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# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2016-2017

GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL

### AND LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE



INFORMATION  
AND REFERRAL  
CENTRE OF GREATER  
MONTREAL

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL CENTRE OF GREATER MONTRÉAL (IRCGM)

Annual Report of Gambling: Help & Referral  
April 1st, 2016 to March 31st, 2017

Registered charity number  
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# GAMBLING: HELP AND REFERRAL

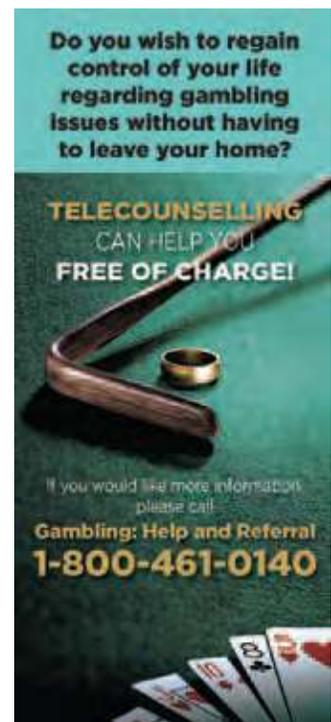
## An Intense Year



From 1993, when the first casino opened in Québec and the Video Lottery Terminals (VLT) arrived in bars, until 2001, Loto-Québec funded the implementation and the management by the Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montréal of the Gambling: Help and Referral (GHR) helpline. Since then, funding has been taken over by the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux*. At that time, everything had yet to be invented: specific services for gamblers were non-existent, knowledge about gambling by counsellors was limited and the public, in general, had very little awareness of the problem. Ten years later, in 2010, we rejoiced (without yet claiming victory) at being able to offer specific and quality services to gamblers in every area of Québec. Services, as well as expertise in research and treatment, were henceforth well established. All that remained was to convince at-risk gamblers and problem gamblers to ask for help.

We realize that there is still a long way to go before we can reach a satisfactory percentage of gamblers in treatment. The *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS)* took another step towards achieving this goal by entrusting GHR with the mandate of offering a TeleCounselling program to problem gamblers. Services for compulsive players, already offered in public rehabilitation centres in Québec, are by consequence improved.

TeleCounselling is a short-term, over the telephone form of psychological help given by the team of Gambling: Help and Referral. In fact, GHR has been participating since the launch of this program by first assembling the group of counsellors that would be offering this program and then relying on the team of counsellors to inform people about this new service. TeleCounselling is for people with game of chance addiction who prefer this approach over face-to-face therapies or for those who have a hard time getting around. The success of such a program rests on one major characteristic: that of being given by counsellors who from the start, other than their clinical training and supervision, were specialized in over the telephone help for addiction.



The potential of such an approach on a therapeutic level was clearly proven during the pilot project in 2006 for which the MSSS financed. It was also proven that serving the entire Québec territory from one telephone service point is not only realistic, but very well received by the population.

That is how the GHR service fully fulfills its mission: a telephone service that is free for the Québec population, anonymous, bilingual and 24/7. A service that offers support, information and referral.



### SUPPORT...

- during difficult moments while facing the ambivalence of acknowledging the problem;
- during the urges to gamble even if the procedures for getting help have already begun;
- during crises when suicidal thoughts are overwhelming;
- during anxiety attacks about starting treatment.

### INFORMATION...

- on the signs to look out for that a gambling problem may be developing;
- on how to talk to a loved one we suspect of having a problem;
- on all therapy, support and reinsertion available to gamblers;
- on what irrational thinking, protective factors and triggers are.

### REFERRAL...

- to an outpatient rehabilitation centre (CRD);
- to a support group for gamblers;
- to short-term, over the telephone, treatment: TeleCounselling;
- to programs for the loved ones of a gambler.

This year, a team of 12 counsellors answered 12,089 calls. The counsellors at GHR, for the most part, have completed certificates in substance abuse and hold baccalaureates in one of the following fields: psychology, criminology, social work, special education, multi-discipline baccalaureates combining certificates in mental health, youth intervention, violence, victims and society or a DEC in correctional intervention, etc.

In addition, all counsellors who begin working at GHR receive a 200-hour training in a 1/1 ratio setting. This “in house” training includes: theory on problem gambling and its Cognitive Behavioral Treatment, concepts of co-dependency, interventions during psychosocial or suicidal crises, interventions with a gambler’s loved ones, interventions with youth. An overview of the different treatment approaches, an introduction to the basics of the Motivational Interviewing approach and mental health problems; specifically personality disorders are also addressed. This training also includes a presentation of the different areas of Québec and their main cities, the CRD’s that serve them, how to use the iCarol database, as well as, various referral tools: books, scientific studies, research papers, etc.

The philosophy of our interventions is based on believing in the skills and resources of our callers: we therefore strive to mirror these skills and to restore confidence in our callers so that they may use them. Using the basics of Motivational Interviewing makes sense here. Being anonymous and confidential enables callers to speak the unspeakable without fear of being identified. In fact, suffering, shame, despair, anxiety, an insecurity are often part of their experiences.

Between November 15, 1993, and March 31, 2017, more than 200,000 people called GHR. For twenty-three years now, Gambling: Help and Referral has been offering a reliable service of quality support, information and referrals to the entire population of Québec. We continue to make every effort so that the callers’, for whom GHR acts as a safety net, trust in us is well deserved and maintained.

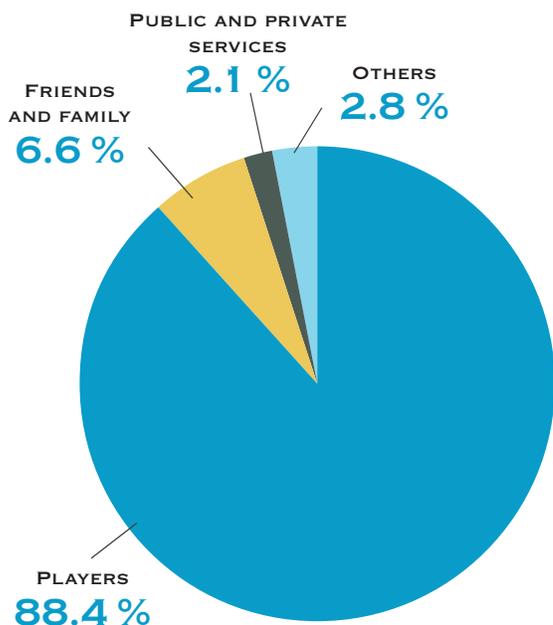
This year, more than 12,000 people used this service; among them, 6% were anglophones. The service received one complaint that was handled to the satisfaction of the complainant by the coordinator.



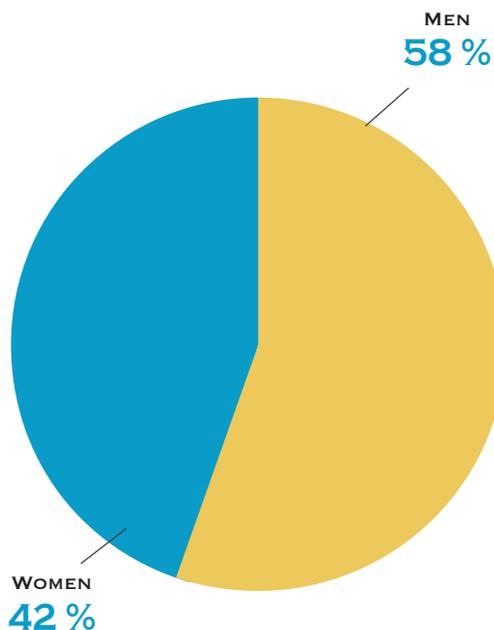
## SOURCE OF REQUESTS

In 2016–2017, 88.4% of callers were very concerned with their gambling habits: of these, 42% were women (38% of callers) and 58% were men (51% of callers). We note that there was an increase of 2% of men from last year. Among the rest of the callers, more than 6% were the loved ones of a gambler: partners, siblings, parents, friends, etc. More than 4% were counsellors and professionals from the public and private sectors. Of the total number of callers, more than 95% were adults and 4% seniors.

### SOURCE OF REQUESTS



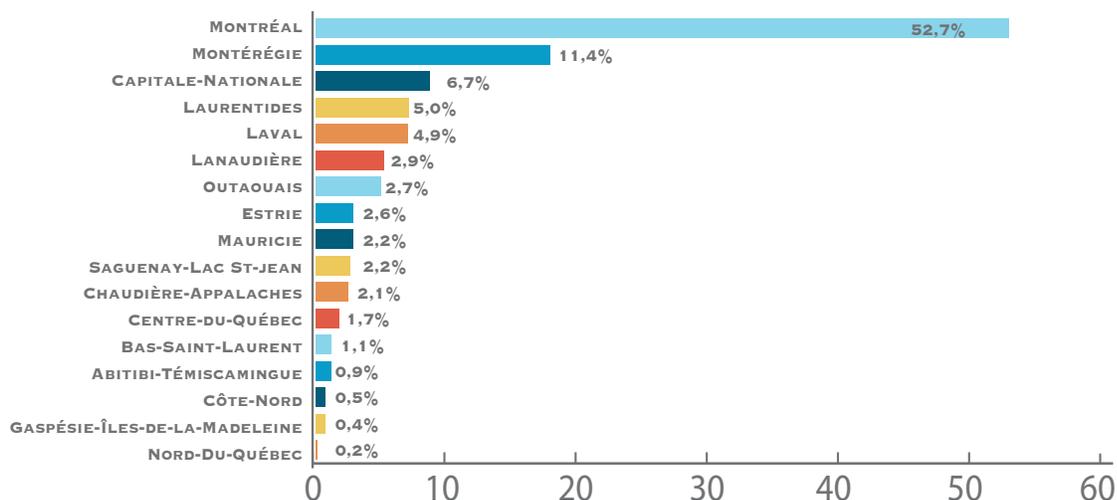
### GENDER OF PLAYERS



## GEOGRAPHICAL SOURCE OF CALLS

More than half of the calls were from Montréal with 52%; followed by Montérégie (11%), Capitale-Nationale (6.6%), Laurentides and Laval (almost 5% each), Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec (almost 4%), Lanaudière, Outaouais and Estrie (almost 3% each). Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Chaudière-Appalaches, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, Côte-Nord, Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Nord-du-Québec accounted for about 7% of calls.

## GEOGRAPHICAL SOURCE OF CALLS



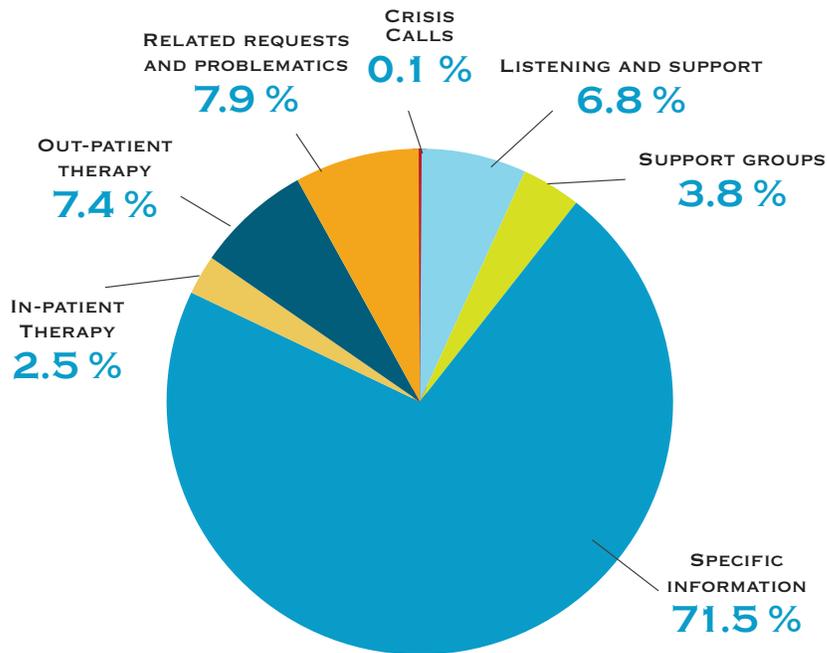
## TYPES OF GAMING MENTIONED

The types of gaming most often mentioned by our callers were Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) with 51%, casino slot machines, lotteries, as well as, on-line games accounted for 11% for each of these 3 categories and poker was 5%. Other types of gaming such as bingo, horse racing, sports betting, electronic games and certain casino games accounted for 11%.

## TYPES OF REQUESTS

- Specific information on prevention, problem gambling, the profile of at-risk gamblers, the GHR service, comorbidity, the gambling industry, self-exclusion, as well as, codependency represented more than 70% of calls.
- Requests for rehabilitation services and support groups represented more than 13% of calls.
- Other related problems such as crisis management, suicidal thoughts, mental health problems, substance abuse, violence, legal services, budget consultation and shelter, etc., represented a little more of 7% of calls.
- Listening and support represented more than 6% of calls.

## NATURE OF REQUESTS



### ON-LINE HELP

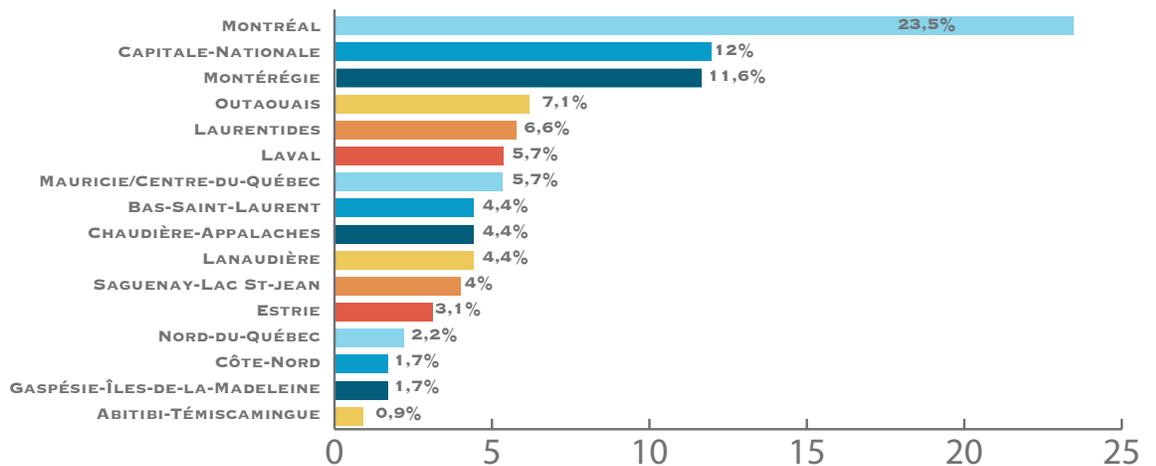
In 2006, the *ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux* entrusted Gambling : Help and Referral with the mandate of answering requests made on-line via its website: almost 2 000 people have used this service. In 2016–2017, almost 250 people took advantage of this service which represented an increase of 25% from last year.

### THE WEBSITE

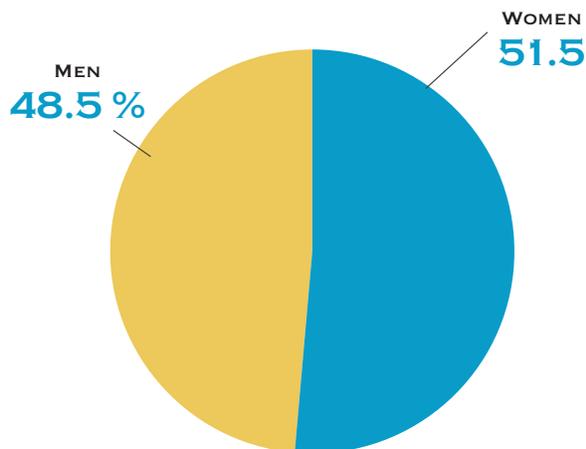
The Gambling: Help and Referral website is both an information site, as well as, an on-line help site. Upon entering, the users are asked to choose between on-line help or information on gambling. The site is not only for gamblers but family members, loved ones and counsellors, as well. Since its creation, 53% women and 47% men have used this website.

In 2016–2017, these were the geographical sources of on-line requests: Montréal 23.5%, Capitale-Nationale 12%, Montérégie 11.6%, Outaouais 7.1%, Laurentides 6.6 %, Laval 5.7%, Mauricie — Centre-du-Québec 5.7 %, Bas-Saint-Laurent, Chaudière-Appalaches and Lanaudière 4.4% each, Saguenay — Lac-Saint-Jean 4%, Estrie 3.1%, Nord-du-Québec 2,2%, Côte-Nord and Gaspésie – Îles-de-la-Madeleine 1.7% each, and Abitibi-Témiscamingue 0.9%.

## ON-LINE HELP



## TELECOUNSELLING



**“This little phone number that I dialled one day saved my life...”**

**-Testimony from a participant of the TeleCounseling Program**

## TELECOUNSELLING FOR PROBLEM GAMBLERS

After five years of service, 471 people have requested this short-term TeleCounseling.

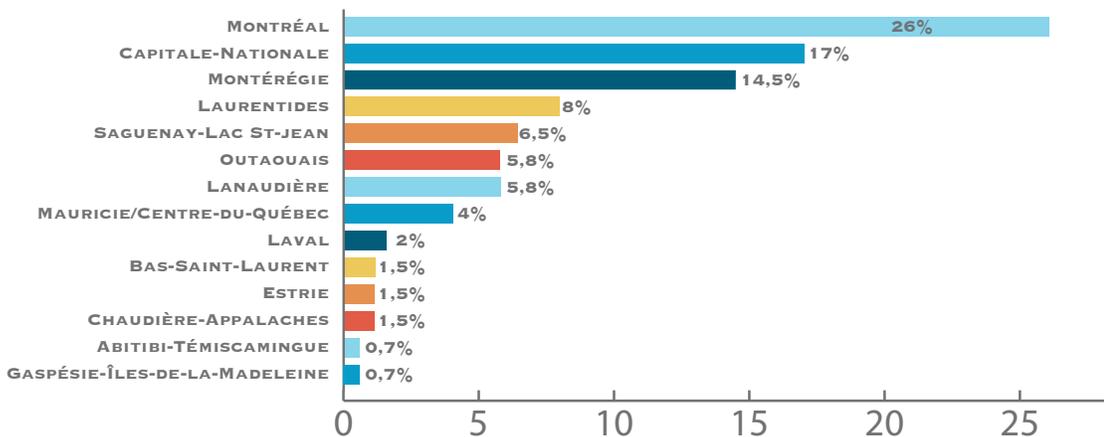
This free service for problem gamblers, whose clinical supervisor is Mr. Jacques Ducharme M.Ps., is intended for a clientele with diverse socio-demographic characteristics from all areas of Québec. As previously mentioned, the recruitment of participants is done by the members of the GHR team.

In 2016–2017, 140 people with a gambling problem requested the TeleCounseling service, which represented an increase of almost 20% from last year. This year, a bit more women than men requested TC:

51.5% were women and 48.5% were men. The participants were divided in 14 of the 16 health and social areas of Québec: 26% from Montréal, almost 17% from Capitale-Nationale, 14.5% from Montérégie, almost 8% from Laurentides, 6.5% from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, 5.8% from Outaouais, as well as, Lanaudière, more than 4% from Mauricie and Centre-du-Québec, 2% from Laval, almost 1.5% from Bas-Saint-Laurent, Estrie and Chaudière-Appalaches, and finally, 0.7% from Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

This short-term treatment program for problem gamblers, innovative in that it is over the telephone, includes a one-and-a-half-hour evaluation session and six telephone appointments on the following themes: motivation, finances, irrational thinking, triggers, relapse prevention, as well as, staying the course. Four follow-up sessions are available at 1, 3, 6 and 12 months following the end of the program. TeleCounselling is a relevant approach for early intervention, for people who have a hard time getting around and for people who are weary of asking for help in the public sector for fear of being recognized, etc.

### TELECOUNSELLING



### The TeleCounselling Team:

Mr. Jacques Ducharme, M.Ps.,  
clinical supervisor

Mrs. Hélène Hamel, M.I.T.,  
coordinator and counsellor

Mrs. Estelle Arcand, counsellor

Mr. Alexis Beaulieu-Thibodeau, counsellor

Mr. Gil Bellemare, counsellor

Mrs. Leila Ech-chouyekh, counsellor

Mr. Érick-André Leroux, counsellor

Mrs. Isabelle Provencher, counsellor

Mrs. Nancy Rocha, counsellor

## TRANSFER OF KNOWLEDGE ACTIVITIES

As clinical supervisor of the TeleCounselling program, Mr. Jacques Ducharme participated in a panel entitled *Chaque porte est la bonne* from a conference organized by the Association des intervenants en dépendance du Québec (AIDQ) and Université de Sherbrooke, Longueuil campus.

Mrs. Hamel participated in certain activities offered by the Research Chair on Responsible Gambling, Concordia University:

- Follow-up meetings from Actions concertées (*Fond de recherche du Québec, Société et culture – FRQSC*), *Impacts socioéconomiques des jeux de hasard et d'argent*.
- Viewing of the film KA-CHING! with two DHR/GHR counsellors, followed by a discussion with experts (*L'algorithme de l'addiction ; regard sur l'univers des machines à sous*).

Lastly, she assisted in the launching of the book: *Sommes-nous trop branchés? La cyberdépendance*, by Amnon Jacob Suissa.

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## COMMUNICATIONS

The GHR services were highlighted this year during a publicity campaign in the weekly Transcontinental newspapers. As well, there were banners and posters inside buses and bus shelters of the outskirts of Montréal. Mrs. Hamel also gave several interviews on compulsive gambling to different media outlets.

In the different kiosks held by the Centre, the Gambling: Help and Referral services were put in the forefront so that citizens with worrisome gambling behaviours can find help. This was the case during the following events:

- Conseil des délégués FTQ
- Fair : *Intégration et insertion professionnelle*
- Fair : *Carrefour 50 ans +*
- Meeting youth at *Centre jeunesse de Montréal*
- Kiosk held at the Douglas Hospital "*Cross training : santé mentale, consommation et inaptitude*"