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Québec Survey on Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs, and Gambling in High School Students, 2006: Highlights

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The Quebec survey is conducted by the *Institut de la statistique du Québec* every two years. Its main goal is to produce, on a biannual basis, an accurate portrait of trends in smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use and gambling behaviours among Québec high school students from Secondary 1 through 5. For the first time since 1998, poker behavior was investigated. The data of this fifth edition of the survey was collected in the autumn of 2006 from 4,571 students in 173 classes among 149 high schools across the province. The results were made public in the autumn of 2007.

In this spring edition of our Newsflash, we offer a glimpse of the highlights as related to gambling behaviors, with a brief exposé of the findings for tobacco, alcohol and drug use.

The proportion of cigarette smokers in high school decreased from 19% in 2004 to 15% in 2006 particularly among students in Secondary 1 (12% vs. 7%), Secondary 2 (18% vs. 11%) and Secondary 5 (30% vs. 22%). A higher proportion of girls were smokers, compared to boys (17% vs. 13%). However, cigar smoking has increased from 18% in 2004 to 22% in 2006, with the majority of cigar and cigarillo smokers being daily, occasional or experimental smokers (80% respectively).

There was a drop in alcohol consumption (in a 12-month period) between 2004 (63%) and 2006 (60%). This was especially observed in Secondary 1 and 2 and among female experimental drinkers (11% to 8%).

Drug use among high school students in a 12-month period decreased between 2004 and 2006 (36% to 30%). This was observed in all grades of high school, except in Secondary 3. The decrease applied to both boys (36% to 29%) and girls (37% to 31%), and in all categories of drugs. According to the criteria of the DEP-ADO scale, the vast majority (87%) of high school students in Québec did not have an at-risk problem of alcohol consumption or drug use (green light). However, 7% presented problems with alcohol or drugs for which front-line intervention would be recommended and a similar proportion of students presented serious problems with drugs and alcohol for which professional intervention would be recommended.

Gambling behaviors

Between 2004 and 2006, the proportion of students who participated at least once in gambling, including lotteries, in a 12-month period decreased from 45% to 36%. The gambling rate was higher among boys than girls (41% vs. 31%). This decrease particularly applied to students from Secondary 1 to Secondary 4 and to both boys (48% in 2004) and girls (43% in 2004). In 2006, 30% of high school students were occasional gamblers and 6% habitual gamblers.

Profile of high school gamblers

The gambling rate was higher amongst students:

➤ who had a paid job outside the home, compared to those who did not (40% vs. 31%).

➤ who had a weekly allowance larger than 10\$, compared those who had less than 10\$ as a weekly allowance (24% among students whose weekly allowance was \$10.00 or less, increasing as follows: 39%, \$11.00 –\$30.00; 42%, \$31.00–\$50.00, and 51%, \$51.00 or more).

➤ whose language spoken at home was other than French, compared to those whose language spoken at home was French (42% vs. 35%).

➤ in a single-parent family, compared to those in a two-parent family (41% vs. 35%).

➤ whose marks were below the class average, compared to those whose marks were above the class average (44% vs. 35%).

Popularity of poker

In the 12 months preceding the survey, approximately 2.5% of high school students reported having played Internet poker, 15% had played poker for money with friends and 4.7% had taken part in poker games with other people. A higher proportion of boys played Internet poker compared to girls (3.9% vs. 1.1%). The same applied to poker games with friends (21% vs. 9%) and poker games organized by other people (7% vs. 2.6%). The majority of players gambled on an occasional basis in terms of all the forms of gambling. However, all proportions combined, habitual gamblers were more likely to participate in diverse forms of playing poker. Approximately 20% of habitual gamblers reported having played Internet poker compared to 4.7% of

occasional gamblers, 62% had played poker with friends (vs. 38% of occasional gamblers), and 32% had played in poker games organized by other people (vs. 10% of occasional gamblers).

Prevalence of problematic gambling

According to the criteria of the gambling measurement scale (DSM-IV Youth), approximately 3.8% of high school students were at risk of developing a gambling addiction and 2.1% were considered potential pathological gamblers. Only the proportion of gamblers at risk showed a decrease between 2004 and 2006 (6% to 3.8%), whereas the proportion of probable pathological gamblers remained stable from 2002 to 2006, even though the general prevalence of gambling participation has fallen since 2002.

Socio-economic factors contribution

In gambling participation, smoking,

drug and alcohol use, there were socio-economic variables that were found to increase the risks of engaging in those behaviors, namely having a paid job outside of the home, the size of the weekly allowance, language spoken at home, family structure, friends' attitude, and perception of grades (in French or English, according to which language the questionnaire had been completed).

Conclusion

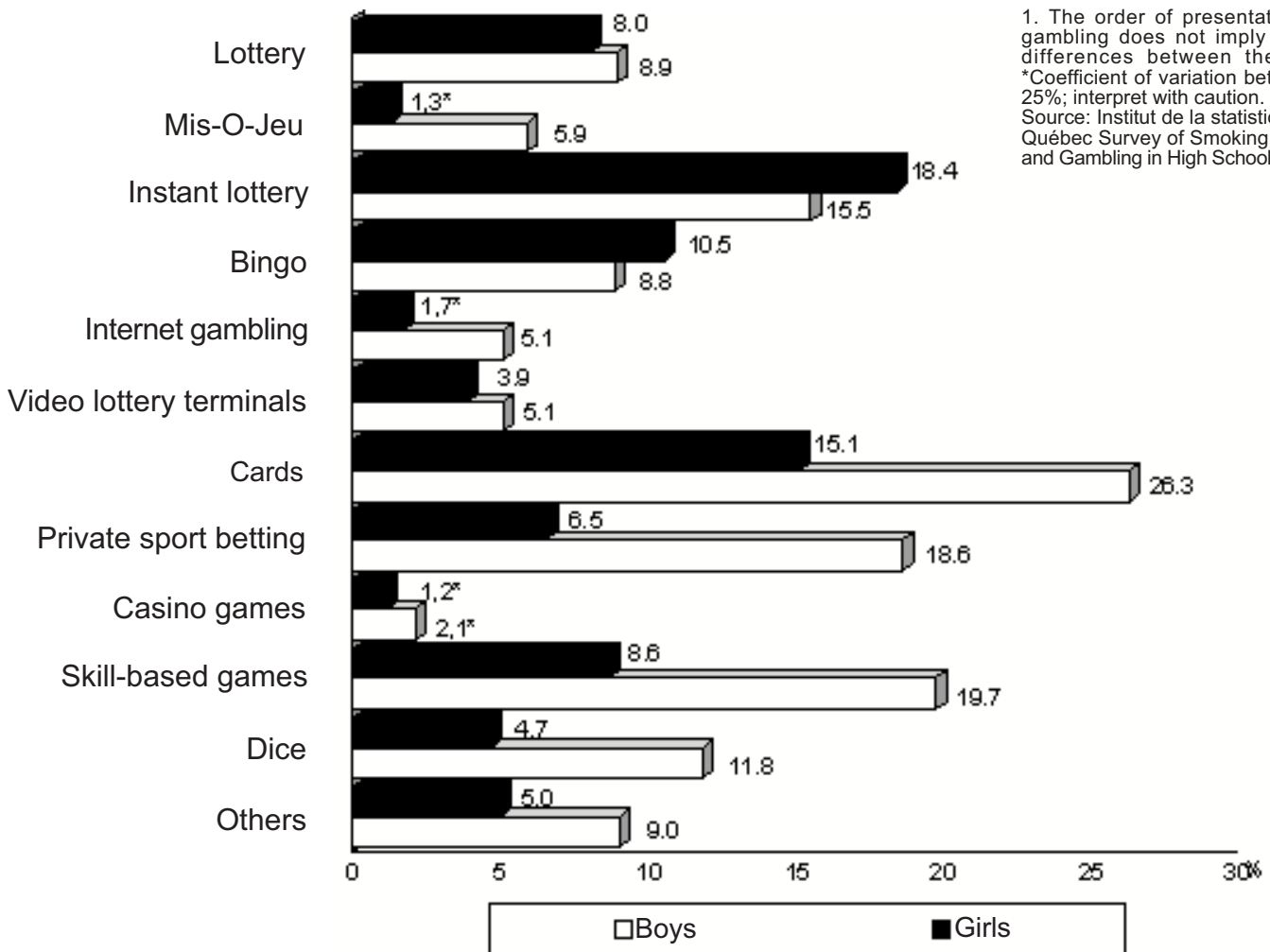
Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students recommend that prevention and sensitization programs are recommended to precisely target students in Secondary 2 and 3. These are pivotal years in which the proportion of students who consume increased. Special attention should also be paid to the needs of students whose marks are below the class average and to families and students whose family structure is single-parent. It would also

be productive to increase our knowledge of the factors why boys seem particularly interested in card games in general and poker in particular.

As well, it would be interesting to document mainly in light of recent advertising and broadcast programming that presents poker as a "sport" in which a player's skill can have an impact on the outcome of the game.

One of the key elements of any program designed to combat smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use or gambling is the regular investigation of trends in behaviours and the characteristics of students engaging in them. To develop effective programs, it is therefore essential to carefully monitor high school student risk behaviours every two years. This is exactly the type of data that the *Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling In High School Students* has been providing since 1998.

Gambling participation in the past 12 months¹ according to type of gambling activity and sex, high-school students, Québec, 2006



1. The order of presentation by type of gambling does not imply any statistical differences between the proportions.
*Coefficient of variation between 15% and 25%; interpret with caution.
Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, Québec Survey of Smoking, Alcohol, Drugs and Gambling in High School Students, 2006.