



Understanding women's gambling behaviour and harm

What the research shows

This study surveyed 509 women from Victoria and New South Wales to better understand women's gambling behaviours and experiences of harm. Findings show that women's gambling participation rates are similar to men's but has been under-recognised in research, policy, and prevention. Women's gambling behaviour varied across age groups, levels of risk, social contexts, product availability, and perceptions of harm.

Key findings

1

How women engage with gambling

Many women reported gambling as part of social and leisure activities, including nights out, time with friends, and accessible entertainment options. Poker machines were the product gambled on most frequently by women overall.

Younger women were more likely than older age groups to:

- Use multiple gambling products
- Gamble frequently
- Engage with sports betting and casino gambling
- Exhibit severe levels of gambling harm

2

Perceptions of harm

There were clear differences in how women perceived gambling risks.

Younger women and those at higher risk were more likely to:

- View some products, particularly sports betting, as less harmful
- Associate gambling with fun, social connection, and the possibility of winning

These perceptions may reduce awareness of harm and increase vulnerability.

3

Why a gendered approach matters

This research shows that women's gambling:

- Is shaped by social settings and accessibility
- Varies across life stages and risk levels
- Has been under-recognised in research, policy, and prevention

Without a gendered approach, public health strategies may overlook the specific ways women experience gambling and harm.



“I don't really gamble, but the pokies can be a bit of fun when you're out with friends”.

– 25 year old woman



Key Insight

Women are not a single group, especially when it comes to gambling.

Understanding how women engage with gambling is critical to developing effective prevention, policy, and support strategies.



BASED ON: McCarthy, S., Thomas, S.L., Randle, M., Bestman, A., Pitt, H., Cowlshaw, S. and Daube, M., 2018. Women's gambling behaviour, product preferences, and perceptions of product harm: Differences by age and gambling risk status. *Harm Reduction Journal*, 15(1), p.22.