

research snapshot

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Online gambling results in additional burden of harms compared to offline gambling

What this research is about

Online gambling is a rapidly growing industry and its activities are becoming easier to access. The harms of offline gambling are well studied. However, the harms of online gambling are not well studied. This is because many online gamblers also gamble offline, so it is hard to attribute harm to one particular form of gambling. The aim of this study was to compare the harmful impacts on different life aspects caused by online versus offline gambling.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited adult gamblers from two online panels. Gamblers included 143 pure online gamblers, 125 mixed online gamblers, and 542 pure offline gamblers. Mixed online gamblers engaged in both online and offline gambling. Each gambler completed an online survey in 2015. The survey assessed demographics, gambling behavior, and the impacts and severity of gambling.

Demographics included age, sex, language, education, income, size of household, postal code, and occupation. Gambling behavior included frequency and history, monthly spending, favorite games, and the nature of the gambling sites visited (state-run or not). Gambling impacts included negative effects on seven different life aspects: work/studies, relationships, physical health, mental health, finances, quality of life, and legal issues.

Work/studies impacts included loss of productivity, absenteeism, and work disruptions. Relationship impacts included the well-being, health and finances of loved ones, and if the gambler had gone through a divorce or separation due to gambling. Physical health impacts included physical activity, sleep disturbances,

What you need to know

This study compared harms caused by gambling amongst online and offline gamblers. The findings suggest that online gamblers reported more negative and severe impacts, and more severe gambling problems. Specifically, pure online gamblers reported gambling caused more harms to their relationships, physical and mental health, finances, and quality of life than offline gamblers. Similar harms were also reported by mixed online gamblers who gambled both online and offline, with additional harms on work or studies. More research is needed to explore the impacts of online gambling. Policy considerations should also be made regarding the marketing of online gambling.

number of medical consultations, medical expenses, and the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Mental health impacts included number of visits to mental health professionals, suicidal thoughts/attempts, and taking antidepressants. Financial impacts included trouble paying bills, gambling debts, loans and bankruptcies. Quality of life included self-reported satisfaction with life. Legal issues included illegal borrowing of money or getting in trouble with law.

The researchers used the propensity score matching method to match the online gamblers to be compared with the offline gamblers. They then compared between pure online gamblers to offline gamblers, and between mixed online gamblers to offline gamblers.

What the researchers found

Gambler profiles. Pure and mixed online gamblers were more likely to be men and earn higher income than offline gamblers. Pure online gamblers were also more likely to have a university degree and be single. The most common activity played by all gamblers was lottery. Although online gamblers preferred poker and slots and offline gamblers preferred instant lotteries and slots. Overall, online gamblers reported more negative and severe impacts from gambling compared to offline gamblers. Online gamblers also reported more severe gambling problems.

Pure online vs offline. Pure online gamblers reported more harms caused by gambling, including harms to their relationships, physical health, mental health, finances, and quality of life. Specifically, pure online gamblers reported harms towards the well-being, health and finances of a spouse or loved one. They also reported harms to their overall physical and mental health. Compared to offline gamblers, pure online gamblers had more gambling debts and an overall lower satisfaction with their life.

Mixed online vs offline. Mixed online gamblers also reported gambling caused more harms to their relationships, physical health, mental health, finances, and quality of life. However, unlike pure online gamblers, mixed gamblers also reported impacts on work or studies including disruptions at work and loss of productivity. They also reported harms towards the well-being, health and finances of a spouse, loved one or child. Compared to offline gamblers, mixed gamblers were more likely to report that gambling led to drinking, less time for physical activities, and sleep disruptions. They reported more negative harms towards their overall mental health and quality of life. They also reported more gambling debts and trouble paying bills, and lower quality of life.

How you can use this research

The findings suggest that online gambling is associated with specific impacts and adds to the burden of offline gambling. Policy makers and gambling regulators should consider restricting the

marketing of online gambling. The findings of this study could also be useful for researchers to build upon existing research and to calculate the social costs of gambling.

About the researchers

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Citation

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Keywords

Internet gambling, impacts, problem gambling, characteristics, propensity score matching

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Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (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 responsible 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.



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Information item	Value
Title	Assessing the differential impacts of online, mixed, and offline gambling
Article URL	http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14459795.2017.1378362
Authors	"Papineau, E.", "Lacroix, G.", "Sévigny, S.", "Biron, J. F.", "Corneau-Tremblay, N.", "Lemétayer, F."
Journal	International Gambling Studies
Year published	2017
Keywords	Internet gambling, impacts, problem gambling, characteristics, Propensity score matching
Geographic coverage	Canada, Québec
Study population	Pure online, mixed online, and pure offline gamblers, aged 18 and over. All had gambled at least once a month over the past year, and for at least 12 months.
DOI	https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2017.1378362
Citation	Papineau, E., Lacroix, G., Sévigny, S., Biron, J. F., Corneau-Tremblay, N., & Lemétayer, F. (2017). Assessing the differential impacts of online, mixed, and offline gambling. <i>International Gambling Studies</i> . Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2017.1378362
Unit of analysis	Group
Sampling procedure	Participants were recruited from two online panels
Response rate	57% and 12% (two online panels)
Study design	Observational (case control)
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