Gambling-like mechanics in *Roblox* player generated content

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INTRODUCTION
Roblox (2006) is one of the most popular games in the world (Filby 2025). It is a platform game, where the primary draw is not content made by the game's developers but instead games made by players (Zhang et al. 2024). Player-developers are paid by the Roblox Corporation based on engagement with their games and in-game purchases (Roblox Corporation, n.d.), including gambling-like purchases (Roblox Corporation 2021). This system and *Roblox*'s popularity has led to concerns of the exploitation of players (and player-developers), amongst researchers (Kou and Gui 2023) and games journalists (People Make Games 2021). This research focuses specifically on the presence of gambling-like purchases (e.g. Loot boxes, Gacha, etc) in games on the platform as these purchases have been linked to problem gambling and extreme spending (Zendle et al. 2020; Drummond and Sauer 2018).

Eiger and Roesner (2026) investigated 86 *Roblox* games and found deceptive strategies such as "default to purchase" and "multi-currency exchanges" were both common amongst other problematic microtransactions. Analysis of player discussion on the *Roblox* subreddit by Kou and Gui (2023) similarly found microtransactions were ubiquitous, often to the direct harm of players, alongside a number of other issues such as problematic world design. Player-developers within *Roblox* are themselves concerned with the harm gambling-like mechanics might cause (Kou et al. 2025), and how Roblox's monetisation structure shifts the burden of monetisation onto creators. Zhang et al. (2024) analysed *Roblox* player-developer discussions and found developers discuss both monetisation strategies and how to evade moderation efforts.

This research investigates specifically the presence and proliferation of gambling-like purchases within player-generated games. This covers both loot boxes (and similar) and social casinos (e.g. simulated poker or slot machines). These mechanics are given focus due to their high risks to young people. This research also captures the expected wagers and outcomes of designs. This is to assess the value of these transactions and their impact on the economics of the platforms.

1. How prevalent are gambling-like mechanics in player-generated content?
2. What is the expected value buy-in and outcomes of gambling on these platforms?

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METHOD

The sample consisted of 100 games from *Roblox's* "most popular" category. Each game was played and video recorded for 10 minutes, where necessary additional time was used to gather full details of identified elements. The following was identified:

- Presence of in-game purchases with purchasable Robux

Gambling-like mechanics:

- Loot boxes (inc. Gacha systems)
- Simulated gambling machines (e.g. slot machines)
- Simulated gambling games (e.g. card games such as poker)

For each gambling-like mechanic:

- Wager (how much virtual currency, if that currency was purchasable, items etc).
- Probabilities, if disclosed.
- What can be won

Metadata was also recorded: name, date of recording, player count at time of recording, use of content from an external brand as part of an official collaboration, and age rating.

RESULTS

Sixty-eight games contained loot boxes, 19 contained simulated machine gambling (all prize wheels), and 2 contained simulated gambling games. This is concerning as young people have limited ability to safely engage with these mechanics (Hardwick et al. 2025).

Gambling-like mechanics are central to the gameplay of some games in the sample. Examples include: "*My Knife Farm [NEW CASES]*" which simulates opening knife cosmetic items from "*Counter Strike:Global Offensive*". "*[🏆]Spin a Soccer Card*" features a similar design and simulates opening player cards from "*FIFA ultimate team*".

Age Ratings and Content warnings

Only 1 game "*🦎Camo Or Snipe!* 💥" was tagged with a gambling related warning: "Gambling (Unplayable gambling content)". This game contained both loot boxes and simulated machine gambling. The highest age rating in the sample was "Moderate 13+" applied to two games: "*[🐰]Neighbors🔊*" & "*PROJECT APEX*". This mirrors Carter et al. (2026), who found similar issues with age ratings in mobile games and argued that these put young people at risk.

Buy-in and Winnings

Minimum buy-in had a mean of 86.9 robux and a median of 50 robux, Maximum buy-in had a mean of 1501 and a median of 449 robux. This cannot be cleanly converted into a real world currency, as robux are bought in fixed bundles which vary in price depending on platform and location. These bundles also differ from the rate Roblox uses when paying developers. Using the most efficient HK$ bundles, the mean minimum buy in is HK$23.00 and the mean maximum buy in is HK$158.00. In terms of possible outcomes: 66 allowed a player to win items, 20 in-game currency, 1 transferable items. 18 had outcomes in multiple categories.

CONCLUSION

Gambling-like mechanics are prevalent in popular *Roblox* games, and players are not warned of the presence of these mechanics by age-ratings. Gambling is also embedded in the design of games on the platform. This raises significant player-protection concerns given the links between gambling-like mechanics and problem gambling.

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BIO

Callum Deery is a Phd researcher investigating Games and Regulation at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. Research interests: Games, Monetisation, and Accessibility. At present, researching player-generated games and the tools used to create them.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No Conflicts to Declare