

An Examination of Lottery Ticket Purchases by Youth and Their Gambling Behaviour

A recent study conducted by Jennifer Felsher, Jeffrey Derevensky and Rina Gupta in our centre examined the differential gambling patterns of underage adolescents in order to identify the specific characteristics and determinants that influence the appeal of the lottery and their lottery playing behaviour.

Playing the lottery was found to be the most popular form of gambling among youth (N = 1,072, aged 10-18 years old) with 39% having reporting having played the lottery within the past week and 17% indicating doing so within the past month. Playing scratch tickets was found to be the most popular form of lottery product. More than half (65%) of youth who indicated having played lottery products reported that

they were able to purchase lottery tickets with little difficulty. Further, a third of underage adolescents reported going to the store specifically to purchase lottery tickets. Although the vast majority (90%) of participants indicated being aware of the legal age to purchase lottery tickets, half of the probable pathological and at-risk gamblers believed there should be no age requirement to purchase any form of lottery ticket.

Over a third of respondents reported that they were more likely to purchase a ticket they had seen advertised, clearly indicating that youth are not immune to lottery advertisements. Furthermore, the heavy promotion of lottery sales at convenience stores may have a special appeal for youth,

with the majority of youth reporting that they were more likely to purchase a ticket that is displayed at the checkout counter. Youth indicated that the most essential quality of a lottery ticket is that it is "fun," it provides entertainment, and it enhances their opportunity to "dream."

Lottery activities are the most popular gambling activity amongst youth for a number of reasons; they are relatively inexpensive, highly accessible, simple to play, they provide immediate reinforcement (particularly scratch tickets) and are widely advertised. We call upon the industry to help reinforce existing laws prohibiting underage youth from purchasing lottery tickets.

Canada's Crime Rates Increase

The Canadian Center for Justice Statistics reported a slight increase (1%) in Canada's crime rate in 2001, representing the first increase in a decade. A sharp increase in bail violations, public disturbances and car thefts were primarily responsible for the overall rise in criminal code violations. Impaired driving increased for the first time in nearly 20 years and drug offenses were up for the eighth consecutive year. The three prairie provinces (Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta) recorded the largest increases in provincial crime rates, while the crime rate fell in only three provinces (Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador).

The crime rate among youth also rose slightly for the second straight year, after decreasing from 1991 to 1999. The violent crime rate for youth increased by 2%, its second consecutive gain, robbery rates climbed by 10%, and youth charged with motor vehicle theft rose 7%. However, not all areas of crime among youth saw increases. Youth property crime rates dropped by 3%, breaking and entering fell by 6% and homicide levels among youth were the lowest level reported in over 30 years.

Interestingly, police reported data showed that 16 is the peak age of offending among all youths and adults for both violent and property crimes.

While increases in crime rates are disturbing, it should be noted that crime rates have dropped over the past decade and this year's slight increase may represent the stabilization of criminal activity in Canada.