



PROBLEM GAMBLING

- The Members of the RGA are extremely committed to ensuring that their customers gamble responsibly. They have worked to minimise the occurrence of problem gambling as well as mitigate its damaging effects.
- Problem gambling can be combated effectively through education, treatment and the socially responsible behaviour of properly licensed and regulated gambling providers.
- Problem gambling can be defined broadly as gambling that is done excessively and negatively affects other areas of a person's life, such as their physical or mental health, work performance, finances, and/or interpersonal relationships. It is a hugely complex issue and recent research has shown that disordered gambling behaviour might be a manifestation of an underlying problem that certain people have in controlling their behaviours more generally, such as in relation to drugs, alcohol, food, shopping or gambling.¹
- It is often wrongly claimed that online gambling is a major cause of problem gambling, but this is not supported by the evidence. For example, the Australian Productivity Commission found in 2009, when reviewing Australia's gambling laws for the Government, that, "*there are no empirical studies that establish a causal relationship between gambling online and problem gambling*".
- There is a growing consensus that an increase in legalized gambling does not increase problem gambling rates. A comprehensive study found that the evidence "does not support the speculation that Internet gambling has an inherent propensity to encourage excessive gambling among a large proportion of players"² In the US the Public Sector Gaming Study Commission found that "there is no solid basis for concluding that the wider legalization of gambling, which has cut into illegal gambling and friendly betting, has caused a concomitant increase in pathological gambling. In fact, it appears that pathological gambling is quite rare within the general population, [and] it does not appear to be increasing in frequency."³ In the UK there are comparatively low levels of problem gambling, which have remained virtually unchanged for the past decade, despite the ready availability of betting, gaming and lottery products.
- The rates of problem gambling in Europe are generally very low and have remained stable as online gambling has grown more popular. For instance, a study of current

¹ Shaffer, H.J., LaPlante, D., LaBrie, R., Kidman, R., Donato, A., and Stanton, M. "Toward a syndrome model of addiction: Multiple expressions, common etiology." *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 12, pp. 367-374. 2004.

² *Id.*

³ Public Sector Gaming Study Commission. *Final Report*,. p. 35. 2000.

rates of probable pathological gambling found in Great Britain was 0.3%, in Sweden 0.3%, in Iceland 0.6%, in Norway 0.3% and in Denmark 0.1%. Much more research needs to be conducted as only 1/3 of European countries have carried out national surveys on problem gambling

- In addition to complying with licensing and code requirements which are designed to minimise the risk of problem gambling, the RGA and our members support other stand alone initiatives. For instance, in the UK, the RGA has been a leading player in the development of an industry advertising code and in the Responsible Gambling Awareness Day programme, while RGA members are major contributors to the GREaT Foundation which funds treatment, research and education programmes. The wider gambling industry has guaranteed a minimum of £5m will be contributed each year between 2009 and 2011.