



2020 OASAS Problem Gambling Prevalence Survey Summary

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE: ASSESS GAMBLING ACTIVITY AND PROBLEMATIC GAMBLING BEHAVIORS IN NEW YORK STATE TO BETTER PROVIDE PREVENTION, TREATMENT, HARM REDUCTION, AND RECOVERY SERVICES

The New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) oversees problem gambling prevention, treatment, harm reduction and recovery services in New York. OASAS certifies problem gambling treatment providers and directly funds seven regional Problem Gambling Resource Centers that provide education and training, referral, assessment, treatment, and recovery support programs.

As part of the agency's oversight of problem gambling, OASAS needs to qualify and quantify the extent of problem gambling among New Yorkers and monitor trends, assess the need for services, identify gaps in services, and subsequently develop appropriate evidence-based programs and strategies for target populations. In 2020, OASAS contracted with RTI International to conduct a survey that would provide statistically valid prevalence estimates of past-year gambling and problem gambling, attitudes and behaviors toward gambling, and awareness of resources for problem gambling services among non-institutionalized adult New Yorkers (ages 18 and older).

Data for the New York Problem Gambling Prevalence Survey were collected between July 24 and December 21, 2020. Overall, 14,209 New Yorkers were sampled for the survey and 3,823 submitted a complete response.

KEY FINDINGS: MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF NEW YORK ADULTS DO NOT GAMBLE AT ALL; 4.4% ARE AT-RISK GAMBLERS; 0.7% ARE PROBLEM OR PATHOLOGICAL* GAMBLERS

Prevalence of Gambling and Problematic Gambling Behaviors

Based on answers to questions about their gambling behaviors, survey respondents were classified into one of five categories:

* The diagnosis of "pathological gambling" found in the fourth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-IV) was replaced with "gambling disorder" in the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). The DSM-5 criteria for gambling disorder differs slightly from the DSM-IV criteria for pathological gambling. The survey used the Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM) to assess gambling behaviors. The PPGM was developed prior to the release of the DSM-5 and uses the pathological gambling terminology. OASAS uses the term pathological gambling in this report to remain consistent with the PPGM instrument.

Category	Description
Non-Gamblers	People who had not engaged in any gambling activity in the previous 12 months.
Recreational Gamblers	People who had gambled within the past 12 months but did not meet any of the criteria for at-risk, problem, or pathological gambling.
At-Risk Gamblers	People who exhibited potentially problematic gambling behaviors but did not meet the criteria for problem or pathological gambling.
Problem Gamblers	People who exhibited “gambling behavior that result[ed] in any harmful effects to the gambler, his or her family, significant others, friends, coworkers, etc.” ¹
Pathological Gamblers	People who indicated a “continuous or periodic loss of control over gambling, a preoccupation with gambling and with obtaining money with which to gamble, irrational thinking, and a continuation of the behavior despite adverse consequences.” ¹

Defining Gambling and Problematic Gambling Behaviors

The survey asked questions corresponding to the Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM). The PPGM is:

a 14-item assessment instrument with questions organized into 3 sections: Problems (7 questions), Impaired Control (4 questions), and Other Issues (3 questions) . . . [It] uses a 12-month time frame, recognizes there to be a continuum of gambling with 4 categories (Recreational Gambler, At-Risk Gambler, Problem Gambler, Pathological Gambler), and has been field tested and refined with both clinical and general population samples.²

People responding to the survey are first asked “Have you gambled in the past 12 months?”. People who responded, “No”, they had not gambled in the past 12 months are classified as “Non-Gamblers”.

If people indicated that they had gambled in the past 12 months, they were then asked questions corresponding to the Problems, Impaired Control, and Other Issues sections. Based on their responses, they were classified into one of the five gambler categories described above.

Problems Questions

- In the past 12 months, has your involvement in gambling caused. . . :
 - you either to borrow a significant amount of money or sell some of your possessions?
 - significant financial concerns for you or someone close to you?
 - serious problems in your relationship with your spouse/partner, or important friends or family?
 - you to repeatedly neglect your children or family?
 - significant health problems or injury for you or someone close to you?
 - significant work or school problems for you or someone close to you?
 - you to miss a significant amount of time at work or school?
 - you or someone close to you to write bad checks, take money that didn't belong to you or commit other illegal acts to support your gambling?
- Is there anyone else who would say that your involvement in gambling in the past 12 months has caused any significant problems regardless of whether you agree with them or not?

Impaired Control Questions

- In the past 12 months. . . :
 - have you often gambled longer, with more money or more frequently than you intended to?
 - have you often gone back to try and win back the money you lost?
 - have you made any attempts to either cut down, control, or stop your gambling?
 - Were you successful in these attempts?
 - is there anyone who would say that you have had difficulty controlling your gambling, regardless of whether you agreed with them or not?

Other Issues Questions

- In the past 12 months. . . :
 - would you say you have been preoccupied with gambling?
 - when you were not gambling did you often experience irritability, restlessness, or strong cravings for it?
 - did you find you needed to gamble with larger and larger amounts of money to achieve the same level of excitement?

Results

Main results:

- 68.0% of people in New York have not gambled at all within the past 12 months (non-gamblers);
- 27.5% of New Yorkers are classified as recreational gamblers;
- 3.8% of New Yorkers are at-risk gamblers;
- 0.7% of New Yorkers are problem (0.3%) or pathological (0.4%) gamblers

FUTURE DIRECTIONS: SURVEY RESULTS WILL INFORM OASAS' PROBLEM GAMBLING PREVENTION, TREATMENT, AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

Data on the prevalence of gambling and problem gambling are sparse; only a few population-based surveys performed in the 1990s and early 2000s reported data on adults at the national level^{3,4}. Prior to the 2020 survey, the last statewide household survey of problem gambling conducted by OASAS was in 2006. The results of the 2020 survey, including the statewide problem gambling prevalence estimate and the differences in behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs between Recreational Gamblers and Problem Gamblers, will inform OASAS' problem gambling prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and recovery efforts moving forward. OASAS will use the knowledge gained from the survey to target prevention and outreach efforts and messaging. Furthermore, the 2020 survey will serve as a baseline to measure the effects of changes to New York State gambling laws that have gone into effect since the survey was conducted.

PROBLEM GAMBLING RESOURCES IN NEW YORK STATE

For resources regarding problem gambling prevention or treatment please visit:

<https://oasas.ny.gov/problem-gambling>.

To get help for problem gambling, for yourself, or a loved one, please call 1-877-8-HOPENY(467369) or text HOPENY(467369).



REFERENCES

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 1999. *Pathological Gambling: A Critical Review*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/6329>.

² Williams, R. J., Volberg, R.A. (2010). *Best Practices in the Population Assessment of Problem Gambling*. Report prepared for the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre. Guelph, Ontario, CANADA. March 31, 2010.

³ Gerstein, DR.; Volberg, RA.; Toce, MT.; Harwood, H.; Christiansen, EM.; Hoffman, J.; Murphy, SA., et al. *Gambling Impact and Behavior Study: Report to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission*. National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago; Chicago, Il: 1999. <https://www.norc.org/PDFs/publications/GIBSFinalReportApril1999.pdf>

⁴ Welte JW, Barnes GM, Wieczorek WF, Tidwell M, Parker J. "Alcohol and gambling pathology among U.S. adults: Prevalence, demographic patterns and co-morbidity." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*. 2001; 62(5):706–712. <https://doi.org/10.15288/jsa.2001.62.706>

