



## Problem gambling among ethnic groups

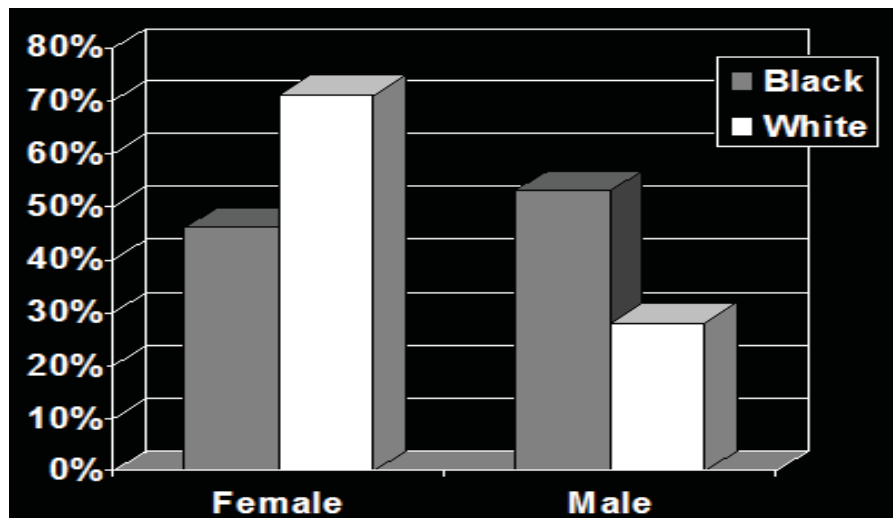
- ⌘ Minority populations most likely have much higher rates of pathological gambling than Caucasians (Moore, Jados, & Carlson, 2000, as cited in Moore, 2001).
- ⌘ Minorities spend about two-and-a-half times more on gambling in a typical month than Caucasians (Volberg, 2001).
- ⌘ Ethnic minority groups (except Asians) are over-represented among individuals classified as problem gamblers (Volberg, 2001).

A 2007 Oregon survey of African-American clients in treatment was conducted at an alcohol and drug inpatient treatment facility for women and children and through men's and women's groups at an outpatient treatment facility. Though the survey was small (59 respondents) and has not been studied for statistical validity and reliability, it provides the following useful and intriguing information about gambling in the African-American community:

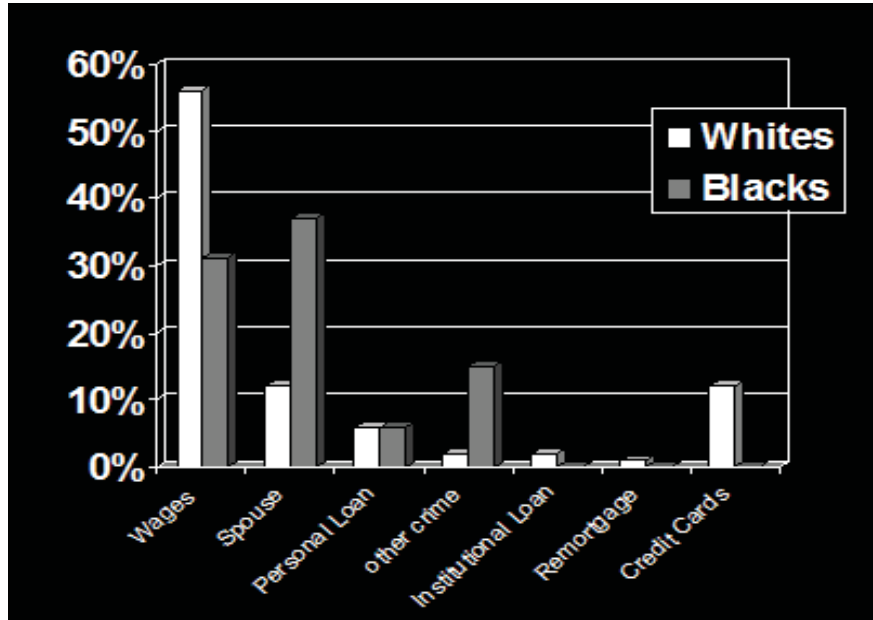
### Preferred games: Caucasians vs. African-Americans

- ❑ Caucasians prefer video poker almost 2:1 over African-Americans.
- ❑ African-Americans prefer dominos about 5:1 over Caucasians.
- ❑ Caucasians play scratch tickets far more than African-Americans.
- ❑ African-Americans play dice far more than Caucasians.

### Treatment clients: Caucasians vs. African-Americans



## Source of gambling funds: Caucasians vs. African-Americans



What are the implications for family treatment?

- ❑ African-American relationships may be more enabling.
- ❑ Caucasian spouses/partners may be oblivious to their partner's gambling.

African-Americans and treatment admission

- ❑ Minorities tend to perceive delayed admission as a form of rejection.
- ❑ Minorities have a history of being abused by bureaucracy and red tape. Complex rules, documents, etc., have historically been used to exploit African-Americans. African-Americans are turned-off by "red tape."
- ❑ Research shows that delayed admission produces poorer outcomes in minorities compared to Caucasian clients in behavioral health and medical care services.

*Special thanks to Hubert Evans, CGAC II at Lifeworks NW for collecting and sharing this data.*

## Asian Americans and Problem Gambling



### Asian American problem gambling in Oregon

Oregon Problem Gambling Services has convened an Asian American Problem Gambling Advisory Group to help shape services in the state. The group sponsored a day-long conference on this issue and has plans to continue working on awareness, prevention and treatment.

After the conference, Bounsang Khamkeo, a behavioral health counselor at the Avel Gordly Center for Healing at OHSU, and Dr. Paul Leung, director of OHSU's Intercultural Psychiatric Program and the Asian Health & Services Center spoke with an Oregonian reporter and shared these thoughts ([http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/10/specials\\_will\\_confront\\_the\\_tab.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/news/index.ssf/2009/10/specials_will_confront_the_tab.html)):

*Why are you concerned about problem gambling?*

Leung: There's no data [on Asian American gambling] available in Oregon. But it's an open secret that when you go into the Asian community – Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian – you hear that a way people come together is to gamble instead of drinking or doing drugs. For clinicians like myself, we all recognize there is an ongoing problem with gambling in our community. I have seen patients come in with depression, but as I inquire further into their history, the depression is a result of gambling away their whole salary.

*How do Asian American families cope with problem gambling?*

Khamkeo: It's a loss of face. They feel shame coming for counseling. They ask me, 'Please don't tell my family.' I ask them to bring in their spouse for family counseling, and even though they value family, they still don't want their family involved in treatment.

Leung: It is taboo. This is a shameful thing for any family to acknowledge that you have someone in your family because of his or her gambling destroying his or her life. Somehow, people still don't think gambling addiction equates to drug or alcohol addiction. They see it as a social thing, instead of a mental health or a

pathological problem. So families, they bail their loved ones out, they pay the debt, they continue to enable the person with the habit.

*What does treatment for problem gambling look like?*

Khamkeo: We teach them how to take care of their money. You can not take your rent money to gamble. It's better to convince them to stop entirely. But even if they stop 50 percent, and gamble half as much, I'm happy, because many of my clients who come to see me have a long history of gambling so we can't solve the problem overnight.

Leung: Once the individual seeks help I can rally the family. You can look at medicine to ease anxiety. You can take financial control away from that person and give it to others. It's one step at a time, but you can curb the behavior.

## **A Tradition of Gambling**

John Glionna (Glionna, John M. 2006. "Gambling, Addiction, and Asian Culture" *Asian-Nation: The Landscape of Asian America*. <<http://www.asian-nation.org/gambling.shtml>> December 31, 2009) describes the Asian American tradition of gambling as follows:

“Many Asians -- especially Chinese -- consider gambling an accepted practice at home and at social events, even among the young. Chinese youths often gamble for money with aunts, uncles and grandparents. While growing up in San Francisco's Chinatown, Lee took betting to absurd levels -- wagering on whether the teacher would assign homework. On rainy days, he bet on which drop would first reach the bottom of the classroom window.

Many Chinese are fascinated by the mystical qualities of luck, fate and chance. The Chinese New Year -- this year Jan. 29 -- is a time of heightened wagering, when bad luck of the old year is ushered out by the good luck of the new. Numerology also plays a crucial role in many Asian cultures. The number 8, for example, is considered extremely lucky by many Chinese, while 4, when spoken in Mandarin and Cantonese, sounds like the word for death and is avoided.

Though Chinese believe most strongly in such concepts, other Asian cultures, including Vietnamese, Korean and Filipino, hold similar beliefs -- depending on China's political influence in their history or the extent of Chinese immigration there. Experts believe that recent Asian immigrants -- risk-takers willing to leave

the familiarity of their homelands -- develop more aggressive gambling strategies than their U.S.-born counterparts.

Often lacking language skills and advanced education, some gravitate to casinos, where waitresses dote on gamblers with free drinks and cigarettes. "They're treated as honored guests even though they work dead-end, minimum-wage jobs," said Tina Shum, a social worker in San Francisco's Chinatown. "That's what they long for." Some eventually engage in "attack" gambling: wagering sums beyond their means in a reckless grab at the American dream. "The immigrant experience is often demeaning," Shum said. "Many get blinded by the neon lights."

## Research

UCLA Gambling Studies Program and the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council (A3PCON) are doing research on problem gambling in Asian American communities. They held focus groups in Korean, Cambodian and Vietnamese communities which confirmed the following:

1. Gambling was a common thing that a lot of community members did.
2. Gambling was very socially acceptable.
3. Almost everyone knew one or two people that they knew had a gambling problem. It was a very common thread that they also didn't know what to do about that person; where to send them, what to say to them, what to do about it.

Dr. Tim Fong, Director of UCLA's Program, when asked why there may be a disproportionate percent of Asian gamblers, responded:

*"I think there is a blend of biological, psychological and social factors. In these Asian communities, gambling is very accepted for entertainment. So you have higher participation rates, a higher approval rate. I think there's a huge social component where the majority of social activities are spent at the casino you're going to do that. If all your friends go to the casino, you're going to go to the casino. There's an immigrant mentality as well, where folks who come here to take a chance and come to America are more likely to gamble because immigrating to America from your homeland is a huge gamble in and of itself. We can't prove this but most likely they have some kind of biological predisposition to gambling in general, in life. It makes it very easy for them to go to the casino when they get here even though they may be very poor. There are all sorts of other factors too. Maybe the recruiting, the advertising by the casino probably has an*

*impact. I think it's all those things. There is no real backlash against gambling in Asian communities. It's not like the churches are saying don't do this; or advocacy groups or intervention groups. It's an activity that's not frowned upon."*

Source: <http://www.la.ucla.edu/profiles/fong.shtml>

Other studies have revealed:

- Gambling is widely accepted in the Asian American community. Regional surveys indicate that Asian Americans have a higher rate of problem gambling as compared to the general population (Woo 2003, Petry 2003).
- Recent immigrants are at especially high risk for gambling addiction. Facing language barriers and limited social venues, many turn to gambling to cope with stress or to seek excitement.  
Source: <http://www.masscompulsivegambling.org/contentmgr/showdetails.php/id/713>
- In San Francisco's Chinatown, which has estimates of up to 15 percent problem gamblers, seventy percent of residents surveyed identified gambling as the number one problem in the community. Similar studies also show that 59 percent of Southeast Asian refugees face gambling addictions.
- Problem gambling has taken a painful toll in Asian communities. The Sacramento Bee recently reported that a well-respected traditional Asian medicine healer in California hanged himself after gambling away \$400,000 of his home equity. Similar stories of suicide, murder and unbearable debt have been ringing out across Asian communities these past few years.
- On average, Asians comprise 30 to 40 percent of clientele in the Los Angeles area casinos. Casinos aggressively gear their marketing toward Asian communities by offering bus packages, Asian holiday deals, and Asian pop star concerts. A person living in an Asian enclave is often no more than two hours away from a casino.
- While the casino industry's explosion in the past decades has catapulted gambling to the mainstream culture, gambling has been a long-standing acceptable form of social entertainment within many Asian cultures. Forms of gambling such as games of mahjong and casino cruises are popular family activities. As a result, problem gambling is not taken seriously unless a gambler amasses serious debt. "[Many Asians] think it's strictly a moral issue, and that gambling does not pose a health risk and therefore they are not seeking help," said Chien-Chi Huang, Asian Community Manager of the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling.
- Factors that thwart preventive measures against problem gambling among Asian communities are: shame, stigma, and the lack of culturally-sensitive services and outreach. In addition, other factors also make it difficult for

problem gamblers to seek treatment – strong values of self-reliance, cultural mores such as the rejection of therapy, a sense of fatalism, and family insulation. For many members of the Asian American community, there is a thin line between normative gambling and problem gambling.

Source: [http://sampan.org/show\\_article.php?display=1896](http://sampan.org/show_article.php?display=1896)

**Links for more general information and resources:**

<http://www.nicoschc.org/>

<http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/resources/responsibleGamblingDocuments/gamblingAndProblemGamblingAmongChinese.pdf> <http://www.asian-nation.org/gambling.shtml#ixzz0bIfSXYFv>

<http://www.asian-nation.org/gambling.shtml#ixzz0bIfBUCMv><http://www.asian-nation.org/gambling.shtml>

<http://www.asian-nation.org/gambling.shtml#ixzz0bIetcGLq>