

# research snapshot

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## Does the need to regulate emotions affect decisions to make in-play sports bets?

### What this research is about

Sports betting is one of the most popular types of gambling. Recent technological advances have increased the availability and accessibility of sports betting. In contrast to traditional sports betting, in-play betting involves wagering on events that occur during a match while the match is ongoing (e.g., which team will win a sports match). Research suggests that in-play sports betting may be a particularly harmful form of gambling. This is due to the rapid pace and continuous nature of in-play betting. Some scholars have proposed that in-play betting shares many characteristics with electronic gaming machines (EGMs), which have long been recognized as a higher risk form of gambling.

There is a gap in current knowledge on what motivates people to make in-play bets. In this study, the researchers aimed to assess emotion regulation as a factor that motivates people to engage in in-play sports betting. The researchers defined the term 'emotion regulation' to include both positive and negative emotional states. For example, people may place an in-play bet to increase their excitement when watching a sports match, or to deal with the negative feelings of losing a bet. The researchers also examined whether impulsivity influences the link between emotion regulation and in-play betting. Specifically, the researchers looked at positive urgency (a tendency to act rashly when feeling strong positive feelings) and negative urgency (a tendency to act rashly when feeling strong negative feelings).

It was hypothesized that excitement would increase after placing an in-play bet and emotion regulation would predict making more in-play bets. It was also hypothesized that the association between making in-

### What you need to know

In-play betting is a feature of sports betting that allows people to bet on events that occur during a sports match while the match is ongoing. In this study, the researchers examined the association between in-play sports betting and emotion regulation. They also looked at the role of impulsivity in this association. The researchers conducted three studies which took place immediately after three major sporting events in 2022. The survey participants were people who had made at least one in-play bet during these sporting events. The researchers found that placing in-play bets was associated with increases in excitement. People with greater emotion regulation motives made more in-play bets and had more severe problem gambling. Furthermore, the association of emotion regulation with in-play betting was stronger among people with high levels of impulsivity.

play bets and emotion regulation would be enhanced by impulsivity.

### What the researchers did

The researchers conducted three studies in 2022. These studies involved adults from the United States and the United Kingdom who had made in-play bets during a major sporting event. In the first study, a survey was posted on CloudResearch, a crowdsourcing website, immediately following the end of the Super Bowl LVI. The final sample consisted of 111 adults aged 19 to 60. In the second study, a survey was also posted on CloudResearch immediately following the March Madness Final, with

a final sample of 121 adults aged 20 to 71. The third study was posted on Prolific, another crowdsourcing platform, immediately following the Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) Champion League Football. The final sample consisted of 239 adults aged 19 to 21.

In the surveys, participants completed self-report measures of pre- and post-bet excitement, how many in-play bets they made during the match, and emotion regulation motives. They also completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) and the Short UPPS-P Impulsive Behavior Scale (SUPPS-P). For the SUPPS-P, the researchers only focused on the positive urgency and negative urgency subscales.

### What the researchers found

The researchers found that participants reported an increase in excitement after placing an in-play bet. Participants with greater emotion regulation motives made more in-play bets and had more severe problem gambling. Greater problem gambling severity was also associated with making more in-play bets.

These findings suggest that people may make in-play bets to regulate their emotions. Furthermore, the researchers found that this effect is amplified among people higher in certain dimensions of impulsivity. In particular, participants with high levels of negative urgency reported making more in-play bets during the sporting events. This was not observed among participants with low levels of negative urgency. Similar results were found for positive urgency.

This work supports the idea that one reason people may make in-play bets is to regulate their emotions, particularly among people with high levels of emotion-driven impulsivity.

### How you can use this research

This research can be used by gambling researchers and regulators. This research can inform future research on in-play betting and the development of new policies and regulations to protect people who gamble from harms. The researchers suggested that responsible gambling tools (e.g., mandatory play

breaks) directed at in-play betting may be warranted to minimize harms from this type of gambling.

### About the researchers

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### Citation

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