

# Research

For a database of gambling research, go to [www.gamblingresearch.org.au](http://www.gamblingresearch.org.au)

The most recent, comprehensive research done in Australia is *Gambling and Young People in Australia*, published by Gambling Research Australia in 2011.

Key findings for the 10 – 18 years old group were:

- In the 12 months prior to the research 77% of survey respondents participated in a gambling activity.
- Males were more likely to be at-risk or problem gamblers<sup>1</sup> than females, with 5.7% of males being problem gamblers as opposed to 3.2% of females, and 19.1% of the males at-risk gamblers compared with 13.9% of females. (This finding, that around 5% of young people in Australia are problem gamblers, is consistent with other Australian and Canadian research.)
- The most common gambling activities were buying scratch lottery and lottery tickets, playing cards, football tipping and sweeps. At-risk and problem gamblers also reported using casino games and poker machines.
- Young people who live with a problem gambler, or who have a peer group member who gambles, are more likely to be at-risk or problem gamblers.
- The most common reasons given for gambling were enjoyment and to win money. Problem gamblers also cited loneliness, escapism and unhappiness.
- Young problem gamblers' behaviour is strongly associated with a positive attitude to gambling, low self esteem, peer involvement in gambling and substance abuse, and 'delinquent' behaviour.
- The majority of participants didn't think problem gambling to be an issue of relevance to them.

Additional points from other research:

- The consequences of young people's problem gambling – for example anxiety, poor performance at school, and harm to relationships - are serious, but arguably less severe than the commonly reported consequences and associated issues of adult problem gambling, which can include depression, loss of employment and assets, problems with the law and suicide.
- Misunderstandings about how commercial gambling works contribute to unsafe gambling behaviours amongst young people.
- Tasmanian research, An Exploratory Investigation of Online Gambling Amongst University Students in Tasmania, Department of Health and Human Services 2010 ([http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/gambling/research/tasmanian\\_research](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/gambling/research/tasmanian_research)) indicates high levels of online problem gambling amongst University of Tasmania students.
- The increasing prevalence of mobile devices increases the access possibilities to online gambling products for young people. Online gambling is noted as an area for ongoing attention of researchers, policy makers, educators and service providers.
- The expansion and promotion of sports betting 'normalises' gambling as an adjunct to sporting spectator culture. Adolescence is a period when attitudes to gambling are developed. Young people are exposed to sports betting promotions. Sport betting is a popular form of gambling in the 18 – 25 age group, particularly amongst males. This is reflected in high at-risk and problem gambling figures for this age group and gambling type.



A recent study by Christine Gardner at the University of Tasmania, *Weighing up the odds: Young Tasmanians' knowledge of, attitudes to, experiences of, and future intentions about gambling* ([http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/gambling/research/tasmanian\\_research](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/gambling/research/tasmanian_research)) found that many young people have well-developed beliefs and attitudes around gambling and some of those beliefs are problematic:

Many participants indicated that gambling was not a good way to make money; however, one-third of participants agreed that gambling could provide high returns. More than half the participants considered that gambling was not a good way to impress their peers and nearly half disagreed that gambling was a great way to socialise and spend time with friends. The 'fun' aspect of gambling, however, was dismissed by only approximately one-quarter of the participants while nearly one-third thought that gambling was fun. Two in five of the participants were non-committal about whether or not gambling was fun (Executive Summary Item 9).

This has clear implications for community education and the ongoing need for schools based prevention.

The report's other key findings include:

- While many participants reported that no one in their family gambled once a week or more often, those participants in a family in which one member gambled regularly were more likely to report that their family approved of and supported gambling.
- Participants reported that major influences against gambling were family and teachers.
- Toy gambling games were reported as influencing participants' views in favour of gambling by the highest number of participants, closely followed by the influences of friends, advertising on TV, other advertising, and family.
- While participants generally agreed that gambling is risky, participants who lived in a Tasmanian town or city were more likely than participants who lived in rural areas to agree that gambling is risky.
- Participants who agreed that gambling was fun were more likely than not to be males who were 14 or 15 years of age.
- Many participants were of the view that it was unlikely anyone could win substantial amounts of money at the casino or that they (the participants) could win more than \$10,000 from Tattslotto sometime in the future. Nonetheless approximately one in eight participants maintained they would at some stage win \$10,000 or more.
- Overall, participants reported it was easy to obtain cigarettes, scratch tickets and alcohol. Specifically, participants who were 14 years of age were the group most likely accessing all three of cigarettes, scratch tickets and alcohol.
- Around one in eight participants thought there were high odds for winning substantial money at a casino, or for winning more than \$10,000 one day playing Tattslotto, or they thought they might have the power to make their numbers come up in gambling games. One in five participants reported that they would 'strike it lucky' while gambling.

\*Problem gambling is characterised by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling, which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or the community. Moderate risk gamblers have a lower level of problems leading to some negative consequences. Gambling behaviour and its consequences can be understood as a continuum, where a person can move between no risk to moderate risk to problem gambling.

The [Problem Gambling Severity Index](#) is a questionnaire or screen which asks about the intensity and consequences of the person's gambling behaviour - chasing losses, borrowing money, associated health problems etc. Scoring the questionnaire assesses the severity of gambling issues and whether a person is a 'problem' gambler, 'moderate risk', 'low-risk' or 'non-problem' gambler.