

Students Making Informed Choices

Gambling on College Campuses

The Massachusetts Council on
GAMING AND HEALTH

How Common Is Gambling Among College Students?

- 42% of college students said they gambled in the last school year.¹
- About **1 in 20** college students (5%) experience gambling problems at some point in their lives²
- In Massachusetts, nearly **3 in 4** young adults (ages 18–24) have gambled at least once in their lifetime.³
- In Massachusetts, over **1 in 4** young adults (ages 18–24) have placed a sports bet in person in the past month.⁴

Why College Students Are at Higher Risk

- College life marks a major life transition — new freedom, independence, and social opportunities. With this freedom can come new risks, including gambling.⁵
- College students are more likely than older adults to take part in risky behaviors such as heavy drinking and gambling⁶
- Many young adults begin gambling around this age because they've reached the legal gambling age and have easier access to gambling than ever before.⁷
- Certain factors can increase the risk for gambling problems, including identifying as a man, experiencing depression or ADHD, having low parental support, and previous big wins.⁸
- Video games that include gambling-like features (such as loot boxes or microtransactions) are linked to higher problem gambling scores among young people.⁹

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What Are the Harms?¹⁰

College students who gamble may be at greater risk for poor grades, missing class, substance use, financial strain, and mental health challenges like anxiety or depression. Because this age group is still developing coping and decision-making skills, the impacts of gambling can be especially strong.



Student-Athletes & Gambling¹¹

- Gambling among NCAA student-athletes has decreased overall in the last 20 years, but certain risks remain.
- In 2024, **52%** of male NCAA student-athletes reported gambling for money in the past year.
- Even though sports betting is now legal in 38 states, only **22%** of NCAA men said they bet on sports (legally or illegally) in the past year.
- More men athletes are now gambling alone (rising from **6%** in 2016 to **15%** in 2024). Gambling alone can make it harder for friends, teammates, or coaches to notice warning signs or offer help.
- About **2%** of NCAA men (and smaller percentage of women athletes), around 6,000 student-athletes nationwide, meet the criteria for problem gambling. Among student-athletes who bet monthly, **6%** say they feel they have a gambling problem.
- Only **1 in 10** NCAA men and **1 in 8** women student-athletes said they know where to go on campus if they or a friend need help.

What Campuses Can Do¹²

College campuses play a key role in creating environments that promote healthy choices and reduce gambling-related harms. Prevention efforts work best when they are collaborative, student-centered, and grounded in care rather than punishment.



Raise awareness and educate: Provide clear, evidence-based information about gambling risks, odds, and warning signs through campus programs, peer campaigns, and student wellness initiatives.



Promote help-seeking and harm reduction: Emphasize that gambling problems are health concerns, share confidential support options, and encourage students to set limits and understand the odds.



Support student-athletes and staff: Offer targeted education on sports betting risks, NCAA rules, and train faculty, coaches, and resident advisors to recognize early warning signs and respond with empathy.

Need Gambling Help?

Are you looking to stop gambling, take a break, or are curious about ways to keep your play safe and fun? We're here for you 24/7, 365. Reach out to our team of trained experts with any gambling-related questions. All calls and messages are free and confidential.

macgh.org

617-426-4554



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