



Wellness Assessment 2022-2023:

Sports Betting: Prevalence and
Impact

Center for the Study of Student Life

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THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

INTRODUCTION

The Student Wellness Center in the Office of Student Life at The Ohio State University uses a holistic wellness model that includes ten key dimensions of wellness, which are: career, creative, digital, emotional, environmental, financial, intellectual, physical, social and spiritual.

The Wellness Assessment was designed to measure these ten dimensions of wellness to give students a better understanding of their own wellness and provide them with resources that they can utilize at Ohio State to improve their wellness. The Wellness Assessment is open year-round to all students. To better understand the changing landscape of sports betting and gambling on college campuses, questions related to the prevalence and impact of sports betting were added to the 2022-2023 Wellness Assessment instrument. This brief report includes 3,619 students that completed the Wellness Assessment in October 2022. Respondents had to complete at least one sports betting related question to be included in this report.

The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of self-reported sports betting behaviors among Ohio State students. Caution should be applied when interpreting these results, as the scope of the report is limited to student responses at one point in time and should not be assumed to be generalizable. More information and a list of online resources related to sports betting and gambling is available in Appendix A of this report.

METHODOLOGY

Comparisons between undergraduate ($n = 2,925$) and graduate/professional ($n = 694$) student responses to sports betting related questions are made throughout this report. To investigate whether differences between the two groups of students were significant, chi-squared tests of independence were conducted. Additionally, a brief literature review related to gambling among college students and recent changes to the legality of sports betting is included to provide context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 2018, the Supreme Court overturned a federal ban on sports betting. Since the ruling, 36 states and the District of Columbia have legalized the practice. Legal sports betting officially launched in Ohio on January 1, 2023, and permits wagering on both collegiate athletics and professional sports. Sports betting was legalized in Ohio through recent legislation, House Bill 29 (Ohio Legislative Service Commission, 2022).

The legislation regulates and legalizes sports betting through Ohio Casino Control Commission licensed sports gaming proprietors that offer sports gaming online and at physical locations for individuals at least 21 years old (Ohio Legislative Service Commission, 2022). As a result of changes in legal status, sports betting operators have started to advertise on college campuses across the country (Sayre, 2022). However, regulations associated with the new Ohio law prohibits marketing to people under 21 and restricts direct advertising on college campuses (Ohio Casino Control Commission, 2023).

Researchers estimate that sports betting is the fourth most popular (22%) form of gambling that college students engage in, after the lottery (41%), raffles and office pools (38%) and card games (38%) (Barnes, Welte, Hoffman & Tidwell, 2010). Individuals engaged in sports betting are notably younger when compared to other forms of gambling (Winters & Derevensky, 2019). Additionally, young adults are at higher risk of for developing gambling disorders when compared to adults, with an estimated 11% of college students classified as at-risk gamblers (Shaffer & Hall, 2001).

Research suggests that about 3 in 4 college students have gambled (legally or illegally) within the past year, with nearly 1 in 5 (18%) gambling weekly or more frequently (Barnes et al., 2010; Lostutter, Lewis, Cronce, Neighbors & Larimer, 2014).

Previous research has found that between 4-14% of college students display gambling behaviors that are associated with moderate levels of adverse consequences (i.e., problem gambling) while between 3-6% of college students exhibit behaviors that constitute pathological gambling (Weinstock, 2007). Male college students, specifically, are more likely to report gambling in the past year, gambling with more money and having a gambling problem (Barnes et al., 2010). In addition to the impact of problem gambling itself, college students with gambling problems are more likely to engage in other risky behaviors, such as tobacco use, binge drinking and illegal drug use (Engwall, Hunter and Steinberg, 2004).

This report provides insight into self-reported sports betting behaviors for students at The Ohio State University in October 2022, prior to the legalization of sports betting in Ohio that began on January 1, 2023.

FINDINGS

PREVALENCE OF SPORTS BETTING

The following tables compare undergraduate and graduate and professional student responses to questions assessing sports betting behavior. As shown in Table 1 below, a large majority of both undergraduate students (94.1%) and graduate and professional students (95.1%) reported that they have never engaged in sports betting. Additionally, frequency of sports betting was similar for both groups of students, with less than 1% of undergraduate and graduate and professional students reporting that they engaged in sports betting one or more times a week. No statistically significant differences between undergraduate and graduate and professional students were detected.

Table 1. On average in the last 12 months, how many times have you engaged in sports betting?

	Undergraduate Students (<i>n</i> = 2,925)	Graduate/Professional Students (<i>n</i> = 694)
Never	94.1%	95.1%
Less than once a month	3.6%	3.3%
More than once a month	1.4%	1.4%
One or more times a week	0.9%	0.1%

Table 2 examines overall engagement in sports betting, as calculated by combining all responses from Table 1 that indicate that sports betting has occurred within the last 12 months in comparison to students reporting having never participated in sports betting. Findings indicate that a smaller percentage of graduate and professional students reported engaging in sports betting in the past year (4.9%) when compared to undergraduate students (5.9%), however, the difference is not statistically significant.

Table 2. Student participation in sports betting within the last 12 months.

	Undergraduate Students (<i>n</i> = 2,925)	Graduate/Professional Students (<i>n</i> = 694)
Did not engage in sports betting	94.1%	95.1%
Engaged in sports betting	5.9%	4.9%

Note. 'Did not engage in sports betting' includes students that selected 'Never' when asked when "On average, in the last 12 months, how many times have you engaged in sports betting?". 'Engaged in sports betting' includes students that selected 'Less than once a month,' 'More than once a month' or 'One or more time a week.'

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SPORTS BETTING

Students indicating that they have engaged in sports betting within the last 12 months were asked about negative consequences resulting from their experience with sports betting. As shown in Table 3 below, only 4.6% of undergraduate students who had engaged in sports betting in the last 12 months agreed or strongly agreed that they have experienced negative consequences related to sports betting. Nearly 6% of graduate and professional students who had engaged in sports betting in the last 12 months agreed or strongly agreed that they have experienced negative consequences as a result. No statistically significant differences between the two groups were detected.

Table 3. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following: In the last 12 months, I have experienced negative consequences related to sports betting? (including: missing school or work, borrowing money, stealing, selling personal items or damaging relationships with family or friends)?

	Undergraduate Students (<i>n</i> = 173)	Graduate/Professional Students (<i>n</i> = 34)
Disagree or strongly disagree	83.2%	79.4%
Neutral	12.1%	14.7%
Agree or strongly agree	4.6%	5.9%

Note. Only respondents that reported they have engaged in sports betting within the last 12 months were asked this question.

CONCLUSION

A large majority of undergraduate and graduate and professional students reported that they have never engaged in sports betting. Only 5.9% of undergraduate students and 4.9% of graduate and professional students reported engaging in sports betting behavior within the past 12 months. Of these students, less than 1% of both undergraduate and graduate and professional students reported a sports betting frequency of one or more times a week. Additionally, 5.9% of graduate and professional students and 4.6% of undergraduate students who engaged in sports betting within the last 12 months reported that they experienced negative consequences related to sports betting. The low level of student participation in sports betting should be interpreted with caution due to the changing circumstances around sports betting legality, access and advertising. The data presented was collected in October 2022, prior to Ohio House Bill 29 taking effect at the start of 2023. The findings of this report should serve as a baseline of information for future investigation into sports betting behavior among Ohio State students.

APPENDIX A.

Educational resources are available online about sports betting, how to recognize signs of problem gambling and how to reach out for help.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- The Student Wellness Center in the Office of Student Life at Ohio State University offers information and resources online at [College Sports Betting in Ohio](#).
- Ohio State University's College of Social Work offers an asynchronous [Problem Gambling Overview](#) training for social workers, counselors and therapists in the state of Ohio.
- The State of Ohio and Ohio for Responsible Gaming created the [Get Set Before You Bet](#) website with gambling education and awareness resources. While not focused specifically on young adults, the website includes useful tips and an interactive quiz to self-assess gambling behaviors and attitudes. The website also includes a [game](#) in which participants help characters learn to gamble responsibly by navigating through various situations.
- [Maryhaven](#) is a Columbus-based non-profit organization that provides resources for problem gambling and gambling addiction. Specifically, they engage in problem gambling prevention conversations, with presentations targeted to high risk groups for problem gambling, such as teens.
- Gamblers Anonymous offers a [20- question self-assessment tool](#).

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