



Problem Gambling and Disability

The vast majority of individuals can gamble without experiencing ill effects, yet roughly 4% of the general population has had a gambling problem¹. Very limited research has been conducted assessing the relation between disability and problem gambling (PG) or pathological gambling (PAG), and most of what is known has been gleaned from demographic data collected as part of studies with a different focus. Furthermore, “disabled” is a term used generally, and the type of disability has rarely, if ever been assessed. Additionally, those who identify as disabled are often grouped with those who report being unemployed, further limiting what is known about PG and disabilities. While data is limited, the research does suggest that individuals suffering from a disability may be at increased risk of having or developing a gambling problem. Therefore, it is important that those who suffer from a disability, their family members, and professionals working with this population be aware of warning signs of PG and where to go to obtain help. Moreover, future research endeavors should focus on increasing knowledge about the association between disabilities and PG.

Problem gambling among those reporting disability as current employment status

The majority of data regarding PG and disability is comprised of demographic information. Specifically, “disability” is one response option for assessing employment type and/or status*.

- The “disabled” or those unable to work were found to be among the most vulnerable to developing a gambling problem²
 - Among disabled participants, 11% were assessed as moderate risk gamblers and 6% as PGs compared to the rates among those employed full time (4.3% and 1.4%, respectively)
- An assessment of primary care patients revealed that 23% of those receiving disability benefits were PAGs⁷
- Twice as many problem as non-PGs (1 in 10) were found to be disabled or unemployed as non-PGs (1 in 20)⁵
- PGs are significantly more likely than non-PGs to be disabled or unemployed^{5,6}
- Individuals who receive disability benefits have significantly higher rates of PG than others, 26% compared to 14%¹⁰.
- Among those receiving disability, PG was related to poor physical and mental health functioning¹⁰.
- Compared to PGs who did not receive disability benefits, those who did experienced more gambling related pathology (as assessed by significantly higher scores on the South Oaks Gambling Screen)¹⁰.

*Problem gambling is specifically excluded as an impairment covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (<http://www.ada.gov/reg3a.html>)



Office of Communications

Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 22.365, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3171 ~ 404-657-2254

Problem Gambling and learning disabilities

- A high percentage of youth with gambling problems also have a learning disability³
- Significantly more probable PAGs cite having been diagnosed with a learning disability (22.3%) than non gamblers (9.4%) and social gamblers (7.8%)⁴
- Significantly more probably PAGs than other youth scored within the clinical range of the Cognitive Problems-Inattentions subscale, indicating that their cognitive processing may be impaired by an inability to concentrate or remain attentive⁴
- Of PGs in a clinical sample of adolescents (16-18 years of age) 17% had a primary diagnosis of a learning disorder and 11% had a primary diagnosis of ADHD⁹
- Youth diagnosed with a learning disability (ADHD) were more likely to be PGs than others⁹

Internet gambling, disability, and problem gambling

- Among participants in a study of Internet gamblers (n = 1920) 12% reported being disabled
 - Of this subsample over 40% were identified as being PGs
 - The authors suggest that this subsample might be more likely to gamble online due to accessibility issues related to their disabilities.
- Disability was a reason cited for preferring Internet gambling over land-based locations⁸
- Respondents who identified themselves as disabled were significantly less likely to report preferring gambling over the Internet to land-based locations⁸.
 - The authors hypothesized that social interaction may be behind this preference and urge further research to explore this association.
- Among a clinical sample of adolescents (of which 92% were diagnosed with a learning disability), higher levels of Internet addiction was positively correlated with PG severity⁹
- Internet gambling has been found to be associated PG¹¹
- Among respondents on disability, 7% reported Internet gambling (3% had tried it and 4% reported having done so more than 10 times)¹¹.

Help is available

Visit the GSU Problem Gambling Research and Intervention Project's web site:

www.GeorgiaGamblingHelp.org

This site offers resources related to problem gambling prevention and treatment. For additional help or technical assistance contact Jennifer Zorland at psyj1z@langate.gsu.edu

¹Emshoff, J., Anthony, E., Lippy, C., & Valentine, L, Mooss, A., Perkins, A., & Zorland, J.. (2007). *Gambling Report for the Georgia Department of Human Resources*. Atlanta, GA: Georgia State University, Department of Psychology.

²Smith & Wynne (2002). Measuring Gambling and Problem Gambling in Alberta using the Canadian Problem Gambling Index. Retrieved from http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/abgaminginstitute/pdfs/gambling_alberta_cpgi.pdf

³Hardoon, K., Gupta, R. & Derevensky, J. (2002, June). *An examination of the influence of emotional and conduct problems upon adolescent gambling problems. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Council on Problem Gambling, Dallas.*

⁴Hardoon, Gupta, & Derevensky. (2002, June). *An examination of the influence of familial, emotional conduct, and cognitive problems and hyperactivity upon youth risk-taking and adolescents gambling problems.* Retrieved <http://youthgambling.mcgill.ca/en/PDF/OPGRC.pdf>

⁵Volberg, R. (2003). Gambling and problem gambling in Arizona. Retrieved from <http://www.problemgambling.az.gov/prevalencestudy.pdf>

⁶Volberg (2001). *Gambling and pProblem Gambling in North Dakota.: A replication study* Retrieved from <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/pubs/docs/study-gambling-in-north-dakota.pdf>

⁷Morasco, B. J., vom Eigen, K. A., & Petry, N. M. (2006). Severity of gambling is associated with physical and emotional health in urban primary care patients. *General Hospital Psychiatry*, 28, 94-100. doi: 10.1016/j.genhosppsych.2005.09.004

⁸Wood, Williams, & Lawton (2007). Why do Internet gamblers prefer online versus land-based venues? *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 20. Retrieved from <http://www.camh.net/egambling/issue20/pdfs/07wood.pdf>



Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities

Frank E. Shelp, M.D., M.P.H., Commissioner

Office of Communications

Two Peachtree Street NW, Suite 22.365, Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3171 ~ 404-657-2254

⁹Parker & Khattak (2007). Pathological gambling and addiction-related problems in an adolescent clinical sample. Retrieved from <http://www.gamblingresearch.org/content/research.php?cid=2698&appid=2180>

¹⁰Morasco & Petry (2006). Gambling problems and health functioning in individuals receiving disability benefits. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 28(10).

¹¹Petry (2006). Internet gambling: An emerging concern in family practice medicine? *Family Practice*, 23, 421-426.