

Facts about Gambling and Addiction

- **Yes, it is addictive.**

"Gambling is an addictive behavior, make no mistake about it . . . Gambling has all the properties of a psychoactive substance, and again, the reason is that it changes the neurochemistry of the brain." [1]

The National Gambling Impact Commission found that following a decade of expansion in the 1990's, the national lifetime compulsive gambling population had grown by at least 50%, to no less than 1.2% based on the most conservative of its source studies. [2]

It also discovered a significant trend indicating **addiction had doubled in many populations within 50 miles of casinos.** [3]

Probable pathological gambling in Nevada in 2000 measured 3.5% and the prevalence of problem gambling added 2.9% for a total of 6.4%. Other cited states ranged from 2.1% in North Dakota in 2000 to 4.9% in Mississippi in 1996. [4]

The American Psychiatric Association notes the diversity of pathological gambling rates in its diagnostic manual. "Community studies estimate the lifetime prevalence of pathological gambling to range from 0.4% to 3.4% in adults, although prevalence rates in some areas (e.g., Puerto Rico, Australia) have been reported to be as high as 7%. Higher prevalence rates, ranging from 2.8% to 8% have been reported in adolescents and college students." [5] Those differences illustrate the effects of demographics, proximity and diversity of gambling opportunities.

- **Proximity matters. So do culture, disadvantage and demographics.**

Researchers at the National Opinion Research Center combined data from a national telephone survey with data from a casino patron survey and found that **adults living within 50 miles of a casino had double the probability of pathological or problem gambling.** [6]

Poverty, lower education level and other social and economic factors can effect gambling addiction, and they can be accelerated by the proximity of gambling outlets. "Neighborhood disadvantage shows . . . a strong positive effect on frequency of gambling and pathological or problem gambling. For every increase of one standard deviation in neighborhood disadvantage the odds of being a pathological or problem gambler increase by 69%. . . . **A casino within 10 miles of home is associated with a 90% increase in the odds of being a pathological or problem gambler.**" [7]

In short, the presence of gambling opportunities is likely to double the prevalence of problem and pathological gamblers, and the addition of other contributing factors may increase the addiction rate exponentially.

For example, 93% of a group of Southeast Asian refugees in a Connecticut study had gambled in the previous two months, and more than half were said to be pathological gamblers. [8]

Clear across the nation, casinos find 60% to 70% of table game customers and 20% to 25%