

March, 2022

2021 Statewide Assessment of Gambling and Problem Gambling in Illinois

Prepared for:

Illinois Department of Human Services,
Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery

Prepared by:

Health Resources in Action



Health Resources in Action
Advancing Public Health and Medical Research



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Governor J.B. Pritzker
Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton
IDHS Secretary Grace Hou

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The views and conclusions expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily represent those of the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery. This project was conducted under a contract between Health Resources in Action and the Illinois Department of Human Services (Contract #43CYZHRA01). This study was conducted by Health Resources in Action under contract with and with funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery.

Suggested Citation:

Carliner, H., Auerbach, A., Showalter, E., Reynoso, N., Robertson, N., Rana, P., Flynn, A., Rushman, A., Sanusi, M., Lawson, E., Wolff, L. S. (2021). *2021 Statewide Assessment of Gambling and Problem Gambling in Illinois*. Boston, MA: Health Resources in Action.

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A downloadable version of this report can be found at <https://weknowthefeeling.org/>

Acknowledgements

The Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery (SUPR) would like to thank the following partners, agencies, communities, and individuals for their participation in the 2021 Illinois Gambling Assessment:

Sponsors

- Casino Gaming Tax Fund

Advisors

- Dr. Silvia Martins, Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health
- Dr. Ziming Xuan, Associate Professor, Department of Community Health Sciences, Boston University School of Public Health
- Gambling Disorder Committee of the Illinois Advisory Council on Substance Use Disorder
- Illinois Council on Problem Gambling
- Illinois Alliance on Problem Gambling

Research Partners

- *Health Resources in Action*, Boston, MA, <https://hria.org/>
- *M. Davis and Company*, Philadelphia, PA, <https://www.mdavisco.com/>
- *Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago*, Chicago, IL, <https://phimc.org/>

Assessment Participants

- Local, State and National Leader Interviews (See Appendix B)
- Community Discussion Hosts (See Appendix B)
- Survey Respondents

Land Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge that the State of Illinois is on the lands of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Chickasaw Nations. These ancestral lands were the territory of these Native Nations prior to their forced and violent removal.

The state of Illinois is currently home to more than 75,000 tribal members. By making a land acknowledgment, we recognize that Indigenous peoples are the traditional stewards of the land that we now occupy, living here long before Illinois was a state and still thriving here today. As we work, live, and play on these territories we have a responsibility to acknowledge these Native Nations and to work with them as we move forward as a vibrant, inclusive State of Illinois.

Special thanks to individuals, families, and communities of Illinois who are personally affected by problem gambling who helped us with this assessment.

Contents

[Chapter 1](#)

Introduction and Methods

[Chapter 2](#)

**Prevalence of Gambling
in Illinois**

[Chapter 3](#)

Problem Gambling in Illinois

[Chapter 4](#)

**Mental Health, Substance Use,
and Other Risk and Protective
Factors**

[Chapter 5](#)

**Attitudes and Perceptions
of Gambling and Problem
Gambling in Illinois**

[Chapter 6](#)

**Problem Gambling Prevention,
Treatment, and Recovery
in Illinois**

[Chapter 7](#)

Recommendations

[Chapter 8](#)

Appendices

Executive Summary

Introduction

There has been significant growth in commercial gambling in the past 40 years, in Illinois and nationally. Most recently, the Illinois Legislature voted to expand gambling in the state, signing a bill in June 2019 that legalized sports betting; authorized up to six new casinos; allowed casino-like gaming at horse racetracks; and expanded video gambling in restaurants, taverns, fraternal organizations, and truck stops. With this expansion, Illinois residents now have many more opportunities to gamble, including ten casinos and over 36,000 video gaming terminals, with more expansion planned.

Legalized gambling is common across the U.S., with 76.9% of adults reporting that they gambled in the past year at least once [1]. Many adults engage in responsible gambling behaviors, however for some vulnerable individuals, gambling can negatively impact their economic, social, and mental well-being. Recent estimates indicate that the prevalence of problem gambling (PG) in the U.S. ranges from 0.1% to 6.0% [2], and the American Medical Association and the American Psychiatric Association classify problem gambling as an addiction.

To address problem gambling in Illinois, it is critical to understand the scope of the problem; which populations are most affected or at risk of developing gambling disorders; and what structures, policies, and practices are currently in place to prevent problem gambling, treat gambling disorders, and support those in recovery. The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) Division of Substance Use Prevention and Recovery (SUPR) aims to address the needs in the state

and provide services for problem gambling, including **prevention** of problem gambling, **intervention** for those at risk, **treatment** for those with an addiction, and support for those in **recovery**. There is limited data about the impact of at-risk and problem gambling in Illinois. IDHS/SUPR supported this statewide gambling baseline assessment study which can inform a strategic initiative for preventing and addressing problem gambling in the state.

Context

The Illinois Gambling Assessment was conducted during an unprecedented time period, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This impacted both the data collection process as well as the behaviors of assessment participants related to their ability to gamble, and their personal employment and financial security. Many of the questions in the Illinois gambling surveys, key informant interviews, and community discussions in this study asked about behaviors and experiences in the past 12 months, which overlapped entirely with the pandemic and ongoing lockdowns and business closures for most participants. In addition, many of the changes in regulation of gambling in Illinois were adopted during the time of this assessment, including expansion of video gaming availability and legalization of sports betting in the state. Altogether, this was a unique and ever-changing time period in which to conduct a statewide assessment. This created challenges with collecting data and interpretation of findings, but also a rare opportunity to explore the topic of gambling in Illinois during such an unprecedented moment in time.

Methods

The assessment was launched in July 2020 and led by Health Resources in Action (HRiA), a non-profit public health consulting organization. The study utilized multiple methods, including surveys of Illinois residents (n=2,029) and frequent gamblers (n=2,503), focus groups, interviews, and reviews of data and best practices. The Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM) was used to categorize survey respondents who gambled monthly or more as frequent recreational gamblers, people at risk of problem gambling, and people with problem gambling. The research team also worked with the Problem Gambling Sub-Committee of the Substance Use Advisory Council to guide the study's approach.

Findings

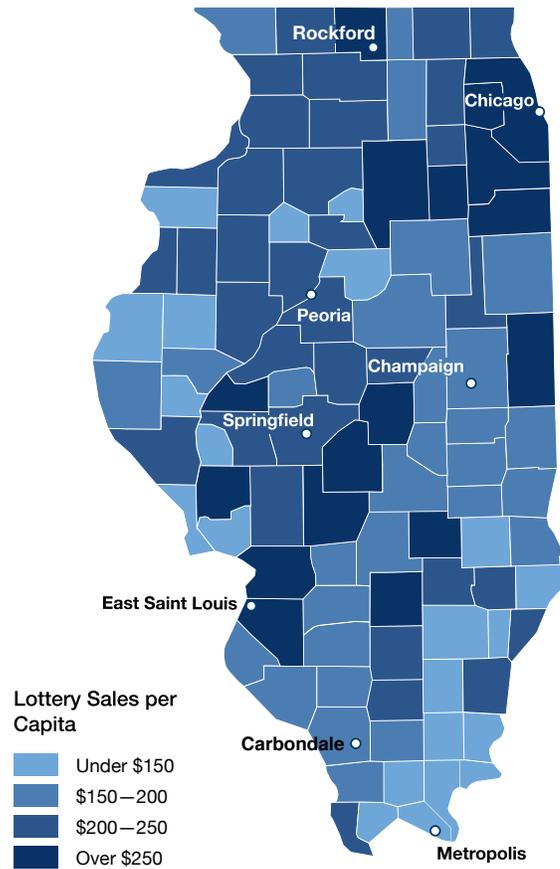
The following provides a brief overview of key findings that emerged from this assessment:

Prevalence of Gambling in Illinois

The vast majority of Illinois residents reported having gambled in the past year:

- **Gambling behaviors** - According to survey responses, 41.9% of adult Illinoisans reported participating in any form of gambling in the past month, 68.4% had gambled in the past year, and 90.3% had gambled ever in their life.
- **Gambling activities** - In the past year, the most popular form of gambling that adult Illinoisans participated in was the state lottery (reported by 54.2% of survey respondents), followed by gambling with friends (33.0%), and organized sports and fights betting (15.3%).
- **Lottery** sales per capita for adults aged 18 or older was \$275 for FY 2020. Total lottery revenue for FY 2020 was \$2.80 billion.

Lottery Sales per Capita for Adults Aged 18 or Older, by County, FY 2020

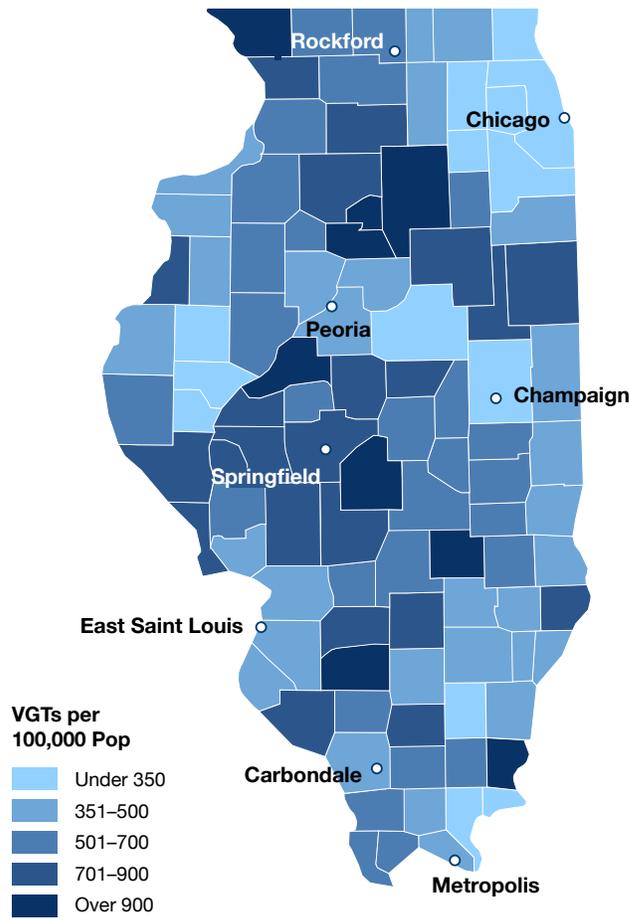


Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019; Illinois Lottery, Camelot, FY 2020

Note: Per capita rates were calculated by aggregating Camelot sales per zip code into counties and using 2019 American Community Survey county population estimates for population over 18 years of age

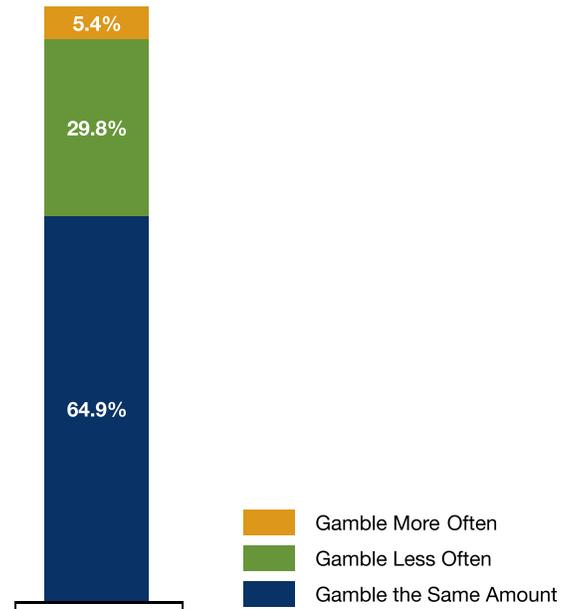
- Admissions and revenue data indicated a prevalent but decreasing trend in **casino and riverboat** gambling in Illinois, with a striking decline in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Only 15.1% of Illinoisans reported that they had gambled at a casino or riverboat in the past year.
- Video **gaming** terminals (VGTs) continued to grow from FY 2013 (7,920) to FY 2020 (36,145) and total tax revenues from terminals similarly increased over 10-fold from FY 2013 (\$36.3 million) to FY 2020 (\$403.5 million). Almost 14% of Illinoisans reported that they had gambled at a VGT in the past year.

Video Gaming Terminals (VGTs), per 100,000 Population, by County, FY 2020



Data Source: IL Wagering Report, 2020; U.S.; U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2015-2019

COVID-19 Impact on Gambling Behavior, Among IL Residents, 2021 (n=1,961)



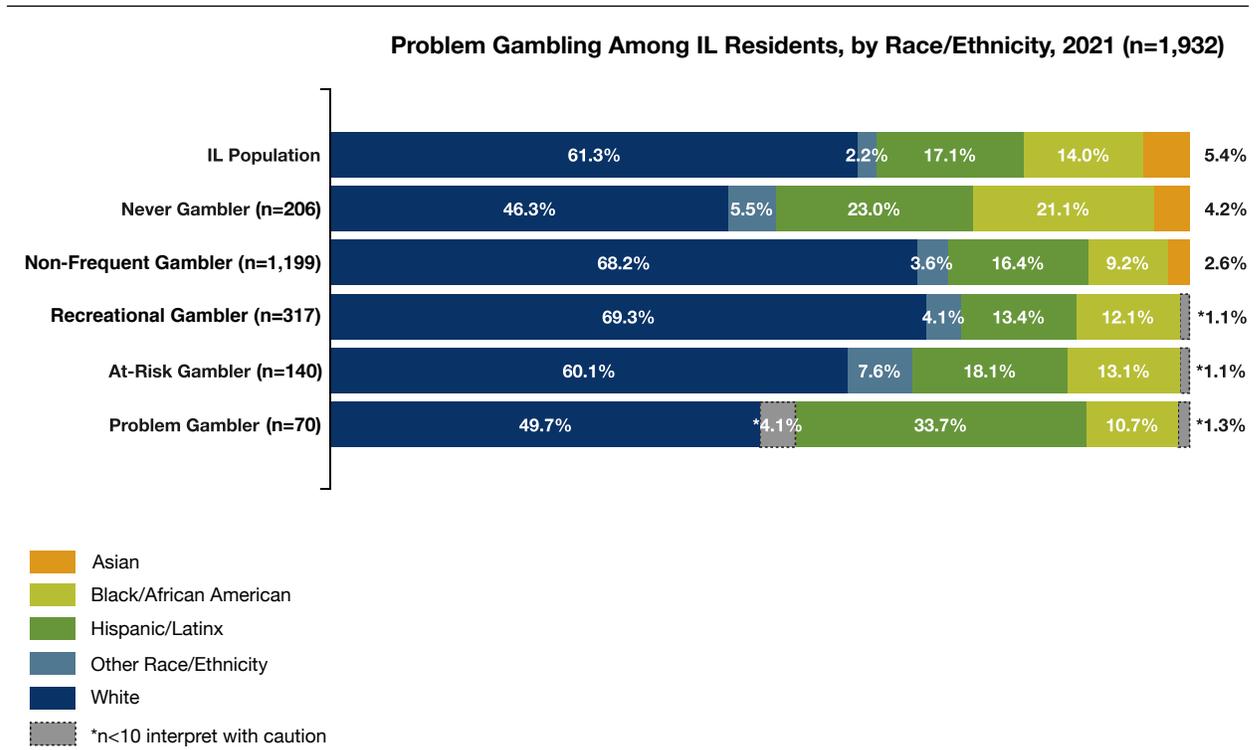
Data Source: IL Problem Gambling Assessment, Representative Population Sample, Weighted %s, 2021

- **Online gambling** was reported by 12.6% of Illinoisans over the past year. Illinoisans aged 18–24 were more likely to have gambled online in the past year and in their lives, relative to older adults. Assessment participants perceived that online gambling has significantly increased due to COVID-19.
- **Organized sports and fights betting** became legal in March 2020, though activity was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. About 15% of Illinoisans reported that they gambled on organized sports and fights in the past year.

- **Gambling with friends** or in the community was the second most common form of gambling in the past year (33.0%). Men, Whites, and college graduates had the highest prevalence of gambling with friends ever in their lives, relative to their counterparts.
- Illinoisans indicated that **COVID-19** affected their gambling behaviors in a number of ways, though nearly two-thirds reported that they gambled the same amount of time as they did before the pandemic.

Problem Gambling in Illinois

The statewide prevalence of problem gambling in Illinois in 2021 was 3.8%. An estimated 383,000 Illinois adults may have a gambling problem, while an additional 761,000 are estimated to be at risk for developing a gambling problem.



Data Source: IL Problem Gambling Assessment, Representative Population Sample, Weighted %s, 2021

- **Types of gambling behaviors** — Approximately 10% of adult Illinoisans never gambled, 61.9% gambled infrequently (less than once per month), 16.5% were frequent recreational gamblers not currently at risk for developing a gambling problem, and 7.7% were at risk of developing a gambling problem.
- **Demographics of types of gamblers**
 - White Illinoisans were more likely to gamble than other races/ethnicities but less likely to have a gambling problem. Hispanic/Latinx Illinoisans were more likely to not gamble at all but, if they did, were more likely to develop a gambling problem.
 - Men were more likely than women to be frequent recreational gamblers, at-risk gamblers, and problem gamblers.
- The most **common forms of gambling** that people with problem gambling reported engaging in weekly or more were online gambling (72.3%), racetracks (71.4%), and the lottery (69.9%).
- **Number of types of gambling** — Among frequent gamblers, recreational gamblers tended to participate in one or two types of gambling (49.4%), people at risk for problem gambling tended to participate in three to five types of gambling (50.3%), and people with problem gambling tended to participate in six or more types of gambling (61.7%).

“

I have \$5, why not bet it?
If I win, then we can move out
of this neighborhood.

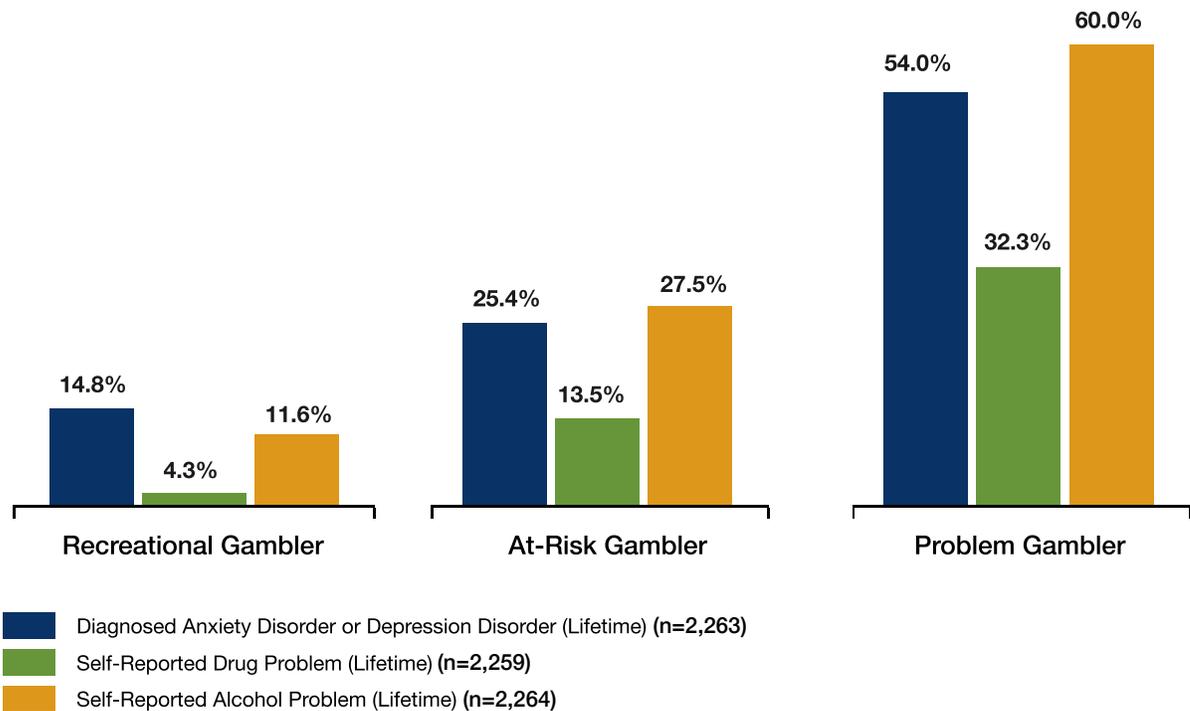
Focus Group Participant

- **During COVID-19**, over half (53.5%) of people with problem gambling reported that their **financial situation** had gotten worse because of the **pandemic**, whereas only 36.5% of at-risk gamblers and 37.6% of frequent recreational gamblers reported a worse financial situation.
- In an average year, people with problem gambling estimated that they spent a median of \$16,750 on gambling. **Debt from gambling** (including loans, credit cards, and informal borrowing) was greatest among people with problem gambling, with 33.0% indicating they had \$10,000–\$50,000 of debt and 21.3% indicating they had \$50,000–\$100,000 of debt.
- **Problem gambling in racial/ethnic groups** indicated that people of color, specifically Hispanic/Latinx (7.3%), Other race/ethnicity (4.1%) and Black/African American (3.6%) Illinoisans had a higher prevalence of problem gambling than White Illinoisans (2.9%). Of frequent gamblers (monthly or more), about one-quarter of Hispanic/Latinx Illinoisans (25.9%) had a gambling problem, whereas about one in ten Black/African American Illinoisans (11.8%) and White Illinoisans (10.4%) did.
- People who engaged in **substance use while gambling** were more likely to have a gambling problem. Among frequent gamblers in Illinois who had problem gambling:
 - 80.4% had ever used alcohol while gambling, compared to only 48.1% of frequent recreational gamblers.
 - 44.5% had ever used marijuana while gambling, compared to only 10.4% of frequent recreational gamblers.
 - Over 30% had ever used illicit drugs or prescription drugs not as prescribed while gambling, compared to less than 3% of frequent recreational gamblers.

Mental Health, Substance Use, and Other Risk and Protective Factors for Problem Gambling in Illinois

Problem gambling disproportionately impacts marginalized communities and is typically interconnected with mental health conditions and substance use.

Lifetime Prevalence of Mental and Substance Use Disorders Among Frequent Gamblers, by PPGM, 2021



Data Source: IL Problem Gambling Assessment, Frequent Gambler Sample, 2021

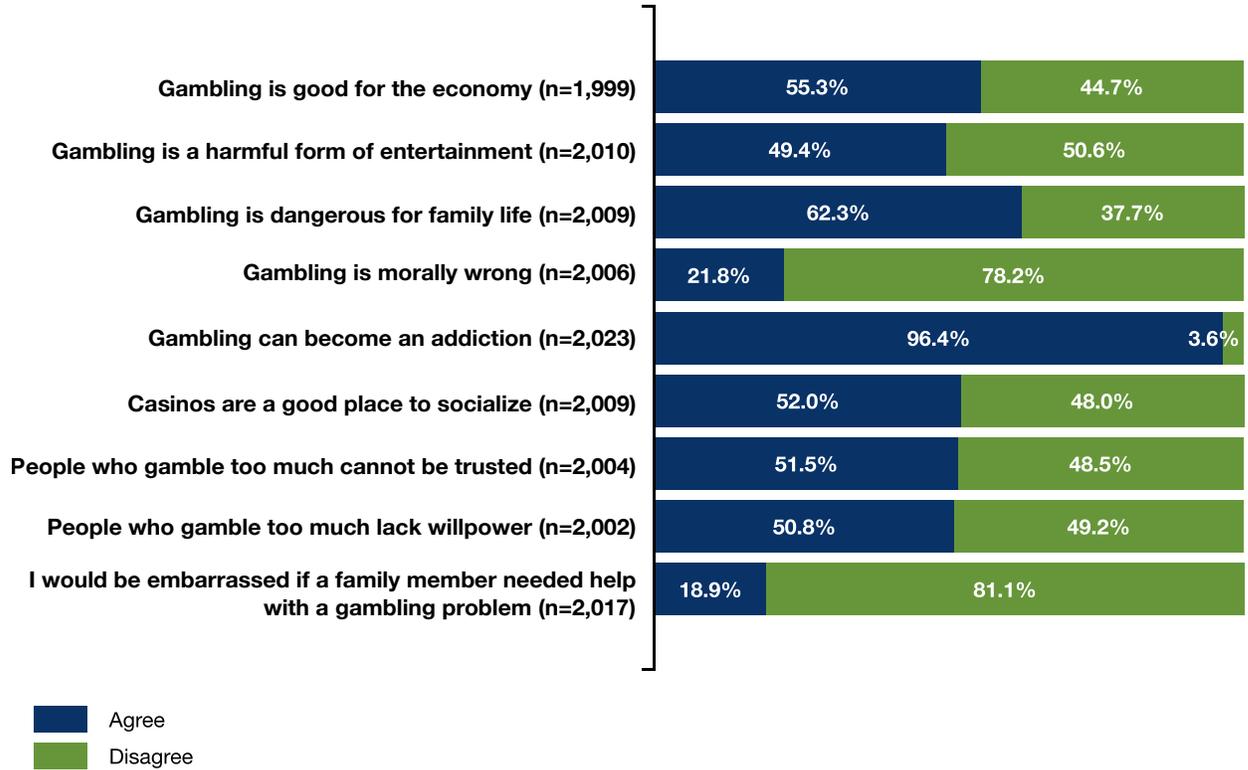
- **Comorbidities** — 68.6% of people with problem gambling experienced **serious anxiety and/or depression** in the past year, compared to 39.2% of at-risk gamblers and 27.9% of frequent recreational gamblers. Similarly, people with problem gambling were more likely to report alcohol (28.0% past year; 60.0% lifetime) and **drug** (14.0% past year; 32.3% lifetime) problems compared to their counterparts.
- One in ten Illinoisans with problem gambling thought about or attempted **suicide** in the past year; one in three had done so in their lifetime.

Attitudes and Perceptions of Gambling and Problem Gambling in Illinois

Attitudes and perceptions of gambling and problem gambling are important to understand in determining the most effective approach to addressing problem gambling in a population. Illinois residents varied in what they thought about gambling behaviors and opportunities, as described below.

- 61.5% of Illinoisans believed the current **availability of gambling opportunities** is OK, while 22.8% believed it is too widely available, 8.3% believed gambling should not be legal in Illinois, and 7.4% believed gambling is not available enough. People with problem gambling (29.2%) were the group most likely to believe gambling was too widely available in the state.

Attitudes Towards Gambling Among IL Residents, 2021



Data Source: IL Problem Gambling Assessment, Representative Population Sample, Weighted %, 2021

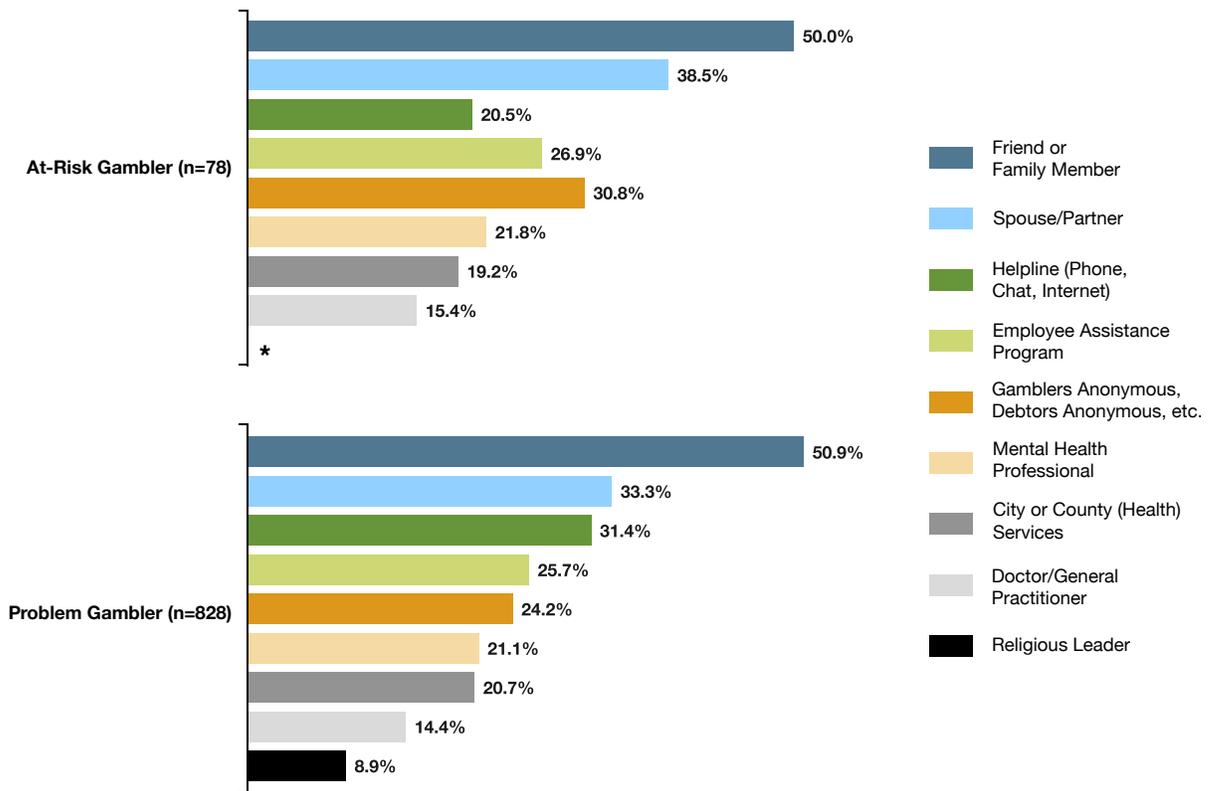
- Of Illinoisans with problem gambling, nearly half agreed with the statement that gambling is a harmful form of entertainment and over 60% agreed with the statement that gambling is dangerous for family life, both higher percentages than people who gamble frequently without problem gambling.
- According to assessment participants, problem gambling is not well understood and is stigmatized, leading to denial of the issue and lack of treatment.

Problem Gambling Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery in Illinois

It is critical to address at-risk and problem gambling at all levels of the continuum from prevention to treatment to recovery. This section describes the various initiatives currently being implemented in Illinois.

- **Prevention** has not been a major focus of current gambling initiatives in Illinois. There have been several education and awareness campaigns focusing on problem gambling, particularly during Problem Gambling Awareness Month in March.

Sources from Which People Sought Help, Among At-Risk and Problem Gamblers, 2021 (n=908)



Data Source: IL Problem Gambling Assessment, Frequent Gambler Sample, 2021

Note: This question in the survey allowed for multiple responses; therefore, percentages may not add up to 100%. Values where n<10 are not presented.

- The state has the **Illinois Problem Gambling Helpline**, a telephone and web resource with specialists trained in evidence-based approaches that help connect people with treatment and recovery support services.
- **Treatment and recovery resources** are numerous, though not spread evenly throughout the state. There are 45 substance use disorder (SUD) provider locations that provide gambling disorder services. Additionally, there are 1,020 SUD provider locations in the state who do not have gambling services but would be eligible to provide gambling screening and referral services. In SFY 2018, 7,000 gambling treatment-related services were provided by SUPR-funded treatment providers. This number more than doubled to over 16,450 services in SFY 2020.

“

We are 50 years behind [other behavioral health issues] in terms of the level of stigma [around problem gambling].

Treatment Provider

- **Treatment-seeking** for gambling disorders was more common among people with problem gambling (76.0% have ever sought treatment), though they were most likely to seek help from friends or family rather than medical professionals. Only 21.1% of treatment-seeking problem gamblers sought help from a mental health professional, and only 14.4% from a doctor or general practitioner.
- Assessment participants cited several **barriers to treatment**. Among people with problem gambling, the most common reasons were that they thought they could fix the problem on their own (45.7%) or they were too embarrassed or worried to ask for help (44.6%). Awareness of treatment services was also a barrier to care. *“There’s a lot of messaging on where to go to gamble, but nothing on where to get treated,”* explained one participant.
- **Gamblers Anonymous (GA)** is a well-known resource in the field that provides a way for those in treatment and recovery to share their experiences with others and receive peer support. The majority of GA locations are in the Chicago metropolitan area, with few locations in other parts of the state.

Recommendations

Primary data from the surveys, interviews, and community discussions as well as secondary data from existing surveillance sources were analyzed and synthesized by HRiA to develop an initial list of recommendations. These recommendations were then examined in the context of the literature about problem gambling, best practices from the field, as well as the context of Illinois. Recommendations were developed for a range of stakeholders across Illinois — government agencies, healthcare and behavioral health institutions, regulatory entities, the gambling industry, educators, policymakers, and others who influence or are affected by problem gambling. These recommendations were organized by the components of the addiction continuum — prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery — as well as two overarching recommendations.

Overarching Recommendations

1

Funding Expansion and Consistency

Recommendation

Designate 1% of annual gambling tax revenue for problem gambling. Best practice is to legislatively establish a percentage of state gambling revenues to be earmarked for problem gambling services [3].

2

Statewide Collaborative

Recommendation

Support the development of a statewide collaborative organization to lead state stakeholders in convening, coordinating, and developing comprehensive programs and policies for those affected by problem gambling, which would include increasing public awareness about problem gambling and advocating for supportive services and treatment.

Promotion and Prevention Recommendations

3

Impact Assessment
and Zoning

Recommendation

Require an impact assessment to be completed and reviewed prior to passage of new gambling legislation. Create zoning restrictions for the location and density of gambling establishments.

4

Outreach, Engagement,
Education, and Awareness

Recommendation

Further engage sub-populations disproportionately impacted by problem gambling to gather additional information about their needs and assets related to problem gambling and use the information to tailor implementation strategies for these populations. Engage these communities in the way they deem most appropriate to foster collaboration and create positive change. To complement tailored engagement, also employ a broad-based, multifaceted education campaign to spread awareness across Illinois about gambling and problem gambling, its risks and harms, and how to prevent and treat problem gambling [4].

5

Player Protections at Point
of Sale and Online

Recommendation

Strengthen player protections by increasing training for gambling establishment employees to identify and offer resources for problem gambling. Implement Duty of Care legislation. Strengthen responsible gambling programs online.

Identification and Intervention Recommendations

6

Monitoring and Data Systems

Recommendation

Conduct prevalence surveys at regular intervals (e.g., every three years) to assess trends. Rotate data collection for special populations of interest and communities at risk. Ensure data collected are made available to all stakeholders—regulators, operators, treatment providers, and researchers—so that work at all levels can be informed by current data. Develop and adapt services to meet the need and appropriately target specific populations [5].

7

Early Screening

Recommendation

Adopt a standardized screening for problem gambling that could be implemented in a variety of venues and sectors (e.g., primary care providers, mental health providers, court system, financial institutions). Form collaborations between Illinois State Departments and Divisions to implement screening tools with the populations they serve.

Treatment and Recovery Recommendations

8

Treatment Access and Provider Training

Recommendation

Continue to expand the supply of treatment providers to meet problem gambling treatment needs in the state. Ensure that behavioral health providers as well as primary care providers are trained in screening and service referrals for problem gambling. Streamline access to/affordability of treatment services for individuals with problem gambling.

9

Promotion of Holistic and Integrated Treatment and Recovery Model

Recommendation

Build and strengthen relationships between problem gambling treatment providers and complementary services. Enhance and provide funding for behavioral health care teams to treat comorbid disorders simultaneously, using a patient- or client-centered approach. Create more opportunities for families to engage in treatment.

10

Strengthen Recovery Support Services

Recommendation

Provide funding to treatment organizations and other community groups to establish, sustain, and advertise peer support groups and broader recovery support services for people with gambling problems as well as their family members.

Executive Summary: References

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