

### Peer pressure in sports betting: does it exist and why does it matter?

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#### Is there pressure amongst peers to bet on sports?

The connection between sports and sports betting has grown at an accelerating rate over the past few years. Sports betting it seems, has become part of a shared cultural view amongst young adults. As sports betting is embedded in Australian sporting culture and access to online gambling products and services are made easy via smart phones, young people are engaging in regular gambling to establish and enhance friendships with their peers.

The sense of belonging to a group or community is a contributing factor to the wellbeing of any adolescent. How a young person spends their time underwrites the development of their personal and social identity, and the lifestyle decisions they go on to make (Cigognani, Zani & Albesi, 2012).

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#### Who is more likely to be pressured to bet on sports?

An Australian study has exposed sports betting to be a well-established cultural and social norm amongst groups of young men (Gordon, 2015). This social influence of wagering with friends during games endorses gambling as being normal, positive behaviour and creates further pressure to engage in betting.

For young men, discussions about sports betting odds are common amongst friendship groups and peer pressure to gamble has reportedly increased among this cohort (Thomas, Lewis, McLeod et al, 2012). It is common for men to compare notes on their betting choices and outcomes, and these discussions may be seen as being positive and interactions which contribute to the perceived skill of the game (Gordon, Gurrieri & Chapman, 2015).

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#### Why this is a concern?

Individual young men who may otherwise not have been interested in participating in gambling activities are likely to feel pressured to do so, and are subsequently at risk of being groomed for a gambling career.

Some men have even reported their concern that they might not see their friends as often if betting wasn't involved. Whilst gambling itself can be enjoyed by many as a casual social activity, the association of this activity with peer connectedness or social survival encourages betting to be regular and ongoing, which is habit-forming and potentially leads to risky gambling behaviour.

Young males have been consistently associated with increased risk for problem gambling (Miller, 2015).

The *Study of Gambling and Health in Victoria: findings from the Victorian prevalence study 2014* identified 80 per cent of sports bettors (interviewed in the past twelve months) as male (Hare, 2015)

The gambling environment is a competitive space, generally mixed with alcohol and a false sense of control of the wager outcome when betting odds or specific game knowledge is discussed. Whether it be a direct pressure by peers, or an individual desire not to be left out of a group, it is likely that responsible gambling techniques such as setting and sticking to limits of time or money may be undermined in this fast paced, impulsive setting.

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## What can be done to reduce the risks?

Balancing gambling with other forms of entertainment is also a strategy for reducing the potential harms of gambling. The challenge for young men and their families, coaches or other adults in their lives, may be to promote a variety of alternative activities to sports betting, and to discuss effective methods of control.

## For more information

[Sports betting embedded in Australian sporting culture](#)

[Brand community and sports betting in Australia](#)

[The increasing harm from advertising and promotion of gambling in sport](#)

[What's the big deal? Talking to teens about gambling](#)

[The Responsible Gambling Guide](#)

[Risk factors for sports bettors](#)

## References

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