



What are the features that make gambling risky?

Some forms of gambling seem to entail a greater risk of developing gambling problems than others. What characterises a risky gambling form first and foremost is the time of the individual gambling session. The shorter the time between the bet, the outcome and being able to gamble on the same game again, the higher the potential risk.

The Public Health Agency of Sweden has further developed a scoring scale devised by a team of German researchers using Swelogs data (Meyer, Fiebig et al, 2011). Seven different factors are weighed together and assigned values according to the degree to which they affect the risk of developing problems. The different forms of gambling on the Swedish market have been divided into “low risk potential”, “medium risk potential” and “high risk potential”.

The factors affecting how risky a form of gambling is are as follows (in descending order):

- Time of individual gambling session – the time between the bet, outcome and being able to gamble on the same game again.
- Multi-betting – the possibility to place several bets or be active in several games at the same time.
- Sound and light effects – sound and light effects during the gambling session and/or when the game is initially presented.
- Variable bet – the possibility for the gambler to choose how much to bet.
- Availability – whether the gambling form is generally available or the gambler has to go a specific location.
- Pay-out of winnings – the time between the outcome and payment of any winnings and being able to place a new bet.
- Continuity – how long a session can be continued without stopping or be extended with a new type of game.

Forms of gambling with low risk potential Gambling forms with a long time between bet and outcome, a short gambling time and few variations. An example is lottery tickets bought in betting shops.

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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Forms of gambling with medium risk potential

Gambling forms with medium risk potential have a shorter time between placing a bet and the outcome and it is usually possible to extend the total gambling time with a suite of gambling rounds. Examples include most sports gambling, gambling on horses and live poker.

Forms of gambling with high risk potential Gambling forms with a short time between placing the bet and the outcome, fast pay-out of winnings, the possibility of long gambling sessions and often also by specific gambling environments characterised by lights and sound. Many of these forms of gambling are available on the Internet. Examples include gambling machines and casino gambling.

Clear correlation between risk potential and problem gambling

Slightly less than half of Sweden's population aged between 16 and 84 gamble at least once a month. Approximately 25 percent gamble on low risk forms of gambling and 15 percent gamble on medium risk forms of gambling. The group who gamble on high risk forms of gambling at least once a month make up 5 percent of the population.

Statistics from the Swelogs study show that 7 percent of non-problem gamblers who gambled on high risk forms of gambling developed gambling problems a year later. The corresponding proportion of gamblers on medium risk forms of gambling was 3 percent and of those who gambled on low risk forms of gambling less than 1 percent.

Gambling on high risk forms of gambling can lead to gambling problems

People who have recently begun gambling on high risk forms of gambling (“new gamblers”) are more vulnerable to developing gambling problems.

Of those who went from not gambling at all in 2008/2009 to gambling regularly on high risk forms of gambling a year later, 20 percent developed gambling problems. Of those who went from gambling less than once a month to gambling regularly on high risk forms of gambling, 10 percent developed gambling problems. Of those who went from gambling regularly on low to medium risk forms of gambling to gambling regularly on high risk forms of gambling, the proportion who developed gambling problems was not as high. Thus, new gamblers are more likely than other gamblers to develop gambling problems if they gamble on high risk forms of gambling.

Preventive measures should focus on high risk forms of gambling

Our conclusion is that there is a link between risk potential and development of gambling problems. An important area for prevention and regulation may be implementing changes to those factors which make the form of gambling risky and measures that limit accessibility to and demand for high risk gambling forms. To be able to follow up the effects of such changes at population level, the entire gambling market needs to be regulated.

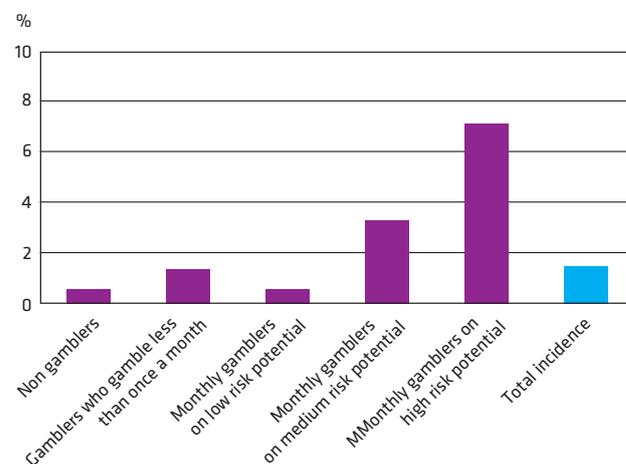
A helpline for gamblers and their family and friends is available via phone, e-mail or chat: www.stodlinjen.se/other-languages/in-english/, phone no +46 (0)20-81 91 00

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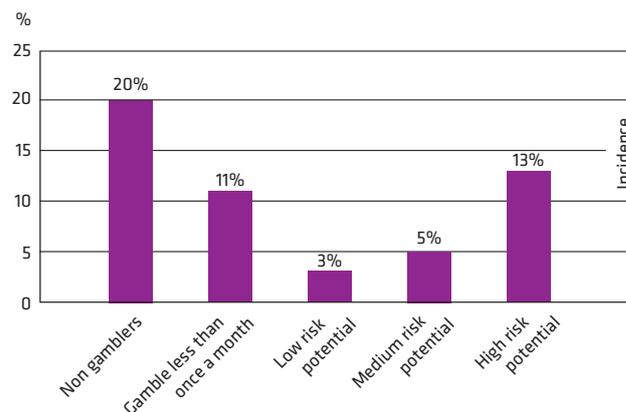
Meyer, G., Fiebig, M., et al (2011). Development of an assessment tool to evaluate the risk potential of different gambling types. *International Gambling Studies* 11(2): 221-236.

Swedish National Institute of Public Health (2012). Gambling and problem gambling in Sweden 2009/2010, Results of one-year follow-up of Swelogs. Swelogs, Swedish longitudinal gambling study. Östersund, Swedish National Institute of Public Health R 2012:04.

New problem gamblers 2009/2010 by monthly gambling in 2008/2009



Incidence among high-risk gamblers 2009/2010 by monthly gambling 2008/2009.



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