

Online bets on NFL games seen surging as season begins

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A company that most of the legal U.S. sports betting industry uses to verify that its customers are where they say they are reported on Monday a record number of transactions over the first weekend of the NFL season.

That helps confirm an expected a big increase in the level of online betting as football season got underway in a nation with many more places to bet this year.

GeoComply Solutions, the Vancouver, Canada-based tech company, said it recorded 58.2 million geolocation transactions across 18 states and Washington, D.C., from Thursday night, when the NFL season began, through 7 p.m. EST Sunday.

That represents a 126% increase from the same period of the 2020 NFL season, when GeoComply processed 25.8 million transactions.

"We expected high volumes, but what we have seen has surprised us nonetheless," said Lindsay Slader, a managing director with Geocomply. "The level of demand across new markets, such as Arizona, indicates that consumers have long waited for the option to legally place a sports bet."

The data records the amount of times the company was called on to verify a customer's location. It is considered a good indicator for at least a minimum level of sports betting activity, more than 80% of which is done online in the U.S.

States require a gambler to be physically located within their borders in order to make an online sports bet, which is where geolocation technology comes in. It uses a combination of cellphone data, software, hardware and databases to determine where a phone or laptop trying to make a bet is actually located.

While it is true that customers can log in and have their location verified without actually placing a bet, many gamblers also make more than one bet after a single login.

In just three years, legal sports betting has spread to more than half the country. New Jersey won a U.S. Supreme Court case in 2018 clearing the way for any state to adopt legal sports betting.

When Thursday night's game between the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Dallas Cowboys kicked off, 26 states plus Washington, D.C., offered legal sports betting, according to the American Gaming Association, the gambling industry's national trade group. But not all of them offer online sports betting.

That was up from 18 a year ago at the start of last year's football season.

GeoComply says it saw the most activity in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Arizona and Illinois.

Arizona, which launched its sports betting on Thursday, has seen more than 6.1 million geolocation transactions from more than 271,000 newly created accounts since then, the company said Monday.

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