

research snapshot

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Gambling and gaming behaviours among youth and parents

What this research is about

In Canada, the video game industry is booming. A growing number of adolescents and young adults use the digital space to game and to gamble. Concerns have been raised about the merging of the two. For instance, there are many new social casino games on social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) and on mobile apps. These types of games are currently unregulated. However, past studies found that playing social casino games might translate into real world gambling. The video game industry has also introduced gambling-like elements into video games. For instance, players can purchase loot boxes which contain random items of different value. Making in-game purchases, especially loot boxes, has been linked to gambling problems. Parents' gambling and gaming behaviours can have a strong impact on their children. This study sought to better understand gambling and gaming behaviours among adolescents, young adults, and parents of children between 8 to 17 years old.

What the researchers did

The researchers surveyed 2,651 participants in Ontario, Canada: 678 adolescents between 12 and 17 years old, 973 young adults between 18 and 24 years old, and 1,000 parents with children between 8 and 17 years old. Participants were asked about their lifetime gambling (i.e., which types of gambling and the frequency of play). To assess for problem gambling in adolescents, the researchers used the Gambling Problem Severity Subscale (GPSS) of the Canadian Adolescent Gambling Inventory (CAGI). Young adults and parents completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI). The researchers asked parents whether they were worried or

What you need to know

This research examined gambling and gaming behaviours of young people of varying ages and parents with children between 8 to 17 years old. The researchers surveyed 2,651 participants. The results revealed that many young people and parents played games that combine gambling and gaming. Playing social casino games and video games for money was related to more severe gambling problems. Parents who played these games and had a gambling problem also had more concerns about their child's gambling and gaming.

concerned about their child's gambling. Parents reported on the child with the most recent birthday.

To assess video game behaviours, the researchers asked adolescents and young adults whether they had played video games in their lifetime. If they said yes, the researchers asked them for the types of games they played or preferred. The researchers also asked them how long they played most recently and whether they spent money in video games. Parents reported on their child's video game behaviour and any concerns about how much their child spent.

What the researchers found

The results revealed that 20.8% of adolescents, 60% of young adults, and 69.9% of parents had gambled in their lifetime. Adolescent gambling did not relate to their video game play. However, in young adults, those who had played video games were more likely to have also gambled. About 18.4% of parents reported that their children had gambled before. They knew about their child's gambling because they were

present at the time or their child told them. Parents who had a gambling problem were more likely to think that their child also gambled and have concerns about their child's gambling.

In terms of gaming, 23% of adolescents played social casino games and 16.9% wagered on video games. Similarly, 20.1% of young adults played social casino games, and 17.7% wagered on video games. Additionally, 22.5% of parents played social casino games and 8.4% played video games for money. Male adolescents and young men were more likely to play video games for money than females. Younger parents were more likely to wager on video games than older parents. Parents who thought that their child gambled were also more likely to think that their child played social casino games. Finally, one-third of adolescents, one-fifth of young adults, and over one-third of parents played social casino games and wagered on video games on a weekly basis (or more).

About 1.9% of adolescents, 7.1% of young adults, and 7.8% of parents had a severe gambling problem. Those who played social casino games and wagered on video games had a higher risk of problem gambling. Adolescents and young adults who gambled and played social casino games were more likely to play gambling-style games for virtual credits or for money. Parents were more likely to report children aged 16 to 17 years playing games for virtual credits or money than younger children, especially when the children also gambled or played social casino games.

Adolescents and young adults who gambled also played video games for longer periods. Finally, 28.6% of adolescents, 47.1% of young adults, and 16.9% of children (as reported by parents) spent money on in-game purchases (e.g., items for avatars, chips/gold). Those who gambled, played social casino games, and wagered on video games were more likely to buy these things. Parents who were concerned about their child's game play were also more concerned about their gambling habits.

How you can use this research

Policy makers could use this research to regulate virtual casino type games to prevent potential

gambling problems among youth. Service providers could develop intervention programs for youth on gambling and gaming. They could also educate parents on how their gambling impacts their children. Future studies could explore how gambling and gaming behaviours evolve in youth over time.

About the researchers

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Citation

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About Gambling Research Exchange (GREO)

Gambling Research Exchange (GREO) has partnered with the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University to produce Research Snapshots. GREO is an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization that aims to eliminate harm from gambling. Our goal is to support evidence-informed decision making in safer gambling policies, standards, and practices. The work we do is intended for researchers, policy makers, gambling regulators and operators, and treatment and prevention service providers.

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