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Gambling in Australia 2026

Gambling Participation, Online and At-risk Gambling, and Affected Others

Aino Suomi, Markus Hahn, Nicholas Biddle

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ANU Centre for Gambling Research

POLIS@ANU - The Centre for Social Policy Research

Research School of Social Sciences

College of Arts and Social Sciences

The Australian National University

Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

www.anu.edu.au

TEQSA Provider ID: PRV12002 (Australian University)

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About POLIS

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Acknowledgment of Country

The research for this report took place in various locations, and all on unceded Aboriginal lands. The authors acknowledge and pay respects to the Elders past and present and recognise how the continuity of knowledge nurtures community and Country – including this research.

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Abstract

Gambling harm remains a major public health issue in Australia. This report updates national prevalence estimates of gambling participation, at-risk gambling (PGSI 1+) and harm from others' gambling, drawing on seven waves of the ANUpoll survey (2019–2026). Data from 2026 (n = 3,482) were analysed alongside previous waves to examine trends in gambling participation, activities, online and venue-based gambling, and demographic profiles.

Gambling participation has stabilised since 2023 at just over 60% of Australian adults gambling in 2026, following sharper declines during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic. The most common activities in 2026 were buying lottery tickets (41% of adult Australians), scratch tickets (19%) and raffle tickets (18%), followed by gambling on electronic gaming machines (EGMs; 16%) and race betting (12%).

At-risk gambling (PGSI 1+) affected around 17% of Australian adults. Following substantial declines in gambling participation and at-risk gambling during the COVID-19 pandemic, at-risk gambling has since stabilised at a higher level. Higher rates were associated with being male, younger age (18–34 years), living in single-parent or 'other' household types, unemployment, mid-level household incomes, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, and more frequent gambling.

Online gambling remained more common than venue-based gambling (27%), with 35% of Australian adults gambling online at least half of the time. Online participation was highest for sports betting (90%), followed by race betting (71%) and lotteries (55%). Participation in illegal forms of online EGMs and casino table games has also increased since 2024. In each year from 2024 to 2026, people who gambled online were more likely to gamble at least monthly than those who gambled in venues. Online gambling was associated with being male, middle age (45–54 years), full-time employment, higher household income, more frequent gambling and higher rates of at-risk gambling.

Affected others: In 2026, 5.1% of Australian adults reported being negatively affected by another person's gambling in the preceding 12 months. Higher rates were observed among younger adults (18–34 years), those living in single-parent or 'other' household types, those with mid-level household incomes, people from CALD backgrounds, and those who themselves gambled at risk.

The findings suggest that, following several years of substantial change, gambling participation and at-risk gambling have settled into a relatively stable pattern, with at-risk gambling remaining at elevated levels. The continued prominence of online gambling, its association with gambling risk, and the substantial number of Australians affected by others' gambling reinforce the need for sustained regulatory and public health responses, particularly as new restrictions on online gambling advertising and marketing take effect from January 2027.

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 for 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, 2022; Rockloff et al., 2020, 2025; Suomi et al., 2024a).

Gambling participation has declined steadily over the past 15 years, yet rates of gambling harm have not fallen at the population level — a pattern our own 2025 wave illustrated, with at-risk gambling almost doubling since the COVID-19 lockdown period despite a steady continued decrease in overall participation (Suomi, Hahn & Biddle, 2025). A newly published longitudinal analysis of the same phenomenon using HILDA data confirms this decoupling of participation from harm is not an artefact of the ANUpoll series alone, tracking gambling participation and higher-risk gambling across the general Australian population from 2015 to 2022 (Chilver, Butterworth & Suomi, 2026). Online gambling has been central to this shift: the proportion of Australian adults engaging in online gambling (excluding lotteries) rose from 8% in 2020 to 11% in 2021 (ACMA, 2022), and by 2025 more than half (56%) of people who gambled did so online at least half of the time — the first time online gambling had crossed that threshold in the survey's history (Suomi, Hahn & Biddle, 2025).

Gambling harm extends beyond the individual who gambles to those close to them — "affected others." International estimates of affected-other prevalence in the general population range from 5% to 21% (Castrén et al., 2021; Dowling et al., 2025; Hing et al., 2022; Lind et al., 2022; Salonen et al., 2014; Svensson et al., 2013), and a recent population-representative Swedish study found 11% of adults reported someone in their close social environment experiencing gambling problems in the past year, most commonly a friend (Sundqvist & Wennberg, 2026). Our own 2025 estimate — 5.9% of Australian adults affected by another person's gambling — sits at the lower end of this range but was associated with the same markers of disadvantage seen internationally: younger age, unemployment, parenting responsibilities, lower household income, and CALD backgrounds (Suomi, Hahn & Biddle, 2025). Methodological work on affected-other measurement has also progressed substantially and a network-based reconciliation of reports from people who gamble and from affected others has revised the long-cited "six others" rule of thumb down to approximately 4.7 people harmed per person with problem gambling — while confirming that people with low- and moderate-risk gambling, not just those at the most severe end, account for the majority of harm transmitted through these networks (Browne, Tulloch & Woodbright, 2026).

This report updates our Australian gambling prevalence series, which now spans seven waves collected in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026

(Suomi et al., 2023, 2024b, 2024c, 2025). It presents national prevalence rates of gambling participation and at-risk gambling overall, across gambling activities and modes (online versus venue), and the rate of individuals affected by another person's gambling. One change from previous waves: the 2026 ANUpoll did not include the K6 psychological distress or the loneliness items used in 2024 and 2025 to characterise the wellbeing profile of online and at risk gambling. In their place, this wave includes life satisfaction and financial stress items, which we use as wellbeing correlates in this report. Where relevant we draw on recent external evidence on distress and loneliness to contextualise our findings rather than testing these relationships directly against 2026 data.

The policy environment has also shifted substantially since our last report was published. Where our 2025 findings called for "more restrictive regulation of online gambling products," the Australian Parliament has since acted: the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Gambling Reform) Bill 2026 passed in August 2026, introducing restrictions on gambling advertising across television, radio, online platforms and sports venues, a national advertising opt-out register, limits on inducement marketing to at-risk customers, a ban on staff and affiliate commissions tied to customer activity, and expanded enforcement powers against illegal offshore gambling services, with reforms commencing from 1 January 2027. The 2026 data presented in this report therefore represent a pre-reform baseline against which the impact of these measures can eventually be assessed.

With that in mind, the aims of the current study are to establish:

1. Prevalence of Australian gambling participation and at-risk gambling in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026
2. Overall and online participation rates across gambling activities in the Australian population in 2024, 2025 and 2026
3. The sociodemographic and wellbeing profiles of individuals gambling online and at risk (for problem gambling), as well as affected others, in 2026.

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 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; the 2026 wave was collected through the same panel. In this paper we use data from seven 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), January 2025 (n=3,387) and March 2026 (n=3,482). 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 and 2026 waves 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

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

At-risk gambling was measured using the 9-item Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI; Ferris & Wynne, 2001), a widely used population measure of gambling-related problems (Orford et al., 2010). The PGSI assesses behavioural symptoms and negative consequences of gambling over the preceding 12 months, with responses ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (almost always). Conventional scoring classifies respondents as non-problem gambling (score 0), low-risk gambling (1–2), moderate-risk gambling (3–7) or problem gambling (8+). However, these categories rely on thresholds that do not necessarily reflect meaningful distinctions in gambling-related harm. Research has demonstrated

[1] Variables used in 2025 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. Different weighting variables were used in 2026, due to data availability: 10-year age groups, Bachelor's degree or higher/Year 12 or higher/less than Year 12, gender, employed/not employed.

considerable heterogeneity within PGSI categories, with individuals achieving similar scores through different patterns of gambling-related problems (Murch et al., 2025). Moreover, relatively small changes in scores can shift respondents between categories, potentially exaggerating changes in gambling risk over time. As the primary purpose of this analysis is to monitor population-level trends and identify factors associated with gambling-related problems, we combine the three higher categories into a single measure of 'at-risk gambling' (PGSI 1+). This captures the proportion of the population reporting at least some indicators of gambling-related problems, without assigning undue significance to conventional category boundaries.

We report two at-risk rates (PGSI 1+) because they are based on slightly different samples. To allow comparison with previous waves, Figure 1 uses the previous classification, in which people who bought only raffle tickets were treated as missing (n = 3,325). On this basis 17.6% of adults gambled at risk. For all other analyses (Tables 1–3) we included people who bought only raffle tickets and classified them as non-problem gambling (n = 3,482), and the at-risk rate was 16.9%.

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".

Life satisfaction was measured with a single item: 'The following question asks how satisfied you feel about life in general, on a scale from 0 to 10. Zero means you feel 'not at all satisfied' and 10 means 'completely satisfied'. Overall, how satisfied are you with life as a whole these days?' We used the continuous score for each analysis.

Financial stress was measured by asking respondents 'Which of the following descriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?', with response options ranging from living comfortably to finding it very difficult on present income; each of the four response categories is compared with the population average.

Demographic information. Demographic and psychosocial information included gender (male, female), age (seven categories: 18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, 55–64, 65–74 and 75 or older), 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

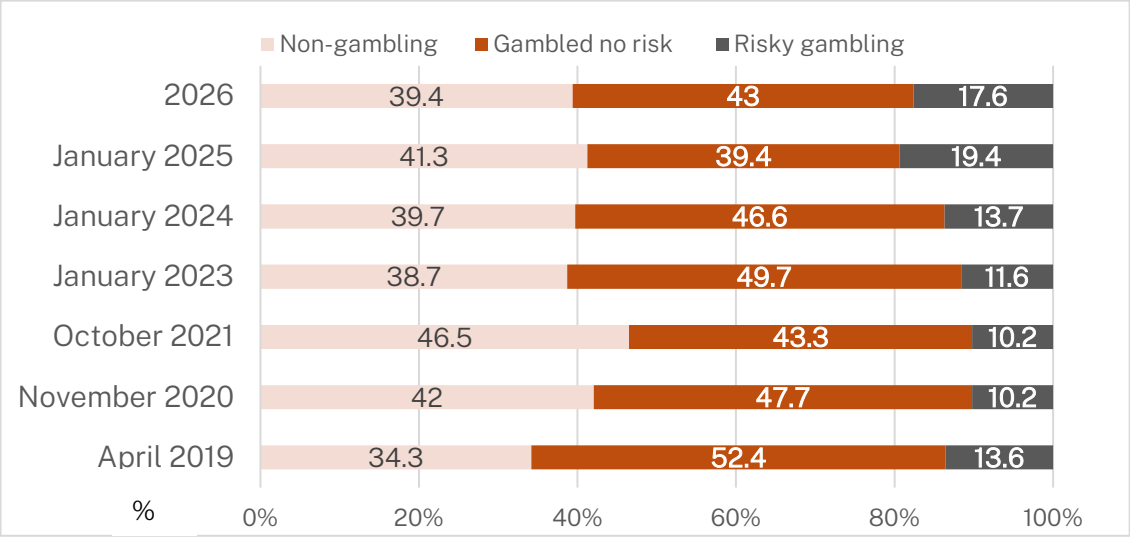
We present proportional data across the cross-sectional waves of 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026 by gambling risk category and overall. After this, the analyses focus on the most recent data collected in 2026, including proportional data for participation in each gambling activity overall, and online vs venue participation, compared with 2024 and 2025 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 at-risk gambling and being personally affected by another person's gambling. Subgroup estimates were compared with the population average. A subgroup was reported as significantly different from the population average when the population average fell outside the subgroup's 95% confidence interval. This is a descriptive screening approach: it does not take account of the uncertainty in the population estimate, or of each subgroup forming part of the population, so differences close to the boundary should be interpreted cautiously. For at-risk gambling, confidence intervals were approximated from group sample sizes using a normal approximation that does not fully account for survey weighting. Online and venue gambling were compared within each group and treated as different when their 95% confidence intervals did not overlap. Differences between survey years were not formally tested.

Results

Gambling participation in Australia 2019-2026

Figure 1 shows the distribution of gambling risk status of individuals who: did not gamble, gambled without risk and gambled at risk (PGSI 1+) in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026. Overall gambling participation has levelled off since the post-pandemic recovery, fluctuating within a narrow band of 59–61% since 2023 (60.6% in 2026, on the raffle-ticket-as-missing basis used in this figure for comparability over time). The proportion of individuals gambling at risk was 17.6% in 2026, similar to the 19.4% recorded in 2025 but still well above the 10–14% range observed across all earlier waves of this series. Together, these patterns suggest that both overall participation and at-risk gambling have settled at a new, elevated plateau rather than continuing to trend in either direction. These estimates show that roughly 1 in 6 Australian adults gambled at risk in the past 12 months.

Figure 1 Percentage of Australians gambling[2] with and without risk in 2019-2026



[2] To allow for comparison over time, individuals who only buy raffle tickets are set as missing for these analyses with 'at-risk' rate 17.6%; for the remainder of the analyses we include individuals buying raffle tickets and the 'at-risk' rate is 16.9% of Australian adult population.

Overall and online gambling participation across activities in 2026

Table 1 compares the participation rates overall and online in 2024, 2025 and 2026 in the Australian adult population. It shows that in 2025 and 2026 the most popular gambling activities were buying lottery tickets (41.3% and 41.2% of Australian adult population, respectively), followed by buying scratch (19.4% and 18.9%) and raffle (15.4% and 18.1%) tickets, gambling on EGMs (14.6% and 15.5%) and race betting (12.6% and 11.7%). Of all activities, sports betting had the largest proportion of online gambling (88.5% and 89.8%), followed by betting on races (76.9% and 71.4%) and buying lottery tickets (51.1% and 55.0%). Note that unlike in Figure 1, estimates from here onwards include individuals who only bought raffle tickets, and they do not 100% correspond to the estimates in Figure 1.

Table 1. Gambling participation rate in Australian population and venue/online participation across individual gambling activities in 2024, 2025 and 2026

	2024 participation		2025 participation		2026 participation	
	% of adults	Of whom online[a] %	% of adults	Of whom online[a] %	% of adults	Of whom online[a] %
Lottery	46.8	52.1	41.3	51.1	41.2	55.0
Raffle tickets	23.4	27.2	15.4	33.4	18.1	30.6
Scratch tickets	15.7	4.9	19.4	12.2	18.9	9.3
EGMs	12.9	6.5	14.6	12.0	15.5	13.4
Races betting	10.0	73.4	12.6	76.9	11.7	71.4
Keno	5.2	10.5	5.8	18.1	6.9	21.0
Sports betting	4.7	95.6	7.0	88.5	8.7	89.8
Casino table games	2.7	4.8	3.1	11.8	3.1	21.8
Bingo	1.4	4.6	2.2	32.3	2.7	25.8

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

Figures 2 and 3 extend this comparison back to 2024, showing participation and online share for each activity across 2024, 2025 and 2026. These are descriptive comparisons only: differences between years have not been tested for statistical significance, so changes should be interpreted with caution. In 2026, buying lottery tickets remained the most common activity (41.2%), followed by scratch tickets (18.9%), raffle tickets (18.1%) and EGMs (15.5%) (Figure 2). Lottery participation was lower in 2025 and 2026 than in 2024 (46.8%), with little difference between the last two years. Participation in sports betting (4.7%, 7.0% and 8.7%) and Keno (5.2%, 5.8% and 6.9%) was slightly higher in each successive year, while raffle ticket participation fell between 2024 and 2025 (23.4% to 15.4%) and partly recovered in 2026 (18.1%), and other activities fluctuated within a few percentage points.

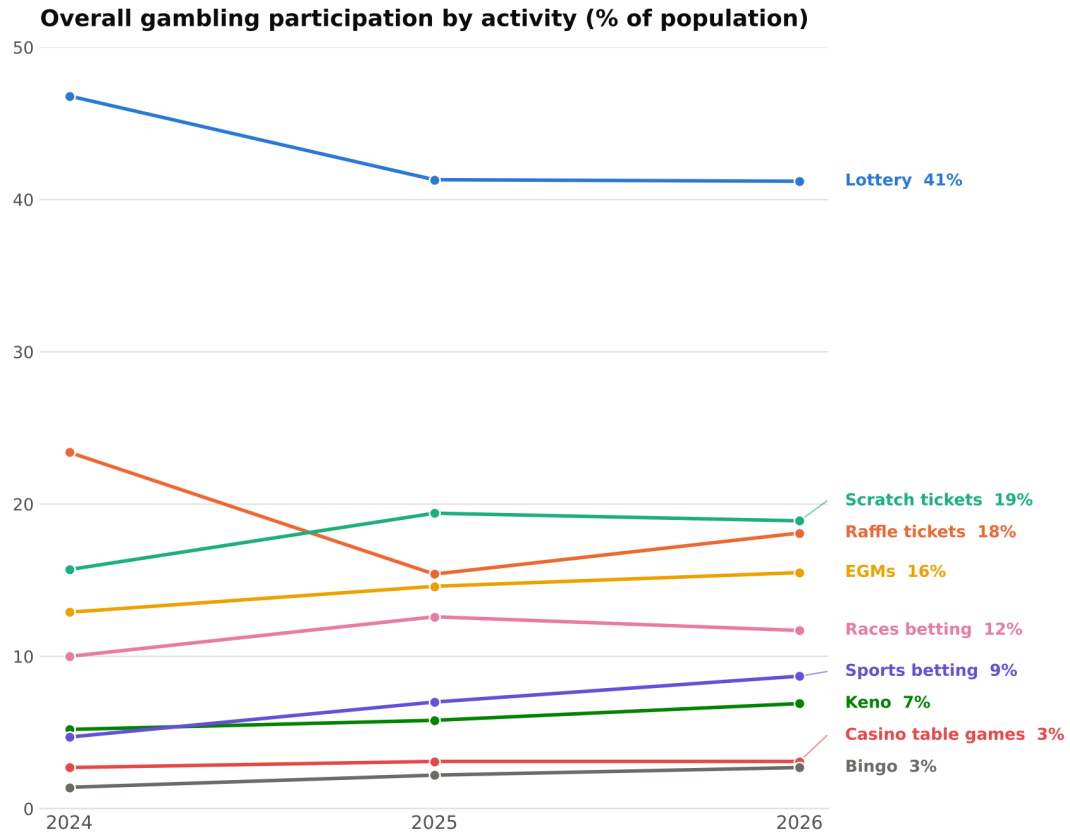


Figure 2 Overall gambling participation by activity, 2024–2026

Percentage of the Australian adult population participating in each gambling activity. Based on the same figures shown in Table 1.

In 2026, sports betting (89.8%) and race betting (71.4%) remained the activities with the highest online share, followed by lottery (55.0%) (Figure 3). The online share of casino table games (4.8%, 11.8% and 21.8%) and Keno (10.5%, 18.1% and 21.0%) was higher in each successive year, whereas the online share of bingo and raffle tickets rose between 2024 and 2025 and was lower again in 2026.

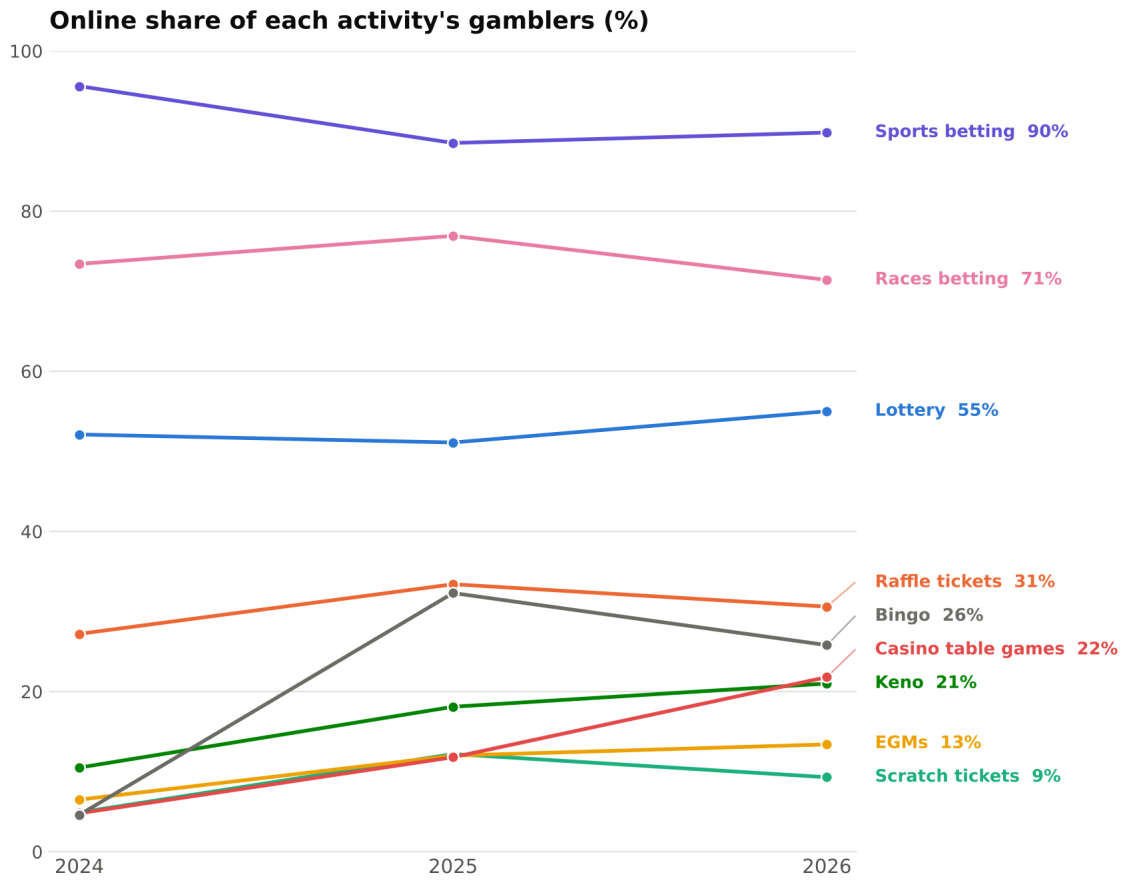


Figure 3 Online share of gambling activity, 2024–2026

Proportion of people participating in each activity who did so online at least half of the time. Based on the same figures shown in Table 1.

Gambling participation across demographic and wellbeing factors

Table 2 shows the proportion of each group who gambled online and who gambled in venues, and whether each group differed significantly from the population average (35.2% online; 27.2% in venues). Participation in any gambling is reported in Table 3, alongside at-risk gambling and being affected by another person's gambling.

Table 2. Online and venue gambling participation across population groups, 2026

		Online gambling %	Venue gambling %
Var	***Australian adult pop.***	*35.2*	*27.2*
Gender	Male	**41.1**[b]	25.2
	Female	**29.6**[a]	29.3
Age	18-24 years	**27.1**[a]	**20.9**[a]
	25-34 years	34.2	**19.9**[a]
	35-44 years	37.0	26.0
	45-55 years	**46.6**[b]	24.0
	55-64 years	38.6	31.6
	65-74 years	**28.2**[a]	**36.6**[b]
	75 +	**28.8**[a]	**36.9**[b]
Education	University degree	34.7	**23.2**[a]
	Certificate or diploma	38.1	28.2
	Year 12	31.3	28.6
	Less than year 12	35.4	30.2
Employment	Employed full-time	**43.3**[b]	**23.0**[a]
	Employed part-time	31.8	27.6
	Unemployed	**26.9**[a]	27.2
	Not in the labour force	**28.8**[a]	**33.3**[b]
Household structure	Single person	35.1	26.5
	Couple without children	34.1	30.4
	Single parent	33.1	33.4
	Couple with children	**37.7**[b]	26.0
	Other	33.2	22.7
Household income	$0 to $52,884	**30.3**[a]	29.9
	$52,885 to $109,304	34.6	29.0
	$109,305 to $168,688	**41.3**[b]	25.5
	$168,689 or more	**42.5**[b]	**20.4**[a]
Financial stress	Living comfortably	33.4	27.5
	Coping on present income	**38.4**[b]	26.1
	Finding it difficult	33.8	28.0
	Finding it very difficult	29.6	29.9
CALD	Yes	**29.4**[a]	**22.9**[a]
	No	36.3	28.2
PGSI risk	At-risk gambling (PGSI 1+)	**61.5**[b]	**38.5**[b]
Gambling frequency	Never	-	-
	Less than monthly	**46.4**[b]	**53.6**[b]
	Monthly	**65.0**[b]	**35.0**[b]
	Weekly or more	**69.2**[b]	30.8
Life satisfaction	Mean score (0–10)	6.2	6.4

Values in **Bolded** cells are significantly [a]=lower, [b]=higher than general population average. Life satisfaction is the mean score (0–10). '-' indicates not applicable.

Online gambling participation

Table 2 also shows that males, those aged 45–54, those employed full-time, those in the higher household income brackets ($109,305 or more annually), individuals in couple households with children, and those coping on their present income were more likely to gamble online compared to the general population. Individuals reporting at-risk gambling and those who gambled more frequently also reported higher online participation rates. The youngest group (18–24), the oldest groups (65 and over), unemployed individuals, those not in the labour force, those on the lowest incomes and those from CALD backgrounds reported lower online participation than the population average.

Venue gambling participation

Table 2 shows that the oldest groups (65+) and those not in the labour force, along with individuals reporting at-risk gambling and those gambling in low to mid frequency (monthly and less than monthly) were more likely to gamble in venues than the population average. Younger groups (18–34), those with a university education, those employed full-time, those earning the highest incomes and those from CALD backgrounds were less likely to gamble in venues.

Online compared with venue gambling

We also compared online and venue gambling within each group, treating the two as different when their 95% confidence intervals did not overlap. Across the population, online gambling was more common than venue gambling. Online gambling was more common than venue gambling among males, those aged 25–54, with a university degree or a certificate or diploma, those employed full-time, couples with children, those with household incomes of $109,305 or more, non-CALD respondents, and those reporting at-risk gambling, or gambling monthly or more often.

No group gambled significantly more in venues than online, although venue gambling was numerically higher among those aged 65 and over, those not in the labour force, and those gambling less than monthly, with overlapping confidence intervals. Online and venue gambling were also similar among females, those aged 18–24 and 55–64, those with Year 12 or less education, those employed part-time or unemployed, couples without children, single parents, those with household incomes under $109,305 and CALD respondents.

Given online gambling enables much more frequent gambling, we examined population trends on high frequency gambling over time by online/venue format. Figure 4 shows the proportion of people who gamble online, and of people who gamble in venues, who gamble monthly or more often (high frequency). Among people who gamble online, 62.5% gambled monthly or more often in 2024, 69.8% in 2025 and 68.3% in 2026; among people who gamble in venues the proportions were 42.9%, 56.5% and 47.3%. The proportion was higher for online than venue gambling in each year.

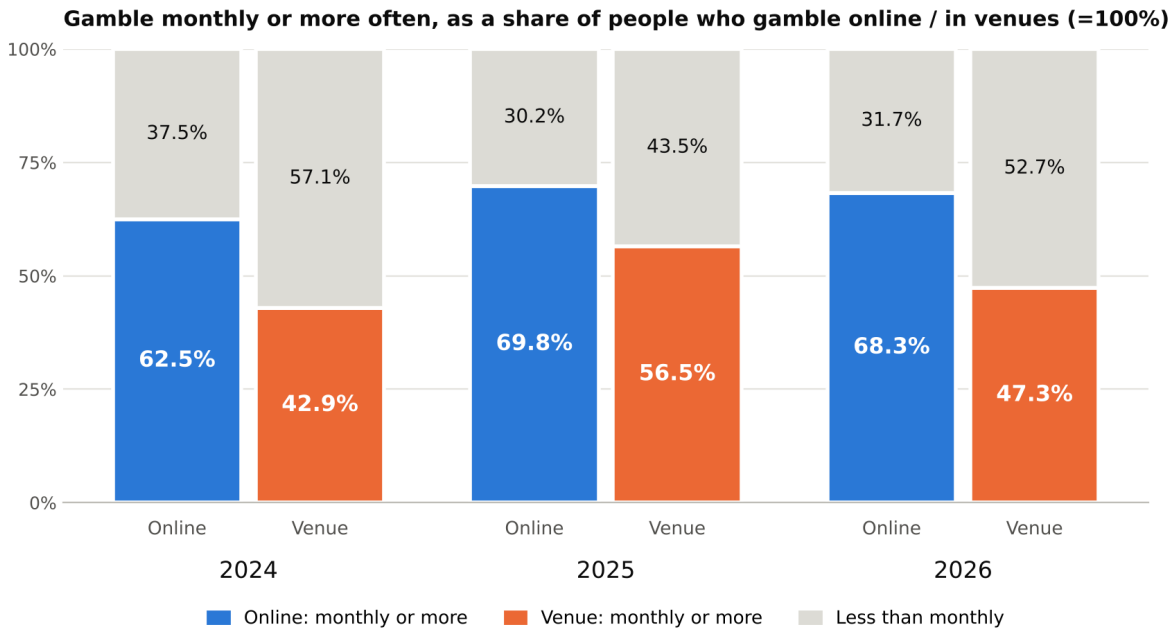


Figure 4 Gambling monthly or more often as a share of online and venue gambling, 2024–2026

Base: people who gamble online (online at least half of the time) and people who gamble in venues, ANUpoll 2024, 2025 and 2026 (weighted). Monthly or more often = gambling at least once a month (monthly but less than weekly, plus weekly or more). People who gamble both online and in venues appear in both groups.

Gambling participation, at-risk gambling and affected others

This next section reports how gambling participation and consequences varied across key demographic, gambling and wellbeing groups.

Gambling participation. Table 3 shows the proportion of each group who gambled in the past 12 months. Overall, 62.4% of adults gambled. Males, those aged 45–64, those with a certificate or diploma, employed full-time and those with household incomes between $109,305 and $168,688 were more likely to gamble than the general population. Females, those aged 18–34, those with a university degree, unemployed individuals, those in 'other' household types and individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds were less likely to gamble. The proportion who gambled did not differ significantly from the population average for the other groups shown.

At-risk gambling. Table 3 on the next page shows that 16.9% of Australian adults reported at-risk gambling in the past 12 months (using the updated raffle-ticket classification; see Measures). Compared with the population average, at-risk gambling was higher among males, those aged 18–34, unemployed individuals, single parents, those in 'other' household types, those with household incomes between $52,885 and $109,304, CALD respondents, and those who gambled more frequently. It was lower among females, those aged 45 and older, those not in the labour force, couples without children and those living comfortably on their present income.

Table 3. Rates of gambling, at-risk gambling and affected other status across population groups, 2026

		Any gambling %	At-risk gambling %	Affected other %
Var	***Australian adult pop.***	*62.4*	*16.9*	*5.1*
Gender	Male	**66.3**[b]	**21.2**[b]	5.7
	Female	**58.9**[a]	**12.8**[a]	4.5
Age	18-24 years	**48.0**[a]	**26.1**[b]	**9.6**[b]
	25-34 years	**54.1**[a]	**22.7**[b]	**7.3**[b]
	35-44 years	63.0	19.3	5.6
	45-55 years	**70.6**[b]	**13.8**[a]	4.0
	55-64 years	**70.2**[b]	**12.1**[a]	**1.6**[a]
	65-74 years	64.8	**11.3**[a]	4.7
	75 +	65.6	**10.9**[a]	2.3
Education	University degree	**57.9**[a]	17.6	5.0
	Certificate or diploma	**66.4**[b]	16.3	5.3
	Year 12	59.9	19.7	6.5
	Less than year 12	65.7	14.8	3.9
Employment	Employed full-time	**66.3**[b]	18.1	5.0
	Employed part-time	59.4	16.3	6.2
	Unemployed	**54.0**[a]	**24.4**[b]	8.3
	Not in the labour force	62.1	**12.1**[a]	3.6
Household structure	Single	61.7	14.5	3.0
	Couple without children	64.5	**13.3**[a]	**3.2**[a]
	Single parent	66.6	**21.6**[b]	**8.0**[b]
	Couple with children	63.7	19.2	5.7
	Other	**55.9**[a]	**20.8**[b]	**9.3**[b]
Household income	$0 to $52,884	60.1	15.7	5.0
	$52,885 to $109,304	63.6	**19.4**[b]	**7.0**[b]
	$109,305 to $168,688	**66.9**[b]	19.9	4.8
	$168,689 or more	62.9	15.9	3.4
Financial stress	Living comfortably	60.9	**12.6**[a]	**2.1**[a]
	Coping on present income	64.5	18.5	5.8
	Finding it difficult	61.8	17.6	6.7
	Finding it very difficult	59.5	16.5	4.6
CALD	Yes	**52.3**[a]	**20.6**[b]	**9.0**[b]
	No	64.4	15.9	**4.1**[a]
PGSI risk	At-risk gambling (PGSI 1+)	100.0	100.0	**15.8**[b]
Gambling frequency	Never	-	-	**3.0**[a]
	Less than monthly	100.0	**20.5**[b]	6.2
	Monthly	100.0	**28.3**[b]	4.2
	Weekly or more	100.0	**30.2**[b]	7.3
Life satisfaction	Mean score (0–10)	6.3	6.1	6.1

Values in **Bolded** cells are significantly [a]=lower, [b]=higher than general population. Life satisfaction is the mean score (0–10); the any gambling value combines online and venue gambling, and '-' indicates not available.

Harm from another person's gambling: affected others. Table 3 also shows that 5.1% 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 in single parent households and in 'other' household types, those with household incomes between $52,885 and $109,304, CALD backgrounds, and — as in previous waves — individuals who themselves reported at-risk gambling. Lower rates were observed among those aged 55–64, couples without children, non-CALD respondents, those living comfortably on their present income, and those who never gamble.

Life satisfaction and financial stress. Mean life satisfaction (0–10) was similar among those who gambled online (6.2) and in venues (6.4; Table 2), and among those who gambled (6.3), gambled at risk (6.1) and were affected by another person's gambling (6.1; Table 3); none differed significantly from the population average. Financial stress showed a clearer pattern with harm. Those living comfortably on their present income had lower rates of at-risk gambling, and of being affected by another person's gambling. Those coping on their present income were more likely to gamble online, but online and venue gambling otherwise did not differ by financial stress.

Summary and implications

Gambling trends over time 2019-2026

The current data show that the past-year gambling participation rate among Australian adults was 60.6% in 2026 on the basis used for the time series, compared with 59% in 2025, 60.3% in 2024 and 66% before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019. Since 2023 the participation rate has stayed within a narrow band of 59–62%, suggesting that the post-pandemic decline has levelled off rather than continuing, as it had over the preceding 15 years (Browne et al., 2020; Paterson et al., 2019; Rockloff et al., 2020, 2025; Stevens et al., 2019; Suomi et al., 2024a).

Within this stable overall rate, the composition of gambling has changed. The proportion of adults gambling without risk fell from 50% in 2023 to 47% in 2024 and 40% in 2025, and was 43% in 2026. The proportion of Australian adults gambling at risk for problem gambling rose from 12% in 2023 to 14% in 2024 and 19% in 2025, and was 17% in 2026. These findings suggest that the shift towards riskier gambling has settled at an elevated level rather than continuing to grow. Our findings are consistent with recent state-wide gambling prevalence surveys showing an intensification of gambling in the general population across Australian jurisdictions which means that while individuals are less likely to gamble, those who gamble are more likely to experience harm (Browne et al., 2024; Rockloff et al., 2025; Suomi et al., 2024a).

Participation across activities

The most popular gambling activities in 2026 were lottery (41%), scratch tickets (19%), raffle tickets (18%), electronic gaming machines (16%) and race betting (11.7%). Of those who gambled in the past 12 months, over half (56%) did so online at least half of the time. Sports betting, though relatively low at the population level (8.7%), has seen continued growth each year since 2024 (4.7% in 2024 and 7.0% in 2025) and has by far the highest online participation rate (89.8%). Other activities with high online participation included race betting (71%), lottery (55%) and raffle tickets (31%). Differences between years in activity-level estimates were not tested for statistical significance and should be interpreted with caution.

While small at the population level, the online share of casino table games has increased each year since 2024 (4.8% in 2024, 12% in 2025 and 22% in 2026). Other notable increases in proportion of online gambling were observed for Keno (11%, 18% and 21%) and for EGM gambling that has doubled from 2024 (6.5% to 13%), although it changed little between 2025 and 2026 (12% to 13%). EGMs and casino table games are currently illegal in online formats in Australia, and our data suggest increasing difficulties by regulators in blocking illegal sites or more aggressive tactics used by offshore gambling operators, as found

in other countries (Egerer & Marionneau, 2024). Online keno was legal in Australia during the 2026 survey period. From 1 January 2027, under the Interactive Gambling Amendment (Gambling Reform) Bill 2026, it will join online casino-style games and electronic gaming machines (or 'poker machines/pokies'), on the list of prohibited online gambling products.

Factors associated with gambling participation

Our findings are consistent in part with state-based surveys showing that higher gambling participation is associated with male gender, middle to older age, and lower education (Browne et al., 2020; Rockloff et al., 2025; Suomi et al., 2024a; Stevens et al., 2019). In 2026, gambling participation was higher among males, those aged 45–64, those with a trade certificate or diploma and those employed full-time, and lower among females, younger adults (18–34) and those with a university degree. Online gambling was associated with male gender, mid-life age (45–54), full-time employment and higher household income. By contrast, venue gambling was more common among the oldest groups (65+), those outside the labour force and those gambling less than monthly.

These findings are in line with our recent studies showing that online gambling attracts a different demographic profile to in-venue gambling (Suomi et al., 2024a, 2024c). The current data from 2026, showing sociodemographic differences between online and venue-based gambling, suggest two largely separate population subgroups of people who gamble. These data also reflect generational change in gambling behaviours: older individuals, including those who have transitioned out of the labour force, tend to gamble in venues, whereas people who gamble online are more likely to be of mid-life age, in full-time employment and on higher household incomes.

Wellbeing, financial stress and online gambling

Online gambling was associated with high rates of at-risk gambling and more frequent gambling than 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 (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.

In 2025, online gambling was strongly associated with both psychological distress and loneliness (Suomi, Hahn & Biddle, 2025). These constructs were not measured again in the current survey; instead, we measured life satisfaction and financial stress. Life satisfaction differed little between people who gambled online or in venues. Lack of financial stress was more closely linked to gambling harm than life satisfaction: adults living comfortably on their present income were less likely to report at-risk gambling or to be affected by another

person's gambling. Financial pressure is both a recognised motive for gambling (Tabri et al., 2022) and a consequence of gambling harm, and these cross-sectional data cannot separate the two.

Gambling harm to self and others

At-risk gambling (PGSI 1+) and affected-other status showed overlapping profiles in 2026. Both were more commonly reported among younger adults (18–34), single parent households and among people in "other" household types, such as share houses and those from CALD backgrounds. These factors were also associated with lower rates of gambling participation overall, pointing to intensification of gambling in certain population segments; where individuals experience more harms despite lower participation. The household demographics now deviate from the traditional picture, in which gambling harm has been linked to a lack of family ties, particularly among people living alone (Syvertsen et al., 2023). One possible explanation is that online gambling is bringing gambling harm into family homes. Consistent with this, couple households with children reported the highest rate of online gambling of any household type. Because online gambling is easily accessible at home, it may be changing who is affected. The cross-sectional design cannot test this directly.

There is very little recent population-based data available on the cultural and ethnic factors associated with at-risk gambling and gambling harm in Australia. Our data are consistent with a growing body of literature showing that while individuals from non-Australian backgrounds were less likely to gamble overall, they were more likely to experience harm (Awaworyi Churchill & Farrell, 2020; Rowlatt et al., 2023). Our data extend these findings by showing higher rates of at-risk gambling and being negatively affected by others' gambling among CALD individuals, despite lower participation.

Conclusion

Gambling participation has levelled off at around 60% since 2023, while at-risk gambling in 2026 at around 17% remains well above the levels recorded before 2025, indicating a settled but elevated level of gambling harm in Australia. Online gambling is concentrated in sports and race betting, and the online share of products that are illegal to offer online in Australia, such as casino table games, has been higher in each year since 2024. Uninterrupted access to online platforms may be shifting the sociodemographic profile of gambling harm, increasingly bringing gambling into family homes. Living comfortably on their present income, rather than life satisfaction, was associated with a lower likelihood of at-risk gambling and of being affected by another person's gambling, highlighting the potential for continued harm if not addressed through evidence-based public health strategies, including stronger regulation of online products. These 2026 data provide a pre-reform baseline for evaluating the reforms commencing from 1 January 2027.

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