

# research snapshot

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## Gambling advertising may negatively affect problem gamblers

### What this research is about

Gambling advertising is intended to encourage people to gamble. It portrays gambling as a fun activity where people can win a lot of money. For many individuals, gambling is an enjoyable social activity that does not lead to problems. However, other people may become addicted to gambling and develop a gambling disorder as a result. Some studies show that gambling advertising affects players with gambling problems more than players without gambling problems. However, it is challenging to assess the impact of advertising on gambling behaviour.

There are many factors that make it difficult to measure how gambling advertising affects gambling behaviour as many studies use self-report questionnaires and surveys to gather data. Participants may have biases or errors when recalling to what extent they have been exposed to advertising or how they have been influenced by it. Data from self-reporting are more valuable if responses are collected from various types of gamblers and regarding various forms of advertising.

This study investigated whether gambling advertising negatively affects Swedish players' gambling behaviour by causing them to gamble longer and bet more money than they initially wanted to. It also explored whether there are certain types of advertising that influence players' gambling behaviour more than others.

### What the researchers did

The researchers used data collected for the fourth wave of the Swedish Longitudinal Gambling Study (Swelogs) in 2014. Swelogs surveyed the Swedish population to investigate factors related to problem

### What you need to know

The aim of this study was to investigate if gambling advertising could negatively affect Swedish players to gamble more often and bet more money than they would otherwise. The researchers analyzed data that were collected in 2014 for the Swedish Longitudinal Gambling Study (Swelogs). Participants were 2163 gamblers aged 22 and older. They found that most participants believed advertising had no effect on their gambling behaviour. Those who reported that they were negatively affected by advertising were more likely to have gambling problems. In addition, those who gambled online, gambled monthly or more often, and were in the age group of 30-49 years were more likely to report negative influence from gambling advertising. The results of this study show that few gamblers are negatively affected by gambling advertising. But its effect on some gamblers, especially problem gamblers, should not be neglected.

gambling in Sweden. It was done over five years starting in 2008. Every year, people who agreed to participate were interviewed and asked a series of questions. All participants were aged 22 and older by the year 2014.

For this study, the researchers analyzed data from 2163 participants who said they had gambled at least once in the past year. They looked at participants' responses to three questions about the negative effect of advertising on their gambling behaviour (gambling more often or for more money than intended). The three questions concerned advertising

for big jackpots, advertising for bonuses for online gambling, and gambling advertising in general. Participants also completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), a questionnaire that assessed how serious their gambling problems were.

### What the researchers found

Few gamblers (2%) believed that gambling advertising encouraged them to gamble more than they intended to. About 12% of participants reported that advertising had a negative effect sometimes. The majority reported that advertising had no effect on how much they gambled. Advertising for jackpots affected gamblers' behaviour the most. Negative effect from advertising for bonuses was mentioned less often. In 2014, bonuses were offered only by online gambling companies without a license in Sweden. Only a few gamblers (6%) had gambled with companies without a license. Among them, quite a number of gamblers (17%) reported a negative influence from advertising for online bonuses.

Participants who reported being negatively affected by gambling advertising were more likely to have gambling problems. Additionally, players who were between 30 and 49 years old, gambled online, and gambled monthly or more often were more likely to be negatively affected by gambling advertising.

Those who reported being negatively affected by advertising were more likely to have set limits on how long they gambled and how much money they bet. This finding suggests that gambling may make it hard for gamblers to resist the urge to gamble and negatively affect their ability to keep their gambling within a reasonable limit. Overall, the results of this study show that few gamblers are negatively affected by gambling advertising. But advertising's effect on some gamblers should not be neglected, especially among problem gamblers.

### How you can use this research

Policy makers can use this research to have policies in place that prevent gambling companies from advertising to players with gambling problems. Policies could focus on limiting advertising for jackpots and bonuses specifically. More research is

needed to understand the extent that gambling advertising affects players with gambling problems. Studies could also investigate how social media marketing may influence gambling behaviour.

### About the researchers

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Gambling, problem gambling, marketing, promotion, advertising

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### Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)

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