



MEDIA RELEASE

6.8 MILLION AUSTRALIANS GAMBLE REGULARLY

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An estimated 6.8 million Australians are regular gamblers, spending money on one or more gambling activities in a typical month, according to new analysis by the Australian Gambling Research Centre (AGRC), part of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

AGRC manager, Dr Jennifer Baxter said that of regular gamblers, participation in lotteries was most common, followed by instant scratch tickets and playing the pokies.

Dr Baxter said there were wide ranging social demographic differences between those who gambled regularly and the rest of the Australian adult population.

“Compared to the Australian adult population, regular gamblers were substantially over represented among males, people aged 50 and over, who had ten years or less of schooling or who had completed a certificate or a diploma,” she said.

“Regular gamblers were also over-represented among retirees, those who lived alone or with one other person, who drew on welfare or lived outside a major city.”

AGRC Lead researcher Dr Andrew Armstrong said Australia’s regular gamblers spent an estimated \$8.6 billion over the entirety of 2015 on activities they engaged in on a monthly basis, with lotteries, pokies and race betting accounting for most of this.

“An average regular gambler spent an estimated \$1,272 in a year, with card playing poker gamblers spending the most (\$3,674) on poker and other gambling activities and buyers of instant scratch tickets the least (\$622) on tickets and other activities,” he said.

“Regular gamblers who favoured the pokies reported spending \$1,292 on average on this activity, those who regularly gambled on races spent \$1,308, sports bettors \$1,032 and casino table gamblers \$1,369.”

The analysis found that 7.9 per cent of Australians had experienced one or more gambling-related problems in 2015, including 1 per cent or 193,000 people who could be classified as problem gamblers – the most severe category. Rates of problems were much higher amongst regular gamblers.

“At least 40 per cent of those who gambled regularly on the pokies, race betting, sports betting, casino table games, private betting or poker experienced gambling-related problems,” Dr Armstrong said.

“People who experienced problems tended to be over-represented among males aged 18-29, those who were unemployed, single, renting and had low incomes.

“Regular gamblers who did not experience problems spent \$883 over the year, compared with problem gamblers who spent an average of \$6,241 a year.

“Gamblers in low income families spent an average of 10 per cent of their household income on gambling, compared to high income households which spent 1 per cent of the household budget.

“Higher risk gamblers lived in households where members experienced a much higher proportion of financial problems, including an inability to pay electricity, gas or telephone bills on time and needing to ask friends or family for financial assistance.”

The national gambling help service provides support and information 24/7, by phone (1800 858 858), and online (gamblinghelponline.org.au).

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The Australian Gambling Research Centre is based at the Australian Institute of Family Studies; the Australian Government's key research body in the area of family wellbeing. AIFS conducts original research to increase understanding of Australian families and the issues that affect them. Go to: aifs.gov.au

The AGRC analysis was based on the 2015 Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The HILDA Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services and is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.