

The WAGER Vol. 13(8): Exposure to casinos and gambling problems: New data, old question

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If exposure to gambling contributes to the development of addiction, then more exposure should correspond to higher rates of gambling problems (Shaffer et al., 2004). This week we examine a study of highly exposed people – those living near a casino – to determine whether their rates of gambling are different from those living farther from a casino (Sevigny, Ladouceur, Jacques, & Cantinotti, 2008).

Participants:

Random sample of 4,922 people drawn from an area within 100km of a Montreal casino.

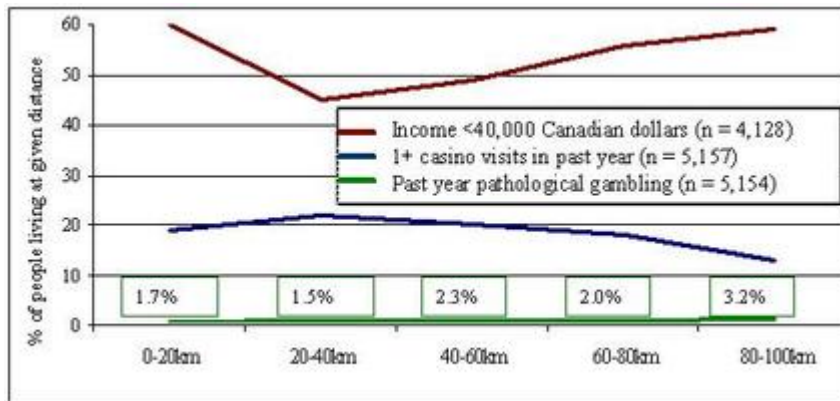
Methods:

Household telephone survey (Ladouceur, Jacques, Chevalier, Sevigny, & Hamel, 2005)

Measures:

- Driving distance from casino (participants were divided into 5 groups: those who lived 0-20km, 20-40km, 40-60km, 60-80km, and 80-100km away from a casino)
- Casino visits in the past year
- Gambling problems as measured by the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS; Lesieur & Blume, 1987)
- [Self reported](#) income

Figure 1: Casino participation, prevalence of pathological gambling, and income in last 12 months by distance to nearest casino (adapted from Sevigny et al., 2008).



Results:

People who lived closest to the casino were:

- Just as likely to be pathological gamblers as the rest of the sample,
- More likely than those living furthest away to have visited the casino during the past year, and
- No more likely than those living furthest away to have lower incomes.

Limitations:

- Proximity to a casino might not be a comprehensive measure of exposure because the casino represents only one gambling venue; other gambling opportunities, such as lotteries, are distributed throughout all regions.
- Proximity to a casino is arbitrarily set at discrete (20km) intervals; this might not represent distance accurately (a continuous measure).
- Self report methodology

Conclusion:

The relationship between exposure and gambling problems is complex, involving the influence of other variables. For example, individual or regional vulnerability could moderate the relationship between exposure and gambling disorders. Future studies could measure interactions between exposure variables and vulnerability variables (e.g., local crime levels and gambling policies, individual mental health and family gambling practices), and the interactions' effects on the exposure-related development of gambling problems.

For more WAGER articles about exposure, please see:

[The WAGER Vol. 9\(16\) - Regional Index of Gambling Exposure - An Acid Test](#)

[The WAGER Vol. 10\(10\) – Risky Business: Youth Gambling](#)

[The WAGER Vol. 10\(1\) – Addiction as Syndrome](#)

What do you think? Comments can be addressed to Leslie Bosworth

References

[Ladouceur, R., Jacques, C., Chevalier, S., Sevigny, S., & Hamel, D. \(2005\). Prevalence of pathological gambling in Quebec in 2002. Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 50\(8\), 181-186.](#)

Lesieur, H. R., & Blume, S. (1987). The South Oaks Gambling Screen: A new instrument for the identification of pathological gamblers. American Journal of Psychiatry, 144, 1184-1188.

Sevigny, S., Ladouceur, R., Jacques, C., & Cantinotti, M. (2008). Links between casino proximity and gambling participation, expenditure, and pathology. Psychology of Addictive Behaviors, 22(2), 295-301.

[Shaffer, H. J., LaPlante, D. A., LaBrie, R. A., Kidman, R. C., Donato, A., & Stanton, M. V. \(2004\). Toward a syndrome model of addiction: Multiple manifestations, common etiology. Harvard Review of Psychiatry, 12\(6\), 367-374.](#)