

research snapshot

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Comparing gamblers who use offshore versus domestic gambling sites

What this research is about

Online gambling is highly popular across the world. Many countries have their own licensed gambling websites, but consumers may also choose to gamble on offshore sites. Offshore sites are not licensed to offer services to local residents. Playing on offshore sites is risky. Games may not be offered fairly, deposited funds may not be protected, or personal details may be hacked. Since offshore sites are not regulated domestically, gamblers may not be able to take legal action through local law enforcement.

Research shows that consumers are unaware or are not concerned about online gambling regulations. They may also lack the skills to identify which sites are safe to play. Studies also find that even if consumers are worried about using offshore sites or have had negative experiences, they still gamble on offshore sites. It is important to understand why consumers choose to gamble on offshore sites instead of domestic sites that are legal in their country.

The aim of this study was to explore online gambling behaviour among Australian adults. Specifically, the researchers investigated the extent to which consumers used offshore sites versus domestic sites. They also explored factors influencing the use of offshore sites, and if using offshore sites would increase the risk of problem gambling.

What the researchers did

Participants were 3199 online gamblers over the age of 18 living in Australia. They completed an online survey. The survey asked participants about their gambling behaviour in general, including the types of games played, how often, and the websites they most frequently visited to gamble. For online gambling, the

What you need to know

The aim of this study was to explore online gambling behaviour among Australian adults. The researchers recruited 3199 adult online gamblers to complete a survey. The researchers identified participants as offshore gamblers if they played on offshore sites, and domestic gamblers if they only gambled on domestic sites regulated in Australia. Most participants played on domestic sites rather than offshore sites. About 25.8% of participants used offshore sites. Offshore gamblers were more involved gamblers and more likely to be problem gamblers than domestic gamblers. Offshore gamblers and domestic gamblers presented distinct profiles. For instance, offshore gamblers were more likely to be male, younger in age, and less likely to be married. Offshore gamblers were more likely to have multiple online gambling accounts. Both groups also differed in what they listed as the advantages and disadvantages of online gambling, and what was important to consider when choosing a site to play.

survey also asked questions such as time of day they played online, number of accounts they had, how they paid to play, and factors that influenced their decision to gamble online. Participants were also asked about their awareness of gambling regulations (e.g., which games they believed could be legally provided online). The survey also assessed participants for problem gambling and collected their demographic information.

The researchers divided participants into two groups: offshore gamblers and domestic gamblers. Offshore gamblers reported playing on offshore sites or playing

a game that could not be legally provided by domestic sites. Domestic gamblers only gambled on websites that were regulated in Australia.

What the researchers found

About 25.8% of participants gambled on offshore sites. Offshore and domestic gamblers had different characteristics. Compared to domestic gamblers, offshore gamblers tended to be male, younger in age, less educated, less likely to be working or retired, and less likely to be married. Offshore gamblers were more likely to speak a language other than English at home. Regarding gambling behaviour, offshore gamblers played almost all forms of gambling more frequently and were more likely to have accounts with several gambling sites. Offshore gamblers were more likely to be moderate-risk or problem gamblers compared to domestic gamblers.

Offshore and domestic gamblers had different opinions about the benefits and drawbacks of online gambling compared to gambling at a venue. For instance, price and having a greater number of gambling options and games were listed more often by offshore gambler as benefits of online gambling. Domestic gamblers were more likely to list convenience as an important benefit. Offshore gamblers were more likely to list drawbacks of online gambling, such as unreliable access or concerns about account safety. Both offshore and domestic gamblers were relatively aware of the types of online games that could be legally offered to the public. For games that could not be legally provided online, both groups were most likely to believe online poker was legal.

There were different factors that influenced which websites gamblers used. Offshore gamblers were more likely to choose sites that had a good reputation, fair price, more gambling options, and fast payout rates. Domestic gamblers were more likely to choose sites that were legal and offered responsible gambling tools.

How you can use this research

Prevention service providers can use this research to organize campaigns that teach gamblers about the risks of offshore gambling and why it is illegal. By

increasing gamblers' understanding of why offshore sites are illegal and risky, it may make them more likely to gamble on domestic sites. Policy makers can use this research to make offshore gambling sites less accessible to consumers. Increasing regulation on offshore sites may protect consumers from gambling-related harms.

About the researchers

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Keywords

Consumer behaviour, consumer preferences, Internet gambling, legislation, offshore gambling, online gambling, policy, problem gambling, regulation

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Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (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 responsible 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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