

knowledge snapshot



The influence of age and gender on the prevalence of gambling problems worldwide

What this article is about

Problem gambling (PG) is widespread across the globe. Prevalence estimates from a large systematic review indicated that as many as 7.6% of people experience harms from PG. However, prevalence estimates also differ according to demographic factors, including age and gender. Younger males have been found to present with higher rates of PG than other groups. Yet, the extent to which these patterns hold across different cultures is not known.

Research on the impact of culture on PG has largely focused on groups of people who live within the same country or jurisdiction. In contrast, fewer studies have examined how broader cultural norms may impact gambling, especially among higher-risk groups of people such as younger men. The goal of this review was to summarize existing large-scale population surveys and explored the prevalence rates of PG by age group and gender across countries.

What was done?

The researchers conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis. The primary goals were to determine global PG prevalence rate, to assess the risk of PG for men compared to women, and to determine the risk of PG for younger (18–35), middle-aged (30–55), and older (45–65) adults. The researchers defined PG broadly as any gambling behaviours that result in harm.

The researchers searched for articles that contained data from large-scale population surveys of gambling conducted worldwide. To be considered for the review, each article had to include PG statistics for both age and gender. In addition, articles were also required to be cross-sectional studies (i.e., studies

Why is this article important?

Problem gambling (PG) is a major concern in many jurisdictions around the world. Research has consistently shown that younger people, especially young males, face higher odds of experiencing PG. Other factors are also known to influence PG, including culture. However, the degree to which age and gender impact PG in different jurisdictions has not been fully explored.

The researchers conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis of gambling population surveys worldwide. A total of 21 studies from 18 different countries were included in the review. It was found that the global prevalence of PG was 1.9%. Consistent with previous research, men were found to be over 3 times more likely to develop PG than women. The results also indicated that younger adults were more likely to experience PG than middle-aged or older adults. Furthermore, some regional differences were found, suggesting that culture and environmental factors play a role in influencing age and gender patterns in PG.

that collected data at one single point in time) and be published between 2000 and 2022. Each study must have more than 1000 participants. Articles not published in English were translated. Also, any article that defined young adults as being below the legal age of gambling or over the age of 35 was excluded.

The researchers searched for articles using several electronic databases: PsycINFO, PsycArticles, and Academic Search Ultimate. The quality of the included articles was assessed using the Joanna Briggs Institute Critical Appraisal Checklist for Studies Reporting Prevalence Data.

Next, for the meta-analysis, each of the included articles was examined for statistics related to the risk of PG for different groups.

What you need to know

A total of 21 eligible studies were included in the systematic review. The studies came from 18 different countries, with 19% based in Asia, 52% in Europe, 19% in Oceania, and 10% in North America. The total number of participants was 156,249 (52.3% women). Participants ranged in age from 14 to over 75 years.

The first aim of the review was to assess PG prevalence globally. The findings indicated that the average rate of PG was 3.1% across the studies, with the lowest rate being 0.5% and the highest rate being 8.6%. Notably, there was a pattern with young men experiencing a greater risk of PG than any other age group. For this group, the prevalence of PG ranged from 4% to 8.1%. Across all age groups, men experienced higher rates of PG than women.

Next, the researchers conducted a meta-analysis on PG in the general population. The meta-analysis pooled together data from 20 studies with results categorized by age groups and gender. The global prevalence rate of PG was 1.9%. The researchers then looked at the influence of gender on PG prevalence using data from 19 studies. It was found that men were 3.4 times more likely to experience PG than women. This result was consistent across most jurisdictions, with the exception of North America.

Finally, a separate meta-analysis examined age and PG. Older adults were less likely than middle-aged adults to have PG. However, younger adults were 1.5 times more likely to experience PG than middle-aged adults. A general pattern of older adults being less likely to experience PG was found across all of the jurisdictions surveyed.

In terms of regional differences, younger adults were more likely to experience PG in Europe and North America, but this difference was not significant in Oceania. Older adults were less likely to have PG in these three regions. However, for Asia, it was found that middle-aged adults had the highest rates of PG. Overall, this review provides further evidence of the higher rates of PG among younger adults, especially

men. However, variations in PG prevalence between countries indicate that cultural and environmental factors also influence the development of PG.

Who is it intended for?

Rates of PG remain high worldwide. Numerous factors influence the development of PG. In particular, being younger and being male are key contributors to a higher risk of PG. Interventions that target these groups are important; however, these findings also highlight the need to consider cultural and environmental factors in intervention efforts.

About the researchers

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Citation

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