

ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGES AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

Individuals with lower incomes, on government assistance, and without a job are more likely to experience problems as a result of gambling compared to those who are not.¹ Among people living in poverty, motivations for engaging in gambling behaviors often include coping with high levels of distress and financial motives in hope of a better life.¹

Problematic gambling rates are the highest where individuals have low socioeconomic status and live in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods.² Socio-economic status (SES) has been shown to influence the relationship between mental health and problematic gambling such that individuals with lower SES often have a stronger relationship between their anxiety and gambling behaviors.³



Among individuals in England using houseless services, 11.6% of them screened within the problem gambling category.⁴



Venues and opportunities for gambling are often located in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities.¹ People living in poorer neighborhoods are 1.28 times more likely to develop a gambling problem than those living in wealthier neighborhoods.²



Among Polish individuals using houseless services, the prevalence of problem gambling was 11.3% compared to 0.7% in the general population.⁵ Houseless individuals were found to engage in lottery gambling twice the rate of the general population.⁵



Individuals living in poverty are more likely than individuals with higher incomes to have gambling problems.¹ One study found that 11.1% of individuals with a low socioeconomic status reported problem gambling compared to 5.1% of individuals with a higher socioeconomic status.²

Problem gambling rate estimates:

Socioeconomically disadvantaged	11.1-11.6% ^{1,4,5}
General population	0.7% ⁵
Higher SES brackets	5.1% ²

1. Hahmann, T., Hamilton-Wright, S., Ziegler, C., & Matheson, F. I. (2020). Problem gambling within the context of poverty: A scoping review. *International Gambling Studies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2020.1819365>

2. Barnes, G. M., Welte, J. W., Tidwell, M. C., & Hoffman, J. H. (2013). Effects of Neighborhood Disadvantage on Problem Gambling and Alcohol Abuse. *Journal of behavioral addictions*, 2(2), 82-89. <https://doi.org/10.1556/JBA.2.2013.004>

3. van der Mass, M. (2016). Problem gambling, anxiety and poverty: an examination of the relationship between poor mental health and gambling problems across socio-economic status. *International Gambling Studies*, 16 (2), 281-295.

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5. Wieczorek, L., Stokiszewski, J., Klingemann, J. I. (2019). Screening of problem gambling among a homeless population in Warsaw. *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 36(6), 542-555.

UNEMPLOYMENT AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

25-30%

of individuals seeking help from GA lost their job due to gambling.⁷

- Individuals with part-time jobs are more likely than those with full-time jobs to have gambling problems.¹
- Roughly 60% of individuals who have engaged in problematic gambling reported being out of paid work for at least 1 months' time.⁶ Of these, roughly 30% received some sort of social benefits within the last year.⁶
- Problem gambling is related to job loss as well. Historically, approximately 25-30% of individuals seeking help from Gamblers Anonymous (GA) have lost their job due to gambling.⁷

HOUSELESSNESS AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

- In Australia, estimated houselessness and housing expenditures related to problem gambling range from \$300,000 to \$2.3 million.⁸
- Lifetime rates of subclinical problem (46.2 %) and disordered (12.0 %) gambling were significantly higher among individuals who were houseless and predominantly African American compared to the general population.⁹
- Past-year houselessness, being female, and aged between 40-74 increased the risk of a problem gambling diagnosis in a sample of treatment-seeking Veterans.¹⁰
- In one study, 82% of individuals who were experiencing houselessness and problem gambling, stated that gambling preceded their houselessness.¹¹
- Another study has shown that women using shelter services who experience poverty/houselessness have a prevalence rate of 19.1% that scored within a "pathological gambling" range.¹²



Problem (46.2 %) and disordered (12.0 %) gambling are higher among houseless individuals.⁹

1. Hahmann, T., Hamilton-Wright, S., Ziegler, C., & Matheson, F. I. (2020). Problem gambling within the context of poverty: A scoping review. *International Gambling Studies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2020.1819365>

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7. National Research Council. (1999). Social and economic effects. In, *Pathological gambling: A critical review* (pp. 156-191). The National Academies Press, doi:10.17226/6329

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12. Matheson, F.I., Dastoori, P., Hahmann, T. et al. Prevalence of Problem Gambling Among Women Using Shelter and Drop-in Services. *Int J Ment Health Addiction* (2021).

INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION OF PROBLEM GAMBLING

Given the disproportionately harmful relationship problem gambling has on individuals who are economically disadvantaged, prevention strategies and methods to intervene are important for community stakeholders to know about.

- Increase awareness of the relationships between gambling, poverty, and homelessness is needed to influence policies promoting public health and to help guide the development of programs and practices designed to address poverty and homelessness.
- Homeless (houseless) services should assess for problem gambling and other mental health concerns and provide referrals to appropriate resources.
- When developing services for persons with economic disadvantages, a one-stop shop model is considered a preferred approach; where comprehensive services are able to address multiple needs such as housing aid, food aid, mental health services, problem gambling education, and addiction treatment.¹³

Key Findings

- Problem gambling is related to employment status. Those with part-time jobs are more likely to engage in problem gambling than full-time workers, individuals engaging in problem gambling are more likely to be out of work, and gambling is the source of job loss for some.
- Subclinical problem gambling and disordered gambling are more common among houseless individuals than in the general population.

¹³ Wright, E. H., Woodhall-Melnik, J., Hamilton-Wright, S., Guilcher, S. J.T., Wendaferew, A., Schuler, A., Matheson, F. I. (2019). Reflections on poverty, homelessness, and problem gambling: Discoveries from a world cafe. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 42.