



## Pasifika and problem gambling

### Background

In New Zealand problem gambling is more prevalent among people with lower socio-economic status and lower educational levels, within which Pasifika feature heavily. <sup>1</sup>

Two thirds of gamblers live in the most socio-economically deprived 40% of New Zealand. Decile 7-10 are the poorer areas of New Zealand where the most pokie machines are found. In Decile 9 areas there is one machine for every 75 people whereas in Decile 1 areas (such as Remuera) there is one machine per 465 people. <sup>2</sup>

In 1991 Pasifika made up 6.5% of the New Zealand population but made up 14% of pathological and problem gamblers. <sup>3</sup> 11% were identified as lifetime problem gamblers (compared to 2.9% of the general population).

A breakdown of the ethnicity of Pasifika gamblers was: 45% Samoan, 18% Cook Island Maori, 20% Tongan, 3% Fijian and 14% other Pasifika.

The prevalence of problem gambling is six times higher among Pasifika than for European New Zealanders. This is because Pasifika also have bimodal gambling patterns. Which means

that there are fewer gamblers but those who gamble are spending disproportionately larger amounts of money (\$13,468 per annum per person) than other ethnicities: European (\$1,761), Maori (\$1,908) and Asian (\$2,829). <sup>4</sup>

Pasifika are the most frequent visitors to casinos and they spending the most amounts of time at gambling venues.

Traditionally when Pasifika men came to New Zealand they adopted gambling at the TAB as a socialisation technique to help combat the isolation of living in New Zealand away from village and community networks. <sup>1</sup>

The introduction of pokie machines in New Zealand and the strong association between continuous forms and problem gambling saw Pasifika become the most at risk ethnicity to develop problem or pathological gambling behaviours. They are also at high risk of other health and social problems including alcohol and drug problems.

In 2004 Pasifika women made up 62% of Pasifika accessing treatment services, while women made up only 50.4% of the total numbers of those seeking help. <sup>3</sup>

Fathers who gamble are more likely to be perpetrators as well as victims of verbal aggression, with at risk/problem gambling also being associated with physical violence. Smoking and alcohol consumption (at higher/harmful levels) were also associated with gambling for both men and women. <sup>5</sup>

### Statistics from treatment services (2007) <sup>6</sup>

Pasifika involved in gambling are less likely to contact treatment or service providers by phone. However, 7.2% of 2007 face to face presentations were Pasifika. By 2009 this had increased to 9%.

The number of new Pasifika clients to the Gambling Helpline increased significantly (by 27.1%) from 10.7% in 2006 to 13.6% in 2007.

The primary mode of gambling for Pasifika men receiving treatment was pokies (75.9%), 65.1% were non casino and 10.8% casino machines.

For Pasifika women the primary mode was also pokies (93.6%). 83% were non casino and 10.6% casino machines.

**Pasifika and Maori women are more at risk from non casino pokie machines than other ethnicities and are more likely to suffer gambling related harm**



### Contributing factors to Pasifika gambling:

- Normalisation of gambling in churches and families
- Normalisation of lending institutes
- Venues catering to Pasifika
- Lack of information
- Low Socio-economic situation
- Family pressure to support financially
- Family and church obligations
- Accessibility of gambling venues in their community

### Impacts of gambling on Pasifika

- Breakdown in family relationships in terms of honesty, trust and spending time with partners and providing for the needs of the children
- Extra financial and care-giving burdens placed on extended family members.
- Financial management problems leading to loss of possessions or eviction, and declines in health, employment, education and contribution to the community.

**For some Pacific people there is an inherent belief that there is a generosity involved in gambling and that all money that is put into the machine is returned through payouts. So, often gamblers seek formulas for when they think the best time to gamble, such as when the machines are full – 'after midnight on a Sunday night'. There is a belief that the machines are controllable, fair, reciprocal and generous.**

Yvette Guttenbeil-Po'u'hila, Tongan Gambling



**For Pasifika problems start with accessibility to venues and gambling outlets**

**6.2.5 Prevalence of Gambling Opportunities and Problem Gambling Risk Factors**

Table 5 below illustrates the relationship between socio-economic deprivation, ethnicity, and availability of gambling opportunities. Gambling venues proliferate as deprivation increases and, consequently, in proximity to the Māori and Pacific peoples populations who reside disproportionately in these areas.

**Table 5: Gambling Outlets and Risk Factors by Decile**

Decile	Population	Maori	Pacific Island	Asian	NCGMs	NCGM Expenditure	TABs	Lotteries Outlets
1	9%	3%	2%	6%	2%	1%	3%	4%
2	10%	4%	3%	11%	3%	3%	3%	4%
3	9%	4%	3%	9%	4%	5%	5%	8%
4	9%	6%	4%	9%	6%	6%	8%	6%
5	10%	8%	5%	11%	6%	8%	9%	9%
6	10%	9%	6%	11%	11%	10%	11%	10%
7	10%	10%	9%	9%	14%	11%	12%	12%
8	11%	14%	13%	13%	19%	20%	18%	17%
9	11%	17%	19%	12%	23%	20%	17%	16%
10	10%	24%	38%	9%	12%	16%	14%	13%
<b>Total Number</b>	<b>4,027,947</b>	<b>564,948</b>	<b>265,908</b>	<b>354,495</b>	<b>19,856</b>	<b>\$938,236,950</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>1,005</b>

The data presented above indicates that the development of gambling venues in New Zealand is in clear alignment with trends and risk factors which have been identified comprehensively in the literature and in previous problem gambling geographies: the distribution of gambling venues occurs disproportionately in areas with higher levels of socio-economic deprivation, with increased Māori and Pacific Island populations. Additional risk factors (suggested anecdotally and through the demographics of problem gamblers seeking treatment) which are more evident at the CAU level (see Table 3 above, page 50) are higher than average populations of Asian and recent immigrant populations.

**NZ study on Why people gamble?<sup>7</sup>**

**Samoa** people often gamble because: they are under stress when unemployed and need money to fulfil tradition obligations; exposed to gambling by family members when they discuss winnings; advertising on TV making gambling glamorous, and sandwich boards identifying availability of venues.

**Tongan** youth gamble for fun but adults

gamble to make money and have a high expectation of winning, this may lead to problem gambling. It was felt that **Tongan** women were developing gambling problems faster than men. It was also suggested that low socio-economic areas were targeted by TABs and pokie outlets where poverty is already high.

**Niue's** focus group felt that those unemployed tended to gamble with their benefits and that

Source: Francis Group (2009) Informing the 2009 problem gambling needs assessment: Report for the Ministry of Health. Wellington: MOH.

employment was one answer to prevent problem gambling. They felt that because one person in the family controls the finances that often gambling can be hidden until things become very bad. They suggested that people gambled because their lives weren't fulfilled and that those around them gambled. They also felt that problem gambling could lead to alcohol abuse.

All groups conceded that the easy access to pokies in pubs and gambling venues contributed to developing problem gambling and that exposure to advertising about Lotto, the casino and the TAB on TV, radio, newspapers and the Internet normalized gambling and emphasized luck in winning.

**Barriers to seeking help for problem gambling by Pasifika are<sup>8</sup>:**

- financial hardship
- cost and transport
- lack of culturally appropriate services
- lack of local services
- difficulties in accessing services
- stigma associated with mental illness
- lack of childcare and support
- gender insensitivity
- lack of information

1. Yvette Guttenbeil-Po'uhila (2004) *Tongan Gambling* URL: [http://www.arphs.govt.nz/Publications\\_reports/pacific\\_health/TonganGambling.pdf](http://www.arphs.govt.nz/Publications_reports/pacific_health/TonganGambling.pdf)  
2. Public Health Intelligence Applications Laboratory, School of Earth Sciences, Victoria University of Wellington. (2003) *Problem gambling geography in New Zealand*. URL: [http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/wpg\\_Index/About-Problem+Gambling+Geography](http://www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/wpg_Index/About-Problem+Gambling+Geography)  
3. M. Bellringer, L. Perese, M. W. Abbott & M M Williams. (2006) Gambling among pacific mothers living in New Zealand. *International Gambling Studies* 6 (2): 217-235.  
4. Australian Inst. Gambling Research (1998) *Study of the social and economic impacts of NZ casinos*. Auckland: NZ Casino Control Authority  
5. M. Bellringer, M Abbott, M. Williams, W. Gao. (2008) Problem gambling—Pacific Islands families longitudinal study. Final Report. Auckland: AUT.  
6. Ministry of Health (2008) Problem gambling intervention services in New Zealand. 2007 service-user statistics. Wellington: MOH  
7. Samson Tse et al. (2005) *Why people gamble*. Auckland: Uniservices.  
8. L. Perese. (2009) *You bet your life... and mine! Contemporary Samoan gambling in New Zealand*. PhD Thesis. Auckland: UoA.

**Problem Gambling Foundation Hotline  
0800 664 262**

Produced by the Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand,  
P.O. Box 8021, Symonds Street, Auckland.  
Phone 368 1520

[www.pfgnz.org.nz](http://www.pfgnz.org.nz) / [www.pfgnz.org.nz/library/](http://www.pfgnz.org.nz/library/)