



NCPG
National Council on Problem Gambling



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**

Beyond the Bracket: Understanding the Impact of Gambling Addiction on Mental Health

Thursday, March 27th, 2025
Senate Visitors Center, Room 202



NCPG

National Council on Problem Gambling



**American
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for Suicide
Prevention**



**PROBLEM GAMBLING
AWARENESS MONTH**

**CALL.
TEXT.
CHAT ONLINE.
24/7.**

1-800-GAMBLER
HELP FOR PROBLEM GAMBLING



An Introduction to Problem Gambling:

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CADCR, QMHP

Founder & Executive Director, Arkansas Problem Gambling Council

Board Member, National Association of Social Workers (Arkansas Chapter)

Advocate for gambling addiction awareness, treatment, and policy development

Defining Problem Gambling



DSM-5 TR Definition: Persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to distress or impairment, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association (2022). Symptoms include:

- Increasing amounts of money gambled
- Inability to control gambling
- Chasing losses
- Lying to conceal gambling behavior
- Preoccupation with gambling
- Jeopardizing relationships, career, or education due to gambling
- Relying on others for financial relief due to gambling losses



Recognized as a behavioral addiction with significant mental health implications



Reference: American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed., text rev.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing.

Mental Health Impacts of Problem Gambling

Increased rates of depression and anxiety

- Studies show problem gamblers are twice as likely to experience major depressive episodes (**Journal of Gambling Studies, 2021**)

Higher risk of substance abuse

- Approximately 35%-50% of individuals with gambling disorder also suffer from a substance use disorder (**National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2022**)

Mental Health Impacts of Problem Gambling

Suicidal ideation and self-harm risks

- Nearly 17% of problem gamblers report attempting suicide, compared to 0.5% of the general population (**JAMA Psychiatry, 2020**)

Financial stress leading to family breakdown and homelessness

- Over 30% of individuals in gambling treatment report severe financial distress leading to eviction or homelessness (**American Journal of Psychiatry, 2023**)



Gambling Addiction in the Social Work Framework

- **Micro Level:** Individual and family impact (mental health, financial stress, relationships)
- **Mezzo Level:** Community effects (workforce instability, criminal justice involvement)
- **Macro Level:** Policy and societal implications (economic burdens, public health responses)



Social Costs & Family Impact of Gambling Addiction

Estimated **\$7 billion** in social costs in the U.S. annually (crime, lost productivity, bankruptcy)

Impact on Families: Divorce, child neglect, domestic violence

Arkansas & Other Southern States: Higher vulnerability due to economic disparities and increasing gambling access



The Need for Research & Targeted Interventions

- Lack of research on youth gambling addiction prevention and treatment resources.
- Importance of **age-specific prevention strategies and intervention programs**



The Need for Research & Targeted Interventions

- First responders and military personnel at **higher risk** due to stress exposure
- Importance of **age-specific prevention strategies and intervention programs**



Collaborative Efforts for Funding and Awareness



State funding for **treatment, research, and prevention**



Partnerships between **mental health professionals, social workers, and policymakers**



Public awareness campaigns leveraging social media and technology

Dave Yeager

U.S. Army Veteran in Recovery from Disordered Gambling

Suicide and Problem Gambling

Jill Harkavy-Friedman, PhD
March 27, 2025



Problem Gambling and Suicide Questions

Do people who have problem gambling disorder have a higher rate of suicide?

Do people who die by suicide have a higher rate of problem gambling?



Prevalence of Gambling

Most adults have gambled

Approximately 85% of U.S. adults have gambled at least once in their lives

60% having gambled within the past year

1-2.4% of people who gamble have gambling disorder

<https://www.ncpgambling.org/help-treatment/faqs-what-is-problem-gambling/#:~:text=About%2085%25%20of%20U.S.%20adults,gambling%20are%20Hawaii%20and%20Utah>

Gabellini E, Lucchini F, Gattoni ME. Prevalence of Problem Gambling: A Meta-analysis of Recent Empirical Research (2016-2022). J Gambl Stud. 2023 Sep;39(3):1027-1057. doi: 10.1007/s10899-022-10180-0. Epub 2022 Dec 31. PMID: 36586057.



Core Symptoms of Gambling Disorder

Longstanding pattern of

- Gambling more and more to get the same excitement
- Can't stop
- Thinking about it all the time
- Gambling to relieve distress
- Lying to cover up
- Causing problems with money, people and work

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, Text Revision. (DSM-5-TR) 2022. American Psychiatric Association. American Psychiatric Association Publishing.



Common Issues People with Problem Gambling may Face

Negative attitudes (Stigma)

Problems with finances

Intimate partner strain

Difficulty with Relationships

Poor work or school performance

M. van der Maas, R. DiMeglio, L. Nower, (2024). Gambling as a precipitating factor in deaths by suicide in the National Violent Death Reporting System. Public Health, 235: 180-186, ISSN 0033-3506, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2024.07.005>



Gambling and Suicidal Ideation and Behavior

Among people with gambling problems

31% suicidal ideation

17% suicide plans

16% suicide attempts

Among people who died by suicide

4.4% were reported to have had problem gambling

Armoon, B., Griffiths, M.D., Mohammadi, R. *et al.* Suicidal Behaviors and Associated Factors Among Individuals with Gambling Disorders: A Meta-Analysis. *J Gambli Stud* **39**, 751–777 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10899-023-10188-0>. M. van der Maas, R. DiMeglio, L. Nower, (2024). Gambling as a precipitating factor in deaths by suicide in the National Violent Death Reporting System. *Public Health*, 235: 180-186, ISSN 0033-3506, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2024.07.005>.



What may connect PGD and suicide?

Barriers to help-seeking: indebtedness and shame

Negative impact for those with problem gambling: Social and occupational problems

Confounders: Psychiatric co-morbidity, alcohol and drug use disorders but not all, family history of suicide, trauma, childhood and adulthood abuse

There is never one cause of suicide, it is a complex and dynamic behavior

Marionneau V, Nikkinen J. Gambling-related suicides and suicidality: A systematic review of qualitative evidence. *Front Psychiatry*. 2022 Oct 26;13:980303. doi: 10.3389/fpsyt.2022.980303. PMID: 36387006; PMCID: PMC9645554. Giovanni, M., Fabiola, S., Federica, F., Mariangela, C., Nicola, P., Ilaria, T., ... & Massimo, D. G. (2017). Gambling disorder and suicide: an overview of the associated co-morbidity and clinical characteristics. *Int J High Risk Behav Addict*, 6(3), e30827.



Factors Associated with PGD & Suicide

Substance use

Impulse control disorders

Mood Disorders: Major Depression, GAD, Bipolar Disorder

Impulsive or reckless behavior

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Personality Disorders

Trauma and ACES



Did you know?

Military and Veteran populations have increased risk for both pathological gambling and suicide

We need to increase focus on Military and Veterans, PGD and suicide

Research

Treatment

Access to health care



Research is Needed: Not Well Studied

What factors contribute to PGD

Treatment development and implementation for PGD

Connection between PGD and suicide

How to help Service Members and Veterans who have greater risk

To save lives we need commitment to address
PGD and suicide



Problem Gambling and Suicide

Do people who have problem gambling have a higher rate of suicide?

Yes

Do people who die by suicide have a higher rate of problem gambling?

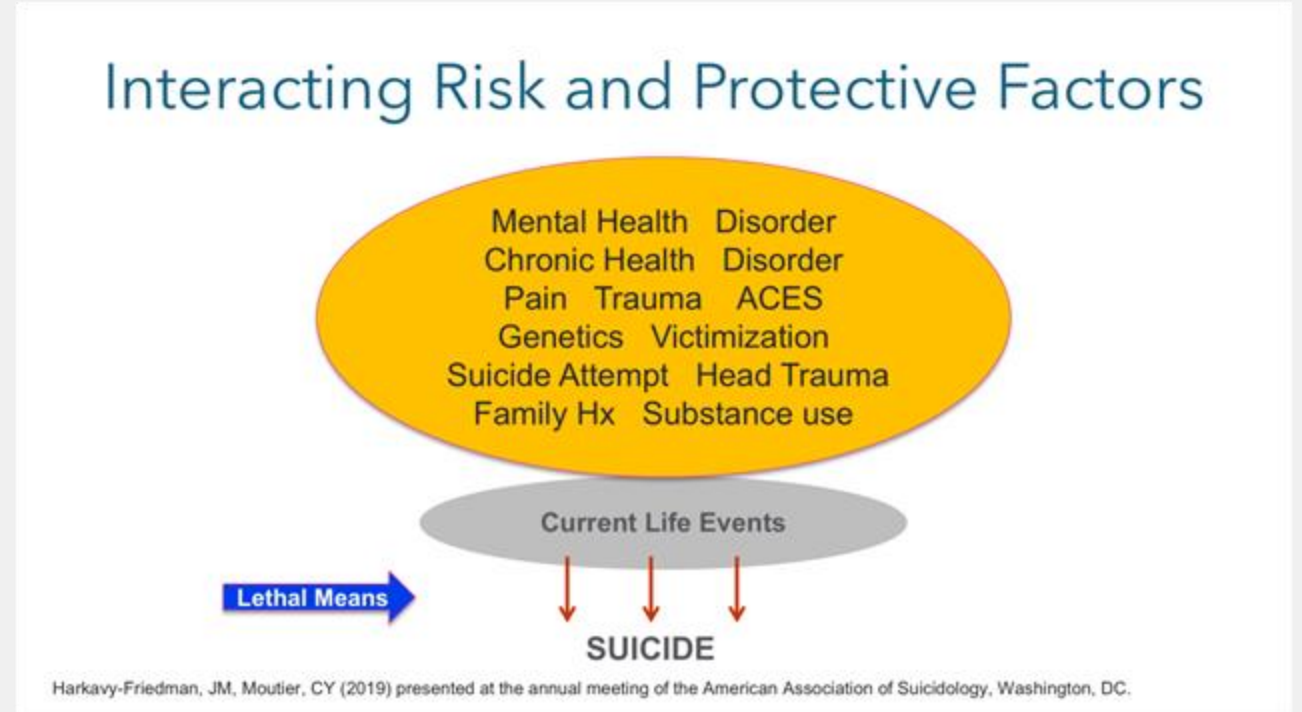
No? Unknown? Higher than what?



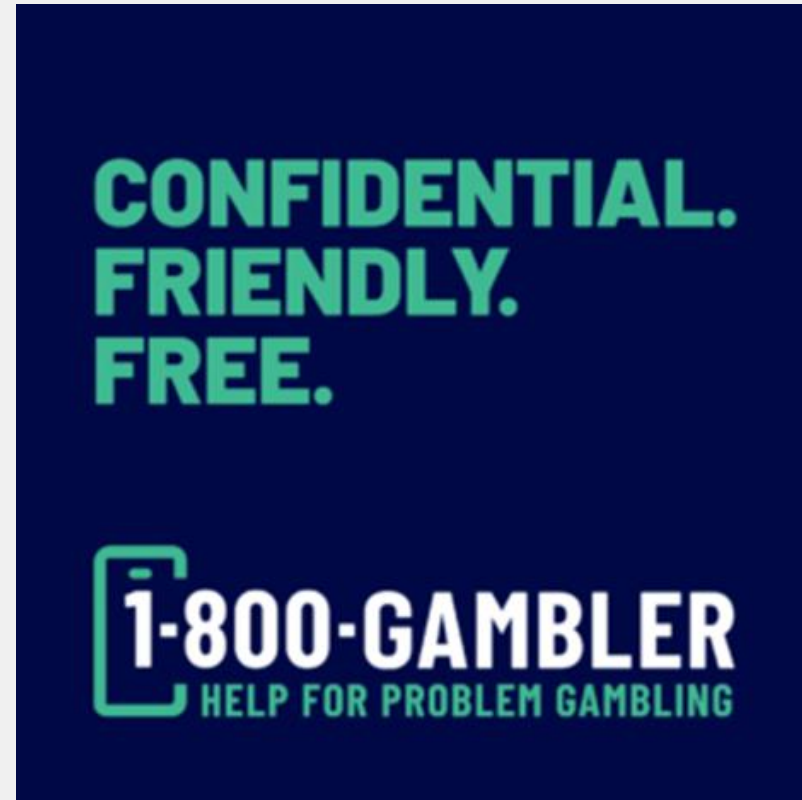
Summary

PGD has been associated with suicide within the context of other contributors to suicide:

Mental health & substance use conditions, chronic physical illness and pain, ACES, head trauma, genetics, family hx



Support for Crisis Services



Thank You!

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Maryland Gambling and Problem Gambling Landscape

Mary Drexler, MSW

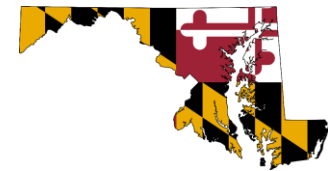
Director of Operations

MD Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling



How it Began

- Legislation to legalize casino gaming
- Center began operation on July 1, 2012
- Center's mission is to promote **healthy and informed choices** regarding gambling and problem gambling



Forms of Legal Gambling in Maryland

- 27 online and in-person sports betting contractors
- Online fantasy competitions
- 13 licensed Bingo Halls
- Lottery
- Horse racing
- 7 off-track-betting sites



Key Initiatives



Public Awareness



Prevention Programs



Public Policy



Research



Free Training with
CEUs



Provider Referral
Directory



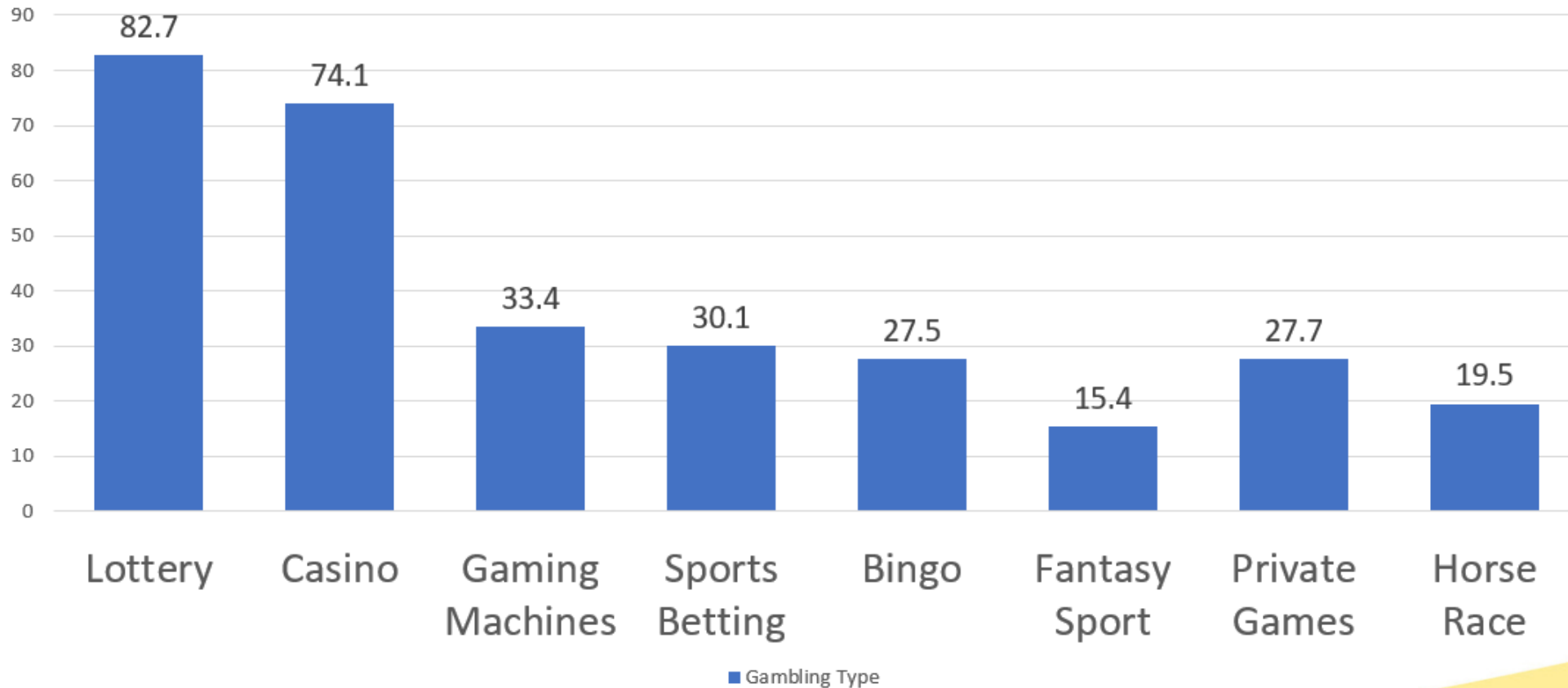
Peer Recovery
Support

Maryland Problem Gambling Helpline
1-800-GAMBLER

Call/Text/Chat

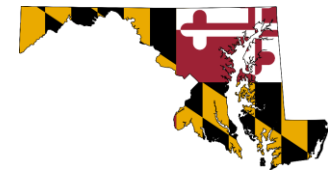
2022 Maryland Gambling Prevalence Study

Percentage of Marylanders Reported by Gambling Type





Problem Gambling hits Home



Voluntary Exclusion Program (VEP)

- A Program/Tool for individuals to **voluntarily ban themselves** from casinos, and other forms of gambling respective to their states.
- Across states, VEP programs have different lengths of times relating to the length of the ban.
- One of many tools for helping individuals with gambling problems.



Contact Information

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Thank you for coming!



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