

# Video game loot boxes are linked to problem gambling: Results of a large-scale survey

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Affiliations expand

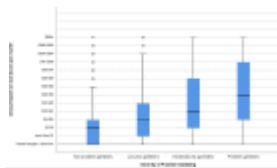
## Abstract

Loot boxes are items in video games that can be paid for with real-world money and contain randomised contents. In recent years, loot boxes have become increasingly common. There is concern in the research community that similarities between loot boxes and gambling may lead to increases in problem gambling amongst gamers. A large-scale survey of gamers ( $n = 7,422$ ) found evidence for a link ( $\eta^2 = 0.054$ ) between the amount that gamers spent on loot boxes and the severity of their problem gambling. This link was stronger than a link between problem gambling and buying other in-game items with real-world money ( $\eta^2 = 0.004$ ), suggesting that the gambling-like features of loot boxes are specifically responsible for the observed relationship between problem gambling and spending on loot boxes. It is unclear from this study whether buying loot boxes acts as a gateway to problem gambling, or whether spending large amounts of money on loot boxes appeals more to problem gamblers. However, in either case these results suggest that there may be good reason to regulate loot boxes in games.

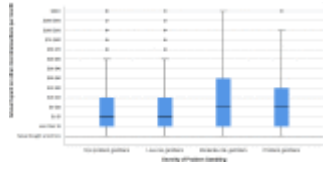
## Conflict of interest statement

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

## Figures



**Fig 1. Box-plot of spend on loot...**



**Fig 2. Box-plot of spend on other...**