

# knowledge snapshot



## A review of esports gambling

### What this article is about

Esports, or electronic sports, is a form of competitive video gaming. The esports industry has grown in recent years, and so has its viewership. Gambling companies have taken advantage of the increasing interest in esports. As a result, esports betting is now offered by various gambling operators. Various payment options can be used to bet on esports, including cryptocurrencies (e.g., Bitcoin), virtual currencies (e.g., in-game skins), or real currency.

Unlike sports betting, however, esports betting does not have clear regulations and has been associated with 'shady' websites. Additionally, there is limited research examining esports-related gambling. Most current studies exploring esports are focused on the gaming aspect (e.g., comparing esports to traditional sports) of esports, not esports gambling. Research also suggests that esports gambling is popular among adolescents and emerging adults, a population known to be vulnerable to developing problem gambling. Therefore, it is crucial to examine gambling-related harms resulting from esports betting.

The current study is the first to review existing research evidence on esports gambling. The researchers aimed to review the demographics and general characteristics of people who gamble on esports; the associations between esports gambling and esports viewership; and motivations for engaging in esports and skins gambling.

### What was done?

The researchers conducted a systematic review through a search of four databases (PubMed, PsycINFO, Scopus, and Web of Science). Studies were

### Why is this article important?

Esports and esports gambling have become increasingly popular in recent years. This article is a review of 30 studies focusing on esports gambling. Findings from the review indicate that people who gamble on esports have unique characteristics and behaviours compared to people who gamble on traditional gambling products. These findings suggest that esports gambling research is increasing, but there is a need for further research in this field, as well as policy and intervention development.

included if they focused on esports gambling; analyzed empirical data; and were published in a peer-reviewed English-language journal. Thirty studies from eight countries were included in the review.

Twenty-four studies were survey-based studies, two used qualitative data collected through interviews, two studies used data from gambling companies, and two studies analyzed *Twitter* (now known as *X*) advertisements. Nine studies were from the USA, seven studies were from Australia, four were international studies, three were from the UK, two were from Finland and Poland, and one study each from Russia, Belgium, and Türkiye.

### What you need to know

Findings from the review indicate that people who gamble on esports are more likely to be young men, who tend to score high on problem gambling scales. In English-speaking countries, people who gamble on esports are more likely to come from non-white ethnic background and speak a non-English language

at home. These findings suggest that developing interventions aimed at youth is warranted to address harms related to esports gambling.

In terms of research topics, 18 studies included information on the general and demographic characteristics of people who gamble on esports. Four studies examined motivations for engaging in esports gambling. Eleven studies examined the association between esports gambling, viewing esports, and playing video games. People who gamble on esports reported playing video games and watching esports more frequently. Thirteen studies examined problem gambling or harms associated with esports gambling. Of these studies, eight reported that people who gamble on esports have higher levels of problem gambling than other groups (e.g., people who bet on sports). In five studies, esports gambling predicted engaging in other types of gambling.

Eight studies reported other aspects of esports gambling. Among them, one study examined esports consumers' perspectives on match fixing. Two studies examined data from gambling companies to understand esports gambling patterns. Two studies examined Twitter advertising. One of these studies reported that esports accounts were twice as likely to advertise overnight between 10pm and 6am.

This review also identified important future research directions that should be explored. The researchers suggest that future research should examine if there is a need to develop a measure specifically to assess motivations for esports gambling. Future research should also compare people who gamble on esports to people who gamble on traditional forms of gambling. Currently, there is a lack of research on esports gambling in non-Caucasian regions, including Asia, Central and South America, and Africa.

### Who is it intended for?

This research is intended for gambling researchers, policy makers, and regulators.

### About the researchers

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