

Summary of Surveys on Gambling in New Mexico

Four Surveys

1. NM DOH Survey: 2006 BRFSS
2. Rachel Volberg 2006 Survey
3. UNM CASAA Surveys 1996 & 1998
4. R&P Survey of Bankruptcy Role

Strengths and Weaknesses of each:

NM DOH Survey

Questions added to existing 2006 BRFSS questionnaire.

Strengths:

1. Random selection of household
2. Random selection of one adult member of household
3. Largest sample size, 6,550
4. Data weighted for probability of selection at each stage
5. Post-stratification weighting to NM population by age and gender
6. Analytical software appropriate for complex sample design
7. DSM-IV criteria for problem and pathological gambling
8. Questions about history of bankruptcy
9. Questions about history of suicide ideation and attempts
10. Possibly the best response rate of the surveys.

Weaknesses:

1. Limited room in questionnaire limited the number of questions on gambling
2. Initial gambling question was used to screen out non-gamblers from the problem gambling questions but the question did not specify a time period so respondents were allowed to use their own definition of current gambling. The majority of those who went on to the problem gambling questions had gambled in the past month. Our method may have screened out many people who had gambled in the past year but not in the past month. It may be important to have included these respondents in the problem gambling questions.
3. Two bankruptcy questions. Should have included a third question to clarify any role gambling may have played in bankruptcy.

Volberg Survey

Telephone survey about gambling.

Strengths:

1. Geographic stratification of sample by county (see note 2 under weaknesses)
2. Random selection of household
3. Random selection of one adult member of household
4. Reasonably Large sample size, 3,596
5. Data weighted for probability of selection at each stage
6. Post-stratification weighting to NM population by age, gender, and race/ethnicity
7. DSM-IV criteria for problem and pathological gambling
8. Questions about history of bankruptcy and other topics of value

Weaknesses:

1. No questions about suicide ideation or attempts.
2. In analysis, no consideration of complex sample design requiring specialized software. Use of inappropriate software can result in under-estimation of error about point estimates which results in unreasonable confidence in the point estimates and the appearance of significant differences between groups that would not appear if the appropriate software were used. One should recognize, then, that reported differences between groups may not have been reported if appropriate analytical methods had been used. This is not a fatal issue regarding the Volberg report but is meant as a cautionary note regarding reported differences between groups, such as Table 9, page 33.
3. Sample size should have been larger but it is not too bad.
4. Response rate is lower than the BRFSS but it is not bad.
5. Hispanic sample could have been higher. BRFSS non-weighted Hispanic sample in 2006 was over 33% of the sample. In the Volberg survey Hispanics only represented 29% of the non-weighted sample. Post-stratification weighting by race/ethnicity addressed this reasonably well, though.

UNM CASAA Surveys (1996 & 1998)

Telephone surveys about gambling.

Strengths:

1. Random selection of household
2. DSM-IV criteria for problem and pathological gambling
3. Many questions about types of gambling and location of gambling

Weaknesses:

1. No questions about bankruptcy.
2. No questions about suicide ideation or attempts.
3. Very small sample sizes, even when combined. Resulted in some changes in results between the two surveys that should raise concerns. For example, jump in percent of sample reporting a disability jumped from 7% in 1996 to 25% in 1998. Small sample sizes can result in these kinds of shifts based on random selection bias. This raises questions about all results from the surveys.
4. No adjustment for probability of selection of the one adult from among the adults in the household.
5. No adjustment for probability of selection of the household and no post-stratification weighting to adult population.
6. Inappropriate software for complex sample designs. Comparisons between groups should be taken with grain of salt.
7. Unusual use of DSM-IV criteria that may be a fine method but it hasn't been tested or used by others. We don't know if the much higher estimates of problem and compulsive gambling from the '96/'98 surveys is real or dependent upon the issues raised here.
8. Data are getting old, 1996 and 1998.

Research & Polling Survey of Bankruptcy Role

Mailout survey of all who filed bankruptcy in a 14 month period.

Strengths:

1. DSM-IV Criteria for problem and pathological gambling
2. Questionnaire sent to all 7,000+ who filed bankruptcy in 14 month period.
3. Only 5% returned as "Addressee unknown" demonstrating that the bankruptcy records may serve as an effective way of surveying this population about other issues in future (health care costs as a reason for filing bankruptcy)

Weaknesses:

1. Limited funding and limited time-frame allowed for only one mailing resulting in 10% response rate. Respondents may differ from non-respondents so estimates may not really represent the population of people who have filed for bankruptcy.
2. All estimates of problem gambling are based on an extremely small number of people, 40 or less. Some estimates are even based on only 4 people.