



Gambling and teens: Concern among parents

Poll report

Poll 33, October 2024



Report highlights

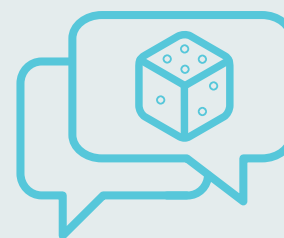
- Over a third of parents (39%) are concerned about gambling for one or more of their teenage children.
- Almost half of parents (45%) have never discussed gambling with their teen.
- One in four parents (25%) find it difficult to discuss gambling with their teen.
- Twice as many male parents (34%) as female parents (18%) find it difficult to talk about gambling with their teen.
- Among parents concerned about online gaming, two in three (65%) are also concerned about gambling for their child.

Parents are concerned about gambling among children

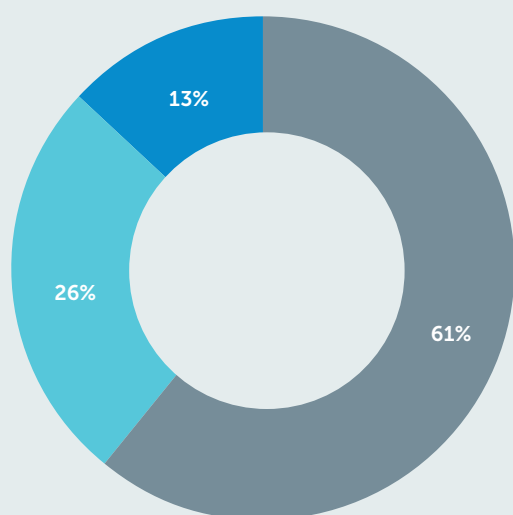
Over a third (39%) of Australian parents report being concerned about gambling for one or more of their teenage children, with 26% of parents 'somewhat concerned' and 13% 'very concerned' (see *Figure 1*) for one or more teens. Parents report concern about 40% of male teens and 33% of female teens. Parents expressed concern for teens of varying ages, with concern peaking for teens aged 16 years (46%).

Parents who report being either 'very concerned' or 'somewhat concerned' for at least one child vary by key demographic characteristics. More male parents report being concerned about gambling (48%) compared to female parents (31%). Additionally, parents under 30 years of age (55%) report higher levels of concern than parents aged 50 years or more (34%). A higher proportion of parents in major cities (41%) were concerned about gambling compared to parents from regional and remote areas (26%). Parents born outside of Australia report a similar level of concern (40%) to parents born in Australia (37%).

Almost half of parents have never discussed gambling with their teen.



Parent concern about gambling for one or more children.



■ Very concerned ■ Not at all concerned
■ Somewhat concerned

Percentage of parents (n = 923)

Note: All proportions are weighted by parents' age, sex, number of children, state of residence, socioeconomic and Indigenous status

Are parents talking with their teen about gambling?

About half of parents (55%) report they had discussed gambling with at least one of their children, while 45% had not discussed it with any of their children.

Among those who had not discussed gambling with their teen, one in five (21%) say it was because they felt the issue was 'not relevant' to their child.

Younger parents – those aged less than 30 years – were more likely to have discussed gambling (68%) than parents aged 50 years or more (57%). Additionally, parents report having spoken with more male teens (57%) than female teens (47%).

One in five parents (22%) who express concern about gambling and their teen have not discussed the issue with them.

Figure 1: Level of concern among parents about gambling in children.

How difficult do parents find it to talk about gambling with their teen?

When asked how difficult parents find it to talk about gambling with their children, the majority (75%) say that it is 'not at all' difficult, suggesting that this is not a barrier to discussion for most parents. One in four parents (25%) say that it is either 'somewhat difficult' (20%) or 'very difficult' (5%) to discuss gambling with their teen.

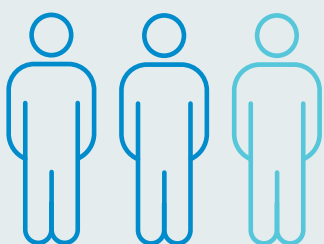
There were meaningful differences in the demographic characteristics of parents who found it difficult to discuss gambling with their teen. Twice as many male parents (34%) as female parents (18%) report finding it difficult. Over half of younger parents – those aged less than 30 years (56%) – say it was difficult to discuss gambling compared to just one in ten parents aged 50 years or more (13%). More parents residing in urban areas report finding it difficult (27%), compared to parents in regional and remote areas (13%); as did single parents (35%) compared to partnered parents (19%). The proportion of parents who report it was difficult to have a conversation about gambling with male teens (27%) was slightly higher than for female teens (20%). Parents say they find it more difficult to discuss gambling with children aged 16 years (33%) than with teens of other ages.

Of note, half of parents (50%) who report being concerned about gambling for one or more teens say they would find it difficult to talk about it with their teen.

Gambling and online gaming

Many online games use gambling-like features to encourage and normalise gambling (1). Two-thirds of parents (65%) concerned about online gaming for their child are also concerned about their child gambling.

Two in three
parents concerned
about online gaming
are also concerned
about gambling for
their teen.



Implications

Gambling is endemic in Australia with around 60% of Australian adults gambling at least once each year (2). Children and teens see adults gambling and are exposed to gambling advertising daily, especially through its association with sports. Sports gambling and other common gambling activities promote gambling as normal and support the perception that it is a social and risk-free activity (2). Research suggests that young people are increasingly participating in online gambling including betting on sports games and horse races, as well as private betting with friends and family (3, 4).

This study found that more than one in three Australian parents are concerned about gambling for one or more of their teenage children. Parents are justified in their concerns, as gambling in childhood can lead to gambling problems in adulthood. Besides losing money, young people who gamble may suffer harmful impacts to their emotional wellbeing, relationships, education and physical health (5). Young people who gamble may be more likely to participate in other risk-taking behaviours such as drinking alcohol (5).

Talking with a parent or caregiver can empower teens to understand the risks of gambling and make informed decisions. However, about half of parents have never spoken with their teens about it – despite not finding it difficult to discuss. Programs need to educate parents about the impact of gambling on young people so they can have informed conversations with their children. They can discuss the chances of winning and the addictive nature of gambling activities to help young people understand the associated risks of financial, social, mental health and emotional harms (3).

There are known links between online games and gambling (1, 4). Many video games played by young people have gambling elements (simulated gambling) which normalise gambling-like activity and increase the risk of gambling with real money (1). Parents need to be aware of the risks of online gaming and understand the role it plays in increasing gambling among children and young people.

As gambling and gambling harm continue to be problems in Australia and affect the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and families, public health policies need to be focused on preventing young people from taking up gambling. Health promotion activities and awareness campaigns should target parents so they are empowered to help children think critically about gambling.

Data source and methods



This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by the Online Research Unit for The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne. The survey was administered from 19–27, September 2023, to a randomly selected population stratified by age, sex and state of residence, nationally representative of Australian parents aged 18 and older. Among Online Research Unit panel members contacted and eligible to participate, the completion rate was 92%. Parents ($n = 923$) included in this study had one or more teenage children ($n = 1160$) and answered questions on their level of concern about gambling and online gaming for their child. They also reported on whether they had talked about gambling with their child and how difficult they would or did find these conversations. All estimates in this report were weighted to reflect the distribution of the Australian population using figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

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