

Problem gambling in Chile: a comparison between pre and post pandemic behavior 2018-2022

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Abstract

The COVID 19 Pandemic involved several behavioral changes in the world's population. Extended periods of isolation were one of the most defining features of it. These changes affected people relationship with gambling, both in terms of access and socialization processes associated to it. Asocial gambling is one of the most direct features of problematic gambling, and it was particularly fit to grow in the framework of long periods of isolation.

The incidence and effects of these changes have not been widely reported, although their importance for the control of problematic gambling, and particularly for the control of the escalation from at risk to problematic gamblers is crucial.

The article reports the differences in prevalence of problematic gambling in Chilean general population as well as the changes in the characteristics of gamblers between 2018 and 2022. The study uses a household-based representative sample of people living in the metropolitan city of Santiago de Chile. The main comparison tool is the validated version of NODS.

The results show an increase in at risk gamblers during the last year, passing from 9.6% to 13.1%, and a large increase in problematic and pathological gamblers, passing from 2.2% to 8.3%. These results show a particular increase in problematic gambling young males and particularly in gamblers involved in online gambling.