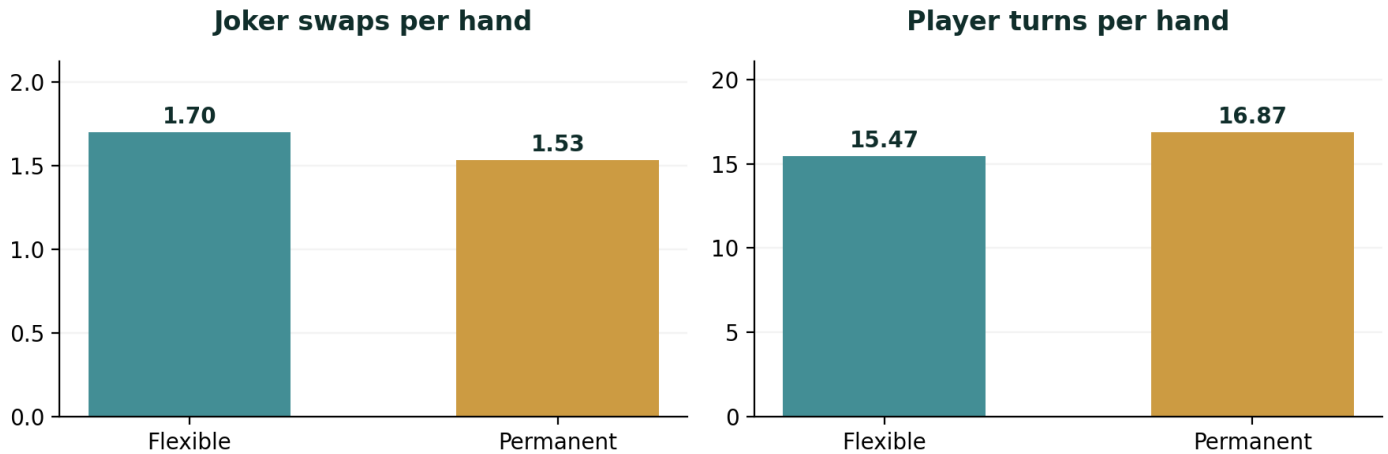


Fewer swaps. Slightly longer hands.

Permanent identity reduced swaps by about 10% and increased player turns by about 9% in matched completed hands. It did not materially change score gaps.

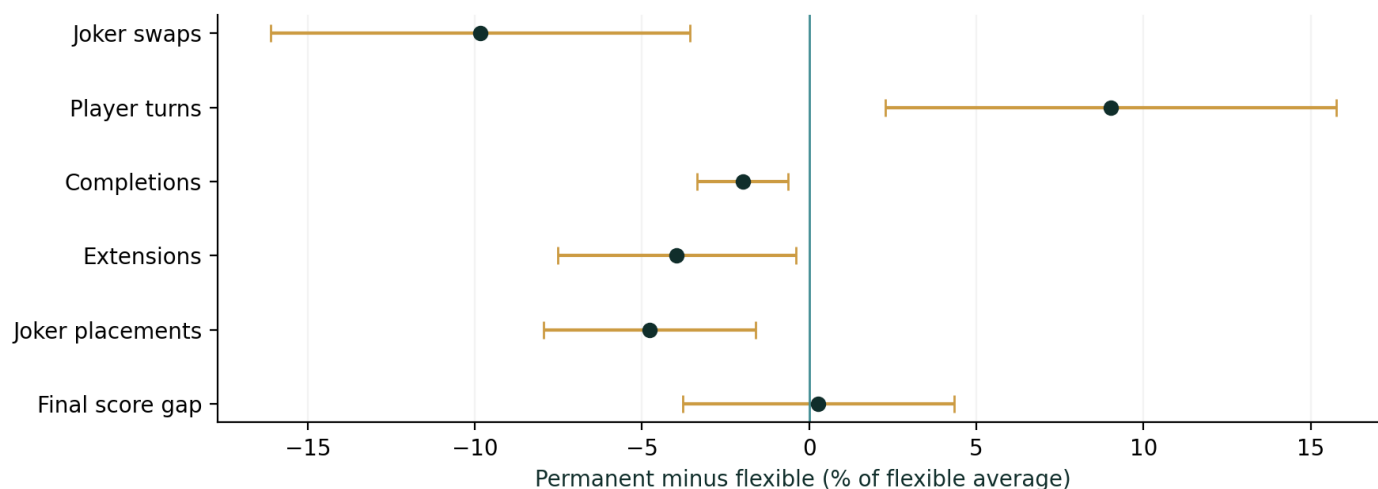


RESULTS PER COMPLETED HAND

Measure	Flexible	Permanent	Change
Joker swaps	1.70	1.53	-9.8%
Player turns	15.47	16.87	+9.0%
Completions	5.81	5.69	-2.0%
Extensions	4.61	4.42	-4.0%
Joker placements	3.46	3.29	-4.8%
Final score gap	94.17	94.43	+0.3%

Basis: 976 initial-deal pairs finished under both rules. Each rule was run on 1,000 deals with four identical Bob bots and nine cards per starting hand. Joker placements count starter, completion, extension and swap actions that explicitly played a Joker; they do not count every play on a Joker combination.

A tradeoff worth testing with people



Points show the average change; bars show approximate 95% paired confidence intervals. Intervals crossing zero do not establish a directional change.

COMPLETION CHECK

Flexible: 985 of 1,000 hands finished. Permanent: 986 of 1,000 finished.
 An 800-step limit stopped the remaining hands. The main graphs use the 976 pairs that finished in both modes; excluding capped hands can affect estimates.

WHAT WAS CONTROLLED

Each pair began with the same deck, hands, dealer and seats. All four bots used the Bob strategy. Both modes used the same added identity-choice heuristic: favor support in the bot's hand and matching cards already visible. Opponents' hidden hands were not used to choose identities. Subsequent play could diverge.

Permanent means rank and run suit stay fixed while the Joker is in a combination. A swap lets the Joker choose a new identity at its destination. Flexible permits the existing automatic adjustment. These were single hands, not full matches.

DECISION

This supports a small tester trial, not a claim that permanent identity increases skill. Equal-strength bots cannot establish a stronger-player advantage, and the experiment does not measure human enjoyment. Keep the live rules unchanged until testers compare the commitment of a fixed identity with flexible play.