

More Australians affected by gambling and for longer

November 5 2018



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

On the eve of the Melbourne Cup, new research from The Australian National University (ANU) has found more Australians are experiencing gambling harm and suffering life and health hardships for much longer

than previously known.

In providing one of the first national snapshots of [gambling](#) harm in Australia, the Centre for Gambling Research (CGR) has identified more than 1.4 million Australians experiencing gambling harm—six times more than the generally accepted figure of around 200,000 people.

While industry and other bodies focus on the figure of one per cent of the population having a [gambling problem](#), the CGR study found that in fact 7.5 per cent of Australians are experiencing low, moderate or high levels of gambling harm.

The study found this group had been experiencing far worse financial, health and social circumstances for an extended time period—at least 15 years.

Director of the CGR Dr. Marisa Fogarty, who carried out the research, said these people had been neglected by the system and like the one per cent of problem gamblers, also need substantial support.

"Fifteen years is a long time for anyone to be experiencing depression, anxiety, separation or not being able to pay bills, but along with gambling, these people are suffering a range of hardships that need addressing."

"On Melbourne Cup day and other big one-off sporting events, it's seen as socially acceptable to have a bet, but we should remember for these gamblers with long-term hardships, a one-off bet might further escalate their problems," said Dr. Fogarty.

"That's why our community should be discussing how we glorify sporting days and think about the sort of messages we want to send to young people watching on."

Compared to people who experience no problems, the study identified those at high-risk of gambling harm were also significantly more likely to

- smoke
- drink heavily
- be depressed or anxious
- be unable to pay household and personal bills on time
- be unable to pay off credit cards on time
- take financial risks
- experience three or more financial hardships like not meeting rent or mortgage payments on time
- and have a generally lower life satisfaction.

The study also found that the same group of people are highly likely to experience the following negative life events:

- separation from a spouse
- physical violence or property crime
- incarceration; themselves or a close family member
- being fired or made redundant and
- see a major worsening in their finances

"What we want to come out of this research now we see the range of problems faced by the [high risk group](#) is to weave gambling interventions into other help services they may access. This is especially important because we know harm from gambling extends to family members and the community as well."

"I also can't stress enough the importance of early intervention and prevention programs for the hundreds of thousands of Australians already experiencing low or moderate levels of gambling harm. This may help prevent them from advancing into higher risk categories."

The CGR research used data from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey (HILDA), a longitudinal study over 15 years.

More information: The full paper is available online:
[cdn.uc.assets.prezly.com/6ad2e ... 7e0e0fe/-/inline/no/](https://cdn.uc.assets.prezly.com/6ad2e...7e0e0fe/-/inline/no/)

Provided by Australian National University

Citation: More Australians affected by gambling and for longer (2018, November 5) retrieved 22 June 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-11-australians-affected-gambling-longer.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.