



FACT SHEET 4: GAMBLING HARM

Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study (2018–2019)

What is gambling harm?

The Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation considers gambling harm to be any negative consequence or side effect that comes from gambling, which can range in severity from momentary feelings of guilt or regret right through to extreme outcomes, like bankruptcy.

The most obvious type of gambling harm is financial, but there are many others. These include relationship difficulties, health problems, emotional or psychological distress, issues with work or study, cultural stresses and criminal activity.

A person can experience gambling harm as a result of their own gambling or someone else's. Harm leads to poorer health and wellbeing of the individual, family, community or population.

Measuring harm

The Short Gambling Harm Scale (SGHS) was incorporated into the *Victorian Population Gambling and Health Study (2018–2019)* to assess the degree of harm caused by gambling.

The SGHS asks participants to indicate if they have had any of the following 10 experiences as a result of their own or someone else's gambling:

- a reduction of available spending money
- a reduction in savings
- regrets about gambling

- less spending on recreational expenses such as eating out, going to movies etc
- feeling ashamed
- feeling like a failure
- feeling distressed
- spending less time with loved ones
- increased credit card debt
- the selling of personal items.

The study also considered four additional severe harms, which participants nominated only if explicitly caused by gambling:

- spending less on essentials such as medication, health and food
- significant relationship conflict
- experiencing family violence
- not attending to children's needs.

Gambling harm by risk category

The Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) is the standardised measure of at-risk behaviour in problem gambling. The PGSI classifies people by the way they gamble: problem gambling; moderate-risk gambling; low-risk gambling; and non-problem gambling.

The PGSI was used in the study to determine the prevalence of problem gambling in Victoria, as well as the rates of people at low or moderate risk of experiencing problem gambling, and non-problem gambling.

The incidence of harm for each PGSI group was then measured using the SGHS. Four additional severe harms were assessed in a subset of the population.

Key findings

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

The proportion of people who experience harm from gambling i.e. at least one of the 10 SGHS harms, rises significantly with each PGSI risk category. Harm is experienced by:

- 4.3 per cent of people whose gambling is classified as non-problem
- 29.2 per cent of people at low-risk of problem gambling
- 59.4 per cent of people at moderate-risk of problem gambling
- 100 per cent of people who experience problem gambling.

When only the four additional severe harms are examined, nearly half – 49 per cent – are experienced by people whose behaviour is classified as problem gambling. The remaining 51 per cent are experienced by people who participate in non-problem, low- and moderate-risk gambling.

These findings are important because they show that the majority of gambling harm in Victoria is experienced by people whose gambling behaviour is not classified as problem gambling.

Overall, 30 per cent of gambling harm in Victoria is experienced by people in the PGSI problem gambling category. The remaining 70 per cent is experienced by people who engage in non-problem, low- and moderate-risk gambling.

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Figure 1: Gambling harm in Victoria by PGSI group

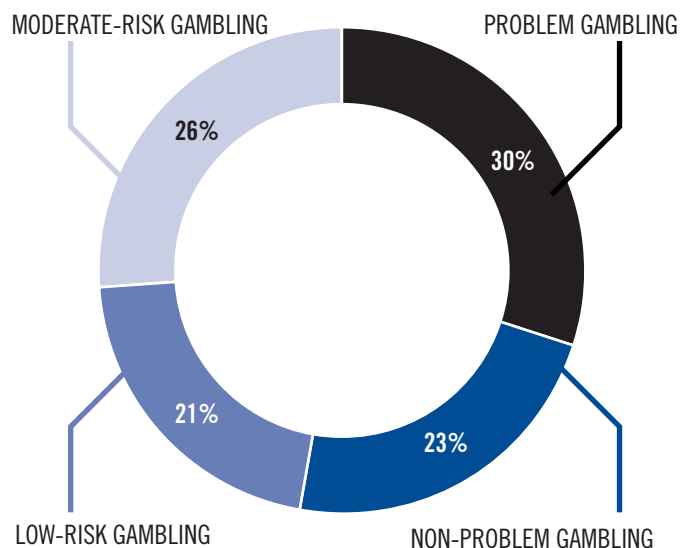
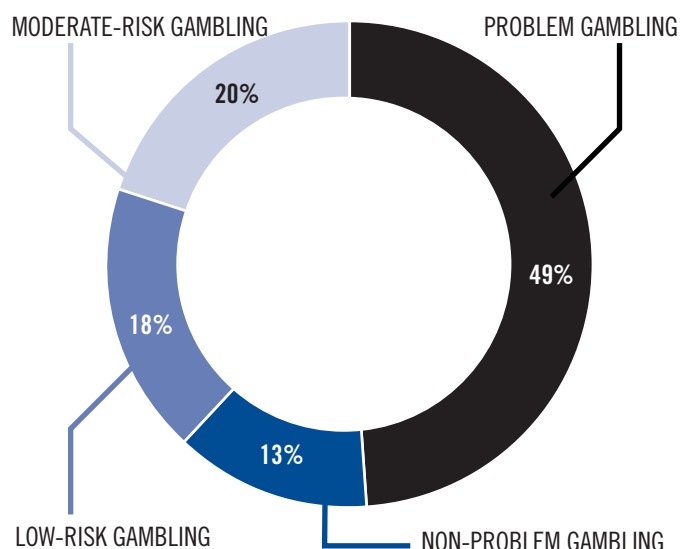


Figure 2: Severe gambling harm in Victoria by PGSI group



Gambling harm by product

Individually, eSports, informal private gambling, Keno and electronic gaming machines (EGMs/pokies) are the 'riskiest' forms of gambling.

At 65.9 per cent, pokies, casino table games and Keno are collectively estimated to account for the majority of gambling harm in Victoria.

However the products with the highest associated harms may not be the products that are the direct source of the harm. Nevertheless, the analysis reliably points to products that are attractive to people who are harmed by gambling.

Gambling harm by region

Of the sum total of all gambling harms experienced in Victoria, 70 per cent occur in metropolitan areas. These areas are where an estimated 77 per cent of the population live.

Gambling harm is widely spread in the Victorian community. However, northern metro, south-eastern metro and western metro areas have a relatively high prevalence of gambling harms. People who live in southern metro, eastern and western Victoria experience fewer harms.

Gambling harm by age

Eighteen per cent of people in the age group 18 to 24 years' experience the most harm from their own gambling.

At 9.9 per cent, people in the age group 35 to 44 years are most harmed by another person's gambling, compared with 6.1 per cent overall.

Gambling harm by gender

More men than women report experiencing each of the 10 harms in the SGHS. All gender differences, bar the selling of personal items, are statistically significant:

- 6.8 per cent of men who gamble say their available spending money has been reduced, compared with 3.4 per cent of women who gamble
- 5 per cent of men say their savings are reduced, compared with 2.8 per cent of women
- 4.4 per cent of men have regrets and feel sorry about their gambling, compared with 2.4 per cent of women.

Gambling harm by income

There is a significant relationship between income and gambling harm. The greatest likelihood of experiencing harm occurs among people on low to middle annual personal incomes of between \$20,800 and \$41,599.

Top harms identified by people who gamble

- 5.1 per cent of people who gamble say their spending money is reduced
- 3.9 per cent say their savings are reduced
- 3.4 per cent have regrets that make them feel sorry about their gambling.

Affected others

At 23.5 per cent, the proportion of people of Aboriginal descent harmed by someone else's gambling is significantly higher than the 5.9 per cent of non-Indigenous people in Victoria who are 'affected others'.

Top harms identified by affected others

- 80 per cent of people harmed by someone else's gambling report feeling distressed about the other person's gambling
- 64.3 per cent say they experience increased tension in their relationship with the person who gambles
- 63.3 per cent feel angry at the person for not controlling their gambling.