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CANADIAN STUDY: UNDERAGE GAMBLING LOW ON LIST OF PARENTAL CONCERNS

A major new study by a Canadian research team looking at parental attitudes on underage gambling has revealed that very few parents are concerned by youth gambling risks, even as rapidly expanding new technologies offer children and teenagers more opportunities to gamble.

The "Parents as Partners" study was conducted between August 2008 and April 2009 and consisted of both quantitative and qualitative study elements. The study was developed and executed by youth strategy firm DECODE in collaboration with the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University.

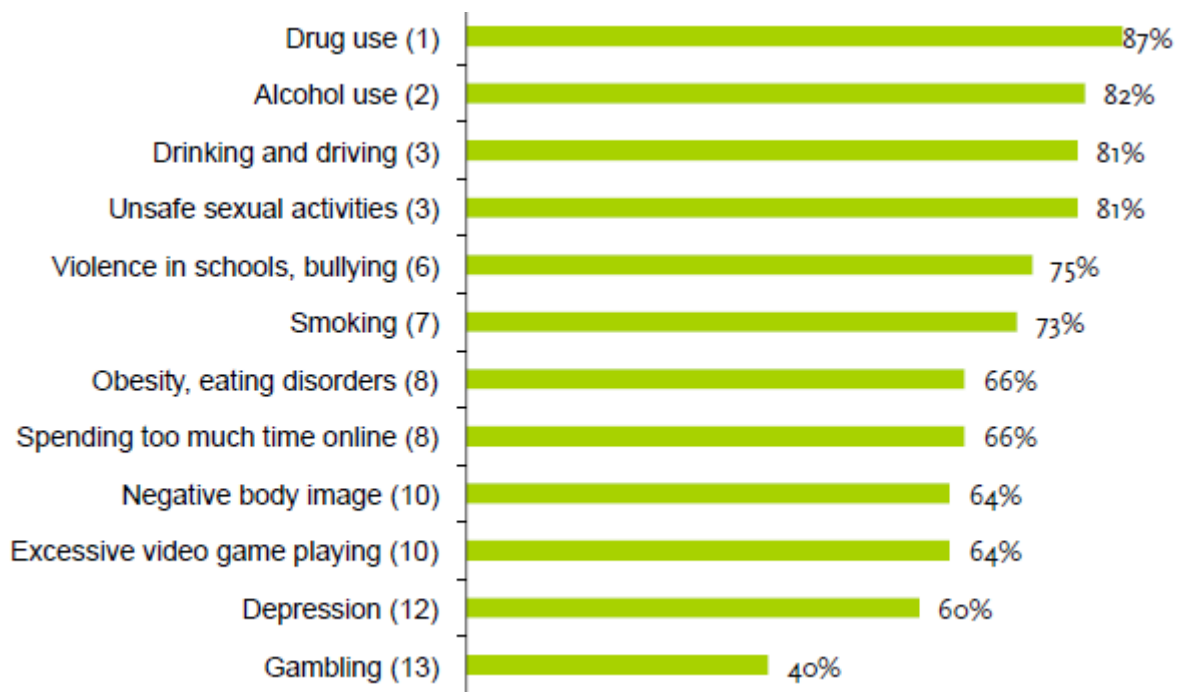
Researchers interviewed 2 700 Canadian parents as part of the study conducted 24 focus groups with approximately 190 parent participants. The study was funded by a consortium of organisations interested in gambling behaviour, including the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation, the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre and lottery and gaming jurisdictions across Canada.

The results show that many parents have not recognized this growing trend among youth, and that they are likely unaware of the direct correlation between gambling as a youth and problem gambling later in life.

"Canada is a world leader in researching and understanding gambling behaviours, and this study looking at parents of teens is a global first. However, while there are some resources on youth gambling currently available for parents, and other resources being developed, this is still an emerging area," reports Dr. Jeff Derevensky, Co-Director of the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors at McGill University and a collaborator on the project.

Of the many concerns parents have about their children - from unsafe sex to drug and alcohol use - underage gambling ranks last, with 40% of parents citing it. This falls well behind concerns about drug use (87%), alcohol use (82%), drinking and driving (81%), unsafe sexual activities (81%), and even excessive video game playing (64%) by teens.

The graph below shows responses to the question "In your opinion, how serious an issue are the following for teens today?" Figures represent top two box responses: "serious" and "very serious."

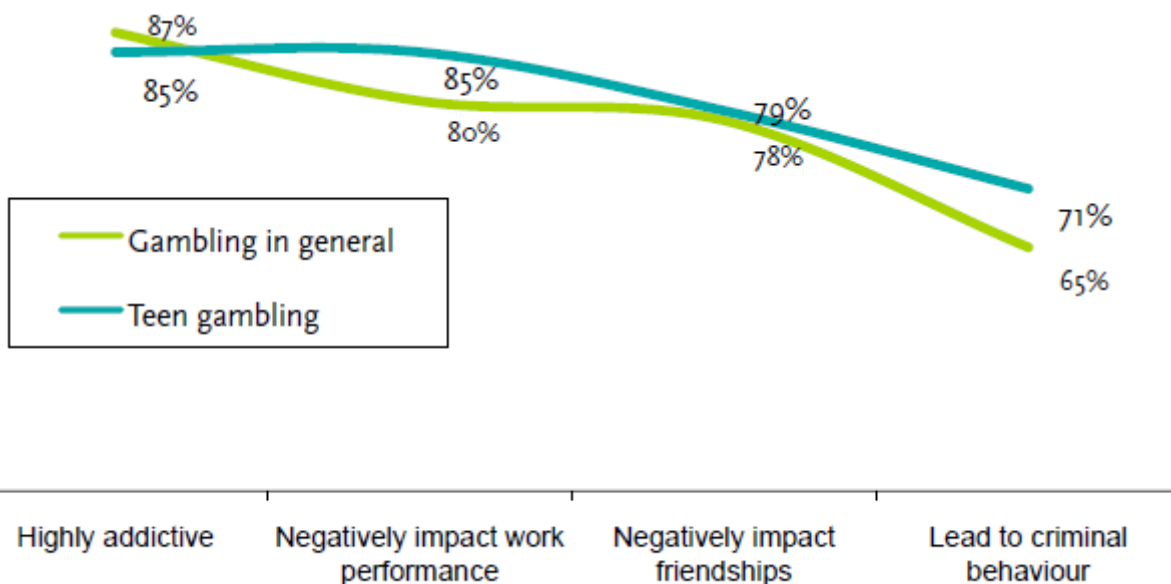


The findings reveal that 67% of parents believe their child would be receptive to discussions about gambling and excessive gambling. Yet 66% of parents report they “rarely” or “never” discuss gambling-related issues with their child, reflecting its low priority (21%). Parents report that they would initiate a conversation about underage gambling if (1) their child was feeling pressured to participate in these activities, and/or (2) they realized that their child’s friend/peer was involved in gambling. Merely being aware of a responsible gambling campaign would not be sufficient to have a conversation with their child about gambling.

While parents may rank gambling as less serious when compared to other youth issues, they recognize potential negative consequences and problems associated with gambling and excessive gambling. This might explain why approximately half of parents (46%) feel that lottery and scratch tickets in convenience stores should be kept out of sight from underage minors.

The majority of parents strongly believe that gambling can become highly addictive and has the potential to interfere with work and school performance along with peer relationships. Many parents also believe that gambling can lead to criminal behaviour. Parental opinions about gambling in general and teen gambling are, in fact, quite similar.

Parents’ Attitudes Toward Gambling and Teen Gambling: Please indicate your agreement with the following statements (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree): Gambling can . . . Note, figures represent top two box answers: “agree” and “strongly agree.”

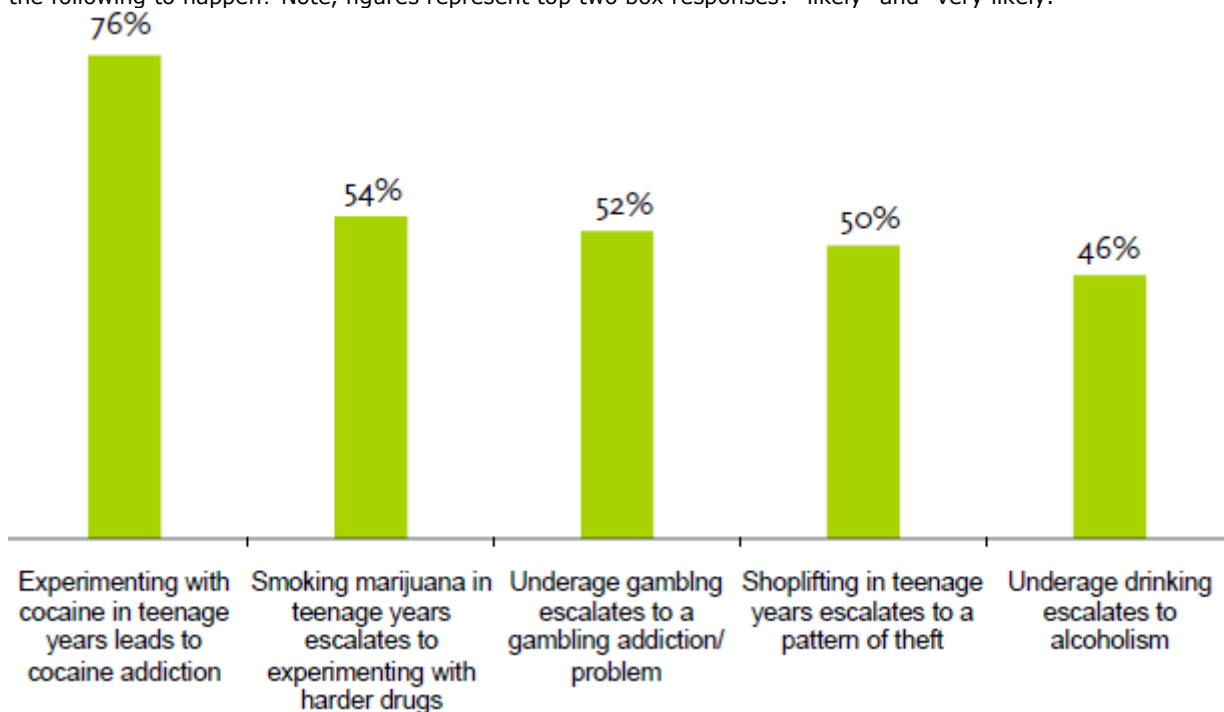


Parents are clearly aware of the negative aspects of gambling and readily understand that these are games of chance and are not an easy way to make money. Thus, 64% of parents suggest this is not an appropriate activity for their teen.

As illustrated in the figure below, many parents believe youth involvement in various risky and/or dangerous behaviours is likely to lead to more serious problems in the future. 52% of parents report that underage gambling can escalate to a gambling addiction/problem. This highlights an

incongruity between parental perceptions about the negative consequences of youth gambling and their commitment to discussing gambling issues with their children.

Parents Believe Experimentation in Teenage Years Leads to Serious Problems: In your opinion, how likely is the following to happen? Note, figures represent top two box responses: "likely" and "very likely."



Amongst respondents, 5% report having personally experienced a gambling problem, and 33% indicate they know someone who has experienced a gambling problem.

Findings reveal that parents become very concerned about their child's involvement in gambling activities when money is involved. For many parents, their child's involvement in playing poker with friends (either at school, in their home or in a friend's home) is not viewed as problematic. In terms of online poker playing, 57% of parents noted they would be concerned/very concerned if their child was playing poker online for free, while 28% reported this would not be problematic. Once gambling for money enters into the mix, parental concern significantly increases.

The research also shows parents are a primary source of lottery tickets for underage youth, as many don't view 'scratch and win' tickets as gambling. Some parents can also contribute to the problem by buying their teens poker sets or other gambling-themed gifts.

24% of parents say their child has received a lottery ticket, scratch ticket or sports lottery ticket as a holiday, birthday, or other gift from a family relative or friend. A similar number of parents (21%), report giving their child one of these types of lottery tickets as a gift. Mothers are as likely to give lottery tickets as gifts to their daughters or sons, while fathers are more likely to give lottery tickets to their sons. The likelihood that parents give their children these types of lottery tickets as a gift increases with the child's age: 13 to 14 years old (16%), 15 to 16 years old (21%), 17 to 18 years old (28%).

Child's Participation in Gambling Activities

When asked specifically about their child's participation in gambling activities, 13% of parents indicated their child had taken part in a gambling activity for money. Recent youth research reveals the number of underage youth who report participating in these activities is four to six times higher, illustrating the gap in parents' awareness. Mothers and fathers share similar beliefs on this topic, the main variance in responses emerge in relation to the child's gender. While 18% of parents with a son believe their child has participated in a gambling activity only 7% of parents with a daughter endorse this belief.

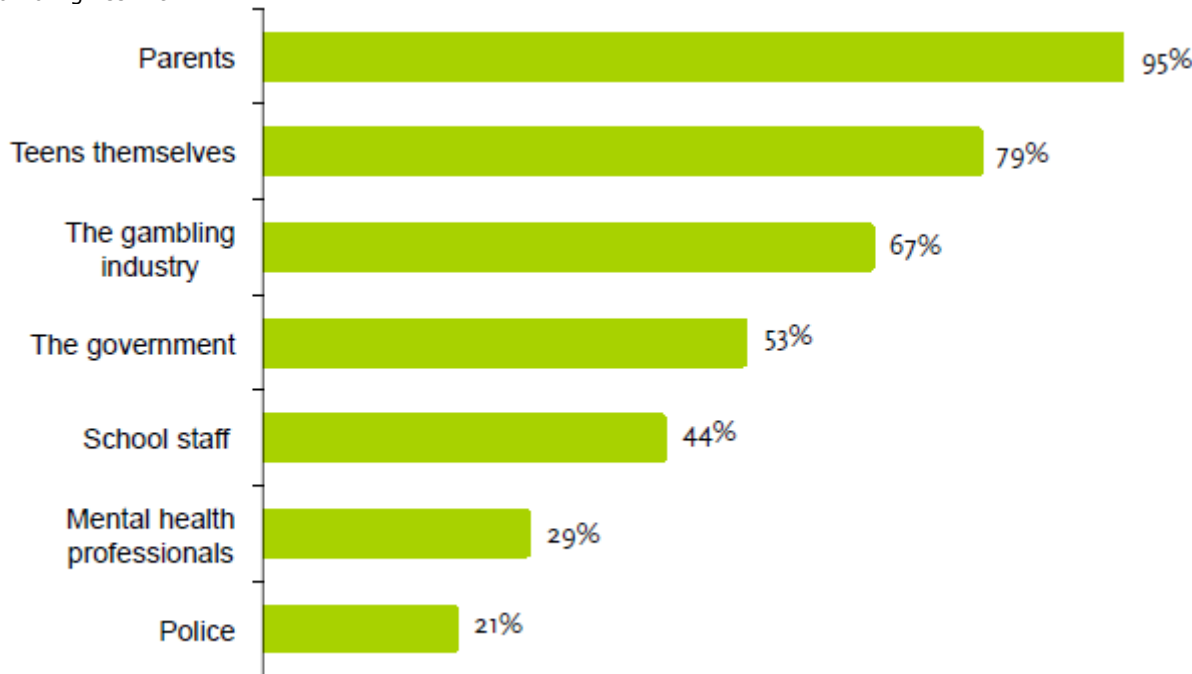
While findings reveal that parents would prefer to receive information about teen gambling issues from their child's school, their children are either not receiving this information or not bringing this information home. Only 15% of parents reported their child has brought home information concerning the risks associated with gambling. A similar proportion, 10%, noted that their child participated in a gambling prevention and/or education program at school. While parents are receiving a variety of informative materials concerning other youth issues, it does not appear that gambling prevention and education are a priority or available in schools.

Parental ratings of the quality of information available about teen issues were highest for issues related to smoking and illicit drug use (69%) while gambling received the lowest (35%).

These data suggest that parents may not be adequately informed to identify or take action to prevent youth gambling problems. Nevertheless, 75% of parents remain confident they could help their child if they became aware of a gambling problem. Given that 21% of parents do not believe it is a

priority to discuss gambling issues with their teen, it is interesting that 95% of parents nevertheless believe that they are primarily responsible for preventing teen gambling. Parents contend that they, along with their child, have the primary responsibility for preventing teen gambling.

Parents Allocate the Responsibility for Preventing Teen Gambling: The responsibility of preventing teen gambling lies with . . .



"Parents should be made more aware of the rapid growth of underage gambling activities, including on social networking sites like Facebook", says Eric Meerkamper, President of DECODE, the youth-focused strategy firm which collaborated on the study. "Encouraging parents to speak with their children about gambling is particularly important since unregulated online opportunities for youth gambling are growing at a phenomenal rate."

Summary of Key Findings

This research highlights the paradoxes of parental attitudes toward youth gambling. While parents express strong opinions against underage gambling, their actions contradict this stance. The majority believe that, in addition to being highly addictive, gambling can also adversely affect work performance and friendships. Over half of parents believe underage gambling can escalate to a gambling addiction/problem, and approximately two-thirds of parents do not condone teenage gambling. Despite this, most parents report they rarely or never have conversations with their child about gambling and/or gambling-related issues. This may explain why other DECODE research shows that among underage youth reporting gambling activity in the last 12 months, a majority believe their parents were "indifferent" to their participation in these activities. Without clear anti-gambling messaging from parents, it is unclear where teens will get them. This report highlights the importance of educating parents about their role.

There is an additional discrepancy between parental attitudes and behaviours. Findings reveal that 95% of parents believe they are primarily responsible for preventing teen gambling and teen gambling problems, yet 59% have participated in a gambling activity with their child for money. Additionally, 24% of parents have given their child a lottery ticket or scratch ticket as a gift. Recent DECODE youth research reveals that parents are the most common source of lottery tickets for teens. Many parents fail to convey messages about gambling while others send mixed or even positive signals. Parents have a key role in preventing teen gambling and teen gambling problems. This research shows that many will first need to reflect upon or examine their own behaviours.

Many parents report regularly monitoring their child's online use, but a significantly fewer number have set controls to limit their child's access to inappropriate sites. (For example, only 9% of parents have installed anti-gambling software at home.) Given that over one-third of parents report their child has a computer in their bedroom with internet access, monitoring online behaviour requires active steps and controls. Youth involvement in online gambling activities is becoming increasingly common as many social networking sites geared to youth such as Facebook include free gambling applications. Parents are likely unaware of their child's participation these activities.

Relative to a list of 13 youth problem issues, parents believe gambling is the least serious issue teens face today. This is one of the main challenges for engaging parents as partners in preventing teen gambling. The primary reason parents cited for not having conversations with their children about gambling stems from their belief that it is not a priority issue. Rather, their attention and energy is focused on educating their children about other youth health-related issues such as alcohol and illicit drug use.

Parent responses show a significant gap in parent awareness of youth gambling behaviour and studies on youth gambling. It would appear that many parents either condone this behaviour or are unaware of their child's gambling behaviours. Parents report their level of concern about their child's participation in gambling activities spikes when money is exchanged.

While the majority of parents report that their child has brought home educational material from school about sexual education, drug use and violence in schools, 85% of parents report their child has not brought home any educational or prevention material from school about gambling. With only 17% of parents usually having conversations with their child about gambling issues and 15% of parents reporting their child has brought home information from their school about gambling, it appears that less than two out of 10 teens have received any guidance and information about gambling-related issues.

A key theme that emerged throughout this research is the significant gender difference in parental attitudes. In general, mothers are more concerned about all types of youth-related risky behaviours and report more often engaging in conversations with their child about multiple issues. Furthermore, when asked if various stimuli would prompt them to have a conversation with their child about gambling, mothers were significantly more likely to be in agreement.

OPGRC CREATES SYNOPSES OF PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

The Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre (OPGRC) has undertaken to create one-page synopses of gambling research articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

The objective of the synopsis project is to provide ready access to the gambling research literature for researchers, practitioners, policy makers, government agencies, and OPGRC website users. Each synopsis will be one page in length and will contain detail regarding the articles' purposes, methodologies, key results, limitations, and conclusions. Each synopsis will be communicated at a level for those who do not have a research background. These synopses will be posted with a flexible search function allowing easy access to gambling research. The synopses will allow users to quickly determine whether they should read the full published article.

In the first stage of the project, synopses are being completed of gambling research articles that have appeared in peer-reviewed journals since 2004. The journals include the top tier, high-impact-factor journals, the gambling specialty journals as well as other peer-reviewed journals.

OPGRC staff consulted with several senior problem gambling researchers on the usefulness of the project and the design and organization of the synopses. Accordingly, the synopses will be organized by topic (e.g., prevention, treatment, screening/evaluation, risk factors, demographics, prevention) on the OPGRC website. Author-derived keywords will also be electronically attached to each synopsis, such that keywords and subject categories can serve as online search prompts. The resource will be user-friendly and the research officer at OPGRC will manage synopsis enquires. In addition, where possible, each synopsis will be linked to a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) that will link the synopsis with the webpage that provides instruction for complete article access.

Once the synopses are posted on the OPGRC website, experienced researchers in the field will be invited to comment on the research studies' potential implications for government agencies, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. Any commentaries provided by these researchers will be posted with the associated synopsis on the website through an RSS feed. OPGRC website users will also be allowed to insert comments regarding synopses using the RSS feed.

FOR PROBLEM GAMBLERS MONEY PROVIDES PSYCHOLOGICAL SATISFACTION RATHER THAN MATERIAL BENEFITS

Problem gamblers are motivated by the desire to win money to enhance their self-image and confidence in an attempt to boost their egos and meet narcissistic demands, concludes a new study which analyses the differences in attitudes toward money between subgroups of gamblers.

Conducted by Alex Blaszczynski and Lia Nower of the University of Sydney's Gambling Research Unit, the study addresses the issue of whether the initial motivation to gamble differs for recreational compared to problem gamblers, and whether differences in attitudes toward money (and its presumed effect on financial security, self-esteem and well being) play a role in the transition from recreational to problem gambling.

The potential to win money is the core feature and primary factor underlying the capacity of gambling to generate excitement and arousal. Given that money (winning) is a primary motivator for gambling, it is surprising that no studies have investigated differences in attitudes and perceptions to money and its perceived value among different sub-sets of gamblers or the relationship between such attitudes to problem gambling.

In gambling, money acts as an incentive and a second-order reinforcer. The acquisition of money is pursued not because of its intrinsic value as an object (piece of paper or metal object) but

rather for what it represents, that is, an opportunity to purchase desired goods and services. According to the Tool Theory of Money¹, money represents an instrumental “means to an end”, that is, the incentive to gamble is driven by the motive to obtain money to purchase things.

It is puzzling therefore, to observe that problem gamblers fail to use gambling-acquired funds to purchase goods and services but re-direct it into further gambling. Thus, gambling appears to be the product “purchased” (secondary reinforcer). The excitement of winning appears to be the primary reinforcing agent and not the fact that it represents an opportunity to purchase something of value at a later time.

An alternative explanation is the Drug Theory of Money. According to Lea and Webley, money is a powerful motivator at the cognitive level partly because it has the capacity “to mimic the neural, behavioural, or psychological action of some other natural incentive”. They refer to a number of studies in the field of neuro-economics in which brain imaging methodologies have shown that specific brain regions are activated by money-related stimuli and that money incentives stimulate cortical reward pathways. This theory argues that there is some inherent property of money that is intrinsically rewarding and that the incentive to gamble is linked to the stimulation of reward centres of the brain rather than to a motivation of personal economic gain.

Accordingly, the aim of this study was to conduct an exploratory evaluation of attitudinal differences toward money held by gamblers and problem gamblers, to evaluate the potential relevance of attitudes to smart card-based technologies and to explore the relevance of the Tool Theory and Drug Theory of Money in relation to gambling.

A sample of 127 patrons attending four venues in the Brisbane metropolitan region agreed to participate in the study. A battery of questionnaires assessing attitudes to money, the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) to assess problem gambling status, and a brief questionnaire designed to elicit attitudes to smart card technologies were administered to patrons in the gaming area of venues.

The following findings were obtained:

- Approximately 15% of the participants met criteria for problem gambling on the CPGI.
- Men (74%) were overrepresented in the sample.
- There were no significant gender or age differences between the various CPGI subcategories of gamblers: non-problem, low-risk, moderate-risk and problem gamblers.
- The median expenditure reported by participants was \$20 with an average of \$71 per session.
- Non-problem gamblers gambled significantly less amounts (\$32) over three sessions per month compared to problem gamblers who spent \$185 over seven sessions per month.
- Moderate and problem gamblers reported a preference for electronic gaming machine play and betting on horses while non-problem gamblers indicated lotteries as their preferred form.
- Compared to non-problem gamblers, moderate and problem gamblers reported a greater degree of motivation to play electronic gaming machines for purposes of excitement/entertainment, income generation and emotional escape.
- Problem gamblers were less likely to endorse any form of pre-commitment or limit setting prior to play.
- Problem gamblers compared to non-problem gamblers were more likely to report a preference to allow the situation to dictate how much they would spend gambling based on the outcome of each session.
- Low-risk gamblers were more likely to set and adhere to limits established prior to commencement of sessions.
- Problem gamblers expressed a strong reticence to the use of smart cards unless there were options available to “top up” or access supplementary cards during sessions of play.
- In general, women were less likely to endorse the use of smart cards.
- Problem gamblers were more likely to view money as a symbol of power, prestige and success rather than a medium through which they could acquire material benefits.
- Problem gamblers were more anxious about money but not about having sufficient money to meet their needs suggesting psychological factors rather than acquiring wealth play an instrumental role in motivating problem gamblers.
- The data supported the Drug Theory of Money in the sense that attitudes to money reflected power, prestige, fantasies of wealth and influence as important reinforcing elements associated with gambling.

In summary, it was concluded that attitudes to money revealed that problem gamblers are motivated by the desire to win money to enhance their self-image and confidence in an attempt to boost their egos and meet narcissistic demands. Electronic gaming machine problem gamblers appear to seek reinforcing psychological rewards rather than material goods and services that money can offer.

This adds a new dimension to understanding the aetiology of electronic gaming machine problem gambling that complements the cognitive belief schemas, behavioural learning and addiction models of gambling: that is, attitudes to money represent a self-gratifying desire for power, prestige and satisfaction of personal needs related to self-image and fantasies of wealth that motivates the gambler

¹ Lea, S. & Webley, P. (2006). Money as tool, money as drug: the biological psychology of a strong incentive. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 29

to persist in the face of adverse consequences. While winning money represents the core of gambling, for problem gamblers money provides psychological satisfaction rather than material benefits. The findings apply to electronic gaming machines but may differ for lottery players where winning large prizes for minimal outlay may be more consistent with the Tool Theory of Money.

The full report may be accessed at –

<http://www.olgr.qld.gov.au/resources/responsibleGamblingDocuments/RGRGPFinalReportAttitudesToMoney.pdf>

SINGAPORE OUTLINES CASINOS EXCLUSION POLICY

Singapore's National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) will soon be sending out letters to over 28 000 people barring them from the two casinos presently under construction and due to open in early 2010. The majority are undischarged bankrupts while the rest are recipients of public financial assistance.

The NCPG said the 28 661 individuals placed on the exclusion list will not be allowed to step into the casinos at Marina Bay Sands and Resorts World at Sentosa. Individuals can also check on a secure website whether they are among those who are banned, said the council, which was established to help mitigate any social fallout spawned by the opening of Singapore's first casinos.

Singapore is the first country to automatically bar this group of people, under what are termed "Third-Party Exclusion Orders".

Problem gamblers may also seek to exclude themselves from the casinos, and in the one month since applications were opened, 56 have done so. Applications may also be made by family members and so far, 19 exclusion orders have been issued.

The exclusion orders were issued by the NCPG, but it is the casinos that will have to enforce the rule. And if they don't, they face potentially heavy penalties. The Casino Regulatory Authority said it was a condition of a gaming licence that those barred from casinos not be allowed in. Should it happen, the casino will be given two weeks to explain why disciplinary action should not be taken. A letter of censure will be sent out, and if changes are not made, the casino may lose its licence or be fined up to S\$1 million.

Both casinos said they are working closely with the authorities to ensure no one slips through. Marina Bay Sands added that checks will be made at the door, where Singapore citizens and permanent residents will be required to pay US\$71.6 before entering the casinos.

It is notable that the gambler in question will not be criminalised. That is because such a move will not help the addict or his family, said the NCPG.

The council has also indicated it may in the future allow voluntary welfare organisations to nominate problem gamblers for exclusion.

Singapore in 2005 lifted a long-standing ban on casinos in a bid to boost tourism revenue amid tougher competition from regional rivals, but put in place a raft of restrictions to address public concern over gaming-related social ills. The casinos, one built by Las Vegas Sands and the other by Malaysia's Genting Group, will include a theme park, convention and hotel facilities, retail sections and restaurants.

Channel NewsAsia
16 December, 2009

SWEDISH REPORT REVIEWS SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH INTO GAMBLING

A new Swedish report reviews the literature in social science research on gambling, in an attempt to provide an alternative to previous gambling research which has generally relied on medical concepts and a medical perspective on gambling as a chronic and progressive illness.

The report's stated objective is to summarise what the literature says about the motives people have for gambling and the factors that influence their degree of involvement in gambling.

Commissioned by the Swedish National Institute of Public Health as a preliminary step to the data-collection phase of the Swedish Longitudinal Gambling Study, the report - *Gambling motivation and involvement: A review of social science research* - cites 434 works describing a variety of research approaches and discussing their usefulness for gambling research.

The report was written by social anthropologist Dr Per Binde of the Centre for Public Sector Research at Gothenburg University.

The report says that most previous gambling research relies on medical concepts of problem gambling as a pathology. This review focuses on the social, economic and cultural aspects of gambling rather than perceiving it as a progressive and irreversible disease in an individual. It thus excludes

biological, psychiatric and psychological research on gambling, including problem gambling prevalence studies.

The section on the sociological approach to gambling research deals with structural functionalism, social frustration and escape theories, gambling as social reward, subculture studies and geographical analyses. From the perspective of structural functionalism, gambling is regarded as a mechanism which can help reduce tension in society. By keeping hopes for betterment alive, gambling can reduce some of the frustration among segments of the population and avoid conflict. It is uncontroversial to claim that people gamble to escape from everyday life. Social frustration and escape theory can however also shed light on what factors push the gambler away from ordinary life and pull him or her towards gambling. From the perspective of social rewards, gambling can be regarded as a social contest, but also as something that relates to togetherness and conviviality.

Subculture studies perceive gambling environments as subcultures with specific and complex cultural codes. It is concluded that very high gambling involvement, resulting in huge monetary losses and personal problems, can be explained by social factors rather than individual pathology. Within geographical analyses the relations between the availability of gambling and socio-economic variables in geographical space are investigated. Research from New Zealand and the USA has shown that gambling opportunities are more common in deprived areas and that people living in a neighbourhood close to a gambling venue have a significantly higher risk of having gambling problems.

The section on economic approaches to gambling research deals with a wide range of different perspectives, beginning with a mathematical paradox related to coin tossing in 1728, and ending with modern economic theories on betting markets with parallels to financial markets. The question of why rational people chose to gamble remained unsolved in economics for more than 200 years. In 1948 Milton Friedman and Leonard Savage came up with a widely accepted solution, relying on the assumption that the marginal utility of wealth does not diminish uniformly. Gambling can then be explained as rational in a socio-economic setting where the winning of a substantial sum offers the winner a qualitative social advancement - for instance from working class to middle class.

A more contemporary approach is the process utility of gambling, where it is recognized that gambling has a utility value in itself. This approach has been used in studies of lottery tickets sales and betting on horse races and baseball games, and also underlies virtually all modern studies of gambling as a consumer and leisure choice. In studies on gambling as consumer choice, an issue often investigated is price elasticity of demand. Some studies suggest that the consumption of lotteries and gambling on slot machines in mature markets follow a consumption pattern similar to that of other consumer products. Unlike consumer studies, there is often a focus on health aspects of behaviour in leisure studies. The motives revealed in these studies are: having fun, meeting other people, seeing new places (casinos), excitement, the chance of winning, the intellectual stimulation of betting games, and having a break from the routine of daily life.

The section on cultural approaches on gambling research also deals with a wide range of different perspectives. The anthropological and ethnological literature on play focuses on aspects such as stimulation of intellectual or physical development, learning of social skills, strengthening of group cohesion, promoting well-being and health through excitement, and entertainment. It is concluded that modern forms of game studies are likely to become of increasing relevance to problem gambling studies if hybrid forms of gambling and video/computer games become popular.

In many traditional and non-Western cultures, gambling, religion and magical practices merge. Magical thinking is also commonly regarded as associated with gambling problems in modern Western societies. Opinion is however, divided regarding a contemporary relation between gambling, religion and existential matters. A recent Swedish study found that by providing a discursive realm for existential and moral issues, narratives of jackpot wins to some extent fill a void left by the decline of traditional religion and folklore. A quantitative cross-cultural analysis of gambling shows that the presence of money and the presence of socioeconomic inequality co-vary with the presence and intensity of gambling. Studies on ethnic minorities often focus on involvement in gambling among problem gamblers while studies on the elderly also explore positive consequences of gambling.

The report concludes by presenting some comprehensive models, dividing these into motivational and involvement models. Some models aim at explaining gambling behaviour from an individual perspective and some from a societal perspective. The research reviewed shows that gambling is a multidimensional phenomenon, which can be studied from many perspectives. A straightforward approach for using the knowledge gained by social, economic and cultural studies in problem gambling research is to view motivational and involvement factors as potential risk factors for problem gambling. The author also notes that a public health approach to conceptualize and study problem gambling has the potential to bridge the gap between the medical and socio-cultural paradigms.

The full report may be accessed at -

<http://www.responsiblegambling.org/articles/binde-gambling-motivation-review.pdf>

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

- 24 - 26 February 2010, Auckland, New Zealand
2010 International Gambling Conference. The Implications of Technology for Policy, Practice and Research

This conference will examine new and emerging technologies and their implications for the future shape of gambling and the groups of people who might be targeted or impacted. The conference will also consider the enhancing measures needed to prevent and reduce harms associated with current and emerging forms of gambling. Such measures include government policy and regulation, industry practice, public education, culturally appropriate education, community engagement and advocacy, indigenous responses reflective of indigenous communities, prevention, early and brief interventions, treatment and rehabilitation. Professor Robert Williams from the University of Lethbridge in Canada will give a keynote address around internet gambling and will also convene a full day workshop on prevention of problem gambling. Professor David Korn from the University of Toronto will give a keynote address on public health in relation to gambling.

<http://www.pgfnz.org.nz/International-Gambling-Conference-2010/0,2752,15232,00.html>

- 9 – 10 April 2010, Banff, Alberta Canada
Alberta Gaming Research Institute's 9th Annual Conference

The conference theme is "Emergent Clinical Issues in Problem Gambling." Presentation and discussion topics will include competing perspectives on etiology and conceptualization of gambling disorders. Research into problem gambling issues was begun to develop an evidence-base for understanding what treatments work. But how do we make these treatments work even better? How can we maximize the number of people who are exposed to these treatments? How can we "sell" our treatments to those that could benefit? What new approaches are worthy of further investigation? What are the most effective knowledge transfer approaches - getting research to influence policy and practice?

http://www.abgaminginstitute.ualberta.ca/2010_conference.cfm

- 13 – 16 April 2010, Toronto, Canada
Responsible Gambling Council's Discovery 2010 Conference

Themes for panel discussions will include: • Genetic Theories and Problem Gambling – What Do We Know Now? • Pay Day Loans/Bookies/Bankruptcies – Looking for Prevention and Early Intervention Opportunities Before the Crisis Hits • Poker – Is It Really a Game of Skill? • Gambling and the Aboriginal Experience – Has It Helped or Hurt? • Are New Slot Machine Features Truly Game Changers? What Are the Implications for Research, Prevention and Treatment? • Fantasy Leagues – Are They Betting on More Female Gamblers? • A Tough Economy – What Are the Impacts on Problem Gamblers? • Game Design – Innovative or Predatory? • Is Legalized Online Gaming in North America Inevitable?

<http://www.responsiblegambling.org/en/programs/events-upcoming.cfm>

- 9 – 12 June 2010, Portland, Oregon, USA
National Council on Problem Gambling 24th National Annual Conference

- 10 – 12 June 2010, Portland, Oregon
National Council on Problem Gambling 24th National Annual Conference

<http://www.ncpgambling.org:80/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3824>

- 14 – 17 September 2010, Vienna, Austria
8th European Conference on Gambling Studies and Policy Issues

BRIEFER BRIEFINGS

WHY DON'T PROBLEM GAMBLERS SEEK HELP?

Australia's Southern Cross University is seeking to identify the reasons why up to 90 percent of problem gamblers don't seek out professional help for their addiction.

With about 400 000 moderate to severe problem gamblers in Australia, Dr John Haw, a research fellow with the University's Centre for Gambling Education and Research, in the School of Tourism and Hospitality Management, said this research would help demystify the complex reasons why problem gamblers typically don't get help until they have reached 'rock bottom' and hopefully point the way to strategies that may encourage them to seek help earlier.

For this study Dr Haw and Professor Nerilee Hing will be interviewing problem gamblers at

three stages of their addiction – those who gamble regularly and are contemplating help; those who have just made the first call for help by dialling the National Gambling Helpline; and those who are actively undergoing counselling for gambling. They are also interviewing recovered problem gamblers.

Problem gamblers are 'those who have difficulty in limiting the time and/or money spent gambling, leading to adverse consequences for themselves and/or the community', Dr Haw said, and they comprise over two percent of the population.

"In general these people don't seek counselling or any other kind of formal help until they are absolutely broke, have amassed a large debt and perhaps can't even afford to pay for food or their accommodation," Dr Haw said.

"When they feel they just can't sink any lower, they may try and get help. Often they don't seek help earlier because they may be in denial that they have a problem, or they may feel shame or guilt. They might have stolen or misappropriated money to gamble, having had a belief that they could gamble themselves out of debt or solve the problem themselves.

"But when all that fails, they may ultimately pick up the phone and call a counselling service for help. I hope this research can lead to some ways in which we can catch people earlier and let people know there's free help available to them, even before they start experiencing harm from their gambling."

Dr Haw is seeking to interview many hundreds of problem gamblers for his study – especially those with an Indigenous background or those from culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

The two-year research project has been funded by a \$287 000 grant from Gambling Research Australia.

GAMBLER LOSES CASE AGAINST AUSTRALIAN CASINO

A compulsive gambler who wagered close to 1.4 billion US dollars during a 16-month betting spree lost his lawsuit against Australia's largest casino when a judge ruled he was not exploited.

High-flying property developer Harry Kakavas claimed Melbourne's Crown Casino facilitated his pathological betting, despite knowing he had a problem that was so severe he had already been banned from one establishment.

Kakavas, 42, who police had barred from entering Sydney's Star City casino, had sued Crown, claiming it "lured" him with gifts and free flights on a private jet to bring him to Melbourne.

But Judge David Harper ruled the casino had not preyed on the baccarat-loving Kakavas and ordered him to repay one million dollars in debts.

"He was not a person so helplessly entrapped by his love of cards that he found it impossible to resist Crown's attentions," Harper told the Victorian Supreme Court.

"He was the highest of this country's high rollers," added the judge. "He enjoyed some spectacular wins. In the end, however, he lost all he won, and more."

Harper said Kakavas never suggested he was incapable of maintaining his high-roller status and had been unable to produce evidence that the casino had conspired to exploit him.

"Crown had no conception of Mr Kakavas as suffering from any kind of relevant disadvantage," the judge said.

Kakavas was a prolific gambler who had tried his luck in Las Vegas, Hong Kong, Macau and the Bahamas, the judge said.

His lawyers had argued the Sydney exclusion order should have been enforced Australia-wide by casino authorities, including Crown.

Instead, his defence said, the Melbourne casino knowingly offered to fly him to the city on at least 14 occasions and left him gift boxes of 50 000 dollars in "lucky money" on the private jet to help him gamble.

During a period of 16 months in 2005 and 2006 Kakavas allegedly turned over 1.5 billion dollars and was allowed to bet single hands of 300 000 dollars.

He was eventually banned from Crown after blowing more than two million dollars on the card tables in just 43 minutes in August 2006.

Kakavas lost a total of 30 million dollars, and sued Crown and its executives for about 20.5 million.

*AFP
8 December, 2009*

SVENSKA SPEL UPS MINIMUM GAMBLING AGE AND FUNDS PROBLEM GAMBLING

Sweden's Svenska Spel is looking to raise the bar on responsible gambling by increasing the national minimum age for lottery ticket sales in Sweden to 18 years, as well as increasing its investment in problem gambling support.

Coming into effect in 2010, the new age limit for lottery tickets means that all of Svenska Spel's products across all sales channels will have a minimum age limit of at least eighteen years old.

"Corporate social responsibility is an important cornerstone of Svenska Spel's business," said Meta Persdotter, CEO of Svenska Spel. "Our ambition is to minimise underage gambling wherever it may occur. To do so we must also be clear and consistent in our view of gaming and age limits, particularly towards our business partners and customers."

Svenska Spel currently has a minimum age limit of 18 years for Oddset games as well as SvenskaSpel.se and Vegas gaming machines, while players at Casino Cosmopol must be a minimum of 20 years old.

The company said that the minimum age limit would make both handling and age verification in retail outlets much easier.

"For some time, we have conducted a dialogue with representatives of the service and convenience goods trade, and this decision is in line with the industry's own demands for a uniform age limit and that the handling of games and lotteries follow the rules that apply for other goods with age limits," said Håkan Sjöstrand, Business Area Manager at Svenska Spel.

"This decision is positive for two reasons – on one hand, shop employees need not think about different age limits for different products, and on the other, it signals a shared view that all gambling can potentially lead to problems and that there should therefore also be an age limit

on lottery tickets," said Bengt Hedlund, President of the trade association, Svensk Servicehandel & Fast Food.

The company has also pledged to invest SEK3 million in order to ensure the continuation of support for problem gamblers.

The investment will mean that two programmes in the country, a 24 hour gambling helpline and an internet based self help programme, will continue to support problem gamblers in 2010.

The company said however that as a gaming operator, it was not its task to directly finance the treatment of people with gambling problems and urged the government to make a clear distinction between the preventative measures which fall under the remit of gaming operators and the treatment of problem gamblers by the authorities.

"It feels good to be able to save two well functioning projects under a transition period until the authorities have decided who should fund them," said Margareta Winberg, Chair of Svenska Spel.

"Today it is not our task to finance the treatment of people with gambling problems, but on the other hand, we must prioritise the consideration of social protection."

Ms. Winberg said there was need for a clear demarcation between what is preventive measures and what is care and treatment of gambling addiction, and where the responsibility lies between different authorities versus Svenska Spel as a gambling company.

Gaming Intelligence
11 December, 2009

STUDY SHOWS GAMBLING ADDICTION MAY BE TREATED WITH MEDICINE

Over recent years, substance and drug addiction had begun being treated through the use of medications. These medications, designed to make the users more inhibited and reduce the urge to use, have recently been researched for their link to problem gambling. The annual meeting of the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology showed research that found some of these drugs help to control pathological gambling.

The study, which was so extensive as to break down problem gamblers into two classes, had examined three different medication studies. Each study held between seventy and one hundred participants, and was led by Dr. Jon Grant. Grant and his team, at the University of Minnesota, studied the "cognition to identify what motivates extreme types of gambling behaviour."

The two classes of gamblers included first those that were driven by urge. The urge-driven gamblers were those who had stated that they gamble when they lose control of their desires. The other type, which is arguably more extreme, are those who cannot contain their habit even when they do not feel the urge to do so.

The first class, those driven by the urge, responded well to the treatments that block certain receptors in the brain. These receptors are those for the neurotransmitter glutamate. Family history was also shown to be significant with helping this group of people. Opioid blockers were also effective in decreasing the urge to use substances, particularly when there was a family history for those with addiction.

Those who have trouble controlling their habits, even with a lack of desire, responded well to a drug that would effect the enzyme catechol-O-methyl-transferase, or COMT. This enzyme played a significant role in certain brain functions. Decreasing this function can make a problem gambler's desire less severe.

USA Online Gambling News

FACEBOOK BANS ONLINE GAMBLING ADVERTISEMENTS

The world's largest social networking group has announced that it will be phasing out online gambling advertisements on its site. Facebook announced they are taking the necessary steps to remove gambling advertising from all areas of their social network.

Facebook's ban includes all forms of online gambling advertising including: bingo, sportsbooks, poker and casinos. By barring online gambling ads, Facebook is essentially putting this form of entertainment in the same category as firearms and tobacco which are also not allowed to be marketed on the site. Facebook is arguing that with a young customer base, it needs to draw a line when it comes to advertising and online gambling is an easy mark.

Under the Prohibited Content section of Facebook's "Advertising Guidelines", section 5 states: "Gambling, including without limitation, any online casino, sports books, bingo, or poker without authorization from Facebook".

Other forbidden content includes inflammatory religious content, three separate categories for adult, uncertified pharmaceuticals and contests or sweepstakes. All in all, 20 categories are being censored on Facebook. In addition to gambling ads, banned topics include spy cameras, politically religious agendas, pyramid schemes, and content that advocates against any organization, person, or group of people, with the exception of candidates running for public office.

Even though the site is blocking gambling advertisements, businesses including online casino, sportsbook and poker operators can still create groups, fan pages and Facebook pages to connect with fans and players.

Yogonet.com
30 December, 2009