



Mott Poll Report

January 22, 2024
Volume 44
Issue 5

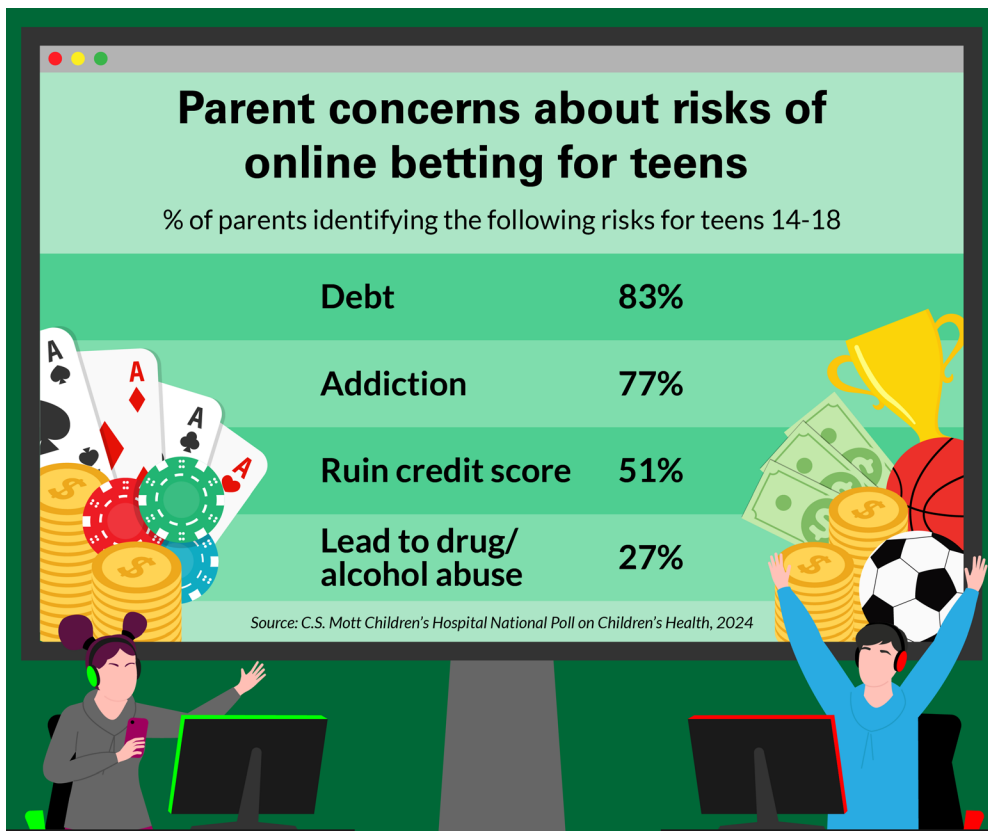
Parent Awareness of Online Betting among Teens

With the expansion of online gambling, teens and young adults have easy access to a variety of betting and gambling options, yet there is little regulation or conversation around this problem. The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents of teens 14-18 years about online betting.

One-third of parents (31%) say that they or another adult in their household participate in online, in-person, or social betting, and 63% say they have seen or heard ads for online sports or casino betting in the past year. Over half of parents (55%) do not know their state's legal age for online betting. Two-thirds of parents (67%) think the legal age for online betting should be 21 years, while 22% think age 18-20 years; 11% feel online betting should not be legal at any age. Only 2% of parents think their teen has used an online betting platform, which was higher among parents of teen boys than girls (3% vs 0.4%). Most parents (55%) think they would definitely know if their teen was betting online; 30% think they might know and 16% think they would probably not know. Two-thirds of parents (69%) report their teen has a bank account, debit card and/or credit card in their own name.

One-quarter of parents (25%) have talked with their teen about some aspect of online betting, including risks (18%), why they are against it (12%), why there are so many ads (4%) and how to win (2%). Many parents are uncertain whether online betting is more addictive than in-person gambling at a casino (44% agree, 12% disagree, 45% unsure), that social betting makes youth more likely to engage in online betting (45% agree, 14% disagree, 42% unsure), or that it's too easy for teens to open an online betting account (29% agree, 8% disagree, 63% unsure).

Parents feel the risks of online betting for youth or young adults are that they will get into debt (83%), develop a gambling addiction (77%), or ruin their credit score (51%), or that online betting may lead to drug or alcohol abuse (27%). Strategies that parents feel would be very effective in minimizing the risks of online betting for youth or young adults include restricting betting after a certain amount is lost (43%), offering a "parent view" option to monitor online betting accounts (38%), verifying legal age with photo ID to open an online betting account (33%), limiting the amount that can be bet within a certain timeframe (33%), and paying treatment costs for youth or young adults who develop gambling addictions (25%).



Report Highlights

Over half of parents do not know their state's legal age for online betting.

1 in 4 parents have talked with their teen about online gambling.

1 in 6 parents think they would probably not know if their teen was betting online.

Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC (Ipsos) for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in August 2023 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults who were parents of at least one child age 0-18 years living in their household (n=2,044). Adults were selected from Ipsos's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 62% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 923 parents with at least one child age 14-18. The margin of error for results presented in this report is ±1 to 3 percentage points.

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics, and the Susan B. Meister Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center.

Findings from the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health do not represent the opinions of the University of Michigan. The University of Michigan reserves all rights over this material.

C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Co-Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Co-Director: Susan J. Woolford, MD, MPH
Contributor: Gary L. Freed, MD, MPH
Design Lead: Sara L. Schultz, MPS
Data Analyst: Acham Gebremariam, MS
Poll Manager: Dianne C. Singer, MPH



**SUSAN B. MEISTER
CHILD HEALTH EVALUATION
AND RESEARCH CENTER**
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

Implications

Gambling advertisements have amassed a large media presence, with frequent ads on TV, delivered through social media, and in-person at sporting events. The ads feature entertainers and sports figures that are popular with teens and young adults; bonuses and promotions imply that you can play with no risk of losing. Teens may be especially susceptible to these ads, which are often marketed to convey feelings of excitement, endless possibilities, and social credit. In addition, many online gambling options will seem familiar to teens. Online sports betting is similar to fantasy football leagues and college basketball tournament pools that are popular with sports fans. Online sweepstakes and social casino games offer rewards, colorful graphics, and other features of popular video and smartphone games to encourage continued use.

Since a 2018 US Supreme Court ruling, over half of states have legalized some type of online gambling. State laws vary in types of online gambling allowed and the minimum age to participate. Although most state laws restrict online sport and casino betting to 21 years or older, there are loopholes. Many online betting websites don't require a log in or proof of age, meaning anyone can create an online betting account. Even on websites with age restrictions, underage users may be able to access online betting by lying about their age or using the account of an older person. Moreover, licensed offshore sportsbooks and casinos operate outside US jurisdictions, which allow online betting regardless of state restrictions.

This expanded accessibility has increased exposure to the risks of betting. Yet in this Mott Poll, just two percent of parents believe their teen has used an online betting platform, while more than half felt they would definitely know if their teen has been betting online. Parents may be underestimating their teen's involvement. Online betting can be difficult to detect because a teen can easily log in on their smartphone or other personal device, delete the search history, hide the app or use it discretely. Two-thirds of parents reported their teen has a bank account or debit/credit card in their own name that could be used to register for online betting platforms. It is likely that many teens could participate in online betting without their parents' knowledge.

The ubiquitous gambling ads may offer an opportunity for parents to have open, productive conversations with their teen about the risks of gambling and its prevalence in their social circles. Only one in four parents said they have talked with their teen about some aspect of online betting. Whether or not the child is actually using betting platforms, ongoing conversations may help the child navigate the social pressures and media presence of gambling platforms.

Parents will want to consider their approach to talking with their teen. Some will express their opposition to gambling in any form, as a matter of principle. Other parents might compare the risks of gambling offered through common fundraisers (e.g., raffles, bingo), card games, or friendly wagers, with the unique risks posed by online betting. Parents can help teens understand the strategies used by gambling sites to lure people into betting more frequently and in larger amounts.

In this Mott Poll, parents expressed concern about going into debt or developing a gambling addiction as a result of online betting, but were uncertain whether online betting is more addictive than in-person gambling at a casino. A key difference is that in-person gambling is available only when the individual is at a casino or other betting location; in contrast, online gambling is always available. Furthermore, once a teen or young adult is registered with an online gambling platform, they may receive "push notifications" – messages from the platform encouraging them to continue betting. This makes it particularly difficult to get away from the temptation of betting.

Parents may want to check their state's regulations for online betting, contacting their elected officials to express support for policies they feel would be helpful, such as age verification requirements. Additionally, if parents have concerns about ill effects of online betting—whether for a teen or an adult family member—they should seek help immediately. States have gambling hotlines that can point families to treatment for gambling addiction.