

Problem Gambling and Gender Differences

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Gender Differences

Historically, men have been overrepresented as problem gamblers, but with recent increased opportunities to gamble, the gender gap has narrowed (LaPlante, Nelson, LaBrie, & Shafer, 2006; Petry, 2006b; Potenza et al., 2001). According to LaPlante et al. (2006), men and women differ in gambling motivations and preferences. Females tend to prefer machine gambling (such as video poker or slot machines) and tend to gamble to escape problems, situations, or loneliness, while males typically gamble to win money, display their gambling skills (as in card-playing), or by participating in sports betting (Echeburua, Gonzalez-Ortega, de Corral, & Polo-Lopez, 2001; Eckenrode, 2011; Ladd & Petry, 2002). Other researchers have found additional support for the aforementioned gender-related differences in gambling preferences and motivations, as well as in using gambling as a means of mood regulation or escape (Echeburua et al., 2001; Eckenrode, 2011; Heater & Patton, 2006; Ladd & Petry, 2010; Potenza, Maciejewski, & Mazure, 2007).

Normally females also start gambling at a later age than men do (Eckenrode, 2011; Heater & Patton, 2006; Ladd & Perry, 2002; Nower & Blaszczynski, 2008). Yet, they tend to develop problem gambling issues in proportionally less time than males do. This “telescoping” process has also been shown among women who start drinking later in life and begin having alcohol-related problems in proportionally less time than men do (Desai, Maciejewski, Pantalon, & Potenza, 2006; Potenza et al., 2001; Taveres, Martins, Lobo, Silveira, Gentil, & Hodgins, 2003; Taveres, Zilberman, Beites, & Gentil, 2001). Female callers tend to have lower annual incomes than men do, are more likely to suffer a mood disorder (such as depression or anxiety) than men are, and tend to be less impulsive than men (Echeburba et al., 2001; Eckenrode, 2011; Ladd & Petry, 2010).

Some states have lately reported that women make the majority of calls to gambling hotlines. For example, a study by Bensinger, Dupont and Associates (2012) for the state of North Carolina indicated that 54.2% of hotline callers were female during the fiscal year 2012. In West Virginia, the Problem Gambler Help Network (2012) reported

that it has consistently received a greater percentage of calls from females since the helpline program began in 2000. In 2012, the network reported that female callers comprised 53% of their total of 10,336 intake calls made to the helpline between August 2000 and June 2012. In several years, 55%-56% of callers to the gambling helpline were female (PGHNWV, 2008, 2009, 2010).

However, the two major epicenters of the gaming industry, Nevada and New Jersey, have continued to report a substantially higher percentage of male callers to helplines. A report to the Nevada Department of Human Resources (Volberg, 2002) indicated that 79.5% of Nevada's problem gamblers' calls to helplines were made by males. Similarly, a study of callers to the New Jersey gambling helpline has shown that a consistently greater percentage of calls from 2006 to 2010 were made by males (Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey, 2010). In 2006, 71% of the callers were male. The lowest percentage of male callers (68%) occurred in 2008 and 2009.