

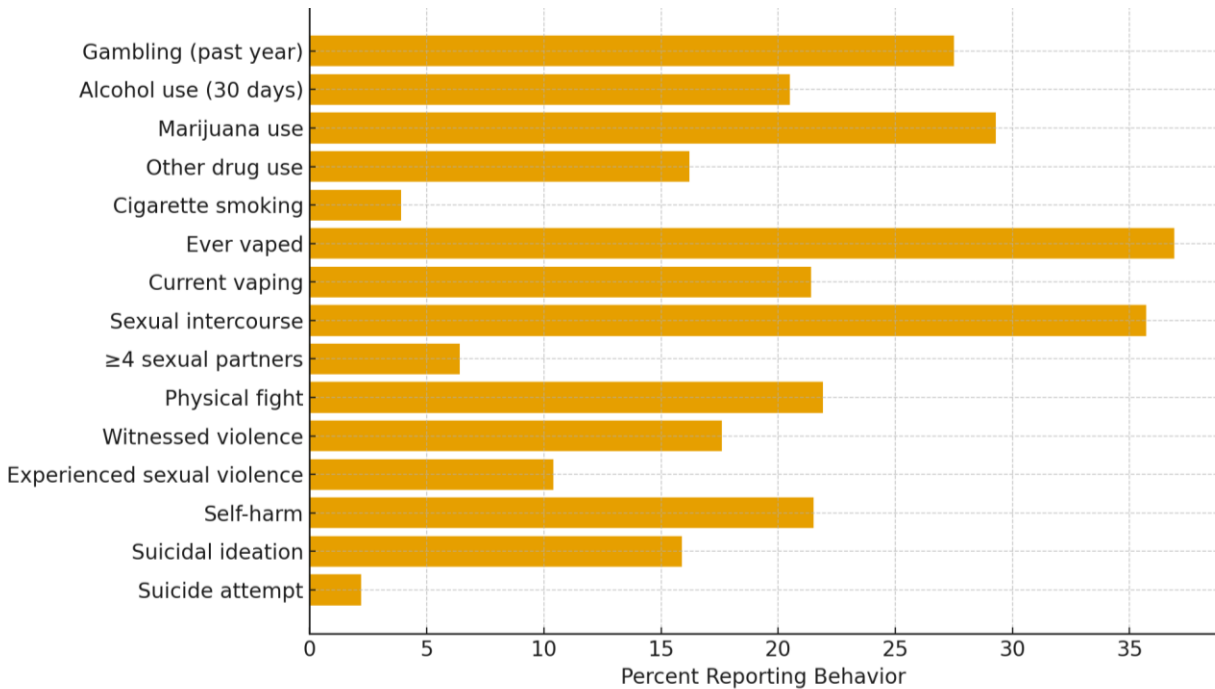
# 2025 North Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) Report: Behavioral and Mental Health Correlates of Adolescent Gambling

This analysis summarizes findings from a weighted Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) dataset (N ≈ 2,265; population size ≈ 471,000). The survey examines adolescent health behaviors and psychosocial correlates, with a specific focus on gambling behaviors within the past year. Weighted analyses were conducted using complex survey design methods (16 strata; 32 PSUs) to produce population-level estimates.

## Sample Characteristics

- Mean Age: 16.08 years (95% CI: 15.91–16.25)
- Gender: 51.1% male, 48.9% female
- Grade Level: 9th (29.1%), 10th (26.7%), 11th (23.0%), 12th (21.2%)
- Racial/Ethnic Composition:
  - White: 45.7%
  - Black: 24.2%
  - Mixed: 19.5%
  - Hispanic: 6.7%
  - Other: 4.0%
- Disability Status: 12.7% reported having a disability
- Sleep Deprivation: 78.8% reported sleeping less than 8 hours per night

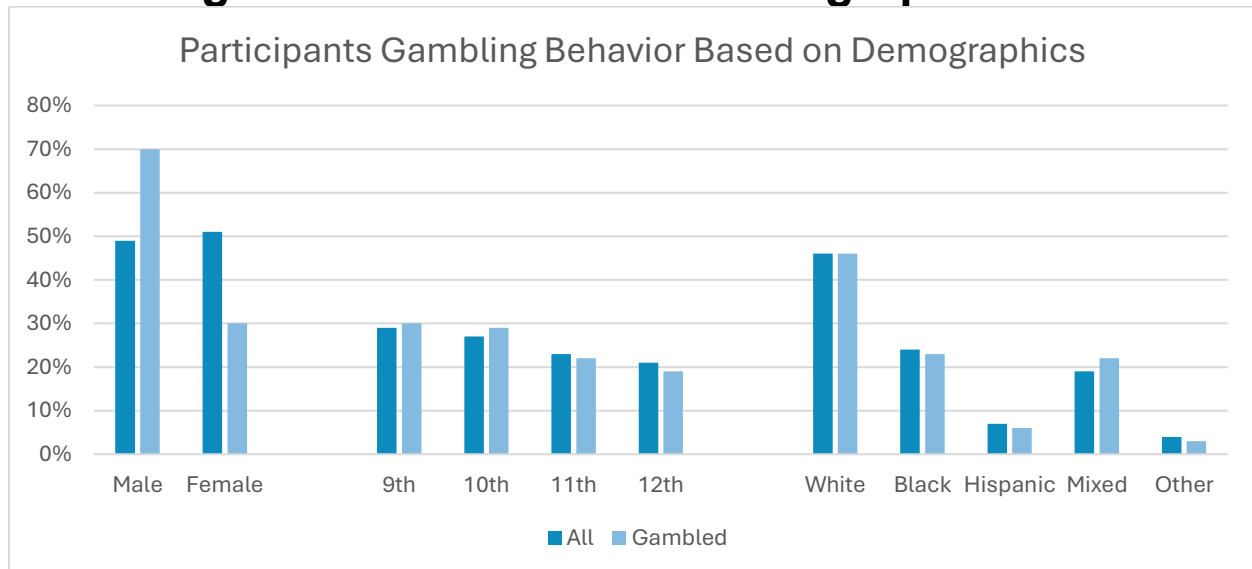
Reported Behaviors	%
Gambling in past year	27.5%
Alcohol use (past 30 days)	20.5%
Marijuana use	29.3%
Other drug use	16.2%
Cigarette smoking	3.9%
Ever vaped	36.9%
Current vaping (30 days)	21.4%
Sexual intercourse (lifetime)	35.7%
≥4 sexual partners (risky sex)	6.4%
Physical fight (any)	21.9%
Witnessed violence	17.6%
Experienced sexual violence	10.4%
Self-harm (without suicidal intent)	21.5%
Suicidal ideation (past year)	15.9%
Suicide attempt (past year)	2.2%
Physical activity (7 days/week)	23.7%
Social media use > several times/day	73.7%



## Mental and Social Well-being

- **Current mental health:** 17.4% reported poor mental health, with another 19.8% reporting moderate concerns.
- **Sense of belonging:** Only 6.5% reported *very strong* belonging at school; nearly 37% rated their sense of belonging as low.
- **Hopelessness:** 39.1% reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness.

## Gambling Behavior Based on Demographics



While gender was strongly correlated with gambling, there was no statistical difference between those who gambled and those who did not gamble within grade nor race/ethnicity.

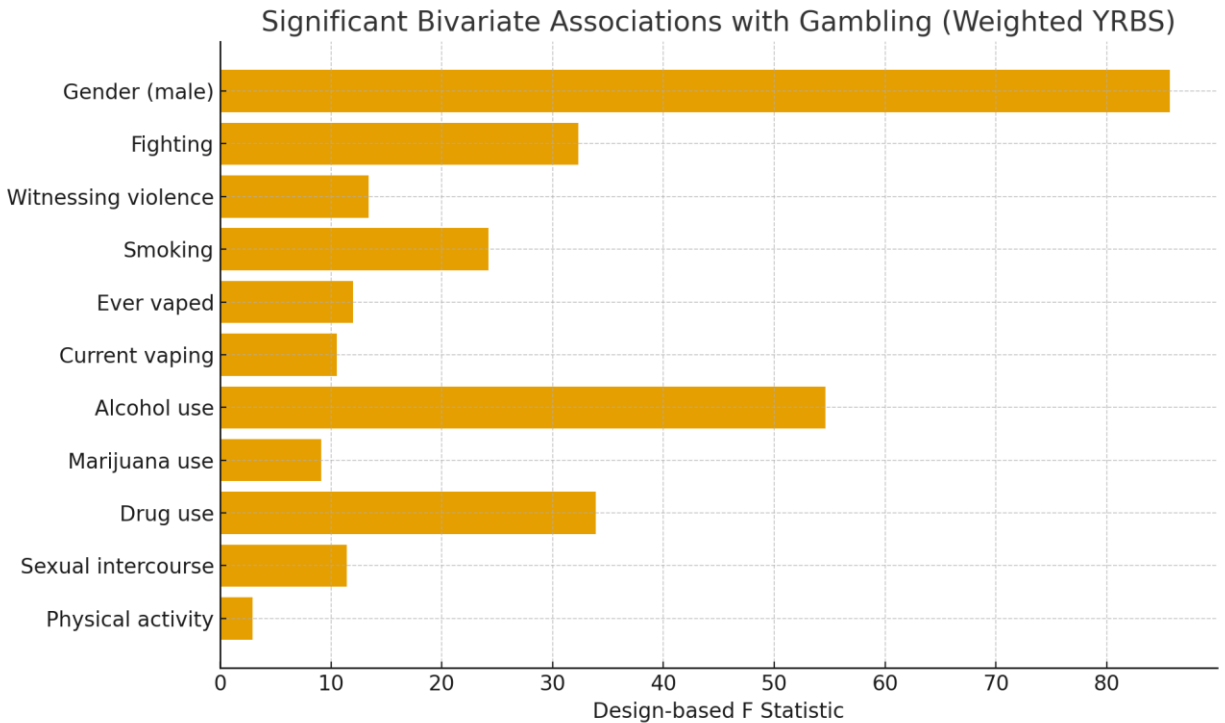
However, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students had a slightly increased level of gambling in the past year whereas 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade students were slightly less likely to gamble.

## Gambling Behavior Among NC Student and its Association with other Behaviors

Weighted chi-square tests (design-based F tests) examined associations between gambling in the past year and other behavioral variables.

Significant results ( $p < .05$ ) are summarized below:

Variable	F	p	Interpretation
Gender (male)	85.7	<.001	Gambling more common among males (70% vs 43%)
Fighting	32.3	<.001	Gamblers more likely to report fights (37% vs 15%)
Witnessing violence	13.4	<.05	Gamblers more often exposed to violence
Smoking	24.2	<.001	Gamblers more likely to smoke (6.8% vs 2.7%)
Ever vaped	12.0	<.05	Gamblers more likely to have vaped (45% vs 32%)
Current vaping	10.5	<.05	Higher current vaping among gamblers (27.7% vs 18.1%)
Alcohol use	54.6	<.001	Gamblers twice as likely to drink (31.7% vs 15.9%)
Marijuana use	9.1	<.05	Higher marijuana use among gamblers (35% vs 26%)
Drug use	33.9	<.001	Gamblers more likely to use other drugs (23% vs 13%)
Sexual intercourse	11.4	<.05	Gamblers more sexually active (42% vs 32%)
Physical activity	2.94	<.05	Gamblers slightly more active (30% reported 7+ days vs 21%)



**Non-significant associations (p > .05):**

Sense of belonging, hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, disability, sleep deprivation, grade level, and social media use showed no significant relationship with gambling behavior.

**Interpretation and Implications**

**Behavioral Correlates**

The weighted analysis suggests that adolescent gambling is strongly associated with other risk-taking behaviors—particularly substance use (alcohol, vaping, drugs), violence exposure, and sexual activity.

**Gender and Risk**

The gender gap remains pronounced: males were over twice as likely to gamble as females. This pattern is consistent with national YRBS findings and reflects cultural and behavioral differences in competitive or monetary risk behaviors.

**Mental Health**

Although gamblers reported somewhat higher rates of suicidal ideation and hopelessness, these associations did not reach statistical significance in this weighted model. This may suggest that emotional distress co-occurs but is not independently predictive of gambling once other behavioral risks are controlled.

## Protective and Contextual Factors

## Conclusions

Prevalence: **Roughly 1 in 4 students reported gambling within the past year.**

Co-occurring risks: Gambling is highly correlated with other substance use and externalizing behaviors, particularly among male students.

## Methodology

Design: Complex survey design with weighting (16 strata; 32 PSUs). N≈2,265; population ≈471,000.

Analysis: Stata svy commands were used to estimate proportions and design-based F statistics for associations between gambling (past year) and outcomes. Statistical significance set at  $p < .05$ . Estimates are correlational and do not imply causation.