



Concerned significant others and gambling problems

Almost every fifth person in Sweden, roughly 18%, aged between 16 and 84, have someone close to them who currently has, or previously had, gambling problems. Being a concerned significant other to a problem gambler has a negative impact on the individual's health, relationships and the economic situation.

Earlier studies have shown similar results, however the majority of them are clinical studies and assume that the concerned significant other is female. It is therefore not certain that these results are representative of the entire population.

Swelogs population study shows that there are differences between how male and female significant others are affected, making it necessary to develop a variety of support services for the group. Significant others of problem gamblers need support both for their own sake and to be able to support the person with gambling problems.

Similarities and differences between men and women

Male concerned significant others have a higher rate of self-reported gambling problems than other men. There is no such correlation among women. The Swelogs study does not investigate the cause of this difference, however one explanation might be that male and female significant others have a different relationship to the problem gambler. It is possible that men have 'looser' relationships with the gambler, such as a colleague or more distant relative, while the women are perhaps more likely to be a member of the problem gambler's immediate family.

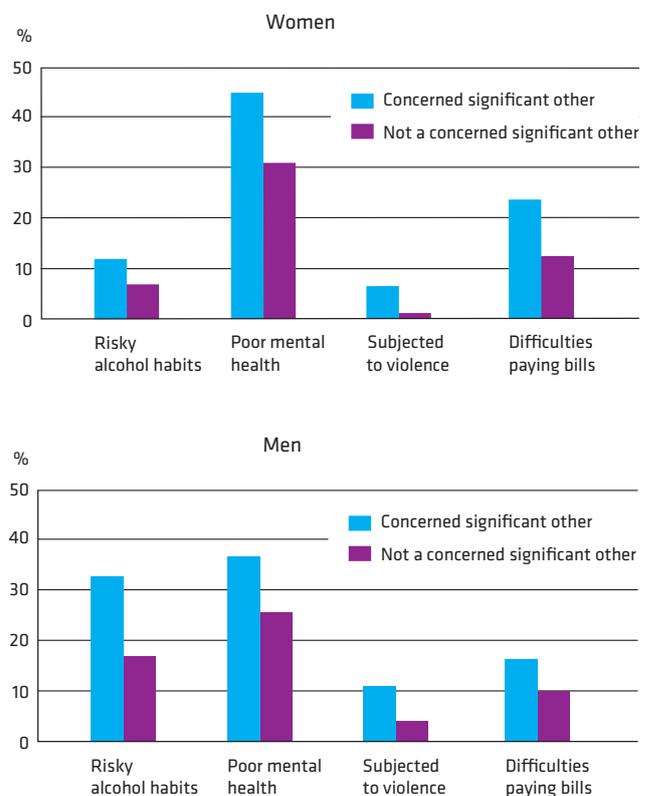
The study shows that there is a strong correlation between being a significant other and receiving social security allowance, having difficulty paying bills, having dangerous drinking habits and experiencing poor mental health. This correlation is clear for both men and women regardless of age and personal gambling problems.

The probability of being subjected to violence is greater for both male and female significant others than those who were not significant others. When it comes to borrowing money, 25% of the male significant others say that they have lent money to someone they believed would use it to gamble or pay off gambling debts compared to 6% of the

Swelogs

Swelogs, the Swedish longitudinal gambling study, is a Swedish population study of health and gambling being conducted over seven years, between 2008 and 2015. The study aims to build an evidence base to develop effective preventive measures against the harmful effects of excessive gambling. The roughly 8,000 randomly selected respondents between the ages of 16 and 84 who took part in the baseline study will be contacted at least three more times during the course of the study. Data used in this fact sheet is from 2008/09 and 2009/10. The degree of gambling problems was assessed based on the measurement instrument Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI).

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men in the general population. The corresponding figures for women are 13% for significant others and 1.4% for the general population.

Female significant others reported more sick leave days from work and less social support than other women. This correlation cannot be proven for men. However, male significant others were more likely to fear losing their job than women.

One-year follow-up of concerned significant others

People who were concerned significant others in 2008/2009 but not in 2009/2010 improved their mental health and had less arguments with people close to them, in comparison with people who remained concerned significant others. Women in this category (not a concerned significant other at the follow-up) enjoyed an improvement in their finances and men had less legal problems in the past year.

Conclusions

Problem gambling is a public health issue that affects gamblers, their concerned significant others, and the wider community. These results confirm what previous studies

have shown: being a significant other of a person who has or has had gambling problems has a negative impact on health, relationships and the economic situation of the concerned significant other. It is therefore important to study problem gambling at several different levels from a public health perspective. Concerned significant others need support both for their own sake and to support the problem gambler(s).

Definitions

Swelogs uses a definition of problem gambling as gambling that has led to negative consequences for the gambler, others in his or her close network, or the wider community.

The definition of concerned significant others used in this study is people who reported someone close to them who currently has, or previously had, problems with gambling. A concerned significant other can thus be a parent, a sibling or other family member, friend, colleague, acquaintance, partner or child of a person assumed to have gambling problems.

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



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