

# research snapshot

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## Poker players remain gambling online or in land-based venues for at least two years

### What this research is about

Online gambling is a type of gambling that players do on the Internet. The most popular online gambling games are poker and sports betting. Players can easily access online gambling sites. Online gambling sites also widely advertise their gambling games. Public health authorities are worried about online gambling. Since online gambling is to easy access and has a lot of advertisements, more people may start playing online. There is also a lack of evidence about what risky online gambling behaviour looks like.

Evidence suggests that players who gamble online bet more money and gamble more often than players who gamble in land-based venues like casinos. Players who gamble online may drink more alcohol and use drugs. They may also have more gambling problems. There are still many unanswered questions about online gambling, especially regarding poker players. In this study, the researchers investigated whether poker players remain gambling online or in land-based venues over a two-year period.

### What the researchers did

This study is part of a larger study. The researchers recruited 304 participants from 16 regions in Quebec, Canada using advertisements on websites, in newspapers, and in places where poker is played (e.g., casinos, bars). Participants thought of themselves as poker players and had bet money on a poker game in the past year. They were 18 years of age and older. The researchers followed participants for two years.

Participants completed questionnaires over the phone or face-to-face. Participants did one questionnaire before they started the study. They also did two follow-up questionnaires over the next two years.

### What you need to know

In this study, the researchers investigated whether poker players remain gambling online or in land-based venues over a two-year period. They recruited participants living in Quebec, Canada. Participants were 18 years of age or older, and bet money on a poker game in the past year. Participants completed three questionnaires: one at the beginning of the study and two over the next two years. Many players remained gambling online or in land-based venues after two years. Only a few players switched from gambling online to land-based gambling. Poker players appeared to share common sociodemographic and mental health characteristics, regardless of whether they played poker online or in land-based venues. Future research could investigate what motivates poker players to gamble online or in venue.

Participants completed these two questionnaires one year apart. The questionnaires asked participants if they mainly played poker online or in land-based venues. They also assessed the number of different gambling activities participants played in the past year aside from poker. These activities might include lotto tickets, bingo, slot machines, and sports betting.

The researchers assessed the severity of participants' gambling problems with the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). The Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) assessed participants for symptoms of anxiety and depression. The DEBA-Alcohol and DEBA-Drugs questionnaires determined if participants were addicted to drugs and alcohol. The Eysenck Impulsiveness Questionnaire

(EIQ) determined if participants were impulsive. Impulsiveness is when a person acts without thinking about the consequences. The Inventaire des croyances liées aux jeux (ICROLJ) assessed participants for illusion of control. Illusion of control is when players think they can control the outcomes of a gambling game, even though gambling outcomes are based on chance. The researchers also collected demographic information from participants such as their sex, age, and education level.

### What the researchers found

Participants who played poker online (36.3%) at the start of the study, continued to play online after two years. Participants who played poker in land-based venues (51.5%) at the start of the study continued to play in land-based venues after two years. This finding suggests that poker players are likely to play on the same platform (i.e., online or in venue) over time.

Only a small number of participants switched from gambling online to gambling in land-based venues (12.1%). There were no participants who switched from playing poker in land-based venues to online. These findings suggest that online gambling's easy access and advertising do not seem to be enough to cause poker players to switch to online gambling.

Participants who played poker online showed more severe gambling problems than those who played in venue. This finding suggests that online gambling is risky. Participants who played poker in land-based venues played a higher number of gambling activities overall, compared to participants who played poker online. The researchers also found that poker players seemed to share common sociodemographic and mental health characteristics, regardless of whether they played poker online or in land-based venues.

### How you can use this research

Researchers can use this research to investigate what motivates players to gamble online or in land-based venues. Prevention service providers can use this research to support the delivery of prevention programs on online poker websites. They can also consider the differences between poker players and other gamblers when creating prevention programs.

### About the researchers

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### Citation

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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).

