

Problem Gambling in Oregon and Public Health Concerns

Over 80,000 Oregonian adults have gambling problems, and most affected prefer Oregon Lottery games.

- ⌘ One in every 37 Oregon adults meets the criteria for being current problem or pathological gambler (*Moore, 2006*).
 - ⌘ Most Oregonians in problem gambling treatment (7 in 10) report preference for video lottery retailers (*Oregon Health Authority, 2012*).
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Problem gambling is connected with other addictions and is costly to Oregonians.

The estimated annual social costs of problem gambling to Oregonians is approximately \$508 million annually, while we are only spending about \$4 million per year to prevent and treat the problem (*Oregon Council on Problem Gambling, 2012*). The following are data from problem gamblers in Oregon's gambling treatment system (*Oregon Health Authority, 2012*):

⌘ **Financial Debt:**

Problem gamblers reported an average of more than \$30,000 in personal gambling debts.
1 in 4 gamblers experienced serious job-related problems.
Half (47.3%) reported their gambling cost them a marriage or significant relationship.

⌘ **Drug Use:**

1 in every 10 problem gamblers admits to having a serious drug problem.

⌘ **Alcohol Abuse:**

About 3 out of 10 problem gamblers admit to struggling with alcohol.

⌘ **Suicide:**

1 in 10 made a suicide attempt within six months to entering treatment.

⌘ **Crime/Legal Issues:**

1 in 4 admitted they committed crimes to attain gambling money.
One in ten reported legal problems.

Youth gambling is a growing concern and is connected to other risky behaviors.

One in every 25 Oregon teens (ages 13-17) is at risk for, or meets the criteria for, problem gambling (*Volberg, 2007*).

Youth gambling and other risky behaviors are connected. (*Source: Oregon Health Authority, 2012*) Oregon Student Wellness Surveys from 2012 for 6th, 8th and 11th grade students show that kids who gamble are than those who don't are at (x 2) **twice** the risk to:

- ⌘ have **abused alcohol + binge drank** in the past month.
- ⌘ have **attempted suicide** in the past year.
- ⌘ have **used marijuana** in the past month.
- ⌘ have **skipped school** in the past month.

Gambling itself may not *cause* these other behaviors, but is highly correlated. There is increasing need for public awareness of problem gambling, in addition to more research needed on the effects of newer forms of gambling (particularly electronic and mobile gambling). Prevention and treatment efforts are seen as effective and vital in helping mitigate problem gambling.