Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria
Distribution of harm

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

What is the study?

This project consulted with experts and the community to develop a framework for measuring and assessing the impact of gambling harm in Victoria. The framework can help researchers, policymakers, health professionals and the community better understand and minimise the negative consequences of gambling.

Distribution of gambling harm

The impact of harm and the number of people affected in a population may vary between gamblers and between those affected by someone else's gambling, as well as across the spectrum of gambling problem severity.*

For example, the impact to health and wellbeing due to problem gambling may be more severe than low-risk gambling. However, problem gambling may affect fewer people than low-risk gambling.

This fact sheet explores the distribution of harm at a population level by aggregating the effects of harm among individuals.**

Distribution by severity of gambling problems

Problem gamblers shared around 15 per cent of the total harm related to one's own gambling, while moderate-risk gamblers accounted for around 35 per cent.

Half the harm resulting from one's own gambling was distributed among low-risk gamblers.

Despite being at the lower end of the severity spectrum, low-risk gamblers shared about 50 per cent of total harm due to their larger numbers.
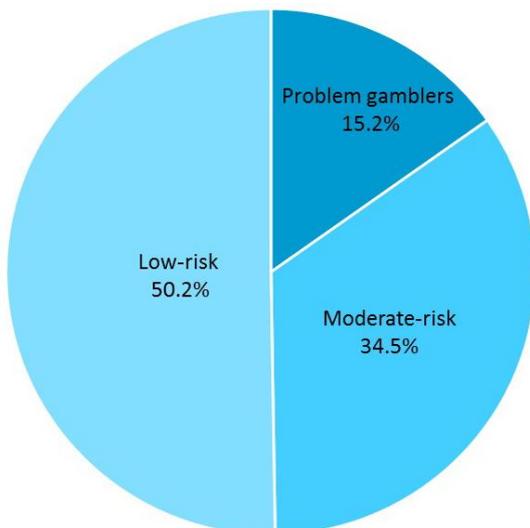
Distribution by gamblers and people close to them
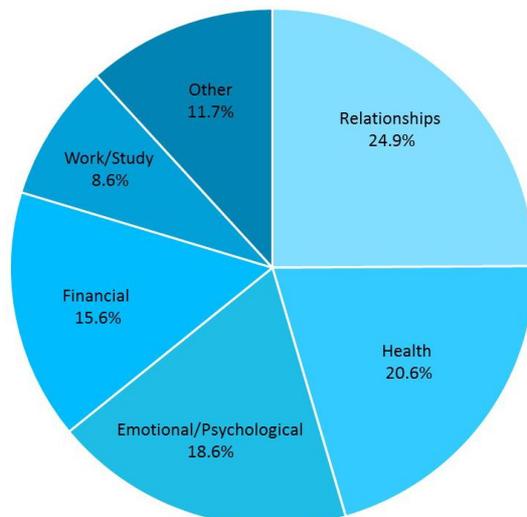
Gamblers experienced the majority of harm (86 per cent), while people affected by someone else's gambling accounted for around 14 per cent of total harm.
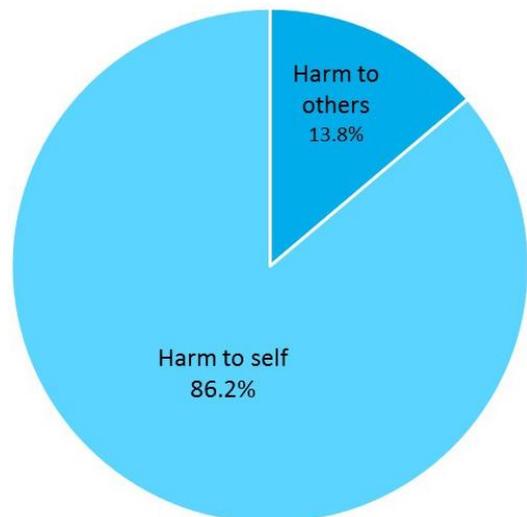
Distribution by dimensions of harm***

Examining the share of harm by the seven dimensions of harm, relationships harm constituted a quarter of total harm.

Harms to health added up to around 20 per cent and emotional or psychological harms accounted for around 18 per cent of total harm.

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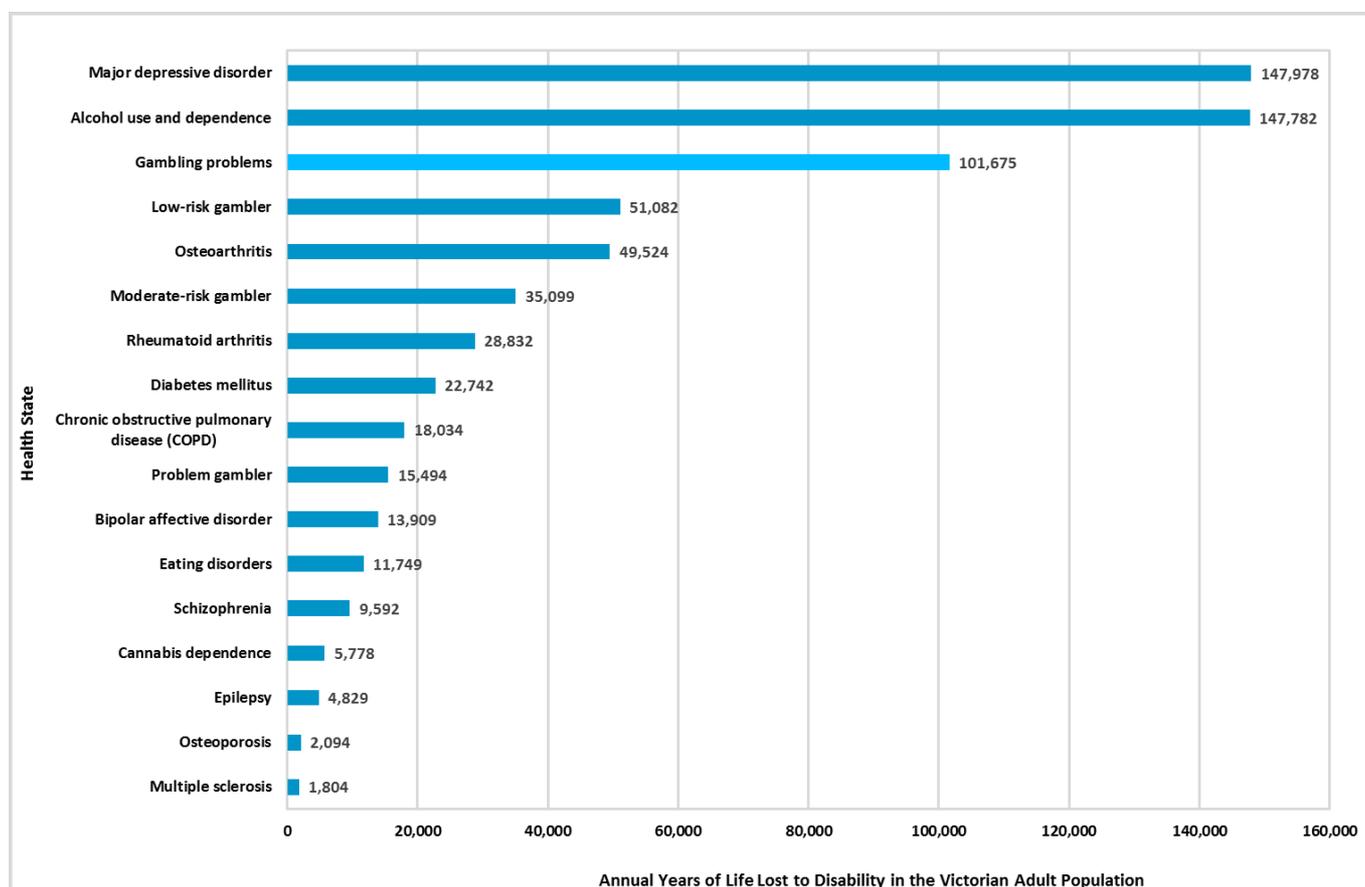
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Aggregated impact compared to other health conditions

The aggregated impact of gambling problems (combining low-risk, moderate-risk and problem gambling) was around two-thirds of major depressive disorder (combining mild, moderate, and severe cases) and alcohol use and dependence.

The impact of alcohol use and dependence was similar to gambling problems but more people reported experiencing alcohol dependence compared to gambling problems. The aggregated impact of alcohol use and dependence was therefore higher.

On the other hand, the number of people experiencing depression was smaller than gambling problems. However, the impact of depression was more severe compared to gambling problems. As a result, the aggregated impact of depression was higher than gambling problems.

Health State	Annual Years of Life Lost to Disability in the Victorian Adult Population
Major depressive disorder	147,978
Alcohol use and dependence	147,782
Gambling problems	101,675
Low-risk gambler	51,082
Osteoarthritis	49,524
Moderate-risk gambler	35,099
Rheumatoid arthritis	28,832
Diabetes mellitus	22,742
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)	18,034
Problem gambler	15,494
Bipolar affective disorder	13,909
Eating disorders	11,749
Schizophrenia	9,592
Cannabis dependence	5,778
Epilepsy	4,829
Osteoporosis	2,094
Multiple sclerosis	1,804

* The severity of gambling problems was measured with the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI). This uses the categories:

- non-problem gambler – gambles with no negative consequences
- low-risk gambler – experiences a low level of problems with few or no identified negative consequences
- moderate-risk gambler – experiences a moderate level of problems leading to some negative consequences
- problem gambler – gambles with negative consequences and a possible loss of control.

For more information about these categories, see the full report or the *Study of gambling and health in Victoria* fact sheet 2: Categories for risk of gambling harm.

** Healthy annual years of life lost to disability was used to aggregate the impact of harm. For details, see the full report: *Assessing gambling-related harm in Victoria*.

*** For more information about the dimensions of harm, see the full report or fact sheet 2: The seven dimensions of gambling harm.