

Smoke-free air law had no effect on off-track betting facility business activity

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An Indiana University study found that a smoke-free air law implemented in an Indiana community did not hurt business at the off-track betting facility in that community. The findings, the researchers said, suggest there is "no economic reason for policymakers to exclude OTB facilities from smoke-free legislation."

Indiana legislators currently are debating a statewide smoke-free air law. Exceptions could include casinos and other gaming venues. Jon Macy, assistant professor in IU's School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation and lead author of the study, said past research has shown that smoke-free laws do not negatively affect businesses, but the findings concerning gambling facilities have been mixed.

"Prior research has very clearly demonstrated that laws prohibiting smoking in public places and workplaces have no negative economic consequences in multiple industries," Macy said. "Our study is one of the first to find that this holds true for gaming facilities as well."

The study, published online on Tuesday (March 22) by the journal *Tobacco Control*, compared per capita "handle," or the amount gamblers spent per number of people living in the county, for three Indiana OTBs from 2002 to 2009. The OTBs were located in Fort Wayne, which in 2007 implemented a smoke-free air law in all workplaces, including gambling facilities, and in Indianapolis and Merrillville, where smoking is permitted at the facilities.

The study found that the per capita handle in all three facilities declined at a similar rate during this period, with unemployment rates proving to be a significant predictor of the per capita handle. As unemployment rates increased, per capita handle decreased. There was no change in the trend in per capita handle after the Fort Wayne location went smoke-free or in the two control locations that continued to allow smoking.

"Given the well-established [negative health consequences](#) of [secondhand smoke exposure](#), strong policies should be enacted to protect workers and patrons at gaming facilities from exposure to secondhand smoke," the authors wrote in their study, 'The impact of a local smoke-free law on wagering at an off-track betting facility in Indiana.' "These strong public health policies can be implemented without fear of negative [economic consequences](#)."

More information: The article is available online at [tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content ... /tc.2010.041913.full](https://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/2010.041913.full)

Provided by Indiana University

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