

# MGC Research Snapshot

## Unpacking the Root Causes of Problem Gambling in the Asian Community December 2021

### What you need to know

There is a need for developing culturally and linguistically appropriate tools and community-based resources for prevention and early intervention to support the Asian community and avoid gambling harm at the personal, family, and community level.

### What is this research about?

There are many root causes of problem gambling in the Asian community, including poverty, social, and cultural loss due to immigration, and unhealthy stress relief. Gambling harm can have short and long-term impacts on children, families, and the community.

This research was motivated by the desire to fill in the gap of understanding how problem gambling manifests in the Asian community and to understand whether existing programs, services, and interventions are adequately serving this immigrant community.

This report provides an in-depth look at gambling's harmful impacts on family and community as it pertains specifically to the Asian community. This report also looks at the role of the casinos in exacerbating gambling in the Asian community and whether this community is being adequately served.

### What did the researchers do?

Bilingual/bicultural community fieldworkers conducted 40 in-depth qualitative interviews to better understand the nature and impact of problem gambling. Participants were community members from the Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese communities.

Researchers also reviewed the state of the science relevant

to gambling problems in Asian communities and looked nationally at a few existing programs.

Authors identified existing resources within a coalition of organizations assisting Asian immigrants/refugees and Asian American families in Boston's Chinatown and surrounding communities that can be leveraged to engage hard-to-reach and at-risk populations.

### What did the researchers find?

- Lack of economic opportunity propels many to turn to gambling as an alternative source or to supplement income.
- Social and cultural isolation due to immigration results in a lack of social and recreational opportunities, often expressed as boredom.
- Casinos exacerbate this problem by capitalizing on this void, providing an environment in which the Asian community feels welcome and accepted.
- There is a lack of culturally appropriate treatment options available to the community and a lack of knowledge and trust in what is available.
- Ethnic specific and community-based organizations are best suited to provide programs, services, and interventions for problem gambling in the Asian community.



## Recommendations:

- Employ a public health approach to address the root causes of problem gambling.
- Provide funding for ethnic-based community-based organizations to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate services and programs for problem gambling prevention and intervention.
- Explore innovative reimbursement models for community-based organizations doing gambling treatment and intervention work beyond the traditional clinical model.
- Invest in the neighborhoods where immigrants work, live and play by creating spaces of belonging where communities can meet for safe recreational and social opportunities.
- Develop programs geared towards helping working-class immigrants gain the language and occupational skills needed to acquire meaningful employment with benefits and wages.
- Conduct an equity audit about responsible gambling and responsible advertising in the Asian community that includes assessing whether the casino industry engages in predatory practices.
- Develop a steering committee of key community leaders to guide the development of policy practice, and services around addressing the root causes of problem gambling.

## Citation

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[https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/Asian-CARES-Research-Report-9.21\\_Report.pdf](https://massgaming.com/wp-content/uploads/Asian-CARES-Research-Report-9.21_Report.pdf)

## Key Words

Problem Gambling; Community-Engaged Research; Asian Community;

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## About the researchers

Heang Leung Rubin, Mia Colby, Yoyo Yau, and Ben Hires are part of the Asian CARES (Center for Addressing Research, Education and Services) team, which is a coalition of ethnic based community-based organizations in the Greater Boston region providing linguistically and culturally appropriate services. Heang, Yoyo and Ben are the co-principal investigators of this study. For more information about this study, please contact Ben Hires at [ben.hires@bcnc.net](mailto:ben.hires@bcnc.net)

## About this Snapshot

MGC snapshots are intended to translate lengthy and sometimes technical reports into an easily understandable overview of the research. The findings and recommendations in the snapshot are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the position of the MGC.

