



Folkhälsomyndigheten
PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF SWEDEN

Recovery from problem gambling

Results from the in-depth Swelogs study



Summary

The in-depth study is a part of Swelogs (Swedish longitudinal gambling study), which is a longitudinal study of the relationships between gambling, problem gambling, and health in Sweden. The study is carried out by the Public Health Agency of Sweden.

This report presents recovery from problem gambling during three to four years, as well as the participant's experience of consequences from gambling at the end of the study in 2013.

Recovery occurred frequently

Two thirds of the study participants who had a gambling problem at the initiation of the study, had recovered after three to four years. Those who had not recovered might have had several relapses or experienced a continuous problem throughout the study period.

Safe upbringing, support, and good socio-economic circumstances

Social support in terms of emotional support during one's childhood, and access to practical help as an adult, seemed to promote recovery from problem gambling. Moreover, a stable social and financial situation appeared to increase the likelihood of recovery compared to an unstable situation. Having a disposable family income above average, and paid employment also implied increased chances of recovery from problem gambling compared to a lower income or education or not having paid employment.

Previous problem gambling and the game's risk potential

Study participants who had already suffered from problem gambling before the study was initiated were less likely to recover than those who had acquired a gambling problem around the time the study was initiated. Furthermore, gambling primarily on games with an average or high risk potential² was associated with a lower likelihood of recovery compared to gambling on low-risk games.

Poor health, alcohol and drug problems

Study participants who did not recover from problem gambling during the study period had worse general health, problems with alcohol and/or drugs, and suffered from depression and anxiety to a higher extent compared to those who had recovered and those who never had a gambling problem.

Perceived negative consequences of gambling

Study participants who did not recover from a gambling problem were more likely to experience negative consequences of gambling than the other study participants who had recovered or never had a gambling problem. Financial problems were among the most frequently occurring consequences.

Conclusions

The results suggest that preventive measures that promote a safe upbringing, social support, and a stable socio-economic situation would increase the likelihood of recovery for problem gamblers. Moreover, our results also imply that relapse prevention should focus on gambling on games with an average or high risk potential. However, more knowledge is needed in that area.

N.B. The title of the publication is translated from Swedish, however no full version of the publication has been produced in English.

2. Games with a high risk potential for problem gambling are characterized by a short time from betting to outcome, fast pay-out of winnings, possibilities of long gambling sessions, and often a particular sound and light environment.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden is an expert authority with responsibility for public health issues at a national level. The Agency develops and supports activities to promote health, prevent illness and improve preparedness for health threats.

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