

U.S. Public: Keep Las Vegas in Las Vegas

Thursday, March 11, 2010

Farleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind

www.publicmind.fdu.edu

Contacts: Peter Woolley 973.670.3239 and Donald Hoover 609.432.7297

According to a national study by Fairleigh Dickinson University's PublicMind Poll™, Las Vegas is first on the country's mind when it comes to gambling. Asked what destination comes to mind when thinking about gambling, 54% of Americans surveyed mention Las Vegas first, while 7% mention Atlantic City N.J. first. No other destination gets more than 2%. Another 21% mention Las Vegas second, and 23% think of Atlantic City second. Thus, Las Vegas is the first or second mention for three of four Americans (73%).

"Despite the spread of gambling across the United States over the decades, Las Vegas remains first in the minds of its countrymen," said Donald Hoover, a professor in FDU's International School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and a former casino executive.

Las Vegas also comes out on top in its ratings. Two in three Americans (65%) have a favorable opinion of Las Vegas against 22% who say their opinion is unfavorable, a 3-to-1 ratio.

By comparison other gaming destinations receive favorable to unfavorable rating of about two to one (2 to 1) with Reno, Nevada coming in at 49% favorable versus 23% unfavorable; Atlantic City at 46% - 26% and New Orleans at 43% to 25%.

"Despite many missed opportunities over the years, Atlantic City has a surprisingly good base of public opinion on which it clearly needs to build," said Hoover. "Also, New Orleans fares extremely well considering its many challenges in recent years, and this augurs well for its growth."

Other gambling destinations tested by the pollsters that come out ahead in public perception include St. Louis, Mo., with 35% favorable to 15% unfavorable opinion and Biloxi, Miss. with 31% favorable to 15% unfavorable. Others, like Shreveport, La. (25%-19%), Foxwoods and Mohegan Sun in Connecticut (20-16), Tunica Miss. (14%-12%), and Chicagoland in Illinois (21%-19%) run about even and a majority have no opinion of them as gambling destinations. Only Detroit comes out with its numbers upside down, with 17% having a favorable opinion and 32% having an unfavorable opinion.

However, Americans' views of the local impact of casinos are not favorable: 46% say casinos have a negative effect on the local community, while 38% say they have a positive effect. Those who have visited a casino in the past 12 months split on the

question (43%-42%) but those who haven't been to visit a casino in the past year are decisive, with 61% saying casinos have a negative impact.

Living near a casino town doesn't make a difference in one's views on the impact of casinos. Among those who live within 30 miles, 46% say casinos have a negative impact, while 40% say they have a positive impact. Among those who live further than 30 miles from a casino town, 44% say they have negative impact, while 38% say their impact is positive. "Citizens may like the jobs and tax revenue from gaming, but they don't necessarily want it in their backyards," said Hoover.

More than half (54%) would oppose bringing any form of gambling facility to their own town, with women being more strongly opposed than men (58%-50%). Those with a favorable view of Atlantic City are three times more likely to support gambling coming to their own town (61%) than are those who have an unfavorable view of Atlantic City (22%).

"Gaming in Atlantic City was supposed to be its salvation when the issue was argued back in the mid-1970s," said Peter Woolley, a political scientist and director of the poll. "But gaming is a big change, and not everyone gets out of it what they think they're going to - whether they're at the gaming tables or the zoning board."

Two-thirds (67%) oppose changing the law to permit people to place bets over the Internet. No partisan difference emerges on the issue, but men are twice as likely as women to support a change (29%-14%), and liberals are more likely than conservatives to favor Internet betting (27%-18%).

A majority (53%) also oppose legalizing sports betting in all states. Once again, males (45%) are more likely to support the measure than are females (34%). Those in the 18-29 age category support the change more (57%) than those in the older age groups. A majority (54%) say legalized sports betting is a bad idea because it promotes too much gambling and can corrupt sports, while 39% agree that since so many people bet on sports anyway, it should be allowed and taxed by the government. Younger people, liberals and those who participate in office pools are more likely than others to think it should be legalized and taxed.

"Keep your eye on these numbers," added Woolley. "If some states allow sports betting and profit by it, other states will want to follow." Currently, New Jersey has plans to try to overturn a federal ban on sports betting.

One in five (20%) say they or someone in their household has participated in an office betting pool, such as for the World Series or the Super Bowl. Males (17%) are three times more likely than females (5%) to have participated, while those aged 30-44 (17%) are more likely than those aged 18-29 (4%) or 60+ (6%) to have participated.

One in three report they or someone in their household has been to a casino or slots parlor in the past year. Men are more likely than women to have hit the tables or slots.

Sixty-two percent report they have visited a casino or slots parlor at some point in their life.

Fairleigh Dickinson University's survey research group, PublicMind, conducted the poll of 1,001 randomly selected adults nationwide by telephone from Jan. 22, 2010, through Feb. 4, 2010. It has a margin of error of +/- 3 percentage points.

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