

# Designing effective gambling prevention programs for young people: What does the research tell us?

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## Today's environment is conducive to youth gambling/gaming

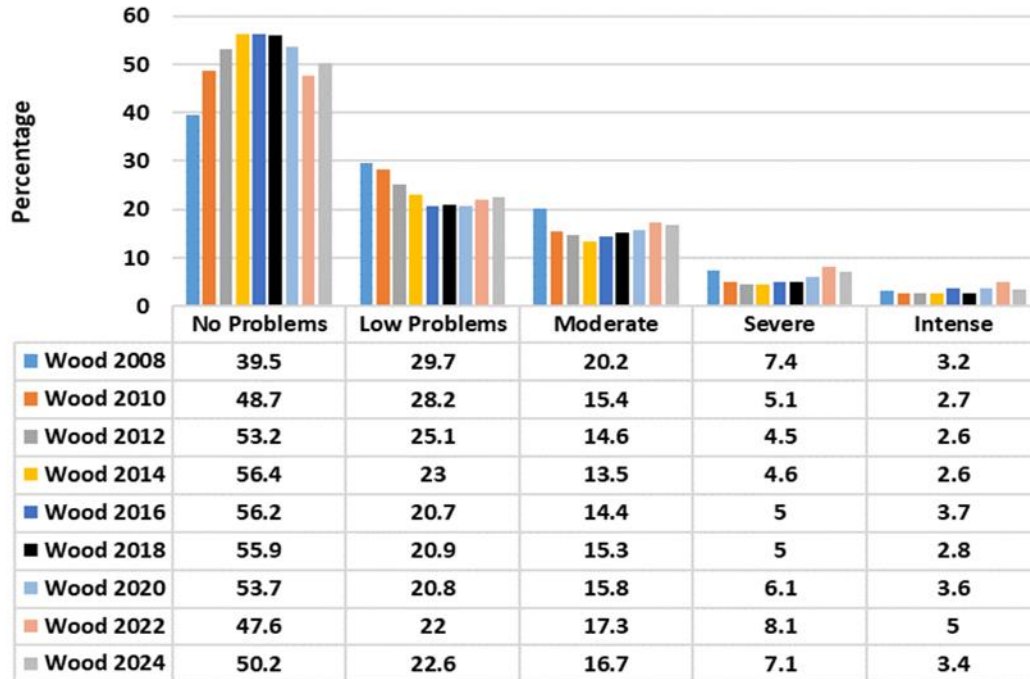
1. Higher early initiation of online gaming and gambling
2. Merging of gambling and gaming (loot boxes/mystery boxes)
3. Increased advertising
4. Increased use of smartphones and other electronic devices
5. Increased use of social media
6. Social acceptability, easy access and availability
7. Few school policies or procedures related to gambling
8. General lack of community involvement and parental awareness re: youth gambling

# **Some recent studies of young people**

# **Addiction and Mental Health Study**

## **Wood County, Ohio (Ivoska & Derevensky, 2024)**

# Youth mental health



## Severe & Intense:

**2018 = 7.8%**

**2020 = 9.7%**

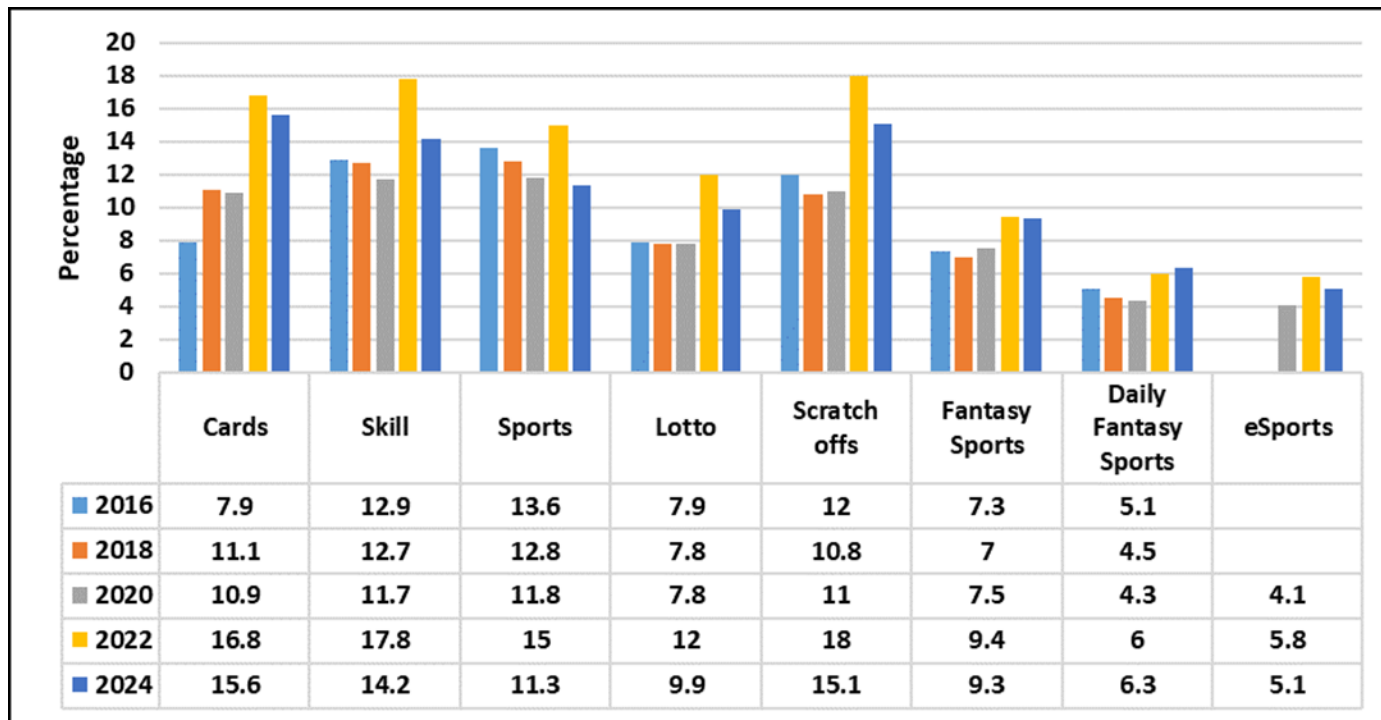
**2022 = 13.1%**

**2024 = 10.5%**

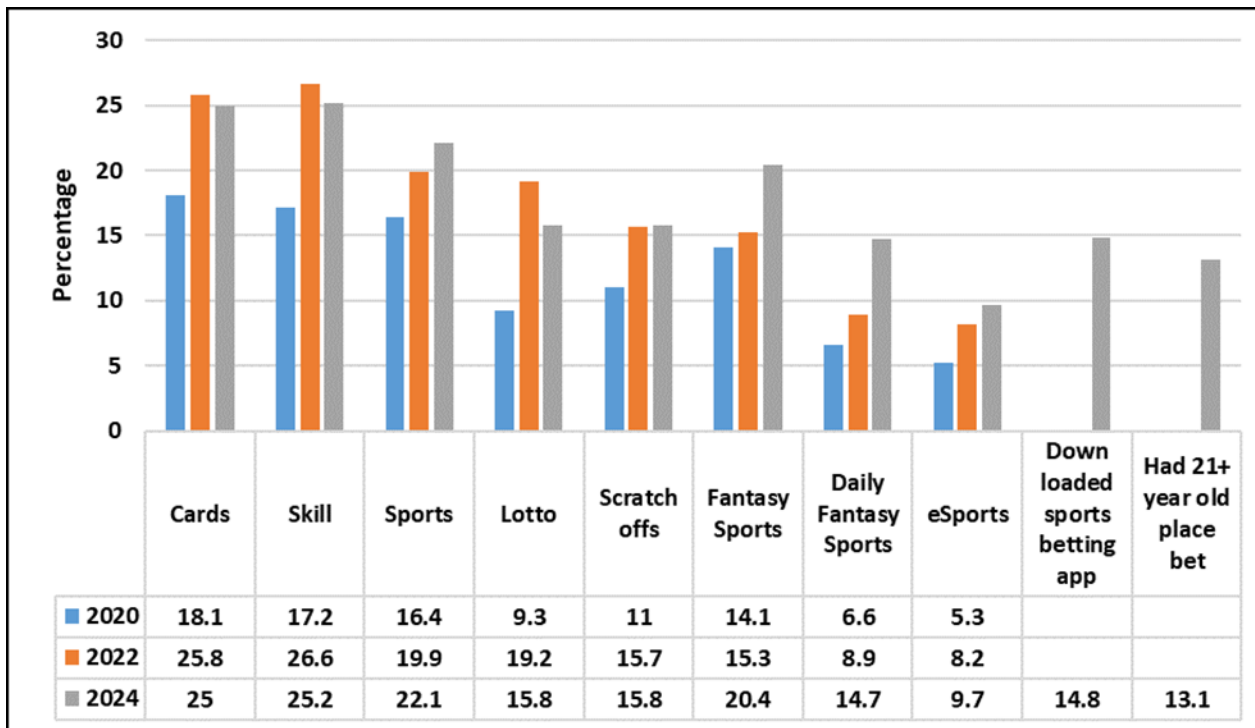
3 months before shutdown

3 months after re-opening (reflects shutdown) 2 years after in person school

## Adolescent Gambling 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade



## Adolescent Gambling - 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> grade males



## Bottom Line... youth gambling post legalization of sports wagering

1. Gambling prevalence has remained relatively constant
2. Gaming and purchasing of loot boxes/mystery boxes has dramatically increased
3. There is ample evidence of the relationship between loot box purchasing and gambling & problem gambling
4. Among older (grades 11 & 12) male adolescents – post introduction of legalized sports wagering in Ohio- sports wagering, fantasy sports wagering and daily fantasy sports wagering has significantly increased
5. 14.8% of male adolescents (grades 11 & 12) report having downloaded a sports betting app
6. 13.1% of male adolescents (grades 11 & 12) report having had a 21 year-old place a sports wager for them



## Bottom line... youth gambling post legalization of sports wagering

7. As mental health problems increase so does gambling in general, betting on fantasy sports, e-sports wagering, betting money on collegiate/professional/amateur sports, and having an older person (age 21+) place a wager on sports for older males (grades 11 & 12)
8. For the entire sample (grades 7-12; males & females), as mental health issues increased in severity so did betting on e-sports, fantasy sports, collegiate/professional/amateur sports, and having an older person (age 21+) place a sports wager for them

# **National Collegiate Athletic Association Wagering Study (Paskus & Derevensky, 2024)**

# Percentage of Student-Athletes Gambling for Money During the Previous 12 Months

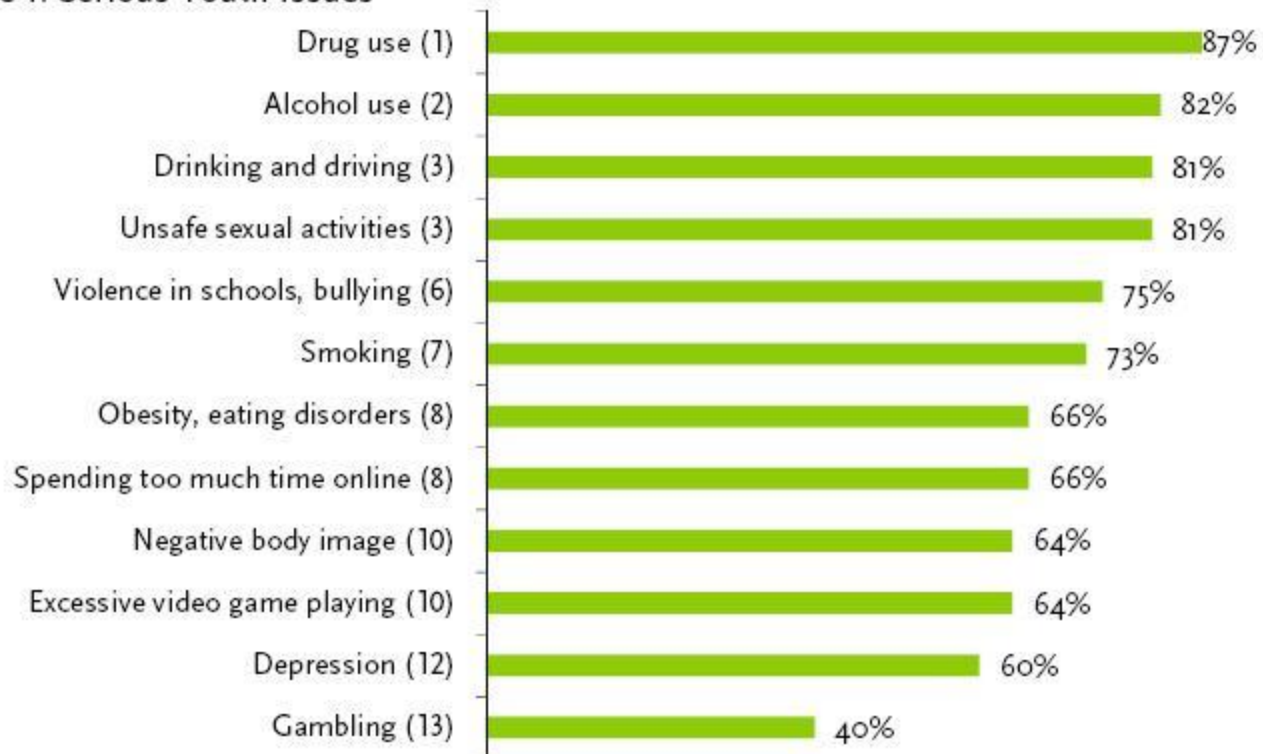
		2008 Study	2012 Study	2016 Study		2024 Study
Men	Overall	66%	57%	55%		52%
	Div. I	58%	50%	48%		45%
	Div. II	67%	56%	54%		51%
	Div. III	73%	65%	61%		58%
Women	Overall	39%	39%	38%		36%
	Div. I	31%	30%	32%		30%
	Div. II	40%	41%	35%		37%
	Div. III	45%	46%	44%		42%

# **Parental Perceptions of Adolescent Risky Behaviors (Derevensky & Campbell, 2012)**

# Parents perceptions of adolescent risky behaviors

Compared to 12 other issues, parents perceived gambling as the least important issue, with only 40% of parents viewing youth gambling as a serious or very serious issue.

Figure 1: Serious Youth Issues



In your opinion, how serious of an issue are the following for teens today? ("serious" and "very serious")

## Reasons why youth gamble

- ▶ Enjoyment
  - ▶ Excitement
  - ▶ Self-esteem
- ▶ Escape problems
  - ▶ To win money

## Some prevention issues

- ▶ Not all forms of gambling are equally problematic
  - Land-based (lottery, casinos); online; sports gambling; loot boxes, esports
- ▶ Abstinence/Harm reduction/minimization
- ▶ Method of delivery is important
  - Youth today live in a digital/social media world

## Prevention can occur on three levels

- ▶ *Primary prevention* refers to targeting intervention to those who have not experienced a gambling problem.
- ▶ *Secondary prevention* refers to targeting those individuals demonstrating “at-risk” behaviors, inappropriate attitudes, and erroneous cognitions with respect to gambling.
- ▶ *Tertiary prevention* refers to the treatment of those individuals currently experiencing a serious gambling problem.



# **Lessons learned from research on youth substance abuse.....**

# Substance abuse prevention

- ▶ Focused around two concepts:
  - *Risk & protection* – and their interaction (SAMHSA)
- ▶ Protective factors balance and buffer risk and ultimately lessen the likelihood of engaging in risk-taking behaviors or buffer exposure to problems
- ▶ Shift in focused prevention to focus on resiliency
- ▶ Education

# Gambling prevention

- ▶ Prevention through risk-reduction
  - individual
  - family
  - peer and social contexts
  - community context
- ▶ Risk-reduction by enhancing protective factors
  - attributes of the individual
  - family support
  - environmental support
- ▶ Using schools as a basis for prevention through promotion of social/personal competence

## Goals of prevention

- ▶ Improve knowledge
- ▶ Increase awareness
- ▶ Change/modify inappropriate attitudes and/or encourage positive attitudes
- ▶ Correct false cognitions, understandings, erroneous beliefs (odds, skill vs. luck, strategies, superstitions)
- ▶ Behavior
  - prevent occurrence of excessive gambling
  - decrease/reduce excessive gambling patterns of behavior

## Responsible prevention efforts include...

- ▶ Incorporating science-based knowledge
- ▶ Taking a wide-angled approach (multi-faceted)
- ▶ Adjusting the material to the developmental level of the recipient
- ▶ At-risk vs. general population (universal)
- ▶ Testing for program effectiveness *PRIOR* to widespread implementation
- ▶ Conducting focus groups with teachers and children for input on program development and to evaluate teacher willingness to implement the prevention format

## Additional key elements

- ▶ Enhanced problem solving and thinking skills leads to more effective coping strategies
- ▶ Strategies to successfully resolve stressful life events
  - social skills
  - communication skills
  - decision-making skills
  - low sensation-seeking behaviors
  - feelings of success, self-worth and mastery
- ▶ Building of strong external resources
  - family
  - peers
  - school
  - community

# **McGill's Youth Gambling Prevention Initiatives**

**[www.youthgambling.com/prevention](http://www.youthgambling.com/prevention)**

## McGill Centre prevention initiatives

- ▶ Brochures targeting adolescents
- ▶ Poster/digital contests for youth
- ▶ Screening cards for youth
- ▶ Paper/pencil curriculum (elementary/junior/senior high school)
- ▶ Booths at mental health awareness day
- ▶ Interactive games (Amazing Chateau; Hooked City)
- ▶ Video (Clean Break)
- ▶ PSAs targeting parents
- ▶ Education for pediatricians, GPs, attorneys, judges





# **Other Considerations**

## Other considerations

- ▶ Helping adults recognize gambling behaviors (Loot boxes)
- ▶ Greater use of digital platforms
- ▶ Incorporating social media
- ▶ Need to educate youth re: advertisements
- ▶ Educating physicians, mental health professionals
- ▶ The use of celebrities to counteract celebrity endorsements

**Is there a one-size-fit all model of prevention?**