



FACT SHEET 1: WHAT A POPULATION STUDY CAN TELL US

Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study (2018–2019)

What is a population study?

A population study is a statistically sound way of exploring a topic or topics within a defined group of people. There are many ways of defining a population – second generation Australians, Victorian farmers and teenagers in Melbourne who are allergic to nuts are all examples of different populations.

Often, a population is too large, or it would be too expensive, for everyone to participate in a study, so a random sample is selected to represent the larger group.

Some population studies are repeated at regular intervals. This allows researchers to track the topic/s over time, identify trends and monitor changes. The results can be used to inform appropriate responses, for example through relevant policies, programs and services.

In Australia, probably the most well-known population study is the federal government's compulsory Census, which every five years collects information about people in the country on a particular date (with a few exceptions, like diplomats). The topics about which data is collected include marriage status, family size, occupation, languages spoken, country of birth and ancestry.

Gambling population studies

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation exists to prevent, reduce and treat the negative consequences or side effects of gambling – gambling harm – in communities across the state.

To inform this work, the Foundation conducts population studies that monitor the participation of Victorians in gambling activities, as well as the health and wellbeing of those who gamble or are affected by someone else's gambling.

Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study (2018–2019)

This study provides the best information about gambling (the topic) among adults in Victoria (the population).

There were 10,638 participants in the study, which was conducted between September 2018 and January 2019. The results have been weighted to reflect the Australian Bureau of Statistics Estimated Resident Population data for Victoria.

The findings of the population study tell us about the relationship between people's participation in gambling and:

- their experience of gambling harm
- the risk of them experiencing problem gambling
- their mental health and wellbeing
- demographic information (such as age, gender and location).

Similar population studies were completed by the Foundation in 2008 and 2014, allowing comparisons over time.

A new measure – harm

Previous population studies of the prevalence of gambling in Victoria used the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to determine the risk that individuals would experience problem gambling. In the latest study, the PGSI was again used to look at risk, but an additional measure was introduced to collect information about harm.

The Short Gambling Harm Scale (SGHS) was incorporated into the study to measure the level of harm experienced in Victoria by people who gamble and people who are affected by someone else's gambling, such as family members and friends.

The study's value

The findings of the *Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study (2018–2019)* are important because they provide:

- evidence to support a public health approach to gambling harm that focuses on community interventions to reduce it, rather than seeking exclusively to reduce rates of problem gambling
- evidence to inform policy, prevention and treatment efforts in Victoria, for example, in relation to where programs and services should be located to meet the greatest needs
- valuable information for governments and agencies to track efforts to reduce and prevent gambling-related harm.