

# Sports Betting From the Front Line: Treating sports betting in clinical practice



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# JODY BECHTOLD

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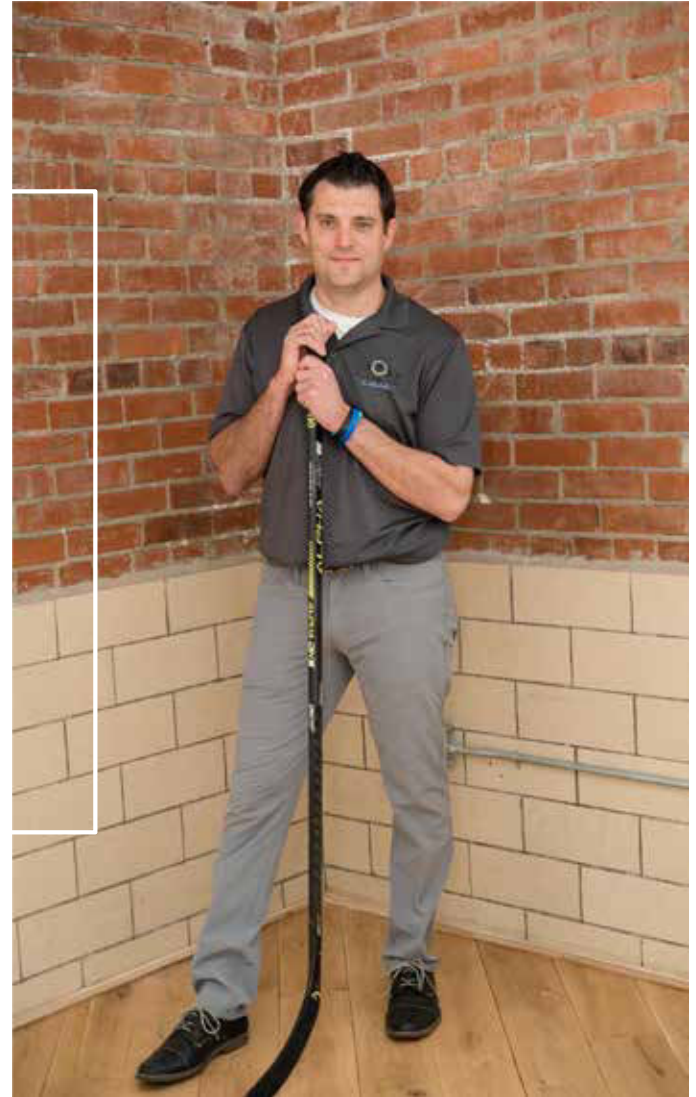
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# ROB BUMBACO

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Clinical Social Worker  
Certified Mental Coach  
COO, The Better Institute  
Former Division I athlete  
Creator: Back in the Game®



# Objectives



- Review current research on sports betting, athletes, and problem gambling
- Understand the risk factors for athletes and problem gambling
- Learn how to utilize past athletic experience to develop effective gambling treatment plan
- Discuss evidence-informed clinical interventions with most sports bettors during therapy

# Athletes & Gambling

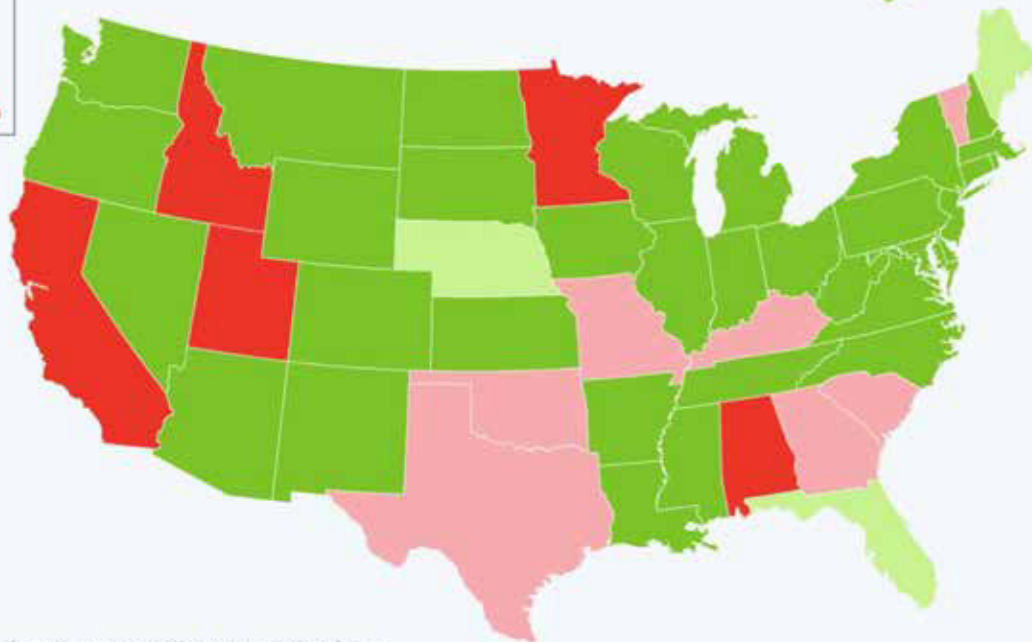


# The State(s) of Sports Betting in the U.S.

Legal status of sports betting in the United States (as of Feb. 6, 2023)



- Legal, live
- Legal, not operational
- Illegal
- Illegal, legislation pending



Source: American Gaming Association





## Major NFL Suspensions

**Ray Rice:** Domestic Violence; 2 games

**Adrian Peterson:** Child Abuse; 6 games

**Greg Hardy:** Domestic Violence; 10 games reduced to 4 games

**Ezekiel Elliott:** Domestic Violence; 6 games

**Calvin Ridley: Gambling; 17 games**



**CALVIN RIDLEY**  @CalvinRidley1 · Mar 7

I bet 1500 total I don't have a gambling problem

 10.1K

 52.7K

 278.2K

# The New York Times, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022

## *Gambling's Spread*

The popularity of sports betting has exploded in recent years in the U.S.



By Eric Lipton

Nov. 21, 2022

Four years ago, betting on live sports was illegal in most of the United States. Now, fans watching games or attending them at stadiums are barraged with advertisements encouraging them to bet on matchups, not just watch as spectators.

This transformation in sports betting started nearly a decade ago, at first with the explosion of wagering on fantasy sports. Then in 2018, the Supreme Court cleared the way for states to legalize wagers on live games. Today, 31 states and Washington, D.C., permit sports gambling either online or in person, and five more states have passed laws that will allow such betting in the future. Professional sports in the U.S. now are part of a multibillion-dollar corporate gambling enterprise.

This shift represents the largest expansion of gambling in United States history. Several of my Times colleagues and I spent months investigating how the industry expanded, and today I want to highlight some of our findings.

### **Unmet promises**

Once sports betting was more broadly legalized, casinos teamed up with sports betting platforms like FanDuel and DraftKings, along with the major professional sports teams, to go state by state to push lawmakers to embrace it. Part of their tool kit for persuasion? Millions of dollars in contributions from the sports betting companies and their allies to those lawmakers' campaigns for office.

- 35 states
- Revenues: fallen short
- Little Oversight
- University involvement
- iGaming

# Yahoo! News, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

THE CONVERSATION

## I treat people with gambling disorder – and I'm starting to see more and more young men who are betting on sports

40

Tori Horn, PhD Student in Clinical Psychology, University of Memphis

Tue, February 7, 2023 at 8:35 AM EST · 5 min read

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Many young sports bettors think they're knowledgeable enough to 'beat the system' Nick Lehr/The Conversation via DALL-E 2, CC BY-SA

- A new type of client has emerged
- The apps don't make it easy to set limits
- It's impossible to avoid sports and smartphones

## *The Conversation*, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023

# THE CONVERSATION

Academic rigor, journalistic flair



**Data from New Jersey is a warning sign for young sports bettors**

Published: February 9, 2023 8:34am EST

- Sports betting is tied to poor mental health
- A vulnerable population is being introduced to a lifetime of negative consequences
- Few regulatory measures in place

# New NCAA Gambling Policy Punishments

The NCAA said that dollar amounts wagered/possible suspensions will stack up like this:

- \$200 or less: sports wagering rules and prevention education.
- \$201-\$500: loss of 10% of a season of eligibility, plus rules and prevention education.
- \$501-\$800: loss of 20% of a season of eligibility, plus rules and prevention education.
- Greater than \$800: loss of 30% of a season of eligibility, plus rules and prevention education.
- For cumulative wagering activities that greatly exceed \$800, NCAA reinstatement staff are directed to consider whether additional loss of eligibility, including permanent ineligibility, are appropriate.

# Clients that are athletic/former athletes



- "Athlete" does not just mean elite level athletes
- Individuals that are passionate about sports, interest in watching sports, enjoy competition, past experience in sports of any kind-coaching, youth level
- A generation that grew up with "fantasy sports" -easy transition to sports betting
- Research shows that they are:
  - Mostly male
  - Avg age 26
  - Online sports betting
  - Athletic or heavy interest in sports
  - Disposable income

# Problem Gambling & At-Risk Behaviors



## Why Are Athletes At Risk?

1. How Athletes are Wired
  - Competitive mindset, risk takers
2. Perfectionist Tendencies
  - Never give up, perfect my craft mentality
3. Pressure to Perform
  - Social media, comparison game
4. Injury
  - Isolation, identity

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# Back in the Game®



- 1. Goal Setting-** process over outcome
- 2. Preparation/Routines-**structure
- 3. Confidence Building-** being in control/roller coaster confidence
- 4. Self-Talk/Visualization-** internal dialogue, things happen twice
- 5. Focus/Motivation-**present focus, controllables, "why"
- 6. Adversity Training-** choose your response



Who is the  
“Sports  
Bettor”?

## Symptoms of Problem Gambling Among US Adults Who Wager on Sports

Joshua B. Grubbs, PhD; Shane W. Kraus, PhD

Table 1. Logistic Regressions and Associated Odds Ratios Estimating Past 12-Month Engagement in Various Types of Sports Wagering Based on Demographic Variables

	Odds ratio (95% CI)				
	Any sports wagering	Paid fantasy leagues	Daily fantasy leagues	General sports wagering	E-sports wagering
Male gender <sup>a</sup>	2.05 (1.78-2.36)	2.17 (1.84-2.56)	2.10 (1.74-2.54)	1.81 (1.55-2.12)	1.55 (1.28-1.88)
Age, y	0.97 (0.97-0.98)	0.97 (0.97-0.98)	0.96 (0.96-0.97)	0.99 (0.98-0.99)	0.96 (0.96-0.97)
Religiousness	1.18 (1.09-1.28)	1.16 (1.06-1.27)	1.37 (1.4 1.52)	1.09 (1.00-1.19)	1.63 (1.46-1.82)
Race <sup>b</sup>					
American Indian or Alaska Native	2.05 (1.14-3.70)	2.30 (1.33-3.96)	1.74 (0.97-3.11)	2.29 (1.34-3.91)	2.10 (1.18-3.75)
Asian	1.08 (0.73-1.61)	1.09 (0.72-1.66)	1.28 (0.82-2.02)	0.84 (0.54-1.29)	1.25 (0.77-2.02)
Biracial	0.72 (0.45-1.17)	0.50 (0.27-0.94)	0.53 (0.26-1.10)	0.92 (0.55-1.54)	1.12 (0.61-2.07)
Black	1.11 (0.88-1.38)	0.98 (0.76-1.27)	1.32 (1.00-1.75)	0.87 (0.68-1.12)	1.21 (0.90-1.61)
Hispanic	0.78 (0.62-0.98)	1.01 (0.78-1.31)	1.03 (0.77 1.38)	0.83 (0.63-1.07)	1.04 (0.77-1.41)
Middle Eastern	6.37 (1.79-22.64)	0.97 (0.35-2.68)	1.41 (0.50-3.98)	2.38 (0.95-6.00)	1.17 (0.40-3.39)
Other <sup>c</sup>	0.94 (0.56-1.58)	1.12 (0.63-1.99)	1.50 (0.80-2.82)	1.18 (0.69-2.03)	1.29 (0.66-2.53)
Education <sup>d</sup>					

# Current Research



- Valenciano-Mendoza, E., Mora-Maltas, B., Mestre-Bach, G., Munguía, L., Richard, J., Derevensky, J. L., ... & Jiménez-Murcia, S. (2023). Clinical Correlates of Sports Betting: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 39(2), 579-624.
- Mestre-Bach, G., Granero, R., Mora-Maltas, B., Valenciano-Mendoza, E., Munguía, L., Potenza, M. N., ... & Jiménez-Murcia, S. (2022). Sports-betting-related gambling disorder: Clinical features and correlates of cognitive behavioral therapy outcomes. *Addictive Behaviors*, 133, 107371.

# Current Research



- Males with high levels of impulsivity reported more frequent engagement in sports betting and had high likelihoods of experiencing gambling problems
- Substance Use and Behavioral Addictions have also been reported
- Sports-betting client were younger, more frequently single, and more highly educated
- Results are consistent with several previous studies



# Evaluative Research 2018-2023 The Better Institute

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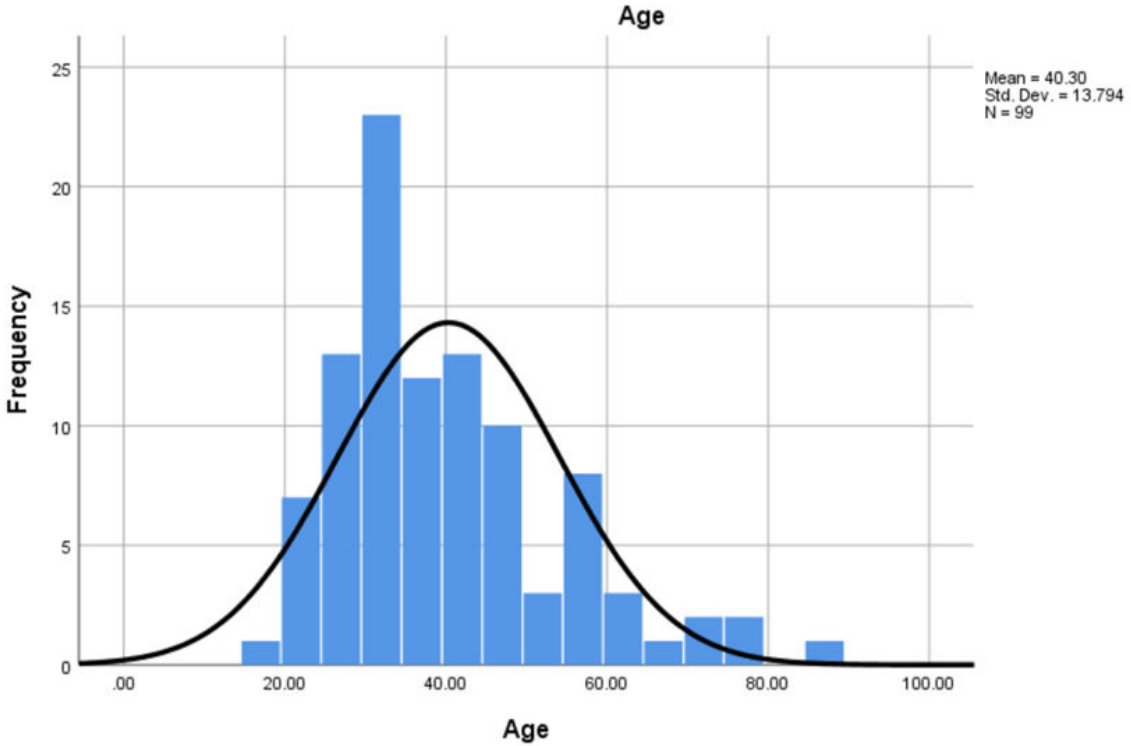
# Initial Data

## N=101



- Age
- Gender
- Marital Status
- Employment Status
- # of Sessions
- GD DSM total criteria
- Former Gamer
- HR or abstinence
- Budget/Restitution plan
- Self-exclusion
- Blocking software
- GA / Online Support
- Family Sessions
- Relapses

Age Range  
(n=99)



Race_Ethnicity					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Caucasian	95	93.1	94.1	94.1
	Asian	3	2.9	3.0	97.0
	African American	3	2.9	3.0	100.0
	Total	101	99.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.0		
Total		102	100.0		

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	76	74.5	75.2	75.2
	Female	23	22.5	22.8	98.0
	Nonbinary	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	101	99.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.0		
Total		102	100.0		

MaritalStatus					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	29	28.4	28.7	28.7
	Married	58	56.9	57.4	86.1
	Lives with	6	5.9	5.9	92.1
	Divorced	6	5.9	5.9	98.0
	Separated	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	OTHER	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	101	99.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.0		
Total		102	100.0		

Race= 93% Caucasian  
Gender = 74% Male

Married = 57%

		Insurance_Funding			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	BCBs	39	39.2	40.2	40.2
	UPMS	22	21.6	22.7	62.9
	CIGNA	2	2.0	2.1	64.9
	Blueshield	1	1.0	1.0	66.0
	Highmark	12	11.8	12.4	78.4
	UBH	2	2.0	2.1	80.4
	Self pay	2	2.0	2.1	82.5
	Aethna	10	9.8	10.3	92.8
	Optum	5	4.9	5.2	97.9
	United Health Care	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	Medicare	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total		97	95.1	100.0
Missing	System	5	4.9		
Total		102	100.0		

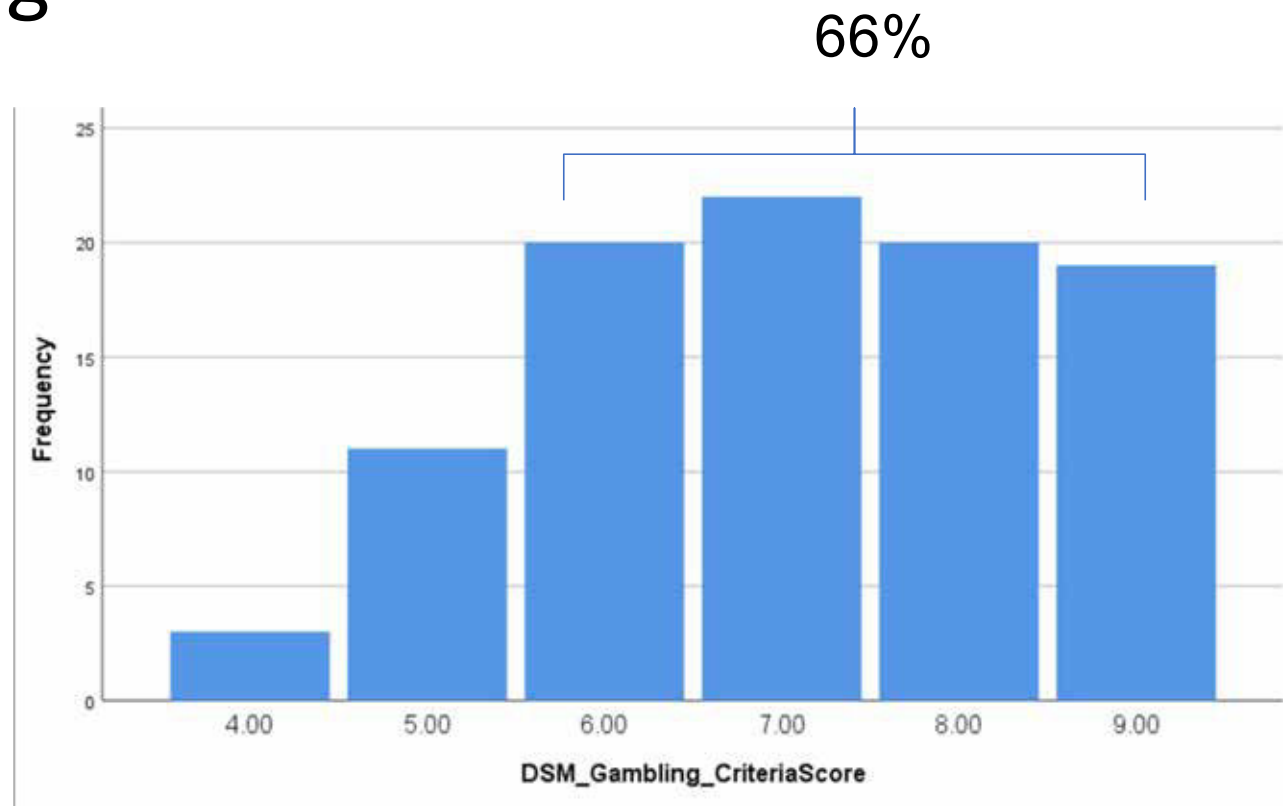
Insurance = 100% commercial  
& Medicare  
(no Medicaid or state)

		Employment_Status			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Full time	80	78.4	80.8	80.8
	Part time	4	3.9	4.0	84.8
	Unemployed	5	4.9	5.1	89.9
	Student	4	3.9	4.0	93.9
	Retired	4	3.9	4.0	98.0
	Disabeled	1	1.0	1.0	99.0
	Retired and disabled	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total		99	97.1	100.0
Missing	System	3	2.9		
Total		102	100.0		

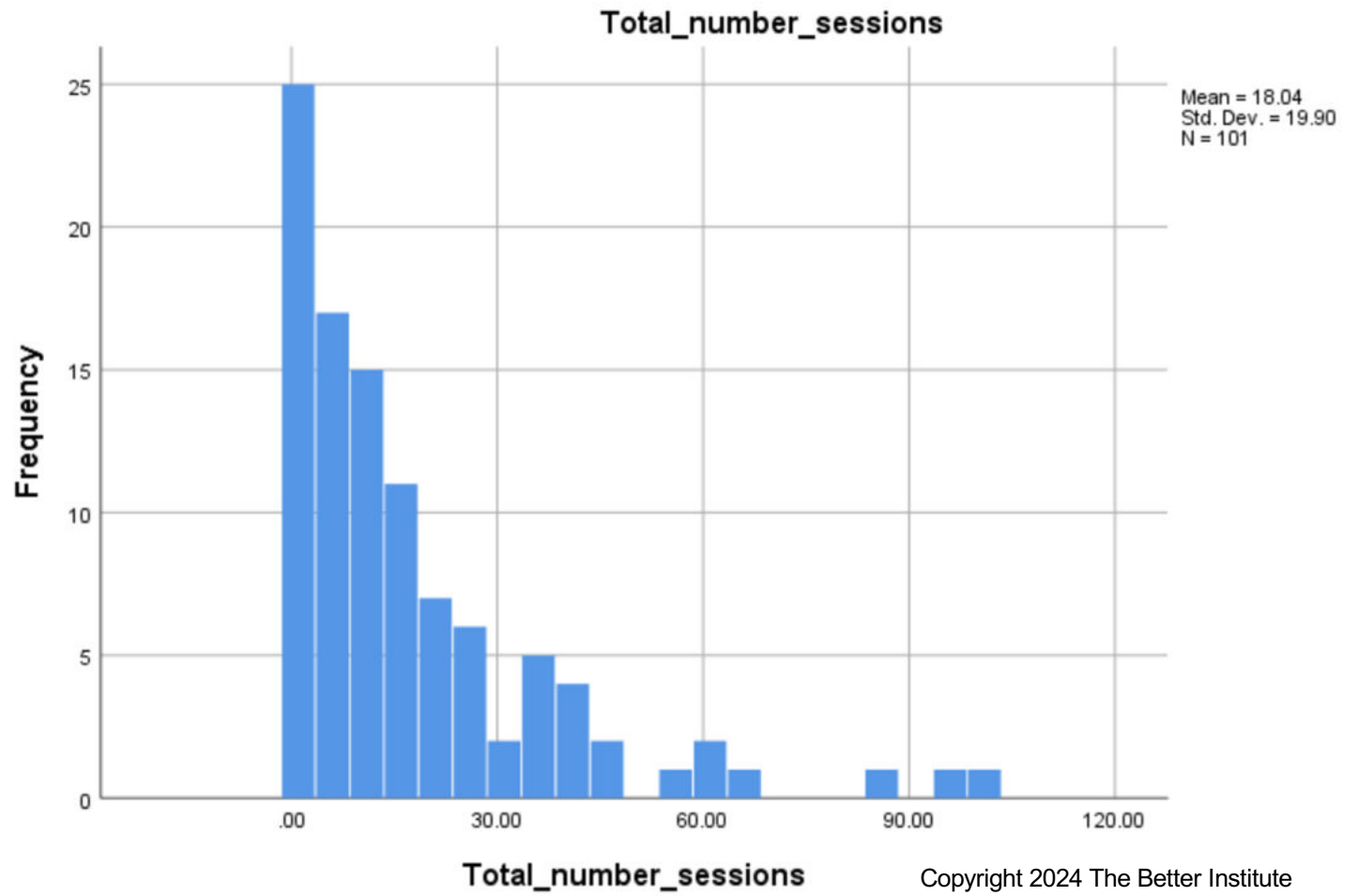
Employment = 80% Full Time



# DSM Gambling Disorder Criteria



How many sessions?



# Family Attendance for Gambling Disorder

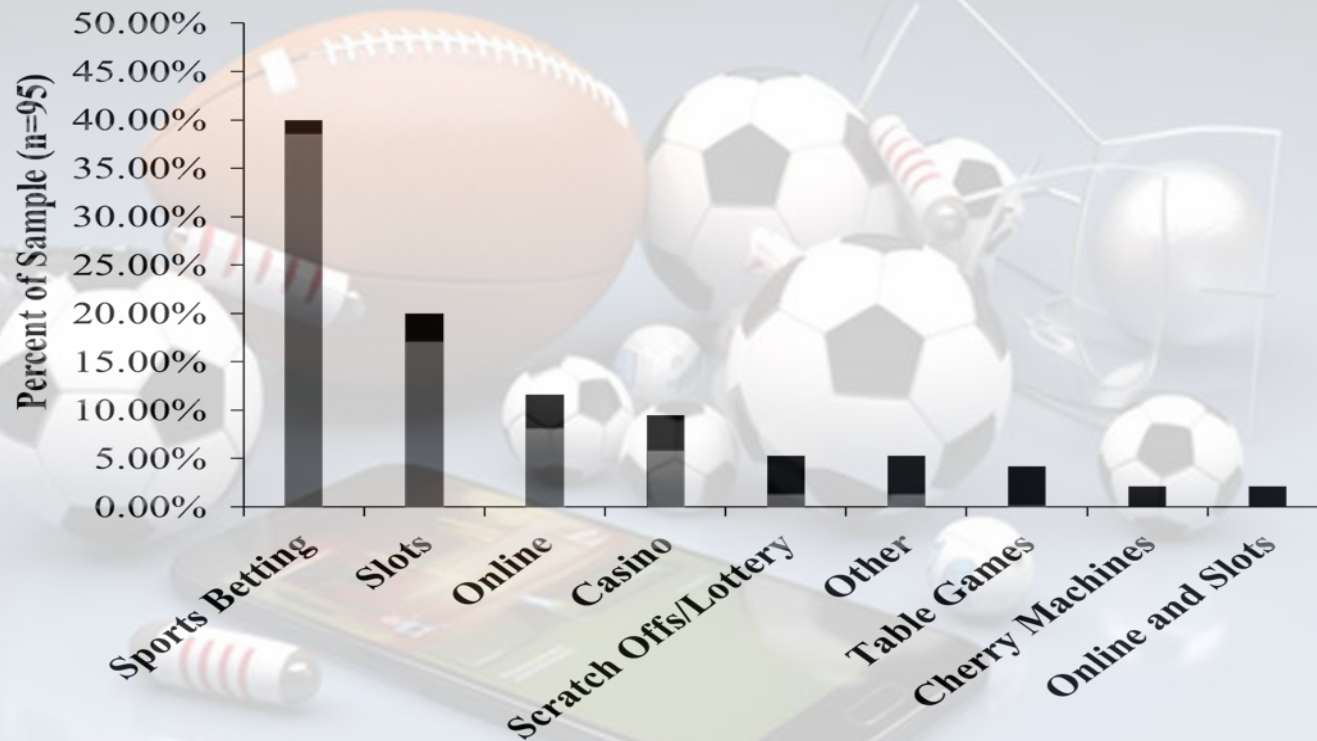
1/3 of The Better Institute clients attend both:

- Individual
- Family therapy

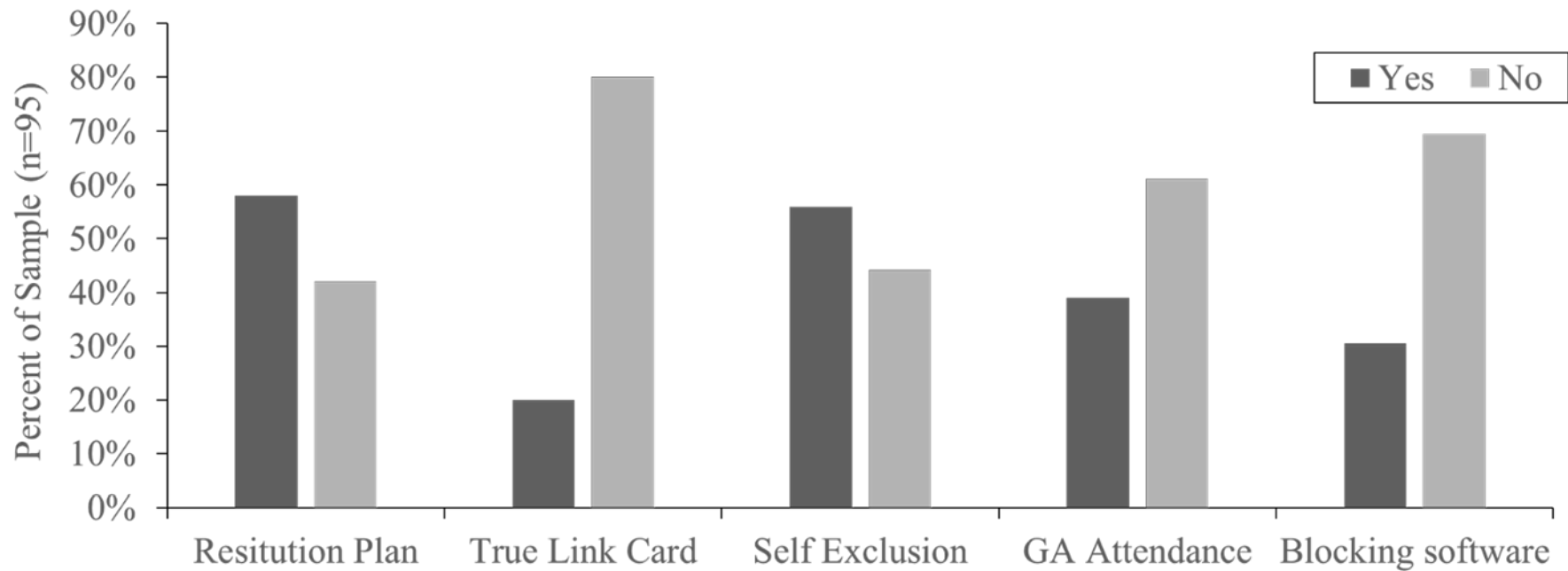


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**Fig 2 (below). Gambling preferences**



**Fig 5 (below). Percent of clients and gambling treatment options used**

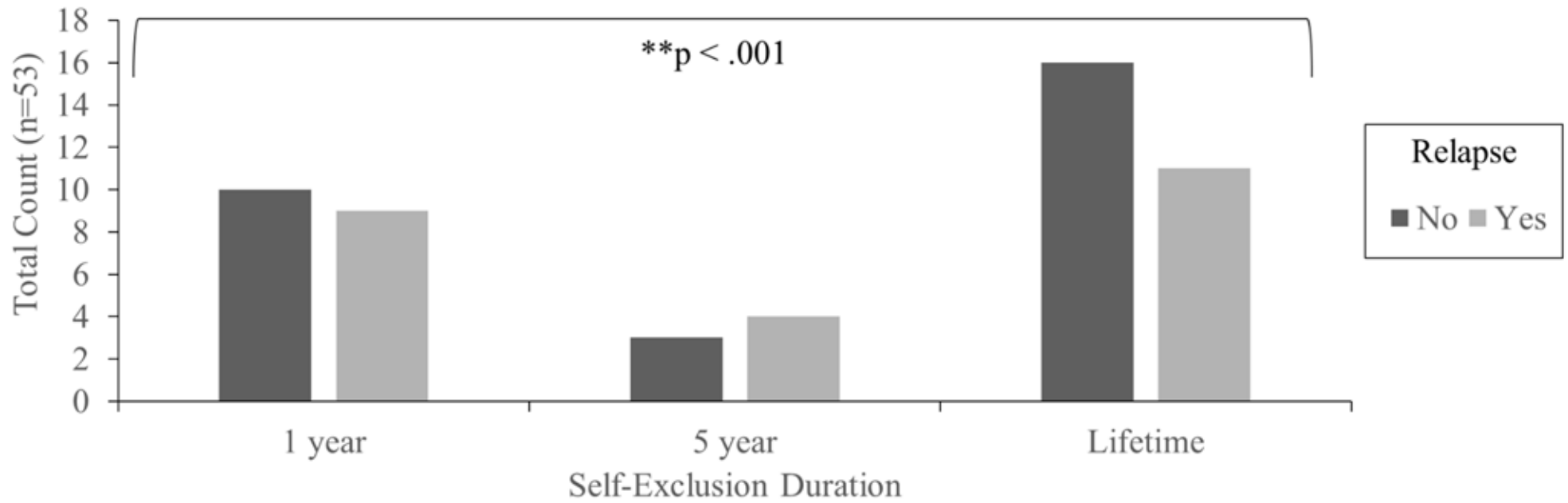


60% of client complete a restitution plan

40% of clients actively attend GA meetings during their treatment at The Better Institute

60% of clients use self-exclusion from gambling establishments

**Fig 4 (below). Total number of clients across self-exclusion duration and relapse (y/n)**



# Treating Sports Betting

## How did we get those results?



# Common Interventions for Gambling Disorder Treatment



- 3 Focus areas:
  - **Time** – boredom
  - Access to **Gambling** – blocking software, self-exclusion
  - Access to **Money** – budget/restitution, Truelink
- Behavior and Cognitive therapies
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Stress management / Mindful meditation
- Support Groups (GA, Online Support)



# Unique Interventions for Sports Betting



- History of athletic involvement- assess
- Use sports/coaching techniques- coach v clinician
- Metaphors- team, opponent, mission
- Competitive mindset-how to use in a positive way

# Translating Interventions for Sports Betting



- *Setting goals*- outcome= abstinence, process=plan
- Preparation- AM/PM routine
- *Confidence*-shame/guilt, rebuild, take control
- *Self-Talk/Visualization*- improve internal dialogue, affirmation training, positive mental images of a successful recovery
- *Focus/Motivation*- C-grids, traffic lights- triggers, "why"-internal/external
- *Adversity Training*- obstacles, planning a response

# Case Examples: Logan



## Relevant Clinical Information:

- 28-year-old male
- Married
- Employed full time in a sales position
- Former hockey player
- Briefly played professional hockey in Europe
- No major mental health concerns

# Case Examples: Logan



## Relevant Clinical Information (cont.):

- Primary concern at time of treatment was sports betting
- Dabbled in gambling during college when he and his teammates would go to the casino
- Problem gambling worsened once he started playing hockey professionally
- Roommate was a big influence on his problem gambling behavior
- His wife is a nurse so he has a lot of free time on the weekends by himself

# Case Examples: Logan



## Treatment:

- How to spend his downtime and establish good routines
- Used self-talk to relate it to gamble and how we talk to ourselves about sports
- Got involved with a support group (part of a team aspect)
- Focused on goal setting
- Adversity and the different things you face as an athlete and relating that to gambling recovery and developing tools on how to navigate those moments

# Case Examples: Blake



## Relevant Clinical Information:

- 40-years-old male
- Employed full-time as attorney/lawyer
- Has been sports betting since college
- Problematic gambling in the past 4 years
- Has lost significant money
- Preoccupied with betting and neglecting work and marriage

# Case Examples: Blake



## Relevant Clinical Information (cont.):

- Division I Athlete in College
- Law School
- Air Force pilot (overseas combat)
- Air Force Defense Lawyer
- Left Air Force after several years due to car accident (possible DUI)
- Currently Defense Attorney for Employment Law

# Case Examples: Blake



## Treatment Plan Talk:

- Mission
- Team
- Opponent
- Competition
- Need to win
- Physical training



# Sports Betting Comprehensive Treatment Plan



TIME, ACCESS to Gambling, ACCESS to Money

- Athlete Mindset
  - BIG focus
  - Metaphors
- Self-exclusion & blocking software
- Financial oversight/involvement
- Structured daily and weekly goals
- Self-Support (team)

# Summary



1. Research is limited
2. Identify the risk factors of athletes and athletic individuals
3. Utilize past athletic mindset and experience to create treatment plan

Questions?





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