

## Social and Economic Consequences of Gambling



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**BACKGROUND:** Gambling and problem gambling correlate with the social situation at both the individual and community levels. This association is often manifested as negative social, economic, and demographic phenomena.

**METHODS:** This article presents a non-systematic review of accessible data on the consequences and impacts of gambling on the regional, local, and individual levels in the Czech Republic. **RESULTS:** Higher accessibility of gambling opportunities correlates with negative phenomena such as unemployment, indebtedness, crimes of violence and against property, a decrease in the population, the consumption of alcohol and illegal substances, and the abuse of social welfare benefits. These phenomena are even more prevalent in socially excluded localities. Some municipalities issue local ordinances to control the accessibility of gambling opportunities. Individually, problem gambling leads to financial struggles, debts, and, in extreme cases, to illegal ways of obtaining the financial wherewithal to fund a gambling addiction,

including crimes, mainly crimes against property such as theft, fraud, and embezzlement. Social and family ties become disrupted as gamblers' relationships with their relatives and other people who are close to them are negatively affected by their behaviour. Problems at work very often lead to unemployment. Employment opportunities created by the gambling industry and tax revenues feeding the public budgets are among the positive social impacts of gambling that are cited most frequently. **CONCLUSION:** Gambling involves a complex social and economic context and works as a regressive tax for low-income groups. Both quantitative and qualitative studies show that gambling is primarily associated with indebtedness, which is a serious consequence of pathological gambling and a cause for or correlate of the social and economic decline of gamblers, their social environment, and entire communities. The latent and stigmatising character of indebtedness and the related social impacts are barriers to treatment.

**KEY WORDS:** GAMBLING – SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS – UNEMPLOYMENT – INDEBTEDNESS

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