

Understanding gambling in the workplace, its motivations, and consequences

What this research is about

Understanding experiences of workplace gambling can provide insight into its risks and harms, as well as the influence of organizational culture on gambling. This study examined the nature and consequences of workplace gambling in Canada, risk factors, and motivations for gambling in the workplace.

What the researchers did

The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study. First, an online survey was distributed through Leger, which hosts Canada's largest online panel. Participants had to be at least 18 years old, be employed full-time, have access to the internet while working, and participate in non-lottery gambling at least once per month. A total of 1,742 participants completed the survey. On average, participants were 39 years old. Most participants (63%) were men. Twelve participants did not provide data on workplace gambling and were excluded from data analysis.

The survey asked the participants about their demographic and workplace characteristics, job satisfaction, and overall gambling (e.g., gambling spending, online vs. offline gambling). Severity of gambling behaviours was assessed using the DSM-5 criteria as well as the Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM). Participants who gambled with their own money while working completed questions about workplace gambling behaviour, such as whether gambling was part of an office pool. They were also asked about negative consequences due to gambling at work and why they gambled at work using the Gambling Motives Questionnaire.

What you need to know

This study examined the nature and consequences of workplace gambling in Canada, as well as risk factors and motivations. This study surveyed 1,742 Canadian adults who were employed full-time, had internet access at work, and engaged in non-lottery gambling at least once a month. Follow-up interviews involved 18 participants who met the DSM-5 criteria for gambling disorder. Among the survey participants, almost half (44%) gambled in the workplace in the last year. Those who gambled in the workplace were more likely to participate in lottery (45%) and in any office pool (56%). About 16% were disciplined for gambling at work, while 13% lost their job at least once. Workplace gambling was linked to younger age, male gender, married/common-law status, working in the gambling industry, and having computer and mobile device access at work. People with higher levels of job satisfaction were less likely to gamble in the workplace. Most participants gambled at work for excitement (52%) or because gambling was a social activity (44%).

A subset of survey participants who reported gambling at work and met the DSM-5 criteria for gambling disorder were invited to participate in a follow-up interview. The interview questions elaborated on experiences of gambling at work and the interplay between work and gambling. A total of 18 participants completed the interview. Most of these participants (83%) were men. On average, they were 43 years old.

What the researchers found

Problem gambling and gambling spending:

Among the 1,730 survey participants included in

data analysis, almost half (44%) gambled in the workplace in the last year. Those who gambled in the workplace were more likely to have gambling problems and spent more money on gambling per month.

Gambling activities: Those who gambled in the workplace were more likely to participate in lottery (45%), sports betting (43%), and scratch and win (28%). They were most likely to gamble using the internet (76%). Among those who gambled in the workplace, about 56% participated in any office pool.

Work-related consequences of workplace

gambling: Among those who gambled during work, about 16% were disciplined for doing so, while 13% lost their job at least once in their lifetime. Most people who lost their job before due to gambling experienced pathological gambling. In the interviews, participants discussed how gambling in the workplace could lead to lower productivity, such as taking longer time to complete tasks. They described how they often took a gambling break that went longer than intended. Most participants talked about emotional consequences of workplace gambling (e.g., stress, guilt, and shame).

Risk factors for workplace gambling: Workplace gambling was linked to younger age, male gender, married/common-law status, working in the gambling industry, and having computer and mobile device access at work. People with higher levels of job satisfaction were less likely to gamble in the workplace. Those who felt that their work was not challenging, interesting, or intrinsically rewarding were more likely to gamble during work to seek money or excitement.

Gambling motivations: Motivations for workplace gambling included excitement (52%), social connection (44%), avoidance such as to avoid working on a task (34%), and coping with stress or emotions (12%). People who gambled for social reasons were more likely to participate in raffle and lottery. In the interviews, participants described gambling-centric motivations in more detail, including gambling to make money or to use their analytical skills through sports betting. They also described gambling as an enjoyable hobby as long as it was under control. Regarding social

motivations, some participants felt pressure to gamble to be part of the group.

How you can use this research

Organizational leaders can use this research to address potential gambling-related harm within workplace. For example, they may implement harm-reduction education around the risks of normalizing gambling culture in the workplace.

About the researchers

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About Greo Evidence Insights

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