

research snapshot

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Prevalence of problem gambling in Germany: A mixed-mode population survey

What this research is about

In Germany, representative population surveys have not found significant changes with respect to gambling-related problems since 2006. This is curious because there is now a greater availability of gambling services in Germany. Gambling providers also report greater revenues. Furthermore, there is more demand for treatment of gambling problems.

Different approaches to conducting representative population surveys have their own challenges. To address these challenges, some studies use mixed-mode surveys. This study examined the prevalence of problem gambling in Germany using a mixed-mode approach with both telephone and online surveys.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited people who were between the ages of 16 and 70 years. Participants had to speak German. The researchers used a mixed-mode design to collect data. More specifically, they used both telephone interviews and online interviews.

For the telephone survey, the researchers used the master sample of the “Working Group of German Market and Social Research Institutes e.V. (ADM)”. This master list includes over 100 million landline telephone numbers. An ADM list that contains mobile telephone numbers was also used. For the online survey, participants were recruited through online access panels (Dynata and GapFish GmbH). Participants had to have access to the internet.

Combined sample: The data from both the telephone and online surveys were included in the analyses. The researchers weighed the data from the telephone survey to the online survey using a ratio of 2 to 1.

What you need to know

In Germany, representative population surveys have not found significant changes with respect to gambling-related problems since 2006. This is curious because there is now a greater availability of gambling services in Germany. Different approaches to conducting representative population surveys have their own challenges. To address these challenges, some studies use mixed-mode surveys. This study examined the prevalence of problem gambling among the German-speaking population aged between 16 and 70 years using telephone and online surveys. There was a total of 12,303 complete interviews. Across the whole sample, 29.7% of participants engaged in one or more forms of gambling within the last 12 months. Men were more likely to gamble than women. Among 18–70-year-olds, 2.3% had a gambling disorder. Among the 16–17-year-old adolescents, 1.7% experienced problem gambling. The researchers found that the prevalence of gambling disorder estimated in this study is significantly higher than that of previous surveys.

The questionnaires asked about the participants’ sociodemographic characteristics and gambling habits (e.g., number of gambling days in the last month for gambling in general; forms of gambling; frequency; land-based vs. online; money spent).

Adult participants were screened for gambling-related problems using a survey instrument that had been adapted to assess the nine DSM-5 criteria. Gambling disorder severity was classified as follows: at-risk (1 to 3 criteria met), mild disorder (4 to 5 criteria met),

moderate disorder (6 to 7 criteria met), and severe disorder (8 to 9 criteria met). Minor participants (aged 16–17 years) were screened using the “DSM-IV Multiple Response – Adapted for Juveniles.”

There was a total of 12,303 complete interviews. Most were conducted by telephone (61%). The response rate was 27% for the telephone-based survey and 10% for the online survey.

What the researchers found

In the final weighted sample, about 50% of participants were female and 50% were male. Most participants were over 46 years old (62%). Across the sample, 29.7% of participants engaged in one or more forms of gambling within the last 12 months. Men were more likely to gamble than women (35% vs. 25%). About 12% of participants gambled only in land-based venues, while 10% only gambled online and 6% gambled both online and in land-based venues.

The most popular forms of gambling were classic lottery (19%) and Eurojackpot (11%). About 7% participated in risky forms of gambling (slot machines, casino games, and sports betting). Most participants who engaged in risky forms of gambling engaged in other forms as well, especially lotteries.

Among people aged 18–70 years old, 2.3% met the DSM-5 criteria for gambling disorder. Most participants with a gambling disorder had a mild disorder (1.1%), while some had a moderate (0.7%) or a severe disorder (0.5%). Another 5.7% of participants had at-risk gambling behaviour. Among participants who gambled in the last year, 7.5% had a gambling disorder. Another 19% had at-risk gambling behaviour. Among the 16–17-year-old adolescents, 1.7% had problem gambling.

Men were more likely to have gambling disorder than women. People with gambling disorder were more likely to engage in German-style slot machines in gambling halls and pubs (33.4%). This was followed by slot machines in casinos (31.5%) and live sports betting (29.7%). Amount of money spent on gambling rose with more severe gambling problems. Participants with no risk or at-risk gambling spent 30–40 euros/month. People with mild disorder spent 95

euros/month, and people with severe disorder spent 209 euros/month.

The researchers found that the prevalence of gambling disorder estimated in this study is significantly higher than that of previous surveys.

How you can use this research

This study can inform gambling policy, intervention, and research. Policy makers and treatment providers can develop preventive measures for early detection of gambling problems for different gambling forms.

About the researchers

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Citation

Meyer, G., Kalke, J., & Buth, S. (2023). Problem gambling in Germany: Results of a mixed-mode population survey in 2021. Advance online publication. *International Gambling Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2023.2182337>

Study funding

Deutscher Lotto- und Totoblock provided funding for the study.

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