Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study (2018–2019)

What is the PGSI?

The PGSI is a questionnaire, or screening tool, used to determine whether an individual is at risk of, or likely to be experiencing, problem gambling.

The PGSI is not a clinical diagnostic tool. Rather, it is usually used by:

- researchers, to estimate the number of people in a population who may be affected
- counsellors, to determine the need for an individual to undertake further assessment.

Similar screens are used to investigate other health issues, such as alcoholism and anxiety.

Responses to the questionnaire

The PGSI questionnaire asks participants to self-assess their gambling behaviour over the past 12 months by scoring themselves against nine questions.

In this population study, the percentages of Victorians who gamble and responded to the PGSI questions with 'sometimes', 'most of the time' or 'almost always' are as follows.

PGSI QUESTION	SOMETIMES / MOST OF THE TIME / ALMOST ALWAYS %
1. Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?	5
2. Have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement?	3.3
3. Have you gone back on another day to try to win back the money you lost?	4.1
4. Have you borrowed money or sold anything to gamble?	0.6
5. Have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?	3
6. Have people criticised your betting or told you that you had a gambling problem, whether or not you thought it was true?	2.7
7. Have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?	7.3
8. Has gambling caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?	2.2
9. Has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household?	1.4

Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation

Victoria's population by PGSI category

The PGSI comprises four categories: problem gambling; moderate-risk gambling; low-risk gambling; and non-problem gambling. However, there is typically some overlap between moderate-risk and problem gambling behaviours, which means that some people move back and forth between the two categories.

At 59.2 per cent, most Victorian adults are in the non-problem gambling category according to respondents' PGSI scores. About 36,000 (0.7 per cent) fall into the problem gambling category. And a further 447,000 (9 per cent) are in the moderate- or low-risk categories.

The following table shows Victoria's population by PGSI category.

	POPULATION ESTIMATES (# OF ADULTS)	ALL RESPONDENTS (N=10,638) %
Problem gambling	36,123	0.7
Moderate-risk gambling	118,004	2.4
Low-risk gambling	329,153	6.7
Non-problem gambling	2,911,781	59.2
Non-gambling	1,524,228	31

PROBLEM GAMBLING
People in this category experience severe negative consequences from their gambling. They are likely to gamble heavily and may have lost control. For example, they may often spend over their limit, gamble to win back money and feel stressed about their gambling.

MODERATE-RISK GAMBLING
People in this category experience less significant negative consequences from their gambling. For example, they may sometimes spend more than they can afford, lose track of time or feel guilty about their gambling.

LOW-RISK GAMBLING
People in this category experience only minor negative consequences, if any. For example, they may very occasionally spend over their limit or feel guilty about their gambling.

NON-PROBLEM GAMBLING
People in this category may or may not gamble frequently with heavy involvement in terms of time and money, but they experience no negative consequences.

PGSI characteristics: general findings

- Men are significantly more likely than women to be in the problem gambling category (1 per cent of men vs 0.5 per cent of women); moderate-risk category (3.4 per cent vs 1.5 per cent); and low-risk category (8.4 per cent vs 5 per cent).

- Women are significantly more likely to be in the non-problem gambling category – 61.2 per cent compared with 57.1 per cent of men.

- 5.9 per cent of 18 to 24-year-olds are in the moderate-risk and problem gambling categories, compared with 3.1 per cent of Victorian adults overall.

- 4.5 per cent of people with an annual income of $20,800–$41,599 are in the moderate-risk and problem gambling categories, compared with 3.1 per cent overall.

- At 7 per cent, a significantly higher proportion of people who gamble and mainly speak a language other than English at home are in the moderate-risk and problem gambling categories, compared with 4 per cent of those who mainly speak English at home.

- 54.8 per cent of people in the problem gambling category participate in four or more gambling activities compared with 14.8 per cent overall, or 11.6 per cent of people in the non-problem gambling category.

- Using the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, where the average satisfaction with life as a whole score is 8.09 out of 10, people in the moderate-risk and problem gambling categories are significantly less satisfied with their lives (6.75). This is particularly marked for people in the problem gambling category (5.32).

- 29.2 per cent of people in the moderate-risk category and 31 per cent in the problem gambling category often or always drink alcohol while gambling, compared with 9.6 per cent in the non-problem gambling category.

- 30.2 per cent of people in the moderate-risk and 39.4 per cent in the problem gambling category smoke daily, compared with 11.5 per cent of Victorians overall.

Problem gambling vs gambling harm

Problem gambling refers to behaviours that lead to negative consequences. People who gamble in this way may find formal treatment helpful to change their behaviour. People who are at risk of problem gambling are also encouraged to seek help early.

Gambling harm refers to the reduced wellbeing that can result from gambling. It affects the person who gambles, as well as the people around them, including family, friends and community.