Positive Play at Play

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Guest Speakers

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The Massachusetts Council on
GAMING AND HEALTH

Mission Statement

The mission of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission is to regulate the legal casino, horse racing, and sports wagering industries with integrity and transparency. Our goal is to maximize consumer protections, minimize negative impacts, and promote responsible gaming through regulation, research, and informed policy making. The Commission endeavors to create a fair and safe gaming environment in the Commonwealth while fostering economic benefits and a diverse workforce for its licensees, residents, and businesses.

The commissioners and all employees of the Massachusetts Gaming Commission are committed to public service and a set of core values that will underpin and guide our work.

The MGC and its employees' value:

★ Working collaboratively with our licensees, stakeholders, and the public for the benefit of all Massachusetts residents.

★ Fostering an inclusive culture at the Commission and among our partners in the Massachusetts gaming, horse racing, and sports wagering industry that reflects the diversity of the Commonwealth.

★ Maintaining the integrity of the Commission's work to promote objective and thorough regulation, enforcement, and compliance.

★ Ensuring transparency in the regulation and oversight of the industries we oversee.

★ Holding the Commission and its employees to the highest level of ethical conduct through a commitment to the law and our enhanced code of ethics.

★ Serving the public with exemplary professionalism and customer service for all whom we come in contact.

★ Promoting research and evidence-based best practices to assess the impact of expanded gaming, horse racing, and sports wagering to prevent and mitigate gambling-related harms.

★ A commitment to promoting responsible gaming to minimize

Massachusetts Research Model:
A commitment to rigorous, independent academic research

To date, over 80 research reports have been released on everything from the epidemiology of problem gambling and its health, social, and economic impacts across the state to reducing harm through safer gambling strategies, practices, and policies.

Let's Define a few things..

Responsible Gaming – The delivery or offering of gambling services designed to encourage players to maintain their gambling at a healthy level and minimize harm to consumers and the community.

Problem Gambling – Behaviors that reflect a range of difficulties in limiting money wagered and/or time spent gambling, which lead to adverse consequences for the gambler, concerned others, or the community.

Let's Define a few things..

Player Health – The prioritization of the well-being of individuals who choose to gamble. It includes promoting healthy behaviors and minimizing gambling related risks. Player health is a shared responsibility between the MGC, the licensees, and those who gamble.

Positive Play – Attitudes and beliefs that do not put the player at risk for developing gambling problems.

Player Health Framework: MGC

- The Framework is intended to help prevent and mitigate social impacts and costs by informing gambling regulation and an overall orientation to safer gaming practices and policies adopted by the MGC and gaming licensees.

- The Framework is buttressed by the MGC's research agenda. Information obtained from sponsored research guides strategies and tactics.

Player Health Framework Core Principle: Shared Responsibility

As regulators of legalized gambling, the MGC has a critical yet limited role in supporting player health. Other governmental agencies and entities; health, science and academic communities; gambling licensees and the broader gambling industry; sports leagues; advertisers and the media; and gambling consumers must all take part to effectively minimize harm caused or exacerbated by gambling.

PHF Core Principle: Precautionary Approach

The current knowledge base regarding the effectiveness of responsible gambling interventions is limited. In this context, it will not always be possible to defer regulatory decisions until definitive evidence is available to support a particular intervention or technology.

A precautionary approach states that when an activity causes some threat or harm to the public or environment, general precautionary measures should be taken. Lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent harm.

PHF Core Principle: Stepped Care Approach

POSITIVE PLAYERS

Focus on promotion and prevention by providing access to information, advice, and self-help resources.

AT-RISK PLAYERS

Increase early intervention through access to tools and resources to support positive play.

PROBLEM PLAYERS

Improve access to programs and services to prevent escalation and maximize recovery.

MAGIC
MASSACHUSETTS GAMBLING IMPACT COHORT STUDY

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Less stable →

Category	Definition	Transition
At-Risk Gambler	Betting more than planned, spending more time than intended, etc.	The minority stayed in this category in the next wave (41.8%), most transitioned to Recreational Gambling (47.9%). A significant percentage of At-Risk Gamblers became Problem Gamblers during the study (19.8%).
Problem Gambler	Experience significant impaired control over gambling and harms	The majority transitioned to At-Risk (29.7%) or Recreational Gambling (17.9%) in the next wave. In the last wave, 76.9% of Problem Gamblers were relapsed Problem Gamblers.
Non-Gambler	Have not gambled in the past year	The majority of Non-Gamblers in one wave stayed Non-Gambler at the next wave (65.0%). For those who transitioned, the majority transitioned to Recreational Gambling (33.8%).
Recreational Gambler	Gamble because they enjoy these activities	The large majority of Recreational Gamblers stayed Recreational Gamblers in the next wave (84.5%).

(Williams et al., 2021)

What is

GameSense?

We're a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy!

GameSense Advisors work at a GameSense Info Centers located at MA casinos. GSAs receive extensive training in responsible gaming techniques, problem gaming behavior and local resources for help.

What does GameSense do?

- Promote a positive approach to play with patrons and peace of mind with the general public.
- A voice of reason offering facts for a clear perspective.
- Clarify myths and messages around gambling.
- Help players understand the rules and odds of the games.
- Communicated on multiple platforms.

Plainridge Park Casino

MGM Springfield

Encore Boson Harbor

GameSense MA Logic Model (simplified)

Impact ----- Improved health and well-being of players

Effect ----- Creation of a socially responsible approach to gambling

Outcomes -----

| Promote positive play | Reduce gambling-related harm | RG enabled workforce |

Outputs -----

-Increased knowledge and engagement with GS
-RG attitudes and behavior

-Increased knowledge and engagement with casino (VSE) and community (treatment) resources

-Increased RG knowledge and engagement with GS
-Referrals

The Positive Play Scale
(Wood, Wohl, Tabri, & Philander, 2017)

An objective/standardized way to measure RG as an outcome

A 14 item scale that measures beliefs and behaviours of players as they relate to RG

Optimizes RG strategy

Segment scores by player types

Benchmark RG as an outcome and measure change over time

positiveplay

positiveplay

Beliefs

Personal Responsibility

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

Gambling Literacy

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

positiveplay

Behaviors

Honesty & Control

Pre-Commitment

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

Measuring Responsible Gambling in Massachusetts: Benchmarking with the Positive Play Scale

Wood, R., Wohl, M.J.A., & Tabri, N. (2022)

Background: In October 2022, a sample of 1,996 Massachusetts players completed an online survey that included the Positive Play Scale, the Problem Gambling Severity Index, general demographic questions, as well as attitudes towards and awareness of various responsible gambling initiatives.

PPS scores: all players

Legend:
- High PPS (green)
- Medium PPS (yellow)
- Low PPS (orange)

Category	Low PPS	Medium PPS	High PPS
Personal responsibility	6.2%	16.9%	76.9%
Personal responsibility	11.5%	20.6%	67.8%
Gambling literacy 2020	28.1%	34.4%	37.5%
Gambling literacy 2022	41.6%	30.0%	28.4%
Honesty & control 2020	9.7%	21.0%	69.3%
Honesty & control 2022	14.5%	22.4%	63.1%
Pre-commitment 2020	13.8%	28.3%	57.9%
Pre-commitment 2022	17.7%	27.5%	54.8%
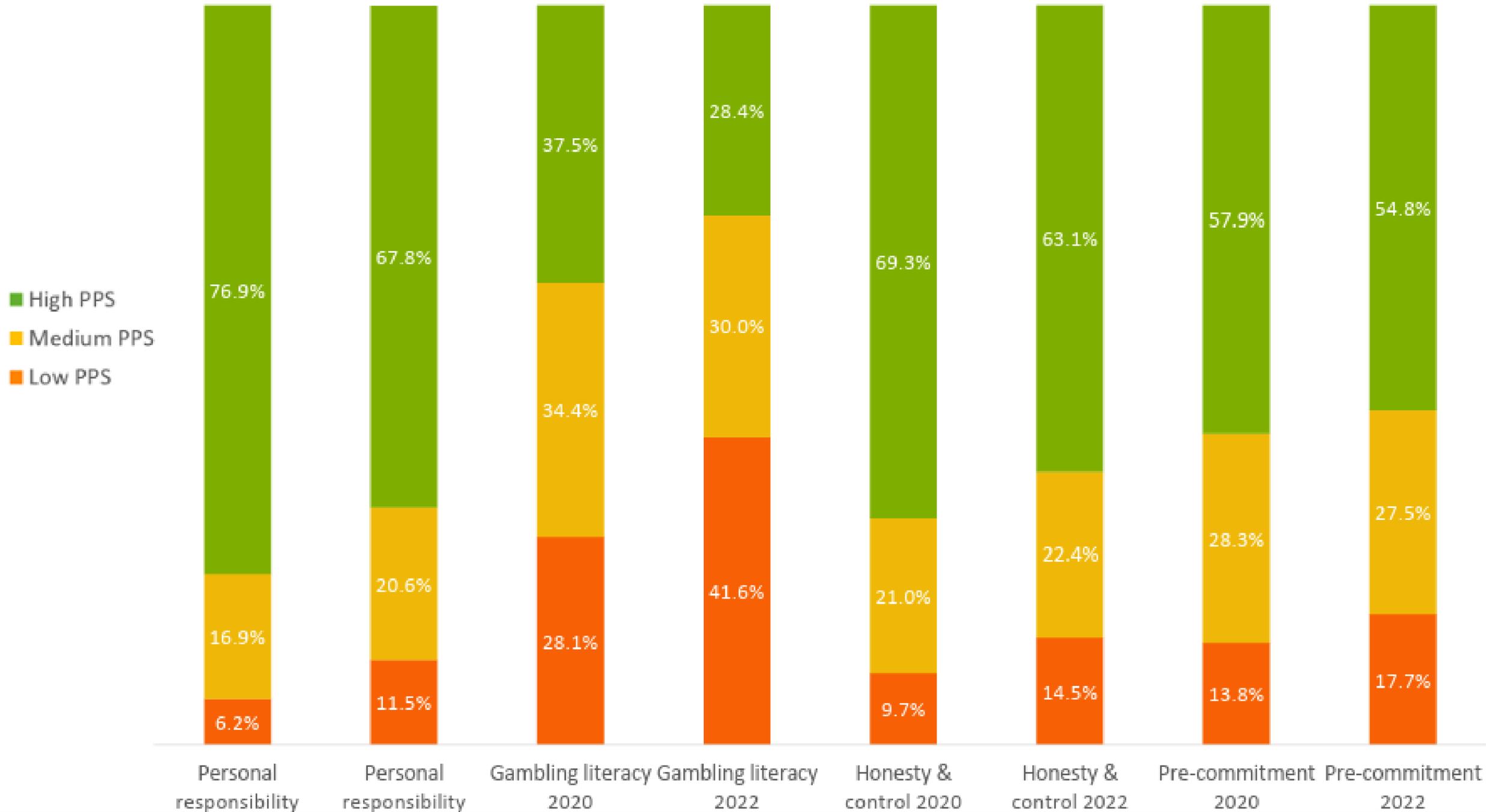
As in 2020, these results suggest that strategies to improve players' *Gambling literacy* and *Pre-commitment* should be considered for Massachusetts players

PPS scores: by age (2022)
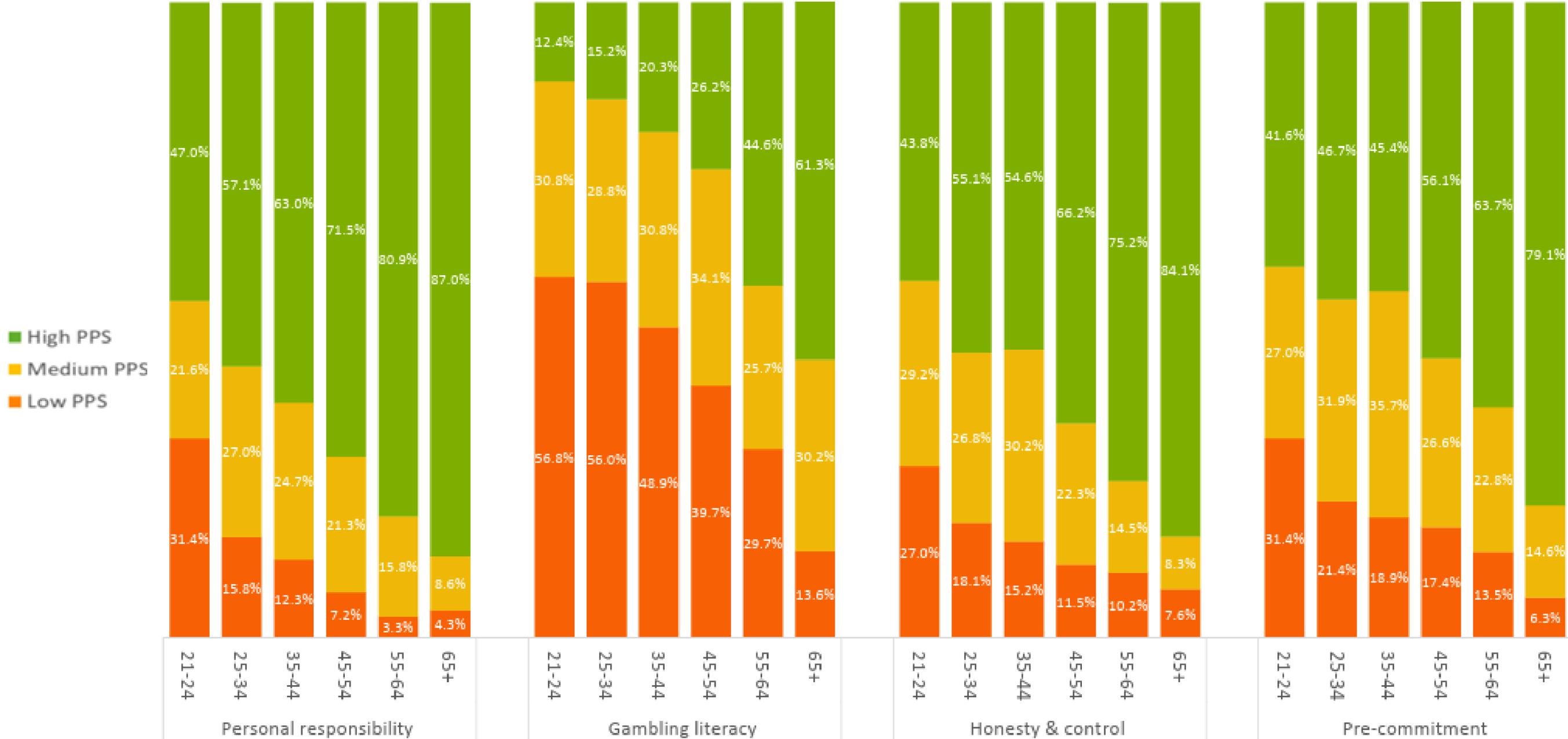
PPS scores increased as age increased, on every PPS sub-scale

PGSI categories by PPS categories
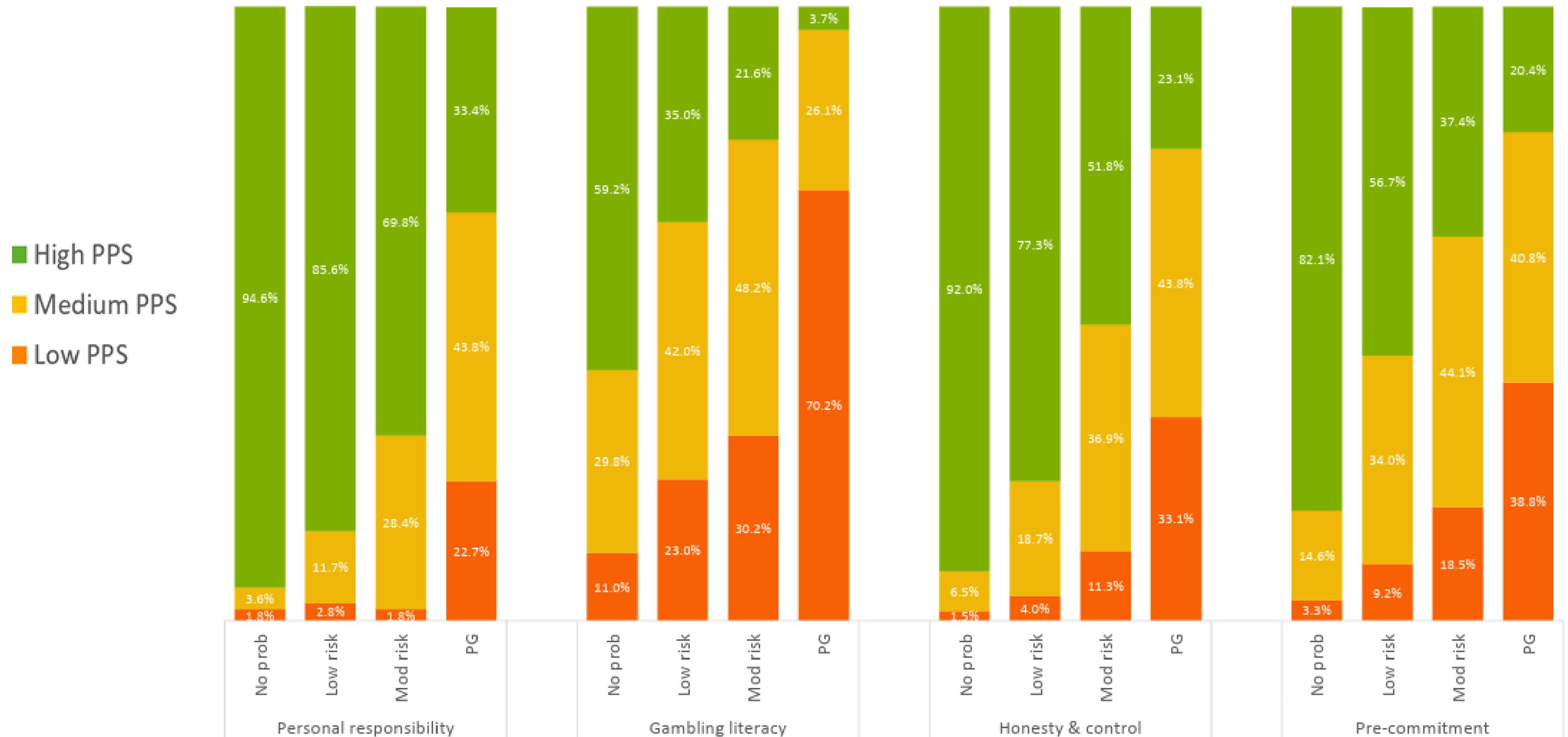
Research to Practice: Encourage Precommitment

- MA players scored the second lowest on pre-commitment factors.
- Personal responsibility, honesty, control of gambling and precommitment to a money is correlated with higher levels of gambling satisfaction.

→

Encourage control of gambling and pre-commitment by offering tools to track and limit money and time spent gambling

→

Players at MA casinos have access to PlayMyWay

Research to Practice: Increase Gambling Literacy

Most players scored medium or low on gambling literacy

➤

Focus attention on educating players about the nature of gambling

➤
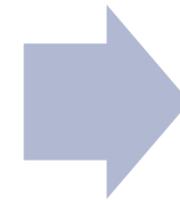
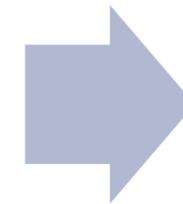A social media campaign was deployed to address erroneous perceptions about chances of winning

Research to Practice: Player Segmentation
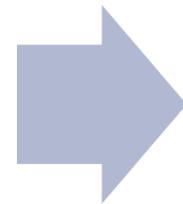
| Playing a wider range of games was linked to lower PPS scores, particularly gambling literacy | → | Focus RG Resources on high frequency multi game players | → | Provide training to GameSense Advisors. Encourage discussion with players about all forms of gambling. |

Research to Practice: Player Segmentation

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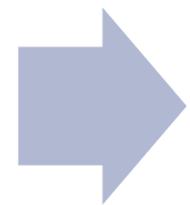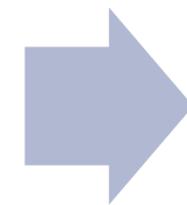
Provide training to GameSense Advisors Encourage discussion with players about all forms of gambling.

"When I first started with GameSense (10 years ago), our toolkit was simple; a few catchy phrases – "Use your GameSense", "Set a budget", "Take a break" - and some basic games that explained randomness in a few straightforward terms. It was a solid foundation, but it barely scratched the surface of what we now know about gambling behavior and harm -reduction."

Amy Gabrilla, Director of Player Health, MA Council on Gaming and Health

"Superstitious" GameSense Quiz
Cognitive Distortions

Question 3: A slot player insists on stopping the reels themselves, believing that it will increase their chances of winning. This is an example of:

- Availability Heuristic
- Near Miss Fallacy
- The Sunk Cost Fallacy
- The Illusion of Control Fallacy

MIND MATCH: SPOT THE DISTORTION!

The belief that personal strategies or rituals can influence the outcome in games of chance.

Treating an "almost win" as an indicator that a jackpot will be coming soon, rather than acknowledging that it is still a loss.

The belief that past outcomes influence the probability of future outcomes in games of chance.

The belief that if one event happens right before another, the first event must have caused the second event to happen even when there is no real connection.

The belief that after losing a significant amount of money, one must keep playing rather than accepting those losses as permanent.

The tendency for gamblers to underestimate their losses or misremember them.

If you gamble, use your GameSense

Subtle positive play grounded change: Changed the name from just "superstitions" to "cognitive distortions, supporting gambling literacy (learning terminology and what they truly are) and informed decision-making.

Player Health Materials

Answer C, 1798

The color changed as a symbol of Irish resistance to British rule. Blue was associated with the British monarch and as Ireland began fighting for independence, it adopted green as a symbol of solidarity.

GameSense Fact- While colors are often linked to luck, prosperity, and wealth in many cultures, they don't actually affect gambling outcomes. Superstitions can make it seem like players have control, but games of chance are always random.

GameSense

Subtle change from "tip" to "fact" reinforces positive play approach by promoting informed choice and gambling literacy. "Facts" signal accurate, nonjudgmental information.

GameSense Fact: Gambling ~~problems do~~ harm does not discriminate. People can struggle with gambling regardless of their backgrounds, abilities or identities.

Shifted from using "gambling problems" to "gambling harm" to promote a more inclusive approach. Aligning with positive play by acknowledging that harm can exist on a spectrum, not just at the point of a clinical "problem" & encourage early intervention/prevention.

Answer: C, Managing your money to meet current and future needs

Financial wellness is not about being rich, but about budgeting, saving, and feeling in control of your current situation and your financial future.

GameSense Fact- Last year, 8% of MA gamblers said they bet more than they could afford to lose (SEIGMA 2024). It's crucial to set healthy boundaries with gambling; ensure your budget covers essentials like rent, food, and bills, and limit gambling to no more than 1% of your monthly before-tax income.

EXAMPLE

QUESTION: T/F?

I believe my chances of winning when gambling become greater if I have been losing.

3:15.7
15:3

GameSense™

Encouraging self-assessment and reflection of personal attitudes towards gambling while also teaching a common gambling misconception.

Answer, A. Toni Morrison

In 1993, Morrison became the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. She was recognized for her impactful works on race, identity, and history.

GameSense Fact: The odds of winning the top prize on the 10- dollar "4 Million Dollar Gold 50X" scratch ticket in MA are 1 in 5.4 million. Big prizes are tough to hit. Play for fun and know your odds.

Encouraging positive play through gambling literacy by providing reminders of gambling odds and setting realistic expectations.

Answer C, They're Magically Delicious!

GameSense Fact: All businesses, including gambling operators, use marketing, advertising, and catchy taglines to promote their products. In recent years, gambling advertising—especially for sports betting—has exploded. Research suggests that this increase in gambling ads is linked to higher rates of gambling-related harm, particularly among vulnerable groups like youth. Be mindful of how advertisements can influence behavior and beliefs (McGrane et al. 2023)

Encouraging mindfulness and awareness of personal play behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions to promote positive play.

Thank You!

Questions?