

COMORBIDITY AND GAMBLING DISORDERS

KEY FACTS

- Comorbidity is the term used to describe the existence of concurrent disorders in an individual. It also refers to the ways in which these disorders interact or interfere with each other.^{1,2}
- As with all addictive behaviors, people who struggle with gambling disorders tend to have other psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and substance-use disorders.
- According to the National Comorbidity Survey Replication, 96.3 percent of the lifetime pathological gamblers also met lifetime criteria for one or more of the other psychiatric disorders assessed in the survey.¹
- A 2008 study by Harvard Medical School's Department of Health Care Policy analyzed the gambling data in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R). They discovered that survey participants with any other psychiatric disorder are 17.4 times more likely to develop pathological gambling than those without such problems.¹
- The largest study that examined the comorbidity of pathological gambling surveyed more than 43,000 representative Americans and concluded that almost 75 percent of those diagnosed with a gambling disorder also had a co-occurring alcohol use disorder, while almost 40 percent had a co-occurring drug use disorder.²
- Studies have also found that people with gambling disorders had very high rates of personality disorders (more than 60 percent), mood disorders (almost 50 percent) and anxiety disorders (more than 40 percent).²
- Researchers have attempted to determine whether or not a gambling disorder precedes a co-occurring disorder, or vice versa. In 2008, researchers found that among those who were diagnosed with pathological gambling, 23.5 percent developed the gambling disorder before any other psychiatric problem. In contrast, 74.3 percent developed the gambling disorder after experiencing co-occurring disorders.¹

REFERENCES

1. Kessler RC, Hwang I, LaBrie R, et al. DSM-IV pathological gambling in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. *Psychol Med.* 2008;38(9):1351–60.
2. Petry NM, Stinson FS, Grant BF. Comorbidity of DSM-IV pathological gambling and other psychiatric disorders: results from the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions. *J Clin Psychiatry.* 2005;66(5):564–74.