

research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



Problem gambling among youth in seven European countries

What this research is about

The teenage years are an important stage of development. Youth take more risks and have an increased chance of developing addictive behaviours, including problem gambling. Gambling is a popular activity among youth. New technological developments, such as the internet and smart phones, increase access to gambling for youth. Internet gambling is linked with higher rates of problem gambling than offline gambling. Knowledge of problem gambling behaviour among European youth, particularly internet gambling, is limited.

The European Network for Addictive Behavior (EU NET ADB) project aimed to increase knowledge of gambling and problem gambling among European youth in seven countries: Germany, Greece, Iceland, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and Spain. In this study, the researchers examined differences in demographic and family factors that might increase the odds of at risk or problem gambling among youth.

What the researchers did

Participants were 13,284 European teenagers (14-18 years) from seven European countries. They completed a questionnaire during class time.

Participants reported sociodemographic and family factors, including gender, age, parental education level, number of siblings, and school grades last year. They completed the South Oaks Gambling Screen-Revised for Adolescents (SOGS-RA), which assessed problem gambling. Based on their score, participants were classified as non-problem gamblers, or at-risk or having a gambling problem.

What you need to know

This study examined the demographic and family factors that might increase the risk of problem gambling among European youth. Participants were 13,284 adolescents aged 14 to 18. The results showed that a greater number of adolescents were either at risk or had a gambling problem if they were male, older, their parents had a lower education level, and they had no siblings. Being at risk or having a gambling problem was also linked with lower age at first use of the internet, lower school grades, using the internet 6-7 days per week, and problematic internet use. Youth at risk or having a gambling problem showed more problem behaviours and worse activity and school performance.

Participants completed the internet and social networking site (SNS) use questions about their daily internet use. They reported whether they belonged to any SNS and for how long they used SNS on weekdays and weekends during the past year. They also reported age at first use of internet, how often their parents limit time on the internet, and whether their parents let them visit every site.

Participants completed the internet addiction test, which measured problematic internet use. This included being preoccupied with internet use, showing behavioural problems, and having emotional changes. They also completed the Youth Self-Report (YSR), which assessed problems in social, academic, and mental and emotional behaviours.

The researchers analyzed which factors were linked with being at risk or having a gambling problem. The

researchers also explored the relationship of YSR scores with being at risk or having a gambling problem.

What the researchers found

One in ten youth reported gambling offline in the last year, and almost 6% had gambled online. Among youth who reported internet gambling, there were more males than females, and more older adolescents (aged 16 to 17.9 years) than younger adolescents (aged 14 to 15.9 years). Greece and Romania had higher rates of youth gambling in online and offline venues, while Spain, The Netherlands, and Iceland had lower rates.

About 3.6% of youth and 28.1% of gamblers (either online or offline) were either at risk or had a gambling problem. Almost half of internet gamblers and over one-quarter of offline gamblers were either at risk or had a gambling problem. The rates of at risk or problem gambling were highest in Romania and Greece, and lowest in Spain and Iceland.

Youth who were either at risk or had a gambling problem were more likely to be male, in the older age group, have parents with lower education level, have no siblings, and have lower grades. They were also more likely to use the internet 6-7 days on average per week and have problematic internet use. Finally, youth who were either at risk or had a gambling problem were more likely to have started using the internet at a younger age. Parental restriction of online content or time did not impact if youth would or would not be at risk or have problem gambling.

Youth who were either at risk or had a gambling problem had more emotional and behavioural problems. They also had lower school and activity performance.

How you can use this research

The findings show a need for better gambling laws and social responsibility tools to prevent youth gambling, with special attention to males. Future research could examine the sociocultural differences across countries that may contribute to varying rates of youth problem gambling.

About the researchers

Elisabeth K. Andrie, **Chara K. Tzavara**, **Eleni Tzavela**, and **Artemis K. Tsitsika** are affiliated with the Adolescent Health Unit, Second Department of Pediatrics, at P. and A. Kyriakou Children's Hospital at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Athens, Greece. **Clive Richardson** is affiliated with Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences in Athens, Greece. **Donald Greydanus** is affiliated with the Department of Pediatrics in the School of Medicine at Western Michigan University in Michigan, USA. **Maria Tsolia** is affiliated with the Second Department of Pediatrics at P. and A. Kyriakou Children's Hospital at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Athens, Greece. For more information about this study, please contact Artemis K. Tsitsika at info@youth-health.gr.

Citation

Andrie, E. K., Tzavara, C. K., Tzavela, E., Richardson, C., Greydanus, D., Tsolia, M., & Tsitsika, A. K. (2019). Gambling involvement and problem gambling correlates among European adolescents: Results from the European Network for Addictive Behavior study. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-019-01706-w>

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in responsible gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

Learn more about GREO by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.

