

The Connecticut Council Problem Gambling Helpline 1999 Summary Report

The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) operates a 24-hour Helpline service for callers seeking help with a gambling problem for themselves or someone they care about. The following report summarizes the results of 728 Connecticut problem gamblers.

Highlights of the 1999 Report

Who are the problem gamblers?

- Two thirds of the problem gamblers were males and one third were females.
- Over ¼ of the problem gamblers (27%) were age 50 or older.
- One quarter of the male problem gamblers were aged 20-29.
- About one quarter of the female problem gamblers (24%) were age 50-59.

What is the financial impact on the problem gambler?

- Average current debt due to gambling was \$18,422.
- Average lifetime losses due to gambling was \$62,514.
- Over three-quarters of the problem gamblers (78%) reported using savings.
- Sixty-three percent of the problem gamblers reported having problems paying bills.
- Half of the problem gamblers borrowed from credit cards and 40% borrowed from family/friends.
- 15% of the problem gamblers reported previous or pending bankruptcy.

What is the emotional and social impact of problem gambling on the gambler?

- Problem gamblers reported high levels of emotional problems (Anxious/worried: 85%; Depression: 67%; Thoughts of suicide: 23%).
- Over one fifth of the problem gamblers (23%) reported problems with work or school.
- Problem gamblers reported excessive use of alcohol (16%) and illegal drug use (6%).
- Other addictions reported by problem gamblers include tobacco (38%); food (16%); and spending/shopping (10%).

- Seventeen percent of problem gamblers reported arrest resulting from gambling.

What is the impact of problem gambling on the family?

- Over half of the problem gamblers (52%) reported spouse or family conflict as a result of problem gambling.
- Six percent of the problem gamblers reported family violence as a result of problem gambling.
- Over one third of the problem gamblers (35%) reported children under the age of 18 living at home.

Do problem gamblers have specific problems in the families in which they grew up?

- One third of the problem gamblers grew up in a family with alcohol abuse.
- Almost one quarter of problem gamblers (24%) grew up in a family where there was a gambling problem.
- Twelve percent of the problem gamblers experienced abusive behavior .
- Seven percent of the problem gamblers grew up in a family where there was drug abuse.

What primary types of gambling causing problems for the problem gambler?

- Casino gambling: Problem gamblers reported problems caused by Slot Machines (41%), Blackjack (31%) and Poker (9%).
- Non-casino gambling: Problem gamblers reported problems caused by Lottery Scratch-off (35%), Daily Lottery (24%) and Sports Betting (15%).

Are there differences in male and female problem gamblers?

- Female problem gamblers developed a problem about three years sooner than male problem gamblers and call the Helpline about eight months sooner than the males.
- Female problem gamblers tended to be older than the male problem gamblers and earned a lower annual income.
- Female problem gamblers had far greater problems than male problem gamblers with slot machines(64% vs. 28%).

- Male problem gamblers have far greater problems than female problem gamblers with Blackjack (38% v. 19%) and Sports Betting (23% vs. 1%).

For Conclusions, Recommendations and further information, consult The CCPG 1999 Problem Gambling Helpline Summary Report, log on to the CCPG Website ccpg@ccpg.org, or call CCPG at 1-888-789-7777.

Introduction

The Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) operates a 24-hour Helpline service for callers seeking help with a gambling problem for themselves or someone they care about. Callers seeking more general information about problem gambling are referred to the CCPG's office.

A 114-item questionnaire was utilized by Helpline staff to obtain the data for this summary. Information was gathered on 931 calls received between January 1, 1999 and December 31, 1999 that were specific requests for help with a gambling problem. The 538 calls for general information are not included in the statistics.

Of the 931 callers with requests for help with a gambling problem, 728 (78.2%) resided in Connecticut. This report summarizes these Connecticut calls. While the percentage of Connecticut calls to the Helpline is fairly consistent with past years, previous Helpline reports have included calls from other states in the percentages. In order to provide a more accurate picture of the impact on problem gambling in the state of Connecticut, only Connecticut information is included in this report.

Major Findings*

- There were 931 calls for assistance with a gambling problem.
- State of residence of the problem gamblers:

78.2% resided in Connecticut.
11.3% resided in Massachusetts.
5.1% resided in Rhode Island.
2.1% resided in New York.
3.3% resided elsewhere.

(The following information is on Connecticut problem gamblers only)

- Approximately 2 out of 3 callers (62.6%) called about their own problem. Almost 1 out of 4 callers (23.5%) were spouses/relatives of the problem gambler. 7.9% of the callers were friends of the problem gambler.
- Gender of caller and problem gamblers:
 - While the callers were slightly more female than male (52.7% female and 47.6% male), about 2/3 of the problem gamblers they were calling about were male (61.6%) and 1/3 were female (38.4%).

- Females (72.9%) called about their own gambling problem more than males (64.8%)

. * Description of results and discussion of findings provided by the CCPG. Numerical information prepared by Yale University, Department of Psychiatry.

- Age of problem gamblers:

- 53.2% were 30-49 years old.
- 10.3% were over age 60.
- 18.8% were age 20-29.
- Males tended to be younger than females:
52.6% of males were age 39 or younger.
34.3% of females were age 39 or younger.
- The age difference was most dramatic in two age ranges:
Age 20-29: 24.7% male vs. 8.6% female
Age 50-59: 11.8% male vs. 24.3% female
- Relatively few were in the younger ranges:
1.2% were 20 or younger.
- Over one quarter of the problem gamblers (26.7%) were 50 years old or older.

- Top three ethnic/racial groups of problem gamblers:

83.7% Caucasian.
6.4% African-American.
3.3% Latino/Hispanic.

- Religious affiliations of problem gamblers:

44.5% Catholic.
16.7% Protestant.
2.5% Jewish.
1.3% Muslim.

One third (33%) indicated no religious affiliation.

- Marital and child status of problem gamblers:

- 46.3% were married (43.9% of males and 49.5% of females).
27.3% were single (32.3% of males and 18.5% of females).

14.7% were divorced (13.8% of males and 17.1% of females).
 The remaining 11.7% were: cohabiting (4.3%), separated (3.0%), widowed (4.0%),
 or unknown (.7%).

- Over one third (35.1%) reported children under the age of 18 living at home (33.1% of males and 37.9% of females).

- Top four Connecticut counties and cities of residence of problem gamblers:

<u>Counties</u>		<u>Cities</u>	
Hartford	27.9%	Norwich	5.5%
New Haven	22.5%	Waterbury	5.1%
New London	19.7%	Hartford	3.8%
Fairfield	12.7%	Bridgeport	3.3%

- Top three occupations of problem gamblers:

26.3% Skilled trade
 24.2% Unskilled trade
 10.2% Middle management

- Employment status of problem gamblers:

Full time 67.3%
 Part time 8.4%
 Unemployed 7.3%
 Retired 7.1%
 Student 1.7%
 Welfare 1.3%
 Workers Comp. 0.8%

A gender breakdown shows the following:

Full time work: 74.3% males vs. 55.6% females
 Part time work: 5.0% males vs. 14.4% females
 Retired: 5.0% males vs. 10.2% females

- Income of problem gamblers:

- One out of four (24.4%) earned less than \$25,000.
 One out of five (21.1%) earned between \$25,000 and \$34,999.
 One out of five (21.2%) earned more than \$45,000.

- Overall, females earned less than males. A gender breakdown shows the following:

Earn less than \$25,000: 20.9% males vs. 30.8% females
 Earn \$25,000 - \$34,999: 24.1% males vs. 15.6% females
 Earn more than \$45,000: 23.4% males vs. 17.5% females

- The types of gambling reported as causing a problem were:

<u>Non-Casino</u>		<u>Casino</u>	
Lottery – Scratch off	34.65%	Slots	40.59%
Lottery – Daily	23.93%	Blackjack	30.53%
Sports Betting	15.18%	Poker	8.91%
Lottery – Lotto	6.44%	Craps/Dice	7.10%
Jai Alai	4.95%	Roulette	6.77%
Horse Racing	4.29%	Bingo	1.98%
Dog Racing	3.63%	Video Poker	1.82%
Bingo	2.31%	Horse Racing	0.66%
Cards	2.31%	Baccarat	0.50%
Slots	.33%	Keno	0.33%

- Females far more often than males were reported to have a problem with slot machines (64.25% vs. 28.31%).

Males far more often than females were reported to have a problem with blackjack (37.92% vs. 19%) and sports betting (23.38% vs. 1.36%).

- Length of gambling of problem gamblers:

- On average, they gambled 6.93 years before a problem developed.
 Gambling began an average of 9.57 years ago.
 Gambling problems started an average of 2.94 years ago.

- Females reported developing a problem in less time than males after beginning gambling (4.87 years for females and 7.98 years for males).

- Females had a gambling problem slightly less time (2.12 years) than males (2.94 years) before calling the Helpline.

- The following problems are reported to have resulted from gambling:

<u>Emotional:</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Anxious/worried	85.15%	87.27%	85.07%
Depression	67.49%	68.05%	70.14%
Thoughts of suicide	22.61%	23.12%	23.08%

Suicide attempts	3.47%	2.6%	6.33%
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Interpersonal:

Family or spouse conflict	51.82%	53.25%	50.68%
Loss of friends	11.88%	12.73%	10.86%
Family violence	5.61%	6.23%	4.52%

Financial:

Used savings	77.72%	78.18%	79.64%
Problems paying bills	63.04%	67.01%	57.92%
Borrowed from credit cards	50.83%	48.83%	57.01%
Borrowed from family/friends	39.77%	41.30%	39.82%
Bankruptcy (previous or pending)	15.4%	17.7%	11.2%

Work/School:

Problem with job or school	23.10%	27.01%	16.74%
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Substance Abuse:

Excessive use of alcohol	16.34%	20.52%	10.41%
Excessive use of prescription medication	2.81%	3.64%	1.81%
Use of illegal drugs	5.78%	7.79%	2.26%

Legal:

Arrested	17.16%	21.82%	9.50%
Debt owed to bookies	5.78%	8.83%	0.45%
Jail or prison	0.99%	1.30%	0.45%

- While males and females were similar in most problem areas, the following differences were noted:
 - Females were reported to have more occurrences of depression and more suicide attempts and more borrowing on credit cards than males.
 - Males more than females were reported to have more problems with job or school, more borrowing from bookies, more abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and more arrests and imprisonment.
- In the family in which the problem gambler grew up, there was a history of the following:

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Alcohol abuse	33.2%	32.5%	35.3%
Gambling problem	23.6%	26.5%	20.4%
Abusive behavior	11.7%	8.3%	18.6%
Drug abuse	7.4%	8.8%	5.0%

- Females reported more history of abusive behavior (18.6% vs. 8.3%) and males reported more history of drug abuse (8.8% vs. 5.0%) and history of gambling problem (25.5% vs. 20.4%).
- Approximately one third of problem gamblers (32.5% of males and 35.3% of females) have a family history of alcohol abuse.
- Losses and debts of problem gamblers:
 - Average current debt due to gambling was \$18,422.
 - Average lifetime losses due to gambling was \$62,514.
 - Males had substantially larger lifetime losses than females (\$71,218 versus \$47,734) and slightly larger current debts (\$17,790 versus \$19,695).
 - The top four persons or institutions to whom gambling debts are owed:
 - 56.77% credit cards.
 - 38.94% family members.
 - 15.35% friends.
 - 11.55% banks/loan companies.

- Reported other addictions of problem gamblers:

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
Tobacco	38.28%	35.88%	45.70%
Food	16.34%	14.55%	20.36%
Alcohol	15.68%	19.48%	9.50%
Spending/Shopping	9.74%	9.09%	11.76%
Drugs	5.94%	8.57%	1.36%
Work	1.32%	1.82%	0.45%
Sex	0.99%	1.56%	0.45%

- Males more frequently than females reported addictions to alcohol (19.48% vs. 9.50%), drugs (8.57% vs. 1.36%) and sex (1.56% vs. 0.45%).
- Females more frequently reported addictions to smoking (45.70% vs. 35.88%) and food (20.36% vs. 14.55%).
- Previous treatment:
 - 13.6% of problem gamblers had been in treatment for excessive behaviors, and 3.2% had received professional treatment for a gambling problem.
- Treatment resources:

- 12.7% of the problem gamblers had previously attended Gamblers Anonymous.
- The primary resources suggested to gamblers were:

Gamblers Anonymous	88.12%
State sponsored Gambling Treatment	80.36%
Gam-Anon	43.07%
Read books/send literature	22.11%

Conclusions, Recommendations and CCPG Efforts

The Mission of CCPG is to reduce the impact of underage and problem gambling on the individual, the family, and the community.

1. Vulnerability shows itself in age, gender and income distinctions in problem gamblers. These differences need to be addressed in increased educational efforts targeted toward specific populations.

- *CCPG has launched a comprehensive Senior Project, including a monthly newsletter to senior centers and health care professionals who work with seniors, and an upcoming state-wide symposium on senior gambling.*
- *In order to develop more effective prevention programs and treatment modalities for problem gamblers, CCPG, in partnership with The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) is conducting a Life Histories research project of problem gamblers to determine gender differences and the impact of loss and trauma.*

2. Due to the relatively high percentage of problem gamblers reporting addictions in addition to gambling, public awareness and educational campaigns should point out the potential for cross addiction.

- *CCPG is working in the mental health sector and school system arena to train clinicians and school psychologists to screen for problem gambling.*

3. Abusive behavior and family violence often is associated with or results from problem gambling. Police and other helping professionals need to be trained to recognize and work with problem gamblers.

- *CCPG, in partnership with The Division of Special Revenue (DSR) is conducting training of all Connecticut police chiefs and has distributed problem gambling literature to all departments.*

4. Since the majority of non-casino problem gamblers report problems with state-run Lottery games, special educational efforts should be targeted towards Lottery players.

- *The CCPG Helpline number is visible on each lottery terminal and educational materials are provided at each Lottery point-of-purchase location. In addition, the Connecticut Partnership for Responsible Gambling (CCPG, DMHAS and the Lottery Corporation) has created a responsible gambling curriculum, which will be shared with all Lottery employees and the 3,700 vendors throughout Connecticut.*

5. As described in this report, the effects of problem gambling are diverse and significant. It is imperative that young people are taught that gambling, like consumption of alcohol, is not a risk free activity. School curricula need to include gambling education programs that teach risk reduction strategies.

- *CCPG is an active member of The Committee for Youth Gambling Action and Awareness, a group comprised of state legislators and representatives from each of the major State departments. The Committee has proposed the development of a model curriculum to be distributed to school districts.*
- *The CCPG School Outreach Project has solicited input from each school district in the state on attitudes and assessments of underage and problem gambling. CCPG is offering consultation, training and intervention programs for school personnel and students to prevent and work with these issues.*

CCPG recognizes the recent increases in funds from The Connecticut Lottery Corporation (CLC) and DMHAS to support increased public awareness and educational programs. These moneys, along with the continued support of Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mohegan Sun Casino, help to further these and related efforts, such as the establishment of The CCPG Resource Center.