



Measuring responsible gambling in Minnesota

Benchmarking with the
Positive Play Scale



Report prepared by:

Drs Richard Wood, Michael Wohl and Nassim Tabri





Introduction

The Positive Play Scale (PPS; Wood, Wohl, Tabri & Philander, 2017) was designed to optimize responsible gambling (RG) strategy by measuring player's positive gambling-related beliefs and behaviors.

When a player-based sample is assessed using the PPS, effective elements of an RG strategy as well as potential gaps can be identified.

The Properties of the PPS

THE PPS IS A 14-ITEM SCALE THAT ASSESSES POSITIVE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS ABOUT GAMBLING.

There are two beliefs subscales:



The extent to which a player believes they should take ownership of their gambling behavior



The extent to which a player has an accurate understanding about the nature of gambling

Items that compose the PPS belief subscales

Personal Responsibility

I should be aware of how much MONEY I spend when I gamble

I should be able to walk away from gambling at any time

I should only gamble when I have enough money to cover all my bills first

It's my responsibility to spend only money that I can afford to lose

Gambling Literacy

Gambling is not a good way to make money

My chances of winning get better after I have lost (reverse coded)

If I gamble more often, it will help me to win more than I lose (reverse coded)

Beliefs:
I believe that.....

The Properties of the PPS

THE PPS IS A 14-ITEM SCALE THAT ASSESSES POSITIVE BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS ABOUT GAMBLING.

There are two behavior subscales:

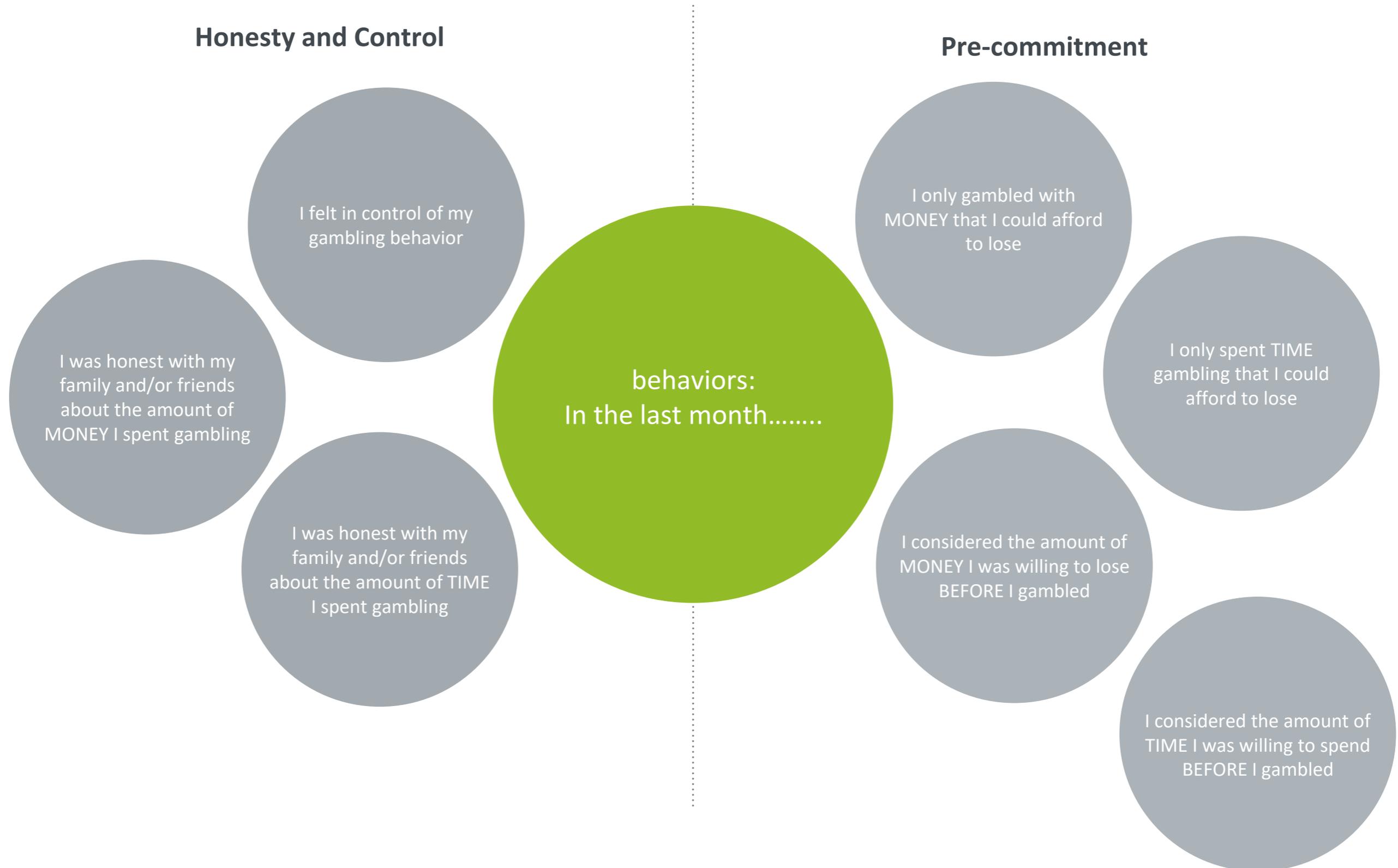


The extent to which players are honest with others about their gambling behavior and feel in control of their behavior

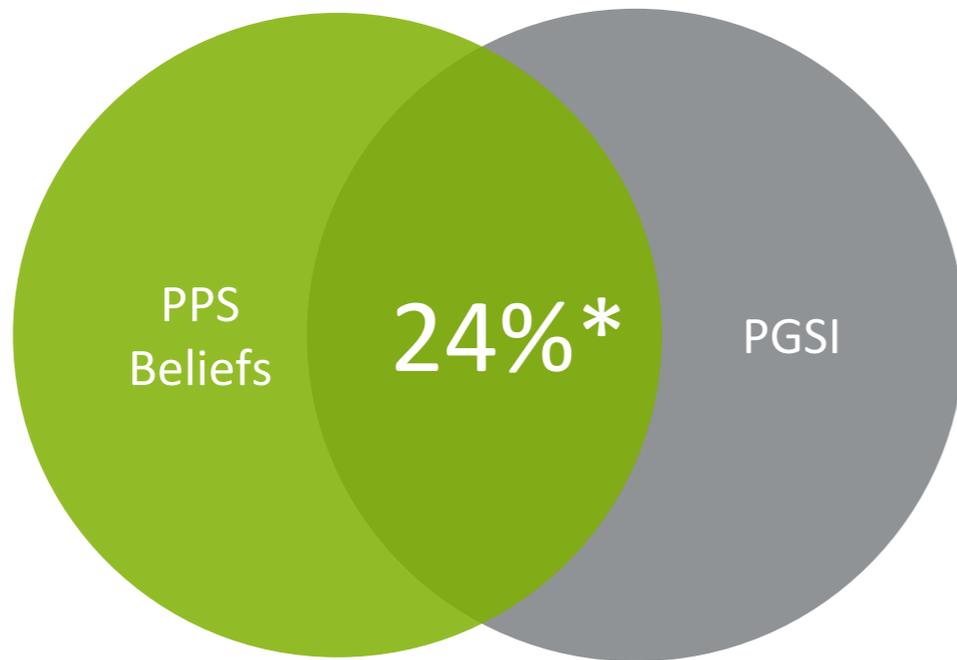


The extent to which a player considers how much money and time they should spend gambling

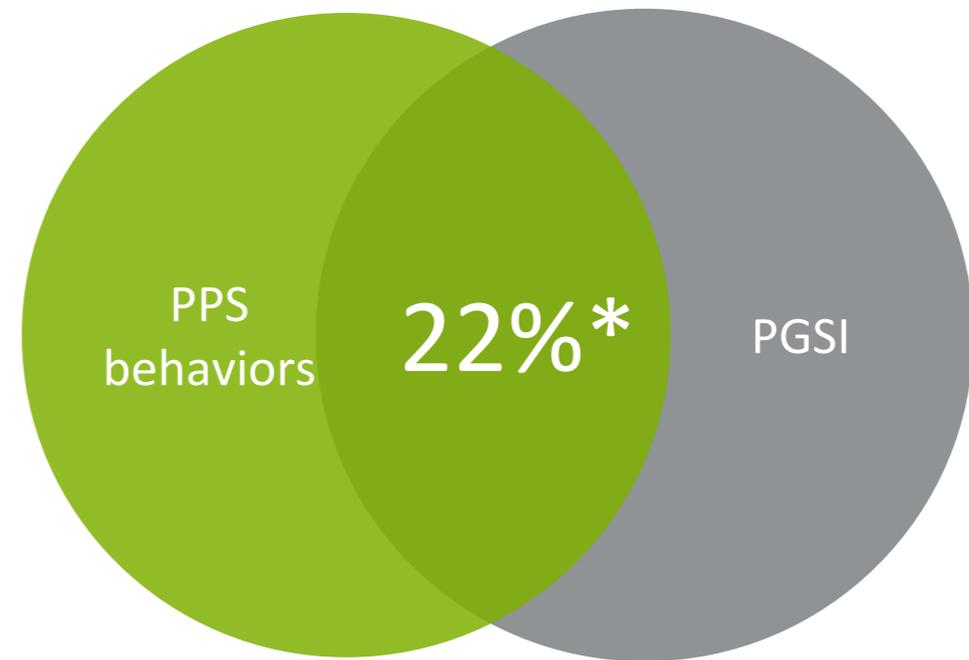
Items that compose the PPS behavior subscales



The PPS is not a measure of disordered gambling



A low PPS score is not an indicator of disordered gambling. However, low positive beliefs and behaviors may contribute to disordered play (over time).



PPS beliefs and behaviors are typically moderately correlated with disordered gambling severity (as measured with the PGSI).

PGSI = Problem Gambling Severity Index

*Figures based on Canadian National Validation study

Players can be placed into positive play categories

High

Clearly a positive player

Medium

A positive player with room for improvement

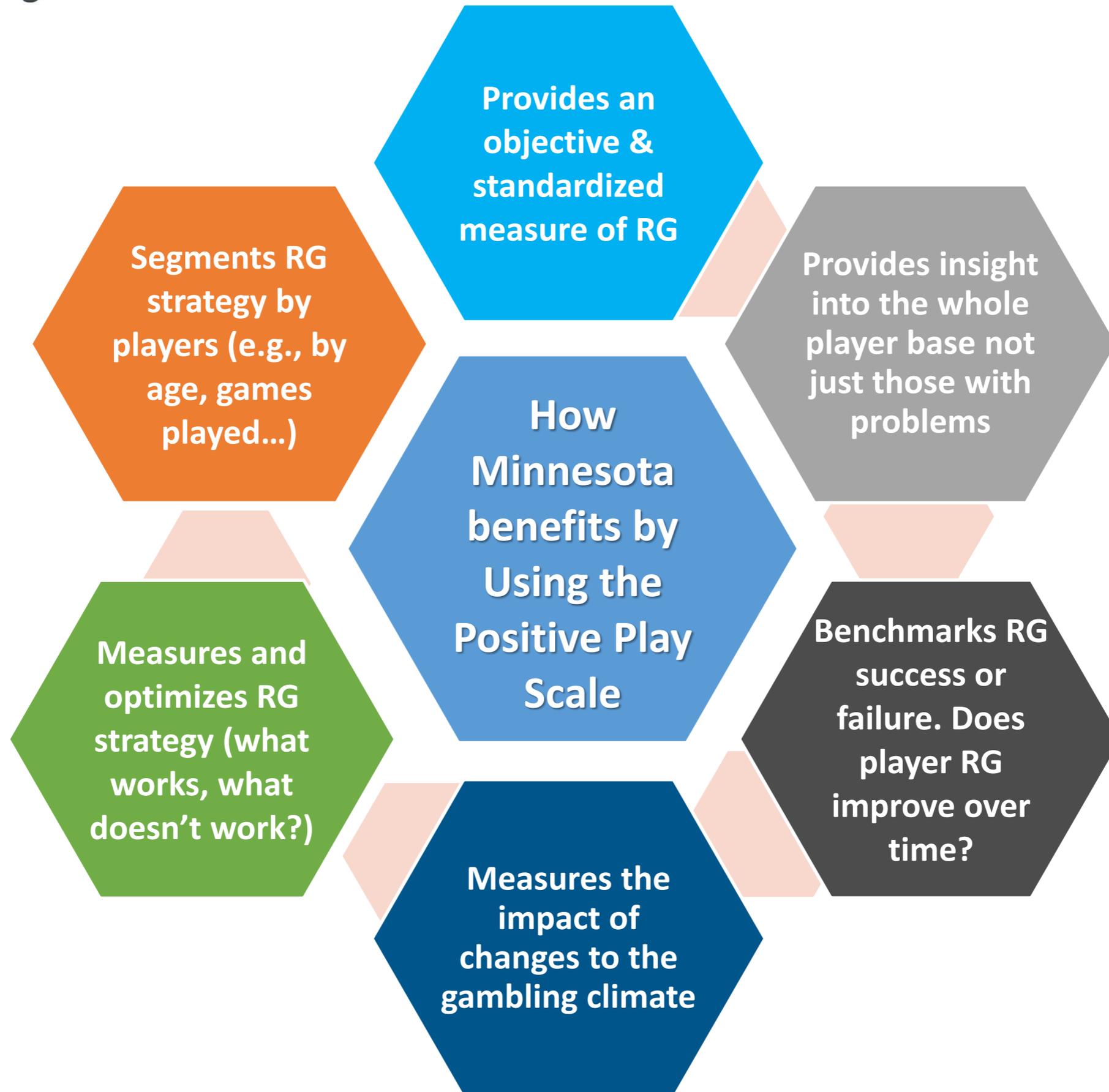
Low

Not a positive player overall, but may have some positive play tendencies and/or beliefs

Initial use of PPS provides benchmark data. When the PPS is administered again the benchmark data can be used for comparison to help identify any changes in players' RG related beliefs and behaviors.

Benefits of using the PPS

- ✓ The PPS offers the opportunity to more effectively examine the beliefs and behaviors of the full spectrum of players. Thus, the PPS can be contrasted against existing measures that can only assess symptoms of disordered gambling.
 - For example, measures like the PGSI (i.e., problem gambling screens) are constructed to identify non-typical (disordered) players, who only comprise a small proportion of players.
 - In contrast, the PPS was designed to assess the beliefs and behaviors of players who gamble without problems (i.e., the majority of players).
 - The PPS can be used to assess the utility of new RG initiatives (e.g., an education campaign aimed at dispelling gambling fallacies)



01.

Positive Play in Minnesota

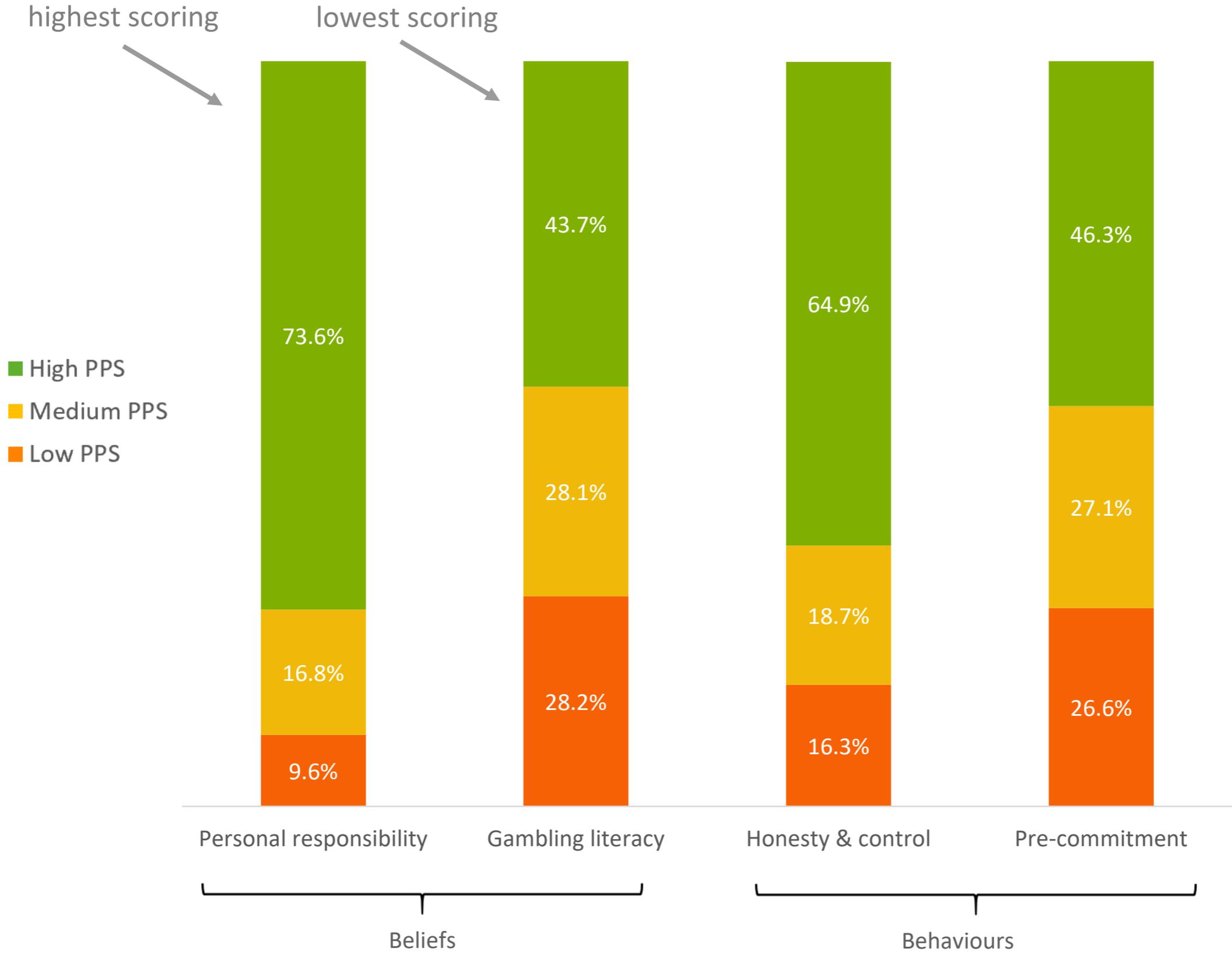




Measuring responsible gambling in Minnesota

- ✓ In September 2019, a convenience sample of 1,517 Minnesota players were recruited by a third-party survey company using online panels.
- ✓ The survey was conducted online and included both the PPS, demographic questions, and other gambling related questions.
- ✓ 100% of the sample gambled on at least one game in the last month.
- ✓ The purpose of the study was to identify benchmark PPS scores (i.e., how responsible are Minnesota players?).

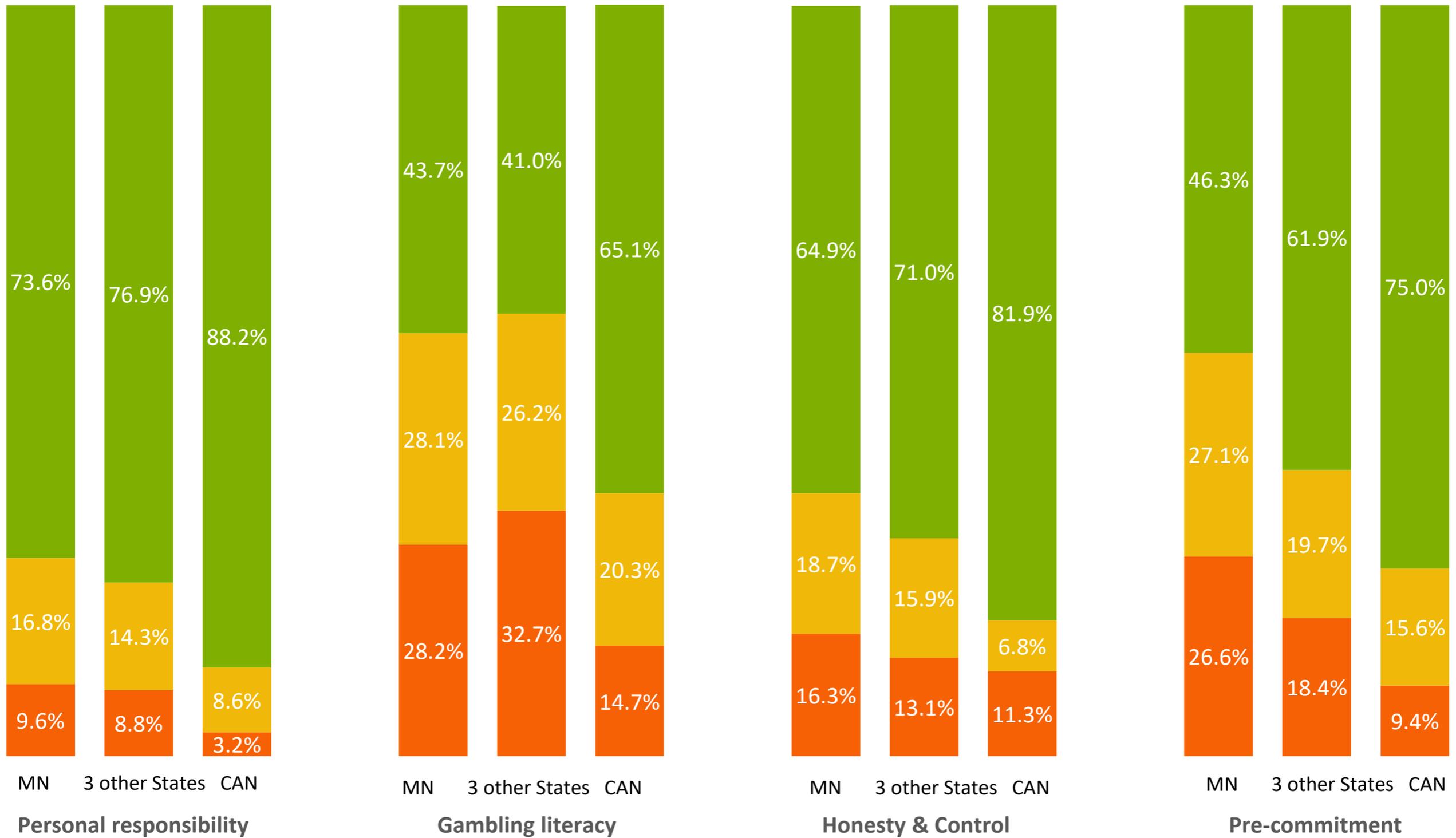
PPS scores: all players



These results suggest that ways to improve players' *gambling literacy* and *pre-commitment* should be considered for Minnesota's RG strategy

PPS scores: Comparison of players in Minnesota with players in three other US states and Canada

- High PPS
- Medium PPS
- Low PPS



Positive play in Minnesota was more in line with what we have observed in other US states than in Canada

Positive play: all players

Key findings:

Most players scored high on *personal responsibility* (in fact, it was the highest scoring sub-scale) as well as *honesty and control*. However, most players scored medium or low on *gambling literacy* and *pre-commitment*

Positive play in Minnesota closely approximated those observed in the three other US States we have previously examined. That is, *pre-commitment* was lower in Minnesota than the aforementioned (3 other) US States. Positive play (all 4 dimensions) in Minnesota was lower than what we observed in a national survey of Canadian players (a survey that assessed positive play in each Canadian province).



Implications:

To increase *Gambling literacy* it may behoove North Star to focus attention on educating players about the nature of gambling. In particular, it may be helpful to address erroneous perceptions players may have about their chances of winning. Also, players should be encouraged to *pre-commit* by considering what they spend (time & money) before they begin gambling.

Canada is a world-leader in RG. One reason is that gambling in each province is managed by a provincial gaming operator with an RG mandate. Best practice in RG is regularly shared between provincial operators. For example, via the Canadian Responsible Gaming Association. An examination of PPS scores in Canada and USA suggests there may be a link between investment in RG (and coordination of RG messages) and positive play.

- High PPS
- Medium PPS
- Low PPS

PPS scores: by gender



(Males = 751, Females = 763, Other = 3)

Positive play by gender



Key findings:

Positive play beliefs and behaviors were similar among male and female players.

Implications:

Based on the findings of the current research, we do not suggest that North Star invest in an RG strategy that segments by gender, at least in reference to the factors assessed by the Positive Play Scale.

Positive play: by age



Key findings:

Positive play beliefs and behaviors increase systematically with age. Moreover, this trend was especially pronounced in relation to *gambling literacy* and *pre-commitment*.

Implications:

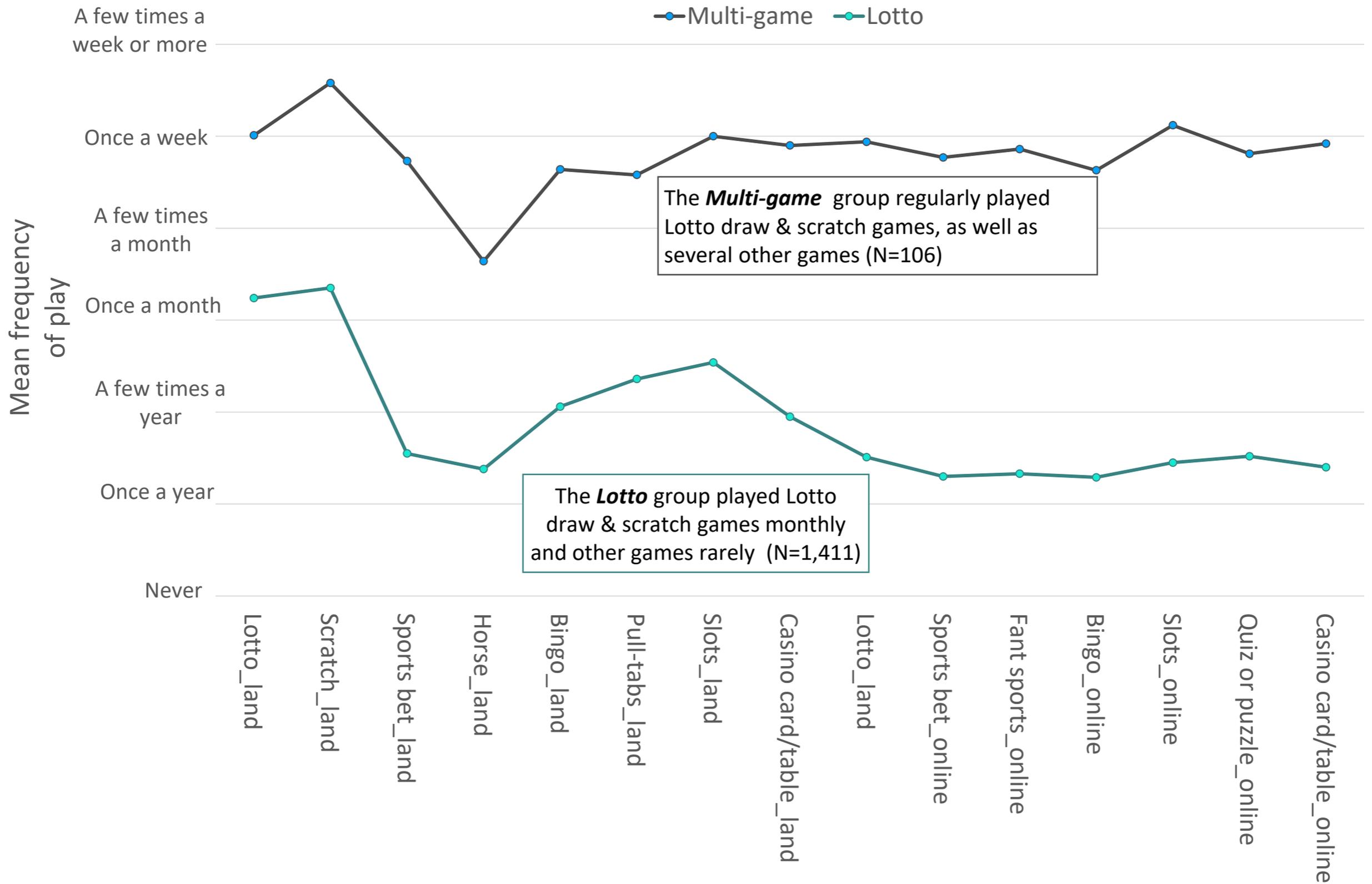
It is unknown why positive play increases systematically with age. One possibility is that there is a cumulative effect of exposure to RG messaging. Older people have had more time to be exposed to RG messages and thus are more influenced by them. Another possibility is that current RG messages are more tailored for older players. Regardless of the reason, the results of the current study suggest that North Star should consider ways to improve RG among younger players. One strategy may be to make RG messages more attractive or palatable to younger players, particularly in relation to improving their *gambling literacy* and *pre-commitment*.

02.

PPS scores by games played

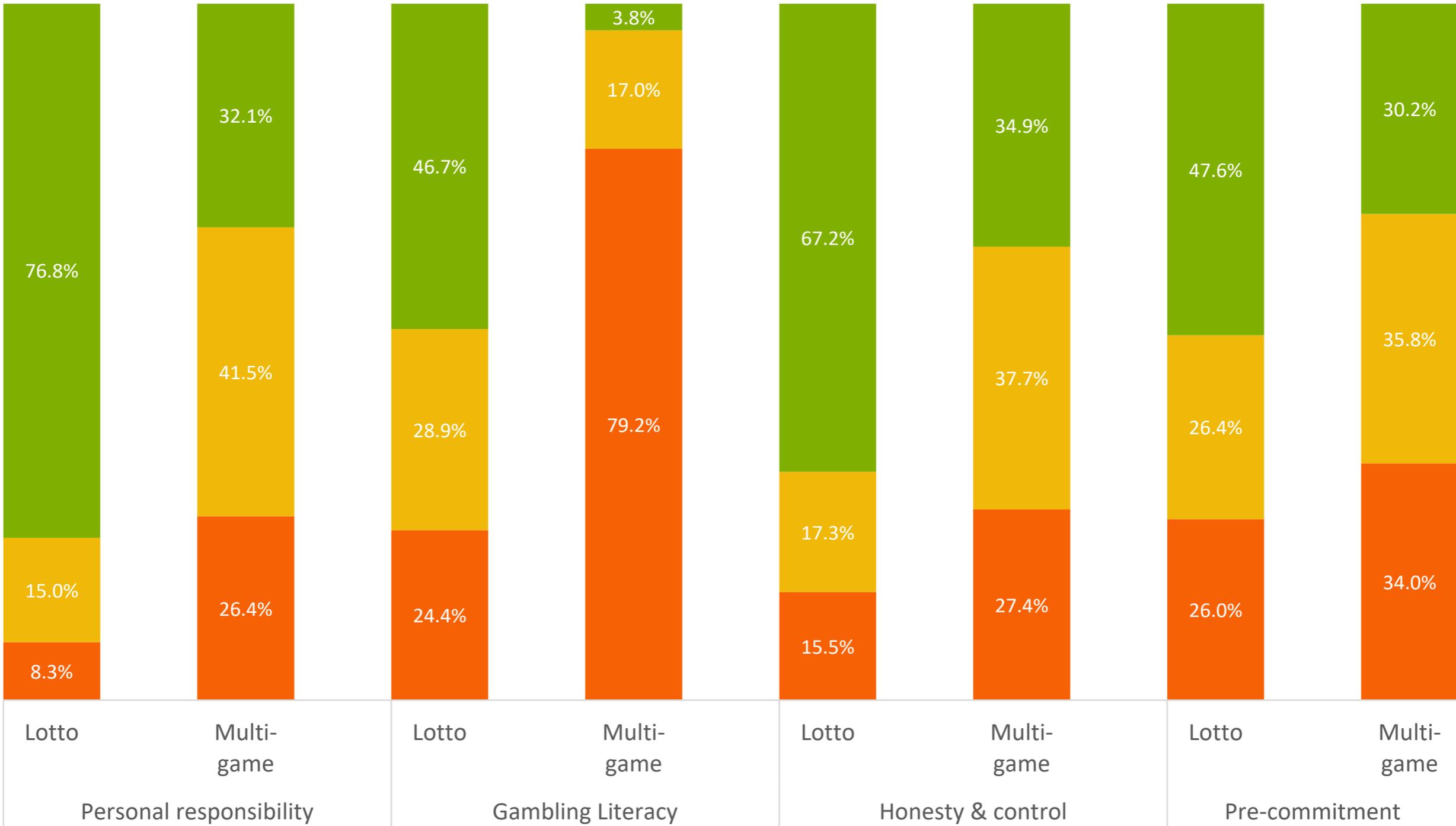


Frequency of play on different games was found to cluster into two distinct clusters of players: *Lotto* and *Multi-game* players



PPS scores by game cluster (lotto vs. multi-game players)

- High PPS
- Medium PPS
- Low PPS



Those who primarily played lotto games (**Lotto** group) had higher PPS scores (i.e., were more responsible players) on every sub-scale compared to those who played lotto games *and* a range of other games more frequently (**Multi-game** group).



PPS and game cluster (lotto vs. *multi-game* players)

Key findings:

Across all the PPS dimensions, those who played only (or predominantly) lotto games at moderate frequency had the highest overall PPS scores.

Playing a wider range of games more frequently was linked to much lower PPS scores, particularly in relation to *gambling literacy*.

Implications:

Exposure to a range of games and higher frequency of play is linked to lower positive play. However, it is difficult to determine whether exposure leads to decrements in positive play or whether those who do not hold positive play beliefs or engage in positive play behaviors are more apt to play multiple games at higher frequency.

Given that PPS scores increase with age, it appears that over time exposure to gambling may eventually lead to more responsible players, possibly through a process of adaptation (LaPlante & Shaffer, 2007). This speaks to the importance of player education, particularly as it relates to *gambling literacy*.

03

PPS and player satisfaction

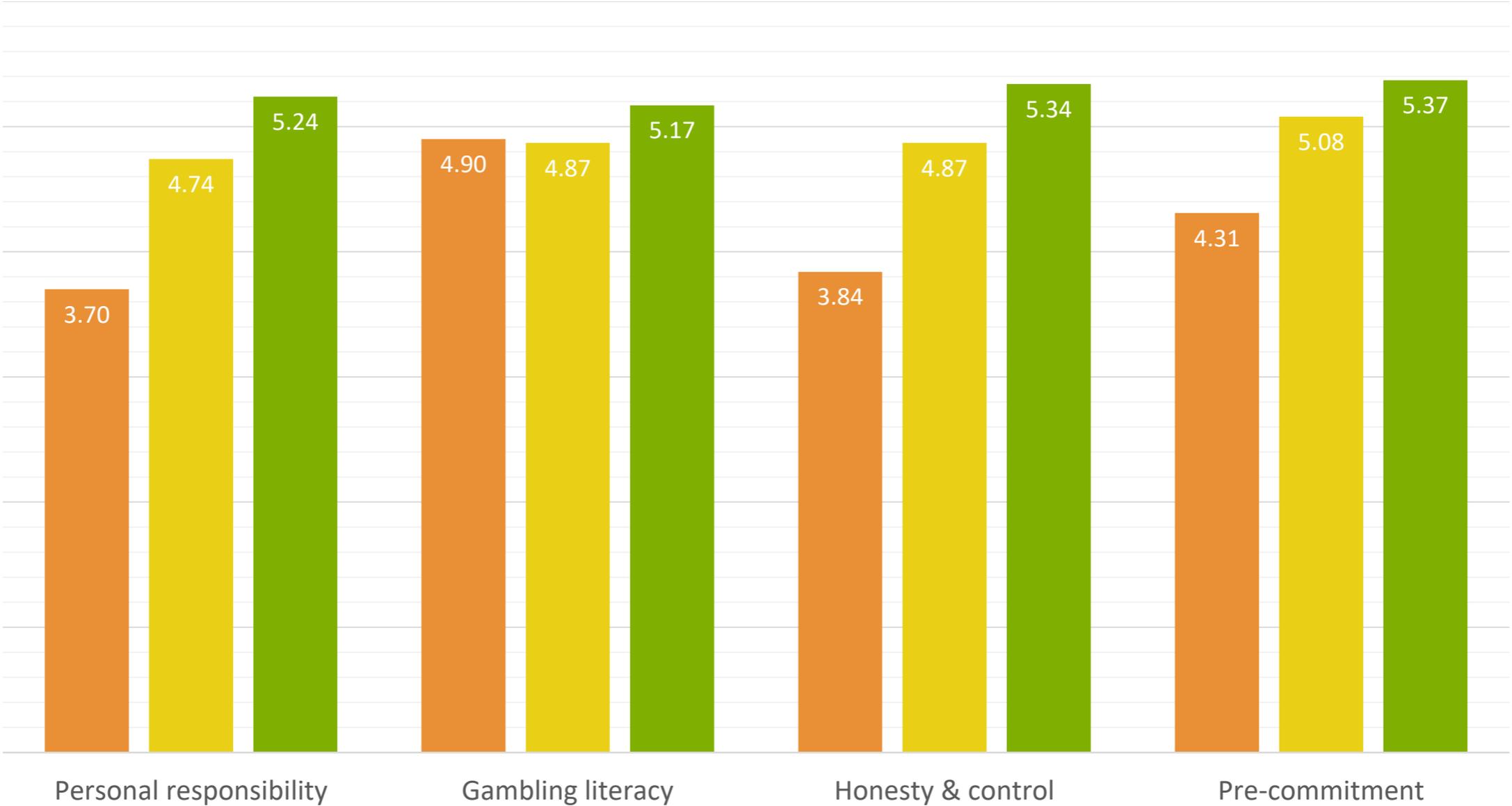


Gambling satisfaction mean scores (out of 7) by PPS category scores

- Low
- Medium
- High

most
satisfied

least
satisfied



Player satisfaction (past year) increased alongside positive play beliefs and behaviors

Positive play and satisfaction with gambling

Key findings:

Players were more satisfied with their gambling experience when they accepted personal responsibility for their gambling, were honest and in control about their gambling, and when they set a limit on the amount of money and time they spend gambling (i.e., *pre-commitment*).

Interestingly, player satisfaction was not associated with the extent to which they were literate about gambling.

Implications:

Should player satisfaction be important to North Star, it may be possible to increase satisfaction via RG efforts that increase *personal responsibility, honesty and control*, as well as *pre-commitment*. That *pre-commitment* and satisfaction are linked makes intuitive sense. Players who pre-determine how much they can afford to lose and then adhere to that limit will be more satisfied than those who spend more than they can afford to lose.

That *gambling literacy* was unassociated with satisfaction was unexpected and deserving of additional empirical attention.

Summary of key findings

01

Most Minnesota players were in the high positive play category, demonstrating that they engage in responsible gambling behaviors and have a good understanding about how to play responsibly. The most positive players expressed the most satisfaction with their past year gambling.

02

Consider how RG strategy could target younger players . In particular, focus on increasing *gambling literacy* and *pre-commitment* through increased RG engagement and education initiatives with younger players (see slides 4 & 6).

03

Results suggest that **segmentation is critical** to understanding the RG needs of different players. To most effectively tailor RG, it is necessary to identify the specific approach/es that works best for each segment. By using the behavioral insights literature and testing different approaches, a more impactful and cost effective RG strategy can be developed.

04

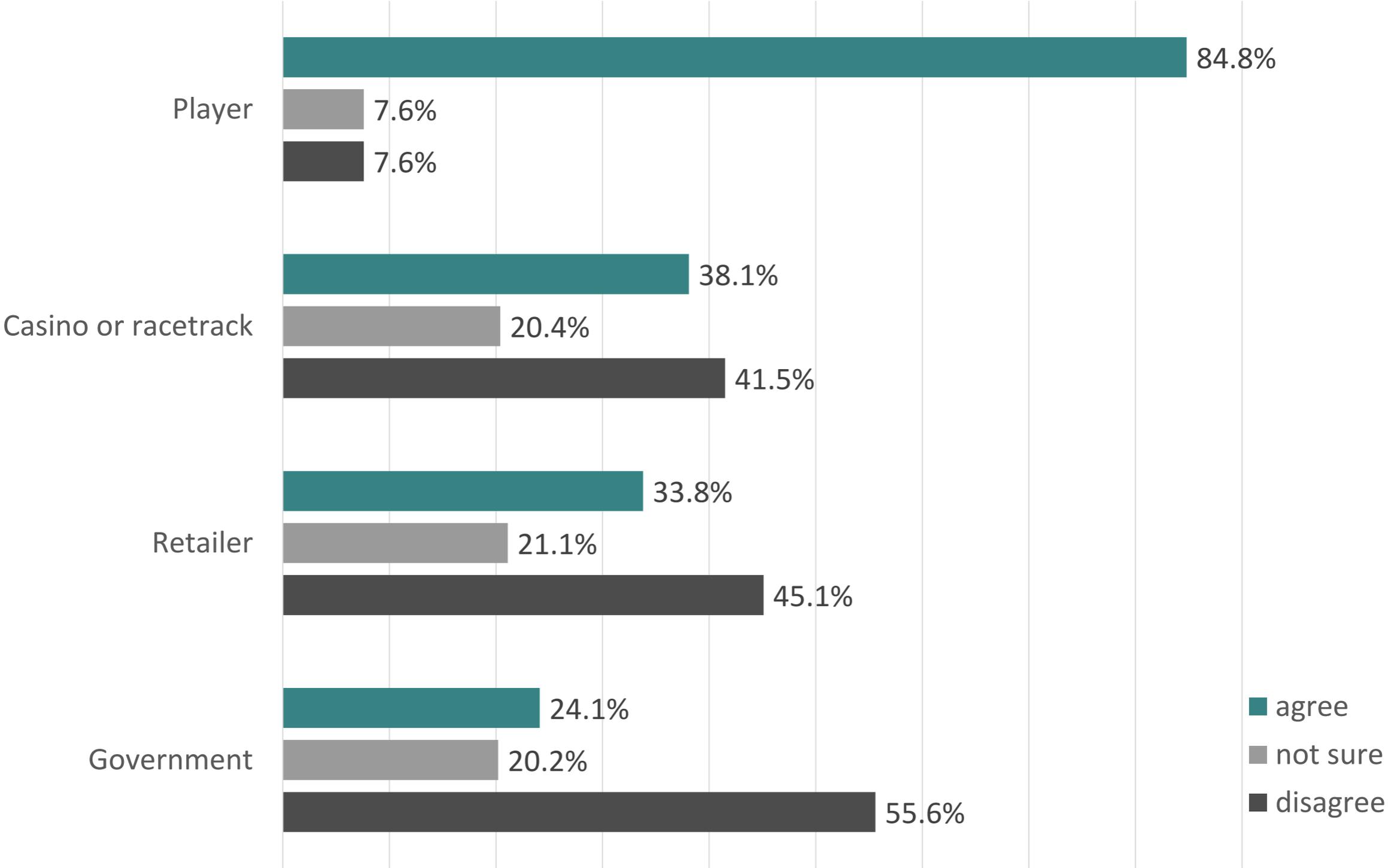
Consider administering the PPS to the same sample of players again in the near future (e.g., one year from initial study) to assess possible changes over time. The PPS can be used as a way to more objectively measure the success of specific (new) RG initiatives, new games and marketing and communication strategies (e.g., before and after the launch of a new initiative).

04.

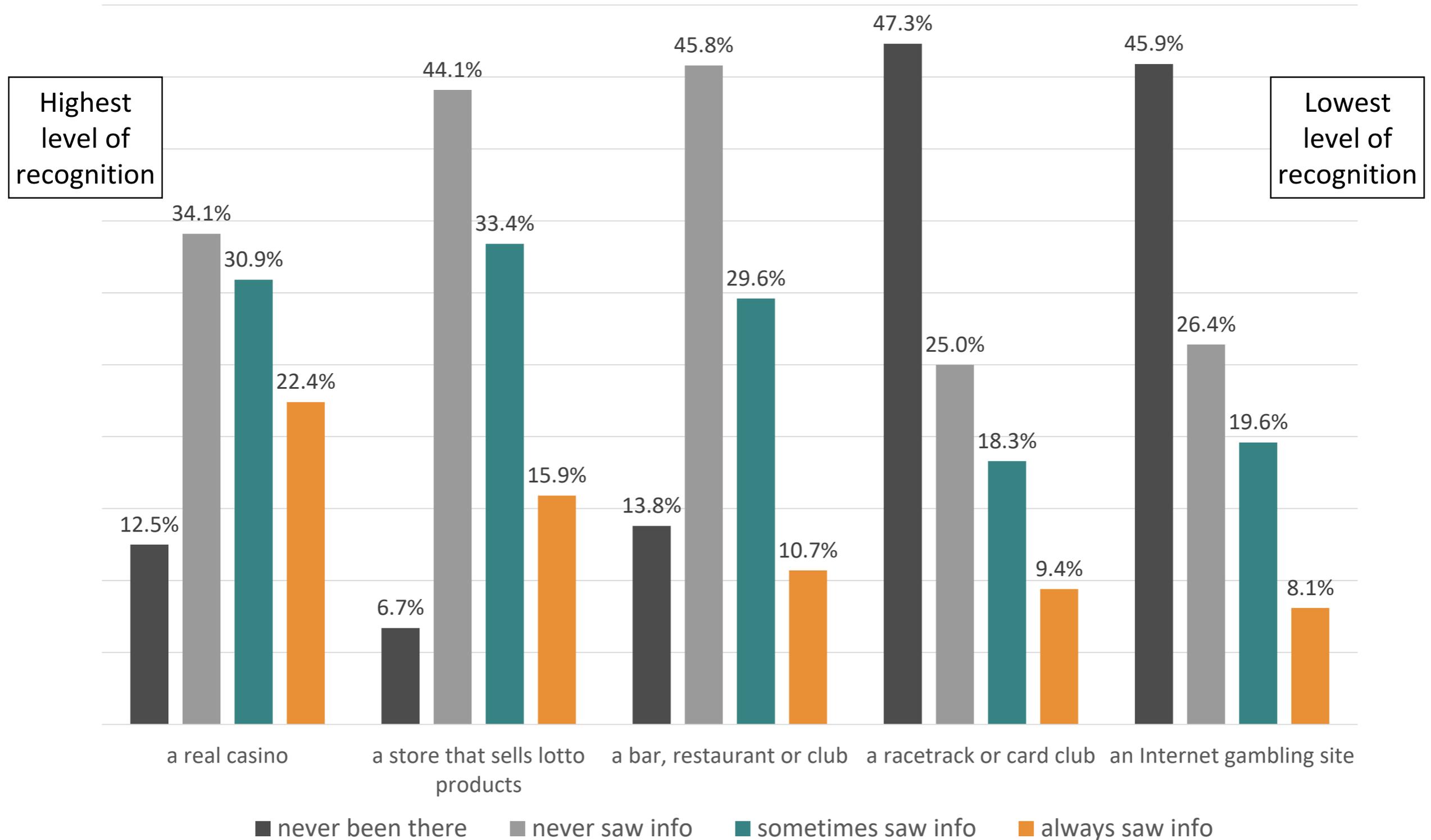
Player data that are unrelated to the PPS



Who has responsibility that the player only gambles what they can afford?



Have you seen information about where to get help for a gambling problem at the following locations?

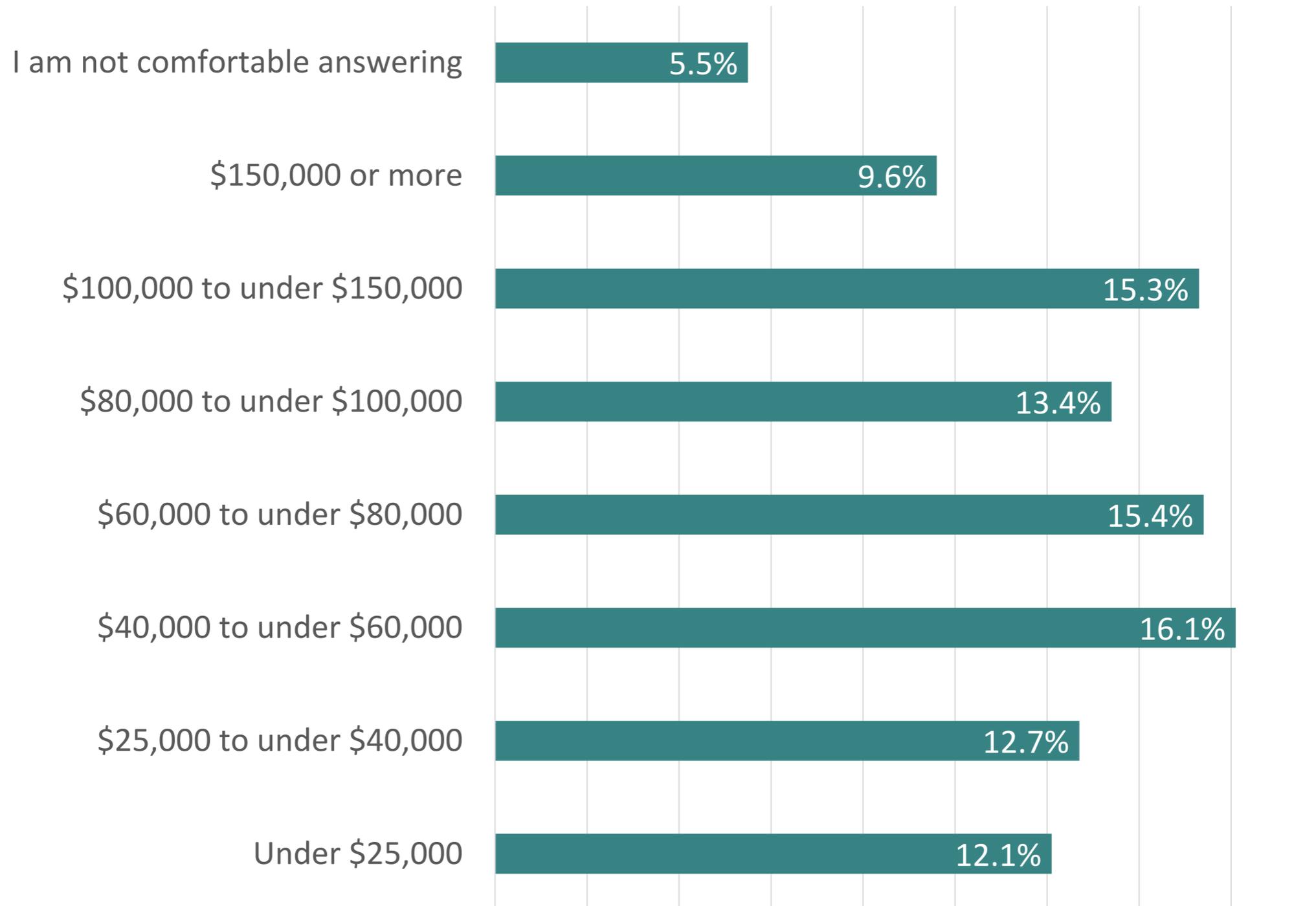


Appendix

Further
player information



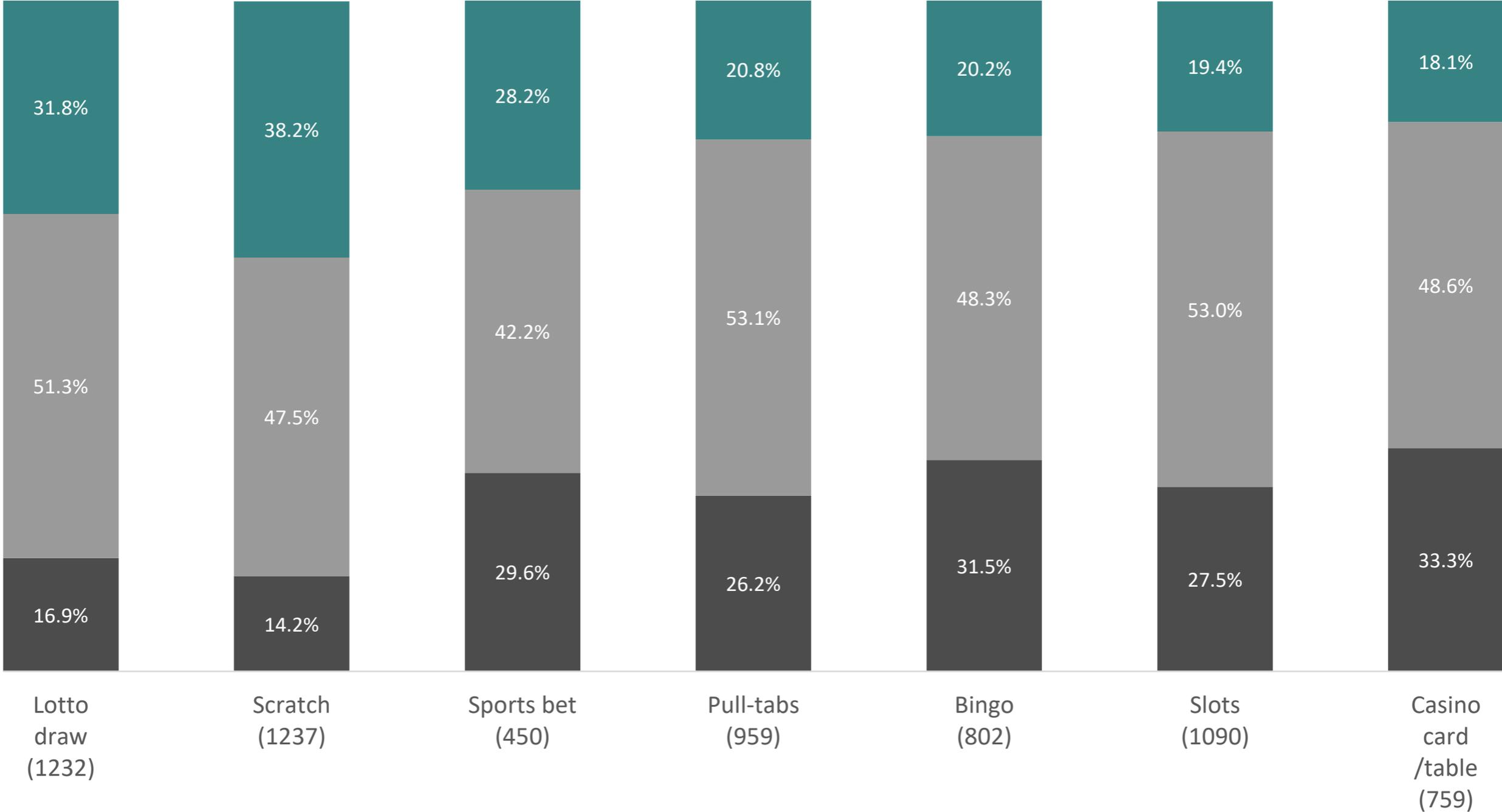
Household income range (before tax)



There was no relationship observed between income and PPS scores

Frequency of games played: Land-based games*

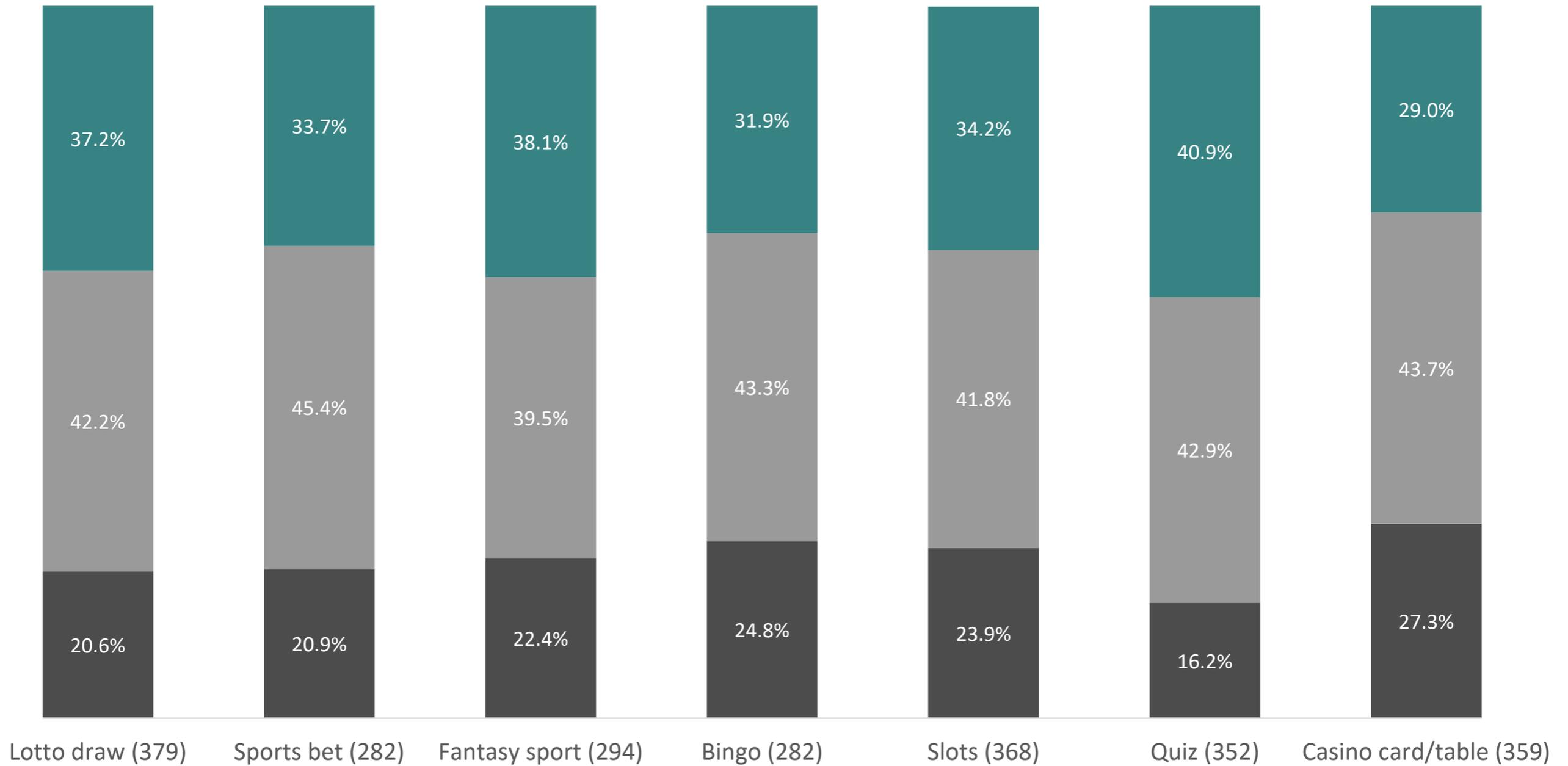
- Core = at least once a week
- Light = more than once a year, but less than once a week
- Infrequent = once a year



*These categories are not mutually exclusive. Some players play more than one game type.

Frequency of games played: Online games*

- Infrequent = once a year
- Light = more than once a year, but less than once a week
- Core = at least once a week



Overall, online games were played by fewer players than for land-based games

Ideas for increasing PPS scores



Increasing Gambling literacy and Pre-commitment scores amongst Minnesota players

- A segmented approach is critical
- Identify a range of possible interventions
- **Easy Attractive Social Timely**
- Work with stakeholder group to narrow down ideas
- Test ideas with player groups
- Define measurement goals and strategy
- Re-test PPS scores with same participants

Ideas for increasing Pre-commitment scores amongst Minnesota players

- **Social proof** the idea that people are influenced by what others do

Did you know that.....

“84% of Minnesota players report that they consider how much money they are willing to lose before they play.”

“90% of Minnesota players agree that they should only gamble when they have enough money to cover their bills first.”

“84% of Minnesota players agree that they only gamble with money that they can afford to lose.”

- **Anchoring** communicate the average amount that Lotto or scratch ticket jackpot winners bet.

Ideas for increasing Pre-commitment scores amongst Minnesota players

- People like to be **consistent**, making a **commitment** encourages them to follow through
 - Ask players how they will decide on a limit before they gamble
 - Give them some options and ask them to tick which strategies they will use
- **Reduce friction**
 - If possible, make setting a limit the default action before playing
- Develop **Positive Language** for all player facing interactions and features (e.g., avoid “limit setting” maybe “My money” or “My bankroll”). Specific language needs to be developed and tested with players. Consider dropping the term “*Responsible Gambling*” from all player facing communications as the term is associated with problem gambling.

Ideas for increasing Gambling literacy scores amongst Minnesota players

➤ **Social Proof**

“Gambling is not a good way to try to make money” (80% of Minnesota players agree)

“Your chances of winning don’t improve after you lose” (72% of Minnesota players agree)

“Playing more frequently doesn’t improve your chances of winning more than you will lose” (73% of Minnesota players agree)

➤ Videos (Social media, in-venue screens, TV)

➤ What every player needs to know

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxMKhUMF-EE>

An example of applying findings from the PPS in Nova Scotia for Responsible Gambling Awareness week

Kai the surfer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLB8nVq824g>

Norah the coffee connoisseur

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Su16V6AgAhE>

Ideas for increasing Gambling literacy scores amongst Minnesota players

- **Reward &/or reciprocity** players need to see merit in attending to an RG message
- **PPS self-test** develop a PPS based fun quiz for players to learn about their playing style

Ideas for increasing overall player engagement with RG

- **Rebrand RG** develop a more positive way to communicate with players to avoid negative connotations (RG experts and marketing collaboration)
 - Develop a more positive overall term to replace RG in all player facing communications
 - Develop more positive terms for all RG related player tools (limit tools, budget tools, self-exclusion,



For further information contact:

Dr Richard Wood

Richard@gamres.org

1-514-619-9474

www.gamres.org



gamres

PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PLAY

