

Study of gambling and health in Victoria

Perceptions of gambling harm



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.

The PGSI defines problem gambling as: gambling behaviour that creates negative consequences for the gambler, others in his or her social network, or the community.

For more about the PGSI and what these scores mean, see fact sheet 2: Categories for risk of gambling harm.

Measuring gambling harm

The researchers used a questionnaire, or screen, called the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to measure the severity of gambling harm in the Victorian adult population.

The PGSI scores gamblers on a scale of 1 to 27, classifying them as:

- non-problem gambler (score: 0)
- low-risk gambler (score 1-2)
- moderate-risk gambler (score 3-7)
- problem gambler (score 8-27).

Participants' perceptions of harm caused by their own gambling

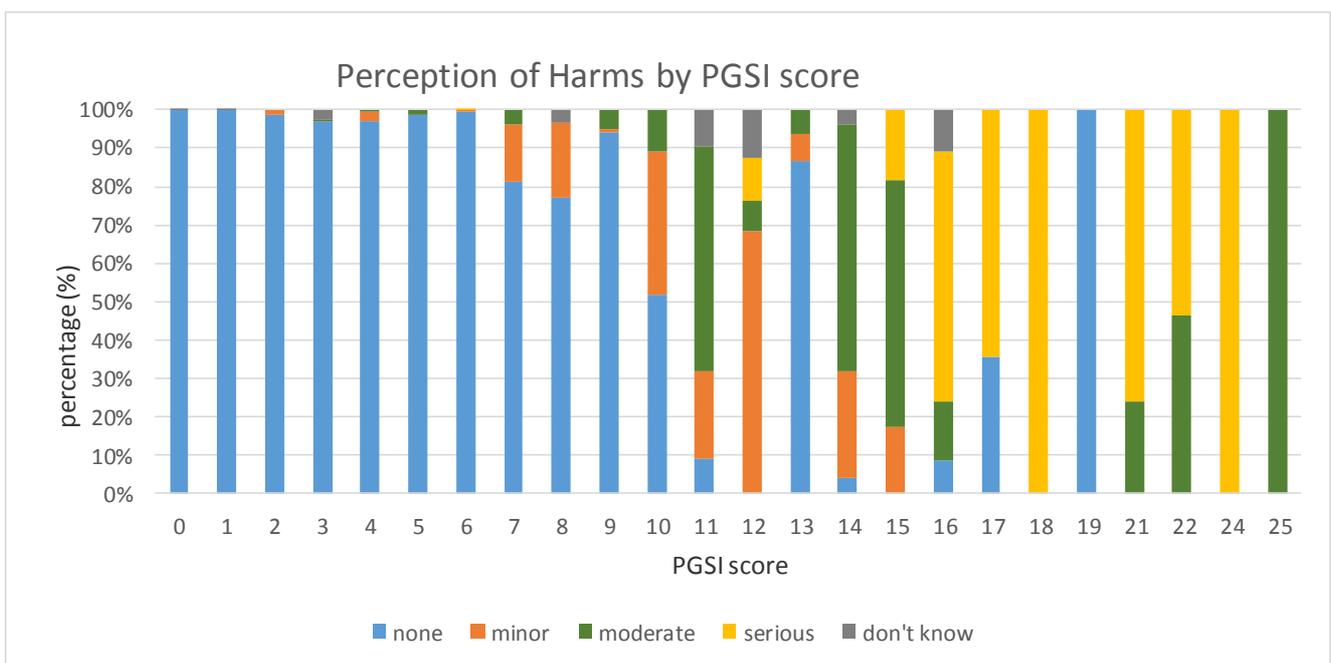
While all study participants completed the PGSI questionnaire, a sub-group of 1541 gamblers were also asked if they experienced problems due to their own gambling. They were asked to rate the severity of harm as none, minor, moderate or serious.

The researchers then compared the group's perceptions against their PGSI scores.

Most participants did not think they experienced harm due to their own gambling, even those with a high PGSI score. However, because the sample size reduces as the PGSI score increases, the higher figures are not as reliable as the lower figures.

Even so, the figures do reveal a trend that gamblers tend to underestimate the harm they experience from their own gambling.

Perception of gambling harm by PGSI score



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Harm experienced from someone else's gambling

The researchers also asked a sub-group of 1866 participants if they experienced harm due to someone else's gambling, and to rate the severity as none, minor, moderate or serious.

The study found that around three per cent (122 thousand) of Victorian adults experience harm due to someone else's gambling. However, this figure underestimates the total number of people affected as children under the age of 18 were not interviewed as part of the study.

The study also hypothesised that people from various socio-economic backgrounds are equally likely to experience harm due to other people's gambling.

No statistical evidence suggested the following factors had an impact on the severity of harm experienced by families and friends:

- gender
- age (excluding people under 18 as only adults participated in the study)
- education level
- employment status
- income level
- whether they were home owners or renters
- whether they were new migrants.

However, it is important to keep in mind that finding no statistical evidence does not mean the impact of socio-economic background does not exist.