



PROBLEM  
GAMBLING  
PREVENTION

# Applying a Public Health Approach to Problem Gambling Prevention

February 24, 2025 | 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Haner Hernandez | Technical Assistance Provider

Sokoni Davis | Special Projects Manager

Ivy Jones Turner | Training and Technical Assistance Manager



EDC.ORG



# Introducing Today's Presenters



**Haner Hernandez, PhD.**  
**CPS, CADCI, LADCI**  
Trainer



**Sokoni Davis, EdD**  
Trainer



**Ivy Jones Turner,**  
**MPA, CPS**  
Trainer



# Introduce Yourself

1

**Insert your city, &  
organization into the chat**



Hello  
my name is

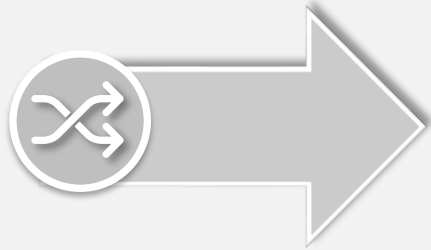
2

**Add your response to this question:**  
*What does a **public health approach** mean to you?*

3

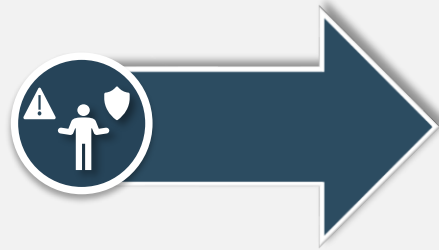
# Key Objectives

## Applying a Public Health Approach to Problem Gambling



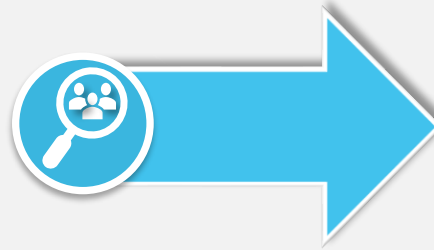
Describe a public health approach for problem gambling

01



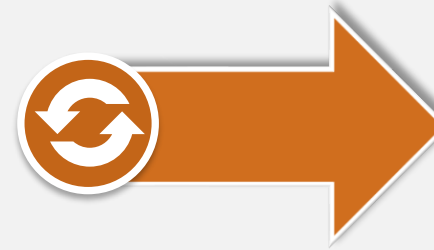
Identify risk and protective factors for problem gambling

02



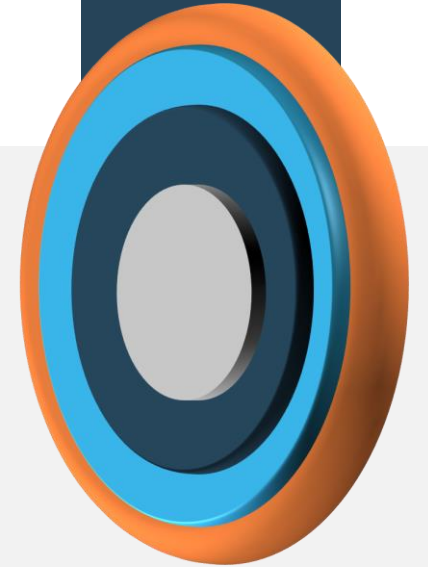
Identify groups at-risk for developing problem gambling

03

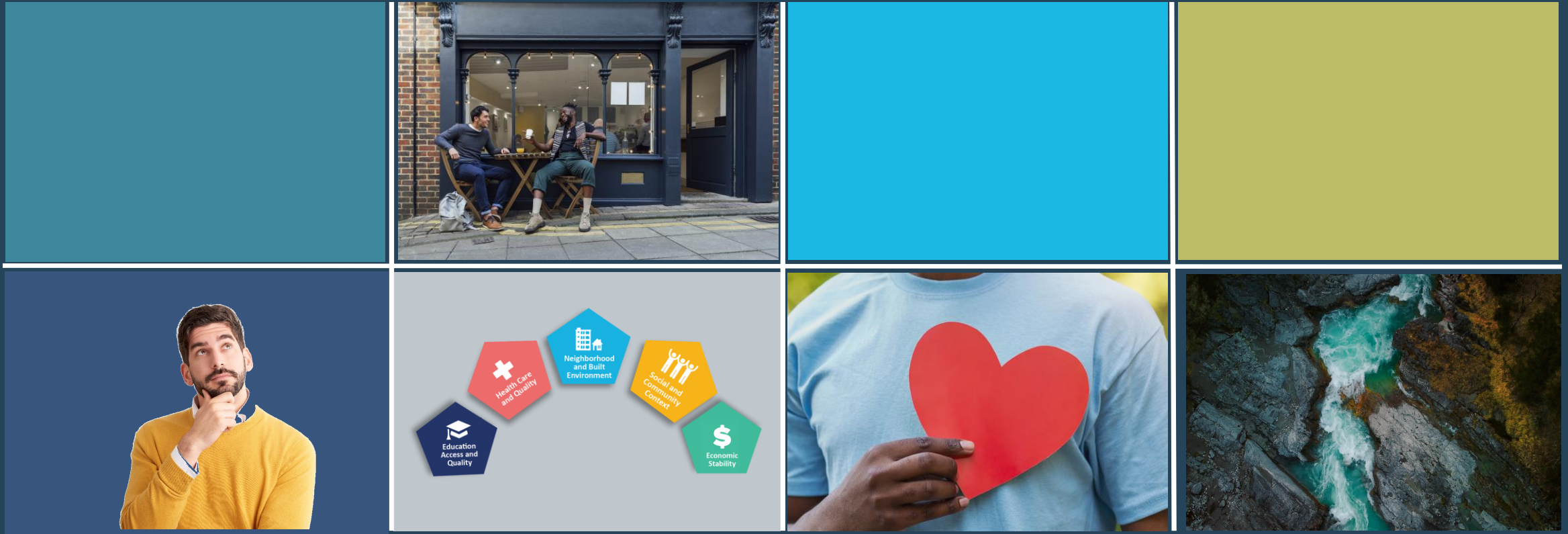


Discuss connections between problem gambling and other health problems

04



# SECTION 1: PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH



# What Makes Us Healthy

## 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



Healthcare  
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



Health  
Behaviors  
10%

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



Physical  
Environment  
30%

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



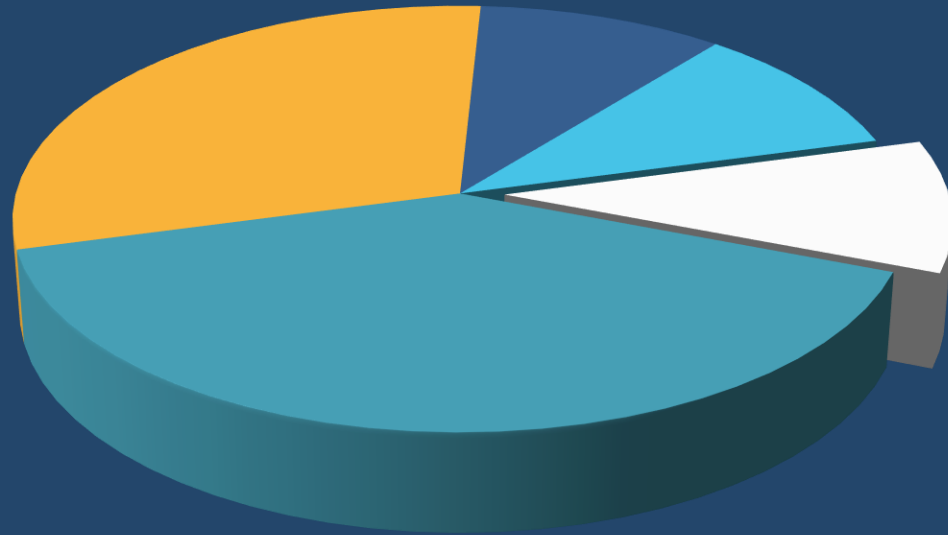
Social and  
Economic  
Factors  
40%

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.



## So What's the Answer?

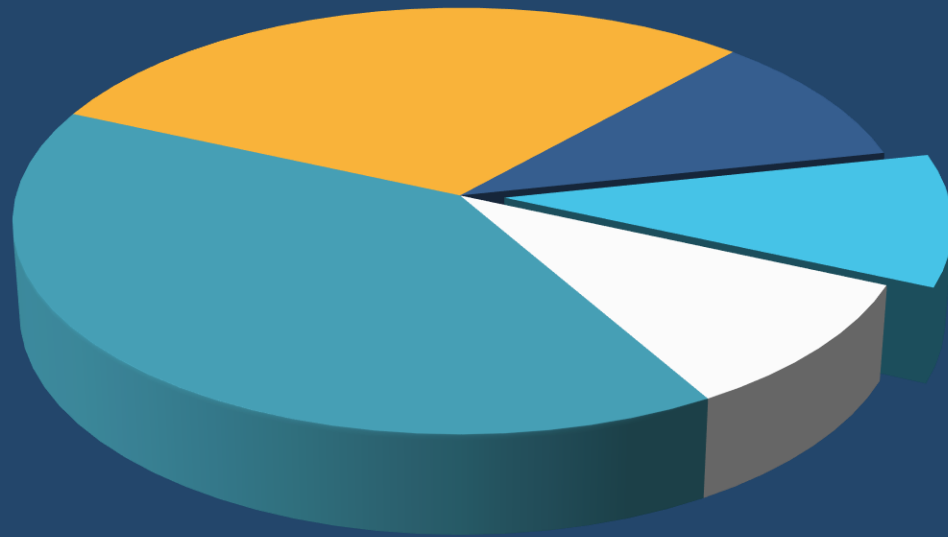
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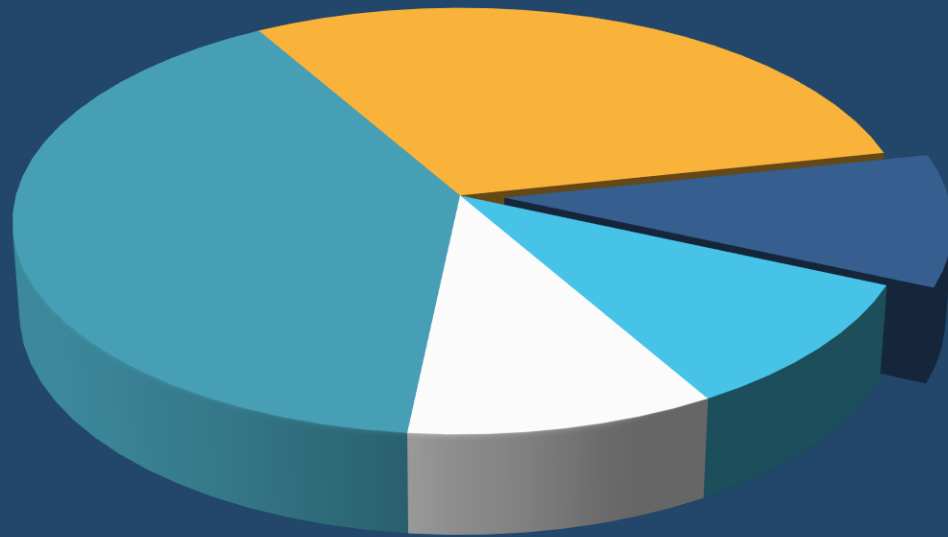


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# Social Determinants of Health

**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 Economic 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

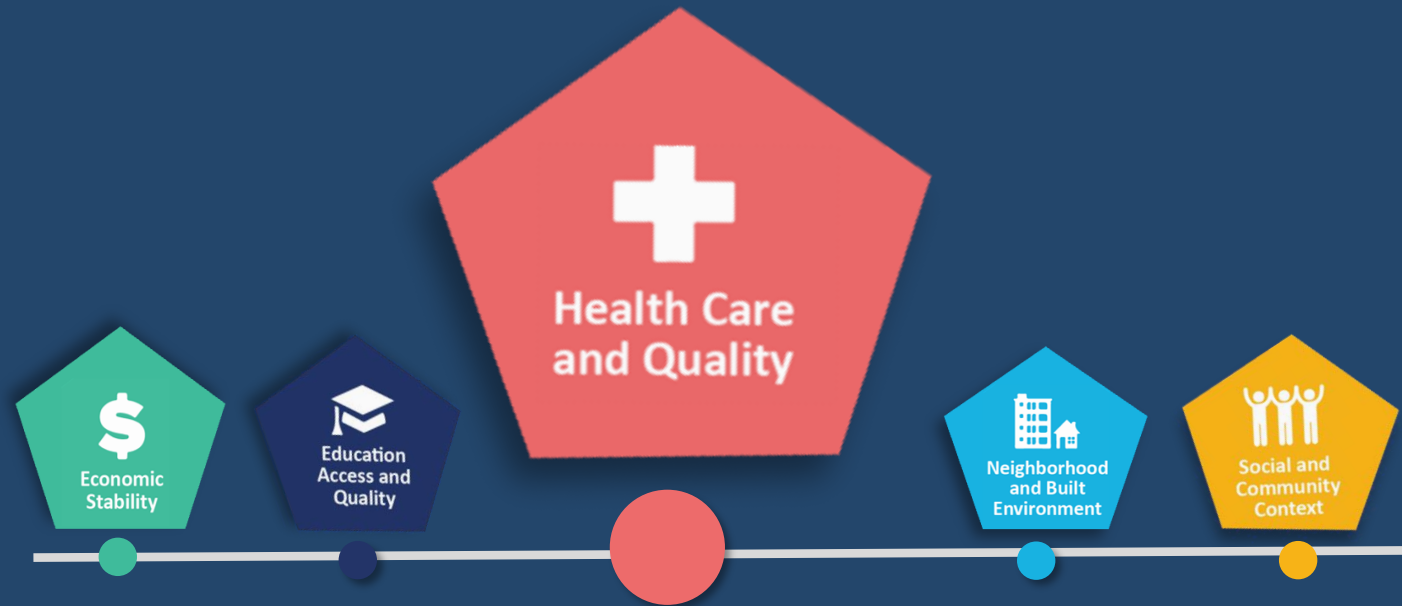


Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Professionals Gateway, Social Determinants of Health



# 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

# Health at Varied Levels



# Health at Varied Levels

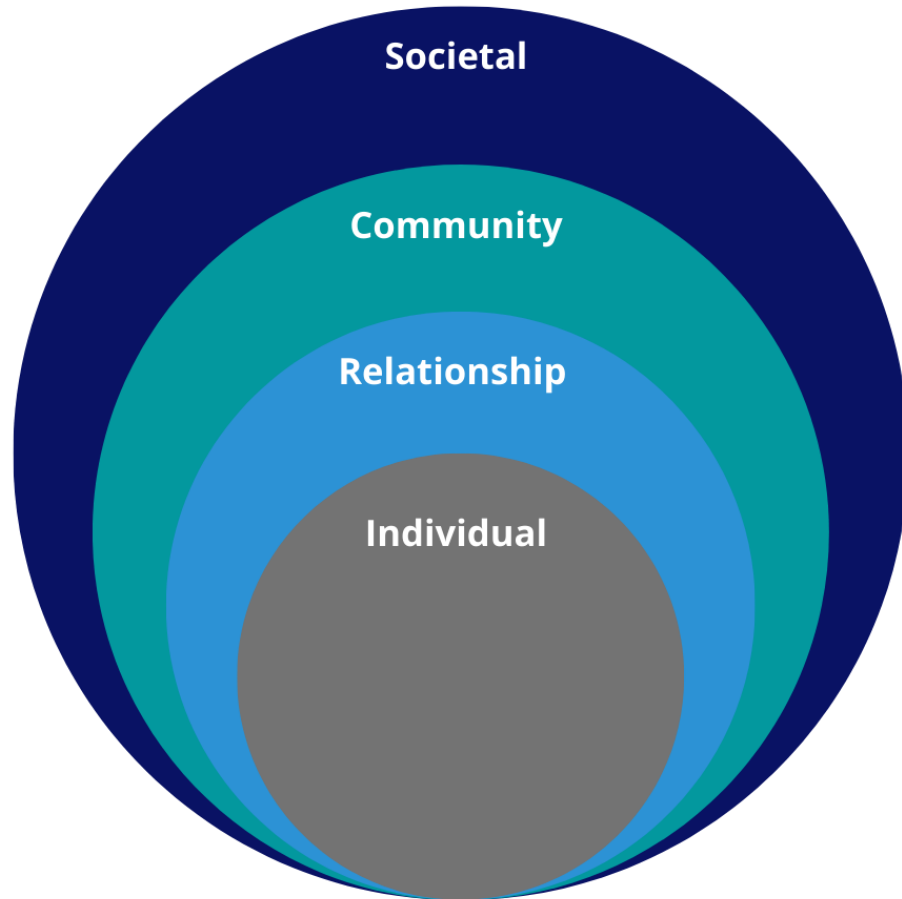


# Health at Varied Levels

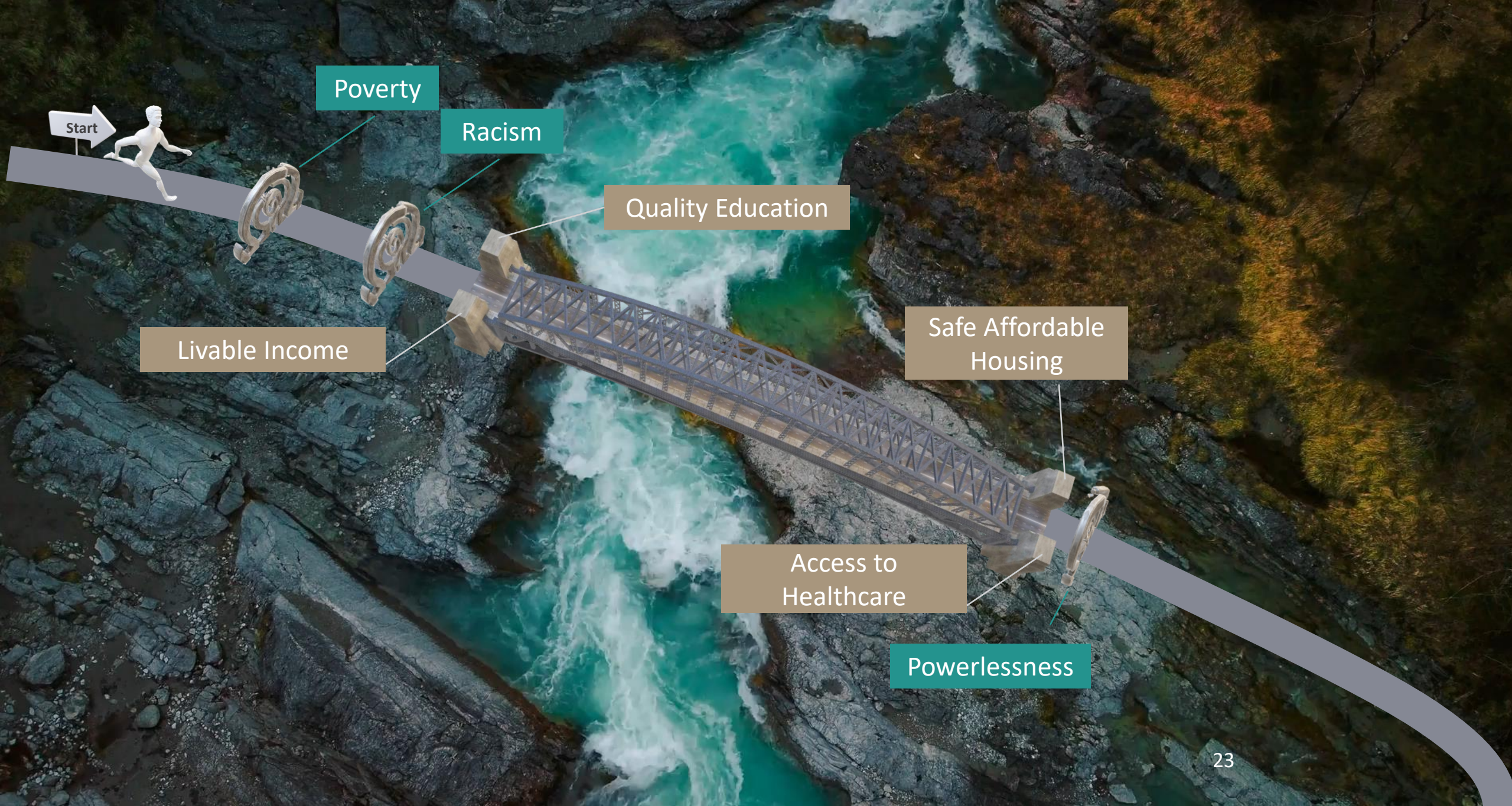


Source: Let's Get Healthy California

# 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

Start

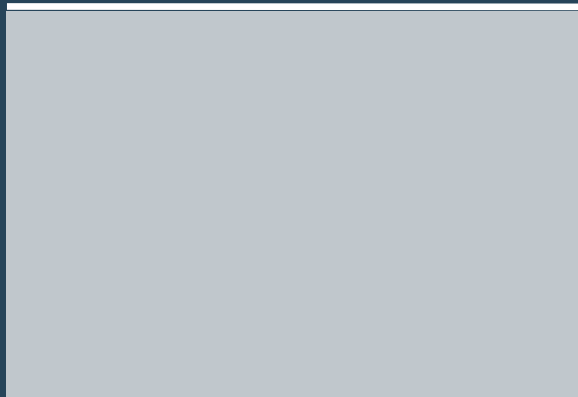
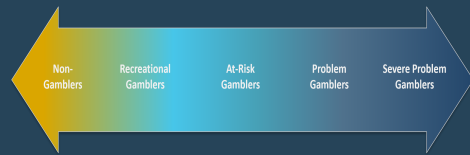
# The Public Health Approach Involves

1. Establishing true partnerships and collaborations with communities to guide the work
2. Defining and measuring health challenges
3. Identifying the sources and risk factors for health challenges
4. Identifying and understanding the resiliency, strengths, and protective factors in individuals and communities
5. Identifying and piloting equitable prevention strategies
6. Implementing effective strategies on a larger scale and evaluating the impacts





# 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

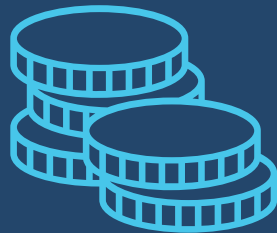
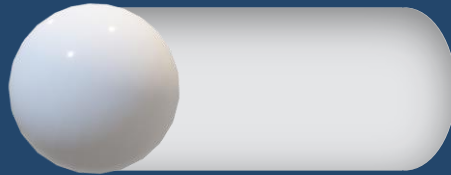


# Types of Gambling

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

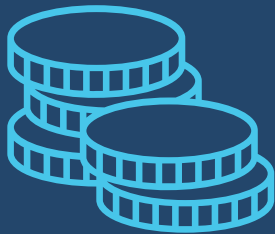
# AGREEE OR DISAGREE

- 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

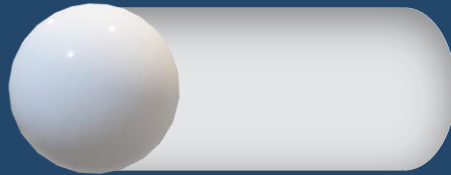
If you flip a penny and it comes up “heads” four times in a row, the next flip is more likely to come up “tails” than “heads.”



**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.”

# AGREEE OR DISAGREE

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



2

You must be 18 or older to legally gamble.

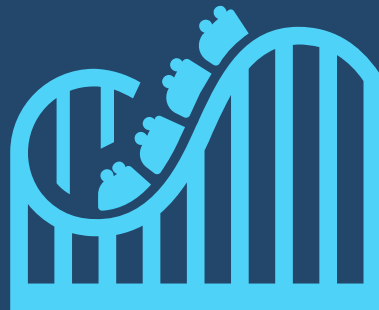
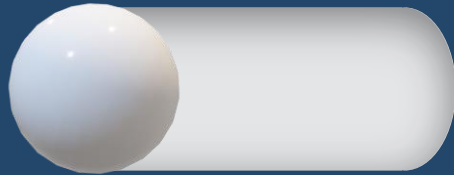


**Disagree.** The legal gambling age differs by state. In Massachusetts, the legal gambling age for the lottery is 18. To play at a gaming establishment, such as a casino, a person must be 21. In other states, it differs.

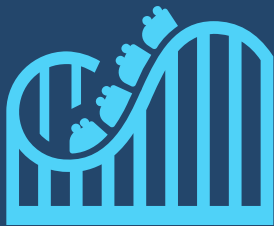


# AGREEE OR DISAGREE

- 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.”

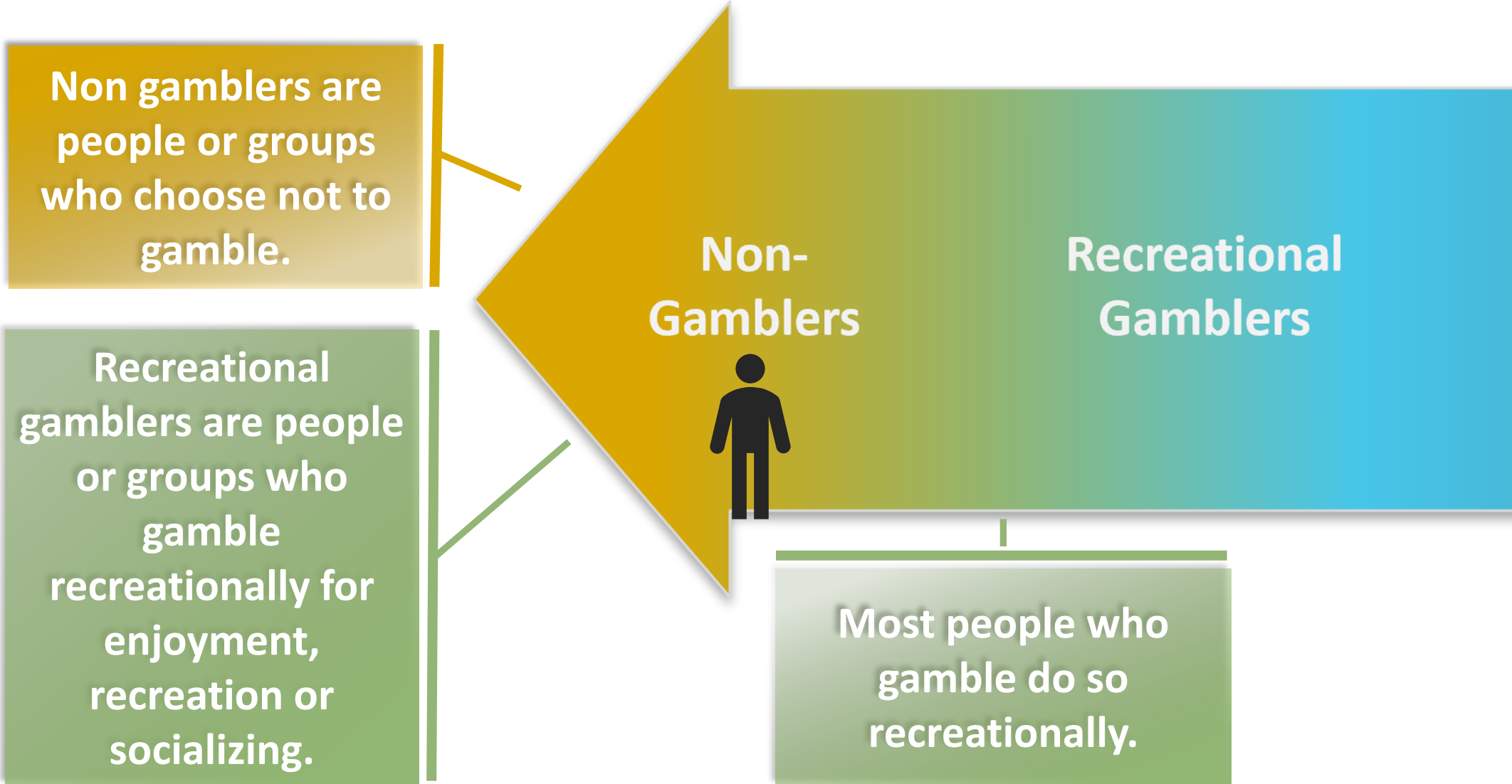
# Defining Our Language: The Gambling Continuum



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 Participation



# Gambling Participation



When people or groups in this category gamble, they may exhibit the following behaviors:

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

# Gambling Participation

onal  
ers

At-Risk  
Gamblers

Problem  
Gamblers

Severe Problem  
Gamblers



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 Participation

**Problem Gamblers**

**Severe Problem Gamblers**



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

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

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

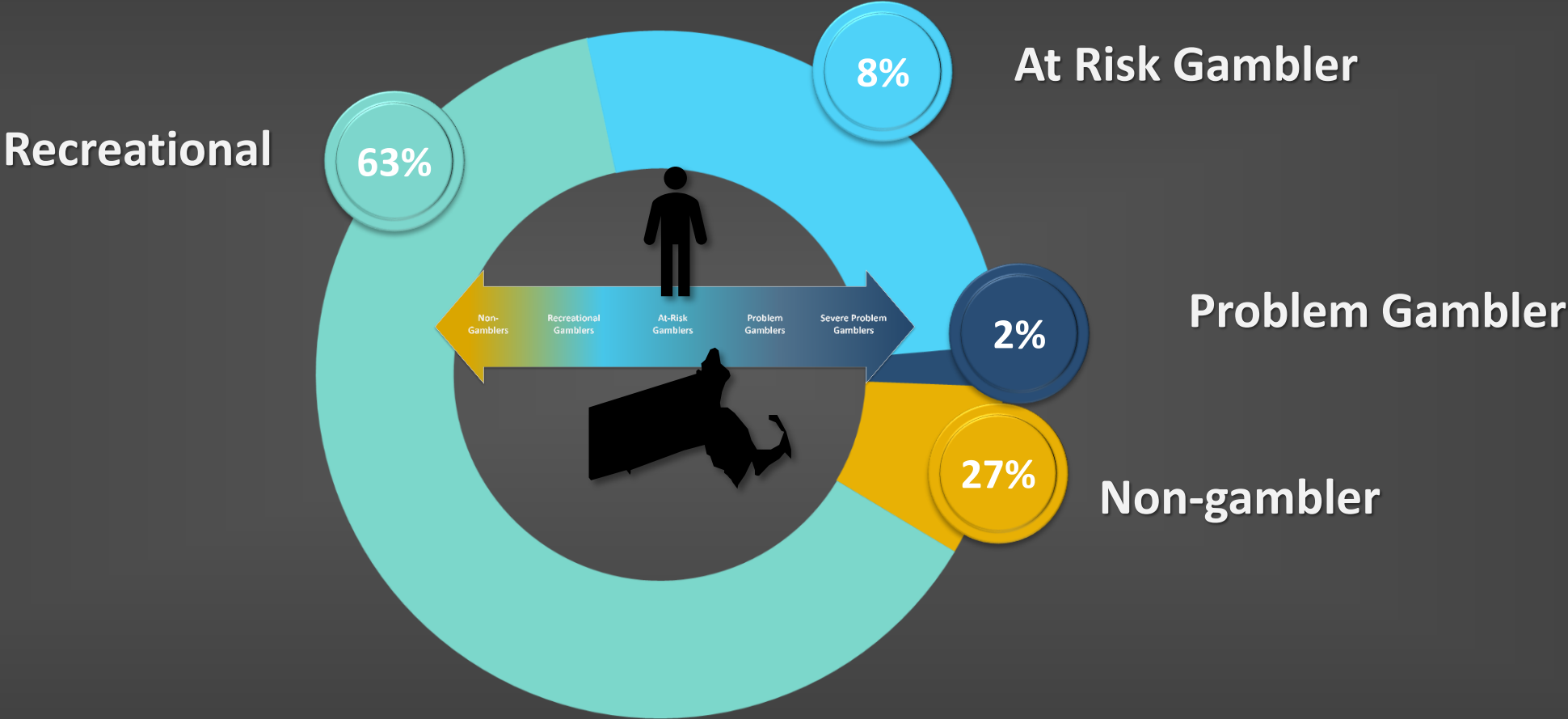
# Gambling Participation

## What About Massachusetts



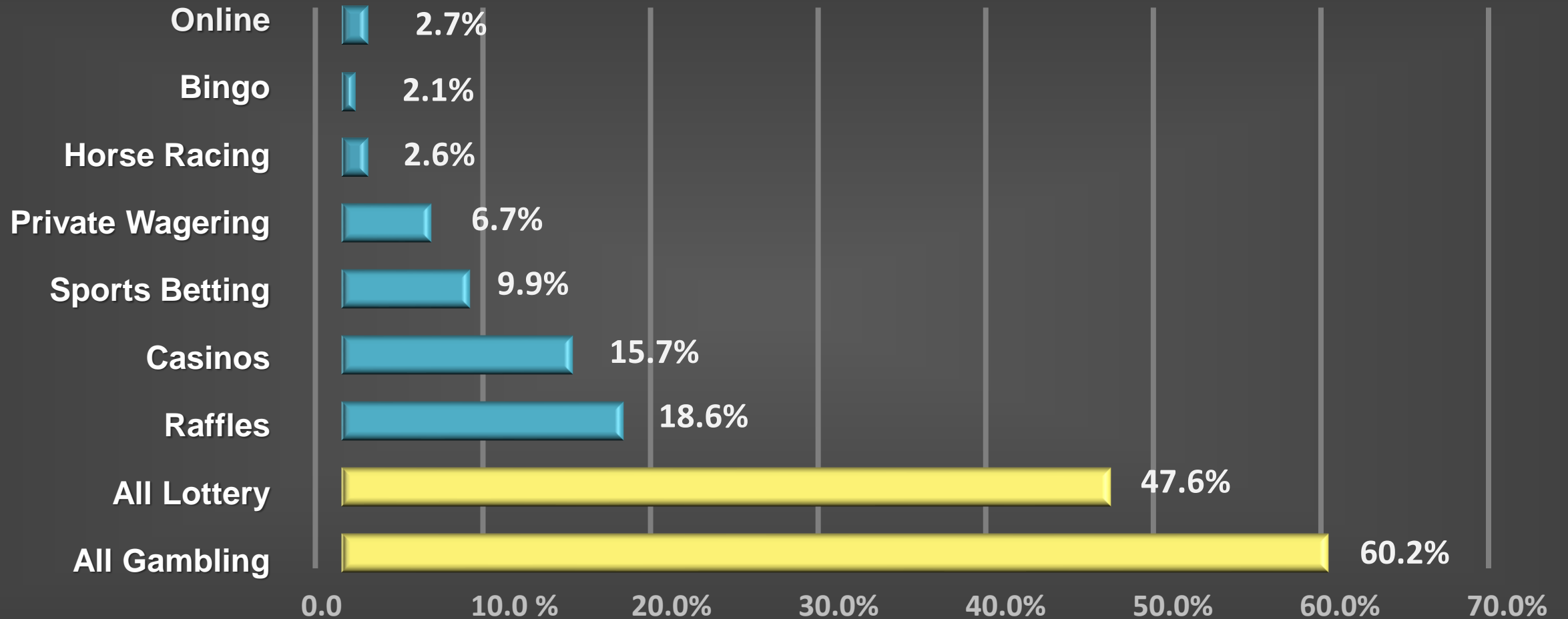


# Gambling Participation Massachusetts



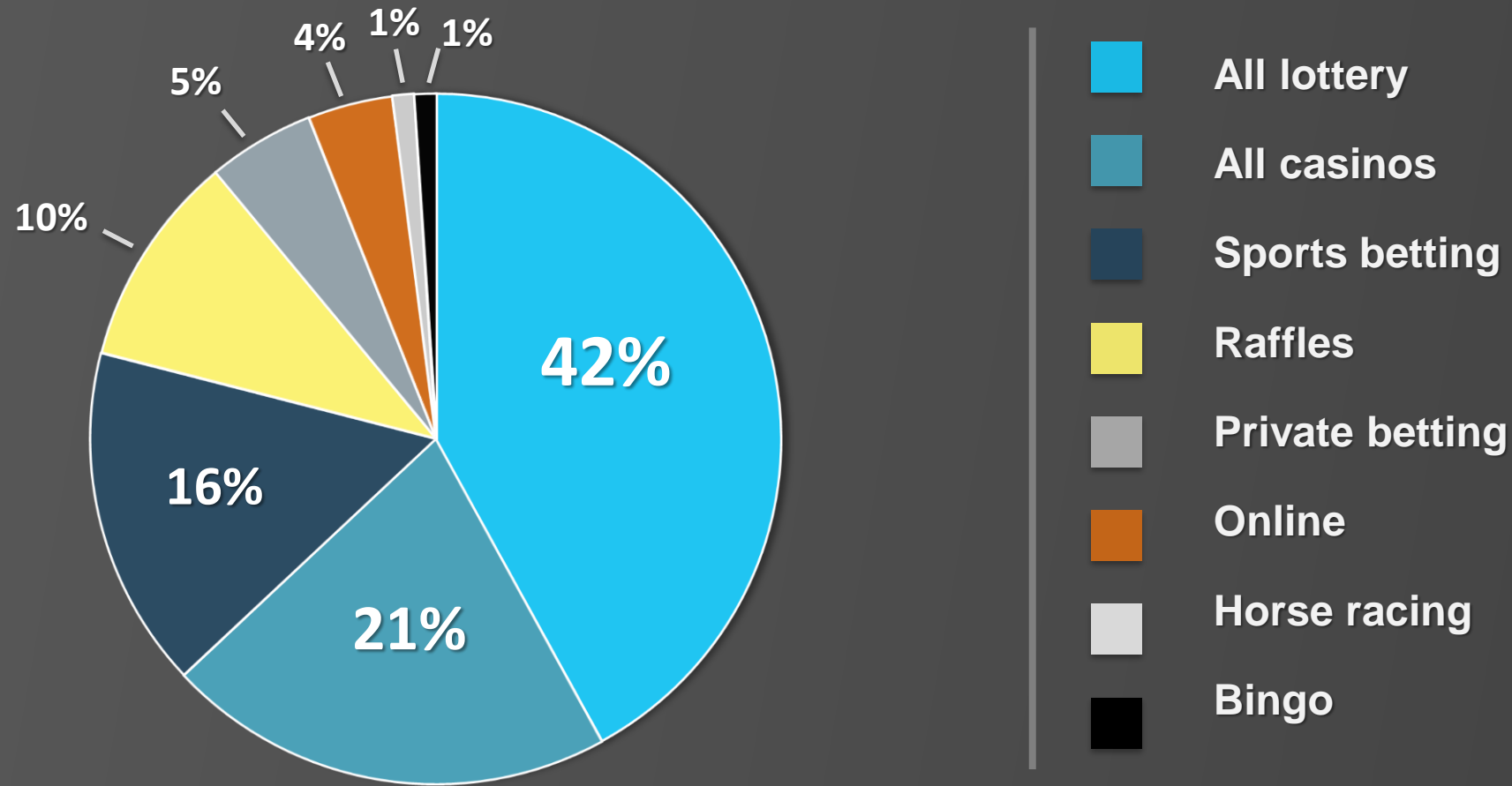
# Gambling Participation

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



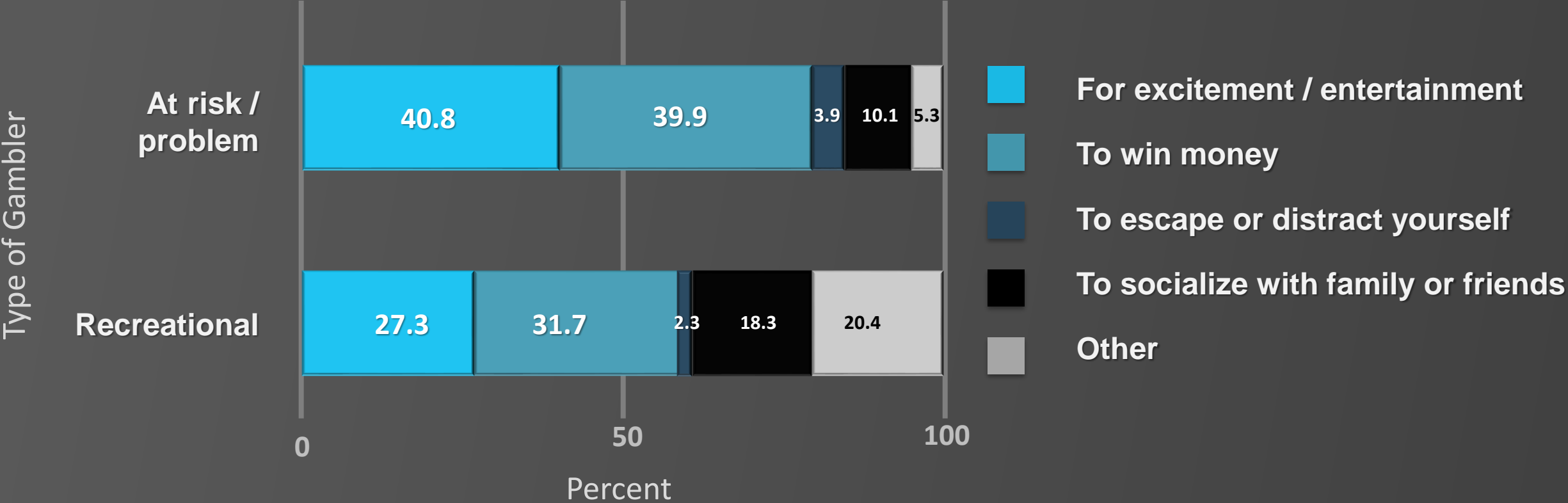
# Gambling Spending

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



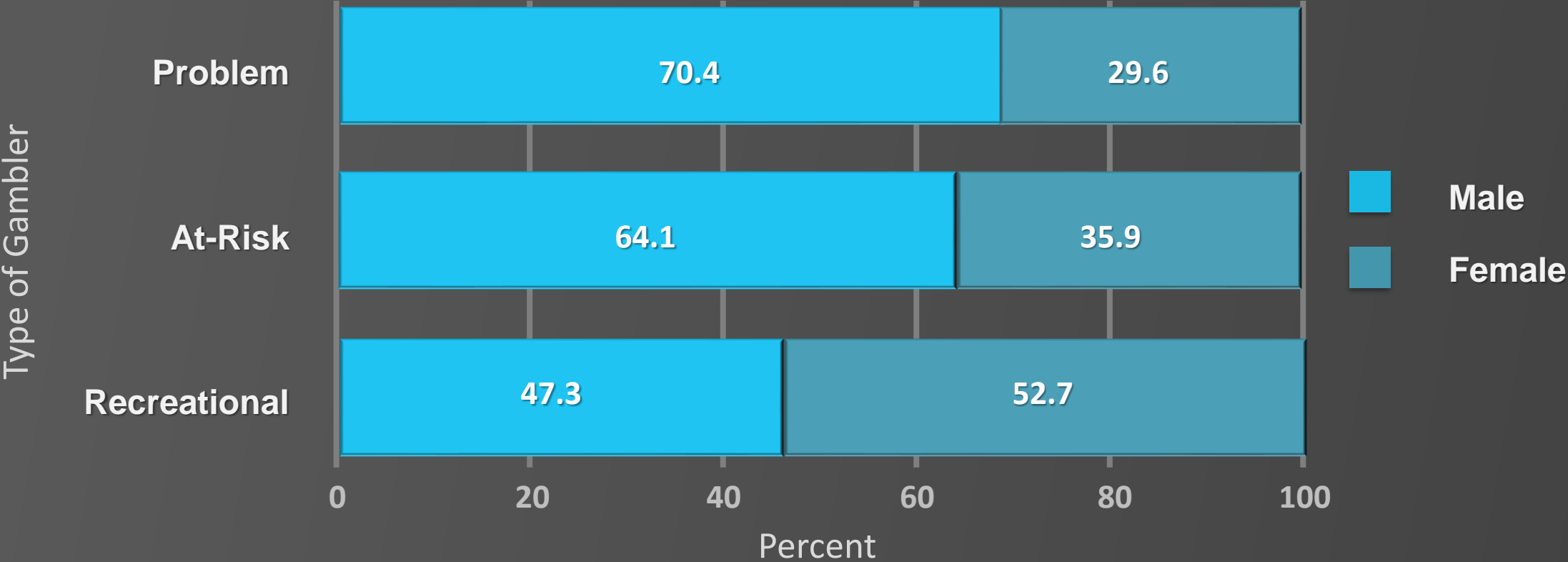
# Reasons for Gambling

(Percent of surveyed participants responded with reasons for gambling)



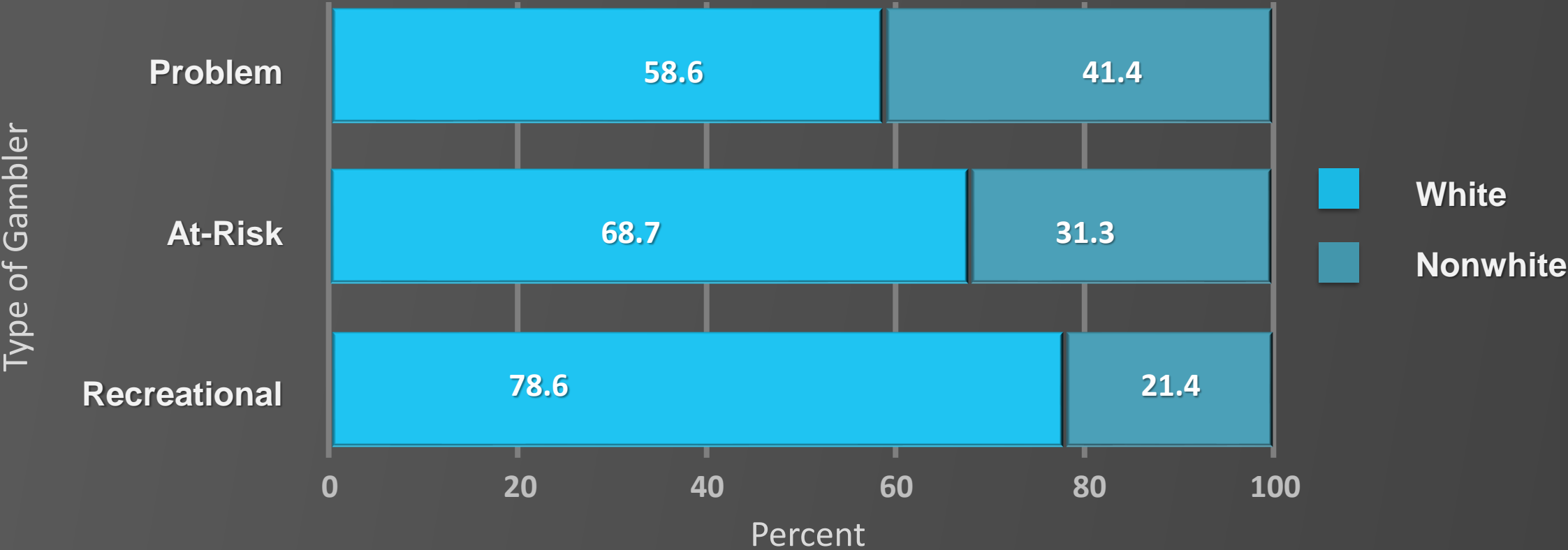
# Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Gender)



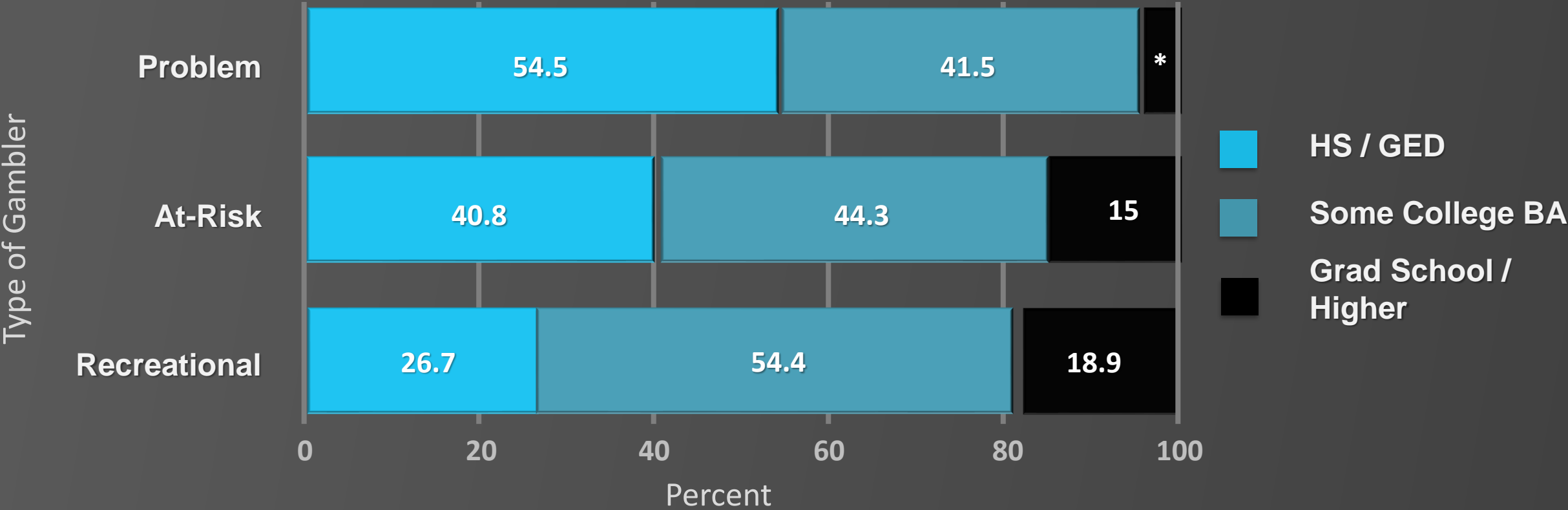
# Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Ethnicity)



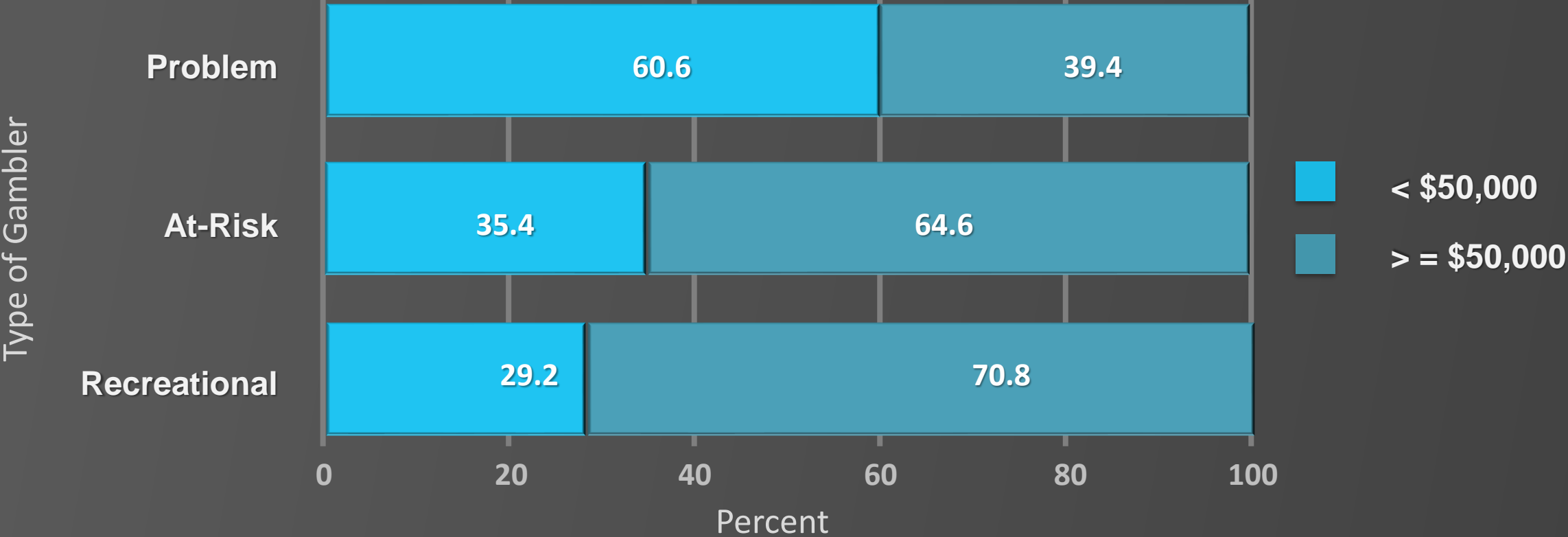
# Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Education)



# Demographics of Recreational, At-risk, and Problem Gamblers

(Income)



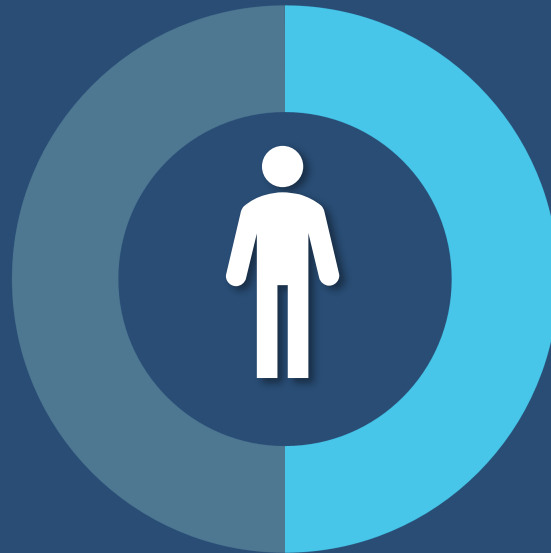


# Risk and Protective Factors



## 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)


**Male** 

**Low SES** (educ., income, occupation) 

**Early Gambling Onset** 

**Impulsivity** 

**Stress and Coping** 

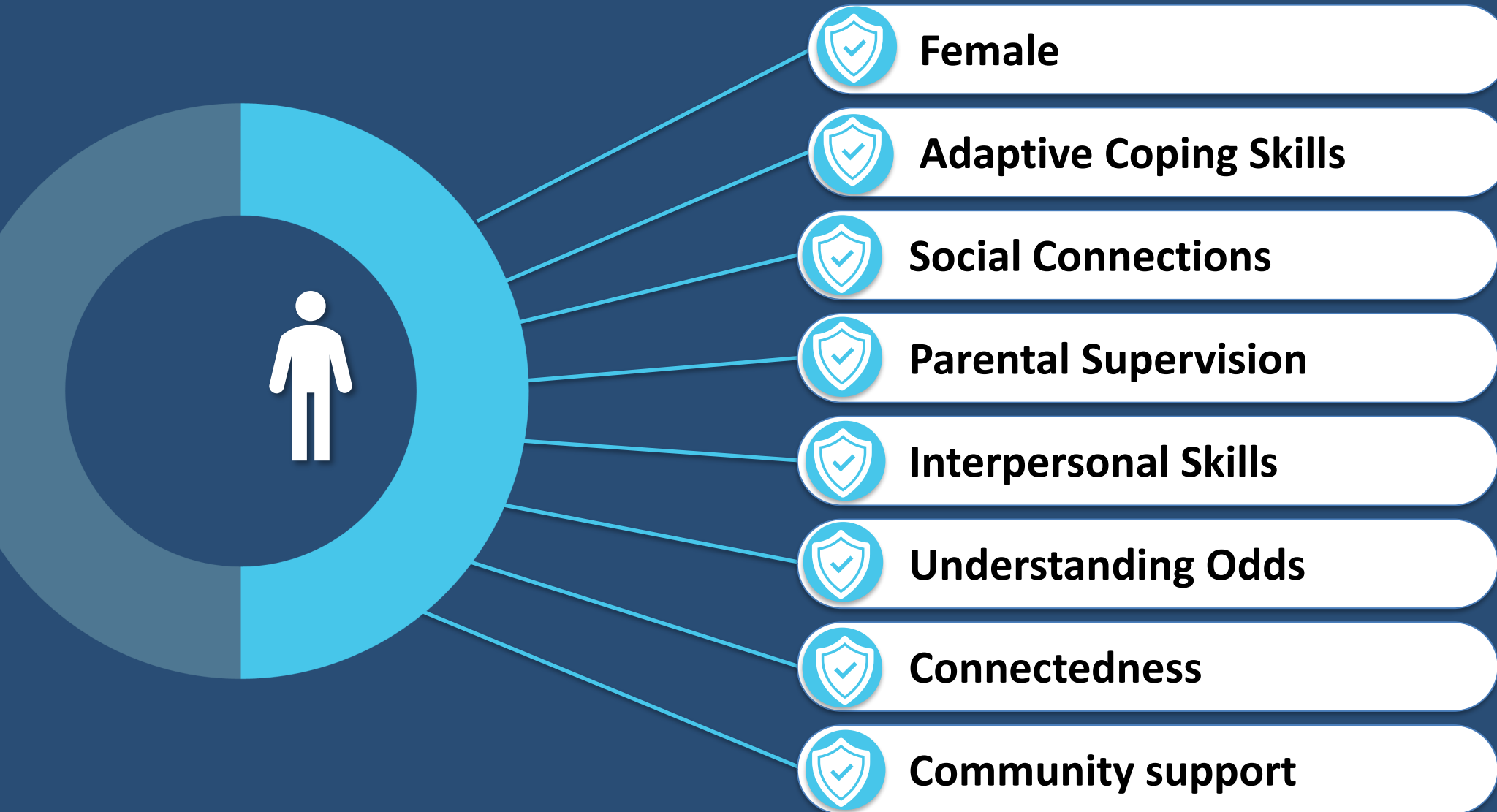
**Substance use** 

**Mental Health Disorder** 

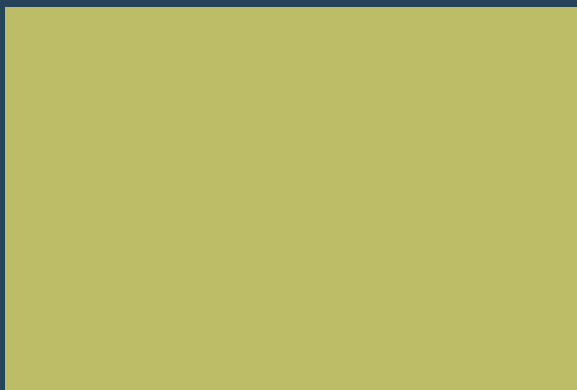
**Family issues** 



# Protective Factors (Examples)



# SECTION 3: GROUPS AT-RISK



# People Who Are At Higher Risk for Problem Gambling

*First, a word about language*

## AVOID

High-risk people or High-risk population

Vulnerable

Priority

Targeted

## INSTEAD USE PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

*People who are at increased risk for (condition)*

*People who live or work in settings that put them at increased risk for...*



Support #StateWithoutStigmaMA

# People Who Are At Higher Risk for Problem Gambling

Research shows that some groups are at higher risk for developing problem gambling, including:

- Youth
- Males
- People of color
- Older adults
- People with a high school diploma or less
- People with an annual income of less than \$15,000
- People who are unemployed
- People with a disability
- Casino employees
- People with a history of incarceration
- People who misuse substances





## **People At-Risk** for Developing Problem Gambling

Groups are 2x as likely or more to  
be at-risk gamblers:

- Populations with a high school education or less
- Populations with an annual income < \$15,000
- Populations who are unemployed
- Populations who have a disability
- Populations who have a history of substance misuse
- Populations who have a mental health disorder



## **People At-Risk** for Developing Problem Gambling

At-risk and problem gamblers were *significantly more likely* to:

Use tobacco

Binge drink in the past 30 days

Problem gamblers had *significantly higher* Past-year use of illicit drugs





## **People At-Risk** for Developing Problem Gambling

At-risk and problem gamblers were *significantly more likely* to:

Identify their physical health status as *poor or fair*

Experience serious problems with depression, anxiety, or other mental health problems

Problem gamblers are at *higher risk* for suicide



# Youth Are Exposed to Gambling

Early in life

By family and friends

Exposure connected to tradition and nostalgic memories

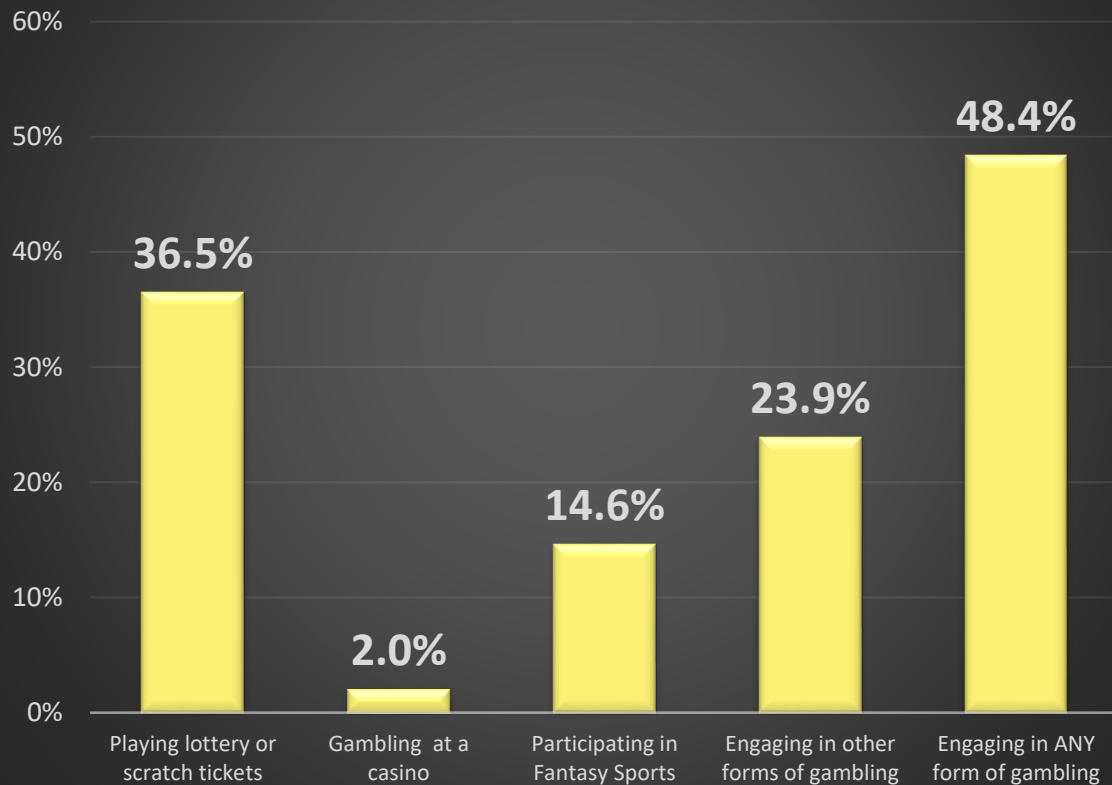
Exposure can be legal or illegal

Exposure is normalized in families & communities

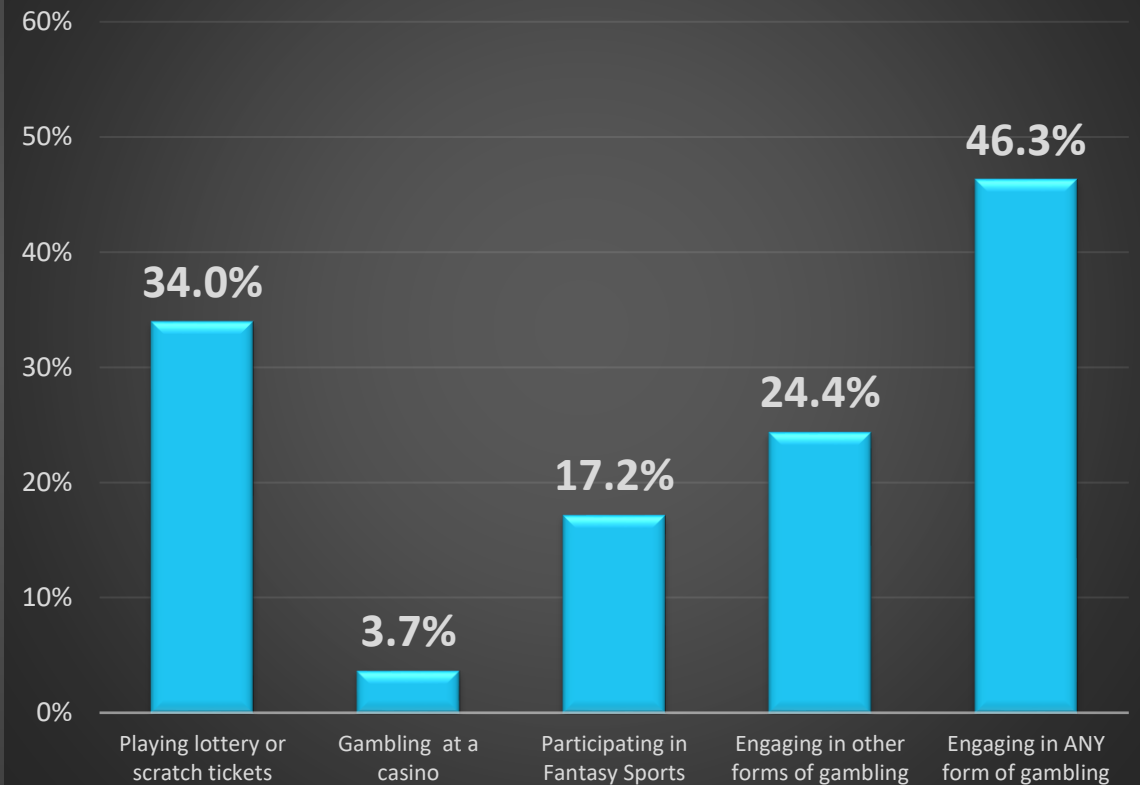
# 2023: MA Gambling Activity Participation Prevalence in Youth

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

## MS Gambling Activity Participation in the Past Year - YHS 2023



## HS Gambling Activity Participation in the Past Year - YHS 2023



# PERCEPTION CONCERNS



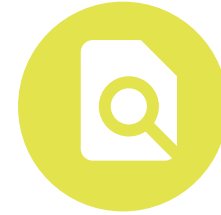
Teens view gambling as a socially acceptable  
Enjoyable form of entertainment  
Significantly less harmful than alcohol, drugs or cigarettes

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

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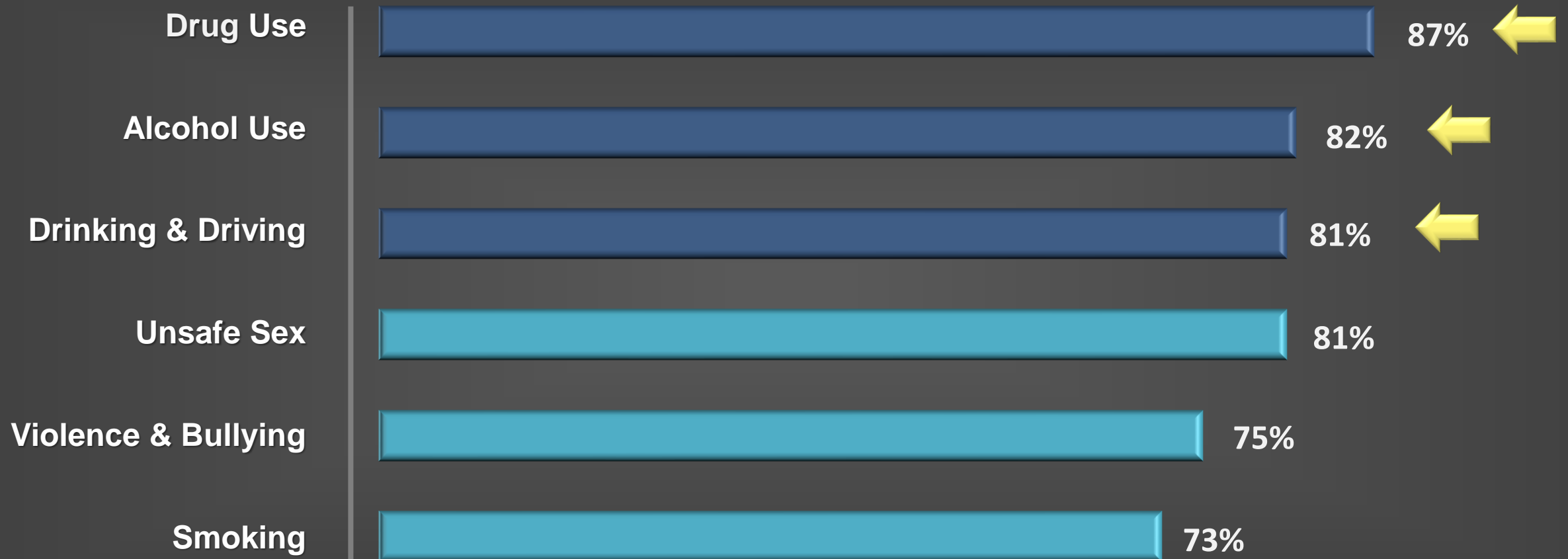


In a comparison of parent and teacher perceptions concerning adolescent risk behaviors, gambling was perceived to be a least serious issue among both parents and teachers

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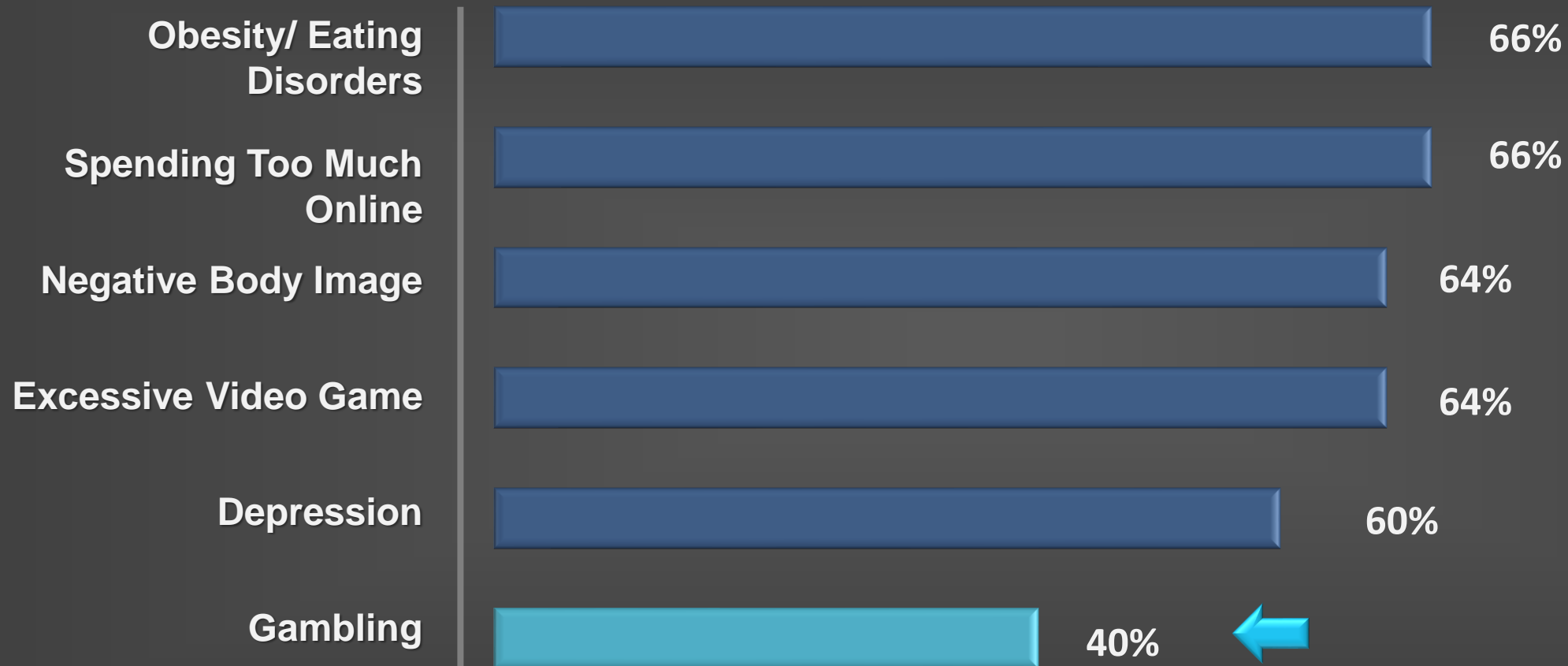
# Parental Perceptions of the Seriousness of Issues Youth May Encounter

(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)

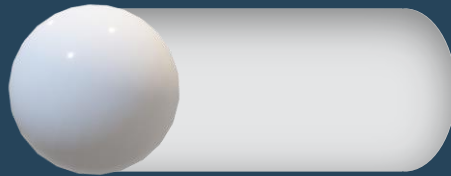
“The brains of people anticipating a win at the roulette table appear to react much like those taking euphoria-inducing drugs.”



# 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.



MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

# Q & A



**PROBLEM  
GAMBLING  
PREVENTION**

MASSACHUSETTS CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

# THANK YOU

**Haner Hernandez | Trainer**

**Sokoni Davis | Trainer**

**Ivy Jones Turner | Trainer**

**Carol Musallam | Training Coordinator**

**[mcoepgp@edc.org](mailto:mcoepgp@edc.org)**

# Upcoming MCOE PGP Health Equity Academy Trainings

- **Engaging Black Men and Boys in Problem Gambling Prevention –**  
March 13, 2025 / 1 pm – 2:30 pm EST



# We Are on Social Media!

Scan the QR codes below to follow our pages



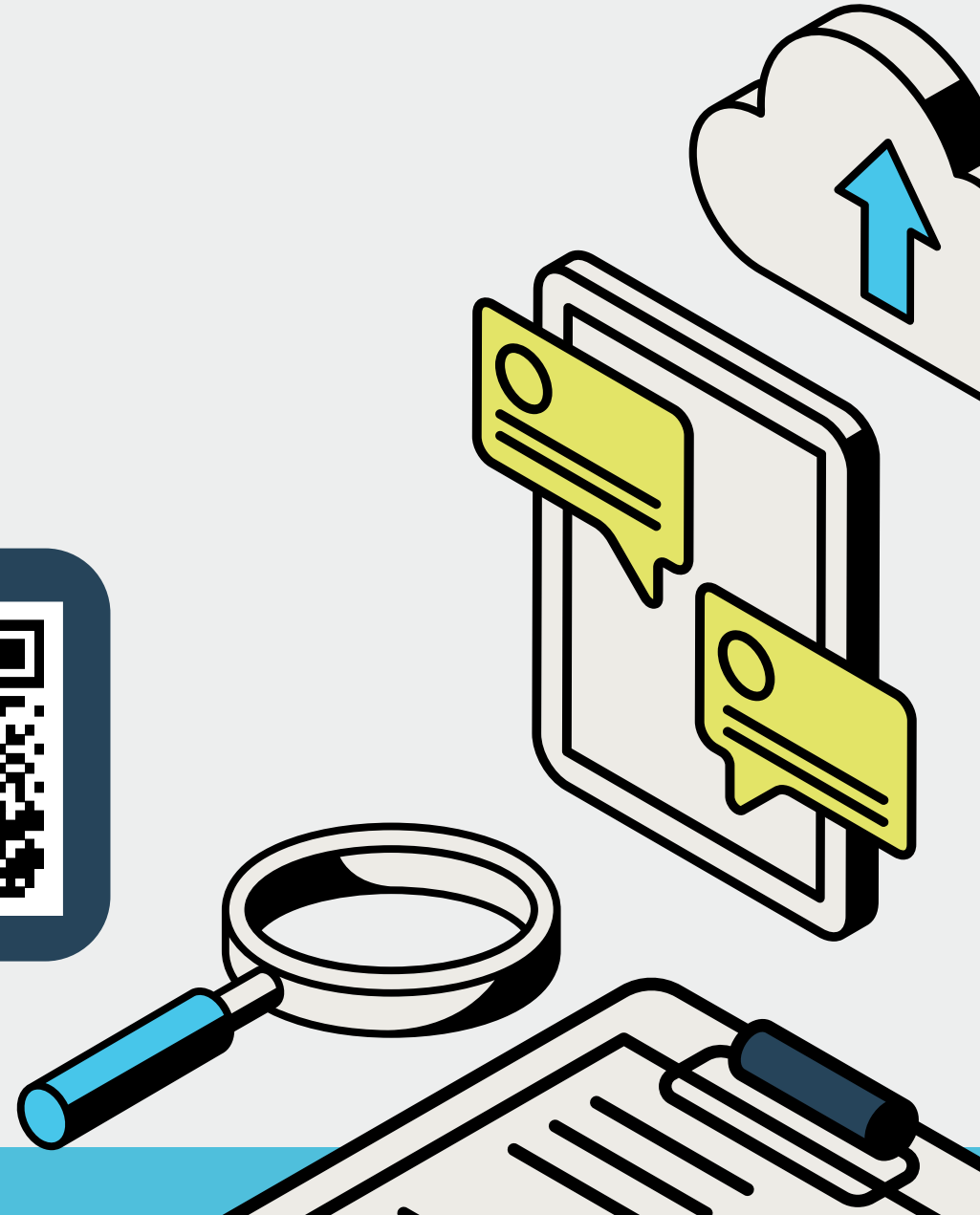
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Instagram



LinkedIn



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