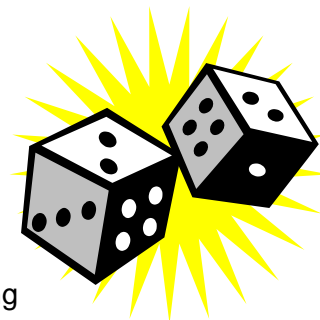


# Prevalence of Problem Gambling

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

## Prevalence Of Problem Gambling

In 1997 the Division on Addictions at Harvard Medical School released findings of its meta-analysis of problem gambling prevalence research. Meta-analysis is a research technique that derives estimates based on scientific reviews of multiple studies. Center director Howard Shaffer and colleagues analyzed 120 previously completed prevalence studies with a total of 122,286 respondents. Their findings reported below, provide reliable estimates of the prevalence of three levels of gambling behavior including those which meet standard diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling.



## Overview Of Problem And Pathological Gambling:

Level 1: A majority of people who choose to gamble do so with little or no adverse consequence. These people, called “recreational gamblers”, account for up to 86% of the adult population.

Level 2: Represents a pattern of gambling that is associated with a wide range of adverse reactions or consequences ranging from mild to moderate.

Lifetime among adults: 3.85%	<i>Past-year adult rates: 2.80%</i>
Lifetime among youth: 9.45%	<i>Past-year youth rates: 14.82%</i>
Lifetime among college students: 9.28%	
Lifetime among adults in treatment settings: 15.01%	

Level 3: Representing a smaller number than Levels 1 and 2, Level 3 gamblers experience the most extreme negative consequences from their gambling, and meet diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling.

Lifetime among adults: 1.60%	<i>Past-year adult rates: 1.14%</i>
Lifetime among youth: 3.88%	<i>Past-year youth rates: 5.77%</i>
Lifetime among college students: 4.67%	
Lifetime among adults in treatment settings: 14.23%	

## Major Findings:

- During the past two decades, gambling disorders have increased among adults.
- Gambling disorders are significantly more prevalent among young people than among the general population.
- Gambling disorders are significantly more prevalent among males than females.

*Shaffer et.al. “Meta-analysis”, 1997*

(continued)

Prevalence surveys conducted in Connecticut in 1991 and 1996 estimate a lifetime combined prevalence of problem and pathological gambling (Levels 2 and 3) at about 6% of the adult population. Lifetime rates are significantly higher than current prevalence rates, with about 1% of the adult population currently meeting diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling.

## Rates Of Problem Gambling Among Patrons At Gambling Facilities Are Much Higher Than In The General Population:

	Probable Pathological	
Casino Patrons:	15%	
Pari-mutuel:	30%	
OTB Parlors:	51%	<i>CT Division of Special Revenue, 1991 and 1996 (N=1000)</i>

## Older Adults Who Gamble Also Have Higher Rates Than The General Population:

Meets Diagnostic Criteria	11% past year	
Sub Clinical	6% past year	
At Risk	39% past year	<i>McNeilly, Burke, 2000 (N=315)</i>



## Conclusions:

- Prevalence of problem gambling appears to vary according to population with treatment populations showing the highest rates.
- Increased access to gambling opportunities appear to be correlated with increased prevalence of gambling problems.
- Prevalence of problem gambling at gambling facilities is many times higher than in the general population.
- More research is needed to measure changes in prevalence and to better understand the impacts of problem gambling on society.

***Our purpose is to reduce the impact of problem gambling on individuals, families, and communities by developing community capacity to provide treatment, intervention and prevention services***

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