

Gaming machines affecting well-being

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Electronic gaming machines have a detrimental impact upon the lives of those who use them and their associates, according to new research.

The Centre for Social and Health Outcomes Research and Evaluation and Te Ropu Whariki carried out the Assessment of the Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in New Zealand for the Ministry of Health.

More than 7000 participants from across the country were interviewed for the study, allowing researchers to create a picture of how gambling affects the well-being of people and their families.

More than 60 per cent of respondents had participated in some form of gambling in the past 12 months, although most of that number was made up of people who bought lottery products, which more than 50 per cent of the population had done.

Participation in other modes of gambling was much lower, with fewer than 10 per cent betting at a racetrack or TAB. Electronic gaming machines were used by four per cent of respondents in clubs, eight per cent in bars or pubs and eight per cent in the casino.

Researchers found playing gaming machines was associated with self-reported poorer physical health and mental well-being. It also affected people's feelings about relationships with family and friends, feelings about self, overall quality of life, and overall satisfaction with life.

This contrasted with other types of gambling such as betting at the racetrack or TAB or playing poker, which did not elicit the same negative feelings from respondents.

The research also showed that Maori and Pacific people were more likely to play gaming machines than other ethnic groups and that there were significant associations between gambling participation and poorer self-rated quality of life in those groups.

Researcher Dr En-Yi Lin says respondents viewed gaming machines as more detrimental to their lives than other forms of gambling.

“Of all the forms of gambling, gaming machines, particularly when played in bars, elicited the most negative responses from people of all ethnicities,” she says. “This contrasts with other forms of gambling which in some cases had positive aspects, perhaps because of their social nature.”

Provided by Massey University

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