

A report from the Current Advances in Gambling Research Conference June 2025

I presented my PhD research at the Current Advances in Gambling Research conference and wanted to share how it went.

I talked about how women with lived experience of gambling harm can find their voice in policy spaces and actually be heard. My research journey started in 2018 when I began recovery, and since then I've been trying to bridge the gap between what we experience and what policy makers think they know about us.

The core message was straightforward: there are 20 million women gambling in the UK annually, nearly half a million face serious consequences like violence and financial crisis, yet women's voices are barely heard when policies are made. Women are nearly half of all gamblers, but the conversation remains dominated by assumptions about men's gambling.

I talked about three main areas that came from interviewing women with lived experience and people who work in the gambling space:

Gender stereotypes make people question whether women know what they're talking about, plus the 'othering' that treats women with lived experience as less credible than 'proper' experts.

Women-only spaces matter but are scarce across the country. Without them, many women stay isolated not just in recovery but miss the journey towards policy influence.

Systemic change is needed. It's not enough adding women with lived experience to existing structures. The gambling ecosystem operates from 'male power' in how things are organised and funded. There is a need to transform the system so women with lived experience don't have to continually squeeze into spaces that weren't designed for their needs.

In my research the women and staff who took part challenged that awful circular logic keeping women marginalised: "women are hard to reach so we won't prioritise them, and because we don't prioritise them, they remain hard to reach."

The research participants flipped the question from "why don't women participate?" to "how do we create conditions where women can participate safely and with authority?"

Feeling so supported and valued at the conference meant everything. The feedback was gratefully received but meeting other women with lived experience who just got it was incredible. There's something powerful about being with people who understand not just the research, but the personal journey behind it. The conference was a chance to share stories and insights and reminded me we're not doing this alone. We have expertise that can't be taught, perspectives policy makers desperately need, and experiences representing millions of women. The challenge is ensuring our expertise doesn't just get heard once but actually informs policies affecting our lives. It means the world knowing people are cheering each other on as we all work in our different ways to ensure no woman faces gambling harm in isolation.