

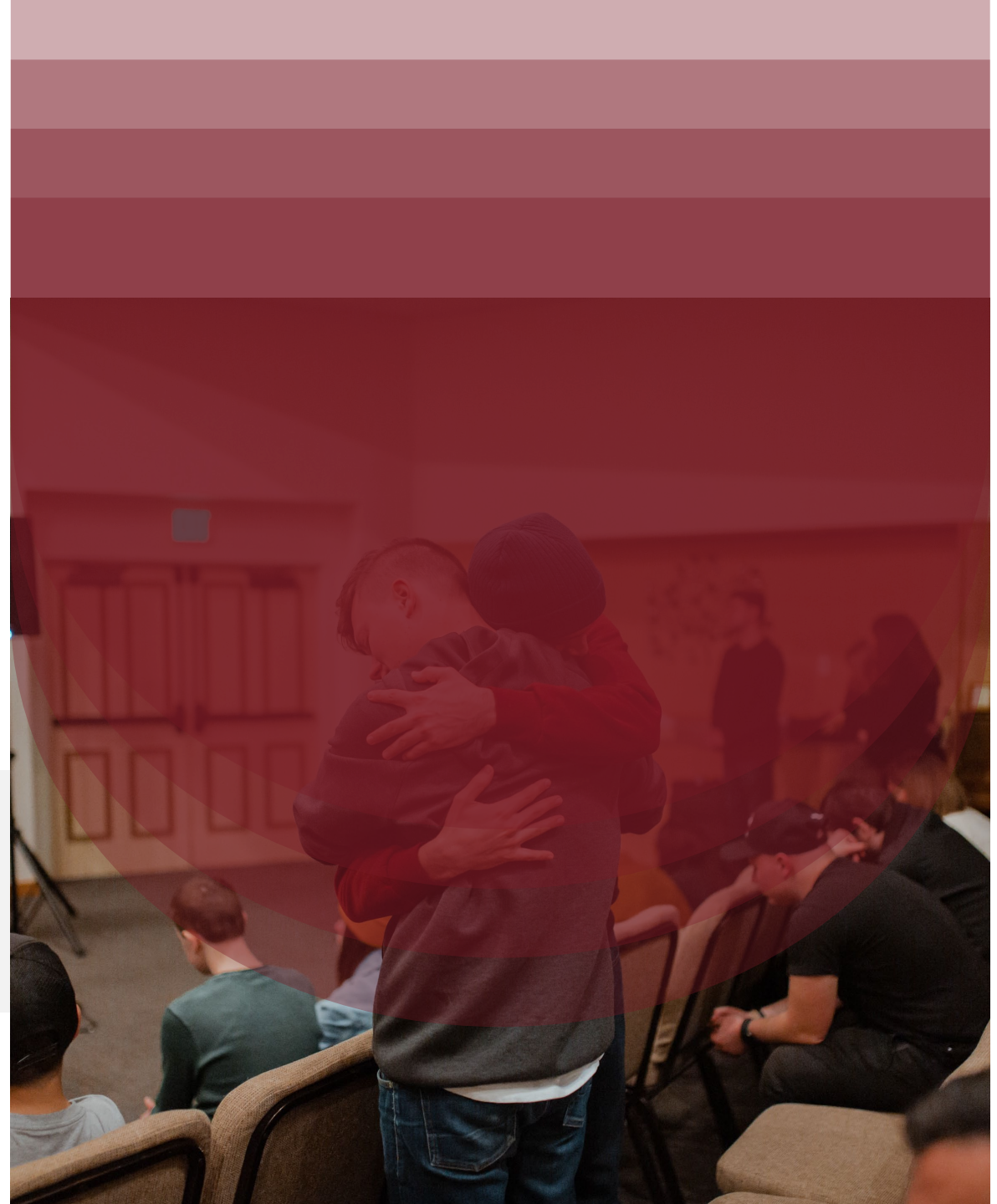
# RECOVERING FROM PROBLEM GAMBLING: TREATMENT TRAJECTORIES AND HELPFULNESS



*Scan me!*

Presented at the National Conference on Gambling Addiction &  
Responsible Gambling 2024  
San Diego, California, USA  
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# DISCLOSURES

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I have received

- Salary and research grant support from the Alberta Gambling Research Institute.
- Consulting fees from the responsible gambling division of a provincial (Crown Corporation) gambling operator in Canada, for work unrelated to the research presented here.

# PROBLEM GAMBLING AND HELP SEEKING

0.23%  
to  
20.63%

**1 in 5**

people with  
problem gambling seek treatment  
(Bijker et al., 2022)



What types of help?



Are these helpful?

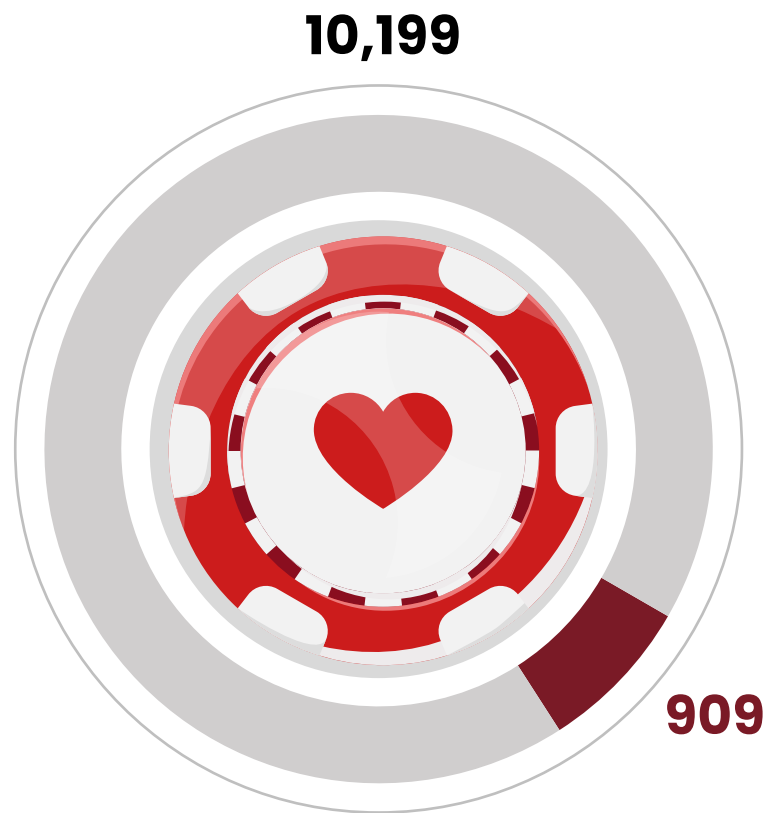


When and why do people  
seek help?





# THE PEOPLE



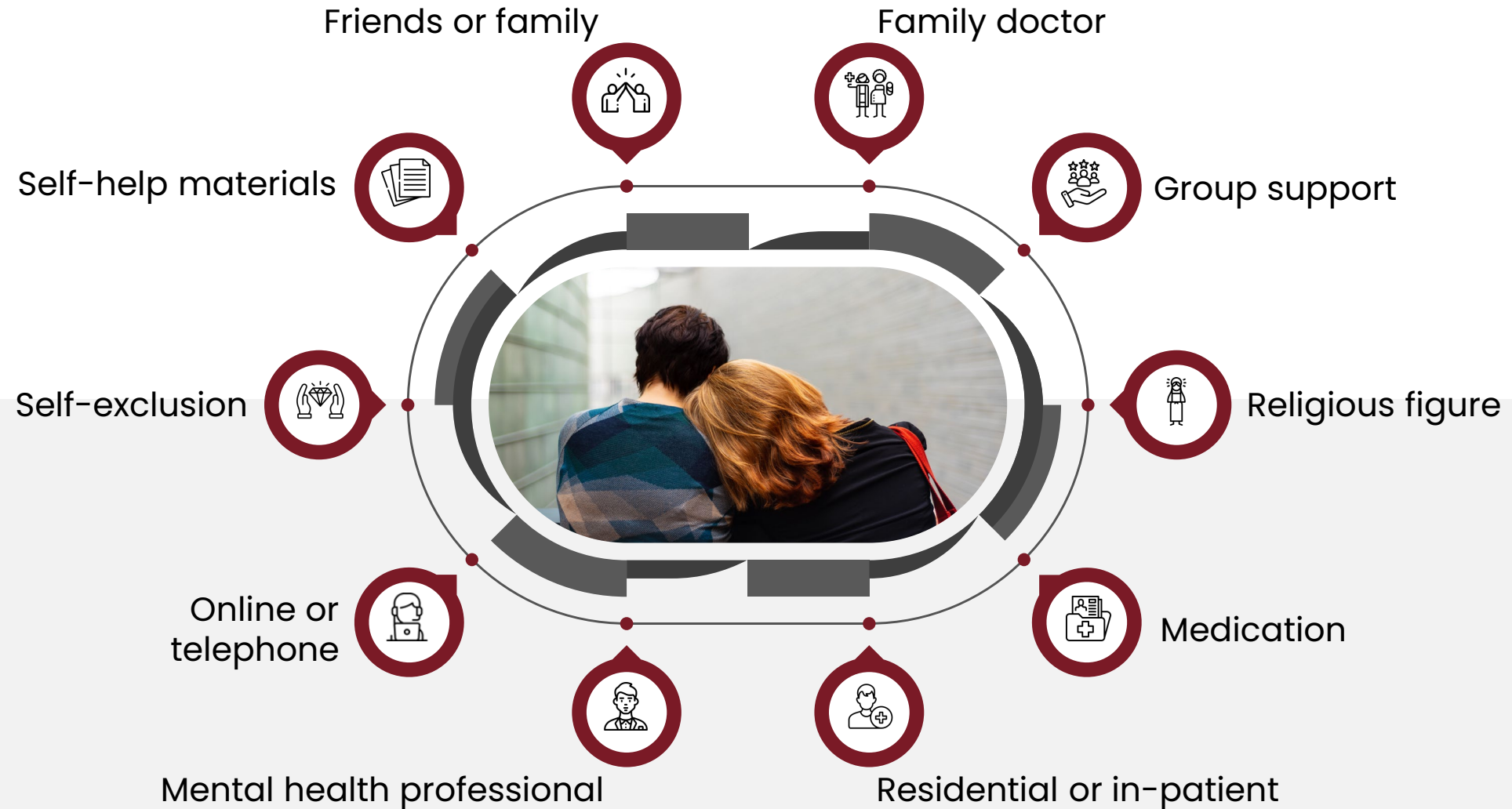
Online panel

Canadian adults  
who gambled  
at least  
monthly in 2018

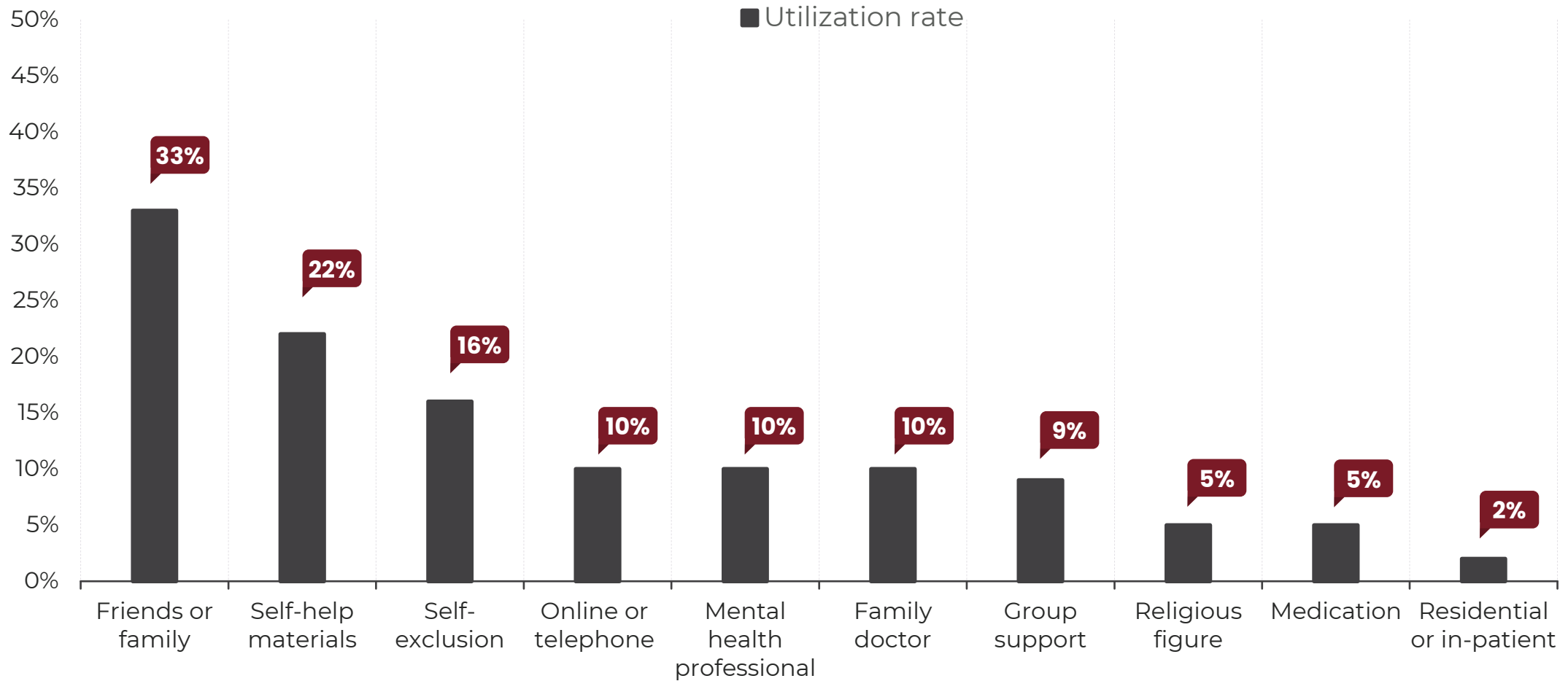
Problem Gambling  
Severity Index  
score  $\geq 5$



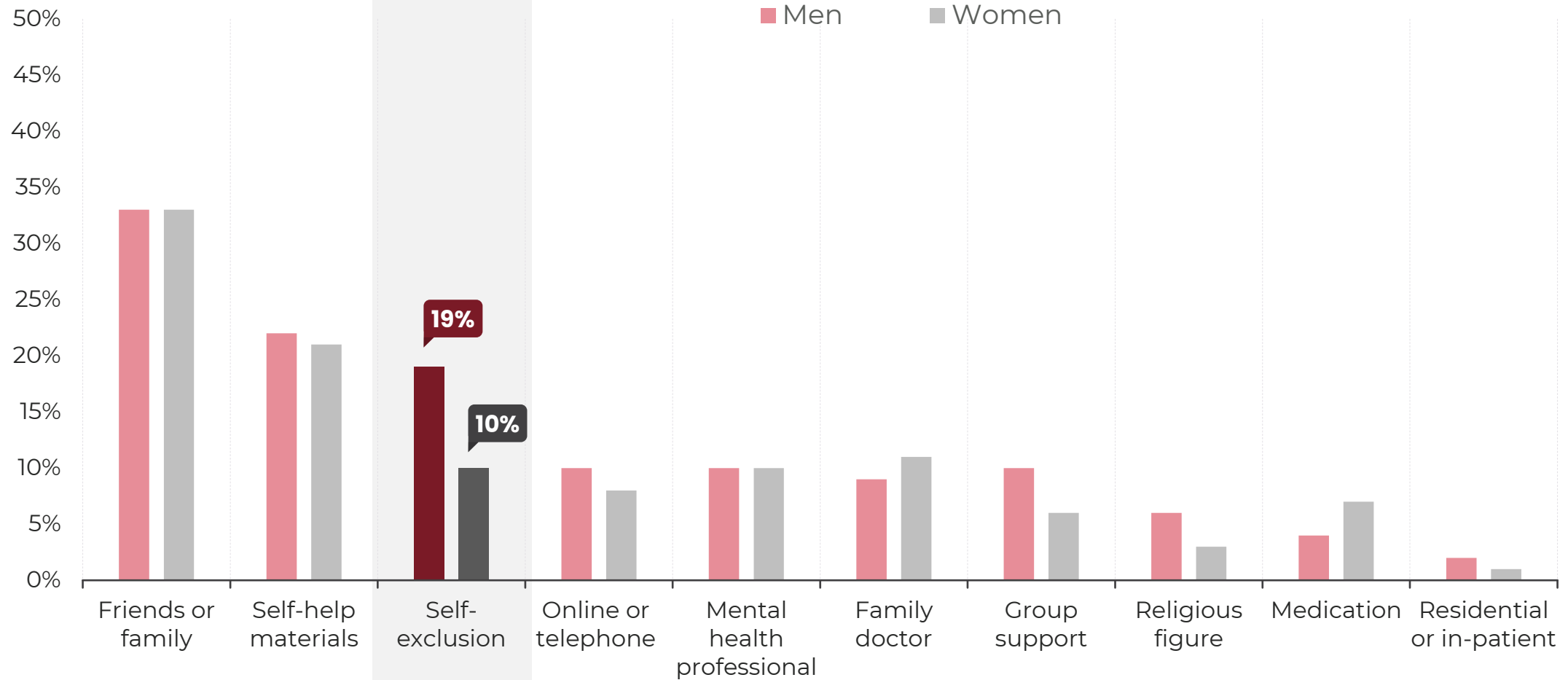
# TYPES OF HELP



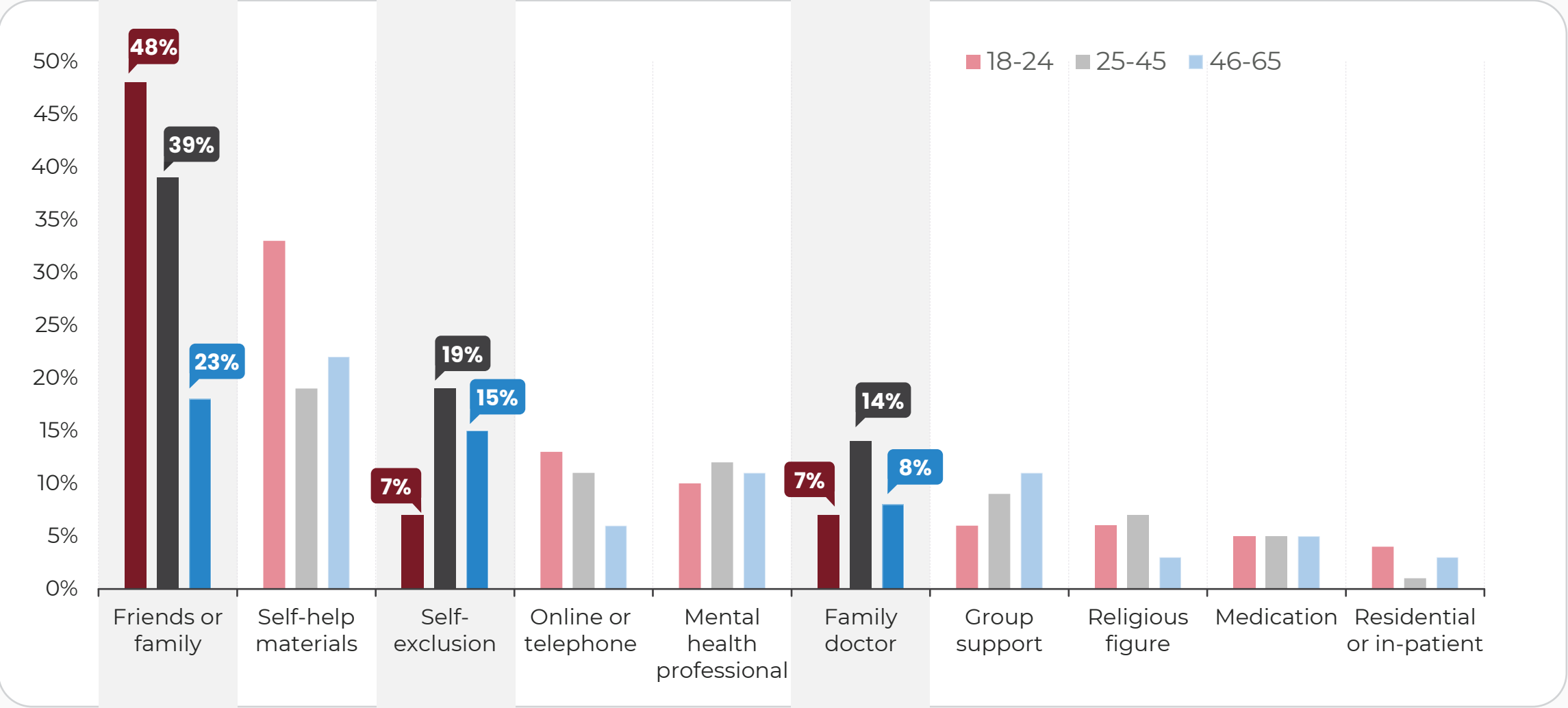
# TYPES OF HELP SOUGHT BY CANADIANS



# SEX DIFFERENCES

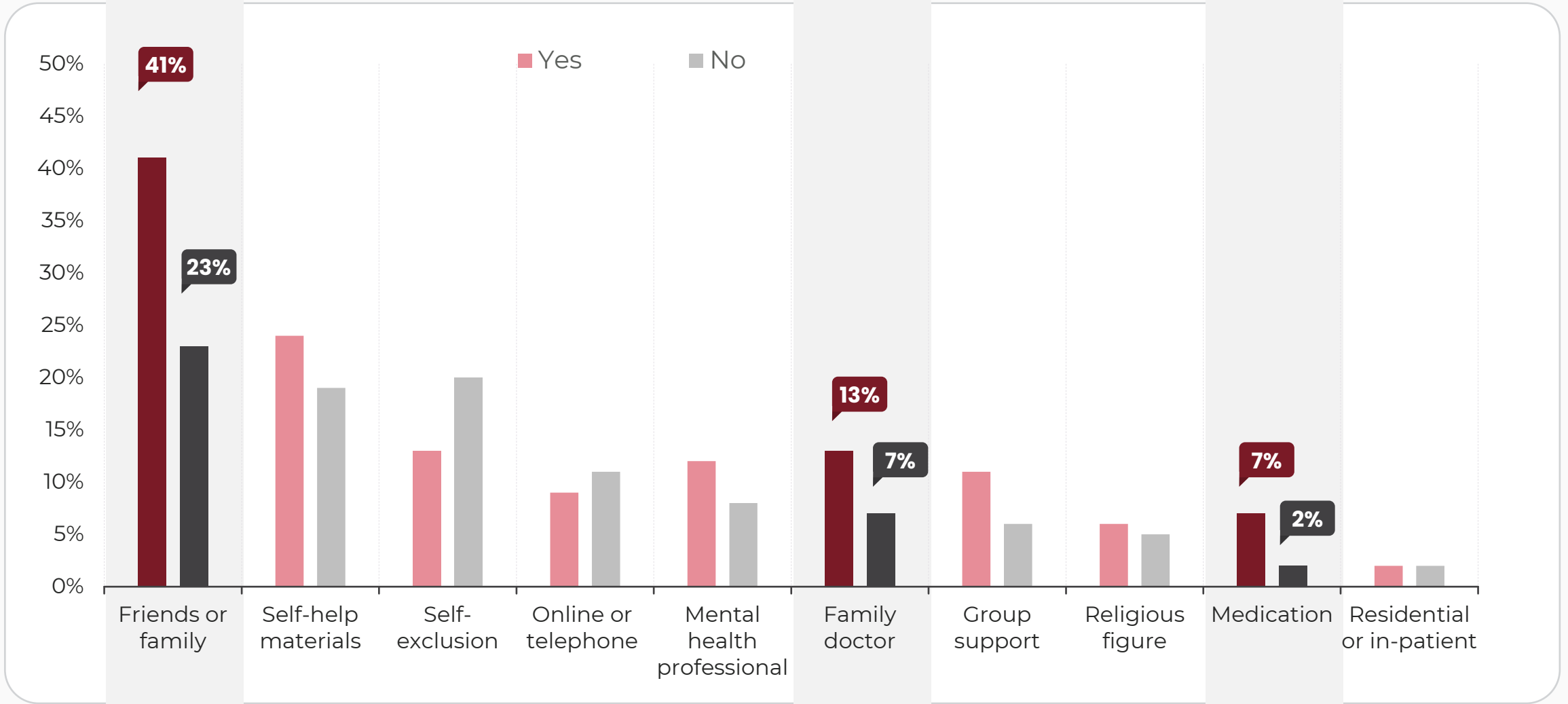


# AGE DIFFERENCES

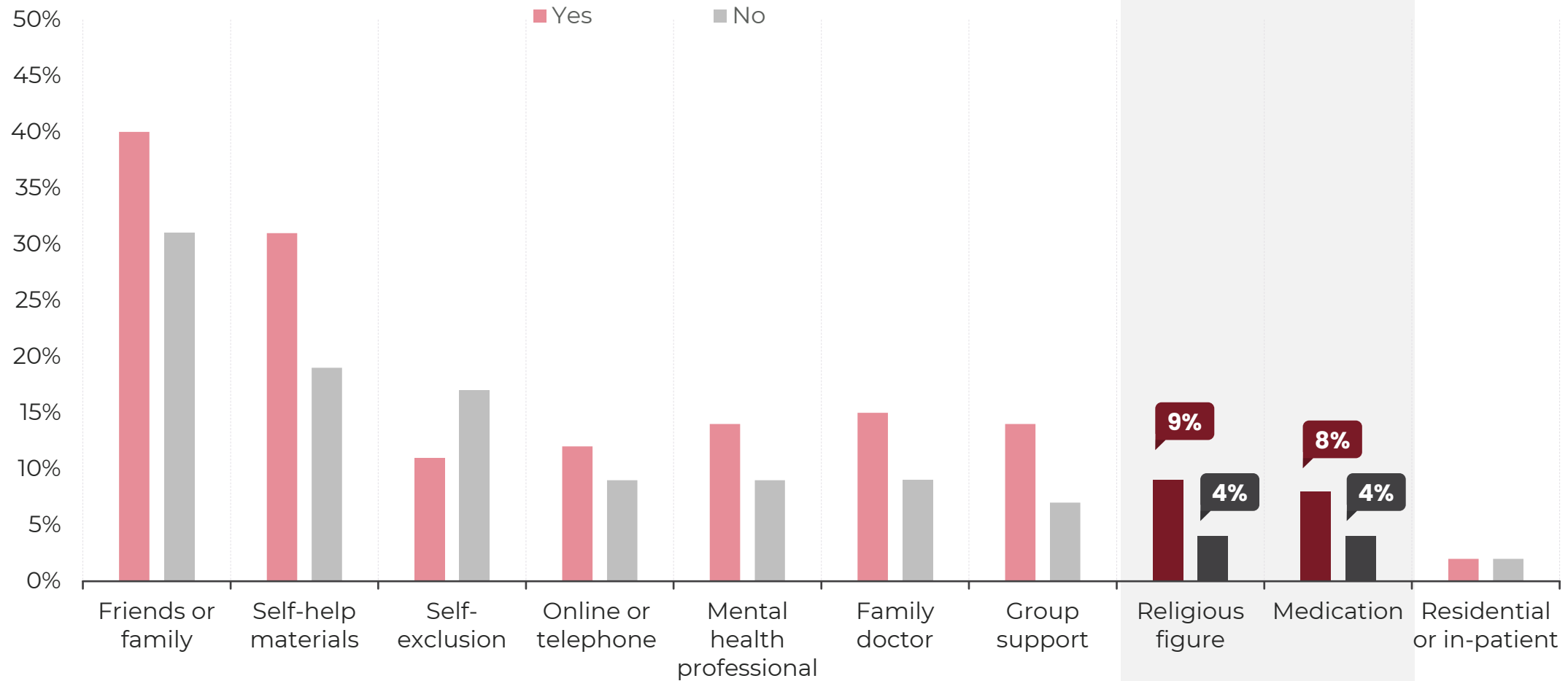




# HAVING A MENTAL HEALTH DISORDER



# HAVING A SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER



# All types of help are perceived as helpful to some extent



(Allami et al., 2023)

# TAKE HOME MESSAGES FROM THESE STUDIES

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- Variety of pathways to recovery.
- Variety of types of support accessed, none perceived as significantly more helpful than others
- Self-recovery is a very popular route
- Routes to treatment are also varied
  - Family/Friends, Clergy, Health professionals, Venue, Web all play important role.

# FRIENDS AND FAMILY



Least helpful



Least combined with other forms



Burden for friends/family who might feel helpless



Importance of services for loved ones of those with problem gambling



Encourage the person suffering from problem gambling to seek help



First one people try?



# NEXT STEP...

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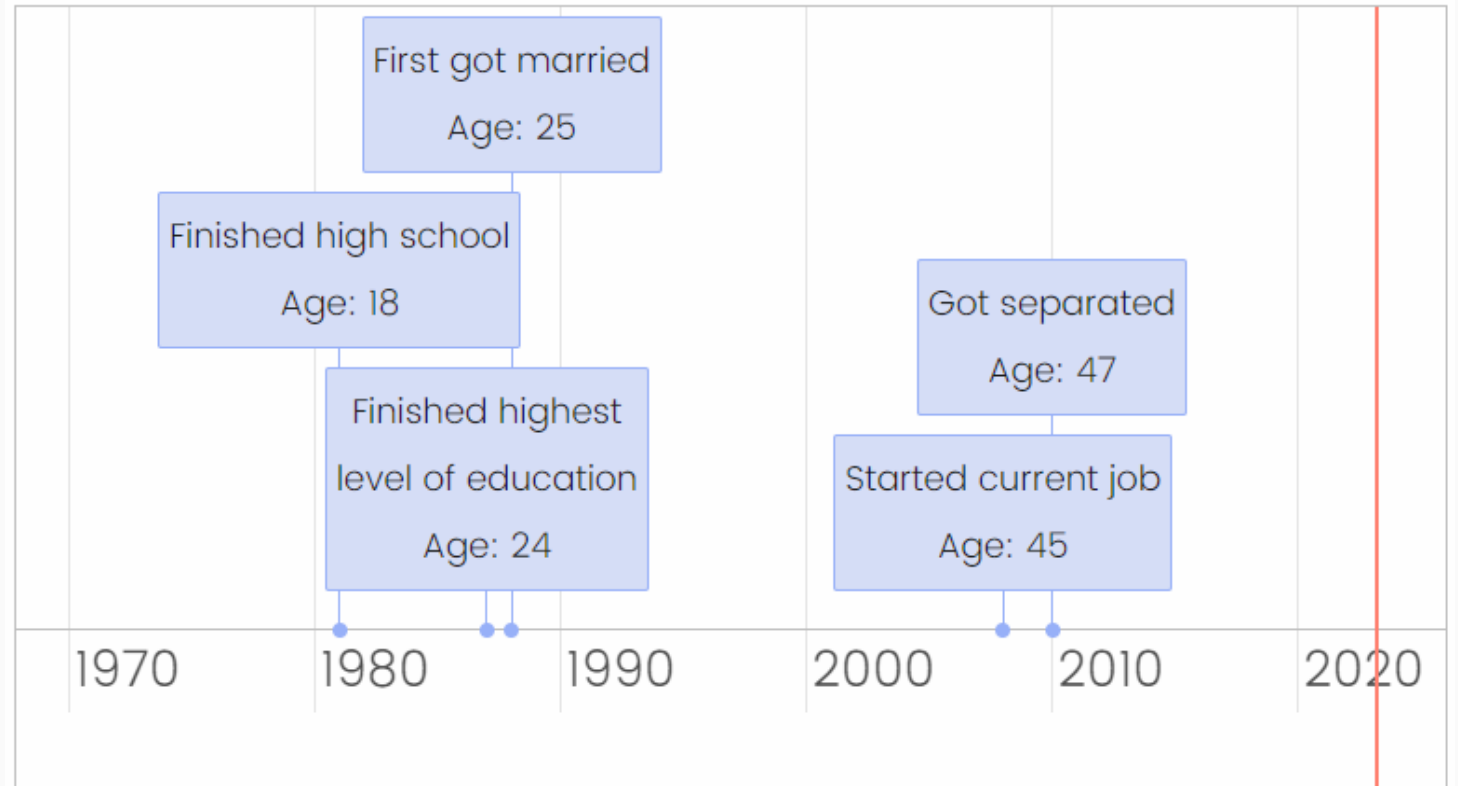
**Imagine a 59-year-old man**



**Started gambling as a teenager**

# Pathways to Treatment Study

- A deeper dive into the experiences and timelines of addressing gambling problems
- Life History Survey method
- Target N= 500 **people in treatment** across Canada

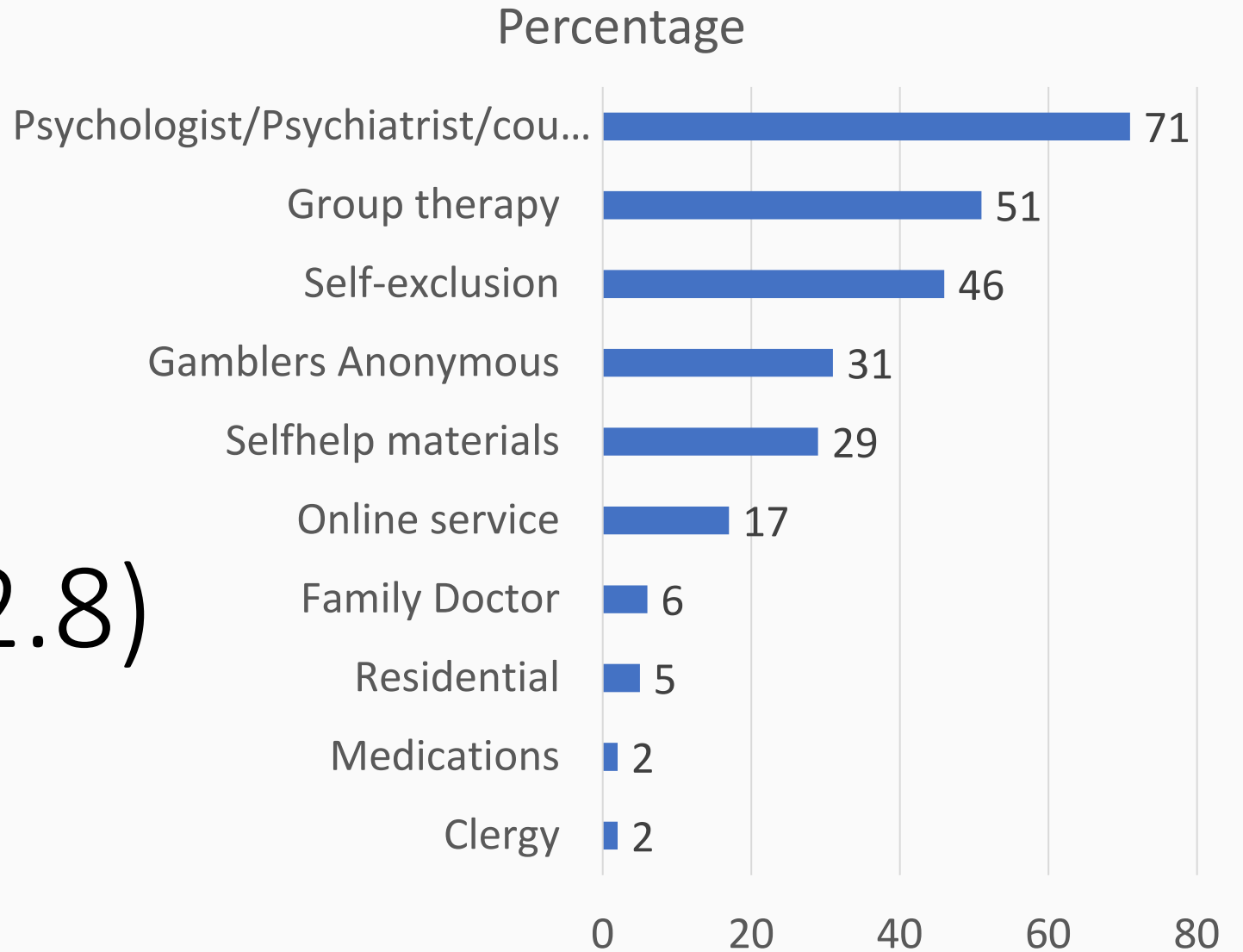


# The sample

## N = 65

- Gender
  - Man – 55%
  - Woman- 43%
  - Other- 2%
- Age- M = 49.9, SD = 15, range 18 to 86
- Ethnicity
  - White- 83%
  - Indigenous – 8%
- PGSI. M= 16.7, SD = 7.5
- Type of gambling causing problem – EGMs- 85%

# Current Treatment (N = 65 ; M = 2.8)



# TIME LAG TO CHANGE

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Problem surfaced  
Age 33.8

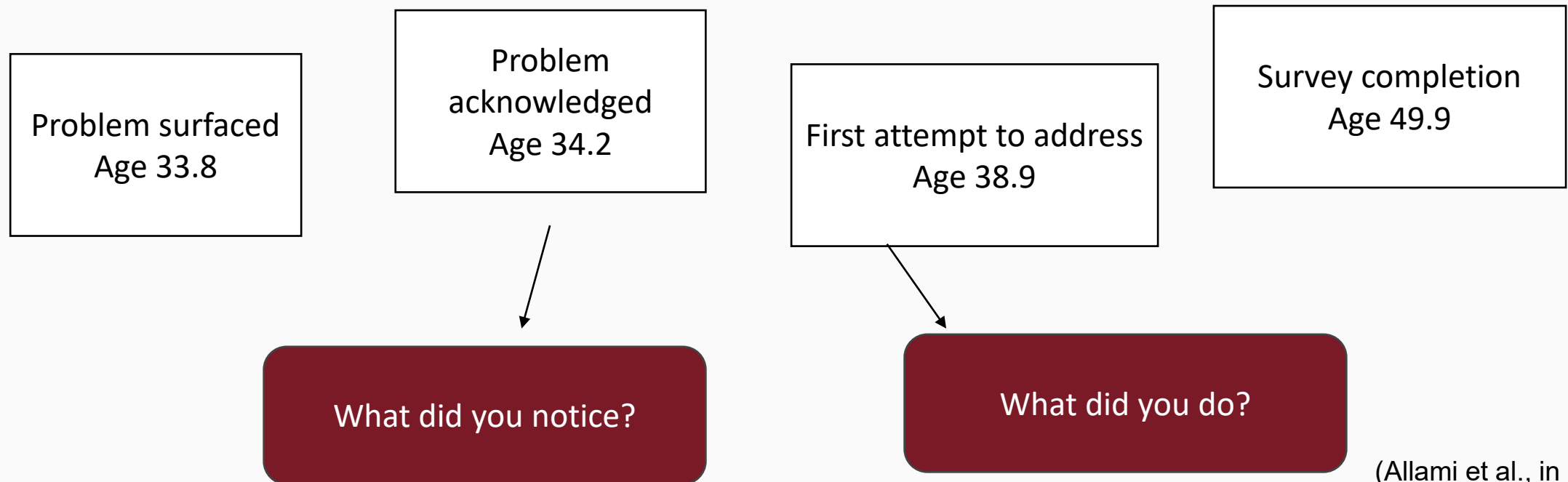
Problem  
acknowledged  
Age 34.2

First attempt to address  
Age 38.9

Survey completion  
Age 49.9



# TIME LAG TO CHANGE



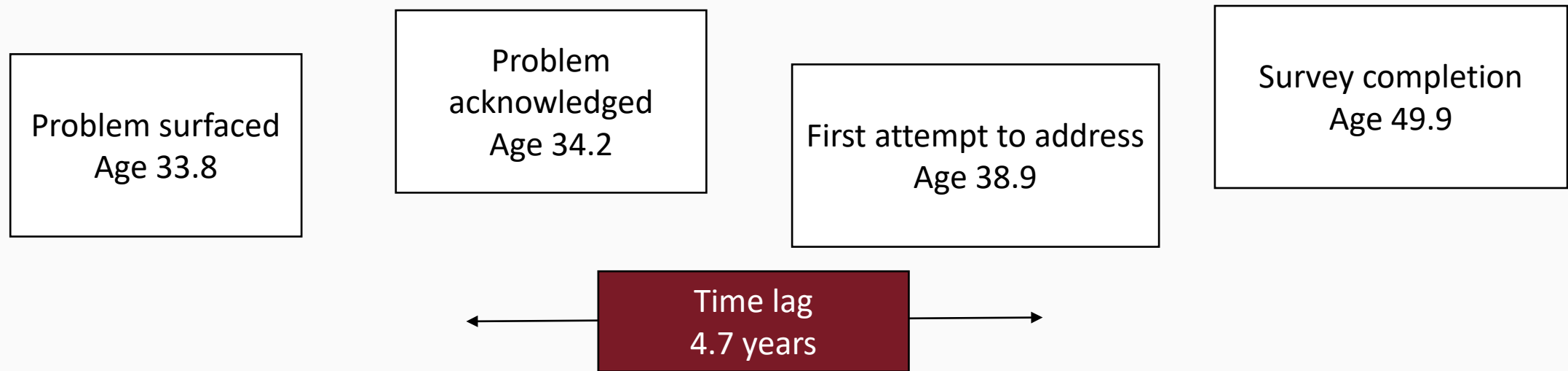
(Allami et al., in prep)

# Problem Acknowledged: What did you notice?

96 reports. N = 65, M = 1.5 per person

	Of people
Financial problems	40%
Changes in gambling engagement	37%
Impaired control over gambling	22%
Preoccupation	20%
Emotional Aspects	12%
Relationship impacts	8%

# TIME LAG TO CHANGE



# What led to the tipping point?

111 reports. N= 65, M = 1.7  
per person

	Of people
Financial problems	77%
Quality of life concerns	29%
Relationship impacts	22%
Change in gambling engagement	17%
Impaired control over gambling	14%
Emotional impact, preoccupation	<10%

# What did you do?

81 actions . N= 65

	Of people
Stimulus control- e.g., blockers, self-exclusion, stayed away	40%
Seek formal or informal help	37%
Harm reduction- e.g., setting limits, limiting \$ access	25%
Replacement activities & relationships	12%
Spontaneous recovery	N = 1



# Where did you turn?

## First and Early Attempts









	Percent choosing as first choice	Helpfulness (not at all to extremely)
Family & friends	77%	Somewhat/Quite
Self-exclusion	64%	Somewhat/Quite
In person counselling	62%	Somewhat/Quite
Gamblers Anonymous	58%	Somewhat/Quite
Online/Telephone counselling	50%	Somewhat

# Where did you turn? Later Attempts



Common responses	Helpfulness
Group therapy (professional led)	Quite
Self-help materials from books or online	Somewhat
Infrequent ( <10 people)	Helpfulness
Residential	Quite/Very
Family Doctor for counselling	Not at all/somewhat
Clergy for counselling	Somewhat/quite
Medication for family dr. or psychiatrist	Somewhat

## **How are these helpful?**

-  External constraint
-  Increase self-awareness, insight, and honesty
-  Instrumental support
-  Pharmaceutical intervention
-  Psychoeducation
-  Social & professional support

## **How are these helpful?**



External constraint



Increase self-awareness,  
insight, and honesty



Instrumental support



Pharmaceutical intervention



Psychoeducation



Social & professional support

- Prevention and Abstinence
- Consequences

## **How are these helpful?**



External constraint



Increase self-awareness,  
insight, and honesty



Instrumental support



Pharmaceutical intervention



Psychoeducation



Social & professional support

- Accountability
- Recognize Emotion
- Reality
- Time Away
- Understand Self
- Transparent and Honest



## **How are these helpful?**



External constraint



Increase self-awareness,  
insight, and honesty



Instrumental support



Pharmaceutical intervention



Psychoeducation



Social & professional support

- Financial Support
- Make Plan
- Took Action
- Need More Help

## **How are these helpful?**



External constraint



Increase self-awareness,  
insight, and honesty



Instrumental support



Pharmaceutical intervention



Psychoeducation



Social & professional support

- Improve anxiety
- Improved sleep
- Improved mood

## **How are these helpful?**



External constraint



Increase self-awareness,  
insight, and honesty



Instrumental support



Pharmaceutical intervention



Psychoeducation



Social & professional support

- Informal Education
- Professional Gambling Education
- Relationship with Money

## **How are these helpful?**

-  External constraint
-  Increase self-awareness, insight, and honesty
-  Instrumental support
-  Pharmaceutical intervention
-  Psychoeducation
-  Social & professional support

- Nonjudgmental
- Therapy strategies
- Helped spirituality
- Similar experiences
- Community and friendships
- Cared for/Emotional support

# How are these helpful? - by gender

Gender	Total (out of 65)		External constraint		Increase Self- Awareness, Insight, and Honesty		Pharmaceutic al Intervention		Psycho- education		Instrumental Support		Social and professional support	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	65		15		18		3		8		9		21	
Women	28	43%	8	53%	8	44%	1	33%	3	38%	2	22%	8	38%
Men	37	57%	7	47%	10	56%	2	67%	5	63%	7	78%	13	62%

# How are these helpful? – by gambling format

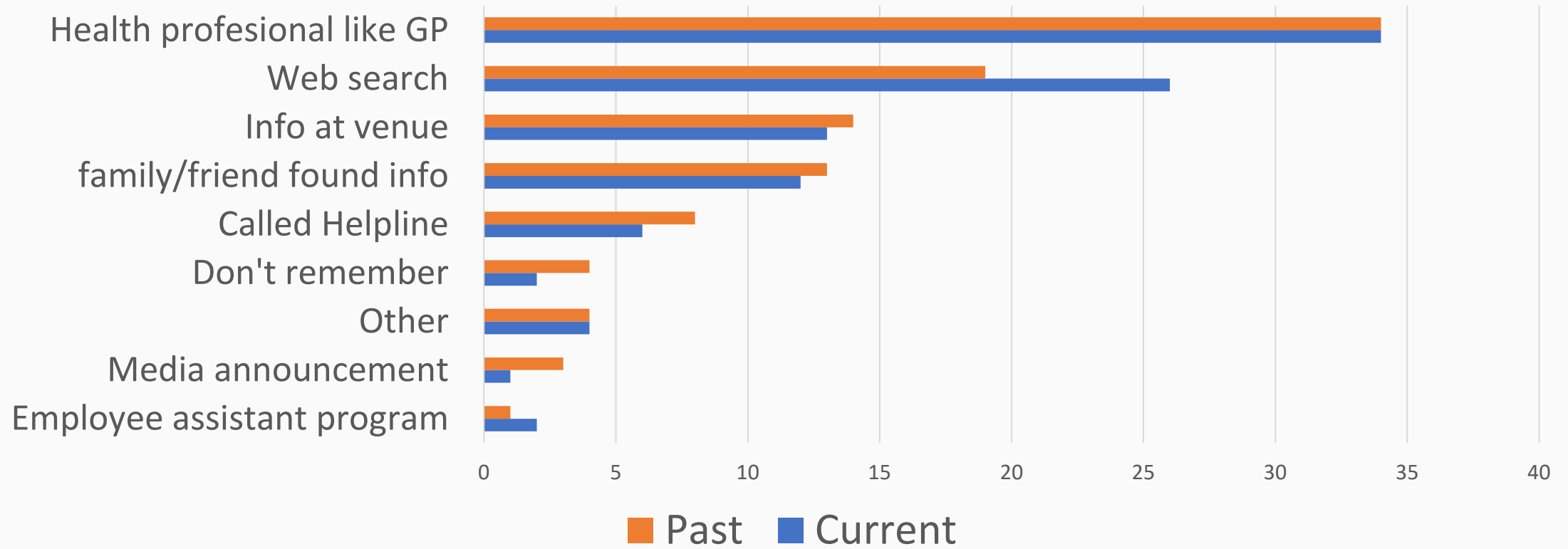
Most problematic format	Total (out of 65)		Increase Self-Awareness, Insight, and Honesty		Pharmaceutical Intervention		Psychoeducation		Instrumental Support		Social and professional support	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total	65		18		3		8		9		21	
EGM	55	85%	14	78%	2	67%	8	100%	7	78%	16	76%
Instant lottery	31	48%	10	56%	2	67%	6	75%	5	56%	12	57%
Casino table games	22	34%	7	39%	2	67%	5	63%	4	44%	10	48%

(Allami et al., in prep)

# Observations so far

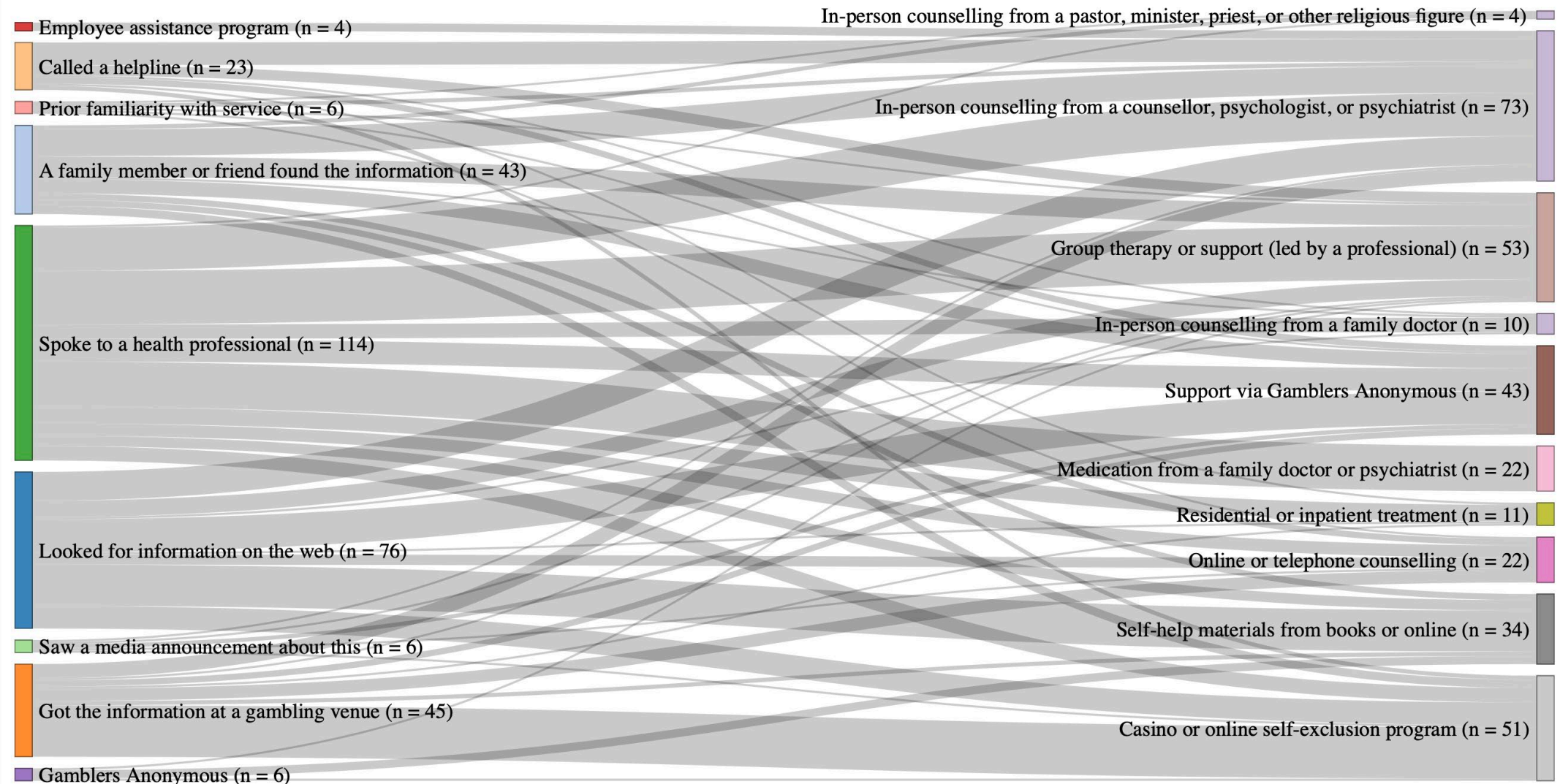
- That darned lag - how to we get people to act sooner on their concerns?
- People do more than one strategy, including many harm reduction options.
- No prominent or more effective treatment choice.

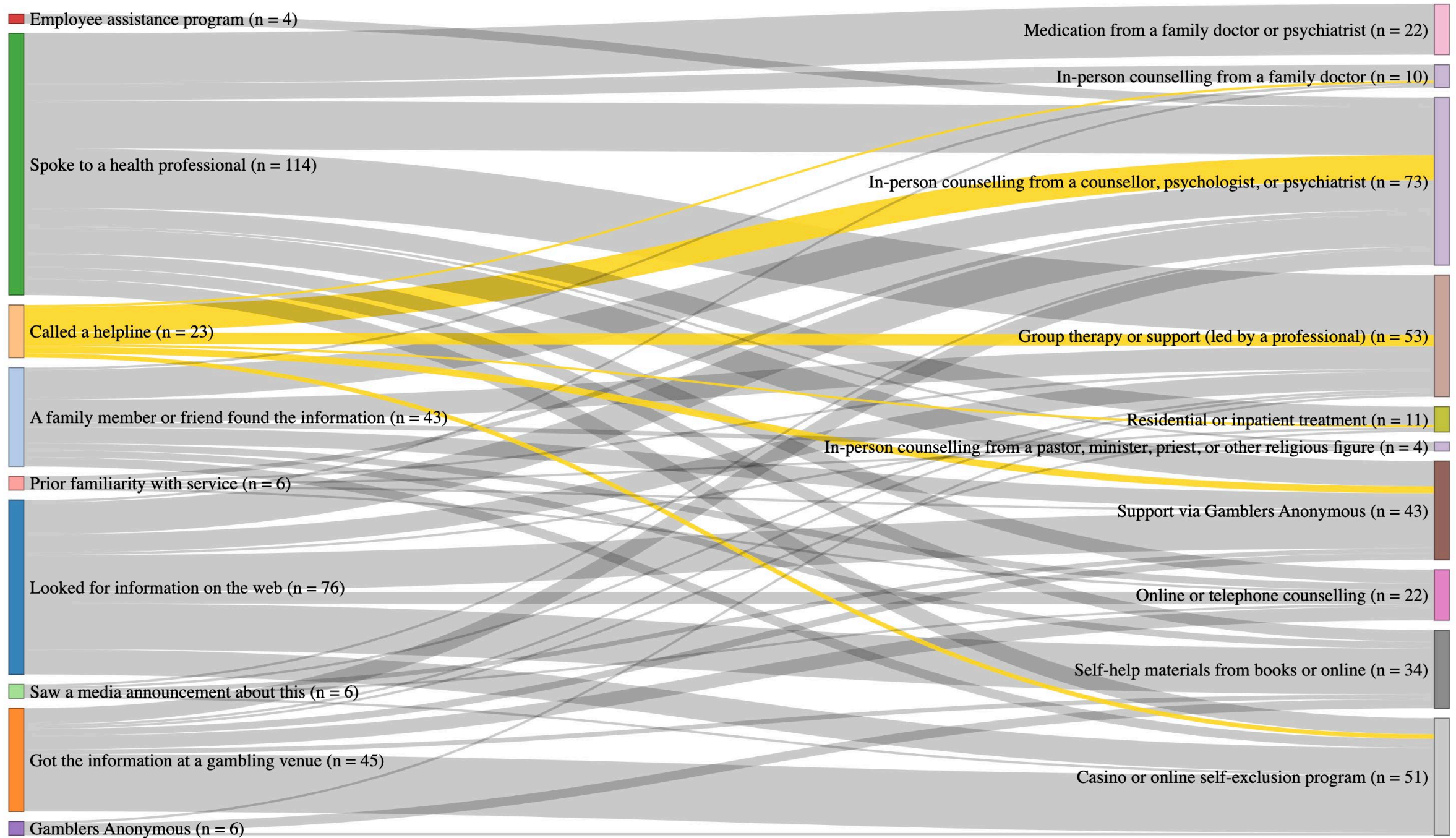
# How did people become aware?



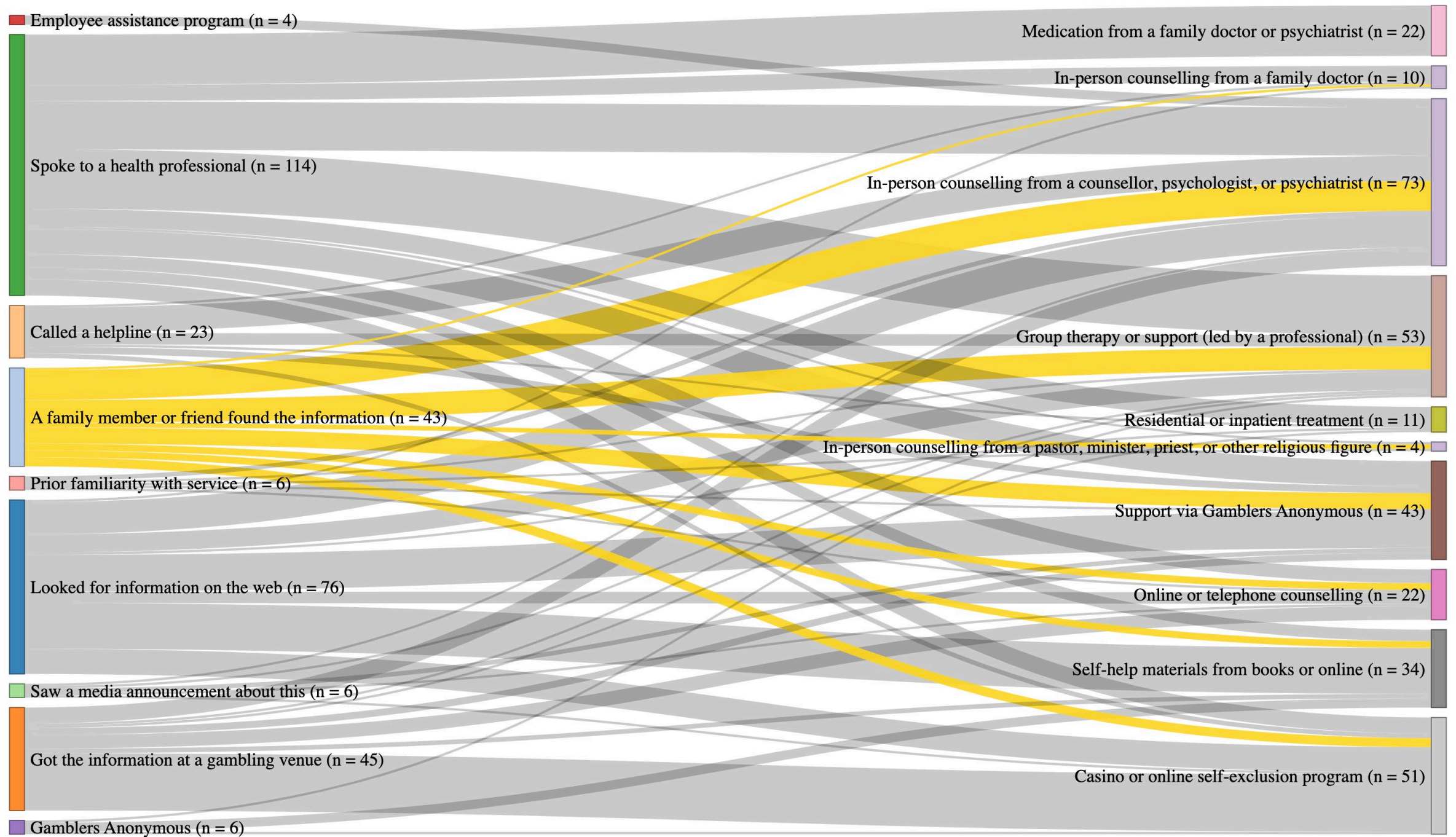


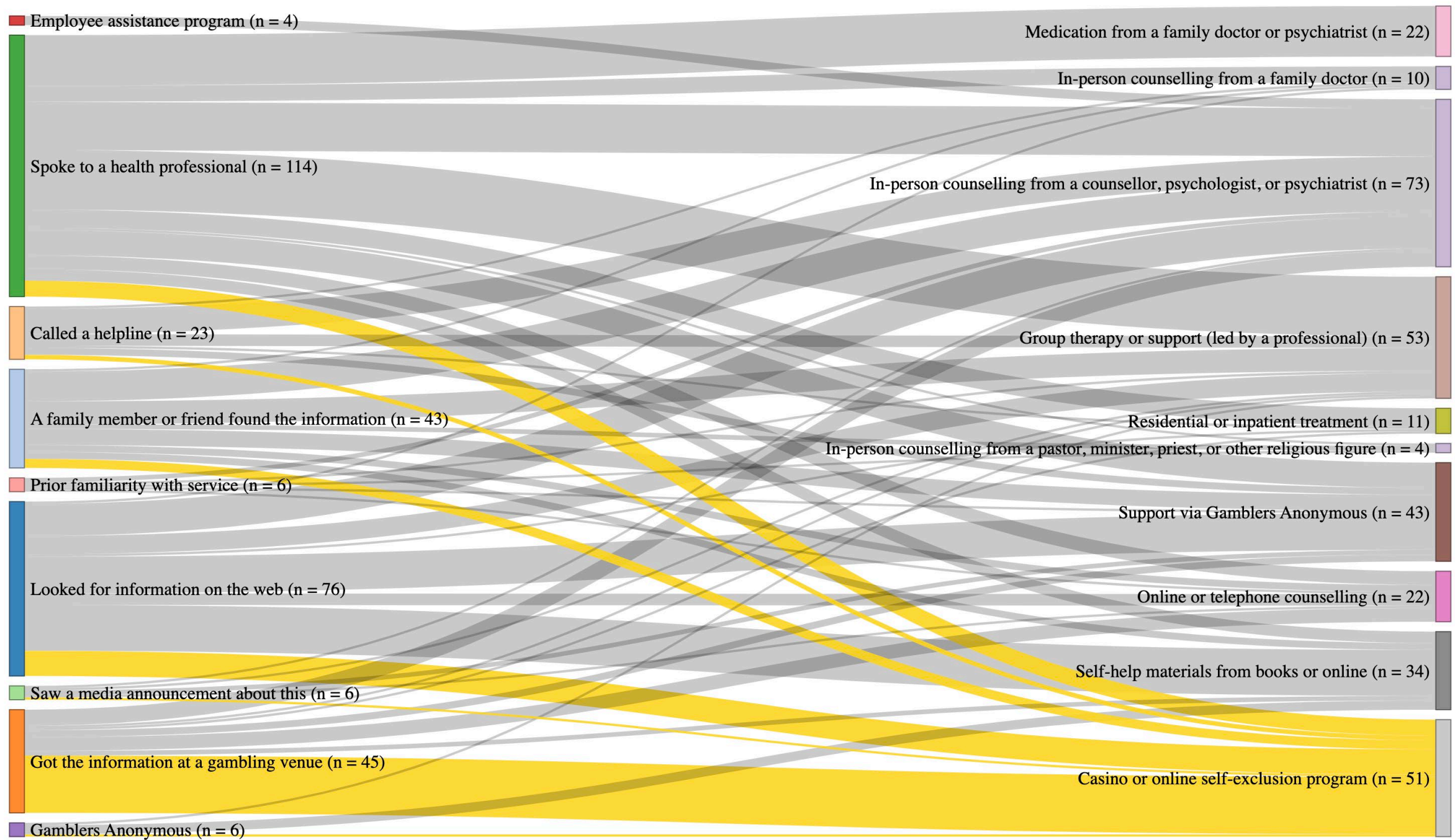
# Making connections



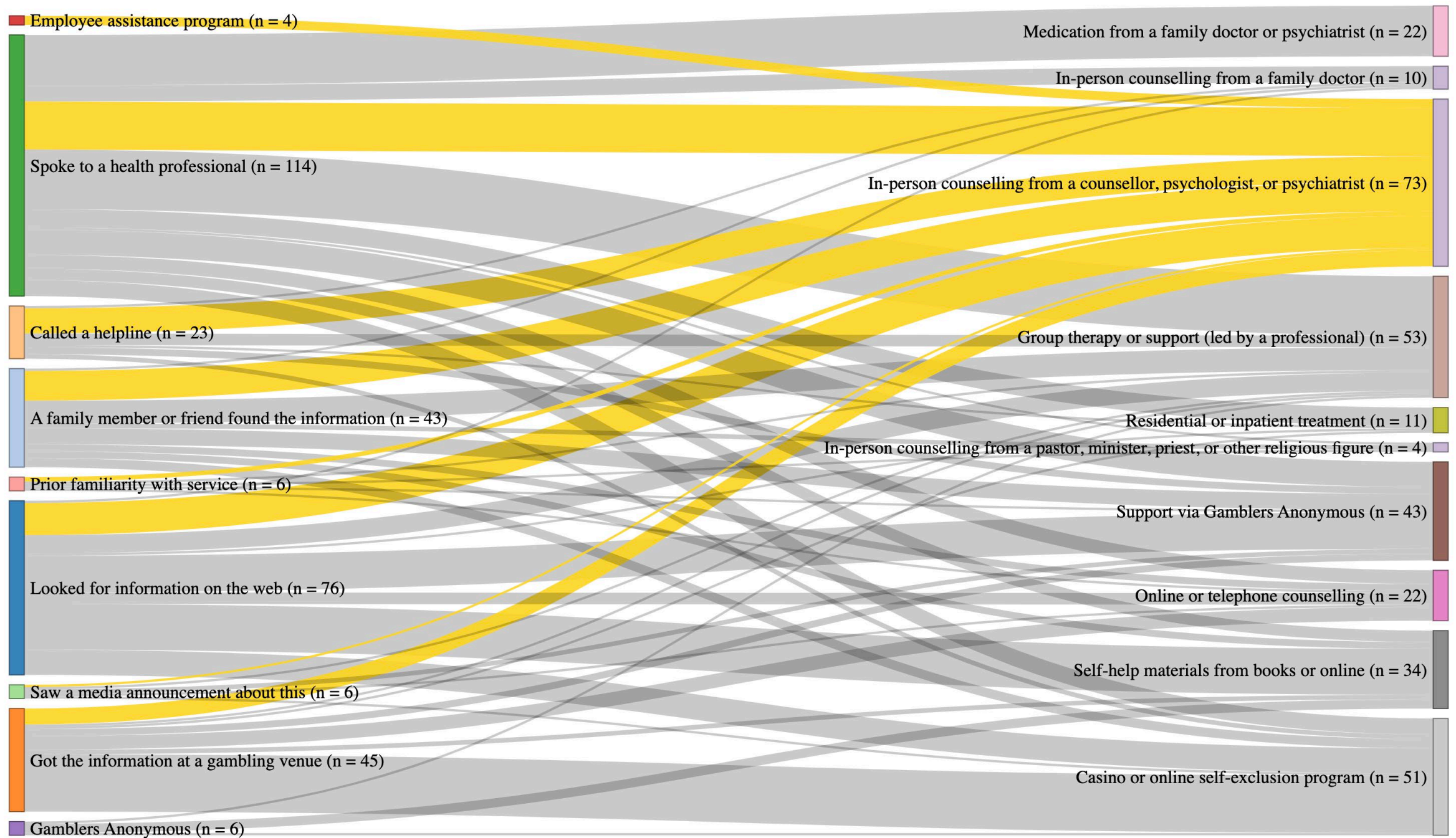






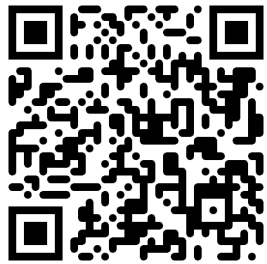






# Online Link to Interactive Figure

<https://gambling-research.github.io/pathways/>



*Scan me!*

employee assistance program (n = 4)

led a helpline (n = 23)

or familiarity with service (n = 6)

family member or friend found the information (n = 43)

oke to a health professional (n = 114)

oked for information on the web (n = 76)

w a media announcement about this (n = 6)

t the information at a gambling venue (n = 45)

mblers Anonymous (n = 6)

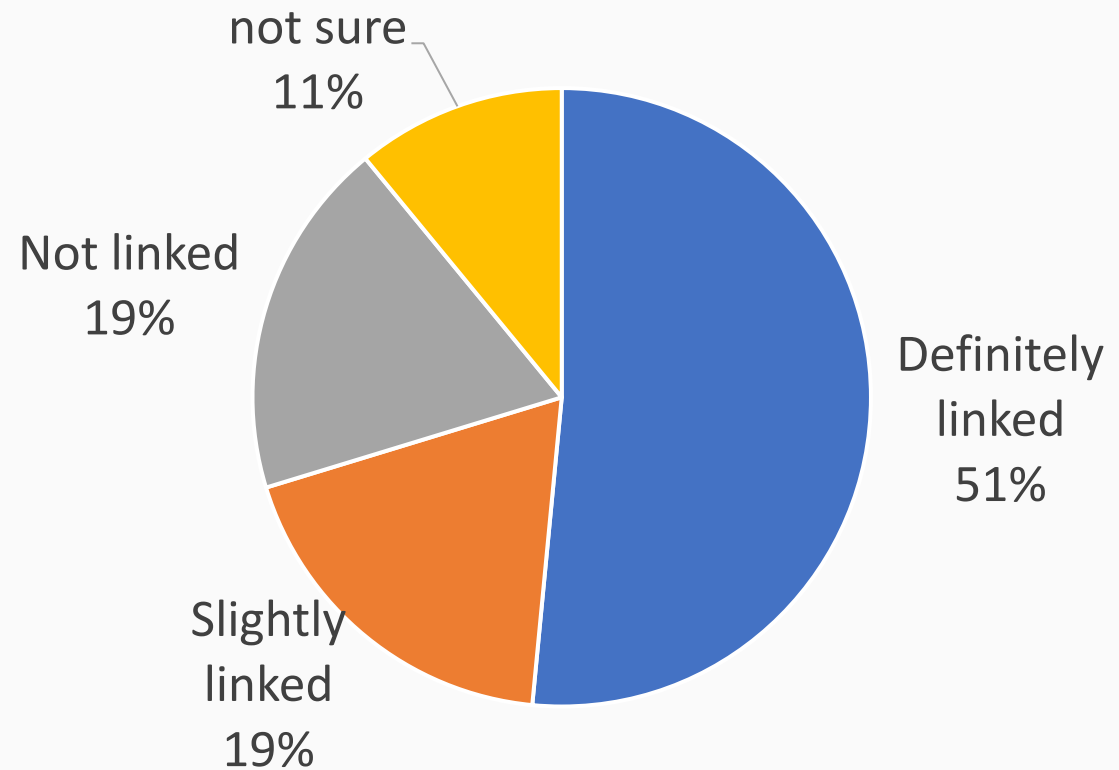
In-per

# More complexity- Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders



# What about mental health and substance use problems?

Do you think your gambling problems are related to mental health and/or substance use (alcohol, cannabis or other drugs) problems?



(Allami et al., in prep)



# Knocking on multiple doors

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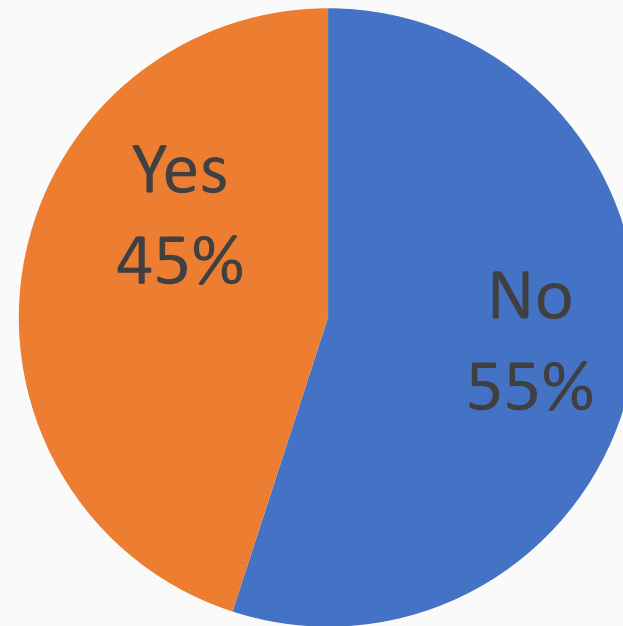
Substance Use  
Treatment  
Age 30

Mental Health  
Treatment  
Age 34.6

Gambling Treatment  
(Formal)  
Age 42.2

# Other behavioural addictions?

- Past 12 months “over involvement” that led to “significant negative effects for you or others”
- Sex or pornography, overeating, exercise, shopping, social media, video games, internet use





# Implications

- Lots to learn about how mental health and gambling addiction are intertwined
- Implications for prevention as well as treatment
- No wrong door idea makes sense but the doors must lead to the right places.

# Thank you



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David Hodgins

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Thanks to Brin Angotti & Lisa Henkel



# References

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Allami, Y., Williams, R. J., Hodgins, D. C., Stevens, R., Shaw, C. A., el-Guebaly, N., ... & Belanger, Y. D. (2023). Canadians With Problem Gambling: Relative Popularity and Helpfulness of Treatment Options. *Canadian Journal of Addiction*, 14(4), 55-65. <https://doi.org/10.1097/CXA.0000000000000194>

Bijker, R., Booth, N., Merkouris, S. S., Dowling, N. A., & Rodda, S. N. (2022). Global prevalence of help-seeking for problem gambling: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addiction*, 117(12), 2972–2985. <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15952>