The 2023 Delaware Epidemiological Profile

Substance Use, Mental Health, and Related Issues:

Gambling
The Delaware 2023 Epidemiological Profile: Substance Use, Mental Health, and Related Issues

is prepared for

Director Joanna Champney and the Delaware Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health & The Delaware State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup

The annual Delaware State Epidemiological Profile is a valuable data resource for strategic planning, decision-making, and evaluation. The report includes modules that highlight indicators of mental health and wellbeing, patterns of substance use and its consequences, and risk and protective factors for people in Delaware. The report also highlights crosscutting issues that warrant attention as well as populations that may experience disproportionate risk for these concerns.

This module is part of a series of materials. To review the Annual Epidemiological Profile Companion Guide (which includes data notes), modules on additional topics, downloadable slides, and infographics, please visit the UD Center for Drug and Health Studies Delaware Epidemiological Reports page. Links to presentations referenced in the annual profile are available from the Presentations webpage.

The SEOW is facilitated by a team at the Center for Drug and Health Studies at the University of Delaware that convenes a network of more than 100 representatives from approximately 55 state and nonprofit agencies, community organizations, advocacy groups, and other entities. The SEOW’s mission is to bring data on behavioral health and associated issues to the forefront of prevention and treatment efforts in Delaware. To learn more, please visit the What is the SEOW? webpage.
Gambling

Figure 1: Past year gambling by type, 5th grade, DSS 2022 ................................................................. 6
Figure 2: Past year gambling by gender and race/ethnicity, 5th grade, DSS 2022 .............................. 6
Figure 3: Past year gambling by type, 8th grade, DSS 2022 ................................................................. 7
Figure 4: Past year gambling by gender and race/ethnicity, 8th grade, DSS 2022 .............................. 7
Figure 5: Past year gambling by type, 11th grade, DSS 2022 ............................................................... 8
Figure 6: Past year gambling by gender and race/ethnicity, 11th grade, DSS 2022 ............................ 8
Figure 7: Past year gambling by gender and race/ethnicity, high school, YRBS 2021 ....................... 9
Figure 8: Select substance use by students who gambled in the past year, high school, YRBS 2021 ... 10
Gambling

Gambling is defined as risking money, or something else of value, on the outcome of an event that is at least partially determined by chance (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014). While gambling can serve as a pleasant pastime for many, problem gambling and gambling disorders can present numerous challenges and negative consequences for others. A gambling disorder requires at least four of the following nine criteria: preoccupation with gambling; inability to cut back or control gambling; irritability or restlessness when attempting to cut back or control gambling; risking more money to achieve the desired level of excitement; gambling to cope with emotional problems; “chasing one’s losses” by gambling even more after losing; lying about gambling; jeopardizing relationships or employment due to gambling; and relying on others to solve financial issues caused by gambling (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

In 2021, the National Council on Problem Gambling conducted the second National Survey on Gambling Attitudes and Gambling Experiences (NGAGE 2.0) in conjunction with IPSOS. Although it is not a prevalence study and the findings must be considered with caution due COVID-19 pandemic impacts, there are several key takeaways: gambling remains a popular activity in the U.S.; the number of respondents reporting at least one potentially problematic behavior increased from 7% in 2018 to 11%; one in four young adults (under age 35) reported frequently experiencing a problematic behavior; and, where it is legal, online gambling is on the rise (National Council on Problem Gambling, 2023). Gambling disorders have been associated with other behavioral health disorders including mood disorders, anxiety disorders, and substance use (Petry, Stinson, & Grant, 2005; Martens, Rocha, Cimini, Diaz-Myers, Rivero, & Wulfert, 2009; Martin, Usdan, Cremeens, & Vail-Smith, 2014).

Gambling regulations vary from state to state. In Delaware, most forms of gambling are allowed and there are multiple casinos. However, there are different age restrictions for certain gambling behaviors. Individuals must be 18 or older to play charity bingo, purchase lottery tickets or scratch-offs, or bet on horses and must be 21 or older to gamble in casinos or slot machines or on the internet (Delaware Council on Gambling Problems, 2018). In June 2018, Delaware became the second state to legalize all other sports gambling, following the May Supreme Court decision, Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association (Domonoske, 2018). Previously, the only other state to allow sports gambling was Nevada, which had legalized the practice in the early 1990s.

The following module highlights gambling data in Delaware from the Delaware School Surveys and the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys.
Delaware School Survey (DSS)¹
The Delaware School Surveys (DSS) are state-funded annual surveys administered to 5th, 8th, and 11th grade public school students throughout Delaware. There are two versions of the survey, one for 5th grade students and a secondary version for 8th and 11th graders. The DSS are designed to provide estimates of youth substance use and other risk behaviors, including gambling. DSS data are used for National Outcomes Measures as well as state and local program planning and evaluation. (For more information or to review the survey questionnaires and earlier reports, visit the DSS page of the University of Delaware Center for Drug and Health Studies website. Due to the data gap in 2020 as well as the changes in the methodology for the 2021-2022 administration due to the COVID-19 pandemic, results of the 2022 DSS should be compared with caution to previous survey results.²)

The charts in this section highlight select data from the 2022 DSS. The survey includes a set of ten questions about gambling activities. In 2022, students were asked how frequently they engaged in any of the following:

- Bet on video games;
- Bet on games of personal skill such as pool, darts, or basketball;
- Gambled on the internet;
- Bet on dice games such as craps;
- Played bingo for money;
- Bet on a challenge like a dare, fight, race, etc.;
- Played cards for money;
- Bet on individual sports teams;
- Bet on fantasy sports teams;
- Played lottery or scratch-off tickets

² For a more detailed description of pandemic impacts on data collection as it pertains to the DSS, please refer to the Companion Guide accompanying this report.
As Figures 1 and 2 illustrate, gambling is common even among 5th graders of all races and genders, with approximately half reporting that they had gambled in the past year. Betting on a challenge or dare, lottery or scratch-off tickets, and video games were the most common activities reported.
Eighth graders reported slightly higher rates of gambling on similar activities as the younger students.

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3 For this survey, games of personal skill include such items as pool, darts, or basketball.
4 In the 2022 DSS Secondary survey, students were asked to identify their gender as boy, girl, nonbinary, or to self-describe their gender. Data reported from the DSS by gender here reflects these three primary categories (boy, girl, and nonbinary/self-describe) and students’ responses are reported by their self-identified gender. As a result, the categories of “boy” and “girl” may include both cisgender and transgender students. For more detailed information about nonbinary and transgender students in the DSS, please visit the Gender and Sexuality module.
Figure 5: Past year gambling by type, 11th grade, DSS 2022

Figure 6: Past year gambling by gender and race/ethnicity, 11th grade, DSS 2022

5 For this survey, games of personal skill include such items as pool, darts, or basketball.
Overall, 11th grade students reported slightly lower rates of gambling within the past year (41%) than either 5th or 8th grade students. Among these older students, boys were more likely to report gambling than girls or nonbinary students (49% compared to 34% and 38%, respectively).

**Delaware Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)**

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a CDC-funded survey that is administered in odd-numbered years to both national and state samples of students. The survey monitors various topics of risk behaviors, including gambling. Delaware has participated in these surveys for over 20 years. Here we report findings from the 2021 Delaware YRBS among high school students.

The Delaware high school students responding to the 2021 YRBS reported an overall gambling rate of 40% for the past year. Males were more likely to report gambling than females. These are similar to the findings reported by 11th grade students on the 2022 Delaware School Survey.

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**Past Year Gambling by Gender and Race/Ethnicity among High School Students, 2021 (in percentages)**

- **Overall**: 40%
- **Male**: 45%
- **Female**: 35%
- **Non-Hispanic Black**: 44%
- **Non-Hispanic White**: 38%
- **Hispanic or Latino/a/x**: 46%
- **Another race or mixed race**: 34%

**Figure 7: Past year gambling by gender and race/ethnicity, high school, YRBS 2021**

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Note: YRBS data for this module was analyzed by the Center for Drug and Health Studies at the University of Delaware with permission from Delaware Division of Public Health.

Until the 2023 YRBS data is analyzed, comparisons of the 2021 data to previous data should be avoided, as findings from the 2021 data may be an exception to ongoing trends. For a more detailed description of pandemic impacts on data collection as it pertains to the YRBS, please refer to the Companion Guide accompanying this report.
The graph above illustrates that Delaware high school students who had reported gambling during the past year on the YRBS were also more likely to report the recent use of alcohol, marijuana, and vaping compared to other students.\footnote{It is important to note that while there is a statistical association between these factors, this does not necessarily mean that there is a causal relationship between them; in other words, we cannot say that one factor causes the other, and there may be other conditions that also influence the association. This holds true for all of the associations discussed in this report.}
References and Data Sources


