



Community Attitudes to Gambling Survey

May/ June 2019

Consultation Report

Introduction

Through the Community Attitudes to Gambling survey, the Ballarat Interagency Taskforce on Gambling Harm sought the views of the Ballarat community on gambling to inform actions of both the Taskforce and by the individual partnering organisations. The survey asked questions about the type and frequency of gambling people participate in, the availability of gambling products, and views about the impact of gambling in Ballarat.

It is intended that the results of the survey will be used to inform the development of policies, projects and advocacy efforts by the organisations who are part of the Taskforce. This will include a gambling policy review being undertaken by the City of Ballarat in coming months. It is also intended that this survey will be repeated by the Taskforce annually and may in the future include additional information gathering activities such as focus groups to build on knowledge of local community attitudes.

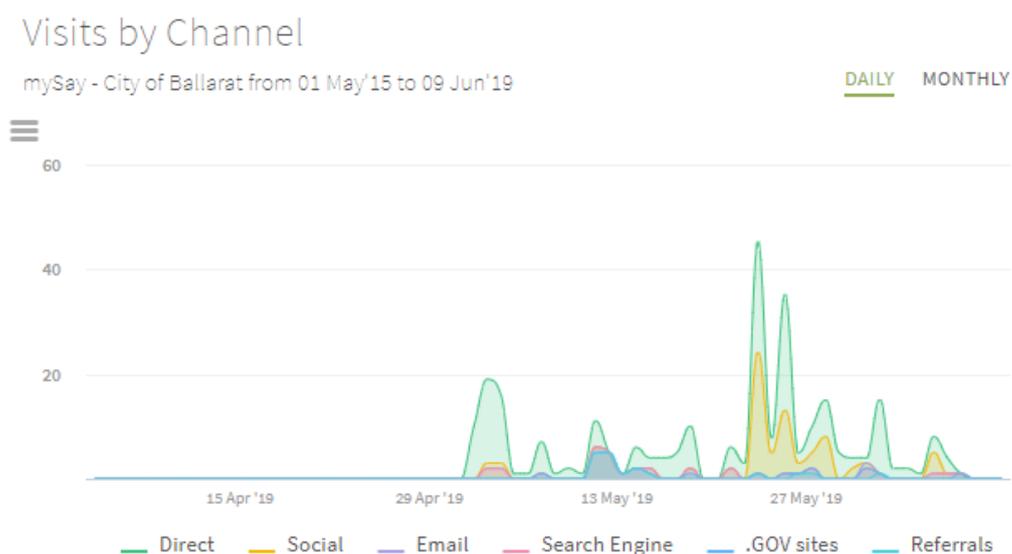
The member organisations of the Ballarat Interagency Taskforce on Gambling Harm currently include Ballarat Community Health, City of Ballarat, Ballarat and Grampians Community Legal Centre, Central Highlands Primary Care Partnership and Compassionate Ballarat. The Taskforce was established to advocate for the reduced harm from gambling in the City of Ballarat using a public health approach.

Method

The survey opened on 1 May 2019 and closed on the 9th June 2019 and was completed by 127 local residents. It was made available on the City of Ballarat My Say page (<https://mysay.ballarat.vic.gov.au/attitudes-to-gambling>) and in hard copy at City of Ballarat Phoenix building at the Ballarat Community Health Sebastopol, Lucas, Wendouree and Victoria Street sites.

Promotion occurred through Taskforce members social media pages, through media release distribution which resulted in a radio interview on ABC about the project and two stories on WIN News. The My Say page recorded a total of 279 people visiting the site of the survey and 172 clicking through to access information.

The most common way that people accessed the site was via a direct link (179 visits) followed by social media posts.



Care was taken to ensure survey questions were as objective as possible and that responses remained anonymous throughout collation. Advice on the design of the survey questions was also sought from researchers at the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation.

Caveat

It is worth noting that there were some areas of over-representation within those who responded to the survey. A higher number of participants identified as female (65.4% of survey participants compared to Ballarat overall 51.9%) and had high levels of education (65.4% of survey participants had a university degree compared to Ballarat overall 18.9%). Many of the people who participated in the survey do not gamble themselves, but did clearly indicate concern about gambling within the Ballarat community and 19.2% indicated they had experienced harm from someone else's gambling. Further demographic information about who participated in the survey can be seen in the 'Collated Survey Results' section in questions 1 through to 7.

Overview of findings

The Community Attitudes survey was made available between May 1, 2019 and July 9, 2019 and gathered feedback from 127 community members through online and hard copy surveys. With an estimated population of approximately 110,000 people in Ballarat this survey has a calculated margin of error of 9%.

Demographic information of survey participants

Some of the key demographic information about those who answered the survey included:

- Respondents to the survey were all residents of the Ballarat area
- More females than males completed the survey (65.4% and 33.9% respectively)
- People who answered the survey were a range of ages although there were lower response rates from those aged 18 to 24 years and over the age of 65
- 58.3% of people who completed the survey did not have any children under the age of 18, with the majority of those who did indicate they have children having either one or two dependants (22% and 12.6% respectively)
- Typically, respondents had high education levels with most people having completed a university degree (65.4%) or a TAFE or trade qualification (20.5%), and only 3.9% of respondents completing education to Year 10 or less.
- Most people who completed the survey indicated that they are working full time (48%) or part time or casually (32.3%), with an additional 7.9% indicated that they are retired.

Gambling frequency and type of participants

Many of those who completed the survey indicate that they are not regular gamblers, with the vast majority (more than 70%) never gambling on the pokies, casino table games, sport or online. When respondents did gamble, it was more likely to be on horse racing and other gambling products such as lotteries, scratchies, raffles and bingo and usually less often than once a month. This correlates with previous demographic responses from the survey (highlighted above) and existing evidence and research that suggests those who have higher levels of education and employment are less likely to gamble.

Despite only small number of respondents indicating that they gambled regularly in previous questions:

- 6.3% of people had lost more than they could really afford to;

- 11.1% had needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement;
- 8.7% of people went back another day to try to win back the money they had lost;
- 8.7% of respondents had experienced health problems, stress or anxiety because of gambling;
- Gambling has caused financial problems for 5.5% of survey respondents; and
- 10.3% of people had felt guilty about the way they have gambled or what happens when they gamble.

Gambling harm

19.2% of people who completed the survey indicated that they had experienced harm because of someone else's gambling. Of the 24 people who indicated that they had experienced harm because of someone else's gambling, nearly all experienced relationship (20 people) and emotional (19 people) harm. In addition, 15 people responded that they had been affected financially and 8 indicated that they also experienced other harms such as affecting work, health or focus on other important things.

Several people made comments about their own and their friends and family's experience of gambling harm. This included family breakdown, suicide, depression and financial hardship. There were also comments about the negative impacts on the community resulting from gambling such as reduced spending at local businesses and the links with family violence and suicide rates. Concern was also expressed at the amount of money being used on gambling and the lack of awareness of the community of how much money is being lost. Some quotes relating to experienced harm included:

"I am aware of significant harm caused by gambling among my extended family, friends and their networks. If the impacts of financial hardship, family breakdown, suicide etc. in Ballarat could be collectively shown it would clearly illustrate that the financial benefits to a relatively small group of local business people and clubs is being achieved at enormous cost to our community and is completely unethical!"

"My now husband suffered from a gambling addiction for 3 years without me knowing. In those 3 years he had accumulated so much debt I had no idea how we would ever rebuild. The emotional and financial damage his poker machine addiction caused is indescribable. At the time we had no help available in Ballarat. I was afraid my partner would take his life and I was also in a very dark place."

Perceived levels of harm and concern of gambling in Ballarat

The survey results indicate that all four common forms of gambling, (pokies, sports betting, betting on horses and casino games), are considered to be harmful to the Ballarat community by at least 87.6% of survey respondents. Pokies are identified as being the most dangerous form of gambling with 93.7% believing that they cause harm to the Ballarat community and 72.4% considering them to be very harmful or extremely harmful. Similar results were found for betting on sports and horses with 92% of respondents considering them harmful products within the Ballarat community.

Of the people who responded to the survey it is clear that the majority of people are concerned about pokies, sports betting, betting on horses and casino games for the people living in Ballarat. Similarly, to the question considering how harmful the different gambling products are, pokies caused the most concern, with over 90% of respondents being at least somewhat concerned and 72.4% feeling very or extremely concerned about pokies in Ballarat. A high percentage of

respondents were also concerned with sports betting and betting on horses for people in Ballarat (89% and 86.6% respectively), although the level of concern was slightly lower than for pokies.

Availability of gambling activities in Ballarat

The majority of survey respondents indicated that activities to gamble on pokies, sports and horses are too readily available in Ballarat. Overall, 83.5% thought that there are too many pokies available, 78% thought that betting on sports was too easily available and 66.1% of people thought that betting on horses was too available. The type of gambling that most people thought was available at a level that was about right was gambling at a casino (55.1%), with 11% of people indicating that they would like more casino gambling available to Ballarat residents who want to gamble.

Only 15.7% of people thought that the level of poker machines in Ballarat was about right, and 0.8% thought that there was not enough available. In the areas of both sports betting and betting on horses, no one indicated they thought there were not enough of these activities available with 22% of people thinking the level of sports betting is about right and 33.9% considering the amount of horse racing activities available being about right.

Poker Machines

In relation to poker machines, there was strong support from respondents for the Victorian Government to increase regulation of poker machines such as having fewer machines, reduced operating hours, 'con-free' poker machines (82.6% agreed or strongly agreed). There was also strong support for the City of Ballarat to oppose any applications for new pokies venues or additional machines where there is evidence of a negative impact in community wellbeing (75.6% strongly agreed, 9.4% agreed).

As was seen in at least twenty verbatim comments provided in question 16, poker machines were one of the most common themes with people showing real concern for the harms caused, the amount of money being lost, the addictive and predatory nature of the product and the comfortable and inviting environments that are created by venues making them more appealing to vulnerable people. Comments indicated that people would like to see more regulation of poker machines including a reduction in numbers and accessibility in Ballarat. One respondent commented:

"The annual losses from poker machines in Ballarat each year is staggering. We need to mobilise the community into saying "no" to pokies and also make it really clear that poker machines are addictive, they are designed to addict, and they are dangerous to our community."

Social acceptance of gambling in Ballarat and individual responsibility

Survey results indicate that gambling is considered to be mostly socially acceptable in Ballarat. Betting on horses is seen as the most socially acceptable form of gambling in Ballarat while gambling on the pokies is seen as less acceptable with 17.3% of respondents indicating that this is not at all socially acceptable in Ballarat. Betting on sports (44.9%) and horses (54.4%) was considered either very or extremely socially accepted in Ballarat by many people.

There were three comments which saw gambling as a recreational activity that people should be able to enjoy, and that the industry also employs a significant number of people in our community. There was also a small number (insert number if known) of comments made that people should be responsible for their own actions if they choose to gamble. This correlated with responses provided in question 15 of the survey which saw 32.3% of people agreeing or strongly agreeing that responsibility for gambling problems lies with the individual.

Gambling advertising and sport

Of those that responded to the survey there was strong support for gambling advertising to be banned during televised sport and during children's viewing hours. A number of people also commented on the normalisation of gambling that is occurring as a result of such widespread advertising.

In addition, the majority of respondents (80.3%) thought that gambling should be banned from sporting venues and sponsorship of sport and 74% thought that sporting organisations do not take enough responsibility for how gambling is promoted in Ballarat. In the final open-ended question of the survey a small number of people commented on the attitudes in local sports clubs that betting on sports through apps is seen as harmless and fun and that there is on occasion peer pressure to participate. There was also concern expressed that the harms of online gambling can be worse because it can be done without anyone seeing you.

Support services and education

Six people commented on the need for more services to be available to those experiencing gambling harm. In addition, it was also identified that often there may be underlying causes for people gambling such as loneliness, depression, financial issues, needing a place to stay safe, and that there should be greater levels of support for these issues also. One relevant comment made was:

"I just think it's awful that so many people say they - or people they know - hit the pokies for company. There should be far greater support for other means of community connection, making friends, keeping from being lonely etc."

It was also indicated that most people thought that there is not enough public education about the consequences of gambling products for children or community members more generally, and that additional education occurring in schools would be beneficial.

Survey methodology

There were three comments made in relation to the survey design or intent with one person believing that the survey was not objective enough coming from the Interagency Taskforce on Gambling Harm to illicit a representative response, and two others indicating that there were not enough options provided in some questions or the ability to skip where not appropriate.

Collated Survey Results

Q1. SUMMARY

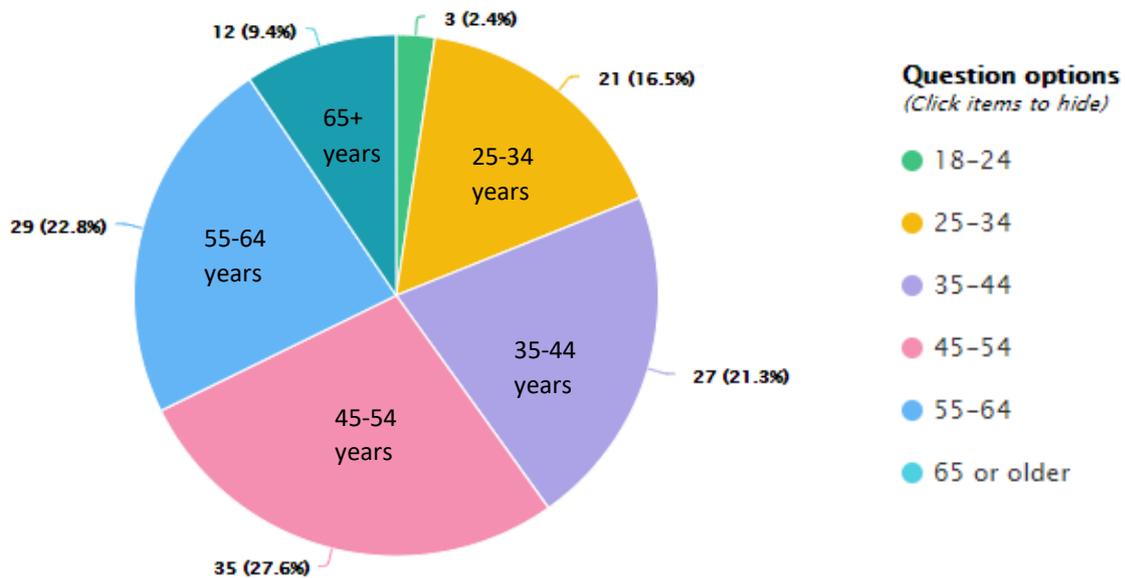
Are you a resident of one of the following postcodes? 3350, 3351, 3352, 3355, 3356, or 3357

All people who completed the survey indicated that they were a resident of one of the Ballarat postcodes.

Q2. SUMMARY

Please select your age group

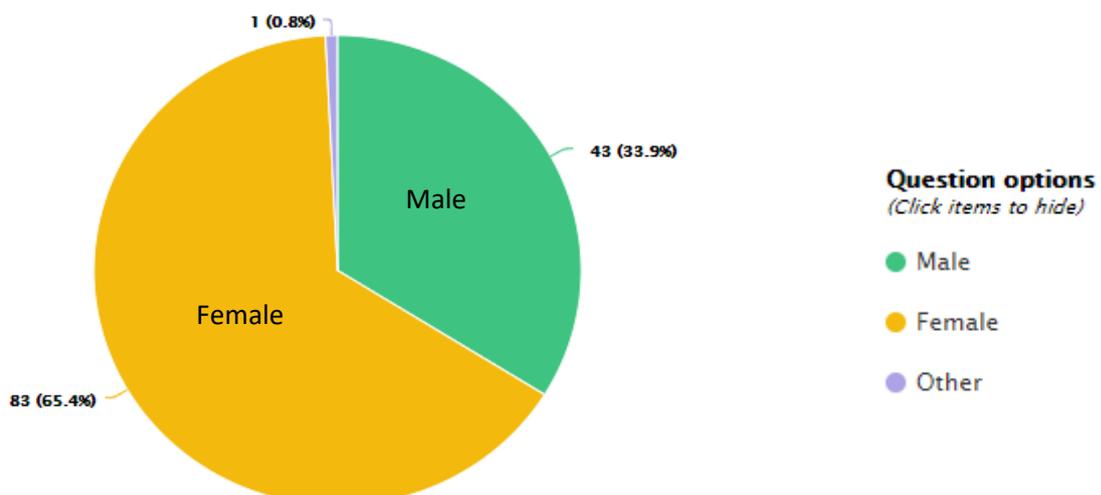
Of the respondents, 2.4% were aged between 18 and 24 years, 16.5% were between 25 and 34 years, 21.3% were between 35 and 44 years, 27.6% were between 45 and 54 years, 22.8% were between 55 and 64 years and 9.4% were over the age of 65.



Q3. SUMMARY

Which gender do you identify as?

There was a higher proportion of female (65.4%) respondents than male (33.9%) respondents, with only one person identifying their gender as 'other'.



Q4. SUMMARY

How many children do you have under the age of 18?

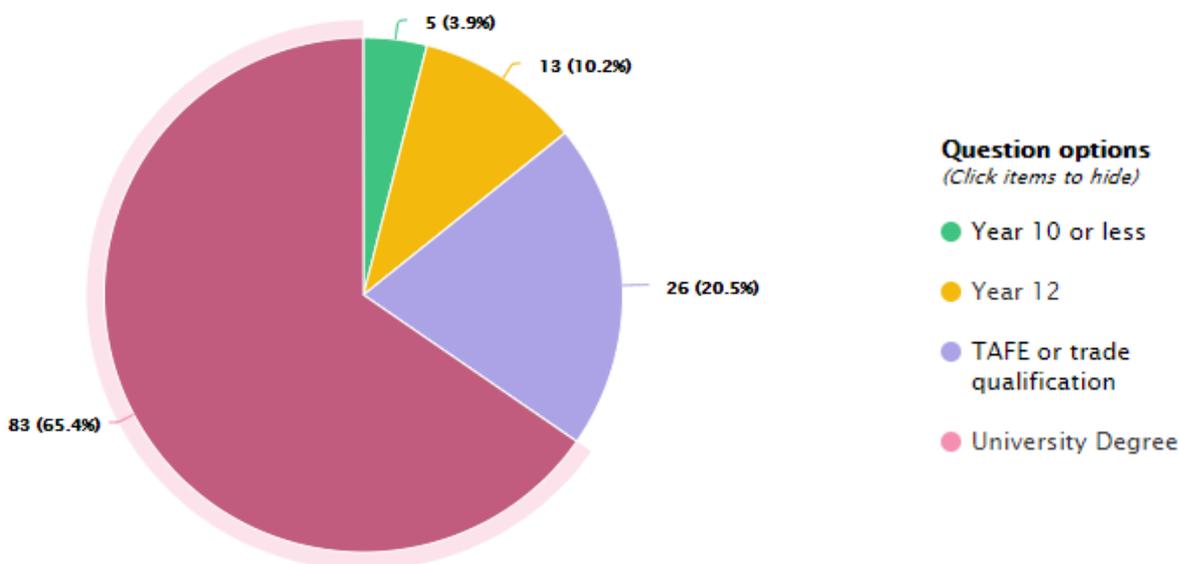
Most survey respondents did not have children under the age of 18 (58.3%), followed by 22% of people who indicated they had one child and 12.6% of people with two children.

Number of Children	Number of Responses	% of total
1	28	22.0
2	16	12.6
3	8	6.3
4	1	0.8
None	74	58.3

Q5. SUMMARY

Which of the following best describes (or is most equivalent to) the highest level of education you have completed?

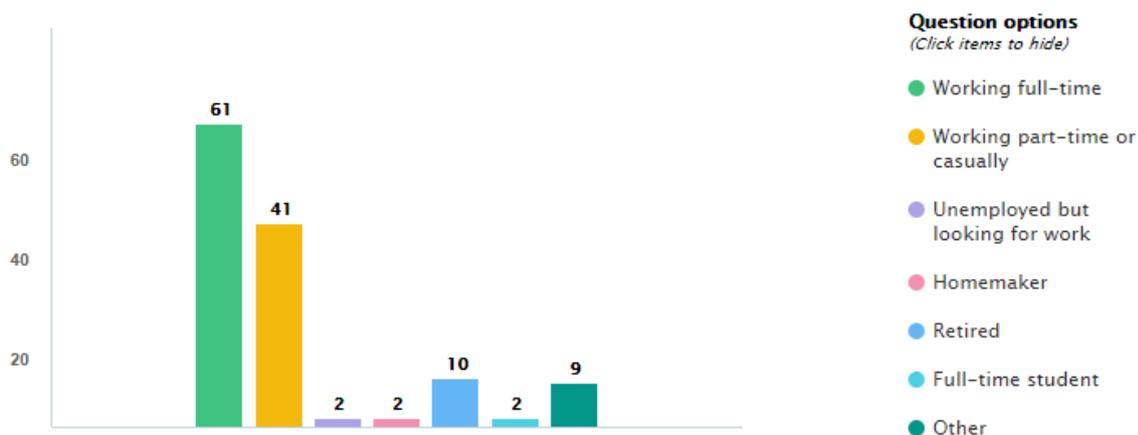
Most people who completed the survey had a high level of education and had completed a university degree (65.4%) or TAFE or trade qualification (20.5%) with only 3.9% of respondents completing education to Year 10 or less.



Q6. SUMMARY

Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

The majority of people who completed the survey indicated that they are working full time (48.0%) or part time or casually (32.3%), with an additional 7.9% indicated that they are retired. There were only 2 respondents each who were either homemakers, a full-time student or unemployed and looking for work.

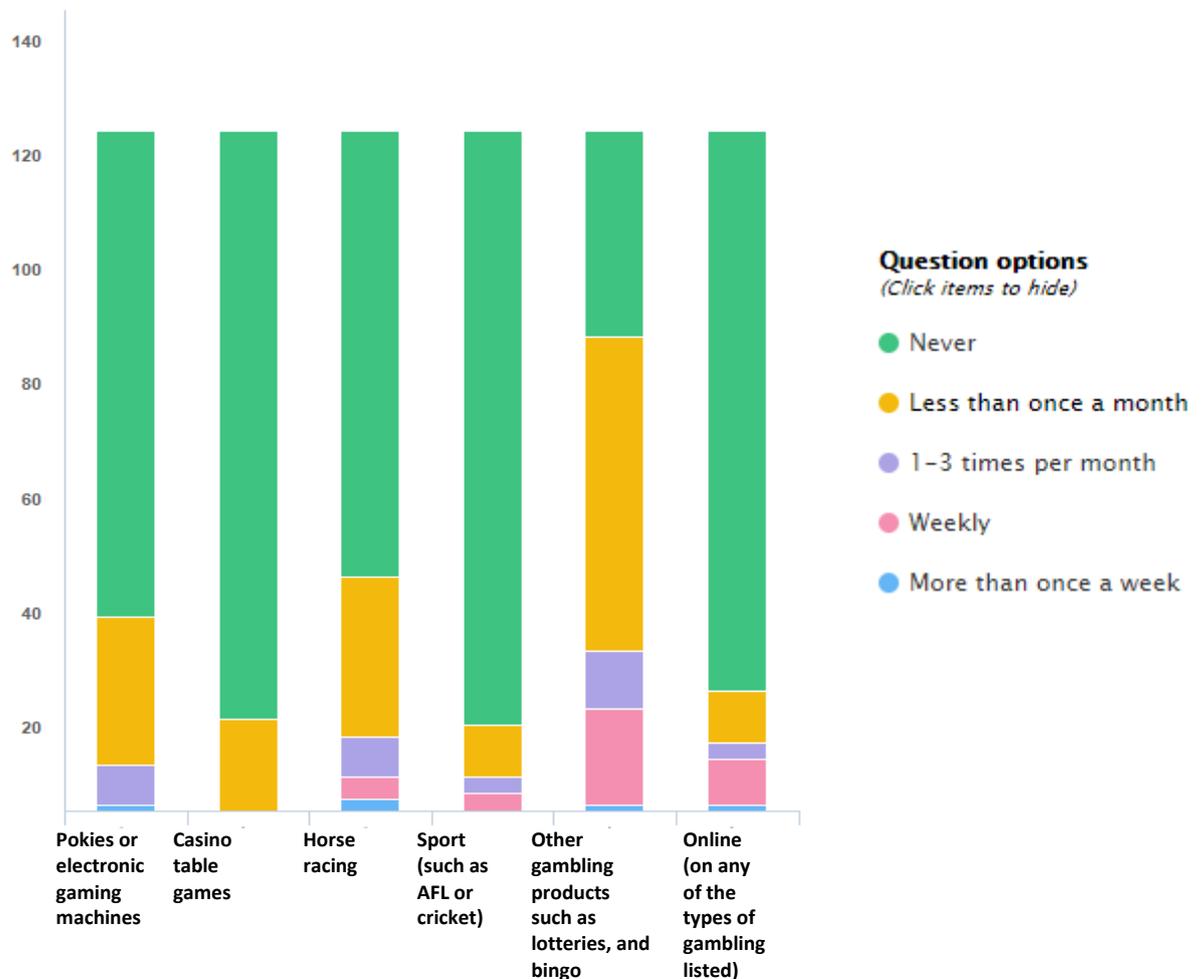


Q7. SUMMARY

In the past 12 months, how often have you gambled on...

From those who responded to the survey the following was reported:

- Pokies - 71.7% never gambled on the pokies, 22% gambled less than once a month, 5.5% gambled 1-3 times a month, and 0.8% (1 person) gambled more than once a week.
- Casino tables – 87.4% never use casino table games, and the remaining 12.6% would play less than once a month.
- Horse racing – 65.4% never gamble on horse racing, 24.4% less than once a month, 5.5% 1-3 times a month, 3.1% weekly and 1.6% more than once a week.
- Sport – 87.4% never gamble on sports, 7.9% less than once a month, 2.4% 1-3 times per month, and 2.4% weekly.
- Other products such as lotteries, scratchies, keno raffles and bingo – 32.3% never gamble on other products, 45.7% less than once a month, 7.9% 1-3 times a month, 13.4% weekly and 0.8% more than once a week.
- Online on any type of gambling – 83.5% never gamble online, 7.1% less than once a month, 2.4% 1-3 times per month, 6.3% weekly and 0.8% more than once a week.



Q8. SUMMARY

Thinking about the last 12 months....

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	Almost always
How often have you bet more than you could really afford to lose?	93.7%	1.6%	1.6%	3.1%
How often have you needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement?	89.0%	7.9%	0.8%	2.4%
When you gambled, how often did you go back another day to try to win back the money you lost?	91.3%	6.3%	0.8%	1.6%
How often have you borrowed money or sold anything to get money to gamble?	96.1%	3.1%	0.8%	0.0%
How often have you felt that you might have a problem with gambling?	93.7%	3.1%	1.6%	1.6%
How often has gambling caused you any health problems, including stress or anxiety?	91.3%	6.3%	1.6%	0.8%
How often have people criticized your betting or told you that you had a gambling problem, regardless of whether or not you thought it was true?	94.5%	5.5%	0.0%	0.0%
How often has your gambling caused any financial problems for you or your household?	94.5%	3.9%	1.6%	0.0%
How often have you felt guilty about the way you gamble or what happens when you gamble?	89.8%	6.3%	1.6%	2.4%

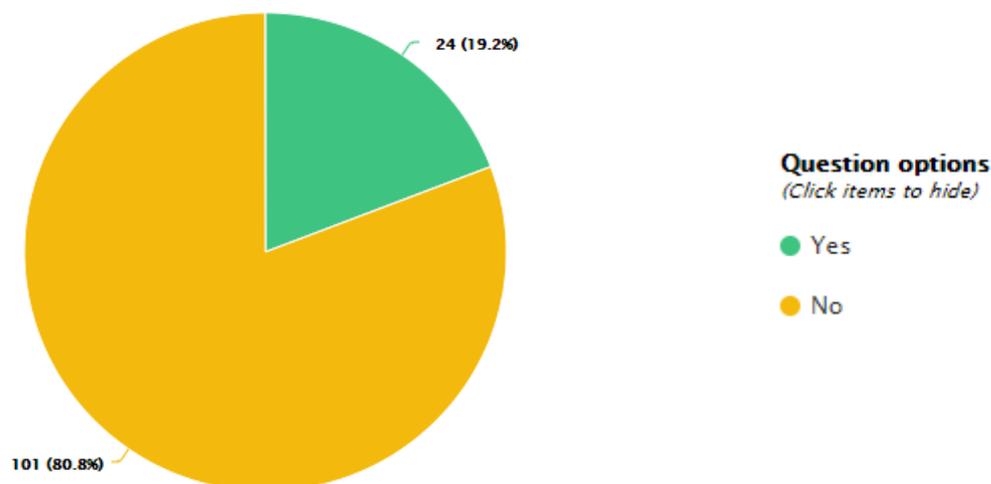
Some of the key findings from the question included that despite only small number of respondents indicated that they gambled regularly in previous questions:

- 6.3% of people had lost more that they could really afford to sometimes (1.6%), Most of the time (1.6%) or almost always (3.1%).
- 11.1% had needed to gamble with larger amounts of money to get the same feeling of excitement sometimes (7.9%), most of the time (0.8%) and almost always (2.4%).
- 8.7% of people went back another day to try to win back the money they had lost at least sometimes.
- 8.7% of respondents had experienced health problems, stress or anxiety as a result of gambling.
- Gambling has caused financial problems for 5.5% of survey respondents.
- 10.3% of people had felt guilty about the way they have gambled or what happens when they gamble.

Q9. SUMMARY

Have you ever experienced harm as a result of someone else's gambling?

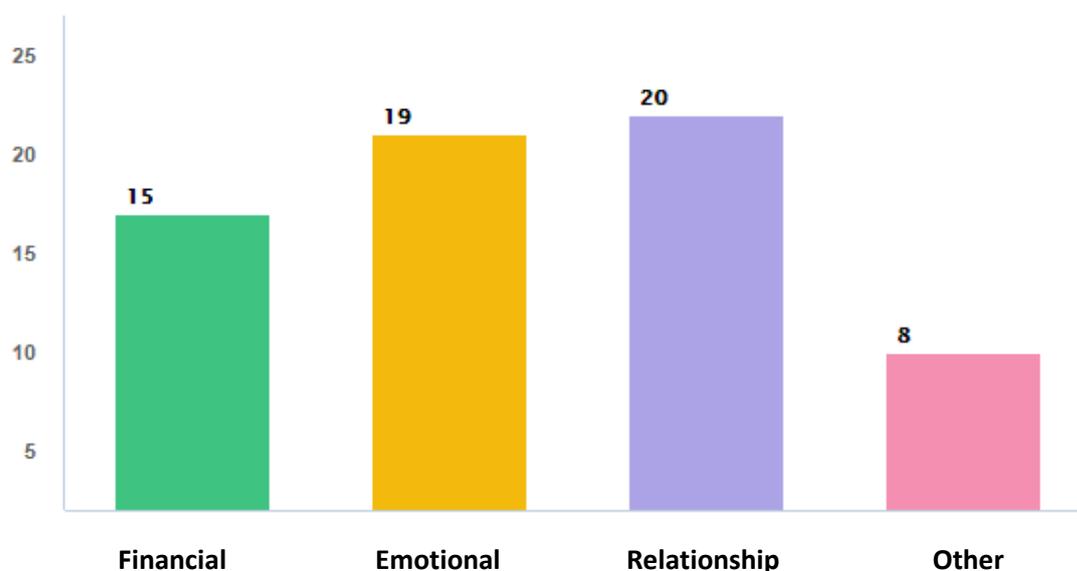
Despite the low levels of gambling indicated by respondents in previous questions, 19.2% of people indicated that they had experienced harm as a result of someone else's gambling.



Q10. SUMMARY

What type of harm was experienced

Of the 24 people who indicated that they had experienced harm as a result of someone else's gambling in the previous question, nearly all experienced relationship (20 people) and emotional (19 people) harm. In addition, 15 people responded that they had been affected financially and 8 indicated that they also experienced other harms such as affecting work, health or focus on other important things.



Q11. SUMMARY

How do you see the following products affecting Ballarat residents?

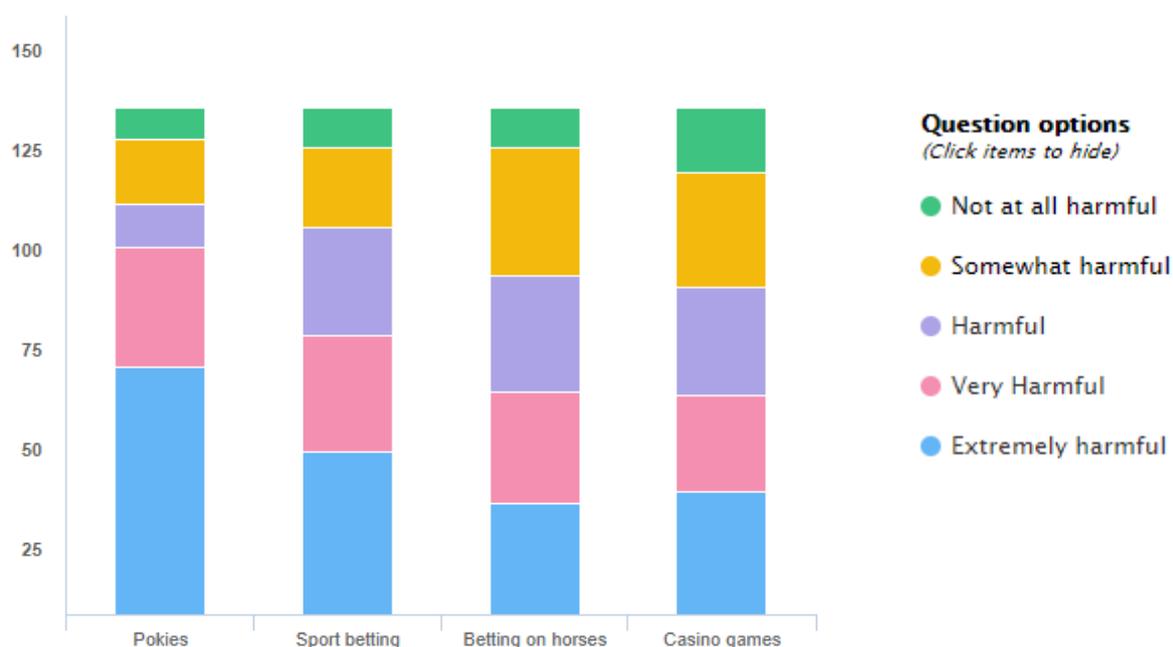
Pokies - Of those who responded to the survey, pokies were seen to be the most harmful gambling product with 72.4% considering them very harmful or extremely harmful to the Ballarat community, and a further 21.3% considering them harmful or somewhat harmful. A small % of respondents (6.3%) thought that poker machines were not harmful at all to the Ballarat community.

Sports Betting - Of those who responded to the survey, sports betting was considered to be the second most harmful gambling product with 55.1% considering sports betting very harmful or extremely harmful to the Ballarat community, and a further 37% considering it harmful or somewhat harmful. 7.9% thought that sports betting is not at all harmful at all to the Ballarat community.

Horse racing - Of those who responded to the survey, horse racing was seen to be slightly less harmful to sports betting with 44% considering gambling on horse racing very harmful or extremely harmful to the Ballarat community, and a further 48 % considering it harmful or somewhat harmful. 8% thought also thought that gambling on horse racing is not at all harmful at all to the Ballarat community.

Casino games – Whilst still seen as harmful by 64.6% of those who responded to the survey, casino games were considered to be the least harmful gambling product to the Ballarat community. 43.3% considered casino games very harmful or extremely harmful to the Ballarat community, a further 44.1% considered them harmful or somewhat harmful and 12.6% thought that casino games are not at all harmful at all to the Ballarat community which could be linked to the limited access to casino games in a local context.

These results indicate that all four common forms of gambling, (pokies, sports betting, betting on horses and casino games), are believed to be harmful to the Ballarat community by the majority of survey respondents. Pokies are identified as being most harmful with 93.7% believing that they cause harm to the Ballarat community and 72.4% considering them to be very harmful or extremely harmful. Similar results were found for betting on sports and horses with 92% of respondents considering them harmful products within the Ballarat community.



Q12. SUMMARY

How concerned are you about each of the following products for people living in Ballarat?

Of the people who responded to the survey it is clear that the majority of people are concerned about pokies, sports betting, betting on horses and casino games for the people living in Ballarat. Similarly, to the previous question considering how harmful the different gambling products are, pokies caused the most concern with over 90% of respondents being at least somewhat concerned and 72.4% feeling very or extremely concerned about pokies in Ballarat.

89% and 86.6% were also concerned with sports betting and betting on horses for people in Ballarat, although the level of concern was slightly lower than for pokies.

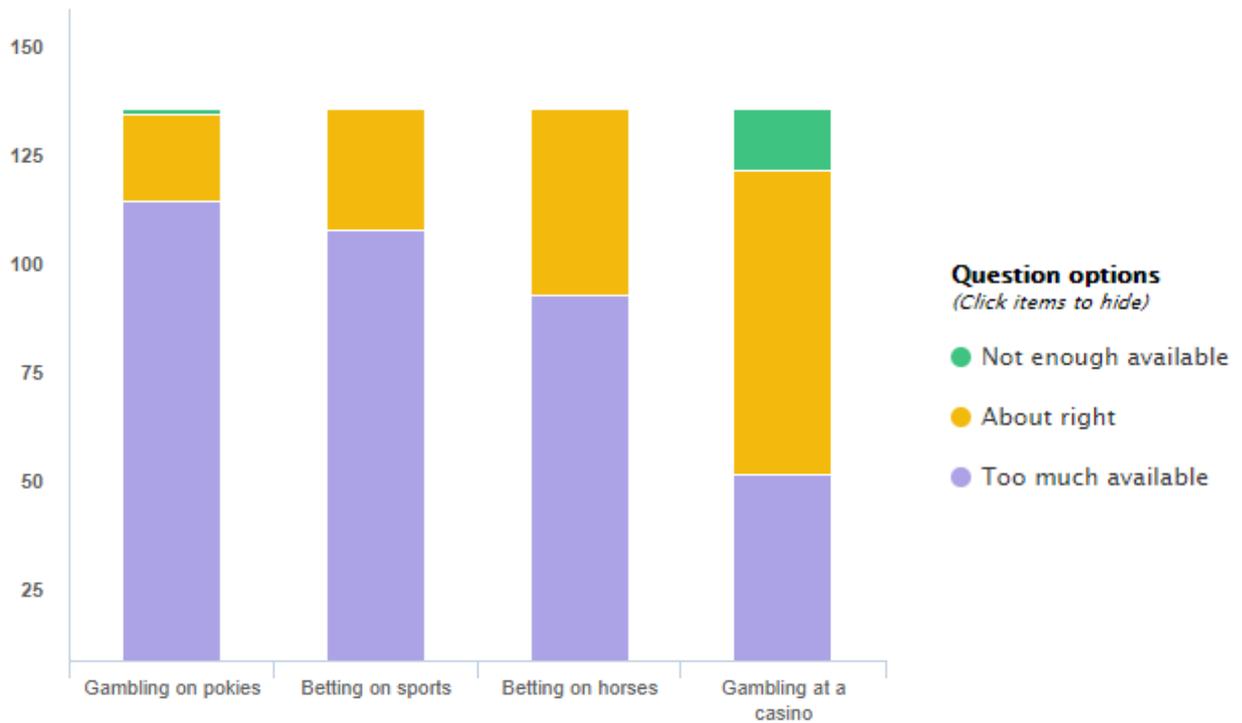
	Not at all concerned	Somewhat concerned	Concerned	Very concerned	Extremely concerned
Pokies	8.7%	11.0%	7.9%	18.9%	53.5%
Sports betting	11.0%	11.0%	19.7%	26.8%	31.5%
Betting on horses	13.4%	17.3%	30.7%	18.1%	20.5%
Casino games	18.1%	18.1%	23.6%	15.7%	24.4%

Q13. SUMMARY

How available are each of the following activities to Ballarat residents who want to gamble?

Most survey respondents indicated that activities to gamble on pokies, sports and horses are too readily available in Ballarat. This includes: 83.5% thought that there are too many pokies available, 78% thought that betting on sports was too easily available, and 66.1% of people who thought that betting on horses was too available. The type of gambling that most people thought was available at a level that was about right was gambling at a casino (55.1%), with 11% of people indicating that they would like more casino gambling available to Ballarat residents who want to gamble.

15.7% of people thought that the level of poker machines in Ballarat was about right, and 0.8% thought that there was not enough available. In the areas of both sports betting and betting on horses, no one indicated they thought there was not enough activities available with 22% of people thinking the level of sports betting is about right and 33.9% considering the amount of horse racing activities being about right.



Q14. SUMMARY

To what extent do you think engaging in the following activities is socially accepted in Ballarat?

Survey results indicate that all the forms of gambling considered in this question are considered at least somewhat socially acceptable in Ballarat. Betting on horses is seen as the most socially acceptable form of gambling in Ballarat while gambling on the pokies is seen as less acceptable with 17.3% of respondents indicating that this is not at all socially acceptable in Ballarat. Betting on sports and horses was considered either very or extremely socially accepted in Ballarat by many people (44.9 % and 54.4% respectively).

	Not at all socially acceptable	Somewhat socially acceptable	Socially acceptable	Very socially acceptable	Extremely socially acceptable
Gambling on pokies	17.3%	28.3%	28.6%	18.9%	8.7%
Betting on sports	4.7%	20.5%	29.9%	27.6%	17.3%
Betting on horses	1.6%	14.2%	29.9%	33.1%	21.3%
Gambling at a casino	5.5%	32.3%	33.1%	15.7%	13.4%

Q15. SUMMARY

To what extent to you agree or disagree with the following statements?

The key findings from the responses to question 15 included:

Sports betting

- 81.9% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that gambling advertising should be banned during televised sport.
- 80.3% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that gambling should be banned from sporting venues.
- 77.2% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that gambling company sponsorship of sport should be banned.
- 74% of people disagreed or strongly disagreed that sporting organisations already take enough responsibility for how gambling is promoted in Ballarat.

Poker machines

- 78.7% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the number of pokies in Ballarat is about right.
- 82.6% of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the Victorian Government should increase regulation of poker machines (such as having fewer machines, reduced operating hours, 'con-free' poker machines).
- 75.6% of respondents strongly agreed that City of Ballarat should oppose any applications for new pokies venues or additional machines where there is evidence of a negative impact in community wellbeing, with an additional 9.4% agreeing.

Gambling and children

- 79.6% disagree or strongly disagree that there is enough education about the consequences of gambling products for children.
- 93.7% of people thought that gambling companies should be banned from advertising in children's viewing hours.

Other

- 51.2% of people disagreed or strongly disagreed that responsibility for gambling problems lies with the individual, 32.3% agreed or strongly agreed that responsibility for gambling problems lies with the individual and 16.5% neither agreed or disagreed.
- 75.6% disagree or strongly disagree that there is enough public education about the consequences of gambling products.
- 91.3% of people responded that they thought that using credit cards to gamble should be banned.
- 78.7% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that the benefits to the community from gambling products outweigh the negatives.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Gambling advertising should be banned during televised sport.	5.5%	6.3%	6.3%	16.5%	65.4%
Gambling advertising should be banned from sporting venues.	4.7%	7.9%	7.7%	24.4%	55.9%
Gambling company sponsorship of sport should be banned.	5.5%	7.9%	9.4%	19.7%	57.5%
The number of pokies in Ballarat is about right.	60.6%	18.1%	6.3%	11.0%	3.9%
The Victorian government should increase regulation of poker machines (such as having fewer machines, reduced operating hours, 'con-free' poker machines).	4.7%	5.5%	7.1%	16.5%	66.1%
Responsibility for gambling problems lies with the individual.	26.8%	24.4%	16.5%	21.3%	11.0%
City of Ballarat should oppose any applications for new pokies venues or additional machines where there is evidence of a negative impact in community wellbeing.	3.9%	7.1%	3.9%	9.4%	75.6%
There is enough public education about the consequences of gambling products.	52.8%	22.8%	9.4%	10.2%	4.7%
There is enough education about the consequences of gambling products for children.	52.8%	26.8%	10.2%	8.7%	1.6%
Gambling companies should be banned from advertising in children's viewing hours.	3.9%	1.6%	0.8%	21.3%	72.4%
Using credit cards to gamble should be banned.	3.9%	2.4%	2.4%	16.5%	74.8%
The benefits to the community from gambling products outweigh the negatives.	66.9%	11.8%	8.7%	9.4%	3.1%
Sporting organisations already take enough responsibility for how gambling is promoted in Ballarat.	44.1%	29.9%	14.2%	9.4%	2.4%

Q16. SUMMARY

Do you have anything else you would like to say about gambling, the gambling industry, access to gambling products or actions to reduce gambling harm in Ballarat?

The last question of the survey provided participants with the opportunity to make any further comments that they wanted in relation to gambling. 45 people chose to answer the question and the responses have been provided in their entirety below for transparency purposes and summarised as follows:

Experience of gambling harm and impacts of gambling:

Several people made comments their own and their friends and family's experience of gambling harm. This included family breakdown, suicide, depression and financial hardship. There were also comments about the negative impacts on the community resulting from gambling such as reduced spending at local businesses and the links with family violence and suicide rates. Concern was also expressed at the amount of money being used on gambling and the lack of awareness of the community of how much money is being lost. Some quotes relating to this included:

"I am aware of significant harm caused by gambling among my extended family, friends and their networks. If the impacts of financial hardship, family breakdown, suicide etc. in Ballarat could be collectively shown it would clearly illustrate that the financial benefits to a relatively small group of local business people and clubs is being achieved at enormous cost to our community and is completely unethical!"

"My now husband suffered from a gambling addiction for 3 years without me knowing. In those 3 years he had accumulated so much debt I had no idea how we would ever rebuild. The emotional and financial damage his poker machine addiction caused is indescribable. At the time we had no help available in Ballarat. I was afraid my partner would take his life and I was also in a very dark place."

"Gambling is very negative for the community and the wellbeing of our vulnerable people. We have a responsibility as a community to care for each other and not allow highly antisocial gambling such as poker machines in our community."

Poker machines

Poker machines were one of the most common themes for this question with people showing real concern for the harms caused, the amount of money being lost, the addictive and predatory nature of the product and the comfortable and inviting environments that are created by venues making them more appealing to vulnerable people. Comments indicated that people would like to see more regulation of poker machines including a reduction in numbers and accessibility in Ballarat. Some quotes related to this included:

"The annual losses from poker machines in Ballarat each year is staggering. We need to mobilise the community into saying "no" to pokies and also make it really clear that poker machines are addictive, they are designed to addict, and they are dangerous to our community."

"I think that the pokies venues are too easily accessible and open too long. By offering warmth, tea and coffee they attract lonely and vulnerable people to feel welcome and part of a group."

Advertising of Gambling

In their comments, several respondents indicated a concern about the prevalence of gambling related advertising particularly during sport and when children may be watching. A number of

people also commented on the normalisation of gambling that is occurring as a result of such widespread advertising and that people who are experiencing gambling harm are exposed to this kind of advertising in so many settings.

Support Services and education

Six people commented on the need for more services to be available to those experiencing gambling harm. In addition, it was also identified that often there may be underlying causes for people gambling such as loneliness, depression, financial issues, needing a place to stay safe, and that there should be greater levels of support for these issues also. One relevant comment made was:

“I just think it’s awful that so many people say they - or people they know - hit the pokies for company. There should be far greater support for other means of community connection, making friends, keeping from being lonely etc.”

In addition, multiple comments were made about the need to provide education about gambling to children in schools.

Sports and Online Gambling

A small number of people commented on the attitudes in local sports clubs that betting on sports through apps is seen as harmless and fun and that there is on occasion peer pressure to participate. There was also concern expressed that the harms of online gambling can be worse because it can be done without anyone seeing you. On a different note, a comment was also made that horse and sports betting are fine because you can win and it is less frequent.

Benefits of Gambling and Individual Responsibility

There were a couple of comments which saw gambling as a recreational activity that people should be able to enjoy, and that the industry also employs a significant number of people in our community. There was also a small number of comments made that people should be responsible for their own actions if they choose to gamble.

Concerns about survey methodology

There were three comments made in relation to the survey design or intent with one person believing that the survey was not objective enough coming from the Interagency Taskforce on Gambling Harm to illicit a representative response, and two others indicating that there were not enough options provided in some questions or the ability to skip where not appropriate.

All Q 16. Comments from survey

The impact of gambling on families and parental relationships and employers is appalling. As a local small business owner, I find it concerning the amount of money that is now used on gambling that was previously used to support small business. The notion of 'community benefit' only benefits the clubs and pubs where the pokies are, they do not support the boarder community or address the negative impacts that pokies causes on the community. Pokies are insidious and clubs and pubs relying on them for income need to divest themselves of the addictive income.
I think the general population has no idea of how much money is lost to pokies and online gambling, and, as a consequence, how much harm the gambling is doing to the Ballarat community
Get rid of the poker machines, do nothing but harm.
In regards to poker machines the main regulation I would like to see is the reduction of a bet. for example the maximum bet is \$5 and this should be reduced to \$1
I believe the gambling industry rely on the disadvantaged who may go for social reasons or for heating/cooling as too expensive at home. These poor people then get sucked into an awful cycle of poverty. I believe it is too easy for children to access gambling on their phones.

<p>It seems that the very name "The Ballarat Interagency Taskforce on Gambling Harm" has determined the outcome of this survey and by asking a loaded question as a this will not illicit a reasonable response, or indeed any opinion that does not agree with the immediate banning because of harm I suspect will be discounted. While some individuals do have issues with gambling, as a whole this industry employs significant people within the area and allows organisations to survive. But hey, all power to you for pre-determining your outcome.</p>
<p>I believe gambling should be limited to casinos in major cities and not in towns such as Ballarat</p>
<p>Small scale gambling may not be so harmful where it does not effect a person or families abilities to remain financially able to meet all other necessary needs. More help through community welfare for problem gamblers and those they affect. Pokies were not a "necessary evil" forty odd years ago!</p>
<p>I think that we need to look at the bigger picture. Why do people gamble in the first place - loneliness, a place to feel safe, social interaction, Adrenalin, depression. It is not just gambling, it is what is going on with the person personally. More professional help is needed for these people.</p>
<p>There needs to be more support for those affected by gambling.</p>
<p>They will do it "underground" if they can't do it legally. They are also grown adults - they should be responsible for their own actions instead of this society of blaming others.</p>
<p>The annual losses from poker machines in Ballarat each year is staggering. We need to mobilise the community into saying "'no" to pokies and also make it really clear that poker machines are addictive, they are designed to addict and they are dangerous to our community.</p>
<p>I am aware of significant harm caused by gambling among my extended family, friends and their networks. If the impacts of financial hardship, family breakdown, suicide etc. in Ballarat could be collectively shown it would clearly illustrate that the financial benefits to a relatively small group of local business people and clubs is being achieved at enormous cost to our community and is completely unethical! I am proud that the City of Ballarat Councillors have been speaking out on this issue more strongly and clearly.</p>
<p>More effort should be put in to people with a gambling problem, other people who don't should have free availability to have a bit of fun when and where they want.</p>
<p>As a parent I am shocked and disturbed by the "normalisation" of gambling, particularly with relation to sports betting, that is occuring through the seemingly unrestricted advertising of sports betting on television during sporting events. While the City of Ballarat is not responsible for this, I think that it is essential that this issue be addressed.</p>
<p>Too much advertising for online/app gambling on tv</p>
<p>Tired of the constant wave of gambling advertising during sport, it is completely out of control. My child is exposed to it, no matter that it's during the day, if he watches sport. I try and change the challenge or mute the sound, but it's pervasive. When a child gives you the odds of who's likely to win you know something is going wrong.</p>
<p>Action should be taken to progressively decrease the number of poker machines in venues.</p>
<p>Gambling is a blight on society. It is an "industry" that's only role is to make money by ripping off people. It should be completely banned.</p>
<p>Child friendly gambling venues - strongly disagree</p>
<p>More harm from gambling comes from online, as it can be done without anyone seeing you</p>
<p>Remove them. The citizens of Ballarat are suffering. The amount of homeless people I see go from the free breakfast in the morning at the Church in Lyd St Sth that then go never to the pokies is phenomenal. Old people with nothing better to do will spend almost thier entire pension on the pokies. Get rid of them.</p>
<p>Gambling ruins so many people's lives. It should be cracked down on with pokies numbers being drastically reduced, less advertising & access to online gambling and much stricter regulations for the gambling industries.</p>
<p>With the amount of advertising that gambling orgs. do (especially TV) it normalises the activity - it should be like smoking - allowed but not in sight.- ban advertising !</p>
<p>I think that the pokies venues are too easily accessible and open too long. By offering warmth, tea and coffee they attract lonely and vulnerable people to feel welcome and part of a group.</p>
<p>I have recovered through my own insight and hard work. Not everyone is so fortunate. It nearly destroyed my life.</p>

<p>There are attitudes in country sport (football & cricket) that betting through an app (such as SportsBet) is harmless and fun. I have witnessed peer pressure to gamble through this method, and it is far too easy for anyone to bet on anything with the touch of a screen. Gambling should be banned in all advertising, but especially on TV during sports matches, which often show you exactly how to go and place a bet on the game that is happening. I have no interest in gambling, yet have still been tempted by these ads in the past. It is a huge trigger for people with gambling harms to try and avoid.</p>
<p>Gambling is very negative for the community and the wellbeing of our vulnerable people. We have a responsibility as a community to care for each other and not allow highly antisocial gambling such as polkie mashines in our community. These machines further isolate vulnerable people and drain their resources without providing any real community engagement. They also choke up spaces which could otherwise engage the community in positive ways.</p>
<p>Predatory</p>
<p>Not enough options for question 7 to be answered correctly. I would bet on a horse or buy a scratch ticket 1-2 per year only.</p>
<p>Pokies are an absolute scourge on any community. The player has zero chance to win in the long-term. They are specifically designed to addict and target the most vulnerable in the community and should be banned altogether. Horse and sports betting is fine because you can win and it is less frequent.</p>
<p>I know friends who are problem gamblers, but they will not accept that they have a problem. Say they only gamble what can afford but that is entire pension!</p>
<p>I think that there are too many Pokies in Ballarat , Although my immediate family have no problem we have many relatives whom we see weekly borrowing money to feed their addiction , They earn more than our family on one wage yet are always finding it hard to survive after going to the pokies .</p>
<p>The amount of money people can put in pokies on any one day should be restricted. The poker machines must be regulated to register and limit what people spend in say a 24 hr period.</p>
<p>Council should make statistics on number of gambling venues, number of regular gamblers, proportion of gambling venues per post code and soicially disadvantaged communities, amount spent average per individual gambler, number of problem gamblers i.e. those who gamble nearly every day, those who spend more than \$50 on average. Also remove access to credit card use and cash in all gambling venues and 100 m2 around.</p>
<p>When we have increased family violence and Suicide rates in our community, how can the financial losses from gambling not be contributing to the issue</p>
<p>I've made it clear that these venues do everything in their power to get people in their doors. Addiction is human nature as is trying to win back losses. - boom boom.</p>
<p>This is a poorly designed survey - I said I didn't gamble which should have eliminated a whole heap of questions. Also are self-employed people not seen as a significant enough category to include in the employment status??</p>
<p>Access is too easy. What's the underlying cause of gambling? Loneliness, financial desperation, depression..?</p>
<p>There are way too many machines in Ballarat and not enough other social activities available to large segments of the community</p>
<p>It is an individual choice to gamble. We all need to be responsible for our own actions.</p>
<p>My now husband suffered from a gambling addiction for 3 years without me knowing. In those 3 years he had accumulated so much debt I had no idea how we would ever rebuild. The emotional and financial damage his pokie machine addiction caused is indescribable. At the time we had no help available in Ballarat. I was afraid my partner would take his life and I was also in a very dark place. The funding from the government had run out at Relationships Australia but had not yet started at CAFS and there was absolutely no one who could help us in ballarat. We couldn't even find a therapist who knew about gambling addiction. Thankfully with the support of our families, our friends, my husbands commitment to GA meetings and a hell of a lot of effort we have been able to rebuild. We both work full time, volunteer for local organisations and have two houses that we worked very hard for. I almost lost everything. Including my husband. We MUST change the law!</p>
<p>Mention gambling in Ballarat and the focus is automatically pokies. From what I see they are the most regulated form of gambling available. The focus should be on the other options which are completely unregulated.</p>

I just think it's awful that so many people say they - or people they know - hit the pokies for company. There should be far greater support for other means of community connection, making friends, keeping from being lonely etc. For your info - wouldn't let me skip ahead over Q8 to Q9. :)

Betting ads should be banned during kids tv hours and during live sports events.

Problem gamblers have an addiction - an illness they need support and treatment for NOT added shame! The Ballarat community and governments need to make a stance and be compassionate. The monetary gains made by venues and governments comes out at an enormous cost to individuals and their families.

It has become normalised and this is catastrophic for the addicted, women, children and the poor. We can not have exposure to gambling where addicted people have to do shopping etc.

Provide education about gambling on primary school and high school.

Provide education/information sessions on the consequences of gambling in primary schools.

I also come across a lot of people who seem to be targeted because they have low income and believe that gambling will help raise them out of financial hardship. They are sent info through social media feeds etc, or venues with pokie machines are often in their neighbourhoods. There is not enough information available in different languages, and most parents are unaware of how accessible gambling is to youth.