

research snapshot

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A national survey of online gambling behaviours in Ireland

What this research is about

Online gambling has become a very popular form of gambling around the world. There are many reasons why online gambling has gained popularity. Online gambling is more readily available (e.g., tablets, smartphones) and accessible (e.g., from the comfort of your own home) than land-based gambling. Also, it is easy to place bets online and outcomes are known immediately. These reasons are why online gambling can be more addictive than other forms of gambling.

People who gamble on multiple activities and own multiple online accounts are more likely to develop problem gambling. Problem gambling is repetitive gambling behaviour that leads to negative consequences. Past research has found several factors that may lead to problems with online gambling in different countries. However, there is little information about online gambling in Ireland. The current study explored Irish online gamblers' gambling activities, their reasons for choosing to gamble online, their attitudes about online gambling, and the consequences of their gambling.

What the researchers did

The researchers based the current study on a similar study done in the United Kingdom. Participants were 208 Irish online gamblers who completed an online survey between December 2014 and June 2015. The survey captured their demographic information, including gender, age, and country of residence. The survey collected information on 11 gambling topics. These included:

- 1) Activities gambled online (e.g., poker, sports betting horse racing, lottery) and how often ('never' to 'most days');

What you need to know

Online gamblers in Ireland share similar gambling behaviours to online gamblers in the United Kingdom and worldwide. For instance, many online gamblers in Ireland suffered from financial and mental health difficulties related to online gambling. However, most gamblers had not received treatment for their gambling problems. The main reason for gambling online was to win money, and the main reason for ending a gambling session was having something else to do. Most online gamblers felt that the dangers of online gambling should be advertised.

- 2) Devices used to gamble online (desktop, mobile app, laptop, tablet);
- 3) Length of time spent gambling per session;
- 4) Years spent gambling online;
- 5) Reasons for gambling online (e.g., to win money, enjoyment, access, comfort);
- 6) Reasons for ending a gambling session (e.g., won a lot of money, boredom, lost too much money);
- 7) Important features when choosing a gambling app or website (e.g., recommendations, variety of games, brand name);
- 8) Emotions experienced when gambling online (e.g., excitement, no difference, lonely);
- 9) Severity and impact of gambling online in the past 12 months (e.g., borrowing money, financial problems, health problems);
- 10) Previous treatments received for gambling addiction; and
- 11) Attitudes around online gambling (e.g., potential dangers of gambling should be advertised, some gambling websites are more trustworthy).

The researchers analysed each of the 11 gambling topics among participants and noted potential differences between men and women.

What the researchers found

The most popular online gambling activities among men were horse race betting and sports betting. Women were more likely to play lottery and instant win scratch cards than men. On average, women spent more time gambling online than men. But, men tended to spend more time per gambling session and had gambled online for more years than women. Women were more likely to be non-regular gamblers compared to men.

Mobile app was the most common method participants used to gamble online. The most important reason for gambling online was to win money. Other common reasons were enjoyment, access, convenience, and availability. Most participants chose their online gambling app or website based on ease of use, free offers, and brand name. The most common reason for ending a gambling session was because they had something else to do. Other common reasons were losing too much money and reaching a target.

Most participants felt excited and happy when gambling online. The next most common emotion was that participants felt no difference when gambling online. Some participants reported feeling negative emotions, such as being frustrated or irritable.

Most participants experienced at least one negative consequence of online gambling. The most common impacts were financial and mental health difficulties. However, most participants had never received treatment for their gambling problems.

Participants strongly agreed that the potential dangers of online gambling should be advertised. They also felt that some gambling websites were more trustworthy than others and they would prefer to gamble on websites that regularly told them how much they had lost.

Overall, the findings were similar to past research in the United Kingdom and other countries. This

suggests that online gamblers in Ireland are similar to online gamblers in the United Kingdom and worldwide.

How you can use this research

This study identified different factors that may be associated with online gambling problems, including the emotions experienced during online gambling and reasons for starting and ending a gambling session. Future research could explore these factors to determine if they are effective targets for intervention to reduce problem gambling.

About the researchers

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Citation

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