

Tender Number 588

Client and Service Analysis Report No.1

Analysis of Clients Presenting to Problem Gambling Services from July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996

**Prepared for the Department of Human Services
by
The Problem Gambling Research Program
School of Social Work
The University of Melbourne, Australia**

1996

This document has been prepared by the University of Melbourne Problem Gambling Research Team. Its purpose is to provide advice and information to the Victorian Department of Human Services concerning an analysis of clients and services of the BreakEven Problem Gambling Counselling Service.

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SUMMARY

Introduction

This Report is an analysis of information on clients of the problem gambling services who had their first contact with an agency between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996. In June 1996, there were 12 such services, returning data collected through use of a common form of client data recording, the Minimum Data Set.

In evaluating the information contained in this Report, it is important to keep in mind that it contains information derived from self-reports of people who have presented to designated problem gambling services. **One cannot legitimately make any inferences from the data in this report to the general incidence or impact of problem gambling in Victoria.** The clients of the problem gambling services may or may not be typical of problem gamblers in Victoria.

Between July 1, 1995 and June 30, 1996, over 1300 people registered with Victoria's problem gambling counselling services with the vast majority being people reporting problems with their own gambling behaviour. Approximately 36% of these people were referred by the telephone counselling service GLine, with community and health agencies referring another 11%. Twenty five percent of clients were self-referred.

Demographic Characteristics of the 'Problem Gamblers'

These clients, with an average age of 39, were about as likely to be men (51%) as women (49%). Approximately one-quarter of these clients were born overseas, from a great range of countries.

The men were almost twice as likely as women gamblers to be unmarried and twice as likely to be living alone.

Just over half of the clients of these agencies had incomes below \$20,000, with 36% of the clients being on fixed incomes such as pensions. Thirty seven percent of clients had incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000. Forty four percent of the clients had, for various reasons, an occupational status other than 'employed'.

Gambling Problems

Not surprisingly, the most common major reason given for attending the problem gambling services was 'financial issues' (44%), with more than eight in ten (83%) of all clients assessed experienced financial problems. The next most common reason for referral was related to aspects of gambling behaviour itself (33%).

About the same proportion who experienced financial problems (85%) also experienced affective disorders, reporting anxiety, mood swings etc. A similarly high proportion also reported problems with

relationships, while almost half of the clients reported that problem gambling had affected their employment and work roles.

About two thirds of the clients experienced five or more problems in areas such as relationships, their family, legal issues, work and employment. This indicates how extensively problem gambling had impacted on the lives of these people.

'Problem gamblers' report spending considerable time gambling. They spend on average about two days per week gambling and gamble for, on average, three hours per day. The highest median loss reported for the last day of gambling was \$400 on numbers (eg roulette).

By far the most common form of gambling behaviour is use of electronic gaming machines (78%).

Three quarters of the 'problem gamblers' reported that they had attempted to control their gambling, but failed.

That about one-quarter of the users of problem gambling services report that they have committed illegal acts to finance their gambling is one indication of the social effects of their problems. An additional concern is that over half of these people rely on others to relieve their losses. Since chasing losses is an almost sure recipe for financial distress, it is not a good sign that 4 out of 5 'problem gamblers' do this.

The persuasiveness of problems related to gambling for these clients is clearly illustrated by the fact that 69% of them report six or more maladaptive behaviours, such as gambling as a way of escaping from problems, lying to their families to conceal the extent of their gambling and jeopardising significant relationships and employment.

Outcomes

At least 61% of cases were partially resolved or resolved at the time of case closure. For legal problems, the rate of partial or complete resolution was 80%, while physical symptoms were partially or totally resolved for 75% of the clients with this problem. These figures should be used with some caution, however, because the criteria for 'resolution' are not clear at this point.

Interpersonal and family problems had the highest rate of non resolution at case closure with over one third of the problems in these areas remaining unresolved.

INTRODUCTION

Since March 1994 the Department of Human Services, formally the Department of Health and Community Services, has been allocated over \$35 million from the Community Support Fund to develop a State wide Problem Gambling Service Strategy.

The strategy consists of a number of initiatives which help both the general community and problem gamblers. These include:

- G-Line, a free, 24 hour, 7 days per week state wide telephone counselling, information and referral service which provides the first point of contact for people seeking assistance or information regarding problem gambling. G-Line also provides a vital link with a range of problem gambling and other counselling services. Many of their calls are referred to the regionally based Break Even Problem Gambling Counselling Services.
- A Knowledge and Skills Development Program for Problem Gambling Counsellors, Financial Counsellors and Gaming Liaison Officers, and other professionals who work with problem gamblers. Training modules address a range of skills and development needs on a variety of topics and will include orientation for new counsellors and modules on working with clients from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- Community education at a local level through the work of Community education officers who speak to community groups and provide information to the general public through a range of initiatives, such as advertising counselling services on the back of supermarket docketts.
- A research program which examines the effects of gambling on individuals and their families, and their interaction with support services. The aim of the research program is to measure the effectiveness of current problem gambling services and intervention models and to provide a profile of problem gamblers to help with further planning of prevention and education strategies.
- Regionally based Break Even Problem Gambling Counselling Services which provide free counselling from many locations across the state. Services generally operate during business hours and are staffed by qualified psychologists and social workers who have the expertise to undertake counselling related to problem gambling, often from an 'addictions' perspective.

BACKGROUND

The Client and Service Analysis, the first of four research projects, is being carried out by a team of researchers led by Associate Professor Alun Jackson, Head of the School of Social Work at the University of Melbourne.

The present Report, Analysis of Clients Presenting to Problem Gambling Counselling Services from July 1 1995 to June 30 1996 is a preliminary report based on the Minimum Data Set collected by Break Even Problem Gambling Counselling Services and the first to result from the Client and Service Analysis.¹

The Minimum Data Set was established and implemented in 1995 and aims to establish a comprehensive record of the use of the Break Even Problem Gambling Counselling Services by individuals. The collection procedures are outlined in The Problem Gambling Services Minimum Data Set Guidelines, May 1995 (See Attachment A). Common forms are used by all Break Even Problem Gambling Counselling Services (See Attachment B).

This Report is an analysis of the Minimum Data Set information on clients of the twelve Break Even Problem Gambling Counselling Services who had their first contact with the service between July 1 1995 and 30 June 1996. The main sites for these services were Bendigo, Ballarat, Horsham, Geelong, Warrnambool, Morwell, Wodonga, Deer Park, West Heidelberg, Ringwood East, East Bentleigh and the Central Business District of Melbourne.

The Report contains valuable information about clients of the Break Even Problem Gambling Counselling Services, although subsequent reports incorporating a longer time frame for analysis and a larger number of agencies, including those established since August 1996, will yield even more valuable information. Although this Report is a self contained document, a set of Technical Appendices, which further detail the findings, will be available in a second volume.

¹ This Report was prepared with assistance for Serena Smith, Tangerine Holt and John McCormack, of the School of Social Work, University of Melbourne.

THE NATURE, USES, AND LIMITATIONS OF THE DATA

The registration data are self-reported data collected by counsellors at initial registration or immediately thereafter. The contact, assessment and closure data are collected at (or immediately after) client interview. Although aimed primarily at helping with case notes, the Minimum Data Set is also designed to help researchers gain a greater understanding of client characteristics and behaviours. The information in this Report comes from data gathered in accordance with the Minimum Data Set guidelines.

There are several limitations affecting the usefulness of the following information, which are important to keep in mind when making inferences from this particular set of data about problem gambling in Victoria.

The findings are primarily based on three of the forms comprising the Minimum Data Set - the Client Registration Form, the Assessment Form and the Case Closure Form. It was not possible to merge these three data sources. In addition, the number of clients about whom complete information existed varied across the three forms, producing an *n* of:

1324 for registration data,

1153 for assessment data, and

623 for closure data.

As with any data analysis exercise which is based on a fixed time period rather than case completion's there will always be a number of clients who are still in the system at the point at which the analysis must be made.

In addition to the above limitation, there is reason to believe that the 'problem gamblers' presenting themselves to these services may not be a representative sample of problem gamblers. There are several reasons for this:

- In most communities, women are considerably more likely to request assistance from public health and welfare agencies than men.
- Different cultural groups have very different attitudes toward gambling in general and problem gambling in particular. In some cultures, gambling is socially acceptable and problem gambling is seen as a problem, but not necessarily as a moral failing. In other cultures, gambling itself is seen as a morally dubious activity and problem gambling is seen as constituting a serious character flaw in the individual. These differences among cultural traditions almost certainly have affected the rates at which 'problem gamblers' report to problem gambling services.
- In a related point, it is also well known that many, although by no means all, problem gamblers may be in a state of denial that they have a problem controlling their gambling. If this denial is influenced

by cultural, social and economic factors, then those who present will tend to be a somewhat atypical sample of problem gamblers.

- Different cultural groups have very different attitudes toward government and its social and community services. In some groups, many do not believe that their cases will be kept confidential. Even though the Victorian Government has high standards of confidentiality in its human services, it can take considerable time for these people to believe that they can trust a counsellor to keep their personal information confidential.
- This Report covers only designated Problem Gambling Services. Some people, particularly people from non-English speaking backgrounds, may go to other services for assistance, when their problem is related to gambling. For many clients in general, a presentation to a counselling service may be made for relationship problems or general financial problems, amongst other problems, where problem gambling is an underlying cause of the ‘symptom’ being presented. There will be future detailed reports on problem gambling for those services, as work undertaken as part of the Client and Service Analysis will quantify the extent to which general family support agencies and financial counselling services are being accessed by people for problem gambling related issues.
- The information presented below is based on self-reports. While no doubt most of these reports are accurate, there are many well-known problems with self-report data, especially in regard to such an emotionally sensitive area as problem gambling.

In sum, in evaluating the information in this Report, it is important to keep in mind that the Report contains only information from self-reports of people who have presented to designated problem gambling services. **One cannot legitimately make any inferences from the data in this report to the general incidence or impact of problem gambling in Victoria.** This is a report about the problem gambling services and their clients, who may or may not be typical of problem gamblers in Victoria.

An additional problem with the Minimum Data Set is its lack of compatibility with other data sets being collected by other government agencies which would enable a more comprehensive comparison between clients of problem gambling services and the general population in Victoria to be made. Data sets such as ABS Census data and the various gambling related surveys done, primarily by the VCGA, could provide a rich source of additional information about who gambles. In the current report we have attempted to include comparative data wherever possible.

FINDINGS

As a part of the standard operating procedures for the problem gambling counselling services, client details are collected at registration and service details as a part of each contact with a client. This information is collected by completing registration and contact forms at (or immediately after) interviewing the client.

All clients' personal information is kept strictly confidential. The researchers who analyse the data see de-identified data only and no attempt is made to identify any client.

The figures presented below do not add up to all of the clients presenting at services. Answering questions is voluntary and some clients chose not to answer some questions or for some other reason an answer was not recorded. As noted earlier, the statistical details with information on missing data are to be found in the technical appendices.

A system of rounding has been used which means column totals do not always add up to precisely 100%.

In this Report, we have often used the phrase 'problem gamblers'. These words should only be taken as indicating that the person has presented himself or herself as having problem gambling behaviour. It should NOT be taken as agreeing (or disagreeing) with this self-assessment. Further, it should not be taken as agreeing (or disagreeing) that the person would necessarily satisfy the Department of Human Services' (or any other) criteria for problem gambling. This is why the term in quotation marks throughout the text.

Between July 1 1995 and June 30, 1996, over 1300 people registered with Victoria's problem gambling counselling services. The vast majority were people who reported that they had problems with their own gambling behaviour. (See Table 1)

Table 1: Status Of Registered Client

Client Status	Male		Female		Total
	frequency	percent	frequency	percent	
Self-identified Gambling Problem	581	51%	560	49%	1141
Partner	37	30%	88	70%	125
Other	5	17%	24	83%	29
Total	623	48%	672	52%	1295

Missing Data = 29

Because of the small number of 'others', all the data below combines the data pertaining to 'Partner' and to 'other'.

Referral Source

Approximately 36% of the clients of the Problem Gambling Services were referred by the telephone counselling service G-Line, with community and health agencies referring another 11%. The media was recorded as source of referral for 3.5% of the clients, the same proportion as were referred by other therapists. Families and friends were cited as a source of referral for 8.5% of the clients. Small numbers of clients were referred from a number of other sources (12.5%)

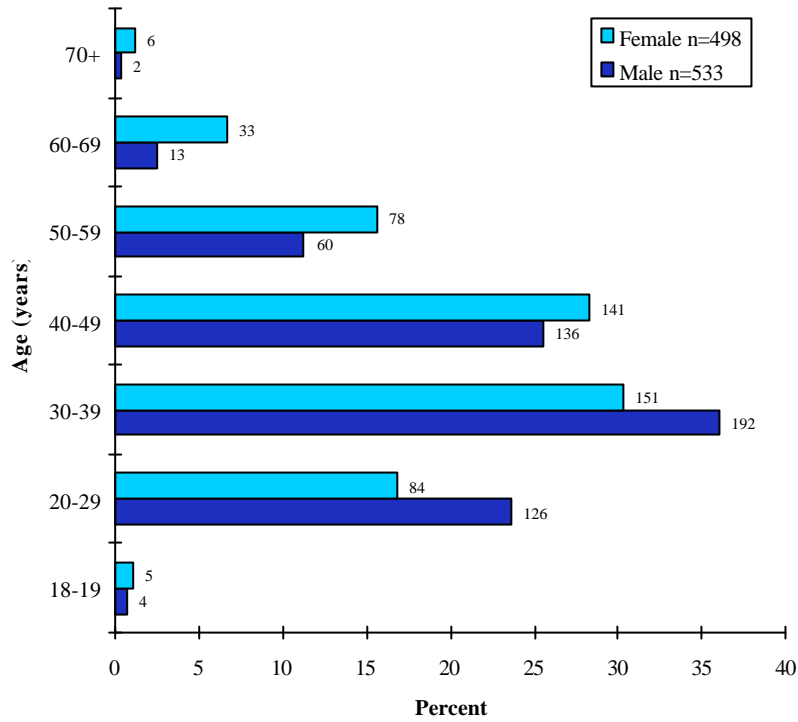
Twenty five percent of clients were self-referred. The concept of self referral is a difficult one. If a client self refers to an agency which deems that a more suitable agency exists to deal with the client's problem, and informs the client of this, then the second agency will record that referral as being from the first agency, even though the client initiated the contact originally. Self referral data, therefore, should not be taken in itself as evidence of insight or motivation. Other opportunities will be pursued in the Client and Service Analysis to explore the complexity of referral behaviour.

Gender and Age Profile of Clients

Approximately as many men (51%) as women (49%) registered as having a problem with their own gambling. This gender breakdown is consistent with the latest available ABS population figures for Victoria (1995), 49.5% men and 50.5% women.

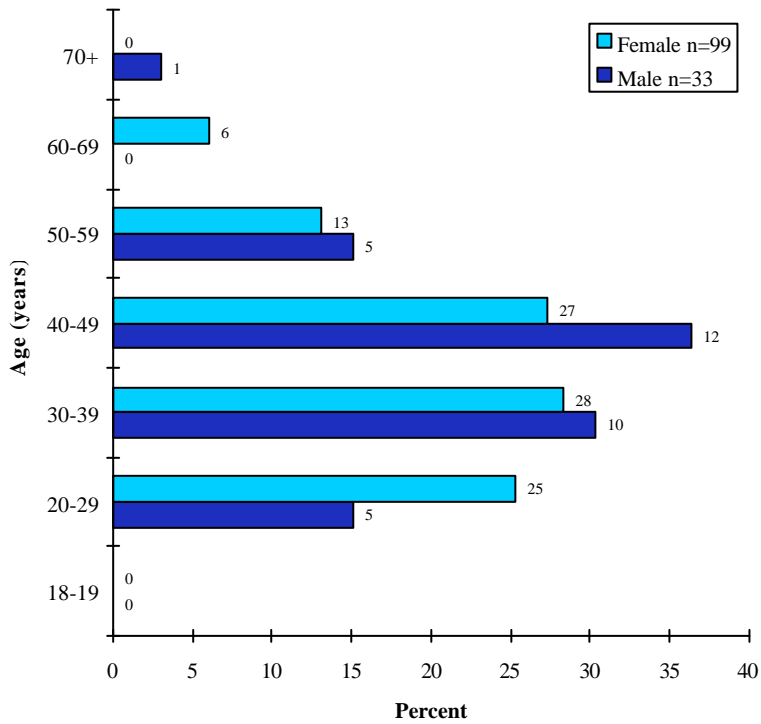
There was a considerable range in ages among the people with problem gambling behaviours, with nine people under the age of 20 and two 80 or over. The average age of the problem gamblers was 39. Half of the 'problem gamblers' were between the ages of 31 and 47. Male 'problem gamblers' tended to be a bit younger, with the average age of the males being 38. The average age of females was 41.

Figure 1: Gender and Age of ‘Problem Gamblers’



Missing Data = 121

Figure 2: Gender and Age of ‘Partner and Others’



Missing data = 23

There is an obvious, but expected, difference between Figures 1 and 2. While roughly equal numbers of males and females self reported as ‘problem gamblers’, three times as many females as males sought counselling for other people’s (particularly their partner’s) problem gambling.

When compared with national population data for 1994 from the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research (BIPR) some interesting contrasts between the ‘problem gambler’ group and the general population emerge. These include:

- Males 30–39 years are over represented as ‘problem gamblers’ compared to the proportion of the Australian male population of the same age, ie. 36% compared with 23%.
- Both male and female ‘problem gamblers’ aged 30–49 years are over represented compared to their representation in the Australian population (calculated as a proportion of the population aged 20 plus), ie. males in this age range constitute 43% of the Australian population but 62% of the ‘problem gambling’ group while females in this age range constitute 41% of the Australian population but 58% of the ‘problem gambling’ group.

Ethnic Background

Approximately one-quarter of the ‘problem gamblers’ were born overseas, from a great range of countries. This figure is consistent with the national figure for percentage of population overseas born, ie (23%).² Over half of these were born in Europe. Only four people required an interpreter, and one of these was for sign language. A greater number of non-English speaking clients and those requiring interpreters may present as specialised ethno-specific programs are established in this area. Again, this is an area which will be explored in detail during the Client and Service Analysis.

Only a relatively small percent of all those registered identified themselves as belonging to a cultural group (<3%). Again, a greater number of people in this category may emerge with the establishment of specialised ethno-specific services.

Marital Status

Overall, 28% of the ‘problem gamblers’ have never been married, but there is a considerable gender difference in this regard: only 20% of the females have never married, whereas 36% of the males have never married. This finding is consistent with Bureau of Immigration and Population Research findings that a higher percentage of men than women never marry. It is unclear what this difference represents, although the age difference between the male and female clients could be one factor.

There is a gender difference in the percentage of ‘problem gamblers’ who are married. While 33% of the men are married, 45% of the women are married. Of the ‘partners and others’, 71% of the males and 62% of the females are married.

² Australian Bureau of Statistics (1994) *Social Trends*

Household and Family Structure

There is a considerable gender difference in the living arrangements of 'problem gamblers'. While 31% of the males live alone, only 16% of the females live alone.

Table 2: Household Structure of 'Problem Gamblers' by Gender

Household Structure	Male		Female		Total
	frequency	percent	frequency	percent	
Lives alone	165	31%	89	16%	254
Family or couple	345	66%	389	71%	734
Single parent family	5	1%	63	12%	68
Other	9	2%	4	1%	13
Total	524	100%	545	100%	1069

Missing Data = 83

There is little difference in the household structures of 'problem gamblers' and the Australian population (when compared with the ABS 1991 census data). Twenty-four percent of 'problem gamblers' compared with 20% of the population were living alone; 69% of 'problem gamblers' compared with 76% of the population were living as a family or couple and the same percentage of respondents were single parent families, at 13%.

Table 3: Household Structure of 'Partners and Others' by Gender

Household Structure	Male		Female		Total
	frequency	percent	frequency	percent	
Lives alone	4	10%	7	6%	11
Family or couple	36	86%	95	86%	131
Single parent family	2	5%	8	7%	10
Total	42	100%	110	100%	152

Missing Data = 3

About 40% of the 'problem gamblers' have dependent children. There is a gender difference, however, with 45% of the females and 36% of the males having dependent children.

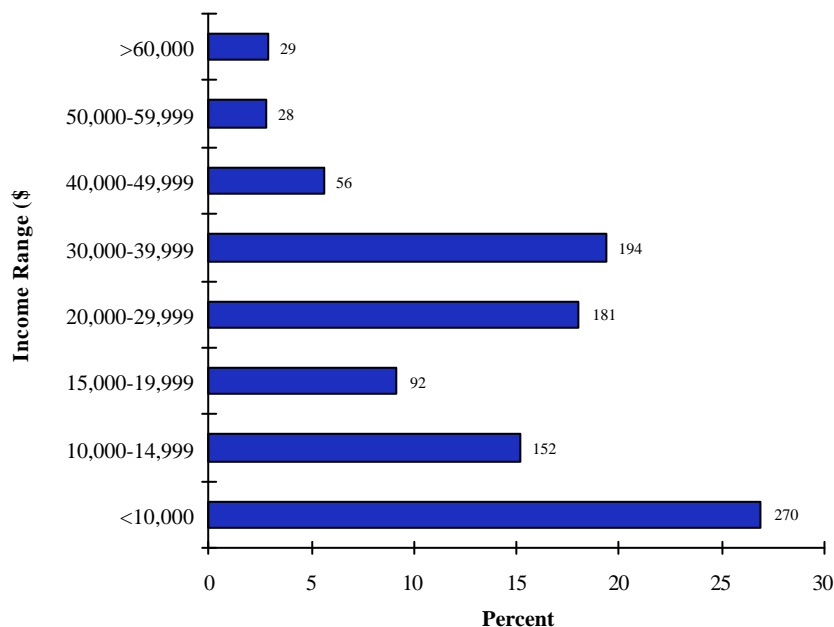
Income

The self-reported income of 'problem gamblers' varied considerably, from 'less than \$10,000' to over \$60,000 per year. Just over half the group had incomes below \$20,000. This is explained somewhat by Figure 6 which shows 36% of these clients as being on fixed incomes such as pensions. Thirty seven percent of clients had incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000.

These figures should be viewed with some caution, however, because it is unclear how many people interpreted the question as applying simply to their own income and how many interpreted it as applying to their partner's or household income as well. Also, it is unclear how many report pre-tax income and how many after-tax income.

It is interesting to note that the profile of problem gambling service clients is consistent with the 1991 census breakdown of income with 58% of the population earning under \$20,000 p.a. and 17% earning between \$20,000 - \$30,000 p.a.. There is a dramatic over representation among 'problem gamblers' of those in the \$30,000 - \$40,000 income bracket, ie. 19% of clients, compared with 8.5% of Australian population.

Figure 3: Income Status of Problem Gamblers (n=1002)



Missing data = 150

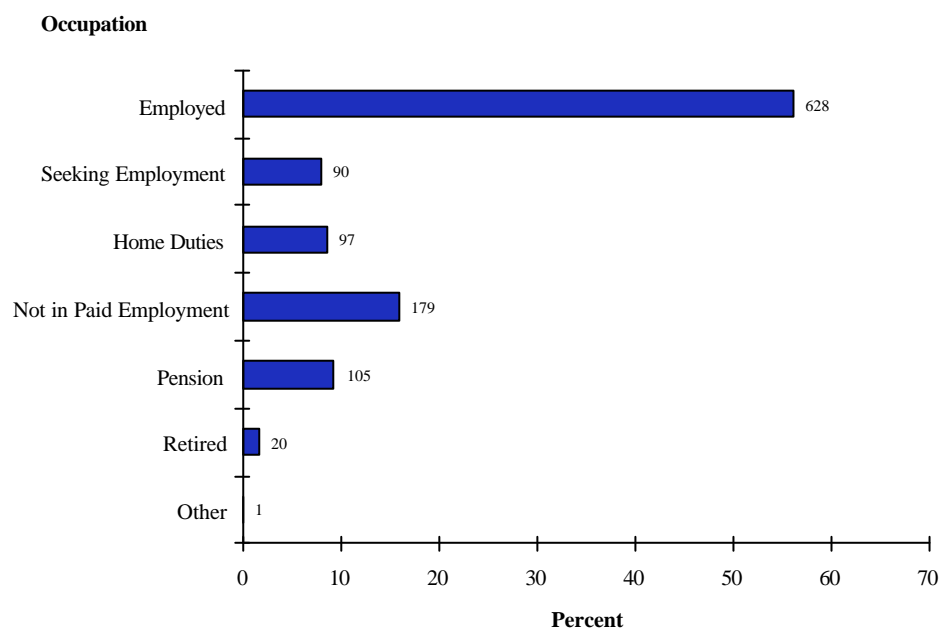
The VCGA Report, *Fourth Survey of Community Gambling Patterns* (1997), does not list directly comparable information on income levels but they do list the proportion of income spent by Victorians

on gambling activities. They note that the average figure for Victorians is 9% while the figure for the category of ‘committed heavy gamblers’ is 33%. If we assume that the counselling services’ ‘problem gamblers’ are most likely to belong to the category ‘committed heavy gamblers’ there is some cause for concern. The problem gambling service client data show us that the income level of the majority of ‘problem gamblers’ is under \$20,000. It is difficult to assess precisely in dollar terms what is the actual income lost, but losses of the magnitude suggested in the VCGA Report would be leaving many of the counselling services’ ‘problem gamblers’ with very low income levels and in financial hardship.

Employment Status

Somewhat more than half of all ‘problem gamblers’ were employed (56%) with another (8%) looking for work.

Figure 4: Employment Status of ‘Problem Gamblers’ (n=1120)

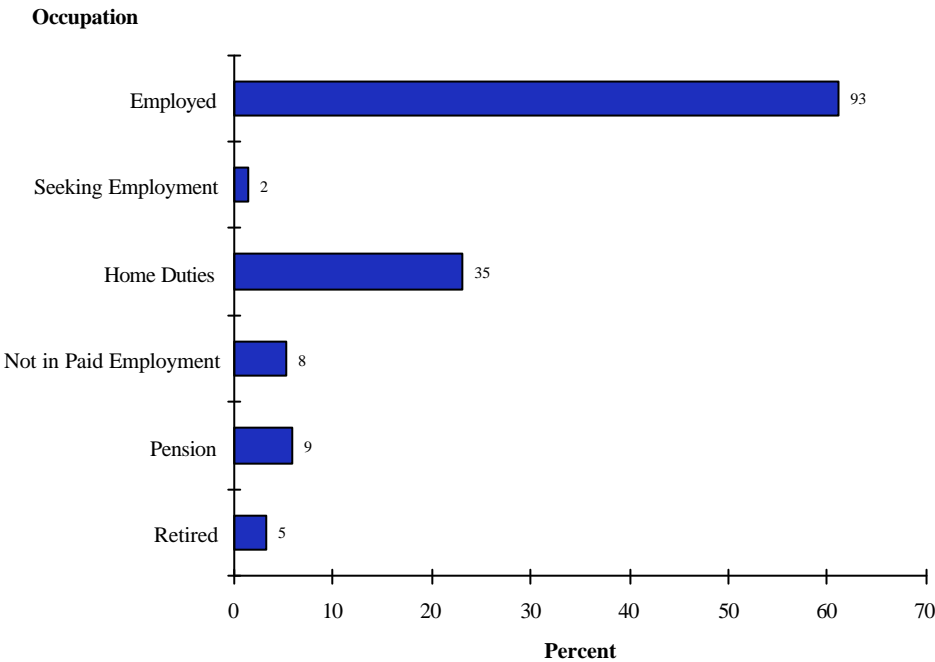


Missing Data = 32

As can be seen in Figure 4, 44% of the clients had, for various reasons, an occupational status other than ‘employed’. This figure might be misleading, however, as although only 56% of the problem gamblers are in paid employment, those not in paid employment cover a wide range of occupational states from receiving a pension to performing home duties. This group should not be simply categorised as ‘unemployed’. As Figure 5 below shows, the employment percentages are roughly the same for the partners and others, except that a much higher percent are engaged in home duties. (8% vs. 23 %)

If we aggregate the categories used in the Minimum Data Set to compare the figures with the 1996 ABS employment status findings some interesting features emerge. The ABS uses three categories to describe employment status - 'employed', 'unemployed' and 'not in the labour force'. The same proportion of 'problem gamblers' are employed as are those employed in the general population (56%). If we combine the categories 'seeking employment' and 'not in paid employment' to constitute the group 'unemployed' we find a large difference, however, with 24% of 'problem gamblers' fitting this category compared with 5.4% of the Australian population.³

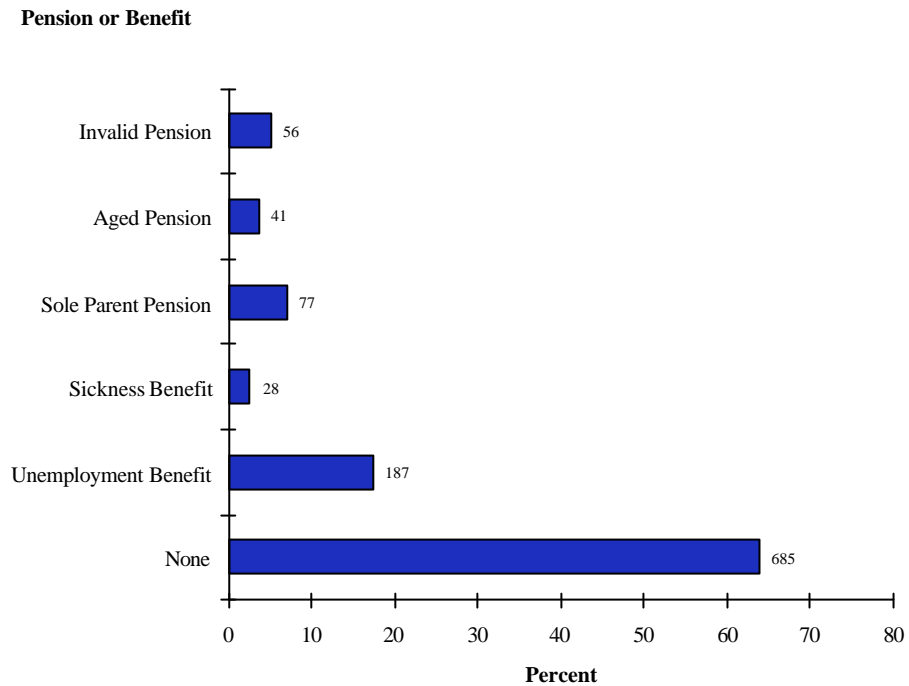
Figure 5: Employment of 'Partners and others' (n=152)



Missing Data = 3

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics *Labour Force Figures 1996, Cat. No. 6203.0*

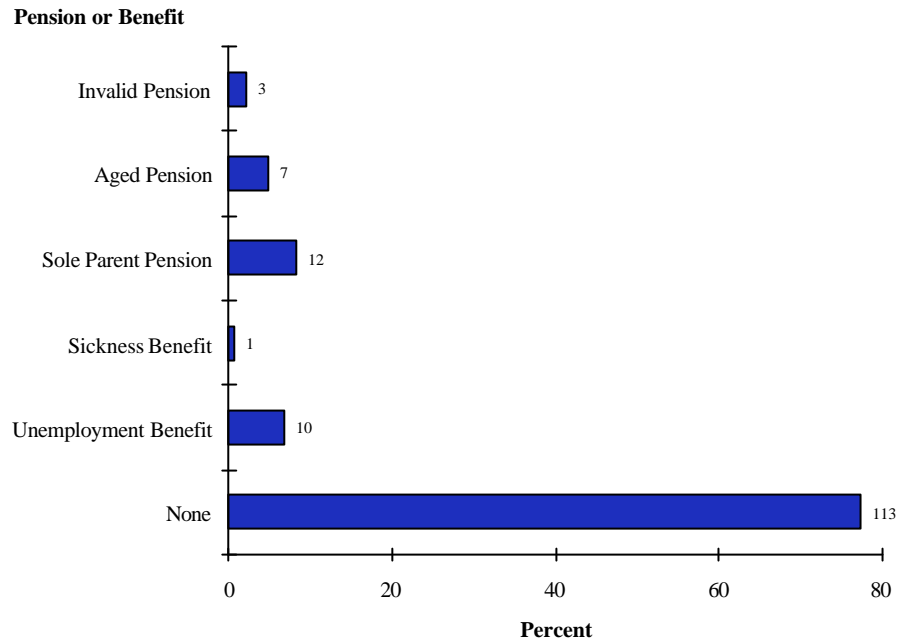
Figure 6: Pensions and Benefits for ‘Problem Gamblers’ (n=1074)



Missing Data = 78

There is a gender difference in the Pension and Benefits distribution for the ‘problem gamblers’. While 25% of the men are receiving unemployment benefits, only 9% of the women do so. On the other hand, 14% of women ‘problem gamblers’ receive the sole parent pension, while less than 1% of men do so. There are more ‘problem gamblers’ receiving social security transfer payments than the general population, ie. 36% of problem gamblers compared with 23% of general population.

Figure 7: Pensions or Benefits for ‘Partners and Others’ (n=146)



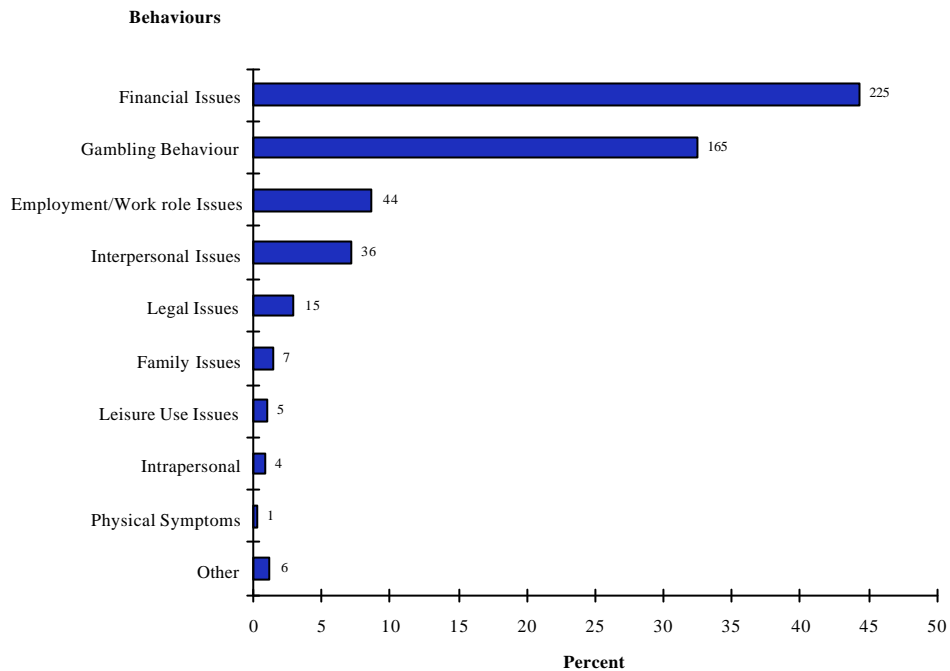
Missing Data = 9

Reason for Referral

The Case Closure Summary Information form (See Attachment B) asks for a client’s primary reason for attendance. The data given in Figure 8 are based on the 623 clients whose cases were closed at the end of the data collection period.

Not surprisingly, the most common reason given for attending the problem gambling services, as Figure 8 illustrates, is ‘financial issues’ (44%). The next most common reason has to do with aspects of gambling behaviour itself (33%).

Figure 8: Primary Reason for Attendance (n=508)

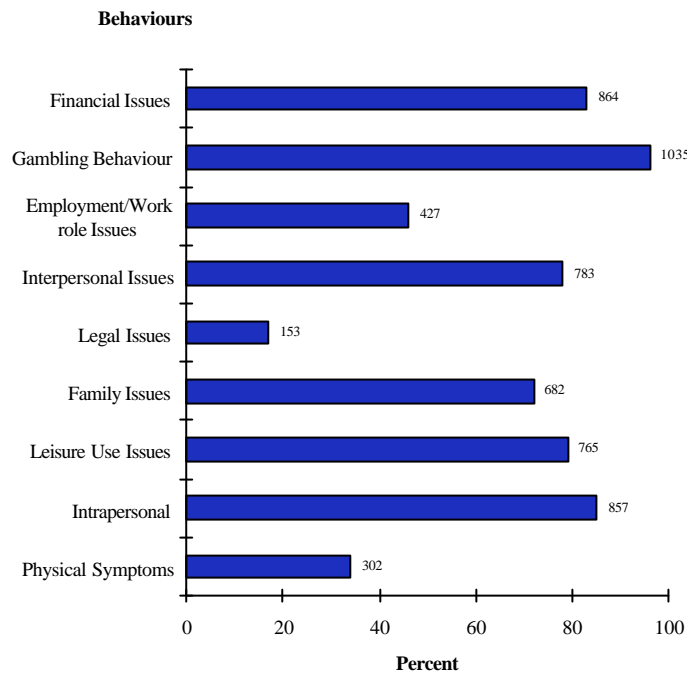


Missing Data = 115

The Client Assessment Form (See Attachment B) asks for ‘correlates’ of gambling behaviour to be noted. These are taken, as the Minimum Data Set Guidelines suggest, to indicate the relationship between gambling and a number of ‘life-style issues’. These correlates correspond to the ‘primary reason for attendance’ as noted on the Case Closure Summary Information Form. Future analysis will look at the relationship between these two. The value of comparing these two is that while correlates are determined at the point of assessment, ‘primary reason for attendance’ is determined retrospectively, thus providing a useful indicator of the fit between the referral agent’s assessment of the problem and subsequent diagnosis by the problem gambling counsellor.

For the purposes of this preliminary report, the correlates will be reported without comparison to the ‘primary reason for attendance.’

Figure 9: Gambling Correlated Behaviours (n=1153)



Missing data are detailed in Technical Appendix

As can be seen from Figure 9, more than eight in ten (83%) of the ‘problem gambler’ clients experienced financial problems. About the same proportion (85%) also experienced affective disorders, reporting anxiety, mood swings etc. A high proportion also reported problems with relationships, while almost half of the clients reported problem gambling affecting their employment and work roles. Table 4 below details the **number** of correlated behaviours experienced by the ‘problem gambler’ clients.

Table 4: Number of Gambling Correlated Behaviours

Number of Behaviours	Frequency	Percent
9	21	2%
8	99	9%
7	208	19%
6	221	20%
5	194	17%
4	157	14%
3	109	10%
2	78	7%
1	24	2%
0	2	<1%
Total	1113	100%

Missing Data = 40

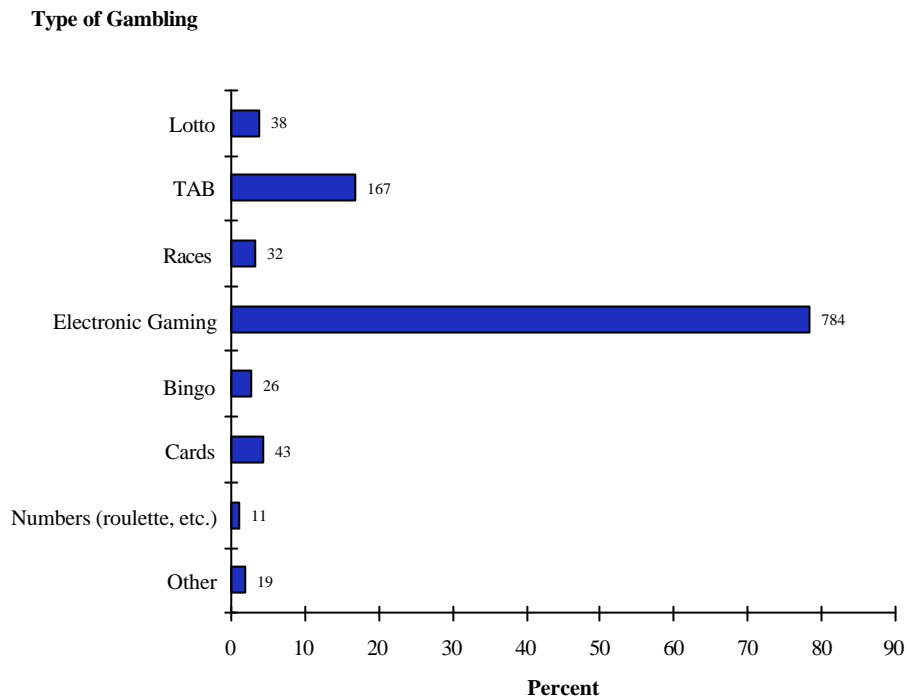
About two thirds of the ‘problem gamblers’ had five or more of the gambling correlated behaviours. This is an indicator the **extensiveness** of the effects of problem gambling on their lives. This is an area of obvious concern, which presumably renders the counselling task difficult. Further analysis to be conducted in the course of the Client and Service Analysis will build on these data exploring the extensiveness of problems and look at the **intensity** of the problems that are experienced. By combining the two, we will have a much clearer understanding of the actual impact of problem gambling on people’s lives.

Gambling Behaviours

The *Client Assessment Form*, based on DSM-IV's definition of ‘Problem Gambling’, was developed to summarise the type, frequency and intensity of the gambling behaviours and their adverse effects. This form is completed by the service provider.

Problem gamblers report spending considerable time gambling with use of electronic gaming machines being by far the most common form of gambling behaviour. (see Figure 10)

Figure 10: Type of Gambling on Most Recent Day of Gambling (n=1120)



Missing data are detailed in Technical Appendix

Note: One thousand and one clients identified at least one gaming behaviour on the most recent day of gambling. The total of the frequencies appearing in Figure 10 add up to more than 1001 because this was a multiple response question where clients could nominate more than one behaviour.

As one would expect, the range of losses reported for the most recent day of gambling was considerable - \$2 to \$20,000. Because the average (the mean) is so substantially affected by large numbers, Table 6 reports the median, the minimum and maximum values of the reported losses.

Where direct comparison is possible it appears that the type of gambling activities undertaken by the general community as reflected in the *Fourth Survey of Community Gambling Patterns* and clients of problem gambling services are radically different. Whereas in the Survey, Lotto was reported as constituting 65% of gambling activity undertaken by the general community it constituted only 4% of the gambling undertaken by the 'problem gambling' clients of problem gambling services. Seventy eight per cent of the 'problem gambling' clients of problem gambling services clients used electronic gaming machines (EGMs) whereas only 40% of Survey respondents reported using EGMs.

Table 5: Self-Reports of Losses on Most Recent Day of Gambling

Type of Gambling	No. of Clients	Median Loss	Minimum Loss	Maximum Loss
Lotto	36	\$20	\$1	\$1000
TAB	164	\$100	\$2	\$5000
Races	30	\$160	\$4	\$3000
Electronic Gaming	770	\$140	\$2	\$20,000
Bingo	25	\$24	\$3	\$80
Cards	41	\$300	\$15	\$10,000
Numbers	11	\$400	\$15	\$2,000
Other	18	\$300	\$44	\$20,000

Missing data detailed in Technical Appendix

The figures given in Table 5 should be treated with caution. The relationship between reported losses and actual losses is complex and the pattern, if any, remains obscure. For example, it may be that gamblers, for reasons of self esteem, under-report losses incurred in forms of gambling requiring judgement, such as horse racing, and over-report losses incurred in forms of gambling only involving chance, such as Lotto.

All forms of gambling were reported as taking substantial amounts of time on the most recent day of gambling as Table 6 below illustrates.

All reports consulted agreed that when relying on self-reports of losses or outlays the amount provided is usually underestimated. The average calculated **weekly** outlay on gambling reported in the *Fourth Survey of Community Gambling Patterns* was \$29 per week per Victorian. Of Problem Gambling Service clients the median self reported loss on the most recent **day** of gambling was \$180. This amount varied greatly depending on the type of gambling. As far as we can compare the two studies the pattern of outlay/loss per type of gambling follows a similar pattern with greater losses/outlay at the casino, races and EGMs and lesser losses at activities such as bingo and lotto. This would tend to confirm the indication noted above regarding the link between reportage and gambling type.

Table 6: Hours Spent Gambling on Most Recent Day of Gambling

Type of Gambling	No. of Clients	Median Hours	Minimum Hours	Maximum Hours
Lotto	18	1	1	20
TAB	143	2	1	10
Races	28	3	1	20
Electronic Gaming	740	3	1	21
Bingo	23	3	1	6
Cards	42	4	1	24
Numbers	10	3	1	6
Other	18	4	1	18

Missing data detailed in Technical Appendix

Table 7: Frequency of Gambling (Days per week)

Type of Gambling	No. of Clients	Median Hours	Minimum Days	Maximum Days
Lotto	32	2	1	7
TAB	154	3	1	7
Races	29	3	1	7
Electronic Gaming	727	3	1	7
Bingo	25	1	1	3
Cards	40	3	1	7
Numbers	10	3	1	7
Other	17	2	1	7

Missing data detailed in Technical Appendix

The median value shows that, with the exception of Bingo, most clients are spending at least two days per week gambling.

In the latest VCGA survey report on community gambling patterns the average number of hours spent on gambling activities varied enormously depending on the type of gambling engaged in. If we consider the categories ‘acknowledged heavy gambler’ and ‘committed heavy gambler’ to be the categories most likely to include ‘problem gamblers’ then these groups spend an average of 1.5 and 2.4 hours (respectively) gambling per week and that they gamble on average 2.4 times per week. The Problem

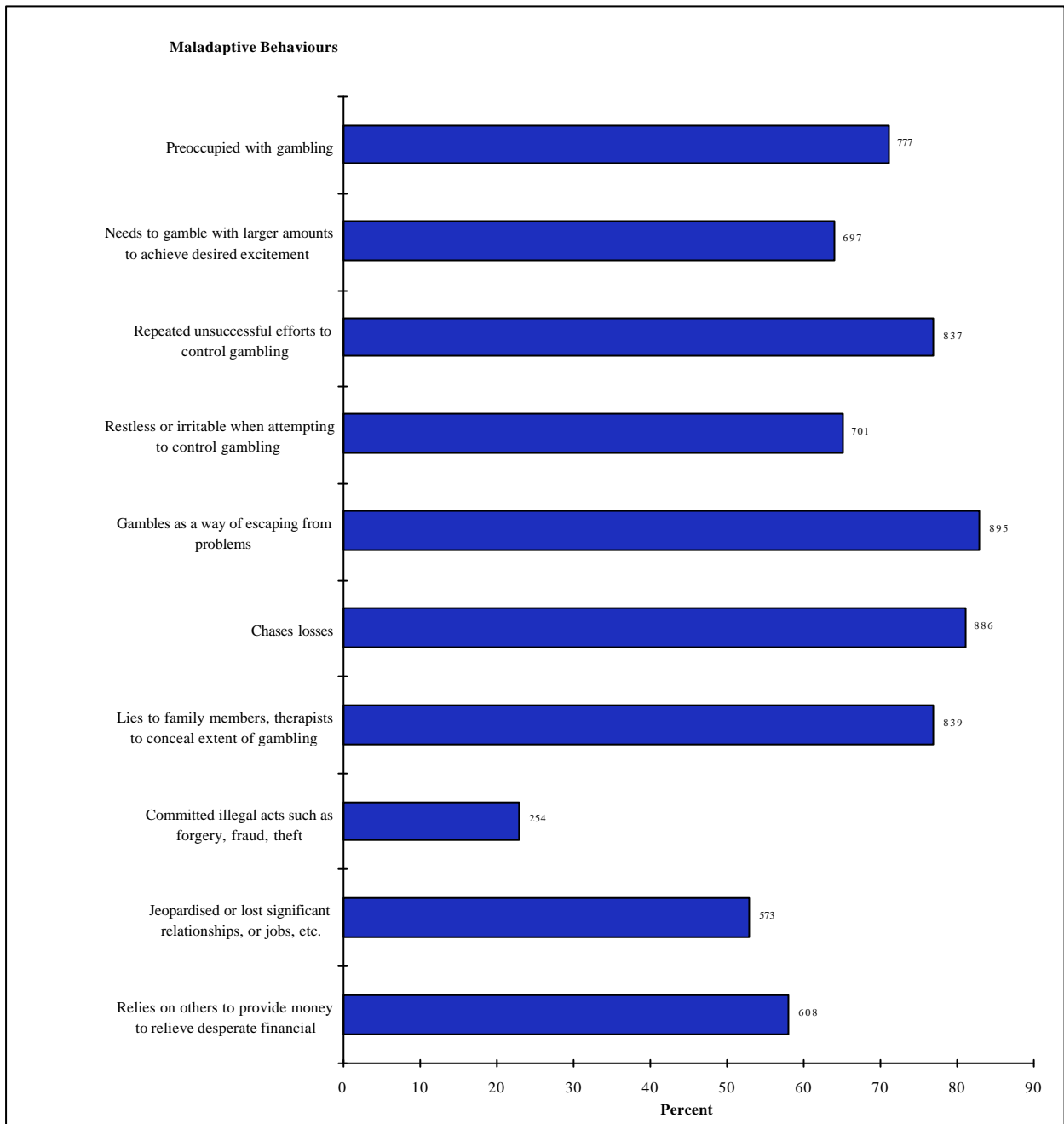
Gambling Services client data shows their 'problem gambling' clients to have gambled for a average of three hours on the last gambling day and that they gamble on average 2.5 days per week.

Maladaptive Behaviours

There is a considerable range of maladaptive behaviours connected with sustained gambling, especially as the losses mount. The list of maladaptive behaviours presented in Figure 11 was based on DSM-IV, but should not be used to construct a **diagnosis** of problem gambling - more sensitive tests are required for that.

That about one-quarter of 'problem gamblers' self-report as having committed illegal acts to finance their gambling is one indication of the social effects of these problems. An additional concern is that over half of the 'problem gamblers' rely on others to relieve their losses. Since chasing losses is a almost sure recipe for financial distress, it is not a good sign that 4 out of 5 problem gamblers do this.

Figure 11: Maladaptive Behaviours (n=1153)*



Missing data are detailed in Technical Appendix

* (Based on Assessment Data)

There are many important questions arising from Figure 11 which point to areas to be followed up in the Client and Service Analysis. Some of these include:

- Why have over three quarters of the clients reported failed attempts to control their gambling, and what did they do to try to achieve this control?

- What are the problems from which gambling is seen to be an escape, and what is the impact on these problems when the ‘solution’ becomes the problem, as it obviously has for many of the clients?
- If over three quarters of the clients admit to lying to their families and/or therapists to conceal the extent of their problem, how does this impinge on the therapeutic process?
- If almost 6 in every 10 clients are relying on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling, what does this mean for the financial health of these people from whom money is borrowed, and how many of these people are propelled into financial counselling or seeking financial relief themselves? What is the cumulative effect of this sort of behaviour?

Table 8 below gives the frequencies of the number of maladaptive behaviours recorded for each client.

Table 8: Number of Maladaptive Behaviours

Number of Maladaptive Behaviours	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
10	65	6%	65	6%
9	133	12%	198	18%
8	174	16%	372	34%
7	202	18%	574	52%
6	186	17%	760	69%
5	140	13%	900	82%
4	86	8%	986	90%
3	59	5%	1045	95%
2	28	3%	1073	98%
1	21	2%	1094	100%
0	7	<1%	1101	100%
	1101	100%		

Missing Data = 52

Again, as with the findings on correlates of gambling, the results detailed in Table 9 show clearly the extensiveness and persuasiveness of problems related to gambling for these clients, with **69%** of them reporting six or more of the maladaptive behaviours. The detailed analysis to be undertaken in other components of the Client and Service Analysis will illustrate whether there are any patterns to the types of maladaptive behaviours which occur together, and the implications of this for planned interventions whether oriented towards prevention or treatment.

Intervention and Outcome

The vast majority (84% or 399 of 475) of the client contacts as noted at closure were individual interviews. A further 9% were couple counselling sessions.

During the period under review only 79 of 7,304 (1%) of contacts were re-presentations of cases which were presumed by the agency to be closed. Re-presentation will need to be carefully examined in subsequent analyses spanning a longer time period, and with consistent interpretation of re-presentation by the range of agencies involved. This is especially the case given the fact that such a high proportion of gamblers (77%) report repeated unsuccessful attempts to control their gambling. It should be noted, however, that these repeated attempts were made at a time prior to the establishment of the problem gambling specific services, and it is not clear how many attempts at control of this behaviour involved counselling.

Due to the way the data have been collected by the Problem Gambling counselling services, case closure information is only available for clients who had their first and final contact between 01.07.95 and 30.06.96, that is, 623 clients.

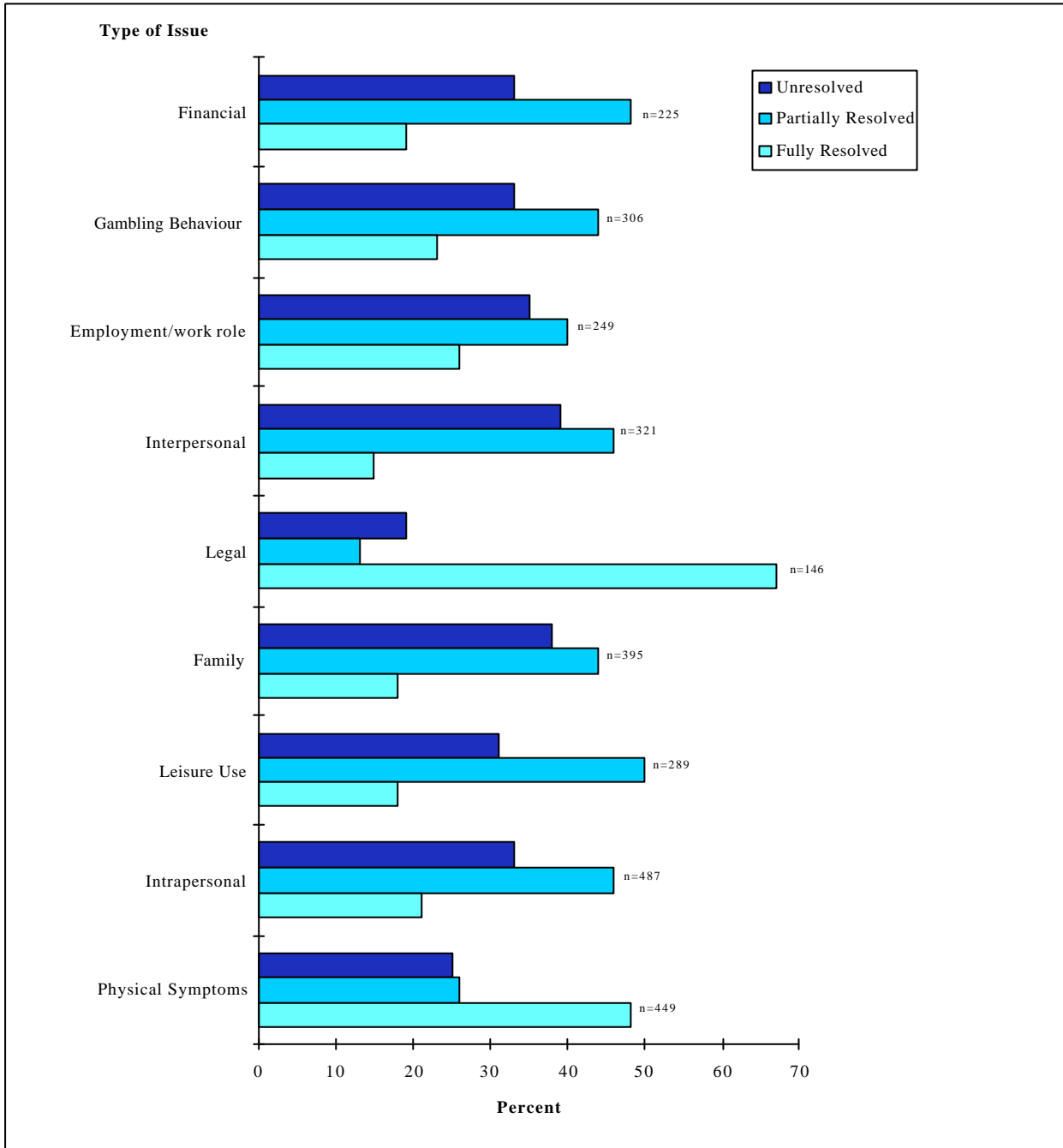
It is important to note that the analysis of these closure data should be treated with some caution since we do not know about clients who had their first contact in the period 01.07.95 to 30.06.96, but who did not have their final contact by the end of the data collection period. It is highly likely, therefore, that we will not be observing some of the more 'difficult' cases who needed more sessions over a longer period of time.

In particular, the distribution of time between first and last contact for clients whose cases are closed, based on these data, will be a biased estimate of the true distribution of time between first and last contact. This is because, for example, we will not be observing those clients who perhaps started later in the year but had not become closed cases before the end of June 1996.

As noted in the section of the Report dealing with limitations of the data, it was not possible to merge the assessment or registration data with the case closure data to obtain a clearer picture of case closure, because of difficulties with a lack of definite and unique identifying information across the three information sources.

The outcome indicator data from the Minimum Data Set present the degree to which a client's problem as expressed at first contact was resolved, or partially resolved, at case closure.

Figure 12: Case Resolution (n=2867)



Missing data are detailed in Technical Appendix

At least 61% of cases were partially resolved or resolved at the time of case closure. For legal problems, the rate of partial or complete resolution was 80%, while physical symptoms were partially or totally resolved for 75% of the clients presenting with this problem.

As noted previously, about eight in ten of the ‘problem gamblers’ were experiencing problems in six or more of the issues noted in the above Table. Their situations are complex, and reflective of the extensive

effects of their problem gambling in many aspects of their lives, both the 'private' domains such as feelings about themselves and interpersonal relationships, and the more 'public' domains such as workplace role and legal issues. What is not clear from the data analysed to date, and an important area for follow up during the Client and Service Analysis is the success rates for problem resolution for different degrees of problem experience and different combinations of problem. The rate of case closures varied considerably across the different services. It is unclear how much of this is due to different criteria for 'closure' and how much is due to differences in the clients' needs and the effectiveness of intervention. This is another issue which will be pursued in the Client and Service Analysis.