

Voices of Women  
who Gamble in Ontario:  
A Survey of Women's Gambling,  
Barriers to Treatment & Treatment  
Service Needs

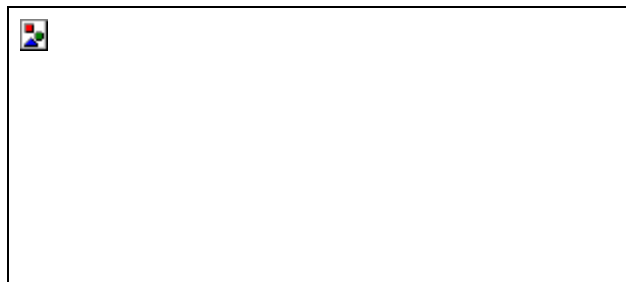
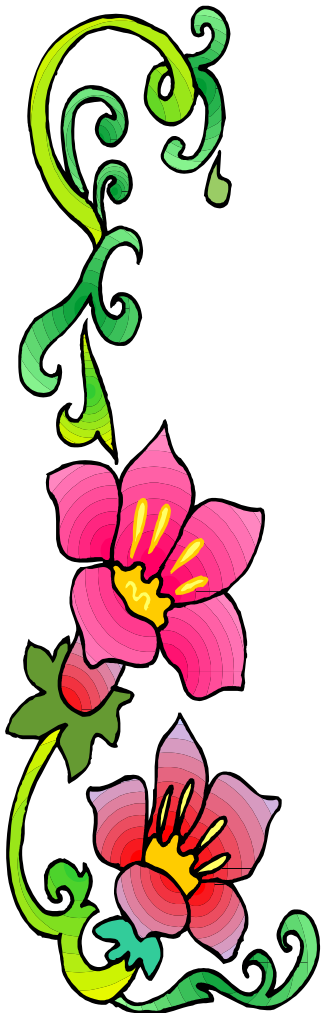
**Discovery 2002**

Niagara Falls, Ontario

April 21-24 2002

Responsible Gambling Council  
(Ontario)

Roberta Boughton  
Problem Gambling Service



# Rationale for Study

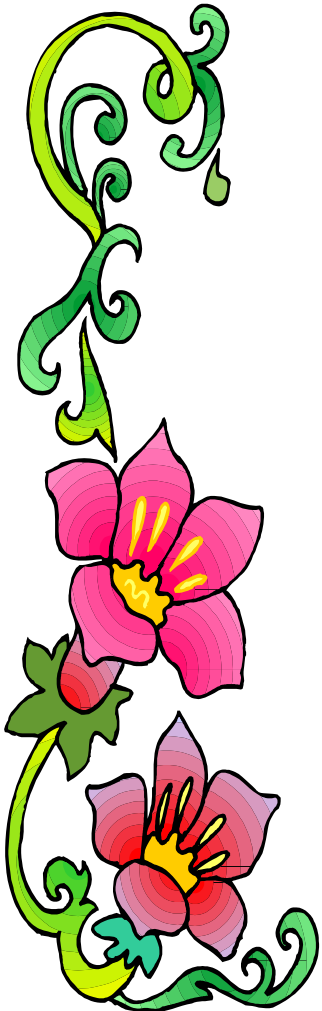
Gambling is rapidly becoming a mainstream activity for women in Ontario

- 83.2% of adults in Ontario gamble
- 3.8% have moderate or severe gambling problems → 340,000

Ratio of male to female gamblers with problems  
4.6 to 3.1

Proportionately fewer female than male problem gamblers are seeking treatment in Ontario

Current treatment utilization:  
Gender ratio (male to female) of gamblers: 1.9 to 1  
(DATIS 2001)



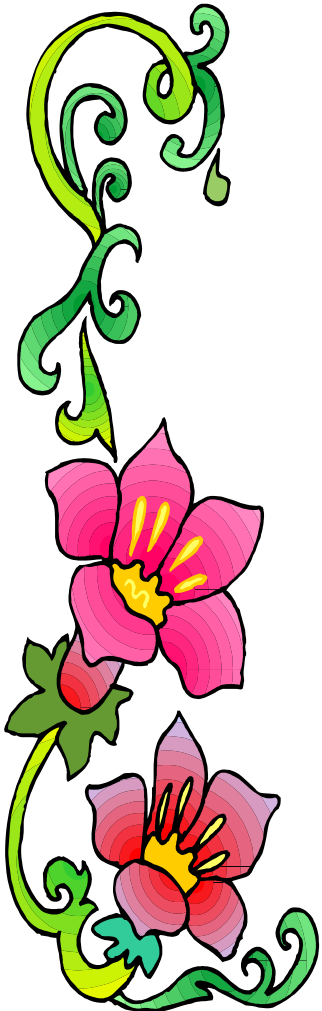
## Limited Involvement of Women in Tx Raises Concerns

Are we currently meeting the needs of this special population of gamblers?

Are there barriers to Tx that we could more effectively address?

Do we need to offer distinct forms of Tx, support and/or education to women who gamble at a problematic level?

Is it possible, as noted by Wynne (1994), that many women are aware that gambling is causing them problems but experience ambivalence & either do not want or seek help?



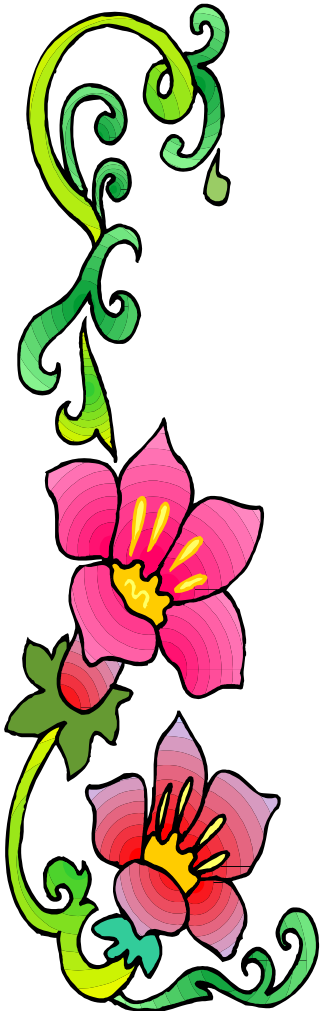
# DRAFT REPORT

## Voices of Women who Gamble in Ontario

April 2000 Ministry of Health and Long  
Term Care - Needs Assessment to  
address these concerns

### Objectives of Study

- Explore barriers to treatment & service needs of female gamblers across Ontario
- Gather information
- Develop Recommendations



**Method: Questionnaire**

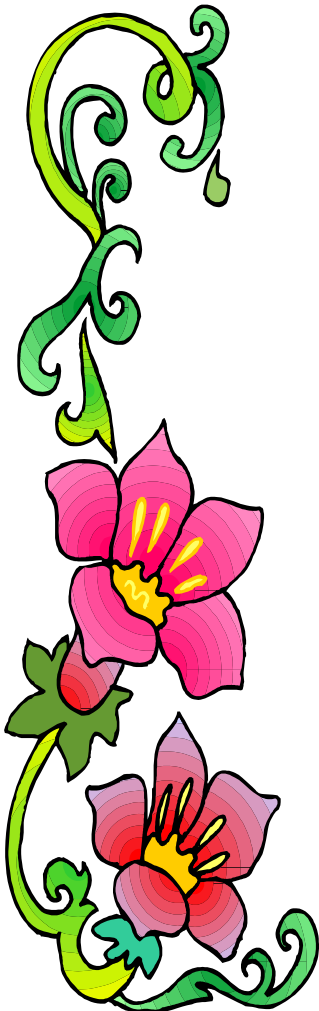
**Voices of Women who  
Gamble in Ontario**

## **Content**

- Developed with reference to existing research on women's gambling
- 46 pages - 2 hrs
- 12 Sections
- Closed & open questions

## **Distribution**

- Mailed
- English & French



## Target

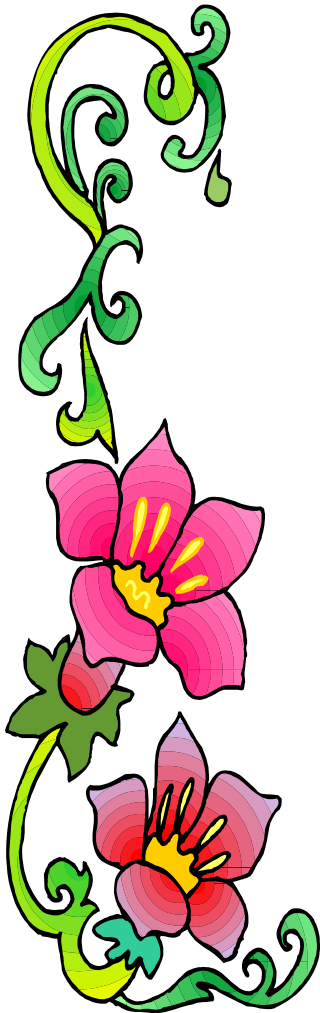
- 300 Women who gamble, are not in Tx but have concerns
- Diversity in game, ages, sexual orientations, ethnicity, incomes,
- Representation - MOH regions

## Recruitment

- Self-selection process
- Ads and flyers
  - Provincial Advisory Board
- Media releases, articles
- Bingo hall distribution

## Response Rate

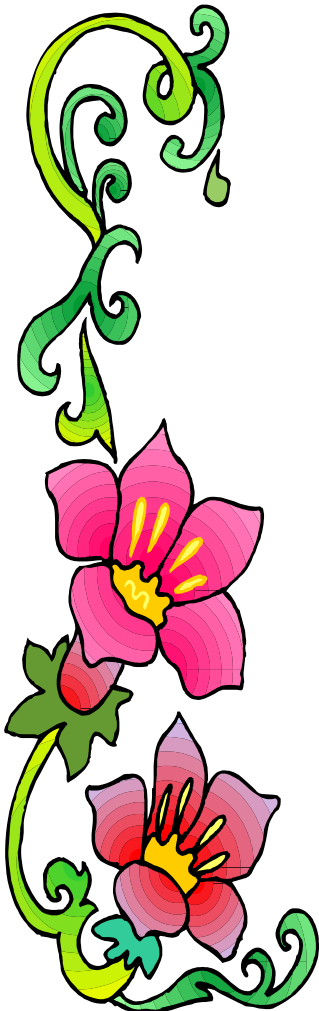
85% n=365



# Report Highlights

## DRAFT COPY

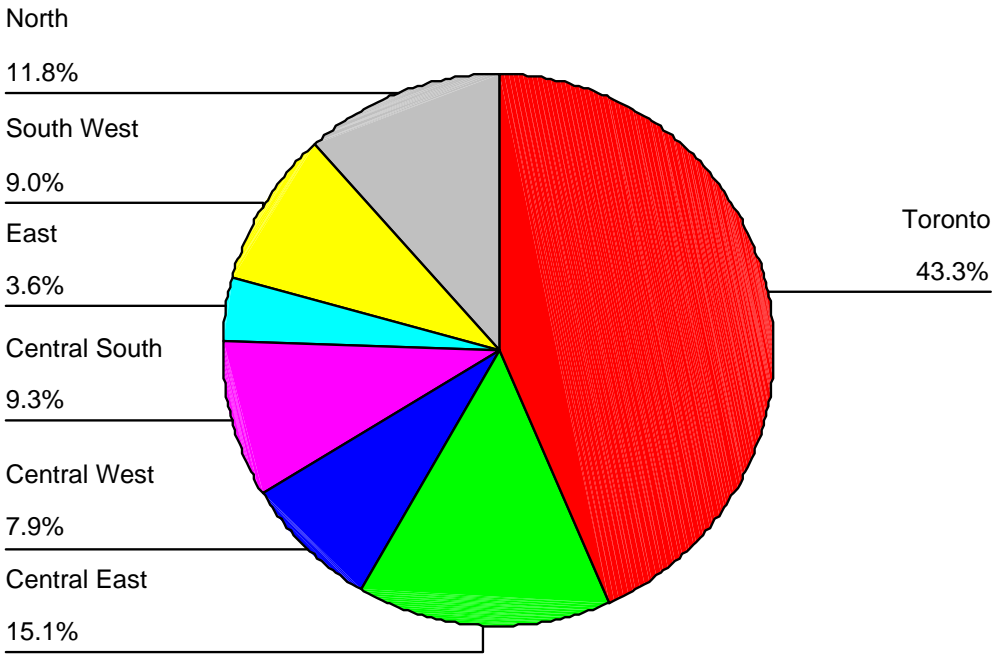
- Demographics
- Family & Personal Histories
- Gambling Behaviours
- SOGS
- Reasons For Gambling
- Barriers to Treatment & Treatment Service Needs



# Demographics of Sample

Geographically diverse

Ministry of Health Region



43% GTA

15% Central East

North 11.8%



## Ethnic Background

Canadian born 90%

### Background

European 80%

Aboriginal 7.4%

French Canadian 7.9%

## Age Composition

Range: 19 - 76 years

Average: 45 years

- 20 Youth
- 163 Adults (26-45)
- 134 Middle Age (46-59)
- 48 Older Women (> 60 years)

## Relationship Status

Married/Common Law	46%
Widowed	5
Divorced	21
Separated	10
Single	23
Dating	17
Heterosexual:	89%
Lesbian or bisexual:	8%

## Education Level

High school	34%
Community College	26%
University/Prof Degree	9%

## Employment Status

- Employed 56%
- 10% Retired (n=36)
  - 16% Disability pension (n=60)
  - 6% Students (n=20)

## Income

Personal net income per month

- range: \$86 - \$9,166
- average: \$1,769

Household net income per month

- average: \$2608

## Dependents

Children living in home

Average: .55      Range: 0-4

Dependents living outside home

Average: .44      Range: 0-7

# Gambling Behaviours

## Games Most Frequently Played

Lottery tickets	87%
Instant win/ scratch tickets	83%
Slots (casino or racetrack)	71%
Bingo	64%

On average women played 4.2  
different games

Majority select slots (35%) or bingo  
(35%) as their 1st Choice or  
Favourite Game

## Gambling Investments

### Frequency of Play per Month

Av. Highest for

• Internet gambling	14
• Scratch tickets	9
• Lottery tickets	8.5
• Bingo	7.5

### Monthly Expenditure on Games

Av. Highest in casino games & bingo

• Slots	\$841
• Cards	\$564
• Video poker	\$310
• Bingo	\$371

Slots → Most Spending Overall

## Factors in Gambling

### Access to venues :Proximity

- 62% - how often
- 43% - types of games

### Safety

- |                           |     |
|---------------------------|-----|
| •Can go alone             | 55% |
| •Easy to get to           | 53% |
| •Comfortable & familiar   | 44% |
| •Hours fit my schedule    | 42% |
| •Lack of harassment       | 41% |
| •It feels safe there      | 37% |
| •No other leisure choices | 30% |

### Availability of Money

- 60% - whenever can get \$
- 41% - play more at certain times of month

## Reasons for Gambling

very or extremely important

→ Fun (80%) Excitement (77%)  
Entertainment (72%)

### 40% → 60% Mood Management

- Cheer myself up 61%
- Deal with boredom 52%
- Try to feel less depressed 44%
- Feel hope 51%
- Soothe myself 40%

### & Stress Relief

- Relief from stress 53%
- Get a break from reality 49%
- Escape problems or worries 48%
- Break from responsibilities/ work 46%

### Autonomy or Freedom

- Be free to do what I want 56%
- Do what I want with my \$ 50%
- Treat myself 48%
- Have time for myself 46%



## \$ Money \$

78% Gamble to Win \$

### Chance/hope of Winning Money

- Feeling my luck will change 67%
- Optimism about winning 66%
- Thinking I am due for a win 65%
- Chasing wins 56%
- Remembering past wins 52%

### Financial Stress

- Financial need 47%
- Chasing losses 45%
- Despair over ever getting ahead 39%
- Feeling pressured to get money 35%



## Playing Patterns

Gamble during the day (78%),  
evening (85%) & through the  
night sometimes (43%)

77% gambled within week of survey

## Escalation of Play & Increase in Risk Tolerance

- 47% Increase in time
- 51% Increase # of games
- 58% Spend more \$ per hand/game
  
- 55% Immune to losses
- 43% Lose interest if cut back \$

**Not Social Gamblers**

## Gambling Expenditures & Income

On average these women gamble  
the equivalent of --

79.7% of Net Personal Income

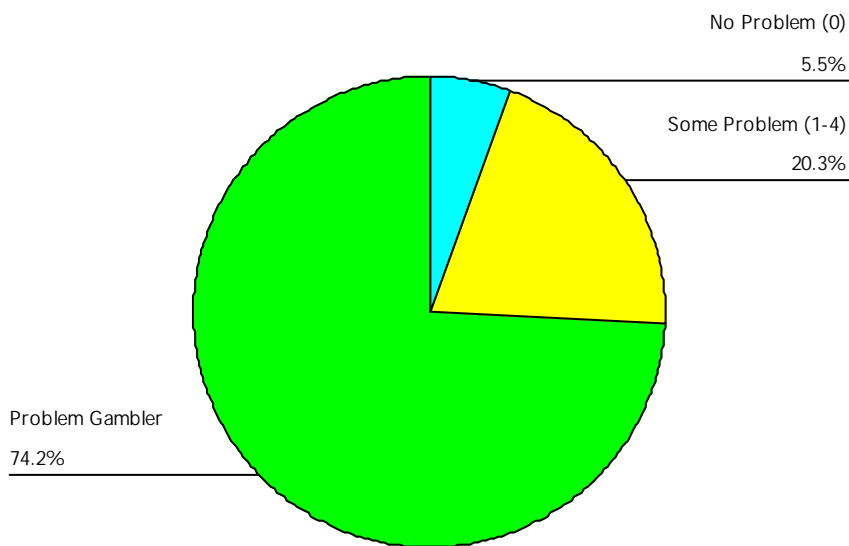
61.2% of Net Household Income

While some spending is a  
reinvestment of winnings...

64% report Gambling Related  
Debts → Av Debt: \$6,883

# South Oaks Gambling Screen - SOGS

South Oaks Gambling Screen -12 mo



Probable Pathological Gamblers  
12-month Screen (74%)  
Lifetime Screens (65%)

Average Score 7.8      Range 0-18

## Family History

High Incidence of Addiction  
& Mental Health Problems in  
Family System

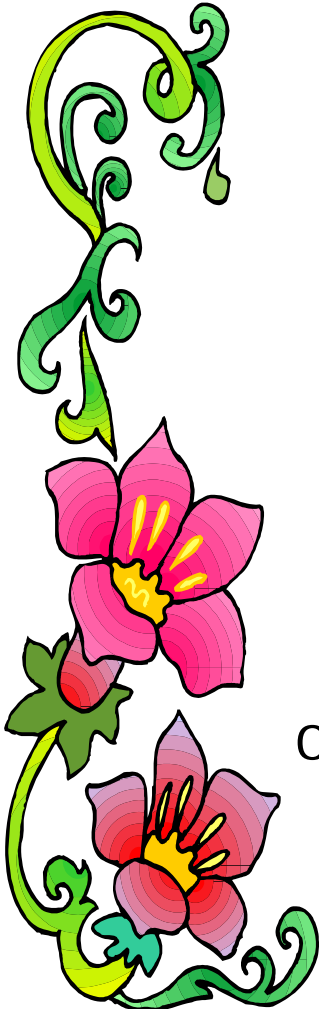
Drugs/alcohol most common

Fathers (38%), Siblings (28%)  
& Relatives (28%) more Likely  
to have Drug/alcohol Problems

Siblings (24%) & Mothers  
(20%) more likely treated for  
Psychiatric Issues

Siblings and Relatives most  
often Problem Gamblers (18%)

Mothers & Fathers at 16%



## Personal History of Abuse & Trauma

Experience	Child	Adult
• Emotional abuse	63%	69%
• Physical abuse	41%	46%
• Sexual Abuse	38%	28%
• Loss	49%	82%
• Trauma	39%	46%
• Religious Abuse	17%	10%
• Racism	19%	18%
• Homophobia	9%	10%
• Financial Abuse		45%

### High Levels of Abuse as Children & Adults

- >60% Emotional abuse
- >40% Physical abuse

Sexual abuse - more common as children  
38% vs 28%

### Rates Childhood Abuse > General Population

- Physical Abuse 41% vs 21%
- Sexual Abuse 38% vs 13%

## Relationship History

Relationship Concern	CURRENT %	PAST %
<b>Problem of Spouse/Partner</b>	(n= 217)	(n=191)
Drugs or alcohol	32%	64%
Mental Health	15%	35%
Gambling	22%	22%
Anger	34%	62%
Criminal Convictions	7%	31%

Spouse Problems most often  
Drugs/alcohol Use & Anger

Mental health problems & criminal  
convictions more frequent in past  
relationships

% with Gambling Problems  
Same in both (22%)

## History of Personal Struggles with Problematic Behaviours

	Current < Past		General Population
Smoking	48%	68%	21%
Binge eating	27%	38%	3%*
Shopping	24%	43%	1%
Starving Self	22%	10%	2%**
Alcohol	9%	41%	7%
Prescription drugs	8%	20%	
Non-prescription	11%	24%	

\* Bulimia

\*\* Anorexia

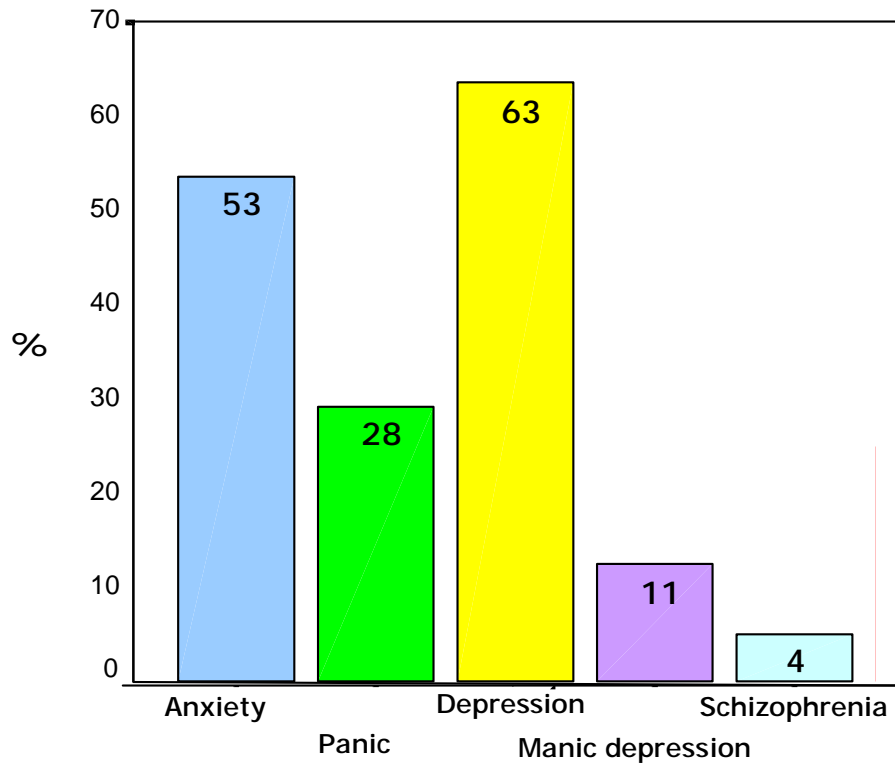
Past Problems More Frequent

% > Population Statistics

## Emotional /Psychiatric History

71% - Professional Help for Mental Health Issues (n=259)

Figure 4-1 History of Professional Help



- 45% suicidal ideation
- 29% suicide attempts
- 10% a result of gambling

Comorbidity > General Population  
CMHA: depression 10% & anxiety 28%



## Perceptions on Change & History of Treatment

89% - Thought About Making  
Changes Over Past Year

80% - Tried to Stop or Cut  
Down Gambling

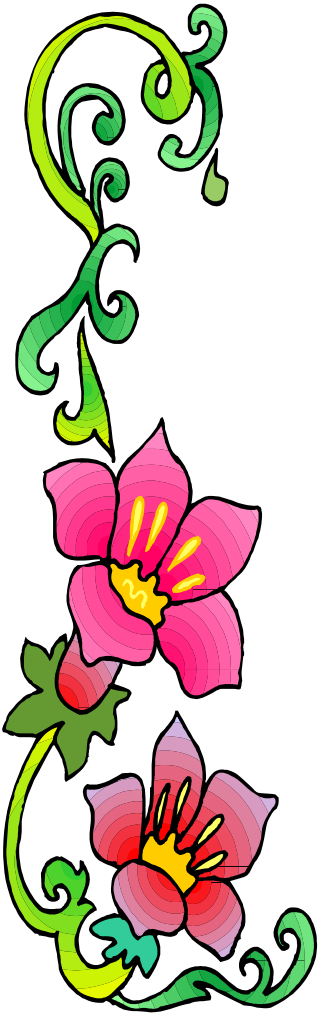
### Harm Reduction or Abstinence?

Learn to gamble in moderation 51%

Stop all gambling 29%

Avoid problematic forms 8%

Don't know 15%



Majority never had  
gambling specific  
counselling (89%)  
or attended GA (91%)

## Natural Recovery

40% with no Tx or GA  
report success in making changes  
on their own (n=123)

### Key Strategies

- Will power 90%
- Distraction 87%
- Reminding self of +ve  
results of not gambling 82%
- & the problems created 71%
- Replacing with other  
leisure activities 72%

Few enlisted the help of other people  
(15%) or therapy (10%)

They were more likely to pray (36%)

**High Value Many Women Place on  
Self-reliance  
In the Change Process**

**Accessing Supports**

Written materials	75%
Talk to another person	47%
Changes on their own	43%
Seek support from a professional	41%

**Direct Tx Services may not  
Beckon to a Fair Portion**

**Alternative Means of  
Supporting Change Is  
Important**

## Barriers: Thoughts about Treatment Services

### Top Items

- 57% I believe that I would have to give up all gambling & don't want to
- 46% I think that treatment services are only for women with very serious problems
- 41% I don't know what to expect from treatment
- 38% I don't know about gambling services available to help

## Barriers: Concerns about Comfort & Safety

49% Don't Feel Comfortable or  
Safe Attending Program

### Concerns - Emotional/Psychological more than Physical

Confidentiality	29%
Recognition	17%
Others might learn of gambling	22%

### Social Anxiety

Apprehension talking about self	27%
Involvement in group	26%
Shy & anxious talking to people	20%

### Discrimination or Insensitivity (25%)

Age discrimination	10%
Appearance	9%

**Barriers:**  
**Personal Feelings/Thoughts**

**Top Items of 16**

- 73% I should be able to make changes on my own
- 66% I can make changes on my own

- 34% I fear being criticized or judged
- 33% I feel a lot of embarrassment & shame about the gambling
- 32% Asking for help would be admitting I can't control it
- 30% I don't want to deal with this issue so tend to avoid or deny it

## Barriers - Thoughts about Gambling

- 59% Keep Hoping for the **Big Win** that will resolve the problems
- 41% Gambling gives me hope that things can improve in my life

- 48% I have times when I have been able to stop or limit my play
- 38% I'm not hurting anybody else
- 30% I don't drink or do other things that can cause problems
- 30% I can stop any time I want

- 35% I love to gamble
- 30% Gambling is my only break from things

- 29% I feel pressure around \$- need to play to pay my debts

## Practical Barriers to Accessing Tx

### Time Constraints (34%)

- work demands 21%
- responsibilities at home 18%

### Money issues (33%)

- treatment costs 26%
- transportation costs 16%
- lost work income 11%

### Physical or Mental Health (24%)

- depression 18%
- anxiety 16%

### Childcare (23% of the sample children <13)

- babysitting costs 37%
- no one to care for the child 20%



## Treatment Service Needs

### Indirect Service Options

- Information & Reading materials 52%
- Self-help manual 43%
- Audiotapes or videos 33%
- Internet Information 35%

### Non-Professional Supports

#### Gamblers Anonymous

- Women's groups 59%
- Mixed 33%

#### Internet

- chat rooms 27%
- bulletin boards 23%

## Direct Service Tx Options

very or extremely helpful

### Counselling

Individual 64%

#### Group

Women's group 59%

Co-ed group 33%

Phone 55%

Crisis 49%

On-line 30%

Couple 32%

Family 28%

Intensive Program 53%

Outpatient day (76%)

Residential (25%)

## Location of Services

very or extremely helpful

Women's Centre	56%
Gambling Tx Centre	56%
Addiction Tx Centre	46%
Medical centre	43%
Mental Health Service	42%
Credit counselling	38%
Home visits	35%
Building or residence	28%
Crisis Counselling:	49%
• 24 hours a day	(73%)
• phone	(67%)
• place I gamble	(42%)

## Hours of Service

very or extremely helpful

- Evening 68%
- Weekend 63%
- Daytime 48%

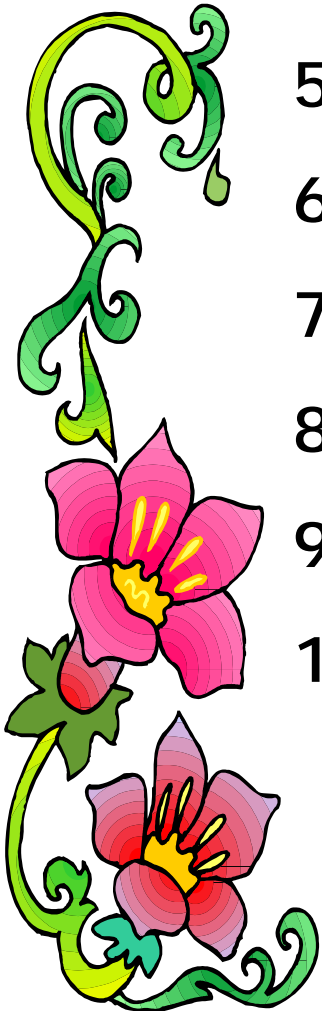
## Other Service Options

Financial consultation	48%
Transportation to Tx	44%
Child-care on site	24%
Legal consultation	27%
Service in my native language:	
French Canadian (n=29)	48%
Aboriginal (n=27)	41%

# Treatment Content

## Life & Gambling Issues

1. Making changes to gambling - 8
2. Financial survival- 7
3. Personal Enrichment -12
4. Leisure & social skills -3
5. Relationship Issues - 9
6. Parenting Issues - 2
7. Social Oppression - 6
8. My Body & Food - 3
9. Life Changes - 7
10. Dealing with the System- 5



## Making Changes to Gambling

Urges to gamble	71%
Strategies to limit play	68%
Triggers	67%
Strategies to stop	64%
False beliefs	50%
Getting support	46%
Mathematical odds	43%
Social pressure	29%

More Interested in Learning  
Strategies to Limit than Stop  
Gambling

Self-awareness (Triggers) more  
Valued than Gaming Odds & Belief  
Systems

**Getting Support** from Family &  
Friends more helpful than **Social  
Pressure** to Gamble

## Financial Survival

very or extremely helpful

Increasing Income	69%
Money management	66%
Money values	61%
Resolving debts	59%

### Couples & Money

married or partnered 49%

(22%: hide \$ from partner)

55% How money is spent is a source of conflict

43% Lack of money is a source of conflict

## Personal Enrichment

Dealing With Stress	72%
Self-esteem	63%
Depression	59%
Anxiety	56%
Guilt and Shame	53%
Empowering myself	57%
Spiritual Well-being	53%



# Leisure & Social Needs

- Meaningful Use of my Free Time 70%
- Having Fun 69%
- Dealing with Isolation & Loneliness 54%



More likely to be selected if...

Unmarried	59% vs. 48%
Psychiatric history	59% vs. 41%
Bingo Player	60% vs. 40%

## Summary

### Key Barriers to Treatment

#### 1st: Self-Reliance

Belief that they should make changes on their own (73%)

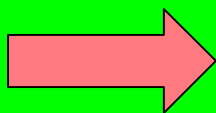
#### 2nd: Gambling Hooks & Financial Pressures

Hope for the BIG WIN to resolve problems (59%) or improve their lives (41%)

#### 3rd: Apprehensions about Tx

Belief that Tx would require them to give up all gambling (57%)

Taken in combination



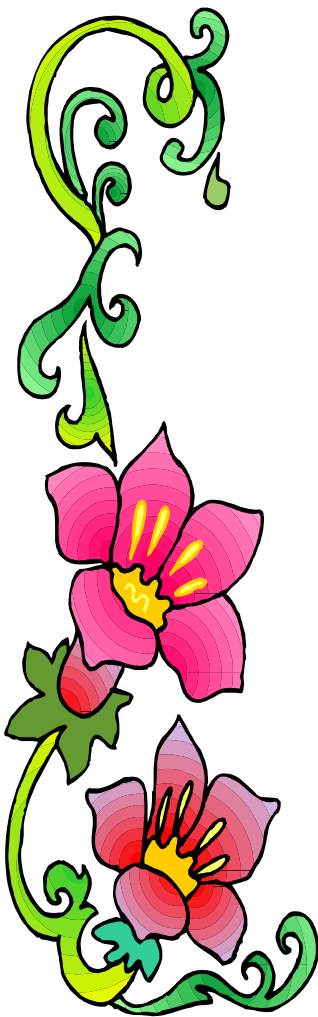
Ambivalence &  
Resistance to Treatment

# Voices of the Women

Honouring & Supporting  
Self-Change Efforts

Helpful Treatment  
Options

Life & Gambling  
Issues



# Gleaning the Wisdom of Clinical Experience

## OPEN DISCUSSION

Do these findings match your clinical experience of women?

What parts of this might relate to your thinking about how to get women into treatment?

Comments & Observations