

## Facebook, alcohol and gambling companies target ads at Australians most at risk of harm

New research released today unveils how Facebook targets people who are at risk of harm with alcohol and gambling advertising.

The research, conducted by The University of Queensland, piloted a novel digital data capture method that enables people to collect the ads that are targeted at them on Facebook via a mobile app and to share the data that platforms create about them.

Facebook tagged the ten people who provided their data for this research with 89 different alcohol and gambling related advertising interests.

Alcohol and gambling companies shared data with Facebook to further enable this targeting. A total of 201 alcohol and 63 gambling companies shared data with Facebook on the 10 people in the study.

One person was tagged with as many as 25 alcohol related advertising interests and had 123 alcohol companies share data about them, while another was tagged with as many as 41 gambling related advertising interests and had 52 gambling companies shared data about them.

Another person, who has been trying over the past 10 years to reduce her alcohol use, had 95 alcohol companies shared data about her.

For someone who was experiencing gambling harm and has been trying to reduce his gambling over the past year, almost two thirds of the ads captured from his Facebook were for gambling and he often saw 15 or more gambling ads in a row.

Dr Giselle Newton, Chief Investigator on the report said, "This report is the tip of the iceberg in terms of what we know about how alcohol and gambling companies collect and use people's data to then target them with their harmful and addictive products.

"People who are trying to reduce their alcohol use or gambling don't want to be targeted with ads selling these products, and can find it difficult to escape this advertising when they are on social media platforms like Facebook."

Oliver, who participated in the research, said he's frustrated that he sees so many alcohol ads when he's using Facebook, and there's no way to stop it.

"It's everywhere, and it's not just billboards, it follows me into my home through my phone. When I'm just trying to look at things – like I'm on Facebook Marketplace a lot – it even follows me there.

"The fact I'm being force fed alcohol ads everywhere is really frustrating, and there's no opt out." Oliver said.

Martin Thomas, CEO of the Alliance for Gambling Reform (AGR) said, “This report provides further evidence of the predatory marketing practices of gambling companies, and how platforms like Facebook enable them.

“Australians expect the Federal Government to do more to ensure people who are most at risk of harm aren’t constantly bombarded with ads for harmful and addictive products.”

Caterina Giorgi, CEO of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), said the report released today further highlights the need for reform.

“People should not be profiled and targeted for advertising based upon their vulnerabilities. It’s concerning to see alcohol, gambling and social media companies deliberately prey on people who are most susceptible to harm.

“We are calling on the Federal Government to implement protections that put the health and wellbeing of families and communities ahead of the interests of alcohol and gambling companies.”

-ENDS-

**Interviews are available with: FARE CEO Caterina Giorgi, UQ Research Fellow Dr Giselle Newton, AGR CEO Martin Thomas and research participant, Oliver.**

**Media outlets are requested to promote help-seeking information when reporting on alcohol and other drugs, in line with the [Mindframe National Guidelines](#).**

**Suggested wording relating this this media story:** *If you or someone you know needs support, please call Lifeline 13 11 14, the National 24/7 Alcohol and Other Drugs Hotline 1800 250 015 or 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732.*

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The **Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education** (FARE) is the leading not-for-profit organisation working towards an Australia free from alcohol harms. We do this through developing evidence-informed policy, enabling people-powered advocacy and delivering health promotion campaigns.

FARE has been working with communities across the country to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians for 20 years. To learn more about us and our work visit [www.fare.org.au](http://www.fare.org.au).