

## ***Youth gambling study highlights the role of online gaming***

McCreary Centre Society today released *Understanding the odds: Gambling among BC youth aged 12–18*, the first full-length report to look at underage gambling in BC. The report shows that around one in five BC youth had gambled for money in the past year, and the most common ways they did so were through online gaming, scratch cards/lottery tickets and playing dice or cards in person. Gaming online for money was the most common activity youth engaged in regularly, including on a weekly and daily basis.

Unlike other forms of gambling for money, there were no gender differences in weekly or daily rates of online gaming for money. The profile of online gamers also looked different to other forms of gambling for money in that younger youth were generally the most likely to be playing regularly.

McCreary’s Executive Director Annie Smith noted: *“This is the first time we have taken a really close look at gambling behaviours among young people in the province, and I think it gives us some really important information about the different ways that youth are gambling, as well as which youth are gambling at rates and in ways that are concerning. I think it also highlights some important links that we may not have thought of before, for example whilst we know that involvement in sport is generally a protective factor for young people, the link that we saw between sports betting and sports involvement deserves further attention.”*

Smith went on to state: *“The range of online gambling options which young people are accessing is concerning, but that said - it was reassuring to see in the report that youth were less likely to gamble for money on a regular basis when they felt their family understood and supported them, felt connected to school or had supportive adults in their community.”*

A copy of the report is available at [www.mcs.bc.ca](http://www.mcs.bc.ca).

Webinar presentations of the results are scheduled for:

July 22nd at 9am, noon and 3pm

July 26th at noon and 2pm

July 27<sup>th</sup> at 10am

Webinar details:

Join from your computer, tablet or smartphone:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/283669373>

Join via phone: 1-888-455-1389 (Toll free). Access code: 283-669-373

**For interviews contact Annie Smith at 604-728-9494 or email [annie@mcs.bc.ca](mailto:annie@mcs.bc.ca)**

## BACKGROUND

*Understanding the odds: Gambling among BC youth aged 12–18* contains information provided by over 30,000 BC youth aged 12–18 who completed the 2018 BC AHS. The 2018 BC AHS was conducted in 58 of BC’s 60 school districts and is the sixth time students have been asked to complete the comprehensive health survey since 1992. The results are considered representative of over 95% of mainstream school students in Grades 7–12 in the province.

### Some key findings from the report:

- ◆ About a fifth (21%) of BC youth aged 12–18 had gambled for money in the past year (i.e., engaged in online gaming, bet on sports, played cards/dice, or played lottery tickets/ scratch cards).
- ◆ In comparison to youth who engaged in other types of gambling for money, youth who exclusively engaged in online gaming for money were less likely to have in-person friends; and were more than twice as likely to have multiple online friends whom they had never met in person, and to only have online friends.
- ◆ Youth were less likely to gamble for money online than they were to play for money in person, as 9% played online cards/dice, sports betting, and/or online gaming for money, compared to 12% who played cards/ dice or sports betting in person. However, problematic gambling was more common among youth who gambled online than among those who gambled in person.
- ◆ Problematic gambling was also more common among youth who engaged in multiple types of gambling activities, and who gambled at least a couple of days a month over the past year.
- ◆ Youth who were involved in organized, informal, or extreme sports on a weekly basis in the past year were more likely to engage in sports betting during that year.
- ◆ Three percent of youth who gambled for money reported that their gambling had reached a point where they needed help (10% of non-binary youth vs. 3% of males vs. 1% of females).
- ◆ Youth who frequently gambled for money (i.e., at least a couple of days a month) were more likely than their peers who gambled less frequently to experience problems connecting with others; and were more likely to be sedentary, to experience mental health challenges, and to engage in potentially unsafe or excessive technology use.
- ◆ Youth were more likely to frequently gamble for money if they had experienced challenges in their life (such as hunger and deprivation), as well as if they were employed in excess of 20 hours a week, participated in extreme sports four or more times a week, engaged in regular or potentially risky substance use, and engaged in other potential health risk behaviours.
- ◆ Frequent gambling did not appear to be associated with the proximity of a youth’s school to the location of casinos, community gaming centres, and race tracks. However, youth who played lottery tickets/scratch cards were more likely to do so on a weekly and daily basis when there were a greater number of lottery retailers within a 2KM radius of their school.