RESEARCH QUESTIONS
How were gambling behaviour and gambling problems related to substance use in the American population from 2011-2013?

PURPOSE
Previous research has clearly shown a link between substance use and problem gambling. However, it is important to regularly revisit this link, as societal views on problem gambling change over time, and previous research did not adequately represent all groups (e.g., women, minorities). In the United States, the last large scale and representative study of problem gambling is a decade old. The current research was performed to examine problem gambling severity and substance use among United States adults.

HYPOTHESIS
None stated.

PARTICIPANTS
Participants were a representative sample of 2963 adults living in the United States (51% female).

PROCEDURE
Participants were recruited by calling a representative sample of US telephone numbers (landlines and mobile phones). Researchers interviewed participants by phone, and asked questions about gambling behaviour, gambling problems, and use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES
Frequency and type of gambling behaviour were assessed using self-report questions. Problem gambling was assessed using the American Psychiatric Association’s DSM-IV criteria. Past-year use, frequent use, and dependence on alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana were also assessed using DSM-IV criteria. Demographic details (e.g., age, gender, race, socio-economic status) were assessed using self-report questions.

KEY RESULTS
In this sample of American adults, 77% had gambled in the past year, 68% had consumed alcohol, 29% had smoked tobacco, and 11% had smoked marijuana. Problem gamblers made up 4% of participants who were not dependent on alcohol, tobacco, or marijuana, but 17% of participants dependent on alcohol, 14% of participants dependent on tobacco, and 33% of participants dependent on marijuana. Past year use of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana were associated with a higher likelihood of having gambled in the past year. Frequent use of alcohol and tobacco, but not marijuana, were associated with a higher likelihood of frequent gambling. Dependence on alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana were associated with a higher likelihood of problem gambling. Demographic risk factors for frequent gambling were being male and having a lower socio-economic status. Demographic risk factors for problem gambling were young age, being male, being black, and having a lower socio-economic status.

LIMITATIONS
Self-report of gambling and substance use and misuse may not reflect actual behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS
Gambling and alcohol use are common among US adults. Intensity of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use is linked with increased gambling frequency and problem gambling intensity. These findings support classification of problem gambling as similar to substance use disorders. Service providers should consider screening for gambling problems during substance use treatment, and vice versa. Screening for substance abuse and problem gambling is especially important among groups at higher risk, including males, young people, and people of low socio-economic status. Treatments for problem gambling must attend to possible co-occurring substance use issues.
