



RESPONSIBLE GAMBLING COUNCIL

Youth Gambling (8-24) in Ontario: Developing Best Practices for Prevention and Treatment

Quantitative Survey Executive Summary

September 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth are at heightened risk to gamble and experience gambling problems. As a result, a growing body of research focuses on estimating and understanding gambling participation and problems among youth. However, research among this group examines specific age ranges instead of covering the entire span of youth.

The current report, presenting the results from a quantitative survey, is part of a larger study that examines gambling across the span of youth in order to develop best practices for youth gambling prevention. Results from the quantitative survey increase our understanding of the progression of gambling involvement from childhood to young adulthood, including variations in this progression by gender. A representative telephone and online survey was conducted with 2,651 adolescents (12-17), young adults (18-24), and parents of children 8-17 in Ontario. Closed- and open-ended questions touched on gambling behaviours and motivations, gambling problems, attitudes towards gambling, video game playing, and socio-demographic characteristics.

Among adolescents, 21% have gambled in their lifetime, with higher participation among males and older adolescents (14-17). Adolescents typically begin gambling at age 12 and 1.9% of adolescents had a gambling problem in the last three months. Adolescent males are more likely than females to experience low to moderate levels of gambling problems (4% vs. 1%). Adolescent males, gamblers, and those experiencing any problems from gambling have more positive opinions of gambling, while older adolescents have more negative opinions.

Among young adults, 60% have gambled in their lifetime, with higher participation among older young adults (21-24) and young men. In the last 12 months, 7.1% of young adults had a gambling problem, with a higher rate among young men. Young men and gamblers have more positive opinions of gambling.

Among parents, 70% have gambled in their lifetime, with higher participation among fathers. Parents recall generally starting to gamble at age 20, with fathers starting earlier than mothers. In the past 12 months, 7.8% of parents had a gambling problem, with a higher rate among fathers. Parental attitudes towards gambling differ based on whether the parent has or has not gambled, and whether the child has or has not gambled. According to parents, 18% of their children have

gambled in their lifetime, with higher rates among parents who have gambled, and parents of older (16-17) and male children. More than one in five parents (21%) have been concerned about their child's gambling, with higher concern among parents of male children and those with moderate or severe gambling problems.

There are many similarities and differences across the span of youth. Lifetime gambling participation is higher in each subsequent age group, from adolescents to parents. Adolescents, young adults, and parents gamble for fun, to win money, and to socialize with friends. Young men and young adults 18-20 are more likely than young women and those 21-24 to report several gambling motivations, including taking risks, becoming a skilled player, relaxing, and forgetting worries.

Instant win tickets are popular among all age groups, from children to parents. Dares or challenges are widely played by children, adolescents, and young adults, and lottery tickets are popular among young adults and parents. Male youth more often bet on sports and video games, while female youth play instant win tickets. Fantasy sports websites are among the most frequently played games from adolescents to parents, with adolescents and parents also frequently playing casino-style games on social networking sites.

A quarter to a third of adolescent, young adult, and parent gamblers has experienced at least one of the indicators used to measure problem gambling. The most frequently experienced indicators for all three groups include feeling guilty about gambling and going back another day to win back losses. Young adults and parents also report betting more than they could afford to lose. Rates of problem gambling are slightly higher in each subsequent age group, from adolescents to parents. Self-reported gambling problems are also slightly higher in each subsequent age group, with a higher rate among young men.

While gambling is not a popular activity in adolescence, it is popular in young adulthood. Adolescents, young adults, and parents agree that gambling is a serious issue for youth, but all also rate it as one of the least serious issues. Despite this low ranking, all three groups agree that gambling can become a problem like alcohol and drugs, and gambling can negatively impact school performance.

Almost all youth, from children to young adults, have played video games in their lifetime, with higher rates of participation among adolescent males and young men. Youth tend to play video games in the last 24 hours, in the evening, and for 30 minutes to an hour. The percentage of youth who spend money within video games is higher in each subsequent age group, with youth purchasing more chips/gold and items for their avatar.

Gambling problems are predicted most strongly by gambling online, gambling frequently, and gambling to get a 'high' feeling among young adults. For parents, the strongest predictors are gambling motivations: playing to forget worries, playing to get a 'high' feeling, and playing to hone skills.