

US bettors to wager \$4.3B on Super Bowl, a big drop from 2020

By Bailey Schulz Las Vegas Review-Journal

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More than 23 million Americans plan to bet a total of \$4.3 billion on Super Bowl LV, a 37 percent drop in expected handle compared with the figure from [last year's game](#).

A new report from the American Gaming Association said the drop was expected and almost entirely caused by pandemic-led restrictions at casinos across the country. The largest declines are expected among retail sportsbooks and casual bets made in social settings, like pools or squares. The total count also includes illegal bets online and with bookies.

Despite the dramatic overall drop, the AGA predicts this year's game will generate the largest single-event legal handle in American sports betting history.

“With a robust legal market, Americans are abandoning illegal bookies and taking their action into the regulated marketplace in record numbers,” AGA President and CEO Bill Miller said in a Tuesday news release.

Sports betting's surge

There are seven new betting markets this year compared with last year, allowing 36 million more American adults the opportunity to bet legally in their home state. According to research firm Eilers and Krejcik Gaming, 45 percent of the adult U.S. population now lives in a state where sports betting is legal.

Twenty-five states and Washington, DC have legalized sports betting, and 21 of those markets are operational. Another 13 states have active or pre-filed legislation to legalize sports betting.

Eilers and Krejcik Gaming analyst Chris Grove said the pandemic makes year-over-year Super Bowl betting comparisons “tricky,” but he’s confident that interest in legal sports betting remains on an upward trajectory. He projects there could be more than 30 markets with legal sports betting by this time next year.

His firm projects Americans will wager \$615 million with legal retail and online sportsbooks for Super Bowl LV, accounting for 1.5 percent of the total estimated U.S. sports betting handle this year. The firm did not have an estimate for last year’s game.

Growth in mobile

Of the 21 operational markets, all but four offer online sports betting in some form.

Online betting is expected to have its best year yet at Super Bowl LV, according to the AGA, which represents the \$261 billion U.S. casino industry. A record 7.6 million bettors are expected to place their wagers online for this year’s game, a 63 percent jump compared with last year.

Mobile betting has accounted for about 82 percent of legal sports wagers nationwide throughout the pandemic, according to the report.

Overall, 1.4 million Americans plan to bet in-person at a sportsbook this year, a 61 percent year-over-year drop. Fewer plan to bet casually with friends or place a pool, squares or similar bet, with each down 18 percent and 19 percent from 2020, respectively. Another 1.8 million plan to bet with a bookie, down 21 percent.

“Retail will recover, but the future of sports betting ... is mobile, either in a casino or outside,” said Brendan Bussmann of Global Market Advisors, a research and management consulting firm. “It allows for convenience and the ability to place bets in a more personalized manner, and not have to wait in line.”

The AGA’s findings are based on an online survey among more than 2,000 adults conducted by Morning Consult late last month.

Demand in Las Vegas

Super Bowl weekend will look different this year, but room rate data show that many are still itching to celebrate the game in-person in Las Vegas.

A stay at the Oyo Las Vegas this Saturday starts at \$91, a 264 percent increase from the \$25 starting price for a room last Saturday, according to [Hotels.com](https://www.hotels.com). Bally’s starting room rate rose 171 percent in that same time frame, from \$35 to \$95, and Park MGM rates jumped 196 percent from \$47 to \$139.

Hotel-casino operators will be [unable to accommodate](#) the large crowd sizes they had in years past, since the state is still enforcing a 25 percent occupancy cap on casino floors.

The matchup between the Kansas City Chiefs and Tampa Bay Buccaneers is set to begin Sunday at 3:30 p.m.

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