

COVID-19 and Problem Gambling

At the start of the pandemic, where casinos were closed and sports had stopped for a period of time, we saw a decrease in some areas of gambling:

- In Europe, there was a significant decrease in the amount of money wagered by sports bettors during COVID-19. Sports bettors did not switch to online casinos.¹
- Gambling decreased, including the number of high risk players.²
- Gambling declined while the casinos were closed and almost half of the players (44.6%) reported saving money. Two thirds of players (66.4%) reported spending more time with family and friends.³

Gambling behaviors that have increased:

- In the United States of America, there was an increase in sports betting, fantasy sports, online wagering and off track betting.⁴

Young adults have experienced more negative consequences while gambling online:

- Adults 24 and under were more likely to miss important events due to gambling;⁵
- Have higher rates of anxiety and depression;^{5,6}
- Experience more financial difficulties and use riskier methods to support gambling.⁵⁻⁷

Additional Risk Factors:

- Gambling under the influence of cannabis or alcohol;⁶
- Heavy alcohol use;⁷
- Male gender;⁸
- Business owners (especially restaurants, nightclubs, retail business and travel agencies).⁹

Other Considerations:

- Video game spending rose 22% since the start of COVID-19,¹⁰ and about half of players (55%) said that they played more games during the pandemic.¹¹
- Although many forms of gaming are not gambling, there are some areas where the lines are blurred between the two behaviors (e.g. loot boxes, gambling on skins and Esports contents, and microtransactions).

How can you help someone or their impacted others, who are having challenges with gambling?

Call the gambling helpline: **1-888-789-7777** or text "**CTGAMB**" to **53342**.

For additional resources and gambling treatment information, please visit: www.ct.gov/dmhas/pgs

¹ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32837423/>

² <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33551689/>

³ Wood and Tabri (2020), Measuring responsible gambling in Massachusetts.

⁴ National Council on Problem Gambling, National Survey on Gambling Attitudes and Gambling Experiences (NGAGE) 2.0.

⁵ <https://www.basisonline.org/2021/09/young-adults-gambling-covid-19-pandemic-ontario.html>

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7357671/>

⁷ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33997939/>

⁸ <https://www.basisonline.org/2021/09/impact-of-covid-19-on-gambling-behavior.html>

⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7959835/?tool=pmcentrez&report=abstract>

¹⁰ Hume et al (2020), The Washington Post: *The Biggest Questions Facing The Gaming World in 2021.*

¹¹ <https://www.theesa.com/resource/2021-essential-facts-about-the-video-game-industry/>