

# research snapshot

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## The risk of problem gambling varies depending on the type of gambling venue

### What this research is about

The features of a gambling venue may influence an individual's desire to gamble on electronic gaming machines (EGMs). Examples of venue features include atmosphere, services offered, number of electronic gaming machines, and the presence of an ATM. Previous research has shown that problem gambling is related to certain venue features.

The aim of this research was to examine preferences between gamblers who played in small venues and gamblers who played in a large gambling hall in Quebec, Canada. Small venues had 5 to 10 EGMs and the gambling hall had 335 EGMs. Researchers compared socio-demographic traits, severity of gambling, preferences for venue characteristics, and gambling behaviors such as frequency and amount of money spent.

### What the researcher did

Researchers recruited participants from two types of gambling venues: a large gambling hall and 31 small venues. The gambling hall had 335 electronic gaming machines, while the small venues had between five and ten. Both venues offered the same types of machines. No alcohol was served in the gambling hall and gamblers had to put money on a smart card to play.

Participants included 66 gamblers from the gambling hall and 143 gamblers from the small venues. Researchers interviewed participants to assess gambling behaviors, severity of gambling, socio-demographic traits, and preferred venue characteristics.

Gambling behaviors included the number of electronic gaming sessions, the time and money spent gambling, alcohol consumption while playing, and whether they

### What you need to know

Gamblers' characteristics may vary depending on the type of venue. This study compared EGM gamblers who played in two different types of gambling venue. Small venue gamblers were more likely to have gambling problems and gamble at more than one venue compared to gamblers who played in a large gambling hall.

Small venue gamblers preferred venues that focused on social features such as the opportunity to meet new people. Gambling hall gamblers preferred venues that focused on physical features such as the presence of an ATM.

played in more than one venue. Venue characteristics included a list of 36 features such as the opportunity to play undisturbed, proximity of venue to home, ATM on site, business hours, number of machines, and opportunity to socialize. Researchers asked participants to select up to three characteristics that had the most influence on their choice of venue.

### What the researcher found

Gamblers who played at the large gambling hall were more likely to be women, living with a partner, retired, and non-problem gamblers. They were also more likely to gamble in only one venue compared to small venue gamblers.

Small venue gamblers were more at risk for problem gambling and more likely to consume alcohol while playing. Small venue gamblers also spent more years gambling and spent more money per hour. They played more sessions per month, but fewer hours per session, compared to gambling hall gamblers.

In terms of preferred venue features, gambling hall gamblers placed more importance on environmental characteristics. These included the type of location (e.g. bar or restaurant), a pleasant setting, the number of EGMs, having an ATM on site, the opportunity to play undisturbed and having a parking lot. Small venue gamblers were more influenced by social characteristics, such as the opportunity to meet people. The most influential characteristic for small venue gamblers was how close the venue was to their home. Closeness to venue increased the risk of problem gambling for small venue gamblers.

#### How you can use this research

Gambling prevention programs should be tailored to different EGM gambler profiles and target factors that increase the risk of problem gambling. For instance, prevention programs should focus on monitoring the number of gambling sessions per month, money spent and alcoholic drinks consumed by small venue gamblers. When targeting gambling hall gamblers, programs should monitor the length of gambling sessions per month, the number of machines used, and the number of hours played per month. Future research should examine differences in gamblers characteristics and preferences across all types of venues.

#### About the Researcher

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#### Keywords

Electronic gambling machines, gambling venue, problem gambling, gamblers' perceptions, gamblers' reported behaviours

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#### Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)

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