

The relationship between land-based gambling outlets and crime events in the United Kingdom

What this research is about

There is a growing interest in understanding whether the presence of land-based gambling outlets (e.g., betting shops, casinos) in certain neighbourhoods is related to higher rates of crime. Gambling outlets might contribute to crime in several ways. Like any place that involves financial transactions, gambling outlets could attract perpetrators and targets of potential criminal attacks (e.g., theft, burglaries). Residents and visitors might also have negative views of neighbourhoods with a high number of “undesirable” businesses (e.g., betting shops, nightclubs). In turn, there may be less care and resources devoted to these neighbourhoods, which can maintain or even increase the crime rate.

In this study, the researchers looked at the relationship between land-based gambling outlets and crime events in England and Wales. They also explored how this relationship might depend on the presence of other types of businesses and the socioeconomic disadvantage of a neighbourhood.

What the researchers did

The researchers used data from multiple sources, including the United Kingdom Police and the United Kingdom Census. Data from the various sources were collected between 2011 and 2017. The researchers considered three successive years of crime data from 2015 to 2017.

The researchers examined the following:

- Counts of crime in England and Wales from 2015 to 2017, including anti-social behaviour, violent crimes, theft, burglaries, property damage, and vehicle crime.

What you need to know

The presence of land-based gambling outlets (e.g., betting shops) in certain communities could contribute to higher crime rates. In this study, the researchers looked at the relationship between land-based gambling outlets and crime events in England and Wales. They used data from sources like the United Kingdom Police and United Kingdom Census collected between 2011 and 2017. The researchers looked at how the density of land-based gambling outlets per 100 square metres was related to crime rates over a 3-year period from 2015 to 2017. They also explored the influence of the presence of other types of businesses (e.g., retailers) and social deprivation (i.e., neighbourhood lacking resources and opportunities).

A higher density of land-based gambling outlets was related to an increase in all types of crime, including anti-social, violent, and theft crimes. This was more pronounced in areas with high social deprivation, but only for burglaries and theft. A higher number of small business owners in a neighbourhood protected against the effects of high gambling outlet density on crime. These findings can inform policies that aim to control and reduce crime in neighbourhoods with land-based gambling outlets. Possible protective measures include monitoring the density of gambling outlets and supporting small businesses.

- Number of land-based gambling outlets per 100 square metres across England and Wales, including betting shops, casinos, bingo, amusement parks and arcades, and pools promoters.
- Number of other businesses that could contribute to crime per 100 square metres

across England and Wales, including evening activities outlets (e.g., nightclubs), retailers, and commercial services and organizations.

- Other neighbourhood data that could influence crime rates, including social deprivation (i.e., lacking resources/opportunities), residential stability (i.e., percentage of long-term residents who own homes), and percentage of small business owners.

What the researchers found

The researchers found that there was a higher rate of crime in areas with a higher density of land-based gambling outlets. In areas with a higher density of gambling outlets, residential stability was lower (i.e., lower percentage of homeowners) and ethnic diversity was higher, with more immigrants. There was also a higher density of other outlets that might contribute to crime, such as nightclubs and retailers, as well as a higher density of small businesses. These results suggest that areas with a high density of gambling outlets are less residential areas.

A higher density of gambling outlets was related to an increase in all types of crime. This relationship was more pronounced in neighbourhoods with higher social deprivation, but only for burglaries and theft (not anti-social behaviour or violent crimes).

Higher residential stability was not found to protect against the influence of high gambling outlet density on crime. However, the positive relationship between gambling outlet density and all types of crime was weaker in areas with a higher number of small business owners. This suggests that small businesses can protect against crime to some extent by providing surveillance and showing that the neighbourhood is cared for (e.g., by looking after their properties).

How you can use this research

The findings suggest that a higher density of land-based gambling outlets is related to higher crime rates. This can inform policies that aim to control and reduce crime in neighbourhoods with land-based gambling outlets. Possible protective measures include monitoring the number of gambling outlets

that are permitted to be open and supporting small businesses.

About the researchers

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