

## What's the issue?



### Key insights

- Young people are most at risk of gambling harm.
- People under 18-years-of-age are gambling, even though it's illegal.
- Kids are exposed to betting via gambling ads, social media, video games and the gambling actions of friends and family.
- Parents, carers, teachers and schools play a key role in protecting kids from gambling harm.

### Are young people gambling?

The short answer is, yes. Although gambling is only legal in Australia for over 18s, research shows that increasingly, young people are finding ways to gamble.

A study on gambling among secondary students in Victoria and NSW (under the age of 18 years)<sup>i</sup> revealed that:

- about **one-third** of surveyed participants (29%) had ever **gambled before the age of 18**
- **9% had bet on sport** in the past year
- The median amount bet by all students who gambled in the past year was between **\$11 and \$20 per month**
- The median amount bet by students classified as **problem gamblers** was **\$150 per month**.

## Sports betting among young people

Sport and race betting mostly happens online. Young people can (and do) easily get around age restrictions to gamble online. Among Australian males aged 18 to 35 who gamble, 23% reported being under 18 when they first placed a bet on sports.<sup>ii</sup>

## How does gambling affect young people?

### Gambling is not like other forms of entertainment

Most gambling products are *designed* to keep you gambling, spending, and losing. It also has the potential to cause psychological, health, relationship, legal and financial harm.

### How are young people exposed to gambling?

- Gambling advertising sends kids the message that betting is not only normal and risk free, but an 'essential' part of being an adult.
- Kids are also exposed to gambling via social media, video games, and the gambling activities of friends and family.
- Studies show that kids who are introduced to betting at an early age are more likely to experience problems with gambling as adults.<sup>iii</sup>

### The convergence of gaming and gambling

Online games and apps are blurring the line between gaming and gambling with games featuring gambling-like elements such as loot boxes, and simulated gambling such as social casino games. These features are teaching kids how to gamble without needing money. It's often easy to win in simulated gambling, leading kids to think they will win when they use real money to gamble.

### Betting and alcohol use are often seen as a 'rite of passage' for young people

A study into the link between gambling and alcohol use among Australian young adults<sup>iv</sup> found that initiation to gambling and alcohol use at or before the age of 18 was often seen as a 'rite of passage' for young people in Australia.

It also found that underage gambling and/or alcohol use was associated with greater harms related to gambling and alcohol use in adult life.

## Why are young people at greater risk of gambling harm?

### Gambling harm starts early

The younger they start, the worse the harm will likely be. Research<sup>v</sup> shows that those who started gambling underage are at higher risk of experiencing gambling harm as an adult than those who started gambling when they were 18+.

### Gambling can look like harmless fun to children and teenagers

Today's children and teenagers are growing up in a new era marked by high levels of sports betting advertising which makes gambling seem fun, exciting, and a normal part of everyday life. Betting ads never show people losing or any negative consequences of gambling so children are learning that it's a harmless and risk-free activity.

### How young brains respond to gambling

Young people often find it more difficult to understand the risks associated with gambling compared to adults. This means that young people can be more impulsive, prone to make riskier bets, and more susceptible to the influence of advertising and incentives.

## The rise of sports betting among young people

### The risks of sports betting

With few limits on the size or quantity of online bets, people of any age can easily get into trouble. Added to this, gambling companies know that inducements such as multi-bets and bonus bets are linked with increased betting expenditure and encourage riskier betting.<sup>vi</sup>

### Young men are most at risk (but young women are catching up)

While young men (18–24 years) bet on sport more than any other age group in Victoria, young women are fast catching up. Betting on sport is one of the highest risk gambling activities with more than a third of Victorians who bet on sport experiencing harm.<sup>vii</sup>

## Sources

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- <sup>i</sup> Noble, N., Freund, M., Scully, M., Clapham, M., Leigh, L. (2025). [The prevalence and correlates of gambling in secondary school students in Victoria and New South Wales, Australia, 2022–23](#). State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.
- <sup>ii</sup> Jenkinson, R. et al (2018), [Weighing up the odds: Sports betting and young men](#), Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- <sup>iii</sup> Dittman, C.K. et al (2022), [The Role of Parents in Youth Gambling](#), Gamble Aware NSW.
- <sup>iv</sup> Sakata, K. et al (2024), [Bets 'n' booze research summary: Intersections of gambling and alcohol use among Australian youth and young adults](#), Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- <sup>v</sup> [Ibid.](#)
- <sup>vi</sup> Hing, N. et al (2018), [Effects of wagering marketing on vulnerable adults](#), Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, Melbourne.
- <sup>vii</sup> Suomi, A. et al, (2024), [Victorian population gambling and health study 2023](#), State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.