

Gambling Prevalence In South Australia



Government of South Australia

Department for Families
and Communities

Moderate and High Risk Gamblers

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.

This fact sheet summarises the results of the study that relate to moderate and high risk adult gamblers.

Key Results

- The prevalence of moderate and high risk gamblers was 1.2% and 0.4% respectively.
- Together these moderate and high risk gamblers are classified as problem gamblers and total 1.6% of the population.
- Moderate and high risk gamblers are more likely to play poker machines than any other form of gambling.
- Moderate and high risk gamblers were found to more likely be male, or have no children in the household, or have secondary school education only.

Who are frequent gamblers?

For this study frequent gamblers are classified as those people who gamble at least fortnightly, excluding those who only play lotto or bingo*.

Overall, 14.5% of adults were found to be frequent gamblers.

How was the rate of problem gambling measured?

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.

What is the prevalence of problem gambling in South Australia?

In South Australia in 2005, the rate of moderate and high risk gambling measured by the CPGI (defined as problem gambling) was 1.6% of the adult population. This rate is not considered to be different from that measured in 2001.

The number of people represented by this rate was approximately 18,000 adults (within the range of 16,000 to 20,000), of whom 5,000 are classified as high risk gamblers.

Characteristics of moderate and high risk gamblers

The most popular gambling activity among moderate and high gamblers, at just over 90%, was poker (gaming) machines; followed by lotto; instant scratch tickets; and betting on horses or greyhounds. This pattern deviates from the general population, where the most popular form of gambling overall is lotto (52%), followed by poker machines (30%).

Moderate and high risk gamblers were more likely to be male or have no children in the household or have only a secondary level of school education.

Among those classified as being in the moderate and high risk gambling categories, the self-reporting of problem gambling was under-reported with 39% of moderate risk, and 12% of high risk gamblers having scored themselves as 'having not at all a problem'.

What is the impact of problem gambling?

Those classified as moderate and high risk gamblers were questioned further about the impact that gambling has:

- generally;
- personally;
- on work;
- on family;
- legally; and
- on housing.

General and personal impacts were common amongst moderate and high risk gamblers. However, legal and housing impacts, substance use and depression were more prevalent amongst high risk gamblers.

General impacts

The majority of moderate and high risk gamblers:

- started gambling with friends (42%);
- remember a big win when they first started gambling (54%);
- have lost over \$200 and up to \$500 on any one occasion (20%); and
- have never had an immediate family member with a gambling problem (77%).

When asked about the most money that they had lost on any one occasion, 24% of high risk gamblers had lost more than \$1,000, compared to 7% of moderate risk gamblers.

Personal impacts

Moderate and high risk gamblers self identified that gambling has often or always:

- been too strong to control (12%);
- been constantly on their mind (14%);
- been used to escape from worry or trouble (22%); and
- made it harder to make money last between pay days (18%).

Overall, in the last year, 5% of problem gamblers had lost their job, and 5% experienced a break-up of an important relationship because of their gambling.

Legal impacts

A higher proportion of high risk gamblers obtained money illegally (26%) and experienced trouble with the police because of their gambling activities (7%). A minority of high risk gamblers (4%) had appeared in court in the last 12 months on charges relating to gambling and 7% had been declared bankrupt.

Housing impacts

Moderate and high risk gamblers over the age of 18 years were asked a series of questions relating to household impacts from gambling. Housing impacts examined whether gambling had left no money to pay rent or the mortgage; or household bills.

Housing impacts were greater amongst high risk gamblers than amongst moderate risk gamblers, whereby:

- 16% of high risk gamblers had often or always had no money to pay their rent or mortgage due to their gambling. This compares to zero amongst moderate risk gamblers; and
- 23% of high risk gamblers had often or always had no money to pay their household bills, compared to 0.5% of moderate risk gamblers.

Substance use

Moderate and high risk gamblers were asked about their use of alcohol, or legal or illegal drugs.

It was more common for moderate risk gamblers (68%) than high risk gamblers (49%) to use alcohol or drugs while gambling.

The majority of problem gamblers (56%) feel that they did not gamble more often whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs. However, a majority (52%) admitted to gambling while under the influence of alcohol or drugs at some point in the last 12 months.

People classified as moderate and high risk gamblers were asked if they felt they had an alcohol or drug problem, to which 15% and 25% respectively said 'yes'. This compares to 0.3% of the general population.



Substance use (continued)

The urge to gamble following the occurrence of a painful event was much greater for those in the high risk category (61%), compared to moderate risk gamblers (14%).

Similarly, the consumption of medicines or substances amongst high risk gamblers was significantly higher than for moderate risk gamblers, particularly anti-depressants (41%) and tranquilisers (25%). This compares to 14% and 10%, respectively, amongst moderate risk gamblers.

Stress and depression

Just over half of those classified as high risk gamblers were under a doctor's care because of physical or emotional problems brought on by stress. This compares to 15% of moderate risk gamblers, which is more consistent with the general population (13%).

Feelings of serious depression were experienced by a greater proportion of high risk gamblers (62%) than moderate risk gamblers (33%). This compares to 14% of the general population.

48.1% of high risk gamblers said they felt seriously depressed in the past 12 months because of their gambling, compared to 7.5% of moderate risk gamblers.

* Although lotto and bingo are undertaken with high frequency (more than once a fortnight), gambling on just lotteries or bingo does not generally lead to gambling problems, so was removed from the definition of frequent gambler.

This fact sheet draws on the information presented in the report **Gambling Prevalence in South Australia (DFC 2006)**, specifically **Chapter 4: Moderate and High Risk Gambling Among Adults**. Copies of the report and fact sheets are available at: www.problemgambling.sa.gov.au