

# research snapshot

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## Comparing demographics and gambling characteristics between land-based only, online only, and mixed mode gambling

### What this research is about

Gambling on the internet has risen rapidly over the last 25 years. Past research has found higher rates of problem gambling among people who gamble online than people who gamble in land-based venues only. However, most studies have combined people who gamble online only with people who gamble in mixed mode (i.e., both online and land-based). This inflates the extent of problems that are due to online gambling. Several studies have distinguished between land-based only, online only, and mixed mode gambling. These studies have all found that people who gamble in mixed mode are most likely to report gambling problems.

This study compared between land-based only, online only, and mixed mode gambling on demographics, gambling behaviours, gambling harms, and rates of at-risk and problem gambling. The current study also identified the risk factors for problematic gambling.

### What the researchers did

The researchers used data from an Australian national telephone survey in 2019. In total, 15,000 adults participated in the survey. The researchers used data from 8,541 participants who had gambled in the past year. Participants were placed into three groups: land-based gambling only (5,919 participants; 69.3%), mixed mode gambling (1,926 participants; 22.6%), and online gambling only (696 participants; 8.1%).

The survey asked participants about their demographics and how often they engaged in 13 different gambling forms (e.g., lotteries, sports betting). Participants were also asked how much they typically spent on each gambling form in a month and percentage of gambling that was online and land-

### What you need to know

This study compared people who gambled in land-based venues only, online only, and in mixed mode. Data were from an Australian national telephone survey. Of the 8,541 participants who had gambled in the past year, 69.3% gambled in land-based venues only, 22.6% in mixed mode, and 8.1% online only. The three groups differed on some demographic characteristics and gambling behaviours. Of note, people who gambled in mixed mode were more likely to experience gambling problems and harms. Gambling on the internet (mixed mode or online only) was associated with more severe gambling problems, even after taking into account other risk factors.

based. The survey included the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) and the Short Gambling Harms Screen (SGHS). Participants who only bet on lotteries and/or bingo less often than weekly were not asked to complete the SGHS. Participants who reported at least one harm were asked which mode of gambling and which gambling form contributed to the harm.

### What the researchers found

#### *Demographic characteristics*

Compared to people who gambled in land-based venues only, those who gambled in mixed mode were more likely to be male, younger, single, born in Australia, and of Indigenous descent. People who gambled online only had some similar demographic characteristics, such as being male and younger. But, people who gambled online only were more likely to be married, have higher education, be born outside of Australia, and speak a language other than English at

home than people who gambled in mixed mode. They were also less likely to identify as Indigenous.

#### *Gambling characteristics*

People who gambled in mixed mode engaged in a higher number of gambling forms and did so more frequently than the other two groups. This included gambling forms available online (e.g., lotteries, races, sports) and in land-based venues only (e.g., electronic gaming machines [EGMs], keno, poker, casino games). Over one-third of people who gambled in mixed mode (35.8%) were at some level of gambling risk (i.e., at least low risk). About 5.1% had problem gambling and 11% had moderate-risk gambling. In comparison, the rates of problem gambling were 1.4% for land-based gambling and 0.7% for online gambling only. The rates of moderate-risk gambling were 3.8% for land-based gambling and 4.7% for online gambling only.

People who gambled in mixed mode were more likely to experience gambling-related harms than the other two groups. EGMs were the most commonly reported harmful form for mixed mode and land-based gambling. Sports betting and lotteries were the most common harmful form for those who gambled online only. Slightly more people who gambled in mixed mode mentioned land-based mode as their most harmful than online mode (54.6% vs. 45.4%).

#### *Risk factors for problematic gambling*

Gambling on the internet (mixed mode or online only) was associated with more severe gambling problems. This held true even after taking into account other risk factors. Engaging in more gambling forms, being male, being single, having lower education, being of Indigenous descent, and speaking a language other than English at home were all risk factors.

#### **How you can use this research**

The distinctive characteristics of the three groups could inform public health efforts to reduce gambling harms. The findings could also be relevant to treatment and support services.

#### **About the researchers**

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#### **Citation**

Hing, N., Russell, A. M. T., Black, A., Rockloff, M., Browne, M., Rawat, V., Greer, N., Stevens, M., Dowling, N. A., Merkouris, S., King, D. L., Salonen, A. H., Breen, H., & Woo, L. (2022). Gambling prevalence and gambling problems amongst land-based-only, online-only and mixed-mode gamblers in Australia: A national study. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 132, 107269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107269>

#### **Study funding**

Funding was provided by Gambling Research Australia.

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