

A large-scale prospective study of big wins and their relationship with future involvement and risk among actual online sports bettors

Many people experiencing problem gambling report that big wins – especially those early on in their gambling experience – increase their desire to continue gambling, even after losing a lot.

Online sports betting is becoming an increasingly popular form of gambling worldwide. It is important to understand the effects of big wins, including early big wins, in this form of gambling.

Q Analyzed the big win effect using betting records from 36,328 sports gamblers who subscribed to a large European online sports gambling website, using two definitions of “big win”:

Absolute Dollar Definition

Any single prize greater than or equal to €1,000

Prize Ratio Definition

Size of a prize divided by the largest wager on a single bet the bettor had ever made up to, and including, that bet

Investigated how several gambling-related measures changed after experiencing a big win:

Betting Engagement (i.e., total stake and number of bets)

Losses (i.e., net loss)

Risk (i.e., median stake size and betting odds)

Examined whether the effects of big wins that occurred earlier differed from those that occurred later.

Absolute Dollar big winners



Placed more bets
Staked more money



Experienced greater net loss

The effect of big wins on:

1. total stake
2. net loss
3. stake size

weakened over time.

Early big winners (those whose big win occurred closer to their registration date) had slightly greater persistence (more months gambling consecutively) than later big winners, but the effect was very small.

Prize Ratio big winners



Had a higher median stake size
Did NOT wager at longer betting odds

Compared to bettors who did not experience a big win.

The effect of big wins on:

1. number of bets
2. total stake
3. net loss
4. stake size

weakened over time.

Both definitions of big wins are associated with increased future engagement, losses, and risk in online sports betting, although the impact of this effect decreases over time.

The timing of big wins (early versus later) does not appear to meaningfully affect engagement within the confines of a single product and operator.

Gambling operators should encourage big winners to withdraw and re-allocate some of their winnings to their savings or other leisure activities. They should also educate players of the actual odds of winning and explain that big wins in sports betting are largely related to luck.