

# State of the Gambling Market 2021: UK & US

toluna\*



harris  
interactive

KURUNDATA



# A need for the latest market understanding

Gambling legislation is changing, regulations are under review, and the COVID pandemic has potentially changed gambling habits in the future.

During this historic and uncertain time for the gambling industry, we fielded our 2021 gambling study, using Toluna Start, in order to better understand current attitudes of gamblers and the general public.



# Markets studied and field schedule



- This study was conducted to capture opinions before increased public news and debate of the still awaited conclusions of the UK Gambling Act review.
- Using Toluna Start, 4,248 interviews were collected between 30th April – 7th May, 2021
- Data has been weighted by age, gender and region to be census representative in all markets

Market	Completed Interviews
 UK	2129
 US	2119

# Key Findings



# Key Findings



This study was conducted to understand current gambling interests and attitudes during unprecedented times, with the impact of the global Covid pandemic, a review of the UK Gambling Act and the prospect of sweeping reforms to regulations, and the US market launching sports betting services across recently legalised states.

The key findings are:

## **Gambling interests during and post pandemic**

- Over half the UK and US public report gambling in the past year. Sports betting is most popular in UK, while Casino games lead in the US and sports betting is growing rapidly since legalisation began.
- In sports betting, popularity follows national sports interests. UK bettors favour football (soccer) and horse racing, while Basketball and the NFL attract most bettors in the US. Boxing is showing strong future interest across both markets.
- For casino game players, slots games continues to grow in popularity alongside interest across blackjack, roulette and poker.

# Key Findings



- Gambling spend is higher in the US than the UK and has increased during the pandemic across both markets (21% have increased spend in the UK, 39% in the US). Along with sports betting markets opening up in the US, there's growth and opportunity for operators.
- As physical/retail venues open again following the pandemic restrictions, there's reservations about returning, with most caution in the UK (only 16% of UK gamblers feel comfortable to return post-restrictions regardless of measures in place, compared to 37% in the US). The US are most concerned about Covid implications, while there's a preference for online in the UK that will underpin more permanent behaviour. Reassurance of sanitisation and safety measures in venues will encourage players to return, however this must be prominent and consistent to ensure confidence.

## Responsible gambling attitudes

- 1 in 10 UK gamblers are concerned they gamble too much, rising to a quarter of US gamblers.
- A responsible gambling environment is important to most gamblers in choosing a provider (68% in UK, 81% in US).
- The majority of the UK and US public are aware of measures to help promote responsible gambling and recognise the need for further measures to protect the vulnerable from gambling harm.

# Key Findings



## Regulations

- There is awareness and support for regulations that have been implemented and potential changes considered in the review of the UK Gambling Act.
- Attitudes are mixed and generally favour a duty of care approach for others, rather than restrictions for personal concern.
- Two thirds of the UK and US public feel gambling advertising encourages people to gamble excessively. A majority feel that potential restrictions on gambling advertising would be effective in limiting gambling harm, including banning celebrity endorsements. Banning bookmakers from sports sponsorship is most polarising with 21% of the UK and 15% of the US disagreeing that this would have an effective impact (likely to include consideration of the importance of related revenues in funding sports). There is greatest agreement that children should not be exposed to gambling adverts (72% in UK and 67% in US).
- At the same time, the majority of the UK and US public do not have issues with current advertising for them personally, and nearly half of the UK and over half of US do not agree there should be further restrictions across different media channels. A sizeable proportion feel current levels of advertising are about right (around a third in the UK and nearly half in the US). Attitudes generally correlate with age.

# Key Findings



## Regulations

- A majority of the UK public feel promotions and incentives contribute to excessive gambling, and there should be restrictions on “VIP” schemes, which encourage high value customers to spend more. There is more agreement to proactively reminding VIPs about responsible gambling (63%), compared to restrictions on rewards (49%) and cash bonuses (42%).
- The majority of the UK public agree with the ban on credits card payments to gambling operators, which came into effect in 2020, while a quarter disagree (26%).
- There is concern over the use of crypto currencies in gambling and the implications for safeguarding and affordability controls. There is limited public familiarity with crypto currencies and 41% are not sure if they should be used, but only 12% currently agree they should be allowed to be used freely.
- Meanwhile, debit card usage will continue to grow (28% of UK gamblers will use more often) and mobile contactless payments are gaining popularity (26% will use more often).

# Key Findings



## US legislation

- Half the US public feel they have a clear understanding of the legal status of gambling (51%). However, an equal proportion feel they aren't sure or don't know enough (24% and 25% respectively). In the case of sports betting, legal status differs by state and where legalised, states have been launching services as recently as this year, with more to come. Awareness and understanding will increase and the US market presents a significant and fast growing opportunity for operators.

# Key Findings



## .. In summary

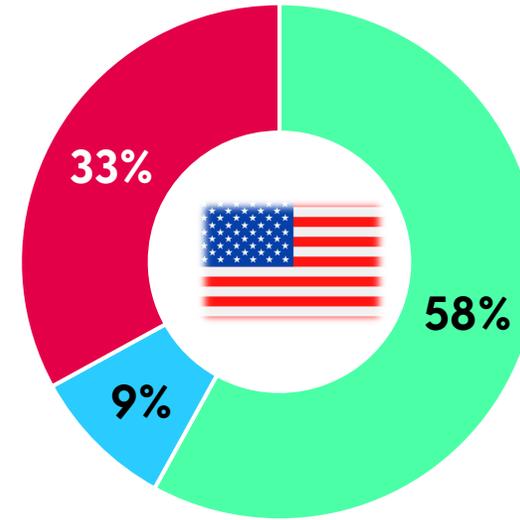
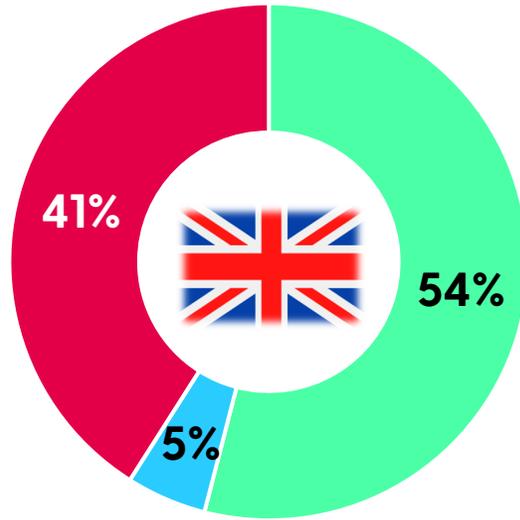
- Gambling is a mainstream form of entertainment and interest continues to grow.
- The pandemic and time at home has led to increased online activity and spend. As restrictions ease, retail operators will need to reassure of sanitisation and safety measures, as in many industries, to attract customers to return.
- The majority of gamblers agree responsible gambling safeguards are important, with a minority of current gamblers concerned they are gambling too much.
- There is mixed but significant support for further regulation in areas such as advertising, incentives and payment methods. However, most recognise the social responsibility to protect the vulnerable from gambling harm, as opposed to feeling restrictions should be applied for personal concerns.
- As the industry awaits the publication of the Government's review of the UK Gambling Act, and US legislation continues to develop, there is an important balance to be struck between safeguards for the vulnerable and the economic and social benefits of gambling, including betting supporting sport as a whole.

# Gambling Habits - during and post pandemic

Over half of UK and US adults report gambling in the past 12 months. Sports betting is most popular in the UK market, while Casino/slots leads in the US, but sports betting has grown rapidly since changes in US legalisation in 2018.



Ever gambled (excluding lotteries)



- Gamblers
- Intenders
- Rejectors

Last 12 months:

**51%**

**55%**

Sports betting  42%



Casino games  36%

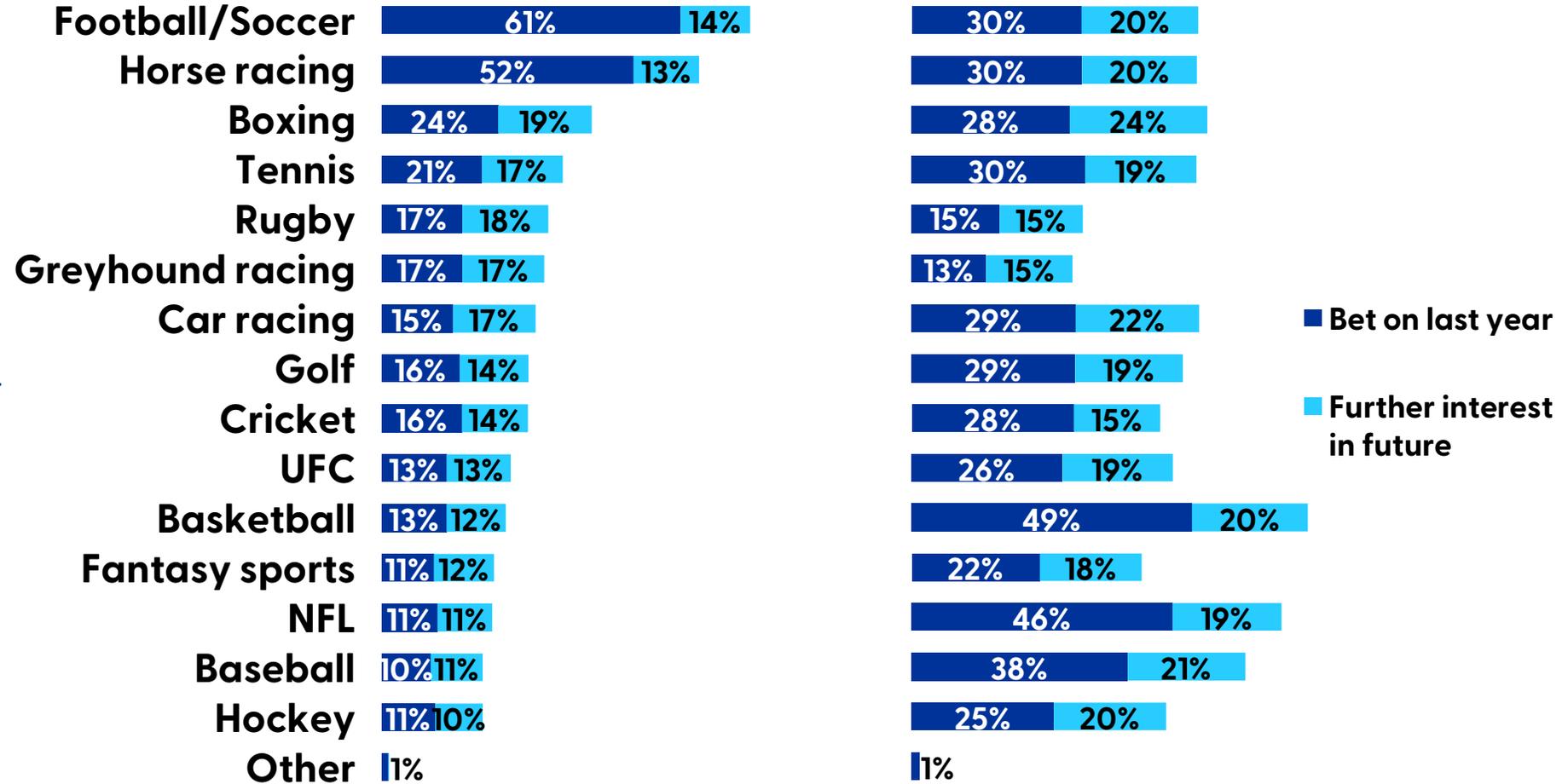


Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

National sports interests underpin betting behaviour. Football (soccer) and horse racing are most popular in the UK (betting is integral to the popularity of horse racing), while basketball and NFL attract most US bettors. Boxing is one to watch with the highest growth potential across both markets.



## Sports Betting Interest



42%

42%

have bet on sports in the past year\*

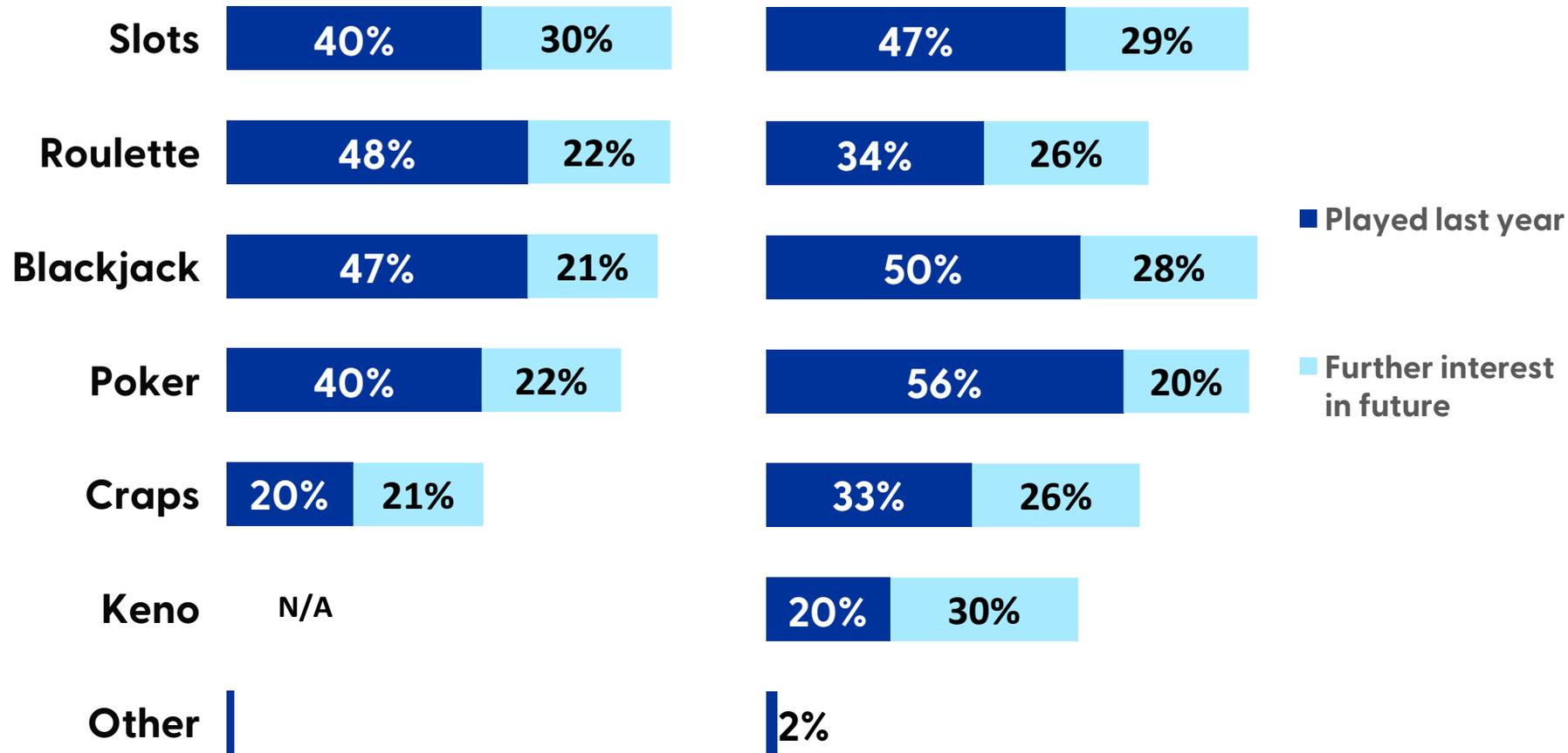
Base: All Sport Bettors in last year (UK: n=887, US: n=899)

\* Based on All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

In the UK, roulette and blackjack are the most popular casino games, with slots and poker close behind. In the US, it's a similar picture, although roulette is less popular. Slots has most growth potential across both markets.



## Casino Games Interest



36%

51%

have played casino games in the past year\*

Base: All Casino Players in last year (UK: n=763, US: n=1076)

\* Based on All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

Gambling spend is generally higher in the US than the UK. Since the start of the pandemic, the US has also seen most growth in spend, which will be a result of states launching sports betting services, as well as the home entertainment factor.



## Gambling Spend



- Less than £5
- £5 to less than £20
- £20 to less than £50
- £50 to less than £100



- Less than \$5
- \$5 to less than \$20
- \$20 to less than \$50
- \$50 to less than \$100

## Change of Spend since COVID



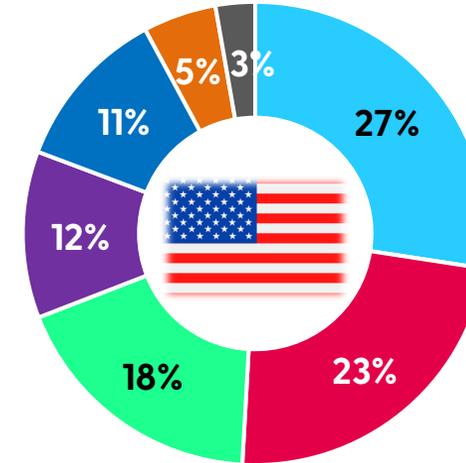
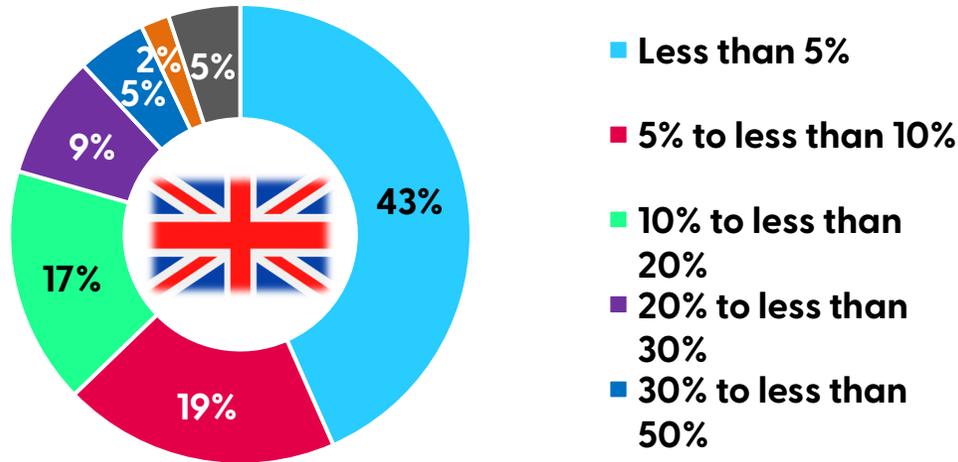
- Increased spend
- Kept same spend
- Decreased spend

Base: All gamblers (UK: n=1152, US: n=1236)

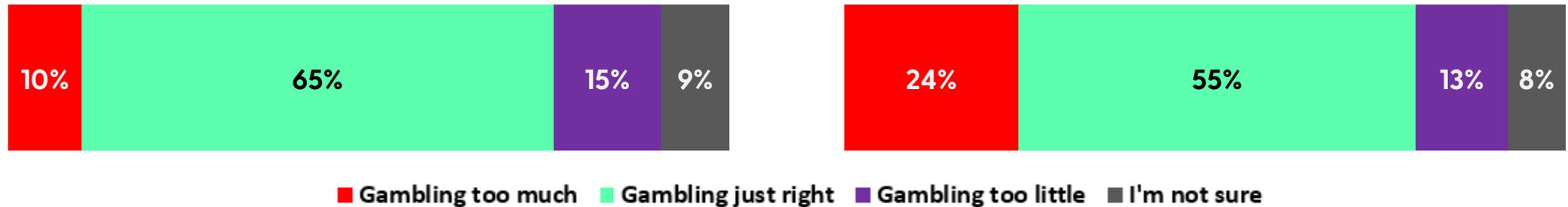
As also seen previously, spend is higher in the US. At the same time, US gamblers have most concern that they're gambling too much.



## % of Monthly Income Spent on Gambling



## Perception of Gambling Amount



Base: All gamblers (UK: n=1152, US: n=1236)

UK gamblers are most reserved about returning to venues. Over twice as many US gamblers have/will return when restrictions are not in place. The cautious minority in the US are most concerned about Covid implications, while in the UK there's a preference for online that will underpin more permanent behaviour.



## Likelihood to Return to Physical

### Casinos/Bookmakers



- Visit once restrictions are lifted
- Wait and see if others go
- Don't want to

- Depends on measures in place
- Too risky until the pandemic has passed
- Don't know

Base: All gamblers (UK: n=1152, US: n=1236)

## Reasons Unlikely to Visit

Worry virus will spread easily in venues

25%

41%

Not confident measures will be followed in...

23%

33%

Prefer playing online

45%

33%

Playing online is more convenient

35%

28%

Other

11%

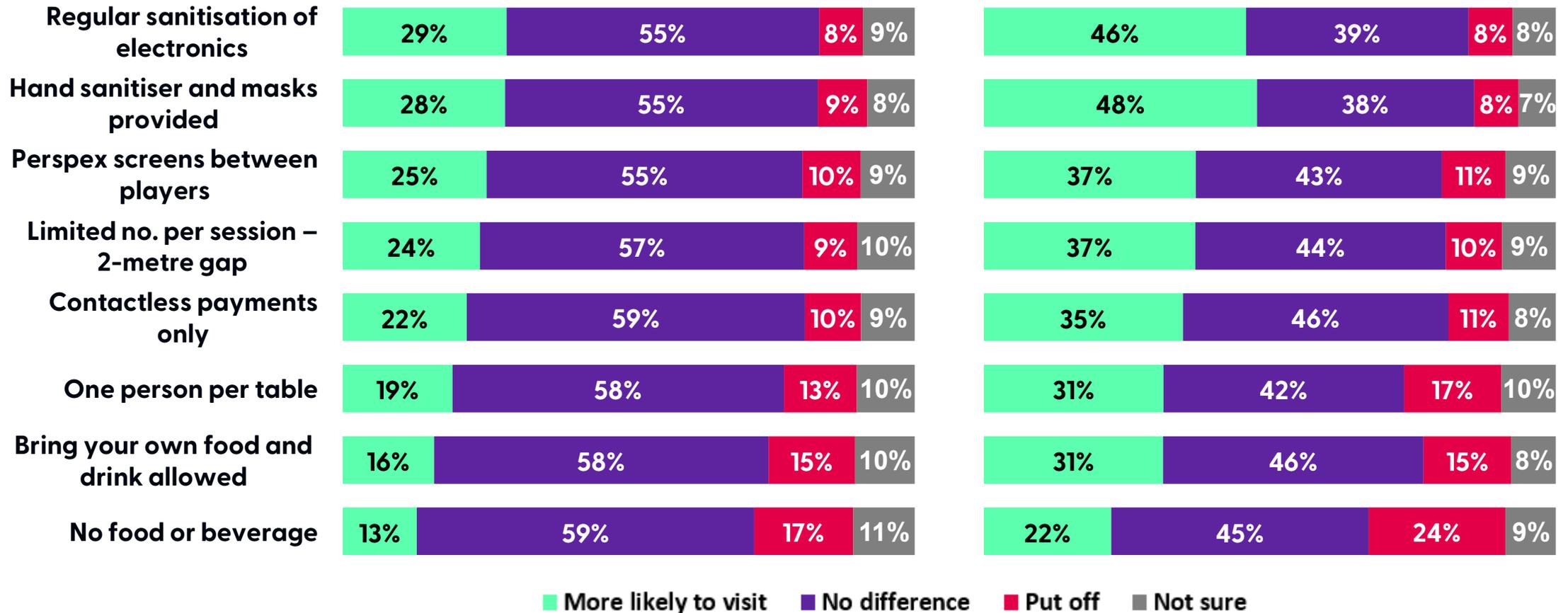
15%

Base: All those unlikely to go back to physical casinos/bookmakers (UK: n=418, US: n=206)

Reassurance of sanitisation will most motivate those who want to return to physical venues, especially in the US. More invasive measures such as Perspex screens is relatively welcomed. However, food and beverage is important to the experience and puts off the most potential visitors if not available.



## Perceptions of Safety Measures



Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

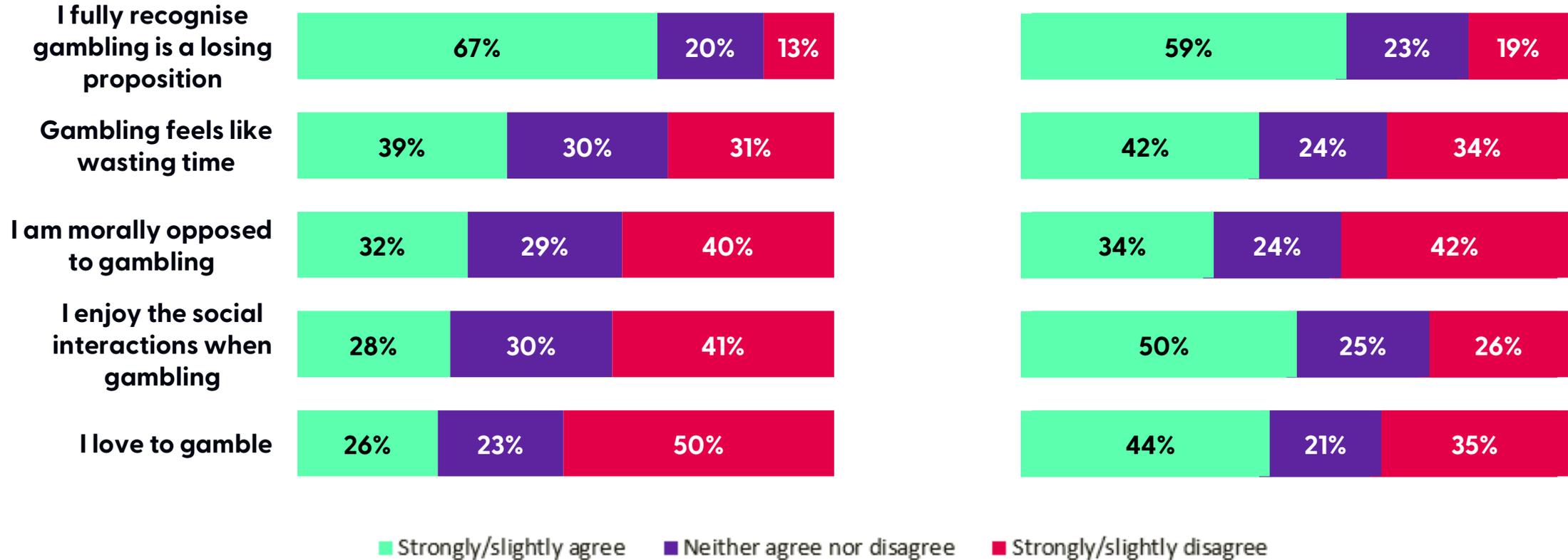
# Motivations



A majority of the UK and US public see gambling as a losing proposition, including gamblers. Nevertheless, there is appreciation of gambling, highest in the US with its intricate history and gambling culture. Moral opposition is significant, but a minority.



## Attitudes towards Gambling



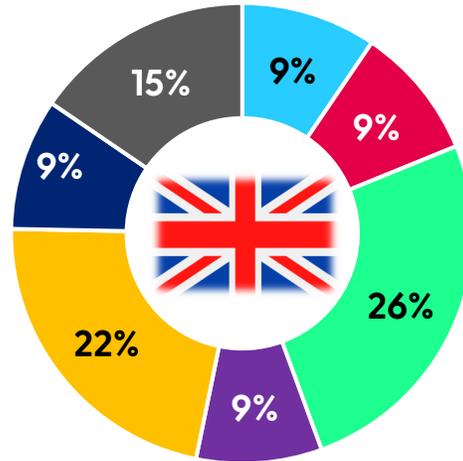
Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

Noting that even gamblers can feel gambling is a losing proposition (long term), we can see that enjoyment and adding excitement to game are the leading motivations to bet. A quarter of bettors are mostly interested in trying to earn some money.

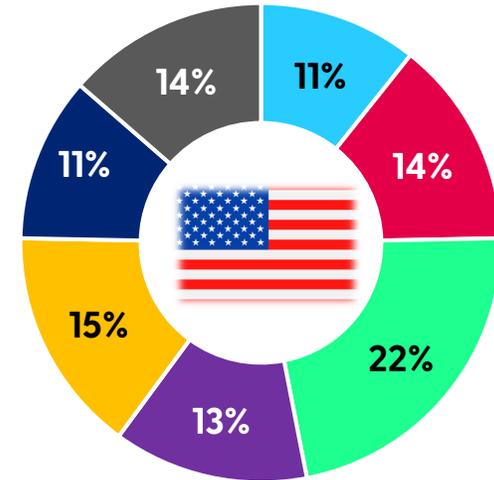


## Motivations to bet

 **67%**  
 **59%**  
 recognise gambling is a losing proposition\*



- Beating the bookie
- Solving the puzzle
- Enjoyment
- Connecting with friends
- Adding excitement



Base: All Sports bettors in last year (UK: n=887, US: n=899)

\* Based on All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

# Responsible Gambling Perceptions and Legislation



We have seen that gamblers can have concerns over their spend and frequency. Here, it's clear that the majority of UK and US gamblers feel that a responsible gambling environment is important when choosing a provider.

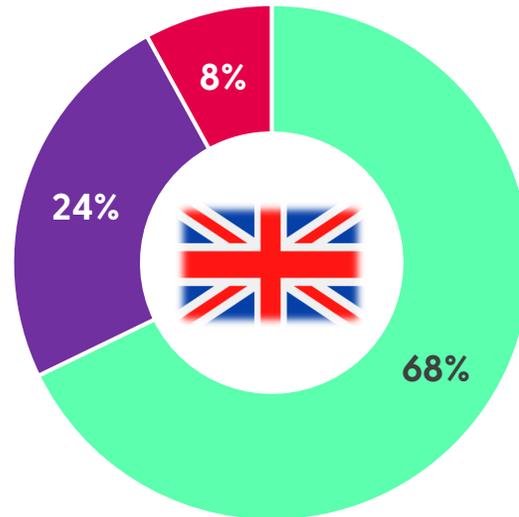


## Importance of a responsible gambling environment

 10%

 24%

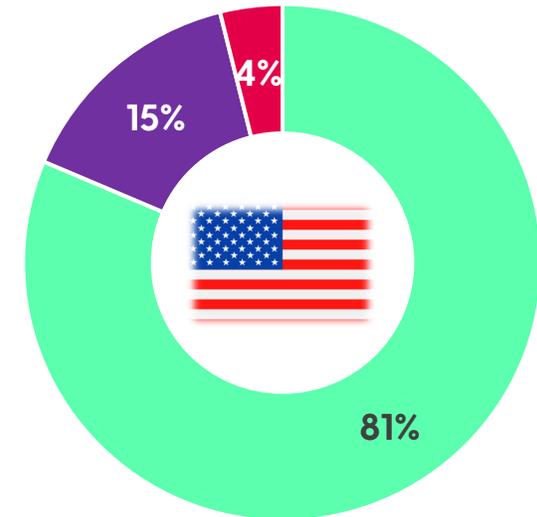
Concerned gambling too much



Very/Quite important

Neither nor

Not/Not quite important

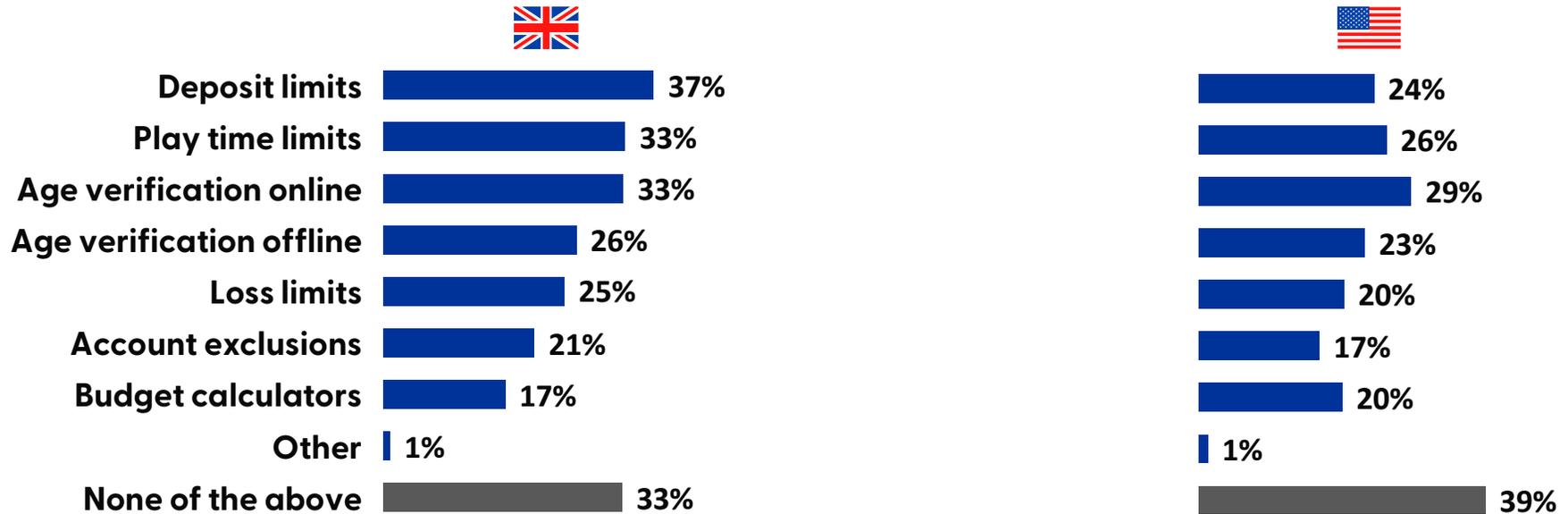


Base: All gamblers (UK: n=1152, US: n=1236)

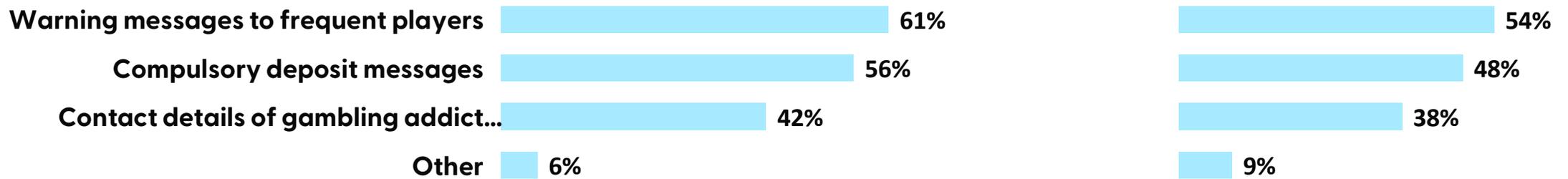
Two thirds of the UK and US public are aware of measures for responsible gambling – deposit limits are the most prominent in UK, age verification in the US. As further potential measures, warning messages to frequent players are perceived to be most effective in helping people gamble responsibly.



### Awareness of Measures Helping People Gamble Responsibly



### Other Measures to Help People Gamble Responsibly



Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

In July 2020, a House of Lords Select Committee published a report entitled **Gambling Harm – Time for Action**. The report considered the social and economic impact of the gambling industry and called for sweeping reforms in gambling regulations.

In December 2020, the Government (DCMS) launched a review of The UK Gambling Act 2005 to assess its fitness for the digital age.

Areas under review include:

- The impact of gambling ads and celebrity endorsements
- VIP schemes and inducements to bet
- Affordability checks and the risks posed by crypto currencies

# Gambling advertising

In August 2019, a voluntary ban came into effect in the UK on whistle-to-whistle TV advertising before the 9pm watershed.

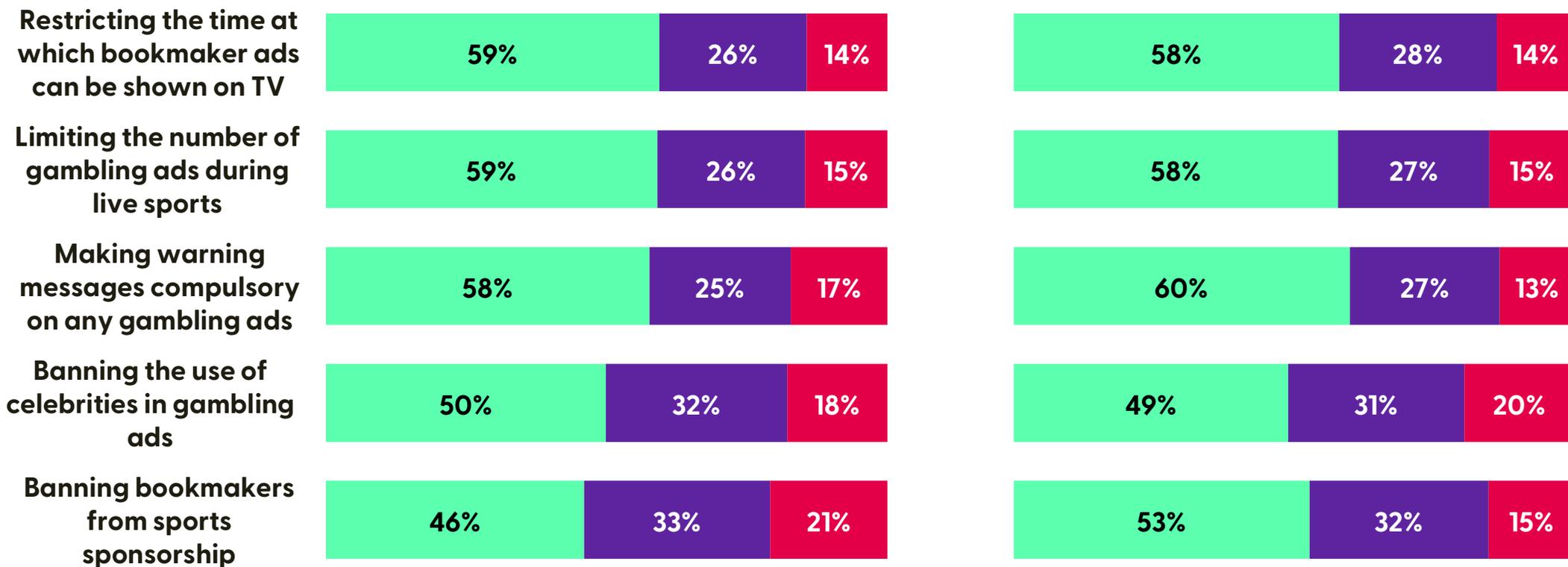
In consideration of further restrictions on TV and online advertising, including celebrity endorsements, the UK Government is currently weighing up evidence on gambling harm and the role of gambling advertising revenues in sport.

How do the UK and US public feel?

The UK and US mostly agree that all proposed restrictions on gambling advertising would be effective, with most support for restricting the times adverts can be shown and limits during live sporting events (already in place in the UK, to mixed views on impact). Banning bookmaker sponsorship is most polarising in the UK, while the US sees less harm in celebrity endorsements, which is rife in gambling advertising.



## Perception of Effectiveness of Measures



Very/quite effective    Neither nor    Not very/not effective

Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

UK males see more impact in banning bookmakers from sports sponsorship, while they are also more likely to be aware of such sponsorship and the promotion of gambling that comes with it.



## Perception of Effectiveness of Measures – Very/Quite Effective – By Segments

	Gender		Age			Gambler types				Gambling amount			Concern for responsible gambling	
	Male	Female	18-34	34-54	55+	Casino players	Sports bettors	Bingo players	Slots players	Below £20	£20 to £100	£100 or above	High	Low
	1065	1064	679	778	672	763	887	705	307	491	459	152	1344	218
Restricting the time at which bookmaker ads can be shown on TV	61%	58%	60%	57%	61%	60%	62%	60%	63%	60%	66%	58%	69%	45%
Limiting the number of gambling ads during live sports	58%	60%	61%	57%	59%	61%	60%	61%	61%	61%	60%	62%	69%	42%
Making warning messages compulsory on any gambling ads	57%	58%	62%	58%	53%	62%	61%	63%	63%	60%	62%	61%	68%	38%
Banning the use of celebrities in gambling ads	51%	49%	52%	47%	51%	53%	51%	55%	51%	49%	51%	55%	58%	34%
Banning bookmakers from sports sponsorship	48%	44%	51%	43%	43%	49%	48%	51%	44%	45%	49%	54%	54%	35%

Base: All respondents in UK (n=2129)

: Significantly higher/lower than all other segment(s) under the same category at 95% confidence level

US males have stronger belief that restrictions in gambling advertising will be effective, while the older generation (55+) have least faith in their impact, which seems like apathy as we'll see that they also consider gambling advertising more harmful.



Perception of Effectiveness of Measures – Very/Quite Effective – By Segments



	Gender		Age			Gambler types				Gambling amount			Concern for responsible gambling		
	Male	Female	18-34	34-54	55+	Casino players	Sports bettors	Bingo players	Slots players	Below £20	£20 to £100	£100 or above	High	Low	
	1065	1064	679	778	672	763	887	705	307	491	459	152	1344	218	
Restricting the time at which bookmaker ads can be shown on TV	58%	63%	53%	62%	63%	50%	70%	72%	73%	65%	57%	72%	70%	69%	34%
Limiting the number of gambling ads during live sports	58%	63%	53%	62%	63%	50%	68%	72%	71%	62%	57%	68%	70%	69%	40%
Making warning messages compulsory on any gambling ads	60%	65%	55%	65%	65%	52%	72%	74%	74%	68%	64%	72%	70%	71%	34%
Banning the use of celebrities in gambling ads	49%	57%	41%	55%	56%	37%	62%	70%	67%	52%	49%	63%	62%	59%	28%
Banning bookmakers from sports sponsorship	53%	60%	46%	58%	58%	44%	65%	71%	70%	56%	53%	65%	65%	63%	34%

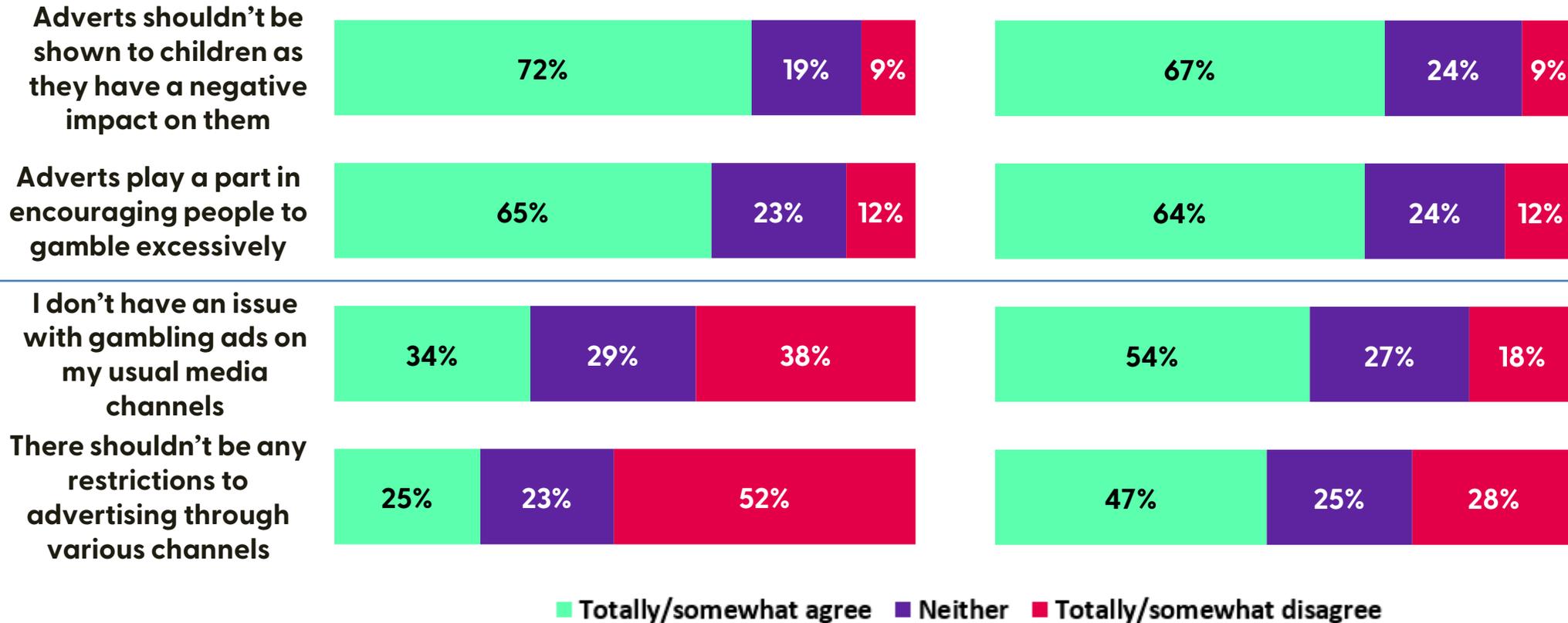
Base: All respondents in US (n=2119)

: Significantly higher/lower than all other segment(s) under the same category at 95% confidence level

Protecting minors from gambling advertising is a primary concern and a majority of the UK and US public believe that advertising contributes to gambling harm. However, a sizeable minority in the UK, and a majority in the US, accept current advertising and many don't feel they should be restricted any further.



**Attitudes towards Gambling-related Ads**



Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

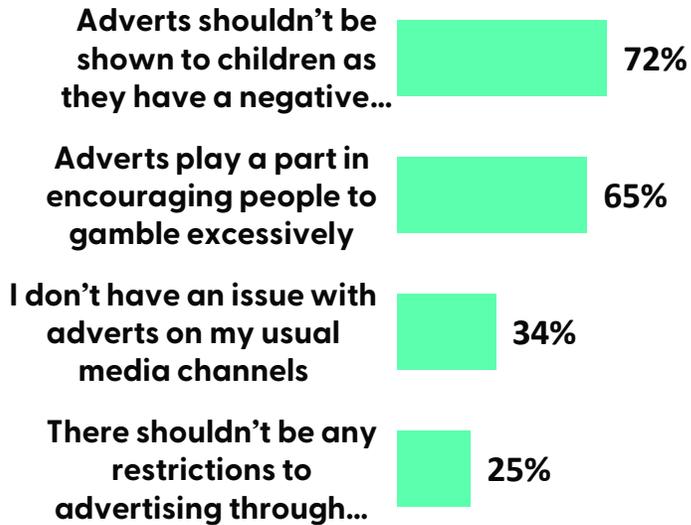
UK agreement with gambling ads causing harm correlates with age and of course responsible gambling concern. At the same time, males and Gen Z/Millennials are most accepting of current advertising, but more casual/lower spend gamblers show lower tolerance.



## Attitudes towards Gambling-related Ads



	Gender		Age			Gambler types				Gambling amount			Concern for responsible gambling	
	Male	Female	18-34	34-54	55+	Casino players	Sports bettors	Bingo players	Slots players	Below £20	£20 to £100	£100 or above	High	Low
	1065	1064	679	778	672	763	887	705	307	491	459	152	1344	218
Adverts shouldn't be shown to children as they have a negative...	71%	72%	60%	72%	84%	63%	66%	62%	64%	72%	66%	62%	79%	61%
Adverts play a part in encouraging people to gamble excessively	65%	65%	57%	63%	75%	58%	58%	57%	60%	62%	58%	60%	72%	56%
I don't have an issue with adverts on my usual media channels	37%	30%	47%	35%	19%	51%	49%	52%	48%	40%	50%	53%	39%	27%
There shouldn't be any restrictions to advertising through...	27%	23%	40%	25%	10%	45%	41%	46%	38%	26%	41%	49%	30%	20%



Base: All respondents in UK (n=2129)

: Significantly higher/lower than all other segment(s) under the same category at 95% confidence level

US males strongly agree that gambling ads can cause harm, but also show greater acceptance. Gen Z/Millennials least agree children should be protected, while attitudes towards censorship could also be influencing their views. Casual/lower spend gamblers seem least considerate of advertising, seeing less potential harm and yet least tolerance at the same time.



## Attitudes towards Gambling-related Ads



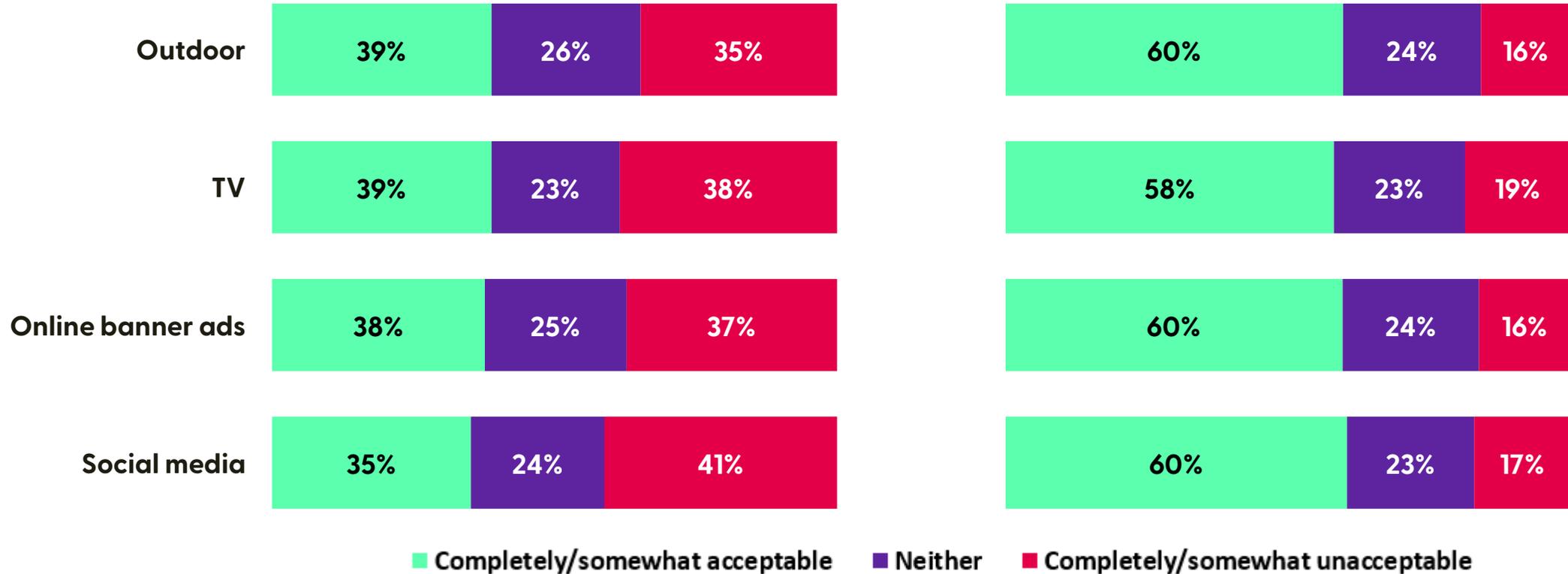
	Gender		Age			Gambler types				Gambling amount			Concern for responsible gambling	
	Male	Female	18-34	34-54	55+	Casino players	Sports bettors	Bingo players	Slots players	Below £20	£20 to £100	£100 or above	High	Low
	1029	1090	623	717	779	1076	899	941	549	299	517	358	1480	182
Adverts shouldn't be shown to children as they have a negative...	71%	63%	62%	71%	68%	71%	73%	73%	67%	62%	74%	73%	75%	49%
Adverts play a part in encouraging people to gamble excessively	71%	57%	63%	67%	61%	72%	76%	74%	65%	62%	72%	75%	72%	45%
I don't have an issue with adverts on my usual media channels	63%	46%	61%	65%	39%	71%	74%	72%	64%	59%	70%	74%	64%	27%
There shouldn't be any restrictions to advertising through...	57%	37%	56%	57%	30%	67%	72%	71%	59%	52%	64%	68%	57%	28%

Base: All respondents in US (n=2119)

Within the UK and US, there is little difference in acceptance of gambling advertising by media channel. However, the US are far more accepting overall.



## Acceptance of Gambling Adverts on Media Channels

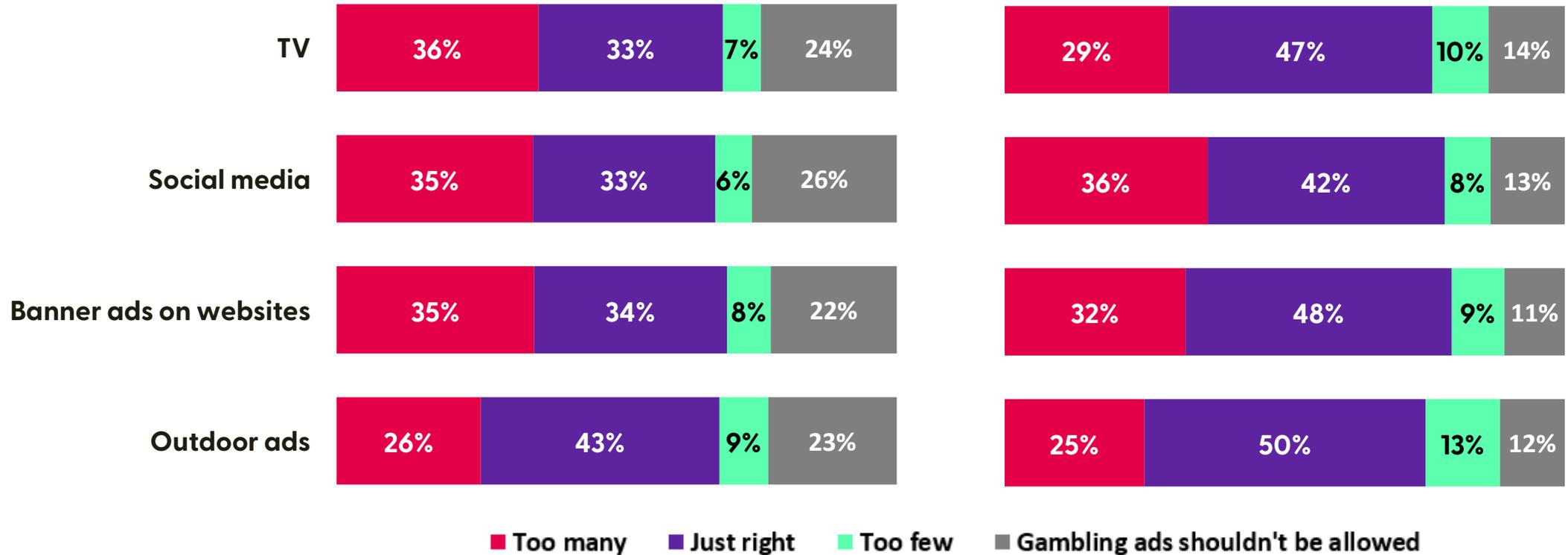


Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

Around a third of the UK and US public feel there's too much gambling advertising on all media channels, however an equal, if not larger, proportion find current levels acceptable. Outdoor is perceived most acceptable and as it is a less experienced channel, this suggests exposure to advertising, as well as social responsibility, is contributing to these attitudes.



## Perception on Number of Gambling Ads on Media Channels



Base: All respondents (UK: n=2129, US: n=2119)

# VIP schemes

High value customers attract enhanced customer service and promotions to encourage loyalty and spend.

In October 2020, the UK Gambling Commission published new guidance for the operation of VIP schemes.

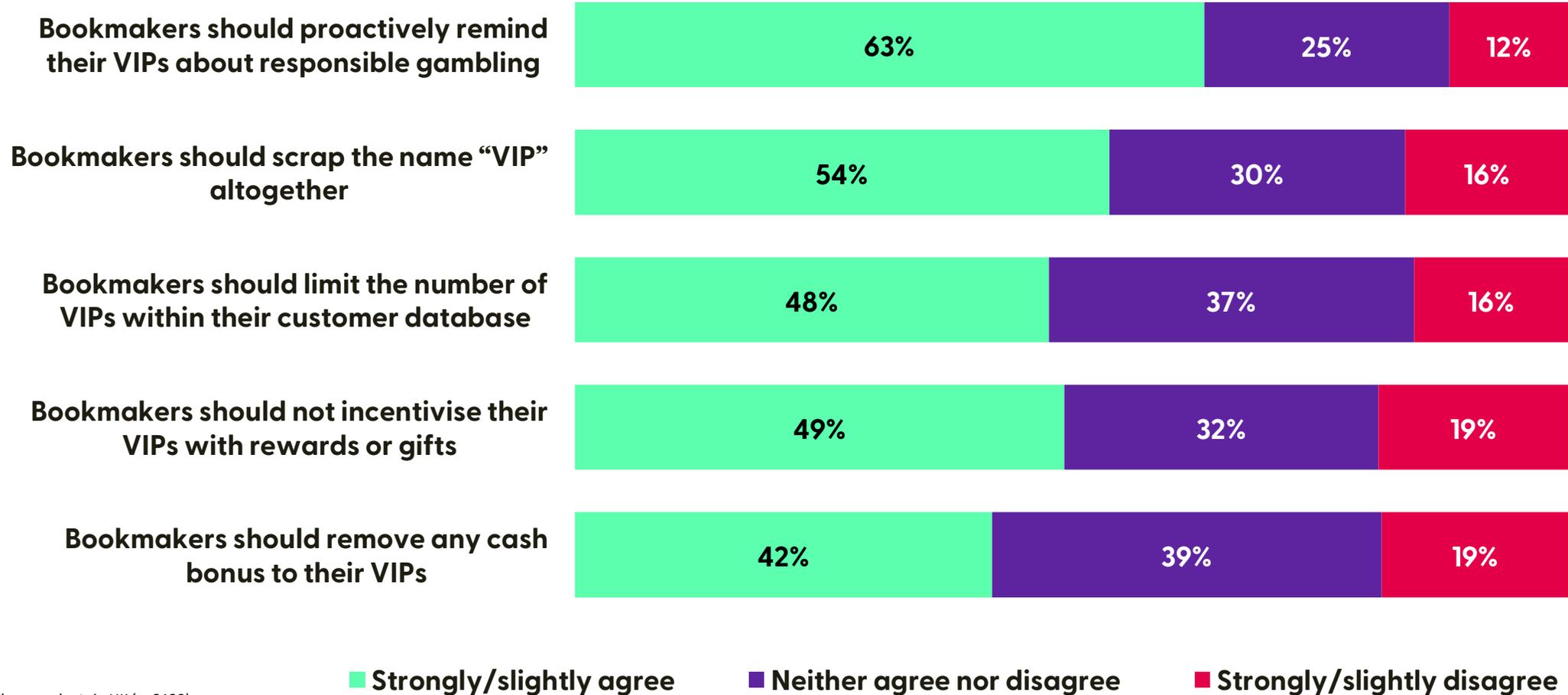
The Gambling Act review is considering the impact of promotions and incentives on gambling harm.

How does the UK public feel?

The majority of the UK public agree operators should proactively remind their VIPs about responsible gambling, while disagreement increases when proposing that such customers should have rewards and bonuses withheld.



## Attitudes Towards VIP Schemes



Base: All respondents in UK (n=2129)

Agreement with restrictions correlates with age and of course responsible gambling concern. However, higher value customers are less open to being reminded about responsible gambling and, not surprisingly, feel most strongly that spend/loyalty should be rewarded.



## Attitudes Towards “VIP Schemes” – Strongly/Slightly Agree – By Segments



	Gender		Age			Gambler types				Gambling amount			Concern for responsible gambling	
	Male	Female	18-34	34-54	55+	Casino players	Sports bettors	Bingo players	Slots players	Below £20	£20 to £100	£100 or above	High	Low
	1065	1064	679	778	672	763	887	705	307	491	459	152	1344	218
Bookmakers should proactively remind their VIPs about responsible...	62%	65%	49%	64%	77%	52%	55%	52%	62%	62%	59%	47%	72%	51%
Bookmakers should scrap the name “VIP” altogether	52%	56%	42%	52%	68%	44%	46%	44%	48%	52%	48%	41%	60%	48%
Bookmakers should limit the number of VIPs within their customer database	48%	47%	40%	44%	60%	40%	41%	40%	42%	42%	45%	36%	54%	44%
Bookmakers should not incentivise their VIPs with rewards or gifts	49%	50%	39%	47%	63%	38%	40%	40%	42%	44%	43%	33%	54%	42%
Bookmakers should remove any cash bonus to their VIPs	42%	42%	34%	38%	54%	35%	37%	36%	35%	37%	36%	35%	47%	39%

Bookmakers should proactively remind their VIPs about responsible...



63%

Bookmakers should scrap the name “VIP” altogether



54%

Bookmakers should limit the number of VIPs within their customer database



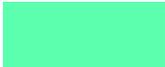
48%

Bookmakers should not incentivise their VIPs with rewards or gifts



49%

Bookmakers should remove any cash bonus to their VIPs



42%

Base: All respondents in UK (n=2129)

: Significantly higher/lower than other segment(s) under the same category at 95% confidence level

# Payments

In April 2020, credit cards were banned for UK gamblers making payments to operators.

The Gambling Act review is considering greater scrutiny of affordability in gambling and how payment methods such as crypto currencies pose a risk for accessing gambling and undermining safeguards.

How does the UK public feel?

While a quarter of the UK public do not agree that credit cards should have been banned, a majority seem to support the view that they pose a risk for problem gambling. Crypto currencies are less understood and support for their use in gambling is low.



## Attitudes Towards Payment Methods of Concern – UK



Credit cards should be accepted for payments on gambling



■ Strongly/slightly agree    
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree    
 ■ Strongly/slightly disagree

Using cryptocurrency to gamble



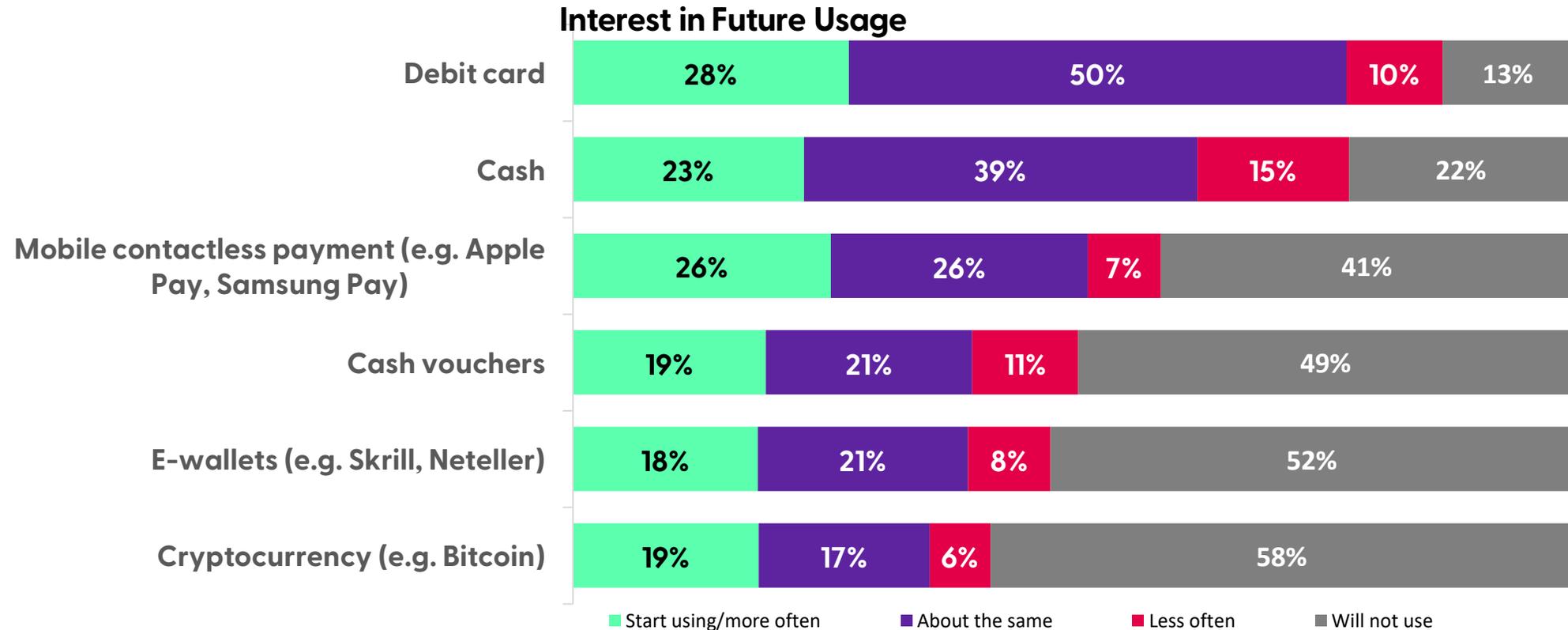
■ Should be allowed to use freely    
 ■ Should be a limit on the amount  
■ Should not be allowed to use    
 ■ Not sure/prefer not to say

Base: All respondents in UK (n=2129)

Debit cards are the most popular payment method in UK and usage will increase. Mobile contactless payments are also gaining more interest. Cryptocurrency is not understood or familiar to many and a majority of gamblers are not currently interested in using such currencies for gambling.



## Payment Methods for Gambling – UK



Base: All gamblers in UK (n=1152)

# US legislation

A US Supreme Court ruling in May 2018 placed sports betting legalisation in the hands of individual states.

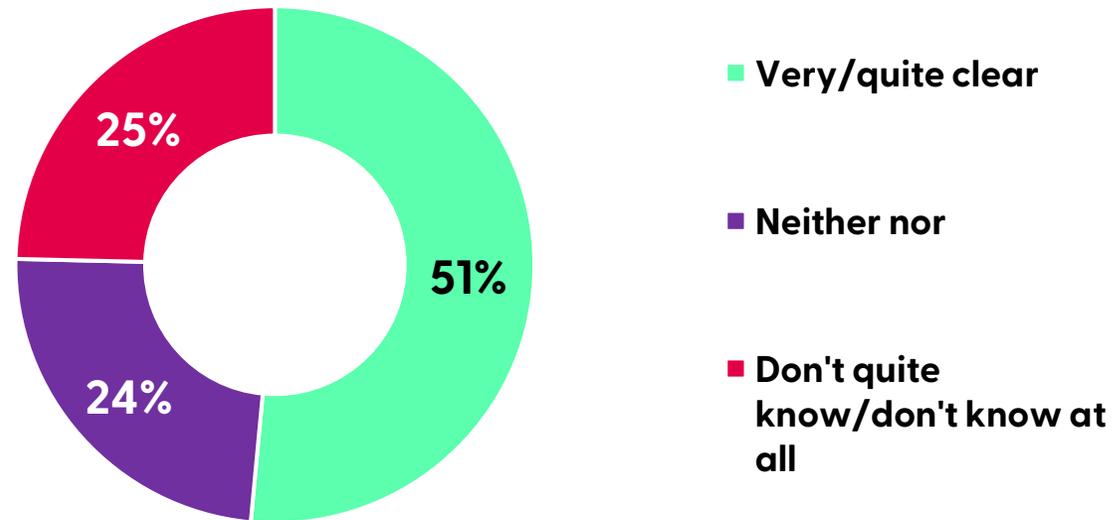
Nevada's stronghold on legal sports betting gave way to a run of states opening legal services, beginning with New Jersey and Delaware opening retail betting in June 2018 (NJ went on to launch online and mobile betting in August 2018). Today, more than 20 states have launched betting services as recently as 2021 and more will likely follow.

Is the US public confident they understand the current legislation status?

The US market is complicated with differing state laws and federal legislation. Half the US public feel the current status of legislation is clear, while further education and state developments will reassure others. Sports betting is opening up rapidly and based on the size of the market and growth so far, there is substantial opportunity for operators able to get a foothold in the market and compete with the dominance of legacy fantasy sports and casino brands.



## Understanding of the Legislation around Gambling in US



Base: All respondents in US (n=2119)

# Brand perceptions

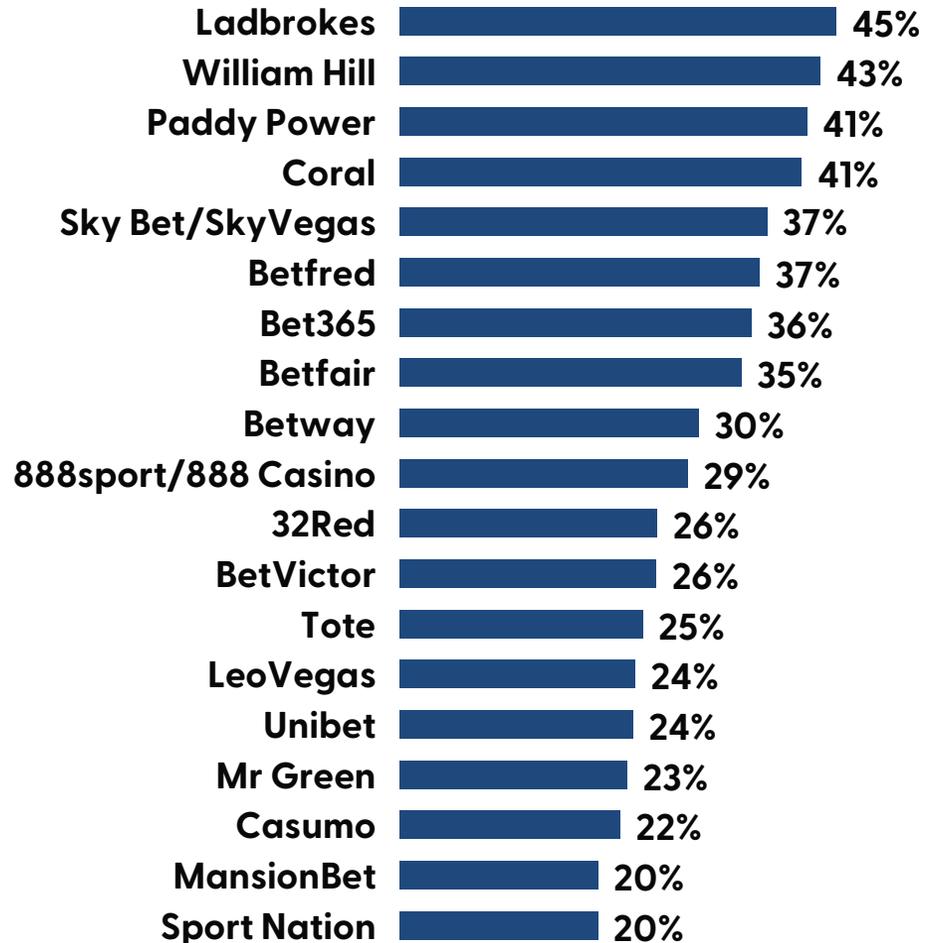




## Perception of Brands Providing a Safe and Responsible Gambling Environment



### Top 2 Box



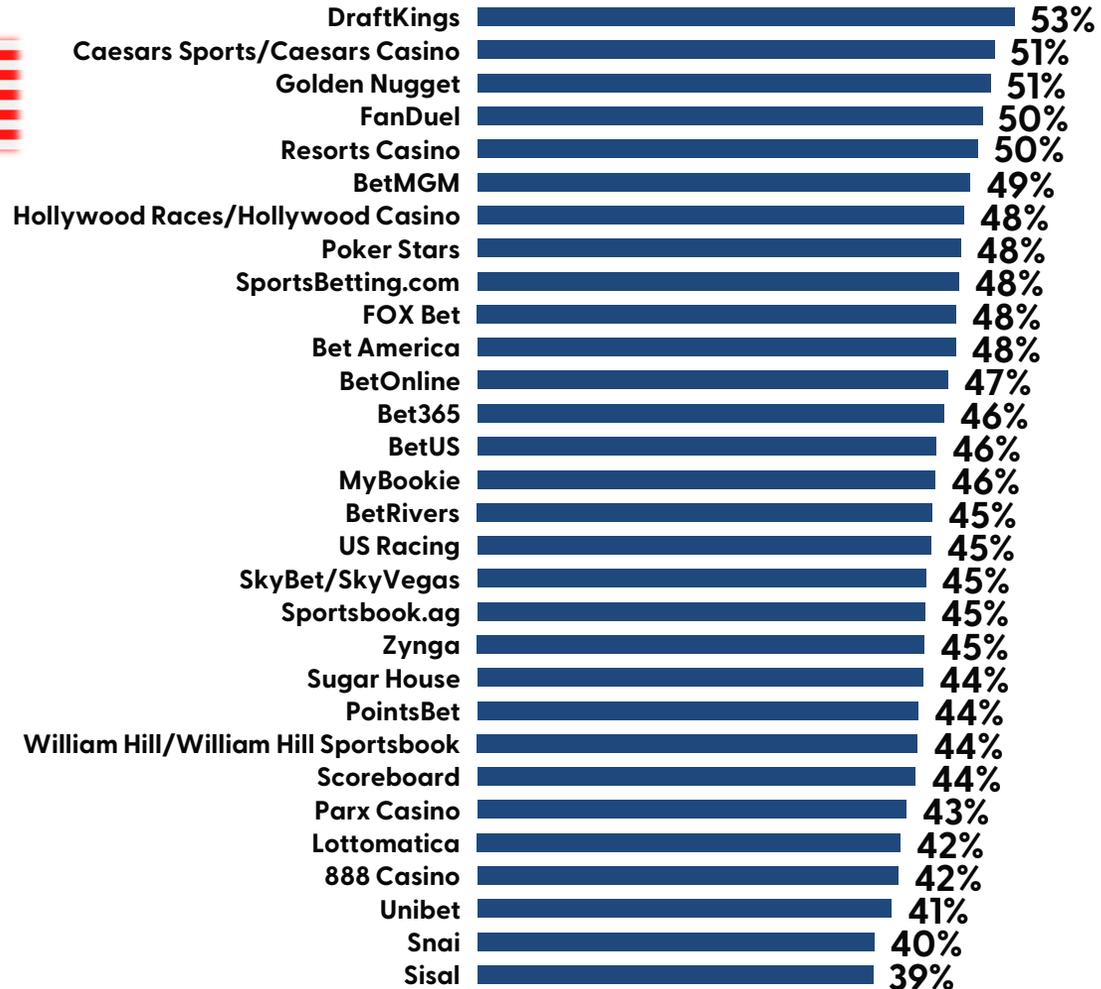
**68%**  
 think responsible gambling considerations are very/quite important when choosing an online sportsbook/casino provider

Base: All gamblers (UK n=1152)



# Perception of Brands Providing a Safe and Responsible Gambling Environment

**81%**  
think responsible gambling considerations are very/quite important when choosing an online sportsbook/casino provider



Top 2 Box

Base: All gamblers (US n=1236)