



Casinos and Crime: Is there a Connection?

The facts show that **the availability of legalized casino gambling does not cause increased crime**. Recently completed research for the National Gambling Impact Study Commission analyzed FBI crime data from 100 communities with varying degrees of proximity to casino gambling. The study concluded that the availability of casino gambling had no effect on rates of serious violent or property crimes, like larceny, burglary, murder, motor vehicle theft, assault, or robberies.¹

Other research organizations, governmental bodies, and academics agree:

- After an exhaustive review of FBI crime data from around the country, the Massachusetts Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight concluded that "there is no statistical evidence proving that the legalization and implementation of gaming in a community will cause an increase in the crime rate of the host municipality, or its greater surrounding area. Some communities experienced a decrease in incidence of crime and crime rates after implementing legalized casino gaming."²
- Governor George Pataki's New York State Task Force on Casino Gambling surveyed 57 casino host communities, and concluded that "casino gambling had brought few significant or recurring crime problems with it. In most jurisdictions, any increase in crime was limited to property offenses, such as larceny and employee thefts, and to traffic-related offenses, including drunken driving; there was no significant increase in violent crime."³
- A Virginia Commonwealth University professor's analysis of arrest data for the white collar crimes of fraud, embezzlement, and forgery in nine of the largest casino gambling markets in the United States concluded net decreases outnumber net increases in arrests for these crimes in the casino jurisdictions. For white collar crimes, trends in casino communities tend to mirror or be more favorable than average trends nationwide.⁴
- The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority analyzed the relationship between crime and riverboat casino gaming in Illinois. It concluded that "The presence of (casino gambling) in a city do not appear to have any substantial negative impact on overall criminal activity or calls for service in the host jurisdiction."⁵

The casino-crime relationship is best summarized as follows: **"Communities with casinos are just as safe as communities that do not have casinos**. Many jurisdictions hosting a single casino or a small number of casinos experience no increase in crimes or crime rates following the introduction of casino gaming. In some cases, the numbers of crimes and crime rates actually decrease. Where the number of crimes has increased following the introduction of gaming -- a scenario sometimes experienced where clusters of casinos have commenced operations or in very small host communities -- the increase in the number of crimes is not due to gaming per se, but simply because of the additional population at risk in these communities. That is, when the increased population is properly accounted for, **there is no increase in crime rates when comparing pre- and post-casino periods**. Increases in the number of

crimes, if they occur, are typically limited to traffic violations and property crimes, often of the petty variety."⁶

¹ National Opinion Research Center, *Gambling Impact and Behavior Study*, Report to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, April 1, 1999, p. 71.

² Massachusetts Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight, *Toward Gaming Regulation: Part 1: Crime*, 1994.

³ New York State Task Force on Casino Gambling, *Report to the Governor*, August 30, 1996.

⁴ Jay S. Albanese, "Casino Gambling and White Collar Crime: An Examination of the Empirical Evidence," paper presented at the conference "Gambling and Gaming: Winners or Losers?", April 30, 1999, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵ Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, *Riverboat Gambling and Crime in Illinois*, 1994.

⁶ Jeremy Margolis, *Casinos and Crime: An Analysis of the Evidence*, December 1997.