

Problem Gambling in the Northern Territory

In October 2005 the *School for Social and Policy Research* conducted a telephone survey to obtain estimates of gambling participation and problem gambling within the adult population of the Northern Territory. In total 1,861 interviews were completed, weighted to a Northern Territory adult population ERP of 136,000. This factsheet presents summary results of this survey as they relate to problem gambling.

Definition of problem gambling

While ‘problem gambling’ may be defined in many ways, most definitions emphasise lack of control over gambling behaviour along with a range of consequent adverse personal, economic, and social impacts (Productivity Commission, 1999). According to the national Australian definition proposed by the 2005 by the Ministerial Council on Gambling:

Problem gambling is characterized by difficulties in limiting money and/or time spent on gambling which leads to adverse consequences for the gambler, others, or for the community.

(Neal, Delfabbro, & O’Neil, 2005)

How is problem gambling measured?

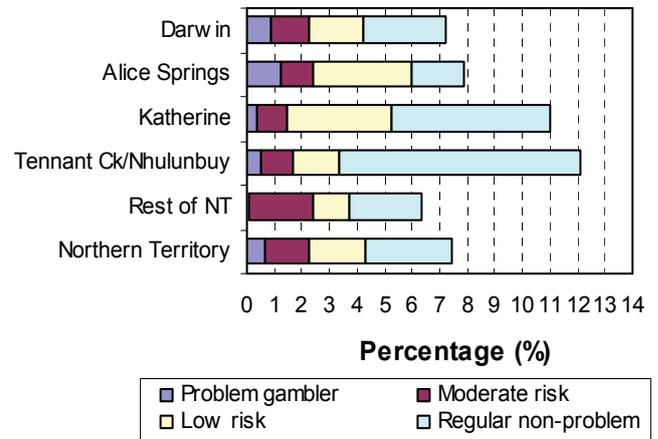
While it is useful to have a set national definition of problem gambling, of greater importance is the measurement tool used to categorise individuals as problem gamblers. These tools generally consist of problem gambling ‘screens’ which are lists of questions designed to distinguish an individual with gambling problems from the rest of society. As different screens categorise people in slightly different ways, resulting in different estimates of the prevalence of problem gambling in any given population, the choice of screen is fundamental to estimates and their social composition. This factsheet presents the results of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) when applied to the Northern Territory adult population.

The CPGI was developed to identify gamblers on a continuum ranging from non-problem to problem gamblers. It CPGI consists of nine questions with responses for each scored from 0 to 3 with total scores ranging from 0 to 27. A score of 8 or more indicates a problem gambler, scores between 3 and 7 indicate a moderate risk gambler, while scores between 1 and 2 indicate low risk gamblers (Ferris & Wynne, 2001). This screen was chosen as it has been recommended for measurement of problem gambling at the national level (Neal et al., 2005) and had been empirically demonstrated to be the most appropriate screen for application in the Northern Territory context (Young & Stevens, 2008).

How common is problem gambling in the NT adult population?

Based on the CPGI, less than 1% of the adult population in the Northern Territory were classified as problem gamblers. This estimate varied across different regions of the Territory (Figure 1). The two cities with casinos (i.e. Darwin and Alice Springs) had the highest percentage of problem gamblers, while remote regions (i.e. rest of NT) and Katherine had the lowest levels, although regular gamblers living in the rest of the Northern Territory (i.e. very remote regions) had the highest percentage of moderate risk gamblers. Tennant Creek had the highest percentage of regular (i.e. weekly gamblers).

Figure 1. Problem gambling by region



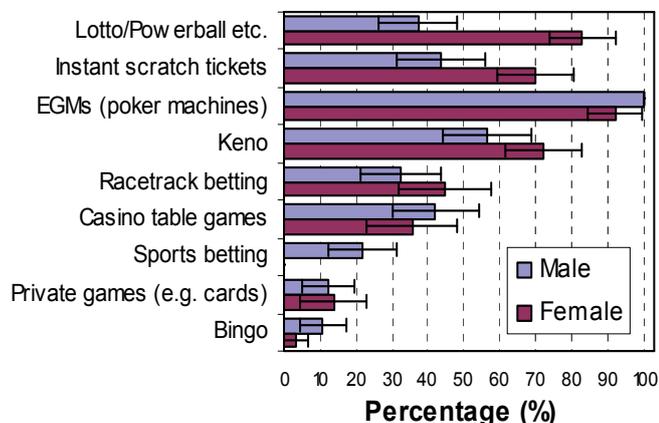
Which activities do problem gamblers prefer?

Electronic gaming machines (EGMs), or poker machines, were the most popular gambling activity amongst problem gamblers (Figure 2). All male and 93% of female problem gamblers had played EGMs in the past year. In terms of gender differences in problem gambling, women preferred lotto, instant scratch tickets and keno. On the other hand, sports betting by problem gamblers was an entirely male affair.





Figure 2. Problem gambler activity preference by gender



Are there more problem gamblers in certain population groups?

Problem gambling exists at higher levels within particular subgroups of the population (Figures 3 and 4).

There is a higher representation of problem gamblers amongst:

- males compared to females
- younger people (18-24) compared to other age-groups
- people living in group (or share) houses compared to single family or person households
- single parents compared to couples with or without children

Figure 3. Socioeconomic factors showing a significant association with problem gamblers

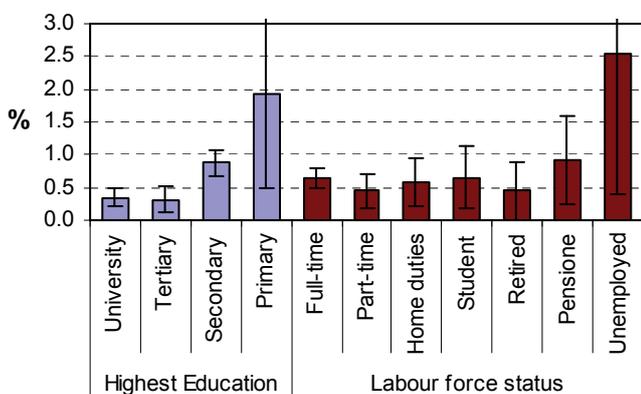
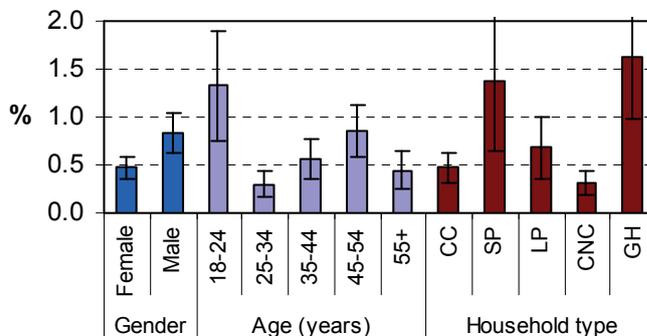


Figure 4. Demographic factors showing a significant association with problem gamblers



CC = couples with children
SP = single parent
LP = lone person

CNC = couple with no children
GH = group house

References

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Methodological Notes

Error bars on figures display the standard error of the estimate. They indicate that there is a 67% chance that the real estimate falls within the lower and upper bound of the error bar. For further details on methodology and statistical data from this survey see Young *et al.* (2006) available for download at

<http://www.cdu.edu.au/sspr/reports.html>

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