

Aussies unaware of issues caused by scratchies, lotteries and bingo

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Throwing in a scratchie or lottery ticket with your weekly shop or attending a regular bingo night might seem like a bit of harmless fun, but a new study suggests people underestimate the potentially harmful

effects of these forms of gambling.

George Institute researchers asked just over 2000 Australians about gambling products and found that while most recognized pokies, casino games, and sports betting as harmful, very few called out scratch tickets, lotteries, and bingo, despite these being in the top ten most harmful gambling products.

Scratchies actually cause more harm to Australians than betting on horse or dog racing, and keno.

Lead author Dr. Leon Booth said that with Australians being some of the world's biggest gamblers and with rates going up during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was time to look at effective ways to minimize gambling-related harm.

"These 'softer' forms of gambling have become so normalized that people don't see them as gambling, and they are also highly accessible. The promise of instant rewards makes scratchies appealing to problematic gamblers, too," he said.

"And while bingo might be seen as an innocent social activity by most people, players are more likely to be dependent on social welfare, making the financial losses even worse."

Australians gamble away almost \$25 billion each year, and around 1.4 million Aussies experience gambling problems.

"While various strategies and policies have been recommended, including decreasing the availability of gambling products, restricting advertising, and implementing public education campaigns, their success depends on [public support](#)," he said.

"But if people don't think there is a problem with certain forms of gambling, they're unlikely to be supportive of further government action to contain them."

The study found that many Australians would support additional restrictions on pokies, casino games, and sports betting, but highlighted the need to ensure more people understand that scratchies, lotteries, and bingo are not harmless forms of entertainment.

"This is especially important given that lotteries and scratch tickets are the most commonly used forms of gambling," Dr. Booth added.

He suggests that [education programs](#) may be necessary to better align public perceptions and actual harm levels for all products, but especially for lotteries, scratch tickets, and bingo.

"Greater efforts are needed to ensure Australians in general—and gamblers in particular—understand that all of these popular [gambling](#) products are harmful," he said.

More information: Leon Booth et al. Public Perceptions of Harm for Nine Popular Gambling Products, *Journal of Gambling Studies* (2021). [DOI: 10.1007/s10899-021-10014-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-021-10014-5)

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