

**FOR EMBARGO TILL 28 MAY 2008, 10AM**

**LATEST GAMBLING PARTICIPATION SURVEY:**

**NO CHANGE IN GAMBLING PARTICIPATION AND  
PROBLEM GAMBLING RATES  
BUT MORE VIEW GAMBLING AS LEISURE AND  
MORE GAMBLERS START EARLIER**

**— NCPG to Step up Public Education and Youth Outreach Efforts --**

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) has released the findings of its second gambling participation survey among Singapore residents to the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG). The 2008 survey was completed in January 2008 while the first survey was completed in February 2005.

### **No Change in Gambling Participation and Gambling Addiction**

The 2008 MCYS survey found that 54% of Singapore residents aged 18 years old and above have taken part in some form of gambling activity over a one year period, compared to 58% three years ago based on the 2005 survey. The analyses suggested that the change from 58% in 2005 to 54% in 2008 was likely due to random fluctuations of gambling participation rate over time.

The 2008 survey also found that between 0.7% to 1.6% of survey respondents may have a gambling addiction, based on reported symptoms suggesting probable pathological gambling. In terms of a single point estimate, the 2008 survey showed a 1.2% probable pathological gambling rate compared to 2.1% in the 2005 survey. However, the analyses suggested that the change from 2.1% in 2005 to 1.2% in 2008 was likely due to random fluctuations of probable pathological gambling rate over time.

Professor David Chan, Chairman of the NCPG Research Sub-committee and Co-Chair of the International Advisory Panel to the National Addictions Management Centre and NCPG said:

*“The NCPG examined the results and noted that the changes in rates of gambling participation as well as probable pathological gambling from the first survey to the second survey fall within the range for random fluctuations over time. In other words, there is no real decrease in both the gambling participation rate and the probable pathological gambling rate between the 2005 and 2008 surveys. The results were not unexpected*

*since the national efforts to systematically tackle problem gambling are in the early stages.*

*Although there is no survey evidence of an increase in problem gambling from 2005 to 2008, we must not be complacent in our efforts to address problem gambling, especially given the serious personal and social consequences of problem gambling and the rise in gambling opportunities locally and in the region.”*

### **More View Some Gambling Activities as Leisure**

The 2008 MCYS survey showed a substantial change in attitude as softer forms of gambling were increasingly seen as leisure. About 49% to 54% of the survey respondents now see 4D, TOTO, Singapore Sweep and social gambling as “leisure activities” as opposed to “gambling activities”, as compared with only 25% to 36% in 2005.

Mrs Mildred Tan, Chairman of the NCPG Public Communications Sub-committee said:

*“In February this year, the NCPG started an integrated public communications initiative to raise awareness of problem gambling and the helpline. To reach out to problem gamblers, a theme for this integrated initiative was developed: ‘Often the people who suffer from problem gambling aren’t the gamblers (but are the families and friends). Stop Problem Gambling’. With the latest prevalence survey results, we will continue to build on this and keep up the messaging throughout the year. All types of gambling activities, including softer forms of gambling, can lead to problem gambling, if done excessively.”*

### **More Start Gambling at a Younger Age**

The 2008 MCYS survey revealed that approximately 75% of the respondents who ever gambled began gambling as early as the age of 24 or younger, up from 63% in 2005. In addition, about 70% of these respondents started to gamble regularly (at least once a week) before they turned 30 years old in the 2008 survey, as compared with about 60% in 2005. The 2008 survey also found that all of the gamblers with symptoms of probable pathological gambling started gambling regularly below the age of 30. Hence, the results showing an early onset of gambling is a cause for concern. The NCPG will step up its outreach programmes targeting youths.

Ms Debra Soon, Chairman of the NCPG Youth Sub-committee said:

*“The NCPG has been supporting youth outreach programmes to raise awareness of problem gambling among primary and secondary students. So far, these programmes have reached over 12,000 students in total. The NCPG will also start programmes targeted at tertiary students and young adults.”*

Mr. Lim Hock San, Chairman of NCPG summed up:

*“The latest MCYS gambling participation survey highlights several focal areas for NCPG’s work ahead. There remains a segment of the population who are addicted to gambling and we must continue to help them overcome their problem. Also, we must now signal to the public the dangers in viewing gambling purely as a leisure activity and address the issues associated with youth gambling. Hence, NCPG will step up its problem gambling counselling, public education and youth efforts.”*

The 2008 report on the MCYS survey on participation in gambling activities among Singapore residents will be available on the MCYS website ([www.mcys.gov.sg](http://www.mcys.gov.sg)) from **28 May 2008, 10am.**

**Annexes:**

Annex 1 – Public Education Initiatives of NCPG

Annex 2 – Youth Initiatives of NCPG

**Issued by:**

**National Council on Problem Gambling**

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***About the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG):***

*The NCPG was appointed in August 2005 as part of Singapore’s national framework to address problem gambling. It is a council comprising 19 members with expertise in public communications, psychiatry and psychology, social work, counselling and rehabilitative services. The Council’s role is to*



*provide advice and feedback to the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) on public education programmes on problem gambling and on the effectiveness of treatment, counseling and rehabilitative programmes ; to decide on funding for these programmes; preventive and rehabilitative programmes; and on the applications for exclusion of persons from casinos. Stop problem gambling, call 1800-6-668-668. For more information, please see [www.ncpg.org.sg](http://www.ncpg.org.sg).*

## ANNEX 1

### **Public Education Initiatives by NCPG**

NCPG has implemented various public education initiatives to create public awareness of problem gambling and community help services available.

The list below describes the public education initiatives undertaken by NCPG. (As NCPG has a specific focus on youth education and outreach initiatives, these are reported separately under Annex 2).

#### 1. Education through Mass Media

- An integrated media campaign taglined “Often the people who really suffer from problem gambling aren’t the gamblers” in 2008, via TV, radio, print and outdoor.
- Co-sponsored “A Million Treasures” or “Bai Wan Bao”, MediaCorp TV8’s drama series incorporating messages on the ills of excessive gambling in Dec 2006.
- Awareness campaign featuring artiste Li Nanxing over TV, radio and TV Mobile during Lunar New Year season, publicising helplines and reminding Singaporeans not to overindulge in gambling activities in February 2007.
- “Bet Your Life”, a 5-parter TV info-educational programme featuring real life case studies of problem gamblers and professional advice by social workers and psychiatrists in January 2006.
- Advertorials during World Cup season and English Premier League seasons in The New Paper, Shin Min Daily and Football Update for 2006 and 2007.
- A 6-parter newspaper advertorial series featuring real life examples of gamblers and their families, published in the Lianhe Wanbao and Shinmin Daily in October 2005 and March 2006 respectively.

#### 2. Education at the community level (30,000 Singaporeans reached to date)

- Partnered D’Rama Arts Pte Ltd and DramaBox, two local theatre groups, to stage dramas tours “168” and “Lucky in Life” at shopping malls and town centres.
- Partnered Olive Consulting Group to reach out to blue collar workers through lunch time skit (Workplace Outreach Programme).
- Partnered Care Corner Counselling, Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society and Institute of Mental Health’s Community Addictions Management Programme to conduct talks to public and religious groups.
- Partnered Fei Yue Community Services to conduct workshops in prisons.

3. Public Education Materials

Over 500,000 copies of public education pamphlets have been distributed to the public through gambling operators, voluntary welfare organisations and community organisations (e.g. Community Development Councils, Community Clubs).

4. Singapore Problem Gambling Conference

NCPG organised the inaugural Singapore Problem Gambling Conference 2007, held between 5 and 7 July. Over 500 international and local experts, practitioners and industry players came together to share and discuss best practices in addressing problem gambling.

Going forward, NCPG will be embarking on these new programmes in 2008/2009:

- NCPG would be sustaining its 2008 integrated media campaign through further bursts to coincide with the soccer and F1 racing seasons. In total, NCPG would have invested some \$3 million in public education for 2008. This is three times more than its annual spends for 2006 and 2007, signalling a ramp-up in its public education efforts.
- It would also be rolling out print materials of the same campaign through 16 gambling operators who have signed up with its voluntary Responsible Gambling Code of Practice. These collateral, bearing its 2008 tag 'Stop Problem Gambling. Call 1800-6-668-668' will be distributed to some 350 gambling outlets here by the end of 2008.
- YAH! or Young At Heart is the first community college in Singapore to promote lifelong learning among senior citizens. It will launch a module on problem gambling under its new Certificate of Community Service in the second half of 2008, where it aims to train 40 seniors to become problem gambling ambassadors to in turn reach out to 7500 seniors by mid 2009.
- D'Rama Arts, a local theatre company will be working with NCPG for the third time round. It has already completed two rounds of roadshows targeting 2600 persons since 2006. Starting from the second half of 2008, it will be working with senior organisations to educate 1200 senior citizens on the potential harms of gambling addiction through a new play.
- NCPG would be working with its appointed partners on programmes for the self-employed. Olive Consulting Group will be assisting the NCPG to reach out to 350 hawkers through a roving exhibition and stand-up skit in 2008.

## **ANNEX 2**

### **Youth Initiatives by NCPG**

NCPG has had a focus on youth since it was formed. NCPG has conducted several youth outreach and education programmes to raise awareness of problem gambling among secondary and tertiary students to date.

These include:

1. “Win Big, Don’t Gamble” roadshow by Methodist Children and Youth Centre (MCYC). The roadshow comprises a package of educative tools which are available to all schools in Singapore, including an in-house produced docudrama, a talk on youth gambling, a poster display section, interactive computer games developed by renowned youth gambling research institute McGill University, as well as popular collateral for youths to retain after the roadshow. MCYC’s roadshow has reached 9,000 secondary students in 10 schools in 2007 and it targets to double this figure by end of 2008.
2. “Handling Underaged Gambling” workshops by St Andrew’s Lifestreams. The programme was co-developed by We Care Foundation and adapted from McGill University’s educational materials; and was formulated into interactive classroom sessions for youths. It was conducted between 2006 and 2007; and had reached 2,000 students in 7 schools in total.
3. Short film entitled “Risk” by South East Community Development Council (CDC). Launched in March 2007, the film was developed by youths for youths as a resource material for schools and youth groups to use in their preventive education efforts. It depicts the story of a young boy who unwittingly falls into gambling through his favourite sport – soccer. Publicity materials of the film have been sent to over 100 schools to encourage take-up rate and the NCPG is currently considering ways of making this resource kit widely available.
4. “Be Yourself, Be in Control” workshops by South West Community Development Council (CDC). The workshops, educating youths on the negative aspects of gambling, was held in July 2007 and reached out to 640 students in four secondary schools in the Southwest District. In conjunction with the initiative, the CDC held a nationwide poster design competition which drew over 170 entries and the winning designs were featured in postcards distributed to youths through various channels.
5. Short film entitled “TORN”, by Honours year undergraduates from the Nanyang Technological University’s Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information. Targeting movie-going youths, this is a family drama on kinship and gambling, exploring common issues in society to promote family

values and educate on the consequences of gambling. The film was launched in May 2008 and the students would be working with MediaCorp TV and foreign film festivals for further publicity.

Going forward, NCPG would be working on these new programmes in 2008/2009:

- Training counsellors on youth gambling and counselling. The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and the NCPG are working with the Institute of Mental Health's Community Addictions Management Programme (CAMP) to train counsellors including those in schools. It is also looking into engaging renowned youth gambling expert, Dr Jeffrey Derevensky from Canada's McGill University to conduct a seminar on working with youth gamblers.
- Consulting youths on effective public education messages. NCPG plans to organise a series of public consultation sessions with tertiary youths, at-risk youths and working youths on the types of messages and creative executions that are suitable for youth-centric public education campaigns. These will culminate into useful inputs for refining its future youth programmes.
- Developing a youth-friendly website. NCPG is currently looking at revamping its website at [www.ncpg.org.sg](http://www.ncpg.org.sg) and intends to tap on it as a key communications tool for youth education. This may include refreshing its look and feel, incorporating more interactive elements (e.g. chatrooms, blogs) and optimising the site through the purchase of intuitive keyword searches (e.g. gambling, problem gambling, help on gambling) and website addresses (e.g. [www.stopproblemgambling.sg](http://www.stopproblemgambling.sg)).