

As you arrive – put your initials on the target!

With the bullseye being an “expert,” place yourself on the target based on what you believe is your current knowledge level of voluntary self-exclusion.



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Voluntary Self-Exclusion: Use & Best Practices



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Talk Roadmap

- Getting on the same page about VSE
- Understanding U.S. VSE access and availability
- VSE policies & procedures
- Participation & effectiveness
- Some thoughts...
- Activities and group work



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Let's Start with Quick Introductions



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What We Know about VSE

Responsible gaming strategies in the gambling industry are **proactive approaches** aimed at minimizing the negative consequences associated with gambling activities, particularly for individuals **at risk of experiencing gambling-related harms**.

VSE programs provide individuals with a mechanism to **limit their access to specific gambling activities** for a **specified term length** which allows individuals to actively engage in overt behavioral change (Blażczyszynski et al., 2007).

By enabling individuals to block access to gambling, VSE programs have become an increasingly popular strategy to aid in the **prevention and reduction of disordered gambling** (Devault-Tousignant et al., 2023).

Little research exists on the efficacy of VSE programs, but first, it is essential to **understand their use**.

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Legal agreement varies by state/jurisdiction



Responsibility on person [operator releases responsibility except for repercussions]



After or before visiting establishment

Voluntary Self-Exclusion

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What Is Voluntary Self-Exclusion?
A tool that allows a person to choose to block their own access to gambling for a set period of time.

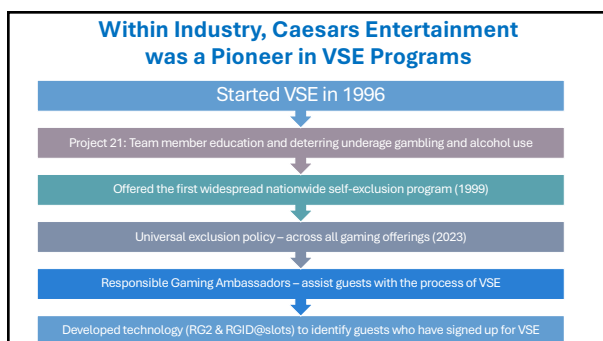
- 1. It is voluntary**
A person chooses to enroll in a self-exclusion program on their own.
- 2. Access is restricted**
Gambling on the program site may be blocked entirely or access to online gambling is restricted.
- 3. It lasts for a set time**
Programs may allow different time periods, such as months or years. Rules vary by state and operator.
- 4. It helps create distance**
Self-exclusion can help reduce the temptation to gamble and support a person's efforts to change their behavior.

Important: Self-exclusion rules are not the same everywhere. Check your state, tribal, or operator program for specific details.

Self-exclusion programs are one of the most widely used and adopted strategies for responsible gambling initiatives intended as a harm-reduction tool in gambling policy.

1. The contract may be with an operator, the state, and/or a tribal entity
2. Some contracts require a notary
3. Some require an individual to visit a gambling establishment and some do not
4. Some require a conversation with someone before/after and others do not
5. Some have specific violation expectations and others do not

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REVIEW ARTICLE
Journal of Behavioral Addiction, 2018, pp. 488–492 (2018)
DOI: 10.1093/jnab/abn006
First published online October 20, 2018

Who uses self-exclusion to regulate problem gambling? A systematic literature review

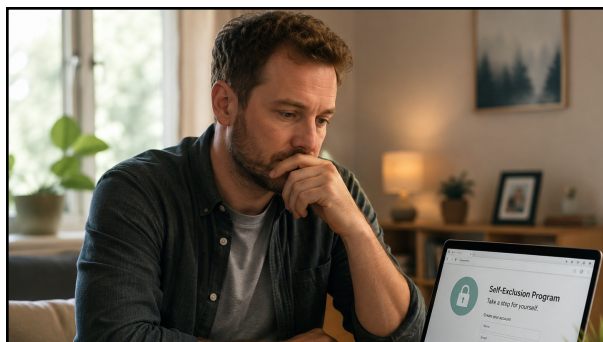
FRANZIŠKA MOTYLÁ,¹ BETTINA GREINE,² PAVEL SLICEKÁ,³ BARBARA BRAUN,⁴ JINNY CHENIERE DRENIER,⁵ and GERHARD KLEIN^{1,6}

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(Received April 26, 2018; revised manuscript received August 24, 2018; accepted August 25, 2018)

✓ Between 45–95% of participants who excluded were male
✓ Ave age 41–45 (brick) vs 31–36 (online)
✓ 51–95% classified as probable disordered gamblers (brick), 68% (online)

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of literature search (Mokkai, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009)

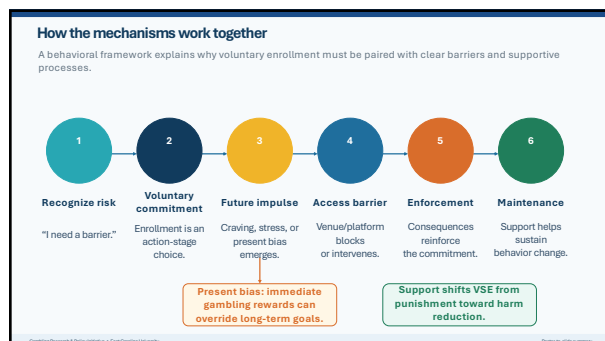
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Evaluation lens: align policy with purpose

The key question is not only whether consequences are harsh, but whether the full system supports the intended purpose of VSE.

Design question	Commitment lens	Environment lens	Justice lens	Deterrence lens
Enrollment	Is consent informed and meaningful?	Are barriers activated quickly?	Are rules explained respectfully?	Are consequences clear?
Detection	Does the system honor the person's commitment?	Can venues/platforms identify attempts?	Is detection consistent across operators?	Is certainty high enough?
Response	Does response reinforce the self-binding goal?	Does it reduce immediate access?	Is treatment humane and predictable?	Is the consequence immediate?
Removal / reinstatement	Does removal reflect readiness and risk?	Are safeguards maintained during transition?	Is the process transparent?	Are expectations firm?

VSE is a voluntary self-regulation tool with deterrent enforcement — not merely a punitive ban.

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Understanding VSE in the United States

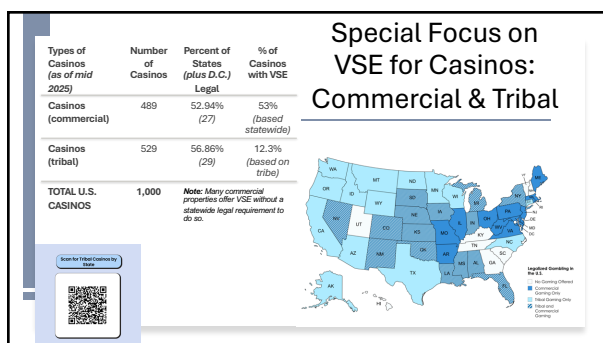
- Government structure (federal vs state law)
 - Gambling is legal under federal law, but each state (and territory) has their own gambling restrictions
- VSE built into law vs optional by operator
 - Sports betting often built VSE into law, other “older” gambling laws do not always include VSE
- State regulations not only differ, but states with tribal gaming operators also have different regulations from one another
- Unlike most other countries, US is patchwork of gambling legislation and operator offering for gambling type and VSE processes



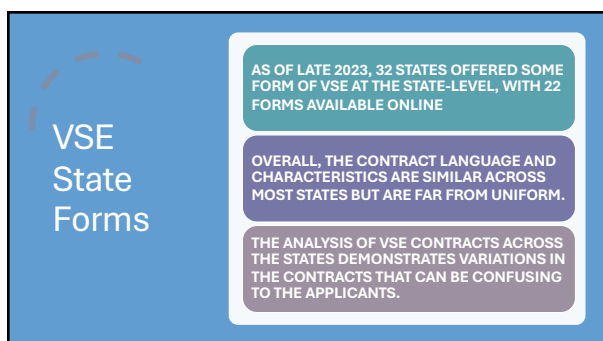
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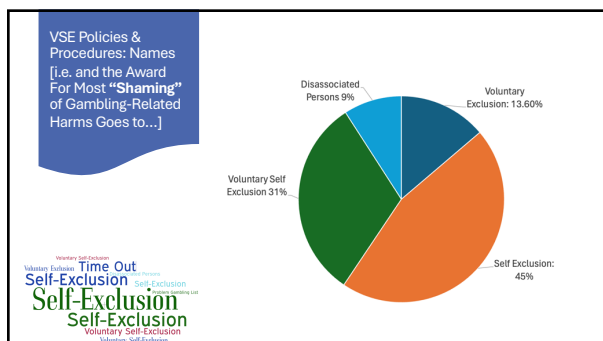
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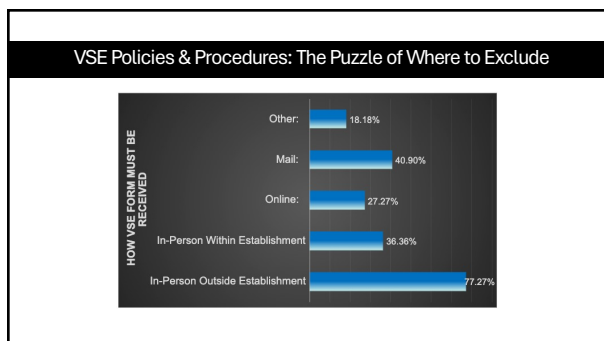
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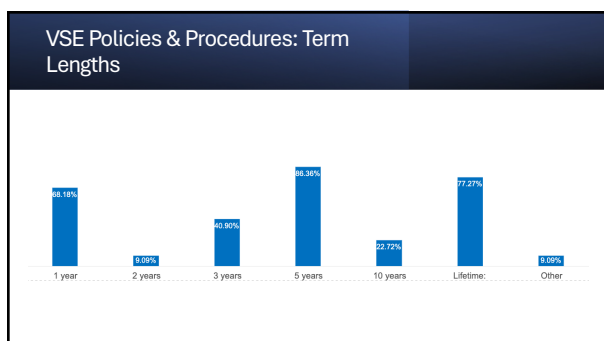
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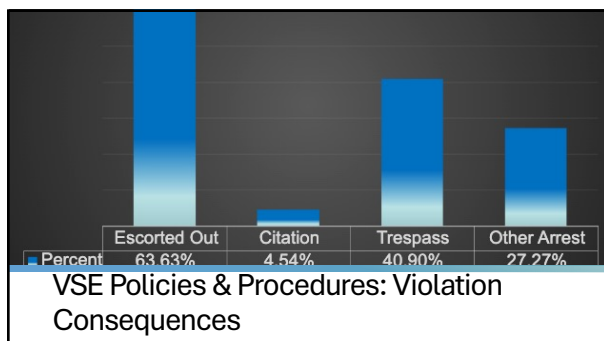
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VSE Policies & Procedures: And the Jackpot Goes To...



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Responsibilization and Risk Transfer

How voluntary self-exclusion policies shift responsibility from industry to individual

Core question

Do VSE "contracts" operate as consumer protection — or as risk transfer?

- Comparative review of VSE form language
- Qualitative coding of responsibility allocation
- Binary coding for individual vs. proprietor responsibility
- Separate coding for liability waivers



Key findings

~70% Individual responsibility
Contracts placed responsibility for avoiding gambling on the excluded person.

~67% Liability waivers
Most forms limited proprietor or state liability for enforcement failures.

Bottom line
VSE is framed as help, but many forms shift risk and consequences back to the individual.

Higher proprietor accountability

Responsibility + accountability framework

Higher individual responsibility →

Shared Enforcement	Risk Transfer Zone
Distributed roles + institutional consequences	Individual bears most responsibility + limited liability
Theoretical Ideal	Weak Structure
Balanced responsibility + strong accountability	Unclear obligations + minimal enforcement

Key takeaway: VSE policies should be assessed not only by who is told to comply, but by who is accountable when the system fails

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A Historical Look at VSE Offering v Usage by one Commercial Entity

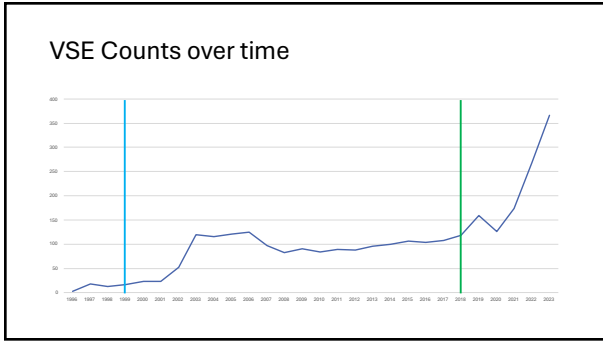
124,370 VSE records with 5 data points:

- Date of Self-Exclusion
- Length of Self-Exclusion*
- Gender (Mr./Mrs.)
- Birthdate
- Zip Code

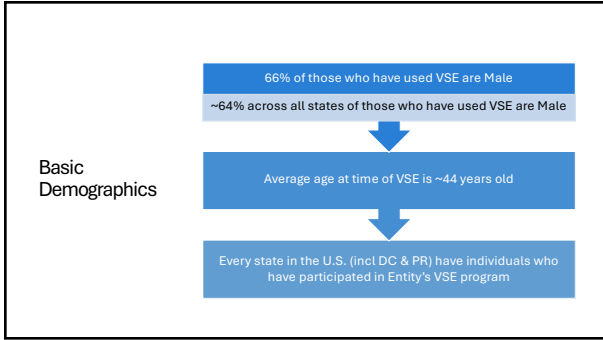
In addition, we added additional data:

- Property locations, details of property offerings, year opened
- Sports wagering legalized by state (brick & mortar; online)
- iGaming legalized by state

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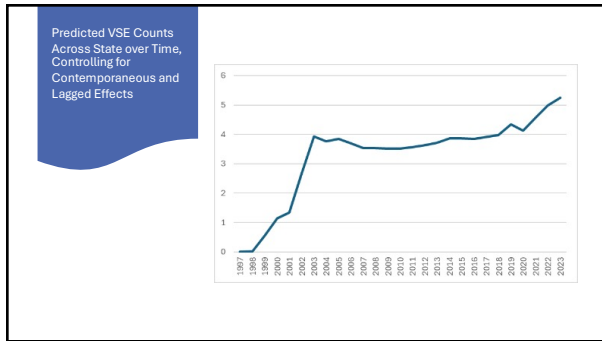
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	With	Without
% Male	55.71	39.25
Avg Exclusion Time	40.25	24.83

States with the operator's properties &/or other legalized gambling have a significantly higher number of people who have used the program **(over time)**

States with the Commercial Casino Operator Compared to States without the Casino Operator Properties

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What Changed in the mid 2000's?

Theme	2004-2006 Development	Lasting Impact
Federal Regulation	UIGEA bans online payment processing for gambling	Reinforced state-level control over gambling markets
State Legislation	States formalize casino licensing + self-exclusion requirements	Expansion of state-managed VSE databases
Corporate Action	Standardized RG protocols	Becomes industry template for cross-property VSE

2006: A Pivotal Year for U.S. Gambling & VSE

Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA) → States Formalize Casino Licensing + VSE

FEDERAL CRACKDOWN

- 2006 UIGEA restricts online gambling payment processing
- Players shift from offshore sites to regulated U.S. sources

LIMITS ONLINE GAMBLING

VSE CATALYST

- States expand responsible gaming laws
- Centralized VSE databases emerge around casino properties

VS. SPURS ADDITIONAL VSE SYSTEMS

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What changed after 2019?

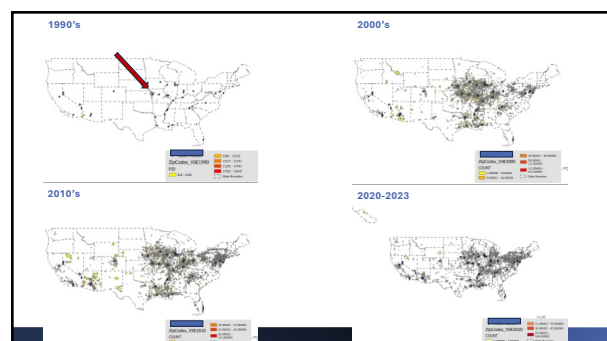
- Natural Break in the data in 2019-PASPA overruled in 2018
- Number of Self-Exclusions 4.6 Times higher After 2019
- 55% Increase in Self-Exclusions with an increase in the number of properties
- 6.5% Decline in Self-Exclusions based on prior year's counts
- The effect of properties changes pre-post-2019
 - Post-2019 the number of properties is associated with a 23.4% increase in expected VSE counts in comparison to pre-2019 levels

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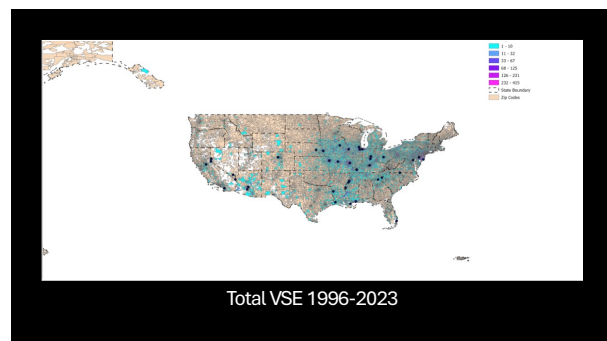
The Effect of Commercial Properties Over Time

- Overall, the number of the operator's properties in a State reduces the number of Self-Exclusions in the state (about a **12% decline for each additional property**)
- However, when we control for the number of properties in the prior year, the previous year's properties is associated with a **26% decrease in Self-Exclusions**, while the number of properties in the same year (contemporaneous) is associated with a **17% increase in Self-Exclusions**
- This suggests a **boomerang effect**, where there is an **immediate increase in VSE** with the addition of properties in a state, but the effect then **declines in the following year**.

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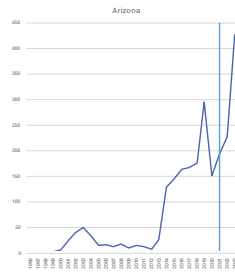
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90's Example: Arizona

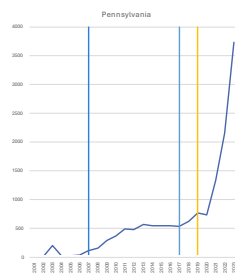
- Property 1994
- Sports Betting 2021



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2000's Example: Pennsylvania

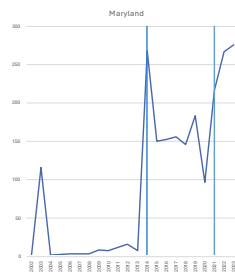
- Property 2007
- Sports Betting 2017
- Mobile Sports Betting 2019



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2010's Example: Maryland

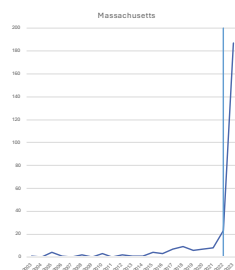
- Property 2014
- Sports Betting 2021



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Early 2020's Example: Massachusetts

- Sports Betting 2022
- Online Sportsbook 2023



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Mobile Sports Betting as a Key Turning Point (2019–2023)

- **Mobile sports betting legalization.**
- Increased **accessibility and frequency** of gambling participation, and
- Parallel **growth in VSE registrations**, reflecting both rising need and greater program visibility.
- The legalization of mobile betting redefined gambling accessibility, effectively removing spatial barriers.



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What these Findings Show



Use of mobile wagering may lead to experiencing gambling-related harms faster



People experiencing GRH may self-exclude, even if not yet having gambling disorder



Increased marketing on RG programs and easy online VSE sign-up may be leading to increased VSE use earlier in someone's gambling experiences



Less than 0.25% of individuals that have visited the provider's properties overall chose to VSE compared to an overall average of about 5% of the U.S. population diagnosable with GD

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What else are we learning?

While VSE has been used widely in the past, the increase since 2018 begins immediately after sports wagering legality, especially mobile wagering legality

Generally, the increase occurs quicker than anticipated in most states

Having brick & mortar properties generally does not increase VSE use as quickly

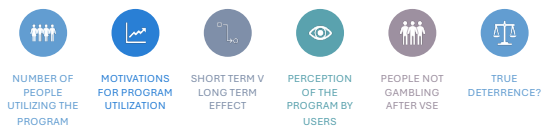
- This is true in states who do not have legal sports wagering

- This may be largely true due to legislation making VSE a requirement and being offered statewide, rather than just by gambling entity

- In general, it appears that **it takes 5+ years to see a significant increase in the use of VSE** in most states

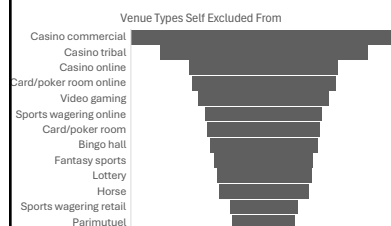
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How should we determine effectiveness?



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VSE Effectiveness: Utilization and Type



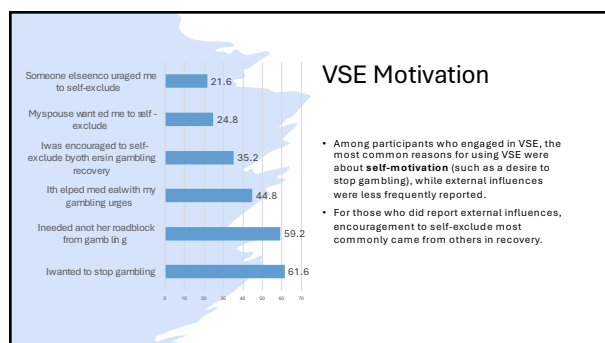
In an effort to examine the factors that influence the use of voluntary self-exclusion, we drew from a sample of individuals who have sought help for gambling disorder. There were significant differences in the profile of gamblers who used VSE and those who did not.

Recovery length was a strong predictor of VSE use, with **those in recovery for longer significantly at higher odds of using VSE.**

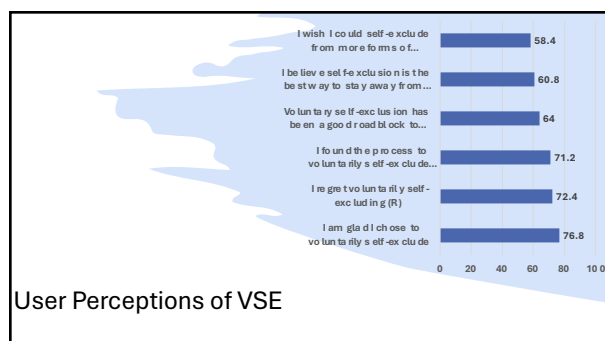
Individuals who use VSE are likely to also be **using other methods of help-seeking**. It is likely that GA participation in particular influences decisions to use VSE.

Those who score as severe on the DSM (8 or 9) are significantly more likely to utilize VSE than those who score lower on the scale.

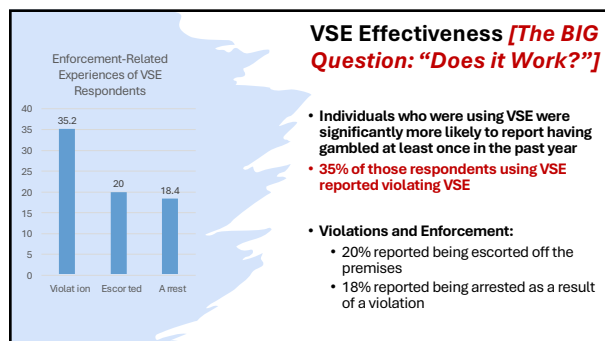
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Is VSE even lawful?



According to contract law, a valid contract requires not just signing a piece of paper, but “consideration”

What “consideration” is being offered by the state and/or excluding entity?



Also, is it possible to sign a contract that makes it entirely unlawful to do something that is lawful (like entering a casino)?



[Sample Contract](#)

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Current Research Suggests the Following Best Practices:

1. Lower enrollment friction (remote verification, online portals) boosts access and dignity.
2. Favor longer or renewable bans over very short periods for better sustained impact.
3. Maximize coverage via multi-operator/national schemes; align identity and data-sharing protocols where lawful.
4. Pair VSE with supports (counseling, blocking tools, payment/marketing restrictions) to reduce relapse pathways.
5. Tackle offshore access with enforcement and consumer education, recognizing that many breaches occur outside the regulated perimeter.
6. Evaluate continuously using clearly defined outcomes (gambling frequency/spend, harms, breaches) [encourage funding for evaluation research & be willing to share data for research purposes].

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Policy Implications & Improvements

Streamline Enrollment:	• Making self-exclusion easy—online, anonymous, and available across venue types—can increase uptake
Ensure Comprehensive Coverage:	• VSE should extend across all licensed platforms in a state, ideally including sports betting, casinos, online operators, and possibly even shared registries across states.
Strengthen Enforcement:	• Better identity checks, surveillance, shared customer databases, and operator compliance mechanisms (penalties, audits) are needed. [But don't criminalize addiction]
Offer Complementary Supports:	• Screenings for mental health, referrals to treatment, periodic check-ins, and integration with self-help tools can make exclusion more structurally supportive.
Monitor & Evaluate:	• Rigorous evaluations—tracking outcomes such as reductions in gambling frequency, harm, expenditures, and mental health changes—are necessary for improvement and justification.
Address Offshore Access:	• Many self-excluded individuals circumvent bans via unregulated offshore platforms; state authorities and operators should educate users and explore technical blocks where feasible.

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Next steps in some of our research

State v Provider's VSE Process Impact

More analysis to consider
amount of time it generally
takes to see an uptick in
VSE use after new property
and/or legislation as well as
by gambling type

More on experience of those who use VSE

- Quantitative analysis
- Qualitative project

Violation penalties over time

- Incl. FOIA requests of law
enforcement for trespass
violations at properties

Continuing to Assess how Legality and Type of Gambling Access Influences VSE Use

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Considerations & Further Discussions

- What occurs when a violation occurs varies greatly, however it is almost always one-sided where the industry and state take little responsibility for violations, but the individual may face dire consequences for what would be a normally legal activity except for the voluntary signing of self-exclusion.
 - Individuals likely need treatment and help over potential criminal sanctions for their gambling disorder.
- Having a unified name and process for self-exclusion can make the application process easier to access across states and allow individuals seeking help to locate the resources needed.
- A need to coordinate RG tools between both commercial and tribal entities to provide the easiest access for those seeking to limit gambling-related harms.
- VSE policies and procedures are fractured across properties and types, which can harm the overall efficacy of VSE as an RG tool.
- Having unified opportunities for RG tools, such as VSE, throughout the U.S. would be in the best interest of potential clients.

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Think-Pair-Share



Consider these prompts:

- One finding that confirmed what you already see in practice.
- One finding that challenged your assumptions.



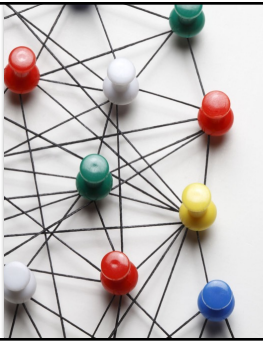
What are your thoughts on this question:

What does the research suggest we should do differently in the design, delivery, enforcement, or support components of self-exclusion?

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Activity: Patron Journey Map

- You are being randomly split into 10 groups
- Your task is to map the person's experience across the self-exclusion lifecycle: awareness, decision, enrollment, enforcement, support, and re-entry or reinstatement (fill out handout)**
- Group Questions to Consider**
 - What does this person need at each stage?
 - Where might the person drop off or avoid completing the process?
 - Where might shame, confusion, or privacy concerns arise?
 - Where is industry action needed?
 - Where is council or support-service action needed?
 - What would good practice look like at each point?



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Activity: Is it a “Breach” or a “Trespass?”

Practice a response to self-exclusion breach that is compassionate, operationally clear, and accountable.

Scenario: A person who is currently self-excluded is identified after entering a gambling venue or attempting to gamble online. Staff confirm the exclusion, but the person is embarrassed, upset, and says, “I know I shouldn’t be here, but I don’t know what else to do.” There is uncertainty about what happens next.

Each person in your group will be given a random “persona,” feel free to trade amongst yourselves if you want.

Fill out handout: What is a humane, operational breach-response protocol focused on dignity, safety, enforcement, documentation, and referral?

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Activity: Tension Cards



Goal: experience hard tradeoffs and develop balanced best-practice principles



Each group will be given two or three tension cards. [fill out handout]



As a group discuss where you agree, where you disagree, and what a balanced best-practice principle would be



Example Principle

“Enrollment should be simple and immediate, while reinstatement should require a deliberate waiting period, clear information, and an offer of support.”

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Let's look at the target

Before our final activity, let's look at the target again... come on up and add your initial to where you believe your knowledge of voluntary self-exclusion is after spending the morning with us.



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Action Planning: “One Commitment, One Ask”

Complete a short action sheet:

- One practice I or my organization can improve internally: Examples include staff scripts, training, enrollment form language, marketing suppression timelines, or follow-up protocols.
- One thing I or my organization needs from partners: Examples include referral pathways, shared materials, data-sharing clarity, or warm handoff processes.
- One unresolved question: Examples include reinstatement criteria, statewide consistency, or measuring outcomes.

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Closing Reflection

Let's go around the room and each complete the sentence:

“Based on today, one thing I will take back to my organization or work to improve VSE is...”

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Thank You!



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