ONLINE GAMBLING IN UNPRECEDented TIMES: RISKS AND RG STRATEGIES

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Outline

1) COVID-19 pandemic is impacting online gambling behaviour
2) It is impacting gambling risk factors
3) Safeguards operators can implement now to minimize risks
4) What the industry might consider when moving forward
RGC: Preventing Problem Gambling

• Home base in Toronto, conducting work globally
• RGC is an independent non-profit organization
• Our mission is to prevent problem gambling and reduce its impacts
• 35+ years experience in research, prevention, and education
• 360 perspective: people who gamble, the public, operators, regulators, policy makers, and treatment professionals
COVID-19 pandemic is impacting gambling behaviour
Online gambling is on the rise...

Worldwide 59% of gamblers have reduced their spending, but 32% have looked for new types of betting.
Online gambling is on the rise...

54% of Ontarian gamblers gambled online after COVID-19 emergency measures were instituted.
Social distancing influenced gambling choices for 32%. 22% had gambled under the influence of a substance.
In the UK:
64% of engaged players increased time or money spent
Online gambling is on the rise...

41% opened a new online betting account.
In Pennsylvania, 25% increase in online casino gaming revenue.
Online gambling is on the rise...

20% increase in new player sign-ups in New Jersey.
Online gambling is on the rise...

In Australia, online gambling is up 142%.
Emerging Wagering Opportunities

- Casino games
- Alternative sports betting
- esports
- Virtual sports
- Other events, like politics, television, and even COVID-19 outcomes
- Poker
New risks to players and operators
COVID-19 Risk Factors

- Recession, job loss, financial uncertainty
- Isolation and loneliness
- Stress and mental health
- Substance use
Substance Use

40.7% | 30.7%
---|---
Ontario

43%

48.7%
Risk Factors in Practice

Player Profile: Gambling for income after being laid off

• Goes online for “something to do”: wins a small jackpot
• Begins gambling as a source of income
• Doesn’t know how the games work
• Bets more than what’s affordable
• Increases financial stress and anxiety
• Begins chasing losses
Safeguards that operators can implement to minimize risk
Hospitality industries are being nimble, creative and entrepreneurial.

Essential businesses and essential services have also adapted quickly.

We need to prepare the gambling industry for its worst day.
An Opportunity to Innovate

- Increase level of customer service
- When choosing games to add, consider risk factors such as speed of play, autoplay etc.
- Try something new to *incentivize* RG behaviours
- Strengthen links with treatment providers
- Use all of the data and resources at your disposal
Player Monitoring

- Engage in stricter monitoring and boost customer contact
- Re-examine the markers of risk
- Consider adding new markers
Player Communications

• **New** players: Thorough onboarding
• **Existing** players: pre/post COVID reports
• **All** players:
  • COVID-specific RG messaging
  • Incentivized RG messaging vs ‘play more’
Marketing and Advertising

• Ensure that messaging doesn’t imply that gambling could relieve negative impacts of social distancing or economic recession
• Step up RG messaging overall and within ads
• Consider replacing marketing for new players with RG messages
• Vet messaging by RG experts
Case Study: Safeguards Being Implemented in the UK

The **U.K. Gambling Commission** has urged operators to:

- Be diligent with affordability checks
- Increase RG interactions
- Onboard new customers responsibly
- Avoid exploiting the crisis
- Review thresholds for risk indicators
- Ensure proper testing of new products
- Stop bonuses for users showing harm

To learn about RGC’s work in the UK, visit [responsiblegambling.org/uk-gambling-research](responsiblegambling.org/uk-gambling-research)
Case Study: Safeguards Being Implemented in the UK

• The **Betting and Gaming Council** has:
  • Introduced a 10-pledge action plan
  • Added 25+ age filtering for ads
  • Removed/changed TV and radio ads

• The **Advertising Standards Authority** has launched a public alert service.

• Stakeholders need to work together to find RG sweet spot

To learn about RGC’s work in the UK, visit responsiblegambling.org/uk-gambling-research
What the industry might consider when moving forward
• Now is the time to improve RG, not cut it, to avoid a tsunami of self-exclusions and burnt out players
• Be proactive in identifying new ways to support your customers
• Base RG programs, tools, and strategies in evidence
• Monitor, evaluate, and adapt

To learn about RGC’s applied research, visit responsiblegambling.org/for-industry/rgc-centre-for-advancement-of-best-practices
New Players, New Normal, New RG Training

- Move RG ethos upstream
- Move beyond compliance at induction
- Update and refresh core training
- Add segmented training for customer service reps, marketing and C-suites
- Use ongoing reinforcement—training is not a one-time event
The Benchmark of Responsible Gambling

Benefits of RG Check

**Trusted**
RG Check is a globally recognized brand. An RG Check accreditation is a sign that the operator has the highest level of standards built into its offering.

**Collaborative**
The goal of an RG Check accreditation is to ensure that operators have the highest standard of RG programming in place. The process is collaborative and scalable.

**Convenient**
If successful, accreditation is granted for three years, after which operators may apply to be reaccredited for a further three-year period.
RG Accreditation for iGaming

- Objective evaluation of RG policies and procedures
- Identifies strengths and areas for improvement
- Provides tools for improvement
- Reassures customers that their safety is a priority
- Increases public confidence

To learn more, visit rgcheck.com
Programs across the Player Journey

- Staff Training
- Education & Awareness
- Accreditation
- Training on Player Interactions
- Pre-Commitment
- Tailored Messaging
- Self-Exclusion
- Referral info: Counselling

Referral info:
- General Population
- At-Risk Population
- High Risk Population
RG Strategies: Treatment

• Harm reduction
• Reach out to the paradoxical patient
RG Strategies: Operators

- RG upstream
- Incentivize players and staff to use RG
RG Strategies: Regulators

• Incentivize RG implementation
• Broad, cross-sector focus
RG Strategies: Research

- Collaborate
- Work with inter-disciplinary teams
Any follow up:

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www.responsiblegambling.org
Returning to Casino/Land-based Gaming: What Operators Need to Know

May 28th, 2020
1:00 - 1:45 pm EST

Register Today