

GAMBLING RESEARCH

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COVID-19 and Canadian Gambling Venue Closures

Steps taken in March to protect the health of Canadians and prevent the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) resulted in the rapid shut-down of Canada's schools, non-essential businesses, and public service locations. Included in these closures were most of the country's commercial gambling venues. A news release by the Canadian Gaming Association on March 24, 2020 indicated that, "In a 72-hour period, almost all of the 114 casinos in Canada closed down, along with more than 200 permanent bingo halls and community gaming centres." Apart from those venues, horse racing tracks in all provinces and video lottery terminals (VLTs) in bars and restaurants in jurisdictions allowing them were closed for business by March 31.

At a time when land-based gambling venues are closed, certain types of gambling still remain available to Canadians gamblers although accessibility varies by province. Available formats as of April 1st included limited in-person ticket lottery sales in all provinces (excluding Quebec), provincially-regulated *online* casino-style gambling, and *online* sales of lottery products.¹

Venue closures in March will no doubt have huge and instantaneous impacts on the \$8-billion annual net income that Canada's provincial governments generate from gambling.² Others impacted are the casino industry and its employees, lottery ticket retailers, horse racing sector participants, charities, recreational gamblers, and individuals experiencing harmful effects from gambling. The Institute will continue to monitor the pandemic's effect on gambling in Canada. Related research emanating from the Institute-funded investigation [Gambling and Problem Gambling in Canada: A National Study](#) is in-progress and initial findings have been submitted to peer-reviewed academic publications.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) assessed COVID-19 as a pandemic. At that time, there were more than 118,000 cases in 114 countries, and 4,291 people had lost their lives. Three weeks later, WHO figures from April 1 show that confirmed cases grew to 823,626 in 205 countries and 40,598 deaths. Canada reported 9,005 confirmed cases and 105 deaths to April 1, 2020.

The primary aim of the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge, is to support academic research related to gambling.

MISSION

To facilitate evidence-based broad research that informs gambling public policy and educates Albertans and the wider audience about the effects of gambling.

Highlights of COVID-19 Closures by Gambling Format

- **Ticket Lottery:** All provinces and territories (excluding Quebec) continue to permit in-person ticket lottery products to be sold from lottery retail locations. Some retail locations, however, are not open and others have voluntarily chosen to stop lottery sales. Provinces that allow lottery tickets to be purchased online continue lottery sales in this manner. *Combined Ticket Lottery provincial net income to provincial governments in 2018-19 was approximately \$2.7-billion.*
- **VLTs:** All provinces that permit VLTs have shut down their networks with the final closure as of March 31st. *Combined VLTs provincial net income to provincial governments in 2018-19 was approximately \$1.5-billion.*
- **Casinos:** All land-based casinos in all provinces and territories have closed. *Combined Casinos provincial net income to provincial governments in 2018-19 was approximately \$4-billion.*
- **Online:** All provinces that permit online casino gambling and the online sale of lottery-type products remain open. *Net income from online gambling to government are not reported in a standardized way. An estimate for online casino gambling net income to provincial governments in 2018-19 was \$165-million.*
- **Horse Racing:** All live horse racing venues in all provinces appears to have closed or remained closed. The racing season is not yet underway in some provinces. *Horse racing total handle for all provinces combined in 2018-19 as reported by the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency was \$1.2-billion.*

Additional information about gambling closures by province:

[The Impact of Covid-19 on Gambling Availability in Canada](#) (2020, March 25)

- 1 Provincially-regulated online casino-style gambling available in BC, MB, ON, QC. Online ticket lottery sales available in BC, MB, ON, QC, NB, PE, NS & NL.
- 2 Total commercial gambling net income to provincial governments (after prizes and expenses) was approximately \$8-billion in 2018-19; net revenue (after prizes) for all provinces & territories combined was approximately \$14.5-billion in 2018-19.

Institute Scholarship Students Present Findings as Research Posters

The Institute is pleased to recognize research abstracts and posters authored by **Institute Scholarship and Research Allowance Award Recipients** ([LINK](#)). All posters were accepted for presentation at the Institute's March, 2020 conference event in Banff, Alberta. The event itself was regrettably cancelled due to Alberta's COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

COWIE, Megan - PhD Student (Psychology, U. of Calgary) - *The Transdiagnostic Features of Gambling Disorder and Substance Use Disorder*

GORENKO, Julie - PhD Student (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary) - *Social Network Moderates the Association Between Gambling to Escape and Problem Gambling Severity Among Older Adults*

LASKOWSKI, Catherine - PhD Student (Neuroscience, U. of Lethbridge) - *Imaging Dopamine Receptor Changes in the Brains of Gambling Rats*

LEOTA, Josh - Master's Student (Psychology, U. of Alberta) - *Reactive Gambling: Approach Motivation Regulates Anxiety via Decreased Sensitivity to Negative Outcomes*

RUSSELL, Gillian - PhD Student (Psychology, U. of Lethbridge) - *Assessing the Relationship Between Implicit Memory Associations and Gambling in Adolescents*

SCHLUTER, Magdalen - PhD Student (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary) - *Examining the Interplay Between Cognitive Distortions, Reward-Related Decision-Making and Impulsive Traits*

SHARIF-RAZI, Maryam - PhD Student (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary) - *Moderating Effects of Sex and Coping on the Relationship between Trauma and Addictive Behaviours: A Longitudinal Study using a Parallel Process Latent Growth Curve Model*

TROTTIER, Maegan - Master's Student (Health Sciences, U. of Lethbridge) - *Substance Use Differences between Problem- and Casual- Gamblers and Video Game Players*

WILCOX, Sean - PhD Student (Cultural, Social & Political Thought, U. of Lethbridge) - *Key Discursive Moments in the Trajectory of Canadian Gambling Public Policy*



A complete listing of accepted conference 2020 research posters is also available ([LINK](#)).

Spotlight on Dr. Murat Akçayır, Postdoctoral Research Fellow



A research review undertaken by Dr. Akçayır Murat entitled, "Advantages and challenges associated with augmented reality for education: A systematic review of the literature" was labeled a "Highly Cited Paper" by Web of Science. This means that, as of November 2019, the paper was among the top 1% of all cited papers within the Social Sciences when compared to other papers published in the same field.

Akçayır, M., & Akçayır, G. (2017). Advantages and challenges associated with augmented reality for education: A systematic review of the literature. *Educational Research Review*, 20, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2016.11.002>

The Institute is pleased to introduce University of Alberta postdoctoral research fellow Dr. Murat Akçayır. Dr. Akçayır, who holds a Ph.D. in the field of Educational Technology, has been working for the past year alongside Institute Research Coordinator Dr. Fiona Nicoll. His research utilizes both quantitative and qualitative techniques and focuses on the intersection of education, emerging technologies and young adults.

Can you tell us about your research?

At present, I work under the supervision of Dr. Fiona Nicoll as a member of the meta-analysis research team. For our current project, we've located more than 7,000 peer-reviewed articles and deeply examined nearly 3,000 of those, which were published in five jurisdictions – included are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K., and the United States. This has allowed us the unique opportunity of being able to study past and current research trends and identify issues and gaps in the gambling literature.

What have been the key findings to date?

The key findings of this preliminary investigation reveal that the most frequently reported gambling problems identified between 2014 and 2018 were those related to young gamblers, online gambling, electronic gaming machines, and children and adolescents (underage gamblers), respectively. In addition, this review found that the three most frequently reported empirically-proven suggestions for alleviating current gambling problems were: (1) creating educational and awareness programs or campaigns related to enhancing public awareness and education about gambling; (2) developing intervention mechanisms and programmes for online gambling, and; (3) offering remote gambling-related help (i.e., online counseling, online treatment).

Our meta-analysis team is also "mapping" the field to identify disciplinary foci in gambling research. The results of a citation analysis reveal that gambling has been studied mainly by researchers from the neuroscience and medical disciplines during the last

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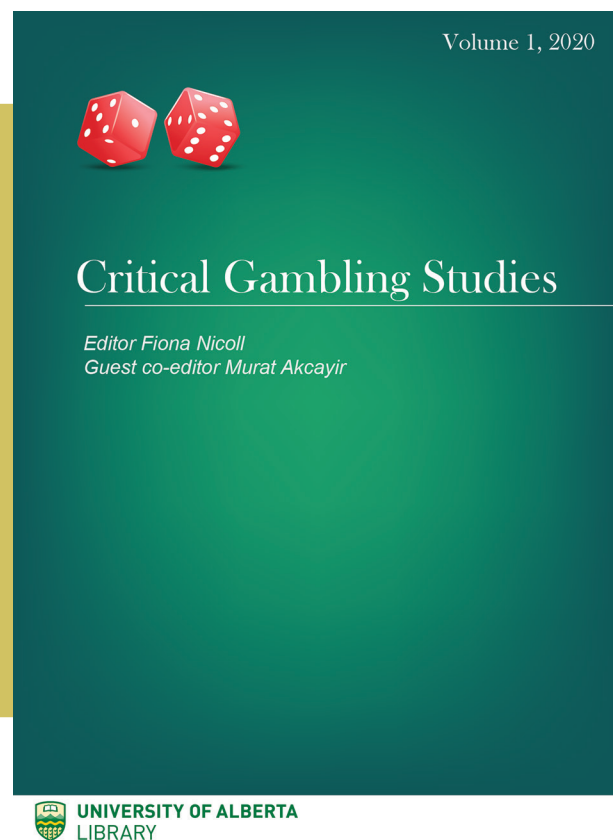
five years. Another finding has been that the discipline of psychiatry acts as a bridge between different academic disciplines in gambling studies. Citation analysis has also revealed some unique patterns of citation and collaboration within gambling research. For example, migrations from video-gaming and/or social gaming studies to gambling studies and vice versa.

What are you working on now?

Currently, I'm analyzing gambling publications in the grey literature, and comparing issues identified in both the primary literature and grey literature. I'm also serving as a guest co-editor for the first issue of the new journal, *Critical Gambling Studies*. My current research interests are focused on digital games/gambling, mitigating harmful gambling in this context, and cultural and educational aspects of gambling that are relatively unexplored to date in the gambling field.

New Open-Access Journal: *Critical Gambling Studies*

The Institute is pleased to announce the publication of the first issue of the new open-access journal *Critical Gambling Studies* which was edited by Drs. Fiona Nicoll and Murat Akcayir.



Conference 2021 Announced for Week of March 22, 2021

The Institute's 20th Annual Conference has been scheduled for the week of March 22, 2021 at the Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta.

It was with considerable disappointment that the Institute had to cancel the 19th Annual Conference scheduled from March 26 – 28, 2020 to ensure the health and safety of our research community. We want to thank all those involved for your support and understanding during this unprecedented time.

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