

DISCUSSION  
PAPER



# GEN BET: HAS GAMBLING GATECRASHED OUR TEENS?

MARCH 2017

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## RESPONSES TO THIS PAPER

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# THE FACTS



8 in 10 adolescents have a smart phone.



6 in 10 adolescents use their mobile phone to go online.

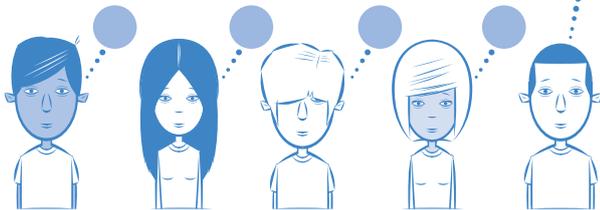


4 in 10 adolescents have seen promotions of gambling on social media.

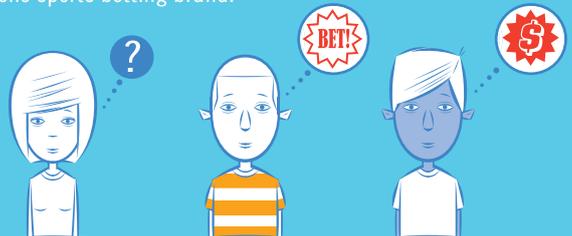


5 in 10 adolescents have high levels of exposure to sports betting marketing.

About 1 in 5 children can identify three or more sports betting brands.



Over two-thirds of children aged 8 to 16 can recall the name of at least one sports betting brand.



## In 12 months:

Up to a quarter of young people bet on sport

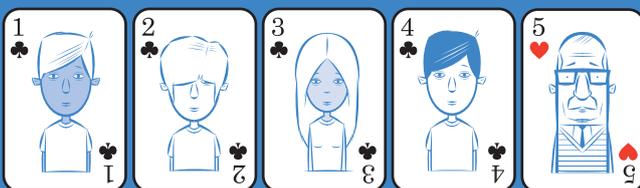
Around 1 in 10 young people gamble online

1 in 5 adolescents play social casino games

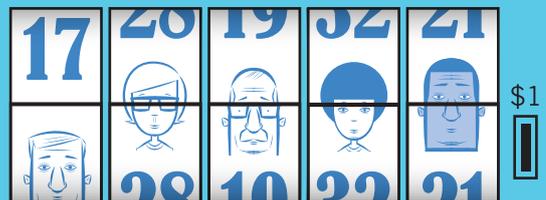
About one young person in every 25 has a problem with gambling, which is an average of one in every high school classroom.



Teenagers are four times more likely to develop gambling problems than adults.



1 in 5 adults with gambling problems started gambling before they were 18.



The Australian gambling industry spent \$236 million on advertising in 2015.



# INTRODUCTION

Children born in this millennium are growing up in an unprecedented environment. They are digital natives for whom social media is practically lifeblood.

In 2015, 80 per cent of adolescents aged 14 to 17 had a smart phone, and 65 per cent used a mobile phone to go online (ACMA 2016).

They are switched on, plugged in and hyper-connected, and this has allowed the gambling environment – which has changed radically during their childhood – to infiltrate their world.

Social media sites like Facebook offer them social casino games, which don't involve money but have inflated payout rates that make winning seem easy. A 2015 study found one in five adolescents had played these gambling-themed games in the past 12 months.

On Facebook, Youtube and Twitter, they see ads from betting companies, often funny videos that show betting as a natural part of sport. Another 2015 study found 15 per cent of Australian adolescents had engaged with betting operators on social media.

This is the first generation to be exposed to saturation marketing of online betting products. When they watch live sport, betting company logos dominate stadium signage and players' shirts. On TV, commentators refer to the odds and a barrage of gambling ads show the fun, social side of having a bet. In 2015, gambling companies spent \$236 million nationally on advertising, plus an additional unknown amount on sports sponsorship.

Mobile apps mean you can bet on sports anywhere, anytime. While these apps are illegal for young people under 18, in 2015, 60 per cent of teenagers who gambled had done so online.

To young people, all of this is normal. Foundation-funded research has determined that increased accessibility and opportunities to bet have 'created a culture of young Australians who have been socialised into betting practices' (Gordon & Chapman 2014, p 28).

While the long-term effects of early exposure to gambling are unknown, evidence from other areas of public health, such as alcohol and tobacco, indicate it is likely to be harmful for young people and create long-term problems.

Our community, including policymakers, parents, teachers and coaches, needs to be vigilant to the risks posed to young people by this pushier, more pervasive gambling environment. We must educate our children to develop healthy and informed attitudes towards gambling, and help them understand that picking winners is not what sport's all about.

This discussion paper draws on findings from the relatively new field of gambling research. We thank the researchers who are contributing to an emerging body of evidence that informs the foundation's work.

They are digital natives for whom the online environment is practically lifeblood.

This is the first generation to be exposed to saturation marketing of online betting products.

Increased accessibility and opportunities to bet have 'created a culture of young Australians who have been socialised into betting practices'.

# WHY YOUNG PEOPLE GAMBLE

Three key factors influence young people's attitudes and behaviour when it comes to gambling:



the gambling environment



gambling marketing



how family and friends view and participate in gambling.

Of course, individual psychological and biological differences also affect attitudes and behaviour, however, these are less relevant from a public health perspective.

## The changing gambling environment

### Gambling regulation

For some forms of gambling, regulation has been fairly consistent over recent years. Pokies in Victoria have sat at just below 30,000 machines for more than a decade (Queensland Government 2016). This means young people have been exposed to a high level of accessibility throughout their childhood and adolescence.

Regulation of betting products, however, has changed dramatically. In 2008 a High Court decision (*Betfair Pty Ltd v. Western Australia*) ruled that state governments may not restrict betting providers based in other states or territories from operating or marketing products in their state. As a result, the number of providers operating in Victoria increased significantly. Extensive marketing by these providers has coincided with greater participation in gambling.

From 2008 to 2014 rates of sports betting increased in the Victorian adult population from 3.96 to 4.82 per cent (Hare 2015). A 2010 study found that up to 20 per cent of young Australians aged 15 to 17 had bet on sports in the past 12 months (Purdie et al. 2011). Given young people are not permitted to bet on sports, this is particularly striking.

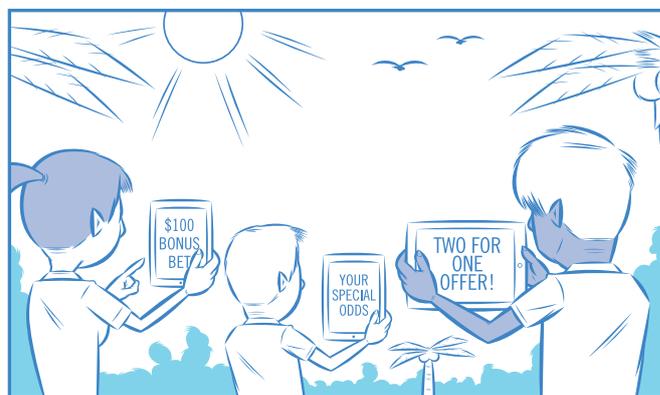
### Online gambling

While online gambling on pokies, casino games and some other products is illegal in Australia, online gambling on betting products is permitted. These products are also heavily marketed online. A 2014 study on the prevalence of gambling in Victoria showed that the majority of people who bet on sports had bet online (Hare 2014).

Young people may be more likely to gamble online than adults. In one study, 60 per cent of young people who gambled had done so online (Gainsbury et al. 2015a).

### Mobile gambling

In 2015, 80 per cent of adolescents aged 14 to 17 had a smart phone, and 65 per cent used a mobile phone to go online (ACMA 2016).



Up to 20 per cent of young Australians aged 15 to 17 had bet on sports in the past 12 months.

Mobile gambling has made it much easier for young people to access gambling.

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Online betting operators increasingly use apps that include features like personalised notifications about promotions and special offers (also known as inducements).

It is unclear how many young people are using betting apps, given by law they can only be accessed by people over 18. However, studies have consistently shown that some young people bet on sports online.

## Social casino games

Social media sites such as Facebook offer social casino games, like slot games and card games including blackjack. As players cannot win money (although they may pay to play), these games are not classified as gambling. This means they can be legally provided to adolescents.

A 2015 study found that one in five adolescents had played social casino games in the past 12 months (Gainsbury et al. 2015a).

While the long-term effects of social casino games are unclear, we know they are associated with increased rates of gambling harm. Foundation-funded research suggests social casino games may 'normalise gambling as a socially acceptable, enjoyable and risk-free activity' (Gainsbury et al. 2015b p. 11).

Social casino games may 'normalise gambling as a socially acceptable, enjoyable and risk-free activity'.

Gainsbury et al. 2015b

## Early exposure through marketing

Gambling advertising has expanded significantly over the past five years due to a highly competitive market. In 2015, the industry spent \$236 million nationally on advertising, up from \$91 million in 2011 (Hickman & Bennett 2016). This was mostly spent on promoting online betting products.

The largest amount was spent on TV advertising, which is permitted for betting products and lotteries, but not for pokies.

## Traditional marketing

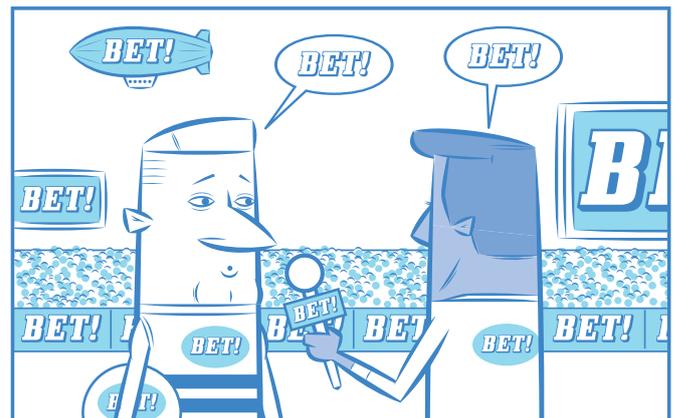
TV advertising during live sporting broadcasts has attracted much public comment. Live sporting broadcasts also feature other forms of gambling marketing, like sponsorships, venue signage and in-program content.

In 2011, there was an average of 58.5 gambling ads at stadiums during Australian Football League (AFL) games and 50.5 ads per game on TV (Thomas et al. 2012). There was an average of 110.67 ads on TV during National Rugby League (NRL) games (Lindsay et al. 2013).

Ads for betting products are not permitted during TV programs classified G or lower from 6 to 8.30 am and 4 to 7 pm, or in programs directed at children between 5 am and 8.30 pm. However, these restrictions exclude sporting broadcasts, even though 84 per cent of adolescents have watched a sporting event in the past 12 months (Sproston et al. 2015).

Adolescents are more likely to experience high levels of exposure to sports betting or racing marketing than the general population – 48 per cent compared to 32 per cent for adults for sports betting, and 36 per cent compared to 26 per cent for adults for racing (Sproston et al. 2015).

While the gambling industry is not deliberately targeting adolescents, the many campaigns aimed at people aged 18 to 24 will also influence teens, who are very close in age and interests to young adults.



Restrictions exclude sporting broadcasts, even though 84 per cent of adolescents have watched a sporting event in the past 12 months.

### Digital marketing

Although TV remains dominant, the fastest growing platform for advertising is digital, with spending from January to August 2015 up 64 per cent on the corresponding period in 2014 (Le Grand 2015). The gambling industry uses Facebook, Youtube and Twitter, often posting content not easily recognisable as advertising, such as humorous videos, and strongly linking gambling to sport (Thomas et al. 2015).

A 2015 study found 42 per cent of adolescents had seen promotions of gambling on social media and 15 per cent had engaged with operators via social media. Around one in ten reported that social media promotions had increased how much they gambled (Gainsbury et al. 2015a).

### Making sports betting seem a normal part of life

Some forms of gambling, like betting on races, are already normalised in the Australian community. For gambling to be normalised, it must be seen as natural, acceptable or embedded in Australian culture. Until recently, betting on sports was uncommon.

In a 2015 study, adolescents were asked about the effect of sports betting marketing on their peer groups (Sproston et al. 2015). Participants said marketing had increased:

- how much friends and family talk about sports betting (18 per cent)
- how interested friends or family are in sports betting (18 per cent)
- how much friends and family would like to bet on sports (18 per cent)
- how much friends or family actually do bet on sports (17 per cent).

Those who said marketing had increased interest or participation in sports betting among their family and friends tended to gamble regularly on sports and racing.

For some adults, 'gambling has become both symbolic of Australian mateship and an important aspect of the traditionally masculine leisure activities of drinking and watching sport' (Thomas & Lewis 2012, p. 36). Adolescents also tend to feel an increasing alignment between gambling and watching sport (Pitt et al. 2016a).

A recent foundation-funded study of 152 children aged between 8 and 16 years (Thomas et al. 2016) found that over two-thirds recalled the name of at least one sports betting brand. Around one in five could identify three or more sports betting brands. Children could also match teams with shirt sponsors – almost two-thirds identified at least one team–sponsor relationship. Further research that drew on this study reported three-quarters of children thought sports betting was becoming a normal part of sport, and 92 per cent of children attending AFL matches had seen promotions for sports betting (Pitt et al. 2016b).

Most young people exposed to betting advertising as children are not yet 18, so the effect of normalisation on participation is unknown. However, evidence from other areas of public health suggests advertising is likely to increase participation in gambling by adolescents.

The gambling industry uses Facebook, Youtube and Twitter, often posting content not easily recognisable as advertising.

Around one in ten reported that social media promotions had increased how much they gambled.

'Gambling has become both symbolic of Australian mateship and an important aspect of the traditionally masculine leisure activities of drinking and watching sport'.

Thomas & Lewis 2012



## The influence of family and friends

Although the effect of gambling marketing on young people has received considerable attention, it is clear the most influential exposure to gambling occurs when young people see family and friends doing it.

### Attitudes and behaviour of family members

Young people are exposed to the gambling behaviour, attitudes and beliefs of parents and siblings. Family attitudes may mean young people receive no negative feedback about gambling. Children in families that approve of gambling are more likely to gamble themselves (Delfabbro & Thrupp 2003).

In one Australian study of poker playing among young people, only one in 10 young players had parents who disapproved of their gambling, and two in 10 had received parental approval. This study also showed almost two-thirds of the players received no substantial adult feedback on their behaviour. Their parents either did not know they were playing or, if they were aware, offered no response to it (Kalé 2011).

Some parents assist young people to gamble, for example, by buying them lottery tickets or scratch cards (Valentine 2008). This may normalise gambling for young people and encourage later take-up.

When an adult in a family has a gambling problem (especially the male parent), this can transmit problems to the children. However, it may not always be due to the example the adult is setting. Problems with gambling may arise in children in response to the pressures of living with an adult who has a gambling problem (Dowling et al. 2010).

### Exposure to gambling venues

Early exposure to gambling may extend beyond witnessing parental gambling. Young people may see gambling in a positive light through taking part in other activities at pokies venues, such as dining or 'family days'. Promotions of venues as 'family friendly' may act to normalise gambling and encourage gambling behaviour later in life (Bestman et al. 2016).

### Friends and gambling

Gambling is often a social activity for young people. Around six in 10 young people who gamble say they gamble with at least one other person, usually a friend (Purdie et al. 2011).

This social aspect means the attitudes and behaviour of friends are an important influence on young people's gambling. Young people who believe their friends are frequent gamblers, or whose friends approve of gambling, are themselves more frequent gamblers (Delfabbro & Thrupp 2003).



It is clear the most influential exposure to gambling occurs when young people see family and friends doing it.

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# MOST YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE GAMBLLED

Even though it is illegal for people under 18 to gamble, research shows most young people gamble at some point. A 2011 study found 64 per cent of people aged 15 to 17 had gambled at least once in the past year, and 75 per cent aged 10 to 14 had gambled at least once in the past year (Purdie et al. 2011). Note that these gambling activities include lotteries and scratch tickets.

There are particular risks, however, in surveying young people about gambling. As with any survey, participants may not respond accurately, for example, because they have forgotten relevant information or they want their responses to reflect well on them. Young people may interpret questions differently from adults, including what constitutes gambling, and this may produce artificial results. When surveyed in classrooms, they may also give misleading responses if they become bored or frustrated.

But despite these limitations, Australian studies have consistently shown that 60 to 80 per cent of adolescents have gambled (Delfabbro, King & Griffiths 2014).

Under-age gambling has also been found to be relatively common in countries similar to Australia, such as Canada, the United States, Great Britain and New Zealand (Volberg et al. 2010).

However, it is important to note that although many young people gamble, few do so on a regular basis. One Australian study found that 6.3 per cent of young people gambled at least once a week (Delfabbro et al. 2009). Another found that less than 5 per cent gambled once a week or more on the gambling activities measured, with the exception of footy tips and sweeps (Purdie et al. 2011).

Some young people are more likely to gamble than others. For example, boys are more likely to gamble than girls, and older adolescents are more likely to gamble than younger adolescents (Delfabbro et al. 2009).

## Types of gambling

Common types of gambling for young people aged 15 to 17 are scratch tickets (49 per cent), lotteries (26 per cent) and card games for money at home (42 per cent) (Purdie et al. 2011).

Young people are also involved in more risky forms of gambling like pokies (9 per cent), race betting (28 per cent) and betting on sports (21 per cent). The table below shows results from three Australian studies of young people and gambling.

Australian studies have consistently shown that 60 to 80 per cent of adolescents have gambled.

## Participation by young Australians in selected gambling activities

Gambling activity		Purdie et al (2011) (aged 15–17) %	Delfabbro (2009) (aged 13–17) %	Dowling (2010) (aged 12–18 <sup>1</sup> ) %
Card games for money at home		42.4	29.1 <sup>2</sup>	36.5
Pokies		8.8	7.5	31 <sup>3</sup>
Racing		28.2	21.7	24.9 <sup>4</sup>
Betting on sport <sup>5</sup>		20.7	18.1	26.1
Lotteries		26.0	11.8	34.8
Scratch tickets		48.7	42	33.7
Bingo		19.2	16.7	7.7
Internet gambling		13.4	6.9	8.9
Card games at the casino		6.3		29.6
Other casino games		7.8		

1 This study was conducted with secondary school students, some of whom were 18 years old and legally able to gamble.

2 Includes card games at the casino

3 Includes only betting at the casino. 26.5 per cent of young people played pokies at clubs and hotels

4 Includes only betting at TAB outlets

5 Studies do not specify if betting is with a commercial operator or informal

Despite the apparently strict barriers around the more risky forms of gambling, including race and sports betting and pokies, up to one in five young people reported gambling on these products. This gambling may be facilitated by family members and other adults. Purdie et al. (2011) found that 36.4 per cent of young people aged 15 to 17 had had someone else place a bet for them.

It is clear there are significant differences in the findings from the studies. This is partly explained by the different age groups and locations. Purdie et al. (2011) and Dowling et al. (2010) are national studies, while Delfabbro et al. (2009) was based in South Australia. Dowling et al. (2010) included some 18-year-olds, who were legally able to gamble.

36.4 per cent of young people aged 15 to 17 had had someone else place a bet for them.

# HARM FROM GAMBLING

Young people may be particularly vulnerable to gambling harm as their ability to assess risk is still developing (Defoe et al. 2015, Willoughby et al. 2013). For adolescents, gambling is one of many risky activities, including sex, drinking alcohol and drug-taking, that may cause harm.

Australian research shows between 2.4 per cent (Delfabbro, Winefield & Anderson 2009) and 4.5 per cent (Purdie et al. 2011) of adolescents meet the clinical definition of problem gambling. This is about one in every 25 young people, which is an average of one in every high school classroom.

Boys (5.7 per cent) are more likely to have gambling problems than girls (3.2 per cent) (Purdie et al. 2011).

These rates are much higher than the rate for problem gambling in adults, which is approximately 1 per cent (Hare 2015). Rates of problem gambling are not directly comparable between adolescents and adults, as different measures are used and behaviour not considered problematic in an adult may be considered problem gambling in a young person. Even so, rates of problem gambling could be as much as five times higher among young people than in adults (Purdie et al. 2011, Hare 2009).

A recent study found low and moderate-risk gamblers also experience harm as a result of gambling (Browne et al. 2016). This means a further 6.4 per cent (Delfabbro, Winefield & Anderson 2009) to 16 per cent (Purdie et al. 2011) of young people may be experiencing harm. This could include:

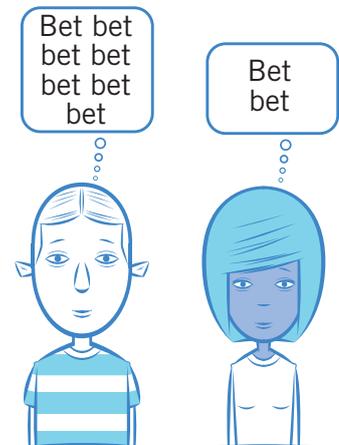
- poor academic performance
- absenteeism from school and early school dropout
- disrupted relationships with family and friends.

As with adult gamblers, these consequences may not be recognised as related to gambling.

## Gambling problems combined with other conditions

The relationship between gambling problems and a variety of other conditions, including mental illness, suicidal thoughts and substance abuse, is complex. An adolescent with a gambling problem is more likely to have depression or think about suicide, and to have lower self-esteem, than a young person without a gambling problem (Haroon & Derevensky 2002). They are also more likely to engage in risky or antisocial behaviour, such as alcohol and drug use, theft and graffiti (Purdie et al. 2011).

It is not always clear whether these conditions are caused by gambling problems or are present before they develop. It is likely issues such as mental illness or substance use are risk factors for problem gambling, and also worsened by it. But regardless of whether it is a cause or an effect of broader issues, harmful gambling often signals other problems exist.



Between 2.4 per cent and 4.5 per cent of adolescents meet the clinical definition of problem gambling.

An adolescent with a gambling problem is more likely to have depression or think about suicide, and to have lower self-esteem.

## Young people and seeking help

Many people who experience gambling problems do not seek help, and this includes many young people. Most adolescents with gambling problems do not recognise they have a problem, which means they do not seek appropriate help (Splevins et al. 2010).

Even when people are aware of problems, stigma can be a barrier to getting help. Young adults are particularly resistant to seeking professional and non-professional help because of shame, pride and wanting to solve the problem on their own (Hing, Nuske and Gainsbury 2011). For adolescents, the fact that their gambling is illegal would be an additional obstacle.

Young people may also be less likely to know where they can seek help (Purdie et al. 2011). If they have seen ads for Gambler's Help counselling services, they may not realise the services cover all ages, not just adults.



## Long-term consequences of early exposure to gambling

Research tells us people who begin gambling at a young age are at greater risk of developing gambling problems as an adult (Burge et al. 2004). Many adults with gambling problems began gambling when they were under-age (Hare 2009).

However, research also shows young people's gambling behaviour varies over time and problems with gambling during adolescence may not lead to continued problems in adulthood.

A South Australian study that followed young gamblers over time found those who gambled at age 15 or 16 were not more likely to gamble at age 21 (Delfabbro, King & Griffiths 2014; Delfabbro, Winefield & Anderson 2009). Those with signs of problem gambling at 15 or 16 were not more likely than others in the study to have signs of problem gambling at 21.

These contrasting patterns of involvement in gambling suggest that for some young people it may be part of the risk-taking of adolescence, while for others it may lead to a lifetime of problems.

Therefore, while it is likely gambling at a young age is linked to future problems, experiencing gambling problems as an adolescent may not be linked to problem gambling as an adult.

Many adults with gambling problems began gambling when they were under-age.

# YOUNG ADULTS AND GAMBLING

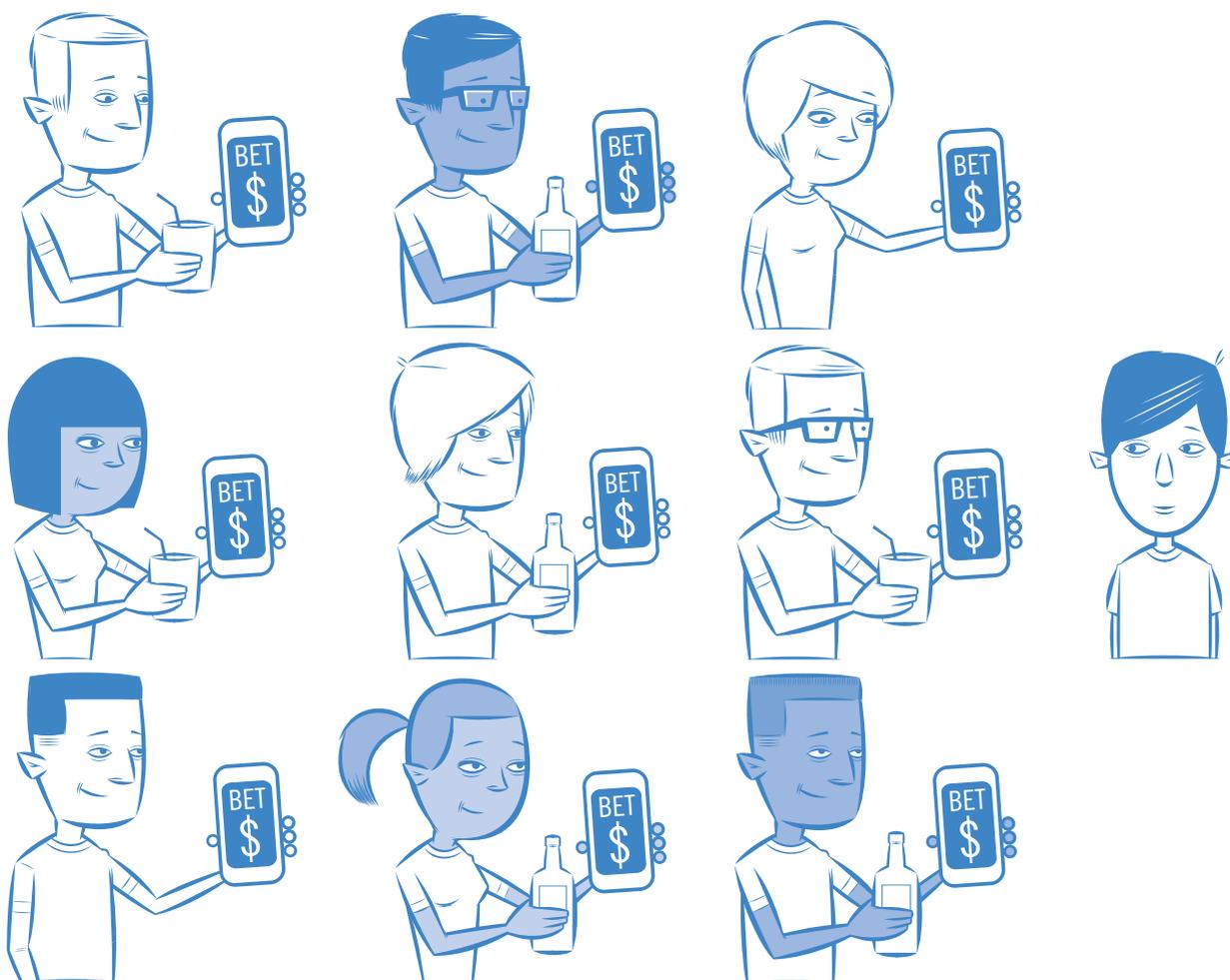
As today's adolescents become young adults and legally able to gamble, the effects of early exposure to gambling will become even more apparent.

It is well understood people aged 18 to 30, particularly men, are at higher risk of experiencing gambling harm than other adults.

Young adults aged 18 to 24 are more likely than other adults to participate in some forms of gambling, including sports betting (Hare 2015). While they are a target for sports betting advertising, their gambling may also be the effect of exposure to marketing in adolescence.

As with teenagers, young adults often have a high tolerance for risk. Gambling may be one of a number of risky behaviours, including drinking alcohol, that become synonymous with watching sport. Peer groups are another important influence, with some young men gambling to 'fit in' (Deans et al. 2016).

Playing casino games is also more common among this group than other adults. Visiting the casino is seen as a rite of passage into adulthood for some young people. Its strong link with alcohol consumption may heighten the risk of short-term harm from casino games.



# RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

It is clear gambling is a significant issue for young people.

We need to respond with targeted approaches that reduce gambling harm for adolescents, and for the adults they will become. And we need to back this work with robust research.

Our responses must also be directed towards parents and young adult peers or siblings, who may model potentially harmful gambling behaviour for young people. Teachers and sporting coaches are another target group, as they can influence young people's attitudes.

The foundation's social marketing campaigns challenge gambling industry messages and promote informed and balanced attitudes towards gambling. Our 2016 'Love the game' campaign highlighted how 'gambling advertising is changing the way kids see sport', and provided information for parents on how to protect young people from the risks.

To reduce young people's exposure to gambling marketing, we must also advocate for appropriate changes to the rules that govern advertising. In a 2015 submission to the Australian Government, we recommended:

1. removing the exemption for sporting programs that allows gambling ads to be broadcast at times when children may be watching TV unsupervised
2. restricting gambling advertising on TV to after 9 pm
3. industry implementing a self-regulatory code regarding advertising on social media that follows guidelines already in place for advertising on broadcast media
4. sporting codes reducing their association with gambling providers, particularly to reduce messages to children that gambling is a part of sport
5. social media providers restricting advertising from illegal offshore operators.

To date, only points three and four have seen positive developments. The Australian Association of National Advertisers has implemented a code that applies the same guidelines for broadcast media to social media, and more elite sporting clubs have joined the foundation's Sporting Club Program.

The foundation's Sporting Club Program and School Education Program, developed in 2013, have been key to our work in countering the normalisation of gambling.

## Sporting Club Program

Our Sporting Club Program works with elite and local clubs to create healthy club environments and reduce the exposure of young people to gambling, especially through sports betting advertising.

We are partnered with 13 elite Victorian sporting clubs, including AFL, cricket and soccer clubs.

We also offer the program to all local Victorian sporting clubs, with particular emphasis on those with high memberships of young men. As at February 2017, over 260 sporting clubs were signed to the program.

For more information, see: [lovethesame.vic.gov.au/sport](http://lovethesame.vic.gov.au/sport)

LOVE  
THE  
GAME



## School Education Program

Our School Education Program aims to help young people navigate the new gambling environment and develop healthy and informed attitudes towards gambling.

It includes professional development sessions and curriculum-based resources for teachers, including maths, literacy, health and humanities units; workshops for senior students (Years 10–12); and information sessions and materials for parents.

We also provide information and resources for parents and teachers online, including strategies for talking to young people about gambling.

As at February 2017, 144 schools and youth organisations across Victoria had participated in the program with over 12,000 students reached.

For more information, see: [lovethethegame.vic.gov.au/schools](http://lovethethegame.vic.gov.au/schools)



## Gambler's Help Youthline

The foundation's Gambler's Help Youthline offers specialist telephone support for young people who may be experiencing harm because of their own or someone else's gambling.

For more information, see [gamblershelp.com.au/youthline](http://gamblershelp.com.au/youthline)

### More information

#### FOR PARENTS

For advice about teenage gambling, you can:

- telephone Gambler's Help on 1800 858 858 or Gambler's Help Youthline on 1800 262 376
- visit [gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://gamblinghelponline.org.au) to chat online with a counsellor.

You can also visit [lovethethegame.vic.gov.au](http://lovethethegame.vic.gov.au) for more information about young people and gambling, including tools and tips for talking to teenagers about the issues.

#### FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

For help and support with your own or someone else's gambling, you can:

- telephone Gambler's Help Youthline on 1800 262 376 – available 24/7 and anonymous, confidential and free
- visit [gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://gamblinghelponline.org.au) to chat online with a counsellor – this service is also available 24/7.

You can also visit [gamblershelp.com.au/youthline](http://gamblershelp.com.au/youthline) for information about gambling, including signs to look for if you think you or someone else might have a problem.

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