



A protocol for identifying gambling grey literature for systematic and scoping reviews

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WHAT IS “GAMBLING GREY LITERATURE”?

“Grey Literature” refers to credible research published outside of academic journals and books. It includes reports published by government agencies, not-for-profits, think tanks, trade organizations, and others.

Over 30% of recent Canadian gambling research publications were published as grey literature.¹

It is “grey” because of limited distribution, not because it is low quality. Grey literature is an important complement to academic journal literature because:

- It covers different topic areas
- It is often more detailed and up-to-date
- It is not subject to publication bias toward significant results.²

HOW TO SEARCH GAMBLING GREY LITERATURE

1. Grey Literature Databases

We identified a small number of searchable databases dedicated to gambling grey literature from multiple publishers:

- GREO Evidence Centre (Canada)
- AGRI Research Repository (Canada)

The following services were identified but have since been taken offline:

- GambLIB Gambling Research Database (Slovenia)
- Australasian Gaming Council Library (Australia)
- Problem Gambling Foundation Library (New Zealand)

2. Customized Google Search Engines

No gambling-specific CSEs were found, but the following contained unique gambling grey literature:

- Ontario Public Health Library Association (Canada)
- Harvard Kennedy School of Government Think Tank CSE (USA)
- Government Documents Roundtable CSE (USA/Int'l)

3. Targeted Websites

We identified organizations with the following mandates, and searched their websites for PDF documents:

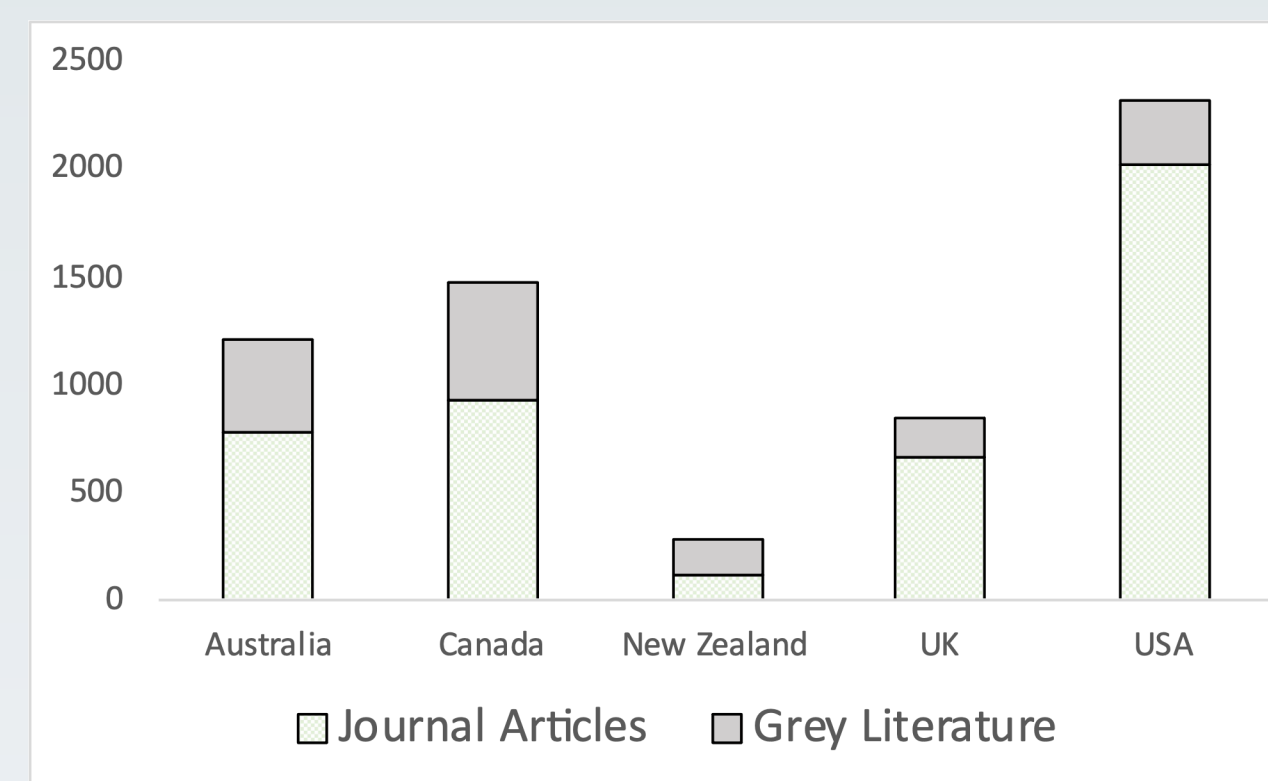
- Fund or perform gambling research
- Regulate gambling
- Collect or report statistics about gambling
- Reduce problem gambling/harm from gambling
- Publish government reports
- NGOs and thinktanks without gambling-specific mandates, known to have published gambling-related research

4. Consultation with Experts

We shared the above results with two gambling research experts from each country, asking them to identify any missing publishers or publications.

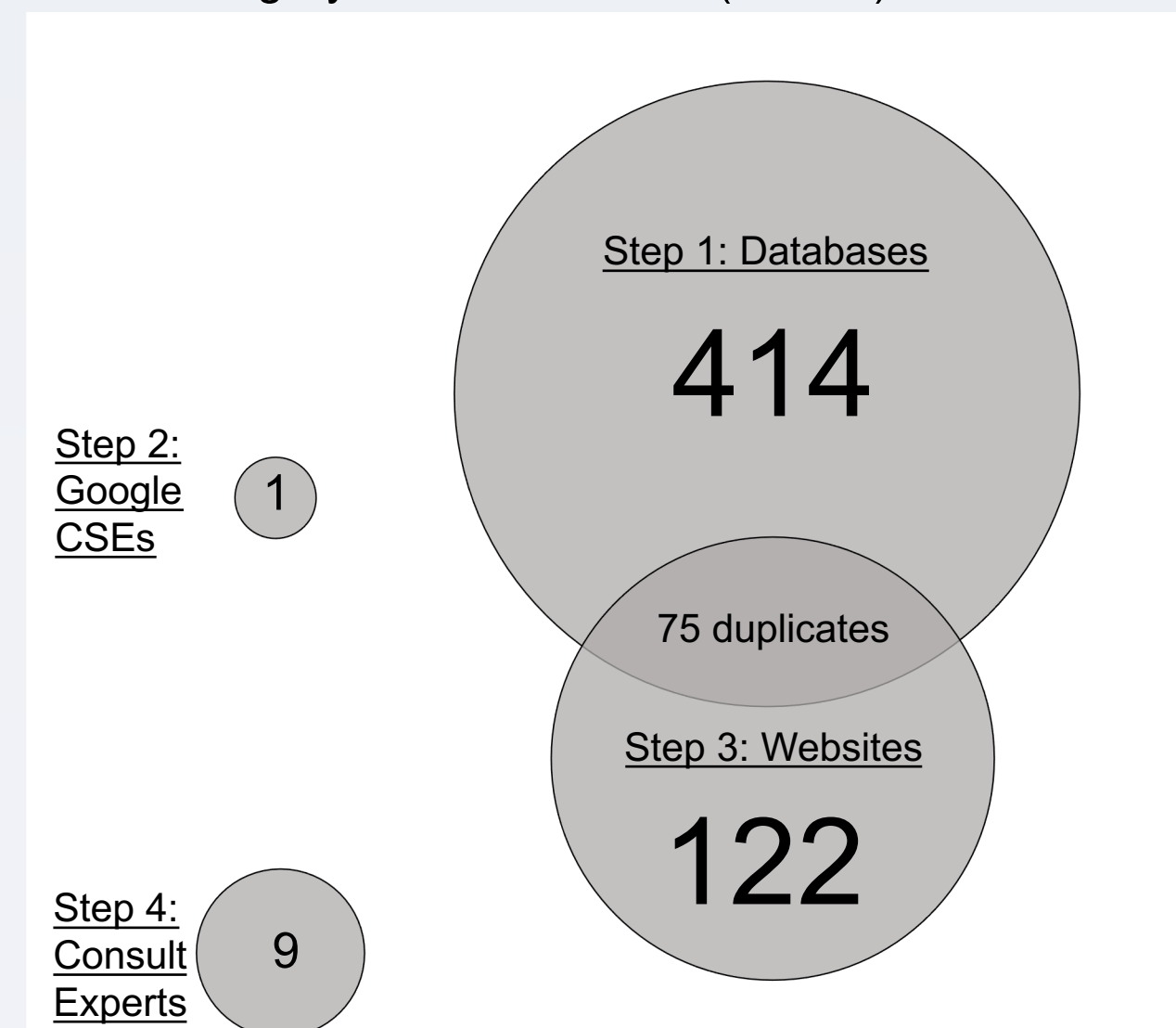
RESULTS

We searched for gambling grey literature in five countries including Canada, alongside a broad search for academic articles on gambling in Web of Science (1996-2018). Our searches yielded **1,597 grey documents** and **4,426 journal articles**.



FINDING CANADIAN GREY LITERATURE

Venn diagram of total documents yielded in the Canadian grey literature search (N=546)



DISCUSSION

- Grey literature makes up over 25% of gambling research publications in five countries, and over 35% in Canada, making it a significant body of gambling research.
- There are few online libraries dedicated to collecting gambling grey literature. Only two are currently available and both are based in Canada.
- All search steps added unique results, but gambling grey literature databases accounted for over 75% of results. When it is not feasible to incorporate all four steps in a review, the GREO and AGRI databases provide good coverage, and are best supplemented by targeted searching.
- Our full dataset of gambling grey literature will be published to the GREO Dataverse Data Repository later this year, and can be conveniently accessed for the purposes of systematic and scoping reviews.

GREY LITERATURE AND SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS

Evidence-based health policy decisions increasingly rely on systematic and scoping reviews to summarize the state of evidence.³

It is best practice to include grey literature in systematic reviews, but it is often excluded from gambling reviews because inclusion is labour intensive and requires more domain knowledge.

Godin *et al.*⁴ devised a four-part strategy for systematically searching public health grey literature:

1. Grey literature databases
2. Customized Google search engines
3. Targeted websites
4. Consultation with contact experts

We adapted their strategy for the gambling grey literature, and used it to perform a broad search for gambling research published since 1996 in five countries including Canada.

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