

# knowledge snapshot



## Prevalence of use and awareness of self-exclusion from gambling in the general adult population

### What this article is about

Self-exclusion is when people voluntarily ban themselves from gambling for a chosen time period. It has been promoted as one of the main responsible gambling tools. Self-exclusion programs vary across gambling operators and jurisdictions. However, multiple barriers exist that prevent their use. In particular, the onerous process of signing up, along with shame and embarrassment, may prevent uptake. This article is a review and meta-analysis of international studies to estimate the prevalence of use of self-exclusion in the general adult population. A meta-analysis is statistical method that pools data from many studies addressing the same research question. Another aim of this article is to estimate the prevalence of awareness of self-exclusion.

### What was done?

The authors followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) and Meta-analyses of Observational Studies (MOOSE) guidelines. They searched for studies that were published in English from 2010 onwards to capture the most recent evidence. Studies must recruit participants from the general adult population, rather than from specific populations (e.g., casino patrons) or people seeking treatment. Studies must also provide enough data to estimate the prevalence of use and/or awareness of self-exclusion programs. Studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and those in the grey literature (e.g., government reports) were included. The authors searched four databases for peer-reviewed studies (ProQuest, Ovid PsycINFO, PubMed, and Scopus).

The search occurred in August 2022. A total of 8,529 records from the scientific databases and 6,637

### Why is this article important?

This article presents a review of international studies on self-exclusion programs. The aim is to estimate the prevalence of use and awareness in the general adult population. Fifteen studies were included in the review. The international prevalence of use of self-exclusion programs was 0.26%. The prevalence of awareness was 11.09%. People with problem gambling were more likely to use self-exclusion than those with moderate-risk or low-risk gambling. Awareness was also higher among people with problem gambling than those with low-risk gambling.

records from the grey literature were found. After removing duplicates and screening for eligibility, 15 studies remained. The authors evaluated study quality using five items from the 10-item Risk of Bias tool.

### What you need to know

#### *Study characteristics*

Of the 15 studies, 11 reported on the prevalence of use of self-exclusion and 5 reported on the prevalence of awareness. Most studies were from Australia (80.0%). The rest were from North America (20%). Fourteen studies collected data via telephone surveys. The remaining study used a combination of telephone, mail, and online surveys.

In all studies, participants were aged 18 years or older. The number of participants ranged from 1,761 to 20,017. All studies used the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) to assess gambling risk. The proportion of participants with problem gambling ranged from 0.4% to 1.4% across studies. The proportion with moderate-risk gambling ranged from

1.1% to 3.7%. Low-risk gambling was reported in 3.9% to 7.7% of participants.

Most studies (86.7%) administered the survey items asking about self-exclusion to people who had gambled in the past year or those who scored above a certain threshold on the PGSI. Over half of the studies (53.3%) reported on use of self-exclusion in the past 12 months. Over one-quarter (26.7%) reported on ever self-exclusion in one's lifetime. One study reported data for both timeframes. Most studies asked about self-exclusion from land-based (60%) or online gambling (26.7%). Two studies asked about self-exclusion from any type of gambling.

### *Prevalence of use and awareness of self-exclusion*

Based on data from the 11 studies on use of self-exclusion, the authors estimated an international prevalence of 0.26%. Use of self-exclusion was higher among adults with problem gambling (15.2%) than among those with moderate-risk gambling (2.5%) or low-risk gambling (0.53%). The authors performed sensitivity analyses to check the robustness of the results. These analyses were restricted to studies with a low risk of bias. The results were similar, with a slightly higher prevalence of 0.35% found.

Based on data from the five studies on awareness, the authors estimated the prevalence of awareness to be 11.09% in the general adult population. The prevalence was significantly higher among adults with problem gambling (81.37%) than those with low-risk gambling (57.79%), but not those with moderate-risk gambling (67.26%). No sensitivity analyses were performed as the risk of bias was low in all studies or high in all studies except for one across the items used to assess their quality.

The studies varied widely in their estimates. But there was no evidence that their estimates differed by region, type of self-exclusion (land-based vs. online gambling), or timeframe (past 12 months vs. lifetime). Year of data collection also made no difference.

### **Who is it intended for?**

This article is intended for researchers, gambling operators, and intervention providers. The authors

suggested a need to promote self-exclusion as a self-management tool to increase awareness and uptake.

### **About the researchers**

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### **Citation**

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