

Gambling communication recall and betting behaviour among Flemish adults during EURO 2024

What this research is about

Gambling companies use major sports events like the UEFA European Football Championship (EURO) to boost brand awareness and normalize gambling as a mainstream leisure activity. As major sports events draw a large audience, gambling companies increase their communication efforts during such events. Gambling communication can occur through traditional media (e.g., TV and radio), digital platforms such as social media, sports sponsorship, and earned media coverage via news reporting of sports events.

Belgium has banned most forms of gambling communication since July 2023, including advertising on TV, radio, social media, and outdoor spaces. The purpose of this study was to explore the link between recall of gambling communication during EURO 2024 and betting behaviour, amidst stricter regulation. The study also examined perceived descriptive norms and illusion of control as possible mechanisms that might explain this relationship. Perceived descriptive norms refer to people's beliefs about how often others gamble. The illusion of control is another erroneous belief that one can influence the outcome of a chance event (e.g., a sports bet), leading to overconfidence about the chance of winning.

What the researchers did

The researchers launched a survey the day after the final match of the EURO 2024 tournament. The survey remained open for 2 weeks. The researchers recruited respondents through various media channels, including ads in a well-known newspaper, a radio station, and social media, and through an online panel. Respondents were Flemish (Belgian, Dutch-speaking) adults who had watched at least

What you need to know

The purpose of this study was to explore the link between recall of gambling communication and betting behaviour during EURO 2024. The study also examined perceived descriptive norms and illusion of control as possible mechanisms that might explain this relationship. The researchers launched a survey after the final match of the EURO 2024 tournament. Respondents were 1,611 Flemish adults who had watched at least one match of the EURO 2024 tournament.

The results showed that respondents' recall across all forms of gambling communication was generally low. Respondents were more likely to remember gambling communication while watching the matches (e.g., billboard and shirt sponsorship) than other forms of gambling communication (e.g., social media, direct messages, emails). Respondents who watched more matches were more likely to recall gambling communication and to bet during EURO 2024. Greater recall of gambling communication was linked to greater perceived descriptive norms and illusion of control. In turn, these erroneous gambling-related beliefs were linked to a greater likelihood of betting during EURO 2024.

one match of the EURO 2024 tournament. A total of 2,371 respondents were recruited. After excluding responses from those who completed less than half of the questions or did not meet the study requirements, the final sample consisted of 1,611 respondents.

Respondents completed the following measures:

- Recall of nine forms of gambling communication.
- Perceived descriptive norms and illusion of control.

- Recall of viewing behaviour of EURO 2024 matches (e.g., how many matches they had watched).
- Total amount of money bet on these matches.
- Whether they thought the tournament changed their regular betting behaviour.
- A 3-item version of the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to measure risk of problem gambling.
- Sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age).

What the researchers found

Most respondents were men (67%). On average, respondents were 42 years old. According to the PGSI, most participants experienced non-problem gambling (80.9%), while 7% experienced low risk, 5.7% experienced moderate risk, and 6.4% experienced problem gambling. On average, respondents recalled watching almost half of the matches during the EURO 2024 tournament, and almost a quarter bet on at least one match. Over half of the respondents (55.7%) reported that they gambled more than usual during EURO 2024.

Respondents' recall across all forms of gambling communication was generally low. But recall varied depending on the form of gambling communication. For example, more than half of the respondents remembered gambling communication while watching the EURO 2024 matches (e.g., billboard and shirt sponsorship) and sponsored posts of gambling brands on social media. Respondents had lower recall of gambling communication through social media influencers, direct messages, and emails.

Respondents who watched more matches were more likely to recall gambling communication and to bet during EURO 2024. The researchers found that gambling communication might contribute to erroneous gambling-related beliefs. Respondents who recalled higher levels of gambling communication reported greater perceived descriptive norms and illusion of control. In turn, these erroneous gambling-related beliefs were linked to a greater likelihood of betting during EURO 2024. The researchers also found that gambling communication influenced people's likelihood to bet

more strongly through perceived descriptive norms than through the illusion of control.

How you can use this research

The findings can inform health communication strategies and initiatives to prevent harmful gambling.

About the researchers

Katho Jacobs, Liselot Hudders, and Steffi De Jans are affiliated with the Department of Communication Sciences at Ghent University in Ghent, Belgium. Katho Jacobs is also affiliated with the Department of Movement and Sports Sciences at Ghent University. **Bram Hartmann and Bram Constandt** are affiliated with the Department of Movement and Sports Sciences at Ghent University in Ghent, Belgium. For more information about this study, please contact Katho Jacobs at katho.jacobs@ugent.be.

Citation

Jacobs, K., Hartmann, B., Constandt, B., Hudders, L., & De Jans, S. (2025). Shaping the odds: Gambling communication normalized betting and fostered illusions of control during EURO 2024. *Health Promotion International*, 40(3), daaf054. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daaf054>

Study Funding

This study was supported by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and the Belgian Federal Sciences Policy Office.

About Greo Evidence Insights

Greo Evidence Insights is an independent, non-profit organization specializing in research, knowledge mobilization, and evaluation in the health and well-being sectors. Greo transforms research and insights into actionable strategies to prevent and reduce harm related to gambling, gaming, technology use, and substance use. To learn more about funding for Research Snapshots visit [our website](#).

