



GAMBLING AND COVID: THE LASTING IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON GAMBLING IN CANADA

Carrie A. Shaw & Robert J. Williams
University of Lethbridge

Disclosures

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- **Conflicts of Interest:** There are no potential conflicts of interest for this presentation or research.
- **Prior dissemination:** Results for Wave 1 & 2 of the ANP COVID Supplementary study have been published

The Natural Experiment

- In early 2020, the novel COVID-19 virus was declared a worldwide pandemic and each country began formalizing responses to the virus. By March 25th, 2020, most commercial land-based gambling venues in Canada had closed as they are deemed non-essential services (AGRI, n.d.; Stevens, 2020). This unprecedented closure of commercial gambling venues provided the natural experimental conditions to examine gambling engagement, motivations, harms, and treatment seeking in the absence of most legal face-to-face gambling opportunities.
- Across two years, pandemic response measures included the iterative relaxation and reinstatement of pandemic related restrictions on non-essential businesses.
- In the Fall of 2022, non-essential businesses were re-opened without pandemic related response measures.

Related Research

Cross sectional

- Pandemic related changes such as changes by game type, platform, etc. (e.g., Brown & Hickman, 2020; Gainsbury et al., 2020; International Gambling Business, 2020; Moraine, 2020, Price, 2022)

Longitudinal

- Player data (Auer et al. 2020; Auer et al., 2023) – all gamblers, sports bettors
- Harmed Individuals (Gunstrone et al. (2020) – sample of previously impacted gamblers/significant others report increased gambling
- Health Survey (Emond et al 2022) – UK youth increase in online during lockdown and alcohol w/ gambling
- Others since land-based restrictions (e.g., Australia: Black et al 2021, Hing et al. 2024; ; Sweden: Mansson et al 2021, etc.).

Other

- Reviews (e.g., Quinn et al., 2022, etc.)
- Calls for safe strategies for returning to land-based gambling (Stark e& Robinson, 2021)

Research Aims

Describe

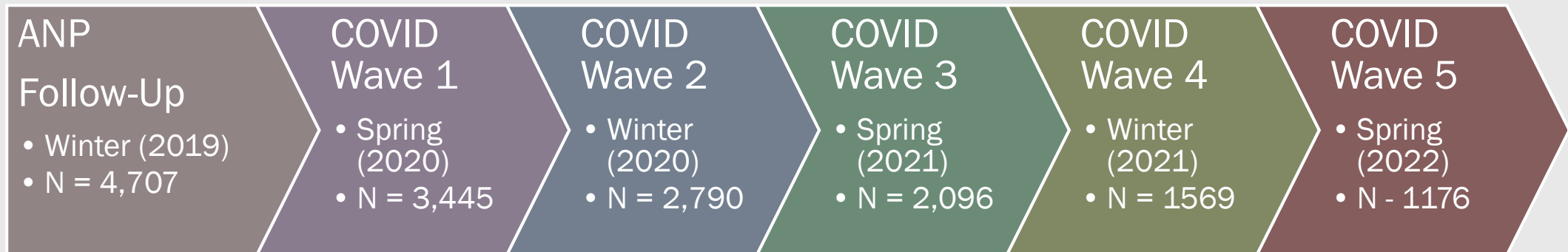
Describe changes in Canadian gambling across time

- Identify if gambling returned to pre-pandemic levels

Examine

Examine the impact of pandemic related variables on problem gambling when the 'new normal' had been established

Data Collection



Research Method

- Comorbidities
 - (DSM Criteria)
- Gambling Variables
 - Gambling Engagement (frequency, # of games, time/session, total losses, platform) (Williams et al. 2017)
 - PGSI (Ferris & Wynne, 2001)
 - Gambling Fallacies Measure (Leonard, Williams, & Vokey, 2015)
- Demographics
- Personality (Impulsivity - NEO-PI-R, Costa & McCrae, 1992)
- Covid Specific Experience (Grasso et al., 2020)
 - Employment
 - Health (self & others)

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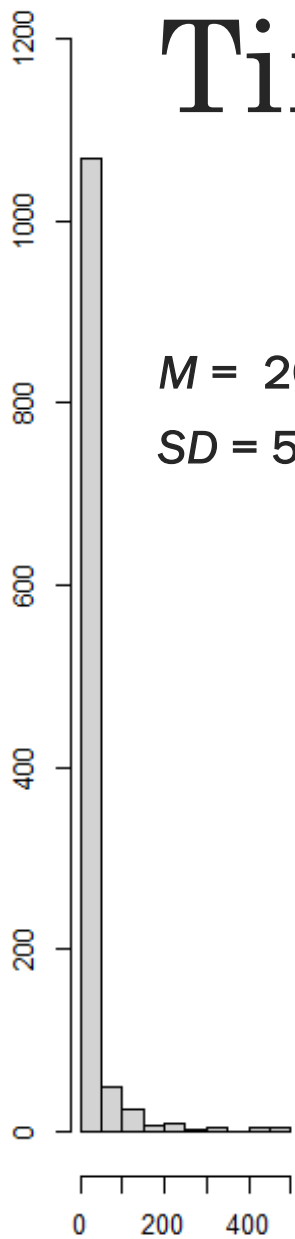
COVID
Waves



RESULTS

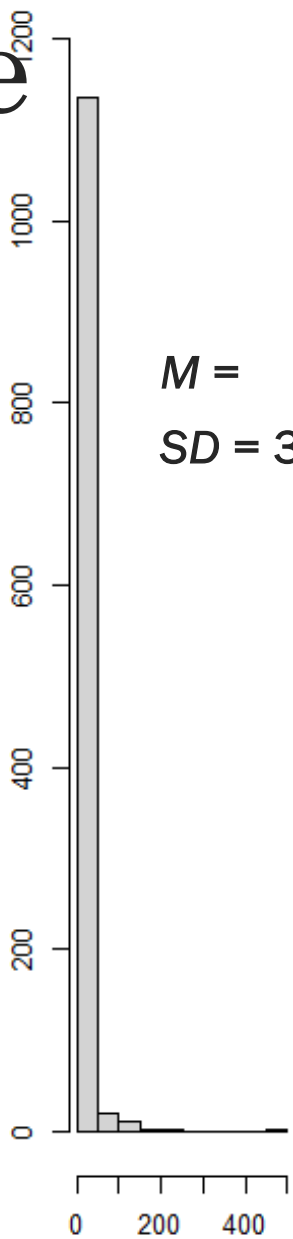
AIM 1

Time



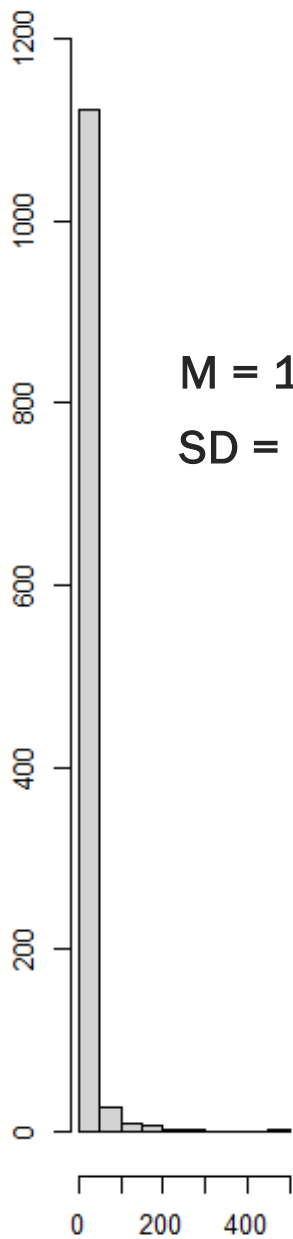
$M = 20.85$
 $SD = 55.05$

Winter 2019



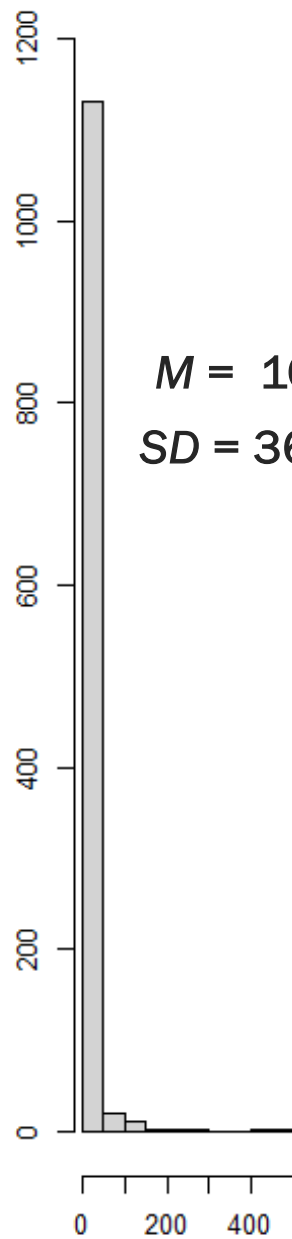
$M = 7.57$
 $SD = 33.94$

Spring 2020



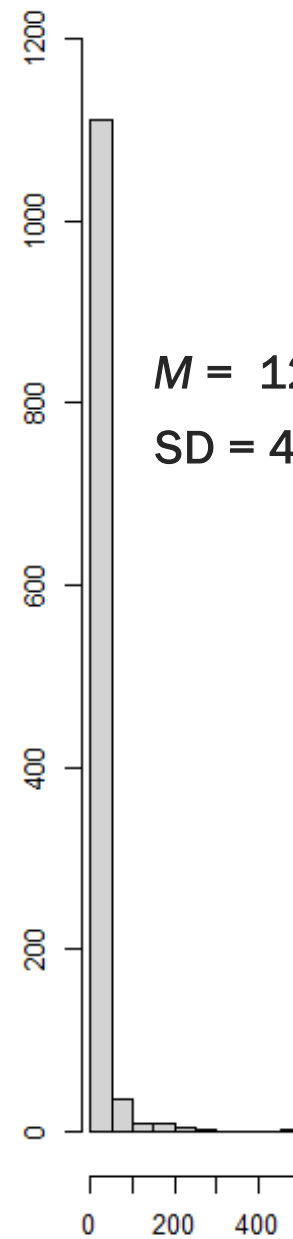
$M = 11.13$
 $SD = 38.15$

Winter 2020



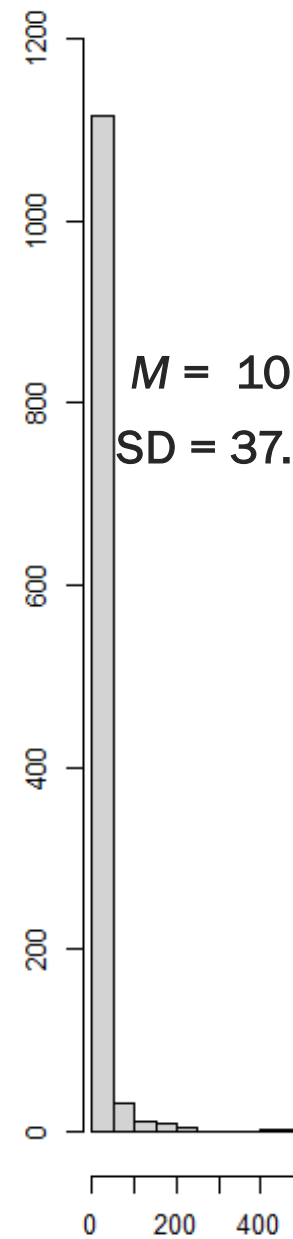
$M = 10.02$
 $SD = 36.55$

Spring 2021



$M = 12.04$
 $SD = 40.58$

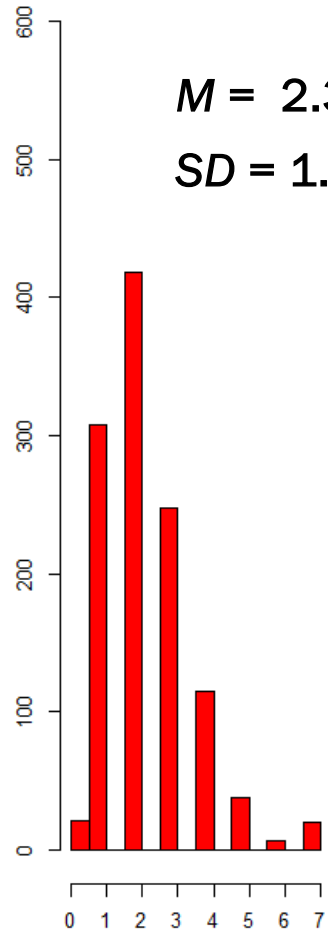
Winter 2021



$M = 10.89$
 $SD = 37.40$

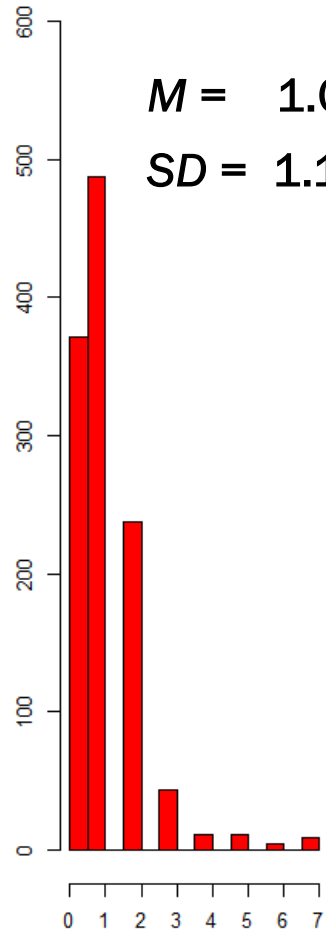
Spring 2022

Number of games



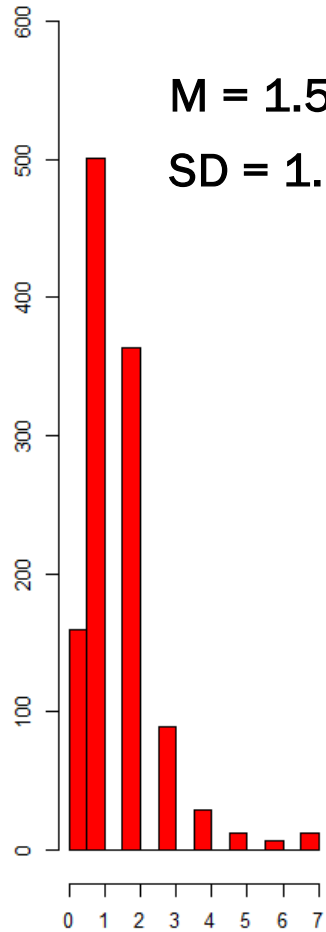
$M = 2.31$
 $SD = 1.28$

Winter 2019



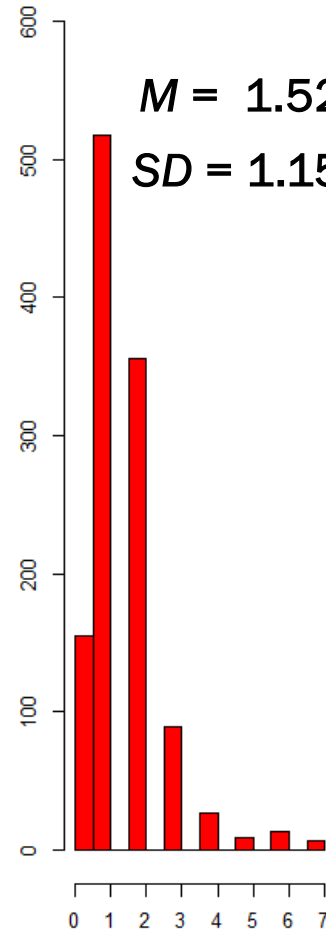
$M = 1.09$
 $SD = 1.13$

Spring 2020



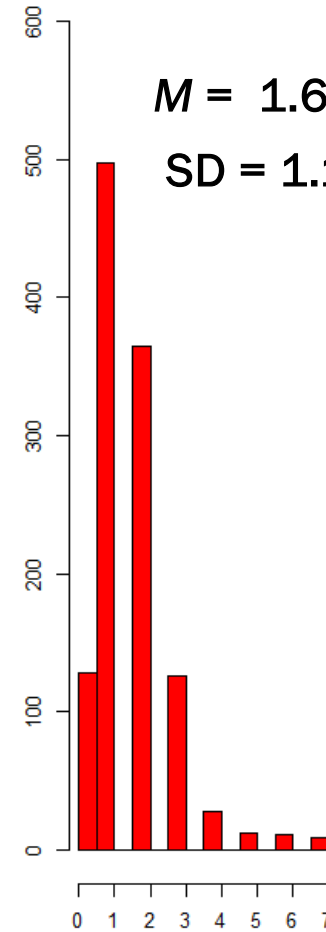
$M = 1.54$
 $SD = 1.19$

Winter 2020



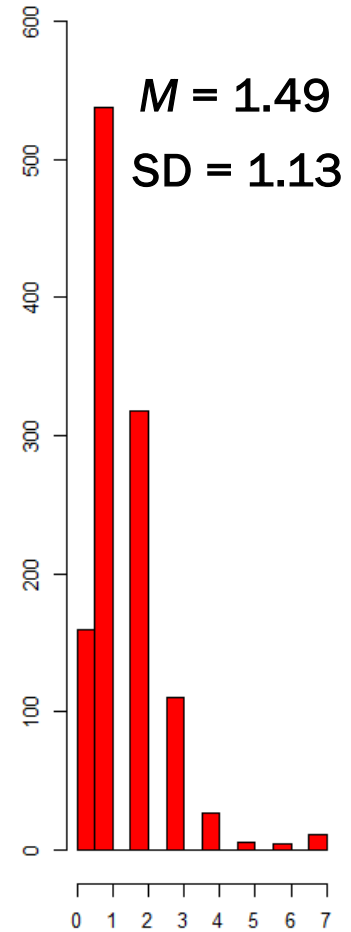
$M = 1.52$
 $SD = 1.15$

Spring 2021



$M = 1.62$
 $SD = 1.16$

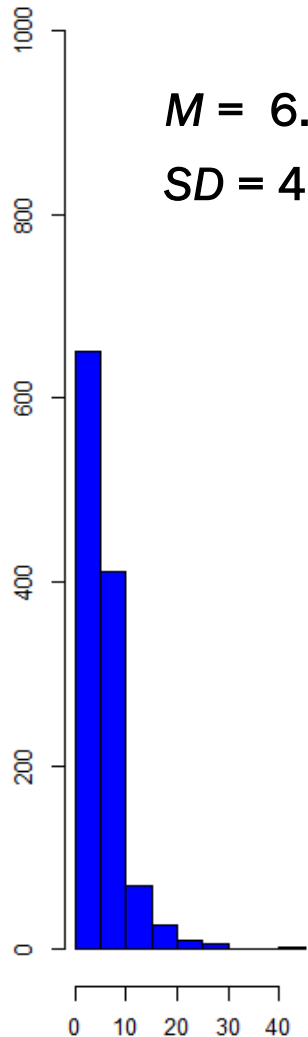
Winter 2021



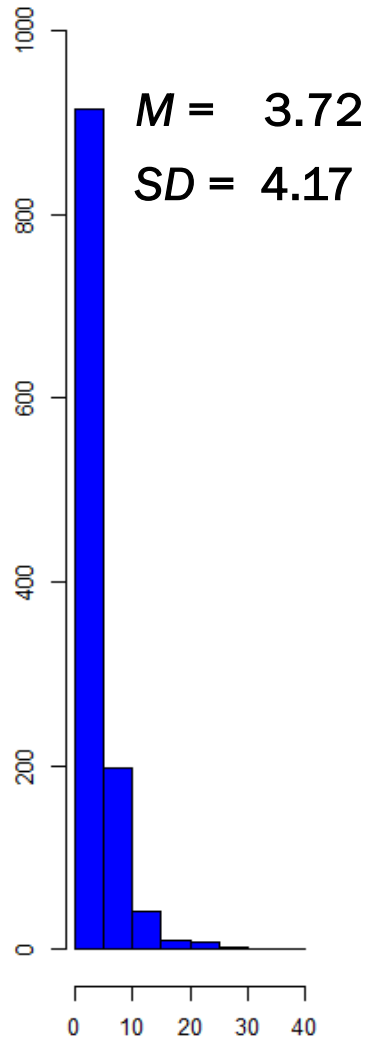
$M = 1.49$
 $SD = 1.13$

Spring 2022

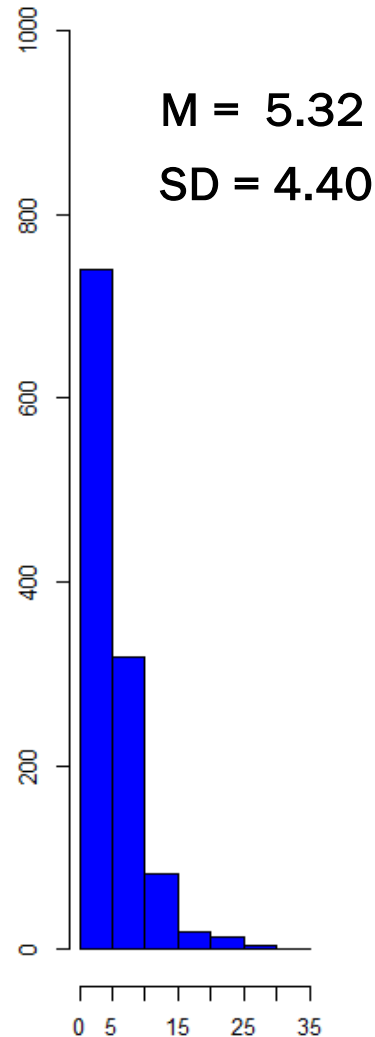
Frequency



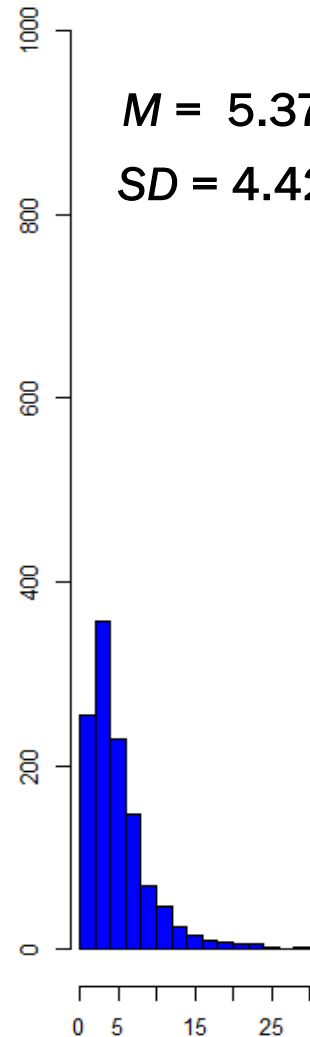
Winter 2019



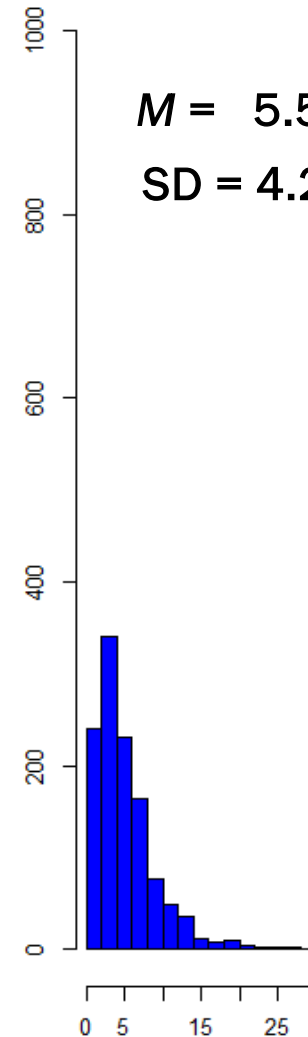
Spring 2020



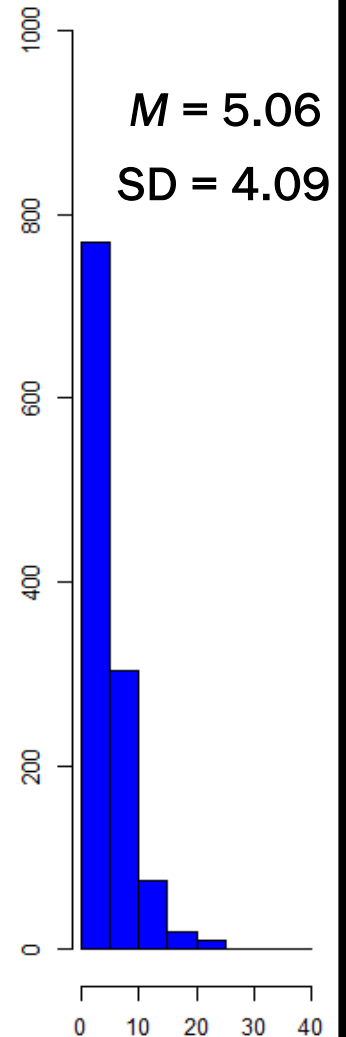
Winter 2020



Spring 2021

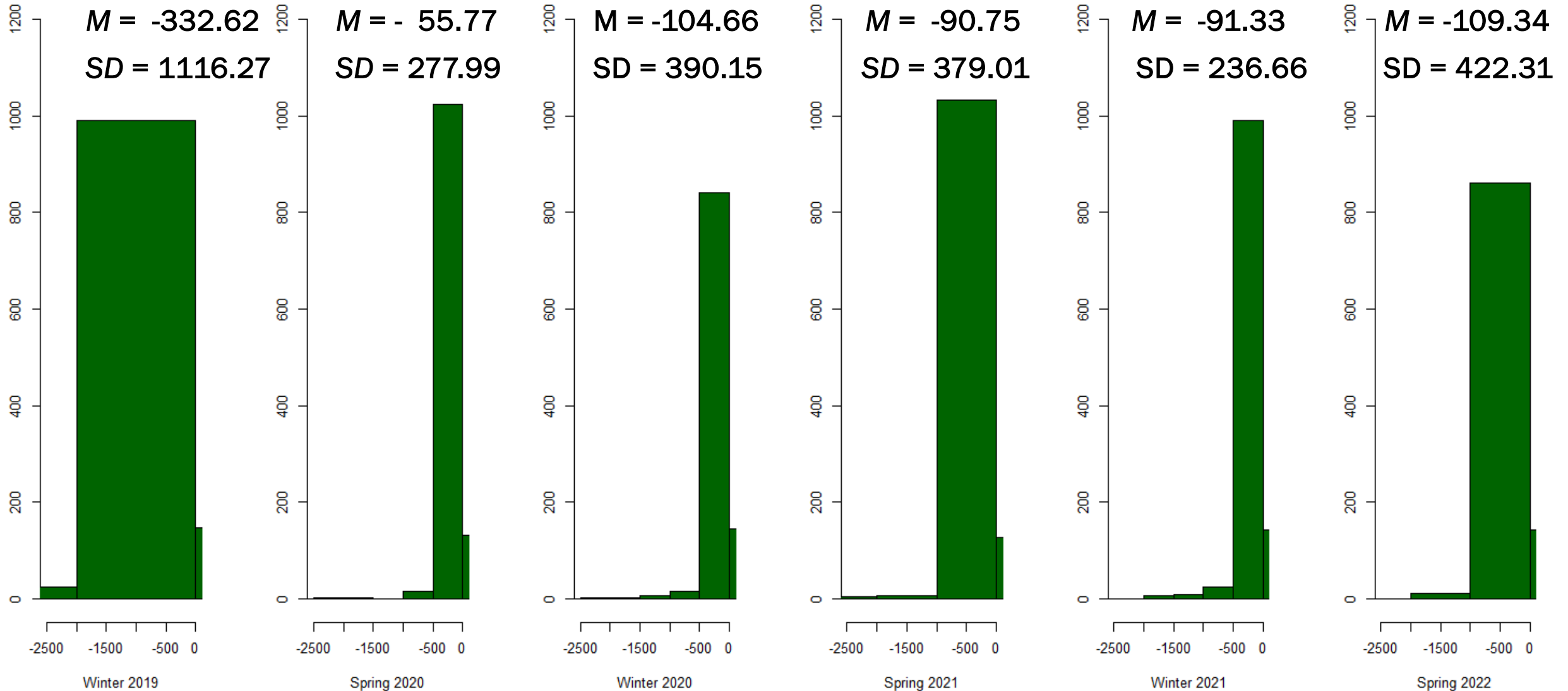


Winter 2021



Spring 2022

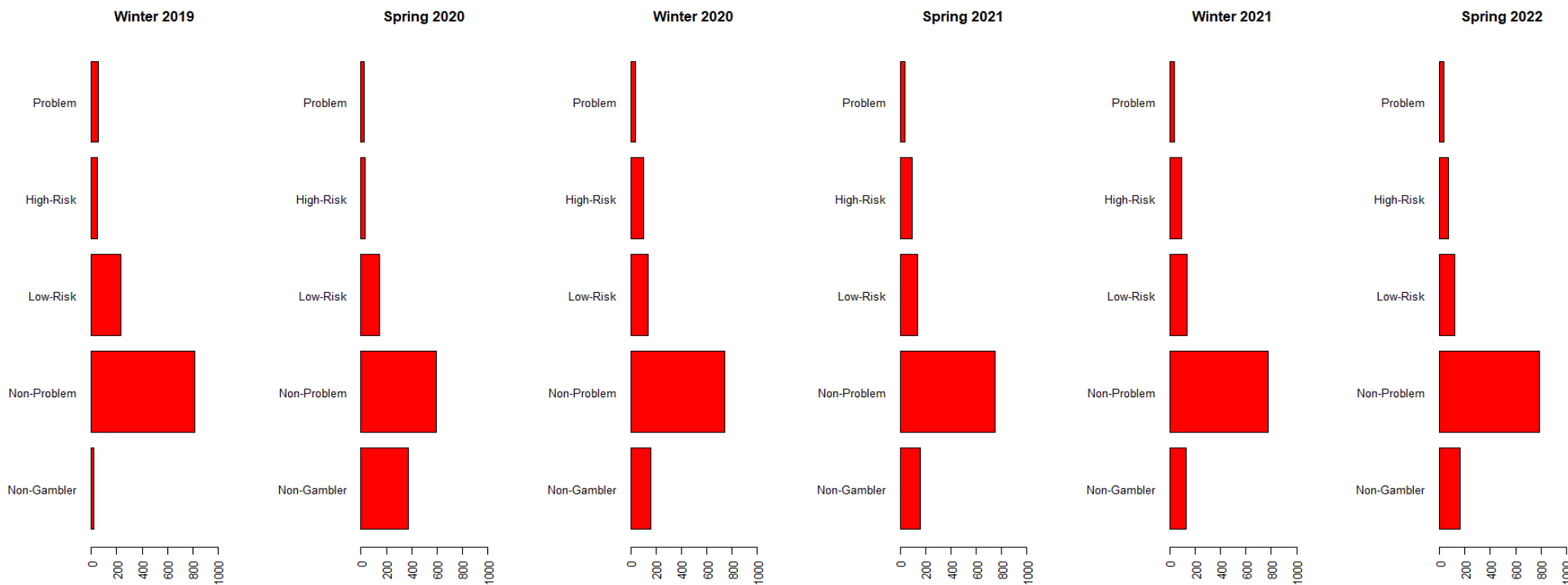
Gambling losses (\$)



Platform



Gambling Category

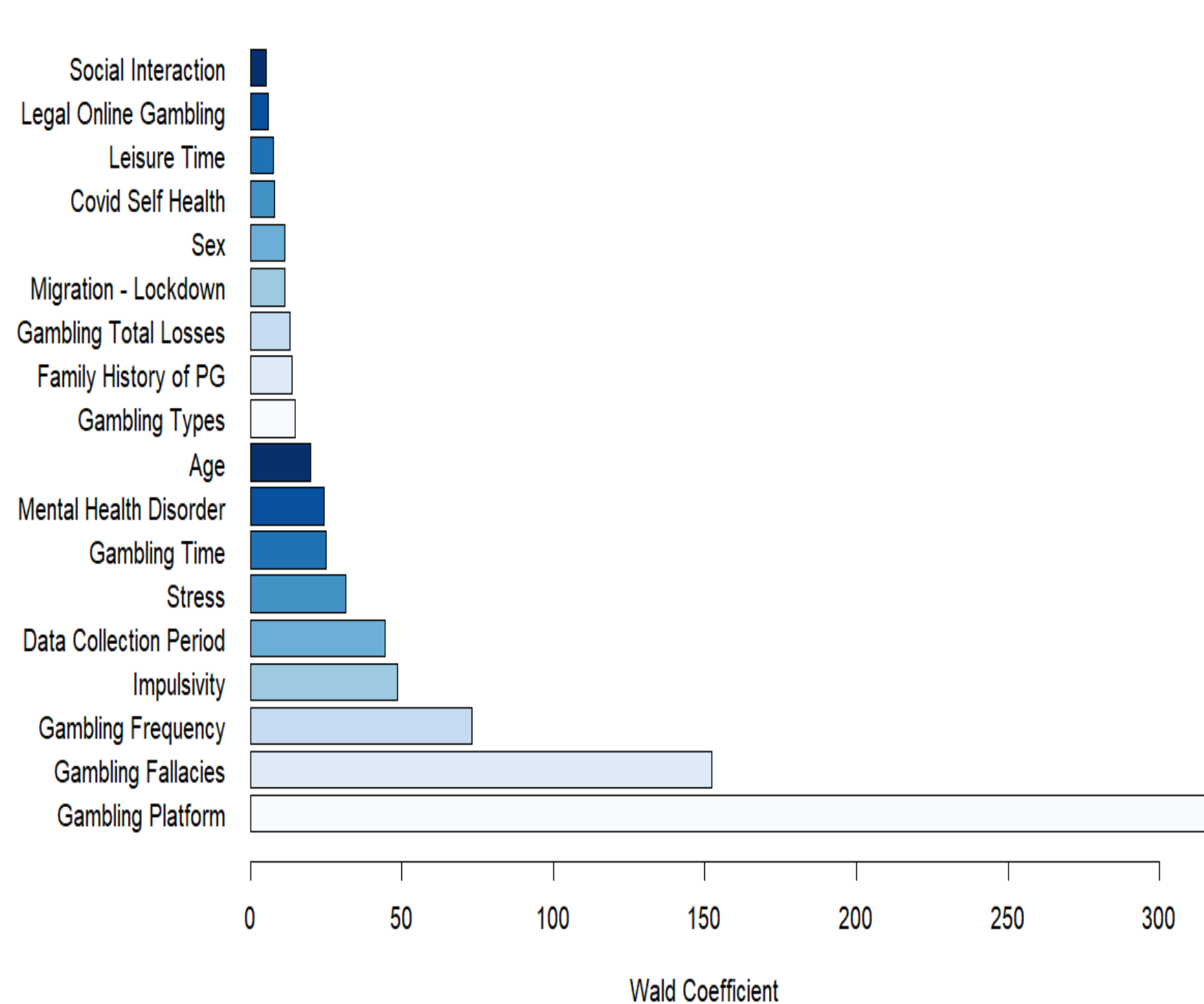


Gambling Category	Winter 2019	Spring 2020	Winter 2020	Spring 2021	Winter 2021	Spring 2022
Problem	4.80%	2.50%	3.40%	2.90%	3.10%	3.10%
Moderate Risk	4.20%	3.00%	8.50%	8.10%	8.00%	6.20%
Low Risk	20.00%	12.60%	11.50%	11.90%	11.80%	10.10%
Non-Problem	69.30%	50.40%	63.00%	63.90%	66.20%	67.00%
Non-Gambler	1.80%	31.50%	13.60%	13.30%	10.90%	13.60%



RESULTS

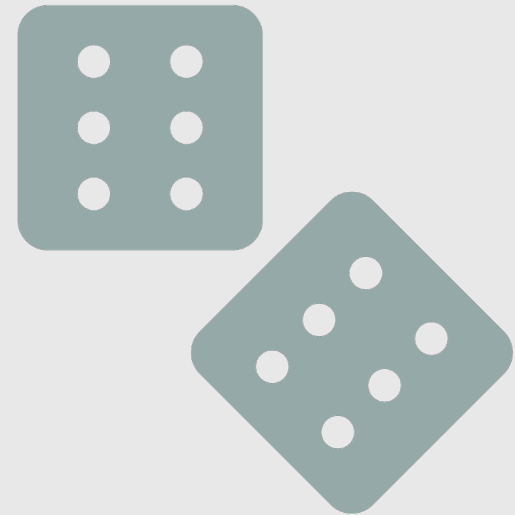
AIM 2



PREDICTING GAMBLING SEVERITY CATEGORY

Conclusions

- Gambling engagement declined during lockdown but began to increase post-lockdown
 - Engagement did not return to pre-pandemic levels
- A significant minority migrated to online gambling with most returning to land-based engagement post-lockdown
 - Rises in online did not return to pre-pandemic levels but considerable fluctuation is evidenced
- The return to land-based venues was a strong predictor for PG category
- COVID specific variables were significant in the prediction of PG scores two years after lockdown



The image features a dark, starry night sky as the background. A bright comet streak is visible in the upper left quadrant. Below the sky, a silhouette of a rugged mountain range is shown against a faint, orange-hued horizon. The text "THANK YOU!" is centered in the middle of the image.

THANK YOU!