
Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling
**Older Adults who engage in gambling:
Research findings**

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Advocates of gambling among older adults...

- “Gambling can stimulate the elderly to a renewed interest in life. Homes for the aged would do well to allow their residents to gamble, thus keeping them alert and involved rather than dull and tranquilized.”

◆ Labat, L. Univ. of Nevada Gerontologist

Reports on bingo

- PG among bingo players (Stoil, 1994)
 - ◆ lottery and keno players
 - ◆ bet small amounts for hours
 - ◆ feel little or no rush or excitement from winning or losing.
 - ◆ chronically depressed, less educated, and of lower income.
 - ☞ Stoil M. (1994) Gambling addiction: the nation's dirty little secret. Behavioral Health Management, 14, 35-38.

Reports on bingo

- Older women may be at risk for developing PG
 - [Dorfman (1995), Roberts (1997), Ozawa (1995)]
- Inverse relationship between depression and level of income/education.
 - [Dorfman (1995) and Roberts (1997)]
 - ◆ Dorfman R. et al (1995) Screening for depression among a well elderly population. *Social Work*, 40:295-304.
 - ◆ Roberts R. et al (1997) Prevalence and correlates of depression in an aging cohort: The Alameda County study. *The Journals of Gerontology*. B:52:S252-259.
 - ◆ Ozawa MN (1995). The economic status of vulnerable older women. *Social Work*. 40:323-331.

Reports on bingo

- Ethnographic study: Rural PA bingo hall
 - ◆ 60-70 female, Caucasian “regulars” aged 50+
 - ◆ 3 nights per week
 - ◆ Chain smokers
 - ◆ Bingo lingo (“being set” “bonanza” “rip off tickets” “speed” “bull in the ring”)
 - ◆ Bingo rituals – sit in same spot each week, arrangement of table, use old cards to determine lucky numbers, dabbers (10 min.)
 - ◆ Reitz, LM. Older Women and Gambling: An Ethnographic Study of Bingo. Lock Haven University of PA.



Casinos and older adults

- way to relax
- way to forget problems
- fill empty hours
- Slot club promotions
 - ◆ Free trips, meals
 - ◆ Play for free
 - ◆ Big Band Dances, former stars Lawrence Welk Show
 - ◆ Prescription discounts
 - ◆ Free flu shots

Normal aging: changes and losses

- Loneliness - loss of spouse, family members or special friends.
- Retirement -
 - ◆ loss of self-esteem / self-worth.
 - ◆ financial security concerns
 - ◆ isolation & loneliness when social and community involvement reduced.
- Move from familiar surroundings
- Anxiety - changes in health self/other.

Cognitive changes

- 70+ as likely as younger adults to make risky and speculative decisions even when potential return would not materialize for 10-20 yrs. Myerson J, Green L, Washington Univ. 1999.
- May be more older adults than known who suffer age-related damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex.
 - ☞ Damage undetected because individuals otherwise healthy.
 - ☞ Many unable to make avoid making poor (risky) decisions, despite repeated clues that would warn them otherwise. Tranel, D, Denburg N, University of Iowa study older adults (56-85y/o).

Reports

- Middle-aged to older women fastest growing group “escape” casino gamblers -- 50% tx.
 - ◆ Chrostowski K. Compulsive gamblers inevitably crash in despair. Parks J., Missouri Department of Mental Health citing report from the National Council on Problem Gambling. Kansas City Star. March 10, 1997.
- Disordered gambling increasing problem for older adults, with shortened rate of time 1- 3 yrs it takes “escape” gamblers to reach a crisis stage in gambling.
 - ◆ Glazer A, Pathologic Gambling. The Nurse Practitioner. 1998; 23(9):74-82.
 - ◆ Fowler P. Addiction crisis stage comes quick for slot players. Executive Director, National Council on Problem Gambling, quoted in The Mississippi Sun Herald, November 25, 1997.

Reports

- Older Detroiters nearly 2x's as likely as others to have a compulsive gambler in household.
 - ☞ Widgery, Robin (December 3-6, 1998). Social Systems Research Institute. The Impact of Casino Gambling on At-Risk Groups in Detroit, Michigan. International Society of Quality-of-Life Studies 1998 Conference. Flint, MI.
- Las Vegas telephone study: 449 adults (55+)
 - ◆ 2% disordered gambling
 - ◆ 0.1% probable pathological gambler
 - ☞ Bernhard B, Problem Gambling Among Elderly Populations in Las Vegas, 2000, UNLV Howard Cannon Center for Survey Research.

Reports

- .6% outpatient geriatric psychiatry clinic disordered gamblers, 3yrs after casino gambling made locally available.
- Clinic not previously seen individual with disordered gambling in 10 + years.
 - ☞ McNeilly DP, Burke WJ.: Disposable Time and Disposable Income: Problem Gambling Behaviors in Older Adults. Journal of Clinical Geropsychology. In press, 2000.

Reports

- Casino marketing: bus services, buffet discounts, giveaway promotions -- coincide with the receipt of pension and SS checks = “third-of-the-month club”
- 95% those on weekday tour buses = senior citizens.
- Argues elderly gambling may have serious long-term consequences because no time or earning potential to recoup gambling losses.

☞ Gosker E, (1999). The marketing of gambling to the elderly. *Elder Law Journal*, 7:185.

Reports

- Sioux City IA petition to re-institute monthly Senior Center trip to casino.
- Board of Directors concerns:
 - ◆ potential liability
 - ◆ negative publicity
 - ◆ parking problems
 - ◆ non-members going on center-sponsored trips
 - ◆ alternate pick-up sites are available.
- 90 to 95 go on trip each month.
 - ◆ Hazlett, Judi, "Elderly file protest as gambling trips end" Sioux City Journal, November 18, 1998.

Reports: AARP Survey (1999)

Frequency

- 35% lottery now & then
- 34% bet "\$1 or 2" when near slots or the races
- 21% do not gamble
- 10% "absolutely" consider selves to be a gambler.
 - ◆ American Association of Retired Persons (1999). It's in the Cards [On-line]. Available:www.aarp.org/am pie/res1099.html.

Amount Wagered

- 33% = just a buck
- 27% = \$1.00-\$50
- 27% = no more than a couple hundred dollars
- 2% = sky's the limit if I've got that lucky feeling

Existing research

- Chronological age negatively related to gambling propensity.
 - ◆ Li WL. and Smith, MH. The propensity to gamble: Some structural determinants. In WR. Eadington (ed.), *Gambling and Society*, Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publishers. 1976.
- General decline in gambling participation with chronological age. Kallick M, Suits D, Dielman T, and Hybels J. Gambling participation. In Kallick M, Suits D, Dielman T. and Hybels J (eds.), *A Survey of American Gambling Attitudes and Behavior*. An Arbor, MI: Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. 1979.
- Gambling behavior declines with age and older adults withdraw from multiple types of gambling.
 - ◆ Mok WP, Hraba J. Age and Gambling Behavior: A declining and shifting pattern of participation. *J. Gambling Studies* 1991; 7(4):313-336.

Existing research

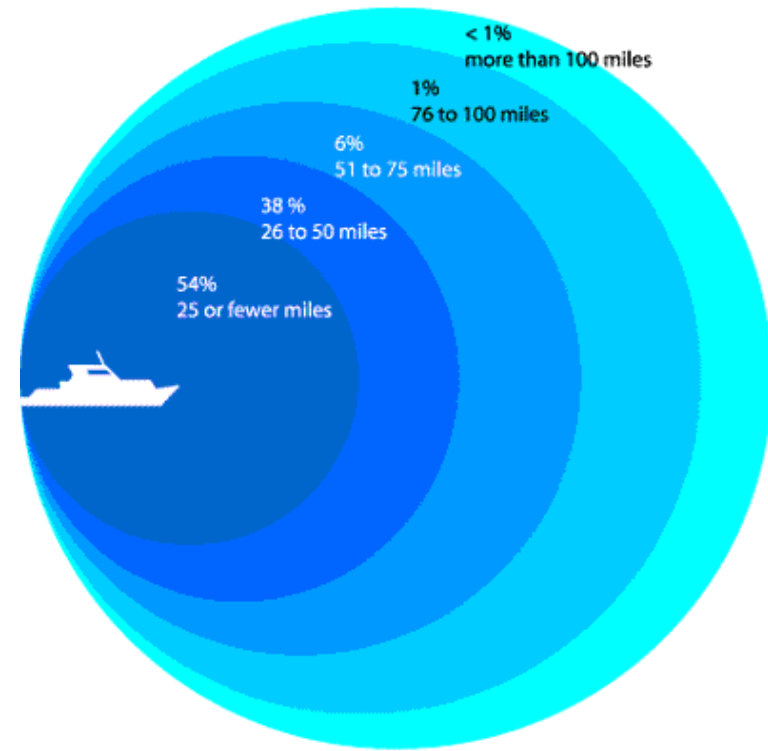
- Women = 66% adults played bingo past year.
- % women ever gambled rose 22% from 1975 to 1998 (vs. 13% men).
- % 65 + yrs olds who had gambled in past-year doubled from 1975 to 1998.
 - National Opinion Research Center (1999). Gambling Impact and Behavior Study: Report to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL. 1999.

Existing research

- Indian and riverboat casino patrons:
 - ◆ Differ in age, income and money budgeted
 - ◆ Very similar in what they want in casino experience:
 - ☞ chance to win, security, and service.
 - ☞ though reduced expectation of winning, the chance to win most important reason for participation.
 - ☞ lesser importance: entertainment/recreation facilities.
- Pfaffenberg, CJ, Indian and riverboat casino patrons: An analytic description of demographic characteristics, expectations, and items of importance. The University of Tennessee, 1997. DA 9840327.

Existing research

- 1996 study of Illinois' riverboat casinos found majority of gamblers were local residents, not tourists.
- Gazel RC, & Thompson WN. (1996). Casino Gamblers in Illinois: Who Are they? The Better Government Association.

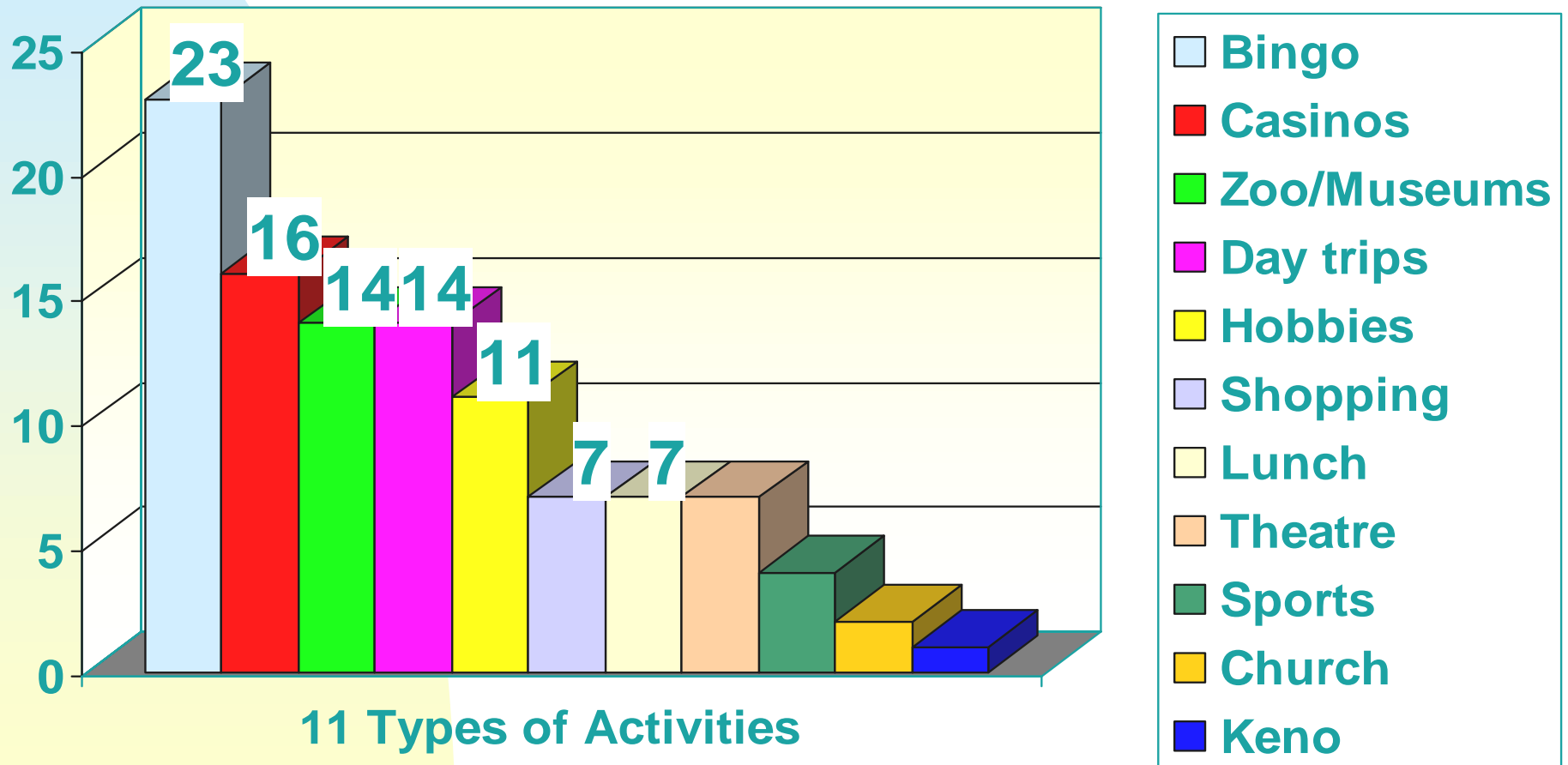


Distance Illinois Patrons Lived from the Riverboat Casinos.
Data from: Gazel, R., Thompson, W. Casino Gamblers in Illinois: Who Are They? University of Nevada.

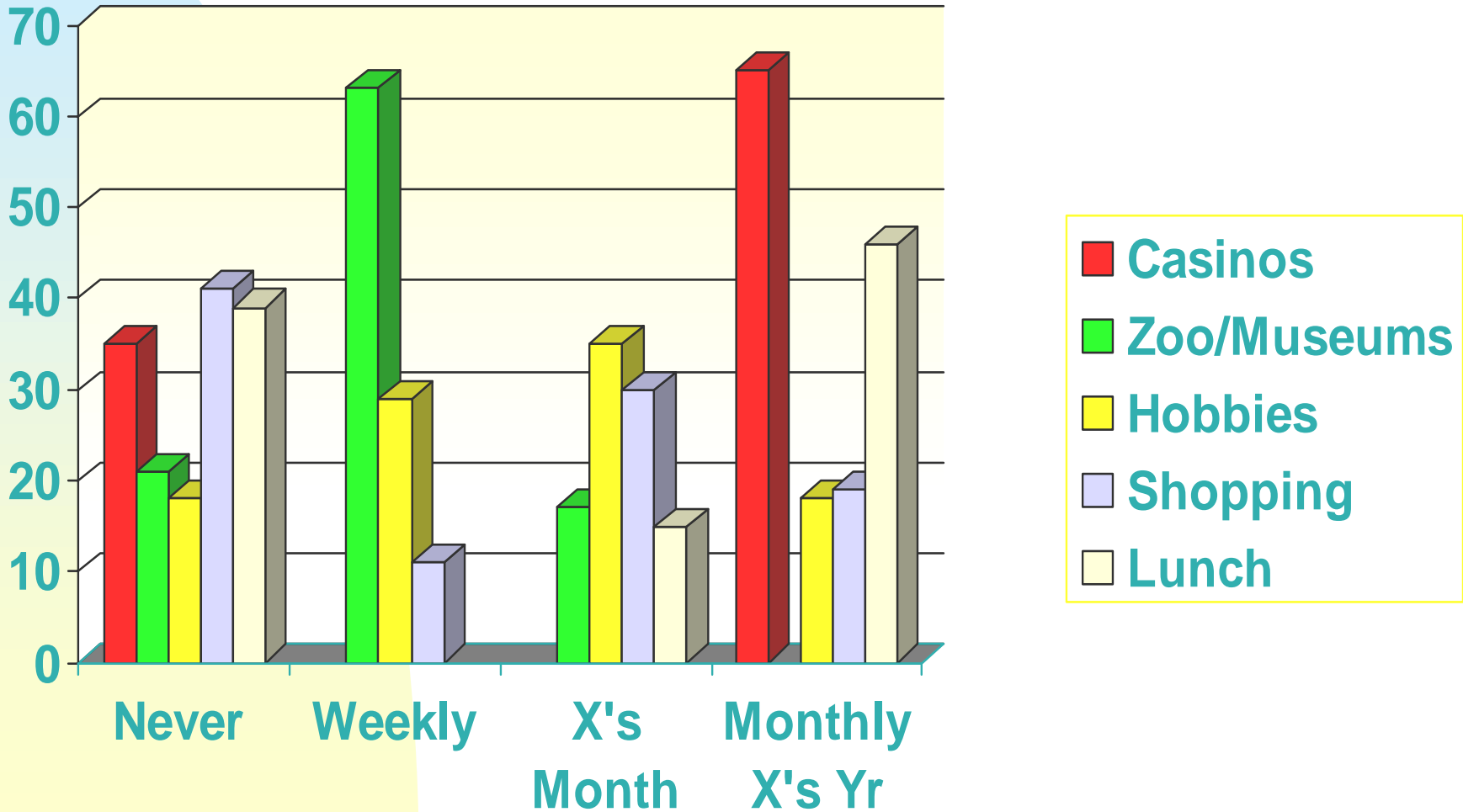
Existing research

- Survey activity directors from 81 residential/assisted-care facilities, senior and retirement centers found gambling (bingo/casino) most popular social activity for older adults.
 - ◆ Represented activity acquisition of 6,957 senior citizens surveyed for 11 social activities.
 - ◆ McNeilly, DP, Burke, WJ, Casino Gambling as a social activity of older adults. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 2001 51,4: 19-28.

Social activities all types



Frequency of access



Existing research

- Manitoba telephone study of 1000 adults 60+ (FU 61 gamblers, & 22 others affected by gamblers) found most seniors gamble and do not experience problems.
 - ◆ 1.6% “at-risk” gamblers
 - ◆ 1.2% probable pathological
- Among the 22 others affected by gamblers
 - ◆ 77% known “for many years’ person has a gambling problem
 - ◆ 91% negatively affected by other’s gambling for a “couple of years”.
 - ◆ Wiebe, J. Manitoba Senior Gambling Prevalence Study. Fall 2000.

Older adult gamblers: attitudes and behaviors

- Older adults (N=315) assessed for depression, life satisfaction, gambling behaviors, attitudes/motivations for gambling.
- Random cluster sampling of 455
- senior/retirement centers (N=157),
- charitable/commercial bingo(N=45)
- AARP members (N=67) casino patrons (N=47)
- McNeilly DP, Burke, WJ. (2000) Gambling Lately: Older Adults and Gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies* 16(4): 393-415, 2000.

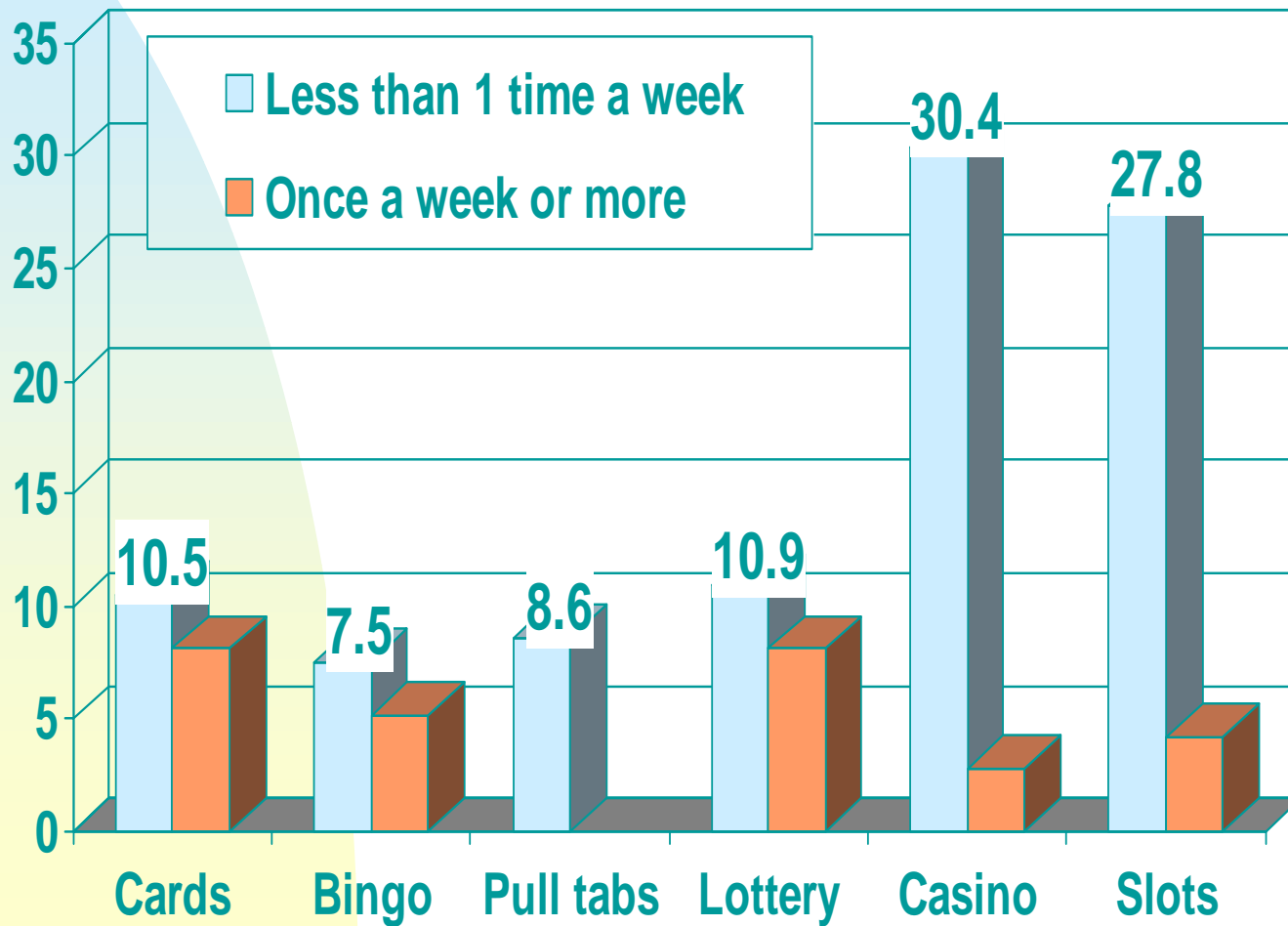


Older adult gamblers: attitudes and behaviors

- Caucasian Female
- HS graduates
- Retired
- Income level
- McNeilly DP, Burke, WJ. (2000) Gambling Lately: Older Adults and Gambling. *Journal of Gambling Studies* 16(4): 393-415, 2000.

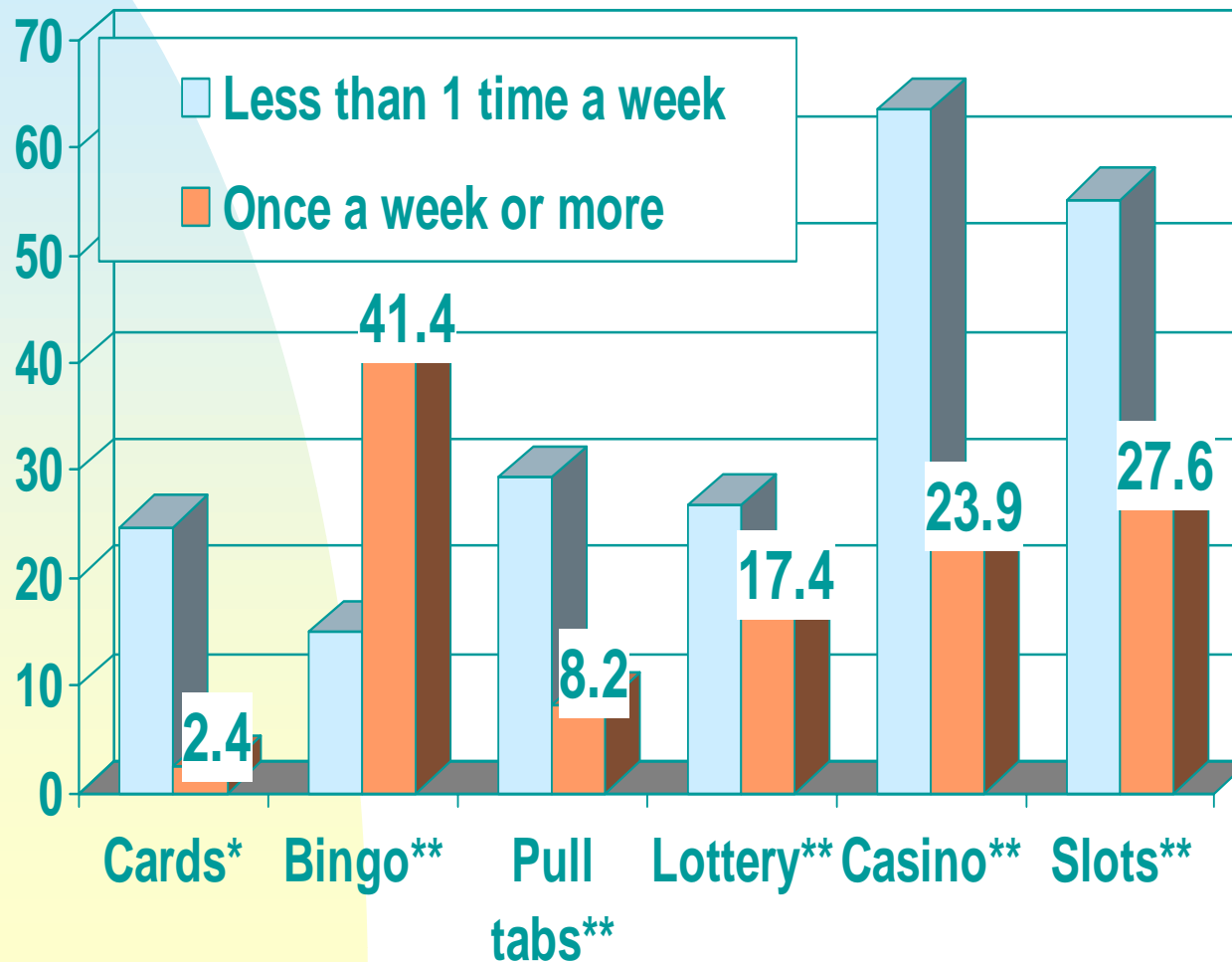
Frequency of gambling: Community group

*<.05, **p<.001



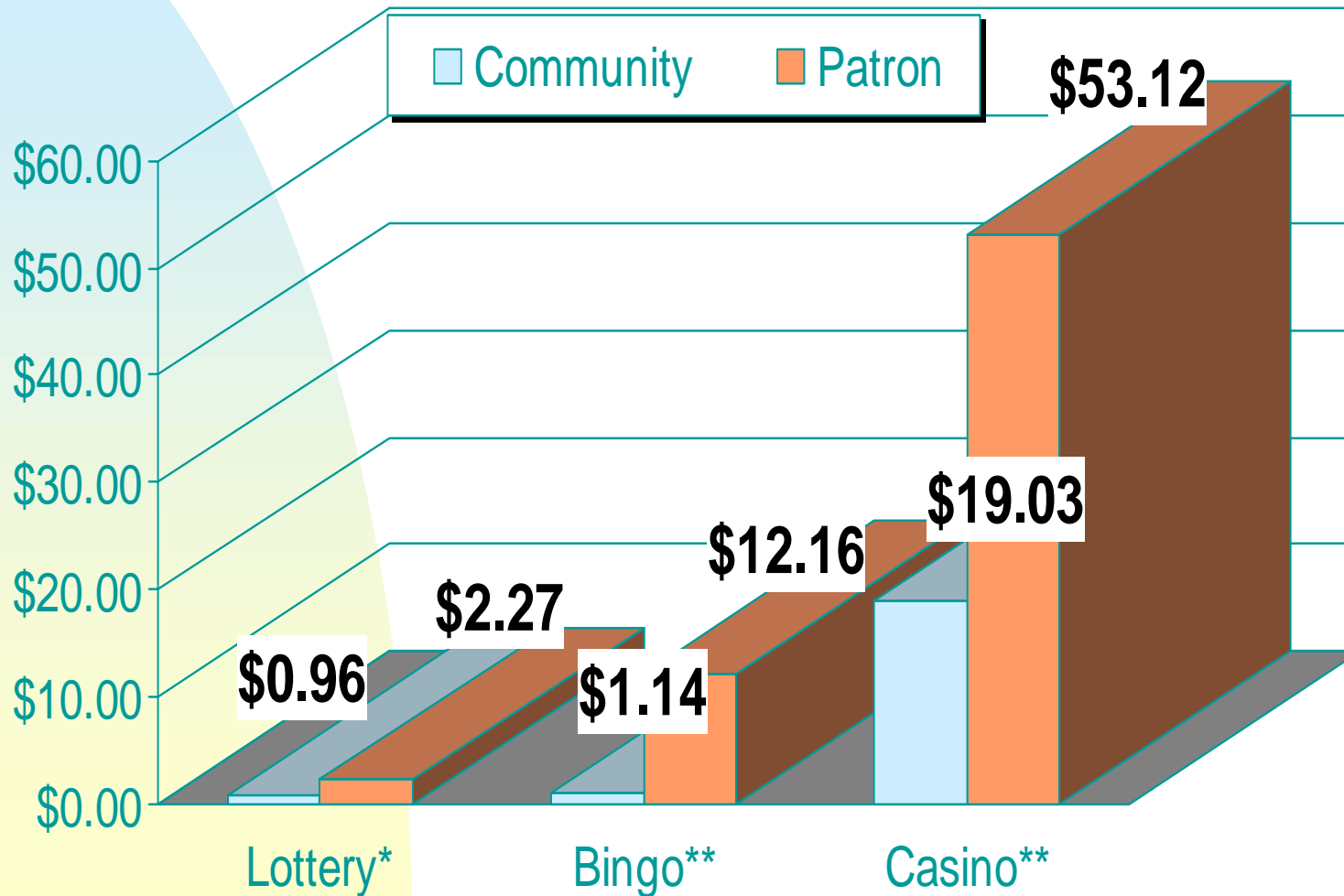
Frequency of gambling: Patron group

*p<.05, **p<.001



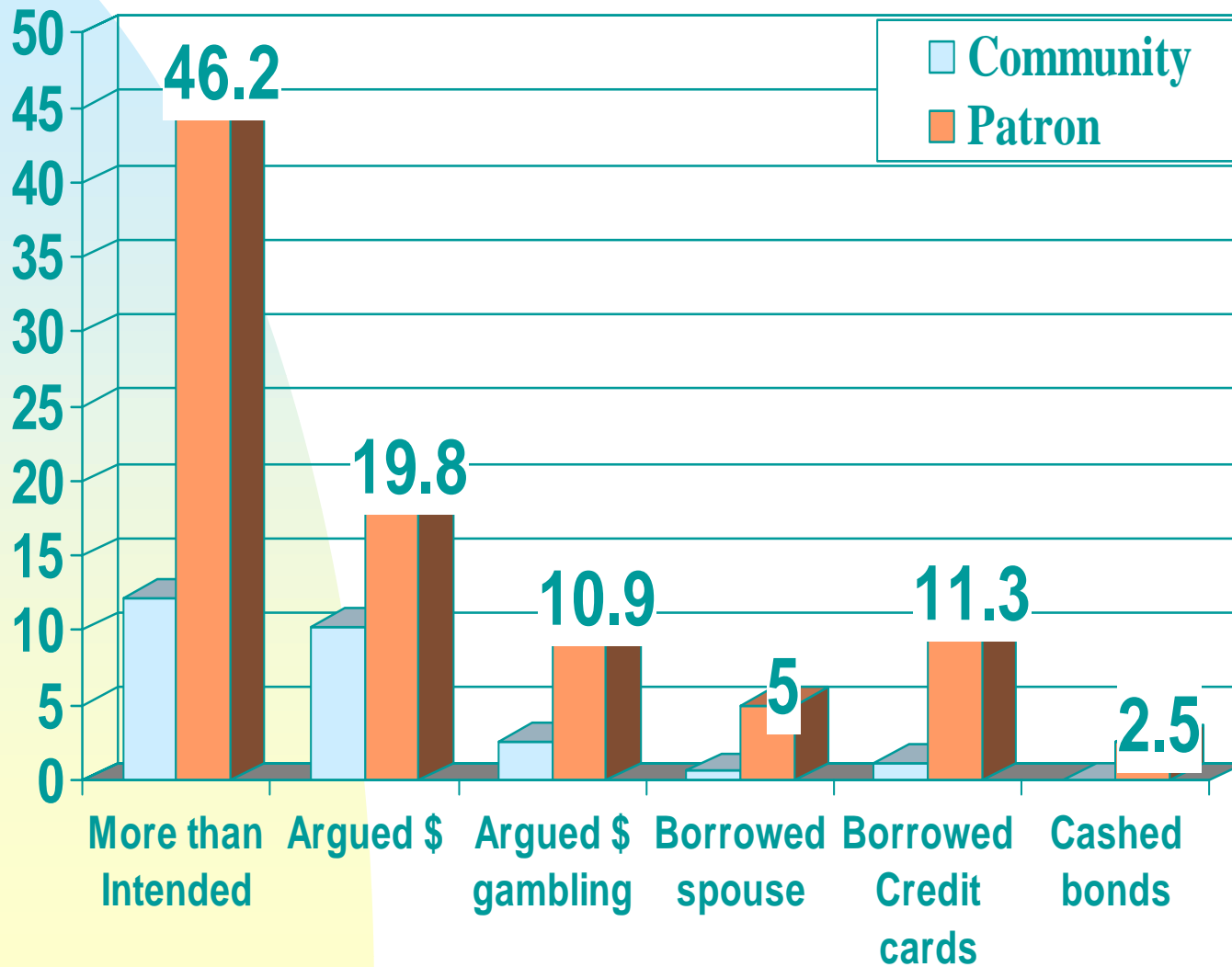
Spending Demographics

*p<.05, **p<.001



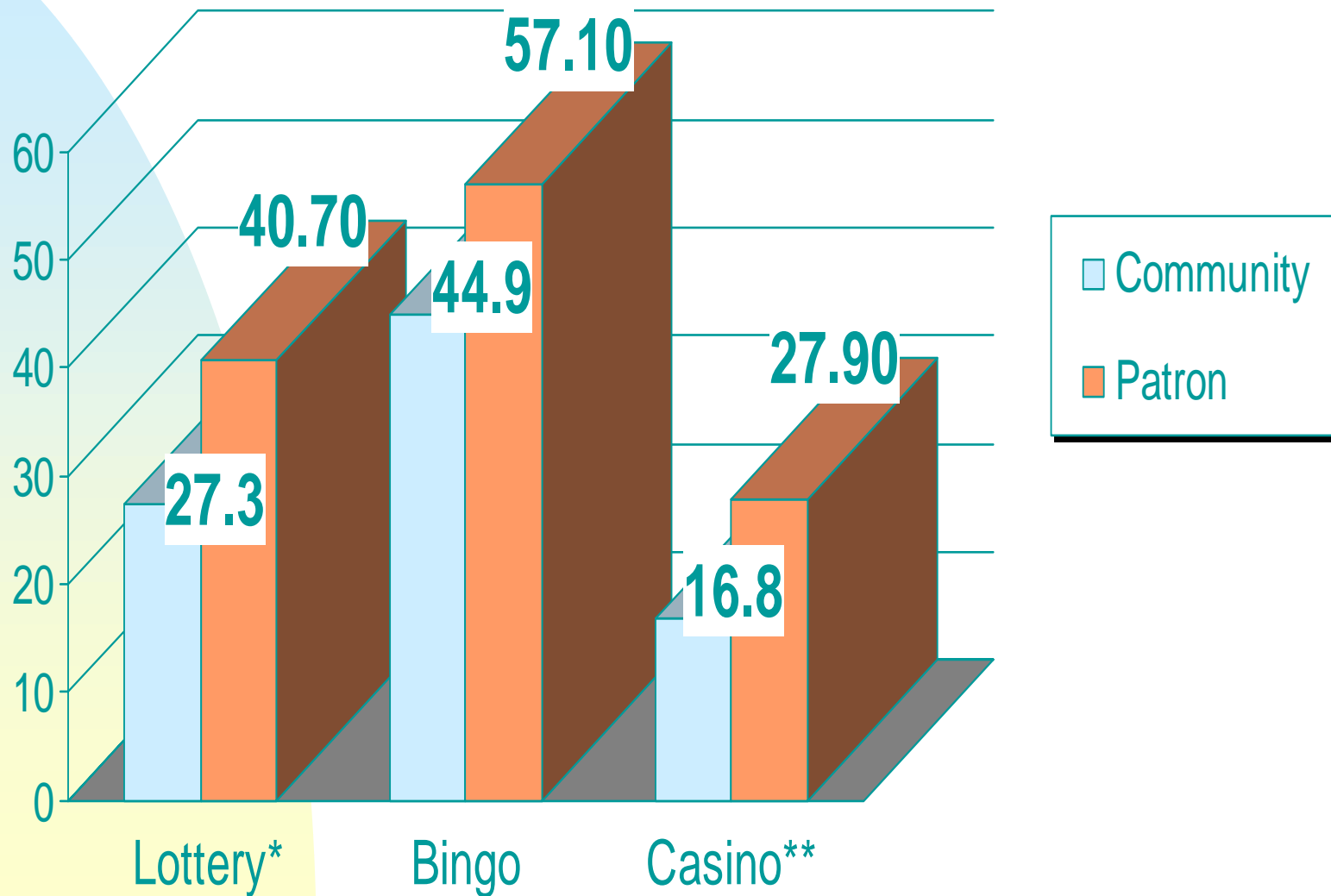
SOGS-R Responses

*p<.05, **p<.001



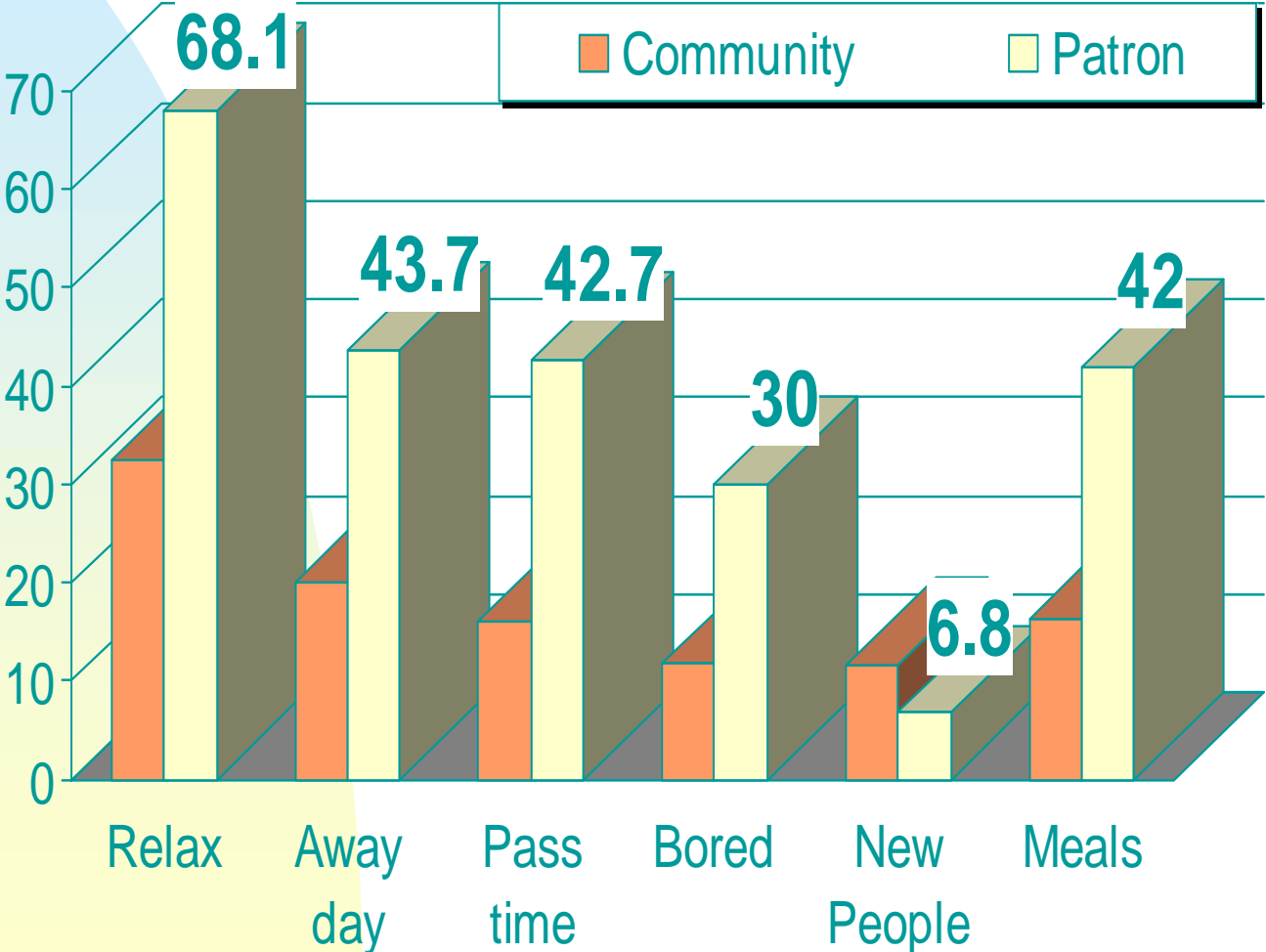
Attitudes: gambling as harmless

*p<.05, **p<.001



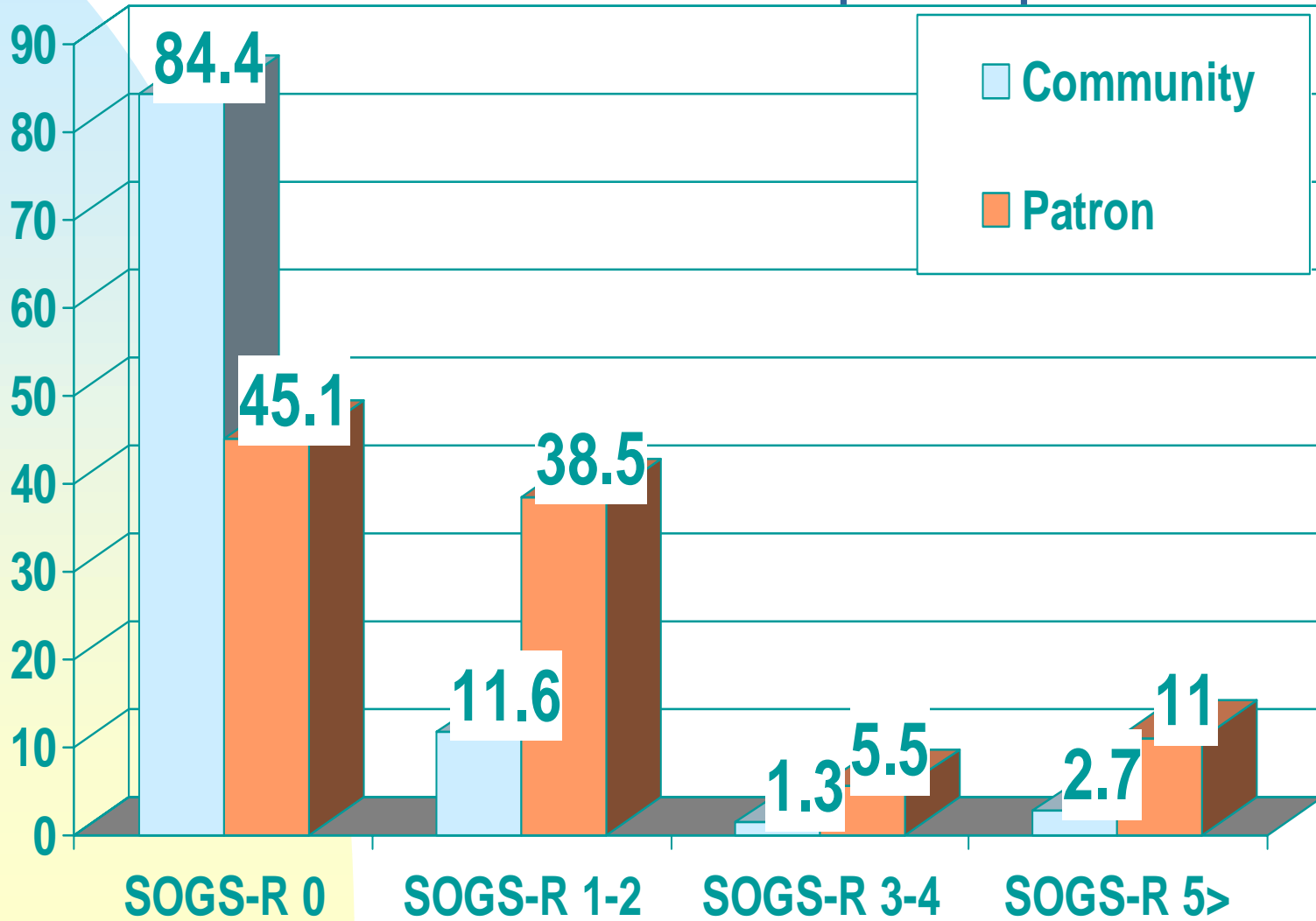
Motivations: casino gambling

*p<.05, **p<.001



SOGS-R Gambling Scores

*p<.05, **p<.001



What we now know

- Older adults discovered gambling (primarily bingo, and slot machines) as a new form of entertainment.
- Older adults are accessing casino gambling and taking advantage of industry promotions but only report inexpensive meals as a motivator.
- Majority of older adults gamble responsibly and without problems.
- Yet - growing concern of potential public health problem – tx.

What we don't yet know

- Incidence of “episodically vulnerable” vs. disordered vs. pathological gambling among differing age groups of older adults (ie: “seniors” and those 65+).
- Course of disordered behaviors among “new” and “old” older gamblers.
- Potential impact of cognitive impairment.
- Prevalence of psychiatric comorbidities compared to adults.
- Sensitivity of current assessment measures.
- Spontaneous recovery and coping mechanisms of older social gamblers.