

# research snapshot

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## The presence of betting shops is linked to increased likelihood of crime in England

### What this research is about

Previous research has looked at how gambling opportunities impact crime levels. Some studies have found that the presence of a gambling establishment increases the risk of crime, especially the presence of a casino. However, the majority of the studies on gambling and crime are from North America and Australia. There is little research on the effect of betting shops on crime in the UK. The few existing studies have found mixed results.

In this study, the researchers examined the relationship between betting shops and crime in England. They examined the spatial patterns of betting shops and various crime types. They also looked at the relationship between betting shops and crime, and whether this relationship persists after controlling for neighbourhood characteristics and whether it changes based on crime type (e.g., theft, public disorder).

### What the researchers did

The researchers used data from the following sources:

#### Police-recorded crime data (PRCD)

The researchers accessed PRCD in England for 2015 and 2019 from a public database. This data consisted of reported crimes for 32,844 neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are also called lower super output areas (LSOAs). LSOAs have an average population of 1500 people or 650 households.

#### Betting shops data

The UK Gambling Commission has a list of all licenced gambling locations in the UK. The researchers mapped the locations of betting shops in 2015 and 2019 to LSOA geography.

### What you need to know

Some previous studies have found that the presence of a gambling establishment increases the risk of crime. However, there is little research on the link between crime and betting shops, especially in the UK. In this study, the researchers examined the relationship between betting shops and crime in England. They examined if there were areas where betting shops and crime clustered together. They found that the presence of a betting shop increased the likelihood of all types of crime examined in the study. The presence of betting shops had the strongest impact on shoplifting, theft from other people, public disorder, and antisocial behaviour when compared with other types of crime.

### Point-of-interest (POI) data

POI was obtained from Digimap-EDINA. POI data included locations of bus stops and food and drink places (e.g., cafes, fast food, pubs, and restaurants). The POI data were only available for 2019. The researchers mapped the POI data to LSOA geography.

### Education deprivation data

Education deprivation is the lack of education attainment in a local population. The researchers used education deprivation data from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for 2015 and 2019. The data grouped all LSOAs into 10 different categories based on education deprivation. Then, the researchers used the most and least deprived categories in their analyses.

### Measures of crime

The researchers examined 10 types of police recorded crime. These included antisocial behaviour (ASB), bicycle theft, other theft, public disorder, shoplifting, theft from person, burglary, criminal damage and arson, robbery, and vehicle crime.

### Neighbourhood characteristics (control variables)

The researchers used data from the 2011 UK Census to create control variables at the LSOA level. These variables might have an impact on the relationship between betting shops and crime. They included (1) concentrated disadvantage, measured via indicators such as percentage of social renter households and percentage of households with a head who is unemployed; (2) residential instability, measured as percentage of private renter households; and (3) ethnic heterogeneity.

The researchers first performed a hotspot analysis which examined if there were areas where different crime categories and betting shops co-existed. In addition, the researchers statistically tested the relationship between the number of betting shops and all the crime categories. They also controlled for all the aforementioned neighbourhood characteristics.

### What the researchers found

The researchers found that licensed betting shops and crime were often present in the same areas. The presence of a betting shop increased the likelihood of all crime types. This relationship was still present even after controlling for neighbourhood characteristics. The researchers also found that the presence of betting shops had the strongest impact on shoplifting, theft from other persons, public disorder, and ASB.

The researchers found that neighbourhood characteristics influenced the relationship between betting shops and most crime categories. For example, the presence of betting shops, bus stops, and eat and drink places increased the likelihood of theft. High education deprivation and social renters also increased the likelihood of crime. In addition, crime was influenced by the level of crime in neighbouring areas.

Finally, it is important to note that the relationship between betting shops and crime is complex and this

research in no way suggests causality. The researchers note that the clustering of betting shops and crime may be influenced by other variables.

### How you can use this research

Policy makers can use this research to inform a public health approach that includes interventions to reduce the impact of betting shops on crime.

### About the researchers

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