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What is the evidence that advertising policies could have an impact on gambling-related harms? A systematic umbrella review of the literature

Fuse Event on Marketing

25/03/2025

Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

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- **Funder:** Greater London Authority
- *The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the GLA members or the project reference group.*
- *The reference group and other GLA and OHID stakeholders provided advice and expert guidance to the project and provided invaluable feedback on a draft of this report.*

Context

- The London Mayor's manifesto commitment to ban harmful gambling advertising on the Transport for London network

Mayor of London election: Sadiq Khan pledges to ban gambling ads on the Tube

“....instruct TfL to bring forward plans to extend the ban to harmful gambling advertisements on the network”

- We were commissioned to produce an independent evidence briefing on relevant research on **the relationship between gambling advertising, gambling-related harms and health and social inequalities**

Background and Aim

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Background

2021 Public Health England evidence review

- Highlighted gambling as a public health problem
- Quantified gambling harms - individuals, families, communities and wider society
- Those experiencing poorer mental health and higher deprivation may be at greater risk therefore exacerbating health and social inequalities

Harm may occur across the entire range of gambling

- Not just at the extreme end – gambling dependence.

Exposure to advertising has been noted as a potential risk factor

- Public Health approach to harm reduction may include advertising restrictions to reduce exposure at a population level

Aim



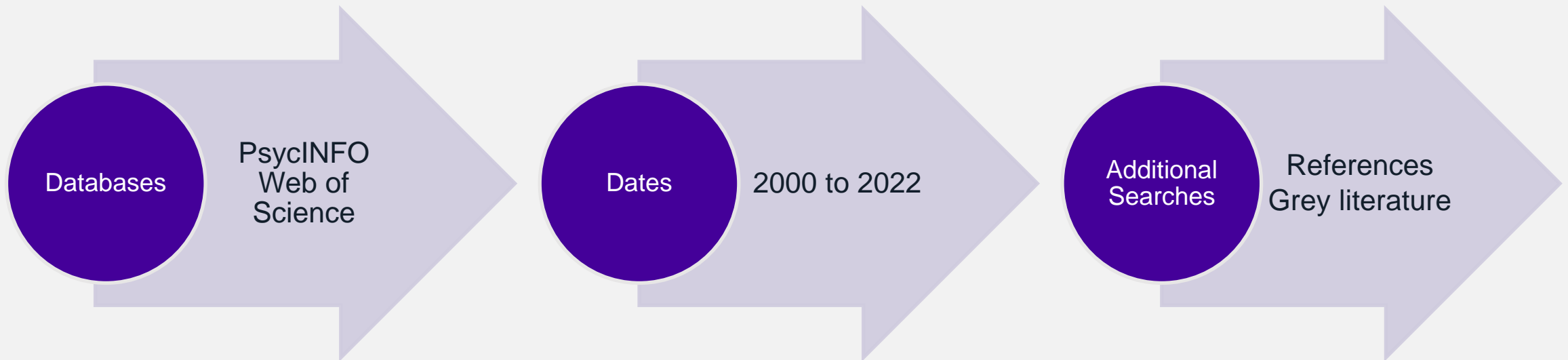
To summarise the evidence exploring the relationship between **exposure to advertising and attitudes and behaviour** that can **lead to harms** and to explore evidence on the impact of advertising for individuals and communities known to be more vulnerable to gambling-related harms.

Methods



Methods

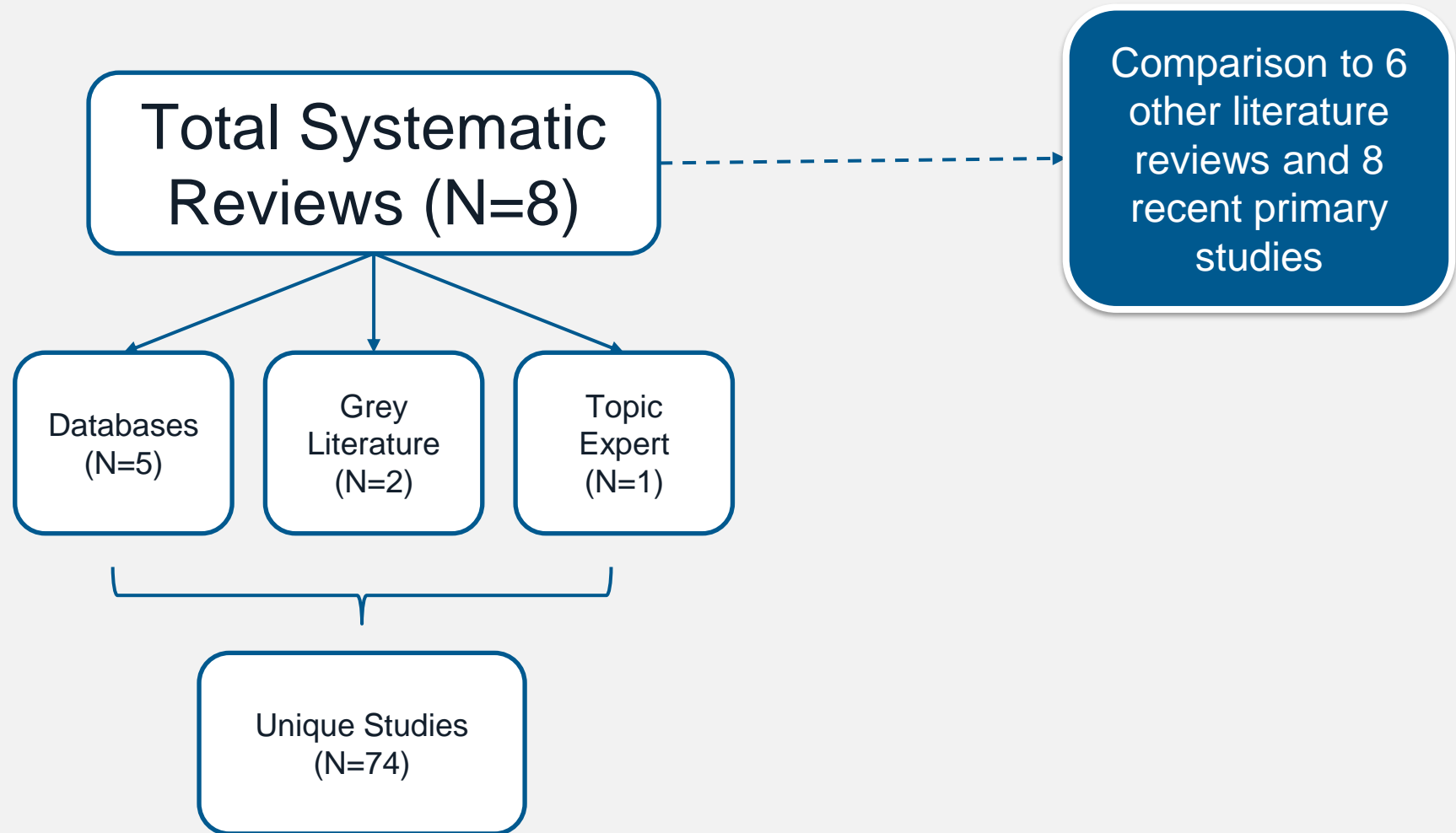
A narrative umbrella review of relevant systematic reviews which included primary studies of the impact of gambling advertising on gambling attitudes, intentions and behaviours.



Results



Results



Results

Authors	Sample/Population	Methods
Bouguettaya et al (2020)	Adult, children, gambling risk	Systematic review and Quantitative synthesis
Newall et al (2019)	Adults, children, gambling risk	Systematic review
Guillou-Landreat et al (2021)	Adults, children, gambling risk	Systematic review
Labrador et al (2021)	Children, young people	Systematic review
Wardle (2019)	Children, young people, gambling risk	Systematic review
Wardle et al (2019)	Migrant groups	Systematic review
Livingstone et al (2019)	Adults, adolescents, young people	Systematic review
Rodda (2020)	Adults, children, young people, gambling risk	Systematic review

Results (Overall)

- Advertising consistently associated with **more positive attitudes to gambling, greater intentions to gamble, and increased gambling activity** including **frequency, gambling expenditure and spending more than intended (excess)**
- Quantitative evidence strongest for gambling behaviour
- Some evidence for a *dose-response effect*
 - Increasing advertising associated with increasing positive attitudes, intentions and behaviours e.g. buying scratch cards
 - In some instances, this was more apparent in riskier gamblers
- Normalisation of gambling especially through sport

Results (Children and Young People)

- Children are **highly exposed** to advertising on TV and social media
- They have **high recall of gambling brands**
- Specific influence of **promotions** that lead to perceived lower risk and increased chance of financial gain
- **'Normalisation'** of gambling for children and young people
- Potential priming effect – teaching them how to bet
- Associated with gambling behaviour including future intentions to gamble
 - Also, the development of 'problem' behaviour
 - May generate difficulties for existing gamblers

Results (Other Vulnerable People)

- Those most vulnerable report being more exposed, more positive attitudes and greater impacts on behaviour
- Results often varied by **Problem Gambling Severity Index Score**
- Some evidence that younger males may be more impacted
- Targeted advertising towards specific ethnic groups

Types of evidence

- **Experimental**
 - Contributes to understanding of causal mechanisms
- **Observational**
 - Association between advertising and behaviour
 - Dose-response effect
- **Qualitative**
 - Understanding why some subgroups may be more impacted
 - Social effects e.g. normalisation
- All provide evidence on vulnerable groups e.g. children and higher-risk gamblers

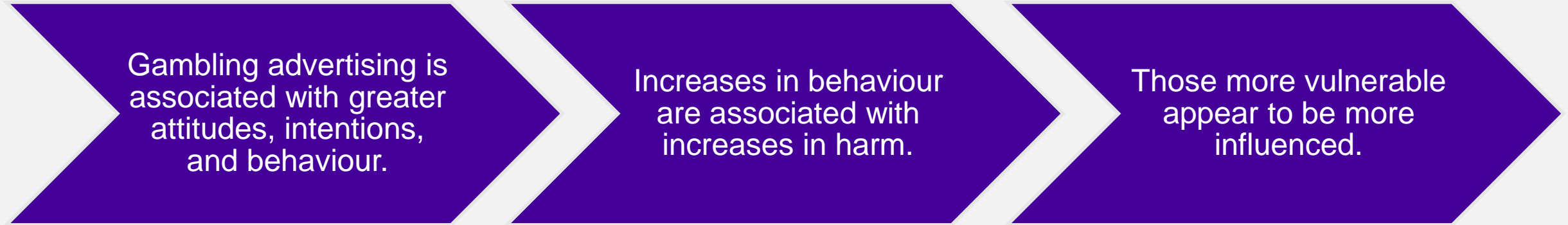
Limitations of the Evidence

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Limitations

- Mostly cross-sectional and self-report
 - However, this continues to develop
- **Lack of evidence for out-of-home advertising (e.g. outdoor or point-of-sale)**
- Inclusion criteria (English language, systematic review)

Interpretation



Restrictions on advertising could reduce both overall harm and potentially mitigate the impact of advertising on gambling-related inequalities.

Additional Evidence

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Additional and Updated Evidence

- Several non-systematic literature reviews
 - Their conclusions corroborate the evidence
- Development of methods
 - Experimental studies
 - Longitudinal studies
- Still a noticeable absence of outdoor advertising studies

Conclusions

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Conclusions

- This review brought together a **diversity of approaches** to understand the relationship between gambling advertising and behaviour to understand the pathway gambling harms
- In the absence of more controlled evidence, the substantial and consistent evidence of the impact of advertising on attitudes, intentions and behaviours **supports restrictions on gambling advertising to reduce harm but also potentially reduce inequalities**
- We need **policy evaluations** like the TfL unhealthy food advertising evaluation

Thank you for listening!



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Original Research

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5 December 2024

Researchers win prestigious Public Health Journal Paper of the Year Award with research on gambling advertising and public health

An impactful study from the Public Health Evidence Reviews & Synthesis Team (PHERST) at the Sheffield Centre for Health and Related Research (SCHARR) has received the Public Health Journal Paper of the Year award.



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