

# Problem Gambling & LGBTQ+ Individuals

While there are not many published research studies specific to LGBTQ+ and gambling disorder, there is evidence that some segments of the LGBTQ+ community may have higher prevalence rates than the general population. This includes consistent findings that LBQ+ women having the highest prevalence rates for both participating in gambling and having Gambling Disorder. Additionally, older LGBTQ+ individuals may be at a disproportionate rate for problem gambling than their heterosexual counterparts.

**So when is it considered a problem, and why should we be particularly concerned about this group?**

Risk factors for gambling addiction include those who are prone to using or misusing substances, stress, depression and PTSD – all factors known to be more likely among the LGBTQ+ community. Of particular concern is that LGBTQ+ adults are at least 3x more likely than heterosexual adults to report suicidal thoughts, plans and attempts. Couple that with the fact that people with Gambling Disorder have an increased risk of suicidal tendency, it is imperative that people within the LGBTQ+ community that are at risk for Gambling Disorder receive culturally-competent services to address their needs.



**Council on  
Compulsive Gambling  
of Pennsylvania**

**1-800-GAMBLER®**

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Several factors contribute to LGBTQ+ individuals developing gambling related issues.

For many LGBTQ+ individuals, gambling is used as an escape, possibly brought on by one or more of the following:

- History of trauma (including emotional and physical abuse due to others not accepting their identity)
- Discrimination & social stigma (over 2/3 of LGBTQ+ individuals experience discrimination in their lifetime)
- Lack of support (many hide their identity to avoid discrimination when they do “come out”)
- Internalized homophobia (self-loathing and inability to feel comfortable in one’s own skin)
- Co-occurring disorders (clinical depression, stress, anxiety disorders, and other addictive behaviors)
- Lack of culturally-competent care (fear of seeking help due to history of homophobic or inappropriate remarks/behaviors by treatment providers)

### Warning Signs of a Gambling Problem

- Increased gambling frequency & preoccupation
- Lying about where lost money has gone
- Borrowing in order to fund gambling/pay debts
- Distancing or isolating from friends/family
- Efforts to stop/cut back are unsuccessful

### Getting Help for LGBTQ+ individuals

There are several LGBTQ+ safe and inclusive resources in PA for those whose lives are negatively impacted by gambling. There are counseling options and support groups where people of all backgrounds are welcome.

### What Help Is Available?

If you think you, or someone you know, may have an issue related to gambling, please call the 24/7 toll-free PA Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLER®.

**Help is just a phone call away.**

For information about ways to access help, please call 1-800-GAMBLER® or visit [www.pacouncil.com](http://www.pacouncil.com)



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