

research snapshot

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Risk factors for problem gambling across racial subgroups in the USA

What this research is about

Problem gambling is defined by continuous gambling behaviours that lead to negative consequences. The consequences may include personal distress, financial problems, and relationship conflicts. Many researchers have studied risk factors that contribute to the development of problem gambling. Past research studies have reported a link between alcohol use and problem gambling. Impulsivity has also been linked to problem gambling. Impulsivity refers to a tendency to act rashly without thinking about the consequences.

Few studies in the USA have involved large groups of participants from racial minority groups, particularly Native Americans and Blacks. There is also a lack of research on whether the co-occurrence of alcohol use and problem gambling differs across racial subgroups. The aim of this study was to explore various risk factors for gambling behaviours among racial minority groups in the USA. Specifically, the researchers examined for differences in gambling and problem gambling between Native Americans, Blacks, and Whites and others.

What the researcher did

The researchers used data from two previous surveys that assessed the gambling behaviours of American residents between 2011 and 2013. One of the surveys was targeted to Native Americans. The surveys asked about the frequency of past year gambling for a variety of games (e.g. lottery, casino, bingo), and how convenient it was to gamble on lottery, bingo, slot machine, and horse or dog racing. The surveys also assessed for problem gambling, impulsivity, and alcohol use. They collected sociodemographic

What you need to know

This study showed that individuals who were Native American or Black were at a higher risk for problem gambling compared to Whites and others in the United States. It also found a variety of risk factors that impacted gambling behaviours. For example, participants who were more impulsive were more likely to be frequent gamblers and problem gamblers. Impulsivity had a larger effect on frequent gambling for Whites/others than for Blacks or Native Americans. Alcohol use and neighbourhood disadvantage had larger effects on Native Americans and Blacks than Whites/others. Heavy drinking and living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood was much more likely to be associated with frequent gambling for Blacks than for Whites/others. Living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood had a greater impact on frequent gambling and problem gambling for Native Americans than for other racial groups.

information including gender, age, race, and socio-economic status.

Neighbourhood disadvantage was determined based on census block information. These included: 1) the percentage of households on public assistance, 2) the percentage of households headed by a female, 3) the percentage of unemployed adults, and 4) the percentage of people in poverty. The researchers also determined the number of casinos within 30 miles of the participant's home address.

In total, there were 549 Native Americans, 363 Blacks, and 2562 Whites and people from other groups in the study. The researchers examined for

risk factors that contributed to gambling and problem gambling among Native Americans, Blacks, and Whites/others.

What the researchers found

Native Americans had a slightly higher rate of gambling than Blacks and Whites/others. Both Native Americans and Blacks had higher rates of frequent gambling than Whites/others. Frequent gambling was defined as gambling twice a week or more often. A higher proportion of Native Americans (18.2%) were problem gamblers compared to Blacks (12.7%) and Whites/others (7.5%).

Men were more likely to gamble, to gamble frequently, and to have problem gambling than women. Frequent gambling and problem gambling were more common among heavy drinkers. The rate of co-occurrence of gambling and alcohol use was highest for Blacks, followed by Native Americans.

Having a lower socioeconomic status was associated with frequent gambling and problem gambling. Neighbourhood disadvantage was not related to past-year any gambling or frequent gambling. However, it had a greater impact on frequent gambling for Blacks and Native Americans compared to Whites/others. Neighbourhood disadvantage was related to problem gambling. In particular, Native Americans living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods were much more likely to be problem gamblers than other racial groups. Alcohol use had a larger effect on frequent gambling for Blacks. Blacks who were heavy drinkers were much more likely to be frequent gamblers than Native Americans and Whites/others.

The presence of a casino within 30 miles and gambling convenience were two other risk factors associated with frequent gambling. But the presence of a casino within 30 miles did not contribute to problem gambling. Also, participants who were more impulsive were more likely to gamble frequently and problematically. Specifically, impulsivity had a larger influence on frequent gambling for Whites/others than for Blacks and Native Americans.

How you can use this research

The findings of this study show that gambling prevention and treatment programs should consider screening their clients for alcohol use. More research is needed to examine for differences in gambling and identify risk factors of problem gambling across racial minority groups. This will allow for more targeted interventions for members of racial minority groups.

About the researchers

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Citation

Barnes, G. M., Welte, J. W., & Tidwell, M. C. O. (2017). Gambling involvement among Native Americans, Blacks, and Whites in the United States. *The American Journal on Addictions*, 26(7), 713-721. <http://doi.org/10.1111/ajad.12601>

Keywords

Gambling, problem gambling, race, ethnicity, Indigenous groups, Blacks, risk factors

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