

Fact Sheet

The Impact of Gambling and Problem Gambling on Asian Families and Communities in New Zealand (The IGAF Project)

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What is contained in the 'IGAF project'?

The Impact of Gambling and Problem Gambling on Asian Families and Communities in New Zealand project (IGAF project) provides important information about the Asian culture and its role in gambling, the role of migration, settlement and the environment in problem gambling amongst Asians, coping behaviours, impacts and consequences of gambling for Asian people and their families and using an ecological approach to reducing problem gambling amongst Asians. The information in this report is useful to those stakeholders working with Asian problem gamblers and their significant others and the wider community affected by gambling and problem gambling.

Why collect this information?

At present, little is known about the impacts of gambling on Asian families and communities in New Zealand. This growing Asian population has significant emerging health issues that need attention to ensure that they do not exacerbate and become a burden both to the Asian community and the New Zealand health system. One of the mental health issues identified for Asians in New Zealand is problem gambling. There is a clear need for accurate knowledge of the issues and impacts of problem gambling on Asian families and communities. This research aimed to meet the current gap in knowledge through an exploration of these issues.

Who undertook this research?

The Centre for Asian & Ethnic Minority Health Research and The Centre for Gambling Studies, at the School of Population Health in The University of Auckland undertook this research in collaboration with the Asian Family Services, Problem Gambling Foundation NZ. This research was funded by The Ministry of Health.

What methodology and methods were used?

The study adopted an ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to exploring the impacts of gambling and problem gambling on the health and wellbeing of Asian families and communities within New Zealand and utilised an acculturation framework to assist with the analysis and interpretation of gambling-related experiences. Through a mixed methods qualitative design, data were gathered in four phases: Review of literature; Focus group discussions; Individual interviews; and Stakeholder group discussions. Sixteen focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders from each of the four major Asian ethnic groups in New Zealand and with Asians from a refugee background; 50 face-to-face interviews were completed with individuals across the five groups, and four focus group discussions were conducted with stakeholders in Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, and Christchurch.

What were the findings of the research?

The data gathered illustrates that gambling amongst Asians is a complex issue that has to be understood within the wider social and institutional context in which Asians are located. Three main variables emerged as impacting Asian gambling in New Zealand:

- Asian culture,
- their settlement experience in their new environment, and
- the way they cope with their settlement experience in New Zealand.

Problem gamblers were found to employ dysfunctional coping strategies to deal with settlement adversities with adverse effects on the mental health and social and financial wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. Based on the data provided by participants, potential strategies have been developed for enhancing resilience and

other variables that protect against problem gambling and moderating those variables that may increase risk for problem gambling. These include:

- utilising cultural strengths,
- building trust,
- normalising help-seeking,
- educating Asian communities about the dangers of gambling, and
- creating a supportive social and institutional environment for Asian immigrants.

Ethnic similarities and differences that impact on gambling behaviour were identified. Significant similarities amongst the five groups include the following which may increase risk for gambling:

- Settlement, integration and social isolation issues.
- Acculturation issues such as power structure changes and intergenerational issues.
- Cultural beliefs and values such as superstition and 'luck'.
- Limited gambling knowledge and awareness.
- Cultural beliefs and values such as stigma and face saving, and spirituality and religion which may protect against gambling.
- Preference for gambling in a casino rather than pubs and playing table games rather than pokie machines
- All ethnic groups reported a wide age range in gamblers in their communities – from the twenties to the sixties.

Significant ethnic group differences were found in the following areas:

- Variations in reasons for migration and settlement expectations in New Zealand which impacted gambling behaviours.
- Gambling participation, gambling related harm and PG prevalence - apparently least amongst refugees, less amongst Southeast Asians and South Asians, and more amongst Chinese, Koreans and international students who have more resources.
- Willingness to talk about PG – South Asians apparently more willing and Chinese less willing.
- Varied preference for ethnically matched service providers or generic services within and between groups.
- Duration of residence in New Zealand - new immigrants at greater risk for gambling and older immigrants who more integrated have less risk.

The consequences and impacts discussed above point to the possibility that a bidirectional relationship may be developing between Asian culture and gambling, with gambling possibly also impacting on Asian culture and the behaviours, values and beliefs that are common to this culture.

Significant learnings and implications drawn from this study include:

- Problem gambling is an ecological issue which may need multiple agencies to work together in finding solutions to problem gambling;
- Asian culture impacts conceptions of gambling, hence cultural strengths could be utilised to intervene in problem gambling behaviours;
- The settlement experience impacts gambling behaviour and improvement of the settlement environment for Asian immigrants has potential to protect against problem gambling, and
- Interventions need to consider cultural diversity and appropriateness. The study identified a gap in information on online gambling which could be explored in further research.

What is the next step for the IGAFF project?

This research report will be disseminated to key health networks around New Zealand. The research team will publish papers and present these at conferences to disseminate the results of the research. The project was presented at the Asian Gambling Forum on 9 July 2012 in Auckland.