Esports are becoming more popular in Australia. Esports are organized video/online game competitions in which players and teams compete in leagues and tournaments to win money. Esports feature skill-based games such as fighting or shooting.

Esports gambling refers to betting on the outcome of a professional esports competition, through licensed or offshore gambling sites. Offshore gambling sites do not hold a license to offer online gambling products and services to local people. Offshore gambling sites may have fewer responsible gambling measures, like restrictions on under-age youth. People may also have less means to pursue for recourse with offshore gambling sites.

Esports gamblers are likely to differ from other sports and race bettors. They may even represent a potentially new group of gamblers. However, the profile of esports gamblers is not well known. The current study compared the characteristics of Australian online esports gamblers to those betting on traditional sports online.

What the researchers did
Participants were 501 Australian adults, aged 18 years and older, who had bet on sports in the past four weeks. Participants completed an online survey.

The survey assessed gambling behaviour, including online and offline gambling for real money, devices used for gambling, and age first gambled for money. It also assessed offshore gambling, including reasons for gambling site selection, and advantages and disadvantages of using onshore and offshore sites. Finally, the online survey captured participants’ demographics, such as age, gender, education, work status, relationship status, and children at home.

The researchers grouped participants into “esports gamblers” (i.e., those who reported both esports and sports betting) and “sports bettors” (i.e., those who reported sports betting only). There were 160 esports gamblers and 341 sports bettors. The researchers analyzed for differences between esports gamblers and sports bettors in terms of demographics, gambling behaviours, and offshore gambling. They also analyzed which characteristics set apart esports gamblers from sports bettors.

What the researchers found
Compared to the sports bettors, the esports gamblers included more females and individuals with Asian ethnic backgrounds. They were also younger than sports bettors, and had higher earning potential (i.e.,
higher education, higher income, and more likely to have full-time employment).

The esports gamblers gambled more often (on a daily basis) than the sports bettors. They also gambled on a greater number of gambling activities and used a greater variety of devices to gamble, including wearable technology and gaming platforms. Compared to the sports bettors, a greater percent of esports gamblers first gambled in their twenties, suggesting that many had only recently begun gambling. This may indicate that esports gambling may be producing a new group of gamblers.

Both esports gamblers and sports bettors preferred licensed gambling sites. Both groups also saw consumer protection and responsible gambling tools as advantages of licensed gambling sites. However, the esports gamblers tended to use offshore sites to a greater extent than the sports bettors. The esports bettors were also more likely to perceive advantages of offshore sites and disadvantages of onshore sites. For instance, they liked that offshore sites had more products/games available and higher betting limits. In contrast, the sports bettors were more likely to perceive consumer risks associated with offshore sites.

**How you can use this research**

The findings have important implications for gambling operators and regulators. Onshore gambling operators should try to enhance the relevance and competitive offerings of their sites. Efforts may also be needed to increase the disadvantages of offshore sites to counter current attitudes of esports gamblers. Gambling regulators should ensure strong age verification standards. Future research should investigate the potential for problem gambling among esports gamblers.

**About the researchers**

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**Keywords**

Online gambling, esports, sports betting, offshore sites, motivations, regulation

**Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO)**

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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