

Study: Who gambles and who experiences gambling problems in Canada

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Tuesday, August 9, 2022

In 2018, nearly two-thirds (64%) of people aged 15 or older reported gambling at least once in the past year. The majority of people who gambled did so without harm. However, close to 2% of past-year gamblers were at a moderate-to-severe risk of gambling-related problems.

These results are from a new study entitled "[Who gambles and who experiences gambling problems in Canada](#)." It found that men, persons living in lower-income households, who were single, divorced or separated, who rated their mental health as fair or poor, or who participated in many different gambling activities were at higher risk of problem gambling. These gambling problems may include financial problems, but also feelings of guilt, stress and anxiety related to gambling.

The data presented here were collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and prior to the *Safe and Regulated Sports Betting Act*, which legalized single-event sports betting in Canada in 2021. The results serve as an important baseline of gambling behaviour in Canada, permitting future monitoring of changes in gambling behaviour over time and possibly as a result of the new legislation.

Buying a lottery or raffle ticket was the most common gambling activity

Gambling includes a variety of activities. In 2018, buying a lottery or raffle ticket was the most common (52%), followed by buying instant win lottery tickets or playing online games (33%), playing electronic gambling machines (such as Video Lottery Terminals, VLTs) (13%), betting on sports (8%), and at casino tables (7%). At 4% each, bingo and speculative financial market activities were less popular.

While nearly two-thirds of all Canadians aged 15 and older gambled in 2018, it was more common among those aged 45 to 64 (72%) than in any other age group (compared with 44% for those aged 15 to 24 and 65% for those aged 25 to 44 and 65 or older). In all age groups, males were more likely than females to report having gambled in the past year.

Some gambling activities were preferred more by males than females. For example, about four times as many males than females who gambled in the past year put money into speculative financial markets (6% compared with 1.5%), and males were three times as likely to bet on sports (12% compared with 4%), twice as likely to have bet at a casino table (any location, including online) (10% compared with 5%) and were more likely to have bought a lottery or raffle ticket (55% compared with 48%).

Conversely, higher proportions of females reported playing bingo (6% versus 2%) and buying instant lottery tickets or instant online games (35% versus 31%) than males. Only electronic gambling machines (such as VLTs) were played by comparable proportions of males and females (12% versus 13%).

Persons from lower-income households more vulnerable to gambling problems despite being less likely to gamble

Persons from lower-income households were less likely to gamble than persons with higher incomes, but more likely to experience gambling problems. For example, 71% of Canadians from the highest-income households reported gambling in the past year and 1% were at moderate-to-severe risk of gambling problems. The corresponding figures for those from the lowest-income households were 54% and 3%. Because lower-income households have smaller discretionary incomes (that is, the money left over after paying the rent/mortgage and buying food and other essentials), even modest spending on gambling tends to account for a larger share of a lower-income household's total spending.



Note to readers

Data in this release are from the 2018 Canadian Community Health Survey, Gambling Rapid Response, which collected information about the prevalence of gambling, types and frequencies of gambling activities and gambling problems. Computer-assisted telephone and in-person interviews were conducted from July to December for 24,983 respondents in the 10 provinces. The corresponding response rate was 59%. Survey sampling weights were applied so that the analysis would be representative of the Canadian population.

In the context of this analysis, "gambling" in the past year included having spent money on or at, bet on, purchased: 1) instant lottery tickets, such as scratch, break-open or pull-tabs, or instant online games; 2) lottery or raffle tickets; 3) electronic gambling machines, such as slot machines, Video Lottery Terminals, electronic blackjack, electronic roulette or video poker; 4) casino table games (e.g., poker, blackjack, baccarat, or roulette at any location, whether at a casino, a private residence, online or anywhere else, excluding electronic machine versions); 5) money bets on sports, such as hockey, football, horseracing, billiards or golf, including pools, sports lottery, or bets made with friends; 6) Bingo, excluding instant games; 7) speculative financial market activities, such as day trading, penny stocks, shorting, options, or currency futures; 8) any other form of gambling not mentioned.

The Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) was used to assess 12-month prevalence of problem gambling. The CPGI is a 9-item instrument that assesses two problem gambling domains: (a) problem gambling behaviour and (b) consequences of that behaviour for the individual or others. Persons with a CPGI score of 3 or more are at moderate-to-severe risk of gambling problems.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3226](#).

The article "[Who gambles and who experiences gambling problems in Canada](#)" is now available in *Insights on Canadian Society* ([75-006-X](#)).

The infographic "[Gambling in Canada](#)" is now available in the series *Statistics Canada – Infographics* ([11-627-M](#)).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; infostats@statcan.gc.ca) or Media Relations (statcan.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.statcan@statcan.gc.ca).