

PROBLEM GAMBLING: PREVALENCE, PROTECTION AND RISK FACTORS

Study Commissioned by the Lottomatica Group spa

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Problem gambling: characteristics and screening

Problem Gambling

Gambling can become a **problem** when the gambler presents some of the following characteristics:

inability to resist the impulse and urgency to gamble

**constantly focuses on gambling-related thoughts
(past experiences, strategies, statistics,
ways of making money)**

**gradually gambles increasing sums to feed his need
for thrill**

**repeated failure of attempts to stop gambling
gambling seen as "relief" from his problems**

**gambling affects his personal life, family, financial
and legal matters**

Problem Gambling

Pathological gambling is an “impulse control **disorder**”, and can only be diagnosed by a psychiatrist.

Screening methods used in studies of the prevalence of compulsive/problem gambling **allow us to identify subjects at risk but CANNOT be used as means of diagnosing pathological gambling.**

When a gambling problem is diagnosed based only on a self-report instrument, it is preferable to refer to “**PROBLEM GAMBLING RELATED BEHAVIOUR**”.

Screening for Problem Gambling

The most widely-used questionnaires to evaluate the **prevalence** of Problem Gambling (or the percentage of problem gamblers) are the following:

South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS)

This is the most widely-used instrument in screening for Problem Gambling and has been used in more than thirty countries

Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI)

A more modern instrument, which compliments the SOGS. Not based on psychiatric criteria, it is suitable for use in non-clinical screening

Flexible instruments, easy to use, **VALID AND RELIABLE** in the evaluation of Problem Gambling

The 2010 Study

The 2010 Study

This study is the second attempt to identify Problem Gamblers in a representative sample of the Italian gambling population

The study carried out in 2008 had found that 1.27% of adult Italians were problem gamblers

The aim of this year's study is to examine the trend in prevalence of Problem Gambling:

- a) on a new "total" sample of gamblers, with the same characteristics as those studied in 2008**
- b) on a "specific" sample of "online" gamblers**

We used these samples to examine the distinctive characteristics of problem gamblers and the most significant **protection and risk factors for Problem Gambling**

Research Methodology

Samples

2000 subjects representative of the **total population of Italian gamblers of adult age (18-74 years)**, or Italians who have gambled at least once for money in the last 12 months (**population = around 26,000,000**)

1000 subjects representative of the **“sub-population” of Italian gamblers of adult age (18-74 years)**, **who have gambled online** for money at least once in the last 3 months (**population = around 1,340,000**)

Sampling was carried out proportionally for each of the main demographic groups

Confidence level:

Total **99.73%**, online **95.46%**

Research Methodology

Differences between the two samples

Gender:

Total 55% Male, Online 81% Male

Average age:

Total 45 years (ds=15), Online 36 years (ds=11)

Education:

Total 9% graduates, 33% high school, 40% junior high school, 18% elementary school.

Online 19% graduates, 51% high school, 29% junior high school, 1% elementary school education.

Marital Status:

Total 28% single, 61% married

Online 52% single, 41% married

Occupation:

Total 13% housewives, 4% students, 16% pensioners

Online 3% housewives, 10% students, 4% pensioners

How many problem gamblers ?

How many problem gamblers ?

Estimate based on analysis of "Total" sample

Estimate based on the total population
of 44,000,000 Italians (18-74 years)

1.01%

(2008 result: 1.27%)

Estimate based on the total population of
around 26,000,000 adult gamblers

1.71%

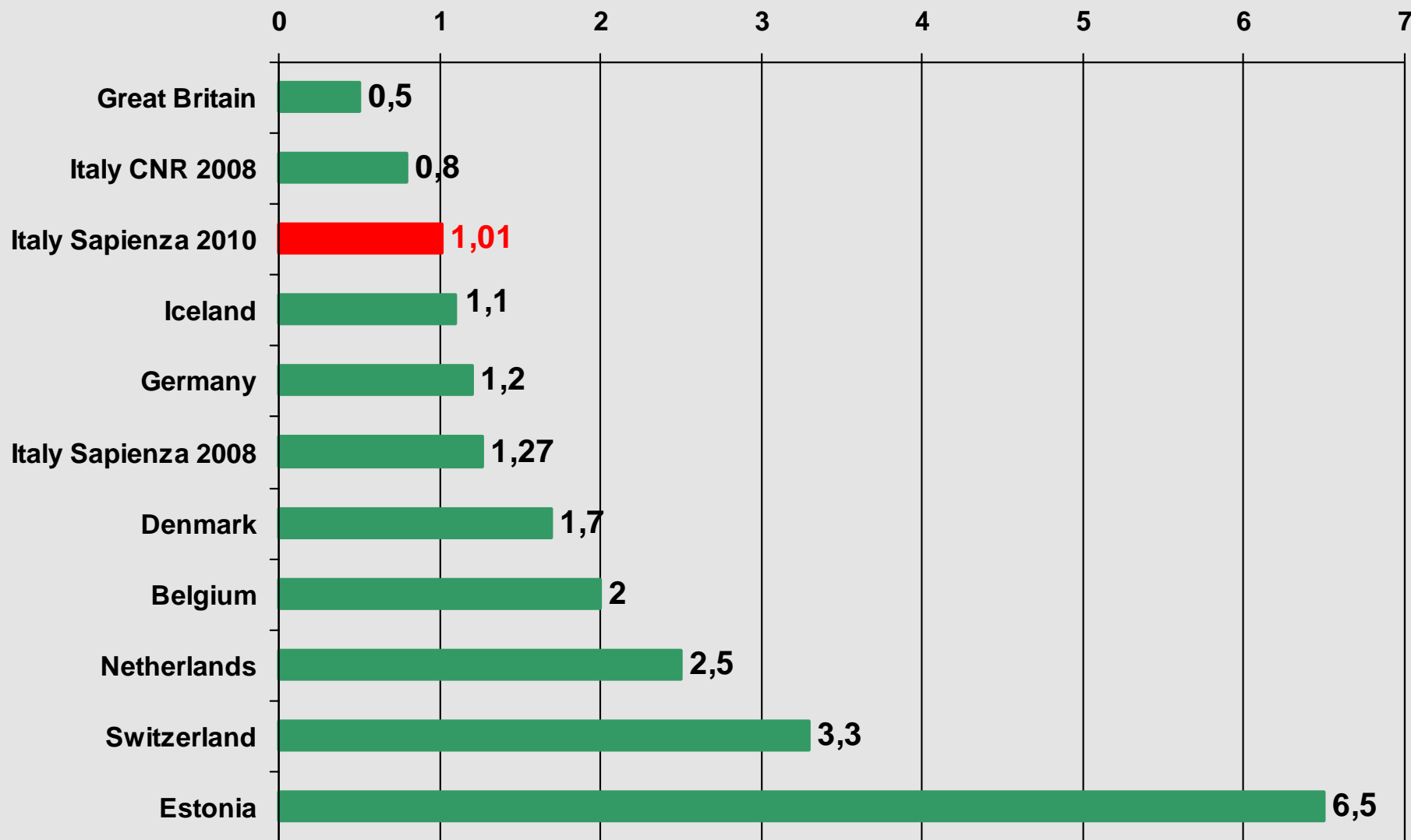
These estimates are in line with the results of
international research

Prevalence estimates of Problem Gambling in international studies

Italia (CNR Pisa – 2008)	0.8%
North America (1997-2010)	0.7%-2.7%
Australia + New Zealand (1997-2010)	0.7%-2.1%
Europe (2001-2008)	0.5%-6.5%

Sources: Psychoinfo, Medline, Googlescholar

Estimates of Problem Gambling in Europe



Sources for European data: Problem gambling in Europe: An overview (M. Griffiths) *Report prepared for Apex Communications (April 2009)*

Prevalence estimates of Problem Gambling

Differences between the present study and the 2008 Sapienza study

Could depend on:

- the responsible gambling measures implemented by operators and authorities
- the fact that the most serious problem gamblers tend to concentrate on online gambling
- the statistical fluctuations present in all sample studies

How many problem gamblers ?

Estimate based on analysis of "online" sample

Estimates based on the total population of 18,700,000 Internet users between 18-74 years (with at least weekly access in the last 3 months)

0.7%

Estimates based on the sub-population of around 1,340,000 gamblers playing online for money, active in the **last 3 months**

9.7%

These estimates are in line with the results of international research

Prevalence estimates of online Problem Gambling

Griffiths, Wood, e Parke (2006): 422 online poker players, **18%** problem gamblers

McBride (2009): USA – 563 online gamblers, **11%** problem gamblers

Wood e Williams (2007): 1880 online gamblers (87% USA, 10% Canada, 3% altri), **20%** problem gamblers

The % are calculated based on the samples and NOT on the population as a whole.

Sources: Psychoinfo, Medline, Googlescholar

How widespread is the problem?

Adult gamblers who gamble online represent a “sub-population” of the adult gambler group as a whole

Adult gamblers who have gambled online in the last 3 months represent around 5% of adult gamblers active in the last 12 months

The estimates regarding the prevalence of Problem Gambling in the two samples studied here (“overall” and “online”) are NOT summable !

**What kind of person is a
problem gambler?**

Identikit of the Problem Gambler

The problem gambler is an “**omnivore**”, in that he:

- plays **more types of games** than other gamblers
- is not interested in only one game, neither does he play only one game
- spends **more time** playing than other players do
- plays more frequently than other players
- spends **larger amounts of money** when he plays

Identikit of the Problem Gambler

- is more likely to be **male (78% vs. 54%)**
- lives alone (18% vs. 9%) rather than with a partner or children (25% 45%)
- is **less capable of managing money** and is therefore more at risk of incurring **debt**
- began to **gamble at an early age (24 vs. 28 years)**
- has or had at least one **parent** with gambling problems (31% vs. 4%)

We discovered no differences regarding other socio-demographic aspects between problem gamblers and other gamblers.

Identikit of the Problem Gambler

- is more **motivated** to gamble (for symbolic, financial or hedonistic reasons)
- holds unrealistic **beliefs** about gambling
- have lower self-efficacy in **regulating** their gaming behaviour
- has a consistent tendency towards **risk**
- tends to experience psychological **discontent** and **unease**

Identikit of the Problem Gambler - *Focus on online gambling*

The problem gambler who gambles online is also an **“omnivore”**, playing more types of games, more frequently and for larger sums than other gamblers.

Here too, the online problem gambler has less **self-efficacy**, holds **unrealistic** beliefs about gambling and is less at his ease than others

The socio-demographic profile of this kind of gambler too is similar to that of the “Total” sample. The percentage of these gamblers who have at least one parent with the same problem is higher (52% vs. 7%)

Identikit of the Problem Gambler - *Focus on online gambling*

The “online” problem gambler “ **DOES NOT** use Internet excessively: as opposed to a non-problem gambler, he goes online **exactly as much** as other gamblers but stays online **less** and uses Internet **less** for social and financial purposes

Therefore it would appear that he uses Internet mainly for gambling

It is likely that this very situation determines his perception of using Internet as a “dependency-related conduct”

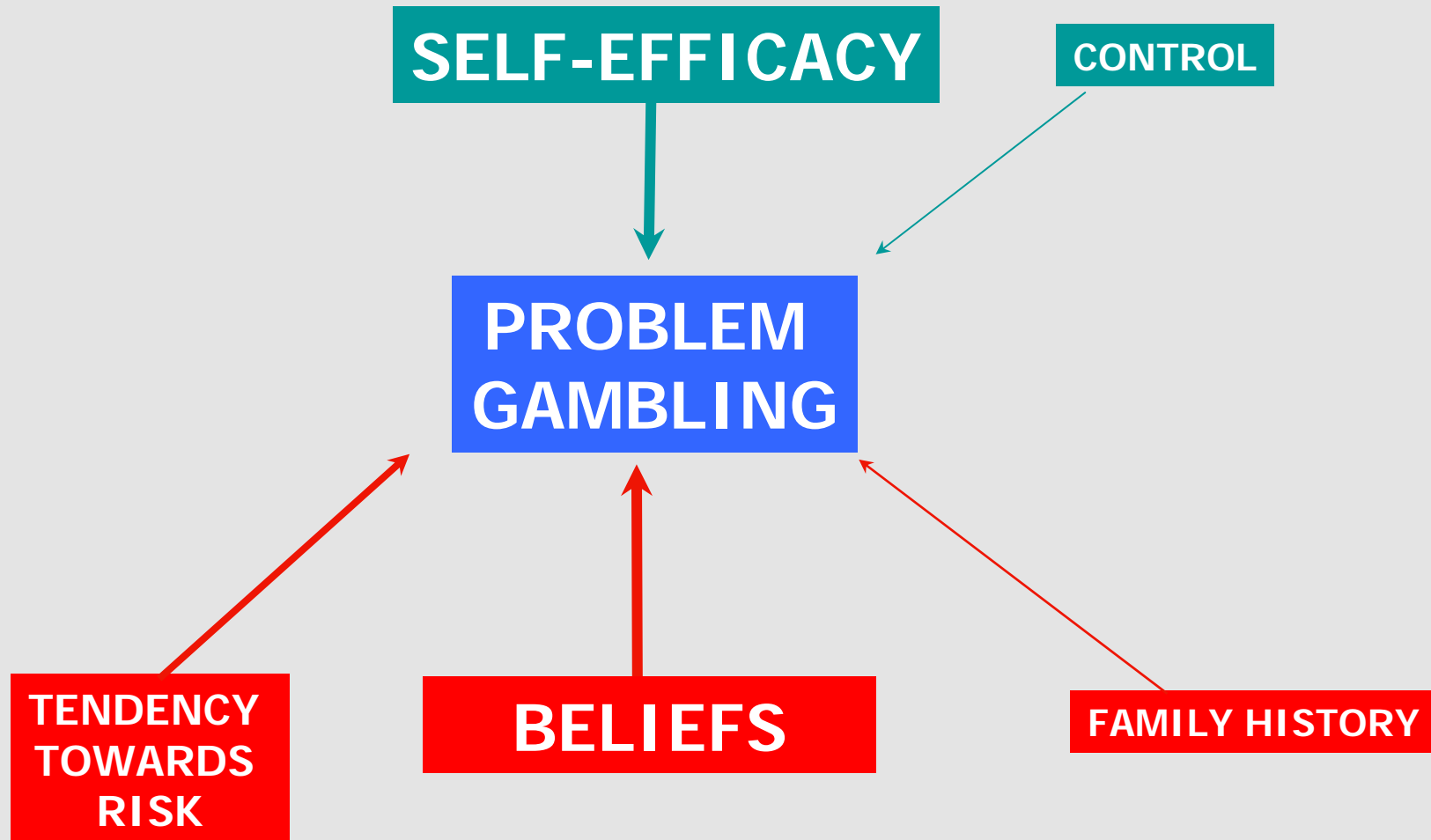
Protection and Risk Factors

Protection and Risk Factors

Are there significant differences between problem gamblers and non-problem gamblers?

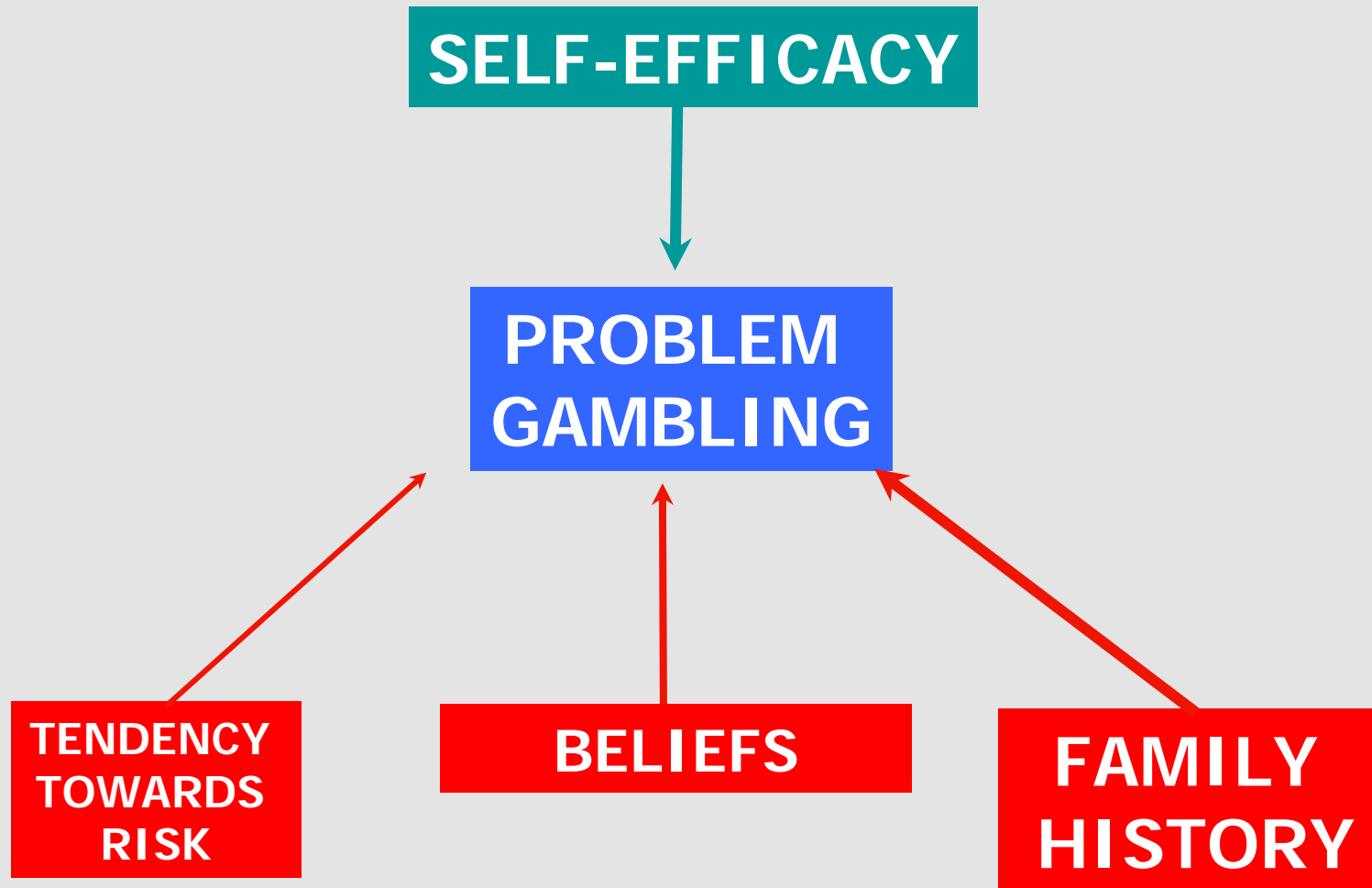
Which of these differences is the **most important** ?

What are the **main** definitive protection and risk factors which affect Problem Gambling ?

Total**PROTECTION FACTORS****RISK FACTORS**

Online

PROTECTION FACTORS



RISK FACTORS

Conclusions

In both samples the prevalence of problem gambling is in line with the results of international research

In the “online” sample the prevalence of this phenomenon is **low given the size of the population, but increases if we limit it to that of gamblers only**

Conclusions

As a result, the study allows us to identify an “omnivorous” gambler

The most important factors to consider when evaluating Problem Gambling are **individual**:

Low self-efficacy

Unrealistic beliefs about the likelihood of winning, of his self-control during the game, etc.

Impulsive, poor self-control

Tendency to seek risk

Family history of gambling

Conclusions

These results allow us to reiterate the recommendations made for actions to be taken in 2008

Education about responsible gambling, using communication to increase self-efficacy (the most significant protection factor**)**

Education about responsible gambling, supplying information to limit unfounded beliefs

Education about responsible gambling by broadcasting publicity **messages which are **clear** and informative**

Conclusions

The results lead us to recommend:

The continuation of the campaigns to educate players about **Responsible Gambling**, held by various operators and authorities

Aiming to create a bigger impact of such campaigns, especially on the **web**

That education about responsible gambling should target not only adults but also **children** and **teenagers** in the hope that they may influence their parents' behaviour

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