



Folkhälsomyndigheten

# Youth and the negotiation of gambling

Jessika Spångberg, Public Health Agency of Sweden

<https://kick.com/>

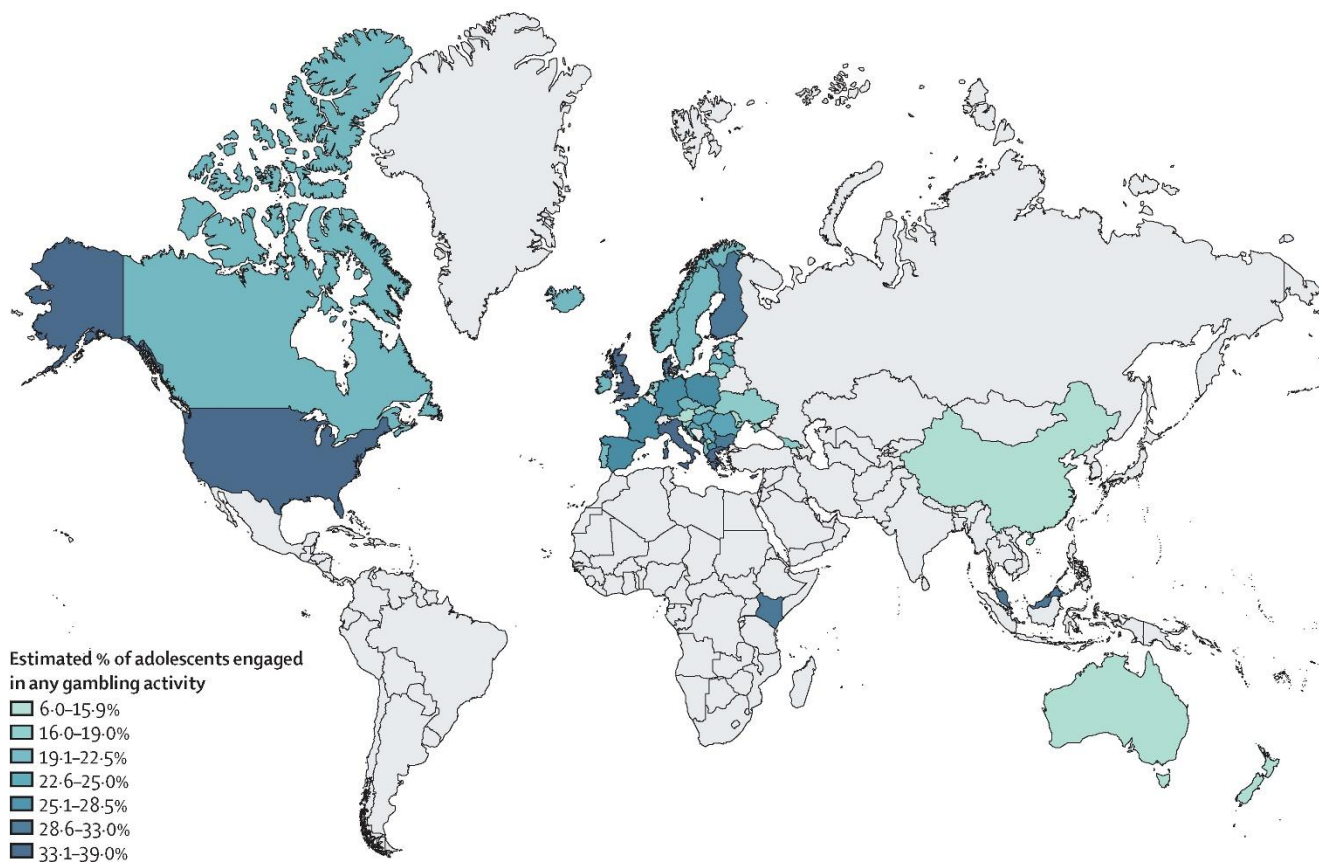


# Agenda

- Overview gambling among youth in the Nordic countries
- Being young and perceptions of risks
- Structural factors and youth gambling
- Youth and the negotiation of gambling
- Some preliminary results from USUF-U

## Thanks to

- Eva Samuelsson, Jukka Törrönen and Josefin Månsson, Stockholm University
- Johan Svensson, The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs
- Maria Forslund, the Public Health Agency of Sweden



The Lancet Public Health  
Volume 9, Issue 8, August 2024, Pages e594-e613

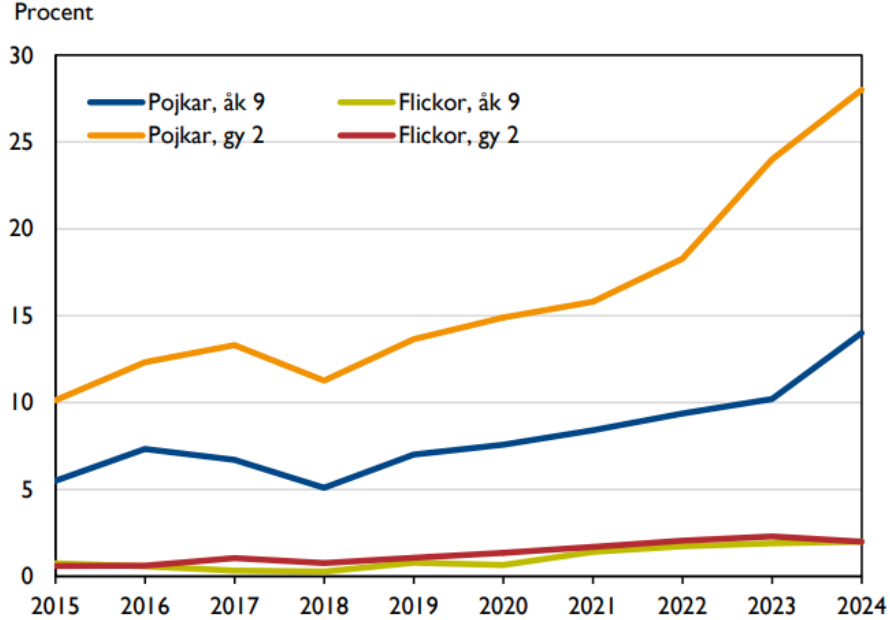


Articles

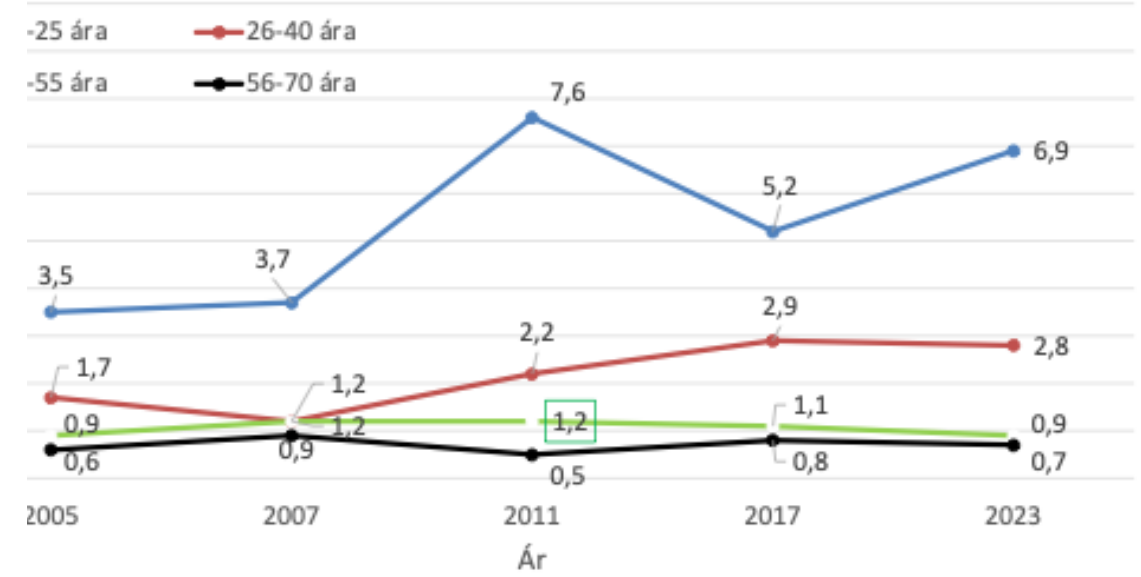
# The prevalence of gambling and problematic gambling: a systematic review and meta-analysis

Lucy T Tran MSc <sup>a</sup> , Prof Heather Wardle PhD <sup>b</sup>,  
Samantha Colledge-Frisby PhD <sup>a,c</sup>, Sophia Taylor MPH <sup>a</sup>, Michelle Lynch MGH <sup>a</sup>,  
Jürgen Rehm PhD <sup>d</sup>, Prof Rachel Volberg PhD <sup>e</sup>, Virve Marionneau PhD <sup>f</sup>,  
Prof Shekhar Saxena MD <sup>g</sup>, Christopher Bunn PhD <sup>b</sup>, Prof Michael Farrell MD <sup>a</sup>,  
Prof Louisa Degenhardt PhD <sup>a</sup>

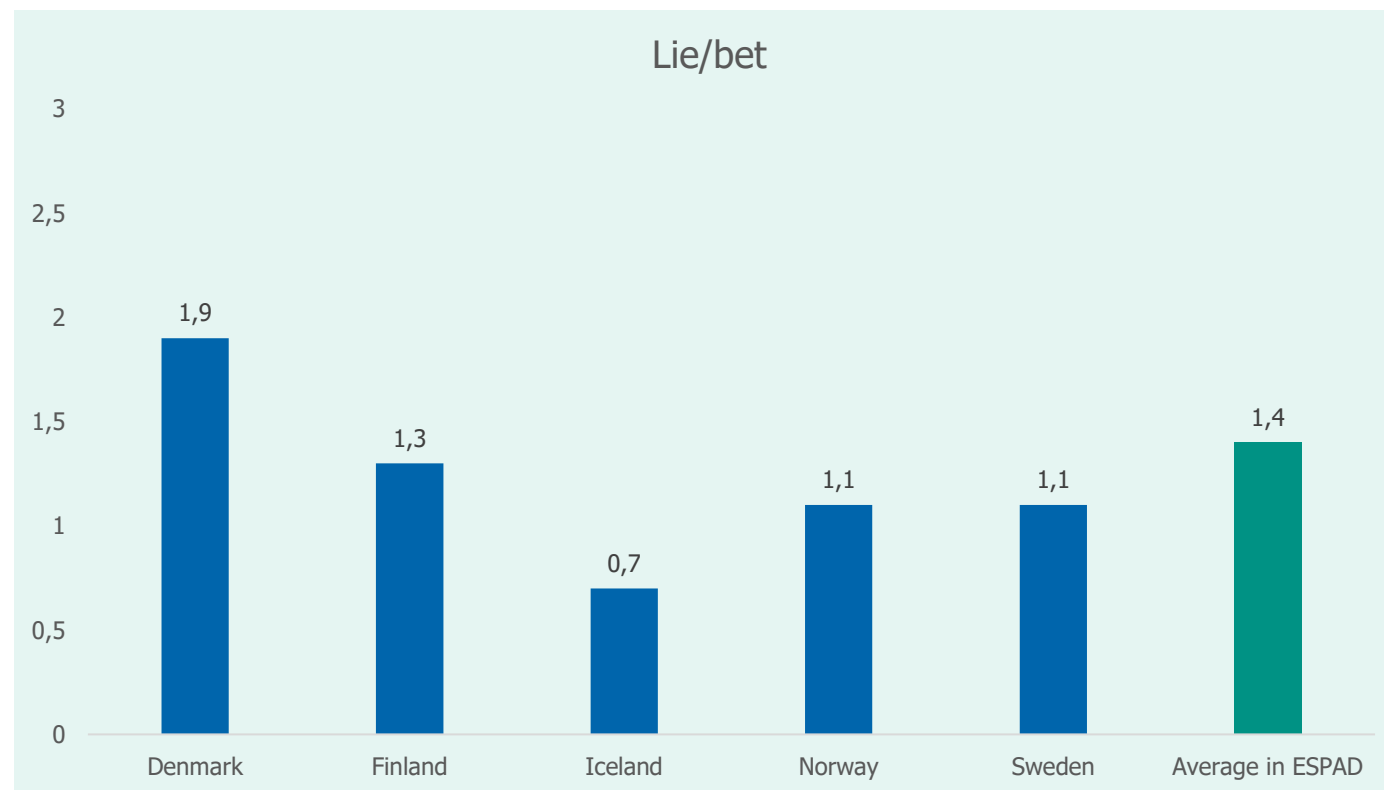
# Examples of national trends of youth gambling behavior: Sweden and Iceland



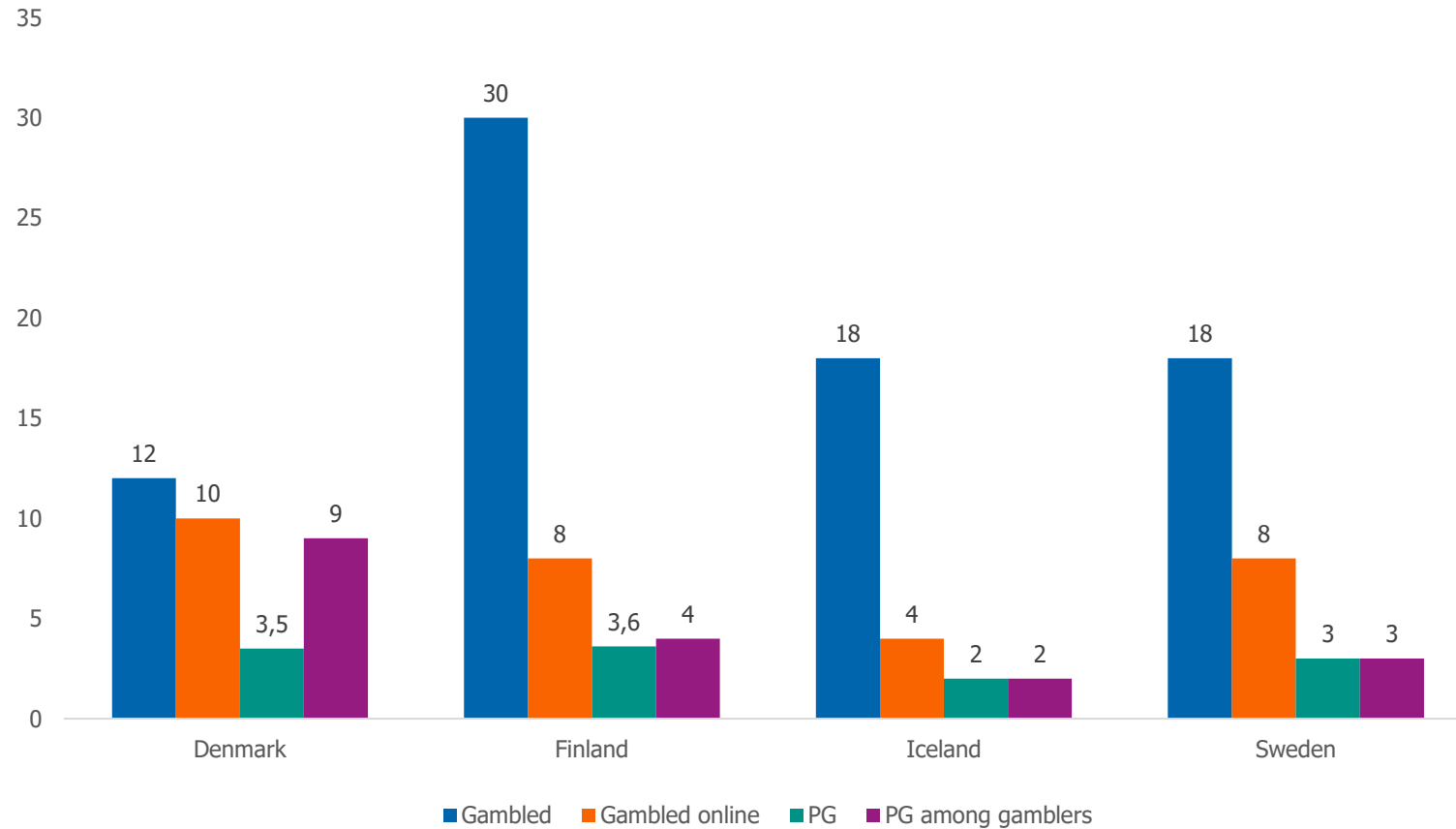
**Diagram 18.** Andelen elever som spelat för 100 kronor eller mer de senaste 30 dagarna, efter kön och årkurs. 2015–2024.



# Prevalence lie/bet among people aged 16 years in ESPAD 2019



# Gambling, online gambling and problem gambling in young people aged 16 years





- Transition between being a child and an adult include include physical, intellectual, emotional and social development

Youth cultures are

- varying due to time, place, group
- more related to leisure than labour
- in orbit around peers
- equally collective as individual
- Alcohol and drugs could be used in the process of individualization as well as part of a collective identity

# Gambling research on youth gambling

- Research on young people and gambling often focuses on prevalence and consequences
- Sociological approaches in gambling research have not been very common
- More research is needed on youth gambling as a social activity in a broader context





# Qualitative aspects of gambling

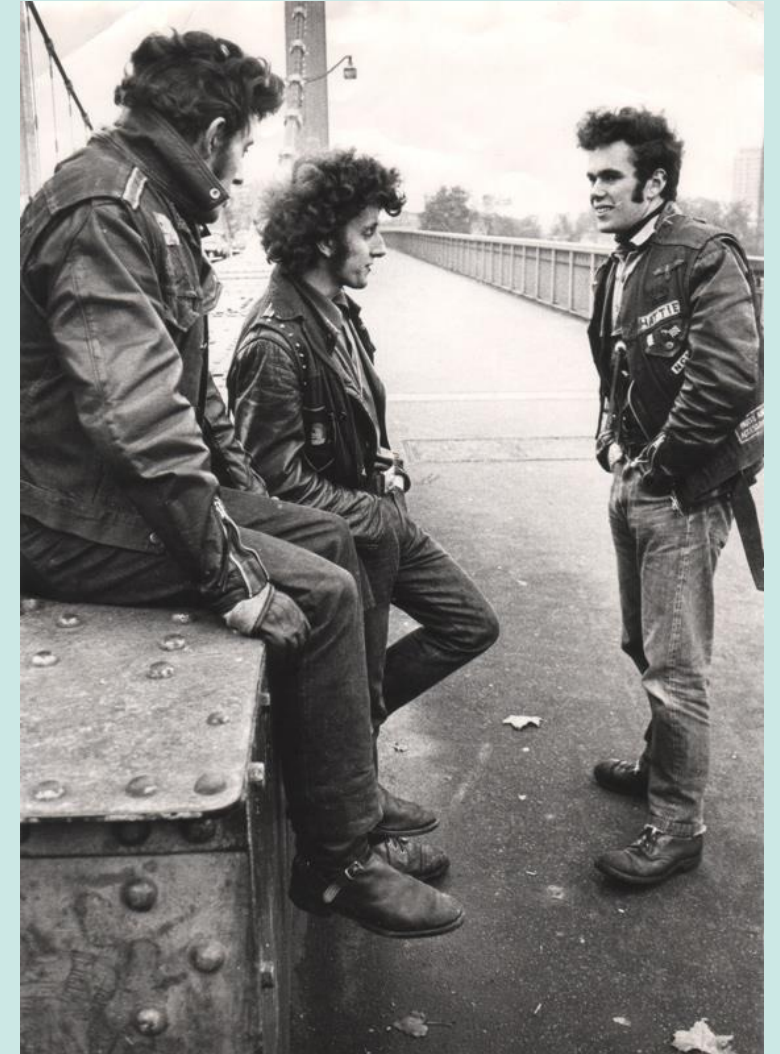
- Longitudinal qualitative study emphasizes the importance of social networks, context and life events in the initiation, maintenance and change of behaviours (Reith and Dobbie 2013)
- Emerging themes in a review of qualitative research (Wardle 2019)
  - Perception and meaning; such as normality and rites of passage
  - Factors influencing behaviour; such as family, peers, places, technologies and advertisement

Reith & Dobbie (2013). Gambling careers: A longitudinal, qualitative study of gambling behaviour, *Addiction Research and Theory*, 21 (50): 376-390

Wardle (2019). Perceptions, people and place: Findings from a rapid review of qualitative research on youth gambling, *Addictive Behaviors*, 90: 99-106

# Moral panic – irrational fears that are spread and exaggerated by the media and politicians

- Concern
- Hostility
- Consensus
- Disproportionality
- Volatility



# Moral panic or actually threats?

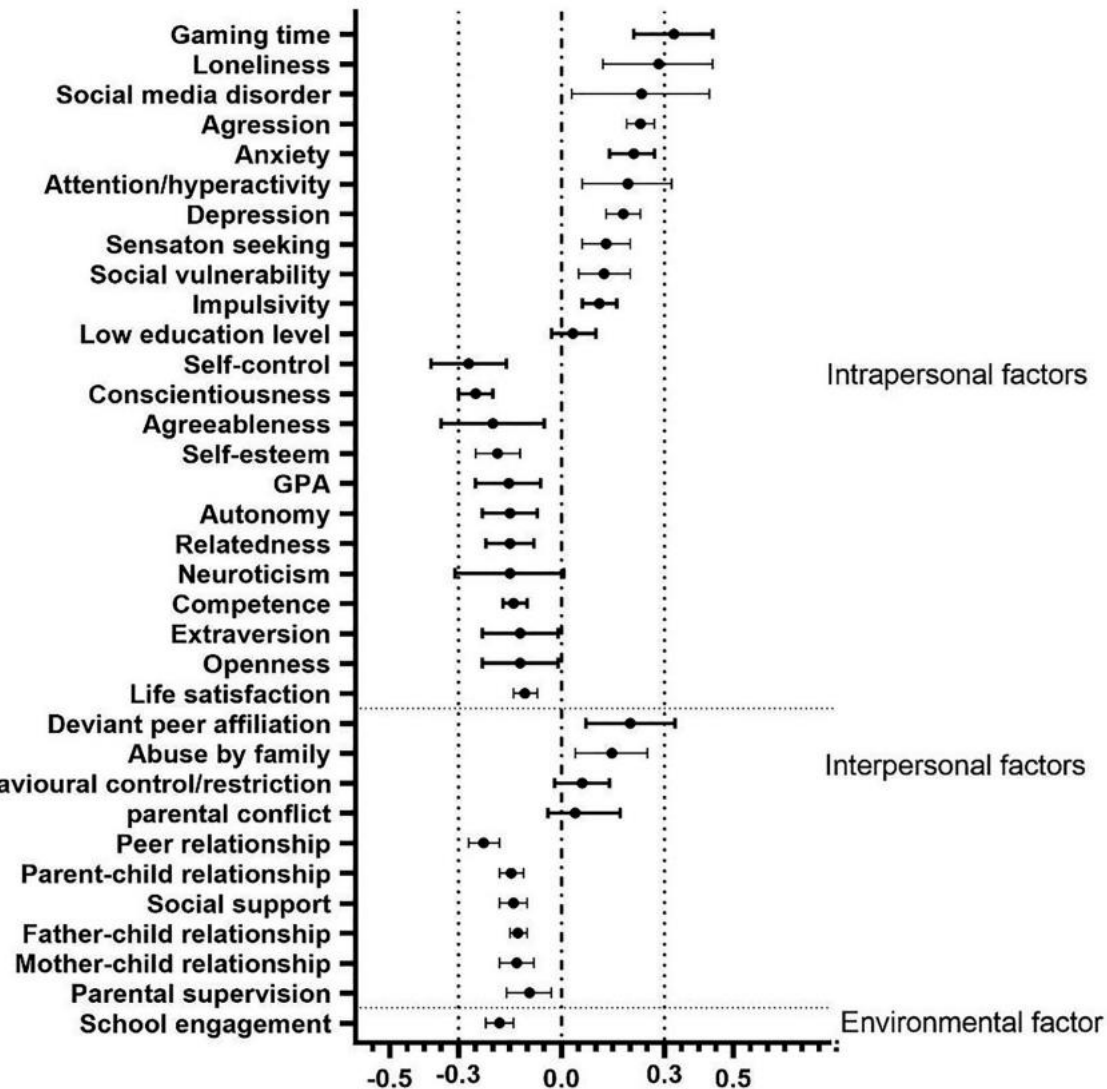
- Computer games?
- Social media?
- Digital media?
- Screen time?
- Gambling?



Recommendations for  
children's and adolescents'  
digital media use



## Col: Metanalysis



Journal of Behavioral Addictions

12 (2023) 2, 375–392

DOI: 10.1556/2006.2023.00017  
© 2023 The Author(s)

REVIEW ARTICLE



## Longitudinal modifiable risk and protective factors of internet gaming disorder: A systematic review and meta-analysis

XIAOYU ZHUANG<sup>1,2</sup>, YOUMIN ZHANG<sup>3</sup>,  
XINFENG TANG<sup>4</sup>, TING KIN NG<sup>5</sup>, JIAXI LIN<sup>3</sup> and  
XUE YANG<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Social Work, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, China

<sup>2</sup> School of Humanities, Jinan University, Guangdong, China

<sup>3</sup> The Jockey Club School of Public Health and Primary Care, Faculty of Medicine, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

<sup>4</sup> Department of Psychology, Renmin University of China, China

<sup>5</sup> Department of Applied Psychology, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, China

Received: January 3, 2023 • Revised manuscript received: April 9, 2023 • Accepted: April 30, 2023  
Published online: May 24, 2023

### ABSTRACT

**Background and aims:** The study aims to thoroughly understand the causal and precedent modifiable risk or protective factors for Internet Gaming Disorder (IGD), a newly defined and prevalent mental disorder. **Methods:** We performed a systematic review on quality-designed longitudinal studies based on five online databases: MEDLINE, PsycINFO, Embase, PubMed, and Web of Science. Studies were included in the meta-analysis if they addressed IGD, adopted longitudinal, prospective, or cohort study designs, presented modifiable factors of IGD, and reported the effect sizes for correlations. Pooled Pearson's correlations were calculated using the random effects model. **Results:** Thirty-nine studies with 37,042 subjects were included. We identified 34 modifiable factors, including 23 intrapersonal factors (e.g., gaming time, loneliness, etc.), 10 interpersonal factors (e.g., peer relationship, social support, etc.), and 1 environmental factor (i.e., school engagement). Age, the male ratio, study region, and study years were significant moderators. **Discussion and conclusions:** Intrapersonal factors were stronger predictors than interpersonal and environmental factors. It may imply that individual-based theories are more powerful to explain the development of IGD. Longitudinal research on the environmental factors of IGD was lacking; more studies are warranted. The identified modifiable factors would help to guide effective interventions for IGD reduction and prevention.

# **Structural factors and youth gambling**

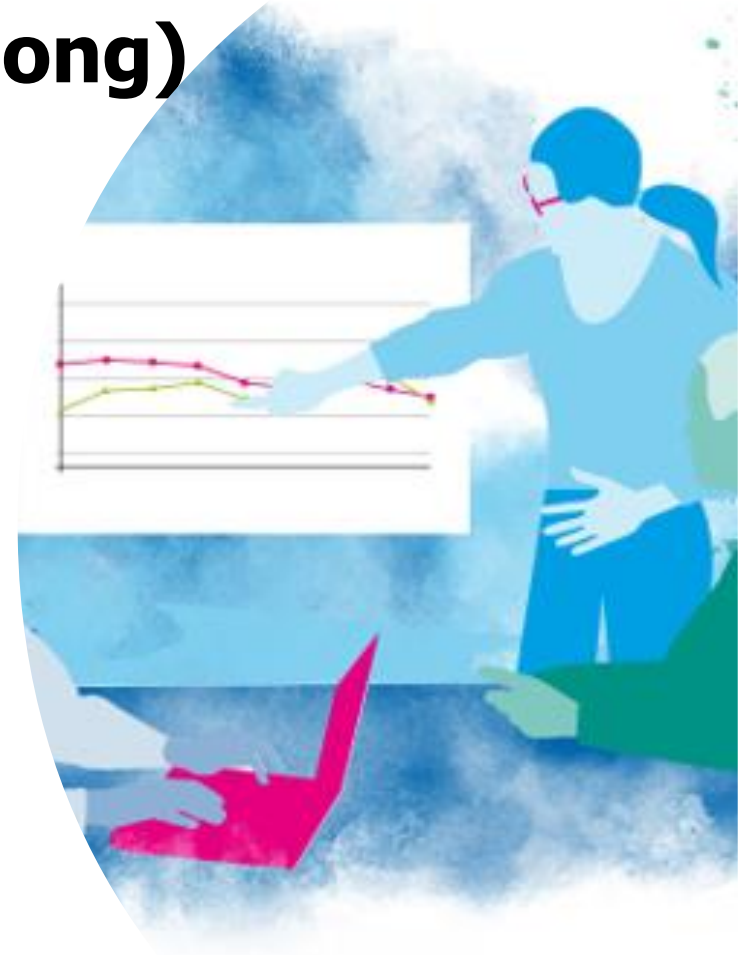
# Modern risk society

- The locus of control has shifted from factors outside the individual (structures, traditions, authorities) to factors that emphasize individual choices and responsibilities (Beck 1992, Järvinen & Room, 2007)
- Risk is no longer considered an objective fact but a phenomenon that gets its meaning in relation to lived experiences, motivations, justifications, and viewpoints
- 'Controlled' and 'uncontrolled' use or "responsible" and "non-responsible" use as a boundary between culturally legitimate and deviant ways of using substances
- Consumption of chance in risk society is resolved through increased individualized risk management (Young, 2010).



# Changes constituting risk for youth (Furlong)

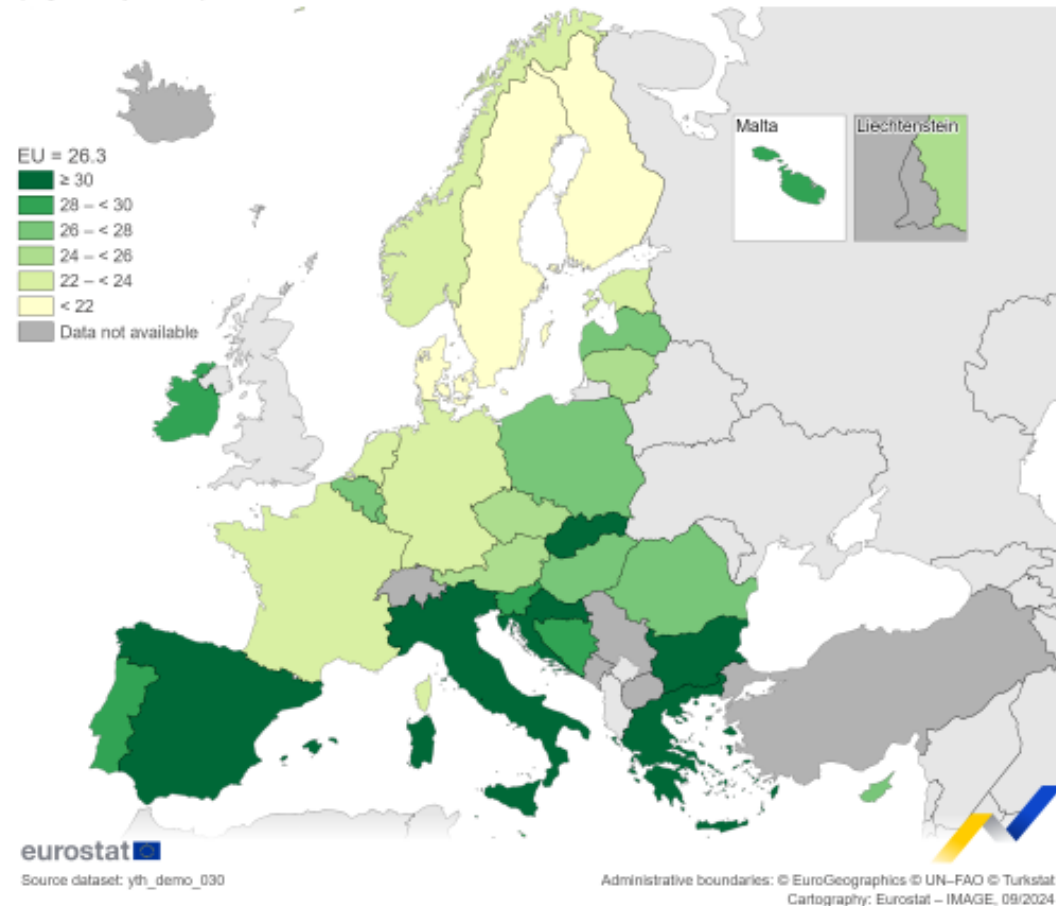
- Labour market
- Economy
- Education
- Health including alcohol, drugs and gambling
- Criminality
- Being dependent on parents





# Youth in the Nordic countries leave their parental homes earlier

Estimated average age of people leaving their parental home, 2023  
(age in years)

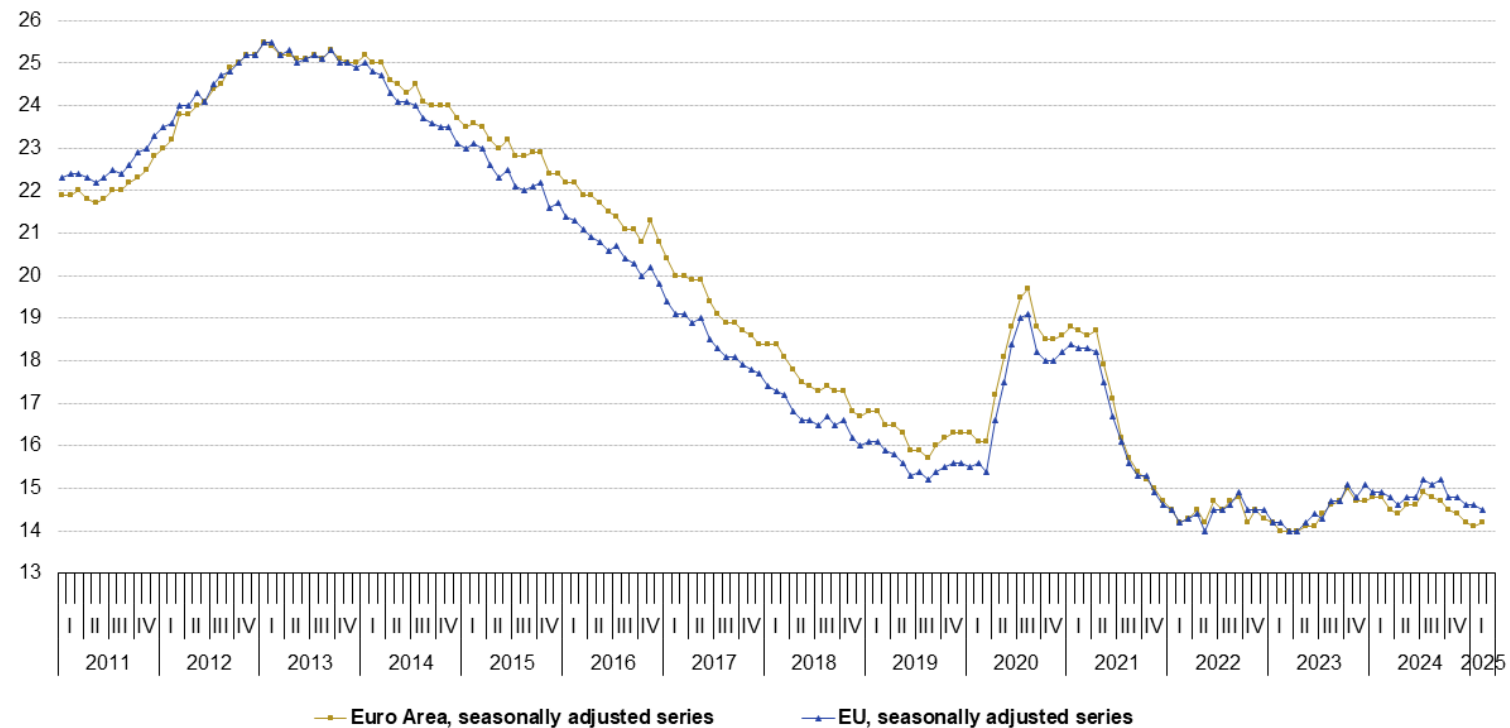


- In Sweden, in 10 years the average age for leaving parental homes has increased with 2 years



# Youth unemployment in EU 2011-2025

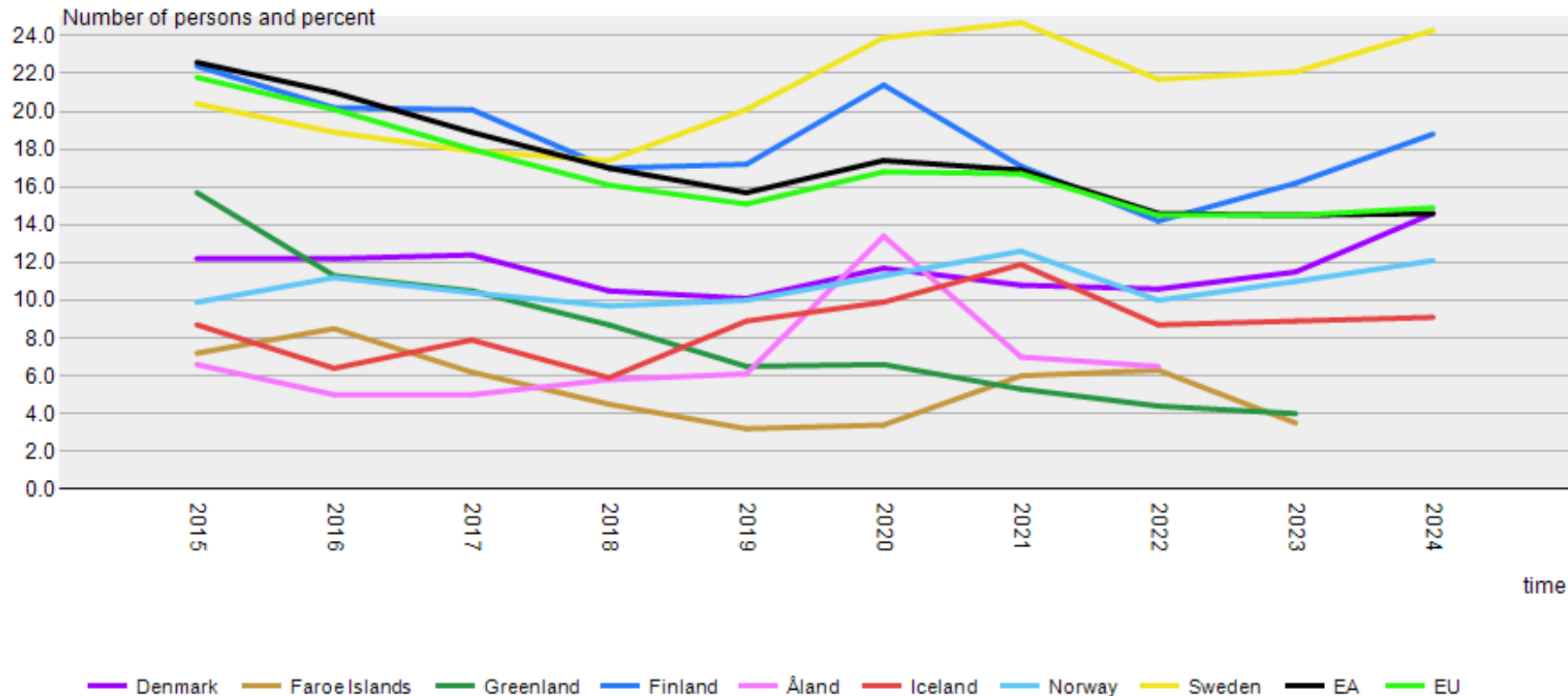
Youth unemployment rates, EU and EA, seasonally adjusted, January 2011  
- February 2025



Source: Eurostat (online data code: une\_rt\_m)

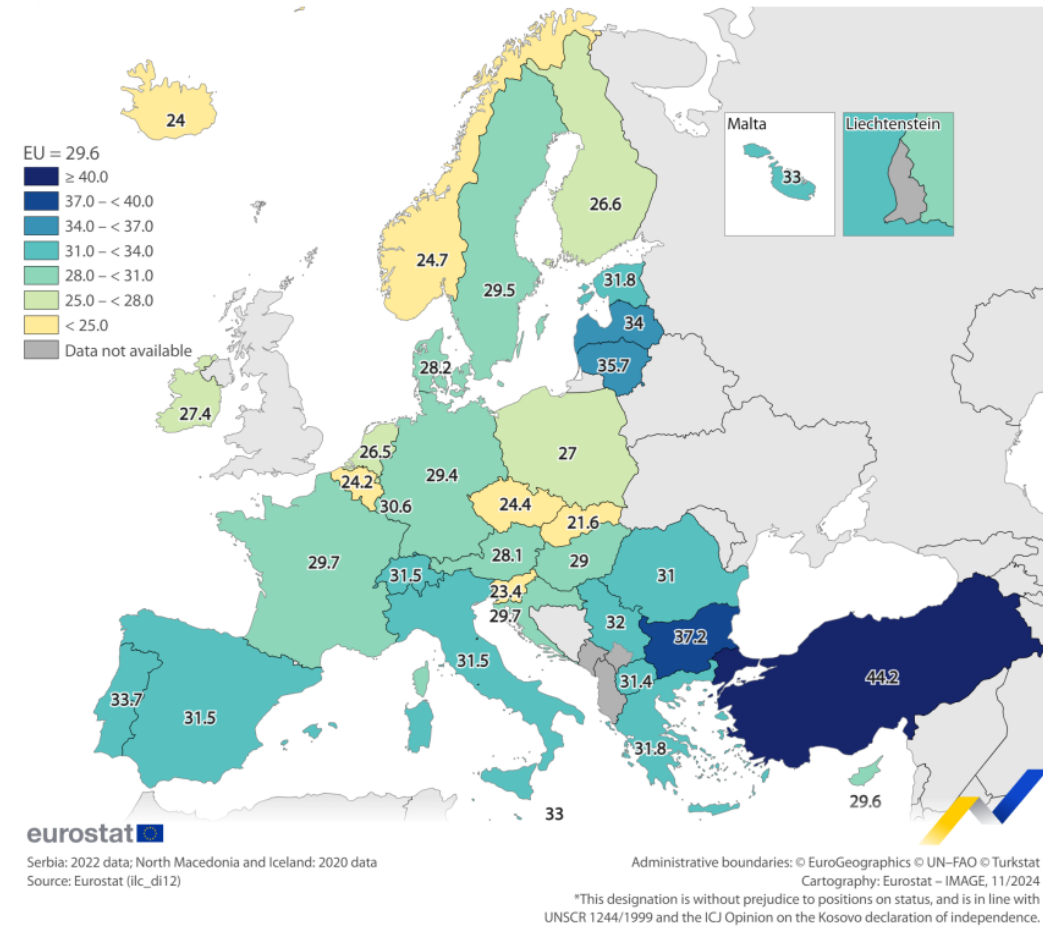
# Youth unemployment in the Nordic countries

WORK02: Employment and unemployment by reporting country and time. Total (15-24 years), Unemployment rate, %, Total.

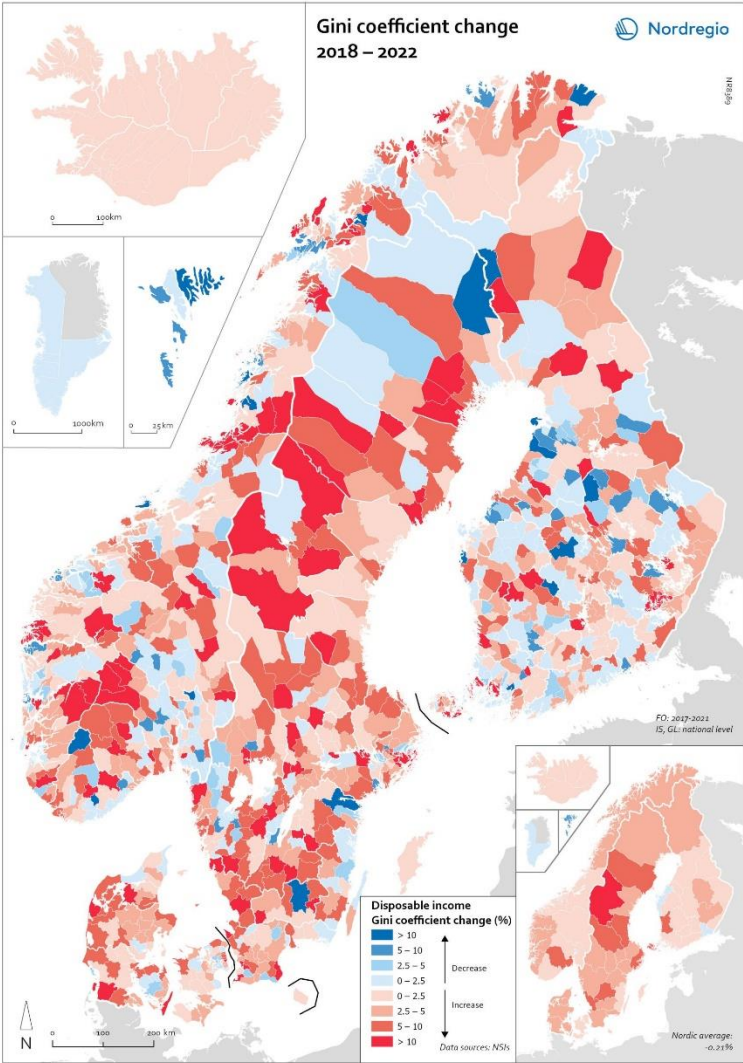
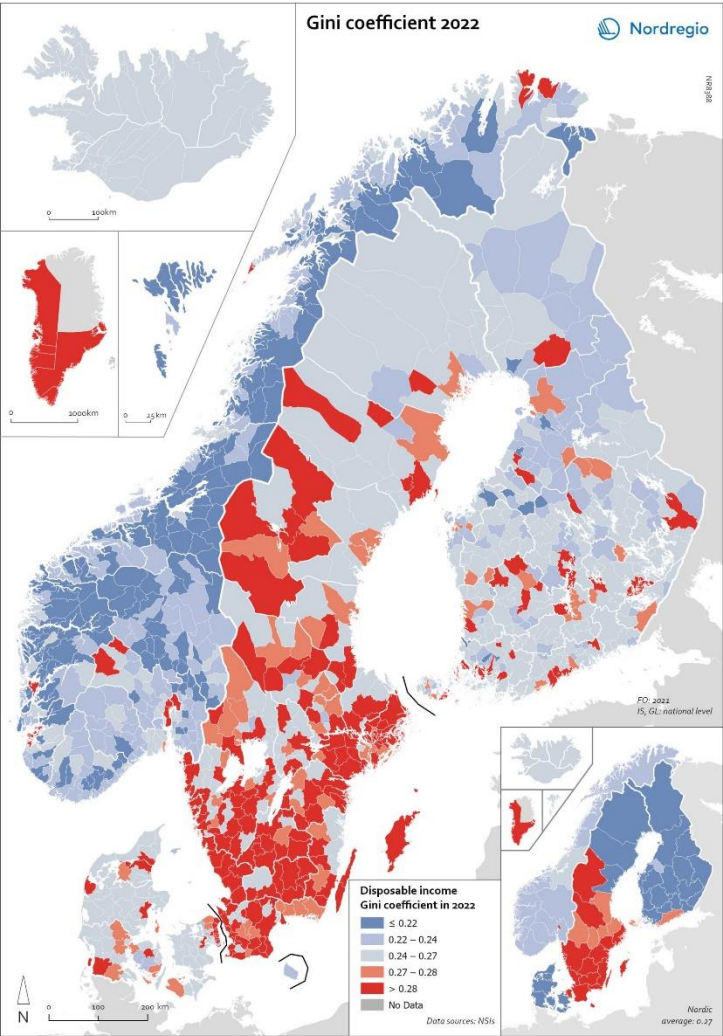


# Inequality in Europe

Gini coefficient for equivalised disposable income per inhabitant, 2023  
(Scale from 0 to 100)



# Inequality and changes in the Nordic countries



# Do structural factors influence youth gambling behavior?

*Journal of Gambling Issues*  
Volume 45, November 2020

<http://jgi.camh.net/doi/pdf/10.4309/jgi.2020.45.5>  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4309/jgi.2020.45.5>

## Associations Between Youth Unemployment and Underage Gambling in Europe

Jessika Spångberg<sup>1</sup> & Johan Svensson<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Public Health Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

<sup>2</sup> The Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs, Stockholm, Sweden

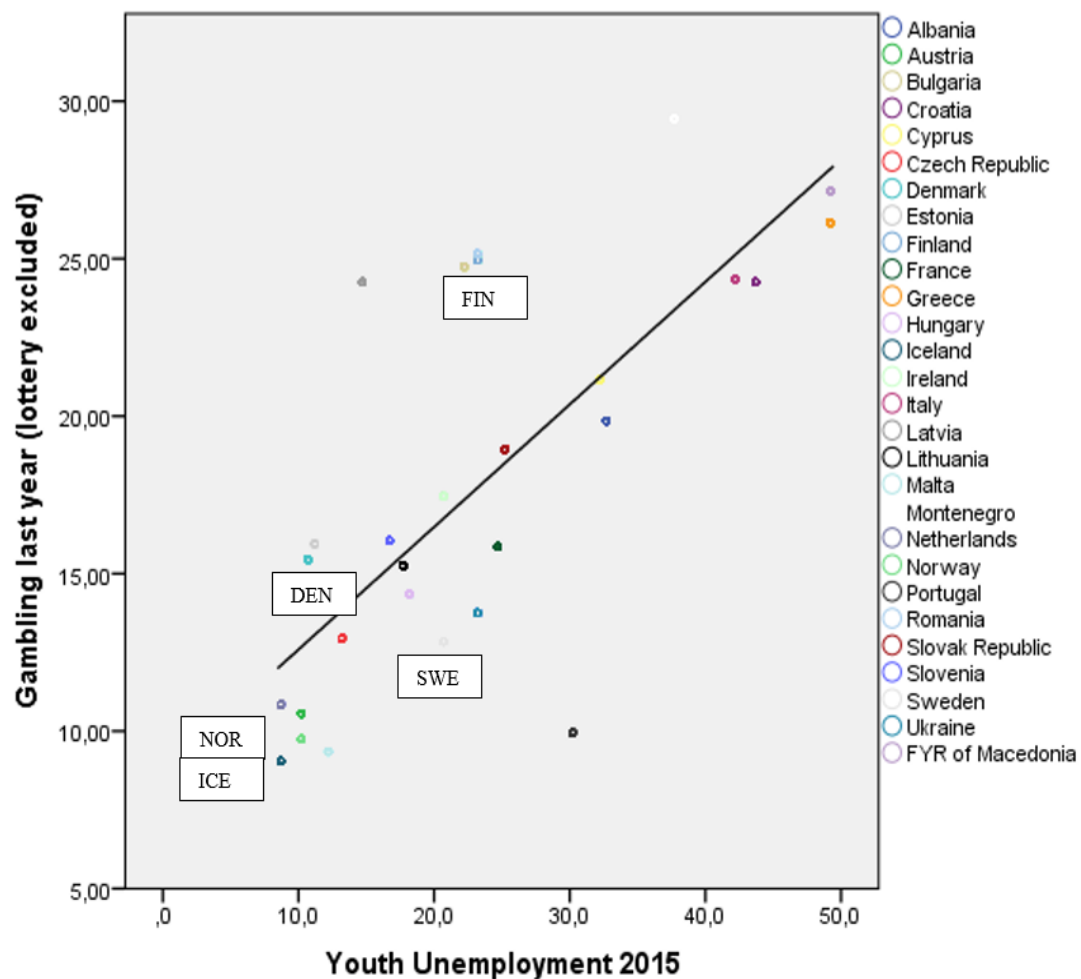
### Abstract

The aim of this work was to explore the associations between youth unemployment and youth engagement in gambling forms that have age limits, namely, slots, sports betting, and cards, both online and offline. Cross-country data were provided by the 2015 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs, a school survey focused on 16-year-olds. Gambling analyses included 30 countries ( $n = 81,229$  respondents). Descriptive analysis with statistical plot diagrams was used and the computed coefficient of determination adopted to identify correlations. The suggested correlation was further tested by multilevel logistic regression analysis, controlling for gender at Level 1 and for the Inequality Human Development Index, gross domestic product/capita, and public health expenditure at Level 2. Underage gambling was associated with a higher degree of adolescent unemployment. The results indicate that youth unemployment is associated with underage gambling, implying that a broad public health framework is needed in the prevention of problem gambling.

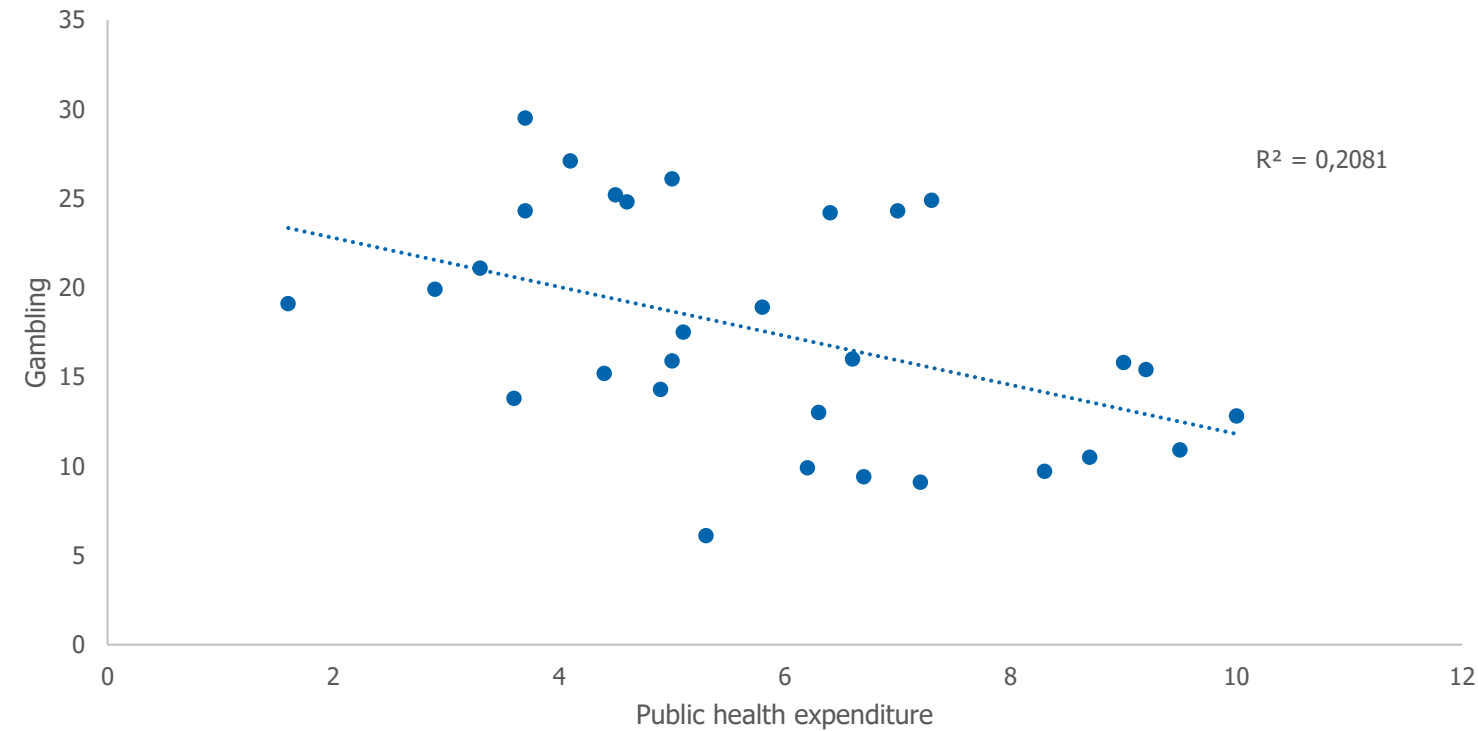
**Keywords:** underage gambling, youth unemployment, public health, Europe, ESPAD

- Multilevel analysis with 30 countries with 81 220 respondents aged 16 years
- Examination of gambling in relation to level of inequality, GNP, public health expenditure and youth unemployment in each country
- Control for age and gender

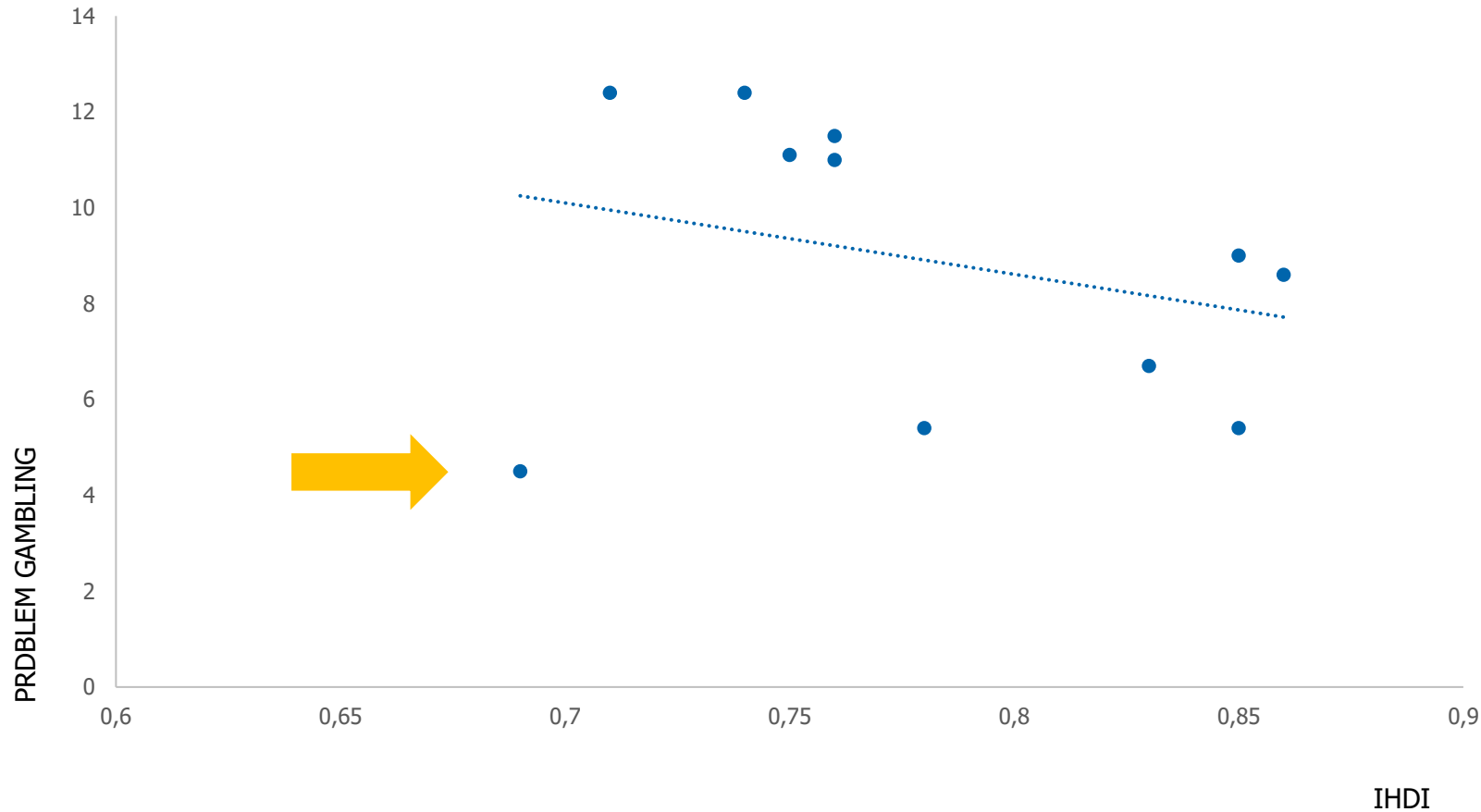
# Youth unemployment and underage gambling



# Public health expenditure and underaged gambling



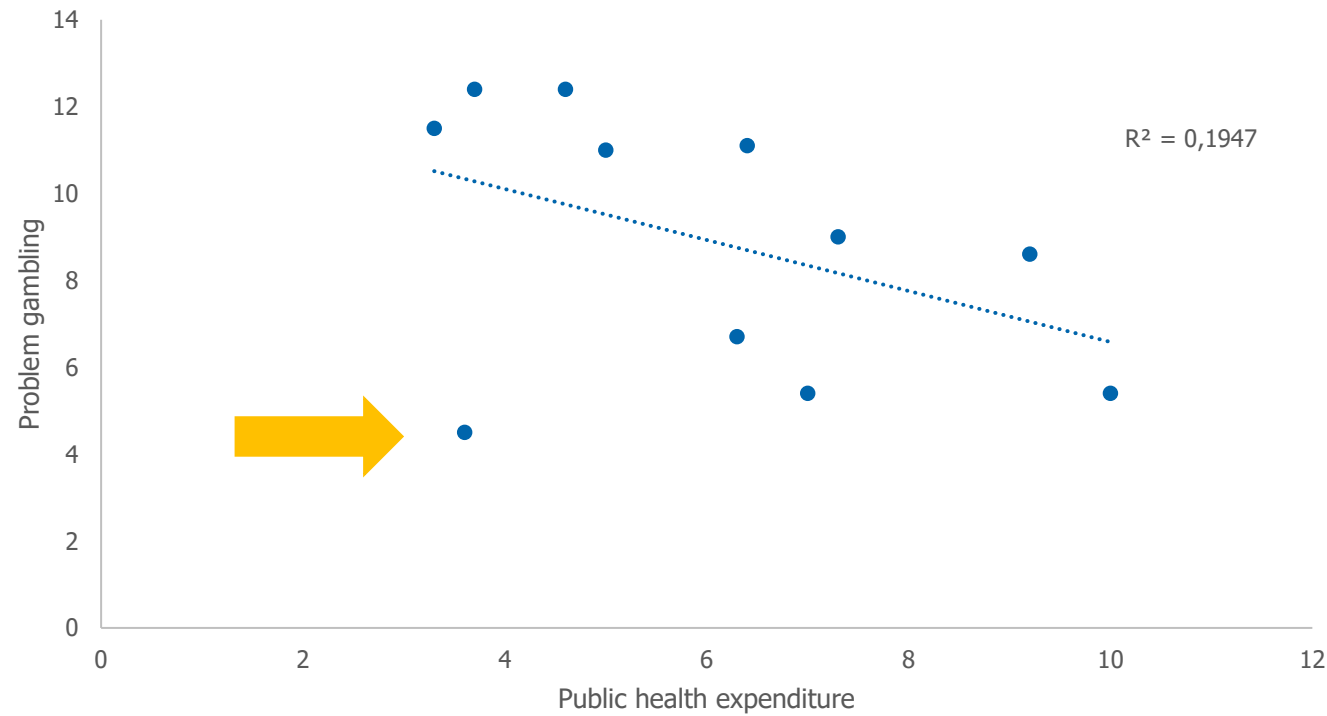
# Problem gambling among youth and inequality



Bulgaria	0,71	12,4
Croatia	0,75	11,1
Czech Rep.	0,83	6,7
Denmark	0,86	8,6
Finland	0,85	9
Greece	0,76	11
Italy	0,78	5,4
Latvia	0,74	12,4
Sweden	0,85	5,4
Ukraine	0,69	4,5
Cyprus	0,76	11,5



# Problem gambling among youth and public health expenditure







# Youth and the negotiation of gambling



# Perception of risk and neutralization techniques

- Scapegoating
- Self-confidence
- Comparison between risks

## Making sense of gambling. Swedish youth navigating between risk and responsibility

Jessika Spångberg <sup>a</sup>, Josefin Månsson <sup>b</sup>, Jukka Törrönen <sup>a</sup>  
and Eva Samuelsson <sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Public Health Sciences, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden; <sup>b</sup>Department of Social Work, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

### ABSTRACT

Youth gambling is commonly described in policy and research as a high-risk behavior. To design relevant measures to prevent gambling problems among youth, it is important to understand how youth themselves relate to gambling. To explore how youth navigate their position on gambling in the context of their everyday lives, we conducted qualitative interviews with 35 participants aged 17–21 years in Sweden; 15 had gambled and 20 had experience of others' gambling. The thematic analysis showed that both gamblers and non-gamblers overall had negative attitudes toward gambling and emphasized repeatedly discourses of personal responsibility in it. The participants used various neutralization techniques to navigate the economic and addictive risks of gambling. Youth who gambled distanced themselves from the risks of gambling by drawing a line between themselves and excessive gamblers, between safe and unsafe gambling, or highlighted how their skills and strategic thinking made gambling less problematic. Also, gambling in liminal circumstances abroad or in alcohol-serving venues offered a safe time and place for gambling by separating it from everyday life practices. The findings provide important cues to how young people locate gambling in their everyday life, which is useful knowledge for policy and prevention.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 13 October 2021  
Accepted 8 May 2022

### KEYWORDS

Gambling; youth; risk; neutralizations; motives; Sweden; qualitative

## Introduction

In policy and research alike, youth gambling is commonly perceived as a risk activity (Messerlian et al., 2007) associated with various health and social problems (Dowling et al., 2017; Fröberg, 2015). Problem gambling among adolescents has been found to be related to both structural factors such as unemployment and individual factors such as parental gambling practices, alcohol consumption (Spångberg & Svensson, 2020), being male, poor school performance and having an impulsive personality (Dowling et al., 2017; Fröberg, 2015). In addition, extended access to gambling venues is related to increased problematic gambling among adolescents (Kristiansen et al., 2015; Riley et al., 2021).

# Scapegoating – “I am not a “gambler”

“Gambling? Not at all. I have zero interest in it. It’s not even on the map. (. . .) At the same time, I can see the point. When we play poker and it’s more interesting with money. There is a greater value.”

(Elliot, 20, occasional gambler)

“If I want to play a little blackjack when I’m out having fun and excited, I think it’s worth it. Because it’s a nice feeling. But I’d never do it normally (. . .).”

(Sam, 21, regular gambler)

The addicted gambler versus  
the responsible gambler/non-  
gambler

# Self-confidence

“It’s [sports betting] really fun . . . but also a bit risky if you’re not well prepared. If I betted, I think I’d have a much better probability to win certain games, because I read a lot of football news and such. You have to engage in it and be informed for it to be acceptable to bet.”

(Henry, 17, non-gambler)

- Young men stressing the strategic and skillful part of gambling

# Comparisons between risks

"We have a rule my boyfriend and I that every other month on the 26th, we buy a lottery ticket. (. . .) We don't buy any gifts, this is our thing. (. . .) It's just a waste, it's a one in a million chance that you'll win. I definitely don't believe I'll win (. . .) But instead of buying a flower or something like that, I might as well gamble and it's fun. Nothing big, just 5 euro. I'd never do it constantly, because it's just addictive."

(Arin, 20, regular gambler)

"That money isn't profit, it's for fun. We'd buy shots and keep some chips to bring back for next time. (. . .) That money is just gone. You pay for having fun and if you win it's a bonus, that's how I see it."

(Sam, 21, regular gambler)

- Rituals for social bonds
- Gambling for fun

# Problematic motives - escape

"It's a thing that gave us a thought of having something to look forward to today or tomorrow or something. To have something going. What made me stop thinking about the gambling is that I started work and don't just hang out anymore and try to pass away the time."

(Dino, 20, regular gambler)

"I used to play poker much more often before. Especially when I felt bad mentally. (. . .) It's like with alcohol. In the moment you forget your problems. (. . .) You can definitely gamble in order to escape."

(Robert, 19, regular gambler)

- Escape

# Problematic motives – money

“If you grow up in a neighbourhood where . . . you don’t travel, you never go on a vacation abroad. You’re in your neighbourhood all the time and surrounded by ten people. And all have the same situation. In the end, you think ‘well, I’d like to be able to do this and that’. You start thinking. And that’s why some people become criminals. Some become gambling addicts, others are so bored they use drugs. But if money hadn’t been a problem and you’d have things to do all the time, I don’t think I had gambled at all. None of my friends either.” (Dino, 20, regular gambler)

I notice that they [friends] get affected. It’s not for fun. It’s bloody serious. (. . .) They say that they gamble because it’s fun. But it doesn’t stay fun. (. . .)

(Robert, 19, regular gambler)

- Winning money
  - Excitement about money instead of having fun or social relations
  - Economic and social marginalization



# Gender, gender all across the board

"It's mainly the boys in the class. It's not a thing for the girls at all."

(Sana, 17, non-gambler)

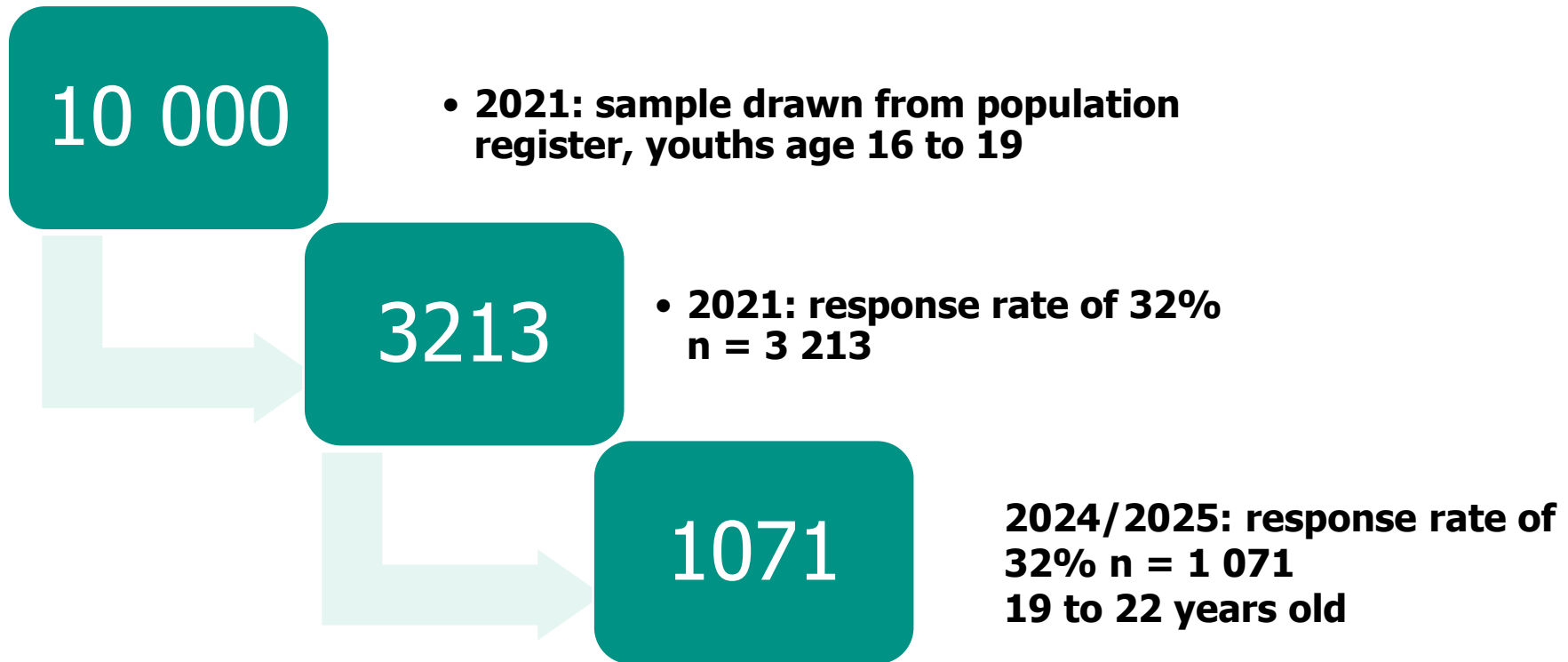
"I don't gamble. My boyfriend has and his friends. And my ex boyfriend when we were like 16 years old, he gamble on his dads account. It feels like a thing for boys, at least in my circle of friends. Last winter my boyfriend gambled quite much but now he doesn't."

(Caroline, non-gambler)

- Gender works as an important mediator of gambling behaviour
- Responsibility in girls' gambling is related to 'respectable' female behavior.
- Girls underline how their gambling is a part of normal sociability, related to safe forms (lottery, bingo), not involve big sums of money and strictly ritualized to specific contexts.

# **Some preliminary resultats from USUF-U**

# Method - sample

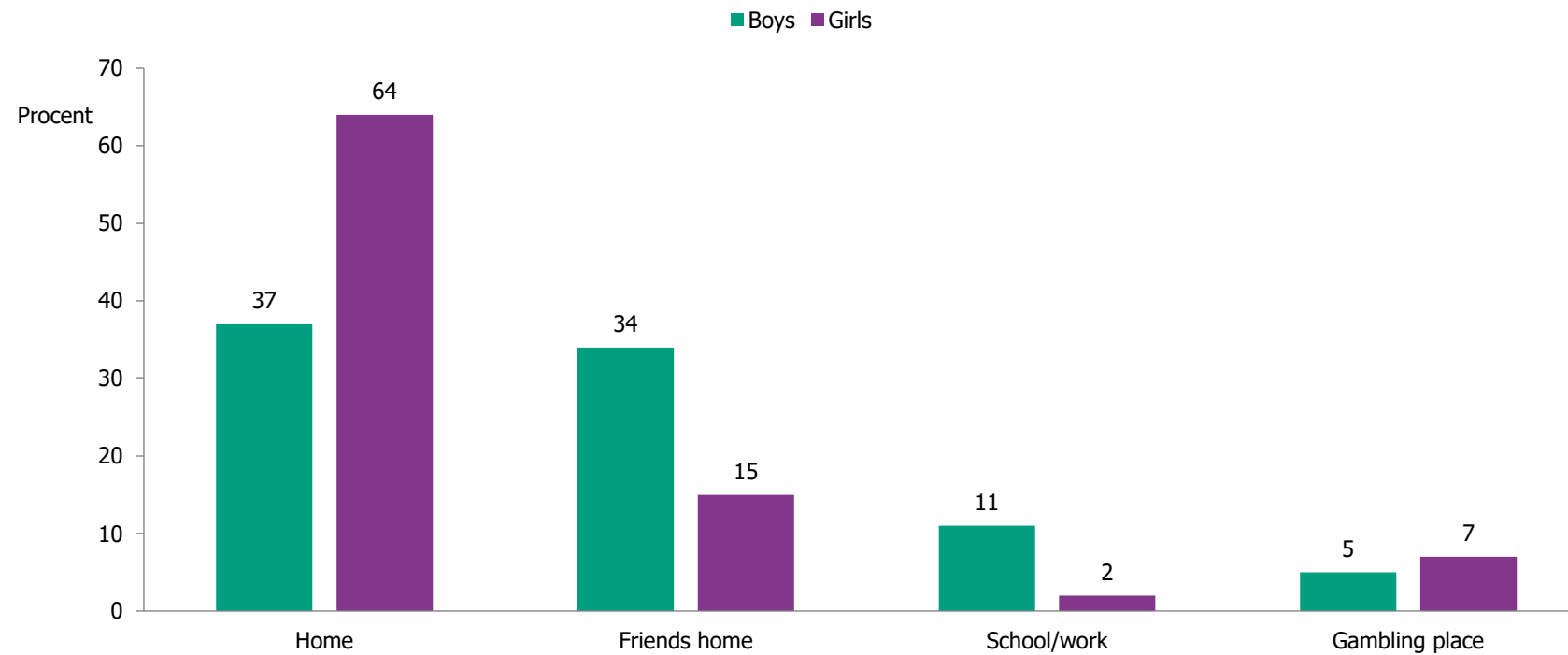


# Short recap results USUF 2021

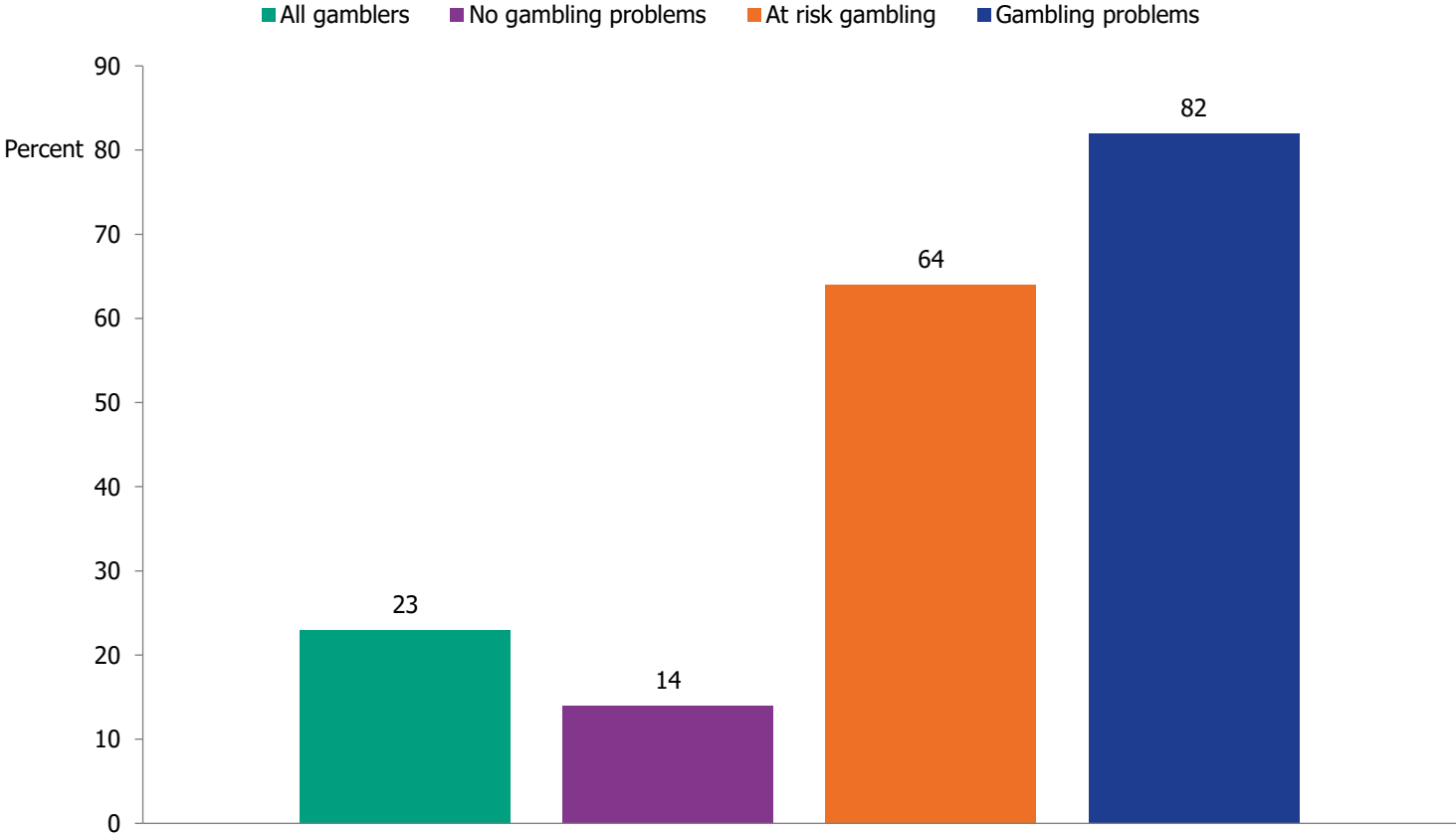
- Age limits for gambling enjoy a high level of support among both parents and young people. Despite this, many parents and adults gamble with children.
- Parents are not aware of the gambling of their children
- Three out of four young people had seen gambling advertisements during the past week
- Almost all participants with problem gambling had gambled online. Landbased bingo and casino relevant for youth under 18 years.
- Gambling problems associated to less satisfaction with school, family, economy and health, as well as alcohol and drugs.
- The convergence between gaming and gambling was relevant



# Young people gambled at home



# Proportion of young gamblers gambling at night



# Development of problem gambling

- Half of those with some degree of problem gambling still had some degree of problem gambling in 2024 (n = 30/61)
- 73 % of people with moderate risk still had some degree of problem gambling in 2024 (n = 16/22)



# Pathways - starting positions

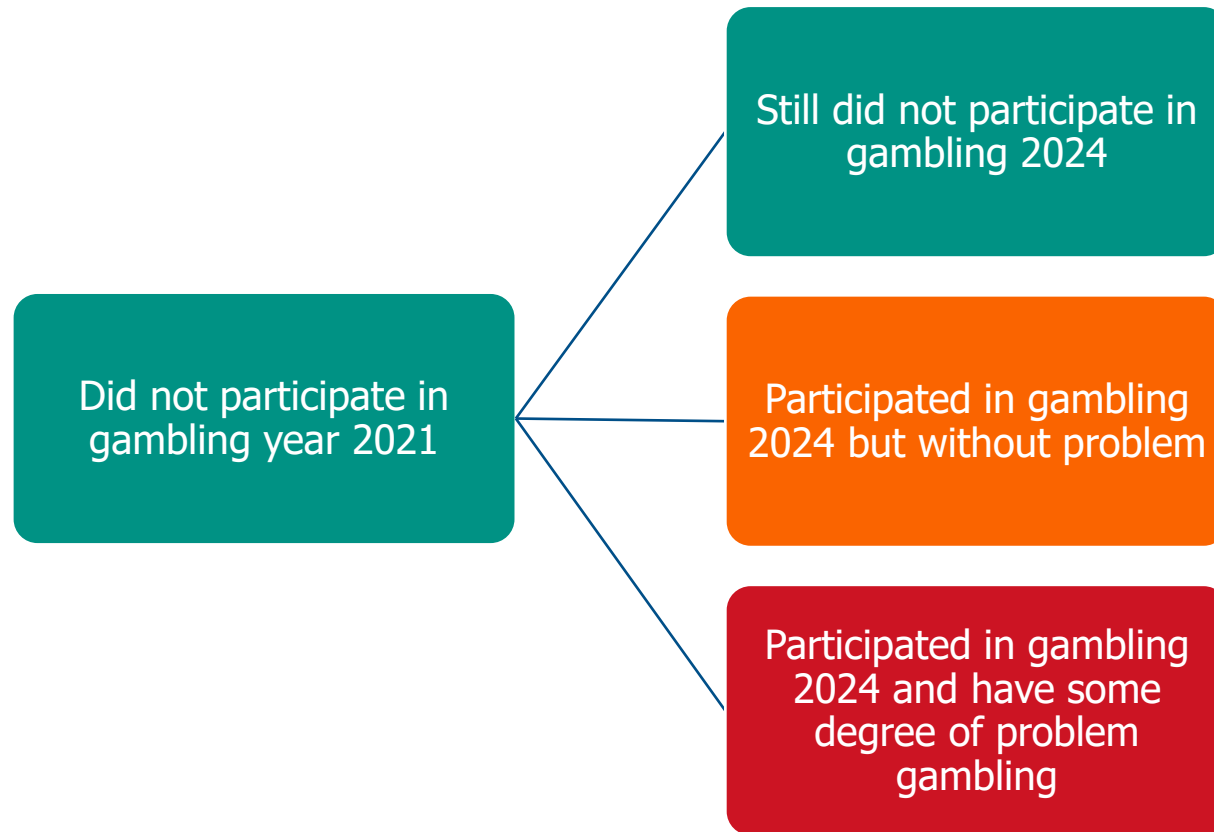
Among the youths that participated in 2021 they could take one of the following "starting positions":

- 1) Did not gamble at all
- 2) Did gamble but with no degree of gambling problem
- 3) Did gamble and with some degree of gambling problem





# Patterns among non-gamblers 2021



- Country of birth (women)
- Type of gambling (2024)
  - Betting on sport (only women)
  - Betting on e-sport
  - Online casino or gambling machines online
  - Casino or gambling machines at restaurant (2024)
  - Poker at restaurant or club (2024)

# Patterns among youth who gambled **WITHOUT** gambling problems in 2021



- Age (men)
- Country of birth (women)
- Computer games 2021 (women )
- Bought lootboxes 2021 (men)
- Type of gambling (only men):
  - Betting on sport 2021
  - Casino or EGM at restaurant or casino 2021

# Patterns among youth who had some degree of gambling problem in 2021



- Lootboxes 2021 (men and women)
- Skins 2021 (women)
- Computer games 2021 (men and women)
- Type of gambling 2024:
  - betting on sport 2021 (men)
  - casino or EGM at restaurant or casino 2021 (men)

# Conclusions

- Youth gambling is a public health concern and a social activity in a broad context. Youth should be involved in the preventive initiatives.
- Problem gambling among youth seem to stay over time – making prevention even more important
- Some phenomena related to computer games, such as loot boxes and skin gambling, are relevant from a prevention perspective from an evidence-based approach
- Gambling in risk society is resolved through increased individualized risk management and youth negotiate gambling through different neutralization techniques.
- Structural factors as gambling policy, youth unemployment and welfare structures, influence youth gambling and problem gambling



# Thank you

Stay up to date by visiting our website

[www.fohm.se/phas](http://www.fohm.se/phas)



Folkhälsomyndigheten

[www.fohm.se](http://www.fohm.se) • [fohm.se/nyhetsbrev](http://fohm.se/nyhetsbrev) • Sociala medier • Podden Liv & Hälsa