Responsible Gambling in Canada: An Analysis of the RG Check Patron Surveys

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Overview

➢ This study analyzed the Responsible Gambling Check patron survey data from Canadian casinos and racinos collected from 2012-2019 (18,580 patrons and 77 venues).

➢ The results indicated **increasing awareness and use over time** of harm minimization tools among more **frequent patrons.**

➢ Despite these promising trends, it is concerning that a **substantial percentage of gamblers are still unaware** of the harm minimization tools available.

Introduction

➢Responsible gambling/harm minimization (RG/HM) measures are important tools to reduce the impact of gambling induced problems and related harms (Brown et al., 2017).*

➢**Awareness and use** of specific RG/HM measures are important indicators of problem gambling severity, and differentiate between non-problem and problematic gambling status (Gainsbury et al., 2020; Jackson et al., 2016).

➢The most notable Canada-wide RG/HM program is the **RG Check accreditation** initiative.

Introduction

➢ The RG Check accreditation program was developed in 2011 by the **Responsible Gambling Council** (RGC) in consultation with policy makers, gambling providers, gamblers, and people who have experienced gambling harm.

➢ The RGC is a Toronto, Ontario-based organization founded in 1983 whose stated goal is the prevention of problem gambling.*

Responsible Gambling Council

All in for Safer Gambling.

RGC

The Responsible Gambling Council (RGC) is a respected, independent non-profit organization. We have been a leader in the prevention of problem gambling in Canada and globally for more than 35 years.

About RG Check

The most comprehensive responsible gambling accreditation program in the world.

RG Check was developed by the Responsible Gambling Council, in consultation with policy makers, gambling providers, players and people who have experienced gambling harm.

The RG Check accreditation process helps gambling venues evaluate, monitor and manage all aspects of their RG strategy.

RG Check Accreditation Process

The RG Check Accreditation process is an independent assessment conducted by specialized staff and is designed to be smooth, efficient, and collaborative.

Jump to 'Achieving iGaming accreditation'

Achieving venue accreditation

The process begins with an initial scope to define all of the components and functions associated with the assessment. RG Check staff provide the operator with the RG Check Handbook which outlines roles, responsibilities and timelines for the complete process. Once the decision is made to proceed, the process follows these steps:

Achieving venue accreditation

The process begins with an initial scope to define all of the components and functions associated with the assessment. RG Check staff provide the operator with the RG Check Handbook which outlines roles, responsibilities and timelines for the complete process. Once the decision is made to proceed, the process follows these steps:

1. **Data gathering**, including documentation collection and an employee survey

2. **Analysis** of all material collected

3. **A two-day site visit** that includes a self-exclusion demonstration, staff interviews, and a survey of players

4. **Scoring**, report writing, and quality assurance

5. **Draft report** provided to the venue for feedback

6. **Final report** of findings and recommendations is reviewed by the <u>Accreditation Panel</u>

7. **Final report and decision** to accredit is conveyed to the venue

Accreditation scoring for venues

To achieve accreditation status, venues must receive an overall score of **70%** or higher, with a score of **50%** or higher for each of the eight standards. As indicated below, scoring has been weighted to provide greater value to those standards deemed to be most important.

Standard	Weighting
RG Policy, Strategy and Culture	20%
Employee Training	15%
Self-Exclusion	15%
Assisting Players	20%
Informed Decision Making	10%
Marketing Communications	5%
Access to Money	10%
Venue and Game Design	5%
Total	**100%**

The RG Check Accreditation Panel

Members of the RG Accreditation Panel are selected based on their integrity and their commitment to high standards in social responsibility and public policy.

For every accreditation submission, a panel member reviews the report and recommendations made by RG Check staff before the decision is confirmed.

Accreditation Panel:

George L. Morfitt, FCA

George is an adjunct professor at the University of Victoria.

Highlights from his distinguished career include:

- Auditor General of British Columbia

- Executive Vice President and CFO for the Diamond Group of Companies

- Authored a report for the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (CICA) Board of Governors on standard setting

Dan Perrins

Dan is the Executive in Residence and Senior Policy Fellow at the Johnson-Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Regina.

Highlights from his distinguished career include:

- Began his career as a frontline social worker and ended his public service career as the Deputy Minister to the Premier and Head of the Public Service, Government of Saskatchewan

- Awarded the Queen's Jubilee Medal and the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal

Introduction

➢The RG Check program is **widely subscribed** to by Canadian gambling operators.

➢In 2019, 71 of the 120 casinos and racinos in Canada (59.2%) had sought out and achieved RG Check accreditation.*

➢Our primary research question was to define the level of **responsible gambling awareness and behaviour** among Canadian casino patrons and whether this awareness and behaviour varies as a **function of venue, time period, and frequency of visitation.**

Method

➤ **Participants:** The participants were **casino and racino patrons** attending a gambling venue in Canada from 2011-2019. All participants voluntarily completed the surveys.

➤ **Procedure**: The gambling patron surveys were conducted over two days at each venue for three hours per day. Approximately 99% of respondents completed the survey using pen and paper. **Between 100 and 300** patron surveys were completed **per venue.***

Method

➢**Data:** The data consisted of three anonymized data files of yearly surveys collected from 2011-2015 (4,370 respondents, 35 venues), 2013-2016 (5,147 respondents, 36 venues), and 2015-2019 (9,063 respondents, 70 venues). In total there were **18,580 respondents and 77 venues**. The RGC provided access to the anonymized data to the investigators via **Gambling Research Exchange Ontario**.*

Method

➤ **Data Cleaning:** The data required cleaning before comparisons could be made (e.g., recoding frequency to one common metric), excluding unsure and missing responses, opened ended questions, and removing the questions that did not appear in each year.*

➤ **Data Analysis:** Chi-square and generalized linear mixed methods.**

➤ **Ethics:** The study was approved by the University of Lethbridge's Human Subject ethics committee (#2019-018).

Method

➢**Surveys**: Surveys in all years were **brief 1-2 page questionnaires** with response options provided for most questions. The questions in all surveys focused on **awareness** of gambling information, responsible gambling information centres (**RGICs**), how to **access** gambling information, and **self-exclusion** programs, with most questions having yes/no response options.*

THE VENUE Patron Survey

THE VENUE is undergoing an evaluation of its responsible gambling policies, practices, and procedures. To help with the evaluation, we are asking patrons to complete this brief survey. Your responses will remain confidential.

1. **At THE VENUE, have you seen any information on… (Check all that apply)**

   - ☐ How slots work
   - ☐ The chances of winning and losing at slots
   - ☐ Tips for keeping gambling in control
   - ☐ Signs of a gambling problem
   - ☐ I haven't seen any information
   - ☐ Not sure

2. ***If* you were concerned about your gambling or a friend or family member's gambling, do you know where to access information for problem gambling assistance at THE VENUE?**

   - ☐ Yes *(Go to Question #2a)*
   - ☐ No *(Go to Question #3)*
   - ☐ Not sure *(Go to Question #3)*

2a. **Name one location in the venue where you would find this information?**

   _____

   _____

3. **Have you heard of the place in THE VENUE where you can get information on responsible gambling – the Responsible Gaming Resource Centre/ GameSense Information Centre (RGRC/GSIC)?**

   - ☐ Yes *(Go to Question #3a)*
   - ☐ No *(Go to Question #4)*
   - ☐ Not sure *(Go to Question #4)*

   - ☐ Yes *(Go to Question #4a)*
   - ☐ No *(Go to Question #5)*
   - ☐ Not sure *(Go to Question #5)*

4a. **Does THE VENUE have a self-exclusion program?**

   - ☐ Yes *(Go to Question #4ai)*
   - ☐ No *(Go to Question #5)*
   - ☐ Not sure *(Go to Question #5)*

4ai. **How did you hear about THE VENUE's self-exclusion program? (Check all that apply)**

   - ☐ Advertisement at the THE VENUE
   - ☐ A staff person told me about it
   - ☐ A friend/family member told me about it
   - ☐ THE VENUE's website
   - ☐ Radio/television/newspaper
   - ☐ Not sure

4aii. **What self-exclusion information have you seen at the venue? (Check all that apply)**

   - ☐ Self-exclusion brochure
   - ☐ Self-exclusion poster
   - ☐ Self-exclusion information on the venue's TVs
   - ☐ Not sure
   - ☐ I have not seen any self-exclusion information at THE VENUE

3a. Have you ever asked a staff person about the Responsible Gaming Resource Centre?

☐ Yes *(Go to Question #3ai)*
☐ No *(Go to Question #3b)*
☐ Not sure *(Go to Question #3b)*

3ai. Was the staff person able to provide you with information on the Responsible Gaming Resource Centre/GameSense Information Centre?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure

3b. Have you ever visited the Responsible Gaming Resource Centre/GameSense Information Centre at THE VENUE?

☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Not sure

4. Have you ever heard of the self-exclusion program?

5. Have you seen any responsible gambling information posted on slot machines?

☐ Yes *(Go to Question #5a)*
☐ No *(Go to Question #6)*
☐ Not sure *(Go to Question #6)*

5a. If yes, what information have you seen?

_____
_____

6. How often do you gamble at THE VENUE? (Check one box only)

☐ Once per month or more
☐ Less than once per month
☐ First time
☐ Not sure

Table 1: Descriptive Results

RG Check Questions	<1/mo gamblers % Yes 2012-2019 (n=3155)	1/mo+ gamblers % Yes 2012-2019 (n=13834)	<1/mo gamblers % Yes in 2012-2015 (n=1640)	1/mo+ gamblers % Yes in 2012-2015 (n=7773)	All gamblers % Yes in 2012-2015 (n=9413)	<1/mo gamblers % Yes in 2016-2019 (n=1515)	1/mo+ gamblers % Yes in 2016-2019 (n=6061)	All gamblers % Yes in 2016-2019 (n=7576)	Average score
1a. At the Casino, have you seen any information on...how slots work	33.7	**42.4**	33.7	40.7	38.5	33.6	**44.6**	**41.6**	38.8
1b. At the Casino, have you seen any information on... chances of winning and losing at slots	28.9	**39.4**	29.5	38.6	36.3	28.3	40.4	37.1	35.0
1c. At the Casino, have you seen any information on...tips for keeping gambling in control	47.0	**52.7**	46.6	51.9	49.9	47.5	53.6	50.9	50.1
1d. At the Casino, have you seen any information on...signs of a gambling problem	41.9	**47.0**	41.4	46.4	44.4	42.5	47.9	45.4	44.7
1e. At the Casino, I haven't seen any information	16.3	**11.4**	19.6	12.7	14.9	**12.8**	**9.7**	**10.5**	13.4
2. Do you know where to access information for problem gambling assistance at the Casino?	57.8	**67.4**	49.3	59.8	57.5	**68.0**	**77.8**	**75.0**	64.6
3. Have you heard of the place ... the Responsible Gambling Information Centre?	52.7	**63.3**	52.3	60.8	58.6	53.3	**66.9**	**63.7**	59.3
3a. Have you ever asked a staff person about the Responsible Gambling Information Centre (RGIC)?	14.7	**21.3**	13.8	19.9	19.1	16.0	**23.1**	**22.2**	19.0
3ai. Was the staff person able to provide you with information on the RGIC?	90.0	89.3	85.4	84.3	84.2	95.4	**96.2**	**96.2**	90.3
3b. Have you ever visited the Responsible Gambling Information Centre at the Casino?	18.5	**28.7**	14.9	24.5	23.0	**23.0**	**34.3**	**32.3**	25.3
4. Have you ever heard of the self-exclusion program?	47.2	**58.9**	44.0	56.2	53.2	**50.8**	**62.3**	**58.8**	54.2
4a. Does the Casino have a self-exclusion program?	96.1	97.0	95.5	95.9	95.7	96.6	**98.2**	**97.8**	96.6
4ai. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from...an advertisement?	48.7	52.3	47.4	50.0	49.3	49.8	**55.0**	**53.9**	50.9
4aii. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from...a staff person?	9.8	**13.8**	8.8	12.6	12.1	10.8	**15.2**	**14.5**	12.3
4aiii. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from...a friend or family member?	32.6	31.7	30.7	29.7	29.7	34.4	**34.2**	**34.0**	32.1
4aiv. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from...the Casino's website?	12.3	14.0	15.3	16.0	15.8	10.0	**12.4**	**11.9**	13.6
4av. At the Casino, I am not sure where I heard of the self-exclusion program	9.4	7.3	13.3	9.6	10.1	7.6	**5.5**	**6.0**	8.7
5. Have you seen any responsible gambling information posted on slot machines?	60.1	59.7	62.2	61.5	61.3	58.1	**58.0**	**57.6**	59.8

Note: Bold indicates statistical significance at p<0.0025 between the two time periods: 2012-2015 and 2016-2019 for the total sample and the higher and lower gambling frequency subgroups (columns 3-5 vs. 6-8), or between the two gambling frequencies subgroups collapsed over time (columns 1 - 2).
n= maximum number of respondents

Table 2: Generalized Linear Mixed Methods Results

RG Check Questions	Included cases %	Model % correct	Corrected Model F	sig	Gambling Freq F	sig	Year F	sig	Estimate	std	Z	sig
	Included cases	Model %	Fixed Effects						Random Effects			
	cases	%	Corrected Model		Gambling Freq		Year					
	%	correct	F	sig	F	sig	F	sig	Estimate	std	Z	sig
1a. At the Casino, have you seen any information on ... how slots work	92.30	60.3	13.944	0.000	63.017	0.000	3.684	0.001	0.079	0.018	4.418	0.000
1b. At the Casino, have you seen any information on ... chances of winning and losing at slots	92.30	63.9	11.709	0.000	75.897	0.000	1.292	0.250	0.127	0.026	4.869	0.000
1c. At the Casino, have you seen any information on ... tips for keeping gambling in control	92.30	56.9	7.097	0.000	43.355	0.000	1.147	0.330	0.071	0.015	4.556	0.000
1d. At the Casino, have you seen any information on ... signs of a gambling problem	92.30	56.4	5.512	0.000	25.339	0.000	2.231	0.029	0.042	0.011	3.871	0.000
1e. At the Casino, I haven't seen any information	92.00	87.7	15.656	0.000	43.227	0.000	9.544	0.000	0.102	0.026	3.919	0.000
2. Do you know where to access information for problem gambling assistance at the Casino	83.00	66.8	60.67	0.000	138.25	0.000	52.916	0.000	0.082	0.019	4.337	0.000
3. Have you heard of the place ... the Responsible Gambling Information Centre?	84.40	63.3	15.663	0.000	105.19	0.000	2.981	0.004	0.180	0.035	5.162	0.000
3a. Have you ever asked a staff person about the Responsible Gambling Information Centre (RGIC)?	51.10	79.7	4.887	0.000	28.449	0.000	1.416	0.194	0.159	0.038	4.185	0.000
3ai. Was the staff person able to provide you with information on the RGIC?	11.50	90.0	12.234	0.000	1.382	0.240	13.784	0.000	0.592	0.186	3.188	0.001
3b. Have you ever visited the Responsible Gambling Information Centre?	52.60	73.3	12.81	0.000	50.087	0.000	8.979	0.000	0.276	0.059	4.661	0.000
4. Have you ever heard of the self-exclusion program?	88.30	65.5	23.255	0.000	108.87	0.000	13.51	0.000	0.418	0.075	5.554	0.000
4a. Does the Casino have a self exclusion program?	39.10	96.9	6.269	0.000	5.051	0.025	5.996	0.000	0.462	0.140	3.296	0.001
4ai. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from ... an advertisement?	40.90	62.0	12.552	0.000	11.837	0.001	11.508	0.000	0.351	0.072	4.864	0.000
4aii. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from ... a staff person?	41.00	86.7	4.265	0.000	17.306	0.000	3.722	0.000	0.110	0.037	2.963	0.003
4aiii. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from ... a friend or family member?	41.00	69.0	1.496	0.153	0.032	0.859	1.708	0.102	0.217	0.046	4.747	0.000
4aiv. At the Casino, did you hear about the self-exclusion program from ... the Casino's website?	34.10	86.3	3.844	0.000	2.961	0.085	4.102	0.000	0.047	0.025	1.897	0.058
4av. At the Casino, I am not sure where I heard of the self-exclusion program	33.10	92.5	39.982	0.000	13.746	0.000	45.639	0.000	0.460	0.115	4.007	0.000
5. Have you seen any responsible gambling information posted on slot machines?	63.40	60.8	3.187	0.001	0.003	0.955	3.541	0.001	0.137	0.029	4.695	0.000

Discussion

➢ The present results display both positive and negatives attributes pertaining to RG/HM; between 35.0% and 64.6% of patrons report awareness of some aspect of RG/HM within the casino.

➢ Other important positive findings are that this awareness is higher among regular patrons compared to occasional patrons and has increased over time.*

Discussion

➢ Although these results suggest there is increasing awareness of RG measures, **a more important goal** would be **to show utilization of RG/HM knowledge** among casino patrons, and to demonstrate **reductions in gambling-related harm**. The present results have almost no information pertaining to behaviour or impact of RG/HM behaviour.

➢ However, it is not unreasonable to speculate that the **impact of greater awareness is low** due to the moderate level of RG/HM awareness and poor link between awareness and behaviour.

Discussion

➢**Limitations**: RG questions **did not assess actual RG/HM behaviours** such as actually setting time or money limits; not accessing additional money from ATMs; activating pre-commitment on slot machines or reward cards (where/when available); utilization of casino self-exclusion, etc. The two questions in the survey that did ask about behaviour* showed lower levels of endorsement, which is consistent with most other studies showing a much **higher level of awareness than usage of RG/HM** (e.g., Jackson et al., 2016).**

Conclusion

➤ The present results indicate that the **RG check program is working**, as awareness of RG/HM strategies is reasonably good and increasing with time.

➤ However, our assessment is that RG/HM awareness **could be further improved**, and consideration should be given to the assessment of the actual utilization and **impact of these tools on behavioural change**.

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Thank you