

**THE NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING
GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

**ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR
AND THE LEGISLATURE
FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2020**

Gamblers Assistance Program

700 South 16th Street, Lincoln NE 68508

402-471-4450

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<https://problemgambling.nebraska.gov/>

INTRODUCTION

Section 9-1004(7) of Nebraska Revised Statutes requires the director of the Gamblers Assistance Program to file an annual report with the Governor and the Clerk of the Legislature. This report provides details of the administration of the Program and the distribution of funds from the Gamblers Assistance Fund.

The Legislature has given the Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling responsibility for a range of activities. Program funds are to be used "primarily for counseling and treatment services for problem gamblers and their families who are residents of Nebraska." The Commission is to develop a process for evaluation and approval of contracts with treatment providers and other services vendors; develop standards for training and certification of counselors; review and use evaluation data; use funds for education regarding problem gambling and prevention of problem gambling; and create and implement outreach and education programs.

During the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2020, the Commission engaged in activities in all of these areas. This report summarizes the finances of the Program and describes the various activities with which the Commission has been engaged.

THE NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

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I. GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FINANCES

The Gamblers Assistance Program receives funding from several state sources, none of which comes from income, sales or property taxes. The Program's expenditures are paid out of two cash funds, the Gamblers Assistance Fund and the Health Care Cash Fund.

The primary account from which the Program's expenditures are paid is the Gamblers Assistance Fund. The sources of revenue for the Gamblers Assistance Fund are:

- Profits generated by the Nebraska Lottery, based on requirements in the Constitution.
- A statutory share of the advertising budget in the Lottery operations cash fund.
- A statutory appropriation from the Charitable Gaming operations cash fund.

The Program also receives an annual appropriation from the Health Care Cash Fund.

The following summaries are derived from the contents of monthly financial reports prepared by the accounting staff of the Department of Administrative Services.

(A) Gamblers Assistance Program Financial Performance 07/01/19-06/30/20

Total Program revenue (Gambler Assistance Fund + Health Care Cash Fund):	1,881,839
Total Program expenditures:	1,897,000
Net Program expenditures in excess of revenue:	(15,161)

(B) Gamblers Assistance Fund Performance During the Period 07/01/18-06/30/19

Revenue Transferred Into the Fund

Article III, Section 24 Constitutional formula: 500,000 + 1% of remaining Lottery profit:

Transfer September 2019	590,384
Transfer December 2019	96,573
Transfer March 2020	106,539
Transfer June 2020	125,561

Total received from Lottery profits during the period:	919,057
Section 9-831 5% of Lottery advertising expenditures:	300,363
Section 9-1,101 Charitable Gaming Operations Fund:	400,000
Investment income:	12,278
Event registration fees:	<u>141</u>
Total revenue to Gamblers Assistance Fund during the period:	1,631,839

Expenditures Paid From the Fund

Salaries and benefits	146,421
Other operations	505,407
Government aid (counseling)	<u>995,172</u>
Total	1,647,000

Recapitulation

Gamblers Assistance Fund revenue:	1,631,839
Gamblers Assistance Fund expenditures:	<u>-1,647,000</u>
Net Gamblers Assistance Fund expenditures in excess of revenue:	(15,161)

Gamblers Assistance Fund Balance

Gamblers Assistance Fund balance 07/01/19:	591,110
Gamblers Assistance Fund balance 06/30/20:	575,949
Gamblers Assistance Fund balance change 07/01/19-06/30/20:	(15,161)

Health Care Cash Fund

Appropriations:	250,000
Expenditures: all for government aid (counseling services)	-250,000

II. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD

JULY 1, 2019-JUNE 30, 2020

1. Commission Meetings

The Commission met four times to consider issues in the operations of the Program. These meetings included reviews of the financial status of the Program, consideration of new and renewed contracts with therapists and other vendors, development of initiatives, and development of the budget for the fiscal year starting July 1, 2020. Meeting notices and minutes of the meetings were posted to the state events calendar and the website maintained by the Program. Therapists were invited to attend Commission meetings to exchange ideas, and give input to staff and commissioners to aid in the development of Program activities.

2. Therapist Contracts

The Commission performs its obligation to provide treatment services to Nebraskans dealing with the effects of disordered gambling by entering into contracts with therapists. During this fiscal year, the Commission had 20 therapist contracts with agencies and individual therapists located in 10 communities. Payments to therapists are based on fee-for-services rendered.

The Commission made payments to these therapists totaling \$1.289 million during this fiscal year. Of this total, \$1.208 million was allocated to outpatient therapy services, and the balance was for community education, information, outreach and disseminating problem gambling messages. Therapists are required to comply with a guideline manual that defines types of therapy and utilization standards. Services are provided to Nebraskans and members of their families experiencing adversity because of addiction to gambling. The Program's counselors provided over 10,000 hours of therapy services to Nebraskans during the fiscal year, by a combination of individual, family and group counseling.

Counselors offer two categories of service: extended outpatient therapy and short-term urgent care therapy. During the fiscal year, 174 individuals were admitted into the outpatient

therapy programs (new admissions declined significantly in May and June due to pandemic concerns). Another 140 individuals received short-term urgent care, offered without a requirement for the program's long-form bio/psycho/social complete evaluation. Approximately 60% of individuals receiving urgent care do not enroll immediately in long-term care. During the year 518 individual Nebraskans received counseling help. Telehealth utilization expanded in the spring and is expected to continue as counselors and clients adapt.

The Program recognizes that addictions of all kinds are prone to relapse, and gambling addiction is no exception. The American Society of Addiction Medicine states that relapse is to be expected. Year-over-year, approximately 30% of the Program's clients state that they had previously been in counseling therapy for gambling problems, and are returning for more help.

The Commission continued to contract for a statewide telephone helpline, staffed around the clock by trained responders, who provide information about the Program and encourage callers to seek help from nearby Nebraska-based therapists, providing immediate direct referrals.

3. FYE 2020 Budget

The final approved appropriation for the second fiscal year of the biennium, ending June 30, 2020, was \$1,942,906. Of that, \$1.15 million was earmarked for therapy services and \$121,977 was allocated for staff salaries (2 FTE). Program expenditures were \$1,897,000, an increase of \$103,000 over the previous year.

An increase of \$300,000 in revenue transferred from the Charitable Gaming Operations meant that the carryover balance in the Gamblers Assistance Fund was only reduced by \$15,000, the smallest amount drawn down since 2014.

At the May meeting the Commission adopted budget control measures in order to prepare for reduced state lottery profits distributions in the coming year and preserve the carryover balance in the cash fund. Allocations to counselors for local and regional outreach activities and an allowance for overhead cost were eliminated; the pay rate for new client assessments was reduced; and urgent care services were reduced by 50%. The Commission resolved to study counseling services utilization guidelines in order to develop additional budget control measures.

4. Legislation to change the method of transferring revenue from Charitable Gaming

Beginning in 2000 the program received a statutory allotment of \$50,000 each year from the Charitable Gaming Operations Fund. This was increased to \$100,000 in 2018, and again to \$400,000 beginning in fiscal year 2019-20. The statute was amended again in this year's session by removing the fixed dollar amount and leaving decisions on these transfers up to each

Legislature. This change eliminates the need to approach the Legislature year after year requesting statutory amendment to increase revenue from this funding source.

5. Website

The Program continues to improve the official State of Nebraska website for viewers to use as the primary path to find help for problem gambling in Nebraska. It is located on the state home page at problemgambling.nebraska.gov. Visitors can find therapy locations near them, public information about the Program elements, current understanding of gambling disorders, and public and professional resources. The website also serves as a primary notification board for meetings and events for the Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling.

The website also hosts a landing page for the multimedia prevention campaign that began in early 2018, nicknamed “BetCareful,” which is designed to draw a gambler’s attention to the downside of gambling. Research suggests that prevention messages that instill a sense of unease or discomfort about gambling are more likely to deter the novice gambler.

A second multimedia campaign, nicknamed “LifeAfterBet” is ready to launch. This campaign will use behavioral marketing to attract gamblers to our program’s counselors. The steps to implement this new campaign are still in development.

The Commission believes that the harm caused by uncontrolled gambling is a public health concern. Addiction to gambling is not simply an individual’s personal problem. It affects families, neighborhoods and communities. The Commission’s multimedia campaign attracted over 2,500 new users to our website each month during the year, which validates the decision to use this medium to disseminate our message.

6. Online Training

The Commission continued its contract with the Nebraska Council on Compulsive Gambling for presentation of training classes for counselors who deliver therapy services to Nebraskans with gambling problems. This is an online course presented by Bellevue University. It runs for 19 weeks and is repeated approximately three times per year. The Commission provided underwriting to develop the program and supports Nebraska candidates for certification by subsidizing part of their tuition cost. Enrollments are limited to 10 students for each session. Since inception in October, 2014, 39 Nebraskans have completed the training.

The Commission also arranged with Bellevue University to offer a shortened course that is available to mental and behavioral health professionals already practicing under other licenses. The Commission expects a shorter academic requirement and lower tuition cost will help to attract new counselors in locations that are now unserved.

7. Data

In response to guidance from the Legislature and the Executive Branch, program staff developed a series of data gathering instruments. These forms are designed to enable the Commission to develop outcome measures. The forms also provide information about the population the program serves, including current status and history. The history questions are based on a meta-analysis of studies of risk and protective factors that influence the development of addiction to gambling. Over time, the Commission will have data to use as a basis for prevention programming and improved counseling utilization standards.

The complete annual report of data is attached to this report. This data was reported by Nebraskans diagnosed with gambling disorder and is not based on surveys, adding to its reliability.

8. Problem Gambling Prevention, Education and Awareness Messages

By statute, five percent of the advertising budget of the Nebraska Lottery is to be dedicated to presentation of messages and information to the public about problem gambling. The Commission has entered into an agreement with the Lottery Division of the Department of Revenue that calls for preparation of an annual advertising plan. The plan accounts for previous year expenditures and projects coming year activities. For the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2020, this allocation was \$300,363.

This year the Commission's expenditures on these activities exceeded the minimum required by the statute, totaling \$430,886. Expenditures included community education and outreach by therapy contractors (\$81,576), the contract with Agent Brand of Lincoln for the multimedia digital prevention campaign (\$325,000), and a series of small newspaper ads.

9. National Problem Gambling Awareness Month

In March Governor Ricketts issued a proclamation declaring that March is Problem Gambling Awareness Month in Nebraska. The Legislature also adopted a resolution, and mayors and city councils from around the state issued similar proclamations.

III. PROGRAM DATA

Gambler Assistance Program counselors admit clients into therapy if they satisfy the diagnostic criteria for Disordered Gambler specified in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5th ed.* When a new client is admitted for therapy, information is gathered to help with diagnosis, treatment planning and program records. This information is analyzed under strict procedures that protect confidentiality. The resulting data gives the Commission insight into the characteristics of Nebraskans who seek help for gambling problems and the nature of gambling in Nebraska.

Highlights from the data report include:

- 29% of Nebraskans seeking counseling for addiction to gambling considered suicide; another 6% attempted suicide before seeking counseling from our program. These rates of suicide thinking and attempts are significantly higher than in the general population.
- 27% of gamblers who first gambled before age 21 were influenced to do so by a parent.
- At the time of admission into therapy, 24% of clients gambled at slot machines.
- Touch-screen “skill” games frequently found in convenience stores are surging in popularity, with 11% of Program clients becoming addicted to gambling on these devices.
- By the time of discharge from counseling, 88% report reducing their gambling and 62% reduced their gambling debt, which had averaged \$34,000 each at the start of their counseling.

IV. CONCLUSION

The Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling is carrying out its mission by expanding and improving existing programs for training therapists, expanding geographical coverage of therapy services and adding new therapists to the field. Subsidizing the cost of problem gambling therapy for Nebraskans and their families is the primary goal of the Program. The Commission is also committed to prevention, education and outreach activities. These activities emphasize evidence-based programs that have been proven to produce expected results.

For the Commission

David Geier, Director

Nebraska Gamblers Assistance Program

Nebraska Gamblers Assistance Program
COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING

Cumulative Data Report

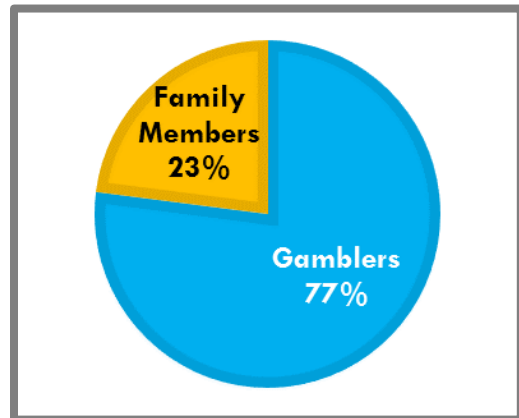
July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2020

A total of **801** Nebraskans and their families received problem gambling counseling services through the Nebraska Gamblers Assistance Program (GAP) between July 1, 2018 and and June 30, 2020.

These individuals included:

- Individuals with gambling disorder admitted into long-term counseling: **292**
- Members of families of individuals with gambling disorder admitted into long-term counseling: **88**
- Individuals accepted to short-term urgent care* counseling: **224**
- Clients carried over from June 2018: **197**

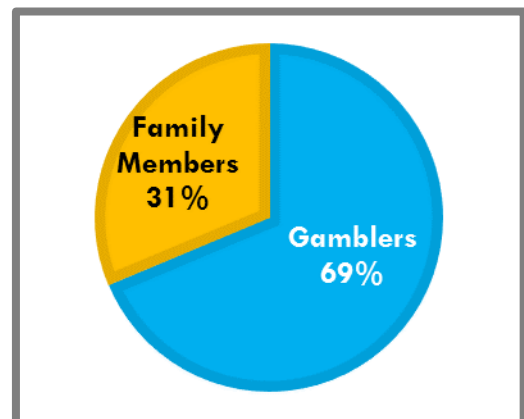
Figure 1: New Admissions to Long-Term Counseling July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2020



* Up to eight sessions of counseling are offered in urgent care with a streamlined admissions process. Counted as unique individuals.

- 28% of urgent care visits resulted in a new admission to long-term counseling between July 1, 2018 and and June 30, 2020

Figure 2: New Admissions to Short-Term Counseling (Urgent Care) July 1, 2018 and June 30, 2020

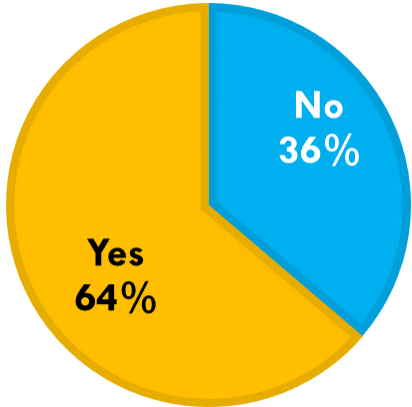
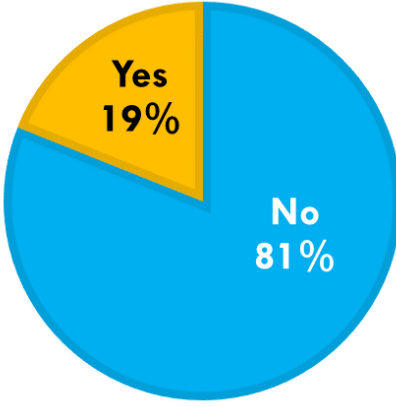


Access to Counseling:

94%

Nebraskans report it is important to them that problem gambling counseling is offered at no cost to them

Characteristics of Nebraskans Receiving Long-Term Counseling for a Gambling Problem

Gambling caused financial distress (foreclosure, eviction, bill collection, bankruptcy) in last 12 months	Gambling caused harm to children in the family in last 12 months
 <p>A pie chart with a yellow slice representing 'Yes' at 64% and a blue slice representing 'No' at 36%.</p>	 <p>A pie chart with a yellow slice representing 'Yes' at 19% and a blue slice representing 'No' at 81%.</p>
Considered violating the law to support gambling	Person in counseling has threatened to harm spouse or intimate partner
27%	3.2%
Considered ending life in the last 12 months	Attempted ending life in the last 12 months
29%	6%

Another payday, another lonely weekend.

Anonymous Family Member

Total gambling debt reported by disordered gamblers

Total gambling debt reported by members of families of disordered gamblers

195 gamblers reported gambling debt totaling

43 family members reported gambling debt totaling

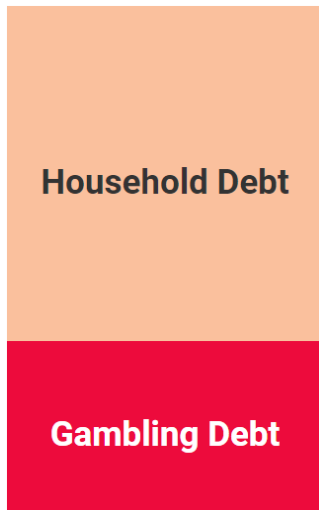
\$6,621,545

for an average \$33,957 debt each

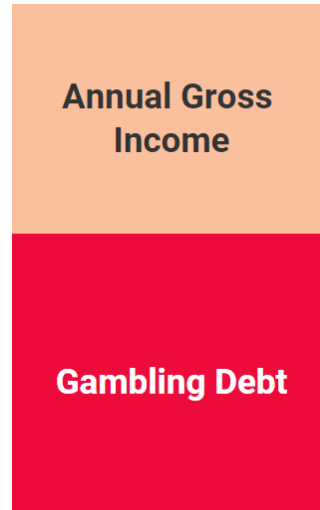


\$2,064,200

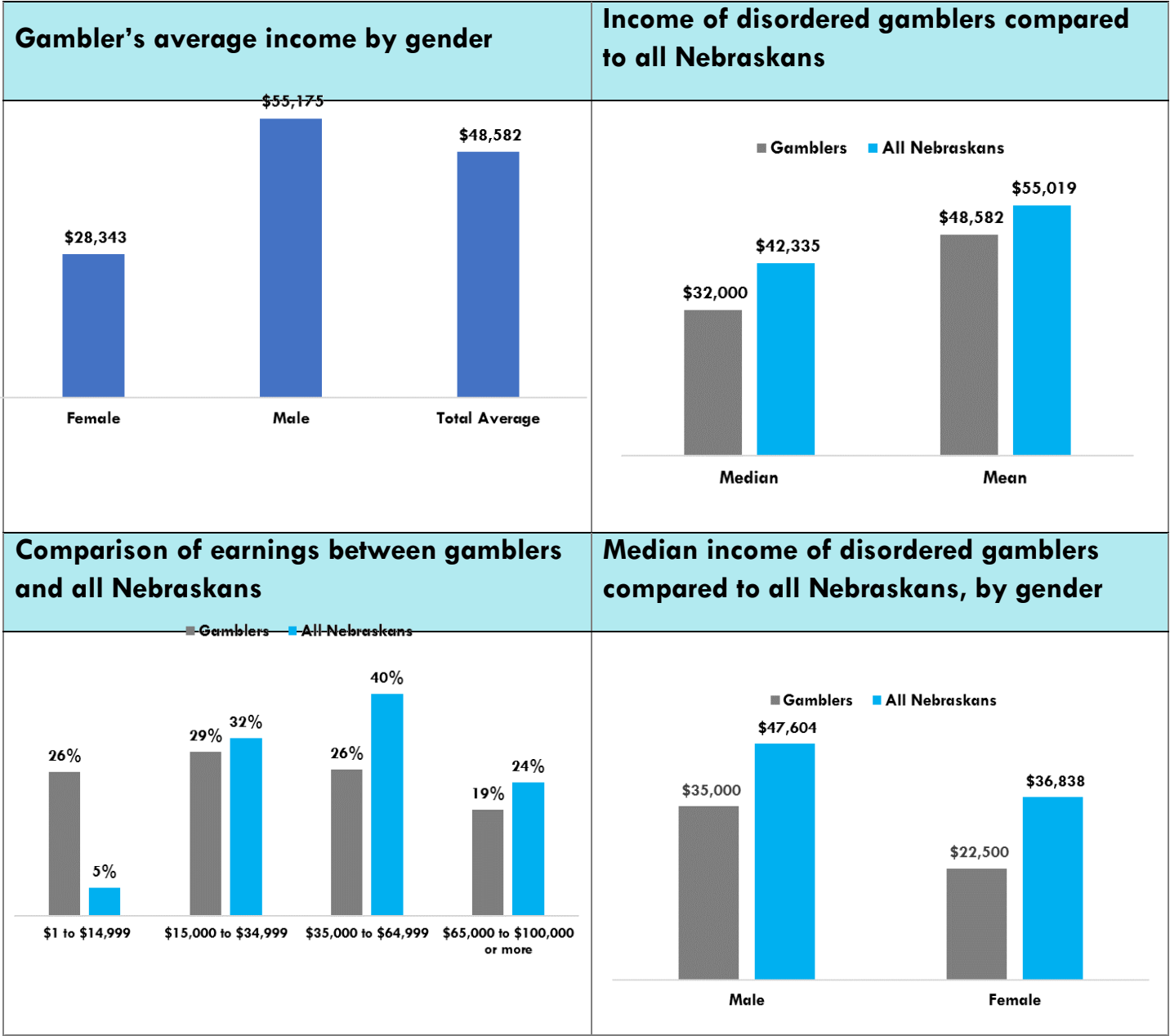
for an average \$48,005 debt each



Gambling debt represents 34% of household debt.

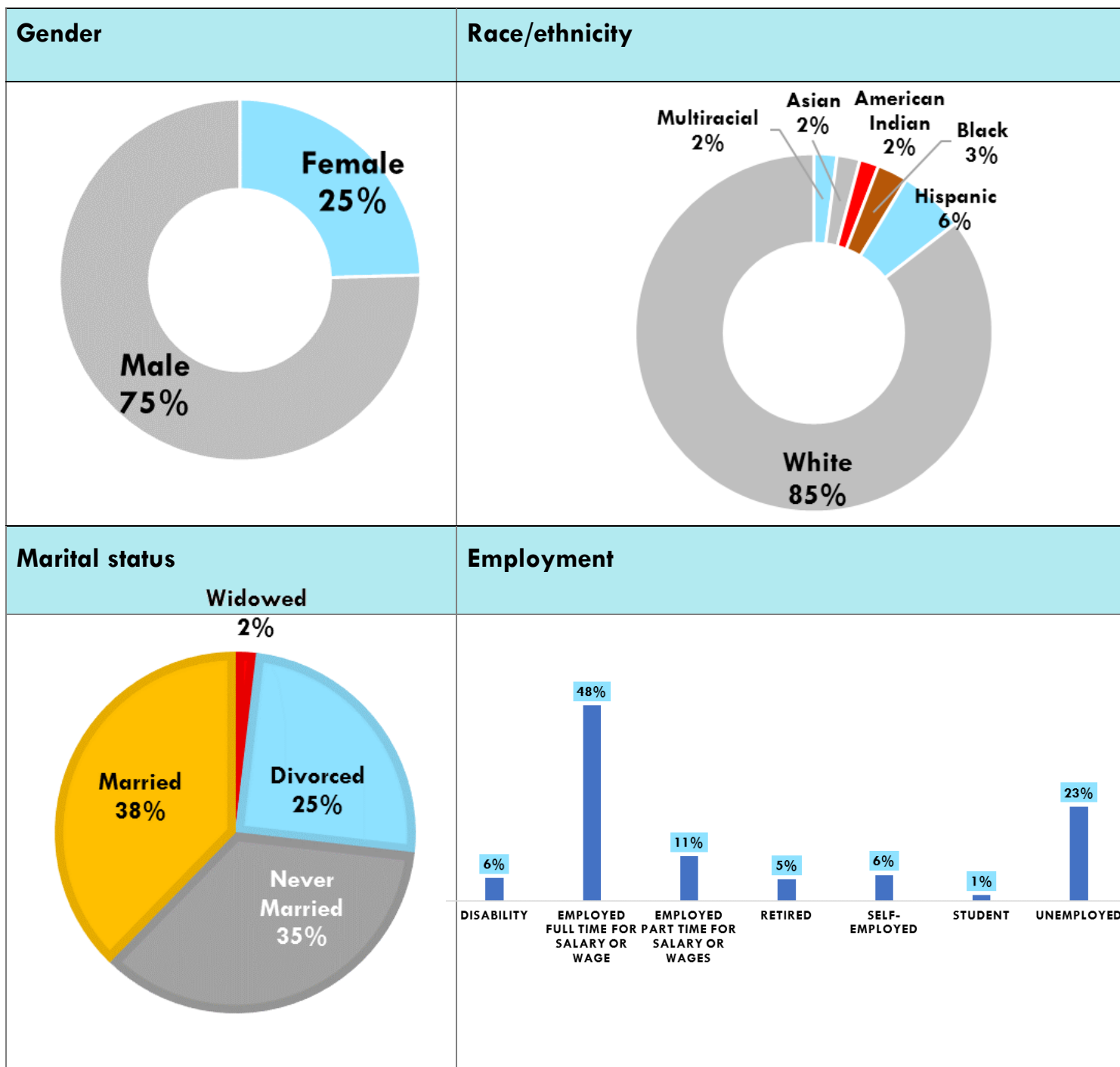


Gambling debt represents 55% of annual gross income.



I found out he'd relapsed and had sunk even lower by stealing money from his place of work. He realized there was no way out so had to ask me for help to replace the money ... which I did. I couldn't risk him losing his job or getting into trouble with the police.

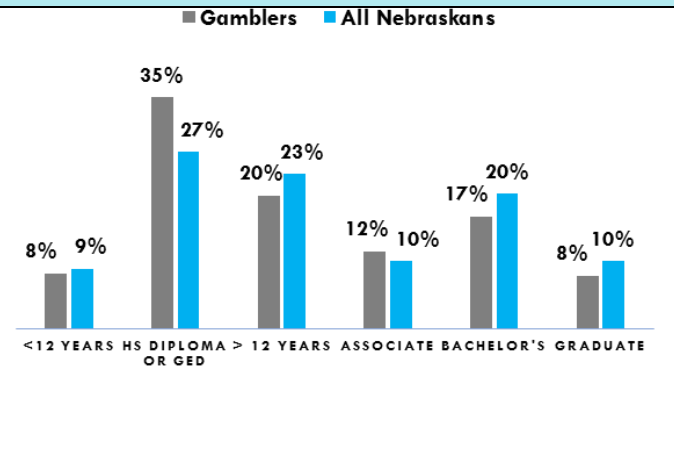
Family Member



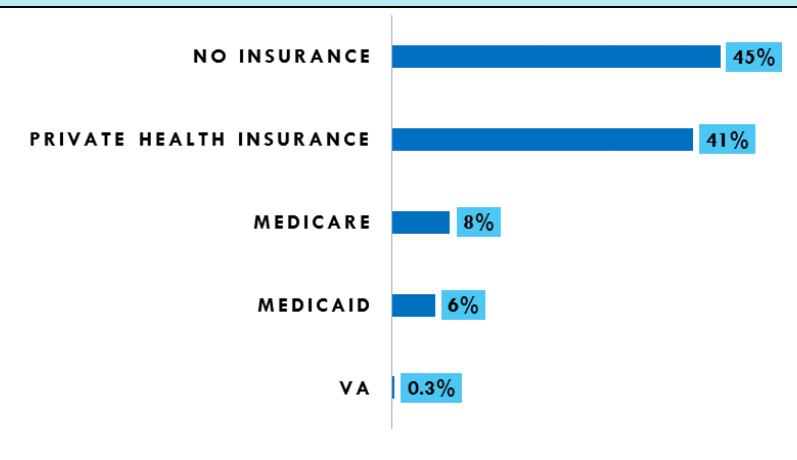
I didn't come home smelling like bourbon ... I didn't have my spouse call me in sick because I was hungover. My addiction - my illness - was invisible, and all the more devastating because of that.

Anonymous Problem Gambler

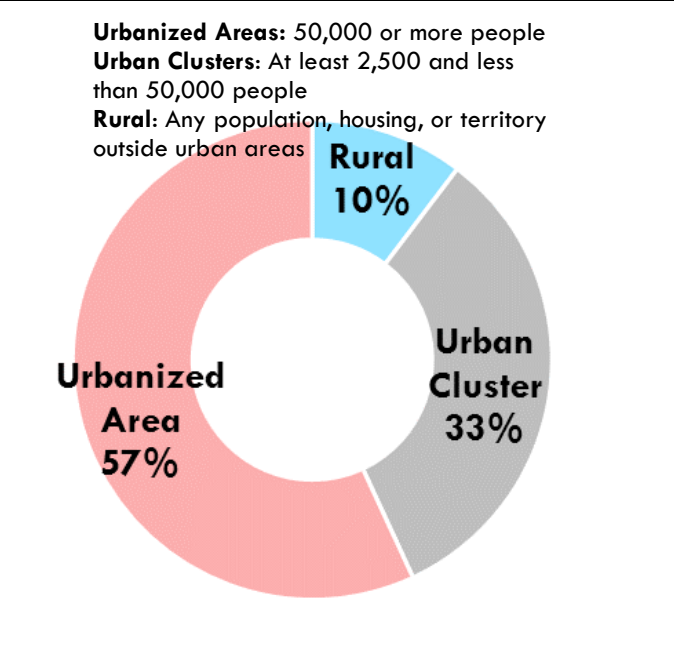
Comparison of educational levels between gamblers and all Nebraskans



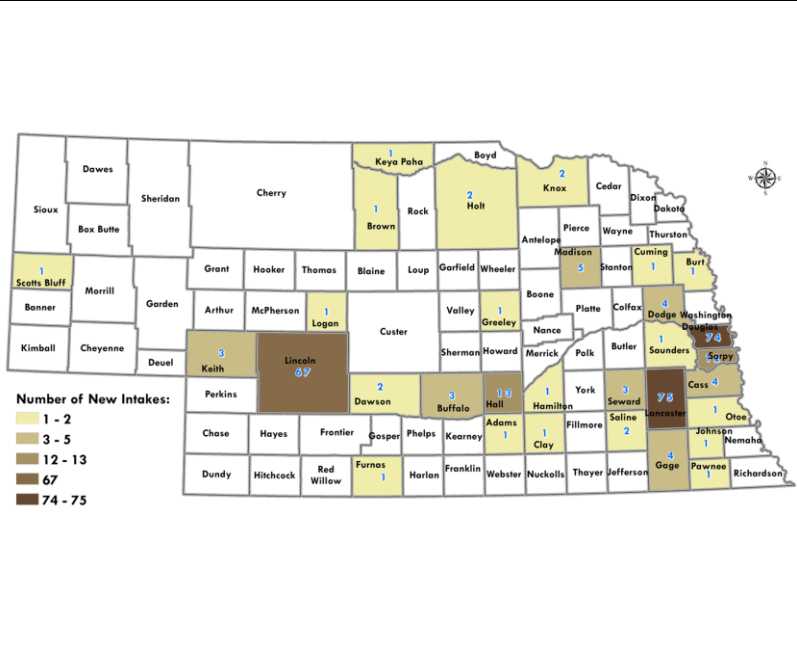
Health insurance



Location of all Nebraskans receiving help



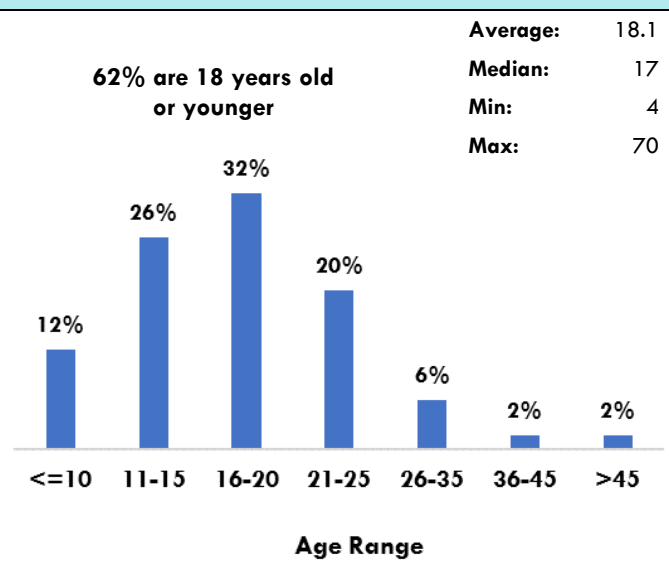
Location of all Nebraskans receiving help by county



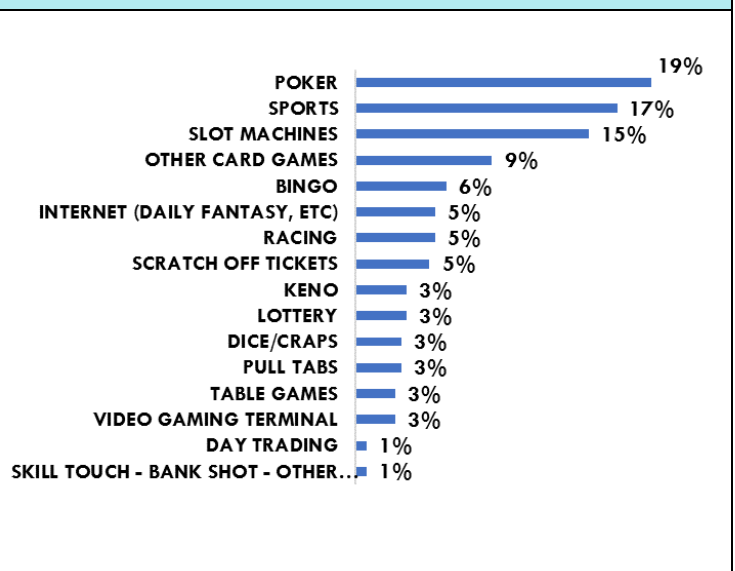
I used to work in Lincoln and Omaha areas. It's very different in the western part of the state. Everybody knows everybody. For somebody to seek out help, it's very difficult, it's embarrassing for them.

GAP Counselor

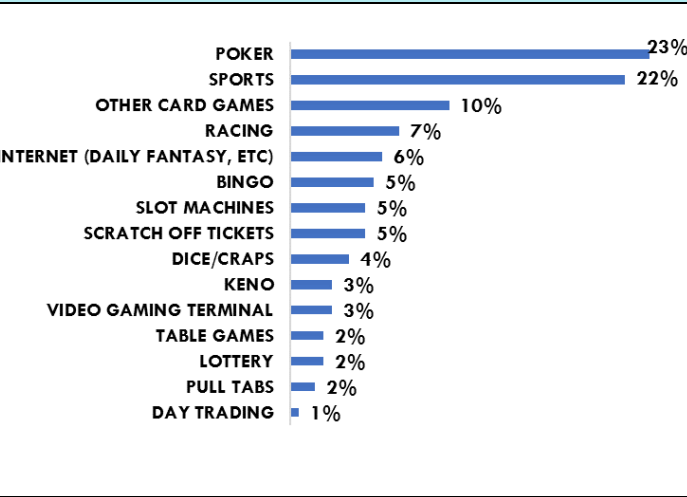
Age first gambled



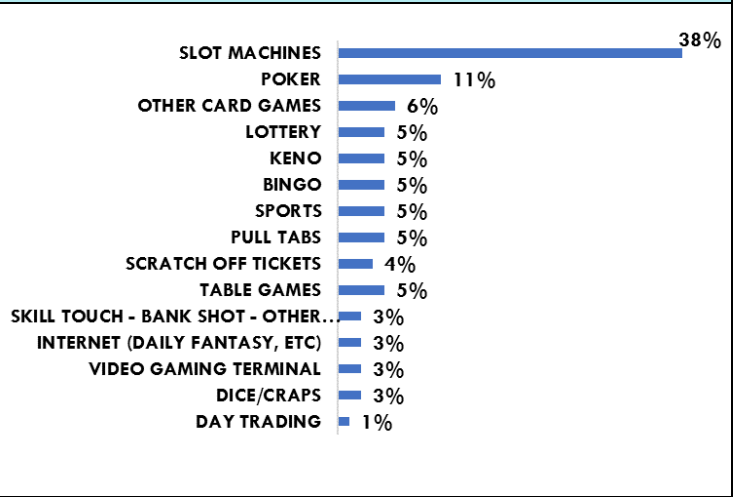
First gambling activity all gambler clients



First type of gambling by gamblers who first gambled before age 21



First type of gambling by gamblers who first gambled after age 21

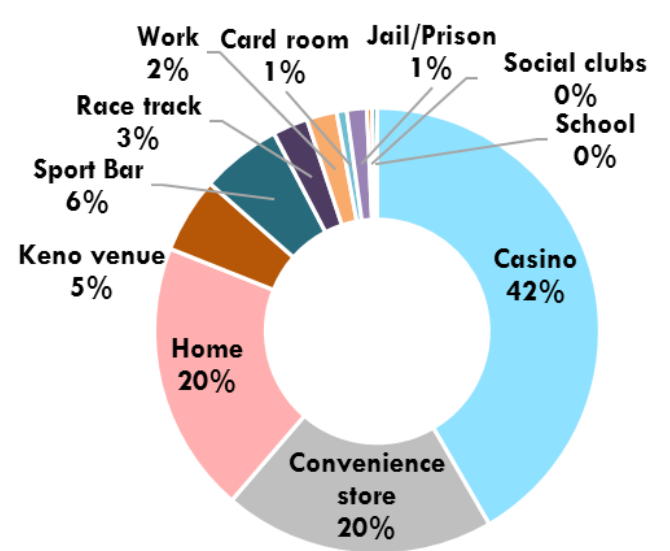
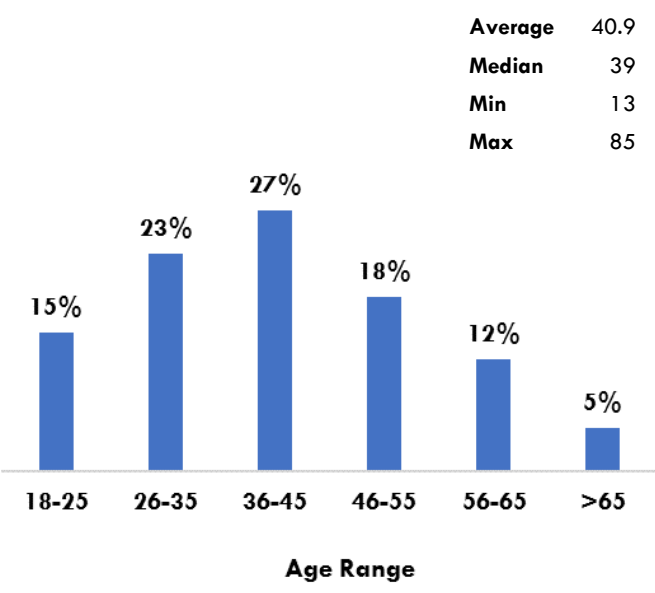


On average, female gamblers seek gambling treatment 21.5 years after the first experience with a gambling activity, nearly two years earlier when compared to male gamblers (average 23.4 years).

GAP Data

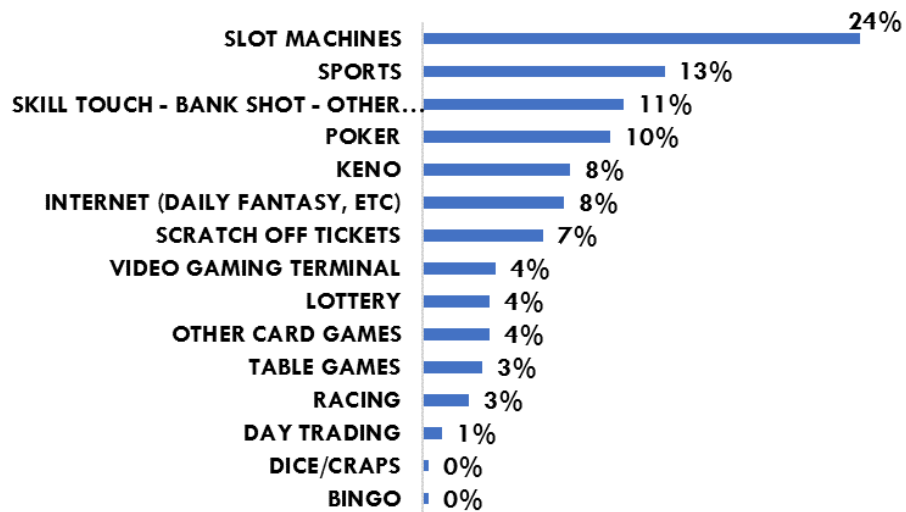
Age at time of admission

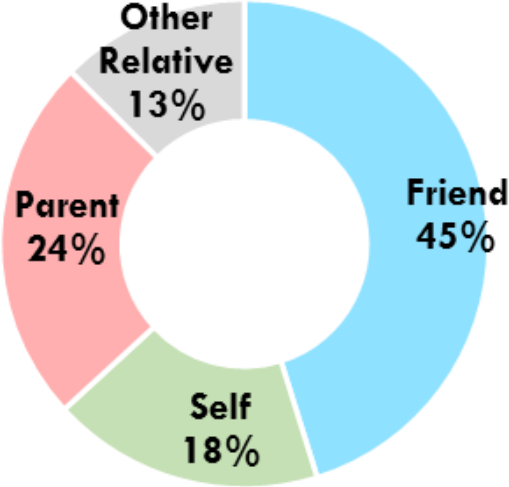
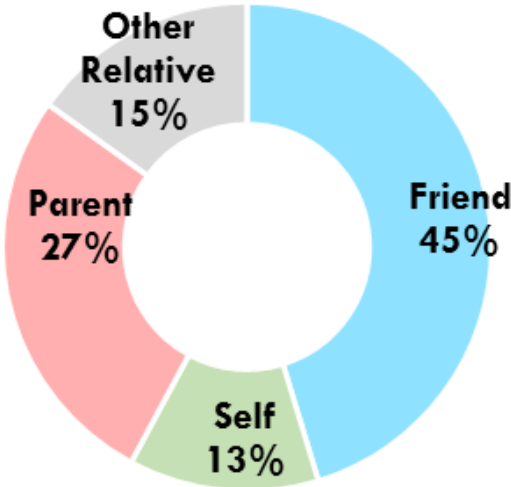
Gambling location



Most frequent gambling activity in the last 12 months

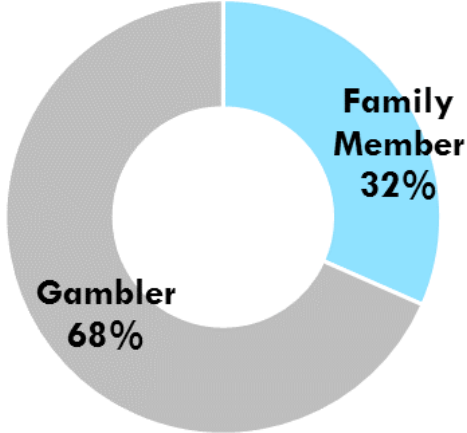
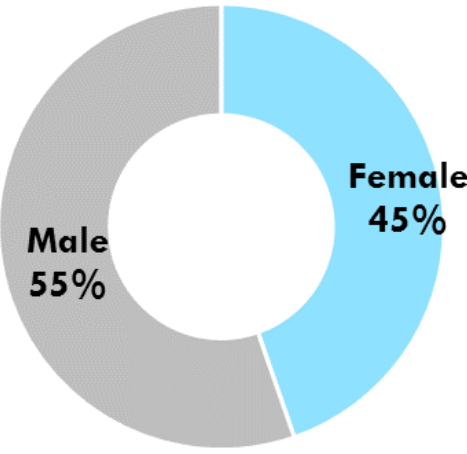
July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2020



Person who influenced gambler to start gambling (all ages)	Person who influenced gambler to start gambling before they were 21 years old																				
 <table border="1"> <caption>Influences on gambling (all ages)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Influencer</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Friend</td> <td>45%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parent</td> <td>24%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Self</td> <td>18%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Relative</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Influencer	Percentage	Friend	45%	Parent	24%	Self	18%	Other Relative	13%	 <table border="1"> <caption>Influences on gambling (before age 21)</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Influencer</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Friend</td> <td>45%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Parent</td> <td>27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other Relative</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Self</td> <td>13%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Influencer	Percentage	Friend	45%	Parent	27%	Other Relative	15%	Self	13%
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Exposure to gambling when growing up	Exposure to other addictions (alcohol, tobacco, drugs)* when growing up																				
<p style="text-align: center;">56%</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">85%</p> <p style="text-align: center;">*Excluding gambling addiction</p>																				

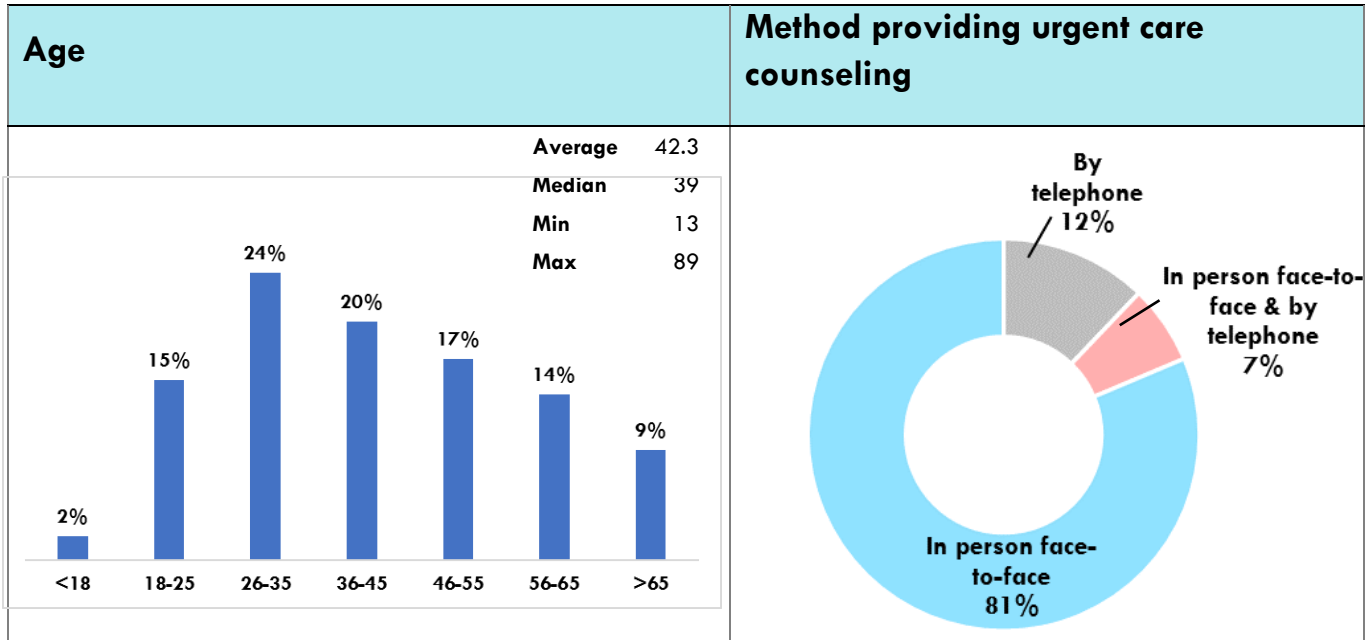
Behavioral addictions are still looked at like it's a willpower issue. People don't understand the physiological part. So, there's more shame [to not being able to overcome the addiction].

GAP Counselor

Number of individuals receiving urgent care	Total urgent care hours												
<p style="text-align: center;">381</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1,282</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Average per individual: 3.4 hours</p>												
Client type	Gender												
 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Client type</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Gambler</td> <td>68%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family Member</td> <td>32%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Client type	Percentage	Gambler	68%	Family Member	32%	 <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>55%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>45%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Gender	Percentage	Male	55%	Female	45%
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Urgent Care - Short-Term Counseling

Gamblers don't show up until there's some huge mess that's been created. The spouse is ready to leave, or they are in deep financial [troubles], there's almost always a major crisis that occurs for them to come in [for help].



Financial crisis	Feeling suicidal
87%	12%
Family/marriage at risk	Bankruptcy/foreclosure
72%	11%
Employment at risk	Referral to emergency services
40%	8%
Risk of criminal action	Danger from others
38%	3%

	Danger to others
	2%

Problems of Urgent Care Clients

Benefit of GAP Counseling Services as Reported by Nebraskan Clients

During Counseling:

- **87%** of Nebraskans report lower gambling when compared to start of counseling
- **73%** of Nebraskans report lower gambling debt since counseling started
- **66%** of Nebraskans report positive progress toward goal for gambling
- **95%** of family members feel satisfied with counseling
- **75%** of family members feel very motivated to continue with counseling

At Discharge:

- **83%** of Nebraskans report being helped within six sessions
- **88%** of Nebraskans reduced their gambling
- **62%** of Nebraskans reduced their gambling debt