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Betting on Boys:

Understanding Gambling Among Adolescent Boys

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Bezos Family Foundation

Jennifer Caldwell and John H.N. Fisher

2026

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Understanding Gambling Among Adolescent Boys

Credits

Data collection:	SSRS
Report writing:	Michael B. Robb and Supreet Mann
Designers:	Mina Cheong and Chris Arth
Copy editors:	Christopher Dare and Jennifer Robb
Communications and Marketing:	Christian Medina Beltz, Kirsten Olsen Cahill, Lisa Cohen, Edda Collins Coleman, Brittany Garcia, Erika Radhansson, Brian Ray, Owen Stidman
Advisers:	David Bell, MD MPH, Columbia University Medical Center
	Lia Nower, JD, PhD, Rutgers University
	Desmond Upton Patton, MSW, PhD, University of Pennsylvania
	Christopher Pepper, San Francisco Unified School District
	Jérémie Richard, PhD, University of Ottawa
	Isaac Rose-Berman, American Institute for Boys and Men
	Niobe Way, PhD, New York University

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Letter from Our Founder

Anyone raising a son is all too familiar with the rhythms of digital life. Between the nonstop notifications, ceaseless social media scrolling, and late-night gaming sessions, boys are figuring out who they are online. As parents, we love to see our sons connect, but we're uneasy, too. And our concern isn't irrational—the data backs it up.

Common Sense Media's newest research revealed something even we didn't expect: More than a third of boys are gambling before they're even old enough to vote.

"Betting on Boys: Understanding Gambling Among Adolescent Boys," our second report about boys' digital lives, gives us a close, comprehensive look at how and why boys gamble. We discovered that for boys today, gambling doesn't happen at casinos or card tables. It lives in sports betting and inside the games our sons already love—in loot boxes, skin cases, and other reward systems that blur the line between playing and paying—and it's being pushed to them on the social media sites they use every day. Nearly half of boys see posts about gambling, yet only 14% actually went looking for them. For most, these posts simply appeared alongside everything else they see online.



I know this can feel overwhelming. But here's the good news: As parents, we are perfectly positioned to help our sons navigate the digital Wild West.

You don't need to become a gaming expert or monitor every click. Instead, ask your son to show you his favorite game. Be genuinely curious about how the rewards work. Which features cost real money? What happens when friends pressure him to spend? Starting these conversations early, and returning to them as kids grow, can help build awareness and set expectations before risky patterns take hold.

Of course, protecting your kids shouldn't rest entirely on your shoulders. We're pushing hard for common-sense safeguards like age verification, advertising rules that actually protect minors, and accountability for how gambling-related material is promoted in digital spaces used by kids. We learned some hard lessons from the rise of social media, and we can't make the same mistakes with online gambling.

The reality is that we're at an inflection point. We can either let gambling become normalized during boys' most vulnerable developmental years, or we can act now—with education, safeguards, and real accountability.



Jim Steyer
CEO, Founder, and Board Co-Chair
Common Sense Media

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Overview

This study shares results from a nationally representative survey of 1,017 boys age 11 to 17 across the United States in July 2025 to understand boys' exposure to gambling activities. Our research considers the influence of peers, family, and social media on gambling and betting activities among boys.

Definitions: For this report, we examine three categories of gambling and gambling-related activities: online gaming–related, sports-related, and traditional gambling.

Online gaming-related gambling: Activities that occur within video game environments or involve game-related items and currency. Some of these activities, such as the purchase of loot boxes, are not always legally or academically defined as gambling. However, they share key characteristics, such as risk, reward, and uncertainty, may shape later gambling habits, and are often described as gambling-like. These include:

- Exchanging real money for random, chance-based rewards in games (e.g., loot boxes, gacha)
- Trading or betting using in-game items acquired with real money (e.g., buying and trading skins)

Traditional gambling activities: Conventional gambling that exists independently of video game platforms. These include:

- Poker with friends or family for real money (online or in person)
- In-person betting with friends for real money (e.g., non-poker card games, dice games, dares)
- Online gambling sites with real money (e.g., slots, roulette, blackjack, poker with strangers)
- Lottery or scratch-off tickets purchased with one's own money (including digital lottery apps)

Sports-related gambling:

- Season- or tournament-length contests for money (e.g., March Madness brackets, fantasy leagues)
- Sports betting, daily fantasy sports, or esports betting for real money (e.g., predicting whether a team will win, or how many points a player will score)
- In-game betting for real money (bets placed after a game has started)

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Key Findings

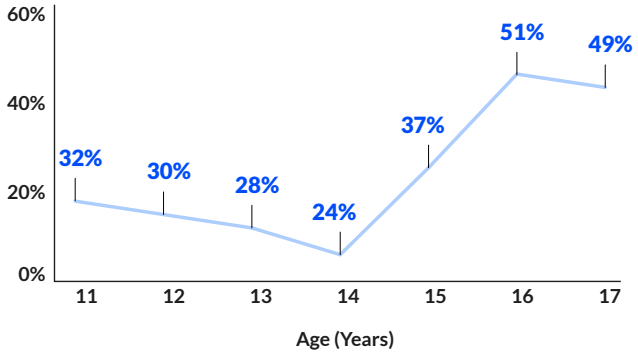
1.

Thirty-six percent of boys age 11 to 17 report gambling in the past year, rising significantly from 32% of boys age 11 to 49% of those age 17.

Among those who report participating in gambling, 65% limited their participation to a single activity, while 35% engaged in two or more different gambling activities. Older teens (age 14 to 17) are far more likely to report having friends who gamble (40% vs. 25% of younger boys, age 11 to 13), and gambling rates climb alongside peer involvement. Boys whose friends mostly gamble show extremely high participation (84%), compared with just 17% of those with no gambling friends.

Figure A: Percent of boys age 11 to 17 who gambled in the past 12 months, by age

Base: Total adolescent boys (N = 1,017). Differences between 16- and 17-year-olds and all younger ages (11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) are significant.



2.

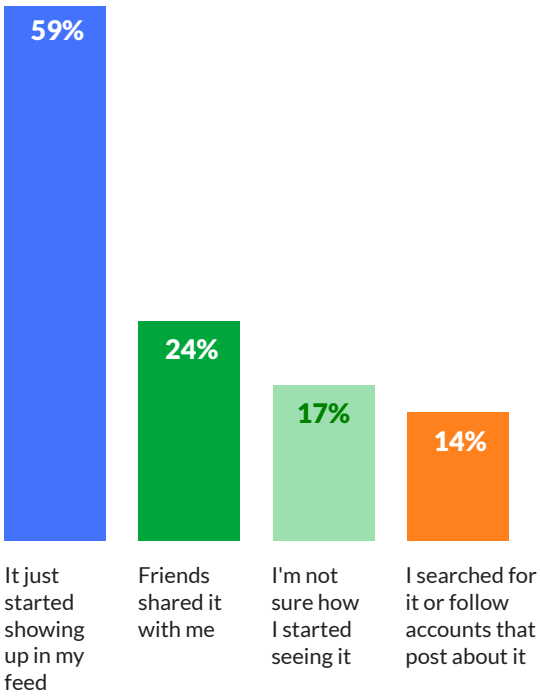
Nearly half (45%) of adolescent boys who gamble also see online gambling content, mostly through algorithmic exposure (59%), and those who watch more frequently spend more on gambling than nonviewers ($72 vs. $33).

Forty-five percent of boys who gamble report viewing gambling videos or streams online. While 14% report actively searching for gambling content or following accounts that post about it, most exposure is passive: 59% say the content "just started showing up" in their feed, and 24% encountered it through peer sharing. Among boys who report losing $51 or more in the past year, three-quarters (74%) watch gambling content, with nearly one-third (30%) watching often, compared to only half (48%) of boys with smaller losses (9% watch often).

Boys who watch gambling content "sometimes or often" are more likely to overspend: 28% say they have spent more than planned, compared with just 5% of nonviewers, and spend significantly more on average ($72 vs. $33 for non-viewers). Viewers are also more likely to cite winning money (41% vs. 18% of nonviewers), friends gambling (26% vs. 5%), and influencers (14% vs. 1%) as motivations for gambling.

Figure B: How boys started seeing content about gambling or betting

Base: Total adolescent boys who watched online videos/streams about gambling and participated in gambling activities (n = 188).



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3.

Boys who gamble spend an average of $54 annually, with a stark divide between higher-loss gamblers and lower-loss gamblers.

Among boys who spent money on gambling in the past year, the average amount spent was $54. On average, 11- to 13-year-olds spent $45, while 14- to 17-year-olds spent $58. However, spending varies significantly based on gambling frequency and content consumption. Boys who gamble at least monthly spent an average of $68, compared to $33 for those who gamble less than once per month.

A stark divide appears between higher-loss and lower-loss gamblers: Boys who reported losses of $51 or more in the past year spent an average of $159—more than eight times the $19 average among those with smaller losses.

4.

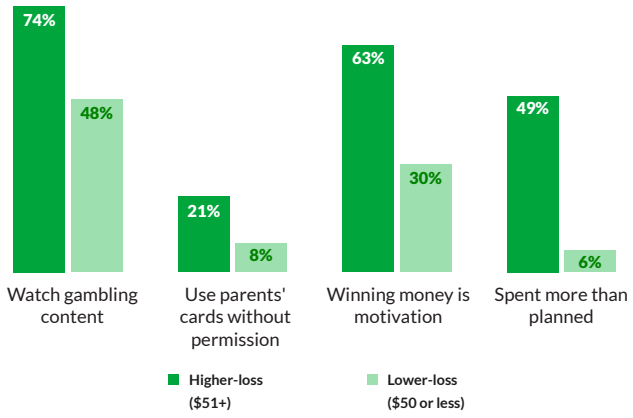
Boys with higher gambling losses show dramatically different patterns of engagement, spending, and motivation, from what they watch to using parents' cards without permission.

Among boys who gamble, those who report losing $51 or more in the past year are more likely to view more gambling content and have a wider range of motivations for gambling. Almost three-quarters (74%) of higher-loss gamblers watch gambling content, with nearly one-third (30%) watching often, compared to only half (48%) of boys with smaller losses (9% watch often).

Additionally, higher-loss gamblers are nearly three times more likely to use their parents' debit or credit cards without permission (21% vs. 8% of lower-loss gamblers). Higher-loss gamblers are far more likely to cite winning money as a motivation (63% vs. 30% of lower-loss gamblers), as well as social and promotional influences: 34% say they gambled because their friends do (vs. 15%), 18% pointed to influencers (vs. 5%), and 14% to ads (vs. 6%). Nearly half (49%) of higher-loss gamblers acknowledged spending more than they planned, compared to just 6% of those with smaller losses.

Figure C: Patterns of engagement, spending, and motivation among higher- and lower-loss adolescent gamblers

Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353).



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5.

Online gaming is the most common context in which boys encounter gambling-like systems, with 23% of all boys participating in game-based activities that mimic gambling.

Online gaming environments expose boys to chance-based systems that closely mirror gambling. Twenty-three percent of all boys take part in gaming-related gambling, and participation rises with age. Among 14- to 17-year-olds, 27% engage in online gaming-related gambling, significantly more than the 18% of boys age 11 to 13. Among boys who gambled in the past year, nearly two-thirds (64%) participated in gaming-related gambling, making it the most prevalent form reported.

6.

The majority of boys who engage in gaming-related gambling spend real money and do so regularly.

More than half (54%) of boys who participate in gaming-related gambling spent real money on random in-game rewards, such as loot boxes, gacha pulls, or skin cases. These activities are also habitual: Of boys who purchase chance-based rewards, 53% do so monthly or more, and 55% who trade or bet using in-game items participate at least monthly. Among boys who gamble (across any gambling type), 28% say they do so because it's part of the games they like to play, and 21% say they gamble to acquire powerful or rare in-game items or to unlock restricted elements, motivations that align closely with online gambling mechanics. Fun or excitement remains the top motivator overall (38%).

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7.

Twelve percent of boys participate in sports-related gambling.

Twelve percent of boys say they have engaged in sports-related gambling. Older teens (age 14 to 17) report slightly higher involvement (14% vs. 10%), though this gap is not statistically significant.

Among boys who gamble, one-third (34%) participate in sports-related gambling, including season-long contests (23%), sports betting or fantasy sports (9%), and in-game betting (6%). Sports-related gambling is also highly frequent: 60% of boys who participate do so monthly or more, with frequency rising further among higher-loss gamblers (89%). Digital and traditional media may reinforce gambling, as nearly 6 in 10 boys see gambling ads during live or streaming sports (57%).

8.

Twelve percent of all boys participate in traditional, non-digital gambling, such as poker or the lottery, with older teens (age 14 to 17) participating significantly more compared with younger boys (age 11 to 13) (15% vs. 8%).

Among boys who gamble, one-third (34%) engaged in traditional gambling in the past year, most commonly in-person betting with friends (18%) or purchasing lottery or scratch-off tickets (14%).

Frequency patterns resemble other categories: 61% of boys who participate in traditional gambling do so monthly or more. Family involvement is common: 25% of boys have played lottery or scratch-off tickets with family. Boys who have gambled in the past year are also much more likely to report gambling with family members (54% vs. 22% of non-gamblers), suggesting that family contexts often overlap with traditional gambling experiences.

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Table A: Percent of boys age 11 to 17 who participated in each type of gambling activity, by age group

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows and within demographic (age). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

	Total			Gambled in the Past Year		
	All Adolescent Boys *N = 1,017*	11- to 13-Year-Olds[a] *n = 482*	14- to 17-Year-Olds[b] *n = 535*	Total *n = 353*	11- to 13-Year-Olds[c] *n = 148*	14- to 17-Year-Olds[d] *n = 205*
Online Gaming-Related Gambling (NET)	**23%**	18%	27%[a]	**64%**	60%	65%
Traditional Gambling (NET)	**12%**	8%	15%[a]	**34%**	29%	38%
Sports-Related Gambling (NET)	**12%**	10%	14%	**34%**	35%	33%

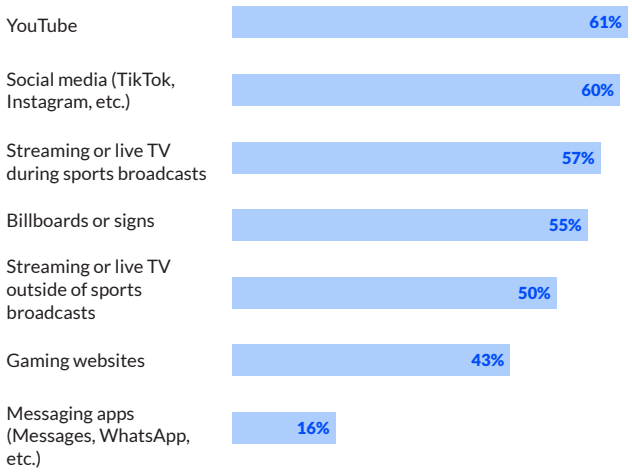
9.

Six in 10 boys see gambling ads on YouTube and social media, though most say ads don't prompt them to gamble.

Sixty-one percent of boys have seen gambling ads on YouTube, and 60% on social media, while 57% notice them during live or streaming sports broadcasts. Traditional channels also reach boys frequently, with 55% seeing billboards or signs, and 50% encountering TV ads outside of sports. The vast majority (93%) say that ads do not prompt them to gamble, but 7% of boys report gambling after seeing ads.

Figure D: Where boys see gambling ads

Base: Total adolescent boys (N = 1,017).



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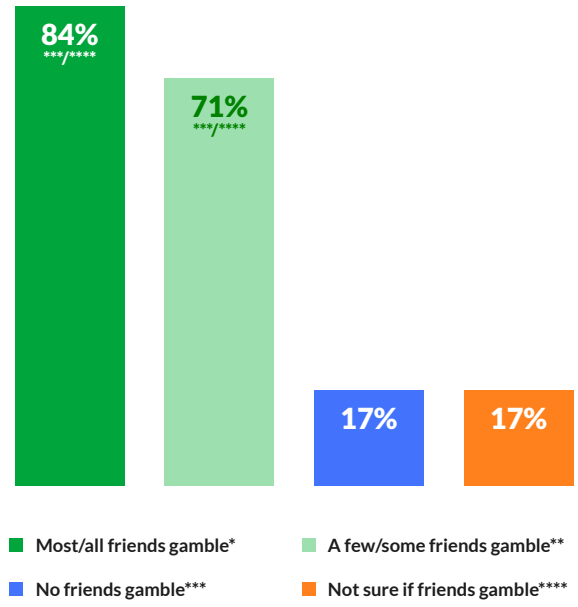
10.

Peer influence is strongly associated with whether boys gamble and how extensively they participate.

An overwhelming 84% of boys whose friends mostly or all gamble report gambling themselves, compared with just 17% of those with no gambling friends. Peer influence also shapes the breadth of gambling: 57% of boys with mostly gambling friends participate in two to three different gambling activities, compared with just 22% among those with only a few gambling friends and almost none among boys without gambling peers. Boys with gambling peers are also more likely to engage in every category (gaming-related, sports-related, and traditional gambling) and tend to participate more frequently.

Figure E: Percent of boys who participated in at least one gambling activity, by peer involvement

*Base: Most/all friends gamble (n = 58), A few/some friends gamble (n = 275), No friends gamble (n = 338), Not sure if friends gamble (n = 345). */**/***/**** indicates a significant difference between most/all, few/some, no friends gamble, or unsure if friends gamble.*



11.

While most boys deny significant harm from gambling, 27% of those who gamble report negative effects, such as stress or conflict, with frequent gamblers and those in gambling peer networks most affected.

Two-thirds (66%) of boys who gamble say they have not really experienced problems due to gambling, but 27% report at least some negative effects, including stress or conflict with parents. Additionally, 40% report some level of regret or wished they hadn't participated.

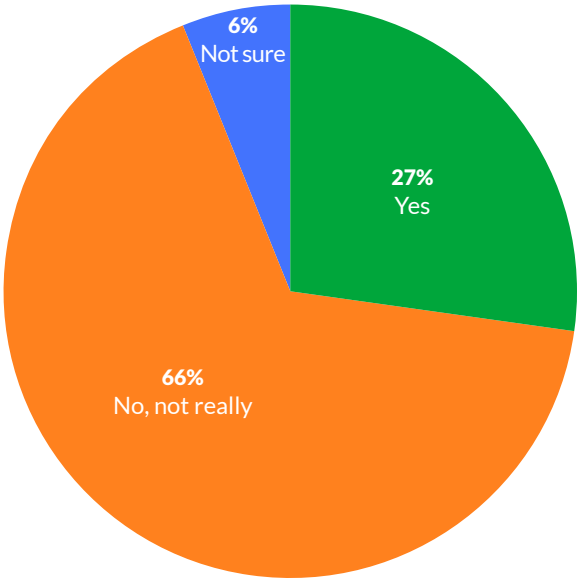
One-third (33%) of those who gamble at least monthly report experiencing problems, compared to only 19% of those who gamble less frequently (less than monthly). Half (52%) of boys with friends who mostly or all gamble report downsides, compared with 28% of those with a few gambling friends and only 15% of those with no gambling peers.

"A friend of mine was either hacked or he was actually doing sports betting, and he showed all the money that he was making. I clicked on the link he had on Instagram so I can see how I can make money too. After going through the process, I felt guilty."

(16-year-old)

Figure F: Percent of boys who report negative effects from gambling

Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.



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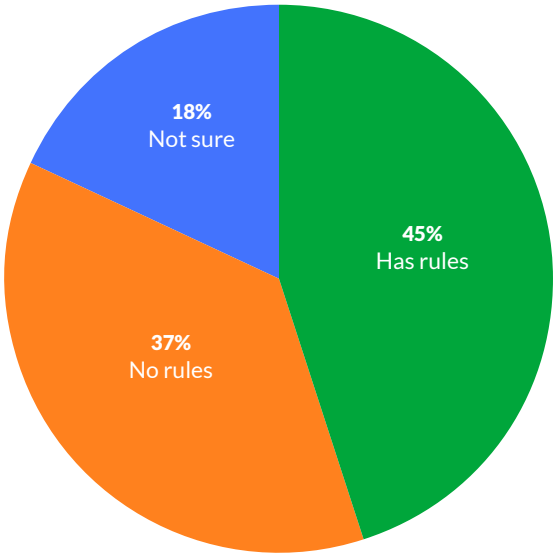
12.

One-third of boys (34%) have gambled with family members.

One-third of boys (34%) have gambled with family members, most commonly by playing lottery tickets or scratch-off games (25%), and by participating in season-long sports wagers, like March Madness or fantasy leagues (8%). Participation varies significantly by income: 45% of boys in households earning at least $100,00 per year report gambling with family, compared with 25% in lower-income households. Boys who gamble with family are more likely to have access to parental funds for gambling: 30% use parents' cards with permission. They are also more likely to gamble independently as well (54% of gamblers vs. 22% of non-gamblers). Overall, fewer than half of adolescent boys (45%) say that their families have rules about gambling.

Figure G: Percent of boys with family rules about gambling

Base: Total adolescent boys (N = 1,017).



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Introduction

Gambling has become increasingly visible and accessible in young people's lives, reshaping the environments where children and teens learn, play, and socialize. Over the past decade, shifts in U.S. gambling policy, rapid expansion of online sports betting, and the convergence of gaming and gambling-like features within digital platforms have created new contexts in which adolescents encounter opportunities to bet or think about betting.

This environment is critically important because adolescence is a developmental period characterized by elevated risk for problematic gambling behavior (Richard & King, 2023). This vulnerability is linked to how ongoing brain development affects decision-making and impulse control, corresponding with a natural tendency toward increases in risk-taking and elevated reward sensitivity during these years.

This study examines how those changes intersect with the daily experiences of boys age 11 to 17. It is the second in a series of reports by Common Sense Media on the digital lives of adolescent boys (Robb & Mann, 2025).

The Changing Legal and Commercial Landscape

The gambling environment in the United States has evolved in recent years, especially since the widespread legalization of online sports betting. Since the Supreme Court's 2018 decision allowing states to legalize sports wagering, betting platforms and advertisements have proliferated. Public attitudes are shifting as well: In 2025, 43% of U.S. adults said that the widespread legalization of sports betting is a "bad thing" for society, up from 34% just three years earlier (Gramlich, 2025).

Recent scandals across major U.S. sports, including the indictment of two Cleveland Guardians pitchers for allegedly manipulating their performance as part of a betting scheme, and an NBA investigation requesting records from players and teams over illegal gambling allegations, illustrate how concerns about sports integrity have intensified (ESPN, 2025; Nam, 2025).

Today, sports wagering is accompanied by aggressive advertising and highly accessible mobile betting apps. These shifts create a commercial ecosystem in which children and teens are increasingly exposed to gambling messaging long before they reach the legal age to participate. In turn, some online platforms have started adjusting their policies to address the issue of minors seeing gambling content. For example, in 2025 YouTube tightened its rules to restrict gambling and gambling-like content from children younger than 18.

Developmental Considerations for Adolescents

Adolescence is a period marked by rapid neurological, cognitive, and social changes. Research highlights several developmental factors that may make teens, particularly boys, more vulnerable to engaging in or experimenting with gambling behaviors, including heightened sensation-seeking and interest in novel experiences, developing emotional regulation skills, greater susceptibility to peer influence, increasing independence in their digital lives, and ongoing development of brain systems related to risk evaluation and impulse control (Potenza et al., 2025). These characteristics do not make gambling involvement inevitable, but they underscore why early exposure deserves careful study.

Forms of Gambling Relevant to Youth

Youth today may encounter or participate in several types of gambling, each presenting unique risks exacerbated by digital technologies:

1. **Online gaming-related gambling (e.g., loot boxes and simulated gambling):** The convergence of gaming and gambling features has led to the "gamblification" of gaming environments. Digital gaming environments incorporate features that function similarly to gambling. These include loot boxes (where purchasing virtual items yields randomly generated rewards of varying value for real-world money or in-game currency), microtransactions that blur the line between gameplay and spending, and simulated casino games within social platforms or free-to-play apps.

   Empirical research shows consistent associations between purchasing loot boxes and developing symptoms of problematic gambling, with the relationship

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typically stronger for adolescents than adults (Gainsbury et al., 2025). This exposure supports the "gateway hypothesis," suggesting that activities with gambling-like features may increase the risk of later problem gambling through priming and normalization effects (Delfabbro & King, 2020). Although these mechanics do not always involve real money, they introduce gambling-like structures and reward systems that may shape attitudes, expectations, and spending habits within games.

2. **Sports betting (including online and fantasy sports):** The rapid legalization and widespread availability of online sports betting since 2018 has resulted in aggressive advertising and media saturation that promotes betting as a fun, easy, and common daily habit (Cohen & Rose-Berman, 2025; Flanagan, 2025). This normalization can be particularly appealing to boys who may overestimate their advantage due to their knowledge of sports (Richard & King, 2023).

   The accessibility of online platforms allows for limitless, frictionless gambling via mobile devices, eliminating traditional barriers like travel time and geography, and enabling participation at any time of day.

3. **Traditional gambling:** While digital forms dominate the risk spectrum, traditional activities, like card games, informal betting with friends, and lotteries, remain potential entry points. One mechanism for early normalization is family participation, such as buying lottery tickets, which may inadvertently convey to youth that gambling is a routine social behavior (Potenza et al., 2025).

Why We Study Gambling in Adolescence

Early gambling behaviors are not deterministically predictive of future problems, but longitudinal and cross-sectional research shows that gambling is common among adolescents, even though most legal gambling is restricted to adults. Rates of problem gambling are estimated to be two to four times higher among adolescents than adults (Potenza et al., 2019, 2025).

Additionally, early exposure to gambling or simulated gambling can be part of a longer developmental pattern, interacting with social, emotional, and environmental factors in ways that may elevate risk for some youth. Today's online gambling ecosystem is highly accessible through smartphones, filled with persuasive design cues that resemble video games, and saturated with advertising that reaches teens across social media and streaming platforms. These experiences often blur the line between gaming and gambling, exposing adolescents to gambling-like mechanics even when they are not seeking them out. The convergence of gaming, social media, and gambling has created new pathways for exposure not seen in prior generations of teens (Brooks & Clark, 2019; Richard & King, 2023; Rizzo et al., 2023).

The Current Study

This study presents a comprehensive examination of 1,017 boys age 11 to 17, surveyed in July 2025 using a nationally representative sampling approach designed to reflect the experiences of boys across diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic contexts, and geographic regions. The research explores how boys encounter gambling across the digital and physical spaces they move through daily, from video games and social media to peer groups, family environments, and online video platforms.

The survey assessed boys' experiences across several key domains:

- Participation in different forms of gambling, including:
  - Online or app-based gambling
  - Sports betting
  - Traditional, in-person gambling activities
- Digital gaming behaviors with gambling-like mechanics, including loot boxes, gacha, microtransactions, and simulated casino games
- Exposure to gambling content, such as advertisements, influencers, online videos, or gambling-themed social media content
- Attitudes and social context, including perceived norms, peer involvement, family behaviors, and beliefs about gambling
- Engagement with digital platforms, including games, streaming, creators, and other online environments, where gambling-related messages may appear

Quotations woven throughout this report come from interviews with boys conducted during survey development, offering firsthand insight into how young people make sense of gambling in a rapidly changing media landscape.

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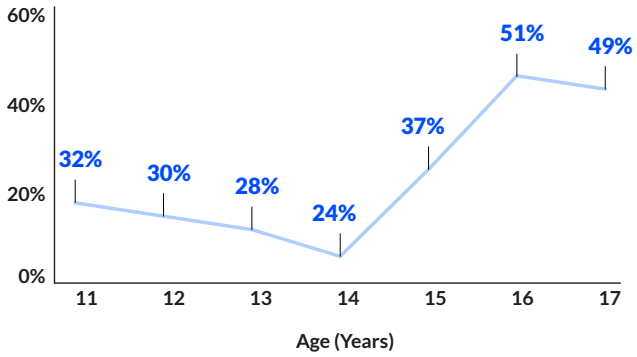
Main Report

Adolescent Boys, Gambling Behaviors, and Digital Influences

Thirty-six percent of adolescent boys report engaging in gambling or gambling-related activities at least once in the past year. Age differences are significant: 32% of boys age 11 report gambling, compared to 49% of those age 17. Gambling activity starts to increase considerably at age 15, and 16- and 17-year-olds demonstrate the highest levels of activity compared to the younger boys.

Figure 1: Percent of boys age 11 to 17 who gambled in the past 12 months, by age

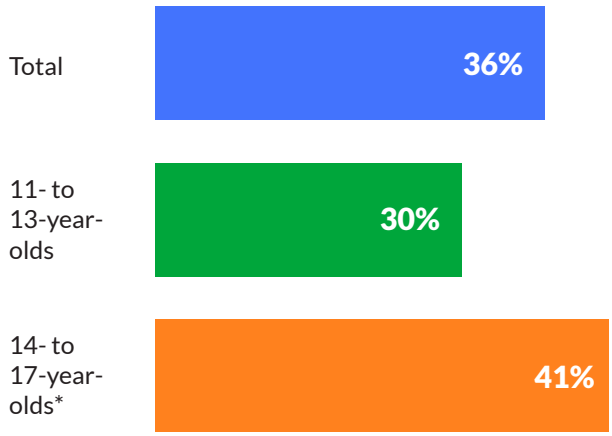
Base: Total adolescent boys (N = 1,017; 11-year-olds, n = 236; 12-year-olds, n = 120; 13-year-olds, n = 126; 14-year-olds, n = 133; 15-year-olds, n = 113; 16-year-olds, n = 133; 17-year-olds, n = 156). Differences between 16- and 17-year-olds and all younger ages (11, 12, 13, 14, and 15) are significant.



Peer engagement in gambling and betting further shaped participation. The highest rate of gambling is among boys who report that most or all of their friends gamble (84%), and the lowest is among those whose friends do not gamble or are unsure if their friends gamble (17% each).

Figure 2: Percent of boys who participated in gambling activity in the past 12 months

*Base: Total adolescent boys (N = 1,017; 11- to 13-year-olds, n = 482; 14- to 17-year-olds, n = 535). */** indicates a significant difference between the two age groups.*



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Older teens are more likely to report that their peers gamble, while younger boys perceive far less peer involvement. Forty percent of 14- to 17-year-old boys have at least a few friends who gamble, compared to 25% of 11- to 13-year-olds.

Across all boys surveyed, 4% say that most or all of their friends gamble, while 30% report that a few or some friends do. One-third (33%) say none of their friends gamble, and another third (33%) are unsure if their friends gamble.

Among 11- to 13-year-olds, just 3% report that most or all of their friends gamble, compared to 5% of 14- to 17-year-olds. Significantly more older boys than younger say a few or some of their friends gamble (35% vs. 22%). Younger boys are far more likely to report that none of their friends gamble (43%) compared to older teens (26%).

Figure 3: Percent of boys who participated in at least one gambling activity, by peer involvement

*Base: Most/all friends gamble (n = 58); A few/some friends gamble (n = 275); No friends gamble (n = 338); Not sure if friends gamble (n = 345). */**/***/**** indicates a significant difference between most/all, few/some, no friends gamble, or unsure if friends gamble.*

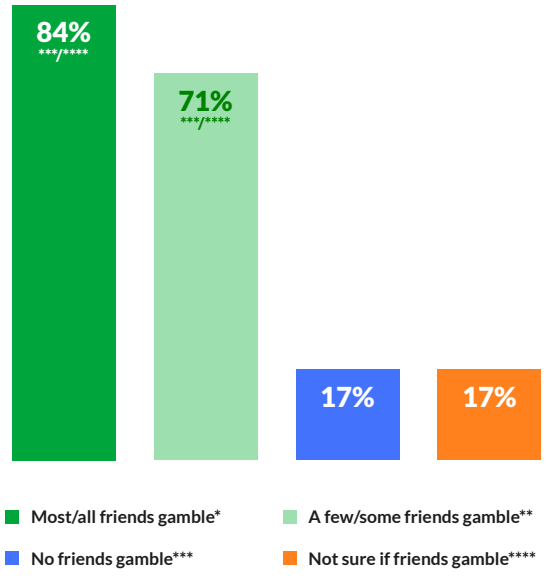

Table 1: Percent of boys who have friends that engage in gambling/betting activities, by age

Note: Columns tested a/b. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows and within demographic (age). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

		Age	
	Total	**11 to 13[a]**	**14 to 17[b]**
	N = 1,017	*n = 482*	*n = 535*
Most/all (NET)	**4%**	**3%**	**5%**
All of them	1%	1%	1%
Most of them	3%	2%	4%
A few/some (NET)	**30%**	**22%**	**35%[a]**
Some of them	8%	4%	12%[a]
A few of them	21%	18%	24%
None of them	33%	43%[b]	26%
Not sure	33%	33%	34%

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Drivers of Adolescent Boys' Gambling Behaviors

Fun and excitement are the entry points to gambling for most boys. Financial motives and social or media influences grow stronger among those who gamble more frequently, consume gambling content, or incur higher losses.

The most common motivation reported by adolescent boys for gambling is fun or excitement (38%). Equal proportions cited winning money (28%) and because it's part of the games they like to play (28%). Other motivations are less common but still noteworthy: 21% say they gambled to acquire powerful or rare in-game items or to unlock hidden elements, while 14% say they participated because their friends do. Fewer teens pointed to gambling as a response to boredom or stress (10%), the appeal of ads or social media (7%), or the influence of an online creator or influencer (6%).

"I only do things like that for fun. I feel like I have enough willpower to quit any time. I think it's very fun to do when you can limit yourself."

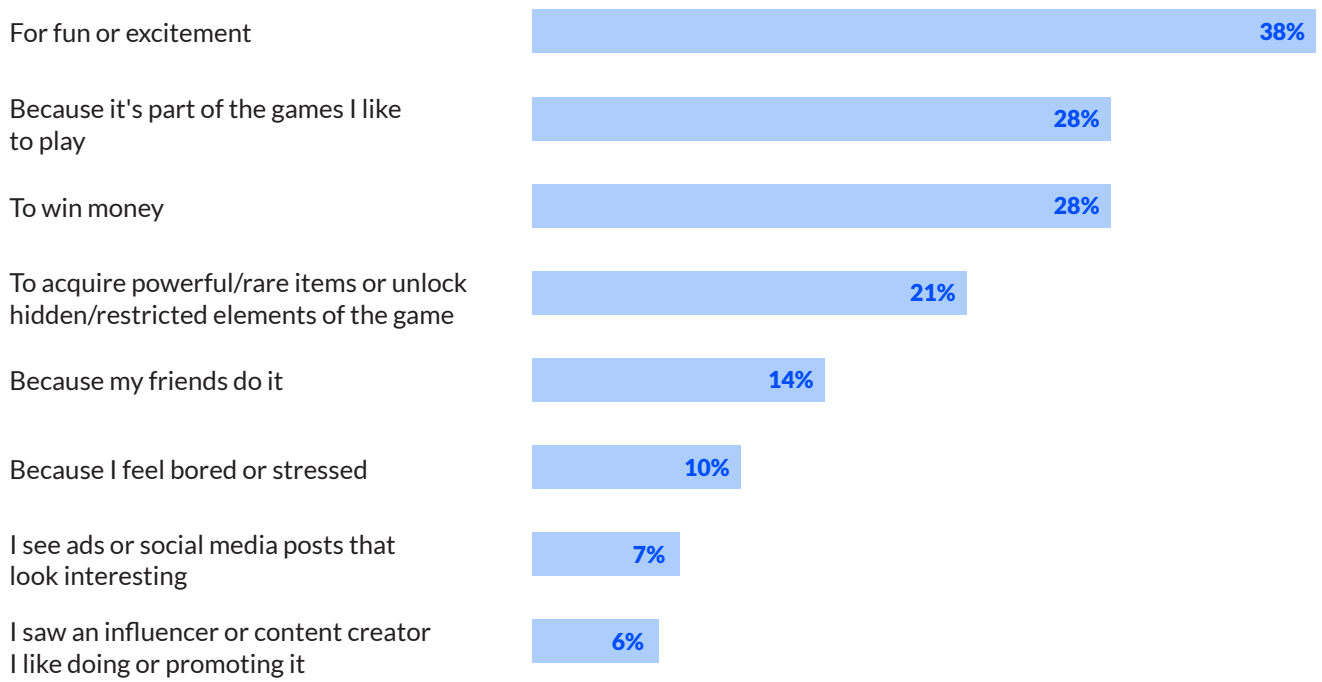
(16-year-old)

"I got rare skins and weapons. It feels good to have the items some players have or don't [have]."

(12-year-old)

Figure 4: Reason for engaging in betting or gambling activities

Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353).



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Frequent gamblers (more than once a month) are more likely to cite both fun or excitement (45% vs. 30% of less frequent gamblers) and winning money (35% vs. 20% of less frequent gamblers) as reasons to participate.

Those who watch gambling videos are more likely to cite both financial and social motivations compared to those who don't watch gambling videos. Among gambling video watchers, 41% say they gambled to win money compared to just 18% of nonwatchers, while 26% say they do so because their friends do (vs. 5% of non-watchers). In addition, 14% of video watchers say they were inspired by an influencer/content creator they like gambling or promoting gambling, compared to only 1% of nonwatchers.

There are also several notable differences in motivations for gambling between those who have lost more money in the past year and those who have lost $50 or less. Boys who lost $51 or more in the past year are far more likely to say they gamble to win money (63%) compared to those with smaller losses (30%).

Higher-loss gamblers are also significantly more likely to cite social and promotional influences compared to those who lost $50 or less in the past year: 34% say they gambled because their friends do (vs. 15% of lower-loss gamblers), and 18% because an influencer/content provider they like gambles or promotes it (vs. 5% of lower-loss gamblers).

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Table 2: Reasons for gambling, by frequency, online gambling content exposure, and losses

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d – e/f. Items with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$). Significance should be read across rows. Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

	Gambling Frequency		Watch Online Gambling Videos		Gambling Losses Last Year	
	Less Than Once a Month[a]	Once a Month or More[b]	Sometimes/ Often[c]	No[d]	$50 or Less[e]	$51 or More[f]
	n = 190	*n = 163*	*n = 188*	*n = 165*	*n = 171*	*n = 74*
For fun or excitement	30%	45%[a]	42%	35%	44%	50%
To win money	20%	35%[a]	41%[d]	18%	30%	63%[e]
Because it's part of the games I like to play	24%	31%	30%	26%	31%	34%
To acquire powerful/rare items or unlock hidden/restricted elements of the game	16%	26%	18%	24%	20%	36%
Because my friends do it	12%	16%	26%[d]	5%	15%	34%[e]
Because I feel bored or stressed	6%	13%	13%	8%	10%	20%
I saw an influencer or content creator I like doing or promoting it	3%	9%	14%[d]	1%	5%	18%[e]
I see ads or social media posts that look interesting	3%	10%	9%	5%	6%	14%

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Gambling Activities and the Impact of Peer Involvement

Gambling activities are split into three main categories:

Online gaming-related gambling: Activities that occur within video game environments or involve game-related items and currency. Some of these activities, such as the purchase of loot boxes, are not always legally or academically defined as gambling. However, they share key characteristics, such as risk, reward, and uncertainty, may shape later gambling habits, and are often described as gambling-like. These include:

- Exchanging real money for random, chance-based rewards in games (e.g., loot boxes, gacha)
- Trading or betting using in-game items acquired with real money (e.g., buying and trading skins)

Among adolescent boys who gambled in the past year, almost two-thirds (64%) participate in online gaming-related gambling, and the most common activity was exchanging real money for random rewards in games (54% of participants reported this). One in five (21%) engage in trading or betting using in-game items acquired with real money.

Traditional gambling activities: Conventional gambling that exists independently of video game platforms. These include:

- Poker with friends or family for real money (online or in person)
- In-person betting with friends for real money (e.g., non-poker card games, dice games, dares)
- Online gambling sites with real money (e.g., slots, roulette, blackjack, poker with strangers)
- Lottery or scratch-off tickets purchased with one's own money (including digital lottery apps)

Among boys who gambled, one-third (34%) participated in traditional gambling activities, mostly in-person betting with friends for real money (18%). Fourteen percent bought lottery or scratch-off tickets.

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Sports-related gambling:

- Season- or tournament-length contests for money (e.g., March Madness brackets, fantasy leagues)
- Sports betting, daily fantasy sports, or esports betting for real money (e.g., predicting whether a team will win or how many points a player will score)
- In-game betting for real money (bets placed after a game has started)

Among adolescent boys who gambled in the past year, over one-third (34%) participated in sports-related gambling. The most common activity was season- or tournament-length contests with friends or family for money (23%).

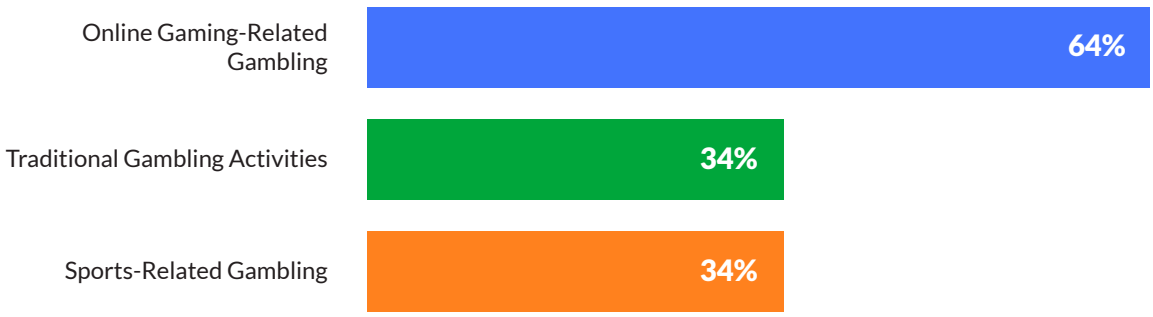
Table 3: Percent of boys who participated in each type of gambling activity, by age group

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows and within demographic (age). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

	Total			Gambled in the Past Year		
	All Adolescent Boys	11- to 13-Year-Olds[a]	14- to 17-Year-Olds[b]	Total	11- to 13-Year-Olds[c]	14- to 17-Year-Olds[d]
	N = 1,017	*n = 482*	*n = 535*	***n = 353***	*n = 148*	*n = 205*
Online Gaming-Related Gambling (NET)	23%	18%	27%[a]	64%	50%	65%
Traditional Gambling (NET)	12%	8%	15%[a]	34%	29%	38%
Sports-Related Gambling (NET)	12%	10%	14%	34%	35%	33%

Figure 5: Among boys who gambled, percent who participated in each kind of gambling activity

Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353).



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Patterns of gambling activity among boys differ sharply, based on their friends' involvement. Boys whose friends mostly or all gamble, as well as those with just a few/some friends who gamble, are substantially more involved across nearly every gambling-related activity in comparison to those whose friends do not gamble:

- Online gaming-related gambling has 70% participation by those with most/all friends gambling, and by 44% of those with a few/some friends gambling (vs. 11% of those with no friends who gamble).
- Three in 10 boys who have at least a few friends who gamble are more likely to participate in traditional gambling activities (32% of those with most/all friends gambling and 30% with few/some friends gambling) versus those with no friends who gamble (4%).
- Sports-related gambling is highest among those adolescent boys with most/all friends who gamble (29%) or with some/few friends who gamble (23%). Participation in sports-related gambling is only 5% among those adolescent boys with no friends who gamble.

In contrast, abstention from gambling is strongly associated with non-gambling peer groups. Over four in five boys with no gambling friends or who are uncertain about their peers' behaviors (83% each) report not engaging in any gambling activities. This compares with only 16% among boys whose friends mostly gamble and 29% who have a few/some friends who gamble. The table below underscores that peer involvement is closely associated not only with whether adolescents gamble, but also with the range of activities they take part in.

Cryptocurrency and "Fake Money" Gambling Games

Purchasing or using cryptocurrency and playing online gambling-style games with fake money are relatively uncommon activities among adolescent boys, but they are sometimes discussed alongside gambling because they involve speculation, chance, or simulated betting.

In this study, 3% of boys age 11 to 17 report having purchased or used cryptocurrency. Cryptocurrency does not involve wagering in the traditional sense, but it can include speculative risk, fluctuating value, and exposure to gambling-adjacent online communities.

Separately, 8% of boys report playing gambling-style games online using fake money, such as slots, blackjack, sports betting, or poker with people they do not know. These games mimic the structure and mechanics of gambling but do not involve real-money stakes.

While both activities may shape familiarity with gambling-like systems, they are not included in this report's core gambling categories because they do not consistently involve real-money wagering or direct financial loss. Instead, they are presented here to provide additional context about the broader digital environments in which boys may encounter chance-based activities or play.

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Table 4: Boys who engage in gambling activities, by peer involvement

Note: Columns tested a/b/c/d. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows. Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

		Peer Involvement in Gambling Activities			
	Total Gambled in the Past 12 Months *N = 353*	Most/All Friends Gamble[a] *n = 58*	A Few/Some Friends Gamble[b] *n = 275*	No Friends Gamble[c] *n = 338*	Not Sure If Friends Gamble[d] *n = 345*
Online Gaming-Related Gambling Activities (NET)	**64%**	**70%[b,c,d]**	**44%[c,d]**	**11%**	**9%**
Exchanged real money for a random reward in a game	54%	63%[b,c,d]	35%[c,d]	10%	9%
Engaged in trading or betting using in-game items acquired with real money	21%	41%[b,c,d]	13%[c,d]	2%	3%
Traditional Gambling Activities (NET)	**34%**	**32%[c,d]**	**30%[c,d]**	**4%**	**2%**
In-person betting with friends for real money	18%	14%[c,d]	18%[c,d]	1%	1%
Lottery or scratch-off tickets bought with your own money	14%	16%[c,d]	12%[c,d]	2%	1%
Poker with friends/family for real money (online or in person)	8%	13%[c,d]	5%[d]	2%	1%
Online gambling sites with real money	3%	4%[c,d]	3%[d]	0%	0%
Sports-Related Gambling Activities (NET)	**34%**	**29%[c,d]**	**6%[c,d]**	**5%**	**7%**
Season- or tournament-long contests with friends/family for money	23%	11%	15%[c,d]	4%	5%
Sports betting, daily fantasy sports, or esports betting for real money	9%	17%[c,d]	6%[c,d]	2%	0%
In-game betting for real money (bets after a game has already started)	6%	10%[c,d]	4%[c]	0%	1%
I have not done any of these	**0%**	**16%**	**29%**	**83%[a,b]**	**83%[a,b]**

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Among adolescent boys who report gambling in the past year, almost two-thirds (65%) limited their participation to a single activity. The rest, however, engaged in two or more different gambling activities, indicating that diversification into multiple forms of gambling is fairly common. Participation in four or more activities is less common overall (5%).

Frequency of participation is similar across each of the three gambling categories, with 6 in 10 boys who gamble in each category saying they participate at least once a month or more in online gaming-related gambling (62%), traditional gambling (61%), and sports-related gambling (60%). Older boys participate more frequently in online gaming-related gambling (69% of boys age 14 to 17 vs. 46% of boys age 11 to 13), as well as those with higher gambling losses (88% vs. 63% of those with losses of $50 or less). Those with higher losses are also more likely to participate at least once a month or more in traditional gambling activities (84% of those with higher losses vs. 63% with losses of $50 or less). While not shown due to very low base sizes, boys participate with higher frequency across all categories when most or all of their peers are also gambling.

The individual gambling activities that have the highest levels of frequency (once a month or more) are:

- Trading or betting with in-game items acquired with real money (55%)
- Sports betting, daily fantasy, or esports (54%)
- Exchanging real money for random in-game rewards (53%)

Figure 6: Among boys who gamble, number of gambling activities engaged in

Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353).

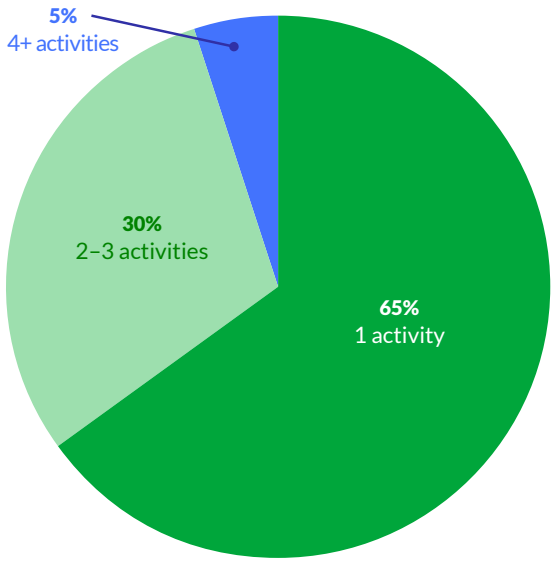

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Table 5: Gambling frequency, by age and gambling losses

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d. Items with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$). Significance should be read across rows within group (age, gambling losses). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

[+] Caution: small base size.

		Age		Gambling Losses Last Year	
	Total Participating in Category	11 to 13[a]	14 to 17[b]	$51 or More in Losses[c]	$50 or Less in Losses[d]
Online Gaming-Related Gambling Activities (NET)	**n = 215**	**n = 87**	**n = 128**	**n = 46[+]**	**n = 101**
Less than once per month	38%	54%[b]	31%	12%	37%
Once per month or more	62%	46%	69%[a]	88%[d]	63%
Traditional Gambling Activities (NET)	**n = 142**	**n = 50**	**n = 92**	**n = 42[+]**	**n = 78**
Less than once per month	39%	38%	40%	16%	43%[c]
Once per month or more	61%	62%	60%	84%[d]	57%
Sports-Related Gambling Activities (NET)	**n = 127**	**n = 52**	**n = 75**	**n = 33[+]**	**n = 55**
Less than once per month	40%	29%	46%	11%	43%[c]
Once per month or more	60%	71%	54%	89%[d]	57%

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Figure 7: Frequency of gaming-related gambling activities among boys who engaged in each activity

Note: Exchanged real money for a random reward in a game (n = 175); engaged in trading or betting using in-game items acquired with real money (n = 78).

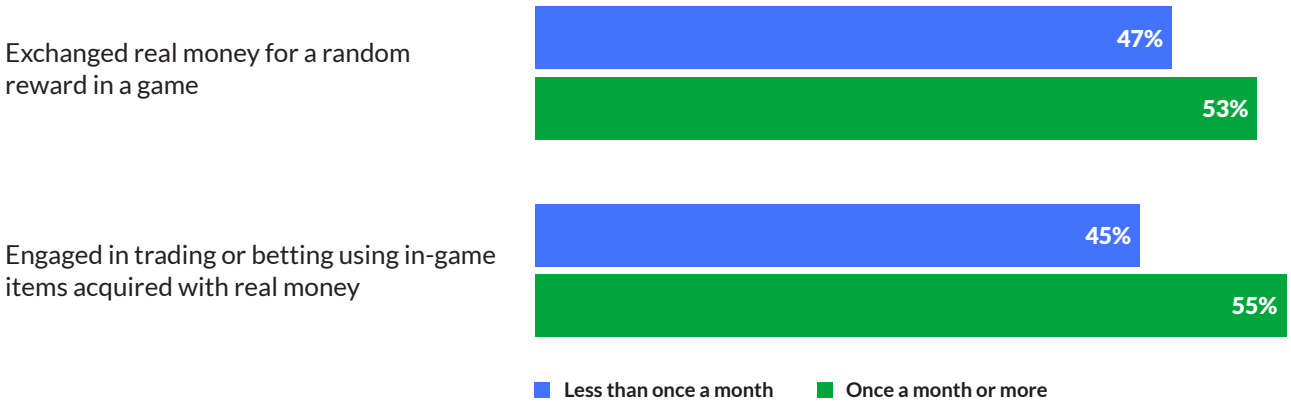

Figure 8: Frequency of traditional gambling activities among boys who engaged in each activity

Note: Poker with friends (n = 30); lottery (n = 55); in person betting (n = 69).

Base size varies by activity. "Online gambling sites with real money" is not displayed due to very small base size.

+ Caution: small base size.

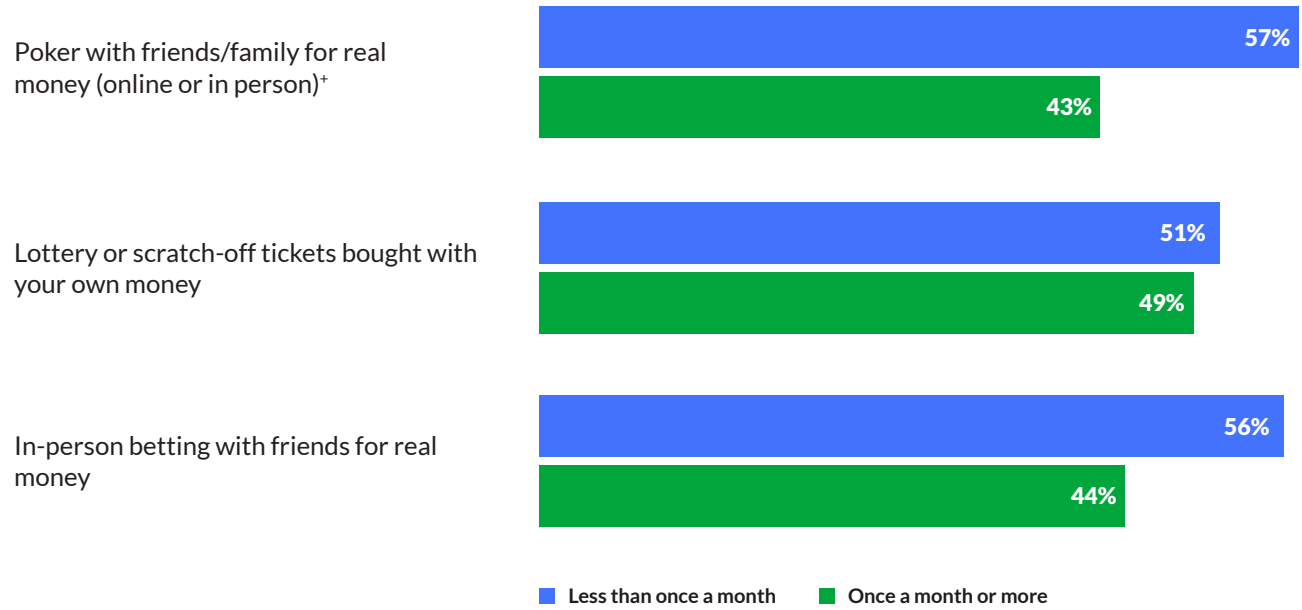

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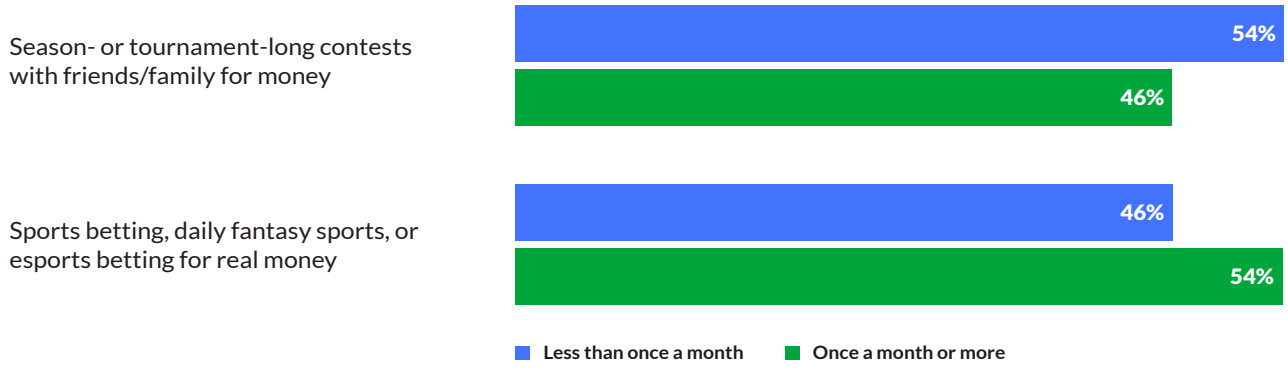
Figure 9: Frequency of sports-related gambling activities among boys who engaged in each activity

Note: Season- or tournament-long contests (n = 730); sports betting (n = 52).
Base size varies by activity. "In-game betting for real money" is not displayed due to very small base size.



Boys with friends who mostly or all gamble are far more likely to branch into multiple forms of gambling. More than half (57%) of these boys report taking part in two to three activities in the past year, compared with just over 2 in 10 (22%) of those with a few gambling friends, and only 2% to 3% of those with no gambling friends or who are unsure of their peers' behavior. This difference is statistically significant and underscores how peer gambling increases both the likelihood of gambling and the diversity of activities.

At the higher end, four or more gambling activities are reported by 11% of boys whose friends mostly gamble, compared to 4% of those with a few gambling friends and essentially negligible levels among boys with no gambling peers (1%) or uncertainty (0%). By contrast, boys with a few/some gambling friends are more likely to engage in just one activity (45%), followed by another 22% who report two to three activities.

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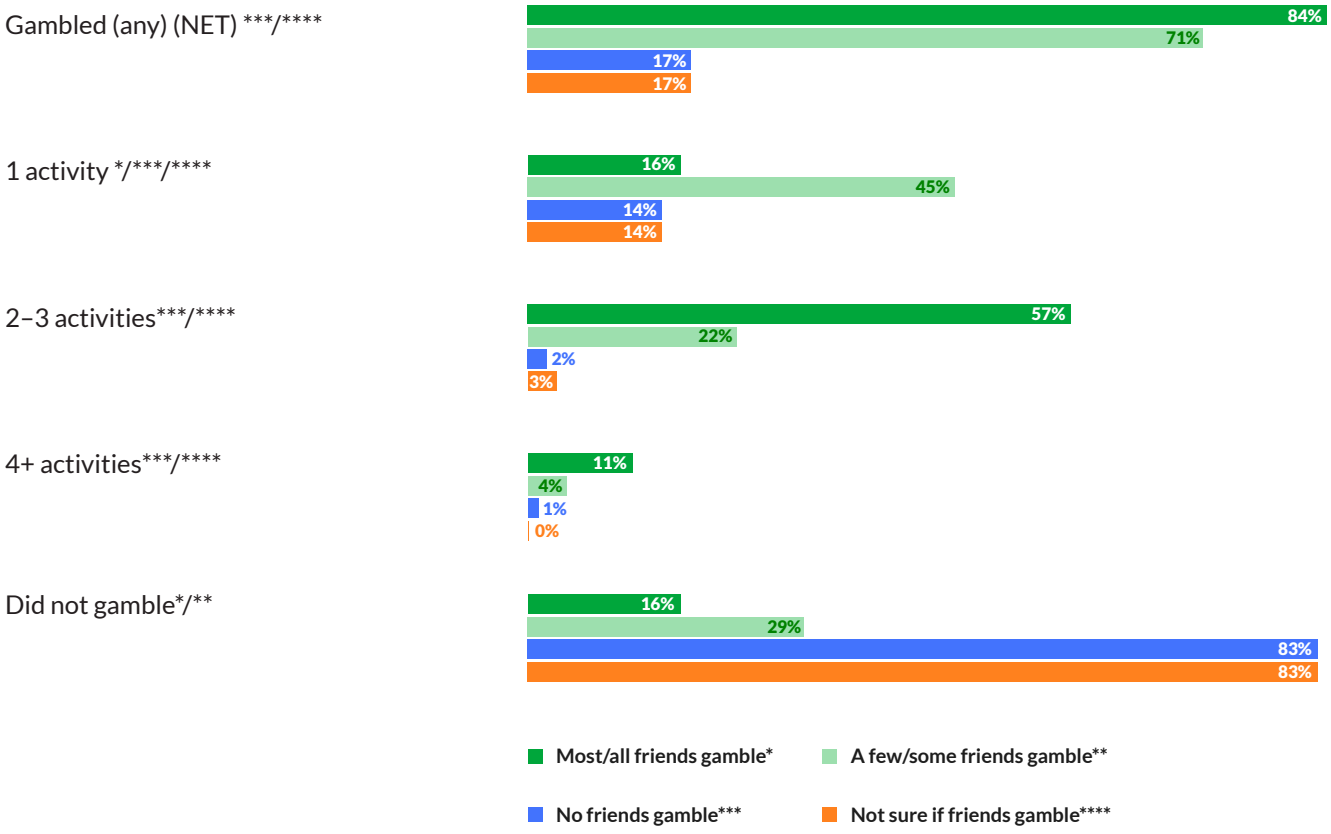
Figure 10: Number of gambling activities in the last 12 months vs. number of friends who gamble

*Base: Most/all friends gamble (n = 58); A few/some friends gamble (n = 275); No friends gamble (n = 338); Not sure if friends gamble (n = 345). */**/***/**** indicates a significant difference between most/all, few/some, no friends gamble, or unsure if friends gamble.*



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Financial Behaviors Associated with Gambling/Betting

Age, income, range of gambling activities, and family environment each shape how boys finance their gambling. Younger adolescents tend to participate more without spending money. Older teens more often use money they earned themselves. Being from a higher-income family tends to provide greater access to parental funds, while family gambling reinforces both access and funding.

Allowance or personal spending money is the most common source of gambling funds overall (36%), with older teens (37%) slightly more likely than younger boys (33%) to use their own money. Among those gambling, use of parents' or other adults' credit/debit cards with permission is reported by 23% overall, with older teens again more likely to access this channel (25% vs. 19%). Money from jobs, gigs, or side hustles shows the sharpest age split: 30% of boys age 14 to 17 report this source, compared with just 7% of 11- to 13-year-olds. Gift cards and monetary presents are also more common among older teens (18% vs. 10%).

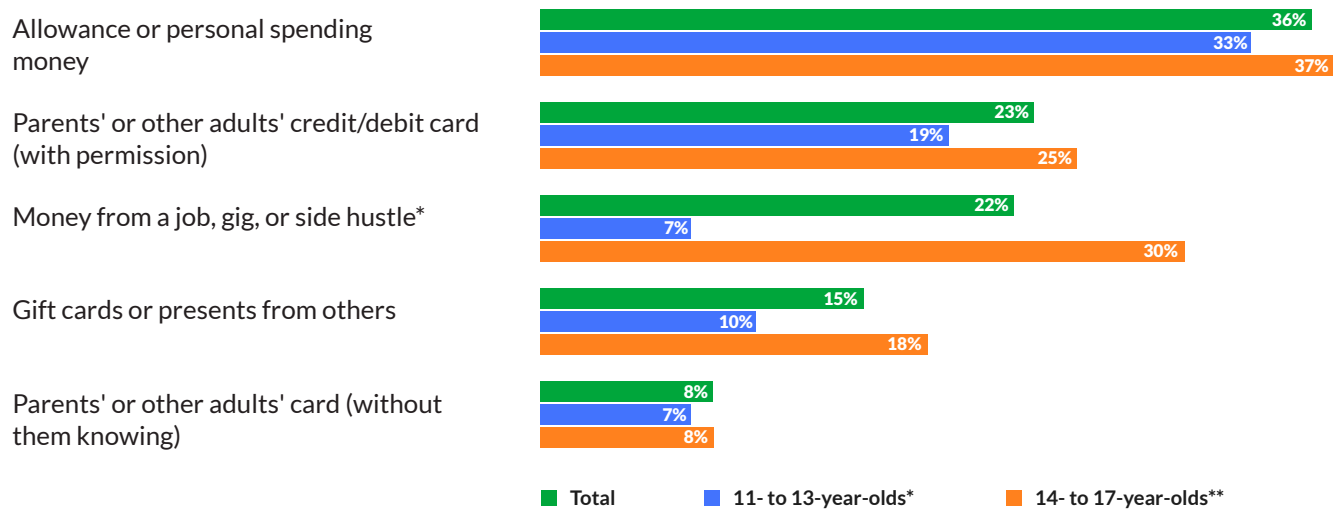
Unauthorized card use is relatively rare overall (8%). Younger boys (11- to 13-year-olds) are more likely to report they do not spend any money on gambling, compared to 14- to 17-year-olds (44% vs. 26%).

"I lost my money, and it made me mad and kind of sad because I lost my allowance money for the week."

(12-year-old)

Figure 11: Sources of money for gambling activities, by age

*Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353); 11- to 13-year-olds (n = 148); 14- to 17-year-olds (n = 205). */** indicates a significant difference between 11- to 13-year-olds and 14- to 17-year-olds.*



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Teens from households with an annual income of at least $100,000 are much more likely to use parents' cards with permission (34%) compared to the 13% of those from households earning $50,000 to $100,000, and are somewhat more likely than the one in five (19%) adolescent boys in households with the lowest income level (less than $50,000). Use of allowance/personal money, however, is fairly evenly distributed across income groups (34% to 38%). While not statistically significant, boys from lower-income households are more likely to use self-earned income from jobs or gigs (30% vs. 16% in households earning more than $100,000), which may reflect limited access to family financial resources.

Among boys who lost $50 or less in the past year, the majority relied on personal allowance money (54%) and to a lesser degree parents' cards (33%). Among those with losses of $51 or more, reliance on job or gig money increases (45% vs. 27% of those with lower losses). Of note, higher-loss gamblers are also far more likely to report using parents' cards without permission (21%) compared to just 8% of lower-loss peers.

Family involvement in gambling also influences access. Among boys who gambled with family members, 30% report using parents' cards with permission, compared to only 14% among those who do not gamble with family. Family gamblers are also far more likely to use job/gig income (30% vs. 10%), reflecting broader acceptance and funding of gambling within the family context. Conversely, those who have not gambled with family are much more likely to say they do not spend money on gambling at all (42% vs. 24%).

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Table 6: Sources of money used for gambling, by household income, losses, and family involvement

Note: Columns tested a/b/c – d/e – f/g. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows within group (household income, gambling losses, gambling with family member). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

		Household Income			Gambling Losses in Last Year		Gambled with Family Member	
	Total	Less Than $50,000[a]	$50,000–$100,000[b]	More Than $100,000[c]	$50 or Less[d]	$51 or More[e]	Yes[f]	No[g]
	N = 353	*n = 143*	*n = 103*	*n = 105*	*n = 171*	*n = 74*	*n = 188*	*n = 150*
Allowance or personal spending money	36%	38%	34%	36%	54%	49%	35%	39%
Parents' or other adults' credit/debit card (with permission)	23%	19%	13%	34%[b]	33%	36%	30%[g]	14%
Money from a job, gig, or side hustle	22%	30%	21%	16%	27%	45%	30%[g]	10%
Gift cards or presents from others	15%	18%	7%	19%[b]	22%	21%	18%	12%
Parents' or other adults' card (without them knowing)	8%	7%	9%	7%	8%	21%[d]	9%	6%
I don't spend money on gambling	32%	31%	37%	29%	N/A	N/A	24%	42%[f]

Overspending is not evenly distributed across adolescent gamblers. It is most prevalent among those who gamble more frequently, those who consume gambling content online, and especially those with higher financial losses.

Among adolescent boys who gamble, 17% report that they have spent more than planned on gambling in the past year. The majority (77%) say they have not, while 5% are unsure—suggesting either limited awareness of their spending or difficulty recognizing overspending. The average spend across all teens who spent money on gambling is $54 in the past 12 months.

Overspending increases with gambling frequency. Among those who gamble less than once a month, only 11% report overspending, compared with 21% of those who gamble

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once a month or more. Average spend also reflects this difference, rising from $45 for less frequent gamblers to $58 for more frequent ones.

Among boys who watch gambling videos "sometimes or often," more than one in four (28%) say they have spent more than planned, compared with just 5% of those who do not watch such content. The average spend seen among viewers of gambling content is significantly higher ($72) compared to nonviewers ($33).

Only 6% of those who lost $50 or less report spending more than planned, while nearly half (49%) of those who lost $51 or more acknowledged spending more than they planned. In this higher-loss group, fewer than half (44%) say they have not overspent, compared with 90% of lower-loss gamblers. The average annual spend among those with losses of $51 or more in the past year is dramatically higher—$159 vs. just $19—confirming that overspending and higher financial losses go hand in hand.

Table 7: Percent of boys who spent more than planned on betting or gambling activities

Note: Among teens who participate in gambling activities and spent money on gambling/betting. Columns tested a/b – c/d – e/f – g/h. Items with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$). Significance should be read across rows within group (age, gambling frequency, gambling videos watched, gambling losses). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

		Age		Gambling Frequency		Watch Online Gambling Videos		Gambling Losses Last Year	
	Total	11 to 13[a]	14 to 17[b]	Less Than Once a Month[c]	Once a Month or More[d]	Sometimes/ Often[e]	No[f]	$50 or Less[g]	$51 or More[h]
	N = 251	*n = 97*	*n = 154*	*n = 105*	*n = 146*	*n = 155*	*n = 96*	*n = 171*	*n = 74*
Yes	17%	11%	20%	11%	21%	28%[f]	5%	6%	49%[g]
No	77%	83%	75%	87%[d]	71%	64%	93%[e]	90%[h]	44%
Not Sure	5%	6%	5%	2%	7%	9%	1%	4%	8%
Mean Amount Spent in Past 12 Months	$54	$45	$58	$33	$68[c]	$72[f]	$33	$19	$159[g]

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Recognition of Downsides to Gambling/Betting Behavior

Most adolescent boys who gamble do not report noticing downsides; however, a meaningful minority recognize some level of downsides. Two-thirds (66%) say "No, not really" when asked if they have experienced problems from gambling. However, 27% report at least some negative effects, and an additional 6% are unsure, reflecting some uncertainty about the impact of their behavior.

Both frequency and peer context intensify awareness of gambling-related downsides. Frequent gamblers and those with most or all friends who gamble are not only more likely to gamble, but also more likely to admit they experience negative effects.

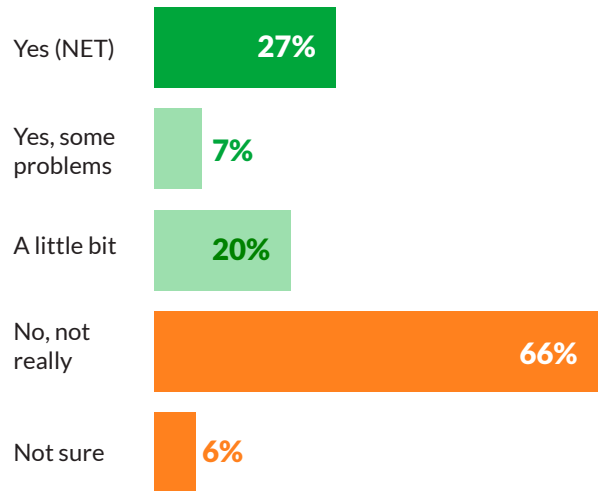
Boys who gamble more often are notably more likely to report downsides. One-third (33%) of those who gamble at least monthly say they experience problems, compared to only 19% of those who gamble less frequently. While the majority in both groups denied issues, denial is somewhat higher among less frequent gamblers (73% vs. 62%).

Peer involvement in gambling plays an even stronger role in recognizing downsides. Over half (52%) of boys with friends who mostly or all gamble report downsides, compared with 28% of those with a few gambling friends and only 15% of those with no gambling peers. Having a higher proportion of gambling peers appears to normalize both engagement and the recognition of harms: 24% of boys with many gambling friends say they have "some problems," compared to only 4% to 6% among those who have a few or no gambling friends.

At the opposite end, boys with a few or no gambling friends are far more likely to report not really seeing a downside (79% of those with no gambling friends; 66% of those with a few/some friends) compared to boys surrounded by many gambling peers (44%). Interestingly, boys unsure of their peers' gambling habits are the most uncertain themselves, with 13% responding "I'm not sure" to noticing downsides—which, while not significant, is higher than in any other group.

Figure 12: Whether boys notice personal downsides to engaging in gambling activities

Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353).



"I was with my friend at his house and he asked his mother to use her phone for the TV code, and when he got her phone we saw something about DraftKings so he took money out of his mother's account and placed a bet on a wrestling match. He won the bet but he got punished for using his [mother's] card without her permission… I felt bad because I didn't try to stop him."

(13-year-old)

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Table 8: Whether boys notice personal downsides of gambling, by frequency and friends' gambling habits

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d/e/f. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows within group (gambling frequency, friends gambling). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

[+] Caution: small base size.

	Gambling Frequency		Friends Gambling			
	Once a Month or More[a]	Less Than Once a Month[b]	Most/All[c]	A Few/ Some[d]	None[e]	Not Sure[f]
	n = 190	*n = 163*	*n = 46[+]*	*n = 193*	*n = 51*	*n = 62*
Yes (NET)	**33%[b]**	**19%**	**52%[d,e,f]**	**28%**	**15%**	**20%**
Yes, some problems	10%	3%	24%[d,e,f]	6%	4%	3%
A little bit	23%	16%	28%	22%	11%	17%
No, not really	**62%**	**73%**	**44%**	**66%[c]**	**79%[c]**	**68%**
I'm not sure	5%	8%	4%	5%	6%	13%

Regardless of whether they see a downside or not, a majority (60%) say they have never felt bad or wished they hadn't gambled, indicating that for many adolescents gambling may be viewed as harmless or normalized. However, 4 in 10 (40%) adolescent boys report some level of regret. Thirty-one percent say they "sometimes" felt bad about gambling, while 5% often and 4% almost always felt bad or wished they hadn't bet or gambled. While most adolescents do not perceive harm, a sizable minority do recognize after-the-fact discomfort, guilt, or regret linked to their participation.

"I wanted to get a specific character but didn't get him, so I tried again and still didn't get him and got upset."

(16-year-old)

"I spent money that wasn't mine thinking I wasn't going to get caught, and I eventually got caught and felt horrible. And I got in big trouble."

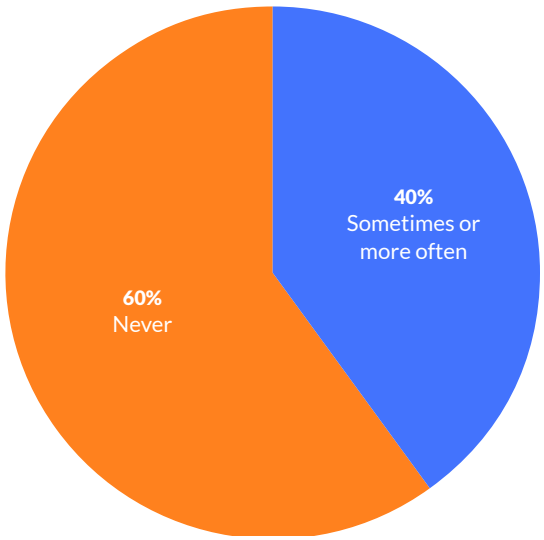
(11-year-old)

"It felt good and feels like we might win big, and if we lose we just say, '99% of the gamblers quit before they win big,' we all know it's a joke."

(16-year-old)

Figure 13: Felt bad or wished they hadn't bet or gambled

Base: Total adolescent boys who participated in at least one gambling activity (n = 353).



"I bought them on a game and then kept playing. My dad asked how much money I had left a few days later and I felt bad."

(14-year-old)

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Viewership of Online Gambling Content and Ads

Consumption of online gambling content among boys who gamble is associated with both personal engagement in gambling and immersion in digital or peer cultures that may normalize it. Age differences are present but modest compared to these contextual factors. Boys with higher losses, gambling peers, and exposure to gambling content are more likely to watch gambling-related media, both occasionally and frequently, though the directionality of these relationships cannot be determined from this data.

Overall, nearly half (45%) of adolescent boys who gamble report viewing online gambling content, whether "often" or "sometimes." Age differences are present but modest: 41% of boys age 11 to 13 report viewership compared to 47% of those age 14 to 17. Older teens and younger boys are equally likely to say they watch often (11% each), while older teens say they sometimes watch (36% of older teens vs. 30% of younger boys).

Among boys who report losing $51 or more in the past year, three-quarters (74%) report watching gambling content, with nearly one-third (30%) saying they watch often. By comparison, roughly half (48%) of boys with smaller losses view gambling content, and just 9% watch often. This suggests a potential connection between financial involvement—regardless of winning or losing—and engagement with gambling media.

Peer involvement in gambling shows a similar dynamic. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of boys who say most or all of their friends gamble report watching gambling content, with over one-quarter (29%) watching often. Among boys with only a few/some gambling friends, 49% report viewing, compared with just 22% of boys with no gambling friends. At the opposite end, 78% of boys without gambling peers say they have never watched gambling content, compared to half of boys with a few/some gambling peers (51%) and roughly a third (35%) of boys who say most or all of their friends gamble.

Table 9: Viewership of online gambling content, by age

Note: Columns tested a/b. Items with different superscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$). Significance should be read across rows. Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

		Age	
	Total	**11 to 13[a]**	**14 to 17[b]**
	N = 353	*n = 148*	*n = 205*
Yes (NET)	**45%**	**41%**	**47%**
Yes, often	11%	11%	11%
Sometimes (I've seen a few)	34%	30%	36%
No, not really	**55%**	**59%**	**53%**

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Table 10: Viewership of online gambling content, by personal and peer gambling behavior

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d/e/f. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows within group (gambling losses, friends gambling). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

[+]Small base size; interpret with caution.

	Gambling Losses in Last Year		Friends Gambling			
	$51 or More[a]	$50 or Less[b]	Most/All[c]	A Few/ Some[d]	None[e]	Not Sure[f]
	n = 74	*n = 171*	*n = 46[+]*	*n = 193*	*n = 51*	*n = 62*
Yes (NET)	**74%[b]**	**48%**	**65%[e]**	**49%[e]**	**22%**	**39%**
Yes, often	30%[b]	9%	29%[d,e,f]	11%	3%	8%
Sometimes (I've seen a few)	44%	39%	36%	38%	19%	32%
No	**26%**	**52%[a]**	**35%**	**51%**	**78%[c,d]**	**61%**

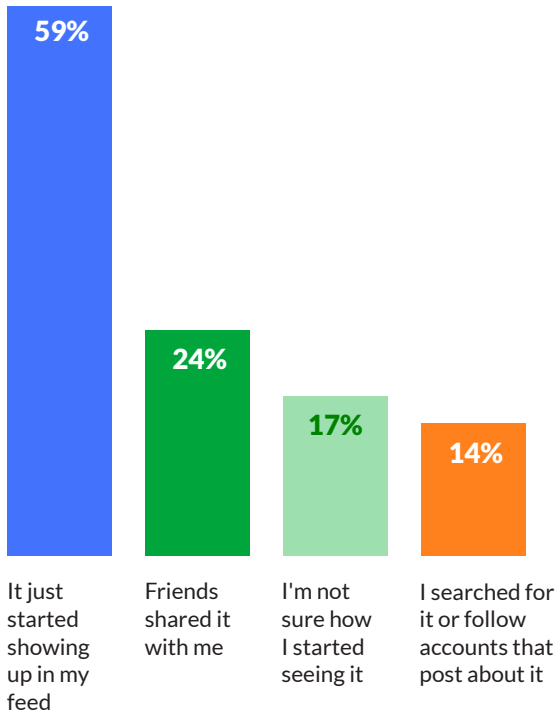
Nearly 6 in 10 (59%) boys who report watching gambling videos or streams say the content "just started showing up" in their feed. Peer influence also plays a role, with nearly one-quarter (24%) saying they first encountered gambling content because a friend shared it with them.

A small but not insignificant group (14%) report actively searching for gambling content or following accounts that post about it, showing that while most exposure is passive, a subset of adolescents are deliberately seeking it out. Slightly fewer than one in five (17%) teens say they are not sure how they first started seeing gambling content, highlighting both the subtlety of exposure and the way it can become normalized within broader digital consumption.

The majority of adolescents who watch online gambling content are not deliberately looking for it—it is arriving in their feeds unprompted, or through peers. This suggests that algorithmic promotion and peer sharing are key for early exposure, raising important questions about platform responsibility and the ways in which gambling-related content slips into mainstream digital spaces for youth.

Figure 14: How boys started seeing content about gambling or betting

Base: Total adolescent boys who watched online videos/streams about gambling and participated in gambling activities (n = 188).



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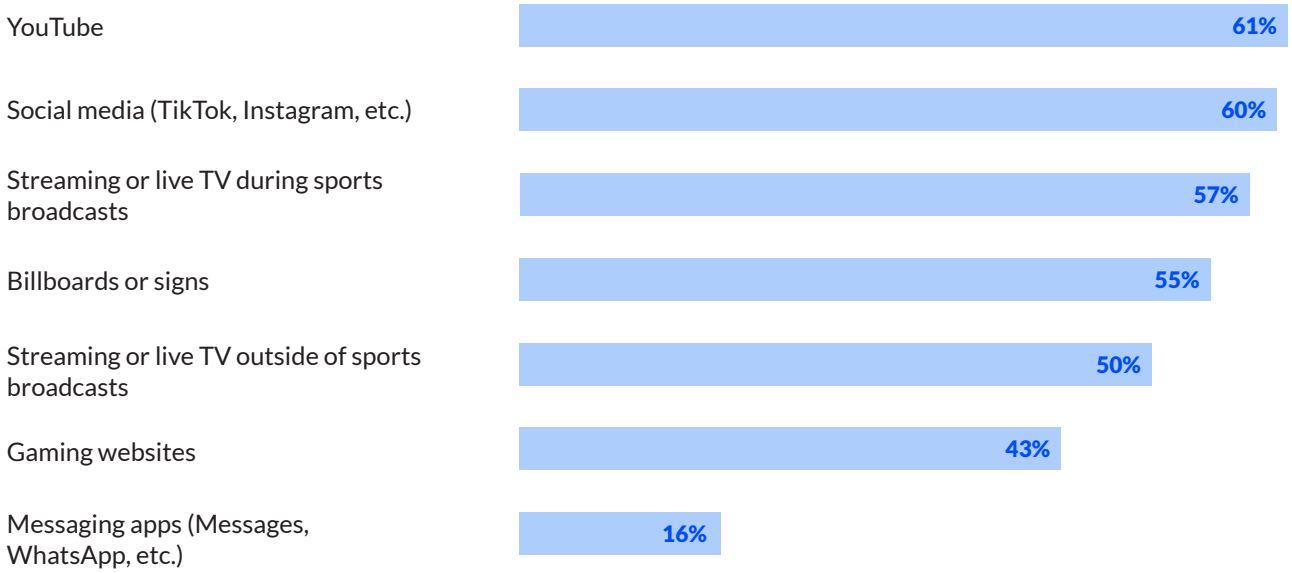
Gambling ads are pervasive across digital and traditional platforms. YouTube and social media are the most common ad channels overall, cited by 61% and 60% of boys, respectively. Television also is a prominent advertising pathway, particularly during sports broadcasts. A majority of boys see gambling ads on live or streaming TV during sports (57%). Ads outside of sports events are less common but still reached half of all boys (50%). Traditional placements like billboards or signs reached 55% of boys overall. The last tier of ad sources are gaming websites and messaging apps (43% and 16%, respectively).

Figure 15: Where boys see gambling ads

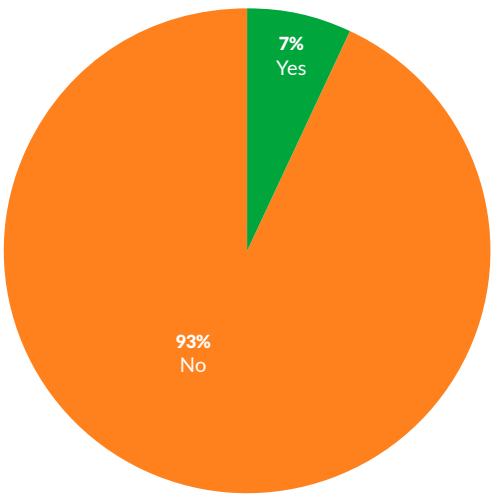
Base: Total adolescent boys (N = 1,017).



Overall, 7% of boys who have seen gambling ads say they have tried gambling afterward, a small overall percentage but potentially a significant number of boys when considered across the national population. The majority say ads do not prompt them to gamble (93% overall). However, it should be noted that this reflects only a direct behavioral response and may not capture ads' potential influence on attitudes or normalization of gambling.

Figure 16: Have tried betting/gambling activity after seeing ad

Base: Total adolescent boys who have seen ads for gambling/betting (n = 872).



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Parental/Family Involvement Around Gambling/Betting

Parental conversations about gambling appear to be occurring for more than half (59%) of teens. However, the conversations appear to mostly be brief in nature. Younger boys and those who do not gamble are least likely to have discussed gambling with parents, while older teens and those who gamble are more likely to have these conversations, though still often only briefly.

This pattern could reflect several possibilities: Parents may only initiate these conversations when they become aware of gambling behavior, or they may view gambling as a topic more relevant for older teens. Parents may also be responding to boys' questions or interests, rather than proactively raising the topic. Another possibility is that parents are uncertain about how or when to address gambling, particularly as it relates to gaming and online activities.

Parental conversations about gambling are relatively common but often limited in depth. Across all adolescent boys surveyed, 59% say they have talked with their parents about gambling in some form. However, most of these are not detailed exchanges—36% say the conversation is only brief, while just 23% report detailed conversations. One in three (33%) say they have never spoken with their parents about gambling at all.

Parental conversations become slightly more likely as boys get older. Among 11- to 13-year-olds, 55% report conversations with parents, compared with 62% of 14- to 17-year-olds. The younger group is also more likely to say they never have these conversations (38%), compared with older teens (29%).

Two-thirds of adolescent boys who gambled in the past year (67%) report conversations with their parents, which is significantly more than the roughly half (54%) of non-gamblers. These conversations between boys who gambled and their parents were significantly more likely to be brief vs. non-gamblers (41% vs. 32% respectively) and slightly more likely to be detailed (26% vs. 22% of non-gamblers). Conversely, non-gamblers are somewhat more likely to report never discussing gambling at all (35% vs. 28%).

Figure 17: Had conversation with parents about gambling

Base: Total adolescent boys (N = 1,017).

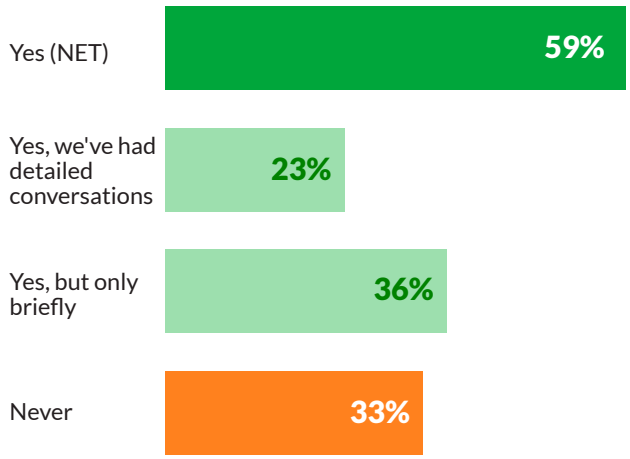

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Table 11: Parent conversations, by age and gambling in the past 12 months

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows within group (age, gambled in the last year). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

	Age		Gambled in the Last Year	
	11 to 13[a] *n = 482*	14 to 17[b] *n = 535*	Yes[c] *n = 353*	No[d] *n = 664*
Yes (NET)	**55%**	**62%**	**67%[d]**	**54%**
Yes, we've had detailed conversations	20%	25%	26%	22%
Yes, but only briefly	35%	36%	41%[d]	32%
Never	**38%[b]**	**29%**	**28%**	**35%**

Households with younger boys and lower-income families are more likely to impose strict rules, while households with older teens and higher-income families are more permissive. Rules are also more common in households where gambling is actively discussed, but when teens themselves gamble, rules often appear weaker or inconsistently enforced.

Overall, fewer than half of adolescent boys (45%) say that their families have rules about gambling or game-related spending. Of these, most (30%) describe them as strict rules, while a smaller proportion (15%) say rules exist but are not enforced strongly. A significant share of boys report either no specific rules (37%) or being unsure (18%).

Younger boys (11- to 13-year-olds) are more likely to report having rules (50%) than older teens (40%). Strict rules are particularly common among the younger group (36%) compared with older teens (25%), while older teens are more likely to say their families have no rules at all (41% vs. 31%).

Teens in the lowest household income bracket (less than $50,000 per year) are somewhat more likely to report rules (49%) compared to those in the highest-income households (more than $100,000; 37%). Strict rules show the same divide: 34% of teens in households making less than $50,000 versus only 20% of teens in households making more than $100,000. Teens in higher-income households are also more likely to say they have no specific rules (42%) than teens in lower-income households (32%).

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Table 12: Presence of family rules on gambling and game spending, by age and household income

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d/e. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows within group (age, household income). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

		Age		Household Income		
	Total	11 to 13[a]	14 to 17[b]	Less Than $50,000[c]	$50,000–$100,000[d]	More Than $100,000[e]
	N = 1,017	*n = 482*	*n = 535*	*n = 458*	*n = 306*	*n = 251*
Yes (NET)	**45%**	**50%[b]**	**40%**	**49%[e]**	**47%**	**37%**
Yes, strict rules	30%	36%[b]	25%	34%[e]	34%[e]	20%
Some rules but not enforced strongly	15%	14%	16%	15%	13%	16%
No specific rules	**37%**	**31%**	**41%[a]**	**32%**	**38%**	**42%[c]**
Not sure	18%	19%	18%	19%	15%	21%

Among boys who gambled in the past year, half (49%) report that their families have rules about gambling, compared to 42% of non-gamblers. In households with rules, gamblers are more likely to describe the rules as loosely enforced (25% vs. 9% of non-gamblers), while non-gamblers more often report strict rules (32% vs. 25% of gamblers).

For boys who have conversations with their parents about gambling, 59% report having family rules, compared to just 25% of those who have not had conversations with their parents about gambling. The presence of strict rules follows the same pattern: 40% among those who have discussed gambling with a parent vs. 14% of those who have not. Of those who have discussed gambling with parents, 30% have no specific rules around gambling, while nearly half (48%) of boys who have had no parental conversations report having no rules.

Family gambling involvement and, to a lesser extent, higher-income households appear to facilitate adolescent gambling. Teens in higher-income households and teens who gamble themselves are far more likely to report engaging in gambling with family. Lotteries and fantasy leagues are the most common entry points, reflecting both accessibility and parental normalization. This suggests that family context plays a major role in shaping gambling initiation and reinforcing gambling as a shared, acceptable activity.

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Table 13: Presence of family rules on gambling and game spending, by teen gambling and parent conversations

Note: Columns tested a/b – c/d. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows within group (gambled in the last year, parent conversations). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

	Gambled in the Last Year		Parent Conversations About Gambling	
	Yes[a] *n = 353*	No[b] *n = 664*	Yes[c] *n = 570*	No[d] *n = 344*
Yes (NET)	**49%**	**42%**	**59%[d]**	**25%**
Yes, strict rules	25%	32%	40%[d]	14%
Some rules but not enforced strongly	25%[b]	9%	19%[d]	10%
No specific rules	**35%**	**38%**	**30%**	**48%[c]**
Not sure	15%	20%	11%	27%[c]

Across all adolescent boys, just over one-third (34%) report gambling with family members in some form. Playing the lottery or scratch-off tickets together is the most common shared activity (25% of all boys), followed by participation in season-long contests, like March Madness or fantasy leagues (8%) and placing sports bets (4%).

More niche activities, such as poker, dice games, or gambling apps, are less frequent (2% to 3%). A majority (60%) say they have never gambled with family members.

Teens from higher-income households (more than $100,000 per year) report much greater involvement: 45% have gambled with family, compared to 25% in homes with an annual income of less than $50,000. Lottery play is particularly income-linked, with 34% of teens in higher-income households gambling this way, compared to only 20% of teens from lower-income households. Similarly, season-/tournament-length contests are more common in higher-income households (16%) versus just 2% in lower-income households. This suggests that families with higher incomes may normalize gambling through socially acceptable formats, like lotteries or fantasy leagues.

Family gambling also varied by race/ethnicity. White adolescents report the highest levels of family involvement (37%), followed by Latino/Hispanic teens (34%) and multiracial teens (31%), while Black adolescents are far less likely (20%).

Teens who gambled in the past year are significantly more likely to also report that they have gambled with family in the

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Table 14: Gambling with family members, by household income and teen race/ethnicity

Note: Columns tested a/b/c – d/e/f/g. Items with different superscripts differ significantly (p < .05). Significance should be read across rows within group (household income, teen race/ethnicity). Due to rounding, individual percentages may not sum to total.

		Household Income			Teen Race			
	Total	Less Than $50,000[a]	$50,000–$100,000[b]	More Than $100,000[c]	White[d]	Black[e]	Latino/ Hispanic[f]	Multi-racial[g]
	N = 1,017	*n = 458*	*n = 306*	*n = 251*	*n = 438*	*n = 187*	*n = 255*	*n = 129*
Yes (NET)	**34%**	**25%**	**32%**	**45%[a,b]**	**37%[e]**	**20%**	**34%[e]**	**31%**
Played lottery tickets or scratch-off tickets together	25%	20%	23%	34%[a,b]	31%[e]	10%	24%[e]	21%[e]
Participated in season-/tournament-long contests together, such as March Madness brackets or fantasy sports leagues	8%	2%	7%[a]	16%[a,b]	9%	6%	7%	7%
Placed sports bets together (e.g., whether a sports team will win or a player will score a certain number of points)	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%	6%	4%	4%
Bet on non-poker card or dice games for money	3%	3%	2%	6%	3%	2%	5%	4%
Played poker for real money together	3%	1%	2%	6%[b]	5%	1%	2%	3%
Used gambling or casino apps/websites together	2%	1%	3%	4%	2%	2%	4%	1%
No, I've never done any gambling activities with a family member	**60%**	**66%[c]**	**62%[c]**	**51%**	**59%**	**74%[d,f]**	**53%**	**66%**

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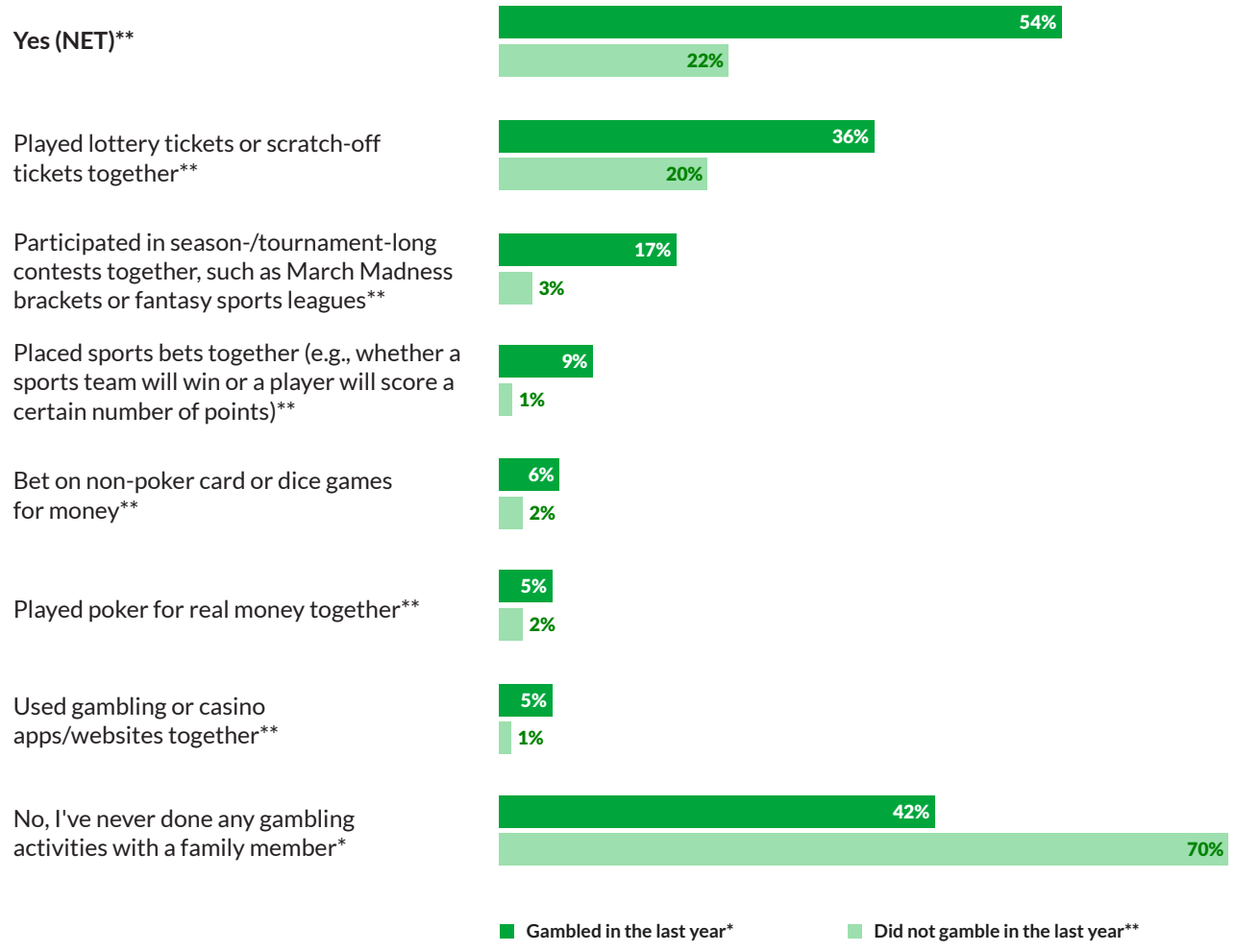
past. Over half (54%) of past-year gamblers report gambling with family members, compared to only 22% of those who have not gambled in the past year. Specific activities show this same divide:

- Lottery tickets: 36% of gamblers vs. 20% of non-gamblers
- Season-/tournament-length contests: 17% vs. 3%
- Poker for real money: 5% vs. 2%
- Casino apps/sites: 5% vs. 1%

Figure 18: Family gambling activities among teens, by past year gambling

*Base: Gambled in the past year (n = 353); Did not gamble in the past year n = 664). */** indicates a significant difference between adolescent boys who gambled in the past year and those who did not.*



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Discussion

This study illustrates how gambling and gambling-like experiences appear across the everyday digital and social environments of many boys. It appears in the games they already play, in the videos and posts that surface in their feeds, among the friends they spend time with, and in some cases in the activities they do with family.

Digital Gaming as a Common Starting Point

Many boys first encounter gambling-like concepts not through March Madness brackets or betting apps, but through the games they already play. Features like loot boxes, microtransactions, and simulated gambling within video games mirror some of the core mechanics of gambling, such as chance and variable rewards, though they may not be gambling in the legal sense. These features are designed to be exciting and immersive, and for most boys they remain exactly that—another form of gameplay. However, these mechanics introduce gambling-adjacent ideas early, particularly the practice of spending money on chance-based rewards, which research suggests can be associated with problem-gambling symptoms among adolescents.

Gambling or Just for Fun?

Many activities that technically qualify as "gambling" for research purposes may not function as harmful or risky for most families. Fantasy sports leagues, March Madness brackets, or small, friendly bets with peers often operate as social, community-building activities. Boys in our interviews commonly described these events as fun, friendly competitions with low stakes, often facilitating bonding with friends, teammates, or family members.

This distinction is critical. For many boys, these competitions may be more about belonging and playful rivalry than about wagering money. From a developmental perspective, this aligns with what we know about adolescence. Boys are heavily influenced by peers, experience intense social motivation, and seek activities that provide connection, identity, and status.

At the same time, our data shows that a subset of boys, particularly older adolescents, begin to report motivations that shift toward "winning money" or taking "real bets." This does not indicate addiction or a widespread problem, but it does mark an important inflection point: When the motivation transitions from social fun to financial gain, the behaviors may start to look more like gambling in the traditional sense. Identifying this shift, rather than labeling all youth gambling as equally concerning, is key to supporting healthy development.

Peers as a Strong Influence

Friends matter a great deal. Boys with gambling-involved peers are far more likely to gamble themselves and to try several different types of gambling. In these settings, gambling tends to become a shared activity: something boys do together, talk about, or imitate. The patterns in this study suggest that peer networks can expand both the opportunity for and the appeal of gambling, especially as boys get older.

Digital Content Finds Boys

Nearly half of boys who gamble say they have seen gambling videos or streams, and most did not seek them out. Content surfaced by algorithms or shared by peers gives boys a window into gambling before they ever place a bet. Boys who watch this content tend to spend more and gamble more often. Their motivations also look different—they are more likely to mention wanting to win money or copying creators they follow. While this study cannot determine what comes first, it is clear that gambling-related content sits in the same digital spaces that boys already use.

Family Influence: Both Permission and Guardrails

Family practices shape boys' exposure as well. One-third of boys say they have gambled with family members, often through lottery tickets or fantasy-style contests. These shared activities may make gambling feel familiar and acceptable. At the same time, many families set rules or talk with boys about gambling. But these conversations are often brief and tend to happen after boys have already engaged in gambling. Rules also taper off with age, suggesting that older boys often navigate gambling with fewer family guidelines in place.

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Escalation Pathways Rather than "Alarms"

The patterns revealed in the data, especially when considered alongside other research on adolescent development and gambling, suggest several meaningful pathways worth monitoring:

- Early familiarity through video gaming may normalize chance-based spending or create excitement around winning.
- Increased exposure through advertising, creator content, live sports, and peers can make betting feel commonplace or socially endorsed.
- Shifting motivations from fun or community to financial gain may signal when behaviors begin to align more closely with risk pathways seen in older adolescents and young adults.
- Easy access, through smartphones, online betting platforms, or peer-run wagers, can lower the barriers to participation, especially for those already curious or motivated to escalate.

These pathways are not deterministic; they describe potential patterns, not inevitable outcomes. But they highlight where prevention efforts, education, and family conversations can be most useful.

Implications

These findings reveal an ecosystem in which gambling has become integrated into adolescent boys' digital and social lives across multiple touchpoints: gaming platforms, peer activities, family traditions, and algorithmic content feeds. The data suggests several areas that warrant attention.

First, the integration of gambling mechanics into gaming environments may introduce chance-based thinking and risk-taking to boys as young as 11, potentially before they or their parents recognize it as gambling-related. The semantic distinction between "buying a loot box" and "gambling" may obscure risks, particularly as boys transition from spending on in-game rewards to other forms of betting.

Second, the power of peer influence underscores the social nature of gambling behavior. Interventions focused solely on individual decision-making may miss the broader peer context that shapes participation. Boys embedded in gambling peer networks may face social pressure to participate and may normalize patterns that could become problematic.

Third, the passive exposure to gambling content through algorithmic recommendations raises questions about platform responsibility and the ways that gambling-related media reaches youth audiences who are not actively seeking it.

Finally, the gap between when boys begin gambling and when parents become aware or initiate conversations suggests a need for earlier, more proactive discussions, framed not as moral warnings but as guidance on digital literacy, peer influence, and financial boundaries, before casual experimentation begins.

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Guidance for Stakeholders

The findings in this report suggest that gambling has become woven into the everyday digital and social lives of boys, showing up in their family activities, social media feeds, games, and peer interactions. The following guidance is intended to help parents, policymakers, industry leaders, and educators support boys in navigating these environments safely.

For parents and caregivers

Parents play an important role in shaping how boys understand and engage with gambling. The data shows that family conversations and rules matter, but they often come after gambling-related behavior has been introduced. Ongoing dialogue and clear boundaries may help boys develop critical thinking about risk, spending, and peer influence before problematic behaviors emerge.

- **Start conversations early and keep them going.** Don't wait until you suspect your son is gambling to bring up the topic. Boys are encountering gambling-like features in games or other content in their tween years. Frame early conversations around decision-making, chance, and money, rather than gambling itself. Ask open-ended questions: "Have you ever bought a loot box or mystery items in a game? What did you get?" Use news stories or sporting events as conversation starters, and revisit the topic regularly as your child gets older.
- **Recognize gambling in many different forms.** Many parents don't realize that in-game purchases, fantasy sports leagues, and March Madness brackets can introduce gambling concepts at an early age. Learn the mechanics of the games your son plays. If a game offers loot boxes or randomized rewards for real money, talk about how chance-based spending works. Ask your son to explain how he spends money in games or with friends, and listen for patterns: Is he chasing rare items? Betting with peers? Spending more than planned?
- **Set clear rules and monitor access.** Nearly half of boys report having no specific family rules about gambling or game-related spending. Rules don't need to be overly restrictive, but they should be clear and consistently enforced. Establish spending limits for games and in-app purchases. Require permission before any real-money gambling or game spending.
- **Pay attention to peer influence.** Boys with friends who gamble are more likely to report gambling themselves and to try multiple forms of gambling. Peer networks can potentially normalize behavior, so get to know your son's peer group and the activities they engage in together. If you learn that your son's friends are gambling, don't forbid the relationships. Instead, help your son think critically about the behavior and encourage them to talk with you when in doubt.
- **Watch for warning signs.** Most boys who gamble do so casually and experience no harm, but a subset of boys show warning signs of problematic behavior, such as spending more than planned, using credit cards without permission, or expressing regret. If your son has lost significant amounts of money, take it seriously and talk to them about the negative effects of their behavior, and consider talking with a counselor or therapist who understands adolescent risk-taking.

For policymakers and regulators

Policy decisions shape the environment in which boys encounter gambling. The expansion of online sports betting, the proliferation of gambling ads, and the use of gambling-like mechanics in games have expanded with minimal regulatory oversight. Policymakers have an opportunity to create guardrails that reduce underage exposure to problematic gambling activities.

- **Strengthen age verification and access restrictions.** While some boys gamble on unregulated sites, many gamble on regulated sites that do not use sufficient age assurance methods. Boys may also use older friends' or family members' account information. Methods to mitigate unauthorized use include implementing more robust forms of age assurance and continuing age assurance obligations throughout the use of the site, instead of only at signup.
- **Restrict gambling advertising to youth.** Boys are saturated with gambling ads across platforms, including on television broadcasts, podcasts, streaming, and social media sites. This advertising often normalizes and glamorizes gambling behavior and reaches minors despite targeting adults. Policymakers should encourage industry to follow the example of the alcohol industry and create guidelines about the types of ads that can be run, who is allowed to participate in them,

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and the types of behaviors they encourage, paired with harsh penalties to ensure compliance. Additionally, following the example of the U.K., as well as the tobacco and alcohol industries in the U.S., policymakers could consider restricting gambling advertisements completely on certain mediums, or limiting them to programming and platforms that have a confirmed audience age 18 and older.

- **Require limitations on gambling-like features for youth.** Gambling-like features on gaming platforms introduce and normalize gambling-like experiences for youth. Virtual currencies, loot boxes, and other manipulative design techniques exploit children's and teens' developmental vulnerabilities and contribute to compulsive gameplay. Obscuring costs to young users with virtual currency and deceptive in-game currency conversion can confuse users and lead to compulsive use.
- **Boost FTC enforcement under its existing authorities.** Policymakers should strengthen the FTC's capacity to bring cases against gaming platforms with gambling-like features that are in violation of the Federal Trade Commission Act (Sec. 5 Unfair and Deceptive Practices) and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.
- **Mandate platform responsibility.** Policymakers should require platforms to take proactive steps to protect minors. Require social media platforms and video-sharing sites to restrict algorithmic promotion and targeted advertisement of gambling content to users under 18.
- **Stronger enforcement against operators targeting minors.** Policymakers should strengthen enforcement against illegal and unregulated gambling operators that specifically target underage users. Operators that target young audiences should be held accountable.

For industry

Gaming and gambling companies can implement design changes that limit boys' exposure to gambling and gambling-like behaviors.

- **Restrict loot boxes and randomized paid rewards.** Loot boxes are the most common form of gambling-like activity reported by boys in this study. These mechanics are often designed to maximize engagement and spending. Gaming companies can disclose odds transparently before purchase, cap spending, and allow players to earn rewards through gameplay rather than requiring payment. Additionally, making these pay-to-play mechanics available only to users above designated ages could allow for more intentional engagement. This approach could be brought into alignment with standardized rating practices, such as those used by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), which already flags simulated gambling in its "Teen" rating category. However, many smaller mobile games available on app stores fall outside of these rating systems, leaving a gap in oversight that industry and platform owners should work to address.
- **Restrict advertising.** Adopt standards that prohibit gambling advertising on platforms or during broadcasts with significant youth audiences. Limit influencer and creator partnerships that promote gambling, especially when creators have substantial underage followings. Finally, ensure that all advertising includes clear warnings about the (un)likely odds of winning, addiction, and underage gambling risks.

For educators

Schools are uniquely positioned to help students develop critical thinking about money, risk, and digital persuasion. While this research focuses on gambling, it's one manifestation of a larger issue. Kids are saturated with messaging that promotes unrealistic wealth-building, instant gratification, and risky financial behavior. The underlying skills (understanding probability, evaluating "get rich quick" schemes, and recognizing how platforms profit from risky behavior) are essential life skills that extend far beyond betting.

- **Integrate financial and digital literacy across curricula.** Gambling education doesn't require a standalone course. The key is helping students connect financial concepts to what they're actually experiencing in their digital lives. These concepts fit naturally into existing subjects:
  - **Math classes** can teach probability, expected value, and odds, helping students understand why "the house always wins" and evaluate claims about "easy money."
  - **Health education** can address risk-taking, addiction, and decision-making around gambling and other high-risk behaviors.
  - **Digital literacy lessons** can examine how platforms use persuasive design to encourage risky financial behavior. Help students recognize and analyze gambling advertising tactics (particularly prevalent on social media platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitch), understand how sports

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betting apps use psychological techniques to encourage continued betting, and evaluate claims in promotions and celebrity endorsements. Students can also examine how the creator economy promotes unrealistic wealth narratives and learn to identify survivorship bias in influencer earnings. Connect this to the broader "get rich quick" mentality that permeates online spaces, from crypto schemes to drop-shipping courses to gambling itself.

  - **Financial literacy** courses can include discussions on evaluating investment claims, understanding how personal money and economies actually grow, and recognizing manipulative marketing around betting and other financial products.

- **Partner with families.** Partnering with families helps amplify prevention messages and ensures consistency across spaces. Provide resources to parents on recognizing gambling-like behavior in games and having conversations about gambling with their children. Encourage parents to model healthy attitudes and behaviors toward gambling and money management.
- **Address peer influence.** Informal betting among peers is not new, but the rise of mobile gambling apps and games with gambling features means these behaviors can spread quickly through peer networks and become normalized within school culture. Train staff to recognize signs of gambling activity, such as students sharing gambling apps, placing informal bets, playing card games for money, or discussing wins and losses, and equip them to respond with education rather than punitive measures. Help students and families understand expectations by establishing clear, communicated policies on gambling-related activities on school grounds or devices. If gambling behavior is identified among a peer group, address it collectively as part of a broader conversation about digital wellness, money management, and how platforms design for engagement and spending. This approach reduces stigma, encourages honesty, and connects gambling to issues that students are already navigating: spending in games, FOMO-driven purchases, and pressure to participate in risky online financial activities.

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Methodology

Overview

Common Sense Media engaged SSRS to conduct this study among boys age 11 to 17 living in the United States. SSRS invited the boys to participate in a self-administered online survey through their parents, who were members of the SSRS Opinion Panel. Data collection was conducted from July 9 to 14, 2025, among a sample of N = 1,017 respondents.

The survey was conducted via the internet in English (977) and Spanish (40). Data was weighted to represent the target population of boys age 11 to 17. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 4.2 percentage points.

This section provides information about the sampling procedures and the methods used to collect, process, and weight data for this study.

Sample Design: SSRS Opinion Panel

SSRS Opinion Panel members are recruited randomly based on nationally representative ABS (Address Based Sample) design (including Hawaii and Alaska). ABS respondents are randomly sampled by Marketing Systems Group (MSG) through the U.S. Postal Service's Computerized Delivery Sequence File (CDS), a regularly updated listing of all known addresses in the United States. For the SSRS Opinion Panel, known business addresses are excluded from the sample frame. Additional panelists are recruited via random digit dial (RDD) telephone samples of cellphone numbers connected to a prepaid cellphone. This sample is selected by MSG from the cellphone RDD frame, using a flag that identifies prepaid numbers. Prepaid cellphone numbers are associated with cellphones that are "pay as you go" and do not require a contract.

The SSRS Opinion Panel is a multimode panel (web and phone). Most panelists take self-administered web surveys. However, the option to take surveys conducted by a live telephone interviewer is available to those who do not use the internet as well as those who use the internet but are reluctant to take surveys online.

Survey Sampling

The sample drawn for this study were boys age 11 to 17 living in the United States who were recruited through SSRS Opinion Panelists, who are U.S. adults age 18 or older that have a child/children age 11 to 17 living in their household. The sample was drawn using a probability proportional to size (PPS) methodology to ensure adequate representation of each demographic group while minimizing the variability of the final weights. The sample was additionally stratified by preferred survey language, mode, and age group of child/children in their household (either 6 to 11 years, or 12 to 17 years) to meet the sample size targets.

Questionnaire Design

To prepare the final questionnaire, SSRS conducted in-depth interviews with 10 boys age 11 to 17, recruited through their parents or legal guardians who are members of the SSRS Opinion Panel and through friends and families. Recruitment took place from April 10 to 25, 2025, and the interviews were conducted concurrently from April 16 to 27, 2025. Table 15 summarizes the age distribution of the participating boys. The boys' valuable insights played a key role in helping Common Sense Media with developing the web questionnaire.

Table 15: Number of boys who participated in the in-depth interviews, by age

Age	*Number of boys interviewed*
11 years old	1
12 years old	1
13 years old	1
14 years old	2
15 years old	0
16 years old	3
17 years old	2

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Next, cognitive interviews were conducted with a separate group of 10 boys age 11 to 17. Recruitment and interviews were carried out concurrently from June 13 to 25, 2025. During the interviews, the participants were presented with questions about their social media use, gaming habits, perception of masculinity, and other subjects to gauge comprehension. The main goals of the testing were three-fold: (1) to grasp how participants interpreted the questions, (2) to understand their thought processes in arriving at answers, and (3) to assess whether any questions posed challenges or could be made more relevant to the boys. Table 16 presents the age distribution of boys who participated in the cognitive interviews.

Table 16: Number of boys who participated in the cognitive interviews, by age

Age	*Number of boys interviewed*
11 years old	2
12 years old	2
13 years old	1
14 years old	1
15 years old	1
16 years old	1
17 years old	2

Following the pretests, SSRS made adjustments to the survey instrument based on the feedback collected from the boys. Changes to the survey instrument did not substantially change its content but further clarified questions and response options to ensure data validity.

SSRS reviewed the questionnaire primarily to identify potential problems in the instrument that might increase respondent burden, cause respondents to refuse or terminate the survey, create problems with respondent comprehension, or pose practical challenges for mode-specific administration such as complex skip patterns.

To enhance accessibility, the questionnaire was translated into Spanish, providing respondents with the option to take the survey in either English or Spanish based on their comfort level. With the exemption of the screening questions, both the parent and the child respondents were allowed to (or "could") skip questions if they wanted.

Data Collection

Screening

Panelists were screened at the start of the survey for their parental status. Respondents who indicated that they were not a parent or legal guardian of a boy or boys age 11 to 17, or if they were but did not consent for their male child to take the survey, were not invited to continue with the survey.

Web Contact Procedures

A "soft launch" that invited a limited number of panelists and their boys to take the survey was conducted from July 9 to 10, 2025. Soft launch data was checked to ensure the functionality of the program and that the administration length of the survey was within the scope of work. After checking soft launch data to ensure that all questionnaire content and skip patterns were correct, an additional sample was released to ensure that the final sample met the study goals. Following the full launch of the survey in English and Spanish on July 11, 2025, a reminder was sent via email or SMS on July 13, 2025.

In households with multiple eligible boys, the parent or legal guardian was instructed to select the boy with the most recent birthday. The survey could be completed immediately if the selected boy was available, or resumed later when he became available.

In appreciation for the boys' participation, they received post-paid compensation in the form of an electronic gift card, sent via email to their parent or legal guardian's email address immediately after completion of the survey.

Median web survey length was approximately 22 minutes, while the average web survey length was approximately 25 minutes.

Programming, Data Processing, and Integration

Programming

Prior to the field period, SSRS programmed the study into its Forsta Plus (formerly known as Confirmit) Web/CATI platform for administration in English or Spanish. Extensive checking of the program was conducted to ensure that skip

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patterns and sample splits followed the design of the questionnaire.

Additional steps were employed to ensure quality experience in survey administration regardless of the device utilized by respondents, whether a desktop computer, tablet, or mobile phone. The web program was optimized for administration via smartphone or other mobile handheld devices. The web program was also checked on multiple devices, including desktop computers and handheld mobile devices, and on different web browsers to ensure consistent and optimized visualization across devices and web browsers. The web survey was accessed directly by respondents, using their unique survey links with embedded passwords. This also gave them the ability to return to their survey later if they chose to suspend their survey.

Quality Control Checks

Respondents who had responses containing gibberish in the open-ended questions were excluded from the final data set. Three completed surveys were removed after applying this cleaning standard (0.3%).

Weighting and Design Effects

Data was weighted to represent boys age 11 to 17 living in the United States. The weighting involves multiple stages, reflecting the nature of sampling for probability-based panels. First, to account for recruitment into the panel, a base weight is created for the entire SSRS Opinion Panel. Then, a study-level base weight is created by adjusting this panel-wide base weight for the probability of selection into the individual study. An adjustment is made for sampling one boy within the household when there is more than one boy. Finally, to create the final weight, the study-level data is raked to parameters for the study's target population.

Panel-Wide Base Weight

The panel-wide base weight adjusts for the SSRS Opinion Panel recruitment and retention process—specifically, differential probabilities of being selected for the recruitment sample, completing the registration survey, joining the panel, and remaining on the panel.

Recruitment design weight

The design weight accounts for differential probabilities of selection for the recruitment sample. The design weight for the SSRS Opinion Panel was computed differently depending on whether the panelist was recruited from address-based sample (ABS), a prepaid cellphone sample, or the SSRS dual-frame RDD telephone Omnibus.

ABS recruits

The design weight for ABS recruits corrects for the disproportionate ABS design by adjusting the sample distribution across the ABS strata to match the distribution of the ABS frame across strata.

ABS recruits come from a variety of sample sources, some of which employ different stratification schemes. The design weight for ABS recruits is tailored to the stratification scheme used for the sample from which the panelist was recruited. Currently, ABS recruitment waves for the SSRS Opinion Panel are stratified on a combination of geographic region and model-based indicators of the presence of key subpopulations.

Prepaid cell recruits

The design weight for prepaid cellphone recruits accounts for any disproportionate sampling of prepaid cellphone numbers from the cellphone RDD frame.

Telephone Omnibus recruits

The design weight for the telephone Omnibus recruits is their original base weight computed at the time of the original Omnibus interview. This base weight accounts for selection probabilities associated with the overlapping dual-frame Omnibus sample design.[1] This base weight is a function of the landline and cell frame sample sizes, as well as each respondent's telephone usage and number of adults in the household.

1 Buskirk, T. D., & Best, J. (2012) Venn diagrams, probability 101, and sampling weights computed for dual frame telephone RDD designs. Journal of Statistics and Mathematics, Vol. 15: 3696–3710.

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Recruitment, nonresponse, and attrition adjustments

Two adjustments are applied to the recruitment design weight:

- A nonresponse adjustment correcting for variability in the recruitment response rate.
- An attrition adjustment correcting for variability in the rate at which originally recruited panelists are retained on the panel.

Both steps use a weighting class adjustment in which adjustment cells are defined by a cross of the recruitment channel and geographic strata.

For ABS recruits, a household size adjustment is also applied to correct for the sampling of one adult within each sampled address.

Non-internet adjustment

For projects that collect data entirely online, people who do not use the internet cannot be included in the sample. To account for this non-coverage and make the results more representative of the entire target population, SSRS makes a non-internet adjustment to the base weight.

This uses a model-based propensity score adjustment to make adults with internet access representative of all adults (regardless of whether they have internet access). Propensity scores are estimated by modeling panel response mode on a range of demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral covariates. The model is a conditional inference tree built in R using the *partykit* package.

Panel-wide raking

To create the final panel-wide base weight, the full panel is raked to target parameters for the population of U.S. adults (age 18 or older). Panel-wide raking parameters include gender, age, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, Census division, civic engagement, population density, frequency of internet use, voter registration status, party identification, religion, household size, and home tenure. This raking step uses panelist profile variables; missing data in these variables is filled in using hot decking prior to raking.

Final Study-Level Weight

The study-level base weight adjusts for differential probabilities of selection from the SSRS Opinion Panel into the sample for this specific study. The study-level base weight is calculated as:

$$PABW * \frac{N_h}{n_h}$$

where PABW is the panel-wide base weight calculated as described above, and, for each stratum *h*, N_h is the number of panelists available and nh is the number invited into the study.

Study-level sampling strata were formed from quantiles of PABW, with higher-weight panelists being given a higher probability of selection. These weight-based strata were defined by crossing language (English/Spanish) with the presence of children age 6 to 17 to meet the required sample size targets for each group.

Within-household probability of selection adjustment for the boys

An adjustment was made to account for the fact that one boy was interviewed within each household that has more than one boy. If the number of boys in the household is denoted by *A*, then the probability that any boy is interviewed and the probability of selection adjustment is: $a_1 = (1/A)^{-1} = A$.[2]

The adjusted base weight would be:
$FinalBW = PPS_{base} weight\ x\ A$.

Study-level raking

With the study-level base weight applied, the data was weighted to balance the demographic profile of the sample to the target population parameters.

Weighting was accomplished by raking sample distributions to target population distributions using iterative proportional fitting. This procedure balances each calibration variable to target benchmarks individually and iteratively. The entire set of calibration variables is cycled through until the weights converge across all dimensions.

2 The standard procedure is to cap A at 3.

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Data was weighted to distributions of the boys' age, boys' education, boys' race/ethnicity, region, parents' education, sex by education, age by education, number of age-eligible boys in the household, home tenure, civic engagement, population density, and internet use frequency. Missing data in the raking variables was imputed using hot decking. Hot deck imputation replaces the missing values of a respondent randomly with another similar respondent without missing data. The following table shows the data sources used for calibration totals.

Table 17: Calibration variable sources

Dimensions	*Source*
Boys' age Boys' education Boys' race/ethnicity Census region Parents' education Parents' sex Parents' age Home tenure Number of boys age 11 to 17 in the household	2023 American Community Survey (ACS) [3]
Population density Internet frequency Civic engagement	Weighted SSRS Opinion Panel

Weights were trimmed at the 4th and 96th percentiles to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on survey-derived estimates.

3 Ruggles, S., Flood, S., Sobek, M., Backman, D., Cooper, G., Rivera Drew, J. A., Richards, S., Rodgers, R., Schroeder, J., & Williams, K. C. W. IPUMS USA: Version 16.0 [dataset]. Minneapolis, MN: IPUMS, 2025. https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V16.0.

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Table 18: Sample demographics

Category	*Values*	*Parameter*	*Unweighted*	*Weight*
Adolescent age	11	13.9%	23.2%	14.3%
	12	14.0%	11.8%	14.4%
	13	14.2%	12.4%	13.6%
	14	14.7%	13.1%	14.5%
	15	14.6%	11.1%	13.8%
	16	14.5%	13.1%	14.6%
	17	14.1%	15.3%	14.7%
Adolescent education	Public school/Not attending	87.8%	86.9%	87.5%
	Private school	12.2%	13.1%	12.5%
Parent education	HS grad or less	33.9%	29.4%	32.4%
	Some college /assoc. degree	27.9%	35.7%	27.8%
	College grad+	38.3%	34.9%	39.7%
Sex, by education	Male, some college or less	28.6%	11.2%	25.5%
	Male, college grad+	17.1%	12.4%	17.8%
	Female, some college or less	33.1%	53.9%	34.8%
	Female, college grad+	21.1%	22.5%	21.9%
Age, by education	18–34, Some college or less	7.7%	19.0%	8.3%
	18–34, College grad+	1.1%	2.5%	1.2%
	35–54, Some college or less	50.0%	44.1%	47.8%
	35–54, College grad+	33.8%	30.1%	35.0%
	55+, Some college or less	4.0%	2.1%	4.1%
	55+, College grad+	3.4%	2.4%	3.6%
Adolescent race and ethnicity	White non-Hispanic	47.8%	43.9%	47.3%
	Black non-Hispanic	12.0%	18.6%	12.6%
	Hispanic born in the U.S.	23.8%	23.3%	23.8%
	Hispanic born outside the U.S.	2.8%	1.5%	2.7%
	Other non-Hispanic	13.6%	12.8%	13.7%
Census region	Northeast	16.0%	15.7%	16.1%
	Midwest	20.9%	20.8%	20.3%
	South	38.8%	43.3%	39.4%
	West	24.3%	20.2%	24.3%
Civic engagement	Civically engaged	39.9%	52.2%	41.9%
	Not engaged	60.1%	47.8%	58.1%
Population density	1 Lowest 20%	22.1%	20.6%	21.7%
	2	20.5%	20.9%	20.6%
	3	21.4%	20.9%	20.7%
	4	19.1%	18.9%	19.5%
	5 Highest 20%	17.0%	18.7%	17.5%
Internet frequency	Almost constantly	51.2%	69.6%	53.4%
	Several times a day or less	48.8%	30.4%	46.6%
Number of boys 11–17 in the household	1	82.5%	70.4%	81.6%
	2	15.8%	25.0%	16.6%
	3+	1.7%	4.6%	1.8%
Home tenure	Own	73.2%	54.5%	72.2%
	Rent	26.8%	45.5%	27.8%

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Effects of Sample Design on Statistical Inference

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. SSRS calculates the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using this data. The so-called design effect, or "deff," represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from a disproportionate sample design and systematic nonresponse. The total sample design effect for this survey is 1.90.

SSRS calculates the composite design effect for a sample of size *n*, with each case having a weight, *w*, as:[4]

$$deff = \frac{n\sum w^2}{(\sum w)^2}$$

The survey's margin of error is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample—the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is 4.2 percentage points, respectively. This means that in 95 out of every 100 samples drawn using the same methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4.2 percentage points away from their true values in the population. Margins of error for subgroups will be larger. It is important to remember that sampling fluctuations are only one possible source of error in a survey estimate. Other sources, such as respondent selection bias, questionnaire wording, and reporting inaccuracy, may contribute additional error of greater or lesser magnitude.

4 Kish, L. (1992). Weighting for unequal pi. Journal of Official Statistics, Vol. 8, No. 2 (183–200).

Sample Disposition and Response Rate

Table 19 details the completion and response rates for this study.

Table 19: Completion rate/response rate

Completion rates/composite response rates	*Total*
Total sample (invited to participate)	6,990
Screen-outs	1,039
Total eligible	5,951
Quality control removals	3
Incompletes	1,064
Quota full	430
Completions*	1,017
Incidence/eligibility rate	49.46%
Survey completion rate (completions/total invited to participate)	14.55%
Survey RR3	21.80%

** Excludes screen-outs or data quality removals that completed the survey.*

Cumulative Response Rate

Cumulative response rate takes into consideration the response rate for the panel recruitment survey, the percent of recruitment survey respondents that agree to join the panel, and this survey's response rate. The cumulative RR3 is 1.06%.

Subgroup Definitions Used in the Analysis

Income

Household income is grouped into three categories based on parents' self-reported annual household income for 2024. The lower-income group includes those with income less than $50,000, the middle-income group includes those with income of at least $50,000 but less than $100,000, and the higher-income group includes those with income of $100,000 or more.

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Gambling frequency

Gambling frequency is grouped into two categories among adolescent boys who reported participating in any type of gambling activities in the past 12 months. High gambling frequency includes boys who gambled once a month or more, whereas low gambling frequency includes those who gambled less than once a month.

Gambling losses last year

Among adolescent boys who reported gambling in the past 12 months and who had spent money on betting or gambling activities, gambling losses in the past year were grouped into two categories. Those who lost $51 or more are classified as having higher gambling losses, while those who $50 dollars or less are classified as having lower gambling losses.

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