



**VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL  
HEALTH SERVICE**

*Caring for the Community*



# Problems shared: gambling by Aboriginal adults in Victoria, Australia – correlations, harms and support

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APSAD 2024

We have no conflicts of  
interest to declare



*We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people, Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country on which this work was written. We also acknowledge the Ngunnawal people on whose land we meet today.*

*Their sovereignty was never ceded.*

# Introducing ourselves

- Kye Bancroft-Gardiner is a Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung descendant employed at La Trobe University as an Aboriginal Research Fellow on this project.
- Lirelle Bennett is a proud Ngāti Ranginui woman employed as a gambling counsellor at the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Sarah MacLean is a professor of Social Work and Social Policy and descendent of uninvited European visitors to this Country.

## And thanks to

- Marion Cincotta for data analysis, Tahnee McBean, Chantelle MaGuinness and Esther Gregory for review and comment
- VAHS for initiating and managing the research
- Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation for funding the study.



# Aim

The aim of this paper is to identify groups of survey participants who experienced particular harm from gambling, what they liked and disliked about gambling and the supports they accessed.



# Method

- **96** Community members responded to our online **survey**, answering questions about their gambling frequency, reasons for gambling and how it affected them.
- Eligible survey participants were Aboriginal adults 18 years or over who resided in Victoria and had gambled in the past 12 months.
- Measures included the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) (Ferris & Wynne, 2001) which is a screening tool to assess gambling harm.

# Results: correlations with harm

- Almost half of survey participants fell into the high-risk category as defined by the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI).
- People aged over 50 had significantly higher proportions of high-risk gamblers than did younger respondents (65% vs. 38%;  $P=0.016$  under Fisher's Exact Test).
- Half of participants experienced negative effects from their own gambling and gambling by others, and this did not differ between lower and higher PGSI risk categories. These included running out of money (27%), taking time away from children and family (23%), conflict with family (20%), feeling loss of control (18%), feeling isolated (15%).
- All people who were negatively affected by their own gambling were also negatively affected by the gambling of family and friends.

# Results: what participants liked and disliked



- Participants reported around double the number of positive as compared to negative experiences associated with gambling.
- Gambling was often a communal experience. Although 27% wanted to gamble alone, others also sought connection with others through gambling, sometimes while eating or drinking together.

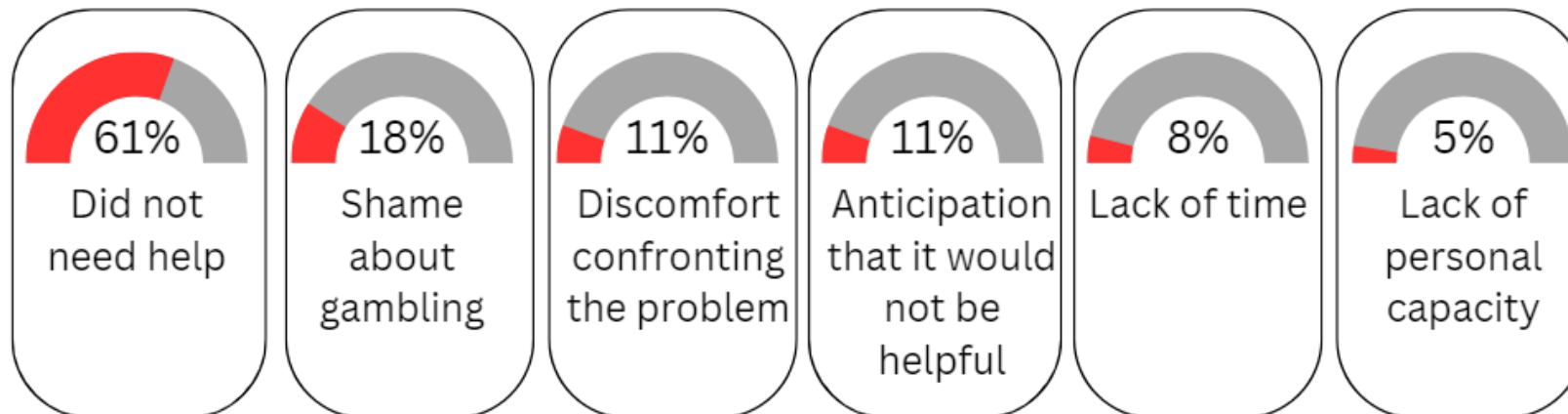
# Results: seeking support

Despite reporting harms and having high PGSI scores, 23% of participants had approached an organisation for support regarding gambling-related problems, and these tended to be higher risk gamblers.

More people (37%) relied on friends or family for support to limit or manage gambling and its harms, rather than formal services.

44% of participants who gambled had stopped or reduced their gambling without asking for help from others.

Reasons given by the 61 people who did not attempt to get professional support for problems with gambling included that they:





# Suggestion for support

Requested supports from a question offering open text responses include:

- Providing more Aboriginal-specific services
- Making a less stigmatising environment for people who experience harm from gambling
- Ensuring cultural safety and leadership in services
- Decreased gambling product availability and advertising.



# Conclusions

- The study has identified a high-risk group in the Victorian Aboriginal Community who have experienced gambling harm and who have mainly not accessed formal service support.
- Aboriginal people are often attracted to gambling as a way to socialise with Community. At the same time, people want Community responses to gambling harm.
- It is important to embed services and responses within Aboriginal Community-controlled organisations and ensure that welcoming Community activities such as yarning circles and Community events are offered to enhance culturally-responsive engagement.

# How VAHS will use the research

- **Strengthen Community engagement:** Promote trust and collaboration with Community members by involving them in the ongoing development of support strategies.
- **Enhance and inform the delivery** of gambling harm prevention and support services.
- **Develop targeted gambling prevention and support services:** Develop culturally safe initiatives that specifically address support to older men and address emerging online sports betting of young adult men (priority group identified from qualitative interviews).
- **Promote community-led solutions:** Ensure the involvement of Elders and Community leaders in co-designing strategies to address gambling harm and co-occurring conditions.
- **Inform policy development:** Advocate for changes in local and national policies that address gambling harm in Aboriginal populations.



# References

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