

BC Problem Gambling Action Plan

June 2026



Introduction

Gambling in British Columbia (BC) is evolving rapidly. The growth of online gambling, the expansion of sports betting, and the increasing visibility of unregulated¹ advertising are reshaping how people engage with gambling and the risks associated with it.

The 2025–2026 *British Columbia Problem Gambling Prevalence Survey* (Prevalence Study) provides a comprehensive assessment of gambling participation, risk, and related harms across the province. The Prevalence Study offers a current understanding of gambling behaviours in BC, including the broader context in which gambling occurs.

The findings show that while many British Columbians gamble without experiencing harm, risk remains present and is not evenly distributed. Elevated risk is associated with younger adults, individuals experiencing financial strain, and those more engaged in online and unregulated gambling environments. The Prevalence Study also highlights emerging concerns, including early exposure among youth through digital platforms and the growing role of online gambling in shaping behaviour and risk.

The findings also point to a concerning rise in moderate to high-risk gambling behaviours, with 19% of adults now falling into these categories. This reinforces the need for a coordinated and comprehensive provincial approach to problem gambling.

In response, the Independent Gambling Control Office (IGCO) is implementing a series of targeted actions aligned with the recommendations of the Prevalence Study. Central to this work is the recent transition to a new service delivery model for Gambling Support BC (GSBC), which modernizes how prevention and support services are delivered.

¹ In BC, gambling is only lawful when conducted and managed by the Province or licensed for charitable purposes in accordance with the Gaming Control Act; unregulated gambling activities operate outside this framework and are considered illegal by the IGCO.

The new service delivery model also modernizes Indigenous-specific services to support Indigenous-led, community-driven approaches to gambling harm reduction. Through a grant-based model, funding will be directed to Indigenous-led initiatives delivering in-community services. This ensures that programming reflects the distinct needs and priorities of Indigenous communities and aligns with commitments under the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*.

This work is taking place alongside the establishment of the IGCO and the implementation of a strengthened legislative and regulatory framework. The *Gaming Control Act (GCA)* (2022), which came into force in April 2026, and its supporting regulations introduce significant new requirements to address problem gambling.

This action plan outlines the IGCO's response to the Prevalence Study and sets out actions to address key areas of risk, including digital environments, outreach to higher-risk populations, stigma and barriers to seeking support, awareness of safer gambling options, youth prevention, and the ongoing monitoring of emerging trends. These actions are intended to reduce gambling-related harm by supporting earlier help-seeking, increasing awareness of safer gambling environments, and improving access to prevention and support services.

BC Problem Gambling Action Items



Recommendation 1:

Strengthen prevention and awareness in digital environments

The Prevalence Study findings suggest that online gambling and digital platforms play an increasingly important role in shaping gambling behaviour and risk in BC. Among adults, online gambling participation has grown substantially and is associated with higher rates of problem gambling, particularly among those using unregulated platforms. Among youth, gambling exposure often occurs through digital channels such as gaming environments, social media, and online betting platforms.

In response, the Prevalence Study suggests that prevention and awareness efforts may benefit from an increased focus on digital environments where gambling exposure is common and more closely associated with problem gambling. This includes continued development of online education and awareness initiatives that address emerging gambling formats, including sports betting, online gambling, and gaming-related gambling mechanics. Ensuring responsible gambling messaging is visible within digital spaces where gambling occurs may help improve awareness among those most likely to be exposed to these activities.

To address this, the IGCO will strengthen its regulatory and policy focus on reducing exposure to high-risk gambling content in digital environments and enhancing the visibility of prevention and support resources where online gambling occurs.

Actions

- The IGCO will rebuild the Gambling Support BC website to include accessible self-help tools and educational resources that address online gambling, sports betting, and gaming-related gambling mechanics, improving access to information within digital environments where gambling occurs. This will enable individuals to better understand risks and access support earlier.
- The BC Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General has requested the federal government develop a national framework to address gambling advertising, with the goal of reducing exposure to gambling-related harms across Canadian jurisdictions.
- The IGCO, in partnership with TELUS Health as part of the new GSBC service delivery model, will be implementing targeted digital marketing and public outreach to deliver responsible gambling messaging in high exposure online environments, including social media platforms.
- The IGCO will use its regulatory authority under the GCA to monitor and enforce compliance with new requirements that strengthen visibility of responsible gambling information in digital environments. This includes requiring BCLC's

online platforms to provide clear, accessible information about gambling (e.g., odds, randomness, and the role of chance and skill) and to prominently display information about problem gambling and available supports without requiring users to hold an account.



Recommendation 2:

Improve outreach to populations experiencing higher risk

In the Prevalence Study, both the adult and youth findings suggest that gambling risk is not evenly distributed across the population but is more common among certain groups. Among adults, higher levels of risk are observed among younger adults, individuals experiencing financial strain, Indigenous and racialized residents, newcomers, and individuals with disabilities. Among minors, risk is higher for those with greater independence, such as those who are working, living outside the parental home, or approaching the legal gambling age.

The Prevalence Study suggests that prevention efforts may benefit from targeted outreach and culturally appropriate engagement with communities experiencing higher risk, particularly through trusted community organizations and social networks. Approaches that consider the broader social and economic context in which gambling occurs can help ensure that supports are relevant and accessible.

To address this, the IGCO will strengthen targeted, inclusive, and culturally appropriate outreach to populations experiencing higher risk, with a focus on improving awareness of and access to prevention and support services.

Actions

- The IGCO, in partnership with TELUS Health, will implement a targeted outreach and marketing approach as part of the new GSBC service delivery model to increase awareness of and access to responsible gambling supports for higher-risk populations, including through tailored messaging and digital engagement.
- GSBC, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, will deliver grant funding to Indigenous-led initiatives through the Community Action Initiative (CAI). This

new grant program supports Indigenous-led initiatives delivering in-community gambling harm reduction services.

- The IGCO will use its regulatory authority under the GCA to monitor and enforce compliance with new requirements to improve accessibility of responsible gambling information for diverse populations. This includes requiring BCLC to provide problem gambling information in multiple languages, including Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, and Punjabi, and making this information readily available in casinos and across online platforms, with consideration of expanding to additional languages in the future.



Recommendation 3:

Address stigma and barriers to seeking support

Although awareness of gambling supports in BC is relatively high, the Prevalence Study suggests that many individuals experiencing gambling-related harm attempt to manage problems independently rather than accessing formal supports. Stigma, embarrassment, and concerns about judgment appear to be among the most common barriers to seeking help. The Prevalence Study suggests that efforts to address gambling harm may therefore benefit from initiatives that normalize help-seeking and reduce stigma associated with gambling problems.

To address this, the IGCO will prioritize expanding low-barrier and early intervention supports to reach individuals before harms escalate, while promoting help-seeking as a normal and supported behaviour. This includes public education initiatives that frame gambling harm as a health issue and emphasize confidentiality, as well as expanding access to online support options to better reach individuals who may be reluctant to seek help through traditional channels.

Actions

- The IGCO, in partnership with TELUS Health, will integrate stigma-reduction messaging into GSBC marketing and outreach activities to normalize help-seeking and promote gambling supports as confidential, health-based services.

TELUS Health services are delivered through multiple channels, including chat-based support, to improve accessibility and engagement.

- The IGCO will use its regulatory authority under the GCA to monitor and enforce compliance with new requirements to expand access to voluntary self-exclusion by requiring digital enrolment options, providing individuals with a more private and convenient way to restrict their gambling.



Recommendation 4:

Improve awareness of safer and regulated gambling options

The Prevalence Study suggests that individuals who gamble on unregulated online platforms are significantly more likely to experience elevated levels of gambling risk and harm compared with those using regulated provincial platforms. At the same time, some groups, including newcomers to Canada, appear less likely to be registered with or aware of regulated gambling platforms.

The Prevalence Study recommends that the public may benefit from increased awareness of regulated gambling environments and the protections they provide, including responsible gambling tools, spending limits, and access to support resources

To address this, the IGCO will discourage the use of unregulated online gambling platforms and strengthen public awareness of the risks associated with these environments, while increasing awareness of BC's regulated online gambling platform. This includes providing clear and accessible information on how to identify the regulated platform and access safer gambling tools, supporting more informed decision-making and encouraging play within BC's regulated environment.

Actions

- The IGCO delivered the "Not Worth the Gamble" public education campaign (February to March, 2026), in partnership with the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit of British Columbia (CFSEU-BC)'s Joint Illegal Gaming Investigation Team (JIGIT) and BCLC, to increase awareness of the risks of

unregulated gambling and improve understanding of the differences between regulated and unregulated gambling environments.

- The IGCO will provide clear and accessible information on its website about BC's regulated online gambling environment and how it differs from unregulated platforms, supporting more informed decision-making.
- The IGCO will pursue amendments to the GCA to strengthen its ability to reduce the presence and impacts of unregulated online gambling operators in BC.



Recommendation 5:

Support early education and prevention among youth

Youth findings in the Prevalence Study suggest that gambling exposure often occurs before legal gambling age, particularly through digital gaming environments, informal betting, and social influences. While many youth engage casually, a meaningful number show indicators of elevated risk and some report experiencing gambling-related harms.

The Prevalence Study suggests that prevention efforts may therefore benefit from strengthening early education about gambling risks, particularly through school-based or youth-focused programs. Educational initiatives that help youth understand the links between gaming mechanics and gambling, recognize risks associated with gambling behaviours, and identify where to seek help may support building awareness before youth reach legal gambling age.

In addition, the Prevalence Study suggests that increasing awareness of available supports among youth may help address gaps identified in the findings, particularly among youth who report limited knowledge of existing services.

To address this, the IGCO will strengthen early education and prevention efforts among youth by integrating gambling risk awareness, including the links between gaming and gambling, and improving knowledge of available supports before youth reach legal gambling age.

Actions

- The IGCO will build on work undertaken by the non-profit sector to support the provincial delivery of a youth gambling prevention curriculum. This work will enhance early education on gambling-related risks, including the relationship between gaming mechanics and gambling, and will equip youth with the knowledge and skills to recognize potential harms and seek available support resources at an early stage.



Recommendation 6:

Continue monitoring emerging gambling trends

The Prevalence Study findings highlight the evolving nature of gambling participation, particularly in relation to online gambling platforms and gaming-related activities. Continued monitoring of these trends will inform future policy, regulations, and program adjustments and developments in response to emerging risks.

The Prevalence Study suggests regular research and data collection can help ensure prevention, education, and support programs remain responsive to changes in gambling behaviour and emerging areas of risk.

To address this, the IGCO will strengthen its capacity to monitor emerging gambling trends and risks through ongoing prevalence studies, targeted research, and enhanced tracking of technological and behavioural developments in gambling environments. This will support timely, evidence-based policy development and continuous improvement of regulation, prevention, and service delivery.

Actions

- The IGCO has released the 2025-2026 BC Problem Gambling Prevalence Study and will continue to conduct prevalence studies on a three to five-year cycle, alongside targeted research on higher-risk populations and emerging gambling behaviours. This will support timely, evidence-based understanding of gambling-related harm and inform ongoing improvements to prevention, regulation, and service delivery.

- The IGCO will establish and support capacity to monitor emerging technological trends and risks within gambling environments, including developments in online gambling platforms. It will also strengthen collaboration and information-sharing across jurisdictions, industry partners, and research bodies to support consistent understanding of emerging trends and coordinated responses to gambling-related risks.
- The IGCO has combined its policy division with GSBC to strengthen coordination and support the integration of research and monitoring findings into policy development and responsible gambling programming, including informing potential updates to regulations under the GCA to address emerging risks and reduce gambling-related harm in BC.

Conclusion

The 2025–2026 BC Problem Gambling Prevalence Study reinforces both the effectiveness of many existing prevention, education, and support programs in BC and the need to respond to a rapidly evolving gambling environment.

This action plan reflects the IGCO’s commitment to continuous improvement. The transition to a new service delivery model for GSBC represents a significant step forward in modernizing services, improving accessibility, and ensuring that supports are responsive to the needs of individuals and communities. The modernization of the Indigenous stream further strengthens this approach by supporting Indigenous-led, community-driven initiatives.

The establishment of the IGCO, the implementation of the new GCA and supporting regulations also strengthens the IGCO’s ability to respond to emerging risks through enhanced regulatory oversight, integrated policy and program development, and improved coordination across responsible gambling services. By aligning policy, research, and service delivery, the IGCO is well positioned to ensure that prevention and harm reduction efforts remain current and effective.

Moving forward, the IGCO will engage with partners, including BCLC, the Ministry of Health, Indigenous communities, the federal government and other jurisdictions, to



implement the actions outlined in this plan. Through ongoing research, monitoring, and engagement, BC will remain responsive to changes in gambling behaviour and emerging areas of risk.

This includes a strengthened focus on high-risk digital environments, earlier intervention, and improved awareness of safer gambling options. Through these collective efforts, the IGCO reaffirms its commitment to minimizing gambling-related harm in BC.