

Survey Respondents Share Opinions of Riverboat Casinos in their Communities

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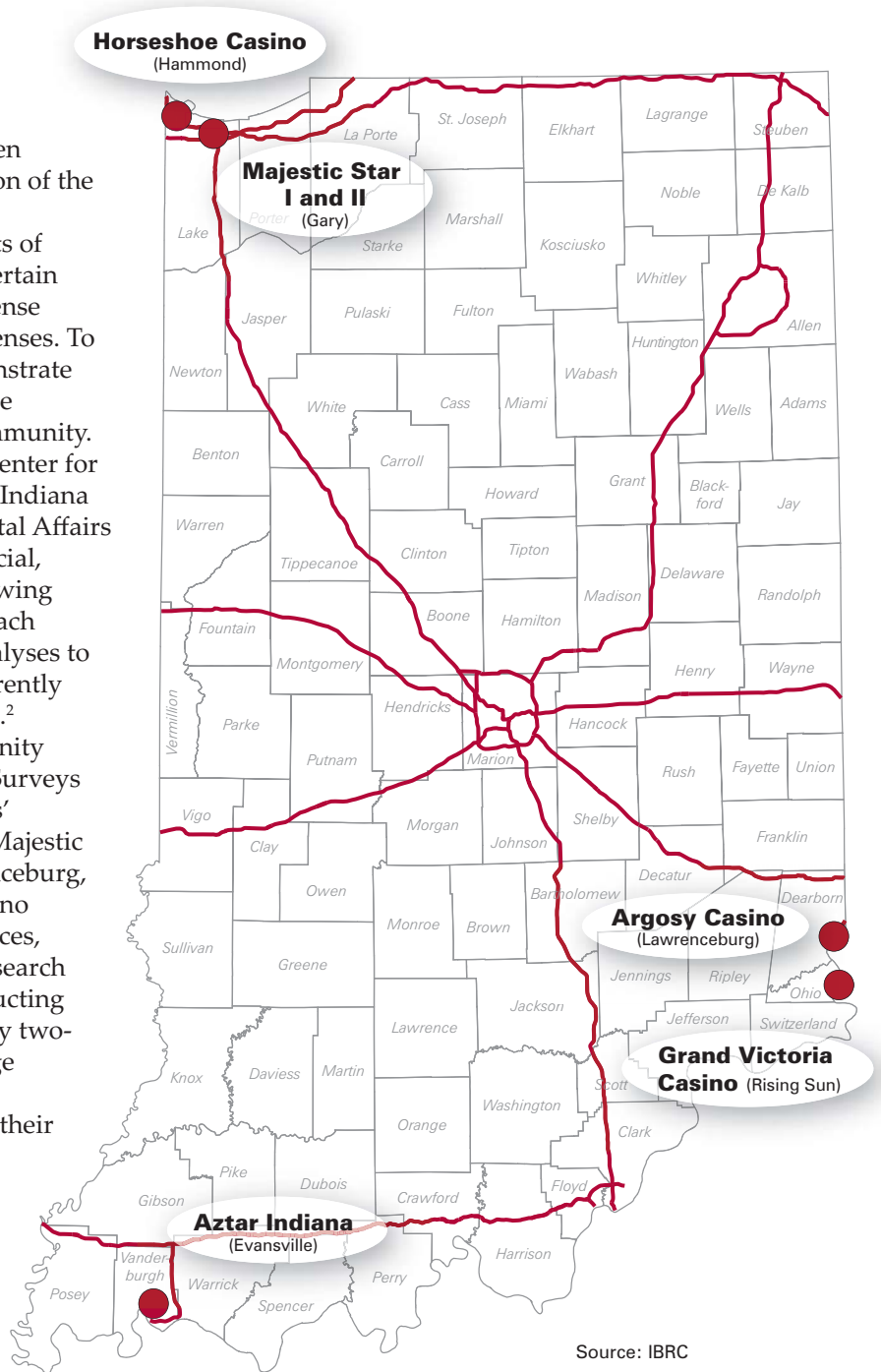
In 1993, a new era began in Indiana. With the passage of the Riverboat Gambling Act,¹ communities in both the northern and southern portions of the state had the opportunity to bring riverboat casinos to their communities. The riverboats came with the promise of jobs and local investment, but they also established legalized gambling within the region. Since then, eleven licenses have been issued in the state, including the recent addition of the French Lick Resort Casino.

In an effort to maximize the positive impacts of Indiana's riverboat casinos, all are subject to certain rules and regulations, including a series of license renewals required to retain their operating licenses. To remain in compliance, the casinos must demonstrate that they are well managed and able to provide continuing economic benefits for the local community. The Indiana Gaming Commission asked the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment (CUPE) of Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs to perform economic, fiscal, community, financial, operational, and other analyses to aid in reviewing the riverboat casino licenses. As the casinos reach these renewal periods, CUPE conducts the analyses to determine the riverboat's impact. CUPE is currently working on a series of eleven-year evaluations.²

One component in determining the community impact is a random survey of local residents. Surveys have been conducted to ascertain the residents' opinions of Horseshoe Casino in Hammond, Majestic Star I and II in Gary, Argosy Casino in Lawrenceburg, Grand Victoria Casino in Rising Sun, and Casino Aztar in Evansville (see Figure 1). In all instances, the surveys were conducted by the Survey Research Center at IUPUI. Data were collected by conducting random telephone interviews of approximately two-hundred residents of each city with the average interview lasting approximately five minutes. Respondents were informed at the outset that their participation was voluntary and their identity would remain anonymous.

For most Hoosiers, the perceived impact of the riverboat casinos is additional revenue for the state. The arrival of the casinos was viewed as a financial windfall for everyone—with local communities reaping the greatest benefit. In the communities where the casinos have been established

Figure 1
Casinos Whose Cities Were Surveyed



Source: IBRC

for more than eleven years, it is important to ask residents if they believe casinos have provided the improved employment opportunities and increased local revenue that they promised and whether or not gambling abuse has tempered the casinos' success. The survey was designed to aid in answering these questions.

Gaming Activities

All respondents were asked questions about their participation in various gaming activities and their frequency of play. As **Table 1** indicates, a majority of respondents have participated in some form of gambling. Lottery tickets, scratch-off, and pull-tabs are the most widely reported form of gaming activity. Those representing the riverboat communities in the southern part of the state generally report higher levels of participation. This is especially true when asked if they have ever placed a bet at a casino or on horse racing. Approximately one-third of respondents have played bingo for cash prizes, while wagering on sports teams and their own personal skill is mentioned by roughly one in five respondents.

While most respondents have tried various forms of gaming, when

Table 1
Percent Responding They Have Ever Participated in Gaming Activity

Gambling Action	Argosy Casino (Lawrenceburg)	Aztar Indiana (Evansville)	Grand Victoria Casino (Rising Sun)	Horseshoe Casino (Hammond)	Majestic Star I and II (Gary)
Purchased Lottery, Scratch-Offs, or Pull-Tabs	79%	76%	78%	67%	69%
Placed Bets at a Casino	56%	48%	53%	37%	32%
Played Cards for Money	49%	49%	47%	43%	26%
Played Bingo for Cash Prizes	37%	39%	31%	40%	31%
Bet on Horses	40%	56%	36%	24%	17%
Bet on Games of Your Own Personal Skill (Pool, Golf, etc.)	20%	20%	22%	19%	20%
Bet Money on Sports Teams	24%	19%	23%	21%	24%

Source: Laura Littlepage, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University

asked about regular participation, the numbers fall. As **Table 2** shows, lottery tickets, scratch-offs, and pull-tabs remain the most prevalent activity. Casino visits are still cited by respondents but wagering on sports teams and personal skill appears to be more frequent among those who have participated in gaming activity within the last month. Excluding Majestic Star I and II, the level of participation of those who have

placed bets at a casino decreases when limiting participation to the last month.

Opinions of Riverboat Casinos

In addition to surveying levels of gaming activity, respondents were asked to provide their opinions of the local casino. **Table 3** illustrates the results when respondents were asked how they felt about having a riverboat casino in their community.

Table 2
Percent Responding They Have Played within the Last Month

Gambling Action	Argosy Casino (Lawrenceburg)	Aztar Indiana (Evansville)	Grand Victoria Casino (Rising Sun)	Horseshoe Casino (Hammond)	Majestic Star I and II (Gary)
Purchased Lottery, Scratch-Offs, or Pull-Tabs	36%	43%	43%	45%	46%
Bet on Games of Your Own Personal Skill (Pool, Golf, etc.)	17%	21%	26%	22%	44%
Bet Money on Sports Teams	24%	15%	3%	17%	35%
Placed Bets at a Casino	24%	16%	21%	23%	32%
Played Cards for Money	12%	18%	14%	6%	10%
Bet on Horses	6%	2%	5%	2%	10%
Played Bingo for Cash Prizes	1%	5%	2%	6%	7%
Bet on Horses	6%	2%	5%	2%	10%

Source: Laura Littlepage, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University

In all areas, more respondents clearly favor the casinos than oppose them. Those opposed to the riverboats cite religious reasons and concerns about gambling problems.

Those in favor value the additional revenue for local governments and community foundations, the jobs, and the entertainment value the riverboat casinos provide.

Table 3 also shows that a sizeable number of respondents neither favor nor oppose but have mixed feelings about the casinos. Because of the range of feelings about the casino, CUPE attempted to determine if various experiences could impact whether someone may be more or less favorable to having a casino in their community. The survey data was segmented to highlight respondents who have not participated in any form of gaming activity, those who know someone

Table 3
Overall Opinion of Casino

All Respondents	Argosy Casino (Lawrenceburg)	Aztar Indiana (Evansville)	Grand Victoria Casino (Rising Sun)	Horseshoe Casino (Hammond)	Majestic Star I and II (Gary)
Favor	54%	47%	64%	48%	43%
Opposed	12%	18%	12%	12%	16%
Mixed Feeling	27%	21%	22%	24%	22%
No Opinion/Don't Know	7%	16%	2%	17%	19%

Source: Laura Littlepage, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University

who works for the local casino, and those who know someone with a gambling problem. Table 4 shows the results of these select groups when asked how they feel about having a casino in their community.

Not surprising, those who are not gamblers have the least favorable ratings of all respondents and a majority either are opposed to or have mixed feelings about the casino.

Those who know a casino worker either equal or exceed the favorability ratings when compared to all respondents. Finally, those who know someone with a gambling problem appear to be just as likely to have mixed feelings about the casinos as they are to be in favor or opposed to them.

Riverboat Casinos as Part of Our Communities

Since 1995, Indiana communities have seen both the benefits and potential problems associated with the riverboat casinos in Indiana. The results of these surveys indicate that respondents believe the benefits outweigh the potential problems. While a number of respondents have mixed feelings about the casinos, an overwhelming majority have participated in some form of gambling activity, including placing a bet at a riverboat casino. Based upon the responses of those who know someone who works at the casino, respondents also appear to recognize that the casinos provide significant employment opportunities and the respondents who do not gamble appear to realize that riverboats make a sizeable investment in their communities. ■

Table 4
Opinion of Casinos from Non-Gamblers, Know Someone who Works at the Casino, or Know Someone with a Gambling Problem

	Argosy Casino (Lawrenceburg)	Aztar Indiana (Evansville)	Grand Victoria Casino (Rising Sun)	Horseshoe Casino (Hammond)	Majestic Star I and II (Gary)
Not a Gambler					
Favor	5%	26%	29%	20%	15%
Opposed	38%	49%	41%	32%	27%
Mixed feeling	52%	15%	27%	20%	27%
No opinion/Don't Know	5%	9%	3%	28%	31%
Know Someone Who Works at the Casino					
Favor	56%	48%	64%	56%	60%
Opposed	11%	18%	13%	11%	17%
Mixed feeling	29%	23%	21%	26%	10%
No opinion/Don't Know	4%	11%	3%	6%	13%
Know Someone with a Gambling Problem					
Favor	24%	30%	41%	35%	35%
Opposed	35%	36%	23%	22%	28%
Mixed feeling	35%	28%	32%	35%	17%
No opinion/Don't Know	6%	6%	4%	8%	20%

Source: Laura Littlepage, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University

Notes

1. Indiana Code 4-33: Riverboat Gambling
2. For additional information on the Commission or to view these reports in their entirety please visit the Commission's website at www.in.gov/gaming/publications/casino_eval/