

Odds are that chronic gamblers are often also depressed

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If a young man is a chronic gambler, the chances are extremely high that he also suffers from depression. This is one of the findings from a study led by Frédéric Dussault of the University of Quebec at Montreal in Canada. Published in Springer's *Journal of Gambling Studies*, it is the first to investigate the extent to which gambling and depression develop hand-in-hand from the teenage years to early adulthood.

Data were drawn from an ongoing long-term study that began in 1984. It follows a group of 1,162 kindergarten boys from economically disadvantaged areas in Montreal in Canada. Over the years information had been collected about the socio-family setting the boys grew up in, how impulsive they were and the quality of their relationships with their parents and friends. The current study includes data from 888 participants who were also asked at the ages of 17, 23 and 28 years old about possible [gambling](#) or depression problems.

Only three percent of these [young men](#) experienced increasing chronic gambling problems between the ages of 17 and 28 years old. This corresponds with the prevalence rate of problem gambling among adults of between one percent and three percent.

However, a majority of the young men (73 percent) with significant gambling issues also suffer from depressive problems. These problems develop hand-in-hand, becoming even more severe over time. This finding supports the notion that "pure" gamblers without related internalizing problems are an exception rather than the rule, at least

during late adolescence to [early adulthood](#). The likelihood is also greater that very impulsive boys will become increasingly depressed and have gambling problems.

The problematic gambling behavior did not necessarily decline by the time the young men turned 28 years old. According to Dussault, this may be because, contrary to delinquent behavior such as violence or theft, gambling is legal once individuals reach adulthood. Also, the influence of deviant friends who entice others to commit offences often diminish as young people grow older.

"Gambling problems may be more a personal problem similar to an addiction: once acquired, they are difficult to get rid of," Dussault says.

Dussault suggests that gambling problems should be treated together with [depression](#). Whereas a strong parent-child relationship could counter the emergence of depressive symptoms, it does not necessarily do so for gambling tendencies. In this regard, Dussault believes early prevention programs should target specific risk factors particular to a person, such as being very impulsive or always making the wrong friends.

More information: Dussault, F. et al (2015). Co-morbidity between Gambling Problems and Depressive Symptoms: A Longitudinal Perspective of Risk and Protective Factors, *Journal of Gambling Studies*. [DOI: 10.1007/s10899-015-9546-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-015-9546-x)

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