

## Media guidelines for responsible reporting on gambling and other stigmatized conditions

### What this research is about

News media plays an important role in shaping public opinions on sensitive subjects. Guidelines that support responsible reporting can help to reduce stigma. They can do this by providing advice on how to share information on sensitive subjects.

Gambling can result in harm to health and wellbeing. In Great Britain, the charity GambleAware has developed media guidelines around how gambling harm should be portrayed in the news. Other guidelines have been introduced by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the University of Glasgow.

Because there is not much research on media guidelines around the reporting of gambling harm, the researchers of this scoping review examined a range of stigmatized conditions, including suicide, mental health, poverty, and substance use. The review aimed to identify shared ideas and strategies around how to reduce stigma through media guidelines. The researchers identified how the guidelines were developed and their key components. They explored common approaches and strategies related to implementing, sharing, and evaluating the guidelines.

### What the researchers did

The researchers followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Statement Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) and the JBI Manual for Evidence Synthesis: Updated Methodological Guidance. They searched PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science databases for peer-reviewed academic articles in March 2024. No limit was placed on publication date or study location. The researchers also carried out a Google Advanced Search and reviewed organizational

### What you need to know

This article addresses concerns around how gambling and other stigmatized conditions are portrayed in the media. Stigma in news reporting can negatively impact people experiencing harm and discourage them from seeking help, while reinforcing harmful stereotypes. Guidelines that support responsible reporting can help reduce stigma and provide advice for sharing information on sensitive subjects. Because there is not much research on media guidelines around the reporting of gambling, the researchers examined a range of stigmatized conditions (suicide, mental ill health, poverty, alcohol and other drug use) to identify common approaches in how media guidelines are developed, shared, and evaluated.

websites (e.g., Samaritans, Mindframe) for relevant documents.

Eligible articles had to address gambling, substance use, suicidal behaviour, mental health, or poverty. They also had to focus on news media guidelines that were meant to shift reporting styles on these conditions or experiences. Sources had to consult media professionals about how to increase reporting according to guidelines. Standalone guidelines were included if there was research that addressed their development, dissemination, implementation, or evaluation. Articles had to be written in English.

The initial search identified 2553 records. After screening, a total of 57 articles were included in the final review. These articles were published between 1998 and 2024. The majority addressed suicide.

### What the researchers found

**Development of media guidelines:** The media guidelines shared similar development processes. All involved collaboration with stakeholders, including journalists, mental health professionals, and people with lived experience. Existing literature, guidelines, and expert knowledge were integrated to inform the content of the guidelines. Media content was also analyzed in the development of some guidelines. Others conducted workshops with people in recovery, engaged family members, and used online surveys.

Journalists are more likely to use guidelines when they are involved in their development. It is important to tailor guidelines to the work culture of journalists, newsrooms, communities, and different media types. Guidelines should also account for the cultural and contextual nuances of the country that they serve.

**Key components of guidelines:** Guidelines around the reporting of suicide, mental health, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) use emphasize avoiding explicit details, using appropriate terminology, and avoiding sensationalism and glamourization. Guidelines around poverty reporting emphasize avoiding outdated stereotypes and including statistics and personal experiences.

**Implementation of guidelines:** Journalists sometimes are not aware that their reporting is sensationalistic or stigmatizing. It is important to tailor journalism education opportunities (e.g., training, workshops) to provide practical guidance on ethical reporting. Implementing and disseminating guidelines can be supported through contact with leaders such as editors and larger media organizations.

**Dissemination:** It is important to actively share guidelines with journalists, policy makers, and the public. This can be done through face-to-face briefings, presentations, events, follow-ups, and providing the guidelines online. The use of guidelines should be monitored over time, and feedback should continually be incorporated into guidelines.

**Evaluation:** More research is needed to assess the effectiveness of guidelines. The implementation of guidelines can be challenging because of a lack of

awareness or resistance from journalists, who may see the guidelines as hindering journalistic freedom. Other challenges include fast-paced reporting and deadlines, competition among media outlets, and different viewpoints on media reporting.

## How you can use this research

This review is intended for public health professionals and policy makers involved in developing media-related interventions.

## About the researchers

**Elizabeth Alice Killick, Michelle Potiaumpai, and Clare Wyllie** are affiliated with Tackling Gambling Stigma, UK. For more information about this study, please contact Elizabeth Alice Killick at [Elizabeth@tacklinggamblingstigma.com](mailto:Elizabeth@tacklinggamblingstigma.com).

## Citation

Killick, E. A., Potiaumpai, M., & Wyllie, C. (2025). Media guidelines for the reporting of gambling and other stigmatised experiences: A scoping review with narrative summary. *Journalism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849251339138>

## Study Funding

Tackling Stigma is a not-for-profit organization supported by grant funding from Derek Webb, who founded and funded the Campaign for Fairer Gambling and who funds Clean Up Gambling and other initiatives to address gambling harm.

---

## 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](#).

