

**Exploration of Cultural Perceptions, Attitudes and Beliefs
Regarding Gambling and Problem Gambling in the
Portuguese Speaking Communities
in the Greater Toronto Area**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research project is a collaboration between COSTI Immigrant Services and Abrigo Centre.

Purpose of the Research

Given limited research in the area of problem gambling within the ethnocultural communities targeted by this project, the purpose of this research was to explore perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding gambling and problem gambling. The research was also designed to explore how problem gambling may be prevented and reduced, and to assess how approaches, materials and techniques to address the issue of problem gambling in ethnocultural communities can be developed. The Portuguese speaking communities are one group among seven ethnocultural groups selected based on size in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Participatory Action Research

In order for the results of this project to be meaningful and useful to the communities involved a participatory approach was used. This means that community stakeholders were actively involved in informing the research process from the onset to the completion of the project.

Data Collection Methods

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather data. Focus groups were conducted with service providers and community members as well as individual interviews with service providers who were not able to attend focus groups.

Data Analysis and Results

Qualitative

- Most focus groups identified card playing and bingo as being popular forms of gambling. Some suggested there is “back room” illegal gambling that happens in the community. Focus group participants did not feel that there was any particular cultural or religious taboo regarding gambling.

- Almost all groups identified gender differences in terms of the games played and in the level of gambling. Seniors suggested it is less acceptable for a woman to be gambling.
- All focus groups reported that it is difficult for people to seek help outside of the family. Other barriers to getting help include language and cultural differences with service providers and a lack of knowledge about existing services. There seemed to be a preference for ethnospecific services among focus group participants.
- Most focus groups identified problem gambling as an important issue because of the difficulties it could cause in the family. Youth did not identify problem gambling as a priority issue.
- Almost all focus groups, including seniors, seemed to think that seniors are at risk of developing problems with gambling. Other subgroups that were identified are men and youth.
- Various methods and venues for public education were identified, including posters, pamphlets, skits, interactive presentations, Portuguese language media community agencies, community physicians, churches, and social clubs.

Quantitative Results

- Common gambling activities reported include sports betting, betting on card games, billiards, bingo, lottery, casino games, and Quino.
- Gambling is not commonly allowed at home, yet 25% responded that people do organize gambling at home.
- Male youth, seniors, and adult males were considered to be at risk of developing problem gambling.
- Family physicians were the preferred source for help with emotional and health concerns.
- A slightly higher percentage of respondents preferred to access services through ethnospecific community agencies versus mainstream agencies.
- There are no services available in the community to deal with problem gambling.
- Nearly 56% recognized problem gambling as one of the top ten issues in the community.
- Most effective methods and venues for public education were identified to be Portuguese language TV (88%), radio (76%), and newspaper (72%), workshops/seminars (47%), cultural events (47%), religious institutions (45%), community agencies/centres (43%), ethnocultural organizations (40%), pamphlets/newsletters (33%), and posters (32%).

Conclusion

This research project brought together a number of stakeholders and provided an opportunity for the community to begin to address the issue of problem gambling, while also providing a base for future research, prevention and treatment.