



Problem gambling: Comorbidity with other disorders and behaviors

There is evidence that the comorbidity rate for some disorders amongst problem gamblers may be as high as 90%¹. Pathological gamblers experience significantly more comorbidity during their lifetime than others, on average they suffer from 4.7 disorders in addition to problem gambling². Among problem gamblers seeking treatment, 49% indicated that a comorbid condition increased the severity of their gambling problem³. Awareness of disorders that are likely to coincide with problem gambling may highlight individuals at increased risk who should be assessed for disordered gambling, as well as inform comprehensive treatment plans.

Psychiatric disorders: Those with psychiatric issues are more likely to have a gambling problem⁴

- **Depression:** Lifetime depression rates among pathological gamblers is between 70 - 76 %¹
- **Personality disorder:** 87% of compulsive gamblers have been found to suffer from a personality disorder. Specifically, **mood disorders:** (60%), **anxiety disorders** (40%), **antisocial personality disorder** (33%)⁵
- **ADD:** Between 30% and 43% of gamblers met the criteria for Attention Deficit Disorder⁶

Substance Abuse:

- Nearly 75% of pathological gamblers have an alcohol use disorder²
- Roughly 40% to 63% of pathological gamblers have a drug abuse disorder^{2,5}

Other compulsive behaviors:

- Estimates suggest that 43% of compulsive gamblers engaged in other compulsive behaviors such as shopping (23%), sexual behavior (17%), and intermittent explosive disorder (13%)⁵

Suicide:

- Among Gamblers Anonymous members 12 -18 % have attempted suicide¹
- Nearly 50% have made plans to kill themselves, and up to 80% reported wanting to die⁷

Offending:

- Roughly 50.% of problem gamblers commit crimes⁹.
- The severity of problem gambling has been associated with participation in criminal activity.
 - among offenders assessed as severe problem gamblers 68.8% reported stealing or obtaining money through illegal means to pay for gambling or gambling debts, compared to only 26.3% of moderate problem gamblers¹⁰

Gender differences: Among individuals seeking treatment for problem gambling³:

- A greater proportion of females (32%) than males (21%) reported two or more comorbid problems
- Of the 11 comorbid problems reported, only depression and problem drinking were cited as exacerbating gambling behavior
- Males reported significantly more alcohol and narcotic use, while women reported significantly more



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eating disorders, compulsive shopping, and tranquilizer use.

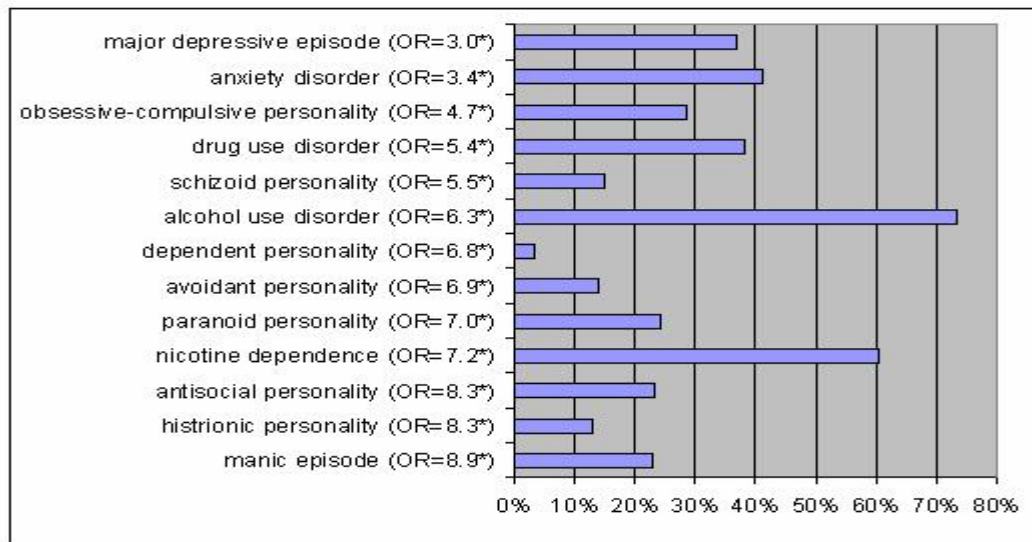


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A recent study (2005) found that the odds of disordered gamblers having a co-occurring disorder are much higher than what is found among those who are not disordered gamblers:

Percentage of Disordered Gamblers with Comorbid Disorders (adapted from Petry et al., 2005¹¹)¹²



LIE-BET TOOL TO RULE OUT PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING¹⁶

This 2-item measure has been found to be reliable and valid at discriminating between pathological and non-problem gamblers. A response of “Yes” to either question indicates further assessment is warranted.

- 1) **Have you ever felt the need to bet more and more money?**
- 2) **Have you ever had to lie to people important to you about how much you gambled?**

For more information visit the GSU Problem Gambling Research and Intervention Project 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 psyjzlz@langate.gsu.edu

¹McCormick, Russo & Ramirez, et al., (1984). Affective disorders among pathological gamblers seeking treatment. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 141, 215 - 218.

²Zimmerman, M., Chelminski, I., & Young, D. (2006). Prevalence and diagnostic correlates of DSM-IV pathological gambling in psychiatric outpatients. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 22, 255-262.

³Westphal, J. R., & Johnson, L. J. (2003). Gender differences in psychiatric comorbidity and treatment-seeking among gamblers in treatment. *The Electronic Journal of Gambling Issues*, 8. Retrieved February 12, 2008, from <http://www.camh.net/egambling/archive/pdf/EJGI-Issue8/EJGI8-research-westphal.pdf>

⁴Shaffer, H. J., Hall, M. N., & Vander Bilt, J. (1999). Estimating the prevalence of disordered gambling behavior in the United States and Canada: A research synthesis. *American Journal of Public Health*, 89(9), 1369-1376.

⁵Black, D.W., & Moyer, T. (1999). Study finds other psychiatric ills accompany pathological gambling. *Outcomes & Accountability Alert*, 4 (8), 4.

⁶Steffgen, K. A. (1995). Check compulsive gamblers for attention-deficit symptoms. *Addiction*, 11(12), 1-2.

⁷Thompson, W. N., Gazel, R., & Rickman, D. (1996). The social costs of gambling in Wisconsin. *The Wisconsin Policy Res. Inst. Rep.* 9, 1 – 44.

⁸Potenza, M. N., Steinberg, M. A., McLaughlin, S. D., Wu, R., Rounsaville, B. J., & O'Malley, S. S. (2001). Gender-related differences in the characteristics of problem gamblers using a gambling helpline. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 158, 1500-1505.

⁹Schwer, R. K., Thompson, W. N., & Nakamuro, D. (2003, February). *Beyond the limits of recreation: Social costs of gambling in southern Nevada*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Far West and American Popular Culture Association, Las Vegas, Nevada.



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- ¹⁰Lahn, J. (2005). Gambling among Offenders: Results from an Australian Survey. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *49*, 343-355.
- ¹¹Petry, N. M., Stinson, F. S., & Grant, B. F. (2005). Comorbidity of DSM-IV Pathological Gambling and Other Psychiatric Disorders: Results From the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, *66*(5), 564-574.
- ¹²The Wager (2005). *Disordered Gambling and Psychiatric Comorbidity*. Retrieved February 10, 2008, from <http://www.basisonline.org/2005/11/the-wager-vol-1.html>
- ¹³Johnson, E. E., Hamer, R., Nora, R. M., Tan, B., Eistenstein, N., & Englehart, C. (1988). The lie/bet questionnaire for screening pathological gamblers. *Psychological Reports*, *80*, 83-88.