



2020

Helpline Annual Statistics

Year ended 31st March 2020

Charity Number: 1060005

Charitable Company Registered
in England No: 03297914



2 Contents

- Introduction 3
- Summary 4
- Scope of this report 12
- Terminology 14
- Full findings 16
- Demographics 20
- Gambling Facilities and Activities 26
- Impacts of problem gambling 29

Introduction

GamCare operates the National Gambling Helpline, providing information, advice and support for anyone affected by gambling harms. Advisers are available **24 hours a day** on Freephone **0808 8020 133** or via web chat at www.gamcare.org.uk.

This service complements a range of free treatments offered across England, Scotland and Wales (face to face, online and over the phone), as well as a moderated Forum and daily chatrooms so that people can speak to others experiencing similar issues and seek support.

Our services are available to gamblers as well as family and friends who are impacted by gambling ('affected others').

Where individuals have complex needs, we also refer them to other providers as part of the [National Gambling Treatment Service](#).

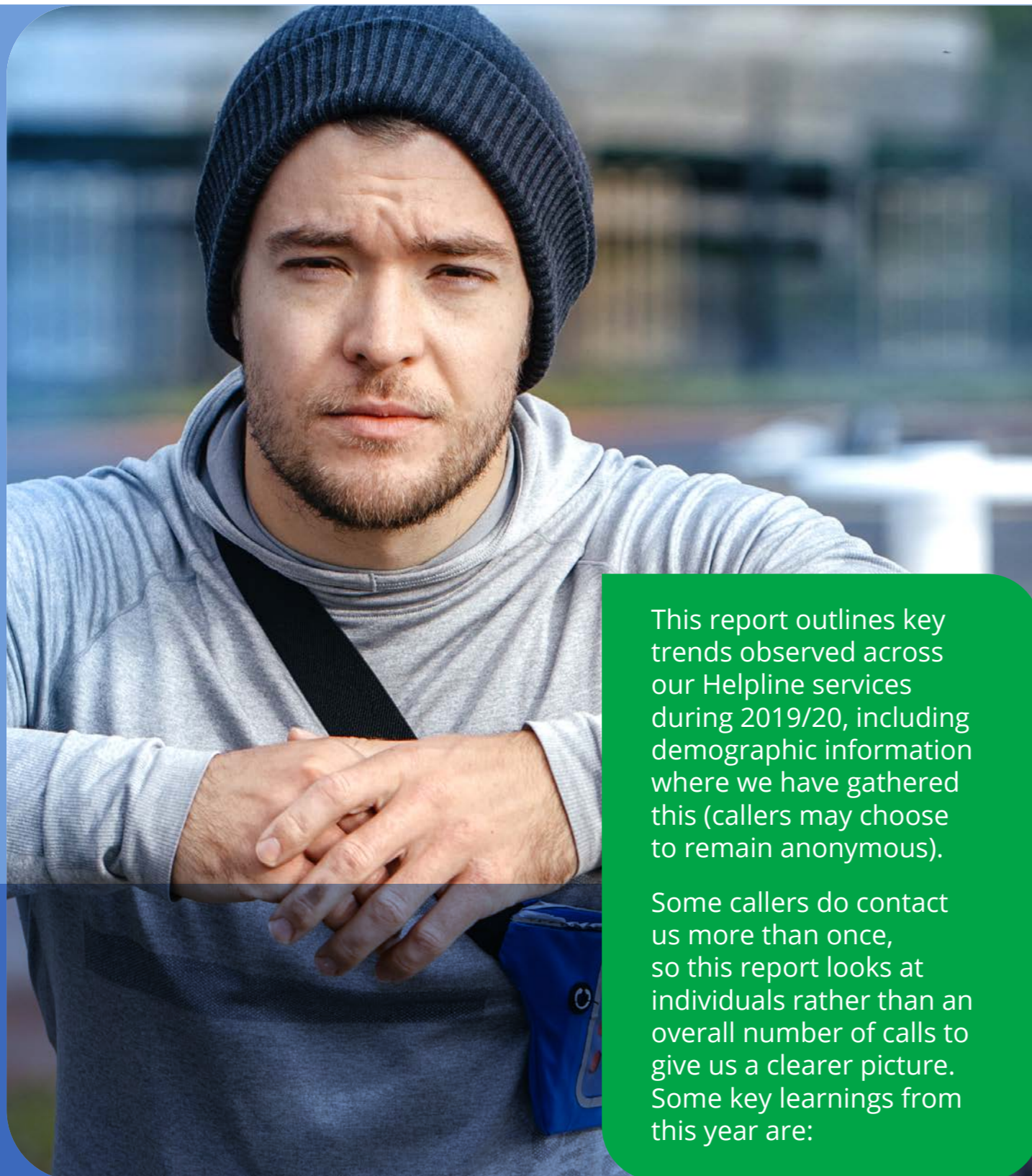
This report gives GamCare useful information when planning for and delivering education, outreach, and support services for those experiencing gambling related harm. By understanding who is using our Helpline we can ensure that we continue to make our services as accessible and as relevant as possible.



Very helpful and very understanding. Listened to everything I was saying and gave me so many options and gave me very helpful information. Would recommend anyone to use this service.

HELPLINE CALLER

Summary



4

This report outlines key trends observed across our Helpline services during 2019/20, including demographic information where we have gathered this (callers may choose to remain anonymous).

Some callers do contact us more than once, so this report looks at individuals rather than an overall number of calls to give us a clearer picture. Some key learnings from this year are:

More people are using the service than ever before



increase in calls

We have received a **30% increase in calls (38,804)** from those affected by gambling, along with others wishing to support them or request advice about our services.



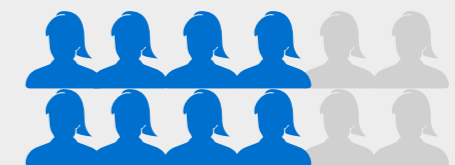
increase in callers

The **total number of callers** contacting us **has also increased by 4%**, to 25,542.



65% identified as male

Overall, the majority (65%) of callers to the Helpline identified as male, as a higher proportion of gamblers contacting the Helpline identified as male (81%).



80% identified as female

80% of affected others contacting the Helpline during 2019/20 **identified as female.**

5

Working males under 35 are most likely to contact us, but women are increasingly seeking help



increase overall in female callers

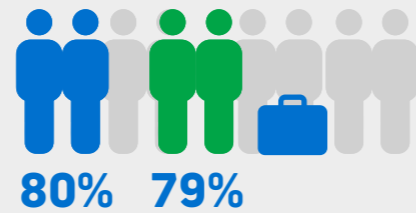
There was a slight increase in overall callers identifying as female, from 32% in 2018/19 to 35% in 2019/20.

6



6/10 callers aged 35 or under

Six out of every ten Helpline callers were aged 35 or under. The single largest group is aged 26-35, accounting for 39% of all Helpline callers.



gamblers employed

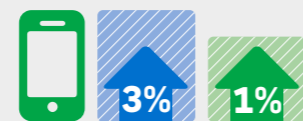
The majority of both gamblers (80%) and affected others (79%) that used the Helpline were employed.



live chat

Those aged 26-35 were notably more likely than other age groups to contact the Helpline via live chat.

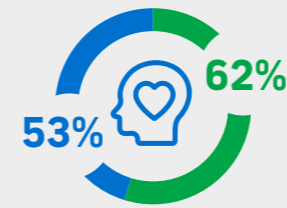
Callers are contacting us more often



proportion of calls

The proportion of callers making five or more calls in a year has increased from around 1% of callers in 2018/19 to 3% in 2019/20.

Impacts on mental wellbeing



anxiety / stress

Anxiety/stress was the most common mental health impact for both gamblers (62%) and affected others (53%) across Helpline in 2019/20.

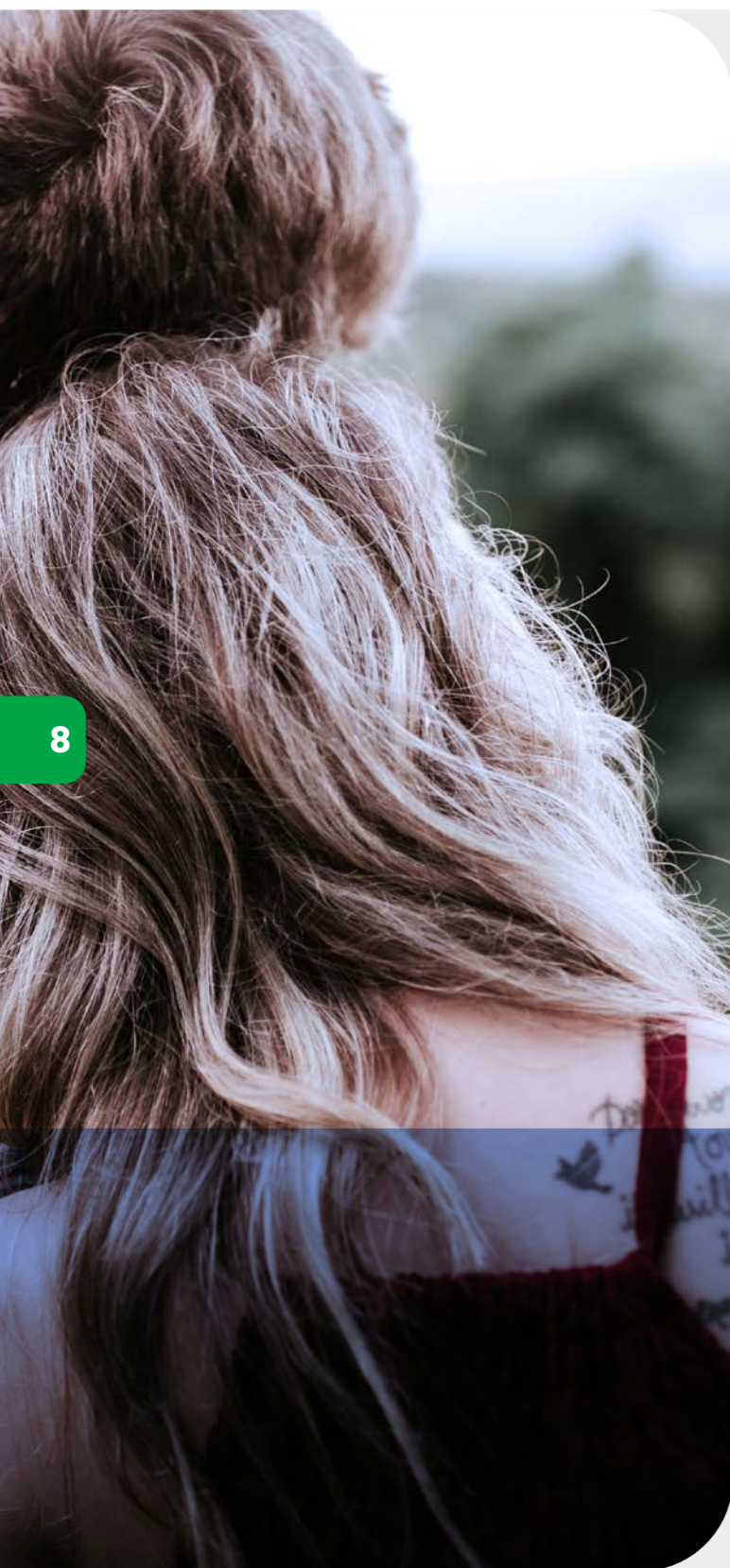


suicidal thoughts

11% of gamblers contacting the Helpline told us they had experienced suicidal thoughts, either currently or in the past.



7

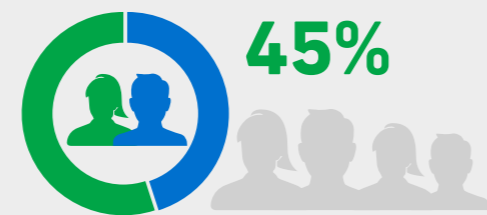


Relationships and family life are impacted



69% are in a relationship

The majority of gamblers (69%) and affected others (89%) using the Helpline are in a relationship or married.



family / relationships

45% of gamblers using the Helpline identified family/relationship difficulties as a significant impact.

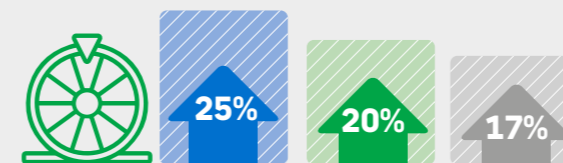
Concerns about online gambling are on the rise

75% Online

46% Offline

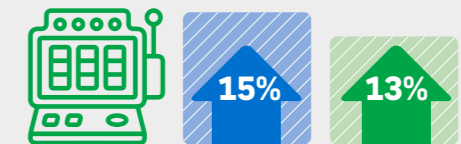
online & offline gambling

Online gambling was reported as problematic by 75% of Helpline callers, compared to 46% for offline gambling in 2019/20. A greater number of callers than in previous years are reporting issues with online gambling activities.



online facilities

The online facilities and activities most likely to be reported as problematic in 2019/20 were betting 25%; followed by slots 20% and casino games 17%.



offline facilities

The offline facilities and activities most likely to be reported as problematic in 2019/20 were betting shop betting 13% and betting shop gaming machines 15%.



online gambling

Online gambling being reported as problematic has increased, and offline gambling reported as problematic has decreased for Helpline callers in 2019/20.



10

“
[It was] nice to talk to someone who understands gambling. As a wife of a gambler I'm struggling to get my head around [it all]. Very kind and supportive. Thank you.
HELPLINE CALLER

We need to talk about money

financial difficulties

66% of gamblers calling the Helpline **reported being impacted by financial difficulties** because of their gambling.



debt levels

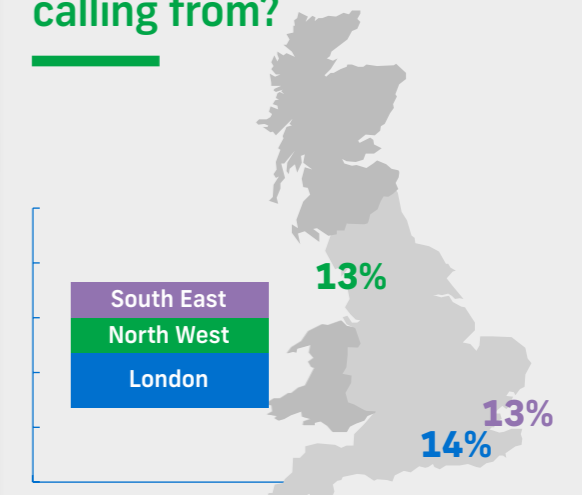
As many as **74% of gamblers** calling the Helpline reported **having debt issues**.

Nearly half of callers **did not disclose the level of their debt (46%)**.

financial difficulties

10% of callers reported debt between **£20,000 - £99,999**.

Where are people calling from?



Location data

Although location data is low (57% not giving location information) this still indicated the **largest proportion of callers to the Helpline were in London (14%)** followed by the North West (13%) and the South East (13%).

11

Scope of this report

This report provides data and information about Helpline activity (both calls and live chats) from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020. Our wider activities will be detailed in our Trustee's Annual Report.

During the first six months of the year covered in this report, from 1st April to 30th September 2019, the Helpline operated from 8am to midnight, seven days a week.

We subsequently extended our Helpline service to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and therefore this report also includes the first six months of data covering this extension (from 1st October 2019 to 31st March 2020).

Please note that most of the data from the Helpline (phone and live chat) relates to individual callers and not calls. Callers who make repeated calls to the Helpline will only be counted once in these statistics.

The exception is the section on **Total Calls Answered**, which provides an overview of the total service volume in each year and is provided for context.

It is important to note that callers may wish to remain anonymous and there is no obligation on callers to provide any data if they do not wish to – this will not affect the service or support they receive from us.

Some questions are only answered by up to half of the caller population. Bases have been provided for each table to ensure transparency of reporting. The bases vary by table from the overall caller population as each table only includes callers with the relevant data available. To improve comparability most 'not known' responses are excluded from most tables.



“

This was my first step to admitting I had a problem and as I would need emotional support, I was referred to counselling... I wasn't expecting to get a quick referral but was told someone would contact me locally to arrange an appointment in a couple of days. This chat has made me feel more positive about the situation and I've started making plans to get help and open up. Thanks.

HELPLINE CALLER

Terminology



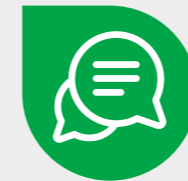
Affected Others

This is anyone affected by someone else's gambling, for example, a family member or close friend.



Brief Interventions

A brief intervention is a conversation of short duration (it can be as short as 5-15 minutes) that offers structured and personalised feedback related to gambling risks and harms, delivered in a non-judgemental and supportive way. This may include advice about making a change or strategies related to goals.



Chats

One to one interactions with our Advisers via live chat, accessed through our website. This service is provided alongside our Freephone number for the National Gambling Helpline.



Target calls

Target calls are calls from those affected by gambling, along with others wishing to support them or request advice about our services.



Other client type

Callers described as 'other' can include professionals supporting those affected by gambling, as well as those working in the gambling industry who would like advice on how to support a customer concerned about their gambling.



Call backs

Outgoing contact from our Helpline team, where we are either providing a check-in for a caller we are concerned about, providing an extended brief intervention over a period of weeks, or contacting a caller who was unable to connect to our service and left their details for a call back.



Extended Brief Interventions

Extended Brief Interventions are longer, often motivational sessions or connected to the person's goals mainly delivered more than once.



Non-Target Calls

Non-target calls can include prank calls, wrong numbers and other instances where the caller does not have a need for our services.



Frequent Callers

Callers to the helpline who have contacted us more than five times in the year (inbound via either phone or live chat).

Full findings

Total Calls answered

- A total of 38,804 target contacts (which are calls and live chats, not individual callers on either channel) were received in 2019/20, a 30% increase from the previous year.
- Inbound telephone calls made up nearly half (47%) of all target contacts.
- Outbound calls (including call backs made by our Advisers) were 16% which is an increase from 7% in the previous year.

16

Table 1: Volume of inbound and target calls 2018/19 to 2019/20

	2018/19	2019/20	% change
Total inbound calls/chats answered	38,281	50,230	31%
Target contacts	29,868	38,804	30%
From Target Contacts:			
Inbound calls	59%	47%	
Inbound chats	34%	38%	
Outbound calls	7%	16%	

Helpline callers by client type

Of the 25,542 individual callers who contacted the Helpline in 2019/20, information was recorded about the client type (i.e. whether they were a gambler or an affected other) for 24,594 (96%).

The remaining data in this section relates to only those callers with client type information that were not flagged on the system as non-target calls by advisers. As such they are not directly comparable with the overall figures outlined in Total Calls Answered.

Table 2: Callers by client type 2018/19 and 2019/20

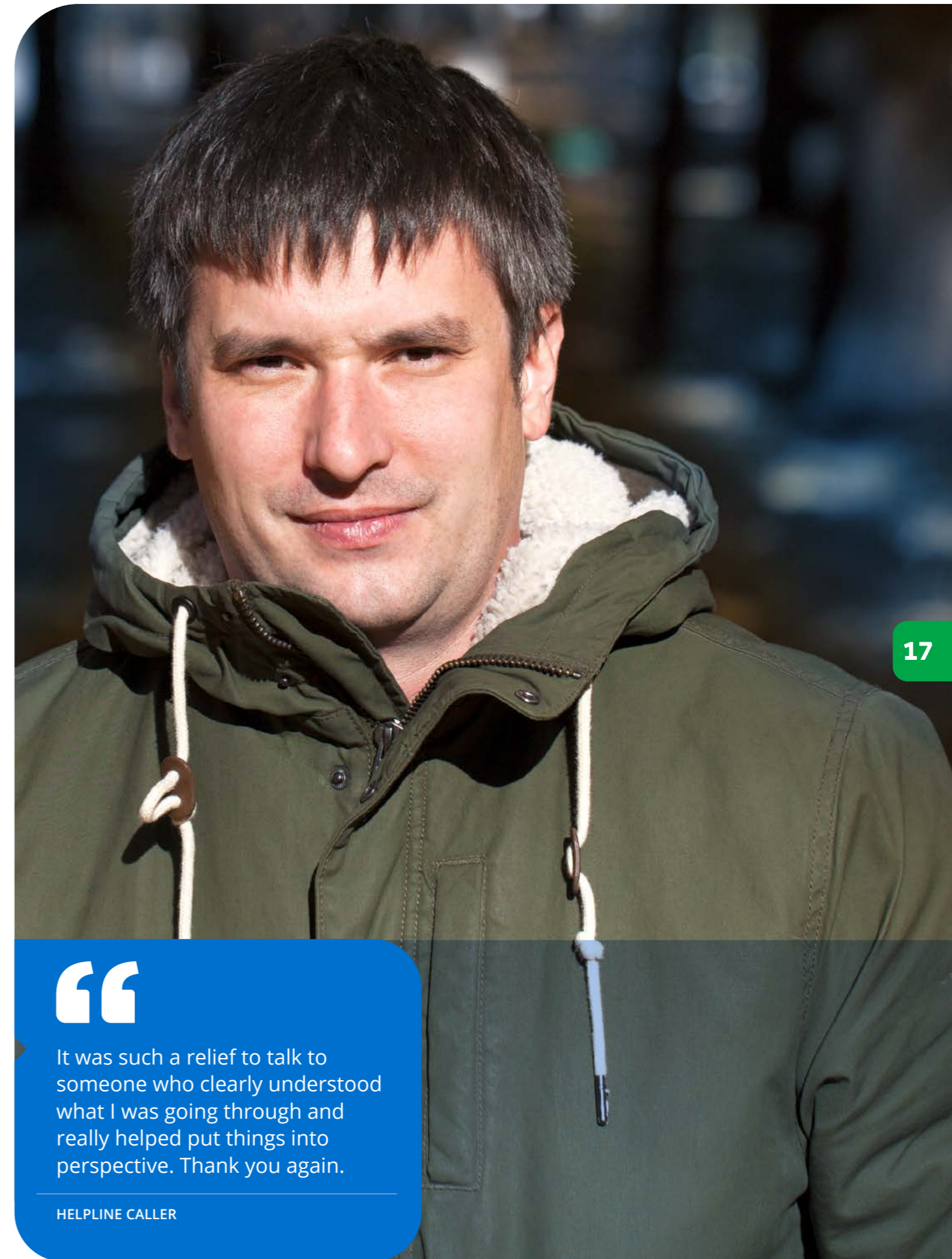
	2018/19	2019/20	% change
Total callers	23,898	24,594	3%
Target contacts			
% Target calls	17,786	18,098	2%
Affected Other	5,694	6,107	7%
Other	418	389	-7%

Table 3: Callers, incoming calls, chats and call backs by client type 2019/20

	Callers	Inbound Calls	Chats	Call Backs
Gambler	74%	76%	79%	86%
Affected Other	25%	22%	20%	14%
Other	2%	2%	1%	0%
N =	24,594	18,004	13,282	5,985

¹ Reasons for non-target flags include prank calls, silent calls and people who called the wrong service.

² Callers described as 'other' can include professionals supporting those affected by gambling, as well as those working in the gambling industry who would like advice on how to support a customer concerned about their gambling.



17



It was such a relief to talk to someone who clearly understood what I was going through and really helped put things into perspective. Thank you again.

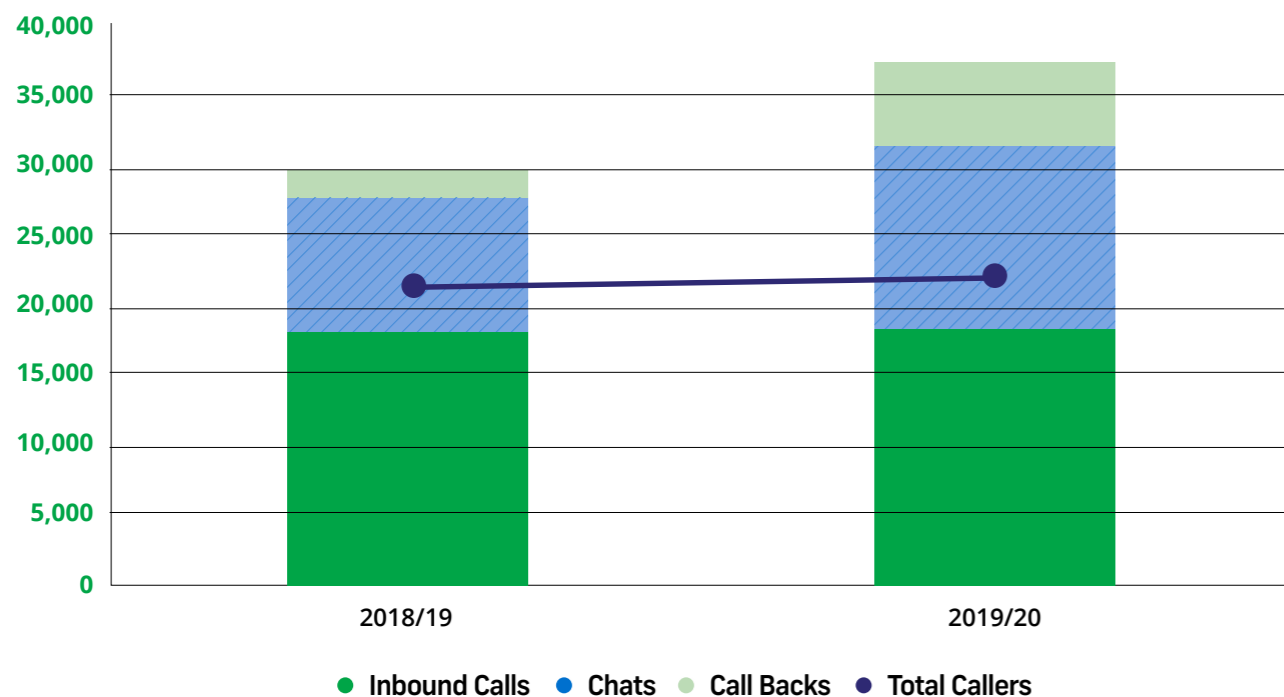
HELPLINE CALLER



Table 4: Target calls from callers with client type 2018/19 and 2019/20

	2018/19	2019/20
Total callers	23,898	24,594
Contacts		
Inbound Calls	18,017	18,004
Chats	9,622	13,282
Call backs	1,946	5,985
Total contacts	29,585	37,271
Average contacts per caller	1.2	1.5

Figure 1: calls to the Helpline by gamblers and affected others 2018/19 and 2019/20



Frequent Callers

For the purposes of this report, we have identified clients who have contact with the Helpline (phone and live chat) five or more times in a year and defined these as “frequent callers”. There are different reasons why a person may contact us multiple times, ranging from someone who recognises they need help and prefers the anonymity and lower levels of commitment than available in treatment services, through to callers with more complex needs who utilise the helpline as an adjunct to other forms of treatment.

- The proportion of callers making five or more calls in a year has increased from around 1% of callers in 2018/19 to 3% in 2019/20.
- In 2019/20, frequent callers accounted for over two thirds (70%) of all call backs and a fifth (20%) of all inbound calls.

Table 5: Frequent contacts to Helpline 2018/19 and 2019/20

	2018/19	2019/20
Number of frequent callers	276	683
Number of frequent callers	1%	3%
Total contacts by frequent callers		
Total contacts by frequent callers	3,082	9,313
Proportion of all inbound calls	9%	21%
Proportion of all chats	3%	10%
Proportion of all call backs	58%	70%



Demographics

Gender

- The majority (65%) of callers to the Helpline identified as male, as a higher proportion of gamblers contacting the Helpline identified as male (81%). Conversely, the majority (80%) of affected others contacting the Helpline identified as female.
- The proportion of callers identifying as transgender/non-binary was less than 1% and has not been included in the remainder of the report due to non-disclosure concerns .
- There was a slight increase in overall callers identifying as female from 32% in 2018/19 to 35% in 2019/20.

Table 6: Client type by gender for Helpline callers 2019/20

	Gambler	Affected Other	Total
Female	19%	80%	35%
Male	81%	20%	65%
Transgender/ non-binary	<1%	<1%	<1%
N =	14,551	5,097	19,648

Table 7: Client type by gender for Helpline callers 2018/19 and 2019/20

	Helpline	
	2018/19	2019/20
Gambler - Female	2,504	2,717
Gambler - Male	12,940	11,831
Affected Other - Female	3,969	4,092
Affected Other - Male	1,052	999
N =	20,465	19,639

Age

- Six out of every ten Helpline callers were aged 35 or under. The single largest group is aged 26-35 which accounted for 39% of all Helpline callers.
- Those aged 26-35 were notably more likely than other age groups to contact the Helpline via live chat.

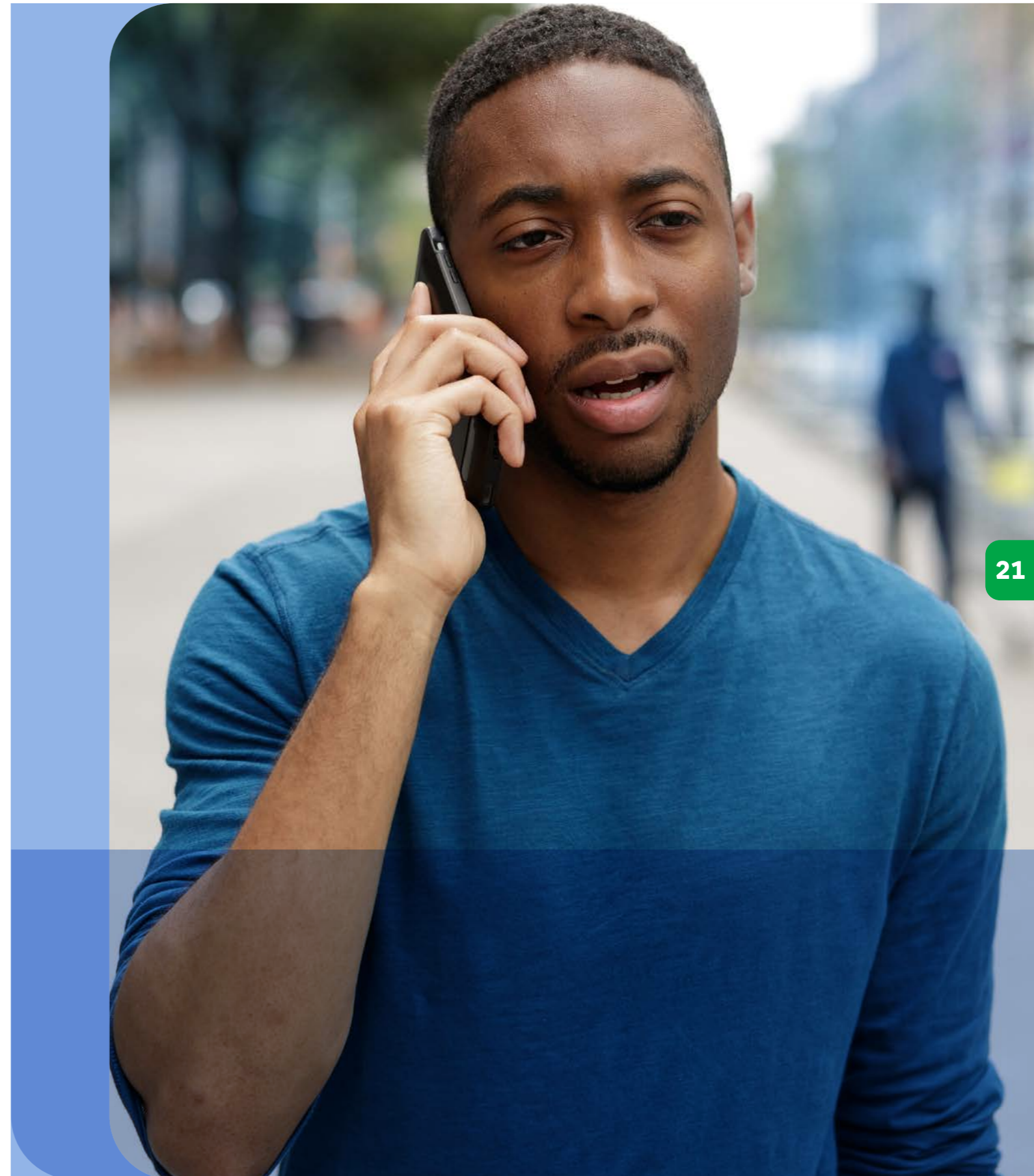
Table 8: Calls and chats by age band 2019/20

	Under 26	26-35	36-45	46-55	Over 55	N =
Helpline callers	21%	39%	21%	12%	8%	10,860
Chats	23%	50%	17%	7%	2%	5,369
Calls (inbound and call backs)	14%	37%	23%	14%	11%	17,105



I really appreciate all the advice you gave me and how personal the adviser made the conversation, I didn't just feel like one of many, they were really supportive and understanding.

HELPLINE CALLER



Ethnicity

Ethnicity reporting for the Helpline was comparatively low, with data available for 35% of Helpline callers in 2019/20.

- The majority of both gamblers (87%) and affected others (89%) who disclosed their ethnicity when contacting the Helpline in 2019/20 were White.
- Asian or Asian British was the next largest ethnic group (7% and 6% respectively).
- Asian callers were more likely to contact the Helpline multiple times, accounting for 13% of frequent callers compared to 7% of callers overall.

Table 9: Caller type by ethnicity for Helpline 2019/20

	Helpline	
	Gambler	Affected Other
White	87%	89%
Black or Black British	4%	2%
Asian or Asian British	7%	6%
Mixed	2%	1%
Any other ethnic group	1%	1%
N =	6,897	1,601

Employment status

- The majority of both gamblers (80%) and affected others (79%) who used the Helpline were employed.
- Affected others were more likely than gamblers to be homemakers or retired (likely reflecting their relationships as either partner or parent).
- Conversely, gamblers were more likely than affected others to be long term sick or disabled and unemployed.

Table 10: Caller type by socio-economic status for Helpline 2019/20

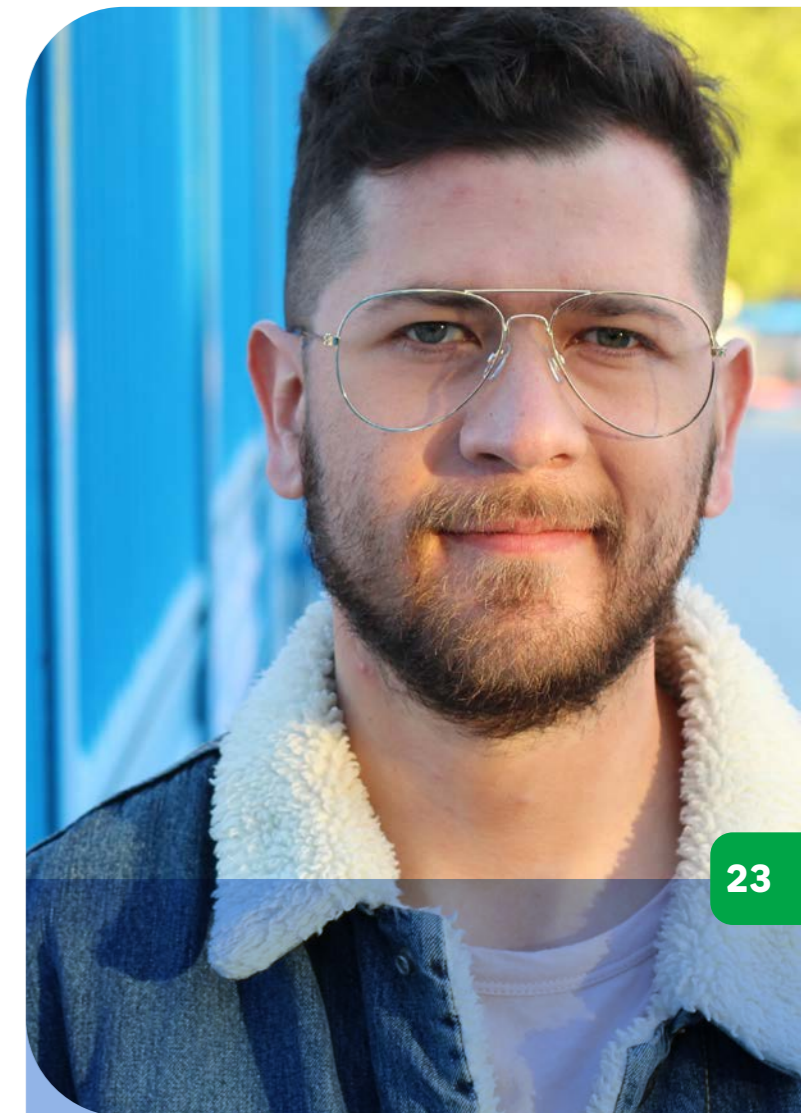
	Helpline	
	Gambler	Affected Other
Employed	80%	79%
Homemaker	1%	7%
In prison, in care, seeking asylum	0%	0%
Long term sick or disabled	7%	3%
Other Economically Inactive	0%	0%
Retired	1%	7%
Student	3%	2%
Unemployed (looking for work)	8%	2%
N =	10,063	2,362

Relationship Status

- The large majority of affected others are either in a relationship (45%) or married/in civil partnership (44%). Only around one in ten affected others were single, separated or divorced.
- A smaller majority of gamblers using the Helpline were also either in a relationship (44%) or married/in civil partnership (25%) but close to a third were single, separated or divorced (31%).

Table 11: Caller type by relationship status for Helpline 2019/20

	Helpline	
	Gambler	Affected Other
Divorced/Dissolved Civil Partnership	2%	2%
In a Relationship	44%	45%
Married/Civil Partnership	25%	44%
Separated	4%	4%
Single	25%	4%
Widowed	1%	1%
N =	9,547	3,510



A fantastic support service. Will highly be recommending you. It was a great help for me to discuss issues when finding out my husband has a gambling addiction. Was helpful to be signposted in the right direction for further support and what to do next.

HELPLINE CALLER

³No cell contain data relating to fewer than 10 people to avoid accidental if identifying information relating to an individual.

Location

Location reporting for the Helpline was comparatively low, with data unavailable for 57% of callers.

- The largest proportion of callers to the Helpline were in London (14%) followed by the North West (13%) and the South East (13%).
- When compared to the general adult population in each region the proportion of clients using the Helpline were generally consistent.

Table 12: Region of clients for Helpline 2019/20

	Helpline	% of adult population
East Midlands	8%	7%
East of England	9%	9%
London	14%	13%
North East	5%	4%
North West	13%	11%
Northern Ireland	1%	3%
Scotland	5%	8%
South East	13%	14%
South West	7%	8%
Wales	4%	5%
West Midlands	9%	9%
Yorkshire and The Humber	10%	8%
N =	10,318	66,796,807

NB: Adult population figures taken from Estimates of the population for the UK, Office for National Statistics (mid-2019).

Years gambling

- The majority of gamblers contacting the Helpline (64%) have been gambling for less than a decade.

Table 13: Years client has been gambling for Helpline callers 2019/20

	Helpline
4 years or less	41%
5-9 years	23%
10-14 years	16%
15-19 years	7%
20 years or more	12%
N =	10,799



I really appreciate the late [night] service when feeling most alone and overwhelmed.

HELPLINE CALLER

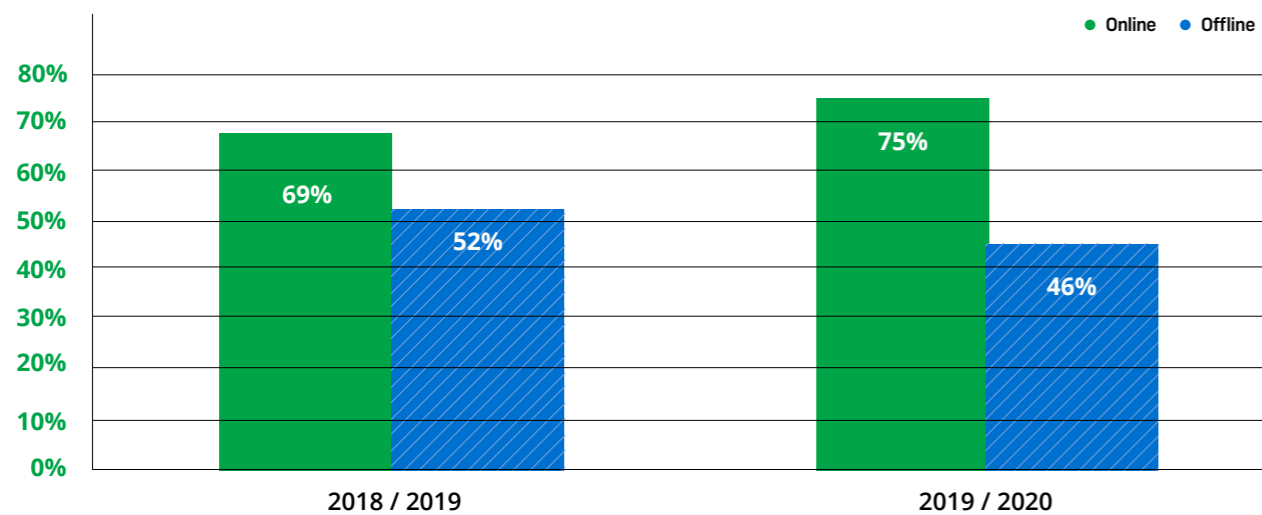


Gambling Facilities and Activities

- This year we have been able to report, for the first time, figures for gambling facilities and activities calculated as a percentage of all gamblers who provided at least one gambling activity. In previous years, the percentages for gambling facilities and activities were calculated as percentages of all gambling activities disclosed.
- The comparison with data from 2018/19 has been adjusted to the new formula to allow transparency for the comparison.
- Online gambling was reported as problematic by 75% of Helpline callers compared to 46% for offline gambling in 2019/20.
- The online facilities and activities most likely to be reported as problematic in 2019/20 were betting 25%; followed by slots 20% and casino games 17%.
- The offline facilities and activities most likely to be reported as problematic in 2019/20 were betting shop betting 13% and betting shop gaming machines 15%.
- Online gambling being reported as problematic has increased, and offline gambling reported as problematic has decreased for helpline callers in 2019/20.

2019/20	Helpline
Online	75%
Offline	46%
N =	14,196

Gambling facilities and activities for Helpline 2019/20

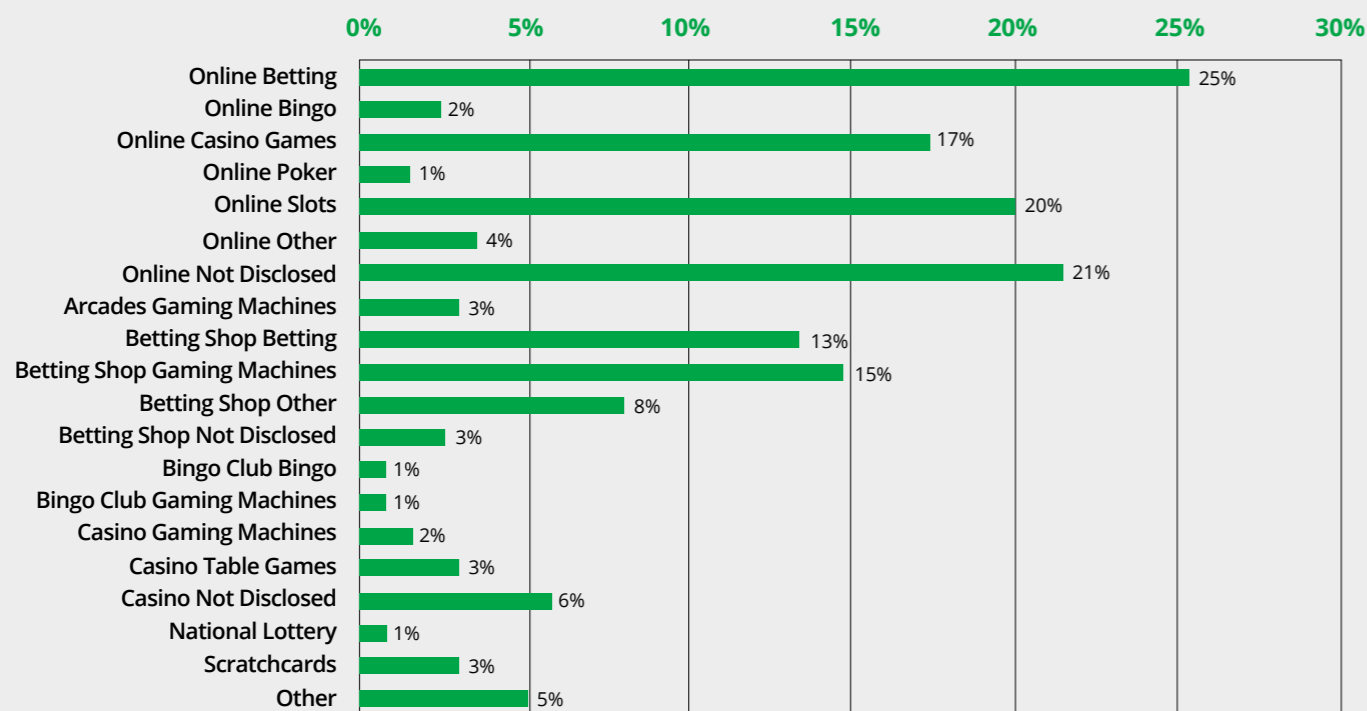




This service was invaluable and allowed me to speak to someone without feeling vulnerable or breaking down, at a time when I was at my lowest. I felt like I wasn't alone.

HELPLINE CALLER

Gambling facilities and activities for Helpline callers 2019/20



Impacts of problem gambling

How we calculate these impacts

- As gambling can affect multiple aspects of a person's life, callers often report more than one gambling impact. In previous years, the percentages for gambling impacts were calculated as percentages of all gambling impacts disclosed in all calls.
- This year we have calculated gambling impacts as a percentage of all individual callers who have mentioned these impacts. This means numbers are smaller, but provide a clearer picture of how many people are affected.
- Impacts reported by Helpline callers are only those impacts created on the system within the relevant year. These impacts may be experienced at the time they contact us, or in the recent past.
- We have also split the impacts into separate sections covering:
 - Mental Health
 - Health, Financial and Other Impacts
 - Alcohol and Drug Misuse
 - Debt
- It is important to note that impacts are self-reported.

Self-Reported Mental Health Impacts

- Anxiety/stress was the most common mental health impact for both gamblers and affected others across Helpline in 2019/20.
- 11% of gamblers contacting the Helpline self-reported suicidal thoughts/ideations, either currently or in the past. Where a caller has intention to take their life our teams take appropriate actions, which include but are not limited to, contacting emergency services, contacting NHS crisis teams and contacting prison welfare teams.

Table 14: Impacts of problem gambling on Helpline callers 2019/20

	Helpline	
	Gambler	Affected Other
Anxiety/Stress	62%	53%
Mental Health	24%	9%
Suicidal thoughts/ideations	11%	2%
Feeling Isolated	24%	11%
N =	14,548	5,091

Self-Reported Health, Financial and Other Impacts

- 66% of gamblers calling the Helpline were most likely to report being impacted by financial difficulties as a result of their problem gambling. This was followed by 45% identifying family/relationship difficulties, 11% general health concerns and 9% work difficulties.
- Unsurprisingly, for affected others, the most common impact described was family/relationship difficulties, reported by 59% of callers.

Table 15: Impacts of problem gambling on Helpline callers 2019/20

	Helpline	
	Gambler	Affected Other
General Health	11%	5%
Domestic Abuse	1%	3%
Family/Relationship Difficulties	45%	59%
Financial Difficulties	66%	40%
Housing Problems	6%	4%
Work Difficulties	9%	3%
Criminal Activity	3%	1%
N =	14,548	5,091

Self-Reported Alcohol and Drug Misuse

- Helpline callers had low reported levels of drug and alcohol misuse, although this may be impacted by non-reporting issues.

Table 16: Drug and Alcohol Misuse of Helpline callers 2019/20

	Helpline	
	Gambler	Affected Other
Alcohol Misuse	5%	1%
Drug Misuse	3%	0%
N =	14,548	5,091



Loved my adviser, so warm, friendly and patient. Just what I needed at a time when I was feeling low, confused and fed up. So amazing... a huge thank you.

HELPLINE CALLER

Self-Reported Debt Levels

The actual level of debt was not disclosed by 46% of Helpline callers in 2019/20. The figures presented here are for gamblers only due to a high rate of non-disclosure for affected others, which anecdotally may be due to them not being fully aware of actual levels of debt.

- Over the past year, 74% of gamblers using the Helpline reported having some level of debt.
- Of the gamblers presenting to the Helpline who provided an approximation of the level of debt, the most frequently mentioned was 'less than £5000' (18%).
- 10% of Helpline callers reported debts of £20,000 to £99,999.

Table 17: Reported debt levels of gamblers using Helpline 2019/20

Level of Debt	Helpline
None	26%
Some	27%
Less than £5,000	18%
£5,000 to £9,999	8%
£10,000 to £14,999	5%
£15,000 to £19,999	3%
£20,000 to £99,999	10%
£100,000 or more	1%
Bankruptcy/IVA	1%
N =	9,897



Amazing advice and support, easy to talk to, made me feel positive and supported to begin the process of helping my partner with his problem.

HELPLINE CALLER

National Gambling Helpline
Call free, **24/7: 0808 80 20 133**
Chat via **www.GamCare.org.uk**