
THE 2006 STUDY
OF GAMBLING AND PROBLEM GAMBLING
IN NEW MEXICO

Executive Summary

*Report to the
Responsible Gaming Association of New Mexico*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the findings of a comprehensive survey of gambling participation and gambling-related problems among adult residents of New Mexico. The main purpose of this survey was to determine the scope of problem gambling in New Mexico and to identify the groups in the population most affected by the disorder. The results of this study also provide information about the impacts of problem gambling in New Mexico and will help public health decision-makers determine the best courses of action when making policy decisions in the future.

Problem gambling is a broad term that refers to all of the patterns of gambling behavior that compromise, disrupt or damage personal, family or vocational pursuits. Pathological gambling lies at the most severe end of a continuum of problematic gambling involvement. Pathological gambling is a treatable mental disorder characterized by loss of control over gambling, chasing of losses, lies and deception, family and job disruption, financial bailouts and illegal acts. This report relies on the most up-to-date methods to provide information on gambling behaviors ranging from this most severe status to more common and everyday forms of gambling behavior. Importantly, this report concludes with recommendations for how to put this information to use in a way that benefits all of the stakeholders in the gaming industry—from the state government to operators to patrons to employees to residents.

Methods

The New Mexico problem gambling prevalence survey was completed in three phases. The first phase included finalizing the questionnaire and the sampling approach, translating the questionnaire into Spanish (a vital consideration in New Mexico, which has a very high proportion of Hispanic residents), programming it for computer administration, and training the interviewers. The second phase of the project included data collection and “cleaning” (a necessary task that readies the numbers for analysis). The third phase of the project included data analysis, development of preliminary tables and preparation of a full report on the project.

The final general population sample for this study included 2,850 residents of New Mexico aged 18 and over. To address the unique demographic characteristics of the New Mexico population, which includes a large proportion of Native Americans, we interviewed a separate oversample of 589 Native American residents of New Mexico. Data collection was carried out between September, 2005 and January, 2006. To ensure that the results could be generalized to the adult population of New Mexico, the sample was weighted by age and ethnicity to account for under-representation of young men and Hispanics, two groups that are particularly difficult to engage in surveys. In presenting the results of the survey, we first examine results from the main sample of the general population. Results from our Native American respondents are considered in a separate section of the report.

Gambling in New Mexico

- The majority of adults in the United States have gambled at some time in their lives. Nationally, the proportion of the population that has ever gambled ranges from 81% in the Southern states to 89% in the Northeast. In New Mexico, 85% of the respondents in the main sample indicated that they had gambled at some time in their lives. Two-thirds (68%) of New Mexico adults have gambled in the past year and one-fifth (20%) gambles monthly or more often. Only 9% of New Mexico adults gamble weekly or more often.
 - The types of gambling that New Mexico adults are most likely to have ever tried are lottery and casino games. Nearly two-thirds of New Mexico adults (64%) have ever tried these activities. Approximately one-quarter of New Mexico adults have ever wagered on horse races, sports and private games and approximately one-sixth of New Mexico adults have ever played non-casino bingo or non-casino gaming machines. Lifetime participation rates are very low for non-lottery numbers games and for Internet gambling.
 - The types of gambling that New Mexico adults are most likely to do on a regular basis are playing the lottery and, although monthly participation is much lower, gambling at a casino.
 - Non-gamblers and infrequent gamblers in New Mexico are significantly more likely than more frequent gamblers to be female, aged 55 and over, widowed, to have less than a high school education and to be retired or keeping house.
 - Monthly and weekly gamblers are significantly more likely than past-year gamblers to be male, to be Hispanic, to have an annual household income over \$50,000 and to have military experience. Monthly and weekly gamblers are significantly less likely than past-year gamblers to have attended college.
 - About one-third (30%) of all gamblers in New Mexico say that slot machines are their favorite gambling activity and another 16% identify casino table games as their favorite type of gambling. Another 16% of the gamblers in New Mexico indicate that playing the lottery is their favorite type of gambling.
 - Non-gamblers and infrequent gamblers are most likely to say that the possibility of losing money is an important or very important reason for not gambling, followed by moral or ethical concerns. Monthly and weekly gamblers are most likely to say that entertainment is an important or very important reason for gambling, followed by winning money. Monthly and weekly gamblers are significantly more likely than less frequent gamblers to say that convenience is an important reason for gambling.
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Problem Gambling in New Mexico

- Two problem gambling screens were used in the New Mexico survey. The NORC DSM-IV Screen for Gambling Problems (NODS) was used to provide a measure of problem gambling based on the most recent psychiatric criteria for pathological gambling as well as comparability with recent national and statewide surveys. In addition, the problem gambling severity items from the recently developed Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) were used in New Mexico as a secondary measure of gambling-related impacts and to provide a first opportunity to compare the performance of these two problem gambling screens in a single survey.
 - In problem gambling prevalence surveys, individuals are classified as *problem gamblers* or *pathological gamblers* on the basis of their responses to the questions included in one of the standard problem gambling screens. As our understanding of the distribution of gambling problems in the population improves, the characteristics of individuals who score even lower on problem gambling screens (*at-risk gamblers*) have gained importance. These individuals are of interest because they represent such a large proportion of the population, because of the possibility that their gambling-related difficulties may become more severe over time, and because the prospects of changing their behavior through effective public awareness and education campaigns are better than for more troubled gamblers. In addition, it may well be that this relatively larger group may create even greater problems than more severely affected groups, simply because of their numerical strength.
 - Based on the NODS, the prevalence of pathological gambling in New Mexico is 1.1% and the prevalence of problem gambling is 1.1%. The prevalence of at-risk gambling in New Mexico is 6.4%. The overall prevalence rate of at-risk, problem and pathological gambling in New Mexico is at the lower end of the range of prevalence rates identified in other states and nationally using this screen.
 - The most recent census identified 1.3 million individuals living in New Mexico aged 18 and over. Based on these figures, there are between 9,400 and 19,400 New Mexico adults who can be classified as pathological gamblers. Another 9,400 to 19,400 New Mexico adults can be classified as problem gamblers. Finally, an additional 72,100 to 95,600 New Mexico adults can be classified as at-risk gamblers.
 - Differences in prevalence rates by gender, ethnicity, marital status, education, employment status and religion are all statistically significant, meaning that the differences observed among subgroups in these populations are greater than would be expected by chance. The prevalence of problem and pathological gambling is particularly high among respondents who have never married and among respondents who are disabled or unemployed.
 - Problem and pathological gambling prevalence rates are highest among past-year players of non-casino bingo and among respondents who wager privately. Problem gambling prevalence is also high among past-year sports bettors and casino gamblers.
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Comparing Non-Problem and Problem Gamblers in New Mexico

- Problem gamblers in New Mexico are significantly more likely than non-problem gamblers to be male, Hispanic, unmarried and disabled or unemployed. Problem gamblers in New Mexico are significantly less likely than non-problem gamblers to have graduated from college and to be retired. Although five in ten problem gamblers in New Mexico work fulltime, two in ten are disabled or unemployed compared with only one in twenty non-problem gamblers.
 - Problem gamblers in New Mexico are most likely to gamble regularly (once a month or more often) on the lottery and at a casino. These individuals are significantly more likely than non-problem gamblers to gamble regularly on sports and private games of skill as well as on non-casino gaming machines and non-casino bingo. One in six problem gamblers in New Mexico reports having gambled in the past year on the Internet, indicating that this relatively new type of gambling may become an increasing concern in the future.
 - Problem gamblers in New Mexico are most likely to identify slot machines, whether located at casinos or at racetracks or social clubs, as their favorite type of gambling.
 - Problem gamblers in New Mexico are significantly more likely than non-problem gamblers to say that excitement and winning money are important or very important reasons to gamble. They are significantly less likely than non-problem gamblers to say that inexpensive entertainment is an important or very important reason to gamble.
 - Problem gamblers in New Mexico are significantly more likely than non-problem gamblers to use tobacco daily, consume alcohol regularly and to have used marijuana and other illicit drugs in the past year. Problem gamblers in New Mexico are also significantly more likely than non-problem gamblers to rate their physical health only fair or poor, to have ever experienced a manic episode, and to have ever been depressed.
 - In contrast to earlier studies, problem gamblers in New Mexico are not significantly more likely than non-problem gamblers to have ever declared bankruptcy. However, problem gamblers in New Mexico are significantly more likely than non-problem gamblers to have ever been arrested and to have been incarcerated. Problem gamblers in New Mexico are also significantly more likely than other gamblers to have been troubled by the gambling of someone in their family.
 - For the most part, at-risk gamblers fall between non-problem and problem gamblers demographically but their gambling participation looks much more like that of problem gamblers than non-problem gamblers. At-risk gamblers are more likely than either non-problem or problem gamblers to say that inexpensive entertainment is an important reason for gambling and to identify casino table games and horse race betting as their favorite types of gambling.
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Comparing Native Americans and Non-Native Americans

- The New Mexico prevalence survey included an oversample of 589 Native American residents aged 18 and over. Data from the main sample and oversample were analyzed to determine whether there were significant differences between Native Americans and non-Native Americans in New Mexico in gambling participation and problem gambling prevalence.
- Native American respondents were significantly younger than non-Native American respondents. They were also significantly less likely to be married, to have annual household incomes over \$25,000 and to have graduated from college.
- While the majority of both Native Americans and non-Native Americans in New Mexico have gambled in the past year, a significantly larger proportion of Native Americans have gambled in the past year compared with non-Native Americans (73% vs. 67%). Native Americans in New Mexico are significantly more likely to have gambled in the past year at a casino and to have played bingo outside a casino while non-Native Americans are more likely to have gambled in the past year on horse races, sports and private games.
- Native Americans in New Mexico are less likely than non-Native Americans to view socializing and entertainment as important reasons for gambling and more likely to view convenience and excitement as important reasons to gamble.
- The prevalence of at-risk, problem and pathological gambling is significantly higher among Native Americans in New Mexico than among non-Native Americans. While statistically significant, these differences are smaller than might have been expected based on research among other Native American and indigenous groups internationally.

Directions for the Future

The impacts of problem gambling can be substantial for communities, businesses, families, and individuals. Pathological gamblers experience physical and psychological stress and exhibit substantial rates of depression, alcohol and drug dependence and suicidal ideation. The families of problem and pathological gamblers experience physical and psychological abuse as well as harassment and threats from bill collectors and creditors. Other significant impacts include costs to employers, creditors, insurance companies, social service agencies and the civil and criminal justice systems.

Studies in many other jurisdictions suggest that problem gambling services play an important role in minimizing rates of problem gambling in the general population. There is also the question of how to prevent progression toward more severe gambling-related problems among the proportion of the population in New Mexico that is at risk for developing more severe gambling-related difficulties.

New Mexico has done well in minimizing gambling problems in the adult population. Consideration should be given to continuing to provide financial support for treatment

services in New Mexico. However, it may also be time to consider expanding the Association's efforts to include problem gambling prevention in order to reduce as much as possible the rate of at-risk gambling in New Mexico. A full range of ameliorative measures in New Mexico would include fostering responsible gambling policies and programs by the full range of gambling operators, expanding training opportunities for treatment professionals, expanding the gambling counselor certification program, establishing procedures to improve the helpline referral process, providing increased funding to support public education and prevention services as well as problem gambling treatment, and continued monitoring of gambling and problem gambling prevalence to assess the impacts of legal gambling on the residents of New Mexico.
