



Report Summary

An examination of Positive Play and responsible gambling across four types of gambling

What this report is about

Positive Play refers to gambling in non-problematic ways. People who engage in Positive Play gamble as a recreational activity. These people are also aware of and able to regulate their emotions; this helps them remain in control of their gambling.

A “Positive Play Scale” has been used to measure four subscales of Positive Play. These subscales measure two behavioural and two belief factors. The behavioural factors include (1) honesty and control and (2) pre-commitment (i.e., setting limits on amount of money and time spent gambling). The belief factors include (1) personal responsibility and (2) gambling literacy (e.g., knowing gambling is not a good way to make money).

Previous research that examined the relationship between the Positive Play Scale and problem gambling found that people who engage in Positive Play are less likely to experience harm. However, past research has also found conflicting results between personal responsibility and problem gambling. These mixed results suggest that the relationship between responsibility and harm is complex.

This report describes the demographic and gambling profiles of people who engage in Positive Play. It also examines the relationship between Positive Play and responsible gambling. Finally, it describes the risk and protective factors of Positive Play.

What was done?

The researchers analyzed data that were collected between August 2019 and May 2020. The data were collected in four waves by “Asking Canadians” on behalf of Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG) as part of

Why is this report important?

This report discusses findings from an analysis of survey data from 3,820 Canadians who engaged in casino gaming, charitable bingo, online gaming, or lottery through OLG. The researchers examined the reliability of the Positive Play Scale. They provided the profiles of people who scored high or low on the Positive Play Scale (e.g., age, gender, and education level). They also examined the relationships between Positive Play and responsible gambling behaviours across the four types of gambling. Finally, they provided recommendations to improve Positive Play.

an ongoing survey. In order to participate in the study, participants had to be at least 18 years old.

The survey began with general questions about demographics (e.g., age, gender, and marital status). Participants were then asked about their gambling behaviours (e.g., how often they gambled in the last 12 months, what games they preferred to play, and amount spent). They were also asked to complete the Positive Play Scale and questions about their perceptions of OLG’s PlaySmart programs.

The participants were grouped into one of four “channels” based on the type of games they played. The four channels were casino gaming, charitable bingo gaming, lottery, and online gaming. Of the 6,000 participants who completed the survey, 3,820 engaged in one of these four gambling activities.

Participants in each channel were asked overlapping but different questions tailored to the type of games they played. These questions can be grouped into:

- (1) Responsible gambling behaviours and beliefs (e.g., problem gambling, cutting back, setting limits, responsible attitudes, knowledge of the games, and erroneous beliefs)
- (2) Information resources
- (3) Awareness of OLG resources
- (4) Use of resources
- (5) Satisfaction with gambling site experiences

The researchers noted that they had some challenges comparing the results of the different groups (channels) because some questions were tailored to each participant group. The researchers looked at the profiles of each participant group (channel) separately. They also combined the groups and analyzed the aggregate data.

What you need to know

Characteristics of the participants

About half (49%) of the 3,820 participants included in this study played the lottery. About 34% gambled at the casino, while 8% gambled online and another 8% engaged in charity gaming. Just over half of the participants were women (52%). There were more participants in the older age groups (ages 45–54, 55–64, and 65+). Most of the participants (80%) were born in Canada. About two thirds of the participants lived in cities with more than 100,000 people.

Positive Play Scale

The researchers examined the Positive Play Scale to check for reliability and fit. They found that two of the subscales—honesty and control, and pre-commitment—could be combined into one scale. Thus, three factors would fit the data better than four original factors. Nonetheless, the researchers used the original scale scoring for the rest of the analyses.

Profiles of participants who engaged in Positive Play

The researchers defined a high score on the Positive Play Scale as scoring 6.5 or higher on all the Positive Play subscales. Overall, about 38% of the participants scored high on all the Positive Play subscales. People who played the lottery were most likely to have high scores (45%), followed by people who engaged in casino gaming (34%), charitable gaming (31%), and

online gaming (20%). Participants who scored high were more likely to be women (40%) than men (36%). They were also more likely to be older (45% of those aged 55–64 and those over 65 scored high, compared to 24% of people aged 18–24). Participants who scored high were also more likely to be from a smaller community than from a larger city. Participants born in Canada and those who had been in Canada for more than 10 years were also more likely to score high on Positive Play. Participants who were married (40%), widowed (38%), divorced (44%), or separated (40%) were more likely to score high than people who were single (30%). High scores were not related to education. In terms of income, people in the highest income bracket (\$150,000 or more) were the most likely to have a high score.

The researchers defined a low score as scoring less than 6 out of 7 on all four of the Positive Play subscales. About 10% of participants scored low. People who gambled online were most likely to have low scores (20%), followed by people who engaged in charitable gaming (18%), casino gaming (13%), and lottery (4%). Men were more likely to score low than women. Participants who were in the youngest age group (18–24 years) were most likely to score low. People who lived in cities with over 100,000 people were more likely to score low than people living in smaller cities. People who were not born in Canada or who lived in Canada for less than 10 years were more likely to score low. Those who were single were most likely to score low (12%), followed by those who were married (9%). People with at least some university education were more likely to have low scores than those who had lower education. People who had income in the low or middle range were also more likely to score low on the Positive Play Scale.

Gambling factors associated with Positive Play

Most of the participants across all channels set limits on their gambling. Most also engaged in Positive Play. The researchers found that people who reported engaging in more responsible gambling behaviours were more likely to score high on Positive Play. As the questions around responsible gambling were different for each channel, it was hard to directly compare



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across the different groups. But overall, setting limits, responsible attitudes, and knowledge of the games were all linked to high Positive Play. Of note, participants across all the channels scored higher on Positive Play if they gambled for entertainment only. Gambling problems and erroneous gambling beliefs were linked to low Positive Play.

People who engaged in casino and online gaming and who were aware of responsible gambling resources scored slightly higher on Positive Play. But people who engaged in lottery and charitable gaming and who were more aware of responsible gambling resources were more likely to score low on Positive Play.

Most participants who engaged in Positive Play had positive attitudes toward OLG's PlaySmart program. These participants were more likely to agree with the program's aims.

Risk and protective factors of Positive Play

For all four types of gambling, responsible gambling behaviour most strongly predicted Positive Play. Gender (female) and age (older) helped to explain higher scores on Positive Play for people who engaged in casino gaming, charitable bingo, and lottery. Positive perceptions of OLG's PlaySmart program helped to explain higher scores on Positive Play among participants who engaged in lottery, charitable bingo, and casino gaming.

Among participants who engaged in charity bingo, casino gaming, and lottery, awareness of responsible gambling resources predicted lower levels of Positive Play.

Who is it intended for?

This report is intended for organizations working to encourage or enhance Positive Play. It is also intended for researchers who study Positive Play.

What does the report recommend?

This report recommends some additional work to improve the Positive Play Scale by fine-tuning the Gambling Literacy subscale. This report also recommends several areas in which the OLG could improve Positive Play, particularly among people who

may be at risk of harm (e.g., younger men who are single and with lower income, and recent immigrants). In particular, the authors discussed the importance of improving awareness of OLG resources and encouraging people to use these resources.

About the researchers

Nigel E. Turner is affiliated with the Institute for Mental Health Research at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the University of Toronto in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. **Darren Christensen** is affiliated with the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Lethbridge in Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. **Amanda Roberts** is affiliated with the School of Psychology in the College of Social Science at the University of Lincoln in Lincoln, United Kingdom. For more information about this study, please contact Nigel E. Turner at nigel.turner@camh.ca.

Citation

Turner, N.E., Christensen, D.R., & Roberts, A. (2023). *Investigating Positive Play using OLG player survey data: A secondary analysis*.

Study disclosures

Funds for this project were provided by the Social and Community Responsibility arm of the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) a crown corporation owned by the Government of Ontario, Canada, and were administered through Greo Evidence Insights.

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