

WAGER 13(9) - Cut Me Off: Self-Limit Programs for Internet Gambling

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[Self-limit programs](#) (i.e., programs offered by casinos or Internet gambling sites that impose wagering or deposit limits) are intended to reduce gambling-related harms. This week the WAGER examines the Internet sports gambling behavior of people using the self-limit program of a prominent Internet gambling site (Nelson, LaPlante, Peller, Schumann, LaBrie, & Shaffer, 2008).

Methods

- 567 Internet gamblers who elected to self-limit their gambling deposits (SLs) compared to 46,567 other subscribers to the same betting site (non-SLs)
- Measures of actual Internet sports gambling during an 18 month period: % of days on which a bet was placed; # of bets per day; average bet size; amount wagered; net gambling loss; and % lost (i.e., net loss/amount wagered).

Results

- SLs bet on more days, placed more bets per day, and were more likely to play online games in addition to sports betting than non-SLs.
- After setting self-limits, 10.6% of SLs ceased all betting.
- SLs who continued to bet after setting limits significantly reduced bets per day and total wagered (see Figure 1).

Table 1. Gambling behaviors of self-limiters before and after imposing limits

	Pre-limit	Post-limit
% days betting	32.45	28.88
# of bets per day	6.88*	5.88*
Average bet size	€ 6.54	€ 7.41
Amount wagered ^a	€17.77*	€12.63*
Net loss ^a	€ 3.02	€ 2.56
% lost	0.23	0.25
*Significant difference between pre-limit and post-limit, $p < .001$		
^a Divided by the number of possible betting days		

Adapted from Nelson et al. (in press).

Limitations

- Participants might have gambled on other sites.
- The impact of self-limiting on sports betting might not generalize to other online betting activities, such as poker or casino games.

Conclusion

This study provides preliminary evidence that self-limiting programs are a promising option for Internet gamblers interested in controlling their gambling and also calls attention to the importance of involvement with gambling activity (i.e., days spent betting and bets per day), not just money at risk in distinguishing people with potential gambling problems.

What do you think? Comments can be addressed to [Ryan J. Martin](#).

References

[Nelson, S. E., LaPlante, D. A., Peller, A. J., Schumann, A., LaBrie, R. A., & Shaffer, H. J. \(in press\). Real limits in the virtual world: Self-limiting behavior of Internet gamblers. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, epub ahead of print.](#)