

# research snapshot

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## Why do people who gamble and their spouses/cohabitants contact gambling helplines?

### What this research is about

Gambling is a leisure activity enjoyed by many people. Unfortunately, it can sometimes lead to problematic gambling and gambling disorder. Research suggests that around the world, the rates of gambling problems are increasing.

Gambling problems, however, do not just affect the person experiencing difficulty with gambling. Studies have found that for every person who develops a gambling disorder, between four to ten additional people (e.g., partners, friends, and family members) are impacted negatively. Additionally, spouses/cohabitants (S/Cs) who live with people with gambling disorder likely experience negative physical, emotional, and social consequences of gambling. Research suggests that when S/Cs are given the necessary tools to support their loved one with gambling disorder, they report less distress and greater relationship satisfaction.

Individuals who develop gambling disorder rarely seek treatment for various reasons (e.g., embarrassment, shame, and denial of problems). Gambling telephone helplines are an essential component of treatment support systems. Many helplines offer telephone and/or online counselling services to people with gambling problems and their loved ones. Gambling helplines can help reduce the frequency of gambling and amount of money spent, as well as lead to better control of gambling and a higher quality of life for people with gambling problems.

In this study, the researchers aimed to examine whether there were differences in the reasons for contacting a gambling helpline among people with gambling problems and S/Cs of people with gambling

### What you need to know

Research suggests that spouses/cohabitants (S/Cs) of people with gambling problems experience many negative consequences of gambling. People who develop a gambling disorder rarely seek help; however, gambling helplines can be a useful treatment tool. In the present study, the researchers examined the reasons for contacting a gambling helpline, primary gambling activity, and primary gambling location reported by people with gambling problems and S/Cs of people with gambling problems. They found significant differences in the reasons for contacting the helpline and primary gambling location identified by people with gambling problems and S/Cs. Gender differences were also observed for the primary gambling activity and location. These results can inform future research and intervention programmes to support people with gambling disorder and their S/Cs.

problems. The researchers also examined whether there were differences in the primary gambling activity and primary gambling location reported.

### What the researchers did

The researchers were provided access to data obtained by a gambling helpline located in Florida, USA, through the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG). A total of 938 people (809 with gambling problems and 129 S/Cs) contacted the FCCG helpline during a one-year period from 2019 to 2020.

The researchers examined demographic information; the reasons for contacting the helpline; the primary gambling activity of the person with gambling

problems; and the most commonly used gambling location by the person with gambling problems.

### What the researchers found

The researchers found significant differences in reasons for calling the gambling helpline among people with gambling problems and S/Cs. People with gambling problems were more likely to report calling for financial reasons (e.g., difficulty paying bills) and treatment referrals/information, while S/Cs were more likely to call due to relationship difficulties.

People with gambling problems and S/Cs did not differ in their identification of the primary gambling activity. However, overall gender differences were observed for people with gambling problems. Women were more likely to identify non-strategic gambling activities (e.g., slot machines) and men were most often found to identify strategic gambling activities (e.g., casino games) as their primary gambling activities. Gender differences were also observed for S/Cs. Male S/Cs were more likely to report not knowing their partner's primary gambling activity, while female S/Cs were more likely to report lottery as their partner's primary gambling activity.

The identification of primary gambling location differed among people with gambling problems and S/Cs. People with gambling problems reported internet sweepstakes centres as their primary gambling location, while S/Cs were more likely to report racinos as the primary gambling location for their loved one with a gambling problem. Gender differences were also observed. Men with gambling problems were more likely to report gambling at their friends' place and racetrack, while women with gambling problems were more likely to report gambling at internet sweepstakes centres. Among S/Cs, men were more likely to report land-based casinos, but women were more likely to report convenience stores for lottery purchasing as their partner's primary gambling location.

### How you can use this research

These findings can be helpful to gambling regulators and researchers. More research is needed to examine why such differences were observed in order to

develop intervention programmes that can help both people with gambling problems and S/Cs.

### About the researchers

**Anthony Sciola, Loredana Marchica, J r mie Richard, and Jeffrey Derevensky** are affiliated with the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University in Montreal, QC, Canada. Loredana Marchica is also affiliated with the Department of Psychology at the Montreal Children's Hospital in Montreal, QC, Canada. **Jennifer Kruse** is affiliated with the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) in Florida, USA. For more information about this study, please contact Anthony Sciola at [anthony.sciola@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:anthony.sciola@mail.mcgill.ca).

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