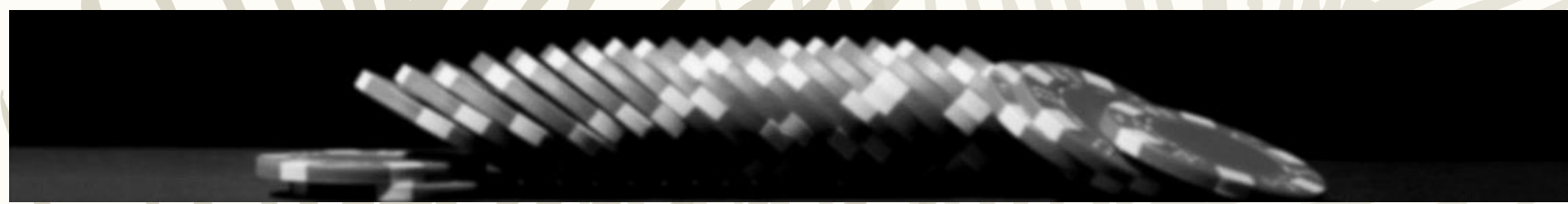


## Introduction

Individuals with gambling disorder (GDs) have been found to differ from low-risk or recreational gamblers with regard to a number of cognitive and dispositional variables, including motives for gambling. For instance, GDs are more likely to report that they gamble to regulate their emotions<sup>1,2</sup>.

Recently, research aimed at identifying protective factors against GD has begun to focus on non-gamblers (NGs) and motivations for not gambling. Though similar motives have been reported by NGs who have previously gambled and lifetime NGs, lifetime NGs placed greater emphasis on financial reasons for not gambling and less emphasis on disinterest or social influences<sup>3</sup>.

A unique group of NGs that has not yet been included in this new area of research is former GDs – that is, individuals who have previously experienced gambling problems and who do not gamble anymore. Former GDs may be more strongly influenced by the harms and consequences they have experienced as a result of gambling, as well as the threat of negative consequences if they were to gamble again. The alcohol literature indicates the importance of social influences in achieving and maintaining abstinence<sup>4,5</sup>, which may be similarly found with regard to gambling. Thus, the aim of the present study was to address this gap in the gambling literature by examining self-generated motives for not gambling among former GDs.



## Method

### Participants

Current non-gamblers (i.e., no gambling over the last 12 months) who have experienced gambling problems in the past ( $N = 78$ ) were recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk)

$M_{age} = 32.09$  years ( $SD = 9.78$ ), range: 21-64 years

69.2% male, 30.8% female

62.8% Caucasian, 21.8% Asian, 9.0% Black, 7.7% Latin American, 1.3% Aboriginal

52.6% single, 38.5% married or common-law

84.6% employed full-time, 83.3% post-secondary educational attainment

### Materials & Procedure

Participants completed a survey assessing demographic characteristics, personality, substance use, personal & family gambling history, and motives for not gambling.

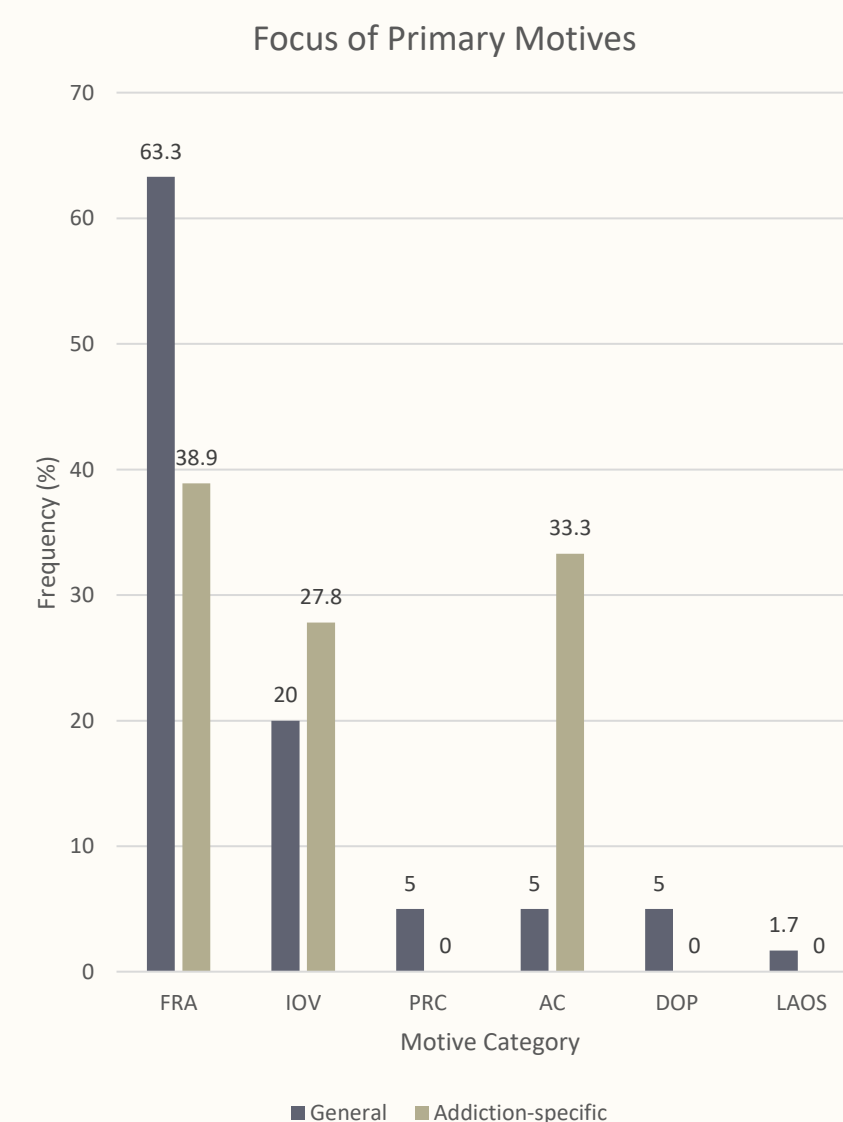
### Analysis

Motives were coded and categorized based on past research and conceptual similarity

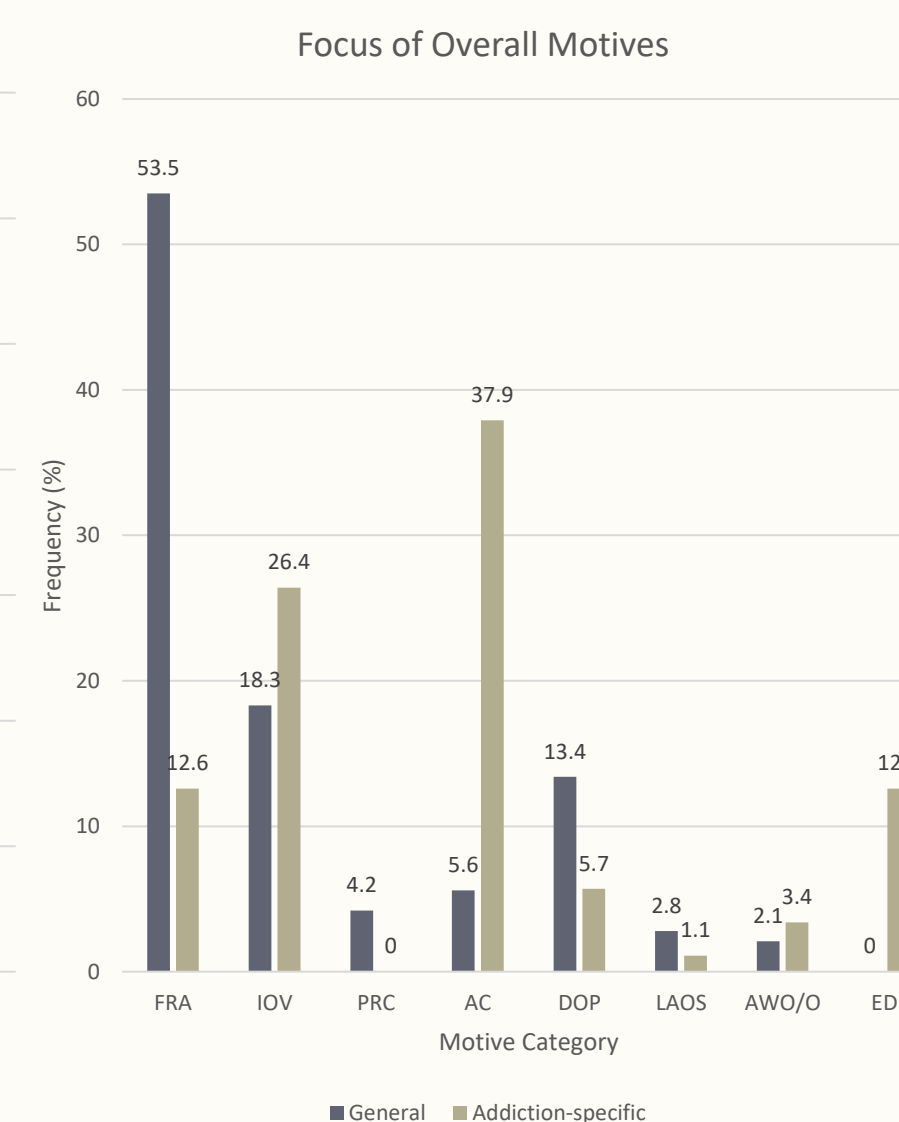
Motives categories were compared in relation to demographic variables, personal and family gambling/problem gambling history, and treatment-related variables using a series of ANOVAs (continuous variables) and chi-square analyses (categorical variables).

**Table 1.** Categorization of primary ( $N = 78$ ) and overall ( $N = 229$ ) motives for not gambling.

Category	Primary $n$ (%)	Overall $n$ (%)	Examples
Financial reasons and risk aversion (FRA)	45 (57.7)	87 (38.0)	"I am trying to rebuild my credit" "Waste of money"
Influence of others' values (IOV)	17 (21.8)	49 (21.4)	"Not damaging my reputation" "My family will leave me if I don't control myself"
Addiction concerns (AC)	9 (11.5)	41 (17.9)	"Not triggering my desires" "I don't want to end up like my dad"
Personal and religious convictions (PRC)	3 (3.8)	6 (2.6)	"My pastor" "Gambling is the cause of indolence"
Disinterest and other priorities (DOP)	3 (3.8)	24 (10.5)	"Waste of time" "Having safer hobbies"
Lack of access, opportunity, or skill (LAOS)	1 (1.3)	5 (2.2)	"Haven't traveled to gambling cities" "I felt unlucky"
Emotional distress (ED)	0 (0.0)	11 (4.8)	"Want to feel good about myself" "If I do it, I will feel like a failure"
Awareness of the odds (AWO)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.4)	"It's all set so you lose everything no matter what"
Other (O)	0 (0.0)	5 (2.2)	"Memories of previous mistakes and losses" "Don't like the environment where gambling takes place"



**Figure 1.** General and addiction-specific focus of primary motives for not gambling.



**Figure 2.** General and addiction-specific focus of overall motives for not gambling.

## Results

### Categorization

Consistent with past research, eight distinct motives categories were identified (Table 1). Unique to the present study, motives differed with regard to whether they were general reasons for not gambling, or reasons specifically related to participants' past gambling problems (Figures 1 and 2).

### Demographic Variables

Motives did not differ on the basis of participant age, gender, ethnic background, or marital status.

### Problem Gambling History

Motives did not differ on the basis of any family or personal gambling/problem gambling history variables.

Motives did not differ based on the length of time participants experienced problems with their gambling or whether or not participants sought treatment.

## Discussion

Similar to past findings<sup>3</sup>, FRA motives were the most frequently reported reasons for not gambling.

AWO motives were infrequently reported ( $n = 1$ ). This may be reflective of the small sample size; alternatively, the low odds of winning may not be a deterrent for former GDs or this group may continue to hold cognitive biases common in GDs<sup>6</sup> and be unaware of the low odds of winning.

The majority of motives categories included both general and addiction-specific motives for not gambling, supporting previous findings which indicate that GDs experience gambling-related harms in many life domains<sup>7</sup>.

As the sample consisted of NGs who had previously experienced gambling problems, it is not surprising that a higher proportion of the motives listed were addiction-related than other samples of NGs, suggesting that personal experience is a strong influence on the decision to refrain from gambling.

Additionally, IOV motives were more frequently mentioned than other samples, suggesting that relationships may aid not only in recovery, but continued abstinence from gambling.

### Limitations

In addition to being potentially underpowered, the present study did not include former GDs who currently gamble in moderation. This may provide an incomplete picture of motives for not gambling among former GDs, as complete abstinence is relatively rare<sup>8</sup> and former GDs who abstain differ from former GDs who gamble moderately with regard to a number of characteristics<sup>9,10</sup>

### Future Directions

Findings of the current study may provide a basis for longitudinal research aimed at identifying motives that are particularly influential to continued abstinence from gambling and those which are predictive of relapse.

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