

# An Introduction to Problem Gambling and Screening Tools for Gambling Disorder



The Maryland Center of Excellence  
on Problem Gambling

# Mission Statement

The Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling promotes **healthy and informed choices** regarding gambling and problem gambling through various key initiatives and partnerships.

The Center works closely with appropriate state stakeholders and brings together experts from a variety of disciplines including psychiatry, medicine, epidemiology, social work, and law.

# Key Initiatives and Resources

- **Public Awareness:** Campaigns through social media, TV, radio, public service announcements, community outreach, public awareness materials and lending library
- **Prevention Programs:** Targeted to the full age continuum and to diverse populations and at-risk groups
- **Public Policy:** To provide information regarding strategies to address the impact of gambling on Public Health within Maryland
- **Research:** To provide evidence-based data on public health aspects of gambling disorders and evaluate and develop evidence-based strategies for prevention and intervention

# Key Initiatives and Resources

- **Free Training:** On problem gambling awareness, prevention and intervention strategies with CEUs
- **Provider Referral Directory:** To provide technical assistance to the health care and behavioral health care providers in Maryland to enhance capacity to address the issue of problem gambling amongst Maryland residents at No Cost.
- **Peer Recovery Support:** To assist individuals dealing with at risk and problem gambling connect with recovery resources within Maryland and to remove any barriers to recovery
- **Helpline: Maryland Problem Gambling Helpline 1-800-GAMBLER**

# Defining Gambling

Gambling is the act of risking something of value, including money and property, on an activity that has an **uncertain outcome.**

Any betting or wagering for self or others, whether for money or not, no matter how slight or insignificant, where **the outcome is uncertain** or depends upon chance or 'skill,' constitutes gambling.

*~ Gamblers Anonymous, 1994*

# Types of Gambling

*What first comes to Mind?*

- Bingo
- Sports betting
- Lottery tickets
- Scratch Offs
- Fantasy sports
- Casino games (slots, table)
- Card or domino games when played for money
- Games of skill played for money: pool, darts, shuffleboard, golf
- Lottery video terminals (VLT)
- Online poker, gin-rummy, etc.
- Horse racing/dog racing
- Stock/commodity market
- Cryptocurrency
- Loot Boxes
- Social gaming
- E-sports

*Can you think of others?*



# Statewide Gambling Prevalence in Maryland, 2020

## Survey Background

- Conducted June – August 2020
- Over 6,000 surveys conducted across the State
- Used the NORC DSM-IV Screen for Gambling Problems (NODS) within survey

*Teresa Yates: Business Operations Director*

*Research Services, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health*

*[TYates@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:TYates@som.umaryland.edu)*



The Maryland Center of Excellence  
on Problem Gambling

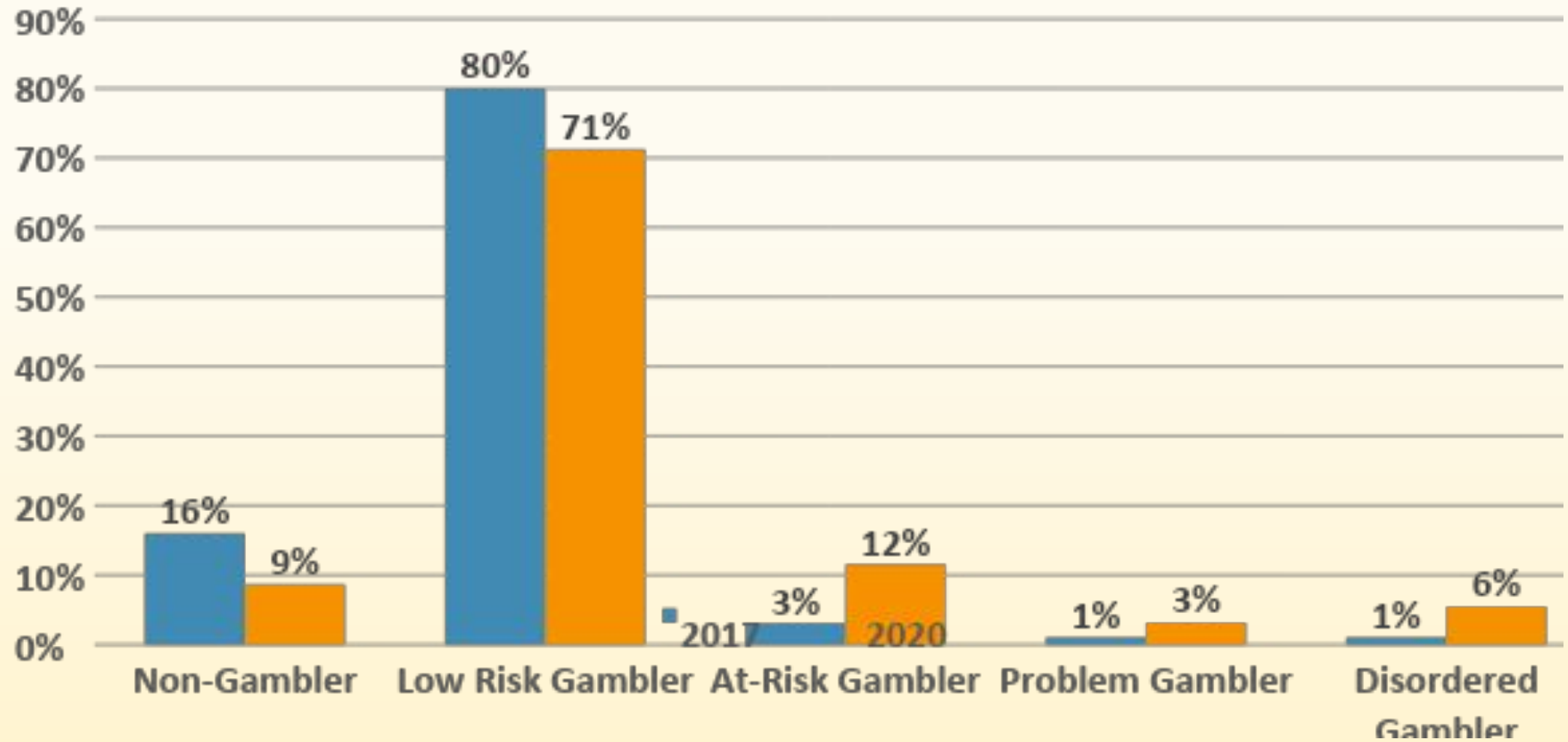
# Possible Reasons for Problem Gambling Increases in Maryland

- Survey collection conducted during a pandemic
- Methods changed from all phone survey in 2017 to on-line survey collection in 2020
- Found a true increase from 2017

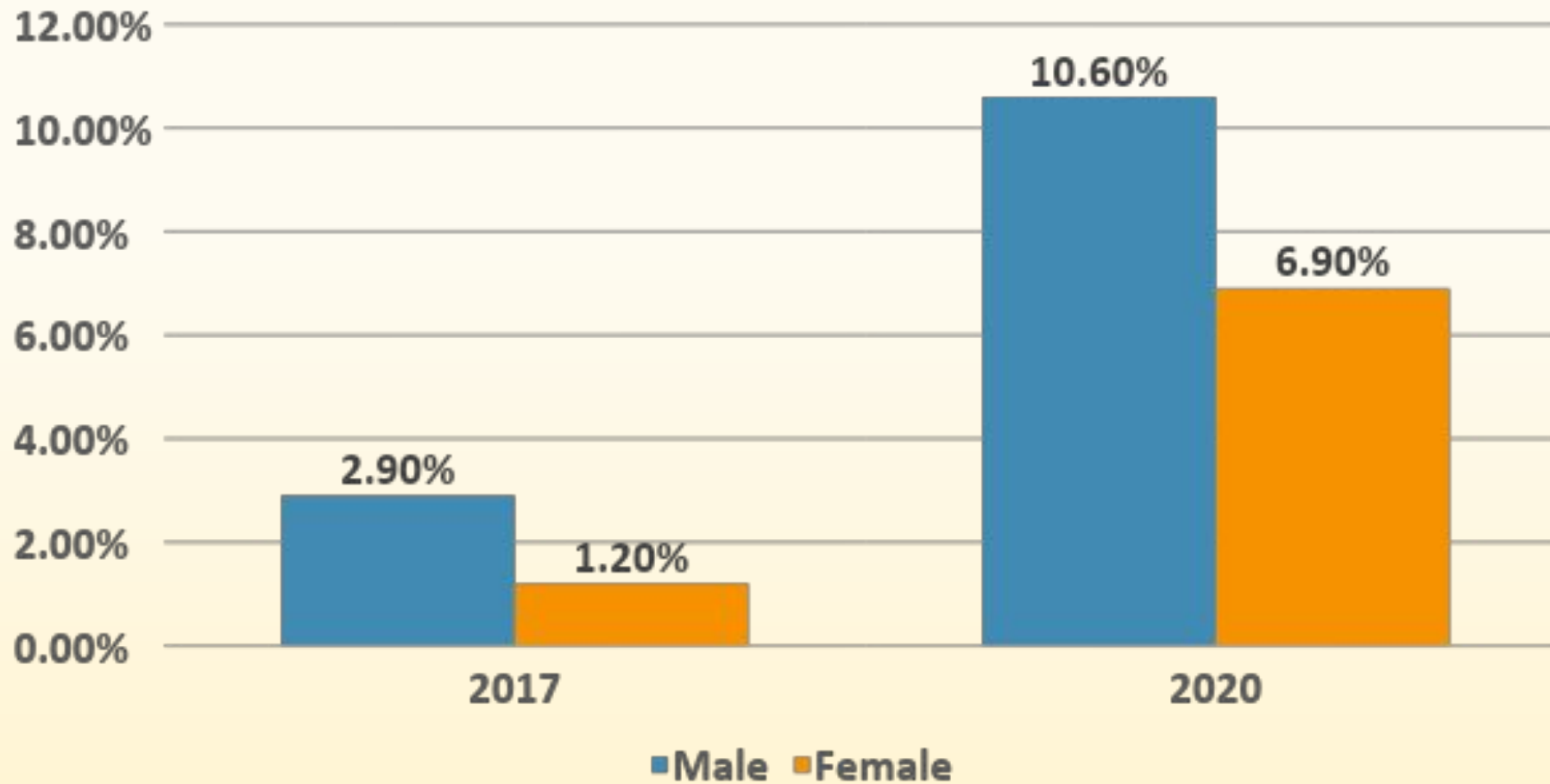




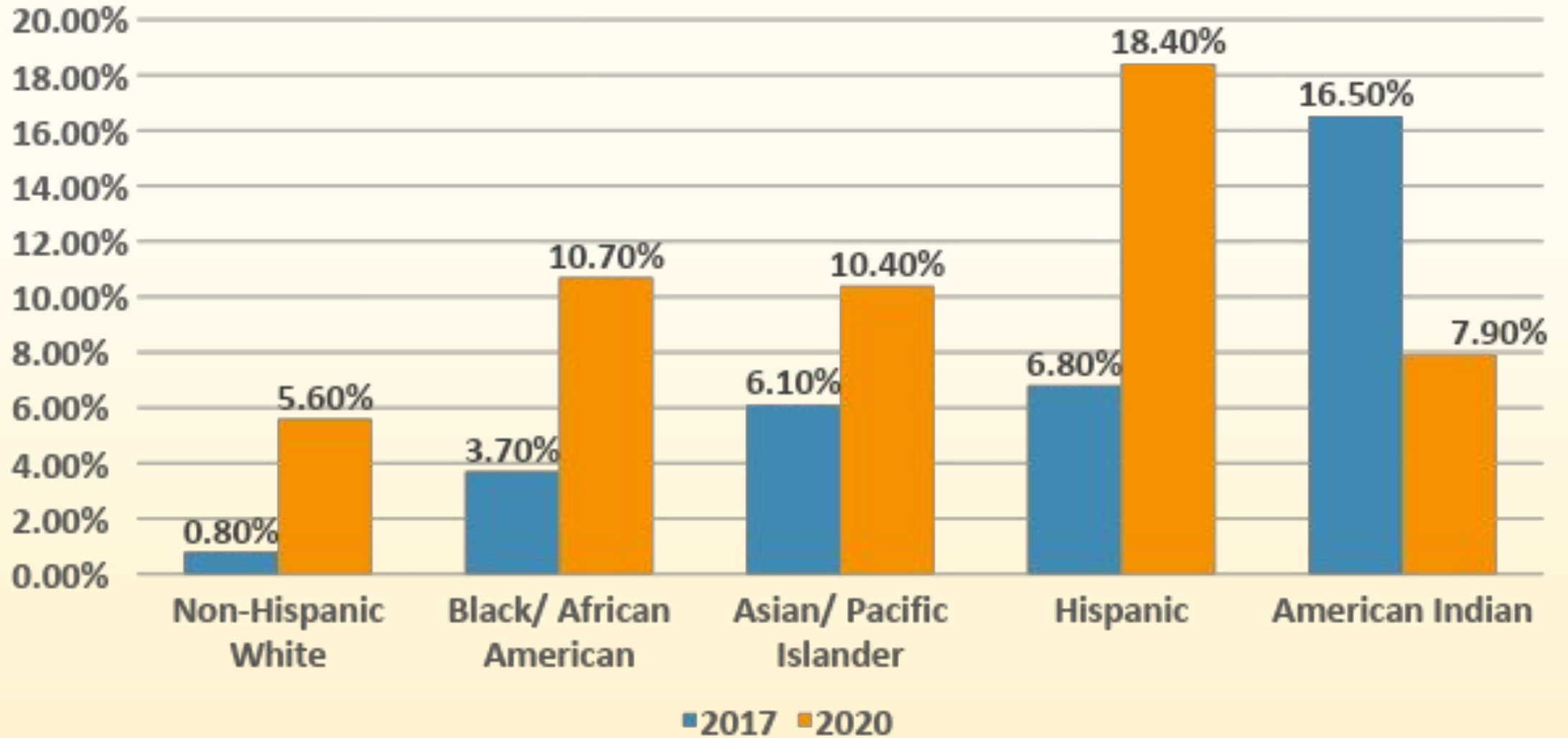
## Percentage of Maryland Respondents By Gambling Risk (Tracy, et. al., 2017 and 2020)



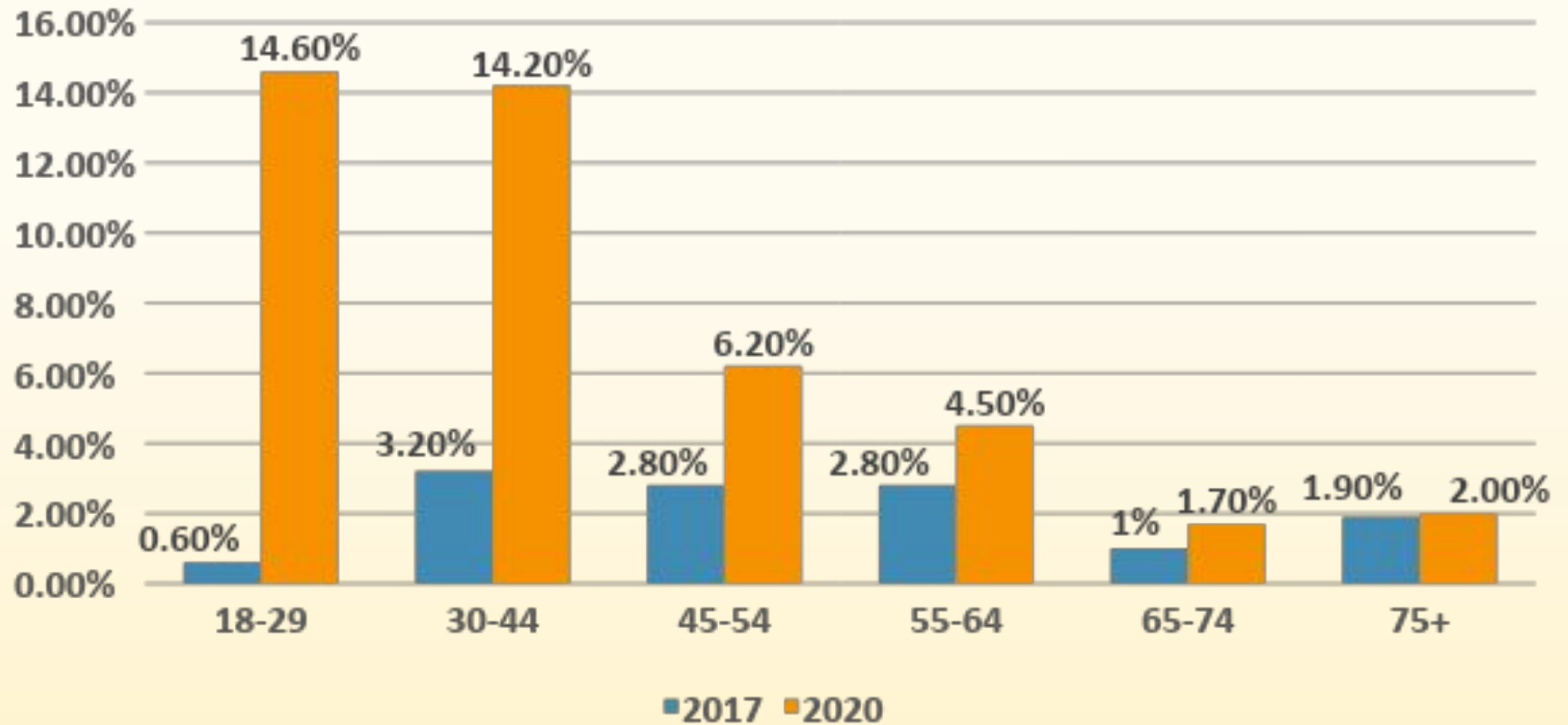
## Percentage of Maryland Disordered Gamblers by Gender (Tracy, et. al, 2017 and 2020)



## Percentage of Maryland Disordered Gamblers by Race (Tracy, et. al., 2017 and 2020)



## Percentage of Maryland Disordered Gamblers by Age (Tracy, et. al., 2017 and 2020)



**You may  
already know  
someone that  
gambles**



Approximately 85% of U.S. adults have gambled at least once in their lives; 60% in the past year.



An estimated 6% of American college students struggle with gambling related problems.



The likelihood of developing gambling disorder increases 23xs for people affected by alcohol use disorders.



Nationally about 1% of the U.S. population has an identified Gambling Disorder, another 2-6% meet subclinical criteria.

# As sports betting expands, the risk of gambling related problems does as well

- Between 2018 and 2021, NCPG estimates that the risk of gambling addiction grew by 30%.
- NCPG has seen significant increases in calls, texts and chats to the National Problem Gambling Helpline, roughly a **45% increase in calls between 2021 and 2022.**



# Risk Factors for Problematic Gambling

- Male
- An early big win
- Single or Divorced
- Gambling before legal age
- Adverse Childhood Events/Trauma
- Hold mistaken beliefs about the odds of winning
- Have a history of risk-taking or impulsive behavior
- History of substance use or other behavioral health disorder
- Family History of gambling disorder or substance use
- Member of a marginalized group or living in a disadvantaged neighborhood
- Proximity to *or* Working at a casino or other gambling venue



The background features a pattern of yellow arrows pointing towards a central red circle. The arrows are arranged in a radial pattern, creating a sunburst effect. The red circle is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image.

# How to Recognize the Signs of Problematic Gambling

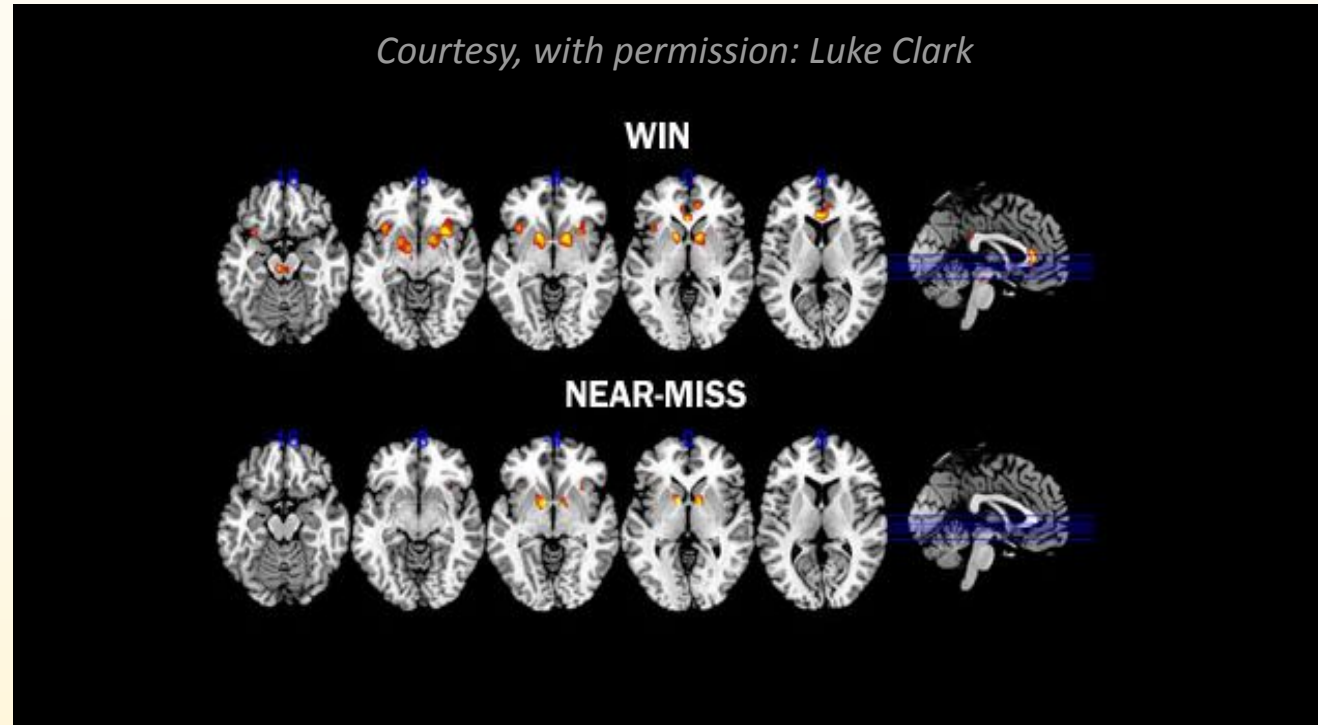


# DSM 5: Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders

## Gambling Disorder: Brief History

- ✓ Gamblers Anonymous was founded in 1957
- ✓ Introduced in 1980 as an impulse control disorder: *Pathological Gambling*, was along side kleptomania and pyromania
- ✓ In 2013, ***Gambling Disorder*** was reclassified by the American Psychiatric Association as a Substance-Related and Addictive Disorder in the DSM 5
- ✓ To date it is the only non-substance disorder included

# Gambling and the Brain



Players who almost win a game of chance have similar brain activity in reward pathways to those who actually win.

Gambling Disorder: DSM 5  
*Warning Signs of Problem Gambling*

**Diagnostic Criteria:**

Persistent and recurrent gambling behavior leading to **clinically significant impairment or distress** exhibited by **4 or more of the following in a 12-month** period and *not better explained by a manic episode.*

**1-3 “At-Risk”**    **4-5 Mild**    **6-7 Moderate**    **8-9 Severe**

# Gambling Disorder: DSM 5

## *Warning Signs of Problem Gambling*

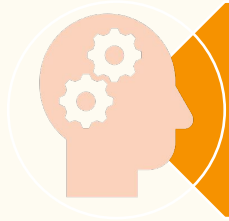
- Lies to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
- Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
- Relies on others to provide money to relieve desperate financial situations caused by gambling
- Is often preoccupied with gambling (e.g., having persistent thoughts of reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping, or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble).

# Gambling Disorder: DSM 5

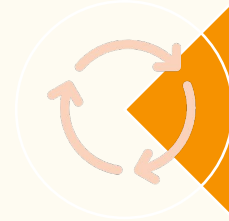
## *Warning Signs of Problem Gambling*

- Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
- Is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
- Has made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
- After losing money gambling, often returns another day to get even ("chasing" one's losses)
- Often gambles when feeling distressed (e.g., guilty, anxious, depressed)

# Gambling and SUD: Similarities



Preoccupation &  
Craving



Progressive, Loss of  
Control



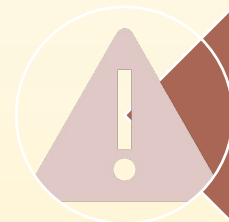
Tolerance &  
Withdrawal



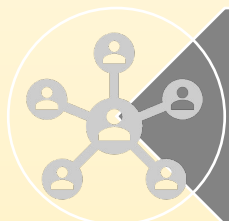
Biopsychosocial  
disorders



Lies to conceal  
behavior



Negative impact on  
major life areas

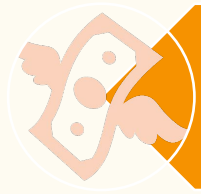


Self-Help Support  
Groups



Familial involvement

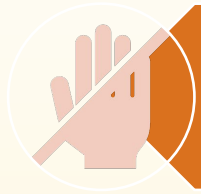
# Gambling and SUD: Differences



Fantasies of success



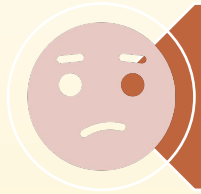
Easier to hide



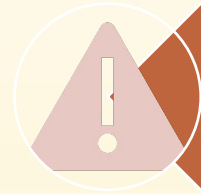
Less resources available



No ingestion required



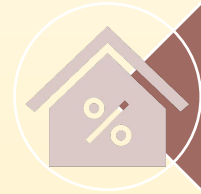
Powerful sense of shame  
and guilt



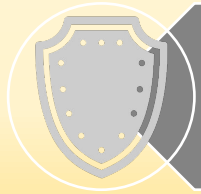
No risk of overdose



Intensity of family anger



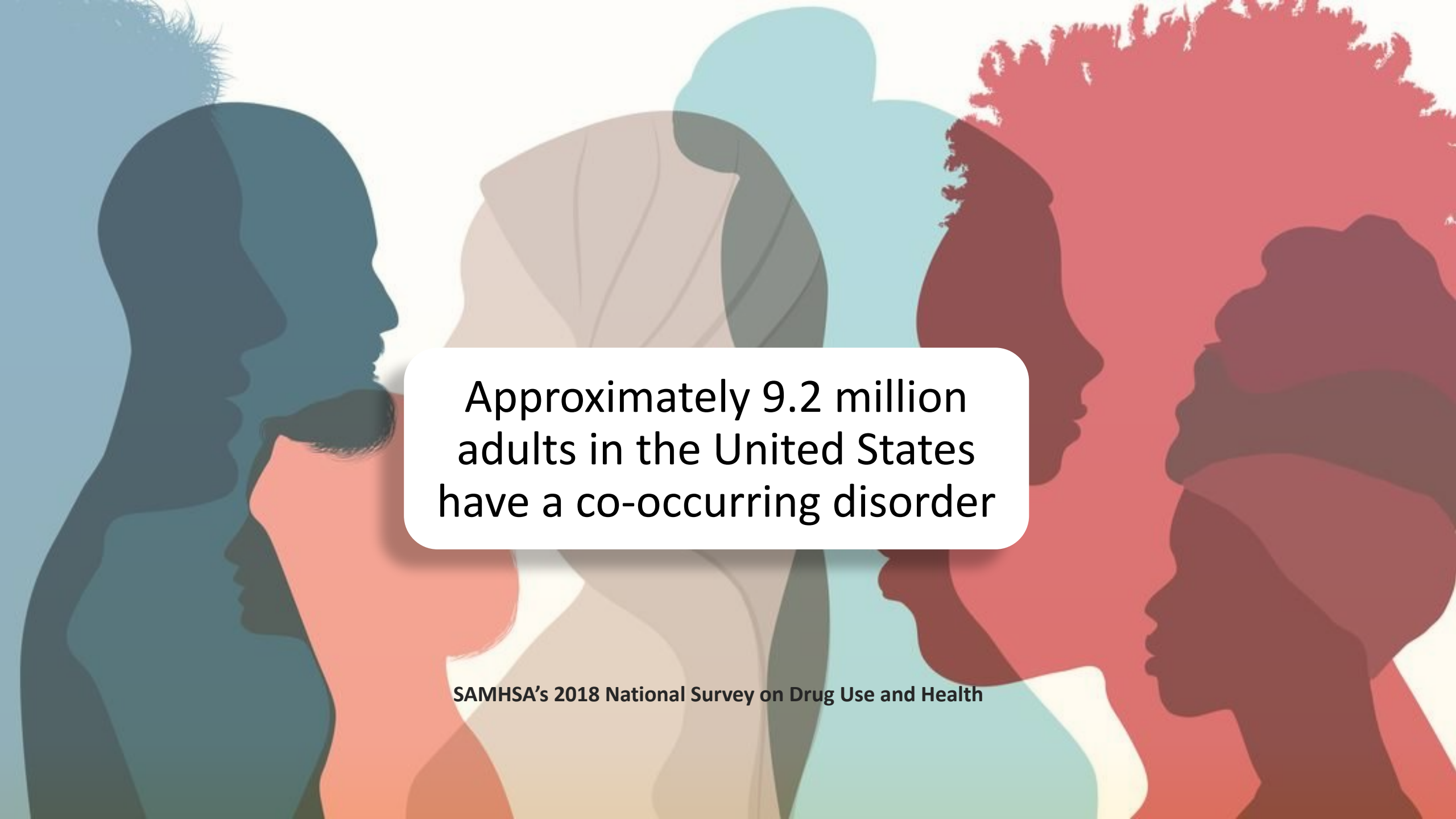
Greater financial problems



Greater denial and  
defenses



Less public awareness and  
acceptance



Approximately 9.2 million  
adults in the United States  
have a co-occurring disorder

SAMHSA's 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health



# Co-Occurring Disorders: Gambling Disorder

“It is rare to observe a disordered gambler *without* a comorbid condition, and it is often the comorbid condition that ultimately leads the individual to treatment.”

*(Afifi, Cox, & Sareen, 2006)*

# Common Comorbidities

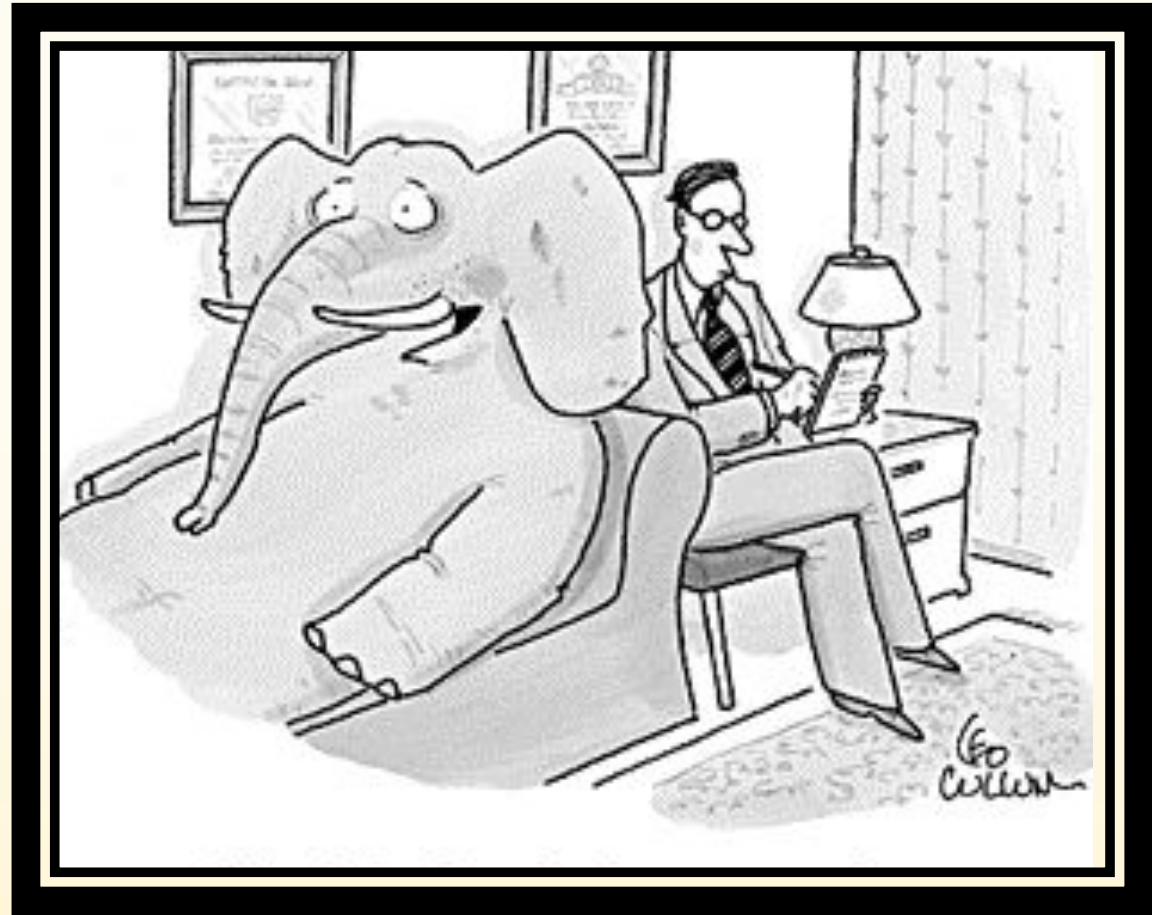


# Gambling and Suicidality

- Per DSM 5, of those in treatment for a gambling disorder, up to **50%** have had suicidal ideation and **20%** have attempted suicide.
- This is about 10X the rate in the general population.
- Often consider “accidents” as way for family to collect insurance:
  - “I am worth more dead than alive.”
- **Understudied and under-recognized.** The public, as well as providers (primary care, mental health, SUD etc.) recognize lethality of substance use overdoses and severe mental illness, but don’t think of gambling as life threatening.

# Why Screen for Gambling?

- Many cases of Gambling Disorder go undetected, due to limited assessment for this problem.
- Screening can help identify individuals who need further assessment.



***“I’m right there in the room, and no one even acknowledges me.”***



# Gambling Screening Tools

- **Lie/Bet**
- **NODS-CLIP**
- **NODS-PERC**
- **SOGS**
- **SOGS-RA**
- **Brief Biosocial Gambling Screen**
- **Problem Gambling Severity Index**
- ***Self Assessments:***  
[helpmygamblingproblem.org](http://helpmygamblingproblem.org) &  
GA 20 Questions



# Problem Gambling Screening Guide

Guidelines for Integrating Gambling Screening  
and Assessment into Current Practice

A Guide for Behavioral Health  
Providers and Medical Professionals



The Maryland Center of Excellence  
on Problem Gambling

## Start the Conversation:

### *Integrate Gambling into your Regular Practice*

- ✓ Universal Screening, not only suspected individuals.
- ✓ Reduces stigma, giving permission and a safe space to talk about gambling.
- ✓ Make connections between gambling and other major life areas, initiating change talk.
- ✓ Have gambling conversations as a part of ongoing psychoeducation.
- ✓ Not diagnostic, repeat as rapport builds, treatment plan reviews, etc.



# Peer Support for Gambling

In FY22  
(July 2021-June 2022),  
330 new clients were  
actively served by the  
Center's Peers



Offer guidance and support to limit, stop or control gambling



Connecting help seekers to no cost treatment, 12-step meetings, credit counseling, voluntary exclusion program, etc.



Inspire hope and optimism navigating recovery goals



Advocate that recovery is possible through lived experience





# **GAMBLING RESOURCES**

**GAMBLING HELPLINE: 1-800-GAMBLER**

**Gam-Ban**

<https://gamban.com/>

**Bet Blocker:**

<https://betblocker.org/>

**True Link:**

<https://www.truelinkfinancial.com/>

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**

<https://988lifeline.org/>

1-800-273-8255 or **988**

**National Council on Problem Gambling**

<https://www.ncpgambling.org/>

**Gamblers Anonymous**

<https://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/locations>

**Gam-Anon**

<https://gam-anon.org/>

**SMART Recovery**

<https://www.smartrecovery.org/gambling-addiction/>

# MARYLAND RESOURCES

*Gambling Helpline: 1-800-GAMBLER*



## Maryland Center of Excellence on Problem Gambling:

- [mdproblemgambling.com](http://mdproblemgambling.com)
- [helpmygamblingproblem.org](http://helpmygamblingproblem.org)
- [asiangamblingsos.org](http://asiangamblingsos.org)
- [militarygamblesafe.org](http://militarygamblesafe.org)

## Maryland Coalition of Families:

<https://www.mdcoalition.org/who-we-help/problem-gambling>

## Local GA Meetings:

<http://dmvgamblinghelp.org>

**Maryland 211**, press 1: Crisis Hotline

## Maryland Legal Aid:

<https://www.mdlab.org>

## Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service

<https://mvlslaw.org>

## Consumer Credit Counseling Services of Maryland:

[www.cccsmd.org](http://www.cccsmd.org)

## CASH Campaign of Maryland (*Creating Assets, Savings and Hope*):

<https://cashmd.org>

# Ways the Center Provides Support



- Free Gambling Related Trainings with CEUs
- Free Case Consultation Calls 4xs a month on Zoom
- Free Peer Support: *1:1 and Group Presentations*
- Free Treatment for Maryland Residents
- Free Awareness Materials for your lobby or offices

# THANK YOU!



Heather Eshleman M.P.H.

**Prevention Manager**

Pronouns: she/her

Office: 667-214-2120

Direct: 667-214-2128

[heshleman@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:heshleman@som.umaryland.edu)



Kristen Beall LCSW-C, ICGC-I, CAC-AD

**Clinical Manager**

Pronouns: she/her

Office: 667-214-2123

Direct: 443-687-6522

[krbeall@som.umaryland.edu](mailto:krbeall@som.umaryland.edu)



Questions  
or  
Comments