

Study on Hong Kong People's Participation in Gambling Activities (2005)

Commissioned by: the Home Affairs Bureau

Funded by: Ping Wo Fund

Conducted by: the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong

Survey period: March to May, 2005

Objectives

The survey tracks the results of a similar study, which was also commissioned by the Home Affairs Bureau, conducted by the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU) in 2001.

The major objectives are to assess Hong Kong people's participation in different kinds of gambling activities and their gambling behaviour, the prevalence of problem and pathological gambling in Hong Kong, as well as the attitude of Hong Kong people towards gambling activities.

Methodology and sampling

- A telephone survey of a representative sample of 2,093 people aged 15 to 64 in Hong Kong with a response rate of 74.7%
- A youth survey through self-administered questionnaires with a representative sample of 2,095 students in secondary schools and institutes of the Vocational Training Council
- Five focus group discussions with five categories, pathological gamblers, family members of the pathological gamblers, social gamblers, youth (aged 18 to 24) and students (aged 18 or below)

The focus group discussions seek to understand people's views on gambling, the pathways of pathological gamblers and their views on measures to tackle gambling-related problems.

Major findings

(I) Telephone survey

- Overall participation in gambling activities in the past 12 months: 81.1% (increased from 78% in 2001)
- Overall participation in various illegal gambling activities in the past 12 months: 2.1% (dropped from 4.2% in 2001)
- Participation in illegal gambling activities among those who have participated in

legal gambling activities: 2.5%

- Participation in legal gambling activities among those who have participated in illegal gambling activities: 98.0 %
- Participation in horse-race betting with the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) in the past 12 months: 25.2% (dropped from 30.4% in 2001)
- Participation in football betting with HKJC in the past 12 months: 16.3%
- Participation in football betting with local illegal and offshore bookmakers in the past 12 months: 1% and 0.4% (dropped from 1.6% and 1.3% in 2001)
- Prevalence of pathological gamblers amongst the general population: 2.2% (increased from 1.8% in 2001)*
- Prevalence of problem gamblers: 3.1% (dropped from 4% in 2001)*
[*These figures were obtained through the use of the DSM – IV (Diagnostics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, the American Psychiatric Association) as the clinical tool to identify the problem and pathological gamblers, which was also used in 2001 study.]⁽¹⁾
- Prevalence of pathological gamblers according to Dr Gracemary Leung's screen ⁽²⁾: 1.1%
- Prevalence of problem gamblers according to Dr Leung's screen: 3.2%
- Awareness of preventive and remedial measures for addressing gambling-related problems: 40.6%
(88.1% through TV commercials and documentary-dramas, 41.2% through posters and banners, and 10.9% through websites)
- Prevalence of parents who have thought of avoiding or reducing participation in gambling or gambling-related activities so as to prevent their children from participating in gambling: 52.9%
- Prevalence of parents who have educated their children about the risks and negative impact of gambling: 61.1%

(II) Youth survey

- Participation in gambling activities among youth respondents aged 12 to 17 in the past 12 months: 29.8% (more than half started gambling at the age of 12 or before)
- Participation in gambling activities among youth respondents aged 18 to 19 in the past 12 months: 51.6%
- Participation in Mark Six lotteries and horse-race betting with HKJC among secondary school students in the past 12 months: 15.0% and 4.4% (dropped from 19.4% and 9.2% in 2001)
- Participation in football betting among secondary school students in the past 12 months: 6.8% (increased from 5.7% in 2001) (participation for those secondary school students aged 18-19 has increased from 4.7% in 2001 to 12.9% in 2005)

- Channels for placing bets among youth respondents aged 12 to 17 who have participated in football betting with HKJC:
 - 1) in person in off-course betting branches of HKJC: 13.8%
 - 2) through family members and relatives: 49.6%
 - 3) through schoolmates and friends: 45.4%
- “Killing time” being the major reason for first participating in gambling: 45.3%
- “Killing time” being the major reason for continuing to participate in gambling: 53.2%

(Focus group discussions revealed that youth respondents cited family and cultural influence, especially the parents’ thinking that gambling was part of Chinese culture, as a major reason for participating in gambling)
- Prevalence of pathological gamblers among secondary school students according to DSM-IV: 1.3% (dropped from 2.6% in 2001)
- Prevalence of problem gamblers among secondary school students according to DSM-IV: 1.3% (dropped from 4.5% in 2001)
- Prevalence of pathological gamblers among youth respondents according to Dr Leung’s screen: 1.3%
- Prevalence of problem gamblers among youth respondents according to Dr Leung’s screen: 0.8%
- Agreed that media coverage on different gambling activities had provided easier access to gambling information among youth respondents aged 12 to 19: 40.3%
- Attitudes towards gambling not affected by media coverage among youth respondents aged 12 to 19: 62.4 %

Notes

- (1) DSM-IV is a clinical tool for assessing the three dimensions of pathological gambling, damage or disruption, loss of control and dependence. It comprises 10 diagnostic criteria on a self-reporting basis on gamblers’ feelings, emotions and behaviours relating to the three dimensions.
- (2) Dr. Gracemary Leung is the Acting Director of the Personal Development and Counselling Centre, University of Hong Kong. She has 30 years’ experience in psychological research and research in gambling-related issues. Dr Leung’s screen is mainly a Chinese screening tool for identifying people with/without gambling problems through their past and current gambling behaviour. It is based on participation in gambling activities and gambling experience, and is culturally Chinese specific.