PROBLEM GAMBLING COUNSELLING
IN NEW ZEALAND 1997 - 1999

A New Zealand Gaming Survey Supplementary Report

August 2000
Chief Executive’s Foreword

Problem Gambling Counselling in New Zealand 1997 - 1999 is a supplementary report released as part of the New Zealand Gaming Survey. It provides a comprehensive profile of the people receiving help for gambling problems from services funded by the Committee on Problem Gambling Management (the Problem Gambling Committee).

The principal objective of the New Zealand Gaming Survey is to provide up to date and robust information on the extent and nature of problem gambling in New Zealand. The Department of Internal Affairs is firmly of the view that if this objective is to be realised, then information from the seven reports to be produced by the Survey needs to be integrated with information available from other sources.

An important source of such information is the data collected by the Problem Gambling Committee, which is the principal purchaser of problem gambling services in New Zealand. Over the past three years the Committee has produced three reports on problem gambling counselling that provide an invaluable insight into help-seeking behaviour in New Zealand. This publication brings together the three Problem Gambling Committee reports in one volume for the first time.

The Department acknowledges the goodwill demonstrated by the Problem Gambling Committee in allowing its reports to be reproduced in this publication and on the Department’s website. This will ensure a wider circulation for the reports and will facilitate the integration of the information they contain with the information progressively being made available from the New Zealand Gaming Survey.

The Department would also like to acknowledge the assistance of John Hannifin and Margaret Gruys of Problem Gambling Purchasing Agency Ltd, and Dr Grant Paton-Simpson with the production of this publication.

[Signature]

Roger Blakeley
Chief Executive
Department of Internal Affairs
PROBLEM GAMBLING COUNSELLING IN NEW ZEALAND
1997 NATIONAL DATA SET

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JUNE 1998
Background

The Committee on Problem Gambling Management is recognised by the Gaming and Lotteries Amendment Act (No 2) 1996, and consists of an independent Chairperson and equal representatives of the providers of problem gambling treatment services and the major gaming industry sectors (presently Casinos, Totalisator Agency Board, Lottery Grants Board and non-casino gaming machines as represented by Gaming Industry of New Zealand Incorporated). The gaming industry provides funds to the Committee on an annual basis to purchase counselling services for people with serious gambling problems. This takes the form of a national telephone helpline, personal counselling services, and contributions to related research, development and education.

The Problem Gambling Purchasing Agency was established in 1996 to provide services for The Committee on Problem Gambling Management, primarily to purchase services for problem gamblers. The Problem Gambling Purchasing Agency is a company working in the Public Health and addictions fields.

The Research Unit at Regional Alcohol and Drug Services has expertise in the areas of gambling research, alcohol and drug services information systems, quality assurance, statistics, computing, psychology and sociology.
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Foreword

The Committee on Problem Gambling Management (COPGM) is very pleased to be able to present this first set of national data for problem gambling counselling services in New Zealand.

The report gives the first comprehensive profile of the people receiving help through COPGM funded services. COPGM is committed to providing assistance to people with gambling problems and to the development of good quality data to aid in the development of effective services.

Counselling services for problem gamblers have provided much needed help for 966 problem gamblers and their families. 952 of those were people presenting for help for the first time.

The Compulsive Gambling Society and the Salvation Army are to be congratulated on their professional delivery of problem gambling counselling services and their dedicated efforts to achieve the highest standards.

COPGM anticipates this will be the first of these annual national data sets. The Committee hopes the report is useful in advancing the understanding of problem gambling and ultimately in reducing the harm associated with problem gambling.

Jim Lynch
Chairperson

Committee on Problem Gambling Management
Introduction

This report contains some of the most detailed information ever gathered about problem gambling counselling service activities in New Zealand.

The data presents a picture of the counselling help provided to problem gamblers and their families. It is presented with the intention of advancing research, planning and development of services for problem gamblers in New Zealand.

This report contains analysis of data collected by problem gambling counselling services during 1997. The data for the National Telephone Helpline will be the subject of a later report and is not included in this data set.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many clinicians in each of the services for their fine work in providing the raw data for this report.

John Hannifin          Margaret Gruys
Directors
Problem Gambling Purchasing Agency
Service Delivery

Numbers of Clients Accessing Services

Counselling services were offered to 966 clients during 1997. Over 98% (952) of these clients were “completely new” (that is, had not received counselling for gambling-related problems in the past).

The chart and table below show the number of people receiving help at problem gambling counselling services for the first time. These are new clients who have not previously received any treatment for their gambling problems from these services.

First time clients per month

Month of first appointment

First time clients per month

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan-97</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-97</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-97</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
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<td>Apr-97</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>May-97</td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>111</td>
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<td>Sep-97</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct-97</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov-97</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-97</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 952
**Hours of Treatment Delivered**

Providers reported having delivered over 4,800 hours of assessment and counselling to clients during 1997.

Individual and/or group-based interventions remain the most frequently used treatment options.

![Total hours of treatment by type](chart)

**Duration of Treatment Episodes**

The chart below was created using data for clients reported as discharged during the year. It shows the proportion of clients engaged in treatment for various lengths of time. The chart shows that the majority of clients for whom we have data have had treatment episodes between one and six months in length.

![Episode durations](chart)

(Real) episode duration
Hours of Treatment Received Per Client

Total time spent treating each client varies considerably. 62% of clients received between one and three hours of treatment, 27% received four to nine hours and 12% received ten hours or more\(^1\).

**Total treatment duration**

![Total treatment duration chart]

**Total duration grouped**

Hours of Assessment Received Per Client

Assessment is the most important first step in treatment. Reported assessment durations vary considerably - however the majority of assessments are concluded within two hours.

**Total assessment duration**

![Total assessment duration chart]

**Assessment duration grouped**

---

\(^1\) Percentages rounded.

Problem Counselling in New Zealand 1997 National Data Set, June 1998
**Referrals Out**

The numbers of clients referred to other agencies for additional assistance are presented in the chart below.

An analysis of the “other” category will be available in future years. Preliminary analysis suggests a high number of these referrals are to selfhelp groups such as Gamblers Anonymous (GA) and GAMANON for family members.

**Pattern of referrals out**

![Chart showing referrals]

*Note: “A and D” = alcohol & drugs.*

**Discharging Patterns**

Agencies seem to be discharging clients in large batches (particularly toward the end of the year). It is anticipated a more even discharging pattern will occur over time as a result of individualised discharge management.

**Amount of discharging over time**

![Graph showing discharging over time]
Client Characteristics

Gamblers, Family Members & Others

Most people (84%) arrived at a service because of their own gambling problem. A smaller proportion (15%) sought help as a partner or “significant other” of a gambler. One percent of attendees fell into the category of “Other” such as friends of gamblers.

Age Distribution - Gamblers & Non-Gamblers

Here, “Family Members” and “Others” are combined into one group simply called “Non-Gamblers”. As can be seen below, the majority of gamblers presenting for treatment are aged between 20 and 49 (mean 36, S.D. 11). The pattern for significant others is similar with slightly more being in the 50-plus age group (Mean 39, S.D. 13).
Gender and Reason for Contact With Service

Most gamblers attending treatment services are male and most family members (or other non-gamblers) attending services are female. The proportion of men and women of each type are presented in the chart below.

Gambler Ethnicity

Percentages of gambling clients of various ethnic backgrounds are presented in the graph below.
Mode of Gambling

The data on mode of gambling causing problems for clients has been presented for clients who are gamblers. The data on mode of gambling causing problems for family members is not included. When the family data is included, there are no significant changes to the figures.

Primary Mode of Problem Gambling (Gamblers)

Almost all clients were able to identify a “main” or primary mode of problem gambling.

Gamblers - distribution by main mode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gamblers Main Mode of Problem Gambling</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-casino machines</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino machines</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino tables</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other or multiple</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports betting</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotto</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housie</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1997 National Data Set, June 1998