

# The Partnership Symposium 2025

## Introduction to Young People & Gambling

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# Presentation Overview

- Symposium Learning Outcomes
- Symposium Structure
- Young People & Gambling
- Theme 1: Young people are being exposed to gambling in new ways
- Theme 2: Certain factors place some young people at greater risk of harm
- Theme 3: Insights to guide meaningful strategies & collaborations

# Symposium Learning Outcomes

## **Young People's Evolving Relationship to Gambling:**

Challenges And Opportunities for Mitigating Harm in Our Digital World



1. To broaden awareness and understanding of young people's evolving relationship and experiences with gambling.
2. To discuss and develop meaningful and practical strategies, including new collaborations, for preventing and reducing gambling harm among this group.

# Symposium Structure

Knowledge + Strategy = Potential for progress

***Content divided across three themes...***

## **Young people's increasing exposure to gambling**

- The nexus of video gaming and gambling
- The proliferation of advertising, including unregulated forms

## **Factors that increase risk & harm for some young people**

- Individual factors
- Relationship factors
- Socio-economic inequities

## **Insights to guide meaningful strategies & collaborations**

# Defining Young People



## Youth: under 18

### Key Objectives:

- Education and awareness
- Limiting exposure
- Prevent/reduce risk and harm
- Protection from unlawful gambling

### Key Stakeholders:

- Policy makers
- Schools
- Public/community health



## Young adults: 18 – 24

### Key Objectives:

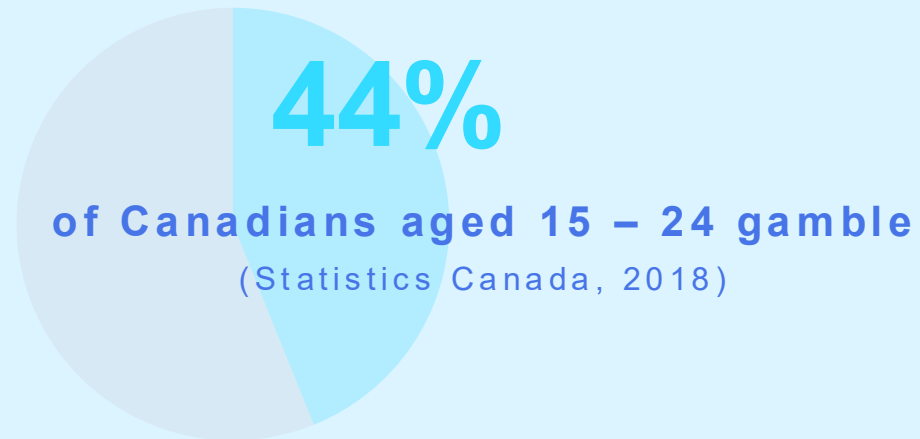
- Education and awareness
- Limiting exposure
- Prevent/reduce risk and harm

### Key Stakeholders:

- Policy makers
- Public/community health
- Gambling regulators
- Gambling operators

*The Partnership is supportive of understanding the relationship between minors and gambling; however, The Partnership does not support minors participating in gambling.*

## Young People & Gambling



**Prevalence of problem gambling in adolescents**  
ranges between

**0.2% - 12.3%**

consistently higher than among adults

(Calado et al., 2017)

**Adolescent gambling disorder** has been linked to anxiety, depression, attention-deficit disorder, learning disorders, antisocial behaviors, conduct problems, substance use, delinquent and criminal behaviors, impulsivity, self-injurious behaviors, and suicidality ideation and attempts.

Derevensky et al., 2019,  
Richard et al., 2020, Riley et al., 2021



## Theme 1.

Young people are being exposed to gambling in new ways

- The nexus of video gaming and gambling
- The proliferation of advertising, including unregulated forms



# The nexus of video gaming & gambling

## Gambling-like gaming features



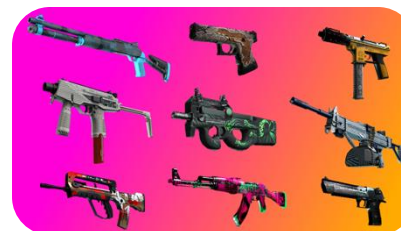
### **Social Casino Games (SCGs)**

Online games that closely resemble gambling games. Players cannot stake or win real-world money, so SCGs are not classified as gambling and can be legally offered to underage youth.



### **Loot boxes**

Items players can purchase using real or virtual currency, on the basis that they may contain something of value to the game. Some share risky features with gambling games such as near-misses and cash-out opportunities.



### **Skin betting**

Skins can have monetary value. Certain gambling providers and unregulated websites accept skins as a digital currency for betting, on eSports or games of chance. Unlicensed operators make these activities available to underage youth.



### **eSports betting**

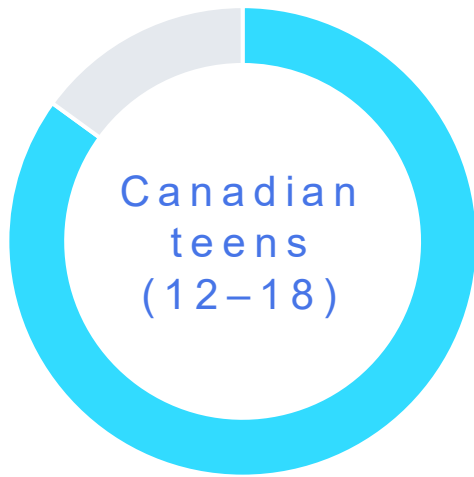
Placing bets on the outcome(s) of an organized video gaming competition, using real-world money or virtual currencies, including skins. Unregulated, unlicensed providers facilitate eSports betting with skins, easily accessible by underage youth.

# The nexus of video gaming & gambling

## Evidence

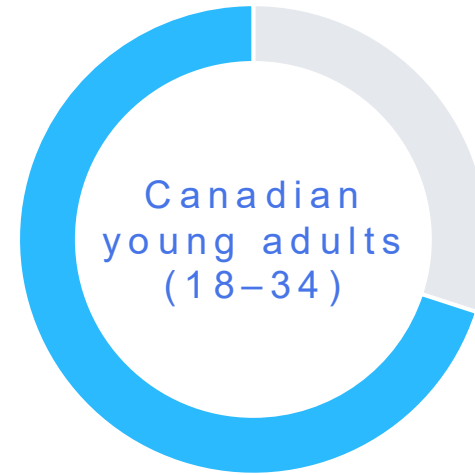
- All four gambling-like gaming activities have been linked to gambling problems and harm, including among young people
- However, unclear if gambling-like gaming is a **pathway** to gambling and/or harm
- Certain studies have suggested a possible migration from early exposure to either loot box purchases or social casino gaming to gambling with real money (Hayer et al., 2018; Macey & Hamari, 2018; Zendle et al., 2019, 2020)
- Other authors have cautioned that the pathway hypothesis needs further research for validation (Brock & Johnson, 2021; Delfabbro & King, 2020; Greer et al., 2023; King et al., 2019)

# Young People & Video Gaming



**85%**

of Canadians aged 12 – 18  
play video games  
(Media in Canada, 2024)



**70%**

of Canadians aged 18 – 34  
play video games  
(Media in Canada, 2024)



**1 in 4**

Ontario students engaged in gambling-  
like video gaming activities  
(OSDUHS, 2023)

# The nexus of video gaming & gambling

## Implications for future work

### **Further research is particularly needed to better understand:**

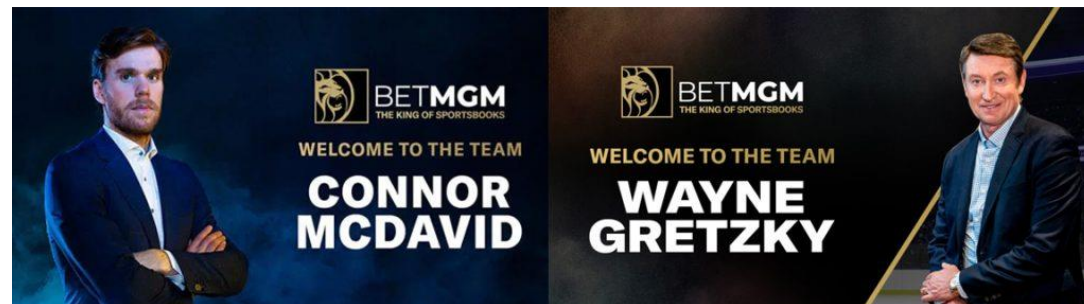
- Canadian young gamers, both youth under 18 and young adults
- Causality of relationships between engagement with gambling-like features and gambling risk/harm
- Differences between types of loot boxes and microtransactions, to determine whether some carry more potential for harm (Zendle et al., 2020)

### **Interventions & policies to better protect young people from gambling harm:**

- Focusing gambling education and prevention efforts on youth and young people who engage in gambling-like video gaming (Wardle, 2019)
- Enhanced regulation of gambling-like gaming features, particularly loot boxes (Gibson et al., 2022; Zendle et al., 2020)
- Regulation/restrictions on the frequency of in-game microtransactions (Gibson et al., 2022)

## The proliferation of gambling advertising

AGCO proposes ban on athlete, celebrity ads for online gambling



### Don't bet on gambling legislation anytime soon

Although Canadians are bombarded by sports betting ads featuring athletes and celebrities, governments have little incentive to rein things in

#### BetStamp's Ambassador Program Raises Ethical Concerns Over Youth Gambling Promotion

Toronto based sports-betting app, BetStamp, is hiring university students to their ambassador program

### Canada Sports Betting Ad Framework Advances Through Senate

## National standards needed for sports betting ads, researchers say

They say it's healthier to limit how often, when and where they run

# The proliferation of gambling advertising

## Evidence

- Studies from multiple countries demonstrate **increased exposure leads to increased participation and harms**, including among young people
- 2023 umbrella review found support for a **causal relationship** between exposure to gambling advertising and more positive attitudes to gambling, greater intentions to gamble and increased gambling activity at both individual and population level (McGrane et al., 2023)
- Some debate around advertising's impact on **intentions** to gamble, particularly among young people (McGrane et al., 2023; DiCenso et al., 2024)

## The proliferation of gambling advertising

### Social media & influencer marketing

- Channels appeal directly to young people
- 72.4% of 18–24-year-olds reported seeing gambling ads on social media at least once a week (Rossi et al., 2021)
- Most gambling brands' social media followers are under 25
- Social media advertising is minimally regulated in some jurisdictions
- Influencer marketing is unregulated



## The proliferation of gambling advertising

### Implications for future work

There is significant research examining the impacts of conventional forms of advertising. However, **further research could help increase understanding of:**

- Impacts on young people
- Emerging, digital advertising forms including social media and influencer-driven

**Policy makers have recognized a need to update gambling advertising regulations to reduce risk and harm.** Evidence-based guidance for such reform includes:

- A Canadian national strategy, including standards governing the promotion and availability of gambling (Young et al., 2024)
- Unified federal guidelines for social media and influencer advertising (Bolat et al., 2025)
- Mandatory sponsorship disclosures and age verification measures across digital formats (Bolat et al., 2025)
- Targeted interventions, including educational campaigns, to raise awareness of the risks associated with influencer marketing and gambling (Bolat et al., 2025)

## Theme 2.

Certain factors place some young people at greater risk of gambling harm

- Individual factors
- Relationship factors
- Socio-economic inequities



## Individual factors

### Evidence

- Young males are at highest risk of gambling harm
- Black young people experience more severe gambling harm vs. White peers
- LGBTIQ+ young people have high rates of gambling & comorbidity
- Indigenous youth have a unique and complex experience and relationship to gambling

## Relationship factors

### Evidence

- Parental support is a strong risk **and** protective factor
- Calado et al., 2017:
  - Strongest risk for gambling harm was for youth who do not live with parents, have lower family connectedness, and have parents/friends who gamble
  - Greater parental supervision and support, and parental knowledge of problematic gambling in siblings was protective

Supportive family environments, lower country-level economic inequalities and higher government expenditures on benefits for families and children appear to be associated with a lower risk of problematic gaming among European adolescents.

(Colassante et al., 2022, p. 2273)

## Socio-economic inequities

### Evidence

- The burden of gambling harm falls on the least advantaged
- Studies have found those from lower social class backgrounds or disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to engage in problem and illegal gambling (Barnes et al., 2015)
- A study in Italy found the social cost of gambling is increasingly concentrated among those of younger age, lower income, and poorer working conditions (Resce et al., 2019)
- Highest prevalence of problem gambling among people with poor health, low life satisfaction and well-being (Public Health England, 2021)
- Problem gambling is associated with standard poverty measures: being unemployed, having unstable housing or being homeless, having low income, and living in a disadvantaged neighborhood (Hahmann et al., 2021)

## Factors that increase risk & harm

## Implications for future work

### **Additional research is needed to better understand:**

- Differences in the experiences and vulnerabilities of various groups/communities of young people
- Canadian young people
- Intersection of risk factors
- Strongest protective factors
- Effectiveness of interventions designed for young people (e.g., evaluations)

While there are many examples of interventions effectively targeting young people, **more attention is needed to:**

- Include Indigenous young people and communities in the development of strategies and interventions (Manitowabi, 2021; Manitowabi & Nicoll, 2021; Manitowabi & Wahsquonaikezik, 2021)
- Test and validate treatment interventions on youth, rather than simply adapting adult therapies (Christakis et al., 2025)
- Ensure interventions are rigorously developed and evaluated (Monreal-Bartolomé et al., 2023)
- Provide greater support for parents, educators, and mental health professionals, particularly in terms of being aware of young people's gambling, setting limits, and being able to recognize warning signs (Derevensky et al., 2019; Király et al., 2022)

# The Partnership Symposium 2025

We look forward to discussing the issues and evidence in greater depth throughout the Symposium.

By bringing together stakeholders from public policy, education, health, research, and the gambling sector, The Partnership hopes the Symposium will generate research priorities, help forge new collaborations, and support initiatives to treat, reduce, and ultimately prevent gambling harm to youth and young adults.

These outputs will be incorporated into a Post- Symposium Report, to be shared with all participants.

