

# FACT SHEET



NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESPONSIBLE GAMING  
Advancing Research, Education and Awareness

## YOUTH GAMBLING

### KEY FACTS

- Gambling for most youth is an infrequent and inconsequential pastime. For some, it is part of the normal adolescent experimentation with adult behaviors and may be considered a rite of passage into adulthood in that youth of legal age tend to shift their gambling participation away from informal games.<sup>1</sup>
- Nevertheless, a small percentage of youth population gamble frequently and experience problems associated with their gambling, and these youth will likely need prevention and intervention services.<sup>2</sup>
- Studies have concluded that early involvement in gambling is predictive of later gambling problems. Many adult problem gamblers report that they started gambling when they were young.<sup>1</sup>
- It can be assumed that between 2 and 7 percent of young people experience a gambling addiction, compared to about 1 percent of adults. An estimated 6 to 15 percent of youth have gambling problems that are less severe, while 2 to 3 percent of adults fall into that category.<sup>1-3</sup>
- One study in Minnesota showed that, compared to girls, boys are more likely to gamble overall than girls, and they are more likely to be “frequent gamblers” (defined as participating in gambling behavior either weekly or daily) than girls.<sup>4</sup>
- This same study found the most recent rates of past-year gambling among youth are about 60 percent of boys and 30 percent of girls. About 4 percent of girls and 15 percent of boys gamble at least once a week.<sup>4</sup>
- Finally, this study demonstrated that rates of gambling participation among youth have gradually and consistently declined since it first measured gambling behavior in 1992. There has been a significant decline in underage play of the lottery from 1992 to 2010 and also downward trends in underage casino play from 1998 to 2010.<sup>4</sup>
- Demographic, behavioral and other psychosocial variables are associated with gambling disorders among youth and have been consistently reported across studies: being male, antisocial behavior, alcohol and drug use, parental/familial gambling, academic problems, impulsivity and peer deviance.<sup>1</sup>
  - These variables may play a role in the development and/or maintenance of gambling behavior and disorder. Studies indicate that problematic gambling behaviors may be part of a constellation of issues that are mainly exhibited by males, including frequent alcohol use, tobacco use, drug use and antisocial behavior.
  - These studies also indicate that youth are typically involved in multiple risky behaviors, such as cigarette smoking, alcohol use, drug use and gambling disorders.

## REFERENCES

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