

FACT SHEET:

GAMBLING AND YOUNG PEOPLE

OVERVIEW

Young people (ages 18-34) are a demographic group most at risk of gambling harm in Australia. The Australian Gambling Research Centre has shown 71% of young men and 55% of young women are at risk of experiencing harm from any form of gambling.¹ Young people are the most vulnerable group for poker machine gambling with 89.2% classified as at risk of gambling harm.² This demographic is also most likely to engage in online betting, with 81.9% of young people being considered in danger of harm.³

There are many reasons young people gamble. Strikingly, on average, young people start both simulated and monetary gambling around the ages of 11-12.⁴ Parents and family are the greatest influence, with young people under 18 gambling most often with parents, grandparents or other relatives. The key predictor for concerning gambling behaviour for young people is growing up with an adult who had gambling addictions. Other key factors are targeted marketing, normalisation of gambling within social and cultural activities, and video games containing gambling components which include games with simulated gambling and realistic casino simulations.

In September 2023 the Australian Government indicated that it intends to reclassify video games that involve gambling elements.

RISK FACTORS

1 Family influence.⁵

- The Office of Responsible Gambling's 2020 Youth Gambling Study found that underage gambling most often occurred with parents/guardians present.
- Gambling is normalised from an early age when children and young people attend gambling venues, such a club with poker machines, with family.
- Family traditions such as betting for Melbourne Cup Day, receiving scratchies as presents, or coming of age rituals involving gambling help normalise gambling for young people.

2 Gambling marketing.⁶

- The rise of digital marketing has opened a new market for gambling advertising. A particularly insidious form of this is 'influencer' marketing, where a social media personality can create content that advertises gambling products.
- As social attitudes change towards the participation of women in gambling, advertising is shifting to target young women. In Australia this is most apparent, but not limited to, by the glamorising of betting on horse racing.

3 Normalisation of gambling in sport.⁷

- The connection between sport and gambling through the constant bombardment of gambling advertising (players' shirts, stadium, commentator mentions, ads) during many sporting events makes it appear to young people as if gambling is an intrinsic part of sport. This normalisation of sport and gambling pressures young people to gamble in order to feel a part of the sporting experience.

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SOLUTIONS

As young people may not be aware they are at risk, or they have a problem, it is important for government, schools and services to openly promote support services and drive educational campaigns from an early age. These can include education on pathways to gambling harm, what harm looks like and where to get help. A good approach with young people is to talk about how machines and gambling apps are deliberately programmed to mislead them, rather than jumping straight to the risk of harm. Education for parents and guardians is essential in minimising exposure to gambling from an early age, as many parents are unaware that activities they consider as games are actually gambling. Experts and young people agree that stronger regulation of gambling products is crucial in minimising risk of gambling harm, including restrictions on advertising, reducing the accessibility of gambling products both in venues and online, and regulating online products such as loot boxes.

Advocating for reform

Wesley Mission has put this fact sheet together as part of our advocacy for reform to minimise gambling harm. Our current campaign goals are to:

- implement universal cashless gambling with harm reduction measures built-in
- power-down poker machines after midnight
- fund an independent state-wide self-exclusion register
- let communities have a say
- have greater transparency in NSW – publish venue data.

Contact us: gambling.reform@wesleymission.org.au

For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/PutPokiesInTheirPlace>



Free, confidential support for people experiencing gambling harm is available 24/7, online and on the phone. Access can be arranged for counsellors who speak community languages, or for interpreters to assist.

GambleAware Helpline **1800 858 858**

gamblinghelponline.org.au

In crisis? **Call Lifeline 13 11**

¹ Australian Gambling Research Centre. (2023). *Gambling participation and experience of harm in Australia*. Melbourne: AIFS.

² Greer, N., Jenkinson, R., Vandenberg, B., & Sakata, K. (2023). Regular pokies gambling in Australia, 2022: National Gambling Trends Study. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS).

³ Greer, N., Jenkinson, R., Vandenberg, B., & Sakata, K. (2023). *Regular online betting in Australia, 2022: National Gambling Trends Study*. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

⁴ The Office of Responsible Gambling. (2020). NSW Youth Gambling Study 2020, Research Summary

⁵ Duffy, L., 2021, *Gen bet: a plain English summary of research into gambling and young people*, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.; McCarthy, S. et al (2020). 'It's a tradition to go down to the pokies on your 18th birthday' – the normalisation of gambling for young women in Australia", Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 44/5, 376-381

⁶ Di Censo, G & Delfabbro, P & King, D (2023). "Young People's Perceptions of the Effects and Value of Sports Betting Inducements." International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction. 1-21.

⁷ Nyemcsok, C. et al (2021). Young people's reflections on the factors contributing to the normalisation of gambling in Australia. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health. 45/2, 165-170; Pitt, H. et al (2022). Young people in Australia discuss strategies for preventing the normalisation of gambling and reducing gambling harm. *BMC Public Health*, 22(1), 956.