



# Asian Americans & Gambling

## Gambling in Asian communities is rooted in...

**Immigration** causes social and cultural isolation. From the lack of culturally appropriate and accessible recreational activities, many gamble out of boredom and loneliness. Many would go to the casinos where they felt welcomed and people who spoke their language, making gambling a way for social interactions and networking.

**Poverty** generates dreams for a better future, gambling as a source of quick money and a way to improve family's financial situation.

**Stress** relief is linked to work pressure, heavy workload, long hours, and challenges in adapting to American culture. The type of work that many immigrants are afforded are factory, restaurant, or other service industry jobs with long hours. Not having many late-night options for stress relief, they are drawn to casinos open 24/7.

Coping strategies from the **trauma** of surviving war and genocide.

Gambling activities as part of **cultural** celebrations and traditions. An example, during the Lunar New Year, it's taboo not to test your luck for the new year. Social gambling, such as card games and mahjong act as a bridge across generations and provides the elderly with social engagement and cognitive activities.

### Types of Gambling Activities

Gambling Types	Count	Percent
Casino Games	31	78%
Lottery	17	43%
Mahjong	14	35%
Sports Betting	12	30%
Other games	11	28%
Keno/scratch tickets	11	28%
Poker	6	15%
Online gambling	6	15%

Table source from the Asian CARES Research Report, September, 2021, Massachusetts

Other games include cultural games like KlakKlok, PakKdaing, StopGo, Thirteen, and APuong.



### Where Gambling is Happening

Where Gambling Happens	Count	Percent
Small shops (lottery tickets)	14	35%
Casinos	33	83%
Parks	2	5%
Illegally (in underground casinos)	4	10%
In homes	12	30%
Clubs (private mahjong place/clubs)	2	5%
Private places	5	13%
Small shops (lottery tickets)	14	35%

Table source from the Asian CARES Research Report, September, 2021, Massachusetts

Private places referred to as a location rather than underground casinos or illegal gambling dens.

## Community Level Impacts

**Financial Stress:** borrowing money from friends, family, and strangers; taking out loans with high interest rates; pawning possession; using loan sharks; selling house/properties; working extra jobs; job loss; large amount of debt; and depletion of savings.

**Deteriorating Family Life:** family arguments and destruction of familial trust.

**Damage to parent-child relationship:** children of parents who have gambling behaviors are at an increase risk of developing problem gambling behaviors later in life; children are exposed to parents arguing; domestic violence; neglect and abuse.

**Impact on the elderly:** many come from cultures that prioritize extended family and kinship networks. The Elderly often play an important role as caretakers of the younger generation. In modern American society, the extended kinship network is lost and without other options, some turn to gambling as a social outlet to fill a void.

**Domestic Violence:** problem gambling causing changes in people, making the person with problem gambling vent and take their anger and stress out on their family.

**Impacts of mental health:** gambling compulsion and negative impact of wanting to win and losing more money can lead to developing anxiety and depression, and in some cases suicide not only by the person gambling but family members directly impacted by the consequences.



## Targeted Marketing

**Casino Environment:** Asian table games such as baccarat, pai-gow poker, and pai-gow tiles. Hiring dealers and hosts that speak the various Asian languages, Asian restaurants/buffets.

**Seductive Advertising/Promotions:** Offers of free products such as appliances, free food vouchers, and hosting concerts where actors and singers from native countries are invited to bring patrons into the casinos increasing the likelihood of gambling. Many casinos will have advertisement and pages on websites targeted with Asian languages and images.

**Casino Buses:** Casino will provide buses in neighborhoods with a high percentage of Asian populations such as in Chinatown during all times of the day. Discounts or deals are always associated with these buses.

**There is a lack of problem gambling research in Asian communities in the United States, and little work has been done to create evidence based culturally treatment models or preventive strategies.**

### Existing Resources, Programs, and Services in Pennsylvania

- Education materials available in several languages (<https://problem-gambling.org>)
- Help Line with language accessibility (<https://www.pacouncil.com/helpline>)
- Self Exclusionary Programs (<https://www.pacouncil.com/self-exclusion>)
- Self-Help Meeting, Gambling Anonymous (<https://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/>)
- Counseling (<https://www.pacouncil.com/gambling-counselors/>)

### Prevention Strategy Recommendations

- Collaborating with and funding for ethnic-based community based organizations to deliver culturally and linguistically appropriate services. Creating sustainability within the ethnic-based community based organizations by training community leaders and staff on screening, assessments, education awareness.
- Collaborating on developing or adapting gambling prevention programming within existing services. Examples: adding gambling prevention education to youth empowerment programs; financial literacy programs; a place for older adults to engage in risk free activities.
- Develop a steering committee or utilize existing coalition group to guide root causes, needs assessment and development of prevention plan and programs.

**Individuals or families seeking resources to help with excessive or problematic gambling call or visit**

**1-800-GAMBLER**  
**[www.pacouncil.com](http://www.pacouncil.com)**

**Pennsylvania Problem  
Gambling Prevention  
Workgroup**



#### References:

Rubin, H.L., Colby M., Yau, Y., Hires, B. (2021). Unpacking the Root Causes of Problem Gambling in the Asian Community. Boston, MA: Massachusetts Gaming Commission.  
Wong, C., Li, G., (2019), Talking About Casino Gambling: Community Voices from Boston Chinatown. Boston, MA: Massachusetts Gaming Commission.