

research snapshot

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A comparison of gambling involvement, motives, severity, and personality traits by gambling mode

What this research is about

Online gambling is easy to access and allows people to engage in continuous, rapid betting. This is concerning because some people might be at greater risk of experiencing gambling problems. People who gamble online often gamble offline as well. More recent research has started to differentiate between how people engage in gambling online compared to offline. Mixed-mode gambling (MMG) describes when people gamble both online and offline.

The researchers of this study compared people who gamble in only online, only offline, and mixed-mode contexts in terms of their gambling involvement and severity of gambling problems. The researchers also compared the three subgroups in terms of their motives for gambling and personality traits.

What the researchers did

This study was part of a larger project on problematic gambling and help-seeking behaviour. The researchers recruited participants using CloudResearch, an online crowdsourcing platform. All participants had to (1) be adults over 18 years old; (2) live in the US; (3) gamble at least once per month in the last six months on activities other than lotteries or raffles; (4) score as moderate-risk or problem gambling on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI scores 5 or higher); and (5) endorse awareness that their gambling had been problematic.

Participants completed an online survey on Qualtrics. The survey included the following questions:

- How often they gambled in the previous six months.
- Problem gambling severity in the previous six months. This was assessed using the PGSI. Only

What you need to know

Gambling both online and offline is called mixed-mode gambling (MMG). This study compared people who gambled online only (ONGs), people who gambled offline only (OFGs), and people who gambled in mixed modes (MMGs) in terms of gambling involvement and severity. It also compared the three subgroups in terms of motives for gambling and personality traits. A total of 517 adults who lived in the United States participated in this study. All participants had moderate-risk or problem gambling based on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) and had gambled in the previous six months. The results showed that MMGs engaged in a wider range of gambling types than ONGs and OFGs. MMGs also had more severe problem gambling than OFGs and ONGs. MMGs were more likely to gamble to enhance positive feelings and for socialization than OFGs and ONGs.

- participants who scored as moderate-risk gambling (PGSI score 5–7) or problem gambling (PGSI score 8+) were included in the study.
- Preferred gambling mode: Participants were asked how they preferred to gamble in the past six months (e.g., only online, mostly online but sometimes offline, 50/50 online and offline, mostly offline but sometimes online, or only offline).
 - Gambling-related harms were measured using the Sheehan Disability Scale Modified for Pathological Gambling (SDS-G). The authors adapted the SDS-G to include six additional areas of harm: finances, interpersonal relationships, legal standing, mental health, physical health, and subjective quality of life.

- Gambling spending was measured by asking participants how much money they typically spent on gambling each month in the past six months.
- Number of gambling activities.
- Gambling motives were measured using the Gambling Motives Questionnaire–Financial (GMQ-F). The GMQ-F assesses enhancement motives (i.e., gambling for positive feelings); social motives (i.e., gambling to socialize with others); coping motives (i.e., gambling to cope with negative feelings); and financial motives (i.e., gambling to win money).
- Personality was measured using the Brief HEXACO Inventory of Personality (BHI).

What the researchers found

A total of 517 participants were recruited. Participants were between 18 and 81 years of age. The average age was 37 years. Nearly half of the participants were women (49.7%), and the other half were men (49.7%). Less than 1% identified as transgender or non-binary.

Gambling involvement

People who gambled online only (ONGs) gambled more frequently than those gambled in mixed-modes (MMGs) and those who gambled offline only (OFGs). Although MMGs spent more money per month than ONGs and OFGs, the differences were not statistically significant. MMGs participated in a wider range of gambling activities than ONGs and OFGs.

Problem gambling severity

MMGs scored higher on the PGSI than ONGs and OFGs; however, the difference between MMGs and ONGs was not statistically significant.

Gambling-related harms

There was no difference in the number of harms that ONGs, OFGs, and MMGs experienced. In terms of specific harms, MMGs reported greater impact on their work/study performance than OFGs.

Gambling motives

MMGs were more likely to gamble to enhance their positive thoughts or feelings than ONGs. MMGs were also more likely to gamble for socialization than ONGs and OFGs. Other differences in motives among the three groups were not statistically significant.

Personality traits

OFGs had higher honesty-humility scores than ONGs and MMGs. Higher honesty-humility scores describe a reduced likelihood to manipulate others for personal gain, be motivated by monetary or material gain, and willingness to break rules. Additionally, MMGs reported higher extraversion levels than ONGs.

How you can use this research

Policy makers and gambling providers can use this research to inform the creation and improvement of new and existing harm minimization strategies.

About the researchers

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