

<http://scienceblog.com/69226/people-in-poor-neighborhoods-are-twice-as-likely-to-have-gambling-problems/#tXHxW86vQQIO40Fw.99>



## **People in poor neighborhoods are twice as likely to have gambling problems**

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The poorer the neighborhood, the higher the risk for problem gambling, according to a study from the University at Buffalo Research Institute on Addictions (RIA).

Based on representative telephone interviews with nearly 5,000 people, ages 14 to 90, in the United States, the study found that problem gambling was twice as likely in neighborhoods with the highest levels of concentrated poverty compared to neighborhoods with the lowest poverty levels.

The study was published in the Journal of Behavioral Addictions last June.

In areas with the highest “neighborhood disadvantage” – determined by census factors such as the percentage of people who were unemployed, received public assistance, and/or live in poverty – more than 11 percent were problem gamblers, compared to just 5 percent in neighborhoods ranking in the top fifth of economic advantage.

“We found that neighborhood disadvantage had a substantial effect on problem gambling, even after controlling for a person’s socioeconomic status, age, gender or race,” says Grace M. Barnes, PhD, RIA senior research scientist and first author. “We also controlled for the convenience of gambling opportunities in these neighborhoods, and our findings were unchanged.”

Further, individuals with the lowest socioeconomic status in the poorest neighborhoods were at greatest risk for gambling problems.

Problem gambling was determined by a number of symptoms, including gambling with increasing amounts of money, repeated unsuccessful efforts to control or stop gambling, and preoccupation with gambling activities. Types of gambling included casinos, sports betting, horse or dog racing, lotteries and online gambling, as well as raffles, office pools, charitable gambling, pulltabs and bingo.

The authors speculated on a number of reasons why gambling is worse in poorer neighborhoods. “It may be that people who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods do not see many role models of financial success achieved through conventional means,” says John W. Welte, PhD, RIA senior research scientist and a study co-author. “Therefore, gambling may be viewed as one of the few opportunities for financial advancement, and perhaps provides the lure as a means for easily gaining money.”

In addition to Barnes and Welte, the study’s other co-authors, both at RIA, are Marie Cecile O. Tidwell, PhD, project manager, and Joseph H. Hoffman, data analyst.

RIA is a research center of the University at Buffalo (UB) and a national leader in the study of alcohol and substance abuse issues. RIA’s research programs, most of which have multiple-year funding, are supported by federal, state and private foundation grants. Located on UB’s Downtown Campus, RIA is a member of the dynamic Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and helps promote UB’s strategic focus on research initiatives.

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