



Australian  
National  
University

## Beliefs & Knowledge – November 2012 - Summary of Findings -

The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission contracted The Australian National University's Centre for Gambling Research to undertake a study into the knowledge and beliefs about the signs and symptoms of problem gambling amongst people who play gaming machines, and their attitudes towards people with gambling problems.

The study was based on interviews with 25 adults who played electronic gaming machines (EGMs) at least once per week, who completed:

- a telephone interview where they were asked questions about their gambling participation and questions about their attitudes towards gambling;
- an in-depth interview where they discussed in more detail their beliefs and knowledge about gambling and problem gambling, the signs and symptoms of problem gambling, and their knowledge of services available for people with gambling problem; and
- a short questionnaire containing the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) items of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index. Participant responses were then grouped according to their score as being in the non-problem/low risk group, moderate-risk group, or problem gambling group.

### **Key results**

The key results of the study include:

- not spending more than you can afford was the most commonly reported feature of responsible gambling;
- knowledge about other features of responsible gambling – such as keeping to a budget, setting time limits, and being a social activity - increased amongst participants who had experienced gambling harms;
- all groups defined problem gambling as gambling more than you can afford, along with associated harms, chasing losses and unrealistic expectations about winning;
- the concept of addiction as a defining feature of problem gambling (as opposed to not gambling more than you can afford) was most evident amongst the moderate-risk and problem-gambling groups;
- many participants held negative views about people with gambling problems, such as believing they addictive personalities, and stigma was an underlying theme;

- all participants could describe at least some signs and symptoms of problem gambling in other people, but they tended to describe overt or extreme behaviour rather than early indications of a developing problem;
- participants' ability to describe the signs and symptoms of problem gambling was greater amongst people who had experienced gambling problems compared to participants in the non-problem/low-risk group;
- not wanting to make judgements based on appearances when observing other people's gambling behaviour was a recurring theme for all groups;
- participants were generally reluctant to intervene if they knew someone had a gambling problem and many said they would only intervene if the person was a family member or a very close friend;
- participants rarely intervened when they knew someone with a gambling problem, and those that did only did so when the person was a family member or relative;
- most participants were optimistic that gambling problems could be treated, but the onus was on the individual recognising their problem and wanting to get help; and
- participants had limited knowledge about the range of problem gambling help services available and very few participants identified health professionals or welfare agencies as potential sources of assistance.

### **Support is available**

Anyone experiencing problems with their gambling is urged to seek assistance. The Commission's problem gambling website provides information on responsible gambling, self help materials and links to help services [www.problemgambling.act.gov.au](http://www.problemgambling.act.gov.au)

Immediate and free assistance is available anytime by phoning Mission Australia on 1800 858 858 or through the national online help service at [www.gamblinghelponline.org.au](http://www.gamblinghelponline.org.au)