

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Introduction

While most adult Albertans gamble responsibly, some experience real and difficult problems with their gambling. This section discusses the estimated extent of problem gambling among adults in the province, the implications of problem gambling for the gaming licensing policies in the province and some of the efforts being applied to address this serious issue.

Alberta Population Study

The most recent estimate of the number of adult Albertans believed to have problems with their gambling was contained in a 1998 report. The report, prepared for the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC), estimated 4.8% of adults in the province have problems with their gambling. That was a decline from the 5.4% reported in 1994; the decrease is not statistically significant (Wynne Resources Ltd. and AADAC, 1998).

Those percentages were further broken down into two groupings. One related to problem gamblers, the other to probable pathological gamblers, or those with more serious problems. It is estimated the number of adults in the “problem gambling” category comprised 2.8% of adult Albertans in 1998 compared to 4.0% in 1994. The estimated number of those with “probable pathological gambling” was 2.0% in 1998 compared to 1.4% in 1994.

The report noted: “Although the increase in probable pathological gambling is not statistically significant, it is a pattern found in other replication studies.” Put another way, and as the Alberta study noted:

Based on the 1996 adult Alberta population of 1.9 million, it is estimated that the number of adult Albertans with less severe gambling problems has decreased from 78,770 in 1994 to 55,139 in 1998. In contrast, it is estimated that the number of adult Albertans with more severe gambling problems has increased from 27,570 in 1994 to 39,385 in 1998.

Moreover, severe problem gambling spills over to other aspects of a person’s life, including relationships with family, friends and co-workers. It may result in a person often being absent from work due to his or her gambling addiction or lead to criminal activities such as theft or fraud by the serious problem gambler to support his or her gambling.

Depending on the estimates used, some will argue the social costs of gambling exceed the benefits derived from it, while others argue the converse, the benefits exceed the costs.

The extent of such costs or harm within the province is not clearly known. Further research as this applies to Alberta specifically is needed and is being pursued as discussed later in this section.

In any case there is in the research available today a clear message for the development of gaming licensing policies. Attention must continue to be paid to the potential harm of gaming activities on some people.

The Gaming Licensing Policy Review takes into account the expectation of Albertans that gaming continue to be controlled, regulated *and* offered in a socially responsible manner. It must also balance the real issues that accompany gambling with another reality, that for most Albertans gambling is a form of recreation. As noted in the 1998 Alberta report:

Most adult Alberta gamblers enjoy participating in all forms of gambling activities as a form of entertainment and recreation. Moreover, most gamblers are able to control their play by incorporating strategies such as wagering only what they can afford to lose, setting betting limits for their play, and participating in gaming activities in a social context with family and friends (Wynne Resources and AADAC, 1998).

Defining Problem Gambling

Problem Gambling Prevalence Research in Alberta

As mentioned, two research surveys have been conducted in the province which have estimated the extent or prevalence of gambling and problem gambling among adults in Alberta. The results of the first study were published in 1994 for Alberta Lotteries and Gaming. That was followed by a “replication study” for AADAC and published in 1998. A replication study is aimed at establishing any patterns or trends in problem gambling behaviour among adults over a period of time.

These studies focused on the Alberta population and are considered important population surveys regarding gambling and problem gambling. Their findings are often cited in various documents that discuss the subject. For that reason further discussion of the two population surveys is provided here.

Defining Terms

The 1994 and 1998 Alberta studies applied various terminology in arriving at the estimated prevalence of gambling and problem gambling in the Alberta population. The context of the studies and the key terminology used follow.

In the 1998 study, gambling activities covers gaming activities licensed in the province and other non-licensed activities. Specifically, those activities include the following:

...(1) the full range of legally-sanctioned and government-regulated gambling that occurs throughout Alberta (e.g., lotteries include video lottery terminals (VLTs), raffles, pull tickets, Sport Select, bingo, charity casinos, and horse racing); (2) games at casinos outside Alberta (e.g., Las Vegas); (3) formal and informal betting for money amongst individuals on a variety of activities (e.g., sports pools and events, games of skill, cards and board games, arcade or video games, Internet gambling); and (4) purchasing speculative investments (e.g., stocks, options, or commodities) (ibid).

A widely-recognized screening instrument called the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) was used to differentiate among those considered to be non-problem, problem and probable

pathological gamblers. The instrument involved asking respondents about 20 items, most of those related to gambling-related financial consequences that the respondent has experienced and then classifying respondents in one of the three categories based on the responses provided (see the appendix of this section for the specific questions).

A non-problem gambler is classified as a respondent who answers up to two items in the affirmative, problem gamblers either three or four and probable pathological gamblers five or more. Those achieving the latter two scores at any time in their lives were respectively considered to be lifetime problem or pathological gamblers. If they achieved those scores in the past 12 months, they were respectively considered to be current problem or pathological gamblers.

What do the terms problem gambling and probable pathological gambling mean? The 1998 report uses “disordered gambling” to help explain the two terms. It cites the use of “disordered gambling” by Shaffer, Hall and Vander Bilt (1997), who conducted an analysis of problem gambling prevalence studies.

In an effort to provide a helpful conceptual framework, they offer the term “disordered gambling” for two main reasons: (1) the concept of disordered gambling transcends each of the existing constructs (e.g., excessive, problem, pathological, and compulsive gambling) by recognizing that each of these categories represents, at various levels of intensity, a lack of order in one of the major systems of human experience (e.g., social, psychological, or biological systems); and (2) the notion of disorder represents a continuum of experience (ibid).

The Alberta study uses problem and pathological gambling to “...describe the severity of respondents’ gambling disorders.” Pathological gambling is more severe or serious than problem gambling.

Comparing the 1998 and 1994 Results

Both the 1994 and 1998 studies are accurate 19 times out of 20 to within 2.3%. In other words, “... with a province-wide sample of 1,821 adult Albertans, one can say with 95% certainty that the results for each survey are within ±2.3% of what they would have been if the entire adult population of Alberta had been interviewed” (Wynne Resources and AADAC, 1998).

Following are some general findings comparing the gambling and problem gambling prevalence in Alberta between 1994 and 1998.

Table A3-1: Gambling and Problem Gambling Prevalence Research Studies *

“Life-time” Gamblers/Non-Gamblers (reporting gambling at least once in lifetime)	1994 STUDY	1998 STUDY
Gamblers	93.0% (1)	97.0% (1)
Non-Gamblers	7.0%	3.0%
Non-Problem Gamblers	84.4%	89.1%
Problem Gamblers	5.9%	5.2%

* In the 1994 and 1998 studies an instrument, the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS-R) was “used to differentiate non-problem, problem and probable pathological gamblers. Problem gamblers are the “less severe” group of adults with gambling problems, having answered “yes” to 3 or 4 items of the 20 items in the SOGS-R. Probable pathological gamblers are the “more severe” group of adults with gambling problems, having answered “yes” to 5 or more items.” (Wynne and AADAC, 1998).

“Life-time” Gamblers/Non-Gamblers (reporting gambling at least once in lifetime)	1994 STUDY	1998 STUDY
Probable Pathological Gamblers	2.7%	2.7%
“Current” Gamblers/Non-Gamblers (reported gambling in past 12 months)		
Gamblers	90.3% (1)	87.4% (1)
Non-Gamblers	9.7%	12.6%
Non-Problem Gamblers	84.9%	82.6%
Problem Gamblers	4.0%	2.8%
Probable Pathological Gamblers	1.4%	2.0%
Top five gambling activities (largest total monthly expenditure and average monthly expenditure)	1. stocks, commodities, options 2. lottery tickets 3. bingo 4. games at casinos outside Alberta 5. VLTs	1. stocks, commodities, options 2. VLTs 3. games at casinos outside Alberta 4. lottery tickets 5. games at local casinos

(1) Figures reported as being statistically significant (p less than or equal to .01).

Of note is 4.8% of adult Albertans are estimated to have a gambling problem. That compares to 5.4% that had a gambling problem in 1994. In the 1998 study it was estimated 2.8% of adult Albertans are problem gamblers (i.e., with some problems) while 2.0% are probable pathological gamblers (i.e., with serious problems); that compares to 4.0% and 1.4% respectively in 1994.

As indicated in the table above, certain gaming activities are more popular than others in terms of total and average monthly expenditures. The report cites particular concern with gaming activities such as VLTs. It notes probable pathological gamblers are likely to engage in a range of continuous play gaming activities, including bingo, casino games and instant win tickets. It further notes there is a greater relationship with VLTs and severe gambling disorders. The reports concludes by indicating further study is needed to “...explore the causal linkages, the presence of intervening variables, and the relationship of continuous play-games –VLTs and others – to severe problem gambling.”

Recommendations

The 1998 report made seven recommendations in the areas of education and prevention, treatment, training and research. They are as follows:

1. In order to ensure public awareness and understanding, AADAC should continue to develop, deliver and enhance its general awareness and education programming on problem gambling.
2. For those at risk for developing gambling problems, AADAC should continue education and prevention initiatives that support early recognition, intervention and referral.
3. AADAC should continue to ensure there are a range of treatment interventions available to match the level of gamblers’ treatment needs.
4. AADAC should continue to screen all clients for multiple addiction problems and ensure an integrated approach to treatment services.
5. AADAC should continue to target education and treatment training strategies that support early recognition, intervention, and referral for those at risk for developing gambling problems.

6. AADAC recommends the adoption of an epidemiological framework for gambling research. As a first step, AADAC supports re-analysing the 1994 and 1998 Alberta prevalence study research within an epidemiological framework, and we also encourage the work of independent researchers in this area. AADAC recommends that this framework be used to guide policy and program development.
7. AADAC recommends the review and refinement of the research methodology and instruments to measure problem gambling in the general population before the next prevalence study in 2002 or 2003. Because this work will take time, and policy and program decisions need to be made now, AADAC also recommends a “best advice” approach to interpreting the current gambling research.

These recommendations have been incorporated into AADAC’s business planning process.

Addressing Problem Gambling

The gambling and problem gambling prevalence reports have affected the way in which gaming is approached. More attention is paid to raising the awareness of problem gambling than in the past. The public also expects the government exercise social responsibility as it manages and controls gaming activities in the province.

Alberta’s Lead Agency

Seven years ago the government appointed the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) as the province’s primary problem-gambling treatment, prevention, education and research agency. Its problem gambling programs are funded entirely through the Alberta Lottery Fund.

Over the past seven years AADAC has introduced a number of initiatives. They include:

- education and treatment programs for problem gamblers (many target adolescent education and prevention);
- campaigns to increase awareness of problem gambling include the use of posters, print, television and radio advertising;
- education programs that involve training for members of the industry and the public; and
- research such as measuring the extent of gambling and problem gambling in the province.

AADAC provides a 1-800 crisis problem gambling help-line, outpatient counselling and in-patient treatment. New treatment programs include non-residential intensive treatment, crisis stabilization, adolescent early intervention gambling survey screen and Chinese gambling outreach programs.

The agency works closely with other agencies including mental health, education boards and community boards. It works closely with the Commission and members of the gaming industry in addressing problem gambling.

AADAC Treatment Statistics

Following are statistics provided by AADAC regarding admissions for problem gambling treatment in Alberta. Also included are figures for the most frequent type of gambling reported through AADAC's 1-800 problem gambling telephone line.

Table A3-2: Problem Gambling Treatment Admissions & Calls to 1-800 Problem Gambling Telephone Help Line: 1995-96 to 1999-2000

	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
AADAC Admissions	2,316	2,617	2,899	3,100	n.a.
1-800 calls	2,713	3,020	3,794	4,132	3,527

Table A3-3: Most Frequent Type of Gambling - AADAC Admissions: 1998-99

TYPE	% ADMISSIONS REPORTED AS MOST FREQUENT TYPE OF GAMBLING
VLTs	66.6
Casinos	12.7
Bingo	10.2
Lotteries	3.1
Games of Skill	1.6
Sports Betting	1.3
Other	0.6

Table A3-4: Most Frequent Type of Gambling Reported on 1-800 Line: 1996-97 to 1998-99

TYPE OF GAME	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000
VLTs	59.4%	58.8%	53.0%	49.7%
Unknown	no data	19.4%	21.0%	23.6%
Casinos	8.4%	9.5%	10.9%	12.1%
Slot Machines	1.6%	2.0%	3.3%	4.5%
Lotteries, Pull Tabs or Scratch Tickets	4.6%	3.3%	3.7%	3.7%
Bingo	4.2%	3.9%	3.3%	2.5%
Stocks	no data	0.2%	0.2%	1.6%
Racing	1.8%	1.5%	1.4%	1.3%
Sports Betting	1.4%	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%
Other	18.7%	0%	2.4%	0.2%

AADAC has indicated service delivery statistics (admissions and 1-800 line calls) tend to be more strongly influenced by public awareness and understanding of gambling problems, advertising and program outreach activities than by the level of problem gambling prevalence.

Commission Initiatives

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission recognizes the importance of addressing problem gambling as a social issue. In that regard it has worked closely with AADAC in promoting the agency's problem gambling education, prevention and treatment services.

Commission policy requires operators of gaming facilities or those offering gaming activities post information about AADAC's problem gambling services. Those facilities include casinos, bingo association halls, bars and lounges with VLTs and ticket retailer locations.

The Commission is a partner with AADAC in providing and encouraging responsible gaming standards at gambling venues. It encourages gaming retailers to provide problem gambling information sessions for staff as part of their overall staff orientation practices and to incorporate clear responsible gaming standards as part of doing business.

The Commission, AADAC and the industry continue to develop new responsible gaming initiatives.

The Commission is researching problem gambling features available on VLTs. These include automatic cashouts, timed play and screen savers with AADAC help line messages.

A Casino Voluntary Self Exclusion Program was implemented in 2000-01. The program was developed by the Commission in close cooperation with Alberta casino operators. It allows individuals with a gambling problem to voluntarily request they be placed on a list denying them entry into any casino in Alberta. Photographs of those individuals are provided to casino staff across the province. The Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association (AHLA) has also established a similar voluntary program through members who are also VLT retailers.

The Commission consults with industry members on adopting programs to reduce problem gambling, including VLT operators and casino facility operators.

Other initiatives are discussed elsewhere throughout the report of the Gaming Licensing Policy Review.

Commitment to Research

The field of treating problem gambling is relatively new. That is in contrast to the experience and knowledge in the treatment for alcohol or drug abuse, which the province has been providing over the past few decades.

Those involved with problem gambling treatment and research recognize the problem is complex and there is more to be learned about it. This is reflected in the province's 1998 gambling study which concluded:

...pathological [or serious problems with] gambling is frequently accompanied by heavy use of alcohol, tobacco, and, to a lesser extent, drugs for some individuals. In the past five years, there has been a growing awareness of the multiple addictions phenomenon in both research and in treatment practice, and clinicians are more vigilant in screening clients for a constellation of addiction problems (Wynne Resources Ltd. and AADAC, 1998).

A similar view was expressed in an earlier report entitled *Gambling in Canada: A Report by National Council of Welfare* published in 1996. It noted: "Whether or not gambling creates, or contributes to other addictive behaviours is a matter of some debate, as is the question of which addiction comes first."

The need for more and better research was identified at the Lotteries and Gaming Summit '98. In the summit report it was recommended: "... the provincial government dedicate more resources

to gaming research in areas like the prevention and treatment of problem gambling, the social impacts of lotteries and gaming, native gaming issues, and emergent gaming activities.”

The government accepted the recommendation and in response established the Alberta Gaming Research Institute on November 26, 1999. The institute, funded by the Alberta Lottery Fund, is a consortium comprising the University of Alberta, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge.

In its 2000-03 business plan, the institute notes its mission is “To significantly improve Albertans’ knowledge of how gambling affects society.” Its core purposes are to:

1. Expand the breadth and depth of scientific knowledge into gambling;
2. Provide education about current knowledge through research publications and reporting of research results;
3. Provide research related to emergent gaming activities;
4. Act as a clearinghouse for literature related to gaming research; and,
5. Forge strong collaborative links with national and international scholars and organizations involved in gaming/gambling research studies.

Various measures are identified to determine the institute’s performance in identified areas.

One of the first projects of the institute is to complete a review of literature in four broad gambling areas before undertaking other research activities. Those areas are:

1. Bio-psychological and health care, including new developments in the prevention and treatment of problem gambling, including new knowledge, efficacy and effectiveness, and evolution;
2. Socio-cultural, including prevalence research, and the social impacts of lotteries and gaming, including aboriginal issues;
3. Economic, including prevalence research, and the economic impacts of lotteries and gaming; and,
4. Government and industry policy and practice.

(Alberta Gaming Research Institute website, <<www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca>>)

Industry Involvement

The full success of problem gambling initiatives requires the support, commitment and involvement of Alberta’s gaming industry. Some members of the gaming industry in Alberta have expressly recognized the importance of creating or participating in programs to address problem gambling.

The Commission has encouraged members in the industry to become involved in problem gambling initiatives. Some of these initiatives were mentioned earlier. To reinforce the importance of their involvement, Commission policies specifically require licensed gaming facilities, including casinos and bingo halls, post or make available problem gambling information as requested through the Commission. Similarly, VLT retailers and ticket lottery outlets are required to make available similar information to their customers. Some members of the industry, through their own initiative and with the Commission’s endorsement, have introduced problem gambling awareness training for their staff.

The Alberta Gaming Industry Association (AGIA) has indicated it aims to proactively address problem gambling in addition to fulfilling its role of representing the financial interests of industry members to the government. Membership to the association is open to anyone involved with gaming activities, including VLTs, bingo and casinos.

The Alberta Hotel Association (now the Alberta Hotel and Lodging Association) has proposed hotel gaming rooms be introduced, in response to public concerns video lottery terminals (VLTs) are too readily accessible in bars and lounges. The proposal suggests removing VLTs from bars or lounges in a hotel and instead allow for single rooms dedicated to slot machine gaming.

Implications

There are strides being made to heighten awareness of problem gambling in the province. Various initiatives to address problem gambling have been identified in this section and are currently underway. Research has been conducted in the past to alert Albertans to the potential harm that may arise from gambling. Efforts are being made to obtain new research, to provide better information on the social and economic costs and benefits of gaming, to help guide gaming policy development in the future.

Through the Gaming Licensing Policy Review process, the Commission is examining other possible initiatives. The sections dealing with specific gaming activities identify the topic of social responsibility under primary issues to be addressed. The question being asked is whether there are other ways in which the Commission may assist AADAC to address problem gambling.

This question will continue to be asked in the future, as the Commission develops specific gaming licensing policies over the next five years in keeping with the direction provided through the gaming licensing review process.

Appendix

South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS)

The South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) was used in the Alberta gambling and problem gambling prevalence studies of 1994 and 1998. The screen consists of a number of questions posed to respondents.

The first part of each question is about whether the respondent *ever* acted in a particular way regarding gambling. The response is considered to represent the respondent's "lifetime" occurrence regarding the action or behaviour. In addition, for each question the respondent was also whether that behaviour or action occurred in the past year. The response here is considered to be the respondent's "current" behaviour.

The SOGS questions follow. Only the first part of the question regarding lifetime behaviour is included. For the sake of brevity the second part dealing with current behaviour is omitted.

1. When you participate in the gambling activities we have discussed, how often do you go back another day to win back money you lost? (possible responses: never, some of the time, most of the time, every time, don't know, refused.)
2. Have you ever claimed to be winning money from these activities when in fact you lost? (possible responses: never, some of the time, most of the time, every time, don't know, refused.)
3. Do you ever spend more time or money gambling than you intended? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
4. Have people ever criticized your gambling? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
5. Have you ever felt guilt about the way you gamble or about what happens when you gamble? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
6. Have you ever felt that you would like to stop gambling, but didn't think that you could? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
7. Have you ever hidden betting slips, lottery tickets, gambling money or other signs of gambling from your spouse or partner, children, or other important people in your life? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
8. Have you ever argued with people you live with over how you handle money? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
9. Have these money arguments ever centred on your gambling? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
10. Have you ever missed time from work or school due to gambling? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
11. Have you ever borrowed money from someone and not paid them back as a result of your gambling? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
12. Have you ever borrowed from household money to gamble or pay gambling debts? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
13. Have you ever borrowed money from your spouse or partner to gamble or to pay gambling debts? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.) *If no spouse or partner, answer no.*
14. Have you ever borrowed money from other relatives or in-laws to gamble or to pay gambling debts? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
15. Have you ever gotten loans from banks, loan companies or credit unions for gambling or to pay gambling debts? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
16. Have you ever made cash withdrawals on credit cards such as VISA or Mastercard to get money to gamble or to pay gambling debts? (Does not include ATM or instant cash cards). (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
17. Have you ever gotten loans from loan sharks to gamble or to pay gambling debts? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
18. Have you ever cashed in stocks, bonds or other securities to gamble or pay gambling debts? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
19. Have you ever sold personal or family property to gamble or to pay gambling debts? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
20. Have you ever borrowed money from your chequing account by writing cheques that bounced to get money for gambling or to pay gambling debts. (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
21. Have you ever had a credit line with a casino or bookie? (possible responses: yes, no, don't know, refused.)
22. Do you feel that you ever had a problem with betting money or gambling?
23. Have you ever wanted to stop gambling?
24. Have you ever tried to get help to stop gambling?
25. Where did you go for help? (list provided, including family, friends, Gamblers Anonymous or other support group, social worker, priest, minister or rabbi, AADAC, etc.)
26. Have you ever been in trouble with the law because of activities related to gambling?

27. While gambling, have you ever felt like you were a different person? Would you say ... (possible responses: almost always, most of the time, sometimes, never, don't know, refused.)
28. While gambling, would you say you ever felt like you were in a trance? Would you say ... (possible responses: almost always, most of the time, sometimes, never, don't know, refused.)
29. While gambling, have you ever lost track of time? Would you say ... (possible responses: almost always, most of the time, sometimes, never, don't know, refused.)
30. While gambling, have you ever felt like you were outside yourself, watching yourself doing it? Would you say ... (possible responses: almost always, most of the time, sometimes, never, don't know, refused.)
31. After gambling, have you ever experienced a memory blackout for the things that happened while you were gambling? Would you say ... (possible responses: almost always, most of the time, sometimes, never, don't know, refused.)