

Australia's National Gambling Toll

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AUSTRALIANS ARE THE WORLD'S BIGGEST GAMBLERS

In the 12 months to March 2026, Australians lost \$36.0 billion to gambling.¹ This was an increase of close to \$1.3 billion on the \$34.3 billion lost in the 12 months to March 2025.

On a per person basis, Australians lose more to gambling than any other country in the world. On average, based on 2022 data, each Australian adult loses \$1,635 a year to gambling, compared to \$1,284 in Hong Kong, and \$809 in the United States.²

Since COVID-19 (2020) gambling losses have increased a staggering 75%, or \$15.3 billion.³ The growth in online gambling is a significant driver of this growth. In 2024, more than one third of Australian adults participated in online gambling,

¹ ABS (2026) *Australian National Accounts: Income, Expenditure and Product, March 2026, Table 8, Net losses from gambling: Current prices; Original*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-national-income-expenditure-and-product/mar-2026>

² Grattan (2024) *A better bet: How Australia should prevent gambling harm*, <https://grattan.edu.au/report/a-better-bet-how-australia-should-prevent-gambling-harm-2/>, p.6. Based on data from H2 Gambling Capital cited in Di Stefano & Hutchinson (2023) *Australia's pokies addiction explained in four charts*. AFR 13 Feb 2023, <https://www.afr.com/companies/games-and-wagering/what-will-happen-ifpokies-go-cashless-20221212-p5c5os>

³ ABS (2026) *Australian National Accounts: Income, Expenditure and Product, March 2026, Table 8, Net losses from gambling: Current prices; Original*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-national-income-expenditure-and-product/mar-2026>

compared to just 8% in 2017.⁴ This was also the first year that participation in online gambling surpassed participation in in-venue gambling.⁵

The national gambling toll

To show just how quickly gambling losses mount, The Australia Institute has developed a toll that counts Australia's estimated gambling losses in real time. The *National Gambling Toll*⁶ counts total accumulated losses from 1 July 2023 to the present. It does this by calculating the average gambling losses per second for the period between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2026, dividing that by the total number of seconds in those 11 quarters, and then projecting that amount forward to the present. At the time this report was published, losses stood at over \$104 billion.⁷

These calculations are based on the latest quarterly ABS National Accounts data for net gambling losses.⁸ According to this data, Australians lost \$36.0 billion to gambling in 12 months to March 2026. This is up from \$34.3 billion in the previous 12 months to March 2025.

Figure 1 shows growth in gambling losses since 2000. Since the brief decline in 2020-21, which coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic, gambling losses have grown 69%, or an average of 11% per year.

⁴ Suomi, Hahn, Biddle (2025) *Gambling participation in Australia 2025*, <https://polis.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/gambling-participation-australia-2025>

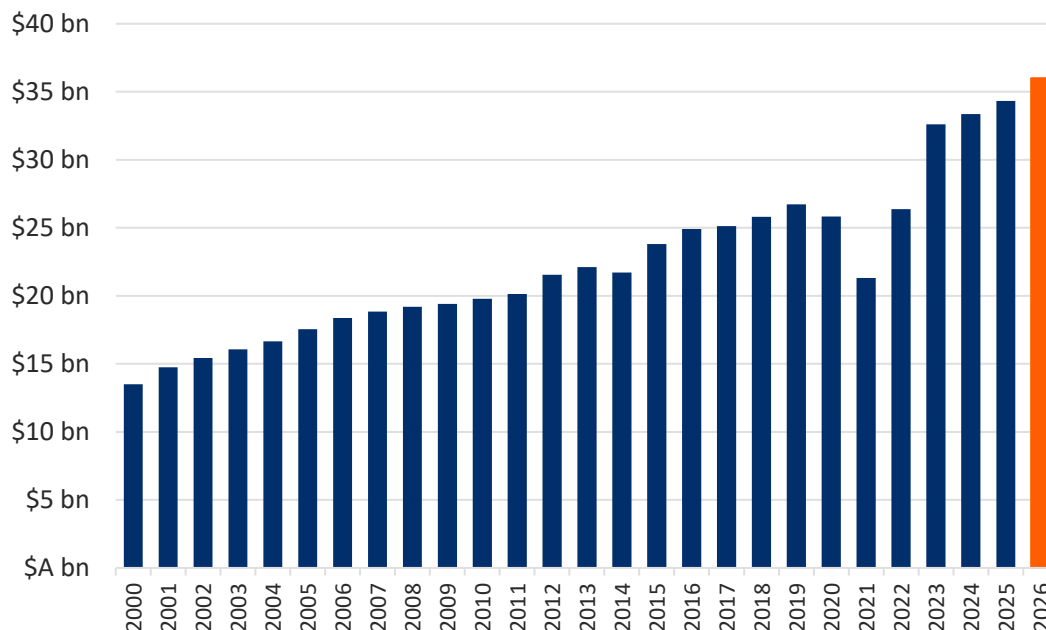
⁵ Suomi, Hahn, Biddle (2025) *Gambling participation in Australia 2025*, <https://polis.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/gambling-participation-australia-2025>

⁶ The *National Gambling Toll* can be viewed at <https://gambling-toll.australiainstitute.org.au/>

⁷ Australia Institute (2026) *National Gambling Toll*, <https://gambling-toll.australiainstitute.org.au/>, accessed 1 July 2026

⁸ ABS (2026) *Australian National Accounts: Income, Expenditure and Product, March 2026, Table 8, Net losses from gambling: Current prices; Original*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/economy/national-accounts/australian-national-accounts-national-income-expenditure-and-product/mar-2026>

Figure 1: Household gambling losses, rolling 12-months to March 2026, \$b



Sources: ABS (2026) Table 8 - Household Final Consumption Expenditure (HFCE). Annual totals based on rolling 12-month to March averages.

THE MURPHY REVIEW

We chose 1 July 2023 as the start date for the *National Gambling Toll* because this is the month after the House of Representatives *Standing Committee on Social and Policy and Legal Affairs* released the final report of its *Inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm*.⁹ The final report, *You win some, you lose more*,¹⁰ has since become known as the ‘Murphy Review’, after the late Labor MP Peta Murphy who chaired the inquiry.

The Murphy Review made 31 recommendations about how the harms of online gambling could be reduced. This included a total ban on advertising for online gambling ads, to be phased in over three years. If the ban had been implemented quickly, ads for sports betting apps would now be a thing of the past.

⁹ Parliament of Australian (2023a) *Inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm*, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts

¹⁰ Parliament of Australian (2023b) *You win some, you lose more*, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts/Report

The Murphy Review also recommended that the Commonwealth Government establish a national regulator for online gambling, and appoint a single government minister responsible for overseeing online gambling. As it stands, the de-facto regulator of Australia's \$50 billion¹¹ online gambling industry is the Northern Territory Racing and Wagering Commission, which has been accused of being ineffective and having conflicts of interest.¹²

The national regulator – as well as a national harm reduction strategy – were to be funded through a levy imposed on the online gambling industry.¹³

Australians are the biggest online gamblers in the world

Australians are not only the biggest gamblers in the world, but the biggest *online* gamblers in the world. According to data from *H2 Gambling Capital*, in 2021 on a per person basis, each Australian lost \$332 in online gambling, compared to \$276 in Sweden (ranked 2nd) and \$43 in the United States (ranked 14th).¹⁴

Online gambling is now a major contributor to the growth in Australia's total gambling losses. Since 2017, the share of the adult population participating in online gambling has risen from 8% to 33% in 2025.¹⁵ In 2024, engagement in online gambling surpassed engagement in in-house gambling for the first time.¹⁶

Online gambling is particularly prominent in sports and race betting, which are collectively known as wagering – 85% of all wagering is now done online.¹⁷ The fastest

¹¹ Northern Territory Racing Commission (2023) *Submission to the Inquiry into online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm* (Sub #143), https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts/Submissions

¹² ABC (2025) *Exposing the honeypot for the world's biggest betting companies*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4MSHGEw2U8>

¹³Parliament of Australian (2023c) *You win some, you lose more*, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts/Report/List_of_recommendations

¹⁴ Alliance for Gambling Reform (2023) *Supplementary information for the Parliament of Australia Inquiry into Online Gambling* (submission 48.2), https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts/Submissions. Based on H2 Gambling Capital data published in Entain (2022) *Annual Report 2021*, <https://www.entaingroup.com/investor-relations/annual-reports/>

¹⁵ Suomi, Hahn, Biddle (2025), Table 1, p. 12.

¹⁶ Suomi, Hahn, Biddle (2025), p.7

¹⁷ H2 (2022) *Australian Offshore Wagering Market Analysis 2023*, <https://responsiblewagering.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/H2-Australia-Offshore-Wagering-Market-Analysis-2023-Report.pdf>, p. 8

growth in losses to gambling can be attributed to wagering. Between 2019-20 and 2023-24, losses from wagering increased a staggering 68%, to \$8.4 billion.¹⁸ In comparison, losses from poker machines grew 28%. Losses from poker machines, however, still represent the largest gambling losses in Australia – totalling \$16.3 billion in 2023-24.¹⁹

Males are more likely to gamble online than females.²⁰ Individuals who partake in risky and high-frequency gambling, as well as those experiencing high psychological distress and loneliness also have higher participation rates in online gambling.²¹

When considering the Murphy Review’s recommendation for a full ban on advertising for online gambling, it is important to note that most advertisements for gambling are for *online* gambling. According to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) online gambling accounts for close to two-thirds, or 64% of all gambling advertising expenditure on free to air TV, metro radio, and online.²² The next biggest category — lotteries, raffles and instant lotteries — represents just 12% of gambling advertising expenditure.

The staggering growth in online gambling and online gambling losses indicates that the advertising is working exceedingly well for the gaming companies. This suggests the recommendations from the Murphy Review should be seriously considered.

Three years without reform

The Commonwealth did not release its response to the Murphy Review until May 2026 – almost three full years after the release of the Murphy Review’s final report. The response said nothing at all about a national regulator, and instead of a total ban on online gambling ads, it announced certain restrictions.²³ This includes:

¹⁸ Queensland Government (2025) *Australian gambling statistics*,
<https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/society/gambling/australian-gambling-statistics>

¹⁹ Queensland Government (2025) *Australian gambling statistics*,
<https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/statistics/theme/society/gambling/australian-gambling-statistics>

²⁰ Suomi, Hahn, Biddle (2025), p.13

²¹ Suomi, Hahn, Biddle (2025), p.14

²² ACMA (2023) *Gambling advertising in Australia: placement and spending*,
<https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2023-10/report/gambling-advertising-australia-placement-and-spending>

²³ Australian Government (2026) *Australian Government response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry report: ‘You win some, you lose more: Online gambling and its impacts on those experiencing gambling harm’*,

- a ban on all wagering advertising during live sporting events on broadcast channels between 6:00am and 8:30pm;
- a ban on all wagering advertising in sports venues and on players' and officials' uniforms;
- a restriction on all wagering advertising on broadcast television to no more than three wagering advertisements per hour per channel between 6:00am and 8:30pm;
- a ban on all wagering advertising on broadcast radio during school drop-off (8:00-9:00am) and pick-up (3:00-4:00pm) hours;
- a ban on all wagering advertising on online platforms, except where users are logged in, are 18 years or older, and have not opted out of such advertising (triple lock functionality); and
- a ban on the use of notable people (including celebrities and athletes) and the promotion of odds in wagering advertising.

As the *National Gambling Toll* shows, Australians continue to lose billions from gambling. Without comprehensive reform, this toll will only continue to grow.

SUPPORT FOR A TOTAL BAN ON GAMBLING ADS

In June 2026, The Australia Institute conducted a nationally representative sample of 2230 Australians on their attitudes towards gambling advertisements.²⁴ Of those surveyed, four in five (79%) said they support a total ban on gambling advertisements including on TV, radio and online. Over 90% of Greens and Independent voters said they support a total ban, as do 87% of 18–24-year-olds.

Despite these high levels of support for a ban, only one in three respondents (34%) think the kinds of restrictions announced by the Albanese Government do not go far enough. One potential explanation for this discrepancy is that this “laundry list” approach of smaller restrictions looks like the Albanese Government is making a lot of changes, even if they fall well short of what the Murphy Review recommended.

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts/Government_Response

²⁴ Australia Institute (2026) *Polling – gambling advertisements*,

https://australiainstitute.org.au/?post_type=tai_cpt_report&p=31623&preview=true

Conclusion

The *National Gambling Toll* calculates the financial losses of Australia's addiction to gambling. While the social harms of gambling are harder to count, the findings from the Murphy Report make it clear that gambling is a major public health issue in Australia. Almost half of the people who gamble are classified at some risk of gambling harm, and this increases to 67% of those who participate in sports and race betting, which is a large component of online gambling. On average, gamblers at the highest risk levels affect six other people.²⁵

Without meaningful reform to gambling regulations, including the total ban on advertising that four in five Australians support, Australians will continue to be the biggest losers in the world.

²⁵ Parliament of Australian (2023b) *You win some, you lose more*, https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/Onlinegamblingimpacts/Report, pp. 2-3