

research snapshot

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How is gambling participation related to obesity among men and women who gamble?

What this research is about

Obesity is a public health concern in many countries. Recent studies have investigated the relationship between problem gambling and obesity. Problem gambling occurs when individuals experience harms because they lose control over how much time and money they spend gambling. Harms may include debts, family conflicts, and physical and mental health problems.

It has been reported that people who are considered obese participate in physically active leisure less often. One study found that problem gamblers tend to exercise less, eat less healthy food, and have a higher body mass index (BMI) compared to non-problem gamblers. BMI is a common index used to categorize a person as underweight, normal weight, overweight, or obese.

This study explored if body weight – as measured by BMI – might be related to gambling frequency. The focus was on regular gambling rather than problem gambling. Specifically, this study investigated if individuals with a higher BMI might gamble more frequently across a range of gambling activities.

What the researchers did

The researchers used data collected by the Pew Research Center for a survey in 2006. The dataset included 1,473 adults living in the USA who reported that they had gambled in the last 12 months. In the survey, participants were asked how often they gambled for 16 different types of gambling activities. These activities included playing bingo for money, visiting a casino, buying lottery tickets, playing slot machines, betting on various sports, and betting on horse or dog races.

What you need to know

This study explored the relationship between obesity and gambling in a group of 1,473 adult gamblers. Obesity was measured using Body Mass Index (BMI). The results showed that gamblers who were considered obese ($BMI \geq 30$) were more likely to play bingo for money and buy lottery tickets than those who were not obese. Among women who gambled, those who were obese tended to gamble in casinos, bet on college basketball, and play slot machines more often. This finding was not observed among men who gambled. Further research is needed to understand the relationship between obesity and gambling, and the role of gender in this relationship.

The researchers examined whether the gambling patterns of people who were considered obese differed from those who were not. They also explored the relationship between obesity and gambling for men and women separately.

What the researchers found

Participants who were considered obese ($BMI \geq 30$) were more likely to play bingo for money and buy lottery tickets compared to those who were not obese. Among women who gambled, BMI was associated with gambling in casino, betting on college basketball and playing slot machines. In other words, women who participated in those gambling activities more often were more likely to be obese. This finding was not observed among men who gambled.

How you can use this research

This study could be useful to researchers, clinicians and problem gambling treatment providers. More research is needed to understand the link between obesity and gambling, and the role of gender. Researchers could also investigate other factors that can explain the obesity-gambling link. For example, being impulsive and having a tendency to focus on immediate needs may be related to both higher BMI and more frequent gambling.

About the researchers

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Citation

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BMI, obesity, gambling

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