

FACT SHEET 13

PROBLEM GAMBLERS

PREVALENCE OF PROBLEM GAMBLING – VICTORIAN ADULTS

All gamblers in this study were administered the nine scored questions from the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), which is a subscale of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI).

The prevalence of problem gambling for the Victorian adult population is 0.70%.

The highest-spend activity by problem gamblers is poker machines or electronic gaming machines (EGMs) (64.14%), followed by table games – like blackjack, roulette and poker (11.21%), lotto/Powerball and pools (9.73%) and horse, harness racing and greyhounds – excluding sweeps (9.47%).

The prevalence of problem gambling was markedly lower for females (0.47%) than males (0.95%).

PREVALENCE OF PROBLEM GAMBLING – BY REGION AND SPEND-BAND

The sampling for this study was stratified to reflect the adult population of each of the eight Government regions across Victoria (see report for details). Local government areas were classified into high, medium or low electronic gaming machine (EGM) expenditure bands.

The high EGM expenditure areas were over-sampled to ensure likely problem gamblers were captured, with 70 per cent of the sample coming from high expenditure areas, 20 per cent from medium expenditure areas and the remaining 10 per cent from low expenditure areas.

The North-west Metropolitan Region has the highest prevalence of problem gambling at 1.18%. The Grampians and Eastern Metropolitan regions have a significantly lower problem gambling prevalence than the Victorian adult population as a whole (respectively, 0.05% and 0.25% compared to 0.70% for all Victorian adults).

Consistent with the sampling design, findings revealed that the likelihood of problem gambling was significantly higher in medium EGM spend bands and high EGM spend bands, compared to lower EGM spend band regions. The chance of being a non-gambler was significantly less in a high EGM spend band, compared to a low spend band.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PROBLEM GAMBLERS RELATIVE TO THE VICTORIAN ADULT POPULATION

Relative to the Victorian population, a profile of problem gamblers shows that there is a significantly:

- higher proportion of males and lower proportion of females
- lower proportion of people 65yrs and older
- higher proportion of people of Indigenous backgrounds
- lower proportion of professionals, technicians/tradesworkers and clerical/administrative staff and a significantly higher proportion of sales workers, machinery operators/drivers and labourers
- lower proportion of people with a personal income of under \$31,199 and a significantly higher proportion with an income of \$31,200-\$51,999
- lower proportion of households with an income of under \$33,799 and significantly higher proportion of households with an income of \$62,400-\$103,999
- lower proportion in Eastern Metro and Grampians regions
- lower proportion of people who have migrated to Australia in the past 5 years
- lower proportion of 'other households'

REASONS WHY PROBLEM GAMBLERS PREFER THEIR HIGHEST-SPEND ACTIVITY

In relation to their highest-spend gambling activity, when compared to non-problem gamblers, problem gamblers:

- are significantly more likely to gamble to take their minds off things
- are significantly more likely to gamble to relieve stress, or boredom or out of habit
- are less likely to gamble to raise money for charities

PARTICIPATION IN PLAYING EGMs

Compared to non-problem gamblers, problem gamblers:

- are significantly more likely to have played EGMs in the past 12 months
- are significantly more likely to have bet on EGMs using greater than a single credit per line
- have a high preference for EGMs with a denomination of two and five cents

The top three most preferred features of EGM venues for problem gamblers are that venues:

- are close to home (38.35%)
- have nice venue staff/managers (33.07%)
- are easy to get to (26.07%)

BETTING ON HORSES, HARNESS RACING AND GREYHOUNDS – EXCLUDING SWEEPS

Compared to non-problem gamblers, problem gamblers are:

- significantly **less** likely to bet each way
- significantly **more** likely to place trifectas
- significantly **more** likely to place quinella bets
- significantly **more** likely to place multi-bets
- significantly **more** likely to place Exacta bets
- significantly **more** likely to use batch betting

PARTICIPATION IN OTHER GAMBLING ACTIVITIES

Compared to non-problem gamblers, problem gamblers are significantly more likely to participate in most other gambling activities. This includes table games, betting on sport and event results, keno, lotto/Powerball and pools, scratch tickets and bingo.

INSIGHT INTO GAMBLING PROBLEMS

Both moderate risk and problem gamblers were asked if they considered that they personally have a gambling problem or may be "at-risk" for problem gambling. Nearly 33% of problem gamblers believe that they are not at risk or have a gambling problem. In comparison, the majority (67%) are aware at some level that at least they may be at-risk or currently have a problem.

LIFE EVENTS

When compared to non-problem gamblers, problem gamblers were significantly more likely to have experienced the following life events: the death of someone close to them; a divorce; legal difficulties; a major injury or illness to either themselves or someone close; trouble with work, boss or superiors; a major change to their financial situation; and an increase in arguments with someone close.



TABLE A. LIFE EVENTS EXPERIENCED BY GAMBLERS IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

| LIFE EVENTS | NON-PROBLEM GAMBLERS (%) | LOW RISK GAMBLERS (%) | MODERATE RISK GAMBLERS (%) | PROBLEM GAMBLERS (%) | VICTORIAN ADULT GAMBLERS (%) |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Major change to your financial situation | 15.44 | 19.83 | 29.15 | 45.86 | 18.02 |
| Major injury or illness to either yourself or someone close to you | 20.75 | 24.04 | 24.7 | 45.27 | 22.23 |
| Increase in the number of arguments with someone you are close to | 6.59 | 10.38 | 17.53 | 41.74 | 8.95 |
| Death of someone close to you | 25.64 | 29.64 | 35.51 | 32.16 | 27.30 |
| Major change in living or work conditions | 18.37 | 23.29 | 27.05 | 27.95 | 20.18 |
| Troubles with your work, boss or superiors | 8.33 | 10.85 | 15.94 | 20.27 | 9.66 |
| Legal difficulties | 3.65 | 6.26 | 7.91 | 10.79 | 4.63 |
| Divorce | 2.16 | 2.78 | 5.06 | 9.36 | 2.66 |

Question: Which of the following life events did you experience in the past 12 months?



GENERAL HEALTH

Survey participants were asked about their general health over the past 12 months and self-reported their health as either: Excellent; Very good; Good; Fair or Poor.

There was a strong tendency for health to decline with increasing risk status for problem gambling. The proportion of problem gamblers who reported their health as poor is nearly 17%. This is considerably higher than for non-problem gamblers (where only 3.43% rated their health as poor).



When compared to non-problem gamblers, problem gamblers also reported:

- a **slightly higher** rate of diabetes (although the trend was only tending towards statistical significance)
- a **significantly higher** rate of lung conditions including asthma
- a **significantly higher** rate of depression
- a **significantly higher** rate of anxiety disorders
- a **significantly higher** rate of obesity
- a **significantly higher** rate of other miscellaneous physical or mental health conditions

TABLE A. GENERAL HEALTH STATUS – BY RISK SEGMENT

| SELF-REPORT | NON-PROBLEM GAMBLERS (%) | LOW RISK GAMBLERS (%) | MODERATE RISK GAMBLERS (%) | PROBLEM GAMBLERS (%) |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Excellent | 25.52 | 17.40 | 15.83 | 15.59 |
| Very Good | 34.98 | 31.33 | 24.45 | 13.38 |
| Good | 26.25 | 31.66 | 34.94 | 28.77 |
| Fair | 9.82 | 14.48 | 16.44 | 25.53 |
| Poor | 3.43 | 5.13 | 8.34 | 16.73 |

Question: Over the past 12 months, would you say that in general your health has been....? (Base: Adults who have engaged in at least one gambling activity in the past 12 months)

