Background

NSW legislation restricts persons under the age of 18 from participating in gambling activities. However, there is a substantial body of research indicating that the rate of problem gambling among minors is higher than for the general population, with many minors reporting that they engage in gambling activities from which they are ordinarily prohibited. It also appears that many people with gambling problems report their first gambling experience as occurring prior to their 18th birthday. The outcome of a recent NSW prevalence study highlighting the particular problems of 18-24 year olds also implies that those younger than 18 are engaging in commercial gambling activities.

Aims

To 1) understand current gambling industry practices in relation to people who clearly appear to be underage and seek to engage in various gambling activities; 2) identify and assess the factors affecting youth access to commercial gambling activities; and 3) examine to what extent persons who appear underage are able to purchase liquor at commercial gambling venues.

Methods

The study utilised youthful looking, but legal age, adults reporting their experiences in attempting to gain access to and purchase products in licensed venues without proof-of-age. 235 venues were visited, comprising 92 hotels, 75 clubs, Star City Casino, 22 stand-alone TAB agencies, nine racetracks and 36 NSW lottery agencies, with a total of 471 venue visits across nine NSW Local Government Areas.

Outcomes

The outcome of the research informs the development of education and awareness activities with respect to gambling industry staff and young people.