

Is gambling a problem for young Canadians?

Earth Times

July 19, 2010.

OTTAWA, ONTARIO -- The Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), along with a consortium of six provincial organizations, has released the Canadian Adolescent Gambling Inventory (CAGI) - a 24-question survey to help researchers and governments identify risky and problematic gambling behaviours in teens aged 13-17.

"The CAGI is the first survey designed specifically to help assess the prevalence and the risks associated with teenage gambling," says Jacques LeCavalier, Associate, CCSA. "Until now, governments and researchers have had no reliable way of assessing the extent to which gambling is an issue for Canadian teenagers."

The consortium developed the CAGI to provide provincial and territorial authorities with a common tool to reliably gauge the extent of teenage gambling within their region. Once jurisdictions have used the tool and collected data, the findings can be compiled to provide insight into the national landscape on this issue.

"Ultimately, the data collected using the CAGI survey will help inform the development of treatment, prevention and intervention programs and policies, as well as guide future research," says LeCavalier.

The questions in the CAGI survey are designed to not only measure whether an adolescent has a gambling problem, but to also look at psychological and social harm, financial consequences and loss of control related to gambling behaviour.

"Previous efforts to assess problem gambling among teenagers have typically used tools designed for adults, developed in a clinical setting and then adapted for youth populations," states Dr. Jamie Wiebe, co-researcher, CAGI project. "This process resulted in variances in research findings and affected the reliability of the results."

The CAGI tool was tested with 2,400 students in secondary schools in Manitoba and Quebec, and was refined through a second round of testing. The tool was also developed in French and English simultaneously-not translated after the fact, as is customary-to ensure its reliability when used with both French- and English-speaking populations.

"The development and testing of the CAGI tool has led to two conclusions," remarks Dr. Joel Tremblay, co-researcher, CAGI project. "First, large-scale studies of youth populations are needed to understand the prevalence of problem gambling behaviours among youth so that we can respond effectively. Second, efforts must be made to continue to follow these youth populations through longitudinal studies to gain insight into how prevalence rates change as individuals transition from youth to adulthood."

"We encourage researchers, clinical teams and governments to use the CAGI instrument as soon as possible to determine the prevalence of adolescent gambling," says LeCavalier.

The co-researchers on the CAGI instrument are Dr. Jamie Wiebe of Factz Research Inc., Dr. Joel Tremblay from the Universite du Quebec a Trois-Rivieres, Dr. Harold Wynne of Wynne Resources, and Dr. Randy Stinchfield of the University of Minnesota Medical School.

Funding partners and members of the Interprovincial Consortium on Gambling Research that made the CAGI possible include the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre, Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch of British Columbia, Ministere de la Sante et des Services Sociaux du Quebec, Manitoba Gaming Control Commission, Nova Scotia Gaming Foundation, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, and the Alberta Gaming Research Institute.

Researchers interested in acquiring the CAGI instrument can contact the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse at info@ccsa.ca

