



# Gambling and Young Women

## What the research shows

This study explored the range of factors that may contribute to the normalisation of gambling for women aged 18–34 in Australia.

## How normalisation happens

**1**

### Early exposure

- Introduced through family activities and traditions
- Attendance at venues for meals and social events
- Informal betting before legal age
- Rituals such as gambling on an 18th birthday

These experiences build familiarity and reduce perceptions of risk.

**2**

### Social networks

- Gambling used to connect with friends and partners
- Social expectations to participate
- Pressure to fit in within peer groups
- Influence of partners and group dynamics

Gambling becomes part of social belonging.

**3**

### Gambling environments

- Venues positioned as social and entertainment spaces
- Co-location with dining, nightlife, and events
- Gambling used to pass time during outings
- High accessibility, including late-night venues

Gambling is embedded within everyday leisure activities.

**4**

### Marketing and feminisation

- Designed to appeal to women's identities and interests
- Links to glamour, fashion, and social occasions
- Increased representation of women in advertising
- Promotions encouraging uptake and continued use

Strategies position gambling as relevant and appealing to women.

**5**

### Changing social attitudes

- Increasing acceptance of women's gambling
- Framed as fun and low risk
- Growth of online betting and mobile apps
- Reduced stigma through online access

Gambling becomes easier to access and harder to avoid.

## What is normalisation?

The normalisation of gambling describes how gambling becomes:

- ✓ Widely available and accessible
- ✓ Regularly used within social settings
- ✓ Seen as a normal and accepted part of everyday life

It is driven by social, environmental, and commercial influences working together.



## Key Insight

**Gambling normalisation for young women is driven by both social experiences and structural forces, and women should be recognised as a key group at risk in policy and prevention efforts.**

## Why this matters

- ✓ Young women engage across multiple gambling products
- ✓ Increased participation is linked to increased harm
- ✓ Early exposure shapes future behaviours
- ✓ Women are an emerging target group for the gambling industry

## Implications for public health

- ✓ Focus on social and environmental drivers, not just individual behaviour
- ✓ Reduce exposure to gambling in everyday settings and communities
- ✓ Address marketing strategies and increasing accessibility
- ✓ Develop gender-responsive prevention strategies that reflect women's experiences.



**BASED ON:** McCarthy, S., Thomas, S., Pitt, H., Daube, M. and Cassidy, R., 2020. 'It's a tradition to go down to the pokies on your 18th birthday'—the normalisation of gambling for young women in Australia. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 44(5), pp.376-381.