

**Addictions Foundation of Manitoba**

***Problem Gambling Help-Line***

**Review 2001-2002**

**Jill Heater, M.A.**

**&**

**Bill Smitheringale, MEd.**

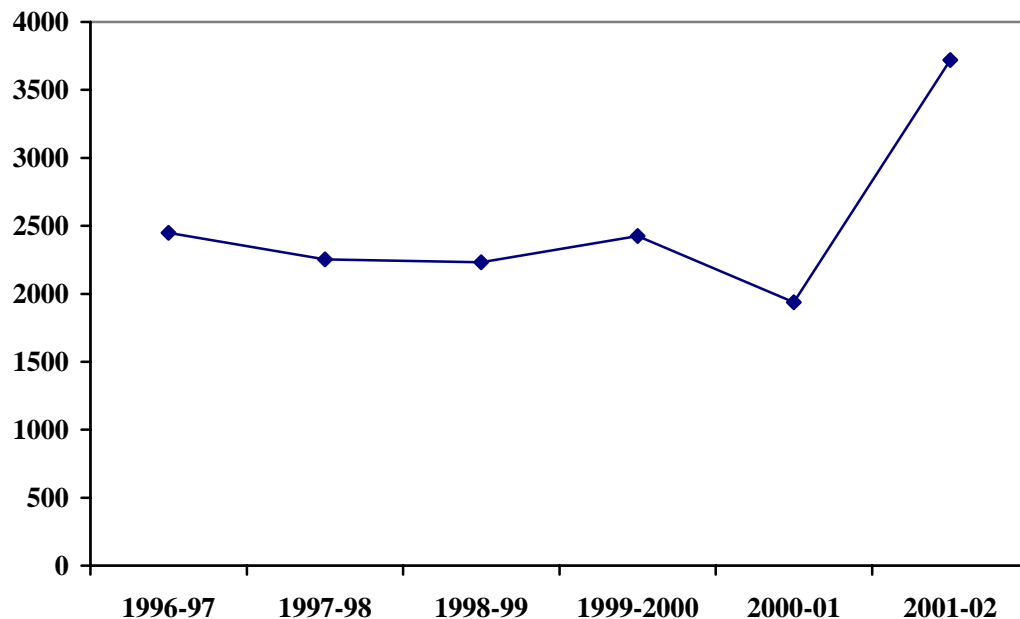
**January 2003**

## Executive Summary

In December 2002, a review of the *Problem Gambling Help-Line* was conducted to inform the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba of caller profiles, gambling patterns, and some of the effects of gambling. This review will help inform the staff on the *Problem Gambling Help-Line* of the characteristics of callers and some of their needs. It will also demonstrate the continuing need for the *Problem Gambling Help-Line* by identifying the increasing number of incoming calls to the help-line.

Figure 1 shows the increase of callers in the fiscal year of 2001-2002 compared with previous years. The current data is compared with the help-line data reported in the *AFM's Annual Statistic Review 2001-2002*.

**Figure 1. The Number of Calls Made to the Help-Line from 1996-2002.**



There is a large increase in the numbers of calls made to the help-line from the fiscal year of 2000-01 to 2001-02 (almost twice as many calls). There are two possible explanations for this increase in calls. First, the Manitoba Lottery Corporation has advertised the *Problem Gambling Help-Line* in various media campaigns (i.e., television, newspaper, posters, etc.) over the past year. Perhaps, this increase in advertising has increased the awareness of the help-line. Second, the help-line began using new data collection forms for the fiscal year of 2001-02. These new forms were intended to make documenting pertinent caller information easier for the help-line staff. Even though we are not sure of the exact cause of this increase, the trend demonstrates the continuing importance of the help-line.

Overall, the information gathered from the callers of the help-line revealed several notable points.

- First, there are about twice as many women calling concerned about someone else's gambling than there are men. There is only a small gender difference in callers calling about their own gambling problem. The ratio between men and women calling the help-line has changed considerably since the first report. In 1994-95, 66% of the calls were from men, whereas, in the present report, 48% of the calls were from men.
- Second, most callers have been either concerned about their own or another's gambling behaviour for several years. This finding is striking: it suggests that problem gambling is a chronic problem that people do not quickly identify. It also may be the case that individuals do not call the help-line until the problem has reached a crisis state. Most of the callers have discussed their concern around gambling with either a spouse or another family member.
- Third, the type of gambling that the majority of callers are phoning about is Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) and the most prevalent gambling locations are at the Winnipeg casinos or a hotel/bar location. This large number of VLT players suggests that gamblers spend much of their time at these machines, which may indicate a potential problem. Hence, VLTs could continue to be used as a site for help-line advertisements and a target for prevention/rehabilitation.
- Fourth, there are a greater number of calls being made during the weekdays (i.e., 8:30am-4:30pm, Monday to Friday) than there are at any other times of the week.

## Introduction

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba operates the *Problem Gambling Help-Line* from its Winnipeg office and is available toll free from anywhere in the province. The help-line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This service provides some counselling, internal and external referrals to appropriate agencies, and education around problem gambling for callers who are concerned of either their own or someone else's gambling behaviour. The help-line is also able to connect suicidal callers with a direct phone line to Klinik (crisis line in Winnipeg) and use an interpretation service for non-English speaking callers.

This is the second review of the help-line. The first written review was conducted in 1995, for the calls in the fiscal year 1994-1995. The present report will review the calls of the fiscal year 2001-2002.

Information for this review of the *Problem Gambling Help-Line* was obtained from two sources. The first source of data came from the daily log sheets that were filled out by the individuals receiving the calls on the help-line. These daily log sheets gathered brief information for every call received, in particular when the call was received, who was calling and for what reason. The daily log sheets are referred to as the "short forms." Generally, these short forms provide a quick overview of how busy the lines are, when the lines are busy, and who is calling. The second source of data came from longer, more detailed log sheets. The detailed information of the calls was gathered at two times a year (all of November, 2001 and March, 2002). The more detailed forms, that are also filled out by the individuals receiving the calls, are referred to as the "long forms." The long forms are intended to gather detailed information from a sample that can be generalized to the entire year of calls. Generally, these long forms provide more detailed information as to why the caller is calling the help-line and his or her concerns around the gambling behaviour involved. The following review is divided into three sections:

- The first section provides an overview of the calls, that is, the information gathered from the daily log sheets (i.e., primarily the short forms).
- The second section provides the specific information of the callers who are calling about their own gambling.
- The third section will provide the specific information of the callers, who are calling because they are concerned of someone else's gambling behaviour.

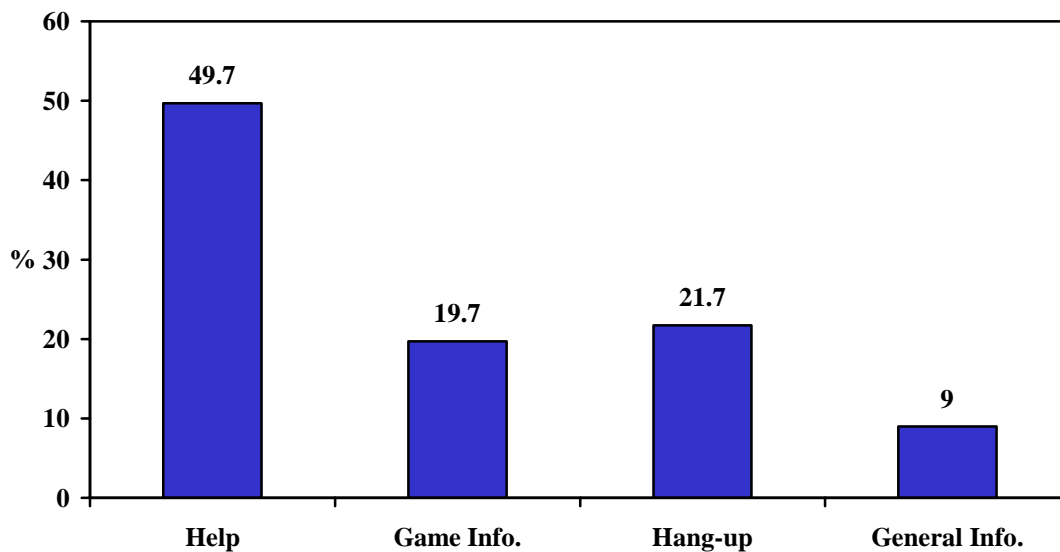
The information presented in the second and third sections is gathered from the long forms, where detailed caller information is collected twice a year. In several of the figures throughout this report, the total figure percentage may exceed 100%. This is because some questions allow for more than one response, hence a total of more than 100%.

### Overview of Problem Gambling Help-Line

There were a total of 3747 calls made to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) *Problem Gambling Help-Line* in the fiscal year of 2001-2002, for all of Manitoba. The majority of calls were from the Winnipeg Region ( $N = 99$ ; 96.1%). There were fewer calls from the Northern ( $N = 1$ ; 1%) and Western ( $N = 2$ ; 1.9%) Regions. There were three calls that were miscoded. The breakdown of calls per region was calculated by the postal codes gathered from the long forms. The number of calls made from the Western and Northern regions is low.

The greatest percentage of calls to the help-line was for help. Of the total 3747 calls, 1863 (49.7%) were calls for help. Calls for help were classified as calls made by someone who was concerned about their own or someone else's gambling behaviour. There were 740 (19.7%) calls requesting gaming-related information and 807 (21.7%) calls that were hang-up/prank calls. Finally, there were 337 (9%) calls where the caller was seeking more general information such as media requests, course information, etc. These percentages are shown on Figure 2. Calls for help comprised of about half of the calls received.

**Figure 2. What are the Types of Calls Made to the Help-Line?**



#### Time of day call received and length of call

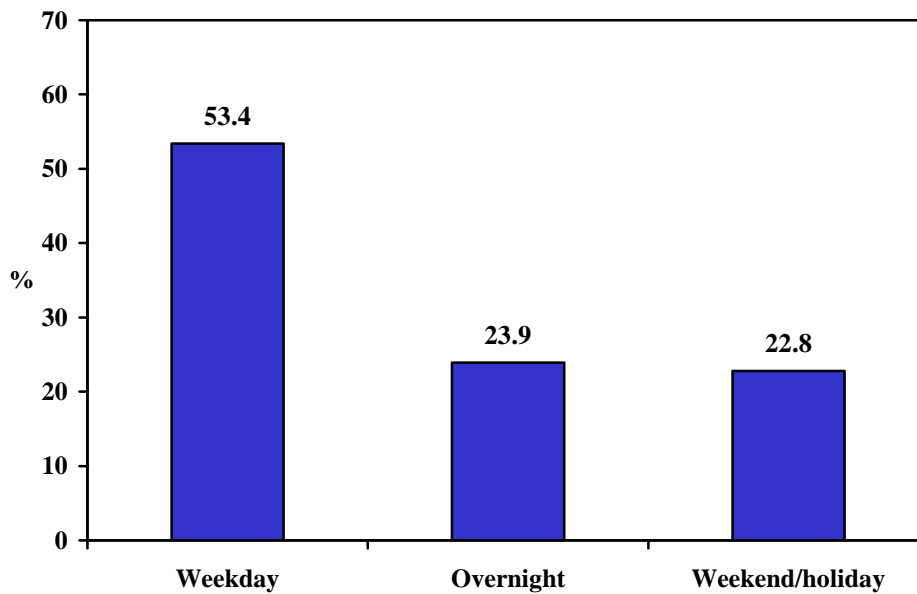
The majority of calls made to the help-line are in the daytime during the week between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm ( $N = 1985$ ; 53.4%; see Figure 3). There are approximately equal amounts of calls made to the help-line during weeknights between 4:30 pm and 8:30 am ( $N = 888$ ; 23.9%) and weekends/holidays ( $N = 847$ ; 22.8%).

The average length of a call for help was approximately 20 minutes. The length of calls ranged between 4 to 55 minutes. The mean length of call for help has increased by 10.5 minutes since 1994-95. There is no obvious explanation for why the calls doubled in length since 1994-95. The mean length of calls was slightly longer during the weekday shift (21 minutes), than they were on the overnight shift (16 minutes), and on the weekend shift (18 minutes). Calls during the weekdays were 31% longer than calls during the weeknights. In terms of who was calling, the affected callers' length of call was slightly longer ( $M = 21.1$ ) than the gamblers' length of call ( $M = 19.5$ ).

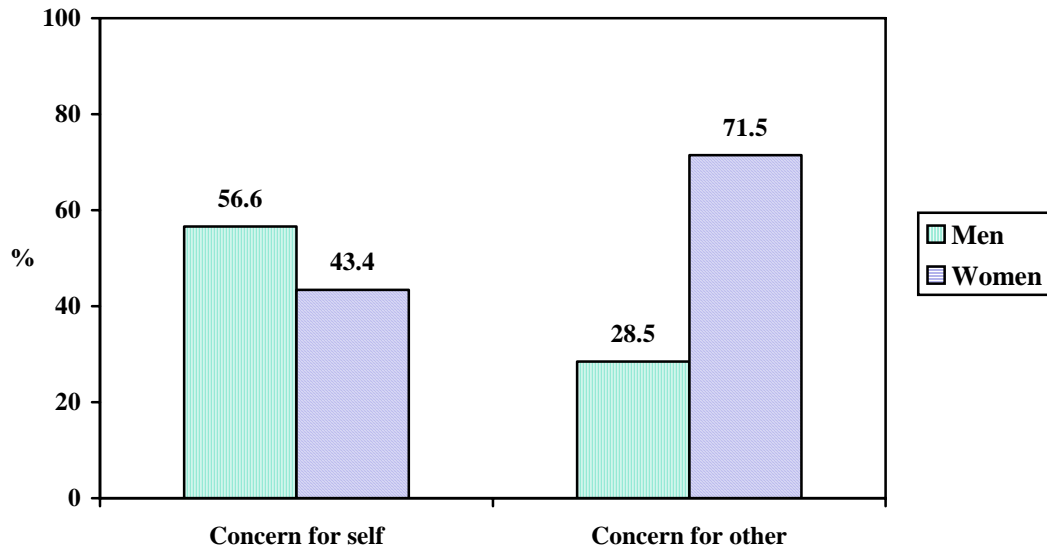
### Overview of type of callers

As mentioned, there were 1863 calls for help on the help-line. The majority of these calls were made by individuals who were concerned about their own gambling (66.9%). There were slightly more men than women who called concerned about their own gambling behaviour (56.6%; 43.4%, respectively). Other calls for help were made by individuals who were concerned about or "affected" by someone else's gambling behaviour (30.7%). Interestingly, there were considerably more women than men who called concerned about someone else's gambling behaviour (71.5%; 28.5%, respectively). This gender comparison is shown in Figure 4. Although the rate of men and women calling concerned of their own gambling is relatively equal, there are far more women than men calling concerned about someone else's gambling. This is consistent with the stereotype of the female gender role as caring and nurturing, as well as the fact that there are greater numbers of men with problem gambling. Two and a half percent of help calls were neither classified as an affected or gambler call.

**Figure 3. On What Shift Are the Calls Received?**



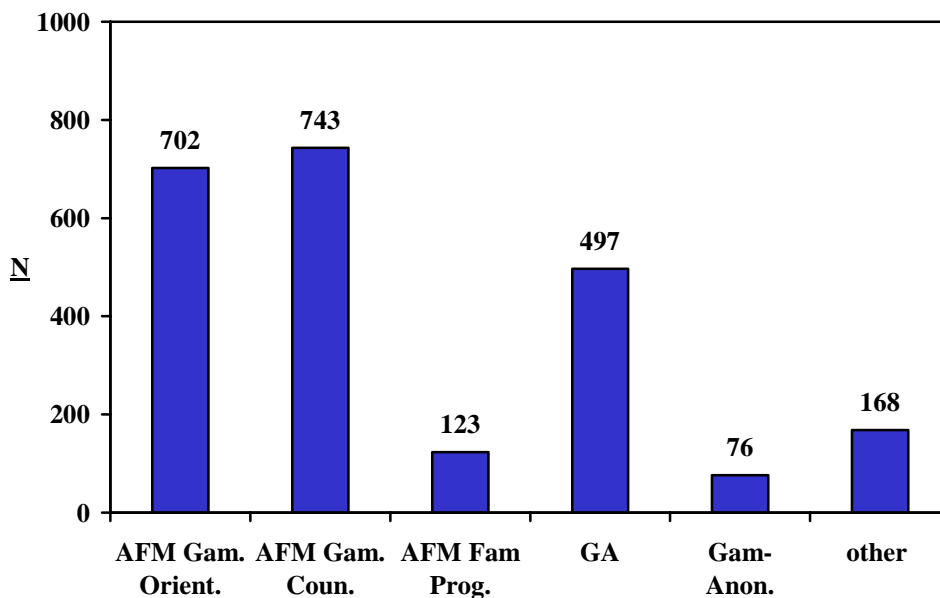
**Figure 4. How Many Men and Women are Calling for Whom?**



**Overview of the help-line referrals provided to callers**

Overall, there was a total of 2309 internal and external referrals provided to help-line callers. The following is the breakdown of agencies and numbers of referrals: AFM Gambling Orientation ( $N = 702$ ); AFM Gambling Counsellor ( $N = 743$ ); AFM Family Program ( $N = 123$ ); Gamblers Anonymous (GA;  $N = 497$ ); Gam-Anon. ( $N = 76$ ); and other agencies ( $N = 168$ ). Most referrals are made to either AFM Gambling Orientation and Counsellor, and Gamblers Anonymous.

**Figure 5. What are the Referrals Provided to Help-Line Callers?**



## A Profile of the Callers – Concerned About Their Own Gambling

The information provided in the following section comes from the long forms – the more detailed information collected from callers in November 2001 and March 2002. A total of 145 calls were received during these months.

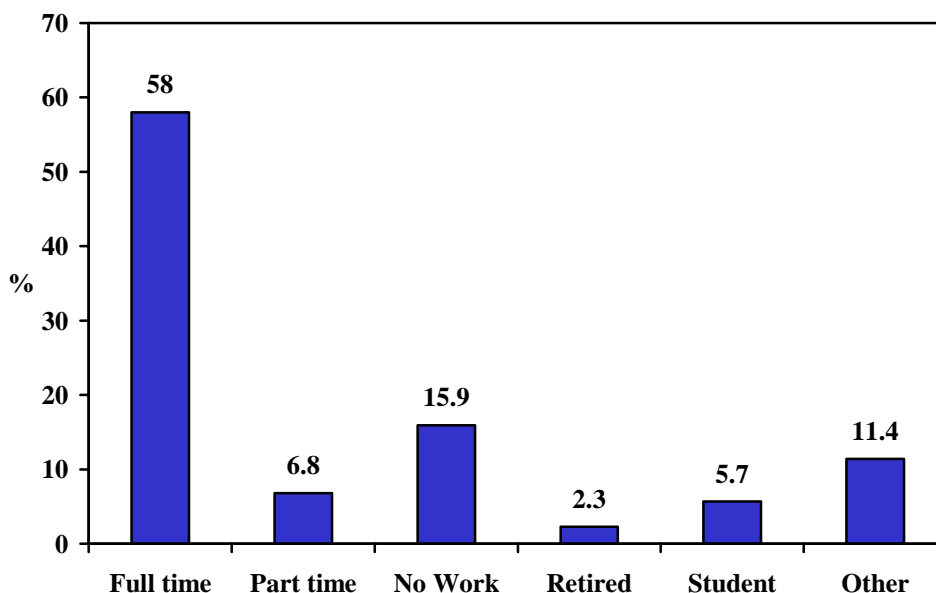
### Caller demographics

A total of 97 calls were received from the caller's concerned about their own gambling.

- There were more men (60.6%) than women (39.4%) who called regarding their own gambling concerns. This is a slightly larger gender ratio than from the short forms.
- The majority of callers were in the 35-50 years age group (57.5%) or 25-34 years age group (25%). There were fewer callers in the younger, 18-24 years (6.3%), and older, 51-64 years (11.3%) age groups.
- Most callers were employed full time (58%; see Figure 6). The employment status for the remainder of callers was as follows: employed part time (6.8%), unemployed and looking for work (9.1%), unemployed and not looking for work (6.8%), retired (2.3%), student (5.7%), and other (11.4%). Of those callers who are classified as employed, 69.4% work during the day, 11.3% work during the night, and 12.9% work rotating shifts (the remaining 6.4% are classified as work "other" shifts).
- Most of the callers spoke English (92.9%), then French (2.4%) and other (4.8%).

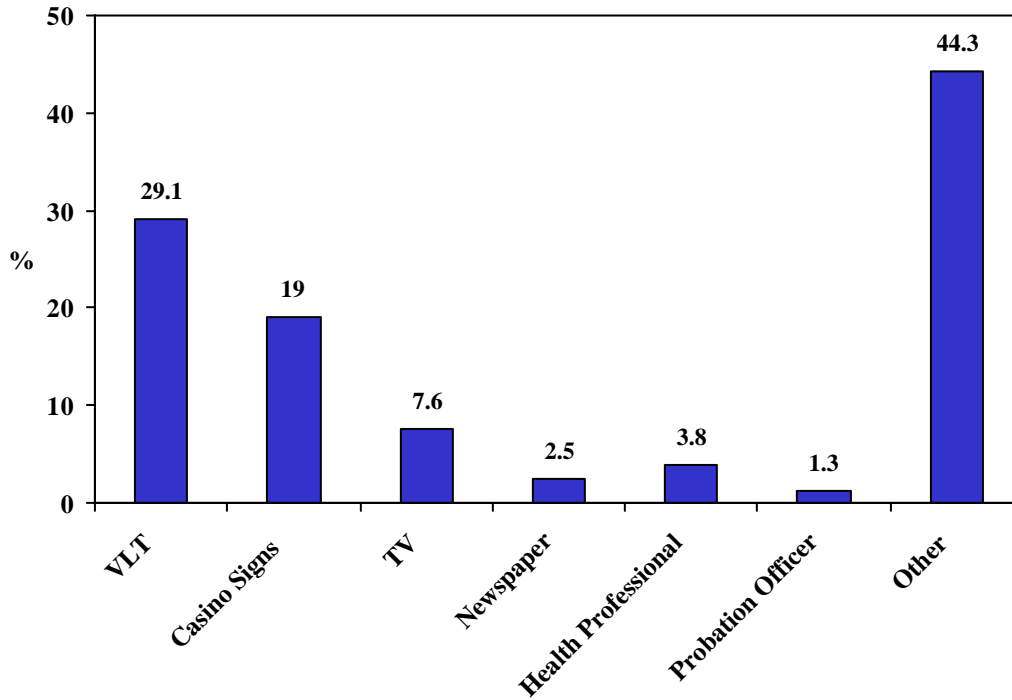
In summary, the average caller is an English speaking 35-50 year old man, who is employed full time.

**Figure 6. What is the Employment Status of Callers Concerned About Their Own Gambling?**

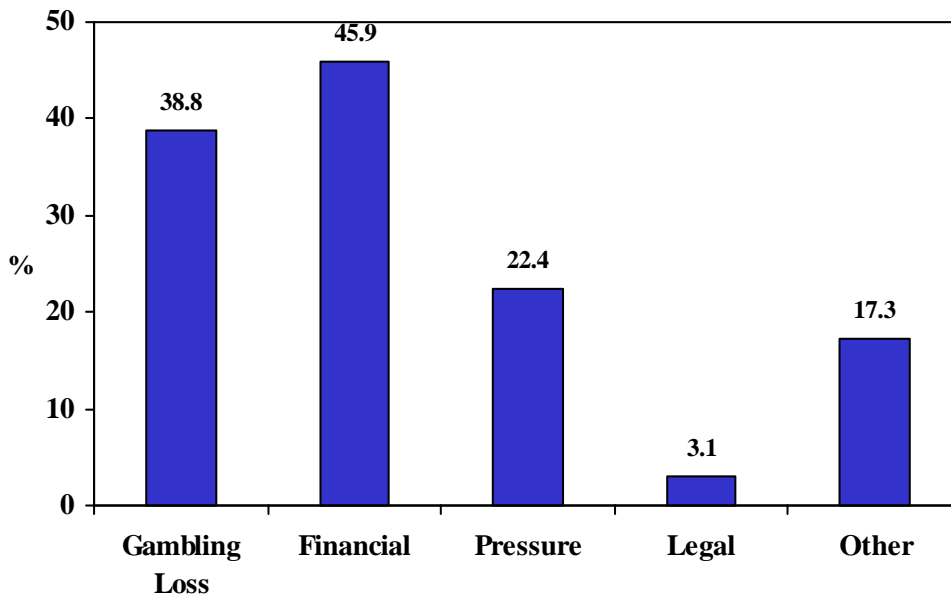


Callers were asked about where they had heard the information about the help-line. The callers heard about this help-line mostly from cards in a VLT site (29.1%), as well as signs in a casino (19%), television commercial (7.6%), newspaper (2.5%), health professional (3.8%), probation officer (1.3%), and other (44.3%; see Figure 7). It appears, then, that the best location to advertise about the help-line is within the casinos and at the VLT sites.

**Figure 7. How Did You Hear About the Help-Line?**



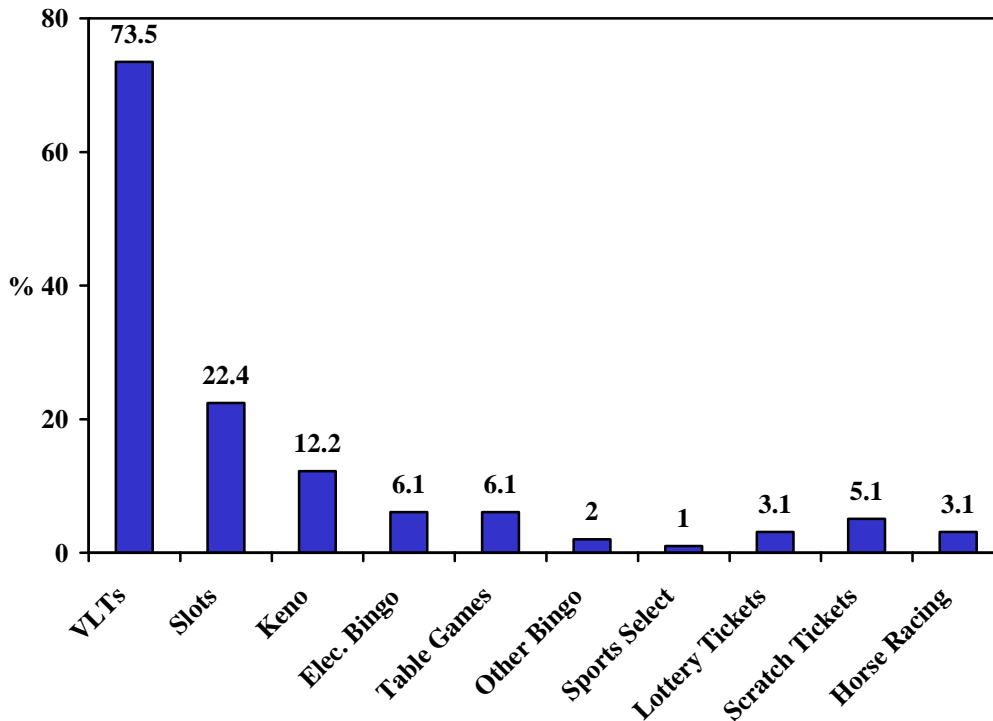
**Figure 8. Why are you Calling the Helpline?**



Callers were asked how long they have been concerned about their gambling. It appears that many callers have been concerned about their own gambling behaviour for some time. Approximately 35.7% have been concerned about their gambling behaviour for more than 5 years, 22.4% from 2-5 years, 18.4% from 1-2 years, 10.2% from 6 months to a year, and 13.2% for less than 6 months. Callers decided to call the help-line when they did many because of a recent significant gambling loss (38.8%), financial concerns (45.9%), pressure from spouse or family members (22.4%), legal concerns (3.1%), and “other” (17.3%; see Figure 8 on previous page).

Callers were asked whom they have talked to about their gambling. Many callers have spoken with some family member about their gambling (spouse = 58.8% and other family member = 38.8%). A smaller number have spoken with friends (17.6%), employer (3.5%), and “others” (16.5%). Based on the data from above, callers have had a problem with gambling for a considerable amount of time, and many have spoken about this problem with other family members (including spouses). It seems that the help-line would provide immediate support for these gamblers and would assist with referrals to more intensive interventions.

**Figure 9. What Type of Gambling Are You Calling About?**

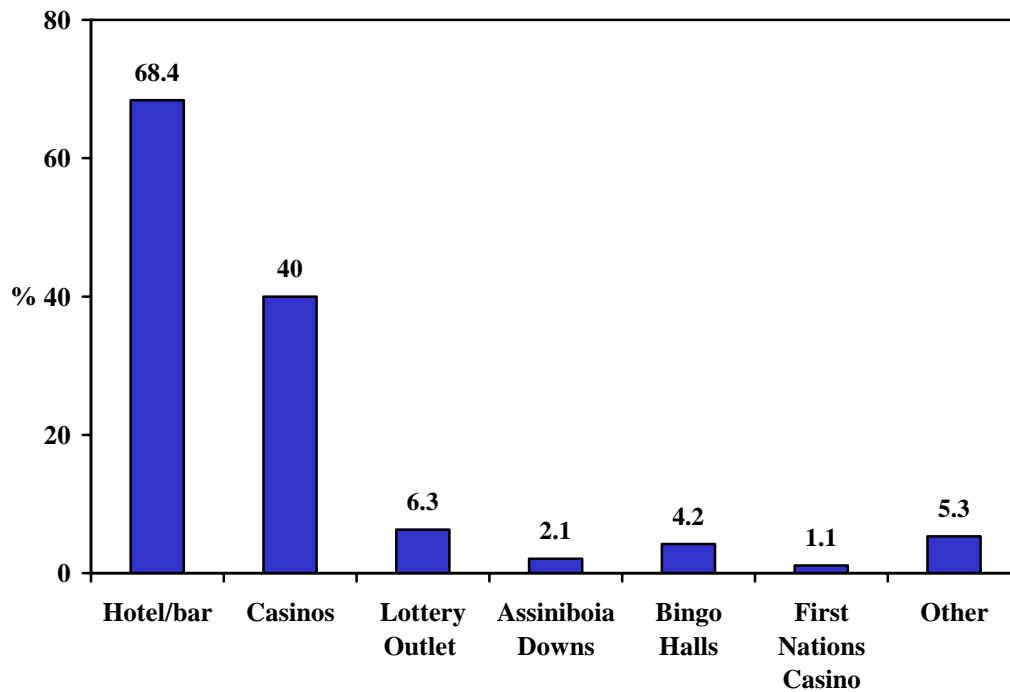


**Gambling behaviour and concerns**

Figure 9 shows that the most frequent type of gambling that callers are phoning the help-line about is VLTs. About 3/4 (73.5%) of all callers indicate that VLT playing is the reason for their call. Callers also mentioned casino games, such as slots (22.4%), Keno (12.2%), electronic bingo (6.1%), and table games (6.1%) as reasons for their call. Other types of gambling that were mentioned by callers were bingo (other than electronic; 2%), Sports Select (1%), lottery tickets (3.1%), scratch tickets (5.1%), horse racing (3.1%), and other types of gambling (1%). The ratio of callers phoning about VLT's to any other game is at the least 3:1.

Callers reported that they primarily gamble in a hotel/bar/restaurant/legion setting (68.4%) and Winnipeg casinos (40%). The other locations where callers gamble are at the First Nation Casino (1.1%), lottery outlets (6.3%), Assiniboia Downs or off-track betting facilities (2.1%), bingo halls (4.2%), and other (5.3%). There are about 10 times as many callers gambling in the casinos and hotels/bars as there are in any other location.

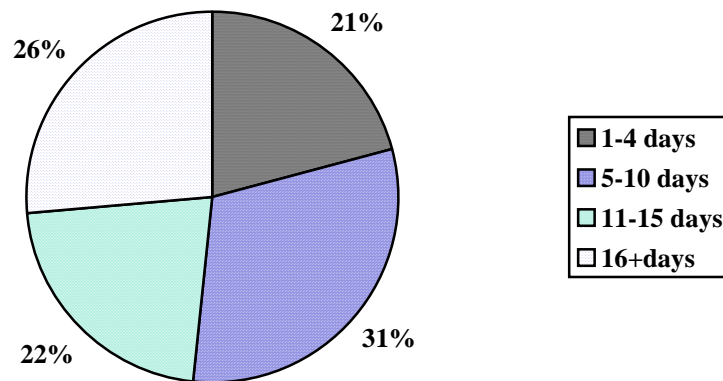
**Figure 10. Where Do You Gamble?**



In terms of how often callers gamble, there is an approximately even distribution in the amount of days that callers gamble per month. About 1/5 (20.9%) of all callers gamble 1-4 days, 30.8% of callers gamble 5-10 days, 22% of callers gamble 11-15 days, and 26.4% of callers gamble 16 plus days per month. These data are shown in Figure 11. Given that it is a common characteristic for gamblers to hide the extent of their gambling, it is likely that these frequencies are an under-estimation.

On the days that the callers were gambling, they reported spending the following amounts of money per day: \$1-\$50 (12.9%), \$51-\$100 (34.4%), \$101-\$250 (34.4%), \$251-\$500 (10.8%), and \$501-\$1000 (5.4%). There were 2% of the callers who did not know how much money they gambled per day.

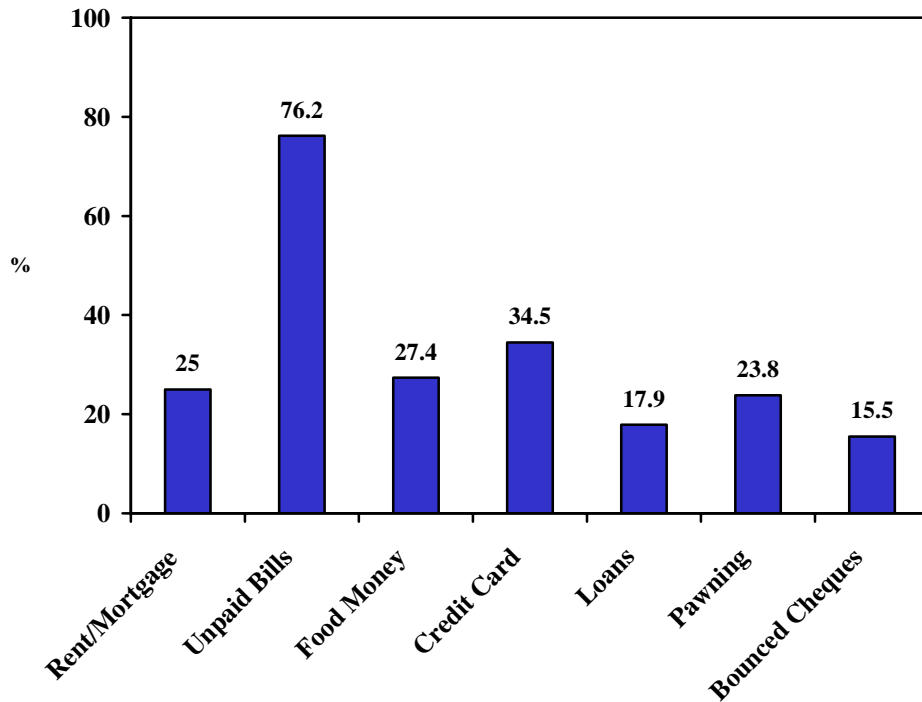
**Figure 11. How Many Days Per Month Do You Gamble?**



### Consequences of gambling behaviour

The callers' gambling has resulted in a variety of negative consequences such as financial, spousal, family, work/school, and legal concerns. The majority of callers (93.8%) reported experiencing financial concerns as a result of gambling. In particular, the financial concerns were unpaid rent/mortgage (25%), unpaid bills (76.2%), little or no food money (27.4%), credit card debt (34.5%), other loans (17.9%), pawning or selling goods (23.8%), and writing bounced cheques (15.5%). There were 10.7% of callers who have considered bankruptcy and 7.1% who have actually declared bankruptcy.

Gambling has also caused problems in the intimate and familial relationships of callers. Those callers who stated they were concerned about their relationships with their spouses or partners (78.7%), stated that gambling has caused arguments (74.1%), resulted in lies regarding their gambling situation (55.2%), and has risked the relationship ending (37.9%). In fact, 12.1% of callers stated that their relationships have ended because of their gambling. Gambling has also caused concerns in the callers' relationships with other family members (38.6%). Of those callers who responded to the question regarding their gambling affecting their school or work, less than half of the callers ( $N = 26$ ; 37.1%) reported that this was a concern. Those who stated that gambling has caused concerns with work or school said that their gambling has resulted in missed days (50%), affected performance (33.3%), and a loss of job (16.7%). There were relatively few callers who stated that their gambling has caused legal concerns (8%).

**Figure 12. What are the Consequences of Your Gambling?**

### Mental health correlates

An important potential correlation with gambling behaviour is suicidality. Of those callers who responded to the question of hurting themselves, 41.9% ( $N = 36$ ) had thought of hurting themselves and 7% ( $N = 5$ ) were thinking of hurting themselves at the time when they made the call to the help-line. This represents a substantial number of Manitobans who may have been helped at that given point of time. Those callers who were currently thinking of hurting themselves, generally did not report having a plan, nor the means to follow through with their plan. In a sense, calling the help-line may be the first step in thinking about intervening in their pattern of self-destructive behaviour. In addition, several callers mentioned that they were receiving help for depression (45.8%), alcohol use (25%), and anxiety (20.8%). The help that this select group of callers was receiving was primarily medication (55%), counselling (20%), and self-help groups (20%).

## A Profile of the Callers – Concerned About Someone Else’s Gambling

The information provided in the following section comes from the long forms – the detailed information collected from callers for all of November 2001 and March 2002. Callers who are calling because they are concerned for another’s gambling behaviour are termed “affected.”

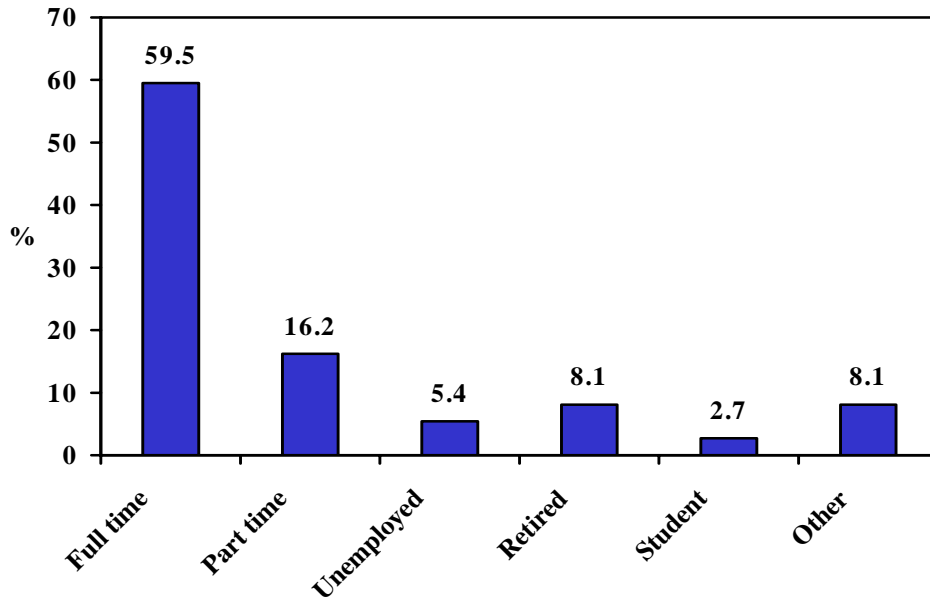
### Caller demographics

A total of 48 callers were identified as affected.

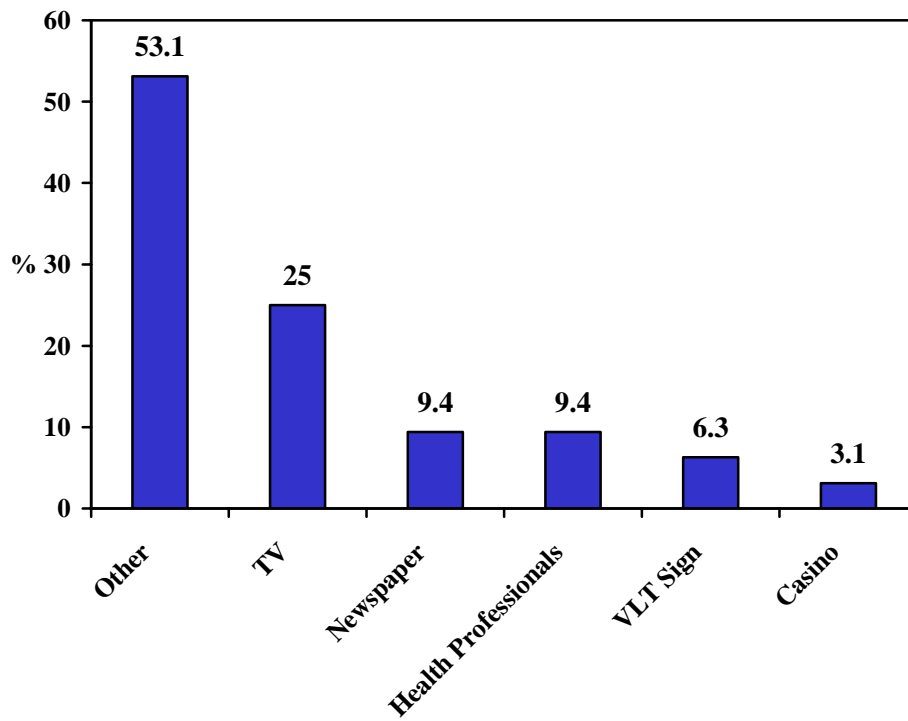
- More than twice as many women (72.7%) than men (27.3%) called the help-line because they were concerned of another person’s gambling. The higher number of concerned women from the long forms is similar to the numbers from the short form. This statistic is interesting because there was a greater ratio of women to men who called the help-line for someone else, than there was who called about their own gambling. Perhaps this ratio difference reflects the stereotypical gender role differences between men and women (i.e., woman as the helper), or because there are typically more men who have problems with gambling than women (hence, more women calling concerned about their partners).
- The age of affected callers was fairly evenly distributed from 21 years to 65 years, apart from the 35 to 39 years age range. There were three times as many affected callers who were 35-39 years old compared with the other age ranges.
- The majority of affected callers were employed full time (59.5%; see Figure 13). The employment status for the remainder of callers was as follows: employed part time (16.2%), unemployed and not looking for work (5.4%), retired (8.1%), student (2.75%), and other (8.1%). Of those affected callers who are classified as employed, 81.4% work day shifts, 7.4% work night shifts, and 11.1% work rotating shifts.
- The affected caller’s language spoken at home is predominantly English (97.5%), with a very small percent speaking another language (2.5%). In summary, the average “affected” caller is an English speaking adult woman who works full time.

The affected callers heard about the help-line primarily from information sources classified as “other” (53.1%; see Figure 14). They also heard about the help-line through television commercials (25%), the newspaper (9.4%), health professionals (9.4%), cards or signs in a VLT site (6.3%), and signs in a casino (3.1%). The sources of how callers heard about the help-line differ between the affected callers and callers calling for themselves. There were far more affected callers who stated that they heard about the help-line from the television than the callers who called for themselves (25% vs. 7.6%). On the other hand, there were fewer affected callers who found help-line information at a VLT site (6.3% vs. 29.1%).

**Figure 13. What is the Employment Status of Affected Callers?**



**Figure 14. How Did You Hear About the Help-Line?**

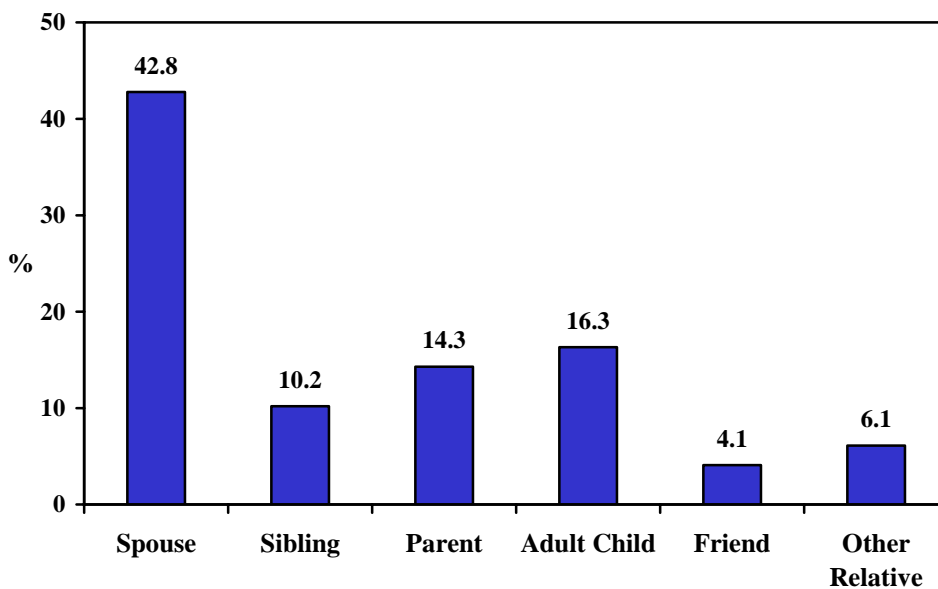


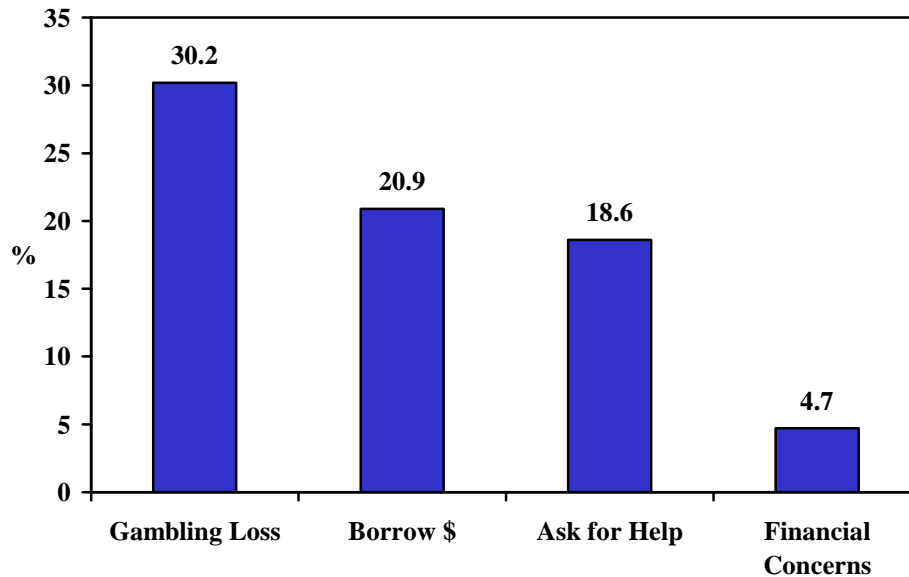
Affected callers were asked whose gambling they were calling about. Figure 15 shows the distribution of responses. The affected callers were typically calling regarding their spouse’s gambling (42.8%). Other affected callers were calling about their sibling’s (10.2%), parent’s (14.3%), adult child’s (16.3%), friend’s (4.1%), or other relative’s (6.1%) gambling.

Affected callers have also been concerned about another’s gambling behaviour for a considerable length of time, which is similar to callers who are calling for themselves. There were 25% of affected callers who have been concerned about another’s gambling for over 5 years, and 46% of affected callers who have been concerned for 1 to 5 years. The remaining 29% have been concerned for less than one year. It appears that help-line callers may be waiting to get help regarding the problem gambling behaviour, or else that the problem gambling behaviour is a problem that may not be easily dealt with.

Most affected callers have talked to the person whom they are calling about (89.8%). Unfortunately, almost half of the gamblers who the affected callers are concerned with are not aware that their gambling is a problem (49%), and 69.4% of affected callers indicated that they had not told the gambler that they were calling the help-line. Affected callers also indicated that they have spoken with other people about the target individuals’ gambling. Most often they had spoken with other family members (61.9%), or their spouse (35.7%). Some (11.9%) had also spoken with their friends. The reason the affected callers decided to call the help-line was because the known gambler had a recent gambling loss (30.2%), the gambler came to borrow money (20.9%), the gambler asked for help (11.6%), and the affected caller is concerned for gambler’s finances (18.6%) and legal concerns (4.7%). These data are shown on Figure 16.

**Figure 15. Whose Gambling Are You Calling About?**



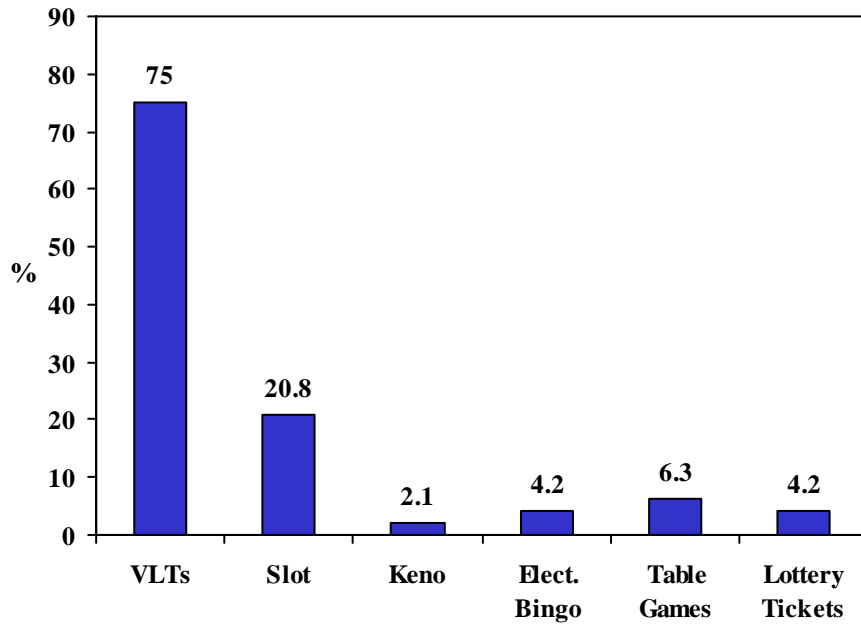
**Figure 16. What Happened to Make You Call the Help-Line?**

### Gambling behaviour and concerns

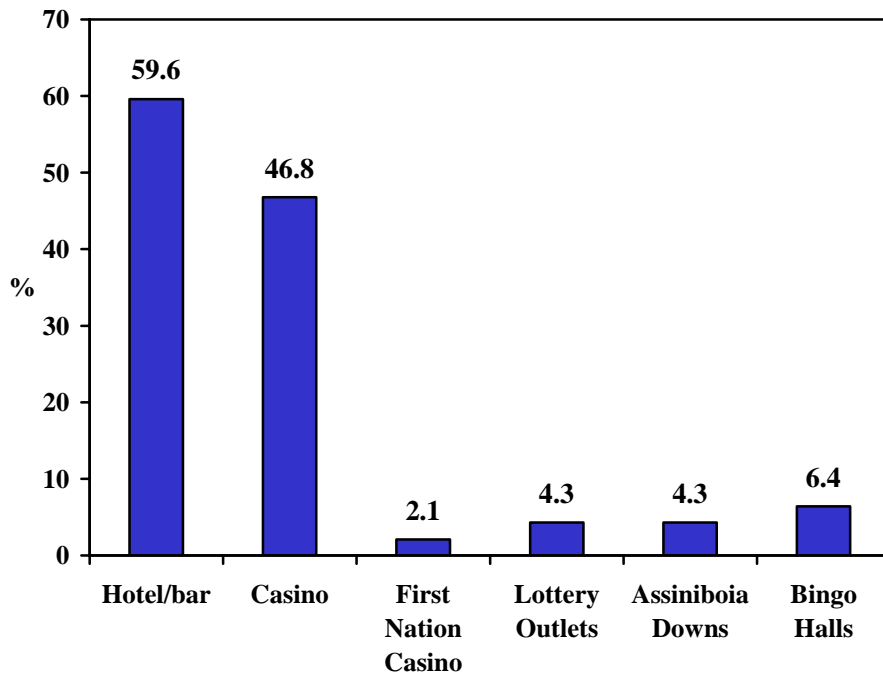
Affected callers also indicated what type of gambling they were concerned about. As with gamblers calling about their own gambling, the most common concern was VLT playing. The distribution of responses is shown on Figure 17. Seventy-five percent of affected callers indicated that VLTs were the reason for their concern and 20.8% also indicated that their concern was slot machines. Less frequent types of gambling behaviour that were of a concern are Keno (2.1%), electronic bingo (4.2%), casino table games (6.3%), and lottery and scratch tickets (4.2%). Clearly, electronic gaming machine-related issues are the main cause of concern for those help-line callers who are concerned about someone else's gambling. This issue is underscored when we look at the location at which gamblers, who are the cause of concern, are gambling. Figure 18 shows that the gamblers are most likely gambling in hotels/bars (59.6%) or Winnipeg casinos (46.8%). Fewer gamblers gamble at the First Nation casino (2.1%), lottery outlets (4.3%), Assiniboia Downs (4.3%), and bingo halls (6.4%).

It appears that many affected callers were using the help-line as one of their first sources of help, regarding the concerned person's gambling behaviour. For 75% of these callers, the help-line was their first effort at getting information about problem gambling. For the 25% who had already been in touch with another resource, 76.9% had contacted AFM services, 23.1% had tried Gamblers Anonymous, and 15.4% had tried another counsellor. When asked if the person who gambles has gone for help, of those who responded, only 17.6% ( $N = 9$ ) of the callers said "yes." Similar to the callers themselves, these gamblers have used AFM services (62.5%), Gamblers Anonymous (25%), other counsellors (25%), and the family doctor (12.5%).

**Figure 17. What Type of Gambling Are You Concerned About?**



**Figure 18. Where Does the Person Who You are Calling About Gamble?**



**Consequences of gambling behaviour**

There are some notable negative consequences from the other's gambling (i.e., friend, spouse, relative, etc.) that has affected the individuals calling the help-line. For instance, over half of the callers (55.8%) said that this gambling person has caused them financial concerns. In addition, the majority of callers said that their relationship with this person has been affected (89.4%) and that their level of trust has changed toward this person (88.4%). All of the callers stated that they were worried or stressed because of this person's gambling.

**Mental health correlates**

There were minimal mental health concerns of the affected callers.

## Conclusions

The AFM *Problem Gambling Help-Line* review indicates the help-line is a useful and important service: there has been a substantial increase in the numbers of calls made to the help-line over the past seven years, for many callers the help-line is their first attempt at outside help and gambling has been a concern for several years. The number of people calling the help-line has increased considerably in the past year, possibly in response to the increased advertising of the help-line number.

Further, clear gender differences have emerged in terms of who calls. Men are more likely to call about their own gambling and women are likely to call about someone else's gambling, usually their spouse. Since 1994-95, there has been an increase in women calling the help-line. In 1994-95, only 1/3 of all calls were women; however, in 2001-02, approximately 1/2 of all calls were women.