

# research snapshot

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## Telephone interventions are most effective for people with a high level of gambling spending

### What this research is about

Gambling providers have a duty of care to prevent excessive gambling. Most providers have introduced responsible gambling (RG) programmes to prevent gambling harm. One RG approach is contacting people who may be at risk of experiencing harm.

In a previous study, the researchers examined the impact of a telephone intervention and a letter intervention introduced by the Norwegian state-owned gambling company, Norsk Tipping (NT). These were motivational interventions that targeted NT customers who had lost the most money in the past year. The interventions encouraged people to think about their gambling habits. They also told them about possible RG strategies to make changes.

The primary outcome measured was theoretical loss (TL). TL is the amount of money that someone is expected to lose over the long term due to the gambling provider's profit. TL accounts for the payback percentage and omits occasional winnings. The results showed that both interventions led to a larger decrease in TL than the control condition (i.e., no intervention). But the telephone intervention was more effective.

In this study, the researchers examined the effects of the telephone intervention on individual trajectories over one year. The aim was to determine individual patterns of change and explore how subgroups of people might respond to the intervention.

### What the researchers did

The researchers analyzed data that were collected for a randomized controlled trial conducted by NT. This trial targeted 10,000 customers of NT who had lost

### What you need to know

The current study analyzed the impact of a telephone intervention introduced by the Norwegian state-owned gambling company, Norsk Tipping. The researchers wanted to know whether the telephone intervention influenced a person's theoretical loss over the next year. Theoretical loss is the amount of money someone is expected to lose over the long time due to the gambling provider's profit. Participants were people who lost the most money (top 0.5%) at Norsk Tipping in the past year. A total of 596 pairs of people were matched based on sex, age, and net losses. One person received the telephone intervention and the other received no intervention (i.e., control condition). The researchers identified three subgroups of participants based on their TL. One subgroup had a relatively high TL, while one subgroup had medium TL, and the last subgroup had a relatively low TL. Over time, all subgroups decreased in TL. But the telephone intervention was more effective than the control condition. The telephone intervention was most effective for those who had a high level of spending prior to the intervention. It was also most effective for people who gambled on sports and in casinos, and those who were male and young or middle-aged.

the most money over the past year (top 0.5%). Participants were matched into groups of three (i.e., triplets) based on sex, age, and net losses. Each participant in each triplet was assigned to one of three contact type conditions. One person within each triplet was contacted by telephone. Another person

was mailed a physical feedback letter, and the third member received no intervention.

The current study only examined the pair of people who received the telephone intervention or no intervention (i.e., control). A total of 596 statistical pairs (i.e., 1,192 people) were included in this study. Most participants were men (84%). On average, people were 54 years old. Most people were between 35 and 54 (41%) or older than 55 years (48%). About 10% were between 18 and 34 years.

The researchers received information about participants' gambling behaviour in the 12 weeks before the intervention and one year following the intervention. TL was measured in Norwegian krone (NOK).

### What the researchers found

The researchers identified three subgroups of people based on their TL. One subgroup had a relatively high TL, while one subgroup had a medium TL, and the last subgroup had a relatively low TL. The high-level group had slightly more men (87%) than the medium-level group (81%). The high-level group also had more younger participants (average age of 49 years) than the medium-level (average age of 54 years) and lower-level groups (average age of 60 years).

Over time, all groups decreased in TL. But the telephone intervention was more effective than the control condition. People in the telephone intervention group showed a sharp initial decline over 12 weeks after the intervention. This sharp decline was then followed by sustained lower gambling. In comparison, people in the control condition decreased in TL steadily over time.

The telephone intervention was most effective for those who had high level of spending. Over the one year, the telephone intervention reduced TL by about 900 NOK for those in the low-level group. It reduced TL by about 1,700 NOK for those in the medium-level group, and by about 1,800 NOK for the high-level group. The telephone intervention was most effective for people who gambled on sports and in casinos. It was also most effective for participants who were men and young or middle-aged.

### How you can use this research

Gambling providers can use this research to inform harm prevention strategies as part of their duty of care.

### About the researchers

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