



Understanding the costs of treating gambling disorders

By Witness Saurombe



Sunday Times
19 Oct 2025

Sunday Times

**GAMBLING
OBSESSION
IS COSTING
SA DEARLY**

Business Tech
13 Sep 2025

South Africa has a new crisis –
and it's getting worse






13 November 2025 — 14 November 2025



Moneyweb
11 June 2025

Daily Maverick
4 Jul 2025

Moneyweb@Midday 

Betting on desperation: How the poor are fueling SA's gambling boom

South Africa's bad bet: How online gambling is a major source of extraction from the economy

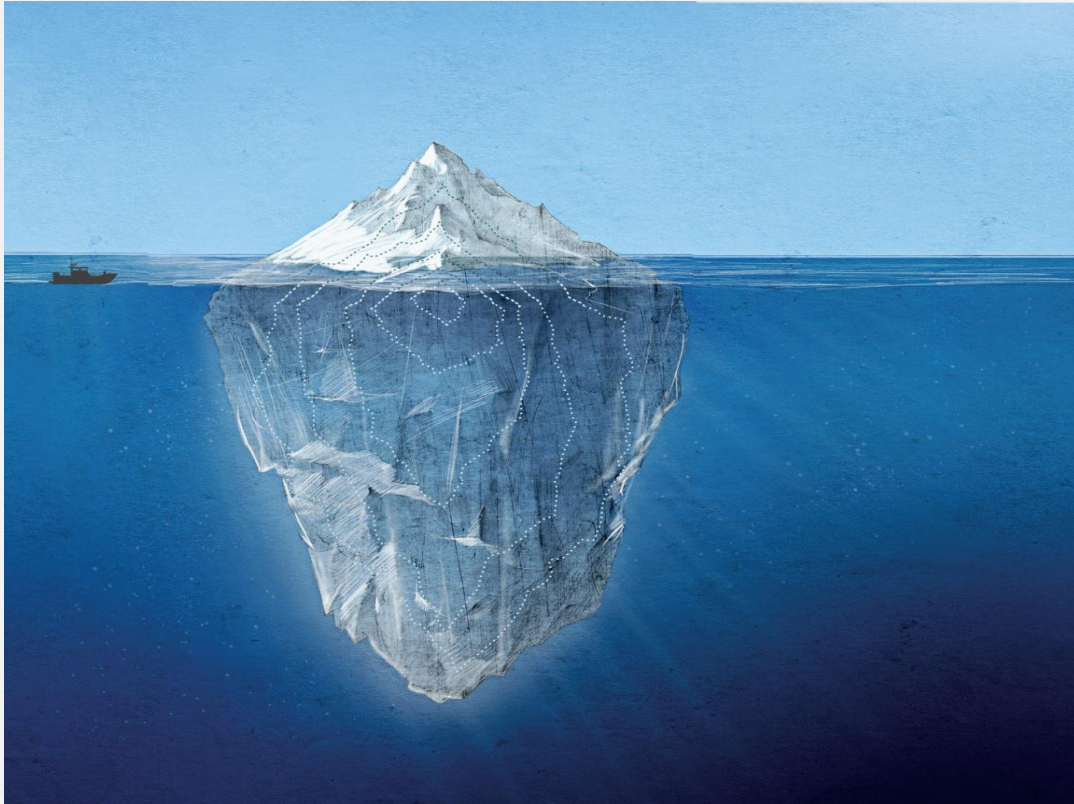
• **What constitutes cost?**

&

• **Cost to who?**

What is the cost? Iceberg Theory

- It's more than what you can see!!



Direct Costs

Indirect Costs

Intangible Costs

What is the cost?

- Direct costs
- Indirect costs
- Intangible costs



Direct costs

- **Treatment and recovery costs / Psychotherapy costs** – counselling, therapy, support group participation
- **Financial and legal costs** – debt counselling/financial literacy, debt recovery, debt restructuring, bankruptcy
- **Medical costs** – certain medications may be used in treatment, such as off-label prescriptions for gambling disorder.

Direct costs *conti...*

- **Legal fees** - Expenses for managing criminal offenses such as theft, fraud, or embezzlement committed to support the gambling habit.
- **Prevention and research** - Public expenditure on prevention programs, research into gambling problems, and regulating the industry.
- **Administrative costs** – costs of arranging and coordinating all activities to assist problem gamblers.



Indirect costs

- **Social services** – social welfare costs, unemployment benefits
- **Health and social care costs** - Expenses for treating comorbidities such as anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular issues.
- **Family and domestic costs** - Costs associated with divorce, separation, child abuse, neglect, and domestic violence.

Indirect costs *conti...*

- **Workplace productivity** - Lost wages, reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, time away from school or work and employer costs related to disciplinary, managing poor performance, re-recruitment and retraining.
- **Justice system costs** - Expenses related to arrests, court cases, and incarceration for gambling-related crimes.
- **Premature death** - The economic cost of lost future earnings due to suicides linked to gambling despair.

Intangible costs

- **Emotional and psychological** - Mental and emotional toll on the individual and their family, including stress, anxiety, depression, guilt, and shame.
- **Social and interpersonal** - Strained relationships, social isolation, and damage to family and community bonds.

Intangible costs *conti...*

- **Loss of life** - Costs associated with suicide, which include the loss of a person's life and the profound impact on their family and society including loss of bread winners.
- **Stigma** - social burden of shame and stigma often prevents gamblers from seeking the help they need.
- **Reduced quality of life** - A decline in overall well-being for both the gambler and affected family members.

Intangible costs *conti...*

- **Physical violence** - Experiences of or threats of physical violence, for example, from loan sharks.

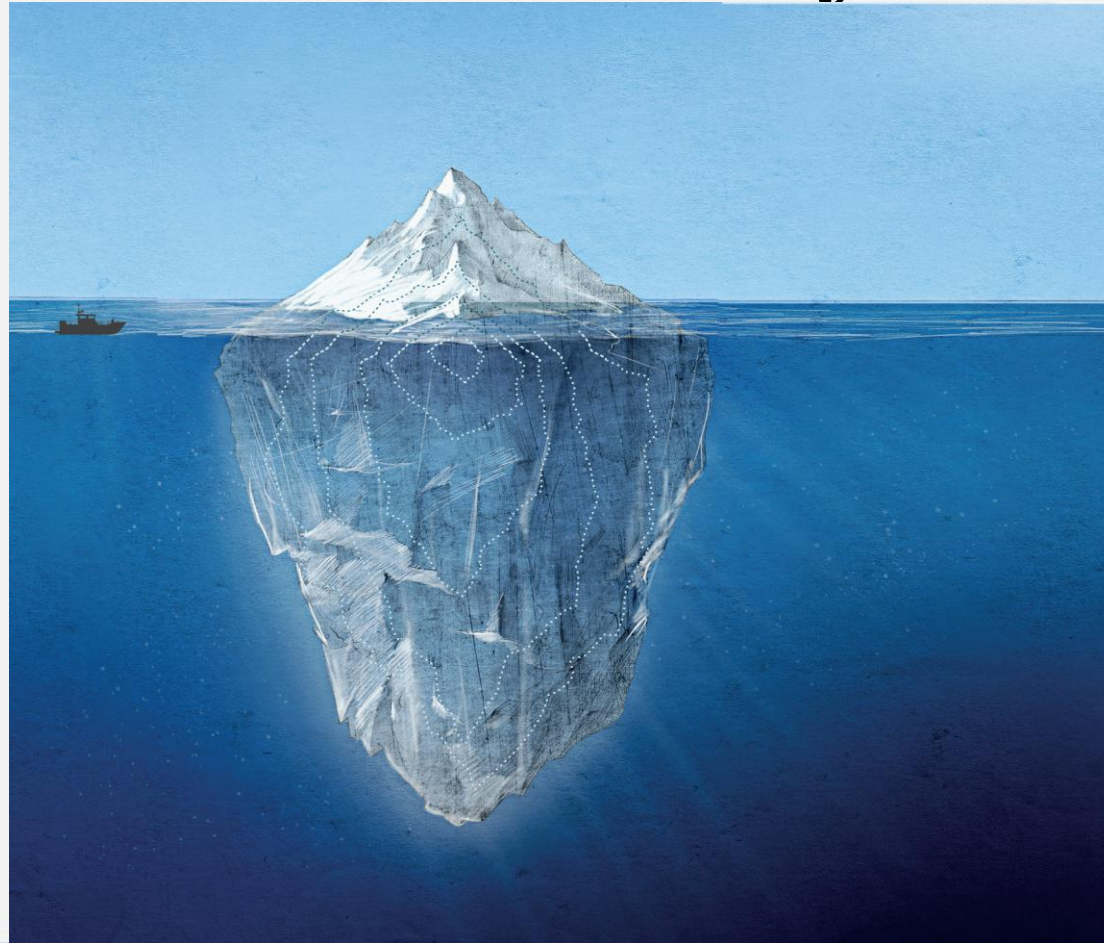
Summary

- **Direct costs**

- Treatment
- Financial
- Medical

- **Indirect Costs**

- Social services
- Health & social care
- Family & domestic
- Workplace productivity
- Justice system
- Premature death



Legal

Prevention & Research

- **Intangible costs**

- Emotional & Psychological
- Social & interpersonal
- Loss of life
- Stigma
- Reduced quality of life
- Physical violence

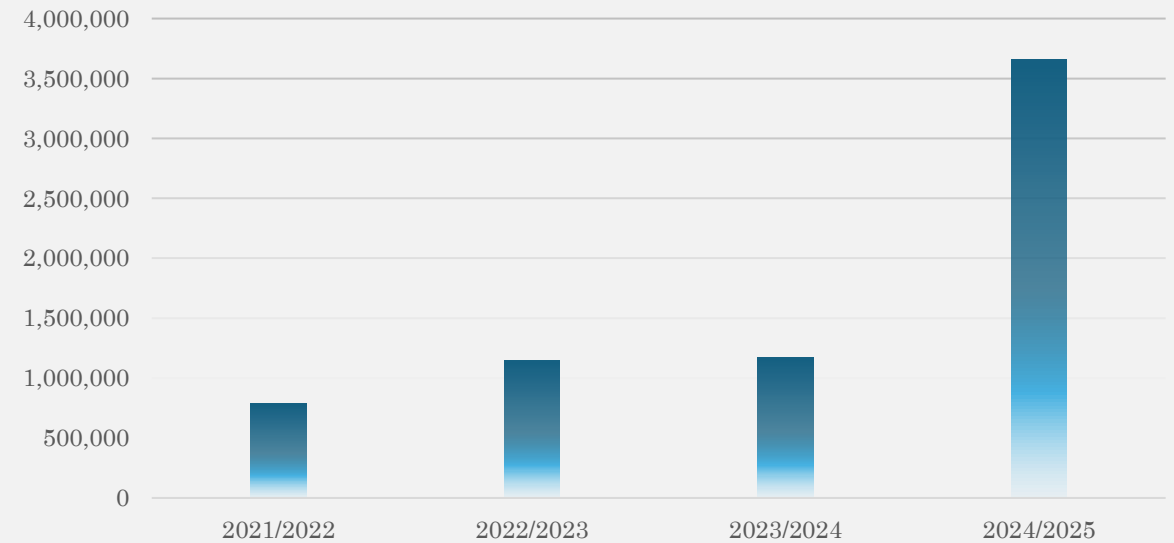
Contextualising SARGF interventions

1. Problem Gambling assessment and referral

- PG assessment process +/- 45 mins



Counselling telephone costs



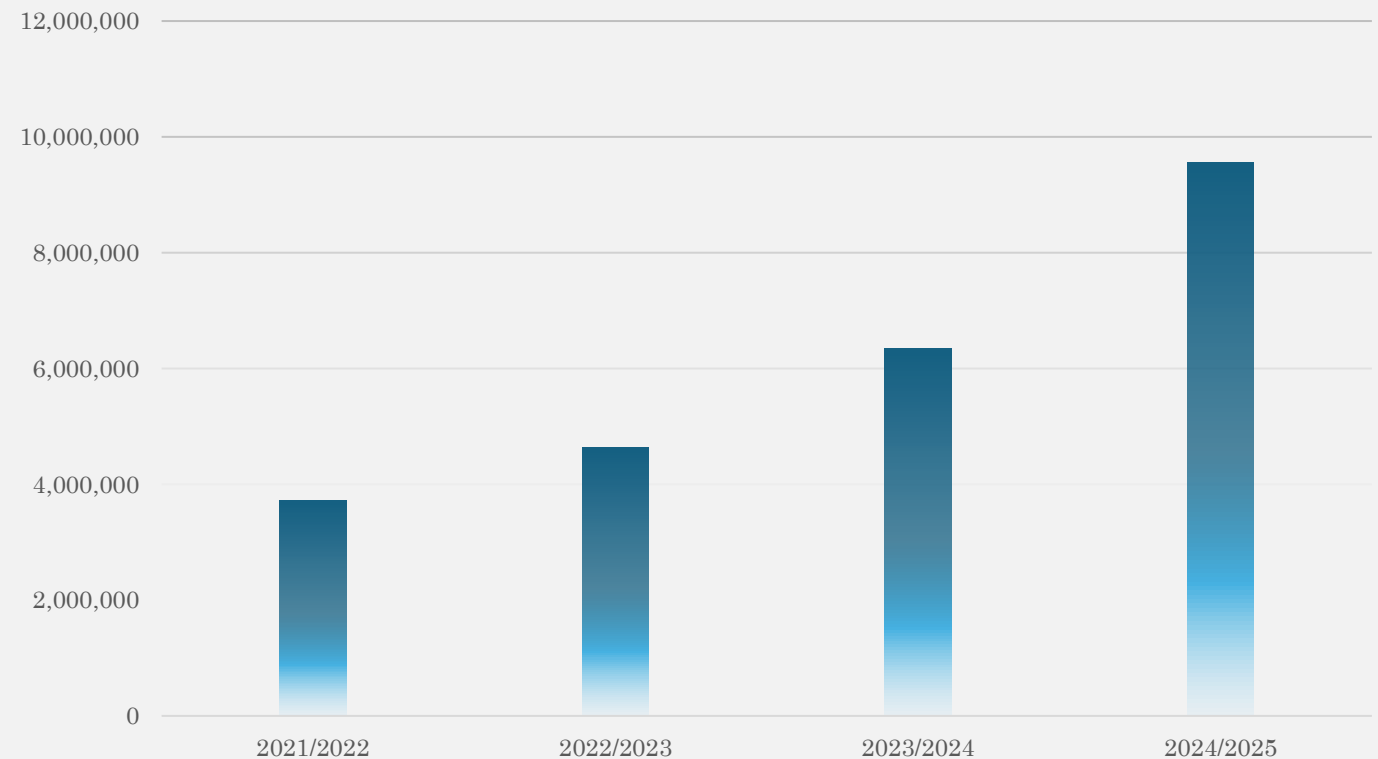
2. Therapy costs

- Problem gamblers – Minimum of 8 sessions
- Self – exclusion - Minimum of 3 sessions
- Family sessions – Minimum of 3 sessions
- Minor sessions
- Ongoing weekly NRGPS support group. Currently has +/- 550 participants.

- 96 Treatment Professionals country wide

- 18 Psychologists
- 55 Social workers
- 19 Registered counsellors
- 4 Wellness counsellors

Therapy costs

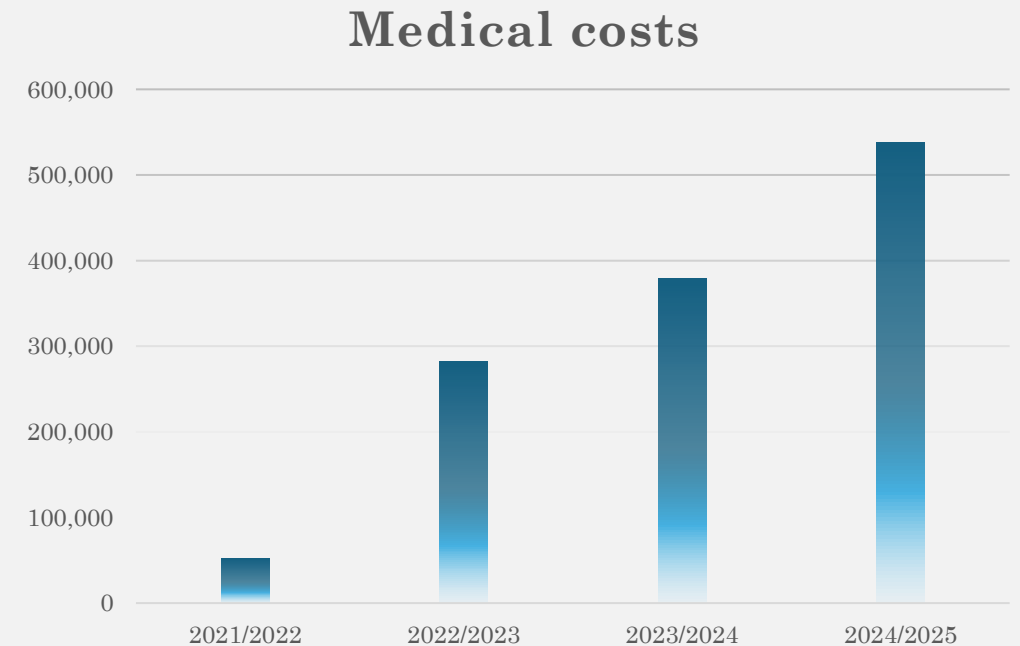




- Financial costs – debt counselling – 11 session minimum
financial literacy – 5 sessions minimum.

- Medical costs

- Psychiatric evaluations
- Inpatient admission from 14 days upwards.
- Medicine costs



3. Advocacy

- Responsible Gambling Workshops
- Exhibitions and Trade shows
- Taking risks wisely (TRW)
- Employee Assistance programme (EAP)



- Punter activations
- Mobile counselling
- Media coverage
 - Social media
 - Radio - including community radios.
 - Television



NATIONAL RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING PROGRAM
An initiative of the SAAGP

RADIO Khwezi
90.5 FM | 107.7 FM

When Fun Turns Into a Trap

Join Bongive Ngobese, Counselling Services Specialist on Radio Khwezi in conversation with Sizwe Zungu as they unpack

Why gambling can become addictive, the brain's response to gambling and its similarities to drugs/alcohol, early warning signs families should watch for, the hidden impact on relationships at home, the rise of online betting and sports gambling and practical advice to support someone in denial & where to find help.

27 SEP 2025

Radio Khwezi
TBC



NATIONAL RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING PROGRAM
An initiative of the SAAGP

SABC NEWS

How technology has made gambling more accessible and the dangers it poses to individuals, their families and society at large.

Join Mrs Sibongile Simelane-Quntana Executive Director on SABC News

10 SEP 2025

Channel: SABC TV News, DSTV Channel 404
Time: 22:20



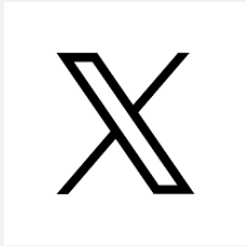
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076 675 0710



responsiblegambling



@SARGFoundation

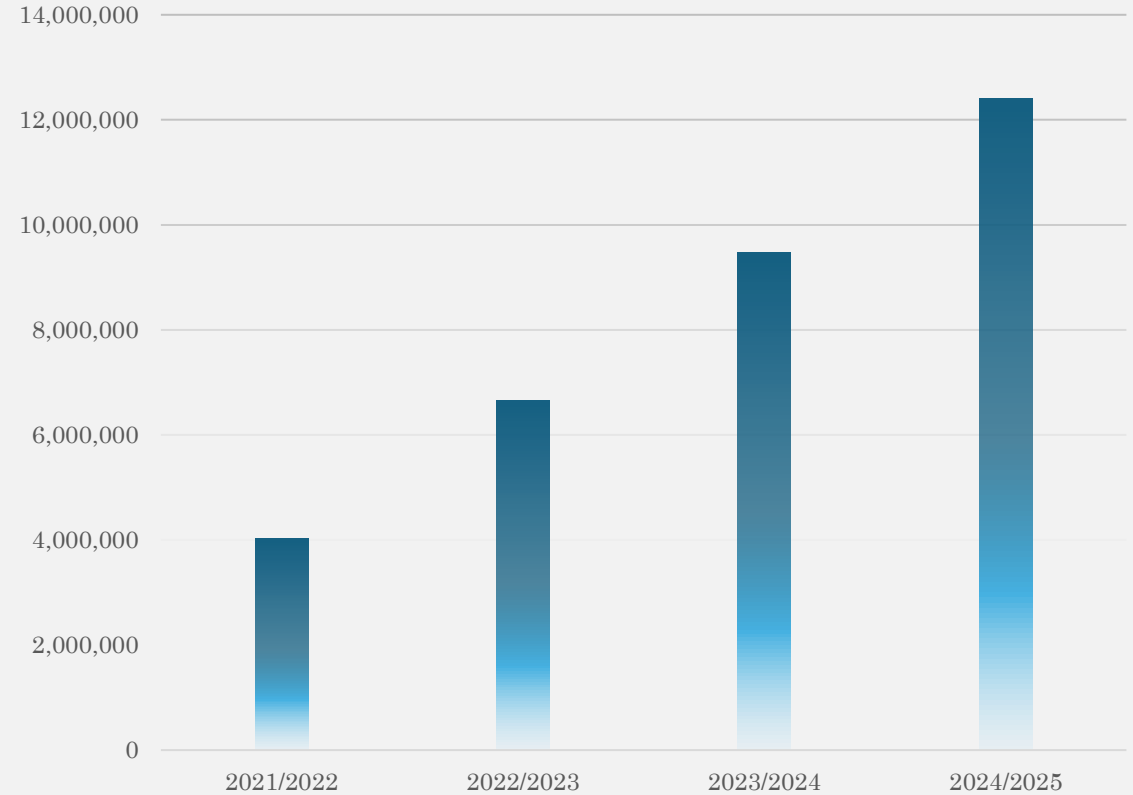


South African Responsible Gambling Foundation



South African Responsible Gambling Foundation

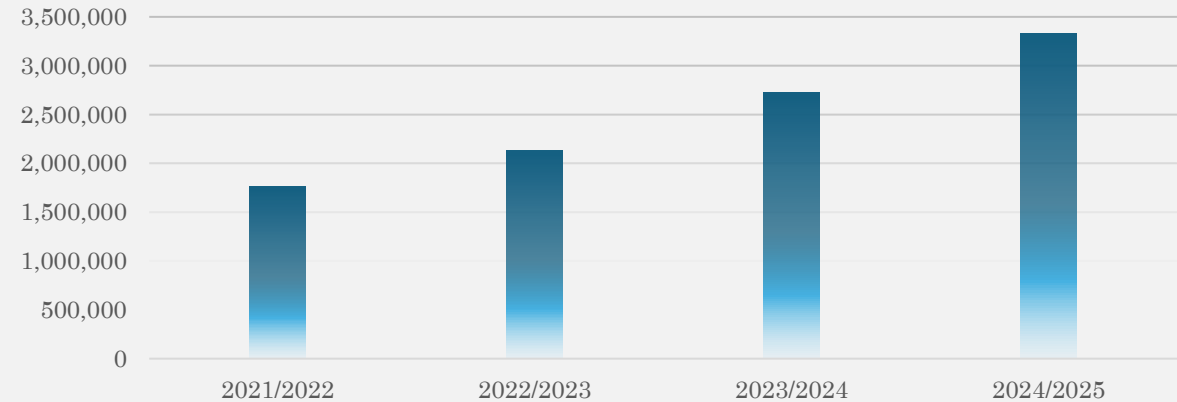
Advocacy costs



4. Industry training

- Operators
- Regulators
- Mental healthcare professionals
- Religious leaders
- Educators

Industry training costs



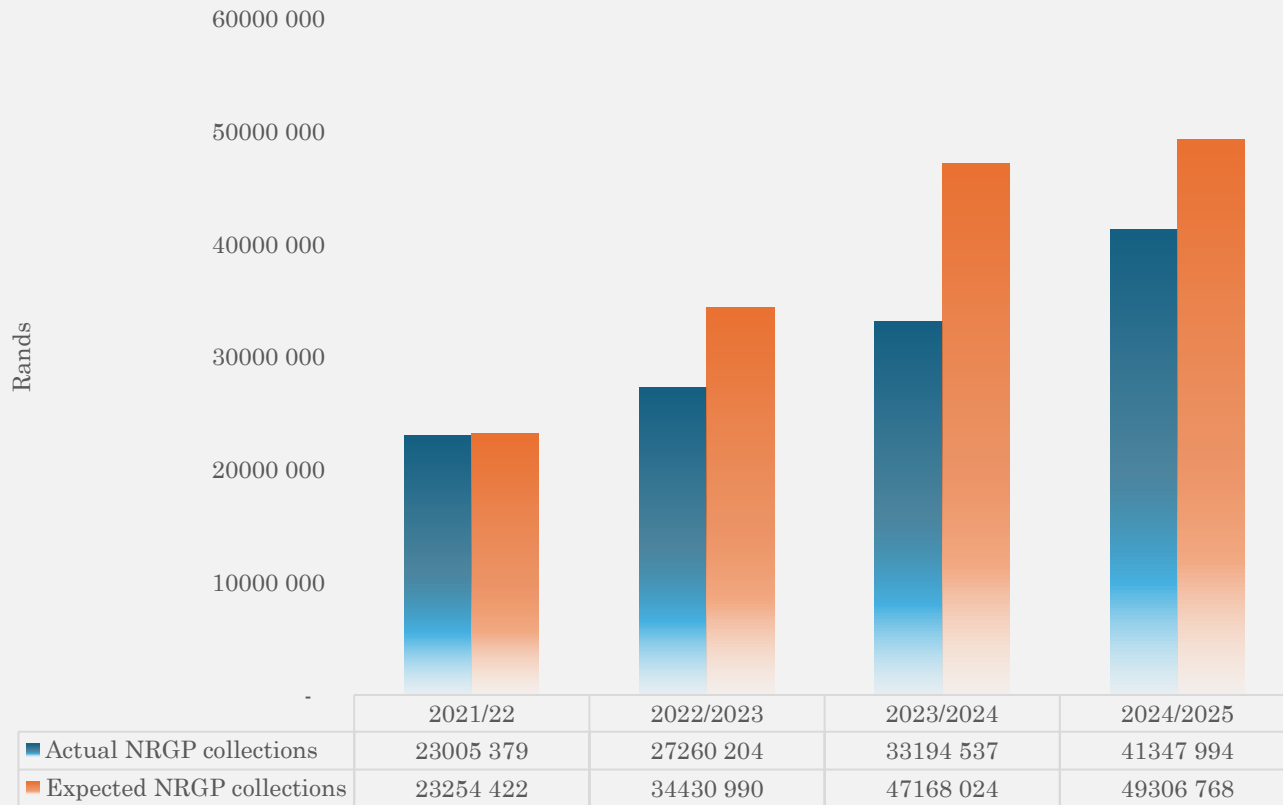
- Prevention and research
 - Trying to gain knowledge on the current patterns which will inform most feasible preventative and treatment measures.

- Administration
 - 45 employees

 - Office management and associated costs

SARGF funding structure

Actual vs. Expected NRGP collections





**Responsible
gambling
championed by
every stakeholder
protects the
future of the
industry!!**



13 November 2025 — 14 November 2025

THANK YOU