



Senior Fact Sheet

Seniors are the fastest growing population of gamblers. They are gambling away their income, their savings, and their chance for a secure future. When they lose, they can't make it up or start over. A compulsion can suddenly manifest in an older person with no history of gambling.

Why Do Seniors Gamble?

The vast majority of older adults gamble for recreation and have few if any problems from their gambling behaviors. Seniors may be attracted to gambling because:

- Trips to gambling venues such as casinos or bingo halls provide an opportunity to socialize.
- Gambling venues often work to attract this subgroup of people, by offering amenities such as free transport, free or discounted meals and other bonuses to seniors who come to gamble
- Seniors often have more free time to fill and are sometimes prone to boredom – gambling can fill the hours with excitement
- Older adults may lose the physical capacity to engage in hobbies and recreational activities that were once enjoyed. Because gambling takes very little physical strength or ability, it can fill this activity void.

Why Are Some Seniors More Vulnerable to Problem Gambling?

- Losing a spouse
- Time on their hands
- A need to seek relief and distraction from physical and emotional aches
- Children living far away
- Loneliness
- Dealing poorly with retirement
- Health problems that limit participation in other activities
- Having financial problems
- Feeling marginalized by society
- Cognitive declines that may impair judgment

The Consequences of Problem Gambling for seniors

- Older adults are more likely living on a fixed income and once retired or with few working years ahead of them, the consequences of a loss of life savings or the loss of a paid-for house can be severe.
- Inability to pay for needed medical care or medications
- The need for a financial bail-out from family members
- Possibility of committing illegal acts to finance their gambling habit
- Stress and ill-health and more.





What are the signs of a senior with a gambling problem?

- Unaccounted for blocks of time
- Unexplained money problems
- The sudden disappearance or sale of valuables
- Avoiding friends or relatives
- Discontinuing activities that were once enjoyed to spend more time gambling
- Lying about time or money spent gambling
- Changes in personality
- Signs of neglecting hygiene or personal appearance

Statistics:

- Researchers have found that 13.9 percent of people over 71 have some form of dementia
- More than half of visitors to casinos are fifty years or older
- Seniors often name gambling as their favorite form of entertainment
- Older women are at a higher risk (“telescoping” of addiction)
- University of Pennsylvania study showed more than 1 out of 10 people over the age of 65 are at risk of financial problems because of gambling
- Efforts to intervene can be seen as interfering with their independence
- Dementia affects frontal lobe of brain, which not only lowers inhibitions, but blunts responses, making the highs not as high and the lows not as low
- Seniors have few options to earn back money lost