



# Insights

from community and staff on the NSW  
GambleAware Helpline experience

A BASELINE SURVEY | June 2023

## Foreword

It's inconceivable that during the dual cost-of-living and housing affordability crises that Australians continue to spend a staggering \$25 billion on gambling each year.<sup>1</sup>

Wesley Mission has a long history of addressing the financial consequences and negative impacts of gambling harm, launching Australia's first dedicated gambling counselling program in 1997.

In January 2023, we partnered with the Office of Responsible Gambling (ORG) to take on the management of its GambleAware NSW Helpline.

In collaboration with ORG and YouGov, Wesley Mission conducted a six-month post-launch study surveying over 1,000 NSW residents aged 18 and older, 23 GambleAware NSW Helpline counsellors and 10 team members.

The purpose of the study was to:

- determine public familiarity with the GambleAware NSW Helpline and its frequent queries
- understand the self-assessment of helpline staff concerning client interaction, information delivery and referral quality
- gauge the satisfaction of GambleAware NSW Helpline counsellors regarding the helpline's referral efficacy.

Thanks to honest feedback from the general public, helpline counsellors and team members, we have a significantly improved understanding of the service and the impact of gambling harm.

I'm pleased to report that nearly half of NSW residents over 18 years old (2.8 million) are aware of the helpline and 49 per cent rate it in the top two sources of support for gambling harm. Additionally, of 11,705 calls made to the helpline in the six months after its launch, only seven per cent went unanswered.

GambleAware NSW Helpline staff praised the helpline's 24/7 availability, prompt and professional approach and the ability to provide specialised support to people in crisis.

What is clear from the findings is that the general public, helpline counsellors and team members have a similar understanding of the service, indicating the helpline is delivering its expected outcomes.

I'd like to offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone surveyed and the staff of GambleAware NSW Helpline who shared their thoughts and feedback so openly. I also thank ORG and YouGov, especially Katie Glover (ORG) and Julie Harris and Corey Gallagher (YouGov), for their insight and collaboration.

Yours in mission,



Rev Stu Cameron  
CEO and Superintendent

**Citation:** Wesley Mission. July 2023. Insights from community and staff on the NSW GambleAware Helpline experience. Sydney.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.analyticsinsight.net/gambling-statistics-in-australia-how-much-money-we-lose/>

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## Executive summary

With the advent of GambleAware NSW in January 2023, Wesley Mission undertook a perceptions baseline study to assess key stakeholders' perspectives and experiences related to the Gambling Helpline service. This research aimed to:

- determine public familiarity with the GambleAware Helpline and its frequent queries
- understand the self-assessment of helpline staff concerning client interaction, information delivery and referral quality
- gauge the satisfaction of GambleAware NSW counsellors regarding the helpline's referral efficacy.

Feedback was received from various stakeholders – including the general public, helpline staff and GambleAware NSW counsellors and staff – through online surveys. Complementing these insights, we reviewed call data from the service's first six months for a deeper understanding.

### Insights Summary

Community insight: GambleAware Helpline awareness and perceptions

- Nearly half of New South Wales (NSW) adults (45 per cent) know of the GambleAware Helpline when prompted, with a higher awareness rate (one in two) among men.
- Awareness dips among women (40 per cent) and the older population (those aged 50 and above) at 41 per cent.
- The GambleAware Helpline is predominantly associated with gambling harm – instances where gambling results in potential or realised adverse outcomes, and to seeking help for issues related to gambling. This perception remains consistent whether individuals are aware of the helpline or not.

- The majority (four in five) think the GambleAware Helpline caters to people dealing with gambling-related challenges. Additionally, two out of three respondents feel the helpline serves the partners of people impacted by gambling. Women tend to believe the service is more geared towards partners and friends of affected people. Moreover, the understanding that the service is for both people facing gambling harm and their partners/friends, is more prevalent among the older age group (50+), but this awareness diminishes among younger age groups.
- For a quarter of NSW residents, the GambleAware Helpline is their top pick for support. The younger demographic (18-24) and people who predominantly speak a language other than English at home, are more inclined to turn to family or friends for help rather than using the GambleAware service.
- Respondents who are familiar with the GambleAware Helpline and can accurately identify its target audience, tend to be more open to considering other (prompted) avenues for assistance compared to those who are unaware of the helpline or are unsure about its intended audience.
- Alternative help sources people might consider include Lifeline, Gambling Help Online, counsellors, support groups like Gamblers Anonymous, family or friends and faith leaders.

#### Trends in call volumes and types of calls

- Despite its primary intention, the service receives calls for a broad spectrum of reasons. Some are non-gambling harm related queries including betting service inquiries, account issues, questions about cash outs, or services such as TAB or Lotto, login difficulties, casino bookings, wrong numbers and hoax calls.
- Analyses suggest improved staff proficiency, evidenced by faster connection times, reduced wait durations and more extended caller engagements.
- Young men in relationships predominantly form the majority of the call base, reaching out for personal gambling issues or concerns about acquaintances.
- The adverse impacts of gambling stretch across financial, emotional and relationship facets.
- Various channels, including online platforms, direct interactions at gambling venues, GambleAware Helpline, Lifeline, Gambling Help Online and personal references, lead callers to the service. Post-call, many are referred to local services for continued support.
- Most people sourced service information from GambleAware website and online ads. Family, friends, the Gambling Helpline and venues were also common references. The least used were Centrelink, the correctional system and community agencies.
- During discussions, interpreters assisted as needed. If the helpline couldn't meet callers' needs, with consent, the callers were referred to local GambleAware providers (GAP). In the first six months, 875 self-help referrals and 1,439 external referrals were made.

#### Helpline staff feedback on performance and effectiveness

- The helpline receives many calls unrelated to gambling harm, such as betting service inquiries, account issues and hoax calls.
- Helpline staff feel gratified in their roles, deriving fulfillment from assisting callers and providing impactful referrals. Positive elements include a user-friendly CRM system and a supportive team environment.
- The helpline strengths lie in its constant availability, professional demeanour, friendly staff and quality referrals.
- Staff view the referral system as efficient, guiding clients towards beneficial resources.

- Staff recommendations include clearer marketing, increased public education about gambling risks, enhanced visibility of the helpline number, and collaboration with gambling venues to encourage genuine calls.

#### GambleAware NSW counsellors and staff feedback

- There is strong collaboration between the helpline and GambleAware NSW staff, with 94 per cent of counsellors receiving client referrals from the helpline.
- Sixty per cent of GambleAware NSW staff believe the support from the helpline is valuable.
- Each GambleAware NSW counsellor, on average, received 55 referrals in the first quarter of 2023, suggesting an active referral process.
- A significant majority of GambleAware NSW counsellors and staff are highly satisfied with the helpline's referral frequency.
- The Net Promoter Score stands at 62 per cent, indicating positive satisfaction levels.
- GambleAware NSW staff commend the system for its efficiency, thorough initial assessments, rapid responses, clarity and timely communication. Fast inquiry handling and daily referral turnaround are especially praiseworthy.
- Their feedback also underscores concerns about referral accuracy and intake and scheduling management. This suggests a need to improve client information handling and refine referral processes.

## Conclusion

The GambleAware Helpline has demonstrated enhanced staff performance and deepened client connections. The varied reasons for its use and the wide range of caller backgrounds emphasise the intricate challenges of gambling. Despite its progress, a discrepancy exists between the helpline's self-assessment and feedback from GambleAware NSW counsellors, suggesting areas for performance enhancement and adaptation.

### Improvement opportunities

- **Response effectiveness:** enhancing the call system to provide better support to genuine inquirers and achieve improved outcomes.
- **Data integrity:** addressing the challenge of incomplete records to remove biases and fill knowledge gaps for more accurate insights.
- **Referral quality:** improve client readiness screening, clarify wait times, refine client referral accuracy, and simplifying process instructions.
- **Visibility and accessibility:** boost the helpline service by increasing awareness, improving communication tactics, managing client volume effectively, and setting clear session expectations.
- **Expand insights through data:** collecting both user and staff feedback to deepen insight into service's effectiveness, pinpoint areas needing improvement, and develop better strategies for supporting people dealing with gambling-related challenges.



## Service overview

Wesley Mission and the Office of Responsible Gambling (ORG) in NSW have a long-standing commitment to addressing the multifaceted challenges of gambling. Wesley Mission pioneered Australia's first dedicated gambling counselling program in 1997, focusing on individual needs, debt management, mediation, and connecting people to crucial community resources.

The ORG leads efforts to mitigate gambling harm through integrated care strategies, including the 24/7 GambleAware NSW Helpline. Funded by the Responsible Gambling Fund, this confidential, free helpline provides nationwide support, with local providers varying by state.

Since January 2023, Wesley Mission has managed the Helpline,<sup>1</sup> committing to providing high quality, transparent, accountable, cost-efficient, and innovative services. The objectives include delivering accessible crisis support, facilitating early access to support services, guiding clients through intervention and treatment options, and using data insights for continuous program improvement.

Over the next five years, Wesley Mission plans to focus on providing culturally sensitive phone support, informing callers about gambling risks, and connecting them with appropriate resources across NSW. The approach emphasises client and community wellbeing, with goals to increase understanding of gambling harms, reduce stigma, and improve service quality and community wellbeing. Anticipated outcomes include broader community awareness, increased engagement with GambleAware, and more accessible support.

<sup>1</sup> NSW Government. 2023. GambleAware Helpline Agreement.

## About the study

The primary goal of the study was to gauge the helpline's efficiency and to guide potential improvements. Additionally, the collected data serve as a reference point for assessing for future impact.

### Research questions

1. How aware is the public of the Gambling Helpline service, and what information do people usually ask for?
2. What call trends have emerged in the helpline service's first six months of operation?
3. How do helpline staff rate their skills in client engagement, information delivery and referral processes?
4. How satisfied are GambleAware NSW counsellors with the helpline's referral quality?

### Study approach

Our investigation was structured around two main components:

#### 1. Data Analysis

We analysed the GambleAware Helpline's data to identify trends in call volume, categories, response times and referral activities. This analysis fostered in-depth discussions on service operations.

#### 2. Primary Research

Our primary objective was to gauge both public and internal views on the GambleAware Helpline's brand awareness, as well as its proficiency in information delivery and referral processing.

- Community Awareness Survey
  - In May 2023, a survey, conducted via YouGov, engaged 1,021 NSW residents aged 18 and above, primarily focusing on the helpline's brand recognition.
  - To ensure the sample reflected the broader population accurately, demographic adjustments were made using the latest NSW population estimates from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, encompassing age, gender and regional distribution.
- Stakeholder Analysis
  - Partnering with the Office of Responsible Gambling, an online survey was carried out in June 2023. Feedback was gathered from 23 GambleAware NSW counsellors and 10 helpline team members.

Through this dual-pronged approach, we extracted pivotal insights into behaviours around seeking help, referrals, prevalent call trends and the team's direct experiences.



## Key findings

### A. Community perceptions of the NSW GambleAware Helpline service

#### GambleAware brand awareness

- Nearly half of 18+ NSW residents, (2.8 million) are aware of the GambleAware Helpline.
- Awareness is greater for men and lower for those 50+.
- Awareness dips among women (40 per cent) and the older population (those aged 50 and above) at 41 per cent.



Quotes from participants regarding their reasons for calling:

### **Gambling addiction and financial consequences**

*“Drowning in gambling debt and can't see a way out; really want to stop gambling.”*

*“Help with gambling addiction and losing hard earned income/welfare benefits.”*

*“They or family members, friends are struggling controlling their gambling addiction.”*

### **Impact on personal and family life**

*“Regrets of gambling, marriage and family issues, spouses calling regarding partner's gambling issues, to request general information.”*

*“In desperation and shame, losing too much.”*

*“Panic, losing control over their future due to gambling habits.”*

*“Family support, fed up with vice, they recognise they have destroyed their finances and family life.”*

### **Seeking help and support**

*“Recognise that they have a challenge with gambling and seek assistance to stop and to manage their financial difficulties from gambling.”*

*“Seeking support to overcome the financial and emotional consequences of gambling harm.”*

### **Access to information and counselling**

*“Help to manage their gambling challenge and/or to find out information about hidden gambling that occurs in on-line games, sporting events etc where either they OR a family member is over accessing and using. To gain information, support and advice.”*

### **Urgency and desperation faced by those affected**

*“People ring the helpline if they have hit rock bottom and by that I mean, have gambled just about all their money away.”*

*“Lost a lot of money gambling because of suicide or depression.”*

These insights reveal that gambling deeply impacts individuals, families and their financial wellbeing, a sentiment consistent with other studies in NSW<sup>2</sup>. The helpline is seen as essential, offering immediate assistance, counselling and support for gambling-related concerns, with a relatively ‘easy-to-remember’ number.

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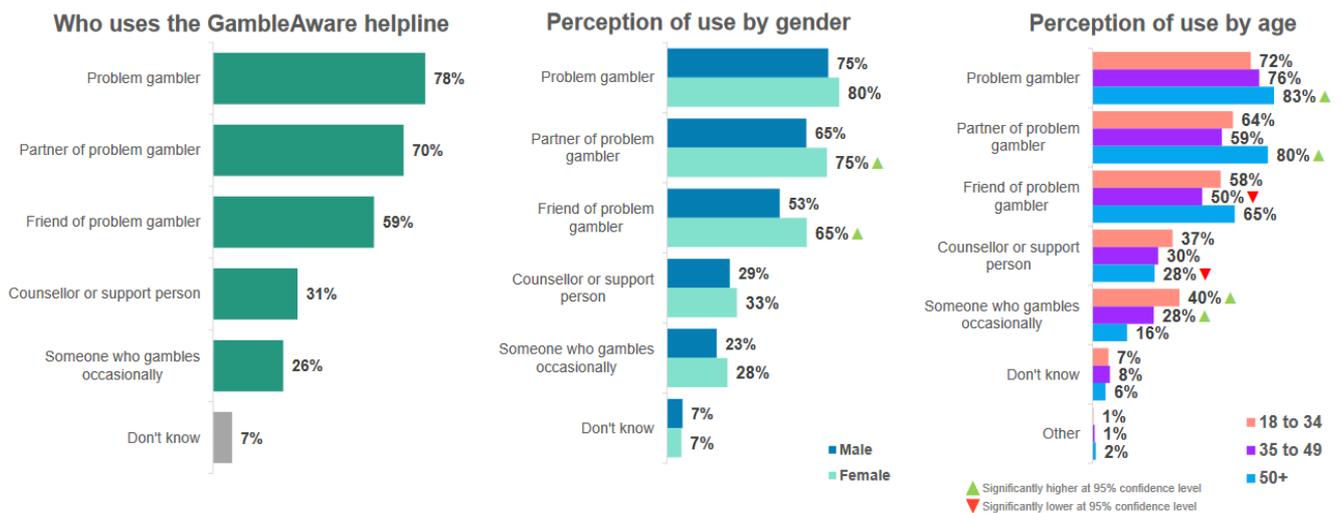
<sup>4</sup> Fund, R. G. (2019). NSW Gambling Survey 2019; Tulloch, C., Hing, N., Browne, M., Rockloff, M., & Hilbrecht, M. (2021). The effect of gambling problems on the subjective wellbeing of gamblers’ family and friends: Evidence from

Staff provide essential guidance, aiding those in need to safeguard themselves and their families from the detrimental effects of gambling addiction.

“We provide crisis counselling, treatment and resources to people experiencing gambling harm and offer support and guidance to their families. All our services are free and our helpline coordinators are available 24/7. Additionally, we have extensive outreach and prevention efforts.”  
(Respondent)

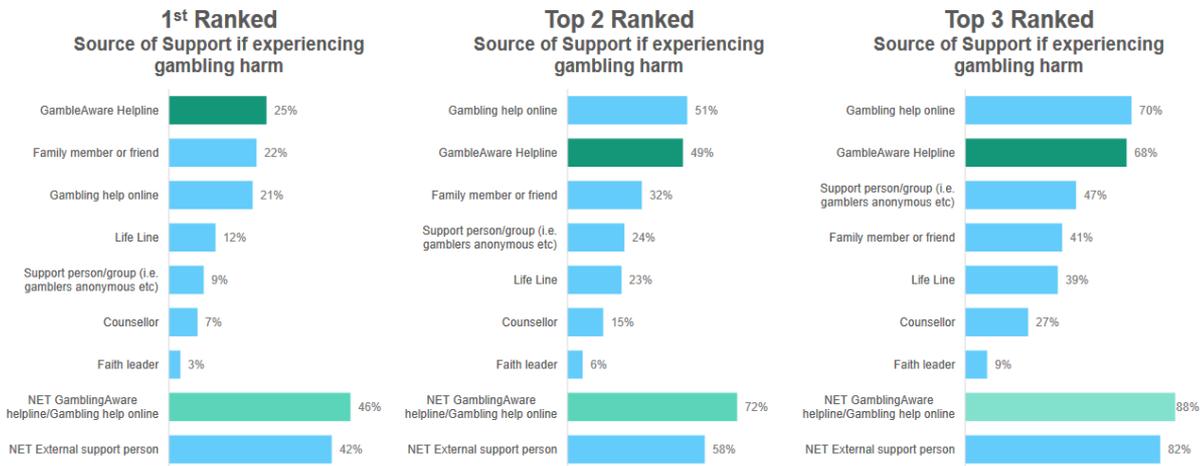
### Perception of use

Three in four (about 78 per cent) NSW residents think that people using GambleAware Helpline are people facing gambling-related-challenges. Over two in three (70 per cent) think it’s used by the partners of those people. Women are more likely say it is for partners and friends affected by gambling harm, while those aged 50 and over are more likely to think the helpline serves both those directly experiencing gambling challenges and their partners.



Base: NSW residents 18+, n=1,021. Q3 Who do you think calls this service?

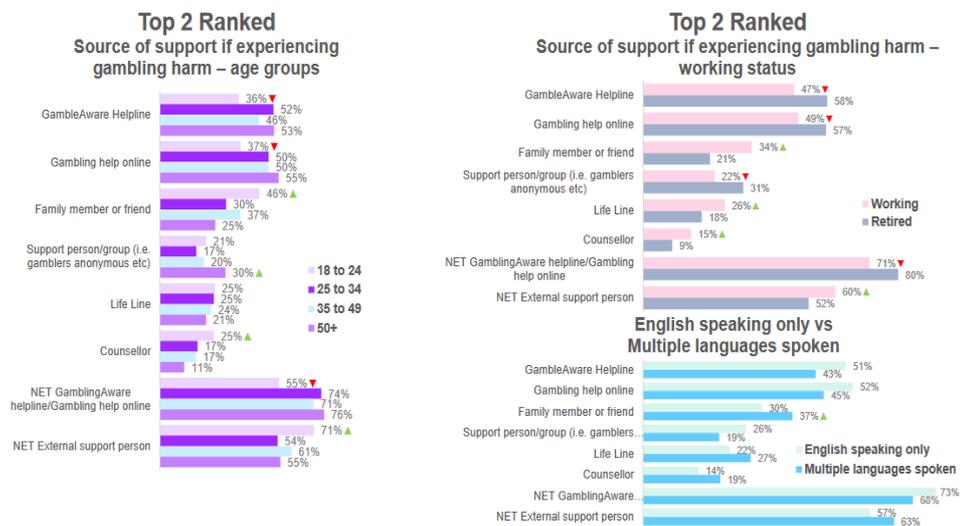
One in four (25 per cent) respondents ranked the GambleAware Helpline as being the top-rated source of support. In the top two-rated sources this ratio rises to one in two (49 per cent) of NSW residents aged 18 and over (the equivalent of 2.9 million, NSW residents 18+).



Base: NSW residents 18+, n=945. Q4 If you were experiencing gambling harm, which of the below people or organisations would you be most likely to consider seeking help from? Please rank the options in order where 1 is most likely and 5 is least likely you would seek help from them.

### Source of support

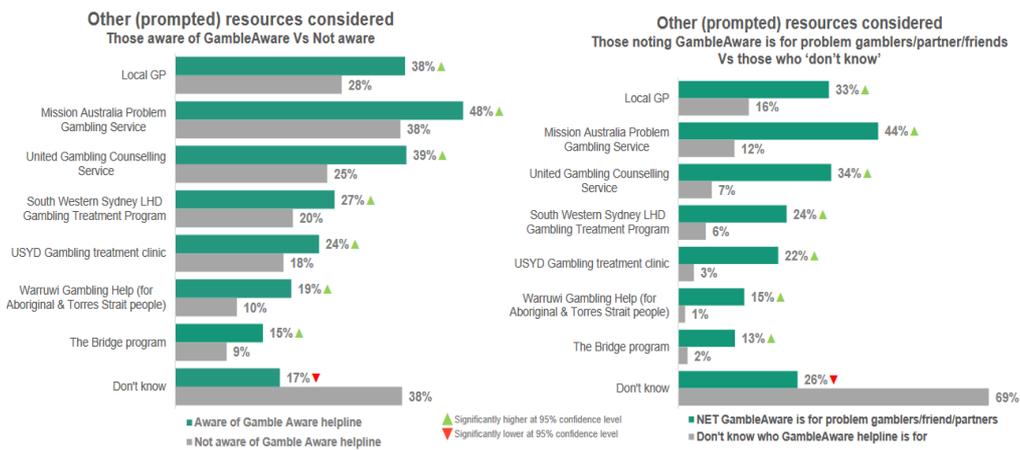
The GambleAware Helpline and online resources are both less likely to be accessed by people aged 18-24 and those who are working. People who also speak a language other than English at home, are more likely to seek help from family or friends. This sentiment aligns with suggestions that collectivist cultures prefer confiding in family and friends over strangers during challenges.<sup>3</sup>



Base: NSW residents 18+, n=945. Q4 If you were experiencing gambling harm, which of the below people or organisations would you be most likely to consider seeking help from? Please rank the options in order where 1 is most likely and 5 is least likely you would seek help from them. ▲ Significantly higher at 95% C.L. ▼ Significantly lower at 95% C.L.

Respondents familiar with the GambleAware Helpline are more inclined to explore other suggested avenues for assistance if they encounter gambling harm, compared to those unaware of the helpline. Specifically, respondents noting that the GambleAware Helpline not only supports those with gambling issues and their family or friends, are more likely to consider seeking help from other services mentioned.

<sup>5</sup> Halpern, D. (2005). *Social capital*. Polity.; Bond, M. H., & Forgas, J. P. (1984). Linking person perception to behaviour intention across cultures: The role of cultural collectivism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 15(3), 337-352.; Holdsworth,



### Suggestions for improvement opportunities

The study reveals that 45 per cent of NSW adults, notably men, recognise the GambleAware Helpline. This highlights the role of awareness campaigns in supporting government efforts to reduce gambling risks.

The helpline is largely seen as a resource for individuals with gambling-related challenges and their partners. It also holds a high ranking as a source of support among NSW residents. However, the data also indicates certain demographic groups, such as younger individuals, workers and non-English speakers at home, are less likely to use this service.

Strategies could be implemented to increase awareness and utilisation of the GambleAware Helpline among the less represented groups.

- For the 18-24 age group and those working, consider marketing efforts or partnerships with educational institutions and workplaces.
- To reach non-English speakers, information about the helpline could be provided in multiple languages and community outreach could be expanded.

Consulting with these communities is crucial when determining the most effective communication methods. As suggested, people with gambling issues often prefer to keep their struggles hidden from strangers including community leaders, avoiding seeking their support. Emphasises on the importance of understanding the cultural and individual nuances when approaching communication and support methods for those with gambling issues is essential.

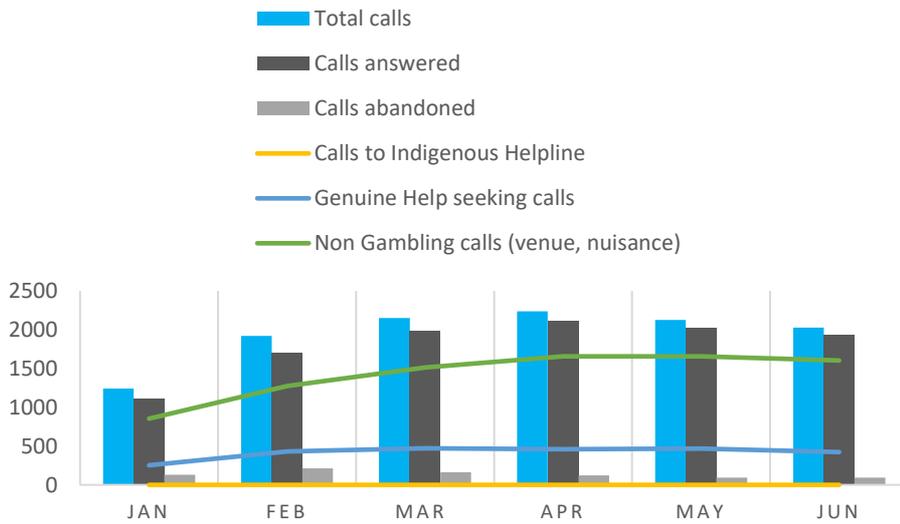
- General Practitioners (GPs) are often the first point of contact, but there is a discernible knowledge gap concerning the identification and management of gambling harm and addiction among these professionals. Their role can be pivotal in ensuring timely intervention. The substantial number of "don't know" responses suggest a need for better awareness campaigns. The helpline is not only for people directly affected by gambling harm, but also for their friends and family – an apparent need for more inclusive campaign to promote its use.

## B. Assessing call patterns: Six-month trend analysis of helpline usage

### Call demand

From January to June 2023, the GambleAware Helpline received a high volume of calls – 11,705 calls.

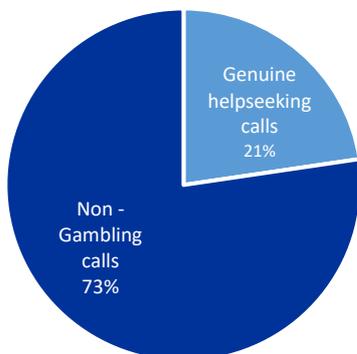
A total of 10,884 calls were answered, showing a strong response rate. Seven per cent (821 calls) went unanswered. No calls were directed to the Indigenous Helpline during this time.



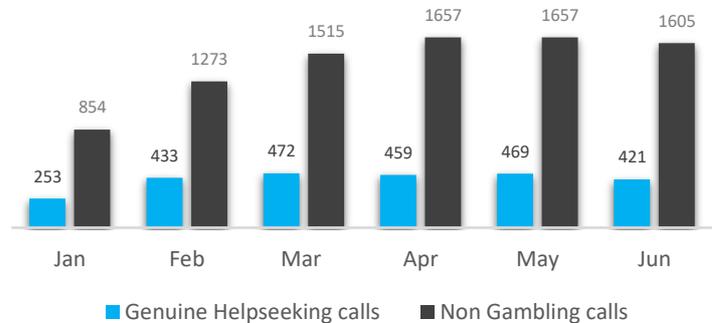
Total calls	11,705
Calls answered	10,884
Calls abandoned	821
Calls to Indigenous Helpline	0
Genuine Help seeking calls	2,507
Non-Gambling calls	8,561

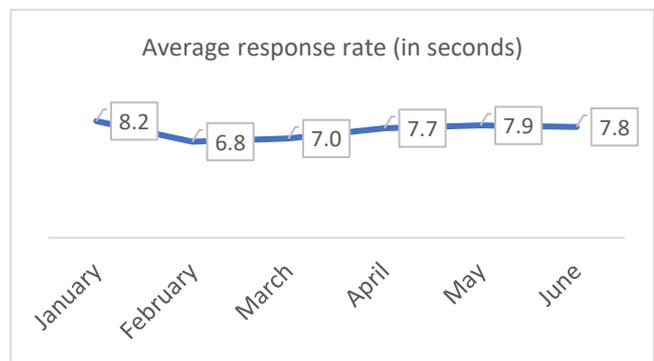
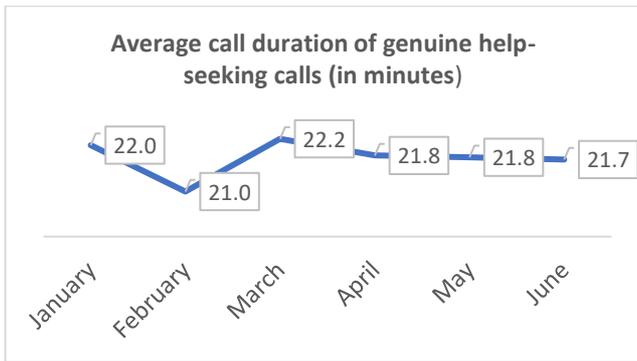
Twenty-one per cent (2,507 calls) were genuine help-seeking calls. This represents a significant engagement with our stakeholders, underscoring the importance and relevance of our services. Seventy-three per cent (8,561 calls) were deemed non-genuine or unrelated to gambling.

Call volume peaked at 472 in March, closely followed by 469 in May, suggesting increased demand during these months. January had the lowest call volume at 253, with a significant increase in February, likely due to the onset of the service.



### Call content

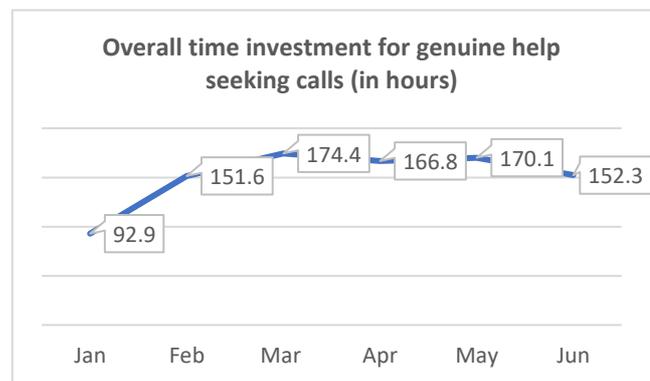
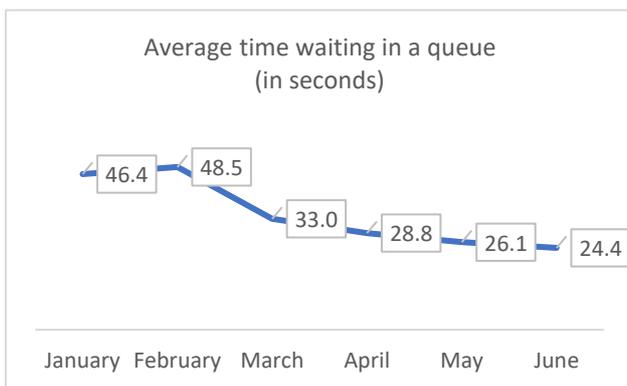




\*"Average Response Time" time between making a call and when a counsellor picks up, indicating the service's response speed.

For genuine help-seeking calls, the average call duration was around 21-22 minutes throughout these months, indicating a consistent engagement level. This consistent call duration implies that the nature of queries or concerns from the public has remained relatively constant during these months.

The average connection time to a counsellor improved slightly, dropping from 8.2 seconds to 7.79 seconds. This may suggest that, following their initial training, the helpline staff are now more proficient and responsive in handling calls.



\*"Average Queue Time" time callers wait before speaking to a counsellor, measuring the service's efficiency with incoming calls.

Total time invested for genuine help seeking calls (in hours)

Client queue time halved from 46.36 to 24.39 seconds, reflecting better efficiency and faster assistance.

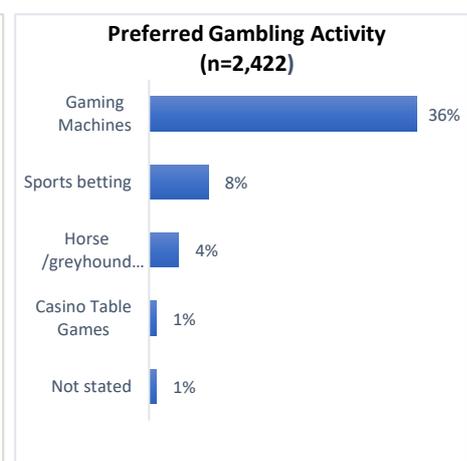
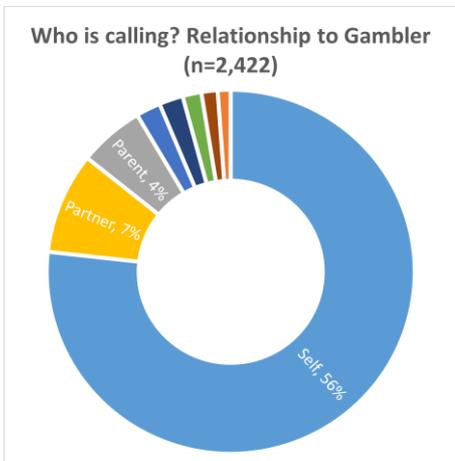
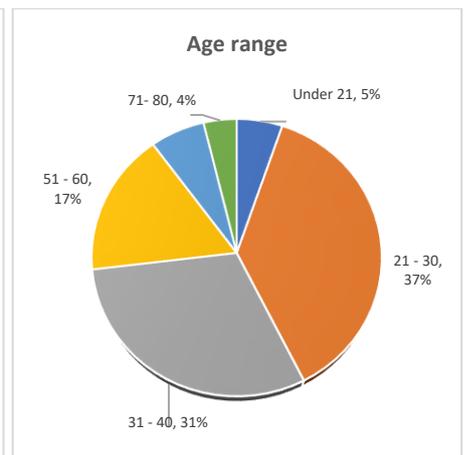
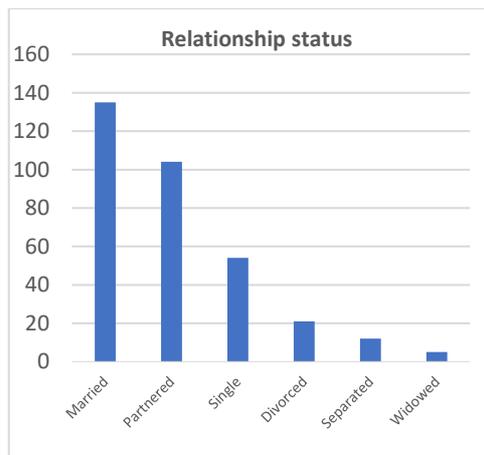
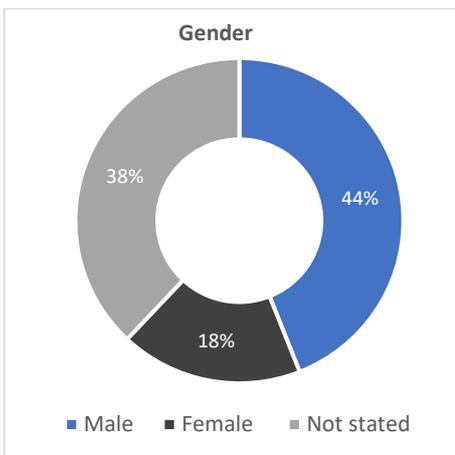
Helpline team spent approximately 908 hours, or about 38 full days, over six months attending to genuine help-seeking calls. This commitment showcases the depth of interaction and the potential resources required to effectively address the needs of our stakeholders.



### Caller profiles

Most callers were men; however, 38 per cent didn't mention their gender. The majority were married or in a partnership, with fewer being divorced, separated or widowed.

Sixty per cent of the callers were young, aged between 21-40 years. The number of callers decreases with age.



Call outcomes



- reasons for call: most were seeking help for personal gambling issues.
- Most commonly accessed gambling venues: Clubs and hotels/pubs were popular due to their social appeal, accessibility and regulations. Online platforms came next, hinting at their growing appeal and ease of access.
- Most common gambling activity: Gambling machines (often referred to as 'pokies') and sports betting were dominant, potentially due to their addictiveness and accessibility. Fewer engage in horse/greyhound racing and at casino games. This mirrors the broader NSW trend, where poker machines and sports betting are considered the most harmful forms of gambling.
- Duration of gambling: The sample presents a varied group in terms of how long they've been gambling, with a significant portion showing prolonged engagement.
- Duration of gambling: The sample shows a varied duration of gambling, with a significant number indicating long-term involvement.
- Gambling impacts: The negative effects of gambling span financial, emotional/mental health and relational domains.
- Source of service information: People most often sourced service information from the GambleAware NSW website and internet ads. Many also relied on family, friends and colleagues, as well as the Gambling Helpline and venues. Some consulted mental health services or Gambling Help Online. Fewer sought information from media outlets, financial counsellors or by self-recommendation. The least common sources included Centrelink, the correctional system and employment or community agencies.

- Call outcome: Interpreters assisted during discussions. If helpline staff couldn't address callers' needs, with consent, they referred them to local GambleAware providers. In six months, 875 self-help messages and 1,439 external referrals were made. Overall, the GambleAware Helpline has enhanced staff performance and client relations. The diverse reasons for its use highlight the complex challenges of gambling-related issues, showcasing its value. Yet, there are areas for improvement and adaptation.

Suggestions for improvement opportunities

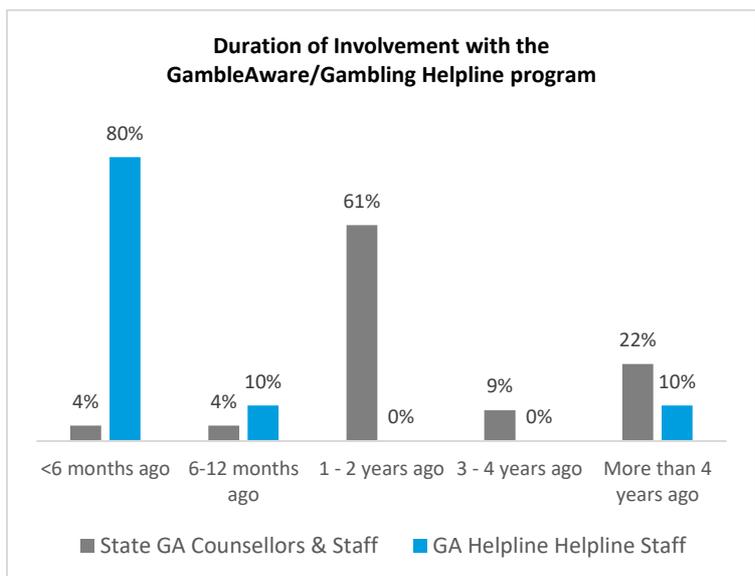
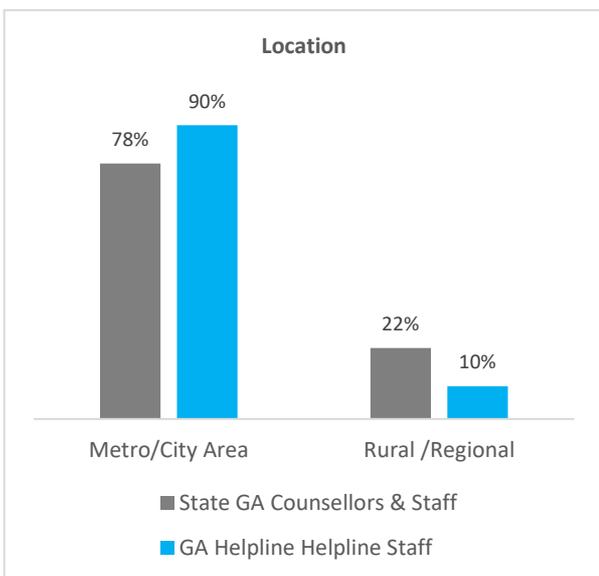
- Optimise call management for efficient service, ensuring adequate staffing during high-demand periods.
- Prioritise ongoing staff training to enhance performance and client satisfaction.
- Use data from peak months to strategise outreach and awareness campaigns, predicting and preparing for surges in call volume.
- Implement a post-call feedback system to gain insights on support quality and areas needing enhancement.
- Optimise and improve data collection methods to address any known biases and gaps. With a significant number of variables missing 50-70 per cent of values, it's crucial to identify and address the reasons for these omissions/discrepancies.
- Provide staff with the necessary tools for consistent data collection, and periodically review and update data for accuracy.
- Using visual aids like graphs and infographics to present data, makes it more digestible and engaging for stakeholders.

### C. Staff perceptions and experiences of GambleAware Helpline

Overview: demographic

The survey was completed by 23 GambleAware NSW counsellors and 10 helpline staff.

Helpline staff observed that most callers are self-identified males aged 25-44, mirroring the general demographics of NSW.



## Volume and nature of calls

Helpline staff handle a significant number of monthly calls, many of which are non-genuine or unrelated to gambling. Common topics include account and money issues, inquiries about betting services such as TAB or Lotto, issues with gambling accounts for example login difficulties, bookings for specific casinos and hoax calls.

## Self-perceptions of performance satisfaction

Helpline staff derive significant satisfaction from their roles, maintained by the tangible difference they make in the lives of callers, a supportive team environment, efficient tools (the CRM system's user-friendliness), and the deep fulfillment in the service they offer, both in immediate assistance to callers and the long-term referrals they provide.



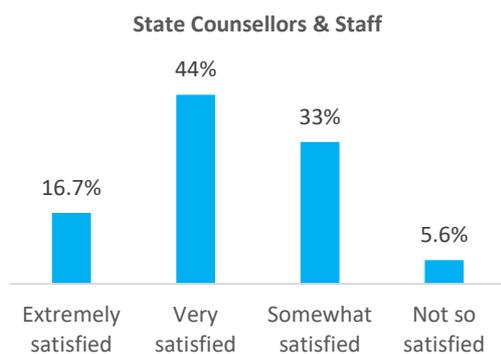
*"It's always the feeling of accomplishment after a call where you have provided support to a person who seem to be lost or hopeless at the beginning, but ends with so much hope and head start for them - whether just to talk to them but even more with a referral for long-term support."*

*"When the gambler thanks you for the support he/she was given and would want to talk to you again."*

*"The system (CRM) is clear and easy to use."*

*"Connecting with the callers, being able to help them with the experience and knowledge I have."*

*"Being able to genuinely help people who are struggling with gambling harm can help people, change their situation in short term and long term."*



Interviews with GambleAware NSW counsellors and other staff revealed that most are satisfied with the helpline team's services, suggesting it meets user expectations.

Feedback from less satisfied respondents indicates room for service improvement.

GambleAware NSW staff praised several features: The helpline's 24/7 availability, prompt and professional approach, friendly staff and specialised support (including the quality of its referrals) were highly commended.

*“Timely, professional, caring.”*

*“It is available for my existing clients to access 24/7 when they need support and it provides a source of referrals for our intake line.”*

*“They are friendly and easy to talk to,”*

*“Good to receive referrals.”*

*“Easy for clients to submit an enquiry.”*

*“Prompt, supportive and non-judgemental.”*

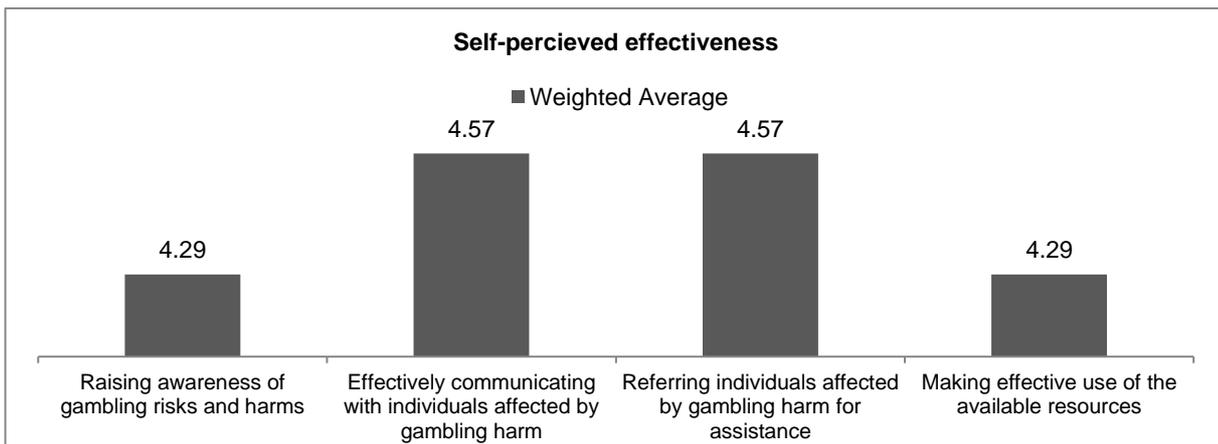
*“The helpline counsellors have for the most part provided useful information in referral creation and have responded to all questions and requests with professionalism and courtesy.”*

Self-perceptions of effectiveness

Service utilisation – helpline staff

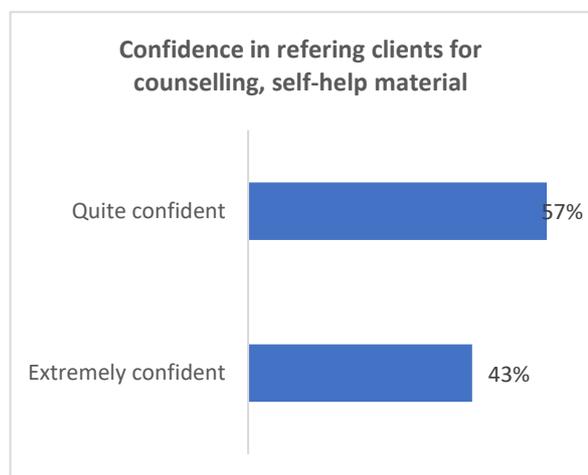
The helpline staff perceive themselves as effective in implementing interventions related to gambling risks and harms. This includes raising awareness, communicating effectively with affected clients, referring clients for assistance and making use of available resources.

The highest self-rated effectiveness was in communicating with individuals affected by gambling harm and referring these individuals for assistance.



Referral process – helpline staff

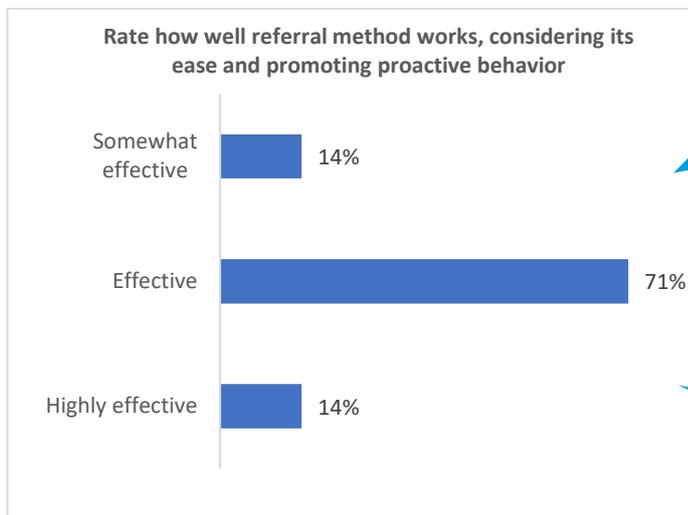
Helpline staff were asked to rate their performance, in terms of satisfaction with the referral process, confidence in referring clients, perceived effectiveness of the referral method and practical use of the referral process.



Helpline staff express overall satisfaction with the referral process, indicating they find it efficient and effective in supporting their work and guiding callers to the appropriate resources.

Staff feel quite to extremely confident in their ability to refer clients for counselling or self-help materials, demonstrating their comfort with the process and their understanding of the resources available.

Helpline staff perceive the referral method as user-friendly and effective in encouraging proactive behaviour among callers.



“Mostly people who want to take a break or stop from gambling would request self-exclusion. While there are other ways on how to do the SE, callers appreciate to do the SE with a gambling counsellor because of the additional and long-term support they can receive than just merely banning themselves from the venues. They understand and agree that they need more in-depth work to be able to recover.”

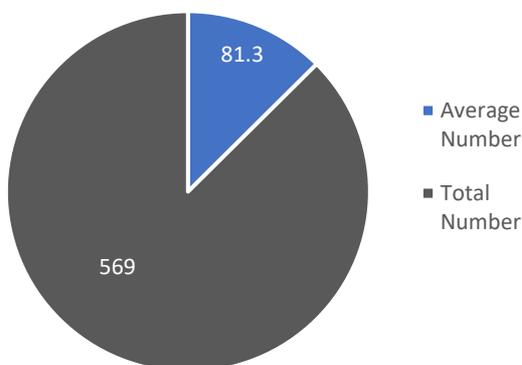
“I will talk with the clients and find their main concern, and introduce our referral service according to their needs.”

### Referral process in action

Helpline respondents were asked to provide an instance when they made use of the referral process, and an approximate percent of individuals who required further intervention.

“Caller called for a referral to a gambling counsellor. This was actioned and self-help information was also sent to the caller.”

Percentage of intervention-needing clients successfully referred for counselling support



In the first six months of operation, an average of 81.3 (14.3 per cent) individuals per month were successfully referred for counselling support.

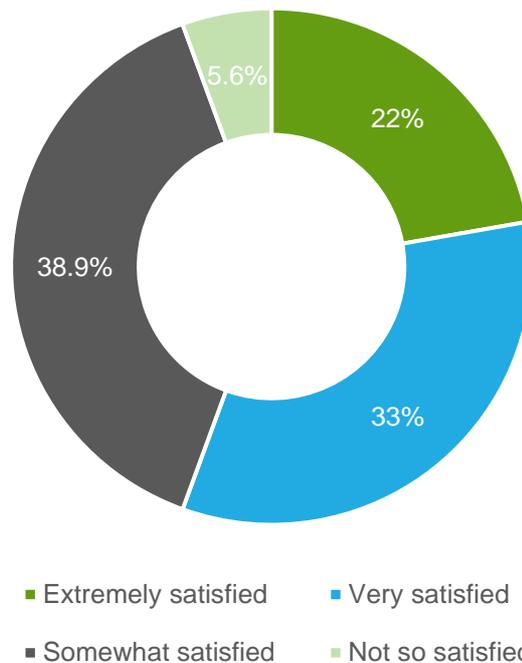
This finding suggests more callers may need more intervention than the helpline offers. It's unclear how many unsuccessful referrals occurred, what alternative assistance was offered, or if a single call was sufficient for others seeking help.

Improvements are needed to better support more individuals.

### Satisfaction with referral frequency - GambleAware NSW counsellors and staff

While a majority of GambleAware NSW staff were pleased with referrals from the helpline, with 22 per cent extremely satisfied and 33 per cent very satisfied, over 40 per cent felt only somewhat or not at all satisfied. This discrepancy is notable, especially since helpline staff believe they're performing exceptionally well.

**Satisfaction with referral frequency, State Counsellors & Staff**



Ninety-four per cent of GambleAware NSW counsellors report to have received client referrals from the helpline, highlighting the close collaboration between the helpline staff and GambleAware NSW counsellors.

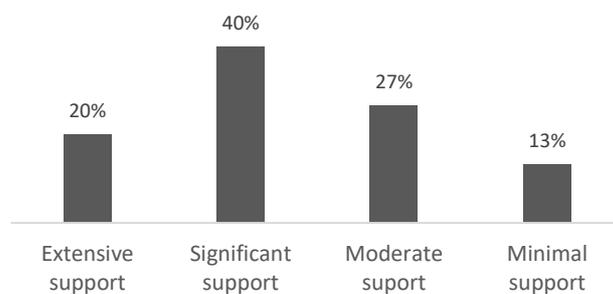
We asked respondents about the proportion of clients they received as referrals from the helpline staff. On average, the respondents received about 55 per cent of their clients through referrals from the helpline.

### Client referrals to GambleAware NSW staff

How would you rate the level of assistance you received from staff of the GambleAware Helpline service?

Sixty per cent of the GambleAware NSW staff felt that the assistance they received from the helpline was significant.

**Level of the support received, State Counsellors & Staff**



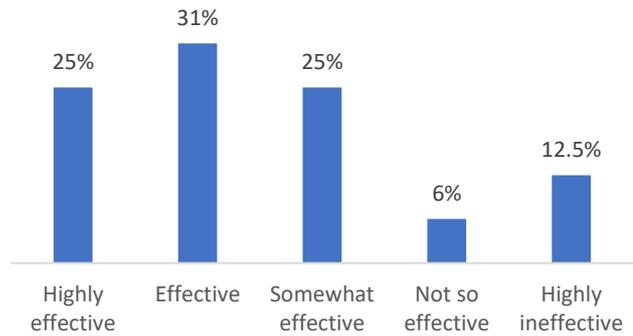
### Effectiveness of the referral method

The evaluation of the referral method focuses on its user-friendliness and its ability to promote proactive behaviour.

GambleAware NSW staff rated the referral method's effectiveness. Fifty-six per cent found it effective or highly effective

Twenty-five per cent considered it somewhat effective, but 18.5 per cent believed there's room for improvement.

How well the referral method works, State Counsellors & Staff



### Strength of the referral method

GambleAware NSW staff appreciated several aspects of the referral method: the efficient process, quality of initial assessments, quick response times, detailed referrals, prompt notifications and clear communication.

Notably, the quick inquiry processing and daily referral turnaround stood out as exceptional features.

*"Extremely efficient and quick." "Referrals come through within a day."*

*"When a sufficient initial assessment is performed." "The referrals are detailed."*

*"Prompt notification... for the most part." "Client details provided via email."*

*"Enquires are dealt with straightaway. No wait time only wait time is with counsellor's availability."*

*"The quality of information provided and clarity of communication."*

Overall, the helpline's referral process with GambleAware NSW counsellors is largely seen as effective, yet feedback highlights areas for improvement to meet everyone's expectations.



## Suggestions for improvement opportunities

### Referral quality and handling client information

GambleAware NSW staff feedback highlights areas for improvement, particularly in providing detailed and accurate client referrals. They also suggest screening for other addictions by helpline staff and including this information in referrals, rectifying occasional referral or scheduling errors, and improvements in intake management and data entry. Addressing these points can notably boost the helpline's efficacy and user satisfaction.

*"Providing more client background."*

*"How intakes are handled and that the bulk of the data entry is left to clinicians."*

*"Better eliciting of need for financial counselling."*

*"Occasional inappropriate referral info given (e.g. caller wants to be called out of hours when this isn't available)."*

*"When we are provided incorrect phone numbers in referrals, when we are not also provided email addresses to contact clients, and when we are referred clients out of our region."*

*"In regard to referrals, maybe better screening around other addictions issues, such as ongoing substance abuse issues (unmanaged mental health), that may make gambling treatment less effective if clients are not supported or willing to address these comorbid issues as well."*

*"At times the helpline refers people to the incorrect GA provider."*

*"The more detail entered into the 'Client Special needs or requests' the better as it keeps us more informed as to the client's situation and expectations."*

### Service accessibility- Increase the frequency of genuine calls

Suggestions focus on reducing the frequency of non-gambling related venue related calls or non-gambling harm related queries and promote genuine help-seeking behaviour. They emphasise improved communication and marketing, boosting awareness of gambling risks, prominent contact number, and partnerships with gambling venues and online sites. This will make the helpline more effective and efficient in providing support to those in need.

*"Be more specific with regards to our service on the posters and pamphlets being distributed to clubs and pubs."*

*"Better marketing with clear information relating to our phone number. This will help with wrong numbers."*

*"Make our number bigger in marketing materials."*

*"Clearer advertising."*

*"Increase the advertisements on dangers of gambling."*

*"When gambling venues share the number for GambleAware on their websites/membership cards/advertisements and offers, they need to clearly mention that the number is for gambling counselling or for people who want to stop/reduce gambling."*

## Improve referral quality

There is mixed satisfaction with the current helpline-to-counsellor referral process. Suggestions for improvements include better client readiness screening, clearer communication on wait times, correct provider referrals and enhanced client education.

High referral volumes indicate potential strain, a need for additional resources or staff.

### Comments on strategies:

*"The volume of referrals is almost too much that we cannot keep up. Either more short-term resources need to be directed towards low risk clients, or more intake/clinical staff are required."*

*"Better screening around clients' readiness to commit to attending sessions. Some clients may perceive that because it's a free service they do not have to attend if they have a booking and should be reminded kindly, that where reasonably possible, notice of non-attendance would be ideal, so that other clients don't miss out on attending and who are able to do so and we can reduce no shows where possible."*

*"Ensuring GambleAware Helpline staff let clients know that we have an extremely high number of calls and it may take a few days to schedule an appointment."*

*"Need to make sure they are referred to the correct provider."*

*"Ensuring that potential clients are given information around gambling and financial counselling."*

## Visibility and accessibility

Participants suggested strategies to enhance engagement, including improving the knowledge of helpline staff about services, promoting team communication and support, and setting clear counselling expectations.

### Comments on strategies:

*"Ensuring helpline staff understand the services offered by financial counsellors as well as gambling counsellors."*

*"Ongoing communication from the team and supporting each other."*

*"Monitoring of client numbers."*

*"Clarity of expectations around what counselling can offer e.g. our ability to overturn self-exclusions."*

## Leveraging data and feedback

Collecting more data, along with feedback from users and staff can enrich understanding of the service's impact, identify improvement areas, and develop more effective approaches to assist those with gambling-related concerns.

- Collecting feedback from callers on the advertisements' impact can reveal if the ads promote help-seeking actions or unintentionally intensify gambling urges or retraumatise individuals.
- Monitoring the results of helpline referrals can assess service effectiveness and highlight improvement areas.
- Consistent feedback on caller satisfaction can further measure service quality and pinpoint areas for enhancement.
- Tracking caller progress longitudinally, such as call frequency and issue resolution, can offer insights into the sustained effectiveness and impact of the service.

Directions for future research could encompass:

- Investigating how the helpline is contributing to and leveraging the evidence base for the interventions it offers.
- Deepened analysis into the service's overall impact and pinpoint areas ripe for improvement.
- Expanding outreach efforts to assess the broader impact and reach of the helpline service, ensuring that it effectively meets the needs of those dealing with gambling-related challenges.

“Feedback from the callers about the ads - the effect of the ads on them (positive - leading to help-seeking behaviour/ negative - retraumatizing or triggers more their urges to gamble). New research findings about gambling help efforts to reducing harm.”

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