

Gambling and Ontario seniors¹

What is the prevalence and nature of gambling and gambling problems among Ontario seniors?

- About 75% of both seniors and younger adults reported at least one instance of gambling in the past year.
- 7.1% of the whole sample experienced gambling problems.
 - 4.6% of seniors and 7.9% of younger adults experienced gambling problems.
 - This indicates that about one in every 20 seniors reported experiencing one or more gambling-related problems in the past year.
- Seniors reported participating in fewer types of gambling activities than younger adults.
 - 70.4% of seniors and 59.8% of younger adults reported participating in ≤ 2 types of gambling.
- Different proportions of seniors and younger adults participated in the following gambling activities
 - *Instant win tickets* - 32% in the senior sample and 39.8% in the sample of younger adults;
 - *Lottery tickets* - 65.3% in the senior sample and 61% in the sample of younger adults;
 - *Bingo* - 4.2% in the senior sample and 2.3% in the sample of younger adults;
 - *Cards/board games* - 7.6% in the senior sample and 12.2% in the sample of younger adults.
- A larger proportion of seniors (8.1%) reported spending > \$500 in the past year on gambling than the younger adults (6.7%).
- Almost twice as many seniors (21.3%) reported spending ≥ 1% of their total household income on gambling in the past year than the younger adults (12.7%).
- There was a very high rate of gambling problems among senior gamblers who reported spending money on instant win tickets at least once per week (16.1%), lottery tickets at least once per week (14.9%), bingo at least once a month (26.2%), cards/board games at least once a month (16.9%), and Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) at casinos (45.5%) at least once a month.
- Gamblers who reported playing VLTs at casinos at least once a month were 29 times more likely to report experiencing a gambling problem in the past year than those who did not gamble in casinos.
- Seniors who reported spending \$501 - 1,000 and over \$1,000 per year on gambling were 37 and 74 times, respectively, more likely to experience gambling-related problems than those who reported spending \$1-50.
- Seniors who spent ≥ 2% of their household income on gambling were 16 times more likely to report experiencing gambling problems than those who spent < 1%

¹ McCready, J., Govoni, R., Mann, R., Eves, R., Zhao, J. (September 2005) [Seniors and Gambling: Sociodemographic and Mental Health Factors Associated with Problem Gambling in Older Adults in Ontario.](#)

Do sociodemographic health determinant factors predict gambling problems among Ontario seniors?

- Seniors with a secondary school education had a 51% lower risk of developing gambling problems than seniors with less education.
- The risk of developing gambling problems was 66% lower among couples living alone and 73% lower among couples and “one parent with children” families than among those in the “other family type” category.²

Do mental health problems, including alcohol and drug dependence, predict problem gambling in Ontario seniors?

- Seniors reported lower levels of problems on nearly all forms of mental health conditions assessed.
- Respondents who met the criteria for any substance abuse had a 55.1% higher risk of any gambling problem than those who failed to meet the criteria.
- Respondents who met the criteria for alcohol dependence had a higher risk of developing gambling problems than those who failed to meet the criteria.

About GREO

Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO) is an independent knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. We create and translate credible research to support evidence-informed decision making in responsible gambling policies, standards, and practice.

For more information, please email info@greo.ca.

² Respondents were required to identify their household type as one of the following: “unattached individual”; “couple alone”; “couple/one parent with children”; or “other family type”.