

GAMBLING AND DISORDERED GAMBLING FACTS: ADOLESCENTS

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. The Council targets a number of prevention and education efforts towards the adolescent population.

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.

REFERENCES CITED: ADOLESCENT POPULATION FACT SHEET

1. Korn DA, Shaffer HJ. Gambling and the health of the public: Adopting a public health perspective. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. 1999;15(4):289-365.
2. American Psychiatric Association. *DSM-IV: Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*. Fourth ed. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association; 1994.
3. National Research Council. *Pathological gambling: a critical review*. Washington D.C.: National Academy Press; 1999.
4. Welte JW, Barnes GM, Tidwell MC, Hoffman JH. The prevalence of problem gambling among U.S. adolescents and young adults: Results from a national survey. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. 2008;24(2):119-133.
5. Barnes G, Welte J, Hoffman J, Tidwell M. Gambling, alcohol, and substance use among youth in the United States. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*. 2009;70:134-142.
6. Slutske WS. Natural recovery and treatment-seeking in pathological gambling: Results of two U.S. national surveys. *American Journal of Psychiatry*. February 2006;163(2):297-302.
7. Welte J, Barnes G, Tidwell M, Hoffman J. The association of form of gambling with problem gambling among American youth. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. 2009;23(1):105-112.
8. Lynch W, Maciejewski P, Potenza M. Psychiatric correlates of gambling in adolescents and young adults grouped by age of onset. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 2004;61:1116-1122.
9. Winters K, Stinchfield R, Botzet A, Anderson N. A prospective study of youth gambling behaviors. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. 2002;16(1):3-9.
10. Gupta R, Derevensky J, Marget N. Coping strategies employed by adolescents with gambling problems. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*. 2004;9(3):115-120.
11. Langhinrichsen-Rohling J, Rohde P, Seeley J, Rohling M. Individual, family, and peer correlates of adolescent gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies*. 2004;20(1):23-46.