

Gambling Prevalence In South Australia



Government of South Australia

Department for Families
and Communities

Poker Machine Use

This study of **Gambling Prevalence in South Australia** was conducted from October to December 2005. It involved a sample size of over 17,000 adults and 605 young people aged 16-17 years (the previous prevalence study conducted in 2001 involved a sample of over 6,000 adults). The study was prepared for, and jointly funded by, the Department for Families and Communities and the South Australian Independent Gambling Authority.

In relation to the adult sample, the study collected information about:

- the venues where people choose to play poker machines¹;
- the types of machines they like to play; and
- various aspects of their behaviour while they are playing poker machines.

This fact sheet summarises the results of the study that relate to poker machine use amongst South Australian adults.

Key Results

- Playing poker machines is the second most popular gambling activity after lotto;
- Moderate and high risk frequent gamblers are more likely to play poker machines;
- 18-24 year old men and women are more likely to play poker machines than any other age groups; and
- People who earn over \$20,000 are more likely to play poker machines.

How many people play poker machines?

In 2005, 30.2% of the adult population had played poker machines at least once in the last 12 months. This is a significant decrease from the 2001 rate of 36.4%.

Frequency of playing poker machines varied, with the majority of people playing poker machines less than monthly. However, 11.2% of poker machine players did so every week.

Moderate and high risk frequent² gamblers are more likely to play poker machines. Of these, 93% of high risk frequent gamblers, and 91% of moderate risk frequent gamblers, play poker machines. (Terms explained at the end of the fact sheet.)

Characteristics of people who play poker machines

People who played poker machines (30.2%) were then asked a series of more detailed questions regarding their use of these machines.

Gender

There was no significant difference between men and women in poker machine use. Of all the adults surveyed, 30.7% of males and 29.7% of females had played poker machines in the last 12 months.

Age group

People aged 18-24 years were more likely to play poker machines. Of this age group, 50.6% had played poker machines in the last 12 months, compared to the state average of 30.2%.

The 25–34 year age group and the 45–74 year age groups were more consistent with the state average. Significantly lower than the state average were the 35–44 year age group at 23.8%, and the 75 years and over at 20.6%.

Marital status

People who had never been married (41%) were much more likely to have played poker machines in the last 12 months, compared with people who were separated /divorced (29%) or married or in a de facto relationship (28%). People who were widowed (24%) were least likely to play poker machines.

Work status

Of those who had played poker machines in the last 12 months, there was only slight variation between work status (i.e. whether they were employed full time, part time, unemployed or home duties/student/retired/other).

Of people who were unemployed, 32.7% had played poker machines in the last 12 months. This was only slightly higher than people who were employed full time (32.0%).

There was no significant difference between people who were employed part time, or those who were on home duties/students/retired/at 30.2% and 27.9% respectively.

Patterns of Play

Respondents aged 18 years and over who gambled on poker machines (30.2%) were asked a series of more detailed questions about their use of poker machines, including:

- where they played;
- the type of machines they play;
- the venues they visit; and
- their beliefs about gambling on poker machines.

Where do people play poker machines?

Hotels were the most popular venue for playing on poker machines (79.6%), followed by the casino (10.1%) and clubs (8.9%).

How far from home would you travel to gamble on poker machines?

Of those who played poker machines, 20.6% would travel ten or more kilometres from home to play. This compares to 11.9% of low risk and 15.4% of moderate to high risk frequent gamblers, indicating that frequent poker machine gamblers are least likely to travel far from home to play.

44.7% of those who played poker machines usually gambled at the closest venue to their home, while 9.6% also gambled at a venue closet to their work or study. This compares to 65.8% and 29.1% respectively for moderate to high risk frequent gamblers.

What types of poker machines do people play?

People usually played one cent machines (74.9%) and those least played were machines higher than \$2 (0.01%).

The majority of people said that they had no loyalty to a particular machine (28.9%) or that they would play anything (27.9%). The highest rated (9.6%) favourite was the dolphin theme machine.

Gambling patterns in poker machine use

A minority (15%) of players made use of loyalty or reward cards when they were playing.

It is popular for poker machine players to bet more than one line at each press of the button, with 13% of players often doing so, and 46% of players always doing so. Betting on more than one line at each press of the button is much more common amongst low risk (66.8%) and moderate to high risk frequent gamblers (66.0%).

The majority of people (34%) played 1–5 lines on the poker machine. This compares to the majority (34.4%) of moderate to high risk frequent gamblers who gamble 11–20 lines when they bet on more than one line.

The majority of players (81.4%) did not increase their bets when they found themselves losing while playing poker machines. However, 10.2% did increase their bets, either sometimes, often, or always. This compares to 48.6% and 34.4%, respectively, of moderate to high risk frequent gamblers.

While the vast majority of poker machine players (76.1%) reported that they had never lost \$50 or more in a single day or session of play, 22.1% reported that they had and 0.9% reported that they had done so over 50 times in the past year. Amongst moderate to high risk frequent gamblers, 12.1% reported that they had never lost \$50 or more in a single day or session of play, 83.3% reported that they had and 13.9% reported that this had occurred on more than 50 occasions.

People playing poker machines sometimes took breaks for various reasons, but 42.5% of players reported that they did not take a break while they were playing. This compares to 28% of moderate to high risk frequent gamblers.



Beliefs and superstitions

People were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with six statements about poker machines. Generally, people did not agree with the range of superstitions and beliefs presented. However, a minority of people held the following beliefs about winning money on poker machines:

- 18.6% of people believed that winning and losing occurs in cycles;
- 17.6% agreed that it was bad to play on a machine that has recently paid out;
- 5% believed that there are certain ways of playing a machine to increase chances of winning;
- 2% admitted to engaging in rituals or superstitious behaviours whilst playing;
- 1.9% found themselves talking or shouting at a machine;
- 1.3% considered themselves to be good at picking winning machines.

Explanation of terms

- ¹ Machines may be known as poker or electronic gaming machines; however this report will refer to these machines only as poker machines. The colloquial term in South Australia is poker machines or pokies. The game of poker is not necessarily a defining feature of poker machines in South Australia.
- ² The Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) was used to assess the risk of problem gambling among people who are frequent gamblers. This survey used a nine item instrument from the CPGI, and concentrated on behaviours that had occurred in the past 12 months. A moderate risk gambler has scored between 3 and less than 8 on the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) measurement tool. A high risk gambler has scored between 8 and 27 on the CPGI.

Frequent gamblers are defined as people who gamble (excluding lotto or bingo) at least once a fortnight

This fact sheet draws on the information presented in the report **Gambling Prevalence in South Australia** (DFC 2006), specifically **Chapters 3: Gambling Patterns of Adults** and **Chapter 5: Poker Machine Use**.

Copies of the report and fact sheets are available at: www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au