

# research snapshot

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## Certain occupational groups are at higher risk of problem gambling

### What this research is about

Some sociodemographic groups are known to have a higher risk of problem gambling. In particular, men, younger people, and people with low socioeconomic status tend to gamble more and have more severe gambling problems. However, only four studies in Canada, USA, and Norway had compared gambling across specific occupational groups. Rates of gambling and problem gambling were found to be higher in job sectors with more men than women. Some work conditions, such as shift work and frequent travel, might also place people at higher risk.

Occupational groups involve many sociodemographic, cultural, and environmental factors. For example, people in manual labour jobs often have low income and little influence over their work. They have few opportunities to move up the social ladder. As a result, they may be motivated to gamble as it presents one of the few possibilities to have a better life. Gambling may also be a part of their workplace culture, which further encourages them to gamble.

The first aim of this study was to identify which occupational groups might be more likely to gamble regularly and to experience at-risk and problem gambling. The second aim was to explore job-specific factors that might place people at higher risk.

### What the researchers did

The researchers analyzed data from 2937 adults who participated in the Swelogs 2015 survey on gambling and health. The Swelogs is a long-term population study in Sweden that started in 2008. For this study, only people who were of working age (18–67 years) and who, according to national registry data, belonged to an occupational group were included. In

### What you need to know

This study examined regular gambling and at-risk/problem gambling among different occupational groups. Data came from the 2015 Swedish population study on gambling and health (Swelogs). Participants were 2937 adults who were 18–67 years old and could be placed into an occupational group. The results showed that three types of workers were more likely to gamble regularly and to experience at-risk/problem gambling: (1) people in 'mobile work' such as construction and skilled trade services; (2) vehicle drivers; and (3) people in monotonous manual indoor work. The findings could inform workplace problem gambling prevention efforts.

the registry data, the occupations of individuals were classified according to the SSYK 2012 system. The SSYK is similar to the International Standard Classification of Occupations 2008 (ISCO-08).

The participants reported how often they participated in various forms of gambling. They also completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). Based on the PGSI, most occupational groups had few people with moderate risk and problem gambling. Therefore, the researchers used a low cut-off score of 1 to indicate 'at-risk and problem gambling'.

The participants also reported on their health, happiness, and risky alcohol use. The researchers obtained their sociodemographic information by linking the survey data to data from Statistics Sweden.

The researchers only examined occupational groups with more than 30 people. First, they estimated the

prevalence of regular gambling and at-risk/problem gambling for people in different occupational groups, while taking gender into account.

The researchers then merged selected occupational groups into three larger groups of people having work of a similar kind. The occupational groups were chosen because where and how their work was carried out might place them at higher risk of problem gambling (e.g., shift work). The three groups included:

- 1) People in 'mobile work' involving manual labour or craftwork, at temporary worksites or along a route (e.g., plumbers, newspaper carriers).
- 2) 'Vehicle drivers' (e.g., taxi drivers, heavy truck drivers, bus drivers).
- 3) People in 'monotonous work' that is typically indoor in a factory, warehouse, or similar place (e.g., machine operators, hand packers, butchers).

The researchers compared the three groups to the rest of the participants. They also compared the three groups to participants with similar sociodemographic and lifestyle factors (e.g., age, gender, health, family situation), but different types of jobs.

### What the researchers found

Results showed that 29% of participants reported regular gambling, and 6% scored as at-risk/problem gambling. People in manual work and transportation jobs were more likely to gamble than people with other types of jobs. They were also more likely to experience at-risk/problem gambling. In contrast, people in professional jobs requiring higher education were less likely to gamble and experience at-risk/problem gambling.

Compared to the rest of participants, those in mobile and monotonous work, but not vehicle drivers, were more likely to gamble regularly. All three groups were more likely to experience at-risk/problem gambling. The same results were found when the three groups were compared to people with similar sociodemographic and lifestyle factors.

### How you can use this research

This study could inform workplace problem gambling prevention efforts. Prevention efforts could target certain occupational groups at higher risk of problem gambling. Future research could examine why some occupational groups are at higher risk.

### About the researchers

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### About 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 safer 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](http://greo.ca) or emailing [info@greo.ca](mailto:info@greo.ca).

