

Public opinion on pokies: Information from the 2010 Health and Lifestyles Survey

The Health and Lifestyles Survey (HLS) is a survey of New Zealanders aged 15 years and over. It aims to measure current and changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours across the Health Sponsorship Council (HSC)'s programme areas - Smokefree, Auahi Kore, SunSmart, problem gambling, and healthy eating.

The second HLS was conducted in 2010, with a large portion of the questionnaire focusing on gambling. The information on people's attitudes, experiences and knowledge relating to gambling will provide a follow-up to the 2006/07 Gaming and Betting Activities Survey, which was conducted as a benchmark around the time that HSC first started developing public health campaigns about problem gambling.

The following are responses from the overall sample of 1,740 New Zealanders (1,654 adults aged 18 and over, and 86 young people aged 15-17) to questions about their opinions of gambling and, more specifically, Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs), also known as pokies. The data have been weighted to be representative of the New Zealand population.

Do people think raising money through gambling does more good than harm, or more harm than good, in the community?

One in two people (51%) felt that raising money through gambling did more harm than good. One in four (26%) felt that it did more good than harm, with just less than one in four (23%) saying they thought it did equal good and harm.

When gambling profits go to causes, such as sport, charities and other community purposes, who do people think the money should be distributed by?

Respondents were able to nominate more than one response to this question. In order of popularity, people selected the following groups to distribute gambling profits:

Lottery Grants Board (or similar): 45%

Local Council: 42%

Community Representatives (including charitable organisations, community trusts, community leaders or JPs, sports clubs, boards of trustees): 42%

Government Departments: 25%

People who operate gambling activities (eg, pokie trusts): 12%

What types of gambling activities are thought of as more likely than others to attract people into playing more often or for more money than they should?

Respondents were able to nominate more than one response to this question.

EGMs/pokies were the most highly mentioned form of gambling that people thought would attract people into playing more than they should (67% or two in three people mentioned pokies).

New Zealand Lotteries products (including Lotto, Keno, Instant Kiwi and Bullseye) were the next most mentioned group of gambling activities, by 58% of people.

Betting on horse or dog races or sports events was mentioned by 40% of people. Internet games were mentioned by 39% of people. Table games at casinos were mentioned by 29% of people.

What types of gambling activities are seen as “socially undesirable”?

Respondents were able to nominate more than one response to this question.

EGMs/pokies were the most likely form of gambling to be called “socially undesirable”, by 50% of people.

The next most common types of gambling to be thought of as “socially undesirable” were betting on horse or dog races or sports events (22%), internet games (21%) and New Zealand Lotteries products (19%).

Do people know who is responsible for deciding whether places in their area can start operating EGMs/pokies, and for deciding whether existing places can add more EGMs?

One in four (25%) people correctly stated that decisions were made by local authorities or councils.

What proportion of people agree that “There is a need for their community to talk about problems that come from gambling and to work out local solutions”?

Over half (56%) of the people agreed, while 30% had “no feeling either way” and 14% disagreed.

Who do people think should play a big role in helping to prevent people from gambling too much?

Two in three (67%) people thought the government should have a big role, and the same proportion thought gambling operators should have a big role. Most people thought the families/ whanau of gamblers (95%) and gamblers themselves (93%) should play a big role. Seven in ten (70%) said health and social services should play a big role.