

Youths gamble away the future?

Study says betting as serious as drugs or unsafe sex

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Youth gambling isn't as big a concern to Canadian parents as other activities like unsafe sex and drug use, according to a new study.

Now, researchers are hoping to change that.

The "Parents as Partners" study, released yesterday, is the first of its kind in the world to examine parental awareness of youth gambling, researchers said.

"Canada is a world leader in researching and understanding gambling behaviours, and this study looking at parents of teens is a global first," said Dr. Jeff Derevensky, Co-Director of the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviours at McGill University.

Conducted by research firm Decode and McGill University, the study interviewed 2,700 Canadian parents and found that of the concerns parents have about their kids, gambling ranks last.

Only 40% of parents cited gambling as a concern, researchers said, describing that number as low compared to 87% of parents who cited drug use, 82% of parents who mentioned alcohol use, 81% who mentioned drinking and driving, and 64% who cited excessive video game playing.

"Parents have an important role to play here," said Eric Meerkamper, president of Decode. "We also found that gambling as a social issue for youth really doesn't sit on their radar, compared to a number of other (issues) -- drinking and driving, drugs, other activities. Gambling as an issue is really low on the radar."

Parents are a primary source of lottery tickets for underage youth, the study found.