

Gambling-related Problems of Self-Excluders in Swiss Casinos

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Objective

In order to develop effective measures for the protection of gamblers, one first needs to understand gamblers and their gambling-specific problems.

Evidence is necessary to design preventive measures to effectively minimize the damaging social impact of gambling.

→We are interested in what motivates an individual to self-exclude, because this represents treatment-seeking behavior.

Casinos in Switzerland



Slide 3, 09/06/2016

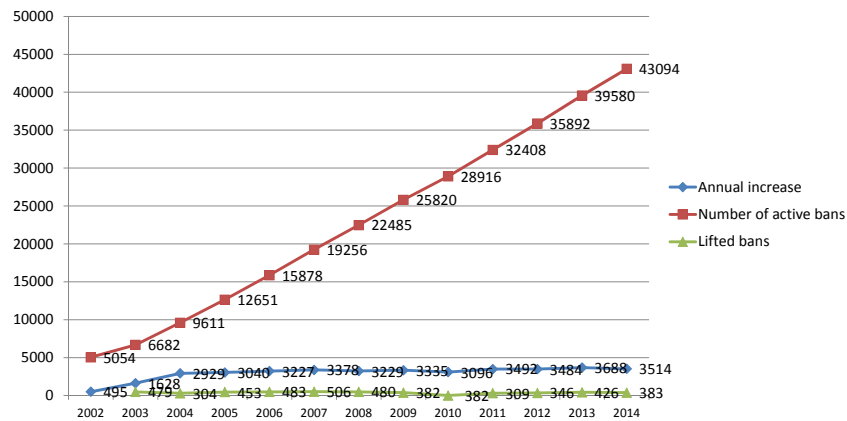
Legal framework

Federal Games of Chance and Casinos Act (1998)

- The law requires the casinos to provide effective prevention measures in order to minimize the damaging social effects of gambling.
- These preventive measures are laid down in the so-called "social concept" every casino must have in place in order to obtain and keep its state concession.
- First, the casinos define measures designed for the early detection of guests at risk for addiction and those who are playing beyond their means.
- Second, casinos are required to exclude gamblers who are over-indebted and also those who make wagers disproportionate to their income.
- Gamblers also have the option to self-exclude.

Slide 4, 09/06/2016

Number of excluded gamblers



Slide 5, 09/06/2016

Research interest

Self-exclusion is one of the most widely used responsible gaming strategies. These programs allow individuals to literally "exclude" themselves from a gaming venue as a way of dealing with problematic gambling behavior.

In Switzerland, hardly any empirical research exists neither on the motives of self-exclusion nor on the details of gambling-specific problems of the self-excluded.

Questions

- What do we know about the gambling addiction-related problems of the self-excluders?
- What reasons underlie their self-exclusions?
- What do we know about the characteristics of the excluded gamblers?

Slide 6, 09/06/2016

Research strategy

We conducted a secondary analysis of data provided on questionnaires that gamblers completed when they requested a self-exclusion.

The data was provided in Excel files.

- **Questionnaires from self-exclusion interviews**

Between 2006 and 2015, the three participating casinos received 8,170 self-exclusion requests.

→ Indicates in absolute numbers (multiple responses)
(mandatory)

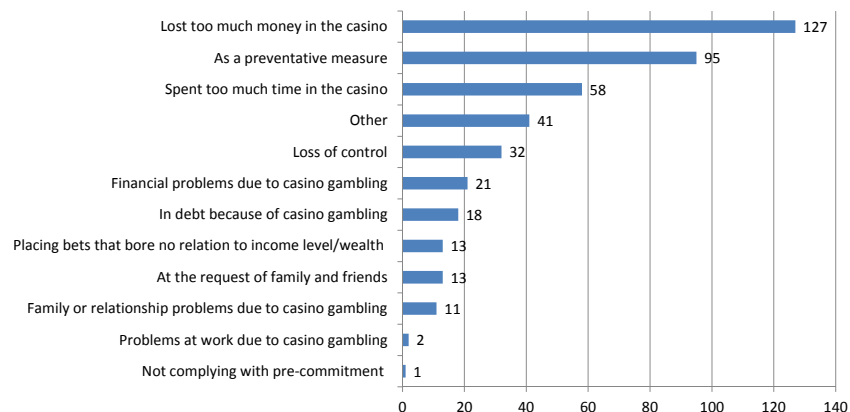
- **Questionnaires based on the DSM-IV**

Between 2006 and 2015, 3,650 of these DSM-IV-based questionnaires were completed (44.7% of self-excluders)

→ Indicates in percentages
(voluntary)

Slide 7, 09/06/2016

Reasons for self-exclusion (multiple answers possible) (N=8'170) (mean per casino and year)



Slide 8, 09/06/2016

Frequency of self-excluders and total of completed DSM-IV-based questionnaires

	Mean per year	Σ 2006 – 2015
Self-exclusion	817	8,170
Recreational gamblers (0-2 DSM-IV-items)	123	1,229
Problem gamblers (3-4 DSM-IV-items)	143	1,425
Pathological gamblers (≥ 5 DSM-IV-items)	100	996
Total of answered questionnaires	366	3,650

Slide 9, 09/06/2016

Changes in gambling addiction-specific symptoms of self-excluders from 2006 to 2015, N=3,650

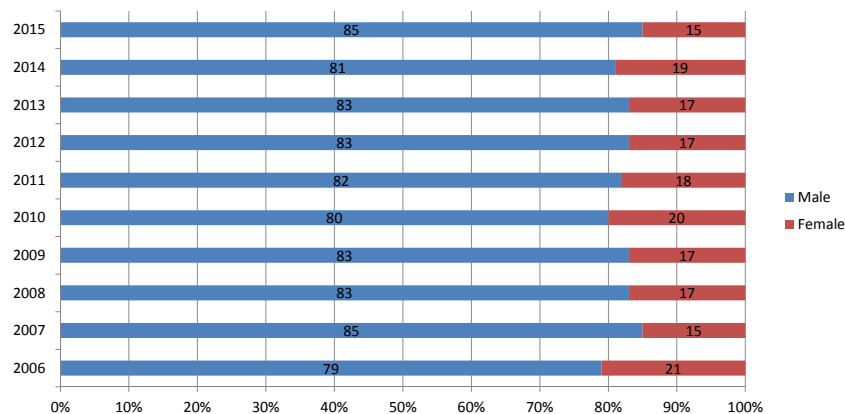


Slide 10, 09/06/2016

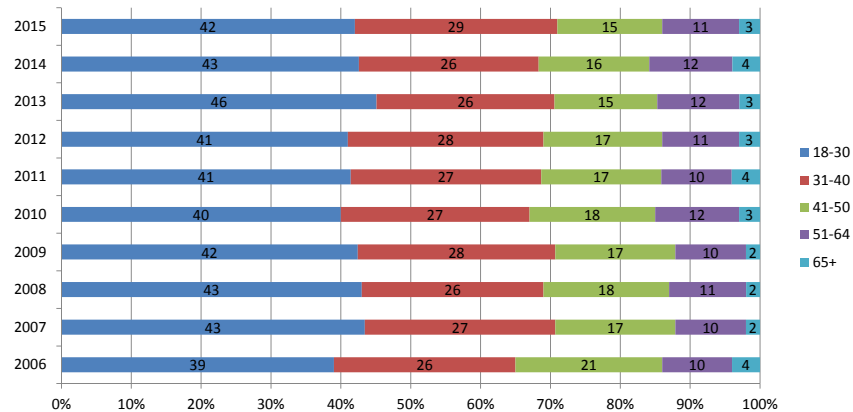
**Percentage of agreement to items to the DSM-IV-based questionnaire
(mean per casinos and years).**

	DSM-IV-based items	%
1	Do you frequently think about going to the casino?	41
2	Have you noticed any changes in your behavior, such as making higher wagers or spending more time in the casino?	62
3	Have you frequently gambled for longer than you had planned?	70
4	If you have tried to come less frequently to the casino or to take less wagering money with you, did you become nervous or restless?	24
5	Do you frequently gamble to escape from other problems?	13
6	When you're gambling: do you often try to win back the money you've lost?	79
7	Have you ever claimed to have won money when in fact you actually lost money?	14
8	Have you tried to cover gambling debts illegally?	2
9	Have you ever lost an important relationship, a job, an apprenticeship, or a promotion due to your gambling?	5
10	When you lose more than you can afford, do you asked people in your close family or circle of acquaintances for financial help?	30
11, 09/06/2016 <i>mean per casino and year</i>		34

**Gender (in %)
Total of exclusions (N=11,126)**



Age (in %)
Total of exclusions (N=11,126)



Slide 13, 09/06/2016

Discussion

The percentage of pathological gamblers among self-excluders is lower in Switzerland than in other countries (e.g. Ladouceur et al. 2000).

Possible reasons/explanations

- The preventive "social concept" of Swiss casinos is rather unique in the international world of gambling.
- Employees are trained to detect problem gamblers at an early stage. Thus it is likely that the proportion of pathological gamblers among self-excluders is lower than in other countries.

➔ In this sense, the social concepts of Swiss casinos and the associated preventive measures are to be appreciated.

Slide 14, 09/06/2016

Conclusion

- The results indicate that a third of self-excluders have no gambling addiction-related symptoms. This confirms that the number of bans is not a reliable indicator of the extent of gambling-related problems.
- As Casinos are required to exclude gamblers who are over-indebted and also those who make wagers disproportionate to their income, one can assume that the gamblers are excluded for financial reason.
- Two thirds of the self-excluders self-report gambling addiction-related symptoms.
- ➔ We know very little about the gambling addiction-related problems of self-excluded gamblers.
- ➔ We need more empirical data about the addiction-related symptoms of self-excluders.

Slide 15, 09/06/2016

Discussion of the methodology

Disadvantages

- The data was collected in order to comply with legal requirements. The questionnaires are relatively rudimentary and no elaborate survey methods were used.
- The possibilities for statistical evaluation of secondary data were limited.
- Against the background of the fact that the request for exclusion is often preceded by a very emotional moment, it is possible that gamblers did not accurately report their situation.

Slide 16, 09/06/2016

Discussion of the methodology

Advantages

- It takes relatively little effort and resources to analyze a decade's data.
- By using various data sources, it is possible to externally validate the results.

Slide 17, 09/06/2016

Acknowledgements

The results were obtained on the basis of documents that the casinos provided for research purposes. We should commend the casinos for taking an active part in spotting the problems behind the decision to ask to be blocked.

- Special thanks go to the directors of the participating casinos which agreed to provide the data for research purposes.
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Slide 18, 09/06/2016