

Risks and opportunities of using player data in the field of harm prevention, reduction and research – experiences from Finland

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Promoting the Mental Health of Children and Youth
by Addressing the Risks of Online Gambling and Gaming
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Content

- Gambling policy program: integrating the management of digital gaming and gambling harm
- Current Situation of Problematic Gaming and Gaming Disorder
- Gambling among youth and the risks and opportunities of using player data and regulating data use – towards best practices



Gambling Policy Programme

- Part of Substance Abuse and Addiction Strategy (2030)
- Includes objectives and measures to reduce harm caused by gambling in Finland by 2030.
- The objectives are directed at:
 - a) guiding the provision of gambling services in a uniform manner and ensuring a gambling system that prevents harm, and
 - b) promoting wellbeing, health and safety, and developing services.
- The Programme pays particular attention to digitalization.
- Defines the objectives for the development of the knowledge base and indicators with a view to determining the national target level for the reduction of gambling-related harm.



Premises of the Gambling Policy Programme

1. To broadly prevent gambling harm ranging from less severe harm to gambling problems and gambling disorder.
2. To handle the prevention of gambling harm as part of the structure related to the promotion of wellbeing, health and safety and social policy and wellbeing economy.
3. To pay attention to factors such as age, gender, income, labour market position, education, place of residence and cultural or language minority status, because not all measures are equally effective for all groups.
4. To integrate the management of digital gaming and gambling harm as appropriate.

Problematic gaming and gaming disorder: Participation and prevalence



- Gaming disorder has been classified as a behavioral addiction similar to gambling addiction in the updated WHO ICD-11 classification in 2019.
 - The translation process of the ICD-11 is ongoing (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare), with anticipated implementation in 2026.
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- In 2023, approximately 53 percent of Finnish individuals aged 18 to 74 played video games, console games, computer games, and mobile games.
 - About one-third of digital gamers play daily or almost daily. Gaming is most common among young people and men.
 - Nearly 10 percent experienced digital gaming as a problem at least sometimes, and 5.4 percent met the criteria for problematic digital gaming (THL 2024).
 - Among higher education students, 7 percent reported digital gaming as a problem, with men (12%) more often than women (4%) (KOTT 2024).



Current support systems

The convergence of gaming and gambling is recognized, and information is provided to both professionals and the wider public.

Information

- Information about loot boxes (Loot Box working group)
- Youth gambling and gaming (National Institute for Health and Welfare).

Prevention

- Preventive and educational programs are offered by NGOs such as Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention (Ehyt Ry), Peluuri, and Sosped.

Early detection and mini-intervention pilot

- Assessment (GAS-7), motivation for change, and follow-up adapted from mini-intervention for problem gambling (developed by THL and Sosped)



Current support systems in digital gaming

Treatment

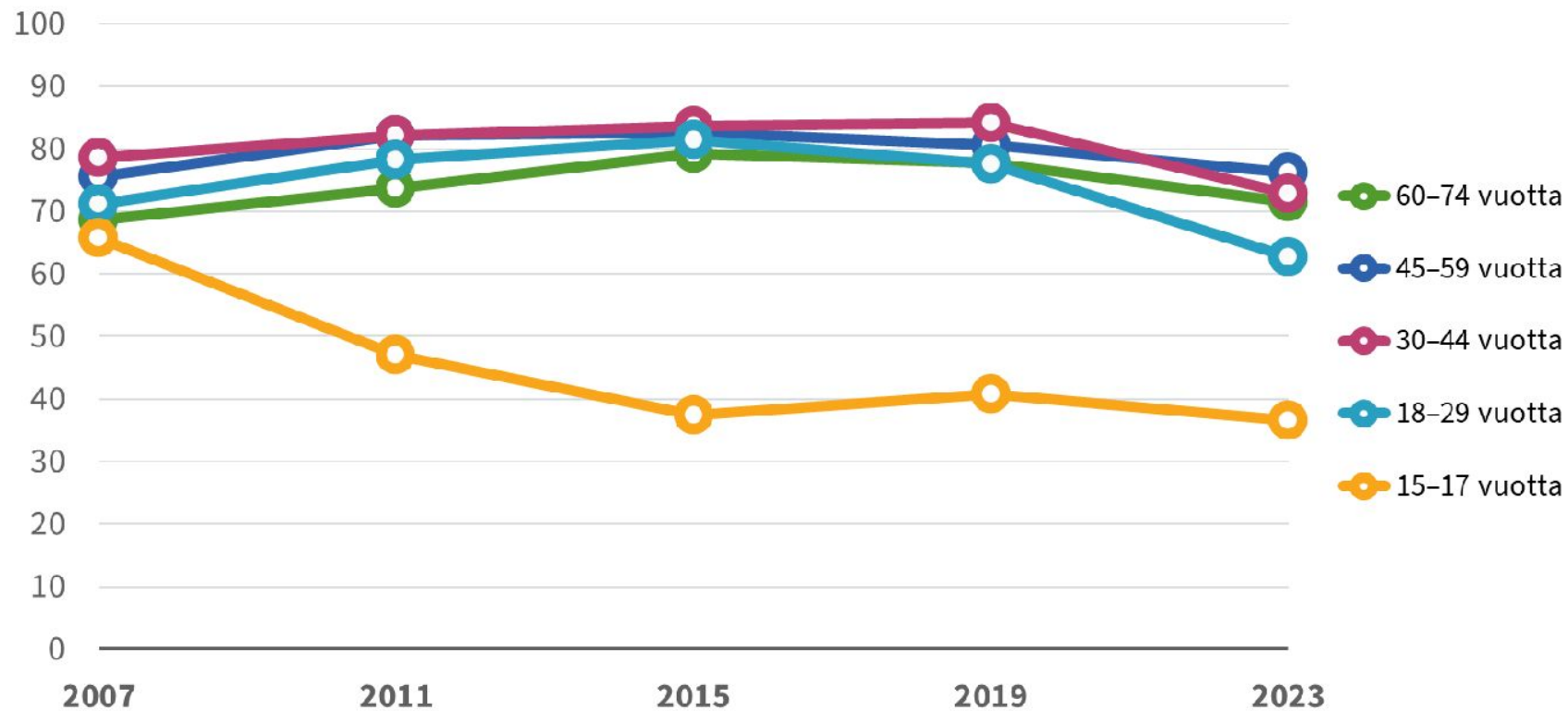
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) based online therapy program for individuals aged 18 years and older (Peluuuri).

Peer support programs

- Peer support activities and expert-by-experience support programs and camps, for individuals aged 18 years and older (Sosped).
- Currently, no evidence-based treatment for the younger population



Gambling Prevalence 2007-2023



Age limit to 18 years in all gambling in 2011

Key Findings among youth:

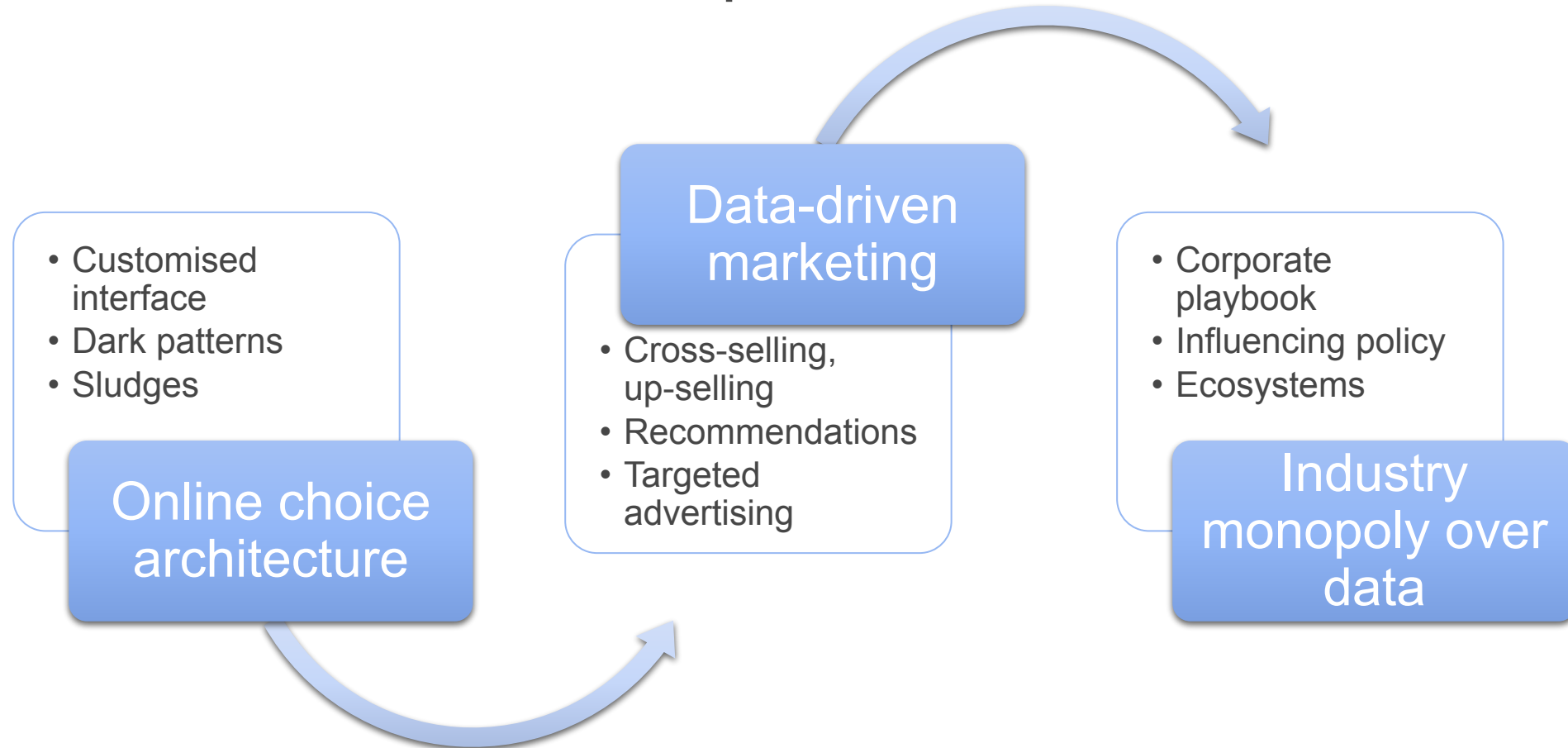
Past-year prevalence of gambling has reduced significantly particularly among the youngest age group (15-17), but in latest surveys also among young adults (18-29).



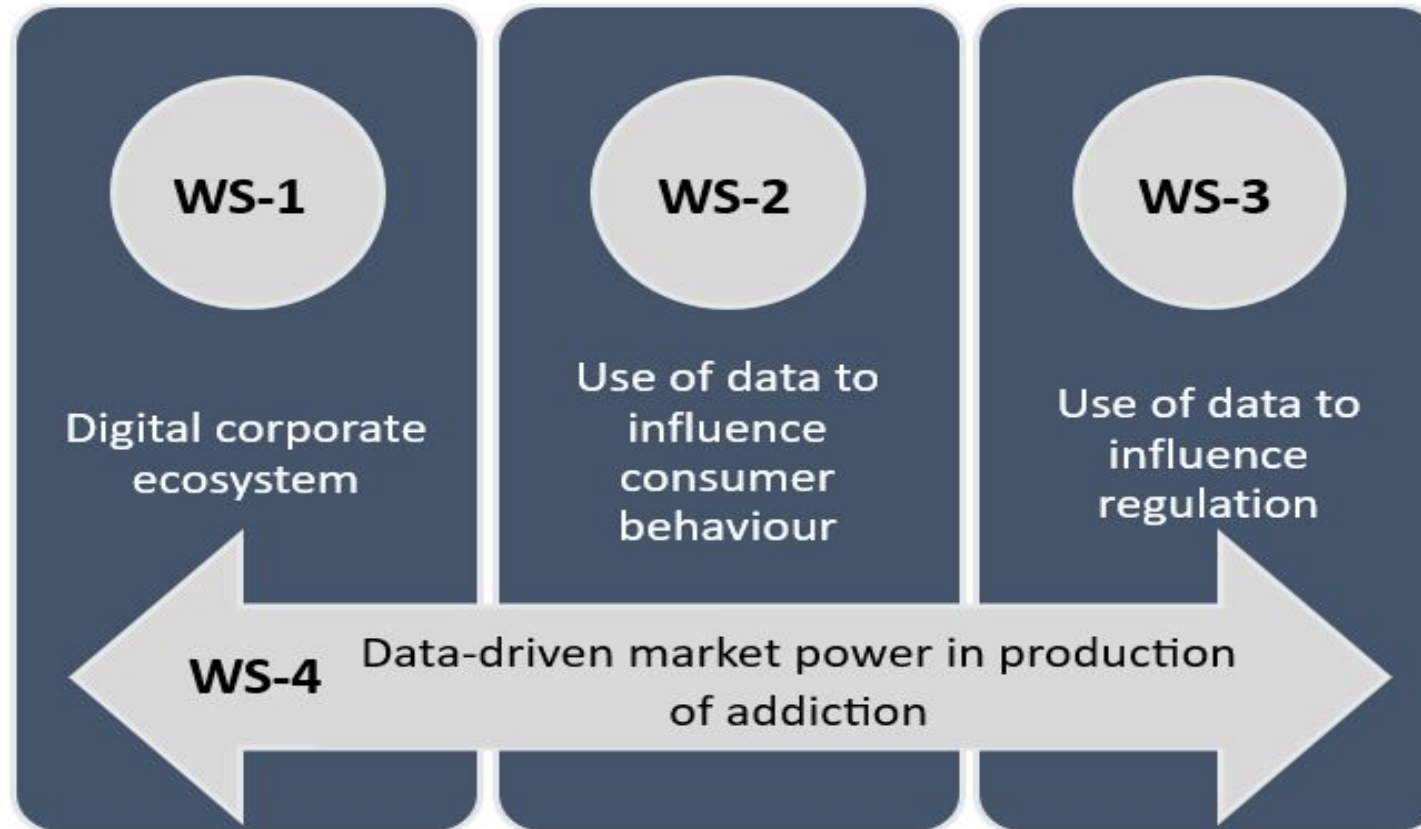
Prevalence of gambling problems among youth

- Minors aged 15-17 experience gambling harms slightly more than the average population (about 4% compared to 3% of the total population) (THL).
- It is estimated that about 1% of young people in this age group have gambling problems.
- However, gambling at risk level is significantly lower among minors aged 15-17 compared to other age groups.
- Additionally, one in ten young people in the same age group has a close relative who gambles problematically.
- Gambling problems are most common in young adults aged 18-24 (5.3%).

Data-driven market practices



Data-driven market power of addictive industries (Data-Addict) project (ERC) University of Helsinki (starter grant 2025-2030)



The aim of the project is to conceptualise the data-driven power drivers that produce and maintain addiction in digital environments.

Regulation of data use: some good practices



Restricting data use for marketing

Prohibiting marketing that targets young individuals, excluded players.
Require gambling companies to obtain customer consent before they can use any personal data for marketing purposes.



Data sharing with regulators and research

All consumer data should be shared in real time with regulators.
Regulator-led centralised access to data for researchers.



Restricting use of harmful algorithms

EU Digital Services Act: Promotes algorithmic transparency,
transparency of AI use



Resourcing regulation

Regulators need to understand digital infrastructures and advanced data analytics

- Wardle, H., Degenhardt, L., Marionneau, V., Reith, G., et al. (2024). Lancet Public Health Commission on Gambling. The Lancet Public Health
- Ukhova, D., Marionneau, V., Nikkinen, J. & Wardle, H. (2024). Public health approaches to gambling? A global review of legislative trends. The Lancet Public Health.

Towards data driven gambling regulation: the Finnish model of using data



- According to lotteries Act and drafted new Gambling Act , MSAH is responsible for monitoring and researching gambling harm, evaluation of gambling related harm, and for developing prevention and treatment.
- Implementation: the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)
- MSAH has appointed a working group to assess the harm and risks associated with the provision of gambling services and product development.
- Current act (monopoly system): MSAH, THL and the working group have the right to obtain data from Veikkaus for implementing these tasks
- New government proposal draft (licence model): Data including player data from all licence holders to a new Register of gambling-related harms
- THL would remain the right to obtain personally identifiable personal data necessary for its task. Identifying data would be used to combine the data with register data from other administrative registers.

Some concluding remarks: protecting children and young adults



- Identifying risks in gambling/ gaming behavior and defining the associated practices should not be left only to industry self-regulation.
- By ensuring the use of data for authorities and research, best practices can be developed.
- Industry self-regulation is not sufficient; regulation and guidelines, for instance related to duty of care implementation, are needed.
- Young adults should be specifically recognized as a high-risk group and targeted measures should be developed.
- Regulating availability and limit expenditure is crucial, and marketing or supply should not be directed at minors.
- Also important to regulate the product ->





Ministry of
Social Affairs and Health



Heading forward - thank you!

