

ADULT GAMBLING AND PROBLEM GAMBLING IN ALBERTA

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In 2001, the Alberta Gaming Research Institute funded a provincial study of gambling and problem gambling. The purpose of the study was to measure gambling participation and the prevalence of problem gambling in Alberta and validate a new instrument, the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI). Telephone interviews were completed with 1,804 Albertans (18 years of age or older) from across the province.

How many Albertans gamble?

In 2001, 82.0% of Alberta respondents had gambled in the previous year. Men and women are equally likely to gamble and gambling is popular among all age groups. Compared to previous gambling studies conducted in the province, gambling prevalence has declined since 1994 (90.3%). In comparison to other Canadian provinces, the prevalence of gambling in Alberta is lower than Saskatchewan (86.6%), British Columbia and Manitoba (85.0%), and Ontario (83.2%), but higher than New Brunswick (80.2%).

What gambling activities are most widespread?

The most frequently cited gambling activities among Albertans in 2001 were the purchase of lottery tickets (61.8%), raffle or fund-raising tickets (49.5%), and instant-win or scratch tickets (29.2%). While the proportion of Albertans engaging in these activities decreased since 1998, slot machine (15.9%) gambling increased. This may be due to increased availability of machines since 1998. Most common reasons given for gambling are to win money, for fun and entertainment, and to support worthy causes.

How many problem gamblers are there?

The Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) differentiates non-problem, low risk, moderate risk and problem gamblers. Figure 1 shows the prevalence of problem gambling among adult Albertans (aged 18+) in 2001. About 5% or 111,000 Albertans experience moderate to severe problems as a result of their gambling.

The prevalence of problem gambling in Alberta has been consistent (at about 5%) since 1994.

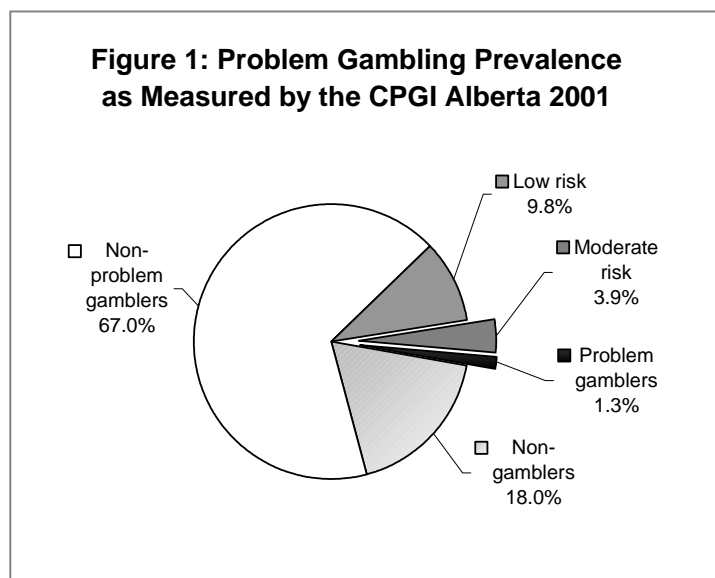
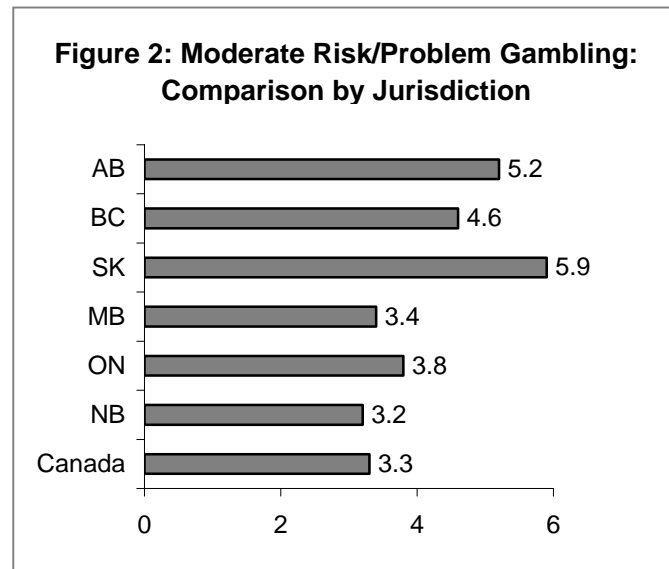


Figure 2 shows that when compared to other provinces, Alberta has a higher proportion of moderate risk and problem gamblers. The exception is Saskatchewan where a slightly higher proportion of the population experience gambling problems.

What else did this research show?

Moderate risk and problem gamblers are found throughout the province in both rural and urban settings. Young single males and Aboriginal people are more at risk than other groups of becoming problem gamblers.

Overall, problem gamblers are more likely to participate in almost all types of gambling. However, the activities most closely associated with problem and at risk gambling, in order, are VLT's, slot machines, Sport Select, sports pools, horse racing and games at casinos.



Moderate risk and problem gamblers are also more likely than other gamblers to (1) bet more than they can afford to lose and bet more than intended, (2) increase wagers to maintain a heightened level of excitement, (3) chase gambling losses, (4) borrow money to finance gambling, (5) lie to family and hide evidence about gambling and (6) gamble to escape personal problems.

The study also found that moderate risk and problem gamblers are more likely than other gamblers to experience negative social consequences. For example, they reported having their gambling behaviour criticized, feeling guilty because of excessive gambling, having personal or household financial difficulties, jeopardizing relationships with family or friends, and/or endangering or losing a relationship, job, school or career opportunity.

As reported by survey participants, the negative personal consequences of gambling may include (1) health problems including stress or anxiety, (2) difficulty sleeping and (3) feelings of irritability or restlessness, (4) use of alcohol and drugs on a regular basis when gambling, (5) depression, or (6) thoughts of or suicide attempts. Problem gamblers are also significantly more likely to report that they want to stop gambling but do not think they can or attempt to quit gambling but are unsuccessful.