Office of Responsible Gambling

Gambling Help Services

Annual Activity Report

An analysis of clients presenting for gambling and financial counselling services between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020

2019–2020

gambleaware.nsw.gov.au

Contents

Background

The Office of Responsible Gambling (the Office) collects data from funded Gambling Help services and other sources to monitor performance and trends in gambling treatment within NSW. This report covers the data collected between 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 from Gambling Help services. Previous reports are available on the GambleAware website.

Only those clients who received at least one counselling session between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020 were included in the final data set. Non-consenting clients were counted in the current report, though their demographic and gambling-related data were not included.

Data from 53 counselling services funded by the Office of Responsible Gambling (through the Responsible Gambling Fund) during the 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020 period was included in the final data set.

Data on clients seen by volunteer counsellors was included. Client and session data from Wesley Community Legal Service was not included as they provide legal services only. Where client responses were recorded as 'Data not collected', 'N/A' or 'Not stated/inadequately described', these data points were excluded from calculations for demographics, gambling, mental health and access to gambling unless otherwise stated.

Data from the Gambling Helpline telephone counselling service or Gambling Help Online digital counselling service is not included in this report.

Summary of Activity

Client and session numbers

6,220

clients received counselling services in 2019/20

54 minutes

Average session duration for all session types, across all services

34,646

Counselling sessions delivered in 2019/20

Gambling counselling made up 82.3% of all counselling sessions and 17.7% of all counselling sessions were for financial counselling

16%

Decrease in number of clients in 2019/20 from 2018/19

5.1%

Decrease in number of counselling sessions in 2019/20 from 2018/19

19,088	In-person counselling sessions
12,968	Telephone sessions
2,590	Online sessions
32,066	Individual sessions
1,533	Group sessions
1,047	Couple/family sessions

Client gambling activities

The two most common preferred gambling venues

41.3%

Clients whose preferred gambling venues were **hotels or pubs**

34.9%

Clients whose preferred gambling venues were **clubs**

The majority of clients undertaking gambling counselling preferred to access gambling in person

87%

preferred to access gambling in person

10.3%

preferred to access gambling online

Client demographics

60.2%
Male clients

39.7%
Female clients

Of clients receiving counselling

69.4%
clients are a gambler

18.1%
partners or family members of a gambler

20%
of clients reported that they spoke a language other than English at home

Of these languages, the most commonly spoken were:

Arabic	32.4%
Vietnamese	10.4%
Korean	5%
Mandarin	4.4%
Cantonese	4.2%

7.4%
of clients identified themselves as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both

Client mental health, substance use and legal history

Of clients undertaking gambling counselling

39.1% were diagnosed with anxiety

46.5% were diagnosed with depression

36.1% had thoughts about suicide

10.2% had attempted suicide

28.3% had a problem with alcohol

22.1% had a problem with other drugs

14.5% had committed an offence related to their gambling

Client and Session Numbers

A total of 6,220 clients received 34,646 counselling services between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2020.

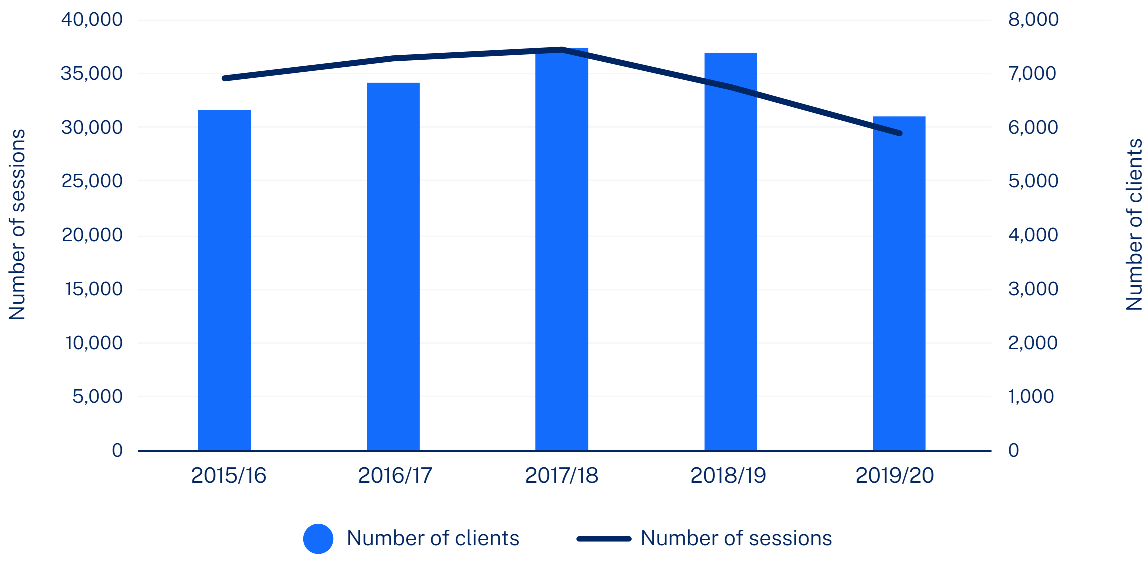
The number of clients in 2019/20 decreased by 16% from 2018/19, and the number of counselling sessions decreased by 5.1%.

Clients who refused their data collection totalled 1,137 (17.6%).[1]

Table 1 — Annual percentage change in clients and sessions for the past five years

	Number of clients	Percentage change from previous year	Number of sessions	Percentage change from previous year
2019/20	6,220	-16%	34,646	-5.1%
2018/19	7,401	-1.4%	36,522	-2.1%
2017/18	7,508	+9.6%	37,308	+10.2%
2016/17	6,848	+8.0%	33,840	+14.6%
2015/16	6,343	+14.4%	29,541	+10.1%

Figure 1 — Figure 1 Number of clients and number of sessions for the past five years



A total of 34,646 counselling sessions were delivered in 2019/20. Of these, 28,521 were for gambling counselling and 6,125 were for financial counselling. As shown in Table 2, the average number of sessions per client was 5.6.

1 Where client responses were recorded as 'Data not collected', 'N/A' or 'Not stated/inadequately described', these data points were excluded from calculations for demographics, gambling activities, access to gambling and mental health, unless otherwise stated.

Table 2 — Session to client ration for all counselling sessions

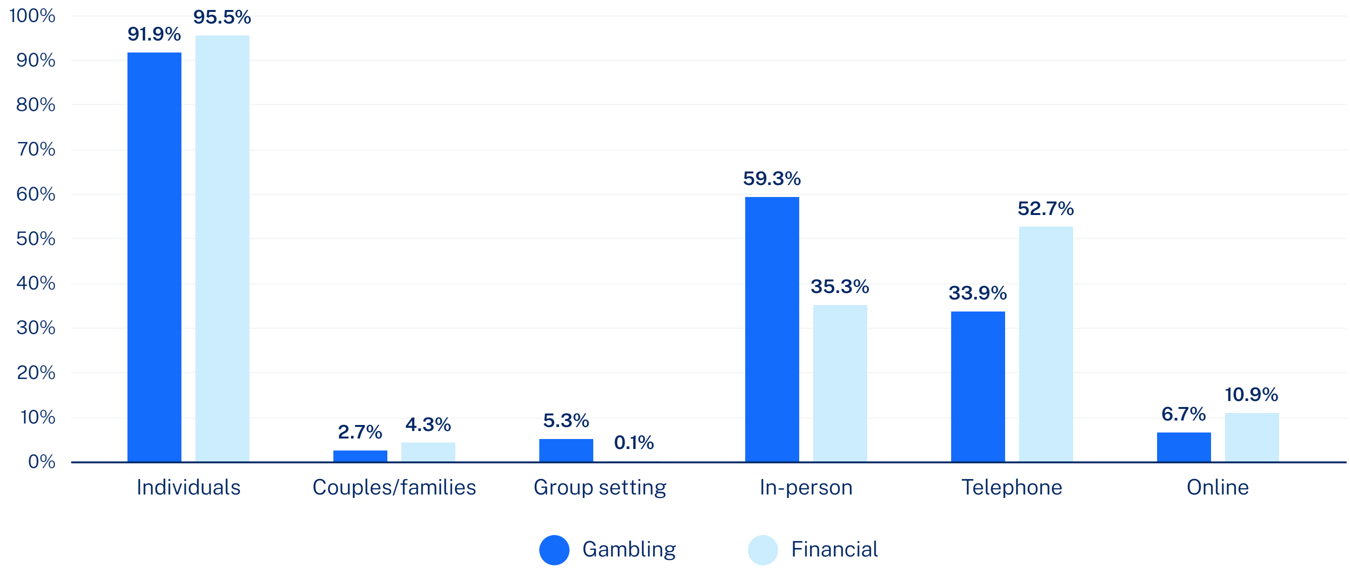
Number of clients	Number of counselling sessions	Average sessions per client
6,220	34,646	5.6

Gambling counselling sessions made up 82.3% of all counselling sessions. Of these, 59.3% of sessions were conducted in-person, 33.9% were by telephone and 6.7% were held online in 2019/20.[2]

Financial counselling sessions made up 17.7% of all counselling sessions. Of these, 35.3% of sessions were conducted in-person, 53.7% were by telephone and 10.9% were held online in 2019/20.

The proportion of sessions conducted for gambling and financial counselling is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 — Gambling and financial counselling by location and session type



Of all clients who attended gambling counselling sessions, 29.1% only attended one session, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 — Number and percentage of clients who attended only one gambling counselling session

Number of clients attending gambling counselling sessions	Number of clients attending only one gambling counselling session	Proportion of clients attending only one gambling counselling session
4,960	1,442	29.1%

Of all clients who attended financial counselling, 45.4% only attended one session, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 — Number and percentage of clients who attended only one financial counselling session

Number of clients attending financial counselling sessions	Number of clients attending only one financial counselling session	Proportion of clients attending only one financial counselling session
1,549	704	45.4%

2 Gambling Helpline and Gambling Help Online counselling sessions are not counted in this report.

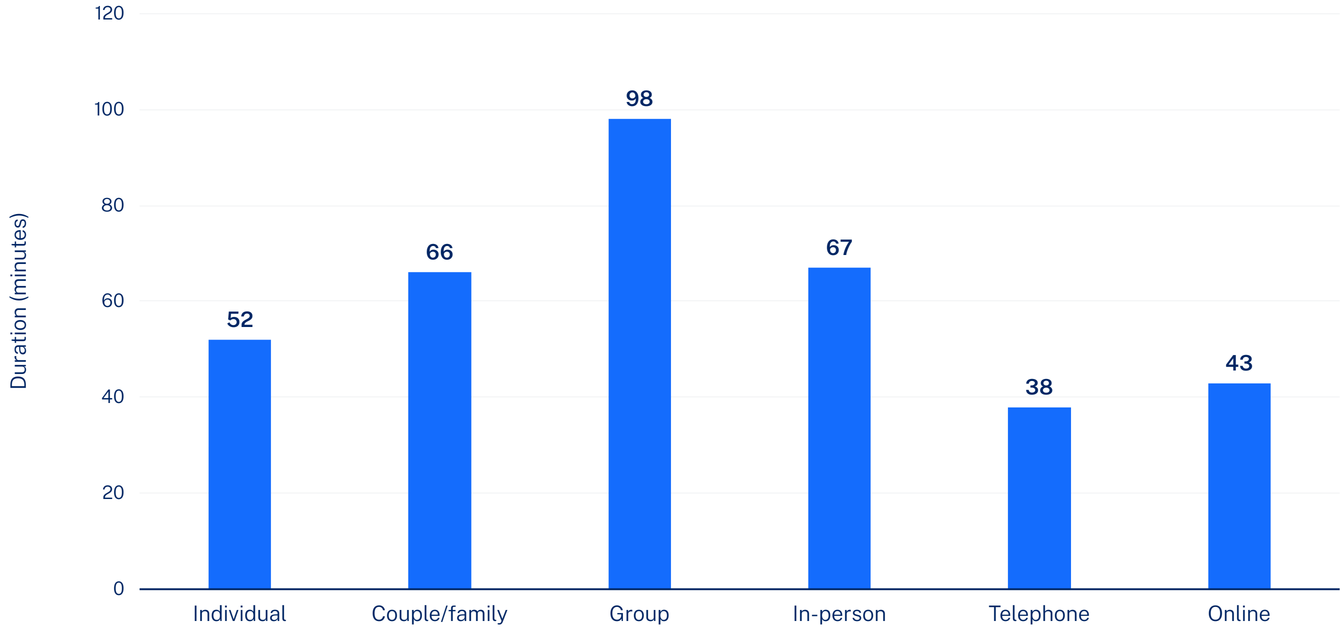
Session Type, Duration and Location

Session Duration

The average session duration was 54 minutes. Sessions involving more than one client were on average longer than sessions only involving one client. This is in line with expectations, more time is required to effectively engage with a group of clients than an individual.

In-person counselling were longer on average than telephone and online counselling sessions (Figure 3).

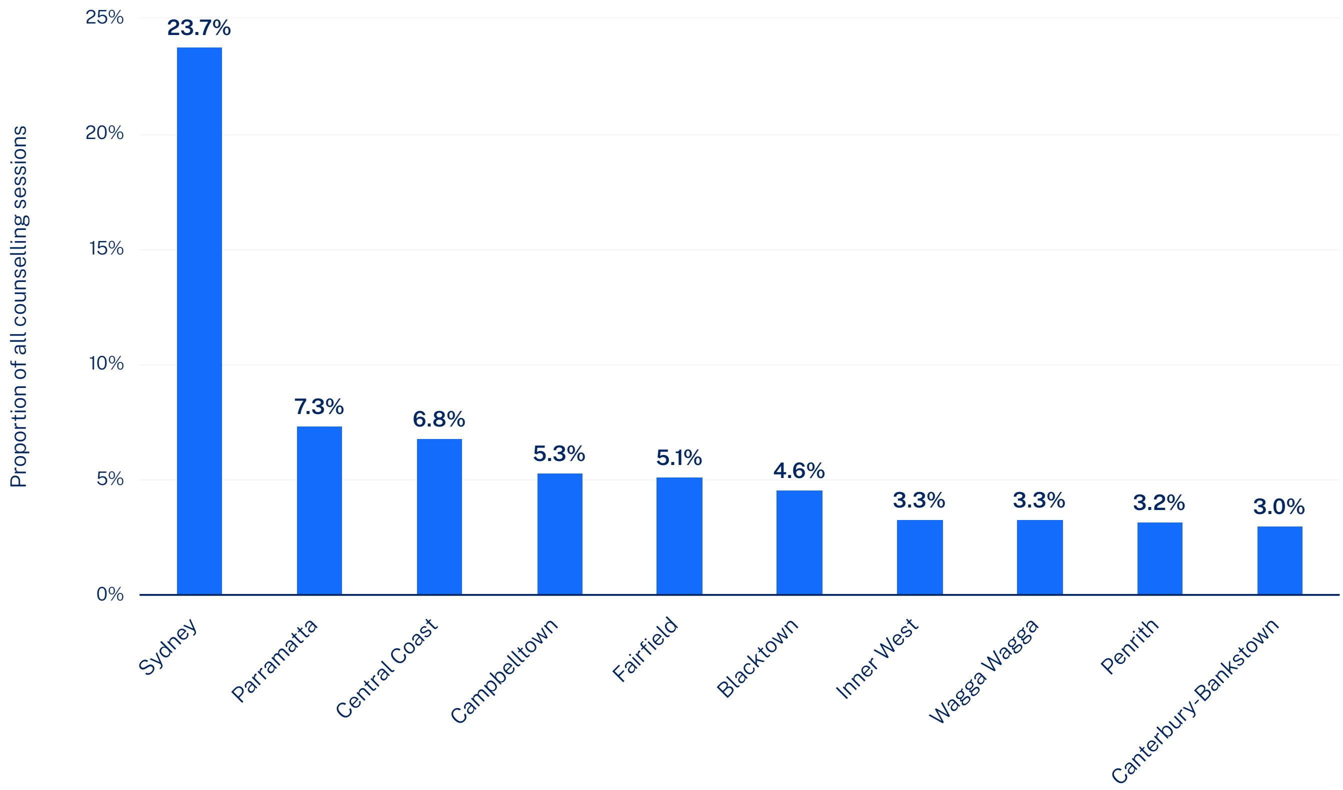
Figure 3 — Average duration (minutes) of counselling sessions by session type and location



Session Location

In 2019/20, counselling sessions were conducted in 71 Local Government Areas (LGAs).[3] The highest proportion of counselling sessions were conducted in the Sydney LGA (Figure 4).

Figure 4 — Proportion of counselling sessions per LGA



3 Does not include telephone or online counselling sessions

Demographics

Age and Gender

Of the clients receiving counselling during 2019/20, 60.2% identified as male, 39.7% female and 0.1% did not state their gender. The age group with the highest proportion of clients was 35–49 years (38.2%). This age group consisted of 38.4% of all male clients and 37.9% of all female clients.

Table 5 displays the breakdown of clients by age and gender.

Table 5 — The number and percentage of clients by age and gender

	Total[4]		Males		Females	
Age	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
<18 years	17	0.3%	15	0.5%	2	0.1%
18–34 years	1,639	31.2%	1,163	36.8%	475	22.8%
35–49 years	2,005	38.2%	1,214	38.4%	790	37.9%
50–64 years	1,195	22.7%	614	19.4%	579	27.8%
65+ years	398	7.6%	158	5.0%	240	11.5%

Indigenous Status

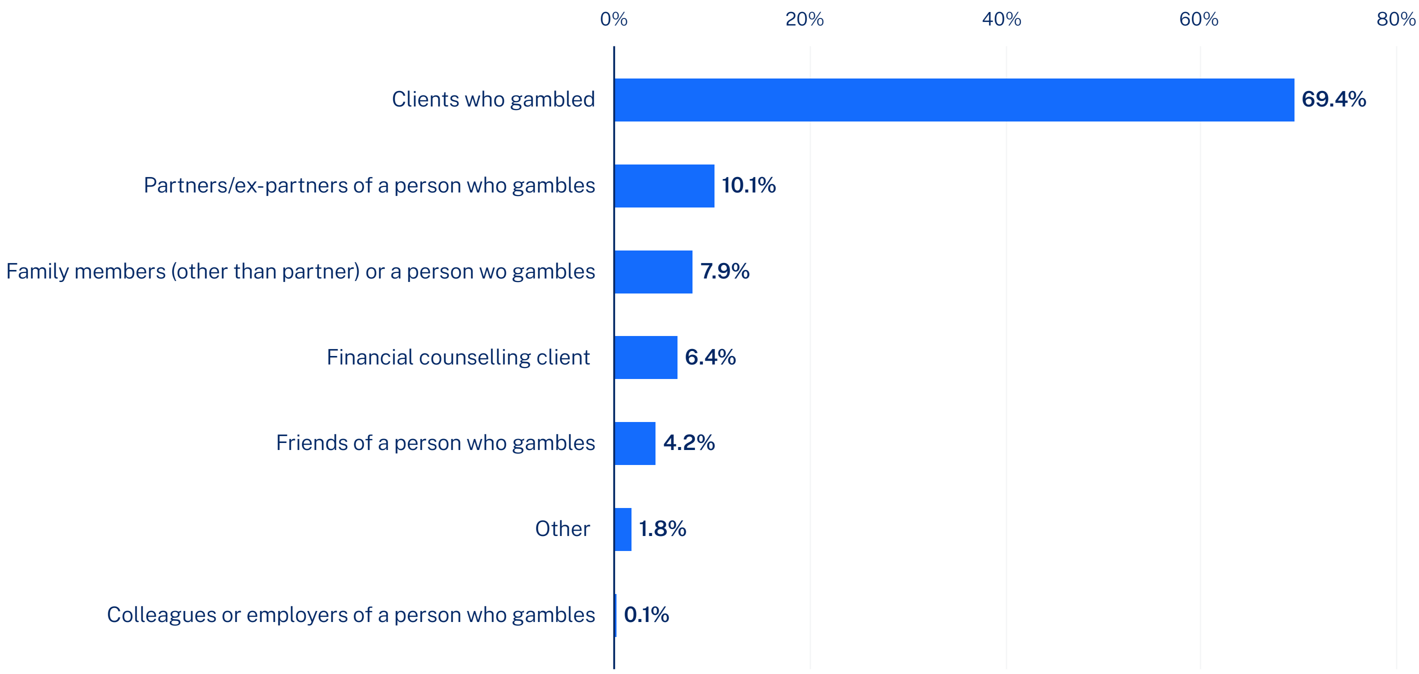
377 (7.4%) of clients reported that they were Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

4 Total count includes clients who did not state their gender

Client Type

The majority of clients who attended counselling services were gamblers (69.4%), followed by family and friends (22.3%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5 — Proportion of each client type attending counselling service



The percentage of male clients who gambled (84%) was higher than the percentage of female clients who gambled (47.1%) (Table 6). Of the clients who were family or friends, 71.8% were female and 28.2% were male.

Table 6 — Number and percentage of client type by gender

	Total[5]		Males		Females	
Client type	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Gambler	3,632	69.4%	2,653	84.0%	975	47.1%
Partner/ex-partner	530	10.1%	86	2.7%	444	21.4%
Family member (other than partner)	415	7.9%	141	4.5%	274	13.2%
Financial counselling client	336	6.4%	153	4.8%	183	8.8%
Friend	220	4.2%	101	3.2%	119	5.7%
Other	95	1.8%	22	0.7%	73	3.5%
Colleague or employer	4	0.1%	1	<0.1%	3	0.1%

5 Total count includes clients who did not state their gender

Language

A total of 1,010 clients (20%) spoke a language other than English at home. Arabic and Vietnamese were the most frequently reported languages other than English (Table 7).

Table 7 — The top ten most frequently reported languages spoken at home by clients other than English

Language	Number	Percentage[6]
Arabic	327	6.5%
Vietnamese	105	2.1%
Korean	51	1.0%
Mandarin	44	0.9%
Cantonese	42	0.8%
Persian (excluding Dari)	35	0.7%
Hindi	34	0.7%
Italian	32	0.6%
Spanish	23	0.5%
Filipino	21	0.4%

Of the clients reporting speaking a language other than English at home, 361 (35.7% of all clients who spoke a language other than English at home) reported speaking English “not at all” or “not well” (Table 8).

Table 8 — The top five most frequently reported languages other than English spoken by clients with reported English proficiency of “not well” or “not at all”

Language	Number	Percentage of clients with English proficiency “not well” or “not at all”
Arabic	180	17.8%
Vietnamese	55	5.4%
Korean	28	2.8%
Cantonese	23	2.3%
Mandarin	20	2.0%

6 English-only speakers are included in this data

Suburb of Residence

The top ten suburbs/towns of residence for clients during 2019/20 are displayed in Table 9.

Table 9 — The top ten suburbs/towns of residence for clients 2019/20

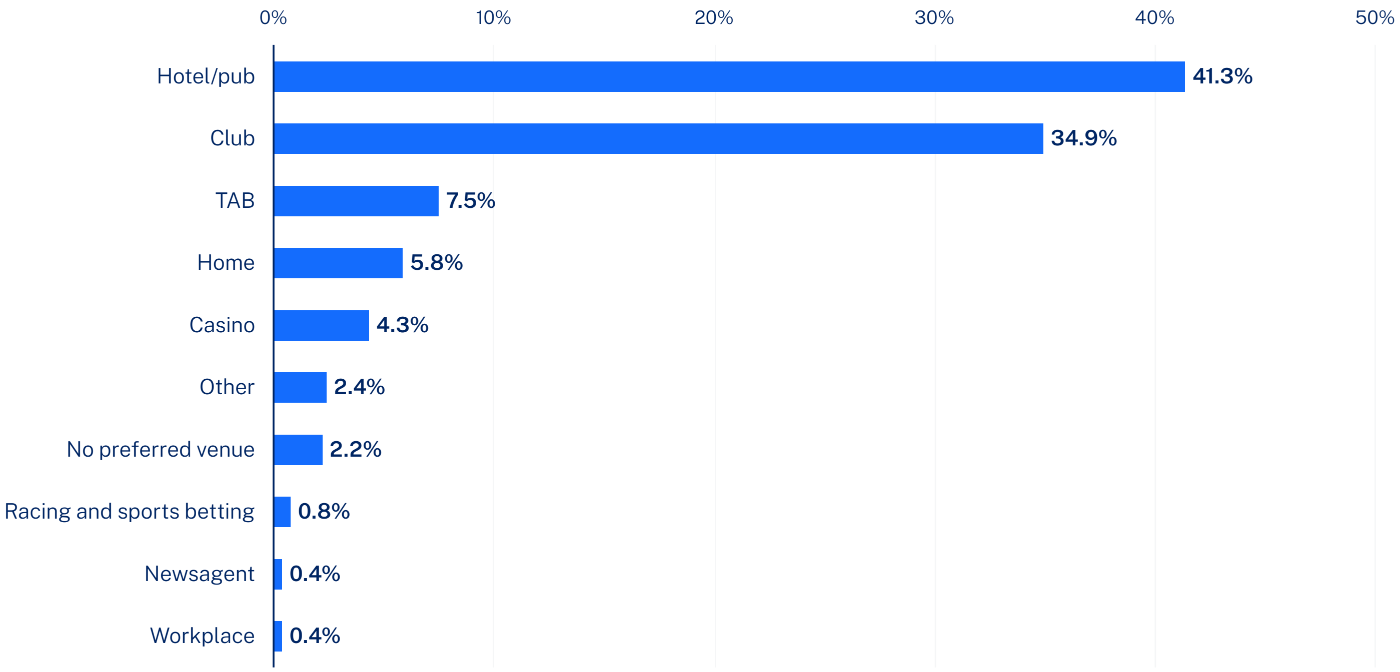
Suburb/Town	Number	Percentage
Wagga Wagga	199	3.7%
Lavington	99	1.9%
Albury	80	1.5%
Cessnock	79	1.5%
Broken Hill	68	1.3%
Bankstown	57	1.1%
Werrington	49	0.9%
Wodonga	49	0.9%
North Albury	45	0.8%
Sydney	44	0.8%

Gambling Activities

Preferred Gambling Venue

Across all gambling counselling clients, the most frequently recorded preferred gambling venues were Hotel/pub (41.3%) and Club (34.9%).

Figure 6 — Preferred gambling venue for gambling counselling clients[7]



7 'Online' is not an option within this dataset

Principal Gambling Activity

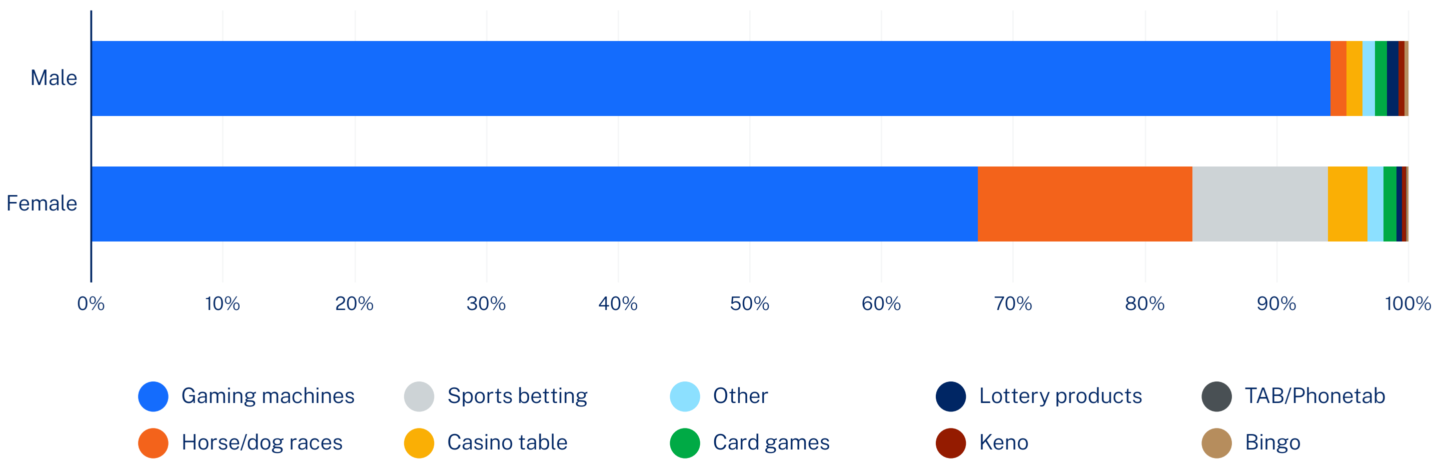
For all gambling counselling clients specifying a principal gambling activity, gaming machines was the most common (74.5%) followed by horse/dog races (12.3%) (Table 10).

Table 10 — Principal gambling activity for all gambling counselling clients

	Total[8]		Males		Females	
Gambling Activity	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Gaming machines	2,575	74.5%	1,701	67.3%	871	94.2%
Horse/dog races	425	12.3%	413	16.3%	11	1.2%
Sports betting	260	7.5%	260	10.3%	0	0.0%
Casino table games	88	2.5%	77	3.0%	11	1.2%
Other	39	1.1%	30	1.2%	9	1.0%
Card games	34	1.0%	26	1.0%	8	0.9%
Lottery products	16	0.5%	9	0.4%	7	0.8%
Keno	13	0.4%	8	0.3%	5	0.5%
Bingo	4	0.1%	1	<0.1%	3	0.3%
TAB/Phonetab	2	0.1%	2	0.1%	0	0.0%

The vast majority of female gambling counselling clients (94.2%) reported gaming machines as their principal gambling activity, with no female clients reporting sports betting or TAB/Phonetab as a principal gambling activity. Principal gambling activities reported by male gambling counselling clients were more varied, with 67.3% reporting gaming machines as their principal gambling activity, followed by horse/dog races (16.3%) and sports betting (10.3%) (Figure 7).

Figure 7 — Principal gambling activity of gambling counselling clients by gender



8 Total count includes clients who did not state their gender

Secondary Gambling Activity

Across all clients undertaking gambling counselling, 39.5% reported a secondary gambling activity (Table 11). A secondary gambling activity is where a gambling counselling client reports more than one preferred gambling activity, but it is not their primary method of gambling. Clients may have more than one secondary gambling activity.

Table 11 — Secondary gambling activity for gambling counselling clients

Gambling Activity	Number	Percentage[9]
Horse/dog races	506	35.2%
Sports betting	470	32.7%
Gaming machines	299	20.8%
Lottery products	249	17.3%
Keno	186	13.0%
Casino table games	179	12.5%
Card games	126	8.8%
Bingo	52	3.6%
Other	50	3.5%
TAB/Phonetab	2	0.1%
On course (racing & sports betting)	1	0.1%

Preferred Means of Accessing Gambling

Across all clients undertaking gambling counselling, the vast majority preferred to gamble in person (87%) (Table 12).

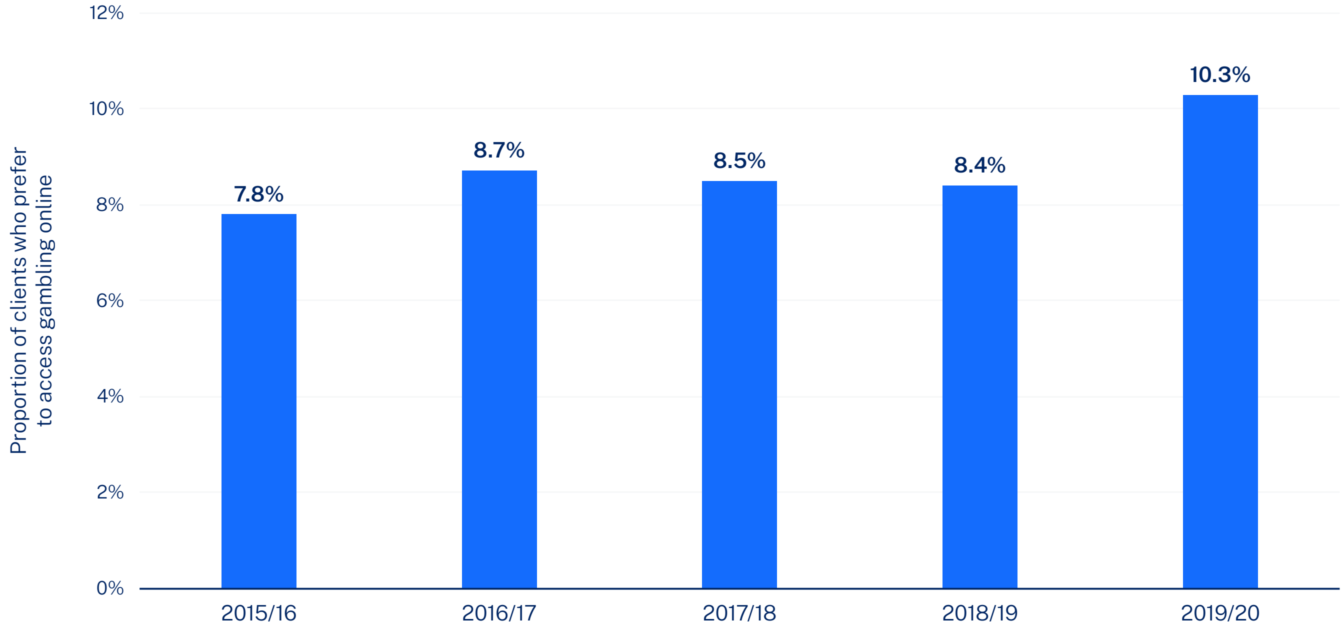
Table 12 — Preferred means of accessing gambling for gambling counselling clients

Means of Accessing Gambling	Number	Percentage
In person	3,049	87.0%
Online	361	10.3%
Telephone	65	1.9%
No preference	21	0.6%
Other (specify)	7	0.2%

9 Percentages were calculated according to the number of clients undertaking gambling counselling who specified a secondary gambling activity

The proportion of gambling counselling clients who prefer to access gambling online experienced its single largest year jump in the last 5 years (1.9%) to the highest proportion of clients on record (Figure 8).

Figure 8 — Online gambling as preferred means of accessing gambling over the past five years



Access to Services

Referral Source

In 2019/20, 43.2% of clients sought support through another health service, including the Gambling Helpline, medical services, or a self-help group, before engaging with a Gambling Help Service.

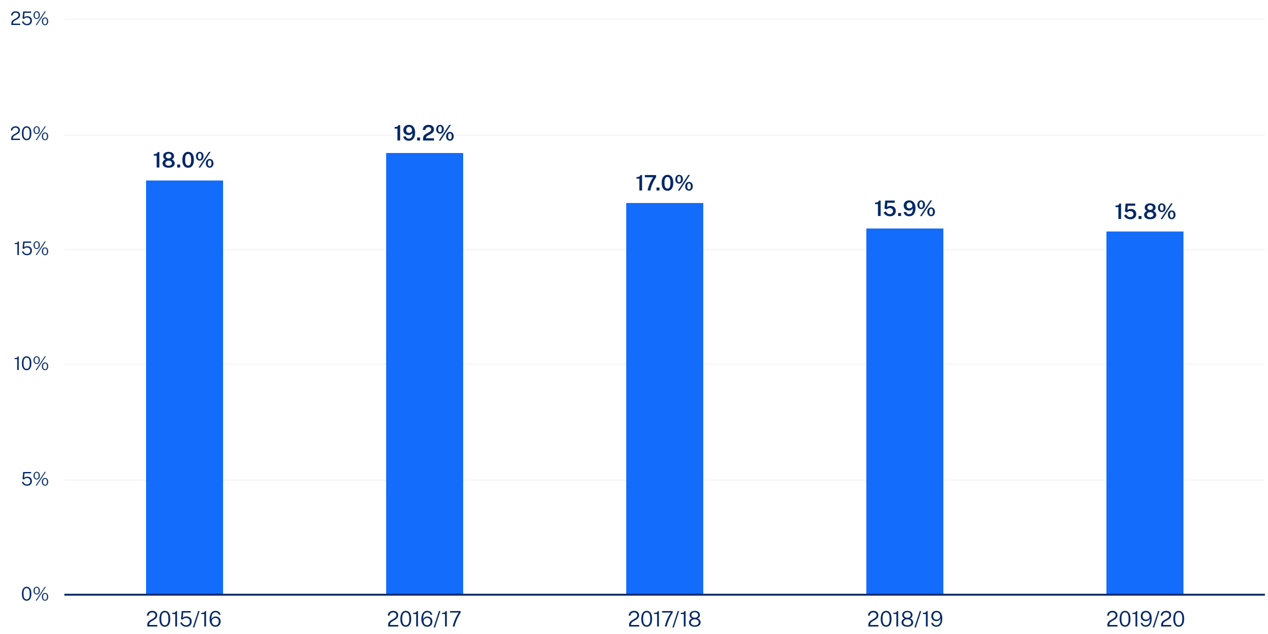
Of clients who noted a referral source, 22% reported another agency their referral source,[10] 19.7% self-referred to a Gambling Help service and 15.8% reported the Gambling Helpline as their referral source (Figure 9).

The proportion of clients reporting Gambling Helpline as their most recent referral has gradually reduced over the past four years (Figure 10).

Figure 9 — Proportion of clients per most recent referral source

10 'Another Agency' includes all mental health and financial services agencies that are not listed at Figure 9

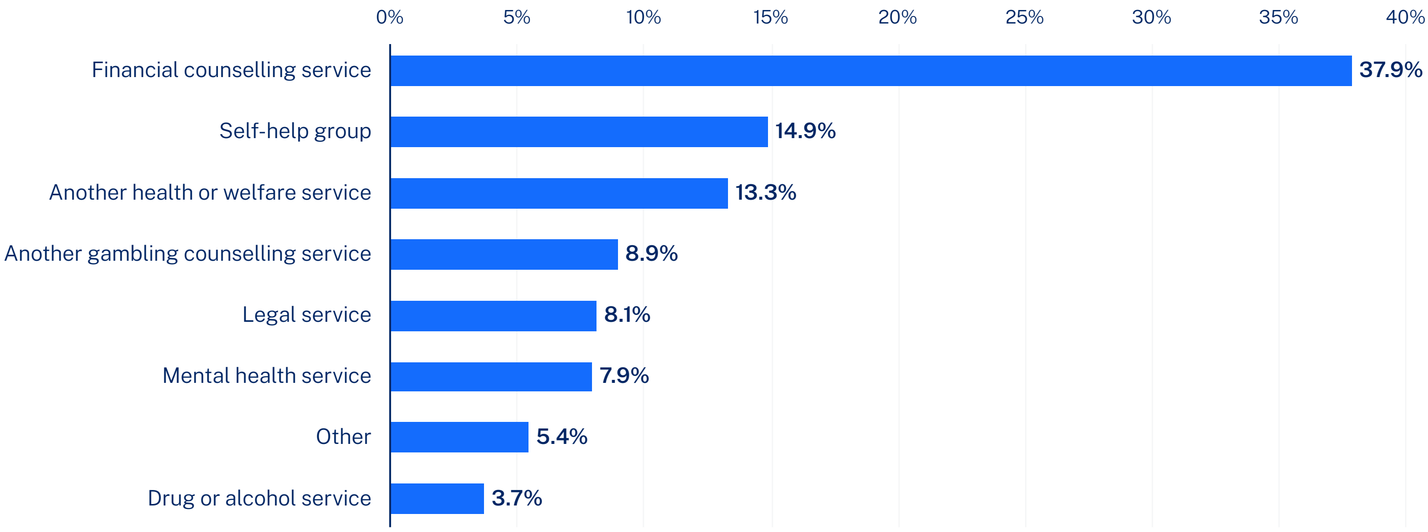
Figure 10 — Proportion of all clients referred by Gambling Helpline



Referrals of clients to other service providers

Across all clients receiving counselling in 2019/20, 45.5% were referred to another service provider. Clients who received a referral to another service provider were most commonly referred to financial counselling service providers (37.9%). Clients were also commonly referred to self-help groups (14.9%) and another health/welfare group (13.3%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11 — Proportion of services clients were referred to[11]



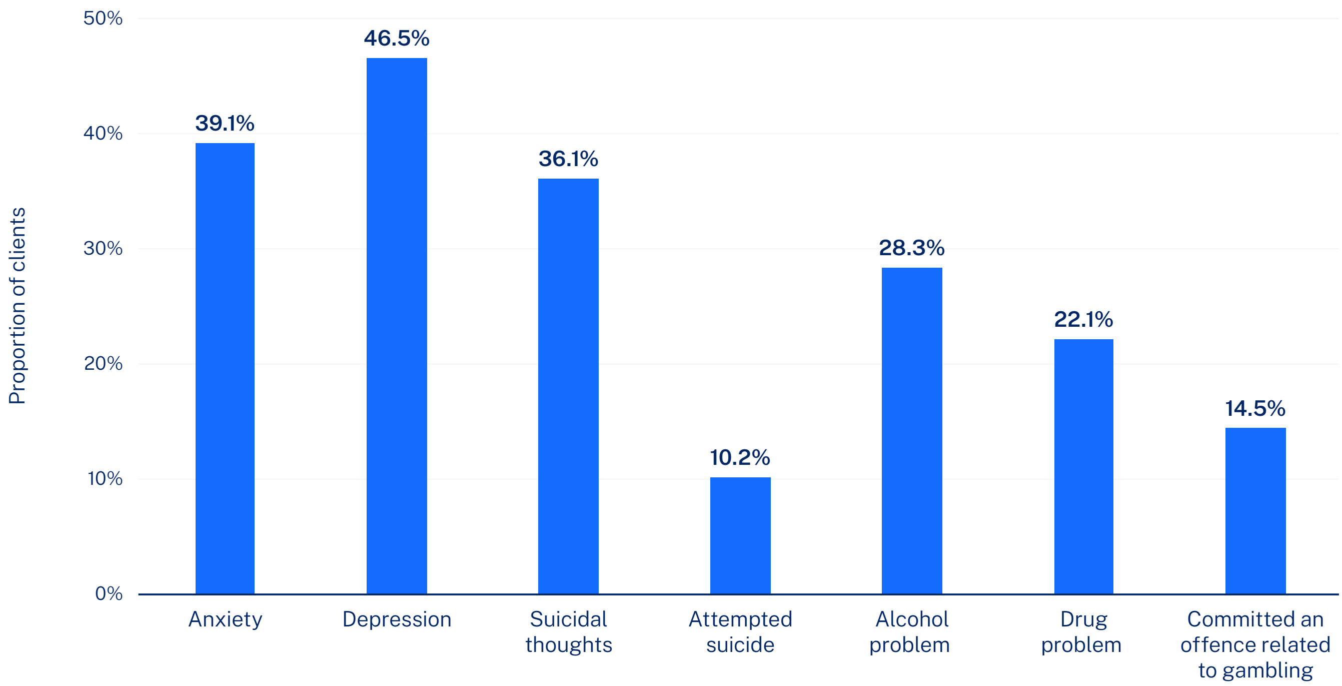
11 Percentages do not include clients not referred to another service provider

Mental Health, Substance Use and Legal History

Significant numbers of clients who undertook gambling counselling reported having mental health, substance use or legal issues (Figure 12).[12]

14% of clients reported no mental health, substance use or legal issues.

Figure 12 — Proportion of clients who reported a mental health, substance abuse or legal issue



12 Percentages are limited to clients undertaking gambling counselling responded either 'Yes' or 'No'

Anxiety

Across all consenting clients, 39.1% (1,283)[13] had been diagnosed with anxiety. Of these clients, there was a higher proportion of males (63.4%) than females (36.4%).

Depression

Across all consenting clients, 46.5% (1,530)[14] had been diagnosed with depression. Of these clients, there was a higher proportion of males (65.4%) than females (34.3%).

Suicide Thoughts

Across all consenting clients, 36.1% (1,174)[15] have had thoughts of suicide. Of these clients, there was a higher proportion of males (68.7%) than for females (31.2%).

Suicide Attempt

Across all consenting clients, 10.2% (328)[16] had attempted suicide. Of these clients, there was a higher proportion of males (61.3%) than females (38.4%).

Alcohol Problem

Across all consenting clients, 28.3% (922)[17] have had a problem with alcohol. Of these clients, there was a higher proportion of males (77.8%) than females (21.8%).

Drug Problem

Across all consenting clients, 22.1% (725)[18] have had a problem with other drugs. Of these clients, there was a higher proportion of males (80.1%) than females (19.3%).

Legal History[19]

Across all consenting clients, 14.5% (468) reported a legal history of having committed an offence relating to their gambling. Of these clients, there was a higher proportion of males (75.6%) than females (24.4%).

13 Count includes clients who did not state their gender
14 Count includes clients who did not state their gender
15 Count includes clients who did not state their gender
16 Count includes clients who did not state their gender
17 Count includes clients who did not state their gender
18 Count includes clients who did not state their gender
19 Legal History refers to having committed an offence relating to gambling

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