



## The link between obesity and gambling

### What this research is about

Research shows that gambling is related to poor general health, including obesity. Obesity may be associated with impulsive behaviour, such as repetitive uncontrolled eating. Gambling is also related to impulsive behaviour. Therefore, researchers examined the link between gambling and obesity. Specifically, the researchers were interested in studying whether obese gamblers would be more impulsive than non-obese gamblers.

### What the researcher did

The researchers recruited 207 young adults between the ages of 18 and 29. All participants had gambled at least five times in the past year. Approximately 11% of participants were considered obese and 24% were overweight. Participants completed an interview measuring pathological gambling symptoms. They also completed questionnaires measuring gambling behaviour and psychiatric conditions. The researchers also recorded participants' heights and weights. Finally participants completed computer tasks to assess cognitive functioning, including reaction time, decision making and attention.

### What the researcher found

Participants who were classified as obese spent more money on gambling each week than overweight or normal weight subjects. Obese participants performed more poorly on the computerized cognitive tasks than the normal weight participants. Specifically, obese participants had slower reaction times, they made less rational decisions, and they had less sustained attention than normal weight subjects. Obese gamblers did not have higher rates of impulse control disorder than normal weight gamblers.

### What you need to know

Researchers recruited 209 young adult gamblers and assessed their gambling habits, weight, height, and cognitive abilities. Obese participants lost more money on gambling than normal weight participants. Obese gamblers also performed more poorly on cognitive tasks than normal weight participants. These results suggest that problem gambling and obesity may share an underlying neurological cause.

### How you can use this research

The researchers found that obese participants lost more money on gambling than normal weight participants. Obese gamblers also performed more poorly on cognitive tasks than normal weight participants. These results suggest that gambling and overeating may be caused by the same underlying trait, such as impulsivity. If this is true, treatment strategies that enhance cognitive abilities may help reduce gambling and overeating.

### About the Researcher

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Obesity, impulsivity, cognition, gambling

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