

research snapshot

summarize | mobilize



Gambling is associated with lower health-related quality of life

What this research is about

Problem gambling is linked to many negative consequences. These include health inequalities, substance use and mental health difficulties. Some studies suggest gambling can reduce health-related quality of life. On the other hand, some researchers suggest some forms of gambling can enhance quality of life, because of providing social interactions and improving a person's emotional, intellectual, and physical functioning.

Yet, little is known about the relationship between gambling and health state utility values. Health state utility values range from 0 ('death') and 1 ('best health status'). They represent a person's preference for being in a particular health state. In a previous study, it was found that problem gambling decreased quality of life by .076 quality-adjusted life years. One quality-adjusted life year is equal to one year of life in perfect health. It is a measure used to evaluate the social and economic costs of a health condition.

Unfortunately, most studies of gambling and health have focused on problem gambling. Yet, low and moderate-risk gamblers account for a significant amount of gambling harms. In the present study, the researcher estimated the association between gambling behaviour and health state utility values in the Australian general population. The researcher also aimed to determine which aspects of health-related quality of life is affected by gambling.

What the researcher did

The researcher used data from wave 15 of the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia. This is a yearly national survey of Australian adults

What you need to know

Problem gambling is linked to health inequalities. It can also reduce health-related quality of life. Not much is known about how different levels of problem gambling affect health-related quality of life. This study examined the impact of gambling on health state utility value and quality of life. Health state utility value is a score that ranges from 0 ('death') to 1 ('best health status'). Participants were 15,144 Australian adults age 15+. Of the total sample, 3.4% were low-risk gamblers based on the Problem Gambling Severity Index. A further 2.1% were moderate-risk gamblers, and 0.9% were people with problem gambling. Greater problem gambling severity was associated with lower health state utility value. Women and people of older age had lower health state utility value. Gambling was associated with 443 quality-adjusted life year losses in 2015 in Australia.

that began in 2001. Wave 15 was the 15th survey that occurred in 2015. Wave 15 included 17,606 people. For this study, the analyses focused on 15,144 people, aged 15 and over, who answered the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI).

Health-related quality of life was measured using the Medical Outcomes Study 36-item Short Form (SF-36). The SF-36 asked participants about their physical and mental health, role limitations due to health problems, pain, and other health-related issues. Health state utility values were calculated using the Short-Form Six-Dimension (SF-6D), which was derived from the SF-36. Demographic characteristics such as

age and gender were included as potential factors that could influence quality of life.

What the researcher found

Of the total sample, 3.4% were low-risk gamblers based on the PGSI. A further 2.1% were moderate-risk gamblers, and 0.9% were people with problem gambling. Differences were found between people with non-gambling/non-problem gambling and people with moderate-risk/problem gambling on demographic characteristics. People with moderate-risk or problem gambling were more likely to be men. They were more likely to be separated, divorced or not in a relationship, be unemployed, and have lower education. They were also more likely to be smokers and former drinkers. People with problem gambling were more likely to be of indigenous origin.

More severe problem gambling was associated with lower mental and physical domains in health-related quality of life. Similarly, greater problem gambling was associated with decreasing health state utility value. This relationship stayed the same when demographic factors were taken into account. Low-risk gambling was associated with -.03 health state utility value, compared to non-gamblers and or non-problem gamblers. Moderate risk gambling was associated with -.06 and problem gambling was associated with -.18 health state utility values. Women and people of older age had lower health state utility values. Gambling was responsible for 443 quality-adjusted life year losses in 2015 in the Australian general population.

Overall, these results showed that gambling was associated with poorer health-related quality of life, even for low-risk gambling. The decline was greater with more severe problem gambling.

How you can use this research

Governments could use this research to help lessen the harms associated with problem gambling. Future research could use longitudinal data to replicate these findings. Longitudinal data can be used to examine the impact of gambling on health-related quality of life over time.

About the researchers

Foruhar Moayeri is affiliated with the Eastern Health Clinical School, Eastern Health, at Monash University in Victoria, Australia. For more information about this study, please contact Foruhar Moayeri at foruhar.moayeri@gmail.com

Citation

Moayeri, F. (2019). A reference set of Health State Utility Values for gambling problem behaviour, a survey of the Australian general population: Implications for future healthcare evaluations. *Expert Review of Pharmacoeconomics & Outcomes Research*. Advance online publication.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14737167.2019.1610397>

About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

Learn more about GREO by visiting greo.ca or emailing info@greo.ca.

