

It's changing our lives, not for the better: Australian teens want action on gambling

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New research looking at young people's attitudes to gambling harms reveals Australian teens feel strongly about the lack of action by government to protect them from a relentless flow of marketing relating

to gambling and betting.

ProThe Deakin University led study asked 12-to-17-year-olds living in Victoria and New South Wales what they think about policies relating to [gambling](#) marketing and their voices provide further evidence of the need for governments to take a stronger stand on gambling industry marketing strategies.

[The findings](#) reveal respondents want more effective regulation of gambling marketing and believe [young people](#) should be given opportunities to contribute to discussions about what gambling regulation should look like.

Dr. Hannah Pitt from Deakin's Institute for Health Transformation (IHT) said the research revealed strong messages for political leaders in particular.

"We asked our young people what they would say to the Prime Minister about gambling marketing if they had the opportunity," Dr. Pitt said.

"They believe governments aren't acting quickly enough and that a lack of action was having a negative impact on their lives."

Here is some of what they had to say:

- (The Prime Minister) is supposed to be responsible for having a good country but we're making a bad country because of gambling.—12-year-old boy, NSW
- If they were involving us, trying to protect us, it would be better. But they don't care. It comes down to the care, I don't think they care... It's changing our lives, not for the better. It's important that we have a say.—15-year-old girl, NSW
- [The Prime Minister] needs to put more pressure on social media

and media networks and stuff to make sure that children aren't exposed to gambling ads, and ads for things that can harm them.—16-year-old girl, Victoria.

- Be more serious about it [gambling marketing], I guess, he's kind of just letting it slide.—16-year-old boy, NSW
- The well-being of the population is more important than the revenue that comes in from these sorts of businesses.—15-year-old boy, NSW

Dr. Pitt said young people were concerned about the pervasive nature of gambling marketing across various platforms, including social media, and viewed current regulations outdated and insufficient, especially given the evolving media consumption habits of young people.

"They were particularly concerned about the lack of regulation associated with [social media](#) platforms and considered current policies (such as age gating) inadequate to prevent the exposure of young people to gambling marketing," Dr. Pitt said.

"These findings add to the growing body of evidence that young people support tighter regulation of gambling marketing, including outright banning of gambling marketing messages."

Lead researcher Professor Samantha Thomas said there was now consistent evidence from young people, parents, and health and social experts that the government's current approach to gambling marketing was inadequate and was not in the best interests of children and young people.

"Findings from this research suggests that young people—like many other [public health](#) and related stakeholders—are not confident that the decisions being made by policy makers about gambling marketing are effectively protecting children from the tactics of this predatory

industry," Professor Thomas said.

"It has been over a year since the Australian Parliament's Inquiry into [online gambling](#) and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm recommended a complete ban of online gambling marketing (similar to tobacco). But the Federal Government is yet to respond to this."

The study involved collaboration between researchers at Deakin University, the University of Wollongong, and Curtin University.

More information: Hannah Pitt et al, "It's changing our lives, not for the better. It's important that we have a say". The role of young people in informing public health and policy decisions about gambling marketing, *BMC Public Health* (2024). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-024-19331-x](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-19331-x)

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