



## Pasifika and gambling

### Background

Problem gambling is more prevalent among people with lower socio-economic status and education levels. In New Zealand, Pasifika feature heavily in this group.<sup>1</sup>

Although a large proportion of Pasifika do not gamble, those that do are at greater risk. They are four times more likely to experience a problem with gambling than the general population.<sup>3,4</sup>

Pasifika are the most frequent visitors to casinos and they spend the most amount of time at gambling venues. Traditionally when Pasifika men came to New Zealand they adopted gambling at the TAB as a socialisation technique to help combat the isolation of living away from village and community networks.<sup>1</sup>

Pasifika have become the most at-risk ethnicity to develop problem or pathological gambling behaviours. They are also at high risk of other health and social problems including alcohol and drug problems.<sup>4</sup>

Male gamblers are more likely to be perpetrators as well as victims of verbal aggression, with at risk/problem gambling also being associated with physical violence. Smoking and alcohol use (at higher/harmful levels) were also associated with gambling for both men and women.<sup>4</sup>

### Statistics

The 2012 National Gambling Study found that while 2.5% of New Zealanders are current problem or moderate-risk gamblers, that number jumps to 8% for Pasifika people.<sup>5</sup>

Pasifika men are more likely to have problems with gambling. About 1 in 8 Pasifika men are current problem or moderate-risk gamblers, compared to 1 in 20 Pasifika women.<sup>5</sup>

Pasifika comprise 7.4% of the New Zealand population<sup>9</sup>, but in 2014/15 Pasifika clients accounted for 21% of face-to-face gambling counselling services<sup>6</sup>.

Nearly two in five of the Pasifika surveyed for the National Gambling Study said there was a moderate amount or a lot of gambling in their families while they were growing up. They also reported higher than average rates of arguing with someone about time or money spent gambling, and of someone in their family going without something they needed due to money being spent on gambling.<sup>5</sup>

*'For some Pacific people there is an inherent belief that there is a generosity involved in gambling and that all money that is put into the machine is returned through payouts. So, often gamblers seek formulas for when they think the best time to gamble, such as when the machines are full – "after midnight on a Sunday night". There is a belief that the machines are controllable, fair, reciprocal and generous.'*

*Yvette Guttenbeil-Po'uhila<sup>1</sup>*

### Barriers that may keep Pasifika from seeking help are:<sup>7</sup>

- Financial hardship
- Cost and transport
- Lack of culturally appropriate services
- Lack of local services
- Difficulties in accessing services
- Stigma associated with mental illness
- Lack of childcare and support
- Gender insensitivity
- Lack of information



## Why do Pasifika gamble?<sup>8</sup>

Samoan people often gamble because they are under stress when unemployed and need money to fulfill traditional obligations. They are exposed to gambling by family members when they discuss winnings, advertisements that make gambling glamorous, and sandwich boards that identify availability of venues.

Tongan youth gamble for fun but adults gamble to make money and have a high expectation of winning. This may lead to problem gambling. It was felt that Tongan women were developing gambling problems faster than men. It was also suggested that low socio-economic areas were targeted by TABs and pokie outlets.

Niue's focus group felt that those unemployed

tended to gamble with their benefits and that employment was one answer to prevent problem gambling. They felt that because one person in the family controls the finances, often gambling can be hidden until things become very bad. They suggested that people gambled because their lives weren't fulfilled and those around them gambled. They also felt that problem gambling could lead to alcohol abuse.

All groups felt that easy access to pokies in pubs and gambling venues contributed to problem gambling, and exposure to advertising about Lotto, the casino and the TAB on TV, radio, in newspapers and on the Internet normalised gambling and emphasised luck in winning.



### Contributing factors of gambling

- Normalisation of gambling in churches and families
- Normalisation of lending institutes
- Venues catering to Pasifika
- Lack of information
- Low socio-economic situation
- Family pressure to support financially
- Family and church obligations
- Accessibility of local gambling venues

### Impacts of gambling

- Breakdown in family relationships in terms of honesty, trust, spending time with partners and providing for the needs of the children
- Extra financial and care-giving burdens placed on extended family members.
- Financial management problems leading to loss of possessions or eviction
- Declines in health, employment, education and contribution to the community.

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