

# research snapshot

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## Positive play and sport gambling behaviours

### What this research is about

In the United States, gambling has become more widely available, including sports gambling. This availability and an increased interest in sports gambling highlight the importance of responsible gambling efforts to help reduce harm. Responsible gambling is defined as “policies, procedures, and personal practices designed to prevent and reduce potential harms associated with gambling.”

Positive play is one part of responsible gambling. Positive play focuses on attitudes and behaviours that decrease the risk of developing gambling problems. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between sports wagering behaviours and positive play.

### What the researchers did

The researchers used data collected for a longitudinal study. The original dataset consisted of survey responses from 4,363 people. It comprised a census-matched sample of 2,806 adults living in the U.S. and an oversample of 1,557 adults who wagered on sports. The samples were recruited via YouGov.

The current study only used data from those who engaged in sports wagering in the past six months during the third wave of data collection (March 2023). A total of 2,476 people completed the third wave of data collection. Among them, 561 people engaged in traditional sports wagering over the past six months. The following gambling behaviours were measured:

- Positive play, assessed using the Positive Play Scale. This scale includes four subscales: personal responsibility, gambling literacy, pre-commitment, and honesty and control.

### What you need to know

This study examined the relationship between sports wagering behaviours and positive play. Positive play was measured using the Positive Play Scale, which includes four subscales: personal responsibility, gambling literacy, pre-commitment, and honesty and control. Participants were recruited via YouGov as part of a larger longitudinal study. The sample included survey responses from 561 adults living in the United States who bet on sports over the past six months.

Overall, this study found that those who gambled online engaged in more problematic gambling behaviours than those who did not gamble online. Those who gambled online as well as in casino had the lowest positive play scores. The type of wager placed was related to positive play levels. Parlays and player prop bets were linked to lower gambling literacy. Betting on moneylines was linked to higher levels of gambling literacy. Those who scored higher on personal responsibility were more likely to bet on moneylines, point spreads, totals, player props, and prop bets. Those who placed in-game bets were more likely to have lower positive play scores. Certain betting platforms, particularly offshore sites, were associated with lower levels of positive play.

- Location of gambling (e.g., casino only, online only, a mix of both, or gambling in some way that is not in a casino or online).
- Type of sports bets (e.g., moneylines, point spread betting, totals or over/unders, parlay bets, player prop bets, and prop bets).

- Timing of gambling (i.e., pre-game, in-game, or both).
- Gambling websites used to place bets from a list of websites.

## What the researchers found

Most of the participants (70%) were men and identified as White (71%). Participants were 49 years old on average. Overall, this study found that those who gambled online engaged in more problematic gambling behaviours than those who did not gamble online.

About 22% of the participants did not bet online or in a casino. About 22% bet only in a casino, while 24% bet only online. About 32% bet in both locations. Participants who did not bet online or in a casino had higher gambling literacy than those who bet in both locations. Compared to those who bet in both locations, participants who bet only in one location (casino or online) also had higher gambling literacy.

Most participants typically bet on moneylines (73%), parlays (54%), point spreads (54%), and totals (54%). People who reported betting on moneylines scored higher on gambling literacy and personal responsibility. Participants who endorsed point spreads, totals, player props, and prop bets were also more likely to score highly on personal responsibility.

Participants who bet pre-game only had higher scores on all four subscales of the Positive Play Scale compared to those who bet in-game only. Those who bet pre-game only also had higher scores on all four subscales compared to those who bet both in-game and pre-game. There was no difference between those who bet in-game only and those who bet both in-game and pre-game.

In terms of gambling websites, participants who reported betting on Bovada, BetOnline, FanDuel, Caesars/WilliamHill, Barstool and PointsBet scored lower on gambling literacy. Those who scored higher on personal responsibility were more likely to bet using FanDuel. Those who scored lower on honesty and control and pre-commitment were more likely to bet using an offshore site.

## How you can use this research

This study can inform policy makers with regard to gambling regulation efforts.

## About the researchers

**Alexander J. Connolly, Lindsay M. Stall, and Joshua B. Grubbs** are affiliated with the Center on Alcohol, Substance Use, and Addictions (CASAA) at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, NM, USA.

**Christopher G. Floyd** is affiliated with the Department of Psychology at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, OH, USA. **Shane W. Kraus** is affiliated with the Department of Psychology at the University of Nevada Las Vegas in Las Vegas, NV, USA. For more information about this study, please contact Alexander J. Connolly at [aconnolly1@unm.edu](mailto:aconnolly1@unm.edu).

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