

Does Problem Gambling Increase Crime? – Illinois Law Review

Five years of survey panel data collected on 4,121 subjects for the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre was conducted to understand if problem gambling is statistically significantly associated with elevated rates of crime. The results are as follows:

- Of the 4,121 individuals surveyed, 10.4% were problem gamblers and 89.2% were not.
- Problem gamblers annual median losses were more than eight times those who are not problem gamblers.
- Problem gamblers gambled 177 days out of the year compared to an average of 68 days for nonproblem gamblers.
- Problem gamblers were **297% more likely to have committed a crime** in the previous year than nonproblem gamblers (10.1% compared to 3.4%)
- Problem gamblers frequently have multiple overlapping personality disorders.
- Problem gamblers are nearly three times as likely as nonproblem gamblers to have substance abuse problems (17.2% compared to 6.6%)
- Problem gamblers are nearly twice as likely to have mental health issues (33.9% compared to 17.5%)
- Problem gamblers are likely to be in the never married group (18.3% compared to 11.2%), less likely to be married (49.7% compared to 59.1%), and are more likely to have no schooling, some elementary, some high school, or only a high school degree.
- Problem gambling rises from 0.77% of the population to 3.44% when casino gambling changed from no availability to availability 60 miles away.

Conclusions:

Problem gamblers commit 2.2 to 3.2 times the crime of a nonproblem gambler. Even at a distance of 60 miles to the nearest casino, problem gambling is associated with elevated crime. Crime rates were 8 percentage points higher in counties with operating casinos older than three to four years due to the casinos presence.