

URBAN CURRENT

Not our lucky day

The sin-sellers want to convince us gambling is gaming. A problem: one definition of game is “an illegal or shady scheme or maneuver, a racket, as in ‘gaming the system’” ... or, in the case of gambling, gaming the masses.

I was going to list all the studies I had gathered, but you can Google “Low-income gamble disproportionately.” Suffice to say, numerous studies from many states confirm those with lower incomes are disproportionately accessing casinos and state lotteries. Just under

FOR EXAMPLE ...

ATLANTIC CITY

Atlantic City is in a class all by itself. It provides a window into both the concentration of access and gambling's impact on a single municipality.



ECONOMIC "BENEFITS"

Thousands were hired by the casinos, but the rest of the city saw no benefits at all ... still has trouble sustaining even a single grocery store.

Has highest unemployment rate in the state.

The city's total assessed property value in 2010 was \$20.5 billion. By 2014, it had fallen to \$11.3 billion.

Is on the brink of bankruptcy. Around 20,000 industry jobs and half of annual gaming revenues have been lost in the last decade.

When four casinos closed in nine months, almost 8,000 workers got pink slips.

Federal and state government is kicking in a combined total of about \$30 million to help cover essential services, including firefighters, through the end of the year.

WITHIN 3 YEARS OF THE FIRST CASINO OPENING ...

40% of local restaurants closed
2,000% increase in homeless people
~200 arson-related fires in homes of people who refused to sell their property to casinos.

33 percent of people who play are at or below the poverty level. The leading lottery states are the leading welfare states.

I'm still wondering how Mississippi, which according to the last census has more Baptists than people, became such a big gambling state. Can anybody help me out here?

HOW ABOUT CRIME?

Belterra Casino in Indiana was fined \$2.26 million ... for hiring prostitutes to entertain high-stakes gamblers.

Reported crimes in the Biloxi, MS, community increased after the first casino opened in 1992.

The crime rate in Atlantic City is three times higher than cities with similar population characteristics.

The National Academies of Science found that “pathological gamblers engage in destructive behaviors: they commit crimes, they run up large debts, they damage relationships with family and friends, and they kill themselves.”

WHAT ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE?

In America, more than 7.9 million adolescents suffer from problem or pathological gambling.



A Louisiana survey of 12,000 adolescents found that 10% had bet on horseracing, 17% had gambled on slot machines, and 25% had played video poker.



The National Gambling Impact Study Commission found adolescent gambling is “associated with alcohol and drug use, truancy, low grades, problematic gambling in parents, and illegal activities to finance gambling.”



...youth ranging from 8 to 17 tried to purchase [lottery] tickets - 80% were successful. The youngest purchaser was 9.



Over half the students surveyed at Atlantic City High School reported gambling in casinos. About 10% indicated they gambled weekly.



96% of compulsive gamblers begin gambling by age 14.

THEN THERE IS "ADDICTION"



Problem and pathological gambling comes with social costs that include fraud, theft, bad loans, bad checks, lost work time, unemployment, welfare benefits, insured or publically supported medical costs, criminal justice system costs ... increased rates of suicide, car accidents, and child abuse ... loss of productivity of spouses, impaired judgment, inefficiency on the job, divorces, added administrative costs for unemployed, and the costs of depression and physical illness related to stress and lower quality of family life.

People who live close to a casino are twice as likely to become problem gamblers as people who live more than ten miles away.

40-60% of casino revenues are earned from problem gamblers.

WITH DATA SUCH AS THIS, clenched in their greedy fists, the Illinois Lottery was caught red-handed targeting minority communities with their advertising.

Cities have long been centers of various illegal gambling operations. However, in the last generation, more and more municipalities in state governments have turned to gambling as a source of revenue.

Cities are disproportionately impacted due to the higher concentration of people in poverty.

Lower income populations and therefore significant swaths of minority populations are the biggest victims of state-sanctioned gambling. This is not racist? Where are the marchers? Where are the media screamers?

The data on gambling and crime available for all to peruse does not keep politicians from pushing for more gambling, and saying they are working to fight crime. Can anyone say hypocrisy?



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