


## Discovery 2005, Self-exclusion panel, Niagara Falls 19<sup>th</sup> of april 2005

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### Swiss experience with self-exclusion programs

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HSA LUCERNE Discovery 2006, Niagara Falls Self-exclusion Panel

I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to you today about our experiences with responsible gambling practice in Switzerland, especially about our experience with self-exclusion programs. In the next ten minutes I will give you a short overview of the general conditions concerning gambling policy in Switzerland. Following this I will present some data about self-exclusion programs. Finally, I will include the most important insights and a few questions for discussion.

### Introduction

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## Casinos in Switzerland

**19 Casinos / 7 mio inhabitants**

**230 Table Games**

**3200 Slot Machines**



For the last three years we have had 19 casinos in our small country which has 7 million inhabitants. These differ in size. The smallest casino has about 6 table games and 150 slot machines; the biggest one has around 20 table games and 350 slot machines. In total we have approximately 3000 slot machines and about 300 table games. In comparison, the Niagara Falls casino right next door is almost as big as all the Swiss casinos together.

### **Socio-political background of casinos in Switzerland**

I want to give you a brief overview of the socio-political background in Switzerland. Gambling was banned by law up until 1993. Twelve years ago this law was repealed by referendum as part of the financial restructuring of the Swiss federal budget. In the year 2002, 19 casinos opened their doors. Therefore Switzerland has one of the highest casino densities per inhabitant in the world.

The Swiss Gaming Act stipulates a number of provisions that are probably unique in Europe. Under the terms of the Act, casino operators must demonstrate that they are making every effort they can to counter the detrimental effects of gambling by using what we refer to as a Social Awareness Plan.

Federal law describes social protection as follows:

1. Casino patrons have to show their identity cards before entering a casino. Persons under the age of eighteen aren't allowed to visit casinos. Visits aren't registered as in most other European countries, but the casino wants to make sure that patrons are allowed to enter the casino. Guests with a gambling ban will be denied access to the casino.
2. Casinos are to provide guests with information on the risks of gambling and the help available.
3. Casino personnel should be trained on how to detect and approach problem gamblers, and be able to provide information on available assistance.
4. Casinos should ban those guests who gamble beyond their limits. Also casino guests have the possibility to ban themselves. A person who is banned from any casino cannot enter another casino anymore. Technology is used to

network these gambling bans throughout Switzerland. The ban is, in principle, valid indefinitely.

A person affected by the ban can apply at the earliest after one year to have the ban lifted.

Since last autumn we have had another possibility for dealing with problematic gambling. A patron can request a visiting agreement, that is, the guest wishes to bring his gambling under control autonomously and agrees with the casino on a set number of visits per month over an agreed timeframe. The guest will then be registered and checked by the entrance system.

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### **Social awareness plan in all Casinos in Switzerland**

- Controlled entry by showing a passport or identity card
- Participants on self-exclusion programs are registered in an electronic data base
- Guest information about the risks of gambling
- Trained casino staff

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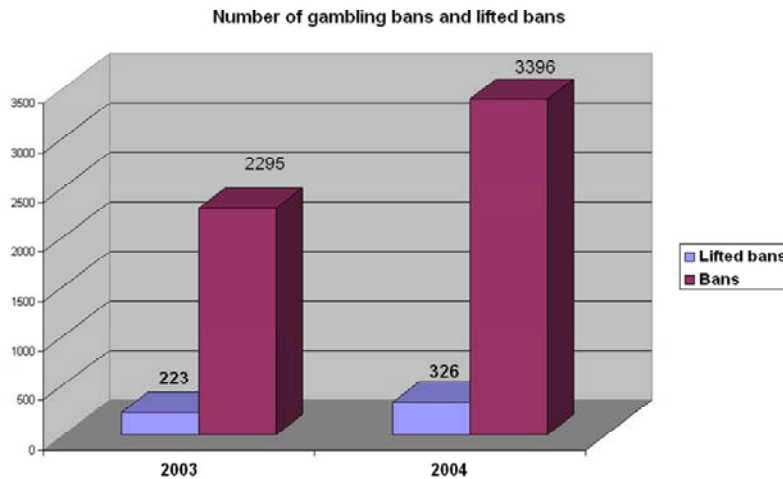
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### **Data on gambling bans 2003/2004**

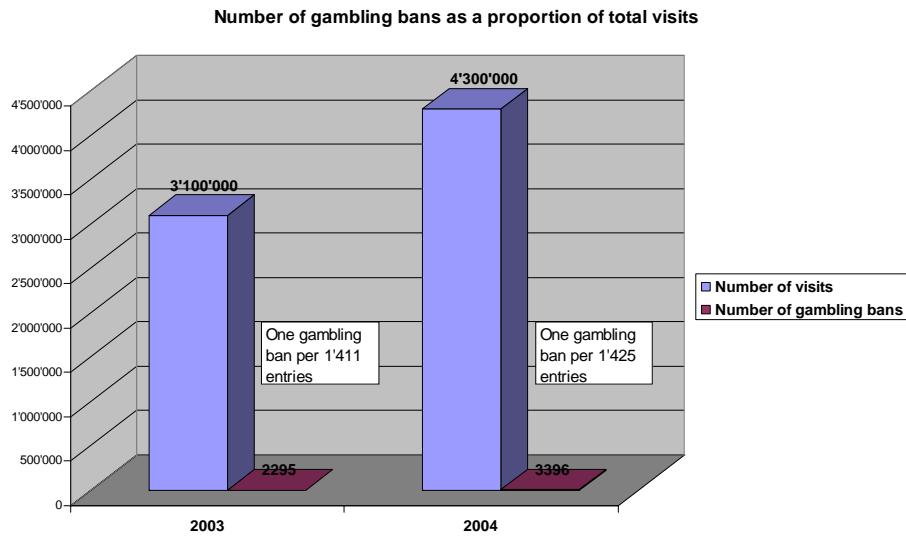
I will now show you some data on gambling bans for the years 2003 and 2004. For the interpretation of the following charts please keep in mind that six casinos opened in the year 2003. Some of the charts may be slightly misleading due to the different time of first opening.

The first chart presents the number of gambling bans for all 19 casinos. In total 2,295 gambling bans were imposed in the year 2003. In the following year the number of the gambling bans increased to 3,396. That's 1,000 bans more than during the year 2004. The reason for this significant increase is not only that some casinos opened in the middle of 2003, but also because of the awareness amongst casino patrons of the possibility of self-exclusions. This awareness has increased thanks to the PR-measures taken.

You can also see the number of people who had their gambling ban lifted. Like I mentioned at the beginning a self-exclusion program lasts for at least one year. In the year 2003 we had 223 people, and in 2004, 326 patrons who had their gambling ban lifted. One in ten gambling bans was lifted in each of those two years.



On the next chart you can see the number of visits per gambling ban. We have set the total number of visits in relation to the gambling bans. In the year 2003 there were a total of 3,1 million visits, in the following year the number of visits increased to 4,3 million. In comparison, we had 2,295 bans in the year 2003 and 3,396 bans in the year 2004. This means that the mean value for the year 2003 averaged 1,411, that is, the casino imposed one gambling ban per 1,411 entries. This figure slightly increased to 1,425 for the year 2004. It is worth mentioning that the ratio for the 19 casinos varies largely, namely between 523 and 2,782.



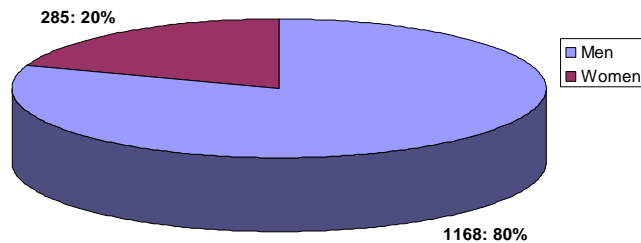
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Now, who qualifies for a gambling ban? We have implemented the social awareness plan at three casinos. I will show you the data of these three casinos. We have merged the data for the years 2003 and 2004.

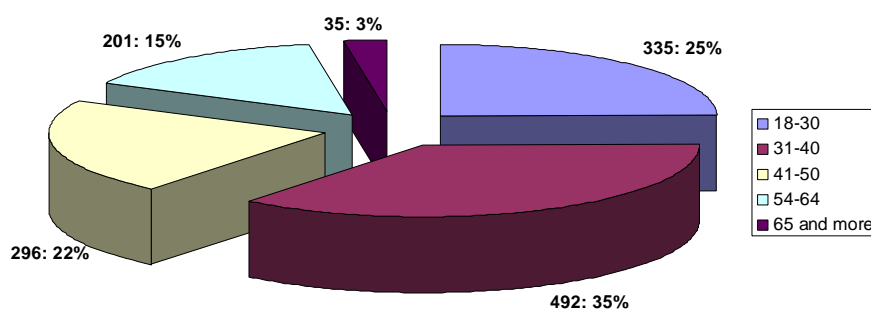
Concerning gambling bans according to gender, you can see the proportion of men to women very clearly. Male patrons who qualify for a gambling ban outnumber females by a ratio of 5 to 1. It is mainly men who develop problematic gambling patterns.

Number of bans according to gender, N=1'453



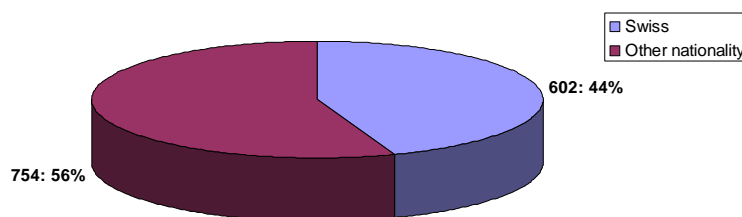
The next chart shows the distribution of bans according to age group. You can see that the largest group by far are the 31- to 40-year-olds of 34%. A quarter is made up by the youngest age group, namely those between 18 and 30 years old, the same percentage as for the 41- to 50-year-olds. The quota dips to 14% for the 51- to 60 year-olds. For the 61-year olds the level is surprisingly low at 3%.

Gambling bans according to age, N=1,359



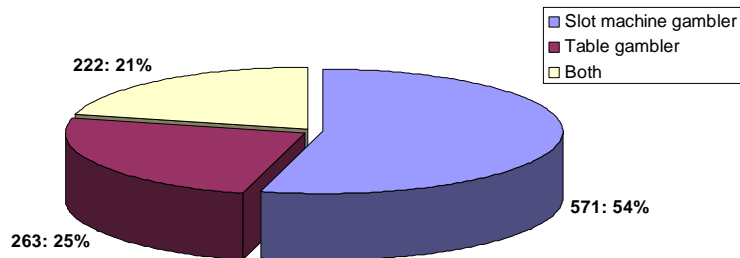
If we look at nationality you can see that 44% are Swiss, while 56% of people who want to ban themselves from the casinos are non-Swiss. In comparison, the percentage of non-Swiss residents in Switzerland is almost 20%. Thus, non-Swiss are more likely to develop problematic gambling habits.

Gambling ban according to nationality, N=1,356



The last pie chart gives an impression of the type of gambler. The major group that is likely to be handed a ban comprises the slot machine gamblers, i.e. more than half of the cases. A quarter of the cases are pure table gamblers and 21% gamble at both slot machines and gaming tables. This data supports the common findings that the game with the highest potential for gambling addiction is the slot machine.

Gambling ban according to type of gambler, N=1,056



Approximately 10% of all bans are lifted. An interesting question would be what the other people are doing while they are banned from the casino.

### Final considerations

To end this presentation we can state that in Switzerland we have very good conditions concerning the self-exclusion-programs. The provisions governing responsible gaming which are aimed at casino operators, are set out in law. The casinos are networked, so the gambling bans are applied throughout Switzerland. The execution of these programmes is monitored by a regulator, in our case The Swiss Federal Gaming Board. Casinos have to document all the processes, from early detection to interventions, that have taken place.

Because of the lack of qualitative evaluation criteria, certain important questions arise, which we would like to focus on:

- What are the people doing while they participate in a self-exclusion program?
- Do they need assistance from an advisory service?
- Do they gamble elsewhere? Or do they move on to another sort of gambling?

Thank you very much for your attention.