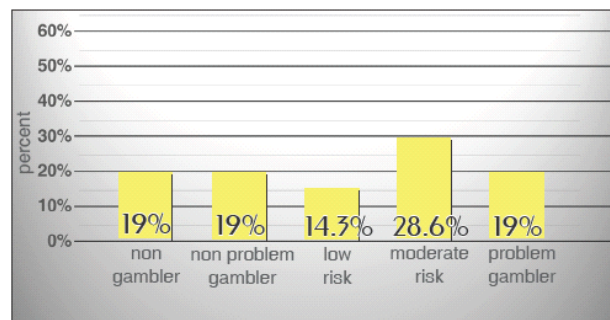


## *Problem Gambling & Help-Seeking: AFM Study Provides a “Piece” of the Puzzle*

Previous research has shown gambling to be of a dynamic nature with some gamblers moving from problem levels to low risk to being a non-gambler - all in one year! Although research shows that gambling behaviour lies on a dynamic continuum, one thing that we don't know too much about are the factors associated with these transitions over time. Are there particular types of gamblers who tend to stay in the same category over time? And if so, what factors contribute to this stability? Are some gamblers more at risk over time due to the way they think about gambling? Also, what are the factors associated with those who seek help for their gambling and how can we help those people who are having issues but do not seek out supports – as we know from the research, help-seeking is very low in problem gambling.

Therefore, in parts of 2007 and 2008 a collaborative longitudinal research project co-led by former AFM Research Analyst, Dr. Jamie Wiebe (also led by Dr. Scott Maitland) and co-investigators – Dr. David Hodgins, Dr. Adam Davey, and Dr. Benjamin Gottlieb was completed with the help of AFM staff, clients and data from the 2006 gambling prevalence study.

**Figure 3.26: Problem Gamblers 48 - Week Transitions**



Source: from the original technical report (please see AFM website)

The longitudinal study examined data from two sources: 347 Manitoba adults who scored at some level of risk on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)<sup>1</sup> from the 2006 AFM Prevalence Study (general population) and a sample of 42 clients attending AFM's Gambling Treatment Orientation session due to concerns about their gambling (also known as the 'help-seeking group'). Data collection points were altered to control for test reactivity and no effect of reactivity was found (the full report explains this in more detail). Response rates over time were excellent. Regression models and latent growth modelling statistical techniques were employed to explore predictive variables and to understand the complex nature of the variables in the long-term.

<sup>1</sup>The PGSI is a sub-scale of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) and it places gamblers at one of four levels: non-problem, at-risk, moderate and severe problems. Reliability and test-retest correlations are good ( $\alpha$ , =.84;  $r$  =.78 respectively).

# AN INSIDE VIEW

## Continued



Vol. 15, No. 1, 2010

Over time participants were surveyed on a variety of areas, including:

- gambling participation;
- levels of problem gambling;
- gambling cognitions (e.g., ‘illusion of control’, ‘perceived inability to stop gambling’);
- alcohol consumption and drug use;
- mental health; and
- social support and demographics.

### Highlights

The study confirmed that there is a great deal of movement in gambling levels. The figure on page 1 illustrates this finding. One year later, those adults who were considered problem gamblers at baseline are now in very different categories with 19% not gambling, 19% non-problem gamblers, 14% low-risk gamblers, and 29% moderate-risk gamblers. Only 19% of the original sample continues to be having severe problems with their gambling. This is good news as we can see that one year later 81% are gambling at less problematic levels. This movement occurred in all categories including the help-seeking group. At baseline (occurring 1 month after the AFM Gambling Orientation session), 17% were non-gamblers and 17% were non-problem or low-risk gamblers – this finding goes to show how quickly our clients can make changes to their situation with some significant changes occurring after they have made their first call to the Problem Gambling Helpline!

Exploring predictors of problem gambling is complex. Of all the factors examined, only a perceived inability to stop gambling and illusion of control

For a copy of the final report or highlights, please visit the following link on the AFW website:  
<http://www.afm.mb.ca/About%20AFM/documents/TransitionsandStabilityofProblemGamblingBehaviours.pdf>

**Table 5.2: Awareness and Use of Problem Gambling Services Among General Population**

Problem Gambling Service	Total General Population Group
<b>Problem Gambling Helpline</b>	
Aware	74.1
Used	1.7
<b>Problem Gambling Counseling Services</b>	
Aware	37.5
Used	2.3

Source: from the original technical report (please see AFM website)

were significant predictors of problem gambling. Factors such as depression, illicit drug abuse, control and perceived inability to stop were associated with a faster rate of reduction in problem gambling over time. Not surprising, alcohol abuse was related to higher initial baseline levels of problem gambling.

One thing that is paramount is the small number of adults who seek help (and as the table above shows - the small number aware of services) for their gambling compared to those at-risk as identified in our prevalence studies. Help-seekers were more likely (compared to the general population sample) to: report personal/financial problems; feel guilty; have support; and drink at harmful levels.

### What does this mean for AFM?

The study provides a wealth of information, but self efficacy/self empowerment, alcohol use and exploring comorbidities seem to play an important part in predicting problem gambling & help-seeking and should be further investigated – within AFM and in other research studies.