

Children and young people's gambling

The 1997 Australian Council of Social Service¹ study of *Young people, gambling and the Internet* provided an important analysis of future directions in gambling involving new technologies. The prevalence data collected as part of that study is consistent with overseas studies, showing that approximately two thirds (62 per cent) of Australian youth were exposed to gambling before their tenth birthday, with more than four fifths (82 per cent) reporting an involvement prior to their thirteenth birthday.¹

Despite gambling having been identified as a normal experience of youth², gambling by children and adolescents is not homogenous across different groups. The forms of gambling engaged in by young people may vary according to whether they live in the city or country,¹ as well as their age and gender³.

The 2003 survey of Victorian gambling participation and attitudes⁴ provided some indicators of gambling preference by age group and, while this survey did not cover under-age gambling, it showed some clear indicators of participation by the younger (18 to 24 years) legal age gambling participants. The 18 to 24 years age group is under-represented as regular gamblers in Victoria, with this group showing a preference for casino table games over other forms of gambling. The survey indicated that nearly 20 per cent of all gamblers reported starting their gambling while under age. For people classified as 'problem gamblers' by the Canadian Problem Gambling Index, 81 per cent of males and 19 per cent of females had their first gambling experience while under 18. Much of this early experience may have been family-based, however, rather than venue-based.

The survey noted a number of other features of the 18 to 24 year old age group, including:

- 50 per cent of the problem gamblers gambled while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- 75 per cent of the problem gamblers reported borrowing from relatives and using credit cards as the main source of income for their gambling.

There is relatively little information available on under-age gamblers' actual gambling patterns. The Jackson et al. study⁵ found that, for year 8 boys, gambling preferences were races and sports (29 per cent), lottery tickets (23 per cent), poker machines or video games (19 per cent) and cards (17 per cent). For year 8 girls, the preferred forms of gambling were lottery tickets (22 per cent), races and sports (20 per cent), poker machines or video games (7 per cent) and cards (6 per cent).

A study of adolescent gambling in the ACT⁶ reported that the most popular forms of gambling, based on overall participation, were bingo and scratch cards (41 per cent), private card games (40 per cent), racing (32 per cent) and betting on sports (26 per cent). Boys were more likely to gamble on card games, racing, sports events and scratch cards, but there were no differences between boys and girls for lotteries and poker machine gambling.

¹ Australian Council of Social Service 1997, *Young people gambling and the Internet*, Australian Council of Social Service, Sydney.

² Winters, KC, Stinchfield, RD, Fulkerson, J 1993, 'Patterns and characteristics of adolescent gambling', *Journal of Gambling Studies*, vol. 9, pp. 371–86.

³ Griffiths, MD, Minton, C 1997, 'Arcade gambling: a research note', *Psychological Reports*, vol. 80, pp. 413–14.

⁴ McMillen, J and Marshall, D 2003, *Victorian longitudinal community attitudes survey*, Gambling Research Panel, Melbourne.

⁵ Jackson, AC, Patton, G, Thomas, SA, Wyn, J, Wright, J, Bond, L, 2000, *The impacts of gambling on adolescents and children*, Victorian Department of Human Services, Melbourne.

⁶ Delfabbro, P, Lahn, J, Grabosky, P 2005, *Adolescent gambling in the ACT*, Centre for Gambling Research, The Australian National University, Canberra.