

Online Betting: Harmless Entertainment or Dangerous Addiction?

Is anyone else concerned about the deluge of ads for online betting on TV? It seems everyone is promoting this form of entertainment, including athletic superstars like Auston Matthews, Wayne Gretsky, Cristiano Ronaldo, Usain Bolt, Charles Barkley, Michael Jordan, and other famous faces. Notice though that these famous faces can afford to lose a thousand bucks here and there:

- Jaromir Jagr ran up a bill of \$500,000 with an online sportsbook before repaying his debt and quitting
- Charles Barkley admits to losing \$30M in blackjack and sports betting before realizing he had a problem
- Ashton Kutcher revealed to Esquire magazine that raking in \$750,000 in four weeks of college football was his reality.
- Floyd Mayweather Jr likes to tweet about his bets:



In my (humble) opinion, these guys have more money than brains. I worry more about the average Joes though. No one ever mentions what they lose, just brag about the thrill of their winnings.

The Risks Involved

Online betting, AKA gambling, is an addiction. These betting sites can be u Like most things that are bad for you, moderation is the key. Of course, the risk to online betters depends on how responsible they are with their money. And, how educated they are on the process. The ads are catchy and glamorous though:

- Unibet Ontario Sports Betting: Bet Anytime, Anywhere
- Bet 365, the World's Favourite: Bet on a Wide Range of Sports
- No Sweat First Bet: New Customers in Ontario get up to \$1000 back if their first bet doesn't win

Was Online Betting Spawned by the Pandemic?

Did lockdowns dictated by the [Covid pandemic](#) fuel the fire increasing the popularity of online betting? The timing of all the ads sure is suspicious to me. Apparently, Alberta made it legal in September 2020, while Ontario followed suit in April, 2022. Coincidence? I think not.

[The Buzzer](#), CBC's sports newsletter, explains the legalities:

Bill C-218 changed that, removing the federal ban on sports betting and paving the path for more types of gambling to be allowed, like futures (e.g. a Stanley Cup bet placed at the beginning of the season) and single-game betting (e.g. the Leafs to beat the Lightning tonight).

Ontario is the first province to launch its regulated sports betting program, with multiple sportsbooks officially opening for business today. With a population of around 14.57 million people, Ontario is expected to generate \$800 million in gross

revenue from sports betting this year – hardly a gamble for the provincial government.

The U.S. passed a similar bill in 2018, and 30 states now host legal sports betting.

The Buzzer

I'm willing to bet (pun intended) that online shopping also increased significantly in 2020 and '21 when people were forced to stay at home. Then in 2022 many were so used to staying home, they continued to take advantage of the convenience.

Know the Risk

The only TV ad I've seen that even mentions the risk involved is from the Canadian Responsible Gambling Council promoted by Andre DeGrasse advising you [know the risks of gambling before imbibing](#).

I admit to being enamoured with and reliant on Amazon too that first Christmas, but call me old fashioned, the online betting worries me. Maybe it's just the mother in me.