



RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION OF GAMBLING: RESULTS FROM A SURVEY OF EXPERTS

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DISCLOSURE OF POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

~ AUD \$6.5 million in research grants

- 97.5% from Australian Federal and State governments
- 2.5% as consulting fees from industry for RG-related work
- attended industry sponsored events & hospitality

Background

- Consumers are now advised to “gamble responsibly” – in gambling adverts, gambling venues/websites, and public health messages
- And to do so by adopting responsible gambling consumption strategies, e.g. limits, breaks, keep gambling in balance, don’t chase losses, understand the odds, only gamble for fun, pay your bills first, don’t borrow money to gamble, etc.
- Unclear if RG consumption strategies are aimed at:
 - non-problem and low-risk gamblers as a harm prevention strategy
 - higher-risk gamblers as a harm minimization strategy, or
 - problem gamblers to address their gambling problem
- Few conceptual developments in RG consumption – no agreed definitions, principles, goals, behaviours.

Aim

To develop validated set of behavioural indicators of responsible consumption of gambling (RCG).

What set of gambling-related behaviours would ensure that gamblers avoid gambling harm, problems and addiction?

Important:

We do not consider efforts to understand and promote RCG to replace industry and government responsibilities for ensuring consumer protection and harm minimisation in gambling!

This work is a pragmatic effort to unpack what “gambling responsibly” entails.

Overview

- Process we are using
- Expert survey results
- Our definition and principles for RCG
- Draft Behavioural Indicators of Responsible Gambling Scale (BIRGS)
- Next steps
- Implications

Process to develop behavioural indicators of RCG

- Systematic literature review:
 - identified 57 RCG behaviours
 - confirmed no agreed definition or underlying principles for RCG
- Content analysis of consumer information on 30 websites:
 - included 6 govt, 10 industry, 14 help service websites
 - 25 Australian, 5 overseas websites
 - analysed for their RCG definitions, descriptions and guidelines
 - included some of the 57 behaviours from the lit review
 - identified 88 *additional* RCG behaviours
 - confirmed lack of consistent definition or principles for RCG
- Total = 145 RCG behaviours

Expert survey

- To help generate definition and principles, and refine behavioural indicators of RCG
- 107 experts recruited through contacts, NAGS delegates and major international forum
- Worked in research (41%), treatment (23%), training (20%), policy/regulation (8%), other (8%)
- Experts asked:
 - to define RCG and identify its objectives (open-ended)
 - to rate importance of each specific behaviour to NP, AR and PGs “to help them to gamble responsibly” (reduced 145 RCG behaviours to 61 for the survey)
 - general views about concept of RCG, its promotion, terminology, whose responsibility, potential concerns.

Expert views on general questions about RCG

- Most thought the term ‘responsible gambling’:
 - is somewhat stigmatising and discouraging for people struggling to control their gambling
 - problem gamblers would not be receptive
 - at-risk and non-problem gamblers would be more receptive
 - ‘safe gambling’ (23%) and ‘low-risk gambling’ (22%) favoured nearly as much as ‘responsible gambling’ (24%)
- Experts overwhelmingly considered RG to be poorly understood by consumers
- And inadequately promoted in a meaningful way
- Existing consumer guidelines for RCG considered inappropriate, lacking evidence of their efficacy.

Expert views on general questions about RCG

- How much responsibility does each group have to ensure people gamble responsibly?

Most experts also felt that:

- too much emphasis on gamblers to self-regulate their gambling
- too little emphasis on industry to provide safe gambling products & environments
- too little emphasis on governments to implement safe gambling policies



Expert views on general questions about RCG

- most experts also agreed that it is possible to develop an evidence-based set of RCG behaviours
- which are practical for consumers
- despite large variations in gamblers' personal circumstances, disposable income and other characteristics.

Key principles underpinning RCG: distilled from lit review, website analysis, expert survey

- **Affordability.** Gambling within an individual's affordable limits of time, money and other resources – which may involve setting and adhering to limits in advance of gambling.
- **Balance.** Keeping gambling in balance with other activities, responsibilities and priorities – so that it does not compromise other aspects of the gambler's life.
- **Informed choice.** Exercising informed choice over gambling – which includes understanding the associated risks, not being influenced by erroneous gambling beliefs, and knowing the odds or the likelihood of losing and winning.
- **Control.** Staying in control of gambling – through self-regulating one's own gambling and knowing when to stop.
- **Enjoyment.** An enjoyable/pleasurable gambling experience – motivated by gambling only for pleasure, entertainment and fun and not to win money.
- **Harm-free.** Absence of gambling-related harm to self and others – including gambling in a way that avoids the development of gambling problems.

Our definition of RCG: distilled from key principles

Exercising control and informed choice to ensure that gambling is kept within affordable limits of money and time, is enjoyable, in balance with other activities and responsibilities, and avoids gambling-related harm.

Importance of RCG behaviours: Expert views

- We grouped the 61 RCG behaviours into 7 categories
- All categories of RCG behaviours considered at least moderately important
- All specific behaviours within each category considered at least moderately important for NPGs, AR and PGs
- But significantly more important for AR and PGs than for NPGs

Developing a preliminary set of RCG behaviours

- Of the 61 behaviours in the survey:
 - only those considered at least moderately important for all three groups of gamblers were retained
 - because of experts' strong majority agreement that RCG messages and guidelines should target all gamblers
 - 10 items discarded
- The final set of preliminary indicators contains 51 behaviours in 7 categories
- Which remain to be tested in samples of gamblers

Our preliminary set of RCG behaviours

1. Ensuring gambling expenditure is affordable

- Only gamble with money that is not needed for necessities such as bills, rent, food, etc.
- Avoid borrowing money or getting money on credit (including credit cards) to gamble with
- Only gamble what you can afford to lose
- Set an affordable gambling budget
- Set deposit limits for Internet gambling accounts
- Use only online gambling websites with daily spend limits

2. Keeping gambling in balance

- Ensure that you gamble in a way that does not cause harm or problems for other individuals
- Ensure that gambling doesn't dominate your leisure time
- Ensure that gambling doesn't dominate your thoughts when you are not gambling
- Engage in other leisure activities, hobbies or interests other than gambling
- Prioritise your responsibilities (e.g., to family, friends, work, study) over gambling

Our preliminary set of RCG behaviours (cont'd)

3. Limiting persistence at gambling

- Avoid chasing losses when gambling
- Avoid increasing bets when losing
- Set and stick to a limit on how much money you spend when you gamble
- Avoid increasing bets when winning
- Avoid betting on every race/sport/other gambling outcome
- Avoid having multiple online gambling accounts
- Set and stick to a limit on your maximum bet size when you gamble
- Set and stick to a limit on how often you gamble
- Cash out all or a portion of winnings and don't gamble those winnings later in the session
- Set and stick to a limit on how long you gamble for each session
- Take frequent breaks when gambling

Our preliminary set of RCG behaviours (cont'd)

4. Understanding gambling

- Understand that gambling outcomes are affected by chance – that any skill will not ensure a win
- Understand that gambling for longer makes no difference to your chances of winning
- Understand that feeling lucky makes no difference to your chances of winning
- Expect to lose when gambling
- Understand that you cannot win money from gambling in the long run
- Ensure that you do not overestimate your skill at gambling
- Understand the odds before you gamble
- Think about the possible negative consequences of gambling
- Read the fine print on promotions before you enter them
- Think about how long it took to save the money that you use to gamble
- Think about how you feel when your gambling money is gone
- Think about other things that the money spent on gambling could be used for

Our preliminary set of RCG behaviours (cont'd)

5. 'Positive' motivations for gambling

- Avoid gambling to pay bills
- Avoid gambling in order to make money
- Only gamble for entertainment/fun/pleasure
- Avoid gambling when you feel depressed or upset
- Avoid taking gambling too seriously, as it is just a game
- Avoid gambling to impress or challenge other people
- Avoid gambling to relieve boredom

6. A planned approach to gambling

- Avoid gambling when affected by alcohol or recreational drugs
- Don't give into peer pressure to gamble
- Avoid gambling with heavy gamblers
- Avoid gambling in the heat of the moment
- Avoid being tempted to gamble by advertisements or promotions

Our preliminary set of RCG behaviours (cont'd)

7. Use help and support if needed

- Seek professional gambling help if needed
- Self-exclude from gambling venues and/or websites if needed
- Block online gambling websites if needed
- Have someone in your life who you can talk to openly about gambling
- Develop a support network

Unsure about this category of behaviours!

Next steps

- Plans to administer these items to samples of regular gamblers to create a Behavioural Indicators of Responsible Gambling Scale (BIRGS)
- Items to be validated against the PGSI (Ferris & Wynne 2001), Gambling Harms Scale (Browne et al. 2016) and the Gambling Urge Scale (Raylu & Oei 2004)
- Seeking to also develop a SF BIRGS – minimum set of behaviours to ensure avoidance of gambling problems, gambling harms and gambling urges.

Potential uses of the BIRGS

Once validated, the BIRGS can be used to:

- promote consistent RCG behaviours as consumer guidelines
- form a self-assessment test for consumers
- inform cognitive behavioural therapy
- measure the prevalence of RCG, and over time
- measure changes in RCG after new RG initiatives
- inform improved industry practices to better support RCG behaviours
- target sub-populations with low usage of RCG behaviours with public health messages
- target RCG behaviours with low usage with public health messages

Further info

Hing, N., Russell, A., & Hronis, A. (submitted). *Behavioural indicators of responsible gambling consumption*.
Melbourne: Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

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Thanks!