



October 15, 2025

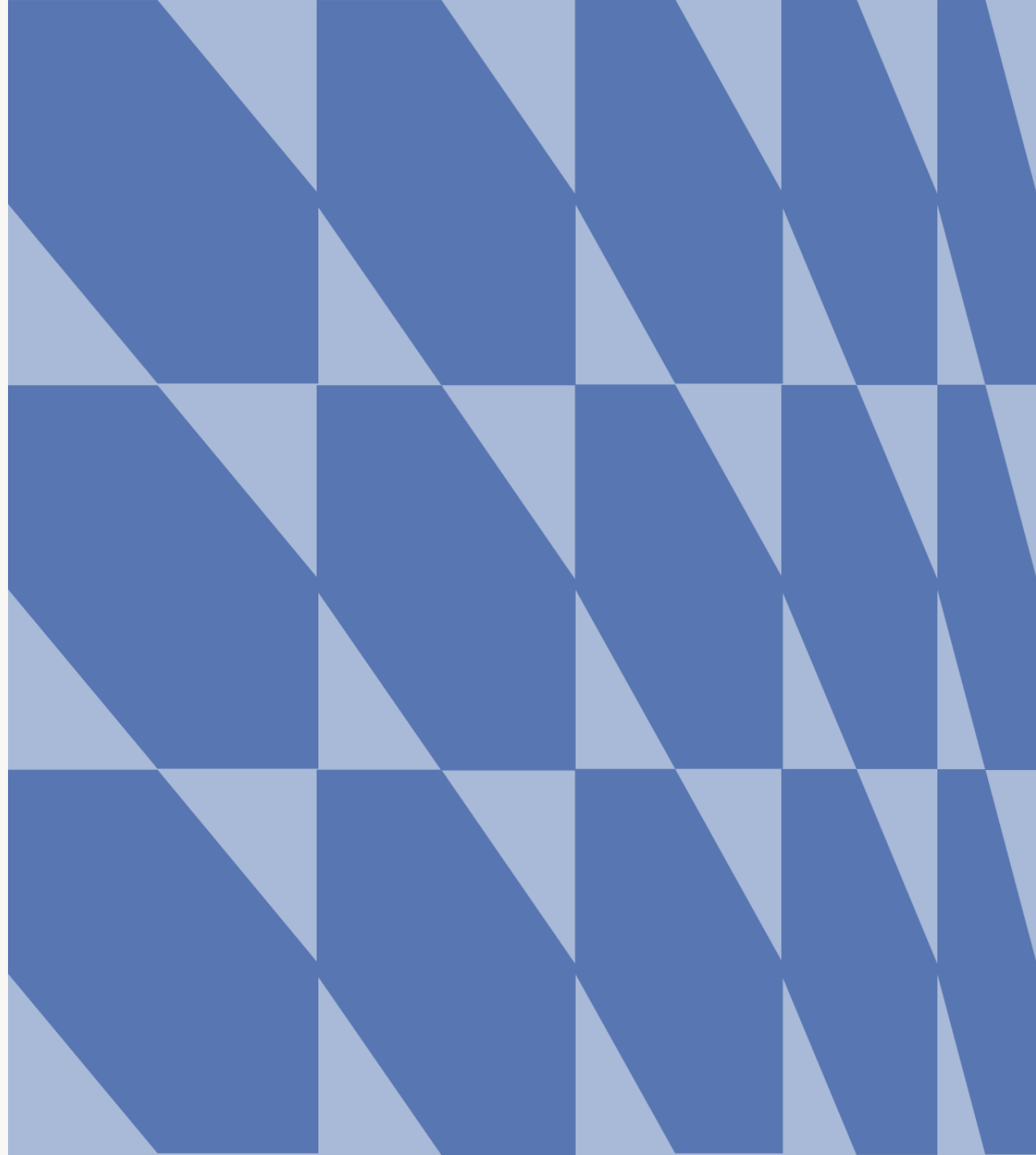
Young Adult Gambling in Medford, MA

Key Findings & Recommendations

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Agenda



-
- 01** Introduction
 - 02** Overview
 - 03** Key Findings
 - 04** Next Steps
 - 05** Q&A

Today's Presenters



Catherine Dhingra

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About Omni

Omni Institute is a nonprofit social science consultancy that provides integrated research, evaluation, and capacity-building services to foster understanding, guide collaboration, and inform action to accelerate positive social change.

Our clients are change-makers.

- Government
- Nonprofits
- Foundations
- Social Enterprises



Project Overview



Project Overview

The Medford Gaming & Gambling Young Adult Survey

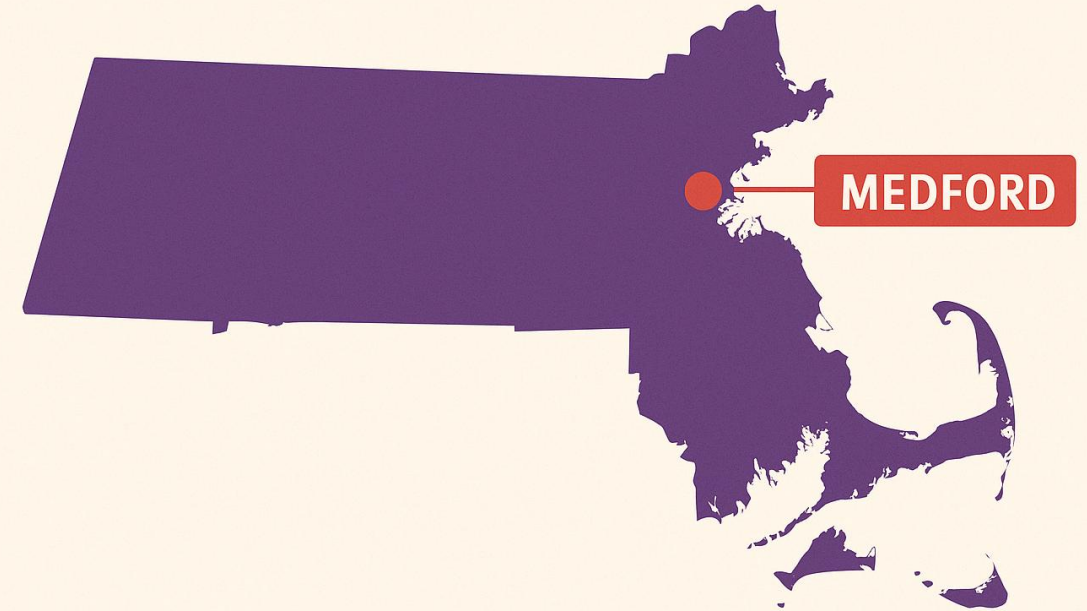
Survey of 18-24 Year Olds Living in Medford, MA

Implemented by the **Medford Health Department Office of Prevention and Outreach** in Medford, MA with support from Omni

Part of a larger assessment that includes a literature review, landscape analysis, and secondary data snapshots related to YA gambling.

Specific focus on gambling and its intersection with substance use and mental health

MASSACHUSETTS



Sample Size: 195



Gambling

Definition: Risking something of value on an activity with an uncertain outcome, in hopes of winning something of greater value

**Lottery &
Scratch
Offs**

**Sports
Betting**

**Brick &
Mortar
Casinos**

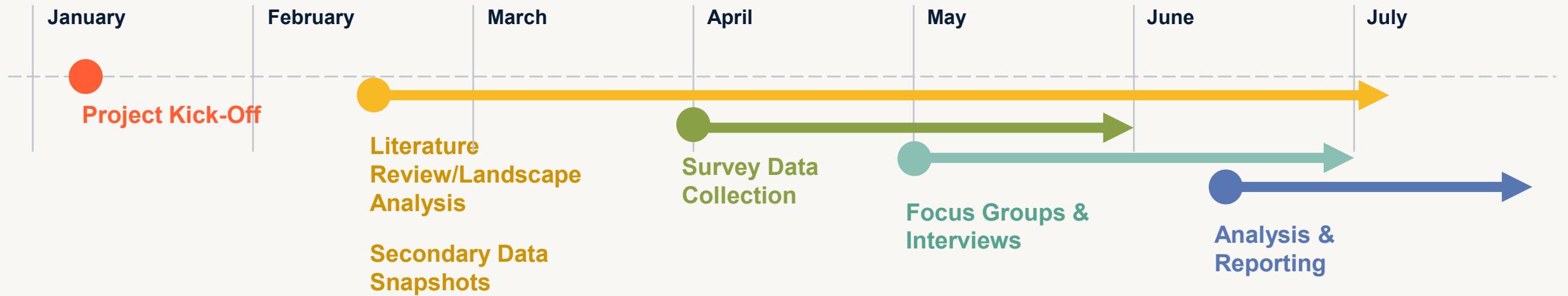
Poker

**Virtual
Casinos
or Slots**

Bingo

**eSports
Betting**

Timeline



Survey Development Steps



Partnership

Tool was developed in consultation between Omni and OPO to identify & navigate gaps in available data

Survey & Literature Review

Omni reviewed other surveys and existing literature to identify measures for questions and domains of interest

Online Programming & Testing

The survey was programmed in Survey Monkey and tested for clarity, length/timing, and functionality

Paper Surveys

The survey was also made available in print form for in-person administration



Survey Implementation



Convenience sampling methods



Active, on-the ground participant recruitment by program staff



Community partnerships supported recruitment efforts



Incentives provided for respondents



All responses were voluntary and confidential

Gambling Behavior

“...It's a lot easier now with apps than it ever used to be...especially because a lot of apps will give you free tokens, like you get 50 free dollars just by downloading...”
– Young Adult Interview Participant

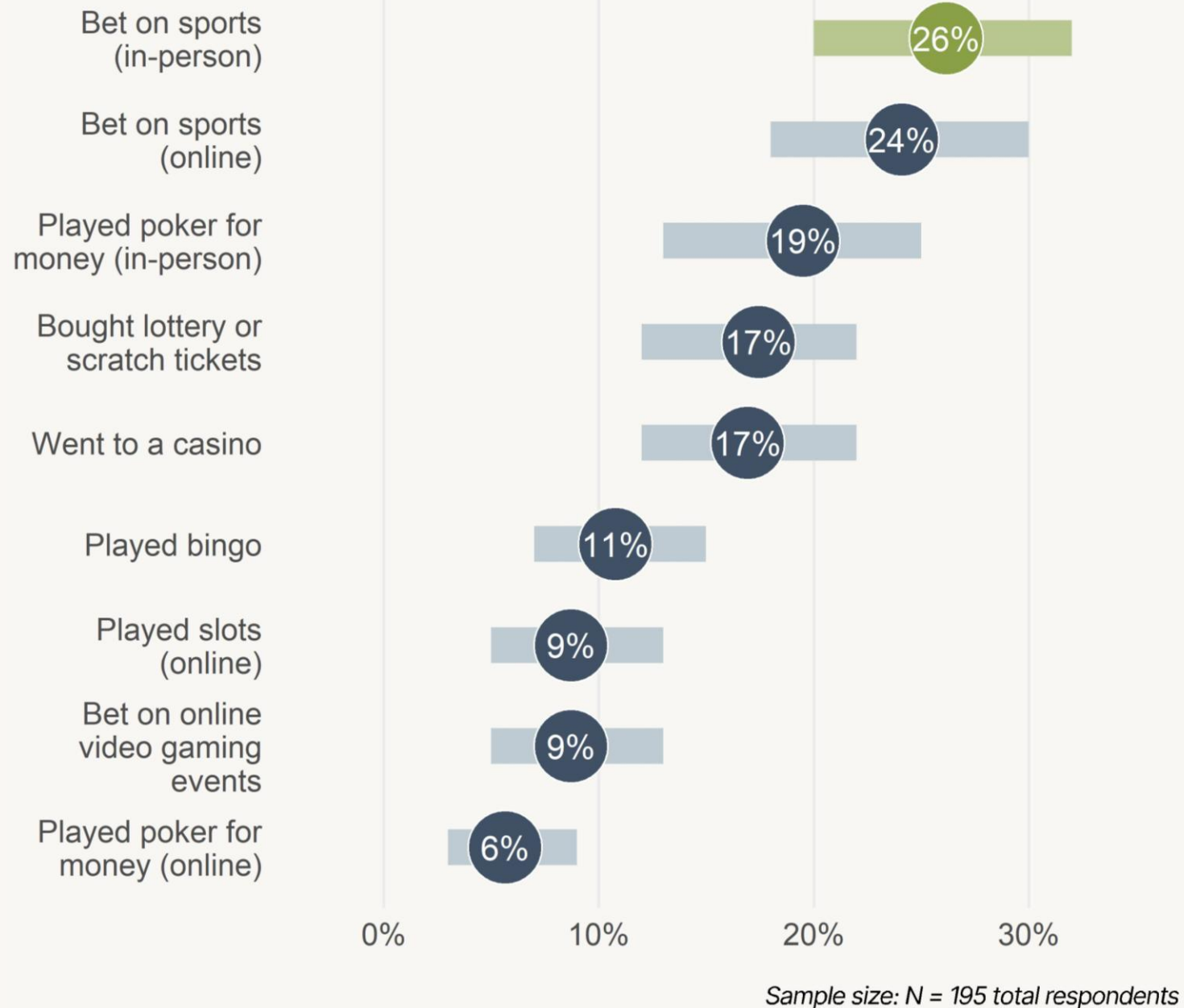


Lifetime Gaming & Gambling

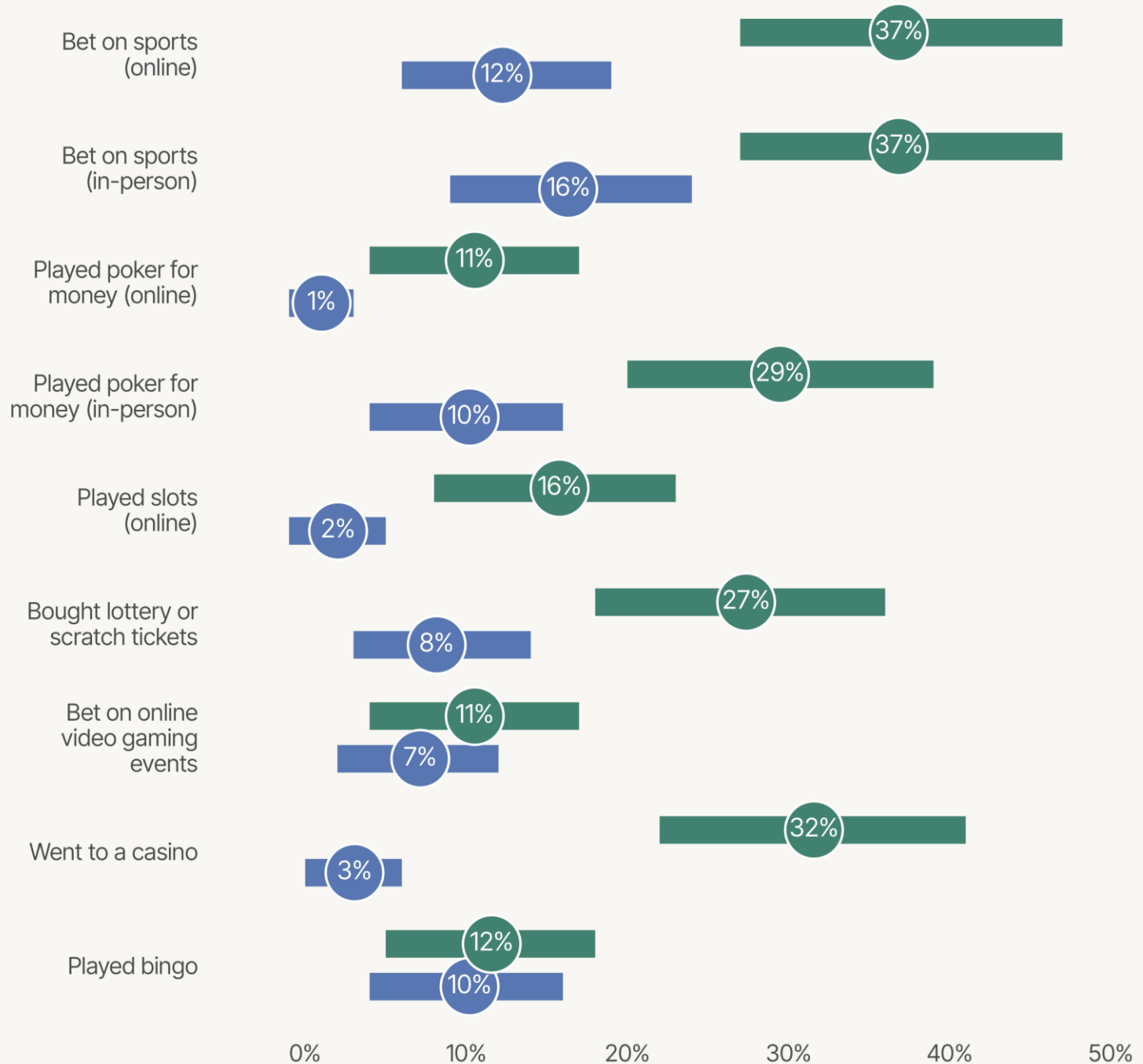
Nearly **3 in 4 young adults had gambled** in some form in their lifetime.



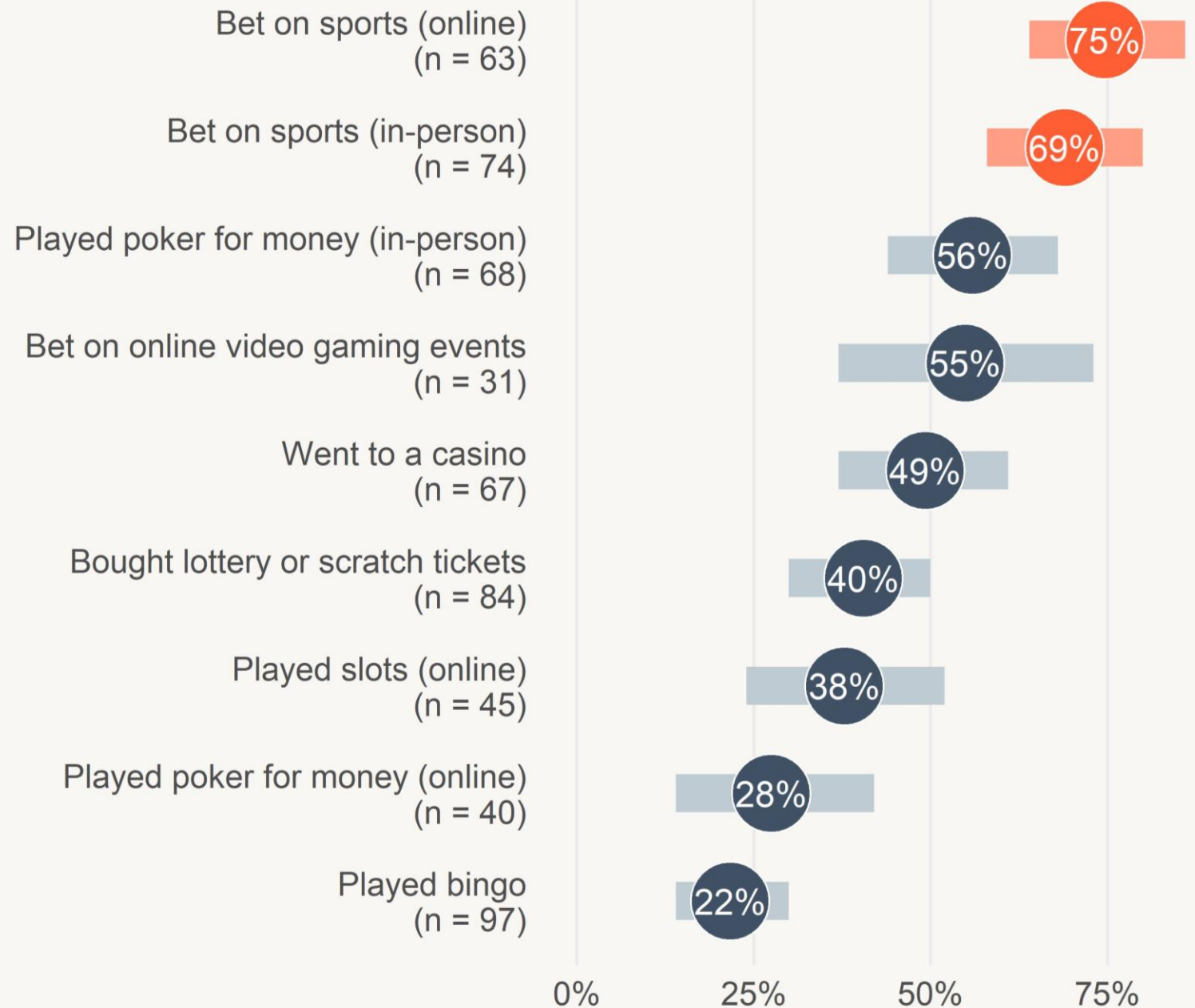
Over 1 in 4 young adults had placed a sports bet in-person in the past month



More than one in ten young adults who are under 21 had placed a bet within the past month. Those 21 or older - who have more opportunities to gamble - were more likely to have placed a bet recently.



Young adults
who have ever
bet on sports
were highly
likely to have
placed a bet in
the last 30
days.



Substance Use

“I see young people coming in for addiction services or recovery services, and they're still betting right there in the center.”
– Key Informant Interview Participant



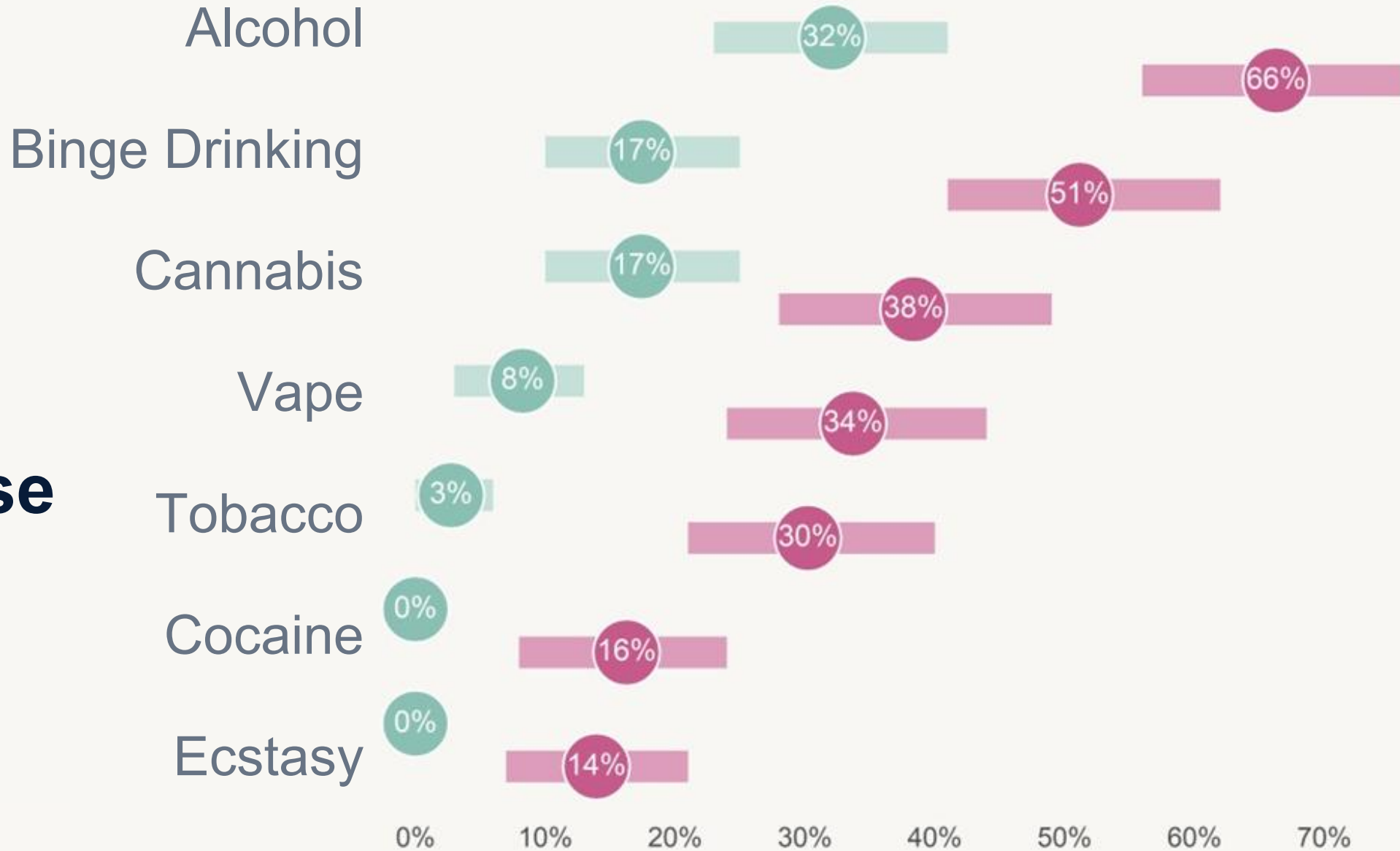
Up to

94%

of people who have a gambling problem will have at least one co-occurring mental health or substance use disorder in their lifetime.

Yakovenko, I., & Hodgins, D. C. (2017). A scoping review of co-morbidity in individuals with disordered gambling. *International Gambling Studies*, 18(1), 143–172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2017.1364400>

Substance use among recent gamblers was much higher than among those who didn't gamble



N = 109 participants who have not gambled recently; N = 86 participants who gambled in the past month

Problem Gambling Warning Signs

“I don't think people process any other risks [besides the money], like [that] there might be some long-term impact on like your adrenaline and your psychological basis.”
– Young Adult Interview Participant



Problem Gambling Disorder

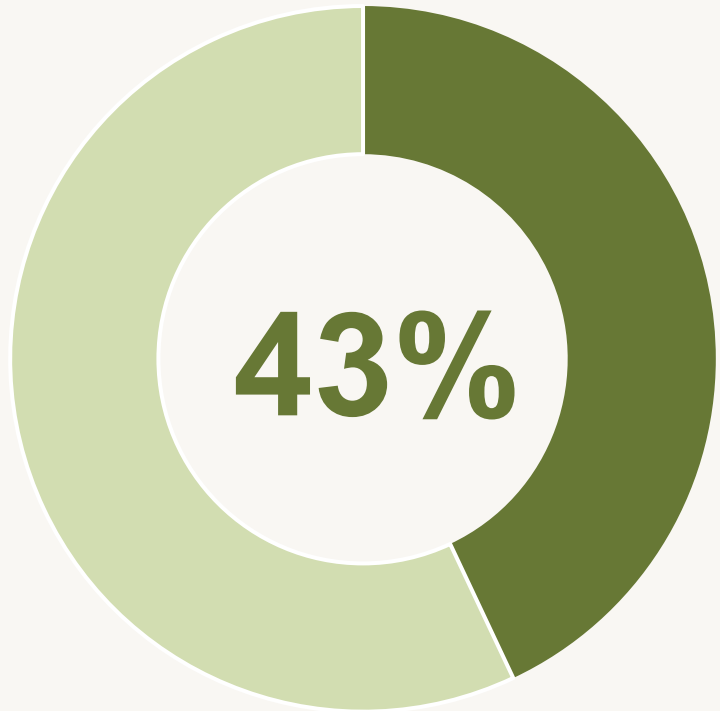
Definition: Sometimes referred to as “gambling addiction” or a “gambling disorder,” problem gambling is defined as gambling behavior that negatively impacts an individual and those around them.

Problem gambling disorder is characterized by experiencing 4+ of the following:

- Relying on others to help with money problems caused by gambling
- After losing money gambling, often returning to get even. ("chasing losses")
- Need to gamble with increasing amounts to achieve the desired excitement
- Frequent thoughts about gambling
- Often gambling when feeling distressed.
- Restlessness or irritability when trying to cut down or stop
- Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back on or stop gambling



What were some of the warning signs we saw among the young adults we surveyed?



**of recent gamblers said that
their gambling has negatively
affected their finances**

N = 86 respondents



23%

of recent gamblers said they have had to turn to friends, family, or lenders for help with a gambling-related money problem

20%

of recent gamblers said have taken money that didn't belong to them from friends, family, or acquaintances to pay for their gambling activities.

N = 86 respondents



Relying on others to help with money problems caused by gambling



“I have too much debt right now”

Recent gamblers

45%

Their Peers

23%

“If I borrow money, I have a responsibility to pay it back”

Recent gamblers

65%

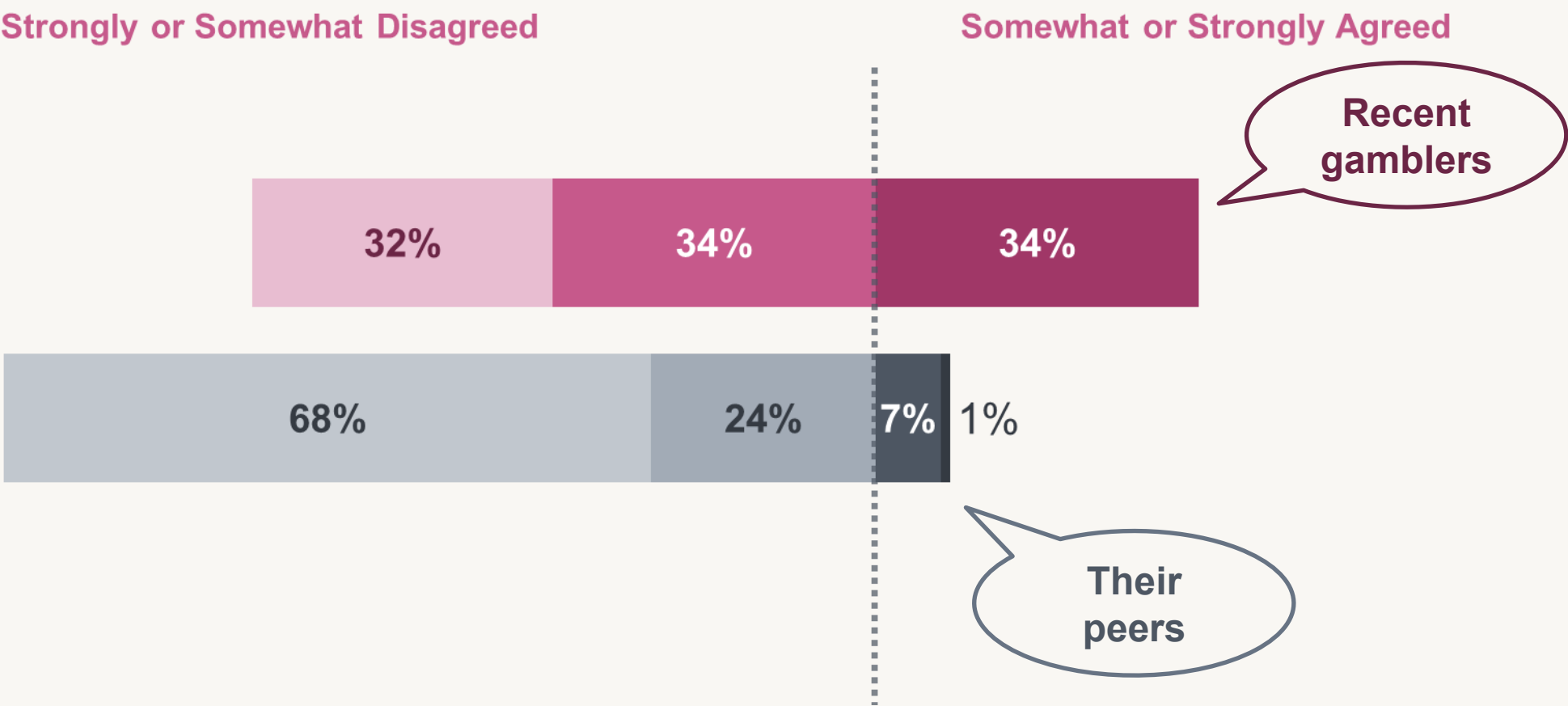
Their Peers

91%

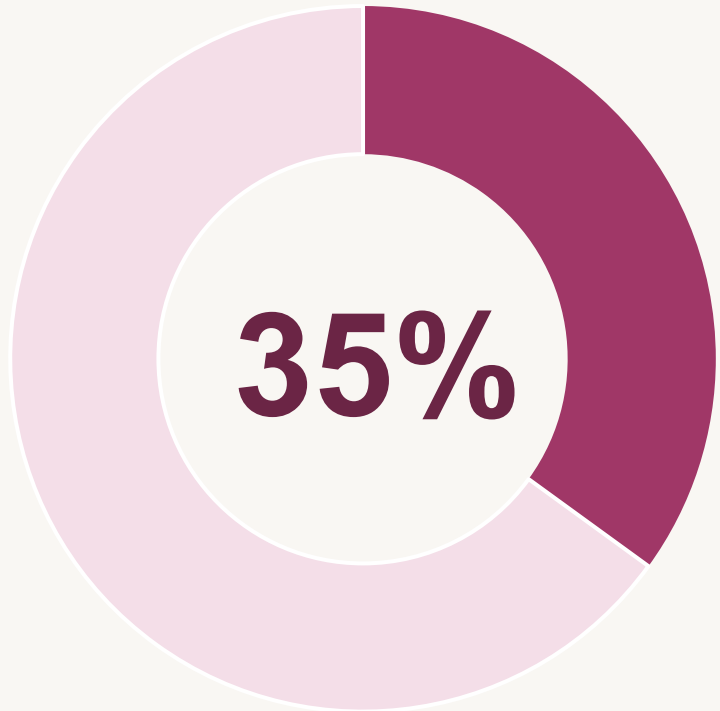
N = 86 participants who gambled in the past 30 days; N = 106 participants who haven't gambled recently or have never gambled



"Someone's changes of winning get better after they have lost"



N = 86 participants who gambled in the past 30 days; N = 106 participants who haven't gambled recently or have never gambled

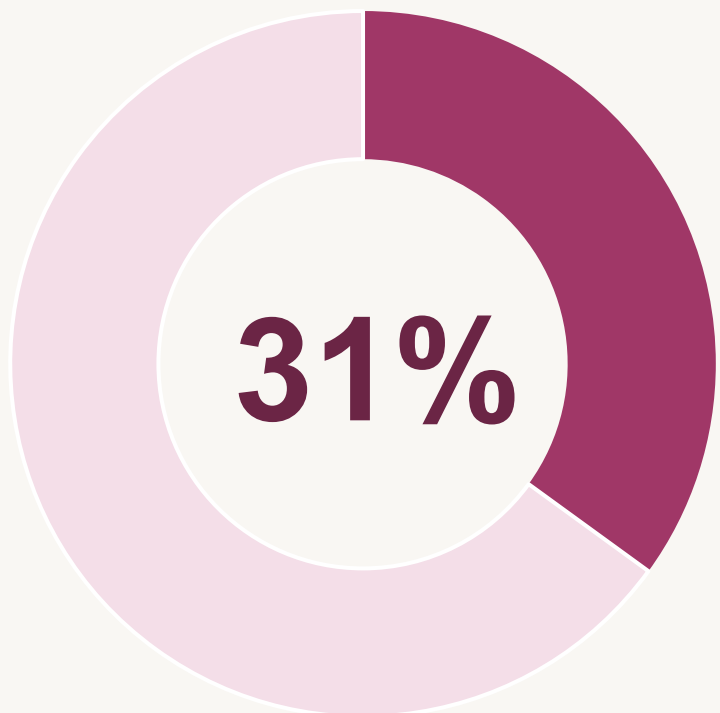


of recent gamblers said that there have been periods when, if they lost money gambling one day, they would often return another day to get even or “win back what they lost.”

N = 86 respondents



After losing money gambling, often returning to get even ("chasing losses")



of recent gamblers said that they have felt the need to gamble with increasing amounts of money to get the same feeling or excitement they got before

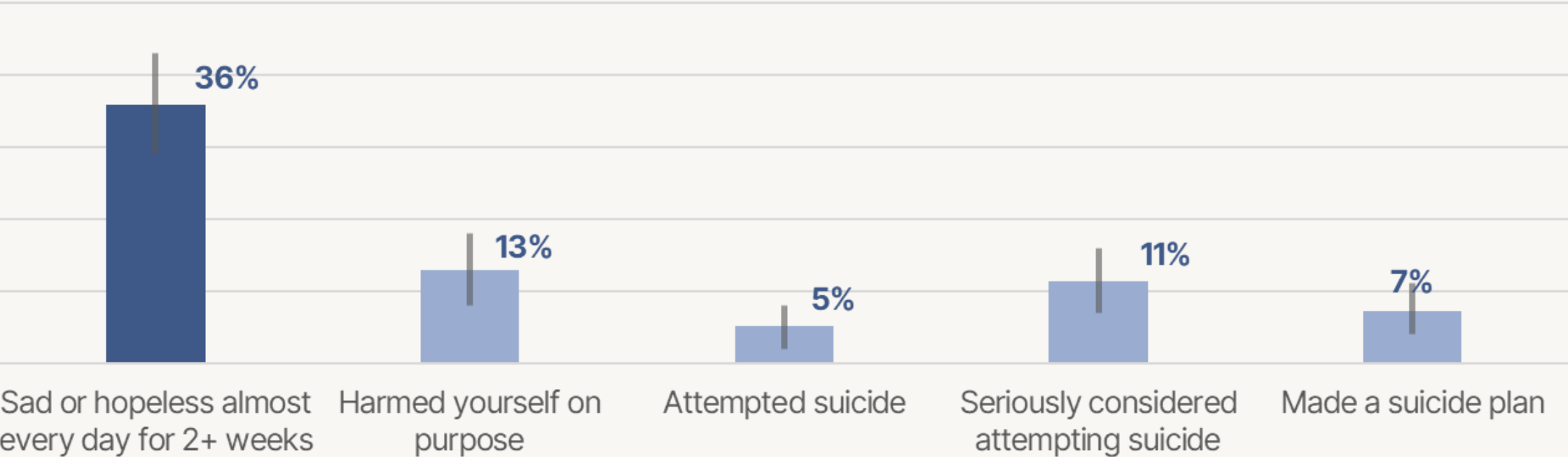
N = 86 respondents



Need to gamble with increasing amounts to achieve the desired excitement



Over a third of young adults surveyed **felt so sad or hopeless almost every day for two or more weeks in a row** in the past year that they stopped doing their usual activities



N = 195 respondents



22%

of recent gamblers said they gambled in the past month as a way to escape personal problems

17%

of recent gamblers spent a lot of time during the day thinking about gambling

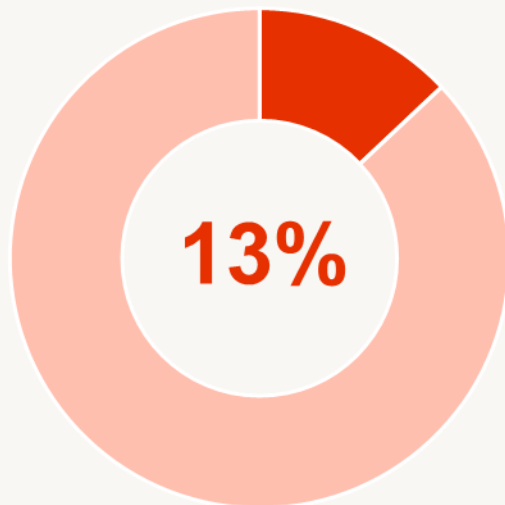


Frequent thoughts about gambling

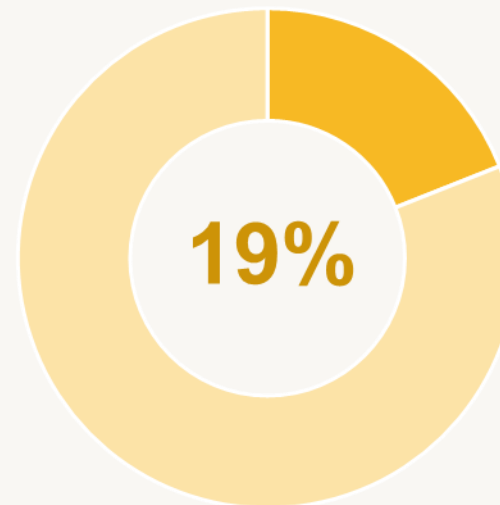


Often gambling when feeling distressed

N = 86 respondents



**of recent gamblers
surveyed felt restless or
irritable when trying to stop
gambling**



**of recent gamblers have
tried and failed to stop or
cut down on their gambling
three or more times in their
lifetime**



Restlessness or irritability when trying to cut down or stop



Repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back on or stop gambling

N = 86 respondents

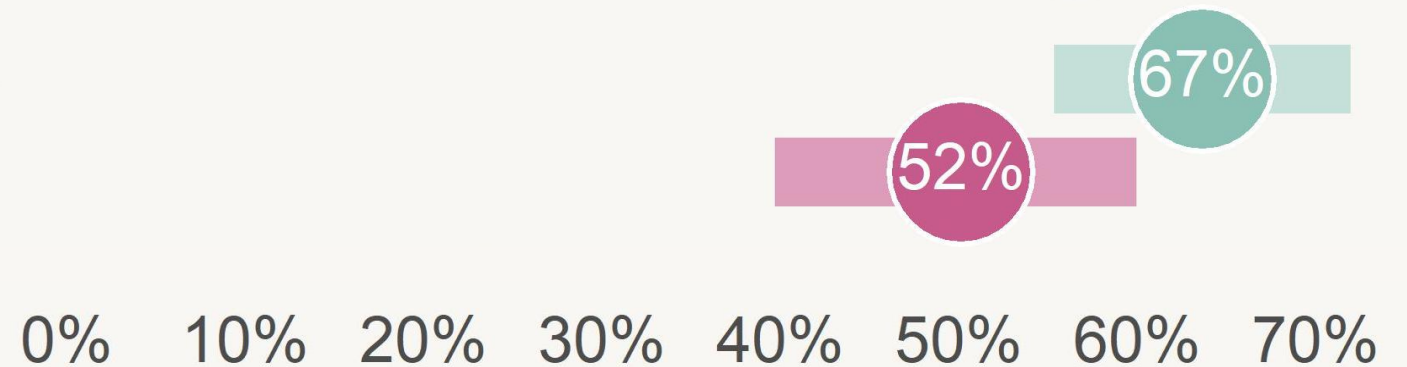
Financial Well-Being

“You have to be smart if you're going to risk something. It shouldn't be something that's actually impactful to you. If you're risking a significant portion [of your income] and it could impact your daily life? I wouldn't consider that responsible.”

– Young Adult Interview Participant

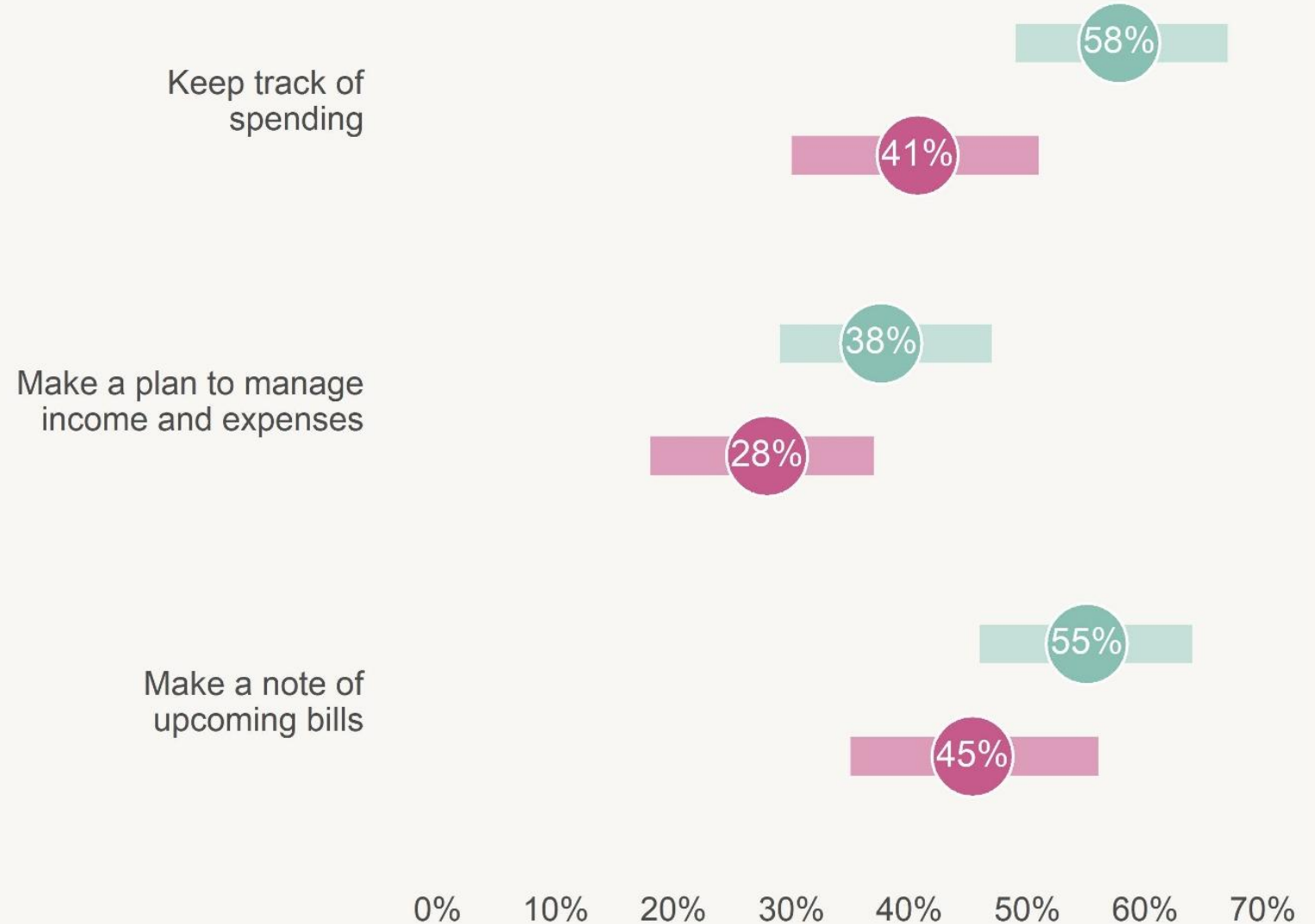
Young adults who have gambled in the past 30 days were also less likely to keep a close watch on personal affairs compared to their peers

I keep a close personal watch on my financial affairs



N = 86 participants who gambled in the past 30 days; N = 106 participants who haven't gambled recently or have never gambled

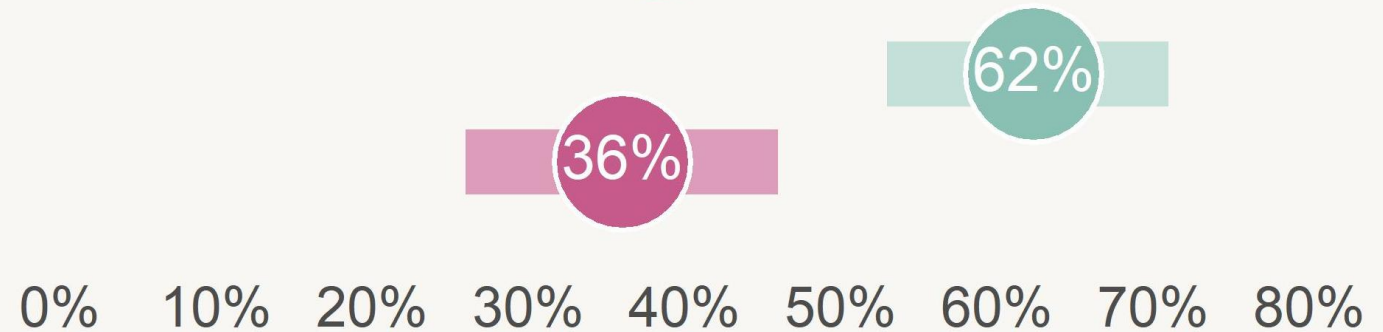
Recent gamblers were less likely to engage in regular budgeting activities compared to their peers



N = 86 participants who gambled in the past 30 days; N = 106 participants who haven't gambled recently or have never gambled

Young adults who have gambled in the past 30 days were also less likely to say they've set long-term financial goals and strive to achieve them compared to those who didn't gamble.

I set long-term financial goals and strive to achieve them

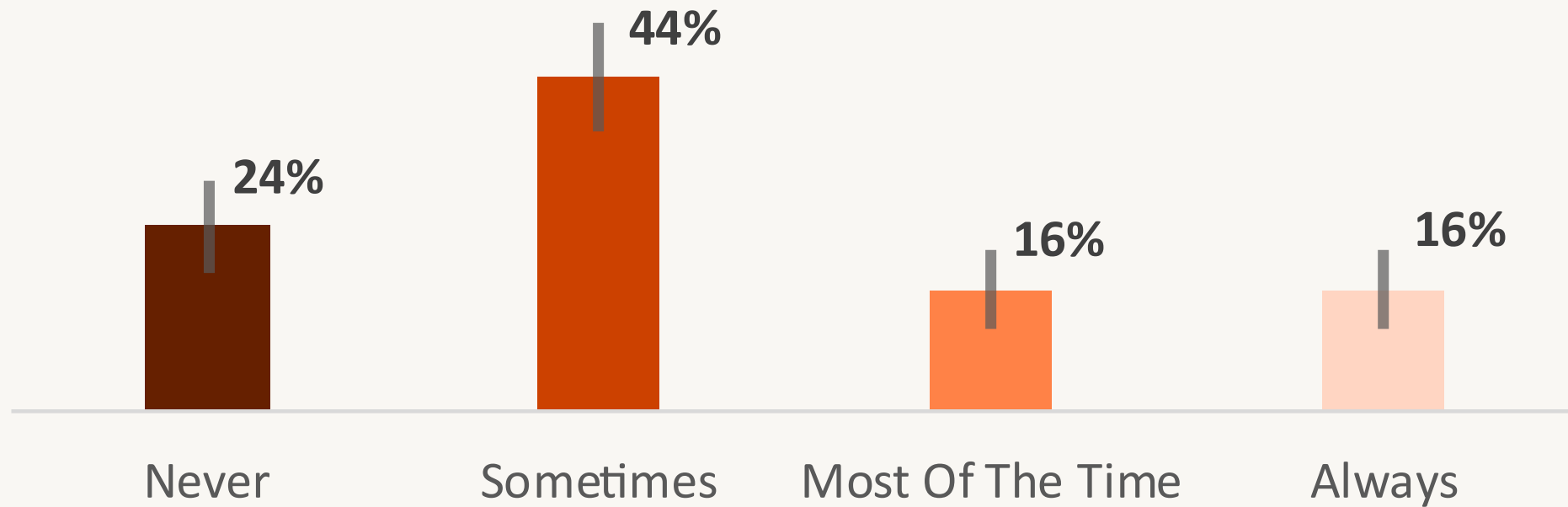


N = 86 participants who gambled in the past 30 days; N = 106 participants who haven't gambled recently or have never gambled

Access to Supports

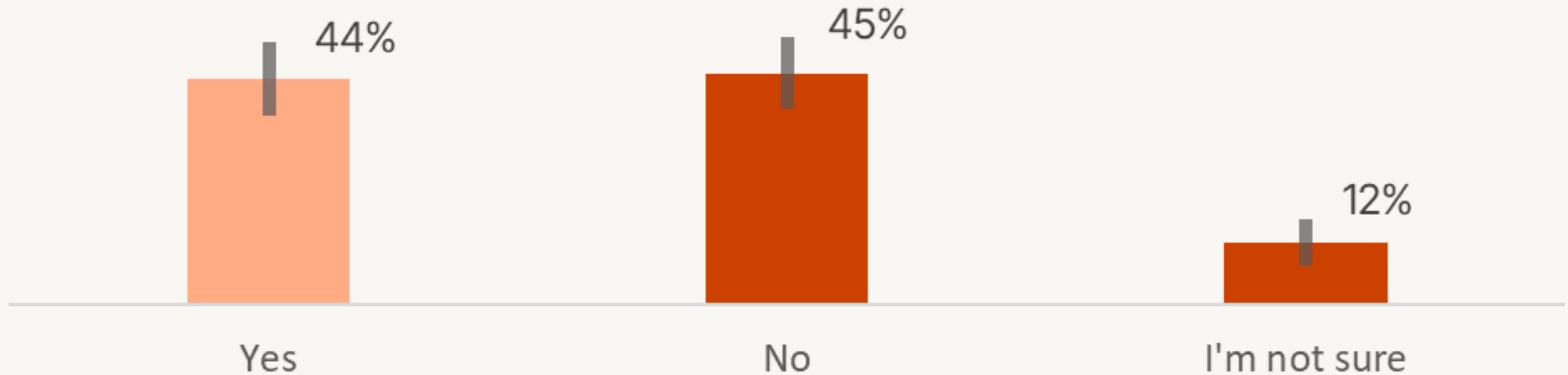
“I think a counselor – if they made it clear that gambling was a problem and that they would be willing to help you – I think that would go a long way. Both making sure people are aware of the issue, as well as offering them support [are important].”
– Young Adult Interview Participant

Nearly one in four young adults surveyed said they never get the help they need when they feel sad, empty, hopeless, angry, or anxious



N = 195 respondents

The majority of young adults surveyed **hadn't or were unsure about whether they had heard about the Massachusetts Problem Gambling Helpline.**



N = 195 respondents

Key Groups

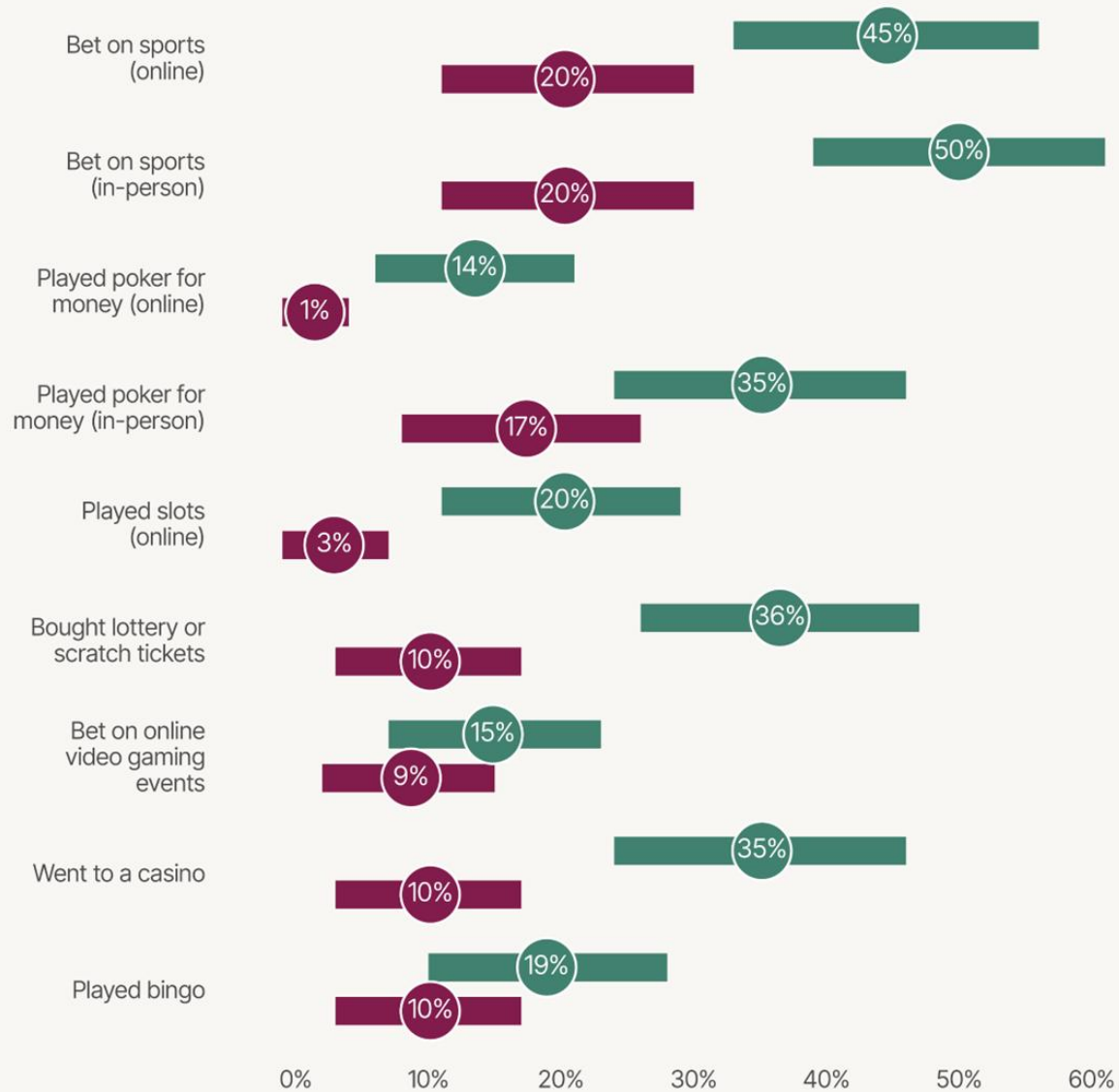
When compared to their peers, LGBTQ+ and BIPOC young adults reported...

- lower lifetime gambling rates, but those who had gambled were more likely to have gambled recently.
- Higher rates of warning signs
- Lower rates of gambling literacy
- Lower rates of honesty with friends & family about gambling behaviors

Men reported higher lifetime and recent gambling as well as lower gambling literacy

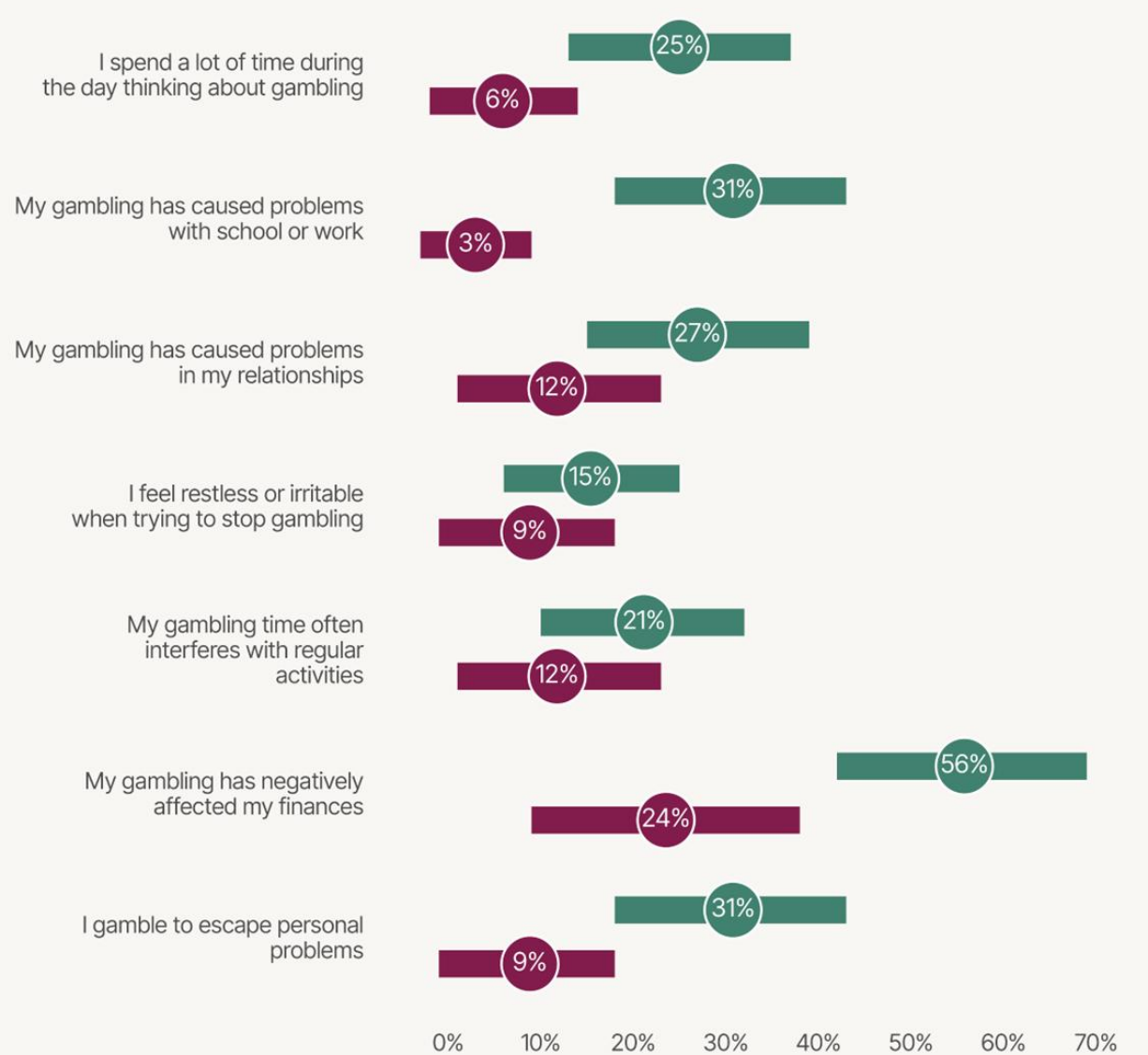
Young adults who are not students stood out as a key priority group reporting significantly higher lifetime and past 30-day gambling, lower literacy, and higher rates of warning signs.

Recent (past 30 days) gambling: Student vs Non-student



Sample sizes: Student = 69; Non-student = 74

Warning signs: Student vs Non-student



Sample sizes: Student = 34; Non-student = 52

Next Steps

Strategic Planning

What types of efforts would you like to see the Department of Health and/or the Office of Prevention & Outreach prioritize?

Report Release

Please provide your email address if you would like to receive a copy of the slides or the report once it is released!



Thank you!

Any questions?

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