

*Executive Summary and Key Findings*

**Ontario Youth Gambling Report:**

**Data from the 2009 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health**

**Survey**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) is the longest ongoing school survey of adolescents in Canada, and the second longest in North America. The study has been conducted every two years since 1977. Between November 2008 and June 2009, 9,112 students (65% of selected students) in grades 7 to 12 from 47 school boards, 181 schools and 573 classes participated in the survey administered by the Institute for Social Research, York University. All data are based on self-reports derived from anonymous questionnaires administered in classrooms.

This report describes gambling activity and gambling problems among Ontario students in 2009, and also examines the relationship between gambling problems and substance use problems, mental health problems, and delinquent behaviours.

Gambling is common among Ontario adolescents, with 42.6% of students reporting involvement in at least one gambling behaviour in the past year. The most common gambling activities are cards and lottery tickets, and the least common are Internet gambling and casino gambling. Gambling increases with grade, and is more common among males than females. Multigambling (participating in 5 or more forms of gambling in the past year) is reported by 3.0% of students.

Problem gambling was defined as a positive response to 2 or more of the 6 problem areas identified on the reduced South Oaks Gambling Scale revised for Adolescents (SOGS-RA-reduced). Problem gambling was seen in 2.8% of the sample, and was more common among males than females. The results suggest that there are approximately 29,000 students across the province who are problem gamblers.

Problem gamblers were significantly more likely to report substance-related problems, mental health problems, and delinquency after controlling for age and sex. A total of 68.5% reported a substance use problem, and their odds of reporting these problems were 6 times higher than other students. Among mental health problems, suicidality seemed to be a particular concern. A quarter of the problem gambling group reported a suicide attempt in the past year, and they were about 18 times more likely to report a suicide attempt than other students. Delinquent behaviours were also common, including theft and selling drugs. The problem gambling group was 11 times more likely report involvement in gang fights and carrying a handgun, and 20 times more likely to report selling drugs other than cannabis.

While gambling is common among Ontario students and the proportion of students who can be considered problem gamblers is relatively small, the problem gambling group demonstrates similar problems, namely substance abuse, mental health, and delinquency/criminal problems that are seen among adult problem gamblers. Successful measures to prevent gambling problems among adolescents may therefore also prevent serious problems in the adult population.

## Key Findings

### 3.1.1 Individual Gambling Activities in 2009 (Grades 7 to 12):

- ❑ Among all students, the 11 activities ranked in the following manner, from most to least prevalent:  
  

|                              |       |
|------------------------------|-------|
| Cards .....                  | 20.2% |
| Gambled in other ways ....   | 18.8% |
| Lottery tickets .....        | 15.5% |
| Sports pools .....           | 12.6% |
| Bingo.....                   | 7.2%  |
| Dice.....                    | 6.1%  |
| Sports lottery tickets ..... | 5.1%  |
| Video gambling machines..    | 3.9%  |
| Any Internet gambling .....  | 3.0%  |
| Internet poker.....          | 2.7%  |
| Ontario casinos .....        | 1.3%  |
- ❑ Eight of the 11 gambling activities significantly vary by sex. Males are significantly more likely than females to: play cards for money; play dice for money; bet in sports pools; buy sports lottery tickets; play video gambling machines or slots; bet over the Internet; bet at Internet poker; and to gamble in other ways not listed. The activities that do not differ by sex are playing bingo, buying lottery tickets, and betting in casinos.
- ❑ There are significant grade differences for 6 of the 11 gambling activities: playing cards, sports pools, sports lottery tickets, other lottery tickets, casino gambling, and playing dice. Generally, these activities increase with grade and peak in grade 12.
- ❑ Only two gambling activities significantly vary by region. Toronto students are least likely to gamble at sports pools compared with students in the other regions. Northern students and Western students are most likely to gamble at video gaming machines.

### 3.1.2 Any Gambling Activity in 2009

- ❑ Among all students, 42.6% (95% CI: 40.2%-45.0%) report at least 1 of 10 gambling activities during the past 12 months. This percentage represents about 452,000 students across Ontario.
- ❑ Males are more likely to report any gambling activity than females (50.5% vs 34.3%, respectively).

- ❑ There is variation by grade, with 12th-graders (56.0%) most likely to report any gambling activity.
- ❑ There are no significant differences among the regions.

### **3.1.3 Multi-Gambling Activity in 2009**

- ❑ Among all students, 3.0% (95% CI: 2.2%-4.0%) gambled at five or more activities during the past 12 months. This percentage represents about 32,000 students across Ontario.
- ❑ Males are more likely to report multi-gambling activity than females (4.5% vs 1.5%, respectively).
- ❑ Despite some variation among the grades regarding multi-gambling activity, these differences are not statistically significant.
- ❑ There are no significant differences among the regions.

## **3.2 Gambling Problems**

- ❑ Among only those indicating that they gambled in the past year, the majority (87%) report that the largest amount of money gambled was less than \$50. About 6% report gambling between \$50 and \$99; 2% report between \$100 and \$199; and another 5% report spending \$200 or more.
- ❑ Overall, 2.8% (95% CI: 2.0%-3.9%) of students have a gambling problem. This percentage represents about 29,000 Ontario students.
- ❑ Males are more likely than females to be at risk for a gambling problem (4.3% vs 1.2%, respectively).
- ❑ Although there is some variation among the grades regarding the likelihood of a gambling problem, these differences are not statistically significant.
- ❑ There is no significant variation by region.

### **Problem Gambling and Hazardous Drinking Behaviour in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, 20.8% (95% CI: 18.8%-22.9%) of students in grades 7 to 12 report drinking at a hazardous level. This represents approximately 211,000 students in grades 7 to 12 across Ontario.

- ❑ According to problem gambling status, 48% of problem gamblers report hazardous drinking behaviour versus only 20% of non-problem gamblers.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are 3 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report hazardous drinking behaviour.

#### **Problem Gambling and Drug Use Problems in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, 15.5% (95% CI: 14.2%-16.9%) of students report a drug use problem. This represents approximately 164,000 students in grades 7 to 12 across Ontario.
- ❑ According to problem gambling status, 46.5% of problem gamblers report a drug use problem versus approximately 14.8% of non-problem gamblers.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are 4 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report a drug use problem.

#### **Problem Gambling and Cannabis Dependence in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, 2.8% (95% CI: 2.2%-3.7%) of students report cannabis dependence. This represents approximately 29,000 students in grades 7 to 12 across Ontario.
- ❑ According to problem gambling status, 24% of problem gamblers report cannabis dependence versus 2.3% of non-problem gamblers.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are 11 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report cannabis dependence.

#### **Gambling Problems and any Substance Use Problem in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, 26% (95% CI: 23.4%-27.9%) of students have at least one substance use problem. This represents approximately 259,000 students in grades 7 to 12 across Ontario.
- ❑ Among those with a gambling problem, 68.5% have at least one substance use problem.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are approximately 6 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to have at least one substance use problem.

#### **Problem Gambling and Elevated Psychological Distress in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, elevated psychological distress is reported by 31.0% (95% CI: 29.1%-32.9%) of students. This represents about 327,000 Ontario students.
- ❑ According to problem gambling status, elevated psychological distress is reported by 61% of problem gamblers. Approximately 30% of non-problem gamblers report elevated psychological distress.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are approximately 4 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report elevated psychological distress.

#### **Problem Gambling and Low Self-Esteem in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, under one-in-ten (8.3%; 95% CI: 7.3%-9.5%) students indicate low self-esteem.
- ❑ Broken down by problem gambling status, only 7.8% of non-problem gamblers indicate low self-esteem while 28.8% of problem gamblers indicate low self-esteem.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are approximately 6 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to indicate low self-esteem.

#### **Problem Gambling and Depressive Symptoms in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, 16.4% of students felt sad often or always during the seven days before the survey; 12.8% felt lonely; 11.4% felt depressed; and 13.3% felt like crying often or always during the past seven days.
- ❑ About one-in-twenty (5.4%; 95% CI: 4.4%-6.6%) students report depressive symptoms. This represents about 56,000 Ontario students.
- ❑ According to problem gambling status, 14.7% of problem gamblers report depressive symptoms, while 5.2% of non-problem gamblers report depressive symptoms.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are approximately 5 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to indicate low self-esteem.

#### **Problem Gambling and Suicidality in 2009:**

- ❑ About 9.5% (95% CI: 8.3%-10.8%) of students reported that they had seriously considered suicide in the past year. This percentage represents about 99,000 Ontario

students. About 2.8% (95% CI: 2.2%-3.5%) of students report attempted suicide in the past year. This represents about 29,000 Ontario students.

- ❑ Approximately 26% of problem gamblers report seriously considering a suicide attempt during the past year, and one-quarter (25%) of all problem gambling students report a suicide attempt during the past year.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are 4 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to have seriously considered committing suicide, and are nearly 18 times more likely to report a suicide attempt.

### **3.5.1 Problem Gambling and Overall Delinquent Behaviour in 2009:**

- ❑ Overall, 10.7% (95% CI: 9.3%-12.2%) of students report delinquent behaviour (defined as 3 or more of 11 behaviours). This percentage represents approximately 113,000 students.
- ❑ 62.2% of problem gamblers report 3 or more delinquent behaviours during the past 12 months versus 9.7% of non-problem gamblers.
- ❑ After controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are 12.5 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report overall delinquent behaviour.

### **3.5.2 Problem Gambling and Non-Violent Delinquent Behaviour in 2009:**

- ❑ Among problem gamblers, the nine non-violent behaviours ranked in the following manner, from most to least prevalent:

|                                       |       |
|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Vandalism .....                       | 53.7% |
| Theft under \$50.....                 | 51.4% |
| Theft over \$50.....                  | 44.5% |
| Ran away from home .....              | 42.7% |
| Fire setting .....                    | 41.8% |
| Take car without consent .....        | 41.7% |
| Sell marijuana or hashish .....       | 31.1% |
| Sell drugs other than marijuana ..... | 29.2% |
| Break and enter .....                 | 24.7% |

- ❑ Problem gamblers are much more likely than non-problem gamblers to engage in all of these non-violent behaviours. Specifically, after controlling for the effects of sex and grade, problem gamblers are 5 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to

report selling marijuana and approximately 20 times more likely to sell drugs other than marijuana; problem gamblers are 5 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report stealing something worth \$50 or less, and are 14 times more likely to report stealing something worth \$50 or more; problem gamblers are 8 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report taking a car for a ride without permission, and 6 times more likely to report a break and entry during the past 12 months; problem gamblers are more than 9 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report running away from home during the past 12 months; problem gamblers are 3 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report fire setting, and are 7 times more likely to report vandalism .

### **3.5.3 Problem Gambling and Violent Delinquent Behaviour in 2009:**

- ❑ Among problem gamblers, the 4 violent behaviours ranked in the following manner, from most to least prevalent:

|                      |       |
|----------------------|-------|
| Assault.....         | 47.4% |
| Carry a weapon ..... | 31.8% |
| Gang fight .....     | 23.8% |
| Carry a handgun..... | 14.4% |

- ❑ Problem gamblers are much more likely than non-problem gamblers to engage in each of these violent behaviours. Specifically, after controlling for the effects of sex and age, problem gamblers are over 11 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to report participating in a gang fight or carrying a handgun; problem gamblers are 7 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to engage in assault; problem gamblers are almost 5 times more likely than non-problem gamblers to carry a weapon.