Youth Gambling Factsheet - High School Age

Updated November 2026

This factsheet compiles youth gambling statistics for high school-age (14-18) youth 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 youth. 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)

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

- 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+. [source]

- **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). [source]

United States Based Research

- **More than half of respondents (52.5%) among 1,677 U.S. adolescents and young adults ages 13 to 27 reported gambling in the past year,** including 42.7% of adolescents ages 13 to 17. [Source]

- **10.8% of adolescents who gambled were classified as being at high risk for problem gambling.** [Source]

- **Family or household gambling was linked to both gambling participation and problem gambling severity.** Among adolescents ages 13 to 17, 51.5% reported that a family or household member gambled. Those who believed a household member had a gambling problem were more than five times as likely and those who gambled with a family member, more than four times as likely, to be high-risk problem gamblers. [Source]

- **Gambling participation increased with age.** Approximately 42.7% of adolescents ages 13 to 17 reported past-year gambling, compared with 56.6% of those ages 18 to 20 and 57.2% of those ages 21 to 27. [Source]

- **Gambling activity preferences varied considerably by age.** Adolescents ages 13 to 17 were more likely to participate in bingo and raffles, while those ages 21 to 27 were more likely to purchase scratch-off and lottery tickets and participate in casino gambling. [Source]

- **Nearly one in five adolescent gamblers (18.9%) gambled at least weekly.** [Source]

- **11.4% of high school students and 10.8% of college undergraduates who gambled were classified as high-risk problem gamblers.** [Source]

- **Prediction markets had the highest proportion of weekly participation among all activities** examined (31.7%). Another 38.9% of prediction-market participants engaged one to three times per month. [Source]

- **Some emerging and less commonly played activities attract participants who engage at relatively high frequencies.** [Source]

- **Those who witnessed gambling in the home were significantly more likely than other respondents to have gambled in the past year (62.5% vs. 45.5%)** [Source]

- **Adolescents, ages 13 to 17, who were at high risk for gambling problems endorsed the highest household exposure of any age group.** [Source]

- 75.5% had a family member who gambled
- 66.3% believed a family member had a gambling problem
- 61.2% reported gambling with a family member

International Based Research

- 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]

- **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]

- 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]

- 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]

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