

PEER SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES IN GAMBLING

A qualitative study

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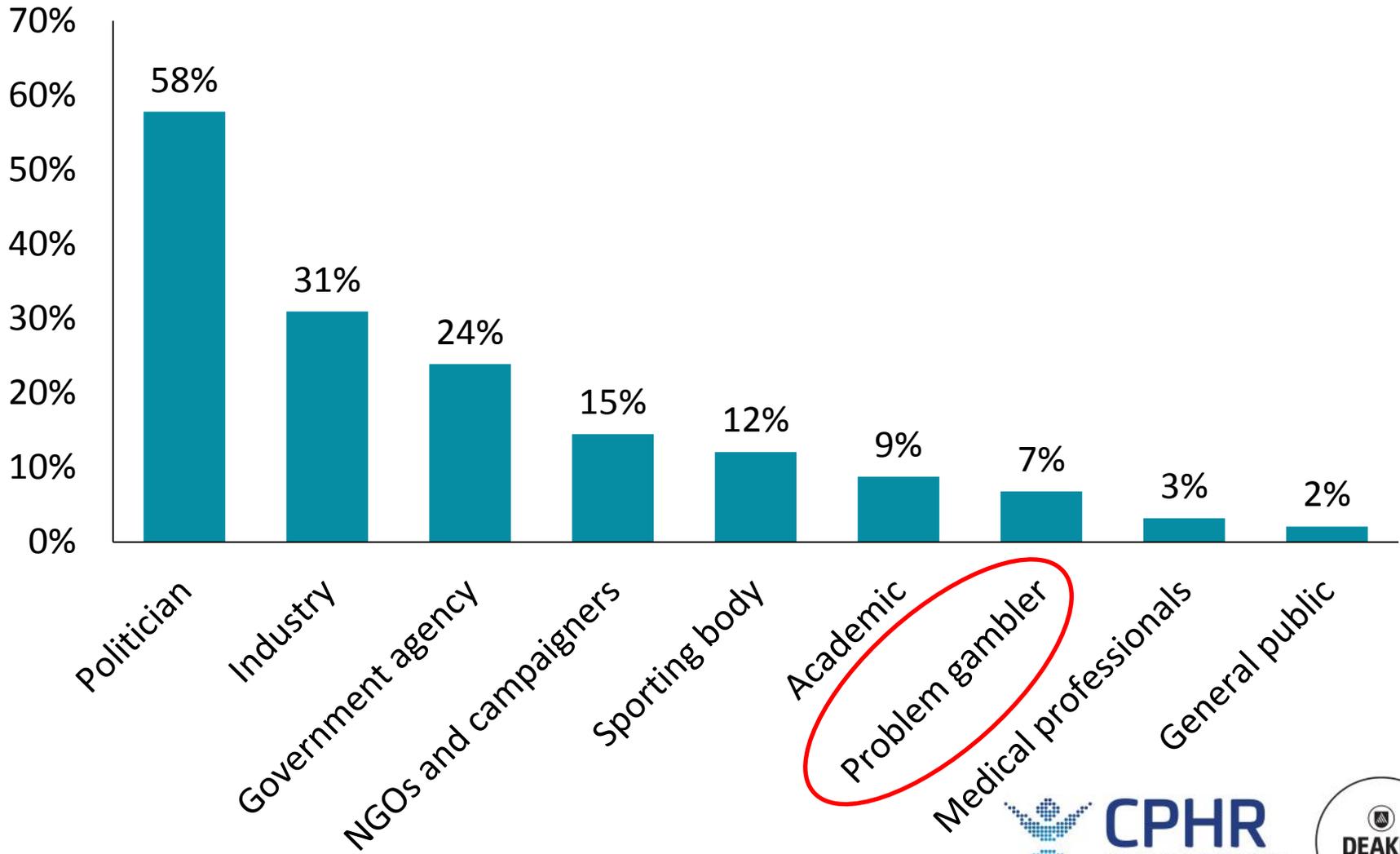


ADVOCACY IN GAMBLING

Peer Connection



BACKGROUND



METHODOLOGY

- In depth interviews with 26 people with lived experience of problem gambling on gaming machines
- All working in peer support and advocacy
- Interviews covered
 - **Experiences with gambling**
 - **Norms for gambling behaviour**
 - **Public discussions of gambling**
 - **Responsible gambling**
 - **Community views**
 - **Experiences with advocacy and peer support**

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

- Advocacy:
 - Speaking publicly to the community
 - Theatrical groups
 - Social media
 - Media
 - Speaking to industry
 - Research
- Peer support
 - 12 step groups
 - Telephone support
- A blurry line between advocacy and peer support

TELLING STORIES

- It's a genuine story. People are not interested in figures...it might just trigger something for people to say well, "OK there's more than people just losing money". (F, 65+)
- I think people actually need to probably hear stories - real life stories of what it's like to be a gambler...it's not something that you choose to do, it's something that you feel like you have to do. (F, 25-34)
- I thought "I want to change what's happening with poker machines" and then I realised "Well, I can't do that but I can share my story and hopefully that would lead to change" and already I've seen that happen. (F, 55-64)

ROLE OF ADVOCACY AND PEER SUPPORT

- Reducing stigma
- Supporting recovery
- Changing the narrative about gambling
- Educating the community

PEER ENVIRONMENTS AND STIGMA

- You have to give the people acceptance...You have to make the people feel that they are worthwhile. (M, 55 to 64)
- I could relate to that straight away. Twenty people in the room, all their stories were my story. So I was already feeling like, "Oh, I've arrived". I've come to the right place. (M, 55-64)
- You've been there, you've done that. You know what the person has experienced, in general...most people have probably suffered the same sort of feelings I did. Shame and fear and the whole kit and caboodle and so...You know, it's helping them overcome that, too. (F, 55-64)

STIGMA AS A BARRIER

- I'm surprised at the number of people...saddened I suppose in a way...an enormous number of people that I've worked with over time who still don't want to be known that they have or had a gambling problem, because it's not an acceptable problem to have. (F, 65+)
- What's written or what's told is the absolutely truth...but they cannot put my name to it, it is really sad...I couldn't let anyone know...I just would have been seen as the village idiot...Like, your mother's an idiot, you know, she's gambling. On those stupid frigging machines, what's wrong with her? (F, 55-64)

STIGMA AND ADVOCACY

- To decrease stigma, you have to basically live with that stigma. Like I have to continuously. (F, 55-64)
- I think there is a big stigma around it...no one spoke about it because they were too afraid of the stigma that they might cop. So that's how it's been going on for so long without any actual action or any community awareness or uprising. (F, 35-44)
- How does Joe average get asked to participate in research or have a voice, or get involved in helping or changing things around gambling? There's no easy way into that, or accessible non-stigma way to participate. (F, 45-54)

NEGATIVE RESPONSES

- All of that will be put down as being “Oh you’re just a stupid little lady. No wonder you blame everybody else” ...People didn’t listen to us because they thought “Oh Jesus, it’s your problem, you can go and deal with it.” (F, 65+)
- There has been little value given to peer support activities (F, 65+)
- The public don’t want to hear about it. They’re not interested. If you’re stupid enough to gamble then you wear the consequences. (F, 45-54)

POSITIVE RESPONSES

- I went on, put my face on TV, and I was working in retail at the time, and there was not one person that came in and criticised me. They all just said how brave. I didn't think I was brave. I just thought, if I can help one person stop getting in to this situation, that's what I want to do. (F, 65+)
- I actually published with my name to it, and the response that I got back then was incredibly supportive. It was an eye opener to me that you could actually 'fess up and say I've done all these terrible things, and people would say "You know what, that's actually really good of you to own up to that and maybe you can tell use more about it, and help us to understand it". (M, 45-54)

SELF CARE

- If we're going to encourage people to talk up about their issues and their problems...we need to make sure that the care and the support grows with that...So I think we need to have I guess a whole of community adjustment to breaking down stigma... and we have to have the support that goes along with that if we're actually going to get somewhere with it. (M, 45-54)

HOPE

- We are not saviours of the world. But we can get the message across to show them the dangers...and show them the strategy of how we can come out. And actually shall we say that we are living testimony of the success, or the hope, the hope of kicking the habit, you know? (F, 55-64)
- I think what I'm bringing to this situation is compassion and understanding...people just feel very alone in their despair. I think that, yeah, hope is what I bring. (F, 35-44)

CONCLUSIONS

- People with lived experience have been excluded from public discussions of gambling
- Stigma is a significant barrier to people being involved in advocacy and peer support
- Involvement in public advocacy involves living with stigma
- Many people involved in advocacy and peer support conceal their identity
- Advocacy and peer support can both reduce stigma associated with problem gambling
- Telling stories is an essential part of both peer support and advocacy

