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High-Risk College Students a Concern Amid Rising Sports Betting Access

Did you know that college students are at a higher risk for the development of gambling addiction? In 2008, the [FCCG's Florida college student gambling and problem gambling prevalence study](#) found that an alarming 14.5% were at risk for gambling problems (compared with 7.1% of the Florida adult population) while 2.7% met the criteria for problem gambling – about twice the number found among adults! A lot has changed since then.

New Young Adult Sports Wagering Survey Completed by the NCAA

Fast forward to present, where sports betting access and advertising have increased dramatically nationwide and in Florida. In 2023, the NCAA performed a nationwide survey of 18- to 22-year-old young adults, including both college students and those not attending college. The survey took a look at betting prevalence among young adults amid the rise of online platforms and advertising. NCAA President Charlie Baker assumed office in March of 2023 and made the research a priority, saying “everyone from coaches to athletics department staff and college presidents must better understand what impact sports betting may have on student-athletes.” The survey examined participation in sports betting activities, betting frequency, typical wager amounts, betting losses, risky behaviors, motives for placing wagers, the impacts of advertising, and more. Following are some of the findings:¹

- Sports wagering activity is widespread on college campuses — 67% of students living on campus are bettors and tend to bet at a higher frequency. More than 41% of college students who bet on sports have placed a bet on their school's teams and nearly 35% have used a local bookmaker who is a fellow student at the same school.¹

- Advertisements have a major influence on betting activity: 63% of on-campus students recall seeing betting ads. This is a higher rate than that found in the general population or those that commute/virtually attend college, and 52.8% of respondents indicated they are at least somewhat more likely to bet after seeing the ads.¹
- Researchers grouped respondents who indicated risky behaviors (“higher risk gamblers”). Nearly 14% indicated betting a few times a week or daily, over 17% said their typical wager was \$50 or more, and nearly 6% reported that they have previously lost more than \$500 on sports betting in a single day.



Out of all respondents, 16% engaged in at least one of these risky behaviors and were grouped by researchers to build a profile for “higher risk gamblers”.¹ These higher risk gamblers:

- Are more likely to engage in three or more betting activities, use a broader variety of bet types, and bet on a larger number of different sports and events.¹
- Believe they could win a lot of money if they consistently gambled (70%).¹
- Report higher sports betting ad recall and are more likely (80%) to say the ads make them more likely to gamble.¹
- Are more likely to be from the Northeast or South, and are more likely to be Black or African American.¹

A Year Later, NCAA President Speaks Out on Risks of College Prop Bets

Prop bets, short for proposition bets, are any bets or wagers made that are not on the final outcome or score of a sporting event. Examples include performance of individual players during the game, how long the national anthem will be, and even whether or not the winning coach will be showered in Gatorade. It’s easy to imagine how prop bets greatly expand the betting opportunities in a single match – but there’s more at stake.

The outcome of a prop bet is often within control of a single athlete, introducing the risk that the athlete will be tempted or pressured to manipulate his or her performance to change the outcome of a wager. Athletes may even be harassed – online or otherwise – following the game. **Gambling addiction only exacerbates these serious safety and integrity risks.**

In March of 2024, NCAA President Charlie Baker issued a statement saying, “Sports betting issues are on the rise across the country with prop bets continuing to threaten the integrity of competition and leading to student-athletes and professional athletes getting harassed.”²

Indeed, Baker reported that the NCAA had found 175 infractions of its sports-betting policy since 2018, with 17 ongoing investigations, in a 2023 letter to Congress.³ If one needs more proof that there is no shortage of college (and professional) sports betting scandals, [ESPN keeps a timeline on its website.](#)⁴

Promoting Access to Problem Gambling Help, Hope, and Resources in Florida

While the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling maintains a neutral stance on legalized forms of gambling, we want to raise awareness that **confidential and multilingual help and hope for problem gambling are available 24/7 by calling or texting the [888-ADMIT-IT HelpLine](#), by initiating a live chat on [gamblinghelp.org](#), or by connecting with us on Facebook or X.**

If you are a professional who works with the college student population in Florida, the FCCG has prevention programming available for you, too. [Learn more on our website](#), or call 888-ADMIT-IT today.

References

1. April 2023. NCAA and Opinion Diagnosis. *Sports Betting Activities Survey*.
2. Bromberg, Nick. “NCAA Set to Push States with Legalized Sports Betting to Ban Prop Bets for All College Sporting Events.” *Yahoo! Sports*, 7 Mar. 2024, <https://ca.sports.yahoo.com/news/ncaa-set-to-push-states-with-legalized-sports-betting-to-ban-prop-bets-for-all-college-sporting-events-141503923.html>
3. Johnathan Israel and Evan V. Bondoc. Foley. April 2024. *The Kids Are Not Alright: Student athletes and the impact of legalized betting on college sports*. <https://www.foley.com/insights/publications/2024/04/student-athletes-impact-legalized-betting-college-sports/>
4. “A Timeline of Sports Gambling Scandals since 2018.” *ESPN*, 17 Apr. 2024, www.espn.com/espn/betting/story/_/id/39908218/a-line-sports-gambling-scandals-2018.