



## Motivations to gamble among Polish older men who had retired

### What this research is about

Gambling is increasingly seen as an entertainment option for older adults. There are age-related factors that may motivate older adults to gamble. Amongst these factors are low income, widowhood, social isolation, and health problems that prevent engaging in other leisure activities.

Most research studies on why people gamble have focused on adults of younger ages. Few of these studies have explored the differences between men and women in their motivations to gamble. Similarly, studies that have explored older adults' gambling motivations have not distinguished between men and women. In general, older adults gamble for entertainment, to win money, to socialise with others, and to cope or escape from problems.

The purpose of this study was to explore gambling motivations among Polish men who had retired. The study also explored which motivations were the most common and if the motivations differed between older men with and without problem gambling.

### What the researchers did

Participants for this study were 44 men aged 55 to 83 years. All had retired from their main profession. Only two men were under the age of 60 and both had retired due to health reasons. All participants gambled regularly (at least once a week) for at least six months prior to the interview.

Participants were recruited by trained interviewers in 2017 at various gambling venues in southeastern Poland, including sports betting sites, casinos, and poll betting sites. Those who agreed to participate were scheduled for an interview at a place of their choice.

### What you need to know

This study explored motivations for gambling among Polish men who had retired. The research team interviewed 44 older men aged 55–83 years. All participants had retired and gambled regularly (at least once a week) for at least six months prior to the interview. The research team identified 10 gambling motivations, which were grouped into five categories. The most common motivations were in the self-gratification category, especially sensations and entertainment. Challenge was a motivation in this category that was rarely mentioned. Older men without problem gambling were also motivated by social reasons, but not older men with problem gambling. Older men with problem gambling more frequently cited financial reasons, coping with problems, and spending time or acting out of habit.

The interview began with questions about basic sociodemographic information. Afterwards, the interview explored in-depth the following topics: (1) family and social situation; (2) gambling activity; (3) gambling in the lifetime; (4) place and role of gambling in life; (5) impact of gambling; (6) consequences of gambling; and (7) awareness of gambling problems.

Participants completed the Polish version of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) at the end of the interview. Ten participants met the criteria for problem gambling (score of 8 or higher). The rest of the participants were categorised as non-problem gambling (score 0–7).

All the interviews were audio-recorded and analysed using thematic analysis. The research team coded the interviews and identified themes related to their research questions.

## What the researchers found

The research team identified 10 gambling motivations, which were grouped into five categories.

### *Self-gratification*

This category included the motivations to gamble for sensations, entertainment, and challenge. Sensations and entertainment were the two most frequently cited motivations by both participants with and without problem gambling. They reflected a desire for positive experiences and emotions associated with gambling, such as excitement, joy, and adrenaline. Challenge was rarely mentioned. It reflected a desire for competition and testing one's skills.

### *Social*

Gambling for social reasons was a common motivation for participants without problem gambling. In contrast, it was not mentioned by any participants with problem gambling.

### *Coping*

Coping included the motivations to regulate one's emotions, to escape from problems, and to get rid of an internal pressure through gambling. These motivations were more frequently cited by participants with problem gambling. They reflected a desire to avoid unpleasant experiences and emotions.

### *Activity*

Activity included gambling as a way of spending time and acting out of habit. Spending time and acting out of habit were more frequently mentioned by participants with problem gambling. These motivations suggest a lack of alternative leisure activities available for older men.

### *Monetary*

Gambling to earn money was the third most common motivation, after sensations and entertainment. It was mentioned by both participants with and without

problem gambling, but more so by those with problem gambling. The importance of financial motivation might be partly explained by the economic situation of Polish older adults, which usually worsens after retirement.

## How you can use this research

This study could inform problem gambling prevention and treatment programmes for older men.

## About the researchers

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## Citation

Lelonek-Kuleta, B. (2022). Male gambling on retirement – qualitative analysis of problem and non-problem Polish gamblers' motivation to gamble. *International Gambling Studies*. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2022.2083655>

## Study funding

This study was funded by a grant from the Ministry of Health in Poland, Gambling Problem Solving Fund awarded to The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

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