

# research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



## Individual, contextual, and motivational factors associated with in-play sports betting and related harms

### What this research is about

Sports betting is an extremely popular form of gambling. The American Gaming Association reported that it generated \$1.5 billion in revenue from 2019 to 2020. This may be partly due to the recent legalization of online sports betting. The increasing popularity of sports betting has given rise to new forms of sports betting, including in-play betting.

In-play betting is a type of live betting that allows people to make bets on specific sporting outcomes while a game is ongoing (e.g., which team will score the next goal). There is limited research on in-play betting, but researchers believe it may be a particularly harmful form of gambling. This is because it involves continuous gambling, meaning it allows people to gamble without taking breaks. In-play betting also has other characteristics that are linked with gambling-related harms. For example, it includes near misses, where bets are close to winning. Near misses are believed to encourage future gambling.

In this study, the researchers investigated individual and contextual characteristics that might increase the risk of harms among people who place in-play sports bets. Such characteristics included problem gambling, adverse childhood experiences, and impulsivity (i.e., a tendency to act rashly). The researchers also looked at motivations associated with in-play sports betting.

### What the researchers did

The researchers recruited adults living in Ontario, Canada, who had bet on sports within the past three months. Participants first completed an online survey. In the survey, they reported demographic characteristics and psychological aspects (e.g., impulsivity). They also completed the Problem

### What you need to know

In-play betting is a new form of sports betting that involves betting on specific sporting outcomes while a game is ongoing (e.g., which team will score the next goal). In-play betting may be associated with greater gambling-related harms. In this study, the researchers examined individual and contextual characteristics (e.g., gambling problems, impulsivity, and substance use while gambling), as well as motives, associated with in-play sports betting. The researchers found that people who made more in-play bets and spent more money were more likely to experience financial and relationship harms. Additionally, people who drank alcohol and used cannabis while gambling were more likely to experience harms due to in-play betting. Problem gambling and other factors, such as coping motives, also increased the risk of harms due to in-play betting.

Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) and the Brief Screener for Substance and Behavioural Addictions (SSBA).

Participants who had made at least one in-play bet in the past three months were invited to participate in a daily diary study. The researchers used a 14-day ecological momentary assessment (EMA) for the daily diary. EMA is a study design where people complete brief surveys throughout the day, at or close to the time when they carry out a specific behaviour (e.g., make an in-play bet). The 14-day EMA occurred from May to June 2022. The researchers chose this timeframe during the National Hockey League (NHL) and National Basketball Association (NBA) playoffs because in-play betting was expected to increase.

Participants completed a survey at 8 am and at 10 pm. The questions in the EMA survey asked if they had placed any in-play bets since 10 pm of the previous night (for the morning surveys) and since 8 am that morning (for the evening surveys). If they did, further questions were asked about their in-play betting behaviours, motives, and harms that occurred.

## What the researchers found

A total of 1,356 EMA surveys were completed by 84 participants. Most participants were white (68%), male (75%), and had at least a college degree (75%). Based on the PGSI, 27% of the participants were at moderate risk and 32% experienced problem gambling. Most participants (92%) placed at least one in-play bet during the 14-day EMA.

In terms of individual factors, people with more severe gambling problems had increased chance of experiencing financial and relationship harms due to in-play betting. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) were associated with spending more money on in-play betting. Negative urgency (i.e., acting rashly when feeling negative emotions) increased the chance of placing in-play bets, whereas sensation seeking was associated with spending more money.

In terms of contextual factors, the researchers found that people placed more in-play bets, spent more money on in-play betting, and had an increased chance of experiencing financial and relationship harms if they drank alcohol and used cannabis while gambling. Being with friends was associated with placing more in-play bets and spending more money. However, being with friends who were placing in-play bets was associated with placing fewer in-play bets.

In terms of motives, “being in the game” was associated with placing more in-play bets. Enhancement motives (i.e., gambling for excitement or fun) and coping motives (i.e., gambling to cope with negative emotions) were associated with placing more in-play bets and spending more money. These two types of motives also increased the chance of experiencing harms due to in-play betting.

## How you can use this research

This research can be used by policy makers, researchers, and regulators. The findings suggest that responsible gambling initiatives and interventions directed towards in-play betting may be warranted.

## About the researchers

**Hyouun S. Kim** and **Jenna L. Vieira** are affiliated with the Department of Psychology at Toronto Metropolitan University in Ontario, Canada. Hyouun S. Kim is also affiliated with the Royal’s Institute of Mental Health Research at the University of Ottawa in Ontario, Canada. **Sophie G. Coelho** and **Matthew T. Keough** are affiliated with the Department of Psychology at York University in Ontario, Canada. For more information about this study, please contact Hyouun S. Kim at [andrewhs.kim@torontomu.ca](mailto:andrewhs.kim@torontomu.ca).

## Citation

Kim, H. S., Coelho, S. G., Vieira, J. L., & Keough, M. T. (2023). Dispositional and contextual correlates of in-play sports betting and related harms: A 2-week ecological momentary assessment study. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000948>

## Study funding

Funding for this study was provided by a research grant independently managed by Greo, with funds supported by Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) to Hyouun S. Kim and Matthew T. Keough.

## About Greo

Greo has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. Greo is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization with almost two decades of international experience in generating, synthesizing, and mobilizing research into action across the health and wellbeing sectors. Greo helps organizations improve their strategies, policies, and practices by harnessing the power of evidence and stakeholder insight.

Learn more about Greo by visiting [greo.ca](https://greo.ca) or emailing [info@greo.ca](mailto:info@greo.ca).

