

## INTERNET GAMBLING – A NEW STUDY



The veritable explosion in recent years of Internet gambling sites constitutes a major source of revenue for Internet companies whose best interests do not necessarily coincide with the best interests of developing children. Researchers have highlighted the ease with which on-line gambling sites may be accessed as well as the visually enticing aspects of Internet gambling. While other sources of gambling are, for the most part, strictly regulated and off-limits to children, the Internet provides an accessible route to an otherwise illegal activity for youth. Recent research conducted here at the

Centre suggests that at least 25% of youth with serious gambling problems are using so-called “practice sites” on-line where no money is needed to play. Given estimates of pathological gambling among young people ranging from 4% to 8%, the availability and accessibility of on-line gambling is cause for major concern. However, few empirical studies have been conducted to date investigating the phenomenon of Internet gambling. Here at the Centre, we recognize the need to examine the impact of this new technology as well as to identify the factors that place children and adolescents at risk for involvement with Internet gambling. To this end, we are currently conducting an Internet gambling study using two samples, a youth sample of about 1500 participants

and a second sample of volunteers of all ages surveyed on-line. Both groups, though different in nature, will provide valuable information about why people gamble on the Internet. All participants will be asked to complete a 30-minute questionnaire inquiring about their gambling behavior and Internet usage. The questionnaire, called the I.G.Q. (Internet Gambling Questionnaire) measures variables such as demographic characteristics, general Internet usage, gambling behavior, substance use, impulsivity, and motivation to gamble with or without money. Using these two sources of data, it is hoped that we will identify factors relevant to pathological gambling as well as first-time Internet gambling. For questions, comments, or more information, please e-mail [andrea.m.byrne@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:andrea.m.byrne@mail.mcgill.ca).

## U.S. Survey on Youth and Substance Use

Stress, boredom, and access to money seem to be the three biggest factors influencing the risk of substance use among American teens according to the National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse conducted by the Centre on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA). This year’s study surveyed 1,987 youth between the ages of 12-17 as well as over 500 parents, many of whom were parents of teens interviewed.

A few interesting findings:

- Teens rating their stress as high (rating between seven and ten on a 10 point scale) were twice as likely as their low stress counterparts to smoke, drink, get drunk and use illegal drugs. For example, 18% of stressed teens stated that future drug use is “likely”

compared to only 7% of low stressed teens.

- Boredom is also a risk for substance abuse. Approximately 91% of teens surveyed reported experiencing boredom. Those youth who reported being bored “often” (17%) were much more likely to drink alcohol, get drunk, smoke cigarettes, and use marijuana as compared to youth who reported being occasionally, rarely, or never bored. Twenty-two percent of youth who are often bored have tried marijuana as compared to only 15% of youth who are not often bored.
- Access to weekly spending is correlated with risk of substance use: the more money a teen has to spend the more likely they are to smoke, drink, and use drugs. Risk scores for

teens who had \$50.00 or more per week in spending money were significantly higher than those of teens having \$15.00 a week or less, 1.73 versus 0.70 respectively.

- These three variables -- stress, boredom, and access to money -- together lead to an overall increased risk of substance use among American youth. Research in the field of youth gambling has also pointed to similar correlates. Further research is needed to better understand how these factors together mediate, precipitate, or reinforce gambling behaviour.

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[http://www.casacolumbia.org/usr\\_doc/2003\\_Teen\\_Survey.pdf](http://www.casacolumbia.org/usr_doc/2003_Teen_Survey.pdf)