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The relationship between problem gambling severity, military service, and gender

Mark van der Maas, Lia Nower

Center for Gambling Studies

School of Social Work

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Gambling and military service

- Rates of problem gambling among veterans and military personnel are generally found to be 2-10 times higher than the general population
- Higher risks of comorbidity among veterans in comparison to the general population
 - Alcohol Use Disorder, Opioid Use Disorder, Tobacco Use, Depression, unstable housing
- Substance Use Disorders and mental health conditions are disproportionately higher among women military service members.
- There is very little comparison between military service members and the general population using representative survey techniques in the literature
 - Doubly so for gambling research

Research questions

- Are there differences in gambling behaviors between military service members and the general population?
- Is military service associated greater gambling harm when controlling for potential confounders?
- Are there gender differences in the association between military service and gambling harm after controlling for important socio demographic features?
- Are there indications that legalization of online betting may have a greater negative effect on military service members when compared to the general population?

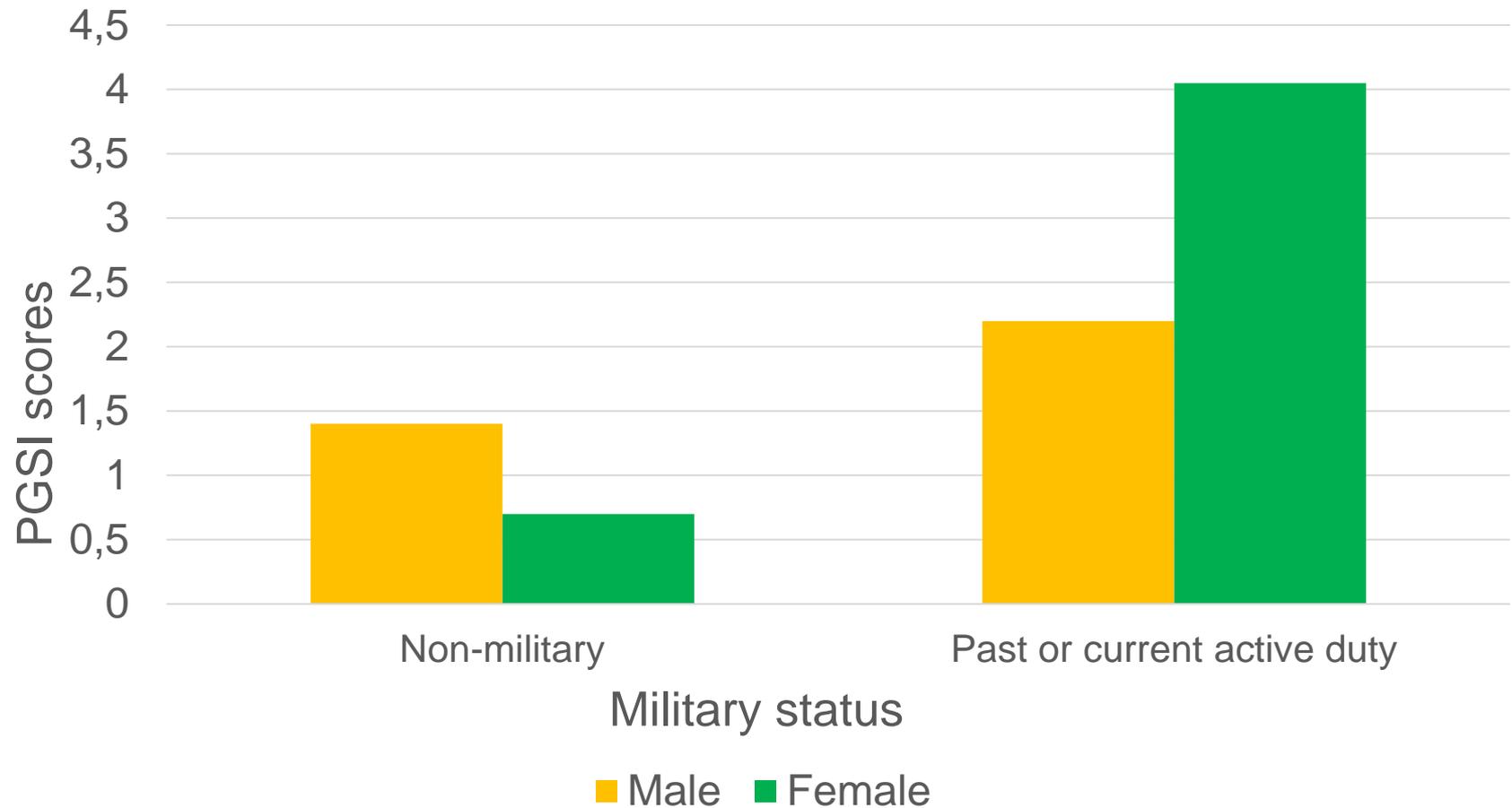
Methods

- New Jersey prevalence survey data (combination of phone and online panels)
- PGSI as dependent variable (measured continuously)
- Sample of 2422 including past year gamblers
- 191 military service members (veteran or active duty)
- 408 scoring 3 or higher on the PGSI
- Controls: Age, race, marital status, household income, education
- Generalized linear modelling predicting PGSI scores
 - Used to account for the non-normal distribution of errors
- Models accounted for complex survey design

Results

- Weekly participation was higher for military service members (59.3% vs. 38.4%)
- Help seeking was nearly ten times higher among service members compared with the rest of the population (11.06% vs. 1.27%)
- Service members reported a greater preference for online forms of gambling (19.82% vs. 8.81%)
- Service members were more likely to have a close relationship with someone they believed gambled too much (26.37% vs. 13.98%)
- GLMs: Service members had higher PGSI scores on average (2.3 vs. 1.1)
- GLMs: Women had much greater differences across military service in comparison to men
 - Men (1.4 vs. 2.3), Women (0.6 vs. 4.1)

PGSI scores: Gender*Military service



Began gambling online because it was made legal

| Online after legalization | Current service | | Veteran | | Current Reserves | | Never | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|---------|------------|------------------|------------|-------|------------|
| | Count | Percentage | Count | Percentage | Count | Percentage | Count | Percentage |
| No | 33 | 75.83% | 132 | 89.46% | 34 | 74.74% | 1790 | 89.43% |
| Yes | 11 | 24.17% | 15 | 10.54% | 11 | 25.26% | 212 | 10.57% |

Discussion

- Service members, past and present are at greater risk of gambling related harm and this risk is significantly increased for women
 - More needs to be explored as to whether this is a selection effect or due to military service being stressful and isolating
- Current member preference for online forms and their reported increase in response to legalization carries important implications
 - Does legalization expose them to a disproportionate amount of risk?
 - Should greater restrictions on availability be made?
 - Should PG be included in screening and standard mental health treatment programs for service members?
- Next steps: Multiple wave analysis and focus on comorbidities

Thanks!

- Contact: mark.vandermaas@rutgers.edu
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