

# research snapshot

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## A longitudinal study of problem gambling, mental health disorders, and drug use among young adults

### What this research is about

Research has shown that gambling activities increase over time among adolescents and young adults. But little is known about how problem gambling is linked to mental health disorders and drug use over time. The researchers analyzed data from the Manitoba Longitudinal Study of Young Adults (MLSYA). They studied if at-risk and problem gambling behaviours predicted mental health disorders and drug use, and if mental health disorders and drug use predicted problem gambling.

### What the researcher did

The researchers studied how problem gambling was linked to mental health disorders and drug use over time among young adults. They analyzed data from the Manitoba Longitudinal Study of Young Adults (MLSYA). The MLSYA recruited 679 young adults aged 18 to 20 years and followed up with them for 5 years from 2007-2011. Participants were asked about their gambling behaviours, mental health disorders, substance use, and demographic information. The researchers studied if at-risk and problem gambling were linked to the onset of mental health disorders and drug use over time. They also studied if mental health disorders and drug use were linked to the onset of at-risk or problem gambling.

### What the researcher found

The researchers found that young adults who were at-risk or had problem gambling were more likely to have depression, alcohol problems and illegal drug use during the 5-year follow-up. But only young adults with illegal drug use were more likely to become at-risk or have problem gambling over time. Alcohol problems and mental health disorders were not linked to the onset of at-risk or problem gambling.

### What you need to know

The researchers studied the link between problem gambling, mental health disorders, and drug use over time among young adults aged 18 to 20 years. They found that young adults who were at-risk or had problem gambling were more likely to have depression, alcohol problems and illegal drug use during the 5-year follow-up. Only young adults with illegal drug use were more likely to develop problem gambling over time. Mental health disorders and alcohol problems did not predict problem gambling.

### How you can use this research

This research is also useful to mental health clinicians as it suggests that social misunderstandings, such as the inability to recognize emotion, may cause anxiety in individuals. This stress may put individuals with addictive personalities at risk of developing an addiction. Clinicians could use this knowledge when designing gambling treatment and prevention programs.

### About the Researcher

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**Keywords**

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