

## GAMBLING AND DISORDERED GAMBLING FACTS: COLLEGE STUDENTS

Founded in 1983, the Massachusetts Council on Compulsive Gambling is a private, non-profit public health agency dedicated to reducing the social, financial, and emotional costs of gambling-related problems. The Council provides prevention, information, education, 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.<sup>1</sup>
- **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).<sup>2</sup> **Compulsive gambling** is the original lay term for pathological gambling.<sup>3</sup>
- **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.<sup>3</sup>
- **Disordered gambling:** a term used to describe the combination of pathological and sub-clinical pathological gambling.<sup>3</sup>

**COLLEGE STUDENT GAMBLING PREVALENCE RATES:** Research has estimated the percentage of college students who gamble as well as the number who have problems as a result of their gambling.

- **Gambling rates:** approximately 75% of U.S. college students gambled in the past year.<sup>4</sup>
  - Males 83%
  - Females 67%
- **Frequent gambling rates:** 18% of U.S. college students gambled weekly or more often in the past year.<sup>4</sup>
  - Males 31%
  - Females 6%
- **Disordered gambling rate:** approximately 6% of the U.S. college students have experienced clinical or sub-clinical pathological gambling in the past year.<sup>4</sup>
- **Past year gambling activity participation:** college students participate in various gambling activities at different rates.<sup>4</sup>
  - Lottery 43%
  - Card games 38%
  - Office pools/raffles 38%
  - Sports betting 23%
  - Games of skill (e.g., bowling, golf) 20%
  - Casino gambling 15%
  - Bingo 13%
  - Betting on animals (e.g., horses, dogs) 7%
  - Video keno 4%
  - Internet gambling 3%

**COLLEGE GAMBLING POLICIES:** Few colleges and universities have implemented policies related to gambling.

- A study examining the gambling policies among a nationally representative sample of U.S. colleges and universities found that only 22% had a written policy concerning gambling, compared with 100% that had written policies for alcohol use.<sup>5</sup>

**MALE COLLEGE STUDENTS, GAMBLING AND GAMBLING PROBLEMS:** Any college student 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 compared to female college students, male college students are more likely to have:*
  - Gambled in the past year<sup>6</sup>
  - Gambled with more money<sup>7</sup>
  - Reported having gambling problems<sup>8-13</sup>

**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 college student population.

- ***Relationships to past year gambling:*** compared to college students who do not gamble, college students who gamble are more likely to:
  - Binge drink
  - Use marijuana
  - Use illicit drugs
  - Smoke cigarettes
  - Engage in unsafe sex after drinking<sup>6</sup>
- ***Relationships to problem gambling:*** compared to college students without gambling problems, college students with gambling problems are more likely to:
  - Use tobacco<sup>9, 11, 14</sup>
  - Use alcohol, drink heavily or binge drink, get drunk<sup>9, 11, 14</sup>
  - Use marijuana or other illegal drugs<sup>9, 14</sup>
  - Drive under the influence<sup>11</sup>
  - Be arrested for non-traffic offenses<sup>14</sup>
  - Binge eat<sup>9, 14</sup>
  - Have a low GPA<sup>14</sup>
  - Experience depression and stress and consider and attempt suicide<sup>11</sup>

#### **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](http://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](mailto:gambling@aol.com), or visit 190 High Street, Suite 5, Boston, MA 02110-3031.

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