

Canadians don't want to roll the dice on expanded gambling

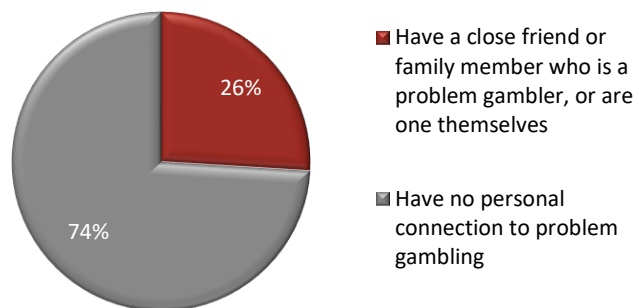
One-in-four say they have family or close friends who have a gambling problem, or have one themselves

October 13, 2016 – Provincial governments have gambled big on gaming and lotteries, collecting almost \$14 billion in revenue each year. But are they to be lauded for hitting the jackpot with an important source of funding for public programs? Or condemned for preying on those most vulnerable to addiction?

While the majority (63%) say provincial involvement in gambling is at minimum “more good than bad”, a new public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute also finds Canadians have little desire to place a bet on an expanded government involvement in gambling. Only one-in-ten (9%) want it. More than four times that many (38%) would like to see involvement reduced.

Further, one-in-four Canadians (26%) report they are personally affected by problem gambling – either because they're struggling with this addiction themselves – or because they have a close relationship with someone who is. Most say necessary help for this problem has not been forthcoming.

Canadian experiences with problem gambling:



METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from August 8 – 12, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1,518 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

Key Findings:

- Most of those who have a close friend or family member struggling with problem gambling say that person has suffered a “significant economic loss” as a result of their behaviour
- Many Canadians are less than satisfied with their provincial governments’ efforts to prevent gambling addiction (47% agree their province doesn’t do enough on this front)
- One area where most would like to see a change is in the presence of Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) in pubs and bars. More than three-in-five (62%) say these machines should only be allowed in special places such as racetracks or casinos

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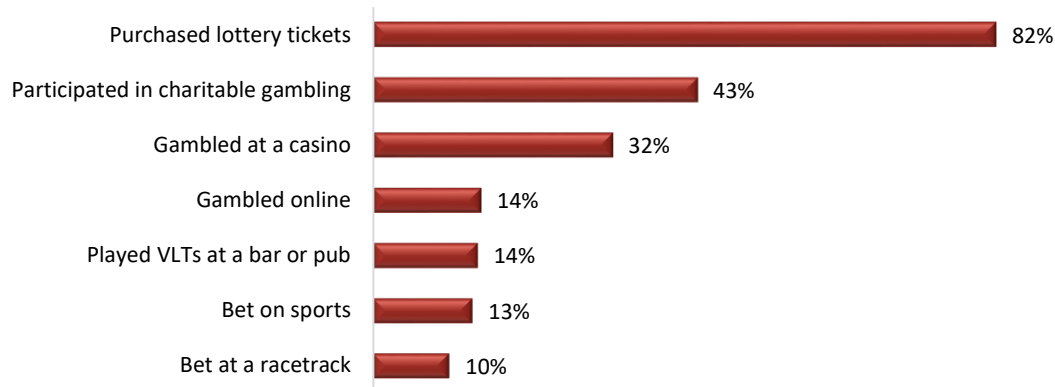
Part 1 – Portrait of Gambling in Canada

Lucky numbers and the Lottery:

The Canadian gambling landscape is a diverse one, with a wide variety of legal activities for gamblers to choose from. That said, one form of gambling rises far above the rest in terms of the rate of participation in Canadian households: the lottery.

More than eight-in-ten Canadian households (82%) contain at least one person who has purchased a lottery ticket in the last year. As seen in the following graph, no other form of gambling involves even half of Canadian households:

Percentage of Canadian households in which someone has done the following in the last year:



Older Canadians are more likely than those under 35 to purchase lottery tickets, and they do so more often and more regularly. Almost six-in-ten Canadians 55 and older (59%) say they purchase lottery tickets at least once a month, while fewer than one-in-three Canadians ages 18 – 34 say the same (32% do).

On most of the other types of gambling canvassed in this survey – especially VLTs, online gambling, and sports betting – the pattern reverses itself. Younger Canadians are more likely to have gambled on each of these activities in the last year, and more likely to have done each one at least monthly ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

There is also a noticeable gender gap on gambling behaviours, with men more likely than women to gamble in each of the ways canvassed in this survey on a monthly – or more frequent – basis.

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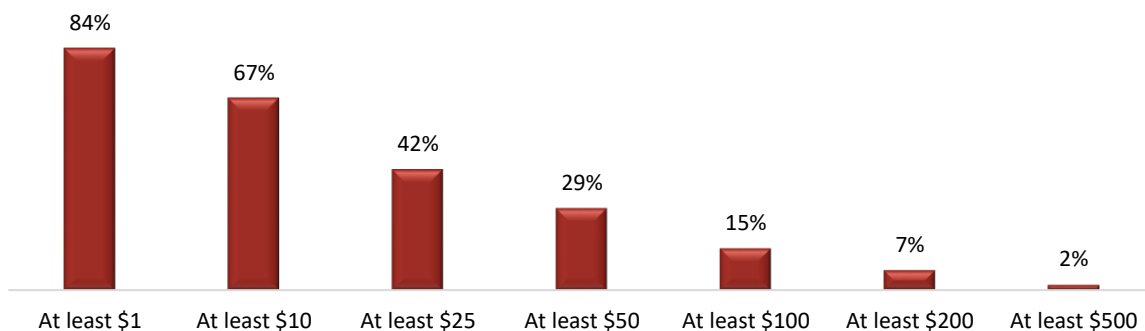
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Who's spending money on what?

It would appear that Canada isn't exactly a nation of high rollers when it comes to spending on gambling. Eight-in-ten (84%) who have gambled in the last year report spending at least \$1 over the last 30 days.

While two-thirds (67%) have spent at least \$10, fewer than half (42%) have spent more than \$25 in the last 30 days, as seen in the following graph:

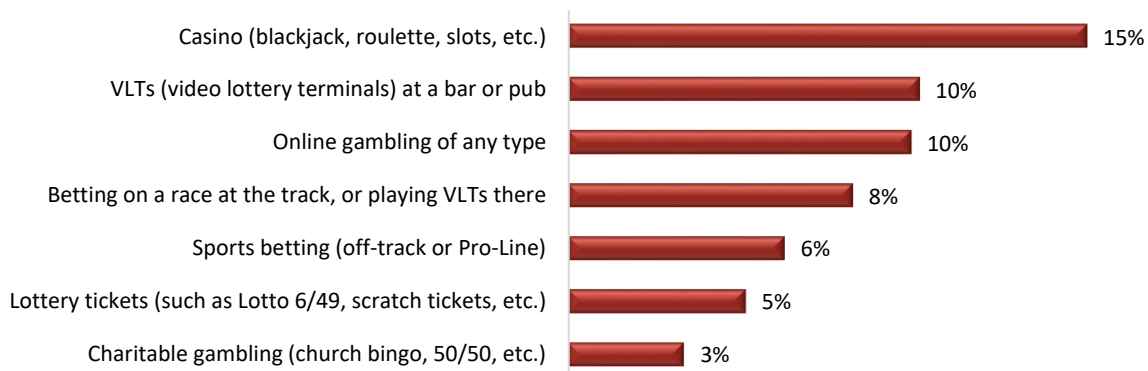
Percentage of Canadian gamblers who gambled more than each of the following thresholds in the last 30 days:



That said, certain activities are more likely to be a draw bigger bets.

The following graph shows the percentage of Canadians who participate in each of type of gambling who report spending more than \$100 on it in the last 30 days.

Percentage who have spent \$100 or more on each activity in the last 30 days*



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**Each bar is based on the total number of Canadians who participate in that type of gambling, not all Canadian adults. So, for example, 15 per cent of casino gamblers spent \$100 or more at a casino in the last 30 days, not 15 per cent of all Canadians.*

As the graph indicates, casino gamblers are the group most likely to have spent \$100 or more in the last 30 days, followed by those who play VLTs and those gambling online.

The notable difference between casino gambling and these other two activities is that a casino is a specific location dedicated primarily to gambling, where going to gamble is often the sole purpose of entering the facility. VLTs and online gambling, by contrast, may occur in a wider variety of locations, and are thus easier to access.

One-in-four are personally affected by problem gambling

Academic studies estimate that roughly 2.4 per cent of adult Canadians are problem gamblers, but this Angus Reid Institute poll finds that problem gambling behaviours touch the lives of a considerably larger number of Canadians, for whom either a close friend or a family member is struggling.

For the purposes of this survey, “problem gambling” was defined as:

“a condition in which a person has difficulty controlling the amount of time and/or money they spend on gambling, leading to negative consequences for the gambler, those close to them, or their community.”

Asked whether they themselves – or anyone else in their household – have ever suffered from problem gambling, some 6 per cent of Canadian adults say “yes,” a number that works out to more than 1.7 million people.

Further, when asked if any close friends or family members with whom they don’t live has gambling a problem (as defined in the preceding paragraphs), another 23 per cent of Canadians answer in the affirmative.

Accounting for those who answer “yes” to both questions, the total number of Canadians who have at least one personal connection to problem gambling – either inside their own household or among their close friends and family – is 26 per cent, nearly 7.5 million people.

This percentage of Canadians expressing some personal experience with problem gambling is consistent across regional, age, gender, and other demographic lines ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

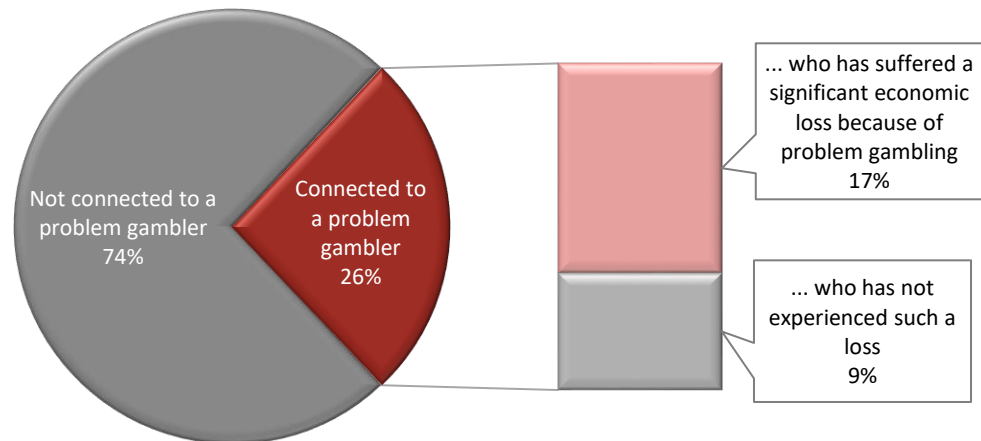
Among those who have some connection to problem gambling, most report that the problem gambler has experienced a “significant economic loss” – such as losing a car or a house – as a result. Overall, roughly one-in-six Canadians (17%) have a close friend or family member who has suffered such a loss, or have suffered such a loss themselves:

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Canadian experiences with problem gambling:



Canadians who have a connection to a problem gambler also say the person in question has not sought help. Only a small portion – fewer than one-in-four – say the problem gambler they know has successfully accessed assistance for their gambling issues ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Part 2 – Are Certain Types of Gambling Harmful?

Regardless of whether they themselves gamble, many Canadians find certain forms of gambling to be essentially harmful to the people who participate in them.

At the top of the list is online gambling. More than half of all Canadians (56%) say online hurts participants most, and fully 50 per cent say the same of VLTs.

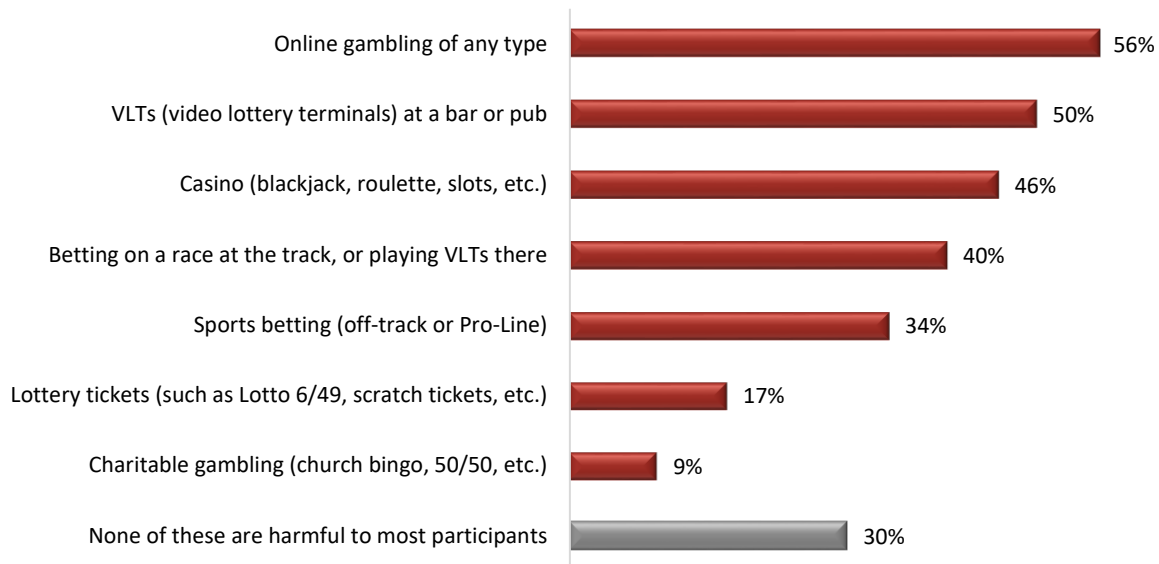
On the opposite end of the spectrum, the activities the largest numbers of Canadians report participating in – lottery tickets and charitable gambling – are the least likely to be viewed as harmful:

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Thinking of these different gambling activities we've been looking at, are there any that you think are essentially harmful to most participants?



As seen in the preceding graph, three-in-ten Canadians (30%) say none of the types of gambling canvassed in this survey are “essentially harmful.” Among those whose lives have been touched by problem gambling, however, the total who say this is just one-in-six (17%).

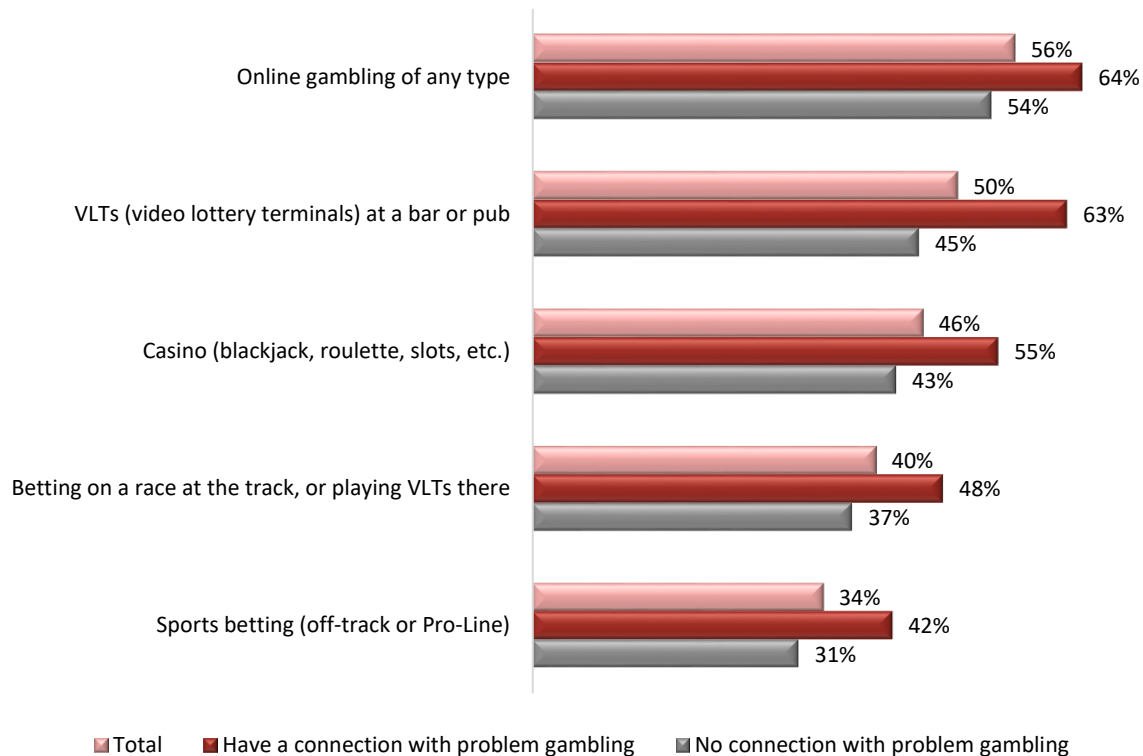
People who have some personal connection to problem gambling are more likely than the general population to say each type of gambling is harmful to participants. Forms of gambling where the gap is widest are seen in the graph that follows.

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The form of gambling for which this gap is largest – VLTs – is also one of the most common problem gambling activities. Fully one-in-three Canadians who have a personal connection to a problem gambler (33%) say that individual struggled with VLTs at pubs and bars.

There has been some debate about the practice of placing these gaming machines in places that aren't otherwise dedicated to gambling. Currently, all provinces except Ontario and British Columbia allow VLTs in pubs and bars. In those two provinces, the machines are only allowed in casinos and other gaming-oriented facilities.

Notably, although Canadians who know a problem gambler are more likely to consider VLTs harmful, they're not any more likely than those who have no such connection to say VLTs ought to be removed from bars. Six-in-ten Canadians (62%) favour such a move, including the same percentage of both groups (see summary tables at the end of this release).

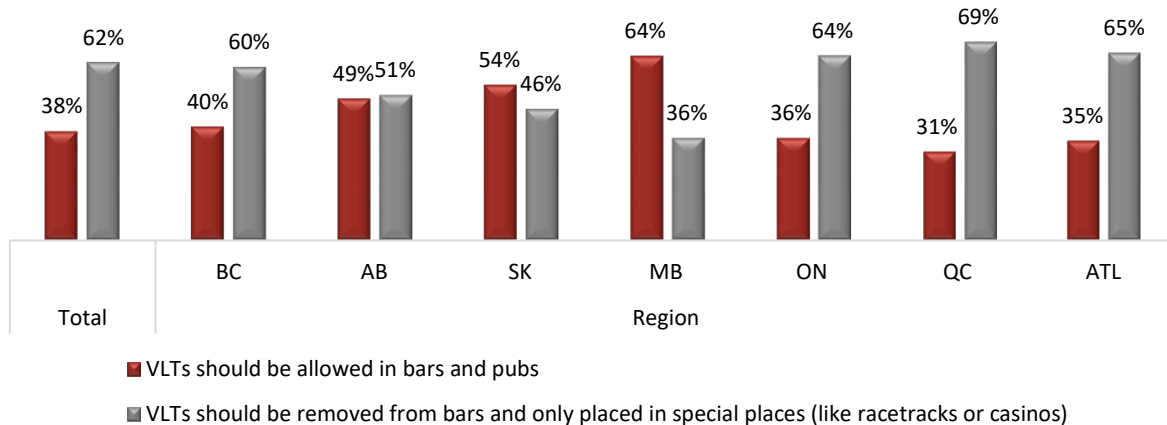
There are regional differences on this question, however. People living in Prairie provinces are more likely to say VLTs should continue to be allowed in bars and pubs, while Quebecers and Atlantic Canadians – whose regions have seen [class-action lawsuits](#) launched over VLTs – would like to see them removed.

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Some say VLTs should not be allowed in bars and pubs, as this makes access too easy and leads to abuse. Others say it's fine, the responsibility falls upon the individual. What do you think?

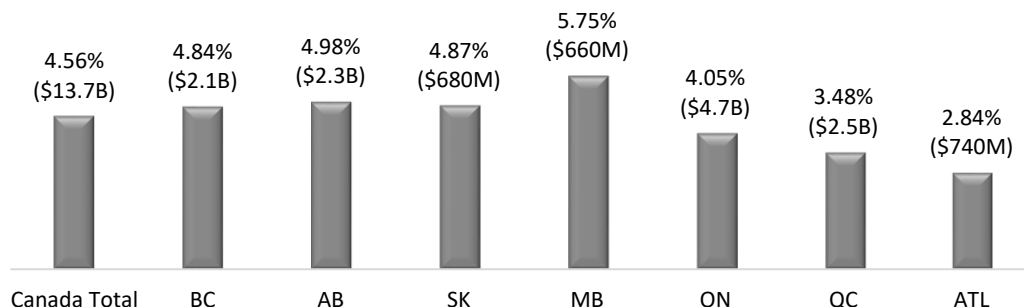


Part 3 – Role of government in gambling

Canadians see value in gambling revenue

Gambling in Canada generates big money – approaching \$14 billion, or close to 5 per cent of total revenue across all provinces. Manitoba earns the most, in terms of percentage, from government-controlled lotteries, casinos and other gambling elements (see note on methodology at the end of this release):

**Percentage of provincial revenue raised through gambling in 2013-14,
with dollar amounts in parentheses
(Source: Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling)**



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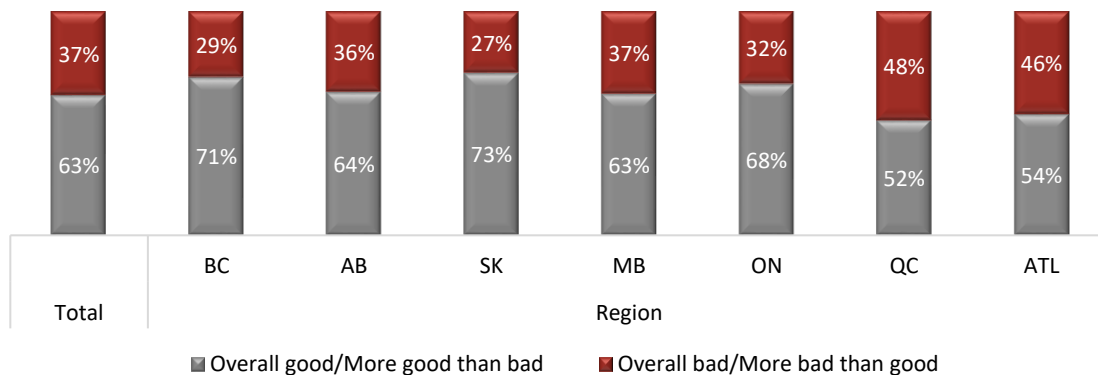
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With these high stakes in play, Canadians are generally okay with their provincial governments raising revenue through gambling. Asked for their views, 43 per cent say government involvement in gambling is more good than bad, and another one-in-five (20%) go a step further, saying it is good overall. On the opposite end of the spectrum, about a quarter (26%) say it's more bad than good, while one-in-ten (11%) see their provincial government's involvement in gambling as "bad overall".

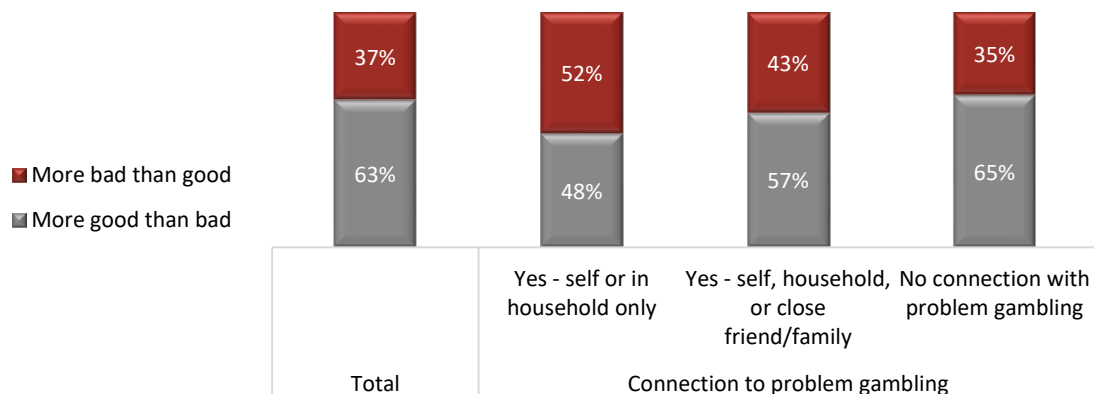
This national view hardens in BC and Saskatchewan where seven-in-ten residents in each province say provincial government involvement is more good than bad. Only Quebec and Atlantic Canada break somewhat from this national trend:

What is your own overall view on having provincial government involvement in gambling?



Those who have a closer connection to problem gambling take a more critical view of their provincial government's relationship with betting:

What is your overall view on having provincial government involvement in gambling?



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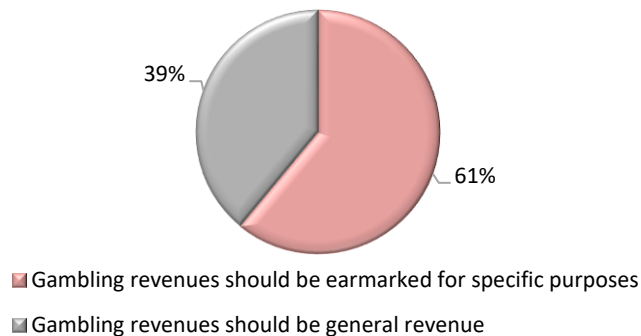
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While distribution varies from province to province, a majority of government-sanctioned gambling revenue ends up in provincial government coffers as general revenue. Certain priorities are more evident than others – most provincial lottery and gaming information will cite health care, education and charitable causes. However, there are also references to provincial priorities or government programs, which are less obvious.

When asked if this is the best use of gambling revenue, most Canadians would rather see the money earmarked for specific purposes.

Generally speaking, which of the following is closest to your own opinion on how gambling revenues should be spent?

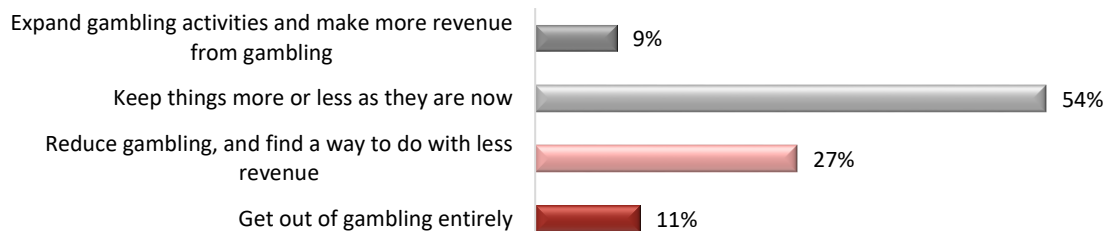


No appetite for expansion

Despite a generally positive view of government-controlled gambling in Canada, there is little to no desire to see this sector grow.

In fact, only one-in-ten (9%) nationwide say that they would like to see gambling activities expanded to earn more revenue. By contrast – three times as many say they would like to see government reduce its focus on this sector. Most, however, favour the status quo:

All things considered, what is your overall view on your own provincial government's involvement in gambling: Would you like to see your own provincial government...

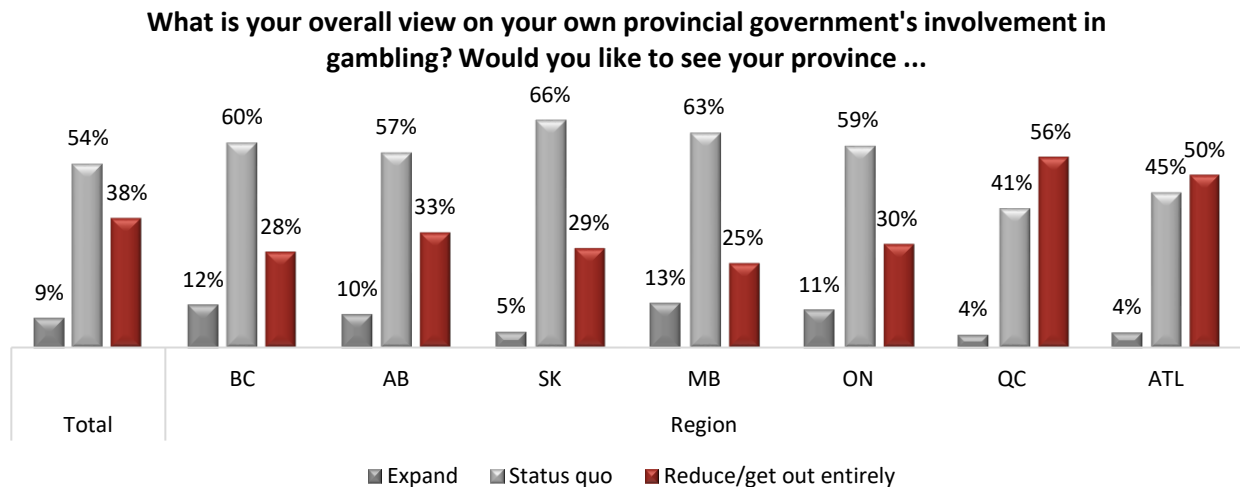


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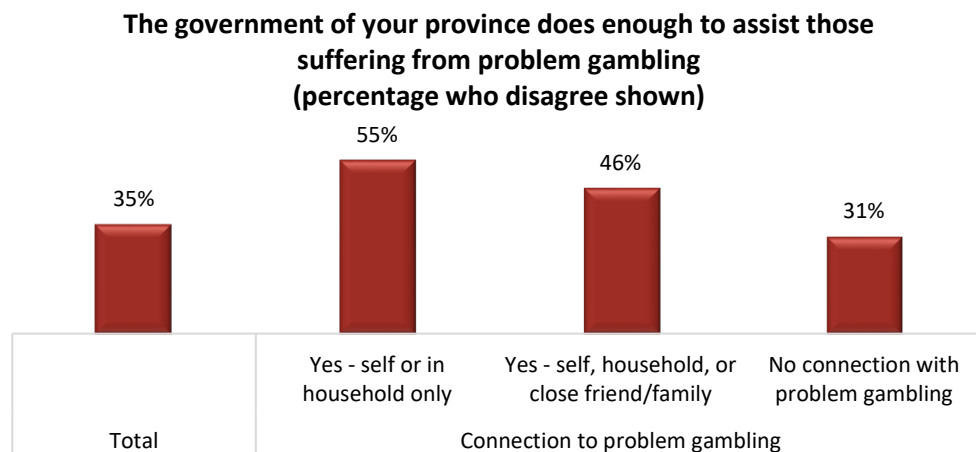
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Narrow majorities in Quebec and Atlantic Canada say their provinces should reduce gambling programs or eliminate them altogether, while the rest of the country favours the continuation of current levels. Importantly, the ratio of those saying reduce versus expand across the country is at minimum two-to-one (Manitoba), and is more than ten-to-one (Quebec, Atlantic Canada) at its most extreme:



While Canadians also say by a wide margin (45% to 28%) that their provincial government does a good job of managing gambling activities, there are also serious concerns about government management of negative impacts.

Asked whether their province does enough to assist those suffering from problem gambling, just one-third (34%) of Canadians say this is the case. A similar number disagree (35%), with a particularly strong negative response from those who have experienced problem gambling issues first hand:



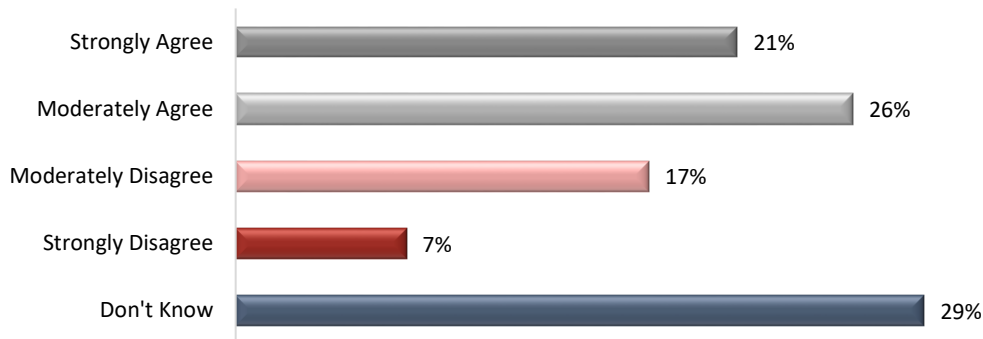
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The area that is perhaps most clear-cut in terms of public opinion? Canadians want their governments to do more to prevent gambling addictions from developing in the first place, by a margin of approximately two-to-one:

The government of your province does not do enough to prevent gambling addictions from developing in the first place:



Provincial governments devote some portion of gambling revenue to gambling addiction research and treatment (for example, [in B.C., the total is 0.5%; in Ontario, it's 2.6%; and in Quebec, it's 2.3%](#)) but it appears that Canadians would like to see more done.

A note on methodology:

The Angus Reid Institute calculated the percentage of provincial revenue generated through gambling using the numbers in table 7 of [this document](#), published by the Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, and provincial budget documents for 2013-14. Revenue figures represent the gross amount of money a given province earned from gambling after paying out prizes, but before factoring in any operating expenses for the gambling activities in question.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

Summary tables follow. For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).

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There has been some debate about VLTs in bars and pubs. Some say that they should not be, as this makes access too easy and leads to abuse. Others say it's fine and the responsibility falls upon the individual. What do you think?			
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1518)	Personal connection to problem gambling	
		Yes (394)	No, no connection (1124)
VLTs should be allowed in bars and pubs	38%	38%	38%
VLTs should be removed from bars and only placed in special places (like racetracks or casinos)	62%	62%	62%

Thinking of these different gambling activities we've been looking at – are there any that you think are essentially harmful to most participants?			
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1518)	Personal connection to problem gambling	
		Yes (394)	No, no connection (1124)
Gambling online (any of the above activities online)	56%	64%	54%
VLTs (video lottery terminals) at a bar or pub	50%	63%	45%
Casino (blackjack, roulette, slots, etc.)	46%	55%	43%
Betting on a race at the track, or playing VLTs there	40%	48%	37%
Sports betting (off-track or Pro-Line)	34%	42%	31%
Lottery tickets (such as Lotto 6/49, scratch tickets, etc.)	17%	18%	16%
Charitable gambling (church bingo, 50/50, etc.)	9%	13%	8%
None of these are harmful to most participants	30%	17%	34%

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What is your overall view on having provincial government involvement in gambling?

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1518)	Personal connection to problem gambling		
		Yes, personally or in household (94)	Yes, total [in household and not] (394)	No, no connection (1124)
Overall good	20%	26%	23%	19%
More good than bad	43%	23%	34%	45%
More bad than good	26%	33%	28%	25%
Overall bad	11%	18%	15%	10%

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? ["The government of your province DOES enough to assist those suffering from problem gambling"]

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1518)	Personal connection to problem gambling		
		Yes, personally or in household (94)	Yes, total [in household and not] (394)	No, no connection (1124)
Strongly Agree	8%	13%	8%	7%
Moderately Agree	27%	22%	24%	28%
Moderately Disagree	21%	17%	26%	20%
Strongly Disagree	13%	39%	20%	11%
Don't Know	31%	10%	21%	34%

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