

Predictors of problem gambling among Australian men

What this research is about

According to a report by the Australian Gambling Research Centre in 2023, about 40% of Australian adults gamble weekly. The popularity of gambling in Australia has raised concerns as it can lead to addiction, posing problems for both population wealth and health. Men tend to gamble more frequently than women. Men are also more likely to engage in all forms of gambling (e.g., lotteries, casino table games, sports betting) and to suffer from gambling-related harms compared to women.

There is a need to identify factors that can reduce risk and promote resilience against gambling-related harms. Anxiety, depression, loneliness, and alcohol use have all been identified as risk factors for problem gambling. Moreover, gambling is often portrayed as a normal “masculine” behaviour. Men may feel the pressure to conform to masculine norms and gamble. On the other hand, social support may act as a protective factor against problem gambling. The aim of this study was to identify psychosocial predictors of problem gambling in Australian men.

What the researchers did

The researcher used data collected for the Australian Longitudinal Study of Male Health, also known as the Ten to Men (TTM) study. The TTM study is the largest longitudinal study on men’s health in Australia. Wave 1 of the TTM study occurred between October 2013 and July 2014. Participants were contacted again for Wave 2 (2015–2016), Wave 3 (2020–2021), and Wave 4 (2022–2023). Data collection is ongoing for Wave 5.

Gambling data were collected from Wave 3 onward. For this study, the researcher included 2,018 participants who provided valid data from Waves 1 to 4. The researcher sought to predict problem

What you need to know

Gambling disorder is a major public health issue in Australia. Men are more likely than women to gamble and to experience problem gambling. This study aimed to identify psychosocial predictors of problem gambling among men. Data were from 2,018 men who participated in all four waves of the Australian Longitudinal Study of Male Health (Ten to Men study). The researchers examined 10 potential predictors: age, socioeconomic disadvantage, subjective wellbeing, generalized anxiety symptoms, depressive symptoms, alcohol use, loneliness, social support, conformity to masculine norms, and gambling frequency.

All predictors were individually associated with problem gambling severity. However, when they were included in a model combining all predictors, only gambling frequency and social support uniquely and significantly predicted problem gambling severity. Men who gambled more frequently and those with lower social support had more severe problem gambling at Wave 4.

gambling (assessed at Wave 4) from psychosocial factors assessed at Wave 3. An exception was conformity to masculine norms which was assessed at Wave 1. The following measures were used:

- The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to assess problem gambling. The PGSI has 9 items measured on a four-point scale ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (always). Higher scores indicate more severe problem gambling.
- Demographics including age and socioeconomic status.
- The Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory-22 (CMNI-22) to assess the extent to which a participant conformed to masculine norms (e.g., risk taking, pursuit of status, self-reliance).

- A self-report scale to measure participation in eight forms of gambling. Higher scores indicate more frequent gambling behaviour.
- The 8-item Personal Wellbeing Index to measure subjective wellbeing.
- The 7-item anxiety scale (GAD-7) to assess anxiety and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 to measure depressive symptoms in the past 2 weeks.
- The World Health Organization's Alcohol Use Disorders Identification test (AUDIT) to measure alcohol use.
- The 4-items UCLA Loneliness Scale to measure loneliness symptoms.
- The 8 items from the emotional/social support subscale of the Medical Outcome Study (MOS) social support survey to measure perceived social support.

What the researchers found

A total of 2,018 participants who provided valid data for all four waves were included in this study. The average age of these men was 44.32 years old. A small number of participants (1.64%) indicated Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Status.

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How you can use this research

This research can inform research and intervention to address problem gambling among men.

About the researchers

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About Greo Evidence Insights

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