

Self-Exclusion: What Gamblers Can Tell Us.

Elaine Nuske (presenter) Louise Holdsworth, Nerilee Hing, Barry Tolchard and Margaret Tiyce

*Centre for Gambling Education and Research (CGER)
Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia*

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Aims

- To assess the effectiveness of gambling exclusion programs operating in Queensland as a mechanism to minimise gambling-related harm.
- To determine whether these effects are sustained over time.
- To assess whether exclusion is more effective when combined with counselling and support.
- To examine what gambling exclusion programs are currently operating nationally and internationally and identify their commonalities and differences.
- A 2 year study of which some results are presented now.

Research Questions

- How effective are gambling exclusion programs as a mechanism to minimise gambling-related harm?
- Are these effects sustained over time?
- Is exclusion more effective when combined with counselling and support?

Research Activities

- Literature review.
- **Interviews with Queensland gambling counsellors.**
- Interviews with peak gambling industry bodies.
- **Time 1 Interviews and surveys with people with gambling problems who have self-excluded.**
- **Time 1 Interviews and surveys with people with gambling problems who have self-excluded and received counselling.**
- Time 1 Interviews and surveys with people with gambling problems who have received counselling but have not self-excluded.
- Time 1 Interviews and surveys with people with gambling problems who have received neither counselling nor self-excluded.
- Time 2 Interviews and surveys.
- Time 3 Interviews and surveys.

Bold indicates included in this presentation

Background to self-exclusion programs

- Self-exclusion programs are based on a public health framework.
- Considers problem gambling as a complex issue requiring multiple solutions.
- An intervention aimed at limiting the potential for problems to arise, and at containing the impact of gambling once it has commenced (Shaffer & Korn, 2002).
- Reflects a harm minimisation approach.

Methods – problem gamblers

- Participants contacted via:
 - Advertisements on Gambling Helpline website
 - Word of mouth via Queensland Gambling Help Agencies
 - CGER database of gamblers who had participated in previous research
- 53 problem gamblers interviewed, all scored +8 PGSI & self-excluded from a Queensland venue
- Surveys and semi-structured follow up interviews conducted by telephone
- Only data from those gamblers who had self-excluded included in this presentation

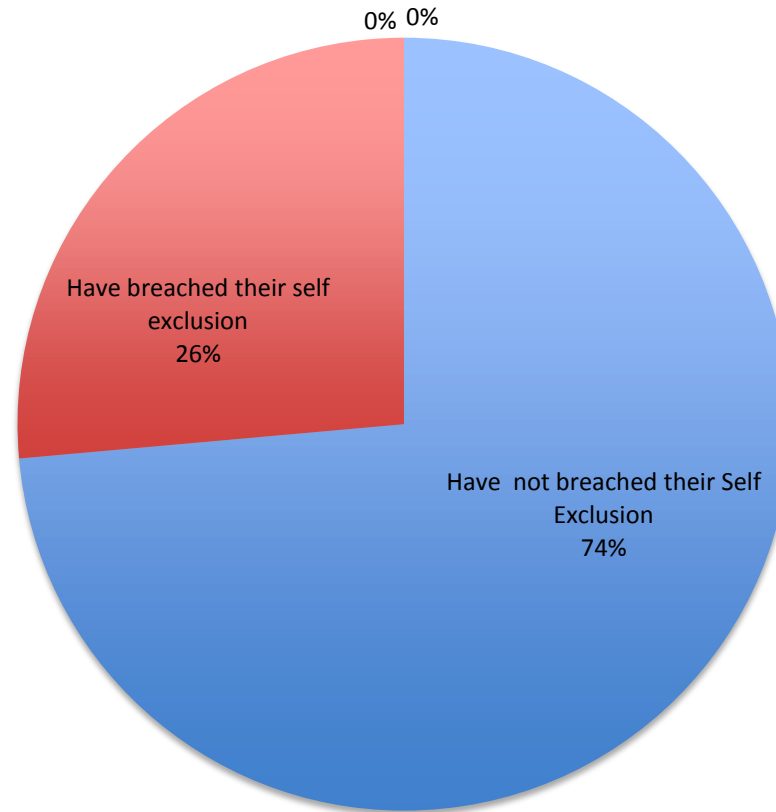
Methods –Gambling Help Counsellors

- 18 gambling help counsellors interviewed
- Semi-structured telephone interviews used
- To seek professional views and client experiences of self-exclusion
- Gambling help counsellors contacted from all gambling help agencies in Queensland
- Counsellors self selected to participate in research

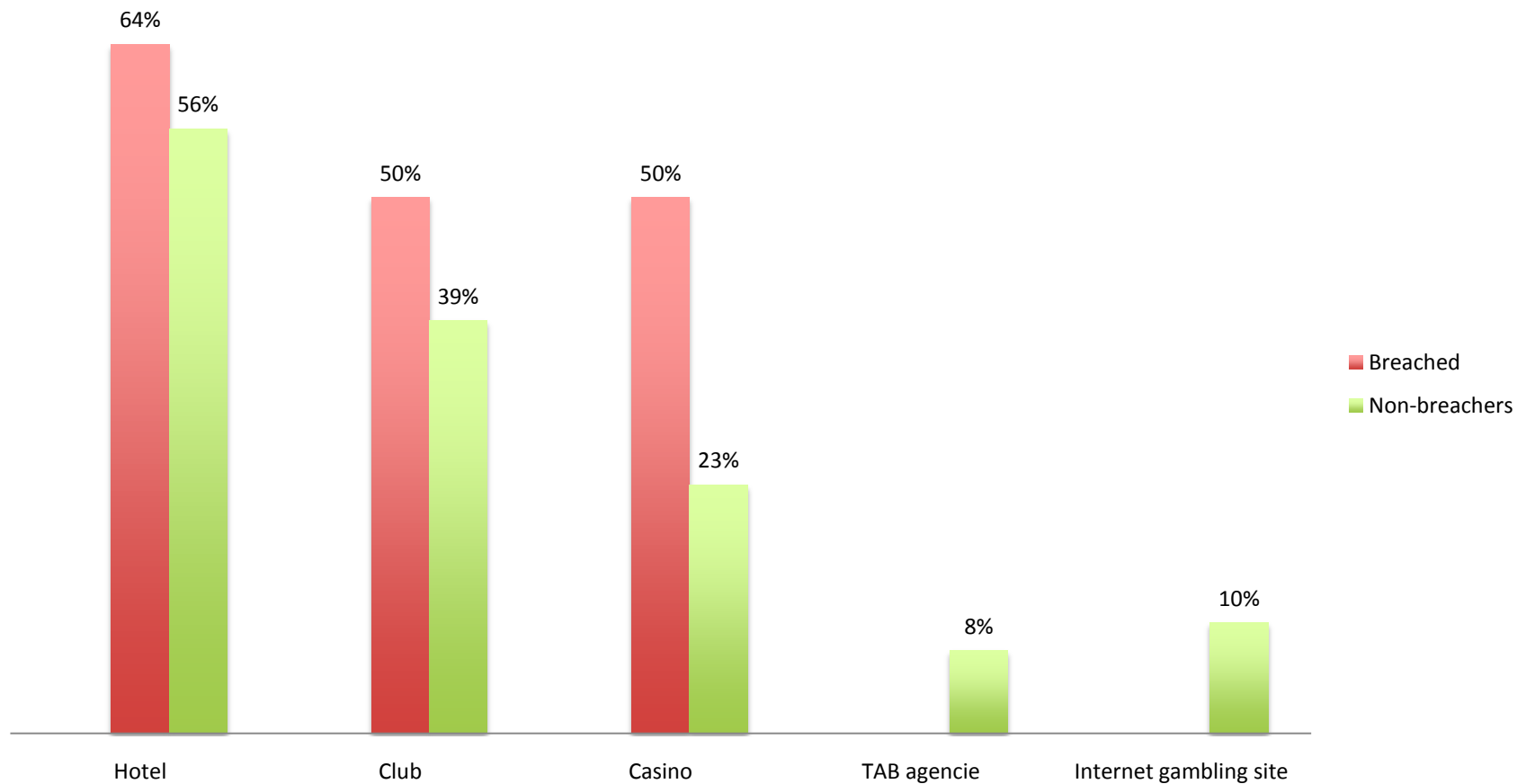
Analysis

- Descriptive statistics from demographic data (53 problem gamblers who had self-excluded)
- Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews from problem gamblers conducted by the research team
- Selected elements of the thematic analysis used to focus on conference theme of self-exclusion
- Thematic analysis of counsellor interviews
- NVivo software used in analysis

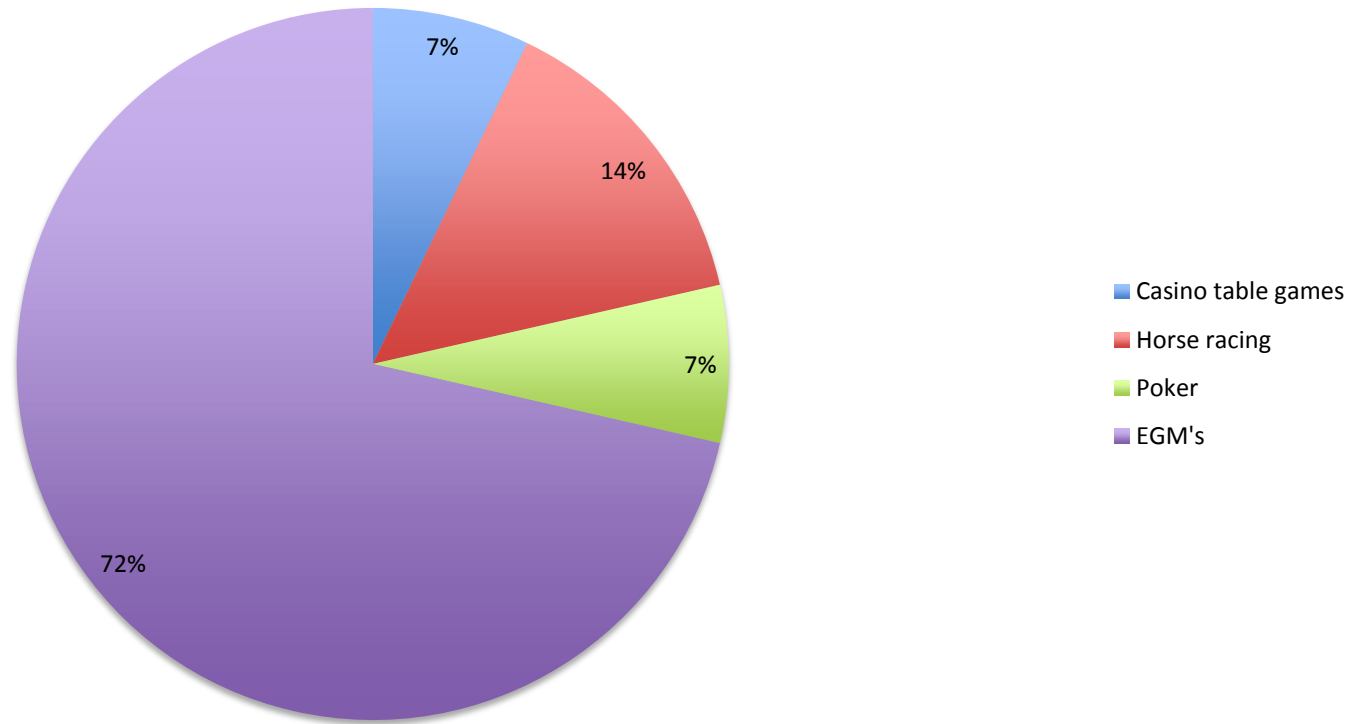
No. of self-excluders who had breached



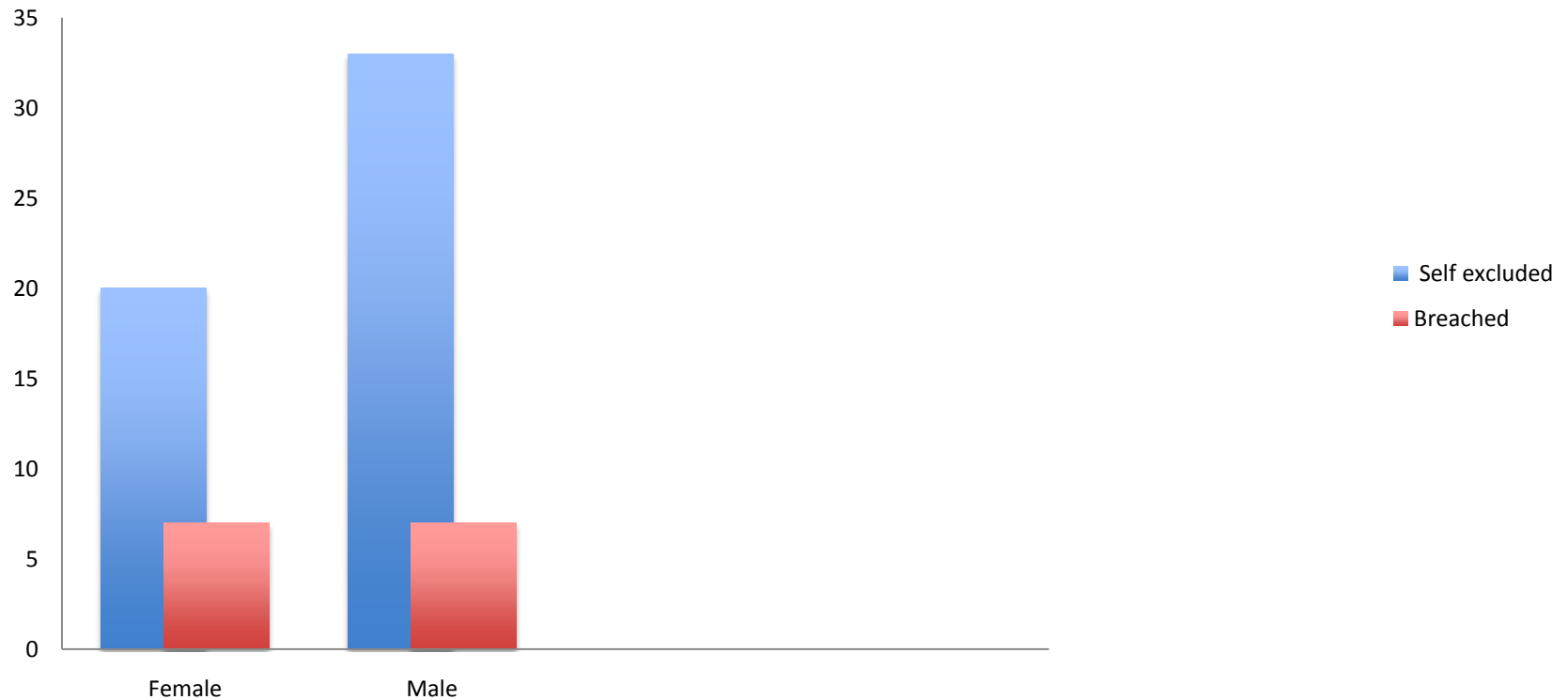
Venue types excluded from



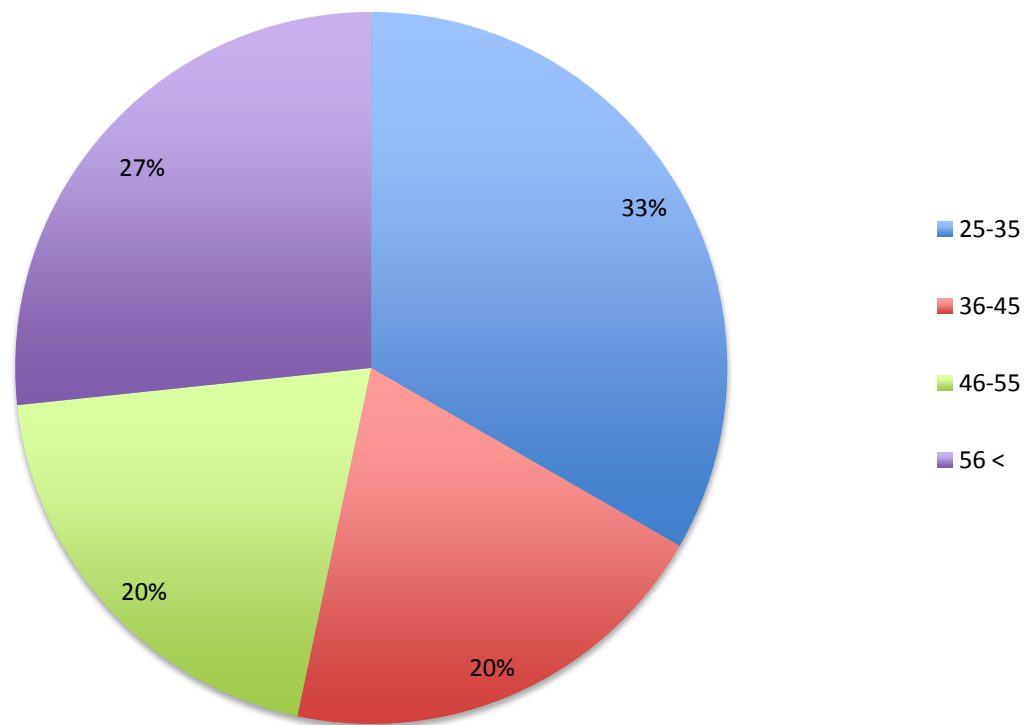
Main type of problematic gambling of people who breached



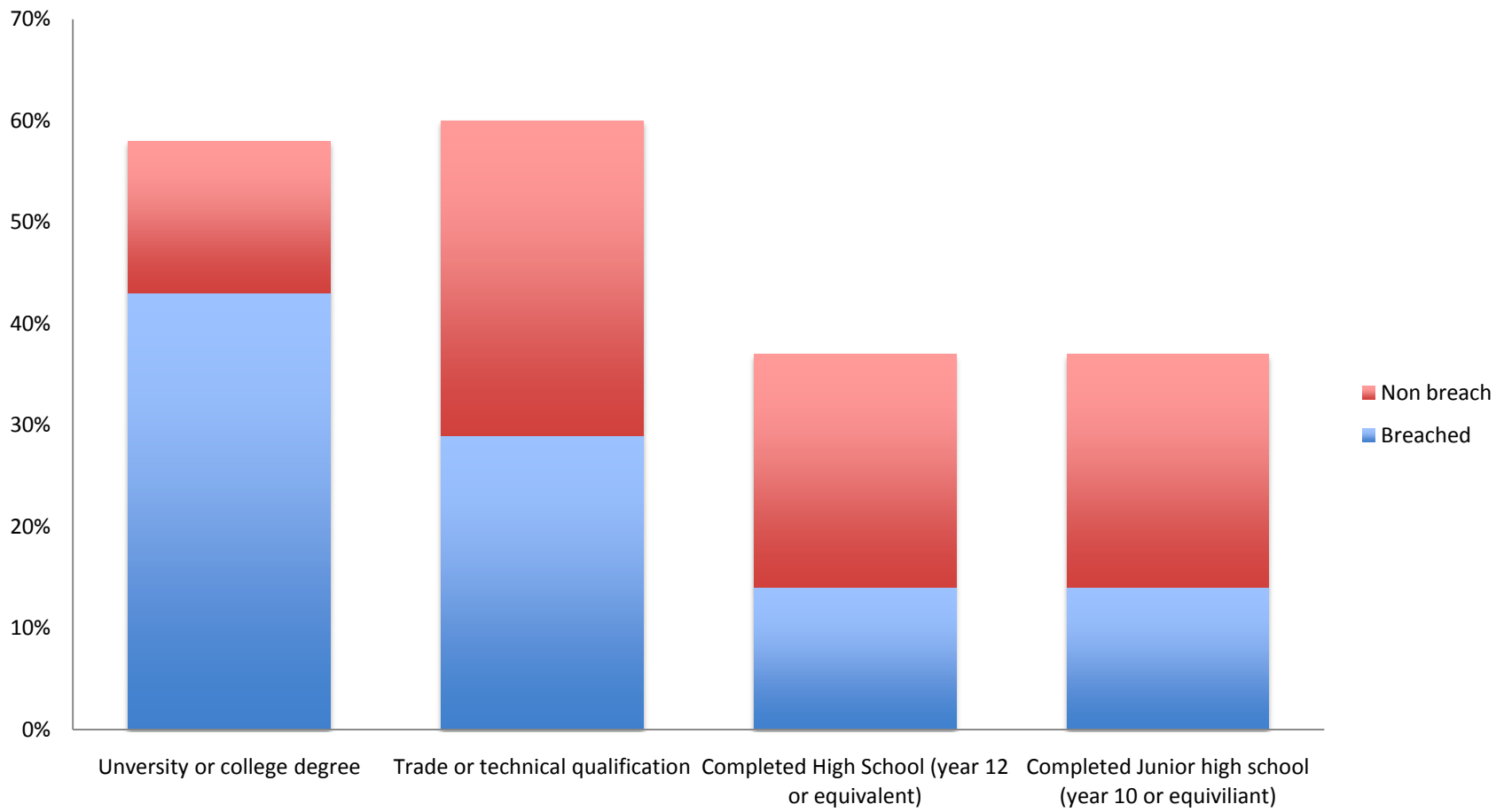
Gender of those who self-excluded and breached



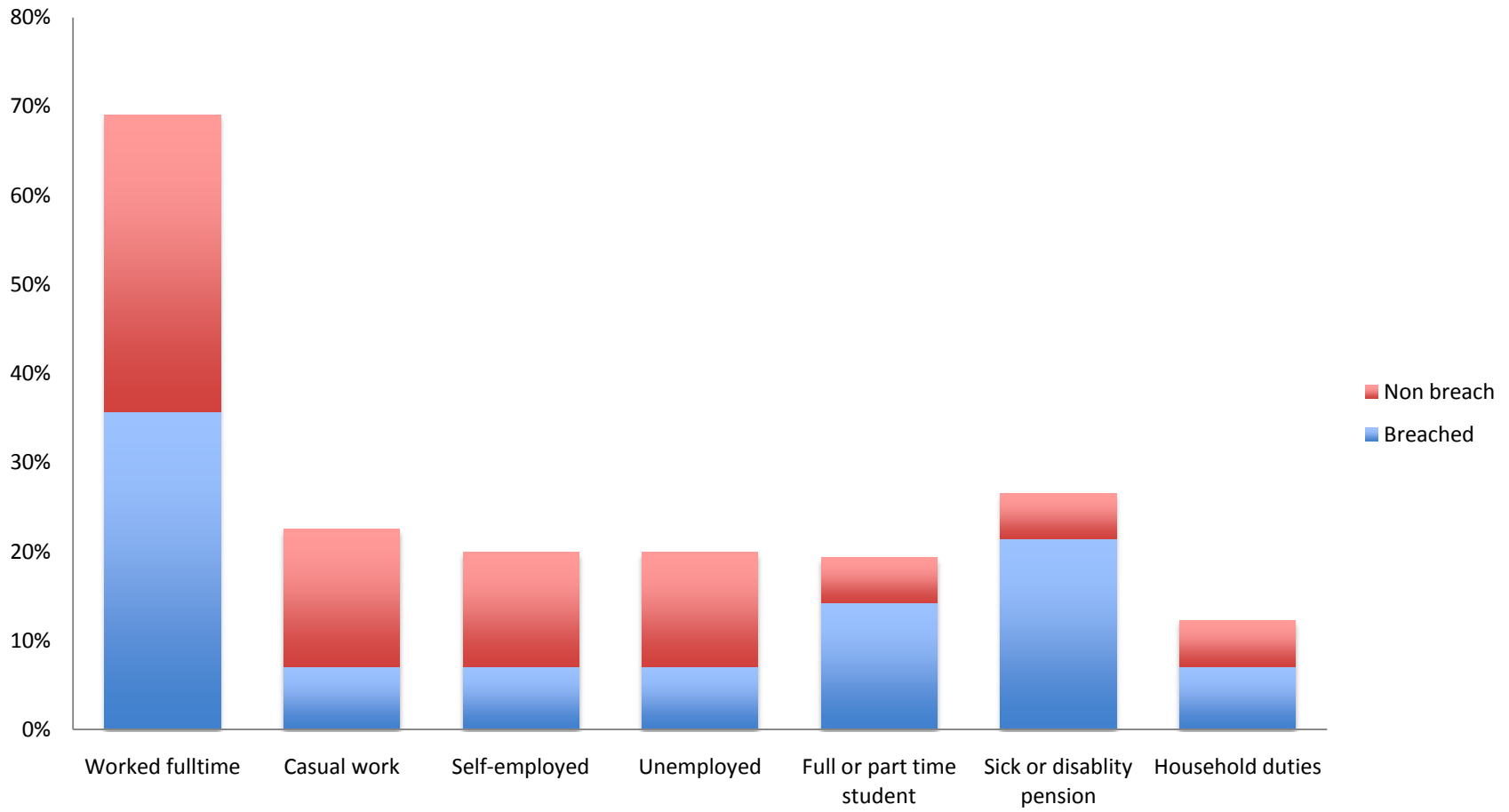
Age of those who breached



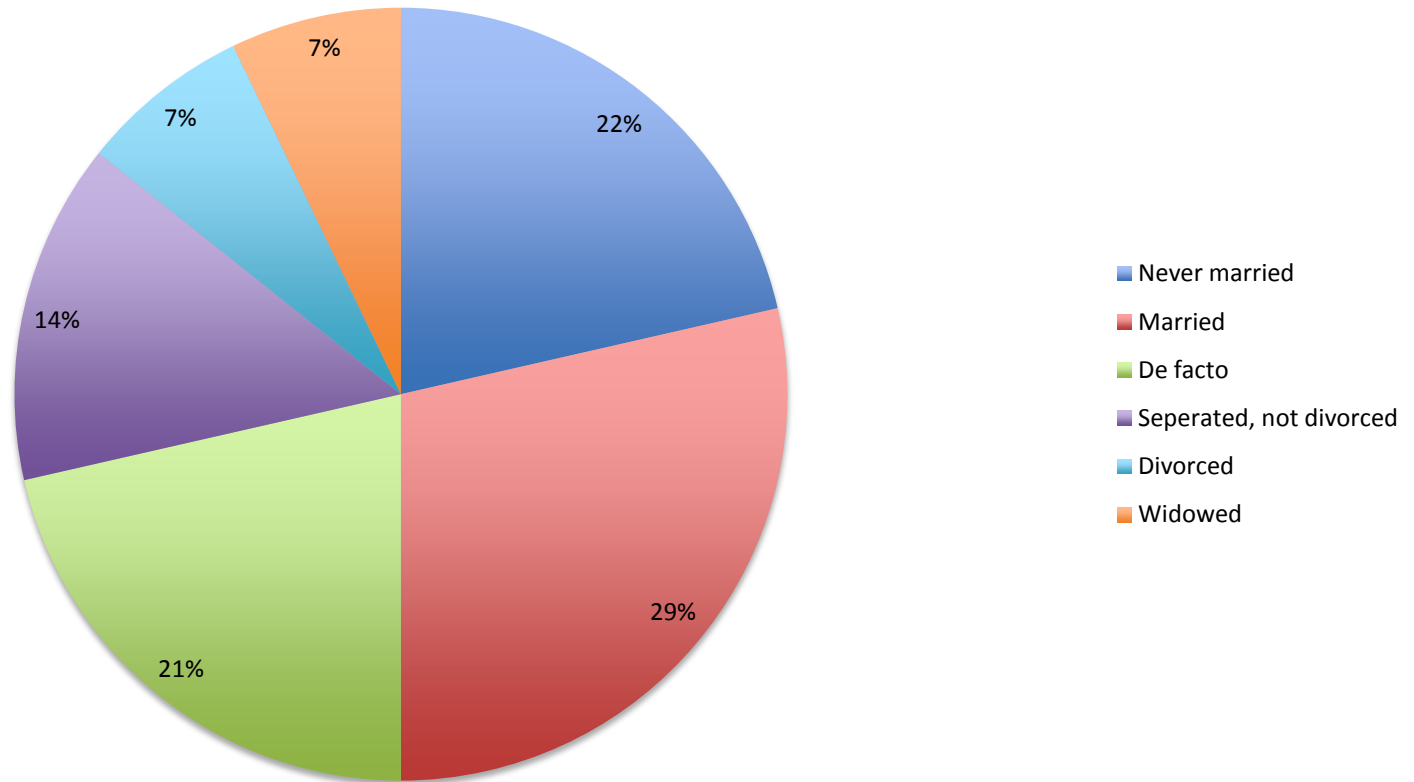
Highest educational qualification



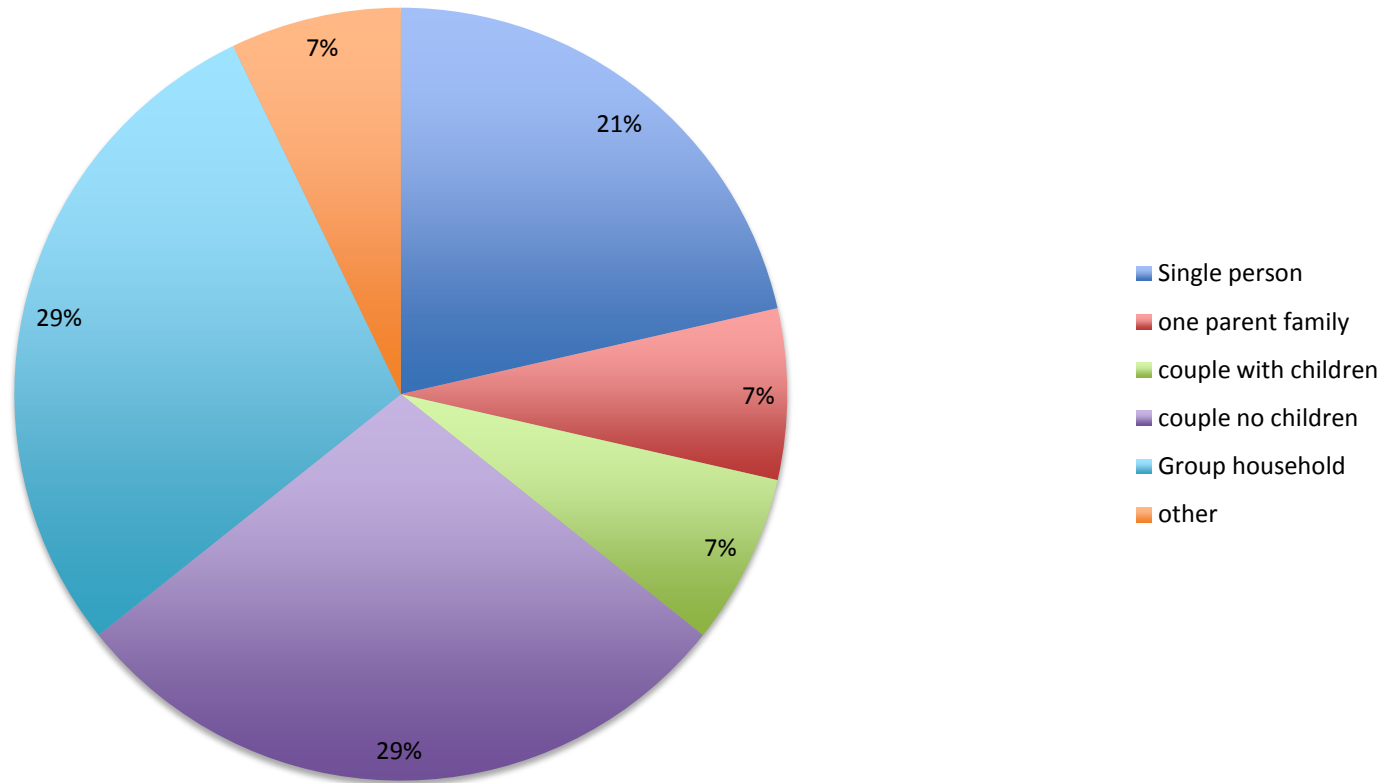
Work status



Marital status



Living arrangements



Semi-structured interview (problem gamblers)

- How long ago initiate self-exclusion?
- Still in place?
- Triggers to self-excluding?
- Barriers to self-excluding?
- What hope for it to achieve?
 - Total abstinence
 - Less gambling activity
 - Have a break from gambling

Findings from semi-structured interviews (problem gamblers)

- Themes:
 1. Motivations to self-exclude
 2. Hopes self-exclusion would achieve
 3. Monitoring and penalties associated with breaching
 4. Outcomes of self-exclusion in terms of gambling behaviour; reduction in harm; urges to gamble
 5. Issues of personal and industry responsibility

Motivation to self-exclude

- The primary reasons for gamblers to decide to self-exclude were financial problems (21); gambling excessively (11) and relationship problems (6).
- Other reasons included being out of control; mental health problems; emotional pain; previous success with self-exclusion; and a big win (15)
- There was no apparent difference between those who had breached their self-exclusion orders and those that had not.

Motivation to self-exclude (continued)

Participants are identified by an ID number and B (breached) or NB (non breached):

Because I knew I had a problem with gambling. It was affecting my mental health. I was very stressful and desperate, and that was the reason why I excluded myself, because it was interrupting my daily life (ID 55 B)

I saw myself in emotional states going to a point that I am familiar with which is beyond control (ID 15 B)

I went because my family had discovered I was using his bank account and he stopped my funds (ID 13 NB)

What the gamblers hoped self-exclusion would achieve

- For those that had breached
 - Abstinence (9)
 - Having a break from gambling (1)
 - Make it harder to gamble through distance from available venues (1)
 - Cutting down only (3)
- For those that had not breached
 - Abstinence (18)
 - Having a break from gambling (5)
 - Making it harder by distance to available venues (4)
 - Cutting down (12)

What the gamblers hoped self-exclusion would achieve

- *It has to be complete abstinence, I'm finding out. Then at those venues I can walk in feeling relaxed and gain trust from them because I can see that I'm not going to try and gamble when I'm not allowed to. I regain my integrity (ID 13 B)*

Breaching of self-exclusion

- Monitoring by venue
 - Those who had breached
 - 5 were not confident in the monitoring process
 - 2 were confident
 - 7 had no comment
 - Those who had not breached
 - 5 were not confident in the monitoring process
 - 17 were confident
 - 17 had no comment

Breaching of self-exclusion

- *There's too big a changeover in staff to monitor. I even know from my own local venue how quick the staff changes. As far as I'm concerned it's not their job (ID 11 B)*
- *Say I were to walk into tonight and I just went straight into the gaming machine, they would probably recognize me, and probably just come up to me and say "Really you're not allowed to come in here," (ID 37 NB)*

Knowledge of penalties for breaching

- Those who had breached
 - 5 had no knowledge of penalties
 - 1 thought there were no penalties
 - 8 thought the penalties ranged from AUD\$1000 to \$5000
- Those who had not breached
 - 31 had no knowledge of penalties
 - 2 thought there were no penalties
 - 6 thought penalties ranged from AUD\$1500 to \$5000

Outcomes of self-exclusion: gambling reduction

- For those that had breached
 - Reduction in gambling activity: 4 - no change; 3 - definite change; 7 - some change
 -
- For those that had not breached
 - Reduction in gambling activity: 6 – no change; 16 – definite change; 7 – some change; 10 – unsure

Outcomes of self-exclusion: gambling-related harm

- For those that had breached
 - Reduction in gambling related harms: 3 - no reduction; 7 - definite reduction; 4 - some change
- For those that had not breached
 - Reduction in gambling related harms; 4 - no reduction; 22 - definite reduction; 13 - some change

Outcomes of self-exclusion

- Gambling urges
 - Those who had breached
 - 3 – no current urges
 - 7 – current urges
 - 4 – experienced urges less often
 - Those who had not breached
 - 7 – no current urges
 - 15 – current urges
 - 17 – experienced urges less often

Issues of responsibility

- Personal responsibility
- Not venue responsibility to control their gambling
- Those that had breached did not see the venues at fault for not allowing them entry
- Self-exclusion forced the issue that they should be in control of their gambling
- Legal arrangements were taken very seriously by most who self-excluded, for both those who breached and those who did not breach.

Summary of problem gambler responses - comparison of those who had breached and those who had not

- What gamblers wanted from self-exclusion:
 - I. Abstinence was a more important motivator for those who had breached
 - II. Reduction in gambling was more important for those that had not breached
- Breaching the self-exclusion order
 - I. Those that had breached had less confidence in the venues effectively monitoring their breaching self-exclusion
 - II. A large number of both groups were unaware of the penalties that they and the venue incur if a self-exclusion is breached
- Outcomes of self-exclusion
 - I. Those who had not breached reported more changes in both gambling activity and gambling related harms than did those who had breached
 - II. Both groups reported a reduction in gambling urges

Counsellor semi-structured interviews

- Professional views on triggers and barriers clients face when considering self-excluding
- Availability of self-exclusion
- Ban length
- Ban scope
- Breaches
- Effects of self-exclusion over time for problem gamblers

Professional views on specific aspects of self-exclusion

- Self-exclusion takes away availability and access
- Self-exclusion can be useful if the person predominantly gambles on poker machines
- And/or gambles only at one or two venues

Counsellor conclusions

- Most counsellors believed that self-exclusion, while effective for some, was not an effective strategy for all clients.
- Counsellors tended to view self-exclusion as a harm minimisation tool rather than a standalone strategy.
- Counsellors believed the process of multiple exclusions to be problematic.
- Counsellors stressed the importance of having a good support network to enhance the effectiveness of self-exclusion

Conclusions and practice implications

- Self-exclusion was for those interviewed an effective strategy within their overall recovery
- For most gamblers, it is their own sense of personal control and responsibility that is highlighted once they self-exclude
- There is some lack of confidence in the venues ability to monitor breaches
- For those that are motivated in their recovery, this is not seen as a major issue
- There is a need for clarity amongst venue staff regarding the self-exclusion provisions and penalties
- It is important for intervention and treatment to integrate personal responsibility alongside knowledge of venue processes for gamblers