



**GAMBLING BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE EFFECTS OF
GAMBLING IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY
2009 SURVEY OF RESIDENTS**

February 2010

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The LVRC is administered through the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges



GAMBLING IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY¹

The opening of the Sands Casino in Bethlehem in May 2009 is seen as both a blessing and a curse for the social and economic landscape of the Lehigh Valley. In the short term, the casino has created over 900 new jobs for Lehigh Valley residents and is providing needed revenue for cash-strapped local and state governments. Initial estimates for the opening of the Sands' suggested a profitable start², however, the long term viability of the casino depends upon continued local and regional interest in gaming as well as the economy. The recent state legislation to expand into table games will again expand employment opportunities creating further economic and social benefits. However, while measurable benefits exist, costs are more difficult to measure as the direct relationship between such negative outcomes as increases criminal offenses and behavioral problems associated with gaming are much harder to connect. Realistically, in order for us to ascertain the long term effects of gambling on the region, it will also take several years until we are able to fully understand the extent to which the casino impacts the larger socio-economic conditions of the region.

As a step towards measuring the impact of the casino on the Lehigh Valley, beginning in 2007, the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium began a study of our residents gambling behaviors and perceptions of gaming. In 2007 we released a report of our findings from a random sample of residents in Lehigh and Northampton counties. At that time we found that about three-fourths of Lehigh Valley residents said they were not very likely or would not gamble at one of the new slot parlor casinos in Pennsylvania. The results in favor of slot casino gaming in the Lehigh Valley were mixed, with nearly an equal number of residents supporting and opposing gaming in the region. While, over one-half of Lehigh Valley residents said they were satisfied with the decision to locate the slot parlor casino in Bethlehem, over three-fourths of local residents strongly believed that the opening of the casino would increase crime. Local residents also strongly believed that the opening of the casino would have a negative impact on traffic congestion. However, residents also strongly felt that the opening of the casino would

¹ The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the LVRC, Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges (LVAIC), or LVAIC institutions.

² *The Morning Call* May 27th 2009, "Bethlehem Sands' Casino Tops the Rest;" and February 17th, 2010, "Sands Casino Continues Strong Winter."

have a positive effect on economic development.

In early 2009, a few months before the casino doors opened in Bethlehem, and with a few slot parlors already open in PA, we again surveyed area residents in order to monitor the extent to which their gambling behaviors and perceptions of gaming changed since 2007. The results of these surveys provide insights into behavioral changes taking place across the Lehigh Valley. We will continue to monitor residents feelings and behaviors as they relate to gaming in order to inform the community of both the positive and negative impacts of the casinos on community well being. The data presented in this report compares baseline results from 2007 to our findings in 2009.

Following a discussion of the key findings and research methods, this report is broken down into three parts: a discussion of the current gambling behaviors of survey respondents; a discussion of respondents' plans to gamble in Bethlehem; and perceptions of the effects of gaming on the Lehigh Valley.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Over 97% of survey respondents in 2009 said that they had participated in some form of gambling in their lifetime including casinos, purchasing lottery tickets, and other forms of gambling.
- Of those surveyed, 77% indicated that they had gambled at a U.S. casino in their lifetime with 37% indicating that they visited a casino during the time period from December 2007 to December 2008.
- Of those who visited a casino to gamble in 2008, 40% visited a casino in Pennsylvania followed by 35% in New Jersey and 12% in Las Vegas. About 50% of those visiting casinos went “a few days all year,” while 38% said they only went 1 time during the past year. Additionally, 75% of those visiting casinos spent 4 or less hours while 22% said they visited a casino, on average, from 5-10 hours.
- In early 2009 slightly more residents supported the casino in Bethlehem than were opposed (49% vs. 42%) with 22% undecided compared to 2007.
- A cross tabulation of the results, broken down by zip code, suggests that residents of Bethlehem (31%) and the boroughs and townships (28%), are slightly more likely to gamble than residents of Allentown (28%) or Easton (24%). Also, fewer residents in 2009 said they “will not gamble” across all localities.

- About three-fourths (73%) of residents feel that crime will increase now that the casino is open, while only 6% feel that crime may decrease and 22% feel that the casino will have no effect or are unsure.
- Responses were much more favorable regarding economic development as 89% of residents feel that the casino's opening will bring at least some new businesses and jobs to the area, an increase over 2007.
- Ninety four percent of residents feel that the casino will at least somewhat increase traffic as compared to only 6% that feel it will have no effect or are not sure.

METHODOLOGY

The full report summarizes data collected in a telephone survey of residents of the Lehigh Valley between January 20, 2009 and February 28, 2009. Individual households throughout Lehigh and Northampton counties were selected randomly for inclusion in the study. The sample of phone numbers used in the survey was generated by Genesys Sampling Systems of Ft. Washington, PA. Interviewing was conducted by the staff of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion, with 450 surveys completed. This number of completions results in a margin of error of +/- 5% at the 95% confidence interval. However the margin of errors for sub groups (i.e. women, income, etc.) and select questions is larger due to smaller sample size. Percentages throughout the survey have been rounded upward at the .5 mark, thus some totals in the results will not equal 100%.

CURRENT GAMBLING BEHAVIOR OF LEHIGH VALLEY RESIDENTS

In this section we examine the extent to which survey respondents have participated in gambling activities in their lifetime, with specific questions about gambling activity in calendar year 2008 as an indicator of current gambling behavior. Over 97% of survey respondents in 2009 said that they had participated in some form of gambling including casinos, purchasing lottery tickets, and other forms of gambling. The most frequent type of gaming behavior reported by our survey participants was purchasing lottery tickets (64%), followed by casino gambling (37%), and charitable betting (34%).

Table 1
Percent of survey participants engaging in various types of gaming in 2008
(n=334)

Types of Gaming	Yes	No
Gambled at a casino in the US	37%	63%
Purchased a lottery ticket	64%	36%
Gambled on the internet	1%	99%
Bet money for charitable purposes	33%	67%
Gambled at a bar	7%	94%
Participated in a sports pool	13%	88%

Of those surveyed, 77% indicated that they had gambled at a U.S. casino in their lifetime with 37% indicating that they visited a casino during the time period from December 2007 to December 2008. Of those who visited a casino to gamble in 2008, 40% visited a casino in Pennsylvania followed by 35% in New Jersey and 12% in Las Vegas. About 50% of those visiting casinos went “a few days all year,” while 38% said they only went 1 time during the past year. Additionally, 75% of those visiting casinos spent 4 or less hours while 22% said they visited a casino, on average, from 5-10 hours. As shown below, more respondents lost money than gained, with about one-fourth breaking even.

Table 2
“In the past year (2008) did you come out ahead or behind on the money that you wagered?”
(n=327)

Rating	2009
Ahead	35%
Behind	42%
Broke Even	24%

LIKELIHOOD OF GAMBLING AT A NEW SLOT PARLOR IN PENNSYLVANIA

At the start of 2009, when we initiated this survey, the Sands Casino building was underway with an anticipated early summer opening. Between the passage of the bill legalizing slot casinos and the Sands opening public sentiment about a slot casino was conflicted. Potential economic gains were somewhat overshadowed by concerns of increases in crime, traffic and larger moral issues surrounding gambling. Table 3 reflects the mixed feelings of residents; by early 2009 slightly more residents supported the casino than opposed (49% vs. 42%) with 22% undecided.

Table 3

**“Feelings about a slot machine casino being build in the Lehigh Valley”
(n=438)**

Rating	2009
Strongly support	15%
Somewhat support	34%
Somewhat oppose	22%
Strongly oppose	20%
Not Sure	9%

Success of the casino is dependent on actual visitors who spend money at the site. In our first survey in 2007 we asked how likely a participant was to gamble at a slot parlor in PA. In 2009 we modified the question to “in Bethlehem”. As shown in Table 4, the 2009 survey findings indicate that the majority (70%) of Lehigh Valley residents, of legal age, said they would not gamble or that it was unlikely. Conversely, 30% said they were “very likely” to “likely” visit a new slot parlor, an increase from 2007. It is worth noting that the percentage who said they “will not gamble” declined by 10% from 2007 to 2009. These results remain consistent when controlling for gender.

Table 4
“How likely are you to gamble at the new slot parlors?”
(n=440)

Rating	2007	2009
Very likely	10%	12%
Likely	15%	18%
Not very likely	23%	29%
Will not gamble	51%	41%
Not Sure	1%	<1%

The results below are consistent with national gambling studies, which suggest that the incidence of engaging in some type of gambling is similar for males and females.³

Table 5
Breakdown of the Likelihood of Gambling by Gender
2009

Rating	Male	Female
Very likely	13%	11%
Likely	19%	17%
Not very likely	29%	30%
Will not gamble	39%	42%

A cross tabulation of the results, broken down by zip code, (Table 6) suggests that residents of Bethlehem (31%) and Easton (42%), are more likely to gamble than residents of Allentown (28%) or our boroughs and townships (28%). However, compared to 2007, there was a large increase in the percentage of Bethlehem and Easton residents who said they were “very likely” to gamble; for Bethlehem the percentage increased from 6% to 13% and for Easton, 7% to 24%! Also, fewer residents in 2009 said they “will not gamble” across all localities. For example, in 2007 60% of Allentown residents said they “will not gamble,” compared to only 43% by 2009.

³ *Gambling Impact and Behavior Study*, Report to the National Gambling Impact Study Commission, April 1, 1999, National Opinion Research Center.

**Table 6
Breakdown of the Likelihood of Gambling by Zip Code
2009**

Rating	Allentown	Bethlehem	Easton	Other localities
Very likely	12%	13%	24%	10%
Likely	16%	18%	18%	18%
Not very likely	29%	33%	32%	28%
Will not gamble	43%	36%	27%	44%
Not Sure	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

One of the concerns of opening a slot machine casino in the Lehigh Valley is that individuals who lack large amounts of disposable income will gamble, further creating stress on families and the community. A cross tabulation of the likelihood of gaming, broken down by income may suggest cause for concern as residents with income levels earning below \$20,000 are more likely to gamble than other income groups, 48%, which is also an increase from 2007 (32%). Conversely, residents earning over \$100,000 are the least likely to gamble, 81%, which is similar to results in 2007.

**Table 7
Breakdown of the Likelihood of Gambling by Income
2009**

Rating	Under \$20,000	\$20,000- under \$60,000	\$60,000 – under \$100,000	Over \$100,000
Very likely	21%	13%	10%	9%
Likely	27%	16%	23%	11%
Not very likely	9%	27%	30%	30%
Will not gamble	42%	44%	33%	51%
Not Sure	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%

PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE AFTER THE OPENING OF THE SLOT CASINO IN THE LEHIGH VALLEY

The survey also asked several questions related to expected changes in crime, economic development and traffic following the opening of the slot parlor in Bethlehem. Not surprisingly, when asked what effect the casino will have on crime in the Lehigh Valley, about three-fourths (73%) of residents feel that crime will increase, while only 6% feel that crime may decrease and 22% feel that the casino will have no effect or are unsure. Comparing results to this question from 2007 it appears that residents are less pessimistic as the casino’s opening neared; only 13% felt that crime would greatly increase in 2009, compared to 25% in 2007.

**Table 8
Casino Opening and Crime
(n=438)**

Rating	2007	2009
Greatly increase crime	25%	13%
Somewhat increase crime	54%	60%
Somewhat decrease crime	3%	5%
Greatly decrease crime	1%	1%
No effect/Not sure	17%	22%

Disaggregating by gender, there appears to be more females than males who expect crime to greatly increase as a result of the casino’s opening.

**Table 9
Casino Opening and Crime by Gender**

Rating	Male	Female
Greatly increase crime	7%	16%
Somewhat increase crime	68%	56%
Somewhat decrease crime	5%	5%
Greatly decrease crime	1%	<1%
No effect/Not Sure	19%	23%

Survey participants were also asked about the potential effects of the casino’s opening on economic development in the region. Responses were much more favorable

regarding this issue as 89% of residents feel that the casino’s opening will bring at least some new businesses and jobs to the area, an increase over 2007.

Table 10
Casino Opening and Economic Development
(n=438)

Rating	2007	2009
Greatly increase econ. Development	32%	22%
Somewhat increase econ. Development	51%	67%
Somewhat decrease econ. Development	5%	4%
Greatly decrease econ. Development	2%	1%
No effect/Not sure	9%	6%

Lastly, residents were asked how the casino will impact traffic in the Lehigh Valley. As with crime, many residents are concerned about the negative effect that the casino will have on traffic congestion in the region. Ninety four percent of residents feel that the casino will at least somewhat increase traffic as compared to only 6% that feel it will have no effect or are not sure. Again, it appears that respondents in 2009 were less pessimistic about traffic problems than in 2007. As show in Table 11, fewer participants in 2009 felt it would greatly increase traffic than in 2007 (41% vs. 52%).

Table 11
Casino Opening and Traffic Congestion
(n=438)

Rating	2007	2009
Greatly increase traffic congestion	52%	41%
Somewhat increase traffic congestion	39%	53%
Somewhat decrease traffic congestion	<1%	<1%
Greatly decrease traffic congestion	1%	0%
No effect/not sure	8%	6%

Conclusion

As these results suggest, from 2007 to 2009 residents feelings about the opening of a casino in the Lehigh Valley have become somewhat more optimistic. The percentages who say they will not gamble and who are strongly opposed to the casino has decreased in just two years. Likewise, residents appear less pessimistic about the effects on crime and traffic congestion. With the location of the casino in Bethlehem, residents from the cities of Bethlehem and Easton say they are more likely to gamble than residents of Allentown or our boroughs and townships. Perhaps the key concern of this study is the fact that residents with income levels under \$20,000 indicated that they are the most likely to gamble. We will continue to monitor the changes in the perceptions and behaviors related to gaming as we seek to understand the larger socio-economic effects of gaming on the Lehigh Valley.

**GAMBLING STUDY
FREQUENCY REPORT**

Fielding Dates: January to February 27, 2009
 Number of Responses: 450 Lehigh Valley Residents age 18 or older
 Margin of Error: +/- 5% at 95% L.O.C.

What zip code do you live in?

City	Percent Responding
Allentown	18%
Bethlehem	17%
Easton	8%
Other	57%

How likely are you to gamble at the new slot parlor in Bethlehem once it is open for business?

How Likely	Percent Responding
Very likely	12%
Likely	18%
Not very likely	29%
Will not gamble	41%

If you do gamble, how often do you plan to visit the new slot parlor in any one year, once it is open?

How Often	Percent Responding
About every day	<1%
1-3 times per week	2%
Once or twice a month	10%
A few days all year	41%
Only 1 day in the year	46%

Have you ever, in your lifetime, gambled at a casino, purchased lottery tickets, gambled at a race track or bet money?

Have you ever gambled?	Percent Responding
Yes	97%
No	3%

Have you ever gambled at a casino in the U.S., that is a large gambling hall with many different kinds of games, for example, a resort or riverboat?

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding
Yes	77%
No	23%

In the past year, since December 2007, have you gambled at this type of location?

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding of Gamblers
Yes	37%
No	63%

In what location did you go to a casino to gamble?

location	Percent Responding
Pennsylvania	40%
New Jersey	35%
Las Vegas	12%
Other	13%

In the past year, since December 2007, think about how often you gambled at a casino in the U.S. How often did you gamble?

How often?	Percent Responding of Casino Gamblers
1-3 times per week	2%
Once or twice a month	9%
A few days all year	51%
Only 1 day in the past year	38%
Did not gamble, skip to	<1%

On average, how long did you gamble each time you visited a casino in the U.S. during the last year?

How long did you gamble?	Percent Responding
Less than 2 hours	42%
2-4 hours	33%
5-10 hours	23%
More than 10 hours	2%

During the last year, when you gambled at a casino, did you come out ahead or behind on the money that you wagered?

Did you come out ahead or behind?	Percent Responding of Casino Gamblers
Ahead	35%
Behind	42%
broke even	24%

About how much did you come out ahead or behind?

How much money did you come out ahead or behind?	Percent Responding
\$1-\$99	27%
\$100-\$499	6%
\$500-\$999	15%
\$1000 +	4%
Not Sure	5%
Refused	9%

In the past year, since December 2007, have you gambled at a race track or an off-track pari-mutuel betting parlor? Please include playing slot machines, cards and other types of games.

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding
Yes	7%
No	93%

In the past year, since December 2007, have you bought a lottery ticket for such games as Lotto, Powerball, dailies like pick-4 or instants and scratch-offs? Please include state-run lottery games only.

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding
Yes	64%
No	36%

In the past year, think about how often you bought a lottery ticket such as Lotto, Powerball, a daily lottery ticket or instant or scratch-off ticket. Was it...

How Often?	Percent Responding
Nearly every day	3%
Less than daily but at least one day a week	17%
Less than weekly but at least one day a month	24%
Less than once a month but more than one day all year	46%
Only one day last year	10%

Now think about all of the lottery tickets you have bought in the past year, since December 2007. Did you come out ahead or behind on your lottery tickets?

Did you come out ahead or behind?	Percent Responding
Ahead	9%
Behind	81%
Broke even	10%

In the past year, since December 2007, have you engaged in gambling on the internet?

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding
Yes	1%
No	99%

In the past year, think about how often you gambled on the internet. Was it...

How Often?	Percent Responding of Internet Gamblers
Nearly every day	17%
Less than daily but at least one day a week	33%
Less than weekly but at least one day a month	33%
Less than once a month but more than one day all year, or	17%
Only one day last year	0%

Now think about all of the times you've gambled on the internet in the past year, since December 2005. Did you come out ahead or behind?

Did you come out ahead or behind	Percent Responding
Ahead	33%
Behind	33%
Broke even	17%

In the past year, since December 2007, have you bet money on a game conducted for a charitable purpose, such as church bingo, raffles or pull-tabs?

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding
Yes	33%
No	67%

In the past year, since December 2007, have you gambled at a bar or restaurant that had only one or two kinds of games such as pull-tabs and other small games of chance? Please do not count locations that have only lottery tickets, bingo halls, or card rooms.

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding
Yes	6%
No	94%

Now I'd like to talk with you about types of gambling that are run like a business but probably without a license. Please do not include any of the kinds of gambling activities we've already discussed. In the past year, since December 2007, have you participated in a sports pool, placed a bet with a local bookmaker, bought a policy or policy nonlicensed number games, or played in a nonlicensed casino or "blind pig"?

Have you gambled?	Percent Responding of Gamblers
Yes	12%
No	88%

In this section we ask about reasons you might have had for gambling or placing a bet.

Please tell us whether each of the following reasons was very important, important, not so important, or not at all important to you as a reason for gambling.

Socializing with friends or family

Importance	Percent Responding
Very important	10%
Important	27%
Not so important	22%
Not at all important	41%

Personal service from the staff

Importance	Percent Responding
Very important	1%
Important	7%
Not so important	24%
Not at all important	56%
Not Sure	

To be around other people

Importance	Percent Responding
Very important	2%
Important	17%
Not so important	24%
Not at all important	56%

The excitement or challenge of gambling

Importance	Percent Responding of Gamblers
Very important	6%
Important	27%
Not so important	20%
Not at all important	48%

To win money

Importance	Percent Responding of Gamblers
Very important	23%
Important	27%
Not so important	18%
Not at all important	32%

Which of the following best describes your feelings about the possibility of a slot machine casino being built in Bethlehem? Would you say that you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose a slot casino being built in the Bethlehem?

Feelings about slot parlor in Lehigh Valley	Percent Responding
Strongly support	15%
Somewhat support	34%
Somewhat oppose	22%
Strongly oppose	20%
Not sure	9%
Refused	<1%

What effect do you think the current economic climate will have on the slot casino in Bethlehem?

How Satisfied	Percent Responding
Very Satisfied	8%
Somewhat Satisfied	43%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	29%
Very Dissatisfied	5%
Neither/none	6%
Not Sure	8%

For the following issues, please indicate what kind of effect you think the opening of a slots casino in the Lehigh Valley. Do you think the effect will be greatly increase, somewhat increase, somewhat decrease, or greatly decrease?

First, what effect will the opening of a slots casino have on crime? Will it...

Effect on Crime	Percent Responding
Greatly increase crime	13%
Somewhat increase crime	60%
Somewhat decrease crime	5%
Greatly decrease crime	<1%
Not sure	22%

Next, economic development - that is, bringing new businesses and jobs to the area? Will it...

Effect on economic development	Percent Responding
Greatly increase economic development	22%
Somewhat increase economic development	65%
Somewhat decrease economic development	4%
Greatly decrease economic development	<1%
Not sure	7%

What about traffic congestion in the Lehigh Valley. Will it...

Effect on traffic congestion	Percent Responding
Greatly increase traffic congestion	41%
Somewhat increase traffic congestion	53%
Somewhat decrease traffic congestion	<1%
Greatly decrease traffic congestion	0%
Not sure	6%

Finally, I have a few questions about yourself.

**Which of the following categories best describes your racial identity?
Are you?**

Racial Identity	Percent Responding
White/Caucasian	92%
African-American	2%
Hispanic/Latino	2%
Asian	1%
Native American	<1%
Mixed race	1%
or other	<1%

Do you rent or own your own home?

Home ownership status	Percent Responding
Rent	14%
Own	84%
Not sure	<1%
Refused	2%

**What is your current marital status?
Are you?**

Marital Status	Percent Responding
Single	13%
Married	67%
Divorced	8%
Widowed	8%
Partnered	2%
Refused	2%

What is your highest level of education?

Highest level of education	Percent Responding
Less than High School	2%
High School Graduate	23%
Some college or technical school	26%
College graduate (4 yr only)	30%
Graduate or professional degree	19%
Refused	<1

**Which of the following categories best describes your family income?
Is it?**

Family Income	Percent Responding
Under \$20,000	8%
\$20,000-\$39,999	13%
\$40,000-\$59,999	16%
\$60,000-\$79,999	14%
\$80,000-\$100,000	12%
Over \$100,000	22%
Not sure/refused	13%

How many children do you have under 18?

Number of Children	Percent Responding
None	66%
One	14%
Two	13%
Three	5%
Four	2%
Five +	<1%

Gender	Percent Responding
Male	34%
Female	66%

About the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium

The Lehigh Valley Research Consortium (LVRC) is a collaboration among academic researchers, governmental, not-for-profit, and business groups throughout the area, which has joined together to examine social, political, economic, health, and environmental issues in a regional context. The LVRC draws upon experts from local four and two year institutions of higher education in order to examine community issues, disseminate information about our community to citizens, engage in collective dialogue, and augment the classroom learning of our local college communities. This collaboration fosters new insights into regional challenges in the hopes of enhancing our understanding of complex issues and solutions.

Recognizing the intertwined nature of the region's communities, we have created a community-based information system, which is a compilation of over 300 indicators. By pulling together many facets of community well-being into one location, this information system creates an opportunity for richer, more productive conversations about our future direction, keeping in mind the unique nature of our diverse communities. Faculty researchers and college students work with community organizations to evaluate existing programs and policies as well as analyze current conditions to offer enhancements to existing policies and practices.

The LVRC is organized through the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges, a 501(c)(3) organization. LVAIC members include Cedar Crest College, DeSales University, Lafayette College, Lehigh University, Moravian College and Muhlenberg College.

For more information about the LVRC visit our website
<http://www.lehighvalleyresearch.org>.

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