

OVERVIEW

Key findings

In South Australia in 2005, the rate of problem gambling, as measured by the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (moderate and high risk gambling), was 1.6% of the population aged 18 years or over. 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 (range 16,000 to 20,000), of whom 5,000 are high risk gamblers.

Overall, 70% of adult South Australians gambled at some time over the previous year. This has decreased from 76% in 2001.

The most popular gambling activity was lotto (including other lottery games like Powerball, Pools, Super 66, or Lottery). Overall, 52% of the adult population played lotto in the previous year.

Poker machines or gaming machines were played by 30% of the adult population at some time in the previous year.

Other popular gambling activities played by more than 10% of adult South Australians over the previous year were instant scratch tickets (24%), and betting on horse or greyhound racing (excluding sweepstakes) (19%).

Methodology

Over 17,000 South Australian adults were interviewed for the gambling survey. Telephone interviewing was used, with numbers being randomly selected from the White Pages.

This gambling survey follows the methodology of the 2001 study, which was, at that time, the largest survey undertaken to examine gambling patterns in South Australia. The current survey is three times larger than the 2001 survey.

This survey examined a wide range of gambling patterns. These included:

- how frequently people gamble;
- types of gambling most commonly used; and
- awareness of support services to assist gamblers with a problem.

Poker (gaming) machine use was examined in considerable detail and included questions on myths and beliefs that poker machine players have about playing these machines.

Frequent gamblers (respondents who gambled every week or fortnight) were asked about issues that indicated problems with gambling, and about the impacts that gambling may be having on their life.

Gambling behaviours among people aged 16 and 17 years were investigated for the first time in a major population survey in South Australia.

Moderate and high risk gambling

The Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) was used to assess risk of problem gambling among those 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.

Overall, 14.5% of adults are frequent gamblers (gambling at least fortnightly). This excludes those who only play lotto or bingo.

The CPGI found that 1.2% of the adult population were classified as moderate risk gamblers, and 0.4% of the population were classified as high risk gamblers. Together these moderate and high risk gamblers (1.6% of the population) are classified as problem gamblers.

Moderate and high risk gamblers identified in the survey were more likely:

- to be male; or
- to have no children in the household; or
- to have secondary school education only.

The most popular gambling activity among moderate and high gamblers was poker (gaming) machines.

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 lost their job, and 5% experienced a break up of an important relationship because of their gambling.

Of problem gamblers, 62% used alcohol or drugs while they were gambling.

In the past year, 41% of problem gamblers experienced feelings of serious depression.

Poker (gaming) machine use

Overall, 15% of poker machine players made use of loyalty or reward cards and 18% reported that they have increased their bets when losing on poker machines, even if only rarely.

There were 43% of poker machine players who said that they never take a break while playing.

Regarding beliefs about poker machines:

- 19% of players strongly believe that winning and losing occurs in cycles on poker machines;
- 5% strongly believe that there are certain ways of playing that increase winning;
- 2% strongly believe in engaging in rituals or superstitions when playing; and
- 18% strongly believe that it is always bad to play on a poker machine that has recently paid out.

A total of 2% of players strongly agreed that they sometimes find themselves talking to, or shouting at, poker machines.

Gambling in young people (16 and 17 year olds)

Overall, 44% of young people aged 16 to 17 years had gambled in the past year.

The most popular form of gambling for 16 and 17 year olds was instant scratch tickets (30% of young people had played instant scratch tickets in the last year).

Problem gambling in young people was assessed using the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Version IV, Juvenile Criteria (DSM IV-J). The DSM IV-J showed that 1% of 16 and 17 year olds were classified as problem gamblers.

