Current Trends in Gambling, Sports Betting and Problem Gambling in Massachusetts, 2022-2024

Rachel Volberg, PhD
Research Professor
School of Public Health & Health Sciences

Overview

- Panel survey methods
  - Focus on regular/monthly gamblers
- Attitudes about gambling
- Gambling behavior
- Gambling problems and harms
- Discussion and future directions

Background

- Online panel surveys
  - Not representative
  - High proportion of regular gamblers, gamblers experiencing problems
  - "It's a feature, not a bug"
  - Useful to regularly monitor direction of changes at relatively low cost
  - Different people in each survey
- Allows for timely introduction of protective, mitigation measures

SEIGMA Surveys

| Survey	Sample Size	Year
Baseline General Population Survey (BGPS)(BTS-E)	9,578	2013-2014
Baseline Online Panel Survey (BOPS)	5,046	2013-2014
Baseline Targeted Surveys (Plainville, Springfield) (BTS-P, BTP-S)	~1,000 each	2014, 2015
Follow-up Targeted Surveys (Plainville, Springfield) (FTS-P, FTS-S)	~1,000 each	2016, 2019
Follow-up General Population Survey (FGPS)(FTS-E)	6,293	2021-2022
Follow-up Online Panel Survey (FOPS)	3,038	2022
Online Panel Survey 2023 (OPS23)	3,380	2023
Online Panel Survey 2024-Spring (OPS24-S)	3,383	2024
Online Panel Survey 2024-Fall (OPS24-F)	3,045	2024
MA Gambling Impact Cohort (MAGIC) – 5 waves	3,139	2013-2019

Methods

- Questionnaire
  - Aligned closely with questionnaire used in population surveys
  - Described as gambling survey since purpose was to recruit gamblers
  - Sections included
    - Physical & mental health, alcohol & drug use
    - Gambling attitudes
    - Gambling behavior
    - Gambling problems and harms
    - Awareness of services

- Data collection
  - Surveys carried out by Qualtrics
  - Over-sample of young adults (18-34) obtained
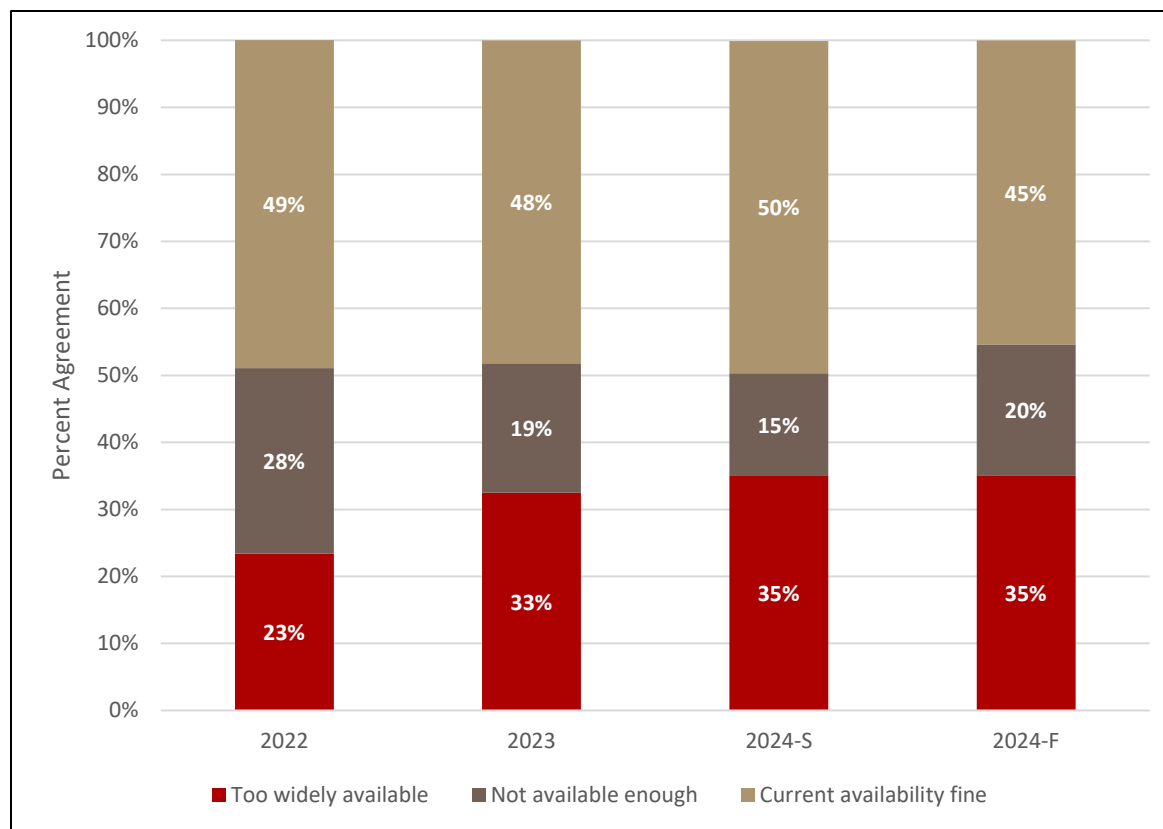
Panel Samples for Analysis

Online Panel	Overall Sample	After Removing Duplicates	%	Gambled Monthly or More	%
FOPS 2022	3038	3038	100	1631	53.7
OPS23 2023	3380	3215	95 .1	1866	58.0
OPS24 Spring	3383	3241	95.8	1916	59.1
OPS24 Fall	3045	2806	92.1	1577	56.2

ATTITUDES TOWARD GAMBLING

Attitudes: Benefits and Harms
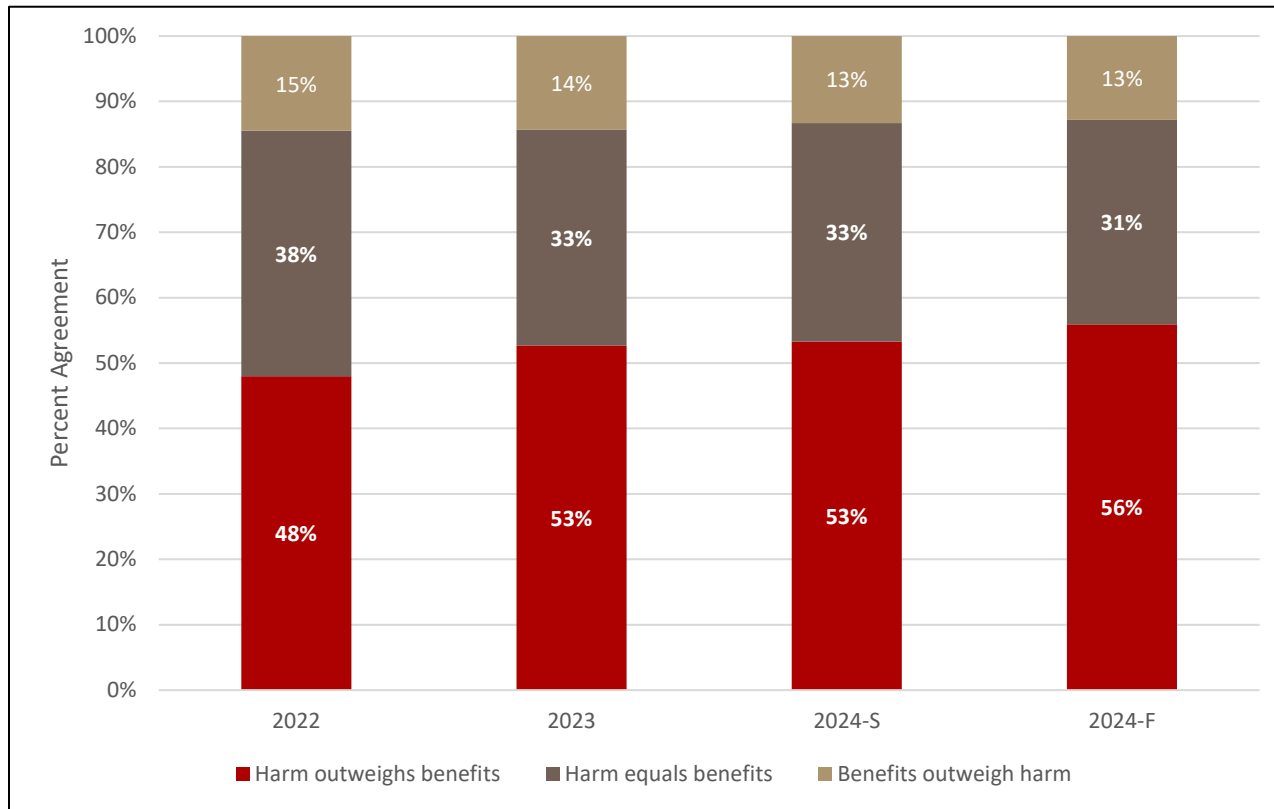
Attitudes: Availability

GAMBLING BEHAVIOR

Gambling Participation

- ## Definition provided for consistency:

  We define gambling as betting money or material goods on an event with an uncertain outcome in the hopes of winning additional money or material goods. It includes things such as lottery tickets, scratch tickets, bingo, betting against a friend on a game of skill or chance, betting on horse racing or sports, investing in high risk stocks, etc.

- ## 13 activities assessed
  - Past-year participation
  - Frequency of participation
  - Expenditures

Gambling Participation
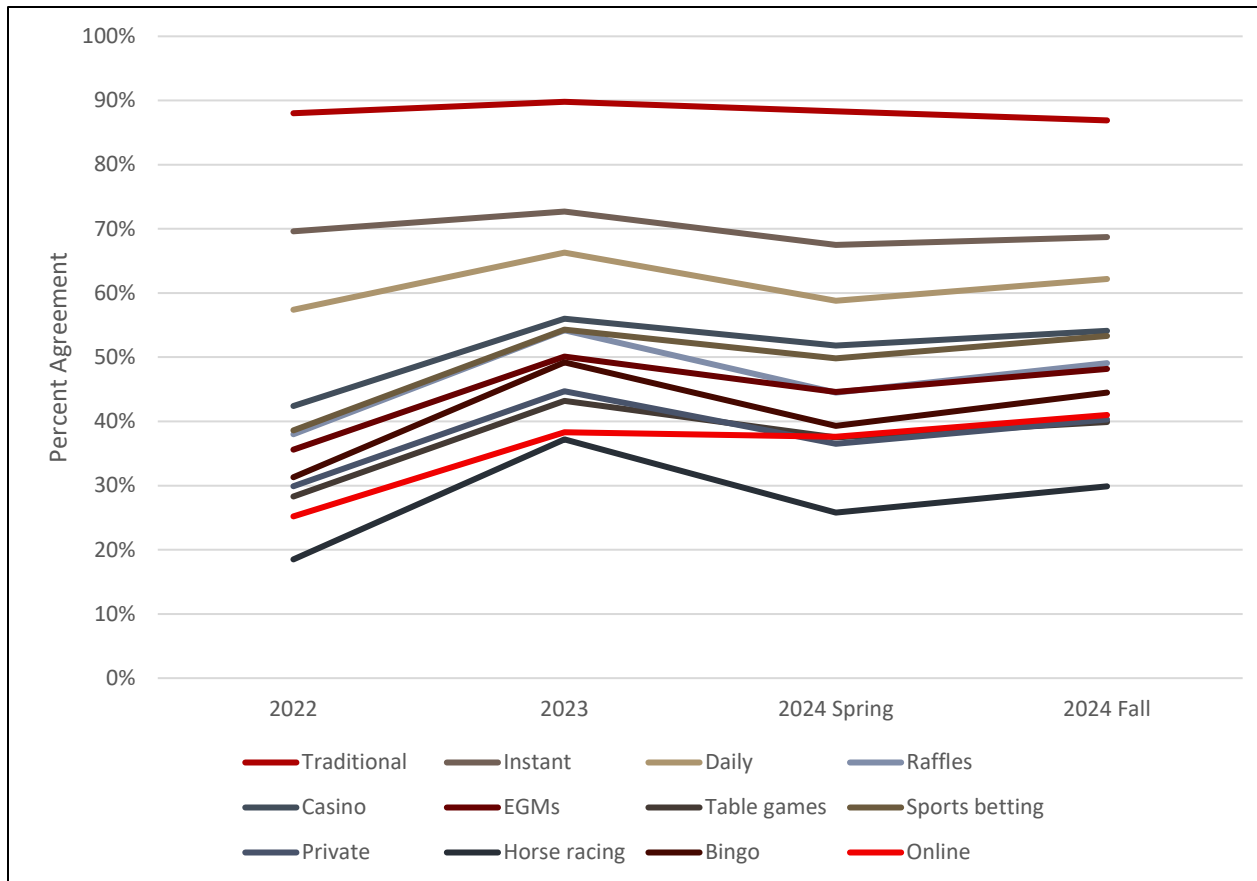
Demographics of Monthly Gamblers
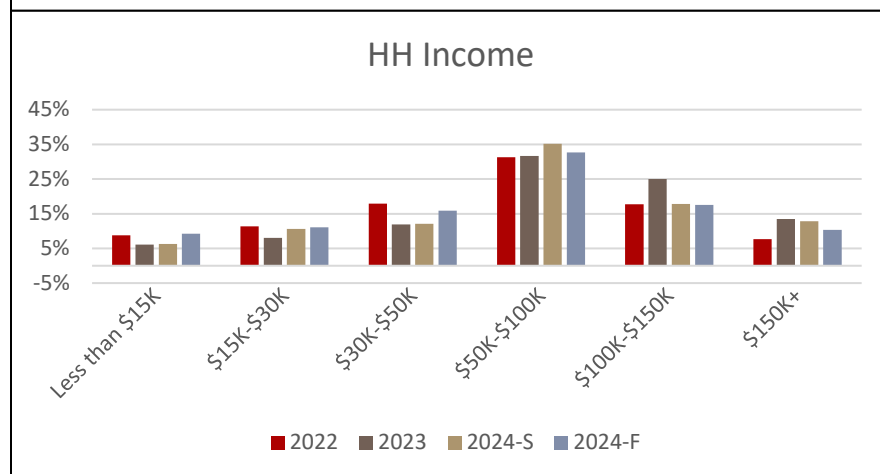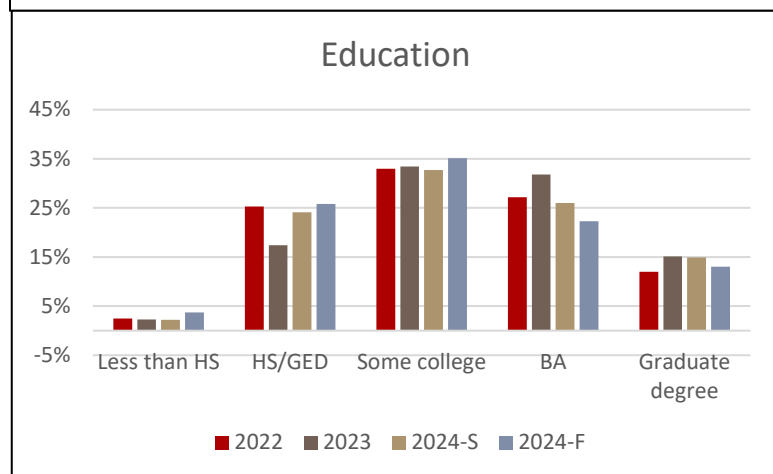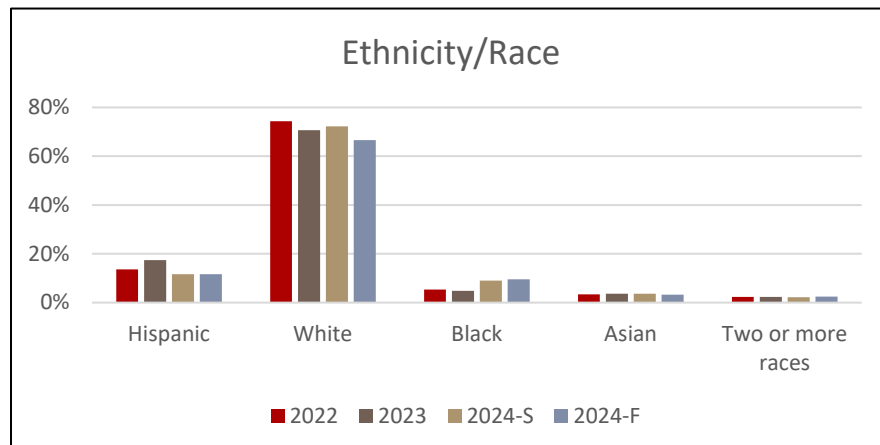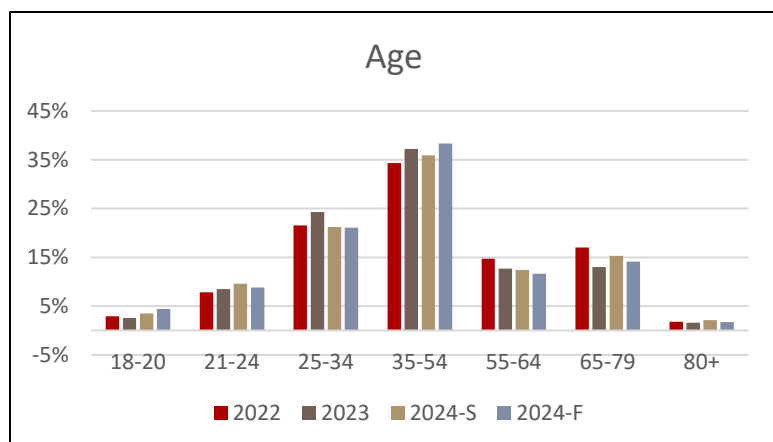
Gambling Intensity

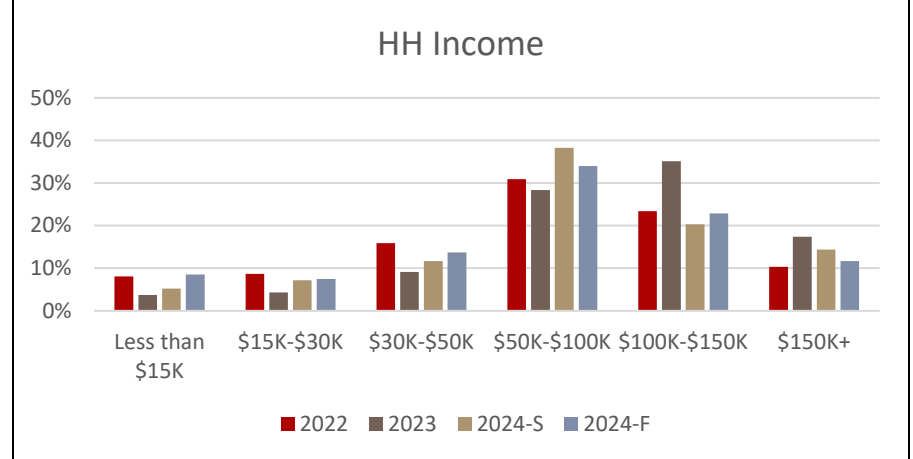|	FOPS 2022			OPS2023			OPS2024 Spring			OPS2024 Fall		
	n	mean	95% CI	n	mean	95% CI	n	mean	95% CI	n	mean	95% CI
# gambling formats	1631	4.6	(4.5, 4.7)	1866	6.0	(5.8, 6.2)	1916	5.3	(5.2, 5.4)	1577	5.6	(5.5, 5.8)
Highest frequency of days/year	1631	103	(98.2, 107.9)	1866	112.6	(108.1, 117.0)	1916	108.8	(104.3, 113.3)	1577	113.1	(108.1, 118.1)
	FOPS 2022			OPS2023			OPS2024 Spring			OPS2024 Fall		
	n	median	95% CI	n	median	95% CI	n	median	95% CI	n	median	95% CI
Gambling expenditures	784	$1044	($700, $1387)	1866	$2910	($2282, $3538)	1916	$2220	($1653, $2787)	1577	$2280	$1704, $2857)

SPORTS BETTING

Sports Betting: Frequency & Activities

		FOPS 2022		OPS2023		OPS2024 Spring		OPS2024 Fall	
		%	**95% CI**	**%**	**95% CI**	**%**	**95% CI**	**%**	**95% CI**
Frequency of sports betting	1=never	61.4	(59.0, 63.8)	45.7	(43.4, 47.9)	50.2	(47.9, 52.4)	46.7	(44.2, 49.1)
	2=at least yearly	6.9	(5.7, 8.2)	6.8	(5.7, 8.0)	8.4	(7.2, 9.7)	7.9	(6.6, 9.3)
	3=at least monthly	12.8	(11.3, 14.5)	19.2	(17.5, 21.0)	16.0	(14.4, 17.7)	19.2	(17.3, 21.2)
	4=at least weekly	18.9	(17.1, 20.9)	28.3	(26.3, 30.4)	25.5	(23.6, 27.5)	26.3	(24.2, 28.5)

Demographics of Sports Bettors
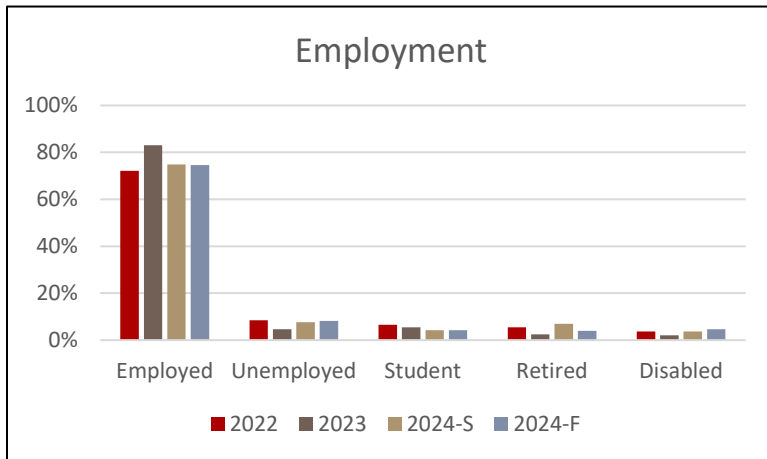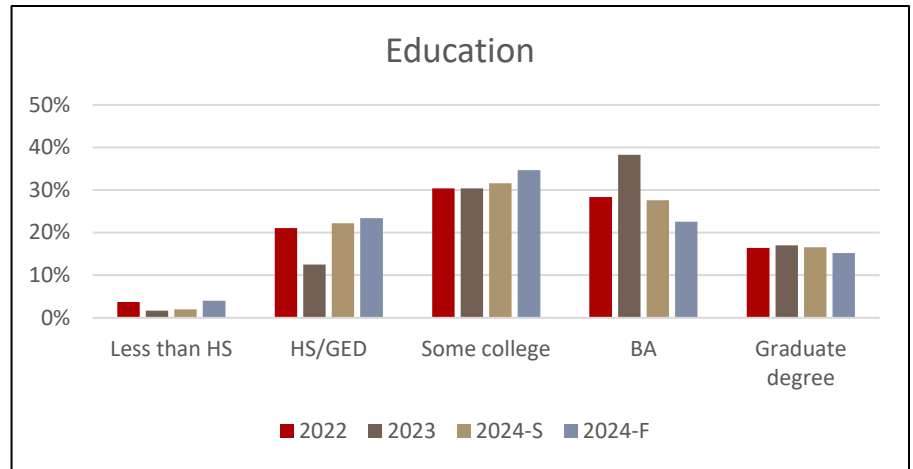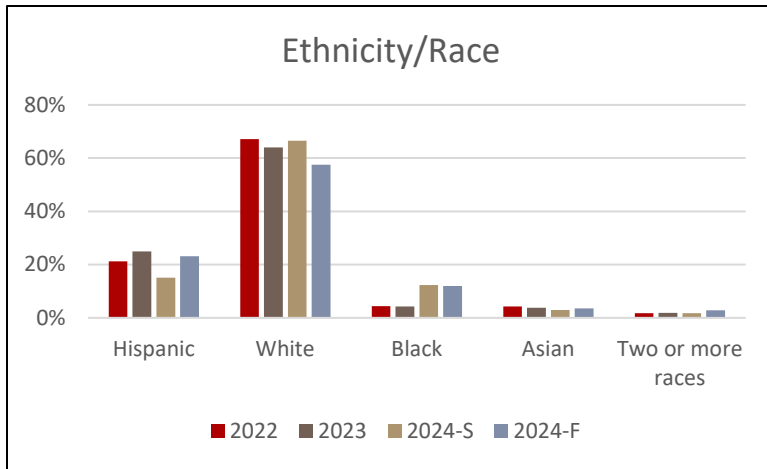
Legal and Illegal Sports Betting

Where and how bet on sports		FOPS 2022		OPS 2023		OPS 2024 Spring		OPS 2024 Fall	
		%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
	Office sports polls or social betting against friends/family	49.3	(45.4, 53.2)	33.6	(30.8, 36.6)	36.6	(33.6, 39.8)	32.2	(29.1, 35
	Legal land-based sportsbook outside MA	29.3	(25.8, 32.9)	31.8	(29.0, 34.7)	26.7	(24.0, 29.6)	32.3	(29.3, 35
	Legal land-based sportsbook in MA	22.6	(19.5, 26.0)	42.6	(39.6, 45.7)	35.9	(32.9, 39.0)	36.0	(32.8, 39
	Illegal/underground land based sportsbook or bookmaker in MA	16.9	(14.1, 20.0)	19.6	(17.3, 22.2)	13.6	(11.6, 15.9)	16.3	(13.9, 18
	Sports event with online sportsbook outside MA	22.4	(19.3, 25.8)	16	(13.8, 18.4)	20.9	(18.5, 23.6)	20.5	(17.9, 23
	Sports event with online sportsbook in MA	11.4	(9.2, 14.2)	26.6	(24.0, 29.4)	30.3	(27.4, 33.3)	26.9	(24.0, 30

[1] Percentages and 95% CI are calculated using the unweighted N

Sports Betting Recapture

	FOPS 2022		OPS 2023		OPS 2024 Spring		OPS 2024 Fall	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Only legal sports betting	66.1	(62.3, 69.7)	68.1	(65.2, 70.9)	69.6	(66.6, 72.5)	67.4	(64.2, 70
Any illegal sports betting	33.9	(30.3, 37.7)	31.9	(29.1, 34.8)	30.4	(27.5, 33.4)	32.6	(29.5, 3
Only illegal sports betting	13.5	(11.1, 16.4)	6.8	(5.4, 8.5)	7.3	(5.8, 9.2)	8.3	(6.6, 1
Any sports betting leakage	54.5	(50.6, 58.4)	51.2	(48.1, 54.3)	47.7	(44.6, 50.9)	53.5	(50.1, 5
If MA had not legalized sports betting, would you have spent the money that you spent gambling on sports at sportsbooks in other states or countries (on-line or in person)			53.0	(47.0, 58.9)	45.0	(40.9, 49.2)	49.7	(45.2, 5

GAMBLING PROBLEMS & HARMS

Problem Gambling - PPGM

| Category	Classification criteria
Non-Gambler	Has not gambled in the past 12 months
Recreational Gambler	Has gambled in past 12 months Total score 0
At-Risk Gambler	Total score 1+ Does not meet criteria for more severe categories OR Gambling frequency and expenditure ≥ PG median
Problem Gambler	Has gambled at least once a month in past 12 months Impaired Control score 1+ Problems score 1+ Total score of 2-4 OR Total score 3+ Gambling frequency and expenditure ≥ PG median
Pathological Gambler (equivalent to severe problem gambler)	Has gambled at least once a month in past 12 months Impaired Control score 1+ Problems score 1+ AND Total score of 5+

Problem Gambling - PGM

| Category	Classification criteria
Non-Gambling	Has not gambled in the past 12 months
Recreational Gambling	Has gambled in past 12 months Total score 0
At-Risk Gambling	Does not meet criteria for Problem Gambling Total score 1+ 1. Total PGM score: 0 = 0; 1-2 = 2; 3+ = 5 2. Score on PGM15: 0 = 0; 1 = 2 3. Number of types of gambling monthly: 0-2 = 0; 3-4 = 1; 5+ = 4 4. Largest amount lost in single day: <$200 = 0; $200-$499 = 1; $500+ = 3 5. Importance of gambling as recreational activity: not very important = 0; somewhat important = 1; quite/very important = 2
Moderate At-Risk	Total score 1+ (13% likely to transition to PG one year later)
High At-Risk *Very High At-Risk*	Total score 4+ (28% likely to transition to PG one year later) Total score 8+ (43% likely to transition to PG one year later)
Problem Gambling	Has gambled at least once a month in past 12 months Impaired Control score 1+ Problems score 1+ Total score of 2+ with **score of 7+ predictive of continued PG in next 12 months** OR Total score 3+ Gambling frequency and expenditure ≥ PG median

Problem Gambling

	FOPS 2022			OPS 2023			OPS 2024 Spring			OPS 2024 Fall		
	N	%	95% CI	N	%	95% CI	N	%	95% CI	N	%	95% CI
Total	1631	100 (,)		1866	100 (,)		1916	100 (,)		1577	100 (,)	
Recreational gambler	888	54.4	(52.0,56.9)	921	49.4	(47.1,51.6)	580	30.3	(28.3,32.4)	462	29.3	(27.1,31.6)
At-risk gambler	402	24.6	(22.6,26.8)	467	25.0	(23.1,27.0)						
At-risk gambler-Moderate							505	26.4	(24.4,28.4)	395	25.0	(23.0,27.2)
At-risk gambler-High/Very high							386	20.1	(18.4,22.0)	278	17.6	(15.8,19.6)
Problem or pathological gambler	341	20.9	(19.0,23.0)	478	25.6	(23.7,27.6)	445	23.2	(21.4,25.2)	442	28.0	(25.9,30.3)

Demographics of Problem Gamblers
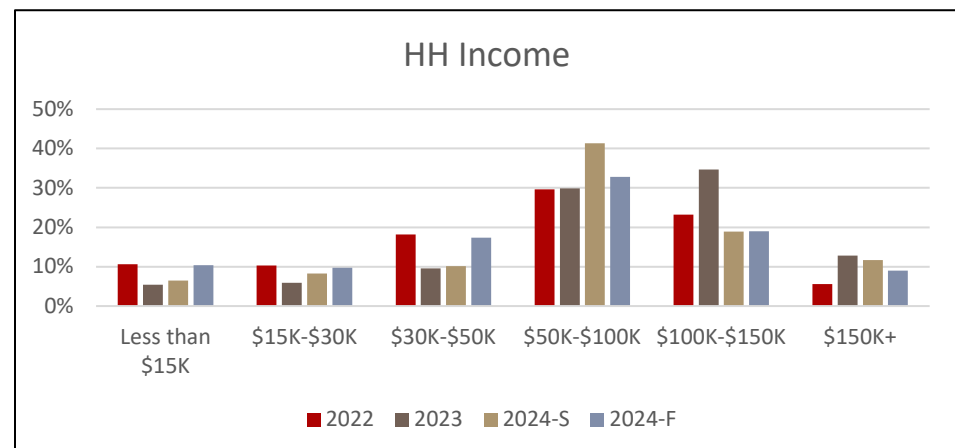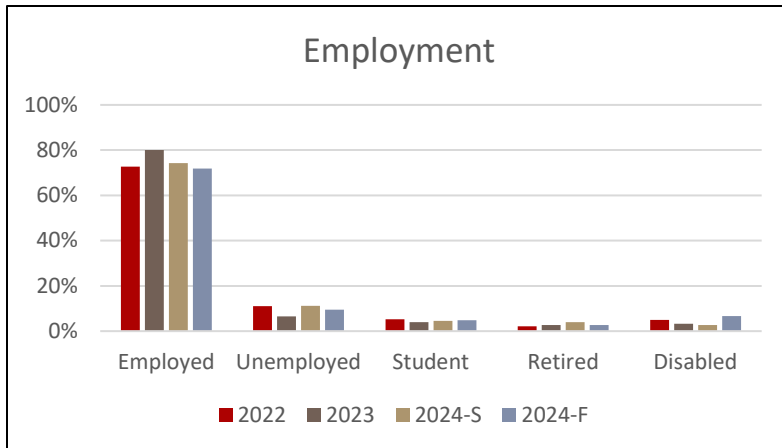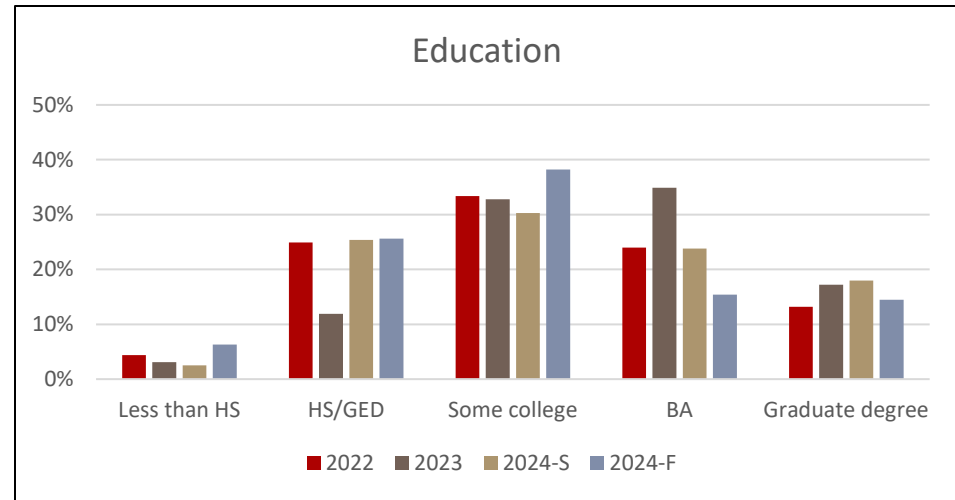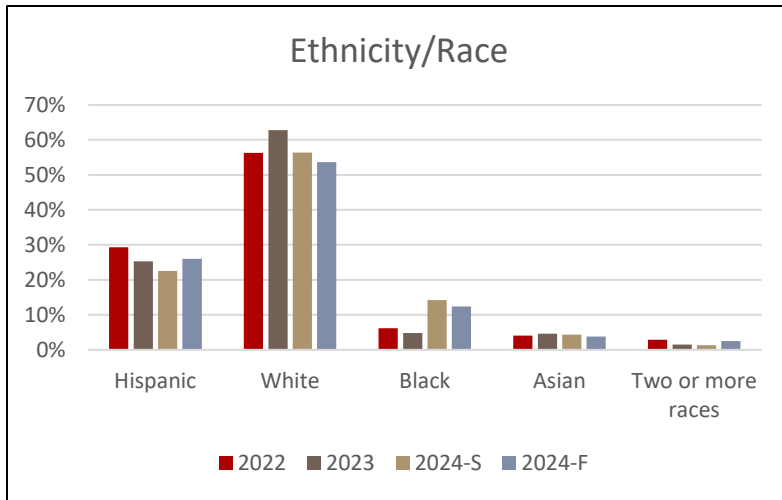
Gambling Harms

	FOPS 2022			OPS 2023			OPS 2024 Spring			OPS 2024 Fall		
	N	%	95% CI	N	%	95% CI	N	%	95% CI	N	%	95% CI
Financial	293	18.0	(16.2, 19.9)	385	20.6	(18.9, 22.5)	397	20.7	(19.0, 22.6)	395	25.0	(23.0, 27.2)
Health	124	7.6	(6.4, 9.0)	188	10.1	(8.8, 11.5)	173	9.0	(7.8, 10.4)	186	11.8	(10.3, 13.5)
Emotion/psychological	295	18.1	(16.3, 20.0)	343	18.4	(16.7, 20.2)	365	19.1	(17.4, 20.9)	345	21.9	(19.9, 24.0)
Family/relationships	227	13.9	(12.3, 15.7)	332	17.8	(16.1, 19.6)	453	23.6	(21.8, 25.6)	429	27.2	(25.1, 29.5)
Work/school	163	10.0	(8.6, 11.5)	231	12.4	(11.0, 14.0)	205	10.7	(9.4, 12.2)	208	13.2	(11.6, 15.0)
Illegal	135	8.3	(7.0, 9.7)	162	8.7	(7.5, 10.0)	163	8.5	(7.3, 9.8)	158	10.0	(8.6, 11.6)

Discussion

Online panels are not representative of the general population but provide information about the direction of changes among regular (monthly) gamblers.

- **Attitudes** about gambling became more negative between 2022 and 2024.

- **Participation** in specific types of gambling was most likely to rise from 2022 to 2023 and then stabilize.

- Gambling **intensity** rose between 2022 and 2023 and then remained stable in 2024.

- The proportion of monthly gamblers **betting weekly on sports** rose between 2022 and 2023 and remained high in 2024.

- There appears to have been some **recapture** of illegal sports betting expenditures between 2022 and 2024.

- **Problem gambling** prevalence rose between 2022 and 2023 and remained higher in 2024.

- Rates of **gambling harm** in 4 of 6 domains were higher in 2024 compared to 2022.
    - A rise in **family or relationship harms** between 2022 and 2023 was followed by another rise in 2024

Recommendations

- Given rising rates of sports betting frequency, education and harm reduction strategies targeting sports bettors are warranted.

- There is a need for an expansion of responsible gambling tools to support individuals reporting financial harms and/or family or relationship harms.

Thank you!

For more information:

www.umass.edu/seigma/reports

https://massgaming.com/about/research-agenda/