

GAMBLING AND DISORDERED GAMBLING FACTS: ADOLESCENTS

Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, non-profit health agency dedicated to providing leadership to reduce the social, financial, and emotional costs of problem gambling, and to promote a continuum of prevention and intervention strategies including: information and public awareness, community education and professional training, advocacy and referral services for problem gamblers, their loved ones and the greater community.

TERMS: There are a number of terms used to define gambling and gambling disorders.

- **Gambling:** Activities in which something of value is risked on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning or losing is less than certain.¹
- **Pathological gambling:** *The American Psychiatric Association* classifies pathological gambling as an impulse control disorder and defines it as the “persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior that disrupts personal, family or vocational pursuits” (p. 615).² **Compulsive gambling** is the original lay term for pathological gambling.³
- **Sub-clinical pathological gambling (i.e., problem gambling):** Gambling behavior that does not necessarily meet the criteria for pathological gambling but results in harmful effects to a gambler, his or her family, significant others, friends, co-workers, and others.³
- **Disordered gambling:** A term used to describe the combination of pathological and sub-clinical pathological gambling.³

ADOLESCENT GAMBLING PREVALENCE RATES: Studies have estimated the percentage of adolescents who gamble as well as the number who have problems as a result of their gambling.

- **Gambling rates:** Nearly 70% of U.S. adolescents between the ages of 14 and 21 gambled in the past year.^{4, 5}
 - Males 77%
 - Females 58%
- **Frequent gambling rates:** Over 10% of U.S. adolescents between the ages of 14 and 21 gambled twice a week or more in the past year.⁴
 - Males 18%
 - Females 4%
- **Pathological gambling rates:** Less than 1.0% (0.4) of U.S. adolescents have experienced pathological gambling in the past year.⁴ The adolescent past year pathological gambling rate is higher than rates observed among the general adult population (i.e., 0.17).⁶
 - Males 0.7%
 - Females 0.0%
- **Problem gambling rates:** Over 2% of U.S. adolescents have experienced problem gambling (i.e., sub-clinical pathological gambling) in the past year.⁴
 - Males 4.2%
 - Females 0.1%
- **Past year gambling activity participation:** Adolescents participate in various gambling activities at different rates.⁷
 - Card games 33%
 - Office pools, charity 30%
 - Lottery 29%
 - Sports betting 23%
 - Games of skill 21%
 - Casino gambling 7%
 - Gambling machines 6%
 - Horse or dog tracks 5%
 - Internet 2%

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN GAMBLING AND OTHER RISKY BEHAVIORS: Gambling and disordered gambling are associated with numerous negative consequences and are highly correlated with other risky behaviors in the adolescent population.

- ***Relationships to past year gambling:*** *Compared to adolescents aged 16-17 who do not gamble, adolescents aged 16-17 who do gamble are more likely to:*
 - Use alcohol
 - Be dependent on alcohol
 - Use drugs
 - Be dependent on drugs
 - Experience depression⁸

- ***Relationships to problem gambling:*** *Compared to adolescents who do not have gambling problems, adolescents with gambling problems are more likely to:*
 - Use alcohol, binge drink^{9,11}
 - Use illicit drugs^{9,11}
 - Smoke cigarettes⁹
 - Be delinquent, have conduct problems^{9,11}
 - Attempt suicide¹¹

ADOLESCENTS AT RISK FOR GAMBLING PROBLEMS: Any young person can develop a gambling problem, regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Though gambling problems do not discriminate among groups, research has shown that the following adolescent groups are more susceptible to gambling problems.

- Those who gamble at a young age^{4,9}
- Males^{4,7,9,10}
- Those with a family history of gambling problems⁹
- Those in a lower SES group⁴
- Those who gamble:
 - On cards
 - At casinos
 - On routine daily events (such as shooting the biggest deer, elections and fights at school)⁷

HELP FOR THOSE WITH GAMBLING PROBLEMS:

Help for people experiencing problems with gambling, their family members, and the greater community is available:

- The Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling operates a free, confidential Helpline (800-426-1234) and website: www.masscompulsivegambling.org. In addition, the Mass. Council trains clinicians and maintains a list of professionals who have earned their Massachusetts Problem Gambling Specialist Certificate (MAPGS).
- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health funds treatment centers throughout the state.
- Many people experiencing problems with gambling join Gamblers Anonymous (GA) or Bettors Anonymous (BA).
- Spouses, significant others, and family members of people experiencing problems with gambling can attend Gam-Anon, a fellowship that meets to share experiences about living with a disordered gambler.

For more information or to have a packet of materials sent to you, please call the Mass. Council Helpline (800-426-1234), the business line (617-426-4554), e-mail the Council at gambling@aol.com, or visit 190 High Street, Suite 5, Boston, MA 02110-3031.

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