RESEARCH QUESTIONS
How do Indigenous Australians who gamble on card games differ from those who gamble but not on card games?

PURPOSE
Gambling via card games has been popular within Indigenous Australian populations since the late sixteenth century. Card gambling functions as a cultural and social activity for many Indigenous Australians. Despite the widespread popularity of gambling, little is known about factors such as help-seeking for Indigenous Australians who experience gambling problems. More information is needed about Indigenous card gamblers to aid in the development of public health measures to address problem gambling. This study compared Indigenous Australian card gamblers with non-card gamblers in terms of demographic characteristics, gambling-related behaviour, substance use, and problem gambling severity.

HYPOTHESIS
None stated.

PARTICIPANTS
Participants were 1259 Indigenous Australian adults.

PROCEDURE
Adult Indigenous Australians were approached at Indigenous festivals and interested participants completed a survey measure of gambling behaviour, problem gambling severity, demographic characteristics, and drug and alcohol use. Participants could also complete the survey online. Participants were entered into a draw for a $200 voucher.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES
Gambling was assessed via self-report. Participants reported on card gambling participation, frequency, duration and expenditure. The Problem Gambling Severity Index was used to measure problem gambling severity. This 9 item questionnaire classifies respondents as non-problem gamblers, low risk gamblers, moderate risk gamblers, and problem gamblers.

KEY RESULTS
Eighty percent of participants reported that they had gambled at least once in the past 12 months. Of these participants, 41% had gambled on Indigenous card games for money and were classified as card gamblers. Card gamblers were more likely to be male than non-card gamblers. Card gamblers were more likely to be unemployed or on disability pension than were non-card gamblers. Card gamblers participated in more forms of gambling than non-card gamblers did. Card gamblers began gambling at a younger age than non-card gamblers did. Card gamblers were more likely to report using drugs or alcohol when gambling compared to non-card gamblers. Card gamblers were more likely to be classified as problem gamblers than non-card gamblers. There were no differences between card gamblers and non-card gamblers in terms of help-seeking. The majority of participants (i.e., 90% of card gamblers and 92% of non-card gamblers) had never sought help for gambling. Card gamblers were more likely than non-card gamblers to report that they gamble to relax and because most friends and family also gamble. Non-card gamblers were more likely than card gamblers to have irrational gambling-related cognitions, such as believing the gambler’s fallacy.

LIMITATIONS
Participants self-selected into the study, meaning that the sample may be biased.

CONCLUSIONS
Gambling on traditional Indigenous card games is still a popular activity for many Indigenous Australians. Card gamblers differed from non-card gamblers in several ways. For example, card gamblers were more likely than non-gamblers to begin gambling when underage. Early exposure to gambling may be beneficial for some individuals by offering a social
form of relaxation, but may contribute to the development of problem gambling for others. Gamblers were unlikely to report that they sought formal help for gambling-related problems, perhaps because of shame or embarrassment associated with seeking help. However, gamblers did report that they sought help from family, friends and respected community members for gambling-related problems. Future research and public health initiatives regarding card gambling in Indigenous Australian populations must recognize the important social and cultural role of card gambling.

**KEYWORDS:** gambling, card games, Indigenous Australian, Aboriginal, treatment seeking, culture and ethnicity

**URL:**