



PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION

Applying a Public Health Approach to Problem Gambling Prevention

October 1, 2025 | 9:00 am – 1:00 pm

Haner Hernandez | Senior Training and Technical Assistance Provider

Ben Spooner | Assistant Director and Training and Technical Assistance Provider



EDC.ORG



Introductions

1

**Name, organization,
position**



Hello
my name is

2

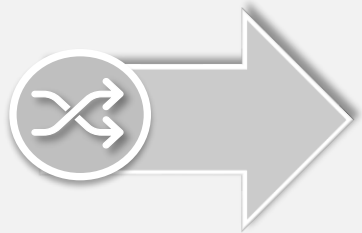
Icebreaker question:

What's your first memory of gambling?

2

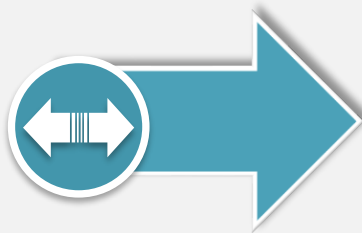
Key Objectives

Applying a Public Health Approach to Problem Gambling



Describe a public health approach for problem gambling

01



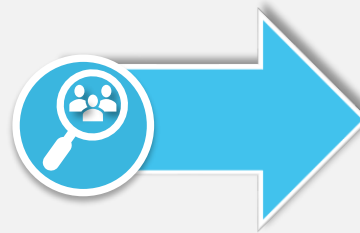
Describe the gambling continuum and associated risks

02



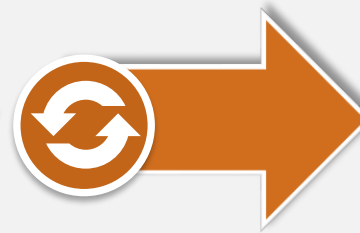
Identify risk and protective factors for problem gambling

03



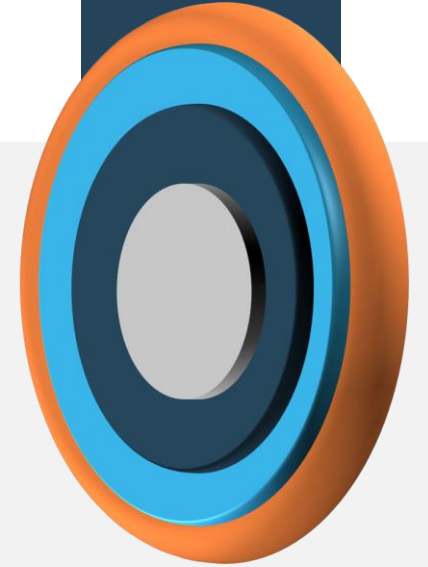
Identify groups at risk for developing problem gambling

04

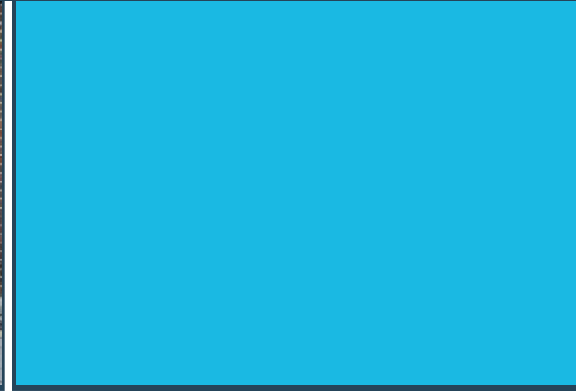
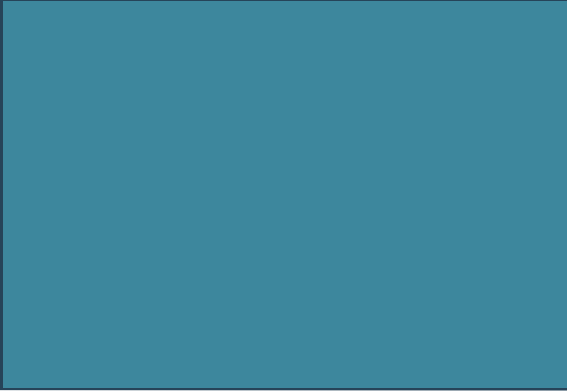


Understand connections between problem gambling and other health issues

05



SECTION 1: PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH



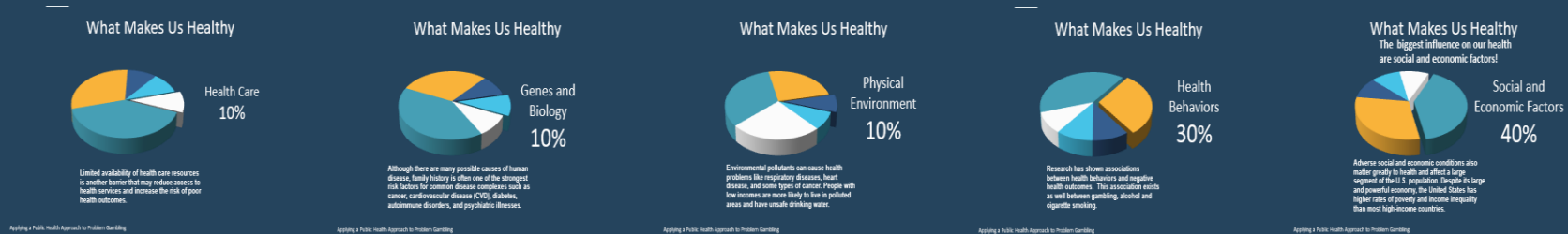
Small Group Discussion:

What are the biggest drivers of health?

- Genes and Biology
- Physical Environment
- Healthcare
- Social and Economic Factors
- Health Behaviors

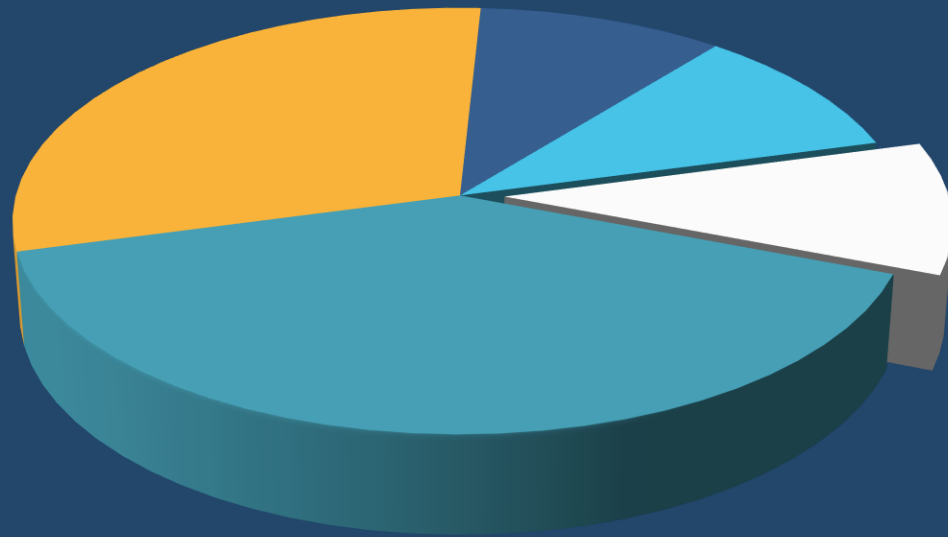
In your groups: Discuss and rank these 5 categories based on what you think are the biggest drivers of health from 1-5.

What Makes Us Healthy



So What's the Answer?

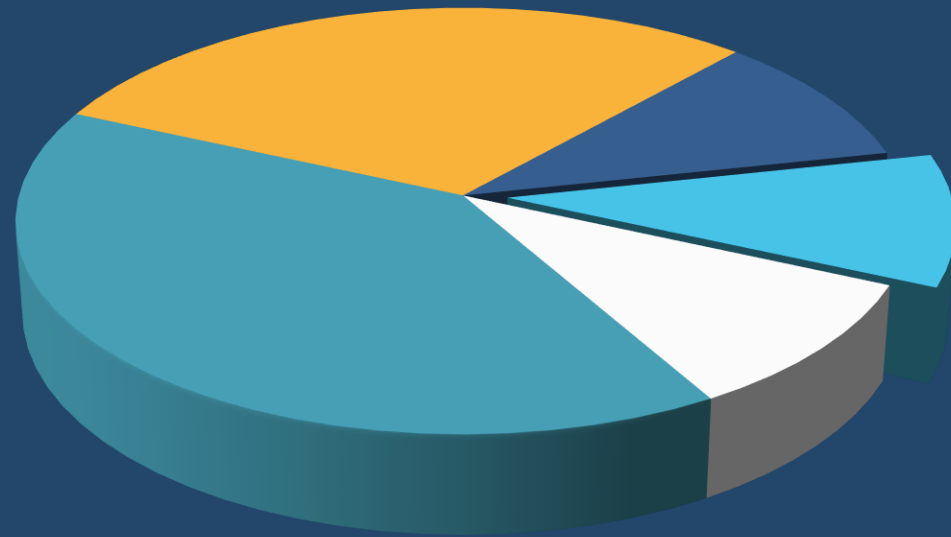
What Makes Us Healthy



Health Care
10%

Limited availability of health care resources is another barrier that may reduce access to health services and increase the risk of poor health outcomes.

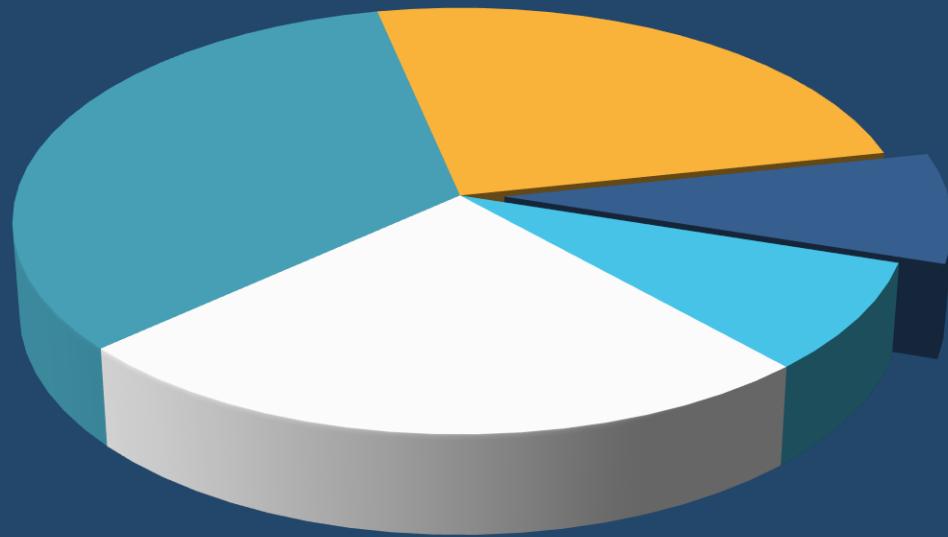
What Makes Us Healthy



Genes and
Biology
10%

Although there are many possible causes of human disease, family history is often one of the strongest risk factors for common disease complexes such as cancer, cardiovascular disease (CVD), diabetes, autoimmune disorders, and psychiatric illnesses.

What Makes Us Healthy



Physical
Environment
10%

Environmental pollutants can cause health problems like respiratory diseases, heart disease, and some types of cancer. People with low incomes are more likely to live in polluted areas and have unsafe drinking water.

What Makes Us Healthy



Health
Behaviors
30%

Research has shown associations between health behaviors and negative health outcomes. This association exists as well between gambling, alcohol and cigarette smoking.

What Makes Us Healthy

The biggest influence on our health
are social and economic factors!

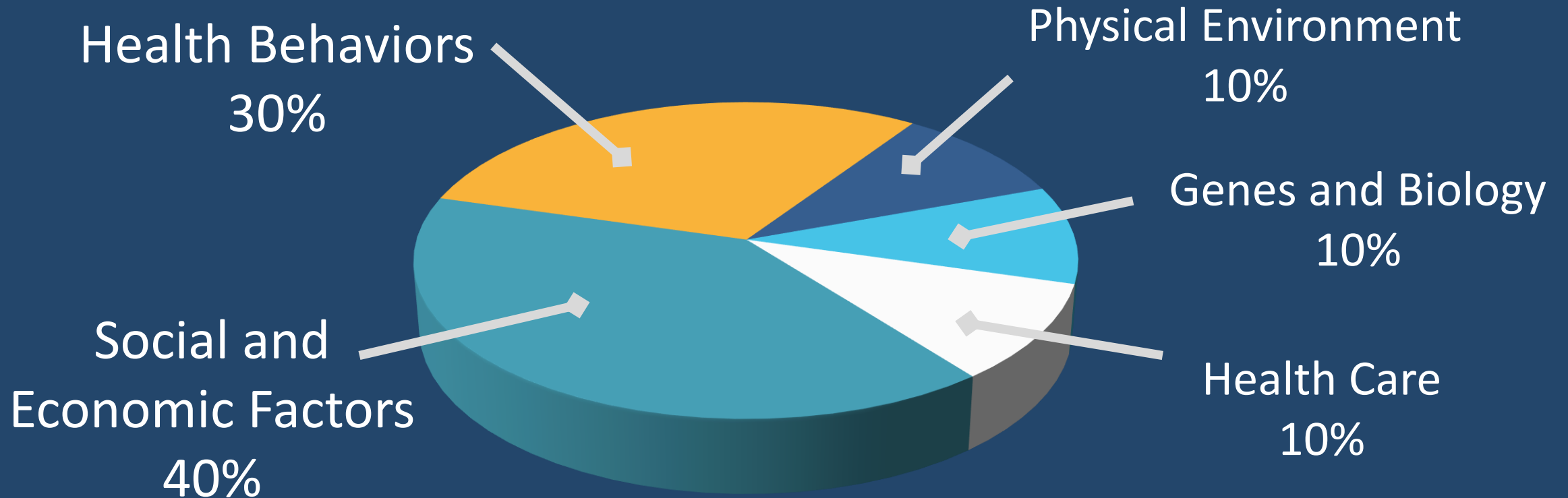


Social and
Economic Factors

40%

Adverse social and economic conditions also matter greatly to health and affect a large segment of the U.S. population. Despite its large and powerful economy, the United States has higher rates of poverty and income inequality than most high-income countries.

What Makes Us Healthy



Social & Structural Determinants of Health

Social and Structural Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health

Education

Educational attainment of a community as well as its access to quality, affordable educational opportunities



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability

Economic environment in which people function



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health

Social and Community Context

Interactions between individuals and groups in a community



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health

Neighborhood and Built Environment

Layout, safety, & physical conditions of the environment in which people exist



Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health

Healthcare and Quality

Presence, quality, and affordability of healthcare.



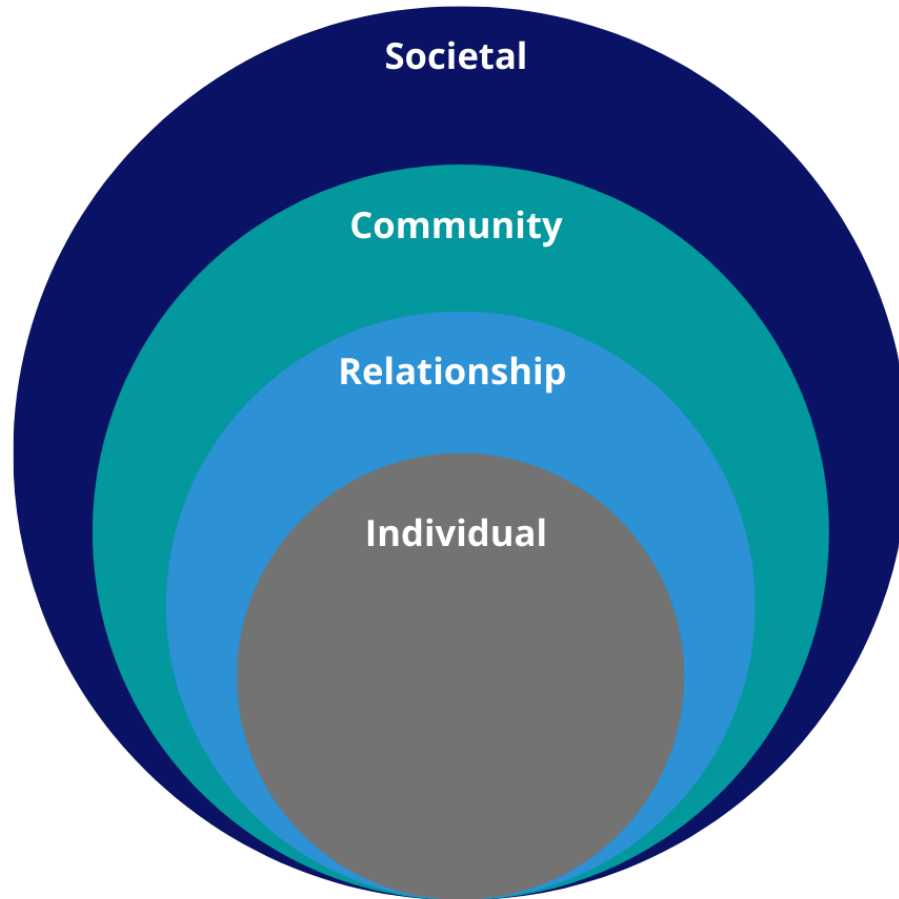
Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health

Health at Varied Levels

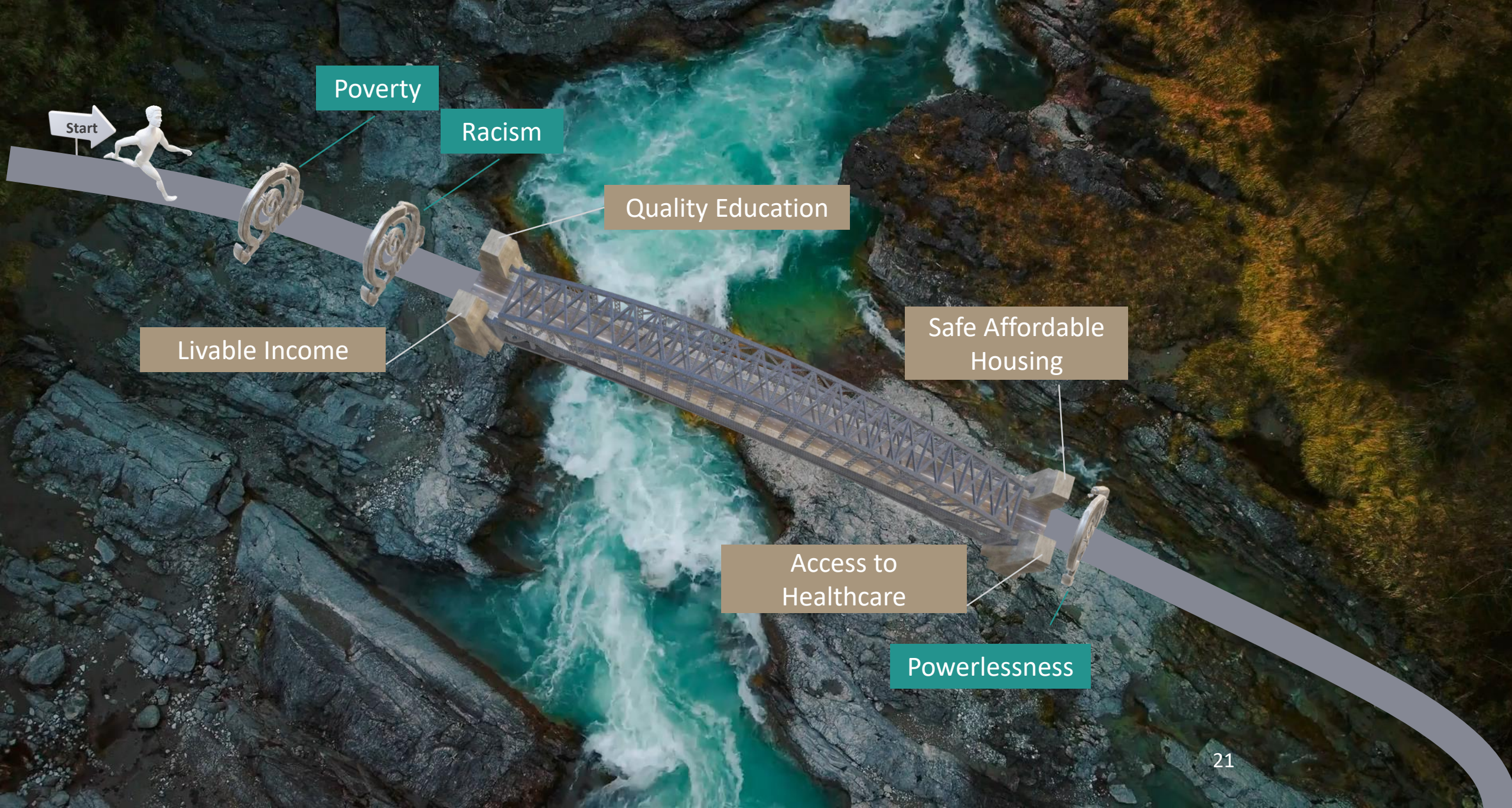


Source: Let's Get Healthy California

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL



- This model considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors.
- Helps us understand the range of factors that put people at risk for problem gambling or protect them from experiencing negative consequences of problem gambling.



Poverty

Racism

Quality Education

Livable Income

Safe Affordable
Housing

Access to
Healthcare

Powerlessness

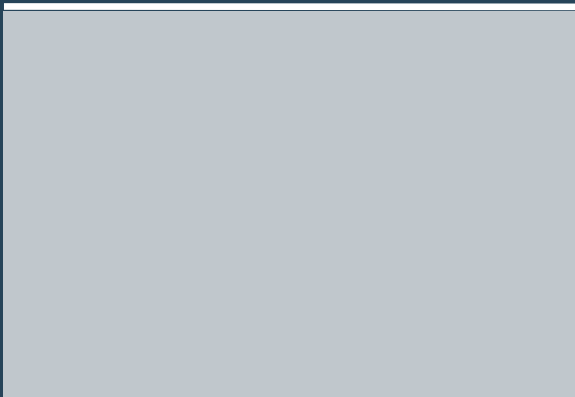
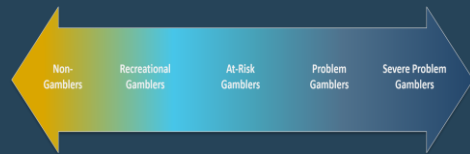
The Public Health Approach Involves

Section 1: Public Health Approach

1. Defining and measuring health challenges
2. Identifying the sources and risk factors for health challenges
3. Establishing true partnerships and collaborations with communities to guide the work
4. Understanding the Social and Structural Determinants of Health (SDOH)
5. Identifying and understanding the resiliency, strengths, and protective factors in individuals and communities



SECTION 2: GAMBLING SPECTRUM





Traditional Definition of Gambling

“Risking something of value on the outcome of an event when the probability of winning is less than certain.”

Definition of Gambling for Groups at Higher Risk

“Any betting or wagering for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where the outcome is uncertain or depends upon chance or ‘skill,’ constitutes gambling.”

Source: Gambler’s Anonymous



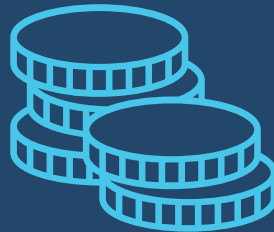
Types of Gambling

 Lottery Tickets or Scratchers	 Sports Betting	 Electronic Games	 Slot Machine
Horse Racing 	 Card Games	Dice Games 	 Casino
 Raffle Tickets	 Bingo	 Games of Skill	 Culturally Specific

AGREE OR DISAGREE

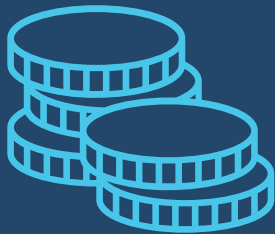
1

If you flip a penny and it comes up “heads” four times in a row, the next flip is more likely to come up “tails” than “heads.”



1

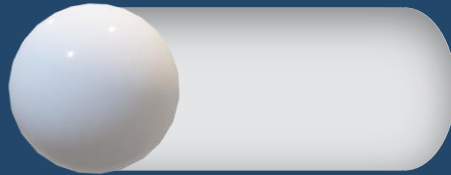
If you flip a penny and it comes up “heads” four times in a row, the next flip is more likely to come up “tails” than “heads.”



Disagree. There is no relationship between the previous outcomes and the next flip of the penny. They are unrelated events. The penny is just as likely to come up “heads” as it is to come up “tails.”

AGREE OR DISAGREE

- 2** You must be 18 or older to legally gamble.



2

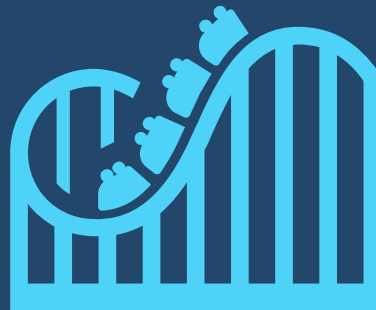
You must be 18 or older to legally gamble.



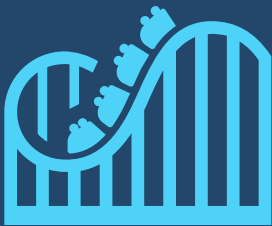
Disagree. The legal gambling age differs by state. In Massachusetts, the legal gambling age for the lottery is 18. To play at a gaming establishment, such as a casino, a person must be 21. In other states, it differs.

AGREE OR DISAGREE

3 People gamble strictly because it's fun.

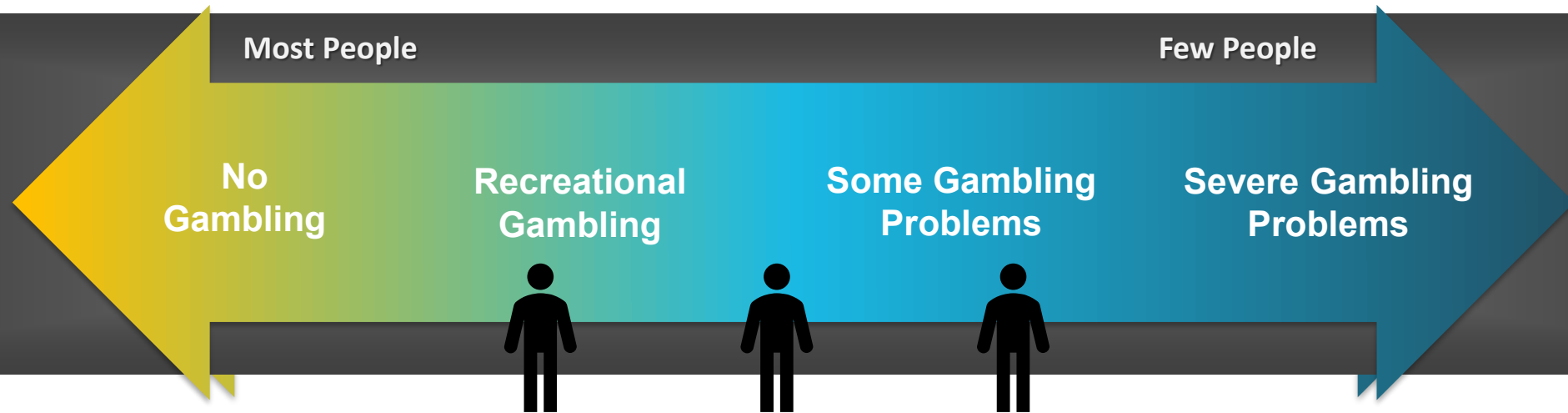


3 People gamble strictly because it's fun.



Disagree. While “entertainment or fun” is the number-one reason mentioned for gambling, the other two major reasons are “excitement and challenge” and “to win money.” Other reasons are “escape” and “glamour.”

Defining Our Language: The Gambling Continuum



This is the gambling continuum, referred to as a spectrum as participation can range from not gambling to problem and severe problem gambling.

People can move back and forth across this continuum

Gambling Continuum



Gambling Continuum

**No
Gambling**

**Recreational
Gambling**

**Some Gambling
Problems**

**Severe Gambling
Problems**



When people or groups are engaged in risky gambling, they may exhibit the following behaviors:

- ✓ Betting more than planned
- ✓ Spending more time gambling than planned
- ✓ Borrowing money to gamble
- ✓ Illusions of control

Gambling Continuum

**Recreational
Gambling**

**Some Gambling
Problems**

**Severe Gambling
Problems**



Problem gambling refers to any kind of gambling that results in negative impact(s) on the person's or group's life or on the lives of their family, friends, and/or co-workers.

The negative impact can occur occasionally, or it can be ongoing and serious situation.

Gambling Continuum

ling
s

Severe Gambling Problems



Severe Problem Gambling is when people or groups have been diagnosed as having a gambling problem found in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)

Compared to the number of people who gamble, very few people are diagnosed with severe problem gambling (2%).

The DSM-5 categorizes severe problem gambling as: “persistent and recurrent problematic gambling behavior leading to clinically significant impairment or distress.”

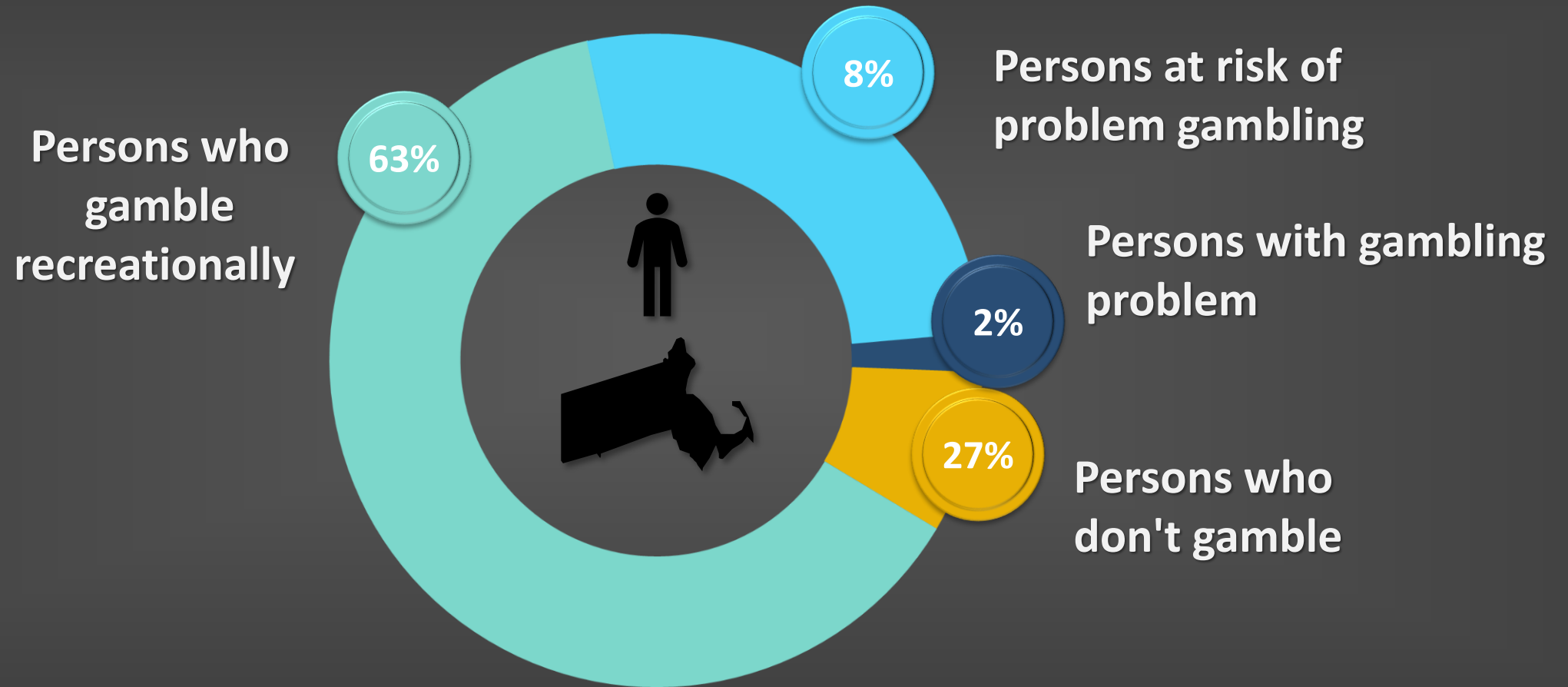
Gambling Continuum

What About Massachusetts



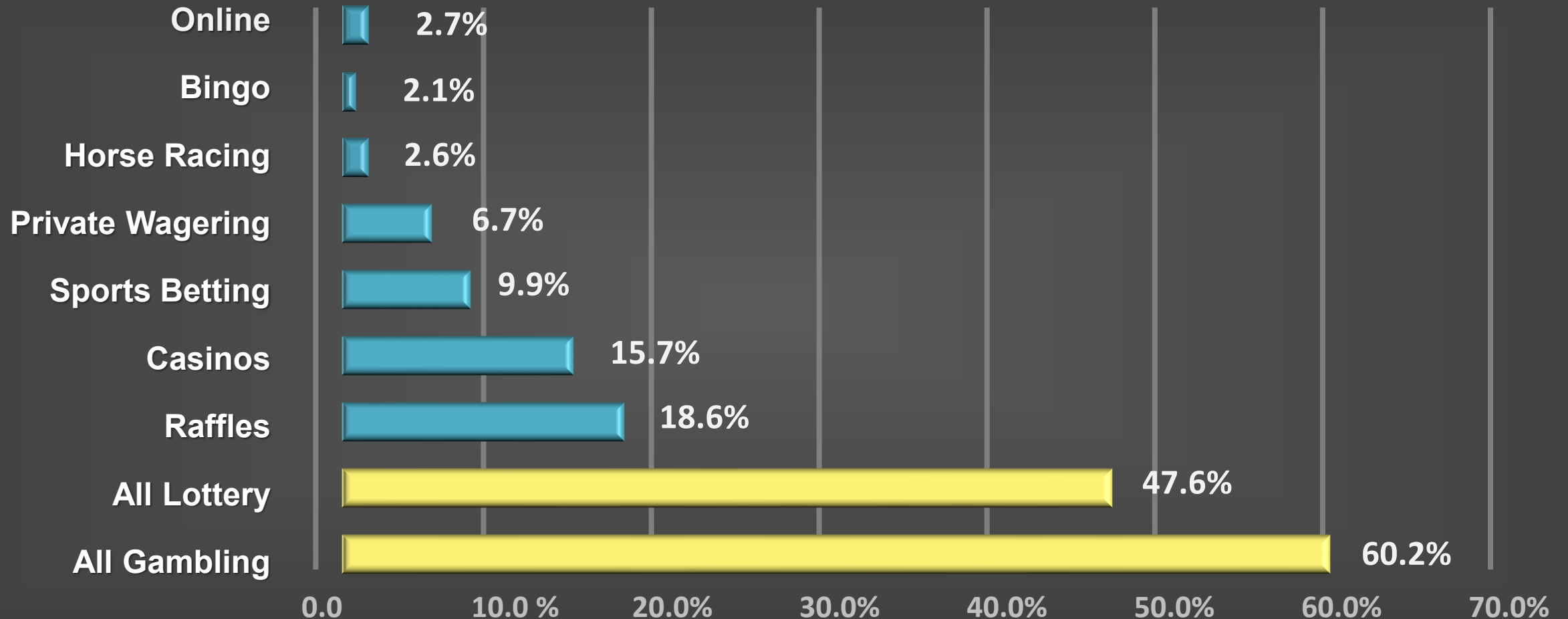
Gambling Participation

Massachusetts



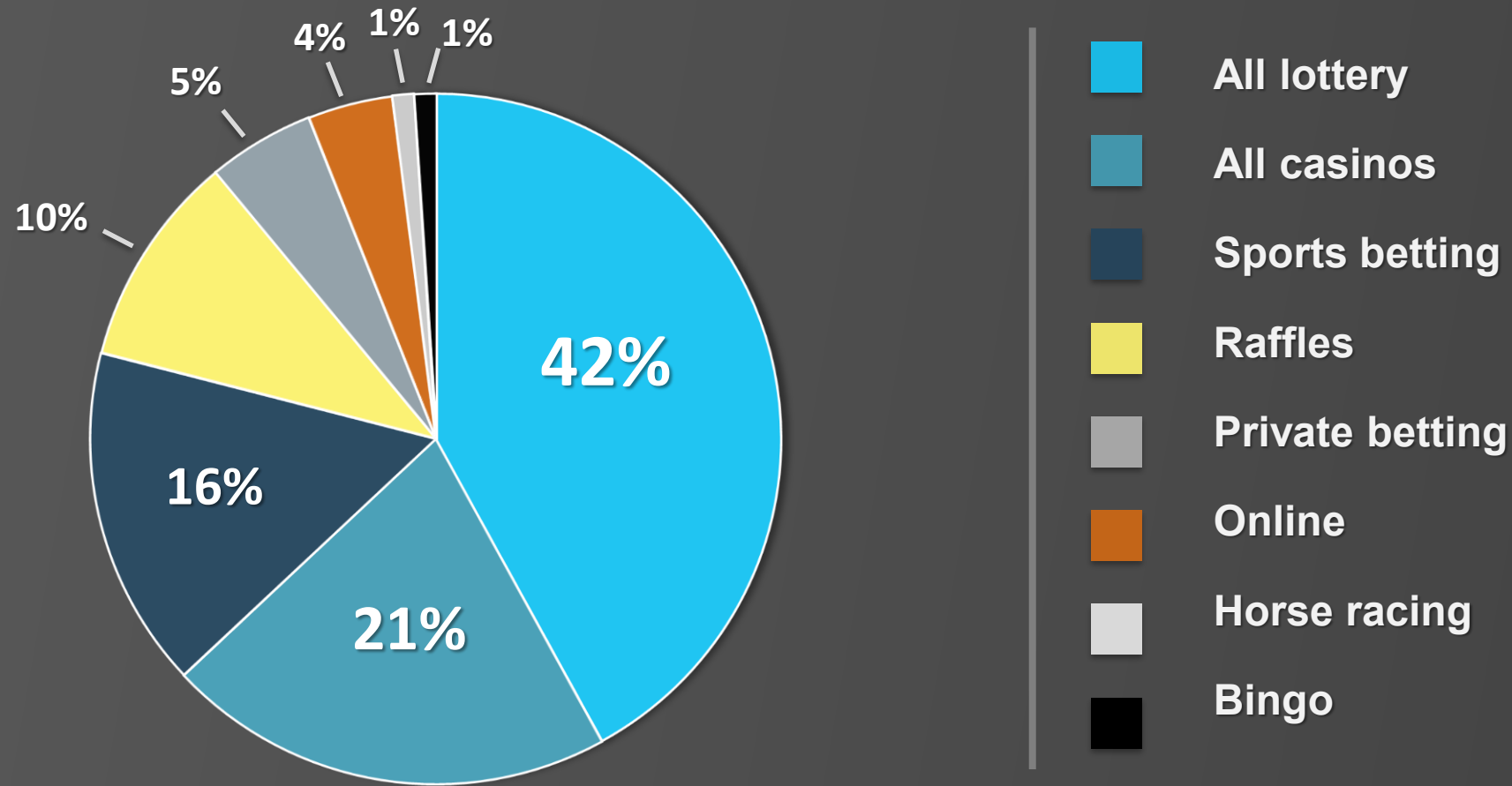
Gambling Participation

(Percent of surveyed participants responded when asked about the ways they gamble)



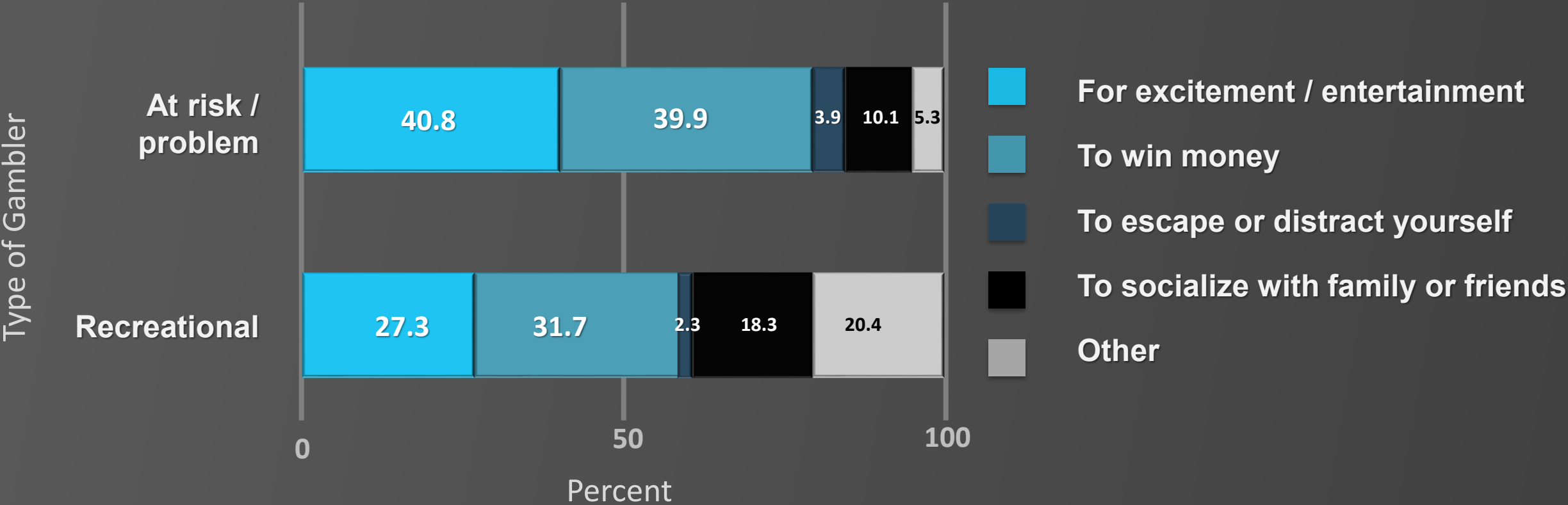
Gambling Spending

(Percent of surveyed participants responded where they spend their money)



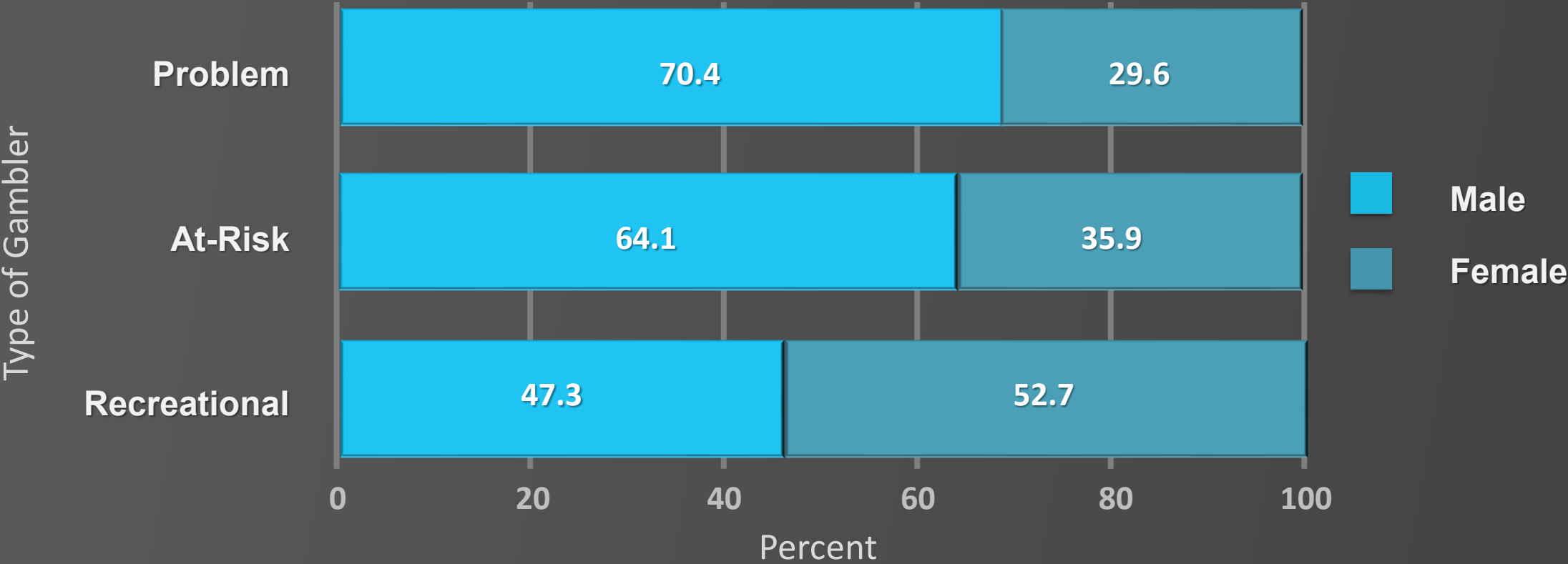
Reasons for Gambling

(Percent of surveyed participants responded with reasons for gambling)



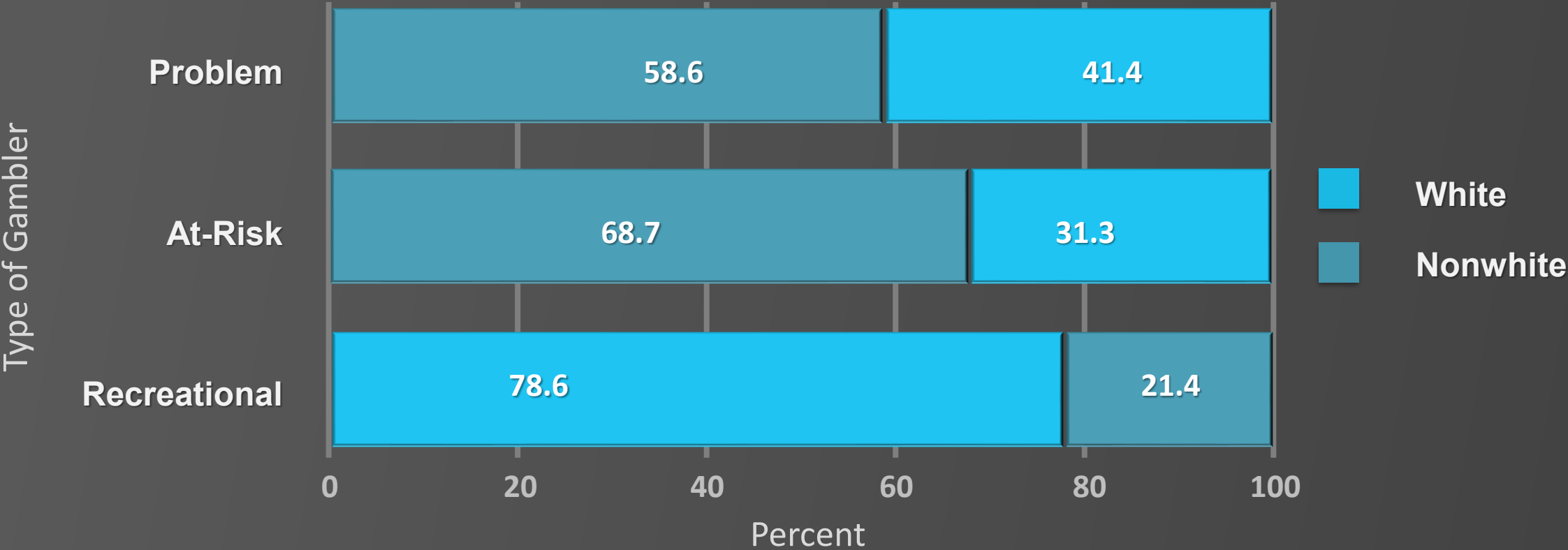
Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Gender)



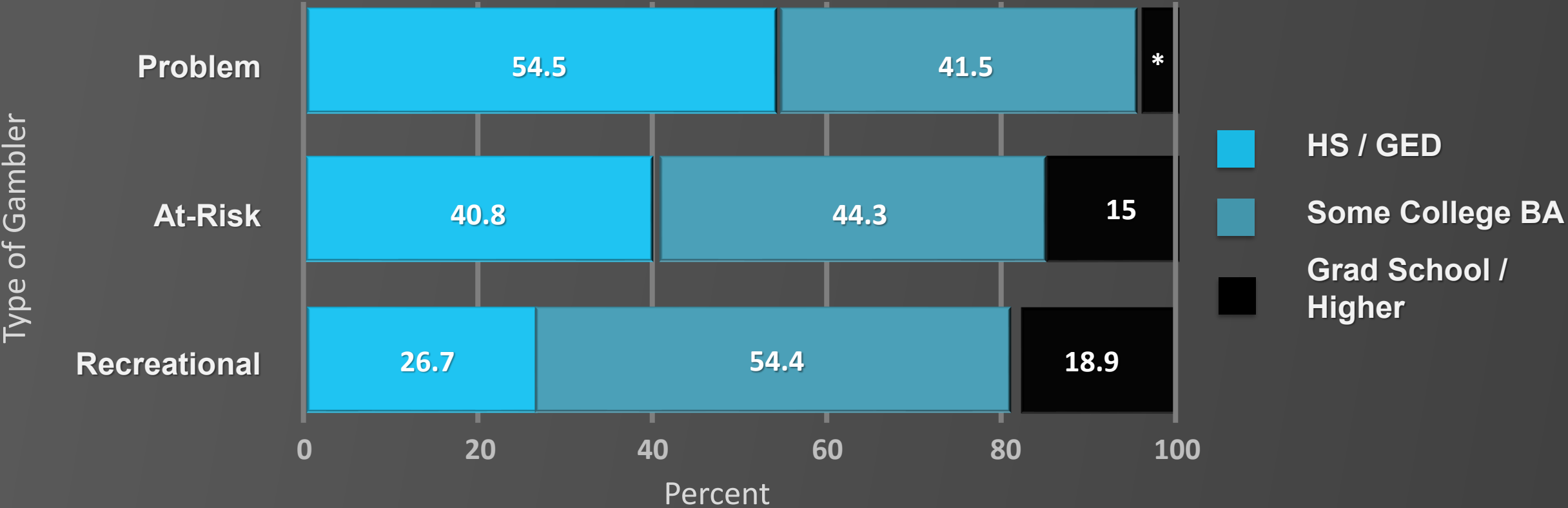
Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Ethnicity)



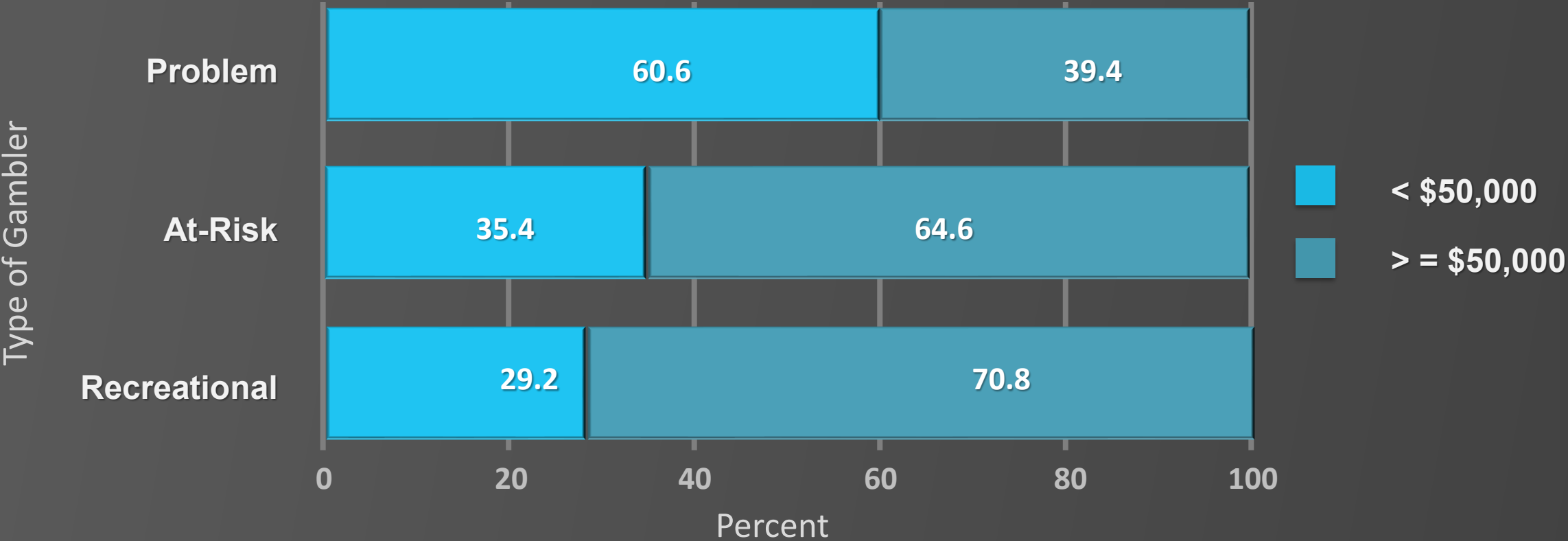
Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Education)



Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Income)



Risk and Protective Factors



Risk Factors

Factors that **increase** the likelihood of developing problem gambling



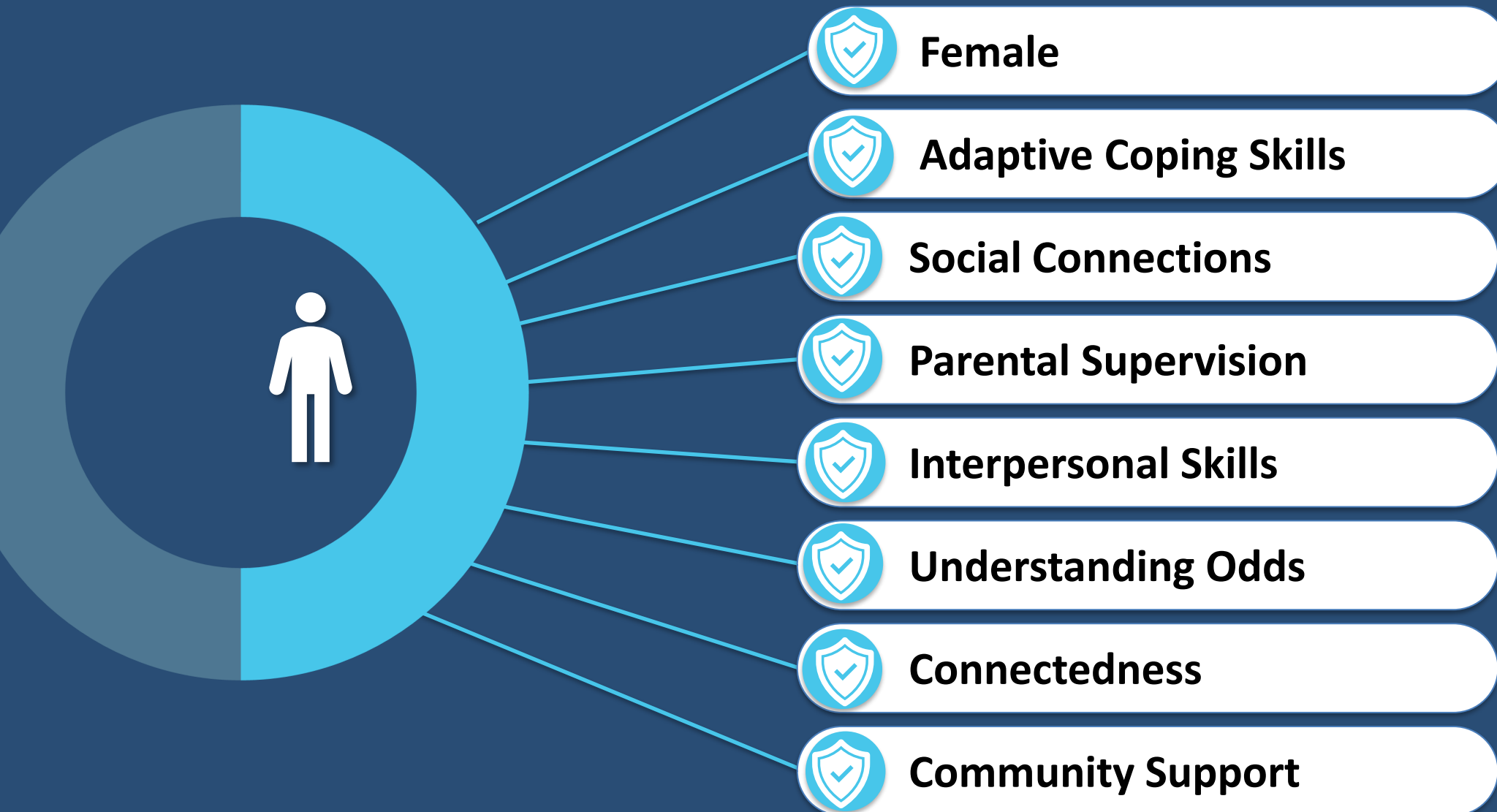
Protective Factors

Factors that **decrease** the likelihood of developing problem gambling

Risk Factors (examples)



Protective Factors (Examples)



The Public Health Approach Involves

Section 2: Gambling Spectrum

1. Gambling definitions and types
2. The gambling continuum and risk and protective factors
3. The identification and utilization of effective data that drives the strategies on a larger scale and evaluating the impacts
4. The identification and piloting of equitable prevention strategies



SECTION 3: GROUPS AT-RISK



People at Higher Risk for Problem Gambling



- **Youth**
- **Male**
- **People of Color**
- **People Who Are Unemployed**
- **Casino Workers**
- **People Who Experience Incarceration**
- **People Who Misuse Substances**
- **People With High School Diploma or Less**
- **Low Income**
- **Older Adults**
- **Active Military and Veterans**
- **People with Disabilities**



Youth Are Exposed to Gambling

Early in life

By family and friends

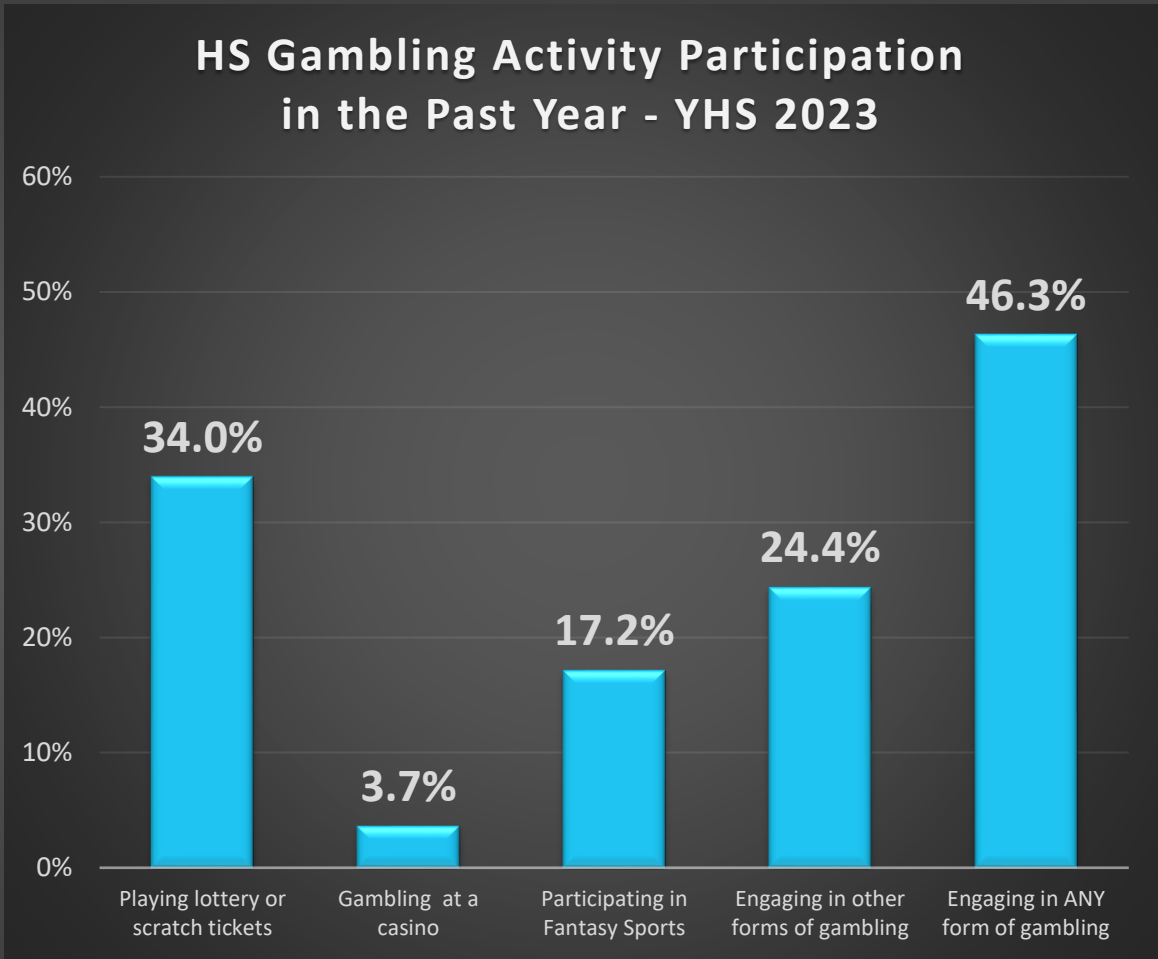
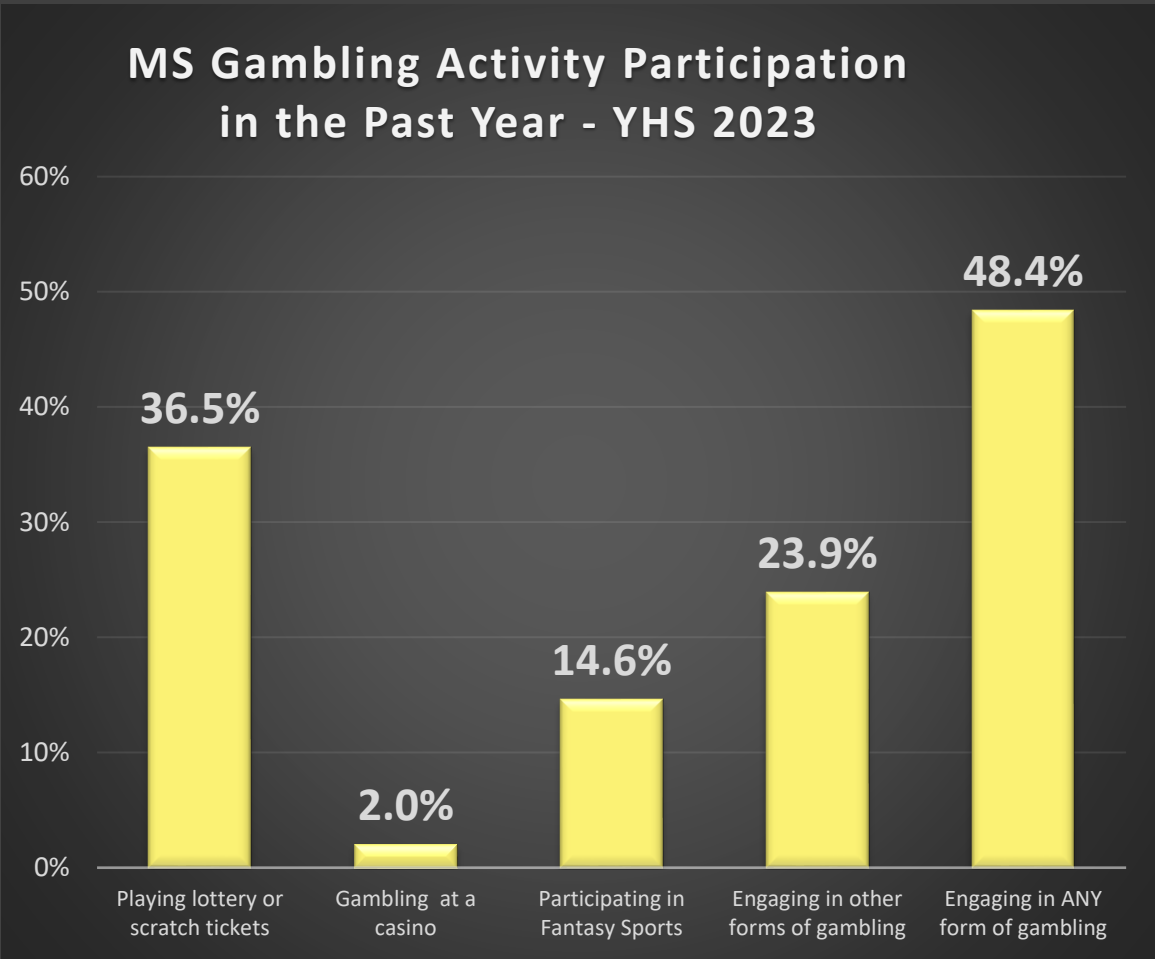
Exposure connected to tradition and nostalgic memories

Exposure can be legal or illegal

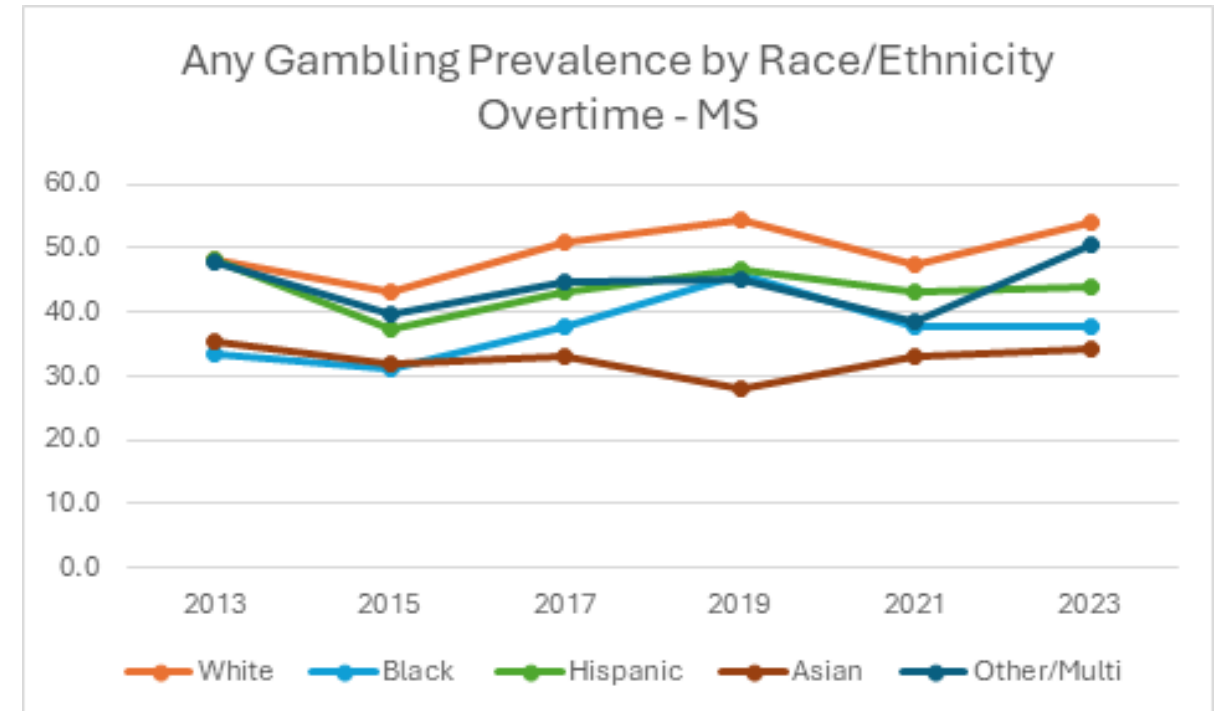
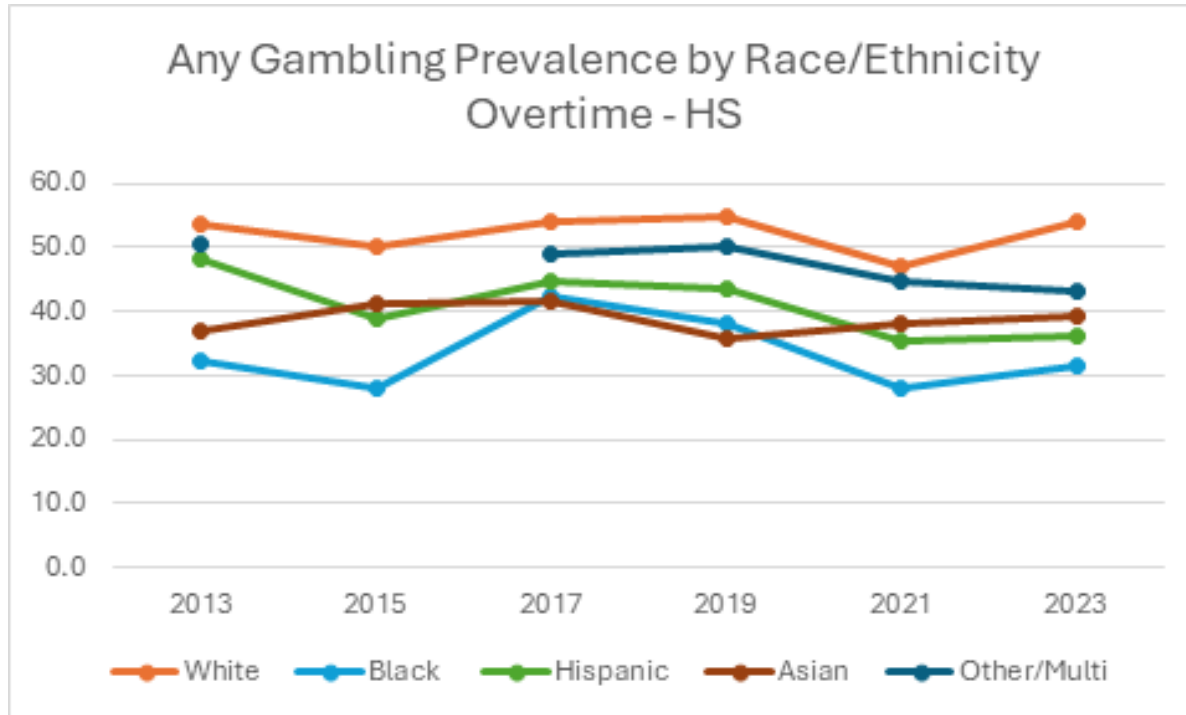
Exposure is normalized in families & communities

2023: MA Gambling Activity Participation Prevalence in Youth

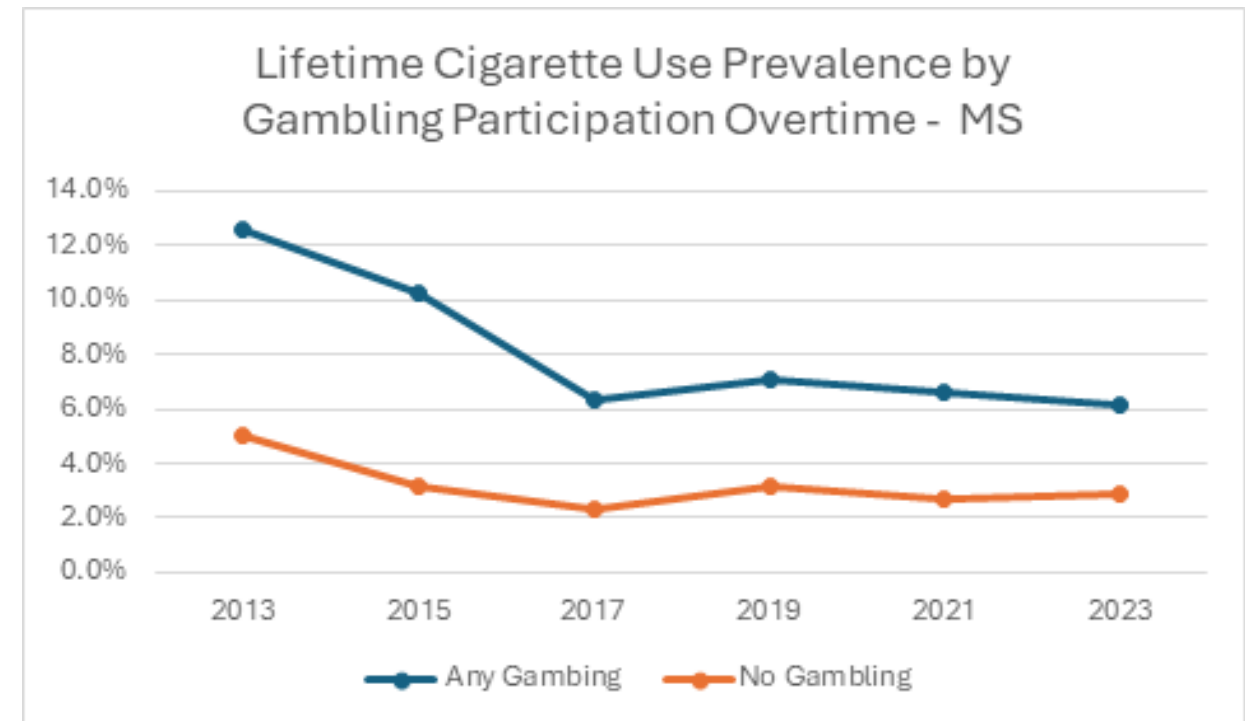
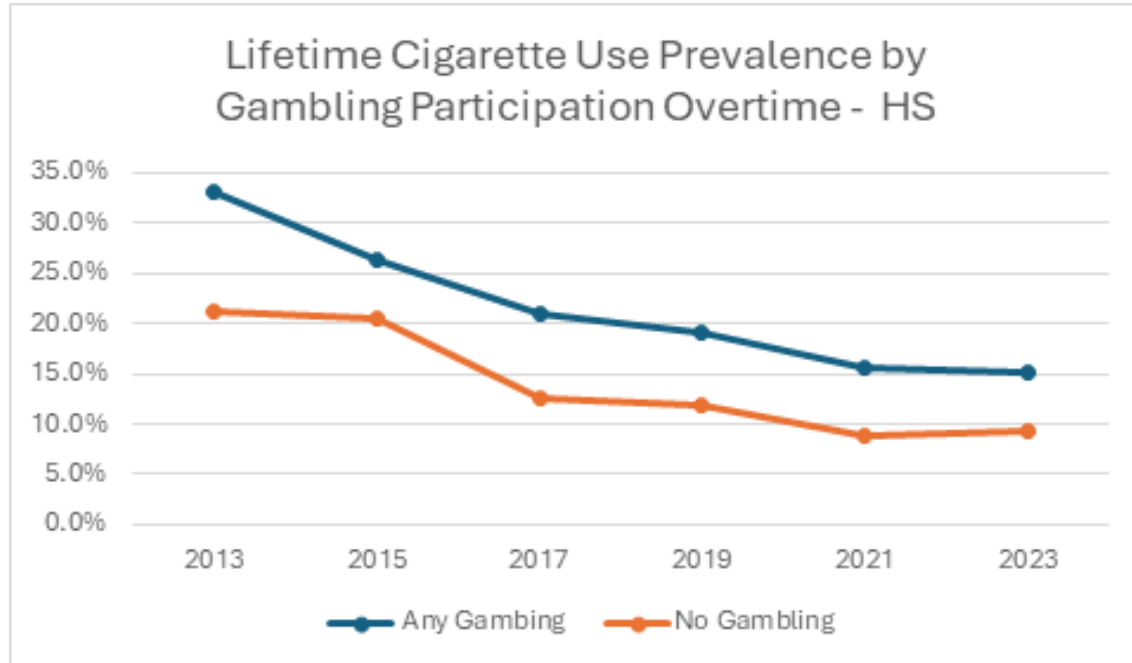
Percent of middle school (MS) and high school (HS) students reported engaging in some form of gambling in the last year.



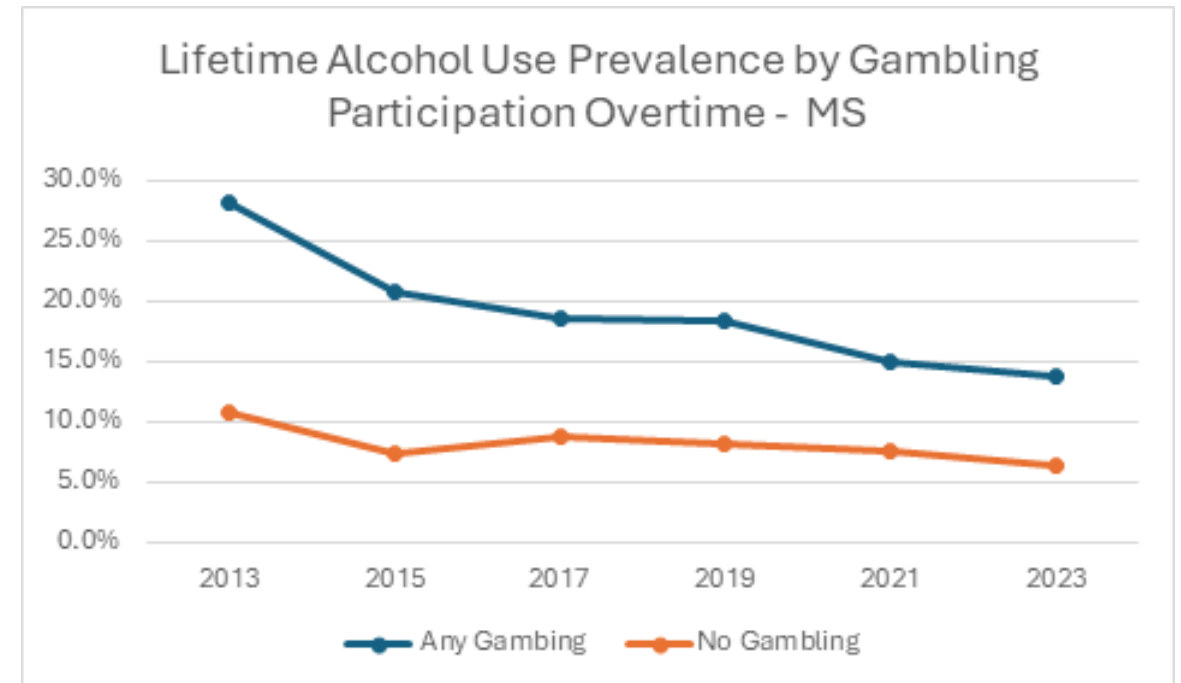
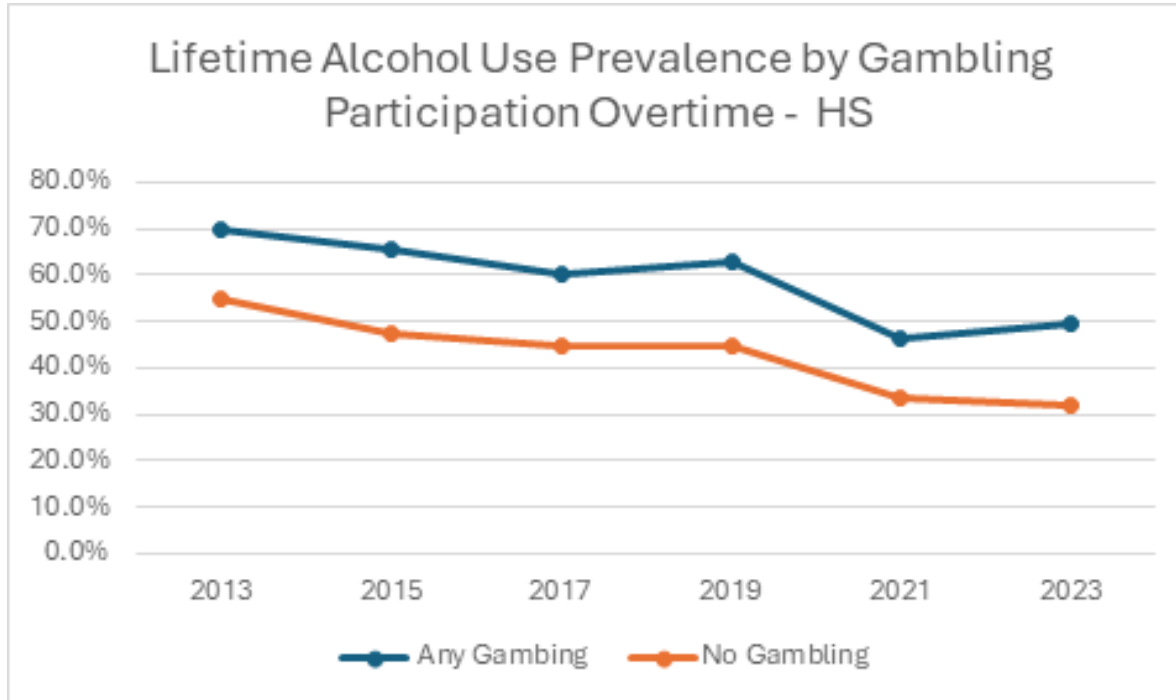
Race/Ethnicity and Gambling Prevalence



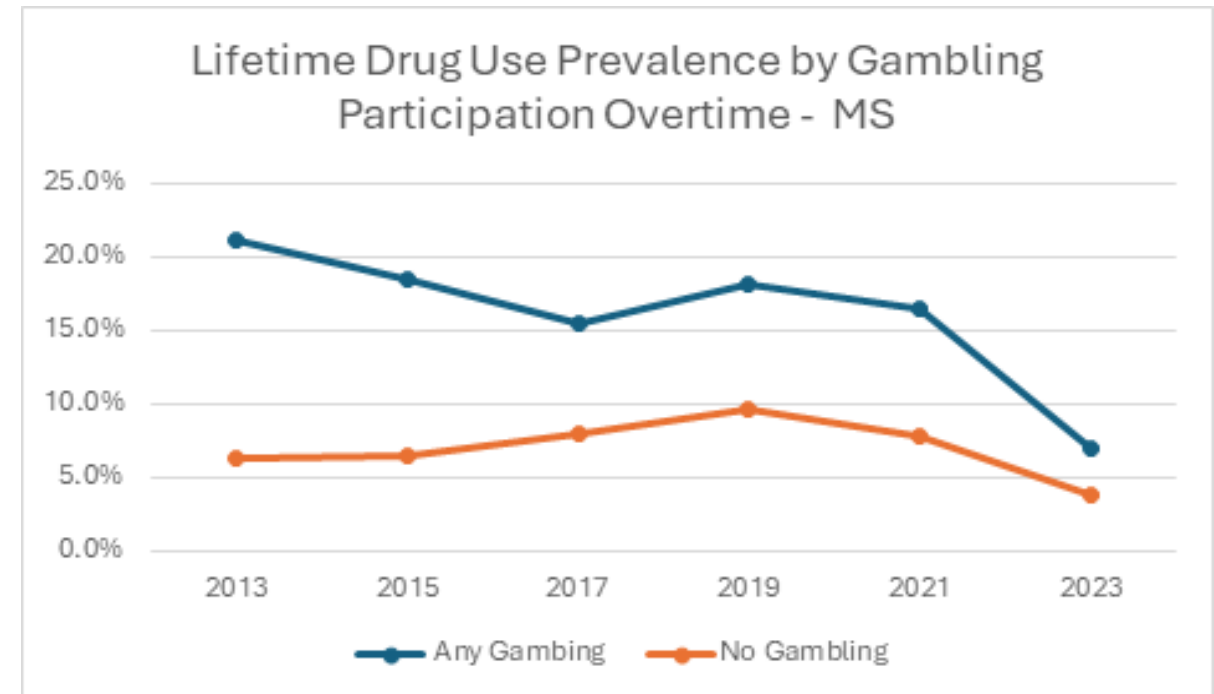
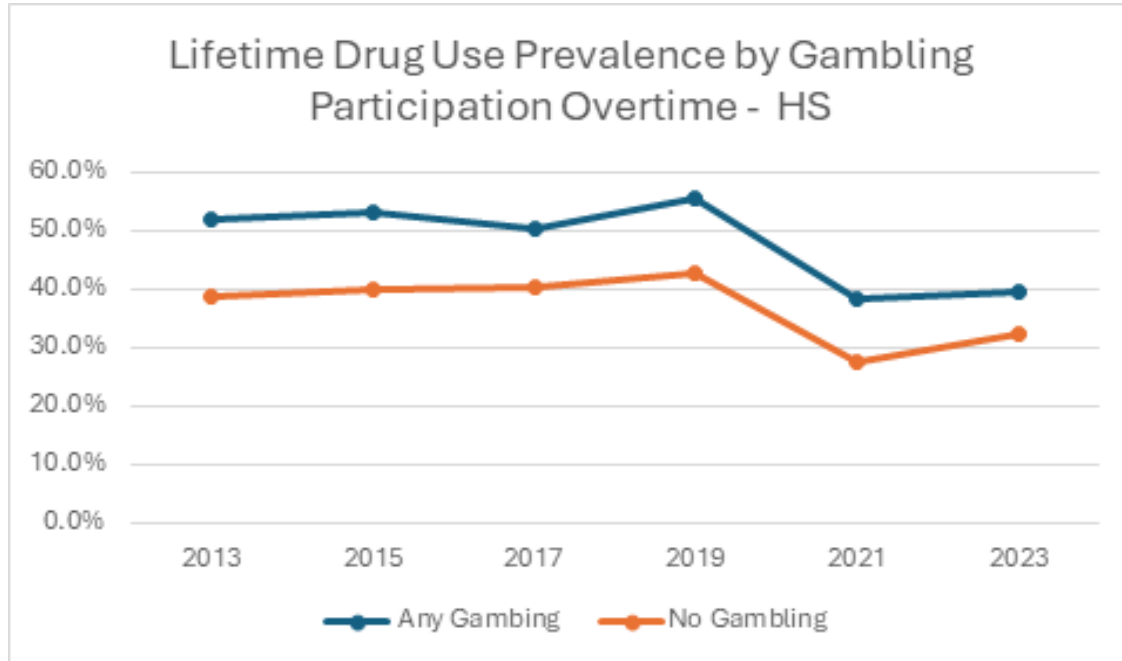
Tobacco Use and Gambling Prevalence



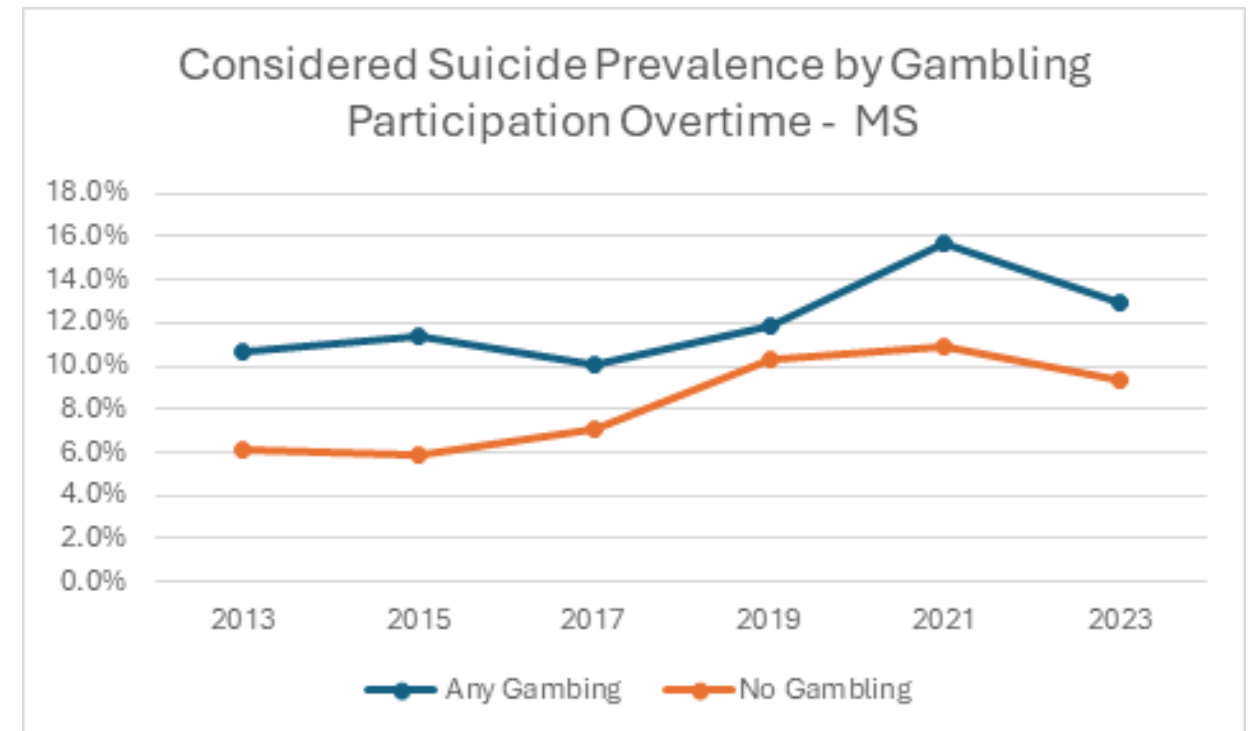
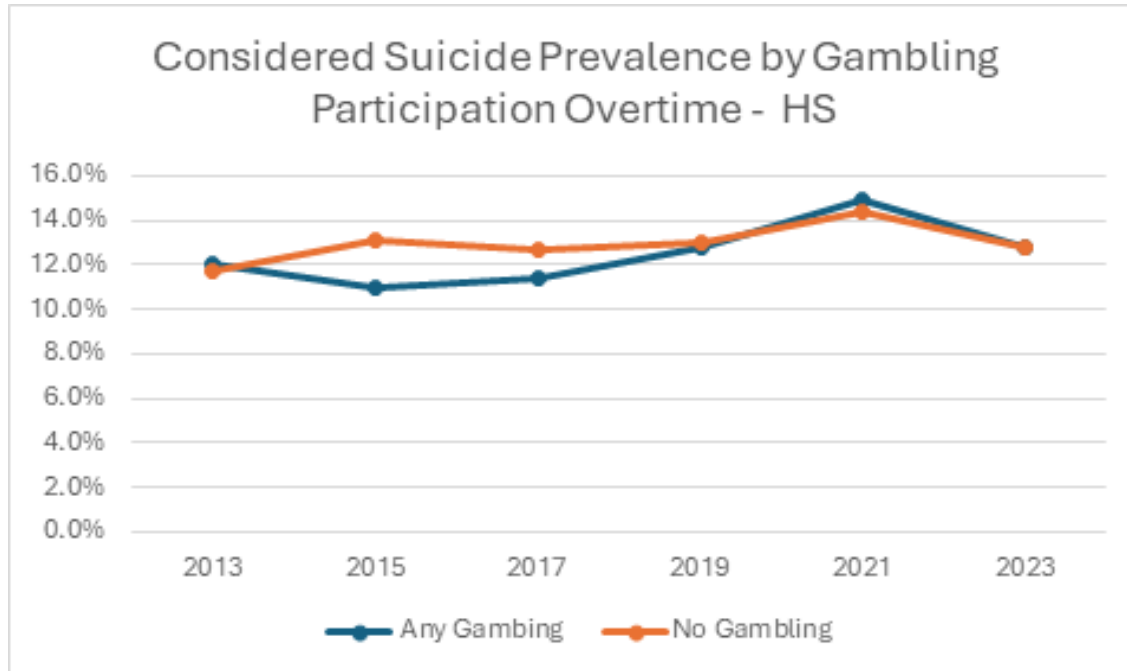
Alcohol Use and Gambling Prevalence



Drug Use and Gambling Prevalence



Considered Suicide and Gambling Prevalence



PERCEPTION CONCERNS



Teens view gambling as a socially acceptable
Enjoyable form of entertainment
Significantly less harmful than alcohol, drugs or cigarettes



In a study about parental perceptions, gambling consistently scored the lowest of 12 serious youth issues



In a comparison of parent and teacher perceptions concerning adolescent risk behaviors, gambling was perceived to be a less serious issue among both parents and teachers

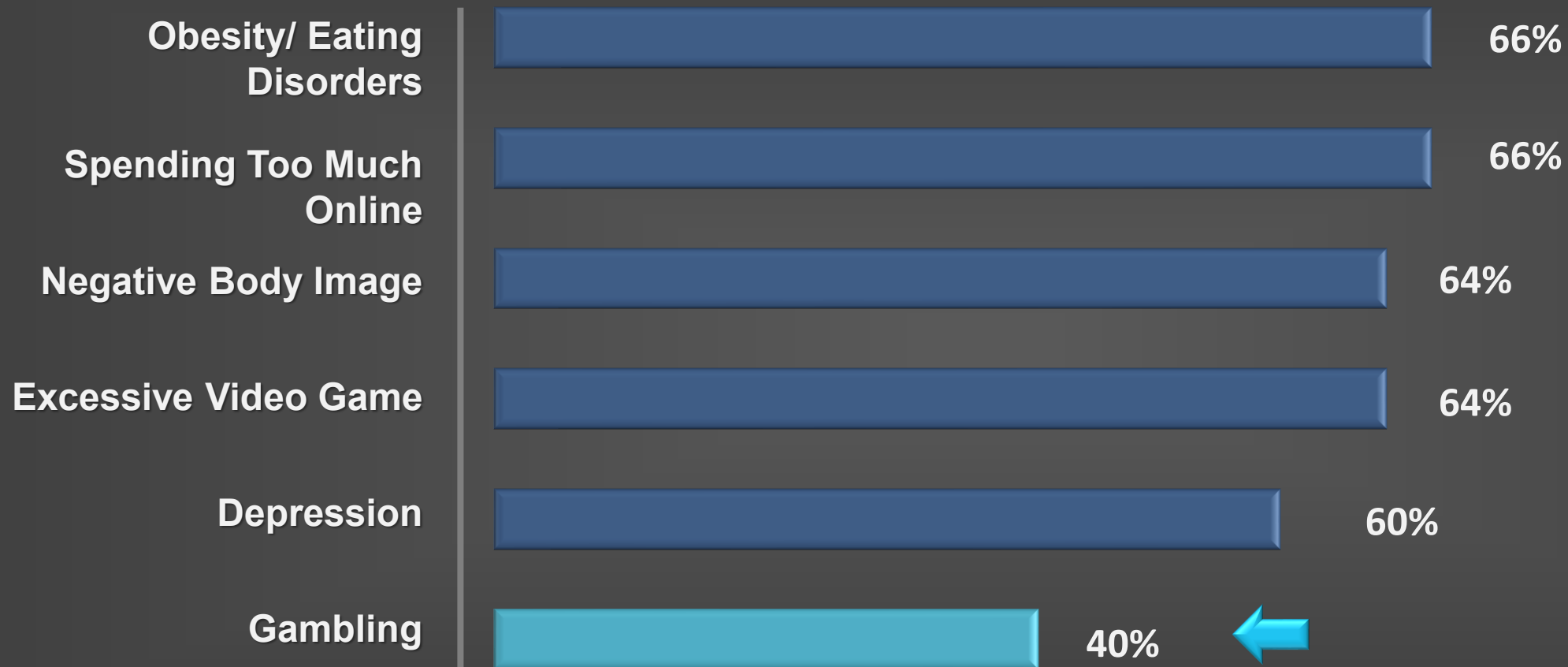
Parental Perceptions of the Seriousness of Issues Youth May Encounter

(Percent of parents perception either serious or very serious)



Parental Perceptions of the Seriousness of Issues Youth May Encounter

(Percent of parents either serious or very serious)



Brain Development

“Because the youth brain is not fully developed until age 25, gambling can be dangerous

A 2001 study at MGH found that gambling has a drug-like effect on the brain (2001)

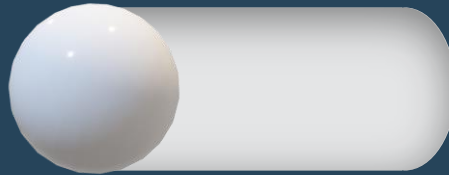
“The brains of people anticipating a win at the roulette table appear to react much like those taking euphoria-inducing drugs.”



AGREEE OR DISAGREE

1

Problem gambling isn't a serious problem like drug or alcohol addiction. If people really want to stop, they will.



1

Problem gambling isn't a serious problem like drug or alcohol addiction. If people really want to stop, they will.



Disagree. For most people, gambling is a social activity or form of entertainment. But for people with a problem gambling addiction, it's much more. Gambling becomes a compulsion and something they can't just stop. They're driven to gamble, just like a person who is addicted to drugs or alcohol.

The Public Health Approach Involves

1. Identifying the sources and risk factors for health challenges
2. Understanding the Social and Structural Determinants of Health (SDOH)
3. Establishing true partnerships and collaborations with communities to guide the work
4. Discussing gambling definitions and types
5. Identifying and understanding the resiliency, strengths, and protective factors in individuals and communities
6. Identifying and piloting equitable prevention strategies
7. Implementing effective strategies on a larger scale and evaluating the impacts





PROBLEM
GAMBLING
PREVENTION

MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Q & A

Evaluation and CEUs



Upcoming MCOE PGP Health Equity Academy Trainings

- **Intersections of Substance Misuse and Problem Gambling Prevention (Virtual)**
October 8, 2025: 10:00 – 12:00 PM
- **Intersections of Suicide and Problem Gambling Prevention (*In-Person) – UMass Lowell/UTECH Building**
October 22, 2025: 10:00 – 2:00 PM
- **What's Equity Got To Do With It? Centering Equity into Problem Gambling Prevention (Virtual)**
November 6, 2025: 1:00 – 3:00
- **Engaging the Community and Partners to Build Capacity to Prevent Problem Gambling (Virtual)**
November 19, 2025: 1:00 – 3:00



We Are on Social Media!

Scan the QR codes below to follow our pages



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MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

THANK YOU

Haner Hernandez | jhernandez@edc.org

Ben Spooner | bspooner@edc.org

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12. Campbell, C., Derevensky, J., Meerkamper, E., & Cutajar, J. (2011). Parents' Perceptions of Adolescent Gambling: A Canadian National Study. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, (25).
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