

Social media use can increase the risk of problem gambling

What this research is about

Gambling is becoming more widely available, with new gambling products being developed. Novel and innovative promotional strategies are put in place to promote gambling, especially on social media. Many studies highlight sociodemographic characteristics associated with problem gambling, such as male gender, younger age, lower education, and lower income. It is crucial to examine the effects of both online and land-based gambling to create effective programs for the prevention of problem gambling.

Like problem gambling, excessive Internet use has been raised as a public health concern. Some scholars argue that social media platforms are designed to be addictive. The relationship between social media use and problem gambling remains underexplored. The main goal of this study is to look at the relationship between social media use and problem gambling in a sample of the Czech population.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited Czechs who were aged 16 and older to complete a survey in 2023. The survey collected demographic information, including sex, age, education level, region, house size, Internet use, and labour status. Participants completed the 9-item Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). A score of 0 indicates no problem gambling. A score of 1 to 4 indicates low risk of problem gambling. A score of 5 to 7 indicates moderate, and a score of 8 and above indicates problem gambling.

Social media use was assessed through various questions. One question asked participants how often they watched or listened to the news on social media in a typical month. Participants were also asked how often they (1) woke up at night, (2) interrupted current activities, and (3) interrupted a

What you need to know

It was found that private costs in 2022 were CZK 91.1–102.3 billion using the Lie/bet scale, or CZK 89.3–105.0 billion using the PGSI. The costs of externalities were CZK 2.6–4.8 billion using the Lie/bet scale and CZK 2.2–5.3 billion using the PGSI. Public costs were estimated to be CZK 5.6–8.0 billion using the Lie/bet scale and CZK 9.6–12.2 billion using the PGSI. The findings of the study suggest that this is a viable method for estimating the social costs of gambling.

Gambling is becoming more widely available. Yet, the relationship between social media use and problem gambling is underexplored. This study examined the association between social media use and problem gambling among Czechs aged 16 and older. Males, younger people, those with lower education, and those who were unemployed or students were found to have higher scores on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). More frequent use of social media for news, disruptive social media use behaviours (e.g., waking up at night to check social networks), and problematic social media use involving lying to others and having conflict with family over social media use were linked to higher PGSI scores.

conversation (with a partner, friend, or colleague) to check social networks. Problematic social media use was assessed with questions such as regularly thinking about using social media again, neglecting other activities, lying to others about the extent of social media use, and feeling bad when not being able to use social media, among other negative consequences.

What the researchers found

A total of 3,093 people completed the survey, with 48.4% males and 51.5% females. About 6.01% of the participants were between 16 to 24 years old; 11.06%

between 25 to 34; 16.17% between 35 to 44; 18.33% between 45 to 54; 18.62% between 55 to 64; and 29.81% were over 65 years old. Most participants had a high school diploma (39.99%) or a university degree (21.6%). Most participants (68.48%) reported using the Internet several times a day. About one-quarter (23.54%) reported using the Internet once a day or almost daily. A minority (7.99%) used the Internet less often than once a day.

Most participants (76.32%) had a score of 0 on the PGSI, indicating no problem gambling. About 15.15% had low risk, 3.48% had moderate risk, and 5.05% had problem gambling. PGSI scores tended to be higher for men than women. Among the age groups, young people aged 16 to 24 had the highest average PGSI score. PGSI scores decreased with age and were lowest among those over 65 years old. In terms of education, participants with primary education had the highest average PGSI score, while those with a university degree had the lowest score. Participants who were unemployed or were students had higher PGSI scores than participants with other labour status.

A small percentage of participants reported disruptive social media use behaviours. These included waking at night (2.23% sometimes and 0.39% often), interrupting activities (11.12% sometimes and 2.13% often), and interrupting a conversation (4.88% sometimes and 0.61% often) to check social networks. A minority of participants reported problematic social media use, such as lying to others about the extent of social media use (2.65%); having conflict with family over social media use (2.81%); regularly thinking about using social media again (4.04%); feeling bad when not using social media (4.01%); neglecting other activities (8.76%); and using social media to escape from unpleasant feelings (13.19%).

Participants who watched or listened to the news more regularly on social media had a higher risk of problem gambling (i.e., higher PGSI scores). Disruptive social media use behaviours, such as waking up at night and interrupting activities to check social networks, were associated with a higher risk of problem gambling. Problematic social media use involving lying to others and having conflicts

with family over social media use was also associated with a higher risk of problem gambling.

How you can use this research

This research can be used to better understand the link between social media use and problem gambling.

About the researchers

Vaclav Moravec, Nik Hynek, Beata Gavurova, and **Michal Miovsky** are affiliated with the Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. **Martin Rigelsky** is affiliated with the University of Prešov in Prešov, Slovakia. For more information about this study, please contact Beata Gavurova at beata.gavurova@lfl.cuni.cz.

Citation

Moravec, V., Hynek, N., Gavurova, B., Rigelsky, M., & Miovsky, M. (2025). From clicks to bets: How social media engagement influences gambling-severity-cross-sectional research. *INQUIRY: The Journal of Health Care Organization, Provision, and Financing*, 62, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00469580251318162>

Study Funding

This study was funded by the project Support for increasing the impact, innovation and sustainability of CEDMO in the Czech Republic, which was funded by the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility and received institutional support and funding from the Institutional Program Cooperatio (Health Sciences) from Charles University.

About Greo Evidence Insights

Greo Evidence Insights is an independent, non-profit organization specializing in research, knowledge mobilization, and evaluation in the health and well-being sectors. Greo transforms research and insights into actionable strategies to prevent and reduce harm related to gambling, gaming, technology use, and substance use. To learn more about funding for Research Snapshots visit [our website](#).

