

# research snapshot

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## Casino staff in Macau may gamble less often than local residents

### What this research is about

Many cities around the world have opened casinos in the past 30 years. People are worried that casinos give communities easy access to gambling and cause more problem gambling (PG). PG is repetitive gambling behaviour that leads to negative consequences. There are two different hypotheses to explain how communities respond to new gambling opportunities such as casinos. The exposure hypothesis suggests that communities with new gambling opportunities will have more people gambling and a higher rate of PG. The adaptation hypothesis suggests that communities will adjust to all of the gambling opportunities over time. Thus, the proportion of people with PG will eventually decrease.

Evidence suggests that the proportion of people with PG increases one year after new casinos are opened in a community. However, the proportion of people with PG in those communities decreases over time. These findings suggest that the adaptation hypothesis explains how people respond to new casino opening in their area. Studies in Australia and Canada show that the proportion of casino staff with PG is much higher than the general population. However, a study in South Korea suggests that casino staff do not have a higher rate of PG than the general population.

The number of casinos in Macau has increased a lot since 2004. About one in five people in Macau work in the gambling industry. The whole Macau population has easy access to gambling games. Based on the exposure hypothesis, casino staff will be more likely to develop PG than the general population. The adaptation hypothesis suggests that casino staff will

### What you need to know

The researchers compared the gambling behaviours of casino staff and local residents in Macau in the past year and when they first started casino gambling. They determined if the exposure or adaptation hypothesis explained the participants' responses to gambling opportunities. 230 casino staff and 169 Macau residents completed a survey either online or in face-to-face interviews. The survey results suggested that many participants gambled at the same frequency or less often than before. Also, casino staff gambled less than Macau residents. Thus, working in a casino in Macau does not make people more likely to have gambling problems. The adaptation hypothesis explains how people in Macau respond to gambling opportunities.

become used to their work environment and will not be more likely to develop PG.

In this study, the researchers compared the gambling behaviours of casino staff and local residents in Macau during the past year and when they first gambled in a casino. The researchers determined if the exposure or adaptation hypothesis would explain participants' responses to gambling opportunities.

### What the researchers did

In 2018, the researchers recruited 230 casino staff in Macau and 169 Macau residents to complete a survey either online or in face-to-face interviews. The survey asked participants for their demographic information such as their age and gender. Participants reported how often they gambled when they first started

gambling in a casino and in the past year. They reported how many hours they gambled in a typical session when they first started casino gambling and in the past year. Participants also reported the largest bet they made in the past year. They answered a question that assessed the “gambler’s fallacy”. The gambler’s fallacy is an erroneous gambling belief that one is more likely to win after a losing streak.

### What the researchers found

The survey results suggested that many participants gambled less over time. About 35.2% of casino staff and 38.8% of Macau residents reported not gambling in the past year. For the rest of the participants, many reported gambling occasionally. About 7.5% of casino staff and 12% of Macau residents gambled regularly (at least once a month).

Among those who gambled in the past year, 15.9% of casino staff and 23.8% of Macau residents played for three hours or more in a typical gambling session. Thus, a higher proportion of Macau residents appeared to gamble regularly and for longer periods of time than casino staff. There were no differences in terms of bet size. About 11.3% of casino staff and 10% of Macau residents endorsed the gambler’s fallacy.

Roughly half of the participants gambled at the same frequency as when they first started casino gambling. For the rest, many gambled less in the past year. But, some participants continued to gamble regularly or had increased to regular gambling. There were more Macau residents who continued to or had moved to gamble regularly than casino staff. These results suggested that casino staff gambled less often than Macau residents.

Overall, these results suggest that the adaptation hypothesis explains how people in Macau respond to gambling opportunities. Working in a casino in Macau does not make people more likely to have gambling problems.

### How you can use this research

Gambling operators can use this research to ensure that responsible gambling (RG) programs are in place for their staff. Researchers can explore whether the

exposure or adaptation hypothesis explains how casino staff and residents of other countries respond to new gambling opportunities.

### About the researchers

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### About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

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