

Online Behaviours, Substance Use, & Intoxicated Gambling among Ontario Gamblers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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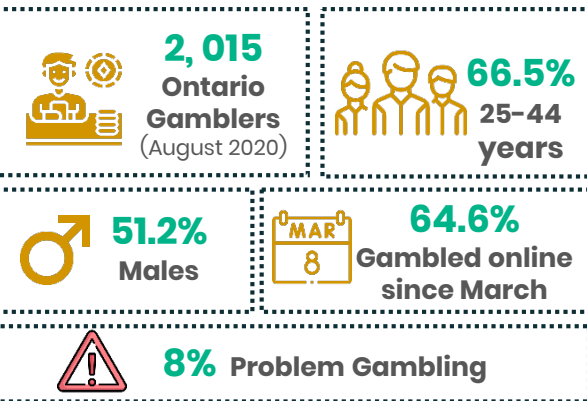
ABSTRACT

Background: A growing body of research suggests various addictive behaviours have increased during COVID-19-precipitated closures and restrictions. Although substance use, online behaviours, and gambling while under the influence are associated with an increased level of gambling risk, little information exists on co-participation and simultaneous use patterns. **Methods:** We conducted a survey of 2,015 Ontario gamblers during the COVID-19 pandemic (August 2020). Among the constructs assessed, we measured co-participation in online behaviours and substance use as well as simultaneous use of substances while gambling. **Results:** Approximately half or more of the participants indicated having 'ever engaged' in the behaviours measured, with sizeable increases in online shopping, social media use, and alcohol consumption during COVID-19. Notable proportions 'ever play under the influence' of alcohol or cannabis, with smaller percentages doing so during COVID-19. **Conclusions:** Gamblers engage in co-participation and simultaneous use of various behaviours/substances to varying degrees. Future work should continue to unpack these patterns and how they relate to gambling harm.

OBJECTIVE

Explore gamblers' co-participation in online gambling, other online behaviours, and substance use as well as their simultaneous use of substances while gambling during the COVID-19 pandemic

METHODS



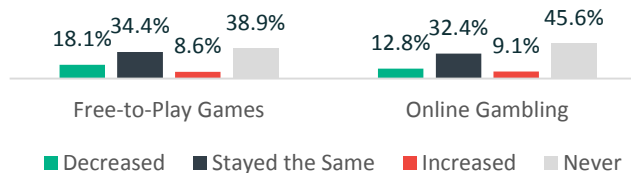
Wave 2 of a 3-wave survey conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on:



RESULTS

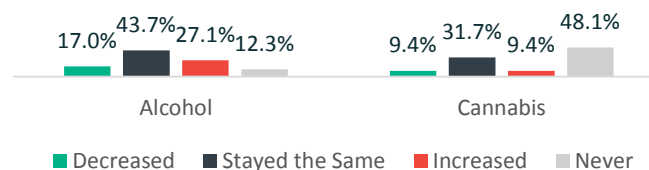
Roughly half or more of gamblers have **ever engaged** in the behaviours measured: 93.2% online shopping, 89.5% social media, 87.7% alcohol use, 66.2% speculative investments, 61.1% free to play games, 54.4% online gambling, 51.9% cannabis use, and 47.7% watch others gamble online.

Changes in (Free-to-Play) Online Gambling during COVID-19 (March-August 2020)



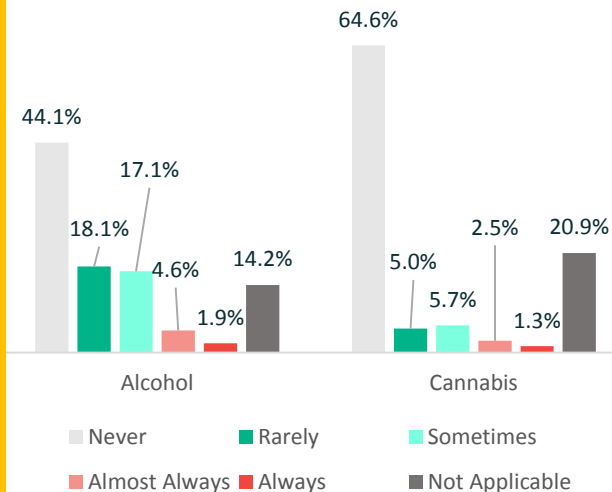
Varying proportions of gamblers reported **increased engagement** in each of the behaviours measured between March and August: 57.6% online shopping, 48.6% social media, 27.1% alcohol, 14.6% speculative investments, 9.4% cannabis, 9.1% online gambling, 8.6% free to play games, and 5.7% watching others gamble.

Changes in Substance Use during COVID-19 (March-August 2020)



Overall, the **majority of gamblers do not gamble while under the influence** of alcohol (58.3%) or cannabis (85.5%). 6.5% almost always or always gamble under the influence of alcohol and 3.8% almost always or always gamble under the influence of cannabis.

Frequency of Gambling under the Influence



Between March and August, 9.2% gambled under the influence of alcohol and 4.6% gambled under the influence of cannabis.

CONCLUSIONS

Those who gamble tend to also participate in other gambling-type behaviours, engage in online behaviours, and use substances. Gamblers are experiencing changes in these behaviours during COVID-19, with the most notable increases for online shopping, social media use, and alcohol consumption. Sizeable proportions of gamblers 'ever play under the influence' of alcohol (41.7%) or cannabis (14.5%), with smaller percentages doing so during COVID-19. Future work should continue to unpack co-participation and simultaneous use, and how patterns relate to gambling harm.

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