

New report considers gaming & gambling in the lives of BC teenagers



McCreary Centre Society today released their latest report from the 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey, *From loot boxes to lottery tickets: Gaming & gambling among BC youth aged 12–18*.

The report is a response to rising concerns about underage gambling following legalization of single game sports betting for adults, combined with social media and in-game advertising of betting sites, and a rise in video games with gambling-style features. The study looked at the gaming and gambling behaviours of over 38,000 Grade 7–12 students in BC, and found that 34% had engaged in at least one of eight gaming and/or gambling activities for money in the past year.

Overall, 20% of youth had gambled for money in the past year (an increase from 18% in 2018). This included at least a doubling of the percentage who played cards or dice online (5% vs. 2% in 2018) and engaged in online sports betting (4% vs. 2%). Online sports betting was still less common than other forms of gambling such as buying lottery tickets but it was the gambling activity youth engaged in most regularly.

Using real money to engage in gaming was also popular, and the most popular of all the gaming and gambling activities was buying in-game items while playing video games, which 20% of youth had done. Also, 9% played in gaming tournaments, and 7% streamed video games for money in the past year.

Potential health risks associated with regular gaming and/or gambling for money included poorer sleep, disrupted eating, and reduced school attendance; and the more regularly youth were gaming and gambling, the more likely they were to report their playing had become problematic. In the past year, 12% reported their gaming had reached a point where they needed help, 1% had reached this point with their gambling, and 1% needed help for both of these.

The report's co-author, Dr. Annie Smith noted, *"The outward signs that a young person is potentially struggling with their gaming or gambling might be different to those which are present when they are struggling with substance use addictions, but we do see some of the same systemic risk factors such as experiencing poverty, as well as some similar health and well-being impacts, including youth being more likely to disengage from school."*

Dr. Smith went on to add: *"We found that gaming for money on a daily basis increased the risk that youth would experience problematic gambling, as well as problematic gaming, so we looked at protective factors that might reduce the likelihood that youth would be gaming this regularly. Two of the factors that had the strongest positive effects were going offline at bedtime, and the presence of an adult to help youth with tasks such as learning life skills. I think this shows us the important role that adults can play in not only setting limits and boundaries, but also in offering support to help youth develop relationships and skills away from their video games."*



McCreary Centre Society is a non-government, non-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, evaluation, and community-based projects.

Founded in 1977, our vision is that all youth are supported to be healthy and connected.

For interviews, contact:

Dr. Annie Smith
Executive Director
Tel: 604-291-1996 ext. 225
Cell: 604-728-9494
Email: annie@mcs.bc.ca

Where to find us:

3552 Hastings Street East
Vancouver, BC, V5K 2A7



mccreary@mcs.bc.ca



mcs.bc.ca

To read the full report, please visit: mcs.bc.ca/pdf/from_loot_boxes_to_lottery_tickets.pdf

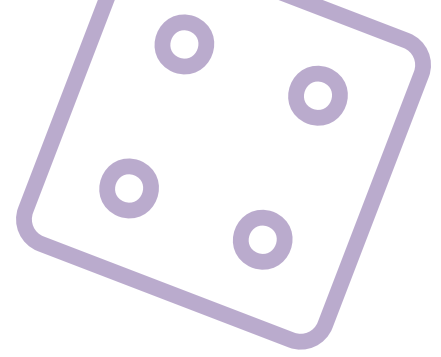
Webinar presentations of the findings are scheduled for:

- /// Tuesday, August 26th from 12pm–1pm PST (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89002542033>)
- /// Thursday, August 28th from 10am–11am PST (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85268387757>)
- /// Thursday, August 28th from 2pm–3pm PST (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86538470988>)

BACKGROUND

The 2023 BC Adolescent Health Survey (BC AHS) was completed by 38,277 youth aged 12–18 in 59 of BC's 60 school districts, and included questions about gambling and gaming.

The BC AHS asked about five ways youth may have gambled for money in the past 12 months: buying lottery tickets/scratch cards, betting on sports in person, betting on sports online, playing cards/dice in person, and playing cards/dice online. The survey also asked about three types of monetized gaming-related activities in the past 12 months: buying in-game items, playing in gaming tournaments, and streaming video games.



Some key findings from the report:

- /// Males were the most likely to have engaged in at least one of the eight gaming and gambling activities for money in the past year (47% vs. 29% of non-binary youth vs. 20% of females).
- /// There was a link between regular sports participation and betting on sports. For example, youth who played organized sports (such as soccer or hockey with a coach) at least weekly in the past year were twice as likely as those who played less regularly or not at all to have engaged in sports betting for money during this time (10% vs. 5%).
- /// Youth more likely to have reached a point where they needed help for their gaming or gambling included those who had no close in-person friends, those who had friends online whom they had never met in person, as well as those experiencing poverty and deprivation. Problematic gaming and gambling were also more common among those who were engaging in esports and other types of gaming after the time they were expected to be asleep, bet with virtual credits they purchased with real money, felt they spent too much time alone, and did not get along with those around them.
- /// Reporting problematic gaming was also more common among those who often or always felt lonely, and had been bullied at school or getting to or from school in the past year.
- /// The three strongest predictors that youth would be engaging in gaming activities for money on a daily basis were not feeling safe in their neighbourhood, having online friends they had never met in person, and participating in extreme sports on a weekly basis. The presence of protective factors reduced the likelihood that youth would be gaming daily. The factors that had the strongest effects were going offline at bedtime, planning to pursue post-secondary education, and having an adult to help with specific tasks (e.g., learning life skills).
- /// Other protective factors that were associated with a reduced likelihood that youth would be gaming and gambling for money regularly included feeling connected and engaged with family, school, and community; having parents or guardians who knew what youth were doing in their free time and online; and having close in-person friends.

