

Intersections between gambling participation, alcohol and illicit substance use, mental ill-health and other harms among Australian males

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Introduction and Aims: Males, especially young adult males, are at risk of gambling harm. Using data from a representative national sample, this study aimed to determine the prevalence of gambling behaviours and harm among Australian men, investigate co-occurring alcohol and illicit drug use, and identify correlates of at-risk gambling among this group.

Design and Methods: Data were from Wave 3 of *Ten to Men: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health* study conducted in 2020/21. Gambling risk was assessed using the Problem Gambling Severity Index. Harmful/hazardous drinking was assessed using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test.

Results: In 2020/21, 44% of Australian men aged 18–62 had gambled in the past year. The most common gambling activities were horse racing (56%) and 'pokies' (54%). Around one-quarter (27%) of men who gambled in the past year were classified as being at some risk of experiencing gambling harms. Over half (55%) of at-risk gamblers were consuming alcohol at hazardous levels, one-fifth (21%) had recently used cocaine, and 13% had recently used meth/amphetamine (vs 7% and 3% among Australian men generally, respectively). Factors independently associated with at-risk gambling (N=2,760) in multivariable analyses included recent depression (aOR: 1.8, 95%CI: 1.3, 2.4), having an annual combined income of <\$50,000 (vs ≥\$200,000; aOR: 1.6, 95%CI: 1.1, 2.4), and recent alcohol or other drug use (aOR: 1.3, 95%CI: 1.0, 1.6).

Discussions and Conclusions: Around one in four Australian men who gamble are at risk of gambling harm. This group is also engaging in significantly higher levels of alcohol and other drug use, which increases risk of experiencing additional harms, in addition to higher rates of mental ill-health.

Implications for Practice or Policy: Policy and practice responses to minimising gambling harms among Australian men need to also address co-occurring alcohol and other drug use and mental ill-health.

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