

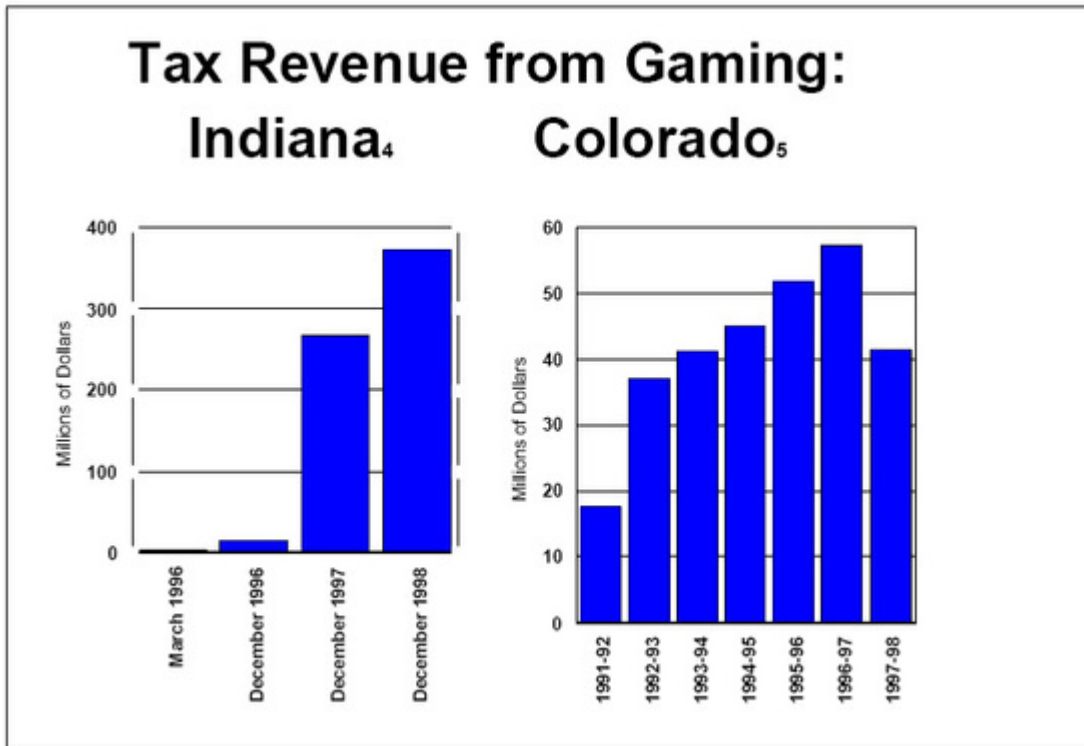
The WAGER, Vol. 4(4) - The changing geography of casino gambling

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In 1998, more people visited the casinos of Indiana than Disney World. Gaming taxes collected from Indiana casinos brought in three times the revenue of the cigarette tax. And the money spent on slot machines last year could have paid for the state's annual budget for two years straight. The gaming industry in Indiana is one of the top four revenue-producers in the nation.*

Indiana is just one of the many states that enjoyed a lucrative 1998. During the first 11 months of last year, casinos in Mississippi brought in over \$2 billion in revenue with an annual growth rate of seven percent.** Casinos in Colorado enjoyed similar success. In the three Colorado towns of Black Hawk, Central City, and Cripple Creek, gaming revenues reached a record \$479.2 million. The tables below show the tax revenue collected from gaming during the last decade for Colorado and Indiana.***

What will this changing geography of the gaming industry mean for pathological gambling? Gambling venues are becoming more evenly distributed throughout the United States. Although an increase in the number of cases of compulsive gambling might seem like the only logical consequence of this geographical shift, there are other possibilities. Other opportunities to gamble (e.g., lotteries) already exist in most states, so an influx of casinos may have little or no effect on the public's exposure to gambling. Such an influx, however, can change the type of games people play. Or, the national burden of pathological gambling may remain unchanged in magnitude while becoming diffused over a larger area. Such changes could have a significant impact on treatment delivery. Areas with nascent gaming industries might be initially unprepared to treat pathological gamblers. Even areas with established treatment centers might have to adapt to the changing needs of patients exposed to new forms of gambling. It may be several years, if not decades, before epidemiologists can fully evaluate the significance of the changing geography of American gambling; nevertheless, it is a dimension of gambling studies that deserves our attention now.



Sources:

* Sword, D. (1999, January 21). Riverboat revenues rose 40% in 1998; Indiana Gaming Commission reports the nine casinos in the state won \$1.34 billion last year. *The Indianapolis Star*, p.C1.

**Palermo, D. (1999, January 5). Mississippi's annual gambling revenues reach \$2 billion. *The Sun Herald*.

***Lane, G. (1999, January 22). 1998 a record year for state gambling proceeds. *The Denver Post*, p.B-4.

****Indiana Gaming Commission monthly riverboat statistical reports (www.ai.org/gaming/html/reports.html).

*****Colorado Division of Gaming, (http://governor.state.co.us/gov_dir/revenue_dir/gaming_dir/dogstats.htm)