

# MGC Research Snapshot

## Understanding the Life Circumstances of Hispanic Residents of a Casino Neighborhood May 2022

### What you need to know

This community-based participatory study explores the relationship between gambling and the life context of Hispanics living in proximity to a casino. This study supports the implementation of evidence-based interventions by incorporating the life experiences of members of under-resourced communities in effort to mitigate the harmful effects of problem gambling.

### What is this research about?

The purpose of this study was:

- 1) To describe the life context of Hispanic individuals residing in Springfield, Massachusetts, to advance the implementation of evidence-based, culturally responsive intervention to mitigate the effects of problem gambling,
- 2) To find ways to incorporate the voices of Hispanics, a group disproportionately impacted by problem gambling, into the design of evidence-based interventions, and
- 3) To uncover the theoretical implications of an understanding of life context on the effective implementation of evidence-based interventions with minoritized groups.

### What did the researchers do?

The study used a community-based participatory research approach to explore the relationship between gambling and the life context of Hispanics living in Springfield, Massachusetts. This study lays the groundwork in incorporating the life experiences of members of under-resourced communities in efforts to mitigate the harmful effects of problem gambling.

- The JSI team got to know the community and built the research capacity to form a community research team (CRT).
- Recruited eight (two men and six women) community residents to form the CRT and built their research capacity through participatory learning activities.
- The CRT conducted a variety of research activities, including: formulating a method to map out gun violence incidents in their community, conducting interviews with 24 Hispanic community residents, and conducting a visual analysis of the physical environment surrounding the MGM casino, located within their community.

### What did the researchers find?

Findings revealed a community overwhelmed by numerous stressors. These include food and job insecurity, housing unaffordability and inaccessibility to local residents, chronic disease, mental health problems, crime, unemployment, fear of becoming homeless because of inability to pay rent, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### What characterizes the life context in which study participants reside?



- **Intersectionality:** Interconnected life events and circumstances
- **Intergenerational component:** Past experiences of family members with problem gambling
- **Historical:** Past events that continue to exert their influence in current generations
- **Cultural:** Values and beliefs that individuals use to develop a sense of agency
- **Ethical/Moral:** Personal beliefs about what is right or wrong
- **Force Majeure:** Unpredictable events that have a major impact on the community
- **Safety:** The desire to be free from harm
- **Leisure:** The quality of free time to engage in recreational or social activities
- **Societal:** Extensive documentation of structural racism in Springfield

**Other key findings:**

- Stress and trauma are pervasive in the respondents' life context, manifesting itself in the areas of family, neighborhood, employment, and housing.
- Respondents held distinct and often opposing views about the presence of the MGM casino in their community.
- Responders noted the normative aspects of gambling, particularly as a family activity, as well as its negative consequences
- COVID-19 had an impact on Respondents' lives.

**How does the life context relate to gambling and problem gambling?**

A thorough understanding of the life context of the participants uncovered a community-level stress model to theorize a mechanism by which the life context of the respondents relates to gambling. Findings revealed that Springfield residents experiencing chronic stress might visit a casino for distraction, to seek relief, to leave worries behind, and to escape an unpleasant reality, among other reasons. Exposure to gambling opportunities to relieve stress could plausibly lead to problem gambling.

**How can components of the life context be incorporated into successful strategies to reduce the effects of problem gambling?**

- Incorporate a trauma-informed approach
- Use multi-level, multi-domain interventions
- Embrace culture
- Place matters
- Incorporate social support
- Address racism

Study findings also recommend providing resources or strengthening existing ones to improve the community's ability to cope with stress and building capacity of community-based organizations to advocate for strategies to address health equity.

**About the researchers**

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**Key Words**

Community-engaged research; Implementation science, Context, Problem Gambling; Springfield; Hispanic.

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**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.

