

Sights and sounds of slot machines increase allure of gambling, study shows

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The sights and sounds of winning on a slot machine may increase your desire to play—and your memories of winning big, according to new research by University of Alberta scientists.

The study, led by U of A psychology professor Marcia Spetch, shows that people prefer to play on virtual [slot machines](#) that provide casino-related cues, such as the sound of coins dropping or symbols of dollar signs.

"These results show how cues associated with money or winning can make slot [machines](#) more attractive and can even make bigger wins more memorable," said Spetch. "Such cues are prevalent in casinos and likely increase the allure of slot machine gambling."

The researchers also found that people preferred to play on machines with these cues no matter how risky the machine was, and regardless of when the sound or [visual effects](#) appeared.

"Attraction to slot machines and memory for winning can be influenced by factors other than the amount of money won on a slot machine," explained study co-author Christopher Madan, a former Ph.D. student of Spetch's now at the University of Nottingham.

"People should be aware that their attraction and sense of winning may be biased," Madan noted.

According to the Canadian Gaming Association, 98 percent of Canadians gamble for fun and entertainment. Alberta is home to 28 casinos and more than 14,000 slot machines. In 2019, the [gaming industry](#) in Alberta generated \$2.7 billion in revenue.

The research was conducted in collaboration with Elliot Ludvig from Warwick University and Yang Liu, a post-doctoral fellow in the U of A's Department of Psychiatry.

Funding for the research is provided by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Alberta Gambling

Research Institute.

The study, "Effects of Winning Cues and Relative Payout on Choice Between Simulated Slot Machines," was published in *Addiction*.

More information: Marcia L. Spetch et al. Effects of Winning Cues and Relative Payout on Choice between Simulated Slot Machines, *Addiction* (2020). [DOI: 10.1111/add.15010](https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15010)

Provided by University of Alberta

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