



EVOLUTION OF THE PLAYING HABITS OF POKER PLAYERS

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POKER: a popular gambling activity

- There are millions of poker players around the world
- Quebec: 4.7% of the adult population (3rd most popular gambling activity)



POKER: is it a risky gambling activity?

- Concern: prevalence of gambling problems (9.1 to 17.2%)
- Consequences
 - financial problems
 - mental health problems
- Problematic gamblers vs those without a problem:
 - elevated number of gambling activities, high frequency of gambling, playing more on the Internet, elevated level of impulsivity and anxiety and higher presence of erroneous beliefs

OUR POKER PLAYERS

- Participant must identify him/herself as a player
- Recruited from different areas:
 - Facebook
 - Presence in bars, advertisements in bars LTPQ (poker tournament league of Quebec)
 - Advertisements in newspapers (Voir - Montreal, Quebec, Saguenay, La Presse, La Tribune, Journal Portneuf)
 - Advertisements on AJPQ sites (metropolitan poker league)
 - Princepoker discussion forum on poker
 - Major tournaments
 - Montreal casino
 - via an epidemiological investigation



**JOUEURS
de POKER
RECHERCHÉS**
en salle et/ou en ligne

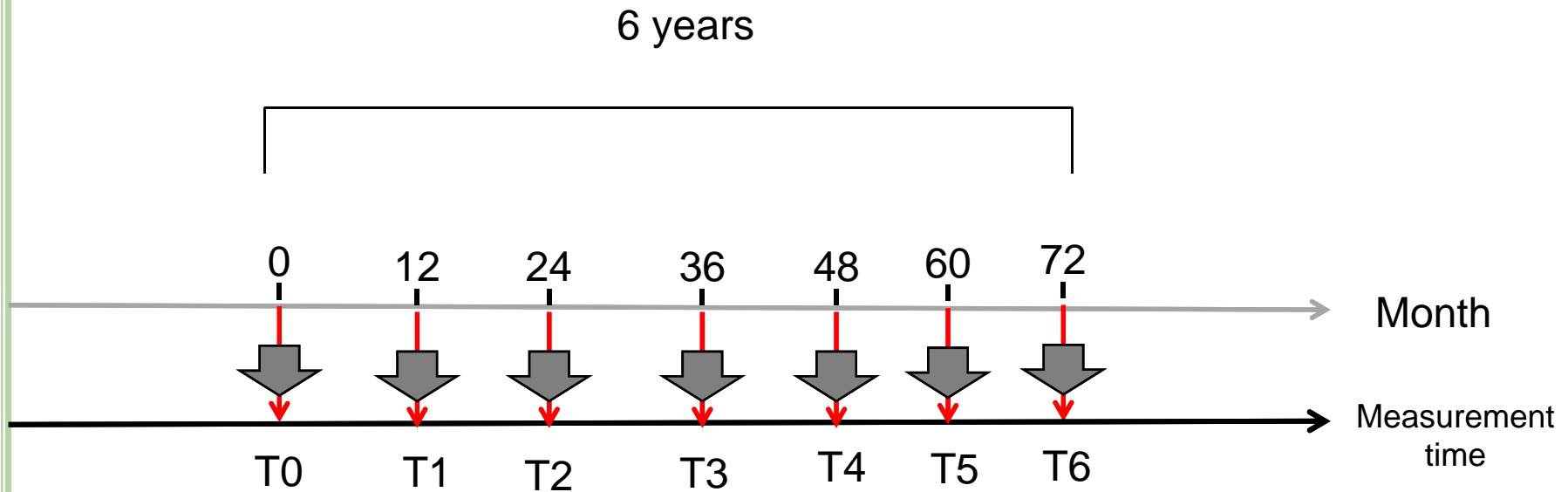
étude menée par
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Poker players consulted once per year for 6 years



**Questionnaires (60 minutes) +
qualitative interviews**

Interviews conducted

- n = 400 poker players recruited in Quebec (T0)

	T0	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
2008-16 wave							
2010-16 wave	→						
2013-16 wave	→						
N eligible		400	276	171	102	77	62
N lost during follow-ups		64	17	16	15	4	3
N abandons		60	25	36	10	1	0
N completed follow-ups		276	234	119	77	72	59
Response rate (%; n who completed follow-ups/n eligible)		69%	85%	70%	75%	94%	95%

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS (n=400)

- 51% preferred playing poker **in a room or among friends**
- 49% preferred playing poker **on the Internet**
- No "purely" Internet players, for the most part
- Played on average **4 other gambling activities (lottery, scratch cards)**



PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

(n=400)

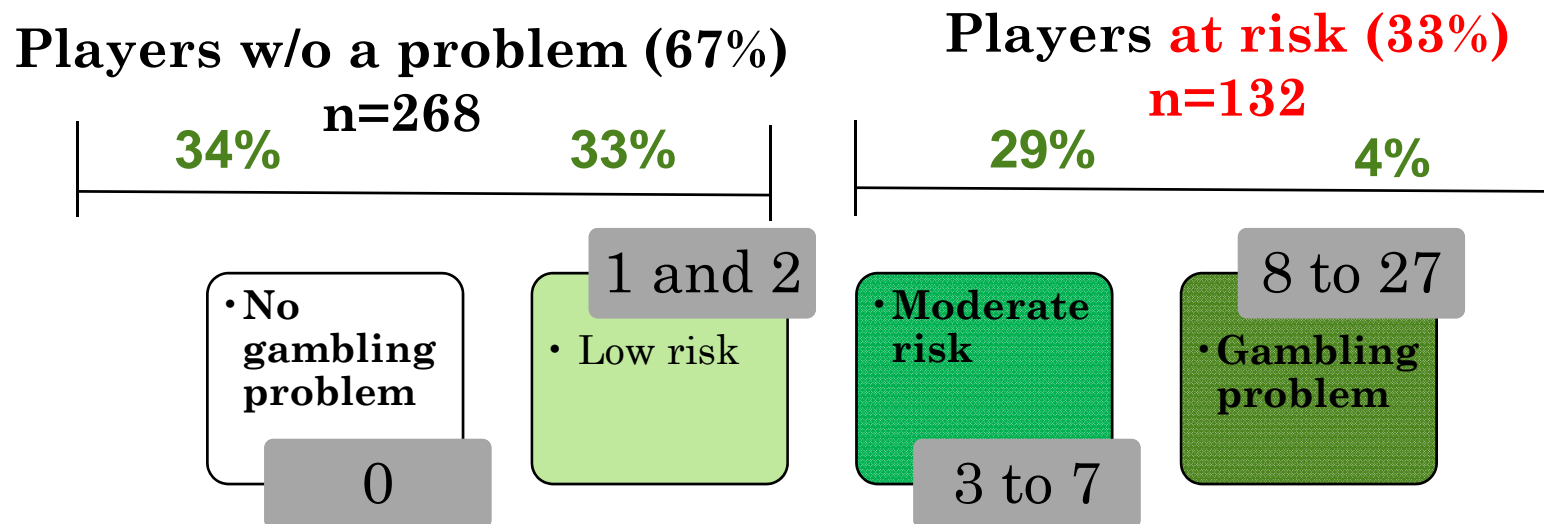
	n	%
Sex		
Male	352	88.4%
Female	46	11.6%
Age		
Average: 32.3 years old		
(18-68 years old)		
Marital status		
Married/couple	208	52.6%
Separated/divorced/single	187	47.4%
Last level of education completed		
Primary school completed	16	4.1%
High school or higher completed	377	95.9%
Annual salary		
Average: \$44 187		
(0 – \$225 000)		

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

(n=400)

- Experienced players (6 years on average)
- 25% professionals or experts
- 21% poker as a source of income

Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI)



How many become pathological gamblers?

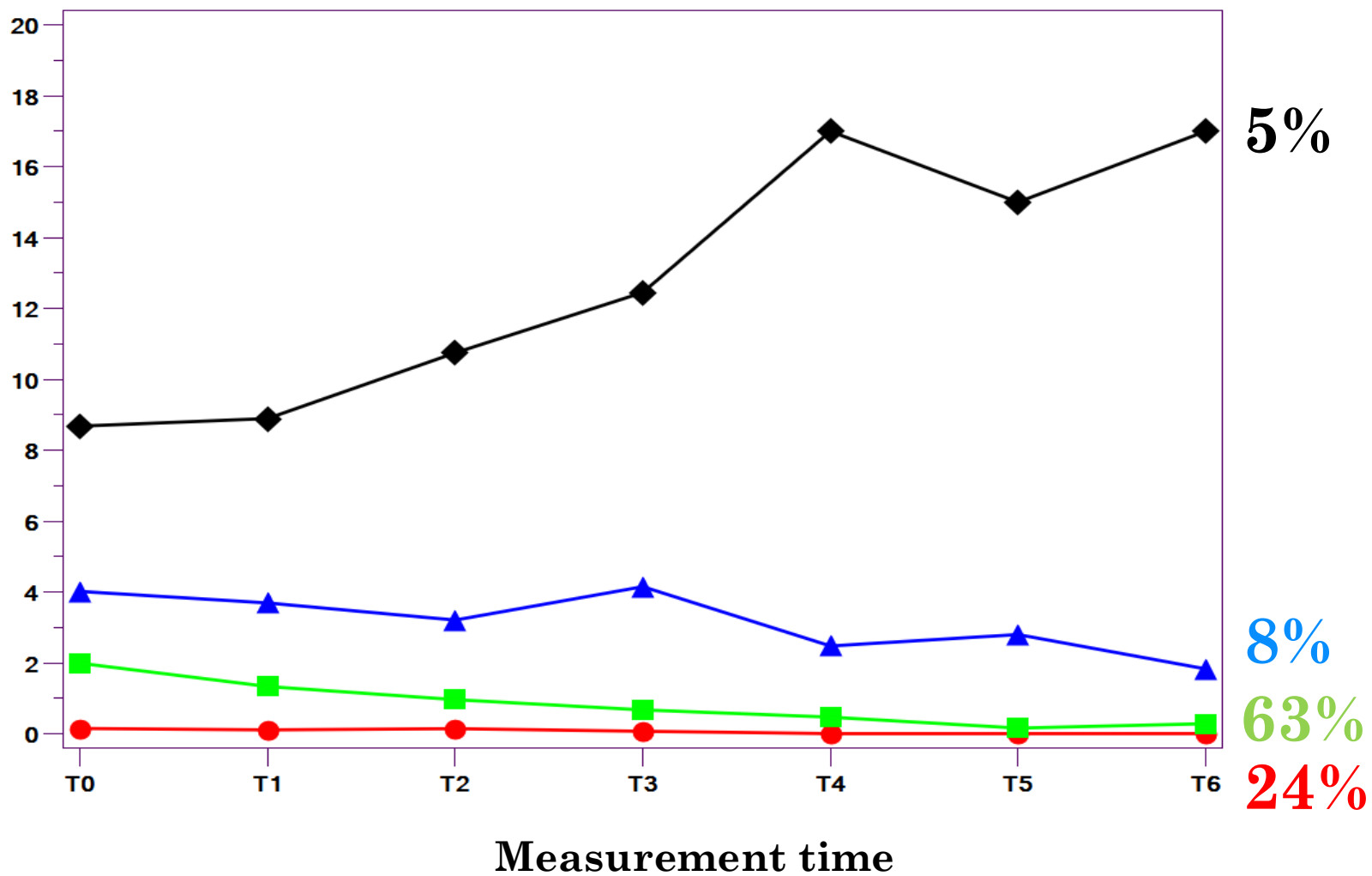
(n=276)

- Over the course of 3 years, on average per year
 - 2.07%** of players became pathological gamblers over the 3 year observation period
 - 16.8%** of players experienced an increased risk of having gambling problems



Trajectory of gambling problems over 6 years

CPGI Score



Findings from the analysis of trajectories

- Only 5% of players were problematic and remained as such
- For the rest, the risk diminished (reassuring!)

But what differentiates excessive players who remain as such (traj. 4)?

Predictors of trajectories (multivariate analyses)

	Traj 2: low risk (decrease) [†]	Traj 3: moderate risk (decrease) [†]	Traj 4: excessive gambling (increase) [†]
	RCA (IC 95%)		
Internet as main modality ^a	2.468 (1.455-4.186)***	11.543 (3.966-33.597)***	6.488 (1.988-21.170)**
Number of gambling activities practiced ^{ab}	1.072 (0.951-1.209)	1.545 (1.242-1.922)***	1.557 (1.214-1.996)***
Anxiety	1.113 (1.032-1.200)**	1.171 (1.067-1.285)***	1.152 (1.033-1.285)*
Satisfaction with life	0.992 (0.973-1.012)	1.076 (1.022-1.132)**	0.931 (0.882-0.982)**
Avoidance	1.820 (0.859-3.854)	3.202 (1.159-8.844)*	3.726 (1.132-12.267)*

[†] Compared to group 1: no problem – stability (reference group).

^a 12 last months. ^b Excluding poker.

* p<0.05; ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001

Do the players report an evolution in their poker habits?

- Qualitative study (n=25)
- Including gamblers who increased or decreased according to the CPGI over one year
- « *Have your poker habits evolved in the past years?* » (increase-decrease-stable)
- « *How would you explain this evolution?* »

OUR PLAYERS explain ...

Perceived decrease in playing poker (n = 19)	Perceived increase in playing poker (n = 3)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less pleasure in playing poker• More severe negative feelings when or after playing (fatigue, anger, emptiness)• Fear of developing a gambling problem• Conflict with family or friends• Life transition resulting in less free time• Distrust of Internet poker sites• Critical view of the possibility of winning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pleasure in playing poker• Intention to become a professional poker player• Desire to make money• Tendency to get too engrossed in activities• Free time and irregular work schedule• Increased accessibility• Stressful life events

n=3 reported a stability in poker playing

Is their perception of evolution in accordance with our vision (CPGI) ?

Gamblers' perception	CPGI category change	Agreement (n = 10) n (%)
Decrease	Decrease	9 (36)
Increase	Increase	1(4)
		Non-agreement (n = 15) n (%)
Decrease	Increase	10 (40)
Increase	Decrease	2 (8)
Stability	Decrease	1 (4)
Stability	Increase	2 (8)

What we can learn from this study

- Few players developed gambling problems
- However, certain had a risk that increased, even if they are not pathological gamblers
 - therefore, identify these players to prevent consequences
- A small group of players who were already pathological remained as such (5%)
 - target these aspects in prevention and treatment: number of gambling activities, Internet, anxiety, satisfaction with life and avoidance

What we can learn from this study

- Some perceived a decrease, when there was actually an increase in risk
 - Strategies to see their gambling habits: tables with losses and revenues
 - A telephone call/year to check in?
- Think of themselves as being different from other players
- Distrustful, questioning general prevention and being hesitant with respect to treatments
- Advice from players: play in a healthy manner, that is to say recreationally and for fun and not for money; have other hobbies

This study allowed us to

- Create a profile of poker players in Quebec
- Understand the evolution of this emerging phenomenon

Questions still remain

- What about female poker players?
- What strategies are used by professional poker players? Avenues for prevention?
- Are current services adapted to poker players?



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