

For Immediate Release

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One-in-five Ontarians Play Poker for Money

*Responsible Gambling Council Poker Poll Shows Younger Poker Players
Are Playing More Poker, More Often*

One-in-five Ontarians play poker for money and just as many are concerned that a friend or family member may be headed toward a gambling problem, according to the ***Responsible Gambling Council Poker Poll***. The poll was conducted by Ipsos-Reid.

The poll results, which were released today, revealed that more than one-third (37%) of young adults aged 18-34 play poker for money. Nearly half of 18-34 year olds say they are playing more poker today than two years ago. They are also playing more frequently, with almost a quarter of those who play poker, playing once a week or more often.

Young Poker Players More Likely to Develop a Gambling Problem

“While actual gambling participation is decreasing across all age groups, there is one exception to that trend — the significant growth in popularity of online poker among younger people. It is a cause for concern because this age group spends the most time online and is the most likely to get into trouble with gambling,” explains Dr. Jon Kelly, CEO, Responsible Gambling Council. Dr. Kelly says the newly released poll data is consistent with the Council’s ***Gambling and Problem Gambling in Ontario 2005*** prevalence study (released September, 2006), which measured the gambling behaviours of a sample of 3604 Ontario adults.

According to that study, participation in online poker among adults aged 18-24 rose from 1.4 per cent in 2001 to 5.5 per cent by 2005 — an increase of almost 400 per cent. The prevalence study also showed that 6.9 per cent of young adults in Ontario have moderate to severe gambling problems, which is more than double the provincial average of 3.4 per cent.

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Four Per Cent of 18-34-year olds Believe They Could Play Poker for A Living

“According to the Responsible Gambling Council Poker Poll, 16 per cent of those aged 18-34 believe that poker is a good way to earn extra money,” says Laurie Bell, the Council’s Director of Prevention Programs. “And even more disturbing is the fact that 4 per cent believe they could earn a living playing poker. It’s this risky way of thinking about poker and the glamorization of the game that could contribute to a gambling problem.”

The public apparently shares the Responsible Gambling Council’s concern. In fact, according to the Poker Poll, a whopping 69 per cent of Ontarians believe that playing poker for money online is a problem today — while 67 per cent believe poker playing in casinos or bars is also cause for concern. And this worry extends to the poker players themselves: 6 per cent admit they sometimes get concerned about the amount of poker they are playing and 18 per cent are worried about a friend or family member.

”If you are worried about the amount of time and money you spend playing poker online or are concerned about a friend or family member, the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline (1-888-230-3505) is available to offer support 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” says Ms. Bell who encourages people with questions or concerns to call.

How much Poker is Too Much?

According to the Responsible Gambling Council Poker Poll, of the 21 per cent of adults who report playing poker, 21 per cent play once a year or less frequently; 22 per cent play every couple of months; 11 per cent play once a month; 11 per cent play once every couple of weeks.

The survey shows that 16 per cent of Ontario poker players are playing once a week or more often — which breaks out as 7 per cent of adults 35 years or older and 24 per cent of young adults 18-34.

So how much poker is too much? When should you be concerned?

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“There is no absolute answer to that question, but there are many warning signs to look for,” says Dr. Kelly. “Most people who gamble for entertainment spend about one to two per cent of their annual income on gambling. If you start getting above that range, you start raising the risks. Other warning signs include feeling guilty about your gambling, spending more and more time playing poker and trying to cut back and failing. If you are experiencing any of these scenarios, you may be at risk of developing a gambling problem.”

The Responsible Gambling Council Poker Poll — Methodology

The Poker Poll was conducted in Spring 2006 (February 21 through March 2, 2006) through a random telephone survey of 1003 respondents aged 18 years or older. The sample was weighted to ensure a regional and age/sex composition that reflects that of the actual Ontario population according to Census data. Results are considered accurate to within +/- 3 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The Responsible Gambling Council

The Responsible Gambling Council is an independent, non-profit organization committed to problem gambling prevention. RGC designs and delivers highly effective awareness programs. The Council promotes the identification and adoption of best practices in problem gambling prevention through research and information dissemination.

About 60 per cent of the Council's problem gambling prevention awareness programs are concentrated on helping to educate and caution young people about the realities of gambling.

For more information about the Responsible Gambling Council Poker Poll and for more information and assistance with a gambling problem, please visit

www.responsiblegambling.org or call the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-888-230-3505.