2025

Problem Gambling

Epidemiological Profile

Developed: February 2026

CONNECTICUT
Mental Health & Addiction Services

CPES
Center for Prevention Evaluation and Statistics

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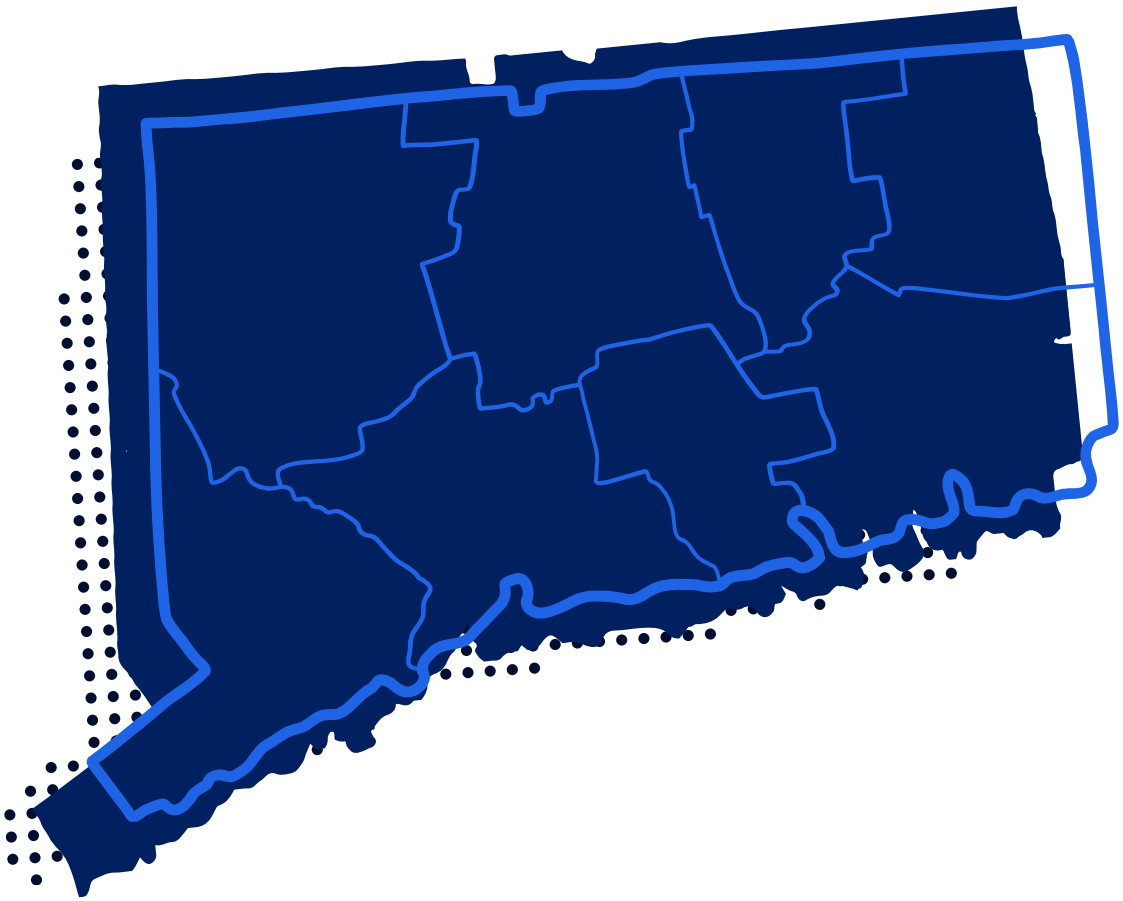
INTRODUCTION

Problem gambling *and* gambling disorder *include* gambling *that disrupts, compromises, or damages personal, family, or vocational pursuits.*[1] *This may include gambling in a variety of settings or formats, such as betting in online and in-person casinos, sports betting, private wagering, charitable games (i.e., bingo, raffles), playing the lottery, and other types of betting (e.g., greyhound racing, off-track betting).*

This epidemiological profile explores problem gambling in Connecticut. Data on *prevalence*, risk factors, and effects and consequences have been synthesized to present a high-level summary. In addition, the profile examines perceptions of gambling across demographic groups.



BACKGROUND

Connecticut is a major gambling destination in the Northeast. The state has two major casinos: Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun. In addition, Connecticut passed Public Act 21-23 in 2021 which authorized retail and online sports betting, online casino gaming, *fantasy contests*, and expanded lottery products.[2]

Rapid growth of mobile and online gambling has increased both legal play and exposure to unregulated sites. The percentage of CT adults who report gambling online in the past year increased fivefold from 2.0% in 2008 to 10.7% in 2023.[3] In the three years following the introduction of legal sports betting and online casino games, CT residents reported they lost nearly $1.8 billion in total on these platforms, according to state regulators.

About 2% of the CT population meet the criteria for problem gambling.[3] Gambling behavior exists on a continuum from no gambling to gambling disorder. While most people either engage in recreational gambling or do not gamble at all, a small portion of individuals have problems related to gambling or meet the criteria for a gambling disorder. Three in ten CT adults (30.7%) report no gambling in the past year whereas seven in ten are either *recreational gamblers* (62.6%), *at-risk gamblers* (4.9%), or *problem gamblers* (1.8%).[3]

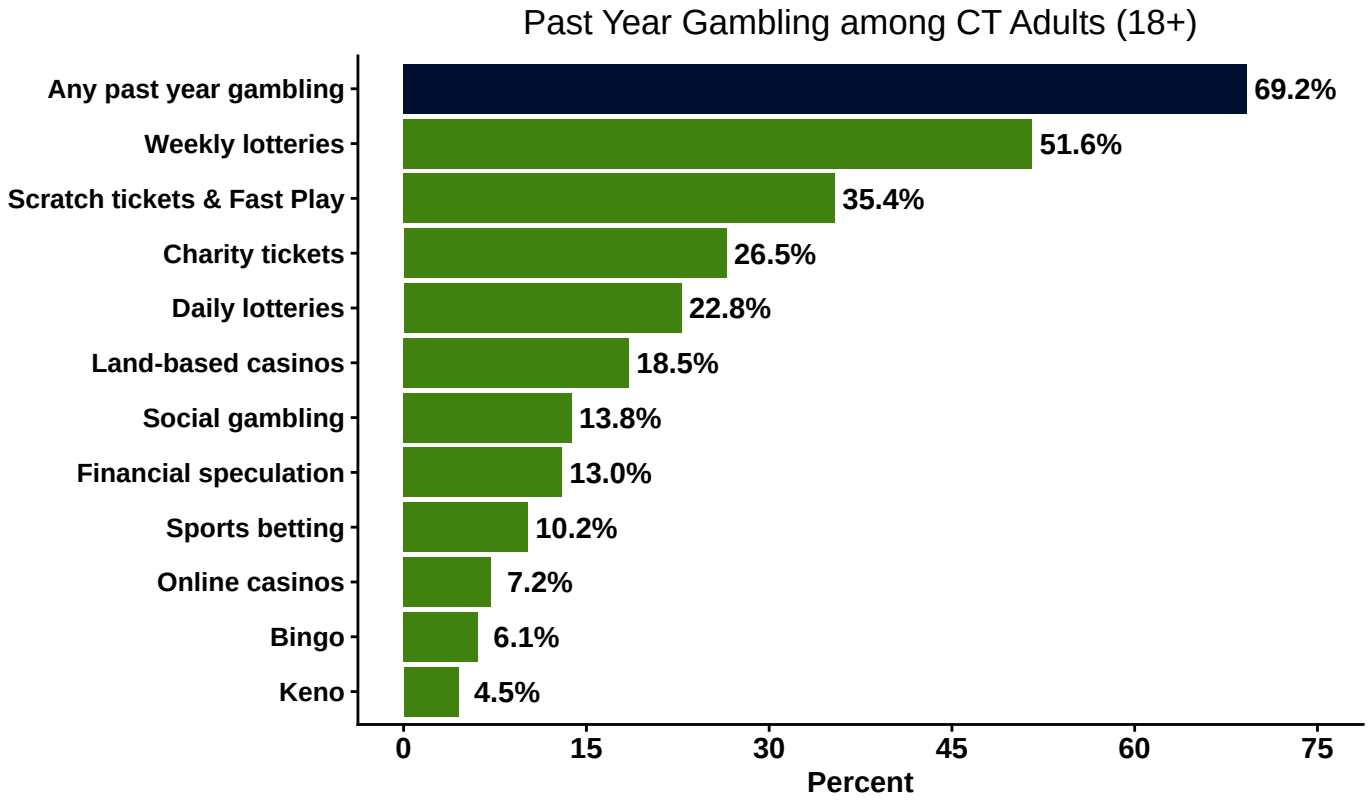
Research conducted by the University of Connecticut found that 73.8% of a sample of the state's undergraduates reported any gambling in the past year, and 8.3% of respondents met the traditional definition of "serious problem gambling."[4] This finding highlights young adults as a population of particular concern for problem gambling.

DMHAS Problem Gambling Services (PGS) runs a statewide system of prevention, treatment, and recovery support, with a confidential 24/7 helpline (1-888-789-7777) and referral network.[5] In addition, Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG) is a non-profit partner that operates helpline services, public education campaigns, and training for providers to reduce gambling-related harm.[6]

PREVALENCE

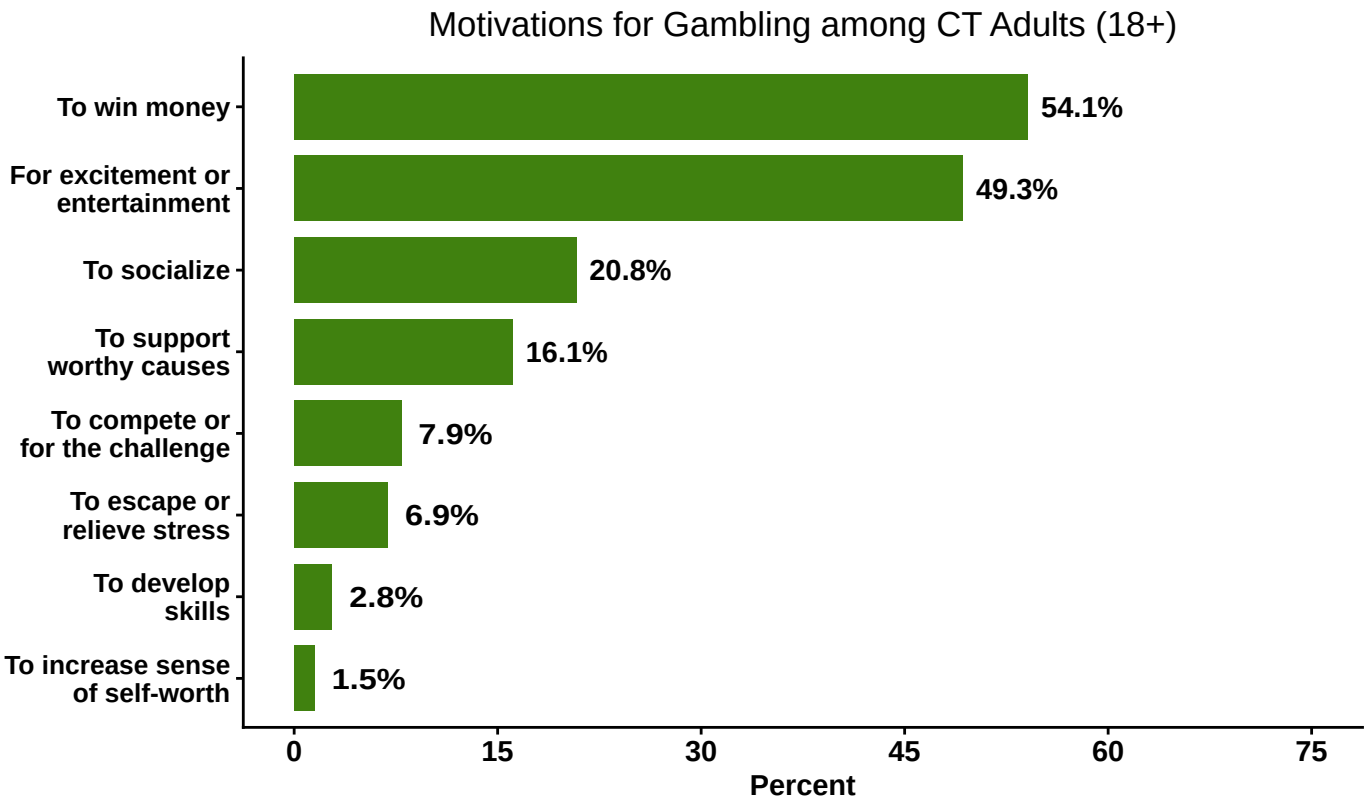
PREVALENCE AMONG ADULTS

Seven in ten Connecticut adults (69.2%) reported participating in some type of gambling in the past year. Half of adults (51.6%) reported that, in the past year, they participated in large jackpot lotteries and about one third (35.4%) reported participating in scratch tickets and *Fast Play*.[3]



Source: Gemini Research, Inc., 2024

Slightly more than half (54.1%) of adults who gambled in the past year did so because they wanted to win money. Similarly, about half of CT adults reported that they participated in gambling for excitement or entertainment.[3]



Source: Gemini Research, Inc., 2024

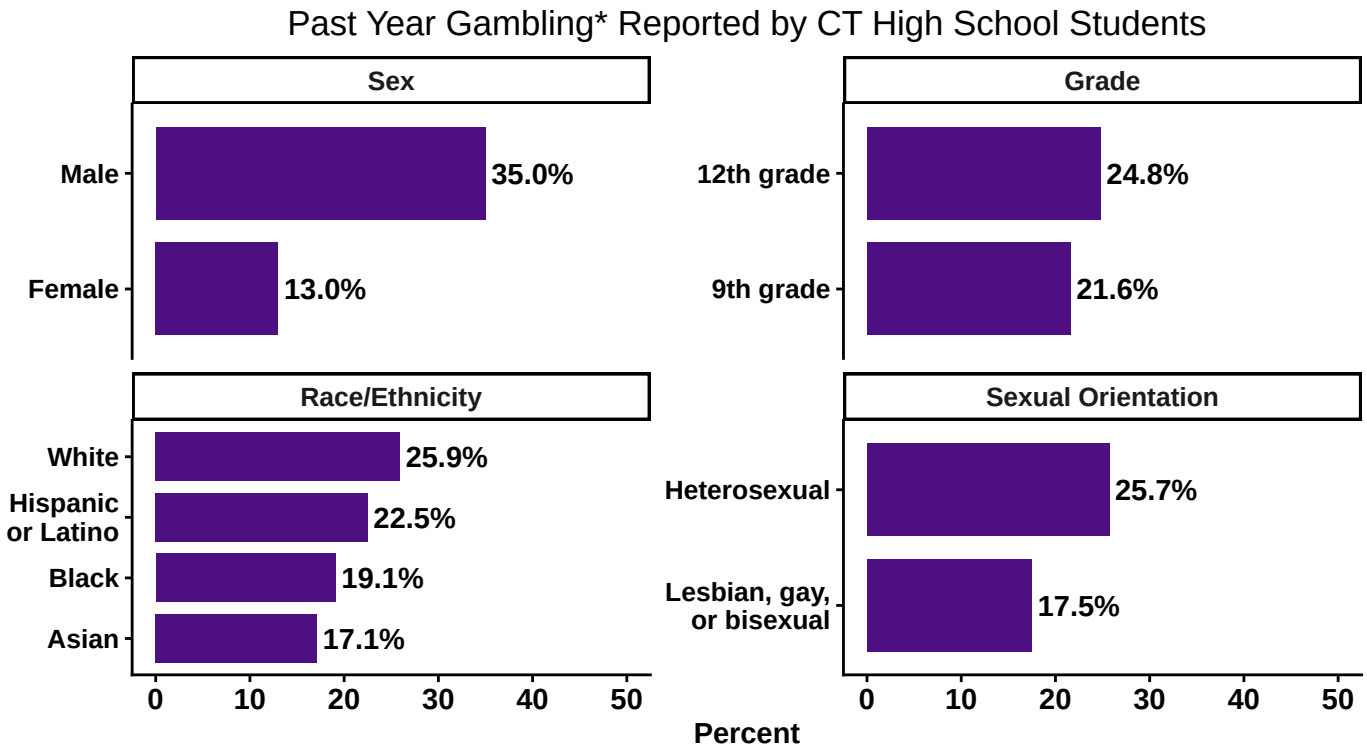
Compared to recreational gamblers and at-risk gamblers, a higher percentage of problem gamblers report that they gambled in the past year "to escape or relieve stress" (38.2%) or because it "makes me feel good about myself" (27.9%).[3]

About three quarters (73.8%) of 1,303 college students surveyed from 30 Connecticut colleges and universities reported that they had gambled in the past year.[4] Among students who responded to the survey, bingo and lottery were the most common types of gambling that students participated in. College students who reported engaging in gambling commonly reported that they did so because they (1) enjoy gambling, (2) gamble on special occasions, or (3) enjoy thinking about jackpot winnings.[4]

PREVALENCE AMONG YOUTH

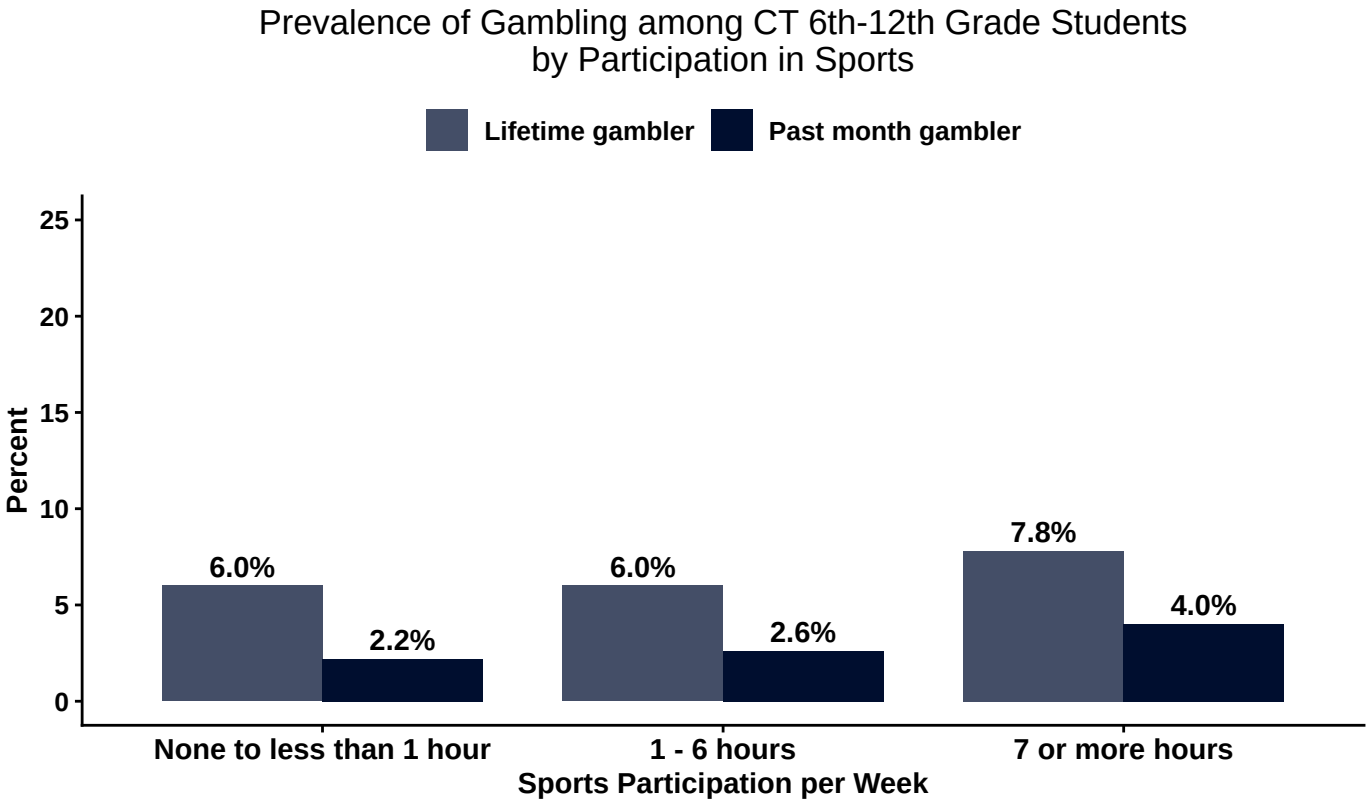
About a quarter (23.6%) of CT high school students reported gambling on sports, during a card or dice game, on the internet, on a game of skill (e.g., pool or video game), or played a state lottery game in the past year.[7]

More than twice the percentage of male students reported past-year gambling compared to female students. A higher percentage of 12th graders, White students, and heterosexual students reported past-year gambling compared to their peers.



*Gambling includes gambling on a sports team, gambling when playing cards or a dice game, playing one of CT's lottery games, gambling on the internet, or betting on a game of personal skill such as pool or a video game.
Source: Connecticut School Health Survey (CSHS), 2023

Young athletes report higher rates of lifetime and past-month gambling compared to youth who either do not participate in sports or participate in sports for six hours or fewer. Findings from the Youth Voices Count Survey (YVCS) indicate that youth who participate in seven or more hours of sports per week report significantly greater lifetime and past-month gambling rates compared to their peers.[8]



Source: Youth Voices Count Survey, B. Weyland Smith, 2019-2025

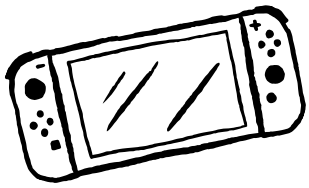
Special Consideration

Gaming is playing electronic games, whether through consoles, computers, tablets, or phones. While gaming itself is not gambling, there are elements of gambling in gaming, as well as similarities between the two behaviors. For example, long or late-night gaming sessions can mirror gambling-like patterns and receiving rewards for logging in every day can build habitual, gambling-like engagement. Furthermore, gradually increasing costs for special in-game items can resemble gambling-like spending and buying *loot boxes* with a small chance of receiving rare items can mimic gambling-style odds.[9]

Gaming Disorder

Gaming Disorder, also referred to as Internet Gaming Disorder, Video Gaming Disorder, and Online Gaming Disorder, is characterized by excessive gaming behavior that leads to significant impairment or distress in daily life. Individuals ages 18 to 25 are most at risk of developing a gaming-related problem or disorder, with males and females both at risk.

Youth (12-17) are also a population of concern. Compared to non-gamblers, a higher percentage of youth who have gambled in their lifetime and/or in the past 30 days reported experiencing both positive and negative effects of gaming such as “I earned credibility with my peers for how well I played,” “I have purchased loot boxes or skins (ex. microtransactions or pay-to-win),” and “I have had a hard time stopping gaming.”[8] Therefore, careful monitoring of gaming behavior among youth may be warranted.



RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Problem gambling is influenced by various conditions and circumstances. *Risk factors* are characteristics at the individual, social, and environmental level that can increase risk for problem gambling or developing a gambling disorder.

Risk Factors for Problem Gambling[10,11,12]

Individual	Social & Environmental
• Biological factors • Age • Family history of mental health conditions in a blood relative, such as a parent or sibling • Family history of substance use or substance use disorder (SUD) • History of misusing substances (licit or illicit) • Stress • A previous or co-occurring mental illness • Prior or current substance use • History of *adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)* • High frequency and severity of gambling behavior • Impulsivity and sensation seeking • Academic and/or behavioral health problems in school	• Social, family, and/or peer norms that encourage or tolerate gambling • Lack of parental supervision and involvement • Childhood trauma • Advertising or marketing that encourages gambling • Stressful life situations

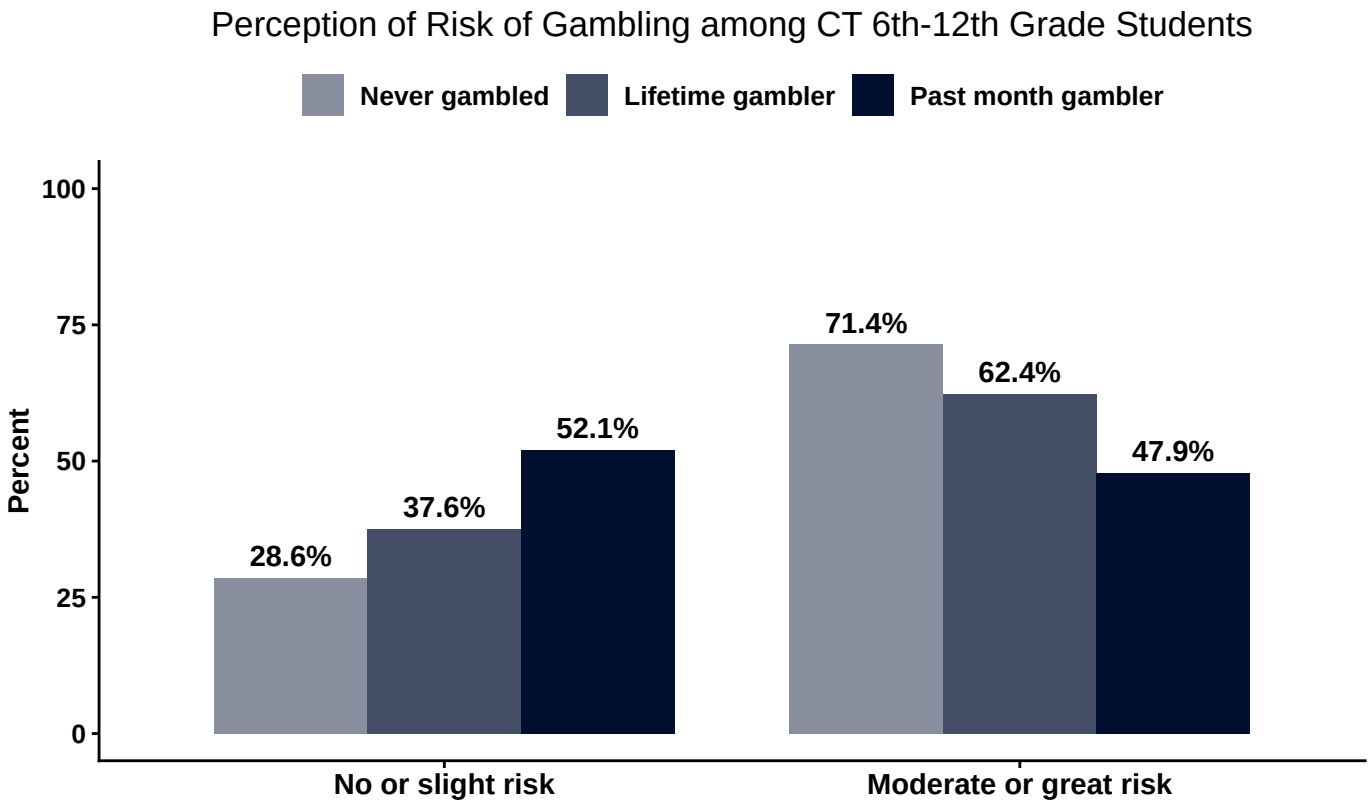
Protective factors are conditions or circumstances that protect individuals against problem gambling or developing a gambling disorder. Similar to risk factors, protective factors exist at various levels relative to the individual.

Protective Factors against Problem Gambling[10,12,13]

Individual	Social & Environmental
• Resilience • Mindfulness • Gambling refusal self-efficacy • *Voluntary Self-Exclusion (VSE)*	• Social connectedness and/or support • Supportive relationships • Parental supervision • Adequate access to resources

PERCEPTION OF RISK

A higher percentage of middle and high school students who gambled in the past month reported that gambling carries little risk compared to their peers.[8]



Source: Youth Voices Count Survey, B. Weyland Smith, 2019-2025

EFFECTS & CONSEQUENCES

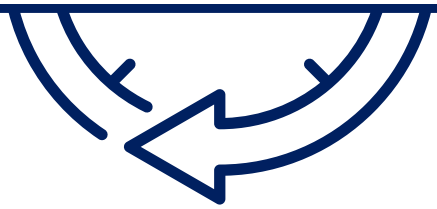
There are direct and indirect effects and consequences of problem gambling for individuals as well as the communities and systems in which they exist.

Short-term Effects[14,15]

- Brain stimulation (“high”)
- Altered mood
- Cognitive issues
- Negative thoughts and feelings (e.g., guilt, shame, hopelessness)
- Mental health issues (e.g., anxiety, depression)
- Gain or loss of money (short-term)
- Substance use
- Sleep issues



Long-term Consequences[14,16,17]



- Mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety)
- Social isolation
- Relationship issues (e.g., with partner, family, friends, co-workers)
- Suicidal thoughts or plans
- Engagement in risky behaviors
- Substance use
- Dependence and addiction
- Gambling disorder
- Poor overall health
- Poor school or work performance
- Financial issues
- Legal issues

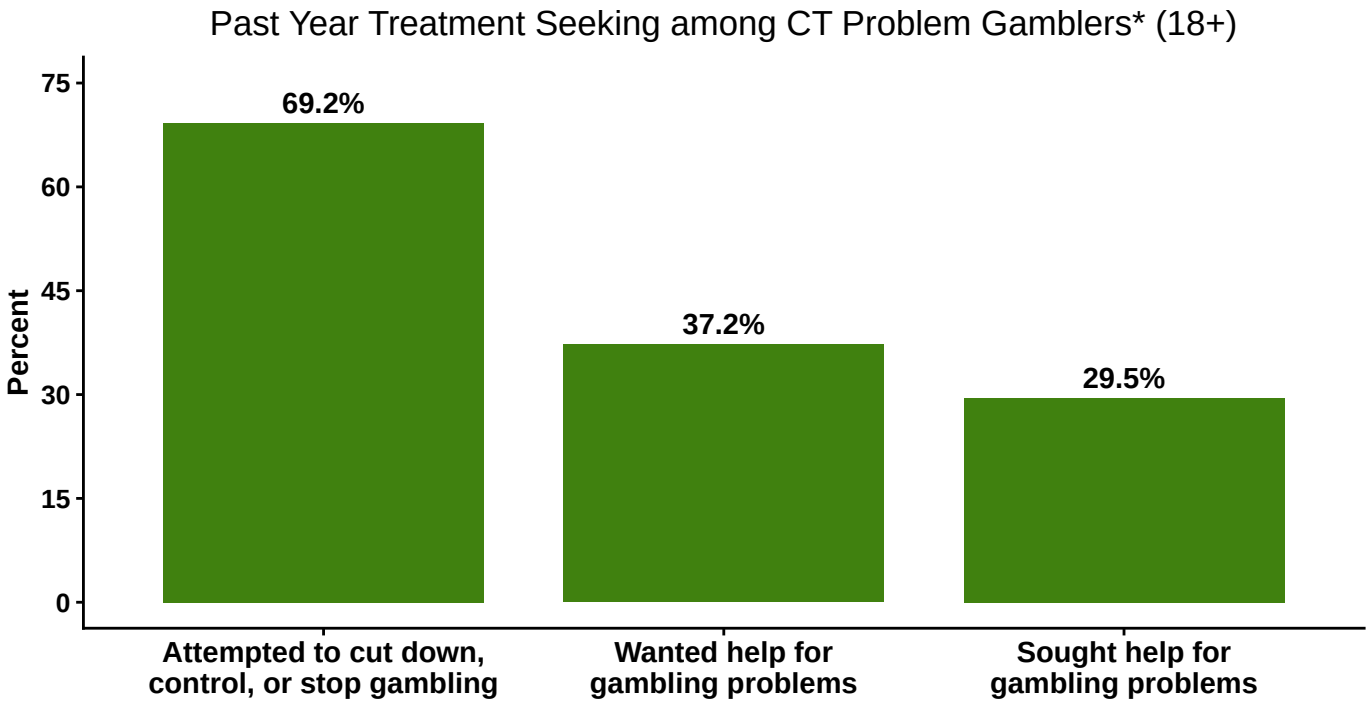
For every person who gambles at high-risk levels, an average of six others (usually non-gamblers) are affected, including families.[18,19] In 2023, the estimated annual societal cost of problem gambling in the United States was $14 billion. These costs included gambling-related crime, criminal justice and healthcare costs, and costs related to job loss, bankruptcy, and other consequences.[1]

Signs & Symptoms of Problem Gambling

Signs and symptoms of problem gambling can include[15]:

- Need to gamble with increasing amounts
- Restless or irritable when trying to control or stop gambling
- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control or stop gambling
- Frequent thoughts about gambling
- Often gambling when feeling distressed
- Often returning to get even after losing money
- Relying on others to help with money problems caused by gambling

Of 415 problem gamblers surveyed, 69.2% attempted to cut down, control, or stop gambling in the past year.[3] However, three quarters of these gamblers sought to do so on their own rather than with help from others.



*Problem gamblers were classified as such if they met the Problem and Pathological Measure criteria as someone who has impaired control over their gambling that is also associated with significant negative consequences for themselves or others. Data presented in this graph are unweighted and represent 415 problem gamblers identified as described above through survey administration by Gemini Research.
Source: Gemini Research, Inc., 2024

In the past fiscal year, 410 clients accessed and received treatment through Connecticut's Bettor Choice Program.[20] Bettor Choice Programs are funded by the State of Connecticut. These programs offer outpatient services such as individual and group treatment, peer recovery support, medication, and budget counseling for both individuals impacted by problem gambling and affected loved ones.[21]

CONCLUSIONS & CONSIDERATIONS

Key takeaways:

- About seven in ten Connecticut adults (69.2%) gambled in the past year, most commonly through lotteries, while fewer participated in land-based casinos (18.5%), sports betting (10.2%), or online casinos (7.2%).
- About a quarter of Connecticut high school students (23.6%) reported gambling in the past year, with higher prevalence among males, 12th graders, White students, and heterosexual students.
- Among CT middle and high school students, recent gamblers are more likely to perceive gambling as risk-free.
- Among the 415 problem gamblers surveyed by Gemini Research Inc., 69.2% reported trying to cut down or stop gambling in the past year, while 29.5% sought help for their gambling problem.

Considerations:

- This profile makes use of multiple data sources; the most recent data available from these sources are utilized in developing this profile.
- Due to changes in federal guidance, analyses based on some sociodemographic *subpopulations* are not included.
- Data at the DMHAS planning region level were not available at the time of developing this profile and thus were not included.
- Prevalence estimates from the 2021 Connecticut School Health Survey data should be interpreted with caution and should not be considered an accurate timepoint in trend analyses, due to a COVID-precipitated shift to Fall semester administration from its traditional Spring administration. Prevalence estimates from the 2021 data should be interpreted with caution because (1) the reporting of risk behaviors tends to be lower in the fall semester and (2) the survey asked about students' behavior in the past 12 months which included a time when there were restricted opportunities for social interaction due to COVID-19.
- Findings from the Youth Voices Count survey are based on unweighted data collected from 39 towns and school districts between 2019 and 2025. Thus, the data do not represent a singular timepoint and cannot be generalized to all Connecticut youth.
- Prevalence estimates are omitted from this profile if they meet the following criteria:
  - **CSHS**: (a) cell count < 30 OR (b) coefficient of variation > 0.30

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more data and information on problem gambling in Connecticut, visit:

DMHAS Problem Gambling Services: https://gamblingawarenessct.org/problem-gambling-services-dmhas/

Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling (CCPG): https://ccpg.org/

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)	Potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (e.g., abuse, neglect, and household challenges) that may increase the risk for mental health problems, chronic illnesses, health-risk behaviors, and adverse social outcomes later in life.
At-risk gamblers	Individuals who report some signs of problem gambling symptomatology and/or are gambling at very high levels similar to problem gamblers. *Definition based on the Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM).*[3]
Fantasy contest	Any fantasy or simulated game or contest with an entry fee, conducted over the Internet, including through an Internet web site or a mobile device, in which: (A) The value of all prizes and awards offered to a winning fantasy contest player is established and made known to the players in advance of the game or contest; (B) all winning outcomes reflect the knowledge and skill of the players and are determined predominantly by accumulated statistical results of the performance of participants in events; and (C) no winning outcome is based on the score, point spread or any performance of any single team or combination of teams or solely on any single performance of a contestant or player in any single event. "Fantasy contest" does not include lottery games.
Fast Play	A category of lottery games that combine the style of instant scratch-off tickets with the rolling jackpots of draw games.
Financial speculation	Refers to things such as purchasing cryptocurrency (e.g., Bitcoin), penny stocks, options for futures, or day trading, shorting, or betting on the direction or future value of a financial index (e.g., Dow Jones Industrial Average).

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Gambling	Risking something of value (e.g., money, time, possessions) on an uncertain outcome.
Gambling Disorder	Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as indicated by the individual exhibiting four or more of the criteria defined by the DSM-5 in a 12-month period. Criteria include items such as *needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement and is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling*.
Loot box	A virtual item that can be earned or purchased and then opened to receive one randomized in-game reward or multiple. Often contains common items with a small chance of containing rare items.
Prevalence	The proportion of a population who have a specific characteristic in a given time period. It may be reported as a percentage (5%, or 5 people out of 100), or as the number of cases per 10,000 or 100,000 people.
Problem gamblers	Individuals who have impaired control over their gambling that is also associated with significant negative consequences for themselves or others. *Definition based on the Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM).*[3]
Problem gambling	Patterns of gambling engagement that cause an individual to have problems in various aspects of their life (e.g., relationships, financial, legal).
Protective factors	Individual, social, or environmental characteristics that reduce individuals' vulnerability to negative health outcomes.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Recreational gamblers	Individuals who gamble and show no signs of excessive gambling or problem gambling symptomatology. *Definition based on the Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM).*[3]
Risk factors	Characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes.
Subpopulation	A subgroup of a larger population of individuals or cases. It describes a specific group of individuals with common characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, risk factors).
Voluntary Self-Exclusion (VSE)	Request to be excluded from legalized gaming activities in Connecticut. Individuals who enroll in self-exclusion are prohibited from collecting any winnings, recovering any losses, or accepting complimentary gifts or services or any other thing of value from a gaming licensee or operator.

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