

Risk of experiencing intimate partner violence increases with more severe problem gambling

What this research is about

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to physical, sexual, and psychological harm that happens in the context of intimate relationships (e.g., marriage). Problem gambling has been linked to a higher risk of both perpetrating and being a victim of IPV.

Most research on the relationship between problem gambling and IPV has focused on women. Thus, less is known about the experiences of IPV in other genders (e.g., men). Also, few studies have looked at how a broad range of demographic, socioeconomic, and mental health factors may play a role in IPV risk among people with problem gambling.

In this study, the researchers looked at whether people with more severe problem gambling are at higher risk of being victims of IPV. They also looked at how IPV experiences are associated with various risk factors, like demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status, and substance use.

What the researchers did

The researchers used data collected from adults aged 20 years and older for the population-based Health Finland survey between September 2022 and February 2023. Participants were recruited to be nationally representative of the adult Finnish population. The survey was sent to 61,000 eligible participants, and 28,154 responded.

The survey included questions about the following:

- Problem gambling in the past year, assessed with the Problem Gambling Severity Index.
- Experiences of physical and psychological violence in the past year. The questions asked

What you need to know

In this study, the researchers looked at whether people with more severe problem gambling are at higher risk of being victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). They also looked at factors associated with increased IPV risk. Data came from 28,154 Finnish adults over 20 years old who participated in the population-based Health Finland survey.

Experiences of any form of violence were more common among females, younger people, and people who had gambled in the past year. Females and people who were aged 20–59 years, engaged in hazardous alcohol use, had suicidal thoughts, or had problem gambling were at higher risk of experiencing physical forms of IPV from a spouse. Females and people who were aged 20–59 years, had one or two children under 18 living in their household, engaged in hazardous alcohol use, or experienced psychological distress, were at higher risk of experiencing psychological forms of IPV. People who gambled were at higher risk of experiencing psychological forms of IPV than people who did not gamble. The risk increased with more severe problem gambling.

about violence perpetrated by a current or former spouse or partner, another family member or relative, and other acquaintances.

- Sociodemographic characteristics, including family status, household income, and education.
- Hazardous alcohol use, assessed with the 3-item Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test.

- Psychological distress, assessed with the 5-item Mental Health Inventory.
- Thoughts of suicide in the past year.
- Social inclusion, assessed with the Experiences of Social Inclusion Scale.

What the researchers found

The largest proportion of participants were in the age group of 70 years or older (42%). There were more female (54%) than male participants (42%).

The researchers first looked at rates of problem gambling and IPV. People who identified as male, under 60 years old, single or divorced/separated, having lower household income, having a lower education level, and having low social inclusion tended to have more severe problem gambling. Overall, people with more severe problem gambling tended to experience multiple risk factors.

Experiences of violence were more common among females, younger people, and people who had gambled in the past year. Compared to males, females were more likely to experience violence by all categories of perpetrators. Violence by family members was the most common, and psychological violence was more common than physical violence. Compared to females, males, especially those with problem gambling, were more likely to experience physical violence by an unknown perpetrator.

The researchers then looked at the relationships between various risk factors and experiences of both physical and mental IPV. Females and people who were between 20 and 59 years of age, engaged in hazardous alcohol use, experienced suicidal thoughts in the past year, or experienced problem gambling, were at higher risk of experiencing physical forms of IPV from a spouse.

Females and people who were between 20 and 59 years of age, had one or two children under 18 living in their household, engaged in hazardous alcohol use, or experienced psychological distress, were at higher risk of experiencing psychological forms of IPV from a spouse. Compared to people who did not gamble, people who gambled were at higher risk of experiencing psychological forms of IPV. The risk increased with more severe problem gambling.

How you can use this research

The findings highlight the need for integrated services to address gambling, IPV, and mental health that are tailored to different gender and age groups.

About the researchers

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Citation

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