Youth Gambling Factsheet

Updated October 2026

This factsheet compiles youth gambling statistics from several international and US or Canada-based studies for use in awareness messaging. However, there is a significant lack of research on youth gambling activity and the harms associated with it, leaving major gaps in understanding how gambling impacts adolescents and young adults. Studies to date have not kept pace with emerging technologies, digital gambling trends, or the experiences of vulnerable subgroups, making it difficult to develop effective prevention, treatment, and policy strategies.

More longitudinal and inclusive research is urgently needed to track how youth attitudes and behaviors evolve and to address gambling-related risks from a public health perspective.

The Harris Poll on behalf of the National Council on Problem Gambling (March 2026) [source]

- Nearly **two thirds of adults** aged 21 and older (65%) **report participating in at least one form of gambling before age 21.**

- Among those activities:
  - **40% played lottery or scratch-off tickets**
  - 37% played home games with friends/family for money
  - 23% placed a sports bet
  - 21% played online casino-style games
  - Played fantasy sports (16%)
  - Other form (3%)

- **Younger adults report even higher rates of early sports betting and online casino play before age 21** compared to older generations. The survey found that 33% of 21–44-year-olds placed a sports bet before 21, versus 11% of 55+.

- **Two-thirds of Americans (66%) say they are concerned about the impact of underage exposure to gambling or gambling-like activities**, which can include sports betting advertisements, online games with betting elements, and loot boxes. One in four (25%) say they are very concerned. Concern is particularly elevated among those with children under 18 in the household (71% compared to 62% among those without children under 18 in the household).

International

- Globally, in 2024 **17.9% of youth under 18 have gambled in the past 12 months.** [Source]
- An estimated **159.6 million youth under 18** have gambled on **commercial forms of gambling,** which are largely age-restricted, in the past 12 months, according to a 2024 review. [Source]
- An estimated **10.3% of youth under 18 had gambled online** in the past 12 months **globally** according to a 2024 review. [Source]
- **Among youth under 18**, **online gambling is the second most prevalent form of gambling activity** according to a 2024 review. [Source]
- Estimated adolescent **gambling prevalence** by region according to a 2024 review: [Source]
    - Australasia, 9.4%
    - East and southeast Asia, 10.9%
    - Eastern Europe, 21.9%
    - Western Europe, 26.6%
    - Africa, 18.9%
    - North America, 33.7%
    - Global, 17.9%
- **Young people aged 25 and under are more likely to meet the criteria for problem gambling** if they play games with gambling-like features (e.g., video games with loot boxes and social casino games) and if they engage in new types of gambling (e.g., online sports betting and e-sports betting). [Source]
- **Young males aged 25 and under are more likely to meet the criteria for problem gambling** than young females. [Source]
- **Young people are more likely to gamble and meet the criteria for problem gambling** if they experience mental health concerns, use substances, and if they have had adverse childhood experiences. [Source]
- Problem gambling among youth under 18 is **more likely to occur** among those individuals who belong to an **ethnic minority.** [Hanss et al. 2014; Fröberg et al. 2015; Forrest and McHale 2012; Griffiths 2008]
- Problem gambling among youth under 18 **is more likely to occur** among those who have **parents who gambled.** [Becoña et al. 2001; Forrest and McHale 2012; Olason et al. 2006b]

- Overall, the most frequent motivations reported by adolescent problem gamblers were **gambling to escape** and the **inability to resist temptation.** [Skokauskas and Satkeviciute 2007; Kristiansen and Jensen 2014]

- Significant predictors of problem gambling include **the experience of winning a large amount of money early in adolescents' playing career**, and **being of lower socioeconomic status.** [Dodig 2013; Surís et al. 2011]

- Despite legislation worldwide to constrain gambling among adolescents and young people, modern technology, such as **online gaming apps** and **online gambling venues**, have significantly **increased** their exposure to the risks of problem gambling. [Source]

- Adolescent problem gambling can lead to many complex problems, such as **criminal behavior, poor academic achievement, school truancy, financial problems, depressive symptoms, suicide, low self-esteem, deterioration of social relationships**, and **substance abuse**. [Source]

- More than **two thirds of adult gamblers** have reported that exposure to gambling during adolescence was a key contributing factor to their current gambling. [Source]

- Adolescent **male gamblers** were **more likely** to engage in multiple forms of gambling than female gamblers. [Source]

- Adolescents were **more likely** to gamble if they had a friend or relative who had a **gambling problem**. [Source]

- Adolescents whose parents gambled had significantly more positive attitudes towards gambling than those with non-gambling parents. [Source]

- Social factors, such as **gambling involvement by family and friends**, have been shown to play **a greater role** in adolescent gambling participation than psychological factors. [Source]

- Effective interventions to **prevent or reduce gambling-related harm in children** and young people up to age 25 often integrate **multiple methods** and actively engage participants, are theory-driven and delivered by trained practitioners, are tailored to developmental needs, and incorporate digital technologies. [Source]

Canada

- A 2019 survey showed that about **4% of Ontario high school students reported symptoms of low to moderately severe gambling problems** (the urge to gamble despite negative

consequences), and about **2% reported behavior consistent with gambling addiction**. [Source]

UK

- The United Kingdom's 2024 Young People and Gambling study found that **1.5% of UK children aged 11–17 years were experiencing problem gambling** and that **an additional 1.9% were at risk.** [Source]