

Public Split Over Tax Breaks in Atlantic City as Majority Opposes Expansion of Gaming Beyond the Boardwalk

Registered voters in the Garden State are divided on questions concerning the future of gaming and Atlantic City in the latest Fairleigh Dickinson University PublicMind Poll. When asked if the state should help Atlantic City developers with tax breaks in order to encourage job growth and increase tax revenue for the state, or whether the state should not use public money to support private enterprise in the area, 41 percent say tax credits are appropriate, while 49 percent believe public money should not be used.

“As Atlantic City continues to struggle with declining revenues, tax credits for developers on the backs of taxpayers may be seen as a government ‘bailout’ to some and as a ‘jobs creator’ to others,” said Krista Jenkins, director of PublicMind and professor of political science at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Seventy-six percent of respondents say they have heard “very little” to “nothing” about the tax incentives, despite their role in helping to fund the development.

As for whether residents favor or oppose the expansion of gaming beyond Atlantic City, only 35 percent say they’re supportive, while a majority, 56 percent, express opposition to other areas becoming hot spots for casino gambling. When a similar question was asked in 2010, even when limited to the expansion of gaming to the Meadowlands, opposition remained the most common response. At that time, 49 percent said they would not like to see the Meadowlands become a site for casino gambling, with 42 percent in favor.

In 2009, the first time PublicMind measured attitudes toward the expansion of gaming beyond Atlantic City, 70 percent of respondents said they were opposed, a number that is notably higher than what has been observed in polls conducted recently and in 2010.

“The results could simply point to the ‘NIMBY’ (not in my back yard) perspective when considering expanded gambling options,” said Jenkins. “There is no shortage of convenient gambling options for Garden State residents, due to added gaming options along New Jersey’s borders. The appetite to expand casino gambling options beyond Atlantic City for New Jerseyans is not there yet.”

Beneath the top line numbers lie insights about who is more sympathetic to the plight of Atlantic City. Among those who have been to a casino or slots parlor in the last 12 months, 48 percent believe the state should help Atlantic City with tax credits; a little more than a third (36%) of those without a recent gaming experience offered a similar response.

At the same time, it is also true that casino-goers are more supportive than non-casino-goers toward allowing gaming to extend beyond Atlantic City, 44 percent vs. 29 percent respectively.

The Fairleigh Dickinson University statewide poll of 901 registered voters was conducted by telephone with both landline and cell phones from September 6, 2012 through September 12, 2012, and has a margin of error of +/-3.3 percentage points.

*Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>
Radio actualities at 201.692.2846 For more information, please call 201.692.7032*

Methodology

The most recent survey by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind was conducted by telephone from September 6 through September 12, 2012, using a randomly selected sample of 901 registered New Jersey voters statewide. One can be 95 percent confident that the error attributable to sampling has a range of plus or minus 3.3 percentage points. The margin of error for subgroups is larger and varies by the size of that subgroup. Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), question wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

PublicMind interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a land-line phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

Landline households are supplemented with a separate, randomly selected sample of cell-phone respondents interviewed in the same time frame. The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, race and gender.

Tables – Registered Voters

Atlantic City Revenue

Now let me ask you about Atlantic City. Recently there has been talk of declining revenues in Atlantic City and the use of tax breaks to encourage commercial development in the area. How much have you heard or read about this issue?

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
A lot	7%	6	7	10	10	4	1	8	10	8
Some	16%	16	17	16	16	16	7	14	21	20
A little	29%	29	24	34	29	30	19	34	27	36
Nothing	47%	49	51	40	44	49	74	44	42	34
Unsure	1%	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	1

	Education			Been to casino in the last 12 months	
	High School	Some College	College Grad	Yes	No
A lot	6	5	9	10	5
Some	11	13	20	18	15
A little	22	29	33	31	28
Nothing	59	52	39	40	51
Unsure	2	-	-	-	-

Atlantic City revenue, public opinion

Which of the following best describes how you feel, even if neither statement is perfect: *The state should help Atlantic City developers with tax breaks in order to encourage job growth and increase tax revenue for the state...or...The state should not be using public money to support private enterprise in Atlantic City.*

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
State help	41%	45	37	39	40	42	52	44	37	35
No help	49%	46	50	54	53	46	40	49	54	51
Unsure	10%	9	13	7	7	12	8	7	8	14

	Education			Been to casino in the last 12 months	
	High School	Some College	College Grad	Yes	No
State help	42	45	39	48	36
No help	47	49	51	44	53
Unsure	12	6	10	8	11

Casino Gambling

Right now casino gambling in New Jersey is limited to Atlantic City. Do you favor or oppose expanding casino gambling to other areas in the state?

	All	Party			Gender		Age			
		Dem	Ind	Rep	Men	Women	18-34	35-49	50-64	65+
Favor	35%	37	33	33	42	28	42	40	31	29
Oppose	56%	55	57	58	51	61	49	54	60	60
Unsure	9%	8	10	9	7	11	9	6	9	11

	Education			Been to casino in last 12 months	
	High School	Some College	College Grad	Yes	No
Favor	33	39	33	44	29
Oppose	57	50	59	49	61
Unsure	11	10	8	6	10

Exact Question Wording and Order

AC1 Now let me ask you about Atlantic City. Recently there has been talk of declining revenues in Atlantic City and the use of tax breaks to encourage commercial development in the area. How much have you heard or read about this issue?

- 1 A lot
- 2 Some
- 3 Just a little
- 4 Nothing at all
- 9 DK

AC2 Which of the following best describes how you feel, even if neither statement is perfect?

- 1 The state should help Atlantic City developers with tax breaks in order to encourage job growth and increase tax revenue for the state
- 2 The state should not be using public money to support private enterprise in Atlantic City.

AC3 Right now casino gambling in New Jersey is limited to Atlantic City. Do you favor or oppose expanding casino gambling to other areas in the state – maybe ask about where it's going to go?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 9 DK

Sample characteristics – Registered voters**Gender**

Male	49
Female	51

Age

18-29	13
30-44	18
45-59	35
60+	33
Refused	2

Race/Ethnicity

White	70
Black/African-American	12
Latino or Hispanic	10
Asian	5
Other/refused	3

Public employee household

Yes	23
No	74
Unsure/refused	3

Party identification

Democrat/Lean Democrat	48
Independent/DK/refused	19
Republican/Lean Republican	33