



World Cup Gambling Harms Guidance



The World Cup is excitement, rivalry, colour, and global celebration, but it's also a moment where football's deeply heteronormative culture becomes more visible. For many LGBTQ+ people, match days can feel exclusionary, intense, or emotionally loaded. Add to that the aggressive gambling marketing that peaks during major tournaments, and the risks increase.

LGBTQ+ people already experience higher rates of gambling harm linked to minority stress, targeted advertising, and environments that don't always feel safe or inclusive. The World Cup can amplify all of this.

This guidance supports people to stay safe, reduce harm, and enjoy the World Cup in ways that are joyful, social, and completely gambling-free, and to know that Recover With Pride is here throughout the tournament for anyone who needs support.





Ways to Enjoy the World Cup Without Gambling

DIY Match Scorecards

Rate each match on drama, skill, teamwork, or “campest moment”. It keeps the focus on fun, not betting.

Predict-the-Moment (Non-Monetary)

Predict silly moments, VAR chaos, dramatic dives, rainbow flags spotted, with no money involved.

Flag-Making Station

Create flags for favourite teams or fictional queer nations. It’s expressive and community-building.

Reaction Wall

A shared board where people post emojis or comments after key moments. A visual timeline of the match.

World Cup Meme Challenge

Create memes during the match and share them at the end. Perfect for humour, connection, and queer creativity.

Themed Watch Party

Decorations, snacks, and outfits inspired by different countries. A safer, celebratory alternative to betting-heavy environments.

Community Watch-Along

A shared LGBTQ+ space reduces isolation and offers a safer alternative to mainstream, heteronormative venues.

Potluck Inspired by Competing Countries

Bring dishes inspired by World Cup nations, social, low-pressure, and culturally joyful.

Mock Commentary Booth

Take turns doing playful commentary. It shifts the energy from gambling to creativity and laughter.

Face Paint & Makeup Station

Create looks inspired by team colours or queer interpretations of football culture.

Poster-Making

Design posters supporting favourite teams or players — funny, artistic, chaotic.





Recognising the Signs of Harm This World Cup Season

For Yourself

You may be experiencing harm if you notice:

- Feeling anxious, distracted, or unable to enjoy the match
- Spending more than you planned or chasing losses
- Hiding gambling from people close to you
- Feeling guilty, stressed, or overwhelmed after betting
- Using gambling to cope with loneliness, dysphoria, or stress

These are common experiences, and noticing them early is a strength, not a failure.

For Friends, Family, and Chosen Family

People close to you may be struggling if you see:

- Sudden mood changes during the match
- Fixation on odds, bets, or "making it back"
- Withdrawing from conversations or hiding their phone
- Avoiding social plans because of gambling
- Becoming defensive or secretive when gambling is mentioned

These signs don't label anyone, they simply indicate someone may need support, reassurance, and a safe space to talk.





What to Do If You're Feeling Pressured to Gamble

Football culture, especially during the World Cup, can be loud, masculine, and heteronormative, and that can make it harder to say no. You're not imagining it. And you're not alone.

Set Boundaries

It's okay to say:

- "I'm watching for fun — I'm not betting this year."
- "I'm taking a break from gambling."
- "I'd rather enjoy the match without money involved."

You can also mute gambling content on social media or set limits with friends using simple boundary phrases.

Use Digital Protection Tools

Gambling blocks and limit-setting tools can help create breathing space. You can use self exclusion software such as GamStop, GamBan, BetBlocker and Banking Blocks (Contact your bank provider or block gambling transactions through your banking app)

Reach Out Early

Talking to someone you trust, a friend, partner, family member, or chosen family, can make a huge difference.



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Venue Guidance for a Safe, Supportive Match Day

Football venues can be intense, loud, and often heteronormative. For LGBTQ+ people, this can heighten pressure to gamble or make it harder to ask for help.

Creating a Safe Environment

- Display messaging that gambling is optional
- Keep the atmosphere focused on fun and community
- Offer alternatives like scorecards, themed competitions, or free sweepstakes

Recognising Signs of Harm in Guests

Look out for:

- Visible stress or agitation
- People checking gambling apps repeatedly
- Groups pressuring someone to place bets
- Tension around gambling outcomes

How Staff Can Support:

- Use reassurance: "Lots of people watch without betting, you're welcome to enjoy the match however you like."
- Signpost digital tools like gambling blocks
- Offer a quieter space if someone needs a moment
- Acknowledge concerns from friends or chosen family

Gambling harm affects whole networks, not just the person placing the bets.



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How to Access Support from Recover With Pride

Recover With Pride is a confidential, LGBTQ+-affirming service for anyone affected by gambling, whether you gamble yourself or are impacted by someone else's gambling.

The service offers:

- Identity-affirming, trauma-informed support
- Space to explore your relationship with gambling safely
- Support for friends, partners, family, and chosen family
- No judgement, no pressure, no assumptions

If Eurovision feels overwhelming, stressful, or pressured this year, reaching out is a strong and positive step. You're not alone, and support is available.

Refer yourself for support and find tools and resources here:
<https://www.switchboard.org.uk/service/recover-with-pride/>

