of purpose or meaning in their work. In some cases, workplace gambling was seen as a form of resistance within a work situation that lacked the qualities of decent or meaningful work (Blustein et al., 2023). For instance, one participant felt justified in gambling at work because their prior attempts at being more engaged had gone unrecognized and unrewarded.

It is important to note that not all participants explicitly connected their workplace gambling with working conditions or job satisfaction. Within the gambling-centric category of

motivation for workplace gambling, some participants explained that they gambled at work for a sense of thrill or excitement. Others likened gambling to a hobby or pastime, or described enjoying sports betting because it involved sophisticated analytic skills in which they could predict outcomes. This was similar to previous qualitative research on motivations for sports betting, in which participants' motivations for gambling included increasing excitement and enjoyment of games, and the perception of control through exercising skills and knowledge about the sport (Killick & Griffiths, 2021). Nevertheless, in the context of a lack of fulfillment or meaning in work, gambling offered many participants a way to escape the monotony of their workplace.

Gambling-Related Risks and Harms

While social motivations for gambling in the workplace represent an opportunity for joining, it is also important to note that gambling in the workplace is not without harm. Similar to Nicoll (2019) and Russell et al. (2018), several participants noted that the social aspects of workplace gambling were not always positive. In some cases, there was a sense of pressure to participate that exacerbated experiences of gambling harms for participants who endorsed problematic gambling behaviours. These participants described gambling primarily to avoid social exclusion. Further, experiencing normalization of gambling in the workplace can also serve to hide the development of gambling problems from family, potentially increasing the harmful impacts on others (Li et al., 2017).

Gambling in the workplace is itself an indication of risk, with those engaging in workplace gambling more likely to endorse items related to harmful gambling and to report higher monthly gambling expenditures. While gambling at work does not necessarily cause gambling disorder, it is a site of interaction with many forms of gambling for which participation can become problematic (Williams et al., 2021). In particular,

performance reduction has also been identified as a key consequence of gambling problems and a reliable predictor of work-related harms such as conflict and job loss (Li et al., 2017). The risk of discipline and job loss is significant, as it can contribute to emotional experiences of fear and shame. As well, the potential harms of job loss are felt beyond the individual, to the family members who depend on them financially (Li et al., 2017).

Similar to previous research, participants in this study tended to construct workplace gambling more as an issue of productivity loss, rather than as a threat to their own well-being (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2021). From a social constructionist perspective, this focus on productivity revealed a neoliberal understanding of workers, with several participants framing workplace gambling as an issue of time theft from an employer perspective. This finding highlights how moralizing narratives about gambling contribute to feelings of guilt and shame about time spent gambling at work. For instance, several participants attributed their workplace gambling to personal or moral failings, such as being a "dishonest employee" or "taking advantage" of their employer. These narratives can serve to obscure the influence of systemic factors that negatively affect employees, such as the erosion of decent work in society, which deprives many individuals of the opportunity to contribute to work that is dignified, productive, and secure (Blustein et al., 2023).

Overall, this research highlights the importance of expanding the focus on gambling harms beyond the individual, and conceptualizing risks and potential harms from a public health perspective that acknowledges the role of gambling-specific factors (such as gambling environment and exposure) and the overall social, cultural, and individual factors (Hilbrecht et al., 2020). Workplaces are relational-cultural contexts where gambling can be normalized or encouraged through social connections, increasing the risk of harmful gambling for those already at risk. In turn, workplace gambling might

heighten the risk of work-related harms, the impacts of which are often experienced beyond the individual, to include family, friends, and colleagues (Li et al., 2017). Similar to Russell et al. (2018), our findings highlight the importance of challenging the normalization of gambling and gambling-related harm within society, as well as the limitations of individualized approaches to problem gambling. In this case, working to address potential gambling-related harm within workplace social groups could include harm-reduction education about the risks of normalizing gambling culture in the workplace and the potential work-related gambling harms.

Additionally, given the importance of job satisfaction for workplace gambling, supporting individuals who might struggle with the harms of gambling within their work-lives must involve a critical examination of the conditions of market work, as Richardson (2012) describes, directing attention “to what is good for people beyond what is adaptive” (p. 194) That is, rather than solely focusing on ways to reduce gambling behaviour to maximize productivity, service providers might help their clients to consider how their current work environment might be productive of harmful gambling. This might include increasing awareness of how their current work exposes them to physical or social contexts that encourage gambling, or how their gambling functions as an escape from job dissatisfaction and monotony.

Limitations, Strengths, and Future Directions

One important limitation is that the data for this study was collected prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, when remote work became the norm for many workers whose jobs could be accomplished online, and access to in-person gambling was frequently limited due to public-health restrictions. Although many employers have emphasized a return to in-person work in more recent months, COVID-19 exacerbated and increased awareness of existing issues in the workforce, including differing access to decent

work, precarity, and inequity, shifting in many ways both attitudes towards and ways of working (Kniffen et al., 2021). Future research could specifically examine the role of remote work in experiences of gambling, given that online spaces are major sources of gambling. A further limitation is the use of self-reported estimates of time spent gambling and gambling expenditures. Future research could integrate more objective data, such as records of gambling transactions and smartphone time-use data. A major strength of the study, however, is the use of innovative, integrated mixed methods, which included integration at multiple phases of the study to shed light on the issue of workplace gambling, which, despite being identified as an indication of risk (e.g., Griffiths, 2009; Li et al., 2017, has remained relatively understudied.

It is important that future research continue to address the nexus of gambling and work in order to examine how political and social structures shape individual experiences and to examine how individuals exercise agency within these systems. Future research could also more thoroughly explore the differences between social gambling in the workplace, which might serve positive functions, and the risk of potential harms through the normalization of gambling in the workplace. A study of the gendered nature of gambling, particularly as it relates to individuals already experiencing problematic gambling behaviours, would also be interesting. Finally, a social constructionist approach to understanding work and gambling offers insights for advocacy regarding workers rights, including enhancing qualities of decent and meaningful work (Blustein et al., 2023). A fuller understanding of individual motivations and experiences of workplace gambling, including the role of access to gambling through smartphones, the role of work satisfaction, and the influence of social connections at work, might also help service providers such as counselors and psychologists to better support individuals who struggle with

gambling, addressing both harms of gambling and issues of work–life satisfaction.

Conclusions

Gambling at work is a major indicator of risk for gambling disorder, as individuals who gamble at work are significantly more likely to meet the DSM-5 criteria for gambling disorder and have higher gambling expenditures. Workplace gambling can have significant consequences for individuals, including loss of productivity and risk of discipline or job loss. The most common forms of workplace gambling are lottery and sports betting, and gambling in the workplace is commonly accessed through office pools. Workplace gambling is highly shaped by social context, as certain forms of gambling such as lottery and sports betting can be a highly normalized aspect of workplace culture. While participating in these gambling activities can present opportunities for social bonding and cohesion, some employees might feel pressured to gamble to avoid social exclusion. Our findings also highlight how the risk of gambling-related harms can be heightened by boredom and lack of satisfaction or meaning in work, coupled with ease of access to gambling through smartphones or working in the gambling industry.

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Appendix. Bivariate analysis of sociodemographic characteristics and workplace characteristics, with multiple imputation.

Participant characteristics (n = 1,730)	Unadjusted Odds Ratio (OR) [95% Confidence Interval]
Sociodemographic characteristics	
Age	
Mean	0.96 [0.95, 0.97]***
Male gender	1.44 [1.18, 1.75]***
Married / common-law	1.41 [1.16, 1.73]***
Education	Overall sig.***
Did not complete high school	Reference
Completed high school	0.91 [0.40, 2.10]
Some university / college	1.68 [0.73, 3.85]
Completed university / college	1.80 [0.81, 4.03]
Professional or graduate degree↓	2.04 [0.89, 4.68]
Income	Overall not sig.
\$0–49,999	Reference
\$50,000–\$89,000	1.25 [0.99, 1.59]
\$90,000+	1.33 [1.03, 1.71]*
Work-related factors	
Computer access at work	2.17 [1.50, 3.12]***
Mobile device access at work	2.91 [1.78, 4.77]***
Participant satisfied with job (n = 1,727)	0.73 [0.60, 0.90]**
Gambling industry (n = 1,719)	5.37 [2.96, 9.76]***
Occupation (n = 1,706)	
Art, culture, recreation, and sport	1.10 [0.57, 2.12]
Business, finance, and administration	0.96 [0.74, 1.24]
Education, law, and social and government services	0.87 [0.66, 1.13]
Health	0.86 [0.62, 1.21]

Management	1.38 [1.04, 1.82]*
Manufacturing and utilities	1.13 [0.79, 1.61]
Natural resources, agriculture, and related production	1.76 [0.99, 3.12]
Sales and services	0.73 [0.56, 0.96]*
Sciences	1.46 [1.03, 2.07]*
Trades, transport, and equipment operators	0.82 [0.59, 1.14]

* Statistically significant with $P < 0.05$

** Statistically significant with $P < 0.01$

*** Statistically significant with $P < 0.001$

↓ Includes law, medicine, dentistry, Master's, or PhD