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Gambling participation in Australia 2025

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Trends over time, and profiles associated with online gambling and gambling harm

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Acknowledgment of Country

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Abstract

Gambling harm remains a major public health issue in Australia, with recent trends showing declining participation yet increasing levels of risky gambling. This study updates national prevalence estimates of gambling participation, risky gambling (PGSI), and affected others using six waves of the ANUpoll survey (2019–2025). Data from January 2025 (n = 3,387) were analysed alongside previous waves to examine patterns across gambling activities, online and venue modes, and demographic and psychosocial profiles. Overall gambling participation slightly declined to 58.8% in 2025, continuing a long-term downward trend. However, risky gambling increased from 13.7% in 2024 to 19.4% 12 months later, by more than five percentage points and almost doubling since the COVID-19 related lock downs 2020-2021. Online gambling increased substantially, with more than half (56.1%) of individuals who gambled mainly participating online in the past 12 months. Sports and race betting were the most heavily online-based activities, while online engagement in electronic gaming machines and casino table games also grew despite legal restrictions. Online gambling were associated with male gender, younger age, higher income, frequent play, psychological distress, and loneliness. Approximately 5.9% of adults reported being harmed by another person's gambling in the past 12 months. Harm from own or another person's gambling were associated with younger age, unemployment, parents, lower household incomes, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Gambling harm from own and another person's gambling were also strongly associated with high psychological distress and loneliness. Findings highlight intensifying harm despite declining participation, highlighting a critical need for regulatory and public health responses targeting online gambling.

Introduction and overview

Gambling harm is a major public health concern in Australia and internationally (Blank et al., 2021), referring to a pattern of harmful gambling behaviours that can lead to negative consequences to financial, social, psychological, physical, occupational, and cultural wellbeing (Langham et al., 2016). At the most severe end of gambling harm, past 12 month problem gambling prevalence ranges from 0.7% to 1.0% in Australia (Browne et al., 2020, 2024; Delfabbro & King, 2021; Rockloff et al., 2020, 2025; Suomi et al., 2024a).

While gambling participation has steadily declined over the past 15 years, the rates of gambling harm or problem gambling have not declined on population level, indicating that a greater proportion of gamblers now experience harm (Rockloff et al., 2025; Browne et al., 2024; Suomi et al., 2024a). Critically, online gambling has risen sharply since 2017: the proportion of Australian adults engaging in online gambling (excluding lotteries) increased from 8% in 2017 to 11% in 2021 (ACMA, 2022). This upward national trend has continued, with our 2024 study showing 33.4% of Australian adults had participated in online gambling in the past year, marking the first time online gambling surpassed venue-based gambling in Australia (Suomi et al., 2024c).

Gambling harm can be experienced by individuals who gamble or those close to them, often referred to as "affected others." Approximately one in six adults experience gambling harm either directly or through another person's gambling (Dowling et al., 2025). A handful of Australian state- and territory-wide general population studies on gambling have specifically asked about the types of negative impacts of someone else's gambling. In Australia, the most recent past year prevalence estimates for affected others range from 5% to 8% of the adult population (Hing et al., 2021; Paterson et al., 2020; Rockloff et al., 2020, 2024; Suomi et al., 2024a; Stevens et al., 2019).

Apart from the current study, there is no other Australian data available to establish the national prevalence rate of affected others, with our previous wave showing that 5.8% of Australian adults were affected others in 2024 (Suomi et al., 2024b). In these data, affected others were younger and earning lower incomes compared to the general population. They also reported significant psychosocial challenges, including high levels of psychological distress and loneliness, raising substantial public health concerns about the impacts of another person's gambling (Suomi et al, 2024b).

This report is an update to our previous Australian gambling prevalence data collected in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023 and 2024 (Suomi et al., 2023, 2024b, 2024c). It presents national prevalence rates of gambling participation and risky gambling overall, across multiple activities and online in Australia. It also presents the rate of individuals who are at risk of harm from another person's gambling (affected others). This report provides important evidence of the patterns of gambling behaviours or profiles associated with gambling harm. Our

previous publications show that since 2023, overall participation rates have continued to decline, consistent with a long-term trend. However, when focusing on gambling activities predominantly available online — such as sports betting, race betting, and lottery — participation rates have increased.

This report provides the most up to date information about the demographic and psychosocial profiles associated with online gambling in Australia. In our previous data from 2024, online gambling was related to younger age, male gender, living in single parent households, higher likelihood of risky gambling, more frequent gambling, and greater reports of loneliness, for example. In this paper, we examine whether gambling participation has continued rise or decline, and whether these trends differ between gambling activities, demographic groups and gambling modes (online vs. venues) in 2025. This information is important for policy makers and decision-makers to understand which gambling activities or platforms are more harmful, and which population segments are at heightened risk of gambling harm, including harms on affected others. With that in mind, the aim of the current study is to establish:

1. Prevalence of Australian gambling participation and risky gambling in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023 and 2024, 2025
2. Overall and online participation rates across gambling activities in Australian population in 2024 and 2025
3. The sociodemographic and wellbeing profiles of individuals gambling online and at risky levels, as well as affected others in 2025

Data and methods

ANUpoll is an approximately quarterly survey of Australian public opinion, designed to situate public opinion within a broad policy context. Since October 2017 the ANUpoll series of surveys has been collected through LinA. The data for January 2025 was collected as part of the 2025 Election Monitoring Survey Series by the Online Research Unit through their Australian Consumer Panel, a non-probability-based online panel. In this paper we use data from four waves of ANUpoll collected in April 2019 (n = 2,054), November 2020 (n=3,029), October 2021 (n=3,474), January 2023 (n = 3,370), January 2024 (n=4,027) and January 2025 (n=3,387). Each wave includes information on the gambling behaviour of Australians aged 18 years and over, with a subset of each wave able to be linked to previous or subsequent waves. Data from all waves used in this paper are available in unit-record format through the Australian Data Archive. All data are weighted to population benchmarks, allowing inferences about the Australian population. Survey weights for the 2025 wave were calculated using iterative proportional fitting or raking, employing the same population benchmarks as for ANUpoll January 2024 to improve consistency across time[1].

Measures

Risky gambling was measured by the 9-item Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI; Ferris & Wynne 2001, the most widely used contemporary population-measure of problem gambling (Orford et al. 2010). The PGSI asks about the negative consequences and behavioural symptoms of gambling over the previous 12 months, e.g., "***Have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?***" with response options ranging from 0=never to 4=often. The PGSI items capture a combination of the common features of addiction drawn from DSM-5 criteria for problem gambling, and categorizes individuals into groups according to their level of risk for problem gambling (Ferris & Wynne,. 2001). We used 'risky gambling' (PGSI 1+) consistent with other population health studies (Afifi et al., 2010; Suomi et al., 2023)[i] across the analyses[2].

Gambling activity. Participants were asked which of the following gambling products they used for money in the past 12 months: (1) poker machines or gaming machines; (2) horse or greyhound races; (3) instant scratch tickets; (4) a lottery game (Tattslotto or Powerball); (5) Keno; (6) table games such as blackjack, poker, or roulette at a casino; (7) bingo or housie; (8) sporting or

[1] Variables used for weighting were: 10-year age groups, Bachelor's degree or higher, less than Bachelor's degree, gender, whether the respondent speaks a language other than English, state or territory, and how the respondent voted in the 2023 Referendum.

[2] Additional support for lowering the PGSI cut point comes from a study which shows that while the PGSI 8+ cut point has a specificity of 99 % (almost no false positives), it only identifies 49 % of the problem gamblers based on clinical ratings and therefore generated many false negatives (Williams and Volberg 2014).

special event like football, cricket, tennis, a TV show, or election; (9) raffle tickets. Individuals reporting any of these gambling activities were included in the overall gambling participation estimate.

Online gambling. For each gambling activity, participants were asked whether they mostly participated online, in venues, or equally online and in venues. In this report online gambling participation refers to those who gambled at least half of the time online for each activity.

Affected other status. The survey used a single item question to ask participants '"have you been personally affected by someone else's gambling in the past 12 months".

Wellbeing. Kessler six-item scale (K6) measured psychological distress as a screener for possible mental health conditions (Kessler et al., 2002; Prochaska et al., 2012). Those with a K6 total score of 19 or higher were categorized as experiencing severe psychological distress.

Demographic information. Demographic and psychosocial information included gender (male, female), age (six categories), highest level of education (not finished high school, finished high school, post school diploma/certificate, university degree), current employment and household status (single person, couple with/without children, single parent and other). We categorised participants into Culturally And Linguistically Diverse (CALD) group if they reported being born outside Australia, or speaking a language other than English at home.

Analysis

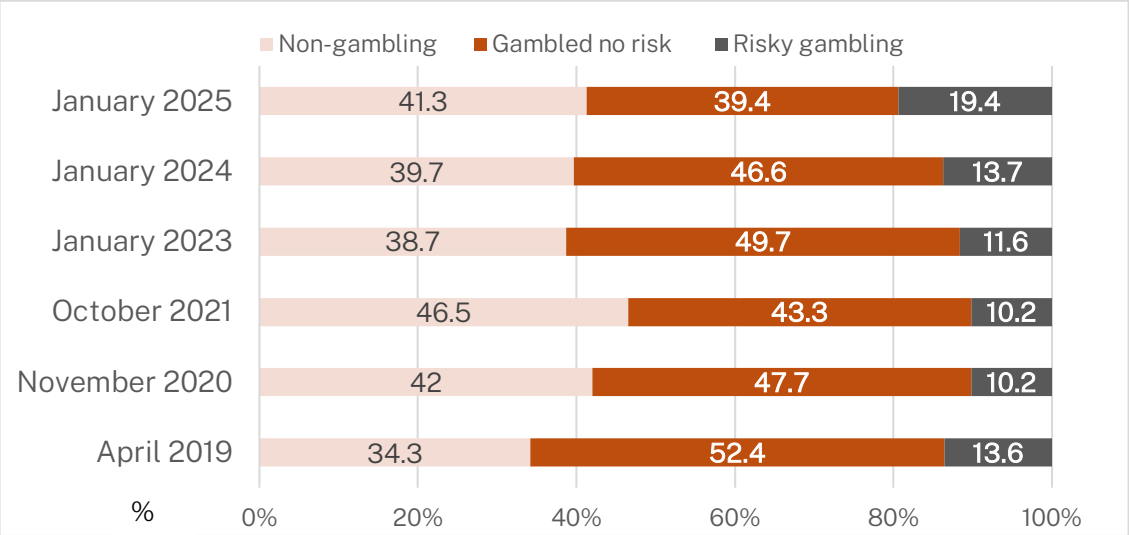
We present proportional data across the cross-sectional waves of 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, and 2025 by gambling risk category and overall. After this, the analyses focus on the most recent data collected in January 2025, including proportional data for participation in each gambling activity overall, and online vs venue participation, comparing it to 2024 data. We then present proportional data across sociodemographic, gambling and wellbeing characteristics for gambling participation including online and in-venue participation. Finally, we present these data on individuals reporting risky gambling and being personally affected by another person's gambling.

Results

Gambling participation in Australia 2019-2025

Figure 1 shows the distribution of gambling risk status of individuals who: did not gamble, gambled without risk and gambled at risky levels (PGSI 1+) in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024 and 2025. Overall gambling participation rate in Australian population is 58.8% in 2025, and it has been steadily decreasing since 2019 with steeper declines during COVID-19. In the most recent data from January 2025, the proportion of individuals gambling at risky levels far exceeded the pre-COVID-19 rate. These estimates show that almost 1 in 5 Australian adults gambled at risky levels in the past 12 months.

Figure 1 Percentage of Australians gambling[3] with and without risk in 2019-2025



[3] To allow for comparison over time, those who only buy raffle tickets are set as missing for these analyses, excluding 1.7% of the population in 2024.

Overall and online gambling participation across activities in 2025

Table 1 compares the participation rates overall and online in 2024 and 2025 in Australian adult population. It shows that in 2024 and 2025 the most popular gambling activities were buying lottery tickets (46.8% and 41.3% of Australian adult population, respectively), followed by buying raffle (23.4% and 15.4%) and scratch (15.7% and 19.4%) tickets, gambling on EGMs (12.9% and 14.9%) and race betting (10.0% and 12.6%). Of all activities, sports betting had the largest proportion of online gambling (95.6% and 88.5%), followed by betting on races (73.4% and 76.9%) and buying lottery tickets (52.1% and 51.1%).

The blue colour in Table 1 gambling activities where overall participation decreased over the past 12 months; red indicates activities with increased participation; and green indicates activities that remained steady. Activities where participation rate increased from 2024 to 2025 are those with largest increases in online participation in the past 12 months (scratch tickets, EGMs, bingo) and those that have moved predominantly online (sports and races betting).

Table 1. Gambling participation rate in Australian population and venue/online participation across individual gambling activities in 2024 and 2025

	2024 participation		2025 participation	
	% of Australian population	Of whom online[a] %	% of Australian population	Of whom online[a] %
Any gambling	*60.3*	*55.4*	*58.8*	*56.1*
Lottery	46.8	52.1	41.3	51.1
Raffle tickets	23.4	27.2	15.4	33.4
Scratch tickets	15.7	4.9	19.4	12.2
EGMs	12.9	6.5	14.6	12.0
Races betting	10.0	73.4	12.6	76.9
Keno	5.2	10.5	5.8	18.1
Sports betting	4.7	95.6	7.0	88.5
Casino table games	2.7	4.8	3.1	11.8
Bingo	1.4	4.6	2.2	32.3

[a]proportion of individuals participating in each activity online at least half of the time.

Gambling participation across demographic, and wellbeing factors

Table 2 shows that males, and individuals in the older age groups (65+) who had not completed year 12 education, living in couple households without children, and with household earnings between $52,885 and $109,304 were more likely to gamble than the general population. Females, younger groups (18–34), those with university education, and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups were less likely to gamble compared with the general population.

Table 2. Gambling participation overall, in venues and online in population groups

		Any gambling %	Not gambling %	Online gambling %	Venue gambling %
Var	***Australian adult pop.***	*58.8*	*41.2*	***33.0***	***26.5***
Gender	Male	**63.7**[b]	36.3	**37.5**[b]	26.2
	Female	**55.4**[a]	44.6	28.4	27.0
Age	18-24 years	**48.8**[a]	51.2	**27.1**[a]	**21.6**[a]
	25-34 years	**52.3**[a]	47.7	34.5	**17.8**[a]
	35-44 years	60.5	39.5	**38.6**[b]	**21.9**[a]
	45-55 years	58.9	41.1	34.2	24.6
	55-64 years	64.2	35.8	32.3	**32.0**[b]
	65-74 years	**67.7**[b]	**32.3**[a]	31.8	**35.9**[b]
	75 +	**67.8**[b]	**32.2**[a]	**27.2**[a]	**40.6**[b]
Education	University degree	**52.1**[a]	47.9	**30.0**[a]	**22.1**[a]
	Certificate or diploma	63.0	37.0	**35.8**[b]	27.2
	Year 12	62.0	38.0	33.6	28.4
	Less than year 12	**66.4**[b]	**33.6**[a]	32.4	**34.0**[b]
Employment	Employed full-time	60.7	39.3	**38.6**[b]	**22.0**[a]
	Employed part-time	54.6	45.4	29.0	25.7
	Unemployed	**53.3**[a]	46.7	**30.0**[a]	23.3
	Not in the labour force	62.3	37.7	28.8	**33.5**[b]
Household structure	Single person	60.9	39.1	33.3	27.6
	Couple without children	**63.3**[b]	**36.7**	33.1	**30.1**[b]
	Single parent	57.7	42.3	32.2	25.4
	Couple with children	59.9	40.1	34.7	25.2
Household income	$0 to $52,884	57.3	42.7	28.3	29.0
	$52,885 to $109,304	**64.4**[b]	**36.0**[a]	35.1	28.8
	$109,305 to $168,688	61.2	38.8	36.4	24.8
	$168,689 or more	57.2	42.8	**38.2**[b]	**18.9**
CALD	Yes	**51.6**[a]	**48.4**[b]	**27.5**[a]	25.2
	No	61.4	38.6	35.1	27.0
PGSI risk	Risky gambling (PGSI 1+)	100.0	-	**61.0**[b]	**39.0**[b]
Gambling frequency	Never	-	100.0	-	-
	Less than monthly	100.0	-	30.3	**45.0**[b]
	Monthly	100.0	-	24.6	24.1
	Weekly or more	100.0	-	**45.1**[b]	31.0
High psychological distress		59.1	41.0	**36.2**[b]	**22.9**[a]
Felt lonely in the past week		59.7	40.3	**42.6**[b]	**17.1**[a]

Values in **Bolded** cells are significantly [a]=lower, [b]=higher than general population average

Online gambling participation

Table 2 also shows that males aged between 25 and 34, with a trade certificate or diploma, employed full-time, and in the highest household income bracket were more likely to gamble online compared to the general population. Individuals reporting risky and high-frequency (weekly or more) gambling, as well as those experiencing high psychological distress and loneliness, also reported higher online participation rates. The youngest group (18–24) and the oldest group (75+), those with university education, and those from CALD backgrounds reported lower online participation than the population average.

Venue gambling participation

Finally, Table 2 shows that the oldest groups (55+), those who had not finished Year 12, and those outside the labour force, along with individuals gambling infrequently (less than monthly), were more likely to gamble in venues. Younger groups (18–34), individuals with university education, those earning the highest incomes, and reporting high psychological distress and loneliness were less likely to gamble in venues compared with the population average.

Gambling harm from own and others' gambling

This next section will report on the negative consequences of gambling – i.e. gambling harm – related to own gambling of another person's gambling in the past 12 months. Harm from own gambling is captured by risky gambling (PGSI 1+) and harm from another person's gambling by a single item about being personally affected by another person's gambling (affected others). We report the rates of those experiencing any harm from own gambling and harm from another person's gambling across key demographic, gambling and wellbeing groups.

Harm from own gambling: risky gambling. Table 3 on the next page shows that almost one in five Australian adults reported risky gambling in the past 12 months. Gambling risk was significantly higher among males, the youngest age group (18–24), unemployed individuals, those in couple households with children, those with household incomes between $52,885 and $109,304, and CALD groups. Risky gambling was also more prevalent among individuals who gambled more frequently and reported higher rates of psychological distress and loneliness. In contrast, lower rates of risky gambling were observed among the oldest groups, those not in the labour force, and individuals in couple households without children.

Table 3. Rates of risky gambling and affected other status across population groups

		Risky gambling %	Affected other %
Var	***Australian adult pop.***	*19.4*	*5.9*
Gender	Male	**23.5**[a]	5.1
	Female	15.0	6.6
Age	18-24 years	**30.0**[a]	**15.8**[a]
	25-34 years	21.7	**9.2**[a]
	35-44 years	23.7	5.0
	45-55 years	19.7	2.8
	55-64 years	14.3	3.8
	65-74 years	**10.7**[b]	**1.9**[b]
	75 +	**13.1**[b]	2.8
Education	University degree	17.3	5.3
	Certificate or diploma	20.8	6.6
	Year 12	21.2	**8.5**[a]
	Less than year 12	18.5	1.9
Employment	Employed full-time	20.9	4.9
	Employed part-time	20.3	6.5
	Unemployed	**31.0**[a]	**13.1**[a]
	Not in the labour force	**15.0**[b]	4.7
Household structure	Single	17.9	**3.3**[b]
	Couple without children	**16.0**[b]	5.3
	Single parent	17.3	6.3
	Couple with children	**23.0**[a]	6.2
Household income	$0 to $52,884	19.0	5.9
	$52,885 to $109,304	**23.0**[a]	**8.7**[a]
	$109,305 to $168,688	18.6	5.4
	$168,689 or more	17.4	**2.6**[b]
CALD	Yes	**22.1**[a]	**8.1**[a]
	No	18.4	5.0
PGSI risk	Risky gambling (PGSI 1+)	100.0	**15.1**[a]
Gambling frequency	Never	-	**3.6**[b]
	Less than monthly	19.0	7.1
	Monthly	**38.2**[a]	6.6
	Weekly or more	**38.9**[a]	7.3
High psychological distress		**37.4**[a]	**15.6**[a]
Felt lonely in the past week		**31.8**[a]	**12.1**[a]

Values in **Bolded** cells are significantly [a]=higher, [b]=lower than general population

Harm from another person's gambling: affected others. Table 3 also shows that 5.9% of the population reported being personally affected by another person's gambling. The rate of affected others was higher among the youngest age groups (18–34), those with only Year 12 education, unemployed individuals, those with household incomes between $52,885 and $109,304, and CALD backgrounds. Affected others were also more common among individuals reporting risky gambling, high psychological distress, and loneliness.

Summary and implications

Gambling trends over time 2019-2025

The current data shows that the past year gambling participation rate in Australian adult population is 58.8%. is slightly lower than the rate 12 months earlier (60.3%) and below the pre-COVID-19 participation rate of 65.6% in 2019. These data confirm that the gambling participation rate plateaued at around 60% since COVID-19, but continues to decrease each year. The trend follows a steady decline in gambling participation over the past 15 years (Browne et al., 2020; Paterson et al., 2019; Rockloff et al., 2020, 2025; Stevens et al., 2019; Suomi et al., 2024a).

While the overall participation rate is similar to that of 12 months ago, the proportion of individuals gambling without risk decreased from 49.7% in 2023 to 46.6% in 2024 and to 39.4% in 2025. At the same time, the proportion gambling at risky levels increased from 11.6% in 2023 to 13.7% in 2024 and 19.4% in 2025. This means that although overall participation is declining, a larger share of those who gamble are doing so at risky levels, and this group continues to grow each year. Our findings are consistent with recent state-wide gambling prevalence surveys showing an intensification of gambling in the general population across Australian jurisdictions (Browne et al., 2024; Rockloff et al., 2025; Suomi et al., 2024a).

Participation across activities

The most popular gambling activities in 2025 were lottery (41.3%), scratch tickets (19.4%), raffle tickets (15.4%), electronic gaming machines (14.6%), and race betting (12.6%). Of those who gambled in the past 12 months, over half (56.1%) did so online at least half of the time. Sports betting, though relatively low at the population level (7.0%), increased from 4.7% in 2024 and had by far the highest online participation rate (88.5%). Other activities with high online participation included race betting (76.9%), lottery (51.1%), and raffle tickets (33.4%).

While small on the population level, the online share of EGM gambling nearly doubled (6.5% to 12.0%) and casino table games more than doubled (4.8% to 11.8%) between 2024 and 2025. These gambling activities are currently illegal in online formats in Australia, and our data suggest difficulties in blocking illegal sites or more aggressive tactics used by offshore gambling operators, as found in other countries (Egerer & Marionneau, 2023).

Factors associated with gambling participation

Our findings are consistent with state-based surveys showing that higher gambling participation is associated with male gender, older age, and lower education (Browne et al., 2020; Rockloff et al., 2024; Suomi et al., 2024a;

Stevens et al., 2019). Online gambling in 2025 was associated with male gender, middle age (35–44), full-time employment, and higher household income. By contrast, venue gambling was more common among the oldest groups (55+), those without high school completion, and those outside the labour force with lower household income.

These findings are in line with our recent studies showing that online gambling attracts different demographic profile to in-venue gambling (Suomi et al., 2024a, 2024c). The current data from 2025, showing sociodemographic and psychosocial differences between online and venue-based gambling, suggest two separate population subgroups of individuals who gamble. These data also reflect the generational change in gambling behaviours: older individuals who are less educated, and potentially retired or otherwise transitioned out of the labour force tend to gamble in venues. The profile of individuals who gamble online looks vastly different, with younger age profile, higher likelihood of fulltime employment and higher income.

Psychosocial factors associated with online gambling

Online gambling was associated with high rates of risky gambling, and much more frequent gambling, compared to venue based gambling. Previous evidence shows that unlimited access to online gambling through mobile devices is associated with continuous gambling, leading to losses and gambling harm at a faster rate than in venues, leading to more excessive gambling and gambling harm (Hing et al., 2021; Parke & Parke, 2019; Suomi et al., 2024a; Tabri et al., 2022). Individuals gambling online and prone to excessive gambling may struggle to take breaks or resist urges, especially since mobile devices with betting apps are now an integral part of daily life.

Critically, online gambling was strongly associated with both psychological distress and loneliness. This differs from our 2024 findings, where only loneliness was linked to online gambling, suggesting a shift in wellbeing profiles. emerging evidence suggests that loneliness predicts online gambling addiction rather than the reverse (Karaıbrahımoglu et al., 2023). During COVID-19, loneliness rose due to social restrictions and contributed to gambling problems (Ciccarelli et al., 2022; Rogier et al., 2021). Large-scale longitudinal data across countries show that loneliness predicts problematic gambling among individuals experiencing psychological distress, particularly among online gamblers (Vuorinen et al., 2021; Sirola et al., 2019). From our data and previous research, it can be concluded that both loneliness and psychological distress play a critical role in the development and maintenance of risky gambling, especially online.

Gambling harm to self and others

Risky gambling (PGSI 1+) and affected-other status revealed similar profiles: younger age, unemployment, parenting responsibilities, lower income, and

CALD backgrounds. Parents, in particular, reported increased risk of gambling harm from their own gambling. Online gambling, being easily accessible at home, may appeal to parents with busy schedules, contributing to harm within families. While gambling harm and problem gambling have traditionally being associated with lack of family ties, single person households (Syvertsen et al., 2023), our data suggests that online gambling is now bringing gambling into family homes, further contributing to the shift in the sociodemographics associated with gambling harm.

CALD status (being born outside Australia or speaking another language than English at home) was associated harm from own of another person's gambling. There is very little recent population based data available on the cultural and ethnic factors associated with risky gambling and gambling harm in Australia. Our data is consistent with a growing body of literature that shows that while individuals from non-Australian backgrounds were less likely to gamble overall, they were more likely to experience harm, consistent with prior research (Awaworyi Churchill & Farrell, 2020; Rowlatt et al., 2023). Our data extend these findings by showing higher rates of affected-other experiences among CALD individuals, despite lower participation.

Conclusion

Gambling participation continues to decline, while risky gambling is increasing at the population level, leading to intensification of harm in Australia. Online gambling rates have exponentially increased in the same period, and may directly contribute to this harm. Uninterrupted access to online platforms is shifting the sociodemographic profile of gambling harm, increasingly bringing gambling into family homes. Online and risky gambling were strongly associated with psychological distress, highlighting the potential for growing harm if not addressed through evidence-based public health strategies, including stronger regulation of online products.

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