

**Nova Scotia**

**Nova Scotia Video Lottery Players' Survey 1997/98**

**HIGHLIGHTS**



**OVERVIEW**

In May, 1991, Nova Scotia was one of the first jurisdictions in North America to undertake the administration/management and control of the video lottery market. By 1996, play of video lottery games accounted for almost \$375 million wagered by Nova Scotians and approximately 54% of the provincial revenue derived from total gambling activities. Video lottery terminals are now available in all provinces, except Ontario and British Columbia, although Ontario is currently preparing to launch its video lottery program. However, to date, there had been no random quantitative studies undertaken by any provincial jurisdiction which specifically examined video lottery players. Consequently, much of what is known about the players and video lottery play habits is based on very small random samples, non-random qualitative studies, anecdotal information or from treatment populations.

As video lottery becomes more widespread, the negative consequences of play are also becoming more evident. In the absence of any conclusive information on the association between video lottery play and problem gambling, the public and service providers, on a community level, are struggling to cope with the video lottery issue. Removal or banning of the machines is often viewed as the only reasonable alternative. Previous to May, 1991, and the government operation of video lotteries, the "Grey Market" for the illegal machines was estimated at approximately 1,500 to 2,000, with presumably similar negative consequences for players (although those adults likely comprised a smaller portion of the population). It has been argued that banning video lottery may only serve to eliminate social play and drive the problems associated with video lottery gambling underground.

There is a strong need for accurate, reliable information on video lottery play and the factors contributing to problem play. Although currently, on a per capita basis, Nova Scotia tends to be ranked sixth in Canada in terms of the number of terminals per 1000 residents (3.55), the province still represents one of the most mature and evolved video lottery gaming markets in North America.

In recognition of a need to manage the consequences of having had the machines available over the past seven

years, the Nova Scotia Department of Health Problem Gambling Services wished to develop a more concise and extensive profile of VL Players in this province. Specifically, they wanted to determine the profile of problem and non-problem players to develop an understanding of the mechanisms players can use to overcome problem gambling on video lottery terminals, and to develop a list of indicators that can be used for the identification, prevention and treatment of problem video lottery players.

In June, 1997, Focal Research Consultants was commissioned, by the Department of Health, to undertake the first benchmark study of video lottery play in Nova Scotia. Based on a comprehensive literature review and pilot testing for the project, a questionnaire and methodology were specifically designed to address the study objectives.

**Nova Scotia Video Lottery Players Survey (October 1997 - January 1998):**

The 1997/98 Nova Scotia VL Players' Survey provides extensive information as to the behaviours, motivations and characteristics of VL players, thereby making a significant contribution to the understanding of video lottery gambling. In addition, the study profiles VL gambling within the context of all adults in the province, thus establishing benchmark measures against which VL play in Nova Scotia can be subsequently monitored and tracked. Specifically, the study results can be directly applied in the design of Problem VL Gambling treatment strategies and harm reduction/minimization initiatives.

The study was designed to offer flexibility in order to ensure the highest quality data upon which to base decisions, while providing a cost effective vehicle for exploring additional issues of interest as required. Given the depth of the information gathered, there is considerable opportunity for on-going analysis of the data to further explore, identify and model response towards VL gambling in order to gain additional insight as to the various underlying factors influencing play of video lottery games. Thus, the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Problem Gambling Services is able to maximize the continuing information return from this leading edge research on video lottery gambling.

**Summary:**

Overall, the results of the study indicate that 5.7% of adults in Nova Scotia are involved in regular continuous play of video lottery gaming. These adults account for approximately 25% of all those who play VLT's each year in the province and contribute approximately 96% of the annual provincial net revenue for VL gambling.

The majority of Regular VL Gamblers (75%) appear to derive entertainment benefit from VLT play and do not report or manifest any long-term ill effects from VL gambling. However, the results suggest that at least 25% of Regular Players have had difficulties with their VL gambling, with at least one-third having attempted to stop and/or reduce their play levels at some time since they have started playing the machines.

The Problem VL Player segment identified in the current research comprises a distinct group of VL Gamblers in Nova Scotia. This group is differentiated from other regular VL gamblers. Problem VL Gamblers in Nova Scotia presently comprise 16% of all of those who play the machines on a regular basis which translates to approximately 0.92% of all adults in the province. This group of VL Gamblers contributes just over half of the net revenue for video lottery gambling and, at any given time, will comprise almost half of all those sitting in front of a video lottery terminal in Nova Scotia. For the most

part, these adults report significant guilt and anxiety, are experiencing difficulties in coping, and are at a loss as to how to control their VL gambling.

The results of the Problem VL Gambler Analysis suggest that there will not be any single treatment solution in addressing problem video lottery play. Prevention, intervention and treatment strategies will have to be as varied as the many factors impacting and contributing to problem VL gambling. By focusing on the specific behaviours, perceptions and characteristics of the individual, it may be possible to customize effective treatment approaches on a per problem player basis. The results of the current study can be used as input in designing and testing various models related to VL gambling treatment. Furthermore, the study results suggest that there are opportunities for harm minimization or harm reduction in terms of those adults who have not (yet) developed problems with VL gambling, but who may be at risk for problem play in the future.

The results of the Nova Scotia VL Players' Survey provide a comprehensive overview and profile of video lottery play in the province. A number of viable options in addressing problem VL gambling in Nova Scotia are identified, which can be further explored and tested. However, given the revenue contribution of Problem VL Gamblers, any "solution" may have significant implications for VLT revenues in the province.

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The primary objective of the project is to develop a comprehensive profile of VLT players in Nova Scotia, including:

- *proportion of players exhibiting problem gambling behaviour;*
- *demographic/characteristics of VL players and the subset of problem players;*
- *lifestyle;*
- *a delineation of risk indicators that will assist in designing prevention and treatment strategies.*

As the first comprehensive study of VL play undertaken in Nova Scotia, the results also provide benchmark measures against which VL play and subsequent intervention and harm reduction strategies/programs can be monitored and tracked. Therefore, *it was also necessary to establish baseline measures of attitudinal, behavioural and psychographical response towards VL gambling within the context of all adults in Nova Scotia for comparison to VL Players.* Rigorous standards in terms of data collection and methodology were incorporated into the study design to ensure data accuracy and reliability.

Based on an extensive literature review and pilot testing for the project, a questionnaire was specifically designed to address the study objectives.

**METHODOLOGY**

To address the objectives of the study, two independent surveys were conducted by telephone with randomly selected adults in Nova Scotia from Oct. 12, 1997 to Jan. 19, 1998:

1. VL Players' Survey (n=711)
2. General Population Survey (n=400)

**VL Player Survey:**

During data collection, a random sample of 11,691 households in NS was initially contacted for participation in a household screening survey. The Household Screen consisted of a brief survey which identified the total number of adults (19+ years) in the household and VL play status for each adult. Of the 11,691 households sampled, a total of 9,339 households and 18,650 adults were successfully screened, yielding a response rate of 79.9% for the Household Screen. Within this sample, 927

Regular VL Players were identified and 711 (76.7% of all those qualified) completed the VL Players' Survey. The overall response rate for the survey was 61.3%. Thus, the results of the study are representative and generalizable to the population of Regular VL Players in Nova Scotia.

The VL Player interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours, with an average of  $\approx$  48 minutes in length.

**General Population Survey:**

The General Population Survey was conducted with 400 randomly sampled adults in NS with a response rate of 61.1%. The interviews ranged from 13 to 29 minutes with an average length of  $\approx$  18 minutes.

There were no significant differences between the two samples in terms of estimating the level and degree of adults' involvement in video lottery gambling in NS. This finding is compelling since different sampling techniques were used and, thus, provided convergent validity for the estimate of VL play activity by adults in Nova Scotia.

**\*\*\*KEY FINDINGS \*\*\***

**The Key Findings for the study are presented under two primary sections:**

- **Provincial Overview of VL Play**  
This section provides a summary profile of VL gambling within the context of the total population of adults in Nova Scotia.
- **Problem VL Gambler Analysis**  
This section provides a summary profile of those adults characterized as Problem VL Gamblers as compared to other regular VL gamblers in Nova Scotia.

More detailed information regarding questionnaire design, pilot testing, survey methods and results is available in the 1997/98 Nova Scotia VL Players' Survey - Technical Report.

**PROVINCIAL OVERVIEW OF VL PLAY**

**Involvement In Gambling Activities  
For All Adults In Nova Scotia**

	Ever Played (Trial)	Play In Last Month	Regular Play (1+ / month)
Lottery Draws	80%	59%	41%
Charity Raffles/Draws	65%	42%	13%
\$2.00 Scratch 'n Wins	39%	25%	10%
\$1.00 Scratch 'n Wins	41%	24%	10%
<b>VLT's</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>
Breakopens	19%	9%	5%
Bingo in Bingo Halls	14%	7%	4%
Card Games (outside of casino)	13%	5%	3%
Slot Machines	27%	7%	2%
Sports Bets/ Pools	6%	2%	1%
Sport Select Proline	4%	2%	1%
Non-slot Casino Games	9%	3%	1%
Horse Racing	3%	1%	<1%
Other Betting	1%	<1%	<1%

**General Gambling Activities Profile:**

For the most part, playing games for money in Nova Scotia is a widespread and socially acceptable entertainment option. Almost all adults in the province (94%) have played at least one type of game offering money prizes at some time, and the strong majority (80%) have participated in at least one gambling activity in the last month. Just over half (54%, or ≈367,000 adults) gamble on a regular monthly basis.

- Participation in **lottery draws** is the most popular gambling activity, both in terms of trial (80%), play in the last month (59%) and regular play (41%).
- Nova Scotians are also highly likely to have ever purchased **charity raffles or draw tickets** (65%) and,

typically, 42% of adults buy these charity draw tickets in a given month. Due to fluctuations in the availability of charity tickets, on-going regular play for these games tends to be substantially lower than for ALC draw tickets (13% versus 41%).

- Trial (ever played) of **\$1.00** (41%) and **\$2.00** (39%) **instant scratch 'n win tickets** and **VLT's** (38%) by adults tends to be similar, however, both play in the last month (≈25% versus 11%) and regular play (10% versus 6%) tends to be twice as high for the instant tickets than for VLT's.
- It is noteworthy that trial of **slot machines** exceeds that noted for **bingo in bingo halls** by almost a factor of 2 (27% versus 14%). A similar percentage of adults have been involved in either gambling option in the last month (7%). Primarily due to the restriction of slot machines to the two casino locations in Nova Scotia (Halifax, Sydney), regular on-going play of slot machines tends to be lower than that noted for bingo (2% versus 4%).
- The majority of other gambling options available in Nova Scotia has been tried by fewer than 15% of adults and elicits regular playing patterns from 3% or less of the adult population.
- On average, adults in Nova Scotia spend approximately \$41.70 each month (out-of-pocket) on gambling activities and an additional \$83.31 on other entertainment expenditures. This suggests that approximately one-third of adults' monthly entertainment expenditures are allocated to gambling expenditures.

**Despite the fact that only 11% of adults play VLT's each month, average monthly expenditures per capita in Nova Scotia tend to be at least twice as high for video lottery gambling than for any other gambling activity (\$14.39 per adult per month). VLT's account for approximately 35% of all out-of-pocket gambling expenditure and 11.5% of total gambling and entertainment expenditure by adults in Nova Scotia. Thus, the results indicate that a small proportion of adults in Nova Scotia (VLT players) are contributing a significant portion of gambling revenues in the province.**

**VIDEO LOTTERY PLAY  
BY ADULTS IN NOVA SCOTIA**

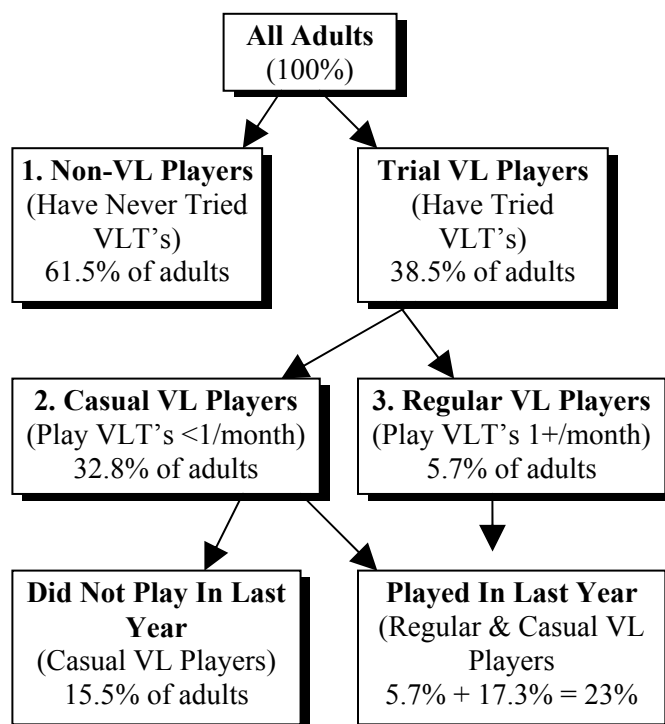
Measures of video lottery gambling historically have been included in studies initially designed to measure other regulated gambling activities, primarily lottery ticket play. More precise measures specifically related to VL gambling were developed for the current study and the results suggest that these measures are significantly more valid for determining VL play estimates than those used previously. The results reveal that VL gambling is markedly different from other gambling activities such as lottery draws, bingo or sports betting, which are most often tied to specific play times or schedules, with a delay between the actual purchase/play and outcome. These factors directly influence play levels and exert some control on play. Video lottery gambling, however, is continuous, accessible and the schedule of play, for the most part, is self imposed, with no definable start/finish time for play within the proscribed hours of operation for licensed establishments in Nova Scotia.

- **≈38.5% of adults 19 years of age or older in Nova Scotia have tried video lottery gambling at some time** (Trial Players).
- **≈23% of adults have played VL games within the last year.** This suggests that 60% of all Trial VL Players have played the games at some time during the past twelve months.
- **≈11% of adults, typically, play video lottery games each month.** This suggests that approximately 29% of all those who have ever tried VL games (Trial Players) will have played VLT's in the last month.
- **≈5.7% of Nova Scotian adults play video lottery games on a regular, continuous basis (1+ times per month).** This suggests that approximately 15% of all those who have tried video lottery games adopt regular playing patterns. Regular VL Gamblers comprise approximately half of those who play video lottery games each month.
- **≈4.5% of Nova Scotians (≈31,000 adults) are categorized as Lapsed Regular Players,** or adults who used to play regularly (once per month or more) at some time in the past, but currently play once every few months or less often. (It is crucial that studies of these lapsed players be conducted to determine the measures and strategies used to curtail their gambling.)

- **It appears that 1.4% of adults stopped playing over the last year, primarily due to concerns about addiction or spending too much money.** This was offset by an additional 1.3% of adults who started playing a regular basis during the last twelve months. Therefore, it can be estimated that there is a relatively high amount of churn (turnover in the percentage of adults playing regularly) within the Regular VL Player base in Nova Scotia, with approximately 25% of Regular Players ceasing play and a similar proportion taking up regular playing patterns.
- Despite the degree of player turnover, on average, **current Regular VL Players have been playing the games on a regular basis for 3.6 years,** suggesting regular playing patterns for VL gamblers are fairly entrenched for these adults.
- **For approximately one-quarter of all Regular VL Players, it appears that factors other than game appeal or liking are contributing to regular play levels.** The fact that 25% of Regular VL Players dislike VL gambling, as compared to other gambling options, yet continue to play heavily, is of concern as it suggests their behaviour is motivated by habit (or compulsion) rather than enjoyment or preference for the activity.

**Segmentation Analysis:**

**VL Population Segments**



To identify the characteristics and behaviours associated with video lottery gambling in the province, all adults were segmented into one of three groups for comparative profiling:

**1. Non-VL Players:**

- 61.5% of adults in Nova Scotia;
- average monthly expenditure on VLT's = 0;
- includes those who have never tried VL games and, thus, are not currently being targeted for play. This group is at low risk for VL play because they have not tried video lottery gambling and, for the most part, are unlikely to do so. However, there may be adults within this segment who would be vulnerable to VL play if they tried the games or if there were any changes in distribution strategies or management of VLT's in Nova Scotia. While these adults have no personal experience with play, in some cases, they will be exposed to VLT's indirectly through involvement by others. **Non-VL Players comprise the majority of adults in Nova Scotia and, thus, due to their relative size, will exert considerable influence on public opinion towards VL gambling.** Furthermore, evidence suggests they also account for half (51%) of those seeking information or assistance to help others with VL problem gambling.

**2. Casual VL Players:**

- 32.8% of adults in Nova Scotia;
- average monthly expenditures on VLT's = \$1.29;
- includes those who have tried video lottery games at some time, but are not playing on a regular basis. While they comprise the majority of the target market for video lottery gambling (≈85%), these adults do not currently have regular playing patterns and, thus, may differ significantly in terms of behaviours, attitudes and demographic characteristics for VL gambling in particular, and for other types of gaming/gambling in general. Over the last year, approximately half of these Casual Players actually played the games (17.2% of adults). **While Casual VL Players comprise approximately 75% of all those who have played video lottery games in the last year, they account**

**for only 4% of total annual VL revenue in Nova Scotia.** Currently, Casual Players can be characterized as social players, although some have deliberately reduced play or stopped playing, either due to changes in lifestyles or in order to control their play of the games.

**3. Regular VL Players:**

- 5.7% of adults in Nova Scotia;
- average monthly expenditure on VLT's = \$243.52;
- includes those adults who play video lottery games on a regular, continuous basis (once a month or more). **Therefore, while these adults represent only approximately 25% of those who played VL games in the last year, they are contributing the majority of revenue generated from VL gambling in Nova Scotia (≈96%).** Consequently, Regular VL Gamblers are at greater risk for developing problems with VL gambling due to the frequency and volume of play and will require markedly different intervention, prevention and education strategies than the Casual Players.

**Demographics Characteristics:**

A comparison of demographic profiles between Regular VL Gamblers and the rest of the adult population found that Regular VL Players tend to have the following characteristics:

- ♦ more likely to be **male** (62% versus ≈48%);
- ♦ **are younger, primarily under 40 years of age** (61% versus ≈45%), although it is noteworthy that those aged 19 - 24 years are over twice as likely to be Regular VL Players than those in any other age category (18% versus 2% - 9%);
- ♦ **have lower education levels** (high school education or less: 51% versus ≈43%; university or post graduate degrees: 9% versus ≈19%);
- ♦ **more likely to be single** (32% versus ≈15%); although over half are married (57%), this is significantly lower than for other adults in Nova Scotia (≈75%);
- ♦ **more likely to live in multi-adult households without children** (48% versus ≈30%).

This profile corresponds with people who are socially active outside the home, spend more time at bars and locations where the machines are found, are less religious and, therefore, more likely to be tolerant of gambling. Most (73%) are employed, primarily in blue collar (35%) or grey collar (24%) occupations and, thus, have access to income (e.g. a pay cheque in order to support the activity).

Given these demographic characteristics, it is reasonable that these individuals are more likely to be regular players of VLT's.

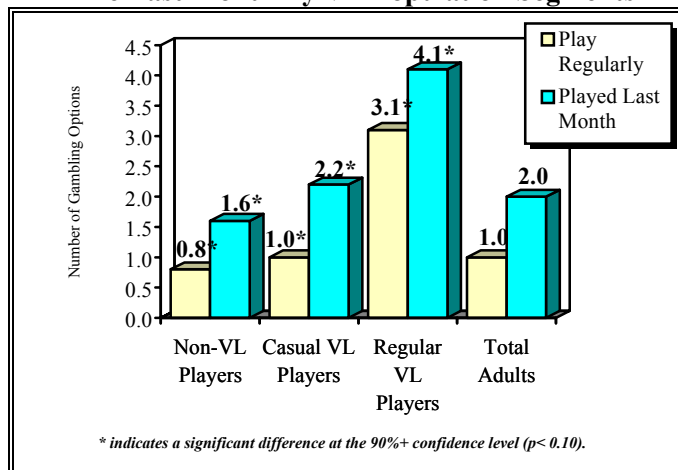
These are not necessarily the demographic characteristics associated with problem VL gambling. However, the demographic analysis of regular and problem VL play provides insight as to particular groups at potentially greater risk for developing problems with play.

**Involvement In Other Gambling:**

Results suggest Regular VL Players are the "consummate gamblers" in Nova Scotia. This group of adults appears to be attracted to games of chance played for money to a much larger degree than for other adults.

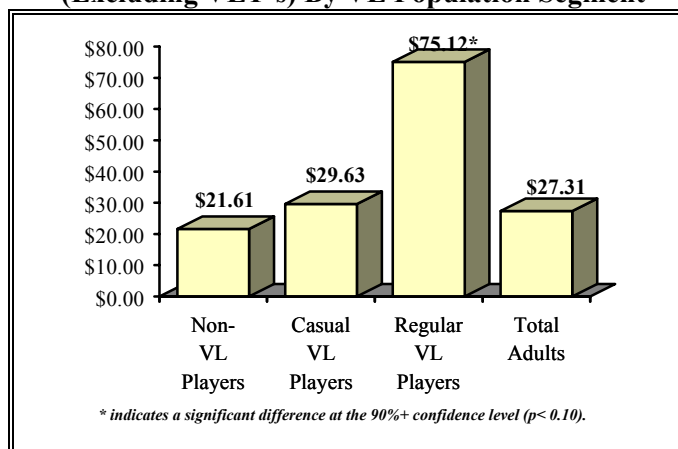
- ♦ Compared to other adults, Regular VL Players are significantly more likely to be regularly involved in almost all other gambling options in Nova Scotia, including:
  - lottery draw tickets (61% versus 40%);
  - \$2.00 scratch 'n wins (36% versus 9%);
  - \$1.00 scratch 'n wins (33% versus 8%);
  - breakopens (14% versus 4%);
  - bingo in bingo halls (13% versus 4%);
  - card games (outside of casinos) (9% versus 2%);
  - slot machines (7% versus 1%);
  - Sport Select ProLine (7% versus 1%);
  - sports bets/pools (6% versus 1%);

**Number of Gambling Options Played Regularly & In The Last Month By VL Population Segments**



- ♦ Regular VL Players participate in more different gambling options in a given month (4.1) and on a regular basis (3.1);

**Total Average Monthly Gambling Expenditure (Excluding VLT's) By VL Population Segment**



- ♦ Regular VL Gamblers also spend substantially more than other adults in Nova Scotia on gambling activities, excluding VLT's. In fact, Regular VL Players, on average, spend 60% more than any other adults and allocate approximately 24% of their current gambling dollars to play of other, non-VLT gambling options.



As a whole segment, Regular VL Players are interested in most forms of gambling. It is not known how much they spent on other games prior to playing VLT's, nor is it known how much they would spend on alternative gambling options if their access to video lottery gambling were restricted. It is possible that many Regular VL Players switched expenditures to VLT's from other forms of gambling once the machines became available, or as they developed regular playing patterns for video lottery. It may be that a large portion of their gambling budget would be switched back if their VL gambling were curtailed.

**Accessibility To VLT Machines:**

Currently, VLT machines are restricted to licensed establishments in Nova Scotia, with approximately 3,225 terminals distributed throughout the province:

- ♦ **Approximately 30% of all adults in Nova Scotia go to licensed establishments on a regular basis of once a month or more.** Regular VL Players are over twice as likely as Casual VL Players to be in a bar location each month (88% versus 40%), with only 20% of Non-VL Players in a licensed establishment once a month or more;
- ♦ **12% of Regular VL Players do not frequent bar locations regularly** and, thus, a sizable proportion are playing the machines at other types of locations (e.g., restaurants, native gambling establishments), with 3% indicating regular play at private locations which do not serve alcohol (illegal locations);
- ♦ Regular VL Players only account for 17% of all adults who go to a bar location each month, yet, given their greater *frequency* of patronage, **they will comprise 33% of all those in a bar/pub/club or lounge in Nova Scotia on any given day;**
- ♦ **on average, Nova Scotians are typically in at least three locations which offer VLT's each month.** Regular VL Players are in these locations, on average, 10.8 times each month versus only 4.4 for Casual VL Players and 2.2 for Non-VL Players;

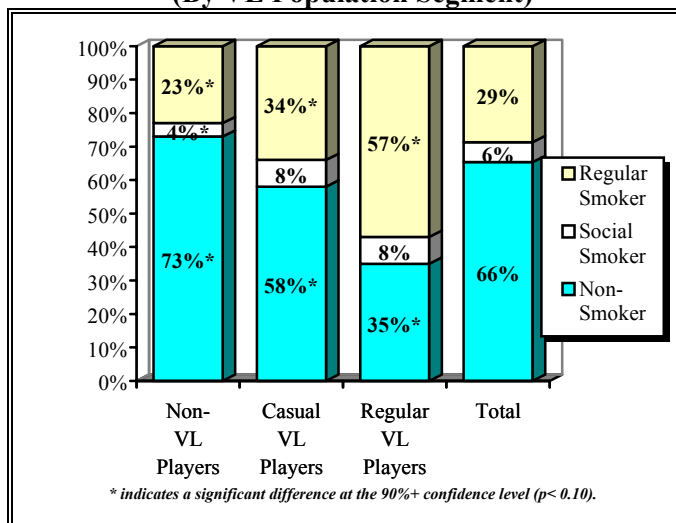
- ♦ **of all the times Regular VL Players are in locations which have VLT's, on average, they will play the machines just over half of the time (57%).** Only 25% of the times they are at a VLT location is to specifically play the games. Regular Players are more inclined to play on impulse, that is, they have gone to a VLT location for other reasons (e.g., to socialize, play darts, play pool), and in 32% of the cases, they end up playing VLT's as well. This means that, on average, over half (56%) of the times they play video lottery, it is on impulse "because the machines are there and available for play;"
- ♦ **34% of Regular VL Players tend to play VL games every time they are in a location which has VLT's.** The incidence of "every time" players tends to be higher for those Regular VL Gamblers in the following segments:
  - 55 years of age or older (59%);
  - those living in single person households (50%);
  - those who are separated/divorced/widowed (50%);
  - those with lower household incomes (<\$25,000: 42%);
  - those with lower education levels, especially compared to those with university degrees (38% versus ≈27%).

While these adults do not necessarily represent Problem VL Gamblers, it appears that Regular Players in these demographic segments are at greater risk for having problems in managing their play and, thus, may benefit from assistance in controlling their VL gambling when exposed to the machines at VLT locations.

**It is noteworthy that while impulse play contributes to the frequency of play for Regular VL Gamblers, the evidence suggests planned play (i.e., those who are at the location to specifically play the machines) is more strongly associated with problem VL gambling. Thus, opportunities exist to intervene or interrupt playing patterns, as the decision to play is often made before the VL Gambler is in front of the machine.**

**Smoking Habits:**

Percentage Who Smoke Cigarettes  
(By VL Population Segment)



There is a strong relationship between VL gambling and smoking in Nova Scotia:

- although **only 29% of Nova Scotia adults smoke** on a regular basis, and 6% “light up” on a social basis, the majority of Regular VL Gamblers are smokers either on a full-time (57%) or part-time basis (8%);
- **62% of Regular VL Players smoke while they are playing VLT’s and 20% smoke more than usual.** This means one-third of those Regular VL Players who smoke are doing so more heavily while playing video lottery games;
- fewer non-smokers frequent licensed establishments on a regular basis (25% versus 40% of smokers), therefore, the results suggest that in Nova Scotia, **more smokers have access to play of VLT’s than non-smokers.**

Given the tendency for Regular VL Players to be smokers, it might be speculated that limiting the machines to smoke free areas may reduce the amount of time Regular Players would devote to play of the games. It may be argued that such a move might serve to counter the greater access smokers have to the machines by virtue of where the VLT’s are located (bars/pubs/lounges). To some extent, this may be effective in reducing play for a significant portion of

players, however, it is noteworthy that the incidence of problem VL play does not differ significantly for those Regular VL Players who smoke (18%) or are non-smokers (14%). (Since smokers comprise a larger proportion of Regular VL Players, they will also make up a larger proportion of Problem Players, but they are no more likely than non-smokers to develop problem play of the games).

**Drinking Habits:**

For the most part, Regular Video Lottery Players are not drinking frequently or heavily when they play the games:

- **26% never drink alcoholic beverages** when they are playing;
- for the **74% of Regular VL Players who do drink** while playing VLT’s, almost half (47%) do so only rarely or on an occasional basis, essentially drinking less than 50% of the time they are playing;
- only **22% of Regular VL Players always drink** and 17% *frequently* partake of alcoholic beverages during VLT play;
- **24% indicated that they have ever played the games** when they would have considered themselves to have been **intoxicated** (had too much to drink).

In general, Regular VL Players do not play when they feel they have had too much to drink. This suggests that Regular VL Players want to be focused on the game and that they believe, for the most part, drinking either “*eats up*” resources that can be used for VL gambling or that it interferes with their ability to play and manage their play of the games. Fourteen percent (14%) of all Regular VL Players indicate that alcohol plays a role in those situations when they tend to exceed their budgets or spend more time and/or money on VL gambling than they intended. Comments centered on the greater tendency for players to bet at higher levels or take greater risks when betting. In most cases, this results in players spending their “*VL money*” faster. For others, there is a tendency to spend more or “*too much.*” As a result, most players tend to avoid excessive drinking, or alcohol in general, while playing VL games.

**VL Gambling & Entertainment Expenditures:**

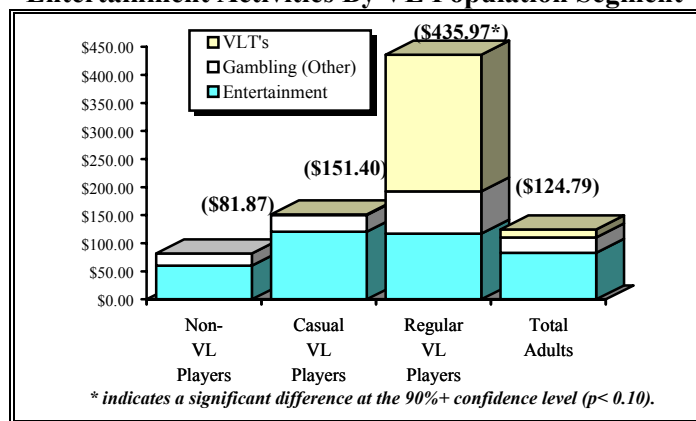
Given the continuous nature of play and easy accessibility of video lottery gambling, it is difficult for players to keep track of their expenditures. This is one of the key factors contributing to players' problems in managing their VL play. Consequently, weekly or monthly estimates by players as to the amount they spent on VLT gambling will often vary from actual expenditures. However, players find it relatively easy to provide out-of-pocket estimates of expenditure on a per play basis, as it is more relevant to their actual play behaviour and experience.

- ♦ "I usually put \$20.00 into the machine when I sit down and I play until I lose it;"
- ♦ "I spend \$5.00, one loonie at a time;"
- ♦ "It varies, but usually I end up spending about \$50.00 of my own money every time I play the machines--sometimes you get really lucky though."

By applying per play estimates to the actual number of times they played in the last month, it is possible to **derive expenditure estimates based on amount spent rather than amount wagered**. This has proven to yield more accurate estimates of net revenue for video lottery gambling.

The results suggest that net VLT gambling revenues in Nova Scotia for 1997/98 will be approximately \$117,336,923 which represents an estimated increase of approximately 10.7% over last year (source: NS Alcohol & Gaming Authority 1996/97: \$105,929,806). (Note: According to 1997/98 figures recently released, the derived estimates are within 2.5% - 3.5% of actual revenue.)

**Average Monthly Expenditure On Total Entertainment Activities By VL Population Segment**



- ♦ **Regular VL Players, on average, are spending almost three times as much money as Casual VL Players each month on entertainment and gambling activities** (\$435.97 versus \$151.40) and five times as much as Non-VL Players (\$435.97 versus \$81.87);
- ♦ **there is no difference in the amount Casual and Regular VL Players spend on general entertainment expenses** (\$120.48 versus \$117.33). Therefore, the primary difference between expenditures in these segments is due entirely to higher gambling expenditures by Regular VL Players;
- ♦ **Regular VL Players, on average, spend \$243.52 each month on video lottery play**, as compared to \$1.29 per Casual Player in Nova Scotia;
- ♦ by definition, Casual VL Players are comprised of those who do not play VLT's every month. Those Casual VL Players who have played in the last month, on average, spend approximately \$8.05 which is still substantially lower than the monthly expenditures for Regular VL Gamblers (\$243.52). **Casual Players make up approximately half of those adults who play VLT's in Nova Scotia each month (~5% of adults) and comprise 75% of all those who played in the last year, yet they only contribute approximately 4% of the total revenue derived from VL gambling;**
- ♦ **Regular VL Gamblers comprise 25% of those who played VLT's in the last year and contribute approximately 96% of the revenue for the games;**
- ♦ **on average, Regular VL Players dedicate 73% of their total monthly entertainment expenditures to gambling activities**, with more than half (56%) of their entertainment dollars exclusively spent on video lottery gambling;

When expenditures are calculated on an individual basis rather than averaged across all Regular Players, it was found that 30% of Regular VL Players are spending the majority (50%+) of their entertainment funds on video lottery gambling each month, with approximately 70% allocating less than 50%. In fact, almost half (49%) of all Regular VL Players spend less than 30% of their entertainment expenditures on video lottery, suggesting that there are significant differences in expenditure patterns within the Regular VL Player base in Nova Scotia.

**Efforts To Control Play (Self & Others):**

- ♦ 2% of all adults in Nova Scotia had someone else express concern about the amount of time and/or money they were spending on VL games;
- ♦ Regular VL Players are more likely to have been approached by concerned friends and family members (18% versus ≈2%). However, Casual VL Players comprise half (51%) of all those who have had someone else intervene or comment on their play. This intervention by a significant person in their life may have contributed to a Casual Player adopting less regular play levels and, ultimately, achieving success in managing his/her play;
- ♦ although 2% have been warned by someone else, over twice as many (5%) have had personal concerns regarding their VL play. Again, Regular VL Players are significantly more likely to report they have been worried about the amount of time or money they spend on VL gambling (25% versus ≈5%);
- ♦ 25% of all Regular VL Players have purposely tried to stop playing for an extended time period, with only 12% able to successfully interrupt their play;

- ♦ 12% of Regular VL Players continually try to stop playing VLT's at least once every few months, with 7% indicating they try to stop every time they play;
- ♦ 29% of all Regular VL Players have tried to reduce their play levels at some time in the past, with only 8% indicating success in their efforts;
- ♦ 17% of Regular VL Players try to reduce their VL gambling at least once every few months, with 8% indicating they try to reduce their play every time they are in front of the machines;

When both efforts to stop or reduce play are considered, one-third (34%) of Regular VL Players have tried to manage their VL play and only 10% were able to successfully resolve their concerns (although it is noteworthy that all of these players are still playing VLT's on a regular monthly basis). Thus, the results suggest that many Regular VL Players move in and out of problems with their VL gambling during the course of their play.

**PROBLEM VL GAMBLER ANALYSIS**

The primary purpose of the Problem VL Gambler Analysis is to identify the distinctive characteristics and behaviours of those Regular VL Players who are experiencing difficulties with video lottery gambling, in order to gauge and evaluate the nature and causes of problem play. The Regular VL Players were segmented into three groups and a comparison among **Infrequent**, **Frequent** and **Problem VL Gamblers** was undertaken to identify possible causes and risk factors associated with problem play.

**Identification Of Problem VL Gamblers:**

Current VL Players were classified as Problem VL Gamblers based on the results of three independent measures:

1. A derived multi-item attitude score of 16+ on 6 key statements associated with problem VL gambling (based on pilot testing);
2. A rating of 5 or higher on a 10-point scale, where 1 means "your" VL play is not at all a serious problem, and 10 means "your" VL play is a serious problem (self-designated score);
3. Respondents' indication that they have ever spent more time or money playing VL games than they should, and that the problem is still unresolved or only partially resolved (self-designated score).

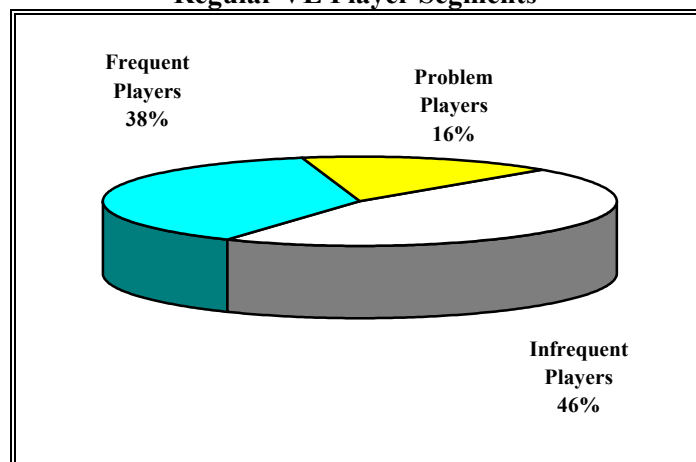
**Respondents had to qualify on at least two of the three measures before being included in the Problem VL Gamblers segment.** There were 105 Regular VL Players who met this nominating criteria. There were twelve respondents who did not qualify on the first two measures, yet stated unequivocally they are currently experiencing problems with their VL play and have not yet resolved the problem. Given these players' perceptions of their VL gambling, it was decided these individuals must be included in the Problem VL Gamblers segment.

The remainder of the sample was divided into two segments, based on their frequency of play over the past three months: those who played three times per month or less, and those who played four times a month or more. Those who played less than four times a month were designated the **Infrequent Player** segment; those who played four or more times a month comprise the **Frequent Player** segment.

	Infrequent Players	Frequent Players	Problem Players
Sample Size	327	267	117
% of Regular Players	46%	38%	16%
Average Number of Times Played per Month	1.6	7.2	8.0

The Frequent VL Player segment meets the criterion of playing, on average, as frequently as Problem Players. Thus, the actual play levels between the two segments are the same and it will be other factors such as attitudes or play patterns that will differentiate the groups.

**Regular VL Player Segments**



**Based on player perceptions regarding their VL play, the segmentation approach used in the current study appears to be successful in grouping the Regular Player base into the two segments that exhibit few symptoms of problem VL play (the Frequent and Infrequent Players) and the one segment of those players exhibiting problems with VL play:**

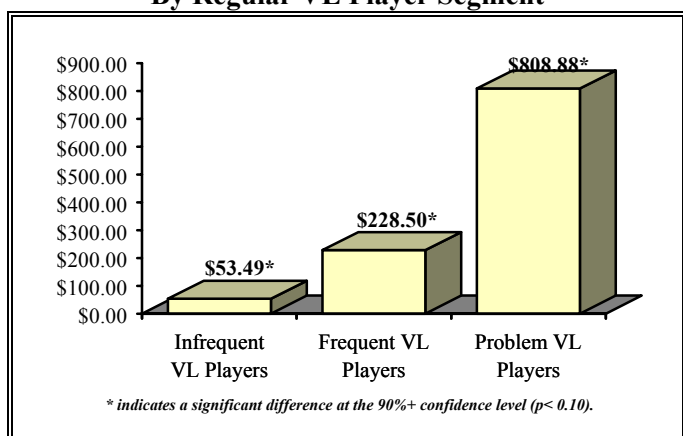
Perception	Total Regular VLT Players (n=711)	Regular Infrequent Players (n=327)	Regular Frequent Players (n=267)	Problem Players (n=117)
Percentage of Regular Players	100%	46%	38%	16%
Still have a problem spending too much <u>money</u> on VL play	16%	1%†	3%†	85%
Still have a problem spending too much <u>time</u> on VL play	14%	1%†	4%†	79%
Still have a problem spending too much <u>time</u> and/or <u>money</u> on VL play	17%	2%†	3%†	91%
Those who rate their problem 5+ on a 10 point problem scale	14%	2%	4%	75%
Someone else feels they have a problem	18%	5%	13%	68%

† VL Players indicating partial resolution of time and money problems were not automatically included in the Problem Player Segment.

**Problem VL Gambler Segment:**

Problem VL Gamblers currently comprise 16% of the Regular VL Player base, representing 0.92% or approximately 6,400 adults in Nova Scotia.

**Average Monthly VL Expenditure By Regular VL Player Segment**



- On average, **Problem VL Gamblers spend 3.5 times more** than Frequent VL Players and 15 times more than Infrequent VL Players each month on VL gambling;
- The fact that **Problem VL Gamblers' monthly VL expenditure is at least 250% higher** than any other Regular VL Player means this segment accounts for a disproportionate amount of the revenue derived from VLT's in Nova Scotia;
- Overall, **Problem VL Gamblers account for approximately 4% of all those who played VLT's in the last year, yet contribute approximately 53% of net revenue for video lottery gambling in Nova Scotia.** On average, these players each spend

approximately \$9,706.56 on an annual basis and, collectively, contribute approximately \$62 million in VL revenue to the province;

- While the Problem VL Gambler segment comprises 16% of the Regular VL Players in Nova Scotia, **there is an additional 9% of Regular Players who indicate they have had problems with their VL gambling in the past, but have subsequently resolved their problem.**

**The majority (75%) of Regular VL Gamblers appear to derive benefit from the entertainment value of the games without suffering any lasting ill effects. However, there is undoubtedly a sub-segment of Regular Players who have or have had difficulties with their VL gambling.**

**Demographic Characteristics of Problem VL Gamblers:**

There are not large skews in the demographic characteristics of the Problem VL Players **when they are compared to other Regular VL Players.** Problem VL Gamblers are **not** more likely to be unemployed. Their work status and occupation status profiles are very similar to other VL players.

- Compared to other Regular VL Players, they are **less likely** to be aged 19 to 24 or over 60 years of age, to be students or homemakers, to be in households with 3 children, to be in households with five or more persons, and to have annual income levels between \$35,000 and \$45,000 or over \$75,000;
- Compared to other Regular VL Players they are **more likely** to have less than grade nine education, to be



aged 50-59, to be living in two adult households with no children, and to be separated/divorced/widowed.

**Most of these demographic segments are small (5% - 14% of all VL players) and do not cause a large shift in the profile of Problem VL Gamblers compared to the other Regular Players. However, these groups may be particularly vulnerable to problems with VL gambling and may require targeted and/or intervention or treatment strategies than other population segments. The only large segment associated with a greater likelihood of being a Problem VL Gambler are those players living in two adult, no children, households. The largest demographic segment with lower probability for being a Problem VL Gambler are those Regular Players who are 19-24 years of age.**

This means that, for the most part, the profile of Problem VL Gamblers in Nova Scotia is very similar to the profile of Regular Players in the province. For example, as males comprise two-thirds of the Regular Players, it is not surprising men also make up two-thirds of the problem players. Therefore, **those requiring immediate assistance for VL gambling problems are most likely to be comprised of the following:**

- ♦ males (65%);
- ♦ slight majority are under 40 years of age (55%), however, Problem VL Gamblers fall fairly evenly across all age categories from 19 - 59 years;
- ♦ the majority (76%) are employed on either a full-time (61%) or part-time (15%) basis, primarily in blue collar occupations (42%);
- ♦ have no children in their households (65%);
- ♦ have lower education levels, particularly high school or less (58%);
- ♦ have household incomes under \$45,000 (61%).

**Lifestyle Factors:**

The lifestyle of Problem VL Gamblers includes **more** passive TV watching than any other segment and includes **less** social interaction with friends and relatives and involvement in hobbies, sports or other interactive activities. Gambling and/or entertainment options like VL games, which are very passive, non-physical and non-social, fit their lifestyle profile very well. Alternative activities that appeal to a person with this lifestyle profile

would have to be identified as viable substitutes for VL gambling.

**VL Play Behaviours & Attitudes:**

Problem Players are more likely to have incorrect beliefs about the odds of winning when they play; more likely to exhibit superstitious behaviour; and more likely to believe they can control or influence the play of the machines.

Contrary to previous reports, significant numbers of Problem Players often play VLT games with other VLT players, utilizing either one or more than one VL machine. At any point, during the day or night, at least 48% of those "occupying stools" in front of VLT's in licensed establishments are Problem Players. There are some days and times when 58% (or more) of the available VLT's are occupied by Problem Players. These include any VL machines on Sunday through Wednesday, and on any day from 10:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Problem VL Gamblers differ significantly from other Regular VL Players in terms of how they play VLT's:

- ♦ while Frequent VL Players, on average, play the games just as often (≈8.0 times/month), **the median time spent playing VL games is 150% higher for Problem VL Gamblers** (5 hours versus 2 hours per week) or an extra 12 hours per month;
- ♦ compared to other Regular VL Players, **Problem Players, on average, spend 2.5 times longer at the machines each time they go to play** (189 minutes versus 63 minutes);
- ♦ on average, **Problem VL Gamblers bring significantly more money to the location to specifically spend on VLT's** and 81% usually end up spending all of these funds each time they play;
- ♦ **they bet at higher levels**, more often betting at maximum levels; are more likely to play until they run out of money and then are more likely to obtain additional funds for continued play;
- ♦ **chasing losses is a significant contributor to problem play** and Problem VL Gamblers are more likely to exceed their budget or intended expenditures to win back money they have lost;
- ♦ **just over half (52%) frequently or always have trouble quitting while they are ahead.** They reinvest more of their VLT winnings on continued play, thus, the amount paid out to these players may be

substantially lower than the average of 72%† of total VLT wagers typically paid out as prizes (†Source: NSAGA 1996-97 Annual Gaming Report);

- ♦ **they tend to have distinct emotional, physiological and behavioural responses towards play of the machines** which can assist in identifying Problem VL Gamblers in the field (e.g., Problem Players will comprise ≈76% to 86% of those observed to be groaning, kicking or talking to the machine, swearing, cursing or yelling while playing VLT's);
- ♦ they more often **lose track of time while playing**;
- ♦ **the majority recognize they are losing (73%)**, yet this does not appear to influence the attitudes for many concerning their future chances of winning. They tend to rely on superstitious behaviour to change their luck;
- ♦ **they believe they are more skilled in the play of the games** and, thus, can influence their chances of winning through their ability to control the play of the game.

- ♦ **56% of current Problem VL Players report they continually try to stop playing VLT's** at least once every few months;
- ♦ **78% indicate they support the restrictions of VL machines to three or four locations in Nova Scotia**, as compared to only one-third of other Regular Players supporting this measure.

There are a variety of coping strategies Regular VL Players have found to be successful in assisting them to manage or regain control of their VL gambling, including:

- ♦ setting and maintaining a budget for play;
- ♦ restricting access to additional funds for continued play (i.e., leave bank cards at home, only bring budgeted amount);
- ♦ enlisting the aid of a spouse, friends and/or family in ensuring a budget for play is maintained (i.e., do not borrow, have financial accounts in spouse's name or under spouse's control);
- ♦ participating in other activities;
- ♦ reducing time spent playing/budgeting time;
- ♦ avoiding/minimizing exposure to the machines;
- ♦ quitting play altogether.

**Any attempts to reduce problem play will have to address changing the beliefs and actual play behaviours of Problem VL Gamblers, as well as reducing the game's effect on their arousal levels while they play. This suggests focusing attention on a combination of factors contributing to their play behaviours, including the machine/game designs, situational factors impacting play and the individual's perceptions and motivations. Specifically, efforts should include reducing the perceived value of superstitious behaviour, limiting their perceived ability to influence the outcome of their play, changing perceptions about the odds of winning after a loss, and reducing factors that lead to, and facilitate, chasing of losses.**

**The key differences in effective control mechanisms between Regular VL Players who are successful in managing their VL play versus Problem VL Gamblers tends to be related to willpower and self control when exposed to the machines. Abstinence and budgeting strategies are judged to be most effective by the Problem Players themselves, but they invariably have difficulty maintaining either strategy once exposed to play. It is noteworthy that coping strategies addressing actual play behaviour (e.g., betting strategies, quitting while ahead) are not mentioned by Problem VL Gamblers. The results suggest this may be a critical area for consideration in the development of harm minimization and harm reduction strategies.**

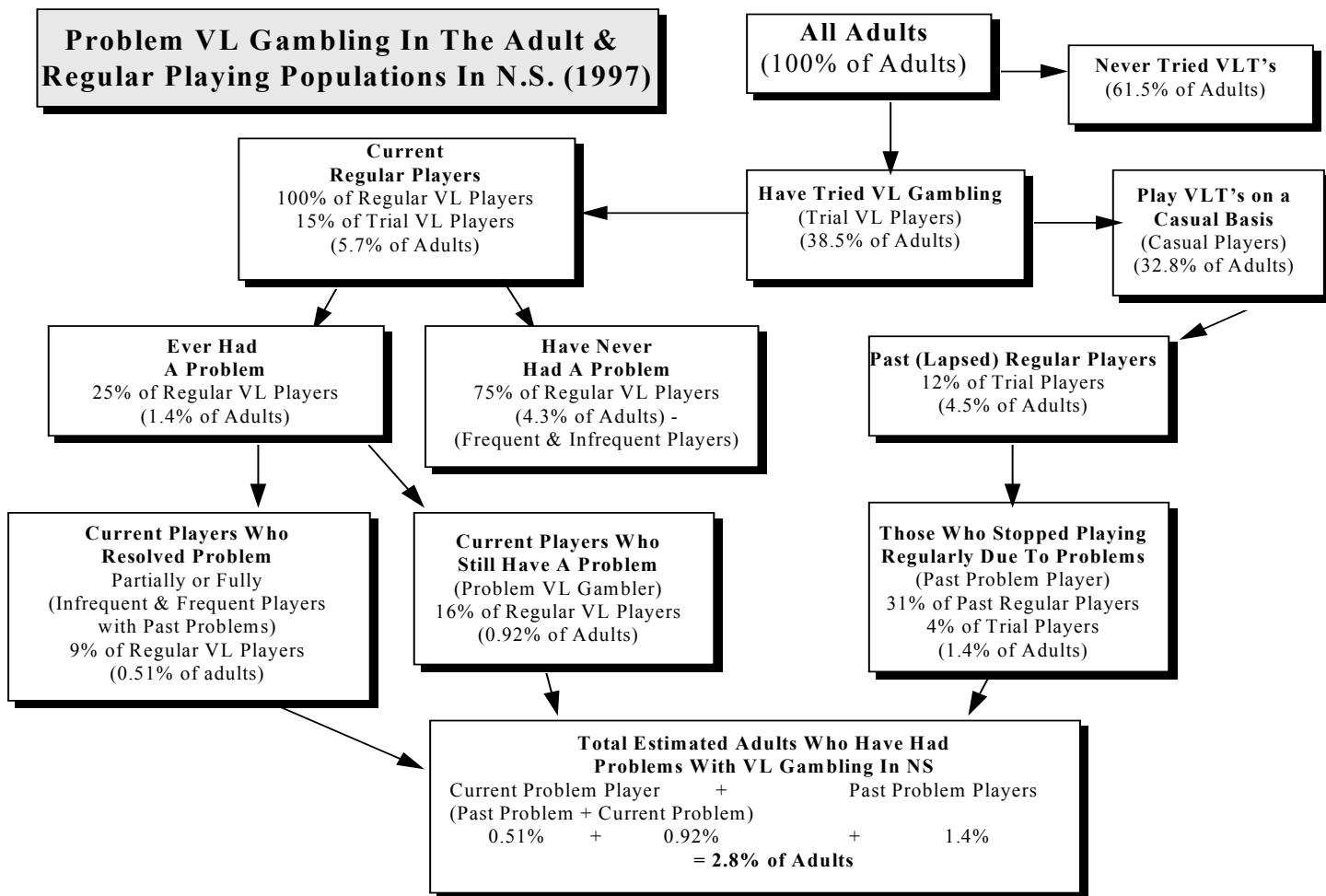
**Coping Strategies:**

Problem VL Gamblers are concerned about an inability to control their own problem play:

- ♦ **only one-third (33%) feel they personally could stop playing VLT games anytime they want**, as compared to 85% of other Regular VL Players;
- ♦ **76% of Problem Players have either temporarily stopped or tried to stop playing** at some time in the past, with 79% having tried to at least reduce their play levels;



**Problem VL Gambling In The Adult & Regular VL Playing Populations:**



The above diagram illustrates the current playing patterns for video lottery in Nova Scotia based on the combined results of the Regular VL Players Survey and the General Population Survey.

To estimate the extent to which video lottery play is associated with problem VL gambling in the province of Nova Scotia, those experiencing both current and past problems are considered. Three groups were identified and used to derive the estimate:

- 1. Current Problem Gamblers (0.92% of Adults)**  
- those who are currently playing video lottery on a regular monthly basis and are categorized as Problem VL Gamblers.
- 2. Current Past Problem VL Gamblers (0.51% of Adults)**

- those who are currently playing video lottery on a regular monthly basis and, in the past, have experienced problems (self-declared) with VL gambling which they have since resolved.

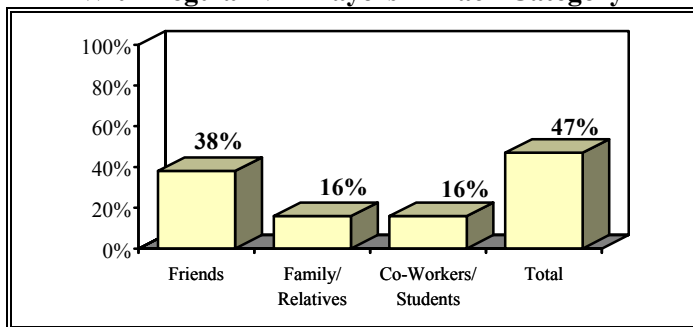
- 3. Lapsed Past Problem Players (1.4% of Adults)**  
- those who, in the past, played video lottery on a regular monthly basis and stopped playing regularly due to problems associated with their play (self-declared problem gamblers).

**Based on these results, the estimate of problem VL gambling, past and present, would be approximately 2.8%, or approximately 19,000 adults in Nova Scotia, who at some time have been personally involved in problem VL play.**

**Public Perception Of Problem Gamblers:**

**Percentage of All Adults Who Have Contact**

**With Regular VL Players in Each Category**



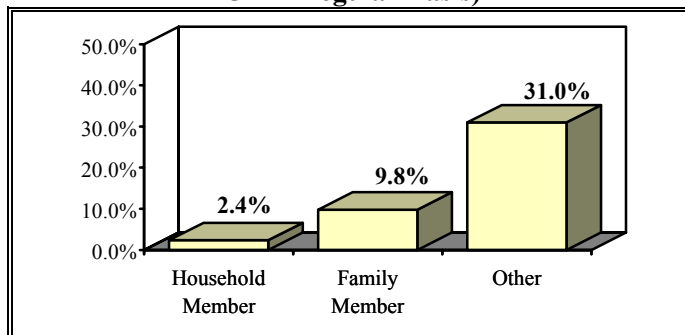
Overall, **47% of all adults in Nova Scotia (≈320,000) report having fairly close personal contact with someone who plays VLT's on a regular basis.** Almost 90% of these same adults (42% or ≈285,000 adults) believe they personally know of someone who is experiencing problems with this type of gambling.

Estimates of problem VL play based on projections from adults in the general population will tend to grossly exaggerate the incidence of Problem Players in the province for two reasons:

- ♦ there will be a tendency to over-count, as several people can be aware of one Problem Player, and;
- ♦ the identification of problem play may be based on hearsay, as opposed to actual behaviour.

**However, when adults are asked to specifically refer to problem VL gambling within their immediate households, the estimated incidence of problem play is almost identical to that noted for the derived estimate of problem play based on the results of the VL Players' Survey.**

**Relationship To Problem VL Gamblers by Category (For Those Who Do Not Play VL Games On A Regular Basis)**



- ♦ based on the reported incidence of problem VL play for household members, **2.4%, or approximately 15,400 adults in Nova Scotia who do not play VL games on a regular basis (Non-Regular VL Players), report they are currently living with someone who has or has had a VL gambling problem.** Almost 20% of these adults are including their own past play of the games and, in 25% of the cases, there is more than one Problem VL Gambler in the household. This increases the estimate to approximately 2.5% to 3.0% of Nova Scotian adults.

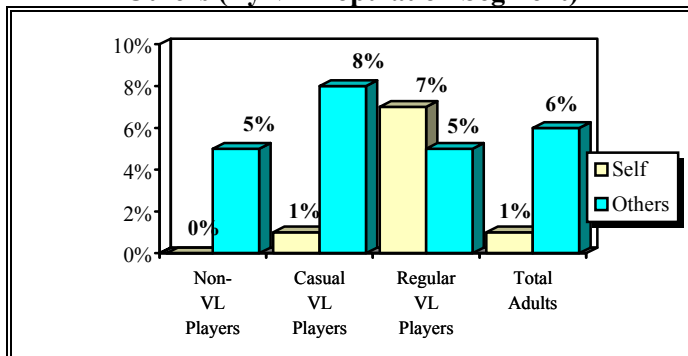
Having individuals estimate the incidence of problem VL play by adults outside their immediate households does provide an indication of the extent to which VL play is associated with problems by the general population. It also indicates the magnitude of the impact a small proportion of Problem VL Players may have on adults in general in Nova Scotia:

- ♦ in total, **31% of those who do not play VL games on a regular basis themselves report having friends or acquaintances who have problems with VL gambling.** Thus, for the majority of adults, problem play tends to have less direct impact on their lives;
- ♦ **9.8% of Non-Regular VL Players in Nova Scotia report that one or more people in their households, or related to their immediate families (including siblings, parents, grandparents, extended family), have a problem with VL gambling,** thus, the impact for these adults is more direct and personal.

Overall, the results suggest that for every current and past Problem VL Gambler in Nova Scotia, approximately 3.3 other adults in the province are directly affected, with an additional 10 adults reporting indirect impact.

**Profile Of Those Seeking Help:**

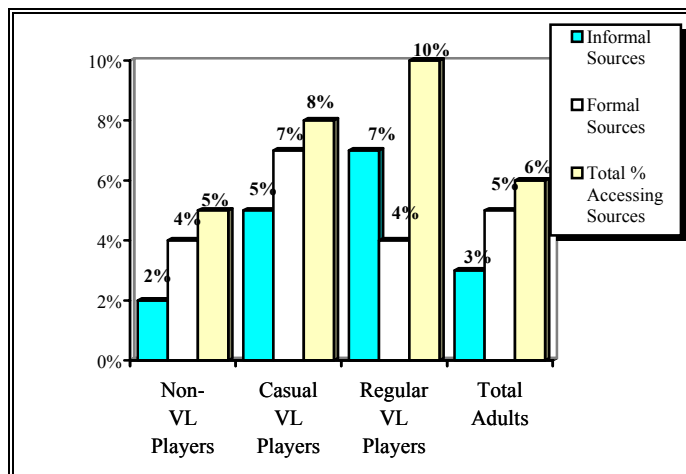
**Those Who Have Ever Sought Assistance For Self Or Others (By VL Population Segment)**



Overall, 6% of all adults (≈40,800) in Nova Scotia have sought assistance and/or information for help in controlling video lottery gambling at some time. Primarily, it is the play of others which is motivating adults to seek assistance:

- approximately **83%** of all those who have sought VL gambling assistance **were doing so in an attempt to help others with their VL play;**
- **5%** of those who have never played VL games (**Non-VL Players**) have sought assistance for others. This group represents approximately half of all those who have accessed information or support services. This has significant implications for program interventions, as 50% of those who have sought assistance for others are unfamiliar with VLT technology and player characteristics;
- **10%** of **Regular VL Gamblers** have attempted to get help or information on VL gambling, with 80% of these players motivated to do so by their own play and 55% seeking assistance for other Regular VL Players. This means that just over one-third (35%) of those Regular VL Gamblers seeking help have done so both for themselves and other players they know. Thus, Regular VL Gamblers will often be a source of information and/or assistance for other players when trying to manage VL play.

**Sources Accessed to Obtain Help or Information on Controlling Play of VL Play**



To identify any differences in the types of sources accessed to obtain information on problem VL gambling, potential sources were segmented into the following two groups:

- **Informal Information Sources** - including spouse/partner, other family members/household members, employers/colleagues/co-workers, friends;
- **Formal Information Sources** - church/religious groups, doctor/therapist, gambling self-help groups, Drug Dependency/Detox, Gambling Helpline, community centre counselor, other service providers.

In general, Nova Scotians are more likely to access formalized services to assist with problem VL gambling (5%) than to go to friends or family members (3%);

- **there is quite often an overlap in sources accessed.** In fact, 66% of those who have sought help through informal avenues (friends/family) have also pursued the issue with formalized service providers;
- 84% of those seeking assistance **eventually go to sources outside their friends and families;**
- compared to all other adults in Nova Scotia, **Regular VL Gamblers are more likely to seek help from informal sources** and tend to access friends and family members twice as often for help than outside organizations (7% versus 4%);
- **approximately one-third (34%) of Problem VL Gamblers report having had contact with sources of assistance in the past,** with only half of these people (who are most negatively impacted by VL gambling) having pursued the issue of their problem play with more formalized sources of help;

- ♦ approximately 45% of all those identified as Problem VL Gamblers have at least one other Problem VL Gambler in their household. Thus, any treatment approach for Problem VL Players should be undertaken at the household level, as the presence of another Problem Gambler has consequences for successful treatment outcomes.

Local Drug Dependency Services offices and self-help groups such as Gamblers Anonymous and church groups are equally likely to be contacted (either directly or indirectly) by those experiencing problems with VLT gambling. In Nova Scotia, 2% of all adults (≈13,600 people) have accessed each of these three sources of assistance for advice and help, either for others or themselves. However, there is considerable overlap in the use of these three services among Regular VL Players, in contrast to other adults who are much more likely to use only one of the three. A similar proportion of all adults have accessed the Problem Gambling Helpline. Again, the majority of those accessing sources of help in Nova Scotia will largely be comprised of friends and family members of Problem Gamblers.

The results suggest that, to be effective, intervention programs and strategies will have to be designed to specifically target VL gamblers, as it is highly unlikely that the majority of those experiencing difficulties will be initiating contact with formalized service providers. In some cases, Problem VL Gamblers may be unaware of available services, or be presently unprepared/unwilling to participate in the anticipated treatment programs (e.g., abstinence approaches to gambling). Communication and education efforts, at a grass roots, community based level, may be effective in reaching those most in need of assistance and should play an important role in harm reduction and harm minimization efforts.

**Reasons For Playing:**

**Infrequent VL Players:**

*"I play on a whim just for the fun of it once in a while because they are there and I have a few extra minutes waiting for someone to show up or to play pool."*

*"They are fun, I enjoy them. I see no harm if played in moderation."*

*"I'd say it's a form of entertainment for me--it's like shooting a game of pool when there is no one there to play with, it's like interactive TV."*

*"I enjoy them on occasion, it's a video game I can maybe win a few bucks from."*

*"It's a social thing, someone I know is playing so I'll play and chat too."*

**Frequent VL Players:**

*"I enjoy the suspense--if I'm going to lose my money or double it. It amuses me to see what's coming--it fascinates me--I want to see what's going to come next or how many 7's I can get--I just like to watch, I love it."*

*"It's a thrill, a challenge and an evening out. It's a rush."*

*"I play to win--I know it computerized and has nothing to do with skill, but I play because I just might get lucky and, at the same time, I get some time away from worries and stress; it relaxes me."*

*"I go out once every week to socialize with my sister--saves me from getting cabin fever. I don't have to think while I'm playing just some R & R I can count on away from my kids. Maybe I'll win, maybe I won't, but no matter, I've had some fun."*

**Problem VL Players:**

*"It's an escape--pure and simple --you are one with the machine, away from everything and everyone else. I don't have to think while I'm playing."*

*"I get the urge to play them. I constantly think of playing them. I play so I can forget about everything else, so I can forget about my urge. I'm fascinated by them--the colours and sounds draw me to them."*

*"I can't stop playing. When I'm in a place where they are, I play even though I don't want to. Once you get on the machine, you could never stop thinking, 'this machine is not going to beat me'."*

*"Can't stay away. I don't want to play them, but I do anyway and spend all my money every week on them."*

*"Even though I try not to play, I can't seem to help it. The thrill of it--the interesting feeling it gives you even when you lose--it's so hard to explain."*

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STRATEGY & RECOMMENDATIONS**

There will be additional efforts focused on the prevention, intervention and treatment of problem gambling.

**No. 1. *The Department of Health, in cooperation with the Regional Health Boards' Addiction Services, will increase the number of staff (5) dealing with problem gambling.***

The information on the profile of Problem VL Gamblers is important to the development of appropriate strategies for early identification and intervention. Collaborative efforts with various partners will assist in providing intervention at the point of play and maximize early referral opportunities.

**No. 2. *As a resource for managers and servers in licensed establishments, the Department of Health, in cooperation with the Tourism Industry Association, will develop a Problem Gamblers intervention program.***

Of those surveyed, 83% seeking help for problem gambling were family members, friends or others concerned about a Problem Gambler. Seventeen percent (17%) of the adults seeking assistance for problem gambling reported that they were seeking help for their own problem.

**No. 3. *Resources available to assist, educate and provide guidance for family members, friends and others concerned about a Problem Gambler will be further expanded.***

The present study provides additional insights into targeted groups of gamblers, including those experiencing harmful effects from their VL gambling. A key concern is the development of effective methods to reach those experiencing the most harm.

**No. 4. *The Department of Health will develop new methods of reaching and assisting individuals who are experiencing significant harm as a result of their VLT gambling activity.***

Addictions Treatment staff throughout the province provide hope and help to Problem Gamblers and their families. The findings of the study should be combined with the experience of service delivery to provide further direction for therapeutic interventions.

**No. 5. *Addictions staff will review the VLT study, identify key treatment issues and develop additional therapeutic responses at regionally-based symposiums sponsored by the Department of Health.***

"Lapsed" VL Players, identified through the present study, can provide crucial information to better understand the characteristics of players who previously played at regular levels. It will be important in the development of intervention strategies to determine the strategies and controls that this group of ex-Regular Players are using to change their gambling behaviour.

**No. 6. *The Department of Health will undertake a further study of former regular VLT users to investigate effective interventions for current Regular Players who wish to change their gambling behaviour.***

**1997/98 NOVA SCOTIA VL PLAYERS' SURVEY**

was a collaborative initiative involving the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Focal Research Consultants Ltd. and other professional and academic individuals. The survey was commissioned and funded through the Nova Scotia Department of Health Drug Dependency/Problem Gambling Services. Survey design, implementation of the survey, analysis and preparation of the Technical Report was performed by Focal Research Consultants Ltd., Halifax, Nova Scotia.

**Additional Copies:**

More detailed information is available in the 1997/98 Nova Scotia VL Players' Survey - Technical Report:

- Section 1.0
  - ◆ Introduction
  - ◆ Background
  - ◆ Methodology
- Section 2.0 - Provincial Overview Of VL Play In Nova Scotia
- Section 3.0 - Problem VL Gamblers Analysis

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