

Summary: Did the COVID-19 pandemic affect gambling-related behaviours?

The province of Manitoba declared a state of emergency on March 27<sup>th</sup>. For roughly three months, several Manitobans were confined to the space of their homes. Considering all this free time, concerns were raised in relation to the potential for an increase in addictive behaviours.

The research examining gambling-related behaviours during the COVID-19 lockdown is limited.

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to examine the gambling-related behaviours of post-secondary students only, during the lockdown. This study examined the gambling behaviours of Brandon University students (n=155). The relationship between participants' problem gambling severity index (PGSI) scores, indicative of problem gambling risk, and gambling activities, as well as gambling increases during the lockdown was significant. The relationship between the endorsement of remaining at home during the lockdown and gambling activities as well as gambling increases during the lockdown was not significant. It was found that participants who reported high PGSI scores and strongly endorsed remaining at home during the lockdown also reported a higher estimated average number of times a week they gambled on sports. Additionally, the relationship between participants' estimates of the average number of times a week they gambled on sports and PGSI scores was significant even when considering lower PGSI scores. Surprisingly, participants who scored low on the boredom proneness scale and high on the PGSI reported greater estimates of the average number of times a week they gambled on sports compared to participants who scored high on the boredom proneness scale. PGSI scores better predicted participants' estimate of the average number of times per week they gambled on sports for males than for females. This study did not identify a significant relationship between sex and risk for gambling problems.