

29,000 Ontario students report problem gambling -- drug use and suicide a concern

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A new study from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) has found that 29,000 Ontario students from grades 7-12 report behaviours indicating that they are gambling problematically. The study also found that more than two-thirds of these students reported problems with substance use and/or alcohol use, and 25% reported a suicide attempt in the past year.

The Ontario Youth Gambling Report looked at self-report data from over 9,000 [students](#) across Ontario to monitor trends and areas for concern regarding gambling. The most commonly reported activities among students were betting on card games and purchase of lottery tickets, while the least common were internet gambling and gambling in casinos.

"Nearly half of Ontario students report participating in at least one form of gambling, and almost 3% scored 2 or more on a validated screening instrument, indicating that they have a gambling problem. This represents about 29,000 students in Ontario," said, Dr. Robert Mann, Senior Scientist in CAMH's Social and Epidemiological Research Department and Principal Investigator on the study. "We also found that students who reported problem gambling indicators also reported high rates of elevated [psychological distress](#) and other potentially dangerous behaviours."

Also of great concern were the mental health indicators in these students. In addition to high rates of depressive symptoms and low self-esteem,

the problem gambling students were about 18 times more likely to report a [suicide attempt](#) in the past year than other students.

Delinquent behaviours were also common in these students including theft and selling drugs. The problem gambling group was 11 times more likely to report involvement in gang fights and carrying a handgun, and were 20 times more likely to report selling drugs other than cannabis.

"We know that adolescents who have problems with gambling, gaming and internet use usually have underlying and sometimes undiagnosed mental health problems," said Dr. Bruce Ballon, Head of CAMH's Adolescent Clinical and Educational Services (A.C.E.S.) for Problem Gambling, Gaming and Internet Use. "Students, parents and teachers need more education about what to look for in youth and how to help. What this research tells us is that there are real harms associated with gambling which our public health and healthcare policies, education system and corporate citizens can't ignore."

CAMH's [Problem Gambling](#) Institute of Ontario (PGIO) has developed a ten lesson curriculum for teachers called Youth Making Choices: Gambling Prevention Program, which is aimed at helping students enhance coping skills, develop knowledge of probability and improve students' ability to recognize and avoid problematic behaviours associated with gambling.

"Our goal in developing this program was prevention," said Robert Murray, Manager at the PGIO. "Considering that 43% of Ontario students are already taking part in at least one gambling activity, it's important that parents and teachers are aware of what to look for so that youth who may be having problems can get help. Students also need to be armed with the knowledge to demystify gambling so that they know what the realities and dangers are."

More information: This curriculum can be integrated into the curriculum expectations of several intermediate and senior level courses in mathematics, social sciences and humanities, English, health and physical education. The curriculum is available now and can be downloaded at [www.problemgambling.ca/EN/Reso ...
thMakingChoices.aspx](http://www.problemgambling.ca/EN/Reso...thMakingChoices.aspx)

Provided by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

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