

# GAMBLING PATTERNS AND PROBLEMS OF GAMBLERS ON LICENSED AND UNLICENSED SITES IN FRANCE

Sylvia Kairouz, PhD<sup>1,2</sup> | Jean-Michel Costes, MA<sup>3</sup> | Eva Monson, PhD<sup>1,2</sup>  
 Vincent Eroukmanoff, MA<sup>3</sup> | Nicole Arsenault, BA<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Concordia University, Canada | <sup>2</sup> Research Chair on Gambling Studies, Concordia University, Canada  
<sup>3</sup> Observatoire des jeux, Ministère des Finances, France

## INTRODUCTION

- Few studies have explored associations between online gambling policies and gambling problems<sup>1</sup>
- Two hypotheses:
  - A public monopoly operator will allow more efficient protection of consumers against gambling harm
  - A licensing system could be beneficial despite increased availability as it would enable increased allocation of funding for responsible gambling measures
- In 2010, France enacted legislation to regulate supply and consumption of online gambling to protect citizens from gambling-related harm

### Objective

- This study aims to assess differences in gambling patterns and gambling-related harm between online gamblers who use licensed versus unlicensed sites

## METHODS

### Online Gambling Survey

- 2012 survey of Internet users conducted by French government research agencies ( $N = 20,107$ )

### Measures

- Self-administered online survey on gambling practices
- Questions pertaining to game-play patterns, regulatory status of gambling activities, gambling-related problems, and demographic characteristics
- Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)<sup>2</sup>

### Participants

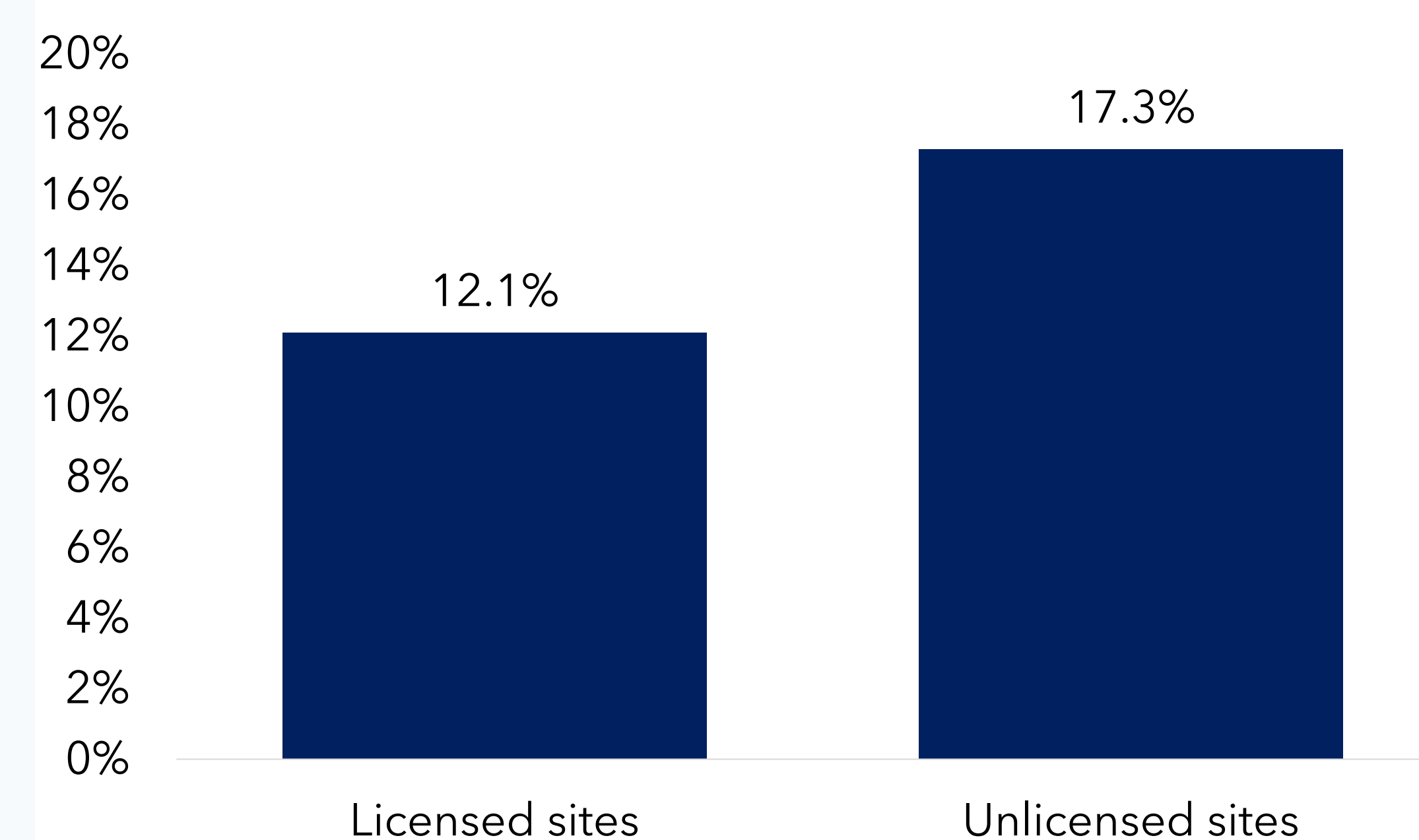
- Subset of 3,860 online gamblers
- 18-75 years of age

### Analyses

- Pairwise logistic regressions
  - Legal status of gambling sites, demographic variables, gambling types
- Multivariate logistic regression
  - Gambling patterns, legal status of sites

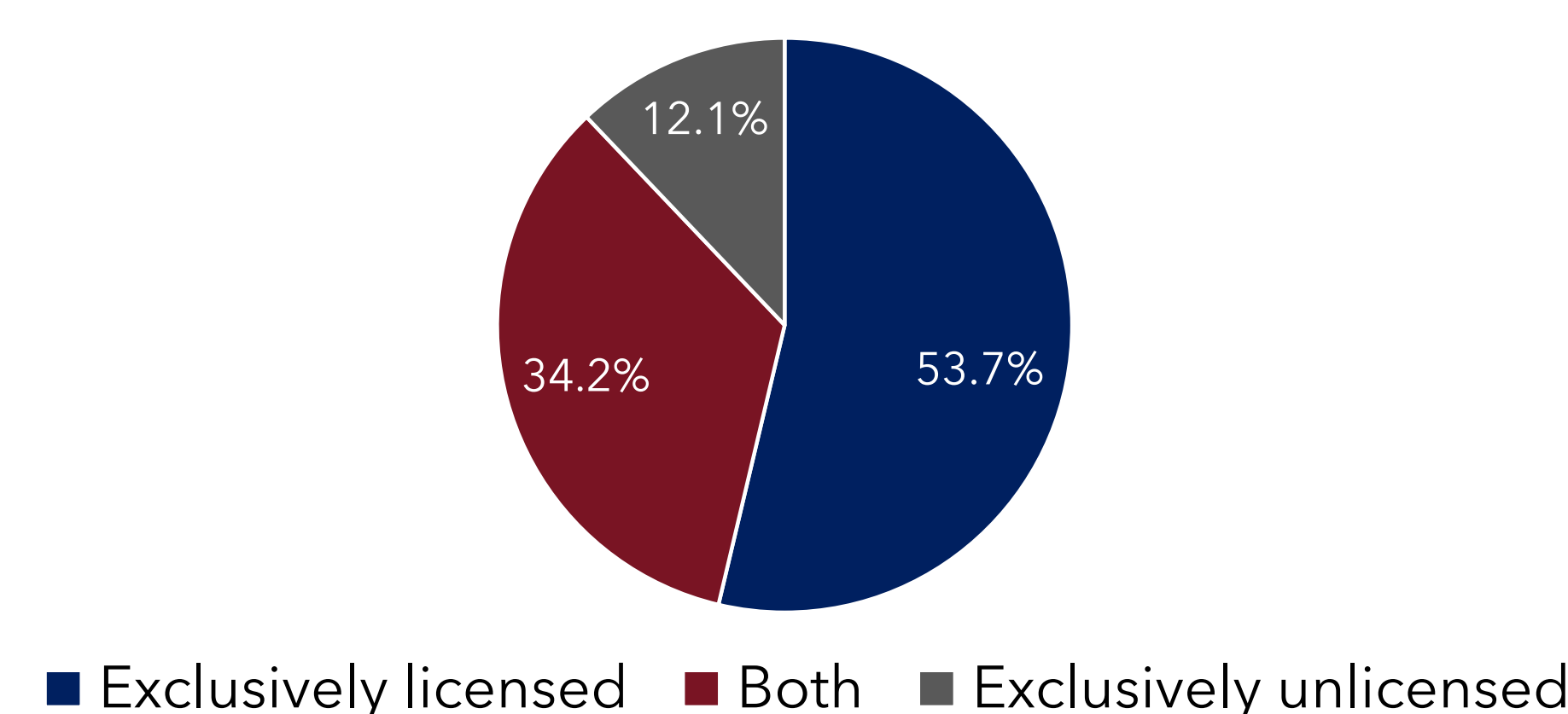
## RESULTS

**Problem Gambling Participation on Licensed vs. Unlicensed Sites**



- Gambling on unlicensed sites was associated with more intense gambling patterns and more gambling-related problems compared to licensed sites ( $OR = 0.67, p = 0.001$ )

**Online Gambling Participation by Regulatory Status of Sites**



## DISCUSSION

- French legislation appears successful in channeling the majority (53.7%) of online gambling from unlicensed to licensed sites
- Few online gamblers continued using exclusively unlicensed sites after legalisation (12.1%)
- A large proportion of online gamblers used unlicensed sites at least once (46.3%)
- Gambling activities carried out on state regulated gambling sites might be less harmful to gamblers across all gambling types for which there are legal options in France, with the exception of poker

### Limitations

- Representative sampling within the general population is challenging due to the low prevalence of online gambling
- The legal status of gambling websites is difficult to discern due to recall bias

**Patterns of Gamblers Who Participated in Regulated Activities by Regulatory Status of Sites ( $N = 3,096$ )**

	Lottery ( $N = 2,374$ )			Poker ( $N = 532$ )			Sports Betting ( $N = 487$ )			Horse Betting ( $N = 467$ )		
	Licensed only ( $n = 1,643$ ; %)	Unlicensed ( $n = 730$ ; %)	OR <sup>1</sup>	Licensed only ( $n = 268$ ; %)	Unlicensed ( $n = 264$ ; %)	OR <sup>1</sup>	Licensed only ( $n = 313$ ; %)	Unlicensed ( $n = 174$ ; %)	OR <sup>1</sup>	Licensed only ( $n = 287$ ; %)	Unlicensed ( $n = 180$ ; %)	OR <sup>1</sup>
<b>Gambling Involvement</b>												
Frequent gambling ( $\geq$ weekly)	35.5	45.9	<b>0.57***</b>	64.1	49.6	<b>1.76***</b>	57.6	64.1	0.79	66.7	68.6	0.92
Important spending ( $\geq$ 500€/past year)	23.2	25.5	<b>0.60***</b>	33.5	27.8	1.00	33.7	45.2	0.69	44.4	45.8	0.96
Problem gambling (PGSI 3+)	8.9	15.4	<b>0.58***</b>	27.5	24.2	1.14	21.4	30.2	<b>0.65*</b>	17.4	22.9	0.65
<b>Associated Consequences</b>												
<b>Lifestyle behaviours</b>												
Sleep disturbances	4.7	16.0	<b>0.31***</b>	42.8	39.4	1.12	14.4	23.2	<b>0.51**</b>	5.7	14.1	<b>0.33**</b>
Unhealthy eating	5.5	14.5	<b>0.41***</b>	35.7	33.0	1.08	11.0	18.6	<b>0.51**</b>	7.8	18.3	<b>0.34***</b>
Interpersonal problems	1.4	1.5	1.03	6.0	2.9	1.65	4.1	4.1	0.82	4.5	2.1	1.75
<b>Increased concern about substance use</b>												
Alcohol	2.4	3.5	0.81	9.1	4.6	<b>2.23*</b>	4.7	4.6	1.33	4.0	3.5	1.16
Tobacco	4.8	11.6	<b>0.58**</b>	18.6	15.7	1.37	7.2	8.6	1.26	9.6	9.8	1.06
Cannabis	1.0	1.6	1.16	2.7	3.5	0.57	2.4	2.9	0.85	0.9	0.7	1.60
Illicit drugs (excl. cannabis)	0.9	1.4	1.04	3.2	1.6	1.32	1.8	1.3	1.92	0.8	0.0	-

<sup>1</sup>Significant odds ratio (OR): \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq .001$

- Poker players are more likely to bet on unlicensed sites
- Lottery and scratch cards are the most popular activities on licensed sites
- Those who gamble on regulated activities on unlicensed sites are more likely to:
  - Be female
  - Be younger
  - Be less educated
  - Be inactive in the labour market
  - Report difficult financial situation

### Lottery

- Those who played lottery on unlicensed sites were more likely to be problem gamblers and report higher gambling involvement, sleep disturbances, unhealthy eating, and increased concern regarding tobacco use

### Poker

- Those who played poker on licensed sites reported frequent gambling and increased concern regarding their alcohol use

### Sports Betting

- Engaging in sports betting on unlicensed sites is associated with problem gambling as well as increased sleep disturbances and unhealthy eating

### Horse Betting

- Horse betting on unlicensed sites is associated with unhealthy eating

## CONCLUSION

- Results provide support for the theory that gambling activities carried out on state licensed sites are associated with less overall harm to gamblers

### Future directions

- Examining the potential benefits and pitfalls of expanding online licensing
- Triangulation of data and combining multiple data sources

### References:

- Planzer, S., Gray, H. M., & Shaffer, H. J. (2014). Associations between national gambling policies and disordered gambling prevalence rates within Europe. *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, 37(2), 217-229.
- Ferris, J., & Wynne, H. (2001). *The Canadian Problem Gambling Index*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Consortium for Gambling Research.