

The perceived risk of different gambling forms and problem gambling in the Czech Republic

What this research is about

Different forms of gambling can be distinguished in terms of their risk levels. “Soft” forms of gambling are considered to be less risky than “hard” forms of gambling. Electronic gaming machines (EGMs) and casino games are often considered to be hard forms of gambling. Lotteries are often considered to be a soft form of gambling. Perceptions of riskiness among people who gamble and the general population can be a protective or a risk factor. This, in turn, can influence the level of involvement in a specific form of gambling. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of problem gambling among adults living in the Czech Republic who engage in different forms of gambling. To do so, the study examined the perceived risk of different forms of gambling.

What the researchers did

The researchers surveyed adults aged 18 and older in the Czech Republic (Olomouc region). The researchers distributed the questionnaire both on paper in the field and online. Trained university students visited multiple municipalities in the Olomouc region to invite people to complete the survey. The mayors of 123 municipalities in the region posted the questionnaire on their municipalities’ websites or social media. Official institutions and some regional media (newspapers and radio) also shared the questionnaire.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

- Sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, highest education level).
- Perceived risk of different forms of gambling.

What you need to know

“Soft” forms of gambling (e.g., lotteries) are considered to be less risky than “hard” forms of gambling (e.g., casino table games). This study examined the level of problem gambling among adults living in the Czech Republic who gamble on different forms of gambling. Data from a survey of 2,498 adults were examined. The only form of gambling that most respondents (61%) viewed as having a low risk of developing problem gambling was paper scratch cards. Online betting, online poker, casino table games, and electronic gaming machines were viewed as high-risk forms.

Compared to those who engaged in only hard forms of gambling or a combination of soft and hard forms of gambling, the percentage of people with low-risk, moderate-risk, or problem gambling was lowest among those who engaged only in soft forms of gambling (e.g., lotteries and scratch cards) in the past year or month. However, because many people engaged in these activities, the absolute number of respondents with problem gambling or some level of risk was the highest. Women were more likely to play soft forms of gambling than men. People who gambled in the past month or year were more likely to develop gambling problems than those who had not gambled as recently.

- Personal experience with different forms of gambling in the past month, in the last year, and at any time during one’s lifetime.
- The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) Short-Form was used to assess the level of problem gambling. Respondents were categorized based on their scores: 0 points = non-problem, 1 point = low-risk gambling, 2–3 points =

low-risk gambling, and 4 points or higher = problem gambling.

A total of 2,724 questionnaires were completed. After removing incomplete questionnaires or those completed by people who were underage or not from the Olomouc region, 2,498 questionnaires were analyzed.

What the researchers found

Perception of risk by gambling form: The only form of gambling that most respondents (61%) viewed as having a low risk of developing problem gambling was paper scratch cards. Online betting, online poker, casino table games, and EGMs were viewed as high-risk forms of gambling. The researchers identified three clusters of gambling forms. The first cluster included lotteries and scratch cards, which were considered the least risky. The second cluster included casino games, EGMs, and poker, which were considered the riskiest. Land-based, online, and live betting were considered to have a risk level in between the other two groups.

Gambling experience: Most respondents had gambled at some point in their life (88%). Over half (56%) gambled in the last year, and 24% gambled in the past month.

Gambling form and problem gambling: A total of 67 respondents experienced problem gambling, based on the PGSI-Short Form. Compared to those who engaged in only hard forms of gambling or a combination of soft and hard forms, the percentage of people with low-risk, moderate-risk, or problem gambling was lowest among those who engaged only in soft forms of gambling (e.g., lotteries and scratch cards) in the past year or past month. However, because most people engaged in these activities, the absolute number of respondents with problem gambling or some level of risk was the highest. People who gambled in the past month or past year were more likely to develop gambling problems than those who had not gambled as recently.

Gender differences: Women were more likely to play soft forms of gambling than men, particularly on a yearly and monthly basis.

How you can use this research

Policy makers can use this research to develop targeted prevention strategies, public education campaigns, and more effective legislation that addresses the risks linked to soft forms of gambling.

About the researchers

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