

# research snapshot

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## What influences people to believe in a shared responsibility of minimizing gambling harm?

### What this research is about

The public health model emphasizes a shared responsibility of minimizing gambling harm. It holds that people who gamble and external stakeholders (e.g., casinos, regulators) are jointly responsible. The researchers did a series of studies to explore beliefs about shared responsibility. Participants were loyalty card holders with MGM Resorts International, a large international gambling operator.

The Year 1 study occurred when GameSense was being established as an onsite responsible gambling educational centre in MGM casinos in North America. The researchers found that most participants held only people who gamble as being responsible for helping to minimize gambling harm. Those who screened positive on the Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen (BBGS) were more likely to also hold other stakeholders responsible. The BBGS is a brief screening tool for gambling problems. Year 2 study's findings replicated those of Year 1 study. It also found that people who believed in a shared responsibility did not report heavier gambling involvement. This study is an extension of the previous studies; it explored if being aware of GameSense would be associated with beliefs about responsibility.

### What the researchers did

The researchers recruited participants from MGM's loyalty program in early 2020, one year after Year 2 study. A total of 4,336 participants responded. The survey included the BBGS and two additional questions about gambling harm. The BBGS has three items assessing withdrawal (emotional harm), lying about one's gambling (family/relationship harm), and needing help with living expenses (financial harm).

### What you need to know

This study is the third in a series of studies exploring beliefs about the responsibility of minimizing gambling harm. The researchers surveyed 4,336 people who were enrolled in MGM's loyalty card program. Six in 10 participants (58.1%) held only people who gamble as being responsible. Participants who endorsed at least one gambling harm were more likely to hold external stakeholders, such as casino employees, as being responsible. They were less likely to hold people who gamble responsible. Participants who were aware of GameSense, MGM's onsite responsible gambling educational centre, were more likely to hold external stakeholders responsible.

People who endorse at least one item are considered BBGS-positive. The researchers added two questions about physical health harm (e.g., stress, loss of sleep) and occupational harm (lost time from work or school). They named the BBGS with the two additional questions the "Expanded Problem Gambling Screen (EPGS)". Participants who endorsed at least one item were considered EPGS-positive.

Similar to Year 1 and Year 2 studies, participants selected stakeholder groups responsible for helping to minimize gambling harm. The options included: (1) people who gamble; (2) scientists; (3) clinicians; (4) MGM Resorts employees; (5) government regulators; (6) public health officials; (7) casino industry lobbyists; and (8) public safety officials.

Participants completed the Positive Play Scale (PPS). The PPS assesses responsible gambling behaviour and

the belief that casinos have a responsibility to help customers be aware of how much money they spend. Participants were also asked about their understanding of how gambling works. They reported their gambling involvement including depth (based on how often they gambled in the past 12 months) and breadth (based on number of games played). Finally, they were asked if they had heard about GameSense.

### What the researchers found

About 15.9% of participants screened positive on the BBGS, and 17.3% screened positive on the EPGS. Thus, people who endorsed a health or occupational harm tended to also endorse at least one item on the BBGS. Six in 10 participants (58.1%) held only people who gamble as being responsible for minimizing harm. Similar to Year 1 and Year 2 studies, participants who screened positive on the BBGS were more likely to hold external stakeholders responsible. Unlike the previous studies, BBGS-positive participants were less likely to hold people who gamble responsible.

According to the PPS, BBGS-positive participants were more likely to hold casinos responsible and scored lower on responsible gambling behaviour. They also had lower understanding of how gambling works. The same results emerged when using the EPGS.

Believing in a shared responsibility was weakly associated with gambling depth only. In Years 2 and 3, participants who were aware of GameSense were more likely to hold external stakeholders responsible but equally likely to hold individual gamblers responsible. In Year 1, participants who were aware of GameSense did not hold more stakeholders responsible. These results suggested that awareness of GameSense might have an impact on beliefs about responsibility only after the program had been fully implemented. Compared to being aware of GameSense, screening positive on the BBGS/EGPS was more strongly associated with believing in a shared responsibility.

### How you can use this research

This study can inform health promotion efforts. For example, public health can use the study findings to design messages targeted to people who gamble.

### About the researchers

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