Massachusetts Residents Have Mixed Opinions on Gambling Expansion in Massachusetts Prior to Casinos

The Massachusetts Legislature passed an Act Establishing Expanded Gaming in the Commonwealth in November 2011. This permits the introduction of casinos and slot parlors in Massachusetts for the first time. Prior to the establishment of casinos, the SEIGMA team took a "snapshot" of how Massachusetts residents felt about gambling. Here, we summarize findings from SEIGMA's *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Massachusetts: Results of a Baseline Population Survey*, based on responses from approximately 10,000 Massachusetts adults in 2013/2014 before casinos were open.

Massachusetts residents have a range of opinions on gambling:

- Over half of the population (55%) believes that some forms of gambling should be legal and some should be illegal, with only a third (32%) reporting that all forms should be legal, and a tenth (13%) reporting that all forms should be illegal

- Nearly two-thirds (61%) believe that the level of gambling availability in the Commonwealth is acceptable prior to casino expansion

- Over half (61%) perceive the impact of gambling expansion on the state to be neutral, beneficial, or very beneficial while 39% perceive the impact to be somewhat or very harmful

Massachusetts residents had mixed opinions about the impact of the planned introduction of casinos and a slot parlor *in the state*:

- Almost equal numbers of people believe it would be harmful (39%) and beneficial (42%)

Perceived Impact of Expanded Gambling in Massachusetts
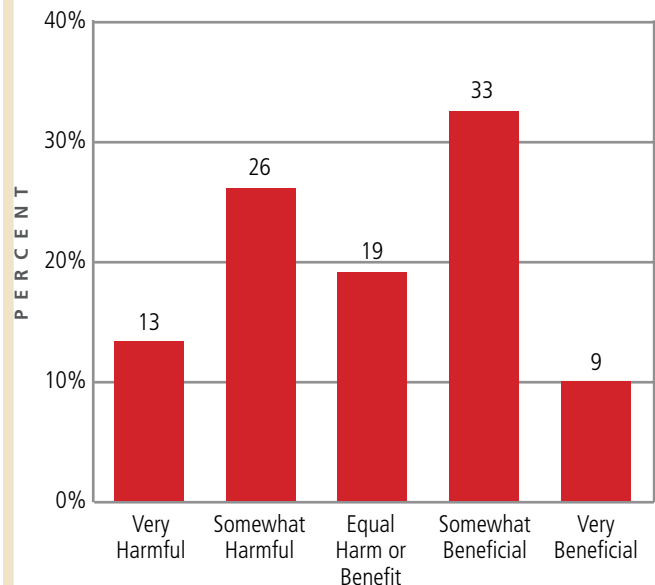
People viewed the impact of having a new casino or slot parlor *in their own community* somewhat more negatively than they perceived the general impact for Massachusetts:

- 43% believe it would be harmful compared to 31% who believe it would be beneficial

SEIGMA

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF GAMBLING IN MASSACHUSETTS

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Gambling
Participation

SEIGMA
FACT SHEET
NUMBER 03
JUNE 2018

Three-Quarters of Massachusetts Residents Gamble Before Massachusetts Casinos Open
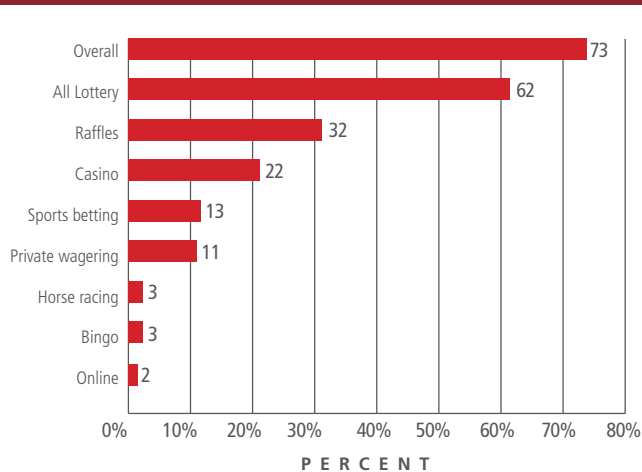
With the passage of the Expanded Gaming Act, Massachusetts will host three casinos and a slot parlor. The SEIGMA team took a "snapshot" to understand how Massachusetts residents participated in gambling prior to casinos and the key demographic groups who are more likely to gamble. Here, we summarize findings from SEIGMA's *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Massachusetts: Results of a Baseline Population Survey* based on responses from approximately 10,000 Massachusetts adults.

In 2013, nearly three-quarters of Massachusetts residents reported participating in one or more of these gambling activities in the past year:

Gambling Participation by Activity Prior to MA Casinos

Activity	Percent
Overall	73
All Lottery	62
Raffles	32
Casino	22
Sports betting	13
Private wagering	11
Horse racing	3
Bingo	3
Online	2

PERCENT

- A quarter of the Massachusetts adult population did not gamble, 35% gambled yearly, 20% gambled monthly, and 18% gambled weekly

- Approximately 6 in 10 people reported playing the lottery

- Just under a quarter (22%) of Massachusetts adults reported visiting casinos to gamble. Over half of people who did so (66%) visited casinos in Connecticut

Despite not having any casinos in 2013, the past-year casino participation rate in Massachusetts was similar to participation rates in some other U.S. jurisdictions with newly introduced casinos, including Maryland and Ohio. The past-year casino gambling rate was higher in U.S. states with mature casino industries compared with Massachusetts, such as Connecticut and Iowa.

Who is more likely to gamble in Massachusetts?

- Men are more likely to gamble than women (77% of men vs.70% of women)

- Middle-aged adults (25-64) are more likely to gamble than younger adults (75% of middle aged adults compared to 55% of young adults)

- Those who identify as White are more likely to gamble than those who identify as Hispanic, Black, or Asian (76% of Whites compared to 63% of Hispanics, 66% of Blacks, 56% of Asians)

# Who is Experiencing Gambling Harm before Massachusetts Casinos?

The Expanded Gaming Act permits the introduction of casinos and slot parlors in Massachusetts for the first time. A primary concern surrounding expanded gambling is its impact on problem gambling. The SEIGMA team took a "snapshot" of what problem gambling looked like in Massachusetts prior to casinos. A primary aim of the baseline study is to understand the demographic characteristics (race, income, gender, age, etc.) which make some people more or less at risk of experiencing harm from gambling. Based on responses from approximately 10,000 Massachusetts adults, we summarize findings from SEIGMA's *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Massachusetts: Results of a Baseline Population Survey.*

People were classified as:

- Non-gamblers (have not gambled in the past year)
- Recreational gamblers (gamble because they enjoy these activities)
- At-risk gamblers (betting more than planned, spending more time than intended, etc.)
- Problem gamblers (experience significant impaired control over gambling and negative consequences)

Gambling Behavior in Massachusetts Before Casinos

- Non-gambler
- Recreational gambler
- At-risk gambler
- Problem gambler

8% · 2% · 27% · 63%
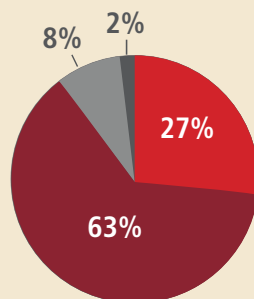
- Based on the percentages in the pie chart, we estimate that approximately 110,000 adult residents are experiencing problems with gambling and approximately 440,000 adult residents are at risk of experiencing problems with gambling

- The amount of problem gambling in Massachusetts is very similar to the amount identified in other U.S. states

Who is more vulnerable to experience harm from problems with gambling?

- Men are 3 times more likely than women
- Persons who identify as Black are 4 times more likely than persons who identify as White
- Individuals with only a high school diploma are 3 times more likely than individuals with a college degree

When at-risk gamblers and problem gamblers are compared to recreational gamblers, survey results showed that those at risk of experiencing harm from a gambling problem and those experiencing harm from a gambling problem are more likely to report:

- Serious problems with depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems
- Using tobacco
- Consuming large amounts of alcohol at one time