



# RESEARCH SYNOPSIS

Lloyd, C. D., Chadwick, N., & Serin, R. C. (2014). Associations between gambling, substance misuse and recidivism among Canadian offenders: A multifaceted exploration of poor impulse control traits and behaviours. *International Gambling Studies*, 14(2), 279-300.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Can self-reported traits prospectively predicted future criminal recidivism, when accounting for incarcerated adult offenders' past criminal behaviour, substance use and gambling behaviour?

## PURPOSE

Individuals involved in the criminal justice system showed a higher prevalence of problem gambling than the general population; however, it was unclear how gambling behaviour was related to risk for future crime. The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether self-reported traits (i.e., sensation seeking, premeditation, and reward sensitivity) prospectively predicted future criminal recidivism, when accounting for incarcerated adult offenders' past criminal behaviour, substance use and gambling behaviour.

## HYPOTHESIS

Sensation seeking, premeditation and reward sensitivity measured would longitudinally predict future crime post-release. The co-occurrence of substance misuse and gambling problems would predict future crime over and above problem behaviours alone.

## PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 140 offenders (100% males; average age = 42 years) incarcerated in federal minimum or medium security institutions in Canada.

## PROCEDURE

Participants were first invited to complete questionnaires of substance use, impulse control, and gambling-related behaviours and problems. The Correctional Service of Canada's electronic files were accessed to record date of release; type of release; any return to incarceration; and reason for return.

## MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES

Recidivism data was gathered from official federal records and defined as revocation of conditional release due to rule violations or committing a new

offence. The Statistical Information on Recidivism Scale-Revised (SIR-R1) was used to predict recidivism. The Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) assessed individuals' range of gambling experience. The Alcohol Dependence Scale (ADS) assessed alcohol dependence. The Drug Abuse Screening Test (DAST-20) assessed prescription and illegal drug use and drug-related life problems. Barratt's Impulsiveness Scale (BIS-11) assessed trait impulsivity including motor, cognitive/attention, and non-planning. The Impulsive Sensation Seeking Scale (ImpSS) assessed sensation seeking. The Behavioral Inhibition System/Behavioral Activation System Scale (BIS/BAS) assessed reward sensitivity (BAS) and punishment sensitivity (BIS).

## KEY RESULTS

There were moderate correlations between measures of trait impulse control, self-reported drug use, and official criminal history. The recidivism rate was 11% for non-problem gamblers and 71% for problem gamblers. Gambling problems prospectively predicted post-release criminal recidivism, even when accounting for past criminal behaviour, impulse control traits and substance misuse.

## LIMITATIONS

The sample size was small. Recruitment did not specifically target offenders with problem behaviours. Participants self-selected for the study and results may not generalize to the broader offender population. Only male participants were included. The study used a mono-method measurement approach did not capture all aspects of impulsivity. The data were correlational and causal relationship could not be examined.

## CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the results suggest that the occurrence of problem gambling was strongly related to future recidivism. If gambling behaviours are in some way causally related to crime, it may be that treatments targeting impulsivity would not be as effective as

programmes addressing gambling specifically, or the life circumstances associated with problem gambling.

**KEYWORDS:** problem gambling, crime recidivism, impulsivity, substance use, sensation seeking

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