

## CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

A recent review found that problem gambling rates among incarcerated individuals ranged from 5.9% to 73%.<sup>1</sup>

Prevalence rates of problem gambling among adults in custody differ by sex, with male prevalence rates ranging from 10.4% to 73%, and female prevalence rates ranging from 5.9 to 45%.<sup>1</sup>



Problematic gambling behaviors have been related across various criminal offence types (robbery, theft, drug offences, violent crimes, etc.).<sup>1,2</sup>



Individuals classified as manifesting a gambling disorder who are incarcerated are significantly more likely to report that gambling was related to their conviction.<sup>3</sup>



While drug related offenses are the most prominent, individuals that have convictions from gambling also report engaging in robberies, property offenses, and theft.<sup>4</sup>



Compared to those without, individuals with problematic gambling behavior have increased odds of being charged with crimes related to drugs, violent or sexual offences, weapon-related crimes, economic crimes, and traffic related crimes.<sup>5</sup>

1. Banks, J., Waters, J., Andersson, C., & Olive, V. (2019). Prevalence of gambling disorder among prisoners: a systematic review. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*.

2. Adolphe, A., Khatib, L., van Golde, C., Gainsburty, S., & Blaszczyński, A. (2018). Crime and gambling disorders: A systematic review. *Journal of Gambling Studies*.

3. Riley, B., Larsen, A., Battersby, M., & Harvey, P. (2018). Problem gambling among Australian male prisoners: lifetime prevalence, help-seeking, and association with incarceration and aboriginality. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 62(11), 3447-3459.

4. May-Chahal, C., Humphreys, L., Clifton, A., Francis, B., Reith, G. (2017). Gambling harm and crime careers. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 33, 65-84.

5. Laursen, B., Plauborg, R., Ekholm, O., Larson, C. V. L., & Juel, K. (2016). Problem gambling associated with violent and criminal behaviour: A Danish population-based survey and register study. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 32, 25-34.

## CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR AND PROBLEM GAMBLING IN OREGON

- About one in every 60 Oregon adults in custody reported that their current incarceration was “primarily” due to gambling.<sup>6</sup> Further, problem gambling is linked to one of every 12 adult incarcerations in Oregon.<sup>6</sup>
- 31% of adults in custody fall within the range of problem gambling; however, only 13% reported that they feel like they have a gambling problem.<sup>6</sup>
- Problem gambling severity correlates on several demographic factors. Being female, non-Hispanic, and being aged between 30 and 60 are predictors of more severe problem gambling. Additionally, being female, Hispanic, and/or Native American pose the highest risk of being incarcerated for a crime related to gambling.<sup>6</sup>
- Approximately 37% of Oregon adults in custody report moderate to high at-risk problem gambling behaviors compared with 2.6% of the Oregon general population.<sup>6</sup>



Problem gambling-related imprisonments account for at least \$10 million a year in Oregon DOC-related costs.<sup>6</sup>



The risk of having a gambling problem is 14X higher among those entering the DOC compared to those in Oregon’s general adult population.<sup>6</sup>

About **1 in 3** adults in custody entering the DOC in Oregon scored within the problematic gambling range on the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI).<sup>6</sup>



40% of Oregon adults in custody who engage in problem gambling reported gambling weekly, however many also reported binge or episodic gambling.<sup>6</sup>



Gambling severity ranges among Oregon adults in custody. In 2019, 24.06% of Oregon adults in custody reported severe gambling, 12.52% reported moderately severe gambling, and 12.31% reported a low severity gambling.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Marotta, J. (2020). Gambling and the Criminal Justice System in Oregon. Invited presentation at the Oregon Problem Gambling Services Fall 2020 Online Learning Series, Salem, OR.

## THEFT AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

- Young age, low education, low income, a high rate of depression, a long history of problem gambling, and negative subjective perception of one’s financial situation is associated with gambling-related cheating and stealing.<sup>7</sup>
- Duration of problem gambling is related to cheating and stealing such that the longer one has engaged in problem gambling, the more likely one is to cheat or steal.<sup>7</sup>
- Self-report depression is related to problem gambling-related stealing and cheating.<sup>7</sup>

## EMPLOYER/EE EMBEZZLEMENT AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

- Among employees who engage in problematic gambling and embezzlement behaviors, the amount of money they have access to and the likelihood of getting detected influence the degree to which they are willing to embezzle.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2012, approximately 9% of all embezzlement cases in the US were motivated by gambling.<sup>9</sup>
- Over six years, approximately a third (29.1%) of embezzlement cases were motivated by gambling.<sup>9</sup>


An estimated 1 in 10 individuals engaged in problematic gambling who have sought help have embezzled or stolen money from their place of work.<sup>8</sup>

7. Ling, K. & Kaariainen, J. (2018). Cheating and stealing to finance gambling: analysis of screening data from a problem gambling self-help program. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 39, 235-257.  
 8. Binde, P. (2016). Gambling-related employee embezzlement: a study of Swedish newspaper reports. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 34, 12-31  
 9. Marquet International (2014). *The 2013 Marquet report on embezzlement.: A white collar fraud study of major embezzlement cases active in the U.S. in 2013*. Marquet International, Ltd.

## CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

- Experiencing abuse in childhood, including sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, puts individuals at a greater risk of developing problematic gambling behavior later in life.<sup>10</sup>
- Problem gambling is a predictor of severe child abuse toward one’s children, even after controlling for psychiatric disorder.<sup>10</sup>

Problem gambling is a predictor of severe child abuse, regardless of mental health presentation.<sup>10</sup>



## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

- Approximately 1 in 3 individuals who engage in problematic gambling report either being victims (38.1%) or perpetrators (36.5%) of physical intimate partner violence.<sup>11</sup>
- Among a sample of individuals seeking treatment for problem gambling, the prevalence of family violence (typically parents and/or intimate partner violence) victimization is 18.4% and perpetration is 19.1%.<sup>12</sup>
- Approximately 11% of perpetrators of intimate partner violence manifest a gambling disorder. Younger age, less than full employment, clinical anger problems, impulsivity, and alcohol and substance use are implicated in the relationship between problem gambling and being a perpetrator of intimate partner violence.<sup>11</sup>

10. Lane, W., Sacco, P., Downton, K., Ludeman, E., Levy, L., & Tracy, J. K. (2016). Child maltreatment and problem gambling: A systematic review. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 58, 24-38.

11. Dowling, N., Suomi, A., Jackson, A., Lavis, T., Pattford, J., Cockman, S., Thomas, S., Bellringer, M., Koziol-McLain, J., Battersby, M., Harvey, P., Abbott, M. (2016). Problem gambling and intimate partner violence: a systematic review and meta-analysis.

12. Dowling, N. A., Oldenhof, E., Cockman, S., Suomi, A., Merkouris, S. S., & Jackson, A. C. (2019). Problem gambling and family violence: Factors associated with family violence victimization and perpetration in treatment-seeking gamblers. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*

## PAYMENT FRAUD AND PROBLEM GAMBLING

- Treatment seeking individuals who problem gamble are more likely to have written bad checks than non-treatment seeking community members who engage in problem gambling.<sup>13</sup>
- Those who engage in problematic gambling have been shown to be 3.6x more likely to be charged with an economic criminal offense, such as theft, forgery, fraud, burglary, and robbery compared to individuals with non-problematic gambling.<sup>5</sup>
- Of those who have experienced problems with gambling, fraudulent efforts, such as embezzlement and welfare fraud were identified as a clear theme of criminal activity in order to achieve funds for gambling.<sup>14</sup>

Those who engage in problem gambling are 3.6x more likely to be charged with an economic criminal offense.<sup>5</sup>



## PROBLEM GAMBLING AND CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR: IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- Most individuals who manifest a gambling problem do not engage in criminal activities.<sup>15</sup> Several large epidemiological surveys of gambling behavior in the United States have found that illegal acts were rarely endorsed unless the participant had also endorsed a number of other criteria such as antisocial personality traits and abuse substances.<sup>16</sup> When illegal acts are present in individuals with gambling disorder, they tend to present with the most severe form of the disorder and that the majority of crimes committed by individuals with gambling disorder are committed to fund gambling.<sup>5</sup>

5. Laursen, B., Plauborg, R., Ekholm, O., Larson, C. V. L., & Juel, K. (2016). Problem gambling associated with violent and criminal behaviour: A Danish population-based survey and register study. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 32, 25-34.

13. Knezevic, B. & Ledgerwood, D. M. (2012). Gambling severity, impulsivity, and psychopathology: comparison of treatment-and community-recruitment pathological gamblers. *The American Journal on Addictions*, 21(6), 508-515

14. Langham, E., Thorne, H., Browne, M., Donaldson, P., ROse, J., Rockloff, M. (2016). Understanding gambling related harm: a proposed definition, conceptual framework, and taxonomy of harms. *BMC Public Health*, 16(80).

15. Arthur, J. N., Williams, R. J., & Belanger, Y. D. (2014). The relationship between legal gambling and crime in Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 56(1), 49-84.

16. Petry NM, Blanco C, Stinchfield R, Volberg R. An empirical evaluation of proposed changes for gambling diagnosis in the DSM-5. *Addiction*. 2013;108:575-581. doi: 10.1111/j.1360-0443.2012.04087.x

## PROBLEM GAMBLING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

- ♦ Integrate problem gambling education and awareness into programming to address multiple risky behaviors. Reducing gambling related crime may best be accomplished by investing in programs to increase the health and well-being of children and families.
- ♦ Work to develop policies and practices to address problem gambling within the criminal justice system including routine screening for problem gambling, utilizing treatment courts for persons with gambling related crimes, and offering prevention and treatment programs within correctional facilities.
- ♦ Increase awareness of the negative life consequences problematic gambling poses, including the increased risk of incarceration for those who engage in problem gambling.
- ♦ To reduce harm caused by problem gambling related fraud and embezzlement, employers are encouraged to follow best practice accounting standards including regular independent audits.
- ♦ When problem gambling is known or suspected among individuals or family units being served, routinely screen for intimate partner violence, elder abuse/neglect, and child abuse/neglect, and accompany by appropriate referrals and resources.

### Key Findings

- While most individuals who manifest gambling problems do not commit gambling related crimes, more severe gambling disorder is broadly associated with various criminal offenses, some of the most common include: robbery, theft, drug offenses, and other non-violent crimes.
- Gambling disorder is much more prevalent among incarcerated populations than the general population.