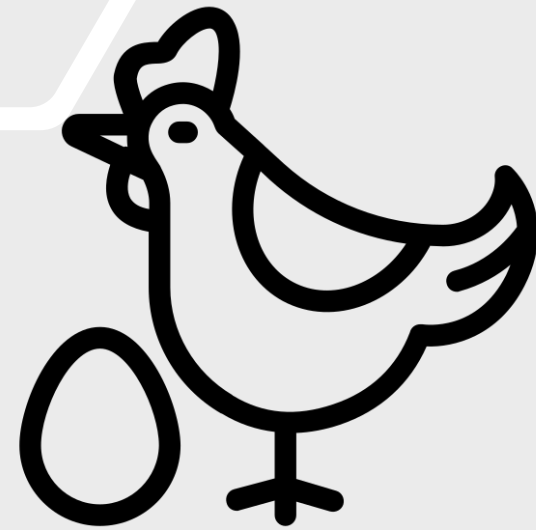


# Looking the Other Way: A Longitudinal Study on Marital Status and Gambling Disorder

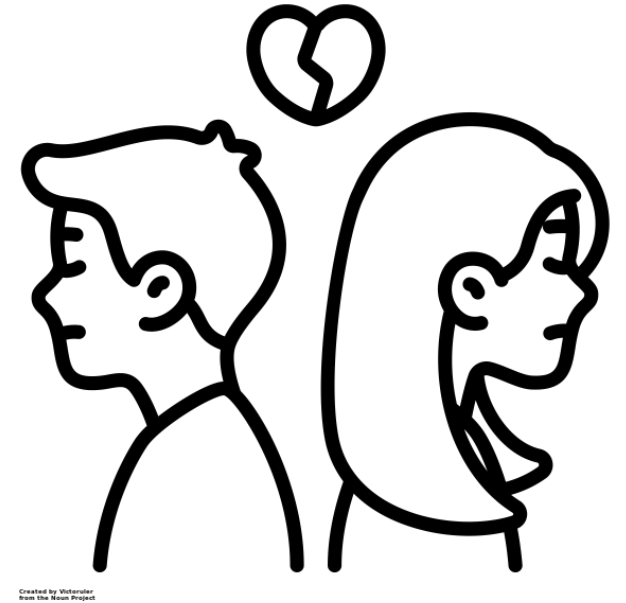
André Syvertsen  
University of Bergen, Norway  
Norwegian Competence Center for  
Gambling and Gaming Research



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# Disordered gambling harms relationships

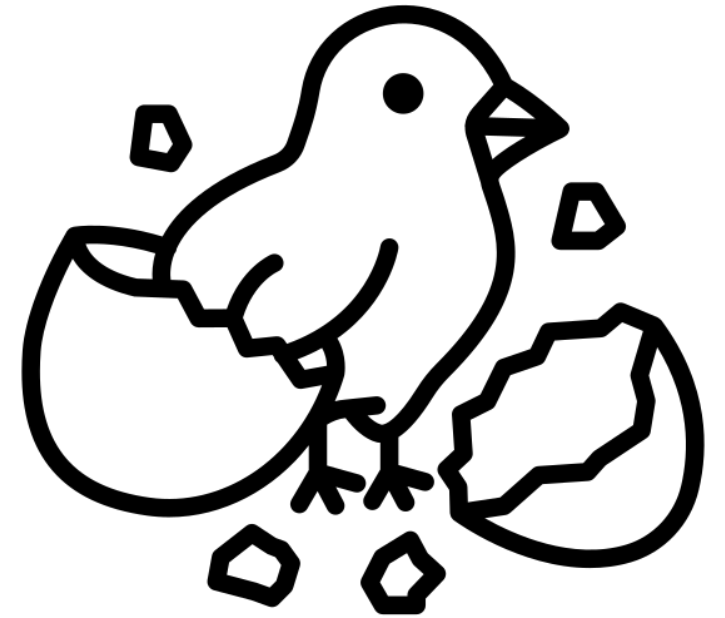
- <sup>1</sup>Disordered gambling is estimated to affect six others on average and spouses/partners report the most distress.
- <sup>2</sup>Within families, disordered gambling leads to:
  - Impaired communication
  - Less emotional responsiveness
  - Less familial problem-solving.
- <sup>3</sup>More severe gambling problems -> worse relationship satisfaction.



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**...and the other way  
around?**

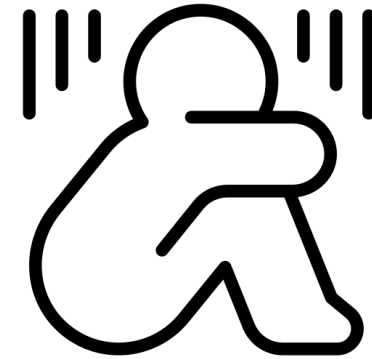
**Break-up could  
predispose a person for  
disordered gambling?  
Marriage may buffer?**



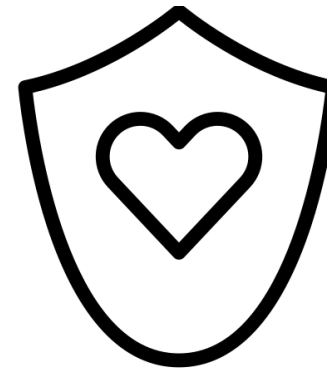
Created by Shekari Ch.  
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# Relationships: Risk and protection for future disordered gambling?

<sup>1</sup>**Separation/divorce** represents a stressful life event associated with **worse physical and mental health.**



<sup>2</sup>**Marriage** is associated with **better physical and mental health.**



# Seeking answers through registry data

- **Sample (Case-control):**

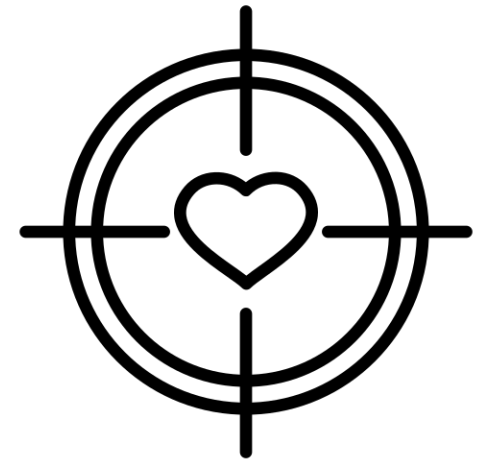
- Cases: Norwegian adults receiving their first gambling disorder (GD) diagnosis within specialist health services ( $n = 5,121$ ).
- Controls: Individuals with other illnesses besides GD ( $n = 27,826$ ) and individuals from the general population ( $n = 26,695$ ).

- **Time period:** January 2008 to December 2018.

- **Research questions:**

- Is going through a **divorce** associated with **increased odds of a gambling disorder** diagnosis compared to remaining married?
- Is getting **married** associated with **reduced odds of gambling disorder** diagnosis compared to remaining unmarried?

- **Registries:** Norwegian Patient Registry (NPR), FD-Trygd database



# Getting divorced was associated with higher odds for GD



**Table 2.**

*Logistic regressions for divorce on odds for first gambling disorder diagnosis*

Predictor	Against NPR illness control (n = 8,114)			Against FD-Trygd general control (n = 8,116)		
	OR <sup>1</sup>	95% CI <sup>1</sup>	p-value	OR <sup>1</sup>	95% CI <sup>1</sup>	p-value
Age in 2008	1.01	[1.00, 1.01]	0.13	1.00	[0.99, 1.00]	0.573
Gender						
Men (reference)	1.00	—		1.00	—	
Women	0.77	[0.66, 0.90]	0.001	0.75	[0.64, 0.87]	<0.001
Exposure						
Married (reference)	1.00	—		1.00	—	
Divorce	2.45	[2.06, 2.92]	<0.001	2.41	[2.02, 2.87]	<0.001

*Note.* <sup>1</sup>OR = odds ratio, CI = confidence interval. GD cases = 1,076.

# Getting married was associated with lower odds for GD



**Table 3.**

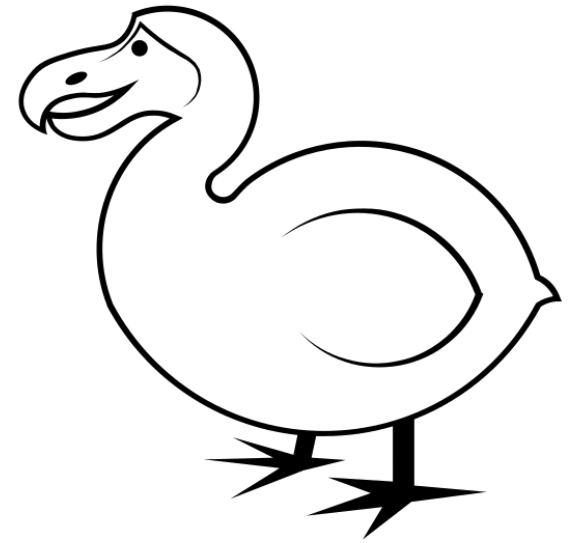
*Logistic regressions for marriage on odds for first gambling disorder diagnosis*

Predictor	Against NPR illness control ( <i>n</i> = 16,925)			Against FD-Trygd general control ( <i>n</i> = 15,940)		
	OR <sup>1</sup>	95% CI <sup>1</sup>	<i>p</i> -value	OR <sup>1</sup>	95% CI <sup>1</sup>	<i>p</i> -value
Age in 2008	1.01	[1.00, 1.01]	<0.001	1.01	[1.00, 1.01]	<0.001
Gender						
Men (reference)	1.00	—		1.00	—	
Women	1.10	[0.99, 1.22]	0.076	1.00	[0.90, 1.11]	0.976
Exposure						
Unmarried (reference)	1.00	—		1.00	—	
Marriage	0.62	[0.55, 0.70]	<0.001	0.57	[0.50, 0.64]	<0.001

*Note.* <sup>1</sup>OR = odds ratio, CI = confidence interval. GD cases = 3,610.

# How can we explain the findings?

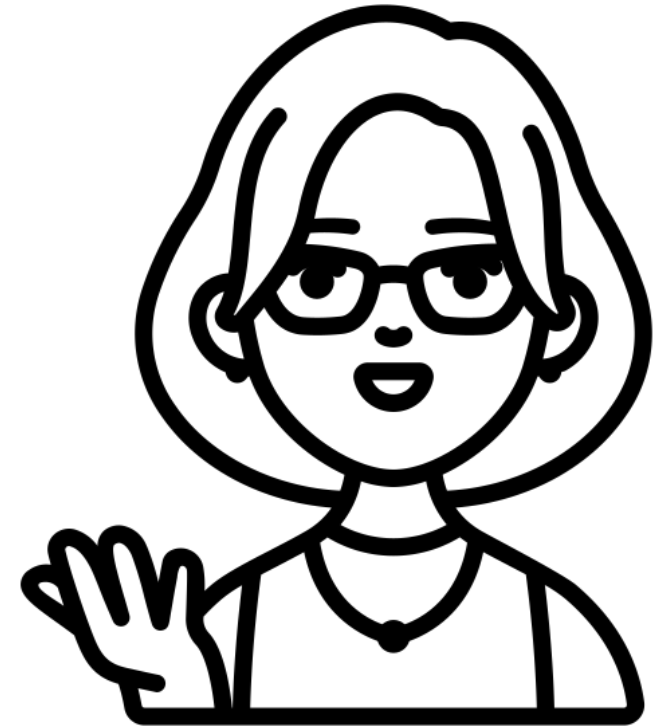
- <sup>1</sup>«Divorce effect»:
  - People might turn to gambling in order to cope with break-up/loneliness
    - Emotion regulation motivation for gambling is associated with increased risk for GD.
- <sup>2</sup>«Marriage effect»:
  - Spouses might control each others behavior (alcohol, gambling, etc.)
  - Marriage might instill an expectation to shape up, i.e., reduce involvement with risk behaviors such as gambling.
  - Remaining unmarried precludes the social support that can come with marriage.



<sup>1</sup>(Allami et al., 2017; Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002; Groupe et al., 2016). <sup>2</sup>(Kendler et al., 2016; Umberson, 1992).



**Clinicians should emphasize current and *previous* social factors, including social network history and experiences with relationship dissolution**



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