

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background**

It has been over ten years since the Northern Territory (NT) completed its first population wide gambling prevalence survey in 2005 (Young, Abu-Duhou, Barnes, Creed, Morris, Stevens & Tyler 2006). Since this time the gambling industry and its regulatory and policy framework has gone through significant changes, with a greater focus now on gambling harm minimisation and using public health frameworks to meet this end; similar to approaches used for other products such as alcohol and tobacco (Browne, Langham, Rawat, Greer, Li, Rose, Rockloff, Donaldson, Thorne, Goodwin, Bryden & Best 2016, Hare 2009, Korn, Gibbins & Azmier 2003).

Prevalence studies related to gambling are important for monitoring problem gambling and gambling consumption over time. Australian jurisdictions have conducted several prevalence studies in the last twenty years (Williams, Volberg & Stevens 2012), with results of those studies indicating Australians are highly involved in gambling, with the Productivity Commission (2010) estimating that around 70 per cent of Australians participated in some form of gambling in the past year. Gambling prevalence studies also facilitate comparisons between jurisdictions in gambling participation and behaviour, including problem gambling risk (Hare 2015, Williams et al. 2012). Changes in the prevalence of problem gambling and gambling participation can provide important information about the effectiveness of policies implemented to mitigate harms from gambling (Williams & Volberg 2012). Analysis of the 2005 NT survey provided information for policy makers, researchers and service providers, and showed that levels of problem gambling in the NT were similar to other jurisdictions across Australia.

This report comes as a result of the Northern Territory Government (NTG) approaching Menzies School of Health Research to carry out a repeat of the 2005 Northern Territory Gambling Prevalence Survey (Young et al. 2006). This report is the first of a series to be released in 2017. It has a similar structure to the previous report, but includes additional information on EGM players, health risk factors such as financial stress, smoking status, and problematic alcohol consumption, gambling motivations, and negative consequences associated with gambling (own and someone else's gambling).

### **1.2 Aims of the survey**

The primary aim of the 2015 Gambling Prevalence and Wellbeing Survey was to inform government on the latest patterns of gambling participation, problem gambling prevalence and gambling harm in the NT. The survey findings will also be of interest to service providers, industry, councils and the broader community.

### **1.3 Survey objectives**

- Produce estimates of gambling participation and patterns of gambling and compare with the 2005 estimates.
- Produce estimates of problem gambling prevalence (and moderate and low-risk gambling prevalence) for the NT and compare with the 2005 estimates.

- Determine risk factors for at-risk gamblers and for different gambling activities.
- Identify harms experienced because of a person's own gambling for at-risk gamblers.
- Determine the extent and reach of gambling harms from another person's gambling.
- Determine health-seeking behaviour among at-risk gamblers and for those affected by someone else's gambling.
- Identify motivations associated with gambling for different risk groups of gamblers.

#### **1.4 Structure of the report**

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the survey methodology including the domains of information collected, survey sampling design, population weighting, and conventions for reporting data and statistical testing of associations in tables and figures.

Chapters 3 to 9 include a range of figures and tabulations of most data collected as part of the survey. Each chapter includes a background section with a brief summary of the literature associated with the presented data, followed by a section of key findings, which lists four or five dot points; the main points of interest for that chapter. Chapter 10 also follows this same format, but includes electronic gaming machines player loss data not collected as part of the 2015 survey (see below).

Chapter 3 presents an overview of patterns of gambling participation (and frequency) by activity, and includes statistical associations between gambling participation and socio-demographic, socioeconomic, and health-related variables. Comparisons are made with the 2005 survey

Chapter 4 examines which activities respondents identified as their highest spending activity over the year, and includes information on the distribution of money spent across preferred highest spend activities by region, age, gender and frequency of gambling.

Chapter 5 presents gamblers endorsement of five types of motivations for gambling by region, age, gender.

Chapter 6 presents problem gambling prevalence estimates for the PGSI, including estimates and statistical associations with different activities, socio-demographic, socioeconomic, gambling motivations, and health-related variables. It also includes the types of negative consequences at-risk gamblers experienced. Comparisons are made with the 2005 survey.

Chapter 7 presents data on negative consequences experienced because of another person's gambling, how the person was related to them, and the types of negative consequences resulting from the other person's gambling. Negative consequences are also examined in relation to socio-demographic, socioeconomic, health risks, and gambling participation variables.

Chapter 8 presents data on community opinion regarding preferences for increases, decreases or no change in EGM numbers in hotels, clubs and the casinos. Opinions on EGM numbers are cross-tabulated by region, age and gender, and EGM frequency of play. Some similar data from the 2005 survey are also included.

Chapter 9 collates information collected in the survey pertaining to EGMs, and includes age, gender and regional estimates of EGM participation, frequency of gambling, venue preferences including whether has a regular venue, plays online and distance from home to regular venue. This chapter also includes associations between EGM participation and the PGSI, negative consequences from own gambling, and negative consequences from another person's gambling.

Chapter 10 is the only chapter using data not collected as part of the 2005 and 2015 surveys. It uses data sourced directly from the NTG Department of Business for EGMs in NT venues. It includes time series data from 2003/4 to 2014/15 on the number of EGMs, player loss, player loss per EGM and percentage returns to players. These data are presented separately for community venues (hotels and clubs) and the casinos, and for unadjusted and entertainment CPI adjusted data, with the latter adjustment putting all years dollar amounts in 2014/15 dollar values.

Chapter 11, the final chapter, makes some conclusions regarding changes in patterns of gambling and problem gambling risk over the last 10 to 15 years in the NT, and highlights further analyses to be carried out.

Appendix A includes detailed survey methodology. Appendix B presents sample characteristics (demographic and socioeconomic) for unweighted and weighted data, which will enable users of the data to better understand which segments of the population were under-sampled. Lastly, Appendix C contains a copy of the survey instrument used for the 2015 Gambling Prevalence and Wellbeing Survey.

