



## Examining the characteristics of people who make in-play sports bets

### What this research is about

In recent years, sports betting has become an extremely popular form of gambling. For example, a 2021 report from the United States (US) found that the number of US citizens who regularly bet on sports increased by 80% within one year. There are several different types of sports betting. Single-event sports betting involves choosing one outcome to bet on prior to the start of a sports match (e.g., which team will win a football game). In in-play sports betting, people make bets *during* a sports match (e.g., which team will score the next point). Unlike other types, in-play betting allows for continuous betting.

Research suggests that in-play sports betting may be associated with greater gambling harms and risks than other types of sports betting. People who make in-play bets may have distinct psychological and demographic characteristics (e.g., being male, young, and impulsive). In this study, the researchers examined psychological, demographic, and gambling-related characteristics of people who made in-play sports bets. The aim was to obtain a clear picture of the characteristics and experiences endorsed by those who made in-play sports bets relative to those who made traditional or single-event bets.

### What the researchers did

Participants were recruited via AskingCanadians, an online panel that is representative of the Canadian population. The final sample consisted of 920 people aged 18+ who bet on sports from Ontario, Canada. Participants completed an online survey. The researchers split the participants into three groups based on their sports betting habits: those who made

### What you need to know

In-play sports betting allows people to make bets while a sports match is ongoing (e.g., which player will score next). In-play sports betting may be a particularly harmful form of gambling. The researchers examined demographic, psychological, and gambling-related characteristics of 920 Canadian adults who bet on sports. They found that people who made in-play bets were more likely to experience various psychological and gambling-related difficulties compared to people who made single-event or traditional sports bets.

in-play bets, those who made single-event bets, and those who made traditional bets.

The survey included the following measures:

- Sports Betting Timeline Follow-Back – recollected sports betting activities in the past three months using a calendar.
- Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) – modified to ask about problem gambling in the past three months instead of the past year.
- Short Gambling Harm Screen (SGHS-18) – harms in the past three months in six domains (financial, work, health, relationships, emotional/psychological, and social deviance).
- Sports Betting Motivation Scale (SBMS) – seven motives for engaging in sports betting (e.g., make money, fun, and socialization).
- Adverse Childhood Experience Questionnaire (ACE) – traumatic experiences prior to the age of 18 years.

- Brief Version of the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS-18) – to assess difficulties with emotional regulation.
- Short UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale (SUPPS-P) – to assess impulsive tendency.
- Depression Anxiety Stress Scales–21 (DASS-21) – to assess depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms in the past week.
- Brief Screener for Substance and Behavioral Addictions (SSBA) – alcohol and cannabis use severity in the past 12 months.

### What the researchers found

About one-quarter of the participants (24.2%) made in-play bets. Most participants made single-event bets (57.9%), and almost one-fifth made traditional bets (17.8%). People who made in-play bets were younger. They were more likely to be men compared to people who made single-event bets, but more likely to be women than those who made traditional bets. People who made in-play sports bets experienced greater gambling problems and gambling-related harms in all six domains compared to the other two groups. They were also more likely to report betting on sports for fun than people who made single-event bets. In general, people who made in-play bets were more likely to endorse most of the motives for engaging in sports betting than the other two groups.

People who made in-play sports bets were more likely to report adverse childhood experiences and were more impulsive. Specifically, they were more likely to act impulsively under strong negative or positive emotions, to act without thinking about potential consequences, and to show greater sensation-seeking tendency. People who made in-play bets also reported more problems with substance use and mental health (e.g., depression and anxiety) than the other two groups. There were few differences between people who made single-event bets and traditional bets.

Future research is needed to examine whether in-play sports betting leads to increased vulnerabilities (e.g., depression), or if people who are already experiencing vulnerabilities are more likely to make in-play bets.

### How you can use this research

This research can be used by gambling researchers, regulators, and policy makers. It may inform sports betting prevention and intervention programs.

### About the researchers

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