Internet gambling on the rise in Australia

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Internet gambling has been around since the 1990s but its popularity has soarded in recent years.

(Medical Xpress) -- Internet gambling is on the rise in Australia according to new research from the University of Sydney and Southern Cross University, with factors such as convenience and ease of access contributing to its popularity.

The study shows that internet gamblers had significantly more positive attitudes towards gambling and that people appear to be gravitating towards online gambling because of its availability and convenience.

Professor Alex Blaszczynski, from the School of Psychology at the University of Sydney, collaborated with lead researcher Dr Sally Gainsbury from Southern Cross University's Centre for Gambling Education and Research (CGER).

Also collaborating on the study, An investigation of internet gambling in Australia, were CGER director Professor Nerilee Hing and the University of Lethbridge's Dr Robert Wood.

"For people with existing gambling problems, internet gambling may create additional risks," Dr Gainsbury said.

"Overall the research showed internet gamblers were not more likely to be problem gamblers, but they do appear to be at higher risk of developing problems."

The findings are part of the largest survey of internet gamblers to date in Australia, with more than 6680 participants taking part in the self-selected, online questionnaire.

Over half of the 450 problem internet gamblers responding to the survey said the use of credit cards or internet bank transfers increased the amount they spent, compared to less than one in 10 of the 2270 non-problem internet gamblers.

"While internet gambling has been around since the 1990s its popularity has soared in the past few years, with clear trends indicating an increasing number of participants starting to gamble online," Dr Alex Blaszczynski said.

Most study participants played on Australian-based sites, where these are available (wagering and lottery), but they showed little concern about the legality of sites and where they are based.

"This is a worrying trend as playing on offshore sites may result in identify theft, fraud, losing funds and cheating, leaving Australians with little recourse," Dr Alex Blaszczynski said.

Internet gambling was perceived to be too addictive by 15 percent of players and poses unique risks, particularly for vulnerable populations: young, single, uneducated and unemployed gamblers.

"Gambling problems take a while to set in before causing severe consequences so as people continue to play online more problems are likely to emerge from this form of gambling," Dr Blaszczynski said.

"The study's researchers are calling for the online gambling space to be made safer for users. Among our recommendations are that players be

encouraged to set limits on their spending; pop-up messages suggesting a break in long continuous sessions; and self-tests to determine the risk of developing [gambling](#) problems."

Provided by University of Sydney

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