

# Problems of pathological gambling differ for younger and older gamblers

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To successfully treat pathological gambling, you need to intervene at an early stage, according to Susana Jiménez-Murcia from the University Hospital of Bellvitge in Spain and colleagues. Their study shows that a patient's age influences how severe the psychopathology and clinical aspects of pathological gambling are. Their work is published online in Springer's *Journal of Gambling Studies*.

These days, access to 24-hour, uncontrolled gambling is straightforward thanks largely to the internet. People can access both classic and modern games, from slot machines and lotteries to poker, roulette and video games. In addition, [pathological gambling](#) is very common among youth, more so than in adults. Unsurprisingly, youth gambling is linked to psychological issues, such as depression, substance abuse, poor school performance and delinquency.

The authors explored the effect of age on [clinical outcomes](#) among 2,309 Spanish patients seeking treatment for pathological gambling. The participants completed a series of questionnaires designed to diagnose pathological gambling and identify its symptoms. The researchers also assessed the patients' personality and measured clinical outcomes, such as presence of any current physical or psychiatric disorder; presence of suicidal thoughts and behaviors; and number of previous treatments.

As expected, the youngest patients had been gambling for shorter periods than both middle-aged and [older adults](#). They also reported fewer gambling-related health problems and lower debt. In addition, the

average age of onset of the gambling disorder was significantly lower among the youngest patients than among the middle-aged or older groups, suggesting that more young people are taking up gambling early on. Interestingly, women appeared to begin gambling at older ages than men.

The authors conclude: "Our findings indicate that there is a relationship between age and pathological gambling: the older the patient, the more gambling-related problems the patient has. Intervention during early manifestations of the complex problem that is pathological gambling is essential for successful treatment planning."

**More information:** Granero R, Jiménez-Murcia S et al (2013). Is Pathological Gambling Moderated By Age? *Journal of Gambling Studies*; DOI [10.1007/s10899-013-9369-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-013-9369-6)

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