# Rising trend of online poker gambling among US high school students sparks concern



A growing trend of online poker gambling is rapidly taking hold among high school students across the United States, raising concerns about the potential financial and psychological risks associated with the activity. The New York Post reports that high schools nationwide are witnessing an influx of student-run online poker leagues, attracting dozens of players who are frequently placing sizeable bets late into the night.

In a striking example from one high school, three players—known by their usernames DerekC9, Fuzzypanda21, and Erik467—engaged in a high-stakes poker game involving a pot exceeding $200, an unusually large sum for teenagers. During this game, Erik467 held pocket aces, statistically the strongest possible starting hand in poker, and confidently went all in before the dealer revealed any community cards. While Fuzzypanda21 folded, DerekC9 opted to call with a king and jack. The sequence of revealed community cards initially seemed favourable to Erik467, but a queen on the river gave DerekC9 a straight, snatching victory and leaving Erik467 with a substantial loss.

Such stories reflect a wider pattern. Within just one high school, multiple leagues and countless poker tables operate with varying sets of rules and skill levels, and online games peak around 11 p.m., often continuing until the early morning. The rapid rise of online casinos and poker platforms over the past two decades has facilitated easier access to gambling, including for underage players. A University of Pennsylvania study found that 2.9 million children aged 14 to 22, many under the legal age of 21, are engaging in card games for money, with 580,000 doing so online.

Experts highlight the potential dangers beneath what might seem like harmless fun. The Office of Problem Gambling Services (OPGS) notes that children introduced to betting by age 12 are four times more likely to develop problematic gambling behaviours later in life. Research by Alesia Burge further indicates that individuals who begin gambling at a younger age tend to gamble more frequently and face more severe addictions in adulthood compared to those who start later.

Isaac Carrillo, an 11th-grade student at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, New York, who aspires to become a psychiatrist, reflects the type of youth getting caught in this rising trend. Scientific studies reinforce concerns about adolescent gambling, pointing to the biology of the developing brain as a key factor. Monique Ernst’s research highlights that the underdeveloped frontal cortex of teenagers—responsible for logical reasoning and decision-making—renders them especially susceptible to addiction and risk-taking. This finding has been supported by numerous subsequent studies.

The prevalence of gambling among teenagers now joins established concerns over substance use such as alcohol and nicotine as areas requiring attention. Unlike casual betting among friends, however, the financial stakes in online poker can escalate rapidly, with reports of some students incurring debts from a few hundred to over a thousand dollars.

This emerging vice presents complex challenges for schools, families, and communities as the activities are often conducted under the cover of digital anonymity and outside school hours. The New York Post’s coverage of this phenomenon underscores the shifting landscape of adolescent risk behaviours in the digital age.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.nypost.com/2024/04/15/high-school-students-join-online-poker-leagues-raising-concerns/> - Corroborates the claim that high schools across the U.S. are witnessing a growing trend of student-run online poker leagues involving sizeable bets and late-night play.
* <https://www.webroot.com/us/en/resources/tips-articles/internet-gambling-among-teens-and-college-students> - Supports statistical data regarding the rising participation of teenagers and young adults in online poker, including details about betting frequency and the number of underage gamblers.
* <https://www.michiganmedicine.org/health-lab/experts-say-increased-access-online-gambling-may-put-teens-risk> - Confirms that increased accessibility of online gambling platforms has led to greater exposure and risks for underage players, including teens' tendency to gamble late at night using digital devices.
* <https://www.parents.com/kids/safety/kids-as-young-as-11-are-becoming-addicted-to-online-gambling/> - Details research on the increased risk of gambling addiction starting from a young age and highlights expert warnings about the developmental vulnerability of adolescents to gambling problems.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4439395/> - Provides research findings that adolescent high school students engage in gambling behaviors and outlines related risk factors, such as the biology of the developing brain contributing to vulnerability.