

Testing the feasibility of the Canadian LRGG in the Finnish cultural context with a mixed methods approach

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The idea of the presentation

- The presentation focuses on presenting the first results of a mixed methods feasibility study of the Canadian Lower Risk Gambling Guidelines (LRGG) in the Finnish context.
- The purpose of the Finnish feasibility study was to find out whether the guidelines work in the Finnish society and whether the guidelines can be applied in the gambling harm prevention work.
- The research has been carried out by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), University of Helsinki Centre for Research on Addiction, Control and Governance (CEACG) and EHYT Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention in 2023-2024.
- One article by Tanja Grönroos, Jukka Kontto, Matthew Young, David Hodgins & Anne Salonen has been accepted to be published in the Journal of Gambling Studies: "Trends in lower-risk gambling by age and net income among Finnish men and women in 2011, 2015, and 2019".
- Gambling discourses and practices are always anchored in a certain time, place, regulation landscape, and culture. To do successful gambling harm prevention it is essential to adapt the harm prevention measures to each culture at hand.

Lower Risk Gambling Guidelines (LRGG) in Canada



- LRGG was published in Canada in 2020 and it is based on rigorous scientific work (e.g. 260 risk curve analyses involving over 60 000 people from eight countries including Finland).
 - **Guideline 1:** Gamble no more than 1% of household income (before tax) (HOW MUCH?) and
 - **Guideline 2:** Gamble no more than 4 days per month (HOW OFTEN?) and
 - **Guideline 3:** Avoid regularly gambling at more than 2 types of games (HOW MANY?)
- For the Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines to help individuals lower their risk of experiencing harms from gambling, **they must follow all three** guidelines at the same time and not be selective about which guidelines to follow when gambling.
- Plus: **Special Risk Populations and Contextual Factors**
- If you have experienced any of the following risk factors, then these limits may not be suitable for you:
 - Problems from alcohol, cannabis or other drug use
 - Problems with anxiety or depression
 - Personal or family history of gambling problems or substance use disorders
- In these instances, you should consider gambling less than these guidelines recommend or not at all.
- **Please see:** <https://gamblingguidelines.ca/>



LRGG

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



The quantitative survey

- A mixed methods study of various stake holders in the Autumn of 2023.
- The idea was to evaluate people's reactions and attitudes towards the guidelines: Are the guidelines understandable, sensible, clear, and potentially worth following?
- The study consisted of a quantitative survey (N=778)
 - Male: 220 /Female: 533/DO not wish to answer: 13/Other: 12



Design of the questionnaire

Background + scales

- Age (numeric)
- Gender (categorical: male/female/other/do not wish to answer)
- Income (categorical, Likert 1-7)
- Education (categorical, Likert 1-7)
 - Group (multiple choice, categorical: lived experience / professional in the field / professional in game industry / professional player / close significant other / other)
- Previous gambling activity, and PGSI
 - Attitudes towards gambling -scale (ATGS-8)
- General well-being (EuroHIS-8)

LRGG evaluation

- Randomization into Block 1 and Block 2
- Block 1 will be presented with the official LRGG
- Block 2 will be otherwise the same but annual income refers to personal (2%) instead of household annual income (1%)
- *Questions*
- To reduce the risk of experiencing problems, do these limits seem too high, too low, or just right for most people who gamble?
- What do you think is a suitable limit?
- Would these limits be effective in reducing gambling harm?
- Would you follow these guidelines yourself if you needed to reduce gambling?
- 10-12 Likert-questions on the acceptability and feasibility of the LRGG (i.e. how sensible, how suitable, how useful [short and long term], any conceivable downsides, willingness to follow guidelines, understandability, clarity)



The qualitative interviews

- Qualitative interviews of various groups; **altogether 37 people**. Done in the spring of 2024.
 - **Recreational gamblers**; 5 groups; 13 participants
 - **Recovered problem gamblers**; 2 groups; 6 participants
 - **Affected others of people experiencing gambling harm**; 2 groups; 4 participants
 - **Professionals working with people experiencing gambling harm**, 3 groups; 12 participants
 - **Professional gamblers**; 1 group; 2 participants
- Difficult to get interviewees due to various reasons (one of them being the bureaucracy of the Finnish social and healthcare system)
- Interviews were done on Teams (one was live)



The main results from the interviews

- The guidelines were considered functional (provided that they are updated to match the Finnish cultural context)
- For some of the interviewees the idea of prevention of gambling harms seemed difficult to grasp: it was easier to talk about people who already experience gambling harms and whether the guidelines would help them or not.
- Especially the professionals working with people experiencing gambling harm felt positive about the guidelines and said that they could use them in their work:
 - [Places to identify gambling problems]...”we have **welfare counseling services, in counseling work, regular health checks for the unemployed, all these, preventive work places, basic level work, and inevitably also in social services and immigration work, in financial debt counselling**”.
- Many interviewees across the groups were skeptical that the guidelines do not help people who already are experiencing gambling problems.

The main cultural differences

- **Guideline 1:** Gamble no more than 1% of household income (before tax)
 - Almost all of the interviewees stated that in the Finnish context it would be more practical to have **an individual monthly net income** (rather than the household income) in the guidelines. This was the biggest cultural difference.
 - The sum of 1 per cent was considered really low. (According to the THL 2024, Finns used 12.2 euros per week for gambling in 2023; men spent 18.3 euros whereas women spent 5.0 euros).
- The **Guideline 2:** Gamble no more than 4 days per month
 - For many the guideline meant that it would be OK to participate in Lotto on Saturday evenings (the most traditional and historically the most popular form of gambling)
 - Many pointed out that **it would be wise to give a guideline of how long one gambling session can last** (the longer the session the bigger the risks both financially, socially and health wise).
- It was pointed out that if a person gambled with borrowed money or has hidden the extension of his/her gambling a person should not gamble at all.
- Too much information on the poster; the poster needs to be clearer.

The benefits of mixed methods study and the way forward



- We wanted to have a comprehensive and rich understanding of the feasibility of LRGG by mixing quantitative and qualitative data. We wanted to answer both **why and how questions** (e.g. Why do you think the LRGG might work; How should we proceed with the dissemination of the guidelines) and **how much, how often and how many questions**.
- It is generally thought that qualitative data offers context and meaning while quantitative data provides generalizability. We need all these aspects to make the guidelines work in the Finnish context. We also need to test the feasibility and get scientifically sound results before we can engage the Finnish social and healthcare system into adapting the guidelines.
- Finland will switch into a partly multilicencing system in 2027. The marketing and accessibility of gambling will mostly likely increase thus making Finns more vulnerable to gambling harms. The Finnish healthcare system is facing a crisis due to funding problems, a lack of staff, and NGOs funding cuts.
- **Therefore: Prevention is needed now more than ever.**



The research group

- Team and collaborators
 - **National Institute for Health and Welfare:**
 - Sari Castrén, Jussi Palomäki Anne Salonen Tiina Latvala
 - **University of Helsinki (Centre for Research on Addiction, Control and Governance (CEACG):**
 - Virve Marionneau, Michael Egerer, Mika Tsupari
 - **Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention (EHYT)**
 - Riitta Matilainen, Eija Pietilä
- In collaboration with
 - **Matthew Young:** Greo, Guelph, Ontario, Canada; Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
 - **David Hodgins:** The University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada

The literature

- Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction (2021): Developing Lower-Risk Gambling Guidelines. <https://gamblingguidelines.ca/resource/developing-lower-risk-gambling-guidelines-presentation/>
- Castrén, Sari (2023): Canadian Lower Risk Gambling Guidelines: Investigating Feasibility of the Guidelines in a Finnish Cultural Context. Presentation at ICBA2023, Incheon Korea September 15, 2023.
- Tanja Grönroos, Jukka Kontto, Matthew Young, David Hodgins & Anne Salonen: "Trends in lower-risk gambling by age and net income among Finnish men and women in 2011, 2015, and 2019". Accepted to be published in the Journal of Gambling Studies.
- THL 2024: Population study: Attitudes towards gambling have become more negative in younger, more positive in older age groups. April 1, 2024. <https://thl.fi/en/-/population-study-attitudes-towards-gambling-have-become-more-negative-in-younger-more-positive-in-older-age-groups>



Thank you!
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