



## Problem gamblers tend to live in poorer areas in England

### What this research is about

Problem gambling occurs when people continue to gamble even though they experience harmful consequences. Problem gambling has been found to be related to certain individual factors. For example problem gambling tends to occur in people who use drug or have other mental health disorders.

Problem gambling may also be related to broader social factors. For example, previous studies in Australia and New Zealand have found that people who live in poorer areas are more likely to have severe gambling problems compared to those who live in wealthier areas. This may be because poorer areas have more gambling outlets such as gambling machines and casinos. Also, people in these communities tend to have lower socio-economic status. Thus, they may be more likely to take financial risks in the form of gambling to improve their living situation. The aim of this study was to determine whether problem gambling was associated with living in certain areas in the UK.

### What the researchers did

The researchers explored data from the 2007 Adult Psychiatry Morbidity Survey (APMS). Data were available from 7328 survey respondents. All respondents were 16 years of age and older and living in England.

The researchers identified respondents as recreational or problem gamblers based on their scores on a DSM-IV questionnaire. Recreational gamblers were individuals who gambled without any problem. The researchers also looked at several individual-level factors. These included annual total

### What you need to know

This study investigated whether people living in certain areas in the UK were more likely to have problem gambling. The researchers analyzed data from the 2007 Adult Psychiatry Morbidity Survey (APMS). They also determined the level of poverty of the areas where the participants lived. The results showed that individual factors affected whether people were recreational gamblers. Recreational gamblers were people who gambled without any problem. Specifically, individuals who were male, in a relationship, and employed were more likely to be recreational gamblers. Several clinical characteristics were also important. Individuals who were impulsive, misused alcohol, and were current smokers were more likely to be recreational smokers. Broader social factors appeared to affect problem gambling. Notably, problem gamblers were more likely to live in poorer areas. More research is needed to understand how the socio-economic characteristics of an area affect gambling behaviours.

income, financial difficulties, general health, mental health, impulsivity, and alcohol and drug use.

The researchers used the 2004 Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation to assess the level of poverty of small geographical areas. The index used seven domains to calculate how deprived an area was. These domains included income, employment, health, education, skills and training, barriers to housing and services, crime, and living environment.

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### What the researchers found

There were 4815 (66%) recreational gamblers, 22 (0.3%) problem gamblers, and 19 (0.26%) pathological gamblers. Pathological gamblers had the most severe gambling problems that met clinical diagnosis.

Individual-level factors affected whether people were recreational gamblers. Individuals who were male, in a relationship, and had a job were more likely to be recreational gamblers. Those who had impulsive personality traits, misused alcohol, and were current smokers were also more likely to be recreational gamblers.

Broader social factors appeared to affect whether people had problem/pathological gambling. Problem and pathological gamblers tended to live in poorer areas. This may mean that problem gambling rates are affected by the characteristics of certain geographical areas.

### How you can use this research

City planners could use this research to reduce the number of gambling outlets in areas where there are higher rates of problem gambling. Health promoters could use this research to run gambling prevention programs in poorer areas with lower socio-economic status. By focusing their efforts in these areas, health promoters can give help to those who are most in need. More research is needed to understand how neighbourhood characteristics affect gambling behaviours. Specifically, research should look at whether higher numbers of gambling outlets influence rates of problem gambling in poorer areas.

### About the Researcher

**Giuseppe Carrà** is a researcher in psychiatry at the University of Milano-Bicocca in Italy and a research associate at the Division of Psychiatry at University College London (UCL) in UK. **Cristina Crocamo** is a postdoctoral fellow in medical statistics, clinical epidemiology and public health at the University of Milano-Bicocca. **Paul Bebbington** is professor emeritus in the Division of Psychiatry at UCL. For more information about this research, please contact Cristina Crocamo at [cristina.crocamo@unimib.it](mailto:cristina.crocamo@unimib.it).

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### Keywords

Gambling, addictive behaviours, socio-economic factors, Great Britain, epidemiology, deprivation

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