

Fonds de recherche
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Québec 

Rapport de recherche

PROGRAMME ACTIONS CONCERTÉES

Le projet ENHJEU : Analyse contextuelle des jeux de hasard et d'argent chez les étudiants universitaires

OVERVIEW

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Titre de l'Action concertée

Impacts socioéconomiques des jeux de hasard et d'argent - Phase 2, 2e concours

Partenaire(s) de l'Action concertée

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Fonds Québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC) et le Ministère de la Santé et des
Services sociaux (MSSS)

PROMOTIONAL TITLE:

Poker, booze and cannabis use: A survey among undergraduate students in Montreal

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND/OR HYPOTHESIS

Young adults in universities are at higher risk for excessive gambling and several associated risk behaviors such as excessive drinking and substance use. The objectives of this project are three-fold: 1) to describe the gambling habits among undergraduate university students exploring patterns of gambling on a wide variety of activities and considering the physical location and the type of gambling partners; 2) to examine the differences between non-social gamblers, at-risk gamblers and problem gamblers; and 3) to assess the relationships between severity of gambling problems and other associated problems such as hazardous drinking, illicit drug use and psychological distress. The findings are expected to provide a reliable portrayal of gambling habits among undergraduate students to purposively identify needs for prevention and services among this vulnerable population.

MAIN RESULTS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**1. Undergraduate students are at higher risk for gambling problems**

Although undergraduate students are less likely to gamble when compared to the adult populations, they are more likely to experience gambling problems. The prevalence of gambling is significantly higher among men than women and among students who are born in Canada or reporting speaking any or both official languages at home. More than half of all university students (60.4%) engaged in at least one gambling activity during the past year, with *lottery tickets* (39.3%) being the most preferred activity followed by

table poker (19.5%) and *video lottery terminals* (VLTs)(17.6%). Conversely, the least preferred gambling activities were *horse and dog racing* (0.7%), *card and board games* (3.1%), and *bingo* (3.9%).

Students' typical monthly spending on gambling was estimated to \$11 over the past year. A majority of students reported monthly spending of up to \$20, and almost 11% more than \$100. Alternatively, the typical debt due to gambling was estimated to 9\$ with a majority of students reporting a yearly debt of up to \$20, and 9% more than \$100. The largest individual spending was reported for poker games (\$10,000) and VLTs (\$5,000) whereas the largest debt was reported for poker games (\$20,000), games of skills (\$11,000) and sports betting (\$10,000).

It was estimated that 4.7% of students who gamble were at moderate-risk for gambling problems or experience problems due to gambling. Compared to non problem gamblers, they reported to gamble on more activities and in more locations, and to have higher spending and debts.

Recommendations. Undergraduate university students should be considered as a vulnerable population in terms of their propensity to experience gambling problems. However, on campus prevention campaigns promoting healthy lifestyle do not encompass any information/educational component on gambling. This is particularly important with the increasing popularity and the trivialization of poker as a pastime.

2. Gambling patterns are intimately determined by the type of activity, the location and the partners

Almost half of students reported betting on only one gambling activity predominantly *lottery*, followed by *poker games* and *VLTs* (9.8%); 30% gambled on two activities

mostly *lottery* and *VLTs* and *lottery* and *poker games*; 20% of students gambled on three activities or more.

Gambling activities are embedded in locations. Table poker occurred predominantly in private residences and to a lesser extent on Internet and in casinos whereas betting on VLTs mostly occurred in casinos and in bars. Card and board games betting were mostly reported in a private residence whereas games of skills were mostly reported in bars and to a lesser extent in private residences and on campus. The large majority of students gambled infrequently, namely less than once a month in most locations, except for betting on poker on Internet which was done more than monthly by 68% of poker players who bet on Internet.

Gambling is also a social activity for most students as betting on all gambling activities was mostly done with partners. Friends were the most reported partners for all activities followed to a lesser extent by other partners such as family members and co-workers. However, sports betting were done significantly more with co-workers than family members.

Recommendations. It is important that messages include warning for higher problems associated with solitary gambling and the increased risk associated with Internet betting.

3. The existence of high-risk profile : Gambling, drinking and illicit drug use

Almost 89% of university students reported drinking in the past year and 8.5% were frequent heavy drinkers. A significant proportion reported risky patterns of alcohol use: 22.7% of students reported a harmful drinking and 11% were identified with possible dependence to alcohol.

Almost 58% of students reported having used cannabis at least once in their life and one-third in the past year. Overall, 30% of students reported having used an illicit drug excluding cannabis in their lifetime with psychedelic drugs or hallucinogens being most reported, followed by amphetamines and ecstasy.

Severity of gambling was positively correlated with heavy alcohol consumption and illicit drug use.

Some students reported experiencing multiple problems involving substance use and gambling. Problem gamblers were significantly more likely to report heavy drinking episodes in the past year and the past month, cannabis and illicit drug use than non problem gamblers. They are also more likely to report psychological distress.

Recommendations. The existence of a high-risk group of students in this population might necessitate more targeted types of prevention and specialized services. In a metropolitan area such as Montreal, service networking and referral systems with universities and treatment services might be an interesting and sustainable strategy to consider with severe cases.

Some university students experience significant social and psychological harm and harm to their studies due to their gambling habits and more broadly their unhealthy lifestyle. Prevention campaigns should encompass information on potential risks associated with gambling whereas services should be made available for more problematic gamblers within and/or outside the campuses. University students have made the choice to devote a significant period of their young adulthood to an educational project that should be preserved individually and collectively by creating favourable and healthy environment for students to attain their goals.