

Affected Family Members: the National Problem Gambling Clinic (London) Experience

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“It wasn’t just the amount of money he had lost, although I still don’t understand [how that much can be spent on gambling], it’s the fact he played with our and our children’s future, the future we had talked about, saved and planned for. He lost it twice over before I knew. The life we had worked for, agreed we would have together has gone”

family member at the NPGC

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Overview of the presentation:

- I will give a brief description of the referral routes and support offered to relatives and friends at the NPGC
- I will give an overview of the questionnaires used to collect the relatives' experiences
- I will outline the initial findings, focussing on particular aspects that seem of most interest
- I will draw some tentative conclusions regarding the information collected and next steps we may take.

National Problem Gambling Clinic

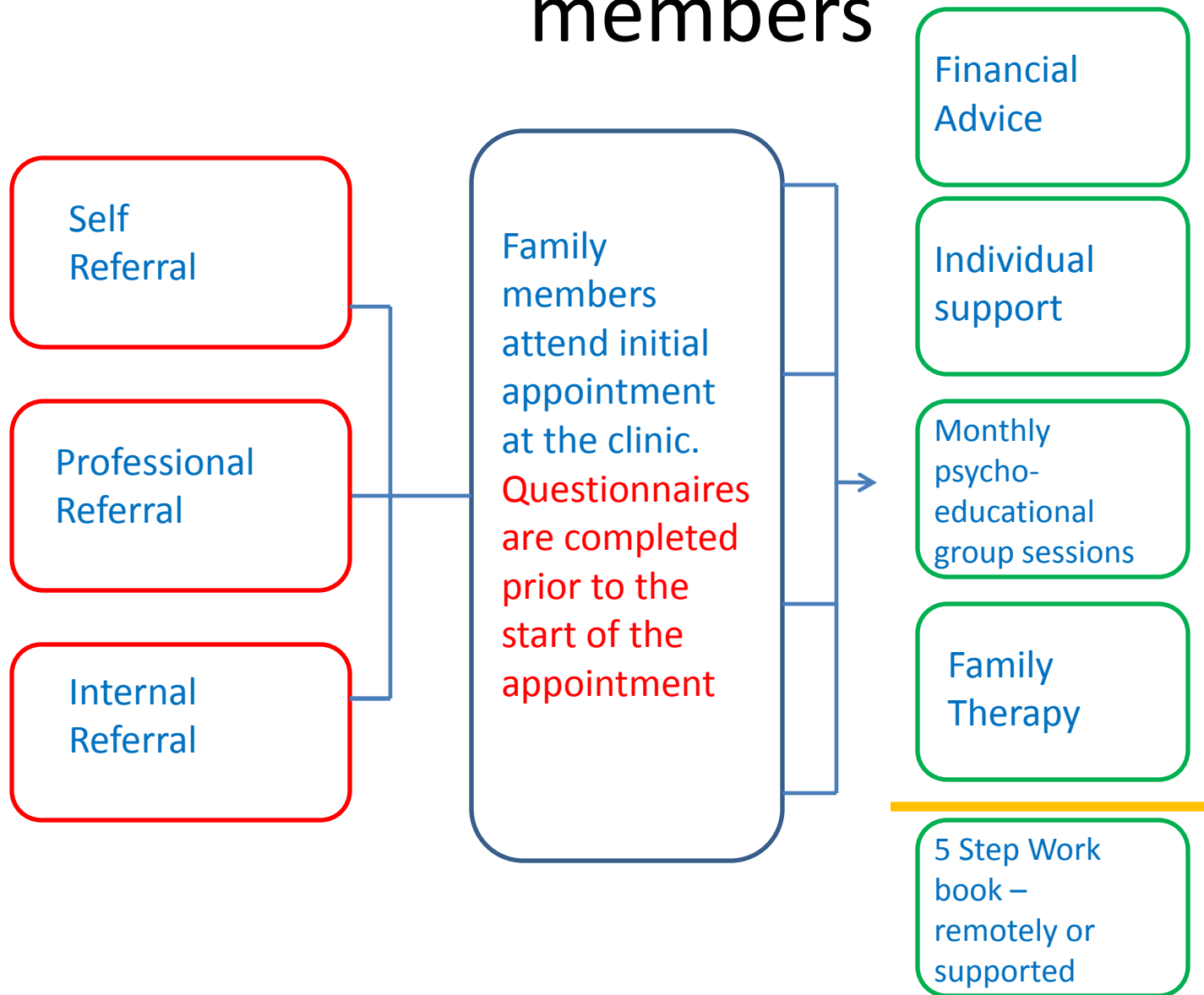
- Opened in 2008 for all those affected by problem gambling
- First NHS clinic treating problem gamblers and supporting their families and friends
- Family Service has grown and now offers a combination of individual & group support, financial advice and family therapy to family members (either with the person who has gambled attending, or without)

National Problem Gambling Clinic

Family Referrals

- Family members can be referred in three ways to the clinic:
 - Self referral
 - Referral by a professional
 - Referral by their gambling relative asking them to attend

Referral pathway diagram for family members



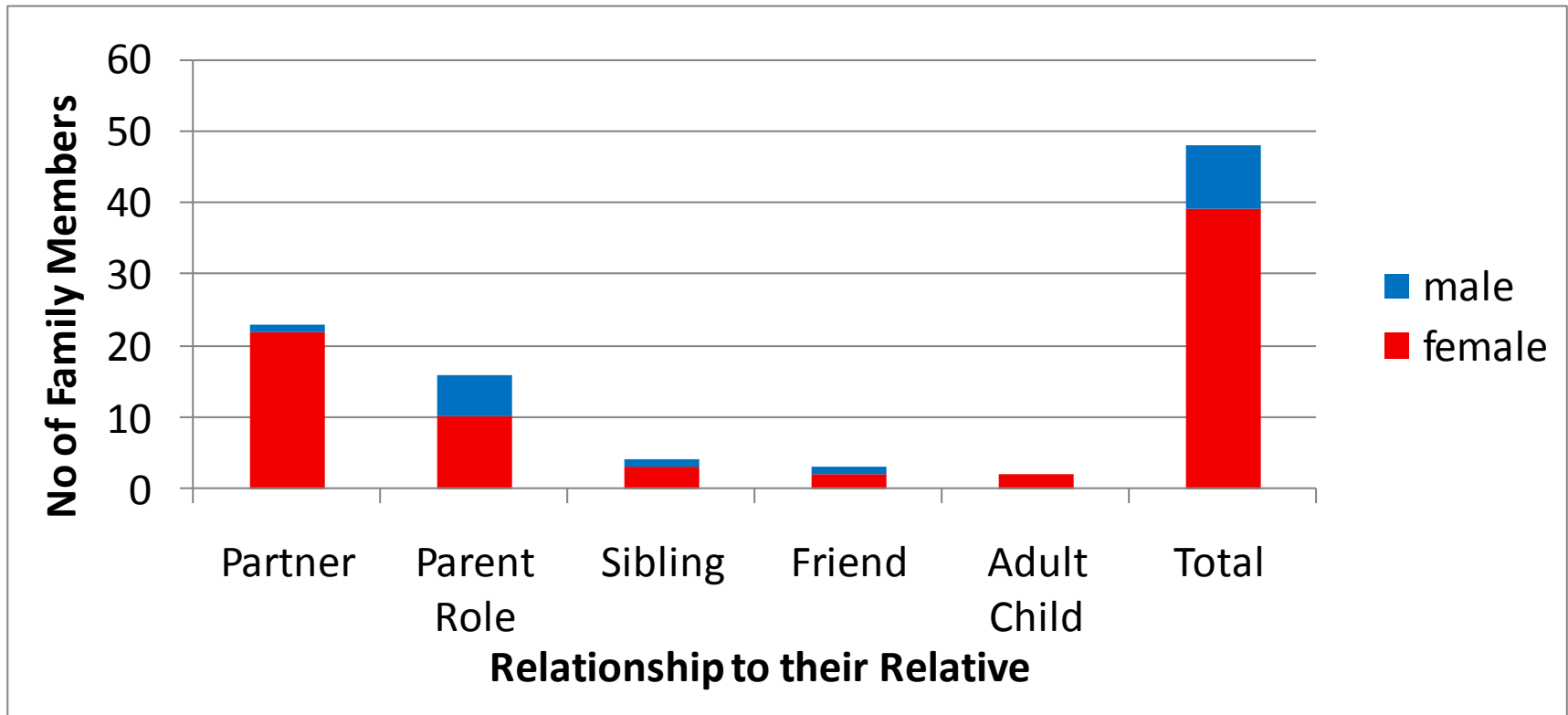
Family Member Questionnaire

- At the NPGC, in collaboration with the University of Birmingham Addiction Research Group, from October 2010 until October 2011, 48 family members were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their experiences.
- The questionnaires were adapted from a new 33-item short form from a set of family member questionnaires used previously with family members affected by their relatives' drug and alcohol use
- Questionnaires are based on the Stress-Strain-Coping-Support model (Orford et al 2010)
- Straightforward adaption with only a few changes

Overview

- Questionnaire covers the family members' experience of:
 - The **impact** their gambling relative's behaviour has had on them and their families' lives
 - The **coping** strategies they have used
 - The **symptoms** they experience
 - The **social support** they experience both professionally and informally
 - Relatives are indicating that the items occur often (3), sometimes (2), once or twice (1) or never (0). In the case of symptoms often (2), sometimes (1) or never (0)
- Although 48 is not a large group it is the first time as far as we know that anyone has given a set of standard questionnaires to a group of this size, of family members affected by the gambling behaviour of their relative

Gender & Relationship of Family Members to the Problem Gambler



Further Demographic Details of the 48 Family Members

- Average age was 44 years
- 58% of family members lived with their gambling relative
- 68% family members identified themselves as White British
- 34 children were identified as being directly affected by their relative's gambling (to varying degrees)

Clinical Experience of using the Questionnaires

- Questionnaire seems to be acceptable and relevant to the experiences of family members
- Bridges a gap that encourages family members to attend for themselves as well as for their relative
- Normalises their experiences ('others must be similar to me', 'I'm not the only one')

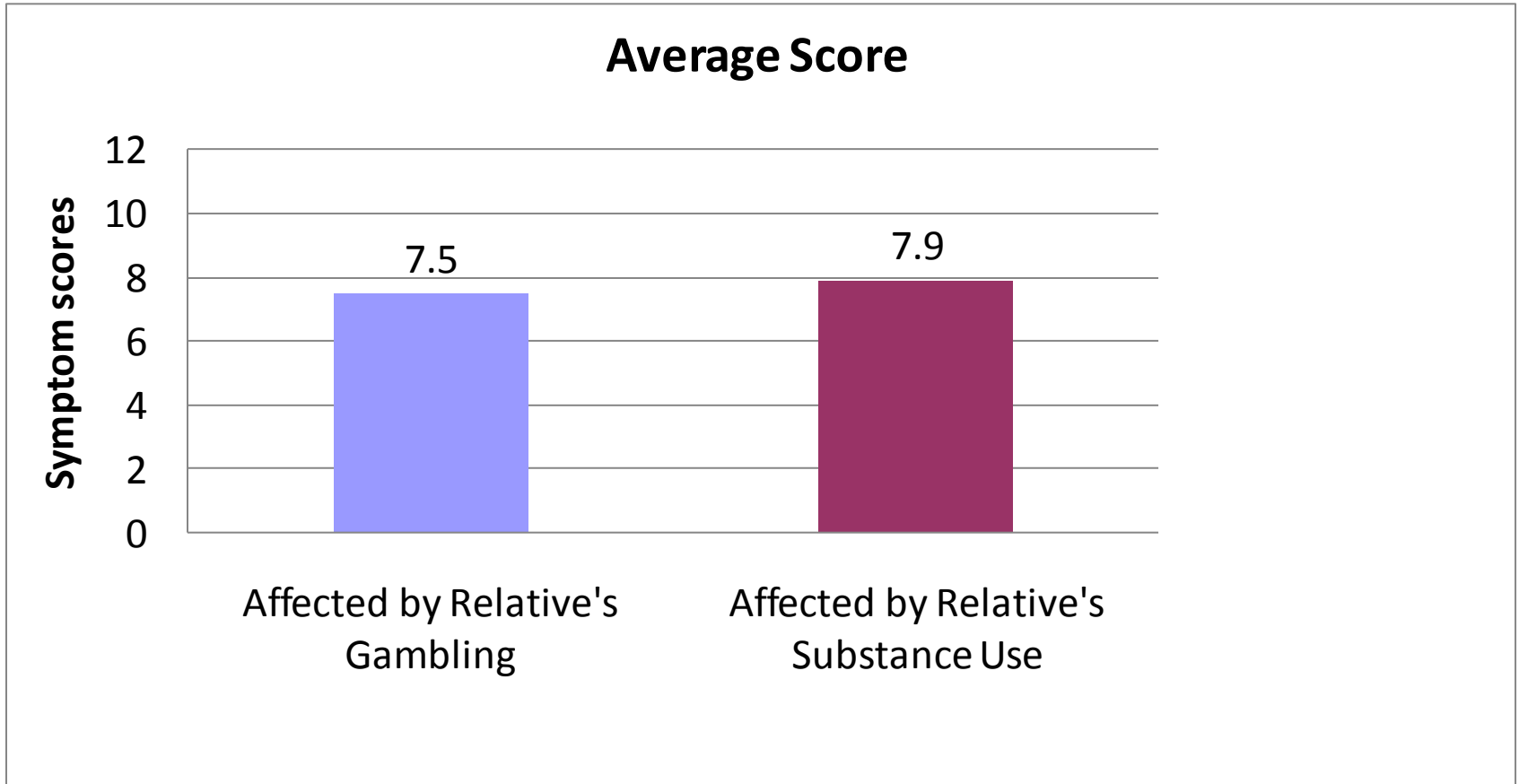
Comparison

- The following is a comparison between these 48 family members with over 200 family members who had been affected by their relative's drug and/or alcohol problem (we combined 4 previous studies)
 - Does not include the social support items as these are newer to the questionnaires
 - Groups not matched as they were not collected with the comparison in mind

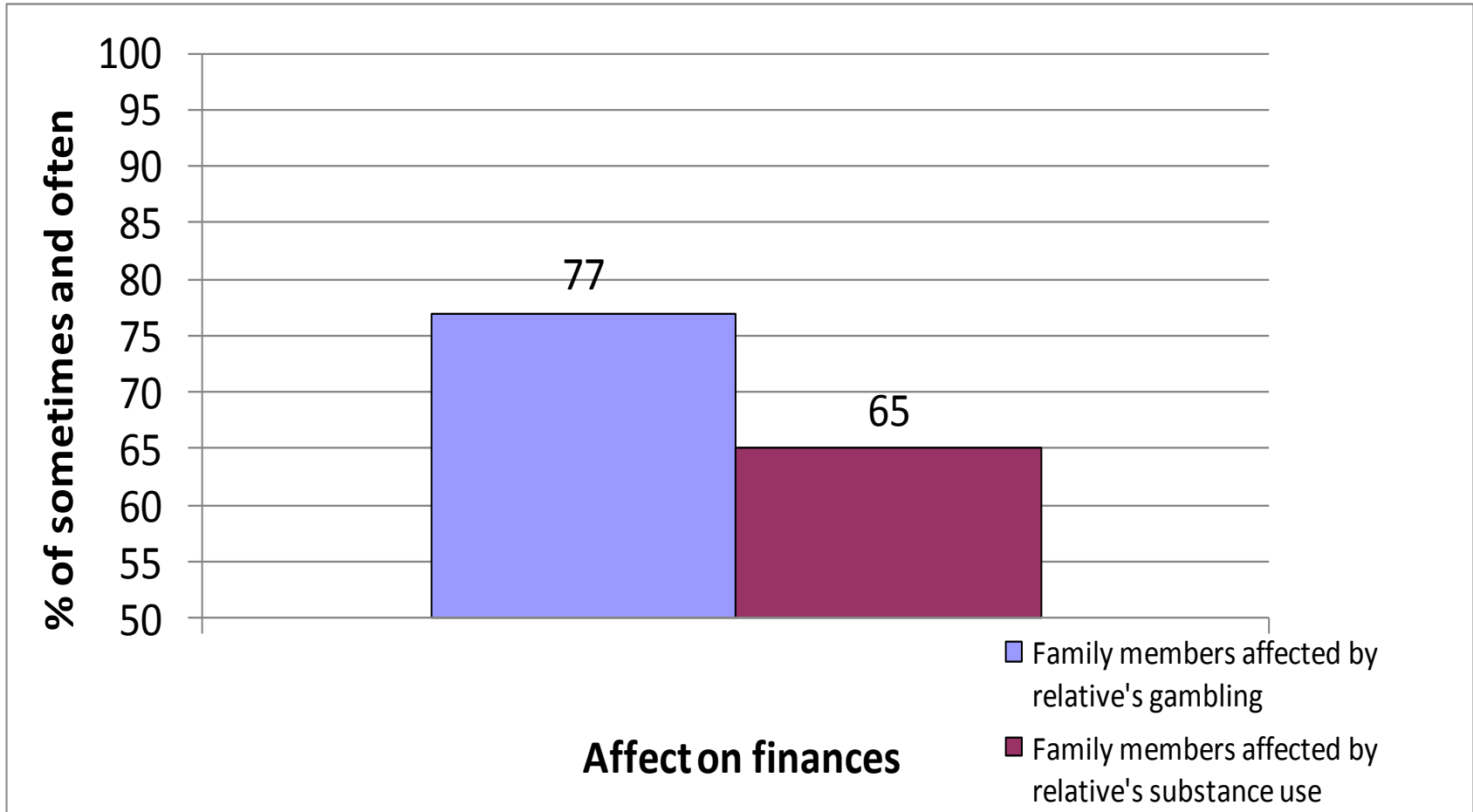
Findings

- Results are similar, although, in general, family members affected by a gambling problem scored lower across the scales than those affected by a drug and alcohol problem.
- **There were exceptions:** family members at the NPGC scored the same on the symptoms scale when compared to those family members attending drug and alcohol services.

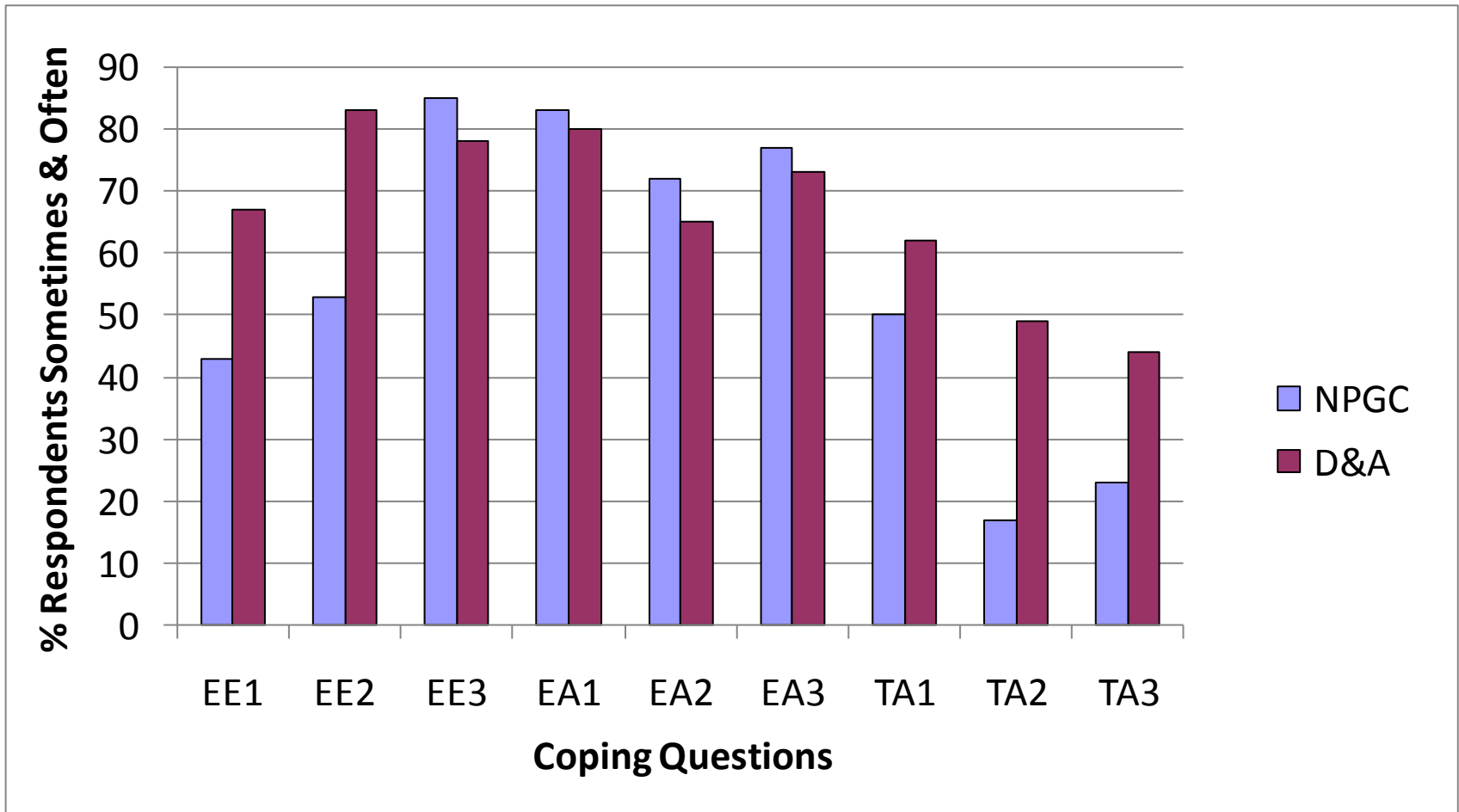
Average Scoring of Family Members on Symptom Items



Financial Impact



The experience of family members coping



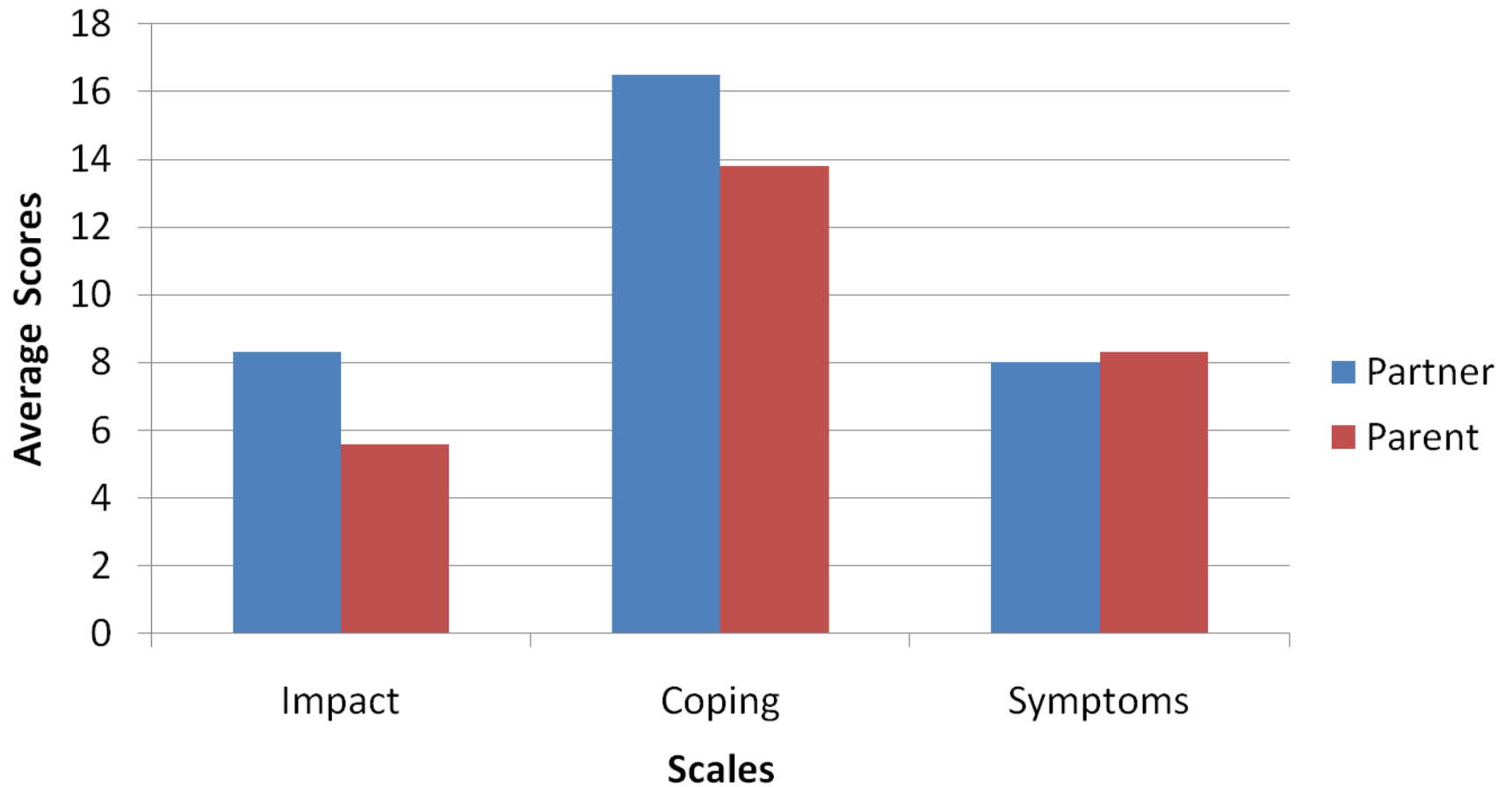
Overview of Comparison

- In general, family members affected by a gambling problem scored lower across the scales than those affected by a drug and alcohol problem.
- Scores on the degree of symptoms were the same, suggesting that family members affected by their relative's gambling experienced that their health and wellbeing was affected just as much as those affected by problematic substance use of a relative.
- There were exceptions that suggest that family members affected by gambling were financially impacted more and that the coping strategies employed to deal with their situation differed to those coping with a drug and alcohol problem within their family.

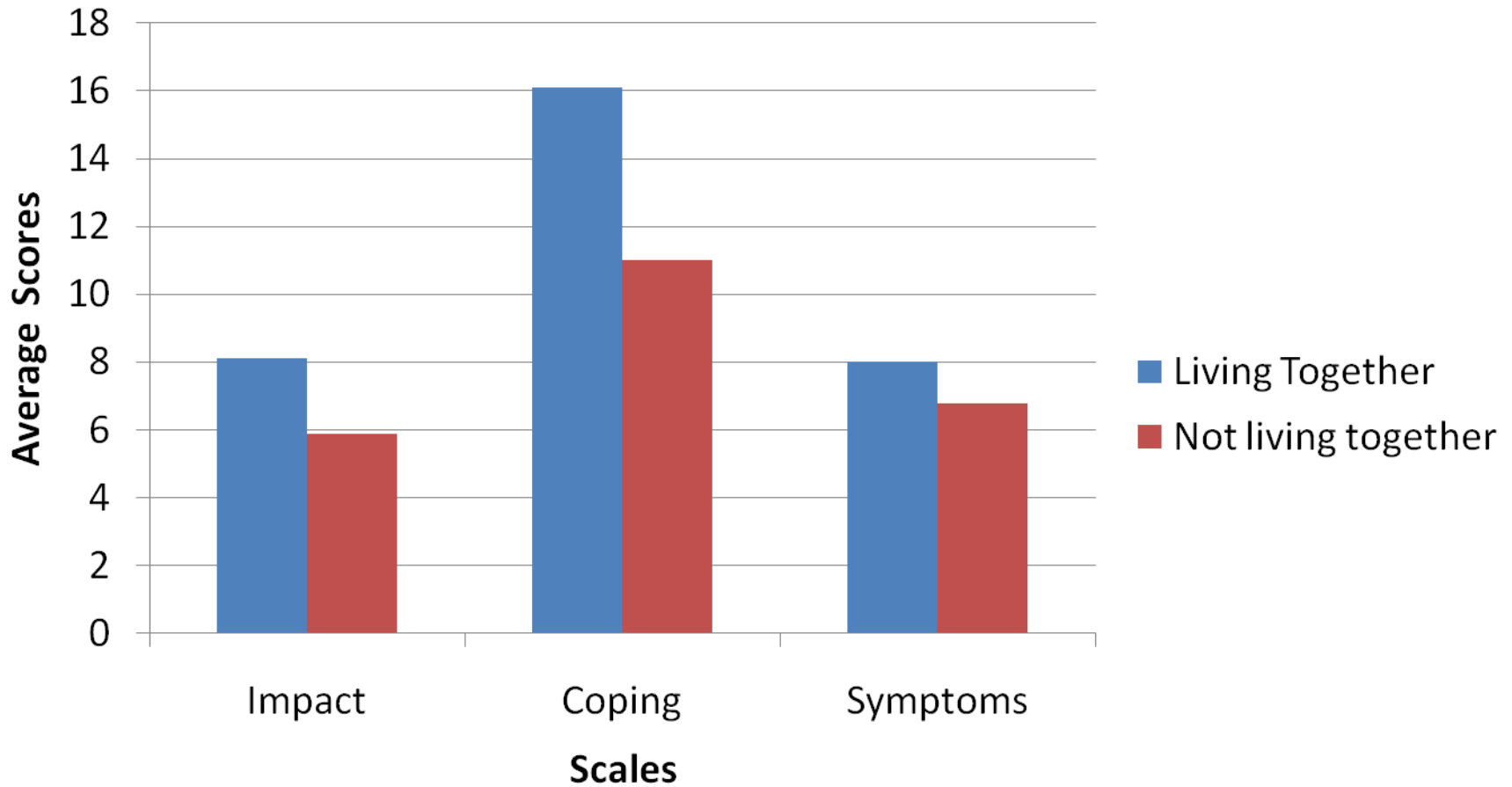
Comparisons within the Data

- Conclusions need to be tentative as groups were not matched and therefore there are differences.
- However if we look at those who are partners of their gambling relative in comparison to those relatives in a parenting role, differences between the groups emerge

Comparison between partner and parents



Comparison between Family Members living with and living separately from their Gambling Relative



Questions Raised

- Do the questions, which were borrowed from drug and alcohol experiences, fully reflect the experiences of adult relatives affected by problem gambling?
- Does gambling affect adult family members very specifically: finances and trust?

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