

COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TO GAMBLING SURVEY 2025

Proudly working
with and for
our community

ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

Executive summary

The Ballarat Gambling Harm Prevention Taskforce carried out community engagement from 22 September to 9 November 2025.

The aim was to gather updated information about how the Ballarat community views gambling, gambling products, and gambling related harm. The engagement also sought to understand whether community attitudes have changed since the last consultation in 2019.

The City of Ballarat led this work as a member of the Taskforce. Most feedback was collected through a digital survey on the MySay platform, supported by consultation sessions, drop in sessions, and hard copy surveys.

The information gathered will help guide the future work of the Ballarat Gambling Harm Prevention Taskforce and its partners, and will also inform the review of the City of Ballarat's Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy.

The Community Response – Key Themes

Across the survey and in-person consultations, several key themes emerged from participants. These are discussed below.

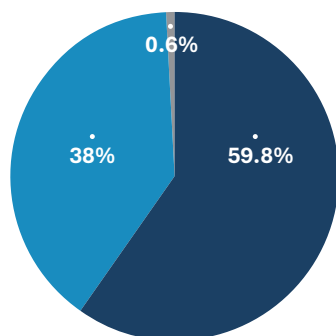
What were participants' experiences of gambling? (MySay survey responses)

The following questions were optional at the beginning of the survey. Not all respondents to the survey chose to respond to the gambling activity-related questions.

Participation:

Of those who responded to this part of the questionnaire

- 59.8% reported that they had gambled in the past 12 months
- 39.7% had not
- 0.6% chose not to answer



Men in Ballarat self-reported gambling at rates

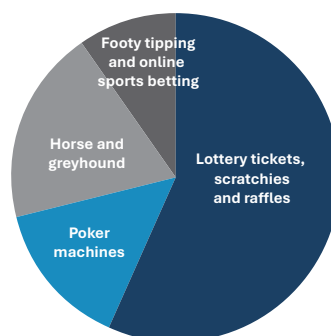
13% higher

than women, which is consistent with Victorian trends

(Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, 2023)

The most common gambling activities that participants engaged in were:

- Lottery tickets, scratchies, and raffles (71.6% purchased in person; 32.8% online).
- Poker machines (26.4%).
- Horse and greyhound racing bets (17.4% in person; 17.9% online).
- Footy tipping and online sports betting (17.4% each).



Gambling Harm

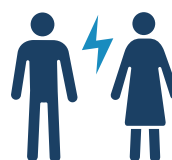
- 12.75% reported that had bet more than they were comfortable losing.
- 7% experienced harm from their own gambling.
- 23% reported harm due to someone else's gambling.

Types of Harm reported:

The most commonly reported types of gambling harm experienced by respondents



Emotional distress



Relationship breakdown



Financial hardship

Key themes emerging from the consultation:



Significant **concern about gambling-related harm** within the Ballarat community, **particularly its impact on vulnerable groups and young people.**



A belief that gambling is becoming **too socially acceptable in Ballarat.**



Concern about the **increasing link between sports and gambling**, both locally and more broadly.



Concerns about the **number and accessibility of poker machines** in the Ballarat LGA.



Impacts of **children and young people's exposure to gambling advertising**, as well as gambling-like features in video games.



A desire for stronger regulatory measures relating to gambling, including poker machines, sports betting, and gambling advertising, and **for local government and other groups to advocate** for these measures at state and federal levels.



The **need for continued and expanded education** within the Ballarat community about gambling harms, with the top three **priority areas identified as sporting clubs, schools, and online/social media.**



A belief that people experiencing gambling-related harm **may not seek help** due to shame, stigma, fear of judgment, or not recognising gambling harm as a problem for them.

Audience and reach

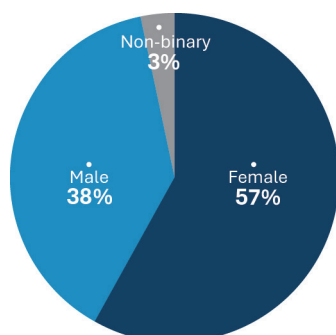
MySay Page

A total of 345 people responded to the survey. Of these, 343 lived, worked, studied, played, or volunteered in Ballarat. The two respondents who did not meet this criterion were screened out and did not complete the remainder of the survey, and are therefore excluded from the results below.

The MySay page received 896 visits, 761 unique visitors, and 343 contributions (including four hard-copy surveys submitted by mail).

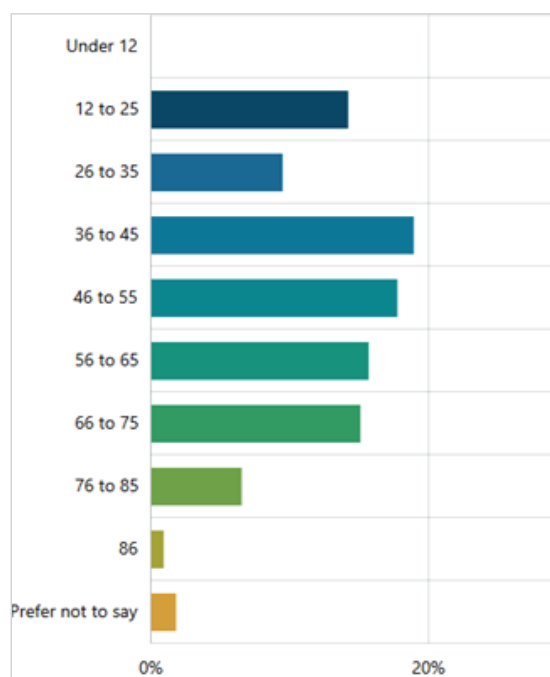
Of the 343 respondents:

GENDER

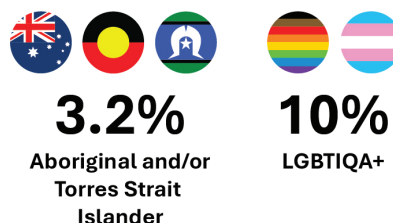


AGE:

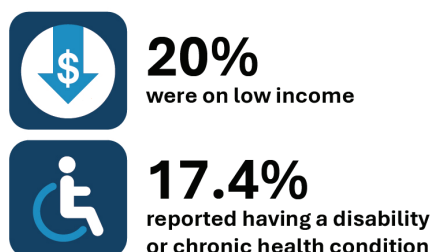
Representation spanned all age groups from 12 to 85+



DIVERSITY



SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS:



CULTURAL BACKGROUND:



The survey contained 19 questions, including an open-ended question for additional comments. Overall, 41.7% of respondents provided further suggestions or feedback; comments were themed for analysis which is included in the Community Response section of this report.

The most common way respondents accessed the online survey was via a direct link (54%), followed by social media (31%), with 24% of these clicks coming via the Facebook advertising campaign.

Limitations to MySay engagement:

The respondents to the survey chose to participate voluntarily, rather than being selected through a random sampling process. This means the results may reflect stronger views about gambling than if the survey had used a more rigorous sampling method.

A self-select survey was chosen because it allowed as many community members as possible to have their say, was cost-effective, and enabled quick data collection. It also gave people with lived experience or a strong interest in gambling-related issues the opportunity to share their perspectives.

In-person consultation

In-person consultation included;

- two community drop-in sessions
- two targeted consultations with City of Ballarat Advisory Committees (LGBTIQA+ and Disability Advisory Committees)
- one focus group with young people engaged through City of Ballarat Youth Services.

A detailed demographic breakdown of in-person consultation has not been included in this report to protect participant anonymity due to smaller sample size.

Overview of participation:

- **31 community members** attended the targeted in-person or online consultation sessions.
- **9 community members** participated in open drop-in sessions (these sessions were open to the public and advertised online).

Advocacy

There were numerous comments and suggestions related to lobbying and advocacy, complementing the feedback gathered through the survey's ranking question on the six proposed advocacy actions.

10 comments from across survey responses and in-person engagement mentioned the way that governments (particularly the Victorian State Government) might be conflicted in efforts to reduce gambling harm due to the high revenue that they received from gambling.

"The Federal (and) State Governments are so dependent upon the revenue from gambling companies that they are reluctant to pass any positive measures that may impact their revenues even though this is extracted from people that can really afford it least"

Despite these barriers, community members were still supportive of Taskforce members continuing to advocate to government.

"The Council already seems to be doing what it can, but State Governments are hooked on gambling revenue, whichever party is in power. So, it is an uphill struggle for Council. Nonetheless, please persist!"

"I strongly believe that far stronger measures need to be put into place to reduce gambling and the harms associated with it"

Several community members specifically mentioned advocating to the Federal Government to lobby for changes, beginning with implementing the recommendations made by the expert Parliamentary Committee chaired by Peta Murphy ("You Win Some, You Lose More") following their inquiry into the impact of online gambling.

Other advocacy suggestions from participants included:

- Introducing **transparency and limits on political donations** and lobbying from gambling corporations
- Giving communities like Ballarat **more power to limit or reject gambling venues**
- **Removing gambling advertising** as much as possible or completely at a local level
- **Banning sport organisations** from **purchasing pokies** for profit

Gambling as a Public Health Issue

A strong theme throughout the engagement was that gambling harm is, and should be treated as, a serious public health issue rather than an individual problem. Many participants felt that reducing gambling harm should follow a health promotion approach similar to the approach Australia has taken to reducing tobacco harm. This involves using multiple strategies together, including legislation, regulation, public education, and health programs.

"Gambling should be managed like smoking - people are free to do it but must not be encouraged."

Others commented about the importance of speaking out about the health and wellbeing impacts of gambling harm, including mental health issues, relationship breakdown, family violence, and financial hardship, and that these harms disproportionately affect vulnerable populations.

Others stressed the importance of sharing data and statistics on gambling and the local impact for Ballarat, including the amount of money gambled in Victoria and Ballarat, and ensuring such information appeared in the local media on a regular basis.

The value of personal stories of people with lived experience of gambling harm was also mentioned.

Advertising and Marketing

There was widespread concern amongst respondents about pervasive gambling advertising, especially during televised sport, and the increasing normalisation of gambling advertising/ sports betting advertising (such as odds) during sport and in view of children.

- There were many calls to ban gambling advertising, and to extend advertising bans to social media, streaming services, and other online platforms.
- Many of the community respondents expressed desire to remove gambling advertising locally wherever possible.
- Many also expressed concerns around increasing rates of online gambling, its accessibility and its growing prevalence.

Regulation of Gaming Venues

Respondents expressed strong support for:

- Reducing the number of poker machines in Ballarat.
- Further restricting venue operating hours.
- Ensuring venues are not co-located with family-friendly spaces (e.g., playgrounds, restaurants), and restricting access/ viewability of gaming areas

Education

- Over 77% of MySay survey respondents disagreed that there is already enough education about gambling harm.
- According to respondents for the survey, the top priority areas for gambling harm education across Ballarat should be:
 - » Sporting clubs.
 - » Schools.
 - » Online/social media.

Impacts on young people

A large proportion expressed concern about youth exposure and conditioning to gambling, especially through:

- Gambling advertising targeting young people, especially through “native/ in-feed” advertising disguised to look like regular videos on TikTok and Instagram feeds, and embedded into video and music streaming service advertisements.
- Normalisation of the link between sports and gambling.
- Poker machine venues near family dining.
- Gambling-like features in video games (such as loot boxes)
- Arcade games (e.g., claw machines).
- Blind box toys and similar intermittent reinforcement
- Gambling in Ballarat high schools, including footy tipping, sports fantasy leagues, and horse racing sweeps in schools during Melbourne Cup.

Support for Gambling

There were five comments in the free text section of the survey that were in support of gambling and felt that Council and other organisations, should largely not be working in this space.

Examples include:

“I don’t reckon we need to prevent it we should embrace it and take away ads”

“It’s nowhere near as bad as the media make it out to be, stop wasting government funds on this and start fixing all the other issues with Ballarat like our roads.”

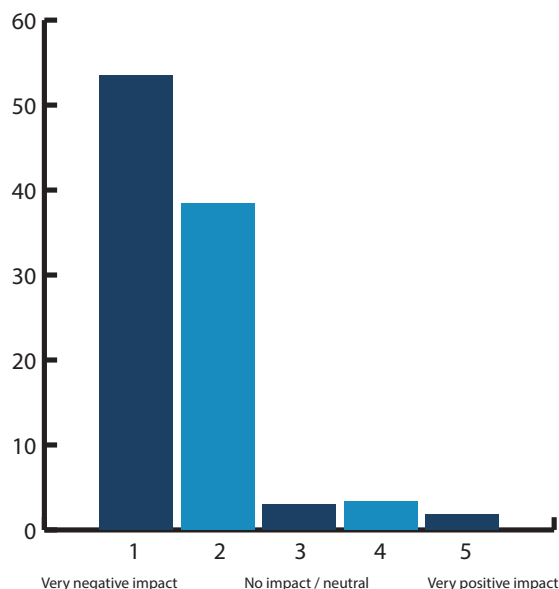
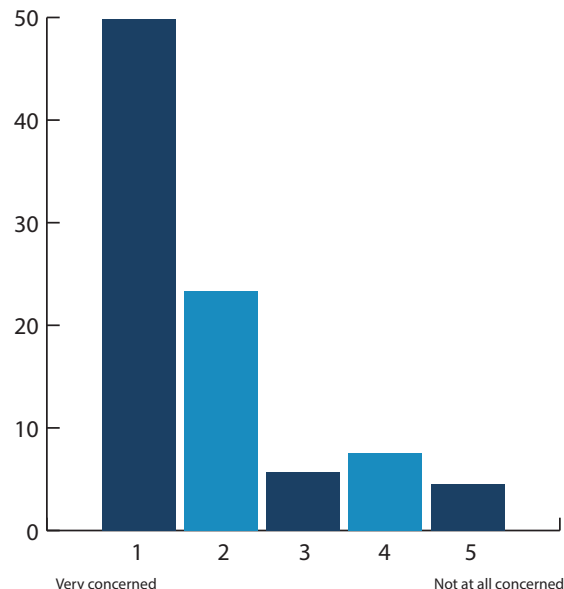
“I believe how people spend their time and money is their own private business and the bureaucracy should keep out of people’s personal affairs.”

These accounted for just under 3.5% of the comments received.

Engagement methods

The following engagement methods were used throughout the consultation period.

- **2x drop-in sessions** open to all community members:
 - » Barkly Square, Tues 28th October 2025 (10am – 12pm)
 - » Central Square shopping centre, Wednesday 29th October 2025 (3pm – 5pm)
- **MySay online survey**
 - » Hosted at mysay.ballarat.vic.gov.au
 - » Promotion on social media (Facebook) on several pages (City of Ballarat; Ballarat East Neighbourhood House; Parent Place Ballarat)
 - » Boosted ad on Facebook (reached over 12,740 and received 231 clicks)
 - » City of Ballarat News Item on website
 - » Information and links to survey sent to all primary and secondary schools in Ballarat, with several including information around the survey in their newsletters
 - » Information and links to survey sent to various stakeholders including BRMC, CMY, the Y, Headspace, CaFS, Ballarat Community Health, and Uniting
- **Hard copies** of the survey were available from City of Ballarat's Phoenix building and were also distributed at various community venues and events, including:
 - » Delacombe Town Centre Community Day (17th October);
 - » Ballarat Seniors Expo (22nd October);
 - » Barkly Square (various tenanted offices);
 - » Ballarat Community Health (various sites);
 - » CaFS.
 - » Circle of Solidarity (Lake Esmond)- Ballarat Mental Health Collective Expo (19th October)
 - » Various CaFS gambling-related workshops including Daughters of the West, Be Ahead of the Game, Know the Score, Your Money Matters, and When Gaming Meets Gambling (sites delivered include Djila-tjarriu Community Hub, Wendouree Neighbourhood Centre Phoenix College, SEDA College, Loreto College)
- **Posters and Fliers** with QR to MySay to encourage participation put up at several sites, including CaFS, Uniting, City of Ballarat, and Ballarat Community Health (several sites), and advertised at all community events above
- **Invitation for written submissions** were encouraged on MySay page
- Inclusion of **advert in BRMC monthly newsletter** with information and QR code to the MySay survey
- **Email** inviting involvement sent out to the **City of Ballarat Children's Advisory Group**
- Targeted **consultation** with **City of Ballarat's LGBTIQ+ Advisory and Disability Advisory Committees**. (Survey link and information was also shared via email with KEAG, and Intercultural Advisory Committees).
- Targeted **focus group** was held with young people involved in City of Ballarat Youth Services (17th October)
- **Full page A4 promotion** and QR link to MySay included in **Term 4 Ballarat East Community Newsletter**, distributed by the Ballarat East Neighbourhood Centre to over 8000 letterboxes in the suburbs of Bakery Hill, Ballarat East, Canadian, Eureka, Golden Point, Mount Pleasant and Warrenheip.

In your opinion, what impact does gambling have on people in Ballarat?**Are you concerned about the impact of gambling on the Ballarat community?****In conclusion**

Overall, the feedback received through the engagement process was firmly in favour of reducing gambling harm through a range of regulatory, advocacy and community education measures.

The results of this community engagement exercise provide strong support for the Taskforce, Council and other community led efforts to continue efforts to reduce gambling harm, and provides guidance on where to focus these efforts, such as with schools, sporting clubs, online, and through advocacy work.

Closing the loop and what's next

A summary of these engagement findings will be emailed to MySay participants in early 2026, and uploaded to the MySay page. This will also be shared with Ballarat Gambling Harm Prevention Taskforce members.

The findings from this survey will be used to inform planning for the 2026/27 financial year for relevant Taskforce members, and will inform updates to the City of Ballarat Gambling Harm Minimisation Policy 2022 which is expected to occur in 2026.

“Ballarat is a proud and resilient community. We don’t have to accept gambling harm as inevitable. With strong leadership, community-driven advocacy, and political will, we can create a future where our kids grow up free from gambling advertising, where our public venues prioritise health over profit, and where families are supported, not exploited.”

Ballarat community member



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All information correct at time of publication.