

## (2) Promotion of crackdowns on online gambling offenses and clarification of actual conditions

“Non-store-based” online casinos accessed via smartphones and other devices have been widely identified as contributing to increased access to gambling and the accompanying problem of gambling addiction. Concerns have also been raised that such platforms may facilitate the outflow of Japan’s national assets overseas and money laundering.

The police are not only cracking down on gamblers themselves, but also, through follow-the-money investigations and thorough information analysis, are arresting payment service providers, affiliates (Note 1), and other parties involved in illegal gambling and profiting unlawfully therefrom, on charges including habitual gambling offenses and violations of the Act on Punishment of Organized Crimes and Control of Proceeds of Crime (concealment of criminal proceeds), thereby sounding the alarm to society. Meanwhile, the police are working to clarify the actual conditions of organized fund acquisition activities and money laundering, as well as to confiscate criminal proceeds.

In 2024, the police carried out enforcement actions in 62 online gambling cases (Note 2) and arrested 279 individuals, representing year-on-year increases of 49 cases (376.9%) and 172 individuals (160.7%). Of these, “non-store-based” cases accounted for 55 cases and 227 individuals, representing increases of 50 cases (1,000.0%) and 195 individuals (609.4%).



Public awareness materials on the illegality of online casinos

### MEMO

### Survey to assess the actual situation of online casinos

In fiscal 2024, the National Police Agency conducted survey research (Note 3) to assess the actual situation of use of online casinos and related websites.

According to the survey, the estimated number of people in Japan who have used online casino websites was approximately 3.37 million, and the estimated annual amount wagered domestically totaled about 1.2423 trillion yen. Among users and ex-users, around 60% reported that they were aware they had a gambling addiction. Among users, ex-users and non-users, approximately 44% responded that they were unaware that online casinos are illegal in Japan.

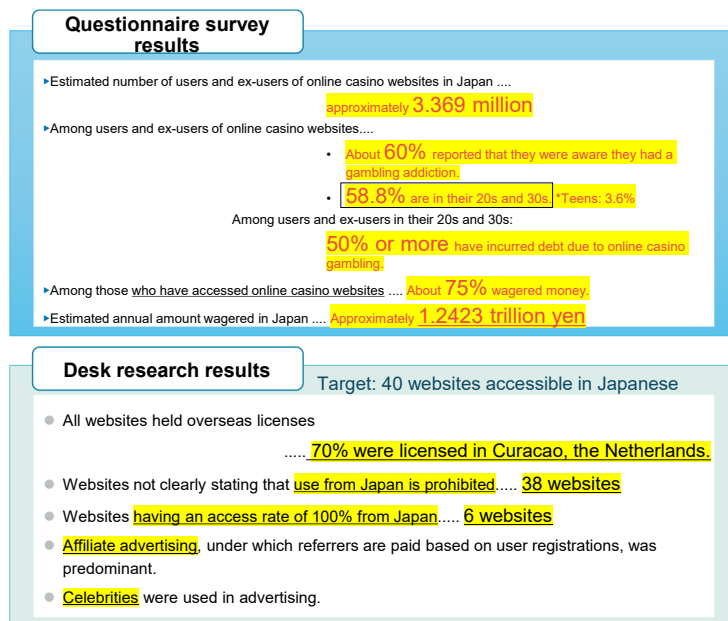
The survey also collected information on online casino websites that are highly likely to be accessed from within Japan. As a result, all of the top 40 websites were found to hold overseas licenses, with about 70% licensed in Curacao, the Netherlands. Of the 40 websites surveyed, 38 websites did not clearly state that use from Japan is prohibited, and 6 websites had an access rate of 100% from Japan. The predominant advertising method was affiliate advertising, in which referrers are paid based on user registrations, and the practice of employing celebrities as promotional figureheads was also observed.

Note 1: This refers to an individual or entity that enters into an affiliate contract with a provider of goods or services to display advertisements for said goods or services in exchange for performance-based compensation, and operates a website or similar platform on which such advertisements are displayed.

2: This includes cases in which individuals access online casino websites to engage in gambling from computers or similar devices at illegal gambling establishments.

3: The survey commissioned by the National Police Agency was conducted through a questionnaire survey and desk research on online casinos. The questionnaire survey targeted individuals aged 15 to 79 residing in Japan and covered general questions related to online casinos. From among the approximately 27,000 respondents, a total of 7,000 individuals were selected, consisting of 6,500 non-users and 500 users and ex-users of online casinos, and a follow-up survey was conducted based on their usage experience. The desk research on online casino websites was limited to websites searchable via general platforms. From 7 comparison websites that introduce online casino websites to Japanese users, the 40 most frequently introduced websites were selected and included in the survey.

Chart III-3 Survey results on online gambling in Japan (FY 2024)

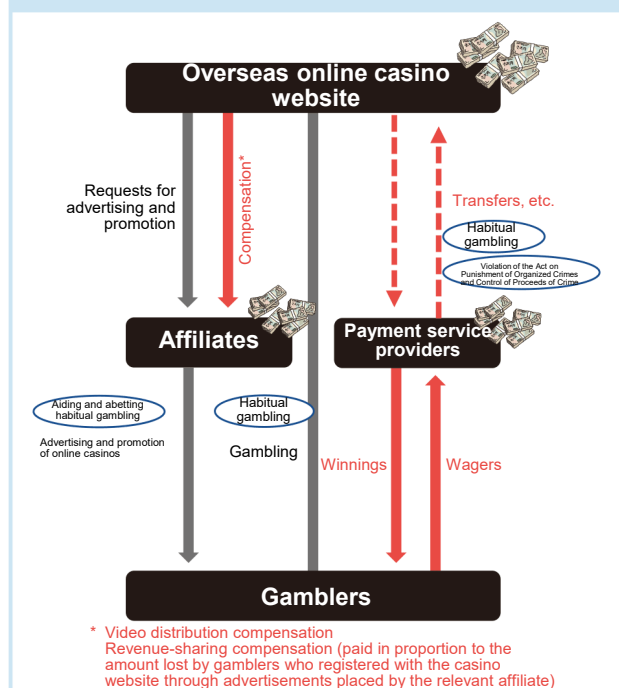


In light of these developments, a law amending part of the Basic Act on Measures Against Gambling Addiction was enacted at the 217th session of the Diet in June 2025 and is to come into effect in September of the same year. This amendment prohibits the display of websites and other platforms that provide venues for illegal online gambling (Note) as well as the dissemination of information that directs users to such activities. It also requires the national and local governments to implement measures to ensure that the public is fully informed that engaging in illegal online gambling is prohibited. The police are further strengthening public awareness of the illegality of online casinos and informing the public not to disseminate information that leads to illegal online gambling, with the aim of reducing opportunities for the public to encounter such information.

### CASE

A 34-year-old female social entertainment and dining establishment employee entered into an affiliate contract with the operators of an overseas online casino website for the period from May 2023 to April 2024, under which compensation was paid based on advertising performance. Using video-sharing platforms and other means, she encouraged an unspecified number of individuals, including a 39-year-old male restaurant owner, to use the online casino website, while advertising that users who registered on the website would receive financial benefits. She thereby caused the man residing in Japan to register on the website and to habitually gamble on it. In September 2024, the woman was arrested for aiding and abetting habitual gambling, and the man was arrested for habitual gambling. (Saitama Prefectural Police)

Chart III-4 Example of the revenue structure of online casinos



Note: This refers to gambling and related activities that are illegally conducted in Japan via the Internet.