

# OVERCOMING THE STIGMA OF GAMBLING HARM



of Victorians gamble.



show no signs of harm from their gambling.



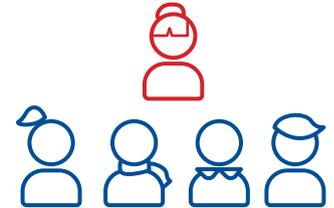
Which means almost 1 in 5 (around 550,000) may be experiencing harm from gambling.

1 million+

Victorians (including children) may be experiencing harm because of someone else's gambling.



In 2014, more than 80% of Victorians with gambling issues did not tell family or friends. This is because of shame and fear of rejection and being labelled and discriminated against as a 'problem gambler'.



of Victorians think problem gambling is an addiction.



Just over half believe it's a diagnosable condition.



One-third consider it a mental health condition. Yet many also consider those experiencing gambling issues to be impulsive, foolish, greedy or irrational.



People who have experienced issues with gambling believe it to be more publicly stigmatised than alcoholism, obesity, schizophrenia, depression, cancer and bankruptcy.



'I thought it was just me; I was the broken thing.'

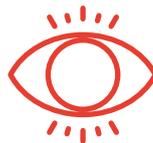
ANNA BARDSLEY

## Breaking down stigma is one of our highest priorities.

THIS INCLUDES BREAKING DOWN:



**PUBLIC STIGMA:** community reaction to people with a stigmatising condition and the formation of negative attitudes towards them. The general public tends to view gambling addiction as a recoverable condition caused by an individual's personality or circumstances.



**PERCEIVED STIGMA:** the belief that others have passed judgement and hold stigmatising thoughts and ideas about a condition. For people dealing with gambling issues, fear of being devalued and discriminated against is a strong deterrent to telling someone or seeking help.



**SELF-STIGMA:** when individuals with a stigmatised condition internalise and apply negative societal conceptions to themselves, diminishing self-esteem and perceived social worth. People dealing with gambling issues often feel ashamed, weak and disappointed in themselves. Secrecy is the main coping mechanism.

## Given these complexities, how do we tackle stigma?



**LEARNING FROM OTHER AREAS OF PUBLIC HEALTH:** Foundation-funded research into the effectiveness of anti-stigma initiatives in areas such as mental health, recommended placing greater emphasis on the factors that contribute to gambling harm, and the impact of stigma and discrimination. The most successful public health initiatives used personal stories and encouraged discussion.



**PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS:** Building awareness of the causes and consequences of gambling harm helps to build community understanding and empathy towards others. Awareness-raising campaigns such as 'Talk. Share. Support.' aim to encourage community conversations and make it OK for people to talk about experiences of gambling harm.



**SHARING STORIES CAN TRANSFORM LIVES:** Personal stories of gambling harm and recovery are powerful in breaking down stigma. We are privileged to work with many individuals who share their stories to give others hope and to let them know they're not alone. This includes on our online platforms, as well as through partner initiatives such as ReSPIN Gambling Awareness Speakers Bureau, the Three Sides of the Coin theatre program and the *Not a dollar more* podcast.

## Given these complexities, how do we tackle stigma? (cont.)



### LIVED EXPERIENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Recognising the importance of firsthand experience of gambling harm in guiding and informing our work, the Foundation established a Lived Experience Advisory Committee in 2018. Representing diverse gambling experiences and backgrounds, the committee provides personal perspectives as we tackle challenges such as stigma and the uptake of support services.



### BUILDING EXPERTISE IN OTHER SECTORS:

We are working with professionals in other areas of health and welfare to equip them to recognise the signs of gambling harm and to support clients displaying them to take the first step in recovery by talking about it.



**'When I got up and told my story, a load lifted from my chest.'**

UNCLE DARYL SMITH



**'I hear the amazement in people's voices when they realise they aren't the only ones and help is available.'**

ELIZABETH PAPPETAS

## Community attitudes are starting to shift



Every year we survey the Victorian community about their views on gambling, for a snapshot of attitudes and perceptions to inform our work to address gambling harm.

In 2019, stigma associated with gambling harm had decreased.

### Do you agree with the following statement?

**'Most people think less of a person who has issues with gambling.'**

↓ **4%**

51% of Victorians agreed – down from 55% in 2018.

↓ **12%**

49% of people at moderate risk of developing gambling issues agreed – down from 61% in 2018.

↓ **13%**

69% of people with gambling issues agreed – down from 55% in 2018.

## WHILE THIS IS ENCOURAGING, WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO.

For more information and data, visit: [responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/stats](https://responsiblegambling.vic.gov.au/stats)

### REFERENCES:

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Goodwin, BC, Browne, M, Rockloff, M & Rose, J 2017, 'A typical problem gambler affects six others', *International Gambling Studies*, 17:2, 276-289, DOI:10.1080/14459795.2017.1331252

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