Queensland Gambling Survey 2023

Key Findings

Background

- The survey collected information on gambling activity and related issues in the Queensland adult population. This information can assist a range of stakeholders in better understanding the Queensland gambling environment. The survey provides an evidence-base for policy development and assists in focusing and assessing harm minimisation strategies. In particular, the survey provides an opportunity to gauge the prevalence of problematic or potentially problematic gambling behaviour in the Queensland adult population.

- The Queensland Gambling Survey 2023 was conducted by the Queensland Government Statistician's Office between 22 March and 27 June 2023. A total of 14,879 Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews were completed.

Break in time series

- The Queensland Gambling Survey 2023 incorporated a number of significant methodological changes aimed at improving the quality and utility of the survey results. These changes represent a significant break in time series and as such comparisons with results published in previous surveys should be treated with caution.

- The key changes were:

    - the sampling frame for the 2023 survey was based on individuals and not households as was the case in previous Queensland gambling surveys, which improves survey coverage

    - the 2023 survey targeted an equal number of completed interviews in each of the four QLD regions. This differs from previous surveys where a proportional sampling approach was used. This change will facilitate comparisons across regions and provide more meaningful data for regional Queensland

    - there were several key changes to the questionnaire - the 2023 survey utilised the original four-point scale of the Problem Gambling Severity Index, compared to the modified five-point scale in previous Queensland gambling surveys. This change will facilitate comparisons with other jurisdictions. In addition, the list of gambling activities has been updated and categories redefined in order to elicit more useful data for regulatory policy and program development (e.g. the single lottery category from previous surveys has been split into two categories: lotteries (Gold Lotto, Powerball etc) and instant scratch tickets) and an additional focus has been placed on enhancing the data collection for online gambling, gambling harm and comorbidities.

Gambling participation

- All survey respondents were asked whether they had participated in each of 14 gambling activities during the previous 12 months.
    - Lottery products (including Gold Lotto, Powerball and other lotteries) were most popular, with 48.74% of the Queensland adult population having purchased such products in the previous 12 months.
    - Instant scratch tickets rated second (26.30%), followed by art union tickets (23.29%) and gaming machines (21.07%) in terms of participation.
    - 13.44% of Queensland adults had bet on horse, harness, or greyhound races and 11.82% had played keno in the previous 12 months.
    - 9.60% of Queensland adults had bet on sporting events such as football, cricket, boxing or motorsports.
- Males had significantly higher gambling participation rates than females for gaming machines, horse, harness or greyhound races, sports betting, keno, and casino table games.
- Gamblers aged 18-34 years had higher gambling participation rates in gaming machines, sports betting and casino table games compared to other age groups.
- While comparisons with previous surveys should be interpreted with caution, and noting that not all gambling participation categories are directly comparable due to the changes mentioned earlier, the 2023 survey results indicate that the proportion of people playing gaming machines (21.07%) and keno (11.82%), as well as betting on horse, harness and greyhound races (13.44%) has significantly declined since the last survey in 2016-17 (gaming machines 24.7%, keno 15.2%, and horse, harness and greyhound races 18.3%), while betting on sports (9.60%) has increased significantly since the last survey (6.9%). Betting on casino table games, purchasing art union tickets and playing bingo have remained relatively unchanged across that time.

Gambling group prevalence statistics

- Prevalence figures from the 2023 survey are presented with findings from previous surveys in the following table. As noted earlier, due to significant methodological changes in the 2023 survey these comparisons should be interpreted with caution.
- The 2023 survey found that:
    - 30.24% of Queensland adults had not gambled in the last 12 months
    - 60.26% of Queensland adults were in the non-problem gambling group (former Queensland surveys termed this the recreational gambling group).
    - 6.27% of Queensland adults were in the low risk gambling group and 2.60% were in the moderate risk gambling groups. The people in these groups may have experienced adverse consequences from their gambling or may be at risk of problems occurring.
    - 0.64% of Queensland adults were in the problem gambling group[1]. The people in this group reported having experienced adverse consequences from their gambling and may have lost control of their behaviour.

[1] It is important to note that while the terms “problem gambling” and “problem gambler” are generally considered to be stigmatising when used to describe those experiencing or at risk of experiencing gambling harm, the usage of “problem gambling” or “problem gambling group” in this report reflects the official terminology of the screening tool used and represents those respondents who scored 8 or more on the PGSI.

- Notably, none of the observed marginal differences between the 2016-17 survey and 2023 survey are statistically significant.

Table 1: Time series of gambling group percentage estimates, Queensland adult population

	2001 (%)	2003-04 (%)	2006-07 (%)	2008-09 (%)	2011-12 (%)	2016-17 (%)	2023 (%)
Non-gambling	15.1	19.7	24.7	25.31	26.16	29.24	30.24
Non-problem[2]	73.2	72.4	67.3	68.02	66.31	61.40	60.26
Low risk	8.2	5.3	5.7	4.71	5.16	6.35	6.27
Moderate risk	2.7	2.0	1.8	1.58	1.90	2.51	2.60
Problem	0.83	0.55	0.47	0.37	0.48	0.51	0.64
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

NB: Results for 2001, 2003-04 and 2006-07 only available to one decimal place.

- Males were significantly more likely to be in the low risk (7.71%) or moderate risk (3.32%) gambling groups compared to females (4.89% and 1.90%, respectively).
- Around 6.21% of regular gamblers[3] and 8.58*%[4] of regular gaming machine gamblers[5] fell into the problem gambling group.
- Those who gamble on the internet are around two to three times more likely than those who never gamble on the internet to be in an at-risk or problem gambling group.
- Gambling group prevalence is generally comparable across Australian jurisdictions (see Table 2).

Table 2: Comparison of gambling group prevalence across Australian jurisdictions (based on most recently published prevalence study in each jurisdiction).

	NT (%)	ACT (%)	TAS (%)	SA (%)	VIC (%)	NSW (%)	QLD (%)
Non-gambling	28.45	40.0	52.9	35.3	31.0	46.7	30.24
Non-problem	57.26	49.6	40.7	57.2	59.2	42.9	60.26
Low risk	9.36	7.0	4.3	4.6	6.7	6.6	6.27
Moderate risk	3.55	2.5	1.7	2.2	2.4	2.8	2.60
Problem	1.37	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.64
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

[2] The non-problem gambling group was referred to as “recreational gambling” in previous surveys.

[3] A “regular gambler” is a person whose cumulative annual frequency of gambling across a range of gambling activities in the 12 months prior to the survey was 52 times per year or more.

[4] Sampling error is measured using relative standard error (RSE) and confidence intervals. RSE scores of 25-50% are denoted by a single asterisk (*) and RSE scores exceeding 50% are denoted by a double asterisk (**). Users are advised to exercise caution when interpreting results marked with * or **.

[5] A “regular gaming machine gambler” is a respondent who played gaming machines 52 times or more in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Gambling behaviours

- Those in the at-risk gambling groups were significantly more likely than the non-problem gambling group to have participated in:
  - Gaming machines
  - Horse, harness or greyhound races
  - Sports betting
  - Keno
  - Casino table games
  - private card games like poker, mahjong or dice games
- The participation rates for were similar for lottery products, instant scratch tickets and the purchase of art union tickets across the non-problem and at-risk gambling groups.
- The survey results indicate a clear relationship between gambling group severity and how often people played gaming machines. Among the non-problem gambling group who had played gaming machines, 4.96*% played 52 times or more per year. In contrast, about 12.54% of the low risk gambling group, 25.86% of those in the moderate risk group and 39.64*% of the problem gambling group played gaming machines 52 times or more per year.
- Only a small proportion (13.93%) of the non-problem gambling group participated in four or more activities. In contrast, 52.92% of the moderate risk gambling group and 61.03% of the problem gambling group had participated in four or more activities.
- The most popular method of betting on horse, harness or greyhound races or sports or novelty events was using a website or mobile app (63.55% and 88.23%, respectively), with a significant majority of both groups using a mobile device for placing those bets.
- At-risk and problem gambling groups were significantly more likely than the non-problem gambling group to have played gaming machines between midnight and 2AM (problem gambling group 42.92%, moderate risk 33.34%, low risk 17.40%, compared to 6.64*% for the non-problem gambling group), while the moderate risk and problem gambling groups were both significantly more likely than the non-problem gambling group to have played gaming machines between 2AM and 4AM (problem gambling group 26.05*%, moderate risk 10.28%, compared to 0.62*% for the non-problem gambling group).

Gambling harm

- The prevalence of gambling harm in the community was ascertained through use of the Gambling Harm Measure (GHM) developed by Delfabbro, Williams and Parke[6]. The GHM examines various aspects of harm and severity across five harm domains: financial, psychological, relationship, physical health, and work/study. Severity is assessed at three levels: over-prioritisation, strains and pressures, and severe harms.
- Across harm domains, psychological harm was the most strongly felt by respondents by way of feeling guilty or worried about time or money spent on gambling (felt by just over 3% of those who gambled in the previous 12 months).
- The prevalence of over-prioritisation of gambling was very low in the non-problem gambling group (1.42%) but increased in line with the severity of the at-risk and problem gambling groups, with 14.15% of the low risk gambling group, 36.97% of the moderate risk group and 82.52% of the problem gambling group over-prioritising gambling across one or more domains of harm.
- Both the non-problem gambling group and low risk gambling group reported a relatively low incidence of strains or pressures from gambling, however 17.98% of the moderate risk gambling group and 77.08% of the problem gambling group reported experiencing strains or pressures across one or more domains of harm.

[6] Delfabbro, P.H., Williams, R., & Parke, J. (2020). *The gambling harm measure.* School of Psychology, University of Adelaide.

- The prevalence of severe harm was very low across the non-problem, low risk and moderate risk gambling groups, however severe harm across one or more of the domains of harm was reported by 41.57% of those in the problem gambling group.

Comorbidities

- The survey explored respondents' mental health, and drug and alcohol use. Central to the examination of mental health comorbidities was the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6) scale. The K6 is designed to measure levels of psychological distress. It includes questions regarding the frequency of encountering six specific symptoms over the preceding 30-day period: feeling nervous, feeling hopeless, feeling restless or fidgety, feeling depressed, feeling that everything is an effort and feeling worthless.
- Overall, around 70.69% of respondents were experiencing no, or low levels, of psychological distress, while just under one-quarter were experiencing moderate distress and 4.84% were experiencing high levels of distress.
- Across the gambling groups, the non-problem and low risk gambling groups experienced similar levels of psychological distress to the broader population, however the moderate risk and problem gambling groups had a much higher incidence of moderate and high levels of distress. In particular, 39.02% of the moderate risk group and 49.18% of the problem gambling group were experiencing moderate distress, while 10.61% of the moderate risk group and 27.44% of the problem gambling group were experiencing high levels of distress.
- Around 41.74*% of the problem gambling group indicated that they might have an alcohol or drug problem, significantly higher than the non-problem gambling group (7.49%) and the low risk gambling group (15.27%). Similarly, 56.25% of the problem gambling group indicated that an immediate family member has had an alcohol or drug problem, significantly higher than the non-problem gambling group (28.01%) and low risk gambling group (32.77%).

Awareness of help services and help seeking

- Just under 75% of adult Queenslanders had heard, or read about, the Gambling Helpline phone number, while 45.36% and 21.64%, were aware of the Gambling Help Online website and face-to-face counselling services for gamblers in their area, respectively.
- Just 14.89*% of the problem gambling group had sought help for gambling related problems in the last 12 months.

Gambling in Queensland regions

- While gambling participation was largely similar across the four Queensland regions, there were some significant results:
  - Participating in lotteries was significantly higher in North Queensland (53.54%) compared to the other regions.
  - Buying art union tickets was significantly more prevalent in South East Queensland (24.94%) compared to the other regions.
  - Betting on horse, harness or greyhound races was significantly more popular in Outback Queensland (17.46%) compared to the other regions.
  - Betting on sporting events was significantly more popular in South East Queensland (10.67%) compared to the Central/Inner West and North Queensland regions.
- There were no significant differences found between regions in terms of at-risk and problem gambling prevalence.