

# Rutgers-Eagleton Poll: New Jerseyans doubtful of benefits of sports betting

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## News

Although Gov. Chris Christie has signed legislation to allow sports betting at racetracks and casinos to try to help revitalize a flagging Atlantic City, many New Jersey residents are not sure the idea is a good bet for the resort town, according to this morning's Rutgers-Eagleton Poll.

While 44 percent of New Jerseyans sees sports betting as a plus for Atlantic City, 48 percent is less positive about its value: 31 percent says it will make no difference and 17 percent views sports betting as bad for the struggling resort city, the poll finds.

New Jerseyans are even more negative when it comes to online gambling. More than half (55 percent) thinks online gambling is bad for Atlantic City, compared with just 5 percent saying it is a good thing. Twenty-three percent says it makes no difference, and 17 percent is not sure.

Residents split their hands when it comes to permitting casinos in other parts of New Jersey, something state legislators have been discussing. Nearly half of Garden Staters agree with the idea, but 43 percent says casinos should just be limited to Atlantic City. Other residents are mostly unsure, but 3 percent offers that gambling should not be legal anywhere in the state. Support is up 12 points from a similar question asked in 1999, when 35 percent favored a statewide casino industry.

Even as support has climbed for statewide expansion, New Jerseyans still question the benefits of gambling. In 1999, 72 percent saw gambling as good for the state, but today only 33 percent agrees. Thirteen percent says it has been bad and 46 percent says it has made no difference.

Sixty-two percent also does not want to gamble on making Atlantic City more like Las Vegas by allowing alcoholic drinks to be carried and consumed outside of casinos. Just over a third say they would support such a measure, which some have suggested would help.

"In the face of Atlantic City's troubles, most New Jerseyans no longer think gambling is particularly good for the state," said David Redlawsk, director of the Eagleton Center for Public Interest Polling and professor of political science at Rutgers. "Nearly four decades after the first casino opened, residents are split on whether gambling should expand and clearly don't believe some current plans will be of much help to Atlantic City itself."

Results are from a statewide poll of 842 residents contacted by live callers on both landlines and cell phones from Sept. 29 to Oct. 5, 2014. The margin of error is +/- 4.4 percentage points.