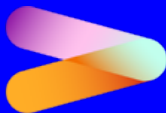


Research into gambling harm in Western Australia

The Behavioural Insights Team and the (former)
Department of Local Government, Sport and
Cultural Industries

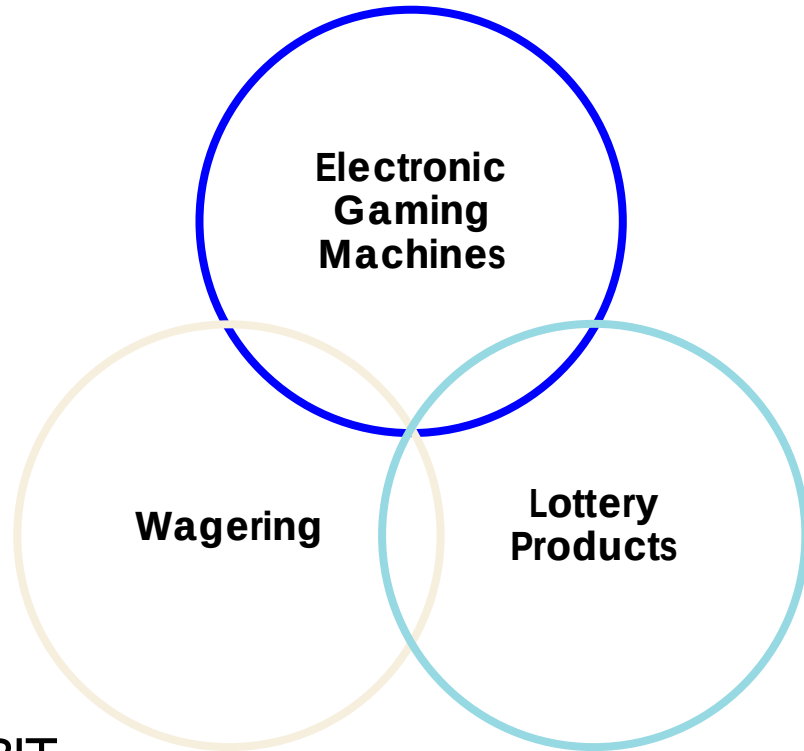


Department of
Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries



I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation and pay my respects to Elders past and present

WA is unique



We used a mixed-methods design



Prevalence Survey

Quantify the prevalence of gambling participation and harm in Western Australia

- ~2,500 participants drawn from the General WA population



Semi-Structured Interviews

Understand what the experience of gambling and gambling harms looks and feels like in the Western Australian context

- 22 organisational stakeholders
- 16 general community interviews
- 12 interviews with people with **lived experience** of gambling harm and **concerned significant others**

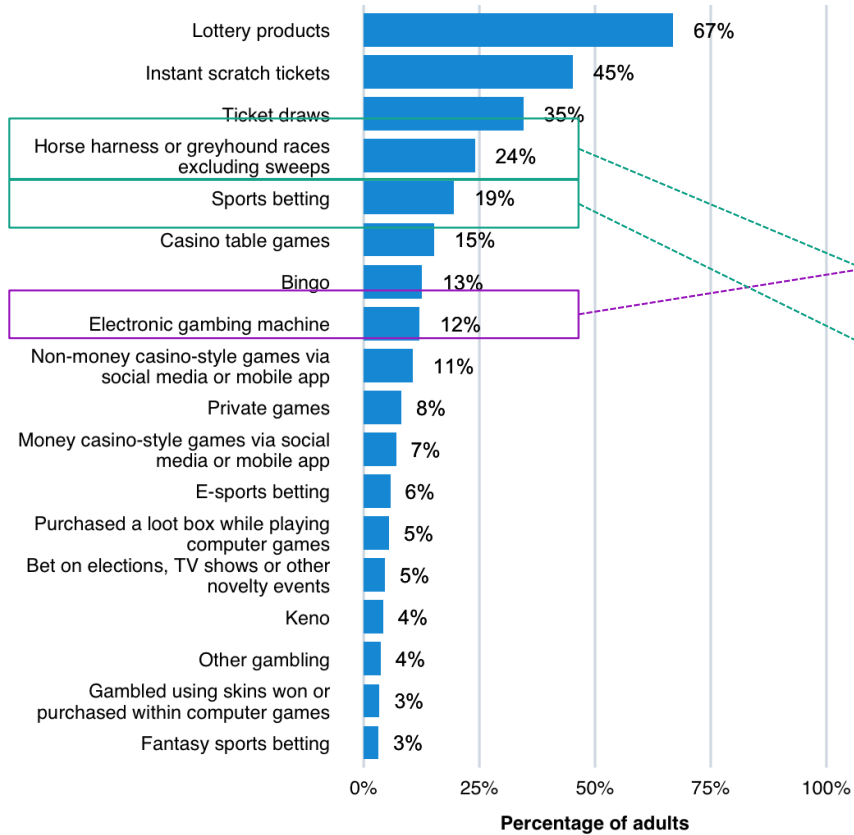
Findings

We found high wagering participation and low EGM participation

- **86%** of survey respondents participated in at least **one form of gambling** in the **past 12 months**.
- The purchase of **lottery products** is the **most prevalent** form of gambling among survey respondents (67%).
- **EGM participation was relatively low**, being the 8th most prevalent activity among survey respondents.
- **Wagering on sports or racing were comparatively more prevalent** among respondents.

*"I've spent some time on the east coast, and there were pokies [i.e. EGMs] everywhere. I was quite a bit taken aback, having come from Perth where we don't have that. We don't have gambling machines." - **WA community member***

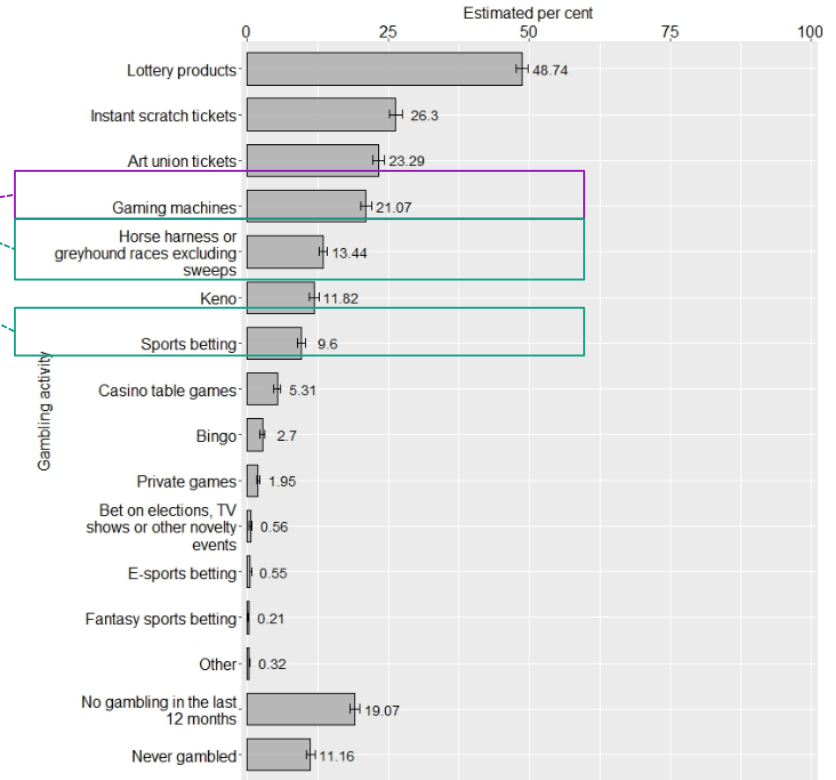
Western Australia



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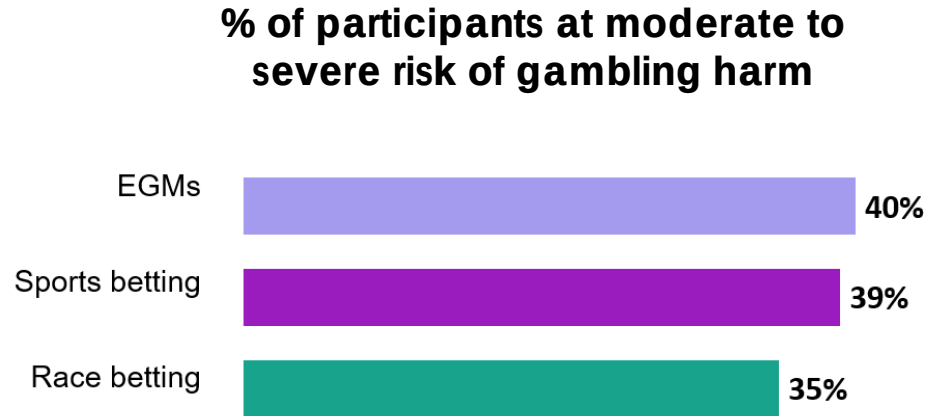
QLD

Figure 1: Participation in gambling activities in the last 12 months (Queensland adult population)

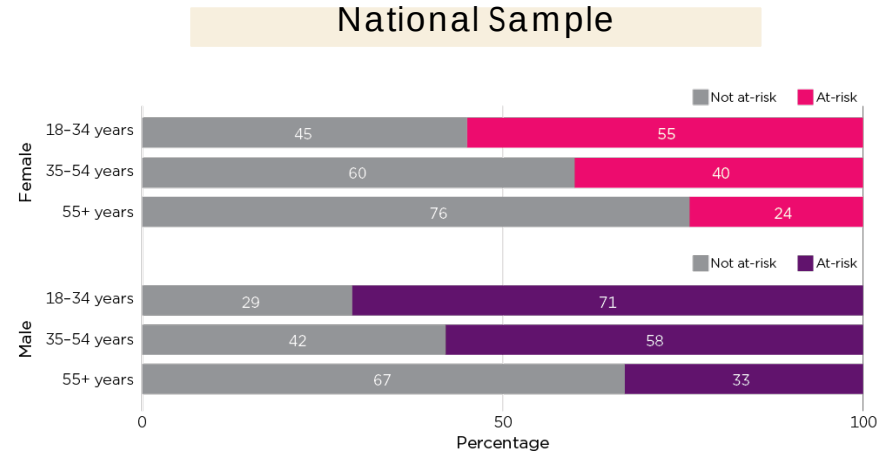
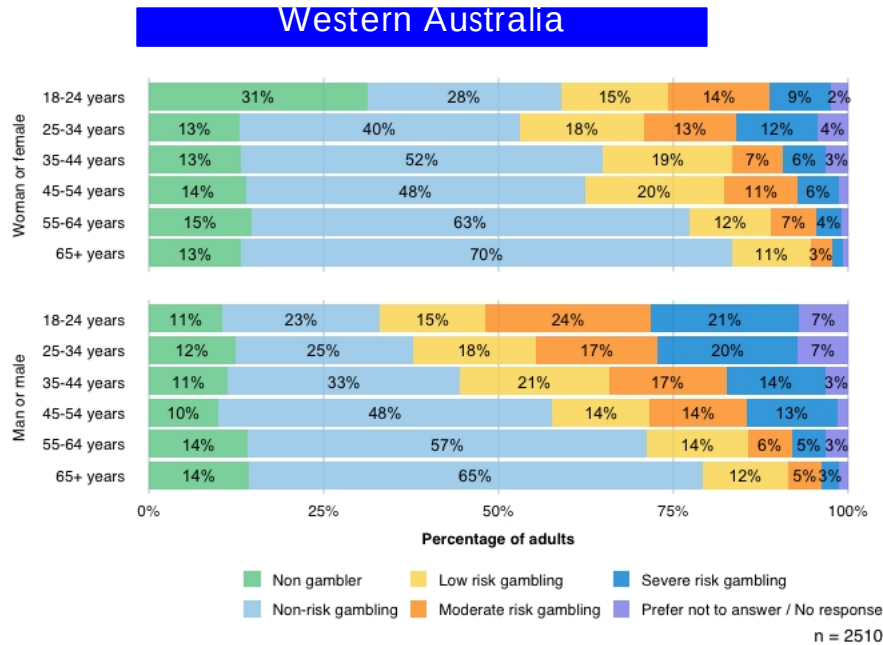


EGMs have higher risk of harm that is mitigated by low prevalence

- **EGM** use is associated with elevated levels of harm
- However, due to comparatively low engagement with EGMs in WA, their overall contribution to gambling harm is limited
- Among the five most commonly reported gambling activities, **sports betting** and **race betting** emerged as the most significant contributors to gambling harm risk



WA follows national trends showing highest prevalence of gambling harm risk among younger people



Source: Australian Gambling Research Centre. (2023). Gambling participation and experience of harm in Australia. Melbourne: Australian Gambling Research Centre, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Preliminary evidence of elevated risk of gambling harm among WA community members identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

- 38% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were classified in the severe-risk PGSI category. HOWEVER, this is based on a small sample and more research needs to be done
- Racial discrimination and broader social disadvantage were also highlighted as risk factors for gambling harms.

"In Indigenous communities, shame plays a big role. People don't want to admit there's a problem, so they don't seek help." - **Health care professional**

There are significant gambling-related harms to individuals

- Overall, **34%** of survey respondents who gambled in the past 12 months said that they had experienced **at least one of the gambling harms** listed in the Gambling Harms Scale (GHS) over the past 12 months.
- The most frequently experienced harms involving **financial impacts**, such as reduction in available spending money or savings.

*“The gambling became harmful when I started attending the Casino on a weekly basis. This led to a lot of problems in my life, including severe financial difficulty. I was close to bankruptcy, and losing my house from my credit card debts.” - **WA community member***

Harms rarely stay with the individual

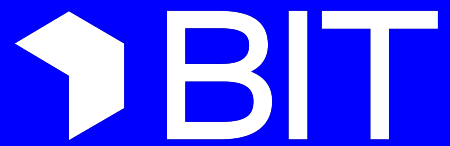
- Overall, **9%** of survey participants said that they had experienced at least one **gambling harm from someone else's gambling** in the past 12 months.
- The most frequently reported harms among survey respondents who had been impacted by someone else's gambling included feelings of **anger or hopelessness, getting less enjoyment from spending time with loved ones, and losing sleep because of stress or worry.**

"It impacts the family on multiple occasions. There's the immediate family - parents and siblings. But it's also the extended family - nieces, nephews etc. We're all spreading ourselves a bit thinner to give him the time and space and assistance necessary." - **Concerned Significant Other**

Final takeaways

WA is indeed a unique gambling environment, however, there are shared challenges

- WA's distinctive policy settings have likely **limited some of the harms from EGMs**
- Prevention needs to reflect **how gambling is now accessed and normalised**. This includes mobile apps, targeted promotions, gambling advertising and the integration of betting into sport
- **Young people, especially young men, are at elevated risk**. Targeted interventions are needed
- Policy and services need to **respond to gambling harm as a public health issue** affecting not just individuals, but the broader social ecosystem



Get in touch:

Joseph Cushing