Study of gambling and health in Victoria
Categories for risk of gambling harm

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

What is the study?

The Victorian prevalence study 2014 is a telephone survey of 13,554 Victorian adults who were selected randomly from the general population. There were 12,551 surveys using landlines and 1003 using mobile telephones. The study aimed to explore gambling and problem gambling in the Victorian population.

How were gamblers categorised?

The researchers used a questionnaire, or screen, called the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to categorise study participants by the degree of gambling harm they are likely to be experiencing.

The categories are:

- non-problem gambler
- low-risk gambler
- moderate-risk gambler
- problem gambler.

It is important to note that categorisation through the PGSI is not the same as clinical diagnosis, which requires assessment by a clinician.

Screens similar to the PGSI are also used to investigate other health issues, such as alcoholism and anxiety.

What were participants asked?

The PGSI asked participants to self-assess their gambling behaviour over the past 12 months by answering the following questions:

1. Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?
2. Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement?
3. When you gambled, did you go back another day to try to win back the money you lost?
4. Have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?
5. Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?
6. Has gambling caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?

7. Have people criticised your betting or told you that you had a gambling problem, regardless of whether or not you thought it was true?
8. Has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household?
9. Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?

The response options attracted the following scores:

- never (score: 0)
- rarely (score: 1)
- sometimes (score: 1)
- often (score: 2)
- always (score: 3).

What do the categories mean?

Non-problem gambler

Score: 0

Non-problem gamblers gamble with no negative consequences.

Low-risk gambler

Score: 1–2

Low-risk gamblers experience a low level of problems with few or no identified negative consequences. For example, they may very occasionally spend over their limit or feel guilty about their gambling.

Moderate-risk gambler

Score: 3–7

Moderate-risk gamblers experience a moderate level of problems leading to some negative consequences. For example, they may sometimes spend more than they can afford, lose track of time or feel guilty about their gambling.

Problem gambler

Score: 8 or above

Problem gamblers gamble with negative consequences and a possible loss of control. For example, they may often spend over their limit, gamble to win back money and feel stressed about their gambling.