

# research snapshot

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## Gambling with others may increase risky gambling behaviour among people with high-risk gambling

### What this research is about

Problem gambling can cause harm to people and their families. Examples of gambling-related harms include financial, interpersonal, emotional, and psychological harms. Harm-reduction approaches can help decrease gambling behaviour and its negative effects. The purpose of this study was to see if gambling in the presence of others helps to reduce risky gambling behaviour. Specifically, the researchers of this study examined whether parallel and cooperative gambling could reduce risky gambling behaviour. They did this using a laboratory-based gambling task. Parallel gambling refers to gambling while sitting next to another person who is also gambling. Cooperative gambling refers to two people gambling while talking (consulting) with each other.

### What the researchers did

Participants were recruited from online survey panels operated by a survey company in Japan. Participants had to be between 20 and 69 years old. They had to have a history of gambling for at least one year. They also had to score as moderate-risk to problem gambling based on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (scores of at least 3). A total of 40 participants agreed to participate in the study.

Upon providing consent to participate in the study, participants completed a baseline assessment. Then, they were divided into pairs. Each pair included people who did not know each other. These people were matched based on gender and generation. On average, people in each pair were about four years apart in age.

Each pair was assigned to one of six groups. The possible groups included (1) solo–parallel–

### What you need to know

This study examined whether gambling in the presence of others could help reduce risky gambling behaviour. The researchers recruited 40 participants from online survey panels in Japan. Participants had to score as moderate-risk to problem gambling based on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (scores of at least 3). Participants were matched into pairs based on gender and generation.

In the experiment, participants played the Game of Dice Task (GDT) across three conditions. They completed it on their own (solo condition), at the same time as another participant (parallel condition), and working together with another participant (cooperation condition). The researchers found that compared to the solo condition, risky betting behaviour was not decreased by the presence of others (parallel condition) or by cooperating with others (cooperation condition). Instead, participants made more risky betting choices in the cooperation condition than in the solo condition.

cooperation; (2) solo–cooperation–parallel; (3) parallel–solo–cooperation; (4) parallel–cooperation–solo; (5) cooperation–solo–parallel; and (6) cooperation–parallel–solo.

In the solo condition, participants completed the Game of Dice task (GDT) on their own. In the parallel condition, both participants completed the task at the same time. They were not allowed to talk or discuss with each other during the task. In the cooperative condition, the participants completed the task at the

same time and were told to consult with each other so that their scores would be higher. They were also told that their combined scores would be totaled for the final score. In each trial of the experiment, participants selected to bet on the outcome of a dice throw. They could bet on a single number or a combination of two, three, or four numbers. Selecting either the single or double choice was considered risky betting, with the single choice being the riskiest.

Participants answered the following measures:

- Demographics (e.g., gender, age, education level, and annual income).
- What types of gambling they participated in during the past year.
- The number of days gambled during the previous month.
- Total time spent gambling in the previous month.
- The Japanese version of the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), which was used to assess severity of problem gambling.
- The Japanese version of the Gambling Symptom Assessment Scale, which was used to assess gambling symptoms during the previous week.
- The Japanese version of the Gambling Urge Scale, which was used to assess gambling urges.
- Personality characteristics were assessed using the Japanese of the NEO Five Factor Inventory.

### What the researchers found

Of the 40 participants, half were men and half were women. On average, participants were 46 years old. Most participants engaged in the lottery (80%), bet on horse races (75%), and engaged in pachinko (52%). Across the whole sample, the average PGSI score was 7.4. Only one participant had a history of problem gambling treatment.

The presence of others while gambling did not decrease risky betting compared to solo betting. Cooperating with others while gambling did not decrease risky betting. Instead, the researchers found that cooperating with others might increase risky gambling behaviour. Compared to solo betting,

participants made more single choices (the riskiest bets) when cooperating with another person.

### How you can use this research

This research shows that it is important to consider how the presence and cooperation of others can impact gambling behaviour.

### About the researchers

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### Citation

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