

Researchers to track impact of lockdown on alcohol, gambling and pornography use

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Credit: [iAmMrRob](#)

Is the lockdown leading us to drink more alcohol or spend more time gambling online or watching pornography? Researchers today launch a survey aimed at tracking how our habits have changed in response to our forced isolation.

The UK was first placed on [lockdown](#) in response to the coronavirus pandemic on 23 March. Only essential businesses were allowed to remain open and everyone was told to stay at home, only to venture out for exercise and shopping.

Almost overnight, people's lives were up-ended, with some people working from home while others have lost their jobs or been furloughed. People who live by themselves have suddenly found themselves with no social contact other than virtual.

To find out what impact this has had on people's behavior, Dr. Valerie Voon from the University of Cambridge and Prof Henrietta Bowden-Jones, Director of the National Problem Gambling Clinic, London, have launched an [online survey](#), HabiT—Habit Tracker—asking about changes in habits during lockdown, specifically quantifying alcohol, smoking, and online use of gambling, gaming and pornography. The [habit](#) tracker survey

is available online. All responses will be anonymous.

The survey is short, only taking 10 minutes to complete. The researchers are keen to hear from both those people who do not consider themselves to be vulnerable or exhibit problem behaviors and those who have struggled in the past or are struggling now.

"We expect to see an increase in these behaviors across the UK in response to the unprecedented circumstances we find ourselves in," says Dr. Voon. "In many cases, these changes will be people's strategies for coping with the anxiety and stress caused by the pandemic and lockdown and, we hope, won't have a long term impact if the behavior can be controlled.

"For some people who might already have been struggling with or have a history of addiction these increased habits could prove problematic. The same goes for those people who find themselves in [difficult circumstances](#), for example having lost their job or facing financial difficulties, or are struggling to cope with the lockdown. These more vulnerable individuals may find their behavior has a more marked longer lasting effect, triggering an alcohol relapse, for instance, or reigniting a gambling addiction."

Survey respondents may also take part in [CrusH, an alcohol avoidance online training game for smartphones](#) being developed which can be accessed as part of the survey.

Five tips for coping during the lockdown

1. Keep active: exercise outdoors and take part in online exercise workouts
2. Keep in touch with people socially online—try FaceTime, Skype or Zoom so that you see people
3. Maintain some regular structure: sleep,

wake, work

4. Don't spend too much time looking at news
5. Use this as an opportunity to try something new—try baking, learning a new language, writing that novel you always dreamed of writing

Provided by University of Cambridge

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