

Study finds no threshold for safe gambling

November 16 2015, by Simon Jenkins



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A new study into problem gambling and gambling addiction has found there is no safe level of gambling.

It found the more [money](#) a person spends on gambling, the greater the risk of a gambler becoming addicted, even at relatively low levels of spending.

The study, led by PhD Candidate Francis Markham from The Australian National University (ANU), overturns previous assumptions that people could avoid the risk of becoming addicted to gambling if they gambled below a safe threshold.

"So if you double the amount of money you spend from \$50 a month to \$100 a month, your risk is going to double," said Mr Markham, from the ANU Fenner School of Environment and Society.

"Where previous studies suggested that the risk of developing gambling problems grew slowly until gambling losses reached a threshold of around \$1,325 per year, our research shows that every increase in spending increases your risk, all the way up the scale."

The findings mean it could be difficult for governments to determine safe gambling guidelines.

Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties limiting time and money spent gambling, often leading to relationship breakdowns, financial stress, depression and substance use [problems](#).

About 115,000 Australians are affected by problem gambling, with a further 280,000 experiencing lower levels of harm and being at heightened risk of progressing to problem gambling.

The Productivity Commission estimated in 1999 that around 33 per cent of money lost on gambling in Australia comes from problem gamblers. Average losses by each problem gambler are estimated to be between \$1,750 and \$5,000 per month.

Researchers within the ANU study found the risk-spend relationship differed across gambling forms.

Problem [gambling](#) was most closely aligned to poker machine expenditure, while there was little relationship between spending on lotteries and the risk of becoming a problem gambler.

The study examined four separate national surveys from Australia, Canada, Finland and Norway.

Provided by Australian National University

Citation: Study finds no threshold for safe gambling (2015, November 16) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-11-threshold-safe-gambling.html>

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