



Shifting Approach: Massachusetts GameSense Research Results and Application

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Background

- In 2014, the Massachusetts Gaming Commission partnered with British Columbia Lottery Corporation to introduce GameSense as part of a responsible gaming strategy in the nascent casino industry in the state.
- Massachusetts was the first US state to adopt GameSense.
- Initial skepticism has shifted to support and cooperation from industry, though questions about the approach and effectiveness have lingered.
- This session will provide an overview of key findings from the research and evaluation and how it shaped our approach.
- Challenges remain as the gambling landscape changes and technology advances.

2011 Expanded Gaming Act

- Allows for resort style casinos in three geographically diverse regions
- No more than one casino in each region
- Allows for one slots parlor statewide (not geographically restricted)

Sports wagering legalized in MA in August 2022; launched in Massachusetts casinos on January 31, 2023 and online on March 10, 2023.





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.

Core Values

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 potential gambling-related harm to individuals and the community.
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THE PUBLIC HEALTH TRUST FUND

Public Health Trust Fund was established to allocate significant resources to research, prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery support services to mitigate the harmful effects of problem gambling and related issues.

The Fund is overseen by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Problem Gambling Services, provides relevant public health programs and services and MGC conducts relevant research and responsible gaming activities.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

PUBLIC HEALTH TRUST FUND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Within the department, the Office of Problem Gambling Services provides relevant public health programs and services.

MASSACHUSETTS GAMING COMMISSION

Conducts relevant research and responsible gaming activities. Promotes research & evidence-based best practices.

Massachusetts 2011 Expanded Gaming & 2022 Sports Wagering Acts

- Directed MGC to implement annual research agenda & numerous references to public health strategies to prevent/mitigate gambling harms
- **Funding:** Public Health Trust Fund
- Funding comes from assessments on licensees, as well as taxes on gross gaming revenue

MGC Research Program

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.

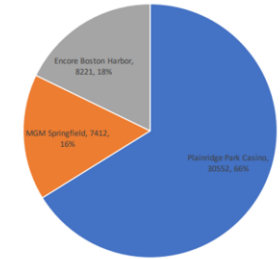




PlayMyWay Active Enrollments
June 2016 – December 2023

PlayMyWay launched at Encore Boston Harbor on September 12, 2022

PlayMyWay launched at MGM Springfield on March 31, 2022

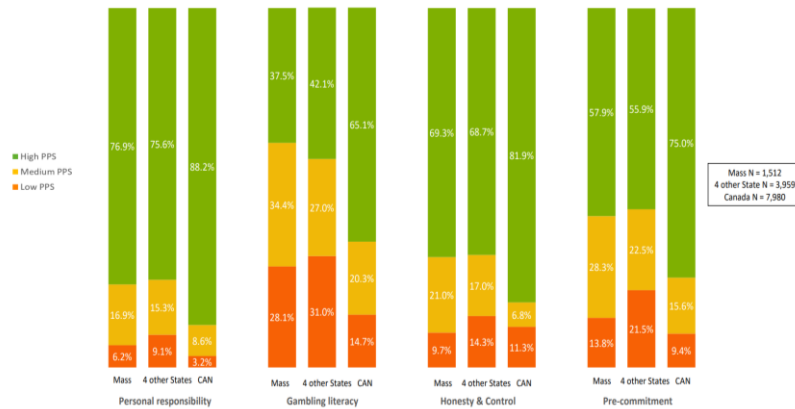


PlayMyWay launched at Plainridge Park Casino on June 2016

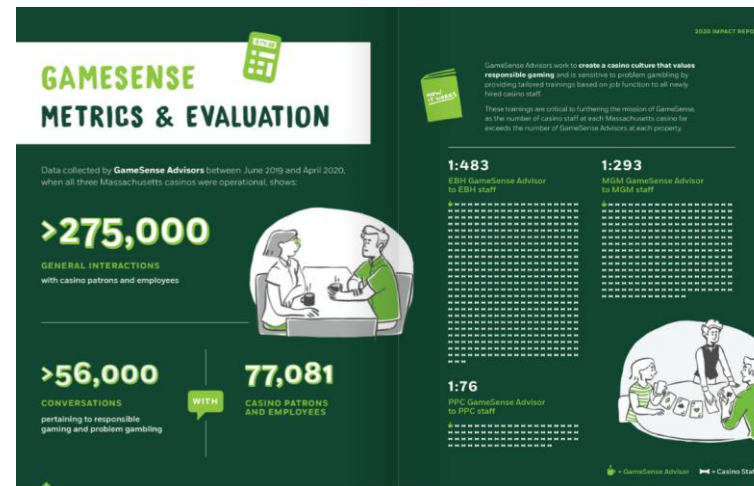
Total active enrollments: 46,185



PPS scores: Comparison of players in Massachusetts with players in four other US states and Canada



Positive play scores in Massachusetts were similar to those observed in four other US States



It can all be a little overwhelming but remember why we do what we do....

Our goal is to promote player health by reducing gambling-related social harms.

We accomplish this by providing an effective, sustainable, measurable, socially responsible, and accountable approach to gambling.

MAGIC MASSACHUSETTS GAMBLING IMPACT COHORT STUDY

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Less stable ↑

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%).

Prevention Paradox at Play in Massachusetts

On a population level, the Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in Massachusetts (SEIGMA) team found that approximately 70% of all gambling harms occur in the low-risk adult general population due to the high number of people in these groups, even though people in the high-risk population suffer the greatest amount of harm per individual (Volberg et al., 2021).

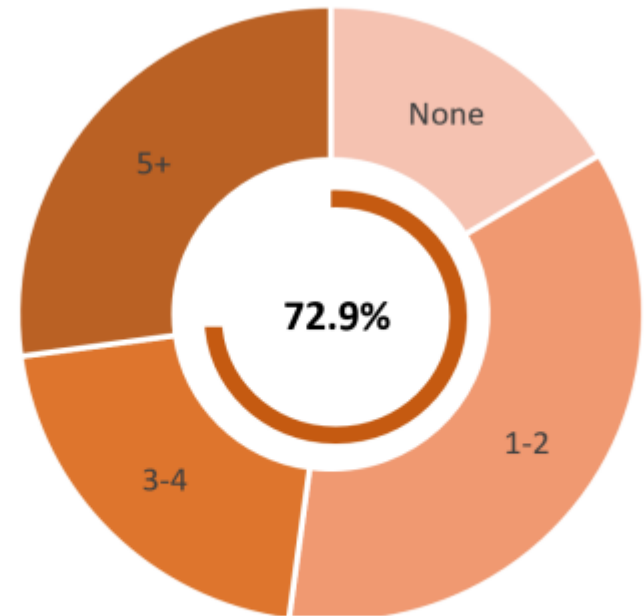


Figure 1. Proportion of Harms Among Regular Gamblers by Gambling Severity Group

GameSense in Focus: Insights from an Evaluation in Massachusetts Casinos

Wohl, M. J. A., Gaudett, G. E., Davis, C. G., & Tabri, N. (2023). Players' awareness of and engagement with GameSense in Massachusetts casinos [Report]. Massachusetts Gaming Commission.

GameSense

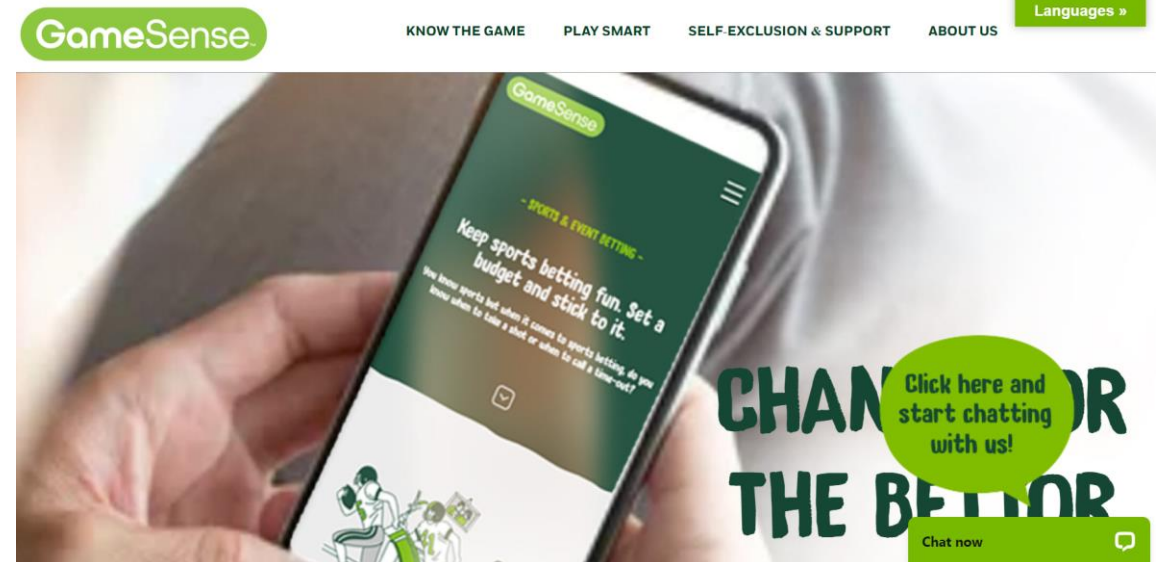
GameSense is a comprehensive responsible gaming strategy

GameSense Advisors work at a **GameSense Info Center** located at casinos. GameSense Advisors receive extensive training in the areas of responsible gaming techniques, problem gaming behavior and local resources for help.

Promote a positive approach to play with patrons and peace of mind with the general public.

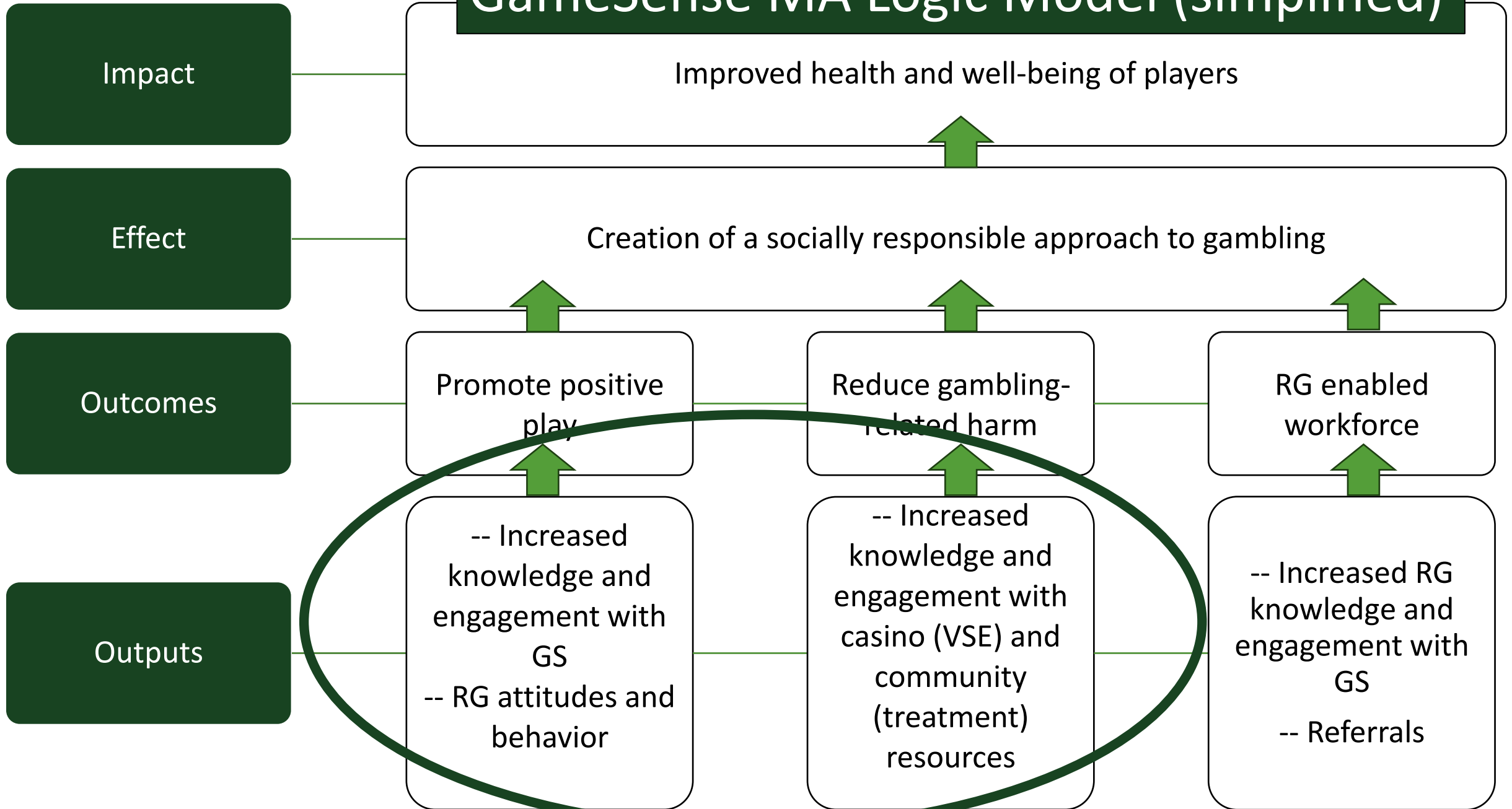
A voice of reason offering facts for a clear perspective.
Clarify myths and messages around gambling.
Help players understand the rules of the games

Presented on multiple platforms.





GameSense MA Logic Model (simplified)



The logo for GameSense, featuring the brand name in a dark green, sans-serif font centered within a white rounded rectangular shape, all set against a dark green background.

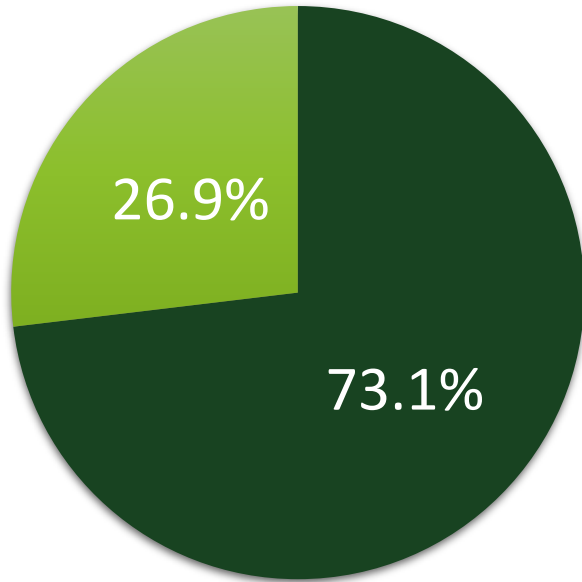
GameSense

Survey of "regular" Patrons

Recruitment: 1109 patrons who

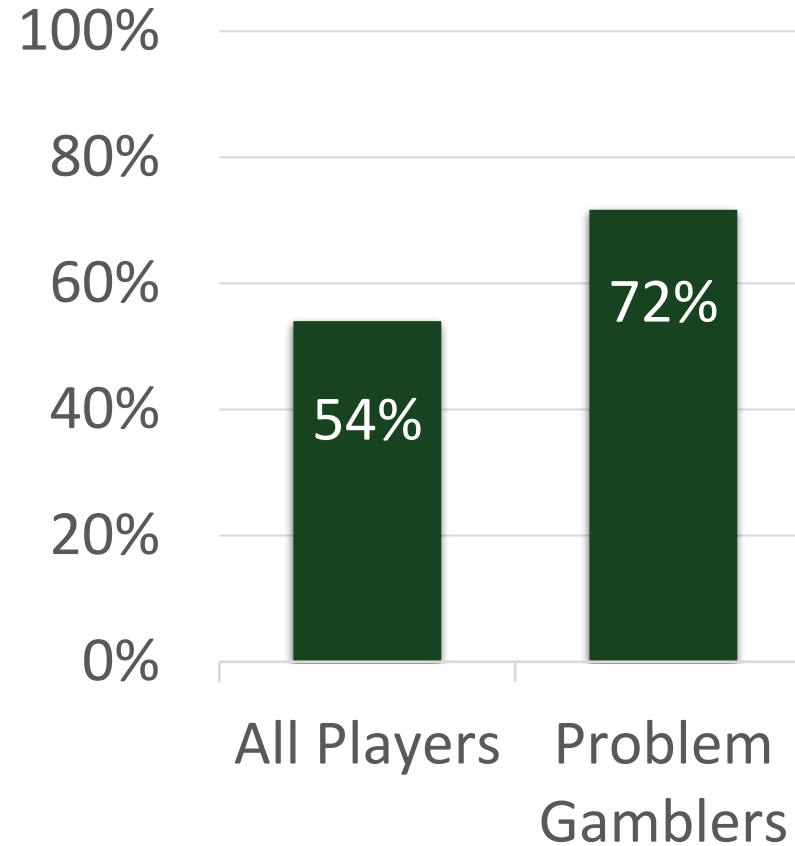
- 1) visited one of the three Massachusetts casinos at least three times in the last three months and
- 2) Spent at least \$100.

Awareness

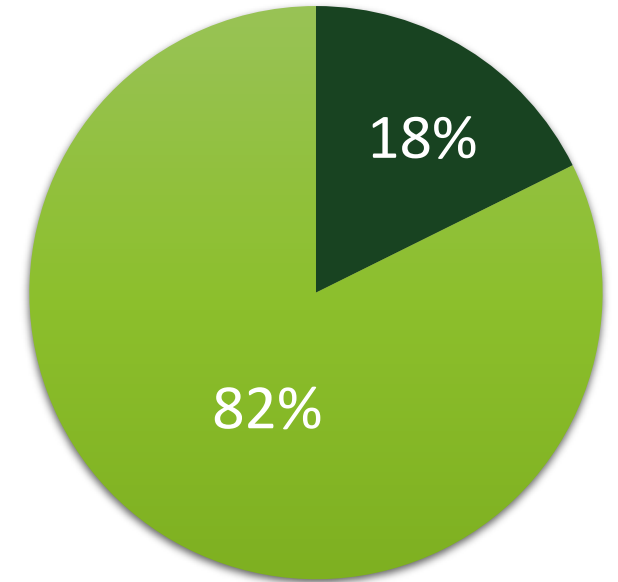


- Aware of GS
- Not aware of GS

Target audience



Have you interacted with GameSense?



- Had engagement
- No engagement

Reasons for *not* engaging with GameSense

Three groups emerged:

Self-assured (n=124):

- “I already know how games work”
- “I already know about gambling-related myths”

Invitation responsive (n=248):

- “No one asked me to check GameSense out

Self-assured non-believers (n=132):

- “I don’t think GameSense Advisors would be able to teach me anything”
- “I don’t think GameSense Advisors help players”

Reasons for engaging with GameSense

Two groups emerged:

Information seekers (n=124):

- “To learn about gambling-related myths”
- “To learn about voluntary self-exclusion”
- “To learn about support for problem gambling”

Curiosity and swag inspired (n=67):

- “I stumbled on a GameSense information Center”
- “To get swag (e.g., a lanyard)”

Purpose of GameSense

Perceived purpose	Proportion who responded “Yes”
Helps educate players about responsible gambling	84%
Provides responsible gaming tools	70%
Offers support for gambling-related problems	70%
Helps educate players about gambling-related myths	26%
It’s a lounge where players can get away from the floor	16%

Outcome of Interacting with GSAs

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor:	M (SD)	% agreement
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly.	4.83 (1.51)	53.5%
I would encourage others to speak with a GameSense Advisor.	4.94 (1.38)	58.8%

Means are on a 7-point scale where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 7 = "strongly agree". Percent agreement was based on responds of 5 or higher on the scale.

Take home messages

1. High level of awareness about GameSense, but room for improvement
2. Only half of participants believed GameSense was for everyone, which may be undermining engagement.
3. Those who engage reap benefits (and refer)



Recommendations

1. Segmented messaging about GameSense and RG.
2. Normalize the use of GameSense.

The GameSense logo is centered within a white rounded rectangle. The word "GameSense" is written in a dark green, sans-serif font. The background of the entire slide is a solid dark green color.

GameSense

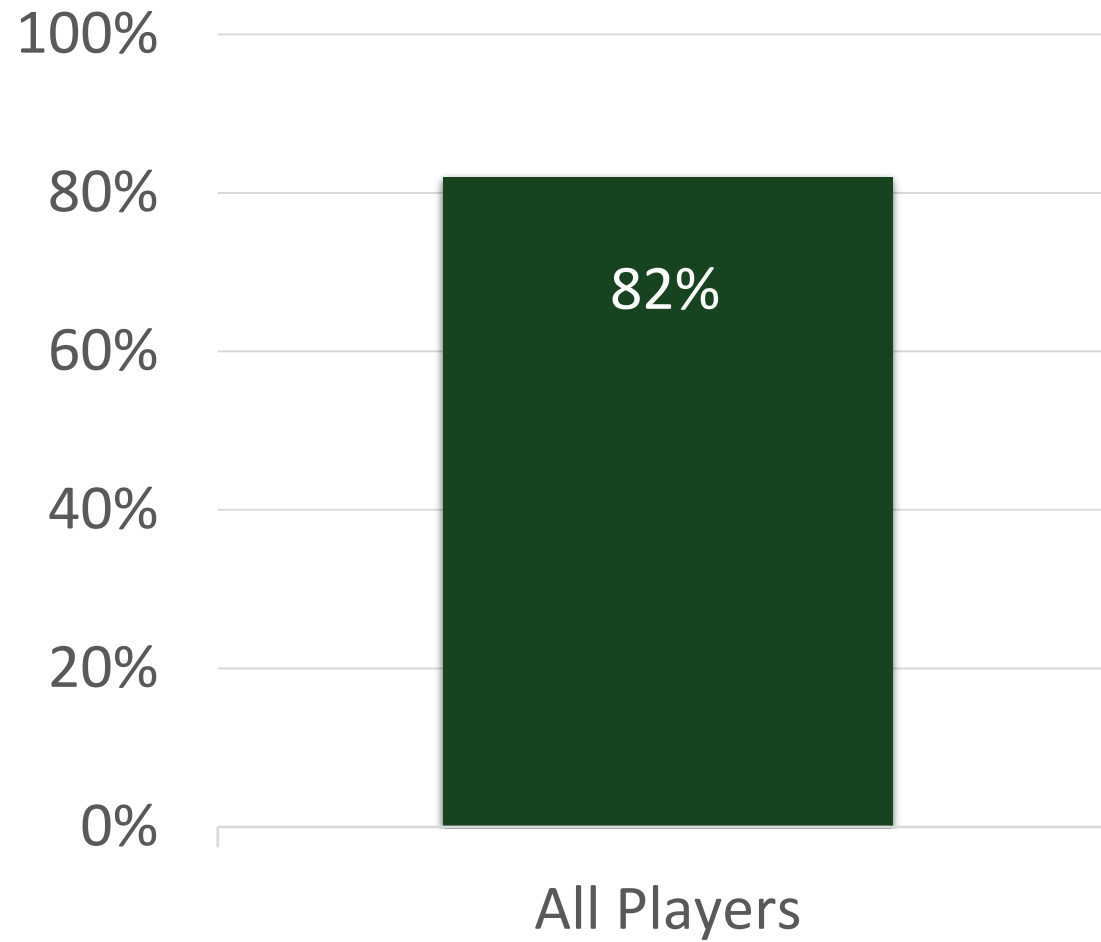
**Survey of Patrons who
interacted with GSAs
about RG**

Recruitment: 303 patrons who visited one of the three Massachusetts casinos and had a meaningful interaction with a GameSense Advisor

An **Exchange Interaction** is a two-way communication with a GSA about responsible gaming or problem gaming

A **Demonstration Interaction** involves a longer communication from a GSA about how a game, responsible gaming tool, or concept works.

Target audience



Purpose of GameSense

Perceived purpose	Proportion who responded “Yes”
Helps educate players about responsible gambling	94%
Provides responsible gaming tools	94%
Offers support for gambling-related problems	93%
Helps educate players about gambling-related myths	84%
It’s a lounge where players can get away from the floor	70%

Reasons for engaging with GameSense

Three groups emerged:

Comprehensive information seekers (n=108):

- To learn about: gambling-related myths, voluntary self-exclusion, and support for problem gambling
- To get swag

RG Curious(n=102):

- To learn about: RG, gambling-related myths, voluntary self-exclusion, and support for problem gambling

Externally inspired (n=83):

- “GSA initiated a conversation with me”
- “To get swag”

Outcome of Interacting with GSAs

Due to my experience(s) with a GameSense Advisor:	% agreement
I feel more informed about how to gamble responsibly.	74.2%
I would encourage others to speak with a GameSense Advisor.	78.8%

Take home messages

1. Patrons benefit from interacting with GSAs.
2. Patrons have diverse motivations for engaging with GameSense.

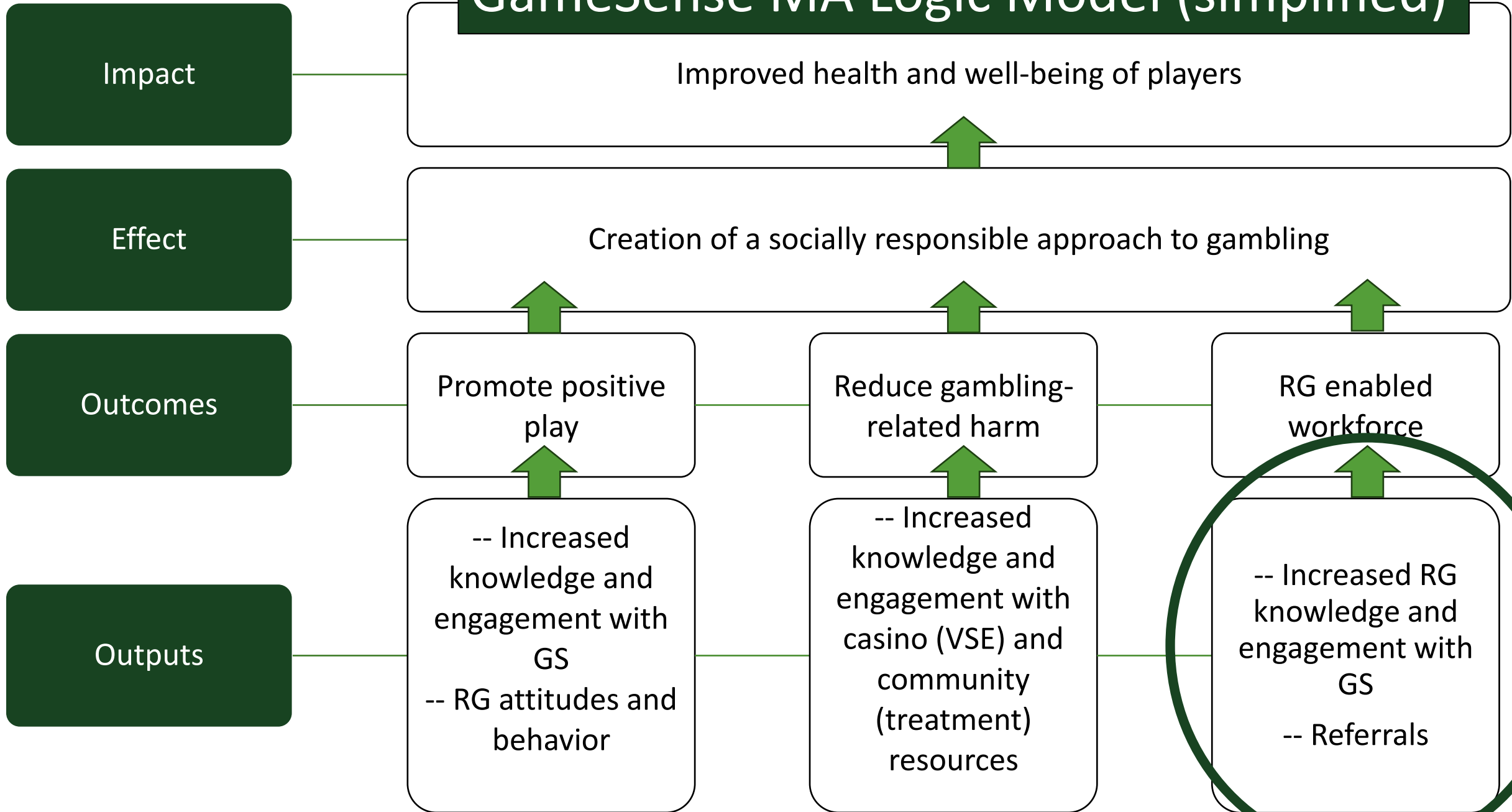


Recommendations

1. Tailored Engagement Strategies
2. Incentivize referrals to GS
3. Increase the GSIC footprint to create a dedicated, GameSense branded, “Play Break”



GameSense MA Logic Model (simplified)



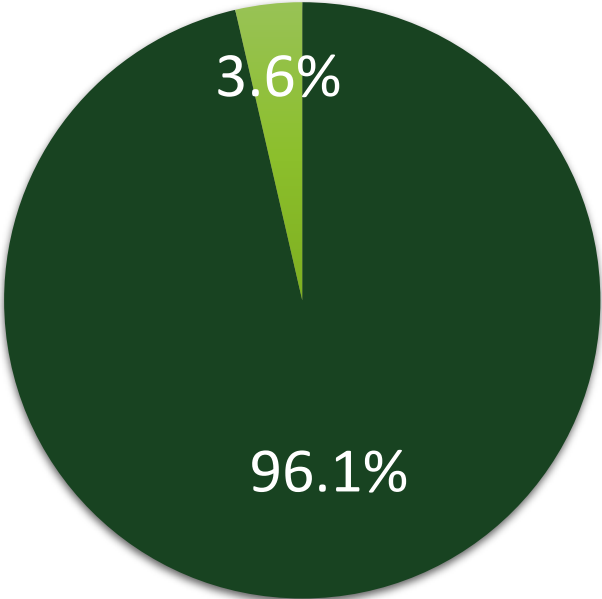
The logo for GameSense, featuring the brand name in a dark green, sans-serif font centered within a white rounded rectangular shape, all set against a dark green background.

GameSense

**Survey of front-line casino
employees**

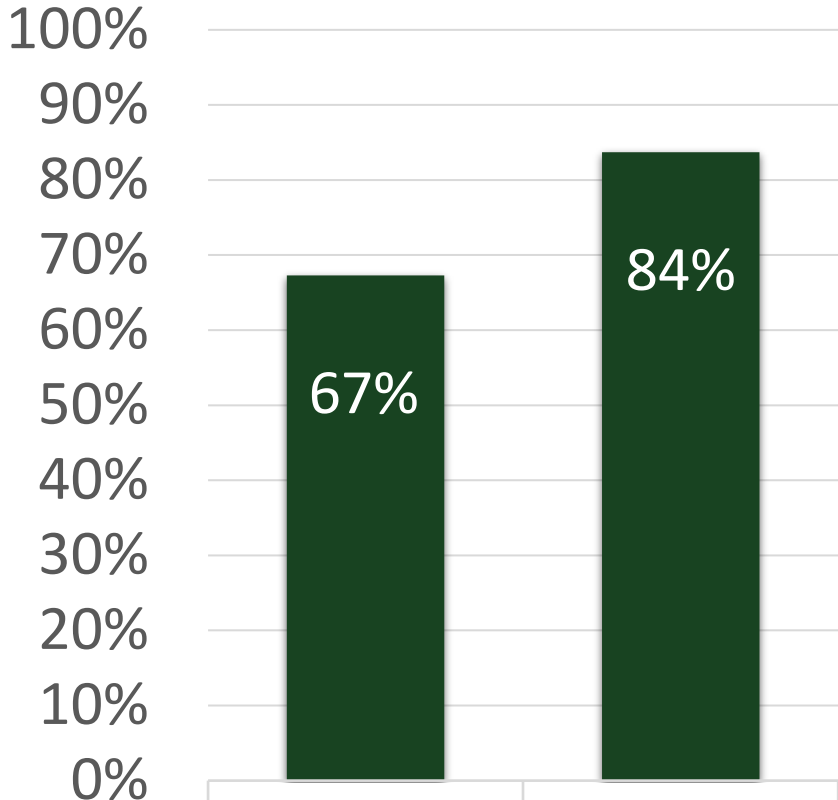
Recruitment: 288 front-line employees from one of
the three Massachusetts casinos

Awareness



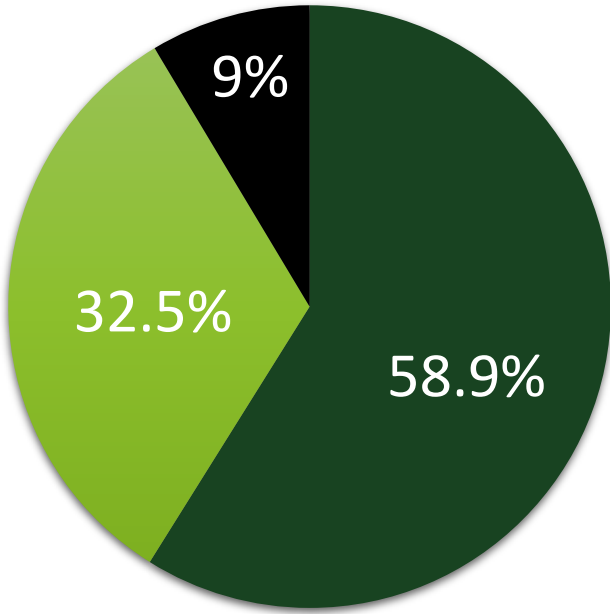
- Aware of GS
- Not aware of GS

Target Audience



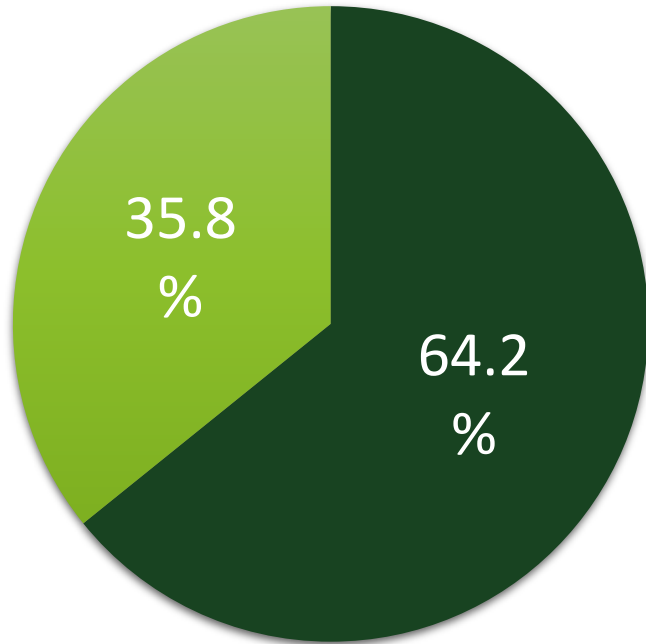
- All Players
- Problem Gamblers

Have you interacted with GameSense?



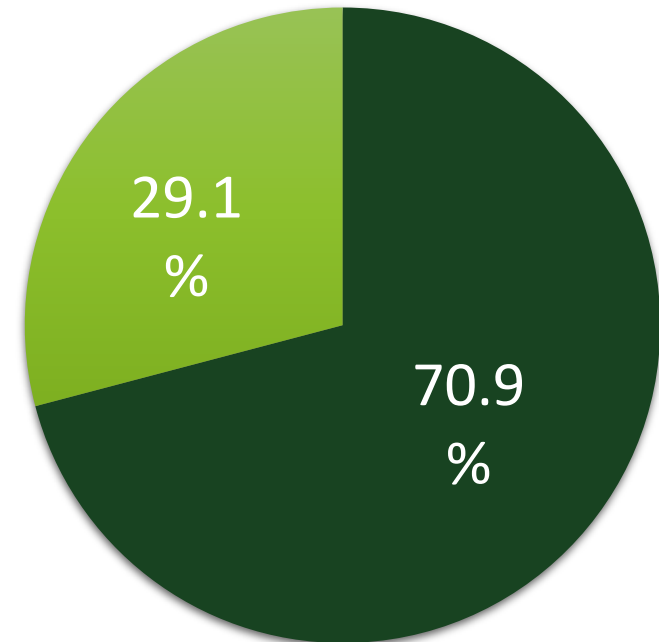
- Visited a GSIC
- Did not visit a GSIC
- No response

Referrals by those who interacted with a GSA



- Have referred a patron to GSA
- Have not referred a patron to a GSA

Referrals by those who interacted with a GSA at a GameSense Information Center



- Have referred a patron to GSA
- Have not referred a patron to a GSA

Take home messages

- Player-facing employees exhibit high awareness of GameSense
- Interactions with GSAs prove valuable
- Referral of patrons to GSAs shows strong correlation with GSIC visits, emphasizing their interconnectedness.
- Comprehensive training is important that encourages employee-customer interactions.



Recommendations

1. Comprehensive Player-facing Employee Training about responsible gambling and GameSense (that is separate from new employee training)
2. Emphasize Value of Employee Interactions with GameSense Advisors (incentivize visits)
3. Refresher “Booster” Training



A special thanks to our GameSense
Advisors!!!

THANK YOU from the MGC Division of Research and Responsible Gaming Staff

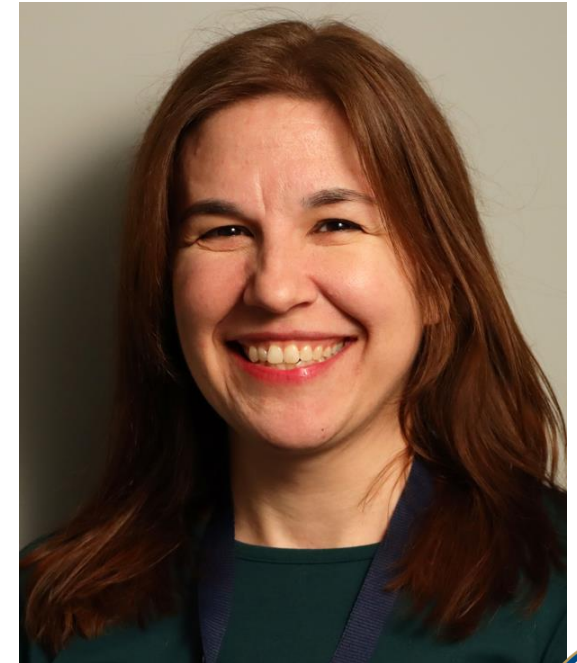
Mark Vander Linden, Director of Research and Responsible Gaming



Long Banh, Program Manager



Bonnie Andrews, Research Manager



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