The proportion of people who have had serious gambling problems doubled

The proportion of people who have had serious problems with gambling at some time in their lives doubled between 1998/1999 and 2008/2009. Greater availability and more intense marketing are two possible explanations.

The findings come from the Public Health Agency of Sweden’s population study Swelogs and an earlier population study on gambling problems. The results were taken in 1998/1999 and 2008/2009.

The calculation is based on Sweden’s population at each point in time.

Of those who had had gambling problems earlier in their lives at the time of the 2008/2009 survey, 42 percent had gambled on the Internet the previous year compared to 7 percent of gamblers who had no problems. At the end of the 1990s, it was unusual to gamble on the Internet. More intense marketing of gambling products might be a further reason. In one Swedish study, people who had previously had gambling problems were influenced to a higher extent by gambling advertisements.

Previous gambling problems – a risk factor

Even if people succeed in recovering from serious gambling problems, consequences such as large debts, relationship breakdowns and health problems are often experienced for a long period afterwards. Previous gambling problems are also a risk factor for developing gambling problems again. As a result, a particularly vulnerable group has grown over the last ten years in terms of gambling harms and potential for relapse.

A focus on prevention methods as well as treatment would not only benefit the individual gambler and those close to them, but also the general community.

A helpline for gamblers and their family and friends is available via phone, e-mail or chat: www.stodlinjen.se/other-languages/in-english/, phone no +46 (0)20-81 91 00

2. In 1998/1999 a sample of people aged between 15 and 74 was used and in 2008/2009 a sample aged between 16 and 84.