

Understanding Australian gambling website customers' use and perceived impact of activity statements on gambling behaviour

What this research is about

Regulators are interested in ways to reduce people's risk of gambling harms. One focus of these efforts is informed choice, which refers to a person's ability to freely choose whether and how to gamble based on accurate information.

Online gambling operators store information about customers' gambling activity, such as the amount of money they have spent on different gambling products. Providing activity statements to customers that summarise their expenditure might lead them to reflect on and reduce their spending. This, in turn, can reduce their risk of gambling harms. This is consistent with the idea that people are more likely to change their behaviour when they receive information that they see as relevant to them.

Since mid-2022, the Australian government has required online gambling operators to send activity statements to active customers monthly. In this study, the researchers looked at customers' use of these statements and their impact on gambling behaviour.

What the researchers did

The researchers recruited 1,647 customers from two licensed Australian gambling websites (i.e., sports and race betting) in January 2024. Participants were required to have placed at least one bet in the past 6 months, owned an account for at least 30 days, and not be suspended, self-excluded, or on timeout/take a break from their account.

Participants completed an online survey that asked about their demographic characteristics, gambling behaviour, use and perceived impact of activity statements sent by the gambling operators, and

What you need to know

Providing people with accurate information about their gambling activity (e.g., money spent) could increase awareness of and reduce risky gambling. Australian gambling operators have been required to send active customers activity statements since mid-2022. In this study, the researchers looked at customers' use of activity statements and their impact on gambling behaviour. They surveyed 1,647 customers from two gambling websites. Survey responses were matched to participants' account data, including bets, transactions, and use of consumer protection tools.

The results showed that over half of participants (57.2%) opened activity statements at least sometimes. Two-thirds (63.9%) thought that activity statements were at least slightly important in helping them track their gambling spending. About 17.6% said that reading activity statements decreased their gambling, and 0.8% reported an increase. Overall, there was minimal evidence that activity statements carry negative consequences.

estimated money spent on gambling and net outcome in the past 30 days. The survey also assessed gambling problems experienced in the past year with the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). Higher scores indicated a higher risk of gambling problems.

Participants' survey responses were matched to data from their gambling accounts. This included bets and transactions made in the past 6 months, and use of consumer protection tools in the past 2 years.

What the researchers found

On average, participants were 44.06 years old. Most participants (84.62%) were male. About 13.79% were female, and 1.59% did not report their gender.

The researchers first looked at participants' survey responses. About 23.1% of participants said they never opened activity statements, 19.8% said rarely, 23.6% said sometimes, 13.3% said very often, and 20.3% said always. About 36.1% of participants said that activity statements were not important to them in tracking their gambling spending, 15.5% said slightly important, 16.8% said moderately important, 20.8% said important, and 10.9% said very important. Of those who said they opened activity statements, 81.6% said there was no change in their gambling. About 17.6% said activity statements decreased their gambling, and 0.8% reported an increase.

Women were less likely to use activity statements than men. People who were at higher risk of gambling problems were less likely to use activity statements. But if they did, they were more likely to say they benefitted from reading them. Participants who used activity statements more often, those with moderate- to high-risk gambling, and those who placed a greater number of bets per day were more likely to report decreased gambling because of activity statements. But more frequent use of activity statement did not enhance participants' accuracy of recalling their past 30-day gambling spending or net outcome (i.e., the total amount they had won or lost).

The researchers looked at the impact of four statement deliveries from September to December in 2023. They observed no change in how often participants bet, or the amount they deposited into their accounts following any of the dates on which they were sent an activity statement. Among participants who had moderate- to high-risk gambling, there was a decrease in the number of bets made per day, but an increase in deposit amount after a statement was delivered in November 2023. There was a decrease in daily deposit amount after a statement was delivered in October 2023.

Overall, the results suggest that many people find activity statements to be useful for tracking their gambling spending. There is minimal evidence that

activity statements carry negative consequences (e.g., loss chasing).

How you can use this research

This study provides valuable information about activity statements as a consumer protection tool to reduce the risk of gambling harms. The findings can inform future research on how to further improve use of activity statements and their impact.

About the researchers

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